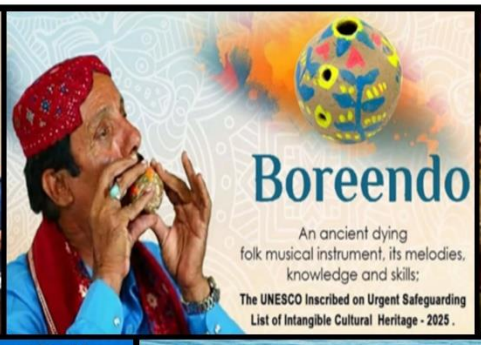
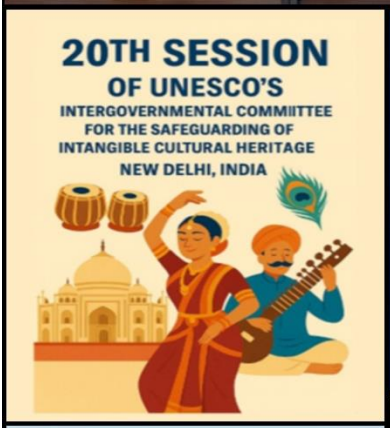
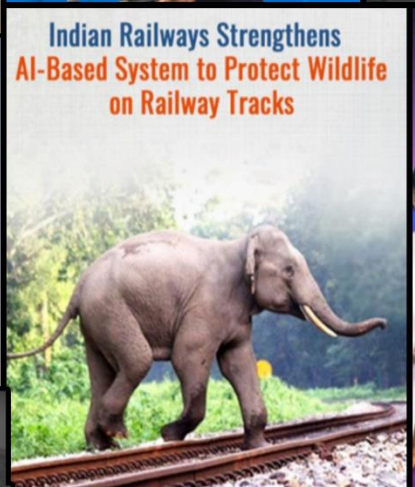
Shankar School of Banking

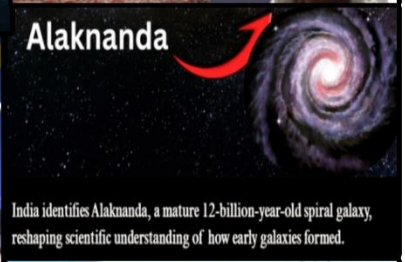
CURRENT AFFAIRS

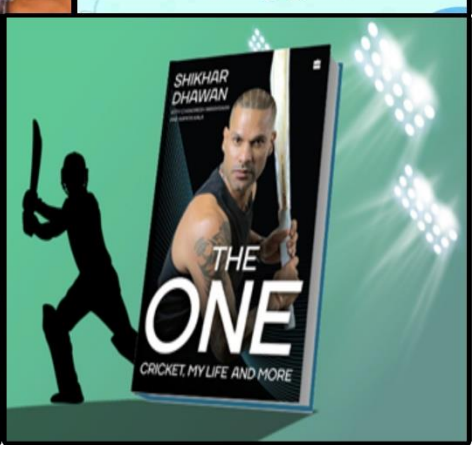
DECEMBER – 2025











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DECEMBER – 2025

NATIONAL NEWS

Rythanna Meekosam' Programme Launched by Andhra Pradesh Government

★ The Andhra Pradesh Government launched a large-scale farmer-centric initiative titled 'Rythanna Meekosam' to provide long-term support under a Five-Point Formula.

★ The programme was inaugurated by Agriculture Minister K. Atchannaidu in Krishna district and will run from 24 to 29 November 2025, with workshops scheduled on 3 December 2025 at Farmer Service Centres.

★ The Five-Point Formula focuses on: Water Security, Demand-Based Cultivation, Agri-Tech Adoption,Food Processing Expansion and Comprehensive Government Backing

★ These measures aim to modernise agriculture, enhance resilience, increase farm-level profitability, and alleviate financial stress on farmers.

★ The Government has invested ₹1,000 crore over the last 18 months to aid farmers directly, particularly to strengthen agriculture against natural disasters along the state's 1,100 km coastline.

★ Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu's leadership focuses on providing permanent solutions to agricultural challenges and mitigating market volatility.

★ **The initiative promotes modern agricultural practices, including:**

- Drone technology for pest control and precision spraying
- Farm mechanisation to reduce manual labour
- Agri-tech solutions at the grassroots level
- The aim is to increase productivity while reducing costs and physical strain.

★ The programme also strengthens market linkages through food processing units, enabling value addition and better access to domestic and international markets. Price protection is ensured through government procurement of crops like tobacco, mango, onion, and coconut.

★ Under the Pradhan Mantri-Kisan Annadata Sukhibhava scheme, the state has disbursed over ₹3,200 crore to more than 68 lakh farmers, supporting rural livelihoods.

Prime Minister Inaugurates 77-ft Statue of Lord Rama and Ramayana Theme Park in Goa

★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated a 77-foot bronze statue of Lord Rama and the newly developed Ramayana Theme Park at Shree Samsthan Gokarn Partagali Jeevottam Math in Canacona, South Goa.

★ The event marked the beginning of the 550th year celebrations of the Math, known as Sardha Panchashatamanotsava, recognised as one of India's oldest spiritual institutions.

- ★ During the ceremony, PM Modi released a commemorative postal stamp and coin to honour the Math's 550-year legacy, which has played a major role in preserving the Dwaita Vedanta tradition and spiritual learning among the Gowd Saraswat Brahmin community.
- ★ The Ramayana Theme Park aims to serve as an interactive cultural and spiritual centre, promoting India's epic legacy and enhancing religious tourism in the region.
- ★ Earlier the same day, the Prime Minister visited Udupi, Karnataka, where he participated in the Laksha Kantha Gita Parayana, a mass recitation of the Bhagavad Gita involving over one lakh participants, including monks, students and devotees.
- ★ In Udupi, he also inaugurated the Suvarna Teertha Mantapa and dedicated the Kanaka Kavacha (gold-plated window covering) for the Kanakana Kindi, a site linked to saint Kanakadasa, who is believed to have had a divine vision of Lord Krishna at that spot.
- ★ The events highlight the government's focus on cultural revival, spiritual unity, and preservation of India's civilisational heritage, while integrating traditional values with modern commemorative initiatives such as theme parks and national symbols.

ICAI Sets Guinness World Record for India's Largest Career Guidance Session

- ★ The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) created a Guinness World Record for organising the largest single-day career advice session in Mumbai.
- ★ The event recorded participation from over 7,400 students, teachers, and principals, with 6,166 students officially counted as per Guinness World Records criteria.
- ★ The record-setting programme was part of ICAI's flagship initiative CAFY 4.0 – Career in Accounting and Finance for Youth and the Super Mega Career Counselling Programme, aimed at guiding students in informed career planning.
- ★ The initiative addresses the gap in structured career guidance in India, particularly for students in non-urban regions, and promotes awareness about opportunities in accounting, finance, economics, business management, and related fields.
- ★ The session included: Career orientation sessions and motivational talks, Live question-and-answer interactions, Resource distribution and Participation from students across commerce, science, and humanities streams
- ★ Although the Mumbai event achieved the world record, the effort was part of a pan-India outreach, with over 1.3 lakh students participating nationwide.
- ★ The achievement strengthens ICAI's role beyond a regulatory professional body, positioning it as a career enabler, mentor, and national knowledge contributor.
- ★ The recognition enhances ICAI's global visibility and highlights India's ability to execute large-scale educational and career counselling programmes.

India Records All-Time High Foodgrain Production of 357 Million Tonnes in 2025

- ★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that India has achieved a record foodgrain production of 357 million tonnes in 2025, the highest in the country's history.

- ★ The announcement was made during the 128th edition of the 'Mann Ki Baat' radio address on 30th November 2025, highlighting India's progress toward food security and agricultural expansion.
- ★ This output marks an increase of 100 million tonnes over the last decade, reflecting strong growth in the agriculture sector.
- ★ India's foodgrain production grew from 257 million tonnes in 2015 to 357 million tonnes in 2025, showing a nearly 40% increase in ten years.
- ★ During his visit to Coimbatore, PM Modi attended the South India Natural Farming Summit (19–21 November 2025) organised by the Tamil Nadu Natural Farming Stakeholders Forum, focusing on: Eco-friendly agricultural systems, Chemical-free farming, Agro-innovation and organic inputs and Market linkages for farmer-producer organisations (FPOs).

National Industries Research and Development Council Launches InDApp

- ★ The National Industries Research and Development Council (NIRDC), under Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) Ministry guidelines, launched InDApp (India's Industrial Empowerment Application) as a single-window digital platform to simplify and accelerate MSME business processes.
- ★ The InDApp platform was unveiled by Union MoS B. L. Verma from the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution (MCAF&PD).
- ★ InDApp aims to provide easy access to approvals, real-time market data, and business opportunities, helping entrepreneurs take faster and informed decisions.
- ★ The platform operates as an integrated single-window system, enhancing speed, transparency, and efficiency in MSME engagement across sectors.
- ★ InDApp supports MSMEs through both online tools and on-ground assistance, offering access to government schemes, technology, export opportunities, and business partnerships.
- ★ The platform was developed with support from seven ministries — MoFPI (Ministry of Food Processing Industries), MoFAHD (Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying), MoAFW (Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare), MoC&I (Ministry of Commerce & Industry), MoEFCC (Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change), MCA (Ministry of Corporate Affairs), and MNRE (Ministry of New and Renewable Energy) — ensuring sector-specific information through a unified digital channel.

Karnataka Launches Upgraded e-Swathu 2.0 to Digitalise Rural Property Records

- ★ Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah launched e-Swathu 2.0, a digital platform designed to regularise and manage rural property records.
- ★ The upgraded system will bring 95 lakh rural properties under the tax net and is expected to generate ₹1,778 crore to ₹2,000 crore in revenue for the state.
- ★ The platform enables inclusion of rural households, including those located outside village boundaries, into the formal property taxation system.
- ★ The system provides faster digital services including issuance of e-Khata documents (Forms 11A and 11B), accessible online without the need to visit gram panchayat offices.

★ A dedicated grievance support helpline (9483476000) has been set up to resolve technical issues.

Hornbill Festival Begins in Nagaland

★ The 26th Hornbill Festival began on 1st December 2025 at the Naga Heritage Village, Kisama, Kohima, coinciding with Nagaland's Statehood Day.

★ The festival is celebrated for ten days and brings together all major Naga tribes to showcase their traditional dance, music, crafts, attire, and local cuisine.

★ Over the years, the Hornbill Festival has grown into one of India's most prominent cultural festivals.

★ The inaugural ceremony was held at Unity Plaza, Kisama, and was hosted by the Governor of Nagaland, Ajay Kumar Bhalla. The opening included various cultural performances and traditional showcases.

★ This year's event saw participation from multiple countries including the United Kingdom, Ireland, France, Austria, Malta, and Switzerland as country partners.

★ Arunachal Pradesh took part as the state partner, reflecting the festival's growing national and global engagement.

★ Ahead of the formal inauguration, various department stalls, cultural exhibitions, and carnival activities were opened to the public, allowing visitors to explore handicrafts, local products, and traditional Naga cuisine.

★ While Kisama remains the primary venue, programs and cultural activities are also organized across different parts of Nagaland, spreading the festive spirit statewide.

★ The Hornbill Festival was originally launched as a tourism development initiative but over the years has grown into a globally recognised cultural event, drawing large numbers of domestic and international visitors and providing a platform to preserve and promote Naga heritage and indigenous traditions.

Tamil Nadu Receives Five New Geographical Indications (GI) Tags

★ Five products from Tamil Nadu have received the Geographical Indications (GI) tag, recognising their uniqueness, heritage value, and regional identity.

★ The newly recognised items include:

- Woraiyur Cotton Sari
- Kavindapadi Nattu Sakkarai (Traditional Jaggery Powder)
- Namakkal Soapstone Cookware (Makkal Pathirangal)
- Thooyamalli Rice (Traditional Rice Variety)
- Ambasamudram Choppu Saman (Wooden Toys)

★ With this addition, Tamil Nadu now holds 74 Geographical Indications (GI)-tagged products, making it one of the leading States in India for certified traditional products.

★ A Geographical Indication (GI) Tag is an Intellectual Property Right (IPR) protection granted to products that originate from a specific geographical region and have qualities, characteristics, or reputations inherently linked to that location.

- ★ The applications for these recognitions were filed on behalf of producers by Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) attorney P. Sanjai Gandhi, providing legal support to safeguard traditional crafts and agricultural heritage.
- ★ The five newly certified products highlight Tamil Nadu's strong legacy in textiles, agriculture, handcrafts, and traditional culinary items.
- ★ The recognition strengthens efforts to promote heritage-based industries, rural sustainability, and export potential, reinforcing Tamil Nadu's position as a major contributor to India's cultural and craft identity.

India to Chair International IDEA for the First Time

- ★ India will assume the chairship of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) for the first time during the Council of Member States meeting in Stockholm, Sweden, and will serve through 2026.
- ★ The role will be represented by Gyanesh Kumar, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) of India, reflecting global recognition of India's experience in conducting large-scale free, fair, and inclusive elections.
- ★ International IDEA, founded in 1995, is an intergovernmental organisation headquartered in Stockholm, Sweden, focused on promoting and safeguarding sustainable democracy worldwide.
- ★ The organisation supports democratic systems through capacity building, electoral assistance, policy research, dialogue facilitation, and institutional strengthening, covering areas such as electoral processes, constitutional reforms, digital democracy, political finance, and democratic resilience amid climate change.
- ★ International IDEA currently consists of around 35 member countries, with the United States and Japan as observers. India is a founding member and has been an active contributor to governance, research, and training programmes.
- ★ India's chairship comes at a time when democracies globally face challenges, including misinformation, declining voter trust, technological disruptions, and threats to electoral integrity.
- ★ As Chair, India will play a key role in shaping global democratic discourse, promoting best practices in election management, and strengthening Election Management Bodies (EMBs) through training, knowledge sharing, and institutional support.

Bharat Taxi Begins Pilot Operations as India's Co-operative Ride-Hailing Platform

- ★ Bharat Taxi, operated by Sahakar Taxi Co-operative Limited, has started pilot operations in Delhi and Gujarat, offering an alternative to private cab aggregators with a driver-owned co-operative model.
- ★ The initiative is supported by the Union Ministry of Co-operation and the National e-Governance Division, under the government vision of "Sahakar Se Samriddhi".
- ★ Bharat Taxi follows a Zero-Commission Model, allowing drivers to retain 100% of their earnings, unlike commercial platforms that charge up to 30% commission.
- ★ The platform ensures No Surge Pricing, offering transparent and predictable fare rates for passengers.

- ★ Drivers, referred to as Saarthis, hold shareholding rights in the co-operative, enabling participation in decision-making and platform governance.
- ★ The system will integrate with DigiLocker, Unified Mobile Application for New-Age Governance (UMANG), and other government digital platforms to streamline operations.
- ★ The pilot phase began in November 2025, and within 10 days, over 51,000 drivers were onboarded, surpassing global co-operative platforms such as the New York-based Drivers Co-operative.
- ★ In Delhi alone, around 650 driver-owners have joined during the initial rollout, with a nationwide launch planned by December 2025.
- ★ The co-operative model aims to provide drivers with higher income security, dignity, and ownership, while offering passengers reliable service, fair pricing, and improved accountability.
- ★ Bharat Taxi aligns with national goals of inclusive digital growth, self-reliance, co-operative-driven development, and modern service delivery under the co-operative economy framework.

Regional Artificial Intelligence (AI) Impact Conference 2025

- ★ The Regional Artificial Intelligence Impact Conference 2025 was held at the State Convention Centre, Shillong, Meghalaya as part of a series of regional events leading up to the India–AI Impact Summit 2026 scheduled for February 2026.
- ★ The conference focused on the themes of People, Planet and Progress, aligning with the government's goal to make AI accessible and impactful across India, including remote regions.
- ★ The Union Minister (responsible for AI) addressed the event virtually and highlighted the government's commitment to democratizing AI under the IndiaAI Mission.
- ★ Under the IndiaAI Mission, over ₹10,300 crore has been allocated to build AI capabilities, infrastructure, and research across India.
- ★ As part of scaling AI infrastructure, 38,000 GPUs have been onboarded to support research institutions, startups, and educational bodies at affordable cost.
- ★ The government plans to establish hundreds of AI and data labs nationwide, some of which are already functional in the Northeast region.
- ★ In Meghalaya, an AI Lab at NIELIT Shillong is already operational. Additional labs are planned at ITI Shillong, Shillong Polytechnic, and ITI Tura, expanding access to AI ecosystems beyond metropolitan areas.
- ★ A major mission objective is AI skill development, with a target to train around 1 million people to enhance employability and foster innovation.

MEITY and MEA Launch Paperless Passport Verification through DigiLocker

- ★ The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MEITY) and the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) have launched a paperless, contactless passport verification process through DigiLocker.
- ★ Citizens can now access and share their Passport Verification Records (PVRs) directly from the Issued Documents section of their DigiLocker accounts, streamlining the passport application and verification process.

- ★ PVRs can be viewed and stored digitally, eliminating the need for physical documents or printing.
- ★ DigiLocker ensures data integrity and authenticity, reducing the risk of forgery or tampering.
- ★ Digital PVRs can be shared with authorized agencies like passport offices for processing applications or background checks without submitting paper copies.
- ★ PVRs now join other government-issued documents in DigiLocker, enabling centralized digital access to vital identity records.
- ★ This initiative reinforces the government's Digital India mission, promoting efficient, transparent, and citizen-friendly services.
- ★ Once generated, a citizen's PVR is automatically pushed to their DigiLocker account, where it can be accessed, downloaded, shared, or digitally verified, and authorized government departments can process applications faster.

RailTel Signs Agreement with Nokia

- ★ RailTel Corporation of India Limited, a Navratna Central Public Sector Enterprise under the Ministry of Railways, signed an agreement with Nokia Corporation to upgrade its National Long-Distance (NLD) and metro optical transport networks across India.
- ★ The upgrade will use Nokia's advanced Internet Protocol (IP) routing and optical technologies to enhance high-speed connectivity, resilience, and network capacity for enterprise and broadband customers.
- ★ The collaboration focuses on modernizing RailTel's infrastructure using a vendor-neutral, open-network model to ensure future scalability and adaptability.
- ★ Technologies deployed include Nokia's 7750 Service Router (SR), Broadband Network Gateway (BNG), and Carrier-Grade NAT (CG-NAT) to support growing data consumption and large-scale traffic management.
- ★ Nokia announced the successful upgrade of RailTel's Dense Wavelength Division Multiplexing (DWDM) NLD network along with deployment of CG-NAT and metro optical transport infrastructure, improving service delivery and network reliability.
- ★ The upgrade leverages Nokia's 1830 Photonic Service Switch (PSS) and advanced transponders, increasing network transport capacity while reducing cost per bit through reuse of existing infrastructure and unused channel spectrum.
- ★ The deployment enables high-capacity Lambda transmission and express traffic lanes between cities, significantly improving overall network performance.
- ★ The unified network infrastructure improves intercity traffic resilience, reduces operational costs, and enhances broadband and enterprise-grade service capabilities.

India Unveils Roadmap to Become Top-3 Quantum Economy by 2047

- ★ NITI Aayog's Frontier Tech Hub, in collaboration with International Business Machines (IBM), launched a national Quantum Technology Roadmap aiming to position India among the top three quantum economies by 2047.

- ★ The roadmap focuses on developing indigenous quantum hardware and software capabilities, reducing dependence on imports and fostering the growth of globally competitive quantum companies and startups (at least 10 startups are expected to emerge from this initiative).
- ★ The initiative supports India in capturing a strong share of the global quantum software and services market and deploying quantum technologies across key sectors such as defence, energy, healthcare, logistics, finance, and cybersecurity to boost national security and technological leadership.
- ★ The roadmap aligns with the National Quantum Mission (NQM) approved by the Union Cabinet in April 2023, with a sanctioned budget of ₹6,003.65 crore for 2023–24 to 2030–31, aimed at advancing research and industrial growth in quantum computing, communication, sensing, materials, and devices.
- ★ Under the NQM, the government will establish Thematic Research Hubs (T-Hubs), support start-ups, strengthen academia–industry collaboration, and build infrastructure for quantum innovation.
- ★ The new roadmap builds on this mission with a focus on commercialisation and global competitiveness.
- ★ The initiative is also expected to offer strategic advantages in national security, cybersecurity, and defence communication systems, and enable breakthroughs in areas like drug discovery, diagnostics, material science, energy optimisation, and smart logistics.
- ★ The roadmap strengthens India's long-term vision under Digital India and Atmanirbhar Bharat, positioning the country as a future leader in emerging deep-tech sectors and global quantum markets.

India to Host 20th Session of UNESCO Inter-Governmental Committee

- ★ India will host the 20th session of the Inter-governmental Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) from 8th to 13th December 2025 at the Red Fort, New Delhi.
- ★ The event will bring together global representatives to review and evaluate nominations for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Intangible Cultural Heritage Lists.
- ★ India has officially nominated Diwali for inclusion in the UNESCO ICH list, highlighting its cultural, spiritual, and social significance as a festival celebrating the victory of light over darkness and good over evil.
- ★ Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) includes community-based living traditions such as oral expressions, performing arts, rituals, festivals, and traditional craftsmanship, as defined under the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage.
- ★ The Red Fort, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, will serve as the venue, symbolically connecting India's tangible and intangible heritage.
- ★ The six-day session will focus on: Evaluation of new nominations by member nations, Review of already listed intangible cultural elements and Policy discussions and international co-operation for safeguarding living heritage
- ★ Diwali's nomination has undergone evaluation by UNESCO assessment bodies and will be placed for final consideration during this session, with India expressing strong confidence in approval.

★ India already has several cultural traditions inscribed under UNESCO ICH, including Yoga (2016), Kumbh Mela (2017), Ramlila (2008), Chhau Dance (2010), and Nowruz (2016 — multinational nomination).

Rajasthan Achieves 100% Digitisation of Electoral Rolls under Special Intensive Revision 2025

★ Rajasthan becomes the first state in India to achieve 100% digitisation of electoral rolls under the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) programme, announced by Chief Electoral Officer Navin Mahajan.

★ SIR by the Election Commission of India updates voter lists by verifying identities, mapping addresses, deleting duplicates, adding new voters, and correcting errors.

★ **Rajasthan's achievement:** 100% voter roll digitisation completed, 97% voter mapping done, only 3% of voters need document submission, and an average of 30 voters per booth require verification.

★ **Benefits of digitisation:** Simplified verification through automated systems, real-time updates for transparency, improved efficiency, easy online access, reduced electoral fraud, and enhanced voter participation.

★ **Field staff contribution:** Success driven by Booth Level Officers, panchayat-level staff, assistant officers, and supervisors.

★ **Electoral timeline:** Draft roll-on 16 December 2025, claims and objections 16 December 2025 – 15 January 2026, hearings and verification 16 December 2025 – 7 February 2026, and final roll-on 14 February 2026.

★ Digitisation sets a benchmark for other states and strengthens electoral transparency and accuracy.

11th India International Science Festival 2025

★ The 11th edition of the India International Science Festival (IISF 2025) was held in Panchkula, Haryana from 6th to 9th December 2025, celebrating India's achievements in science, innovation, and technology.

★ Theme: "Vigyan Se Samruddhi: for Aatmanirbhar Bharat" (Science for Prosperity and Self-Reliant India), reflecting the government's vision to position science as a driver of economic growth, social welfare, and national development.

★ The festival aims to promote science and innovation for self-reliance, integrate traditional knowledge with modern research, and foster scientific temper and curiosity among citizens.

★ The event covers ecology and Himalayan science, science for society and education, self-reliance through science and technology, biotechnology and bio-economy, and traditional knowledge with modern science.

★ Over 150 technical sessions are scheduled on topics such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Artificial General Intelligence (AGI), quantum technology, space science, gene editing, climate science, advanced materials, and agricultural technology.

★ More than 40,000 participants, including scientists, researchers, industry leaders, startups, students, women educators, policy makers, and community innovators, are expected to engage in the festival, promoting collaboration and knowledge sharing.

Jan Dhan Deposits Cross ₹2.75 Lakh Crore in 2025

★ As of November 2025, total deposits in Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) accounts reached ₹2.75 lakh crore, reflecting deepening financial inclusion.

★ PMJDY, launched in 2014, provides zero-balance savings accounts, RuPay debit cards, access to government subsidies via DBT, overdraft facilities, and insurance coverage, targeting the unbanked population.

★ Over 56 crore accounts have been opened under the scheme, with an average balance of ₹4,815 per account.

★ 78.2% of accounts are in rural and semi-urban areas, and 50% of account holders are women, highlighting inclusive growth.

★ The milestone signifies improved financial literacy, greater economic participation, enhanced DBT effectiveness, and expansion of formal banking access.

★ **Growth trend:** 2022 – ₹1.5 lakh crore, 2024 – ₹2.6 lakh crore, 2025 – ₹2.75 lakh crore, demonstrating steady year-on-year increase.

★ PMJDY has transitioned from merely opening accounts to ensuring active usage, making it a cornerstone of India's financial ecosystem.

India Launches Gyan Bharatam Programme for Manuscript Conservation and Digitization

★ India launched Gyan Bharatam, a national programme under the Ministry of Culture, aimed at conserving and digitizing India's manuscript heritage.

★ The initiative was announced in the Union Budget 2025 and reflects India's efforts to preserve civilizational knowledge and make it globally accessible.

★ Gyan Bharatam focuses on surveying, documenting, conserving, digitizing, and distributing ancient manuscripts related to science, philosophy, literature, medicine, astronomy, and culture.

★ The Government allocated ₹491.66 crore for the programme for the period 2025–2031.

★ The programme aims to cover over one crore manuscripts preserved in museums, libraries, academic institutions, private collections, and community spaces across India.

★ A National Digital Repository will be developed using Artificial Intelligence (AI) and advanced digital technologies to ensure global access, preservation, and research support.

★ To implement the programme, the Ministry of Culture signed Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with 31 institutions, including 19 Cluster Centres and 12 Independent Centres.

India to Host WHO Global Summit on Traditional Medicine 2025 in New Delhi

★ India has launched the official countdown for the WHO (World Health Organization) Global Summit on Traditional Medicine 2025, which will be held from 17–19 December 2025 at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi.

- ★ The summit will be co-hosted by the Ministry of Ayush (Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, Homoeopathy) and the WHO.
- ★ The 2025 summit theme is "Restoring Balance: The Science and Practice of Health and Well-Being".
- ★ The focus areas include: Scientific validation of traditional medicine, Digital health and innovation, Biodiversity conservation and Global collaboration for integrative healthcare
- ★ India highlighted its major traditional medicine systems, including Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, Sowa-Rigpa, and Homoeopathy, which are gaining global recognition.
- ★ A key achievement in this sector is the establishment of the WHO Global Centre for Traditional Medicine (GCTM) in Jamnagar, Gujarat, developed under the India–WHO partnership.
- ★ The event aligns with India's diplomatic and health commitments, supported by participation from Ministry of Ayush officials, Press Information Bureau (PIB) and WHO representatives.

Global AI Conclave 2025 to Be Held in Chennai

- ★ India is positioning itself as a global thought leader in responsible Artificial Intelligence (AI) through the Global AI Conclave 2025, jointly hosted by Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras and the India AI Mission in Chennai.
- ★ The conclave reinforces India's focus on safe, trusted, and inclusive AI, guided by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY).
- ★ The event acts as a precursor to the India-AI Impact Summit 2026, one of the world's major platforms on AI governance and innovation.
- ★ The conclave comes at a critical time as global AI adoption grows, raising concerns related to AI safety, ethical use, and accountability.
- ★ India aims to develop globally interoperable yet locally-suited AI governance frameworks, considering its diverse socio-economic and linguistic landscape.
- ★ The conclave will help translate high-level AI principles into practical and implementable governance tools.
- ★ It will feature keynotes, expert panels, and working discussions aligned with India's vision of trustworthy and equitable AI access.
- ★ A major focus is on advancing AI safety and governance frameworks, including adapting broad guidelines into feasible regulatory models across different cultural and legal environments.

ZSI Reports Discovery of Two New Jumping Spiders in Meghalaya

- ★ Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) scientists discovered two new jumping spider species — Asemonea dentis and Colyttus nongwar — in Meghalaya, highlighting the region's importance as part of the Indo-Burma Biodiversity Hotspot.
- ★ The findings were published in Zootaxa, a leading international animal taxonomy journal by Magnolia Press, Auckland (New Zealand).
- ★ Both newly discovered species belong to the Salticidae family, known for stalking and pouncing rather than web-spinning.

- ★ Asemonea dentis is only the third species of Asemonea genus reported in India.
- ★ The name dentis (Latin: tooth) refers to a tooth-like projection on the male's palpal femur, which is a key identification feature.
- ★ Male Asemonea dentis are greenish-brown with a V-shaped pale-yellow abdominal mark, while females are creamy-white with black patterns.
- ★ Colyttus nongwar is only the second Indian species of the Oriental genus Colyttus.
- ★ The species Colyttus nongwar is named after Nongwar village in the Khasi Hills, where it was discovered.
- ★ Both sexes of Colyttus nongwar have an oval reddish-brown carapace, a light-brown abdomen, a creamy band, and five chevron-shaped patches.
- ★ Meghalaya has seen multiple recent spider discoveries, including Irura meghalaya (new species, May 2025) and India's first record of Thiania abdominalis, showing that arachnid diversity in the region remains under-documented.

Maharashtra Launches MahaCrimeOS AI Platform for Cybercrime Policing

- ★ The Government of Maharashtra has partnered with Microsoft to launch MahaCrimeOS Artificial Intelligence, an advanced platform aimed at modernising and accelerating cybercrime investigations across the state.
- ★ The platform was unveiled by Satya Nadella, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Microsoft, during the Microsoft Artificial Intelligence Tour held in Mumbai.
- ★ MahaCrimeOS Artificial Intelligence has been developed by CyberEye, in collaboration with Maharashtra's Advanced Research and Vigilance for Enhanced Law-enforcement (MARVEL), the state's Special Purpose Vehicle for Artificial Intelligence governance, and the Microsoft India Development Center.
- ★ The platform is an Artificial Intelligence– and Microsoft Azure–powered digital investigation system designed to streamline, standardise, and speed up cybercrime case management.
- ★ It is currently deployed in 23 police stations in Nagpur, where it has shown an 80 percent reduction in investigation turnaround time and nearly 100 percent digital registration of cybercrime cases, with standardised Artificial Intelligence–driven workflows.
- ★ The platform complies with strict security, data protection, and governance standards, as ensured by the Microsoft India Development Center.
- ★ The initiative is expected to strengthen cybercrime response, improve investigation speed and accuracy, enhance transparency, and set a national benchmark for the use of Artificial Intelligence in policing and governance.

Union Cabinet Renames MGNREGS as Poojya Bapu Grameen Rozgar Yojana

- ★ The Union Cabinet approved a major update to India's largest rural employment programme.
- ★ The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme will now be renamed as Poojya Bapu Grameen Rozgar Yojana.
- ★ The guaranteed employment days have been increased from 100 days to 125 days per rural household in a financial year.

- ★ This decision aims to strengthen rural livelihoods and improve income stability for millions of rural households dependent on the scheme.
- ★ The Cabinet approved an amendment to the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005, to enable the renaming and enhancement of workdays.
- ★ Formal notification is awaited to operationalise the changes.
- ★ The scheme was originally enacted on 25 August 2005 as the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, providing a legal guarantee of 100 days of wage employment to adult members of rural households.
- ★ The primary objectives of the Act include enhancing rural purchasing power, providing livelihood security, reducing rural distress and poverty, and creating durable community assets.

Odisha Power Transmission Corporation Limited Signs ₹1,685 Crore Long-Term Loan Pact With NABARD

- ★ Odisha Power Transmission Corporation Limited (OPTCL) signed a long-term loan agreement worth ₹1,685.27 crore with the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) to strengthen Odisha's power transmission infrastructure.
- ★ This agreement marks NABARD's first-ever project financing to a State Public Sector Undertaking (PSU) in Odisha.
- ★ The loan carries an interest rate of 7.75% with a 15-year repayment period, including a three-year moratorium.
- ★ Of the total amount, ₹900 crore is allocated for new transmission projects, while the remaining funds will be used to refinance high-cost existing loans, reducing OPTCL's financial burden and consumer electricity tariffs.
- ★ A major project funded is the 400/200 KV Gas Insulated Substation (GIS) at Erasama in Jagatsinghpur district, with a total project cost of ₹850 crore, of which ₹600 crore is financed through the NABARD loan.
- ★ The loan also supports construction of 132/33 KV digital substations at Agalpur-Rampur (Balangir) and Athamallik (Angul), and a 220/33 KV GIS substation at Madanpur-Rampur (Kalahandi).
- ★ Funds are allocated for the 400 KV Talcher–Meramandali transmission line, costing ₹77 crore, to evacuate power from NTPC's Talcher Thermal Power Station Stage-III (2×660 MW).
- ★ The investment will strengthen Odisha's transmission network, ensure reliable electricity supply, and support industrial growth and economic development across the state.

Commemorative Postage Stamp issued in honour of Emperor Perumbidugu Mutharaiyar II

- ★ A commemorative postage stamp was released by the Vice-President of India, Shri C.P. Radhakrishnan.
- ★ The stamp was issued in memory of Emperor Perumbidugu Mutharaiyar II, also known as Suvaran Maran.
- ★ The release ceremony was held at the Vice-President Enclave, New Delhi.

- ★ The event aligns with the Central Government's initiative to recognise unsung rulers and cultural icons of Tamil Nadu and to preserve India's historical and cultural legacy.
- ★ Emperor Perumbidugu Mutharaiyar II belonged to the Mutharaiyar dynasty, which ruled central Tamil Nadu between the 7th and 9th centuries CE.
- ★ He ruled from Tiruchirappalli for nearly four decades and is regarded as one of the most distinguished rulers of early medieval South India.
- ★ His administrative achievements included maintaining stability, territorial expansion, and demonstrating military strength to consolidate regional authority.
- ★ He was a strong patron of temples, religious institutions, Tamil literature, and cultural activities, contributing to the preservation of Tamil identity and heritage.
- ★ He initiated and supported irrigation and public works, vital for agrarian development, with inscriptions across Tamil Nadu attesting to his role in water management.
- ★ The commemorative stamp symbolises official recognition of a historically underrepresented ruler.
- ★ It aims to popularise regional history, promote heritage awareness, support cultural diplomacy, and reinforce an inclusive historical narrative beyond widely known dynasties.

MP to Develop Veerangana Durgavati Tiger Reserve as Cheetah Sanctuary

- ★ Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav announced that Veerangana Durgavati Tiger Reserve will be developed into a cheetah sanctuary before the next monsoon session.
- ★ Located at Nauradehi in Sagar district, it will become the third cheetah habitat in Madhya Pradesh, after Kuno National Park and Gandhi Sagar Sanctuary.
- ★ India successfully reintroduced cheetahs after their extinction in the 1950s, becoming the only country globally to do so.
  - First cheetah habitat: Kuno National Park, Sheopur (September 2022) – currently 28 cheetahs.
  - Second cheetah habitat: Gandhi Sagar Sanctuary, Mandsaur (April 2025) – currently 2 cheetahs.
  - Next phase: Eight cheetahs expected from Botswana in January 2026.
- ★ Veerangana Durgavati Tiger Reserve has been approved by the Madhya Pradesh State Cabinet for cheetah habitat development.
- ★ The reserve will expand the cheetah range and population, complementing existing habitats in the state.
- ★ The move will strengthen biodiversity conservation, support ecosystem balance, and enhance wildlife management capacity.
- ★ Development of the sanctuary is expected to promote eco-tourism and conservation awareness.
- ★ The initiative further highlights India's leadership in global big cat conservation through international co-operation, particularly with African nations, for expertise in cheetah management and long-term conservation planning.

India to Establish Maitri II Antarctic Research Station by 2032

- ★ India is set to expand its polar research presence with Maitri II, a next-generation research station in East Antarctica, expected to be completed by 2032.
- ★ Maitri II will replace the existing Maitri I, operational since 1989 in the Schirmacher Oasis, and will provide modern, all-weather facilities to support year-round scientific research.
- ★ The station will upgrade India's research infrastructure in Antarctica, including state-of-the-art laboratories, ice-core storage systems, and facilities for biological and microbial research.
- ★ India's Antarctic programme began in 1981 with Dakshin Gangotri, which ceased operations around 1989. Since then, Maitri and Bharati stations have supported research in meteorology, glaciology, geology, atmospheric sciences, biology, zoology, and seismology.
- ★ The total estimated cost of Maitri II is ₹2,000 crore, with ₹29.20 crore approved by the Ministry of Earth Sciences for pre-investment activities including architectural design, site planning, and DPR preparation.
- ★ Advanced logistics and infrastructure will ensure uninterrupted operations during both Antarctic summer and harsh winter months.

Ponduru Khadi from Andhra Pradesh Receives Geographical Indication Tag

- ★ Ponduru Khadi, a traditional handspun and handwoven cotton fabric from Andhra Pradesh, has been granted the Geographical Indication (GI) tag by the Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- ★ The recognition comes nearly 100 years after Mahatma Gandhi praised Ponduru Khadi for its exceptional fineness and craftsmanship, highlighting its historical importance during the freedom movement.
- ★ Ponduru Khadi is known for its extremely fine texture, strength, and durability.
- ★ It is produced using locally grown cotton and traditional spinning techniques, including a special wooden charkha and the use of rice starch to strengthen the yarn.
- ★ The fabric gained prominence during India's freedom struggle, when Mahatma Gandhi promoted it as a symbol of self-reliance and Swadeshi.
- ★ A Geographical Indication (GI) tag is an intellectual property right granted to products originating from a specific geographical area and having distinct qualities or reputation linked to that region.
- ★ Ponduru Khadi joins other GI-tagged Indian textiles such as Banarasi silk, Kanchipuram silk, Pochampally Ikat, and Chanderi fabric.
- ★ Its inclusion further strengthens Andhra Pradesh's cultural and artisanal identity and promotes the preservation of indigenous crafts.

MY Bharat Introduces Special Web Portal for Republic Day 2026

- ★ As part of the Republic Day Celebrations–2026 (RDC-26), the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports has launched a dedicated webpage on the MY Bharat Portal.
- ★ The initiative aims to conduct national-level youth competitions across India.
- ★ The competitions include Essay Writing, Painting, and Slogan/Signature Competitions.

- ★ The programme is designed to promote patriotism, creativity, and civic engagement among the youth of the country.
- ★ Interested participants can register and participate online through the MY Bharat Portal.
- ★ The official participation portal is https://mybharat.gov.in/pages/republic_day_2026.
- ★ Prize money has been provisioned for top-performing participants.
- ★ Selected youth will receive an opportunity to participate in the Republic Day Celebrations–2026 Parade.
- ★ The initiative strengthens youth participation in national celebrations and fosters a sense of national pride and responsibility.

Odisha to Host Regional Artificial Intelligence Impact Conference 2025

- ★ The Odisha Government will host the Regional Artificial Intelligence Impact Conference from 19 to 20 December 2025, positioning the state as an emerging contributor to artificial intelligence–driven governance and public service delivery in India.
- ★ A curtain-raiser event was organised by the Electronics and Information Technology Department, outlining Odisha's artificial intelligence vision, policy roadmap, and ongoing real-world applications.
- ★ The state aims to develop a comprehensive artificial intelligence innovation ecosystem supported by strong governance, advanced digital capabilities, and long-term policy certainty.
- ★ The conference forms part of the national build-up towards the India Artificial Intelligence Impact Summit, scheduled for February 2026.
- ★ Regional Artificial Intelligence Impact Summits are planned across eight states, including Madhya Pradesh, Kerala, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Meghalaya, Uttar Pradesh, Telangana, and Odisha.
- ★ It was noted that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has envisioned Odisha as a major artificial intelligence hub in the country.
- ★ The conference is guided by the principle of the "Three Ps – Planet, People, and Progress", focusing on sustainability, inclusive growth, and sector-specific artificial intelligence applications in governance.

Jammu and Kashmir Launches First Gen Z Post Office

- ★ Jammu and Kashmir has launched its first Gen Z Post Office at the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences Vijaypur, marking a major step towards modernising and digitising postal services.
- ★ With this launch, All India Institute of Medical Sciences Vijaypur has become the first All India Institute of Medical Sciences in India to host a Gen Z Post Office.
- ★ The Gen Z Post Office was inaugurated on 17 December 2025 at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences Vijaypur campus.
- ★ The facility was inaugurated by Professor (Dr.) Shakti Kumar Gupta, Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer of All India Institute of Medical Sciences Vijaypur, in the presence of the Chief Postmaster General of the Jammu and Kashmir Circle and other senior postal officials.

- ★ The initiative reflects the Department of Posts' shift towards customer centric, technology enabled and youth oriented postal services, aligned with the expectations of younger generations.
- ★ The Gen Z Post Office integrates postal services, banking services and insurance services under one roof with a modern ambience and simplified service delivery.
- ★ It offers digital payment options, faster transaction processing and improved accessibility, making postal services more efficient and user friendly.
- ★ The facility promotes India Post Payments Bank services, postal savings schemes and insurance products, with a special focus on financial inclusion of students and young professionals.
- ★ Establishing the Gen Z Post Office within an institutional campus ensures easy access to essential services and strengthens collaboration between India Post and premier educational and healthcare institutions.

National Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Hub Scheme to Promote Inclusive Entrepreneurship

- ★ The Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises has intensified efforts to promote entrepreneurship among Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe communities through the National Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Hub Scheme, in line with the goals of inclusive economic growth, social justice, and equitable participation in the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises ecosystem.
- ★ The National Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Hub is a flagship scheme of the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, implemented by the National Small Industries Corporation Limited, a Government of India enterprise.
- ★ The scheme focuses on capacity building, entrepreneurship promotion, financial support, skill development, and market access for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe entrepreneurs.
- ★ The primary objective of the scheme is to develop entrepreneurial capacity among Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe communities and enable them to compete effectively in domestic and global markets, addressing long-standing challenges such as limited access to credit, weak market linkages, lack of exposure to public procurement, and gaps in technical and managerial skills.
- ★ A key feature of the scheme is its support for public procurement, where Ministries, Departments, and Central Public Sector Enterprises are mandated to procure at least four percent of their total purchases from Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe owned enterprises.
- ★ The scheme facilitates registration on the Government e-Marketplace, participation in tenders, and understanding of procurement procedures.

Government to Establish Bureau of Port Security to Strengthen Maritime Security

- ★ In a major step to strengthen India's maritime security framework, the Central Government has decided to establish a Bureau of Port Security (BoPS).
- ★ The new body aims to enhance security at ports and on vessels through improved coordination, intelligence sharing, and risk-based security planning, at a time when Indian ports are handling rapidly increasing trade volumes.

- ★ The Bureau of Port Security will be a statutory body responsible for regulating and overseeing security arrangements at ports, vessels, and port facilities across the country.
- ★ It will be set up under the Merchant Shipping Act, 2025 and function under the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways.
- ★ The BoPS will be modelled on the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security, which oversees airport and aviation security in India.
- ★ The key responsibilities of the BoPS will include security regulation and oversight of ports and ships, timely collection, analysis, and sharing of security-related information, and the implementation of graded and risk-based security measures.
- ★ Risk assessment will be based on factors such as the location of the port, trade potential, and vulnerability and threat perception.

Uttarakhand Chief Minister Unveils 'Meri Yojana' Welfare Schemes Portal

- ★ Pushkar Singh Dhami, the Chief Minister of Uttarakhand, launched the "Meri Yojana" Portal in Dehradun, Uttarakhand.
- ★ Meri Yojana is an online platform (accessible at gov.in) designed to provide comprehensive information on welfare schemes offered by both the Central Government and State Governments.
- ★ The primary aim of the initiative is to increase public awareness of welfare schemes and ensure benefits reach eligible beneficiaries in a time-bound manner.
- ★ The portal seeks to reduce dependency on intermediaries, thereby enhancing transparency and accountability in welfare delivery.
- ★ Meri Yojana Portal strengthens service delivery effectiveness by making scheme-related information easy to understand and accessible in simple language.
- ★ The portal features a comprehensive database of welfare schemes, including scheme details, eligibility criteria, application procedures, and required documents.
- ★ Alongside the portal, three editions of the "Meri Yojana" handbook were launched to support offline access to information for those in remote areas.
- ★ The handbook editions include the General Edition, State Government Edition, and Central Government Edition.

SBI Life Introduces New Smart Samriddhi Life Insurance Savings Scheme

- ★ SBI Life Insurance has launched 'New Smart Samriddhi', an individual, non-linked, non-participating life insurance savings plan.
- ★ The New Smart Samriddhi plan offers a combination of guaranteed savings and life insurance cover, ensuring financial security for the policyholder's family.
- ★ The product provides guaranteed annual additions of 5.5% or 6% on cumulative premiums, depending on the premium amount chosen.
- ★ New Smart Samriddhi is designed to promote disciplined, goal-based savings, addressing the need for balanced financial planning by enabling steady growth of savings along with assured financial protection.

Indian Railways Strengthens AI-Based Wildlife Protection System

- ★ Indian Railways has strengthened its Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based wildlife protection system along railway tracks to enhance wildlife conservation and railway safety.
- ★ The initiative aims to reduce train accidents involving elephants, lions, tigers, and other wildlife, especially in forest areas and wildlife corridors, by providing real-time alerts to train operators.
- ★ The system uses AI-enabled cameras and advanced sensor technologies to detect animal movement near railway tracks and generate alerts well in advance, enabling loco pilots to slow down or stop trains in time.
- ★ AI-based cameras can alert loco pilots nearly 500 metres in advance.
- ★ An Intrusion Detection System (IDS) integrated with a Distributed Acoustic System (DAS) captures ground vibrations and sounds, making it particularly effective in detecting elephants, whose movement produces distinctive vibrations.
- ★ Alerts are transmitted in real time to loco pilots, station masters, and control rooms for coordinated preventive action.
- ★ The system has already been implemented across 141 route kilometres on the Northeast Frontier Railway, a region highly prone to elephant–train collisions.
- ★ Based on its successful performance, additional tenders have been awarded to extend the system to 981 more route kilometres.
- ★ With this expansion, total coverage will increase to 1,122 route kilometres across sensitive wildlife zones in the country.
- ★ The strengthened AI-based system enhances operational safety of railways, protects endangered wildlife, and supports India's environmental and conservation commitments.
- ★ By enabling timely, preventive action through real-time data, the initiative shifts the approach from reactive accident response to proactive risk prevention.

Haryana Declares Hansi as 23rd District

- ★ The Haryana Government has officially declared Hansi as a new district, making it the 23rd district of the state, following the issuance of a formal government notification.
- ★ The decision aims to improve administrative efficiency, strengthen governance, and accelerate development activities in the region.
- ★ With the notification, Hansi has been granted full district status. The newly created district comprises two administrative subdivisions: Hansi and Narnaund.
- ★ This reorganisation is expected to reduce the administrative burden on Hisar district and provide the Hansi region with independent district-level administration.
- ★ The notification was issued under the provisions of the Haryana Land Revenue Act, 1887 and the Registration Act, 1908.
- ★ As per statutory requirements, the order received formal approval from the Governor of Haryana, giving it legal validity.
- ★ The decision was taken under the leadership of Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini.

★ Earlier, Hansi was part of the Hisar district. Due to increasing administrative and developmental requirements, the State Government decided to reorganise Hisar district by carving out Hansi as a separate district.

Fifth National Conference of Chief Secretaries 2025

★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi will chair the Fifth National Conference of Chief Secretaries in New Delhi.

★ The conference will be organised under the theme "Human Capital for Viksit Bharat", reflecting the government's focus on transforming India's population into skilled, productive and future-ready human capital to achieve the goal of a developed nation.

★ The event seeks to strengthen structured Centre–State collaboration on critical development priorities.

★ Deliberations will focus on early childhood education, school education, skilling, higher education, and sports and extracurricular activities, with emphasis on inclusive, sustainable and people-centric growth.

★ Special sessions will cover deregulation in States, technology in governance, AgriStack for smart supply chains, One State One World-Class Tourist Destination, Atmanirbhar Bharat and Swadeshi, and a roadmap for a post–Left Wing Extremism future.

★ Informal discussions will also take place on heritage and manuscript preservation and digitisation and Ayush for All, highlighting the integration of traditional knowledge with modern governance.

★ Chief Secretaries of all States and Union Territories, senior central officials and experts will participate.

★ Previous editions were held at Dharamshala (June 2022), New Delhi (January 2023), New Delhi (December 2023) and New Delhi (December 2024).

Ministry of Civil Aviation Grants No Objection Certificates to New Airlines

★ The Ministry of Civil Aviation has granted No Objection Certificates (NOCs) to two new airlines, Al Hind Air and FlyExpress.

★ These approvals clear the way for their commercial launch in 2026.

★ Another new carrier, Shankh Air, which has already secured its NOC earlier, is also expected to begin operations next year.

★ Together, these developments indicate increased activity and competition in India's domestic aviation sector.

★ Granting of an NOC is the first major regulatory step for launching an airline in India.

★ It signifies that the proposed airline has met initial requirements related to ownership structure, financial capability, and security clearances.

★ The approvals come at a time when India's aviation market is witnessing rapid passenger growth, along with concerns over market concentration and resilience.

★ India is currently the world's third-largest domestic aviation market, driven by rising incomes, improved regional connectivity, and increasing air travel demand.

★ At present, there are nine scheduled domestic airlines operating in the country.

World's Largest Open-Air Theatre Dhanu Yatra Inaugurated in Bargarh, Odisha

★ Dhanu Yatra, the world's largest open-air theatre festival, was inaugurated in Bargarh district of Odisha.

★ It is an eleven-day cultural festival that celebrates Indi an mythology, tradition, and folk performance, attracting thousands of visitors from across Odisha and other parts of India.

★ The festival is based on the mythological re-enactment of the life of Lord Krishna, starting from his birth and culminating in the death of King Kansa, his demon uncle.

★ A unique feature of Dhanu Yatra is that the entire town of Bargarh is transformed into the mythical city of Mathura.

★ Streets, palaces, riverbanks, and courtyards become live performance spaces, turning the town itself into a theatre.

★ Key locations such as the Rangamahal, Nanda Raja's court, and other public spaces serve as natural stages where different episodes of Krishna's life are enacted sequentially.

★ Unlike conventional theatre, there is no fixed stage or seating, and the boundary between performers and audience is blurred, creating a fully immersive and interactive experience.

★ Dhanu Yatra plays an important role in preserving and promoting the cultural and mythological heritage associated with Lord Krishna.

Ola Electric Bags ₹366.78 Crore Incentive Under PLI-Auto Scheme

★ Ola Electric has received a sanction order of ₹366.78 crore from the Ministry of Heavy Industries under the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for Automobile and Auto Components (PLI-Auto).

★ The sanctioned incentive pertains to FY 2024–25 and is issued under the Demand Incentive for Determined Sales Value component of the scheme.

★ The incentive amount will be disbursed through IFCI Limited, which acts as the designated financial institution for implementing the PLI-Auto Scheme.

★ The PLI-Auto Scheme is aimed at promoting domestic manufacturing, encouraging advanced automotive technologies, and enhancing global competitiveness of India's automobile and auto components sector.

★ The scheme supports India's broader objective of self-reliance (Atmanirbhar Bharat) and the transition towards electric mobility and clean transportation.

VoxelGrids Develops India's First Indigenous Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) Scanner

★ VoxelGrids, a Zoho-backed Indian medical technology startup, has developed India's first indigenously built Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) scanner, providing a major boost to Make in India and the medical technology sector.

★ The development significantly reduces India's dependence on imported diagnostic equipment and strengthens the domestic healthcare infrastructure.

- ★ The project is the outcome of a 12-year research and development effort led by Arjun Arunachalam, Founder of VoxelGrids.
- ★ Until now, India relied largely on foreign manufacturers such as Siemens and GE Healthcare for MRI machines.
- ★ VoxelGrids has designed and built a 1.5-tesla MRI scanner, which has been deployed at the Chandrapur Cancer Care Foundation near Nagpur.
- ★ The MRI scanner is completely designed and manufactured in India.
- ★ It does not use liquid helium, unlike conventional MRI machines.
- ★ The scanner is around 40% cheaper to build compared to imported MRI systems.
- ★ The machine incorporates indigenous technological innovations, rather than being a replica of foreign designs.
- ★ The initiative will help lower the cost of MRI scans, improving access to affordable healthcare.
- ★ It strengthens Atmanirbhar Bharat in the medical devices sector.
- ★ The development encourages growth of the Indian medical technology startup ecosystem.
- ★ It improves the availability of advanced diagnostic facilities in tier-2 cities and rural regions.
- ★ Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) is a non-invasive diagnostic technique that uses strong magnetic fields and radio waves.

Sudarsan Pattnaik Creates World Record Santa Claus Sculpture in Odisha

- ★ Renowned sand artist and Padma Shri awardee Sudarsan Pattnaik created a world record–breaking Santa Claus sculpture at Niladri Beach, Puri, Odisha.
- ★ The artwork celebrates the Christmas spirit and conveys a message of peace, harmony and global unity.
- ★ Titled “World’s Biggest Apple and Sand Installation of Santa Claus”, the sculpture was unveiled on 26 December 2025.
- ★ It has been officially recognised by the World Records Book of India.
- ★ Sudarsan Pattnaik shared visuals of the installation on social media, highlighting its unique festive theme.
- ★ The sculpture was made using 1.5 tonnes of apples along with sand.
- ★ It measures 60 feet in length, 45 feet in width and 22 feet in height.
- ★ The installation combines sand art with fruit-based elements, making it a one-of-a-kind artistic creation.
- ★ The artwork was designed to spread a message of peace and harmony across the world.
- ★ The installation attracted tourists and local visitors, boosting cultural tourism in Puri.
- ★ It promoted the Christmas spirit through creative public art.
- ★ The sculpture showcased India’s innovation and eco-friendly artistic talent on a global platform.
- ★ Sudarsan Pattnaik is an internationally acclaimed sand artist.

- ★ He is known for creating sculptures highlighting social issues, global events, climate change, humanitarian causes and environmental protection.
- ★ Niladri Beach, Puri, is widely known for sand art exhibitions and tourist attractions, especially during festive occasions like Christmas.

India to Introduce Its First Comprehensive National Anti-Terror Policy

- ★ India is set to introduce its first comprehensive National Anti-Terror Policy, aimed at strengthening the national security architecture.
- ★ The policy is in the final stages and will provide a unified framework for Central and State agencies to prevent, investigate and respond to terror-related incidents.
- ★ It reflects India's evolving security challenges such as digital radicalisation, cross-border threats and the need for stronger inter-agency coordination.
- ★ A major focus of the policy is on emerging and non-traditional terror threats.
- ★ It addresses digital radicalisation, where extremist groups use social media and encrypted platforms to recruit and indoctrinate youth.
- ★ The policy also highlights the misuse of open borders, particularly along the India–Nepal border, for terrorist movement and logistics.
- ★ Special attention is given to foreign-funded conversion and radicalisation networks, which threaten internal security and social harmony.
- ★ To fine-tune the policy, a National Investigation Agency (NIA) conference will be held in New Delhi on 26–27 December.
- ★ The conference will bring together Central agencies and State anti-terror units to discuss operational and strategic aspects.
- ★ NIA Director General Sadanand Date and National Security Guard (NSG) Director General Brighu Srinivasan have already consulted State Police Chiefs on evolving terror trends.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

India Global Forum Launches $250 Million Fund for Global Expansion

- ★ The India Global Forum (IGF) launched a $250 million fund at IGF Middle East 2025 in Dubai to support high-growth Indian consumer and industrial companies in international markets.
- ★ The initiative aims to promote Indian brands globally, strengthen India–UAE economic ties, and accelerate India's integration into global value chains.
- ★ Backed by private investors including Ved Family Office and Ananta Capital, the fund focuses on sectors like food and beverage, consumer products, chemicals, automotive, advanced manufacturing, and industrial goods.
- ★ Companies will receive support through an accelerator programme, access to investors and partners, use of Dubai's logistics infrastructure, and guidance on branding, compliance, and regulatory requirements.

- ★ The fund helps Indian firms scale globally, gain international recognition, and diversify markets, reducing dependency on traditional exports.
- ★ Dubai serves as a strategic launchpad due to its connectivity, regulatory efficiency, and investor network.
- ★ Expected outcomes include enhanced export performance, creation of globally competitive Indian brands, increased investment inflows, stronger India–UAE trade ties, and growth in jobs and R&D.
- ★ Challenges include ensuring market readiness, sustaining long-term competitiveness, managing execution risks, and navigating external uncertainties like geopolitical tensions and currency fluctuations.

Oxford University Press selects "Rage Bait" as its 2025 Word of the Year

- ★ The Oxford University Press (OUP) selected "Rage Bait" as the Word of the Year 2025.
- ★ Usage of the term "Rage Bait" has tripled in 2025, showing its rising presence on social media for provoking outrage and polarization.
- ★ The term originated in 2002 on Usenet, where it described irritated driver reactions to overtaking signals, forming the basis of its modern meaning of intentional provocation.
- ★ Rage Bait is defined as online content deliberately created to trigger anger or outrage by being frustrating, provocative, or offensive, usually to increase traffic or engagement.
- ★ It refers to content designed to cause anger to generate likes, comments, and shares, and is different from clickbait, which mainly provokes curiosity.
- ★ Other shortlisted words for 2025 included "Aura farming" and "Bio hack".

Kerala's 100-Year-Old ULCCS Recognised as Global Co-operative Cultural Heritage Site

- ★ The Uralungal Labour Contract Co-operative Society (ULCCS), a 100-year-old labour co-operative in Kerala, has been recognised as a Global Co-operative Cultural Heritage Site by the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA).
- ★ The announcement was made at Itamaraty Palace, Brazil, placing ULCCS among 31 globally significant co-operative heritage sites.
- ★ India now has two sites on the inaugural global list: ULCCS and the Dr Verghese Kurien Museum (Amul), Anand.
- ★ The 31 founding sites span 25 countries, including Rochdale (UK), Federation of Southern Co-operatives (USA), and Moshi Co-operative University (Tanzania).
- ★ ICA also launched the world's first Co-operative Cultural Heritage Platform and Global Map, showcasing co-operative legacies worldwide, including ULCCS.
- ★ Founded in 1925, ULCCS employs over 18,000 workers, has a turnover of ₹2,334 crore, and is globally known for ethical labour practices, engineering excellence, and projects like UL Cyberpark.

Canada Announces Delisting of Syria and HTS from Terror-Related Sanctions

- ★ Canada has announced policy changes by removing Syria from its list of states supporting terrorism and revoking the terror designation of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS).
- ★ The decision reflects a broader shift in Western engagement with the new political leadership in Damascus following last year's transition of power.
- ★ The announcement follows HTS ousting Bashar al-Assad and taking control of the Syrian Government.
- ★ Canada stated that the action aligns with similar steps taken by the United Kingdom and the United States.
- ★ Syria was initially added to Canada's terrorism-support list in 2012 during the civil conflict triggered by a crackdown on pro-democracy protests.
- ★ HTS, previously sanctioned for its association with Al-Qaeda, had been considered a major extremist threat
- ★ The move supports Syria's transitional authorities as they attempt to distance themselves from prior militant activities and build a more inclusive political structure.

Australia Enforces Global First Ban on Social Media for Under-16 Users

- ★ Australia has begun enforcing a world-first ban preventing children under 16 from using major social media platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube.
- ★ Under the law, 10 major platforms, including TikTok, Meta's Instagram, and Alphabet's YouTube, must bar underage users or face a fine of up to A$49.5 million ($33 million).
- ★ Parents and children will not be punished, but tech companies could face fines up to $32 million for any breach under the new law.
- ★ The Australian internet regulator, eSafety Commissioner, will require all affected platforms to report numbers of under-16 accounts on the days before and after the ban went live.
- ★ Countries including the US, France, Denmark, and Malaysia are observing the rollout and may adopt similar laws in the future.

Pakistan's Ancient Boreendo Added to UNESCO's Urgent Intangible Cultural Heritage List

- ★ Pakistan's Boreendo (also called Bhorindo/Bareendo) was inscribed on United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO's) List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding during the 20th Session of UNESCO's Intergovernmental Committee, held at Red Fort, New Delhi.
- ★ Boreendo is a spherical terracotta vessel-flute from Sindh (Pakistan), believed to be over 5,000 years old, with roots in the Indus Valley Civilization (sites such as Mohenjo-Daro).
- ★ The instrument has cultural parallels in Kutch, Gujarat, highlighting shared Indus Valley heritage across regions.
- ★ It is regarded as the oldest surviving musical instrument of southern Sindh, traditionally used in Sufi devotional gatherings, village ceremonies, and winter festivals.

- ★ The inscription was granted due to the severe risk of extinction, as only two practitioners retain complete knowledge: Ustaad Faqeer Zulfiqar (musician) and Allah Jurio (master potter).
- ★ UNESCO classified Boreendo as an "ancient dying folk musical instrument", including its melodies, knowledge, and craftsmanship skills.

India and France to modernise 1992 Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement

- ★ India and France have agreed to revise the 1992 Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) to modernise the treaty in line with global tax transparency standards.
- ★ Under the revised DTAA, the dividend tax rate on Indian subsidiaries paying dividends to French parent companies will be reduced from 10% to 5% where shareholding exceeds 10%.
- ★ For minority shareholdings below 10%, the dividend tax rate will increase to 15%, ensuring equitable tax treatment.
- ★ In return, India will obtain expanded rights to tax capital gains arising from share sales by French investors, with the earlier 10% shareholding threshold removed.
- ★ The revised agreement also eliminates the "Most Favoured Nation (MFN)" clause for France, addressing long-standing tax disputes and reducing uncertainty following the 2023 Supreme Court ruling.
- ★ The Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) is a bilateral tax treaty applicable when a person resides in one country and earns income in another country.
- ★ The main objective of DTAA is to prevent double taxation, ensuring that the same income is not taxed twice in two different countries.

UNEP Hosts 7th United Nations Environment Assembly in Nairobi

- ★ The 7th United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-7) was held from 08–12 December 2025 at the UNEP Headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya.
- ★ UNEA is the world's highest decision-making body on environmental matters, under the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).
- ★ The theme of UNEA-7 was "Advancing sustainable solutions for a resilient planet".
- ★ UNEA-7 was chaired by Abdullah bin Ali Al-Amri, President of the Environment Authority of Oman.
- ★ Over 6,000 delegates from 186 countries, including governments, international organisations, civil society and the private sector, participated.
- ★ Union Minister of State Kirti Vardhan Singh, MoEFCC, represented India at UNEA-7.
- ★ On 10 December 2025, the 2nd Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEA) Day was observed, focusing on global and regional environmental agreements.
- ★ The 21st Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum (GMGSF) was held prior to UNEA-7 to facilitate stakeholder discussions on key agenda issues.
- ★ GEO-7, compiled by 287 scientists from 82 countries, highlighted severe impacts of climate change, biodiversity loss, land degradation, desertification, and pollution.

- ★ The report estimated global macroeconomic benefits of USD 20 trillion annually by 2070, rising to USD 100 trillion per year thereafter, through systemic transformations.
- ★ Achieving net-zero emissions by 2050 requires annual investments of about USD 8 trillion until 2050, as per GEO-7.

Nepal Lifts Decade-Long Ban on ₹200 and ₹500 Indian Currency Notes

- ★ Nepal has lifted its decade-long ban on carrying high-denomination Indian currency, including ₹200 and ₹500 notes.
- ★ Individuals can now carry Indian currency up to ₹25,000 per person, applicable to both Nepali and Indian citizens.
- ★ The decision was taken in a Nepal Cabinet meeting on December 15, 2025, following amendments by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to the Foreign Exchange Management (Export and Import of Currency) Regulations, 2015.
- ★ Under the revised rules, Indian, Nepali, and Bhutanese nationals can carry higher-denomination Indian notes while travelling to and from India.
- ★ The Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) will issue a formal circular after notification in the Nepal Gazette, legalising these transactions.
- ★ The move is expected to boost Nepal's tourism and hospitality sectors, particularly in border towns that rely heavily on Indian visitors.
- ★ This decision strengthens India-Nepal economic ties and facilitates cross-border trade and travel.

Trump Administration Launches $1 Million "Gold Card" Visa for Expedited U.S. Residency

- ★ The Trump administration officially launched the "Trump Gold Card" visa programme, offering a fast-track pathway for non-U.S. citizens to live and work in the United States.
- ★ Applicants are required to pay an initial USD 15,000 processing fee to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) through the official website Trumpcard.gov.
- ★ After payment, applicants must undergo background vetting and security clearance.
- ★ Upon successful clearance, applicants must make a USD 1 million contribution (gift) to obtain the Trump Gold Card visa.
- ★ The Trump Gold Card functions similarly to a U.S. Green Card, but provides expedited residency benefits.
- ★ President Donald Trump described the Gold Card visa as a "stronger and more powerful" residency pathway compared to the traditional Green Card.
- ★ A corporate version of the Trump Gold Card has also been introduced.
- ★ Under the corporate Gold Card, companies can secure expedited visas for employees by paying USD 2 million per employee.
- ★ The programme is aimed at attracting high-net-worth individuals and corporate investments into the United States.

India and Ethiopia Sign Three MoUs to Strengthen Bilateral Co-operation

★ India and Ethiopia signed three Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Addis Ababa, marking his first-ever official visit to Ethiopia.

★ The visit highlights India's growing diplomatic engagement with Africa, especially the Horn of Africa region.

★ One MoU was signed on co-operation in customs administration, aimed at improving information sharing, preventing customs-related offences, facilitating smoother trade and logistics, and enhancing transparency in cross-border trade, thereby boosting bilateral trade efficiency.

★ The second MoU provides for the establishment of a data centre at the Embassy of Ethiopia, which will strengthen digital infrastructure, improve data security and management, and support e-governance and diplomatic communication, aligning with India's expertise in digital public infrastructure.

★ The third MoU focuses on co-operation in United Nations peacekeeping operations, seeking to enhance coordination and training, share best practices, and strengthen global peace and security, reflecting the shared commitment of both countries to multilateralism.

★ India and Ethiopia share long-standing historical relations, marked by people-to-people contacts, educational exchanges, and development co-operation in areas such as education, health, and capacity building.

★ The strong personal rapport between PM Narendra Modi and PM Abiy Ahmed Ali has provided fresh momentum to bilateral and multilateral co-operation between the two countries.

India and Oman Ink Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement

★ India and Oman signed the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) under the leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi and His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

★ The CEPA marks a major milestone in India's strategic engagement with the Gulf region.

★ The agreement unlocks export opportunities for India's labour-intensive sectuors including textiles, leather, footwear, gems and jewellery, engineering products, plastics, furniture, agricultural products, pharmaceuticals, medical devices, and automobiles.

★ Zero-duty access is granted on 98.08% of Oman's tariff lines, covering 99.38% of India's exports by value.

★ This is the second Free Trade Agreement (FTA) signed by India in the last six months, after the United Kingdom.

★ Oman has offered ambitious services commitments, covering 127 sub-sectors including Computer Related Services, Business Services, Professional Services, Audio-visual Services, R&D, Education, and Health Services.

★ The agreement provides enhanced mobility for Indian professionals, including Intra-Corporate Transferees, Contractual Service Suppliers, Business Visitors, and Independent Professionals.

Armenia Unveils Yerevan Blue Butterfly as Official Logo for COP17 on Biodiversity

★ The Government of Armenia unveiled the Yerevan Blue Butterfly as the official logo for the 17th Conference of the Parties (COP17) to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

- ★ COP17 is scheduled to be held in October 2026 in Yerevan, Armenia.
- ★ Armenia also announced the official COP17 slogan – "Taking Action for Nature".
- ★ The COP17 logo is inspired by the Erivan Anomalous Blue (Polyommatus eriwanensis), a blue butterfly endemic to the Yerevan region.
- ★ The butterfly symbol represents local biodiversity, ecological resilience, and conservation awareness.
- ★ The logo features 23 blended colours, symbolising the 23 targets of the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.
- ★ The Kunming (China)–Montreal (Canada) Global Biodiversity Framework was adopted in 2022.
- ★ The framework aims to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030.
- ★ The COP17 emblem and slogan underline Armenia's focus on shifting from broad commitments to targeted and coordinated global action for biodiversity conservation.

Doha Hosts 11th Conference of States Parties to the UN Convention Against Corruption

- ★ The 11th Conference of the State Parties (COSP-11) to the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) was held from 15–19 December 2025 in Doha, Qatar.
- ★ It is the world's largest global anti-corruption conference, focusing on strengthening international anti-corruption frameworks and reviewing progress on the only legally binding universal anti-corruption instrument.
- ★ The 5-day conference was hosted by the State of Qatar in collaboration with the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).
- ★ The conference was presided over by Hamad bin Nasser Al-Misnad, Chairman of the Administrative Control and Transparency Authority (ACTA) of Qatar.
- ★ A major outcome of COSP-11 was the adoption of the "Doha Declaration 2025", titled "Strengthening international co-operation and technical assistance and seizing the opportunities provided by Artificial Intelligence (AI) systems in preventing and combating corruption".
- ★ The Doha Declaration 2025 urges member states to leverage digital technologies, including Artificial Intelligence (AI), to strengthen cross-border law enforcement co-operation against corruption.
- ★ It emphasizes improving the accuracy, efficiency and objectivity of national corruption risk assessments through digital tools and big data analysis.
- ★ The declaration highlights the role of expert digital networks, especially the UNODC Global Operational Network of Anti-Corruption Law Enforcement Authorities (GlobE Network), for secure and instant information exchange.
- ★ Apart from the Doha Declaration, COSP-11 adopted 11 additional resolutions addressing diverse anti-corruption issues.
- ★ These resolutions focus on enhancing transparency in political party funding, candidates for elected public offices, and electoral campaign financing, as well as the role of corruption in environmental crimes.

★ The 12th session of COSP (COSP-12) will be held in Uzbekistan in 2027.

ROHM Collaborates with Tata Electronics Private Limited

★ Japanese semiconductor leader ROHM Company Limited (ROHM) has partnered with Tata Electronics Private Limited (TEPL) to manufacture semiconductors for domestic and global markets.

★ The collaboration aims to establish a sustainable semiconductor supply chain under the Make in India initiative, targeting automotive, consumer electronics, IoT, AI, defence, and aerospace sectors.

★ Under the Power Semiconductor Framework, the partnership will combine ROHM's advanced device technologies with TEPL's assembly and testing capabilities to build semiconductor manufacturing infrastructure in India.

★ ROHM and TEPL will explore co-development of advanced, high-value packaging technologies and jointly market the semiconductor supply chain.

★ TEPL will assemble and test ROHM's India-designed automotive-grade 100V, 300A Si MOSFET in a TOLL package, with mass production targeted for 2026.

★ The initiative aligns with the Government of India's Make in India vision, promoting domestic manufacturing and technology self-reliance (Aatmanirbhar Bharat).

★ ROHM, established in 1958 in Kyoto, Japan, specializes in semiconductors, integrated circuits (ICs), discrete devices, and electric components, with a global lead in Silicon Carbide (SiC)

★ TEPL, established in 2020, focuses on design, assembly, and testing of semiconductors and electronic components, supporting advanced manufacturing in India through its upcoming facilities in Gujarat (Dholera) and Assam (Jagiroad).

★ The partnership strengthens India's semiconductor ecosystem, fostering technology transfer, skill development, and global competitiveness.

India Set to Take Over Kimberley Process Chairmanship from January 1, 2026

★ India has been selected as Chair of the Kimberley Process (KP) from 1 January 2026, marking the third time the country will hold the chairmanship (previously in 2008 and 2019).

★ India will assume the role of KP Vice Chair from 25 December 2025, prior to taking over the Chair in 2026.

★ The Kimberley Process (KP) is a tripartite international initiative involving governments, the diamond industry, and civil society to prevent trade in conflict diamonds.

★ Conflict diamonds are rough diamonds used by rebel groups to finance conflicts against legitimate governments, as defined by UN Security Council resolutions.

★ The Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS) was established under a UN resolution and came into effect on 1 January 2003.

★ KP currently has 60 participants (representing 85 countries), with the European Union counted as one participant, together accounting for over 99% of global rough diamond trade.

★ India's selection reflects global trust in India's commitment to integrity, transparency, and responsible international trade, as stated by Commerce and Industry Minister Shri Piyush Goyal.

- ★ As a major global hub for diamond manufacturing and trade (Surat alone polishes 90% of the world's diamonds), India's leadership gains importance amid shifting geopolitics and emphasis on sustainable sourcing.
- ★ During its Chairmanship (2026), India will focus on strengthening governance and compliance, digital certification and traceability, data-driven transparency, and consumer trust in conflict-free diamonds.
- ★ As Vice Chair (2025) and Chair (2026), India will work with all KP participants and observers to enhance rule-based compliance, credibility, and effectiveness of the Kimberley Process.

India Announces $450 Million Humanitarian and Reconstruction Package for Sri Lanka

- ★ India has announced a $450 million humanitarian and reconstruction assistance package for Sri Lanka following the large-scale devastation caused by Cyclone Ditwah.
- ★ The assistance was announced during high-level meetings in Colombo, reinforcing India's role as a first responder and trusted neighbour in the Indian Ocean Region.
- ★ The announcement was made during the visit of External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, who travelled to Sri Lanka as a special envoy of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- ★ Sri Lankan leadership described India's support as a strong symbol of deepening India–Sri Lanka relations.
- ★ Cyclone Ditwah caused extensive damage across Sri Lanka, affecting over 600 people, destroying hundreds of buildings, and displacing nearly 2 lakh people.
- ★ The cyclone severely damaged roads, railways, bridges, public utilities, and caused major losses to agriculture, health, and education infrastructure, creating urgent humanitarian needs and long-term reconstruction challenges.
- ★ During his two-day visit, Jaishankar met President Anura Kumara Dissanayake, Prime Minister Harini Amarasuriya, Sri Lanka's Foreign Minister, opposition leaders, and representatives of the Indian-origin Tamil community.
- ★ President Dissanayake termed India's assistance as "a new chapter in Indo–Sri Lanka relations".
- ★ The $450 million relief package includes a $100 million grant and $350 million in concessional credit lines, ensuring both immediate relief and long-term rebuilding.
- ★ The funds will be utilised for restoration of roads, railways and bridges, reconstruction of damaged houses, repair of health and education infrastructure, agricultural support to address food shortages, and strengthening disaster response and preparedness systems.
- ★ The assistance is being provided under Operation Sagar Bandhu, launched by India in response to Cyclone Ditwah.

United States President Donald Trump Unveils Plan for New US Navy 'Battleship'

- ★ United States (US) President Donald Trump announced plans for the US Navy to build a new large warship, described as a "battleship", as part of a proposed "Golden Fleet".
- ★ The proposed battleship is claimed to be larger than the Iowa-class battleships used by the US during World War II.

- ★ The warship is expected to be equipped with hypersonic missiles, rail guns, and high-powered lasers, though several of these advanced weapons systems are still under development.
- ★ The plan aims to revive US shipbuilding capacity, reduce cost overruns and construction delays, and counter China's dominance, which accounts for about 53% of global shipbuilding, compared to roughly 0.1% by the US.
- ★ According to Trump, the US Navy may initially build two ships, with a long-term plan to expand the fleet to up to 25 vessels, although production timelines remain uncertain.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Indian Space Research Organisation to Launch US Communication Satellite

- ★ The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) will launch a US communication satellite in December 2025 using the LVM3 (Launch Vehicle Mark-III) on a commercial basis.
- ★ The mission is a purely commercial launch involving an American satellite, with no bilateral collaboration between the two countries.
- ★ India currently has 57 satellites in orbit, and this number is expected to triple in the next three years to strengthen national services.
- ★ India's space programme, which began in the "cycle era", is projected to be on par with leading spacefaring nations by 2040 in terms of launches, satellites, communication, applications, and capabilities.

Google and Accel Team Up To Launch The 2026 AI Cohort

- ★ Accel and Google have partnered to launch the 2026 AI Cohort under Accel's Atoms programme.
- ★ Both organisations plan to co-invest up to $2 million in early-stage Indian AI startups.
- ★ The partnership is supported through the Google AI Futures Fund, which will also assist diaspora founders building products for India and global markets.
- ★ Selected startups will receive funding, along with access to Google Cloud, Gemini, and DeepMind resources.
- ★ The Atoms programme is now exclusively focused on AI and has already backed 40 startups.
- ★ These supported startups have collectively raised over $300 million in follow-on funding.
- ★ Accel, formerly known as Accel Partners, is a global venture capital firm headquartered in Palo Alto, California, United States.

Russia's Soyuz MS-28 Launches Three-Member Crew to ISS

- ★ The Russian spacecraft 'Soyuz MS-28' was successfully launched carrying 3 crew members — two Russian Roscosmos cosmonauts and one American NASA astronaut — to the International Space Station (ISS) for an 8-month mission.
- ★ The launch marked the final mission of Expedition 73.

- ★ The spacecraft was launched using the Soyuz 2.1a booster rocket from the Russia-leased Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan.
- ★ The booster successfully placed Soyuz MS-28 into its designated orbit.
- ★ After launch, the spacecraft will orbit Earth twice before performing an automated docking with the ISS Rassvet module.
- ★ The crew comprises Sergey Kud-Sverchkov, Sergei Mikaev, and Chris Williams.
- ★ This mission is the 1st spaceflight for Chris Williams and Sergei Mikaev, and the 2nd flight for Sergey Kud-Sverchkov.
- ★ These three members will join Expedition 73, which already includes NASA astronauts Mike Fincke, Zena Cardman, and Jonny Kim.
- ★ The ISS crew also includes JAXA astronaut Kimiya Yui and Roscosmos cosmonauts Sergei Ryzhikov, Alexey Zubritsky, and Oleg Platonov.
- ★ The mission will conduct over 40 scientific experiments and two spacewalks during its 8-month duration.
- ★ NASA astronaut Chris Williams will carry out scientific research and technology demonstrations to support human space exploration and Earth-benefiting applications.

ISRO Chief V. Narayanan Unveils India's First Private Navigation Technology Hub

- ★ Narayanan, Chairman,Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO), inaugurated the Anant Centre of Excellence for Navigation (ACEN), India's first private navigation technology hub, at Kinfra Park, Thiruvananthapuram (Kerala).
- ★ ACEN has been established by Ananth Technologies Limited (ATL), an aerospace and defence company.
- ★ The centre focuses on developing indigenous navigation technologies including Inertial Navigation System (INS), Global Satellite Navigation System (GNSS) receivers, advanced sensors, gyroscopes, accelerometers, and Precision Timing Systems (PTS).
- ★ ACEN aims to integrate Navigation with Indian Constellation (NavIC) with Global Positioning System (GPS) or GNSS, inertial sensors, inertial sensors, AI-based sensor fusion, and vision/radar-based navigation to build multi-modal navigation solutions.
- ★ The technologies developed at ACEN have applications in satellites, launch vehicles, missiles, aircraft, UAVs, ships, submarines, mapping, surveying, disaster management, and civil transportation and logistics.

Nokia Partners with Bharti Airtel to Open Airtel's Network Capabilities to Developers in India

- ★ Nokia Corporation, a telecom firm from Finland, has entered into a strategic partnership with Bharti Airtel Limited to make Airtel's network capabilities accessible to developers and enterprises across India.
- ★ The collaboration will enable Airtel's pan-India network capabilities to be opened for third-party innovation through Nokia's Network as Code platform supported by a developer portal.

- ★ After successful trials, Airtel will roll out its network Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) on a subscription basis via Nokia's Network as Code platform.
- ★ The partnership will give developers, system integrators, and enterprises access to tools needed to build next-generation digital solutions, including 5G, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and advanced computing.
- ★ Network APIs will allow telecom operators to virtualise parts of their network, enabling them to securely share select features and data with developers.
- ★ This API-enabled model will support the creation of customised, high-performance, and advanced digital applications tailored to industry needs.

Department of Biotechnology and BIRAC Renew Partnership with CEPI

- ★ The Department of Biotechnology (DBT) under the Ministry of Science and Technology (MoS&T), along with Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC), has renewed its 'Engagement Strategy' with the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) for co-operation in vaccine and allied technology R&D.
- ★ The renewal agreement was formally signed on 18 September 2025, continuing the partnership established in October 2019 for an initial period of 5 years.
- ★ Since 2019, DBT-BIRAC and CEPI have collaborated to promote vaccines for epidemic-prone diseases such as Chikungunya, Coronavirus, and Monkeypox (M-pox).
- ★ Two Indian facilities — the DBT-BIRAC-THSTI Biosafety Laboratory and Experimental Animal Facility — have been recognised by CEPI and supported vaccine development from pre-clinical to Phase-3 trials.
- ★ Multiple training programmes on vaccine development have been conducted, enhancing India's expertise and capacity in vaccine R&D.
- ★ The expanded engagement strategy now covers pathogens listed on the WHO Blueprint Priority Diseases and includes monoclonal antibodies (mAbs), lab-made proteins that mimic the immune system to target specific cells and antigens.

Ancient Spiral Galaxy 'Alaknanda' Detected by Indian Astronomers

- ★ Indian astronomers from National Centre for Radio Astrophysics -Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (NCRA-TIFR), Pune, Maharashtra discovered a massive ancient spiral galaxy named Alaknanda, located 12 billion light-years away, using James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) data.
- ★ The discovery was made by Rashi Jain and Professor Yogesh Wadadekar and was published in the journal Astronomy and Astrophysics.
- ★ The galaxy was named Alaknanda after the Alaknanda River, symbolically paired with the Mandakini River, the Hindi name for the Milky Way.
- ★ JWST deep-field observations revealed Alaknanda located behind Abell 2744 (Pandora's Cluster), where gravitational lensing amplified its light and enabled high-resolution imaging.
- ★ Alaknanda is a 30,000-light-year-wide grand-design spiral galaxy featuring a central bulge, a rotating disk, symmetric spiral arms, and star-forming clusters arranged in a beads-on-a-string pattern.

- ★ The galaxy contains around 10 billion solar masses of stars and shows a star-formation rate 20–30 times higher than that of the Milky Way.
- ★ The extremely high star-formation rate indicates rapid assembly within a few hundred million years after the early universe formed.
- ★ Alaknanda is observed as it existed 12 billion years ago, making it a fully developed spiral galaxy in the early universe.
- ★ The galaxy's mature structure challenges existing models that predicted early galaxies to be chaotic, irregular, and slow-forming, thus providing new insights into galaxy evolution.

IIT-Bombay's SINE Unveils India's First Deep-Tech VC Fund Backed by an Incubator

- ★ The Society for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (SINE) at Indian Institute of Technology-Bombay (IIT-B), Mumbai, Maharashtra launched 'Y-Point Venture Capital (VC) Fund', India's 1st deep-tech VC fund managed by an academia-linked incubator, with a total investment of ₹250 crore.
- ★ The fund aims to support deep-tech startups in India by providing early-stage risk capital.
- ★ The Y-Point VC Fund is SEBI-approved and registered as a Category-II Alternative Investment Fund (AIF).
- ★ The fund will invest in 25–30 pre-seed and seed-stage startups from IIT-B and other top research institutes, with a maximum ticket size of ₹15 crore.
- ★ Priority investment areas include Artificial Intelligence (AI), advanced computing, nuclear technology, life sciences, healthcare, defence, climate tech, and space technology.

NASA Loses Contact With Decade-Old MAVEN Spacecraft Orbiting Mars

- ★ The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has lost contact with the Mars Atmosphere and Volatile Evolution (MAVEN) spacecraft, which has been orbiting Mars for over a decade.
- ★ The communication blackout occurred after MAVEN passed behind Mars, a routine orbital phase during which contact is temporarily unavailable.
- ★ While MAVEN was functioning normally before the blackout, it failed to re-establish communication after re-emerging from behind the planet.
- ★ NASA engineers are conducting detailed investigations to determine whether the issue involves onboard systems, power supply, or external factors.
- ★ MAVEN was launched in 2013 and entered Mars orbit in 2014 to study the upper atmosphere of Mars and its interaction with the solar wind.
- ★ The mission provided crucial evidence explaining how Mars lost most of its atmosphere over billions of years.
- ★ MAVEN's findings showed that intense solar activity stripped atmospheric gases, transforming Mars from a warm, wet planet into a cold and arid world.

Google Launches Disco, an Experimental AI-driven Browser

★ Google Disco is an experimental AI-powered web browser launched through Google Labs, described by Google as a new "discovery vehicle" for web exploration.

★ Disco is built on Chromium, similar to Google Chrome, but with deeply integrated AI tools embedded into the browsing experience.

★ The core feature of Google Disco is GenTabs, which is powered by Google's Gemini 3 model.

★ GenTabs analyses the browsing context, including open tabs, search activity, and user prompts, to deliver AI-assisted discovery and navigation.

★ Opera has opened public access to its AI-powered browser Opera Neon, removing the earlier waitlist system.

★ Opera Neon targets users interested in early experimentation with advanced AI technologies, offering weekly feature updates.

★ Opera Neon is an agentic AI browser, where AI agents automate tasks, execute workflows, and create or modify web applications.

★ The browser integrates multiple AI models within a single workspace, including Gemini 3 Pro, GPT-5.1, Veo 3.1, and Nano Banana Pro.

★ Opera Neon uses an LLM-agnostic engine, allowing it to seamlessly switch between different large language models (LLMs).

India Launches DHRUV64

★ India achieved a major milestone in technological self-reliance with the launch of DHRUV64, the country's first fully indigenous 1.0 GHz, 64-bit dual-core microprocessor.

★ The processor has been designed and developed by the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC) under the Microprocessor Development Programme (MDP), with support from the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY).

★ DHRUV64 strengthens India's domestic semiconductor design ecosystem and enhances indigenous capability in advanced computing hardware.

★ DHRUV64 is a high-performance, homegrown microprocessor operating at 1.0 GHz with a 64-bit dual-core architecture, enabling improved multitasking, higher efficiency, and better reliability.

★ Its 64-bit architecture allows handling of large data sets and complex computing tasks, making it suitable for next-generation digital systems.

★ The processor supports seamless integration with external hardware, offering flexibility for diverse real-world applications.

★ The processor is designed for both strategic and commercial applications, including 5G infrastructure, automotive systems, industrial automation, consumer electronics, and the Internet of Things (IoT).

★ Its secure and stable performance makes it valuable for applications requiring long-term reliability and mission-critical operation.

★ The launch of DHRUV64 aligns with national initiatives such as the India Semiconductor Mission, reinforcing India's vision of becoming a technology creator rather than just an assembly hub.

Apple Launches Open-Source AI Model SHARP

★ Apple has released a new open-source AI model called SHARP, which can convert a single 2D photograph into a photorealistic 3D scene.

★ The model is detailed in the research paper titled "Sharp Monocular View Synthesis in Less Than a Second" and is publicly available on GitHub.

★ SHARP reconstructs a realistic 3D representation of a scene from just one image, allowing the scene to be viewed from slightly different angles while maintaining scale and depth consistency.

★ The model works by creating a lightweight 3D representation, which can be rendered in real-time from nearby viewpoints without generating a new image each time.

★ SHARP uses a 3D Gaussian representation, where millions of tiny points of colour and light combine to form a smooth and realistic 3D scene.

★ This approach produces smooth parallax effects, similar to natural head movement when viewing a real object.

★ Unlike earlier methods requiring multiple photos and slow per-scene optimisation, SHARP predicts the entire 3D structure from a single image in less than a second on a standard GPU.

★ The model complements Apple's Spatial photos and depth effect features available on newer iPhone models like the iPhone 15 Pro and later.

Indian Army Partners with Netaji Subhas University of Technology

★ The Indian Army signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Netaji Subhas University of Technology (NSUT) to collaborate on software and AI-based defence solutions.

★ Under the MoU, NSUT students and faculty will participate in live problem-solving projects of the Indian Army, gaining hands-on experience in real operational challenges.

★ NSUT will support capacity building through Faculty Development Programmes (FDPs) and customised training programmes for Army personnel, strengthening indigenous innovation-driven defence preparedness.

★ The collaboration aims to enhance technology integration, AI applications, and self-reliance in defence in line with Aatmanirbhar Bharat.

★ Meanwhile, the Indian Army is set to procure around 850 kamikaze drones (loitering munitions) under fast-track acquisition procedures from indigenous sources.

★ The proposal for 850 loitering munitions with launchers is at an advanced stage and is expected to be cleared by the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC).

★ The Indian Army plans to induct around 30,000 loitering munitions in the near future to equip all fighting forces.

★ Each Army infantry battalion will have one Ashni platoon, responsible for operating drones for enemy targeting and counter-insurgency operations.

Russia Plans Lunar Nuclear Power Plant Deployment by 2036

★ Roscosmos plans to construct a power plant on the Moon by 2036 to support its lunar exploration programme and the Russia–China International Lunar Research Station (ILRS).

★ The proposed lunar power facility is widely believed to be nuclear, with key involvement from Rosatom (state nuclear energy corp) and the Kurchatov Institute, highlighting advanced energy solutions for space missions.

★ Roscosmos has signed a contract with the Lavochkin Association (a major aerospace company) in December 2025 to undertake the development and implementation of the lunar power plant project.

★ The lunar power plant will provide energy support to rovers, scientific observatories, and permanent infrastructure, enabling long-term human and robotic presence on the Moon.

★ The Moon, located about 384,400 km from Earth, plays a vital role in stabilising Earth's axial wobble, ensuring a stable climate, and is also responsible for ocean tides.

IIT Patna Launches PARAM Rudra Supercomputer

★ PARAM Rudra supercomputer was launched at Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Patna, Bihar, marking the first PARAM Rudra system in Bihar under the National Supercomputing Mission (NSM).

★ The launch was presided over by Amitesh Kumar Sinha, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY).

★ A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for setting up PARAM Rudra was signed in May 2023 between IIT Patna and Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC) under MeitY.

★ The supercomputer delivers 838 teraflops performance and is built using indigenously developed Rudra servers and software, supporting Atmanirbhar Bharat in High-Performance Computing (HPC).

★ PARAM Rudra at IIT Patna will support advanced research for around 60 faculty members and 400 students across 10 departments.

★ PARAM (PARAllel Machine) signifies "supreme" in Sanskrit, while Rudra refers to the Vedic name of Lord Shiva, symbolising power and strength.

★ The system uses Intel Xeon Central Processing Unit (CPUs) and NVIDIA A100 Graphics Processing Unit (GPUs), enabling high-end Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning (ML), and simulation workloads.

★ It is equipped with large RAM, parallel Lustre storage, and high-speed InfiniBand interconnects, providing petaflop-scale computing capability (1015 Floating Point Operations Per Second, FLOPS).

Sharadchandra Pawar CoE in Artificial Intelligence Inaugurated in Baramati

★ Industrialist Gautam Adani inaugurated the Sharadchandra Pawar Centre of Excellence in Artificial Intelligence in Baramati, Maharashtra.

★ The centre has been established under Vidya Pratishthan, a reputed educational institution governed by the Pawar family, and is fully funded by the Adani Group Chairman.

- ★ The initiative aims to strengthen India's artificial intelligence ecosystem and higher education infrastructure through industry–academia collaboration.
- ★ The centre is located in Baramati, around 110 kilometres from Pune, and is envisioned as a hub for advanced learning, research, and innovation in emerging digital technologies.
- ★ The inauguration ceremony was attended by several prominent leaders, including Sharad Pawar, Supriya Sule (Member of Parliament from Baramati), Ajit Pawar, Sunetra Pawar, Rohit Pawar, and Yugendra Pawar, Treasurer of Vidya Pratishthan.
- ★ The centre reflects the growing role of corporate participation in educational development, supporting skill development aligned with Industry 4.0, enhancing student employability, and promoting research, innovation, and entrepreneurship.

BANKING & FINANCE

Nepal Releases New ₹100 Note

- ★ Nepal issued new ₹100 currency notes featuring a revised map that includes Kalapani, Lipulekh, and Limpiyadhura, territories India claims as its own.
- ★ The new note was released by the Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) and bears the signature of former Governor Maha Prasad Adhikari with the issue date 2081 BS (2024).
- ★ The map was already present on the old ₹100 note and has now been revised as per the government's decision.
- ★ Among denominations like ₹10, ₹50, ₹500, and ₹1,000, only the ₹100 note carries Nepal's map.
- ★ Nepal's move traces back to May 2020, when the K.P. Sharma Oli Government unveiled a new political map showing the disputed regions as Nepal's territory, later endorsed by Parliament.
- ★ India rejected Nepal's claim, calling it a "unilateral act", an "artificial enlargement", and "untenable", maintaining that Kalapani, Lipulekh, and Limpiyadhura are Indian territories.
- ★ In 2024, when Nepal announced printing the revised ₹100 note, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar announced that the act would not change the reality on the ground and reiterated India–Nepal boundary talks continue through an established mechanism.
- ★ Design features of the new note include Everest on the left, a Rhododendron watermark, a faint green Nepal map, the Ashoka Pillar with "Lumbini – birthplace of Lord Buddha", and on the reverse, a horned rhino, along with a security thread and embossed black dot for the visually impaired.
- ★ Nepal shares an 1850 km border with Indian states: Sikkim, West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Uttarakhand.

NPCI BHIM App Introduces Full Delegation Feature Under UPI Circle

- ★ Bharat Interface for Money (BHIM), developed by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), launched a new Full Delegation feature under the UPI Circle to attract new users.

- ★ The feature allows a primary account holder to authorize up to five trusted individuals (family, dependents, staff) to make UPI payments directly from the primary user's bank account.
- ★ It includes Primary Users (account holders) and Secondary Users (trusted individuals) designated by the primary user.
- ★ Secondary Users must have a BHIM UPI ID/VPA, even if they do not have a bank account.
- ★ The primary user can set a monthly spending limit of ₹15,000 and may also define a per-transaction limit.
- ★ Delegated users can make payments without using the primary user's UPI PIN, while all transactions remain visible to the primary user.
- ★ The delegation period can be set between 1 month to 5 years by the primary user.
- ★ A primary user can link up to five secondary users, but each secondary user can be linked to only one primary account.
- ★ UPI Circle, launched in 2024, supports partial delegation (needs primary user approval) and full delegation (no approval needed).
- ★ UPI has 450 million registered users and is operated by NPCI.
- ★ NPCI BHIM Services Ltd. (NBSL) was incorporated in 2024 as a wholly owned subsidiary of NPCI.

RBI Grants Certificate of Authorisation to Paytm Payments Services Limited to Operate as a PA

- ★ Paytm Payments Services Limited (PPSL), a subsidiary of One97 Communications, received the Certificate of Authorisation (COA) from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to operate as a Payment Aggregator (PA) under the Payment and Settlement Systems Act (PSSA), 2007.
- ★ Certificate of Authorisation (COA) is a standard regulatory approval granted to most major fintech companies for operating as PAs.
- ★ The RBI had imposed restrictions in November 2022 on PPSL due to FDI compliance issues. PPSL later fulfilled the requirements and received in-principle approval in August 2025, leading to the final licence.
- ★ The RBI has lifted the restrictions imposed on November 25, 2022, enabling PPSL to onboard new merchants
- ★ With the COA, PPSL can now onboard new merchants, process digital payments, and expand its payment ecosystem.
- ★ Payment Aggregator (PA): A fintech service that allows merchants to accept digital payments without creating their own payment gateway or direct bank integration.

World Bank Sanctions USD 776 Million for Education Reform in Punjab and Climate-Resilient Agriculture in Maharashtra

- ★ The World Bank approved USD 776 million (around ₹6,467 crore) for two India projects — one to improve education in Punjab and another to support climate-resilient agriculture in Maharashtra.

- ★ The Punjab project, POISE (Punjab Outcomes-Acceleration in School Education Operation), received a USD 286 million loan with 19-year maturity and a 5-year grace period.
- ★ The POISE project aims to improve school education quality through technology-enabled monitoring, learning-outcome tracking, and strengthening SCERT and Assessment Cell
- ★ The project will build digital infrastructure, provide teacher training, and supply educational resources through state-level systems.
- ★ The Punjab initiative will benefit 59 lakh early-childhood students, 13 lakh primary students, and 22 lakh secondary students.
- ★ The Maharashtra project, POCRA Phase II (Maharashtra Project on Climate Resilient Agriculture), received USD 490 million with a 24-year maturity and 6-year grace period.
- ★ POCRA Phase II aims to enhance agricultural productivity and climate resilience using precision-farming technologies, AI, remote sensing, and improved soil, nutrient, and water management.
- ★ The Maharashtra project targets a 30% income increase for smallholder farmers and will benefit 20 lakh small and marginal farmers in 21 districts, including 2.9 lakh women farmers.
- ★ POCRA (Nanaji Deshmukh Krishi Sanjivani) was originally launched in 2018–2024 as a ₹4,000 crore joint initiative of Maharashtra Government and World Bank, with Phase I covering 5,220 villages across 16 districts.

Punjab National Bank Unveils Digital Solution for PM SVANidhi Scheme

- ★ Punjab National Bank (PNB) launched a digital solution for the PM Street Vendor's AtmaNirbhar NIDHI (PM SVANidhi) scheme, along with several other new products.
- ★ PM SVANidhi, implemented by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, provides affordable working capital loans to street vendors affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ★ PNB also introduced end-to-end digitisation of its staff accountability portal and rolled out a conduct risk framework for employees.
- ★ The new products were launched by Central Vigilance Commissioner Praveen Kumar Srivastava, in the presence of PNB MD and CEO Ashok Chandra, ED Bibhu Prasad Mahapatra, and CVO Raghvendra Kumar.

State Bank of India Partnered with SBI Payments

- ★ State Bank of India (SBI) and its subsidiary SBI Payments Services plan to complete the modernisation of their core banking infrastructure within two years.
- ★ SBI is upgrading hardware, shifting from Unix to Linux, externalising functions such as vendor and government payments, and adopting microservices for processes like inquiries and accounting.
- ★ The bank is developing its own private cloud infrastructure to improve scalability, regulatory compliance, and data security.
- ★ To foster innovation, SBI has set up a sandbox and innovation hub, providing access to nearly 300 APIs for fintechs to test and integrate their solutions with SBI's systems.

Reserve Bank of India Fines HDFC Bank ₹91 Lakh

★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) imposed a penalty of ₹91 lakh on HDFC Bank for violating the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 and RBI directions related to interest rates on advances, outsourcing of financial services, and KYC norms.

★ The penalty was due to use of multiple benchmarks for the same loan category, subsidiary conducting non-permitted business, and outsourcing KYC compliance to external agents.

★ The action was taken based on findings of the Statutory Inspection for Supervisory Evaluation (ISE) for the bank's position as on 31 March 2024.

Utkarsh Small Finance Bank and Axis Securities Launch Integrated 3-in-1 Banking and Investment Account

★ Utkarsh Small Finance Bank Limited (Utkarsh SFBL) partnered with Axis Securities to launch a unified 3-in-1 account combining banking and investment services.

★ The 3-in-1 account links a Utkarsh SFBL savings account with Axis Securities' demat and trading account.

★ The partnership aims to enhance financial inclusion by making investing simpler, intuitive, and more accessible for customers.

★ Customers get multi-channel access through branches, Internet Banking, Mobile Banking, and assisted services.

★ Axis Securities will provide technology-driven trading platforms, research insights, and flexible brokerage plans to support investors.

★ The initiative helps both new and experienced investors with easy access to equity, derivatives, and other investment products.

RBI Fines Mannakrishna Investments ₹3.10 Lakh for Regulatory Non-Compliance

★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) imposed a monetary penalty of ₹3.10 lakh on Mannakrishna Investments Private Limited for non-compliance with regulatory directions.

★ The penalty relates to violations of the 'Master Direction – RBI (NBFC – Scale Based Regulation) Directions, 2023', specifically concerning Governance Issues.

★ The action was taken under Section 58G(1)(b) read with Section 58B(5)(aa) of the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934.

★ The penalty followed an RBI inspection conducted based on the company's financial position as of March 31, 2024.

★ After inspection, RBI issued a show-cause notice for non-compliance with directions.

★ The company failed to obtain prior written permission from RBI before appointing a Director, leading to a management change exceeding 30% (Excluding Independent Directors).

TATA Realty Gets ₹1,280 Crore Green Loan from DBS Bank

- ★ Tata Realty and Infrastructure Limited (TRIL), a wholly-owned Tata Sons subsidiary, signed a ₹1,280 crore green loan facility with DBS Bank India to fund Intellion Park, a 2.1 million sq ft Grade-A sustainable office campus in Gurugram.
- ★ DBS Bank India acted as the sole advisor and green loan coordinator, ensuring funds are used only for certified green assets meeting global ESG benchmarks.
- ★ The green loan was availed through an SPV (Special Purpose Vehicle) of Tata Realty, marking a major push for sustainable real-estate financing in India.
- ★ Intellion Park Gurugram spans 2.1 million sq ft across 4 towers under Tata Realty's Intellion brand, offering premium office spaces for Global Capability Centres (GCCs).
- ★ The project incorporates high-performance green building features such as rooftop solar, advanced water recycling, biophilic design, pedestrian-friendly podiums, EV charging stations, and integrated waste management.
- ★ The campus is aligned with global sustainability certifications including LEED and IGBC, forming part of Tata Realty's 100% green-certified portfolio.
- ★ Located in Gurugram's prime commercial corridor, the project supports India's rapidly growing GCC ecosystem, projected to create 1 million+ jobs.
- ★ Tata Realty has achieved a 5-star GRESB 2025 rating (Global Real Estate Sustainability Benchmark), representing the highest global sustainability recognition.
- ★ A major precedent is Intellion Park Chennai, recognised as India's first IFC EDGE Zero Carbon campus.

NPCI Bharat BillPay Limited Launches "Banking Connect"

- ★ NBBL (NPCI Bharat BillPay Limited), a subsidiary ofNational Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), launched "Banking Connect", an interoperable net banking platform to simplify online merchant payments by removing multiple integrations, enabling biometric authentication, and offering real-time RBI oversight of fund flows.
- ★ The platform was launched at the Global Fintech Festival 2025 in the presence of the RBI Governor.
- ★ A single NBBL-certified integration connects banks to all Payment Aggregators (PAs), supporting major banks like HDFC, ICICI, SBI, YES Bank, AU SFB, Federal Bank, and PAs like PayU, PineLabs, Razorpay, Juspay, Zoho.
- ★ Provides a frictionless experience with no username/password, supports biometric/QR payments, features mobile-first design, uniform UI, and low-code/no-code merchant onboarding within 10–15 days.
- ★ Ensures enhanced security via real-time fraud monitoring, standardised error codes, and policy-based controls, reducing redirect and timeout drop-offs.
- ★ Enables same-day settlement with 8 cycles/day (earlier monthly) and offers instant transaction visibility to RBI, beneficial for crypto and online gaming oversight.
- ★ Supports no transaction caps, handles high-value merchant payments, and promotes mobile banking adoption.

ADB Sanctions USD 475.8 Million for Assam and Meghalaya

- ★ The Asian Development Bank (ADB) approved a USD 475.8 million loan package for Northeast India to strengthen healthcare, ecotourism, and sustainable livelihoods.
- ★ Of this, USD 398.8 million was allocated for Assam's tertiary healthcare and medical education modernisation.
- ★ Another USD 77 million was sanctioned for Meghalaya's ecotourism and sustainable livelihood development.
- ★ The initiatives aim to create sustainable livelihoods, empower women, and enhance environmental resilience and regional economic growth.
- ★ In Assam, the project will upgrade Gauhati Medical College & Hospital (GMCH) into a super-speciality hub, with additional upgrades to Assam Medical College (Dibrugarh) and Silchar Medical College.
- ★ Assam's project includes climate-resilient infrastructure, digital hospital systems, smart classrooms, simulation training labs, and a gender-responsive one-stop crisis centre at GMCH.
- ★ The healthcare project addresses inadequate tertiary facilities and human resource shortages despite earlier Vision 2030 measures.
- ★ In Meghalaya, the ADB loan supports integrated ecotourism and sustainable agri-livelihoods, aligned with Meghalaya Vision 2032.
- ★ The project involves restoration of 25,000 hectares of community forests using performance-based payments.
- ★ It includes development of eco-tourism facilities such as visitor centres and craft hubs and promotes climate-smart agriculture like drip irrigation and fallow-land restoration.
- ★ The initiative benefits 8,000+ people, including women and Indigenous communities, by strengthening co-operatives, PPP models, and a livelihood innovation fund.
- ★ An additional USD 1 million Technical Assistance (TA) grant will support capacity building and development of carbon and biodiversity credit systems.

India Partnered with ADB Ink Over USD 800 Million in Loan Agreements

- ★ The Government of India and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) signed three loan agreements worth over USD 800 million for major projects in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, and Gujarat.
- ★ A USD 500 million loan was signed for the Maharashtra Power Distribution Enhancement Programme for Agricultural Solarization to modernise rural power infrastructure and supply daytime solar electricity to farmers.
- ★ The Maharashtra programme aims to provide daytime electricity to at least 9 lakh agricultural consumers by 2028 and includes renewable integration, substation upgrades, HT/LT line construction, and 500 MWh battery storage
- ★ A Japanese Yen-denominated loan (¥27,147,200,000 ≈ USD 190.6 million) was signed for the Indore Metro Rail Project, supporting 8.62 km underground metro line with 7 stations, improving connectivity to Indore Airport.
- ★ Madhya Pradesh Metro Rail Corporation Limited (MPMRCL) will implement the Indore Metro project, expected to start operations by January 2030.

- ★ A USD 109.97 million loan was signed for the Gujarat Skills Development Programme to upgrade 11 mega ITIs, establish centres of excellence, and train youth in high-growth sectors such as IT, logistics, automotive, renewable energy, healthcare, and agri-tech.
- ★ The Gujarat programme is led by the Labour, Skill Development & Employment Department in partnership with Kaushalya: The Skill University (KSU), using a hub-and-spoke model with private training providers.
- ★ A Technical Assistance (TA) grant of USD 1 million was signed for the SWIFT Project (Sustainable Wetland and Integrated Fisheries Transformation) in Assam, aimed at improving wetland ecosystems and fisheries development.
- ★ Loan signing was led by the Joint Secretary (ADB & Japan), Department of Economic Affairs, with agreements signed by Saurabh Singh (DEA) and Mio Oka (ADB Country Director).

State Bank of India and Bank of India Sign Memorandum of Understanding

- ★ State Bank of India (SBI) and Bank of India (BOI) signed an Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to jointly establish a Centre of Excellence (CoE) in Strategic Partnership.
- ★ The initiative aims to bolster leadership and expertise in project financing across India.
- ★ The collaboration seeks to foster innovation and strengthen co-operation within the banking sector.
- ★ The MoU enables Co-financing Opportunities, allowing both PSBs (Public Sector Banks) to jointly finance large-scale infrastructure and industrial projects by leveraging their combined strengths.
- ★ The partnership enhances Co-branded Visibility for SBI and BOI in the corporate and project financing domain.
- ★ The MoU emphasizes Capacity Building, focusing on training, skill development, and leadership programs for employees of both banks.

Reserve Bank of India Approves Razorpay as Cross-Border PA

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has approved Razorpay to operate as a Payment Aggregator – Cross Border Inward & Outward (PA-CB-I&O) under the Payment and Settlement Systems (PSS) Act, 2007.
- ★ The PA-CB licence mandates strict compliance with KYC (Know Your Customer), AML (Anti-Money Laundering), secure payment flows, export documentation, and settlement timelines.
- ★ With this approval, Razorpay can now process international payments, enabling Indian businesses to receive payments from global customers and allowing foreign companies to pay or operate in India through Razorpay.
- ★ Razorpay, founded in 2014 by Harshil Mathur and Shashank Kumar, offers digital financial solutions including Payment Gateway, RazorpayX (neo-banking), Razorpay Capital, Subscriptions and Recurring Payments, Smart Collect, Payment Links, and Payment Pages.

RBI Reaffirms SBI, HDFC Bank and ICICI Bank as Domestic Systemically Important Banks

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced that State Bank of India (SBI), HDFC Bank, and ICICI Bank will continue as Domestic Systemically Important Banks (D-SIBs) for 2025, retaining the same bucketing structure as in 2024.
- ★ SBI must maintain an additional Common Equity Tier-1 (CET-1) capital buffer of 0.80% of its Risk-Weighted Assets (RWAs), while HDFC Bank and ICICI Bank must maintain 0.40% and 0.20% CET-1 buffers, respectively.
- ★ The 2025 D-SIB list is based on data as of 31 March 2025.
- ★ The RBI's D-SIB Framework, first issued in July 2014 and updated in December 2023, mandates annual disclosure of D-SIB banks and their classification into systemic importance buckets.
- ★ D-SIBs carry an additional CET-1 surcharge over Basel-III requirements, depending on their assigned bucket.
- ★ Banks designated as D-SIBs are considered "Too Big to Fail (TBTF)", assessed based on size, complexity, substitutability (including value and volume of rupee payments), and interconnectedness with the financial system.
- ★ SBI became India's first D-SIB in 2015, followed by ICICI Bank in 2016 and HDFC Bank in 2017.
- ★ Banks are selected as D-SIBs if their size exceeds 2% of India's GDP, after which they are evaluated on Size, Interconnectedness, Lack of substitutes, and Complexity.
- ★ Foreign banks with Indian branches are categorised as Global Systemically Important Banks (G-SIBs) and must maintain additional CET-1 capital surcharge in India proportional to their RWAs.

Life Insurance Corporation of India Introduces New Insurance Plans

- ★ The Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), India's largest insurance company, launched two new insurance products: Protection Plus (Plan 886) and Bima Kavach (Plan 887) to enhance financial security and provide flexible savings or pure-risk cover options.
- ★ Protection Plus (Plan 886) is a Non-Participating, Linked, Life, Individual Savings Plan that combines life insurance protection with savings opportunities.
- ★ The entry age for Protection Plus is 18–65 years, with policy terms of 10, 15, 20, and 25 years, and premium paying terms (PPT) of 5, 7, 10, or 15 years.
- ★ Policyholders can choose the investment fund type, adjust the sum assured, make top-up premium payments, and partial withdrawals after five years.
- ★ Premiums are flexible, payable regularly or for a limited period, with minimum limits based on PPT and mode of payment and no maximum limit.
- ★ The maximum age at maturity can reach up to 90 years for a 25-year policy term, providing long-term savings and insurance coverage.
- ★ Bima Kavach (Plan 887) is a Non-Participating, Non-Linked, Life, Individual Pure Risk Plan offering financial protection to the family in case of the insured's unfortunate death during the policy term.
- ★ The entry age for Bima Kavach is 18–65 years, with applicants aged 60 years and above considered case by case under underwriting and reinsurance approval.

- ★ The maturity age ranges from 28–100 years, and the policy term can extend up to 82 years with cover ceasing at 100 years.
- ★ Death benefits can be Level Sum Assured or Increasing Sum Assured, with the option to receive benefits in installments.
- ★ Premium payment options include single premium, limited premium (5, 10, or 15 years), or regular premium.
- ★ The minimum basic sum assured is ₹2 crore, with no upper limit subject to underwriting norms, and women and non-smokers receive special premium rates.
- ★ Life cover can be enhanced at predefined life-stage events, such as marriage or childbirth, under Level Sum Assured with regular premium.

NPCI International Partners with ACLEDA Bank

- ★ NPCI International Payments Limited (NIPL), the international arm of the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), partnered with ACLEDA Bank Plc, the first publicly listed commercial bank in Cambodia, to enable cross-border QR-based payments.
- ★ ACLEDA Bank, nominated by the National Bank of Cambodia as the operator of the Bakong (KHQR) national QR network, will help establish seamless QR-based payments between India and Cambodia.
- ★ Indian tourists can make payments at over 4.5 million KHQR merchant points in Cambodia using UPI apps, while Cambodian tourists can scan over 709 million UPI QRs in India using Cambodian apps.
- ★ The partnership enables the acceptance of Cambodia's KHQR network in India and interoperability between UPI and KHQR, facilitating secure, frictionless cross-border payments.
- ★ The collaboration provides benefits for travellers, allowing payments across tourist attractions, restaurants, and retail outlets, enhancing convenience and financial inclusion in both countries.
- ★ India's recent global payment linkages include the interlinking of UPI with TARGET Instant Payment Settlement (TIPS) operated by the Eurosystem, with collaboration between RBI, NIPL, and the European Central Bank.
- ★ UPI acceptance internationally is already enabled in Singapore, Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, UAE, Mauritius, Qatar, and France, covering over two million international merchants.
- ★ NIPL is supporting countries such as Namibia, Trinidad and Tobago, and Peru to develop UPI-like payment systems.

Securities Exchange Board of India Launches SWAGAT-FI

- ★ The Securities Exchange Board of India (SEBI) issued the SEBI (Foreign Venture Capital Investors (FVCI)) (Amendment) Regulations, 2025 to allow low-risk foreign investors to participate in the Indian securities market through single window access.
- ★ SEBI introduced SWAGAT-FI (Single Window Automatic & Generalised Access for Trusted Foreign Investors) with objectives to provide easier investment access to verified low-risk foreign investors, enable a unified registration process, and reduce repeated compliance and documentation.

- ★ The SWAGAT-FI framework applies to sovereign wealth funds, central banks, multilateral bodies, government-owned funds, regulated public retail funds, insurance companies, and pension funds.
- ★ Under SWAGAT-FI, entities can register simultaneously as Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) and FVCIs without additional documentation, enabling investment in listed equities and debt as FPIs and unlisted companies, specified sectors, and startups as FVCIs.
- ★ The amendments to the FPI and FVCI regulations will be effective from 01 June 2026.
- ★ SEBI has extended the registration continuance period, including fee payment and KYC review, to 10 years, up from the earlier 3–5 years, promoting long-term investor participation.
- ★ FPIs operating from International Financial Service Centres (IFSCs) can now include retail schemes with a resident Indian sponsor or manager, aligning them with Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs).
- ★ SEBI addressed inconsistencies between SEBI and IFSCA (International Financial Services Centres Authority) by capping sponsor contributions at 10% of a fund's corpus or assets under management.

SEBI Grants In-Principle Nod to NHAI's Raajmarg Infra Investment Trust as an InvIT

- ★ The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has granted in-principle approval for registering Raajmarg Infra Investment Trust (RIIT) as an Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvIT) under SEBI InvIT Regulations, 2014.
- ★ The approval strengthens NHAI's asset monetization program by enabling monetization of National Highway assets.
- ★ RIIT aims to create a high-quality, long-term investment instrument targeted at retail and domestic investors.
- ★ For final registration, RIIT must fulfill conditions within six months, including appointment of directors, submission of financial statements, and compliance with regulatory requirements.
- ★ Raajmarg Infra Investment Managers Pvt. Ltd. (RIIMPL) was incorporated in Nov 2025 as the Investment Manager for RIIT.
- ★ RIIMPL is a collaborative venture with equity participation from major financial institutions such as SBI, PNB, NaBFID, Axis Bank, Bajaj Finserv Ventures, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, IDBI Bank, IndusInd Bank, and Yes Bank.
- ★ NHAI has earlier monetized assets worth ₹48,995 crore via the Toll-Operate-Transfer (TOT) model.
- ★ NHAI has also raised ₹43,638 crore through four rounds of Private InvITs, attracting both domestic and global investors.
- ★ The Public InvIT framework ensures transparency, investor protection, strong reporting, and strict compliance standards.
- ★ The initiative will boost public participation in developing world-class National Highway infrastructure.

NPCI's Global Arm NIPL Signs Pact with ACLEDA Bank

- ★ NPCI International Payments Limited (NIPL), the global arm of NPCI, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with ACLEDA Bank Plc., the first publicly listed commercial bank in Cambodia, to enable QR-based cross-border transactions between India and Cambodia.
- ★ The partnership advances regional payment interoperability, supporting the ASEAN vision of inclusive digital economies and promoting innovation in digital payments.
- ★ In March 2023, the National Bank of Cambodia (NBC) signed an MoU with NIPL to enable cross-border payments between the two countries.
- ★ In May 2023, NBC selected ACLEDA Bank as the sponsoring bank to collaborate with NIPL in developing QR payment systems.
- ★ NIPL has expanded the global footprint of UPI through partnerships with BENEFIT (Bahrain), PayPal (Global), Razorpay Curlec (Malaysia), NTT (Japan), and Magnati (UAE).
- ★ The Service Agreement establishes the technical and operational framework to integrate NPCI's UPI network with ACLEDA Bank's KHQR ecosystem.
- ★ Under the MoU, ACLEDA Bank will operate Cambodia's national QR network — Bakong (KHQR) — on behalf of the National Bank of Cambodia.
- ★ The collaboration aims to enable UPI acceptance in Cambodia and KHQR acceptance in India, enhancing bilateral digital payment connectivity.
- ★ QR-based cross-border payments between India and Cambodia are expected to launch in Semester 2 of 2026.
- ★ The MoU will ensure seamless QR-code-based transactions for Indian and Cambodian travellers across tourist attractions, restaurants, retail stores, and other establishments.
- ★ For example, Indian tourists in Cambodia will be able to use UPI-enabled apps to make payments at over 4.5 million KHQR merchant touchpoints.
- ★ The collaboration ensures secure, interoperable payments through UPI and KHQR apps, benefiting businesses and improving consumer convenience in both countries.

Vrutti Collaborates with HSBC India

- ★ Vrutti, part of the Catalyst Platform, in partnership with HSBC India, has launched 'FPO Shakti', a blended, stage-based financing model aimed at enabling Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) to access capital.
- ★ The FPO Shakti initiative aims to bridge the financing gap that prevents FPOs from growing beyond the early incubation stage.
- ★ The new facility is supported by HSBC India and Friends of Women's World Banking (FWWB) India, which acts as the Facility Manager.
- ★ In its initial cohort, the initiative will support 15 early-growth FPOs, with plans to scale to over 100 organisations in future phases.
- ★ The model integrates stage-appropriate financial instruments, including revolving funds, guarantees, and revenue-linked finance, combined with technical assistance delivered by Business Support Organisations (BSOs).

- ★ The initiative incorporates digital record-keeping systems, enhancing transparency, lender confidence, and supporting a readiness framework for governance, business planning, and market linkages.
- ★ Each FPO will undergo a 24-month (2-year) structured journey, focusing on governance, market systems, financial discipline, and digital enablement.
- ★ India has over 44,000 registered FPOs, making it one of the world's largest networks of farmer-owned collectives.

Fino Payments Bank to Convert into a Small Finance Bank

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has granted in-principle approval to Fino Payments Bank Limited (FPBL) to convert into a Small Finance Bank (SFB), making it the 1st Payment Bank in India to receive such approval.
- ★ The approval was given after assessing its application under the 'On-Tap' Licensing Guidelines for Small Finance Banks, aimed at enhancing financial inclusion.
- ★ As per RBI norms, only payments banks controlled by residents and operating for at least 5 years are eligible for SFB conversion, a criterion that Fino Payments Bank (operational since 2017) now meets.
- ★ The conversion will allow Fino to accept larger deposits, offer credit facilities, and expand its customer base, including individuals and small enterprises.
- ★ This approval follows the RBI's decision to allow AU SFB to convert into a Universal Bank, while applications from Jana SFB and Ujjivan SFB remain pending or returned.
- ★ With Fino's conversion, only large payments banks such as Airtel Payments Bank, Jio Payments Bank, and India Post Payments Bank remain active, while Paytm Payments Bank is barred from new deposits and activities due to regulatory violations.
- ★ After conversion, Fino will join 11 existing SFBs: AU, Equitas, Suryoday, Utkarsh, Jana, Unity, Capital, ESAF, Ujjivan, Shivalik, and Slice SFB.
- ★ Fino received board-level approval in July 2023 to pursue this shift and applied formally for an SFB licence in December 2023.

Life Insurance Corporation of India Partnered with Yes Bank

- ★ The Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), India's largest life insurance company, has entered into a strategic bancassurance partnership with Yes Bank Limited, a leading private sector bank.
- ★ The partnership was formally announced in the presence of Doraiswamy, MD and CEO of LIC, and Prashant Kumar, MD and CEO of Yes Bank, along with senior officials from both organisations.
- ★ The objective of this bancassurance partnership is to increase the accessibility of life insurance across India and support the national vision of 'Insurance for All by 2047'.
- ★ As part of the collaboration, Yes Bank customers will gain access to LIC's comprehensive life insurance products through the bank's extensive branch network and digital platforms.
- ★ The partnership strengthens LIC's distribution network and enhances Yes Bank's product offerings, promoting wider financial inclusion.

Reserve Bank of India Issues Revised Gold Metal Loan Directions, Effective 1 April 2026

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) issued revised Gold Metal Loan (GML) Directions as part of updates to the regulatory framework for gold-related lending, effective 1 April 2026.
- ★ The revised rules amend the Master Direction on Import of Goods and Services and the Gold Monetisation Scheme (GMS).
- ★ Under the new framework, nominated banks importing gold can extend import-linked GML to entities engaged in jewellery manufacturing or sales for domestic or export markets.
- ★ Non-manufacturer jewellers are also eligible to borrow if they outsource jewellery production to registered artisans, goldsmiths, or manufacturing units.
- ★ Gold Metal Loans (GML) refer to loans provided by eligible banks to specified borrowers in the form of physical gold metal.
- ★ The GML scheme was originally launched in 1998 under the Export-Import Policy 1997–2002 to support the working capital needs of the jewellery sector.
- ★ Banks are permitted to set interest rates on GML based on the cost of procuring or holding gold, with repayment tenors aligned to FTP rules for exporters and up to 270 days for non-export borrowers.
- ★ GML repayment will be in INR, but for GMS-linked GML, borrowers may optionally repay the principal in physical gold under specified conditions.
- ★ Banks must submit quarterly GML reports to the RBI, with all revised provisions becoming effective from April 1, 2026.

Punjab National Bank Debuts Premium RuPay Metal Credit Card 'Luxura'

- ★ Punjab National Bank (PNB), India's 2nd largest Public Sector Bank (PSB), has launched a premium RuPay credit card 'Luxura' in New Delhi to boost its presence in the high-value credit card segment.
- ★ During the launch, PNB appointed Harmanpreet Kaur, Captain of the Indian Women's Cricket Team, as its first female brand ambassador.
- ★ The Luxura credit card is available for individuals in the age group of 21–70 years.
- ★ The income eligibility requires salaried applicants to earn ₹2.5 lakh per month, while non-salaried applicants must have a minimum annual income of ₹30 lakh.
- ★ PNB has fixed the credit limit for the Luxura card between ₹1 lakh and ₹5 lakh.
- ★ Applicants must pay a joining fee of ₹9,000 (including GST) and an annual fee of ₹7,500 (including GST) to avail the Luxura card benefits.
- ★ PNB also launched updates to its PNB One 2.0 mobile banking platform to improve digital banking services.
- ★ The bank introduced a digital rooftop solar financing facility under Digi Surya Ghar to support renewable energy adoption.
- ★ PNB joined the India International Bullion Exchange (IIBX) to enable online gold bullion transactions.

Government and RBI Implement Multiple Steps to Enhance the Digital Lending Framework

- ★ The Government is actively working with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and other regulators to curb the operations of unauthorized digital loan apps in India.
- ★ RBI has launched a Digital Lending Apps (DLAs) Directory on its website from 1 July 2025 to help customers verify whether a digital lending app is linked to an RBI-regulated entity (RE).
- ★ The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) is empowered under Section 69A of the IT Act, 2000 to block unauthorized loan apps after following due legal procedures.
- ★ RBI issued the Reserve Bank of India (Digital Lending) Directions, 2025 on 8 May 2025, mandating strict norms on recovery practices, data privacy, and grievance redressal for Regulated Entities (REs), Lending Service Providers (LSPs), and Digital Lending Apps (DLAs).
- ★ The Government is engaging major internet intermediaries and messaging platforms to monitor and restrict unauthorized loan app operations.
- ★ The Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) under the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) is analysing digital lending apps and supporting citizens through the National Cybercrime Reporting Portal (cybercrime.gov.in) and the Cybercrime Helpline 1930.
- ★ Citizens can lodge complaints against illegal deposit-taking entities through the SACHET portal and the State Level Coordination Committee (SLCC)
- ★ The RBI and banks are conducting awareness programs such as SMS alerts, radio campaigns, cyber-crime prevention publicity, and e-BAAT (electronic Banking Awareness and Training) to educate citizens about fraud risks and safe digital practices.

Reserve Bank of India Announces Major Highlights of its 5th Bi-monthly Policy

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) conducted the 58th and 5th Bi-monthly Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting of Financial Year 2025-26 (FY26) from 3–5 December 2025, chaired by Governor Sanjay Malhotra, and attended by Nagesh Kumar, Saugata Bhattacharyya, Prof. Ram Singh, Dr. Poonam Gupta, and Indranil Bhattacharyya.
- ★ The MPC unanimously reduced the Repo Rate to 5.25% under the Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF), while maintaining a Neutral stance, indicating flexibility for future rate movements.
- ★ The rate cut was undertaken because inflation fell to multi-year lows and growth showed early signs of softening, providing policy space to support economic activity.
  - Repo Rate (Repurchase Rate): 5.25%
  - Reverse Repo Rate: 35%
  - CRR (Cash Reserve Ratio): 3%
  - SDF (Standing Deposit Facility) Rate: 5.00%
  - MSF (Marginal Standing Facility) Rate: 5.50%.
  - Bank Rate: 5.50%
  - SLR: 18.00%

IFC Commits USD 50 Million to Gujarat Fluorochemicals' EV Materials Subsidiary

- ★ The International Finance Corporation (IFC) invested USD 50 million (₹450 crore) in GFCL EV Products Limited, a subsidiary of Gujarat Fluorochemicals Limited (GFL), through compulsorily convertible instruments.
- ★ The investment will help establish India's first fully integrated battery materials manufacturing facility, strengthening the country's EV and clean energy ecosystem.
- ★ This marks IFC's first investment in India's battery-materials sector, indicating strong global confidence in India's clean energy and electric mobility goals.
- ★ The greenfield facility will manufacture Lithium Hexafluorophosphate (LiPF6), electrolyte formulations, Lithium Iron Phosphate (LFP) cathode materials, and Polyvinylidene Fluoride (PVDF) / Polytetrafluoroethylene (PTFE) binders used in electric vehicles and energy storage systems.
- ★ The project is expected to boost domestic supply chains, reduce import dependence, and help position India as a competitive player in the global advanced battery materials value chain.
- ★ Barclays served as the financial adviser to GFCL EV for this transaction.

RBI Announces ₹1 Lakh Crore Open Market Operations and $5 Billion USD/INR Buy-Sell Swap to Boost Liquidity

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced Open Market Operations (OMO) purchases of ₹1 lakh crore and a 3-year USD/INR buy–sell swap of $5 billion in December 2025 to inject durable liquidity into the banking system.
- ★ OMOs are a key monetary policy tool used by the RBI to regulate liquidity in the banking system by buying or selling government securities (G-Secs) in the open market.
- ★ When RBI purchases government securities, it injects liquidity into the system, encouraging banks to lend more, which can boost economic activity.
- ★ When RBI sells government securities, it absorbs excess liquidity and helps to control inflation by reducing the money supply.

Securities and Exchange Board of India Unveils PaRRVA

- ★ The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) launched the Past Risk and Return Verification Agency (PaRRVA) to prevent misleading past-performance claims in advertisements by Research Analysts (RAs), Investment Advisors (IAs), and stock brokers.
- ★ PaRRVA is the world's first initiative of its kind and was launched in partnership with the National Stock Exchange (NSE) and CAREEdge Ratings.
- ★ The initiative was created to address loopholes where unregistered players advertise unverifiable high returns, while regulated intermediaries are restricted from sharing legitimate past performance.
- ★ SEBI's investor survey found that only 36% of investors have adequate market knowledge, while 62% rely on influencers and 23% chase quick profits, highlighting the need for verified performance disclosures.

- ★ Under PaRRVA, intermediaries submit data through secure API/file upload, which is validated by the PaRRVA–NSE Data Centre (PDC) using exchange and clearing corporation transaction data.
- ★ PaRRVA generates 50+ risk–return metrics with T+1 portfolio checks, enabling accurate and standardized performance verification.
- ★ PaRRVA was first announced during the 208th SEBI Board Meeting in December 2024 and the operational framework was issued in April 2025.
- ★ PaRRVA is an independent verification mechanism allowing Regulated Entities (REs) to showcase authentic and validated performance data, reducing mis-selling and investor risk.
- ★ As per SEBI's 2025 circular, a Credit Rating Agency (CRA) will act as PaRRVA, and it must partner with a recognized Stock Exchange (SE) which will function as the PaRRVA Data Centre (PDC).

RBI Updates Rules on Carrying Indian Currency To and From Nepal and Bhutan

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) issued revised directions to modify rules on the export and import of Indian currency to and from Nepal and Bhutan.
- ★ Under the new rules, any person except citizens of Pakistan or Bangladesh may carry Indian currency notes up to ₹100 denomination without limit while travelling to/from Nepal or Bhutan.
- ★ Individuals are allowed to take out of India Indian currency above ₹100 denominations up to ₹25,000 to Nepal or Bhutan.
- ★ Travellers may bring into India from Nepal or Bhutan Indian currency above ₹100 denominations up to ₹25,000.
- ★ Authorised Persons have been directed to inform customers and stakeholders about the revised provisions.
- ★ The amendments were notified via FEMA (Export and Import of Currency) (Amendment) Regulations, 2025, published in the Official Gazette on 2 December 2025.
- ★ These directions are issued under Sections 10(4) and 11(1) of FEMA, 1999, and operate without prejudice to other legal permissions

RBI Orders Partner Banks to Pause Issuance of OneCard Co-Branded Credit Cards

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has directed banks partnered with FPL Technologies (OneCard) to halt fresh issuance of co-branded credit cards due to regulatory concerns.
- ★ The pause aims to give RBI clarity on data-sharing practices, specifically whether FPL and partner banks comply with outsourcing and customer-data protection norms.
- ★ Until the review is complete, banks must suspend onboarding new OneCard customers as per RBI instructions.
- ★ OneCard is issued by partner banks such as BOB Cards, SBM India, Federal Bank, CSB Bank, South Indian Bank, and Indian Bank, while FPL Technologies handles customer acquisition and management.
- ★ In March 2024, Federal Bank and South Indian Bank had already reported RBI directions to pause their co-branded credit card programmes.

- ★ The issue follows RBI's stricter guidelines (March 7, 2024) to curb fintech back-door entry into regulated credit card operations, especially regarding data sharing and operational control.
- ★ FPL Technologies, founded in 2019 by ex-ICICI Bank executives, last raised $25.5 million in December 2025; earlier, its valuation peaked at $1.3 billion (2022) after Temasek's investment.
- ★ Co-branded credit cards have surged through partnerships with Swiggy, Amazon, Flipkart, etc., prompting stricter regulation by RBI.

RBI Revises Credit Information Reporting Directions, 2025 Through Amendment Notifications

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has issued Amendment Directions to modify the Credit Information Reporting Directions, 2025 based on feedback from the earlier draft framework.
- ★ The revised framework, issued under Section 11 of the Credit Information Companies (Regulation) Act, 2005, will come into force on 1 July 2026.
- ★ Lenders must submit credit data to Credit Information Companies (CICs) four times a month — on the 9th, 16th, 23rd, and last day of each month — moving towards near-real-time reporting.
- ★ A full file containing records of all active and closed accounts must be submitted as on the last day of each month, by the 5th of the following month.
- ★ CICs are required to submit half-yearly reports on entities failing to adhere to timelines via the RBI's DAKSH portal.
- ★ India has four primary Credit Information Companies (CICs), licensed and regulated by RBI under the Credit Information Companies Regulation Act, 2005 — TransUnion CIBIL, Experian, Equifax, and CRIF High Mark.

Reserve Bank of India Launches Two-Month Campaign from 1st January 2026

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced a two-month campaign starting 1st January,2026 to clear all customer grievances pending for more than a month with the RBI Ombudsman.
- ★ RBI Ombudsman scheme helps provide cost-free redressal of customer complaints involving deficiency in services rendered by entities regulated by RBI, if not resolved to the satisfaction of the customers or not replied within a period of 30 days by the regulated entity.
- ★ Governor Sanjay Malhotra stated that the campaign aims to strengthen customer service as grievance pendency has increased due to a surge in complaints.
- ★ RBI has urged full co-operation from all regulated entities (REs) to make the campaign effective and impactful.
- ★ RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das highlighted that the central bank has implemented initiatives to enhance customer experience, including simplifying re-KYC, improving financial inclusion processes, and launching the "Aapki Poonji, Aapka Adhikar" awareness program.

SEBI Approves Groww as Online Bond Platform Provide

- ★ Groww has received Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) approval to operate as an Online Bond Platform Provider (OBPP), enabling it to list, distribute, and transact in listed corporate bonds directly through its app.
- ★ The OBPP licence allows Groww to expand offerings beyond equities and mutual funds, providing retail investors easier access to fixed-income and lower-risk investment products.
- ★ OBPP refers to Online Bond Platform Providers, which are digital platforms for buying and selling bonds.
- ★ As per NSE data, Groww holds the largest market share among stockbrokers at 26.62%.

IDFC First Bank Unveils FD-Backed Premium Credit Card Offering Zero Forex Markup

- ★ IDFC First Bank launched an upgraded 'FIRST WOW! Black Credit Card', which is a premium credit card backed by Fixed Deposit (FD).
- ★ The card features 0% Forex (FX) markup, making it attractive for international travellers and cross-border online shoppers.
- ★ The card is available to individuals aged 18+, against an FD starting at ₹20,000.
- ★ The linked FD offers up to 6.3% interest on a 367-day FD with 100% withdrawal limit.
- ★ Cardholders receive both a physical Mastercard for global usage and a RuPay virtual credit card linked to UPI for QR payments.
- ★ Both cards operate under one account, with a single credit limit and a unified consolidated statement.
- ★ The card provides 4 domestic airport lounge accesses annually, ₹2 lakh personal accident insurance, ₹25,000 lost card liability cover, and ₹10,000 trip cancellation cover on select bookings.
- ★ The card offers zero forex markup and allows interest-free ATM withdrawals for up to 45 days with a ₹199 fee.
- ★ The joining/annual fee is ₹750 (including GST), which is waived from the second year for customers spending ₹1.5 lakh annually.

Airpay Gets Reserve Bank of India Nod to Operate as Full-Stack Cross-Border PA

- ★ Airpay Payment Services Private. Limited. received full authorisation from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) under the Payment and Settlement Systems (PSS) Act, 2007 to operate as a full-stack cross-border Payment Aggregator (PA-CB).
- ★ With this approval, Airpay is now authorised to operate across PA-O (Online), PA-P (Physical/POS/QR) and PA-CB
- ★ The approval positions Airpay among a select group of Regulated Entities (REs) permitted to facilitate domestic and global payments across major merchant channels.
- ★ The expanded licence allows Airpay to serve enterprises, Direct-to-Consumer (D2C) brands, and SMEs through a unified compliant platform for collections, payouts, and settlements.

- ★ Airpay expects cross-border payment processing volumes to increase by 30–40% in the next 6–12 months.
- ★ The company projects that cross-border flows will contribute over 20% of revenue, with the onboarding of 50,000 merchants.

RBI Clears SBI and BoB to Establish Digital Payments Intelligence Platform

- ★ The State Bank of India (SBI) and Bank of Baroda (BoB) received Reserve Bank of India (RBI) approval to set up a new entity for a Digital Payments Intelligence Platform.
- ★ The new company, named Indian Digital Payment Intelligence Corporation (IDPIC), will be established as a Section 8 company under the Companies Act, 2013.
- ★ The purpose of IDPIC is to detect and prevent fraudulent digital transactions across public sector banks by acting as a central intelligence hub for real-time data sharing and fraud pattern analysis.
- ★ The Finance Ministry granted an exemption permitting both SBI and BoB to hold over 30% stake in the new company, valid until 16 October 2026.
- ★ All 12 public sector banks are expected to take equity stakes in the newly created entity.
- ★ IDPIC will be launched with an authorised capital of ₹500 crore and a paid-up capital of ₹200 crore.

Wise Unveils No-Fee Multi-Currency Travel Card for Indian Travellers

- ★ Wise, a global money movement company, has launched the Wise Travel Card in India, targeting travellers seeking transparent pricing and ease of use abroad.
- ★ The card was first announced at the Global Fintech Festival (GFF) 2025 held in Mumbai, Maharashtra.
- ★ Issuance Fee Waiver: Wise has waived the ₹460 issuance fee for sign-ups until 10 February 2026; the card has no annual fees, no subscription charges, and no inactivity fees.
- ★ Multi-Currency Support: The card supports 40+ currencies, including Vietnam, Indonesia, Turkey, and Georgia.
- ★ Digital Onboarding: Onboarding is fully digital via DigiLocker and video KYC.
- ★ The card offers an instant digital card, IMPS-based account top-ups, and in-app controls for security.
- ★ Global Acceptance: It is accepted on the Visa Network in 160+ countries.
- ★ ATM Withdrawal Limit: Users get free ATM withdrawals up to USD 200 per month, after which standard charges apply.

Nationwide 'Your Money, Your Right' Campaign Facilitates Settlement of ₹2,000 Crore Unclaimed Money

- ★ The Ministry of Finance (MoF) announced the progress of the nationwide campaign "Aapki Poonji, Aapka Adhikar – Your Money, Your Right", conducted from 4 October to 5 December 2025 to settle unclaimed financial assets.

- ★ In the first two months, around ₹2,000 crore in unclaimed funds were successfully reclaimed by rightful owners.
- ★ The campaign's objective is to facilitate settlement of unclaimed bank deposits, insurance proceeds, dividends, shares, mutual funds, and pension amounts.
- ★ The campaign follows the 3A Framework – Awareness, Accessibility, and Action for resolving unclaimed assets.
- ★ District-level camps were held in 477 districts across India during the campaign period.
- ★ Awareness materials including Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and multilingual content were widely disseminated for public understanding.
- ★ The camps provided digital demonstrations, helpdesks, and claim guidance to support citizens.

Sahaj Insurance Obtains IRDAI Approval for Corporate Agency Licence

- ★ Sahaj Insurance Services Private Limited, a subsidiary of Sahaj Retail Limited., has secured a Corporate Agency Licence from Insurance Regulatory Development Authority of India (IRDAI), enabling it to solicit and distribute insurance products on behalf of underwriting insurers.
- ★ The company will focus on offering low-premium, high-relevance insurance policies for households in agrarian and informal sectors, covering life, health, accident, crop, livestock, and micro-insurance.
- ★ Sahaj Insurance will collaborate with leading insurers to deliver affordable protection solutions to rural and underserved populations.
- ★ The company operates through Village Level Entrepreneurs (VLEs), known as Sahaj Mitrs, who provide digital services including e-governance access, digital payments, and mobile banking in remote communities.

IndusInd Bank Partners with Jio-bp to Launch Mobility+ Card

- ★ IndusInd Bank and Jio-bp have launched the 'IndusInd Bank Jio-bp Mobility+ Credit Card', a co-branded fuel and lifestyle credit card on the RuPay network.
- ★ This is IndusInd Bank's first fuel-centric credit card and Jio-bp's first co-branded card, designed for digitally savvy consumers.
- ★ The card enables UPI-based credit card payments, offering ease of payments on UPI platforms.
- ★ Customers can earn up to 60 litres of free fuel annually through the rewards programme.
- ★ The card provides 4.25% value back on fuel purchases at Jio-bp Mobility Stations, enhancing benefits for frequent vehicle users.
- ★ Users earn Smiles reward points on fuel, dining, groceries, convenience store purchases, and Wildbean Café.
- ★ The card offers additional perks such as a 1% fuel surcharge waiver, 24×7 roadside assistance, and monthly/annual milestone rewards.
- ★ It carries a joining fee of ₹499 + GST, which is waived if the customer spends ₹10,000 within the first 30 days.
- ★ The foreign currency markup on international usage is 3.5%.

Ageas Federal Life Insurance Launches New Brand Identity with Refreshed Logo

- ★ Ageas Federal Life Insurance unveiled a new brand identity, introducing a refreshed logo and the brand promise "Har Wada Mumkin – Promises Made Possible".
- ★ The new logo features two arcs symbolising protection and guidance, with orange and violet colours representing optimism and trust.
- ★ MD and CEO Jude Gomes launched the rebranding in Mumbai along with brand ambassador Sachin Tendulkar.
- ★ Ageas Federal Life Insurance is a joint venture between Belgium-based Ageas and Federal Bank.
- ★ The rebranding reflects the company's commitment to simplifying insurance and making financial protection more accessible across India.
- ★ Ageas Federal ranks fourth in solvency among private life insurers with a 270% solvency ratio as of March 2025.
- ★ The company achieved 13% year-on-year growth in Individual Annual Premium Equivalent for the period ending October 30, 2025, outpacing the industry's projected 9% growth.
- ★ It maintained a 100% Individual Claim Settlement Ratio for FY25, demonstrating strong operational performance.

SalarySe and CUB Launch India's First Credit Card Exclusively for Salaried Individuals

- ★ SalarySe partnered with City Union Bank (CUB) to launch India's first salary-exclusive credit card, the Level Up RuPay Credit Card, designed specifically for salaried individuals.
- ★ The card is powered by the RuPay Credit Card on UPI framework, supporting the RBI's push for a cashless economy.
- ★ The card introduces a first-of-its-kind "Salary Day Bonus" offering up to 37.5% rewards on spending made on salary credit days.
- ★ The Level Up Card rewards routine spending such as UPI payments, bill payments, online shopping, and in-store purchases.
- ★ It leverages NPCI's Credit on UPI system, enabling secure and transparent revolving credit through daily UPI transactions without separate loan applications.
- ★ Launched in Chennai, the product is tailored around the spending behaviour of working professionals, replacing traditional travel- or luxury-focused benefits.
- ★ Employer-linked salary verification backs the card issuance, promoting disciplined borrowing and controlled credit exposure.
- ★ Users can apply for the card and access curated financial services through the SalarySe mobile app.

Amazon to Invest Over $35 Billion in India Across All Business Verticals by 2030

- ★ Amazon announced an investment of over USD 35 billion in India by 2030 during the Amazon Smbhav Summit in New Delhi, covering all business verticals.

- ★ The investment focuses on AI-driven digitisation, export growth, job creation, and business expansion, aligned with India's national priorities.
- ★ Amazon signed an MoU with Gati Shakti Vishwavidyalaya (GSV) under the Ministry of Railways (MoR) to collaborate on education, research, and skill development.
- ★ Amazon aims to democratise AI access for 14 million small businesses and provide AI education to 4 million government school students.
- ★ Amazon plans to create 1 million new jobs, contributing to a total of 3.8 million jobs generated in India.
- ★ A new programme, 'Accelerate Exports', was launched to boost export-led growth by connecting digital entrepreneurs with manufacturers.
- ★ Amazon will expand logistics, data, and digital infrastructure, and strengthen AI-enabled marketplace and shopping features.
- ★ Since 2010, Amazon has invested USD 40 billion, digitised 12 million small businesses, enabled USD 20 billion in exports, and supported 2.8 million jobs in India.
- ★ Under the MoU, Amazon will co-develop courses on AI, automation, and logistics, and support research in transportation, digital freight, drone operations, and sustainable mobility.

RBI Relaxes Norms for Opening and Operating Cash Credit, Current and Overdraft Accounts

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has eased norms for opening and maintaining Cash Credit (CC), Current Accounts, and Overdraft (OD) facilities, incorporating stakeholder feedback on the draft circular issued in October.
- ★ Banks are now allowed to offer Cash Credit (CC) accounts without restrictions, based purely on customer requirements.
- ★ For customers with aggregate banking exposure below ₹10 crore, any bank may freely open or maintain Current or Overdraft (OD) accounts.
- ★ For borrowers with banking exposure above ₹10 crore, only banks holding at least 10% of the borrower's total exposure are permitted to open or maintain Current or OD accounts.
- ★ If no bank or only one bank meets the 10% exposure threshold, the top two lenders by exposure may maintain Current/OD accounts, modifying the earlier rule that limited such accounts to two banks regardless of exposure share.
- ★ Funds received in collection accounts must be transferred within two working days to the borrower's designated CC, Current, or OD account.
- ★ Any Overdraft (OD) disbursement from a collection account must be routed only through the designated account.
- ★ Banks are required to monitor all transaction accounts regularly, and at least once every six months, to ensure compliance with the revised RBI guidelines.
- ★ The revised norms will come into effect from April 1, 2026, though banks may choose to implement them earlier in full.

Central Board of Direct Taxes Launches Data-Driven NUDGE Campaign

- ★ The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) has taken action against intermediaries involved in filing Income Tax Returns (ITRs) with bogus deductions and exemptions under the Income Tax Act, 1961.
- ★ Investigations revealed a nationwide network of agents filing returns with incorrect claims on a commission basis.
- ★ Large-scale bogus deduction claims were made through donations to Registered Unrecognised Political Parties (RUPPs) and Charitable Institutions, resulting in tax evasion and fraudulent refunds.
- ★ Many RUPPs were found to be non-filers, non-operational at registered addresses, and not engaged in political activity, acting as conduits for hawala transactions, cross-border remittances, and fake donation receipts.
- ★ CBDT searches against RUPPs and trusts uncovered incriminating evidence of bogus individual donations and fake Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) claims by companies.
- ★ The CBDT has strengthened its data-driven and analytics-based risk assessment to detect suspicious deduction patterns at an early stage.
- ★ A key risk pattern was identified in claims under Section 80G (donations to charitable institutions) and Section 80GGC (donations to political parties) of the Income Tax Act, 1961.
- ★ Data analytics showed taxpayers claiming deductions to suspicious or unverifiable entities without adequate supporting information.
- ★ A large number of taxpayers have already revised their ITRs for AY 2025-26 and filed updated returns for previous assessment years.
- ★ As a taxpayer-friendly measure, CBDT launched a targeted NUDGE campaign, allowing taxpayers to voluntarily correct or withdraw incorrect claims.
- ★ SMS and Email advisories are being sent from 12 December 2025 to identified taxpayers on their registered mobile numbers and email IDs.

Sberbank Introduce First-India Mutual Fund Offering Russian Investors Access To Nifty50 Equities

- ★ Sberbank and JSC First Asset Management have launched a new mutual fund, First-India, providing Russian retail investors exposure to India's equity market via the Nifty50 Index.
- ★ The fund was unveiled during Sberbank CEO Herman Gref's visit to India, at an event hosted by the National Stock Exchange (NSE).
- ★ The product offers a direct route for Russian investors to participate in the growth of India's largest and most liquid companies.
- ★ The Nifty50 Index, launched in 1996, comprises 50 major stocks across 15 sectors and is among the world's most widely tracked indices, with 45+ passive funds in India and 22 overseas funds linked to it.

RBI Grants In-Principle Approval to JPMorgan for New Pune Branch

- ★ JPMorgan Chase & Co. has received in-principle approval from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to open a new branch in Pune, marking its first branch expansion in India in nearly a decade.
- ★ The Pune branch will be JPMorgan's fourth branch in India and will primarily cater to corporate clients.
- ★ The new branch will provide a full range of banking services, including transaction banking and term lending.
- ★ JPMorgan last received approval to open branches in India in 2016, when it was permitted to set up three branches.
- ★ JPMorgan Chase & Co. is an American multinational banking and financial services institution.
- ★ The bank is headquartered in New York City and incorporated in Delaware, USA.
- ★ As of 2025, JPMorgan Chase & Co. is the largest bank in the United States and the world's largest bank by market capitalisation.

ADB Sanctions Multi-Sector Loans To Boost Chennai Metro Expansion

- ★ The Asian Development Bank (ADB) approved three loans worth USD 448 million to support urban infrastructure, public healthcare, and women-focused financial inclusion in India.
- ★ ADB sanctioned USD 240 million as a second tranche under a USD 780 million facility approved in 2022 for Chennai Metro Rail Phase 2 in Tamil Nadu.
- ★ Chennai Metro Phase 2 spans a total network of 118.9 km across three corridors.
- ★ The project provides 18 new universally accessible and disaster-resilient stations with upgraded multimodal interchanges.
- ★ Construction under the current tranche is targeted for completion by mid-2028.
- ★ ADB approved a USD 108 million results-based loan to strengthen the public healthcare system in Mizoram.
- ★ The programme supports universal health coverage through the Mizoram Universal Health Care Scheme (MUHCS).
- ★ MUHCS provides cashless health coverage up to ₹5 lakh per family per year.
- ★ The healthcare programme targets 38 million residents, focusing on women, elderly persons, and persons with disabilities.
- ★ The scheme integrates Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY) and state health schemes into a single platform.
- ★ The integration links primary, secondary, and tertiary healthcare services.
- ★ Priority areas include non-communicable diseases, disaster-resilient health infrastructure, and institutional strengthening.
- ★ Mizoram is the first Indian state to undertake an ADB-supported comprehensive health system reform.
- ★ ADB approved a USD 100 million loan to Five-Star Business Finance Limited, based in Chennai, Tamil Nadu.

★ The programme aims to expand Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) credit access for women entrepreneurs from lower-income groups.

SEBI Grants In-Principle Approval to National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange Limited

★ The National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange Limited (NCDEX) received in-principle approval from the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) to launch a Mutual Fund (MF) transaction platform.

★ The SEBI approval permits NCDEX to establish a platform enabling investors to buy and sell Mutual Fund units after fulfilling regulatory requirements.

★ The proposed MF transaction platform will facilitate easy access and seamless MF transactions for investors.

★ National Commodity Clearing Limited (NCCL), a wholly owned subsidiary of NCDEX, will manage the Clearing and Settlement operations of the platform.

★ Clearing will involve validation of trade details, while Settlement will ensure fund transfer from investors to Mutual Funds and allocation of MF units.

★ The MF transaction platform will function independently from NCDEX's commodity trading infrastructure.

★ The platform will also remain separate from future equity trading systems, allowing faster rollout and operational flexibility.

★ The initiative marks NCDEX's diversification into the Mutual Fund distribution ecosystem under SEBI regulation.

ADB Sanctions USD 846 Million Loan to Strengthen Skill Development and Employability in India

★ The Asian Development Bank (ADB) approved a USD 846 million loan (about ₹7,000 crore) to India to boost skills and employability.

★ The funding supports the programme "Supporting Pradhan Mantri Skilling and Employability Transformation through Upgraded ITIs (PM-SETU)".

★ The PM-SETU programme aims to create a future-ready workforce for manufacturing and emerging technology sectors.

★ The initiative aligns with national priorities such as Skill India and Make in India.

★ Under the programme, 650 Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) will be modernised across 12 states.

★ The ITI modernisation will follow a hub-and-spoke cluster model.

★ The programme focuses on upgrading infrastructure, training equipment, and digital systems to deliver industry-aligned, demand-driven courses.

★ The project proposes to upgrade 5 National Skill Training Institutes (NSTIs) into Centres of Excellence.

- ★ The upgraded NSTIs will strengthen advanced trainer development and improve the quality of instructors.
- ★ The programme introduces governance reforms through Public–Private Partnerships (PPPs).
- ★ PPPs will provide greater institutional autonomy to ITIs and enhance industry participation in curriculum design, assessment, and placements.
- ★ Training will be expanded in high-growth sectors such as renewable energy, electric mobility, advanced manufacturing, and the green and digital economy.

Kerala Grameena Bank Partners with Fyno

- ★ Fyno, an intelligent communications hub for banks and financial institutions, has partnered with Kerala Grameena Bank (KGB) to streamline and govern all customer communication workflows.
- ★ The unified platform enables centralised management of customer communications, ensuring timely and accurate message delivery with improved visibility, control, and regulatory compliance.
- ★ The partnership aligns with the RBI's focus on customer service quality, grievance redressal, and mandatory multilingual accessibility, increasing operational efficiency of banks.

Common Logo Unveiled for Regional Rural Banks

- ★ On the principle of "One State One RRB", the Department of Financial Services (DFS) under the Ministry of Finance consolidated 26 Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) across 11 States/UTs, effective from 01 May 2025.
- ★ The RRB consolidation reform aims to create stronger, more efficient, and financially sustainable RRBs.
- ★ After the amalgamation, 28 RRBs continue to operate across India.
- ★ These 28 RRBs serve rural areas through an extensive network of over 22,000 branches in more than 700 districts.
- ★ To create a single and unified brand identity, the Government unveiled a common logo for all 28 RRBs.
- ★ The common RRB logo strengthens institutional identity, visibility, and recognition of RRBs nationwide.
- ★ The logo reflects themes of progress, growth, and development in rural and remote areas.
  - ○ Upward Arrow (Symbol of Progress): Represents growth, development and advancement in rural economies.
  - ○ Hands (Symbol of Nurturing): Conveys care, support and a helping hand to rural communities.
  - ○ Flame (Symbol of Enlightenment): Signifies warmth, knowledge and empowering rural populations.
- ★ The dark blue colour in the logo represents finance, stability, and trust.
- ★ The green colour in the logo signifies life, sustainability, and growth, reflecting service to rural India.

- ★ The common branding initiative is expected to give RRBs a modern, distinct, and easily recognizable identity across the country.
- ★ The initiative symbolizes the collective commitment of RRBs towards financial inclusion and rural development.
- ★ The reform aligns with the Government's objective of strengthening rural banking infrastructure and deepening last-mile financial access.

State Bank of India Inks €150 Million Deal with KfW

- ★ State Bank of India (SBI) signed a €150 million Line of Credit (LoC) (≈ ₹1,360 crore) with KfW Development Bank, Germany, to finance climate-friendly energy generation projects in India.
- ★ The agreement was signed at KfW Headquarters, Frankfurt (Germany), reinforcing Indo-German co-operation in sustainable development finance.
- ★ The €150 million LoC continues the long-standing SBI–KfW collaboration focused on renewable energy and green infrastructure.
- ★ The facility enables financing for a broader range of climate-oriented projects, including advanced and innovative renewable technologies.
- ★ The initiative supports accelerated renewable energy adoption, low-carbon infrastructure, and India's clean energy transition.
- ★ It leverages international expertise and low-cost funding, strengthening India's green energy ecosystem.

IDFC First Bank Introduces USD and EUR Global Savings Account

- ★ IDFC First Bank, a private sector bank, launched the 'IDFC First Global Savings Account' for Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) to hold foreign currency earnings in USD and EUR.
- ★ The account is offered through the International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) at GIFT City, Gandhinagar (Gujarat), strengthening India's offshore banking ecosystem.
- ★ It allows NRIs to maintain savings in United States Dollar (USD) and Euro (EUR) without mandatory conversion into Indian Rupees.
- ★ Key benefits include zero fees on overseas transfers and 100% repatriation of both principal and interest to overseas accounts.
- ★ The account offers an interest rate of around 4.75% per annum on USD balances, making it attractive compared to regular NRI savings options.
- ★ There is no minimum balance requirement, increasing accessibility for global Indian customers.
- ★ Interest earned enjoys Tax Deducted at Source (TDS) exemption, enhancing post-tax returns for NRIs.
- ★ The account can be opened and operated digitally, eliminating the need for branch visits or physical paperwork.
- ★ NRIs can also invest in foreign currency Fixed Deposits (FDs) in USD or EUR through the same account.

Google Pay, Axis Bank Launch UPI-Enabled RuPay Co-Branded Credit Card

★ Google Pay partnered with Axis Bank Limited to launch the 'Google Pay Flex Axis Bank Credit Card', a UPI-enabled co-branded credit card on the RuPay network.

★ The card is the first product under "Flex by Google Pay", an initiative aimed at making credit simpler and more accessible in India.

★ It enables users to make payments at millions of offline merchants and online platforms directly using the Google Pay app via QR code scanning.

★ The card is embedded within Google Pay, allowing users to apply digitally at zero cost, with no physical paperwork, and start transactions instantly upon approval.

★ Axis Bank is responsible for card issuance and underwriting, while Google Pay provides the digital payment experience and interface.

★ The card is designed to integrate credit with everyday UPI transactions, enhancing digital payment convenience for small-ticket daily spends.

★ Users earn reward points called "Start", where 1 Start point = ₹1, which are instantly redeemable on eligible transactions within the app.

★ The card offers flexible repayment options, allowing users to convert outstanding bills into Equated Monthly Instalments (EMIs) directly through the Google Pay app.

★ Customers can manage the credit card digitally, including blocking/unblocking the card, setting transaction limits, and resetting the PIN within the app.

BoB Underwrites $500 Million, 5-Year Foreign Currency Loan for OVL Overseas IFSC Limited

★ Bank of Baroda (BoB) has underwritten a $500 million, 5-year foreign currency term loan for OVL Overseas IFSC Limited (OOIL).

★ OOIL is a wholly owned subsidiary of ONGC Videsh Limited (OVL) and is registered in GIFT City.

★ Bank of Baroda acted as the Sole Mandated Lead Arranger (SMLA) for the loan, showcasing its strength in syndicated foreign currency lending.

★ The transaction highlights the growing maturity of GIFT City as a hub for cross-border and offshore financing.

★ The drawdown ceremony for the term loan was held at Bank of Baroda IFSC Banking Unit (IBU), GIFT City, in the presence of senior officials from BoB and OVL.

★ The IFSC Banking Unit (IBU) at GIFT City is a critical pillar of BoB's international footprint and is its third-largest branch outside India, with a diversified portfolio covering syndicated credit, retail banking, and trade finance.

RBI Imposes Restrictions on Gauhati Co-operative Urban Bank

★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has imposed restrictions on The Gauhati Co-operative Urban Bank due to its weak financial and liquidity position.

★ Under RBI directions, customers can withdraw a maximum of ₹35,000 from their accounts during the restriction period.

- ★ The restrictions came into force after business hours on Tuesday (December 17, 2025) and will remain valid for six months, subject to review.
- ★ The bank is prohibited from granting or renewing loans, making investments, incurring liabilities, or making payments without prior RBI approval.
- ★ Depositors are protected under deposit insurance, and eligible customers can claim up to ₹5 lakh from the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC).
- ★ The Gauhati Co-operative Urban Bank Ltd was established in 1965.

RBI Grants Payment Aggregator Approval to Paytm Payments Services

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) authorized Paytm Payments Services Limited (PPSL), a wholly-owned subsidiary of One 97 Communications Limited, to operate as a Payment Aggregator (PA) for offline (physical) payments and cross-border transactions.
- ★ The authorization allows PPSL to facilitate physical merchant transactions through Point-of-Sale (PoS) devices, such as Card Machines and Soundboxes.
- ★ PPSL is also permitted to aggregate inward and outward cross-border payments in strict compliance with the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), 1999.
- ★ With this approval, PPSL now holds a comprehensive Payment Aggregator licence covering online, offline, and cross-border payment segments.
- ★ The expanded licence enables end-to-end payment services for merchants across both domestic and international markets, removing the need for third-party rails.
- ★ Compliance conditions require PPSL to commence its cross-border operations within six months of the authorization date.
- ★ PPSL must adhere to strictly prescribed transaction limits (such as the ₹25 lakh cap for certain cross-border payouts), net worth requirements (minimum ₹15 crore, rising to ₹25 crore), and regulatory reporting norms.
- ★ A critical security mandate requires that any unusual or adverse incidents must be reported to the RBI within six hours.
- ★ The authorization supports Paytm's domestic and global expansion, enables direct control over merchant infrastructure, and significantly reduces dependence on third-party payment aggregators, which is expected to improve operating margins.

Airtel Payments Bank, NPCI Bharat BillPay Limited Enable EV Wallet Recharges

- ★ Airtel Payments Bank partnered with NPCI Bharat BillPay Limited (NBBL), a wholly owned subsidiary of the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), to enable Electric Vehicle (EV) wallet recharges through Bharat Connect.
- ★ Bharat Connect is the new name of the Bharat BillPay System (BBPS), operated by NBBL.
- ★ The initiative allows users to recharge EV wallets directly via the Airtel Thanks app.
- ★ The EV wallet recharge facility is powered by BBPS, ensuring instant, secure, and reliable
- ★ The partnership enables interoperable EV wallet recharges across multiple EV charging service providers.

- ★ It offers a single, unified payment platform, reducing fragmentation across EV charging networks.
- ★ The initiative enhances convenience and seamless digital payments for EV users.
- ★ NBBL ensures standardised, secure, and interoperable bill payment infrastructure through Bharat Connect.
- ★ The partnership expands BBPS coverage from traditional utility payments to modern services like EV charging.

Asian Development Bank Commits USD 4.26 Billion Sovereign Lending to India

- ★ Asian Development Bank (ADB) committed USD 4.258 billion in sovereign lending to India in 2025 to support skilling, renewable energy, urban infrastructure, transport, healthcare, and ecotourism.
- ★ Out of 16 newly committed ADB projects, nearly 32% focus on human and social development, 26% on the energy sector (mainly renewables), and over 18% on urban development.
- ★ A major allocation of USD 846 million was approved for PM-SETU, aimed at modernising Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) and strengthening India's skill ecosystem.
- ★ ADB committed USD 650 million for the PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana to scale up rooftop solar adoption nationwide.
- ★ For urban transformation, USD 775 million was allocated to projects in Assam, Kerala, Sikkim, and West Bengal, focusing on water supply and sanitation services.
- ★ An additional USD 729 million will be used to expand regional rapid rail (Delhi–Meerut) and metro networks in Chennai and Indore, improving urban mobility and reducing congestion.
- ★ Other key loans include USD 460 million for rural power and solar irrigation in Maharashtra.
- ★ USD 398.8 million was sanctioned for healthcare infrastructure and medical education in Assam.
- ★ Over USD 200 million was committed for ecotourism projects in Meghalaya and Uttarakhand, highlighting ADB's focus on inclusive and sustainable growth.

Canara HSBC Life Partnered with Equitas SFB

- ★ Canara HSBC Life Insurance has entered into a bancassurance partnership with Equitas Small Finance Bank (ESFB) to expand life insurance penetration across India.
- ★ The partnership will leverage Equitas SFB's network of 994 branches and 365 ATMs across 18 States and Union Territories, with a focus on southern and western India.
- ★ Canara HSBC Life Insurance will offer a wide range of products including protection, savings, annuity, child plans, and investment-linked insurance products through the bank's distribution channels.

Reserve Bank of India Imposes ₹61.95 Lakh Penalty on Kotak Mahindra Bank

- ★ Reserve Bank of India (RBI) imposed a monetary penalty of ₹61.95 lakh on Kotak Mahindra Bank Limited.

- ★ The penalty was imposed for non-compliance with RBI guidelines on Basic Savings Bank Deposit Accounts (BSBDA), Business Correspondent (BC) activities, and Credit Information Companies (CIC) Rules, 2006.
- ★ RBI found that Kotak Mahindra Bank opened multiple BSBDA accounts for customers who already held such accounts, violating regulatory norms.
- ★ The bank also entered into arrangements with BCs to undertake activities beyond the permissible scope under RBI directions.
- ★ The penalty was imposed under the powers conferred by Section 47A(1)(c) read with Section 46(4)(i) of the Banking Regulation Act and Section 25(1)(iii) read with Section 23(4) of the Credit Information Companies (Regulation) Act, 2005.

South Indian Bank Introduces RuPay Contactless SIB Paytag Sticker

- ★ South Indian Bank launched the RuPay Contactless SIB Paytag Sticker, an NFC-enabled payment instrument for fast and secure digital payments.
- ★ The compact sticker can be attached to mobile phones, wallets, or cardholders, enabling tap-and-pay transactions without a physical debit card.
- ★ The Paytag Sticker allows contactless payments at POS terminals using the RuPay infrastructure.
- ★ For transactions up to ₹5,000, no PIN is required, while transactions above ₹5,000 at POS terminals require PIN authentication.

HCLTech Signs Multi-Year Digital Modernisation Partnership with Netherlands' ASN Bank

- ★ HCL Technologies (HCLTech) entered into a multi-year strategic partnership with ASN Bank, the Netherlands' fourth-largest retail bank, to modernise digital operations and IT architecture.
- ★ The partnership focuses on modernisation and standardisation of IT systems, enabling a future-ready digital organisation for ASN Bank.
- ★ It aims to streamline IT services, reduce the number of vendors, and automate core banking processes to enhance efficiency.
- ★ HCLTech will support enterprise applications and IT systems through a scalable distributed delivery model.
- ★ The collaboration is expected to improve operational efficiency, enhance customer experience, and rationalise existing products.
- ★ The partnership aligns with ASN Bank's 'Simplify and Grow' strategy and strengthens HCLTech's presence in the Dutch banking sector.

BharatPe and YES BANK Introduce 'Pay Later with BharatPe' Instant Credit on UPI

- ★ BharatPe, in partnership with YES BANK, launched 'Pay Later with BharatPe', an instant Credit on UPI product powered by NPCI.
- ★ The product aims to democratise access to credit across India, catering to both consumers and merchants, especially those new to credit.

- ★ The facility provides interest-free credit for up to 45 days, with limits refreshed upon repayment, and flexible 3–12 month EMI repayment options.
- ★ Users can track usage, limits, and repayments, manage EMIs, and pay securely via UPI, ensuring a safe, convenient, and fully integrated credit experience.

Only Five Startups Achieve Unicorn Status in 2025

- ★ Only five startups became unicorns in 2025, the same as in 2024, indicating a continued valuation reset in India's startup ecosystem despite a recovery in growth-stage funding.
- ★ According to Venture Intelligence, $3.2 billion was invested in Series B and C rounds in 2025, up from $2.6 billion in 2024.
- ★ The five new unicorns in 2025 were Dhan, Jumbotail, Drools, Porter, and Juspay.
- ★ This is sharply lower than 2022, when 22 startups reached unicorn status during the pandemic-era valuation boom.
- ★ A unicorn company is a privately held startup valued at over $1 billion, a term coined by VC Aileen Lee.

RBI Grants Final Payment Aggregator Licence to Mswipe Technologies

- ★ Mswipe Technologies Private Limited received the final Payment Aggregator (PA) licence from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
- ★ The licence allows Mswipe to provide both online and offline merchant payment acceptance under a single regulatory framework.
- ★ The PA approval authorises onboarding of merchants and aggregation of multiple payment instruments across online, offline and hybrid platforms.
- ★ The licence enables inward and outward cross-border transactions, strengthening international payment facilitation.
- ★ Omnichannel payment acceptance is supported through e-commerce websites, mobile applications (apps) and physical storefronts.
- ★ Mswipe Technologies also holds an in-principle Prepaid Payment Instrument (PPI) licence and a Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC) licence, obtained in 2022.
- ★ With this approval, Mswipe joins a select group of fully authorised Payment Aggregators including Paytm, Razorpay, Pine Labs, Easebuzz, PayU and Airpay.

PayNearby Secures Third-Party Application Provider Licence Approval from NPCI

- ★ Fintech company PayNearby has received Third-Party Application Provider (TPAP) licence approval from the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).
- ★ The TPAP licence authorises non-bank entities to offer UPI-enabled payment applications in India.
- ★ Following the approval, PayNearby launched the "PayNearby Saathi" app, expanding its presence in the digital payments ecosystem.
- ★ PayNearby Saathi provides UPI-enabled savings accounts and digital payment services to users.

- ★ The app integrates BHASHINI, India's national language translation platform, for voice-based interactions.
- ★ BHASHINI integration enables users to interact in their preferred Indian languages with instant voice responses, enhancing financial inclusion.
- ★ Well-known TPAP licence holders include PhonePe, Google Pay, and Paytm, placing PayNearby among leading UPI service providers.
- ★ The development supports India's digital payments growth, multilingual access, and last-mile financial services delivery.

Canara Bank Introduces 'Canara ai1Pe', a Unified UPI App

- ★ Canara Bank, an Indian Public Sector Bank (PSB), has launched 'Canara ai1Pe', a UPI-based digital payments application.
- ★ Canara ai1Pe aims to provide fast, secure, and convenient digital payment services to customers across banks.
- ★ The app allows users to link savings or current accounts from any bank to send and receive UPI payments, ensuring full interoperability.
- ★ Core services of the app include instant fund transfers, QR-code-based merchant payments, utility bill payments, and mobile/DTH recharges on a single platform.
- ★ To ensure security, the app uses device binding (restricting access to the registered mobile only) and mandatory UPI Personal Identification Number (PIN) authentication.
- ★ The UPI Delegate feature (also known as UPI Circle) enables primary users to add trusted family members with predefined monthly spending limits, such as ₹15,000, while maintaining central control.
- ★ The app supports UPI Autopay, allowing automated recurring payments for subscriptions, EMIs, SIPs, and utility bills.
- ★ The app offers a user-friendly interface with rewards and finance management tools, significantly enhancing digital banking convenience for users of all age groups.

Axis Bank Introduces 'Digital Merchant Cash Advance Loans' for MSMEs

- ★ Axis Bank Limited, a leading private sector lender in India, has launched a new digital loan product called 'Digital Merchant Cash Advance Loans' for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).
- ★ The product is specifically designed to address the cash flow requirements of small merchants, such as retail shopkeepers, who need quick access to working capital for daily operations.
- ★ The loan offers an unsecured credit facility ranging from ₹2 lakh to ₹20 lakh to eligible MSMEs, requiring no collateral.
- ★ It is the first-of-its-kind product in the industry that assesses merchant eligibility primarily based on daily cash flows and digital transaction intelligence, rather than conventional financial documents or property-based guarantees.
- ★ The entire process is fully digital, from application to disbursement, allowing instant credit decisions for merchants within minutes of applying.

★ The product features an Everyday Installment (EDI) system, enabling shopkeepers and small merchants to repay loans in small daily installments linked to their daily sales, ensuring business stability without the stress of large monthly payments.

Canara HSBC Life Insurance Enters Bancassurance Partnership with Equitas Small Finance Bank

★ Canara HSBC Life Insurance Company Limited (Canara HSBC), a Joint Venture (JV) between Canara Bank (51%), HSBC Insurance (26%), and Punjab National Bank (which inherited the stake from OBC), has entered into a strategic bancassurance partnership with Equitas Small Finance Bank (ESFB).

★ Under this partnership, Canara HSBC Life will offer a comprehensive suite of products, including life protection, savings, annuity, child, and investment-linked plans (ULIPs), via ESFB's network of nearly 1,000 banking outlets.

★ The collaboration promotes financial inclusion by integrating life insurance with ESFB's branch and phygital banking model, improving access for customers across Tier 1, 2, and 3 locations, especially in Southern India (Tamil Nadu and Karnataka).

★ The initiative aligns with IRDAI's vision of "Insurance for All by 2047", which aims to ensure that every Indian citizen has an appropriate life and health cover by the centenary of India's independence.

SEBI Clears NHAI-Sponsored Raajmarg Infra Investment Trust to Operate as Public InvIT

★ National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has received Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) approval for its sponsored Raajmarg Infra Investment Trust (RIIT) to operate as a public Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvIT).

★ The approval strengthens NHAI's asset monetisation programme, aimed at unlocking value of National Highway assets and creating a long-term investment instrument for retail and domestic investors.

★ The Public InvIT (RIIT) seeks to broaden public participation in national highway infrastructure development and support sustainable infrastructure financing.

★ NHAI has incorporated Raajmarg Infra Investment Managers Pvt. Ltd. (RIIMPL) as the Investment Manager for RIIT.

★ RIIMPL is a collaborative venture with equity participation from major financial institutions including SBI, PNB, NaBFID, Axis Bank, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, IDBI Bank, IndusInd Bank, Yes Bank, and Bajaj Finserv Ventures Ltd.

★ Shri NRVVMK Rajendra Kumar, Member (Finance), NHAI, will serve as Managing Director and CEO (Additional Charge) of RIIMPL.

★ An Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvIT) is a SEBI-regulated trust that pools investor funds to own and operate income-generating infrastructure assets and distributes most of the cash flows to unit holders.

NPCI Launches Central Portal – upihelp.npci.org.in to Manage UPI Autopay Mandates

- ★ The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) has launched a centralized portal – npci.org.in to enable users to view, manage, and revoke all UPI Autopay standing instructions from a single platform.
- ★ The initiative aims to curb opaque recurring charges and prevent dark patterns used by some digital platforms that trigger automatic monthly debits with low user visibility.
- ★ NPCI has announced that UPI Autopay mandates will become portable, allowing users to transfer recurring mandates seamlessly from one UPI application to another.
- ★ All UPI ecosystem members, including banks and payment service providers, are required to implement these reforms by December 31, 2025, to enhance consumer protection and transparency.
- ★ According to NPCI data, UPI Autopay recurring transactions recorded 100% year-on-year growth, reflecting rapid adoption of recurring digital payments.
- ★ In November 2025, the top 10 banks together processed 926 million UPI Autopay transactions, a significant rise from 530.5 million transactions in November 2024.
- ★ State Bank of India (SBI) emerged as the largest processor of UPI Autopay transactions, handling 290 million recurring payments.
- ★ Airtel Payments Bank recorded the fastest growth, with UPI Autopay transactions increasing from 25.6 million to 89.7 million within a year.

SEBI Doubles Threshold to ₹10 Lakh to Simplify Issuance of Duplicate Securities

- ★ Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has simplified the procedure for issuance of duplicate securities by doubling the monetary threshold for simplified documentation from ₹5 lakh to ₹10 lakh.
- ★ The revised norms aim to make the process faster, efficient, and investor-friendly, while reducing compliance burden and procedural inconsistencies.
- ★ The decision follows a consultation paper issued in November 2025, focused on ease of investor services and uniformity in procedures.
- ★ Effective immediately, the new guidelines also apply to applications currently under process.
- ★ Investors holding securities valued up to ₹10 lakh will now be required to submit fewer documents, simplifying recovery of lost or damaged securities.
- ★ All duplicate securities will be issued only in demat mode, promoting dematerialisation and stronger investor protection.
- ★ For securities above ₹10 lakh: SEBI has prescribed a standardised Affidavit-cum-Indemnity Bond format with rationalised documentation.
- ★ Securities up to ₹10,000: Investors can submit a simple undertaking on plain paper.
- ★ Securities above ₹10,000 and up to ₹10 lakh: Submission of only a standard Affidavit-cum-Indemnity Bond on appropriate non-judicial stamp paper is required.

- ★ Securities above ₹10 lakh: Investors must additionally submit a copy of FIR, police complaint, court order, or complaint containing full details of the securities.
- ★ For securities valued above ₹10 lakh, the listed company must publish an advertisement about the loss of securities in a widely circulated regional newspaper on a weekly basis.

Life Insurance Corporation of India Partners with Sahaj Insurance Services

- ★ Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) has entered into a strategic collaboration with Sahaj Insurance Services Private Limited to expand life insurance penetration in rural and semi-urban India.
- ★ The partnership aims to improve insurance access and awareness in underserved and low-literacy regions, supporting India's broader goals of financial inclusion and social security.
- ★ Under the agreement, Sahaj's assisted digital service network will enable citizens to understand, enrol in, and manage LIC life insurance policies, simplifying insurance processes at the last mile.
- ★ The collaboration will leverage digitally enabled rural centres to provide services such as policy onboarding, policy servicing, and claims assistance.
- ★ The partnership aligns with its long-standing objective of providing life insurance protection to all sections of society, especially beyond urban centres.
- ★ Sahaj Insurance Services highlighted that the initiative combines LIC's trusted brand with Sahaj's last-mile delivery and assisted digital model.
- ★ Sahaj Insurance Services Private Limited is a wholly owned subsidiary of Sahaj Retail and operates under the Kanoria Foundation initiative.
- ★ Sahaj Insurance Services has recently received a corporate agency licence from the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI), enabling it to distribute insurance products nationwide.

IRDAI Slaps ₹1 Crore Penalty on Reliance General Insurance for Regulatory Violations

- ★ The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) imposed a ₹1 crore monetary penalty on Reliance General Insurance for violation of regulatory norms.
- ★ IRDAI observed irregular payouts of ₹5.16 crore in FY19 made by the insurer to Glitterbug Technologies, the parent company of Coverfox Insurance Broking.
- ★ The regulator also flagged arbitrary payments made to an individual agent of Oriental Insurance Company, amounting to ₹1.14 crore (FY19), ₹27 lakh (FY20) and ₹28.67 lakh (FY21).
- ★ IRDAI directed Reliance General Insurance to place the penalty order before its Board, submit the Board meeting minutes, and file an Action Taken Report (ATR) within 90 days.

RBI Grants Non-Banking Financial Company Registration to Aryaman Finance (India) Limited

- ★ Aryaman Finance (India) Limited (AFIL), a wholly owned subsidiary of Aryaman Financial Services Limited (AFSL), received a Certificate of Registration (CoR) from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to commence operations as a Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC).

- ★ The RBI grants NBFC registration under Section 45-IA of the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934, which governs regulation and supervision of NBFCs in India.
- ★ Post approval, AFIL will operate as a Type-II NBFC-ND-ICC (Non-Deposit Taking – Investment and Credit Company), meaning it is not allowed to accept public deposits.
- ★ As an NBFC-ND-ICC, AFIL will primarily undertake lending, investment, and allied financial services, while complying with RBI prudential norms and regulatory requirements.
- ★ Aryaman Financial Services Limited (AFSL) is a SEBI-registered Category-I Merchant Banker, highlighting its strong regulatory standing in the capital markets.
- ★ AFSL's core business includes lead management and syndication of IPOs, FPOs, Rights Issues, Private Investment in Public Equity (PIPE), Venture Capital (VC) funding, and other fund-raising activities.

ECONOMY

India's Forex Reserves Fall By $4.4 Billion To $688.1 Billion

- ★ India's forex reserves declined by USD 4.472 billion to USD 688.104 billion during the week ended 21 November,2025 mainly due to a sharp fall in gold reserves.
- ★ The overall reserves had earlier increased by USD 5.543 billion to USD 692.576 billion in the previous reporting week.
- ★ Foreign Currency Assets (FCA), the largest component of reserves, fell by USD 1.69 billion to USD 560.6 billion, impacted by movements in euro, pound, and yen.
- ★ Gold reserves recorded a steep decline of USD 2.675 billion to USD 104.182 billion for the week.
- ★ Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) decreased by USD 84 million to USD 18.566 billion.
- ★ India's reserve position with the IMF dropped by USD 23 million to USD 4.757 billion during the reporting week.
- ★ In summary, India's foreign exchange reserves decreased by USD 4.4 billion, driven primarily by reductions in gold reserves, FCA, SDRs, and the IMF reserve position.

Moody's Projects India's GDP To Grow 7% In 2025, Leading Emerging Market Expansion

- ★ Moody's Ratings stated on November 28, 2025 that India will lead growth among emerging markets and the Asia-Pacific (APAC)
- ★ India's GDP is projected to grow 7% in 2025 and 4% in 2026, according to Moody's.
- ★ Moody's said India's domestic growth drivers continue to underpin economic resilience despite global uncertainty.
- ★ Although the Indian rupee has weakened against the US dollar, most rated companies have strong currency risk management or financial buffers.

- ★ Investment-grade Indian companies continue to have access to international capital markets, Moody's
- ★ APAC GDP growth is projected to remain steady at 4% in 2026, compared with 3.3% in 2024 and an expected 3.6% in 2025.
- ★ On a weighted average basis, emerging markets in APAC will grow at 6%, while advanced markets will record only 1.3% growth.

India's Current Account Deficit Narrows to $12.3 Billion in Q2 FY26

- ★ India's current account deficit (CAD) moderated to $12.3 billion, or 1.3% of GDP, in Q2 FY26, supported by a lower merchandise trade deficit.
- ★ In the preceding quarter (Q1 FY26), the current account deficit was $2.4 billion, or 0.2% of GDP.
- ★ The RBI reported that India's merchandise trade deficit narrowed to $87.4 billion from $88.5 billion a year earlier.
- ★ Non-resident deposits declined to $2.5 billion from $6.2 billion.
- ★ A current account deficit occurs when a country's imports exceed exports in goods and services, reflecting foreign transactions and impacting economic stability.

Asian Development Bank Ups India's FY26 Growth Projection to 7.2%

- ★ The Asian Development Bank (ADB) released the Asian Development Outlook (ADO) December 2025 titled "Growth Steadies But Uncertainty Lingers", updating economic projections for India and developing Asia.
- ★ ADB raised India's GDP growth forecast for FY26 to 7.2% (up by 70 bps from 6.5%), citing strong domestic consumption boosted by recent tax cuts and GST reforms.
- ★ India recorded GDP growth of 8.2% in Q2 FY26, the highest in six quarters, compared to 7.8% in Q1, reflecting robust recovery momentum.
- ★ Despite the FY26 upgrade, ADB retained India's GDP growth projection for FY27 at 6.5%, showing stable long-term expectations.
- ★ ADB revised India's inflation outlook downward to 2.6% for FY26 (earlier 3.1%) due to GST reductions, easing food price inflation, strong agricultural output, and favourable weather conditions.
- ★ Inflation in India is projected to rise to 4.2% in FY27, aligning closer to the RBI's inflation target, reflecting normalising price trends.
- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) also increased its FY26 GDP growth estimate to 7.3%, up from 6.8%, after strong economic performance during July–September.
- ★ For developing Asia, ADB upgraded the CY25 growth forecast by 30 bps to 5.1%, up from 4.8% projected in ADO September 2025.
- ★ ADB also raised the CY26 growth outlook for developing Asia by 10 bps to 4.6%, signalling sustained regional recovery.
- ★ Inflation in developing Asia is expected to fall to 1.6% in CY25, down from 1.7%, mainly due to lower food inflation in India.

★ The CY26 inflation forecast for developing Asia remains unchanged at 2.1%, indicating stable price expectations.

DEFENCE

India Deploys INS Vikrant and INS Udaygiri for Sri Lanka's International Fleet Review 2025 in Colombo

★ India's first indigenous aircraft carrier INS Vikrant and the indigenously built frigate INS Udaygiri are representing the Indian Navy at the International Fleet Review (IFR) 2025 in Colombo, Sri Lanka from 27–29 November 2025.

★ The IFR 2025 is part of the Sri Lanka Navy's 75th anniversary and includes naval ships, delegations, and observers from multiple countries.

★ This marks the maiden overseas deployment of both INS Vikrant and INS Udaygiri, highlighting India's focus on regional maritime co-operation.

★ The participation of INS Vikrant, India's Nation's Pride, emphasises India's commitment to peace, stability, and security in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) through enhanced collaboration and interoperability.

★ The deployment of INS Udaygiri showcases India's advancing indigenous shipbuilding capabilities and its expanding naval presence in the IOR.

★ During the Colombo visit, the ships will join the ceremonial fleet review, city parade, community outreach events, and professional naval exchanges.

Indian Navy Receives 'Taragiri', the Fourth Indigenous Nilgiri-Class (Project 17A) Advanced Stealth Frigate

★ Taragiri (Yard 12653), the fourth ship of the Nilgiri Class (Project 17A) and the third built by MDL, was delivered to the Indian Navy on 28 Nov 2025, marking progress in Aatmanirbharta in warship construction.

★ Taragiri is the modern reincarnation of the former INS Taragiri, a Leander-class frigate that served from 1980 to 2013 for 33 years.

★ Project 17A frigates are versatile multi-mission platforms featuring advanced stealth, firepower, automation, and survivability

★ The ship was designed by the Warship Design Bureau (WDB) and supervised by the Warship Overseeing Team (Mumbai), using the Integrated Construction philosophy to meet timelines.

★ P17A ships carry upgraded weapon and sensor suites compared to the P17 Shivalik class, including BrahMos SSM, MFSTAR, MRSAM, 76mm SRGM, 30mm/12.7mm CIWS, and ASW rockets and torpedoes.

★ These ships use CODOG propulsion with a diesel engine + gas turbine, driving Controllable Pitch Propellers (CPP), supported by an advanced Integrated Platform Management System (IPMS).

- ★ Taragiri is the fourth P17A ship delivered in 11 months, with its build period reduced to 81 months compared to 93 months for the first ship Nilgiri.
- ★ The remaining three P17A ships (one at MDL, two at GRSE) will be delivered by August 2026.
- ★ The project has 75% indigenisation, involved 200 MSMEs, and generated employment for 4,000 direct and 10,000 indirect.

India–Maldives Joint Military Exercise Ekuverin Begins in Kerala

- ★ The 14th edition of Joint Military Exercise EKUVERIN between the Indian Army and the Maldives National Defence Force (MNDF) began at Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, held from 02–15 December 2025 (14-day joint exercise).
- ★ The Indian Army is represented by 45 personnel from the GARHWAL RIFLES, while the Maldives also participates with an equal-strength MNDF contingent.
- ★ 'Ekuverin', meaning "Friends" in Dhivehi, signifies the strong friendship, mutual trust, and military co-operation between India and the Maldives.
- ★ The exercise has been conducted alternately in both countries since 2009, reflecting India's Neighbourhood First Policy and commitment to strong defence partnerships.
- ★ The 2025 edition focuses on enhancing interoperability and operational synergy in Counter-Insurgency (CI) and Counter-Terrorism (CT) operations across jungle, semi-urban, and coastal terrains.
- ★ Troops will undertake joint tactical drills, best-practice sharing, and operational planning to strengthen their ability to respond to regional security challenges.
- ★ The exercise highlights the growing defence co-operation and shared commitment of India and the Maldives toward peace and stability in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).
- ★ India and Maldives also conduct Ekatha (bilateral) and Dosti (trilateral with Sri Lanka).

ICG and Philippine Coast Guard Hold First Annual Bilateral Meeting

- ★ The 1st Annual Bilateral Meeting between the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) and the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) was held in Manila, Philippines on 02 December 2025.
- ★ The meeting was conducted under the MoU signed on 22 August 2023 between the two coast guards.
- ★ Both sides reviewed ship visits, professional exchanges, and ongoing co-operative activities, and agreed to strengthen interoperability and operational coordination.
- ★ The engagement aligns with India's Act East Policy, SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) and the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI).
- ★ Priority areas of co-operation included Maritime Search and Rescue, Maritime Law Enforcement, Marine Pollution Response, and Capacity Building.
- ★ The meeting was co-chaired by ADG Donny Michael, Commander (Eastern Seaboard), ICG, and Vice Admiral Edgar L. Ybanez, Deputy Commandant for Operations, PCG.

India to Commission INS Aridhaman, Third Indigenously Built Nuclear Submarine

- ★ India is preparing to commission INS Aridhaman, its third indigenously built nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine (SSBN), enhancing the nation's sea-based nuclear deterrent.
- ★ INS Aridhaman has entered the final phase of trials, with induction expected soon, as confirmed by Navy Chief Admiral Dinesh K. Tripathi.
- ★ The submarine follows INS Arighaat and joins INS Arihant, enabling India to operate three ballistic missile submarines simultaneously, strengthening second-strike capability under its nuclear doctrine.
- ★ INS Aridhaman has an improved design, capable of carrying more long-range nuclear-capable missiles, with enhanced endurance and survivability.
- ★ A fourth submarine in the series is under construction, further expanding India's strategic depth.
- ★ Admiral Tripathi highlighted Indian Navy initiatives such as the Indian Ocean Ship Sagar and Africa-India Key Maritime Exercise, involving nine regional and African partner nations, promoting co-operation and shared maritime practices.
- ★ The Navy expects to receive four Rafale fighter jets by 2029 and is advancing Project 75 India, aimed at acquiring six advanced submarines.
- ★ INS Aridhaman is equipped to carry longer-range missiles, significantly enhancing strike capability and survivability in line with India's nuclear doctrine.
- ★ The submarine will form a trio of Arihant-class SSBNs along with INS Arihant and INS Arighaat, the latter commissioned in August 2024 in Visakhapatnam.

India–Malaysia Joint Military Exercise Harimau Shakti Begins

- ★ The 5th edition of India–Malaysia Joint Exercise Harimau Shakti–2025 began at Mahajan Field Firing Range, Rajasthan, and will be held from 05–18 December 2025.
- ★ The Indian contingent mainly comprises troops from the DOGRA Regiment, while Malaysia is represented by the 25th Battalion Royal Malaysian Army.
- ★ The exercise aims to rehearse Sub-Conventional Operations under Chapter VII of the United Nations Mandate with emphasis on counter-terrorist operations.
- ★ Both armies will practice cordon, search and destroy missions, heliborne operations, AMAR (Army Martial Arts Routine), combat reflex shooting, and Yoga.
- ★ Training includes securing helipads, conducting casualty evacuation, and improving interoperability during UN peacekeeping operations.
- ★ Both sides will exchange best practices, enhancing defence co-operation and strengthening bilateral relations between the Indian Army and the Royal Malaysian Army.
- ★ The 4th edition (2024) was held at Bentong Camp, Pahang District, Malaysia from 2–15 December 2024.
- ★ The 1st edition (2012) of Exercise Harimau Shakti took place in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in October 2012.

8th Edition of Indo–French Bilateral Air Exercise Garuda 25

- ★ The 8th edition of Exercise Garuda, a bilateral Indo–French air exercise, was held at Air Base 118, Mont-de-Marsan, France.
- ★ The exercise concluded on 27 November 2025, and the IAF contingent returned to India on 02 December 2025.
- ★ The exercise involved the Indian Air Force (IAF) and the French Air and Space Force (FASF).
- ★ The IAF participated with Su-30MKI fighter aircraft, supported by IL-78 air-to-air refuelling aircraft and C-17 Globemaster III transport aircraft.
- ★ Both air forces conducted complex air operations in a realistic operational environment, improving combat readiness.
- ★ Training included joint mission planning, coordinated strike and escort missions, and familiarisation with operational procedures, enhancing interoperability.
- ★ The IAF maintenance crew maintained high aircraft serviceability, ensuring smooth execution of all planned missions.
- ★ Exercise Garuda 2025 was one of the largest international air training engagements undertaken by the IAF in 2025.

India–Indonesia Joint Special Forces Exercise Garuda Shakti

- ★ The 10th edition of the India–Indonesia Joint Special Forces Exercise GARUDA SHAKTI commenced at the Special Forces Training School, Bakloh, Himachal Pradesh, and is being held from 03–12 December 2025.
- ★ The Indian contingent in the 2025 edition consists of troops from the PARACHUTE REGIMENT (Special Forces), while the Indonesian contingent comprises personnel from the Indonesian Special Forces.
- ★ The exercise aims to enhance mutual understanding, co-operation, and interoperability between the Special Forces of both countries.
- ★ Training involves troop-level tactics, counter-terrorism techniques, unarmed combat, combat shooting, sniping, heliborne operations, and planning for drone, counter-UAS, and loiter-munition strikes in semi-mountainous terrain.
- ★ Both sides are exchanging expertise on weapons, equipment, and operational practices to strengthen joint operational capabilities.
- ★ The exercise emphasises physical fitness, tactical drills, and high-intensity combat training, culminating in a validation exercise simulating real-world operational scenarios.
- ★ The 2025 edition of GARUDA SHAKTI marks a major step in enhancing India–Indonesia defence co-operation and strengthening bilateral military relations.

Indian Army Hosts Third Edition of Chanakya Defence Dialogue 2025

- ★ The Chanakya Defence Dialogue 2025 was held at the Manekshaw Centre, New Delhi, inaugurated by President Droupadi Murmu, bringing together military leaders, global experts, diplomats, industry representatives, and scholars.

- ★ The dialogue focused on India's vision of Sashakt (Empowered), Surakshit (Secure), and Viksit (Developed) Bharat, addressing security challenges, defence reforms, and technological advancements in cyber, space, and cognitive warfare.
- ★ General Upendra Dwivedi highlighted the Army's transformation roadmap with HOP 2032, STEP 2037, and JUMP 2047, emphasizing indigenisation, innovation, and stronger military–industry–academia collaboration.
- ★ The event was organised by the Indian Army, in collaboration with the Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS).
- ★ It was the third edition of the dialogue, examining India's security challenges and technological frontiers in an increasingly contested global landscape.

Indian Navy to commission second MH-60R helicopter squadron INAS 335 at INS Hansa

- ★ The Indian Navy will commission its second MH-60R helicopter squadron, INAS 335 (Ospreys), on 17 December 2025 at INS Hansa, Goa, in the presence of Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi, the Chief of the Naval Staff.
- ★ The commissioning marks a significant milestone in naval modernisation and capability enhancement of the Indian Navy's aviation arm.
- ★ The MH-60R helicopter is equipped with advanced weapons, sensors, and avionics, making it a multi-role and versatile platform.
- ★ The helicopter enhances the Navy's ability to counter both conventional threats and asymmetric threats, including maritime security challenges.
- ★ The aircraft has been fully integrated with fleet operations and has demonstrated operational effectiveness on multiple occasions.
- ★ The induction of INAS 335 will provide a major boost to the Indian Navy's integral aviation and maritime combat capabilities.

India–UAE Joint Military Exercise DESERT CYCLONE 2025

- ★ The Indian Army contingent has departed for the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to participate in the 2nd edition of the India–UAE Joint Military Exercise DESERT CYCLONE-II.
- ★ Exercise DESERT CYCLONE-II will be held at Abu Dhabi, UAE, from 18 to 30 December 2025.
- ★ The Indian contingent consists of 45 personnel, primarily from The Mechanised Infantry Regiment.
- ★ The UAE Land Forces will be represented by the 53 Mechanised Infantry Battalion with a comparable strength.
- ★ The exercise aims to enhance interoperability and strengthen bilateral defence co-operation between the Indian Army and UAE Land Forces.
- ★ Training focuses on urban operations and sub-conventional warfare under a United Nations mandate.
- ★ The exercise prepares both forces for peacekeeping, counter-terrorism, and stability operations.

- ★ Joint training includes fighting in built-up areas (FIBUA), heliborne operations, and detailed mission planning.
- ★ Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) and counter-UAS techniques will be integrated for operations in urban environments.
- ★ The exercise builds on recent high-level visits by the Commander, UAE Land Forces (Oct 2025) and the Commander, UAE Presidential Guard (Dec 2025).
- ★ DESERT CYCLONE-II highlights the deepening India–UAE strategic partnership and growing military diplomacy.
- ★ The exercise reinforces a commitment to regional peace, security, and stability.
- ★ It promotes a mutual understanding of tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) and develops interoperable military capabilities.

India and Brazil Sign Tripartite MoU on Scorpene-Class Submarine Maintenance

- ★ India and Brazil signed a tripartite Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen co-operation in the maintenance of Scorpene-class submarines.
- ★ The MoU was signed between the Indian Navy, Brazilian Navy, and Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL).
- ★ The agreement was concluded during the official visit of Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi to Brazil from 9–12 December 2025.
- ★ The MoU focuses on exchange of information related to maintenance, life-cycle support, and sustainment of Scorpene-class submarines operated by both navies.
- ★ It aims to share technical expertise, improve submarine upkeep, and enhance long-term operational readiness.
- ★ Scorpene-class submarines are advanced diesel-electric attack submarines designed for anti-surface warfare, anti-submarine warfare, intelligence gathering, and surveillance.
- ★ India operates these submarines under Project-75, with construction carried out by MDL under technology transfer.
- ★ Brazil also operates Scorpene submarines as part of its naval modernisation programme, making co-operation mutually beneficial.
- ★ The agreement will enhance co-operation in logistics support, training of personnel, experience sharing, and defence research and development.
- ★ It is a significant step in strengthening Navy-to-Navy as well as industry-to-industry collaboration, and reinforces the growing India–Brazil strategic partnership as major maritime nations and key voices of the Global South.

Indian Navy Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff Vice Admiral Tarun Sobti visits Maldives

- ★ Vice Admiral Tarun Sobti, Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff (DCNS), Indian Navy, visited Maldives from 15–17 December 2025 to attend the closing ceremony of Exercise Ekatha 2025.

- ★ Exercise Ekatha, established in 2017, is an annual bilateral maritime exercise between the Indian Navy and the Maldives National Defence Force (MNDF).
- ★ The 8th edition of Ex Ekatha 2025 focused on enhancing interoperability and operational synergy between the two navies.
- ★ Key activities included technical and combat diving, boarding operations, firing drills, demolition and explosive handling, asymmetric warfare tactics, and heli-borne special operations.
- ★ During the visit, VAdm Tarun Sobti met Major General Ibrahim Hilmy, Chief of Defence Force (CDF), MNDF, in Malé.
- ★ Discussions covered regional maritime security challenges, training co-operation, counter–drug trafficking efforts, and review of ongoing defence projects.
- ★ The DCNS handed over operational spares for MNDF Coast Guard Ship Huravee onboard INS Sharda at Malé on 15 December 2025.
- ★ The engagement aligns with India's strategic vision of MAHASAGAR (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth for all in the Region) and the Neighbourhood First Policy.

India–UAE Exercise DESERT CYCLONE-II

- ★ The 2nd edition of the joint military exercise "DESERT CYCLONE-II" between the Indian Army (IA) and the UAE Land Forces commenced at Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates, and will continue till 30 December 2025.
- ★ The two-week long exercise aims to enhance interoperability and strengthen bilateral defence co-operation through joint training in urban environments.
- ★ The exercise focuses on sub-conventional operations under a United Nations (UN) mandate, preparing both forces for peacekeeping, counter-terrorism, and stability operations.
- ★ The Indian contingent comprises 45 personnel, primarily from a battalion of The Mechanised Infantry Regiment.
- ★ The UAE Land Forces contingent includes 53 personnel from the 53rd Mechanised Infantry Battalion.
- ★ Planned activities include fighting in built-in areas (FIBUA), heliborne operations, and detailed joint mission planning.
- ★ The exercise incorporates Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) and counter-UAS techniques for operations in urban terrain.
- ★ DESERT CYCLONE-II reflects the strengthening strategic partnership between India and the UAE and is expected to boost military-to-military relations.

ICG Commissions New-Generation Fast Patrol Vessel 'Amulya' Built by Goa Shipyard Limited

- ★ Indian Coast Guard (ICG) commissioned ICG Ship 'Amulya' on 19 December 2025 at Goa.
- ★ Amulya is the third of eight Adamya-class Fast Patrol Vessels, representing a new-generation indigenous patrol vessel.

- ★ The vessel was designed and built by Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL), reflecting India's indigenous shipbuilding capability.
- ★ With over 60% indigenous components, ICGS Amulya supports the Government initiatives of Aatmanirbhar Bharat and Make in India.
- ★ The 51-metre-long vessel integrates a modern design philosophy focused on efficiency, endurance, and rapid response capability.
- ★ The ship is powered by two advanced 3000 kW diesel engines, enabling a top speed of 27 knots.
- ★ ICGS Amulya has an operational endurance of 1,500 nautical miles, allowing extended missions in India's maritime zones.
- ★ Mission roles of ICGS Amulya include surveillance, interdiction, search and rescue (SAR), anti-smuggling operations, and pollution response.
- ★ ICGS Amulya will be based at Paradip, Odisha, under the administrative and operational control of the Commander, Coast Guard Region (North East).
- ★ The ship is commanded by Commandant (JG) Anupam Singh.
- ★ Crew strength of ICGS Amulya consists of 05 officers and 34 personnel, totaling 39 crew members.

Indian Navy Retires INS Sindhughosh

- ★ The Indian Navy decommissioned INS Sindhughosh (S55), the lead Kilo-class diesel-electric submarine, after 40 years of service.
- ★ The decommissioning ceremony was held at Naval Dockyard, Mumbai, on 19 December 2025.
- ★ The event was presided over by Vice Admiral Krishna Swaminathan, Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Western Naval Command.
- ★ The decommissioning marked the end of a four-decade-long operational career, highlighting INS Sindhughosh's significant contribution to India's maritime security.

Indian Navy Receives 'Anjadip', Third Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft

- ★ 'Anjadip', the third of eight ASW Shallow Water Craft (ASW SWC), was delivered to the Indian Navy on 22 December 2025 at Chennai.
- ★ The ship has been indigenously designed and built by Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE), Kolkata, in partnership with L&T Shipyard, Kattupalli under a Public-Private Partnership (PPP).
- ★ ASW SWC vessels are constructed as per the Classification Rules of the Indian Register of Shipping (IRS), highlighting collaborative defence manufacturing.
- ★ With a length of about 77 metres, these are the largest Indian Naval warships propelled by Waterjets.
- ★ Anjadip is equipped with Lightweight Torpedoes, indigenously designed Anti-Submarine Rockets, and shallow water SONAR, enabling effective detection and engagement of underwater threats.
- ★ The ship will enhance the Navy's anti-submarine warfare, coastal surveillance, and mine-laying capabilities.

- ★ The vessel is named after Anjadip Island off the coast of Karwar, Karnataka, and is a reincarnation of the erstwhile INS Anjadip, a Petya-class corvette decommissioned in 2003.
- ★ The delivery marks a key milestone in indigenous shipbuilding, aligned with the Government's vision of 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat', with over 80% indigenous content.

RANKS, INDICES & REPORTS

World's Most Populous City – UN Report 2025

- ★ According to the United Nations World Urbanisation Prospects 2025, Jakarta (Indonesia) has overtaken Tokyo as the world's most populous city with an estimated 42 million residents.
- ★ Dhaka (Bangladesh) is second with 37 million, and Tokyo (Japan) is third with 33 million.
- ★ The change in ranking is due to UN's revised urban delimitation criteria, which provide a standardised global framework for city populations, including: consistent population and geospatial criteria, accurate mapping of functional urban areas, and better inclusion of urban sprawl and regional connectivity.
- ★ In 1950, only 20% of the world's population lived in cities; by 2025, nearly half of the 8.2 billion people reside in urban areas.
- ★ By 2050, two-thirds of global population growth is expected in cities. The number of megacities (population ≥10 million) has increased from 8 in 1975 to 33 in 2025.
- ★ Overall, Tokyo shows a gradual population decline, reflecting Japan's demographic challenges.

India's Leading Fruit and Fish Producer with Robust Economic Growth: RBI Report

- ★ According to a Reserve Bank of India (RBI) report, Andhra Pradesh has emerged as a top-performing state across agriculture, fisheries, and socio-economic indicators.
- ★ During FY 2024–25, the state ranked first in fruit production with over 19 million tonnes.
- ★ Andhra Pradesh also led in fish production, recording nearly 1 million tonnes.
- ★ The state recorded steady economic growth, with GSDP estimated at nearly ₹16 lakh crore at current prices in 2024–25.
- ★ The per capita GSDP of the state stood at over ₹2.5 lakh, reflecting rising income levels.
- ★ Average life expectancy in Andhra Pradesh was 70 years (on par with the national average), with female life expectancy at 73 years and male life expectancy at 68 years.
- ★ In terms of power availability, the state ranked 14th nationally, with per capita availability of nearly 1,500 units.
- ★ Progress towards Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) placed Andhra Pradesh at 10th position nationally with a score of 74.

AWARDS & PRIZES

Jay Shah Awarded "Indian of the Year 2025" in Outstanding Achievement Category

★ Jay Shah, Chairman of the International Cricket Council (ICC), received the Indian of the Year 2025 award under the Outstanding Achievement category for his significant contributions to modernising cricket administration.

★ The award recognises his leadership in implementing major reforms such as pay parity between men's and women's teams and launching the Women's Premier League (WPL).

★ Jay Shah served as Secretary of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) from 2019 to 2024, and currently serves as the ICC Chairman (2024–present).

★ His major contributions include: Women's cricket reforms, including equal pay and the successful establishment of the WPL and Modernisation of cricket operations, including major media rights deals and infrastructure development such as the National Cricket Academy Centre of Excellence.

★ During the ceremony, the Indian women's cricket team was also honoured under the Sports category, following their ICC Women's World Cup 2025 victory, reflecting the impact of reforms introduced during Shah's tenure.

★ The award also highlights India's rising influence in global sports governance, the growing importance of inclusivity in sports, and India's expanding role in shaping global cricket.

★ Jay Shah dedicated the award to Harmanpreet Kaur, Mithali Raj, and Jhulan Goswami, acknowledging their contributions toward strengthening women's cricket in India.

★ The event was held on 28 November 2025 and was attended by major personalities from sports, culture, and policymaking.

K Vaikunth Honoured at International Film Festival of India 2025

★ Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant unveiled a commemorative postal stamp in honour of veteran cinematographer and filmmaker K Vaikunth at the 56th International Film Festival of India (IFFI) 2025 in Panaji, Goa.

★ Vaikunth, whose career spanned over five decades, was recognised for shaping the visual language of classic Indian cinema, blending technical brilliance with human depth.

★ His work captured both the grand narratives and intimate emotional landscapes of Indian storytelling, influencing generations of filmmakers.

★ The festival featured the screening of Vaikunth's 1977 documentary "Goa Marches On", highlighting the cultural evolution of Goa and his long-standing connection to the state.

★ Over his career, Vaikunth contributed to 35 feature films, numerous commercials, and documentaries, including notable classics such as Mere Apne, Bandhan, Mausam, Raaz, and Parichay.

★ Vaikunth passed away on February 9, 2003, but his legacy continues to inspire filmmakers and visual storytellers.

★ The commemorative stamp serves as a symbolic and institutional recognition of his artistic impact, bridging India's cinematic heritage with contemporary audiences.

FIFA Peace Prize at 2026 FIFA World Cup

★ Donald Trump received the first-ever FIFA Peace Prize during the 2026 Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) World Cup official draw the Kennedy Center, Washington, D.C.

★ The award was presented by FIFA President Gianni Infantino to recognise what FIFA described as Trump's "extraordinary actions to promote peace and unity around the world".

★ The FIFA Peace Prize is a newly launched honour aimed at recognising individuals contributing to peace and unity through sports and diplomacy. It includes a trophy, medal, and certificate.

★ The prize selection is reportedly overseen by a new FIFA Social Responsibility Committee, whose membership has drawn scrutiny due to involvement of controversial figures.

★ During his acceptance speech, Trump credited himself for attempting to resolve or de-escalate global tensions, including: India–Pakistan standoff, Conflicts in Gaza, Congo, Israel–Iran, Armenia–Azerbaijan disputes and Thailand–Cambodia border tension

★ Trump referred to the award as "one of the greatest honours of my life".

★ The decision has also raised concerns over the politicisation of international sports, especially after reports of strengthening ties between FIFA and Trump's network, including Ivanka Trump's association with a USD 100 million FIFA-linked education initiative.

★ Supporters of Trump praised the award, while peace activists, diplomats, and international observers criticised the move, reviving debates around Trump's long-standing pursuit of the Nobel Peace Prize.

Raveena Tandon Named PETA India Person of the Year 2025

★ Bollywood actress Raveena Tandon has been awarded PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) India Person of the Year 2025 for her long-term contribution to animal rights, wildlife protection, and humane education.

★ She promotes a meat-free lifestyle and has consistently supported campaigns against cruelty toward both domestic and wild animals.

★ Raveena partnered with her daughter to donate a mechanical elephant to a Jain temple in Karnataka, encouraging the end of using real elephants for rituals.

★ She raised concerns regarding wildlife killings, including the case of a leopard killed by villagers, and urged authorities to take action to protect animal habitats and wildlife affected by development projects.

★ She supports PETA India's Compassionate Citizen Programme, which teaches school children empathy and kindness toward animals.

★ Raveena has adopted multiple rescue animals, including dogs and cats, and promotes adopting homeless animals instead of purchasing from breeders.

★ She has campaigned for vegan and cruelty-free living, speaking against the leather and exotic skin trade and urging food chains to introduce vegan options.

Anant Ambani Receives Global Humanitarian Award for Animal Welfare

- ★ Anant Ambani, founder of Vantara, has become the youngest recipient and the first Asian to receive the Global Humanitarian Award for Animal Welfare by the Global Humane Society.
- ★ The award recognizes his contribution to wildlife protection, large-scale animal rescue, scientific conservation, and global awareness for ethical treatment of animals.
- ★ The recognition was announced at an international wildlife conservation event, where the Global Humane Society described his work as "a new global benchmark for compassion in action".
- ★ The honour is considered one of the highest global awards in animal welfare and is given only to individuals who have made transformative global impact in conservation and humanitarian responsibility.
- ★ Vantara, founded by Anant Ambani, is a large-scale animal welfare and conservation initiative in India focusing on rescue, rehabilitation, veterinary care and species preservation.
- ★ Vantara is Global Humane Certified, signifying adherence to international ethical standards for animal safety, rehabilitation, and care.
- ★ The centre aims to rehabilitate endangered and extinct-in-the-wild species and support their reintroduction into natural habitats to strengthen biodiversity.

BoB Named 'Best Bank in India' at The Banker's 2025 Asia-Pacific Awards

- ★ Bank of Baroda (BoB) has been awarded the 'Best Bank in India' at The Banker's "Bank of the Year Awards 2025 – Asia-Pacific".
- ★ The award recognised BoB for enhancing customer experience through phygital branches that combine digital and in-person banking services.
- ★ These phygital branches enable customers to quickly access statements, income tax certificates, nominee updates, and video-call support for loans such as home, car and term deposits.
- ★ BoB expanded customer support by opening 184 new branches across India to strengthen on-ground service delivery.
- ★ The bank introduced Smart OD (Overdraft) to support small businesses, enabling fast working-capital loans based on GST data and current account information.
- ★ Through digital verification, business financing can be approved in less than 24 hours, improving financial inclusion for enterprises previously lacking access

TIME Names Neal Mohan as "2025 CEO of the Year"

- ★ TIME magazine has named Neal Mohan, the Indian-origin CEO of YouTube, as the "2025 CEO of the Year".
- ★ His recognition reflects innovation-driven leadership, marked by technical excellence, empathy, and strategic foresight.
- ★ Neal Mohan was born to Indian parents and grew up in an environment that emphasized discipline, academic excellence, and curiosity.
- ★ He began his career at Accenture, gaining experience in consulting and enterprise processes.
- ★ Mohan later joined DoubleClick, where he became deeply involved in online advertising systems.

★ He became CEO of YouTube in 2023, leading the platform during a transformative global media era.

A'ja Wilson Named TIME's Athlete of the Year 2025

★ TIME magazine has honoured A'ja Wilson, superstar forward of the Las Vegas Aces, as the 2025 Athlete of the Year for delivering one of the most dominant and historic seasons in professional basketball history.

★ Wilson led the Las Vegas Aces to their third WNBA Championship in four years, while collecting an unprecedented series of major individual awards.

★ Her iconic parade outfit featuring a gold Thanos gauntlet symbolised the completeness of her achievements.

★ Wilson's rise began in South Carolina, where she overcame challenges including dyslexia and grew into the nation's No. 1 high school recruit.

★ At the University of South Carolina, under coach Dawn Staley, she led the Gamecocks to their first-ever national championship in 2017.

★ During the Aces' early struggles in 2025 — including a 53-point loss — Wilson's leadership transformed the team.

★ She introduced player-created scouting reports, accountability checklists, team bonding activities, and direct communication, helping rebuild discipline and chemistry.

★ TIME recognised Wilson not only for her historic season but also for her cultural impact, influence on women's sports, and her advocacy for representation, equity, and inclusion.

★ Her impact now places her alongside transformative sporting icons like Michael Jordan, Serena Williams, and Muhammad Ali.

TIME Magazine Names "Architects of Artificial Intelligence" as Person of the Year 2025

★ TIME Magazine has declared the "Architects of Artificial Intelligence" as its Person of the Year 2025, recognising the individuals who designed, built, and accelerated Artificial Intelligence into the centre of global life.

★ TIME described 2025 as the year when the full potential of Artificial Intelligence became visible, transforming industries, economies, politics, governance, creativity, and daily life worldwide.

★ Instead of honouring technology itself, TIME recognised the people behind Artificial Intelligence, whose innovations reshaped global power structures and societal functioning.

★ Editor-in-Chief Sam Jacobs stated that TIME has historically honoured groups or concepts when a single individual could not represent the scale of impact, as seen earlier with the Personal Computer (1982) and Endangered Earth (1988).

★ Artificial Intelligence in 2025 crossed a tipping point, shifting from a niche innovation to a mainstream force adopted across healthcare, education, governance, media, defence, and global policymaking.

- ★ TIME highlighted that Artificial Intelligence systems became widely accessible to consumers, governments began adopting and regulating Artificial Intelligence, and global politics increasingly reflected the influence of Artificial Intelligence leaders.
- ★ TIME's Person of the Year tradition, started in 1927, honours the person, group, or concept that most influenced global affairs during the year; recent recipients include Taylor Swift (2023) and Donald Trump (2024).

Supriya Sahu Conferred 2025 Champions of the Earth Award

- ★ Supriya Sahu, Additional Chief Secretary to the Government of Tamil Nadu, was honoured with the 2025 Champions of the Earth Award, the highest environmental recognition of the United Nations.
- ★ The award was announced by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) during the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-7) held in Nairobi.
- ★ She received the award under the Inspiration and Action category, which recognises individuals delivering measurable and transformative environmental benefits.
- ★ Under her leadership, Tamil Nadu implemented sustainable cooling innovations, including tree-lined urban corridors, nature-based shading systems, and heat action plans for vulnerable communities.
- ★ The Champions of the Earth Award, established in 2005, is now in its 20th year and honours leadership across policy, entrepreneurship, inspiration and action, science, and innovation.
- ★ UNEP highlighted that the 2025 awardees reflect urgent global action as adaptation costs for developing countries may reach USD 365 billion annually by 2035.

DV Kapur Foundation Energy Innovation Awards 2025

- ★ India's first DV Kapur Foundation Energy Innovation Awards were presented at the SCOPE Complex, New Delhi, recognising technological innovations supporting clean energy transition, efficiency, and indigenous research.
- ★ The awards were organised by the DV Kapur Foundation, which focuses on promoting research, development, and indigenous technological solutions in the energy sector.
- ★ The initiative aims to encourage innovators, especially young researchers, to address India's evolving energy challenges and future sustainability needs.
- ★ Prof Ajay Kumar Sood, Principal Scientific Advisor to the Government of India, felicitated the awardees.
- ★ **Category 1 – Young Innovators (under 38 years):**
  - Winner: Dr Achu Chandran, Principal Scientist, Council of Scientific and Industrial Research – National Institute for Interdisciplinary Science and Technology (CSIR-NIIST)
  - Innovation: Nano Electricity Generator
  - Prize: Citation, trophy, and ₹1 lakh
- ★ **Category 2 – Individuals/Organizations for Technological Innovation:**
  - Winner: NTPC's Research and Development wing – NETRA
  - Innovation: Green Use of Coal Technologies

- Prize: Citation, trophy, and ₹10 lakh
- Recipient: Shri Shaswattam, Executive Director (NETRA), along with his team

★ The awards highlight the importance of innovation in meeting India's rising energy demand while ensuring long-term sustainability.

★ They recognise the role of scientists and research and development organisations in driving clean, efficient, and sustainable energy solutions for India's future.

Miyana Railway Station Wins National Energy Conservation Award 2025

★ Miyana Railway Station in Guna district, Madhya Pradesh, has been awarded the National Energy Conservation Award (NECA) 2025 for outstanding energy efficiency and sustainable operations.

★ The award was presented by President Smt. Droupadi Murmu on National Energy Conservation Day (14 December 2025), recognising the station's exemplary contribution to energy conservation.

★ The National Energy Conservation Award is conferred annually by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) under the Ministry of Power to institutions and establishments demonstrating excellence in reducing energy consumption across sectors like industry, transport, buildings, and public utilities.

★ Miyana Railway Station was selected as the Best Performing Unit in the Transport Category (Railway Station) for its systematic efforts in reducing electricity consumption. The award was received by Smt. Shobhana Bandopadhyaya, General Manager, West Central Railway.

★ Energy-saving measures implemented at the station include:

- Replacement of conventional lighting with LED lights, which consume significantly less power and have longer operational life.
- Installation of BLDC (Brushless Direct Current) fans, reducing electricity consumption by 50–60% compared to conventional fans.
- Adoption of smart lighting circuits operating in the 30–70% range, automatically regulating lighting based on usage and time.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi Conferred Ethiopia's Highest National Honour

★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi was conferred Ethiopia's highest civilian honour, the Great Honour Nishan of Ethiopia, during his official visit to Addis Ababa.

★ With this, PM Modi became the first global Head of State or Head of Government to receive this prestigious award.

★ This honour is the 28th international State award conferred upon PM Modi, reflecting India's growing global stature, especially in Africa and the Global South.

★ The Great Honour Nishan of Ethiopia is awarded for exceptional contributions towards strengthening Ethiopia's international partnerships and global standing.

★ The award was formally conferred by Ethiopian Prime Minister Dr Abiy Ahmed Ali, who hosted PM Modi and led the ceremonial proceedings.

★ With this recognition, PM Modi became the first global leader to receive Ethiopia's highest honour and joined the list of most internationally recognised Indian leaders.

World's Best International Airport 2025

★ Singapore's Changi Airport has been named the World's Best International Airport for 2025 at the Travel + Leisure India's Best Awards 2025.

★ The recognition was based on global reader voting, highlighting Changi Airport's excellence in overall travel experience, passenger comfort, and world-class facilities.

★ The award was announced during the 14th edition of Travel + Leisure India's Best Awards, which honour excellence across the travel and hospitality sector.

★ Winners are selected through an online reader-voting process, making the outcome a direct reflection of traveller preferences and real-world experiences.

★ Changi Airport emerged at the top among global airports, reaffirming sustained passenger trust and satisfaction.

★ The recognition highlights Changi's ability to combine operational efficiency, innovation, aesthetics, and passenger-centric services.

★ The airport is renowned for its sky-lit terminals, open spaces, indoor gardens, and art installations, creating a relaxing travel environment.

★ Iconic attractions include the world's tallest indoor waterfall, butterfly gardens, and immersive leisure zones, transforming long layovers into memorable experiences.

Air India Wins Best Domestic Airline Award at Travel + Leisure India

★ India's national carrier Air India has won the Best Domestic Airline title at the Travel + Leisure India and South Asia's Best Awards 2025, marking its second consecutive win.

★ The recognition comes during Air India's major transformation phase, focusing on fleet renewal, service quality, and enhanced customer experience.

★ The Travel + Leisure India and South Asia Awards are organised by Travel + Leisure India and South Asia and are completely reader-voted, unlike jury-based awards.

★ Votes are cast by travellers based on actual travel experiences, with key evaluation parameters including service quality, comfort, reliability, and overall travel experience.

★ The award therefore directly reflects passenger trust and preference.

★ The win highlights rising expectations of Indian travellers and validates Air India's efforts toward improved onboard comfort, consistent service delivery, and better operational reliability.

★ It also strengthens Air India's credibility in the domestic aviation market.

★ According to Air India, the award reflects strong customer confidence in its domestic services.

Oman's Highest National Honour

★ Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has been conferred Oman's highest civilian honour, the First Class of the Order of Oman, during his official visit to Muscat, marking another major milestone in India's diplomatic outreach.

★ With this recognition, PM Modi has now received 29 top foreign State honours, reflecting India's rising global stature and his personal international influence.

- ★ The honour was presented during the final leg of PM Modi's three-nation foreign tour.
- ★ The Order of Oman is the highest civilian award of the Sultanate of Oman.
- ★ It has earlier been awarded to globally renowned leaders such as Nelson Mandela, Queen Elizabeth II, Queen Máxima, Emperor Akihito of Japan, and King Abdullah of Jordan, highlighting the prestige of the award.
- ★ PM Modi's inclusion in this list underlines the strength, depth, and maturity of India–Oman bilateral relations.

Advocate Shubham Awasthi Conferred '40 Under 40 Lawyer Award' 2025

- ★ In a significant recognition of young legal talent in India, Advocate Shubham Awasthi has been conferred with the prestigious '40 Under 40 Lawyer Award' 2025, one of the most respected honours in the Indian legal fraternity.
- ★ The award recognises not only professional excellence but also commitment to public service and humanitarian values, highlighting the growing role of young advocates in strengthening India's justice delivery system.
- ★ Shubham Awasthi is a practising advocate at the Supreme Court of India, known for his work in public interest litigation, constitutional law, and social justice matters.
- ★ He holds a postgraduate degree in Media and Entertainment Laws and has been actively associated with several government and statutory
- ★ Beyond legal practice, Advocate Shubham Awasthi has been actively involved in humanitarian and social initiatives.
- ★ He was recently appointed Deputy Secretary General (India) of the World Humanitarian Drive, a London-based global organisation, reflecting his commitment to combining legal expertise with social responsibility.
- ★ The '40 Under 40 Lawyer Award' is significant as it encourages merit-based recognition, highlights emerging leaders shaping India's legal future, inspires young advocates to pursue excellence with ethics, and strengthens public confidence in the next generation of legal professionals.
- ★ Such recognitions play an important role in nurturing talent within India's evolving legal ecosystem.
- ★ The award was presented at the 6th Edition of the BW Legal World 40 Under 40 Lawyers and Legal Influencers Awards 2025, held in New Delhi.

French Honour Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres

- ★ In a significant cultural milestone, Ravi Deecee, a noted Malayalam publisher, was conferred the prestigious French honour Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres for his outstanding contribution to literature, publishing, and cross-cultural exchange, particularly between India and France.
- ★ The award ceremony was held at the Embassy of France in India, highlighting the growing role of cultural diplomacy and literary collaboration.

- ★ The honour was conferred by Thierry Mathou, the Ambassador of France to India, who commended Ravi Deecee for transforming DC Books into one of India's leading publishing houses and for actively promoting French literature in Indian languages, especially Malayalam.
- ★ The ceremony was attended by several eminent personalities from India's literary and cultural circles.
- ★ Ravi Deecee is the Publisher and Managing Director of DC Books, one of India's most respected publishing companies.
- ★ Under his leadership, DC Books has emerged as a major force in Indian publishing with a strong emphasis on regional languages, high-quality translations, and literary excellence.
- ★ A key contribution of DC Books has been the translation of major French literary works into Malayalam, enabling Indian readers to access global literature in their mother tongue.
- ★ DC Books has published Malayalam translations of works by renowned French and Francophone authors such as Annie Ernaux, Jean-Paul Sartre, Emmanuel Carrère, David Diop, Maryse Condé, Céline, and Johanna Gustawsson.
- ★ These efforts have significantly strengthened France–India literary relations, promoted multilingualism, and enhanced cultural understanding.
- ★ The Ordre des Arts et des Lettres is a prestigious French civilian honour instituted in 1957 to recognise individuals who have made exceptional contributions to the promotion of arts, literature, and culture in France and worldwide.

President Presents Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar 2025

- ★ President of India Droupadi Murmu presented the Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar 2025 at a ceremonial function held in New Delhi.
- ★ The award recognises children below 18 years for exceptional achievements, bravery and exemplary conduct, highlighting the role of youth in shaping India's future.
- ★ The Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar is India's highest civilian honour for children.
- ★ It is awarded in six categories: Bravery, Social Service, Environment, Sports, Art and Culture, and Science and Technology.
- ★ The scheme replaced the earlier National Bravery Awards and aims to encourage, inspire and recognise young role models whose actions positively impact society.
- ★ Vaka Lakshmi Pragnika (7 years) was praised for her achievements in chess, contributing to India's growing global stature in the sport.
- ★ Acts of bravery by Ajay Raj and Mohammed Sidan P, who saved lives through courage and presence of mind, were commended.
- ★ Vyoma Priya (9) and Kamlesh Kumar (11) were remembered with reverence for losing their lives while saving others, symbolising supreme sacrifice at a young age.
- ★ Shravan Singh (10) was lauded for supplying water, milk and lassi to Indian soldiers during Operation Sindoor in a border area despite risks.
- ★ Achievements across diverse fields were also recognised.
- ★ Shivani Hosuru Uppara, a differently abled sportsperson, was praised for overcoming economic and physical challenges to excel in sports.

★ Vaibhav Suryavanshi was commended for his record-breaking achievements in cricket at a young age, reflecting India's growing sporting talent.

APPOINTMENTS & RESIGNATIONS

Chair of International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance

★ The Election Commission of India (ECI) announced that Gyanesh Kumar, the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC), will assume the Chairship of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IIDEA) on 3 December 2025.

★ He will preside over all Council meetings during 2026 as the Chair of IIDEA.

★ The Chairship will be taken over during the Council of Member States meeting in Stockholm, Sweden.

★ India, being the world's largest electorate (nearly 1 billion voters), will share best practices from its transparent electoral processes with Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs).

★ The Chairship reflects the global recognition of the ECI as one of the world's most credible and innovative EMBs.

★ India is a founding member of IIDEA.

★ Joint programs, workshops and research will be conducted between IIIDEM (India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management) and IIDEA.

★ Focus areas include disinformation, electoral violence, and voter trust erosion.

★ Under the CEC's leadership, IIDEA and ECI will work together to document and disseminate technological and administrative innovations.

★ IIIDEM has signed 28 MoUs with different countries.

★ It has trained 3169 officials from nearly 142 countries.

Managing Director and Chief Knowledge Officer of the World Bank Group

★ The World Bank Group (WBG) appointed Paschal Donohoe as its Managing Director (MD) and Chief Knowledge Officer (CKO).

★ Paschal Donohoe is the former Minister for Finance of Ireland, bringing extensive public- and private-sector experience to the role.

★ He succeeds Axel van Trotsenburg, who is retiring at the end of November 2025 after a 37-year career.

★ As MD and CKO, Paschal Donohoe will oversee the WBG's strategic engagement with governments, civil society organisations, foundations, philanthropies, and private-sector stakeholders.

★ In the private sector, he worked for nearly a decade at Procter & Gamble, gaining key corporate and management experience.

- ★ In public service, he has over 20 years of government experience, including almost 10 years as Ireland's Minister for Finance.
- ★ He served as President of the Eurogroup (2020–2023), coordinating euro-area finance ministers.

Chairman of Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs

- ★ Vivek Chaturvedi, a 1990 batch Indian Revenue Service (Customs & Indirect Taxes) Officer, has been appointed Chairman of the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) to assume charge from December 1, 2025.
- ★ He will assume charge following the superannuation of Sanjay Kumar Agarwal, with the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet clearing his appointment.
- ★ Chaturvedi currently serves as Member (Tax Policy & Legal) on CBIC and has over three decades of experience in customs administration, intelligence, data analytics, and vigilance.
- ★ Previously, he served as Principal Director General in the Directorate General of Vigilance and Chief Vigilance Officer of CBIC, overseeing internal oversight and integrity processes.
- ★ He also served as Director General (DG) at the Directorate General of Analytics and Risk Management under CBIC.
- ★ As CBIC Chairman, Chaturvedi will play a key role in the government's Budget-making process 2026-27, particularly in indirect taxes, following GST rate changes in September.
- ★ Chaturvedi has extensive experience in the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI), serving as Deputy Commissioner, Joint Commissioner, Additional Director, and Additional Director General at DRI headquarters.

Controller of Warship Production and Acquisition (CWP&A)

- ★ Vice Admiral Sanjay Sadhu, AVSM, NM assumed charge as Controller of Warship Production and Acquisition (CWP&A) on 28 November 2025.
- ★ He was commissioned in the Indian Navy in 1987 and holds a Post Graduate degree in Mechanical Engineering and MPhil in Defence & Strategic Studies.
- ★ He has over 38 years of service, holding major Operational, Staff, and Yard appointments.
- ★ For distinguished service, he has been awarded the Ati Vishisht Seva Medal (AVSM) and the Nausena Medal (NM) by the President of India.
- ★ He succeeds Vice Admiral Rajaram Swaminathan, AVSM, NM, who superannates on 30 November 2025 after 38 years of service during which 8 ships were commissioned into the Indian Navy.

Additional Charge of Border Security Force Director General

- ★ The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) assigned Praveen Kumar, the current Director General (DG) of Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), the additional charge of DG, Border Security Force (BSF) effective from 1 December 2025.
- ★ He will hold the BSF DG charge until a regular appointment is made or until further orders.
- ★ He succeeds Daljit Singh Chawdhary, who superannuated on 30 November 2025.

- ★ Praveen Kumar is a 1993-batch IPS Officer belonging to the West Bengal (WB) cadre.
- ★ He previously served as Superintendent of Police (SP) in multiple WB districts and as Deputy Inspector General (DIG), Midnapore Range, where he led security operations in Naxal-affected areas.
- ★ He has held key positions at both state and central levels, contributing to policing, counter-insurgency, and border management frameworks.
- ★ He became the 35th Director General of the ITBP in October 2025.

Air Marshal Tejbir Singh Assumes Role of IAF's Director General (Inspection & Safety)

- ★ Air Marshal Tejbir Singh has taken charge as Director General (Inspection & Safety) at Air Headquarters.
- ★ He has a distinguished career of over 37 years in the Indian Air Force (IAF).
- ★ He is an alumnus of the Royal College of Defence Studies (RCDS), United Kingdom.
- ★ He has logged over 7,000 flying hours during his service.
- ★ He contributed majorly to enhancing C-130J Super Hercules Special Operations capability in the IAF.
- ★ He brings strong expertise in operational experience, leadership, safety management, and inspection systems.
- ★ He succeeded Air Marshal M. B. Ranade, who retired on 30 November 2025 after a 39-year career.
- ★ The IAF recognized Air Marshal Ranade for his professionalism, outstanding service, and contributions to air operations and organizational excellence.
- ★ This leadership transition highlights IAF's commitment to strengthening flight safety and operational standards.

Executive Director of RBI

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) appointed Usha Janakiraman as Executive Director (ED), effective 1 December 2025, marking a major milestone in her 30 years of RBI service.
- ★ She will head the Department of Supervision (DoS) as ED, overseeing risk assessment, data analysis, and vulnerability monitoring to strengthen financial system oversight.
- ★ Usha Janakiraman is a Chartered Accountant (CA) with extensive experience at the RBI.
- ★ Prior to her promotion as ED, she served as Chief General Manager-in-Charge (CGM-in-Charge), Department of Regulation, RBI Central Office, Mumbai.
- ★ She has worked in key areas including Financial Regulation (FR), External Investment and Operations (EIO), Banking Supervision (BS), Public Debt Management (PDM), and Currency Management (CM).
- ★ The RBI currently has 16 Executive Directors (EDs) responsible for managing its various departments and functions.

Managing Director of Life Insurance Corporation of India

- ★ The Department of Financial Services (DFS), Ministry of Finance (MoF), Government of India (GoI) appointed Ramakrishnan Chander as the Managing Director (MD) of Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC).
- ★ The appointment is effective immediately and runs until September 30, 2027, or until further orders, whichever is earlier.
- ★ The appointment was issued under Section 4 of the Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) of India Act, 1956 and notified in the Gazette of India, Part II, Section 3, Sub-Section (ii).
- ★ Ramakrishnan Chander began his career in 1990 as an Assistant Administrative Officer (AAO) in LIC.
- ★ He has 35+ years of experience in the insurance sector with expertise in investment management, operations, marketing, and international business.
- ★ His previous roles include Executive Director (ED) – Investment (Front Office) and Chief Investment Officer (CIO) of LIC.
- ★ He held major leadership positions such as Senior Divisional Manager (SDM) in Nagpur and Hyderabad, Regional Manager (P&GS & Marketing) in the South Zone, and Executive Director heading LIC's International Operations Strategic Business Unit.

Stefan Priesner of Austria Named UN Resident Coordinator for India

- ★ United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Antonio Guterres appointed Stefan Priesner of Austria as the United Nations (UN) Resident Coordinator in India for a four-year term beginning 1 December 2025 and ending in 2029.
- ★ He succeeds Shombi Sharp, who completed a four-year term as UN Resident Coordinator in India.
- ★ Stefan Priesner began his career in the private sector and joined the UN in 1997, starting with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Bhutan.
- ★ He served as Deputy Chief in Nepal (2001–2004) and Deputy Resident Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina (2004–2008).
- ★ He held senior roles including Country Director in Bangladesh (2008–2012), Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative in Uzbekistan (2013–2017), Resident Coordinator for Malaysia, Brunei, and Singapore (2017–2021), and Resident Coordinator in Iran (2021–2025).
- ★ As UN Resident Coordinator in India, he oversees the UN Country Team, directs all UN development activities, represents the UN at the highest levels, provides policy guidance to the government, and drives progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

AU Small Finance Bank Appoints Ranbir Kapoor and Rashmika Mandanna as Brand Ambassadors

- ★ AU Small Finance Bank (AU SFB), which recently received the RBI's (Reserve Bank of India) in-principle approval to become a universal bank, has appointed Ranbir Kapoor and Rashmika Mandanna as brand ambassadors.

- ★ The bank aims to strengthen its identity as a preferred national banking brand across metros, urban centres, and deeper Bharat markets.
- ★ The collaboration focuses on boosting customer preference for AU SFB's core products, particularly Savings Accounts and Current Accounts.

Chief Executive Officer of Bank of America India

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has approved the appointment of Vikram Sahu as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Bank of America N.A. (BANA) in India for a three-year term.
- ★ Vikram Sahu succeeds Kaku Nakhate, who has now become the Chair of Bank of America in India while continuing as the India Country Executive (a role held since 2025).
- ★ Vikram Sahu has nearly three decades of global financial experience, having held leadership roles in India, Hong Kong, Singapore, the USA, and Europe.
- ★ He previously worked at Goldman Sachs for over 14 years, serving as the Head of Research for South Asia.
- ★ Before becoming CEO, he held the position of Global Head of Equity Research at Bank of America.
- ★ His appointment as CEO is in addition to his role as India Country Executive, and he continues to report to Jin Su, President for Asia-Pacific.
- ★ As CEO, he chairs BANA India's Local Management Team (LMT) and remains a member of Bank of America's Asia-Pacific Executive Committee.
- ★ He also chairs the India Country Leadership Team (CLT) and oversees strategic growth, governance, and regulatory compliance for Bank of America in India.

Chairman of ONGC

- ★ The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC), chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved a one-year extension of Arun Kumar Singh's tenure as Chairman of Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC).
- ★ The extension is effective from 7 December 2025 to 6 December 2026.
- ★ Arun Kumar Singh has a career spanning four decades across various segments of the petroleum industry.
- ★ He previously served as Director (Marketing) of Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) from 2018 to 2021.
- ★ Arun Kumar Singh assumed charge as Chairman of ONGC on 7 December 2022.

Apple Appoints Bangalore University Alumnus Amar Subramanya as its new Vice-President of Artificial Intelligence

- ★ Apple has appointed Amar Subramanya as its Vice-President of Artificial Intelligence (AI), marking a significant shift in leadership to accelerate its global AI strategy.
- ★ Amar Subramanya is a Bengaluru-educated researcher, with a Bachelor of Engineering in Electrical, Electronics and Communications from Bangalore University (2001).

- His career includes roles at IBM, Microsoft, and Google, where he led AI initiatives and research, including a return to Microsoft in senior AI roles.
- In his new position, Subramanya will oversee Apple's foundation models, machine learning research, and AI safety and evaluation, which are central to Apple's product and software strategy.
- He will report to Software Head Craig Federighi, reflecting Apple's plan to integrate AI deeper into its ecosystem.
- The appointment occurs amid global competition in AI, with tech companies investing heavily in generative AI, safety frameworks, and large-scale AI model development.
- This move demonstrates Apple's commitment to strengthening AI infrastructure, broadening research capabilities, and developing AI-driven features for consumer products.

Bank of Baroda Rolls Out 'Masterstroke' Campaign Featuring Sachin Tendulkar

- Bank of Baroda (BoB) launched a new advertising campaign featuring cricketer Sachin Tendulkar as its global brand ambassador.
- The campaign promotes four key retail products — home loans, car loans, MSME loans via bob Digi Udyam, and the bob Masterstroke Lite Savings Account.
- It builds on last year's theme 'Play The Masterstroke', focusing on helping customers make smart and informed financial decisions.
- The campaign uses a 360-degree media strategy across television, print, social media, radio, outdoor, and cinema to ensure pan-India reach.
- Bank of Baroda, founded in 1908, is majority-owned by the Government of India with a 97% stake.

First Chief of Defence Forces for a Five-Year Term

- Pakistan's President Asif Ali Zardari approved the appointment of Field Marshal Asim Munir as the country's first Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) for a five-year term.
- The CDF post was created through the 27th Constitutional Amendment, aimed at establishing unity of command and ensuring faster decision-making during critical situations.
- The new CDF role replaces the earlier position of Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCSC), which has now been abolished.
- President Zardari granted a two-year service extension to Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmad Babar Sidhu, effective from 19 March 2026.
- Asim Munir, who has served as Chief of Army Staff (COAS) since November 2022, had already received a five-year extension to his COAS tenure in 2024.

President of Press Club of India

- Senior journalist Sangeeta Barooah Pisharoty has been elected as the first woman President of the Press Club of India (PCI), marking a historic milestone in India's media institutions.

- ★ Her election reflects a significant shift in leadership representation within the journalist fraternity in New Delhi.
- ★ Pisharoty's panel achieved a clean sweep, winning all office-bearers and managing committee posts with a 21–0 mandate in the Press Club elections.
- ★ Along with her election as President, Afzal Imam was elected Secretary General and Jatin Gandhi became Vice-President.
- ★ Aditi Rajput was elected Treasurer and R. Sunil as Joint Secretary, both elected unopposed.
- ★ The Managing Committee consists of 16 members from print, digital, and broadcast media, ensuring diverse representation.
- ★ Members of the Managing Committee include Niraj Kumar, Abhishek Kumar Singh, Jahanvi Sen, Ashok Kaushik, Kallol Bhattacharjee, Praveen Jain, Agraj Pratap Singh, Manoj Sharma, Nyanima Basu, P. B. Suresh, V. P. Pandey, Prem Bahukhandi, Sneha Bhura, Javed Akhtar, Rezaul Hasan Laskar, and Sunil Kumar.
- ★ The election is widely seen as a landmark for gender representation in Indian media leadership.
- ★ The new executive is expected to focus on press freedom, journalist welfare, institutional transparency, member engagement, and advocacy for journalistic rights.

President of Chile

- ★ Chile has elected Jose Antonio Kast as its new President, marking the most right-wing leadership shift since the return to democracy in 1990.
- ★ Jose Antonio Kast, leader of the Republican Party, defeated left-wing candidate Jeannette Jara in the second-round (runoff) election.
- ★ The election followed a highly polarised campaign centred on crime, migration, and economic stagnation.
- ★ Although Jeannette Jara led the first round, the combined strength of right-wing candidates indicated a broader conservative shift in voter sentiment.
- ★ The election saw high voter turnout due to the reinstatement of compulsory voting for the first time in over a decade.
- ★ Since 2010, Chile has alternated between left and right governments, and Kast's victory follows this political cycle.
- ★ He has expressed support for aspects of Augusto Pinochet's military regime, which ruled Chile from 1973 to 1990.
- ★ Kast assumes office amid economic uncertainty, institutional fatigue, and unresolved constitutional reform debates.
- ★ His presidency will be closely watched for how it balances strict security policies with civil liberties and manages deep social divisions revealed during the campaign.

MD and CEO of PNB Housing Finance

- ★ PNB Housing Finance Limited has appointed Ajai Kumar Shukla as its Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer (MD & CEO) and Key Managerial Personnel, subject to shareholder approval.
- ★ The appointment was approved by the Board of Directors on 12 December 2025.
- ★ The tenure of Ajai Kumar Shukla is five years, effective from 18 December 2025 to 17 December 2030.
- ★ Prior to this appointment, he served as Chief Business Officer at Tata Capital Housing Finance Limited, where he worked for 16 years.
- ★ At Tata Capital, he headed key functions such as Credit, Risk Management, Valuation, Digital Transformation, and Affordable Housing Finance.
- ★ Before joining Tata Capital, he worked with ICICI Bank for over 7 years in the mortgage business, handling diverse roles across multiple regions.
- ★ He began his professional career at LIC Housing Finance Limited, where he served for 7 years.
- ★ The leadership change is expected to strengthen PNB Housing Finance's growth strategy, improve operational efficiency, and support long-term expansion in India's housing finance market.

Raj Kumar Goyal Sworn in as Chief Information Commissioner

- ★ Raj Kumar Goyal, a 1990-batch IAS Officer (AGMUT cadre), was sworn in as the Chief Information Commissioner (CIC) by President Droupadi Murmu at Rashtrapati Bhavan.
- ★ His appointment was recommended by a three-member selection panel headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, along with Home Minister Amit Shah and Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi.
- ★ The post of CIC had been vacant since 13 September 2025, following the completion of Heeralal Samariya's
- ★ The panel also recommended eight new Information Commissioners — Surendra Singh Meena, Ashutosh Chaturvedi, Swagat Das, Sudha Rani Relengi, P.R. Ramesh, Khushwant Singh Sethi, Jaya Varma Sinha, and Sanjeev Kumar Jindal — restoring the Central Information Commission to full strength for the first time in nine years.
- ★ Raj Kumar Goyal, after taking oath, administered the oath of office to the eight new Information Commissioners in the presence of incumbent Anandi Ramalingam and Vinod Kumar Tiwari.
- ★ The Central Information Commission (CIC), constituted under the Right to Information Act, 2005, can have a Chief Information Commissioner and up to 10 Information Commissioners. Its jurisdiction extends over all Central public authorities.

11th Director General of National Council of Applied Economic Research

- ★ The National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) has appointed Suresh Goyal as its 11th Director General, effective January 5, 2026.
- ★ Suresh Goyal will succeed Poonam Gupta, who served as Director General of NCAER from July 2021 to April 2025.

- ★ Prior to this role, Goyal served as Managing Director and CEO of the National Highway Infra Trust (NHIT), supporting the National Monetisation Pipeline of the Government of India.
- ★ Goyal has extensive experience in the private sector, having served as Senior MD and Head of India and Southeast Asia at Macquarie Infrastructure and Real Assets, based in Singapore.
- ★ NCAER, established in 1956 in New Delhi, is India's oldest and largest independent economic policy research think tank.
- ★ NCAER collaborates with over 12 Central Government ministries, 3 State Governments, and 13 other organisations.

Sai Jadhav Becomes First Woman Officer to Graduate from Indian Military Academy

- ★ Sai Jadhav (23 years) from Kolhapur, Maharashtra created history by becoming the first woman officer to pass out from the Indian Military Academy (IMA), Dehradun.
- ★ Her achievement ended a 93-year-old male-only tradition at IMA, which was established in 1932.
- ★ Since its inception, over 67,000 cadets have graduated from IMA, and Sai Jadhav is the first woman among them.
- ★ She has been commissioned as a Lieutenant in the Territorial Army (TA), becoming the first woman officer from IMA to join the TA.
- ★ At present, 8 women officer cadets are undergoing training at IMA as part of the first women batch selected through the National Defence Academy (NDA) in 2022.
- ★ Sai Jadhav joined IMA with special permission and successfully completed six months of rigorous training, meeting the same standards as male cadets.
- ★ She will participate in the Passing-Out Parade in June 2026 at the Chetwode Building, an honour reserved for IMA graduates.
- ★ Following her commissioning into the Indian Army (IA), she became the fourth generation in her family to serve the nation, after her great-grandfather (British Army), grandfather (Indian Army) and father Sandeep Jadhav (currently serving).

IIFL Finance Names Ex-RBI Deputy Governor BP Kanungo as Non-Executive Chairman

- ★ IIFL Finance Limited, a retail-focused diversified NBFC, appointed Bibhu Prasad (BP) Kanungo as Non-Executive Chairman of the Board with immediate effect on 19 December 2025.
- ★ BP Kanungo is a former Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and is currently serving as a Non-Executive Independent Director on the IIFL Finance Board.
- ★ As Chairman, BP Kanungo will play a key role in framing strategic policies, strengthening corporate governance, and safeguarding shareholder interests.
- ★ BP Kanungo has nearly 40 years of experience in central banking, monetary policy, and financial regulation.
- ★ He served as Deputy Governor of RBI from 2017 to 2021 and was also a Member of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC).

Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of Canara Bank

★ The Financial Services Institutions Bureau (FSIB) has recommended Brajesh Kumar Singh for the post of Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer (MD and CEO) of Canara Bank.

★ He will succeed K. Satyanarayana Raju, the current MD & CEO of Canara Bank, who is retiring on superannuation in December.

★ The final appointment will be made by the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC), chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

★ Brajesh Kumar Singh is currently serving as Executive Director of Indian Bank and was appointed to this role on 10 March 2024 for a three-year term.

★ Before joining Indian Bank, he served at Bank of Baroda in roles such as Credit Officer, Branch Head, and Regional Head.

★ At Indian Bank, he has been a member of key committees including the Management Committee, IT Strategy Committee, Credit Approval Committee, and the Committee of Directors (Vigilance).

Chair of BWF Athletes' Commission for 2026–29 Term

★ P.V. Sindhu has been elected Chair of the Badminton World Federation (BWF) Athletes' Commission for the 2026–2029 term, strengthening athlete representation in global badminton governance.

★ As Chair of the Athletes' Commission, the double Olympic medallist will also serve as a Member of the BWF Council, ensuring direct player representation in policy and decision-making at the international level.

★ P.V. Sindhu has been associated with the BWF Athletes' Commission since 2017 and has served as a BWF Integrity Ambassador since 2020, reflecting her long-standing administrative and sporting experience.

★ Debora Jille (Netherlands) has been appointed Deputy Chair of the BWF Athletes' Commission, alongside members from Korea, Egypt, and China, highlighting the global composition of the body.

★ In Para badminton, Chan Ho Yuen Daniel (Hong Kong China) has been elected Chair of the BWF Para Athletes' Commission, with Cathrine Rosengren (Denmark) serving as Deputy Chair.

★ Soraya Aghaei Haji Agha, the first female badminton player from Iran to compete in the Olympic Games (Tokyo 2020), has been appointed as one of five new members of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) Athletes' Commission.

Odisha Names Anu Garg as State's First Woman Chief Secretary

★ The Government of Odisha has appointed Anu Garg, a senior Indian Administrative Service (IAS) Officer, as the Chief Secretary (CS) of Odisha, making her the first woman to hold the state's top bureaucratic post.

★ The appointment of Anu Garg will come into effect on 1 January 2026, following the retirement of incumbent Chief Secretary Manoj Ahuja on 31 December 2025.

★ Anu Garg is a 1991-batch IAS Officer of the Odisha cadre, with over 30 years of experience in public administration.

- ★ In February 2023, she created history by becoming the first woman Development Commissioner of Odisha, the second-highest bureaucratic position in the state administration.
- ★ She has served at the Union Government level as Joint Secretary in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), the Ministry of Textiles (MoT), and the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW).
- ★ At the state level, she has held key positions including Principal Secretary of the Labour Department and the Women and Child Development Department of Odisha.
- ★ Anu Garg was a member of the High-Level Expert Group (HLEG) on Universal Health Coverage (UHC) constituted by the Planning Commission of India.
- ★ Prior to her appointment as Chief Secretary, she served as Development Commissioner-cum-Additional Chief Secretary, overseeing the Planning and Convergence Department and the Water Resources Department of Odisha.

Executive Director of Bandhan Bank

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) approved the re-appointment of Ratan Kumar Kesh as Executive Director (ED) of Bandhan Bank for a three-year term, effective March 31, 2026.
- ★ He will continue as Chief Operating Officer (COO) and Key Managerial Personnel (KMP) of Bandhan Bank, ensuring leadership continuity.
- ★ Ratan Kumar Kesh has nearly 30 years of cross-sector banking experience, overseeing operations, technology, digital transformation, risk management, and customer experience.
- ★ He has held senior leadership roles in leading banks such as Axis Bank, HDFC Bank, Yes Bank, and ICICI Bank.
- ★ He joined Bandhan Bank in March 2023 and led major IT and operations transformation, focusing on process improvement, automation, and customer service excellence.
- ★ In 2024, he served as Interim Managing Director (MD) and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Bandhan Bank, strengthening his leadership credentials.

Barham Salih Appointed as New UNHCR Chief

- ★ The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) approved Barham Salih as the next Head of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).
- ★ Barham Salih became the first UN Refugee Chief from the Middle East since the late 1970s, and his appointment was approved by consensus of all 193 UN member states.
- ★ He was recommended by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, who highlighted Salih's background as a former refugee, crisis negotiator, and senior political leader.
- ★ Salih will succeed Filippo Grandi and will assume office on January 1, 2026, serving a five-year term as UNHCR Chief.
- ★ He served as President of Iraq from 2018 to 2022, leading during the period following the Islamic State (IS) group's territorial defeat in Iraq.

SPORTS

Ten-Year-Old Bodhana Sivanandan Shines at UK Women's Blitz Championship

- ★ Bodhana Sivanandan, aged ten, from Harrow, north-west London, won eight consecutive games at the UK Women's Blitz Championship held in Royal Leamington Spa, defeating experienced adult players.
- ★ Her performance has earned her a spot among the top 50 women in the world for blitz chess.
- ★ Earlier in 2025, she became the youngest person ever to earn the Woman International Master (WIM) title, the second-highest rank in women's chess.
- ★ At age nine, she became the youngest individual to represent England internationally in any sport.
- ★ Bodhana aspires to become the youngest Grandmaster in history, a record currently held by a 12-year-old.
- ★ Chess experts describe her as a "generational talent", with exceptional skill and maturity for her age. Bodhana states: "I don't mind who I compete against, I only care about the game".
- ★ Her achievements extend beyond chess, supporting development in mathematics, art, and music at school.

World Professional Jiu-Jitsu Championship 2025

- ★ Giovanna de Sequeira, a 10-year-old Indian athlete, won a bronze medal at the World Professional Jiu-Jitsu Championship 2025 held in Abu Dhabi.
- ★ She competed in the Under-28 kg Infant/Girls Gi category.
- ★ Her achievement is notable as she made a comeback after undergoing knee surgery five months earlier.
- ★ Giovanna rebuilt her form by first participating in the Kickboxing National Championship, marking her return to competitive sports.
- ★ She trains under coach Raunak Singh and was accompanied by her family, including her sister Erica de Sequeira, who holds an advanced international jiu-jitsu certification.
- ★ The medal highlights India's growing presence and improving performance in global martial arts competitions, especially among young athletes.
- ★ The achievement also reflects increasing access to professional coaching, exposure, and structured support systems in non-mainstream sports in India.

Ahmedabad Confirmed as Host City for 2030 Commonwealth Games

- ★ Ahmedabad has been officially selected to host the 2030 Commonwealth Games, winning over Abuja, Nigeria.
- ★ The announcement was made at the Commonwealth Sport's General Assembly in Glasgow.
- ★ The 2030 Games will coincide with the centenary of the Commonwealth Games Movement, adding historical and strategic significance.

- ★ Organisers highlighted lessons learned from the 2010 Delhi Games, ensuring that venues are largely ready, funding is secured, and an organising committee will be established promptly.
- ★ The Games are expected to feature 15–17 sports, including athletics, swimming, table tennis, bowls, and netball, with T20 cricket and triathlon under consideration.
- ★ Dr. PT Usha, President of the Commonwealth Games Association of India, emphasised the Games will be inclusive, strong, and future-ready, celebrating a century of Commonwealth sports and promoting cultural unity.
- ★ Ahmedabad's world-class infrastructure, including the Narendra Modi Stadium, the largest cricket stadium globally, supports the Games, with most venues already in place to avoid construction delays and cost overruns.
- ★ The state's Gujarat sports model, combining grassroots development with elite training, serves as a benchmark for sustainable sports growth.
- ★ The event aims to showcase India's sports excellence, urban readiness, and hospitality, aligning with India's broader ambitions, including hosting the 2036 Summer Olympics.

India Wins Silver at Sultan Azlan Shah Cup 2025

- ★ The Indian men's hockey team won the Silver medal at the Sultan Azlan Shah Cup 2025 held in Malaysia.
- ★ India lost 1-0 to Belgium in the final played in Ipoh.
- ★ Belgium, ranked World No. 3, won their first-ever Sultan Azlan Shah Cup title.
- ★ The winning goal was scored by Thibeau Stockbroekx in the 34th minute.
- ★ This was Belgium's second appearance in the tournament after finishing sixth in 2008.
- ★ India, ranked World No. 7, returned to the tournament after six years. This was India's second consecutive runners-up finish, following the final loss to South Korea in 2019. India has won the tournament five times, last in 2010, and remains the second-most successful team, behind Australia (10 titles).
- ★ In the final match, Belgium dominated early play and created more attacking chances.
- ★ Indian goalkeepers Shashikumar Mohith Honnenahalli and Pawan made key saves to prevent further goals. A goal by Tom Boon was disallowed for dangerous play.
- ★ India attempted a comeback after conceding but missed a penalty corner and narrowly avoided conceding again.
- ★ Despite strong efforts in the final minutes, Belgium maintained their lead until full time.
- ★ In the bronze medal match, New Zealand defeated host Malaysia 6-1, claiming third place in the 2025 edition of the tournament.

Archery Premier League Wins Emerging Professional Sports Event of the Year

- ★ The Archery Premier League (APL) has won the title of Emerging Professional Sports Event of the Year at the India Sports Awards 2025 during FICCI TURF 2025, the 15th Global Sports Summit held in New Delhi.

- ★ The Archery Premier League is the world's first professional franchise-based archery league, launched by the Archery Association of India (AAI) to make archery more engaging, commercially viable, and broadcast-friendly.
- ★ The inaugural edition of the Archery Premier League was held from 2 October to 12 October 2025 at the Yamuna Sports Complex, New Delhi, featuring top national and international archers.
- ★ The main objective of the Archery Premier League is to elevate archery to modern professional sports standards, enhance fan engagement, strengthen India's global performance especially in the Olympic Games, and make the sport accessible to a wider audience.
- ★ The Archery Premier League featured six franchise teams, each composed of eight archers (four male and four female).
- ★ A total of 36 Indian archers and 12 international players participated.
- ★ The league included both recurve and compound archery, with teams selected through a draft format.
- ★ Matches followed a fast-paced format of 20 minutes, with 15 seconds per arrow, and were held under floodlights to increase broadcast appeal.
- ★ The league final saw the Rajputana Royals defeating the Prithviraaj Yodhas in a close 5–4 shoot-off, marking a dramatic finish to the first season.
- ★ The award strengthens the Archery Premier League's credibility, encourages higher sponsorship and media participation, and positions the league as a key force in advancing professional archery in India.

Cristiano Ronaldo Partners with Perplexity Artificial Intelligence

- ★ The football legend Cristiano Ronaldo announced his partnership with Perplexity Artificial Intelligence, joining the company as both an investor and brand ambassador.
- ★ As part of the collaboration, Ronaldo launched a personalized Artificial Intelligence feature called the "Ronaldo Hub", designed for fans to explore his football journey through curated content and interactive tools.
- ★ The Ronaldo Hub allows users to:
  - View exclusive, private photos from Ronaldo's archive
  - Ask Artificial Intelligence-generated questions about his personal and professional journey
  - Relive iconic moments, including famous goals
  - Access detailed timelines of his achievements and milestones
- ★ This marks one of the first major integrations of celebrity-driven personalised Artificial Intelligence, setting an example for athlete–technology partnerships.
- ★ Perplexity is an Artificial Intelligence-powered search and assistant platform offering multimodal responses, voice interaction, and real-time verified results. It positions itself as a competitor to ChatGPT and Google Gemini.
- ★ With Ronaldo's global reach of over 650 million social media followers, the partnership is expected to help Perplexity expand in regions such as Latin America, Asia, and the Middle East, where Ronaldo has a massive fan base and Artificial Intelligence usage is rapidly evolving.

India's Sarwagya Singh Kushwaha Becomes World's Youngest FIDE-Rated Chess Player

★ Sarwagya Singh Kushwaha, a 3-year-old from Madhya Pradesh, became the youngest officially rated chess player in the world in December 2025.

★ He achieved this at the age of 3 years, 7 months, and 20 days, entering the records of FIDE (Fédération Internationale des Échecs / International Chess Federation).

★ He received an official rapid rating of 1572, which is significantly higher than the usual minimum entry rating of 1400 required for official recognition.

★ Sarwagya earned his rating after defeating multiple adult players, including:

- Yogesh Namdev (Rating: 1696)
- Abhijeet Awasthi (Rating: 1542)
- Shubham Chourasiya (Rating: 1559)

★ Sarwagya began showing exceptional chess ability at 2.5 years old, identifying all chess pieces within a week of learning the game.

★ He currently trains 4–5 hours daily, including online games and puzzle solving, alongside guided coaching.

★ FIDE (International Chess Federation) is the global body responsible for official chess tournaments, rules, and player rankings.

India to Host Squash World Cup 2025 in Chennai

★ India will host the Squash World Cup 2025 for the third consecutive time at the SDAT Stadium, Chennai, from 10–14 December 2025.

★ Chennai, known as the "Home of Indian Squash", continues to strengthen its global presence with strong support from the Squash Rackets Federation of India (SRFI) and Tamil Nadu's sports authorities.

★ The Squash World Cup is an international mixed-team tournament featuring four-player squads — two men and two women.

★ The event uses an innovative scoring system introduced in 2023, with a first-to-seven points format and a sudden-death tiebreak at 6–6, making matches faster and spectator-friendly.

★ India hosting the event for the third time reflects:

- Rising popularity of squash in India
- Strong administrative and infrastructural backing
- Chennai's proven success in organizing major racquet sports events

★ The 2025 edition holds importance for India as it aims to further enhance squash visibility and challenge top global teams.

FIH Men's Junior Hockey World Cup 2025

★ The 14th edition of the Fédération Internationale de Hockey Men's Junior Hockey World Cup 2025 concluded in Chennai and Madurai, Tamil Nadu.

- ★ The tournament was held from 28 November to 10 December 2025 at the Mayor Radhakrishnan Hockey Stadium, Chennai, and the Madurai International Hockey Stadium.
- ★ Germany emerged as the champion, winning its eighth Men's Junior Hockey World Cup title, the most by any nation.
- ★ In the final match, Germany defeated Spain 3–2 in a shoot-out after the match ended in a 1–1 draw at full time.
- ★ With this victory, Germany further consolidated its dominance in junior men's hockey at the global level.
- ★ India won the bronze medal, defeating Argentina 4–2 after staging a remarkable comeback.
- ★ India was trailing 0–2, but scored four goals in the final quarter within 10 minutes to clinch third place.
- ★ Indian goal scorers in the bronze medal match were Ankit Pal (49th minute), Manmeet Singh (52nd minute), Sharda Nand Tiwari (57th minute), and Anmol Ekka (58th minute).
- ★ This bronze medal highlighted the depth and potential of India's young hockey talent.
- ★ India's previous gold medals in the Men's Junior Hockey World Cup were won in 2001 and 2016.
- ★ The final standings of the 2025 tournament were Germany (Gold), Spain (Silver), and India (Bronze).

R. Praggnanandhaa Wins FIDE Circuit 2025

- ★ Indian Grandmaster Rameshbabu Praggnanandhaa won the FIDE Circuit 2025 with 115.17 points, topping a year-long global leaderboard in December 2025.
- ★ With this achievement, he became the only male player worldwide to qualify for the Candidates Tournament 2026 through the FIDE Circuit route.
- ★ The qualification secures his place in the Candidates Tournament 2026, which determines the challenger for the World Chess Championship 2026.
- ★ This marks Praggnanandhaa's second consecutive appearance in the Candidates Tournament, underlining his consistency at the elite level of world chess.
- ★ The FIDE Circuit 2025, organised by the International Chess Federation (FIDE), was a year-long qualification pathway from January to December 2025, with rankings based on a player's best seven tournament results.

Amul Renews Partnership with Argentina Football Association as Regional Sponsor

- ★ Amul renewed its partnership with the Argentina Football Association (AFA) as the Official Regional Sponsor for the fourth consecutive year.
- ★ The renewed agreement will continue through the FIFA World Cup 2026.
- ★ Amul became the first Indian regional sponsor in the history of Argentine football in 2022, making this extension a significant milestone.
- ★ AFA President Claudio Fabián Tapia stated that the partnership reflects the growing connection between Argentine football and India, driven by shared passion and growth.

- ★ The partnership highlights the link between sports and nutrition, underlining the role of milk and healthy nutrition in enhancing performance, passion, and dedication.
- ★ By associating with the FIFA World Cup 2022 champions Argentina, Amul strengthens its image as a global sports brand.
- ★ The renewed sponsorship enhances Amul's international presence and aims to inspire millions of fans in India and globally.
- ★ With the FIFA World Cup 2026 approaching, the collaboration is expected to feature fan engagement initiatives and global campaigns celebrating football and nutrition.

MRF Tyres Wins 2025 FIA European Rally Championship Teams Title

- ★ MRF Tyres clinched the 2025 FIA European Rally Championship (ERC) Teams Title, marking a major boost to India's presence in global motorsport technology.
- ★ The award was presented at the FIA Awards Gala, the annual season-closing ceremony organised by the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA).
- ★ This is MRF Tyres' third ERC Teams Championship title, after earlier victories in 2022 and 2023, with the latest win coming in 2025.
- ★ The ERC Teams Title is awarded based on consistent performance across multiple rally events held in diverse and challenging European terrains, where tyre grip, durability, and adaptability are critical.
- ★ The trophy was handed over by Manuel Avino, Vice President, FIA Europe, to Arun Mammen, Vice Chairman and Managing Director of MRF Ltd, at the FIA Awards Gala.
- ★ The victory highlights MRF's research-driven approach, high-quality manufacturing, and ability to meet extreme motorsport performance standards.
- ★ MRF's repeated success positions it among the few Indian companies to consistently compete and win in elite global motorsport championships, traditionally dominated by European and Japanese firms.
- ★ The achievement strengthens India's visibility in high-performance automotive engineering and enhances MRF's global brand recognition and export potential.
- ★ MRF has a long-standing association with motorsports, backed by sustained investment in research and development, testing facilities, and international racing partnerships.
- ★ The ERC success underlines the importance of long-term vision, innovation-led growth, and consistent investment in niche but high-impact sectors like motorsport technology.

Jharkhand Wins First Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy Title 2025–26

- ★ Jharkhand scripted history by winning their first-ever Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy (SMAT) title in the 2025–26 season, defeating Haryana by 69 runs in the final held at Maharashtra Cricket Association Stadium, Pune.
- ★ Jharkhand posted 262 runs for 3 wickets, while Haryana were bowled out for 193 runs, making it the highest team total ever recorded in a T20 tournament final in Indian domestic cricket.
- ★ Ishan Kishan played a match-winning innings of 101 runs off 49 balls, hit the most sixes in the tournament, and finished as the leading run-scorer of SMAT 2025–26.

- ★ Kumar Kushagra scored 81 runs off 38 balls and shared a massive 177-run partnership with Ishan Kishan, maintaining scoring momentum after the powerplay.
- ★ Anukul Roy contributed 40 not out off 20 balls and took 2 wickets, while Robin Minz scored 31 not out off 14 balls.
- ★ Sushant Mishra delivered an effective bowling performance, taking 3 wickets for 27 runs.
- ★ This victory made Jharkhand the 12th team to win the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy and the first new champion since Mumbai in the 2022–23 season.
- ★ The performance strengthened Ishan Kishan's prospects for a return to the Indian Twenty20 International team.
- ★ The Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy is India's premier domestic Twenty20 cricket tournament, traditionally dominated by teams such as Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Mumbai, with Jharkhand lifting the title for the first time in the 2025–26 edition.

East Bengal FC Wins Inaugural SAFF Women's Club Championship 2025

- ★ Indian women's football created history as East Bengal Football Club won the first-ever South Asian Football Federation (SAFF) Women's Club Championship 2025.
- ★ East Bengal defeated Nepal's Armed Police Force (APF) Football Club by 3–0 in the final held at Dasrath Stadium, Kathmandu, Nepal.
- ★ With this victory, East Bengal FC became the first Indian women's club to win an international football title.
- ★ This achievement sets a new benchmark for women's club football in India and is expected to boost confidence, investment, and grassroots participation in the sport.
- ★ The SAFF Women's Club Championship is a newly launched tournament organised by the South Asian Football Federation to promote women's club football and provide international exposure to South Asian teams.
- ★ The 2025 edition was the inaugural edition, making East Bengal FC's title win historically significant for Indian football.

Smriti Mandhana Becomes First Asian Batter to Cross 4,000 Runs in Women's Twenty20 Internationals

- ★ Indian Vice Captain Smriti Mandhana marked her return to international cricket by creating history in the first Women's Twenty20 International against Sri Lanka at Visakhapatnam.
- ★ She became the first Indian and first Asian batter to cross 4,000 runs in Women's Twenty20 Internationals, reaffirming her status as one of the leading batters of the modern era.
- ★ During the match, Mandhana scored 25 runs off 25 balls, a crucial innings that helped her reach 4,007 runs from 154 Women's Twenty20 International matches.
- ★ With this feat, she became only the second player in Women's Twenty20 International history to cross the 4,000-run mark.
- ★ Suzie Bates of New Zealand remains the highest run-scorer in the format with 4,716 runs in 177 matches.

★ Mandhana now stands second on the all-time Women's Twenty20 International run-scorers list, highlighting her consistency and longevity at the top level.

124th Amateur Golf Championship of India

★ Indian amateur golf witnessed a major milestone as Sukhman Singh clinched the Indian Golf Union 124th Amateur Golf Championship of India with a dominant performance.

★ The championship was held at the Tollygunge Club, Kolkata, one of the oldest golf courses in India.

★ In the 36-hole matchplay final, Sukhman Singh defeated Harman Sachdeva of Haryana.

★ The match remained tied until the sixth hole, after which Sukhman steadily gained control.

★ He went 4 Up after 12 holes and maintained a 2 Up lead at the halfway stage, consistently pressuring his opponent.

★ Sukhman later built a commanding 7 Up lead with seven holes remaining, leading to the match being concluded after 29 holes.

★ The victory is significant due to Sukhman Singh's sporting legacy, as his father Simarjeet Singh is a former India Number One amateur golfer and a multiple-time amateur champion.

Alpine SG Pipers Win Global Chess League 2025 Season 3

★ Alpine SG Pipers, led by Rameshbabu Praggnanandhaa and Anish Giri, won the Global Chess League 2025 Season 3, defeating defending champions Triveni Continental Kings in the finals held in Mumbai.

★ This victory marked the first-ever Global Chess League title for Alpine SG Pipers and highlighted India's growing dominance in international chess, with Indian players excelling in high-pressure global team formats.

★ The finals were played in a two-match format, where overall consistency and team strength were decisive.

★ Alpine SG Pipers won the first match by 4–2, gaining an early advantage through aggressive and tactically sharp play.

★ In the second match, the team dominated further, registering a 4.5–1.5 win to clinch the championship convincingly.

★ Anish Giri played a decisive role in the finals by delivering a tactical masterclass against Wei Yi and winning both games with the Black pieces.

★ His exceptional performance earned him the Most Valuable Player of the Finals award.

★ Rameshbabu Praggnanandhaa delivered a crucial victory in the second match by defeating Vidit Gujrathi in a 35-move tactical game, displaying composure, maturity and attacking precision at a critical stage.

★ Another key contribution came from Alireza Firouzja, who defeated Fabiano Caruana in the first match, underlining the strong collective performance of Alpine SG Pipers.

- ★ The Global Chess League is a franchise-based international chess tournament designed to make chess more spectator-friendly by combining rapid-format games, team strategies and high-intensity matches.
- ★ Season 3 featured elite grandmasters and emerging talents from across the world and concluded with a high-quality final in Mumbai, further strengthening the league's global appeal.

Chairman of Badminton World Federation Athletes' Commission

- ★ Pusarla Venkata Sindhu (PV Sindhu), India's badminton icon, has been elected Chair of the Badminton World Federation (BWF) Athletes' Commission for the 2026–2029 term.
- ★ With this appointment, she becomes a member of the Badminton World Federation Council, ensuring direct athlete representation in global badminton governance.
- ★ The election marks a major milestone in Sindhu's leadership role beyond competitive badminton.
- ★ As Chair of the Athletes' Commission, PV Sindhu will represent the interests and concerns of badminton players worldwide.
- ★ She will contribute to policy formulation, governance decisions, and athlete-centric reforms within the BWF.
- ★ PV Sindhu has been associated with the BWF Athletes' Commission since 2017.
- ★ She has also served as a BWF Integrity Ambassador since 2020, strengthening her role in promoting ethical practices in badminton.
- ★ Debora Jille (Netherlands) has been appointed Deputy Chair of the Athletes' Commission.
- ★ Other commission members include An Se-young (Olympic Champion), Doha Hany (Egypt), and Jia Yifan (China).
- ★ In para-badminton, Chan Ho Yuen Daniel (Hong Kong China) has taken over as full-time Chair.
- ★ Indian para-badminton player Abu Hubaida is also a member of the commission.

BOOKS & AUTHORS

Shikhar Dhawan Releases Autobiography "The One: Cricket, My Life and More"

- ★ Former Indian cricketer Shikhar Dhawan launched his autobiography titled "The One: Cricket, My Life and More" in New Delhi.
- ★ The book is published by HarperCollins India and spans 288 pages, offering a candid account of Dhawan's cricketing journey and personal life.
- ★ The autobiography provides an honest reflection on Dhawan's early life in Delhi, his passion for cricket, career milestones, personal struggles, controversies, and moments of self-doubt.
- ★ He began as a wicketkeeper in Delhi before becoming a prominent opening batsman.
- ★ He made ODI debut in 2010, T20I debut in 2011, and Test debut in 2013.
- ★ He is highlighted as the highest run-scorer in ICC Champions Trophy 2013, contributing significantly to India's title win.

★ Among the fastest Indians to score 5,000 ODI runs, showcasing consistency at the top level.

HarperCollins Publishers India to Release Book on Salman Khan

★ HarperCollins Publishers India has announced the publication of a new book titled "Salman Khan: The Sultan of Bollywood", authored by award-winning journalist and writer Mohar Basu.

★ The book is scheduled for release, coinciding with the birthday of Salman Khan, one of Hindi cinema's most influential and enduring superstars.

★ The book traces Salman Khan's cinematic journey, focusing on his iconic screen characters, memorable dialogues, chart-topping songs, and box office-defining films.

★ It blends fan anecdotes, film industry insights, and rare photographs, providing a detailed account of how Salman Khan emerged as the quintessential mass hero of Bollywood.

★ The narrative highlights popular roles such as Prem, Bajrangi, and Tiger, showcasing his dominance across romance, comedy, and action genres, a rare achievement in Hindi cinema.

★ Author Mohar Basu described the book as a tribute to the old-school magic of cinema, when the arrival of a superstar could electrify single-screen theatres.

★ She emphasised that Salman Khan represents the uninhibited joy of movie-going, a quality that has become increasingly rare in contemporary cinema.

★ According to the author, the book explains why Salman Khan has remained a ritualistic and festival-linked presence for audiences for nearly three decades, particularly during festival releases and first-day-first-show screenings.

Vice President Releases Book 'Sanatan Sanskriti Ki Atal Drishti'

★ The Vice President of India, Shri C.P. Radhakrishnan, released the book 'Sanatan Sanskriti Ki Atal Drishti' at the Vice President's Enclave, New Delhi.

★ The book has been authored by Shri Vasudev Devnani, Speaker of the Rajasthan Legislative Assembly.

★ The Vice President congratulated the author and described the book as a timely and significant contribution, particularly as the nation commemorates the centenary birth anniversary of former Prime Minister and Bharat Ratna Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

★ While speaking on the occasion, the Vice President stated that Atal Bihari Vajpayee was not merely an individual but an institution in himself, whose life and leadership were deeply rooted in strong values, democratic principles, and an inclusive vision of nationalism.

★ He recalled the Pokhran Nuclear Tests of May 1998, conducted under Operation Shakti during Vajpayee's tenure as Prime Minister, noting that they demonstrated India's strategic autonomy, national confidence, and global standing.

★ The Vice President also highlighted Vajpayee's iconic slogan "Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan, Jai Vigyan", which reflected his holistic vision of national strength encompassing defence, agriculture, and science.

IMPORTANT DAYS

World AIDS Day 2025

★ World AIDS Day 2025 is observed on 1st December with the theme "Overcoming disruption, transforming the AIDS response".

★ The day aims to raise awareness about AIDS, a sexually transmitted disease caused by HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus).

★ AIDS can be prevented and controlled through proper awareness, safe practices, and timely medical intervention.

★ World AIDS Day was first initiated in 1988 and observed on 1st December to promote global health awareness.

★ The day serves as an opportunity to support people living with HIV, remember those who lost their lives to the disease, and strengthen global efforts in fighting the epidemic.

★ From 1996 onwards, the observance was taken over by the United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), making it an annual campaign for education, prevention, and awareness.

★ The World AIDS Campaign was registered as a nonprofit organization in 2004 in the Netherlands to coordinate global awareness and advocacy efforts.

World Computer Literacy Day 2025

★ World Computer Literacy Day 2025 is observed on 2nd December.

★ The day is celebrated annually to promote computer literacy and digital awareness, especially among women and children.

★ The observance was started in 2001 by the National Institute of Information Technology (N.I.I.T.) to mark its 20th anniversary.

★ N.I.I.T. was founded in 1981 by Rajendra Singh Pawar and Vijay K. Thadani.

★ The initiative began after a study showed that men were the majority of global computer users, highlighting the gender gap in technology access.

★ Since its establishment, N.I.I.T. has expanded to over 30 countries, focusing on skills and talent development in the IT sector.

★ The day supports building a digitally empowered society aligned with global digital transformation goals.

International Day of Persons with Disabilities 2025

★ International Day of Persons with Disabilities 2025 is observed annually on 3rd December.

★ The day is also known as the World Day of the Handicapped 2025.

★ It is celebrated to promote understanding, acceptance, and care for people with disabilities, and to ensure they are treated with dignity, equality, and respect.

- ★ In 1976, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) decided that from 1981, the International Day of Persons with Disabilities would be observed globally.
- ★ The United Nations (UN) officially announced 3rd December as the permanent date for the observance of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.
- ★ The first Paralympic Games were hosted in 1960, marking a major milestone in global disability sports representation.
- ★ In 1992, the United Nations officially proclaimed the International Day of People with Disability as an annual observance.
- ★ In 2013, Australia became the first country to pass the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) aimed at improving welfare, accessibility, and support systems for persons with disabilities.

Indian Navy Day 2025

- ★ Indian Navy Day 2025 is observed on 4th December to honour the role, strength, and achievements of the Indian Naval Forces.
- ★ The day also commemorates Operation Trident, a successful naval attack carried out by India against Pakistan during the Indo-Pakistan War of 1971.
- ★ The Indian Navy was initially established by the East India Company in 1612, marking its historical origin.
- ★ During the 1971 Indo-Pakistan War, Pakistan launched an offensive on 3rd December by attacking Indian air bases. In response, the Indian Navy executed Operation Trident on the night of 4th–5th December, targeting the Karachi harbour.
- ★ Pakistan lacked aircraft to counter the naval strike, which allowed India to carry out a successful operation, resulting in the destruction of enemy vessels and significant casualties among Pakistani naval personnel.
- ★ The operation was led by Commodore Kasargod Pattanashetti Gopal Rao, whose leadership played a crucial role in the mission's success.
- ★ Indian Navy Day is celebrated nationwide every year to honour the bravery, dedication, and strategic excellence of the Indian Naval Forces and to commemorate the historic maritime victory of 1971.

World Soil Day 2025

- ★ World Soil Day 2025 is observed on 5 December to raise awareness about the importance of healthy soil and sustainable soil management.
- ★ The theme for World Soil Day 2025 is "Healthy Soils for Healthy Cities", highlighting the critical role soil plays in supporting sustainable urban environments.
- ★ Soil is essential for life as it provides food, medicinal resources, and filters natural water through its layers. Despite its importance, soil is often taken for granted.
- ★ Soil formation is an extremely slow process. It takes 200 to 400 years to form just 1 centimetre of soil, and nearly 3,000 years to create fertile soil, making its protection crucial for agriculture and food security.

- ★ In 2002, the International Union of Soil Sciences (IUSS) proposed establishing a dedicated global observance to promote soil conservation awareness.
- ★ The initiative was led by the Kingdom of Thailand under the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej, whose commitment helped drive global recognition of soil as a vital natural resource.
- ★ The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) supported the formal establishment of the observance at the international level.
- ★ In 2014, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) officially designated 5 December as World Soil Day, marking its first global celebration during the 68th United Nations General Assembly session.
- ★ The observance continues to promote sustainable land use practices, soil conservation, and awareness of declining soil health across the world.

International Civil Aviation Day

- ★ International Civil Aviation Day is observed annually on 7th December to raise global awareness about the significance of international civil aviation for social and economic development.
- ★ The day was established by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), a specialized agency of the United Nations, to highlight the impact of civil aviation worldwide.
- ★ Civil aviation has transformed tourism, business, and cultural connectivity, enabling faster travel and fostering international relations.
- ★ The first International Civil Aviation Day was celebrated in 1994, marking ICAO's 50th anniversary.
- ★ In 1996, the United Nations General Assembly officially recognized 7th December as International Civil Aviation Day, emphasizing its global importance.

Armed Forces Flag Day

- ★ Armed Forces Flag Day is observed annually on 7th December to honor the martyrs and the personnel of the Indian Armed Forces who protect the nation's borders.
- ★ The day was first proposed in 1949 by the then Defence Minister, who set up a committee to observe it annually and collect funds through the distribution of flags.
- ★ The primary objective is to collect funds from citizens to support welfare programs for serving personnel, ex-servicemen, and their families.
- ★ It is also known as the Flag Day of India and serves as a platform for citizens to express gratitude and pay homage to military personnel, including those who sacrificed their lives in service.
- ★ Funds collected are used for rehabilitation, education, healthcare, and welfare schemes for the armed forces community, reinforcing national respect and support for defense personnel.

International Anti-Corruption Day 2025

- ★ International Anti-Corruption Day 2025 is observed annually on 9 December to promote awareness about the negative impacts of corruption on governance, society, and national development.

- ★ The observance highlights how corruption affects key sectors such as health, education, justice, democracy, and economic development, leading to inequality, weakened institutions, and reduced public trust.
- ★ Corruption has existed since ancient times, and some of the earliest recorded references to anti-corruption practices appear in:
  - The Code of Hammurabi (Babylonia)
  - The Great Edict of Horemheb (Egypt)
  - Arthashastra (India)
- ★ The modern concept of public welfare and public interest began emerging strongly in the 19th century, leading policymakers and reformers worldwide to view corruption not just as unethical behaviour but as a serious barrier to societal progress.
- ★ Bribery and corrupt practices led to officials compromising quality of work, ethics, accountability, and service delivery, gradually affecting all levels of society and contributing to institutional decay and public distrust.

Human Rights Day 2025

- ★ Human Rights Day 2025 is observed on 10th December. Human Rights are treating every person with the right to life, liberty, property, and the pursuit of happiness.
- ★ The Human Rights Day 2025 theme set by the WHO this year is "Human Rights: Our Everyday Essentials".
- ★ Human Rights Day's first observation was started in 1948 when the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- ★ The day was popular to all when the UN issued a Human Rights Stamp which covered and understood the concept by millions of people.
- ★ It was issued by the United Nations Postal Administration in 1952, which received over 200,000 advanced orders.
- ★ The aim of the Declaration of Human Rights is to establish a common standard of living for all people across the planet and to encourage all UN Members of State, to increase the standard of living among people in their respective countries.

Nobel Prize Day 2025

- ★ Nobel Prize Day 2025 is observed on 10th December. Nobel Prize Day 2025 is also known as the Death Anniversary of Alfred Nobel.
- ★ It honors the achievements of Alfred Bernhard Nobel, a Swedish engineer, chemist, entrepreneur, and philanthropist.
- ★ Alfred Nobel's father was an engineer himself and Alfred Nobel expressed early interest in engineering, and explosives in particular. Nobel became interested in stabilizing the unpredictable explosive nitroglycerin.
- ★ While conducting the experiments an unexpected accident took place which cost the life of his brother. But Nobel continued his work ultimately succeeding in inventing dynamite as a superior and more stable version of nitroglycerin.

- ★ Alfred Nobel went on to invent an even better alternative to dynamite in the form of gelignite.
- ★ Later he re-evaluated his life's goals and decided to use his earnings to set up a prize that recognized the best in humanity. The prizes in the different categories reflect his own interests in various fields.
- ★ Alfred Nobel died on 10 December 1896, in Sanremo, Italy, at his very last residence, Villa Nobel, overlooking the Mediterranean Sea.

International Mountain Day

- ★ International Mountain Day (IMD) 2025 is observed on 11th December to promote awareness about the importance of mountains, their ecosystems, and communities.
- ★ The 2025 theme is "Glaciers matter for water, food and livelihoods in mountains and beyond", highlighting the crucial role of glaciers in sustaining life and the risks posed by climate change.
- ★ Increasing climate variability has reduced mountain agriculture productivity, leading many men to migrate in search of alternative livelihoods.
- ★ As a result, mountain women have taken on additional responsibilities, yet they remain largely invisible due to limited decision-making power and unequal access to resources.
- ★ In the United States, there was a long-standing tradition where students skipped classes to visit nearby mountains for recreation, which became an informal celebration of mountain appreciation.
- ★ The United Nations General Assembly declared 2002 as the International Year of Mountains, recognising the global importance of mountain ecosystems.
- ★ The UNGA established 11 December as International Mountain Day to promote conservation, sustainable development, and protection of mountain environments.
- ★ Japan observes Mountain Day as a national holiday, aimed at encouraging people to appreciate mountains and the natural environment.

Universal Health Coverage (UHC) Day

- ★ Universal Health Coverage Day 2025 is observed on 12th December to promote access to quality health services without financial hardship.
- ★ The first healthcare system was established in 1883 by German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck.
- ★ Bismarck introduced the 'Bismarckian system', an insurance-based healthcare model requiring mandatory medical insurance, similar to modern non-profit health-insurance systems.
- ★ Universal Health Coverage Day was initially promoted by the World Health Organization (WHO), the UN body responsible for international public health.
- ★ In December 2012, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) passed a resolution urging countries to accelerate progress toward universal healthcare.

National Energy Conservation Day

- ★ National Energy Conservation Day 2025 is observed on 14 December 2025 across India.

- ★ The day is observed by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency, which functions u00nder the Union Ministry of Power, Government of India.
- ★ The objective of the observance is to promote cost-efficient energy production, resource conservation, and efficient use of energy among citizens and industries.
- ★ The National Energy Conservation Day 2025 celebrations are held for one week, from 8 December to 14 December 2025.
- ★ National Energy Conservation Day was first observed on 14 December 1991 by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency under the Union Ministry of Power.
- ★ The Bureau of Energy Efficiency plays a key role in developing and implementing strategies and policies to reduce excessive consumption of energy in the country.
- ★ The Bureau of Energy Efficiency also executed the Energy Conservation Act, 2001, which provides a legal framework for promoting energy efficiency in India.
- ★ The main objective of National Energy Conservation Day is to reduce energy consumption and encourage efficient and responsible use of energy across all sectors.
- ★ The observance highlights the importance of sustainable development, energy security, and long-term environmental protection.

Minorities Rights Day

- ★ Minorities Rights Day in India 2025 is observed on 18th December.
- ★ The day is observed in India every year to safeguard the constitutionally guaranteed rights of religious minorities in the country.
- ★ Minorities Rights Day was first observed on December 18th, 1992 by the United Nations.
- ★ The UN adopted the statement on the individual Rights belonging to religious or Linguistic National or Ethnic Minorities.
- ★ In India, it is the responsibility of the National Commission for Minorities (NCM) to carry out the events on this day.
- ★ The NCM was established by the Union Government under the National Commission for Minorities Act, in 1992.

International Migrants Day

- ★ International Migrants Day 2025 is observed on 18th December.
- ★ This year's theme, "My Great Story: Cultures and Development",
- ★ Migration involves more than just starting anew.
- ★ Migrants move around in quest of safety and chances that will let them reimagine who they are.
- ★ Others are evading prejudice and discrimination.
- ★ Although the day was established in 2000, it has been observed since 1997 that several Asian migrant organizations designated December 18 as the day to advocate for the respect, rights, and protection of migrants.

- ★ On account of the ever-increasing number of migrants around the world, on December 4, 2000, the United Nations General Assembly declared December 18 as the day for International Migrants
- ★ Goals connected to migration are included in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of the United Nations.
- ★ Among them is education access, which will result in improved prospects and a higher standard of living.

International Human Solidarity Day 2025

- ★ International Human Solidarity Day 2025 is observed on 20 December to promote the spirit of solidarity, unity, and collective responsibility among nations and people.
- ★ The day is celebrated to raise awareness about the need for governments to honour their commitments to international agreements aimed at peace, development, and social justice.
- ★ It highlights the principle of "Unity in Diversity", emphasising co-operation among different cultures, societies, and nations to address global challenges.
- ★ On 22 December 2005, the United Nations General Assembly recognised solidarity as one of the fundamental and enduring values of the twenty-first century by adopting Resolution 60/209.
- ★ As part of this initiative, the World Solidarity Fund was created to support efforts aimed at ending poverty and promoting social development, particularly in developing countries.
- ★ The declaration of International Human Solidarity Day helped propagate the idea that global problems such as poverty, inequality, and exclusion require shared responsibility and collective action by the international community.

National Mathematics Day 2025

- ★ National Mathematics Day 2025 is observed on 22 December to commemorate the birth anniversary of Srinivasa Ramanujan, one of India's greatest mathematicians.
- ★ The day has been observed since 2012, with educational programmes, seminars, and mathematics-related activities conducted across schools, colleges, and universities in India.
- ★ The observance aims to promote mathematical education, innovation, and scientific temper, while recognising Ramanujan's extraordinary contribution to mathematics in India and globally.
- ★ Srinivasa Ramanujan was born in 1887 in Erode, Tamil Nadu, into an Iyengar Brahmin family.
- ★ Despite limited formal education, he demonstrated exceptional talent by mastering trigonometry by the age of 12 and developing several original mathematical theorems independently.
- ★ At the age of 14, Ramanujan left home and later joined Pachaiyappa's College, Madras, where he excelled only in mathematics and could not complete his Fellow of Arts degree due to poor performance in other subjects.
- ★ Ramanujan became a member of the London Mathematical Society in 1917, marking his growing international recognition.
- ★ In 1918, he was elected as a Fellow of the Royal Society, becoming one of the youngest Fellows in its history.

★ National Mathematics Day honours Ramanujan's legacy and serves as an inspiration for students, researchers, and educators, highlighting India's rich contribution to the field of mathematics.

National Consumer Rights Day 2025

★ National Consumer Rights Day 2025 is observed on 24 December to create awareness about the rights and protection of consumers in India.

★ The theme for 2025 is "Efficient and Speedy Disposal through Digital Justice", highlighting India's focus on technology-enabled, accessible, and timely consumer grievance redressal mechanisms.

★ Consumers play a central role in the economy as most buying and selling decisions are driven by consumer demand, making consumer awareness and protection essential.

★ In India, consumer rights received formal recognition with the enactment of the Consumer Protection Act, 1986, which aimed to protect consumers from unfair trade practices, sale of substandard goods, fraud, and deficiency in services.

★ With rapid economic transformation, changes in shopping behaviour, travel patterns, digital commerce, and service delivery, the existing consumer protection framework required modernisation.

★ To address these changes, the Consumer Protection Act, 2019 was passed by the Parliament of India on 6 August 2019, replacing the 1986 Act and strengthening consumer rights in a dynamic and digital economy.

★ The Right to Information Act complements the Consumer Protection Acts by promoting transparency and accountability in governance, which has significant implications for consumer empowerment.

Good Governance Day 2025

★ Good Governance Day 2025 is observed on 25 December to commemorate the birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, a recipient of the Bharat Ratna.

★ The day is observed alongside Christmas celebrations and is treated as a working day for the Government of India, emphasising commitment to citizen-centric governance.

★ The Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG) launched Good Governance Week 2025, to be observed from 19 December to 25 December.

★ The guidelines for the nationwide 'Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore' campaign were released by Secretary, DARPG, Rachna Shah.

★ The campaign focuses on administrative outreach, grassroots service delivery, and strengthening transparent, accountable, and responsive governance.

★ The observance of Good Governance Day originated after Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya were jointly announced as Bharat Ratna awardees on 23 December 2014.

OBITUTARY NEWS

Renowned Bharatanatyam legend Kumari Kamala

★ Renowned Bharatanatyam dancer Kumari Kamala (Kamala Laxmi Narayanan) passed away at age 91 in California, USA.

★ Kumari Kamala was born on 16 June 1934 in Mayuram (Mayiladuthurai), Tamil Nadu.

★ She trained in Vazhuvoor-style Bharatanatyam, Kathak, and Hindustani Music at a young age.

★ She acted in over 100 films across Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, and Hindi

★ She debuted as a child artist in Tamil films like Valibar Sangham (1938) and Rama Nama Mahimai (1939).

★ She appeared in Hindi films such as Jailor (1938), Kismet, and Ram Rajya (1943).

★ Her dance sequences like Paampu Attam (Snake Dance) in Jagathalapratapan (1944) made her widely popular.

★ She performed in well-known films including Sri Valli (1945), Meera (1945), and Nam Iruvar (1947). She received the Padma Bhushan (1970), the third-highest civilian award of India.

★ She was honoured with Kalaimamani (1967) by the Tamil Nadu Government and the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award (1968).

Padma Shri Awardee and Veteran Journalist Prafulla Govinda Baruah

★ Prafulla Govinda Baruah, veteran journalist and Padma Shri awardee (2018), passed away at the age of 93 in Guwahati, Assam.

★ He was born on 26 July 1932 in Dibrugarh, Assam Province (British India).

★ He was the Chairman Emeritus and Editor of The Assam Tribune, one of Northeast India's leading English newspapers.

★ He formally entered the journalism profession in 1962, marking the beginning of a distinguished media career.

★ He became Managing Director (MD) of The Assam Tribune Group in 1966 and later served as Editor from 1997.

★ He was awarded the Padma Shri in 2018 for his contributions to Literature and Education, particularly in Assam.

★ He promoted Assamese literature through the publishing house 'Sahitya Prakash' and founded the monthly literary magazine 'Goriyasi'.

★ He established the socio-cultural organisation 'Jyotirupa' to nurture talent in drama and performing arts.

★ He played a key role in establishing Radha Govinda (RG) Baruah College in Guwahati, contributing to higher education in Assam.

★ He organised Assam Prakalpa seminars to encourage dialogue on economic development and policy issues of the state.

- ★ He was felicitated by Asam Sahitya Sabha and honoured by the Kamala Saikia Trust for ethical and principled journalism.
- ★ He also received an appreciation citation from Dr. B. Borooah Cancer Institute for his efforts in cancer awareness initiatives.

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