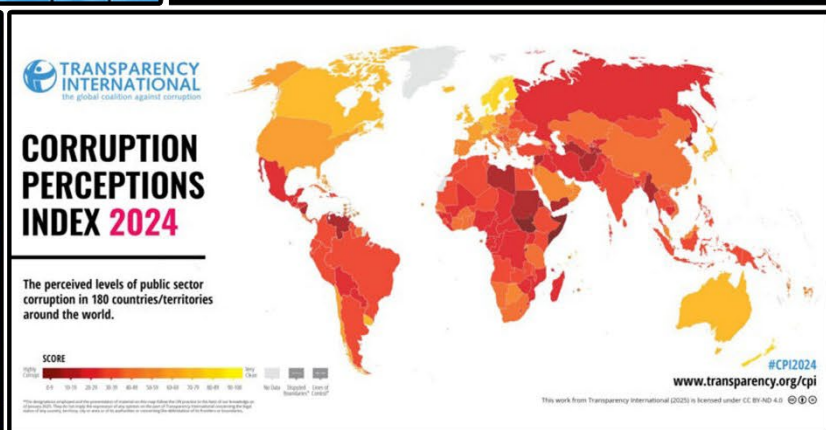
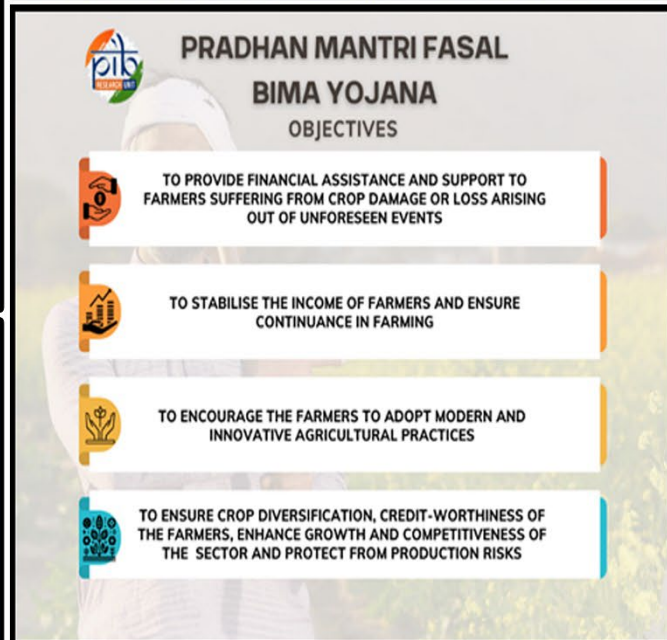
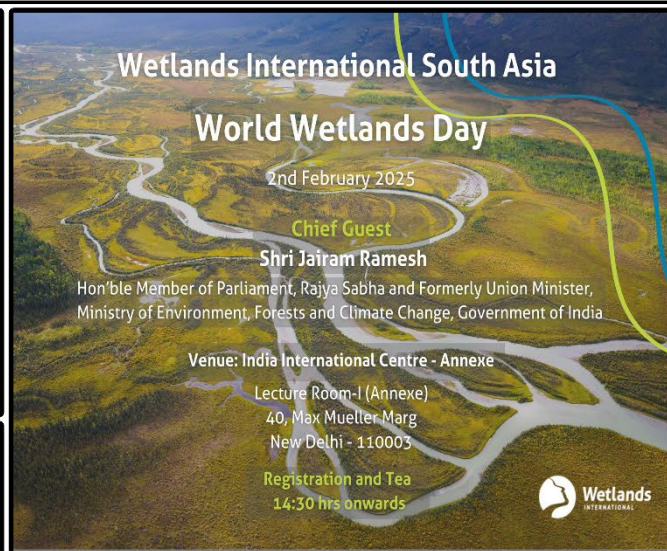
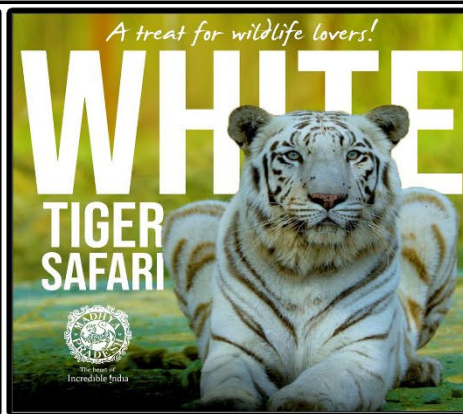




Shankar School of Banking

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FEBRUARY – 2025

NATIONAL NEWS

Ministry of Rural Development Sanctions 27 Roads Under PM-JANMAN

- ★ In a major step towards enhancing rural connectivity and economic growth, the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) has approved 27 roads spanning 50.13 km under the Connectivity Component of PM-JANMAN in Maharashtra.
- ★ This initiative involves an investment of ₹50.35 crore and aims to uplift Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in the state.
- ★ **Key Objectives of the Initiative**
 - All-Weather Road Connectivity: Ensuring reliable infrastructure for 27 PVTG habitations in remote areas.
 - Socio-Economic Upliftment: Improving living standards and economic opportunities for PVTGs.
 - Bridging Rural-Urban Gap: Strengthening connectivity between remote villages and urban centres.
 - Boosting Trade and Commerce: Enhancing local economies by facilitating transportation of goods and services.
 - Improved Access to Essential Services: Enhancing healthcare, education, and market accessibility.
 - Employment Generation: Creating job opportunities and stimulating local economies.

Union Budget 2025-26

- ★ The Union Budget 2025-26, presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.
- ★ The Government has presented the Union Budget 2025-26 with the theme “Sabka Vikas”.
- ★ It marks her eighth consecutive budget presentation, including six annual and two interim budgets.
- ★ Union Budget 2025-26 Focus area: zero poverty, quality education, affordable healthcare, skilled employment, women’s economic participation, and farmers’ prosperity.

Indian Railways Launches ‘Swarail’ SuperApp for Seamless Travel Experience

- ★ The Ministry of Railways has unveiled its new SuperApp ‘SwaRail’, designed to be a one-stop solution for all railway-related services.
- ★ Currently in its beta testing phase, the app is available for download on the Google Play Store and Apple App Store.

- ★ The key focus of this app is to enhance user experience through a seamless interface, integrating various railway services into a single platform, thereby reducing the need for multiple apps and saving space on user devices.
- ★ It was developed by Centre for Railway Information Systems (CRIS).
- ★ Users can access all services through a single login. The same credentials used for other Indian Railways apps, like IRCTC RailConnect and UTS Mobile App, will work seamlessly with the SwaRail app.

Kerala to Implement E-Way Bill for Gold

- ★ The Goods and Services Tax Network (GSTN) has introduced a new E-Way Bill (EWB) feature exclusively for gold in Kerala, effective January 20, 2025.
- ★ This initiative aims to regulate the intrastate movement of gold while preventing tax evasion in the sector.
- ★ The new feature applies to goods classified under Chapter 71 of the Harmonized System of Nomenclature (HSN), excluding imitation jewellery (HSN 7117).
- ★ The Government of Kerala has issued a notification making it mandatory for taxpayers to generate an EWB for gold transportation within the state.
- ★ The EWB system for gold is applicable only for intrastate movement and does not cover imitation jewellery (HSN 7117).
- ★ Taxpayers can continue generating EWBs for imitation jewellery using the standard EWB system.
- ★ The GSTN clarified that this feature is designed to assist taxpayers in compliance while enhancing tracking and accountability in the gold trade.
- ★ This initiative is expected to curb tax evasion and improve transparency in Kerala's high-value gold sector.

Jammu and Kashmir Introduces Geo-Tagging for Chinar Trees Under "Tree Aadhaar" Mission

- ★ The Jammu and Kashmir Government has launched the "Tree Aadhaar" mission to conserve the declining chinar trees.
- ★ The initiative involves conducting a census and assigning a unique identity to each chinar tree for better monitoring and protection.
- ★ The chinar tree is the state tree of Jammu & Kashmir, now a Union Territory.
- ★ The oldest surviving chinar tree, around 700 years old, is located in Chattergam village, Budgam, central Kashmir, and was planted by a Sufi saint.
- ★ So far, 28,560 chinar trees have been enumerated and geo-tagged, out of an estimated 32,000 to 33,000 trees.
- ★ A metallic QR code is being placed on chinar trees, allowing users to scan and access information on 25 parameters.

New Delhi World Book Fair 2025

- ★ The New Delhi World Book Fair 2025 will be held from February 1 to 9, 2025, at Bharat Mandapam, Pragati Maidan, New Delhi (Halls 2-6, Ground Floor).
- ★ The event will be inaugurated by President Droupadi Murmu, who will also serve as the Chief Guest.
- ★ The theme for this year's fair is "Republic@75", highlighting nation-building, governance, freedom, equality, and social justice.
- ★ Several renowned personalities, including Shashi Tharoor, Kumar Vishwas, Pankaj Tripathi, Prakash Jha, and Pushpesh Pant, will participate in discussions and cultural programs.
- ★ The event will feature a vast collection of books, cultural performances, and discussions on democratic values and constitutional principles.

Andhra Pradesh Launches 'Mana Mitra'

- ★ The Andhra Pradesh Government has launched 'Mana Mitra', a WhatsApp-based governance platform aimed at providing citizens with digital access to Government services.
- ★ The initiative, introduced by State Education and IT Minister Nara Lokesh, is designed to simplify processes like obtaining certificates, paying bills, and accessing civic services.
- ★ The platform allows residents to access various Government services by sending a simple "Hi" message to an official WhatsApp number.
- ★ The Government plans to connect 36 departments in the first phase, with 161 services available initially.
- ★ Blockchain technology and AI-based automation will be incorporated in future upgrades, enhancing digital governance with features like AI bots and voice-enabled services.
- ★ The second phase of the platform will expand to include 360 services.
- ★ The QR code feature will allow users to verify certificates and prevent fraud.
- ★ The initiative follows an agreement with Meta, signed in October 2023.

Gujarat Village's Inland Mangrove to Be State's First Biodiversity Heritage Site

- ★ The 78-hectare area of Guneri village in Lakhtar tehsil, Kutch district, has been declared as Gujarat's first Biodiversity Heritage Site (BHS).
- ★ The site is a natural inland mangrove area.
- ★ The Gujarat Government made the announcement based on a recommendation from the Gujarat Biodiversity Board.
- ★ The declaration aims to ensure the conservation and enrichment of the area's flora and fauna through a management plan.
- ★ The announcement was made under the provisions of The Biodiversity Act, 2002.
- ★ The Act allows the State Government to notify an area as a BHS after consulting local bodies.
- ★ Unlike typical mangroves found along sludgy sea coasts accessed daily by seawater, the Guneri mangrove site is unique.

- ★ It is located 45 km from the Arabian Sea and 4 km from the Kori Creek, where seawater never reaches.
- ★ The site is devoid of sludge and is spread over a flat, forest-like piece of land.

India's First White Tiger Breeding Centre Approved in Madhya Pradesh

- ★ The Central Zoo Authority (CZA) has given final approval for India's first white tiger breeding centre, to be established in Govindgarh, Rewa district, Madhya Pradesh.
- ★ This project is a landmark step in wildlife conservation, as Rewa holds historical significance for being home to the last known wild white tiger.
- ★ Final approval was granted by CZA for the breeding centre.
- ★ The Maharaja initiated a breeding and conservation program, leading to the global spread of white tigers in captivity.
- ★ The project is part of the revised master plan for the Maharaja Martand Singh Judeo White Tiger Safari and Zoo in Mukundpur.
- ★ The initiative is expected to boost wildlife tourism and generate employment opportunities for locals.

Shivraj Singh Chouhan Launches Watershed Yatra

- ★ Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan launched a 'Watershed Yatra' in a hybrid mode.
- ★ The Yatra was launched by the Minister in the virtual mode while it was launched in a physical mode by the concerned officials in 800 Gram Panchayats in which more than one lakh people participated in the launch program.
- ★ The Watershed yatra aims to create awareness and encourage mass participation of the people about the watershed development activities in the areas where Watershed Development activities are being carried out under the Watershed Development Component of Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (WDC-PMKSY 2.0) programme.
- ★ Watershed refers to the area of land that drains or sheds water into a specific waterbody like a lake, stream, river, and finally into the ocean. The watersheds drain melted snow and rainfall into these water bodies.
- ★ The Watershed Yatra has been launched by the Union Ministry of Rural Development.
- ★ The Watershed Yatra will be through a specially designed and equipped mobile van which will cover around 805 projects in 13587 villages in 26 States and the Union Territories in 60-90 days.
- ★ The Watershed Yatra aims to involve the people in the conservation of soils and water and inspire community participation in the effective and successful implementation of WDC PMKSY Projects.

Government Expands Ayushman Bharat – Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana for Senior Citizens

- ★ The Government of India expanded Ayushman Bharat – Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) to provide free treatment benefits up to ₹5 lakh per year for all senior citizens aged 70 years and above, irrespective of socio-economic status, including tribal communities.

- ★ The National Health Authority (NHA) introduced a revised Health Benefit Package (HBP) covering 1,961 medical procedures across 27 specialties such as General Medicine, Surgery, Orthopedics, Cardiology, and Oncology.
- ★ States have flexibility to customize the Health Benefit Packages based on local needs.
- ★ Beneficiaries of Ayushman Vay Vandana Cards can avail of these benefits through a network of 30,072 hospitals, including 13,352 private hospitals.
- ★ Extensive awareness campaigns are being conducted through newspapers, radio, street plays, digital displays, mass messaging, and Doordarshan to reach rural and backward areas.
- ★ Frontline workers such as ASHAs, AWWs, and VLEs are engaged to promote mass awareness.
- ★ For assistance, beneficiaries can call the 24×7 helpline (14555) or give a missed call to 1800-110-770.
- ★ The Union Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare, Shri Prataprao Jadhav, shared this information in a written reply in Rajya Sabha.

The Government of India Introduces 'Haj Suvidha App'

- ★ The Government of India has launched the 'Haj Suvidha App', aimed at improving the pilgrimage experience for Indian Haj pilgrims.
- ★ The app serves as a comprehensive guide for pilgrims, providing them with essential services throughout their journey to ensure they have a smooth and fulfilling experience while performing the sacred rituals.
- ★ The initiative underscores the Government's commitment to modernizing the pilgrimage experience by enhancing accessibility, support, and convenience for Indian pilgrims.

India Launches First Ferret Research Facility in Haryana

- ★ India has inaugurated its first Ferret Research Facility at the Translational Health Science and Technology Institute (THSTI) in Faridabad, Haryana, marking a major milestone in the country's biomedical research efforts.
- ★ The facility aims to enhance research in infectious and non-communicable diseases, with a focus on vaccine and therapeutic development.
- ★ Rajesh Gokhale, Director General of the Biotechnology Research and Innovation Council, led the inauguration, emphasizing the facility's role in improving India's preparedness for emerging diseases.
- ★ The facility will focus on critical studies for vaccine and therapeutic development, especially for respiratory diseases like influenza and coronaviruses.
- ★ Ferrets are an ideal model for respiratory disease research, placing India among a select group of nations with this capability.
- ★ The research will enhance pandemic preparedness and contribute to the development of treatments for infectious diseases.

Union Cabinet Extends Skill India Programme Till 2026

- ★ The Union Cabinet in a meeting held in New Delhi on 7th February 2025 and chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has restructured and extended the central sector scheme “Skill India Programme” till 2025-26.
- ★ The Skill India Mission was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2015 to create a trained workforce in India to meet the needs of the industry and help in the economic development of the country.
- ★ Three key skilling schemes of the Central Government Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana 4.0, Pradhan Mantri National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (PM-NAPS), and the Jan Shikshan Sansthan Scheme have been consolidated into a comprehensive “Skill India Programme”.
- ★ The Outlay for the Skill India Programme from the period 2022-23 to 2025-26 is ₹ 8,800 crore.
- ★ The Skill India programme is being implemented by the Union Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship.
- ★ The components of the Skill India Programme are Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana 4.0, Pradhan Mantri National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (PM-NAPS), and the Jan Shikshan Sansthan.

ISLRTC Signed MoU with National Book Trust

- ★ A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Indian Sign Language Research and Training Centre (ISLRTC), under the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD), Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, and the National Book Trust (NBT) at the World Book Fair 2025.
- ★ This partnership is aimed at improving accessibility and inclusivity in education for Deaf children, ensuring they have access to quality reading materials in their preferred mode of communication.
- ★ Both the Director of ISLRTC and NBT reaffirmed their dedication to enhancing education for Deaf children across India, ensuring they are provided with books in Indian Sign Language.

PM Modi Virtually Inaugurates India Energy Week in Delhi

- ★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi virtually inaugurated the 3rd India Energy Week being held in New Delhi on 11 February 2025.
- ★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi is on an official visit to France from 10-12th February 2025. He is in France to co-chair the AI Action Summit along with the French President Emmanuel Macron.
- ★ The India Energy Week is jointly organised by the Federation of Indian Petroleum Industry (FIPI) and the DMG Events, under the overall patronage of the Union Ministry for Petroleum and Natural Gas.
- ★ Public Sector Company ONGC is the principal partner and the French multinational company Total Energies is the International Partner of the 3rd India Energy Week.

- ★ The India Energy Week provides a platform for regional and global energy companies with an opportunity to network with key buyers from over 120 countries across the full energy value chain.
- ★ The exhibitors have the opportunity to showcase their cutting-edge technologies to forge strategic partnerships, drive sustainable energy solutions, and explore opportunities to shape the future of energy.

Government of Odisha Rolls Out ‘Antyodaya Gruha Yojana’

- ★ The Odisha Government has decided to implement the Unified Pension Scheme (UPS), ‘Antyodaya Gruha Yojana’ for economically weaker sections of society.
- ★ Employees can choose between UPS and National Pension System (NPS).
- ★ Pension benefits include 50% of average basic pay (last 12 months before retirement) for those with 25+ years of service.
- ★ Minimum pension amount set at ₹10,000 for retirees with at least 10 years of service.
- ★ Family pension benefits include 60% of the pension amount drawn by the deceased retiree.
- ★ Guaranteed family pension benefit after retirement, which was not available in NPS.
- ★ Odisha Government launches ‘Antyodaya Gruha Yojana’ to provide affordable housing for economically weaker sections denied houses under PMAY.
 - Target: 25 lakh houses over the next three years with an investment of ₹7,550 crore.
 - Financial assistance: ₹1.20 lakh per house under the scheme.
 - Completion incentives: ₹20,000 bonus for finishing houses within 4 months and ₹10,000 bonus for finishing within 6 months.
- ★ Family definition simplified to include husband, wife, dependent parents, and children for scheme eligibility.

India Hosts the International Conference on Governance

- ★ India is hosting the annual Conference of the International Institute of Administrative Science (IIAS). The conference titled IIAS-DARPG (Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances) India Conference 2025 is being held in New Delhi from 10-14 February 2025.
- ★ The conference will provide a platform for experts from over 55 countries to explore innovations in public administration, governance, and policymaking.
- ★ They will also discuss the future of public administration, issues related to governance reforms, and the role of technology in shaping public governance.
- ★ The annual General Assembly meeting of the IIAS will also take place during the International Conference.
- ★ The Conference is being organised jointly by the International Institute of Administrative Science (IIAS) with the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG), Government of India.
- ★ The theme of the IIAS-DARPG India Conference 2025 is “Next Generation Administrative Reforms – Empowering Citizens and Reaching the Last Mile”.

Haryana's 'Har Khet-Swasth Khet' Campaign Aims to Provide Soil Health Cards

- ★ The 'Har Khet-Swasth Khet' campaign aims to collect soil samples from every acre of Haryana and provide farmers with soil health cards.
- ★ The target is to achieve this within the next 3-4 years.
- ★ So far, 70 lakh soil samples have been collected.
- ★ 55 lakh soil samples have been analyzed.
- ★ 86.65 lakh soil health cards have been distributed under the Soil Health Card Scheme.
- ★ 17 new permanent soil and water testing laboratories have been established.
- ★ 54 new small soil testing laboratories have been opened in various mandis.
- ★ 240 small soil testing laboratories have been set up in Government senior secondary schools and Government colleges.
- ★ A Soil Health Card is used to assess the current status of soil health and, when used over time, to determine changes in soil health that are affected by land management.

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs Launches 'Culinary, Crafts and Clicks – Moods and Magic' Festival

- ★ The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), in collaboration with MyGov, has introduced the 'Culinary, Crafts and Clicks – Moods and Magic' festival.
- ★ This initiative aims to showcase India's rich cultural heritage through food, traditional arts, and photography.
- ★ The festival, which is being held at key locations like Kartavya Path and Amrit Udyan, features artisans, photographers, and food enthusiasts.
- ★ A major attraction of the festival is the 'Moods and Magic' photography contest, which invites photographers to capture India's public spaces and cultural vibrancy.
- ★ The festival aligns with MoHUA's broader mission of promoting cultural engagement in urban spaces.

Assam Set to Host World's Largest Jhumur Dance Festival

- ★ Assam will host the world's largest Jhumur dance (also called Jhumoir) on 24th February, in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- ★ The performance aims to set a Guinness World Record, featuring over 7,500 dancers and artistes.
- ★ The two-day investment summit Advantage Assam will take place on February 25-26, showcasing Assam's rich traditions and attracting investors.
- ★ The event is a platform to promote Assam's culture and position the state as a new investment destination.
- ★ Preparations for the cultural event include master training workshops, district-level performances, and final rehearsals in Guwahati.
- ★ Assam had previously set a Guinness World Record for the biggest Bihu dancing performance.

- ★ The goal of Advantage Assam 2.0 is to increase infrastructure development and investment in the state.
- ★ The summit is expected to attract global investors, reinforcing Assam's growing reputation as a business-friendly state.

Asia's First Animatronic Elephant 'Ellie' Unveiled in Bengaluru

- ★ Ellie, Asia's first life-sized animatronic elephant, was introduced in Bengaluru.
- ★ It was created by PETA India and voiced by actor Dia Mirza, Ellie aims to educate children about the harsh realities of elephant captivity and promote compassion towards animals.
- ★ Since May 2023, Ellie has reached over 165,000 children across various schools in India.
- ★ PETA India's Compassionate Citizen program has already reached 93 million children across 200,000 schools in India.
- ★ Ellie's presence in Bengaluru marks a significant step in integrating humane education into school curriculums.

Karnataka Government Launches New Single-Window System

- ★ Karnataka's revamped Single Window System, introduced by CM Siddaramaiah, aims to simplify business approvals, reduce compliance burdens, and fast-track industrial investments while ensuring transparency and efficiency.
- ★ It integrates 150 business services across 30 state departments, allowing real-time tracking of approvals, amendments, and renewals.
- ★ It also introduces Affidavit-Based Clearance (ABC) through Karnataka Udyog Mitra, enabling investors to start construction and preparatory activities without waiting for multiple approvals.
- ★ It is integrated with the National Single Window System (NSWS) for seamless access to central-level services. Includes Karnataka Industrial Areas Development Board (KIADB) services such as land search, selection, allotment, and building plan approvals.
- ★ It introduces a GIS-Based Industrial Information System to help investors check site-related compliance before starting projects.

Government Sanctions ₹3,295.76 Crore for Development of Iconic Tourist Centres

- ★ The Government of India has approved 40 projects across 23 states under the 'Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment (SASCI) – Development of Iconic Tourist Centres to Global Scale' Scheme for the Financial Year 2024-25.
- ★ The total financial outlay for these projects is ₹3,295.76 crore, and they aim to comprehensively develop, brand comprehensively, and market iconic tourist destinations in India.
- ★ Objective is to develop world-class tourist destinations with end-to-end tourism experiences.
- ★ It strengthens tourist value chains (infrastructure, facilities, and services) and funding support to states for project implementation.

India to host First-Ever Regional Dialogue on Global Coalition for Social Justice

- ★ Union Minister Mansukh Mandaviya will inaugurate the first-ever Regional Dialogue on Social Justice, which is set to take place on February 24-25 at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi.
- ★ This landmark event is organized by the Ministry of Labour and Employment, in collaboration with the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and the Employers' Federation of India (EFI).
- ★ The dialogue aims to bring together global stakeholders to discuss inclusive and sustainable social policies.
- ★ Key Objectives of the Regional Dialogue include Promote fair employment opportunities and social security, Strengthen inclusive economic growth across the Asia-Pacific region and beyond and Enhance responsible business practices for social justice.
- ★ India is a key member of the Asia-Pacific Co-ordinating Group and is taking the lead in hosting the first-ever Regional Dialogue on Social Justice.
- ★ Theme: "Responsible Businesses for Inclusive and Sustainable Societies".

PACS Partnered with Common Service Centres in Andhra Pradesh

- ★ In Andhra Pradesh, the integration of Primary Agricultural Co-operative Societies (PACS) with Common Service Centres (CSCs) has significantly advanced rural financial inclusion.
- ★ This collaboration has resulted in the disbursement of ₹12,905 crore in loans, benefiting approximately 6.78 lakh individuals.
- ★ The initiative aims to provide accessible financial services to rural populations, thereby addressing territorial inequalities and empowering local communities.
- ★ This effort aligns with the broader objectives of the Digital India program, which seeks to enhance digital infrastructure and services across the country.
- ★ E-Pragati: This state enterprise architecture framework aims to deliver 750 services to over 30 million citizens by integrating 34 departments onto a single platform.
- ★ Bhudhaar: Launched in 2018, Bhudhaar assigns an 11-digit unique number to every land parcel in the state, facilitating streamlined land management and reducing disputes.
- ★ e-Panta (Crop Booking): An Android application designed to assess crop details and analyze cropping patterns, aiding in better agricultural planning and management.
- ★ Loan Charge Creation Project: This project aims to prevent fraudulent and multiple loans by enabling bankers to verify land details before loan issuance, ensuring transparency and trust in agricultural financing.

Madhya Pradesh Introduces India's First GCC Policy 2025

- ★ Madhya Pradesh becomes the first state in India to introduce the Global Capability Centre Policy 2025.
- ★ It aims to position the state as a global hub for innovation and collaboration.
- ★ It Supports decentralization by encouraging businesses to expand beyond metro cities into tier-2 cities.

- ★ The GCC Policy 2025 offers incentives for capital expenditure, payroll, upskilling with a focus on IT, finance, engineering, HR, AI, and cybersecurity.
- ★ The state offers lower operational costs compared to metro cities, with strong infrastructure and financial incentives making it an attractive destination for global firms.
- ★ MPSeDC has been designated as the nodal agency, with the Policy Implementation Unit (PIU) overseeing project approvals, incentives, and compliance.
- ★ Madhya Pradesh aims to contribute to India's \$110 billion GCC market by 2030, establishing itself as a leader in the GCC revolution.

Karnataka Launches Clean Mobility Policy

- ★ The Energy Department of Karnataka introduced the Clean Mobility Policy 2025–2030 to establish the state as a hub for green transportation.
- ★ It was launched by Energy Minister K.J. George at the Global Investors' Meet.
- ★ The targets include ₹50,000 crore in investments in the clean mobility sector, which is expected to create one lakh new jobs across the state.
- ★ The Comprehensive Clean Mobility Policy (CMP) incorporates the EV policy, which was set to expire in 2027.
- ★ This is expected to boost the entire green energy sector, beyond just EV manufacturing.
- ★ Karnataka has 2.5 lakh registered EVs and 5,403 EV charging stations. It ranks third in India for EV adoption.
- ★ The CMP aims to install 2,600 additional charging stations under a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model.

West Bengal Launches “Nodi Bandhan” Scheme

- ★ The West Bengal Government has launched the “Nodi Bandhan” initiative as part of its 2025-26 budget, aiming to address natural disasters and generate employment opportunities.
- ★ The name “Nodi Bandhan” was personally coined by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.
- ★ Introduced as part of the 2025-26 budget, the “Nodi Bandhan” (River Bond) scheme aims to combat natural disasters while generating employment opportunities.
- ★ Focuses on interconnecting rivers and wetlands to promote sustainable development and mitigate environmental challenges.
- ★ It aligns with the state's commitment to flood prevention, river erosion control, and economic growth.
- ★ The scheme aims to combat natural disasters like floods and river erosion, enhance job opportunities in sectors such as agriculture, fishing, and small-scale industries, and strengthen climate resilience in vulnerable districts like Murshidabad and Malda.
- ★ The Government has allocated ₹200 crore to tackle riverbank erosion in Murshidabad and Malda, with a two-year masterplan.
- ★ This plan will use hydrological models for scientific planning and nature-based solutions to prevent erosion and enhance resilience.

Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) Celebrated 9 Years Anniversary

- ★ On February 18, 2025, the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) celebrates its 9th anniversary, marking nearly a decade of providing financial security to Indian farmers.
- ★ Launched in 2016 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, PMFBY serves as a comprehensive crop insurance scheme, protecting farmers from natural calamities, pests, and diseases while encouraging the adoption of modern farming practices.
- ★ The Union Cabinet (January 2025) approved the extension of PMFBY till 2025-26.
- ★ Total budget allocated: ₹69,515.71 crore.

‘Waste Recycling and Climate Change 2025’ Conclave

- ★ Union Minister for Environment, Forest, and Climate Change, Shri Bhupender Yadav, inaugurated a day-long conclave organized by the Recycling and Environment Industry Association of India (REIAI) on ‘Waste Recycling and Climate Change 2025’.
- ★ He highlighted that India generates 62 million tonnes of waste annually, with a sharp increase in plastic, electronic, and hazardous waste.
- ★ The linear economy model (take-make-dispose) is unsustainable due to landfill pressure, resource depletion, and environmental damage.
- ★ Circular economy is focused on reducing, reusing, and recycling, which is essential to conserve resources, drive innovation, and create jobs.
- ★ Under PM Narendra Modi’s leadership, India is moving from waste management to resource recovery through the waste-to-wealth initiative.
- ★ By 2050, India’s circular economy is expected to be worth \$2 trillion and create 10 million jobs, offering new opportunities for start-ups.
- ★ The recycling industry is encouraged to adopt new technologies to reduce natural resource dependence and cut critical mineral imports.

Kerala Health Department Launches nPROUD

- ★ In a first-of-its-kind initiative in India, the Kerala Drugs Control Department is set to launch a programme for the collection and scientific disposal of expired and unused medicines.
- ★ The Kerala Government is set to launch ‘nPROUD’ (New Programme for Removal of Unused Drugs), a pioneering initiative aimed at the scientific collection and disposal of expired and unused medicines.
- ★ This program, the first of its kind at the Government level in India, addresses the critical issue of improper disposal of pharmaceuticals, which can lead to antimicrobial resistance, health hazards, and environmental pollution.
- ★ Under nPROUD, facilities will be established to collect unused medicines from households, allowing residents to deposit them at designated collection points.
- ★ The project will initially roll out in Kozhikode Corporation and Ulliyeri Panchayat, with plans for statewide expansion.

- ★ The collected medicines will be processed at the Kerala Enviro Infrastructure Limited (KEIL) waste treatment plant, ensuring environmentally safe disposal.
- ★ This initiative reflects Kerala's commitment to public health and environmental sustainability by providing a structured system for the disposal of pharmaceutical waste.

India's First Open-Air Art Wall Museum

- ★ On the occasion of the celebration of the 150th year of the foundation of the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD), India's first "Open Air Art Wall Museum" was inaugurated at the Mausam Bhawan in New Delhi.
- ★ Mausm Bhawan is the name of the building that houses the headquarters of the Indian Meteorological Department in New Delhi.
- ★ The Indian Meteorological Department was founded by the British on 15 January 1875 and presently it is under the Union Ministry of Earth Science.
- ★ The Open Air Museum refers to the artwork done on the walls of the Mausma Bhawan.
- ★ The IMD, in collaboration with the 'Delhi Street Art' organisation, has depicted the history of the IMD in 38 unique murals.

Uttarakhand Cabinet Approves New Land Law To 'Protect' State's Resources

- ★ Pushkar Singh Dhami-led Government in Uttarakhand has repealed the 2018 land law enacted during Trivendra Singh Rawat's tenure.
- ★ A new stringent law has been approved, addressing demands from social and political organizations.
- ★ The previous law had relaxed provisions introduced by former CM Bhuvan Chand Khanduri.
- ★ A ban has been placed on land purchases by individuals from outside the state.
- ★ Horticultural and agricultural land in 11 districts (except Haridwar and Udham Singh Nagar) cannot be purchased by outsiders.
- ★ The Government aims to preserve the state's character by ensuring proper land use and preventing encroachments in hilly regions.
- ★ District magistrates will no longer have the authority to approve land purchases; instead, transactions will be processed through a Government portal.
- ★ Regular reports on land transactions must be submitted to the Revenue Council and Government.
- ★ Land within municipal boundaries must be used according to designated land use, or it will revert to Government ownership.
- ★ The Government has announced measures to regulate land prices, ensuring affordability for local residents.

SPM-NIWAS and Arghyam Partner to Develop Digital Public Infrastructure

- ★ The Syama Prasad Mookerjee National Institute of Water and Sanitation (SPM-NIWAS) and Arghyam have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to collaborate on developing Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) for the Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) sector.

- ★ This initiative aligns with the Government of India's vision to enhance water and sanitation service delivery through digital solutions.
- ★ The collaboration aims to conceptualize, design, and implement a digital ecosystem to support key national programs Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) and Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM-G).
- ★ SPM-NIWAS will lead the implementation of digital initiatives.
- ★ Arghyam, as a key knowledge partner, will contribute expertise in technology-driven water governance.
- ★ The partnership will focus on developing open APIs and interoperable solutions for data-driven decision-making.

India's First Zoo-Based Biobank Established at PNHZP, Darjeeling

- ★ India has made a significant advancement in wildlife conservation by setting up the country's first zoo-based biobank at Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park (PNHZP), Darjeeling, West Bengal.
- ★ Operational since July 2024, this facility aims to preserve genetic materials of endangered species.
- ★ Additionally, the zoo has launched an animal museum, enhancing conservation and research efforts.
- ★ This initiative is in collaboration with the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) under the Ministry of Science and Technology, marking a major milestone in India's biodiversity preservation.
- ★ It functions as a 'frozen zoo' to store DNA, cells, and tissues of endangered species.
- ★ It utilizes cryogenic storage at 196°C using liquid nitrogen to maintain viability for future research, breeding, and species revival.

First Conference of the Women Peacekeeper held in New Delhi

- ★ The first Conference for Women Peacekeepers of the United Nations was held in New Delhi on 24 and 25 February 2025.
- ★ The Conference brought together 35 nations whose women troops are active in the United Nations Peacekeeping operation across the globe.
- ★ The United Nations was represented by the UN Under Secretary General, Department of Peace Operations, Jean-Pierre Lacroix and the UN Special Co-ordinator Christian Saunders.
- ★ India is the second largest contributor to the United Nations Peacekeeping operations.
- ★ The Conference was organised by the Ministry of External Affairs in association with the Union Ministry of Defence and the Centre for United Nations Peacekeeping (CUNPK) of the Indian Army.
- ★ The theme of the first Conference for Women Peacekeepers of the United Nations was "Women in Peacekeeping: A Global South Perspective".
- ★ The main aim of the conference is to discuss and explore the evolving role of women in peacekeeping operations and discuss strategies to enhance their participation in the United Nations Peacekeeping operations.

Haryana Government's Witness Protection Scheme

- ★ The Haryana Government has rolled out the 'Haryana Witness Protection Scheme 2025' to ensure the safety and security of witnesses who play a crucial role in the justice system.
- ★ The primary aim of the scheme is to protect witnesses from threats, harassment, or intimidation that may arise during judicial proceedings.
- ★ By providing legal protection, including the possibility of relocating, changing identities, or offering other safeguards, the Government seeks to strengthen the rule of law, encourage witnesses to testify without fear, and improve the overall functioning of the criminal justice system.
- ★ The scheme will be applicable to witnesses of offences punishable with death, life imprisonment, or imprisonment of seven years or more.
- ★ Additionally, it will cover punishments under Sections 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, and 79 of the BNS, as well as under Sections 8, 10, 12, 14, and 15 of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012.
- ★ Under the scheme, there will be three categories of witnesses based on threat perception.

Accidental Insurance Scheme for School Children in Rajasthan Launched

- ★ The Government of Rajasthan has launched Shiksha Sanjeevani Bima Yojana to provide accidental insurance to schoolchildren in the state.
- ★ This first-of-its-kind scheme will offer personal accident insurance coverage of ₹1 lakh to 1.3 lakh to children and their parents enrolled in State Government schools. Initially, the scheme will cover schools in the Udaipur Division.
- ★ The State Education and Panchayati Raj Minister, Madan Dilawar launched the scheme.
- ★ The scheme was launched at the Shiksha Jeevan Personal Accident Insurance Ceremony organised at the Residency School of Udaipur on 26th February 2025.
- ★ Wonder Cement, Zurich Kotak General Insurance and State Bank of India are partners of the Shiksha Sanjeevani Bima Yojana scheme.
- ★ Wonder Cement will provide money to pay the insurance premium for the insured children in the Udaipur Division.
- ★ The money will be made available by Wonder Cement through its CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) fund.
- ★ The Zurich Kotak General Insurance Company will be the insurance provider for the scheme.
- ★ Zurich Kotak General Insurance Company (India) Limited is a joint venture between Zurich Insurance Group of Switzerland and Kotak Mahindra Bank.
- ★ State Bank of India will open a no minimum balance requirement savings bank account for the enrolled students.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Chinese Scientists Build the World's First Deep-Sea Radar

- ★ China has developed the world's 1st deep-sea radar system capable of detecting and tracking high-altitude aircraft from a depth of 1,000 metres
- ★ This system marks a significant advancement in anti-submarine warfare, potentially transforming submarines from prey to predators.
- ★ The system uses an acoustic sensor array deployed on the seabed to capture faint sound waves emitted by aircraft.
- ★ These sound waves, after reflecting off the seabed and sea surface, are used to estimate the aircraft's co-ordinates with high accuracy.
- ★ Sound waves from aircraft are typically reflected back into the sky by the sea surface, with only a small fraction penetrating the water.
- ★ These waves become distorted due to varying temperatures, densities, salinities, and ocean currents.
- ★ The research team, led by Zhang Bo and Peng Zhaohui, developed a method to exploit reflected sound waves to enhance detection sensitivity.

India to Host BRICS Youth Council Entrepreneurship Working Group Meeting

- ★ The Department of Youth Affairs, under the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India, is organizing the BRICS Youth Council Entrepreneurship Working Group Meeting from 3rd to 7th March 2025.
- ★ The central theme of the meeting is "Youth Entrepreneurship for Sustainable Growth", with approximately 45 youth representatives from BRICS countries expected to participate.
- ★ On January 17, 2025, Nigeria was officially admitted as a partner country of the BRICS bloc, which includes Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa.
- ★ Indonesia has officially become a full member (10th) of the BRICS group of emerging economies. Brazil, holding the presidency of BRICS for 2025, announced this development, noting that Indonesia's candidacy was endorsed by BRICS leaders at the Johannesburg summit in 2023.

Niger becomes the First African Country to Eradicate Onchocerciasis

- ★ Niger has been acknowledged by the World Health Organization (WHO) for eliminating onchocerciasis (river blindness), making it the 5th country globally and the first in Africa to achieve this milestone.
- ★ Onchocerciasis is the second leading infectious cause of blindness worldwide, after trachoma.
- ★ The disease is caused by the parasite *Onchocerca volvulus*, transmitted through the bites of infected black flies, primarily found in riverine areas.
- ★ It affects rural populations in sub-Saharan Africa and Yemen, with smaller endemic areas in Latin America.

- ★ Success was achieved through collaboration between the Nigerien Government, WHO, and non-Governmental organizations, which mobilized resources and technical support.
- ★ Continuous monitoring and timely adjustments in strategies ensured the effectiveness of interventions.
- ★ Onchocerciasis caused immense human suffering and hindered economic development by driving communities away from rivers, which are vital for livelihoods.
- ★ Niger is the 5th country to eliminate onchocerciasis, joining Colombia (2013), Ecuador (2014), Mexico (2015), and Guatemala (2016).
- ★ In the WHO African Region, 21 countries have eliminated at least one NTD.
- ★ Niger previously eliminated Guinea-worm disease (dracunculiasis) in 2013, demonstrating its leadership in public health.

United Kingdom to become 1st Country to Criminalise Artificial Intelligence Child Abuse Tool

- ★ The United Kingdom will be the first country to introduce laws against AI-generated sexualised images of children.
- ★ The law makes it illegal to possess, create, or distribute AI tools that generate abusive images, with punishments up to five years in prison.
- ★ Possessing AI “paedophile manuals” that teach how to use AI for child abuse will be a crime punishable by up to three years in prison.
- ★ Running websites for paedophiles to share child abuse content or grooming advice will be punishable by up to 10 years in prison.
- ★ Home Secretary Yvette Cooper highlighted that AI is accelerating online child sexual abuse and grooming.
- ★ A UK inquiry estimated that 500,000 children are victims of some form of abuse each year, with online abuse growing rapidly.
- ★ The Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) reported 3,512 AI-generated child abuse images found on a single dark web site in 30 days.
- ★ The most serious category of AI child abuse images increased by 10% in one year, according to the IWF.
- ★ Cooper called for other countries to follow the UK’s lead in tackling AI-generated child abuse content.

Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger Officially Leave West Africa’s ECOWAS Bloc

- ★ The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has formally recognized the withdrawal of Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso after prolonged tensions.
- ★ The bloc urged its 12 remaining members to continue recognizing passports and trade agreements with the departing nations.
- ★ ECOWAS President Omar Touray emphasized regional solidarity and invited the three nations to a technical meeting for discussions.

- ★ The fallout began after Niger's July 2023 coup, leading to ECOWAS threatening military intervention and demanding the reinstatement of Mohamed Bazoum.
- ★ The three nations accused ECOWAS of failing to protect member states and aligning with foreign powers.
- ★ They formed the Alliance of Sahel States (AES) and strengthened ties with Russia, Turkey, and Iran for security and strategic interests.
- ★ ECOWAS granted a six-month grace period for reconsideration, but public rallies in Niger and Burkina Faso supported the exit.

15th International Meeting of World Pharmacopoeias

- ★ The Indian capital city of New Delhi hosted the 15th International Meeting of World Pharmacopoeias from 5-7 February 2025.
- ★ The International meeting provided a platform for the global Pharmacopoeial leaders, regulatory authorities, and industry stakeholders to strengthen co-operation in Pharmacopoeias and to improve public health outcomes.
- ★ They discussed measures to improve pharmaceutical standards, harmonization of pharmaceuticals, and regulatory convergence.
- ★ The first International Meeting of World Pharmacopoeias was held in Geneva, Switzerland, from 29th February to 2nd March 2012.
- ★ The 15th International Meeting of World Pharmacopoeias was organised by the WHO and was hosted by the Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission (IPC) under the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India.

US to Withdraw from UNHRC and Stop Funding of UNRWA

- ★ Donald Trump, the 47th President of the United States of America, has signed an executive order to withdraw the country from the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) and permanently stop the funding of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).
- ★ He has also ordered the review of the American contribution to UNESCO and the funding of the United Nations.
- ★ Since coming into power in January 2025, Donald Trump has been following a policy in which the United States is reviewing its contribution to all international organisations.
- ★ The world's largest economy, the United States, contributes around 22% of the United Nations budget.
- ★ These measures were announced by US President Donald Trump after his meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Washington.
- ★ During his meeting with Netanyahu, he also announced that the United States would take over the Palestinian territory of Gaza, under the control of Israel.

India and Saudi Arabia Discuss Strengthening Co-operation

- ★ India and Saudi Arabia discussed strengthening co-operation in the critical minerals sector, focusing on investment and technological collaboration.
- ★ Indian Minister of Coal and Mines G. Kishan Reddy met Saudi Arabia's Minister of Industry and Mineral Resources Bandar Ibrahim Alkhorayef in New Delhi to explore joint ventures and advanced mining technologies.
- ★ The Geological Survey of India Training Institute was designated a Centre of Excellence under the Future Minerals Forum to train geologists from Saudi Arabia, Africa, and Central Asia.
- ★ Both Ministers emphasized the need for secure mineral supply chains and co-operation in processing critical minerals for clean energy technologies.
- ★ The meeting aligns with India's National Critical Minerals Mission.
- ★ India participated in the Future Minerals Forum 2025 in Riyadh, where Reddy reinforced India's commitment to securing critical minerals and met representatives from Brazil, Italy, and Morocco to foster global partnerships.

GMR Airports Limited Strengthens Corporate Sustainability with UNGC

- ★ GMR Airports Ltd (GAL) has joined the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC), further solidifying its commitment to corporate sustainability.
- ★ GAL operates airports in Delhi, Hyderabad, Goa, and Medan (Indonesia), and is involved in the development of Bhogapuram (Visakhapatnam) and Crete (Greece) airports, while also providing technical services to Mactan Cebu International Airport (Philippines).
- ★ All GMR-operated airports hold green building certifications from either the US Green Building Council (USGBC) or the Indian Green Building Council (IGBC).
- ★ In FY24, GAL served over 121 million passengers, reflecting its expanding influence in the global aviation industry.

United States President Donald Trump Signs Order to Leave UNHCR

- ★ United States President Donald Trump signed an executive order to withdraw the United States from the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), citing unethical practices by certain "outlier" countries within the UN.
- ★ He criticized the disproportionate financial burden on the U.S., stating that other nations exploit the UN system for their self-interest.
- ★ The executive order also halts U.S. funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), the primary UN body providing aid to Palestinian refugees.
- ★ The decision follows the Biden administration's suspension of UNRWA funding after reports emerged alleging staff involvement in the October 7 Hamas attack on Israel.
- ★ A day after US President Donald Trump announced America's withdrawal from the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), Israel's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Gideon Sa'ar, has stated that Israel would also join the US in its decision not to participate in the UNHRC.
- ★ The UNHRC, a 47-member body, meets annually in Geneva, Switzerland, to address global human rights issues.

- ★ Established in 2006, it serves as a platform for discussions among UN officials, member states, and experts.

1st BIMSTEC Youth Summit 2025

- ★ The first BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Co-operation) Youth Summit was held in Gandhinagar, Gujarat from 7-11 February 2025.
- ★ Earlier, a two-day BIMSTEC Digital Conclave was held in Colombo, Sri Lanka on 7th and 8th February 2025.
- ★ India hosted the second meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Cyber Security Co-operation in New Delhi on 21 January 2025.
- ★ The 1st BIMSTEC Youth Summit was organised jointly by the Ministry of External Affairs and the Union Ministry of Youth Affairs.
- ★ The Young Indians of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) was the knowledge partner of the Youth Summit.
- ★ The theme of the 1st BIMSTEC Youth Summit was 'Youth as a bridge for intra-BIMSTEC exchange'.
- ★ More than 70 youth delegates from the seven BIMSTEC member countries (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand) participated in the Youth Summit.
- ★ The delegation comprised Ministers, Members of Parliament, Mayors, entrepreneurs, technology developers, cultural personalities, social media influencers, and other civil society leaders of the member countries.

India to Host Inaugural World Audio Visual Entertainment Summit (WAVES)

- ★ India will host the first-ever World Audio Visual Entertainment Summit (WAVES) at the Jio World Convention Centre in Mumbai from May 1 to 4, 2025.
- ★ The event aims to establish India as a global media and entertainment hub, attracting media CEOs, entertainment professionals, and creative leaders from around the world.
- ★ WAVES is envisioned as the Davos for the entertainment industry, fostering collaboration, investment, and innovation.
- ★ The summit will focus on animation, gaming, visual effects, and filmmaking, highlighting future trends and industry growth.

Bangladesh Government Launches 'Operation Devil Hunt'

- ★ Operation Devil Hunt was launched by Bangladesh's interim Government in response to attacks on protesters allegedly carried out by supporters of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's Awami League party.
- ★ Over 1,300 people were detained in two days after the launch of the operation.
- ★ The operation led to the arrest of Chayan Islam, a former MP of Sirajganj-6, and Awami League members.
- ★ Gazipur Police made at least 100 arrests on the second day of the operation.

- ★ The operation aims to restore order and ensure public safety across Bangladesh.

India and US Agree to Double Trade and Boost Defence Ties

- ★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi concluded his two-day visit to the United States of America (USA) with an agreement to more than double bilateral trade to \$500 billion by 2030 and a new framework for the US-India major defence partnership for the next 10 years.
- ★ During his meeting with US President Donald Trump at the White House, both leaders discussed bilateral, regional, and global issues.
- ★ They launched a new initiative titled the “U.S.-India COMPACT (Catalyzing Opportunities for Military Partnership, Accelerated Commerce and Technology) for the 21st Century.
- ★ It outlines the goals and programmes between the two countries that will guide the relationship between the two countries in the future.
- ★ Mission 500 launched to more than double total bilateral trade to \$500 billion by 2030.
- ★ To achieve this goal, both countries will start negotiations for a multi-sector Bilateral Trade Agreement between the two.
- ★ India will buy more defence systems, oil, and gas from America to reduce the American trade deficit with India.
- ★ India and the US will sign a new 10-year “Framework for the U.S.-India Major Defence Partnership in the 21st Century”.

Nityanand Rai Attends 4th No Money for Terror Conference

- ★ Nityanad Rai, Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, led the Indian delegation at the 4th Ministerial Conference on ‘No Money for Terror’.
- ★ The 4th No Money for Terror conference was hosted by the German Government in Munich, Germany.
- ★ More than 200 high-level officials and experts from the Egmont group of countries and key international organisations took part in the conference.
- ★ The main objective of the Conference is to further international co-operation in stopping the financing of terrorism and organised crime.
- ★ The conference discussed ways to enhance multi-national co-operation and strengthen the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) of the member countries in combating the financing of terrorism.
- ★ Union Minister Nityanand reiterated the proposal of India to create a permanent secretariat of the No Money for Terror to make it a permanent body.
- ★ The Egmont Group was established in 1995.
- ★ Its main aim is to strengthen and facilitate secure information sharing amongst its members to combat money laundering, terrorist financing, and other predicate crimes.

4th Edition of SAMVAD in Thailand

- ★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi virtually addressed the 4th edition of SAMVAD – the Global Hindu-Buddhist Initiative for Conflict Avoidance and Environmental Consciousness.
- ★ The SAMVAD initiative is the brainchild of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the late Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. It was established in 2015.
- ★ SAMVAD brings together two ancient civilizations, Hinduism and Buddhism, which promote tolerance.
- ★ The Conference aims to shift the paradigm of global discourse on conflict and environment from Conflict Resolution to Conflict Avoidance and from Environmental Regulations to Environmental Consciousness.
- ★ It brings together the political, social, and religious leaders of these two civilisations to foster collaboration in achieving the goal of conflict and the environment.
- ★ The New Delhi-based Vivekananda International Foundation is the main organiser of the SAMVAD. It organises the SAMVAD in association with the New Delhi-based International Buddhist Confederation and the Tokyo Foundation of Japan.
- ★ The theme of the 4th edition of SAMVAD was – Asian Century of Dharma – Dhamma.

India Signed Five MoUs with Qatar

- ★ India and Qatar signed five memorandums of understanding (MoU) and two agreements during the state visit of the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani, to India.
- ★ Both the countries agreed to elevate their relationship to a 'Strategic Level'.
- ★ Qatar is the fifth country in the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC), with which India has a strategic partnership, the other being Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, and Kuwait.
- ★ Five MoUs and 2 agreements were signed between India and Qatar.

Agreements:

- Establishment of a bilateral Strategic Partnership between the two countries.
- Agreement on revised Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) and Prevention of Fiscal Evasion concerning Taxes on Income.

Five MoUs:

- Financial and Economic Co-operation.
- Co-operation in the field of Youth and Sports between the two
- Co-operation in the field of Documents and Archives.
- Co-operation between Invest India and Invest Qatar.
- Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and Qatar Business Association to promote business relationships.

India Elected to the Vice Presidency of the IALA In Singapore Meeting

- ★ India has been elected Vice Presidency of the International Organisation of Aids to Marine Navigation (IALA). India was elected for this post at the first 1st General Assembly of the

International Organization for Marine Aids to Navigation (IALA) held in Singapore from 18-21 February 2025.

- ★ This was the first General Assembly of the IALA since becoming an interGovernmental organization on 22 August 2024. It was established as a non-Governmental organisation (NGO) in 1957.
- ★ After becoming an inter-Governmental organisation, the organisation's name has been changed to the International Organization for Marine Aids to Navigation.
- ★ The Indian delegation was led by K. Ramachandran, Secretary, Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways.
- ★ The General Assembly meeting provided a platform for the stakeholders to discuss issues related to developments in Aids to Navigation, vessel traffic services, emerging technologies, and governance in the use of Maritime Autonomous Surface Ships.

India Becomes Chairman of BOB Inter-Governmental Organisation

- ★ India has become the Chairman of the regional Bay of Bengal (BOB) Programme Inter-Governmental Organisation.
- ★ India assumed the Chairmanship from Bangladesh at the 13th Governing Council Meeting of the Bay of Bengal Programme Inter-Governmental Organisation at Male, Maldives.
- ★ Dr. Abhilaksh Likhi, Secretary, Department of Fisheries, Government of India, formally assumed the Chairmanship of the Organisation at Male, Maldives.
- ★ The Bay of Bengal Programme Inter-Governmental Organisation meeting was held in Maldives from 20-22 February 2025.
- ★ The Governing Council is the apex decision-making body of the Bay of Bengal Programme Inter-Governmental Organisation, which meets once a year.
- ★ The 13th Governing Council Meeting of the Bay of Bengal Programme Inter-Governmental Organisation meeting was held as part of the 'Policy Guidance for Mainstreaming Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM) in Small-Scale Fisheries' Conference.
- ★ The Ministry of Fisheries and Ocean Resources of the Maldives Government organised the high-level conference in collaboration with the Bay of Bengal Programme Inter-Governmental Organisation.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Visit Mauritius as Guest

- ★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Mauritius to participate as the Guest of Honour at the country's National Day celebrations.
- ★ The announcement was made by Mauritian Prime Minister Navin Ramgoolam, who emphasized that Modi's presence highlights the deep and historic ties between the two nations.
- ★ Mauritius celebrates its National Day on March 12, marking its independence from British rule in 1968.
- ★ The event is a symbol of the country's sovereignty and progress.
- ★ The visit is a testament to India-Mauritius relations, which span diplomatic, economic, and cultural co-operation.

- ★ India has played a key role in Mauritius' development initiatives, infrastructure projects, and strategic partnerships.

UNESCO Launched the “Imagine a World with More Women in Science” Campaign

- ★ The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has launched the “Imagine a World with More Women in Science” campaign to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the International Day of Women and Girls in Science on February 11, 2025.
- ★ This initiative, supported by Canada's International Development Centre (IDRC), aims to promote greater representation and participation of women in STEM fields worldwide.
- ★ The campaign builds on UNESCO's 2024 Call to Action: Closing the Gender Gap in Science, highlighting how diverse perspectives drive innovation in science, technology, medicine, artificial intelligence, and beyond.
- ★ The movement is promoted using the hashtag #EveryVoiceInScience.
- ★ Women represent only one-third of the global scientific community.
- ★ In some countries, less than 10% of researchers are women.
- ★ A 2024 UNESCO report found that women hold just 22% of STEM jobs in G20 countries.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

First Indian on Private International Space Station Mission

- ★ Indian Air Force Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla is set to become the 1st Indian astronaut to travel to the International Space Station (ISS) on a private mission in 2025.
- ★ The mission is led by NASA astronaut Peggy Whitson, with Shubhanshu Shukla serving as the mission pilot.
- ★ He is also the astronaut-designate for India's human spaceflight program, Gaganyaan.
- ★ He will board the SpaceX Dragon spacecraft from Kennedy Space Center, Florida, as part of Axiom Mission 4 (Ax-4), a joint venture between NASA and ISRO.
- ★ Ax-4 will include astronauts from India, Poland, and Hungary, marking the first such international collaboration in over 40 years.
- ★ The astronauts will spend 14 days aboard the ISS, conducting scientific experiments, educational outreach, and commercial activities with NASA and ISRO.
- ★ Rakesh Sharma was the first Indian to travel to space in 1984 aboard the Soviet Soyuz T-11 mission under the Interkosmos program.

Maharashtra to Launch India's First Artificial Intelligence University

- ★ Maharashtra to establish India's first Artificial Intelligence (AI) university, announced by IT Minister Ashish Shelar with an aim to position Maharashtra as a hub for AI education, research, and innovation.

- ★ A task force formed, including experts from academia, industry, and Government.
- ★ The university will serve as a centre of excellence for AI research, skill development, and policy formulation.
- ★ Key stakeholders include IIT Mumbai, IIM Mumbai, Google India, Mahindra Group, L&T, and Government bodies.
- ★ The focus areas include AI applications in healthcare, agriculture, finance, manufacturing, and bridging the AI skill gap.
- ★ Two meetings were held, discussing curriculum, industry partnerships, funding, and location.
- ★ The initiative aligns with Maharashtra's digital infrastructure and innovation
- ★ It is expected to boost India's role in global AI advancements and support economic growth.

Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology and IIT Indore

- ★ In collaboration with IIT Indore, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has launched AgriHub, an AI-driven Center of Excellence (CoE) to revolutionise Indian agriculture.
- ★ The initiative will leverage Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning (ML), and Deep Learning (DL) to address key agricultural challenges such as drought, floods, and low productivity.
- ★ The objective is to utilize AI, ML, and DL for addressing agricultural challenges like droughts, floods, and low crop productivity.
- ★ It Provides farmers, researchers, and agribusinesses with cutting-edge agritech solutions.
- ★ It will also establish partnerships across farmers, NGOs, and agribusinesses to streamline research and technology deployment.

IIT Madras Launches Bharat Cancer Genome Atlas

- ★ IIT Madras launched India's first cancer genome database, Bharat Cancer Genome Atlas (BCGA), to enhance cancer research and diagnostics.
- ★ Addresses the underrepresentation of Indian genetic data in global cancer genome studies, impacting diagnostic kits and targeted therapies.
- ★ Since 2020, IIT Madras has sequenced 960 whole exome analyses from 480 breast cancer tissue samples across India.
- ★ BCGA provides genetic insights into Indian breast cancer cases, aiding early diagnostics, disease progression tracking, and treatment improvements.
- ★ The project is a collaborative effort with Karkinos Healthcare, Mumbai; Chennai Breast Clinic; and the Cancer Research and Relief Trust, Chennai.
- ★ Centre of Excellence on Cancer Genomics and Molecular Therapeutics at IIT Madras played a key role, funded under the "Institutions of Eminence" initiative.
- ★ BCGA will help identify cancer-specific biomarkers, enabling early detection and novel drug discovery for Indian patients.
- ★ The database will act as a national genomic repository, accepting contributions from researchers across different cancer types.

- ★ It enables personalized medicine, ensuring cancer treatment strategies are tailored to genetic and molecular profiles, improving medical care and patient outcomes.

Indian Army and IIT Guwahati Collaborate on Bamboo-Based Composite Bunkers

- ★ The Indian Army, in collaboration with IIT Guwahati, has initiated the development of bamboo-based composite bunkers as a sustainable alternative to conventional military structures.
- ★ This project is designed to enhance sustainability, reduce weight, and improve deployability in high-altitude regions like Arunachal Pradesh.
- ★ The initiative aligns with the Army's 'Decade of Transformation' vision, emphasizing the integration of advanced materials into defense infrastructure.
- ★ The project is specifically targeted at high-altitude locations in Arunachal Pradesh along the Eastern Himalayas.

WAVES 2025 Launches TruthTell Hackathon

- ★ TruthTell Hackathon launched by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting in collaboration with the India Cellular and Electronics Association (ICEA) as part of the World Audio Visual and Entertainment Summit (WAVES) 2025.
- ★ The hackathon is a part of the Season 1 of the Create in India Challenge (CIC) and focuses on developing AI-powered solutions to combat misinformation in live broadcasting.
- ★ The competition aims to create tools for real-time misinformation detection and fact verification in live broadcasts.
- ★ Prize pool of ₹10 lakh with cash prizes, mentorship, and incubation support for winning teams.
- ★ Over 5,600 registrations received globally, with 36% participation from women.
- ★ Objectives include enhancing trust and transparency in the media, promoting ethical journalism, and fostering the responsible use of AI in news reporting.
- ★ Prototype submission deadline: 21st February 2025.
- ★ Final presentations scheduled for the end of March 2025, with winners showcasing their work at WAVES Summit 2025.

India to Launch The Chandrayaan-4 Mission in 2027

- ★ India will launch the Chandrayaan-4 mission in 2027 to bring back moon rock samples to Earth, according to Science and Technology Minister Jitendra Singh.
- ★ The mission will involve two launches of the LVM-3 rocket to carry and assemble five components in orbit.
- ★ India's first crewed space mission will send astronauts to low-Earth orbit in 2026.
- ★ India plans to launch Samudrayaan to explore the seabed at depths up to 6,000 meters, with three scientists in a submersible.
- ★ India will conduct an uncrewed Gaganyaan mission in 2025 with a robot named Vyommित्रा.

- ★ India is building a 3rd launch pad for heavier rockets and expanding with a new launch site in Tamil Nadu's Tuticorin district for small satellites.
- ★ India's space economy is valued at \$8 billion and is projected to reach \$44 billion in the next decade.

Hindustan Jet Trainer-36 Gets a New Identity as 'Yashas'

- ★ Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) has officially renamed its flagship jet training aircraft, the Hindustan Jet Trainer HJT-36, as 'Yashas' following extensive modifications aimed at enhancing its performance and operational efficiency.
- ★ The new name was unveiled by the Ministry of Defence's Secretary (Defence Production) Sanjeev Kumar in the presence of HAL Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) Dr DK Sunil and senior officials at Aero India 2025.
- ★ As part of its preparation for induction, 'Yashas' has been upgraded with state-of-the-art avionics and a modernized cockpit, improving training effectiveness and operational efficiency.
- ★ The enhancements include Weight reduction measures and Replacement of obsolete imported equipment with indigenous Line Replaceable Units (LRUs).

Tata Elxsi Partners with Garuda Aerospace

- ★ Tata Elxsi, a global leader in design and technology services, and Garuda Aerospace, a pioneering UAV (Unmanned Aerial Vehicle) manufacturer, have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) at Aero India 2025.
- ★ This partnership establishes a dedicated UAV design, engineering, and certification center to develop indigenous drone technologies for Indian defence applications, agriculture, and smart cities, supporting the 'Make in India'.
- ★ Tata Elxsi and Garuda Aerospace are showcasing prototypes, designs, and operational UAVs at Aero India 2025.
- ★ Additionally, a demonstration of indigenised UAV components highlights India's advancements in autonomous UAV technologies.
- ★ Tata Elxsi will lead the design, development, testing, and certification of UAV subsystems, leveraging its expertise in avionics, miniaturisation, ground control systems, secured communication, and energy optimisation.
- ★ Its proven capabilities in avionics certification, including compliance with DO-254 and DO-178C standards, will ensure regulatory adherence and safety.
- ★ Garuda Aerospace, with a strong presence in defence and other sectors, will lead business acquisition and delivery.

IIT-Kanpur has developed a Solar Dehydration Technique

- ★ Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur has developed a solar dehydration technique to help farmers preserve their produce and reduce post-harvest losses.
- ★ This technology uses solar energy to dry fruits and vegetables, extending their shelf life.

- ★ The Ranjit Singh Rozi Shiksha Kendra at IIT Kanpur introduced the technology to provide farmers with an alternative to distress sales by enabling them to store their produce longer and sell when market demand rises.
- ★ To demonstrate the practical use of this technology, IIT Kanpur conducted a training session for around 30 farmers from the Hariya Nature Farming Producer Company and Lavkush Farmer Producer Organization (FPO) under the Namami Gange project.
- ★ The training was held in collaboration with Shramik Bharti and led by Professors Sandeep Sangal and Kallol Mondal, who explained how solar dehydration can help farmers store their produce for longer periods.
- ★ IIT Kanpur has partnered with the Department of Food Processing at CSJMU University to standardize operating procedures and quality benchmarks for solar dehydration.
- ★ This initiative aims to address issues like price volatility and food waste, while promoting renewable energy solutions in farming, aligning with sustainable agricultural practices in India.

Kerala Launches World's First AI-Driven Government Screening Program

- ★ The Kerala Government has launched Nayanamritham 2.0, the world's first AI-powered public health screening program for chronic eye diseases in collaboration with Remidio, a leading Indian health-tech company.
- ★ Expanding beyond its initial focus on diabetic retinopathy, the upgraded program now includes glaucoma and age-related macular degeneration (AMD), marking a significant milestone in AI-driven healthcare.
- ★ Kerala becomes the first Government public health system globally to implement AI-based chronic eye disease screening at scale.
- ★ Optometrists are now equipped with Remidio's AI-enabled fundus cameras, which instantly classify cases as referable or non-referable.
- ★ This real-time AI screening allows for faster diagnoses and timely specialist referrals, improving patient outcomes.
- ★ The AI-driven screening model aims to reduce preventable blindness, enhance early detection, and improve healthcare efficiency.

NASA to Launch Lunar Lander 'Athena' with SpaceX Falcon 9

- ★ The US space agency, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), is preparing to launch its mission Moon on February 26, 2025.
- ★ The spacecraft Nova-C lander 'Athena' on a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket is scheduled for a lift-off from Florida's Kennedy Space Center from Launch Complex 39A.
- ★ This mission is a part of NASA's CLPS (Commercial Lunar Payload Services) initiative and Artemis campaign.
- ★ The Intuitive Machines IM-2 mission, carrying NASA science investigations and technology demonstrations to the Moon, will be streamed online.
- ★ Intuitive Machines' lunar lander will spend around one week in transit to the Moon following the launch.

- ★ As per NASA, the spacecraft will make a landing on the lunar surface possibly on March 6, 2025 or later.
- ★ This mission aims to develop a further understanding of the Moon's environment and help in future human missions to the lunar surface as part of NASA's Moon to Mars exploration approach.

BANKING & FINANCE

Finvasia, YES Bank Introduce Jumpp Super App for Digital Finance

- ★ Finvasia, YES Bank Introduced Jumpp Super App.
- ★ Jumpp is a super app that combines banking, payments, savings, investing, and borrowing into one platform.
- ★ It allows users to consolidate their financial accounts through account aggregation and enables instant YES Bank savings account openings.
- ★ It is designed for online shoppers in Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities.
- ★ It focuses on financial inclusion with multilingual AI-driven assistance (English and Hindi) and voice-based interactions for users with limited digital literacy.
- ★ It aims to onboard 1 million users by January 2026.
- ★ It expands services beyond metro cities and integrates with India's Account Aggregator (AA) framework, which has recorded over 100 million consents for secure data sharing.

HDFC and Startup India to Launch 'Manufacturing Accelerator Program'

- ★ HDFC, in collaboration with Startup India's Bharat Startup Grand Challenge, has launched the Manufacturing Accelerator Program to foster innovation and drive growth in India's manufacturing sector.
- ★ The program supports startups addressing critical manufacturing challenges using cutting-edge solutions.
- ★ Applications are open until 15 February.
- ★ It is a joint initiative by HDFC Bank, DPIIT (Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade), and riidl Somaiya Vidyavihar University.
- ★ It aims to build a thriving ecosystem for innovation, scalability, and global competitiveness in manufacturing.
- ★ It will enhance manufacturing efficiency through real-time monitoring and upgraded machinery.
- ★ It will also promote sustainable manufacturing by reducing carbon emissions and waste.

Paytm Unveils 'Receive Money QR Widget' For Android

- ★ One 97 Communications (OCL) owns Paytm, India's leading payments and financial services distribution company, has launched a new 'Receive Money QR Widget' for Android users, enabling instant payment collection directly from a smartphone's home screen.
- ★ Paytm is a pioneer in QR codes, Soundbox, and mobile payments.
- ★ The widget is designed to benefit influencers, shopkeepers, freelancers, delivery partners, and small businesses by simplifying and speeding up payment collection.
- ★ The feature was first introduced for iOS users and received a positive response, prompting its extension to Android.
- ★ Paytm introduced a distinct coin-drop sound for real-time payment notifications.
- ★ This sound provides an instantly recognizable alert, enhancing user experience and ensuring payment transparency.
- ★ Paytm's launch of these features reflects its commitment to continuous innovation based on user needs, offering greater convenience and confidence in mobile payments.

Exto India Technologies Selected by RBI to Test Offline Payment Solutions in Retail Payments Sandbox

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has launched a regulatory sandbox for testing 'On Tap' applications under the theme 'Retail Payments'.
- ★ Exto India Technologies Private Limited was selected for the Test Phase and evaluated an offline digital payment product.
- ★ The product uses Distributed Ledger Technology (DLT) combined with private biometric authorization to enable offline card-to-card and card-to-phone transactions.
- ★ The innovation integrates cryptography of distributed ledgers, on-card biometric authentication, and time-limited balances to prevent double spending.
- ★ The product has been successfully tested and found acceptable under the Regulatory Sandbox (RS).
- ★ It may be considered for adoption by Regulated Entities, subject to compliance with regulatory requirements.

India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) Partnered with PNB MetLife India

- ★ India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) and PNB MetLife India Insurance Company Limited (PNB MetLife) have launched a bancassurance partnership to expand life insurance accessibility across India.
- ★ The collaboration will leverage IPPB's network of 650 outlets and its customer base of 110 million to promote financial inclusion.
- ★ Bank assurance, also known as bancassurance, is a partnership between a bank and an insurance company to sell insurance products to the bank's customers.
- ★ IPPB is a payments bank that operates under the Department of Posts, Ministry of Communications.

Financial Intelligence Unit-India Imposes Penalty on Bybit Fintech Limited

- ★ The Financial Intelligence Unit-India (FIU-IND) has imposed a monetary penalty of ₹9,27,00,000 (Nine crore twenty-seven lakh rupees) on Bybit Fintech Limited for violations under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002.
- ★ Bybit is a Virtual Digital Asset Service Provider (VDA SP), classified as a 'reporting entity' under Section 2(1)(wa) of the PMLA.
- ★ Bybit failed to secure mandatory registration with FIU-IND while expanding its services in the Indian market, leading to continuous non-compliance.
- ★ Due to these violations, FIU-IND ordered the blocking of Bybit's websites under the Information Technology Act, 2000, through the Ministry of Electronics and Communication Technology (MEITY).
- ★ FIU-IND had issued Anti-Money Laundering (AML) and Combating the Financing of Terrorism (CFT) guidelines for Virtual Digital Assets on March 10, 2023.
- ★ A detailed registration circular for Virtual Digital Asset Service Providers was issued on October 17, 2023.

Visa Teams Up with Elon Musk's X to Introduce 'X Money' Accounts

- ★ X (formerly Twitter) is moving towards becoming an "everything app", a concept Musk has envisioned for years, and is partnering with Visa to launch real-time payments in 2024, introducing a new digital wallet service called "X Money Account" for peer-to-peer payments.
- ★ The service will be powered by Visa Direct for real-time money transfers.
- ★ Users can transfer funds to their bank accounts.
- ★ Musk's idea of an "everything app" dates back to the late 1990s with com, which later merged into PayPal.
- ★ He envisioned a multi-functional platform similar to China's WeChat, which includes messaging, video, streaming, and payments.
- ★ Other tech giants like Meta (Facebook, Instagram) have integrated shopping, games, and dating features into their platforms.

Kotak Mutual Fund Launches India's First Morgan Stanley Capital International India Exchange-Traded Fund (ETF)

- ★ Kotak Mahindra Asset Management Company (Kotak Mutual Fund) has launched the Kotak MSCI India exchange-traded fund (ETF), India's 1st-ever fund replicating the MSCI India Index, offering investors a unique opportunity to gain exposure to India's thriving economy.
- ★ The fund will be open for public subscription from January 29 to February 12, 2025.
- ★ The Morgan Stanley Capital International (MSCI) index is an index used by global investors to track India's growth story.
- ★ It comprises 156 companies from the large and mid-cap segments of the Indian market.

- ★ The MSCI India Index, covering 85% of the Indian equity universe, offers broad diversification across key sectors like Consumer Discretionary, Finance, Healthcare, and Real Estate, making it an attractive option for both domestic and international investors.

Airtel Payments Bank Teams Up with Karnataka Bulldozers

- ★ Airtel Payments Bank has partnered with the Karnataka Bulldozers for the Celebrity Cricket League (CCL) 2025.
- ★ Airtel Payments Bank will co-sponsor the team and promote safe digital banking solutions to fans across India.
- ★ The partnership highlights Airtel Payments Bank's focus on providing simple, safe, and rewarding banking services, while promoting the passion and energy of the Karnataka Bulldozers.
- ★ The team's dynamic playstyle mirrors the fast and efficient services offered by Airtel Payments Bank to millions of customers.
- ★ CCL 2025 will begin on 8 February 2025, combining cricket and entertainment.
- ★ Through this partnership, Airtel Payments Bank aims to engage millions of cricket fans nationwide and reinforce its position as a trusted digital banking partner.

NPCI Recommends Higher Automatic Teller Machine Fees

- ★ National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) recommends increasing ATM cash transaction fees from ₹21 to ₹22 per transaction beyond the free limit.
- ★ ATM interchange fee hike proposed: ₹17 to ₹19 for cash transactions and ₹6 to ₹7 for non-cash transactions.
- ★ Banks pay interchange fees when their customers use another bank's ATM.
- ★ For non-metro areas, industry players recommend ₹21 per cash transaction and ₹7 for non-cash transactions.
- ★ Current RBI rules allow 5 free ATM transactions per month in non-metro areas and 3 free transactions in metro cities (Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Mumbai, and New Delhi).
- ★ RBI's ATM Interchange Committee, including IBA CEO, SBI, and HDFC Bank officials, submitted recommendations in September 2023.
- ★ Rising ATM operation costs due to inflation, borrowing costs, cash replenishment, and compliance expenses.

RBI Releases Latest Data on ₹2000 Denomination Banknote Withdrawal

- ★ Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced withdrawal of ₹2000 banknotes on May 19, 2023; latest update published on January 1, 2025.
- ★ Deposit or exchange facility at bank branches was available until October 7, 2023.
- ★ RBI's 19 Issue Offices continue to exchange ₹2000 notes since May 19, 2023, and accept deposits from October 9, 2023.
- ★ The public can send ₹2000 banknotes through India Post to RBI Issue Offices for deposit.

- ★ ₹2000 banknotes in circulation dropped from ₹3.56 lakh crore (May 19, 2023) to ₹6,577 crore (January 31, 2025) – 98.15% returned.
- ★ ₹2000 banknotes remain legal tender.

HDFC Bank to Fund Over 50 Startups with 15 Incubators

- ★ India's largest private sector bank, HDFC Bank has launched the 8th edition of its Parivartan Start-Up Grants initiative, with a total commitment of up to ₹20 crore.
- ★ The initiative aims to support 50-60 social ventures this fiscal year.
- ★ HDFC initiative funds startups in AI for social good, climate innovation, financial inclusion, agriculture, and sustainable rural development, along with education, livelihood enhancement, gender diversity, and inclusion.
- ★ Selected startups will receive grants of up to ₹50 lakh.
- ★ HDFC Bank has partnered with 15 incubators and accelerators, including IIT Madras, IIM Ahmedabad Ventures, Villgro, and ICAR Pusa Krishi, to identify promising social ventures.
- ★ The program will conclude with "Demo Day" events, where funded startups will showcase their work to investors, corporates, and media.
- ★ Startups from Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Haryana, and northeastern states will participate.
- ★ Since 2017, HDFC Bank Parivartan has supported 400+ startups through 120+ incubators, continuing its focus on social entrepreneurship and sustainability.

Beacon Introduces India Bill Pay Within the My Beacon Super App

- ★ Beacon launched Beacon India Bill Pay, enabling users in Canada to pay bills in India directly from their Beacon Money account.
- ★ This service allows payment of over 20,000 bills in India using Canadian Dollars, integrating with Bharat Connect (formerly Bharat Bill Payment System, BBPS).
- ★ The service complies with Reserve Bank of India policies and eliminates the need for NRI accounts or intermediaries.
- ★ Beacon Money allows Indian nationals to open Canadian accounts before arriving in Canada, with no SIN or Canadian address required, offering a digital onboarding process.
- ★ Visa cards are delivered within 7-10 days after arrival, supporting global transactions, Interac e-Transfers®, and bill payments.
- ★ Beacon is the first company in North America to tie up with Bharat Connect for bill payments.
- ★ For the first time, immigrants can settle utility bills, hospital bills, family expenses, and other payments in India from all within a single app and through your Beacon Money account, eliminating intermediaries and complex NRI accounts.

RBI Monetary Policy

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Sanjay Malhotra announced a cut in the policy repo rate under the liquidity adjustment facility (LAF) by 0.25% and reduced it to 6.25%. The cut was

announced by the RBI Governor as per the recommendation of the Monetary Policy Committee of the RBI.

- ★ After five years, the RBI has cut the policy repo rate.
- ★ The recently appointed RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra announced his first bimonthly monetary policy on 7th February 2025.
- ★ The RBI has also forecasted a growth rate of 6.7% for the Indian economy in 2025-26.
- ★ According to the National Statistical Office, the growth rate of the gross domestic product (GDP) of India in 2024-25 was 6.4%.
- ★ The next meeting of the MPC is scheduled for April 7 to 9, 2025.
- ★ Policy Repo Rate: 6.25%
- ★ Fixed Reverse Repo Rate: 3.35%
- ★ Bank Rate: 6.50%
- ★ Standing Deposit Facility (SDF): 6.0%
- ★ Marginal Standing Facility (MSF): 6.50%
- ★ Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR): 4.50%
- ★ Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR): 18%

South Indian Bank Launches Two Specialized Startup Current Account Products

- ★ South Indian Bank (SIB) has launched two specialized startup current account products to support the growing startup ecosystem in India: SIB Business Startup Current Account and SIB Corporate Startup Current Account.
- ★ These products are designed to cater to different types of businesses, with features tailored to their specific financial needs.
- ★ The SIB Business Startup Current Account is for sole proprietorships and partnerships, providing essential banking support during the early stages of a business.
- ★ The SIB Corporate Startup Current Account is aimed at private limited companies, public limited companies, one-person companies, and limited liability partnerships, addressing the more complex financial requirements of larger business entities.
- ★ **Key Features:**
 - Zero minimum balance requirement for up to three years.
 - Unlimited free RTGS/NEFT transactions through digital channels.
 - Premium debit card with exclusive benefits such as airport lounge access.
 - To qualify, businesses must have an incorporation or registration date not older than three years.

Indian Bank Partnered with Indian Institute of Technology Madras

- ★ Indian Bank has announced a Cyber Security and FinTech hackathon in collaboration with the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras, set for April 2025.

- ★ This event is part of a broader hackathon series organized by Public Sector Banks (PSBs) under the guidelines of the Department of Financial Services (DFS) and the Indian Banks' Association (IBA).
- ★ The series focuses on encouraging innovation by partnering with IITs, universities, and scientific institutions to address emerging challenges in financial technology and cybersecurity.
- ★ The upcoming hackathon will focus on key issues within the FinTech sector and advanced fraud detection mechanisms in cybersecurity.
- ★ Indian Bank aims to engage young minds in addressing real-world challenges in financial security and contribute to advancements that safeguard India's financial ecosystem.
- ★ This partnership underscores Indian Bank's commitment to fostering innovation in digital banking and aligns with the Government of India's vision for a secure and resilient financial ecosystem.
- ★ By leveraging both academic expertise and industry collaboration, the bank seeks to strengthen financial security and drive digital transformation in the banking sector.

IBBI Proposes 'Mini Group Insolvency' to Streamline Resolution of Interconnected Entities

- ★ The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) has proposed a mechanism to improve the Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP) for interconnected entities.
- ★ Currently, the lack of a structured approach for handling multiple related entities undergoing CIRP simultaneously leads to inefficiencies, increased costs, and conflicts.
- ★ The IBBI's discussion paper proposes several amendments, including:
 - Joint hearings: For related entities undergoing CIRP.
 - Appointment of a common resolution professional: To oversee the CIRP of interconnected entities.
 - Information-sharing protocols: To facilitate better co-ordination and transparency.
 - Co-ordinated timelines: To streamline the process and improve efficiency.
- ★ This initiative is seen as a "mini group insolvency" mechanism, paving the way for a more comprehensive group insolvency framework under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC).

Ujjivan Small Finance Bank Seeks RBI Approval for Universal Banking License

- ★ Ujjivan Small Finance Bank (SFB) has applied to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) for a universal bank license.
- ★ This move aims to broaden the financial services Ujjivan can offer its customers.
- ★ The RBI has recently established a committee, headed by former Deputy Governor MK Jain, to evaluate such applications.
- ★ The RBI's "Guidelines for 'on-tap' Licensing of SFBs in Private Sector" outlines the criteria for SFBs transitioning to universal banks.
- ★ **Key requirements:**
 - A minimum net worth of ₹1,000 crore.

- Scheduled status and a satisfactory performance record for at least five years.
- Listing on a recognized stock exchange (all SFBs except North East Small Finance Bank are currently listed).
- Net profits in the previous two financial years.
- Gross Non-Performing Assets (GNPA) of less than or equal to 3% and Net Non-Performing Assets (NNPA) of less than or equal to 1% in the last two financial years.
- No new lock-in period for promoter shareholding is mandated.

RBI Forms Working Group to Review Trading and Settlement Timings of Regulated Markets

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has formed a working group led by Executive Director Radha Shyam Ratho to review trading and settlement timings of financial markets regulated by the RBI, with a report due by April 30, 2025.
- ★ The review aims to synchronize market and settlement timings for efficient price discovery and liquidity management, considering technological advancements such as increased electronification of trading, 24 × 5 forex and derivatives markets, and 24 × 7 payment systems.
- ★ India's financial markets currently operate between 9 AM and 5 PM, and the group will assess the impact of these timings on price transmission, liquidity, volatility, and trade distribution.
- ★ The working group will analyze cross-country market timings to understand their influence on market development and participation, while identifying potential benefits, costs, and challenges of revising current trading and settlement hours.
- ★ The final recommendations are expected to enhance market efficiency, reduce settlement risks, and make Indian financial markets more robust and globally competitive.

RBI Introduces Exclusive “bank.in” Domain

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) launches an exclusive internet domain ‘bank.in’ for registered banks to enhance cybersecurity and prevent phishing scams.
- ★ Registration for ‘bank.in’ starts in April 2025.
- ★ RBI plans to introduce another dedicated domain, ‘fin.in’, to secure the broader financial sector.
- ★ ‘Bank.in’ will help mitigate risks of fraudulent banking websites that exploit public trust.
- ★ RBI to extend Additional Factor of Authentication (AFA) for international digital payments to offshore merchants supporting this feature, adding an extra layer of security.
- ★ Cybersecurity measures align with RBI's broader strategy to combat AI-driven frauds, deepfake scams, and advanced malware attacks.

Kerala to Borrow ₹2424.28 Crore from World Bank

- ★ The Kerala Government approved the Kerala Health System Improvement Programme by availing a loan of ₹2,424.28 crore from the World Bank.
- ★ The state Cabinet meeting, chaired by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, granted approval and decided to implement the project under the Programme for Results (P for R)

- ★ The main objective of the programme is to ensure an excellent standard of living and life expectancy while helping the people of the state build a life free from preventable diseases, accidents, and premature deaths.
- ★ All interventions under the programme will focus on ensuring the welfare of the poor.
- ★ The project aims to establish resilient healthcare systems that provide value-based healthcare while addressing the state's evolving demographic and epidemiological challenges.
- ★ The Government stated that the project will also enhance co-ordination between various state departments to effectively respond to emerging threats, including climate change, and improve the efficiency of healthcare delivery systems in Kerala.
- ★ Key objectives include developing a comprehensive ecosystem to prevent non-communicable diseases, strengthening healthcare infrastructure, adopting better approaches to tackle climate-related health risks, and effectively responding to emerging health threats.

Hyderabad-based Ikonz Studios Partnered with IDFC FIRST Bank

- ★ IDFC FIRST Bank, in collaboration with Ikonz, has expanded its use of the latest artificial intelligence (AI) avatar of Bollywood superstar Amitabh Bachchan to 10 more branches across five new cities, including Delhi, Gurugram, Ahmedabad, Bangalore, and Hyderabad.
- ★ This initiative allows Bachchan to connect with an additional 70 million people.
- ★ Previously, Ikonz and IDFC FIRST Bank introduced Bachchan's AI avatar at the Juhu Branch in Mumbai, where it quickly gained acceptance and improved customer trust and banking efficiency.
- ★ Ikonz Studios, based in Hyderabad, is known for its expertise in hyper-realistic, multilingual intelligent avatars and holographic technologies.
- ★ Through this partnership, customers are greeted by Bachchan's interactive digital avatar, providing information about banking products like Zero Fee Banking, Monthly Interest Credits, and Mobile Banking in his signature style.

Paytm Partners With Online Travel Agency, Agoda

- ★ One 97 Communications Limited (Paytm) has teamed up with Agoda, a prominent digital travel platform under Booking Holdings, to enhance its travel services.
- ★ This collaboration enables Paytm Travel to offer hotel bookings alongside its existing services, which include flights, buses, and trains.
- ★ Travelers can now access Agoda's vast selection of accommodations across both Indian and international destinations directly through the Paytm app.
- ★ With Agoda's integration, Paytm Travel ensures a seamless booking experience, offering a broad range of hotels, exclusive deals, and efficient stay planning.
- ★ This partnership provides convenience for frequent travellers and businesses with cost-effective solutions and simplified itinerary management.
- ★ As an IATA-accredited travel agent, Paytm Travel assures a trustworthy booking experience, with additional benefits like free cancellations, instant refunds, travel insurance, and access to an extensive inventory.

- ★ Exclusive discounts through Paytm's collaborations with top banks further add value for users.

Policybazaar Partnered with HDFC Life

- ★ Policybazaar has partnered with HDFC Life, a leading player in India's life insurance sector, to launch the HDFC Life Click 2 Protect Ultimate.
- ★ This collaboration is poised to set new standards in the insurance domain, positioning both Policybazaar and HDFC Life at the forefront of innovation and customer satisfaction.
- ★ The HDFC Life Click 2 Protect Ultimate is designed to address critical consumer concerns, such as ease of acquiring insurance and a seamless claims process for beneficiaries.
- ★ The product offers a Return of Premium on Maturity, meaning policyholders receive all premiums paid at maturity.
- ★ It also includes a Terminal Illness Benefit, providing accelerated death benefits in case of specified illnesses, with a six-month waiting period.
- ★ Additionally, the Smart Exit Benefit allows policyholders to reclaim their entire premium (excluding taxes) if they exit the policy early.
- ★ These features ensure financial security and peace of mind for the insured.
- ★ HDFC Life Click 2 Protect Ultimate sets a new benchmark in term insurance by focusing on innovation, transparency, and consumer-first.
- ★ The product is specifically tailored for salaried professionals with an annual income of ₹10 lakh.

Easebuzz Secures RBI's License for Online Payment Aggregation

- ★ Easebuzz, a full-stack payment solutions provider, has received final authorization from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to operate as an Online Payment Aggregator (PA) under the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007.
- ★ This approval enables Easebuzz to continue facilitating digital payments for businesses across sectors like eCommerce, Education, Real Estate, and Travel and Tourism.
- ★ Easebuzz joins a select group of approved payment aggregators in India, authorized under RBI's regulatory framework.
- ★ The platform is currently processing an annual Gross Transaction Value (GTV) of USD 30 billion.
- ★ Easebuzz is evolving into a full-stack financial operating system by expanding into B2B Payments.
- ★ It launched an invoice management and payments platform in partnership with NPCI Bharat BillPay (NBBL).
- ★ It is certified as a Biller Operating Unit (BOU) on the Bharat Bill Payment System (BBPS).
- ★ Online payment aggregators are companies that facilitate online payments by acting as intermediaries between the customer and the merchant.

SEBI Proposes New Framework to Handle Unclaimed Funds, Securities

- ★ The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has proposed a new framework to address unclaimed funds and securities lying with stock brokers to protect investors' interests.

- ★ As of January 31, the total value of unclaimed funds had reached ₹323 crore, while unclaimed securities were valued at ₹182 crore.
- ★ Unclaimed securities arise due to incomplete or incorrect demat account details or the non-traceability of clients, legal heirs, or nominees.
- ★ SEBI has proposed that if a client is unreachable or funds cannot be credited to their bank account, the accounts will be placed under “enquiry status”.
- ★ Stock brokers must attempt to contact clients through all available means and transfer such funds to clearing corporations.
- ★ If securities remain in the “enquiry status” for over 30 days, they will be classified as unclaimed securities.
- ★ Funds that remain unclaimed for a year will be transferred quarterly to a dedicated bank account of the designated stock exchange.
- ★ Unclaimed funds held for over 3 years will be transferred to the Investor Protection Fund (IPF).
- ★ Stock exchanges and brokers will provide a search facility on their websites for clients, nominees, and legal heirs to check and claim unclaimed funds and securities.

Union Bank and Bank of India to Update External Benchmark Lending Rates

- ★ Public-sector lender Union Bank of India has revised its External Benchmark Lending Rate (EBLR) to 9.0% from February 11, 2025.
- ★ This follows Reserve Bank of India’s decision to reduce policy repo rate by 25 basis points to 6.25% on February 07, 2025.
- ★ Another Mumbai-based lender Bank of India has revised its repo-based lending rate (RBLR) to 9.10% (repo rate: 6.25% plus mark up of 2.85%).
- ★ EBLR is linked to external benchmarks, like the repo rate set by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
- ★ EBLR is used to determine interest rates for home loans, retail loans, and micro and small business loans.
- ★ When the repo rate changes, the EBLR also changes.
- ★ This directly affects how much you pay on your loans.
- ★ Repo Linked Benchmark Lending Rate (RBLR) means reference rate for your loan, which is benchmarked, to the Repo Rate published on a predetermined date by the Reserve Bank of India from time to time.
- ★ The RBLR will be determined by adding a markup to the Repo Rate published by RBI as detailed in the Schedule.

RBI Imposes ₹35.60 Lakh Penalty on Federal Bank and Karur Vysya Bank

- ★ Reserve Bank of India (RBI) imposed a penalty of ₹35.60 lakh on Federal Bank Ltd and Karur Vysya Bank Ltd for non-compliance with RBI directions.
- ★ Federal Bank received the highest penalty of ₹27.30 lakh for non-compliance with directions on interest rates of deposits.

- ★ A statutory inspection by RBI revealed that Federal Bank opened certain savings deposit accounts in the name of ineligible entities.
- ★ Karur Vysya Bank was fined ₹8.30 lakh for failing to comply with directions regarding loan systems for bank credit delivery.
- ★ RBI found that Karur Vysya Bank did not ensure that the outstanding loan amount was at least the required percentage of the sanctioned working capital limit for certain borrowers.
- ★ The penalties were imposed after considering the reply and submissions from both banks during their personal hearing.
- ★ RBI clarified that the penalties are based on regulatory compliance deficiencies and are not a judgment on the validity of any transaction or agreement between the banks and their customers.

SEBI Launches MITRA

- ★ The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), the market regulator, has launched the Mutual Fund Investment Tracing and Retrieval Assistant (MITRA) platform to help investors trace inactive mutual fund folios.
- ★ The platform will be managed by Computer Age Management Services Limited (CAMS) and KFIN Technologies Limited as agents of Asset Management Companies (AMCs).
- ★ It aims to help investors identify overlooked investments and assist legal heirs in claiming rightful investments.
- ★ Inactive mutual fund folios are those with no transactions for 10 years but still holding unit balances.
- ★ The platform must be made active within 15 working days from SEBI's circular dated February 12, 2024.
- ★ It encourages investors to complete the Know Your Customer (KYC) process and reduces non-KYC compliance folios.
- ★ Investors may lose track of investments due to physical investments with minimal KYC details, lack of PAN, email ID, or a valid address, preventing folios from appearing in their Consolidated Account Statement (CAS).
- ★ Some inactive folios may be due to the investor's demise, making them susceptible to fraudulent redemptions.
- ★ The platform will be accessible via links on MF Central, AMCs, AMFI, QRTAs, and SEBI websites.
- ★ CAMS and KFIN Technologies will be jointly responsible for compliance, including system audit and cyber security audit.
- ★ The platform must comply with SEBI's Business Continuity Plan (BCP) and Disaster Recovery (DR) guidelines for Market Infrastructure Institutions (MIIs).

RBI Allows Kotak Mahindra Bank to issue Fresh Credit Cards

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) lifted the restrictions on Kotak Mahindra Bank, allowing it to issue new credit cards and onboard new customers through its website and mobile app, nearly 10 months after an embargo was imposed on it.

- ★ The restrictions were imposed on April 24, 2024, under Section 35A of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949, due to IT and cybersecurity concerns.
- ★ RBI's 2022-23 IT Examination found serious deficiencies in areas such as IT inventory management, patch and change management, user access management, vendor risk management, data security, and disaster recovery.
- ★ Kotak Mahindra Bank took remedial measures, including an external audit approved by RBI, to validate compliance.
- ★ RBI reviewed the corrective actions and found them satisfactory, leading to the lifting of restrictions and resumption of full operations.
- ★ The bank is now expected to strengthen its IT governance and risk management processes to prevent future regulatory concerns.

RBI Set to Launch ₹50 Denomination Banknotes with Updated Signature

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) will soon release ₹50 denomination banknotes in the Mahatma Gandhi (New) Series with the signature of newly appointed Governor Sanjay Malhotra.
- ★ The design of the new ₹50 notes will remain identical to the existing notes in the Mahatma Gandhi (New) Series.
- ★ All previously issued ₹50 banknotes by the RBI will continue to be legal tender.

SIDBI and Agence Française de Développement, France Inked \$100 million Deal

- ★ Small Industries Development Bank of India (Sidbi) and Agence Française de Développement (AFD), France signed a USD 100 million credit facility agreement (CFA) to support Green Finance solutions for Indian MSMEs.
- ★ The agreement aims to help MSMEs transition to energy-efficient and climate-friendly business models.
- ★ AFD will provide a USD 100 million credit line to SIDBI for affordable loans in renewable energy and sustainability projects.
- ★ This initiative aligns with India's goal of achieving carbon neutrality
- ★ SIDBI is an All India Development Financial Institution (DFI) focused on financing and developing Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in India.

Ashoka University Signed Memorandum of Understanding with Axis Bank

- ★ Ashoka University has partnered with Axis Bank to strengthen its PhD, Post-Doctoral, and Research.
- ★ The agreement signed is titled "Co-building Interdisciplinary Sciences and Research at Ashoka University".
- ★ The collaboration aims to develop advanced science laboratories for Neurosciences, Behavioural Studies, and Physics Research.
- ★ Axis Bank will contribute INR 104 Crore through a CSR grant over the next four years.

- ★ The funding will enhance research infrastructure, provide competitive fellowships, and support research grants.
- ★ Scholars will benefit from financial support, allowing them to focus entirely on
- ★ The initiative will help attract and retain top research talent within
- ★ Ashoka University aims to align its research and education standards with global benchmarks.

EXIM Bank to Fund Vietnam's Procurement of Guard Boats and Patrol Vessels

- ★ The Export-Import Bank of India (Exim Bank) will provide lines of credit (LoC) totalling USD 300 million to Vietnam for procuring high-speed guard boats and offshore patrol vessels (OPVs).
- ★ A line of credit (LOC) is a pre-approved borrowing limit that a customer can use to access funds from a bank or financial institution.
- ★ The Exim Bank entered into an agreement on July 31, 2024, with the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (GO-VNM) for an India-supported LoC of USD 180 million to procure four OPVs, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI)
- ★ Additionally, the bank signed another agreement with GO-VNM for an LoC of USD 120 million to procure high-speed guard boats, according to an RBI circular.
- ★ Both agreements are effective from January 20, 2025, and the last date for disbursement is 60 months after the scheduled completion date of the project.
- ★ The export of eligible goods and services from India will be subject to the Foreign Trade Policy.

UGRO Capital Partners with Dutch Entrepreneurial Development Bank, FMO

- ★ UGRO Capital, a leading DataTech NBFC focused on MSME lending, announced its latest strategic financing collaboration with FMO.
- ★ UGRO Capital has raised INR 2,600 million through Non-Convertible Debentures (NCDs).
- ★ The proceeds will support women empowerment, territorial inequality reduction, and youth empowerment
- ★ The INR-denominated NCDs were fully subscribed by FMO, highlighting its commitment to inclusive and sustainable prosperity.
- ★ In December 2023, UGRO Capital raised USD 30 million (~INR 2,490 million) in an unlisted NCD issuance, primarily for green financing.
- ★ Over six years, UGRO Capital has extended credit to 100,000 small businesses, boosting business turnover and employment.

Reserve Bank of India Imposes Monetary Penalty

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has imposed monetary penalties on Shriram Finance, Ujjivan Small Finance Bank, and Nainital Bank for non-compliance with regulatory norms.
- ★ Penalty on Shriram Finance: A fine of ₹5.80 lakh was levied for failing to implement a system for periodic review of risk categorization of accounts, among other issues.

- ★ Penalty on Ujjivan Small Finance Bank: The bank received a penalty of ₹6.70 lakh on Ujjivan Small Finance Bank Limited for non-compliance with certain directions issued by RBI on 'Loans and Advances - Statutory and Other Restrictions'.
- ★ Penalty on Nainital Bank: A penalty of ₹61.40 lakh was imposed due to non-compliance with directives on interest rates for advances and customer service.
- ★ Specifically, the bank did not benchmark certain floating rate loans extended to MSMEs to an external benchmark rate and levied penal charges for non-maintenance of minimum balance in savings accounts at flat rates instead of proportionate charges based on the shortfall.
- ★ The RBI emphasized that these penalties are based on deficiencies in regulatory compliance and are not intended to question the validity of any transactions or agreements made by the banks with their customers.
- ★ These 3 penalties have been imposed in exercise of powers conferred on RBI under the provisions of Section 47A (1)(c) read with Section 46(4)(i) of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.

BoM Gets Reserve Bank of India Go-Ahead to Set Up Branch in GIFT City

- ★ The Bank of Maharashtra (BoM) has received approval from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to establish an International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) Banking Unit at GIFT City in Gandhinagar, Gujarat.
- ★ This will be BoM's first international branch, enabling offshore banking operations from within India.
- ★ The IFSC Banking Unit will provide BoM access to international financial markets, enabling the bank to offer a comprehensive range of products, including External Commercial Borrowings (ECBs), to clients with foreign currency funding requirements.
- ★ Additionally, the unit will support funding needs for overseas entities, such as joint ventures or subsidiaries of domestic clients, and facilitate participation in global syndications.
- ★ GIFT City, India's first IFSC, aims to transform the nation's financial landscape by offering world-class banking services domestically, reducing reliance on offshore financial hubs.
- ★ The center has evolved into a hub for fintech innovation and global investments, attracting institutions across banking, education, and technology sectors.
- ★ This strategic move aligns with the Indian Government's vision of establishing the country as an international financial hub, providing BoM with a platform to expand its international banking business and deliver specialized services to its customers.

India Post Payments Bank Brings Digital Banking

- ★ India Post Payments Bank is providing comprehensive banking services for millions of pilgrims at the Mahakumbh 2025, ensuring convenience and security for all financial transactions.
- ★ Service counters, mobile banking units, and customer assistance kiosks have been set up at five key locations across Mahakumbh.
- ★ IPPB's Daak Sevaks are providing doorstep banking, enabling devotees to withdraw cash from Aadhaar-linked accounts through Aadhaar ATMs (AePS).
- ★ Devotees can also access a variety of banking services by calling

- ★ IPPB is fostering a cashless ecosystem by enabling local vendors and small businesses to accept digital payments via DakPay QR Cards, supporting the Government's Digital India vision.
- ★ IPPB has launched awareness campaigns to educate pilgrims and vendors about its services.
- ★ Professionals and Daak Sevaks are stationed at key locations to assist with account openings, transactions, and queries, while information hoardings and digital demos familiarize attendees with IPPB's offerings.
- ★ IPPB is offering free printed photographs to visitors as a keepsake, adding a personal touch to their experience at Mahakumbh.

HDFC Life Announces Tie-up with CARS24 Financial Services Private Limited.

- ★ HDFC Life has partnered with CARS24 Financial Services Private. Limited. in a corporate agency tie-up, aiming to provide life insurance solutions to CARS24 customers.
- ★ CARS24 Financial Services Private Limited ("CARS24 Financial Services") is a professionally managed Non-Banking Financial Company ("NBFC") registered with the Reserve Bank of India and with IRDAI as an Insurance Corporate Agent.
- ★ The Company is a part of CARS24 group and offers a variety of vehicle financing solutions to customers.
- ★ INSURE24, a major milestone for CARS24, is set to transform the digital insurance landscape for India's rapidly growing online consumer base.
- ★ This partnership will enable CARS24 Financial Services Pvt. Ltd. to distribute products of HDFC Life to existing and future customers of CARS24.
- ★ The life insurance solutions of HDFC Life will be offered across the branches as well as the digital platforms of the partner.
- ★ Both partners aim to work together with the objective of increasing the reach of life insurance across locations where CARS24 has a presence.

PNB MetLife Partners with Truhome Finance

- ★ PNB MetLife India Insurance Company Limited has announced a strategic partnership with Truhome Finance (formerly Shriram Housing Finance Limited) to offer Group Credit Life Insurance to Truhome Finance's home loan customers.
- ★ This collaboration aligns with PNB MetLife's mission, Milkar Life Aage Badhein, and underscores its commitment to expanding reach and promoting financial inclusion.
- ★ The insurance solutions will be available across 165 Truhome Finance branches in 17 states, providing financial protection to homeowners and their families by covering outstanding loan liabilities in unforeseen circumstances.
- ★ By integrating Credit Life solutions with Truhome's home loan offerings, the collaboration aims to protect borrowers' liabilities and support their home ownership aspirations, contributing to the vision of 'Insurance for All by 2047'.
- ★ The partnership reflects a shared commitment to empowering individuals and families with financial security and supporting home ownership aspirations, aligning with national goals for broader insurance coverage.

Tata Capital to Issue Green Bonds, Non-Convertible Debentures to Raise ₹15,000 crore

- ★ Tata Capital plans to raise ₹15,000 crore (\$1.72 billion) through debt, including green bonds and Non-Convertible debentures (NCDs).
- ★ The proceeds will be used for on-lending purposes and business operations.
- ★ Funds from green bonds will specifically support projects related to renewable energy, energy efficiency, and clean transportation.
- ★ ₹10,000 crore will be raised through green bonds and market-linked NCDs through private placement.
- ★ ₹5,000 crore will be raised through secured redeemable NCDs with a liquidity window facility.
- ★ Green bonds are a type of fixed-income debt instrument that funds environmental projects, while non-convertible debentures (NCDs) are a type of fixed-income investment that cannot be converted to shares.

South Indian Bank Launches 'SIB Quick FD' for Seamless Digital Investment

- ★ South Indian Bank has rolled out a new service, 'SIB Quick FD', which allows individuals to start a fixed deposit without needing to open a savings account with the bank.
- ★ This new feature provides a hassle-free digital banking experience for both existing customers and non-customers alike.
- ★ The process is entirely paperless, and users can make their fixed deposits through UPI transactions.
- ★ With no need for traditional paperwork or in-person visits, the service promises to be a convenient and accessible way for anyone to invest in fixed deposits.
- ★ The minimum amount for starting a fixed deposit through 'SIB Quick FD' is ₹1000, and the service is available 24/7.
- ★ Additionally, the bank assures that all fixed deposits made through this service will be covered by DICGC insurance, up to 5 lakh, depending on the amount invested.
- ★ Interest rates on deposits are also stated to be competitive, though specific rates can be checked on the bank's platform.
- ★ This initiative is in line with South Indian Bank's commitment to offering simple and efficient digital banking solutions to the public.

Life Insurance Corporation Launched 'Smart Pension' Plan

- ★ Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) has launched the 'Smart Pension' plan, effective from February 18, 2025.
- ★ It is a Non-Participating (Non-Par), Non-Linked, Individual/Group, Savings, Immediate Annuity Plan.
- ★ The plan is tailored specifically for the domestic market and aims to meet the growing demand for pension and retirement savings in India.

- ★ LIC expects this product to strengthen its leadership position in India's growing pension and retirement savings market.

IRDAI Permits One-Time UPI Mandate for Buying Life, and Health Cover

- ★ The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) has permitted a one-time UPI mandate for blocking premium amounts for life and health insurance policies.
- ★ Previously, no premium deposit/proposal deposit was required while submitting a proposal form, except for policies issued based on a declaration of good health where coverage starts immediately upon payment.
- ★ Insurers must obtain explicit consent from the policyholder before deducting the premium amount from their bank account.
- ★ Based on insurer requests, UPI One Time Mandate (OTM) has been enabled to streamline premium payments and ensure smooth transactions.
- ★ The UPI mandate allows customers to block funds in their bank accounts for premium payments, ensuring funds are available while delaying actual debit.
- ★ Under the Bima Applications supported by Blocked Amount (Bima - ASBA) system, funds are transferred only when the insurance policy is issued.
- ★ The insurer blocks the premium amount. If the proposal is accepted, the amount is debited. If the proposal is rejected, the blocked amount is unblocked and returned to the customer.
- ★ Insurers must offer Bima-ASBA as an option for policyholders purchasing life and health insurance policies.
- ★ The UPI mandate facility will be an optional mode of payment, available alongside existing payment methods.

Karnataka Bank Launches 2 Products

- ★ Karnataka Bank launched two new banking products to commemorate its 101st Founders' Day.
- ★ KBL Stri is a specialized savings bank account designed for women, catering to homemakers, professionals, and entrepreneurs.
- ★ KBL One Family Banking Programme is a solution that links family members under a single ID, offering shared privileges, tailored benefits, and seamless banking access.
- ★ Madhusudan Sai, Spiritual Leader, stressed the importance of fostering strong customer relationships.
- ★ With a strong capital base and strategic investments in digital transformation, Karnataka Bank aims to stay resilient and relevant in modern banking.
- ★ During the event, the dignitaries released 101 symbol lapel pins, launched new products, and handed over CSR commitment letters to three beneficiaries.

LIC Launches Smart Pension Plan

- ★ Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) has launched a single-premium smart pension plan offering various annuity options for Single Life and Joint Life

- ★ The Non-Par and Non-Linked plan includes liquidity options for partial or full withdrawal as per policy terms.
- ★ Minimum Purchase Price: ₹1,00,000, with incentives for higher purchase amounts.
- ★ Flexible annuity payment modes: Yearly, Half-yearly, Quarterly, or Monthly.
- ★ Special Feature: Immediate annuity option for NPS subscribers.
- ★ Death Benefit Options: Lump sum, annuitisation of the benefit, installment payments, liquidity option, advanced annuity, or annuity accumulation.

IFSCA Notifies New Bullion Market Regulations, 2025

- ★ The International Financial Services Authority (IFSCA) has introduced the IFSCA Bullion Market Regulations, 2025, replacing the IFSCA (Bullion Exchange) Regulations, 2020.
- ★ These new regulations expand the scope of the bullion market ecosystem in GIFT City, Gujarat, and introduce key consumer safeguards.
- ★ The name has been changed from Bullion “Exchange” Regulations to Bullion “Market” Regulations to reflect a broader coverage beyond just the bullion exchange.
- ★ It now includes all market participants involved in the bullion ecosystem.
- ★ IFSCA is empowered to conduct inspections, inquiries, and impose penalties to ensure consumer interests are safeguarded.

RBI Proposes Scrapping Foreclosure Charges on Floating Rate Loans for Individuals and MSME

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has issued draft guidelines proposing the removal of foreclosure charges on floating-rate loans for retail and MSME borrowers, including loans granted to individual borrowers for business purposes.
- ★ These changes will provide greater flexibility for borrowers to switch lenders offering better terms and allow them to prepay their loans without incurring penalties, which currently range from 4-5% on the outstanding principal for personal loans.
- ★ According to the draft circular, regulated entities (REs), except Tier 1 and 2 primary (urban) co-operative banks and base layer NBFCs, shall not impose prepayment penalties on floating-rate loans sanctioned to individuals and MSE borrowers, up to an aggregate limit of ₹7.50 crore per borrower.
- ★ This waiver will enable MSMEs to utilize their savings for expansion, improve cash flow, and enhance financial stability.
- ★ Additionally, the RBI has proposed that lenders must permit loan prepayment without enforcing a minimum lock-in period and must not retrospectively levy charges that were previously waived or undisclosed to borrowers.
- ★ The central bank has invited comments and feedback from stakeholders and the public on these draft guidelines until March 21.

Mirae Asset Sharekhan Partnered with ICICI Prudential Life Insurance and HDFC Life

- ★ Mirae Asset Sharekhan, a leading financial services platform, has entered the life insurance distribution sector through strategic partnerships with ICICI Prudential Life Insurance and HDFC Life.
- ★ This move aligns with the company's vision of offering a one-stop financial platform that integrates wealth creation with long-term financial security.
- ★ Mirae Asset Sharekhan aims to bridge the gap between investment and financial protection by providing a diverse range of life insurance products, including:
 - Term Life and Health Plans — Ensuring income protection and financial security for dependents.
 - Unit Linked Insurance Plans (ULIPs) — Offering market-linked returns alongside life cover.
 - Endowment Plans — Providing risk-free savings with life cover for family security.
 - Annuity and Retirement Solutions — Ensuring financial stability post-retirement.
- ★ ICICI Prudential Life's Guaranteed Pension Plan Flexi aims to secure retirement savings with a guaranteed lifelong income, while its GIFT Select Plan combines financial protection with assured income benefits.
- ★ HDFC Life's Click 2 Protect Elite provides a comprehensive safety net against uncertainties, while Click 2 Achieve offers immediate income with customizable premium payment options.
- ★ By integrating insurance with investment solutions, Mirae Asset Sharekhan is strengthening its position in the financial services ecosystem, catering to the evolving needs of modern investors.

PNB Signs Memorandum of Understanding with Indo-Tibetan Border Police

- ★ Punjab National Bank (PNB) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), framing a strategic partnership to provide exclusive financial benefits and insurance coverage for ITBP personnel, pensioners, and their families.
- ★ The MoU was signed by P. Singh, General Manager, PNB, and S.C. Mamgain, Inspector General (Admn), ITBP, at the ITBP Headquarters, CGO Complex, and New Delhi.
- ★ Through this partnership, PNB has reaffirmed its dedication to supporting India's armed forces, particularly the 'Himveers' of ITBP, by framing customized financial products and services tailored to their needs.
- ★ Under the MoU, ITBP personnel will receive extensive insurance coverage and financial benefits.
- ★ PNB has also extended its Rakshak Account benefits to ITBP pensioners, framing a financial security

Association of Mutual Funds in India Launches 3 New Investor Initiatives

- ★ The Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI) has launched three strategic initiatives — Chhoti SIP, Tarun Yojana, and MITRA — aimed at enhancing financial inclusion, promoting investor awareness, and facilitating the retrieval of forgotten investments.
- ★ These efforts align with the Securities and Exchange Board of India's (SEBI) mission to democratize mutual fund investments and broaden participation across diverse demographics.

- ★ These initiatives reflect AMFI's commitment to making mutual funds a viable and accessible investment avenue for every Indian, thereby strengthening financial inclusion and investor protection.
- ★ Chhoti SIP: This initiative introduces a Systematic Investment Plan (SIP) starting at ₹250, making mutual fund investments more accessible, especially for first-time investors and individuals from underserved communities.
- ★ Tarun Yojana: Aimed at integrating financial literacy into school curricula, Tarun Yojana seeks to equip young minds with foundational knowledge of investment principles, fostering early financial education.
- ★ MITRA (Mutual Fund Investment Tracing and Retrieval Assistant): This platform assists investors and their legal heirs in identifying and recovering inactive or forgotten mutual fund holdings, ensuring rightful asset ownership.

Paytm Launches Solar Soundbox

- ★ Paytm Solar Soundbox is an eco-friendly solution that harnesses a low-cost alternative energy source, enabling merchants in rural, remote, and electricity-deprived areas to seamlessly integrate into the digital ecosystem.
- ★ It aims to empower merchants in urban and rural areas with digital payment solutions and Supports India's vision of a cashless and sustainable economy.
- ★ It also enhances accessibility, reliability, and efficiency in digital transactions.

Kisan Credit Card Loans Cross ₹10 Lakh Crore in the Country

- ★ According to the Union Ministry of Finance the total loan sanctioned under the operative Kisan Credit Card (KCC) accounts in the country has crossed the ₹ 10 lakh crore figure.
- ★ According to the Ministry the total KCC loan in March 2014 was ₹4.26 lakh crore which has more than doubled to ₹ 10.05 lakh crore as of 31st December 2024.
- ★ Around 7.72 crore farmers in the country have benefited from the KCC loans.
- ★ In her 2025-26 Union Budget speech, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced an increase in the short term loan provided under the Modified Interest Subvention Scheme through Kisan Credit Card from ₹ 3 lakh to ₹ 5 lakh.
- ★ The Kisan Credit Card (KCC) is a type of revolving credit facility introduced by the Government to provide loans at cheaper rates to the farmers through banks.

IndusInd Bank Partners with Professional Golf Tour of India

- ★ IndusInd Bank has partnered with the Professional Golf Tour of India (PGTI) as its official Banking Partner, reinforcing its commitment to providing a premium experience to Ultra High Net Worth Individuals (UHNIs) and High Net Worth Individuals (HNIs) under its PIONEER banking.
- ★ This collaboration aligns with the bank's strategy of offering value-added services tailored to customers' lifestyles, particularly in sports.

- ★ IndusInd Bank will actively support PGTI events throughout the tournament, contributing to the expansion of golf and strengthening India's professional golfing landscape.
- ★ The PGTI tour, led by Kapil Dev (President) and Amandeep Johl (CEO), features over 20 tournaments annually, with PIONEER customers getting opportunities to participate in various engagement activities across tournament cities.
- ★ The PIONEER banking program provides a comprehensive range of full-stack banking and wealth management solutions for UHNI and HNI customers, covering personal banking, business banking, wealth management, and NRI banking.
- ★ Its wealth management solutions offer mutual funds, alternative products, sovereign gold bonds, and NPS, along with legacy planning services.
- ★ The program also includes exclusive credit and debit card benefits, with select golf lessons for PIONEER credit cardholders catering to golf enthusiasts.

ECONOMY

IRDAI Restricts Health Premium Hikes for Seniors to 10% Annually

- ★ The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) has directed insurers not to increase health insurance premiums for senior citizens (aged 60 and above) by more than 10% without prior approval.
- ★ Insurers must seek regulator approval before discontinuing health policies for senior citizens.
- ★ To control rising healthcare costs, insurers have been urged to standardise hospital empanelment and negotiate package rates similar to the Government's PM Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY).
- ★ Premium rates for health insurance are determined by factors such as estimated claims, administrative costs, and acquisition expenses.
- ★ A major driver of premium increases is the lack of standardised hospitalisation costs in private insurance, unlike PMJAY, which negotiates uniform package rates.
- ★ Senior citizens have reported instances where their premiums nearly doubled, especially when crossing into a higher age bracket or during insurer pricing revisions.
- ★ Health insurance premiums are annual and lack a level premium structure (unlike term insurance), leading to fluctuations due to rising medical expenses.
- ★ Currently, health insurance does not offer premium discounts for maintaining good health. The primary incentive for early purchase is the continuity benefit, which ensures claims are not rejected due to pre-existing conditions.
- ★ Under new IRDAI guidelines, insurers must disclose the rationale behind price hikes, ensuring transparency for policyholders.

RBI To Inject ₹2.5 Lakh Crore to Enhance Liquidity in Banking System

- ★ Reserve Bank of India injects ₹2,50,000 crore to enhance banking system liquidity through a Variable Rate Repo (VRR).

- ★ The ₹2,50,000 crore amount was decided based on an assessment of liquidity conditions.
- ★ Daily VRR auctions will continue in Mumbai on all working days, with reversal occurring on the next working day until further notice.
- ★ RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra assured that the central bank is committed to providing sufficient liquidity and will take steps to ensure durable liquidity.
- ★ The RBI is closely monitoring the rupee and taking steps to keep the Indian currency stable.
- ★ A Morgan Stanley report suggests the RBI may proactively manage liquidity and consider additional measures like OMO purchases or FX swaps as liquidity deficit rises towards end-March.
- ★ The RBI Governor highlighted the trade-off between stability and efficiency in formulating regulations.
- ★ The RBI has deferred the implementation of Liquidity Coverage Ratio (LCR) and project financing norms by a year, with new implementation scheduled for March 31, 2026.
- ★ Public and private sector banks had opposed the original March 2025 deadline, fearing it would cause a liquidity crisis in the financial system.

India's GDP Growth to slow to 6.4% in 2025: Moody's Analytics

- ★ India's economic growth is projected to slow to 4% in 2025, down from 6.6% in 2024, primarily due to new U.S. tariffs and weakening global demand impacting exports, according to a report by Moody's Analytics.
- ★ The report, titled 'Asia-Pacific Outlook: Chaos Ahead', highlights that the entire Asia-Pacific region is expected to experience slower growth as trade tensions, policy uncertainties, and uneven economic recoveries affect the region's fortunes.
- ★ Specifically, China's GDP growth is forecasted to decline from 5% in 2024 to 4.2% in 2025 and 3.9% in 2026.
- ★ For India, the anticipated slowdown is attributed to external trade pressures and a moderation in domestic demand, despite the country's position as one of the fastest-growing major economies.
- ★ Moody's projects that India's GDP will remain in the low-6% range in the coming years, with growth estimated at 4% for both 2025 and 2026.

YES Bank Ranked Highest Among Indian Banks for ESG and Climate Disclosures by S&P Global and CDP

- ★ YES BANK has once again demonstrated its leadership in sustainability, emerging as India's highest-rated bank in the S&P Global Corporate Sustainability Assessment (CSA) 2024 and the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP) for the 3rd consecutive year.
- ★ With a CSA score of 72 out of 100, YES BANK is the only Indian bank to feature in the S&P Global Sustainability Yearbook 2025, placing it among the top 15% Global Banking Leaders.
- ★ The bank has also retained an A (Leadership Band) rating from CDP, reinforcing its strong climate change strategy and transparent ESG disclosures.

- ★ The CSA assesses up to 1,000 data points across key factors, including Climate Strategy, Financial Inclusion, Human Rights, Corporate Governance, and Risk Management.
- ★ YES BANK scored A- in the 2024 CDP Climate Change assessment, maintaining its leadership status.

BUSINESS NEWS

L&T Finance Limited Launches Knowledgeable AI (KAI)

- ★ L&T Finance Limited (LTF) has launched Knowledgeable AI (KAI), an AI-powered virtual advisor on its redesigned website for home loans.
- ★ KAI aims to simplify the home loan journey, especially for first-time buyers, by addressing challenges like complex terminology and lengthy processes.
- ★ The AI tool uses advanced Large Language Model (LLM) technology to offer personalized home loan guidance, including EMI calculations, loan estimates, and expert answers.
- ★ KAI goes beyond basic chatbots, utilizing RAG technology for accurate information extraction from LTF documents and smooth EMI calculations with interactive sliders.
- ★ It also allows users to download EMI schedules, bookmark options, and provides conversational answers for better understanding.
- ★ L&T Finance Limited (LTF), headquartered in Mumbai, holds an 'AAA' credit rating, focuses on sustainability and women's empowerment through its CSR project "Digital Sakhi".
- ★ As part of its Lakshya 2026 plan, LTF aims to become a digitally enabled, customer-focused retail finance company, leveraging its 2.5 Crore customer database for growth.

Amazon and UP Government Collaborate to Boost Women Entrepreneurs

- ★ Amazon India has partnered with Uttar Pradesh's ARGA initiative to support women entrepreneurs in Gonda through its Saheli programme.
- ★ The initiative helps small businesses access digital tools and e-commerce opportunities to expand their reach.
- ★ Amazon India will provide training on digital marketing, product listing optimization, advertising, and data analytics to improve online sales.
- ★ The program aims to strengthen rural entrepreneurship by addressing challenges like packaging and marketing.
- ★ The partnership was launched during World Wetlands Day at Parvati Arga Bird Sanctuary, attended by CM Yogi Adityanath and Minister Kirti Vardhan Singh.
- ★ CM Yogi Adityanath emphasized the importance of e-commerce in scaling rural businesses through better packaging and digital marketing.
- ★ The initiative enables rural women entrepreneurs to sell products on Amazon, gaining access to a wider customer base across India and beyond.

- ★ The collaboration aligns with Amazon India's strategy to support small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs) and integrate local products into mainstream e-commerce.

Bank of Baroda Partnered with Tata Power

- ★ Tata Power Renewable Energy Limited (TPREL) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Bank of Baroda for financing residential rooftop solar systems under the Pradhan Mantri Surya Ghar Yojana (PMSGY).
- ★ Customers will be given loans up to ₹ 600,000 at interest rates starting from 7% per annum with fixed and floating options.
- ★ Loans of up to ₹ 200,000 for rooftop solar systems of up to 3 kW with minimal documentation and 10% margin.
- ★ Loans of up to ₹ 600,000 for systems between 3 kW and 10 kW with 20% margin.
- ★ Loans are collateral-free with flexible repayment tenure of up to 10 years.
- ★ Bank of Baroda home loan customers will have interest rates ranging from 9.15% to 11% per annum.
- ★ Non-home loan customers will have access to interest rates between 10.15% and 12% per annum.

Indian Fintech Company, Infibeam's Rediff.Com Secures NPCI License

- ★ Indian fintech company, Infibeam Avenues has achieved a significant milestone through its subsidiary, com, which has secured a Third-Party Application Provider (TPAP) license from the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) for its digital payment platform, RediffPay.
- ★ This move enables RediffPay to offer Unified Payments Interface (UPI) services, marking Infibeam's strategic entry into the consumer-facing digital payments sector.
- ★ A Third-Party Application Provider (TPAP) is a company that offers applications or platforms enabling users to initiate and receive payments via Unified Payments Interface (UPI).
- ★ TPAP acts as an intermediary between the user, their bank, and the UPI network, ensuring seamless transactions.
- ★ TPAPs must obtain a license from the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), which regulates the UPI system in India.
- ★ NPCI's approval was confirmed, with Axis Bank as the Payment System Provider (PSP).
- ★ In August 2024, Infibeam Avenues acquired a 54% stake in Rediff.com, positioning the platform to serve as a digital financial services aggregator.
- ★ The platform aims to offer a range of financial services, including credit and wealth management products, to address the diverse needs of Indian consumers.

General Insurance Corporation of India Strengthens Global Presence with United Kingdom Subsidiary Initiative

- ★ General Insurance Corporation of India (GIC Re)'s board of Directors has approved the incorporation of a wholly owned subsidiary – GIC Re, India Service Company – in the United Kingdom.

- ★ This move is part of the company's ongoing expansion strategy.
- ★ The approval was granted during the board meeting held on 3 February 2025.
- ★ The subsidiary will have a minimal capital requirement, with the unit potentially being set up with a capital of GBP 1 (approximately \$1.24).
- ★ The UK-based subsidiary will focus on insurance-related activities and services.
- ★ GIC Re will seek approval from the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) for the formation of the subsidiary.

NABARD Collaborated with Palladium Consulting India Private Limited

- ★ The Export Pathshala workshop aimed at enhancing agri and allied exports through Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) was organized by National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) in collaboration with Palladium Consulting India Private Limited (PCIPL).
- ★ The workshop provided training on export procedures, quality compliance, and market linkages, with a focus on fruits, vegetables, and spices exports from Odisha.
- ★ Participants included policymakers, financial institutions, exporters, FPOs, and industry experts.
- ★ Key sessions included topics on export documentation, compliance, post-harvest management, packaging for export readiness, value chain development, and risk mitigation for perishable goods.
- ★ Industry experts from NABARD, APEDA, the World Trade Centre, the Spices Board of India, and Bank of Baroda shared insights.
- ★ A field visit to PRB Super Foods in Khordha provided hands-on exposure to good packaging and logistics practices for large-scale agri-exports.

NABARD Partnered with Rajasthan

- ★ The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) has projected a priority sector credit potential of ₹4.40 lakh crore for Rajasthan in the fiscal year 2025-26.
- ★ This projection was unveiled during the State Credit Seminar 2025-26, where NABARD released the State Focus Paper (SFP) for the upcoming financial year.
- ★ The SFP serves as a comprehensive document, consolidating district-wise loan potentials across Rajasthan in both physical and financial terms.
- ★ The current projection marks a 22% increase over the previous year's estimates, reflecting NABARD's commitment to fostering integrated and sustainable rural prosperity in the state.
- ★ The projected credit allocation is distributed as follows:
- ★ 47% (approximately ₹2.07 lakh crore) is earmarked for agriculture and allied activities.
- ★ 45% (approximately ₹1.98 lakh crore) is designated for the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector.
- ★ 8% (approximately ₹35,200 crore) is allocated to other priority sectors, including housing and education.

StockGro and Zomato Launch Financial Literacy Program

- ★ StockGro, a leading financial knowledge platform, has partnered with Zomato, India's top food delivery service, to launch a financial literacy program aimed at improving the financial stability and planning skills of delivery partners.
- ★ The initiative provides educational training on budgeting, saving, and investing, offered in multiple regional languages to ensure accessibility.
- ★ StockGro has conducted 10 financial literacy workshops across Delhi, Hyderabad, Kolkata, and Bangalore, reaching over 1,000 delivery partners.
- ★ The sessions focus on money management skills, helping gig workers handle irregular income and plan for financial security.
- ★ This program aligns with Zomato's broader mission to upskill and support one million gig workers.
- ★ Zomato has been actively investing in financial well-being initiatives to provide its workforce with essential benefits and training.

Zomato Unveils 'Nugget'

- ★ Zomato has launched 'Nugget', a no-code AI-driven customer support platform designed to help businesses automate and streamline their customer service.
- ★ Developed over three years, Nugget already manages 15 million+ monthly interactions across Zomato's ecosystem, including Blinkit and Hyperpure.
- ★ This marks Zomato's strategic shift towards AI-powered business solutions, enhancing efficiency in customer interactions.
- ★ It enables businesses to integrate AI-driven support without coding expertise.
- ★ It allows easy customization to match unique business needs.
- ★ Ministry of Labour and Employment Signs MoU with APNA.
- ★ The Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE) has signed an MoU with APNA, a leading job recruitment platform, to enhance employment prospects for young job seekers.
- ★ This partnership will add over 10 lakh job opportunities annually to the National Career Service (NCS) Portal, strengthening domestic employment avenues.
- ★ It serves as a bridge between job seekers and employers.
- ★ APNA will post job listings on NCS, connecting formal and informal sector employers with candidates.
- ★ APNA will access NCS's vast candidate database, while MoLE ensures smooth integration through an online and offline interface.

Tata Power Partners with AWS to Modernize India's Energy Sector

- ★ Tata Power has announced a strategic partnership with Amazon Web Services (AWS) to modernize its digital infrastructure and accelerate India's transition toward a sustainable energy ecosystem.

- ★ This collaboration will leverage cloud technology, artificial intelligence (AI), and the Internet of Things (IoT) to enhance operational efficiency, strengthen grid resilience, and empower consumers with smarter energy management tools.
- ★ Tata Power is migrating 23 mission-critical applications to AWS using Amazon Elastic Kubernetes Service (EKS).
- ★ Integration of cloud computing, AI, and IoT will enable real-time energy monitoring and automation.
- ★ Smarter energy distribution will help reduce inefficiencies and improve service reliability.
- ★ India aims to achieve 500 GW of non-fossil fuel energy by 2030.
- ★ Cloud-based technologies will enhance grid stability and optimize energy supply and demand.

DEFENCE

India's Largest Metal 3D Printing Machine for Rocket Components

- ★ A significant breakthrough in Large Area Additive Manufacturing (LAAM) has been achieved at the DRDO-Industry-Academia Centre of Excellence (DIA-CoE) at IIT Hyderabad.
- ★ The project is a collaboration between IIT Hyderabad, DRDO's Defence Research and Development Laboratory (DRDL), and industry partners.
- ★ The LAAM system uses Powder-based Directed Energy Deposition (DED) technology for manufacturing rocket components.
- ★ The indigenously designed machine has a build volume of 1m × 1m × 3m, making it one of India's largest metal additive manufacturing machines.
- ★ It employs Laser and Blown-Powder Direct Energy Deposition technology and features dual heads for thermal balancing and speed enhancement.
- ★ A major milestone was achieved with the successful fabrication of a 1-meter-high component, marking progress in large-scale additive manufacturing.

Maldives Host The 13th Edition of the 'Ekuverin' Military Exercise

- ★ The 13th edition of the joint India-Maldives military exercise 'Ekuverin' is being hosted by Maldives from 2-15 February 2025.
- ★ The inaugural ceremony of the 13th Ekuverin exercise between the Indian Army and the Maldives National Defence Forces (MNDF) was held at the Official Composite Training Center of the MNDF at Maafilaafushi in Maldives.
- ★ During the inauguration ceremony, Major General Ibrahim Hilmy, Chief of the Maldives National Defence Force, and G Balasubramanian, Indian High Commissioner, were present.
- ★ The 12th edition of the Ekuverin was held at Chaubatia in Uttarakhand from 11-24 June 2023.

- ★ The main aim of the exercise is to enhance the ability of both the defence forces to work in co-ordination and partnership to conduct counter-insurgency operations and to carry out joint humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations.
- ★ India and Maldives share a close political and defence relationship. Since 1998, defence and security co-operation has been identified as a major area of co-operation between the two countries.

Indian Navy Concludes Joint Manship Drills Under TROPEX-25

- ★ The Theatre Level Operational Readiness Exercise (TROPEX-25) was held off India's western coast.
- ★ Senior military leadership participated, including Lieutenant General Johnson P Mathew (Chief of Integrated Defence Staff to the Chairman Chiefs of Staff Committee) and Vice Chiefs from the Army, Navy, and Air Force.
- ★ The exercise involved dynamic naval operations with Indian Navy ships, submarines, and aircraft.
- ★ Key vessels involved included INS Vikrant (aircraft carrier), INS Visakhapatnam (guided missile destroyer), INS Satpura (stealth frigate), and INS Jalashwa (amphibious vessel).
- ★ Highlights included precision missile, gun, and rocket firings, anti-submarine warfare drills, and amphibious landings by Indian Army troops.
- ★ MiG-29K fighter jets and helicopters showcased aerial strength through bomb busts, rocket firings, and low-level aerobatics.
- ★ The exercise demonstrated the Navy's ability to project air power across the maritime domain.
- ★ In addition to TROPEX-25, the Indian Navy maintains a strong schedule of bilateral and multilateral exercises with navies globally.
- ★ Conducted in the Indian Ocean, it aims to validate operational concepts and enhance operational readiness and interoperability in a multi-threat environment.

Indian Army Renames Kolkata's Fort William to 'Vijay Durg'

- ★ The Indian Army made a significant move towards decolonization by renaming Kolkata's Fort William to 'Vijay Durg'.
- ★ This decision reflects India's commitment to honoring its indigenous military history while removing colonial imprints.
- ★ The new name is inspired by Vijaydurg Fort in Maharashtra, a stronghold under Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, and aligns with the Government's push to eliminate colonial-era symbols.
- ★ It served as a key British military base during colonial rule and became the Eastern Command headquarters post-independence.
- ★ The name symbolizes India's indigenous military heritage, representing victory and resilience of the Indian armed forces.
- ★ This renaming is in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's initiative to remove colonial names and traditions.

Indian Army and IAF Conducts Joint Military Exercise 'Winged Raider'

- ★ The Indian Army and the Indian Air Force jointly conducted a comprehensive training exercise named EX Winged Raiders in the Eastern Theater.
- ★ The exercise which was focused on special airborne operations was aimed to enhance inter-service synergy.
- ★ The joint military exercise is part of the Government of India's effort to push for interoperability leading to the setting up of an integrated theatre command in the country.
- ★ The 'Winged Raiders' was conducted to test the interoperability of the Indian Army and the Indian Air Force.
- ★ In the military, Theatre refers to a specific geographical area. These specific geographical areas could be either on land, sea, or air. The military expects these identified areas could potentially become areas of conflict or war in the future.
- ★ The exercise focused on special airborne operations and was conducted in the Eastern Theater of the Indian Army.
- ★ During the exercise, the personnel of the Indian Army and the Indian Air Force rehearsed various airborne insertion techniques from both fixed-wing and rotary-wing aircraft. During the exercise, the Chinook helicopter of the Indian Air Force was also used to conduct special airborne operations.

India and Egypt Military Exercise Cyclone 2025

- ★ The 3rd edition of the India and Egypt military 'Exercise Cyclone' 2025 was commenced at the Mahajan Field Firing Range, Rajasthan on 10th of February 2025. The annual Cyclone Exercise is held alternately in India and Egypt.
- ★ The first edition of the Exercise Cyclone was held in India from 14-27 January 2023.
- ★ The special forces of the Indian Army and the Egyptian Army participate in the annual Exercise Cyclone.
- ★ In the 3rd edition of the exercise, the Indian Army is represented by the elite Parachute Regiment (Special Force). At the same time, the Egyptian contingent includes the elite Egyptian Special Forces from the Rangers and paratroopers' units.
- ★ The exercise focuses on enhancing the skill of both the armed forces in operating side by side in conducting special operations against the terrorist and hostile forces in desert and semi-desert terrains.
- ★ It provides an opportunity for both the armed forces to exchange expertise and learn about the latest combat tactics used by the other sides.

6th Edition of Joint Military Exercise Dharma Guardian

- ★ The 6th edition of Dharma Guardian will be held at Mount Fuji, Japan from February 25 to March 9, 2025.

- ★ The exercise aims to enhance interoperability between the Indian Army and Japanese Self-Defense Forces, with a focus on joint urban warfare and counter-terrorism operations under the UN mandate.
- ★ The announcement follows Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Upendra Dwivedi's successful visit to Japan in October 2024.
- ★ The exercise will focus on joint counter-terrorism and disaster response training scenarios, strengthening the capabilities and mutual understanding between the two forces.
- ★ It demonstrates the deepening military co-operation between India and Japan and emphasizes trust-building and the exchange of best practices between the armed forces.
- ★ The exercise aims to contribute to peace and security in the Indo-Pacific region, enhancing regional stability for both nations.

DRDO Signed Pact with MIDHANI for High-Performance Aerospace-Grade Steel

- ★ The Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA), a premier lab under the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), has signed an MoU with MIDHANI for the indigenous development of high-strength, high-toughness special-grade steel "MDN100" for aeronautical applications, including its use in the 5th generation Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA).
- ★ The steel, known for its good forgeability, will be utilized in highly stressed aircraft parts, offering weight-saving benefits.
- ★ The MoU was signed during Aero India 2025, reinforcing the vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat.
- ★ MIDHANI, a Defence PSU, has been supporting DRDO and Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL) in supplying critical materials for aeronautical purposes, including SuperNi 41 plates, a nickel-chromium-based superalloy capable of withstanding extreme temperatures in aero engines.
- ★ ADA, the nodal agency for combat aircraft development in India, is actively engaged in key programmes, including LCA Mk2, AMCA, and the Twin Engine Deck-Based Fighter (TEDBF).

Indian Army Boosts Air Defense with Modernization Efforts

- ★ With advanced systems like the AK-203 rifle and QRSAM, India aims to meet modern warfare.
- ★ The Indian Army is undergoing significant modernization, enhancing its air defense capabilities by replacing outdated weapon systems with state-of-the-art alternatives and addressing new-age threats, including drones.
- ★ A key part of this modernization is the AK-203 rifle, currently manufactured in Amethi, Uttar Pradesh.
- ★ This rifle is positioned as a superior alternative to the AK-47 and a replacement for the INSAS rifle, which has had performance issues since the 1990s.
- ★ The INSAS (Indian Small Arms System) rifle, weighing 15 kg, has limited effectiveness beyond 400 meters.
- ★ According to Zee Hindustan, the AK-203 has superior specifications — it is lighter (3.8 kg), has double the effective range (800 meters), and can fire 700 rounds per minute compared to INSAS's 650.

- ★ Additionally, the AK-203 has an improved magazine capacity of 30 rounds versus INSAS's 20 rounds.
- ★ While the AK-203 focuses on ground-level combat, the Indian Army is also strengthening its air defense capabilities.

Indian Coast Guard Conducts Successful 'Sagar Kavach'

- ★ The two-day coastal security exercise 'Sagar Kavach' in West Bengal concluded on February 22, 2025 co-ordinated by the Coast Guard Region North East with the State Coastal Security Operation Centre (SCSOC) serving as the nerve center.
- ★ The exercise validated the coastal security SOPs through various drills along the 158 km coastline, simulating scenarios such as hijacking of fishing boats, smuggling of contraband, IED planting, and attacks on vital coastal assets.
- ★ Active patrolling was conducted by Indian Coast Guard, Navy, West Bengal Police, CISF, BSF, Customs, district police, and the Forest Department, while fishermen's watch groups were activated as the 'Eyes and Ears' of security forces.
- ★ Special operations included CISF and Quick Response Teams of the Coast Guard and police, alongside co-ordinated Sea and Air surveillance.
- ★ Given evolving threats such as terrorism, smuggling, illegal immigration, and poaching, the exercise aimed to validate SOPs and enhance co-ordination among agencies.

DRDO and Indian Navy Successfully Test NASM-SR Missile in Chandipur

- ★ The Indian Navy in collaboration with the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has successfully conducted the flight test of the indigenously developed Naval Anti-Ship Missile – Short Range (NASM-SR) on 25 February 2025.
- ★ The missile was launched from the Indian Navy's Sea King Mk 42B helicopter from the Integrated Test Range (ITR), Chandipur in Odisha on 25th February 2025.
- ★ NASM-SR is the country's first indigenously developed air-launched anti-ship missile system with a sea skimming ability. The first test of the missile was conducted in May 2022.
- ★ According to the DRDO, the Man-in-Loop feature of the missile was successfully validated in the test.
- ★ The unique feature of the NSAM-SR is its Man-in-Loop.
- ★ The missile has both fire and forgets and Man-in-Loop features.
- ★ Fire and forget means the pilot can lock on the target and fire the missile. The missile equipped with a heat seeker hit the target without any further guidance from the pilot of the fighter plane or attack helicopters.
- ★ Man-in-Loop means that the missile maintains a two-way data link with the helicopter's pilot.

Indian Navy has Handed over Ex INS Guldar to MTDC

- ★ The Indian Navy has handed over Ex INS Guldar, a Landing Ship Tank (Medium), to Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation Limited (MTDC).

- ★ The ship will be converted into India's first underwater museum and artificial reef using a decommissioned naval vessel.
- ★ The ship was transferred to MTDC at Karwar on an 'as is where is' basis. The MTDC will manage the transformation, which includes removing pollutants, securing environmental clearances, obtaining necessary NOCs, and scuttling the ship at Sindhudurg following strict safety protocols.
- ★ It was built at Gdynia Shipyard, Poland and commissioned on December 30, 1985.
- ★ It served in Eastern Naval Command (1985-1995) and later in Andaman and Nicobar Command until decommissioning on January 12, 2024.

RANKS, INDICES & REPORTS

India with 89 Sites has the largest number of Ramsar Sites in Asia

- ★ The Government of India has added four new wetland sites – Sakkarakottai Bird Sanctuary and Therthangal Bird Sanctuary in Tamil Nadu, Khecheopalri Wetland in Sikkim, and Udhwa Lake in Jharkhand- to the Ramsar Wetlands Site.
- ★ The number of Ramsar sites in the country is now 89 and India has the highest number of Ramsar sites in Asia ahead of China (82 sites).
- ★ After the United Kingdom (175 sites) and Mexico (142), India has the third-largest number of Ramsar sites in the world.
- ★ Within India, Tamil Nadu has a maximum - 20 wetlands under the Ramsar site list.
- ★ For the first time, wetland sites of Jharkhand and Sikkim have been included in the Ramsar site list.

International Air Transport Association Report

- ★ India has emerged as the global leader in passenger load factor (PLF) for domestic flights, recording an impressive 86.4% in 2024, surpassing the US (84.1%) and China (83.2%), according to the latest International Air Transport Association (IATA) report.
- ★ India's booming aviation sector carried 16.3 crore domestic passengers in 2024, highlighting its rapid growth and efficiency.
- ★ Passenger Load Factor (PLF) in 2024: 86.4% (highest globally).
- ★ Total domestic passengers carried: 16.3 crore (as per DGCA data).
- ★ Total air traffic growth (domestic & international): 10.4% increase over 2023.
- ★ International traffic growth: 13.6% compared to 2023.
- ★ Capacity increase (Available Seat Kilometers – ASK): 8.7% in 2024.
- ★ Overall Load Factor: 83.5% (new global record).

Corruption Perception Index 2024

- ★ India has been ranked 96th amongst 180 countries/territories in the 2024 Corruption Perception Index, released on 11th February 2025.
- ★ The Corruption Perception Index ranks the 180 countries/ territories on the basis of perceived public sector corruption level.
- ★ Denmark topped the Index for the seventh consecutive time and was perceived as the least corrupt country followed by Finland and Singapore.
- ★ The Corruption Perception Index is released by Berlin, Germany-based non-Governmental organisation, Transparency International.
- ★ The first report was released in 1995 and since then every year the report has been released by Transparency International.
- ★ In 2024, India's overall score was 38.
- ★ The report was focussed on how "corruption hampers the fight against climate change".

Henley Passport Index 2025

- ★ The Henley Passport Index 2025, compiled by Henley and Partners, ranks 199 passports based on visa-free and visa-on-arrival access to global destinations.
- ★ Based on International Air Transport Association (IATA) data, the rankings highlight global mobility trends.
- ★ Singapore secured first place with Visa-free access to 193 out of 227 destinations.
- ★ India's ranked 80th position in the Henley Passport Index 2025.
- ★ It shared 80th position with Algeria, Equatorial Guinea, Tajikistan with Visa-free or visa-on-arrival access to 62 countries.

Second Country in World to Launch EPL for Pilots

- ★ India has become the second country in the world after China to launch an Electronic Personnel License (EPL) for pilots in the civil aviation sector.
- ★ The Union Minister for Civil Aviation, K Rammohan Naidu, formally launched the EPL for pilots.
- ★ The introduction of the EPL for Pilot is part of the Central Government's Digital India initiative and effort to promote the Ease of Doing Business in the country.
- ★ The EPL for pilots was introduced based on the recommendation and format of the global civil aviation body, the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO).
- ★ The main aim of the EPL is to enhance the safety, security, and efficiency of the civil aviation licensing system.
- ★ The EPL is a digital version of the personal license issued to civil aviation pilots in the country.
- ★ It will replace the existing smart card-based licence issued to the pilots by the Government.
- ★ The pilots will be issued licences on self-contained mobile electronic visual display devices.
- ★ The EPL licenses will be securely accessible through the ministry's e-GCA Mobile Application.

- ★ The existing physical smart card-based licence will be gradually phased out with the EPL licenses.

Indus Valley Report 2025

- ★ As per the recently released Indus Valley Report 2025, India has emerged as the global leader in the Initial Public Offering (IPO) in 2024. The Indian companies raised \$19.5 billion through IPO in 2024, accounting for 23% of the IPO worldwide.
- ★ The Indus Valley Report 2025 was released by the Mumbai based Blume Ventures Advisors Private Limited.
- ★ In 2024 there were 268 IPOs in the country. Out of the 268 IPOs, 90 were listed on the Main board while 178 were listed on the small and medium enterprises (SME) segment of the stock exchanges.
- ★ \$19.5 billion was raised through IPO which was 23% of the global money raised through IPOs in 2024.
- ★ In 2024, India's largest ever IPO was issued by Hyundai Motors (India) Private limited.
- ★ When an unlisted company sells its securities to the public, it is called Initial Public Offerings (IPO).
- ★ Public Issue refers to the fund raised by the companies by selling its securities like shares, debentures, bonds etc to the general public.
- ★ The company has to follow the rules and regulation of the capital market regulator Securities Exchange Board of India (SEBI).
- ★ The Public issue can be either Initial Public Offering (IPO) or Further on Public Offering (FPO).

AWARDS & PRIZES

Grammy Awards 2025

- ★ Indian-born American musician Chandrika Tandon won her first Grammy award in the 'Best New Age Album, Ambient or Chant Album category' for her album Triveni at the 67th Grammy Awards 2025.
- ★ This was the first Grammy Award for the 71-year-old Chandrika Tandon who was once nominated for a Grammy award in 2011 for her album Soul Call.
- ★ The 67th annual Grammy Awards function was held at Crypto.com Arena in Los Angeles, the United States of America.
- ★ The Grammy Awards is considered to be one of the most prestigious awards in the music industry and is given annually by the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences in the United States of America. The first Grammy Award was given in 1959.
- ★ Album of the Year: "Cowboy Carter" – making her the first Black woman in 26 years to win this prestigious award.
- ★ Best Country Album: "Cowboy Carter" – marking her successful venture into country music.

- ★ Best Country Duo/Group Performance: “II MOST WANTED” (with Miley Cyrus) — showcasing her ability to cross genres effortlessly.
- ★ Kendrick Lamar continued his reign as a lyrical genius, winning two of the night’s most coveted awards: Record of the Year: “Not Like Us” and Song of the Year: “Not Like Us”.

BCCI Award 2025

- ★ Legendary Indian cricketer and Bharat Ratna awardee Sachin Tendulkar was honoured with the 2023-24 Col. C.K. Nayudu Lifetime Achievement Award by the BCCI (Board of Control for Cricket in India) in a glittering ceremony held in Mumbai on 1st February 2025.
- ★ The cricket governing body in India, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), honoured the exceptional performance of Indian cricketers for the 2023-24 season at the BCCI Naman Awards 2025.
- ★ The Col. C.K. Nayudu Lifetime Achievement Award was instituted by the BCCI in honour of the legendary Indian cricketer Col. C.K. Nayudu. The first cricketer to receive the award was Lala Amarnath in 1994.
- ★ Fast bowler Jasprit Bumrah was honoured with the 2023-24 Polly Umrigar Award for Best International Cricketer for his outstanding performance in 2024. He took 71 wickets from 13 Tests in 2024. This was the third Polly Umrigar award for Bumrah.
- ★ Best Performance in BCCI Domestic Tournaments of 2023-24- Mumbai Cricket Association.

Award Winners of the BCCI Naman Awards 2025

- ★ Following is the list of winners of the BCCI Naman Awards 2025:
 - Best International Debut: Men – Sarfaraz Khan
 - Best International Debut: Women – Asha Sobhana
 - Best International Cricketer: Women – Smriti Mandhana
 - Polly Umrigar Award for Best International Cricketer: Men – Jasprit Bumrah
 - BCCI Special Award: Ravichandran Ashwin
 - Col. CK Nayudu Lifetime Achievement Award: Sachin Tendulkar
 - Highest wickets in ODIs 2023-24: Women – Deepti Sharma
 - Highest run-getter in ODIs 2023-24: Women – Smriti Mandhana
 - Best umpire in domestic cricket, 2023-24: Akshay Totre
 - Best performance in BCCI domestic tournaments for events in 2023-24: Mumbai Cricket Association.

University of Sussex Confers Honorary Doctorate on Noel Tata

- ★ The University of Sussex has awarded an honorary doctorate to Noel Tata, a prominent business leader within the Tata Group, in recognition of his contributions to global business leadership, ethical practices, and corporate social responsibility.
- ★ A proud alumnus of Sussex University, Tata has played a pivotal role in the expansion of the Tata Group, particularly in retail, steel, and investment sectors.

- ★ The award was presented by Professor Sasha Roseneil, Vice-Chancellor and President, University of Sussex.
- ★ He was instrumental in the growth of Trent, Tata's fashion retail division and expanded retail brands such as Westside, Star Bazaar, and Zudio.

Sahitya Akademi Award 2024 in Dogri Conferred on Late Chaman Arora

- ★ The Sahitya Akademi Award 2024 in Dogri has been conferred on Late Chaman Arora for his short story collection, "Ik Hor Ashwthama".
- ★ The prestigious award was approved by Sri Madhav Kaushik, President of Sahitya Akademi, based on the recommendation of a three-member jury.

First Black Woman to Win Mrs World 2025

- ★ Tshego Gaelae, a Soweto-born attorney, has made history by becoming the first Black woman to win the Mrs World 2025 title at the grand finale in Las Vegas.
- ★ The 34-year-old, who is also the 2024 Mrs South Africa Queen, follows in the footsteps of Candice Abrahams, the only other South African to hold the title (2016).
- ★ Gaelae's victory is a historic moment in the 40-year history of the Mrs World pageant, and she plans to leverage her platform to champion women's empowerment while representing South Africa on the global stage.
- ★ Gaelae becomes the first Black woman to win the prestigious Mrs World title in the pageant's history.
- ★ She is only the second South African to win the Mrs World title, following Candice Abrahams, who won in 2016.

ICAI Awards for Excellence in Financial Reporting

- ★ REC Limited, a Maharatna Central Public Sector Enterprise under the Ministry of Power has been awarded the 'Gold Shield' in the 'Financial Services Sector (Other than Banking and Insurance)' category at the ICAI Awards for Excellence in Financial Reporting for FY 2023-24.
- ★ The award reflects REC Limited's commitment to excellence in financial reporting, transparency, and adherence to accounting standards.
- ★ The selection was based on accounting practices, disclosure policies, presentation of financial statements, compliance with Indian accounting standards, and statutory guidelines.
- ★ The ceremony took place at the World Forum of Accountants (WOFA) in New Delhi, with ICAI President CA Ranjeet Kumar Agarwal and other key ICAI officials present.
- ★ The ICAI Awards, established in 1958, recognize and encourage excellence in financial reporting across sectors.

Deepak Kumar Kedia Honored with 'CA in Public Service' Award

- ★ Deepak Kumar Kedia, Inspector General (IG) Headquarters, National Security Guard (NSG), has been awarded the 'CA in Public Service' Award by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI).

- ★ The award was presented at the World Forum of Accountants Meet in New Delhi, in recognition of his outstanding contributions to law enforcement and national security.
- ★ He was honored for his exceptional contributions to law enforcement and national security.
- ★ He also awarded the President's Medal for Distinguished Service on Republic Day 2025.

Indian Filmmaker Varsha Bharath's Bad Girl Wins NETPAC Award

- ★ Indian filmmaker Varsha Bharath's directorial debut, Bad Girl, has won the NETPAC (Network for the Promotion of Asian Cinema) Award at the International Film Festival Rotterdam (IFFR) 2025.
- ★ Bad Girl secures the NETPAC Award, placing it among acclaimed Indian films like Nasir (2019).
- ★ The film's teaser received mixed reactions for addressing female sexuality and caste dynamics.
- ★ NETPAC is a worldwide organization of 29 member countries.
- ★ It was created as the result of a conference on Asian cinema organized by Cinemaya, the Asian Film Quarterly, in New Delhi in 1990 at the instance and with the support of UNESCO, Paris.

Indian Students Win Bronze at Global Best M-Gov Award 2025

- ★ Three Indian Computer Science students from Maharaja Agrasen Institute of Technology, New Delhi, secured the Bronze Award at the Global Best M-Gov Award 2025 during the World Government Summit (WGS) in Dubai.
- ★ Their AI-powered app, AccessWay, was recognized for its role in enhancing mobile Government services and social inclusion for individuals with disabilities.
- ★ The award was presented by Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Vice President of the UAE, along with a cash prize of \$10,000.
- ★ Sagar Teotia (Team Lead), Abhinav Mishra and Anushka Singh are fourth-semester Computer Science students from Maharaja Agrasen Institute of Technology, Delhi.
- ★ AccessWay App is AI-powered platform integrating Augmented Reality (AR), Artificial Intelligence (AI), and crowdsourced data.
- ★ It provides accessible navigation, social connections, and emergency assistance for people with disabilities.

France's Highest Aviation Honor – Grande Médaille

- ★ Hollywood star Tom Cruise has been honored with the Grande Médaille, the highest distinction from the Aero-Club de France.
- ★ The award was presented by the club's President, Catherine Maunoury, recognizing Cruise's significant contributions to aviation and his role in inspiring future pilots.
- ★ It was awarded by Aero-Club de France, one of the oldest aviation organizations
- ★ He was awarded for his passion for aviation, performing his own aerial stunts, and inspiring future pilots.

Forward Faster Sustainability Award 2025

- ★ NTPC Limited., India's largest integrated power utility, has been honoured with the Forward Faster Sustainability Award 2025 in the Water Resilience category.
- ★ The award was presented by the UN Global Compact Network India (UN GCNI) at a ceremony in Chennai.
- ★ The award recognizes NTPC's leadership in sustainable water management and conservation. NTPC follows the Reduce, Reuse and Recycle (3R) principles to enhance water efficiency across its operations.

N. Chandrasekaran Awarded Honorary Knighthood by the United Kingdom

- ★ N. Chandrasekaran, Chairman of Tata Group, was conferred with an honorary knighthood by the United Kingdom.
- ★ This prestigious honor recognizes his outstanding contributions to strengthening the economic and business ties between India and the UK.
- ★ The award recognizes his strategic efforts in fostering strong business connections and creating jobs and technological collaboration in the UK.
- ★ The honorary knighthood enhances Tata Group's global stature, reinforcing its presence in over 100 countries.
- ★ The award signals continued co-operation between India and the UK, particularly in sectors like automotive, technology, and infrastructure.
- ★ It bolsters Tata Group's credibility in international markets, aligning with the UK's economic priorities in innovation and sustainability.

Assam's Purnima Barman Named "Woman of the Year" by Time Magazine

- ★ Dr Purnima Devi Barman, a wildlife biologist from Assam, has been included in the Time Magazine 2025 "Women of the Year" list.
- ★ Dr Purnima Devi Barman is among the 13 women across the globe to be included on the Time Magazine list.
- ★ These women have been included in the list for their contribution in identifying a problem related to women and finding a solution to it to create a better, more equitable world.
- ★ A two-time Whitley Gold Awardee (2017 & 2024), Dr Purnima Devi Barman, was recognised for her effort in conserving the endangered bird, Hargila or Greater Adjutant Stork and its wetland habitat.
- ★ Dr. Barman mobilised the local people, especially women and children, to protect the Hargila bird and its ecosystem in Assam.

Nita Ambani Honored with Governor of Massachusetts' Citation for Philanthropy

- ★ Nita Ambani, Founder and Chairperson of Reliance Foundation, has been awarded the Governor of Massachusetts' Citation for her outstanding contributions to education, healthcare, sports, arts, culture, and women's empowerment.

- ★ This prestigious recognition highlights her dedication to driving positive societal change in India and globally.
- ★ She founded Dhirubhai Ambani International School, one of India's top-ranked educational institutions, promoting academic excellence and leadership development.
- ★ She leads the Sir H.N. Reliance Foundation Hospital and Research Centre, providing world-class medical care in Mumbai.
- ★ The hospital ensures advanced treatments and healthcare accessibility for people from all walks of life.

Manohar International Airport Wins Prestigious 'Sarvashrestha Suraksha Puraskar'

- ★ Manohar International Airport (GOX), operated by GMR Goa International Airport Ltd. (GGIAL), has become the first Indian airport to win the 'Sarvashrestha Suraksha Puraskar (Golden Trophy)' at the NSCI Safety Awards 2024 in the 'Service Sector' category.
- ★ The award highlights the airport's exemplary Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) performance.
- ★ It was recognized for reducing workplace injuries, implementing best safety practices, and maintaining a zero-incident record.
- ★ It was awarded by the National Safety Council of India (NSCI), under the Ministry of Labour, Government of India.

APPOINTMENTS & RESIGNATIONS

Director of Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre in Thiruvananthapuram

- ★ Mohan has been appointed as the Director of the Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre (LPSC) in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala.
- ★ He succeeds Narayanan and is currently serving as Director (Projects) at the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC).
- ★ Mohan previously served as the Director of the Human Space Flight Centre from June 2023 to June 2024.
- ★ He has held key roles as Project Director for the Cryogenic Upper Stage (CUS) and the Space Capsule Recovery Project (SRE-2).
- ★ He was also the System Leader for the Moon Impact Probe (MIP) project in the Chandrayaan-1 mission.
- ★ His contributions to ISRO have been recognized with the ISRO Performance Excellence Award (2016) and the ISRO Merit Award (2010).

Prime Minister of Belgium

- ★ Conservative political leader Bart De Wever was sworn in as the Prime Minister of Belgium by King Phillippe on 3rd February 2025 in a ceremony at the royal palace in Brussels.

- ★ Bart De Wever takes over as the Prime Minister from Alexander De Croo, whose seven-party coalition took 493 days to form a government in 2019-20.
- ★ De Croo had stayed on as caretaker leader after the June 2024 elections.
- ★ The Government was formed in Belgium after the Parliamentary election in June 2024 and failed to give a decisive mandate to any political party or coalition of parties.
- ★ Belgium has a complicated political system, and the country is divided into Dutch-speaking Flanders and French-speaking Walloon communities.
- ★ In 2010-11 it took political parties 541 days to agree to form a government after the parliamentary election failed to give a decisive majority to a political party or a coalition.

Gopal Vittal CEO of Bharti Airtel Appointed as Acting Chair of GSMA Board

- ★ Gopal Vittal, Vice Chairman and Managing Director of Bharti Airtel, has been appointed as the acting chair of the GSMA board.
- ★ He was previously serving as the Deputy Chair of the GSMA.
- ★ The position became vacant after José Maria Álvares-Pallete, Chairman and CEO of Telefónica, resigned from the GSMA, making him ineligible to continue as Chair.
- ★ The GSMA is a global non-profit telecom association representing over 1,100 companies from the telecom ecosystem worldwide.
- ★ Its members include telecom service providers, device manufacturers, software companies, equipment providers, internet companies, and organizations from adjacent industries.
- ★ This appointment highlights Airtel's growing influence in the global telecom sector.

Canara Bank Appoints Dr. Madhavankutty G as Chief Economist

- ★ Canara Bank appointed Madhavankutty G as Chief Economist, effective January 2025.
- ★ He will provide strategic advice on domestic and global economic and financial sector developments.
- ★ He has over two decades of experience in economic research across banking, conglomerates, and academia.
- ★ He previously worked as a senior economist at Bank of India, Aditya Birla Group, and Times Group.
- ★ He holds a postgraduate degree in business economics and a doctorate in international economics.
- ★ He served as a visiting faculty member at NMIMS, IMT Nagpur, and KJ Somaiya Institute, Mumbai.

New President and Vice President of ICAI

- ★ The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) elected its new President and Vice President for the term 2025-26.
- ★ CA Charanjot Singh Nanda was elected as President.

- ★ He is Fellow Chartered Accountant (FCA) with 34 years of experience in practice since 1991.
- ★ He completed Bachelor of Commerce from MLN College in 1987.
- ★ CA Prasanna Kumar D was elected as Vice President.
- ★ He previously served as a key Central Council member of ICAI.

The leadership transition saw CA Ranjeet Kumar Agarwal passing the presidency to CA Charanjot Singh Nanda and CA Charanjot Singh Nanda passing the vice-presidency to CA Prasanna Kumar D.

Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of Ratnakar Bank

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has approved the reappointment of R Subramaniakumar as Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer (MD and CEO) of Ratnakar Bank.
- ★ The reappointment is for three years, from June 23, 2025, to June 22, 2028.
- ★ The reappointment will be subject to shareholder approval as per RBI and SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015.
- ★ Subramaniakumar has been serving as MD & CEO of RBL Bank since June 23, 2022.
- ★ His current term ends on June 22, 2025, and the reappointment will take effect thereafter, subject to shareholder approval.

Gyanesh Kumar Appointed as India's Next Chief Election Commissioner

- ★ Gyanesh Kumar, a retired Indian Administrative Service (IAS) Officer from the 1988 Kerala cadre, has been appointed as India's 26th Chief Election Commissioner (CEC), effective February 19, 2025.
- ★ He succeeds Rajiv Kumar, who retires upon reaching the age of 65.
- ★ The selection was made by a three-member committee comprising Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, and Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi.
- ★ Kumar's term as CEC is set to continue until January 26, 2029.
- ★ During this period, he will oversee significant electoral events, including the 2029 Lok Sabha elections, 20 state assembly elections, and the Presidential and Vice-Presidential elections in 2027.

First Woman to Serve As NASA's Acting Administrator

- ★ Janet E. Petro made history as the first woman to serve as NASA's Acting Administrator.
- ★ She is also the 11th Director of the John F. Kennedy Space Center (KSC).
- ★ In 2025, she was appointed by President Donald Trump as NASA's Acting Administrator.
- ★ She has held the position of KSC Director since 2021, continuing to shape NASA's future.
- ★ Janet joined NASA and became the first woman to serve as Deputy Director at the Kennedy Space Center.

- ★ She played a pivotal role in transforming KSC into a “multi-user spaceport”, enabling both NASA and private companies to use the facility.

Chief Economic Adviser Nageswaran Term Extended By 2 Years

- ★ Government of India has extended the tenure of the Chief Economic Advisor to the Ministry of Finance, V. Anantha Nageswaran for a period of two years till 31st March 2027.
- ★ Venkatraman Anantha Nageswaran was appointed as the Chief Economic Advisor in January 2022, succeeding KV Subramanian.
- ★ The Chief Economic Advisor to the Ministry of Finance is head of the Economic Division of the Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance.
- ★ The main functions of the Division are advisory in nature and the Finance Minister is not bound to accept its recommendations.
- ★ It examines the domestic and international economic trends and undertakes research studies having an impact on economic policies and management of the economy.
- ★ V. Anatha Nageswaran is an alumnus of the Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Ahmedabad and did his PhD in finance from the University of Massachusetts, United States of America.

Director of the FBI by US Senate

- ★ President Donald Trump’s nominee for Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Kash Patel, was confirmed by the United States Senate by 51-49 votes. He succeeds Christopher Wray as the FBI Director.
- ★ According to the United States of America’s “Omnibus Crime Control Act and Safe Streets Act of 1968”, the President nominates the Director of the FBI, which must be approved by the American Senate by a simple majority.
- ★ The 100-member Senate is the upper house of the bicameral American Congress (Parliament). The lower house of Congress is the House of Representatives.
- ★ Donald Trump, the 47th President of the United States of America, is a member of the Republican Party, which has a majority in both the Senate and the House of Representatives.
- ★ Kash Patel was sworn in by the US Attorney General Pam Bondi.
- ★ The FBI is part of the United States Department of Justice, which is led by the Attorney General.

PayU Appointed Pramod Rao as New Chief Risk Officer

- ★ PayU has appointed Pramod Rao as its new Chief Risk Officer (CRO).
- ★ He will oversee risk management strategies, regulatory compliance, and financial security.
- ★ Rao brings over 27 years of expertise in banking, financial services, and telecom.
- ★ He has worked with Axis Bank, Vodafone Idea, Citibank, IDBI Bank, ICICI Bank, and HSBC, specializing in risk management and compliance.
- ★ His appointment is part of PayU’s leadership expansion, which includes key hires like Pranav Pandya (Chief Compliance Officer) and Dimple Mehta (Company Secretary).

- ★ Rao aims to strengthen security measures, ensure compliance excellence, and support PayU's growth in the payments ecosystem.
- ★ PayU recently received in-principle authorization from the RBI to operate as an online payment aggregator.

Shaktikanta Das Appointed Principal Secretary-2 To Prime Minister Modi

- ★ Former Governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Shaktikanta Das has been appointed Principal Secretary II to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, according to a notification issued by the Secretariat of the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet.
- ★ His expertise will be crucial in managing economic challenges such as trade wars, rupee volatility, and slowing growth.
- ★ He is an IAS Officer (1980 batch, Tamil Nadu cadre) with extensive experience in the Finance Ministry, including roles as Revenue Secretary and Economic Affairs Secretary.
- ★ He managed banking sector reforms, helping reduce gross NPAs from 10.8% (2018) to 2.8% (2024).
- ★ He also played a key role in major financial events, including the IL&FS crisis and the Russia-Ukraine war's economic impact.

SBI Life Appoints Dorababu Daparti as Deputy Chief Executive Officer

- ★ Dorababu Daparti has been appointed as Deputy Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of SBI Life Insurance, with effect from 24 February 2025.
- ★ His appointment was approved by the board based on the recommendation of the Nomination and Remuneration Committee.
- ★ Daparti has over 29 years of experience in the financial industry.
- ★ He holds a Master's degree in Sciences (M.Sc.) and is a Chartered Associate of the Indian Institute of Bankers (CAIIB).
- ★ He joined State Bank of India (SBI) in 1995 and has held various managerial and executive roles within the organization.
- ★ He has served as the Country Head and CEO of SBI's Maldives operations since September 2021.
- ★ He also played a key role as Deputy General Manager and Head of Overseas Planning and Strategy in the International Banking Group at SBI's Corporate Centre, Mumbai.

SPORTS

Logo and Mascot Unveiled for 23rd National Para Athletics Championship 2025

- ★ The official logo and mascot for the 23rd National Para Athletics Championship 2025 were unveiled.

- ★ The mascot represents determination and resilience, reflecting the spirit of para-athletes who push boundaries despite challenges.
- ★ The logo incorporates elements that symbolize the dynamic nature of para-athletics and the championship's values of empowerment and equality.
- ★ The World Championships will provide a global platform for Indian para-athletes to showcase their talents, elevating the profile of Para Athletics in India.

Government Extends Financial Support for Athletes of 9th Asian Winter Games

- ★ For the first time, the Government of India has extended full financial support to the Indian contingent participating in an Asian Winter Games under the Assistance to National Sports Federations (ANSF) Scheme.
- ★ The Union Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports has announced the inclusion of the Indian contingent participating in the 9th Winter Asian Games to be held in Harbin, China under its ANSF scheme.
- ★ The Chinese city of Harbin is hosting the 9th Asian Winter Games from 7-14 February 2025.
- ★ Harbin is hosting the Winter Asian Games for the second time having hosted it in 1994.
- ★ Under the ANSF scheme, the Government of India provides financial assistance to National Sports Federations for the training of athletes, hiring of foreign coaches, support staff, etc for participation in International and national events.
- ★ The Government will provide full financial support to the athletes participating in the Alpine Skiing, Cross-Country Skiing, Figure Skating, Short Track Speed Skating, and Speed Skating (Long Track) events at the 9th Asian Winter Games.
- ★ India is sending an 88-member contingent to the Harbin Winter Games, including 59 athletes and 29 officials.

Hockey India League 2024-25 Title

- ★ Shrachi Rarh Bengal Tigers won the 6th Men's Hockey India League 2024-25 title, beating Hyderabad Toofans 4-3 in a tense final at a packed Birsa Munda International Hockey Stadium in Rourkela, Odisha on 1 February 2025.
- ★ This was the first title win for the Shrachi Rarh Bengal Tigers, winning them a prize of ₹ 3 crore. The runners-up Hyderabad Toofan won ₹ 2 crore as prize money.
- ★ The 6th men's Hockey India league was held at the Birsa Munda Hockey Stadium in Rourkela, Odisha from 28th December 2024 to 1st February 2025.
- ★ Earlier, the Odisha Warriors won the first edition of the Women's Hockey India League 2024-25 title by defeating Soorma Hockey Club 2-1 in the final.
- ★ The inaugural Women's Hockey India League was held at the Marang Gomke Jaipal Singh Munda Astro Turf Hockey Stadium in Ranchi on 26 January 2025.
- ★ Fairplay Award (Team): UP Rudras.
- ★ Best Goalkeeper of the Tournament: Bikramjit Singh, Hyderabad Toofans.

- ★ Upcoming Player of the Tournament: Arshdeep Singh, Hyderabad Toofans.
- ★ Top Scorer of the Tournament: Jugraj Singh, Shrachi Rarh Bengal Tigers.
- ★ 2025 Player of the Tournament: Sukhjeet Singh, Shrachi Rarh Bengal Tigers.

Tata Steel Masters 2025

- ★ Indian Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa clinched the Tata Steel Masters Chess Tournament 2025, defeating world champion D. Gukesh 2-1 in a dramatic tiebreaker.
- ★ The thrilling contest saw both young prodigies engage in an intense battle after finishing the 13th and final round tied at 8.5 points each.
- ★ Praggnanandhaa won 2-1, securing his first-ever Tata Steel Masters title.

2025 Chennai Open Tennis Single Title

- ★ Kyrian Jacquet of France won the 2025 Chennai Open Tennis men's single title by defeating Elias Ymer of Sweden in the final.
- ★ The final was played at the SDAT Tennis Stadium in Nungambakkam, Tamil Nadu.
- ★ The 2025 Chennai Open Tennis tournament was an ATP 100 Challenger event. It was held from 3-9 February 2025 at Nungambakkam, Tamil Nadu.
- ★ It was the first ATP title for the 23 year old Kyrian Jacquet of France. In the 2025 Chennai Open final, World No. 273 ranked Kyrian Jacquet defeated World No.332 Elias Ymer of Sweden 7(7)-6(1), 6-4 in the final to win his first ATP title.
- ★ The doubles title of the 2025 Chennai Open Tennis was won by the Japanese pair of Shintaro Mochizuki and Kaito Uesugi. In the final the Japanese pair defeated the Indian pair of Ramkumar Ramanathan and Saketh Myneni 6-4, 6-4.
- ★ The ATP tour is the highest ranked men's tennis tournament and Challenger Tour is considered to be the second highest tour for the professional players.

Mumbai Open 2025 Tennis Tournament

- ★ Jil Teichmann of Switzerland defeated Mananchaya Sawangkaew of Thailand to win the singles title of the 2025 Mumbai Open tennis tournament.
- ★ The Mumbai Open is a WTA (Women Tennis Association)-125 event and it was held in the Cricket Club of India, Mumbai from 3-9 February 2025. It is the only WTA tournament to be organised in India.
- ★ The 2025 Mumbai Open singles title was the 2nd WTA-125 title for Jil Teichmann. In 2024 she won her first WTA-125 tournament in Ljubljana, Slovenia.
- ★ In the Mumbai Open, World No.117 Teichmann defeated World No. 122 Mananchaya Sawangkaew 6-3, 6-4 in the final.
- ★ Jill Teichmann got a valuable 125 points and a winner's cheque of USD 15,000.
- ★ In the doubles, the Russian pair of Elena Pridankina and Amina Anshba defeated India's Prarthana Thombare and her Dutch partner Arianne Hartono 6(4)-7(7), 6-2, 10-7 in the final.

International Cricket Council Unveils Champions Trophy 2025 Anthem

- ★ The International Cricket Council (ICC) has officially launched the theme song for the ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025, titled 'Jeeto Baazi Khel Ke', performed by renowned Pakistani singer Atif Aslam.
- ★ The anthem aims to build excitement for the tournament, which is just 12 days away from kickoff.
- ★ The official anthem of the ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025 embodies the passion, energy, and global love for cricket.
- ★ The ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025 will be held from February 19 to March 9, 2025, across Pakistan and the UAE.
- ★ The top eight cricketing nations will compete in a 15-match tournament for ultimate glory.
 - Singer: Atif Aslam
 - Producer: Abdullah Siddiqui
 - Lyricists: Adnan Dhool and Asfandiyar Asad
 - Music Video: A tribute to Pakistan's cultural heritage, featuring street markets, stadiums, and fan celebrations.

2025 Para Archery Asia Cup

- ★ The 27-member Indian archery contingent of Para-archers ended their 2025 Para Archery Asia Cup – World Ranking Tournament campaign with six gold medals to top the medals tally.
- ★ Overall the Indian contingent won 12 medals – six gold, three silver, and three bronze in the tournament.
- ★ The 2025 Para Archery Asia Cup – World Ranking Tournament was held in Bangkok, Thailand from 2-11 February 2025.
- ★ On the last day of the competition, India won six medals including two golds.
- ★ Sarita won the gold in the women's compound open by defeating Singapore's Nur Syahidah Alim.
- ★ Shyam Sundar Swami won the sixth and final gold medal for India in the men's compound open event by defeating Ken Swagumilang of Indonesia.
- ★ Rakesh Kumar won a bronze in the men's compound open defeating Malaysia's Wiro Julin in a shootout.
- ★ Pooja lost her final match in the women's recurve open final to Slovakia's Zina Lavrinc and had to settle for a silver medal.

Pankaj Advani Wins National Billiards Title

- ★ Ace cueist Pankaj Advani won his 36 National Billiards and 10th Snooker title at the 91st Billiards and Snooker National Championships 2024 held in Indore, Madhya Pradesh.
- ★ The 91st Billiards and Snooker National Championships 2024 for Senior, Junior, and Sub Junior was held in Indore, Madhya Pradesh from 7th January to 16th February 2025.
- ★ It was organised by the Billiards and Snooker Federation of India and hosted by the Madhya Pradesh Billiards and Snooker Association.

- ★ The Billiards and Snooker National Championships is the only qualifying tournament of India for the Asian and the World Championships.
- ★ The Asian Snooker Championships 2025 will be held in Doha, Qatar from 15-21 February 2025.
- ★ Both Pankaj Advani and Brijesh Damani will represent India in the Qatar event.

ICC Names Shikhar Dhawan as Champions Trophy Ambassador

- ★ The world cricket governing body, the International Cricket Council (ICC), has appointed former Indian cricketer Shikhar Dhawan as one of the four ambassadors of the ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025.
- ★ The 9th ICC Men's Champions Trophy is being co-hosted by Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) from 19 February to 9 March 2025.
- ★ The four ambassadors of the 2025 Champions Trophy are Shikhar Dhawan of India, Sarfraz Ahmed of Pakistan, Shane Watson of Australia, and New Zealand's legendary fast bowler, Tim Southee.
- ★ Shikhar Dhawan, who recently retired from international cricket, was the Player of the Series of the 2103 edition of the Champions Trophy, won by India.
- ★ Shane Watson was part of the Australian team that won the Champions Trophy twice in 2006 and 2009
- ★ Sarfraz Ahmad was part of the Pakistan side, which won the 2017 edition of the Champions Trophy.
- ★ The 9th edition of the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 is being co-hosted by Pakistan and the UAE.

Meghalaya to Host 39th National Games in 2027

- ★ The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) has officially announced that Meghalaya will host the 39th edition of the National Games in February/March 2027.
- ★ The decision was conveyed by IOA President PT Usha to Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad Sangma, marking a major milestone for the northeastern state.
- ★ Meghalaya will receive the IOA flag during the closing ceremony of the 38th National Games in Uttarakhand (Haldwani).

38th National Games

- ★ Uttar Pradesh's Sachin Yadav continued his impressive rise in javelin throw, securing the gold medal at the 38th National Games in Ganga Athletic Stadium Dehradun.
- ★ The 25-year-old delivered a remarkable performance, bettering his personal best with an 84.39m throw, overcoming stiff competition from Rohit Yadav and Shivpal Singh in the nine-man final held at Maharana Pratap Sports College, Dehradun.
- ★ Sachin Yadav's massive 84.39m throw in his fifth attempt broke the previous National Games record of 82.23m, set by Rajender Singh in 2015 (Kerala).

- ★ Sachin Yadav's 84.39m throw at the National Games now ranks as the fourth-highest in Indian men's javelin throw history.

Shikhar Dhawan Named Official Ambassador for ICC Champions Trophy 2025

- ★ The ICC Champions Trophy 2025, scheduled from February 19 to March 9 in Pakistan and Dubai, has gained further excitement with the announcement of Shikhar Dhawan as one of its official event ambassadors.
- ★ Dhawan, India's highest run-scorer in the tournament's history, joins an elite group of cricketing legends to promote the competition.
- ★ He is India's highest run-scorer in Champions Trophy history with 701 runs.
- ★ He is the only player to win the Golden Bat in two consecutive editions.

BBC Indian Sportswomen of the Year 2024

- ★ Double Olympic medal winner shooter Manu Bhaker has been named the 2024 Indian Sportswomen of the Year by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) of the United Kingdom.
- ★ In 2020, Manu Bhaker won the BBC's Emerging Athlete of the Year award.
- ★ The BBC instituted the BBC Indian Sportswomen of the Year in 2019. It honours Indian sportswomen for their performance in a calendar year.
- ★ Manu Bhaker secured the highest public vote to win the 2024 BBC Indian Sportswomen of the Year award.
- ★ Sportswomen of the Year: Manu Bhaker (Shooter)
- ★ Para-sportswoman of the year award: Avani Lekhara (won gold in 2020 Tokyo and 2024 Paris Paralympics in shooting).
- ★ Lifetime Achievement Award: Mithali Raj (former Indian women's cricket team captain).
- ★ Emerging Athlete of the Year: Sheetal Devi (youngest para-athlete to win a medal in Paralympics. She won a bronze in the Archery's Mixed team Open event at the 2024 Paris Paralympics.)

2025 Asian Snooker

- ★ Ace India cueist, Pankaj Advani won the 2025 Asian Snooker Championship's men's title, defeating Amir Sarkosh of Iran in the final.
- ★ This was the 14th title win for Pankaj Advani across the sports format in the Asian Snooker and Billiards events.
- ★ The 2025 Asian Snooker Championship for the Men's, Women's and Men's under-21 was organised by the Asian Confederation of Billiards Sports and hosted by the Qatar Billiards Sports Federation in Doha, Qatar, from 15-21 February 2025.
- ★ Pankaj Advani's win in Doha was his 14th title win across all the formats in Asia.
- ★ In the women's section of the 2025 Asian Snooker Championship, Mongolia's Narantuya Bayarsaikhan defeated Ng On Yee of Hong Kong, China.

Memory League World Championship 2025

- ★ In a remarkable display of cognitive brilliance, 20-year-old Vishvaa Rajakumar from India has been crowned the winner of the Memory League World Championship 2025, as reported by The New York Times.
- ★ This prestigious global competition tests participants' ability to memorize and recall sequences of numbers, images, and words in record time.
- ★ Rajakumar's record-breaking performance included recalling 80 digits in just 13.5 seconds, showcasing his extraordinary mental agility and memorization skills.
- ★ He used the "Memory Palace" technique, an ancient Roman memorization strategy to win.
- ★ The "Memory Palace" technique associates information with familiar locations.
- ★ Rajakumar visualized different rooms in a house to recall sequences of numbers and words.
- ★ This technique helps in organizing and retrieving information effortlessly.

2025 Uganda Badminton Tournament

- ★ Indian Badminton players won three titles at the Uganda International Challenge 2025 Badminton Championship. India won the men's singles, mixed doubles and the men's doubles title.
- ★ The \$17,5000 Ugandan International Challenge 2025 Badminton Championship was held at the Lugogo Indoor Arena in Kampala, Uganda.
- ★ The winner of the men's and women's singles got \$2,100 each. The prize money for the doubles – women's, men's and mixed winners got \$1,400 in each event.
- ★ World no 106 ranked Indian Manraj Singh defeated Azerbaijan's Dicky Dwi Pangestu 21-10, 17-21, 21-18 in the final. Manraj who was seeded seventh in the Ugandan event took just over an hour to defeat Dicky Dwi Pangestu.
- ★ In the Men's Doubles final top seed Indian pair of Dingku Singh Konthoujam and Amaan Mohammad defeated the Indian pair of Akshan Shetty and Sankar Prasad Udayakumar 14-21, 21-15, 21-17 in the finals.
- ★ The third title for India at the tournament was won in the mixed doubles event.
- ★ The Indian pair of Ishaan Bhatnagar-Srinidhi Narayanan were declared winners after Dhruv Rawat-Maneesha K retired due to injury. American Ishika Jaiswal won the women's singles title by defeating Nesihan Arin of Turkiye 21-15, 19-21, 22-20 in the final.

2025 Sydney Classic Squash Title

- ★ Saurav Ghosal returned from his retirement to win the Octane Sydney Classic 2025 Squash Tournament.
- ★ India's most successful squash player, Saurav Ghosal, announced his retirement from professional squash in April 2024.
- ★ The \$6000 prize money Octane Sydney Classic 2025 was part of the Professional Squash Association (PSA) Squash Tour.
- ★ It was a tournament for the professional men players, and it was held in Sydney, Australia.

- ★ The win in the Sydney Classic was the 11th PSA title for Saurav Ghosal. In the final, 38-year-old Saurav Ghosal defeated world No. 142 Abdelrahman Nassar of Egypt 11-2, 11-6, 11-2.

BOOKS & AUTHORS

Union Home Minister Releases “Indian Renaissance: The Modi Decade” Book

- ★ The book “Indian Renaissance: The Modi Decade” was released by Shri Amit Shah, Union Home Minister and Minister of Co-operation, in New Delhi.
- ★ Shri Manohar Lal, Union Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs, Shri Kartikeya Sharma, Rajya Sabha MP, and Aishwarya Pandit, the book’s editor, were present at the event.
- ★ Shri Amit Shah described the past 10 years under Prime Minister Narendra Modi as the end of one era and the beginning of a new one, with India’s history being rewritten.
- ★ He predicted that even Modi’s critics would acknowledge this period as one marked in golden letters in future history books.
- ★ Amit Shah outlined a vision where India’s history will be divided into three parts:
 - Before and After Independence,
 - Before and After the Emergency,
 - Before and After Modi Ji.
- ★ He affirmed that under Modi’s leadership, India is progressing towards becoming a fully developed nation by 2047.

Omar Abdullah Released the book named ‘Hearts and Heroes’

- ★ Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir Omar Abdullah officially released the book “Hearts and Heroes: Lives that Shaped Us”, authored by Kulbhushan Kumar, a JKAS Officer currently serving as Director of Finance in Disaster Management, Relief and Rehabilitation Department.
- ★ The book launch event took place at the Civil Secretariat in Jammu, attended by colleagues and well-wishers of the author.
- ★ The book is poetic tribute to visionaries, leaders, and unsung heroes who have significantly impacted society.
- ★ It focuses on love, kindness, and determination, drawing inspiration from global icons.
- ★ The book is published by Authors Press and aims to inspire readers through poetic storytelling.

IMPORTANT DAYS

World Wetlands Day

- ★ World Wetlands Day is celebrated on 2nd February every year.

- ★ Aim to raise global awareness about the vital role of wetlands for people and the planet.
- ★ The Convention on Wetlands was adopted in 1971.
- ★ This year is especially significant as World Wetlands Day 2025 will be observed as a United Nations international day for the second time.
- ★ On August 30 last year, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution to mark the day.
- ★ The day is celebrated to mark the date of the adoption of the Convention on Wetlands on February 2, 1971, in the Iranian city of Ramsar on the shores of the Caspian Sea.
- ★ World Wetlands Day was first celebrated in 1997.

World Cancer Day

- ★ World Cancer Day, observed annually on February 4th, is a global initiative dedicated to raising awareness, taking action, and reducing the impact of cancer worldwide.
- ★ The 2025 theme, “United by Unique”, marks the beginning of a three-year global campaign (2025-2027), emphasizing individualized care and inclusivity in cancer treatment.
- ★ The day unites individuals, communities, and Governments in the fight against cancer, emphasizing prevention, early detection, and effective treatment.

International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation

- ★ International Day Against Female Genital Mutilation 2025 is observed on the 6th February 2025.
- ★ The Joint Programme on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting was initiated by UNFPA and UNICEF in 2007 to accelerate the abandonment of the practice.
- ★ In 2008, WHO and 9 other United Nations partners released a declaration titled “Eliminating Female Genital Mutilation: An Interagency Statement” regarding the abolition of FGM.
- ★ WHO 2010 published a “Global strategy to stop health care providers from performing female genital mutilation” in collaboration with other key UN agencies and international organizations.
- ★ The UN General Assembly in 2012 adopted a resolution A/RES/67/14 on the elimination of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

World Pulses Day

- ★ World Pulses Day 2025 is observed on the 10th of February.
- ★ By definition, pulses only include dried seeds from leguminous plants grown for food and do not include green vegetable crops that were harvested.
- ★ Their seeds are significant and healthy superfoods because they are packed with vital elements including fiber, protein, vitamins, and minerals.
- ★ Building on the success and momentum of the I.Y.P., and recognizing the potential of pulses to further achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Burkina Faso, a landlocked West African nation, proposed the global observance of World Pulses Day.

- ★ On December 20, 2018, the General Assembly of the United Nations proclaimed February 10 as World Pulses Day through resolution (A/RES/73/251), and the day has been celebrated as a global event since 2019 and supported by many member nations.
- ★ According to the U.N., pulses remain influential in mitigating the global challenges of poverty, food security and nutrition, human health, and soil health.

International Epilepsy Day

- ★ International Epilepsy Day 2025 is observed on the 10th of February.
- ★ International Epilepsy Day is the brainchild of the International Bureau for Epilepsy and the International League Against Epilepsy.
- ★ The two organizations have put together various events on the day since their inception.
- ★ Epilepsy is one of the world's oldest-known medical conditions, with records dating back to the beginning of recorded history.
- ★ Of course, back then, it was treated as a spiritual condition.
- ★ In 2000 B.C., an ancient Mesopotamian text described a person who underwent an exorcism under the influence of a moon god.
- ★ Ancient Babylonians attributed seizures to possession by evil spirits.
- ★ The ancient Greeks also considered epilepsy to be spiritual possession, but they associated it with genius and divine interventions.

National Deworming Day

- ★ National Deworming Day 2025 is observed on the 10th of February.
- ★ Worms can create long-term health issues in children and interfere with their health, education, and overall well-being, even if their effects might not be visible immediately.
- ★ Without knowing, children can carry worms for a long time and the only visible symptoms might be their hindered physical and mental health.
- ★ It was therefore deemed necessary to treat all children despite not appearing sick and the observation of national deworming day came into being.
- ★ According to a report by the World Health Organisation, around 241 million children in India, all between the ages of 1 and 14 years are at risk of parasitic intestinal worms.
- ★ The Presence of these parasitic worms also known as Soil- Transmitted Helminths (STH).
- ★ National Deworming Day was launched first on 10th February 2015.

International Day of Women and Girls in Science

- ★ The 10th International Day of Women and Girls in Science 2025 is observed on 11th February 2025.
- ★ The Commission on the Status of Women adopted a report on March 14, 2011, with the goal of encouraging girls and women to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering, and math.

- ★ Moreover, promoting women's equal access to full employment and respectable jobs should be a priority.
- ★ The General Assembly recognized in a resolution on science, technology, and innovation for development adopted on December 20, 2013, that women and girls should have full and equal access to and participation in science, technology, and innovation.
- ★ In 2015, the United Nations General Assembly declared 11 February as the International Day of Women and Girls in Science.
- ★ On 11 February 2025, we will celebrate its 10th anniversary together at UNESCO Headquarters.

National Productivity Day

- ★ National Productivity Day 2025 is observed on the 12th of February 2025.
- ★ The theme for National Productivity Day 2025 is "From Ideas to Impact: Protecting Intellectual Property for Competitive Startups".
- ★ On February 12, 1958, the National Productivity Council of India was Registered under Societies Registration Act XXI, 1860.
- ★ To mark the council's establishment, its members decided to observe National Productivity Day every year on the same day.
- ★ So, apart from encouraging people to be more productive in their work, National Productivity Day also celebrates the anniversary of the establishment of the National Productivity Council.

World Radio Day

- ★ World Radio Day is celebrated on 13 February is a date proclaimed by UNESCO to celebrate radio broadcasts, improve international co-operation among radio broadcasters and encourage decision-makers to create and provide access to information through radio, including community radios.
- ★ Many people in history have contributed to perfecting radio waves and frequencies, but it was Italian inventor Guglielmo Marconi who proved the feasibility of communication over the radio.
- ★ He sent and received a telegram over the first radio signal in history from Italy in 1895.
- ★ The first radio station in America was established in Pittsburgh in 1919, and the FM radio debuted in 1939.
- ★ Broadcasting over radio went digital in 1994 when radio streaming started via the internet. This was accompanied by the first internet-only 24-hour radio station. In 2011, at the 36th session of UNESCO's General Conference, February 13 was proclaimed as World Radio Day.
- ★ This date was chosen by UNESCO's Director-General as it was the anniversary date of the United Nations International Broadcasting Service, which was created on February 13, 1946.

World Day of Social Justice

- ★ The United Nations (UN) World Day of Social Justice is annually observed on February 20 to encourage people to look at how social justice affects poverty eradication.

- ★ The Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action for Social Development were reviewed by the UN member states a decade later in New York in 2005.
- ★ Finally, 20th February was declared the annual World Day of Social Justice by the United Nations on November 26, 2007.
- ★ The International Labour Organization (ILO) is the first specialized agency of the United Nations formed on October 29, 1919.
- ★ ILO is also credited with proposing the observance of February 20th as World Day of Social Justice adopting the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalisation at the International Labour Conference on June 10, 2008.

International Mother Language Day

- ★ Every year February 21 is celebrated as International Mother Language Day 2025 all over the world.
- ★ UNESCO declared February 21st as International Mother Language Day in the year 1999 and has been witnessed all throughout the world since 2000.
- ★ This declaration of Mother Language Day came into existence as a tribute to the language movement in Bangladesh. When Pakistan was separated in 1947 it had two partitions: East Pakistan and West Pakistan.

Central Excise Day

- ★ Every year February 24 is celebrated as the central Excise Day all over the world.
- ★ The day is being celebrated to honor the service of the Central Board of Excise and Customs (CBEC) to the country.
- ★ The Central Excise Department was one of the oldest departments in India which was established in the year 1855, under the British Raj.
- ★ “The Central Excise Act” or “The Central Excise and Salt Act” was regulated in the year 1944, in which year for the first time Central Excise Day was celebrated but later in the year 1996 these acts get some changes.
- ★ In recognition of the establishment of laws, the CBEC has celebrated Central Excise Day since the passing of the Salt Act which was signed into law on February 24, 1944.

OBITUTARY NEWS

American Greg Bell, Oldest Living Olympic Gold Medallist

- ★ Greg Bell, the 1956 Olympic long jump gold medalist, passed away on January 25 at his home at the age of 94.
- ★ At the time of his death, he was the oldest living U.S. track and field Olympic gold medalist.
- ★ Bell was born on November 7, 1930, in Terre Haute, Indiana, into extreme poverty.

- ★ After high school, he was drafted into the Army, where he continued to excel in the long jump during meets in Europe.
- ★ He won his first of three AAU national titles in 1955 with a leap of 26-0.5.
- ★ In 1956, he won the NCAA title and tied for first at the Olympic Trials, though he was declared the winner due to the lack of international tiebreaking rules.
- ★ At the 1956 Melbourne Olympics, Bell won the gold medal with a jump of 83m (25-8.25), setting an Olympic record.
- ★ He continued his success with another NCAA title in 1957, an AAU indoor crown in 1958, and an AAU outdoor gold in 1959.
- ★ Bell was inducted into the National Track and Field Hall of Fame in 1988.
- ★ He was also a charter member of the Indiana Track and Field Hall of Fame and the IU Athletics Hall of Fame.

Former Chief Election Commissioner Navin Chawla

- ★ Navin Chawla, former Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) of India, passed away at the age of 79.
- ★ Chawla served as Election Commissioner (EC) from 2005 to 2009 and as CEC from April 2009 to July 2010.
- ★ His tenure was controversial, with the BJP accusing him of partisan functioning.
- ★ In 2009, then CEC Gopalaswami recommended his removal, but the Government did not act on it.
- ★ In 2006, LK Advani and 204 MPs petitioned then President APJ Abdul Kalam to remove Chawla, citing alleged bias.
- ★ Chawla was a former bureaucrat and oversaw the 2009 Lok Sabha elections.
- ★ He advocated for constitutional amendments to protect election commissioners and pushed for the inclusion of third-gender voters under the 'others'.
- ★ He was also known as the biographer of Mother Teresa, having written the book 'Mother Teresa' (1992) and co-authored 'Faith and Compassion: The Life and Work of Mother Teresa' with photographer Raghu Rai (1997).

Sam Nujoma, The First President of Namibia

- ★ Sam Nujoma, the first President of independent Namibia, passed away at the age of 95 in Windhoek.
- ★ He Co-founded the South West Africa People's Organisation (Swapo) in the 1960s and played a crucial role in Namibia's freedom from South African rule (1990).
- ★ He Led Namibia as its first President from 1990 to 2005.
- ★ Historic U.S. Visit: In 1993, became the first African leader hosted at the White House by Bill Clinton.
- ★ Global Recognition: Clinton referred to him as "the George Washington of his country" and "a true hero of the global movement toward democracy."

Padma Shri Awardee and Celebrated Folk Singer Sukri Bommagowda

- ★ Sukri Bommagowda, a celebrated folk singer and Padma Shri awardee, passed away at 84 in Badageri village, Uttara Kannada.
- ★ Fondly known as Sukrajji, she was a revered figure in the Halakki Vokkaliga community.
- ★ She played a crucial role in preserving Halakki folk heritage and had a repertoire of nearly 5,000 folk songs.
- ★ She used music as a tool for social awareness and actively participated in social movements.
- ★ She was honored with the Padma Shri award in 2017 for her contributions to folk art and social causes.
- ★ She received the Nadoja Award and the Rajyotsava Award from the Karnataka Government.

A Musical Legend Pratul Mukhopadhyay

- ★ Pratul Mukhopadhyay, the renowned Bengali vocalist, composer, and lyricist, passed away at the age of 83, leaving an indelible mark on Bengal's music scene.
- ★ Known for his soulful and revolutionary songs, Mukhopadhyay's works like "Ami Banglar Gaan Gai" and "Dinga Bhasao Re" became iconic, representing the cultural identity of West Bengal.
- ★ Mukhopadhyay's love for music began at a young age. By the age of 12, he composed his first song, "Ami Dhan Katar Gaan Gai", based on a poem by Mangalcharan Chattopadhyay.
- ★ His compositions displayed a deep understanding of human emotions, nature, and the socio-political landscape. Mukhopadhyay was a self-taught artist, making his work unique in the Bengali music industry.

MISCELLANEOUS

IBCA Becomes a Full-Fledged Treaty-Based Organization

- ★ International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) Framework Agreement comes into force from January 23, 2025 as a treaty-based international organization.
- ★ 5 countries ratified the agreement: India, Nicaragua, Eswatini, Somalia, and Liberia.
- ★ 27 countries, including India, have consented to join IBCA, along with multiple international/national wildlife organizations.
- ★ It was launched by PM Narendra Modi on April 9, 2023, during the 50 Years of Project Tiger event.
- ★ Focus on conservation of 7 big cats: Tiger, Lion, Leopard, Snow Leopard, Cheetah, Jaguar, and Puma.
- ★ It was established by the Government of India through NTCA (National Tiger Conservation Authority) under MoEFCC on March 12, 2024.
- ★ It aims to promote collaboration, share best conservation practices, strengthen interGovernmental efforts, and secure ecological sustainability.

Indian-Origin Astronaut Sunita Williams Breaks Spacewalking Record

- ★ Astronauts Sunita Williams and Butch Wilmore conducted a 5-hour and 26-minute spacewalk on the ISS.
- ★ They removed degraded radio communications hardware and collected samples to check for microorganisms on the ISS exterior.
- ★ Sunita Williams, an Indian-origin astronaut, broke the record for the longest total spacewalking time by a woman, with 62 hours and 6 minutes.
- ★ She surpassed Peggy Whitson's previous record of 60 hours and 21 minutes.
- ★ Williams and Wilmore have been stranded on the ISS since June 2024 due to technical issues with Boeing's Starliner spacecraft, including helium leaks and thruster malfunctions.
- ★ NASA plans to bring them back to Earth in late March 2025 using SpaceX's spacecraft.
- ★ This was Williams' 9th spacewalk and Wilmore's 5th.
- ★ Williams previously made history in 2012 by completing a triathlon in space.

India Targets to Eliminate Lymphatic Filariasis By 2027

- ★ The Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare, Jagat Prakash Nadda virtually launched the annual Mass Drug Administration (MDA) campaign for the elimination of Lymphatic Filariasis in identified 13 endemic states on 10 February 2025.
- ★ The Union Minister announced that the Central Government aims to eliminate the incidence of Lymphatic Filariasis disease in the country by 2027.
- ★ The MDA campaign aims to administer anti-filarial medicine to persons in the identified endemic area to prevent the further transmission of the disease.
- ★ The MDA has been launched in the identified 111 districts of 13 states where the Lymphatic Filariasis disease is endemic.
- ★ The Government of India has adopted a two-pronged strategy for the elimination of Lymphatic Filariasis in the country by 2027.
- ★ Two-pronged strategies are Mass Drug Administration (MDA) and Home-based management of lymphoedema cases and up-scaling of hydrocele operations in identified district hospitals/medical colleges.
- ★ The annual MDA campaign is administered by the National Center for Vector Borne Diseases Control under the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

Google Renames 'Gulf of Mexico' As 'Gulf of America'

- ★ Tech giant Google has officially renamed the Gulf of Mexico to the 'Gulf of America' on Google Maps for American users.
- ★ For Mexican users, it will still be displayed as the Gulf of Mexico.
- ★ For the rest of the world, both names will appear on Google Maps.
- ★ The order directs the U.S. Secretary of the Interior to formalize the name change within 30 days.
- ★ February 9 has been officially declared as 'Gulf of America Day' by Trump.

First Astronaut with Disability Approved for ISS Mission

- ★ The European Space Agency (ESA) has confirmed that John McFall, a 43-year-old British surgeon and former Paralympian, has been approved for a long-duration mission aboard the International Space Station (ISS).
- ★ His selection under ESA's Parastronaut initiative marks a groundbreaking step toward inclusivity in space exploration.
- ★ At 19 years old, McFall lost his leg in a motorbike accident but pursued a career in athletics, representing Great Britain as a Paralympian.
- ★ He later became a surgeon, demonstrating resilience and determination.
- ★ In February 2025, McFall passed ESA's medical evaluation, becoming eligible for a long-duration space mission.
- ★ His clearance was approved by all ISS partners, including the United States.
- ★ The initiative aligns with ESA's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) commitment, ensuring equal opportunities in space exploration.

ACQUISITION & MERGERS

RBI Approved Temasek's Zulia Investments for 7% Stake in AU Small Finance Bank

- ★ AU Small Finance Bank (AU SFB) announced on February 13, 2025, that the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has approved Temasek's Zulia Investments to acquire up to 7% stake in the bank.
- ★ The approval allows Zulia Investments Pte. Ltd., which is an indirect wholly owned subsidiary of Temasek Holdings (Private) Limited, to acquire the stake within one year from the RBI approval date.
- ★ If the acquisition is not completed within this period, the approval will be cancelled.
- ★ The acquisition must comply with the Banking Regulation Act, 1949, RBI's guidelines on shareholding, the Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999, SEBI regulations, and other applicable laws.

Flipkart-Backed super.money Acquires Checkout Financing Platform BharatX

- ★ super.money, backed by Flipkart, has acquired BharatX, a buy-now-pay-later (BNPL) fintech startup.
- ★ The acquisition is an all-cash transaction, but financial terms have not been disclosed.
- ★ BharatX's core team will join super.money to enhance the app's credit offerings.
- ★ They will focus on developing credit solutions for the Unified Payments Interface (UPI).
- ★ money ranked as the 7th largest UPI player as of November 2024, processing 78.49 million transactions worth ₹3,130.10 crore (US\$ 359.23 million), according to NPCI.
- ★ The acquisition aligns with super.money's plan to expand its credit product portfolio.
- ★ Future offerings include personal loans and other unsecured credit products.

