



Shankar School of Banking

CURRENT AFFAIRS

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NATIONAL NEWS

Meghalaya's Living Root Bridges Nominated to UNESCO World Heritage List

- ★ India has formally submitted the nomination dossier of Meghalaya's living root bridges, titled "Jingkieng Jri / Lyu Chrai Cultural Landscape", to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for the 2026–27 World Heritage evaluation cycle.
- ★ The dossier was submitted by Vishal V. Sharma, India's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to UNESCO, to Lazare Assomo Eloundou, Director of UNESCO's World Heritage Centre.
- ★ The nominated cultural landscape spans the Khasi Hills and Jaintia Hills of Meghalaya.
- ★ It represents a centuries-old living heritage tradition developed and preserved by the indigenous Khasi and Jaintia communities.
- ★ The living root bridges form the core of the nomination and embody the indigenous philosophy of living in harmony with nature and reverence for Mei Ramew (Mother Earth).
- ★ The submission acknowledges the leadership of the Prime Minister of India, the Union Minister for Culture, and the Chief Minister of Meghalaya.
- ★ Contributions of the Archaeological Survey of India, the Ministry of External Affairs, and local communities in conserving this heritage have been recognised.
- ★ The nomination reflects India's commitment to safeguarding living cultural landscapes and advancing international heritage conservation through UNESCO.

Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Forms High-Level Committee

- ★ The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare constituted a high-level Committee to review and strengthen the functioning of Farmer Producer Organisations in Tamil Nadu.
- ★ The Committee will assess governance, business sustainability, technical support, value addition, marketing, and capacity-building aspects of Farmer Producer Organisation operations.
- ★ It will recommend measures to strengthen operational efficiency, technical support systems, institutional co-ordination, and market linkages, with special focus on key crops of Tamil Nadu.
- ★ The Committee is expected to submit its final report within two months to the Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.
- ★ Indian Council of Agricultural Research – National Research Centre for Banana, Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu, along with Krishi Vigyan Kendras through Indian Council of Agricultural Research – Agricultural Technology Application Research Institutes, Hyderabad, Telangana, will act as the host institution and provide logistical and secretarial support.

National Institution for Transforming India Launches Sampoonata Abhiyan 2.0

- ★ The National Institution for Transforming India launched Sampoonata Abhiyan 2.0 to ensure essential services reach the most remote and underserved populations.
- ★ The campaign aims to fast-track development and achieve 100 percent saturation of key development indicators across Aspirational Districts and Aspirational Blocks in India.
- ★ Sampoonata Abhiyan 2.0 will be conducted for a three-month period from 28 January to 14 April 2026.
- ★ The campaign was launched by B.V.R. Subrahmanyam, Chief Executive Officer, National Institution for Transforming India, in the presence of Rohit Kumar, Additional Secretary and Mission Director, Aspirational Districts and Blocks Programme, National Institution for Transforming India, along with Planning Secretaries.
- ★ The initiative expands Sampoonata Abhiyan 2024 and covers 112 Aspirational Districts and 513 Aspirational Blocks under the Aspirational Districts and Blocks Programme.
- ★ National Institution for Transforming India, in co-ordination with concerned Central Ministries and Departments and the Governments of States and Union Territories, will jointly drive the effective implementation of the campaign.

Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation Launches PAIMANA Portal

- ★ The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) has operationalised PAIMANA (Project Assessment, Infrastructure Monitoring and Analytics for Nation-building) to monitor Central Sector Infrastructure Projects worth ₹150 crore and above.
- ★ PAIMANA replaces the old OCMS-2006 (Online Computerised Monitoring System), thereby modernising infrastructure project monitoring.
- ★ Following the principle of “one data, one entry”, PAIMANA is integrated via APIs with the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade’s (DPIIT) Integrated Project Monitoring Portal (IPMP / IIG-PMG).
- ★ This integration allows automatic data flow from IPMP, reducing manual data entry, with approximately 60% of projects updated automatically.
- ★ The portal was operationalised through co-ordination with 20+ Central Ministries / Departments, along with DEA and DPIIT, covering project mapping, data migration, validation, and analytics.
- ★ Currently, 1,392 ongoing infrastructure projects have been onboarded on PAIMANA, with data sanitisation of IPMP and further onboarding of stakeholders and projects underway.

Mumbai to Host 6th National Crop Nutrition Summit 2026

- ★ Mumbai will host the 6th National Crop Nutrition Summit on 5–6 February 2026 at the National Stock Exchange Complex, Bandra Kurla Complex, Mumbai.
- ★ The two-day summit is being organised by the Indian Micro-Fertilizers Manufacturers Association.
- ★ The theme of the summit is “Converge, Collaborate and Co-create”.

- ★ The summit will focus on micronutrients, specialty fertilizers, and biological inputs, reflecting the changing priorities in Indian agriculture due to soil nutrient depletion and sustainability concerns.
- ★ Key discussions will cover precision crop nutrition, sustainable input usage, regulatory and policy reforms, and expansion of domestic manufacturing capacity.
- ★ Emphasis will be placed on positioning India as a global agri-input manufacturing and export hub, while ensuring farmer productivity and soil health.
- ★ The summit will be inaugurated by Jayakumar Jitendrasinh Rawal, Minister of Marketing and Protocol, Government of Maharashtra.
- ★ P.K. Singh, Agriculture Commissioner of India, will attend as Guest of Honour and outline the Government of India's vision on agri-input reforms, specialty fertilizers, biologicals, ease of doing business, and export competitiveness.

Patna Bird Sanctuary and Chhari-Dhand Declared Ramsar Sites

- ★ India has added two new wetlands to the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance, strengthening its global commitment to wetland and biodiversity conservation.
- ★ The newly designated sites are Patna Bird Sanctuary in Etah district, Uttar Pradesh, and Chhari-Dhand in Kutch district, Gujarat.
- ★ With this addition, India's total Ramsar sites have increased to 98.
- ★ The recognition has been granted under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, an international treaty adopted in 1971 at Ramsar, Iran, for the conservation and wise use of wetlands.
- ★ India became a signatory to the Ramsar Convention in 1982.
- ★ Patna Bird Sanctuary is a freshwater wetland located in the Gangetic plains.
- ★ It supports a large number of resident and migratory bird species.
- ★ During winter, it serves as an important habitat for migratory birds from Central Asia and Siberia, highlighting its ecological significance.
- ★ Chhari-Dhand is a seasonal saline wetland located in the arid landscape of Kutch.
- ★ Despite harsh climatic conditions, it supports migratory birds, desert wildlife, and rich biodiversity.
- ★ The wetland is home to species such as chinkara, wolf, caracal, desert cat, desert fox, and several endangered bird species.
- ★ The expansion of India's Ramsar network reflects a rise from 26 sites in 2014 to 98 sites in 2026, showing a growth of over 276 per cent.
- ★ The development underscores India's commitment to ecosystem protection, biodiversity conservation, climate regulation, flood control, and groundwater recharge under global environmental frameworks.

Adampur Airport Renamed Sri Guru Ravidas Maharaj Ji Airport

- ★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi renamed Adampur Airport in Jalandhar as Sri Guru Ravidas Maharaj Ji Airport and also inaugurated a new civil terminal at Halwara Airport in Ludhiana.

- ★ The renaming honours Guru Ravidas, a revered Bhakti movement saint and social reformer, and carries strong social and cultural significance, especially in Punjab.
- ★ The decision fulfilled a long-pending demand from various political parties and social groups.
- ★ A resolution for renaming Adampur Airport was passed by the Punjab Vidhan Sabha in 2020, and the demand was reiterated by the current State Government.
- ★ The move combines cultural recognition with infrastructure development, strengthening regional air connectivity in Punjab.
- ★ Adampur Airport was revamped at a cost of ₹125 crore under the UDAN 5.0 scheme and serves the Doaba region of Punjab.
- ★ The civil terminal at Adampur is spread over 40 acres and operates using the Adampur Air Force Station airstrip.
- ★ Airport operations at Adampur resumed on 31 March 2025 after a four-year suspension due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- ★ Currently, Adampur Airport operates limited flights by Star Air and IndiGo, connecting cities such as Mumbai, Nanded and Bengaluru.
- ★ Connectivity challenges remain due to a narrow 4.3-kilometre rural approach road, with land acquisition delays cited as the main reason for non-expansion.
- ★ Earlier air routes to Delhi, Jaipur and Mumbai were discontinued due to low passenger demand, highlighting sustainability challenges under regional connectivity schemes.
- ★ At Halwara Airport in Ludhiana, a new civil terminal was virtually inaugurated by the Prime Minister.
- ★ The Halwara civil terminal has been built at a cost of ₹54 crore by expanding the Halwara Air Force base.

Gujarat Becomes India's Largest Renewable Energy Contributor

- ★ Gujarat emerged as the largest contributor to India's renewable energy capacity, accounting for 16.50% of the national total as of 31 December 2025.
- ★ Gujarat ranks 1st in India in total installed renewable energy capacity with 42.583 GW.
- ★ The state contributes 16.50% of India's total renewable energy capacity, reflecting strong policy support and infrastructure readiness.
- ★ Gujarat ranks 1st in wind power capacity and 2nd in solar power capacity.
- ★ Total installed solar capacity stands at 25,529.40 MW (December 2025), including ground-mounted, rooftop, hybrid, and off-grid systems such as PM-KUSUM.
- ★ Major solar parks include Charanka, Radhanesda, and Dholera.
- ★ Khavda Renewable Energy Park (Kutch) is planned for 37.35 GW, with 11.33 GW already operational, making it the world's largest renewable energy park.
- ★ Installed wind power capacity is 14,820.94 MW as of December 2025.
- ★ Kutch district contributes the highest share, followed by Jamnagar, Devbhumi Dwarka, Amreli, and Rajkot.

- ★ Gujarat has commissioned 2,398.77 MW of wind-solar hybrid projects, supported by modern evacuation infrastructure and government-allotted land.
- ★ The state has crossed 11 lakh rooftop solar installations, generating 6,412.80 MW, the highest in India.
- ★ Since 2016, Gujarat has contributed over 25% of India's total rooftop solar capacity.
- ★ Under PM-KUSUM, 12,700 off-grid solar water pumps have been installed to support farmers and sustainable irrigation.
- ★ Gujarat's renewable growth is backed by strong policies ranging from the Wind Power Policy 1993 to the Gujarat Integrated Renewable Energy Policy 2025.
- ★ Policies focus on ease of grid connectivity, removal of capacity limits, promotion of hybrid systems and battery storage.
- ★ Digital platforms like Akshay Urja Setu ensure faster approvals, transparency, private investment, renewable manufacturing, and green job creation.

Assam Government Announces ₹50 Crore Grant to Preserve Koch Dynasty Heritage

- ★ Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced a ₹50 crore grant to preserve and restore the heritage of the Darrang kings of the Koch dynasty during Mahabir Chilarai Divas celebrations in Darrang district.
- ★ The grant aims to restore royal sites, monuments and cultural landmarks associated with the Darrang kingdom of the Koch dynasty.
- ★ The Darrang district administration and Public Works Department (PWD) were directed to begin restoration work immediately.
- ★ The project seeks to honour indigenous rulers, protect Assam's historical legacy and develop the region as a major cultural tourism hub.
- ★ The Koch dynasty was one of the most powerful medieval dynasties of Assam, emerging after the decline of the Pal dynasty of ancient Kamarupa.
- ★ The dynasty was founded by Biswa Singha in 1515 and reached its peak under Maharaj Naranarayan (1540-1586).
- ★ The Koch rulers played a major role in shaping Assam's political boundaries, military strength and cultural identity.
- ★ The Koch dynasty followed a hereditary monarchy, used Narayani currency, and adopted Hinduism through Sanskritisation, while also accommodating local ethnic traditions.

Andhra Pradesh Launches Pilloo AI Voice-Based Billing and Accounting App

- ★ Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu launched Pilloo AI, a voice-based billing and accounting application in Andhra Pradesh.
- ★ Pilloo AI is an AI-powered digital accounting agent designed to simplify financial management for small businesses.
- ★ The application allows users to create invoices, record sales and payments, generate balance sheets, and track receivables and payables simply by speaking in their native language.

- ★ Users are not required to have any prior accounting knowledge, making the app especially useful for micro and small enterprises, shopkeepers and first-time entrepreneurs.
- ★ The app supports five Indian languages, ensuring wider accessibility and ease of use.
- ★ Pilloo AI enables users to record daily transactions, generate financial reports, and automate data entry.
- ★ Users can upload bills and bank statements, which are processed instantly using AI-based data extraction.
- ★ This automation reduces manual effort, saves time, and minimizes errors in bookkeeping.
- ★ By eliminating dependence on professional accountants and expensive accounting software, the app lowers the entry barrier to formal accounting.
- ★ Pilloo AI helps improve financial discipline, transparency and record-keeping accuracy among MSMEs.
- ★ Proper digital records enhance credit readiness, helping small businesses access bank loans and government schemes more easily.
- ★ The initiative aligns with Andhra Pradesh's vision of using technology to simplify business operations, promote digital inclusion, and strengthen the MSME ecosystem.
- ★ Pilloo AI also supports India's broader national push for MSME digitisation and transparent financial practices.

Andhra Pradesh Plans Exclusive Women Industrial Park

- ★ Andhra Pradesh Government has proposed an exclusive industrial park for women entrepreneurs, marking a strong step towards women empowerment and inclusive industrial growth.
- ★ The proposed industrial park will be spread across 30 acres and will focus on women-led industries, startups, and small businesses.
- ★ The objective is to provide a safe, supportive, and well-equipped business environment for women to start and expand enterprises.
- ★ The initiative reflects the State Government's commitment to promoting women entrepreneurship and employment generation.
- ★ The Andhra Pradesh Government has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with FICCI Ladies Organisation (FICCI-FLO) to support implementation of the project.
- ★ FICCI Ladies Organisation (FICCI-FLO) is the women's wing of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry and works to empower women entrepreneurs across India.
- ★ Under the partnership, FICCI-FLO will mobilise women entrepreneurs, provide mentoring and business guidance, support skill development and capacity building, and facilitate networking and market linkages.
- ★ The industrial park infrastructure will be developed by the Andhra Pradesh Industrial Infrastructure Corporation (APIIC).
- ★ APIIC will provide quality industrial infrastructure, fast-track approvals and clearances, and statutory and operational support, reducing delays for women entrepreneurs.

Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs Unveils Upgraded National Youth Parliament Scheme (NYPS 2.0) Portal

- ★ The Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs (MoPA) launched an upgraded version of the National Youth Parliament Scheme (NYPS) web portal, known as NYPS 2.0, to expand the reach, inclusivity and participation of the Youth Parliament Programme across India.
- ★ The upgraded portal builds on the original NYPS, which was launched on 11 September 2024, and has shown strong nationwide engagement.
- ★ As of 27 January 2026, the scheme recorded 95,319 participants who took part in 660 Youth Parliament Sittings.
- ★ NYPS 2.0 focuses on inclusive access, particularly aiming to increase participation from remote and rural areas by removing limitations present in the earlier version of the portal.
- ★ The upgrade has expanded eligibility criteria.
- ★ Earlier, participation was limited to students from recognised educational institutions only.
- ★ Under NYPS 2.0, participation is now open to all educational institutions, organised groups, and individual citizens across India.
- ★ The upgraded portal supports multiple modes of participation.
- ★ Institution Participation allows schools, colleges and universities to organise Youth Parliament Sittings (YPSs).
- ★ These sittings are conducted under Kishore Sabha for younger students and Tarun Sabha for Undergraduate and Postgraduate students.
- ★ In addition, NYPS 2.0 enables Group Participation for citizen groups and Individual Participation, ensuring wider democratic engagement beyond formal educational settings.
- ★ Overall, NYPS 2.0 aims to deepen democratic values, parliamentary awareness and civic engagement among youth and citizens, making the Youth Parliament Programme more accessible and representative nationwide.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi Narendra Modi's Visit to Punjab

- ★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Punjab to take part in commemorative, developmental and infrastructure-related programmes.
- ★ The visit coincided with the 649th birth anniversary of Sant Guru Ravidas, a 15th-century saint, poet and social reformer, known for his teachings on equality, social justice and human dignity.
- ★ PM Narendra Modi arrived at Adampur Airport in Jalandhar, Punjab as part of his visit.
- ★ During the visit, the Prime Minister unveiled the new name of Adampur Airport as 'Shri Guru Ravidass Maharaj Ji Airport, Adampur', in honour of Sant Guru Ravidas and his lasting spiritual and social legacy.
- ★ PM Modi virtually inaugurated the new civil terminal building at Halwara Airport in Ludhiana (Punjab).
- ★ The new terminal is aimed at improving regional air connectivity for Ludhiana and nearby industrial and agricultural regions, strengthening economic activity, trade and mobility.

- ★ The Prime Minister visited Dera Sachkhand Ballan, a prominent spiritual centre of the Ravidassia community in Jalandhar, and paid tribute on the occasion of Guru Ravidas Jayanti.

Government of India Withdraws 18% Central Excise Duty on Unmanufactured Tobacco

- ★ The Government of India (GoI) withdrew the 18% Central Excise Duty on unmanufactured tobacco or tobacco refuse.
- ★ The withdrawal applies to unmanufactured tobacco cleared without a brand name and not packed for retail sale.
- ★ The decision is effective from 1 February 2026.
- ★ Earlier, all unmanufactured tobacco cleared from factories or warehouses was subject to 18% excise duty.
- ★ Under the new amendment, unbranded and non-retail packed unmanufactured tobacco will now attract nil excise duty.
- ★ The move provides major relief to tobacco farmers, small suppliers and businesses, especially those operating in the unorganised sector.
- ★ Other forms of unmanufactured tobacco that are branded or packaged for retail sale will continue to attract 18% Central Excise Duty.
- ★ The government has also clarified that excise duty on cigarettes remains unchanged, irrespective of stick length.

Alwar Becomes First District in India to Attain Complete Insurance Coverage

- ★ Alwar district in Rajasthan became the first district in India to achieve 100% insurance coverage under the “Insurance for All by 2047”
- ★ The roadmap aligns with the vision of a ‘Secure India–Insured India’ at the grassroots level.
- ★ The initiative is a joint effort of the Government of India (GoI) and the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI), a statutory body under the Ministry of Finance.
- ★ 1,367 previously uninsured people aged over 10 were brought under coverage through systematic door-to-door surveys, achieving full saturation in the district.
- ★ Nine villages have been formally declared fully insured: Bhulla Ka Bas, Bichpuri, Palankheda, Antapada, Hanumanta, Kalyanpura, Morodkhurd, Kodalka, and Lalpur.
- ★ The insurance policies were formally handed over to beneficiaries in a programme chaired by Additional District Collector Bina Mahawar.
- ★ Premiums for all eligible adults in these villages were funded by a Non-Government Organization (NGO), ensuring coverage without financial burden.
- ★ The insurance policies were issued by United India Insurance Company Limited (UIIC).

NCDC Implements Yuva Sahakar Scheme and Swayamshakti Sahakar Yojana

- ★ The National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) is implementing Yuva Sahakar Scheme and Swayamshakti Sahakar Yojana to promote innovation, inclusivity, youth entrepreneurship, and women empowerment in India’s co-operative sector.

- ★ Both schemes are fully funded by NCDC, a statutory body under the Ministry of Cooperation, and align with the Government of India's vision of co-operative-led grassroots development and employment generation.
- ★ NCDC provides financial assistance, institutional support, and capacity building to co-operatives across sectors such as agriculture, dairy, fisheries, handloom, cottage industries, and services, strengthening their economic viability.
- ★ Yuva Sahakar Scheme aims to encourage newly formed and youth-led co-operative societies by supporting innovative and start-up-oriented ideas.
 - It focuses on co-operatives facing initial capital constraints.
 - It provides financial assistance to help youth-driven co-operatives scale up and become economically self-reliant.
- ★ Swayamshakti Sahakar Yojana focuses on financial inclusion and livelihood generation, especially for women and economically weaker sections.
 - It supports women Self Help Groups (SHGs) through access to affordable bank credit.
 - It promotes collective income-generating activities and women-led co-operative enterprises.
 - It aims to enhance women's participation in the economy and decision-making in co-operatives.
- ★ Both schemes address key priorities such as youth employment, women empowerment, and strengthening co-operative-based economic models through collective ownership and sustainable growth.

Kerala Becomes First State to Announce Elderly Budget for FY27

- ★ Kerala has become the first Indian state to announce a dedicated Elderly Budget in its Financial Year 2026–27 (FY27) State Budget, drawing national attention to ageing-related policy challenges.
- ★ The Elderly Budget was announced by Kerala Finance Minister K.N. Balagopal as part of the FY27 Budget, making it the first-ever separate budget statement for senior citizens in India.
- ★ An Elderly Budget is a policy tool that consolidates all government expenditure related to senior citizens into a single statement, including pensions, healthcare, social security, and welfare schemes.
- ★ While it does not necessarily imply additional spending, it improves transparency, helps assess the fiscal impact of an ageing population, and supports long-term planning, a practice increasingly used by countries undergoing demographic transition.
- ★ The total allocation under Kerala's Elderly Budget is ₹46,236.52 crore, which accounts for 19.07% of the state's total Budget size.
- ★ A major feature of the allocation is that nearly 68% of the total amount is spent on pensions for retired government employees.
- ★ These pension payments are statutory obligations and would have been incurred even without a separate Elderly Budget, leading to debate over whether the move introduces new welfare measures or largely repackages existing expenditure.
- ★ The Kerala Government has clarified that presenting elderly-related spending separately helps citizens and policymakers clearly understand the scale of expenditure on the ageing population.

Amit Shah Launches Bharat Taxi, India's First Cooperative-Based Ride-Hailing Platform

- ★ Union Minister of Home Affairs and Cooperation Amit Shah launched Bharat Taxi, India's first co-operative-based ride-hailing platform, at Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi.
- ★ The initiative is aligned with the Government of India's vision of "Sahkar se Samridhhi", which focuses on prosperity through co-operation, and aims to strengthen the co-operative sector while promoting inclusive and citizen-centric mobility solutions.
- ★ Bharat Taxi was conceptualised by the Ministry of Cooperation to address issues faced by drivers on aggregator-based platforms such as high commissions, surge pricing pressure, and lack of social security.
- ★ Bharat Taxi is registered under the Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act, 2002 and was formally established on 6 June 2025.
- ★ It is designed as an indigenous, driver-owned and driver-centric alternative to foreign investment-based ride-hailing platforms, focusing on fairness, transparency, and shared prosperity.
- ★ A key feature is its zero-commission and surge-free pricing model, where drivers, known as Sarathis, do not pay commission per ride, and profits are directly distributed to drivers.
- ★ The platform follows the principle "Sarathi Hi Malik", placing drivers at the centre of ownership, operations, and value creation, while allowing them the freedom to work on other platforms without exclusivity restrictions.
- ★ During the launch, the top six performing Sarathis were honoured and given share certificates, reinforcing their ownership rights.
- ★ Each honoured Sarathi received ₹5 lakh personal accident insurance and ₹5 lakh family health insurance.
- ★ Nine Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) were exchanged with public and private stakeholders to enhance digital integration, safety, service delivery, and operational efficiency.
- ★ Bharat Taxi provides strong social security and welfare measures, including health insurance, accident insurance, retirement savings support, and dedicated driver support systems.

Airbus Inaugurates CoE for Aerospace Studies at Gati Shakti Vishwavidyalaya

- ★ Airbus inaugurated a Centre of Excellence (CoE) for aerospace studies at Gati Shakti Vishwavidyalaya (GSV), Vadodara, Gujarat.
- ★ GSV is India's industry-driven Central University dedicated to the transportation and logistics sector.
- ★ The CoE marks a major milestone in the long-term collaboration between Airbus and GSV to strengthen India's aerospace ecosystem.
- ★ The Centre will focus on research, innovation, and talent development in the aerospace sector.
- ★ A key focus area of the CoE is Research and Development on Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF).
- ★ The Centre will also support student-led innovations in future aerospace technologies.
- ★ The CoE was announced in 2024 and inaugurated by Jürgen Westermeier, President and Managing Director, Airbus India and South Asia.

- ★ Airbus highlighted its commitment to cutting-edge technologies, including converting Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) into Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF).
- ★ The initiative aligns with the Government of India's Aatmanirbhar Bharat vision.
- ★ Airbus-GSV collaboration aims to empower students with industry-relevant skills and support India's future aviation ecosystem.
- ★ Under the partnership, 45 meritorious and underprivileged students are supported through a full scholarship programme.
- ★ One-third of the scholarships are reserved for women.
- ★ Airbus has also established an Airbus Chair Professorship for Aerospace Studies at GSV.
- ★ The Chair supports undergraduate, postgraduate, and short-term executive programmes.
- ★ A Joint Study Agreement (JSA) has been signed to promote high-impact research.

PLASTINDIA 2026 to be Held at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi

- ★ PLASTINDIA 2026, one of the world's largest plastics exhibitions, will be held from 5 February to 10 February 2026 at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi.
- ★ The six-day global exhibition will bring together industry leaders, policymakers, innovators, start-ups, and international exhibitors on a single platform.
- ★ PLASTINDIA 2026 highlights India's growing role in global manufacturing, sustainability, and innovation, especially in the plastics sector, a key contributor to the national economy.
- ★ PLASTINDIA is a globally recognised exhibition showcasing advancements in plastics processing, machinery, raw materials, and sustainable solutions.
- ★ The 2026 edition is organised with support from the Department of Chemicals and Petrochemicals, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, and Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises.
- ★ Over the years, PLASTINDIA has served as a major global meeting point for manufacturers, suppliers, and buyers, helping Indian industries connect with international markets and advanced technologies.
- ★ The theme of PLASTINDIA 2026 is "Bharat Next".
- ★ The theme aligns with the national vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat and Viksit Bharat, as envisaged by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- ★ The exhibition focuses on manufacturing-led growth, export promotion, and employment generation, built around the four pillars of Men, Material, Machine, and Markets.
- ★ The vision of PLASTINDIA 2026 also revolves around five strategic elements: Trade, Technology, Talent, Tradition, and Tourism.

NITI Aayog Drafts Blueprint to Make Andhra Pradesh a Clean Energy Hub by 2035

- ★ NITI Aayog released a draft clean energy blueprint to transform Andhra Pradesh into a major renewable energy hub by 2035.
- ★ The draft plan was presented by BVR Subrahmanyam, Chief Executive Officer, NITI Aayog, to the Andhra Pradesh Government in Vijayawada.

- ★ The blueprint focuses on clean power generation, energy storage, grid modernisation, and affordable electricity, under the ASSET (Accelerating Sustainable State Energy Transition) platform.
- ★ The plan proposes massive investments of around ₹7.5 lakh crore to support Andhra Pradesh's clean energy transition.
- ★ Of this, ₹3.3–₹3.4 lakh crore is earmarked for domestic energy transition, while ₹4–₹4.2 lakh crore is planned to develop Andhra Pradesh as a renewable energy export hub.
- ★ Nearly 90% of the total investment is expected from private sector players, highlighting strong private participation.
- ★ The investment push is expected to generate 5–6 lakh new jobs, significantly boosting the State's economy.
- ★ Currently, about 47% of Andhra Pradesh's power generation comes from renewable sources.
- ★ By 2035, the State aims to add 35 gigawatt solar power, 12 gigawatt wind power, and 55–60 gigawatt hour energy storage for domestic consumption.
- ★ For national-level renewable energy exports, targets include 30 gigawatt solar, 25–30 gigawatt wind, and 10–12 gigawatt pumped storage capacity.
- ★ A major highlight of the blueprint is the promise of low-cost electricity.
- ★ Power purchase costs are estimated at ₹3.90–₹4 per unit, while overall supply costs are expected to remain below ₹6 per unit.
- ★ Lower power costs are expected to benefit households, farmers, and industries, improve farm incomes, enhance industrial competitiveness, and reduce subsidy burdens on the State Government.

Nationwide 'Self-Reliance in Pulses Mission' Launched from Madhya Pradesh

- ★ The Self-Reliance in Pulses Mission was launched at the Food Legumes Research Centre (FLRP), Amlaha, with the goal of making India self-reliant in pulses production.
- ★ The programme was chaired by Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan as the Chief Guest.
- ★ The primary objective of the mission is to end India's dependence on pulse imports and transform the country into a pulse exporter by improving production, productivity, processing, and value addition.
- ★ It focuses on creating a complete value chain from seed to market, including seed reforms, cluster development, and measures to ensure fair prices for farmers.
- ★ Under the cluster-based model, the government plans to establish 1,000 pulse mills across India to strengthen processing capacity.
- ★ Financial support will be provided through subsidies of up to ₹25 lakh per unit, along with incentives for cluster-based production, particularly benefiting farmers in Madhya Pradesh.
- ★ As part of seed distribution reforms, the mission will ensure state-level seed release and distribution.
- ★ Farmers will receive improved seed kits and financial assistance of ₹10,000 per hectare to adopt better production practices.

- ★ Overall, the mission holds significant importance in promoting import substitution, enhancing farmer income, and ensuring nutrition security.

V.O. Chidambaranar Port in Thoothukudi Becomes First Indian Port to Install Advanced 'Anti-Drone System'

- ★ V. O. Chidambaranar (VOC) Port in Thoothukudi, Tamil Nadu becomes the first port in India to initiate installation of an advanced 'Anti-Drone System', enhancing protection of critical port infrastructure.
- ★ This initiative represents a major step in strengthening maritime and coastal security.
- ★ The project aims to bolster airspace surveillance, ensure adherence to emerging coastal defence norms, and enhance emergency response preparedness at the port.
- ★ The agreement for the project was signed by A.Ganesan, Chief Mechanical Engineer, VOC Port Authority (VOCPA), and Anurag Agarwal of Central Electronics Limited (CEL).
- ★ The project is expected to be completed within 3 months.
- ★ The system involves deployment of a comprehensive, integrated Radio Frequency (RF) and radar-based drone detection and jamming system, specifically designed for complex port environments.
- ★ The advanced 'Anti-Drone System' provides 360-degree coverage, omnidirectional bearing, with an effective range of up to 5 kilometers (km).

Himachal Pradesh Launches 'Padhai with AI' Initiative

- ★ Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu launched 'Padhai with AI' at Barthin in Bilaspur district, Himachal Pradesh.
- ★ The initiative focuses on integrating Artificial Intelligence into public education, especially for competitive and government exam aspirants.
- ★ 'Padhai with AI' is a district-level digital education programme developed for students of Bilaspur district.
- ★ The platform uses AI-based tools to provide structured learning content, exam-oriented material, and personalised academic support.
- ★ The programme aims to bridge learning gaps for students who lack access to quality coaching, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas.
- ★ The initiative ensures equal access to education, allowing students to learn anytime and anywhere through a fully digital ecosystem.
- ★ Continuous academic counselling is a key feature, helping students improve subject understanding and adopt effective preparation strategies.
- ★ The platform reduces dependence on expensive private coaching institutes, promoting inclusive education.
- ★ The programme has been implemented by the Bilaspur district administration with institutional support from NTPC.
- ★ Deputy Commissioner Rahul Kumar stated that the initiative brings technology-driven education facilities directly to students.

- ★ The launch event was attended by Rajesh Dharmani and senior officials, highlighting collaboration between the State Government, district administration, and public sector organisations.
- ★ The initiative reflects the State Government's commitment to modernising public education through innovation, technology, and inclusivity.
- ★ The use of Artificial Intelligence in education enables personalised learning, adaptive content delivery, performance tracking, and data-driven guidance.
- ★ 'Padhai with AI' strengthens AI-led education delivery and supports outcome-oriented, inclusive learning aligned with future workforce needs.

World's First Doctor-Led AI-Powered Home Healthcare Ecosystem 'iLive Connect' Launched

- ★ India launched 'iLive Connect', the world's first doctor-led, Artificial Intelligence-powered home healthcare ecosystem.
- ★ The initiative is aimed at providing round-the-clock medical monitoring from patients' homes, with a special focus on senior citizens and high-risk patients.
- ★ iLive Connect has been developed by cardiothoracic surgeon Dr Rahul Chandola and interventional cardiologist Dr Viveka Kumar.
- ★ The system is designed to function as a personalised Intensive Care Unit-like care system at home.
- ★ It uses Food and Drug Administration-certified and European Conformity-certified wearable medical devices.
- ★ The wearable devices include a chest-mounted biosensor patch and a wristband for continuous real-time monitoring.
- ★ The ecosystem tracks multiple vital health parameters such as two-lead Electrocardiogram, heart rate, respiratory rate, oxygen saturation, body temperature, blood pressure trends, physical activity, and heart rate variability.
- ★ All collected health data is securely transmitted to a cloud-based platform.
- ★ The data is monitored round the clock by specialist doctors operating from a central medical command centre.
- ★ The launch of iLive Connect marks a major step in technology-driven healthcare delivery, strengthening home-based medical care and reducing dependence on hospital-based monitoring.

India Named Country of the Year at BIOFACH 2026

- ★ India has been designated Country of the Year at BIOFACH 2026, the world's largest and most influential organic trade fair, to be held from 10–13 February 2026 in Nuremberg, Germany.
- ★ The recognition highlights India's leadership in global organic agriculture and its growing role as a reliable supplier of certified organic products.
- ★ BIOFACH Germany is a premier global platform exclusively focused on organic food and agriculture, bringing together buyers, policymakers, certification agencies, and producers from across the world.

- ★ Being named Country of the Year provides India global visibility, strategic market access, and influence in sustainability and traceability discussions.
- ★ India's participation is led by APEDA (Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority) under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- ★ APEDA has participated in BIOFACH for over a decade, but BIOFACH 2026 marks India's largest-ever presence, reflecting rapid growth in organic exports.
- ★ The India Country Pavilion spans 1,074 square metres, making it one of the largest national pavilions at BIOFACH 2026.
- ★ It will host 67 co-exhibitors, including organic exporters, Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs), co-operatives, organic laboratories, State Government bodies, and commodity boards.
- ★ India will showcase a wide range of organic agricultural and value-added products, including organic rice, oilseeds, pulses, herbs, spices, cashew, ginger, turmeric, large cardamom, cinnamon, mango pulp, and essential oils.
- ★ The display reflects India's strength across the entire organic value chain, from farm produce to processed foods.

BHASHINI Migrated to Sovereign AI Cloud on Yotta Infrastructure

- ★ Yotta Data Services, India's leading sovereign cloud infrastructure and platform services provider, successfully deployed BHASHINI's end-to-end sovereign Artificial Intelligence cloud transformation.
- ★ The deployment was carried out on Yotta's Government Community Cloud and Shakti Cloud.
- ★ With this migration, BHASHINI now operates entirely on Indian cloud and Graphics Processing Unit infrastructure, ensuring that language datasets, Artificial Intelligence models, and citizen interactions remain within India's jurisdiction.
- ★ The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology stated that the deployment is aligned with the objectives of the IndiaAI Mission.
- ★ It represents a major step towards building self-reliant, secure, and scalable Artificial Intelligence capabilities in India.
- ★ The development was showcased at The India Artificial Intelligence Sovereignty Dialogues, an official Pre-Summit Event of the Artificial Intelligence Impact Summit 2026.

Dr. Jitendra Singh Launches First Technology Development Board Open Call under RDI Fund of ANRF

- ★ Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science and Technology and Earth Sciences, and Minister of State for Prime Minister's Office, Personnel, Public Grievances, Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, Dr. Jitendra Singh, launched the first Open Call of the Technology Development Board (TDB).
- ★ The Open Call is launched under the Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) Fund of the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF).
- ★ The objective is to strengthen India's innovation ecosystem by supporting the commercialisation of indigenous technologies through structured, long-term financing.

- ★ The initiative marks a departure from conventional government funding models, as it provides direct government-backed financial support to private sector innovation, beyond philanthropy or Corporate Social Responsibility-led funding.
- ★ The RDI Fund aims to enable private enterprises to scale technologies in sectors that were earlier largely confined to the public domain.
- ★ Opening of strategic sectors such as space and nuclear energy for private participation has influenced the design of the fund.
- ★ The fund provides long-term, affordable financing with equity-linked options to share risk, while ensuring accountability and responsible commercialisation.
- ★ The total corpus of the RDI Fund is ₹1 lakh crore.
- ★ Financing is offered at concessional interest rates of around 2–4 per cent.
- ★ The fund provides long tenures of up to 15 years, including moratorium provisions.

NSSTA Celebrates 18th Foundation Day with Focus on Viksit Bharat@2047

- ★ National Statistical Systems Training Academy (NSSTA), under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), celebrated its 18th Foundation Day at Mahalanobis Auditorium, Knowledge Park-II, Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh.
- ★ Theme: “Reimagining Capacity Building for Official Statistics to Achieve Vision of Viksit Bharat@2047”.
- ★ NSSTA functions as a premier Central Training Institute for strengthening India’s official statistical system through skill development, ethics, and technological advancement.
- ★ Dr. Saurabh Garg, Secretary, MoSPI, described data as the “fifth factor of production”, alongside land, labour, capital, and technology.
- ★ Key reforms highlighted:
 - Restructuring of Indian Statistical Service (ISS)
 - Deployment of ISS Officers across 60 ministries
 - Focus on district-level granular data dissemination
- ★ The Union Minister inaugurated the Digital Data Lab to promote digital skilling, AI-enabled statistical systems, and Mission Karmayogi strengthening.
- ★ Mr. Stefan Priesner, UN Resident Coordinator, termed statistics as the “grammar of development”, crucial for achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 and India’s Vision 2047.
- ★ Journals “AAROHAN” and “PRATIBIMB” were released by ISS probationers.
- ★ A panel discussion was held on “Communicating Statistics to Policymakers and the Public”.
- ★ Certificates were awarded to top performers in iGOT Karmayogi courses.
- ★ The event reaffirmed NSSTA’s commitment to data-driven governance, AI integration, advanced analytics, and building a future-ready statistical workforce aligned with Viksit Bharat@2047 vision.

First Meeting of BRICS Sherpas and Sous Sherpas Held in New Delhi

- ★ The first meeting of BRICS Sherpas and Sous Sherpas under India's Chairship 2026 was held in New Delhi.
- ★ The meeting was chaired by Sudhakar Dalela, Secretary (Economic Relations) and India's BRICS Sherpa, supported by Mr. Shambhu L. Hakki, Joint Secretary (Multilateral Economic Relations) and India's BRICS Sous Sherpa.
- ★ BRICS Sherpas and senior officials from Brazil, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and United Arab Emirates participated in the meeting.
- ★ The BRICS Sherpas and Country Representatives jointly called on the External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar on 10 February 2026.
- ★ India presented its Chairship priorities under the theme "Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability".
- ★ Various Ministries and Departments of the Government of India presented priorities and proposed activities across multiple BRICS thematic areas.
- ★ Key areas of co-operation included health, agriculture, labour and employment, disaster risk reduction, environment, climate change, energy, innovation, Information and Communication Technology, security and counter-terrorism, and economic and financial domains.
- ★ A productive exchange of views was held on the institutional development of the BRICS grouping.
- ★ Under India's people-centric Chairship approach, presentations were made on co-operation in sports, youth connect, cultural engagements, BRICS Academic Forum, BRICS Think Tank Council, BRICS Civil Forum, BRICS Business Council and BRICS Women's Business Alliance.
- ★ Representatives of BRICS Partner countries participated in the opening session of the meeting.
- ★ BRICS Members and Partner countries appreciated India's theme and priorities, noting that they build upon co-operative activities undertaken during previous Chairships.

Union Budget Sanctions National Large Solar Telescope and National Large Optical-Near Infrared Telescope

- ★ In the Union Budget, the Government sanctioned the establishment of two major telescopes: National Large Solar Telescope (NLST) and National Large Optical-Near Infrared Telescope (NLOT).
- ★ The initiative aims to strengthen India's capabilities in solar studies, space weather research, and deep space exploration.
- ★ The National Large Solar Telescope (NLST) is a 2-metre aperture solar telescope coming up in the Merak region near Pangong Tso Lake (Ladakh).
- ★ It will operate in the visible and near-infrared wavelengths of the electromagnetic spectrum.
- ★ The National Large Optical-Near Infrared Telescope (NLOT) will be a 13.7-metre aperture segmented-mirror telescope to be built in Hanle (Ladakh).
- ★ It will consist of 90 smaller hexagonal mirror segments, functioning together as one large primary mirror.

- ★ The telescope will operate in the optical and near-infrared wavelengths of the electromagnetic spectrum.
- ★ It will be among the world's largest telescopes in the optical-infrared category.

Delhi Approves Chief Minister Skill Development Scheme

- ★ The Delhi Government approved the Chief Minister Skill Development Scheme to support artisans associated with khadi, handloom, and cottage industries.
- ★ Chief Minister Rekha Gupta announced the initiative, emphasizing the need to connect traditional artisans with modern and global markets.
- ★ The scheme will be implemented through the Delhi Khadi and Village Industries Board (DKVIB).
- ★ In the first phase during 2025–26, around 3,728 artisans will receive training with an approved budget of ₹8.9 crore.
- ★ For 2026–27, the government is expected to allocate ₹57.5 crore to expand the programme.
- ★ Each beneficiary will undergo 12 days of structured training, including a 2-day Entrepreneurship Development Programme (EDP).
- ★ Training will be conducted in batches of 35–45 participants to ensure focused guidance.
- ★ Beneficiaries will receive a stipend of ₹4,800 (₹400 per day) along with ₹100 per day for meals.
- ★ After completion, artisans will be provided with essential toolkits, including foot-operated sewing machines where required.
- ★ A major component of the scheme is digital onboarding of artisans.
- ★ Each artisan will receive an e-catalogue with product photographs and profile details.
- ★ Products will be listed on the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC), enabling access to national and international markets.
- ★ The initiative aims to remove middlemen, improve profit margins, and enhance market visibility for artisans.
- ★ The scheme aligns with the objectives of the Union Budget 2026–27, which emphasized branding, quality improvement, and global market linkage for artisans.
- ★ The initiative also reflects the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi under Viksit Bharat, highlighting skill development as central to nation-building.
- ★ Khadi and village industries generate employment for millions, particularly women and marginalized communities.
- ★ At the national level, the sector is supported by the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC), while state-level implementation is handled by bodies such as Delhi Khadi and Village Industries Board (DKVIB).
- ★ The scheme aims to promote economic inclusion, employment generation, digital empowerment, and preservation of traditional crafts.

Kerala Launches Sthree Suraksha Scheme

- ★ Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan launched the Sthree Suraksha Scheme at Malayinkeezhu, Thiruvananthapuram.
- ★ The scheme provides a ₹1,000 monthly pension to economically backward women and transwomen.
- ★ The pension was credited to 10,18,042 beneficiaries in the first phase after verification and approval of applications.
- ★ The scheme covers women and transwomen in the 35–60 years age group.
- ★ It is applicable to those not receiving benefits under any other social welfare pension programme.
- ★ The financial assistance is transferred directly to beneficiaries' bank accounts through the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) mechanism.
- ★ The primary objective is to ensure economic independence, dignity, and gender justice, particularly for unemployed and financially vulnerable women.
- ★ The government described the scheme as a major step towards building a women-friendly Kerala.
- ★ The initiative is part of broader welfare measures targeting working-class and economically vulnerable sections.
- ★ The Chief Minister highlighted that Kerala was the first State in India to introduce Gender Budgeting, under which departments allocate specific funds for women-centric projects.

India to Establish First National Cow Culture Museum in Mathura

- ★ India will establish its first-ever National Cow Culture Museum in Mathura, Uttar Pradesh.
- ★ The museum will be developed within the campus of Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya Veterinary Science University.
- ★ The initiative aims to present a comprehensive understanding of cattle by blending cultural heritage with scientific awareness.
- ★ The project moves beyond religious symbolism to highlight the role of cattle in agriculture, economy and sustainability.
- ★ Objectives of the Museum:
 - To showcase the cultural importance of cattle in Indian society.
 - To highlight the economic role of bovines in rural livelihoods.
 - To promote scientific awareness about cattle conservation.
 - To encourage sustainable agricultural practices.
- ★ The museum will present both spiritual and practical dimensions of cattle.
- ★ Mathura, located in the Braj region, holds strong traditional associations with cattle.
- ★ The project is being implemented under the direction of the Government of Uttar Pradesh.
- ★ It aims to strengthen the cultural identity of the Braj region while promoting scientific knowledge.

President Droupadi Murmu Inaugurates Centenary Celebrations of Ol Chiki Script

- ★ President Droupadi Murmu inaugurated the centenary celebrations of the Ol Chiki script in New Delhi.
- ★ The event was organised by the Ministry of Culture to mark 100 years (1925–2025) of the Ol Chiki script.
- ★ The Ol Chiki script was invented in 1925 by Pandit Raghunath Murmu for the Santhali language.
- ★ The Ol Chiki script was developed to provide a standard writing system for the Santhali language.
- ★ Earlier, Santhali was written using Roman, Devanagari, Oriya and Bengali scripts, which did not accurately represent its pronunciation.
- ★ The invention of Ol Chiki ensured accurate phonetic representation of the Santhali language.
- ★ Over the last century, the script has strengthened Santal cultural identity and language preservation.
- ★ Members of the Santal community in Nepal, Bhutan and Mauritius also benefited from a unified script system.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi Inaugurates India AI Impact Expo 2026

- ★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the India AI Impact Expo 2026 at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi.
- ★ The Expo showcases India's leadership in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and commitment to responsible and inclusive innovation.
- ★ The Prime Minister described the event as a convergence of ideas, innovation and intent.
- ★ The Expo highlights India's AI talent and its vision to shape Artificial Intelligence for global good.
- ★ The event brought together policymakers, startups, researchers and global technology leaders.
- ★ AI solutions developed in India are expected to contribute to global technological advancement.
- ★ The initiative aligns with the vision of Digital India, which leverages technology to improve governance, healthcare, education, agriculture and financial inclusion.
- ★ Hosting the Expo positions India as a responsible Artificial Intelligence innovator in the global technology ecosystem.
- ★ Artificial Intelligence refers to machines performing tasks that normally require human intelligence such as learning, reasoning and decision-making.
- ★ India has expanded its AI ecosystem through government initiatives, startup growth and research institutions.
- ★ National Artificial Intelligence strategies aim to integrate AI into governance, healthcare, agriculture and education while ensuring ethical and safe usage.
- ★ With a strong Information Technology workforce and innovation-driven policies, India is emerging as a global Artificial Intelligence hub.

Union Health Minister Launches SAHI and BODH

- ★ Union Health Minister Jagat Prakash Nadda will launch SAHI and BODH at the India Artificial Intelligence Summit 2026 held at Bharat Mandapam.
- ★ The initiatives aim to strengthen Artificial Intelligence adoption in India's healthcare sector and build a safe, ethical and globally competitive Health Artificial Intelligence ecosystem.
- ★ The launch aligns with India's broader digital health vision under the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission.
- ★ SAHI (Strategy for Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare for India) is a national guidance framework for responsible Artificial Intelligence adoption in healthcare.
- ★ SAHI focuses on:
 - Governance and data stewardship
 - Ethical and evidence-based Artificial Intelligence deployment
 - Monitoring and validation mechanisms
 - Alignment with public health priorities
 - Support to States and health institutions for safe implementation
- ★ SAHI aims to ensure safe, inclusive and transparent Artificial Intelligence integration while protecting patient rights and ensuring data security.
- ★ BODH (Benchmarking Open Data Platform for Health Artificial Intelligence) is a privacy-preserving digital platform for evaluating Artificial Intelligence models in healthcare.
- ★ BODH has been developed by the Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur in collaboration with the National Health Authority.
- ★ BODH enables evaluation of Artificial Intelligence models using real-world health data without sharing underlying datasets, thereby ensuring data privacy.
- ★ It functions as a Digital Public Good under the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission.
- ★ BODH promotes transparency, quality assurance and rigorous testing of Artificial Intelligence tools before deployment.
- ★ The launch of SAHI and BODH signals India's commitment to innovation-driven yet ethically governed Artificial Intelligence in healthcare.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi Inaugurates Kumar Bhaskar Varma Setu

- ★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated major infrastructure projects in Assam worth over ₹5,450 crore, aimed at boosting connectivity and strategic preparedness in the Northeast.
- ★ The projects include the Kumar Bhaskar Varma Setu over the Brahmaputra River in Guwahati and the Northeast's first Highway Emergency Landing Facility (ELF) in Dibrugarh district.
- ★ Kumar Bhaskar Varma Setu is a 2.86 km-long, six-lane extradosed Prestressed Concrete (PSC) bridge built at a cost of approximately ₹3,030 crore.
- ★ It connects Guwahati with North Guwahati and is the first extradosed bridge in Northeast India.
- ★ The bridge reduces travel time between the two sides of the city to seven minutes.
- ★ It improves access to major landmarks, including the Kamakhya Temple.

- ★ Advanced engineering features include:
 - Base isolation technology using friction pendulum bearings
 - High-performance stay cables
 - Bridge Health Monitoring System (BHMS) for real-time structural monitoring
- ★ The Northeast's first Highway Emergency Landing Facility (ELF) was inaugurated on the Moran Bypass in Dibrugarh district.
- ★ The ELF has been developed in co-ordination with the Indian Air Force (IAF) as a dual-use infrastructure for both military and civilian aircraft during emergencies.
- ★ After inauguration, Sukhoi Su-30MKI and Dassault Rafale fighter jets conducted successful take-offs and landings on the highway stretch.
- ★ The ELF is a 4.2 km-long reinforced concrete highway stretch designed to function as an emergency runway.

Cabinet Approves PM RAHAT Scheme

- ★ The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved the launch of PM RAHAT (Road Accident Victim Hospitalization and Assured Treatment).
- ★ The scheme ensures that no road accident victim is denied life-saving treatment due to lack of money.
- ★ Under PM RAHAT, eligible victims will receive cashless treatment up to ₹1.5 lakh per person.
- ★ Coverage is available for 7 days from the date of accident.
- ★ The scheme strengthens India's emergency healthcare system and promotes timely trauma care.
- ★ India records a high number of road accident fatalities annually, and nearly 50% of deaths can be prevented if treatment is provided within the Golden Hour.
- ★ The scheme ensures:
 - Immediate hospital admission
 - Financial certainty for hospitals
 - Structured emergency co-ordination
 - Protection for vulnerable citizens
- ★ Key features of PM RAHAT:
 - ₹1.5 lakh cashless treatment per victim
 - Coverage for 7 days
 - Stabilization treatment up to 24 hours (non-life-threatening cases)
 - Stabilization treatment up to 48 hours (life-threatening cases)
 - Police authentication through digital system
 - Applicable on any category of road
- ★ The scheme is integrated with the Emergency Response Support System (ERSS) 112 helpline, allowing victims, Good Samaritans (Rah-Veer), or bystanders to dial 112 for ambulance support and nearest designated hospital details.

National Green Tribunal Clears Great Nicobar Project Worth Rupees 81,000 Crore

- ★ The National Green Tribunal has approved the Rupees 81,000 crore Great Nicobar Project, cited its strategic importance while imposed strict environmental safeguards.
- ★ The six-member bench headed by Justice Prakash Shrivastava upheld the Environmental Clearance granted in November 2022 and directed strict compliance with all conditions.
- ★ The National Green Tribunal upheld the Environmental Clearance granted in November 2022 and found no valid ground to interfere.
- ★ The tribunal stated that national interest and strategic requirements must be balanced with environmental protection.
- ★ The project will proceed under strict monitoring and legally binding environmental conditions.
- ★ The Great Nicobar Project was conceived by NITI Aayog in 2021 under Maritime Vision 2030 and Amrit Kaal Vision 2047.
- ★ It includes an International Container Transshipment Terminal, a greenfield international airport, township development and a 450 megavolt ampere gas and solar based power plant.
- ★ The project aims to reduce India's dependence on foreign transshipment hubs and strengthen its position in global maritime trade.
- ★ The island's proximity to the Malacca Strait enhances India's Indo-Pacific maritime security and strategic presence.
- ★ Environmental safeguards mandate protection and scientific translocation of over 16,000 coral colonies and prevention of shoreline erosion.
- ★ Protection measures are required for endangered species such as the Leatherback turtle, Nicobar megapode, saltwater crocodile, robber crab and Nicobar macaque.
- ★ Concerns remain regarding deforestation, seismic vulnerability and the rights of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups such as the Shompen and Nicobarese communities.
- ★ The project area includes ecologically sensitive zones such as Campbell Bay National Park, Galathea Bay National Park and the Great Nicobar Biosphere Reserve, which is recognised under the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Man and Biosphere Programme.
- ★ Great Nicobar Island is separated from the Andaman group by the Ten Degree Channel, and Indira Point, India's southernmost point, is located here.

Losar Festival 2026 Celebrated in McLeod Ganj, Himachal Pradesh

- ★ The Losar Festival 2026, marking the Tibetan New Year, is being celebrated from 18 to 20 February in McLeod Ganj, Himachal Pradesh.
- ★ The festival marks the beginning of the Fire Horse Year as per the Tibetan lunar calendar.
- ★ The presence of Tibetan spiritual leader Dalai Lama has added spiritual significance to the celebrations.
- ★ Losar Festival 2026 is being observed from 18 to 20 February in McLeod Ganj, the headquarters of the Tibetan exile community in India.

- ★ The festival marks the beginning of the Fire Horse Year, which occurs once in 60 years in the Tibetan zodiac cycle.
- ★ In Tibetan astrology, the Fire Horse symbolizes strength, energy, passion and transformation.
- ★ Monasteries are conducting special prayer sessions, and devotees are offering prayers for peace, prosperity and freedom for Tibet.
- ★ Families are cleaning homes, decorating monasteries and preparing khapse, a traditional deep-fried Tibetan sweet dish.
- ★ Devotees are praying for the long life of the Dalai Lama and global peace.
- ★ Cultural programmes, traditional attire and community gatherings are being organised across McLeod Ganj.
- ★ Losar is celebrated by Tibetan and Himalayan Buddhist communities in India, Nepal, Bhutan and Tibet, usually falling in February or March based on the lunar calendar.
- ★ In India, major celebrations take place in Himachal Pradesh, Ladakh and Sikkim.
- ★ The festival symbolises purification, renewal and the beginning of a new zodiac year.

Mumbai Climate Week 2026 Inaugurated in Maharashtra

- ★ Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis inaugurated the first Mumbai Climate Week at the Jio World Convention Centre in Bandra, Mumbai.
- ★ The three-day global conclave aims to promote actionable climate solutions, renewable energy expansion and sustainable transition strategies, particularly for the Global South.
- ★ The event is organised by Project Mumbai in partnership with the Government of Maharashtra and supported by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation.
- ★ The first edition of Mumbai Climate Week is a three-day event concluding on 19 February 2026.
- ★ The core theme focuses on practical and actionable climate solutions with emphasis on urban resilience and renewable energy expansion.
- ★ Special attention is given to climate challenges faced by the Global South.
- ★ Union Minister Prahlad Joshi announced the installation of one lakh additional solar pumps in Maharashtra under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan Scheme to strengthen agricultural energy security.
- ★ The inauguration was attended by dignitaries including Pankaja Munde, Ritu Tawde and Sanjay Mukherjee.
- ★ The event extends beyond the convention centre to include community-based and campus-level climate engagement activities across Mumbai.

India Creates Guinness World Record for Responsible Artificial Intelligence Pledges

- ★ India created a Guinness World Record by collecting 2,50,946 valid pledges for responsible Artificial Intelligence use within 24 hours.
- ★ The achievement was announced by Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw during the India Artificial Intelligence Impact Summit 2026 held at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi.

- ★ The pledges were recorded between February 16 and February 17, 2026, and officially verified by a Guinness World Records adjudicator at the venue.
- ★ India secured the Guinness World Record for Most pledges received for an Artificial Intelligence responsibility campaign in 24 hours.
- ★ A total of 2,50,946 valid pledges were recorded, significantly exceeding the initial target of 5,000 pledges.
- ★ The campaign was launched under the India Artificial Intelligence Mission in collaboration with Intel India.
- ★ Participants pledged commitment towards ethical, inclusive and responsible use of Artificial Intelligence through an online platform.
- ★ The pledge campaign included awareness on data privacy, transparency, accountability and combating misinformation.
- ★ Citizens completing the pledge received a digital certificate and access to Artificial Intelligence learning resources.
- ★ More than 5 lakh students and educational institutions actively participated, making it a major youth driven initiative.
- ★ The achievement highlights India's emphasis on responsible Artificial Intelligence governance, public awareness and ethical technology adoption.

India France Launch Indo French Centre for Artificial Intelligence in Health

- ★ India and France jointly inaugurated the Indo French Centre for Artificial Intelligence in Health at All India Institute of Medical Sciences New Delhi during the Rencontres Universitaires Et Scientifiques De Haut Niveau 2026 meetings
- ★ The centre was launched by Union Health Minister Jagat Prakash Nadda and President of France Emmanuel Macron, marking a major step in Artificial Intelligence powered healthcare collaboration between the two nations.
- ★ The Indo French Centre for Artificial Intelligence in Health will function as a specialised hub for interdisciplinary research in Artificial Intelligence and healthcare.
- ★ Core focus areas include Artificial Intelligence in healthcare, brain health and neuroscience, clinical decision support systems, global healthcare innovation and responsible use of health data.
- ★ The centre has been established under a Joint Memorandum of Understanding between All India Institute of Medical Sciences New Delhi and Indian Institute of Technology Delhi with Sorbonne University and Paris Brain Institute.
- ★ The collaboration will promote joint research programmes, academic exchange, mobility of students and faculty and knowledge sharing in Artificial Intelligence and health sciences.
- ★ The inauguration took place during the Rencontres Universitaires Et Scientifiques De Haut Niveau 2026 meetings, featuring a session on Artificial Intelligence in brain health and global healthcare.
- ★ Discussions focused on Artificial Intelligence applications in mental health, brain disorders and global health challenges involving scientists, clinicians and policymakers.

South African Cheetah Gamini Gives Birth to Three Cubs at Kuno National Park

- ★ Female cheetah Gamini, translocated from South Africa, gave birth to three cubs at Kuno National Park, Madhya Pradesh, marking the 9th successful cheetah litter at the park.
- ★ With the new births, India's cheetah population increased to 38, including 27 India-born cubs and 11 translocated adult cheetahs from Namibia and South Africa.
- ★ Earlier, Namibian cheetah Aasha gave birth to five cubs, showing increasing reproductive success under Project Cheetah.
- ★ Three adult cheetahs were also relocated to Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary, Madhya Pradesh, expanding cheetah habitat beyond Kuno National Park.
- ★ Project Cheetah was launched on 17 September 2022 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi with the release of eight Namibian cheetahs to reintroduce the species that became extinct in India in 1952.
- ★ Since the programme began, 21 cheetahs (adults and cubs) have died, highlighting the challenges of wildlife reintroduction despite recent conservation successes.
- ★ The project supports biodiversity restoration, wildlife conservation, and ecosystem balance in India's protected reserves.

Vice President Releases Tamil and Gujarati Editions of Constitution of India

- ★ Vice President C.P. Radhakrishnan released the updated Tamil and Gujarati editions of the Constitution of India along with the 8th Edition of the Legal Glossary (English–Hindi) at Uprashtrapati Bhavan.
- ★ The initiative aims to enhance constitutional awareness and linguistic inclusivity.
- ★ Release made on the occasion of International Mother Language Day (21 February).
- ★ Objective is to promote access to constitutional provisions in regional languages.
- ★ India has 22 officially recognised languages under the Eighth Schedule.
- ★ Constitution now available in multiple Indian languages including Bodo, Dogri, Santhali and Nepali.
- ★ Initiative strengthens democratic participation and inclusive governance. 8th Edition of Legal Glossary (English–Hindi) aims to simplify legal terminology.
- ★ Glossary will benefit lawmakers, judicial officers, students and researchers.
- ★ Transition reflects India's commitment to multilingual governance and cultural preservation.
- ★ Tamil recognised as one of the oldest classical languages in the world. Move enhances awareness of constitutional rights and duties at the grassroots level.

Union Finance Minister Launches NMP 2.0 Asset Monetisation Pipeline

- ★ Nirmala Sitharaman, Union Minister of Finance (MoF), launched the second phase of the National Monetisation Pipeline called National Monetisation Pipeline 2.0 (NMP 2.0) in New Delhi.

- ★ NMP 2.0 focuses on asset monetisation, which means using under-utilised or existing infrastructure assets to generate government revenue and attract fresh investments for economic development.
- ★ The pipeline was formulated by NITI Aayog in consultation with infrastructure ministries, aligned with the Asset Monetisation Plan 2025–30 announced in the Union Budget 2025–26.
- ★ The NMP 2.0 target estimates an aggregate monetisation potential of ₹16.72 lakh crore, including private sector investment of ₹5.8 lakh crore, during FY 2025–26 to FY 2029–30.
- ★ The target under NMP 2.0 is 2.6 times higher than the target under NMP 1.0.
- ★ The Finance Minister stated that NMP 1.0 achieved nearly 90% of its ₹6 lakh crore target, demonstrating successful implementation of asset monetisation reforms.
- ★ The initiative supports the vision of Viksit Bharat @2047 by promoting accelerated infrastructure development and economic growth momentum.
- ★ Asset monetisation helps in recycling productive public assets, enabling capital expenditure (CAPEX) funding while reducing budgetary pressure on the government.
- ★ The policy aims to mobilise funds for new infrastructure projects and support sustainable economic expansion through public asset value unlocking.

“Badhna Hai Toh Yahan Judna Hai” Campaign Launched

- ★ The Government of India launched a nationwide awareness campaign titled “Badhna Hai Toh Yahan Judna Hai” to expand participation in the Skill India Digital Hub (SIDH).
- ★ The campaign was launched by Union Minister of State (I/C) for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Jayant Chaudhary on the sidelines of the India AI Impact Summit 2026.
- ★ The campaign aims to accelerate progress towards Viksit Bharat by strengthening India’s digital skilling ecosystem.
- ★ Legendary actor Amitabh Bachchan has been roped in to promote awareness and boost nationwide participation in SIDH.
- ★ Skill India Digital Hub (SIDH) is India’s integrated digital platform for skilling, employment and lifelong learning.
- ★ SIDH has onboarded over 1.5 crore registered candidates, making it one of the country’s largest unified digital skilling platforms.
- ★ The platform is mobile-first and AI-enabled, offering industry-aligned and future-ready courses with personalised recommendations.
- ★ SIDH integrates multiple government skilling initiatives into a single digital ecosystem, reducing fragmentation and improving access.
- ★ Key features include LMS-enabled central learning hub, digitally verified credentials, QR-code enabled digital CVs, Aadhaar-based eKYC registration and OTP-enabled mobile access.
- ★ The platform is available in more than 21 Indian languages, ensuring inclusivity and wide accessibility.
- ★ SIDH caters to students, graduates, working professionals and aspiring entrepreneurs, supporting upskilling and reskilling needs.

- ★ The campaign will be rolled out across digital platforms, social media and QR-enabled touchpoints to enable seamless registration.
- ★ The initiative promotes the vision of “Lifelong Learning for Prosperity – for anyone, anytime, anywhere”, aligning with India’s goal of becoming a global skill capital.

Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology Launches Blockchain India Challenge

- ★ The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) launched the Blockchain India Challenge in New Delhi to promote blockchain-based digital governance solutions.
- ★ The initiative was launched by Shri S. Krishnan, Secretary, MeitY, in the presence of senior officials from MeitY and the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC).
- ★ The objective of the challenge is to encourage Indian startups to develop permissioned blockchain-based solutions for government use cases.
- ★ The focus areas of the challenge include: Regulatory control, Security and trust, Auditability, Tamper-proof records and Single source of truth across systems.
- ★ The initiative aims to enhance transparency, accountability and efficiency in public service delivery through blockchain technology.
- ★ Startups are also allowed to propose innovative blockchain solutions beyond the listed sectors in collaboration with relevant government departments.
- ★ The initiative is being implemented by C-DAC with the support of MeitY.
- ★ Startups recognized under the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), in partnership with government departments, will receive stage-wise funding support.
- ★ The challenge aims to develop ten impactful blockchain-based use cases across ten categories, which are expected to be scalable and deployable across India.
- ★ Eligible startups can register and access detailed information, including eligibility criteria, guidelines and Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) provisions, on the official challenge website.

Uttar Pradesh CM Inaugurates IBM’s AI GovTech Innovation Centre in Lucknow

- ★ Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath inaugurated IBM’s AI GovTech Innovation Centre in Lucknow to strengthen technology-driven governance in the state.
- ★ The Centre has been established in collaboration with IBM to design and scale AI-based solutions aimed at improving governance, transparency, and public service delivery.
- ★ The Chief Minister stated that the initiative will help Uttar Pradesh emerge as a leader in Artificial Intelligence (AI), Deep Tech, and Quantum Computing.
- ★ Uttar Pradesh is advancing rapidly in the fields of: Artificial Intelligence (AI), Robotics, Drone Technology, Medical Technology (MedTech) and Quantum Computing
- ★ The state budget has made provisions for setting up Centres of Excellence in Robotics and Drone Technology. Collaboration with IIT Kanpur is also underway in the MedTech sector.
- ★ During the programme, IBM signed two Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with the Uttar Pradesh Government:

- With the Department of IT and Electronics to develop AI-based applications across government departments.
- With the Directorate of School Education to introduce AI literacy programmes for students and teachers from Classes 6 to 12.
- ★ The event was attended by senior officials from the Uttar Pradesh Government, IBM, and IIT Kanpur.

Delhi to Implement 'Rah-Veer' Scheme to Encourage Road Accident Assistance

- ★ The Government of Delhi has decided to implement the Centre's 'Rah-Veer' Scheme in the national capital to encourage citizens to help seriously injured road accident victims.
- ★ Chief Minister Rekha Gupta announced that individuals assisting accident victims to receive timely medical care will be rewarded.
- ★ Reward includes ₹25,000 cash incentive along with a certificate of appreciation for helping a seriously injured victim reach the hospital within the golden hour.
- ★ Maximum Reward includes ₹25,000 per accident, even if multiple victims are saved.
- ★ National Recognition 10 outstanding Rah-Veers will receive a national award of ₹1 lakh annually.
- ★ Objective is to ensure treatment of seriously injured victims within the 'golden hour', which is critical for saving lives after accidents.
- ★ The scheme provides safeguards under the Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act, 2019, which includes Good Samaritan provisions protecting helpers from legal harassment.
- ★ The initiative aims to reduce road accident fatalities, promote public participation, and encourage compassion and responsible citizen behaviour in emergency situations.

National Arogya Fair 2026 to be Held in Shegaon, Maharashtra

- ★ The Ministry of Ayush, Government of India, in collaboration with the All India Ayurvedic Congress, will organise the National Arogya Fair 2026 from 25–28 February 2026 at Shegaon, Buldhana district.
- ★ The event will be inaugurated by President Droupadi Murmu on 25 February 2026 at Visava Maidan, Sant Gajanan Maharaj Sansthan, Shegaon.
- ★ The programme will also be attended by the Governor of Maharashtra and Union Minister of Ayush Prataprao Jadhav.
- ★ Objective is to expand access to Ayush-based preventive and promotive healthcare and enhance public awareness about traditional systems of medicine.
- ★ Visitors will receive free consultations, health check-ups, and free medicines under various Ayush systems including Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, Sowa-Rigpa, and Homoeopathy.
- ★ The fair will feature yoga demonstrations, expert lectures, therapy showcases, and exhibitions by reputed Ayush institutions.
- ★ A special session titled "Ayurvedic Farming: Production, Value Addition and Marketing" will be held on 27 February 2026, focusing on cultivation of medicinal plants, agroforestry, post-harvest management, and market linkages.

- ★ The initiative aims to encourage farmers in the Vidarbha region to diversify into medicinal crops and strengthen the Ayush supply chain.
- ★ The National Arogya Fair 2026 will serve as a convergence platform for public healthcare services, knowledge sharing, and rural livelihood enhancement, reinforcing the role of Ayush in improving public health and economic development.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

UAE Central Bank Approves Country's First USD-Linked Stablecoin

- ★ The Central Bank of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) approved the country's first USD-backed stablecoin, marking a major step in regulating digital assets and payment tokens.
- ★ The stablecoin, named USDU, is approved under the Payment Token Services Regulation framework of the UAE Central Bank.
- ★ USDU is issued and managed by Universal Digital Intl Limited, which is regulated by Abu Dhabi Global Market's (ADGM) Financial Services Regulatory Authority.
- ★ Universal Digital has become the first foreign payment token issuer registered with the UAE Central Bank.
- ★ The approval places the UAE among the first major financial jurisdictions to implement a fully regulated framework for USD-denominated digital settlements.
- ★ Stablecoins are cryptocurrencies pegged to reserve assets such as the US dollar, designed to minimise price volatility and are suitable for payments, settlements, and cross-border transfers on blockchain systems.
- ★ The Payment Token Services Regulation sets rules for issuance, reserve backing, and governance of payment tokens and allows foreign payment tokens to be registered if they meet disclosure, custody, and compliance standards.
- ★ USDU is pegged 1:1 to the U.S. dollar, with reserves held in UAE-based banks like Emirates NBD and Mashreq, and Mbank as a strategic partner.
- ★ The framework limits usage of foreign payment tokens, focusing on cross-border settlement, digital asset transactions, and regulated financial use cases, not as a replacement for cash or domestic payment instruments.
- ★ The approval follows years of regulatory buildup in the UAE, addressing risks such as reserve opacity and governance gaps observed in global stablecoin failures.
- ★ The UAE approach separates domestic payment use from foreign payment tokens, providing a regulated USD-linked token within the banking and compliance environment for institutions in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia.
- ★ The framework emphasizes control, reserve transparency, and limited scope, reflecting lessons from earlier market disruptions, rather than pushing for retail adoption.

UN Environment Programme Releases “State of Finance for Nature 2026” Report

- ★ The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) released The State of Finance for Nature 2026 report, highlighting a stark imbalance in global environmental financing.
- ★ The report finds that for every USD 1 invested in protecting nature, the world spends nearly USD 30 on activities that damage it, with USD 7.3 trillion flowing into nature-negative finance in 2023.
- ★ Of the total nature-negative finance, USD 4.9 trillion came from private sources, mainly in energy, utilities, industrials, and basic materials, while USD 2.4 trillion came from environmentally harmful public subsidies to fossil fuels, agriculture, and infrastructure.
- ★ In contrast, Nature-based Solutions (NbS) received only USD 220 billion, with nearly 90% from public sources and only 10% from private investment.
- ★ UNEP estimates that NbS investments must increase 2.5 times to reach USD 571 billion annually by 2030, which is about 0.5% of global GDP.
- ★ Nature-negative finance refers to global financial flows to activities harming nature, such as fossil fuel extraction, unsustainable agriculture, and deforestation, accounting for 7% of global GDP in 2023.
- ★ Environmentally Harmful Subsidies (EHS), totaling USD 2.4 trillion, distort market prices, making environmental destruction cheaper than conservation.
- ★ Nature-based Solutions (NbS) involve actions to protect, sustainably manage, and restore ecosystems, addressing societal challenges like climate change, food security, and disaster risk, while providing human well-being and biodiversity benefits.
- ★ International frameworks driving NbS finance include the Rio Conventions:
 - UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).
 - Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).
 - UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).
- ★ These set targets for climate stability, biodiversity conservation, and land restoration by 2030.
- ★ For India, scaling Nature-based Solutions through reforms like the Nature Transition X-Curve, green taxonomy, subsidy rationalisation, and private capital mobilisation is critical to protect biodiversity while sustaining long-term economic growth.

India Joins BRICS Centre for Industrial Competencies

- ★ India has officially joined the BRICS Centre for Industrial Competencies (BCIC) to strengthen skill development, industrial training, and workforce co-operation among BRICS nations (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa).
- ★ The announcement was made at an event organised by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce and Industry, at Vanijya Bhavan, New Delhi.
- ★ India’s participation marks a significant step towards enhancing industrial capabilities, especially for the manufacturing sector and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).
- ★ BCIC is a multilateral platform designed as a one-stop centre to provide integrated support services to manufacturing companies and MSMEs across BRICS countries.

- ★ The centre focuses on capacity building, technology adoption, productivity improvement, and sharing of best manufacturing practices.
- ★ BCIC operates in partnership with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), which provides technical expertise and global best practices in industrial development.
- ★ A Trust Fund Agreement was signed between DPIIT and UNIDO, formally confirming India's participation in BCIC.

World Government Summit 2026 Opens in Dubai

- ★ The World Government Summit 2026 opened in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, under the theme “Shaping Future Governments”.
- ★ The summit is being held up to February 5, 2026.
- ★ It is one of the world's most significant global platforms focusing on public policy, governance, innovation, sustainability and technology.
- ★ The summit aims to strengthen governance frameworks, enhance international co-operation, and address economic, social and technological challenges facing the global community.
- ★ More than 6,250 participants are attending the summit.
- ★ Participation includes over 60 Heads of State and Government and more than 500 Ministers from over 150 governments.
- ★ The summit has attracted 87 Nobel Laureates, highlighting its strong focus on evidence-based and intellectual policy discussions.
- ★ More than 700 Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) are participating, bringing private sector perspectives on growth, innovation and resilience.
- ★ Delegates from over 80 international, regional and academic organisations are present.
- ★ The summit features over 445 sessions and more than 450 global speakers.
- ★ The theme “Shaping Future Governments” emphasises the need for proactive, innovative and future-ready governance rather than reactive policymaking.
- ★ Discussions focus on how governments can remain responsive and effective amid rapid technological change, while balancing innovation with sustainability.
- ★ The summit addresses governance challenges in a multipolar global order and the need to adapt public institutions to diverse and demanding populations.
- ★ Key discussions include the future of government work, focusing on digital transformation, artificial intelligence in public services, upskilling of public sector workforce, and maintaining public trust.

United States to Launch \$12-Billion Critical Rare Minerals Reserve

- ★ The United States announced plans to create a \$12-billion critical rare minerals stockpile to reduce dependence on China for key resources.
- ★ The initiative, named “Project Vault”, is aimed at securing rare earths and other critical minerals prone to price volatility and supply disruptions.

- ★ The project will combine \$10 billion in loans from the US Export-Import Bank (EXIM) with around \$1.67 billion in private capital.
- ★ Major companies involved in Project Vault include General Motors, Stellantis, Boeing, and Google.
- ★ Rare earth minerals, critical for smartphones, electric vehicles, fighter jets, and clean energy technologies, are a strategic priority for long-term economic and national security.
- ★ Donald Trump compared the initiative to the Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR), emphasizing protection of American businesses and workers from shortages.
- ★ The US Secretary of the Interior, Doug Burgum, stated that 11 additional countries will be announced for participation in the initiative.
- ★ China controls about 70% of global rare earth mining and 90% of processing, giving it a chokehold on the sector, which Project Vault aims to counter.
- ★ The government-backed loan for the reserve will have a 15-year period, similar to funding mechanisms used for MP Materials, Vulcan Elements, and USA Rare Earth.
- ★ The reserve will shield manufacturers of vehicles, electronics, and other goods from supply chain disruptions, ensuring economic and national security.

United States Congress Approves \$200 Million Security Aid for Baltic Nations

- ★ The United States Congress approved a \$200 million security assistance package for the Baltic nations amid intensified Russian military activity along NATO's eastern flank.
- ★ The funding is part of the Fiscal Year 2026 Defence Appropriations Act, which is included in the \$838.7 billion US defence budget.
- ★ The Baltic Security Initiative under this act ensures continued support for Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.
- ★ The bill was signed into law by US President Donald Trump on February 3, 2026, despite earlier Pentagon proposals to discontinue the programme.
- ★ An additional \$10 million was allocated to Estonia through the Foreign Military Financing (FMF) programme for procurement of US-made defence equipment, including HIMARS ammunition, Javelin anti-tank missiles, and large-calibre artillery shells.
- ★ The funding strengthens deterrence for NATO allies and reflects bipartisan commitment to the transatlantic alliance.
- ★ Rising regional tensions are linked to incidents such as Russian fighter jets entering Estonian airspace and increased hybrid activities attributed to Russia and Belarus.

Member of World Health Organization's Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network

- ★ New York City, United States of America (USA) joined the World Health Organization (WHO)'s Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN), strengthening global public health co-operation.
- ★ Earlier, Illinois (USA) became part of GOARN on 3 February 2026.
- ★ GOARN is a WHO co-ordinated global network, established in 2000, comprising 360+ institutions

- ★ It functions under the United Nations (UN) Health Network framework, co-ordinated by WHO.
- ★ The primary objective of GOARN is early detection, monitoring, and rapid response to disease outbreaks and public health emergencies.
- ★ GOARN surveillance mechanisms aggregate global disease reports, signals, and alerts from WHO Member States, hospitals, laboratories, and partner institutions.
- ★ The network supports capacity building by providing training, technical guidance, and expert support to strengthen national and local public health systems.
- ★ GOARN promotes best practices in outbreak preparedness and response across regions.
- ★ Indian partner institutions under GOARN include Empower School of Health, ICMR–National Institute of Epidemiology (NIE), Manipal Institute of Virology, National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), National Institute of High Security Animal Diseases (NIHSAD), National Institute of Virology (NIV), Population Council Institute, and The INCLEN Trust International.

India and United States of America Agree on Interim Trade Agreement Framework

- ★ India and the United States of America (USA) agreed on a framework for an Interim Trade Agreement (ITA), marking a major step towards a full USA-India Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA).
- ★ Under the agreement, India will reduce or remove tariffs on all industrial goods and many agricultural and food products from the USA, including Animal feed (Distillers' Dried Grains – DDGs), Red Sorghum, tree nuts, fruits (fresh and processed), soybean oil, and wine and spirits.
- ★ The USA will impose an 18% reciprocal tariff on Indian exports such as textiles and apparel, leather and footwear, plastics and rubber, chemicals, handicrafts, home decor, and some machineries, under Executive Order 14257 of April 2, 2025.
- ★ The USA will remove security-related tariffs on Indian aircraft and aircraft parts, provide quota-based preferential access for auto parts exports, and determine outcomes for pharmaceuticals based on national security review
- ★ India plans to purchase USD 500 billion worth of products from the USA over 5 years, including energy products, aircraft and parts, technology products, precious metals, and coking coal.
- ★ The agreement will also expand digital trade, including advanced technology products, Graphics Processing Units (GPUs), and data-center equipment.

Indian Prime Minister Official Two-Day Visit to Malaysia on February 7–8, 2026

- ★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Malaysia on a two-day official trip from February 7–8, 2026, at the invitation of Malaysian PM Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim.
- ★ This was PM Modi's third official visit to Malaysia, reinforcing the longstanding diplomatic and economic ties between the two nations.
- ★ During the visit, PM Modi and PM Anwar Ibrahim held restricted and delegation-level meetings, deepening the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP) established in 2024.
- ★ Both leaders reviewed co-operation across sectors including trade and investment, defense and security, digital economy, Artificial Intelligence (AI) & semiconductors, infrastructure development, clean energy, tourism, education, health, and maritime co-operation.

- ★ PM Modi attended the 10th India-Malaysia CEO Forum in Kuala Lumpur to discuss trade, investment, and economic co-operation.
- ★ India and Malaysia signed 11 MoUs to boost bilateral co-operation in AV co-production, disaster management, anti-corruption, UN peacekeeping, semiconductors, wildlife conservation, social security, vocational education (TVET), security, and health.
- ★ An MoU on academic collaboration in Ayurveda was signed between University of Cyberjaya (UoC), Selangor and Institute of Training and Research in Ayurveda (ITRA), Jamnagar, Gujarat.
- ★ India set up a Consulate General in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah (Malaysia) to strengthen diplomatic, commercial, and people-to-people ties.
- ★ Thiruvalluvar Centre was established at Universiti Malaya to promote Tamil language, literature, and Indian culture in Malaysia.
- ★ NPCI International Payments Limited (NIPL) and PayNet Malaysia agreed to link their payment systems (UPI-PayNet), enhancing digital financial co-operation and cross-border remittances.

India and Seychelles Adopt SESEL Framework

- ★ India and Seychelles adopted a Joint Vision for Sustainability, Economic Growth and Security through Enhanced Linkages (SESEL) during talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Patrick Herminie.
- ★ The SESEL Vision was adopted during President Herminie's State Visit to India (5–10 February 2026), coinciding with 50 years of Seychelles' independence and 50 years of India–Seychelles diplomatic relations.
- ★ India announced a Special Economic Package of USD 175 million (USD 125 million Line of Credit and USD 50 million Grant) to support development projects, capacity building, defence co-operation, maritime security, employment, and skill development.
- ★ Both leaders agreed to deepen co-operation in digital transformation, with India supporting Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI), including digital payments and governance systems in Seychelles.
- ★ In health and food security, India pledged 10 ambulances, co-operation in affordable medicines and hospital infrastructure, and donated 1,000 metric tonnes of food grains to help reduce the cost of living.
- ★ Both sides enhanced co-operation in renewable energy, climate resilience, and disaster preparedness, with Seychelles agreeing to join the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) and implement multi-hazard early warning systems.

India Signs Social Security Agreement with United Kingdom

- ★ India signed a bilateral Social Security Agreement (SSA) with the United Kingdom (UK) focusing on social security contributions for cross-border workers.
- ★ The agreement prevents double taxation on social security payments and facilitates smoother mobility for Indian professionals working in the UK.
- ★ Under the pact, employees on short-term assignments (up to 36 months) will not pay social security contributions in both countries, reducing the financial burden for individuals and employers.

- ★ Approximately 75,000 Indian professionals, especially in IT, engineering, finance, and consultancy, are expected to benefit from the agreement.
- ★ Indian companies operating in the UK will find it more cost-effective to deploy staff for short-term assignments.
- ★ To claim exemption from dual contributions, workers must obtain a Certificate of Coverage (CoC) through the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) under the Ministry of Labour & Employment (MoL&E) or via the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), while UK workers follow a similar process through their authorities.
- ★ The SSA strengthens India-UK co-operation in labour mobility and social security protection for professionals.

Reunion Island's Piton de la Fournaise Volcano Erupts Again in 2026

- ★ Piton de la Fournaise volcano on Reunion Island erupted for the second time in 2026, marking a period of renewed activity.
- ★ The volcano is located at the east-southeastern end of La Réunion, a French island in the western Indian Ocean.
- ★ This is the second eruption within a month, following an eruption on January 18, 2026, after two years of inactivity, which lasted about 48 hours.
- ★ Piton de la Fournaise is a massive basaltic shield volcano, built on the flank of the older Piton des Neiges.
- ★ It is one of the most active volcanoes in the world, currently in a phase of frequent but short-lived eruptions producing lava fountains and extensive lava flows.
- ★ The volcano is around 500,000 years old and has been listed as a UNESCO World Heritage natural site since 2010.
- ★ Shield volcanoes, like Piton de la Fournaise, are the largest volcanoes on Earth and have broad, gentle slopes, unlike conical composite volcanoes.
- ★ They primarily erupt basaltic lava, which has low viscosity, allowing lava to flow over large distances.
- ★ Shield volcanoes are formed by repeated intermittent eruptions over vast periods; famous examples include Hawaiian volcanoes.

Australia Allocates US\$2.8 Billion for Nuclear Submarine Facility under AUKUS Pact

- ★ Australia announced an initial investment of US\$2.8 billion (AU\$3.9 billion) to build a new facility for nuclear-powered submarines under the AUKUS security pact.
- ★ The AUKUS partnership involves Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, focusing on advanced defence and technology co-operation.
- ★ The facility in Osborne, near Adelaide, will support construction and maintenance of US-designed nuclear submarines, enhancing Australia's naval capabilities.
- ★ Deliveries of the submarines are expected to begin around 2032, strengthening Australia's long-range strike capacity in the Indo-Pacific region.

- ★ Prime Minister Anthony Albanese described the initial investment as a “down payment” on the facility.
- ★ Long-term projections estimate AU\$30 billion to be spent on the submarine construction facility.
- ★ The AUKUS pact, announced in 2021, is Australia’s largest-ever defence investment aimed at countering China’s growing influence in the Indo-Pacific.
- ★ From 2027, US-commanded Virginia-class submarines will be based in Australia, with several Virginia submarines sold to Canberra around 2030.
- ★ The defence deal includes technology transfer for Australia to build its own nuclear submarines in the future.
- ★ The Osborne submarine construction yard will generate almost 10,000 jobs in design and construction and train up to 1,000 apprentices per year.
- ★ In September, 2025 Australia unveiled US\$8 billion to upgrade shipyard facilities in Perth, transforming it into a maintenance center for the future fleet of nuclear-powered submarines.

Switzerland to Host 2027 AI Summit in Geneva

- ★ Switzerland will host the 2027 AI Summit in Geneva, while the UAE is set to host the 2028 edition, demonstrating global continuity in AI governance efforts.
- ★ The announcement was made by Swiss President Guy Parmelin during his meeting with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the sidelines of the India AI Impact Summit 2026.
- ★ Switzerland is co-ordinating with India, South Korea, France, and Sweden to promote inclusive and balanced AI governance frameworks.
- ★ India–Switzerland relations have strengthened following the India–EFTA Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA), which came into effect in October 2025, accelerating economic co-operation.
- ★ President Parmelin highlighted the potential of a bilateral Investment Treaty to promote Swiss investment in India and support sustainable job creation.
- ★ India–Switzerland ties have been celebrated for 25 years (2024), with TEPA further reinforcing co-operation in AI and research.
- ★ The announcement underscores Switzerland’s focus on AI, research collaboration, and deepening economic relations with India.

India and Israel Signed Memorandum of Understanding

- ★ India and Israel signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen defence co-operation, focusing on joint seminars, industrial collaboration, and technology sharing.
- ★ The agreement was facilitated during a strategic defence seminar and Business-to-Business (B2B) meetings organised by SIBAT (International Defence Cooperation Directorate) under the Israel Ministry of Defence (IMOD), in collaboration with Society of Indian Defence Manufacturers (SIDM) and Ministry of Defence (MoD), India, in Tel Aviv, Israel.
- ★ The India–Israel Defence Industry Seminar was led by Brigadier General (Retd.) Yair Kulas, Director of SIBAT, who facilitated interactions between 30 Indian defence companies and 26 Israeli defence companies through B2B meetings.

- ★ The Indian delegation was headed by Ramesh K, Director General (DG) of SIDM, along with J P Singh, Ambassador of India to Israel, and Group Captain Vijay Patil, Defence Attaché.
- ★ Discussions focused on strengthening India's defence industrial ecosystem, including co-development, co-production, technology transfer, and interoperability.
- ★ The discussions also highlighted the Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) 2026, aimed at modernising defence procurement processes and promoting indigenous defence manufacturing.
- ★ The initiative aims to boost bilateral defence industrial co-operation, strengthen strategic partnerships, and enhance defence technology innovation between India and Israel.

Prime Minister to Address Israeli Parliament During Historic Israel Visit 2026

- ★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi will become the first Indian Prime Minister to address the plenary session of the Knesset during his two-day official visit to Israel.
- ★ The visit has been described as historic by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and marks a significant milestone in India Israel bilateral relations.
- ★ Prime Minister Modi will also hold high-level discussions with President Isaac Herzog.
- ★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi will address the Knesset plenary session becoming the first Indian Prime Minister to do so. Addressing the Israeli Parliament is regarded as a high diplomatic honour and reflects the elevation of bilateral ties.
- ★ This will be his second visit to Israel, following his landmark 2017 visit that strengthened co-operation and elevated India Israel relations to a strategic partnership level.
- ★ During the visit, he will hold bilateral talks with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and President Isaac Herzog, focusing on defence co-operation, innovation, security collaboration, agricultural technology, water management and regional stability.
- ★ The official programme at the Israeli Parliament will begin with a ceremonial welcome at the Weil Courtyard, followed by signing of the guestbook in the Chagall State Hall and a joint photograph session.
- ★ A special plenary session will be held in honour of the visiting Prime Minister, where key Israeli leaders including the Speaker and Opposition representatives will deliver remarks.
- ★ Diplomatic relations between India and Israel were established in 1992, and co-operation has since expanded in defence, agriculture, water management, science and technology. India is one of Israel's major defence partners, while Israel supports India with advanced agricultural and irrigation technologies.
- ★ The visit highlights India's balanced West Asia policy, maintaining strong relations with Israel while also engaging constructively with Arab nations. It further strengthens political trust and strategic collaboration between the two democracies.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

India's Space Economy Worth USD 8.4 Billion with 399 Start-ups in Launch Vehicles, Satellites, and Space Technology

- ★ India's space economy is currently valued at USD 8.4 billion, with 399 space start-ups operating in launch vehicles, satellites, propulsion systems, and space-grade electronics.

- ★ Indian Space Policy 2023 permits private entities to undertake end-to-end space activities, including launches, satellite manufacturing and operations, data services, and ground stations.
- ★ IN-SPACe has disbursed ₹2.36 crore under its Seed Fund and Pre-Incubation Entrepreneurship Programme to support early-stage space ventures.
- ★ According to IN-SPACe's Decadal Vision Report, India aims to expand its space economy from USD 8.4 billion (2022) to USD 44 billion by 2033, including USD 11 billion in exports.
- ★ The Decadal Vision Strategy of IN-SPACe focuses on three pillars: Revenue Generation, Ecosystem Development, and Catalysing Space Activities.
- ★ Revenue Generation will be driven by commercialization of launch services, satellite and ground operations, Earth observation, satellite communication, satellite navigation, and in-orbit economy.
- ★ Space economy growth is supported by demand generation, international collaboration, promotion of space culture, and enabling industry to scale services and exports.
- ★ Of the 434 foreign satellites launched by ISRO, 399 were launched after 2014, highlighting India's rapid growth in space services.
- ★ Currently, approximately 1050 private companies have provided their capabilities on the IN-SPACe Digital Platform (IDP) for various space activities.

Japan Achieves World-First Recovery of Rare Earth Minerals from Deep-Sea Sediments

- ★ Japan announced it had successfully recovered rare earth minerals from deep-sea sediments, marking a world-first achievement.
- ★ The recovery was conducted by the deep-sea drilling vessel Chikyu, which retrieved sediments from a depth of nearly 6,000 metres near Minamitorishima Island.
- ★ The initiative aims to reduce Japan's dependence on China for rare earth elements and other critical minerals.
- ★ The move is part of Japan's broader strategy to build resilient and secure supply chains for critical minerals.
- ★ Rare earths, comprising 17 metals difficult to extract from the Earth's crust, are used in electric vehicles, hard drives, wind turbines, and missiles.

Bharat Earth Movers Limited Signs Tripartite Master Research Agreement

- ★ Bharat Earth Movers Limited (BEML), a Public Sector Undertaking (PSU) under the Ministry of Defence (MoD), signed a Tripartite Master Research Agreement (MRA) to strengthen research collaboration.
- ★ The agreement was signed with the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru and the Foundation for Science, Innovation and Development (FSID), the innovation arm of IISc.
- ★ Signatories to the MRA included Shantanu Roy (CMD, BEML Limited), Govindan Rangarajan (Director, IISc), and B.Gurumoorthy (Director, FSID).
- ★ The purpose of the agreement is to jointly promote next-generation research and technology development across critical sectors.

- ★ The partnership will accelerate blue-sky research, applied research, and translational research in high-technology domains.
- ★ Focus areas include aerospace and defence technologies, rail and metro systems, next-generation mobility, mining and construction equipment, maritime technologies, green technologies and sustainability, and advanced manufacturing systems.
- ★ BEML has committed substantial investments in Research & Development (R&D) to support and sustain the collaborative innovation programmes under this initiative.

Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre Selects Three Indian Startups for Satellite Bus as a Service Initiative

- ★ The Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACe), the commercial arm of ISRO, selected three Indian private startups – Astrome Technologies Private Limited, Azista Industries Private Limited, and Dhruva Space Private Limited – under the Satellite Bus as a Service (SBaaS) initiative.
- ★ The initiative focuses on developing indigenous small satellite bus platforms capable of carrying and operating multiple customer payloads.
- ★ A satellite bus provides essential services to payloads and acts as a cost-effective, modular platform for domestic and international missions.
- ★ Under SBaaS, each selected company will receive a ₹5 crore grant for the development and demonstration of a robust, modular, and scalable satellite bus.
- ★ IN-SPACe will provide access to ISRO and Department of Space (DoS) infrastructure, along with testing facilities and technical guidance.
- ★ The SBaaS initiative was announced through an Announcement of Opportunity (AO) in April 2025, inviting proposals from Indian Non-Governmental Entities (NGEs).
- ★ A total of 15 proposals were received by July 2025, and the three firms were selected after a rigorous multi-stage evaluation process.
- ★ Contract agreements have been signed, marking the formal commencement of implementation under the scheme.
- ★ SBaaS is a business model where companies provide a ready-to-use satellite bus platform with services, instead of customers building satellites independently.
- ★ Milestone-linked grant disbursement and continued support through IN-SPACe, ISRO, and DoS infrastructure will be provided in subsequent phases.
- ★ Future phases will enable hosted payload missions on these platforms, expanding public-private partnership (PPP)-led space programmes.
- ★ The initiative strengthens private sector capability building in satellite platforms and hosted payload services.

IIT Bombay and Columbia University Sign MoU

- ★ Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay and Columbia University, USA signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to establish the Columbia-IIT Bombay Center of AI for Manufacturing.

- ★ The Columbia–IIT Bombay Center of AI for Manufacturing will function as a joint research and translation hub focused on developing robust, scalable, and human-centric AI systems for real-world manufacturing applications.
- ★ The center will address multiple sectors, including semiconductors, robotics, industrial manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, food processing, refining and petrochemicals, construction, infrastructure, transport, and logistics.
- ★ By leveraging the complementary strengths of IIT Bombay and Columbia University in foundational AI, optimization, and manufacturing engineering, the center aims to build end-to-end industrial AI solutions capable of handling shop-floor challenges such as legacy equipment, noisy data, real-time constraints, and multilingual workforces.
- ★ The collaboration with industry partners will focus on applied research, customized industrial solutions, talent development, and startup translation.
- ★ The center will also release foundational datasets, AI models, and interfaces as public goods to support India's diverse manufacturing ecosystem, including MSMEs.
- ★ The initiative aligns with the Ministry of Education's efforts, which has already established four other AI centers, aiming to strengthen industrial AI research and applications in India.

GalaxEye Ties Up with NewSpace India Limited to Market Satellite Imagery Services

- ★ GalaxEye, a leading Indian space-tech startup, signed a Data Reseller Partnership Agreement (MoU) with NewSpace India Limited (NSIL).
- ★ NSIL is the commercial arm of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), responsible for the commercialisation of Indian space products and services.
- ★ Following the agreement, GalaxEye became the first private Indian satellite operator to formally collaborate with NSIL for reselling Earth Observation data.
- ★ Under the MoU, NSIL will resell GalaxEye's entire satellite imagery portfolio in both domestic and global markets.
- ★ The portfolio includes 'SyncFused OptoSAR' imagery products, which deliver high-precision Earth observation insights.
- ★ Key application sectors of GalaxEye data include agriculture, disaster management, natural resource and inventory management, infrastructure planning, and environmental monitoring.
- ★ GalaxEye is an Indian Institute of Technology, Madras (IIT-M), Tamil Nadu-incubated space-tech startup.
- ★ The company specialises in building advanced satellite payloads such as Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR), a space-based imaging radar capable of all-weather observation.
- ★ The collaboration promotes Opto-SAR products and services at a global level, strengthening India's space exports.
- ★ The agreement reflects the Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiative by promoting Indian space products internationally.
- ★ The agreement will help expand advanced Earth observation capabilities to a wider user base while supporting India's strategic and developmental priorities.

Bodhan AI to Build Bharat EduAI Stack as Digital Public Infrastructure

- ★ The Government of India plans to integrate Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools in school education from pre-primary to higher secondary levels starting from the next academic session.
- ★ The initiative is driven by Bodhan AI, a not-for-profit entity under the Centre of Excellence in AI for Education at IIT Madras, with an initial budget allocation of ₹500 crore.
- ★ Bodhan AI will develop the Bharat EduAI Stack as a Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) for education, modeled after scalable systems like UPI.
- ★ The platform will support Indian languages, integrating speech recognition, speech synthesis, and AI-based learning tools tailored to local needs.
- ★ The initiative aligns with National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, promoting technology-enabled learning, multilingual education, and adaptive assessment systems.
- ★ Academic content and implementation frameworks will draw from NCERT and SCERT.
- ★ AI in education will enable personalised learning, real-time assessments, automated feedback, and intelligent tutoring systems for students.
- ★ Tools will generate instant feedback, personalised worksheets, and targeted practice modules, specifically supporting foundational literacy and numeracy.
- ★ Voice-based learning solutions will be deployed via phones, tablets, and laptops to reduce screen dependency.
- ★ Teachers will receive AI-generated performance reports and diagnostic insights to design remedial interventions.
- ★ Parents may access AI dashboards tracking their child's academic progress and learning gaps.

Rocket Debris Bearing Indian Space Research Organisation Logo Discovered Near Uninhabited Island in Maldives

- ★ Debris bearing the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) logo and India's National Emblem was found on Kunahandhoo island in the Maldives in December 2025.
- ★ The debris is believed to be part of the Payload Fairing from ISRO's LVM3 (Launch Vehicle Mark-3).
- ★ The LVM3-M6 mission on 18 December 2025 successfully launched the BlueBird Block-2 satellite for AST SpaceMobile from Sriharikota.
- ★ The LVM3 is India's heaviest rocket, a three-stage vehicle with solid strap-ons, a liquid core stage, and a cryogenic upper stage.
- ★ The debris washed up on an uninhabited island in the Maldives, causing no damage to human life or property.
- ★ ISRO has not yet confirmed whether the debris belongs to an Indian launch vehicle.
- ★ Earlier in November 2025, the LVM3 was also used to launch the CMS-03 communication satellite.

BANKING & FINANCE

PFRDA Introduces NPS Swasthya Pension Scheme

- ★ The Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) permitted the launch of 'NPS Swasthya Pension Scheme' as a Proof of Concept (PoC) under its Regulatory Sandbox Framework to integrate health benefits with pension savings.
- ★ The scheme is introduced under the PFRDA Act, 2013 and operates with temporary relaxations in the PFRDA (Exits and Withdrawals under NPS) Regulations, 2015 during the PoC period.
- ★ NPS Swasthya Pension Scheme will function as a specific sector scheme under the Multiple Scheme Framework (MSF) of the National Pension System (NPS).
- ★ The pilot project will be launched by approved Pension Funds (PFs) for a limited period, subject to prior approval from PFRDA.
- ★ For implementation, PFs may collaborate with Central Recordkeeping Agencies (CRAs), fintech firms, and Health Benefit Administrators (HBAs)/Third-Party Administrators (TPAs).
- ★ Any Indian citizen can enrol, provided they have a Common Scheme Account (CSA) under NPS.
- ★ Subscribers can withdraw up to 25% of their own contributions for medical expenses, with no limit on the number of withdrawals, after maintaining a minimum corpus of ₹50,000.
- ★ If inpatient medical expenses exceed 70% of the total corpus in a single instance, subscribers are allowed a 100% lump-sum premature exit exclusively for medical treatment.
- ★ Subscribers above 40 years of age (excluding government subscribers) can transfer up to 30% of contributions from their existing NPS account to the Swasthya Pension Scheme account.
- ★ The scheme aims to assess operational, technological and regulatory feasibility of combining healthcare support with long-term retirement planning, making it a first-of-its-kind health-linked pension initiative under NPS.

Punjab and Sind Bank Gets Reserve Bank of India Nod to Open Branch at GIFT City IFSC

- ★ Punjab and Sind Bank has received Reserve Bank of India (RBI) approval to open a branch at the International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) in GIFT City, Gandhinagar.
- ★ The new branch will operate within GIFT City, India's globally competitive financial services hub.
- ★ The move strengthens the bank's capabilities in foreign currency lending, trade finance, treasury operations, and international banking services.
- ★ Punjab and Sind Bank is a state-owned public sector bank, headquartered in New Delhi, led by MD and CEO Swarup Kumar Saha.
- ★ Opening a branch at GIFT City IFSC marks the bank's formal entry into global financial services and aligns with India's ambition of positioning GIFT City as a world-class financial hub.
- ★ GIFT City IFSC facilitates cross-border financial transactions, offshore banking, international trade finance, and capital market activities under a globally competitive regulatory framework.

- ★ The branch will enable the bank to operate with greater flexibility in foreign currencies, catering to the needs of corporate and institutional clients engaged in global trade and investment.
- ★ The initiative supports national priorities of financial sector development, global integration, and contributes to India's ambition of becoming a global financial powerhouse.
- ★ By leveraging the GIFT City ecosystem, Punjab & Sind Bank aims to promote sustainable growth, innovation, and value creation for stakeholders.

India Permits EU Banks to Open 15 Branches in Four Years under India–EU FTA

- ★ India has agreed to allow European Union (EU) banks to open up to 15 branches over a four-year period under the India–EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA).
- ★ The move represents a calibrated opening of India's financial services sector, while retaining safeguards for domestic stability and national interests.
- ★ Currently, European banks operating in India include Deutsche Bank, BNP Paribas, and Societe Generale.
- ★ The cap of 15 branches reflects India's cautious approach to financial sector liberalisation, balancing foreign participation with regulatory oversight by domestic authorities.
- ★ Under the FTA, India allows 100% foreign direct investment (FDI) in the insurance sector and 74% FDI in banking services.
- ★ The agreement aligns with India's objective of attracting stable foreign capital, improving service efficiency, and integrating with global financial markets without compromising prudential norms.
- ★ India has secured carve-outs for national security and retained policy space in sensitive sectors like legal services.
- ★ The FTA includes a bilateral safeguard mechanism, allowing India to temporarily raise duties to MFN level for a maximum of four years in case of import surges harming domestic industries.
- ★ On intellectual property rights, India is not obliged to amend or dilute existing IP laws, preserving policy autonomy in pharmaceuticals, innovation, and public interest regulation.
- ★ The agreement provides for a general review by a joint committee within five years of entry into force and every five years thereafter, allowing scope for recalibration as trade and investment flows
- ★ The rules of origin clause ensures that only meaningful manufacturing or value-adding activities qualify for preferential tariffs, excluding minimal operations like packaging, labelling, minor assembly, or peeling.

RBI Imposes ₹2.70 Lakh Penalty on Northern Arc Capital Limited

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) imposed a monetary penalty of ₹2.70 lakh on Northern Arc Capital Limited.
- ★ The penalty was imposed for non-compliance with RBI's Know Your Customer (KYC) Directions.
- ★ RBI exercised its powers under Section 58G(1)(b) read with Section 58B(5)(aa) of the RBI Act, 1934.

- ★ RBI found that the company failed to implement an IT system/software for effective identification and reporting of suspicious transactions, a key KYC/AML requirement.
- ★ The statutory inspection referred to the company's financial position as on 31 March 2024.
- ★ Northern Arc Capital Limited, founded in 2009, offers retail loans to underserved households and businesses in India.
- ★ The penalty is based on regulatory compliance deficiencies and does not question the validity of any customer transactions.
- ★ Imposition of the monetary penalty is without prejudice to any other action RBI may initiate against the company.

World Bank Pledges \$8–10 Billion Annual Financing to India for Next Five Years

- ★ India and the World Bank Group (WBG) announced a new Country Partnership Framework (CPF) to support India's next phase of growth and its Viksit Bharat.
- ★ The CPF was announced after a meeting between Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and World Bank President Ajay Banga.
- ★ The partnership will provide \$8–10 billion in annual financing over the next five years, leveraging public funds, private capital, and global expertise.
- ★ The CPF targets five job-generating sectors: infrastructure & energy, agribusiness, healthcare, tourism, and value-added manufacturing.
- ★ Implementation of the CPF will begin immediately through ongoing projects, including:
 - An \$830 million loan to support Pradhan Mantri Skilling and Employability Transformation, upgrading ITIs to skill over one million youth, especially women.
 - A \$490 million Maharashtra project to enhance climate-resilient agriculture using digital and precision farming.
 - The Kerala Health Systems Improvement Program with \$280 million to strengthen digital health systems.
 - Credila Financial Services initiative with \$750 million to support higher education financing for up to 190,000 students.
- ★ Programs to scale electric mobility, strengthen domestic manufacturing, and create jobs in clean transport.
- ★ The partnership focuses on four strategic outcomes:
 - Boosting rural prosperity and resilience through income diversification, value chains, market access, and water management.
 - Supporting urban transformation and livable cities, with investments in infrastructure, housing, services, and integrated planning.
 - Investing in people across the life cycle, from early childhood health to secondary education, market-aligned skills, and patient-centered health systems.
 - Strengthening energy security, core infrastructure, and resilience, including renewable energy, e-mobility, and green hydrogen.

State Bank of India Unveils CHAKRA

- ★ State Bank of India (SBI) launched CHAKRA (Centre of Excellence) to finance sunrise sectors vital for India's economic transformation and sustainable growth.
- ★ CHAKRA will focus on renewable energy, EVs, green hydrogen, advanced cell chemistry, battery storage, semiconductors, decarbonisation, data centres, and smart infrastructure.
- ★ These sectors have a combined investment potential of ~₹100 trillion over the next five years, with SBI estimating a lendable opportunity of ₹20–22 trillion.
- ★ SBI signed MoUs with 21 financial institutions, enabling co-financing and capacity building through joint project finance teams stationed at CHAKRA.
- ★ Global participation includes Japanese banks SMBC and MUFG, along with Indian DFIs such as PFC, REC, and NaBFID, with discussions ongoing with European and US banks.
- ★ CHAKRA will support informed decision-making through white papers, sector reports, knowledge series, industry roundtables, and policy dialogues.
- ★ The Centre will enable structured engagement with DFIs, multilateral agencies, banks, NBFCs, industry bodies, corporates, start-ups, academia, and policy think tanks.
- ★ Through CHAKRA, SBI aims to strengthen capabilities, promote innovation-focused enterprises, and improve capital flow to sectors driving India's technology-led and sustainable future, building on its earlier MSME Centre of Excellence.

SBI Enhances Trade Finance and Global Banking Services with GTFC Launch in Kolkata

- ★ State Bank of India (SBI), India's largest Public Sector Bank (PSB), launched a Global Trade Finance Centre (GTFC) in Kolkata, West Bengal, to strengthen trade finance and global banking operations.
- ★ In July 2025, SBI inaugurated two specialised GTFCs located in Kolkata (West Bengal) and Hyderabad (Telangana) on the occasion of its 70th anniversary.
- ★ The GTFC follows a centralized system to streamline inland trade and efficiently process import and export transactions.
- ★ The centre supports SBI branches across eastern and northern India, enabling faster turnaround time, strong compliance oversight, and an enhanced customer experience for domestic and cross-border trade.
- ★ The GTFC is technology-driven, leveraging Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning (ML), and Blockchain, marking a shift from traditional paper-based systems.
- ★ The total staff strength of the GTFC is 277, comprising 161 SBI employees, 105 outsourced staff, and 11 temporary personnel.
- ★ Local hiring accounts for 61% of the workforce, with 169 employees from West Bengal, supporting regional employment generation.
- ★ Since 2024, the GTFC has contributed ₹1.40 crore as Goods and Services Tax (GST) to the West Bengal economy.

Union Budget 2026-27 Proposes Self-Help Entrepreneur Marts

- ★ The Union Budget 2026-27 announced the establishment of Self-Help Entrepreneur (SHE) Marts as community-owned retail outlets to strengthen women-led enterprises and deepen the self-help group (SHG) ecosystem across states.
- ★ The SHE Marts initiative aims to provide a structured market platform for products made by women entrepreneurs, with Jharkhand emerging as a key beneficiary due to its strong SHG base.
- ★ The programme builds on the Lakhpati Didi Programme and aims to help women transition from credit-based livelihoods to ownership of enterprises.
- ★ SHE Marts will be set up within cluster-level federations of SHGs and supported through enhanced and innovative financing instruments to enable women to access organised retail and stable demand.
- ★ The community-owned retail model allows women-led SHGs to collectively market and sell their products, reducing dependence on intermediaries and improving income realisation.
- ★ Jharkhand has mobilised around 39 lakh rural SHG members through the Jharkhand State Livelihood Promotion Society, and SHE Marts complement ongoing efforts to transform women from borrowers into business owners.
- ★ The initiative aligns with the Budget's broader emphasis on inclusive growth and women-led development, focusing on ownership, market access, and scale to create sustainable income opportunities.
- ★ SHE Marts aim to help women reach larger markets, build brands, and strengthen local institutions such as self-help groups.
- ★ The Lakhpati Didi Programme, run by the Ministry of Rural Development, supports rural women in starting small businesses and earning a steady income of at least Rs 1 lakh per year.
- ★ Under the programme, women are trained in skills like plumbing, making LED bulbs, and using and repairing drones to become financially independent.
- ★ As per the Economic Survey 2026, raising women's workforce participation to around 55% by 2050 could be key to sustaining strong annual GDP growth in India.

Union Budget 2026-27 Allocates ₹73,990.94 Crore to DoT

- ★ The Union Budget 2026-27 allocated ₹73,990.94 crore to the Department of Telecommunications (DoT), focusing on telecom infrastructure revival and strengthening state-owned BSNL.
- ★ The allocation for FY27 is 8.65% lower than the FY26 Budget Estimate of ₹81,005.24 crore but 38.56% higher than the FY26 Revised Estimate of ₹53,398.17 crore.
- ★ The increase over the revised FY26 figure is largely due to higher capital infusion into Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) for network expansion and financial recovery.
- ★ The total net allocation for the DoT in FY27 is ₹80,927.94 crore, including an additional ₹6,937 crore from the Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF).
- ★ Funds from USOF will be used for compensation to telecom service providers, the BharatNet rural broadband programme, and research and development in the telecom sector.

- ★ Union Minister for Communications Jyotiraditya Scindia stated that the government is working to strengthen BSNL's financial and operational position, with average revenue per user (ARPU) rising from ₹90 to ₹99, targeting ₹100.
- ★ The capital infusion along with internal cash flows will fund spectrum costs, network rollout, towers, and other infrastructure needs of BSNL.
- ★ The incremental allocation also supports the BharatNet programme, including expanding fibre connectivity, upgrading infrastructure, and meeting BSNL's internal capital expenditure requirements.
- ★ The Budget strategy reflects a focus on consolidating public sector telecom capabilities while continuing investments in rural connectivity and long-term digital infrastructure.

Central Bank of India Partners with HSBC Asset Management

- ★ Central Bank of India (CBI), a leading Public Sector Bank (PSB), signed a distribution agreement with HSBC Asset Management (India) Private Limited to offer Mutual Fund (MF) products to its customers.
- ★ The partnership aims to expand CBI's wealth management offerings across its customer base.
- ★ Under the agreement, CBI will distribute HSBC AMC's MF schemes including equity, debt, and hybrid funds through its bank branches and digital platforms.
- ★ HSBC Asset Management (India) will provide professionally managed mutual fund investment solutions to CBI customers.
- ★ The collaboration is expected to help customers unlock the value of their savings through diversified investment products aligned with long-term financial goals.

Matrixport Secures In-Principle Regulatory Approval to Operate Financial Services in Bhutan's GMC

- ★ Matrixport, a leading digital asset financial services platform, received In-Principle Approval (IPA) for its Bhutan-based entity Matrix Bhutan Pte Ltd from the Gelephu Financial Services Office (GFSO).
- ★ The approval allows Matrix Bhutan Pte Ltd to operate regulated financial services within or from Gelephu Mindfulness City (GMC), Bhutan.
- ★ Under the proposed licence, Matrixport can offer regulated money services, deal in investments as a matched principal, and provide custody services for assets.
- ★ No regulated financial services will commence until all licensing conditions are fulfilled and final approval is granted by the GFSO.
- ★ The planned operations in Gelephu Mindfulness City (GMC) will function under a robust Supervision, Compliance, and Governance framework, ensuring regulatory oversight and operational integrity.

National Statistical Office to Launch NHIS and ASISSE from April 2026

- ★ The National Statistical Office (NSO) under the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation (MoSPI) will launch two major national surveys – the National Household Income

Survey (NHIS) and the Annual Survey of Incorporated Services Sector Enterprises (ASISSE) – from April 2026 to strengthen India’s statistical system.

- ★ These surveys aim to fill long-standing data gaps, particularly in household income and the services sector, using robust scientific design, expert guidance, and extensive field trials.
- ★ The NHIS will generate comprehensive data on living conditions, income distribution, and income sources, enabling inter-household and inter-regional comparisons and providing insights into patterns of income generation.
- ★ The ASISSE will comprehensively cover the incorporated services sector using Goods and Services Tax Network (GSTN) datasets, producing State- and industry-level estimates on Gross Value Added (GVA), fixed capital, capital formation, employment, and wages/emoluments.
- ★ Both surveys will be conducted in digital mode (CAPI) across India, except for remote villages of Andaman & Nicobar Islands, with a strong focus on data quality, field supervision, and building respondent trust.
- ★ The surveys are expected to support policy formulation, enable assessment of household well-being, and provide a comprehensive database on the corporate services sector for economic planning and interventions.
- ★ The All-India Workshop of Trainers (AIWOT) held in Chennai on 28–29 January 2026 trained around 300 officials from zonal, regional, and sub-regional offices to ensure uniform understanding of concepts and successful field implementation.
- ★ The surveys will cover the entire Indian Union, generating data to strengthen India’s statistical system and facilitate evidence-based economic planning.

Tripura Gramin Bank Introduces India’s First RRB Co-Branded RuPay Credit Card

- ★ Tripura Gramin Bank (TGB), in collaboration with its sponsor bank Punjab National Bank (PNB), launched a Co-branded RuPay Credit Card.
- ★ TGB became the first Regional Rural Bank (RRB) in India and also the first among the eight PNB-sponsored RRBs to introduce a co-branded credit card.
- ★ The launch of the TGB–PNB Co-Branded RuPay Credit Card marks the Golden Jubilee (50th year) of Tripura Gramin Bank.
- ★ The card was launched at Agartala, Tripura.
- ★ The credit card is powered by the RuPay Network, ensuring secure and widely accepted transactions.
- ★ The card has been developed jointly by Tripura Gramin Bank (TGB), Punjab National Bank (PNB), and PNB Cards & Services Limited.
- ★ The collaboration provides a secure, seamless, and modern credit facility to customers.
- ★ The card focuses on enhancing digital access for rural and semi-urban customers.
- ★ It enables customers to access the RuPay digital payment ecosystem.
- ★ The card facilitates convenient payments, purchases, and day-to-day banking transactions.

Punjab National Bank Launches 'LUXURA Metal Credit Card'

- ★ Punjab National Bank (PNB), a leading Public Sector Bank (PSB), launched the 'LUXURA Metal Credit Card' on the Visa Infinite platform targeting high-net-worth and lifestyle-driven customers.
- ★ The launch expands PNB's premium credit card portfolio with enhanced luxury and travel benefits.
- ★ The card carries a Joining Fee of 4,999 + GST and an Annual Fee of Rs. 1,999 + GST.
- ★ It offers accelerated reward points on purchases with boosted earnings on travel and lifestyle spending.
- ★ Customers receive welcome bonus points and annual milestone bonus reward points on higher spending.
- ★ The card provides zero forex mark-up on all foreign currency transactions.
- ★ It offers unlimited complimentary airport lounge access in India and abroad.
- ★ Cardholders get 24×7 Visa Concierge Services for personalised assistance.
- ★ Hotel benefits include room upgrades, complimentary breakfast, Wi-Fi, and late check-outs.
- ★ Dining benefits include discounts at partner restaurants in India and overseas.
- ★ The card features special flight booking offers through travel partners.
- ★ Additional lifestyle benefits include fuel surcharge waivers, grocery savings, and movie offers.

World Bank Sanctions USD 830 Million Funding for PM-SETU

- ★ The World Bank Group (WBG) approved an USD 830 million loan for India's Pradhan Mantri – Skilling and Employability Transformation Through Upgraded Industrial Training Institutes (PM-SETU) Programme to revamp Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) and boost youth employment opportunities.
- ★ The programme is part of the WBG's Country Partnership Framework (CPF) for India (FY 2026–31), which envisages USD 8–10 billion annual financing support.
- ★ The loan tenure has a final maturity of 19.5 years including a 4-year grace period.
- ★ The key objective is to upgrade ITIs and National Skill Training Institutes (NSTIs) to bridge skill gaps and improve job placement outcomes.
- ★ The programme was jointly prepared by the World Bank (WB) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB).
- ★ It aims to mobilize at least USD 680 million in private capital to strengthen ITI infrastructure and operational capacity.
- ★ An institutional hub-and-spoke model will be implemented comprising 200 Hub ITIs and 800 Spoke ITIs with strong industry integration.
- ★ Training will focus on high-demand sectors such as Manufacturing, Electric Vehicles (EVs), Artificial Intelligence (AI), Green Energy, Textiles, and Construction.
- ★ The PM-SETU Programme targets creation of over 1 million better-skilled workers annually.
- ★ The initiative also ensures 25% female participation through updated curricula and inclusive skilling frameworks.

RBI Levies ₹18.76 Lakh Compounding Penalty on One 97 Communications

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) imposed a compounding fee of ₹18.76 lakh on One 97 Communications Limited (OCL), the parent company of Paytm Payments Services Limited (PPSL).
- ★ The penalty was issued under the provisions of the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), 1999 for contraventions related to foreign investment transactions in its subsidiary.
- ★ The transaction involved investments worth approximately ₹33 crore made by Little Internet Singapore Private Limited into Little Internet Private Limited (LIPL).
- ★ The investments were carried out during the period March 2016 to June 2017.
- ★ The violation pertained to contravention of Regulation 5(1) read with Regulation 13 of FEMA Notification No. 120/RB-2004.
- ★ One 97 Communications Limited (OCL) disclosed the compounding order under Regulation 30 of SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements – LODR) Regulations, 2015.
- ★ Compounding under FEMA is a voluntary settlement process involving admission of contravention and payment of a fee, after which the matter is disposed of without litigation.
- ★ Additionally, the RBI compounded another case involving Nearby India Private Limited, a subsidiary of OCL, imposing a fee of ₹4.28 lakh.
- ★ This additional compounding took place in Quarter 3 (Q3) of Financial Year 2025–26 (FY26).

Equitas SFB Enters Strategic Bancassurance Tie-Up with Bharti AXA Life

- ★ Equitas Small Finance Bank (Equitas SFB) signed a strategic bancassurance partnership with Bharti AXA Life Insurance, backed by Bharti Enterprises and France's AXA, to expand life insurance reach across India.
- ★ The partnership aims to boost life insurance penetration and help customers secure their long-term financial future.
- ★ Under the partnership, Bharti AXA Life Insurance will offer its life insurance products, including protection, savings, and retirement plans, to Equitas SFB customers.
- ★ The collaboration will use both physical and digital channels to provide wider access to customers.
- ★ The partnership focuses on deepening life insurance adoption in semi-urban and rural areas, where insurance penetration has been limited.

RBI's Gold Purchases Plunge to 4 Tonnes in 2025 from 73 Tonnes in 2024

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) bought only 4 tonnes of gold in 2025, significantly lower than 73 tonnes in 2024, mainly due to very high gold prices.
- ★ In 2025, RBI's quarterly gold purchases were: 3.4 tonnes in Q1, 0.4 tonnes in Q2, 0.2 tonnes in Q3, and 0 tonnes in Q4, showing a sharp slowdown in buying.
- ★ In comparison, RBI had purchased 16 tonnes in 2023 and 77 tonnes in 2021, making 2025 one of the lowest purchase years.
- ★ According to the World Gold Council (WGC), global central banks bought a total of 328 tonnes of gold in 2025, slightly lower than 345 tonnes in 2024.

- ★ Poland was the largest gold buyer in 2025, adding 102 tonnes, followed by Kazakhstan (57 tonnes) and Azerbaijan (53 tonnes).
- ★ Other major buyers included Brazil (43 tonnes), China (27 tonnes), and Turkey (27 tonnes), showing continued interest in gold reserves worldwide.
- ★ The largest net gold sellers in 2025 were Singapore (26 tonnes), Ghana (12 tonnes), and Russia (6 tonnes).
- ★ In December 2025, central banks bought 19 tonnes, taking the full-year net purchases to 328 tonnes.
- ★ China extended its monthly gold buying streak to 14 consecutive months, while countries like Kyrgyz Republic, Czech Republic, Mongolia, and Indonesia also added to their reserves.
- ★ Singapore was the largest seller in December 2025, reducing reserves by 11 tonnes.

SBI Mutual Fund Launches InvesTap Nxt

- ★ SBI Mutual Fund (SBIMF) launched InvesTap Nxt, a next-generation digital investment platform designed to make investing simpler and smarter.
- ★ InvesTap Nxt is an AI-powered platform featuring a personal AI assistant that allows investors to ask questions, explore investment options, and track portfolios through conversational interactions.
- ★ The platform integrates SBIMF's SmartAssist, an AI-powered WhatsApp chat companion, into InvesTap Nxt for enhanced investment management.
- ★ InvesTap Nxt uses advanced AI, conversational investment journeys, and Wealth Index via Account Aggregator (AA) integration to provide a personalised view of financial portfolios.
- ★ The platform offers easy-to-understand insights, enabling users to access consolidated financial information across products and institutions within a secure, consent-based framework.
- ★ The conversational interface of InvesTap Nxt interprets user intent, analyses portfolio data, and delivers timely insights aligned with individual financial goals.
- ★ SBI Mutual Fund, incorporated in 1987, is an Indian private asset management company promoted by the State Bank of India, with its head office in Mumbai.

State Bank of India Secures \$1 Billion Social Loan from Japan's MUFG

- ★ State Bank of India (SBI) raised a \$1 billion (₹7,100 crore) social loan from Japan's Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group (MUFG).
- ★ This is the first social loan raised by an Indian bank, marking a landmark deal in India's banking and social finance space.
- ★ The loan was raised through MUFG's GIFT City (IFSC) branch, with MUFG as the sole lender, though it may be syndicated later.
- ★ The loan has a five-year maturity and includes a green shoe option of \$500 million, allowing SBI to raise additional funds if required.
- ★ The interest rate on the loan is 90 basis points above the three-month SOFR (Secured Overnight Financing Rate), considered competitively priced compared to similar overseas borrowings.

- ★ The funds will be used to support women-led enterprises and businesses owned or managed by women, promoting women's economic empowerment and gender equality.

Axis Bank Introduces “Rooftop Solar Finance”

- ★ Axis Bank launched “Rooftop Solar Finance”, a new financing product aimed at helping Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) adopt solar energy systems on their commercial rooftops.
- ★ The product offers collateral-free loans ranging from ₹10 lakhs to ₹2 crores, available through Axis Bank's branch network across India.
- ★ The repayment tenure is 4–7 years, providing flexible repayment options aligned with business cash flows.
- ★ The financing supports solar adoption, enabling firms to install rooftop solar systems, reduce long-term energy costs, and lower dependence on grid electricity.
- ★ Axis Bank has partnered with Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) and a technology partner to ensure cost transparency for businesses.

RBI Announces Compensation Framework of Up to ₹25,000 for Victims of Small-Value Digital Frauds

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced a compensation framework for victims of small-value digital frauds, offering relief of up to ₹25,000 per customer.
- ★ The scheme provides a once-in-a-lifetime benefit for bank customers who lose money in small-value fraudulent transactions, including cases involving shared OTPs.
- ★ Under the framework, RBI will bear 70% of the loss (up to ₹25,000), while the remaining 30% will be shared equally by the customer (15%) and the bank (15%).
- ★ The compensation will be paid from the Depositor Education and Awareness Fund (DEAF), which has a current corpus of around ₹85,000 crore.
- ★ The announcement was made by RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra after the 59th Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting
- ★ The framework aims at enhancing customer protection and addressing the surge in digital frauds, particularly those below ₹50,000, which form a large share of fraud cases.
- ★ RBI plans to issue three draft guidelines for customer protection: mis-selling of financial products, recovery of loans and engagement of recovery agents, and limiting liability of customers in unauthorised electronic banking transactions.
- ★ The extant instructions on limiting liability of customers in unauthorised transactions were issued in 2017 and have now been reviewed in view of rapid adoption of technology.
- ★ RBI also plans to publish a discussion paper on measures to enhance the safety of digital payments, including lagged credits and additional authentication for specific users such as senior citizens.

Reserve Bank of India to Double Collateral-Free Loan Limit

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has announced plans to double the limit for collateral-free loans for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) from ₹10 lakh to ₹20 lakh, effective April 1, 2026, to boost credit access for the micro, small, and medium sector.

- ★ MSME collateral-free loans are provided under the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY) with a current limit of up to ₹10 lakh, covering manufacturing, services, and related sectors.
- ★ The loans under PMMY are divided into four categories (including the new addition):
 - Shishu: up to ₹50,000
 - Kishore: ₹50,001–₹5 lakh
 - Tarun: ₹5 lakh–₹10 lakh
 - Tarun Plus: ₹10 lakh–₹20 lakh (for those who have successfully repaid previous Tarun loans).
- ★ An enterprise is classified as micro, small, or medium based on investment in plant and machinery or equipment and turnover:
 - Micro enterprise: Investment ≤ ₹2.5 crore, Turnover ≤ ₹10 crore
 - Small enterprise: Investment ≤ ₹25 crore, Turnover ≤ ₹100 crore
 - Medium enterprise: Investment ≤ ₹125 crore, Turnover ≤ ₹500 crore
- ★ Collateral-free loans provide instant funds for businesses without risking assets with the financial institution.

India Contributes USD 35.18 Million to UN 2026 Regular Budget, Enters 'Honour Roll'

- ★ The Government of India (GoI) paid USD 35.18 million to the United Nations (UN) Regular Budget for 2026.
- ★ Following this payment, India joined the UN's 'honour roll' alongside 51 member states who paid their regular budget dues in full and on time.
- ★ India's total assessed contribution to the UN budget stands at USD 38.223 million, with USD 3.091 million offset against staff income taxes.
- ★ India contributed 1.016% to the UN's regular budget of USD 3.45 billion.
- ★ This contribution supports core UN operational expenses, excluding peacekeeping activities.
- ★ The 193-member UN General Assembly (UNGA) approved the USD 3.45 billion regular budget for 2026 in December 2025.
- ★ The UN budget covers the organisation's three main pillars: peace and security, sustainable development, and human rights.
- ★ As of February 4, 2026, 51 member states have paid their regular budget assessments in full, within the 30-day due period specified in the UN financial regulations.

DICGC With RBI Approval, Introduces Risk-Based Premium Framework for Deposit Insurance

- ★ The Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC), with the approval of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), has issued guidelines for implementing a Risk-Based Premium (RBP) framework for deposit insurance.
- ★ Currently, all banks pay a uniform premium of 12 paise per ₹100 of assessable deposits (AD), irrespective of their risk profile or financial strength.
- ★ DICGC Act, 1961 [Section 15(1)] provides for differential premium rates for different categories of insured banks.

- ★ There will be two risk assessment models: Tier 1 Model for Scheduled Commercial Banks (excluding RRBs), based on supervisory ratings, quantitative assessment (CAMELS parameters), and potential loss to Deposit Insurance Fund (DIF); and Tier 2 Model for RRBs and Rural Cooperative Banks (StCBs, DCCBs, UCBs), based on quantitative assessment and potential loss to DIF.
- ★ Banks can receive a maximum risk-based incentive of 33.33% over the card rate, along with a vintage incentive of up to 25% for long, distress-free contributions to the DIF.
- ★ Local Area Banks and Payments Banks will continue to pay the card rate of 12 paise, while UCBs under PCA/SAF will remain at the card rate until they exit such frameworks.
- ★ The RBP framework will be effective from April 1, 2026, banks must maintain confidentiality of ratings, and the framework will be reviewed at least once every three years.
- ★ Under the RBP framework, banks are classified into four risk categories (A–D), with Category A being the lowest risk and Category D the highest risk.
- ★ Category A banks will pay the lowest premium of 8 paise per ₹100 of AD, Category B will pay 10 paise, Category C will pay 11 paise, and Category D will continue at the existing card rate of 12 paise with no discount.
- ★ The premium payable based on the effective risk-based rate will be reflected in the DICGC New Integrated Application System (Samyak).
- ★ CAMELS full form represents Capital Adequacy, Asset Quality, Management, Earnings, Liquidity, and Sensitivity to Market Risk, which evaluates the financial health and risk profile of commercial banks to ensure stability.

RBI Releases Draft Rules for Credit Index and Total Return Swap Derivatives

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has released draft rules for derivatives on credit indices and total return swaps (TRS) linked to corporate bonds.
- ★ The objective is to deepen and improve liquidity in the corporate bond market, which is relatively small and illiquid compared to the government securities market.
- ★ The move follows the Union Budget 2026-27 proposal to introduce TRS on corporate bonds, enabling better credit risk management and fund-raising across rating categories.
- ★ A total return swap (TRS) allows one party to transfer the full economic return of a bond or index (including interest income and price changes) to another party, in exchange for a fixed or floating benchmark-linked payment.
- ★ The RBI has prescribed strict norms for benchmarks and indices, requiring them to be published by administrators authorised by RBI or SEBI, with settlement standards set by the Fixed Income Money Market and Derivatives Association of India (FIMMDA).
- ★ All OTC credit derivative transactions must be reported to CCIL within 30 minutes, and settlement may be cash, physical, or auction-based, as determined by the Credit Derivatives Determinations Committee.

RBI Imposes ₹1 Lakh Penalty on Vinayaka Capsec Private Limited

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) imposed a monetary penalty of ₹1 lakh on Vinayaka Capsec Private Limited.

- ★ The penalty was levied for non-compliance with RBI directions on 'Acquisition of Shareholding or Control'.
- ★ RBI found that the company failed to obtain prior written approval for a change in shareholding exceeding 26% of its paid-up equity capital.
- ★ The action was taken under Sections 58G(1)(b) and 58B(5)(aa) of the RBI Act, 1934.
- ★ A show cause notice was issued to the company, and after considering the company's reply and personal hearing, RBI sustained the charge, warranting imposition of the penalty.
- ★ This action was based on regulatory compliance deficiencies and does not affect the validity of any transaction or agreement entered into by the company with its customers.
- ★ The monetary penalty is imposed without prejudice to any other action that RBI may initiate against the company.

RBI Announces Four Measures to Strengthen Urban Co-operative Banks, Boosting Credit and Capacity

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced four regulatory and developmental measures to strengthen Urban Co-operative Banks (UCBs), focusing on credit expansion, efficiency, and capacity building.
- ★ RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra stated that these steps aim to improve credit delivery and operational flexibility in the UCB sector.
- ★ RBI proposed raising financial limits on unsecured loans and loans to nominal members, enabling UCBs to lend more freely to underserved segments.
- ★ The RBI also proposed removal of tenor and moratorium-related restrictions on housing loans for Tier III and Tier IV UCBs, easing regulatory constraints.
- ★ To strengthen governance and skills, RBI announced Mission SAKSHAM (Sahakari Bank Kshamta Nirman) for institutional capacity building.
- ★ Under Mission SAKSHAM, RBI plans to train over 1.4 lakh participants from UCBs to enhance managerial and technical capabilities.
- ★ Separately, a January 2026 RBI discussion paper has sought public feedback on restarting licensing of new UCBs after a two-decade pause, with safeguards to prevent past failures.

Kotak Mahindra Bank Becomes First in India to Grant Fully Digital Foreign Portfolio Investor Licence

- ★ Kotak Mahindra Bank Limited (KMBL) became the first custodian in India to issue a Foreign Portfolio Investor (FPI) licence and complete the entire onboarding process through electronic signatures (e-signature).
- ★ The milestone follows the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) operationalising a unified digital workflow in January 2026 for FPI registration and onboarding.
- ★ The new system enables the use of Digital Signature Certificates (DSCs) and electronic signatures via the FPI Common Application Form (CAF)

- ★ As per SEBI guidelines, DSCs used in the process must be issued by Indian certifying authorities in accordance with the Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000.
- ★ Prior to this full rollout, KMBL had already issued its first two FPI licences using completely digitally signed documentation, removing the requirement for physical paperwork and wet signatures.
- ★ The initiative marks a major step toward paperless compliance, faster onboarding, and ease of doing business for foreign investors in India's capital markets.

HDFC Life Forms Strategic Partnership with Muthoot FinCorp

- ★ HDFC Life has entered into a strategic partnership with Muthoot FinCorp Limited., the flagship company of the Muthoot Pappachan Group.
- ★ Through this tie-up, Muthoot FinCorp's customers will gain access to HDFC Life's group and individual life insurance products, including protection and long-term savings plans.
- ★ The insurance solutions will be offered through Muthoot FinCorp Ltd's extensive network of 3,750 branches across India, as well as through its digital platform.
- ★ The partnership supports the vision of "Insurance for All by 2047" and will help deepen financial inclusion.

RBI Introduces Reforms to Boost Cooperative Banks' Financial Stability, Governance, and Digital Capabilities

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI), in consultation with the Government of India, announced that loans sanctioned by banks to National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) e.f. January 19, 2026, for on-lending to co-operative societies are eligible for classification as priority sector lending (PSL) under the respective categories.
- ★ The priority sector lending (PSL) classification applies to banks other than Regional Rural Banks (RRBs), Urban Cooperative Banks (UCBs), Small Finance Banks (SFBs), and Local Area Banks (LABs).
- ★ NCDC is a statutory corporation under the Ministry of Cooperation that provides financial assistance to Cooperatives and contributes directly to accelerating the growth of the co-operative movement.
- ★ The Government of India and RBI have taken multiple measures to strengthen co-operative banks in terms of financial health, governance, digital inclusion, deposit security, credit availability, and prudent regulation.
- ★ Urban Cooperative Banks (UCBs) have been allowed to open new branches to expand their operations.
- ★ Housing loan limits for UCBs have been increased from 10% to 25% of their total loans and advances.
- ★ The Banking Regulation Act has been amended to increase the terms of directors of Cooperative Banks from 8 to 10 years.
- ★ Licensing fees for onboarding co-operative banks to Aadhaar-enabled Payment System (AePS) have been reduced.

- ★ The National Urban Co-operative Finance and Development Corporation Limited (NUCFDC), a non-deposit taking NBFC, has been set up as an Umbrella Organization for UCBs, providing IT infrastructure and operational support.
- ★ A Shared Services Entity (SSE) named Sahakar Sarthi has been established to provide technological services to Rural Cooperative Banks.
- ★ Rural Cooperative Banks have been included by RBI in the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme to enhance grievance redressal.
- ★ Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC) insures various types of deposits up to ₹5,00,000 per depositor per bank, including principal and interest, for all co-operative banks.

Reserve Bank of India Launches Financial Literacy Week 2026

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has been observing Financial Literacy Week (FLW) annually since 2016 to promote financial awareness among citizens.
- ★ FLW 2026 is being observed from February 9 to 13, 2026 on the theme: “KYC – Your First Step to Safe Banking.”
- ★ RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra inaugurated FLW 2026 and emphasized the critical role of KYC in ensuring safe, secure, and inclusive banking.
- ★ Banks and stakeholders have been urged to simplify and promote KYC and re-KYC compliance among customers.
- ★ The Central KYC Records Registry (CKYCR) was highlighted as a key tool to simplify customer onboarding and strengthen financial inclusion.
- ★ RBI Regional Offices, including Panaji, co-ordinated with banks to support nationwide campaigns on financial inclusion schemes, including re-KYC for uninterrupted banking services.
- ★ The campaign will raise awareness about the benefits of KYC/CKYC, precautions against fraudulent KYC calls, messages, and links, and caution the public against becoming money mules.
- ★ FLW 2026 includes awareness and outreach programmes across India, with stakeholders encouraged to actively disseminate campaign messages to promote a secure financial ecosystem.

RBI Grants In-Principle Approval to Transcorp International for Centralized Payment Systems

- ★ Transcorp International Limited received in-principle approval from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to participate in Centralized Payment Systems (CPS), marking a major development in its banking services infrastructure.
- ★ Following the RBI authorization, Transcorp can hold and operate a bank account at RBI and be allotted its own Indian Financial System Code (IFSC).
- ★ The CPS authorization, usually granted to banks, allows Transcorp to develop and operate its payment ecosystem with Real Time Gross Settlement (RTGS) and National Electronic Funds Transfer (NEFT) capabilities, following RBI guidelines.

- ★ Participation in CPS will enhance payment ecosystem independence, operational efficiency, and regulatory compliance, while enabling secure and technology-driven payment solutions.
- ★ Transcorp reported 49% profitability growth for the quarter and 67% growth for the 9-month period ending December 31, 2025, compared to the previous year.
- ★ The company has fully repaid all public Fixed Deposits (FDs) under its Public FD scheme.

IIFL Capital Secures SEBI Nod to Set Up Wholly Owned Subsidiary at GIFT IFSC

- ★ IIFL Capital Services Limited received Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) approval to establish a Wholly Owned Subsidiary (WOS) at Gujarat International Finance Tec-City – International Financial Services Centre (GIFT IFSC).
- ★ The new entity will be named IIFL Capital Services (IFSC) Ltd and operate as a separate legal entity.
- ★ It will undertake permitted financial services and capital market activities within GIFT IFSC, subject to approvals from the RBI and other regulators.
- ★ The initiative aims to strengthen IIFL's global financial services platform and expand its international market presence through India's premier offshore financial hub.
- ★ IIFL Capital is one of India's leading wealth management, broking, and investment banking firms, managing approximately \$28 billion of assets under management and custody.
- ★ The firm is a leader in investment banking and institutional equities in India, with offices and sales teams in Mumbai, Singapore, London, and New York.
- ★ Its institutional customer base includes sovereign wealth funds, pension funds, private equity funds, mutual funds, insurance companies, hedge funds, and alternative investment funds.

ADB Approves USD 182 Million Funding to Strengthen Assam

- ★ The Asian Development Bank (ADB) approved USD 182 million in additional financing to expand support for strengthening Assam's resilience to chronic flooding and riverbank erosion along the Brahmaputra River.
- ★ This additional funding supplements the ongoing USD 200 million Climate Resilient Brahmaputra Integrated Flood and Riverbank Erosion Risk Management Project in Assam, approved in October 2023.
- ★ The expanded funding will extend integrated flood and riverbank erosion risk management measures into four additional high-priority reaches of the Brahmaputra River.
- ★ Under the expanded scope, the project will construct 63.5 kilometers of riverbank protection, undertake adaptive and emergency works to strengthen existing structures, and implement pro-siltation measures to promote sediment deposition and reclaim eroded land.
- ★ The project will upgrade and widen disaster-resilient flood embankments and implement nature-based solutions, such as reed propagation and wetland restoration, to reduce erosion, flooding, and improve ecological resilience.
- ★ The financing will enhance knowledge-based river management through flood risk maps, asset condition surveys, erosion prediction models, flood forecasting, early warning systems, and community disaster preparedness programs.

- ★ The project aims to directly benefit about 600,000 rural residents, particularly poor households, women, and disadvantaged groups along the Brahmaputra River.
- ★ The initiative will strengthen the livelihoods and resilience of vulnerable riverine communities through women-focused livelihood support, disaster-resilient agriculture, vocational training, and upgraded rural markets.
- ★ Women's economic empowerment is a central feature, providing support to self-help groups, youth skills development, and market-driven business planning.

Reserve Bank of India Issues Draft Amendments for Lending Rules of Urban Co-operative Banks

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has issued draft amendment directions for Urban Co-operative Banks (UCBs) to revise norms on unsecured loans and concentration risk.
- ★ Unsecured advances are defined as portions of loans not covered by the realisable value of security (primary and collateral) to which the UCB has valid recourse, and this value must be estimated realistically.
- ★ Loans against inland D/A bills with usance up to 90 days will not be treated as unsecured.
- ★ Loans against receivables will not be considered unsecured as long as receivables are not overdue beyond 30 days.
- ★ The total unsecured loans by a UCB to its members cannot exceed 20% of total loans and advances (as per last audited balance sheet).
- ★ Unsecured loans beyond 20% are allowed only for priority sector loans, and up to ₹50,000 per borrower.
- ★ Draft amendments will come into effect from October 1, 2026, or earlier if fully adopted by the UCB, and existing non-compliant loans may run off till maturity, but cannot be renewed unless aligned with new norms.
- ★ The draft directions were announced as part of the Statement on Developmental and Regulatory Policies dated 6th February 2026 and issued by RBI's Department of Regulation for public comments.
- ★ The amendments cover concentration risk management, credit facilities, and financial statements presentation and disclosures of UCBs.
- ★ Aggregate ceiling for unsecured loans by UCBs is proposed to be raised to 20% of total advances, up from the existing 10% of total assets.
- ★ The lending limit to nominal members for purchase of consumer durables is proposed to increase to ₹2,50,000 per borrower.
- ★ RBI has proposed deregulation of tenor and moratorium norms for housing loans for Tier-Three and Tier-Four UCBs.

Axis Bank Introduces Gold Loan Scheme for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises

- ★ Axis Bank has launched a gold loan product specifically targeting micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs).
- ★ The product is available across 3,300+ gold loan-enabled branches nationwide.

- ★ Loan amounts range from ₹50,000 to ₹1 crore, based on borrower eligibility and internal policies.
- ★ The facility operates as a secured overdraft against gold jewellery, allowing borrowers to pay only monthly interest, with the principal remaining as an overdraft.
- ★ The loan-to-value (LTV) ratio goes up to 82%, which is higher than typical industry standards, while remaining fully compliant with regulatory guidelines.
- ★ The product allows same-day over-the-counter disbursement, with funds credited directly to the borrower's account.
- ★ Documentation required includes standard KYC, Udyam Registration or Assist Certificate, and ITR or GST registration.
- ★ The higher LTV is supported by Axis Bank's risk management practices, customer segmentation, and gold valuation and monitoring processes.
- ★ The launch aligns with the increasing prominence of secured lending and MSME financing in India, driven by rising gold prices and demand for short-term liquidity.

RBI Forms Committee to Review Regulatory Framework for Business Correspondents

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has constituted a committee to review the regulatory framework for business correspondents (BCs).
- ★ The committee will suggest amendments and draft revised guidelines for public consultation.
- ★ The committee has been tasked with examining the operations of business correspondents and recommending measures to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the BC model.
- ★ Members of the RBI committee include officials from the RBI, Department of Financial Services, Indian Banks' Association (IBA), and the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD).
- ★ The committee's recommendations will guide the review of related regulatory guidelines, with draft amendment directions to be released for public consultation.
- ★ Business correspondents play a critical role in financial inclusion, acting as enablers of last-mile access to financial services, especially in underserved, rural, and remote areas.
- ★ Business correspondents are deployed by financial institutions and companies to provide basic banking services in unbanked and remote parts of India.
- ★ Services provided by BCs include deposits, withdrawals, and bank account opening through low-cost, technology-driven customer service points spread across India.

PB Pay Gets Reserve Bank of India Approval to Operate as Payment Aggregator

- ★ PB Pay Private Limited, a wholly-owned subsidiary of PB Fintech Limited (parent company of Policybazaar and Paisabazaar), received a Certificate of Authorisation (CoA) from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to operate as a Payment Aggregator (PA).
- ★ The CoA was granted under the Payment and Settlement Systems Act (PSS Act), 2007, completing a regulatory process that began with incorporation in 2024 and in-principle approval in April 2025.

- ★ The approval allows vertical integration for PB Fintech Limited, enabling Policybazaar and Paisabazaar to process payments internally, reducing dependence on third-party payment gateways and enhancing operational efficiency.
- ★ With the PA license, PB Pay can legally onboard merchants and offer digital payment services including Unified Payments Interface (UPI), credit/debit cards, and digital wallets.
- ★ This marks PB Pay's formal entry into India's regulated payments sector, strengthening its digital payment ecosystem.

BOBCARD Launches Braille-Enabled Premier Credit Card in Manipal, Karnataka

- ★ BOBCARD Limited, the credit card issuing arm of Bank of Baroda (BoB), introduced a Braille-enabled version of its Premier Credit Card at Manipal, Karnataka.
- ★ The Braille-enabled credit card is designed to enhance accessibility for visually impaired users by helping them identify and use the card easily in everyday transactions.
- ★ The card incorporates Braille elements that improve ease of use, confidence, and financial inclusion.
- ★ It integrates an inclusive Braille design with premium credit card features.
- ★ The card offers accelerated rewards on travel, lifestyle, dining, and international transactions.
- ★ It provides travel perks such as complimentary domestic airport lounge access.
- ★ Cardholders also receive curated lifestyle privileges and other premium benefits.

Punjab National Bank Announces 'Soldierathon 2026' Themed Half Marathon in New Delhi

- ★ Punjab National Bank (PNB), a leading Public Sector Bank (PSB), announced 'PNB Soldierathon 2026', a themed half marathon, at its Corporate Office in Dwarka, New Delhi.
- ★ The announcement was made ahead of PNB's 132nd Foundation Day Celebrations to be observed on April 12, 2026.
- ★ The event is branded under the theme "PNB Soldierathon 2026 – Run with Soldiers, Run for Soldiers", marking the second edition of PNB's marquee half marathon.
- ★ The initiative aims to honour the Indian Armed Forces while promoting fitness, discipline, national pride, and community engagement.
- ★ It is part of the bank's social responsibility and nation-building efforts.
- ★ During the launch event, PNB unveiled the official name, theme, T-shirt, and medal of PNB Soldierathon 2026.
- ★ A short film was also showcased highlighting the growing scale and impact of PNB's flagship fitness initiatives.

EximPe Receives RBI Approval as Payment Aggregator-Cross Border

- ★ EximPe, a Singapore-headquartered cross-border payments fintech, secured final Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Payment Aggregator-Cross Border (PA-CB) authorisation.

- ★ The approval enables international merchants to collect payments from Indian customers via Unified Payments Interface (UPI), cards, wallets, and net banking.
- ★ Notably, the company obtained the PA-CB licence without holding a prior domestic Payment Aggregator (PA) licence.
- ★ With this authorisation, EximPe can now operate under the PA-CB framework for both import and export transactions.
- ★ Prior to approval, the firm functioned as a technology service provider to banking partners, facilitating over USD 500 million in bank-led cross-border trade payments across key Asia corridors.
- ★ The fintech has set a target to achieve USD 1 billion in annualised UPI payments over the next 24 months, driven by merchant adoption across Asia corridors.
- ★ EximPe was founded by Arjun Zacharia and operates offices in Bengaluru (Karnataka) and Mumbai (Maharashtra).
- ★ The company raised USD 5 million in seed funding in 2022, backed by Leo Capital along with other venture funds and angel investors.

Shri M. Nagaraju Chairs Meeting in New Delhi to Formulate Roadmap for Financial Inclusion 2.0

- ★ Shri M. Nagaraju, Secretary, Department of Financial Services (DFS), Ministry of Finance, chaired a meeting in New Delhi to deliberate on the preparation of the roadmap for Financial Inclusion 2.0.
- ★ Discussions focused on preparation of a plan document to further financial inclusion in India.
- ★ The roadmap aims to ensure access to banking services for all citizens, including rural and vulnerable populations.
- ★ It seeks augmentation of banking infrastructure in villages to improve service delivery.
- ★ The initiative emphasizes availability of formal credit, especially for women and vulnerable sections of society.
- ★ One of the goals is to achieve insurance and pension coverage for all citizens by 2047.
- ★ The plan promotes the development of innovative digital and financial products to cater to diverse needs.
- ★ Efforts will be made to increase penetration of digital transactions, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas.
- ★ Raising awareness on financial frauds, including digital frauds, is a key component of the initiative.
- ★ The roadmap includes imparting financial and digital literacy to adults as well as secondary and senior secondary students.

NPCI International Signs Pact with PayNet Malaysia

- ★ NPCI International Payments Limited (NIPL), the international arm of NPCI, signed an agreement with Payments Network Malaysia Sdn Bhd (PayNet) to enable QR-based merchant payments between India and Malaysia.

- ★ The initiative will be rolled out in a phase-wise manner to ensure smooth implementation.
- ★ In the first phase, Indian travellers in Malaysia can use their UPI apps to make payments at DuitNow QR merchant locations.
- ★ In a later phase, Malaysian visitors to India will be able to make payments by scanning UPI QR codes using their DuitNow apps.
- ★ Indian tourists will have access to millions of DuitNow QR acceptance points across Malaysia, including restaurants, retail stores, tourist attractions, and other establishments.
- ★ This collaboration strengthens cross-border payment connectivity by enabling interoperable QR payment infrastructure that supports secure, efficient, and seamless merchant payments for travellers in both countries.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman Launches Bharat-VISTAAR

- ★ Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced the launch of Bharat-VISTAAR (Virtually Integrated System to Access Agricultural Resources), a multilingual AI tool integrating AgriStack portals and ICAR agricultural practice packages with AI systems.
- ★ AgriStack was launched in 2024 under the Centre's Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) Mission to consolidate agriculture data on a single platform.
- ★ AgriStack is a Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) for the farm sector under the Digital Agriculture Mission (DAM), approved by the Union Cabinet in September 2024.
- ★ AgriStack comprises three foundational registries: Farmer Registry, Geo-referenced Village Maps, and Crop Sown Registry, maintained by State Governments/UTs.
- ★ Each farmer receives a Unique Digital Identity (similar to Aadhaar), known as Kisan Pehchaan Patra, containing landholding details and crop information.
- ★ The Centre targets completion of the Farmer Registry with dynamic Records of Rights (RoR) synchronisation by March 2027; North Eastern States target: March 2028.
- ★ The Crop Sown Registry records season-wise crop data through mobile-based Digital Crop Surveys.
- ★ The Geo-referenced Village Map Registry contains land record geographic data linked with latitude-longitude co-ordinates.
- ★ Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) packages provide scientific agricultural practice data integrated into the AI platform.

Indian Overseas Bank Signs MoU with Indian Institute of Management Kozhikode

- ★ Indian Overseas Bank (IOB) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Indian Institute of Management-Kozhikode (IIM-K), Kerala to collaborate on the design, delivery, and certification of customised training programmes and workshops for IOB's senior leadership and executives.
- ★ The MoU was signed during the 90th Foundation Day celebrations of IOB on 10 February 2026.
- ★ IOB also announced the establishment of a dedicated Centre of Excellence (CoE) for training and capacity building.

- ★ Under the MoU, IIM-K through its Kochi Campus (IIMK Kochi) and IOB through its Staff College and CoE will jointly develop and deliver high-impact learning interventions tailored for top executives, senior management, and selected officers.
- ★ These programmes will align with IOB's strategic priorities and long-term vision of becoming a leading institution anchored in sound and prudent banking principles.
- ★ The collaboration aims to support IOB in navigating a rapidly evolving economic and social environment while pursuing sustainable value creation.
- ★ Both institutions will jointly identify and develop programmes that address IOB's strategic and training needs, leveraging IIM-K's expertise across management domains.
- ★ As part of the partnership, IIMK Kochi Campus and IOB will co-create programmes aligned with the core focus areas of IOB's Staff Training College and CoE.

RBI Permits Bank Loans to National Cooperative Development Corporation

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has allowed bank loans to the National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) for on-lending to co-operative societies to be classified as Priority Sector Lending (PSL) from January 19, 2026.
- ★ This provision applies to all banks except Regional Rural Banks (RRBs), Urban Cooperative Banks (UCBs), Small Finance Banks, and Local Area Banks, and must comply with the PSL Master Direction 2025.
- ★ NCDC, a statutory corporation under the Ministry of Cooperation, provides financial assistance to co-operatives and directly supports the growth of the co-operative movement in India.
- ★ Reforms to strengthen co-operative banks include allowing Urban Cooperative Banks (UCBs) to open new branches and increasing housing loan limits from 10% to 25% of total loans and advances.
- ★ Governance reforms include extending the tenure of co-operative bank directors from 8 to 10 years and reducing Aadhaar-enabled Payment System (AePS) onboarding fees to promote digital inclusion.
- ★ Cooperative banks now benefit from RBI's Integrated Ombudsman Scheme and Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC) coverage up to ₹5 lakh per depositor per bank, enhancing depositor protection.
- ★ Additional support structures include the National Urban Co-operative Finance and Development Corporation (NUCFDC) for IT infrastructure and operational support, and the Shared Services Entity (SSE) Sahakar Sarthi for technological services to Rural Cooperative Banks.
- ★ These measures aim to strengthen financial health, governance, credit availability, and digital adoption in co-operative banks, contributing to a robust co-operative banking system in India.

DBS First in Asia-Pacific to Pilot Visa Intelligent Commerce for Everyday Payments

- ★ DBS Bank Limited, Southeast Asia's largest lender, entered into a strategic partnership with Visa to drive the future of agent-initiated payments under a joint pilot of Visa Intelligent Commerce (VIC).
- ★ With this collaboration, DBS became the 1st issuer in Asia Pacific to drive real-world agentic commerce use cases.

- ★ VIC provides a comprehensive suite of integrated APIs and partner programmes, leveraging Visa's secure infrastructure to enable safe, transparent, and consent-driven payments by AI agents on behalf of consumers.
- ★ Under the pilot project, AI-powered agents successfully executed food and beverage transactions using DBS/POSB credit and debit cards, with payments processed through secure issuer-controlled flows and customer consent mechanisms.
- ★ Following the successful pilot, DBS and Visa plan expansion into online shopping, travel bookings, and other routine digital payment transactions.
- ★ The pilot validates AI-ready credentials, advanced authentication systems, and intent-driven transaction controls to ensure secure and scalable agent-led commerce.
- ★ A related study highlighted that 8 in 10 consumers in Singapore rely on AI assistance while shopping online, underscoring growing adoption of AI-driven digital payments.

Reserve Bank of India Imposes Rs 1.35 Crore Penalties on 5 Banks and Non-Banking Financial Companies

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) imposed monetary penalties totaling Rs 1.35 crore on 5 financial institutions (FIs), including 3 banks – CSB Bank Limited, Bank of Maharashtra (BoM), DCB Bank Limited – and 2 Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) – IIFL Finance Limited and Navi Finserv Limited.
- ★ CSB Bank received the highest penalty of Rs 63.60 lakh for non-compliance with RBI directions on Business Correspondents (BCs) and Customer Service in Banks.
- ★ DCB Bank was penalized Rs 29.60 lakh for failing to maintain the required Loan-To-Value (LTV) ratio in certain gold loan accounts.
- ★ Bank of Maharashtra (BoM) was fined Rs 32.50 lakh for non-compliance with RBI directions on credit information reporting for Self-Help Group (SHG) members and KYC rules.
- ★ IIFL Finance Limited was penalized Rs 5.30 lakh for non-compliance with RBI directions on asset classification.
- ★ Navi Finserv Limited was fined Rs 3.80 lakh for non-compliance regarding Recovery Agents.
- ★ The penalties highlight RBI's focus on regulatory compliance in areas like loan management, KYC norms, BC operations, and asset classification across banks and NBFCs.

Union Minister Launches India's First CBDC-Based Digital Food Currency

- ★ Union Minister Amit Shah, Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA) and Ministry of Cooperation (MoC), launched India's first Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC)-based Digital Food Currency pilot under the Public Distribution System (PDS) in Gandhinagar, Gujarat.
- ★ Under the CBDC framework, digital coupons generated through the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) will be credited directly to beneficiaries as programmable digital currency (₹).
- ★ Beneficiaries can redeem foodgrains at Fair Price Shops (FPS) using CBDC coupons or voucher codes, ensuring transparent, modern, and leakage-free ration distribution.
- ★ The new system addresses operational challenges related to biometric authentication and e-POS (Point of Sale) devices, enabling secure, traceable, and real-time transactions.

- ★ The pilot was launched in Ahmedabad, Anand, Valsad, and Surat districts of Gujarat, in collaboration with the Government of Gujarat and RBI.
- ★ Subsequent phases will expand the initiative to Union Territories (UTs) including Puducherry, Chandigarh, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, and Daman & Diu.
- ★ The e-vouchers in PDS can help reduce physical grain distribution, curb burgeoning food subsidies, and control open-ended procurement of grains.

RBI proposes mandatory reporting of OTC forex and interest rate derivatives by AD Cat-I banks

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has proposed mandatory reporting of Over-the-Counter (OTC) foreign exchange and interest rate derivative contracts by Authorised Dealer Category-I (AD Cat-I) banks.
- ★ The reporting requirement covers transactions done directly or via overseas related parties, including parent companies, subsidiaries, and entities under common control, while associate companies are excluded.
- ★ Banks must report all such trades to the Clearing Corporation of India Ltd (CCIL) trade repository, ensuring transparency in offshore rupee derivative markets.
- ★ Transactions must be reported on the trade date or within two working days; contracts with a notional value of \$1 million or less may be exempt from reporting.
- ★ The RBI has proposed a phased implementation:
 - Within 12 months: At least 70% of the notional value must be reported.
 - After 18 months: Threshold rises to 80%.
 - After 24 months: Threshold reaches 90%.
- ★ The directions apply to all OTC rupee derivative contracts, including those traded on electronic platforms, but exclude exchange-traded derivatives.
- ★ Back-to-back transactions and trades between related parties and other AD Cat-I banks in India are exempted from reporting.
- ★ Reported transaction details must include notional value, counterparty name, maturity, currency, and other specifications, with reporting formats prescribed by CCIL and approved by RBI.
- ★ The proposed framework extends existing reporting norms under the Master Direction on Risk Management and Master Direction on Rupee Interest Rate Derivatives (2025) to include global rupee-linked OTC derivatives by offshore related parties.
- ★ The initiative aims to improve transparency, risk monitoring, and regulatory oversight in offshore rupee derivative markets where many transactions currently remain unreported.

NSE Gets SEBI Nod to Introduce Indian Natural Gas Futures

- ★ The National Stock Exchange (NSE) has received approval from the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) to launch Indian Natural Gas futures.
- ★ The move aims to enable market-based price discovery and improve the availability of natural gas in India.

- ★ The NSE Indian Natural Gas futures will be monthly contracts, with up to 12 contracts available for trading at any point.
- ★ NSE is collaborating with the Indian Gas Exchange (IGX) to leverage IGX's gas trading infrastructure for futures development.
- ★ Natural gas futures will benefit gas producers, city gas distributors, power generators, fertiliser manufacturers, industrial consumers, traders, and financial participants.
- ★ The contracts provide a transparent, efficient, and robust risk management tool aligned with India's evolving natural gas pricing framework.
- ★ Futures will enable effective hedging against price volatility and support long-term planning for market participants.
- ★ The launch reinforces India's strategy to develop a market-based mechanism for natural gas pricing and availability.

RBI Revises External Commercial Borrowings rules, allows companies to raise up to \$1 billion

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) released the final guidelines on External Commercial Borrowings (ECBs), aiming to rationalise fundraising through the route.
- ★ Under the new guidelines, companies can raise ECBs up to \$1 billion or 300% of net worth, whichever is higher, compared to the previous \$750-million annual cap.
- ★ Eligible borrowers must raise ECBs with a minimum average maturity of three years.
- ★ Manufacturing sector borrowers can raise ECBs with a 1–3 year average maturity, provided the outstanding amount does not exceed \$150 million.
- ★ The cost of borrowing through ECBs should be market-determined, with fixed-rate loans linked to floating rate plus spread capped at the ceiling.
- ★ RBI expanded the borrower and lender base, allowing any entity, including firms under restructuring or investigation, to raise funds through ECBs.
- ★ Proceeds of ECBs can be utilised in deposits or other debt instruments with maturity up to one year.
- ★ End-use restrictions apply: ECB funds cannot be used for chit funds, Nidhi companies, real estate, construction of farmhouses, or stock market investments.
- ★ The guidelines aim to simplify reporting, rationalise borrowing limits, and remove restrictions on cost of borrowing, promoting greater flexibility in overseas fundraising.

16th Finance Commission boosts Urban Local Government Grants by 230% to ₹3.56 Trillion

- ★ The 16th Finance Commission (2025–30) has increased grants to Urban Local Governments (ULGs) by 230%, allocating ₹3.56 trillion, up from ₹1.55 trillion under the 15th FC.
- ★ The share of grants to ULGs has risen to a record 45%, compared to 36% in the previous Finance Commission period.

- ★ The 16th Finance Commission has retained 41% vertical devolution while introducing GDP contribution as a new criterion for horizontal distribution.
- ★ The Finance Commission is a constitutional body under Article 280 that strengthens India's fiscal federalism.
- ★ The Finance Commission is constituted by the President of India every five years.
- ★ Shri Arvind Panagariya, former Vice-Chairman of NITI Aayog, is the Chairman of the 16th Finance Commission.

IDFC First Bank Introduces FD-Backed 'Hello Cashback Credit Card' for First-Time Users

- ★ IDFC First Bank launched 'Hello Cashback Credit Card', a Fixed Deposit (FD)-backed credit card aimed at first-time users and individuals with no credit history.
- ★ The card requires no eligibility conditions such as credit score or income proof; customers can avail it by opening a minimum FD of ₹10,000, with the credit limit set at 100% of the FD value.
- ★ It integrates standard credit card functionalities, including contactless payments, Equated Monthly Installment (EMI) conversion options, and enhanced security features.
- ★ The card provides tiered online cashback:
 - 3% on the first ₹10,000 of online spending per billing cycle.
 - 5% spends beyond ₹10,000.
 - 1% cashback on UPI payments made through IDFC FIRST Bank apps.
- ★ The joining fee is ₹1,000, waived until March 31, 2026, and the annual fee is ₹1,000, fully waived on annual spends of ₹2 lakh or more, and 50% waived on ₹1 lakh spends.
- ★ Additional benefits include ₹2 lakh personal accident cover, ₹25,000 purchase protection, and fuel surcharge waivers.

National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development and National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange Launch Price Protection Scheme

- ★ The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) and National Commodity & Derivatives Exchange (NCDEX) launched a Price Protection Scheme to help farmers manage price volatility through put options trading in turmeric, jeera, and dhaniya (coriander).
- ★ Under the scheme, NABARD subsidises premiums for put options for Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) across seven states.
- ★ Eligible organisations include FPOs promoted by NABARD, Small Farmers Agribusiness Consortium (SFAC), National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC), NAFED, State Rural Livelihood Missions, and co-operatives.
- ★ The scheme has been launched in Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Telangana, and Karnataka.
- ★ In the first phase, the scheme has covered 80 FPOs and 1.34 lakh farmers, with 6,544 tonnes of produce hedged.

Mastercard Conducts India's First AI-Powered Fully Authenticated Agentic Commerce Transaction at India AI Impact Summit 2026

- ★ Mastercard completed India's first fully authenticated agentic commerce transaction at the India AI Impact Summit 2026, showcasing AI-led payments.
- ★ The transaction was conducted inside a Large Language Model (LLM)-powered interface, using tokenisation to replace card details with secure digital identifiers, reducing fraud risk.
- ★ The initiative is part of Mastercard's Agentic Commerce Framework and aligns with its Agent Pay Framework for secure AI-driven payments.
- ★ The demonstration involved Mastercard cards issued by Axis Bank and RBL Bank, with payment processing by Cashfree, Juspay, PayU, and Razorpay.
- ★ Merchant partners included Swiggy/Instamart, Zepto, Vodafone Idea, and Tira, demonstrating ecosystem-wide interoperability.
- ★ The transaction used Model Context Protocol (MCP), an open-source standard for connecting AI applications to external systems.
- ★ Tokenisation replaced sensitive card details with unique digital identifiers, enhancing security during transactions.
- ★ The initiative signals Mastercard's readiness for AI-led payments in India, one of its fastest-growing markets, and is part of its Asia-Pacific expansion.

Airtel Money Gets Reserve Bank of India Approval to Operate as Type II Non-Deposit NBFC-ICC

- ★ Airtel Money, a subsidiary of Bharti Airtel, has received a Certificate of Registration (CoR) from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to operate as a Type II – Non-Deposit Taking Non-Banking Financial Company – Investment and Credit Company (Type II NBFC-ND (ICC)).
- ★ The CoR was issued under Section 45-IA of the RBI Act, 1934, bearing Registration No. N-14.03676.
- ★ Being a non-deposit taking NBFC, Airtel Money is prohibited from accepting public deposits, ensuring compliance with RBI prudential norms.
- ★ The company is authorised to engage in credit and investment-related activities, including lending and financial transactions, without soliciting deposits from the public.
- ★ Type II NBFC-ND (ICC) entities are regulated by RBI, do not accept public deposits, but may interact with customers and raise funds from financial institutions.
- ★ Such NBFCs focus on specialised financial operations like microfinance (NBFC-MFI), factoring (NBFC-Factor), or infrastructure financing (NBFC-IDF).
- ★ This registration allows Airtel Money to commence operations as a non-banking financial institution, adhering to conditions prescribed by the RBI.

Reserve Bank of India Imposes ₹38.60 Lakh Penalty on UCO Bank

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) imposed a ₹38.60 lakh monetary penalty on UCO Bank for non-compliance with regulatory directions.

- ★ The penalty pertains to violations related to interest payment periodically on savings deposits, locker rent refunds, and credit information reporting for Self Help Group (SHG) members.
- ★ UCO Bank failed to pay interest on certain savings accounts, did not report SHG member-level credit data to Credit Information Companies (CICs), and did not refund proportionate locker rent on premature locker surrender.
- ★ The penalty was imposed under the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 and the Credit Information Companies (Regulation) Act, 2005.

National Payments Corporation of India Launches UPI One World Wallet

- ★ The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) launched the 'UPI One World' Wallet for international delegates attending the India AI Impact Summit 2026 in New Delhi.
- ★ The pilot programme targets visitors from 40+ countries, enabling real-time UPI person-to-merchant (P2M) payments without requiring an Indian bank account or local mobile number.
- ★ The wallet can be linked to an international mobile number and used at any UPI-enabled merchant across India, including metros, small towns, and rural areas.
- ★ The wallet is being issued through authorised Prepaid Payment Instrument (PPI) providers and is currently available at Indira Gandhi International Airport and the NPCI Pavilion at Bharat Mandapam.
- ★ Delegates can activate the wallet through the CheqUPI app (Transcorp) by completing KYC verification using passport, visa, selfie authentication, and UPI PIN setup.
- ★ The system allows a maximum load of ₹25,000 per transaction with a monthly cumulative limit of ₹50,000.
- ★ The initiative promotes digital payments inclusion, strengthens tourism-friendly financial services, and enhances India's global digital payment infrastructure.

Gujarat International Finance Tec-City City Signs MoU with AJNIFM

- ★ Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT City) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Arun Jaitley National Institute of Financial Management (AJNIFM), Faridabad, under the Ministry of Finance (MoF), in Gandhinagar, Gujarat.
- ★ The MoU aims to promote joint postgraduate (PG) and executive programmes, collaborative research, and academic exchanges in International Finance and Financial Technology (FinTech).
- ★ The partnership supports capacity building under the GIFT International FinTech Institute, aligning financial education with the needs of India's only International Financial Services Centre (IFSC).
- ★ The collaboration aims to create a future-ready talent pipeline for global and cross-border finance operations.
- ★ A five-day Industry Immersion Programme was launched for second-year MBA students of AJNIFM, providing exposure to regulatory frameworks, capital markets, cross-border financial services, and digital finance innovations.
- ★ AJNIFM trains officers of Government Financial and Accounts Services (GF&AS) and provides postgraduate and executive-level financial education.

- ★ GIFT City provides a global financial ecosystem for practical and applied financial learning, strengthening India's international finance and FinTech capabilities.

Axis Bank Partners with IndiGo

- ★ Axis Bank Limited, India's 3rd largest private sector bank, partnered with IndiGo (InterGlobe Aviation Limited) to launch two co-branded travel and lifestyle credit cards – IndiGo Axis Bank Credit Card and IndiGo Axis Bank Premium Credit Card.
- ★ The credit cards provide rewards through IndiGo's loyalty programme – IndiGo BluChip.
- ★ The IndiGo Axis Bank Credit Card is priced at ₹799 (including GST) and is targeted at retail customers, offering a balanced mix of travel and lifestyle benefits across major spending categories.
- ★ The IndiGo Axis Bank Premium Credit Card is priced at ₹5,000 (including GST) and is designed for affluent customers seeking enhanced travel privileges and premium lifestyle benefits.
- ★ Both credit cards are available on the RuPay network and Visa network.
- ★ IndiGo Axis Bank Credit Cardholders will receive a 1,200 BluChips voucher on joining and renewal, along with benefits such as complimentary domestic airport lounge access and accelerated rewards on UPI (Unified Payments Interface) transactions.
- ★ IndiGo Axis Bank Premium Credit Cardholders will receive vouchers worth 5,000 BluChips on joining and renewal, along with complimentary domestic and international airport lounge access.
- ★ The Premium Credit Card also offers a reduced forex markup of 2.5% on international transactions, making it suitable for frequent international travellers.

ICICI Prudential Launches India's First NPS-Based Swasthya Pension Scheme

- ★ ICICI Prudential Pension Funds Management Company Limited launched India's first Swasthya Scheme named "ICICI PF NPS Swasthya Equity Plus", integrating retirement planning with healthcare benefits under the National Pension System (NPS).
- ★ The scheme is launched as a Proof of Concept (POC) under the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) Regulatory Sandbox Framework.
- ★ The scheme was developed in collaboration with Apollo HealthCo Limited (healthcare network partner) and KFin Technologies Limited (digital technology partner).
- ★ Subscribers can make multiple withdrawals up to 25% of their own contributions specifically for medical expenses.
- ★ The scheme aims to promote financial discipline by protecting long-term retirement savings while providing healthcare financial flexibility.
- ★ The product is designed to complement health insurance rather than replace it and may be linked to existing health insurance coverage in the future to strengthen its supplementary role.
- ★ The scheme is primarily a retirement savings product with healthcare-linked withdrawal flexibility.
- ★ During the POC phase, the scheme offers higher equity exposure to support long-term retirement wealth creation.

- ★ In medical emergencies, if expenses exceed 70% of the corpus, premature closure is allowed, with payments made directly to healthcare providers and remaining funds transferred to the regular pension scheme.
- ★ Compared to a regular NPS account, which allows only four partial withdrawals, this scheme provides greater liquidity for medical needs.

WB Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency Issues USD 197.67 Million Guarantee to Support SBI Rooftop Solar Refinancing

- ★ The Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA), the guarantee arm of the World Bank Group (WBG), issued a USD 197.67 million guarantee for five years to Citibank N.A. for its non-shareholder loan to the State Bank of India (SBI).
- ★ The guarantee supports the refinancing of investments in India's Grid-connected Rooftop Solar Photovoltaic (GRPV).
- ★ The GRPV systems programme was launched by SBI in 2016 with financing from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), part of the World Bank Group.
- ★ The facility allows refinancing of the remaining principal of the USD 500 million IBRD loan for the GRPV systems.
- ★ By transferring exposure to Citibank's balance sheet, the transaction frees lending capacity for additional World Bank financing to the Government of India (GoI).
- ★ The guarantee protects Citibank against the risk of non-honoring of financial obligations by a state-owned enterprise.
- ★ The project promotes clean energy by providing grid-connected rooftop solar installations, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and displacing carbon-intensive thermal generation.
- ★ The loan supports a national programme to deliver GRPV systems to commercial and industrial customers across India.

Reserve Bank of India Establishes High-Security Data Centre in Odisha

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has launched its second high-security Data Centre in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, to strengthen the safety, resilience, and continuity of critical financial infrastructure.
- ★ The greenfield facility is built on an 18.55-acre campus at Info Valley-II, Khordha (Odisha) and will host the RBI's core computing systems.
- ★ The centre will manage currency (cash) supply operations, digital inter-bank payments, payment and settlement systems, and regulatory financial data monitoring.
- ★ The facility has achieved Tier IV design certification, meeting the highest global standards of reliability, uptime, redundancy, and operational performance.
- ★ It is designed with in-built fault tolerance, layered physical and cyber safeguards, high redundancy, and resilience architecture to ensure uninterrupted functioning of core systems.
- ★ The new centre is strategically located away from cross-border threat zones and high seismic-risk regions, enhancing national financial security.

- ★ The Primary Data Centre of RBI is located at Kharghar, Navi Mumbai, Maharashtra, which hosts core applications, databases, and software systems.
- ★ With the rapid growth of digital transactions and real-time payment systems, secure data infrastructure is being treated as a cornerstone of financial stability.
- ★ The initiative aligns with global best practices, similar to secure facilities operated by the US Federal Reserve Bank, such as the East Rutherford Operations Center.
- ★ Other Indian institutions like the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) and the State Bank of India (SBI) are also developing their own dedicated data centres.
- ★ As of 2025, RBI is also launching a pilot cloud facility with data centres in Mumbai and Hyderabad to provide sovereign local cloud storage solutions for financial institutions.

New India Co-operative Bank Limited removed from Second Schedule of the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934 from February 2026

- ★ New India Co-operative Bank Limited., Mumbai, Maharashtra has been removed from the Second Schedule of the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934, which lists scheduled banks in India, effective from February 2026.
- ★ Removal from the Second Schedule means the bank loses its status as a scheduled bank, along with privileges such as access to RBI refinance facilities and participation in monetary policy operations and liquidity support mechanisms.
- ★ Scheduled bank status is granted under Section 42 of the RBI Act, 1934, subject to fulfilment of requirements such as minimum capital, reserve maintenance, and regulatory compliance norms.
- ★ Exclusion from the schedule follows the bank's voluntary amalgamation with Saraswat Co-operative Bank Ltd., which was approved in August 2025 to ensure stability after a significant misappropriation scam.
- ★ The action highlights RBI's strict regulatory supervision to ensure financial system stability and depositors' protection in the banking sector during institutional transitions.

RBI Issues Regulatory Guidelines for Bank Lending to Real Estate Investment Trusts

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) released draft amendment directions across five regulatory frameworks covering commercial banks, small finance banks (SFBs), and All India Financial Institutions (AIFIs) regarding credit facilities, concentration risk management, and financial disclosure norms.
- ★ The draft allows regulated entities to provide finance to Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) subject to prudential safeguards, risk management standards, and exposure limits.
- ★ Banks may lend to SEBI-registered REITs in India, while overseas branches may lend to foreign REITs only in jurisdictions having a strong insolvency or bankruptcy legal framework.
- ★ Banks can lend only to listed REITs that have been operational for at least 3 years, have positive net distributable cash flows for the last 2 years, and have no adverse regulatory action in the past 3 years.
- ★ Lending is permitted only if Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs) under the REIT structure are not under financial stress.

- ★ Banks must follow a Board-approved lending policy, ensure continuous monitoring of end-use of funds, and confirm that trust deeds permit borrowing.
- ★ The aggregate bank exposure to a REIT and its SPVs/holding companies (Holdcos) cannot exceed 49% of the REIT asset value, unless the Board prescribes stricter limits.
- ★ Banks must carefully evaluate cash flow stability and debt servicing capacity before extending credit to REIT entities.
- ★ The framework strengthens prudential regulation, financial stability, and safe infrastructure financing channels in the banking system.

Reserve Bank Of India Issues Revised Kisan Credit Card Guidelines

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) issued draft revised guidelines for Kisan Credit Card (KCC) to expand coverage, improve agricultural financing, and streamline loan operations.
- ★ The revised KCC framework applies to commercial banks, Small Finance Banks (SFBs), Regional Rural Banks (RRBs), and rural co-operative banks to ensure uniform implementation across India.
- ★ The guidelines apply to new KCC loans and existing loans during renewal or review cycles.
- ★ Crop seasons have been standardized as 12 months for short-duration crops and 18 months for long-duration crops to ensure uniform repayment and loan planning cycles.
- ★ Marginal farmers are defined as farmers owning up to 1 hectare of land, while small farmers own more than 1 hectare but up to 2 hectares of land.
- ★ The KCC loan tenure has been extended to 6 years to better match long agricultural crop cycles.
- ★ Drawing limits will now be based on scale of finance per crop season, ensuring credit reflects actual cultivation and input costs.
- ★ Farmers can use an additional 20% credit limit for technology-driven agriculture practices such as soil testing, weather forecasting, and organic certification.
- ★ A flexible KCC credit limit of ₹10,000 – ₹50,000 is available for marginal farmers based on landholding size and crop type.
- ★ Eligible borrowers include owner cultivators, tenant farmers, sharecroppers, Self Help Groups (SHGs), and Joint Liability Groups (JLGs).
- ★ Farmers engaged in animal husbandry, fisheries, and allied agricultural activities are also eligible for working capital credit.
- ★ Banks shall waive collateral security and margin requirements for agricultural loans up to ₹2 lakh per borrower.

ADB Signs USD 108 Million Financing Deal with Aavas Financiers Limited

- ★ Asian Development Bank (ADB) signed a senior secured debt financing package of up to USD 108 million (about ₹983 crore) with Aavas Financiers Limited.
- ★ The objective of the financing is to expand affordable housing loans and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) lending in underserved states across India.

- ★ The funding will support housing loans for self-built homes and green-certified houses, promoting climate-resilient and energy-efficient housing solutions for lower-middle-income borrowers.
- ★ The financing will also provide business loans to MSMEs, thereby improving access to credit in regions with limited formal financial penetration.
- ★ The package includes USD 8 million in concessional debt financing through the Canadian Climate and Nature Fund for the Private Sector in Asia (CANPA), administered by ADB.
- ★ The concessional component is aimed at encouraging green housing initiatives and sustainable development practices in the housing finance sector.
- ★ The transaction further includes up to USD 150,000 in technical assistance, which will be used to: Strengthen institutional capacity, Promote awareness about green and climate-resilient housing and Enhance implementation of sustainable housing finance practices
- ★ The initiative aligns with ADB's broader objective of promoting inclusive growth, climate resilience and sustainable infrastructure development in India.

ECONOMY

Goldman Sachs Raises India's Calendar Year 2026 Gross Domestic Product Growth Projection to 6.9%

- ★ Goldman Sachs upgraded India's CY26 (Calendar Year 2026) real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth forecast by 20 basis points (bps) from 6.7% to 6.9%.
- ★ The upgrade follows the conclusion of the United States of America (USA)–India trade deal, which reduced reciprocal tariffs on Indian goods from 25% to 18%.
- ★ The forecast is based on goods export exposure of about 4% of GDP to USA final demand and an export demand elasticity of around 0.7.
- ★ The trade agreement is expected to reduce trade-policy uncertainty and improve private investment intentions in India.
- ★ A capex (capital expenditure) recovery is likely in the second half of CY26 due to improved business confidence.
- ★ Lower tariffs are projected to narrow India's Current Account Deficit (CAD) by about 25% of GDP to nearly 0.8% in CY26.
- ★ Easing trade tensions may support higher capital inflows and reduce pressure on the Indian Rupee (INR).
- ★ India's bilateral goods trade surplus with the USA has doubled from about USD 20 billion in CY15 to nearly USD 40 billion in CY25.
- ★ The expansion in trade surplus has been driven mainly by electronics, pharmaceuticals, and textiles.

Moody's Forecasts India's FY27 GDP Growth at 6.4%, Leading G20 Economies

- ★ Moody's Ratings, an American rating agency, released the report titled 'Banking System Outlook – India: Outlook stable, backed by strong economic growth and robust bank fundamentals'.
- ★ The report projected India's real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth at 6.4% in FY2026-27 (FY27).
- ★ India is expected to remain the fastest-growing economy among G20 nations, driven by robust domestic consumption, policy measures, and a stable banking system.
- ★ System-wide bank loan growth is projected to increase marginally to 11–13% in FY27, compared to 10.6% in FY26 year-to-date.
- ★ The overall system-wide loan-to-deposit ratio is expected to remain around 80%.
- ★ Net Interest Margins (NIMs) are expected to improve gradually as deposit costs decline, supporting banking sector profitability.
- ★ Loans are projected to grow in tandem with deposits, keeping the loan-to-deposit ratio around 80% through FY27.
- ★ Non-Performing Loan (NPL) ratio is expected to remain low at 2–2.5%, with a slight rise in slippages as loans mature.
- ★ Retail asset quality is expected to stay stable, particularly among prime borrowers.
- ★ Banking sector profitability will remain stable, with system-wide Return on Assets (ROA) projected to increase to 1.2–1.3% in FY27, compared to 1.2% in H1 FY26.

APPS & PORTAL

NSO Launches Beta Version of Model Context Protocol Server for eSankhyiki Portal

- ★ The National Statistics Office (NSO) under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) launched the beta version of its Model Context Protocol (MCP) server for the eSankhyiki portal.
- ★ The MCP Server enables users to connect official datasets directly to their own Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools and applications.
- ★ The MCP Server is a major step in building the data infrastructure required for Viksit Bharat.
- ★ The beta version currently features seven datasets: Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), Consumer Price Index (CPI), Annual Survey of Industries (ASI), Index of Industrial Production (IIP), National Accounts Statistics (NAS), Wholesale Price Index (WPI), and Environment Statistics.
- ★ MoSPI plans to expand the MCP Server with additional datasets in the coming months.
- ★ The MCP Server allows users to access verified information and insights in real-time, enabling faster work, informed business decisions, and immediate access for policymakers.
- ★ The initiative aligns with the objectives of Working Group 6 on Democratising AI, headed by Dr. Saurab Garg, Secretary of MoSPI.

- ★ The eSankhyiki portal, launched in June 2024, serves as India's national platform for official statistics, providing a centralised gateway to socioeconomic and macroeconomic data.

SH Act 2013 Ensures Safe and Secure Workplace Environment for Women

- ★ The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 (SH Act) aims to provide a safe and secure working environment for women.
- ★ The SH Act covers all women, irrespective of age or employment status, in public and private sectors, organised and unorganised, including domestic workers.
- ★ The Act establishes institutional mechanisms for redressal through Internal Committees (IC) and Local Committees (LC).
- ★ An Internal Committee is mandatory in workplaces with 10 or more employees to handle complaints of sexual harassment.
- ★ A Local Committee is constituted at the district level to address cases in workplaces with fewer than 10 employees or complaints against employers.
- ★ The Act enforces compliance through strict penalties for employers who fail to implement its provisions.
- ★ A first violation attracts a fine of ₹50,000, while repeat violations may lead to a double fine and possible cancellation or non-renewal of business licences.
- ★ The Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) is the nodal ministry responsible for effective implementation of the Act.
- ★ The MWCD launched the Sexual Harassment electronic Box (SHe-Box) on 29th August 2024.
- ★ SHe-Box serves as a single-window, centralised digital platform, creating a central repository to strengthen monitoring of the Act's implementation and track cases filed and disposed of nationwide.

BUSINESS NEWS

Walmart Becomes First Retail Company Worldwide to Reach USD 1 Trillion Market Capitalisation

- ★ Walmart Inc., an American multinational retail corporation, became the first retail company globally to achieve a market capitalisation of USD 1 trillion.
- ★ The milestone followed a strong rally in Walmart's share price over the past year.
- ★ Walmart's stock rose by nearly 26% in the last 12 months and about 468% over the past decade.
- ★ This performance outpaced the S&P 500 Index, which gained around 264% during the same decade.
- ★ In December 2025, Walmart was added to the Nasdaq-100 Index, a tech-focused index comprising the world's most valuable non-financial companies.
- ★ Walmart has invested billions of dollars in Artificial Intelligence (AI)-enabled supply chains to enhance operational efficiency.

- ★ AI investments improved inventory planning, fresh produce delivery, and delivery speed.
- ★ These technology upgrades helped Walmart exceed same-store sales estimates for 15 consecutive quarters.
- ★ Other companies with market capitalisation above USD 1 trillion include Nvidia, Alphabet, Apple, Microsoft, Amazon, Meta, Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC), Tesla, and Broadcom.

DEFENCE

Taiwan Completes Maiden Underwater Sea Trial of Indigenous Submarine

- ★ Taiwan has successfully completed the first underwater sea trial of its domestically developed submarine, marking a major milestone in strengthening maritime deterrence against China.
- ★ The submarine, named “Narwhal” (also known as Hai Kun), conducted a shallow-water submerged navigation test off Kaohsiung, Taiwan’s southern port city.
- ★ The trial was confirmed by CSBC Corporation, Taiwan’s state-owned shipbuilder leading the indigenous submarine programme.
- ★ Taiwan plans a total of eight domestically built submarines under this programme to enhance its ability to protect vital sea lanes and conduct sea denial operations.
- ★ The programme has leveraged expertise and technology from the United States and the United Kingdom, a notable breakthrough for diplomatically isolated Taiwan.
- ★ China considers Taiwan its territory and has increased military pressure through frequent naval exercises around the island.
- ★ Submarines are seen by Taipei as a critical asymmetric capability to counter China’s naval superiority.
- ★ The Narwhal submarine, originally scheduled for delivery in 2024, faced delays due to international constraints and political pressure from Beijing.
- ★ The submarine has a cost of T\$49.36 billion, is equipped with a US-supplied combat management system, and will carry US-made Mark 48 heavyweight torpedoes.
- ★ Future submarines in the series may be equipped with missile systems to further enhance deterrence.
- ★ Taiwan aims to deploy at least two domestically built submarines by 2027, focusing on mobile and survivable systems such as submarines, drones, and truck-mounted missiles.
- ★ The submarine trial highlights Taiwan’s intent to bolster defense capabilities amid growing strategic competition in the Indo-Pacific region.

Indian Army Signs Deal with US Firm Shield AI

- ★ The Indian Army (IA) signed an agreement with USA defence technology firm Shield AI for the procurement of V-BAT VTOL Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) to be manufactured in India.

- ★ Under the agreement, Shield AI will supply V-BAT drones and licenses for Hivemind autonomy software, enabling the armed forces to develop and test mission-specific autonomy applications.
- ★ V-BAT is classified as a ‘Group-3’ VTOL UAS and features a ducted-fan design, allowing vertical take-off and landing without runways.
- ★ Key features of V-BAT include a heavy-fuel engine, long-endurance surveillance of over 12 hours, capability to operate in difficult terrain and high-threat environments, and a lower logistical footprint.

Indian Army and Indo-Tibetan Border Police Conduct Joint “Agni Pariksha” Exercise

- ★ The Indian Army and the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) conducted a joint training exercise named “Agni Pariksha” at Sigar in East Siang district, Arunachal Pradesh from January 19 to 24, 2026 to enhance inter-force combat synergy and operational integration.
- ★ The primary objective of Agni Pariksha was to familiarise non-artillery personnel with artillery procedures, co-ordination mechanisms, and the execution of firing missions.
- ★ The exercise aimed to break traditional role-based silos by exposing infantry and ITBP personnel to realistic artillery employment in dynamic combat scenarios.
- ★ Spearhead gunners from the Spear Corps conducted training alongside infantry regiments and ITBP units, marking the first-of-its-kind collaborative firepower training initiative.
- ★ Non-artillery personnel were systematically trained to independently conduct multiple artillery firing drills under the close supervision of experienced gunners.
- ★ The exercise significantly enhanced mutual trust, co-ordination, and operational responsiveness among the participating forces.
- ★ By improving understanding of firepower integration, the training helped in rapid decision-making and effective battlefield co-ordination in high-intensity and border-related contingencies.
- ★ This was the first phase of a broader initiative, considered a pioneering step towards developing integrated combat capabilities required for future battlefields.
- ★ The exercise reflects the Indian Army’s evolving doctrine of joint operations and closer co-ordination with central armed police forces in complex operational environments.

India-Kyrgyzstan Joint Special Forces Exercise KHANJAR Begins in Assam

- ★ The 13th edition of the India-Kyrgyzstan Joint Special Forces Exercise KHANJAR (KHANJAR-XIII) is being conducted from 4 to 17 February 2026 at Missamari, Assam.
- ★ Exercise KHANJAR is an annual joint military exercise conducted alternately between India and Kyrgyzstan since 2011.
- ★ The Indian Army contingent comprises 20 personnel from the Parachute Regiment (Special Forces), while the Kyrgyzstan contingent comprises 20 personnel from the ILBRIS/Scorpion Special Forces Brigade.
- ★ The exercise aims to exchange best practices in Counter Terrorism and Special Forces Operations in urban and mountainous terrain.

- ★ Training activities include urban warfare, counter-terrorism, sniping, reconnaissance, surveillance, room intervention, building clearance, and mountain craft under a United Nations (UN) mandate.
- ★ The exercise enhances interoperability between the Special Forces of both nations and strengthens defence ties.
- ★ Exercise KHANJAR addresses common concerns of international terrorism and extremism, reaffirming the commitment of India and Kyrgyzstan towards peace, stability, and security in the region.
- ★ The exercise provides an opportunity to develop advanced Special Forces skills, including sniping, complex building intervention, and mountain craft.
- ★ KHANJAR facilitates sharing of experiences, best practices, and joint drills in special operations to strengthen bilateral military co-operation.

INS Sudarshini of Indian Navy Makes First Lokayan 26 Port Call at Salalah, Oman

- ★ Indian Navy's sail training ship INS Sudarshini arrived at the port of Salalah, Oman, marking the first international port call of her transoceanic voyage – Lokayan 26.
- ★ The arrival at Oman represents a key milestone in the ten-month long deployment, aimed at showcasing India's maritime heritage and fostering international maritime co-operation.
- ★ INS Sudarshini sailed from her home port, Kochi, on 20 January 2026, navigating the seasonal winds of the Arabian Sea, completing the first leg of her voyage.
- ★ The port call strengthens maritime ties and strategic partnership between India and Oman.
- ★ During the three-day visit, professional interactions and training engagements with the Royal Navy of Oman are planned.
- ★ The ship will be open to school children and local residents, promoting maritime awareness and people-to-people connect.
- ★ The Lokayan 26 voyage serves as a symbol of India's seafaring legacy and the Indian Navy's commitment to maritime diplomacy, goodwill, and international co-operation across the oceans.

Sagar Defence Delivers First Batch of Unmanned Surface Vessels to Indian Navy

- ★ Sagar Defence Engineering Private Limited (Sagar Defence), based in Mumbai, Maharashtra, successfully delivered the first two Unmanned Surface Vessels (USVs) to the Indian Navy (IN), marking its maiden batch delivery.
- ★ The USVs are designed for high-speed autonomous operations with advanced payloads and feature Artificial Intelligence (AI)-driven navigation and real-time communication systems.
- ★ The vessels can exceed 50 knots and incorporate stealth features to reduce radar signature.
- ★ In terms of combat capability, the interceptor craft is equipped with a 7 mm gun and has provisions for short-range missiles and loitering munitions.
- ★ The USVs can counter small hostile boats, intercept fast targets, and conduct precision strikes, combining patrol and offensive roles.

- ★ The platforms offer multi-mission capabilities including maritime surveillance, reconnaissance, and support to anti-submarine warfare (ASW)
- ★ The vessels are built with over 70% indigenous content, highlighting India's growing defence manufacturing capability.
- ★ A contract for 12 USVs was signed between the Indian Navy and Sagar Defence on 8 January 2023 under the indigenous autonomous boat swarm programme.
- ★ The delivery aligns with the Government of India's Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative, promoting self-reliance in defence technology.

Indian Coast Guard Commemorates 50 Years of Dedicated Service on Raising Day

- ★ The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) is commemorating its 50th Raising Day on 1 February 2026, marking five decades of dedicated service to the nation.
- ★ The ICG was raised on 1 February 1977 with just seven surface platforms and has grown into a formidable maritime force.
- ★ Currently, the ICG operates 155 ships and 80 aircraft, with a target to reach 200 surface platforms and 100 aircraft by 2030.
- ★ The force is popularly known as Bharatiya Tatrakshak and safeguards India's maritime interests.
- ★ The ICG is responsible for maritime law enforcement, coastal security, search and rescue, marine environmental protection, and humanitarian assistance.
- ★ It maintains surveillance over two million square kilometres of Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and more than 11,000 kilometres of coastline.
- ★ The ICG aligns with Aatmanirbhar Bharat and Make in India initiatives by inducting indigenously built ships, aircraft, helicopters, and advanced surveillance systems.
- ★ Over five decades, the ICG has evolved into a versatile and highly respected maritime organisation.

India and Greece Ink Joint Declaration to Strengthen Defence Industry Collaboration

- ★ India and Greece signed a Joint Declaration of Intent (JDI) in New Delhi to strengthen bilateral defence industrial co-operation.
- ★ The agreement was signed after bilateral talks between Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Greek Defence Minister Nikolaos-Georgios Dendias at the Manekshaw Centre.
- ★ The declaration will serve as the foundation for developing a five-year roadmap for defence partnership between the two countries.
- ★ Both countries exchanged the Bilateral Military Cooperation Plan for 2026, outlining future military engagements between their armed forces.
- ★ The initiative aims to expand collaboration between India's Aatmanirbhar Bharat (Self-Reliance) initiative and Greece's Hellenic defence reforms under Agenda 2030.
- ★ The signatories of the declaration were Union Minister Rajnath Singh on behalf of India and Nikolaos-Georgios Dendias on behalf of Greece.

- ★ Greece announced the deployment of a Greek International Liaison Officer at the Information Fusion Centre – Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) in Gurugram, Haryana, to enhance maritime co-operation.

India–Tanzania Convene 4th Joint Defence Cooperation Committee Meeting in Zanzibar

- ★ The 4th Joint Defence Cooperation Committee (JDCC) meeting between India and Tanzania was held in Zanzibar from 02–03 February 2026.
- ★ The meeting reviewed ongoing defence co-operation and discussed expanding collaboration in military training, service-to-service co-operation, maritime security, and defence industry co-operation.
- ★ Both sides explored new areas such as counter-terrorism, peacekeeping training, and capacity building in niche domains like Electronic Warfare (EW), Cyber Security, and Artificial Intelligence (AI).
- ★ Military medicine was identified as a new potential area of co-operation between the two countries.
- ★ India and Tanzania agreed to initiate Air Force-to-Air Force co-operation, complementing existing co-operation between their Navies and Armies.
- ★ The Indian delegation was led by Shri Amitabh Prasad, Joint Secretary (Defence Cooperation), along with senior officials from the Department of Defence and the Indian Defence Forces.
- ★ The Tanzanian delegation was led by Mr. Ibrahim Mhona, Chief of Operations and Training, TPDF (Tanzania People’s Defence Force).

Indian Air Force, Royal Thai Air Force Hold Joint In-Situ Exercise

- ★ The Indian Air Force (IAF) and the Royal Thai Air Force (RTAF) are conducting a joint in-situ air exercise to enhance operational co-ordination and interoperability between the two air forces.
- ★ In-Situ Training refers to exercises conducted under realistic operational conditions at or near actual mission locations, rather than simulated environments.
- ★ The primary objective of the exercise is to strengthen aerial operational co-ordination, improve combat interoperability, and reinforce Indo-Thai defence co-operation and regional synergy.
- ★ The IAF deployment includes Su-30MKI multirole fighter jets, AWACS (Airborne Warning and Control System), AEW&C (Airborne Early Warning & Control) aircraft, and IL-78 mid-air refuelling aircraft.
- ★ The RTAF participation features Gripen fighter aircraft, a Sweden-made multirole combat jet.
- ★ Diplomatic relations between India and Thailand were established in 1947, and both countries celebrated the 75th anniversary of ties in 2022.
- ★ A key milestone in defence ties is the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Defence Cooperation, signed on 25 January 2012.
- ★ Ongoing defence co-operation includes defence dialogues, joint naval maritime patrolling, annual staff talks, expert exchange visits, training of officers, and trilateral/multilateral military exercises.

- ★ As part of high-level engagements, General Songwit Noonpackdee, Chief of Defence Force of the Royal Thai Armed Forces, visited India from 21–24 January 2025.
- ★ Thailand’s “Act West” policy complements India’s “Act East” policy, strengthening regional strategic alignment.

Agneevasthraa Partners with Indian Army

- ★ Agneevasthraa, a domestic manufacturer of carbon fabrics and advanced composite materials, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Indian Army (IA) to supply materials for defence applications.
- ★ The MoU covers carbon fabrics, which are lightweight, high-strength textiles made from carbon fibers, and composite materials, combining two or more constituent materials for defence-specific properties.
- ★ The supplied materials will be used in armour systems, protective gear, structural components, and high-performance defence platforms.
- ★ The collaboration aligns with the Government of India (GoI)’s vision of ‘Make in India’ and ‘Aatmanirbhar Bharat’, promoting domestic defence manufacturing.
- ★ Agneevasthraa has a long-standing association with the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) in delivering world-class material innovations.
- ★ The MoU ensures the Indian Army has access to cutting-edge, locally sourced carbon-related technology meeting rigorous global standards.
- ★ The collaboration focuses on custom design and manufacturing of advanced carbon and allied materials for critical, high-stakes defence applications.

Indian Air Force to Showcase Combat Strength at Exercise Vayushakti-26

- ★ The Indian Air Force (IAF) will conduct Exercise Vayushakti-26 on 27 February 2026 at Pokhran Air-to-Ground Range, Jaisalmer, showcasing its combat readiness and firepower capability.
- ★ Vayushakti-26 is a large-scale operational exercise aimed at demonstrating the IAF’s role as the nation’s “first, fastest and fiercest responder”.
- ★ The exercise will highlight the IAF’s ability to rapidly punish adversaries, dominate the operational environment and convert tactical actions into strategic outcomes.
- ★ It will exhibit rapid response capability, precision strike power and full-spectrum aerial warfare operations in high-intensity combat scenarios.
- ★ Frontline fighter aircraft participating include Tejas, Rafale, Jaguar, Mirage-2000, Sukhoi-30MKI, MiG-29 and Hawk executing co-ordinated strike missions.
- ★ Strategic and tactical airlift platforms such as C-130J, C-295 and C-17 will demonstrate rapid troop deployment and logistics mobility.
- ★ Rotary-wing platforms including Chetak, ALH MK-IV, Mi-17 IV, Light Combat Helicopter (LCH), Apache and Chinook will perform assault, support and rescue operations.
- ★ Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA) will undertake surveillance, reconnaissance and strike roles during the exercise.

- ★ The drill will feature advanced weapon systems such as Short Range Loitering Munitions (SRLM) for precision targeting.
- ★ Akash Surface-to-Air Missile Systems will demonstrate indigenous air defence capability.
- ★ SpyDer Air Defence Systems will showcase quick-reaction aerial threat interception.
- ★ Counter Unmanned Aerial Systems (CUAS) will highlight anti-drone warfare preparedness.
- ★ Operations will be conducted in day, dusk and night conditions to simulate realistic combat environments.
- ★ The exercise reflects the vision of Aatmanirbhar Bharat in strengthening self-reliant defence capabilities.
- ★ Guided by the core values “Achook, Abhedya aur Sateek”, the drill emphasises precision, invincibility and accuracy in air operations.
- ★ Vayushakti-26 will also demonstrate the IAF’s role in Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Management (HADR) missions.

Indian Navy Launches MILAN Village at Visakhapatnam as Part of Exercise MILAN 2026

- ★ The Indian Navy inaugurated the MILAN Village at the Eastern Naval Command, as part of its flagship international naval exercise, MILAN 2026.
- ★ The inauguration was presided over by Vice Admiral Sanjay Bhalla, Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Naval Command, who formally opened the village and inspected the facilities for participating navies.
- ★ The MILAN Village serves as an experience zone bringing together delegates and naval personnel from over 70 countries, fostering camaraderie, cultural A key focus of the village is cultural exchange, featuring live vocal performances, traditional folk dances, and cultural ensembles, showcasing India’s diverse heritage and artistic legacy.
- ★ The village includes stalls displaying naval souvenirs, handicrafts, and handloom products, representing craftsmanship from across India, along with regional Indian cuisine.
- ★ Vice Admiral Sanjay Bhalla emphasized that MILAN Village complements professional naval engagement and enhances India’s maritime outreach during International Fleet Review (IFR) 2026, MILAN 2026, and IONS Conclave of Chiefs hosted in Visakhapatnam.
- ★ Exercise MILAN 2026 will be conducted from 15–25 February 2026 and is one of the largest multilateral naval exercises in the Indo-Pacific, strengthening interoperability, maritime domain awareness, and collective response capabilities.
- ★ The Harbour and Sea Phases of the exercise will focus on anti-submarine warfare, air defence, search and rescue, and co-operative security missions, reinforcing a free, open, inclusive, and rules-based maritime order.

INS Tarangini to Participate in IFR 2026 and MILAN Exercises at Visakhapatnam

- ★ INS Tarangini, the Indian Navy’s sail training ship, is among the prominent vessels arriving at Visakhapatnam for the International Fleet Review (IFR) 2026 and multinational naval exercise MILAN, commencing February 18, 2026.

- ★ Around 75 naval vessels are expected to participate, including 20 foreign warships, highlighting India's expanding naval diplomacy in the Indo-Pacific.
- ★ INS Tarangini was commissioned in 1997 and became the first Indian naval vessel to circumnavigate the globe in 2003–2004.
- ★ The ship represented India at the International Fleet Review during the Sri Lankan Navy's diamond jubilee in December 2010, being the only tall ship present and the first reviewed by the Sri Lankan President.
- ★ INS Vikrant, India's first indigenously built aircraft carrier, will headline IFR 2026, symbolising naval self-reliance and blue-water capability.
- ★ IFR 2026 provides a platform to showcase naval strength, operational readiness, and defence manufacturing achievements.
- ★ Foreign naval participation includes the Philippine Navy's BRP Miguel Malvar, Maldives' CGS Huravee, Seychelles Coast Guard SCGS Zoroaster (P609), and Vietnam People's Navy frigate VNPS 17.
- ★ Participation from 20 foreign navies reflects India's focus on co-operative security, interoperability, and maritime partnerships in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and Indo-Pacific.
- ★ The simultaneous conduct of IFR 2026 and MILAN underscores India's emphasis on strategic maritime engagement and promoting regional stability.

Indigenous Cadet Training Ship 'Krishna' Launched by Indian Navy

- ★ The first indigenously designed and built Cadet Training Ship (CTS) 'Krishna (Yard 18003)' of the Indian Navy was launched at Larsen & Toubro (L&T) Shipbuilding facility, Kattupalli near Chennai, Tamil Nadu.
- ★ The ship was launched by Anupama Chauhan, President of Defence Wives Welfare Association (DWWA), in the presence of General Anil Chauhan, Chief of Defence Staff (CDS).
- ★ CTS Krishna is the first of three Cadet Training Ships being constructed by M/s L&T Shipyard under a contract signed with the Ministry of Defence on 07 March 2023.
- ★ The ship is named after River Krishna, the third longest river in India, following Naval naming traditions.
 - Key Specifications: The ship is 122 metres long, has a displacement of 4,700 tonnes, a maximum speed of nearly 20 knots, and an endurance of about 60 days at sea.
 - Crew Capacity: The vessel will accommodate 20 Officers, 150 Sailors, and 200 Cadets.
 - Primary Role: To provide basic sea training to Naval Cadets, including seamanship, navigation drills, ship handling, and onboard life exposure.
- ★ The ships will also train Officer Cadets (including women) and Cadets from Friendly Foreign Countries after their shore-based basic training.
- ★ Secondary Roles include Hospital Ship services, Non-Combatant Evacuation Operations (NEO), Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR), and Search and Rescue (SAR)
- ★ The ship has been indigenously designed and built, marking a major step in the Indian Navy's indigenous shipbuilding programme.
- ★ The project supports the Government of India's Aatmanirbhar Bharat and Make in India

- ★ Formal delivery of CTS Krishna to the Indian Navy is planned by the end of 2026.
- ★ The launch ceremony was attended by senior naval officials including Vice Admiral Sanjay Sadhu and Rear Admiral Upal Kundu, along with leadership from L&T Shipbuilding.

Indian Navy Hosts Exercise MILAN 2026

- ★ The Indian Navy (IN) hosted three major international engagements at Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh (AP) from 15–25 February 2026, including Exercise MILAN 2026, International Fleet Review (IFR) 2026, and the 9th Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) Conclave.
- ★ Exercise MILAN 2026 was inaugurated by Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and conducted from 19–25 February 2026 in the Bay of Bengal as a biennial multilateral naval exercise hosted by the Indian Navy.
- ★ The theme of MILAN 2026 was “Camaraderie, Cooperation, Collaboration”.
- ★ International Fleet Review (IFR) 2026 was held on 18 February 2026 off Visakhapatnam, under the theme “United through Oceans”, presided over by President Droupadi Murmu, Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces.
- ★ The 9th IONS Conclave 2026 was held on 20 February 2026 at Visakhapatnam, AP.
- ★ India will lead IONS for the 2026–2028 term, marking its second tenure as Chair since the forum’s launch in 2008, New Delhi.
- ★ Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi, Chief of Naval Staff (CNS) of the Indian Navy, assumed the Chairmanship of IONS from the Royal Thai Navy (RTN).

INS Sudarshini Makes Historic Port Visit to Safaga, Egypt

- ★ Indian Navy’s Sail Training Ship INS Sudarshini arrived at Safaga, Egypt as part of its Lokayan-26 deployment.
- ★ The ship covered a distance of 1,832 nautical miles in 16 days, sailing from Salalah to Safaga, demonstrating crew endurance, confidence, and operational resilience.
- ★ On arrival, the ship was welcomed by Egyptian Navy officials and Indian Embassy representatives, highlighting strong diplomatic maritime relations.
- ★ The Commanding Officer of INS Sudarshini met Rear Admiral Ramy Ahmed Ismail Mohamed, Base Commander, Red Sea and Safaga Naval Base, strengthening naval co-operation and interoperability.
- ★ During the port visit, the Indian Navy conducted professional exchanges, shared sail training best practices, and performed community outreach activities to promote bilateral goodwill.
- ★ The transit through the Gulf of Aden and Red Sea was a critical operational phase, requiring navigation through challenging weather conditions and dense shipping traffic, showcasing advanced seamanship skills.
- ★ The visit supports the “Bridges of Friendship” initiative, reinforcing India–Egypt maritime co-operation and strategic naval partnership.
- ★ The deployment reflects the Indian Navy’s commitment to maritime diplomacy, training excellence, and international naval collaboration.

7th Edition of Joint Military Exercise ‘Dharma Guardian’

- ★ Dharma Guardian, the 7th edition of the India–Japan Joint Military Exercise, began at Chaubattia, Uttarakhand, from 24 February to 9 March 2026.
- ★ The exercise strengthens defence co-operation between India and Japan, particularly in semi-urban warfare and tactical co-ordination.
- ★ The exercise involves 120 personnel from each side, with Japan represented by the 32nd Infantry Regiment and India represented by the Ladakh Scouts.
- ★ The exercise is conducted alternately in India and Japan and serves as a key pillar of bilateral defence co-operation.
- ★ The main objective is to enhance interoperability, jointness, and synchronized tactical procedures for joint military operations in semi-urban environments under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter.
- ★ Training modules focus on high physical fitness, joint operational planning, and modern combat tactical drills using advanced technology.
- ★ Tactical activities include establishing Temporary Operating Bases, developing Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) grids, and setting up Mobile Vehicle Check Posts (VCPs).
- ★ Specialized mission training includes cordon and search operations, heliborne missions, and house intervention drills in hostile environments.
- ★ The exercise also focuses on physical conditioning and operational readiness in challenging terrains.
- ★ Previous editions: 6th edition held at East Fuji Training Area, Japan (2025) and 5th edition at Rajasthan, India (2024).
- ★ Exercise Dharma Guardian is an annual exercise between the Indian Army and the Japanese Ground Self Defence Force conducted in 2018.
- ★ The exercise reflects a shared vision of a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific”, strengthening regional stability, security co-operation, and rules-based international order.

Army Chief Flags in Bharat RanBhoomi Darshan Expedition at National War Memorial

- ★ Chief of the Army Staff General Upendra Dwivedi flagged in the Bharat RanBhoomi Darshan Expedition at the National War Memorial, in the presence of senior civil and defence dignitaries.
- ★ The 3,400-kilometre expedition began from Dwarka, Gujarat, and covered key battlefields and border areas across Gujarat and Rajasthan before concluding in New Delhi.
- ★ The initiative was led by the Regiment of Artillery and aimed to honour India’s war heroes, preserve military heritage, highlight border infrastructure development, and promote national integration.
- ★ The route covered strategically significant locations including Bhuj, Rann of Kutch, Munabao, Longewala, Jaisalmer, Bikaner, and Ambala, traversing remote desert terrain in the Rann of Kutch and the Thar Desert.

- ★ The 35-member contingent included personnel from the Regiment of Artillery, the Indian Navy, and the Border Security Force, reflecting joint co-operation among multiple security forces.
- ★ During the expedition, homage was paid at major war memorials and historic battle sites along the Western Front. Engagement activities included interactions with Veer Naris and Viranganas, veterans, National Cadet Corps cadets, students, and residents of border villages.
- ★ The expedition showcased enhanced border connectivity and infrastructure development in forward areas, reinforcing India's operational preparedness and outreach efforts in strategic regions.
- ★ The Bharat RanBhoomi Darshan initiative connects India's historic military sacrifices with present-day defence readiness, inspiring youth and strengthening the bond between the Armed Forces and civilians, particularly in remote border areas.

7th India–Japan Joint Military Exercise 'Dharma Guardian' Held in Uttarakhand

- ★ The 7th edition of the India–Japan Joint Military Exercise 'Dharma Guardian' commenced at the Foreign Training Node, Chaubattia, Uttarakhand and is being conducted from 24 February to 9 March 2026.
- ★ It is an annual bilateral military exercise between the Indian Army and the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force (JGSDF), held alternately in India and Japan.
- ★ Both countries have deployed a 120-member contingent. The Japanese side is represented by troops from the 32nd Infantry Regiment, while the Indian contingent is drawn from the Ladakh Scouts.
- ★ The exercise aims to strengthen military co-operation, enhance interoperability, and improve combined operational capabilities, particularly in semi-urban operational environments.
- ★ The drill focuses on joint planning, synchronised tactical operations, and application of modern military technologies to address emerging security challenges.
- ★ The exercise is designed to achieve high physical endurance standards, seamless co-ordination, and enhanced joint combat readiness under realistic operational conditions.
- ★ 'Dharma Guardian' remains a key pillar of India–Japan defence ties, reinforcing mutual trust and preparedness to respond effectively to regional security concerns.

RANKS, INDICES & REPORTS

Global Soft Power Index 2026

- ★ Global Soft Power Index 2026 ranks countries based on their ability to influence and attract others through culture, values, governance, and ideas, rather than military force or economic pressure.
- ★ Soft Power refers to a nation's ability to shape preferences of other countries through culture, diplomacy, values, innovation, and global reputation.
- ★ Strong soft power helps attract tourists, investors, skilled talent, and strengthens international partnerships.

- ★ It is often described as the power of perception, where a country's global image directly impacts its influence and growth.
- ★ The Global Soft Power Index measures soft power using Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and nation brand attributes.
- ★ India ranks 32nd globally with a score of 48.0.
- ★ India dropped 2 positions and declined by 1.8 points compared to the previous year.
- ★ Despite strong cultural influence and international outreach, improvement is needed in governance, media perception, and sustainable development.
- ★ The United States remains at the top, but its score declined, highlighting fragile global trust.
- ★ China narrowed the gap with the US, reflecting rising global influence.
- ★ Japan overtook the UK to rank third, showing strong nation branding.

India Emerges as a Major Engine of Global Urban Growth in 2025: UN Report

- ★ A United Nations report (2025) states that around 45% of the global population lives in urban areas, a sharp rise from 20% in 1950.
- ★ India has emerged as one of the biggest drivers of global urban growth, placing it at the centre of worldwide urbanisation trends.
- ★ India currently has five megacities, each with a population of more than 10 million.
- ★ New Delhi, with a population of over 30 million, is among the four largest cities in the world, alongside Jakarta, Dhaka and Tokyo.
- ★ Major Indian cities such as Mumbai, Bengaluru, Chennai and Kolkata continue to attract migration, jobs and investment.
- ★ The 2025 UN report introduced the "Degree of Urbanization" method, which classifies cities based on population size and density, not just administrative boundaries.
- ★ Under this method, densely populated urban areas outside official city limits are also counted as cities.
- ★ Due to this revised methodology, population estimates of many Indian and Asian cities have increased, offering a more accurate picture of urban living patterns.
- ★ Asia dominates global urbanisation, hosting 9 of the world's 10 largest cities and nearly 60% of all megacities.
- ★ India plays a central role in Asia's urban growth, supported by its young population, internal migration and expanding service and manufacturing sectors.
- ★ While megacities receive attention, the report highlights that most urban growth is occurring in small and medium-sized cities.
- ★ Nearly 96% of cities globally have populations below 1 million.
- ★ In India, smaller cities are growing faster than large metros due to improved road connectivity, digital infrastructure and emerging local industries.
- ★ Cities such as Kozhikode, with a population exceeding 5 million, highlight the shift away from metro-centric urban development.

Responsible Nations Index 2026

- ★ The Responsible Nations Index 2026 was released by the World Intellectual Foundation (WIF).
- ★ The index covers 154 countries and evaluates global leadership based on responsibility, ethical governance, and collective good, instead of traditional indicators like Gross Domestic Product or military power.
- ★ The objective of the index is to assess how responsibly nations govern, care for society, protect the environment, and contribute to global co-operation.
- ★ Singapore ranked 1st globally, emerging as the most responsible nation in the world and the only Asian country in the top 10.
- ★ Switzerland ranked 2nd and Denmark ranked 3rd, highlighting the strong performance of smaller nations with robust governance frameworks.
- ★ The rankings come at a time of rising geopolitical tensions, economic uncertainty, and increasing climate challenges, emphasizing the relevance of responsible governance.
- ★ Syria ranked 153rd and Yemen ranked 151st, highlighting how prolonged conflict weakens governance, social welfare, and environmental protection.
- ★ India ranked 16th globally with a responsibility score of 0.5515, showing strong performance among developing nations.

QS Best Student Cities 2026

- ★ Delhi has been ranked 1st globally as the world's most affordable city for international students.
- ★ The ranking is based on a joint report by Knight Frank, Deloitte India, and QS.
- ★ The report is titled "India's 155 Million Student Mandate" and was released on Wednesday.
- ★ Mumbai secured the 11th position, while Bengaluru ranked 15th globally.
- ★ The ranking forms part of the QS Best Student Cities 2026 assessment.
- ★ A total of 150 cities worldwide were evaluated in the ranking.
- ★ Cities were assessed across six equally weighted categories: Affordability, Employer activity, University rankings, City desirability, Student voice and Student mix
- ★ India holds a strong competitive advantage in the affordability parameter.
- ★ The report stated that affordability is a decisive factor for international students and parents.
- ★ Tuition fees, living costs, and purchasing power in Indian cities compare very favourably with major education hubs in the United Kingdom, United States, Europe, and Australia.
- ★ Lower costs result in reduced student debt and a better return on investment due to strong employability outcomes.
- ★ Global universities are increasingly viewing India both as a source of students and as a destination for academic expansion.
- ★ India has the world's largest 18–23 age population, with nearly 155 million young adults.
- ★ The country is shifting from being a traditional outbound student market to a core destination for offshore university campuses.

- ★ According to Knight Frank India, India is poised to become a strategically critical global destination for higher education expansion.
- ★ This growth is driven by policy reforms, demographic scale, and urban readiness.

Women, Peace and Security Index 2025–26

- ★ The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Index 2025–26 has been released by the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security in partnership with the Peace Research Institute Oslo.
- ★ The index ranks 181 countries based on women’s inclusion, justice, and security.
- ★ Each country is assigned a score between 0 and 1, where a higher score indicates better conditions for women.
- ★ The index highlights that around 676 million women were exposed to conflict in the past year, representing a 74% increase since 2010.
- ★ The WPS Index is published biennially and is aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.
- ★ The assessment is based on 13 indicators covering economic participation, political representation, legal equality, discrimination, violence, and conflict exposure.
- ★ Global progress on women’s well-being has largely stagnated between 2017/18 and 2025/26, according to the report.
- ★ Denmark ranked first for the third consecutive time, while Afghanistan ranked last.
- ★ Nordic countries dominate the top ranks, reflecting strong social welfare systems and gender equality policies.
- ★ Most bottom-ranked countries are conflict-affected or fragile states, showing a strong link between instability and women’s safety.
- ★ India ranked 131st out of 181 countries.
- ★ India’s score: 0.607.
- ★ The ranking reflects steady but uneven progress in women’s inclusion and security.
- ★ India has shown improvement in financial inclusion and maternal health indicators.
- ★ Persistent challenges remain, including gender-based violence, low female workforce participation, and safety concerns.

Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) 2025

- ★ The Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) 2025 has been released by Transparency International, evaluating 182 countries based on perceived levels of public sector corruption.
- ★ The CPI score ranges from 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean).
- ★ The global average score declined to 42 in 2025, marking the lowest level in more than a decade.
- ★ A total of 122 countries scored below 50, indicating that corruption remains a widespread global issue.

- ★ Transparency International observed that the number of countries scoring above 80 has sharply declined, signalling governance challenges even in traditionally strong democracies.
- ★ Denmark ranked 1st with a score of 89, maintaining its position at the top for the 8th consecutive year.
- ★ South Sudan ranked at the bottom with a score of 9 (Rank 181).
- ★ Somalia also scored 9 (Rank 180/181 level).
- ★ India ranked 91st globally in the CPI 2025.
- ★ India secured a CPI score of 39 out of 100.
- ★ India's score remains below the global average of 42.
- ★ The ranking indicates a slight improvement compared to the previous year, suggesting incremental progress in governance and transparency reforms.

Rajasthan Leads India's Wool Production in FY24

- ★ India ranks 2nd in sheep population globally and 9th in wool production.
- ★ Total sheep population in India stands at 77.4 million.
- ★ India's total wool production in FY24: 33.69 million kg.
- ★ Rajasthan emerged as the largest wool-producing state with 16,013.50 thousand kg, accounting for 47.53% share of national output.
- ★ Rajasthan's dominance is supported by its arid climate and extensive grazing lands.
- ★ Major sheep breeds in Rajasthan include Marwari and Chokla, producing mainly coarse wool used in carpets and blankets.
- ★ Jammu and Kashmir produced 7,770 thousand kg (23.06%), known for fine wool from Changthangi and Merino sheep, used in shawls and handicrafts.
- ★ Karnataka produced 6,472 thousand kg, mainly medium to coarse wool for rugs and textiles.
- ★ Telangana recorded 4,422 thousand kg, supported by state-backed sheep rearing schemes.
- ★ Gujarat produced 2,083 thousand kg, contributing coarse wool for carpet industries.
- ★ Maharashtra recorded 1,601.28 thousand kg, mainly from drought-prone regions.
- ★ Himachal Pradesh produced 1,422.69 thousand kg, known for wool used in warm garments and handicrafts.

AWARDS & PRIZES

Promotion of Aviation Ecosystem at Wings India 2026

- ★ Uttarakhand has been awarded Best State for Promotion of Aviation Ecosystem at Wings India 2026, India's flagship civil aviation conference and exhibition.

- ★ The award was announced on 30 January 2026 and recognises the state's policy support, infrastructure development, regional air connectivity, heli services, tourism growth, and disaster management benefits.
- ★ This recognition is significant as Uttarakhand has challenging mountainous and remote terrain, yet has achieved notable progress in civil aviation.
- ★ Wings India 2026 is India's largest civil aviation event, bringing together policymakers, aviation companies, investors, and global stakeholders.
- ★ Awards at Wings India are considered highly credible, as they reflect actual improvements in aviation policy and infrastructure.
- ★ Uttarakhand's selection places it alongside major aviation hubs despite geographical constraints.
- ★ Uttarakhand was chosen due to consistent policy support and focused institutional efforts in aviation development.
- ★ The state has worked through the Uttarakhand Civil Aviation Development Authority (UCADA) to expand airports, heliports, and regional air routes.
- ★ Aviation development in the state covers both commercial flights and helicopter services, particularly for remote and hilly regions.
- ★ These initiatives have reduced travel time, improved access to difficult areas, and supported economic activities.
- ★ The award was received by senior officials of UCADA at a ceremony held at Begumpet Airport.
- ★ The event was attended by the Union Civil Aviation Minister and senior officials of the Ministry of Civil Aviation.

Crafoord Prize 2026

- ★ Indian-origin climate scientist Veerabhadran Ramanathan has won the Crafoord Prize 2026, often referred to as the "Nobel of Geosciences".
- ★ The award recognises his pioneering contributions to climate and atmospheric science, especially his discoveries related to greenhouse gases and global warming.
- ★ His research has had a direct impact on global climate policy, including international environmental agreements.
- ★ Veerabhadran Ramanathan is an atmospheric scientist of Indian origin with a career spanning over five decades.
- ★ He was born and educated in southern India and studied engineering in Bengaluru before moving to the United States for higher education.
- ★ He worked at leading global institutions and fundamentally reshaped scientific understanding of climate change.
- ★ His work established that global warming is driven not only by carbon dioxide (CO₂) but also by multiple heat-trapping gases acting together.
- ★ In the 1970s, while working at NASA Langley Research Center, he made a breakthrough discovery related to chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs).

- ★ His 1975 paper published in Science demonstrated that a single CFC molecule can trap thousands of times more heat than a CO₂ molecule.
- ★ This was the first clear scientific proof that gases other than CO₂ could significantly drive global warming.
- ★ His later research highlighted the role of trace gases such as methane and nitrous oxide in accelerating global warming.
- ★ In 1985, he co-authored studies warning that these gases could cause faster-than-expected climate change.
- ★ His scientific findings played a crucial role in shaping the Montreal Protocol (1987), which led to the global phase-out of CFCs.
- ★ The Montreal Protocol is regarded as one of the most successful international environmental treaties and prevented substantial additional warming.

Swachhata Pakhwada Awards 2025

- ★ Paradip Port Authority won the First Prize at the Swachhata Pakhwada Awards 2025, emerging as the Cleanest Performing Major Port of India.
- ★ The award was instituted by the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW) for excellence in cleanliness, sustainability and community participation.
- ★ The recognition highlights the port's role as an active contributor to the Swachh Bharat Mission, beyond its commercial and trade functions.
- ★ The award was presented on 3 February 2026 in New Delhi by Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal, in the presence of Minister of State Shantanu Thakur and Secretary, Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, Vijay Kumar (Indian Administrative Service).
- ★ The award was received by P. L. Haranadh, Chairman, Paradip Port Authority, on behalf of the port workforce.
- ★ Paradip Port Authority adopted a holistic and sustained approach to cleanliness, combining sanitation infrastructure, behavioural change, environmental protection and worker welfare.
- ★ Measures included large-scale cleanliness drives, scientific waste management, elimination of single-use plastics and community-led activities across port and surrounding public areas.
- ★ Swachhata Pakhwada is a flagship cleanliness campaign under Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, focusing on behavioural change, waste management, green practices, citizen engagement and Safai Mitra welfare.
- ★ Ports and maritime institutions are evaluated on environmental stewardship, public participation and inclusiveness, not just operational hygiene.
- ★ Under the Jan Bhagidari initiative, Paradip Port Authority ensured mass public participation through cleanliness drives in schools, temples, beaches, ponds and port premises.

22nd Upendra Nath Brahma 'Soldier of Humanity' Award 2025

- ★ Gyalyum Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck, Queen Mother of Bhutan, was conferred the 22nd Upendra Nath Brahma 'Soldier of Humanity' Award 2025.

- ★ The award ceremony was held in February 2026 at Bodoland University, Kokrajhar, Assam.
- ★ The event was attended by Lakshman Prasad Acharya, Governor of Assam.
- ★ The award recognised her lifelong humanitarian service, compassionate leadership, social development efforts, and cultural preservation work.
- ★ The Upendra Nath Brahma ‘Soldier of Humanity’ Award was instituted in 2004 by the Upendra Nath Brahma Trust.
- ★ The award is named after Upendra Nath Brahma (Bodofa), a revered Bodo leader and social reformer.
- ★ The award upholds the ideals of sacrifice, courage, social justice, peace, and service to humanity.
- ★ It is conferred on individuals with outstanding contributions to human welfare, peace, and inclusive development.
- ★ During the ceremony, the Governor of Assam highlighted the relevance of Bodofa’s philosophy in contemporary society.
- ★ He also referred to the Assam Government’s decision to declare 31 March as Chatra Divas (Students’ Day) in honour of Upendra Nath Brahma, to inspire students and youth.
- ★ She was honoured particularly for her leadership of the Tarayana Foundation, which has contributed to: Rural development, Women’s empowerment, Education and healthcare initiatives and Preservation of Bhutan’s cultural heritage.

Indian Educator Rouble Nagi Wins Global Teacher Prize 2026

- ★ Indian educator and social activist Rouble Nagi won the Global Teacher Prize 2026 at the World Government Summit held in Dubai.
- ★ She received a cash award of USD 1 million, making it one of the highest-value awards in the education sector globally.
- ★ The award is presented by GEMS Education and was handed over by Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum.
- ★ Rouble Nagi was honoured for her grassroots education work through the Rouble Nagi Art Foundation, focusing on children from slum and marginalised communities.
- ★ She has established more than 800 learning centres across India, supporting children who are out of school as well as school-going children.
- ★ Her unique “Living Walls” learning model uses educational murals painted on walls to teach literacy, mathematics, science, and history.
- ★ These murals convert public spaces and slum walls into open classrooms, making education accessible, visual, and inclusive.
- ★ Rouble Nagi began her journey 24 years ago with just 30 children in a small workshop.
- ★ Over the years, her initiative has expanded to reach over one million children across various regions.
- ★ The Global Teacher Prize was launched in 2015 and is often referred to as the “Nobel Prize for Teaching”.
- ★ Rouble Nagi is the 10th recipient of the Global Teacher Prize.

- ★ Previous winners include teachers from Kenya, Palestine, Canada, and Saudi Arabia, known for impactful education work in challenging environments.

First Major Port to Receive IGBC Platinum and Shunya Certifications

- ★ V.O. Chidambaranar (VOC) Port Authority became the first Major Port in India to receive the Indian Green Building Council (IGBC) Platinum Rating.
- ★ The certification was awarded to the Administration Building for excellence in sustainability, energy efficiency and eco-friendly infrastructure.
- ★ The Administration Building operates under a Green Policy and structured waste management plan.
- ★ It is equipped with rooftop solar panels and a high Solar Reflectance Index roof coating, reducing the Urban Heat Island effect and improving energy efficiency.
- ★ Resource conservation measures include:
 - Internet of Things-enabled water meters
 - Indoor Air Quality monitoring systems
 - Rainwater harvesting systems
 - Water-saving plumbing fixtures
- ★ These initiatives led to a 37 per cent reduction in potable water consumption.
- ★ All wastewater is treated through an on-site Sewage Treatment Plant and fully reused within the premises.
- ★ The Administration Building operates on 100 per cent renewable energy.
- ★ 89 per cent electricity is generated through on-site solar power.
- ★ 11 per cent electricity is sourced from off-site renewable energy.
- ★ VOC Port also secured Shunya and Shunya Plus certifications from the Bureau of Energy Efficiency under the Ministry of Power.
- ★ Shunya Certification signifies a Net Zero Energy Building.
- ★ Shunya Plus Certification denotes a Net Positive Energy Building.

Oil India Limited Wins FIPI Award 2025 at India Energy Week

- ★ Oil India Limited (OIL) has won the FIPI Award 2025 under the category 'Oil and Gas Production Company of the Year' (more than 1 MTOE).
- ★ The award recognises OIL's strong production performance and contribution towards India's energy security.
- ★ The award was presented by the Federation of Indian Petroleum Industry (FIPI) during India Energy Week held in Goa.
- ★ The ceremony was attended by Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas Hardeep Singh Puri and Dr Neeraj Mittal, Secretary, Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas.
- ★ Dr Ranjit Rath, Chairman and Managing Director of OIL, received the award on behalf of the company.

- ★ OIL has demonstrated strong growth through:
 - Expansion of exploration activities
 - Improved recovery from mature oil fields
 - Adoption of advanced technologies
 - Enhanced operational efficiency
- ★ OIL is a Maharatna Central Public Sector Enterprise (CPSE) under the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas.
- ★ The company has a strong operational presence in the Northeast region and is expanding its footprint across India.
- ★ The recognition reinforces OIL's role in ensuring sustainable energy growth and national energy security.

Our Lady of Grace Cathedral Wins UNESCO Asia-Pacific Award of Merit 2025

- ★ The 475-year-old Our Lady of Grace Cathedral in Vasai, Maharashtra received the Award of Merit at the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation 2025.
- ★ It became the only religious site from India to receive recognition in the 2025 edition of the awards.
- ★ The announcement was made in Bangkok, Thailand, during the 25th anniversary ceremony of the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation.
- ★ A total of 10 projects from six countries were recognised in 2025, namely China, India, Japan, Malaysia, Nepal and Vanuatu.
- ★ The awards are presented under four categories: Award of Distinction (Highest Honour), Award of Merit, Award for New Design in Heritage Contexts and Special Recognition for Sustainable Development
- ★ The Award of Distinction (2025) was jointly conferred on:
 - Sihang Warehouse Conservation Project (China)
 - Iwami Ginzan Library Conservation Project (Japan)
 - Nepal secured two Awards of Merit in the 2025 edition.
- ★ A total of 90 entries from 16 countries were evaluated by a seven member international jury, marking the highest number of submissions in the award's history.
- ★ The recognition highlights India's growing global presence in cultural heritage conservation and restoration efforts under international platforms.

APPOINTMENTS & RESIGNATIONS

Sunetra Pawar Becomes Maharashtra's First Woman Deputy Chief Minister

- ★ Sunetra Pawar, wife of late NCP leader Ajit Pawar, was appointed as the Deputy Chief Minister of Maharashtra, becoming the first woman DyCM since the state's formation 66 years ago.

- ★ The appointment followed the sudden death of Ajit Pawar (66) in an air crash at Baramati, triggering swift political developments in the state.
- ★ Sunetra Pawar (62) is a Rajya Sabha Member of Parliament and was unanimously elected as the leader of the NCP legislature party before her appointment.
- ★ The oath of office and secrecy was administered by Maharashtra Governor Acharya Devvrat at Lok Bhavan, Mumbai.
- ★ The ceremony was attended by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, cabinet ministers, and senior leaders of the BJP-led Maha Yuti Government.
- ★ The NCP legislature party meeting was held at Vidhan Bhavan, presided over by NCP Working President Praful Patel, and conducted by NCP State President Sunil Tatkare.
- ★ A resolution proposing her name was moved by Dilip Walse-Patil and seconded by Chhagan Bhujbal, reflecting unanimous party support.
- ★ Ajit Pawar was the longest-serving Deputy Chief Minister of Maharashtra, holding the post for nearly nine years, making Sunetra Pawar's appointment both historic and symbolic.

Member (Operations and Business Development) of Railway Board

- ★ Shri Hari Shankar Verma, a 1987 batch Indian Railway Traffic Service (IRTS) Officer, has assumed charge as Member (Operations and Business Development), Railway Board, and Ex-officio Secretary to the Government of India.
- ★ Prior to this appointment, he served as Director General, Safety, Railway Board, where he played a key role in strengthening railway safety standards.
- ★ During his tenure as Director General, Safety, Indian Railways' safety record improved significantly, with a drastic reduction in consequential accidents through process improvements.
- ★ In his career with Indian Railways, Shri Verma has held several important positions including Additional Divisional Railway Manager, Central Railway (Mumbai) and Divisional Railway Manager, Salem Division, Southern Railway.
- ★ He also served as Chief Passenger Traffic Manager, Central Railway, Mumbai, Principal Chief Operations Manager, Hubli, South Western Railway, and Director General, Indian Railways Institute of Transport Management (IRITM), Lucknow.
- ★ Shri Verma has received the Hon'ble Rail Minister Award twice along with multiple General Manager (GM) level awards for his outstanding contributions.
- ★ He has undergone management training in Singapore, Malaysia, and Italy, and is widely regarded as a specialist in Railway Traffic and Management.

Shri Divakar Jayant Assumes Charge as Director General of Naval Armament

- ★ Shri Divakar Jayant, INAS, took charge as Director General of Naval Armament (DGONA) at Naval Headquarters, Ministry of Defence (MoD), on 02 Feb 2026, succeeding Shri P Upadhyay, who superannuated on 31 Jan 2026.
- ★ Shri Divakar Jayant belongs to the 1991 batch of the Indian Naval Armament Service (INAS) and joined the Naval Armament Organisation of the Indian Navy on 28 Dec 1992.

- ★ He has held senior positions including Chief General Manager and General Manager/Principal Director at Naval Armament Depots in Mumbai, Visakhapatnam, and Alwaye, as well as at NHQ/MoD, during 33 years of service.
- ★ An Electrical Engineering graduate from IIT Delhi, Shri Divakar Jayant specialises in life-cycle management of Torpedoes and planning of explosive infrastructure projects, with vast knowledge of HR and administration.
- ★ The Officer has also undergone the prestigious APPPA course (2017–18), enhancing his expertise in naval armament management.

Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of Yes Bank

- ★ Yes Bank has appointed Vinay Muralidhar Tonse as its new Managing Director (MD) and Chief Executive Officer (CEO), following Reserve Bank of India (RBI)
- ★ Tonse will serve a three-year tenure, starting from the date he assumes charge, subject to shareholder approval.
- ★ Vinay Tonse previously served as Managing Director – Retail Business and Operations at the State Bank of India (SBI), demitting office on 30 November 2025.
- ★ The appointment follows the completion of the extended tenure of Prashant Kumar, who led Yes Bank through a critical recovery phase post-2020 crisis.
- ★ Yes Bank stated that Tonse is eligible to be appointed as a director and is not debarred by SEBI or any statutory authority.
- ★ Tonse brings extensive experience in corporate banking, international operations, and risk management, signaling the regulator's focus on experienced leadership for systemically important banks.

Managing Director of Indian Infrastructure Finance Company Limited

- ★ Indian Infrastructure Finance Company Limited (IIFCL) has appointed Rohit Rishi as its new Managing Director for a three-year tenure.
- ★ He previously served as Executive Director at Bank of Maharashtra from November 1, 2023, to February 3, 2026.
- ★ Rohit Rishi succeeds PR Jaishankar, who demitted office in May 2026 after completing a five-year tenure.
- ★ IIFCL, set up in 2006, is a wholly-owned Government of India NBFC-IFC, registered with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) since September 2013, providing long-term finance to infrastructure projects.
- ★ The company aims to provide long-term financial assistance to viable infrastructure projects across India.

Anutin Charnvirakul's Bhumjaithai Party Wins Thailand General Election

- ★ Thailand's caretaker Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul, leader of the Bhumjaithai Party (BJT), won the general election for the 500-member House of Representatives, as per preliminary results announced by the Election Commission of Thailand (ECT).

- ★ Anutin Charnvirakul assumed the position of Prime Minister of Thailand in September 2025 following a period of political turbulence, and continued as caretaker PM during the election period.
- ★ The Bhumjaithai Party (BJT) secured a strong mandate to form the next government, marking a decisive victory in the national polls.
- ★ BJT won 194 seats (175 constituency + 19 party-list), falling short of the 251-seat majority mark in the 500-member House.
- ★ The People's Party secured 116 seats, while Pheu Thai Party won 76 seats.
- ★ Kla Tham Party secured 57 seats, and the Democrat Party won 22 seats.

Kerala to Appoint Thanya Nathan C. as State's First Visually Challenged Woman Judge

- ★ Thanya Nathan C. is set to become Kerala's first visually challenged woman judge, marking a historic milestone in the State's judicial history.
- ★ She secured first rank among persons with benchmark disabilities in the Civil Judge (Junior Division) examination of the Kerala Judicial Service.
- ★ The Kerala High Court has completed the selection process, and the appointment letter will be issued by the government.
- ★ Ms. Nathan, a first-rank holder in LLB from Kannur University, practised law using Braille and screen-reading software to overcome challenges of visual impairment.
- ★ A 24-year-old woman from Kannur, Kerala, cleared the Kerala Judicial Services examination for the post of Civil Judge (Junior Division).
- ★ She secured first rank in the maiden selection for differently-abled persons, following a Supreme Court order that differently-abled persons should not be barred from becoming judicial officers.

New Managing Director (MD) and Chief Executive Officer of City Union Bank

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) approved the appointment of R. Vijay Anandh as the new Managing Director (MD) and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of City Union Bank (CUB).
- ★ R. Vijay Anandh will serve a three-year term starting from May 1, 2026, subject to final ratification by the bank's shareholders.
- ★ His annual remuneration as MD and CEO will be Rs 2.50 crore per annum.
- ★ R. Vijay Anandh currently holds the position of Executive Director (ED) at CUB and was previously Executive President in 2023, before being designated ED in 2024.
- ★ He will succeed Dr. N. Kamakodi, who has been serving as MD and CEO of CUB since May 2011, with his term ending on April 30, 2026.

Shikhar Dhawan Named Brand Ambassador for First Delhi Khel Mahakumbh

- ★ Former Indian cricketer and Arjuna Awardee Shikhar Dhawan was appointed as the Brand Ambassador of the inaugural Delhi Khel Mahakumbh by the Government of Delhi.

- ★ The Delhi Khel Mahakumbh will be held on February 13, 2026, across 16 locations covering all 12 districts of Delhi.
- ★ It is a large-scale grassroots sports festival launched by the Directorate of Education and Sports, Government of Delhi.
- ★ The event aims to strengthen sports participation at the grassroots level and promote a sports culture among youth.
- ★ Sports disciplines included in the event are Basketball, Football, Athletics, Kabaddi, Wrestling, Squash, and Volleyball.
- ★ Shikhar Dhawan represented India in all three formats of international cricket – Tests, ODIs, and T20Is.
- ★ He scored over 6,700 runs in One Day Internationals (ODIs), including 17 centuries and 39 fifties.
- ★ In Test cricket, he amassed more than 2,300 runs, with a highest score of 190.
- ★ In T20 Internationals (T20Is), he scored 1,759 runs in 68 matches.
- ★ Dhawan was the top scorer in the 2013 ICC Champions Trophy, playing a key role in India's title victory.
- ★ He was honoured with the prestigious Arjuna Award in 2018 for his outstanding achievements in cricket.

Brand Ambassador for Delhi Government's Delhi Khel Mahakumbh Sports Initiative

- ★ Shikhar Dhawan, former India cricketer and Arjuna Awardee, has been appointed as the Brand Ambassador of the Delhi Khel Mahakumbh, a major sports initiative of the Delhi Government.
- ★ The Delhi Khel Mahakumbh is an initiative of the Directorate of Education and Sports, Government of NCT of Delhi, aimed at strengthening grassroots sports participation and talent identification.
- ★ The initiative focuses on promoting sports, nurturing young talent, and integrating sports with education and youth development in the capital.
- ★ The motto of the event is "Aao Delhi Khele", highlighting mass participation and youth engagement in sports.
- ★ The initial phase will feature seven sports – Kabaddi, Football, Athletics, Wrestling, Basketball, Volleyball, and Squash.
- ★ Competitions will be conducted across 16 different stadiums/venues in Delhi.
- ★ The event will witness participation from thousands of young athletes representing all 12 districts of Delhi.
- ★ The official mascot 'Ranveer' was unveiled, symbolising energy, courage, and the sporting spirit of Delhi's youth.
- ★ The Mahakumbh is designed as a large-scale multi-sport platform bringing together school and community-level athletes to provide structured competition, exposure, and pathways towards professional sports careers.

74th President of Institute of Chartered Accountants of India

- ★ Chartered Accountant (CA) Prasanna Kumar D was elected as the 74th President of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI), under Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) for the 2026–27 term, with immediate effect (February 12, 2026), under the Ministry of Corporate Affairs.
- ★ He succeeds CA Charanjot Singh Nanda as ICAI President, marking a key leadership transition for the professional accounting body.
- ★ CA Mangesh Pandurang Kinare was elected as Vice-President (VP) of ICAI for the 2026–27 term.
- ★ CA Prasanna Kumar D is a senior Chartered Accountant from Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, with over four decades of professional experience in practice, institutional governance, policy involvement, and member welfare initiatives.
- ★ He qualified as a Chartered Accountant in 1984 and is a Fellow Member of ICAI, a status granted to members with extensive professional experience and significant contributions to the profession.
- ★ At the branch and regional level, he served as Chairman of the Visakhapatnam Branch of ICAI (2001–02) and later as a Member of the Southern India Regional Council (SIRC) from 2007–2016, including Chairman of SIRC (2013–14).
- ★ He was elected to the 24th, 25th, and 26th Central Councils of ICAI, serving multiple consecutive terms, and was Vice-President of ICAI during 2025–26 before becoming President.

Uday Kotak Appointed as Chairman of GIFT City by Gujarat Government

- ★ The Gujarat Government has appointed Uday Suresh Kotak, industrialist and veteran banker, as Chairman of Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT City) with immediate effect.
- ★ Uday Kotak replaces Hasmukh Adhia, who had been serving as Non-Executive Chairman since 19 June 2023.
- ★ The appointment was announced through a resolution issued by the Urban Development and Urban Housing Department, Government of Gujarat, and reviewed by ANI news agency.
- ★ Uday Kotak is the Founder and Director of Kotak Mahindra Bank, having played a major role in the bank's growth over 38 years.
- ★ He served as Managing Director and CEO of Kotak Mahindra Bank until 1 September 2023, after which he became non-executive non-independent director from 2 September 2023.
- ★ Under his leadership, the Kotak Mahindra Group has grown into a diversified and integrated financial services conglomerate, including alternative investment, asset management, and insurance businesses.
- ★ Kotak Mahindra Bank originated as an NBFC in 1985, later became a bank in 2003, and emerged as one of India's leading private sector banks under Uday Kotak's leadership.

MD and CEO of AU Small Finance Bank Limited for Three Years

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India approved the reappointment of Sanjay Agarwal as Managing Director (MD) & Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of AU Small Finance Bank Limited for a three-year term effective from 19 April 2026.

- ★ Sanjay Agarwal is the Founder of AU SFB and led its transformation from a Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC) into India's largest Small Finance Bank (SFB) with emphasis on financial inclusion, innovation, and digital transformation.
- ★ He began his leadership tenure as MD of AU Financiers (India) Limited in February 2008 and later became MD & CEO of AU SFB on 19 April 2017 after its conversion into a bank.
- ★ He received the EY Entrepreneur of the Year Award (2018) in the Financial Services
- ★ He was also named Business Leader of the Year (2016) by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India.

Bulgaria Names Andrey Gyurov as Interim Prime Minister

- ★ Iliana Malinova Iotova, President of Bulgaria, appointed Andrey Gyurov, Deputy Governor of the Bulgarian National Bank (BNB), as interim Prime Minister (PM) to lead a caretaker government until national elections scheduled for April 2026.
- ★ Andrey Gyurov is a former lawmaker and parliamentary leader of the reformist group 'We Continue the Change'.
- ★ He served as a member of the National Assembly from 2021 to 2023 and has a professional background in academia and European financial institutions.
- ★ Gyurov has been Deputy Governor of the Bulgarian National Bank (BNB) since 2023 and was nominated as acting Prime Minister to organize the snap parliamentary elections.
- ★ The previous government resigned on 11 December 2025 following weeks of street protests over economic policies and perceived corruption.
- ★ No official date has yet been set for the snap election, which will be the eighth parliamentary election in five years for Bulgaria, an EU and NATO member state.
- ★ Former President Rumen Radev resigned last month, transferring his largely ceremonial role to Vice President Iliana Iotova, making her Bulgaria's first female head of state.
- ★ Bulgaria joined the euro zone on 1 January 2026 and continues to face political and governance challenges.

Barbados Prime Minister Mia Amor Mottley Wins Third Straight Term in Office

- ★ Mia Amor Mottley has been re-elected as Prime Minister of Barbados for the third consecutive term after the 2026 general election.
- ★ The ruling Barbados Labour Party (BLP) achieved a historic clean sweep, winning all 30 seats in the House of Assembly, leaving no opposition representation.
- ★ In terms of vote share, the BLP secured about 69.83% of the total votes polled, while the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) received around 27.31%.
- ★ PM Mia Amor Mottley defeated opposition leader Ralph Thorne, with the DLP failing to win even a single seat in the election.

Ramalingam Sudhakar Steps Down as President of the National Company Law Tribunal

- ★ Ramalingam Sudhakar demitted office as President of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) after completing a distinguished tenure.

- ★ He joined the Tribunal in November 2021 and served for over four years at its helm.
- ★ During his tenure, he significantly strengthened the institution and enhanced the dispensation of justice in corporate and insolvency matters.
- ★ His leadership was marked by diligence, integrity, and an unwavering commitment to judicial excellence.
- ★ At the farewell reference, he highlighted that the resolution rate of cases increased substantially due to collective co-operation of all stakeholders.
- ★ In the last four years, nearly 54,800 cases were instituted before the Tribunal.
- ★ Out of these, more than 48,000 cases were disposed of, achieving an impressive resolution rate of over 85 percent.
- ★ Apart from judicial functions, he focused on strengthening administrative systems and improving infrastructural facilities.
- ★ These initiatives ensured the smooth functioning of the Tribunal and created an efficient and conducive working environment for Bar Members, litigants, and staff.

Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of Slice Small Finance Bank

- ★ Slice Small Finance Bank (Slice SFB) appointed its founder Rajan Bajaj as Managing Director (MD) and Chief Executive Officer (CEO).
- ★ He succeeded Satish Kumar Kalra, marking the bank's transition from a fintech startup to a fully licensed Small Finance Bank (SFB).
- ★ The appointment was approved by the Board of Directors, shareholders, and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
- ★ Rajan Bajaj founded Slice in 2016 and led its transformation into a regulated banking entity following its merger with North East Small Finance Bank (2024).
- ★ Slice has served over 20 million registered users, employs more than 3,000 people, and has raised over USD 250 million from investors such as Tiger Global, Insight Partners, and Advent International.
- ★ Bajaj previously worked on the product team at Flipkart and served as Executive Director (ED) of Slice before becoming MD & CEO.
- ★ In 2019, he established Quadrillion Finance, a wholly owned NBFC, which provided credit to retail customers and small businesses using technology-led underwriting and risk processes; it was later merged into Slice's banking entity.

Rob Jetten Sworn In As Youngest Prime Minister Of The Netherlands

- ★ Rob Jetten (Rob Arnoldus Andreas Jetten) was sworn in as the youngest-ever Prime Minister of the Netherlands at the age of 38, becoming the first openly gay head of government in Dutch history.
- ★ He succeeded Dick Schoof, who had served as Prime Minister since 2024 and continued in a caretaker role after the government collapse in June 2025.

- ★ The oath ceremony was administered by King Willem-Alexander at Huis ten Bosch Palace, located in The Hague.
- ★ Rob Jetten leads a minority coalition government formed after the October 2025 general election.
- ★ His party, Democrats 66 (D66), a centrist and pro-European party, performed strongly in the election, securing 26 seats.
- ★ The coalition government includes the Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA) and the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD).
- ★ The coalition holds 66 out of 150 seats in the lower house of the Dutch Parliament (Tweede Kamer), requiring continuous support from opposition parties to pass legislation.
- ★ His appointment marks a historic milestone in inclusive leadership and Dutch politics.

Slice Small Finance Bank Appoints Rajan Bajaj as MD and CEO

- ★ Slice Small Finance Bank has appointed its founder Rajan Bajaj as the new Managing Director (MD) and Chief Executive Officer (CEO).
- ★ The appointment has been approved by the Board of Directors, shareholders, and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
- ★ Rajan Bajaj founded Slice in 2016 as a Bengaluru-based fintech startup focused on credit and payment solutions for young and underserved customers.
- ★ In 2024, Slice merged with North East Small Finance Bank, transforming into a fully regulated Small Finance Bank. He earlier served as Executive Director post-merger and now succeeds Satish Kumar Kalra as MD & CEO.
- ★ The bank has raised over USD 250 million from global investors including Tiger Global, Insight Partners, and Advent International.
- ★ Slice SFB offers digital-first banking products such as savings accounts with daily interest credits, fixed deposits, UPI services, borrowing solutions, and India's first UPI-led bank branch.
- ★ Under Bajaj's leadership, the bank aims to leverage Artificial Intelligence (AI) to deliver personalised banking services, strengthen financial inclusion, and expand access to affordable financial products, particularly in rural and underserved regions.

MoUs AND AGREEMENTS

AAI Partners with Bharat Taxi

- ★ Airports Authority of India (AAI) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Bharat Taxi to improve last-mile connectivity at select airports. The MoU was exchanged by AAI Chairman Vipin Kumar.
- ★ The initiative aims to provide regulated, transparent, and passenger-friendly taxi services at AAI-managed airports.
- ★ Bharat Taxi is India's first driver-owned co-operative taxi service, operated by Sahakar Taxi Cooperative Ltd.

- ★ Unlike app-based aggregators, Bharat Taxi follows a no-surge pricing model, ensuring fixed and predictable fares for passengers.
- ★ The platform is promoted by the National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) and supported by co-operative institutions.
- ★ Under the plan, services will be introduced at airports in Rajkot, Vadodara, Surat, Bhuj, Pune, Aurangabad, Varanasi, Kanpur, Prayagraj, and Agra.
- ★ Most of the covered airports are in regional and tier-2 cities, improving connectivity where transport options are limited.
- ★ The partnership ensures transparent pricing, regulated operations, and improved safety within airport premises.
- ★ The initiative reduces fare disputes and enhances passenger trust, especially for elderly passengers and first-time flyers.
- ★ The model empowers drivers by making them direct stakeholders instead of commission-based workers.
- ★ It provides income stability, ownership, and social security to drivers.
- ★ The initiative supports national goals such as Atmanirbhar Bharat, Sahakar se Samridhhi, and Viksit Bharat 2047.

Indian Army and IDFC FIRST Bank Ink Memorandum of Understanding

- ★ The Indian Army and IDFC FIRST Bank signed a three-year Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) valid till February 2029 to provide specialised banking services and enhanced insurance benefits to serving and retired Army personnel.
- ★ Under the MoU, Personal Accidental Insurance (PAI) cover of ₹60 lakh will be available without mandatory salary or pension credit, instead linked to minimum monthly account credits.
- ★ Additional insurance benefits include ₹35 lakh nominee cover and ₹1 crore Air Accident Insurance, enhancing financial security for Army families.
- ★ The MoU also provides ₹4 lakh Higher Education Cover and up to ₹2 lakh Girl Child Marriage Cover, supporting education and social welfare needs.
- ★ The agreement ensures financial protection, social welfare support, and inclusive benefits for the Army community under a structured banking and insurance framework.

AIIA Signs MoU with General Insurance Council for Cashless Ayurveda Coverage

- ★ The All India Institute of Ayurveda (AIIA) signed a Common Empanelment Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the General Insurance Council in New Delhi.
- ★ Under the agreement, AIIA has been empanelled with all 32 general insurance companies associated with the General Insurance Council.
- ★ The MoU enables cashless Ayurveda treatment for eligible policyholders under these 32 insurance companies.
- ★ This step has been described by the Ministry of Ayush as a historic move to integrate Ayurveda into the mainstream health insurance system.

- ★ With this empanelment, patients can now avail insured Ayurveda healthcare services without upfront payment, subject to policy terms and eligibility.
- ★ The initiative strengthens the integration of traditional medicine with the modern health insurance ecosystem in India.
- ★ Patients can avail insurance benefits for Ayurveda therapies such as Panchakarma, chronic disease management, and preventive care.
- ★ The move improves affordability and accessibility of Ayush-based treatment and reduces financial burden on patients.

SPORTS

Sixth Edition of Khelo India Winter Games 2026 Inaugurated in Ladakh

- ★ The sixth edition of the Khelo India Winter Games 2026 was inaugurated by Lieutenant Governor Kavinder Gupta at the Nawang Dorjan Stobdan Stadium, Leh, Union Territory of Ladakh.
- ★ The first phase of the Games, dedicated to ice sports, was held from 20 January to 26 January 2026.
- ★ In the medal tally, Haryana topped the table with 5 Gold, 1 Silver, and 2 Bronze medals.
- ★ Ladakh secured the second position with 2 Gold, 5 Silver, and 4 Bronze medals.
- ★ Maharashtra finished third with 2 Gold, 3 Silver, and 2 Bronze medals.
- ★ The Games were organised by the Department of Youth Services and Sports, Union Territory of Ladakh, under the supervision of the Sports Authority of India, with technical support from National Sports Federations.
- ★ The event followed a two-leg format, with Phase 1 (ice sports) held in Leh and Phase 2 (snow sports) scheduled at Kangdoori Phase 1 and Gulmarg Golf Course Club, Jammu and Kashmir.
 - Phase 1 disciplines included Ice Hockey and Ice Skating, with Figure Skating introduced for the first time.
 - Phase 2 disciplines include Alpine Skiing, Nordic Skiing, Ski Mountaineering, and Snowboarding.
- ★ The Games are conducted under the Khelo India Scheme, a Central Sector Scheme of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports.
- ★ The logo symbolises energy, resilience, and the national spirit of winter sports.
- ★ The official mascot, Sheen-E-She (Shan), the Snow Leopard, represents resilience, agility, and the Himalayan legacy.

Novak Djokovic Becomes Oldest Australian Open Finalist in Open Era (2026)

- ★ Novak Djokovic created history at the Australian Open 2026 by becoming the oldest man in the Open Era to reach the final, breaking a 53-year-old record.
- ★ He achieved the feat at the age of 38 years after defeating Jannik Sinner in the semifinal on 30 January 2026.

- ★ Djokovic broke the record held by Ken Rosewall, who was 37 years, 2 months, and 1 day old when he won the Australian Open in 1972.
- ★ This makes Djokovic the oldest finalist at the Australian Open in the Open Era.
- ★ In the semifinal, Djokovic defeated Jannik Sinner in a five-set marathon with the scoreline 3–6, 6–3, 4–6, 6–4, 6–4.
- ★ The match lasted over four hours and concluded close to 2:00 am local time at Rod Laver Arena.
- ★ With this win, Djokovic advanced to his 38th Grand Slam final.
- ★ He is chasing his 11th Australian Open title and a record-extending 25th Grand Slam title.
- ★ The victory marked his first five-set win at a Grand Slam since the 2024 French Open final.
- ★ Djokovic reached the final despite recent losses to Sinner, who had beaten him in their previous five encounters, highlighting Djokovic’s longevity, fitness, and mental resilience.
- ★ In the final, Djokovic will face Carlos Alcaraz, setting up a high-profile clash between experience and youth.
- ★ Djokovic currently leads their head-to-head 5–4, though Alcaraz won their last Grand Slam final meeting at Wimbledon 2024.

Devika Sihag Wins Maiden BWF Super 300 Title at Thailand Masters 2026

- ★ Indian badminton player Devika Sihag won her first BWF Super 300 title at the Thailand Masters 2026, marking the biggest breakthrough of her career.
- ★ The 20-year-old shuttler from Haryana defeated Goh Jin Wei of Malaysia in the women’s singles final.
- ★ The final ended after Goh Jin Wei retired due to a hamstring injury.
- ★ At the time of retirement, Devika Sihag was leading convincingly 21–8, 6–3, showing complete dominance.
- ★ Devika’s performance in the final highlighted her aggressive stroke play, sharp net control and strong mental composure.
- ★ Despite the premature end, her overall tournament performance clearly justified the title win.
- ★ This was Devika Sihag’s maiden title at the BWF Super 300 level, making it her most significant career achievement so far.
- ★ BWF Super 300 tournaments are part of the BWF World Tour and offer important ranking points and international exposure.
- ★ The title win is expected to boost her world ranking, confidence and visibility on the international circuit.
- ★ The victory will help Devika compete more regularly in higher-level tournaments such as Super 500 and Super 750 events.
- ★ Goh Jin Wei, ranked World No. 68, is a two-time former World Junior Champion and was considered a strong contender in the final.

Haryana Thunders Win Pro Wrestling League (PWL) 2026 Title

- ★ Haryana Thunders won the Pro Wrestling League (PWL) 2026 title after defeating Delhi Dangal Warriors by 5–4 in a thrilling final held at Noida Indoor Stadium.
- ★ The PWL 2026 final was decided in the last bout, making it one of the most dramatic finals in league history.
- ★ After eight bouts, the score was tied at 4–4, leading to a decisive final women’s match.
- ★ The title-sealing bout was the women’s 62 kg category, where Iryna Koliadenko of Haryana Thunders clinched victory.
- ★ Iryna Koliadenko, a Paris Olympics silver medallist, showcased technical superiority and composure under pressure to secure the winning point.
- ★ Her win sealed a 5–4 victory for Haryana Thunders and became the defining moment of the final.
- ★ Turan Bayramov (Delhi Dangal Warriors) was named Player of the Tournament, winning all seven bouts in the men’s 57 kg category and scoring 59 points.
- ★ Chandermohan (Punjab Royals) emerged as the highest point scorer of the tournament.
- ★ Player of the Match: Neha Sangwan (Haryana Thunders).
- ★ Fighter of the Match: Ronak (Delhi Dangal Warriors, men’s 125 kg).
- ★ Impact Player of the Match: Akshay Dhere (men’s 57 kg).

Para Throwball National Federation Cup 2026

- ★ Jharkhand women’s team won the gold medal at the Para Throwball National Federation Cup 2026, delivering a disciplined and confident performance at the national level.
- ★ The women’s final of the Para Throwball National Federation Cup 2026 was a closely contested match between Jharkhand and Rajasthan.
- ★ Playing against the host team Rajasthan, Jharkhand displayed composure and tactical discipline under pressure.
- ★ Jharkhand defeated Rajasthan by a 21–17 scoreline, reflecting consistent attack and strong defensive play.
- ★ Structured gameplay throughout the tournament helped Jharkhand overcome crowd pressure and strong opposition to emerge as champions.
- ★ Jharkhand’s women’s team followed a well-planned and composed campaign in the tournament.
- ★ The players demonstrated teamwork, discipline, adaptability, and match awareness in every round.
- ★ Their ability to adapt to different opponents and remain focused in crucial moments proved decisive in winning the gold medal.
- ★ The victory highlights Jharkhand’s growing strength in para sports and reflects effective preparation at both grassroots and competitive levels.
- ★ In the men’s category of the Para Throwball National Federation Cup 2026, Andhra Pradesh emerged as champions.

Asian Shooting Championships 2026

- ★ Indian shooter Manu Bhaker won the silver medal in the women's 25m pistol event at the Asian Shooting Championships 2026, held in New Delhi.
- ★ This silver came five days after she finished 7th in the 10m air pistol final, marking a strong comeback at the continental level.
- ★ Manu Bhaker qualified with a score of 584, indicating solid form during the qualification round.
- ★ In the final, she scored 35 points, tying with Vietnam's Thuy Trang Nguyen, which led to a double shoot-off.
- ★ Manu narrowly missed gold after dropping three targets in the second shoot-off, settling for silver.
- ★ The final saw an early lead by Esha Singh and Nguyen, but Manu moved into medal contention after Esha missed five shots in the ninth elimination series.
- ★ The performance highlighted Manu Bhaker's improved finals temperament and mental strength, areas she has been focusing on in recent years.
- ★ The silver medal is Manu Bhaker's first-ever individual silver in the 25m pistol event at the Asian level.
- ★ Earlier, she had won bronze medals in the 25m pistol at the ISSF World Cups in 2021 and 2023.
- ★ The year 2026 is crucial for Indian shooters, with the Asian Games ahead and qualification for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics beginning from July 31, 2026.

Magnus Carlsen Wins 2026 FIDE Freestyle Chess World Championship

- ★ Magnus Carlsen won the 2026 FIDE Freestyle Chess World Championship.
- ★ He defeated Fabiano Caruana in the final with a score of 2.5–1.5
- ★ The final was held in Weissenhaus, Germany.
- ★ A draw in the fourth and final game was sufficient for Carlsen to seal the title.
- ★ The victory marks his 21st world title across formats.
- ★ It is his first official Fédération Internationale des Échecs (FIDE)-recognized title in the Freestyle (Chess960) format.
- ★ Nodirbek Abdusattorov defeated Vincent Keymer to secure third place and qualify for 2027.
- ★ Hans Niemann claimed fifth place with a 2–0 win over Arjun Erigaisi.
- ★ Levon Aronian won the Armageddon game against Javokhir Sindarov to take seventh place.

Smriti Mandhana Wins BBC Indian Sportswoman of the Year 2025

- ★ Smriti Mandhana was named the BBC Indian Sportswoman of the Year 2025 for her outstanding role in India's historic Women's World Cup 2025 victory.
- ★ The award ceremony was held in New Delhi on February 16, 2026.
- ★ At 29 years of age, Mandhana played a pivotal role in India's World Cup triumph, marking a landmark moment in Indian women's cricket history.

- ★ She described 2025 as a “special year for women’s cricket” in a video message while touring Australia with the Indian team.
- ★ Major achievements of Smriti Mandhana include:
 - Second-highest centuries in Women’s One Day Internationals.
 - Third-highest total runs among current women cricketers.
 - Fastest 50-over international century (50 balls) by an Indian, surpassing the record of Virat Kohli.
- ★ Divya Deshmukh won the Emerging Player of the Year Award for her victory at the International Chess Federation Women’s World Cup at the age of 20.
- ★ Para-Sportswoman of the Year was awarded to Preethi Pal for winning two bronze medals at the Paris Paralympics 2024 (Track and Field).
- ★ The Lifetime Achievement Award was conferred on Anjali Bhagwat, India’s first woman shooter to reach an Olympic final.
- ★ BBC Star Performers of the Year included:
 - Indian Women’s Cricket Team – Women’s World Cup victory
 - Indian Women’s Cricket Team for the Blind – World Cup win
 - Indian Women’s Kabaddi Team – World Cup champions
 - Ekta Bhyan, Deepthi Jeevanji and Preethi Pal – Para Athletics achievements
- ★ BBC Changemakers of the Year included:
 - Indian Women’s Ice Hockey Team
 - Rajbir Kaur
 - Savita Punia
 - Paani Devi
- ★ The winners were selected by a distinguished jury including Leander Paes, Deepa Malik, and Anju Bobby George.
- ★ The award highlights the growing global recognition of Indian women’s sports and reflects increasing investment, visibility, and inspiration for young athletes across the country.

Tejaswin Shankar Wins Gold at Asian Indoor Athletics Championships 2026

- ★ India’s Tejaswin Shankar clinched a historic gold medal at the Asian Indoor Athletics Championships held in Tianjin, China.
- ★ He won the men’s heptathlon event with a record-breaking performance, marking India’s only gold medal at the championship.
- ★ Tejaswin Shankar won Gold Medal in Men’s Heptathlon with 5,993 points.
- ★ He created a new National Indoor Record with this performance.
- ★ He surpassed his earlier best of 5,650 points set in 2021 in the United States of America.
- ★ The Gold Medal was India’s only Gold Medal at the championship.
- ★ The Heptathlon consists of seven track and field events conducted over two days.

- ★ India finished the championship with a total of five medals and secured sixth position in the overall standings.
- ★ Other Indian medal winners:
 - Pooja – Silver Medal in High Jump
 - Tajinderpal Singh Toor – Silver Medal in Shot Put
 - Ancy Sojan – Bronze Medal in Long Jump
- ★ Host nation China topped the medal table with 34 medals including 10 Gold, 11 Silver and 13 Bronze medals.

Norway Sets Record with 17 Gold Medals at 2026 Winter Olympics

- ★ Norway created history at the Milan Cortina Winter Olympics by winning its 17th gold medal, the highest number of gold medals won by any nation at a single Winter Games.
- ★ The record was achieved after Johannes Dale-Skjevdal secured gold in the men's 15-kilometre biathlon mass start event.
- ★ Norway won 17 gold medals, breaking its previous record of 16 gold medals set at the Beijing Winter Olympics.
- ★ Johannes Dale-Skjevdal delivered a perfect 20 out of 20 shooting performance in the biathlon mass start.
- ★ Winning time: 39 minutes 17.1 seconds.
- ★ He took the lead after the first standing shooting round despite gusty winds and slow snow conditions.
- ★ Silver medal was won by Sturla Holm Laegreid, finishing 10.5 seconds behind and securing his fifth medal of the 2026 Games.
- ★ Bronze medal was claimed by Quentin Fillon Maillet, finishing 25.6 seconds behind the winner and earning his ninth Olympic medal overall.
- ★ The biathlon men's 15 kilometre mass start includes 30 athletes, five 3 kilometre ski loops and four shooting rounds (two prone and two standing) with penalty laps for missed targets.
- ★ Norway leads the all-time Winter Olympics medal tally with 405 medals.
- ★ Norway's medal tally: 148 Gold, 134 Silver, 123 Bronze (Total 405).
- ★ United States ranks second with 330 total medals (114 Gold, 121 Silver, 95 Bronze).
- ★ Germany ranks third with 267 total medals (105 Gold, 97 Silver, 65 Bronze).
- ★ The 17th gold medal at Milan Cortina 2026 reinforces Norway's dominance in Winter Olympics history, particularly in biathlon and Nordic skiing events.

BOOKS & AUTHORS

Vice President Releases Book Atal Bihari Vajpayee: The Eternal Statesman in New Delhi

- ★ Vice President C.P. Radhakrishnan released the coffee table book Atal Bihari Vajpayee: The Eternal Statesman in New Delhi.
- ★ He described the publication as a fitting tribute to Bharat Ratna Atal Bihari Vajpayee, stating that the book is more than a collection of photographs and celebrates the life, leadership, and enduring legacy of one of India's tallest statesmen whose ideals continue to inspire the nation.
- ★ The book was released in New Delhi by Vice President C.P. Radhakrishnan.
- ★ It highlights major milestones of Atal Bihari Vajpayee's political journey, covering both personal and political dimensions of his life.
- ★ The book portrays Vajpayee's commitment to dialogue, consensus-building, and democratic values throughout his political career.
- ★ Key leadership milestones highlighted include:
 - Pokhran Nuclear Tests (1998), which strengthened India's national security.
 - Visionary infrastructure initiatives such as the Delhi Metro project, symbolising development-oriented governance.
- ★ The Vice President observed that Vajpayee demonstrated how strength and sensitivity can coexist in leadership.
- ★ The publication underscores three core pillars that defined Vajpayee's leadership:
 - Dialogue over confrontation
 - Democracy as a foundational value
 - Development as a national priority

ACQUISITIONS & MERGERS

CCI Approves Hinduja Leyland Finance Merger with NDL Ventures

- ★ The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has approved the proposed merger of Hinduja Leyland Finance Limited (HLFL) with NDL Ventures Limited (NDL).
- ★ The merger aims to consolidate and integrate the businesses of Hinduja Leyland Finance Limited into NDL Ventures Limited.
- ★ NDL Ventures Limited (NDL) currently has no active business operations (following the demerger of its media business).
- ★ Hinduja Leyland Finance Limited (HLFL) is an NBFC-Asset Finance Company focused on providing small-ticket loans to urban and semi-urban retail customers.

- ★ HLFL's financing portfolio includes: Two-wheelers and three-wheelers, Medium and heavy commercial vehicles (MHCVs), Light commercial vehicles (LCVs) and small commercial vehicles (SCVs), Cars and multi-utility vehicles.
- ★ HLFL also provides loans against property, home loans, and affordable housing loans, catering to diverse financial needs.

IMPORTANT DAYS

World Leprosy Day

- ★ World Leprosy Day 2026 is observed on 30th January 2026.
- ★ World Leprosy Day 2026 aims to create awareness about a disease that many people believe to be extinct, especially in developed countries.
- ★ The theme for World Leprosy Day 2026 is "Leprosy is curable, the real challenge is stigma".
- ★ The disease is also called Hansen's disease, named after the Norwegian doctor Gerhard Henrik Armauer Hansen, who is known for identifying the bacteria that causes Leprosy.
- ★ French philanthropist Raoul Follereau started World Leprosy Day in 1954 to raise awareness of the illness, particularly its socioeconomic effects. World Leprosy Day is observed on the last Sunday of January.
- ★ To honor Mahatma Gandhi's unwavering compassion for those suffering from the disease, the day is marked in India on January 26, the anniversary of his passing.
- ★ Despite being curable today and uncommon in affluent nations like the U.S., the illness still has a stigma.
- ★ The countries with the highest incidence of incidents include Indonesia, Brazil, and India.
- ★ People who are infected are frequently subjected to prejudice and exclusion, which prevents them from receiving the proper medical attention, treatment, and even basic human rights.

World Wetlands Day

- ★ World Wetlands Day is celebrated on 2nd February every year.
- ★ It aims to raise global awareness about the vital role of wetlands for people and the planet.
- ★ This day also marks the date of the adoption of the Convention on Wetlands on 2 February 1971, in the Iranian city of Ramsar.
- ★ Because of the many benefits we get from wetlands, World Wetlands Day is observed on February 2 every year to raise awareness about their importance and the need to preserve them.
- ★ On this day, 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 is observed every year on 4 February across the world.
- ★ It is a global uniting initiative led by the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC).
- ★ The World Cancer Day 2026 theme is “United by Unique”, highlighting people-centred cancer care.
- ★ Cancer is the second leading cause of death globally.
- ★ Cancer refers to the uncontrolled growth of a group of cells in the body.
- ★ It can occur at any age, and if not detected early or treated properly, it significantly increases the risk of death.
- ★ World Cancer Day aims to raise awareness, encourage prevention, promote early detection, and support effective treatment.
- ★ The observance originated in 2000 during the first World Summit Against Cancer held in Paris.
- ★ It was founded by the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC).
- ★ The day supports the objectives of the World Cancer Declaration, which was written in 2008.
- ★ The primary goal of World Cancer Day is to reduce illness and deaths caused by cancer worldwide.
- ★ The day is observed globally with support from the World Health Organization (WHO) to spread awareness about cancer and its treatment.

World Interfaith Harmony Week (WIHW)

- ★ World Interfaith Harmony Week (WIHW) 2026 is being observed globally from 1 February to 7 February 2026 under the leadership of the United Nations (UN).
- ★ The observance aims to promote peace, tolerance, non-violence, dialogue, and mutual understanding among people of different religions and beliefs, especially in a world facing conflict, division, and religious intolerance.
- ★ The concept of WIHW is rooted in the “A Common Word” initiative (2007), which brought together Muslim and Christian leaders.
- ★ The initiative highlighted shared ethical values such as love for God and love for one’s neighbour.
- ★ It emphasized that common moral principles can act as a foundation for peaceful coexistence among faiths.
- ★ Growing global concerns over religious intolerance and violence led to the idea of dedicating a specific global week to interfaith harmony.
- ★ The proposal for observing World Interfaith Harmony Week was presented at the 65th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on 23 September 2010.
- ★ The proposal was put forward by:
 - Abdullah II, King of Jordan.
 - Ghazi bin Muhammad, Prince of Jordan.

- ★ They urged the international community to recognize the importance of interfaith co-operation for building lasting peace and reducing religious conflict.
- ★ On 20 October 2010, the United Nations officially adopted the proposal through Resolution A/RES/65/5.
- ★ The resolution designated 1–7 February every year as World Interfaith Harmony Week.
- ★ The first World Interfaith Harmony Week was observed from 1–7 February 2011.

National Deworming Day

- ★ National Deworming Day 2026 is observed on 10th February.
- ★ The National Deworming Day is an initiative of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India to make every child in the country worm free.
- ★ This is one of the largest public health programs reaching a large number of children during a short period.
- ★ 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 International Day of Women and Girls in Science 2026 is observed on 11th February 2026
- ★ 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 order to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. It is necessary for girls and women of all ages.

National Productivity Day

- ★ National Productivity Day 2026 is observed on 12th February.
- ★ National Productivity Day is commemorated to promote India's productivity culture.

- ★ National Productivity Day aims to increase awareness about the importance of productivity, innovation, and efficiency.
- ★ 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.
- ★ The radio is a medium that has sustained its usage over time.
- ★ It is a platform for providing information, educating people, allowing expression across cultures, and of course, playing all our favorite music.
- ★ No matter how advanced technology becomes, radio is an irreplaceable medium, especially during the occurrence of natural or man-made disasters.
- ★ any 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 World Day of Social Justice is annually observed on 20 February to promote efforts toward poverty eradication, full employment and social integration.
- ★ It is a global observance and not a public holiday.
- ★ The day has been observed since 2009 following its proclamation by the United Nations on 26 November 2007.
- ★ World Day of Social Justice is observed every year on 20 February to promote social justice, equality and inclusive development.

- ★ The day emphasises poverty eradication, full employment and decent work, and social integration.
- ★ The foundation of the observance lies in the World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen, Denmark, in 1995, where over one hundred world leaders adopted the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action for Social Development.
- ★ The declaration was reviewed by Member States in New York in 2005, reaffirming commitment to social development and equitable societies.
- ★ The International Labour Organization, established on 29 October 1919, played a key role in promoting the observance of 20 February as World Day of Social Justice.
- ★ The International Labour Organization adopted the Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization at the International Labour Conference on 10 June 2008.
- ★ The declaration is guided by the Philadelphia Declaration of 1944 and the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work of 1998.
- ★ Social development is defined as promoting social justice, solidarity, harmony and equality within and among nations.
- ★ Governments are encouraged to build strong frameworks to ensure a society for all, focusing on equal job opportunities, equitable income distribution and greater access to resources.

World NGO Day 2026

- ★ World NGO Day 2026 is observed on the 27th of February 2026
- ★ G.O. is an acronym for non-governmental organization.
- ★ World NGO Day is a day set aside to recognize, celebrate, and honor the fundamental contributions and profound impact that these independent organizations have had on the world.
- ★ World NGO Day was originally founded in 2009 by Marcis Liors Skadmanis, a social entrepreneur.
- ★ However, it was observed for the first time on February 27, 2014.
- ★ It's a day set aside to honor all non-governmental and nonprofit organizations, recognizing their impact on the world.
- ★ The holiday was officially declared back in 2010 by the 12 member countries of the Baltic Sea NGO Forum, recognized as a partner of the Council of the Baltic Sea States.
- ★ However, it only received international recognition in 2014 from the European Union, the United Nations, and other international organizations.

OBITUTARY NEWS

Australian Hockey Veteran and Former India Coach Michael Nobbs

- ★ Michael Nobbs, former Australian hockey player, passed away at the age of 72 after a prolonged illness.

- ★ He earned 76 international caps for Australia between 1979 and 1985.
- ★ Nobbs was part of the Australian hockey teams that competed in the 1981 Hockey World Cup in Bombay and the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics.
- ★ He became the coach of the Indian men's hockey team in 2011, following India's failure to qualify for the 2008 Beijing Olympics.
- ★ Under his coaching, India competed at the 2012 London Olympics, marking a key phase in Indian hockey's revival.
- ★ Apart from India, Nobbs also served as the head coach of the Japanese men's hockey team.

Padma Shri Awardee and Renowned Travel Writer Hugh Gantzer

- ★ Prominent travel writer and Padma Shri awardee Hugh Gantzer passed away at the age of 95 on February 2, 2026, in Mussoorie, Uttarakhand.
- ★ He was honoured with the Padma Shri (India's fourth highest civilian award) in 2025 in the field of Literature and Education.
- ★ Hugh Gantzer was widely known for his travel writing, showcasing India's diverse landscapes and cultures through books, articles, and documentaries.
- ★ Earlier, he served in the Indian Navy (IN) and retired with the rank of Commander before becoming a full-time travel writer.
- ★ He worked closely with his wife Colleen Gantzer, forming a well-known travel writing duo; she passed away in 2024.
- ★ He was associated with The Times of India (ToI) for several decades.
- ★ He authored the iconic weekly column "Sexes and the City", which ran for over 40 years, making it one of the longest-running in Indian journalism.
- ★ His contributions include producing 52 travel documentaries for Doordarshan.
- ★ He also authored over 30 books on travel and culture, including the "Intriguing India"
- ★ He contributed travel columns to several leading English newspapers, expanding public interest in tourism and heritage.

James Van Der Beek, Star of Dawson's Creek

- ★ James Van Der Beek, widely recognised for his lead role in the television series Dawson's Creek, has passed away at the age of 48.
- ★ Van Der Beek rose to international fame in 1998 playing Dawson Leery in Dawson's Creek, which ran for six seasons and became a defining show of late 1990s American television.
- ★ His portrayal of the introspective aspiring filmmaker earned him critical recognition and a devoted fan following.
- ★ Beyond the series, he appeared in films such as Varsity Blues and participated in several television projects, demonstrating versatility across genres.

Renowned Documentary Filmmaker Frederick Wiseman

- ★ Renowned American documentary filmmaker Frederick Wiseman passed away at the age of 96 in Massachusetts, United States of America (USA).
- ★ He was born on January 1, 1930, in Boston, Massachusetts.
- ★ Frederick Wiseman was widely regarded as a master of observational filmmaking (often associated with Direct Cinema).
- ★ Over a career spanning more than five decades, he directed 40+ documentaries.
- ★ His films primarily focused on institutions such as schools, hospitals, courts, libraries, police departments, and cultural organizations.
- ★ His notable documentaries include “Titicut Follies”, “High School”, “Welfare”, “Juvenile Court”, “Boxing Gym”, “La Danse”, “Central Park”, and “Crazy Horse”.
- ★ He also directed “The Last Letter” (2002) and “A Couple” (2022), which were his fiction feature films.
- ★ In 2016, he received an Honorary Academy Award (Oscar) from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences for his extraordinary contribution to documentary filmmaking.

