



Shankar School of Banking

CURRENT AFFAIRS

MARCH - 2025



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APRIL – 2025

NATIONAL NEWS

IIT Madras and Indian Railways Have Launched India's First Hyperloop Test Track

- ★ IIT Madras, in partnership with Indian Railways, has established India's inaugural hyperloop test track within the IIT campus.
- ★ This 422-meter-long facility is designed to test and refine hyperloop technology, paving the way for ultra-fast intercity travel that could reduce long journeys to just a few minutes.
- ★ The system operates on magnetic levitation, where electromagnetically levitated pods travel inside a vacuum tube.
- ★ This configuration minimizes friction and air resistance, enabling pods to achieve speeds of up to 1,200 km/h.
- ★ Such high speeds could allow routes like Delhi to Jaipur or Bengaluru to Chennai to be covered in approximately 30 minutes, far surpassing traditional rail travel.
- ★ The initiative is a collaborative effort between the Indian Government and academia.
- ★ The project is funded by the Ministry of Railways and serves as a research platform to develop hyperloop technology.
- ★ Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw has committed an additional \$1 million grant to accelerate research.

Sarbananda Sonowal Unveils 'One Nation-One Port'

- ★ Union Minister for Ports, Shipping, and Waterways, Sarbananda Sonowal, announced key reforms to modernize India's maritime infrastructure and strengthen its role in global trade.
- ★ These initiatives, unveiled in Mumbai, align with the Union Budget's focus on the maritime sector, aiming to boost port efficiency, promote trade, and enhance shipbuilding capabilities.
- ★ Objective is to establish a unified operational framework for all major ports in India.
- ★ Benefits include Reduces operational delays through standardized procedures, Lowers logistics costs by eliminating inefficiencies and Improves global competitiveness by aligning with international standards.

Aadhaar Good Governance Portal Launched to Streamline Authentication Requests

- ★ The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has launched the Aadhaar Good Governance Portal to simplify and expedite the approval process for Aadhaar authentication requests.
- ★ This initiative aligns with the government's vision to enhance ease of living, improve service accessibility, and ensure transparent governance.

- ★ Objective is to enhance transparency and inclusivity in decision-making processes while expanding Aadhaar authentication services.
- ★ Aadhaar is the most trusted digital ID, with over 100 billion authentications recorded in the past decade.
- ★ The amendment expands Aadhaar authentication scope, improving service delivery in healthcare, e-commerce, education, credit rating, hospitality, and aggregator platforms.

Swavalambini Initiative to Promote Women Entrepreneurship in Country

- ★ To promote women entrepreneurship in the country, the Union Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), in collaboration with NITI Aayog, has launched the Swavalambini initiative.
- ★ The Swavalambini initiative at the Chaudhary Charan Singh University, Meerut, Uttar Pradesh, was launched by Union Minister (Independent Charge) for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship and Minister of State for Education Jayant Chaudhary on 1st March 2025.
- ★ The Swavalambini initiative was simultaneously virtually launched in Banaras Hindu University (BHU), the University of Hyderabad, and Maulana Azad National Urdu University.
- ★ The Swavalambini initiative is being implemented by the National Institute for Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development (NIESBUD) and in joint partnership with NITI Aayog. NIESBUD comes under the Union Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship.
- ★ It aims to empower female students in Higher Education Institutions with the skills and confidence needed to establish their businesses.
- ★ It includes a two-day Entrepreneurship Awareness Programme for around 600 female students, where they will learn fundamental entrepreneurial concepts, market opportunities, and essential business skills.

IGNCA Hosts Literary Discussion on Kailash Satyarthi's Autobiography Diyaslai

- ★ The Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), under the Ministry of Culture, in collaboration with the Satyarthi Movement for Global Compassion, organized a literary discussion on Diyaslai, the autobiography of Nobel Peace Prize laureate Kailash Satyarthi.
- ★ The event focused on the book's exploration of social justice, child rights, and global compassion.
- ★ Diyaslai is the autobiography of Kailash Satyarthi, a renowned child rights activist and Nobel Peace Prize winner (2014).
- ★ The book narrates his life struggles, activism, and relentless fight against child labor.
- ★ Satyarthi shares his journey from humble beginnings in Vidisha, Madhya Pradesh, to leading global movements advocating for children's rights and education.

PM Modi Chairs NBWL Meeting At Sasan Gir On World Wildlife Day 2025

- ★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi chaired the 7th National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) meeting at Sasan Gir in the Junagadh district of Gujarat on World Wildlife Day on 3rd March 2025.

- ★ Gir is the only sanctuary for the Asiatic lion in India. Besides Africa, it is also the place in the world where lions can be seen in the wild.
- ★ Every year since 2014, the 3rd of March has been observed as World Wildlife Day.
- ★ The day is observed to raise awareness about the world's wild fauna and flora.
- ★ The United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution on 20 December 2013 to observe 3rd March as World Wildlife Day.
- ★ This day was chosen by the United Nations to commemorate the adoption of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in 1973. The CITES plays an important role in promoting a sustainable wildlife trade.
- ★ During the 7th meeting of the National Board for Wildlife, the Prime Minister reviewed the various initiatives of the government for wildlife conservation, including Project Elephant, Project Tiger, Project Snow Leopard, etc.
- ★ During the meeting, the Prime Minister also announced various projects for the conservation of wildlife.
- ★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the 16th cycle of the Lion census to be conducted in the Gir sanctuary in 2025.

Chhattisgarh Government Presents ₹1.65 Lakh Crore Budget for FY26

- ★ The Chhattisgarh Government presented a ₹1,65,000 crore budget for the fiscal 2025-26, proposing substantial funding for welfare schemes related to women, food security, while allocating ₹10,000 crore for boosting farm prosperity.
- ★ The Dearness Allowance (DA) for State Government employees has been increased to 53%.
- ★ The revised DA will be paid in April with March's wages.
- ★ The budget aligns with Amrit Kaal Vision 2047 and aims to achieve developmental milestones for 2030.
- ★ ₹5 crore allocated for a survey of the Metro Rail line between Raipur and Durg.
- ★ Mahtari Vandan Yojana: Increased allocation to ₹5,500 crore for financial assistance to women.
- ★ Krishak Unnati Yojana: ₹10,000 crore to boost agricultural prosperity.
- ★ Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Gramin): ₹8,500 crore for rural housing.
- ★ Mukhyamantri Khadyann Sahayata Yojana: ₹4,500 crore for food security.
- ★ Free Electricity for Farmers: ₹3,500 crore allocated for free electricity to agricultural pumps up to 5 HP.

PM Modi Inaugurates Wildlife Rehabilitation and Rescue Center, Vantara

- ★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated Vantara in Jamnagar, Gujarat. The Prime Minister was in Gujarat to attend the 7th meeting of the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) meeting at Sasan Gir in the Junagadh district of Gujarat on 3rd March 2025.
- ★ The Vantara is a wildlife rescue, conservation, and rehabilitation center.

- ★ During his visit to Vantara, the Prime Minister inspected various facilities and interacted directly with the rehabilitated animals.
- ★ Recently, the Radhe Krishna Temple Elephant Welfare Trust of the Vantara was honoured with the 2025 Prani Mitra award in the Corporate category by the Government of India.
- ★ The Vantara Center has been established by Reliance Industries Limited and the Reliance Foundation. The Vantara is spread over 3000 acres of land within the Reliance Industries oil refinery complex at Jamnagar, Gujarat.
- ★ The Vantara center attempts to address issues like habitat loss of the wildlife, human-animal conflicts and the poaching of the wild animals.
- ★ The Vantara animal rescue, conservation, and rehabilitation center is home to more than 200 species and over 1.5 lakh rescued endangered and threatened animals.

India Inaugurates First World Peace Center in Gurugram, Haryana

- ★ India has taken a major step towards global peace and harmony with the inauguration of its first World Peace Center in Gurugram, Haryana.
- ★ Established by Ahimsa Vishwa Bharti under the guidance of Jain Acharya Lokesh, the center aims to promote non-violence, spiritual awareness, human values, and universal brotherhood.
- ★ The event witnessed the presence of prominent leaders and spiritual figures.
- ★ Key objective includes:
 - Promoting Non-Violence and Peace – Spreading the message of ahimsa (non-violence) and encouraging peaceful practices in daily life.
 - Spiritual and Moral Upliftment – Conducting discourses, workshops, and meditation sessions to enhance spiritual and moral consciousness.
 - Environmental and Ethical Awareness – Addressing climate change, ethical leadership, and social responsibility.

Mizoram Launches Voluntary Pension Scheme to Tackle 'Proxies' Menace

- ★ The Mizoram Government has introduced the Special Voluntary Retirement Scheme across the state.
- ★ Under this scheme, any employee unable to perform official duties due to health, domestic, or other debilitating issues can apply for voluntary pension.
- ★ This scheme covers all regular government employees governed by CCS (Pension) Rules, 1972, who have not completed 20 years of service.
- ★ Additionally, employees under the Mizoram New Defined Contributory System, 2010 are also eligible.
- ★ According to Mizoram CM Lalduhoma, this scheme provides affected employees with an honourable exit while addressing the widespread issue of government employees hiring proxies.
- ★ Current data shows that 3,365 government employees across 44 departments had engaged proxies as substitutes.
- ★ Of these, over 2,000 employees cited health reasons, while 703 employees were affected by domestic issues.

- ★ In June 2024, the Government ordered all proxy-hiring employees to report to their assigned posts within 45 days.

India Launches Cities Coalition for Circularity (C-3)

- ★ India has launched the Cities Coalition for Circularity (C-3) on March 3, 2025, marking a major step towards sustainable urban development.
- ★ This multi-national alliance aims to promote city-to-city collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and private sector partnerships to enhance waste management and resource efficiency.
- ★ The initiative aligns with India's Pro-Planet People (P-3) approach, focusing on the 3R principles (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle) and circular economy practices.
- ★ The objective is to strengthen urban sustainability by fostering collaboration between cities, policymakers, industry leaders, and development partners.
- ★ The coalition will bring together multiple nations to share knowledge and best practices in circular economy principles.

West Bengal to Deploy AI in Kanyashree Scheme by International Women's Day

- ★ The West Bengal Government is planning to leverage AI in its flagship Kanyashree program aimed at reducing drop outs among girls in schools.
- ★ On the occasion of International Women's Day (March 8), this initiative is being planned to counter problems emerging from applicants making mistakes in submitting long application forms online.
- ★ Currently each applicant has to upload 30-35 information details on the portal including name, address, bank account among others.
- ★ Inadvertently mistakes crop up including wrong bank accounts and IFSC codes as well as even 2 girls ending up with the same account numbers.
- ★ These issues often lead to delay in disbursement of the amount under Kanyashree.
- ★ Under Kanyashree 1 part of the scheme, all girls studying between 13 to 18 years of age get ₹ 1000 as stipend yearly if she does not get married.
- ★ If she continues studies after 18 without getting married, she gets a onetime stipend of ₹ 25000.
- ★ Since every year, more than 1 lakh girls enrol for this scheme under the Women and Child Welfare Department, more mistakes cropping up was often leading to time delays.

24th World Sustainable Development Summit 2025

- ★ The 24th World Sustainable Development Summit 2025 concluded in New Delhi on 7th March 2025.
- ★ The World Sustainable Development Summit, which claims to be the only independently convened international summit on sustainable development and environment in the Global South, was held in New Delhi from 5-7 March 2025.

- ★ The Summit provides a platform for thought leaders, heads of state and government, scholars, corporates, youth groups, and civil society to discuss issues related to sustainable development and climate change and suggest innovations and solutions.
- ★ The World Sustainable Development Summit 2025 was organised by “The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI)”.
- ★ The theme of the 24th World Sustainable Development Summit 2025 was “Partnerships for Accelerating Sustainable Development and Climate Solutions”.
- ★ The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) was set up as the Tata Energy and Resources Institute in 1974.
- ★ It is a non-governmental organisation registered under the Societies Registration Act of 1860.
- ★ TERI’s expertise lies in conducting research in the fields of energy, sustainable development, and the environment.

Kerala Chief Minister Inaugurates Advance Cybersecurity Operations Centre

- ★ Chief Minister of Kerala, Shri Pinarayi Vijayan, inaugurated the Advanced Cybersecurity Operations Centre (SOC) for the Kerala Police Cyber Division via video conferencing.
- ★ The initiative aims to enhance cybersecurity for police systems and critical infrastructure across the state.
- ★ The Centre for Development of Telematics (C-DOT), under the Department of Telecommunications (DoT), Ministry of Communications, has developed TRINETRA, an AI-powered cybersecurity platform designed to protect enterprises and critical sectors.
- ★ Key Features of the Cybersecurity Operations Centre (SOC):
 - 24 × 7 Cyber Threat Monitoring to identify vulnerabilities and prevent cyberattacks.
 - Protection of Police Infrastructure, including headquarters, city commissionerates, and police stations.
 - Real-Time Anomaly Detection using AI-driven analysis of endpoints, network traffic, and user behaviour.
 - Proactive Cyber Threat Mitigation to ensure robust data security.
- ★ This initiative marks a significant leap in strengthening Kerala Police’s cybersecurity resilience, ensuring the safety of critical digital infrastructure from evolving cyber threats.

Punjab Government Launches Project Hifazat

- ★ The Government of Punjab launched Project Hifazat to protect women from violence on the eve of International Women’s Day.
- ★ The Project was launched by Punjab’s Social Security, Women, and Child Development Minister Dr Baljit Kaur in Chandigarh
- ★ International Women’s Day is observed every year on 8th March. The theme of the 2025 International Women’s Day is “For All Women and Girls: Rights. Equality. Empowerment”.
- ★ The project aims to protect women and children from violence by providing immediate assistance from government departments.

- ★ It provides a dedicated helpline number, '181', which the victim can call for help.
- ★ The initiative aims to improve the response mechanism of the government departments to report of violence against women through better inter-departmental co-ordination.
- ★ It also aims to remove the fear of women from reporting cases of violence and harassment at home, the workplace or at any place.
- ★ The Project Hifazat of the Punjab Government has been integrated with Mission Shakti and Mission Vatsalya of the Central Government.

58th Tiger Reserve of India

- ★ The Union Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change has notified the Madhav National Park of Madhya Pradesh as the 58th Tiger Reserve of the country under the centrally sponsored scheme Project Tiger.
- ★ It is the 9th Tiger Reserve of the state under the Tiger Project of the Central Government.
- ★ The Madhav National Park is situated in the Shivpuri district of Madhya Pradesh.
- ★ It was notified as a National Park in 1958.
- ★ It is spread over 375.233 sq.km.
- ★ It is situated on the northern fringe of the Central Highlands of India, forming a part of the Upper Vindhyan Hills.
- ★ Project Tiger was launched as a centrally sponsored project in 1973 as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme.

Coal India and IIT Hyderabad Collaborate for Clean Coal Energy Research

- ★ Coal India Limited (CIL) and IIT Hyderabad (IITH) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).
- ★ Objective is to establish the Centre of Clean Coal Energy and Net Zero (CLEANZ) at IIT Hyderabad.
- ★ It focuses on developing clean coal technologies and sustainable utilization of coal in line with India's Net Zero commitments.
- ★ The initiative comes under the National Centre for Coal and Energy Research (NaCCER).
- ★ NaCCER is an independent R&D unit under CMPDI (Mine Development and Consultancy Arm of CIL).

JP Nadda Launches Tripura Government's 2 Schemes For Girls in Agartala

- ★ The Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare and President of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Jagat Prakash Nadda, launched the two welfare schemes of the Tripura Government for the girls of the state.
- ★ The scheme – Mukhyamantri Balika Samriddhi Yojana and Mukhyamantri Kanya Atmanirbhar Yojana – was launched on the occasion of the two years of the formation of the BJP Government in the state.
- ★ **Mukhyamantri Balika Samriddhi Yojana:**
 - The scheme is for the girl children born in a below poverty line (BPL) in the state.

- The State Government will deposit ₹ 50,000 in the name of the girl in a bond.
- After the girl reaches the age of 18 years, the bond will be given to the girl.
- According to the State Government, the value of the bond is expected to be ₹ 10 lakhs when the girl child turns 18.

★ **Mukhyamantri Kanya Atmanirbhar Yojana:**

- It will be for meritorious girl students studying in Higher Secondary Schools.
- The schools affiliated with the Tripura Education Board, CBSE, and Indian School Certificate (ISC) are eligible under the scheme.
- 140 meritorious students scoring high marks in the exam will be provided a Scooty free of cost by the State Government.

The National Archives of India Celebrates the 135th Foundation Day

- ★ The National Archives of India (NAI) celebrated its 135th Foundation Day on March 11, 2025, with a grand event featuring the inauguration of the “Indian Heritage through Architecture” exhibition by Union Minister Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat.
- ★ The event also saw the launch of the ‘Gyan Bharatam Mission’ and highlighted the world’s largest digitization program, ensuring the preservation of India’s rich historical records.
- ★ It showcased India’s architectural legacy from ancient, medieval, Mughal, and colonial eras.
- ★ It featured original archival documents, UNESCO records, and personal papers of eminent personalities.
- ★ It aims to expand access to India’s vast knowledge repository.

FIEO Launches SheTrades India Hub

- ★ The Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) launched the SheTrades India Hub, a groundbreaking initiative aimed at empowering women entrepreneurs and strengthening India’s export ecosystem.
- ★ This initiative is part of a global effort led by the International Trade Centre (ITC) and is funded by the UK Government’s SheTrades Commonwealth Programme.
- ★ With this launch, FIEO became the host institution for the 20th SheTrades Hub worldwide.
- ★ The SheTrades India Hub is established in partnership with ITC and the UK Government’s SheTrades Commonwealth+ Programme.
- ★ India joins the ranks of 19 other countries hosting SheTrades Hubs globally.
- ★ The initiative focuses on enhancing market access, business skills, and financial inclusion for women-led enterprises.
- ★ It aims to increase women’s participation in international trade and contribute to India’s economic growth.

Assam To Launch First Satellite ‘ASSAMSAT’

- ★ Assam is set to launch its first satellite, ‘ASSAMSAT’, marking a major step in utilizing space technology for governance and development.

- ★ Finance Minister Ajanta Neog announced the initiative during the 2025-26 state budget presentation in the Assembly.
- ★ The satellite will enhance the flow of critical data for better management of key socio-economic initiatives, benefiting agriculture, disaster management, infrastructure, border security, and law enforcement.
- ★ The project is being developed in collaboration with IN-SPACe under the Union Ministry of Space, showcasing Assam's commitment to advanced technology in public services.
- ★ To encourage innovation and research, the Assam Government plans to involve college and university students in experimental satellite development.
- ★ This initiative, in collaboration with IN-SPACe and ISRO, aims to foster young talent and strengthen India's space sector.

Finance Ministry Approves ₹10,000 Crore Zero Coupon Bond Issuance by PFC

- ★ The Finance Ministry has authorized Power Finance Corporation (PFC) to issue Zero Coupon Bonds (ZCBs) worth up to ₹10,000 crore.
- ★ These bonds will be issued at a discount and redeemed at full face value upon maturity.
- ★ A Zero Coupon Bond (ZCB) is a financial instrument that does not pay periodic interest (coupon) during its tenure. Instead, it is issued at a discount and redeemed at face value upon maturity.
- ★ The difference between the issue price and face value represents the investor's return.
- ★ It is to be issued on or before March 31st 2027, with a maturity period of 121 months (10 years and 1 month).
- ★ Bonds will be issued up to 10 lakh.
- ★ Investors receive ₹1 lakh per bond upon maturity.
- ★ ZCBs are ideal for long-term investors seeking a lump sum payout rather than periodic interest payments.

Walmart-Owned Indus Appstore Partners with Xiaomi India

- ★ Indus Appstore, owned by Walmart-backed PhonePe, has announced a multi-year alliance with Xiaomi India to pre-install its app marketplace on all Xiaomi devices sold in India.
- ★ As part of the deal, Xiaomi will replace its existing app store, GetApps, with Indus Appstore on current devices.
- ★ Xiaomi India partnered to pre-install Indus Appstore on all new devices.
- ★ It aims to challenge Google Play Store by offering an alternative app marketplace.
- ★ The deal strengthens Indus Appstore's presence, making it the default app store for millions of Xiaomi users.

Indian Railways Joins Mission Amrit Sarovar to Enhance Water Conservation

- ★ The Indian Railways has been integrated into the Union Government's Mission Amrit Sarovar, launched in April 2022, to combat water scarcity and enhance groundwater recharge across India.
- ★ The initiative focuses on the construction and rejuvenation of 75 ponds per district, emphasizing community participation (Jan Bhagidari) and climate resilience.
- ★ By October 2024, over 68,000 ponds had been restored.
- ★ In Phase 2, the Indian Railways will play a critical role in desilting, excavating, and constructing water bodies near railway lines, while using the excavated material for railway embankments.

Tamil Nadu Replaces ₹ with '₹' in State Budget Logo

- ★ The Tamil Nadu Government has replaced the Indian Rupee symbol (₹) with the Tamil letter '₹' in the state budget logo for FY 2025-26.
- ★ This decision, led by Chief Minister M.K. Stalin, is seen as a cultural assertion and aligns with the state's long-standing opposition to Hindi imposition and the National Education Policy (NEP).
- ★ The Tamil Nadu budget logo now features '₹' instead of the standard Rupee symbol (₹).
- ★ The move emphasizes Tamil identity and aims to promote linguistic pride.
- ★ The decision reflects Tamil Nadu's resistance to the perceived Hindi imposition.
- ★ It aligns with the state's stance against the National Education Policy (NEP), which is considered "saffronized" by the ruling DMK Government.

Prime Minister Modi to Inaugurate 10th Edition of Raisina Dialogue

- ★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the 10th edition of Raisina Dialogue 2025 in New Delhi.
- ★ Prime Minister of New Zealand, Christopher Luxon, will join the inaugural session as the Chief Guest.
- ★ The theme this year is "Kālachakra — People, Peace and Planet". During the event, decision makers and thought leaders of the world will engage each other across conversations in various formats, over six thematic pillars.
- ★ The 10th Raisina Dialogue will witness participation of representatives from about 125 countries.
- ★ The participants include Ministers, former Heads of State and Heads of Government, Military Commanders, Captains of Industry, Technology Leaders, Academics, Journalists, Scholars on Strategic Affairs, Experts from leading Think Tanks, and Youth.
- ★ Over 3500 participants will be joining the Dialogue in-person, and the proceedings will be viewed by millions across the world on various digital platforms.
- ★ The Raisina Dialogue is India's premier conference on geopolitics and geoeconomics committed to addressing the most challenging issues facing the global community.

DMRC Introduces Urban Cargo Service with Blue Dart

- ★ India's largest metro network operator, Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC), has introduced urban cargo (freight) service on its network in partnership with logistics company Blue Dart Express Private Limited.
- ★ The DMRC has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Blue Dart to transport its cargo across the metro network of the DMRC in the Delhi- NCR (National Capital Region) area.
- ★ According to the DMRC, it is the first metro network in South Asia and the Pacific region to introduce such a cargo service.
- ★ Initially, the cargo service was introduced on the Blue line of the DMRC, and gradually, it will be expanded to all the networks of the DMRC.
- ★ According to the DMRC, it has been inspired by the pilot project of the Madrid Metro of Spain.
- ★ The time-sensitive cargo of Blue Darts will be efficiently transported through the vast DMRC network, which is known for its punctuality.
- ★ The service is expected to reduce road traffic of the Blue Darts, which normally uses vehicles to deliver the cargos within the Delhi NCR areas.

Sikkim Government Imposes a Tourist Fee of ₹50 Per Person

- ★ The Prem Singh Tamang Government in Sikkim has imposed ₹50 as entry fee for tourists entering the state. This has been made applicable from 15th of March 2025.
- ★ The fees have been introduced under the provisions of the Sikkim Registration of Tourist Trade Rules, 2025.
- ★ The ₹50 person fees will be paid by tourists visiting the state and will be valid for a stay upto 30 days.
- ★ If the tourist again visits the state after 30 days then they will again have to pay the fees of ₹50 per person.
- ★ Children below five years old and visiting government officials on official duties are exempted from the fees.
- ★ The fees collected from the tourist will be deposited into the Tourism Sustainability Development Fund of the Sikkim Government.
- ★ According to the Sikkim Government, the fund will be used to develop tourism infrastructure and services.
- ★ The fund will be used to enhance road connectivity and improve cleanliness in the state so that the tourism industry in the state gets a boost.

Prime Minister's Internship Scheme (PMIS) Mobile App Launched

- ★ Union Minister of Finance and Corporate Affairs, Nirmala Sitharaman, launched a dedicated mobile application for the Prime Minister's Internship Scheme (PMIS) in New Delhi.
- ★ This initiative aims to simplify the registration process, provide real-time updates, and enhance accessibility for candidates seeking internship opportunities.

- ★ Union Minister Sitharaman highlighted that this scheme is crucial for nation-building and urged industries to actively support youth skill development.
- ★ Minister of State for Corporate Affairs, Harsh Malhotra, also emphasized that the PMIS App will significantly improve access to internships across industries.
- ★ Prime Minister's Internship Scheme (PMIS) bridge the gap between academic learning and industry requirements for youth employability.

Delhi Government to Implement PM-ABHIM Scheme

- ★ The Delhi Government will sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to implement the Pradhan Mantri Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission (PM-ABHIM).
- ★ This initiative aims to enhance primary healthcare services and improve preparedness for future pandemics.
- ★ It is a Central Government scheme to strengthen public health infrastructure.
- ★ It focuses on upgrading primary healthcare facilities in urban and rural areas.
- ★ It aims to improve pandemic preparedness and response to health emergencies.

India's First PPP Green Waste Processing Plant to Be Set up in Indore

- ★ India's cleanest city Indore in Madhya Pradesh has launched India's first public-private partnership (PPP) model-based green waste processing plant under the Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban.
- ★ The project will process green waste in the municipal area of the city into valuable resources and help the city to achieve garbage-free status.
- ★ The second phase of the Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban launched on 1st October 2021 aims to achieve "Garbage Free" status for all cities of the country by 2026.
- ★ The green waste processing plant is being set up by the Indore Municipal Corporation in partnership with Astronomical Industries Private Limited.
- ★ The Municipal Corporation will allocate the land for the facility and transport the green waste to the facility.
- ★ The private sector will be responsible for constructing and managing the waste processing facility.
- ★ The green waste plant will give a boost to the circular economy and provide an alternative option to substitute the use of non-biodegradable materials.

C-DOT Launches Samarth Incubation Programme

- ★ The Centre for Development of Telematics (C-DoT) has launched an incubation programme for the Startups "Samarth" to boost innovation and indigenous research in the field of telecommunications and Information Technology (IT) sectors.
- ★ Startups registered with the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry are eligible for the Samarth Incubation Programme.

- ★ The chosen startups will get a grant of up to ₹5 lakh, and gain access to well-furnished office space for a period of 6 months at the C-DOT Campus in the country.
- ★ They will also have access to C-DOT Lab facilities and will be mentored by C-DOT technical leaders and industry experts.
- ★ The startup will also get an opportunity for future collaboration under the C-DOT Collaborative Research Program if they are selected.
- ★ The C-DOT will implement the Samarth Incubation Programme through the selected Software Technology Parks of India (STPI).

UIDAI Partners with Sarvam AI to Enhance Aadhaar Services with AI

- ★ The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) has partnered with Bengaluru-based Sarvam AI, an indigenous Generative AI (GenAI) company, to enhance the user experience of Aadhaar services.
- ★ This collaboration introduces AI-powered voice interactions, real-time fraud detection, and multilingual support to make Aadhaar services more accessible, secure, and efficient.
- ★ This one-year agreement, extendable by another year, reflects UIDAI's commitment to technological advancements and user-centric innovations.
- ★ It improves Aadhaar service accessibility, security, and user experience using AI.
- ★ It enables real-time user feedback for Aadhaar services.
- ★ It detects overcharging during enrollment and updates.

Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy Launches 'Rajiv Yuva Vikasam'

- ★ Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy launched the 'Rajiv Yuva Vikasam' scheme on the Assembly premises.
- ★ The scheme provides self-employment loans to SC, ST, BC, and Minority.
- ★ The scheme aims to create self-employment opportunities for five lakh unemployed youth across Telangana.
- ★ The Government has allocated ₹6,000 crore for the initiative.
- ★ Eligible beneficiaries can receive up to ₹3 lakh to establish self-employment units.
- ★ Application scrutiny begins next month, and loan sanction documents will be issued on June 2nd (Telangana Formation Day) Loans up to ₹1 lakh will receive an 80% subsidy, Loans up to ₹2 lakh will receive a 70% subsidy and Loans up to ₹3 lakh will receive a 60% subsidy.

Government of Jammu and Kashmir Launches 'Watan Ko Jano' Programme

- ★ The 'Watan Ko Jano' programme, launched by the Government of Jammu and Kashmir with funding from the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, aims to foster national integration by providing underprivileged children (under 18 years) from government-run homes exposure to India's cultural, historical, and technological advancements.
- ★ The initiative plays a crucial role in promoting unity, inclusivity, and patriotism among the youth of Jammu and Kashmir.

- ★ The programme seeks to strengthen national unity by providing Kashmiri youth with first-hand experiences of India's diverse heritage.
- ★ Fostering National Integration – Encouraging young participants to understand and appreciate India's cultural diversity.
- ★ Educational Exposure – Organizing visits to historical landmarks, premier educational institutions, and industrial hubs.
- ★ Technological Awareness – Introducing students to advancements in science, technology, and innovation.
- ★ Personality Development – Enhancing communication skills, leadership abilities, and self-confidence through interactive activities.
- ★ Promoting Social Harmony – Strengthening the spirit of unity and brotherhood across different regions.

Central Government Launches BioSaarthi to Support Biotech Startups

- ★ The Government of India has launched the BioSaarthi initiative to support Indian Biotech startups to expand their domestic and global reach and business.
- ★ The BioSaarthi initiative was unveiled by the Union Minister for State (Independent Charge) for Science and Technology Dr Jitendra Singh in a function organised in New Delhi on 21 March 2025.
- ★ The function was organised to celebrate the 13th Foundation Day of the Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC).
- ★ The Minister also released the "India Bioeconomy Report 2025" on the occasion.
- ★ The BioSaarthi is a six-month cohort that will facilitate structured mentor-mentee engagements.
- ★ Mentor refers to an experienced person who guides the startup entrepreneur also known as a mentee in tackling the challenges experienced by the startups.
- ★ The initiative will focus on engaging overseas experts, especially from the Indian diaspora successful in the biotech sector.
- ★ It aims to strengthen India's biotech ecosystem by fostering innovation, enhancing industry-academia collaboration, and positioning Indian startups for global success.

2025 Jal Shakti Abhiyan: Catch the Rain Launched in Panchkula

- ★ The 6th edition of the Jal Shakti Abhiyan: Catch the Rain - 2025 was launched in Panchkula, Haryana on the occasion of World Water Day on 22 March 2025 with a focus on 148 water-stressed districts of the country.
- ★ This was the first time that Jal Shakti Abhiyan: Catch the Rain was launched outside New Delhi.
- ★ The Government of India launched the Jal Shakti Abhiyan in 2019 which was later renamed as the Jal Shakti Abhiyan: Catch the Rain in 2021. The annual campaign aims to increase water conservation awareness amongst the people and ensure community participation in water conservation projects.
- ★ The campaign is active during the monsoon season.

- ★ The Jal Shakti Abhiyan: Catch the Rain-2025 initiative was launched by the Union Ministry of Jal Shakti in partnership with the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change and the Government of Haryana.
- ★ The theme of the Jal Shakti Abhiyan: Catch the Rain in 2021 is- Peoples' Action for Water Conservation - Towards Intensified Community Connect.

Delhi Became 28th Legislature to Join NeVA

- ★ Delhi has become the 28th legislature in India to join the National e-Vidhan Application (NeVA) to create a paperless and digital legislative process. Nagaland was the first state in India to implement the National e-Vidhan Application (NeVA) in 2022.
- ★ India has a national legislature named Parliament and 28 states and three Union Territories – Delhi, Puducherry, and Jammu and Kashmir -have legislature.
- ★ The Delhi Legislative Assembly signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Union Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs and the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi in New Delhi on 22 March 2025.
- ★ The NeVa is a digital platform developed under the Digital India Initiative of the Central Government to realise the One Nation One Application vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- ★ It is under the Union Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs.
- ★ It aims to replace the paper-based legislative process with an efficient digital paperless system accessible to all.
- ★ It is a workflow-based system hosted on the National Informatics Center (NIC) cloud system, MeghRaj 2.0.
- ★ NeVa is a web-based suite of applications and mobile apps that can be accessed with any digital device by the members of the legislature.

Mumbai To Host FATF Private Sector Collaborative Forum 2025 Meeting

- ★ Mumbai, financial capital of India will host the 2025 Private Sector Collaborative Forum (PSCF) meeting of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) from 25th – 27th March 2025.
- ★ The Private Sector Collaborative Forum of the FATF is an annual meeting which seeks to foster collaboration between the FATF and the civil society and private sector to fight against money laundering and terrorist financing other financial crimes.
- ★ The 2024 FATF Private Sector Collaborative Forum Meeting was held in Vienna, Austria in April 2024 and was hosted by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).
- ★ The 2025 PSCF is being organised by the apex global anti money laundering organisation FATF.
- ★ It is being hosted by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in collaboration with the Department of Revenue, Union Ministry of Finance.
- ★ The annual PSCF meeting seeks to enhance collaboration between the private sector and the civil society with the FATF member countries to strengthen global anti money laundering (AML) and combating the financing of terrorism (CFT) mechanism.

- ★ The meeting will be attended by more than 250 representatives from the financial sector, non-financial businesses and professions, civil society, academia, FATF members and other stakeholders.

Conrad Sangma Inaugurates The 7th Act East Business Show

- ★ Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad Sangma inaugurated the 7th Act East Business Show in the state capital Shillong on 25th March 2025.
- ★ The three-day Act East Business Show will be held in Shillong from 25th – 27th March 2025.
- ★ The 7th Act East Business Show aims to promote Meghalaya as a trade and investment destination and further the trade and business ties between India's North Eastern region with the BBIN (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal) and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) as per the Act East Policy of the Government of India.
- ★ The North East Region of India includes – Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura, Manipur, Nagaland and Sikkim.
- ★ The main feature of the Act East Policy is as follows:
 - It has expanded the scope to include the countries of Southeast Asia and Indo-Pacific countries;
 - Create opportunities for the North East States by connecting with the Southeast Asian countries in the field of Commerce, Culture and connectivity.
 - The Act East Business Show is organised by the Kolkata based Indian Chamber of Commerce In collaboration with a host state of the North East.

ESI Scheme of ESIC Extended To 15 Districts of Uttar Pradesh

- ★ The Government of India has extended the coverage of the Employees' State Insurance (ESI) Scheme of the Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) to 15 additional districts of Uttar Pradesh.
- ★ The total number of districts covered under the ESI scheme in the country now stands at 689 out of 778 districts in the country.
- ★ The ESI scheme is India's largest social insurance scheme, administered by the Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) under the Union Ministry of Labour and Employment.
- ★ It provides social benefits to employees as defined under the Employees' State Insurance Act, 1948.
- ★ The ESI Scheme was launched by Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru in Kanpur on 24 February 1952. It was also simultaneously launched in New Delhi on the same day.
- ★ Both the employer and the Employees contribute to the scheme.
- ★ The contribution of the employers is 4.75 % of the wages of the employee.
- ★ The employee contribution is 1.75% of the wage.
- ★ Employees earning a daily wage of less than ₹ 137 per day are exempted from payment of their share of contribution.

Haryana Launches AI Chatbot 'Sarathi' for Citizen Services

- ★ The Haryana Government has introduced 'Sarathi', an AI-powered chatbot, to facilitate citizens' direct access to government documents and policies.
- ★ It was launched by Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini, the initiative is part of Haryana's digital governance strategy.
- ★ It provides immediate access to official policies, notifications, and circulars.
- ★ It enhances transparency in government operations.
- ★ It also boosts administrative efficiency by integrating AI for instant data retrieval.

Darjeeling Zoo In West Bengal First in India to Launch Cryogenic Preservation of Wildlife DNA

- ★ The Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park in Darjeeling, West Bengal has become the first zoo in the country to preserve DNA samples of more than 60 varieties of wildlife found exclusively in the snowy Himalayan terrains.
- ★ These include tissues from red pandas, snow leopards and other indigenous species that were killed either in road accidents or in captivity.
- ★ This Darjeeling Zoo is spread across 8 acres and at an altitude of 7050 ft, it is India's highest-altitude Zoological Park.
- ★ The zoo is collaborating with the Center for Cellular and Molecular Biology, Hyderabad for this cryogenic conservation initiative.
- ★ The aim is to preserve genetic material for species facing extinction so that it can aid in future research and conservation efforts.
- ★ The project started in 2023 and a dedicated laboratory has been set up inside the zoo where DNA samples are stored in steel containers filled with liquid nitrogen at freezing temperatures.

West Bengal Police Launch Mobile App

- ★ The West Bengal police have launched a mobile application which can be used by police personnel while applying for their transfers.
- ★ A substantial section of the Police department staff starting from the ranks of constable to Sub-inspector can apply for these transfers through the e-HRMS software.
- ★ The deadline for transfer requests through the app will end on 11 April, 2025.
- ★ Those police staff who have already applied for transfer before 21 March will need to make a fresh application through the app only.
- ★ Only those with special medical contingencies can apply throughout the year.
- ★ The mobile app was launched to ensure transparency in the whole transfer process.
- ★ There were allegations that some officers were asking for financial benefits in exchange for transfer postings.
- ★ The DIG (Administration) of West Bengal Police have asked every district police unit to set up a help desk that would assist the police staff in using the application software.

- ★ This application is in line with the Utsasree app launched by the West Bengal Government earlier to process the transfers of teachers to avoid allegations of bribery and nepotism.

3rd Edition of SourceX India 2025

- ★ The 3rd edition of the SourceX India 2025 was inaugurated in New Delhi on 26 March 2025.
- ★ The SourceX India is the country's first Global Market Place that brings together the global buyers and the Indian companies and provides an opportunity to launch successful Indian brands in the international markets.
- ★ The 3rd edition of the SourceX India is being held at the Yashobhoomi Convention Centre, New Delhi, from 26-28 March 2025.
- ★ Over 150 buyers from more than 45 countries are participating in the 3rd edition of the SourceX India.
- ★ The buyers are from Africa, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the European Union (EU), Oceania, West Asia, and North Africa (WANA), etc.
- ★ The SourceX India 2025 has been organised by the Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) under the aegis of the Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- ★ Objective is to provide a platform for the reputed Indian companies in food and non-food Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG), as well as the services sector, to showcase their potential to international buyers.
- ★ It will help Indian companies launch successful Indian brands into the international markets.

Vodafone Idea Partners with West Bengal's Export Body to Boost MSME Digital Transformation

- ★ Vodafone Idea (Vi) signed an MoU with the West Bengal State Export Promotion Society (WBSEPS) to support MSMEs in their digital journey.
- ★ Objective is to accelerate digital adoption among MSMEs in West Bengal, benefiting over 10 million people employed in the sector.
- ★ This collaboration is expected to enhance MSME competitiveness, drive economic growth, and improve digital literacy in the state
- ★ Vi will provide localized digital tools and training modules in Bengali.
- ★ It will conduct webinars to enhance tech adoption among MSMEs.

Gujarat Becomes Second State to Implement Uniform Civil Code

- ★ Gujarat is set to become the second state in India to implement the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) after Uttarakhand.
- ★ The decision to introduce the UCC aligns with the vision of 'Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat' and reflects the state's commitment to uniformity in civil laws.
- ★ To facilitate the process, the Gujarat Government has established a high-level committee chaired by former Supreme Court judge Justice Ranjana Desai.

- ★ The committee has been tasked with evaluating and drafting a comprehensive Uniform Civil Code for the state.
- ★ It aims to ensure a balanced approach that respects constitutional principles and public sentiments.
- ★ As part of its consultative approach, the committee has invited suggestions from residents, socio-political organizations, and legal experts.
- ★ The deadline for submitting suggestions has been extended until April 15, 2025, to encourage greater public participation in the law-making process.
- ★ This extension allows for a broader dialogue, ensuring that the perspectives of various stakeholders are taken into account.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

India And Japan Renew \$75 Billion Bilateral Currency Swap Agreement

- ★ The Bank of Japan, acting as agent for the Minister of Finance of Japan, and the Reserve Bank of India signed the second Amendment and Restatement Agreement of the Bilateral Swap Arrangement (BSA).
- ★ The BSA is a two-way arrangement where both authorities can swap their local currencies in exchange for the US Dollar.
- ★ The size of the BSA remains unchanged, that is, up to 75 billion US Dollars.
- ★ Japan and India believe that the BSA, which aims to strengthen and complement other financial safety nets, will further deepen financial co-operation between the two countries and contribute to regional and global financial stability.
- ★ Currency swaps are agreements between two parties to trade one currency for another at a preset rate over a given period.

India Extends \$1 Mn Grant to Lao People's Democratic Republic

- ★ The Indian Government has granted approximately USD 1 million to Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) under the India-UN Development Partnership Fund.
- ★ The grant supports the project 'Strengthening Large-scale Food Fortification: The Case of Investing in Rice Fortification'.
- ★ The initiative focuses on fortifying rice to combat micronutrient deficiencies and enhance long-term nutrition strategies.
- ★ The project aims to bolster food systems and improve the nutritional diversity of the country's food supply.
- ★ It seeks to address malnutrition by fortifying a widely consumed staple food in Lao PDR.
- ★ The Permanent Mission of India to the UN highlighted this as part of India's diplomatic and developmental co-operation with Lao PDR.

- ★ The India-UN Development Partnership Fund, established in June 2017, supports developing countries in achieving UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- ★ This grant reinforces India's commitment to global development and nutrition initiatives.

India and Nepal Sign MoU in WASH Sector and Strengthen Ties in Railways

- ★ India and Nepal have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to promote co-operation in the field of Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) sector and waste management.
- ★ Both countries also reviewed their existing and proposed cross-country rail projects at the 9th Project Steering Committee (PSC) and the 7th Joint Working Group (JWG) meetings held in New Delhi.
- ★ The MoU between India and Nepal on the Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) sector and waste management was signed in New Delhi.
- ★ The MoU aims to ensure better access to clean drinking water and sanitation for their populations.
- ★ Both countries will collaborate in Capacity Building, Technology and Knowledge Transfer and Groundwater Management.
- ★ India and Nepal reviewed their co-operation in the Railway sector at the 9th Project Steering Committee and the 7th Joint Working Group meetings.

India Secures Place on UN's Honour Roll for Timely Budget Payment

- ★ India paid USD 32.895 million to the UN Regular Budget, securing a place on the UN Honour Roll.
- ★ This recognition is awarded to nations that pay their assessed contributions in full within 30 days of receiving the UN's payment notice.
- ★ India was among only 36 nations that met the Honour Roll criteria as of the deadline.
- ★ India has consistently fulfilled its financial obligations to the UN, reflecting its commitment to a rules-based global order.
- ★ The timely budget payment reinforces India's credibility as a responsible global player and strengthens its case for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council (UNSC).

Nepal Passes E-Commerce Bill To Regulate Online Trade

- ★ Nepal's Parliament passed the Electronic Commerce Bill, giving confidence to consumers and creating a legal framework for regulating the country's online trade.
- ★ The bill proposes fines ranging from three lakh Nepali rupees to five lakh Nepali rupees, jail terms of three years, or both, depending on the severity of the cases.
- ★ The Government of Nepal moved to enact the bill decades after e-commerce began in the Himalayan Nation.
- ★ The draft bill was prepared in 2021 but stalled due to frequent government changes.

- ★ The bill was registered in the National Assembly upper house by the then-Industry Minister Ramesh Rijal in July 2023.
- ★ According to the amended bill, micro and cottage entrepreneurs can also sell their goods and services using online platforms.
- ★ The bill includes a refund policy for buyers if the purchased goods and services do not match the listed details, such as design, trademark, shape or picture, and weight.
- ★ According to the bill, e-commerce platforms must be registered in the electronic system of the Department of Commerce, Supplies, and Consumer Protection, and the department will conduct regular inspections to ensure this.

Razorpay Enters Singapore

- ★ Bengaluru-based fintech firm Razorpay has announced its expansion into Singapore, marking its second market in Southeast Asia after
- ★ This move aligns with Singapore's vision for a cashless and innovation-driven economy and aims to support digital transformation in the region.
- ★ Razorpay's AI-driven solutions promise to reduce cross-border transaction costs by 30-40% for businesses.
- ★ Razorpay is introducing a suite of payment solutions in Singapore, including:
- ★ Agentic-AI and RAY, which enhance operational efficiency through intelligent automation.
- ★ A payment gateway, cross-border solutions, and real-time financial analytics.
- ★ Razorpay will work closely with banks, financial institutions, and regulators to ensure compliance and seamless integration into Singapore's financial ecosystem.
- ★ Businesses in Singapore can now access Razorpay's services for faster settlements, reduced costs, and AI-driven efficiency.

Prime Minister Modi to Attend Mauritius National Day as Chief Guest

- ★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi will embark on a State Visit to Mauritius from March 11 to 12, 2025, at the invitation of Mauritian Prime Minister Navinchandra Ramgoolam.
- ★ The Ministry of External Affairs stated that PM Modi will attend Mauritius' National Day celebrations on March 12 as the Chief Guest, marking his first visit to the island nation since 2015.
- ★ India and Mauritius share deep-rooted historical, cultural, and people-to-people ties.
- ★ The visit is framed within India's broader strategic vision – 'Security and Growth for All in the Region' (SAGAR) – which highlights India's commitment to the Indian Ocean region.
- ★ A contingent of the Indian Defence Forces will take part in the celebrations, accompanied by a ship from the Indian Navy, reinforcing deep strategic and defense co-operation.
- ★ PM Modi will call on the President of Mauritius and hold bilateral talks with his Mauritian counterpart. He will also meet senior dignitaries and political leaders to reinforce diplomatic ties.

India and Armenia Signed two MoU

- ★ India and Armenia signed two memorandums of understanding (MoUs) to strengthen the bilateral relationship between the two countries.
- ★ The MoUs were signed during the visit of Armenia's Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan to India.
- ★ They discussed the regional and bilateral issue. Discussion was held on a wide range of bilateral issues like the co-operation in the field of trade, economics, politics, connectivity, education, culture, and people-to-people contacts.
- ★ Both sides also agreed to explore co-operation in digital technologies, and pharmaceuticals.
- ★ These MoUs are:
 - Co-operation in the field of regulation of medical products. The MoU was signed by the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) under the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and the Center of Drug and Medical Technology Expertise (CDMTE) of Armenia.
 - Co-operation between Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service and Diplomatic School of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia.

India Participates in United Nations Commission on the Status of Women

- ★ The Government of India, led by Union Minister for Women and Child Development, Smt. Annpurna Devi, actively participated in the 69th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW) at the UN Headquarters, New York (March 10-21, 2025).
- ★ India emphasized its commitment to gender equality, inclusive development, and international co-operation for women's empowerment.
- ★ It addressed 12 critical areas of concern under the Beijing Platform for Action.
- ★ It highlighted India's flagship schemes for women's health, nutrition, education, and economic empowerment.
- ★ It also reaffirmed India's commitment to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

India, Malaysia to Co-chair 14th ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting

- ★ India and Malaysia will co-chair the 14th ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus) Experts Working Group (EWG) on Counter-Terrorism, which will be held in New Delhi from March 19 to 20, 2025.
- ★ This marks the first time India is leading the Counter-Terrorism EWG.
- ★ Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh will deliver the keynote address during the opening ceremony on March 19, 2025.
- ★ Timor Leste and the ASEAN Secretariat will also be present.
- ★ The meeting will launch the 2024-2027 cycle of activities under the Counter-Terrorism EWG.
- ★ Discussions will focus on developing a comprehensive strategy to counter evolving threats of terrorism and extremism.
- ★ Defence forces from ASEAN and partner nations will share their experiences, laying the groundwork for planned exercises, seminars, and workshops over the next three years.

- ★ The ADMM-Plus platform facilitates defence co-operation among ASEAN nations and their dialogue partners.
- ★ It currently focuses on seven priority areas: counter-terrorism, maritime security, humanitarian assistance and disaster management, peacekeeping operations, military medicine, humanitarian mine action, and cyber security.

India and New Zealand Signed Agreement To Boost Defence and Trade Ties

- ★ India and New Zealand have signed five agreements including on defence and agreed to launch a negotiation on free trade area agreement to boost the trade ties between the two countries.
- ★ The agreements were signed during the visit of New Zealand's Prime Minister Christopher Luxon to India.
- ★ Christopher Luxon was on his first official visit to India from 16-20 March 2025.
- ★ During his visit to New Delhi, Prime Minister Christopher Luxon held summit level discussion with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- ★ Both sides discussed bilateral, regional and national issues. They issued a joint statement after the end of their talks.
- ★ Both the countries agreed to launch negotiation on a Free Trade Area agreement.
- ★ The leaders also witnessed the signing of five agreements and exchange of memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the two countries.
- ★ Both sides exchanged Authorized Economic Operators Mutual Recognition Agreement. The agreement will facilitate easier movement of goods between the two countries through close co-operation between customs authorities and is expected to boost bilateral trade.

Indonesia to Join the New Development Bank of BRICS

- ★ Indonesia has agreed to join the New Development Bank established by the BRICS group. When Indonesia joins the New Development Bank, it will become the 9th country to become a member of the New Development Bank.
- ★ The decision to join the New Development Bank was announced by the Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto during his meeting with the New Development Bank's President Dilma Vana Rousseff on 25th March 2025.
- ★ The decision of Indonesia to join the New Development Bank follows its full membership of BRICS on 6 January 2025.
- ★ Indonesia is the 10th member country of BRICS and the first from Southeast Asia.
- ★ The BRICS is an intergovernmental organisation that was set up by Brazil, Russia, India, and China.
- ★ Objective is to provide loans to develop infrastructure and sustainable development projects in emerging markets and developing countries.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Zydus Lifesciences Launches India's First Quadrivalent Flu Vaccine

- ★ Zydus Lifesciences has launched VaxiFlu-4, India's first quadrivalent influenza vaccine, providing protection against four virus strains based on WHO recommendations.
- ★ Approved by the Central Drug Laboratory (CDL), the vaccine was developed at Zydus's Vaccine Technology Centre (VTC) in Ahmedabad.
- ★ The company aims to enhance flu prevention and improve healthcare accessibility in India by offering an affordable, high-quality solution.
- ★ Influenza remains a significant public health concern, with seasonal outbreaks causing high mortality worldwide.
- ★ Meanwhile, Zydus Lifesciences' stock is trading at ₹879.95 as of February 27, 2025, reflecting a slight decline of 34%.

Delhi AIIMS Set to Open Nation's First Digital Addiction Facility

- ★ The All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Delhi is set to launch India's first Centre for Advanced Research on Addictive Behaviours (CAR-AB) to tackle internet and technology addiction among children and youth.
- ★ Approved by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), the center will focus on evidence-based solutions for problematic technology use.
- ★ AIIMS Delhi is taking action against excessive and problematic technology use, which has been recognized as a major public health problem.
- ★ Yatan Pal Singh Balhara, faculty in-charge of the Behavioral Addictions Clinic (BAC) at AIIMS, is leading the project.
- ★ The objective of the centre is Prevention, early detection, and intervention programs for digital addiction.

Amazon Unveils Its First Quantum Computing Chip Ocelot

- ★ Amazon Web Services (AWS) has unveiled Ocelot, the company's first-generation quantum computing chip.
- ★ The new chip can slash the costs of implementing quantum error correction by up to 90%, the company stated.
- ★ Ocelot was developed by the AWS Center for Quantum Computing at the California Institute of Technology.
- ★ A major challenge with quantum computers is that they're very sensitive to the smallest changes, or 'noise' in their environment, such as vibrations, heat, and electromagnetic interference from cell phones and Wi-Fi networks, Amazon stated in a media release.
- ★ To tackle this problem, quantum computers rely on quantum error correction, which uses special encodings of quantum information across multiple qubits.

- ★ But due to the sheer number of qubits required to get accurate results, current approaches to quantum error correction have come at a huge cost.
- ★ Scientists at AWS have published their findings in the journal Nature.
- ★ Amazon is the third tech giant to announce a new experimental chip.
- ★ Microsoft recently unveiled its Majorana 1 chip, which uses a material called topoconductor, an entirely new state of matter, according to the company.
- ★ Google's Willow is also believed to address errors that occur in quantum systems.

Blue Ghost Spacecraft Successfully Lands on the Moon

- ★ Firefly Aerospace, a US-based private space company, successfully landed its Blue Ghost spacecraft on the moon for a two-week research mission.
- ★ The touchdown occurred at 3:35 AM US East Coast time (08:35 GMT) in the Mare Crisium region, a visible lunar basin from Earth.
- ★ Firefly becomes the second private firm to land on the moon, after Intuitive Machines, whose Odysseus lander had a damaged landing on 2024.
- ★ Firefly claims Blue Ghost is the first fully successful soft landing by a private company.
- ★ The mission is part of NASA's Commercial Lunar Payload Services (CLPS) programme, which leverages private industry for lunar exploration.
- ★ Blue Ghost carried 10 scientific and technological payloads, including NASA instruments to study lunar dust, radiation, and surface materials.
- ★ Key instruments include those for measuring the moon's internal heat flow, preventing lunar dust accumulation, and laser-ranging experiments.
- ★ The spacecraft was launched on a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket from Florida's Kennedy Space Center on January 15.

Government Launches AI Kosha to Strengthen AI Development

- ★ The AI Kosha initiative is a significant step in India's AI development strategy.
- ★ It serves as a non-personal data repository with 316 datasets to aid AI model development, focusing on Indian languages to support the creation of translation tools for linguistic inclusivity.
- ★ It is part of the broader ₹10,370 crore IndiaAI Mission, which promotes AI innovation.
- ★ India has also expanded its AI compute infrastructure by commissioning 14,000 GPUs, an increase from 10,000, with quarterly expansions planned.
- ★ The initiative provides pooled access to these GPUs for startups and academia to facilitate AI model training and deployment.
- ★ Additionally, India is working on developing its own homegrown AI model, inspired by China's DeepSeek, to create cost-effective AI solutions.

Bharti Airtel Partners with SpaceX to Bring Starlink Internet to India

- ★ In a landmark agreement, Bharti Airtel has partnered with Elon Musk's SpaceX to bring Starlink's satellite internet services to India.
- ★ This first-of-its-kind agreement is subject to SpaceX obtaining the necessary regulatory approvals from the Indian Government.
- ★ SpaceX has applied for security clearance from the Indian Government.
- ★ The Home Ministry is reviewing SpaceX's application for Starlink's authorization in India.
- ★ Airtel's own satellite service, OneWeb, focuses on enterprise solutions, while this partnership allows Airtel to offer consumer satellite services.
- ★ This agreement intensifies competition between Reliance Jio and SpaceX, as they previously clashed over spectrum allocation methods.
- ★ Airtel and SpaceX will work together to offer Starlink equipment in Airtel's retail stores.
- ★ The partnership will enhance connectivity packages for businesses, enterprises, and underserved communities.

NASA's Newest Space Telescope Blasts off to Map the Entire Sky and Millions of Galaxies

- ★ NASA's latest space telescope, Spherex, was launched into orbit on Tuesday aboard a SpaceX rocket from California.
- ★ The telescope will map the entire sky in unprecedented detail, capturing a sweeping view of hundreds of millions of galaxies and their cosmic glow since the universe's beginning.
- ★ The \$488 million mission aims to study galaxy formation and evolution over billions of years, as well as the rapid expansion of the universe in its early moments.
- ★ Within the Milky Way, Spherex will also search for water and life-related ingredients in the icy clouds between stars where new solar systems.
- ★ Weighing 1,110 pounds (500 kg), roughly the size of a grand piano, Spherex will use infrared imaging to map the entire sky in six months.
- ★ Over two years, it will complete four full-sky surveys from its 400-mile (650 km) orbit over Earth's poles.
- ★ Although Spherex lacks the detailed resolution of NASA's Hubble and Webb telescopes, its wide field of view will enable it to capture large-scale cosmic structures and contribute to understanding the universe's history and composition.

India and Japan to Collaborate on Lunar Exploration

- ★ The Centre has approved the Chandrayaan-5 mission, which will study the Moon, ISRO Chairman V. Narayanan
- ★ Narayanan confirmed that Chandrayaan-5 will be conducted in collaboration with Japan.
- ★ The upcoming Chandrayaan-4 mission expected to launch in 2027 will focus on bringing lunar samples back to Earth.

- ★ ISRO is also working on future projects such as Gaganyaan (India's human spaceflight program) and the Bharatiya Space Station, which aims to establish India's own space station.

Department of Telecommunications (DoT), Unveils 5G innovation Hackathon 2025

- ★ Organized by the Department of Telecommunications (DoT), the 5G Innovation Hackathon 2025 is a six-month initiative aimed at developing advanced 5G-powered solutions for societal and industrial challenges.
- ★ Open to students, startups, and professionals, the hackathon provides mentorship, funding, and access to over 100 5G Use Case Labs, enabling participants to develop scalable technologies.
- ★ Key focus areas include AI-driven network maintenance, IoT solutions, 5G broadcasting, smart health, agriculture, industrial automation, non-terrestrial networks (NTN), D2M, V2X, and quantum communication.
- ★ The winner will receive ₹5,00,000, the first runner-up ₹3,00,000, and the second runner-up ₹1,50,000.
- ★ Special recognitions of ₹50,000 each will be awarded for the Best Idea and Most Innovative Prototype.
- ★ Additionally, 10 labs will receive Certificates of Appreciation, and one institute will be recognized for presenting the Best Idea from an Emerging Institute.

ISRO Chairman Inaugurates New IIT-Madras Research Centre

- ★ The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on March 17, 2025, inaugurated the Shri S Ramakrishnan Centre of Excellence in Fluid and Thermal Science Research at the Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT Madras).
- ★ The newly launched centre, based in the Department of Mechanical Engineering at IIT-M, aims to advance research in spacecraft and launch vehicle thermal management.
- ★ During the inauguration, ISRO Chairman, Dr V Narayanan, highlighted India's progress in cryogenic engine technology, stating that despite initial technological denials, the country now possesses three cryogenic engines, including a human-rated version.
- ★ He noted that only 6 countries have developed this technology.
- ★ The centre is named after Shri S. Ramakrishnan, an IIT Madras alumnus and aerospace engineer known for his contributions to launch vehicle engineering.
- ★ He played key roles as Project Director for the PSLV and GSLV Mk-III and served as Director of the Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre (LPSC) and Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC). He was awarded the Padma Shri in 2003.
- ★ IIT Madras Director Prof V Kamakoti emphasized the importance of thermal and cooling technologies in space exploration.

ISRO and Semiconductor Laboratory develops 32-bit Microprocessor

- ★ The first production lots of the 32-bit microprocessors VIKRAM3201 and KALPANA3201, developed for space applications, were handed over to V. Narayanan, Secretary, DOS/Chairman,

ISRO, by Shri S. Krishnan, Secretary, MeitY, in a function organized at New Delhi by the Semiconductor Laboratory (SCL), Chandigarh.

- ★ These microprocessors were designed and developed by the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre of ISRO in collaboration with SCL, Chandigarh.
- ★ VIKRAM3201 is India's first fully indigenous 32-bit microprocessor, qualified for use in the harsh environmental conditions of launch vehicles.
- ★ Fabricated at the 180nm CMOS semiconductor fab of SCL, this processor is an advanced version of the 16-bit VIKRAM1601 microprocessor, which has been in use in ISRO's launch vehicle avionics system since 2009.
- ★ A "Make-in-India" version of the VIKRAM1601 processor was later inducted in 2016 after the establishment of the 180nm semiconductor fab at SCL,
- ★ VIKRAM3201 features a custom Instruction Set Architecture, floating-point computation capability, and high-level language support for the Ada language.
- ★ All software tools, including the Ada compiler, assembler, linker, and simulator, along with the Integrated Development Environment (IDE), were developed in-house by ISRO.
- ★ The initial lot of VIKRAM3201 devices was successfully validated in space in the Mission Management Computer of the PSLV Orbital Experimental Module (POEM-4) during the PSLV-C60 mission.

BANKING & FINANCE

ADB Approves \$200 Million Loan to Improve Kolkata Infrastructure

- ★ The Manila-based Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a \$200 million loan to the Kolkata Municipal Corporation Sustainability, Hygiene and Resilience (Sector) Project.
- ★ The loan will finance projects that aim to improve the living conditions of the poor by developing climate and disaster resilient sewage and drainage infrastructure in the city.
- ★ This is expected to reduce the risk of waterborne and vector-borne diseases, and will also help in reducing flood risks.
- ★ The \$200 million loan amount will be used to develop and expand the sewerage and drainage infrastructure within the city and strengthen the Kolkata Municipal Corporation's governance and revenue generation efforts.
- ★ **Sewage and Infrastructure Development:**
 - Construction of 84 kilometers of combined trunk and secondary sewerage and drainage pipelines in the city,
 - Installation of 176 km of combined lateral sewerage and drainage pipelines up to customer connections, Providing sewer connection to 50,000 households and Construction of one sewage treatment plant and five pumping stations.

★ **Strengthening Kolkata Municipal Corporation:**

- Develop a comprehensive IT-based asset management system for Kolkata Municipal Corporation, enhance property tax revenue collection of the Corporation and expand the early flood warning system in the city.

SEBI Imposes ₹5.05 Crore Penalty on Indian Clearing Corporation (ICCL)

- ★ The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has imposed a penalty of ₹5.05 crore on Indian Clearing Corporation (ICCL), a wholly owned subsidiary of BSE, for alleged violations related to cybersecurity and system audit norms.
- ★ Following an inspection conducted between December 2022 and July 2023, SEBI issued a show-cause notice to ICCL in October 2024, citing multiple compliance lapses.
- ★ One of the key findings was that ICCL submitted a network auditor report without incorporating management or board comments, which is a regulatory requirement.
- ★ Additionally, SEBI's investigation revealed that ICCL did not maintain an up-to-date inventory, failed to address issues flagged in cyber audits promptly, and did not establish a one-to-one correspondence between its disaster recovery site (DRS), near site (NS), and Primary Data Centre (PDC), as mandated by cybersecurity regulations.
- ★ This penalty highlights SEBI's strict stance on cybersecurity compliance and risk management within financial institutions, emphasizing the need for clearing corporations to adhere to prescribed norms and ensure robust cybersecurity frameworks with timely resolution of audit observations.

Go Digit Launches India's First AQI-Based Parametric Insurance

- ★ Go Digit General Insurance Limited (Digit Insurance) has partnered with M. Dastur Reinsurance Brokers (KMD) to introduce one of India's first AQI-based parametric insurance policies for migrant construction workers in Delhi NCR.
- ★ The policy provides compensation of up to ₹6,000 to 6,200 workers affected by construction bans imposed due to severe air pollution.
- ★ Under the policy, claims are triggered automatically if Delhi's daily Air Quality Index (AQI) exceeds 400 more than twice.
- ★ A "strike" is defined as three days of AQI above 400 within any five-day period, with a minimum 25-day gap between strikes.
- ★ Various government and court directives mandate halting construction activities when pollution reaches hazardous levels, directly impacting workers' earnings.
- ★ Nikhil Kamdar, appointed actuary at Digit Insurance, stated that the policy aims to provide a transparent and efficient solution for wage loss caused by pollution-related work stoppages.
- ★ In 2024, Digit Insurance also introduced excess heat-related parametric insurance for women labourers in Gujarat.

YES Bank Teams Up with World Trade Center

- ★ YES BANK, India's 6th largest private sector bank, in collaboration with World Trade Center (WTC) Mumbai, hosted the Export Conclave 2025 at YES BANK House.
- ★ The event brought together over 100 exporters, industry leaders, and government delegates to discuss emerging trade trends, challenges, and global opportunities.
- ★ A key highlight of the conclave was the signing of a strategic Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between YES BANK and WTC Mumbai.
- ★ This partnership aims to empower MSMEs by improving access to credit, trade facilitation services, and global market insights, reinforcing India's export ecosystem.
- ★ At the event, YES BANK launched two flagship offerings under its YES Business suite — YES Exports and YES PowherUp — designed to support MSMEs and women entrepreneurs, respectively, in expanding their businesses globally.
- ★ YES Exports is a comprehensive export financing solution that enables businesses to scale faster by offering pre-shipment & post-shipment finance, ensuring quick access to working capital.
- ★ It provides export finance up to ₹10 Cr with minimal collateral, based on financial performance, along with expert trade advisory to help businesses make informed decisions.
- ★ A digital SME service desk simplifies banking needs, while seamless global transactions are ensured with competitive forex rates and efficient export bill processing.
- ★ The Export Conclave 2025 served as a strategic platform for fostering new partnerships, trade financing solutions, and global business opportunities.

Paytm Partners With Startup Perplexity To Integrate AI-Powered Search

- ★ Paytm has partnered with Perplexity to integrate AI-powered search into its app.
- ★ This feature will allow users to ask questions, explore topics in local languages, and make informed financial decisions.
- ★ Perplexity is an AI-driven answer engine that provides real-time responses with in-line citations. The integration will help users access instant and reliable information on financial planning, market trends, and everyday queries, Paytm stated in a statement.
- ★ With India's growing digital economy, the demand for quick and accurate financial insights is increasing.
- ★ Paytm's AI-driven search aims to assist users in managing their finances and making informed choices.
- ★ The company has been focusing on expanding digital literacy and accessibility through technology.

BoB Receives BSI's ISO 22301:2019 Business Continuity Management System Certification

- ★ Bank of Baroda has received the ISO 22301:2019 Business Continuity Management System (BCMS) certification from the British Standards Institution (BSI).

- ★ The certification recognizes the bank's operational resilience, business continuity planning, and risk management aligning with global best practices.
- ★ Objective is to ensure uninterrupted services during disruptions and enhances risk management capabilities.
- ★ ISO 22301:2019 is a globally recognized standard focusing on minimizing operational disruptions and swift recovery during crises.
- ★ It enhances the bank's image as a resilient financial institution ensuring continuous service.
- ★ Beena Vaheed, Executive Director of Bank of Baroda, emphasized that this certification reflects the bank's commitment to business continuity and stakeholder confidence.

Indian Fintech Firm, NPST Partners With Hyperface

- ★ NPST, an Indian fintech firm, has partnered with Hyperface to offer embedded credit lines through UPI for banks and credit issuers.
- ★ India has a significant gap in affordable credit access, with only 100 million credit cards compared to over 400 million UPI users.
- ★ The collaboration aims to provide seamless, digital-first credit solutions to enhance purchasing power and promote financial inclusion.
- ★ Consumers will have access to pre-approved credit lines at the point of sale and the ability to split payments into flexible installments.
- ★ Merchants will benefit from higher conversion rates, larger transaction values, and improved customer loyalty.
- ★ NPST will integrate its UPI switch technology with Hyperface's Embedding Banking Platform to facilitate seamless transactions.
- ★ Hyperface's Credit Management Engine is a modular, flexible, and scalable system for embedding credit in UPI.
- ★ The solution provides real-time credit risk assessment, instant business insights for banks, and built-in compliance tools.
- ★ Banks and credit issuers can rapidly deploy and re-calibrate UPI-based credit products.
- ★ The partnership aims to drive scalability, innovation, and sustainability in India's digital credit ecosystem.

BOB Leads the Way with Central Bank Digital Currency

- ★ Bank of Baroda (BoB) has launched a pilot Loyalty/Cashback Programme for merchants, leveraging the programmability of the Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC).
- ★ The initiative is in collaboration with a fintech company and is available through the 'bob Merchant App'.
- ★ It enables small and medium merchants, such as local retail shops, grocery stores, and pharmacies, to independently create and run loyalty/cashback programmes.
- ★ Merchants do not need to invest in additional infrastructure or software to operate these reward programmes.

- ★ Merchants can configure their cashback offers, including the campaign period, cashback percentage, and expiry date.
- ★ During the campaign period, BoB customers using the bob World Digital Rupee app will receive cashback in the form of Programmable CBDC (PCBDC).
- ★ PCBDC can only be used at the specific merchant outlet where it was issued, ensuring targeted customer engagement.

India Overseas Bank Partners with IGBC

- ★ The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) Indian Green Building Council (IGBC) and Indian Overseas Bank (IOB) signed an MoU to offer accessible financing for IGBC-certified green buildings.
- ★ Under this partnership, developers constructing IGBC-rated green buildings will receive preferential financing options, while homebuyers purchasing homes in IGBC-certified projects will get tailored financial assistance.
- ★ The collaboration aims to promote energy-efficient construction, water conservation, and the use of renewable materials.
- ★ IOB will explore new financing models for IGBC Green Affordable Housing, IGBC NEST, and NESTPLUS, focusing on Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) and Lower Income Groups (LIG) to ensure that green housing is accessible to all segments of society.
- ★ To spread awareness about the benefits of green buildings, IGBC and IOB will launch a public communication campaign, developing informative materials like brochures, flyers, and digital content.
- ★ This partnership will mainstream sustainability in India's construction sector by providing financial incentives to encourage developers and homebuyers to adopt eco-friendly housing solutions.

City Union Bank (CUB)-Chennai Super Kings (CSK) Co-Branded Credit Card Launched

- ★ City Union Bank (CUB), ahead of the Indian Premier League (IPL) season, has partnered with Chennai Super Kings (CSK) to introduce a co-branded credit card designed for cricket enthusiasts.
- ★ The initiative offers CSK fans a unique financial product that blends banking benefits with exclusive perks linked to their favourite IPL franchise.
- ★ During the launch, CUB Executive Director Vijay Anandh described the offering as a "passion credit card", tailored to fill a gap in the existing credit card space.
- ★ The card is available in three variants — Mass, Platinum, and Signature.
- ★ Each card features a distinct CSK-themed design, showcasing the team's iconic yellow colour and lion logo.
- ★ Holders of the card can enjoy a host of benefits, including:
 - Bonus reward points on CSK-related merchandise, match tickets, and experiences
 - Exclusive access to team events, fan meet-ups, and special occasions

- Discounts and offers on official CSK merchandise
- Enhanced security and digital convenience for seamless transactions
- ★ CUB is not just targeting its existing customers but also new-to-bank customers with a fully digital onboarding process.

Magma General Insurance Partners with Hyundai India Insurance

- ★ Magma General Insurance Limited has partnered with Hyundai India Insurance Broking Private Limited (HIIB) to distribute motor insurance products.
- ★ The agreement enables Magma's insurance solutions to be offered at over 600 Hyundai dealerships across India.
- ★ Policies will cover risks such as accidents, theft, natural disasters, and third-party liabilities.
- ★ HIIB aims to improve insurance penetration by offering reliable solutions.
- ★ Magma seeks to strengthen its passenger car portfolio and expand its market presence.
- ★ Industry Impact: The partnership aims to enhance customer convenience and financial security in India's competitive automobile insurance sector.

ICICI Prudential Life Launches Income Guarantee Product in Volatile Times

- ★ ICICI Prudential Life Insurance has introduced 'ICICI Pru GIFT Select', a long-term savings product that offers guaranteed immediate income for liquidity.
- ★ The product provides flexibility in choosing the start time, duration, and maturity amount of the guaranteed income.
- ★ It includes a life cover component to ensure financial security for the family.
- ★ A unique feature is the increasing income option, where income grows at a compounding rate of 5% per annum, acting as an inflation hedge.
- ★ Amit Palta, Chief Product and Distribution Officer, stated that the product allows customers to customize guaranteed income based on their life goals and cash flow needs.
- ★ In a volatile macroeconomic environment, customers prefer guaranteed returns and wealth preservation.
- ★ ICICI Pru GIFT Select helps customers protect their financial savings from market fluctuations while achieving their financial goals.
- ★ The company has a claim settlement ratio of 99.3% in nine months of FY'25, with an average settlement time of 1.2 days for non-investigated claims.

Poonawalla Fincorp Launches 24/7 Digital Personal Loan Product

- ★ Poonawalla Fincorp, a Cyrus Poonawalla Group NBFC focused on Consumer and MSME Lending, has launched PL Prime Digital 24x7, an industry-first fully digital personal loan for salaried professionals.
- ★ The loan offers instant access to credit with approvals in just 15 minutes, up to ₹15 lakh, through a completely paperless process.

- ★ Key features include 24×7 availability via mobile app, website, and authorized partners, Zero collateral requirement and Flexible EMI tenures.
- ★ The personal loan segment in India has grown 27% year-on-year, highlighting the increasing reliance on unsecured credit.
- ★ Poonawalla Fincorp continues its risk-averse lending approach by calibrating pricing based on risk while leveraging disruptive technology to enhance customer experience.
- ★ This launch further strengthens the company's PL Prime Business segment, recently introduced to expand its lending portfolio.

Paytm Ties Up with RBL Bank

- ★ Paytm has partnered with RBL Bank to boost digital payment adoption among the bank's merchant partners.
- ★ As part of the initiative, Paytm will provide Soundbox and card machines to RBL Bank's merchants for seamless and efficient transactions.
- ★ Key benefits for merchants include Real-time transaction tracking through Paytm for Business dashboard, Support for multiple payment modes, including UPI, RuPay credit card on UPI, UPI Lite, debit and credit cards, and EMI options and Secure and reliable payment solutions powered by Paytm's technology.
- ★ Paytm Soundbox revolutionized in-store payments with instant audio confirmations.
- ★ NFC Card Soundbox enables 'Tap and Pay' transactions for debit and credit cards, including payments from international tourists.
- ★ Multilingual audio alerts in 11 languages, enhancing merchant convenience.
- ★ The collaboration reduces cash dependency and empowers merchants with cutting-edge digital payment solutions.

Jio Finance To Buy Entire SBI Stake In Jio Payment Bank

- ★ The Jio Financial Service Limited board has approved the purchase of 7.9 cores of shares of the Jio Payment bank from the State Bank of India for ₹ 104.54 crore. At present, the State Bank of India holds 17.8 % shares in the Jio Payment Bank.
- ★ According to Jio Financial Services Limited, if the proposal is approved by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), then the whole process will be completed within 45 days of RBI approval.
- ★ RBI is the regulator of the Payment Banks in India.
- ★ Jio Payment Bank is a joint venture of Jio Financial Service Limited and SBI, and it started its operation in April 2018.
- ★ Jio Financial Services Limited holds 82.17% of the paid-up equity share capital of Jio Payments Bank Limited, while SBI holds 17.8 % of the shares.
- ★ Earlier, the Executive Committee of the Central Board of Directors at SBI approved the divestment of the bank's entire stake in Jio Payments Bank Limited to Jio Financial Services for ₹ 13.22 per equity share, resulting in a total of ₹ 104.54 crore.

- ★ If the deal takes place, then Jio Financial Services Limited will become the 100% owner of Jio Payment Bank.

PhonePe Launches 'insuring HEROES' Campaign for International Women's Day

- ★ PhonePe launched its 'insuring HEROES' campaign ahead of the International Women's Day.
- ★ International Women's Day is observed every year on March 8.
- ★ As part of the initiative, the company is offering exclusive discounts of up to 30%, specifically for women, on select term life and health insurance plans.
- ★ It is available on the PhonePe platform until March 9, 2025.
- ★ Women can avail these exclusive offers on the PhonePe app to ensure their overall economic well-being and enjoy long-term stability.
- ★ Discounts include up to 15% off on health insurance plans, and up to 30% off on term life insurance plans.
- ★ Through this initiative, PhonePe aims to assist women with greater financial security, facilitating their access to the right insurance solutions tailored to their unique needs.

HDFC Bank Launches Project HAKK

- ★ HDFC Bank has introduced Project HAKK (Hawai Anubhavi Kalyan Kendra) to support Indian Air Force (IAF) pensioners, veterans, and their families by providing essential services and financial empowerment.
- ★ HDFC Bank has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Indian Air Force (IAF), represented by the Assistant Chief of Air Staff – Accounts & Air Veterans, and CSC Academy.
- ★ 25 centres will be established across various Air Force units, including New Delhi, Bengaluru, Gurgaon, Pune, Secunderabad, Guwahati, Jodhpur, and Chandigarh.
- ★ In collaboration with CSC Academy (under Common Service Centre E-Governance Limited), the bank will provide financial literacy and skill development training for veterans and their families, empowering them to become financially independent.
- ★ Defence personnel, ex-servicemen, and their families can avail 500+ G2C (Government to Citizen) and B2C (Business to Customer) services, including Aadhaar services, NPS (National Pension System), PAN Card application, passport services, and bill payment services.
- ★ This initiative reflects HDFC Bank's commitment to supporting the defence community by ensuring easy access to essential financial services and training programs.

HDFC Bank, Indian Army and CSC Academy to Expand Project NAMAN

- ★ HDFC Bank, India's leading private sector bank, along with the Indian Army and CSC e-Governance, has renewed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to expand Project NAMAN – A Tribute to Veterans to 26 Directorate of Indian Army Veterans (DIAV) locations.
- ★ Project NAMAN aims to provide support and services to Army veterans, their families, and next of kin.

- ★ The CSC Centres, operated by Army veterans or their families, will offer pension-related services, Government to Citizen (G2C) services, and Business to Consumer (B2C) services within defence establishments.
- ★ In the second phase, Project NAMAN will expand to 26 DIAV locations across Rajasthan, West Bengal, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Jammu & Kashmir, Meghalaya, Bihar, Odisha, and New Delhi.
- ★ The first phase, launched in September 2023, established Common Service Centres (CSCs) at 14 DIAV locations.
- ★ HDFC Bank, through its Parivartan programme, aims to enhance economic inclusiveness for defence service veterans and their families by providing skill development and training in financial products and services.
- ★ The individuals managing the CSCs will receive a monthly monetary grant for the initial 12 months to support their operations.

TMB Revises Lending Rates

- ★ Tamilnad Mercantile Bank (TMB) has announced a revision in its Marginal Cost of Funds Based Lending Rate (MCLR) and Repo Linked Lending Rate (RLLR), effective March 7, 2025.
- ★ The bank has reduced the one-year MCLR to 9.60% from the previous 9.75%, while the RLLR has been revised down to 9.25% from 9.45%.
- ★ The decision follows the bank's ongoing adjustments to its lending rates, reflecting changes in market conditions and internal cost structures.
- ★ The revised rates are expected to impact various loan products linked to the MCLR and RLLR benchmarks.
- ★ MCLR is the minimum interest rate at which a bank is willing to lend to its customers.
- ★ RLLR is a lending rate that is directly linked to the repo rate set by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

RBI Imposes ₹76.6 Lakh Penalty on 4 Non-Banking Financial Companies

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has imposed a total penalty of ₹76.6 lakh on four non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) for non-compliance with its Peer-to-Peer (P2P) lending platform regulations.
- ★ Fairassets Technologies India faced the highest penalty of ₹40 lakh.
- ★ Bridge Fintech Solutions and Rang De P2P Financial Services were each fined ₹10 lakh.
- ★ Visionary Financepeer was penalized ₹16.6 lakh.
- ★ The penalties were imposed under the 'Non-Banking Financial Company – Peer-to-Peer Lending Platform (Reserve Bank) Directions, 2017'.
- ★ RBI clarified that the penalties were due to regulatory deficiencies and do not affect the validity of transactions or agreements made by these entities with customers.
- ★ The penalties were announced through separate releases from the central bank.

SBI Life Insurance Expands Product Line With Two New Child Insurance Plans

- ★ SBI Life Insurance, one of India's most trusted private life insurers, has launched two new child products, 'SBI Life - Smart Future Star' and 'SBI Life - Smart Platina Young Achiever', specifically curated to empower parents in securing their child's future aspirations.
- ★ Addressing the innate need of parents to ensure a fulfilling life for their children regardless of socio-economic challenges, SBI Life's child products offer the necessary tools to build a comprehensive financial safeguard for their child.

★ **SBI Life: Smart Future Star.**

Category: Individual, Non-Linked, Participating, Life Insurance Savings Product

Benefits:

- Long-term corpus growth through bonuses
- In-built Waiver of Premium benefit on death or Accidental Total Permanent Disability of the proposer, ensuring financial security
- Flexible maturity pay-out options to meet changing financial needs

★ **SBI Life: Smart Platina Young Achiever**

Category: Individual, Non-Linked, Non-Participating, Life Insurance Savings Product

Benefits:

- Guaranteed maturity benefit, offering financial security for the child's education, career aspirations, or marriage.
- Flexible maturity pay-out options to meet evolving financial needs.
- In-built Waiver of Premium benefit on death or Accidental Total Permanent Disability of the proposer, ensuring financial security.
- Risk-free savings approach, catering to parents who prefer guaranteed returns.

State Bank of India Unveils 'Asmita' Loan and 'Nari Shakti' Debit Card

- ★ In a significant move to support women entrepreneurs across India, the State Bank of India (SBI) has launched 'Asmita', a collateral-free digital loan designed exclusively for women-led micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs).
- ★ The initiative, unveiled on the eve of International Women's Day, aims to provide easy access to finance at low-interest rates, along with comprehensive support to help women entrepreneurs scale their businesses.
- ★ The launch of Asmita comes after a TransUnion CIBIL report highlighted the low participation of women in business borrowing.
- ★ Key Features of SBI Asmita Scheme include Customized Financing, Collateral-Free Loans, Financial Literacy and Support, Low Interest Rates, Paperless Process and Entrepreneurial Training
- ★ Alongside Asmita, SBI has also introduced the 'Nari Shakti' RuPay Debit Card, made entirely from recycled plastic as part of the bank's sustainability initiatives.
- ★ Key Benefits of 'Nari Shakti' Debit Card: Exclusive benefits on shopping, travel, entertainment, and insurance and designed to cater to the changing financial and lifestyle needs of women

Star Health Insurance Launches 'SheTARA' Campaign

- ★ Star Health Insurance launches the "SheTARA" health campaign in Tamil Nadu to celebrate International Women's Day.
- ★ This initiative aims to raise people's awareness of preventative healthcare solutions and recruit more women as insurance agents.
- ★ This is a crucial step as Tamil Nadu's factories employ nearly 42% of India's women workers (6.3 lakh).
- ★ These camps will provide essential health screening services to women at subsidised rates.
- ★ This will include tests for measuring thyroid function, haemoglobin levels, blood sugar, blood pressure, and bone mineral density.
- ★ The company will also host a special webinar to explain how women can achieve work-life balance and prioritise their health in the age of AI.
- ★ The event will be led by a prominent gynaecologist.
- ★ Besides, it will also host a flagship event at its Anna Nagar branch (Chennai) to recognise the contribution of its women employees.

BoB Introduces the BoB Global Women NRE and NRO Savings Account

- ★ Bank of Baroda has launched the BoB Global Women NRE & NRO Savings Account, an exclusive banking product for women NRIs.
- ★ This initiative is designed to cater to global aspirations and unique banking needs of women NRIs.
- ★ The bank has also revamped its BoB Premium NRE & NRO Savings Account, enhancing its features.
- ★ **Key Features:**
 - Customised debit card with nil issuance charges and concessions on annual renewal fees.
 - Complimentary airport lounge access (domestic & international).
 - Concessional interest rates on home and auto loans, with reduced processing charges.
 - 100% concession on locker rent for secure storage.
 - Free Air Accident Insurance of ₹50,00,000 and Personal Accidental Insurance of ₹5,00,000.
 - Auto sweep facility to earn higher interest.
 - Quarterly Average Balance (QAB) requirement: ₹1,00,000 in CASA or ₹10,00,000 in CASA + Term Deposits.

IIFL Finance Rebrands 7 Existing Branches Into All Women Staffed 'Shakti' Branches

- ★ IIFL Finance has rebranded seven branches into all-women staffed 'Shakti' branches on Women's Day.
- ★ The seven branches are located across the Delhi NCR and Mumbai Metropolitan Region.
- ★ This initiative highlights IIFL Finance's commitment to empowering women in financial services.

- ★ 'Shakti' branches celebrate the strength and resilience of women driving social and economic change.
- ★ These branches will cater to all borrowers while offering financial literacy programs for female entrepreneurs.
- ★ Staffed entirely by women, these branches will create employment opportunities for female professionals.
- ★ Beyond financial services, they will provide skill development programs to support women entrepreneurs.
- ★ Women business owners form a significant segment of IIFL Finance's customer base.
- ★ The initiative reinforces IIFL Finance's focus on financial inclusion, diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).
- ★ IIFL Finance serves millions of customers, primarily from underserved communities across India.

SEBI Reshapes Fundraising Rules: Rights Issues to Close In 23 Days

- ★ The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has introduced a new regulation to expedite the capital-raising process for companies by reducing the timeline for completing rights issues to 23 days.
- ★ The rule will come into effect from April 7, 2025.
- ★ The reduced timeline makes rights issues a more efficient alternative to preferential issues, which take around 40 days.
- ★ Rights issues must remain open for a minimum of 7 days and a maximum of 30 days.
- ★ Stock exchanges, depositories, and the registrar to the issue will validate application bids and finalize the basis of allotment.
- ★ Companies now have greater flexibility in allocating shares to specific investors.
- ★ The revised framework will allow companies to secure capital faster, ensuring quicker access to funds for expansion, debt repayment, or operational needs.
- ★ The shorter timeline improves financial flexibility and adaptability.
- ★ Investors will benefit from improved liquidity, a streamlined application process, and reduced uncertainties.
- ★ The integration of stock exchanges and depositories enhances market efficiency, making rights issues more attractive and boosting participation in capital markets.

Reserve Bank of India and National Centre for Financial Education (NCFE)

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the National Centre for Financial Education (NCFE) have launched multiple nationwide campaigns to enhance financial literacy in India.
- ★ Lead banks have been directed to establish Financial Literacy Centres (FLCs) to conduct special awareness camps.
- ★ The "RBI Kehta Hai" campaign promotes safe banking practices through multi-media channels, while mass media awareness programmes educate people across different age groups.

- ★ To standardize financial education, RBI has developed the Financial Awareness Messages (FAME) booklet, which includes targeted content for different groups, including senior citizens.
- ★ Additionally, the NCFE and Centre for Financial Literacy (CFL) are conducting Financial Education (FE) programmes for students (below 18 years) and senior citizens (above 60 years).
- ★ The National Strategy for Financial Education (NSFE), formulated by NCFE, aims to provide essential financial knowledge and skills.

Kuhoo Finance Secures RBI's Approval For NBFC Licence

- ★ Kuhoo Finance has received approval for a non-banking financial company licence from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), student loans-focussed lending platform, allowing it to lend from its books along with partner NBFCs and banks.
- ★ The licence is set to significantly expand Kuhoo's lending capacity, enabling the firm to offer education loans of up to ₹2 crore across various academic disciplines.
- ★ With the new regulatory status, Kuhoo Finance aims to expand its product portfolio to cater to executive education and upskilling programmes.
- ★ The company also plans to strengthen partnerships with educational institutions and financial entities to improve student accessibility across India.
- ★ To support its expansion plans, Kuhoo is preparing to raise fresh capital.
- ★ WestBridge had invested ₹20 crore in 2022 into the startup.
- ★ Before securing the NBFC licence, Kuhoo was primarily acting as a loan facilitator, partnering with banks and NBFCs to originate, underwrite, and process education loans.

Transunion CIBIL And FACE Partner To Launch Consumer Education Initiative

- ★ TransUnion CIBIL and the Fintech Association for Consumer Empowerment (FACE) are partnering to promote financial literacy and credit awareness in India.
- ★ The initiative, named CIBIL Jaagran, aims to improve credit education and facilitate easy access to credit for consumers via FinTech solutions.
- ★ **Under the agreement:**
 - TransUnion CIBIL will provide knowledge and expertise and develop co-branded and customized educational content.
 - FACE, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) recognised Self-Regulatory Organization (SRO) in the FinTech sector, will work with its 165 FinTech members to promote financial literacy and credit awareness among consumers.
 - TransUnion CIBIL's information repository, data capabilities, and analytical insights position it well to offer relevant content about financial literacy.
- ★ The content will include: Emails, Articles, Videos, Webinars, Podcasts
- ★ This material will be disseminated by FACE, which will leverage its own and its members' digital engagement channels to maximize reach and impact.

Digital Transformation Award 2025

- ★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi today commended the Reserve Bank of India for being selected for the Digital Transformation Award 2025 by Central Banking, London, UK.
- ★ Mr. Modi said this accomplishment reflects an emphasis towards innovation and efficiency in governance.
- ★ He added that Digital innovation continues to strengthen India's financial ecosystem and empower countless lives.

State Bank of India To Set Up Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Fintech Project Finance Unit

- ★ State Bank of India (SBI) is establishing a "Center of Excellence for Project Financing" to focus on financing new-age industries such as artificial intelligence (AI), e-commerce, and fintech.
- ★ The unit will diversify SBI's Project Finance and Structuring division, which traditionally funds large infrastructure projects.
- ★ SBI will hire specialized professionals to staff the unit.
- ★ An external consultant is being appointed to assist in setting up the unit.
- ★ SBI's project financing increasingly includes new-age industries and renewable energy sectors.
- ★ This shift aligns with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's infrastructure development push.
- ★ In the 2024 fiscal year, SBI funded 48 large projects through its Project Finance & Structuring Unit.
- ★ The new unit will also share insights with other financial institutions.
- ★ SBI aims to complete the project within a year.

Reserve Bank of India Gets Global Recognition For Rolling Out Digital Initiatives, Including Pravaah And Sarthi Systems

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has been selected for the Digital Transformation Award 2025 by Central Banking in London, UK.
- ★ The award recognizes RBI's digital initiatives, Pravaah and Sarthi, developed by its in-house team.
- ★ The awards committee highlighted how these initiatives have reduced paper-based submissions, transforming RBI's internal and external processes.
- ★ Sarthi, launched in January 2023, digitized RBI's internal workflows, enabling employees to store and share documents securely.
- ★ It has improved record management, data analysis, and operational efficiency by automating tasks.
- ★ Sarthi allows task tracking, collaboration, and integration with other RBI systems, creating a unified information repository.
- ★ Pravaah, launched in May 2024, enables external users to submit regulatory applications digitally to RBI.

- ★ Documents processed through Pravaah are linked to Sarthi, ensuring centralized cybersecurity and digital tracking.
- ★ Pravaah has digitized over 70 regulatory applications, supporting nine RBI departments.
- ★ Between May and December 2024, over 2,000 applications were filed, leading to an 80% increase in monthly submissions due to its ease of use.

Godigit Promoters Get IRDAI Nod For First Private Reinsurer

- ★ Valueattics Re, promoted by GoDigit founders Kamesh Goyal and Prem Watsa, has received a reinsurer licence from the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI).
- ★ It is the first reinsurer licensed exclusively under IRDAI's revamped framework with an initial paid-up capital of ₹210 crore.
- ★ The promoters include Oben Ventures LLP (backed by Kamesh Goyal) and FAL Corporation (supported by Prem Watsa's Fairfax Financial Holdings).
- ★ At present, state-owned General Insurance Corporation of India (GIC Re) is the only domestic reinsurer.
- ★ Currently, 12 foreign reinsurance branches (FRBs) are operating in the country, including those of Munich Re, Swiss Re and Lloyd's of London.
- ★ With general, life, and reinsurance businesses under the Digit group, they aim to provide comprehensive risk coverage solutions.
- ★ Fairfax subsidiary FAL Corporation will hold a majority stake in Valueattics Re, while Fairfax Financial Holdings remains a major player in property and casualty insurance and reinsurance.
- ★ The move is expected to increase competition in the reinsurance sector, allowing more private participation and addressing a longstanding industry need.

EIL, MECON, 4 Others in Fray for Reserve Bank of India's Currency Management Project

- ★ State-owned Engineers India and MECON as well as four private entities are in the fray for the project to comprehensively revamp RBI's currency management infrastructure in order to cater to future cash needs of the country's fast growing economy.
- ★ Private entities: Accenture Solutions, Colliers International (India) Property Services, PricewaterhouseCoopers, and The Boston Consulting Group (India)
- ★ The project aims for a comprehensive modernization of RBI's currency management system to handle future cash demands in India's fast-growing economy.
- ★ As per the EoI document, the scope includes the creation of greenfield currency management centres, implementation of warehouse automation, installation of security and surveillance systems, development of an inventory management system, and establishment of a centralized command centre.
- ★ RBI invited an Expression of Interest (EoI) for consultancy and project management services.
- ★ It received 11 applications, out of which six entities were shortlisted for the next stage—issuance of a Request for Proposal (RFP).

- ★ Currently, banknotes are printed at four presses, and coins are minted at four mints.
- ★ The new banknotes and coins are received at 19 Issue Offices (IOs) across the country and further distributed through 2,800 Currency Chests (CCs) operated by scheduled banks.
- ★ Many central banks face rising costs and security risks due to increasing banknote volumes.

BRISKPE Gets Reserve Bank of India's In-Principle Nod To Operate As Cross Border Payment Aggregator

- ★ BRISKPE has received in-principle authorisation from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to operate as a payment aggregator for cross-border (PA-CB)
- ★ The approval allows the company to facilitate both export and import payments under the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007.
- ★ The authorisation aligns with the RBI's updated regulatory framework introduced in October 2023.
- ★ The company aims to support micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) engaged in international trade.
- ★ BRISKPE stated that the approval will enable it to provide seamless solutions for businesses facing inefficiencies in international payments.
- ★ BRISKPE currently processes around 10,000 export service transactions per month.
- ★ The company expects transaction volume to increase to 100,000 per month by the end of the next financial year.
- ★ BRISKPE introduced a unified cross-border payment platform that integrates account-to-account transfers with card collections.
- ★ The platform is powered by PayU and PayPal and caters to exporters, service providers, marketplace sellers, and freelancers.
- ★ Established in 2023, BRISKPE secured \$5 million in seed funding from PayU India in April 2024.
- ★ The platform allows users to receive funds in six major currencies: USD, CAD, AUD, Singapore Dollar, GBP, and Euro.

Fitch Affirms Union Bank of India and Punjab National Bank (PNB) Ratings at BBB

- ★ Fitch Ratings affirmed Union Bank of India and Punjab National Bank (PNB) at 'BBB-' with a stable outlook, mirroring India's sovereign rating.
- ★ The ratings are driven by government support, with the Indian Government holding 75% stake in Union Bank of India and 70% in PNB, ensuring a high probability of support.
- ★ Growth in the Indian economy is expected to help both banks sustain profitability.
- ★ Fitch upgraded the Viability Rating (VR) of both banks to 'bb-' from 'b+', supported by improvements in their risk profiles and financial performance.
- ★ The Government Support Rating (GSR) was affirmed at 'BBB-'.
- ★ For Union Bank of India, Fitch revised the asset-quality score to positive from stable, expecting a further decline in the impaired-loan ratio.

- ★ The risk profile score was upgraded to 'b+' from 'b', driven by greater loan diversification, reduced corporate loan risk, and limited exposure to unsecured retail loans.
- ★ However, risks remain due to the bank's history of cyclical growth and financial metric deterioration in economic downturns.
- ★ For Punjab National Bank (PNB), the bank's large nationwide presence supports profitable business generation.
- ★ The risk profile score was upgraded to 'b+' from 'b', reflecting improved loan mix diversification, clean-up of legacy bad loans, and limited unsecured retail loan exposure.
- ★ Fitch revised the asset-quality outlook to positive from stable, with the impaired-loan ratio declining to 4.1% (9MFY25) from 5.7% (FY24).
- ★ The earnings and profitability score was upgraded to 'bb-' from 'b+', as profitability exceeded expectations.
- ★ Both banks are expected to sustain profitability in the medium term, provided risks are effectively managed.

Asian Development Bank Launches 'Frontier Seed'

- ★ The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has launched the Frontier Seed (Pacific) program to strengthen private sector growth and economic resilience in the Pacific region.
- ★ The initiative aims to develop local capital markets, support sustainable businesses, and promote inclusive economies.
- ★ Initial commitment of \$4 million, backed by ORCA Trust Fund, Nordic Development Fund, and UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO).
- ★ SeaPAC Pte Ltd (Fiji): Received \$200,000 technical assistance to boost prawn production and improve food security.
- ★ Kahuto Pacific: Received \$200,000 technical assistance to enhance aerial mapping services and improve coastal data availability.

CUB Ties Up with Sunrisers Hyderabad as Exclusive Banking Partner

- ★ City Union Bank (CUB) has partnered with Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) to launch a co-branded credit card.
- ★ The bank will offer customized savings accounts and loans.
- ★ Special co-branded credit cards will be available for SRH supporters.
- ★ Cardholders will receive special rewards and discounts on SRH merchandise.
- ★ Access to exclusive fan experiences will be provided.
- ★ Offers on SRH memorabilia, including jerseys, caps, and other merchandise, will be available.
- ★ Seamless mobile banking and contactless payment options will be introduced.
- ★ Instant access to SRH promotions through CUB's online platforms will be offered.
- ★ CUB will have a strong presence on SRH match days.
- ★ Digital and on-ground activations will engage fans.

Securities and Exchange Board of India Partners with DigiLocker

- ★ The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has partnered with DigiLocker to minimize unclaimed assets and enhance investor protection.
- ★ Investors can store and access their demat and mutual fund holdings on DigiLocker.
- ★ DigiLocker users can fetch and store their statement of holdings for shares, mutual funds, and CAS.
- ★ Nominees can be added to investor accounts for easy access to financial documents after the investor's demise.
- ★ DigiLocker will update account status upon investor's death using data from KRAs.
- ★ Automatic notifications through SMS and email will be sent to nominees to facilitate asset transmission.
- ★ SEBI has instructed AMCs, RTAs, and depositories to register with DigiLocker for seamless investor access.
- ★ KRAs will provide death data to DigiLocker to streamline asset transfers.
- ★ This move aims to reduce unclaimed assets caused by dormant accounts and outdated information.
- ★ The circular will be effective from April 1, 2025.

National Payments Corporation of India International Partners with HitPay

- ★ HitPay has partnered with National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) International Payments Limited (NIPL) to integrate India's UPI into its platform.
- ★ The move allows Singapore merchants to accept UPI payments for in-store and eCommerce transactions.
- ★ The integration provides access to 450 million UPI users, offering a cost-effective alternative to credit cards.
- ★ India is among Singapore's fastest-growing tourist markets, with 1.2 million Indian visitors in 2024.
- ★ Merchants can accept payments from 50 UPI-supported apps, including BHIM, Google Pay, PhonePe, and Paytm.
- ★ Transactions can be processed through Shopify, Wix, and WooCommerce through HitPay's platform.
- ★ HitPay's cross-border network includes PayID (Australia), PromptPay (Thailand), QRIS (Indonesia), QR Ph (Philippines), VietQR (Vietnam), and WeChat Pay (China).
- ★ HitPay plans to introduce DuitNow in Malaysia and other regional payment solutions in 2025.

Reserve Bank of India Signed MoU with Bank of Mauritius

- ★ RBI and Bank of Mauritius (BOM) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to promote local currency transactions.

- ★ The agreement facilitates cross-border trade using Indian Rupee (INR) and Mauritian Rupee (MUR).
- ★ It covers current account transactions and permissible capital account transactions.
- ★ Exporters and importers can invoice and settle in their domestic currencies, boosting INR-MUR market development.
- ★ The use of local currencies reduces costs and settlement time for transactions.
- ★ The MoU strengthens bilateral co-operation, trade ties, and financial integration between India and Mauritius.
- ★ RBI highlighted the initiative's role in deepening historical, cultural, and economic relations.

SBI Mutual Fund Introduces Two New PSU Bank Investment Schemes

- ★ SBI Mutual Fund has introduced two new passive schemes – SBI BSE PSU Bank Index Fund and SBI BSE PSU Bank ETF, that will track the BSE PSU Bank Index.
- ★ These funds provide exposure to India's public sector banking sector and will be available for subscription during the New Fund Offer (NFO) period from March 17 to March 20, 2025.
- ★ The SBI BSE PSU Bank Index Fund is an open-ended index fund, while the SBI BSE PSU Bank ETF is an exchange-traded fund (ETF) that will be listed on the NSE and BSE.
- ★ Both funds aim to replicate or track the performance of the BSE PSU Bank Index.
- ★ At least 95% of the total assets of these funds will be invested in securities that are part of the BSE PSU Bank Index.
- ★ The remaining 5% may be allocated to government securities, tri party repos, and liquid mutual funds for liquidity management. The benchmark index for both schemes is the BSE PSU Bank TRI.
- ★ During the NFO period, investors can subscribe to these funds with a minimum investment of ₹5,000.
- ★ Additional investments can be made in multiples of ₹1.
- ★ The funds will be managed by Viral Chhadva, who is also responsible for SBI's Nifty 500 Index Fund, Nifty50 Equal Weight Index Fund, and Nifty50 Equal Weight ETF.

DPIIT and YES BANK Sign MoU To Strengthen India's Startup Ecosystem

- ★ The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with YES BANK to support startups, innovators, and entrepreneurs across India.
- ★ This collaboration will enhance financial access, market linkages, and mentorship opportunities for early-stage ventures.
- ★ Startups will gain better access to financial resources and investment opportunities.
- ★ It assists in securing loans, credit, and investment opportunities.

Scapia Resumes Onboarding of Their Travel Credit Cards on the Federal Bank Platform

- ★ Scapia has relaunched its travel-focused credit card, emphasizing simplified travel rewards and a seamless user experience.
- ★ After a temporary halt in 2024 due to regulatory restrictions on Federal Bank, its co-brand partner, Scapia has resumed credit card issuance with new benefits.
- ★ In 2023, Scapia launched its credit cards focused on the travel space.
- ★ Scapia was unique because their card products and the whole app and experience are concentrated on travel.
- ★ In 2024, Scapia had to stop onboarding new customers because the regulator asked Federal Bank, their banking partner, to discontinue onboarding new co-brand credit card customers.
- ★ Scapia's zero forex markup makes it ideal for international travelers, allowing users to make purchases in foreign currencies without extra charges.
- ★ However, these transactions do not earn rewards.
- ★ Cardholders can enjoy unlimited domestic lounge access by spending INR 10,000 monthly.
- ★ Additionally, purchases made at airport outlets (up to INR 1,000) are reimbursed in Scapia Coins (1 Coin = INR 0.2).
- ★ Through the Scapia Coins Rewards Programme, users earn 10% Scapia Coins on every transaction and 20% on travel spends via the Scapia app.
- ★ With the conversion rate of 5 Scapia Coins = 1 Rupee, this translates to 2% rewards on regular spends and 4% on travel bookings.
- ★ The Scapia credit card is lifetime free, with no joining or annual fees, making it an attractive option for frequent travelers.

Equitas Bank Renews T20 Partnership with CSK and GT for 2025

- ★ Equitas Small Finance Bank has renewed its partnership with Chennai Super Kings (CSK) and Gujarat Titans (GT) as the Official Banking Partner.
- ★ This marks a six-year association with CSK and a three-year partnership with GT.
- ★ The collaboration aligns with Equitas' 'Bank Behind Champions' campaign, emphasizing excellence and community engagement.
- ★ Equitas' branding will be featured on CSK's lead helmet and the back of GT's helmet this season.
- ★ The campaign integrates outdoor advertising and localized activities to raise awareness about Equitas' CASA and loan products.
- ★ The 'Bank Behind Champions' initiative aims to provide exceptional banking services to entrepreneurs, employees, and CSR beneficiaries.
- ★ Equitas also focuses on expanding access to digital banking, offering customers a convenient and rewarding Do-It-Yourself (DIY) banking experience.

Zuno General Insurance Integrates 'Pay How You Drive' as a Standard Feature

- ★ Zuno General Insurance has introduced Zuno SmartDrive, integrating the Pay-How-You-Drive (PHYD) feature into its motor insurance policies.
- ★ It is the first insurer in India to offer mobile telematics as a built-in feature at no extra cost.
- ★ The PHYD feature, previously an add-on, is now automatically included in all new and renewing policies.
- ★ Using mobile telematics, it evaluates speed, braking patterns, and distractions, allowing policyholders to track their driving scores via the Zuno app.
- ★ Safer driving can result in lower premiums, offering financial incentives to responsible drivers.
- ★ Zuno SmartDrive personalizes premium calculations, shifting from a fixed pricing model to behavior-based pricing.
- ★ This ensures policyholders have greater control over insurance costs.
- ★ In addition to renewal discounts, customers can earn weekly and monthly rewards based on driving scores, displayed on a leaderboard in the Zuno app.
- ★ Through Zuno SmartDrive, Zuno General Insurance aims to deliver a data-driven and personalized insurance experience, helping policyholders optimize coverage costs while encouraging safe driving habits.

Government Launches BAANKNET, E-Bkay to Enhance PSU Bank E-Auctions

- ★ On 3rd January 2025, the government introduced BAANKNET, an upgraded e-auction portal.
- ★ All 12 Public Sector Banks (PSBs) and the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) are using BAANKNET for listing and auctioning properties across India.
- ★ The e-BKray platform was launched on 28th February 2019.
- ★ Key Features of BAANKNET:
 - State-of-the-Art Platform – Advanced e-auction system for banks to recover Non-Performing Assets (NPAs).
 - Robust Architecture – Web and mobile accessibility for seamless interaction.
 - Automated KYC and Secure Payments – Integrated Know Your Customer (KYC) tools and secure payment gateways ensure transparency.
 - Comprehensive Listings – A one-stop solution from property search to sale across India.
 - Simplified Navigation – User-friendly interface for easy property search and bidding.
 - Smart Auctions and Fair Pricing – AI-powered mechanisms to ensure competitive pricing.
 - Transparency and Seamlessness – Enhances stakeholder trust in property transactions.
 - Bank Verified Titles – All property titles are verified by banks, ensuring authenticity and reliability.

Central Depository Services (India) Limited's Arm Inks Pact with LIC

- ★ Centrico Insurance Repository (CIRL), a subsidiary of Central Depository Services (India) Ltd. (CDSL), has entered into an agreement with Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC).

- ★ CIRL will provide Insurance Repository (IR) services to LIC under their Request for Proposal (RFP) process.
- ★ Policyholders will benefit from IR services and enhanced value-added features periodically.
- ★ CIRL has partnerships with 43 insurance companies, including 23 life insurance companies, to provide IR services across India.
- ★ The partnership with LIC, India's largest life insurer, enhances CIRL's opportunities to develop services for policyholders nationwide.
- ★ Central Depository Services (India) Ltd. (CDSL) is one of the two major securities depositories in India, alongside National Securities Depository Limited (NSDL).
- ★ It was founded in 1999 and operates under the regulatory framework of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI).

RBI Fines HDFC Bank and Punjab and Sindh Bank for Regulatory Violation

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has fined the public sector bank, Punjab and Sindh Bank, and the private sector bank, HDFC Bank, for violating various regulatory provisions. HDFC Bank was fined ₹75 lakhs, and the Punjab and Sindh Bank ₹68.20 lakhs.
- ★ The fines were imposed on these banks by the RBI, exercising its power under the Banking Regulation Act 1949.
- ★ The Banking Regulation Act 1949 makes the RBI the regulator of banks in India.
- ★ India's largest private sector bank, HDFC Bank, was fined for its non-compliance with certain directions issued by the RBI on Know Your Customer (KYC).
- ★ According to the RBI, the bank failed to categorise certain customers into low, medium, or high risk categories.
- ★ According to RBI rules, the banks have to classify their customers based on their transactions and the bank's risk perception into low risk, medium-risk, and high-risk customers and monitor the bank accounts of these customers accordingly.
- ★ HDFC was also found guilty of allotting multiple customer identification codes to certain customers instead of a Unique Customer Identification Code (UCIC) for each customer.
- ★ RBI fined Punjab and Sindh Bank for Its non-compliance with its directives on CRILC ('Central Repository of Information on Large Credits) and the guidelines on the Basic Savings Bank Deposit Account (BSBDA)
- ★ The bank was found guilty of not reporting certain borrowers with non-fund-based exposure of ₹5 crore and above to CRILC.
- ★ The Bank was found guilty of allowing certain BSBDA holders to open Savings Bank Deposit Accounts.
- ★ According to the RBI, a person cannot open a BSBDA account along with a savings account in a bank.

State Bank of India Raises \$1 Billion in Syndicated Dollar Loan

- ★ State Bank of India (SBI) has raised \$1 billion through the largest dollar-denominated syndicated loan from India this year.
- ★ The bank opted not to exercise a \$250 million greenshoe option that could have expanded the five-year loan facility.
- ★ Foreign-currency loans by Indian issuers have declined by 30% in 2025, amounting to \$3.2 billion, a four-year low (IndexBox).
- ★ Reliance Industries Ltd. is currently seeking a loan of up to \$3 billion, which may reverse this trend.
- ★ Shadow banks (NBFCs) are increasingly turning to dollar-denominated loans due to tighter domestic regulations.
- ★ Shriram Finance Ltd. is in talks to secure \$250 million through a three-year loan.
- ★ The firm has already raised a record \$2 billion in offshore borrowings for FY 2024-25.
- ★ Bank of Baroda secured a \$750 million term facility from eight lenders earlier this month.
- ★ Bank of India has raised \$400 million via a dollar syndicated loan, according to people familiar with the matter, marking its first such deal since 2012 that expands a list of the country's borrowers tapping global credit markets.

Bank of Baroda Launches the Baroda Mdiginext Mobile App

- ★ Bank of Baroda, a top-tier public sector bank in India, has introduced its latest innovation—the Baroda mDigiNext mobile application.
- ★ This specialized app is designed exclusively for corporate clients utilizing the bank's Baroda Cash Management Services (BCMS), making Bank of Baroda one of the few banks in India to offer a dedicated cash management solution for businesses.
- ★ The Baroda mDigiNext app leverages cutting-edge technology to streamline cash management workflows for businesses.
- ★ It provides 24/7 access to powerful financial tools, enabling quick, data-driven decision-making on the move.
- ★ The app will monitor transaction status instantly.
- ★ OTP verification and 3-Factor Authentication will be provided for secure transactions.

ECONOMY

EPFO Retains 8.25% Interest Rate on Employees' Provident Fund Deposits

- ★ The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) has retained the interest rate on employees' provident fund (EPF) deposits at 8.25% for 2024-25.
- ★ In February 2024, EPFO had marginally increased the interest rate to 8.25% for 2023-24 from 8.15% in 2022-23.

- ★ Previously, the interest rate was lowered to a four-decade low of 8.1% in 2021-22 from 8.5% in 2020-21.
- ★ The 8.1% interest rate in 2020-21 was the lowest since 1977-78, when it stood at 8%.
- ★ The Central Board of Trustees (CBT), EPFO's decision-making body, approved the 8.25% interest rate for 2024-25 in a meeting and it will now be sent to the Ministry of Finance for ratification.
- ★ Historically, EPFO had lowered the interest rate to 8.5% in 2019-20 from 8.65% in 2018-19, while the rate was 8.65% in 2016-17 and 8.55% in 2017-18.
- ★ The interest rate stood at 8.8% in 2015-16, 8.75% in 2013-14 and 2014-15, 8.5% in 2012-13, and 8.25% in 2011-12.

IRCTC and IRFC Becomes 25th and 26th CPSE Navratnas

- ★ The Government of India has upgraded IRCTC (Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation Ltd.) and IRFC (Indian Railway Finance Corporation) to Navratna status. Both the IRFC and IRCTC were earlier Schedule 'A' Miniratna CPSE.
- ★ IRCTC becomes the 25th central public sector enterprise (CPSE) to be accorded the status of Navratna while IRFC becomes the 26th CPSE to be accorded the Navratna status.
- ★ The Department of Public Enterprises under the Union Ministry of Finance in a social media post on 3rd March 2025 gave this information.
- ★ The Government of India grants Maharatna, Navratna, and Mini-Ratna status to its profit-making CPSEs to make them more efficient and competitive.
- ★ A Navratna CPSE enjoys substantial managerial and financial autonomy.
- ★ Some of the benefits are as follows:
 - No need for Central Government approval for investments up to ₹1,000 crore or 15% of their net worth in a single project.
 - No need for Central Government approval for entering into technology joint ventures or strategic alliances with other companies.
 - They can establish financial joint ventures and wholly owned subsidiaries in India or abroad under certain terms and conditions.

RBI May Have To Infuse ₹1 Lakh Crore By March, 2025

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) may have to inject additional ₹1 lakh crore into the banking system by March 2025 to maintain liquidity at an equilibrium level, according to a report by the State Bank of India (SBI) research.
- ★ The report highlighted that systemic liquidity remains tight, with a deficit of approximately ₹1.6 lakh crore as of the end of February 2025.
- ★ The average liquidity deficit is higher, at around ₹1.95 lakh crore.
- ★ The banking system has been facing a severe liquidity crunch in recent months, making it one of the worst liquidity shortages in over a decade.
- ★ Liquidity conditions in the banking system have deteriorated significantly over the past few months.

- ★ To ease liquidity pressures, the RBI has taken several measures, including conducting variable rate repo (VRR) auctions of different tenors, open market operations (OMOs), and dollar-rupee swap arrangements.
- ★ The central bank has also carried out daily VRR auctions since January 16, 2025 to manage short-term liquidity needs.

India's GDP Growth To Exceed 6.5% In FY26: Moody's

- ★ Moody's has projected India's GDP growth to exceed 6.5% in FY26, up from 6.3% in FY25.
- ★ This growth will be driven by higher government capital expenditure, tax cuts, and interest rate reductions, which will boost consumption.
- ★ The rating agency maintains a stable outlook for the banking sector.
- ★ However, asset quality is expected to deteriorate moderately due to stress in unsecured retail loans, microfinance loans, and small business loans.
- ★ Despite this, bank profitability will remain adequate as declines in net interest margins (NIMs) are expected to be marginal amid modest rate cuts.
- ★ India's economic growth had temporarily slowed in mid-2024 but is now reaccelerating and is expected to be among the fastest-growing large economies globally.

S&P Cuts India's Growth Forecast To 6.5% in 2025-26

- ★ The S&P Global has revised its forecast for India's real gross domestic product (GDP) growth in the financial year 2025-26 to 6.5% from its earlier projection of 6.7%.
- ★ The global credit rating agency S&P Global forecasted the growth rate of the economies of the Asia Pacific Region (APAC) in its latest report released on 25th March 2025.
- ★ The report was prepared taking into account the possible impact of the reciprocal tariffs threatened by the Donald Trump administration of the United States of America on its trading partners.
- ★ According to the National Statistical Office, the growth rate of the real gross domestic product (GDP) of India in 2024-25 was 6.4%.
- ★ In its latest monetary policy of February 2025, the Reserve Bank of India has forecasted a growth rate of 6.7% for the Indian economy in 2025-26.
- ★ The report takes into account the expected US tariff on Indian goods that has lowered the growth rate of India to 6.5% in 2025-26.

BUSINESS NEWS

SEBI Directs Mutual Fund to Deploy Funds Within 30 Days Of NFO

- ★ Securities and Exchange Boards of India (SEBI) has directed for the asset management company (AMC) of the mutual fund to invest the money collected from investors through new fund offer (NFO) within 30 business days from the date of allotment of the scheme units.

- ★ Currently, there is no time limit for deploying the funds collected through NFO.
- ★ The latest directive of SEBI is seen as an effort to stop mis-selling of NFOs by the mutual funds, and discourage them from raising excess funds from the public.
- ★ Asset management company (AMC) approved by SEBI manages the funds raised from the public through NFO.
- ★ The latest SEBI directive will be applicable from 1st April 2025.
- ★ The AMC in the Scheme Information Document (SID) of a mutual fund scheme will have to specify the period during which it will deploy the funds collected from the investors.
- ★ The money collected from the investor has to be invested within 30 business days from the date of allotment of the scheme units.
- ★ If the AMC fails to deploy the funds within 30 business days, it will have to give its reason in writing to the AMC's investment committee.
- ★ If the AMC investment committee is satisfied, then it can extend the timeline by another 30 business days.
- ★ If the AMC fails to deploy the fund within the extended period, it cannot accept fresh public investment in the scheme until it deploys the fund as mentioned in its SID.
- ★ AMCs cannot levy exit load on the investors exiting such a scheme due to the AMC's non-compliance with deploying the funds.
- ★ SEBI has made the mutual funds Trustees responsible for monitoring the deployment of funds collected in NFO.

SEBI Launches Centralized Database for Corporate Bonds

- ★ Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has launched a centralized database portal for corporate bonds called Bond Central to provide a single, authentic source of information on corporate securities.
- ★ The portal has been developed by the Online Bond Platform Providers Association (OBPP Association) in collaboration with Market Infrastructure Institutions (MIIs), including stock exchanges and depositories.
- ★ Bond Central is a public information repository, accessible free of cost, aimed at enhancing transparency and informed decision-making for investors and market participants.
- ★ The OBPP Association, a not-for-profit entity, will operate the portal with support from MIIs.
- ★ **Key features of Bond Central:**
 - Unified view of corporate bonds across exchanges and issuers.
 - Comparison tool for corporate bond prices with Government Securities (G-Secs) and other fixed-income indices.
 - Access to detailed risk assessments, corporate bond documents, and disclosures to help investors evaluate opportunities.
 - Standardised corporate bond data to reduce information asymmetry and build market trust.

DEFENCE

Tri Service Special Force Exercise Desert Hunt Concludes

- ★ The tri-service exercise involving the special forces of the Indian Air Force, Indian Navy, and the Indian Air Force, code-named 'Desert Hunt', concluded at the Indian Air Force Station Jodhpur, Rajasthan.
- ★ The Desert Hunt exercise was conducted under the leadership of the Indian Air Force from 24-28 February 2028 at the Jodhpur Air Force Station.
- ★ The Indian Armed Forces are conducting a series of joint tri-services as part of the Indian Government's effort to set up an integrated theatre command in India.
- ★ Under the integrated theatre command, the three wings of the Indian Armed Forces - Army, Navy, and the Air Force will work under one command.
- ★ In November 2024, the Indian Army, Indian Air Force, and Indian Navy participated in a command-level tri-service theater exercise code-named 'Poorvi Prahar' along the India-China border.
- ★ The Desert Hunt exercise was supervised by senior officers of the Indian Air Force, Indian Navy, and the Indian Air Force.
- ★ The Special Forces of the three wings of the armed forces participated in the Desert Hunt exercise. The Indian Army was represented by the elite Parachute Regiment (Special Force), the Marine Commando Force (MARCOS) of the Indian Navy, and the Garud Commando Force of the Indian Air Force.

NASA And Nokia to Launch the First Cellular Network In Space

- ★ NASA's IM-2 mission, is a 10-day lunar expedition targeting the south pole's Mons Mouton to mine water ice and rare minerals.
- ★ It will deploy Nokia's 4G/LTE network for real-time communication, paving the way for sustainable lunar bases and future Martian missions.
- ★ Its primary goal is to mine for water ice and rare minerals critical for future lunar bases.
- ★ The mission also aims to deploy Nokia's 4G/LTE cellular network, a partnership with NASA to boost high-speed, real-time communication for future lunar operations.
- ★ The IM-2 mission uses Intuitive Machines' Athena lander, which detached from a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket and is set to land near the lunar south pole on March 6, 2025.
- ★ Athena carries two NASA instruments designed to drill 3 feet into the lunar surface to search for water and carbon dioxide.
- ★ A secondary objective of the IM-2 mission is to deploy the first lunar cellular network, developed by Nokia in partnership with NASA and Intuitive Machines.
- ★ The 4G network is expected to function for only a few days due to lunar night temperatures (-200°C), which will deactivate the system.
- ★ The Texas-based Intuitive Machines became the first private company to complete a successful moon landing last February, carrying six NASA payloads, including one at the moon's south pole.

Indian Navy Participates in the Exercise Sea Dragon 2025

- ★ The five-nation Naval exercise Sea Dragon 2025, which includes the Indian Navy, commenced off the Guam coast in the western Pacific Ocean.
- ★ The Sea Dragon exercise 2025 is being hosted by the United States Navy's 7th fleet and will be held from 4-19 March 2025.
- ★ It is a multilateral naval exercise where the allies and partner countries of the United States are invited to improve tactical and command interoperability between the allies and partners.
- ★ In the 2025 edition the United States Navy is hosting the Indian Navy, Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force, Royal Australian Air Force, and the Republic of Korea Navy.
- ★ The Sea Dragon exercise is an anti-submarine warfare exercise.
- ★ All the countries deploy their Maritime Patrol and Reconnaissance aircraft for the exercise.
- ★ The Indian Navy deploys P8I Maritime Patrol and Reconnaissance aircraft manufactured by Boeing of the United States.
- ★ During the exercise, the Pilots and aircrew from the participating countries discuss strategy to co-ordinate and build plans and tactics for anti-submarine warfare.

2025 TROPEX Exercise of Indian Navy

- ★ The mega Indian Navy's 3-month long Theatre Level Operational Exercise (TROPEX) concluded.
- ★ The biennial Tropex exercise, which commenced in January 2025 after the successful conclusion of the Sea Vigil Exercise, focused on the enhancement of the Indian Navy's combat capability across the Indian Ocean especially in the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal Theater.
- ★ The exercise was conducted in both harbour and sea phase.
- ★ The exercise included AMPHEX, an Amphibious Exercise, a Joint Work Up Phase focused on precise delivery of ordnance on target, Cyber and Electronic Warfare, and a Tactical Phase.
- ★ The TROPEX exercise is mainly an Indian Navy exercise with participation by the Indian Army, Indian Air Force and Indian Coast Guard units.

12th India-Kyrgyzstan Exercise Khanjar Commences in Kyrgyzstan

- ★ The 12th India- Kyrgyzstan joint military exercise, Khanjar, commenced in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, on March 10, 2025. The 12th edition of the annual bilateral Khanjar exercise will be held from March 10 to 23, 2025.
- ★ The 11th edition of the Khanjar exercise was held at the Indian Army's Special Forces Training School Bakloh, Himachal Pradesh, from 22 January to 03 February 2024.
- ★ The elite Special Forces of both countries' armies participate in the Khanjar exercise.
- ★ The exercise focuses on counter-terrorism operations and special forces operations in built-up areas and mountainous terrain.
- ★ This year's edition of the Khanjar exercise will also focus on developing the sniping skills of the special forces, complex building intervention, and mountain craft.

- ★ The Khanajar exercise is also part of the effort of both the countries to strengthen their bilateral relationship, especially in defence.
- ★ To promote the friendly ties between the defence personnel of both the countries, the Indian contingent will participate in Kyrgyzstan's festival of Nowruz.
- ★ In the Khanjar exercise, a 20-member contingent of the Special Forces participates.
- ★ India is represented by the Indian Army's Parachute Regiment (Special Forces), while Kyzystan's side is represented by its elite Scorpion Brigade.

First Defence Minister to Visit Institute of Aerospace Medicine, Bengaluru

- ★ Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh made history by becoming the first Defence Minister of India to visit the Institute of Aerospace Medicine (IAM) of the Indian Air Force (IAF) in Bengaluru, Karnataka.
- ★ His visit emphasized the critical role of aerospace medicine in India's defence and aviation sectors.
- ★ During the visit, he was briefed on IAM's contributions to pilot training, aeromedical research, and medical evaluation of Air Force personnel.
- ★ He also inaugurated a new research project on space psychology, highlighting India's growing focus on space medicine as the country advances in both aerospace and space exploration.
- ★ IAM is a premier aerospace medicine institute under the Indian Air Force, dedicated to research and training in aeromedical sciences.
- ★ One of the key highlights of the visit was the launch of a major research initiative – the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) Extramural Research Project: Centre for Advanced Research.

India Signs \$248 Million Deal with Russia

- ★ India has finalized a \$248 million agreement with Russia's Rosoboronexport to procure 1,000 horsepower (HP) engines for its T-72 battle tanks.
- ★ This strategic upgrade will enhance the maneuverability and combat effectiveness of the Indian Army.
- ★ The deal also includes technology transfer to India's Armoured Vehicles Nigam Ltd (AVNL) for licensed production of these engines, boosting India's defense manufacturing capabilities.
- ★ The deal is focused on modernizing the Indian Army's aging T-72 battle tank fleet.
- ★ T-72 tanks have been in service with the Indian Army since the 1970s and remain a critical component of India's armored forces.
- ★ The Indian Army currently operates 2,500 T-72 tanks, each equipped with 780 HP engines.
- ★ The new 1,000 HP engines will replace the older engines, significantly improving speed, maneuverability, and battlefield performance.

Indian Navy's INS Imphal to Enhance Bilateral Ties at Mauritius National Day 2025

- ★ Indian Naval Ship (INS) Imphal arrived at Port Louis, Mauritius, for its maiden port call ahead of Mauritius' 57th National Day celebrations on March 12, 2025.

- ★ It continues the tradition of Indian naval participation in Mauritius' National Day events, reinforcing strong maritime ties.
- ★ It will contribute a marching contingent, a naval band, and a helicopter for the National Day Parade flypast at Champs de Mars.
- ★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi will attend the event as Chief Guest.
- ★ The warship's visit from March 10-14 includes bilateral engagements, such as cross-training, friendly sports fixtures, and community outreach programs.
- ★ A joint Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) surveillance and exercise with the Mauritius Coast Guard is planned to strengthen regional security.
- ★ Mauritius remains a key partner in India's efforts to ensure a secure and stable Indian Ocean Region (IOR).
- ★ INS Imphal, commissioned in December 2023, is the third of four Project 15B (Visakhapatnam-class) destroyers.
- ★ It is equipped with advanced weaponry, sensors, and machinery, making it one of the most sophisticated warships

India-Bangladesh Joint Patrol 'Corpat' And Bilateral Exercise 'Bangosagar'

- ★ The 6th Co-ordinated Patrol (CORPAT) and 4th BONGOSAGAR bilateral exercise between the Indian Navy and Bangladesh Navy commenced on March 10, 2025, and will continue until March 12, 2025, in the Bay of Bengal, as per a statement by Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR).
- ★ Regular patrols and drills have enhanced interoperability and co-operation between the two naval forces, ensuring better maritime security and economic development in the region.
- ★ The exercises aim to combat illegal fishing, smuggling, human trafficking, piracy, and drug trafficking in the designated maritime zones of both nations.
- ★ Bangladesh Navy is represented by BNS ABU UBAlDAH and a maritime patrol aircraft.
- ★ The Indian Navy is participating with INS RANVIR and a helicopter.
- ★ The patrols are supervised by Commander Flotilla West.
- ★ CORPAT has been held annually since 2018 to improve information sharing, maritime crime prevention, and regional security.
- ★ BONGOSAGAR-23 and the 5th CORPAT were conducted in November 2023, featuring communication drills, surface gunfire, tactical maneuvers, and a humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) exercise.

Tejas Fighter Jet Successfully Test Fires Air-To-Air Astra Missile Off Odisha Coast

- ★ India's Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) successfully conducted the test launch of the Astra Beyond Visual Range Air-to-Air Missile (BVRAAM) from the LCA AF MK1 prototype fighter aircraft on March 12, 2025, off the coast of Chandipur, Odisha.
- ★ The test-firing achieved a direct hit on a flying target, with all subsystems performing accurately, meeting all mission parameters and objectives.

- ★ The Astra missile, developed by DRDO, has a range of over 100 km and features advanced guidance and navigation systems for precision targeting.
- ★ The missile is already inducted into the Indian Air Force (IAF).
- ★ This successful test marks a crucial step towards the induction of the LCA AF MK1A variant.
- ★ The achievement was made possible by the efforts of ADA, DRDO, Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), CEMILAC, DG-AQA, IAF, and the Test Range team.

India-Bangladesh Naval Exercise 'Bongosagar 2025'

- ★ The India-Bangladesh Naval Exercise 'Bongosagar 2025' and the Co-ordinated Patrol were conducted in the Bay of Bengal.
- ★ The exercise aimed to enhance interoperability between the two navies, strengthening their ability to respond collaboratively to maritime security challenges.
- ★ It enhances co-ordination between the Indian Navy and Bangladesh Navy.
- ★ It also strengthens maritime security co-operation and improves tactical planning, co-ordination, and information sharing.
- ★ Indian Navy INS Ranvir and Bangladesh Navy BNS Abu Ubaidah participated in the exercise.

Indo-French Varuna Naval Exercise 2025

- ★ The Indian Navy and the French Navy will carry out the 23rd edition of their bilateral naval exercise, VARUNA, from March 19 to 22, 2025.
- ★ The exercise has been an important part of India-France maritime co-operation since it began in 2001 and reflects the strong naval partnership between the two countries.
- ★ According to an official press release, VARUNA 2025 will focus on improving co-ordination and co-operation between the two navies.
- ★ The exercise will include various drills and manoeuvres involving underwater, surface, and air operations.
- ★ Key warships and aircraft from both navies will take part, including India's aircraft carrier INS Vikrant and France's aircraft carrier FS Charles de Gaulle.
- ★ Other participants include fighter aircraft, destroyers, frigates, and an Indian Scorpene-class submarine.
- ★ The exercise will feature advanced air defence drills and fighter jet exercises, including mock air combat between India's MiG-29K and France's Rafale-M jets.
- ★ Anti-submarine warfare drills will focus on strengthening underwater surveillance, while surface warfare operations will involve co-ordinated movements and engagements by ships from both navies.
- ★ Maritime patrol aircraft will assist in improving situational awareness, and replenishment-at-sea exercises will boost logistical co-operation.

India and Tanzania to Co-host the 1st India Africa Naval EX Aikeyme

- ★ As a part of its military outreach in the African region, India will co-host a maritime exercise named Aikeyme with Tanzania in the Indian Ocean in April 2025.
- ★ The maiden military exercise Aikeyme which means unity in Sanskrit will see the participation of 10 African countries including Tanzania.
- ★ The Indian Government has also announced the Indian Ocean Ship (IOS) Sagar initiative to complement the MAHASAGAR initiative of the Indian Navy.
- ★ The inaugural edition of the Aikeyme maritime exercise will be conducted off the Dar es Salam in Tanzania from 13–18 April 2025.
- ★ The inaugural exercise is expected to be inaugurated by the Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh.
- ★ It will be co-hosted by the Indian Navy with the Tanzania Peoples' Defence Force.
- ★ The Aikeyme Maritime exercise co-hosted by India and Tanzania will also see the participation of South Africa, Kenya, Eritrea, Comoros, Djibouti, Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles, and Mozambique.
- ★ The Aikeyme maritime exercise will involve both the Harbour and Sea Phase exercises.
- ★ During the Harbour Phase the participating countries Naval personnel will take part in Table Top Command Post exercises on anti-piracy operations and information sharing, along with training on Seamanship and Visit Board Search and Seizure (VBSS).
- ★ During the Sea Phase, the focus will be on Search and Rescue, Small Arms firing, Helicopter Operations and conducting VBSS operation.

RANKS, INDICES & REPORTS

Wealth Report 2025

- ★ According to the 19th Wealth Report 2025, India has emerged as the fourth largest global wealth hub in the world after the United States of America, China, and Japan.
- ★ The number of High Net-Worth Individuals (HNWIs) in the country has risen from 80,686 in the last year to 85,698 in 2025, a growth of 6 percent. The report expects the HNWI population in India to increase to 93,753 by 2028.
- ★ The report attributes India's progress to its strong economic growth rate, a growing startup ecosystem fueled by widespread smartphone access, and a growing culture of entrepreneurship.
- ★ The Wealth Report is released by the London, United Kingdom-based real estate consultancy firm Knight Frank.
- ★ The annual report offers an analysis of private wealth in the world and global investment trends.

IndiGo Becomes the World's Second Fastest-Growing Airline in 2024

- ★ IndiGo Airlines ranked as the world's second fastest-growing airline regarding seat capacity, which increased by 1% year-on-year (YoY) to 134.9 million seats in 2024.
- ★ Qatar Airways secured the top position with a 10.4% growth in seat capacity.
- ★ IndiGo ranked as the fastest-growing airline globally in terms of flight frequency growth, recording a 7% YoY increase.
- ★ IndiGo holds one of the world's largest aircraft orders, with over 900 aircraft on order.
- ★ It received 58 new Airbus aircraft in 2024, the highest among all airlines.
- ★ However, approximately 80 aircraft remain inactive due to MRO-related supply chain issues.

2024 World Air Quality Report

- ★ India has been ranked as the 5th most polluted country in the world in 2024 by the 7th annual World Air Quality Report.
- ★ The report which monitors the air pollution level in the world based on the World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines also mentions India having 13 out of 20 most polluted cities in the world.
- ★ Byrnihat in Meghalaya, situated along the border with Assam, has been declared the most polluted city in the world.
- ★ The World Air Quality Report is released by Switzerland-based air quality technology company, IQAir.
- ★ In the 2024 report, the IQAir has used the air quality data of over 40,000 air quality monitoring stations in 8954 locations of 138 countries.
- ★ The report uses WHO air pollution guidelines on fine particulate matter (PM2.5).
- ★ The average annual PM2.5 in India was 50.6 µg/m³. It is more than 10 times higher than the WHO guideline.
- ★ The report ranks 138 countries.

World Happiness Report 2025

- ★ India has been ranked as the 118th happiest country in the world amongst the 147 countries surveyed in the latest World Happiness Report 2025.
- ★ India which was ranked 126 in 2024 has climbed by 8 positions in the latest report.
- ★ Finland retained its status as the happiest country in the world while Afghanistan was ranked as the most unhappy country in the world.
- ★ The 13th edition of the World Happiness Report was released on 20th March 2025 coinciding with the International Day of Happiness that falls on 20th March each year.
- ★ The annual World Happiness Report is published by the University of Oxford's Wellbeing Research Centre in partnership with Gallup and the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network.

- ★ The countries are ranked in the Happiness Index based on a survey conducted by the American multinational analytics company Gallup. It asks around 1000 people in a country to rate their life on a score of 0 to 10.
- ★ The responses of the people are modelled on six variables; Having someone to count on, GDP per capita, life expectancy, Freedom to make life choices, Generosity, and Freedom from corruption.

International Monetary Fund Report

- ★ According to the recently released data by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Indian economy is likely to overtake Japan in 2025 and Germany in 2027 to become the world's third largest economy after the United States of America and China.
- ★ The positive report of the IMF comes after a World Bank report which suggested that India needs to grow at an average annual growth rate of 7.8 percent to achieve the target of Viksit Bharat or a developed country by 2047.
- ★ The real gross domestic product (GDP) of India has doubled from \$2.1 trillion in 2015 to \$4.3 trillion in 2025.
- ★ The growth rate of India was 105 percent which is the highest growth rate amongst the major economies.
- ★ IMF estimates that with the current growth rate India is expected to surpass Japan in 2025 and Germany in 2027.
- ★ India is currently the fifth-largest economy in the world after the United States of America, China, Germany, and Japan.
- ★ The IMF data mentions that the United States remains the largest economy in the world with a real GDP of \$ 30.3 trillion in 2025 as compared to \$ 18.3 trillion in 2015.

AWARDS & PRIZES

Screen Actors Guild (SAG) Awards 2025

- ★ The 31st Screen Actors Guild (SAG) Awards took place on February 23, 2025, at the Shrine Auditorium and Expo Hall, Los Angeles.
- ★ It was hosted by Kristen Bell and streamed live on Netflix, the event honored exceptional performances in film and television over the past year.
- ★ Jane Fonda received the SAG Life Achievement Award for her remarkable career and humanitarian contributions.
- ★ In her speech, she emphasized the importance of empathy and unions in the entertainment industry.
- ★ The SAG Awards are voted on by fellow actors, making them a prestigious recognition in Hollywood.
- ★ Best Cast in a Motion Picture: Conclave (unexpected winner)
- ★ Best Male Actor in a Leading Role: Timothée Chalamet (A Complete Unknown as Bob Dylan)

- ★ Best Female Actor in a Leading Role: Demi Moore (The Substance as Elisabeth)
- ★ Best Male Actor in a Supporting Role: Kieran Culkin (A Real Pain as Benji Kaplan)
- ★ Best Female Actor in a Supporting Role: Zoe Saldana (Emilia Pérez as Rita)
- ★ Best Stunt Ensemble in a Motion Picture: The Fall Guy

Prani Mitra and Jeev Daya Award Ceremony 2025 Recognizes Outstanding Contributions to Animal Welfare

- ★ The Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI), a statutory body under the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying, organized the Prani Mitra and Jeev Daya Award Ceremony, at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi.
- ★ The event, aimed at promoting animal welfare and recognizing contributions in this field, was graced by Union Ministers of State for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry, and Dairying, Prof. S.P. Singh Baghel and Shri George Kurian, alongside senior officials from AWBI, Ministry of Animal Husbandry, and State Governments.
- ★ As part of the event, four significant books were released to guide veterinarians, policymakers, and field officials in implementing animal welfare laws effectively:
 - Handbook for Veterinary Officers on Animal Welfare Laws
 - Law Enforcement Handbook on Animal Welfare Laws
 - Animal Law Handbook for Urban Local Bodies
 - Prani Mitra Award (Introduced in 1966) – Recognizes individuals and organizations for their outstanding contributions to animal welfare. Since inception, 54 individuals have been honored.
 - Jeev Daya Award (Introduced in 2001) – Acknowledges individuals, institutions, and organizations for their dedication to protecting animals. Since 2001, 12 awards have been conferred.

President Confers Visitors Award

- ★ President Droupadi Murmu inaugurated the two-day Visitors Conference 2024-25 at the Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi.
- ★ The Visitor's Award is given in the field of Innovation, Research, and Technology Development.
- ★ **Visitor's Award for Innovation:**
 - Professor Saripella Srikrishna of the Banaras Hindu University. He was honoured for his effort in developing Novel Indigenous Innovation in Quantum Technology to boost the National Green Hydrogen Mission.
- ★ **Visitor's Award in Research:**
 - Physical Sciences:
 - Professor Ashwini Kumar Nangia of the University of Hyderabad.
 - He was recognized for his seminal research in the discovery and development of high bioavailability drugs and pharmaceuticals with enhanced efficacy at affordable costs.

- Biological Sciences:
 - Jointly to Professor Rina Chakrabarti, University of Delhi and Professor Raj Kumar of the Central University of Punjab.
 - Professor Rina Chakrabarti was honoured for her research in Sustainable Freshwater Aquaculture.
 - Professor Raj Kumar was honoured for his research in exploring various cancer hallmarks and the development of synthetic anticancer lead molecules.

★ **Visitor's Award for Technology Development**

- Dr Venkateswarlu Chintala of the Gati Shakti Vishwavidyalaya.
- He was recognised for his research in the production of petrol and diesel production at a commercial scale from landfill municipal mixed plastic waste.

Jay Shah Receives Icon of Excellence Award

- ★ Jay Shah, Chairman of the International Cricket Council (ICC), has been awarded the prestigious Icon of Excellence Award at the 14th Edition of the Forbes India Leadership Awards (FILA) 2025 for his outstanding contributions to cricket administration and global expansion of the sport.
- ★ He became ICC Chairman at 36 years old, the youngest in history.
- ★ He focused on globalizing cricket, ensuring financial stability, and enhancing the game's competitiveness.
- ★ The award recognizes innovative leadership in cricket.
- ★ It honors his work to make the sport fairer, more inclusive, and globally competitive.

Forbes India Leadership Awards (FILA) 2025

- ★ The Forbes India Leadership Awards (FILA) 2025 concluded with a grand ceremony at the Jio World Convention Centre in Mumbai, celebrating India's corporate and entrepreneurial leaders.
- ★ The prestigious event recognized outstanding contributions in business, innovation, and leadership, highlighting individuals and organizations that have shaped India's economic and social landscape.
- ★ Hosted by Forbes India, the event brought together top industry leaders, entrepreneurs, and philanthropists, honoring their transformative impact.
- ★ Emerging Innovator Award: BugWorks Research
 - BugWorks Research was awarded for its groundbreaking work in biotechnology.
- ★ Outstanding Startup Award: BrowserStack
 - BrowserStack, one of the fastest-growing tech startups, was honored for revolutionizing software testing solutions.
- ★ Icons of Excellence: Ajay Singh and Katrina Kaif
 - Ajay Singh, Chairman and MD of SpiceJet, was recognized for his contribution to the aviation sector, reflecting on the airline's journey against all odds.
 - Katrina Kaif, co-founder of Kay Beauty, was honored for entrepreneurship in the beauty industry, promoting inclusivity and self-expression in cosmetics.

Honorary Order of Freedom of Barbados Award

- ★ The Government of Barbados conferred its prestigious Honorary Order of Freedom of Barbados Award to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- ★ The award was received by the Union Minister of State for External Affairs and Textiles, Pabitra Margherita, on behalf of Prime Minister Narendra Modi at a function in Bridgetown, the capital of Barbados.
- ★ Prime Minister Modi has been conferred with the award for his strategic leadership and valuable assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ★ Prime Minister of Barbados Mia Amor Mottley announced the award for Prime Minister Narendra Modi during her meeting with Prime Minister Modi at the sidelines of the 2nd India-CARICOM summit meeting.

EY Entrepreneur of the Year 2024

- ★ The founder and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of online stock broking company Zerodha Limited, Nitin Kamath, has been conferred with the EY Entrepreneur of the Year 2024 India award.
- ★ Nitin Kamath will represent India at the EY World Entrepreneur of the Year Awards to be held in Monte Carlo in June 2025.
- ★ The winners of the 26th edition of the annual EY Entrepreneur of the Year 2024 India in various categories were announced by the Indian subsidiary of the British consultancy firm EY on 5th March 2025.
- ★ Union Minister of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change Bhupender Yadav gave the awards to the winners.
- ★ Zerodha is credited for making capital market investing more accessible and cost-effective for small investors.
- ★ Zerodha achieved Unicorn status in 2020 without any external funding. Zerodha is now supporting many fintech and startup companies like Nazara Technologies and Bluestone.
- ★ Zerodha also launched India's first Growth Liquid ETF in January 2024.
- ★ Veteran banker KV Kamath was recognized with the Lifetime Achievement Award for his outstanding contributions to the financial sector.
- ★ S Somanath, ISRO Chairman, was awarded the Special Jury Award for his role in India's landmark space missions, reinforcing India's global position in space exploration.

AM Turing Award 2024

- ★ Andrew G. Barto and Richard S. Sutton of the United States of America have been selected for the prestigious 2024 ACM A.M. Turing Award.
- ★ The winner of the prestigious A.M. Turner award, which is considered as a Nobel Prize in Computing, was announced by the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) in New York, United States of America.
- ★ Both the winners will share the \$1 million prize money sponsored by Google.

- ★ Both Andrew G. Barto and Richard S. Sutton were honoured for their work in conceptual and algorithmic foundations of reinforcement learning, crucial for artificial intelligence.
- ★ They introduced the main ideas, constructed the mathematical foundations, and developed important algorithms for reinforcement learning.
- ★ The A.M. Turing award was instituted in 1966 by the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM), New York, United States of America.
- ★ It is given every year to individuals whose work has outstanding significance for computer science.
- ★ The prize has been founded as a tribute to the British mathematician, computer scientist, and cryptanalyst Alan Mathison Turing.

Lifetime Achievement in Hospitality and Education Through Technology

- ★ Dr. Suborno Bose, Chairman of the International Institute of Hotel Management (IIHM), has been awarded the 'Lifetime Achievement in Hospitality and Education Through Technology' at the Vibrant Bharat Global Summit 2025.
- ★ The award was presented by Union Tourism Minister Gajendra Shekhawat in recognition of Dr. Bose's pioneering contributions to integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) and technology into hospitality education and tourism.
- ★ Adding to the significance of the event, Dr. Bose also launched his latest book, "Harmonizing Human Touch and AI in Tourism and Hospitality", which tells the evolving role of AI in the industry.
- ★ He was recognized for his pioneering work in blending AI with tourism and hospitality.

Jayshree Vencatesan Wins Ramsar Award For 'Wetland Wise Use'

- ★ Dr Jayshree Vencatesan has become the first Indian to win the annual prestigious Ramsar Award in the 'Wetland Wise Use' category.
- ★ Dr Jayshree Vencatesan was one of the 12 women included by the Ramsar Secretariat in its second edition of Women Changemakers in the World of Wetlands.
- ★ The Ramsar secretariat based in Gland, Switzerland announced the names of the '2025 Women changemakers in the world of wetlands' on the eve of the International Women's Day on 7th March 2025.
- ★ The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands is the international treaty that protects the wetlands of the world. Its secretariat is located at the headquarters of the IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature) in Gland, Switzerland.
- ★ In 2024, the Ramsar secretariat released the first 'Women changemakers in the world of wetlands' to honour women across the world for their leadership and commitment to conserving and protecting wetlands.
- ★ The Women are recognised in three categories: Fostering international collaboration for wetlands, Wise use of wetlands, and Wetland protection.
- ★ Jayshree Vencatesan was honoured in the "wise use of wetlands' category.

- ★ Dr. Jayshree Vencatesan is the co-founder of the Care Earth Trust, established in 2000 in Chennai, Tamil Nadu.
- ★ The Trust is an all women non-governmental organisation that works for the conservation of biodiversity through research, advocacy, and capacity building.

PM Modi Conferred with Mauritius Highest Civilian Award

- ★ The Mauritius Government conferred its highest civilian award, “The Grand Commander of the Order of the Star and Key of the Indian Ocean”, to the visiting Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, on 12th March 2025.
- ★ During his visit, eight Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) were signed between the two countries, and PM Modi was also the Chief Guest of the National Day celebration of Mauritius.
- ★ At the end of the visit, both countries agreed to elevate their partnership to the level of an Enhanced Strategic Partnership.
- ★ The President of Mauritius, Dharambeer Gokhool, conferred the country’s highest civilian award, “The Grand Commander of the Order of the Star and Key of the Indian Ocean”, to Prime Minister Modi during the 57th National Day celebration of Mauritius at Port Louis.

ASQ Airport Experience Award 2024

- ★ GMR Airports Infrastructure Limited has announced that its subsidiary, Delhi International Airport Limited (DIAL), has been honored with the prestigious Airport Service Quality (ASQ) Airport Experience Award 2024 for the Best Airport Over 40 Million Passengers in the Asia-Pacific region.
- ★ This marks the seventh consecutive year that Delhi Airport has received this prestigious recognition, reinforcing its commitment to customer service excellence.
- ★ The Airport Service Quality (ASQ) Awards, presented by Airports Council International (ACI), are widely regarded as the gold standard for evaluating airport service quality worldwide.

2024 ACM A.M. Turing Award

- ★ The 2024 ACM A.M. Turing Award, often referred to as the “Nobel Prize in Computing”, has been awarded to Andrew G. Barto (University of Massachusetts, Amherst) and Richard S. Sutton (University of Alberta) for their pioneering contributions to Reinforcement Learning (RL).
- ★ Their work has significantly shaped the foundations of AI and machine learning.
- ★ The prize money is sponsored by Google.
- ★ Key Achievements include Development of Temporal Difference Learning, Advances in Policy-Gradient Methods and Integration of Neural Networks in RL.
- ★ RL is a learning paradigm where an agent learns optimal behaviors by receiving rewards for its actions in an uncertain environment.
- ★ **Major Contributions of Barto & Sutton:**
 - Temporal Difference Learning:
 - Developed methods to solve reward prediction problems in dynamic environments.

★ **Policy Gradient Methods:**

- Introduced techniques for optimizing decision-making policies in RL.

★ **Combining Learning & Planning:**

- Developed algorithms that integrate learning with planning, improving adaptability.

★ **Influence on Deep Reinforcement Learning:**

Their work laid the foundation for modern AI breakthroughs such as:

- AlphaGo (by DeepMind).
- ChatGPT and other generative AI models.

Hockey India Awards 2024

- ★ Indian men's hockey team captain Harmanpreet Singh and veteran Indian women's hockey team goalkeeper Savita Punia won the 7th Hockey India's best male and female players awards, respectively.
- ★ The 7th Annual Hockey India award ceremony was held in New Delhi, in which hockey players' institutions associated with the game of hockey were honored for their performance in the 2024 hockey season.
- ★ India men's team captain Harmanpreet Singh won Hockey India's Balbir Singh Sr. Award for Player of the Year in the men's category.
- ★ Harmanpreet Singh led the Indian team to a bronze medal in the 2024 Paris Summer Olympics, and he was also the top goal scorer of the tournament.
- ★ He also led the Indian team to its 5th Men's Asian Hockey Champions Trophy title at the 8th edition of the Champions Trophy held in China in 2024.
- ★ He was also the Player of the Tournament at the 2024 Men's Asian Hockey Champions Trophy.
- ★ Harmanpreet Singh was also named the 2024 FIH Men's Player of the Year.

Muthoot Microfin Shines at SKOCH Awards 2025

- ★ Muthoot Microfin, a leading microfinance institution empowering women entrepreneurs, has achieved a remarkable milestone by winning two Gold Awards at the SKOCH Awards 2025.
- ★ These prestigious honors recognize the company's outstanding contributions to digital financial inclusion and innovative insurance solutions, further solidifying its leadership in India's microfinance sector.
- ★ The awards were presented to Sadaf Sayeed, CEO of Muthoot Microfin, by Sameer Kochhar, Chairman of SKOCH Group, and Gursharan Dhanjal, Vice-Chairman of SKOCH Group, at a ceremony in New Delhi.
- ★ Corporate Excellence – Best Customer Application on Digital Financial Inclusion.
 - It is awarded for Mahila Mitra, a digital platform revolutionizing financial transactions for women in rural India.
 - 73 million downloads with a 4.2-star rating.
 - It enables seamless and secure digital transactions, eliminating financial barriers.

- It strengthens Muthoot Microfin's mission of financial empowerment for women.
- ★ BFSI Award – Best Insurance Scheme
 - It is recognized for the Griha Raksha Insurance Scheme, providing crucial financial security.
 - Coverage for 66 million beneficiaries, safeguarding vulnerable communities.
 - It ensures financial stability for women entrepreneurs and their families.
 - It reduces financial risks, allowing women to focus on their businesses.

RBI Honoured with Central Banking 'Digital Transformation Award'

- ★ Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has bagged the 2025 Digital Transformation Award of the Central Banking Award announced by London-based Central Banking.
- ★ The 12th annual Central Banking Award was announced in London.
- ★ The Central Banking recognised the Pravaah and Sarthi digital initiatives of the RBI for the 2025 Digital Transformation Award.
- ★ The award credits former RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das for transforming the paper-based RBI work culture into a digital-based work culture, to standardize and streamline workflows, cut costs, and raise transparency.
- ★ Saarthi went live in January 2023 to digitise RBI's internal workflow.
- ★ It helped RBI's staff to store and share documents securely, improving record management and increasing the options for data analysis through reports and dashboards.
- ★ After the successful adoption of the Saarthi initiative, the RBI launched the Parvaah initiative.
- ★ The Parvaah system went live in May 2024. The Parvaah focused on providing a digital forum for external users to submit regulatory applications to the RBI.
- ★ Both the Saarthi and the Pravaah systems have been developed by the RBI's IT department. The developer team of Sarthi and Parvaah was led by Shailendra Trivedi, Chief General Manager-in-charge of the RBI's IT department.

Ramnath Goenka Award in Journalism 2025

- ★ Mridulika Jha of Aaj Tak won the Ramnath Goenka Award for Excellence in Journalism 2025 for her coverage of the 'Dunki route' adopted by the youths of Haryana to illegally enter the United States of America.
- ★ 27 journalists were felicitated in 20 categories at the 19th Ramnath Goenka Award for Excellence in Journalism 2025 in a function held in New Delhi on 19 March 2025.
- ★ Ramnath Goenka Award for Excellence in Journalism was instituted by the Indian Express Group on the birth centenary anniversary of its founder Ramnath Goenka. The award is administered by the Ramnath Goenka Foundation.
- ★ The award was first given in 2005 and it honours Print/Digital and Broadcast journalists in India in various categories for their courage and excellence in journalism despite facing considerable political and economic pressures.
- ★ President Droupadi Murmu was the Chief Guest of the 19th Ramnath Goenka Award for Excellence in Journalism 2025. She gave awards to the winners of the 19th edition of the award.

- ★ The winners were presented with a citation, a Trophy, and a cash prize of ₹ one lakh.

Maharashtra Bhushan Award 2024

- ★ 100 year old veteran Sculptor Ram Sutar has been chosen for the highest civilian award of the Maharashtra Government 'Maharashtra Bhushan' 2024. This was announced by the Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis in the state legislative assembly on 20th March 2025.
- ★ Ram Sutar was unanimously chosen for this award by a committee headed by the Chief Minister.
- ★ He is considered to be a master in Bronze sculpting and has various landmarks to his name.
- ★ He designed the world's tallest statue 'The Statue of Unity' in Kevadia Gujarat.
- ★ Sardar Patel is also known as the Ironman of India or Bismarck of India for his role in the integration of Princely states into India after independence.
- ★ Ram Sutar designed the iconic statue of Mahatma Gandhi in a seated position situated in the Parliament of India.
- ★ The Maharashtra Bhushan Award was instituted by the Maharashtra Government in 1995.
- ★ It is the highest civilian award in Maharashtra and is given to a resident of Maharashtra.
- ★ The award winner is honoured with a memento and a cash prize of ₹ 25 lakhs.

59th Jnanpith Award 2024

- ★ Eminent Hindi poet and writer Vinod Kumar Shukla of Chhattisgarh has been selected for the prestigious 59th Jnanpith Award 2024.
- ★ Vinod Kumar Shukla is the first from Chhattisgarh and the 12th eminent Hindi writer to receive the prestigious award.
- ★ The Bharatiya Jnanpith Trust administers the Jnanpith and Moorti Devi awards. Jnanpith Award which was first conferred on eminent Malayalam writer G S Kurup is considered one of the most prestigious awards in the field of literature in India.
- ★ His first poetry collection 'Lagbhag Jai Hind' was published in 1971. He has also written novels- 'Naukar ki Kameez', "Deewar mein ek Khidki Rehti Thi" and "Khilega to Dekhenge".
- ★ Vinod Kumar Shukla's books have been translated into several languages including English, Italian, and German.
- ★ The Award carries a cash prize of ₹ 11 lakhs, a citation, and a statue of Vagdevi (Goddess Saraswati).

Vijay Sankar Honored with Denmark's Prestigious Knight's Cross

- ★ Vijay Sankar, the Honorary Consul General of Denmark for Southern India and Chairman of The Sanmar Group, has been awarded the Knight's Cross of the Order of Dannebrog by the King of Denmark.
- ★ This distinguished honor recognizes his exceptional consular services and his efforts in strengthening Indo-Danish relations.

- ★ The award was presented by Rasmus Abildgaard Kristensen, Ambassador of Denmark in India, at a special ceremony in Chennai.
- ★ The event also highlighted the Sankar family's five-decade-long association with Denmark's consular services.

Chiranjeevi Honored with Lifetime Achievement Award at UK Parliament

- ★ Veteran Telugu cinema superstar Chiranjeevi has been conferred with the Lifetime Achievement Award for his immense contribution to Indian cinema, cultural influence, and public service.
- ★ The award was presented by London-based think tank Bridge India at the prestigious House of Commons in the UK Parliament.
- ★ It was hosted by British-Indian MP Navendu Mishra, along with Sojan Joseph and Bob Blackman
- ★ His films have influenced Indian cinema, inspiring actors and filmmakers alike.
- ★ Bridge India is a London-based think tank focused on India's global influence, socio-political affairs, and cultural contributions.
- ★ Objective is honouring individuals who significantly contribute to cinema, public service, and global diplomacy.

Indian-Origin British Author Rana Dasgupta Wins Literary Award For 2014 Book

- ★ Indian-origin British author Rana Dasgupta won the 2025 Windham-Campbell Prize in the non-fiction.
- ★ The award will be presented during an international literary festival at Yale later this year.
- ★ He was awarded for his 2014 book "Capital: A Portrait of Twenty-First Century Delhi".
- ★ Prize Amount of \$175,000, administered by Yale University.
- ★ Capital explores Delhi's transformation amid globalisation and economic liberalisation.
- ★ It captures perspectives of bureaucrats, elites, slum dwellers, and street vendors, offering an in-depth portrayal of the megacity.

APPOINTMENTS & RESIGNATIONS

Tuhin Kanta Pandey Appointed 11th Chief of SEBI

- ★ The Appointment Committee of the Union Cabinet has approved the appointment of Tuhin Kanta Pandey as the 11th Chairman of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI).
- ★ Tuhin Kanta Pandey, currently the Finance and Revenue Secretary in the Union Ministry of Finance, will succeed Madhabi Puri Buch as the Chairman of SEBI.
- ★ Madhab Puri Buch, the first woman appointed as the Chairman of SEBI, whose term ends on 28 February 2025.

- ★ Madhabi Puri Buch assumed the office of the SEBI Chairman on 1st March 2022 for a three-year term.
- ★ Tuhin Kanta has been appointed for three years from the date he assumes his office.
- ★ The 1987 Odisha cadre IAS Officer Tuhin Kanta Pandey is the longest serving DIPAM (Department of Investment and Public Asset Management) Secretary in the Union Ministry of Finance. During his tenure, Air India and Neelanchal Ispat Nigam Ltd were privatised.

Ajay Seth Takes Additional Charge as Revenue Secretary

- ★ Ajay Seth, DEA Secretary, has been given additional charge as Revenue Secretary following Tuhin Kanta Pandey's appointment as Securities and Exchange Board of India's Chairperson.
- ★ Seth will hold the position until a regular appointment is made or until further orders, as per the ACC order.
- ★ Ajay Seth, a 1987-batch IAS Officer of the Karnataka cadre, has been DEA Secretary since 2021, focusing on economic growth, fiscal management, infrastructure financing, and digital payments.
- ★ His additional charge comes at a time when the government is emphasizing tax reforms, revenue mobilisation, and simplifying compliance frameworks.
- ★ The Government aims to ensure policy continuity while finalising a full-time Revenue Secretary.
- ★ Tuhin Kanta Pandey, former Finance Secretary, has been appointed as Securities and Exchange Board of India Chairperson for a three-year tenure.

Manan Kumar Mishra Re-elected as Bar Council of India Chairman

- ★ Manan Kumar Mishra, Senior Advocate of the Supreme Court of India and Rajya Sabha MP, has been re-elected unopposed as the Chairman of the Bar Council of India (BCI) for a historic 7th consecutive term.
- ★ He won the Bihar State Bar Council elections for the 7th consecutive time and was re-elected unopposed as a BCI member from Bihar for the 3rd term last year.
- ★ Mishra expressed gratitude to the legal fraternity and reiterated his commitment to advocate welfare.
- ★ He announced that the Advocates Amendment Bill would be introduced with provisions for advocates' well-being, ensuring no contentious elements are included.
- ★ The BCI Vice-Chairman election will take place on March 4, 2025, with Prabhakaran (Tamil Nadu & Puducherry) and Ved Prakash Sharma (Delhi) contesting.
- ★ A national meeting of advocate representatives and State Bar Councils will be held on May 17 in New Delhi to discuss advocate welfare, the Advocate Protection Act, and other legal policy matters.

CEO of Government e Marketplace (GeM)

- ★ The 1999-batch Indian Administrative Officer of Gujarat cadre, Ajay Bhadoo, has been appointed as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Government e-Marketplace (GeM).
- ★ Ajay Bhadoo has been appointed, effective from 3rd March 2025. He succeeded L Satya Srinivas.

- ★ An additional Secretary in the Department of Commerce, Union Ministry of Commerce, is given the additional charge as the CEO of the Government e Marketplace. Thus, Ajay Bhadoo in addition to being the additional Secretary in the Department of Commerce, will also be the CEO of the Government e-Marketplace. The Government e-Marketplace (GeM) is managed by GeM Special Purpose Vehicle.
- ★ The GeM Special Purpose Vehicle is owned by the Government of India and has been set up under section 68 of the Companies Act 2013.
- ★ The Government e-Marketplace (GeM) comes under the Department of Commerce, Union Ministry of Commerce.

New Executive Director of RBI

- ★ Dr Ajit Ratnakar Joshi has been appointed as Executive Director (ED) of the RBI, effective March 3, 2025.
- ★ He will oversee the Department of Statistics and Information Management and the Financial Stability Department.
- ★ He previously served as Principal Adviser in the Department of Statistics and Information Management.
- ★ He has over 30 years of experience in statistics, information technology, and cyber risk management.

Prime Minister of Canada

- ★ Mark Carney has been announced as the next Liberal Party leader and the 24th Prime Minister of Canada, succeeding Justin Trudeau.
- ★ The announcement was made by Liberal Party President Sachit Mehra after Carney won the leadership race with 131,674 votes (85.9%).
- ★ His competitors included Chrystia Freeland (11,134 votes), Karina Gould (4,785 votes), and Frank Baylis (4,038 votes).
- ★ Carney has previously served as Governor of the Bank of Canada (2008–2013) and Governor of the Bank of England (2013–2020).
- ★ He also chaired the Financial Stability Board (2011–2018) and worked at Goldman Sachs before moving into central banking.
- ★ He is credited with helping Canada navigate the 2008 financial crisis, making him one of the most respected economic leaders.

Chief Information Security Officer of Kotak Mahindra Bank

- ★ Kotak Mahindra Bank has appointed Neeraj Naidu as its Chief Information Security Officer (CISO).
- ★ He served as CISO at IDFC First Bank, where he strengthened the bank's security framework.
- ★ He held leadership roles as Vice President and Head of IT Infrastructure at Capital First Ltd., Program Manager at NSEIT Ltd., and Project Manager at Nayamode USA, Inc.

- ★ His appointment underscores Kotak Mahindra Bank's commitment to cybersecurity and digital protection.
- ★ He is expected to strengthen the bank's security posture and drive innovation in risk management.

Atul Kumar Goel Assumes charge as Chief Executive of Indian Banks' Association (IBA)

- ★ Atul Kumar Goel has assumed charge as Chief Executive (CE) of the Indian Banks' Association (IBA).
- ★ He served as MD & CEO of Punjab National Bank (PNB) from February 2022 to December 2024 and was Chairman of IBA for two terms in 2021-22 and 2022-23.
- ★ His predecessor, Sunil Mehta, was MD & CEO of PNB from 2017 to 2019 and served as IBA CE from January 2020 to September 2024.
- ★ Goel is a qualified Chartered Accountant with 30 years of banking experience.
- ★ He has worked at Allahabad Bank (now Indian Bank), Union Bank of India as Executive Director, UCO Bank as MD and CEO, and PNB as MD and CEO.
- ★ His leadership at IBA is expected to strengthen policy advocacy and banking reforms in India.

ICICI Bank Appoints Kamal Wali as Head of Security Operations Center

- ★ ICICI Bank has appointed Kamal Wali as the Head of its Security Operations Center (SOC), reinforcing its commitment to cybersecurity and risk mitigation.
- ★ With over 18 years of experience in cybersecurity and IT operations, Wali will play a crucial role in strengthening the bank's digital security infrastructure.
- ★ Primary Responsibilities include Overseeing security operations to combat evolving cyber threats and Strengthening cybersecurity infrastructure for digital resilience.

New Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago

- ★ Stuart Young was sworn in as the new Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, succeeding Keith Rowley, who resigned.
- ★ The swearing-in ceremony took place at the President's House in the presence of President Christine Kangaloo.
- ★ Young pledged to build a safer nation and called for unity among citizens.
- ★ His first action as PM will be a Cabinet reshuffle.
- ★ He previously served as Minister of Energy and Energy Industries and Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister.
- ★ Like Rowley, he belongs to the People's National Movement (PNM).

Tractors and Farm Equipment (TAFE) Appoints Lakshmi Venu as Vice Chairman

- ★ Lakshmi Venu has been appointed Vice Chairman of TAFE (Tractors and Farm Equipment), one of the world's largest tractor manufacturers.
- ★ She is recognized for her contributions to farm mechanization and the auto component business, with a strategic, customer-centric, and innovation-driven leadership approach.
- ★ Mallika Srinivasan, Chairman and MD of TAFE, praised her impactful contributions and leadership in Massey Ferguson and Eicher Tractors.
- ★ She is also the Managing Director of Sundaram-Clayton Ltd, a key automotive component manufacturer.

Deena Mehta Re-appointed as Independent Director of Fino Payments Bank

- ★ Deena Asit Mehta has been reappointed as an Independent Director of Fino Payments Bank Limited, effective March 19, 2025, subject to shareholder approval.
- ★ She has over four decades of experience in capital markets, playing a key role in reforms such as:
- ★ He has been part of SEBI committees for 21 years, contributing to multiple market reforms.
- ★ She is recognized with several awards, including the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India.
- ★ She holds qualifications as a Chartered Accountant and a Master's in Management Studies.

New Executive Director of RBI

- ★ Indranil Bhattacharyya has been appointed as Executive Director (ED) of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), effective March 19, 2025.
- ★ He will oversee the Department of Economic and Policy Research (DEPR).
- ★ He has three decades of experience in monetary policy, fiscal policy, banking, and international economic relations.
- ★ He served as an Economic Expert in the Technical Office of the Governor at Qatar Central Bank (2009–2014).

Ajay Seth Has Been Appointed as the New Finance Secretary

- ★ The Government of India has appointed senior IAS (Indian Administrative Officer) Ajay Seth as the next Finance Secretary.
- ★ He will succeed Tuhin Kanta Pandey, who took over as the 11th Chairperson of the capital market regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI).
- ★ The Appointment Committee of the Cabinet in a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and attended by Union Minister for Home Affairs and Minister for Co-operation, Amit Shah approved the appointment of Ajay Seth as the new Finance Secretary, Union Ministry of Finance.
- ★ Ajay Seth is currently the Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Government of India.

- ★ Ajay Seth was also given the additional charge of the post of Secretary, Department of Revenue, Union Ministry of Finance.
- ★ Currently, Ajay Seth is India's Alternate Governor on the Asian Development Banks (ADB) Board of Governors.

S.K. Majumdar Appointed as Canara Bank's New Executive Director

- ★ S.K. Majumdar has been appointed as Executive Director of Canara Bank, effective March 24, 2025.
- ★ The appointment was officially notified by the Ministry of Finance, Department of Financial Services.
- ★ He has over 25 years of experience in the banking sector.
- ★ Previously he served as Chief Financial Officer (CFO) of Canara Bank.
- ★ He joined Canara Bank in January 2000, excelling in corporate credit, treasury operations, and governance.

BRICS New Development Bank's Head Dilma Rousseff Confirms Her Re-Election

- ★ Brazilian ex-President Dilma Rousseff has been re-elected to serve another term as the head of the BRICS New Development Bank (NDB), a position she first assumed in March 2023.
- ★ Her new term is set to last for five years.
- ★ Rousseff, who served as Brazil's President from 2011 to 2016, has continued her leadership role in the international financial institution, focusing on development projects in BRICS nations and beyond.
- ★ The BRICS New Development Bank (NDB) was established in 2014 by the BRICS countries—Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa—as a multilateral development bank aimed at supporting infrastructure and sustainable development projects in emerging economies.
- ★ The bank's primary goal is to mobilize resources for development projects in BRICS countries and other developing nations, with a focus on reducing poverty, promoting economic growth, and fostering co-operation among member states.

SPORTS

SABA Women's Championship 2025 Title

- ★ The Indian senior women's basketball team won the 3rd SABA Women Championship 2025, defeating Maldives 107-32 in the final. This was the first time that the Indian team was participating in the SABA Women's Championship.
- ★ The 3rd SABA Women's Championship was organised by the South Asian Basketball Association and hosted by the Basketball Federation of India at the KD Jadhav Indoor Stadium in New Delhi from 23-26 February 2025.

- ★ The 3rd SABA Women's Championship was a qualifier tournament for the level 2 of the FIBA Women's Asia Cup.
- ★ With this victory, the Indian women's team has qualified for the level 2 of the FIBA Women's Asia Cup to be held in China from 13-20 July 2025.
- ★ India defeated Maldives and Nepal in the league stage of the Championship and finally Maldives in the finals.

2025 Bengaluru Open ATP Tennis Single Title

- ★ Brandon Holt of the United States defeated Shintaro Mochizuki of Japan to win the singles title of the 2025 Bengaluru Open ATP 125 Challenger tennis tournament. The final was played at the KSLTA Tennis Stadium, Bengaluru, on 2 March 2025.
- ★ The \$200,000 prize money Bengaluru Open was a 125 ATP Challenger tennis tournament. It was held at the KSLTA Tennis Stadium in Bengaluru from 24 February to 2 March 2025.
- ★ It was the fourth and last of the ATP Challenger tennis tournaments to be held in India in 2025, after the Chennai Open, Delhi Open, and the Maharashtra Open. All the tournaments were played on Hard Court.
- ★ Brandon Holt, who lost in the final of the 2025 Maharashtra Open to Dalibor Svrčina of Czechia, defeated 2019 Wimbledon boys' singles champion Shintaro Mochizuki 6-3, 6-3 in the final.
- ★ Brandon Holt collected 125 ATP points and a winners cheque of \$28,400. The losing finalist, Shintaro Mochizuki, collected 64 ATP points and a cash prize of \$16,700.
- ★ The duo of Indian Anirudh Chandrasekar and Ray Ho of Chinese Taipei (Taiwan) defeated Blake Bayldon and Matthew Christopher Romios of Australia 6-2, 6-4 to win the doubles title of the Bengaluru Open 2025.

2025 Dubai Open Tennis Doubles Title

- ★ Indian tennis player Yuki Bhambri and Australian Alexei Popyrin won the doubles title of the 2025 Dubai Open tennis tournament. It was the first ATP 500 doubles title for both the players.
- ★ The singles title of the Dubai Open was won by Stefanos Tsitsipas of Greece.
- ★ The \$3,237,670 prize money Dubai Open was an ATP 500 event for the professional men's tennis player. It was held from 24 February to 1 March 2025 at Dubai in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).
- ★ The winner of the singles and double title won 500 ATP points. The winner of the singles title won \$605,530 in prize money, while the doubles winner got \$198,880 to be divided amongst the partners.
- ★ Swiss great Roger Federer has won the Dubai open singles title a record eight times and Novak Djokovic has won it 5 times.

Cannes International Open 2025

- ★ Indian Grandmaster Pa Inian clinched the Cannes International Open title, defeating compatriot V Pranesh in the ninth and final round in Cannes, France.
- ★ Inian's Final Score: 5 points, securing the title with a half-point lead.

- ★ Runner-up: Aradhya Garg (7 points) – Delhi-based International Master.
- ★ Third Place: Kazybek Noderbek (7 points) – World Junior Champion from Kazakhstan, placed third on tiebreak.
- ★ Unbeaten Streak: Iniyan remained undefeated with six wins and three draws.
- ★ Elo Rating Gain: +12 points, taking his rating to 2579, bringing him closer to the 2600 Elo barrier.

Australian Cricketing Legend Steve Smith Announces Retirement

- ★ Australian cricketing legend Steve Smith has announced his retirement from One-Day Internationals (ODIs), ending an illustrious career in the 50-over format.
- ★ Smith played a pivotal role in Australia's ODI success, evolving from a leg-spinning all-rounder to one of the most dependable middle-order batters.
- ★ With 170 matches, 5800 runs, and two World Cup victories, Smith leaves behind an enduring legacy in Australian cricket.
- ★ However, he remains committed to Test and T20 cricket, focusing on upcoming international assignments.
- ★ Steve Smith officially retires from ODIs, concluding a remarkable journey in the format.

Sharath Kamal To Retire After WTT Star Contender Chennai 2025

- ★ Legendary Indian male table tennis player Achnata Sharath Kamal has announced his retirement from professional table tennis after the 2025 WTT Star Contender Chennai tournament.
- ★ Chennai will host a WTT Star Contender event for the first time from 25 to 30 March 2025. He will finish his illustrious career in the city where he was born.
- ★ Sharath Kamal was born on 12th July 1982 in Chennai, Tamil Nadu. He started his professional table tennis career when he was in class X.
- ★ Sharath Kamal won his first National title in 2003. He has won the National title 10 times in his career.
- ★ He broke Kamlesh Mehta's record of eight National titles.
- ★ Sharath Kamal was honoured with India's fourth highest civilian award, Padma Shri, in 2019.
- ★ Sharath Kamal was conferred the 2004 Arjuna Award.

Asian Women's Kabaddi Championship

- ★ The Indian women's Kabaddi team defeated Iran to win their fifth Asian Women's Kabaddi Championship title.
- ★ The Indian team defeated the host, Iran, 32-25, in the final of the 6th Asian Women's Kabaddi Championship 2025, held in Tehran on 8th March 2025.
- ★ The Indian Kabaddi team, led by Sonali Shingate, entered the 6th edition of the Asian Kabaddi Championship as a defending champion.
- ★ The Asian Kabaddi Federation is the governing body of men's and women's Kabaddi in Asia.

2025 World Junior Chess Championship

- ★ Grandmaster (GM) Pranav Venkatesh became the 7th Indian to win the World Junior Chess Championship.
- ★ GM Pranav Venkatesh won the 2025 World Junior Chess Championship after his last match against FIDE Master Matic Lavrencic of Slovenia ended in a draw. He topped the points table with 9 points and won the 2025 World Junior Chess Championship title.
- ★ The 2025 World Junior Chess Championship was organised by the international chess governing body FIDE at Petrovac, Montenegro.
- ★ Before the start of the 2025 World Junior Chess Championship, GM Pranav Venkatesh was ranked 140th in the world.
- ★ During the whole tournament, Pranav remained unbeaten. He won seven matches and drew 4.
- ★ He secured 9 out of a maximum 11 points to win the World Junior Chess Championship.

Commonwealth Games Federation Rebrands as 'Commonwealth Sport'

- ★ In a major rebranding initiative, the Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF) has officially changed its public identity to Commonwealth Sport, marking a shift from a sports federation to a global sports movement.
- ★ This announcement was made on March 10, 2025, in celebration of Commonwealth Day.
- ★ While the legal entity will still be known as the Commonwealth Games Federation, the public-facing identity and branding will now operate under Commonwealth Sport to enhance global recognition and emphasize unity, development, and inclusion through sports.
- ★ The governing body of the Commonwealth Games and Commonwealth Youth Games stated in an official media release that the rebranding aligns with a broader vision to position the organization beyond just sporting events.
- ★ The goal is to strengthen its global identity as a catalyst for social development and community engagement through sports.
- ★ A key highlight of the rebranding was the launch of the inaugural Commonwealth Sport King's Baton Relay for the Glasgow 2026 Commonwealth Games.

Hockey India Senior Women National Champion

- ★ Hockey Jharkhand defeated the defending champion Hockey Haryana in the final to win the 15th Hockey India Senior Women National Championship 2025.
- ★ The final match was played at the Tau Devi Lal Complex in Panchkula, Haryana.
- ★ Hockey Mizoram defeated Hockey Maharashtra to take the third spot with Hockey Maharashtra at the fourth position.
- ★ Defending champion Hockey Haryana entered the final by defeating Hockey Maharashtra in the semifinal, while Jharkhand entered the final by defeating Mizoram.
- ★ Hockey India organised the 15th Hockey India Senior Women National Championship 2025 at Tau Devi Lal Complex in Panchkula, Haryana, from 1st – 12th March 2025.

- ★ In the new format, the Division A matches were played in a knock-out format. Twelve teams participated in the Division A of the 15th Hockey India Senior Women National Championship.

England to Host Kabaddi World Cup 2025

- ★ For the first time in history, the Kabaddi World Cup 2025 is being hosted outside Asia, with England set to stage the tournament.
- ★ The competition begins this evening, and the Indian men's team will open their campaign against Italy in Wolverhampton, West Midlands.
- ★ This is the second edition of the Kabaddi World Cup organized by World Kabaddi.
- ★ The first edition (2019) was held in Malaysia, where India won both the men's and women's tournaments.
- ★ This tournament is different from the International Kabaddi Federation (IKF) Kabaddi World Cup, which has been exclusively hosted in India.

President of IOC

- ★ 41 years old Kirsty Coventry of Zimbabwe has been elected as the 10th President of the International Olympic Committee (IOC).
- ★ She will succeed Thomas Bach on 23rd June 2025 which is also the Olympic Day.
- ★ The current President Thomas Bach will resign as the IOC member and assume the Honorary President for Life of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) position after the completion of his term on 23rd June 2025.
- ★ Kirsty Coventry is the first woman and African to be elected as the President of the IOC.
- ★ Kirsty Coventry secured 49 votes out of the 97 votes cast and was declared elected. The term of the IOC President is eight years.
- ★ The President is eligible for re-election once for a period of four years.
- ★ Kirsty Coventry is a former swimmer who represented Zimbabwe in international sporting events.

SRFI Indian Tour 2025

- ★ Indian Squash prodigy Anahat Singh and Veer Chotani won the women's and men's singles titles, respectively at the SRFI Indian Tour PSA Challenger event.
- ★ The SRFI Indian Tour PSA Challenger event was held at the Indian Squash and Triathlon Academy in Chennai, Tamil Nadu from 17-21 March 2025.
- ★ The total Prize money for the men's event was \$15,000 and for the women's event was also \$15,000.
- ★ 17-year-old Anahat Singh defeated top seed Akanksha Salunkhe 3-1 to bag her 10th title.
- ★ Veer Chotrani won his sixth PSA title by defeating Melvil Scianimanico of France 3-1 in the final. It was the first PSA title win for Veer Chotrani in India.
- ★ The game of squash like cricket, tennis, and football was introduced by the British colonialists into India.

- ★ To popularise and govern the sport of Squash in India, the Squash Rackets Federation of India (SRFI) was established.
- ★ The Squash Rackets Federation of India (SRFI) is the sole Squash body to be recognised by the Government.

Sepak Takraw World Cup 2025 in Patna

- ★ The Indian Men's Regu team created history by winning the first-ever gold medal at the BIHAR SepakTakraw World Cup 2025, defeating Japan in the final 2-1.
- ★ India finished the World Cup with seven medals - one gold, one silver, and five bronze medals.
- ★ India finished fourth on the medal tally, with Thailand at the top with four medals.
- ★ The BIHAR SepakTakraw World Cup 2025 was organised by the International Sepaktakraw Federation (ISTAF) and hosted by the Sepaktakraw Federation of India at the Patliputra Indoor Stadium in Kankarbagh Patna from 20-25 March 2025.
- ★ Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Chaudhary and Sports Minister Surendra Mehta presented medals and trophies to the winners and runners up teams.
- ★ The Indian contingent won a total of seven medals in the BIHAR Sepak Takraw World Cup 2025.

MS Dhoni, Michael Hussey Unveil CSK's New Book

- ★ PS Raman's book 'Leo – The Untold Story of CSK' was launched at a city hotel, with MS Dhoni, Stephen Fleming, and Mike Hussey attending the event.
- ★ CD Gopinath, the oldest surviving Test cricketer in India, unveiled the book and presented the first copy to Anirudh Ravichander.
- ★ Former cricketers K Srikanth, Brijesh Patel, WV Raman, and S Badrinath were also present.
- ★ Gopinath spoke about the evolution of cricket from its English origins and praised Dhoni for his leadership and impact on and off the field.
- ★ Raman's book chronicles CSK's journey, including the challenging two-year suspension, offering exclusive behind-the-scenes insights and never-before-seen photos from CSK's archives.
- ★ PS Raman, who had earlier written his father VP Raman's biography, stated he started preparing notes for this book five to six years ago.
- ★ He also acknowledged his association with N Srinivasan, the driving force behind CSK's formation.

BOOKS & AUTHORS

'March of Glory' Book Launched

- ★ To commemorate the Golden Jubilee of India's first and only Hockey World Cup victory in 1975, a book titled 'March of Glory' was officially launched, at Shivaji Stadium, New Delhi.

- ★ The book, co-authored by hockey historian K. Arumugam and journalist Errol D'Cruz, chronicles the historic triumph of the Indian hockey team in Kuala Lumpur on March 15, 1975.
- ★ Focus of the Book include Chronicles India's 1975 Hockey World Cup victory and Features key match details, player quotes, and over 250 rare photographs.
- ★ It highlights India's shocking loss to Argentina, comeback victories, and tense final win against Pakistan.
- ★ Hockey India President Dilip Tirkey praised the book for its historical importance, stating that it serves as a vital documentation of Indian hockey's glorious past.
- ★ The book aims to inspire future generations by reliving India's greatest hockey achievement.

ACQUISITIONS & MERGERS

Arcil Acquires Ujjivan Small Finance Bank's Stressed Microfinance Loans

- ★ Asset Reconstruction Company (India) Ltd (Arcil) has acquired Ujjivan Small Finance Bank's (SFB) non-performing and written-off microfinance loans worth ₹365.5 crore for ₹34.26 crore, implying a 94% haircut for Ujjivan SFB.
- ★ The bank had an overall provision of 66.51% on this loan portfolio.
- ★ The acquisition was conducted through a Swiss Challenge auction process, as per Arcil's statement.
- ★ Pallav Mohapatra, MD and CEO of Arcil, stated that the company aims to leverage its expertise in recoveries to unlock value from the acquired loans while supporting financial stability in the microfinance sector.

IMPORTANT DAYS

National Science Day

- ★ National Science Day is celebrated on 28th February every year to honor the discovery of the Raman Effect by Sir C.V. Raman while working at the Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science, Kolkata.
- ★ His groundbreaking discovery earned him the Nobel Prize in 1930.
- ★ The theme for National Science Day 2024 is "Empowering Indian Youth for Global Leadership in Science & Innovation for VIKSIT BHARAT".
- ★ It underscores the role of young minds in shaping India's scientific and technological future, aligning with Viksit Bharat 2047, a vision for a self-reliant and developed India.

Zero Discrimination Day

- ★ Observed annually on March 1, Zero Discrimination Day promotes equality, dignity, and inclusion for all individuals.
- ★ Initiated by UNAIDS in 2014, the day addresses stigma and discrimination, particularly against marginalized communities.
- ★ The theme for the year 2025 is “We Stand Together.”
- ★ This year’s theme focuses on community-led initiatives in the fight against HIV and discrimination.
- ★ It emphasizes dignity, respect, and support for individuals affected by HIV while strengthening global health efforts.
- ★ The initiative was launched by UNAIDS Executive Director Michel Sidibé on February 27, 2014, in Beijing. It was later recognized by the United Nations (UN) and its member states to challenge discriminatory laws and practices.

World Civil Defence Day

- ★ World Civil Defence Day 2025 is celebrated every year on March 1st.
- ★ It is a day to celebrate the importance of civil defense and commemorate the people who have sacrificed their lives for it.
- ★ The World Civil Defence Day 2025 Theme is “Civil Defence, guarantee of security for the population”.
- ★ In 1958, the International Association of Geneva Zones became the International Civil Defense Organization (ICDO).
- ★ In 1972 the representatives of ICDO member states approved the current text of the organization’s constitution, which entered into force on 1 March 1972.
- ★ It attributes the status of the intergovernmental organizations to the ICDO. March 1 was established as World Civil Defence Day.

World Hearing Day

- ★ World Hearing Day is announced to be celebrated on March 3rd, 2025.
- ★ This year 2025, World Hearing Day theme is “Changing mindsets: Empower yourself to make ear and hearing care a reality for all!”.
- ★ In late 1816, Laurent Clerc helped to establish the earliest recorded permanent institution for deaf students in the U. S.
- ★ In 1870, Hearing educators eliminated sign language and agreed to embrace oral teaching at the Second International Congress on Deaf Education in Milan, Italy.
- ★ The World Health Organisation (WHO) created a holiday to raise awareness to avoid deafness in 2007 and the holiday was renamed from International Ear Care Day to World Hearing Day in 2016.

World Wildlife Day

- ★ World Wildlife Day 2025 is celebrated on March 3rd, 2025.
- ★ World Wildlife Day 2025 theme is “Wildlife Conservation Finance: Investing in People and Planet”.
- ★ Thailand proposed World Wildlife Day in the General Assembly of the UN on December 20, 2013, to create awareness among people about the world’s wild animals and plants.
- ★ The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) declared March 3, at its 68th session, the day of the adoption of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

National Safety Day

- ★ National Safety Day 2025 is celebrated on March 4th, 2025.
- ★ The National Safety Day 2025 Theme is “Safety & Well-being Crucial for Viksit Bharat”
- ★ In 1965, a decision was taken to set up national and state-level Safety Councils by the Ministry of Labour and Employment and the Standing Labour Committee’s session approved this in February 1966.
- ★ On March 4, 1966, the National Safety Council of India (NSC) was registered by the Ministry of Labour and Employment.
- ★ Then the council was registered under the Society Registration Act of 1860 and the idea behind this council was to create the SHE campaign.
- ★ The SHE campaign stands for the Safety, Health, and Environmental movement.
- ★ The foundation day of the National Safety Council was decided to observe as National Safety Day in 1972.
- ★ It was also decided to celebrate it as a National Safety Week (NSW) Campaign that will last for one week.

International Women’s Day

- ★ International Women’s Day 2025 is celebrated on 8th March 2025.
- ★ In 1869, Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton started the National Women’s Suffrage Association to fight for women’s rights
- ★ Clara Zetkin proposes a Women’s Day celebration, and International Women’s Day is celebrated annually from this point forth, which is a day for Women in 1911.
- ★ In 1965, the women’s liberation movement fought for politics, work, the family, and sexuality, and all women were given the right to vote.
- ★ In the 2000s, with the help of the internet, the message of feminism became unified with a focused direction.

CISF Raising Day

- ★ CISF Raising Day 2025 is observed on March 10th 2025.

- ★ CISF was formed on March 10, 1969, under the CISF Act of the Parliament of India.
- ★ It started with as many as 2,800 personnel for the better protection and security of industrial undertakings in the country.
- ★ Three battalions were formed to provide integrated security cover to the Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) which, in those years, occupied the commanding heights of the economy.

International Day of Women Judges Day

- ★ The International Day of Women Judges, observed annually on March 10, highlights the vital role of women in the judiciary.
- ★ It promotes fairness, representation, and inclusivity in legal systems while encouraging more women to pursue judicial careers.
- ★ It recognizes women's contributions to the judiciary and strengthens judicial legitimacy through inclusivity.
- ★ It was declared by UNGA through Resolution 75/274 on April 28, 2021
- ★ It is first observed on March 10, 2022.

World Sleep Day

- ★ World Sleep Day 2025 is observed on the 14th March 2025.
- ★ The World Sleep Day theme 2025 is "Make Sleep Health a Priority"
- ★ World Sleep Day was founded by the World Sleep Day Committee of the World Sleep Day Society in 2008.
- ★ It is celebrated annually on the Friday before the northern hemisphere vernal equinox.
- ★ World Sleep Day is observed annually on the Friday before the March Equinox.
- ★ The first World Sleep Day was held on 14 March 2008.
- ★ Events involving discussions, presentations of educational materials, and exhibitions take place around the world and online.

World Consumer Rights Day

- ★ World Consumer Rights Day is celebrated on 15th March 2025.
- ★ World Consumer Rights Day was inspired by President John F Kennedy, who sent a special message to the US Congress on 15th March 1962, in which he formally addressed the issue of consumer rights.
- ★ He was the first world leader to do so.
- ★ The consumer movement first marked that date in 1983 and now uses the day every year to mobilize action on important issues and campaigns.

National Vaccination Day

- ★ National Vaccination Day, also known as National Immunisation Day, is observed annually on March 16 to highlight the importance of vaccination in public health.
- ★ It is first observed in 1995, marking the administration of India's first Oral Polio Vaccine (OPV).
- ★ The day commemorates the success of the Pulse Polio Campaign, launched by the Government of India to eradicate polio.
- ★ Under this program, two drops of the oral polio vaccine were given to children aged 0 to 5 years.
- ★ Due to sustained immunization efforts, India was declared polio-free in 2014 by the World Health Organization (WHO).

Ordnance Factories Day

- ★ Ordnance Factories Day 2025 is observed on the 18th March 2025.
- ★ It is a national event celebrated annually on the 18th of March every year all over India.
- ★ Purpose is to commemorate the foundation of the first Ordnance Factory in colonial India at Cossipore near Kolkata in 1801.
- ★ The East India Company of England, to increase their economic interest and political hold, considered manufacturing military hardware as a vital element.
- ★ The British authorities in 1775 established a Board of Ordnance in Fort William, Kolkata, which marks the official beginning of the Army Ordnance in India.
- ★ They further set up a gunpowder factory in 1787 at Ishapore, which started production in 1791.
- ★ In 1801, the British established a Gun Carriage Agency at Cossipore, Kolkata and production started on March 18, 1802.
- ★ This heralded the first industrial establishment of Ordnance Factories in India and they continue to operate to date.

International Day of Forest

- ★ Every year since 2013, the International Day of Forest is observed across the world on 21st March.
- ★ The day seeks to raise awareness of the world to strengthen the conservation, sustainable management, and development of all types of forests and trees outside forests for the benefit of current and future generations.
- ★ According to United Nations estimate around 1 crore or 10 million hectare of forest land is being lost annually across the globe.
- ★ The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations at its 16th annual Conference held in November 1971, decided to observe 21st March as World Forestry Day.
- ★ The theme for the 2025 International Day of Forest is 'Forests and Food'.
- ★ The theme underscores the role played by forests in providing food, nutrition, and livelihoods to humans.

World Down Syndrome Day

- ★ World Down Syndrome Day 2025 is observed all over the world on March 21st, 2025.
- ★ It is a global event celebrated all over the world annually on March 21st every year.
- ★ The 21st day of March was selected to signify the uniqueness of the triplication of the 21st chromosome which causes Down syndrome.
- ★ The United Nations (UN) yearly sets the theme for commemoration of World Down Syndrome Day, Theme of WDSD 2025 is “Improve Our Support Systems”.
- ★ In 2005, the UN’s general assembly decided that in fulfilling the UN’s Sustainable Development Goal no one should be left behind and the persons with disabilities must also come forward to help the UN in its targets of Agenda 2030.

World Poetry Day

- ★ On 21st March 2025, the World Poetry Day 2025 is observed all over the world.
- ★ It is a global event celebrated on March 21st every year all over the world in order to honor the poets to continue to instill the tradition in newer generations.
- ★ The earliest poetry is believed to have surfaced with the “Epic of Gilgamesh” sometime during 2000 B.C., but it is likely that poetry existed even before the spread of literacy.
- ★ In the 14th Century, Sonnets were Created and Francesco Petrarca’s writings are some of the most famous early ‘sonnets’.
- ★ The day was proposed and adopted by UNESCO in 1999, on the occasion of its 30th General Conference held in Paris to “give fresh recognition and impetus to national, regional and international poetry movements”.
- ★ On March 21st, 2000 the first World Poetry Day was celebrated.

World Water Day

- ★ World Water Day 2025 is celebrated all over the world on March 22nd, 2025.
- ★ It is an international event observed annually on March 22nd every year all over the world highlighting the importance of freshwater.
- ★ The day is used to advocate for the sustainable management of freshwater resources.
- ★ “Glacier Preservation” is the theme of World Water Day 2025, proposed by IGRAC.
- ★ United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution by which 22 March of each year was declared World Day for Water, to be observed starting in 1993.

Purple Day for Epilepsy

- ★ On March 26th Purple Day of Epilepsy 2025 is observed all over the world.
- ★ The main objective of celebrating this day is to show empathy towards people suffering from epilepsy and to dispel myths prevalent in society regarding this condition.

- ★ Epilepsy is a neurological disorder (a disease of the nervous system) in which abnormal electrical activity in the brain causes seizures.
- ★ It is a chronic condition that can affect people of any age.
- ★ Purple Day was initiated in 2008 by a 9-year-old Canadian girl, Cassidy Megan, who herself had epilepsy.
- ★ She dedicated this day to raising awareness about epilepsy.
- ★ The Canadian Epilepsy Association and National Foundation for Epilepsy (NFE) made it a global campaign in
- ★ In 2017, The Anita Kaufmann Foundation set a Guinness World Record on Purple Day by facilitating the largest ever training session on epilepsy.

OBITUTARY NEWS

Mumbai Cricket Great Padmakar Shivalkar

- ★ Padmakar Shivalkar, the legendary left-arm spinner, passed away in Mumbai at the age of 84.
- ★ Shivalkar picked up 589 wickets in First-Class cricket across 124 games, with an impressive average of 19.74.
- ★ He played a key role in Mumbai's 15-season Ranji Trophy title streak and was regarded as one of the finest spinners in domestic cricket.
- ★ In 2017, he received the C.K. Nayudu Lifetime Achievement Award from the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), alongside fellow spinner Rajinder Goel.
- ★ His last public appearance was during the 50th anniversary celebration of Wankhede Stadium, where he was felicitated by the Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA).
- ★ Shivalkar was spotted and mentored by Vinoo Mankad and trained at Shivaji Park Gymkhana.

Former Indian All-Rounder Syed Abid Ali

- ★ Syed Abid Ali, a former Indian all-rounder, passed away at the age of 83 in the United States.
- ★ He was born in Hyderabad. Abid Ali made a name for himself as a dependable all-rounder in Indian cricket.
- ★ He was known for his ability to swing the ball, bat sensibly in the lower order, and was one of the most agile fielders of his time.
- ★ Abid Ali made his Test debut against Australia in Brisbane, where he immediately showcased his bowling prowess.
- ★ In his first-ever Test match, he claimed six wickets for 55 runs, a remarkable feat that announced his arrival on the international stage.
- ★ In the same Australia series, he displayed his batting skills at Sydney, scoring two gritty half-centuries (78 and 81), proving his worth as a complete all-rounder.
- ★ His ability to contribute in both departments made him an invaluable asset to the Indian team.

Former Union Minister Debendra Pradhan

- ★ Former Union Minister Debendra Pradhan, father of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, passed away in New Delhi on Monday at the age of 84.
- ★ Born on July 16, 1941, in Nalam, Dhenkanal district, Odisha, Pradhan completed his MBBS from SCB Medical College, Cuttack, in 1966.
- ★ He began his career as an Assistant Medical Officer in Talcher in 1967 but took voluntary retirement in 1973 to start private practice.
- ★ He entered politics by joining the BJP in 1980 and later became the party president for the undivided Dhenkanal district in
- ★ He served as Odisha BJP President in 1988, 1990, and again from 1995 to 1997, during which time Odisha witnessed the entry of Naveen Patnaik into state politics.
- ★ Pradhan was elected to the Lok Sabha from Deogarh in 1998 and was appointed Minister of State for Surface Transport in the Vajpayee Government.

MISCELLANEOUS

Saturn Gained 128 New Moons, With A Total Of 274 Moons

- ★ The International Astronomical Union (IAU) has officially recognised 128 new moons for the gas giant planet Saturn, taking the number of moons of the planet to 274.
- ★ The number of Saturn's moons increased after the IAU recognised the discoveries from a team of astronomers led by Edward Ashton at the Academia Sinica in Taiwan.
- ★ Saturn now officially has the largest number of moons of the eight planets in our solar system. Jupiter, with 95 moons, has the second-highest number of moons in the solar system.
- ★ The 128 new moons were discovered by stacking images from the Canada-France-Hawaii telescope.
- ★ Some of Saturn's other moons were discovered by space voyages of the Voyager 1 and Cassini spacecraft when it passed by Saturn.

Ayushmann Khurrana Named 'Fit India Icon' by Union Sports Minister

- ★ Renowned Bollywood actor Ayushmann Khurrana has been officially designated as the 'Fit India Icon' by Union Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya.
- ★ The announcement was made during the inaugural ceremony of the Fit India Movement in New Delhi.
- ★ With this recognition, the 40-year-old actor has joined hands with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Fit India Movement, an initiative that aims to inspire citizens to prioritize their health and well-being.
- ★ The Fit India Movement is a nationwide fitness campaign launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on August 29, 2019.

- ★ Objectives of the Fit India Movement are encouraging people to adopt a healthier lifestyle and promoting simple and fun ways to incorporate physical activity into daily routines.

