BAZOOKA

MARCH 2025

MONTHLY CURRENT AFFAIRS PDF

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Contents

NATIONAL AFFAIRS

1. From April 2024 to Feb 2025, the **Cumulative coal production** reached **928.95 million tonnes (MT),** reflecting a 5.73% increase compared to 878.55 MT in the same period last year.
   The cumulative coal dispatch rose to 929.41 MT, marking a 5.50% growth from 880.92 MT in the previous year.
   Coal production from Captive and Other entities stood at 173.58 MT up to February 2025, registering a 30.16% increase from 133.36 MT in the corresponding period last year.
   The coal dispatch from Captive and Other entities reached 178.02 MT up to February 2025, reflecting up 31.90% increase from 134.96 MT in the same period last year.

2. The **Northern Coalfields Limited (NCL)**, a subsidiary of Coal India Limited, has launched the **'First Aid Training Program for Homemakers'** to extend awareness about first aid beyond the workplace and into the homes of its workforce.
   This initiative aims to cover **8,000 homemakers of NCL Family by June 2025**.
   The program aims to train housewives with practical knowledge to manage common medical situations, including burns, cuts, choking, poisoning, minor injuries, heat-related ailments, and even cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).
   The First Aid Training Program for Homemakers, launched on 26th January 2025, has successfully trained about 1,500 homemakers in different sessions held at all Projects.

3. **Jyotiraditya Scindia**, Union Minister for Communications, represented India at the **Mobile World Congress (MWC) 2025**, one of the world's largest and most influential technology and telecommunications events, held in **Barcelona, Spain.**

   The theme of the event was **"Converge. Connect. Create."**

   The Union Minister addressed several key sessions, including 'Global Tech Governance: Rising to the Challenge' and 'Balancing Innovation and Regulation: Global Perspectives on Telecom Policy.'

   He inaugurated the **Bharat Pavilion**, set up by the Telecom Equipment & Services Export Promotion Council (TEPC) and the Department of Telecom, at MWC 2025. The Bharat Pavilion featured 38 Indian telecom manufacturers.

   He announced that the **9th edition** of the **India Mobile Congress 2025** will be held in New Delhi from 8th to 11th October 2025.

   He also launched **VVDN's** indigenously designed and manufactured, AI-based **Wi-Fi-7** during his visit to Bharat Pavilion.

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4. The Union Ministry of Civilian Aviation inaugurated a new **Boeing 737** flight service operated by **Air India Express** connecting **Kolkata to Goa via Hindon**. The project was inaugurated by Union Civil Aviation Minister **Kinjarapu Rammohan Naidu** at Hindon, showcasing exemplary civilian-military coordination.

   Hindon Airport is located in Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh. Due to its strategic location use capabilities, military infrastructure, and capacity to handle diverse air traffic, it is a crucial asset for the nation.

   This flight is launched under the **UDAN** (Ude Desh Ka Aam Naagrik) project. It is a testament to the Indian Air Force's commitment to supporting both military and civilian air operations, facilitating improved access to varied locations.

5. The Indian Air Force conducted an integrated Tri-Service Special Forces exercise, **Exercise Desert Hunt 2025**, at Air Force Station Jodhpur from February 24 to 28, 2025.

   This exercise brought together elite Para (Special Forces) of the Indian Army, Marine Commandos (MARCOS) of the Indian Navy, and Garud (Special Forces) of the Indian Air Force.

   The exercise aimed to enhance interoperability, coordination, and synergy among the three Special Forces units.

   It focused on ensuring a swift and effective response to emerging security challenges.

   The exercise reinforced the Indian Armed Forces' commitment to national security by promoting seamless inter-service cooperation.

6. The **HIMASHIELD 2024 Grand Challenge**, organized by (the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing) **C-DAC Thiruvananthapuram** under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology research initiatives, successfully concluded on **National Science Day** in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala.

   The challenge aims to tackle the growing threat of Glacier Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs) caused by climate change-induced glacier melting.

The challenge provided a platform for young researchers and innovators to develop indigenous, sustainable solutions to tackle this critical environmental challenge.

This nationwide grand challenge was launched on August 24, 2024. A total of seven teams participated in the final round.

Winner (Rs 5 lakhs, Trophy & Certificates): GlofsenseTeam consists of Venkatesh R, Naveen Krishnaa S, and Nithish T from Bannari Amman Institute of Technology, Sathyamangalam, Tamil Nadu.

First Runner up (Rs 3 lakhs, Trophy & Certificates): CryoWizardsTeam consists of Sourabh Anand (Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology, Dehradun) and Sunil Mahato, Sudip Banerjee, Nikita Roy Mukherjee(Birla Institute of Technology, Mesra)

Second Runner up (Rs 2 lakhs, Trophy & Certificates): CryoSenseTeam consists of Dr.Ashim Sattar, Dr.Sudipta Saha, Dr.Debajyoti Biswas, Abhinav A, Kattamuri Mohan Krishna, Kartick Cherukuri (IIT Bhubaneswar)

7. The **Union Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE)**, in collaboration with **NITI Aayog**, launched **Swavalambini**— a Women Entrepreneurship Programme at Chaudhary Charan Singh University, Meerut.

This initiative empowers female students in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) by providing them with the necessary entrepreneurial mindset, resources, and mentorship to successfully build and scale their ventures**.**

The program introduces a structured, multi-stage training approach to help young women transition from ideation to successful enterprise creation.

It begins with an Entrepreneurship Awareness Programme (EAP), a two-day workshop designed to introduce around 600 female students to fundamental entrepreneurial concepts, market opportunities, and essential business skills.

This is followed by the Women Entrepreneurship Development Programme (EDP), a 40-hour training initiative for 300 selected students. The EDP covers critical aspects of business development, finance access, market linkages, compliance, and legal support.

A six-month mentorship and handholding support system has been incorporated to help participants transform their ideas into sustainable business ventures.

8. The **Sugamya Yatra** initiative was organized by the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD), the Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MSJE), and the Office of the Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD) on the occasion of the **International Wheelchair Day 2025** (1st March).

The Yatra aims to break myths associated with wheelchair users, promote accessibility, and encourage inclusivity in society.

The initiative received support from the Pt. Deendayal Upadhyaya National Institute for Persons with Physical Disabilities (PDDU-NIPPD), Indian Sign Language Research and Training Centre (ISLRTC), Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC), and Samarthyam – Centre for Universal Accessibility.

Key Activities at the Event:

Accessibility Walk – An interactive experience where citizens and policymakers understand the real-life challenges faced by wheelchair users.

Experiential Simulation Exercise – Non-disabled individuals used wheelchairs to gain firsthand experience of accessibility challenges.

Panel Discussion – A thought-provoking dialogue featuring policymakers, social activists, and members of the disability community on inclusivity, accessibility, and disability rights.

9. The **Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs (IICA)**, under the aegis of the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Government of India, hosted the inaugural **National Association of Impact Leaders (NAIL) Meet 2025** in **Goa.**

   This landmark event, attended by over 100 participants, served as a confluence of eminent ESG professionals, policymakers, and thought leaders, all brought together to exchange insights, deliberate on emerging sustainability trends, and chart the course for a resilient and responsible corporate future.

   The event was held under the esteemed guidance of Ajay Bhushan Prasad Pandey, DG & CEO, of IICA, and Chairman, of the National Financial Reporting Authority (NFRA).

   During the event, IICA announced the 3rd edition of the flagship ESG annual conference of IICA, organized with support from the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, the National Conference on Responsible Business Conduct (NCRBC), scheduled to be held on the 2nd and 3rd of July 2025.

10. The **All-India Spices Exporters Forum** organized the **International Spice Conference (ISC) 2025** from February 24 to 27 in **Bengaluru, Karnataka**.

    The conference aims to lead the conversation on building a resilient and responsible future for the sector.

    The theme for the 2025 International Spice Conference is **"Building Trust Beyond Borders."**

    Krishna M. Ella, Executive Chairman, Bharat Biotech International Ltd., inaugurated the conference, and Abhinav Bindra, Olympic gold medallist and founder of Abhinav Bindra Targeting Performance, was the Guest of Honour.

    The conference was held at The Leela Bhartiya City, Bengaluru.

    During the conference, the **All-India Spice Exporters Forum** signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the **American Spice Trade Association (ASTA)** to improve collaboration in the international spice trade.

11. Defence Secretary **Rajesh Kumar Singh** presented the **report of the Empowered Committee for Capability Enhancement of the Indian Air Force (IAF)** to Defence Minister **Rajnath Singh** in New Delhi.

    The report focused on enhancing 'Aatmanirbharta' in the Aerospace domain with the private sector complementing the efforts of DPSUs and DRDO.

    The Committee has identified key thrust areas and made recommendations for implementation in the short, medium, and long term so as to achieve the desired capability enhancement goals of the IAF optimally.

    The Committee was formed on the directions of Defense Minister to holistically examine all issues and prepare a clear plan of action. It was chaired by the Defence Secretary with the Vice Chief of Air Staff, Secretary (Defence Production), Secretary, Department of Defence R&D and Chairman DRDO, DG Acquisition as members and Deputy Chief of the Air Staff as Member Secretary.

12. Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Gir National Park in Gujarat and chaired the 7th meeting of the National Board for Wildlife.

The National Board for Wildlife reviewed various initiatives undertaken by the Government in wildlife conservation, highlighting achievements in the creation of new protected areas and species-specific flagship programs such as Project Tiger, Project Elephant, and Project Snow Leopard, among others.
The Board also discussed conservation efforts for dolphins and Asiatic lions, and the establishment of the International Big Cats Alliance.

First-ever estimation of **riverine Dolphin report** released with a count of **6,327 dolphins**. The foundation stone of Wildlife Infrastructure for the National Referral Centre laid for Wildlife in Junagadh.

Key Wildlife Initiatives announced:

- 16th Asiatic Lion Population Estimation set for 2025.
- Centre of Excellence for Human-Wildlife Conflict to be established at SACON, Coimbatore.
- Cheetah reintroduction expanded to Gandhisagar Sanctuary (MP) & Banni Grasslands (Gujarat).
- New conservation projects for Gharials and Great Indian Bustard launched.
- Technology in Conservation: Emphasis on remote sensing, AI, and geospatial mapping for tackling forest fires and human-animal conflicts.

13. **India and Nepal** have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen cooperation in the **Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) sector.**

This MoU aims to promote collaboration between the two nations and strengthen intergovernmental cooperation in the WASH sector, ensuring better access to clean drinking water and sanitation for their populations.

The comprehensive MoU outlines a collaborative framework encompassing several key areas:

- Training programs for Nepali personnel in water resource management and related fields.
- Sharing of technological expertise and best practices between India and Nepal in the WASH sector.
- Joint efforts in monitoring, assessment, and management of groundwater resources, including quality improvement, artificial recharge, and rainwater harvesting.

14. The **Ministry of New and Renewable Energy** has sanctioned **five pilot projects** consisting total of 37 vehicles (buses and trucks), and 9 hydrogen refueling stations.
The vehicles that will be deployed for the trial include 15 hydrogen fuel cell-based vehicles and 22 hydrogen internal combustion engine-based vehicles.
These vehicles will run on **10 different routes across the country viz**., Greater Noida – Delhi – Agra, Bhubaneshwar – Konark – Puri, Ahmedabad – Vadodara – Surat, Sahibabad – Faridabad –

Delhi, Pune – Mumbai, Jamshedpur – Kalinga Nagar, Thiruvananthapuram – Kochi, Kochi – Edappally, Jamnagar – Ahmedabad, and NH-16 Visakhapatnam – Bayyavaram.

The projects are **awarded to major companies** like TATA Motors Ltd, Reliance Industries Limited, NTPC, ANERT, Ashok Leyland, HPCL, BPCL, and IOCL.
The total financial support for selected projects made available will be around **Rs. 208 Crore** from the Government of India. These pilot projects are likely to be commissioned in the next **18-24 months**, paving the way to the scaleup of such technologies in India.

15. **Coal India Limited (CIL)** under the aegis of the Ministry of Coal organized a day-long Kantha Fair to showcase the exquisite embroidery work of 200-250 women artisans from West Bengal at its Atrium, Coal Bhawan, New Town.
The artisans are the beneficiaries of the Kantha Skill Centre constructed under the CSR of CIL.
As a lead company, Central Coalfields Ltd, Ranchi, Jharkhand organized a mega program where tribal art, women-led businesses, and technical skills were showcased.
Other subsidiaries like BCCL, CMPDIL, ECL, NCL SECL, MCL, and WCL conducted programs on the common theme of Women Empowerment.

16. The **National Waterways Regulations, 2025**, formulated by the Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) under the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW), have been introduced for the construction of jetties and terminals by various entities, including private, public, and joint ventures, on national waterways across the country.
Under these regulations, any entity, including private players, seeking to develop or operate an inland waterway terminal on a national waterway must obtain a 'no objection certificate' (NoC) from the IWAI.
The regulations cover both new and existing terminals, whether permanent or temporary.
Permanent terminals can be maintained for a **lifetime** by the operator, while temporary terminals will have an initial **five-year term**, with the possibility of extensions.
Terminal developers and operators will be responsible for the technical design and construction, ensuring alignment with their business plans and providing adequate access for efficient operations.
The Digital Portal for Terminal Applications will be developed by IWAI to enhance efficiency, transparency, and accessibility, for Ease of Doing Business.

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17. The **Aditya-L1 mission** has captured the **first-ever image** of a **solar flare 'kernel'** in the lower solar atmosphere using the **Solar Ultraviolet Imaging Telescope (SUIT)** payload.
Its SUIT observed an X6.3-class solar flare, one of the most intense solar eruptions. Aditya-L1 studies solar flares by detecting UV and X-ray emissions using instruments like SUIT, SoLEXS, and HEL1OS.
SUIT captures images of the Solar Photosphere and Chromosphere in UV, while SoLEXS and HEL1OS monitor solar X-ray activity.
The mission aims to study solar upper atmospheric dynamics, chromospheric and coronal heating, and coronal mass ejections (CMEs). The L1 location allows uninterrupted solar observations, helping advance our understanding of space weather and its impact on Earth.

Aditya-L1, India's first space mission to study the Sun, was launched in September 2023 and is positioned in a halo orbit around Lagrange Point 1 (L1) for continuous solar observation.

18. The Supreme Court has directed all States to address transparency issues in the tendering and procurement of **Anti-Retroviral Therapy (ART) drugs** for **HIV/AIDS patients**.

ART is a combination of medicines that helps control HIV by **reducing the virus in the body and preventing the destruction of CD4 cells** (helper T-cells), which are crucial for the immune system.
While ART cannot cure HIV, it lowers the viral load, allowing CD4 cell recovery and immune system protection.
To combat HIV/AIDS, India launched the National AIDS and STD Control Programme (NACP) in 1992, ensuring better prevention, treatment, and care.

19. Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated **Vantara**, a wildlife preservation project.

The project has been announced by **Anant Ambani,** the Chairman of Reliance Industries and is established by Reliance Industries and Reliance Foundation. It is an animal rescue, conservation, and rehabilitation center in **Jamnagar, Gujarat**.
During the inauguration, Prime Minister Modi praised the initiative, highlighting its significance in preserving India's rich biodiversity and cultural heritage of coexisting with nature.
Vantara is home to over 1.5 lakh rescued, endangered, and threatened animals, offering them a home away from home and a second chance at life. The 3,000-acre sanctuary focuses on animal welfare and conservation, providing a haven for over 2,000 animals across 43 species.
The facilities offer ICU, MRI, CT scan, X-ray, ultrasound, endoscopy, dental scalers, lithotripsy, dialysis, and cutting-edge technology for live video conferences during surgical procedures.
The center also boasts a state-of-the-art Elephant Rescue Centre.
The **Elephant Hospital** within the center is a marvel, which comes equipped with advanced medical facilities, including portable X-ray and laser machines, a pathology lab, and a hyperbaric oxygen chamber. The center's 500-member staff, comprising veterinarians, nutritionists, and pathologists, works tirelessly to ensure the well-being of over 200 elephants, offering treatments such as hydrotherapy pools, a large elephant jacuzzi, and even multani-mitti massages.

20. The **12th Regional 3R and Circular Economy Forum in Asia and the Pacific** was organized from 3rd to 5th March 2025 at Rajasthan International Centre, **Jaipur.**

The forum was addressed by Union Minister Shri Bhupender Yadav. He highlighted that India's circular economy is to generate a market value of over $2 trillion and create close to 10 million jobs by 2050.
The theme of the Forum is "Realizing Circular Societies Towards Achieving SDGs and Carbon Neutrality in Asia-Pacific."
The forum saw the physical participation of 24 Asia-Pacific member countries, with ministers from Japan, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, and Maldives attending in person.
The forum concluded in Jaipur with the unanimous adoption of the **'Jaipur Declaration' (2025-2035).**
A global alliance platform, **C-3 (Cities Coalition for Circularity)**, was agreed upon as part of the declaration.
The session/forum saw some initiatives, such as:
Launch of SBM Waste to Wealth PMS Portal

The launch of the SBM Waste to Wealth PMS Portal is a major highlight. It is an innovative online platform developed under the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM). The portal is designed to enhance project monitoring, streamline data management, and facilitate resource sharing, thereby supporting the mission's broader objective of transforming waste into valuable resources. This initiative aligns with the government's commitment to sustainable urban development and effective solid waste management.

Release of IFC Document Reference Guide

The session also marked the release of the IFC Document Reference Guide: Business Models and Economic Assistance for Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) Projects. This guide provides comprehensive insights into various business models for MSW processing, including waste-to-electricity, biomethanation, and bioremediation. The document serves as a crucial resource for municipalities and private players looking to implement effective and economically viable waste management projects.

Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between CSIR and MoHUA

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA). This partnership will facilitate research-driven solutions and innovative technologies to enhance urban waste management practices across India.

Release of 'India's Circular Sutra'

The event also saw the release of 'India's Circular Sutra: A Compendium of Best Practices in 3R & Circular Economy'. This compendium documents successful case studies and innovative approaches in the Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle (3R) framework, providing valuable insights for urban local bodies and stakeholders looking to implement circular economy solutions.

CEEW Report on Solid Waste Management in Million-Plus Cities

The Council on Energy, Environment, and Water (CEEW) presented its latest study, which offers a detailed outlook on solid waste management (SWM) practices in cities with populations exceeding one million. The report highlights sustainable waste management strategies, circular economy principles, and decentralized solutions that can be tailored to meet the unique challenges of India's rapidly urbanizing regions.

21. **Air Chief Marshal AP Singh**, Chief of the Air Staff, inaugurated the **16th 'JUMBO' Majumdar International Seminar** which was organized by the Centre for Air Power Studies (CAPS) on 4th March 2025 at Air Force Auditorium.

    The theme for the seminar was **"Evolving Dynamics of Aerospace Power"**.
    'Jumbo' Majumdar International Seminar is an annual event organized by Centre for Air Power Studies (CAPS) in commemoration of late Wing Commander Karun Krishna Majumdar, an ace fighter pilot of pre-Independence India.
    Key discussions of the seminar include integrated aerospace management, space exploitation for air control, drone and Manned-Unmanned Teaming (MUMT) in warfare, the impact of electronic warfare (EW) and cyber operations, and the induction of emerging technologies into 5th-generation aircraft. The event brought together officials, researchers, and aviation experts, fostering engagement and discussions on the future of aerospace power.

22. The **WAVES India: A Bird's Eye View Challenge** which is the part of the Create in India initiative, recently invited drone pilots and filmmakers to capture India's landscapes, heritage, and vibrant life through aerial cinematography.

    The event was organized by **Broadcast Engineering Consultants India Limited** (BECIL) in collaboration with the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting.

Create in India initiative is part of the run-up activities for the **World Audio Visual & Entertainment Summit (WAVES**), scheduled to take place from **1st to 4th May 2025** at Jio World Convention Centre and Jio World Gardens in **Mumbai**.

WAVES, in its first edition, is a unique hub-and-spoke platform poised for the convergence of the entire **Media and Entertainment (M&E) sector.**

WAVES is structured around **four key pillars** i.e. Broadcasting & Infotainment, AVGC-XR (Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming, Comics, and Extended Reality), Digital Media & Innovation, and Films.

The **challenge is part of** the **first pillar**, **Broadcasting & Infotainment**, which focuses on the evolving landscape of media, information dissemination, and entertainment.

The challenge boosts creativity in the M&E sector with over 73,000 registrations so far. This initiative engages creators globally, offering a platform to showcase talent. It reinforces India's role as a media and entertainment hub.

There are two participation categories, such as:

a. Open Categories:
   - Video Editors
   - Professional Drone Pilots
   - Filmmakers/Teams/Students/Individuals
b. Drone Didi: The beneficiaries of the scheme can participate also.

The winners will be felicitated at the WAVES 2025 summit in Mumbai.

23. Union Ministers of Road Transport & Highways **Nitin Gadkari** and Union Ministers of New & Renewable Energy **Pralhad Joshi** flagged off the **first-ever trials of hydrogen-powered heavy-duty trucks** which is a major step toward India's net-zero emissions goal by 2070.

Tata Motors has launched the hydrogen-powered heavy-duty truck trials, marking the first such initiative in the country.

This first ever trial of hydrogen powered heavy duty trucks includes an initial trial period of 24 months.

The trial will deploy 16 advanced hydrogen-powered vehicles featuring Hydrogen Internal Combustion Engine (H2-ICE) and Hydrogen Fuel Cell Electric Vehicle (H2-FCEV) technologies.

These trucks will operate on key freight corridors, including Mumbai, Pune, Delhi-NCR, Surat, Vadodara, Jamshedpur, and Kalinga Nagar.

Funded by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy under the **National Green Hydrogen Mission**, this trial will evaluate the commercial viability of hydrogen trucks and aid in developing the necessary infrastructure for their long-term deployment.

The hydrogen truck includes the **Tata Prima H.55S** (H2-ICE and H2-FCEV models) and **Tata Prima H.28** (H2-ICE truck) which offers an operational range of 300-500 km.

These vehicles are designed for cost-efficient, high-performance, and low-emission transport, featuring advanced driver-assist safety features and the premium Prima cabin for enhanced driver comfort and productivity.

24. The **Skillhub Online Games Federation** (SOGF) has appointed **Padma Shri awardee Koneru Humpy** as the Brand Ambassador of the SOG Grandmaster Series. Koneru is India's youngest-ever Woman Grandmaster.

This partnership marks a significant milestone in the evolution of skill-based gaming, bridging the gap between traditional mind sports and the emerging digital competitive ecosystem.

The **SOG Grandmaster Series**, organised by the Skillhub Online Games Federation, in collaboration with the International Mind Sports Association (IMSA). It aims to establish a

regulated and credible platform for competitive skill-based gaming, featuring formats such as chess, blind chess, and other strategic mind sports.

Koneru Humpy

- She is an Indian chess player who was born in 1987 in Gudivada, Andhra Pradesh.
- She received the **Padma Shri in 2007**.
- She received the Arjuna Award in 2003, one of India's top sporting honors.
- She was named BBC Indian Sportswoman of the Year in 2021.
- And she won the Women's World Rapid Chess Championship in 2019.
- In 2020, she won a gold medal at the Chess Olympiad.

Skillhub Online Games Federation (SOGF) is a non-governmental organization (NGO) that promotes and regulates India's online gaming industry. SOGF was **established in 2023** and is **headquartered in Delhi**.

25. The Union Cabinet approved two major ropeway projects- **Govindghat to Hemkund Sahib Ji (12.4 km) and Sonprayag to Kedarnath (12.9 km)- in Uttarakhand**, which will be developed under National Ropeways Development Programme – Parvatmala Pariyojana.

    These projects will be developed on Design, Build, Finance, Operate, and Transfer (DBFOT) mode.
    Govindghat to Hemkund Sahib Ji ropeway project will have a Monocable Detachable Gondola from Govindghat to Ghangaria (10.55 km) and further integrated with the advanced Tricable Detachable Gondola (3S) technology from Ghangaria to Hemkund Sahib Ji (1.85 km). It will have a design capacity of 1,100 passengers per hour per direction (PPHPD) with a maximum carrying capacity of 11,000 passengers per day. The project will be developed at a total capital cost of **Rs. 2,730.13 crore.**
    Sonprayag to Kedarnath ropeway will have Tri-cable Detachable Gondola (3S) technology with a design capacity of 1,800 passengers per hour per direction carrying 18,000 passengers per day. The ropeway will cut travel time from 8-9 hours to just 36 minutes.
    Parvatmala Pariyojana:
    The pariyojana aims to improve connectivity in hilly areas. It aims to ease congestion in mountainous areas with limited road and train connectivity.
    The **Union Budget for 2022-23** announced the National Ropeways Development Programme – "Parvatmala".
    The scheme aims to develop more than 250 projects with a ropeway length of over 1,200 kilometers under the PPP model with around 60 percent contribution support by the Government of India.
    The Programme is being implemented by National Highway Logistics Management Limited (NHLML), a special-purpose vehicle of the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI).

26. Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the establishment of the **second National Gene Bank**.

    A gene bank is a repository of genetic material, such as seeds, pollen, or tissue samples, collected from different plant species in order to protect them from potential extinction and preserve vital varieties for future generations.
    The Ministry of Finance has announced the establishment of a second National Genebank in the **2025–26 budget** to safeguard India's agricultural biodiversity.
    This facility will house 10 lakh (1 million) germplasm lines, offering critical conservation support for both the public and private sectors involved in genetic resource management.
    India's **first gene bank** was **set up in 1996** by the **Indian Council of Agricultural Research-National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources** (ICAR-NBPGR) in New Delhi.

This bank comprises 12 regional stations across the country for the collection and storage of vital crop germplasm. These germplasms are the genetic constituents of plants or animals that are used in research, conservation, and crop breeding.

As on January 15, 2025, the bank currently stores 0.47 million accessions (plant material stored and used for breeding) - according to the database maintained by ICAR-NBPGR. These include cereals (0.17 million accessions), millets (more than 60,600 accessions), legumes (over 69,200 accessions), oilseeds (more than 63,500 accessions), and vegetables (nearly 30,000 accessions).

27. The **Defence Bio-Engineering & Electro Medical Laboratory** (DEBEL) under the **Defence Research and Development Organisation** (DRDO) successfully conducted high-altitude trials of the Indigenous On-Board Oxygen Generating System (OBOGS)-based Integrated Life Support System (ILSS) for the LCA Tejas, recently.

This advanced system eliminates the need for traditional liquid oxygen cylinders by generating real-time breathable oxygen, enhancing pilot endurance and operational efficiency.
Tested on the LCA-Prototype Vehicle-3 of HAL/ADA, the ILSS met stringent aeromedical standards at **altitudes up to 50,000 feet** and under high-G manoeuvres.
Performance assessments included oxygen concentration, demand breathing, and full functional testing of the Anti-G Valve and Breathing Oxygen System (BOS).
Manufactured by Larsen & Toubro Limited with 90% indigenous content, the ILSS represents a major step towards self-reliance in aerospace technology. It can also be adapted for MiG-29K and other aircraft.
This milestone was achieved through collaboration between DRDO, HAL, ADA, IAF, and other key agencies.

28. **Central Electricity Authority** (CEA), a statutory body under the Ministry of Power, in collaboration with **Tata Power Delhi Distribution Ltd.** (Tata Power-DDL) organized the **Fifth Edition of 'Lineman Diwas'** in New Delhi.

The day is being celebrated on 4th March in order to recognize the invaluable contributions of linemen and ground maintenance staff, the backbone of India's power sector.
The **theme** for the 5th edition of Lineman Diwas celebration was '**Seva, Suraksha, Swabhiman**', which aptly, signifies the Dedication, Service and Sacrifice of the frontline heroes of the power sector.
The Ministry of Power also launched a special Anthem on Lineman Diwas.
During the event, **four DISCOMs** and **five Linemen** were recognized as **high performing DISCOMs and Linemen** for their exemplary adherence to safety standards.
The day was **first organized** by Central Electricity Authority (CEA) in collaboration with Tata Power-DDL in **March 2021**, and subsequent editions were held in 2022, 2023 and 2024 to acknowledge the selfless service of these frontline heroes by dedicating a day to applaud and appreciate their hard work.

29. The **Indian Navy's First Training Squadron** (1TS) reached **Phuket Deep Sea Port**, as a part of its ongoing training deployment to Southeast Asia.

The squadron comprised INS Shardul, INS Sujata, and ICGS Veera.
The squadron concluded with coordinated tactical manoeuvres and exchange of sea riders during PASSEX with HTMS Huahin on 04th March 2025.

During the event, bilateral activities between the Indian Navy and Royal Thai Navy (RTN) included multiple professional exchanges, training visits and social interactions bolstering Navy-to-Navy connections. The interactions focused on regional security, avenues for joint training exercises and goodwill activities.

The sea trainees of 1TS visited 3rd Naval Area Command, Phangna Naval Port and HTMS Krabi providing opportunities for training interaction and sharing of best practices.

The visit consolidated strong bonds of friendship between the two Navies and underscores Indian Navy's commitment to strengthening maritime cooperation with its neighbors in line with the vision of SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region).

30. India has inaugurated its **first World Peace Center in Gurugram**, Haryana, marking a significant step towards promoting global peace and harmony.

The center will be established by Ahimsa World University under the guidance of Jain Acharya Lokesh.
The center was inaugurated by former President Ram Nath Kovind and other prominent leaders.
The center aims to promote world peace and harmony, with its voice reaching platforms such as the United Nations and the World Parliament of Religions.
The center will be dedicated to the mental, emotional and character development of the people.

31. The Union Minister for New and Renewable Energy, Pralhad Joshi inaugurated **India's first AI-powered solar manufacturing line** at Goldi Solar's newly established plant in Kosamba, Surat, Gujarat.

The plant, designed to have a production capacity of 14 GW, features several groundbreaking technologies, including AI-powered high-speed stringers that enable the production of 10,000 cells per hour.
This automation ensures high consistency, reduces errors, and minimizes material wastage.
The facility also utilizes AI-powered Automated Optical Inspection (AOI) systems that employ computer vision to detect and eliminate defects on a microscopic level, ensuring top-tier quality control.
The facility includes an integrated pre-lamination section with an automated EVA laying robot, which optimizes the placement of encapsulation layers with minimal human intervention.
This reduces inconsistencies compared to manual methods. The plant is further equipped with AI-driven 3-Display EL and visual inspection systems to guarantee that only the highest quality solar modules are produced, improving reliability and durability.

32. The **Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation** (IRCTC) and the **Indian Railway Finance Corporation** (IRFC) were recently granted **'Navratna' status** by the Government of India, making them the **25th and 26th** Navratna CPSEs.

The move allows the two central public sector enterprises (CPSEs) to make discretionary investments up to Rs 1,000 crore or 15% of their net worth. **Both come under** the administrative control of the **Railway Ministry**.
IRCTC and IRFC will have enhanced powers to establish joint ventures and overseas offices, access new markets and leverage local expertise.
Additionally, it will foster innovation by furthering technological alliances and strengthening market positioning. This will also facilitate mergers and acquisitions, leading to growth and increased market share.

IRCTC has an annual turnover of Rs 4,270.18 crore, profit after tax (PAT) of Rs 1,111.26 crore and a net worth of Rs 3,229.97 crore for financial year 2023-24.
IRFC has an annual turnover of Rs 26,644 Cr, PAT of Rs 6,412 crore and a net worth of Rs 49,178 Cr for fiscal 2023-24.

33. The **Ministry of Panchayati Raj** (MoPR) has launched a pioneering campaign to eliminate proxy representation and promote genuine women leadership at the grassroots level.

As part of this initiative, MoPR has collaborated with **The Viral Fever** (TVF) for the production of a series of compelling digital content that addresses critical issues affecting local rural governance.
The production by TVF features renowned actors like Neena Gupta, Chandan Roy, and Faisal Malik, created within the widely acclaimed web-series Panchayat.
The first of these productions, "Asli Pradhan Kaun?" premiered on 4th March 2025, coinciding with the launch of the Ministry's "Sashakt Panchayat Netri Abhiyan" (सशक्त पंचायत-नेत्री अभियान).
The film was screened at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi before an audience of over 1,200 elected women representatives of Panchayati Raj Institutions from across the country.
"Asli Pradhan Kaun?" addresses the issue of 'Sarpanch Pati' culture – where male family members unofficially represent elected women leaders – a practice that undermines the constitutional mandate of women representation in Panchayati Raj Institutions.
This initiative comes in the wake of the recent Report on "Transforming Women's Representation and Roles in Panchayati Raj Systems and Institutions: Eliminating Efforts for Proxy Participation", which has gained wider attention and gathered momentum in favour of the Ministry's consistent efforts to strengthen genuine women leadership in local governance.
As part of its comprehensive approach, the Ministry will release two additional productions focusing on:
- **Digital Intervention and Transparency** – Showcasing how technology can transform rural governance
- **Own Source Revenue** – Highlighting the importance of financial independence / self-reliance for Panchayats

The Union Ministry of Panchayati Raj launched **Sashakt Panchayat Netri Abhiyan** on 4th March in Delhi. The abhiyan is designed to enhance the capacity and effectiveness of Women Elected Representatives of Panchayati Raj Institutions across the country.
It will focus on building skills and confidence of women elected to Panchayati Raj positions, ensuring they can exercise their constitutional rights and responsibilities effectively.

Attempt RRB PO 2025 Free Mock Test

34. Union Finance Minister **Nirmala Sitharaman** and Minister of State for Finance **Pankaj Chaudhary** launched the **New Credit Assessment Model** based on the scoring of the **digital footprints of MSMEs**.

The model for MSMEs was announced in the **Union Budget 2024-25**.

This model will leverage the digitally fetched and verifiable data available and devise automated journeys for MSME Loan appraisal using objective decisioning for all loan applications and model-based limit assessment for both Existing to-bank (ETB) as well as New to Bank (NTB) MSME borrowers.

The digital footprints used by the model may include name and pan authentication using NSDL, mobile and e-mail verification using OTP, API fetch of GST data through service providers, bank statement analysis using account aggregator, ITR upload and verification, API-enabled

commercial and consumer bureau fetch and due diligence using CICs, fraud checks, hunter checks through APIs, among others.

The credit assessment model for MSMEs is expected to be a significant improvement over the traditional assessment of credit eligibility based only on asset or turnover criteria.

35. The **Department of Fisheries, under the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying** (MoFAH&D) organized the **Fisheries Startup Conclave 2.0** in **Hyderabad**, Telangana.

The event was inaugurated by Union Minister Rajiv Ranjan Singh, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry (MoFAH&D) & the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, along with Minister of State Prof. S.P. Singh Baghel (MoFAH&D and Ministry of Panchayati Raj) & Prof Ramesh Chand, Member NITI Aayog.

The conclave was held to promote innovation in the fisheries sector.

During the event, **Fisheries Startup Grand Challenge 2.0** was launched to **support startups in manufacturing** and related areas. The program aims to foster entrepreneurship, technological advancements, and sustainability in fisheries and aquaculture, enhancing production and efficiency.

Through the challenge, support will be extended to 10 winning startups with Rs 1 crore in funding.

Each winning proposal will receive structured incubation support from Central Institute of Fisheries Technology, National Fisheries Development Board, or other affiliated institutions under the Department of Fisheries.

The conclave also witnessed the launch of the **National Fisheries Digital Platform (NFDP) Mobile App** which is a transformative initiative aimed at streamlining digital access to fisheries-related services and resources.

The app was launched to expand access to Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PM-MSY) benefits.

The app offers a seamless interface for users, particularly startups to navigate various modules and avail scheme benefits.

The Department of Fisheries launched the **National Fisheries Digital Platform** (NFDP) in **September 2024**.

The platform was developed under **Pradhan Mantri Matsya Samridhi Sah-Yojana** (PM-MKSSY) for creating digital work-identities for fishers, fish farmers, vendors, and processors, enabling their seamless integration into formal financial and welfare systems.

The NFDP mobile app has transformed the fisheries sector by enabling digital registration and providing access to the PM-MKSSY scheme, financial aid, insurance, and training programs. It offers Rs 100 for self-registration and Rs 76 for registration.

Special awareness and registration camps are boosting participation, making this initiative a major step toward digital inclusion and financial empowerment in the fisheries sector.

36. To boost the **electronic toy sector, for the first time in India "e-Toycathon 2025"** was organized by the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing **C-DAC under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology's (MeitY's)** research initiatives.

e-Toycathon 2025 aimed at fostering innovation in the toy sector by providing a platform for young researchers and innovators to develop indigenous, and sustainable solutions.

About e-Toycathon 2025:

e-Toycathon 2025 was officially announced by Secretary, MeitY on 23rd November 2024, under the MeitY-funded project "Development of Electronics and IT-based Control and Automation Solutions for Consumer Electronic - Toys Industry".

Registration for the event was open to engineering institutes, universities, and colleges; each institute was allowed to nominate two teams for Stage 1: The Innovative Design Competition.

This online competition was conducted from January 14 - 17, 2025, attracting 112 teams and engaging 400+ engineering students from across India.

In **Stage 1**, a jury panel comprising Indian Toy Industry experts shortlisted 20 teams to advance to Stage 2 in the e-Toycathon.

In **Stage 2**, all 20 shortlisted teams showcased their skills in electronic toy prototype development in C-DAC Noida.

The competition offered the following cash prizes:
- First Prize: ₹2,00,000
- Second Prize: ₹1,00,000
- Third Prize: ₹50,000
- Two Consolation Prizes: ₹25,000 each

The **first prize** was awarded to **Sri Krishna College of Engineering and Technology, Coimbatore** for **Play Mat Toy,** a fun and attractive play mat that has piano functional keys, animal pictures, sounds/drums/music/rhymes, etc. The mat is made up of soft material so that it can be folded. Children can engage in both playing the piano and dancing; this allows them to enjoy the music for entertainment while improving their musical intelligence and visual training.

The **second prize** was awarded to **Jaypee Institute of Information Technology, Noida,** for **Robo-Mentor AI** which is an innovative educational toy designed to empower children by combining the excitement of robotics with the supportive capabilities of generative AI. The primary goal is to create a learning experience where kids can build and program their robots while receiving dynamic, personalized guidance that enhances their sense of agency and achievement.

National Institute of Technology, Durgapur secured the 3rd place for **Interactive Educational Chart.** This chart is made to engage children in learning about India through activities. It is in English language with feature of choosing any regional language as well. The chart is in interactive mode; children can press on a particular picture and get response with sounds and light.

National Institute of Technology, Srinagar and Indian Institute of Information Technology, Senapati, Manipur were given consolation prizes for **Compact Mini Drone Toy** and **Electronic Cashier Machine Toy** respectively.

37. **Patanjali Ayurved Ltd** has inaugurated **Asia's largest orange processing plant** at its Mega Food and Herbal Park in Mihan, **Nagpur, Maharashtra**.

The plant has a processing capacity of **800 tonnes per day**.

The primary goal of the plant is **to provide export-quality products** while ensuring maximum profit for farmers.

The Rs **1500 crore plant is designed to operate on a zero-waste system**, ensuring that no part of the fruit goes to waste. **Apart from orange juice**, the facility will also produce volatile and

fragrance oils from orange peels, along with processing fruits like lime, amla, pomegranate, guava, grapes, gourd, carrot, mango pulp, and tomato paste based on seasonal availability.
The grand inauguration took place in the presence of Union Minister Nitin Gadkari, Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, Patanjali's Managing Director Acharya Balkrishna, and Yoga Guru Swami Ramdev, among others.

38. On its **135th Foundation Day**, National Archives of India (NAI) reduced the user charges for downloading documents **from Abhilekh Patal** in order to facilitate access to records.

For the supply of digital images (including Digitize on Demand), the charges have been reduced as follows**:**
For Indian Scholars downloading of first 20 Pages will be free of cost. The detailed slots may be seen below:
   - 0-20 images- free of cost.
   - 20-50 images -Rs 2/- per image
   - 50-100 images-Rs 3/- per image.
   - 100-above- Rs 5/- per image.
For Foreign Scholars downloading of first 20 Pages will be free of cost. The detailed slots may be seen below:
   - 0-20 pages- free of cost.
   - 20-50 pages-Rs 5/- per pages
   - 50-100 pages-Rs 10/- per page.
   - 100-above- Rs 15/- per pages**.**
If the number of images falls within the next slot, the rate for that slot will be applied to all pages.
The rates for providing scanned images of oversize and large-size maps/documents up to A-0 size have been reduced from ₹20 to ₹15 per image (300 dpi), and the minimum charge has been eliminated.
The reprography service rates (physical printouts) for Indian scholars have been decreased from ₹5 to ₹2 per page, while for foreign scholars, the rate has been reduced from ₹10 to ₹4 per page.
Additionally, charges for photocopying color pages have been lowered for Indian scholars from ₹20 to ₹8 per page, and for foreign scholars, from ₹40 to ₹16 per page.

39. **Madhav National Park**, located in the Chambal region of Madhya Pradesh, has been declared **India's 58th Tiger Reserve (9th Tiger Reserve of MP).** The reserve currently houses 5 tigers (including 2 cubs).

The total area of the Madhav Tiger Reserve spans 1,751 square kilometers, which includes:
   - **Core Area: 375 square kilometers**
   - **Buffer Zone: 1,276 square kilometers**
The park is located in the Shivpuri district of Madhya Pradesh.
The park was named after Madho Rao Scindia, the former Maharaja of Gwalior.
The dense forests of the National Park were the former hunting grounds of Mughals and Scindia rulers.
The tiger reserve has George Castle inside the reserve, built by Scindias in anticipation of British King George V's visit in 1911.

40. The first rear fuselage for the **Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Mk1A**, delivered by the Indian private company **Alpha Tocol Engineering Services Private Ltd**, was formally handed over to **Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL)** in **Bengaluru, Karnataka.**

The event was attended by **Raksha Mantri Rajnath Singh**, who hailed the occasion as a major step forward in India's defense manufacturing journey.

The delivery of the rear fuselage underscores India's progress towards **self-reliance in defense manufacturing** and highlights the government's commitment to strengthening **public-private partnerships** in the defense sector.

The **rear fuselage** is a critical structural component of an aircraft, supporting the tail and its associated systems.

Collaboration with Private Sector:

- As part of the **83 LCA Mk1A contract**, HAL has partnered with several Indian private companies, including **L&T, Alpha Tocol Engineering Services, Tata Advanced Systems Ltd (TASL), VEM Technologies, and Lakshmi Machine Works (LMW)**, for the supply of major components.
- HAL has already produced **12 LCA Mk1A rear fuselages**, which are being integrated into aircraft currently under production.

The new supply from Alpha Tocol will help HAL meet its additional delivery commitments to the **Indian Air Force (IAF)** starting from **2025-26**.

41. The **Maritime India Vision 2030** aims to elevate India's global shipbuilding ranking to the **top 10**, while the **Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047** aims to position India within the **top 5.**

The government has taken several measures to develop and enhance the shipbuilding infrastructure in the country, such as:

- The Shipbuilding Financial Assistance Policy (SBFAP) was amended on January 29, 2025, to encourage greater participation in shipbuilding.
- In November 2021, the government released five variants of standard tug designs to support Indian shipyards.
- To promote indigenous shipbuilding, the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways on 20.09.2023 has revised the hierarchy of Right of First Refusal (RoFR) to be followed in any kind of charter of a vessel that is undertaken through a tender process.

 Revised Right of First Refusal (RoFR) Hierarchy (Sep 2023):
- Indian-built, Indian-flagged, and Indian owned.
- Indian-built, Indian-flagged, and Indian IFSCA-owned.
- Foreign-built, Indian-flagged, and Indian owned.
- Foreign-built, Indian-flagged, and Indian IFSCA owned.
- Indian built, foreign-flagged, and foreign-owned.

The government launched the Green Tug Transition Programme (GTTP) to reduce carbon emissions in tugboat operations and introduced Harit Nauka guidelines for greener inland waterway vessels.

In April 2016, shipyards were added to the Harmonized Master List of Infrastructure Sub-sectors.

The Right of First Refusal was granted to Indian shipyards in tenders for new shipbuilding orders from government entities.

As per the Public Procurement Order, 2017, ships below ₹200 crores must be procured from Indian shipyards.

42. **Rentokil Initial Hygiene**, a global leader in hygiene solutions, announced its achievement of **carbon neutrality** for **2024.**

This accomplishment covers **Scope 1 (direct emissions) and Scope 2 (indirect emissions from energy consumption)** while making notable progress in Scope 3 (indirect emissions across the value chain).

The achievement is the result of years of strategic initiatives and innovative measures aimed at conserving resources and fostering a cleaner, greener future.

Key Initiatives Driving Carbon Neutrality:
- Over 58% of used batteries were recycled in 2024, reducing CO_2e by 2.69 tonnes. The company aims to achieve 100% battery recycling through partnerships with government-authorized e-waste management partners.
- Advanced incineration techniques replaced traditional landfill methods, reducing CO_2e by 21.14 tonnes through the disposal of 172,383 kilograms of sanitary waste. Low-Temperature Thermal Destruction (LTTD) technology further minimized emissions and converted waste into eco-friendly materials like bricks and pots.
- Installation of 310 LED lights across facilities saved 13,020 kWh of energy, preventing 9 tonnes of CO_2e emissions. This switch also eliminated mercury use, aligning with safe environmental practices.
- Transitioning to digital Purchase Orders (POs) saved 792 kilograms of paper, preventing 9 tonnes of CO_2e emissions—equivalent to the carbon offset provided by 374 trees annually.
- Incorporation of electric and CNG vehicles, along with on-site services, reduced fuel consumption by 9,083 liters, saving 21.17 tonnes of CO_2e in 2024.

43. Union Minister of Food Processing Industries (FPI), **Chirag Paswan**, inaugurated **AAHAR-2025,** the **39th edition** of The International Food & Hospitality Fair, at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi.

This flagship B2B event is organized by the India Trade Promotion Organisation (ITPO), the premier trade promotion body of the Government of India.
It is recognized as one of Asia's most prominent food and hospitality exhibitions.

Key Highlights of AAHAR-2025:
- Technical Sessions organized by MoFPI and NIFTEM-Kundli to discuss innovation in food processing, machinery, packaging, and regulatory frameworks.
- **Dr. Subrata Gupta, Secretary, MoFPI**, stressed the need for farmer education on reducing chemical contamination.
- **Blockchain, IoT, and AI** were highlighted as key solutions for ensuring food traceability and compliance.
- Experts from FSSAI, CODEX, Coca-Cola India, Marico, Nestlé R&D, and IIT-Guwahati shared insights on regulatory compliance and food processing innovations.

Key Outcomes:
- Strengthened regulatory standards in alignment with global best practices.
- Increased farmer education on sustainable and responsible chemical usage.
- Adoption of AI, IoT, and Blockchain for food safety and compliance.
- Development of indigenous rapid food testing kits to reduce import dependency.
- Stronger industry-government collaborations to enhance food safety benchmarks.

MoFPI will **host the World Food India 2025 Summit** from **September 25-28, 2025**, as part of India's global expansion in the food industry.

44. The **National Archives of India (NAI)** celebrated its **135th Foundation Day** on **11th March 2025** with an exhibition **titled "Indian Heritage through Architecture."**

Union Minister of Culture & Tourism, **Gajendra Singh Shekhawat** inaugurated the exhibition.
The exhibition showcased India's rich cultural heritage as reflected in its diverse architectural marvels, spanning thousands of years and encompassing a variety of styles, influences, and historical periods.

During the event, the '**Gyan Bharatam Mission'** was launched to save and promote the heritage of the country's manuscripts. The aim is to make historical documents accessible to a wider audience. The mission was announced in the Union Budget 2025-26.

The event also marked the release of the book titled *"Thumb Printed: Champaran, Indigo Peasants Speak to Gandhi (Volume III),"* documenting 423 testimonies from the Champaran Satyagraha, including 143 principal testators, with 5 women and 11 minors among them.

The National Archives of India, an attached office under the Ministry of Culture, was originally established as the Imperial Record Department on 11 March 1891 in Kolkata (Calcutta). Following the transfer of the capital to Delhi in 1911, the present NAI building, designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens, was completed in 1926. The complete transfer of records from Calcutta to New Delhi was finalized in 1937.

The National Archives of India also serves as the nodal agency for implementing the Public Records Act, 1993, and the Public Record Rules, 1997.

45. Union Cooperation Secretary **Ashish Kumar Bhutani** addressed the **First Foundation Year** of the **Cooperative Election Authority (CEA)** as the Chief Guest in New Delhi.

The CEA is formed to protect the core cooperative principle of democratic control of the members of the cooperative society and the Authority is responsible for transparently conducting the elections in cooperatives and also overseeing the electoral process in multi-state cooperative societies, ensuring transparency and accountability while conducting the election in Cooperative Societies.

Chairperson of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka State Cooperative Election Authority were present on this occasion.

Note:
- The Cooperative Election Authority was notified on 11th March 2024 with a mandate to conduct free and fair elections of Multi-State Cooperative Societies. At present, there are three members of the Authority.
- The Authority has issued election programs for more than 137 Societies and 100 elections for the Board of Directors & Office Bearers have been conducted under the supervision of the Cooperative Election Authority successfully.

The current Chairman of the Cooperative Election Authority (CEA) is Devendra Kumar Singh.

46. The **Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority** (APEDA) showcased India's rich agricultural heritage and growing organic sector at the **Natural Products Expo West 2025**, held from **March 4 to 7, 2025**, at the **Anaheim Convention Centre, California, USA.**

APEDA facilitated the participation of **13 leading Indian exporters,** representing a diverse range of organic products**, including** rice, oilseeds, herbs, spices, pulses, nuts, ginger, turmeric, large cardamom, cinnamon, mango puree, and essential oils.

The **India Pavilion at the Natural Products Expo West 2025** was inaugurated by **Abhishek Kumar Sharma,** Consul (Commerce), Consulate General of India, San Francisco, USA. The Pavilion showcased India's organic agricultural prowess, offering visitors an immersive experience of the country's organic farming traditions.

The India Pavilion at the Expo stood as a testament to India's organic excellence, highlighting high-quality products, inspiring exporter stories, and a collective commitment to a healthier, more sustainable future.

APEDA, a statutory body under the Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Government of India, is responsible for the development, promotion, and facilitation of agricultural and processed food

product exports from India, with a focus on enhancing India's presence in the global organic food market.

47. The **National Pharmaceuticals Pricing Policy (NPPP), 2012** established the new framework for regulating drug prices in India.

The policy is implemented by the **National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA)** under the Department of Pharmaceuticals (DoP).
The key principles of price regulation under NPPP, 2012 are:
- Prices are regulated for drugs deemed essential for public health.
- The policy focuses on regulating the prices of finished medicines (formulations) used by consumers, not upstream products like bulk drugs or intermediates.
- Prices are determined based on market data rather than cost-based calculations.

The Drugs (Prices Control) Order (DPCO), 2013 operationalizes the NPPP, 2012. Under DPCO, 2013, the NPPA fixes ceiling prices for essential drugs. The Integrated Pharmaceutical Database Management System (IPDMS 2.0) facilitates the collection of market-based data and displays updated information on ceiling and retail prices for stakeholders.
Transparency Measures:
- Manufacturers are required to submit price lists in Form-V (for formulations) or Form-VI (for medical devices) to dealers, State Drugs Controllers, and the Government.
- Retailers and dealers must display these price lists prominently at their premises.
- The NPPA's mobile app, Pharma Sahi Daam (PSD), provides consumers with easy access to drug prices, including brand names, compositions, ceiling prices, and maximum retail prices.
- Draft price calculation sheets for proposed price revisions are uploaded on the NPPA website for 10 working days to invite stakeholder feedback before finalizing prices.
Key Initiatives:
- **IPDMS 2.0:** Ensures real-time updates on drug prices for stakeholders.
- **Pharma Sahi Daam App:** Enhances consumer access to drug price information.
- **Transparency in Price Fixation:** Draft price calculations are made public for stakeholder input.

The Pharma Sahi Daam (PSD) mobile APP was launched for the first time on **29th August 2016**. Its revamped version was launched in 2022. It serves as an online tool enabling consumers to instantly check the prices of both scheduled and non-scheduled medicines at the time of purchase.
 The app indicates the Maximum Retail Price (MRP) of medicines, inclusive of GST, facilitating consumers in verifying whether medicines are being sold within the approved price range and detecting any instances of overpricing by pharmaceutical companies or chemists.

48. **India** has assumed the **chairmanship** of the **68th United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs** (CND) for the year **2025.**

This marks a significant milestone in India's role in global efforts to combat drug trafficking and substance abuse.
The UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) is the central policymaking body of the United Nations on drug-related matters. It is responsible for monitoring the global drug situation, implementing international drug control treaties, and addressing emerging challenges in drug trafficking and abuse.

The CND is one of the functional commissions of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and a Governing Body of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) which is headquartered in Vienna.

49. The **Department of Pharmaceuticals, Government of India**, hosted an Industry Dialogue in Mumbai to promote the **Promotion of Research and Innovation in the Pharma-MedTech Sector (PRIP) Scheme**.

The event brought together industry leaders, research institutes, and associations to discuss strategies for strengthening industry-academia linkages, fostering collaboration, and leveraging government initiatives to accelerate R&D and commercialization of innovative solutions in the pharmaceutical and medical technology sectors.
The objective of the PRIP Scheme:
- The PRIP Scheme aims to promote research and innovation in the pharmaceutical and medical technology (MedTech) sectors.
- The scheme was notified **on August 17, 2023**, with a total financial outlay of Rs 5,000 crore, of which **Rs 4,250 crore** is focused on accelerating investments in the R&D ecosystem within the sector.
- It focuses on enabling cost-effective and affordable healthcare solutions to address future health challenges.

50. The **Indian Air Force (IAF)** conducted a combat training exercise at **Umiam Lake** in **Shillong, Meghalaya**. The exercise showcased multiple aircraft, helicopters, para jumpers, and specialized operations to enhance interoperability with the Indian Army Special Forces and the Navy.

The training exercise included Combat Rubberised Raiding Craft drops, para jumps, and helocasting (jumping from an aircraft into water) **using An-32 and C-130 aircraft and Mi-17 helicopters**
The exercise was witnessed by **National Cadet Corps (NCC) cadets in Shillong,** who observed the operations firsthand.

51. **Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation**, **Amit Shah**, virtually inaugurated and laid the foundation stone for several development projects worth **₹146 crore in Ahmedabad**, **Gujarat.**

These projects aim to enhance infrastructure, connectivity, and healthcare facilities in the region.
Key projects:
- The foundation stone has been laid for the construction of a 4-lane bridge over the Narmada Canal on National Highway No. 147 at a cost of Rs. 36.30 crore, and a flyover bridge on Sarkhej-Gandhinagar (SG) Highway at Chharodi at a cost of Rs. 45 crore.
- The construction of a railway overbridge, approximately 1 km long, on the Ahmedabad-Viramgam railway track at Sanand-Chekhla-Kadi Road, with an investment of Rs 60 crore.
These infrastructure projects will enhance the convenience of local residents, improve connectivity, and provide a fresh boost to employment, industry, and business.

52. The **Ministry of Mines**, in collaboration with the **Government of Goa**, organized a landmark event that marked a significant milestone in India's mining sector.

The event was graced by Union Minister for Coal and Mines, G. Kishan Reddy, and Chief Minister of Goa, Dr. Pramod Sawant.

It featured the launch of **India's first-ever auction of Exploration Licences (ELs),** a transformative reform aimed at unlocking the nation's untapped critical and deep-seated mineral resources.

The program **also included a Roadshow on the 5th Tranche of Auction of Critical Mineral Blocks** and the inauguration of the AI Hackathon 2025, themed 'Mineral Targeting using AI.'

During the event, Union Minister G. Kishan Reddy and Chief Minister Dr. Pramod Sawant **jointly launched** the auction of **13 Exploration Licence blocks**, encompassing critical minerals such as Rare Earth Elements (REE), Zinc, Diamond, Copper, and Platinum Group Elements (PGE).

This initiative facilitated through a transparent online bidding process, is designed to accelerate systematic mineral exploration, enhance private sector participation, and reduce India's dependency on mineral imports.

As part of the event, the AI Hackathon 2025 on **'Mineral Targeting using Artificial Intelligence'** was inaugurated by G. Kishan Reddy and Dr. Pramod Sawant.

This initiative aims to leverage AI-driven techniques and geoscience data to identify new mineral-rich zones, particularly concealed and deep-seated deposits.

Participants will develop AI models using datasets such as geophysics, geochemistry, remote sensing, and borehole data, with a focus on critical minerals like REE, Ni-PGE, and Copper.

The hackathon is expected to drive innovation in India's exploration ecosystem and strengthen data-driven mineral discovery.

To further encourage private sector involvement in mineral exploration, Union Minister G. Kishan Reddy and Chief Minister Dr. Pramod Sawant **awarded certificates to three newly notified Private Exploration Agencies:**

- M/s Earthenviro Lab Private Limited
- M/s Ocean Drilling and Exploration Pvt. Ltd
- M/s Enkay Enviro Services Pvt. Ltd.

53. The first **Shaurya Vedanam Utsav** was held in the **Motihari** city of East Champaran district of **Bihar.** The two-day event featured a spectacular military display and an exhibition of the lethal weapons of the Indian Armed Forces.

The event was organized by the **Defence Ministry,** Government of India, in collaboration with the East Champaran district administration.

The Indian Army displayed its indigenously developed K-9 Vajra self-propelled artillery gun, Weapon Locating Radar (WLR) Swathi. the T-90 Bhishma Main Battle Tank, BMP infantry combat vehicles, etc.

The Indian Air Force performed an impressive flypast featuring three Su-30MKI fighter jets, two AN-32 transport aircraft, and Chetak helicopters.

The elite Akash Ganga skydiving team of the Indian Air Force performed a high-altitude combat freefall from 8,000 feet.

54. The **Network Planning Group (NPG)** convened its **89th meeting** led by **Pankaj Kumar**, Joint Secretary at the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), to assess critical infrastructure projects across the road, railway, and metro sectors.

A total of **eight projects** were reviewed, comprising four road developments, three railway expansions, and one metro initiative.

Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH)

- **Two-lane with paved shoulder from Darugiri to Dalu section in Meghalaya**

The project involves the development of the existing road into a two-lane highway with a paved shoulder along the Darugiri to Dalu section of NH-62 (New NH-217) in Meghalaya. This 136.11 km-long stretch passes through East Garo Hills, South Garo Hills, and West Garo Hills, significantly enhancing regional connectivity. Given its strategic location, this corridor is essential for facilitating cross-border trade and regional economic development.

- **Construction of a four-lane tunnel connectivity across River Brahmaputra between Gohpur and Numaligarh**

The project involves the construction of India's first-ever road tunnel beneath a major river. The four-lane tunnel under the Brahmaputra will reduce travel time from 6.5 hours to just 30 minutes, shortening the distance from 240 km to 34 km. This twin-tube, unidirectional underwater tunnel will enhance connectivity to Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, and other northeastern states.

- **Widening and improvement of the existing carriageway to four lanes of the Kaliabor-Numaligarh section**

This project aims to upgrade the existing highway from two lanes to four lanes along the Kaliabor-Numaligarh section (NH-37/NH-715) in Assam. Covering 85.67 km across Nagaon, Karbi Anglong, and Golaghat districts, the project incorporates wildlife-friendly measures such as an elevated corridor and wildlife crossings to protect Kaziranga National Park's biodiversity.

- **Construction/upgradation to two-lane with paved shoulder from Mayjilar to Jaisalmer with Jaisalmer Bypass Link Road**

Spanning 138.177 km, this project in Rajasthan includes brownfield and greenfield stretches along NH-11 and NH-70. It aims to improve regional connectivity, boost tourism, facilitate defense movement, and enhance road safety.

Ministry of Railways (MoR)

- **Badlapur-Karjat third and fourth-line expansion**

The 32.460 km-long brownfield project addresses increasing passenger and freight congestion along the Mumbai-Pune-Solapur-Wadi-Chennai corridor. Enhancing connectivity between key commuter hubs and freight transit points, this project will benefit towns including Badlapur, Vangani, Shelu, Neral, Bhivpuri, and Karjat.

- **Construction of the fourth line from Nergundi to Cuttack with a flyover at Nergundi**

The 15.99 km-long brownfield railway infrastructure project in Odisha aims to decongest existing rail lines, facilitate freight movement, and ensure smoother operations along a key corridor serving Paradip Port, Talcher coalfields, and major steel and power industries.

- **Construction of a doubling line from Haridaspur to Paradip**

The 74.09 km-long brownfield project in Odisha will enhance freight transportation capacity and logistics efficiency, facilitating seamless coal transportation from Talcher Coalfields to Paradip Port while supporting industrial expansion in the Angul-Jharsuguda cluster.

Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA)

- **Rajkot Metro Rail Project:**

The Rajkot Metro Project is a greenfield urban transport initiative aimed at reducing congestion and providing a sustainable mode of transport in Rajkot, Gujarat. Covering 41.11 km, the project integrates seamlessly with existing urban infrastructure, ensuring multimodal connectivity with regional rail, city bus services, and intermediate public transport such as autos and cycle rickshaws.

55. The **Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS)** launched a major crackdown on e-commerce platforms, targeting the sale of unsafe, non-certified products.

The operation, spearheaded by the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution, focused on leading e-commerce giants such as Amazon and Flipkart, with raids carried out in cities like Lucknow, Gurugram, and Delhi.

Raid on an Amazon warehouse in Lucknow: The BIS officials confiscated 215 toys and 24 hand blenders that lacked the mandatory BIS certification.

Amazon's Gurugram facility in February: The seizure of 58 aluminum foils, 34 metallic water bottles, 25 toys, 20 hand blenders, 7 PVC cables, 2 food mixers, and 1 speaker, all of which were found without proper certification.

Flipkart warehouse in Gurugram (operated by Instakart Services Pvt Ltd)**:** Authorities seized 534 stainless steel vacuum-insulated bottles, 134 toys, and 41 speakers that did not meet the required standards.

BIS investigations revealed that many of these non-certified products were linked to Techvision International Pvt Ltd. Following this lead, raids at two of the company's facilities in Delhi uncovered approximately 7,000 electric water heaters, 4,000 electric food mixers, 95 electric room heaters, and 40 gas stoves, all lacking BIS certification.

The seized items included products from brands such as Digismart, Activa, Inalsa, Cello Swift, and Butterfly.

For such things, BIS has already filed two court cases against Techvision International for violations of **the BIS Act, 2016.**

Violators face penalties starting at Rs 2 lakh, which may extend up to ten times the value of non-compliant goods sold or offered for sale. In severe cases, offenders could face imprisonment of up to two years under **Section 17 of the BIS Act.,2016.**

The standards authority has issued notices to major e-commerce platforms, including Amazon, Flipkart, Meesho, Myntra, and BigBasket, directing them to ensure that only BIS-certified products are listed where certification is mandatory.

BIS surveillance activities have identified that several non-certified products are being sold on these platforms.

Non-certified products include those that do not bear the ISI mark an ISI mark with an invalid license number. Such products pose significant safety risks to consumers as they **have not undergone**

independent third-party testing to ensure compliance with minimum safety and performance standards.

Consumers have been advised to use the BIS Care App to verify the authenticity of product certifications and to report non-compliant items.

The seizures underscore growing concerns over consumer safety, as numerous non-certified products continue to be sold online despite government regulations mandating certification for items like pressure cookers, electrical appliances, and children's toys.

BIS emphasized that market surveillance activities will continue as part of ongoing efforts to protect consumer interests and ensure compliance with safety standards.

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56. **INS Imphal** completed its port visit to Mauritius and left Port Louis. The ship was at Mauritius to participate in the **57th Mauritius National Day celebrations**, representing India with a marching contingent, **the Indian Navy band, and a flypast by two MH 60R helicopters**.

    Prime Minister Narendra Modi was the Chief Guest at the spectacular parade.

    During the port visit, the ship also held several professional interactions, cultural engagements, sports fixtures and community outreach activities to further strengthen the robust bonds between the two countries.

    Training capsules were conducted onboard the ship for Mauritius National Coast Guard (NCG) personnel on practical aspects of harbor and sea watchkeeping, VBSS (Visit, Board, Search, and Seizure), force protection, shipborne helicopter operations, firefighting, and damage control.

    Some additional activities:

    - A medical camp for the elderly at **Gayasingh Ashram** was also conducted by the ship's crew.
    - The ship was opened to the public on 12 March on the occasion of Mauritius National Day and saw over 1,300 visitors.
    - The ship's crew visited key security establishments at Port Louis, including the Mauritius Police and NCG Headquarters.
    - **Capt Kamal K Choudhury**, the ship's Commanding Officer, called on key dignitaries and high-ranking officials of the Mauritius Government and Mauritius Police Force (MPF).
    - The ship hosted a deck reception along with the High Commission of India, which was attended by senior ministers and officials from Mauritius and members of the local diplomatic corps.

    After departing from Port Louis, **INS Imphal conducted** a bilateral passage exercise and joint **EEZ surveillance** with **MCGS Victory** to strengthen the collaboration between the Indian Navy and the National Coast Guard of Mauritius.

57. Union Home Minister **Amit Shah** attended **the Assam Rifles HQ relocation function** at Sector 23 HQ Assam Rifles, Khatla, Aizawl.

    The event marked the relocation of Assam Rifles from Aizawl's city center to **Zokhawsanga**.

The dreams of the Mizo people for over 35 years have finally been realized with the relocation of Assam Rifles from Aizawl's urban area to Zokhawsanga.

The first military camp in Aizawl was established in 1890.

He also highlighted major infrastructure projects in Mizoram: including the ongoing construction of a 4-lane highway from Vairengte to Aizawl, the double-lane highway from Aizawl to Tuipang, and the development of Sairang railway station.

Lt. Gen. Vikas Lakhera is the current Director General of Assam Rifles.

Historical Background behind this event:

A formal memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the Assam Rifles and the Mizoram Government was signed at the Mizoram House in New Delhi on October 23, 2024, outlining the relocation process and the terms of land transfer.
The MoU outlined the relocation process and the terms of the land transfer. A detailed press note was also released at that time.

58. Union Home and Cooperation Minister **Amit Shah** inaugurated **Lachit Barphukan Police Academy in Dergaon, Assam**, and laid the foundation of its Phase II as well.

Named after the legendary Ahom general Lachit Barphukan, the academy will train police personnel with modern facilities.

The academy, sprawling over 340 acres, is undergoing renovations and expansions in two phases, with the first phase costing Rs 167 crore and will focus on expanding housing infrastructure, with plans to provide residential quarters for 240 families, along with hostels that can accommodate 312 officers/personnel and 2,640 trainees.

The projected cost for the **second phase is Rs 425 crore**, showcasing the government's commitment to building a world-class training center for police forces.

All three phases will involve a cost of around **Rs. 1050 crore**, which will make it the best police academy in the nation Many types of modern facilities have been included in this academy.

Major steps by GoI for Peace and Harmony:

- The Bodo Peace Accord was signed.
- The Karbi Pact was signed in 2021.
- The Adivasi peace pact in 2022.
- The ULFA peace pact in 2023.
- The Assam-Meghalaya Border peace pact in 2023.
- The Assam Arunachal Pradesh Border peace pact too was signed.
- More than 10,000 youths surrendered arms and joined the mainstream.

The government laid initiatives with an expenditure of Rs. 10,000 crores:

- A project of more than 200 kilometers of roads is being built under Bharatmala Pariyojana; the Duburi-Phulbari bridge has been built with Rs. 3,000 crores.
- Rs. 1,000 crores have been spent on roads and embankments.
- A six-lane rail bridge is being built across the Brahmaputra.
- Majuli and Jorhat are being connected through a national highway with Rs 382 crore.
- Rs. 1200 crore has been spent on the expansion of the Lokapriya Gopinath Bordoloi airport.
- Railway Projects worth Rs. 9,000 crores have been dedicated

Major steps of Government in the Educational field with an expenditure of Rs. 1000 crore:

- a medical college in Tamulpur,
- a medical college in Nalbari,
- a medical college in Kojrajhar,
- a medical college in Dhuburi, along with many other infrastructure projects have been accomplished.

For the **first time, piped drinking water** has been supplied to **58 lakh homes,** and **1.80 crore people** have been given **free medical care up to Rs. 5 lakhs**; toilets were built in 43 lakh homes; 2.32 crore people have been given five kg of rice free of cost; and 51 lakh gas cylinders have been given 21 lakh homes have been built.

59. The first-ever **Fit India Carnival** was inaugurated by Union Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports **Mansukh Mandaviya** at Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium (JLN), New Delhi.

The event aims to promote physical fitness, mental well-being, and healthy lifestyle choices among citizens.

Bollywood actor Ayushmann Khurrana, wrestling champion Sangram Singh, wellness expert Mickey Mehta, former WWE wrestler Shanky Singh, and Guinness World Record holder Rohtash Chaudhary were present at the grand celebration.

The event also unveiled the mascot, logo, and anthem of the Khelo India Para Games, scheduled between March 20 and 27 in New Delhi.

The Fit India Carnival, a three-day fitness and wellness festival, was held on March 16, 17, and, 18.

A host of sports activities including rope skipping, stationary cycling, arm wrestling, cricket bowling, squat, and push-up challenges, etc. were highlighted over the three days at the Fit India carnival.

Key Activities and Performances:

- Martial arts demonstrations: **Kalaripayattu, Gatka, and Mallakhamb**.
- Fitness challenges: Rope skipping, arm wrestling, push-ups, squat competitions, and cricket bowling.
- Free health assessments by the Sports Authority of India's National Centre of Sports Sciences and Research (NCSSR), including nutrition and psychological consultations.
- Launch of the book "Benefits of Cycling" by NCSSR.
- 'Fitness through Dance' cultural segment to promote fitness engagingly.

- Question & Answer session with fitness icons.

60. The bilateral meeting between the **Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi,** and the Right Honourable **Christopher Luxon, Prime Minister of New Zealand** was held in New Delhi.

During the meeting, both sides announced the launch of negotiations for a comprehensive and mutually beneficial India-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations.

The India-New Zealand FTA negotiations aim to achieve balanced outcomes that enhance supply chain integration and improve market access.

Both countries have continuously worked towards building their bilateral relationship encompassing trade and investment.

Key Highlights of the meet:

Announcements:

- Launch of negotiations between India and New Zealand on a Free Trade Agreement (FTA).
- Launch of negotiations between India and New Zealand on an arrangement facilitating the mobility of professionals and skilled workers.
- New Zealand joins the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI).
- New Zealand becomes a member of the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI).

Bilateral Documents:

- Joint Statement
- Memorandum of Understanding on Defence Cooperation between the Ministry of Defence of India and the New Zealand Ministry of Defence.
- Authorized Economic Operator - Mutual Recognition Agreement (AEO-MRA) between the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs of India (CBIC) and the New Zealand Customs Service.
- Memorandum of Cooperation on Horticulture between the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare of India and the Ministry for Primary Industries of New Zealand.
- Letter of Intent on Forestry between the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change of India and the Ministry for Primary Industries of New Zealand.
- Education Cooperation Agreement between the Ministry of Education of the Republic of India and the Ministry of Education of New Zealand.
- Memorandum of Cooperation in Sports between the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports of the Government of India and the Sport New Zealand of the Government of New Zealand.

61. Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation, **Amit Shah**, addressed the **57th annual conference of the All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU)** as the Chief Guest in **Kokrajhar, Assam.**

During the event, the Union Minister highlighted the positive outcomes of the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) peace accord, signed on January 27, 2020, stating that 82 percent of the agreement's terms have already been fulfilled and the remaining terms would be fully implemented in the next two years.

Under the 'One District, One Product' program, Kokrajhar's famous "Mushroom from Bodoland" is now being served in hotels in Delhi.

Hundreds of Bodo youth have been brought into the mainstream through education and development. The government has allocated Rs. 287 crore to rehabilitate former National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) members, with 90% of the funding provided by the Modi government. This rehabilitation effort has been pivotal in shifting the focus from separatism to progress in Bodoland.
Rs. 1,500 crores has been allocated for the region, despite its population being only 3.5 million.

ABSU's contributions to education, have enabled students to take their 12th-grade exams in the Bodo language, ensuring the survival of the Bodo language for generations to come.

A prominent road in Delhi will be named Bodopa Upendra Nath Brahma Marg in Brahma's honour, and a bust of Brahma will be unveiled in a special program in April 2025.

62. **Rashtriya Ayurveda Vidyapeeth (RAV)**, under the aegis of the Ministry of Ayush, Government of India, hosted its **28th Convocation & Shishyopanayaniya Samskara** in New Delhi.

The prestigious event was marked by the felicitation of esteemed Ayurvedic practitioners, accreditation of prominent institutions, and the announcement of groundbreaking initiatives to strengthen Ayurveda education and practice in India and globally.

During this convocation, **Prataprao Jadhav**, Union Minister of State, Ministry of Ayush, and Union Minister of State for Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, facilitated Ayurvedic practitioners through the Lifetime Achievement Award & Fellow of RAV Award.

Lifetime Achievement Awards for Pioneers in Ayurveda:

- Prof. Banwari Lal Gaur (Jaipur, Rajasthan)
- Prof. Kulwant Singh (Jammu and Kashmir)
- Vaidya Mohan Narayan Tambe (Satara, Maharashtra)
- Dr. Bidhubhusan Nanda (Dhenkanal, Odisha)

Fellow of RAV (FRAV) Award Conferred to Eminent Ayurvedic Scholars:

- Vaidya Rajeev Bhardwaj – Member of Parliament, Kangra (Himachal Pradesh)
- Vaidya Meeta Kotecha – Jaipur, Rajasthan
- Prof. Sanjeev Sharma – Jaipur, Rajasthan
- Prof. Arun Kumar Tripathi – Uttarakhand
- Dr. G. Prabhakar Rao – New Delhi
- Prof. Lakshman Singh – Varanasi
- Vaidya Ashutosh Gupta – Maharashtra
- Vaidya Urmila A. Pitkar – Maharashtra
- Vaidya Nitin M. Kamat – Maharashtra
- Vaidya Shailja Uppinakuduru – Karnataka
- Vaidya Vinod Kumar Vairagi – Madhya Pradesh

- Vaidya Tuhin Kanti – West Bengal
- Vaidya Tapan Kumar – Gujarat

These individuals were recognized for their contributions to research, clinical practice, education, and propagation of Ayurveda across India and beyond.

Ministry of Ayush launched the **Diplomate of National Board Ayurveda (DNB) program**, a major milestone in advancing Ayurvedic education to enhance the credibility of Ayurvedic education.

63. The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) released the monthly **Wholesale Price Index (WPI) for India**. This report provides crucial information on price changes in various sectors of the economy, aiding in economic analysis and policy formulation.

The WPI for February 2024, with **a base year of 2011-12**, reflects **a 0.20% provisional annual inflation rate**, driven primarily by increases in food articles, crude petroleum & natural gas, electricity, machinery & equipment, and motor vehicles, trailers & semi-trailers.

Monthly Change Overview

- The WPI for all commodities increased by **0.07%** in February 2024 compared to January 2024.
- Primary Articles witnessed a 0.22% increase in the index, driven by price rises in minerals, crude petroleum & natural gas, and food articles.
- Fuel & Power has experienced a 0.19% index increase, mainly due to higher prices of electricity and mineral oils.
- Manufactured Products remained unchanged, with varied price movements across different NIC two-digit groups.
- The Food Index showed a rise from 178.0 to 178.3, resulting in an inflation rate increase from 3.79% to 4.09%.

Monthly Change in Major Groups

Primary Articles:

- A rise of 0.22% in the primary articles index, led by increased prices in minerals, crude petroleum & natural gas, and food articles.
- Non-food articles witnessed a **1.73%** price decline.

Fuel & Power:

- An increase of 0.19% attributed to higher prices of electricity and mineral oils.
- The Coal prices dropped by 0.15%.

Manufactured Products:

There is no change in the index, with varied price movements across different NIC two-digit groups.

WPI Food Index:

Increased from 178.0 to 178.3 with the contribution of a rise in inflation from 3.79% to 4.09%.

All Commodities as per the final WPI for December 2023 stood at 151.8 with an inflation rate of 0.86%.

64. The **Department of Telecommunications (DoT)** has partnered with **WhatsApp** to launch a security campaign aimed at combating online fraud and spam.

The DoT has teamed up with WhatsApp to expand Meta's security initiative, **'Scam Se Bacho Campaign'**, to raise awareness and curb digital fraud. The partnership is expected to enhance efforts in tackling cybercrime, which has seen a significant rise in recent years.

WhatsApp is leveraging data from the Digital Intelligence Platform (DIP)—a DoT initiative that enables real-time intelligence sharing with over 550 stakeholders, including banks and law enforcement agencies. This system plays a key role in detecting and addressing misuse of telecom resources.

Sanchar Sathi:

Sanchar Saathi is an Indian government web portal, owned and operated by the Department of Telecommunications, to help Indian mobile users track and block lost smartphones and identity theft, forged KYC, using the CEIR module. Users get a request ID to check and potentially unblock the IMEI (International Mobile Equipment Identity) in the future.

65. Union Minister of State for Labour & Employment, Shobha Karandlaje presented the BEEDI workers' data in the Parliament.

As per the presented data, there are 49.82 lakh registered Beedi workers in the country.

The Labour Welfare Scheme under the Ministry of Labour and Employment is implemented across the country through **Labour Welfare Organizations**, situated in 18 Regions across the country, including for the welfare of the Beedi Workers and their family members.

The Labour Welfare Scheme has three components, namely, Health, Scholarship & Housing, and the details are as under:

- Health care facilities through 10 Hospitals and 279 dispensaries. Reimbursement of expenditure for specialized treatments i.e. Cancer, Tuberculosis, Heart Diseases, Kidney Transplantation.
- Financial Assistance for the education of the children of beedi workers from class-I to college/University ranging from Rs. 1000/- to Rs. 25,000/- per student per annum, depending upon class/course.
- Subsidy of Rs.1,50,000/- (per beneficiary) for construction of pucca houses, under the Revised Integrated Housing Scheme (RIHS) 2016. RIHS has been converged with Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana.

The Government also runs other various welfare schemes for the welfare of Unorganized workers including for the Beedi workers:

- Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (ABPMJAY),
- Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY),

- Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY),
- Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan- Dhan (PMSYM),
- Public Distribution System through the One-Nation-OneRation-Card Scheme under the National Food Security Act,
- Deen Dayal Upadhyay Gramin Kaushal Yojana,
- Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana,
- Mahatma Gandhi Bunkar Bima Yojana,
- Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana,
- Pradhan Mantri Street Vendors Atmanirbhar Nidhi PMSVANidhi,
- Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana among others.

66. Union Minister of State for Labour & Employment, Shobha Karandlaje presented several steps to streamline the process of claim settlement on behalf of the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO).

Some of these are as follows:

- For Auto mode processing of advance claims, the amount limit has been enhanced to **Rupees One lakh**. Further, in addition to illness/hospitalization advances, the advances for housing, education, and marriage are also enabled for auto-mode processing. Now, **60%** of advance claims are processed in auto mode.
- The auto-mode claims are processed within three days. EPFO achieved a historic high of 2.16 crore auto-claims settlement as of 06.03.2025 during the current financial year, up from 89.52 lakh in FY 2023-24.
- Member details correction process has been simplified, and members having Aadhaar-verified UANs can make corrections in their IDs themselves, without any EPFO interventions. At present, about 96% of corrections are being done without any EPF office intervention.
- Over 99.31% of claims are now received in online mode, without any requirement to visit the field office. In FY 2024-25, 7.14 Crore claims have been filed in online mode.
- In Transfer claim submission requests, the need for employer's attestation of Aadhaar-verified UANs has been done away with. Now only **10% transfer claims** require member and employer's attestation.
- The requirement for submitting a cheque-leaf with the claim form has also been relaxed for KYC-compliant UANs meeting prescribed criteria.
- EPFO has also provided de-linking facilities to the members, whose EPF accounts have been erroneously/fraudulently linked by the establishments. Since its launch on 18.01.2025, more than 55,000 members have de-linked their accounts till the end of February 2025.
- Certain upfront validations have been developed to guide members about eligibility /admissibility of claims to ensure that members do not file ineligible claims
- The claim settlement process is being further simplified with the Centralization of member databases under the Centralized IT Enabled System (CITES 2.01).

67. **CSC Academy** joined hands with **Shoolini University, Himachal Pradesh**, one of the top ranked universities in India to enhance the access to quality higher education in India.

The collaboration aims to offer undergraduate and postgraduate programs through online mode to students across the country. This initiative of CSC Academy will bridge the education gap, providing industry-relevant skills and better career prospects, particularly for first-generation learners, especially in rural and disconnected areas.

Through this initiative, Common Services Centre (CSC) operators (Village Level Entrepreneurs - VLEs) will facilitate student registrations, ensuring higher education is more accessible to aspiring students, even in remote areas.

Programs Offered:

- BBA (Bachelor of Business Administration)
- BCA (Bachelor of Computer Applications)
- MBA (Master of Business Administration)
- MCA (Master of Computer Applications)
- MA (English Literature)

68. The **Data Informatics and Innovation Division**, under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with **Indraprastha Institute of Information Technology, Delhi (IIIT-Delhi)** under the Data Innovation Lab component of the Capacity Development Scheme of the Ministry.

The initiative aims to foster an innovation ecosystem by bridging the gap between academia and real-world statistical challenges. It seeks to leverage academic expertise to enhance the quality and application of official statistics in policymaking and governance.
The Ministry has also signed MoUs with: **IIM Nagpur IIT Madras IIIT Vadodara IIT Gandhinagar Maharaja Agrasen University.**

69. The **Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency** (IAEA), **Rafael Mariano Grossi**, inaugurated the **S. N. Bose** Building at the Global Centre for Nuclear Energy Partnership (GCNEP) at **Sushma Swaraj Bhavan** in New Delhi.

The inaugurated S N Bose Building was named in honor of the eminent Indian **physicist Dr. Satyendra Nath Bose.**

The facility houses state-of-the-art laboratories catering to GCNEP's specialised schools, enhancing its capabilities in nuclear security, reactor technology, radiation safety, nuclear material characterisation, and radioisotope applications.

During this event, a **Certificate Course on Nuclear Engineering** was also introduced which is a six-month program designed to provide in-depth knowledge on reactor physics, nuclear fuel cycle, radiological safety, nuclear safeguards, and emerging applications of nuclear technology.

The course is planned to be opened to all the signatories of GCNEP globally and will cater to 40 international and 10 national participants in a batch. The course aims to foster a new generation of nuclear professionals equipped to contribute to the safe, secure, and sustainable use of nuclear energy.

Diplomats of GCNEP partner countries, senior officials of the Ministry of External Affairs, and the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) were present at the event.

70. **A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** was signed between the **Lok Sabha Secretariat** and the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)** for the development of Sansad AI solution in the presence of Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla and Union Minister for MeitY Ashwini Vaishnaw.

The SANSAD BHASHINI initiative is envisioned to provide comprehensive In-House AI solutions for multilingual support and streamlined processes in parliamentary operations.

The key AI Initiatives under Sansad Bhashini are:

- **AI-Based Translation**: This will enable real-time translation of parliamentary content, including legacy debates, committee meetings, and agenda files, into various regional languages, making documents more accessible to all citizens.

- **AI-Powered Chatbot for Parliament Website:** This is designed to help MPs and officials quickly retrieve parliamentary rules, documents, and procedural information, with continuous improvements based on user interactions.

- **Speech-to-Text Conversion & Live Interpretation:** This will convert spoken debates into written text with real-time transcription, supporting multiple Indian languages while incorporating features like background noise reduction and customizable vocabulary for enhanced accuracy.

- **Speech-to-Speech Conversion with Real-Time Transcription:** This will also include an AI-powered chatbot designed to help MPs and officials quickly retrieve parliamentary rules, documents, and procedural information, with continuous improvements based on user interactions.

71. The **Directorate General of Civil Aviation** (DGCA) has granted an aerodrome license for Amravati Airport in Maharashtra.

Alliance Air is anticipated to commence flights between Amravati and Mumbai by the end of March 2025.

This development is part of Maharashtra's broader efforts to strengthen aviation infrastructure, which also includes enhancements to airports in Chandrapur, Dhule, Shirdi, and Navi Mumbai.

MADC Managing Director **Swati Pandey officially handed over the DGCA certification** to the Chief Minister of Maharashtra, Devendra Fadnavis.

Details of Amravati Airport's Development:

- The Public Works Department constructed the Amravati airport's airstrip in 1992. In 1997, the Maharashtra Airport Development Company (MADC) acquired it from the Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation (MIDC).
- The Airports Authority of India (AAI) was granted a 60-year lease on the airport by the Maharashtra government in 2014, with a monthly rent payment of Rs 100,000.

- As part of its development plans, the AAI intended to expand the airport's runway to 2,500 meters to accept larger aircraft, such as the Airbus A-320.

72. A Ministerial Roundtable, co-hosted by the **Government of India and UN Women**, was organized along the sidelines of the **69th session of the Commission on the Status of Women** at UN Headquarters in New York.

    The event focused on **"Digital and Financial Inclusion for Women's Empowerment".**

    The roundtable featured two main sessions:

    - The first focused on leveraging digital public infrastructure to accelerate women-led development, moderated by Christine Arab, UN Women Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific.
    - The second explored financial inclusion and the criticality of core resources, moderated by Daniel Seymour, Director of UN Women's Strategic Partnerships Division.

    The **discussion underscored alarming statistics:** globally, **a $1.7 trillion financing gap persists for women-owned MSMEs,** while financial literacy rates for women remain disproportionately lower than for men in almost every country and across all age groups.

    Throughout the discussion, participants emphasized that women's economic empowerment serves as a foundation for their participation in decision-making at household, community, and institutional levels.

    Digital tools were recognized as critical for enabling women to engage with governance systems, lead businesses, and advocate for their rights.

    The ministerial roundtable provided an important platform for Member States, especially from the Global South, to share experiences on how UN Women could better leverage its mandate to support countries in delivering on their commitments during this milestone year.

73. The **National Bureau of Fish Genetic Resources** (NBFGR) has identified the **14th eel species** from the Indian coast. It is a new species of **Congrid eel** discovered off **Thoothukudi coast, Tamil Nadu**.

    This species belongs to Ariosoma Genus. It was named **Tamilicum**, with reference to the world's oldest language, Tamil.

    This new species presented with a dorsal surface of the head with a single whitish band across the anterior eye margin and the ventral portion of the lower jaw had tiny dark pigmentation patches, forming a dark line along the isthmus.

    It had long, vomerine teeth patch, reaching half the length of maxillary, and possessed 120-129 total vertebrae and it grows up to 30 centimeters in length.

    It is morphologically closely related to Ariosoma emmae from the Taiwan waters but exhibits 13.4% genetic divergence in mitochondrial CO1 gene sequences.

    It is non-toxic and is commonly used as poultry feed.

These eels are benthic dwellers, living at the bottom of the sea and if the protein level is comparable to other edible fish, it could be suggested that they be commercialized for consumption.

74. **The Headquarters Integrated Defense Staff (HQ IDS)** has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the **Department of Science and Technology (DST)** to enhance technological self-reliance for the Indian Armed Forces through strengthening collaboration in defense research and development.

The partnership seeks to leverage DST's extensive R&D capabilities to address the evolving needs of the Armed Forces by aligning defense technology research with national science initiatives, thereby enhancing the defense sector's self-reliance in critical technology domains.

Under this MoU, DST will facilitate access to its research infrastructure, expertise, and academic institutions to meet the defense sector's requirements.

The collaboration will focus on developing advanced military technologies and fostering innovation, contributing to the overall goal of building self-reliance in critical defense capabilities.

75. **South Eastern Coalfields Limited's (SECL)** Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative, **'SECL Ke Sushrut',** became the **first and only CSR scheme** of any coal Public Sector Undertaking (PSU) to be listed on the Direct Benefit Transfer (**DBT**) portal.

This achievement reflects SECL's commitment to enhancing educational accessibility through transparent and efficient delivery mechanisms.

The DBT initiative, launched by the Government of India, aims to reform the delivery of benefits and subsidies by directly transferring funds to beneficiaries' bank accounts, minimizing leakages, and ensuring effective utilization of resources.

At present, the DBT portal features approximately 325 schemes from 55 ministries, covering diverse sectors such as health, education, agriculture, and social welfare.

'SECL Ke Sushrut', started in 2023, is a flagship educational initiative under SECL's CSR programs, designed to provide free medical coaching to 40 students preparing for the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET).

In the first batch of the program, 39 out of 40 students successfully qualified for NEET 2024. Among them, 11 students secured admission to the MBBS course, 2 gained admission in BDS, 2 were admitted to BAMS, 2 got admission in BPTH and 2 were selected for Veterinary courses in Government Colleges across Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh.

Attempt RRB PO 2025 Free Mock Test

76. The **North Eastern Handicrafts and Handlooms Development Corporation Ltd. (NEHHDC)**, under the Ministry of Development of the North Eastern Region, has obtained **Oeko-Tex certification** for **eri silk** from **Germany.**

Oeko-Tex is a worldwide certification for textiles such as yarns, fabrics, buttons, linens, terry cloth, thread, and other accessory materials that test for harmful substances in raw, semi-finished, and finished textile materials and products. The Oeko-Tex certification ensures that the final product is safe for human use.

The Government of India through the Central Silk Board has taken the following steps to develop & modernize the eri silk industry:

- Established Central Muga & Eri Research Institute at Lahdoigarh with its nested units, Assam to cater to the needs of R&D, Training & extension support required to the eri silk sector.
- Efforts are in place through the R&D Institute of Central Silk Board to modernize & upgrade the eri silk sector, through the carry out of innovative research required for the field and the development & demonstration of an improved package of practices & technologies among stakeholders to increase the production & productivity.
- Established Muga Eri Silkworm Seed Organization with its nested units for maintenance, production, and supply of quality eri silkworm seed.
- Implementing Silk Samagra-2 scheme from 2021-22 to 2025-26 for the overall development of the sericulture industry in the country including the eri silk sector.

77. The **Armed Forces Medical Services, New Delhi,** and the **National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS), Bengaluru** have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), for collaborative research and training aimed at enhancing mental health support and care for the Armed Forces.

The MoU was signed by Surgeon Vice Admiral Arti Sarin, AVSM, VSM, Director General Armed Forces Medical Services, and Dr Pratima Murthy, Director of NIMHANS in a ceremony attended by senior officials from both institutions.

The collaboration will focus on strengthening mental health services, conducting specialized training for medical personnel, and developing innovative programs to address the mental health issues faced by Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, their families, and dependents.

The key objectives of the MoU include collaborative research, faculty exchange, and academic activities.

NIMHANS, with its expertise in Neuropsychiatry, will provide help in conducting research on advanced Psychiatric care and support to military personnel, addressing common issues such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorders (PTSD), Anxiety, and Depression.

78. The **Defence Acquisition Council (DAC),** under the chairmanship of Raksha Mantri Rajnath Singh, accorded **Acceptance of Necessity (AoNs)** to eight capital acquisition proposals amounting to over **Rs 54,000 crore.**

For the Indian Army, AoN for procurement of a **1350 HP Engine** was accorded to upgrade the present 1000 HP Engine for the **T-90 Tanks**. This will enhance the battlefield mobility of these tanks especially in high-altitude areas by increasing the power-to-weight ratio.

For the Indian Navy, AoN for procurement of **Varunastra Torpedoes** (Combat) was accorded by DAC. Varunastra Torpedo is an indigenously developed ship-launched anti-submarine torpedo developed by the Naval Science & Technological Laboratory.

For the Indian Air Force, AoN for procurement of **Airborne Early Warning & Control (AEW&C) Aircraft Systems** was accorded by DAC. AEW&C systems are capability enhancers that can

change the complete spectrum of warfare and exponentially increase the combat potential of every other weapon system.

DAC also approved the guidelines for reducing the timelines at various stages of the Capital Acquisition Process to make it faster, more effective, and more efficient.

79. Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh announced that **North India's first nuclear power project** will be established in **Gorakhpur, Haryana.**

The **Jaitapur Nuclear Power Plant**, initially approved in 2008, faced delays due to shifts in agreements with French stakeholders.
Once operational, the Jaitapur plant will house six nuclear reactors, each with a capacity of 1,730 MW, totaling 10,380 MW. This will contribute 10 percent of India's 100 GW nuclear energy target by 2047, making it a cornerstone of the nation's clean energy strategy.

80. The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has approved the proposal for setting up of a new **Brownfield Ammonia-Urea Complex** of **12.7 Lakh Metric Tonnes (LMT)** annual capacity of Urea production within the existing premises of Brahmaputra Valley Fertilizer Corporation Limited (BVFCL), **Namrup Assam**, with an estimated total project cost of **Rs.10,601.40 Crore** with Debt Equity ratio of **70:30** through a Joint Venture (JV), under the New Investment Policy, 2012 read with its amendments on 7th October 2014.

The tentative overall schedule for the commissioning of the Namrup-IV Project is 48 months.

The Cabinet also approved the **National Fertilizers Limited (NFL)'s equity participation** of 18% in relaxation to the limits prescribed in Department of Public Enterprises (DPE) guidelines; and the constitution of an Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) to oversee the process of setting up of Namrup-IV Fertilizer Plant.

In the proposed JV, the equity pattern will be as under:

- Government of Assam: 40%
- Brahmaputra Valley Fertilizer Corporation Limited (BVFCL): 11%
- Hindustan Urvarak & Rasayan Limited (HURL): 13%
- National Fertilizers Limited (NFL): 18%
- Oil India Limited (OIL): 18%

BVFCL's share of equity shall be instead of tangible assets.

81. Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh released **the "India Bioeconomy Report 2025" (IBER 2025)** and **BioSaarthi** mentorship initiative for biotech startups during the 13th anniversary of the BIRAC held at the National Media Centre in New Delhi.

Key highlights of IBER 2025:

- India's bio-economy has witnessed a remarkable 16-fold rise in 10 years of the past decade, from $ 10 Billion in 2014 to an impressive $165.7 Billion in 2024.

- The bio-economy in India has exceeded its original projected value of $150 billion which was established for 2025.

- The biotechnology sector presently adds 4.25% to the national GDP measurements.

- A 17.9% annual rate of growth during the last four years has elevated India to a status of leading biotech power in the world.

BioSaarthi: A Global Mentorship Initiative for Startups:

The **six-month** cohort BioSaarthi serves as a mentor-mentee engagement program which provides specific guidance to new biotech entrepreneurs through its organized framework.

This initiative will:

- Foster innovation in India's biotech ecosystem.
- Enhance industry-academia collaboration.
- Indian startup organizations will gain better prospects to succeed internationally.

The program should enlist foreign experts together with professionals from the Indian diaspora to function as international mentors.

82. The **14th meeting** of the **ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus) Experts Working Group on Counter-Terrorism (EWG on CT)** was held in New Delhi.

   India and Malaysia co-chaired the 14th ADMM-Plus.

   Delegations from the ASEAN Secretariat, ASEAN countries (Lao PDR, Malaysia, Indonesia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, Philippines, and Vietnam), and ADMM-Plus member states (China, USA, Russia, Australia, Japan and Republic of Korea) participated in the meeting.

   During the meet, discussions were held to focus on evolving a robust and comprehensive strategy to tackle the evolving threat of terrorism and extremism.

   The meeting was aimed at sharing the on-ground experience of the Defence Forces of ASEAN countries and its dialogue partners.

   The meeting laid a foundation for the activities/exercises/meetings/ workshops planned for the current cycle.

   The co-chairs, India and Malaysia, conveyed a work plan for the activities planned for the cycle 2024-2027. It announced the conduct of a **Table-Top Exercise for EWG on CT in Malaysia in 2026** and a **Field Training Exercise in India in 2027.**

83. The Government of India has established an **Inter-Ministerial-Industry Committee on Fintech (IMICF)** to address regulatory concerns and long-term strategy for the financial technology sector.

   The committee will be chaired by the **Secretary of the Department of Financial Services (DFS).**

   The present (as of March 2025) Secretary of DFS is **M. Nagaraju.**

   The committee will focus on how fintech has influenced the broader banking and financial services industry, identify obstacles that hinder growth, and analyze global best practices in governance and regulation.

The committee will also comprise of representatives of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), the Department for the Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), the Department of Economic Affairs, and NITI Aayog.
From the regulatory bodies, both SEBI and RBI will be represented.

Fintech founders and CEOs who are part of this Panel include Ajay Kaushal, co-founder of BillDesk; Ashish Garg, Managing Director and Senior Partner at McKinsey; Jitendra Gupta, founder of Jupiter; Varun Dua and CEO of Acko; Lalit Keshre, CEO of Groww.

Key terms of reference (ToRs) of the Committee are as follows:

- To analyze the growth of the fintech sector and its contribution to the BFSI sector;
- To understand the issues and challenges of the fintech sector;
- To take stock of the regulatory and policy developments in the fintech sector;
- To identify the global best practices related to governance and regulation of FinTech's.

The committee will submit its report within three months from the date of its first meeting.

84. The Government of India hosted the **10th edition** of the **Raisina Dialogue 2025** in New Delhi. The event was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Chief Guest: Christopher Luxon, Prime Minister of New Zealand

The theme for 2025: *"Kālachakra – People, Peace and Planet".*

Six thematic pillars:

- Politics Interrupted: Shifting Sands and Rising Tides;
- Resolving the Green Trilemma: Who, Where, & How;
- Digital Planet: Agents, Agencies and Absences;
- Militant Mercantilism: Trade, Supply Chains & the Exchange Rate Addiction;
- The Tiger's Tale: Rewriting Development with a New Plan;
- Investing in Peace: Drivers, Institutions, & Leadership.

The event witnessed the participation of representatives from about 125 countries including 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.

Raisina Dialogue, launched in 2016 by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), is named after Raisina Hills in New Delhi. It is organized annually by the Ministry of External Affairs in collaboration with the Observer Research Foundation (ORF).

It is India's premier geopolitics and geo-economics conference, comparable to the Munich Security Conference (Germany) and Singapore's Shangri-La Dialogue.

The Raisina Dialogue brings together global leaders, policymakers, academics, industry experts, and journalists to address global challenges.

85. Union Minister of Youth Affairs & Sports and Labour & Employment, Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya inaugurated the **National Dope Testing Laboratory (NDTL) Annual Conference-2025** on the theme **"Anti-Doping Science: Innovations and Challenges",** bringing together key stakeholders from the sports and scientific communities in New Delhi.

The event provided a vital platform for scientists, coaches, physical education professionals, sports federations, and students to engage in insightful discussions on the latest advancements and challenges in anti-doping science.

The conference highlighted the crucial role of scientific innovation in doping detection, addressed the constantly evolving nature of prohibited substances, and underscored the importance of collaborative efforts to uphold the integrity of sports.

NDTL:

The **National Dope Testing Laboratory (NDTL)** is an organization based in India that focuses on testing and analyzing samples for performance-enhancing drugs (PEDs) and other banned substances in sports. It was established in **2008** by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports to combat doping in Indian sports and to ensure fair competition.

NDTL plays a crucial role in adhering to international standards set by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA). It conducts dope testing on athletes across various sports to detect banned substances and ensure athletes comply with anti-doping regulations.

86. The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, has approved the **'Incentive Scheme for Promotion of Low-Value BHIM-UPI Transactions (Person to Merchant - P2M)'** for the financial year 2024-25.

The incentive is paid by the Government to the Acquiring Bank (merchant's bank) and is then shared among other stakeholders: Issuer Bank (customer's bank), Payment Service Provider Bank (facilitates UPI onboarding/API integration), and App Providers (TPAPs).

The incentive scheme will be implemented at an estimated outlay of **Rs 1,500 crore**, from **1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025.** It exclusively covers UPI (Person to Merchant – P2M) transactions of up to **₹2,000,** specifically targeting small merchants to encourage the adoption of digital payments at the grassroots level.

Objective:

- Promotion of indigenous BHIM-UPI platform. Achieving the target of 20,000 crore total transaction volume in FY 2024-25.
- Supporting the payment system participants in building a robust and secure digital payments infrastructure.
- Penetration of UPI in tier 3 to 6 cities, especially in rural & remote areas by promoting innovative products such as feature phone-based (UPI 123PAY) & offline (UPI Lite/UPI LiteX) payment solutions.
- Maintain a high system uptime & minimize technical declines.

Under the approved scheme, incentives are designed based on the merchant category and transaction value.

For small merchants, UPI transactions up to **₹2,000** will attract **zero Merchant Discount Rate (MDR)** and will be eligible for an incentive of **0.15%** of the transaction value.

For transactions **above ₹2,000**, there will be **zero MDR** but **no incentive**. In the case of large merchants, all transactions, regardless of the amount, will have zero MDR and will not carry any incentive.

Reimbursement mechanism:

80% of the admitted claim amount by the acquiring banks will be disbursed unconditionally each quarter.

The remaining **20%** will be disbursed based on the following performance criteria:

- **10% of the admitted claim** will be paid **only if** the acquiring bank's **technical decline rate** (failed transactions due to technical issues on their side) is **less than 0.75%**.

- The remaining **10% of the admitted claim** will be paid **only if** the acquiring bank's **system uptime** (availability of their systems) is **more than 99.5%**.

87. The Ministry of Defence signed a contract with **Armoured Vehicle Nigam Limited** for the procurement of a **Nag Missile System (NAMIS)** tracked version of anti-tank weapon platform and **Force Motors Ltd & Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd** for around **5,000 Light Vehicles for the Armed Forces** at a total cost of around Rs 2,500 crore.

NAMIS (Tr) weapon system:

The total cost of the contract for the procurement of the NAMIS(Tr) weapon system, developed by the Defence Research & Development Laboratory of DRDO, is Rs 1,801.34 crore.

Light Vehicles:

These modern vehicles are designed as per contemporary vehicle technology with enhanced engine power to cater to a payload of 800 kgs.

Both procurements will enhance indigenization and national defense equipment manufacturing capabilities.

88. **Poonawalla Fincorp Limited** (PFL), a Cyrus Poonawalla Group NBFC, launched an **AI-powered underwriting solution** developed in collaboration with **IIT Bombay**. The system integrates artificial intelligence with human expertise to streamline credit evaluation and accelerate decision-making.

This innovation targets faster and more accurate credit evaluation processes in retail lending.

The solution combines Large Language Models and Machine Learning to create an automated credit decision system while maintaining human oversight. PFL expects the technology to boost credit managers' productivity by 40 percent in retail lending.

89. The Department of Posts (DoP) under the Ministry of Communications (MoC) issued a commemorative postage stamp of denomination **Rs.5** to honor **Mata Karma**, a revered saint, social reformer, and devoted follower of Lord Krishna, on her **1009th birth anniversary**.

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister (CM) Vishnu Deo Sai released a postage stamp of Mata Karma during the event in Raipur on March 25, 2025.

The stamp artistically depicted Mata Karma serving khichdi to Lord Krishna, with the sacred Jagannath Temple in the backdrop.

This representation pays tribute to the tradition started by Mata Karma, which remains a significant part of the temple's customs.

The commemorative stamp, along with philatelic items like the First Day Cover (FDC) and Information Brochure, is available at Philately Bureaus nationwide and online.

90. The **Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG)** teamed up with **Digital India Bhashini** to launch an AI-driven, multilingual, and multimodal grievance redressal system for the Centralized Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS).

This collaboration of DARPG-Bhashini will create a future roadmap for a more efficient, accessible, and responsive governance system for citizens.

The citizens cutting across regions will be able to file grievances on the CPGRAMS portal through 22 regional languages in an intuitive interface that will make grievance lodging much easier.

The solution in expected to go live by July 2025.

91. The **Ministry of Defense** (MoD) signed contracts with **Bharat Forge Limited and Tata Advanced System Limited** for the procurement of 155mm/52 Calibre Advanced Towed Artillery Gun Systems (ATAGS) and High Mobility Vehicle 6x6 Gun Towing Vehicles, respectively, at a total cost of about **Rs 6,900 crore**.

With the signing, total contracts worth Rs 1.40 lakh crore have been signed by MoD for capital procurement till date in the current Financial Year 2024-25.

The 155 mm/52 Calibre ATAGS will replace the vintage and smaller calibre guns and enhance the artillery capabilities of the Indian Army. The procurement of this gun system marks a significant milestone in the modernisation of the Artillery Regiments, enhancing operational readiness.

92. A team of researchers from **Mar Athanasius College** in **Kothamangalam** has made the botanical discovery in Kerala's Western Ghats, identifying a new species of freshwater red algae named **Sheathia rosemalayensis**.

The algae was found in the pristine waters of **Rosemala,** located in the **Kollam district,** and has been named after its discovery site.

The study was conducted by **Dr. Jayalakshmi P.S**., assistant professor at Mar Athanasius College, Kothamangalam (Kerala), and **Fr. Dr. Jose John**, former principal of Sacred Heart College, Thevara (Kerala).

Belonging to the Batrachospermaceae family and Sheathia genus, this species represents an extremely rare find in India, with its habitat currently documented only in the ecologically unique southern Western Ghats.

The research team distinguished S. rosemalayensis from three other recently identified freshwater red algae—Kumanoa chaugulei, Kumanoa periyarensis, and Macrosporophycos sahyadricus— through detailed morphological analysis and molecular sequencing.

To confirm their unique classification, DNA barcoding was conducted on all four species, providing genetic validation. The finding not only enriches India's biodiversity records but also highlights the Western Ghats as a critical hotspot for rare aquatic flora.

93. The **Ministry of Information & Broadcasting**, in collaboration with the **Media & Entertainment Association of India (MEAI),** hosted **WAM! (WAVES Anime & Manga Contest)** at Whistling Woods International in **Mumbai, Maharashtra.**

WAM! is one of the WAVES (World Audio Visual Entertainment Summit – Create in India Challenges.

Around 300 participants competed across three key categories, Manga, Webtoon, and Anime, at the latest edition in Mumbai.

The event also featured a Voice Acting showdown with 34 participants and an electrifying Cosplay contest with 45 participants.

Winners of WAM! Mumbai 2025:

Voice Acting Competition

- Winner: Chinchakar Ganesh Sanyog
- Runners-up: Aditi Joshi & Payal Vishal

Cosplay Contest

- Winner: Kaizad Sheshbaradaran as Okarun
- First Runner-up: Yash Mokal as Monkey D. Luffy
- Second Runner-up: Esha Joshi as Robin

Manga Category

- Student Winner: Jay Kumar Nagori
- Professional Winner: Hriday Biswas

Webtoon Category

- Professional Winner: Eesha Chavan

Anime Category:

- Student Winner: Chinmay Narote
- Professional Winner: Reubun Saldhana

94. **The Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA)** has successfully exported the first consignment of **GI-tagged Dalle Chilli from Sikkim to the Solomon Islands.**

Pathway of this first Consignment:

- In 2020, the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), under the Ministry of Commerce & Industry, granted the GI tag to Dalle Chilli, a unique and highly pungent variety grown in Sikkim.
- For this landmark export transaction, Mevedir, a leading agri-export enterprise committed to promoting organic produce from Sikkim, directly supplied the first shipment to the Solomon Islands.
- Through its extensive procurement network, Mevedir sourced about 15,000 kg of fresh Dalle Chilli from farmers and Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) in South Sikkim.
- This consignment ensured farmers received a premium price of Rs 250-300 per kg, compared to the usual Rs 180-200 per kg, reaffirming the economic benefits of GI tagging and international trade.

Dalle Chilli:

- Dalle Chilli, also known as Fire Ball Chilli or Dalle Khursani, is renowned for its intense pungency, bright red colour, and high nutritional value. It is also known as Red Cherry Pepper (Capsicum annum var cerasiforme).
- Scarlet red, it is one of the hottest chillies in the world. It is one of the valuable cash crops of Sikkim.
- Rich in vitamins A, C, and E, along with potassium, its Scoville Heat Units (SHU) range from 100,000 to 350,000, making it a sought-after spice for both culinary and medicinal applications.
- In Nepal, it is also known as Akbare Khursani or Jyanmaara Khursani.

95. **Union Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Minister** Shivraj Singh Chouhan announced that the Government of India abolished the **20 percent export duty** on **onions,** effective from **1ˢᵗ April 2025**, to ensure that farmers receive a remunerative price.

In 2023, a 40% duty was levied on onions to discourage farmers from exporting as increased domestic demand pushed up the retail price. When the price of onions started falling and farmers started getting a lower price, the government decided to reduce the export duty on onions from 40% to 20%.

The removal of the export duty on onions will enable farmers' hard-earned produce to reach global markets duty-free, securing better and more remunerative prices.

96. **Paras Defence and Space Technologies Limited** secured a contract worth **Rs.142.31 crores** from the **Centre for High Energy Systems & Sciences (CHESS)**, a division of the Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) under the Ministry of Defence (MoD).

The company will develop a Laser Source Module and integrate it with a Beam Control System (BCS) on a mobile platform for Anti-Drone and Anti-Missile applications, advancing high-power laser technology for modern warfare.

The project is scheduled for completion in 24 months.

This makes Paras Defence the first Indian company to develop such an advanced system, boosting local innovation in defence technology.

The Total Addressable Market (TAM) for high-power laser defence systems is estimated at Rs.25000 crore.

97. The **Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL)** launched "**Tavasya",** the second frigate of Project 1135.6 (Yard 1259). This frigate was built 56% indigenously in India, marking a significant leap from the 25% indigenization seen in its foreign-built counterparts.

The frigate is designed for multi-role operations, including air, surface, and subsurface combat, strengthening the Indian Navy's (IN) presence and dominance in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

It aligns with India's goal of achieving Rs. 50,000 crores in defense exports by 2029.

Tavasya:

- Tavasya, derived from the mace of Bhima in the Mahabharata, symbolizes the strength of the Indian Navy.
- The frigate measures 124.8 meters (m) in length, 15.2 m in width, and has a draught of 4.5 m.
- It has a displacement of approximately 3,600 tons and a top speed of 28 knots.
- It is equipped with stealth capabilities, BrahMos missile systems, torpedo launchers, and advanced sonar and sensor systems.

The first ship by GSL, 'Triput', was launched on July 23, 2024.

98. Researchers have confirmed the identification of a new plant species, **Uniyala keralensis**, in the **Agasthyamala Biosphere Reserve, Kerala.**

The species is named after the State of Kerala. It belongs to the Asteraceae family. It is endemic to southwest India.

Uniyala Keralensis:

- Uniyala keralensis is a small to large shrub.
- It can grow up to 1 to 3 meters in height.
- The plant shows attractive light purple florets.

Agasthyamala Biosphere Reserve:

- **Location**: Southern Western Ghats, spanning Kerala & Tamil Nadu.
- It includes Shendurney, Peppara, Neyyar Wildlife Sanctuaries, & Kalakad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve.
- Hosts 2,254 higher plant species (405 endemic), Nilgiri Tahr, Lion-tailed Macaque, Bengal Tiger, Indian Elephant.

99. The **Indian Railway Finance Corporation (IRFC)**, a public sector undertaking under the Ministry of Railways (MoR), signed a Rupee Term Loan (RTL) agreement worth **Rs. 5,000 crores** with **NTPC Renewable Energy Limited (NTPC REL)**, a subsidiary of NTPC Green Energy Limited (NTPC GEL).

The loan aims to finance NTPC REL's ongoing and new capacity expansion projects in the renewable energy sector.

NTPC REL has secured an unsecured loan backed by a negative lien with limited exceptions. The funds will drive the company's Renewable Energy (RE) growth in solar, wind, energy storage, and green hydrogen sectors.

The loan agreement was signed after NTPC Green Energy received approval from Rajasthan Renewable Energy Corporation Ltd to begin work on the final phase of its 320 MW Bhainsara Solar PV Project in Jaisalmer.

Indian Railways (IR), one of the largest electricity consumers, aims to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2030.

This agreement supports India's goal of reaching 450 Gigawatt (GW) of RE capacity by 2030, emphasizing the crucial role of public sector entities like IRFC in this transition.

100. The **Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) YuWaah** have signed a Statement of Intent (SOI) to empower rural women and youth across India.

This three-year partnership focuses on creating livelihood opportunities by connecting women from Self-Help Groups (SHGs) to jobs, self-employment, entrepreneurship, and skill-building initiatives, thereby boosting female labour force participation in rural areas.

The SOI was signed by T. K. Anil Kumar, Additional Secretary of MoRD, and Sharada Thapalia, Deputy Representative (Operations), UNICEF India.

As part of the collaboration, efforts will be made to strengthen digital infrastructure through the establishment of **Computer Didi Centers and Didi ki Dukan** in five blocks across five states, namely **Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, and Rajasthan.**

This pilot project has the potential to scale up and reach 35 lakh women across more than 7000 blocks after being successful.

The partnership will also feature innovative initiatives, such as Youth Hub, a cutting-edge aggregator platform for jobs, skilling, and volunteering.

The scalable models will be tested to create thousands of Lakhpati Didis, furthering the Government's vision of empowering women entrepreneurs.

101. Technopark-based small satellite manufacturing company **HEX20** has successfully launched and established contact with **'Nila',** India's first private payload hosting satellite, aboard **SpaceX's Transporter-13 mission**.

This rideshare service provides cost-effective orbital access for small satellites.

As part of this mission, HEX20 carried Release Actuators as the payload from a German space company, Dcubed, demonstrating HEX20's commitment to fostering global partnerships for rideshare mission.

Key Highlights of the 'Nila' Mission:

- The mission aims to validate HEX20's locally developed satellite subsystems.
- The satellite is named after Kerala's revered Nila River, reflecting its regional significance.
- 'Nila was deployed with support from Berlin-based Exolaunch GmbH.
- Weighing under 5 kg, it carries an in-orbit demonstration payload from Germany's Dcubed GmbH.

The mission received backing from:

- IN-SPACe (Ahmedabad): Regulatory approvals and testing assistance.
- ISRO (Bengaluru): Technical guidance and approval for a ground station at Marian Engineering College, Kerala.
- Academic Partnerships: HEX20 established a command center at Marian College, training faculty and students to operate the facility for data reception from 'Nila' and future missions.

102. The **Defense Research & Development Organization (DRDO)** and the **Indian Navy** successfully flight-tested the indigenously-developed **Vertically-Launched Short-Range Surface-to-Air Missile (VLSRSAM)** at the Integrated Test Range (ITR), Chandipur, Odisha.

The flight test was carried out from a land-based vertical launcher against a high-speed aerial target at very close range and low altitude. It has established the Near-Boundary-Low Altitude capability of the missile system.

During the test, the target was destroyed by the missile executing the high turn rate required for engaging targets at very close range and establishing the missile's agility, reliability & pin-point accuracy.

The test was conducted with all weapon system elements deployed in combat configuration. These elements, including a missile with an indigenous Radio Frequency seeker, Multi-Function Radar, and Weapon Control System, have performed as per expectations.

The performance of the system was validated by the flight data captured by various Range Instruments developed by ITR Chandipur.

103. The **Indian Institute of Management Mumbai** (IIM-Mumbai) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the **Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG)** of India.

The MoU was signed in the presence of **K. Sanjay Murthy, CAG of India**, and **Manoj Tiwari, Director**, **IIM-Mumbai,** in New Delhi, Delhi.

This collaboration focuses on enhancing audit practices across critical sectors such as Oil & Gas, Coal, Defense, Healthcare, Shipping, and Public Distribution Systems, with a special emphasis on inventory management, supply chain, and logistics audits.

Key initiatives under the partnership include:

- Capacity Building & Customized Auditor Training
- AI-driven Data Analytics & Technology Integration
- Research, Policy Advisory & Knowledge Exchange
- Workshops, Roundtables, and Global Expert Sessions

104. The **Indian Navy** successfully launched its **10th Ammunition Cum Torpedo Cum Missile (ACTCM) Barge** (LSAM 24, Yard 134) at **M/s Suryadipta Projects Private Limited in Thane**, **Maharashtra.**

The ceremony, presided over by Commodore Rahul Jagat, SPS, of the Submarine Overseeing Team (SOT), Mumbai, underscores the Navy's commitment to indigenization.

Key Details:

- In March 2021, the Navy signed a contract with this MSME shipyard to construct 11 ACTCM barges, of which nine have already been delivered and operationalized.
- Designed and built domestically in partnership with an Indian Ship Design firm and Indian Register of Shipping (IRS), these barges underwent model testing at the Naval Science and Technological Laboratory (NSTL), Visakhapatnam, to validate seaworthiness.
- The project aligns with the Make in India and 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' initiatives, reducing reliance on foreign defense imports.

105. The **Digital Bharat Nidhi (DBN)**, under the Department of Telecommunications (DoT), and the **National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD)** signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for digital empowerment in rural areas across the country.

The objective of the MoU is to drive rural development in institutions supported by NABARD by providing access to digital services and digital governance and promoting a digital economy through high-speed broadband connectivity under the BharatNet programme.

The key areas of this collaboration include:

- **Reference Data Sharing**: NABARD will share information including geo-coordinates and contact details of institutions, and DBN will share geo-coordinates of BharatNet Point of Presence (PoP) locations in Gram panchayats (GPs) from where high-speed broadband connectivity to be extended to rural institutions/enterprises.
- **Digital Content Sharing**: Both parties will share digital content (audio/video/text) related to their schemes and projects with each other.
- **Digital Services Integration**: Both parties will share information on their digital services/citizen-centric applications/portals/e-governance platforms for further integration and dissemination of information.
- **Awareness and Capacity Building**: Both parties will collaborate on awareness programs and capacity-building measures for start-ups, entrepreneurs, and rural institutions.
- **High-speed Broadband Access to Enable Digital Economy**: Both parties will promote each other's efforts to enable a digital economy by leveraging high-speed broadband connectivity using BharatNet.
- **Inclusion of ICT Infrastructure**: NABARD will promote the inclusion of ICT infrastructure, including broadband access support to institutions under their schemes and projects.

106. India has launched **'Operation Brahma'** to deliver humanitarian assistance to **earthquake-affected Myanmar**.

As part of this effort, **INS Satpura and INS Savitri** from the Eastern Naval Command, along with **INS Karmuk and LCU 52** from the Andaman and Nicobar Command, participated in Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) operations.

Approximately 52 Tons of relief material have been embarked onboard these ships, including HADR pallets consisting of essential clothing, drinking water, food, medicines, and emergency stores.

Under the Ministry of External Affairs' (MEA's) direction, the HADR efforts are being progressed in conjunction with Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff, Indian Army, Indian Air Force, and NDRF.

107. India has surpassed **Sri Lanka** to become the world's second-largest exporter of tea, with **255 million kg of tea exports in 2024**, while Kenya has retained the top spot, according to data compiled by the Tea Board of India. India's tea exports touched a 10-year high at 255 million kg in 2024 despite the uncertainties in the global market triggered by geopolitical tensions.

The country's exports shot up by a robust 10 percent during the year from the corresponding figure of 231.69 million kg recorded in 2023.

The value of India's exports jumped by over 15 percent to Rs 7,111 crore in 2024 from Rs 6,161 crore in 2023, as the prices were also higher during the year.

There was a sharp increase in shipments to Iraq, accounting for 20 percent of tea exports, and merchants are expecting to send 40-50 million kg to the west Asian country this fiscal.

Indian exporters, who entered several markets of west Asia when the Sri Lankan crop was low, managed to retain the shipment volumes there.

India exports tea to more than 25 countries, with the UAE, Iraq, Iran, Russia, the USA, and the UK as its major markets.

India is among the top five tea exporters in the world, accounting for about 10 percent of total world exports.

India's Assam, Darjeeling, and Nilgiri teas are considered one of the finest in the world. Most of the tea exported out of India is black tea, which makes up about 96 percent of total exports. The other varieties include regular tea, green tea, herbal tea, masala tea, and lemon tea.

108. India's textile industry plays a crucial role in the national economy, contributing **2%** to the GDP and positioning the country as the **6th largest textile exporter**, with a **3.9%** share in global exports.

The sector is projected to reach $350 billion by 2030, generating 3.5 crore jobs.

Beyond traditional textiles, **technical textiles** are transforming the industry. These specialized fabrics prioritize functionality over appearance and cater to diverse sectors such as automobiles, construction, healthcare, and agriculture.

National Technical Textiles Mission (NTTM):

Launched in 2020-21, the NTTM aims to boost India's technical textiles sector with a ₹1,480 crore outlay for five years (until 2025-26). The mission focuses on four key areas:

- Research, Innovation, and Development – Encourages R&D in technical textiles to
- develop new materials and processes.
- Promotion and Market Development – Increases the adoption of technical textiles
- through promotional efforts and global partnerships.
- Export Promotion – Strengthens exports with a dedicated export council.
- Education, Training, and Skill Development – Supports specialized education, internships, and workforce training in technical textiles.

So far, ₹517 crore has been allocated, with ₹393.39 crore utilized across various initiatives. 168 research projects worth ₹509 crore have been approved under the NTTM.

STATES AFFAIRS

109. The **Mangrove Initiative for Shoreline Habitats & Tangible Incomes** (MISHTI) is a government-led program launched in **2023** to facilitate mangrove plantations along India's coastline and on salt pan lands.

Under the MISHTI scheme, Gujarat led the nation by planting mangroves across **approximately 19,020 hectares at a cost of over Rs 76 crore** in the last two years.
It is estimated that **1,500 species of plants and animals**, including fish and birds, depend on mangroves, as the shallow waters beneath mangrove trees serve as breeding nurseries.
Gujarat's 1,650 km coastline supports diverse ecosystems, including mangroves. Under the 'MISHTI' scheme, the central government aims to plant mangroves across 540 sq. km in five years, with Gujarat already covering 190 sq. km in two years.

The state's mangrove cover is distributed across four major regions:

- Kutch District leads with 799 sq. km.
- Gulf of Kutch (Jamnagar, Morbi, Porbandar, Dwarka) has 236 sq. km.
- Central & Southern Gujarat (Bhavnagar, Ahmedabad, Bharuch, Surat, etc.) holds 134 sq. km.
- Saurashtra Region (Amreli, Junagadh, Gir-Somnath) has 6 sq. km.

110. The Government of Karnataka announced that **Bangalore City University** will be renamed as **Dr. Manmohan Singh Bengaluru University** in honor of the late former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.
The government aims to make it a model university, incorporating Government Arts College and Government RC College as constituent colleges.
The state govt. also announced that professional subject experts will be appointed as Professors of Practice in 16 government engineering colleges to enhance the employability of students through practical knowledge.
It also announced that newly launched polytechnics and engineering colleges will be provided with furniture, equipment, computers and books at a cost of Rs 10 crore.
A constituent college of Visvesvaraya Technological University (VTU) will be established at Chintamani in Chikkaballapur district at a cost of Rs 150 crore.
The Mysuru University will establish a Prof Nanjundaswamy Research Chair.

111. The **Mizoram** government has launched a **Special Voluntary Retirement Scheme** to address the issue of government employees hiring proxies.
This scheme allows employees unable to perform their duties due to health, domestic, or other challenges to opt for voluntary pensions.
It applies to **regular government employees under the CCS (Pension) Rules, 1972, who have not completed 20 years of service**, as well as those under the Mizoram New Defined Contributory System, 2010.

112. The **state cabinet of Assam** led by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa has officially renamed the Electronics City in Jagiroad to **Ratan Tata Electronic City**.

The decision underscores the Tata Group's profound influence on Assam's economic and technological landscape.

The creation of the "Ratan Tata Electronic City" will not only contribute to the local economy but will also position Assam as a key player in India's digital transformation journey.

The Tata Group's investment will further bolster the region's infrastructure, including roads, power supply, and logistics, ensuring that the state becomes a business-friendly environment.

CM Sarma had also announced the setting up of the ₹27,000 crore Tata semiconductor assembly plant at Jagiroad at recently held Advantage Assam 2.0 Investment and Infrastructure Summit. The summit was held on February 25-26, 2025, in Guwahati.

The assembly will be the site for the development of indigenous advanced semiconductor packaging technologies, including flip chip and I-SIP (integrated system in package) technologies.

These technologies are extremely critical for key applications such as automotive (especially electric vehicles), communications, network infrastructure and others.

113. **Sapher,** a leading force in the global renewable energy sector, **partnered with** the **Punjab government** (through Punjab Genco Ltd), to drive large-scale solar investment in key districts, including Fazilka and Ferozepur.

The collaboration aims to strengthen Punjab's renewable energy infrastructure by integrating solar power with existing biogas and hydroelectric projects.

One of the key proposals included installing solar panels above canals to reduce water evaporation and optimise land use.

Punjab has an extensive canal network, and the government sees this as a potential solution to balance water conservation with energy generation.

The partnership also aims to improve electricity access in rural areas, where frequent outages disrupt daily life.

114. The **Gujarat SemiConnect Conference** was inaugurated by Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel at Mahatma Mandir in Gandhinagar, Gujarat.

The three-day conference witnessed the participation of more than 1,500 delegates from various countries and India, along with over 250 exhibitors.

Theme: "**Silicon Gujarat: Powering India's Semiconductor Revolution**".

The conference featured three primary events. They are:

- Building Local to Global Value Chain

- 19th Indian Electronics and Semiconductor Association Vision Summit

- 2nd Indian Semiconductor and Packaging Ecosystem Conference

The conference witnessed the signing of **eight major Memorandums of Understanding** (MoUs) for investments in the semiconductor and fab sector worth over **Rs 1.04 lakh crore**, the launch of the Semiconductor Supply Chain Compendium, as well as the e-foundation stone laying for a hospital, an international school, and a fire station to be built in Dholera.

Among the key agreements,

- **Jabil India** signed an MoU **to establish a Silicon Photonics Manufacturing Unit** in Gujarat with an investment of Rs 1,000 crore. This unit will produce photonics transceivers essential for AI, telecom, the Internet of Things (IoT), and smart infrastructure, creating approximately 1,500 new jobs.

- The conference also witnessed the signing of a **Financial Support Agreement** (FSA) between the **India Semiconductor Mission** (ISM) and **Tata Electronics** (TEPL) for a semiconductor fabrication unit in Dholera. This ambitious project, backed by central government funding, involves an investment of Rs 91,526 crore.

- **Tata Electronics** also entered into an MoU with **IIT Gandhinagar** to **strengthen skill development in the semiconductor sector.**

- A tripartite agreement was also signed between Tata Electronics, Taiwanese company Powerchip Semiconductor Manufacturing Corp (PSMC), and Himax Technologies to collaborate on semiconductor chip production in Dholera.

115. Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation **Amit Shah** attended various events as the Chief Guest in Gandhinagar, Gujarat.

At the event, he **laid** the **foundation stone** for the **High-Performance Sports Center** in **Gandhinagar** to provide the para-athletes with world-class facilities and the best infrastructure.

He also unveiled a **₹150 commemorative coin** on the occasion of the **150th birth anniversary** of revered **Acharya Shri Buddhi Sagar Surishwar Maharaj,** who made karma, dharma, meditation, and knowledge life values.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was also signed between the **Gujarat government's Department of Science and Technology** and **Common Service Centers** for the online delivery of citizen-centered services.

He also addressed the '**Swarnim Shatabdi Samapan Mahotsav'** (golden centenary closing ceremony) of the **Ahmedabad District Cooperative Bank**. The bank was established in 1925 and is a testament to the prosperity of farmers in Ahmedabad district.

He also released **24 reprinted books** by the **SastuSahitya Mudranalaya Trust** during the Akhand Anandotsav event in Ahmedabad.

The trust was founded in 1907 under the inspiration of Bhikshu Akhandanand, who emphasized the importance of knowledge and literature. Since 2023, Amit Shah has been serving as the president of the trust.

116. **Punjab's** Minister for Social Security, Women, and Child Development Baljit Kaur launched **'Project Hifazat'** aimed at empowering women and children facing violence by enhancing reporting mechanisms and support systems.

The project seeks to eliminate fear among victims of domestic violence, workplace harassment, and abuse, ensuring better last-mile connectivity and an integrated support system. It aims to strengthen coordination among different government departments, such as:

- Social Security, Women & Child Development
- Punjab Police
- Health & Family Welfare

A **24x7 women and child helpline (181)** will be at the core of **Project Hifazat**, assisting women and children in distress. Calls will be classified into:

- Emergency cases (transferred to ERSS-112 for immediate action)
- Non-emergency cases (referred to One Stop Centres (OSCs), District Child Protection Units (DCPUs), and Women's Empowerment Hubs.

The project ensures rescue operations, legal assistance, medical aid, and psycho-social support for victims, offering a comprehensive safety net.

117. Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented the Manipur budget for 2025-26 in the Lok Sabha.

The budget outlines a total expenditure of **₹35,103.90 crore**, up from ₹32,656.81 crore in the current financial year (2024-25).

The budget was tabled under the President's Rule, which was imposed in Manipur on 13th February 2025 under Article 356 of the Constitution.

Key Notes of the Budget:

Total Receipts:

Estimated at ₹35,368.19 crore, up from ₹32,471.90 crore in 2024-25.

Capital Outlay:

Increased by 19% to ₹7,773 crore compared to the current financial year.

Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment (SASCI):

Over ₹2,000 crore was allocated under this scheme.

Social Sector Outlay:

₹9,520 crore was allocated for social sector initiatives.

Relief and Rehabilitation:

- ₹15 crore for temporary shelters for internally displaced persons (IDPs).
- ₹35 crore for housing for displaced people.
- ₹100 crore for relief operations.
- ₹7 crore for compensation.

Incentives for Police Personnel:

₹2,866 crore was allocated for incentives to police personnel posted in sensitive areas.

Fiscal Deficit:

- Estimated at 3.42% of the Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP).
- Total outstanding debt is projected at 37% of GSDP for 2025-26.

Supplementary Demands for Grants (2024-25):

- The Budget Estimate (BE) for 2024-25 was ₹34,899 crore, revised to ₹32,657 crore in the Revised Estimate (RE).
- Revenue receipts were revised from ₹27,716 crore (BE) to ₹24,374 crore (RE).
- Capital receipts were revised from ₹7,099 crore (BE) to ₹8,098 crore (RE).
- The fiscal deficit for 2024-25 (RE) is projected at 4% of GSDP.

118. Assam Finance Minister **Ajanta Neog** presented a **₹2.63 lakh crore** Budget for the 2025-26 fiscal year in the Assembly.

The state has witnessed a 250% rise in budgetary expenditure while capital expenditure has risen to ₹24,964 crore in 2024-25.

The budget focuses on key sectors such as healthcare, education, infrastructure, and agriculture, aiming to boost economic growth and improve the quality of life for the people of Assam.

Key Highlights of the Budget:

- The Budget offered exemption of professional tax for earnings up to ₹15,000 per month. The Minister said it would benefit over 1.43 lakh taxpayers.
- The government announced a one-time financial aid of ₹5,000 for tea workers during the annual budget. Neog stated that the assistance will benefit around 6.8 lakh tea workers across the state. The government has allocated ₹342 crore for the initiative.
- Presenting her last full budget for the fiscal, Neog also announced an extension of the tax holiday for green tea leaves for two more years to alleviate the challenges faced by the tea industry.
- The government has allocated ₹5,000 crore for its flagship Orunodoi scheme, which would cover over 37 lakh women in the state.
- Another ₹3,038 crore has been allocated for the Mukhya Mantri Mahila Udyamita Abhiyan to encourage women entrepreneurs. The scheme will begin on April 1, 2025, in Behali.
- The Mukhiya Mantri Nijut Moina scheme is allocated ₹391 crore. The scheme is aimed to boost girls' higher education and fight child marriage.

119. **Rural Electrification Corporation (REC) Limited** has signed an MoU with the **Energy Management Centre (EMC), Government of Kerala**, to finance pumped storage projects (PSP) in the state over the next five years.

The agreement has an estimated cost of **Rs 183.6 billion**.

The PSPs are expected to improve grid stability and support the integration of renewable energy sources.

The investment aligns with Kerala's long-term energy strategy, which focuses on sustainable and efficient power management.

The EMC, an autonomous body under the state's Department of Power, will oversee the planning and implementation of these projects in collaboration with the Kerala State Electricity Board Limited.

120. The **Andhra Pradesh** government has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with **Microsoft** to train 2 Lakh students in the state in artificial intelligence (AI) technologies.

The MoU also involves Microsoft equipping local students with skills in other "advanced technologies" over one year.

This MoU will help them to prepare for careers in IT and other industries in the state and will enable the state's youth to capitalize on the growing opportunities in the AI space globally.

Microsoft will impart training in AI and cloud computing to **500 teachers and 10,000 engineering** students from 50 rural engineering colleges in the State.

Also, 30,000 students from 30 ITIs (industrial training institutes) will be given AI training in digital productivity.

Nearly, 50,000 people will receive 100 hours of AI training to improve public services, adding that government officials will also be exposed to AI skills, and all this comes in a couple of months through the big tech major plans to invest $3 Bn in India to expand its AI and cloud capabilities.

Microsoft plans to equip 10 million Indians with essential **AI skills by 2030 as part of its ADVANTA(I)GE** India initiative.

As part of Microsoft's social impact charter, the AI skilling program will be undertaken in partnership with the government, nonprofit, and corporate organizations and communities.

121. The Government of the **United Kingdom (UK)**, in collaboration with the **Energy Department of Odisha** and **GRIDCO**, hosted a high-level workshop titled **'Net-Zero Vision for Bhubaneswar.'**

The event focused on exchanging knowledge, encouraging cooperation among various stakeholders, and developing a roadmap for Bhubaneswar's transition into a low-carbon, sustainable city.

The **Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), New Delhi** played a key role as the knowledge partner for the workshop.

A major highlight of the event was the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between TERI's Director General, Dr. Vibha Dhawan, and Dr. Debi Dutta Tripathy, FA-cum-Additional Secretary to the Government of Odisha. This agreement strengthens Odisha's commitment to clean energy transition and reinforces knowledge-sharing efforts to advance renewable energy, industrial decarbonization, and sustainable urban development.

122. **Kerala** has become the **first state in India** to establish a **Senior Citizens Commission** by passing the Kerala State Senior Citizens Commission Bill 2025.

This new commission would focus on protecting the rights, welfare, and rehabilitation of the elderly.

Senior Citizens Commission is a **statutory body** established under the **Kerala State Senior Citizens Commission Act, 2025.**

The commission will be based in **Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala.**

The commission will safeguard the rights and welfare of elderly citizens and act as an advisory body for policymaking.

The commission will take the lead in implementing initiatives to utilize the skills of senior citizens for the benefit of society.

123. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee announced that Premier League defending champions **Manchester City** have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to set up a **sports school** in **Kolkata.**

Manchester City FC would set up a football academy in Kolkata, and it signed an agreement in this regard with the Techno India group.

This would be the English club's first football academy in the country and would be known as Man City Football School.

The Manchester City Football School in Kolkata will provide students with an authentic and creative football education program inspired by the coaching philosophy and methodology of the world-leading football club.

124. **Tamil Nadu** won the **National Awards for Water Resources Management**, including the **National Award for Excellence in Integrated Water Resources Management 2024** for the Tamil Nadu Irrigated Agriculture Modernization Project (TNIAMP).

The **World Bank**-aided **Tamil Nadu Irrigated Agriculture Modernisation Project** (TNIAMP) was presented with the National Award for 'Excellence in Integrated Water Resources Management 2024' by the Central Board of Irrigation and Power (CBIP), Government of India.

125. Maharashtra-based **Nayara Energy** (formerly Essar Oil Limited) **s**igned two Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with the **Forest and Environment Department** of the Government of Gujarat and the **Vidya Samiksha Kendra (VSK)** under the Department of School Education and Literacy of the Ministry of Education (MoE) in Gandhinagar (Gujarat).

MoU on Conservation of Khijadiya Bird Sanctuary:

- Under the MoU with the Gujarat Forest and Environment Department, Nayara Energy will offer financial support for the conservation and restoration of the Khijadiya Bird Sanctuary, a Ramsar Site, in the Jamnagar district of Gujarat.
- It aims to improve the wetlands' environment, boost local biodiversity, and involve local communities in managing the sanctuary.
- It also focuses on promoting ecotourism, restoring the wetland, and developing conservation infrastructure.
- The project will span three years with a total cost of Rs 12 crore.

MoU on Promotion of Literacy:

- The MoU signed between Nayara Energy and VSK will enhance reading activities in 1,300 government schools and Anganwadis in Jamnagar and Devbhoomi Dwarka in Gujarat.
- As part of this three-year initiative, it aims to distribute approximately 3,75,000 books, laying a strong foundation for reading and learning.

126. **Vodafone Idea (Vi)** has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the **West Bengal State Export Promotion Society (WBSEPS)** to boost the digital transformation of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in the state.

Objective:

- Accelerate digital adoption among MSMEs in West Bengal, benefiting over 10 million people employed in the sector.
- Enhance MSME competitiveness, drive economic growth, and improve digital literacy in the state.

Scope:

- Vi will provide localized digital tools and training modules in Bengali.
- Conduct webinars to enhance tech adoption among MSMEs.
- Leverage Vi's digital assessment and advisory initiative, which has evaluated 9 lakh MSMEs nationwide since 2022.

127. India has completed genome sequencing of **10,000 isolates** of "**Mycobacterium tuberculosis**".

The genome sequencing initiative is a **part of the Dare2eraD TB program** (Data Driven Research to Eradicate TB), launched in **March 2022**, which focuses on data-driven research to eradicate TB.

A key component of this initiative is the Indian Tuberculosis Genomic Surveillance (InTGS) Consortium, spearheaded by the Department of Biotechnology (DBT), the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), and the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), in collaboration with major clinical institutions.

The program aims to sequence over 32,000 TB isolates to identify drug resistance mutations and improve treatment outcomes.

Note: Tuberculosis is a contagious airborne disease caused primarily by Mycobacterium tuberculosis.

128. The **West Bengal** police launched a mobile application through which police personnel can apply for their transfers to bring transparency to the process.

In a directive issued on 21st March 2025, the staff of the department from the ranks of constable to Sub-inspector can apply for transfers through the e-HRMS software.

The deadline for transfer requests through the app is April 11, 2025.

Only those police personnel who are in special medical cases can apply for transfer throughout the year.

The directive also mentioned that those who have already applied for transfer before March 21 would have to make a fresh application through the software.

Earlier, the state government had introduced an app, 'Utsasree,' to process the transfers of teachers to avoid complaints of bribery and favouritism.

129. Gujarat will become the second state after Uttarakhand to adopt the Uniform Civil Code (UCC).

State Law Minister Rushikesh Patel announced this in the assembly, calling it a step toward equal justice.

A committee led by ex-Supreme Court judge Justice Ranjana Desai will draft the UCC, ensuring it aligns with the constitution and public opinion.

The panel has sought suggestions from residents, legal experts, and groups, extending the deadline to April 15, 2025, for wider input.

The UCC aims to ensure gender equality and uniform civil laws while protecting fundamental rights.

UCC:

- The Uniform Civil Code refers to a single set of laws governing personal matters such as marriage, divorce, adoption, inheritance, and succession for all citizens of India.
- The concept of UCC is mentioned in **Article 44** of **Part IV** of the Indian Constitution as a Directive Principle of State Policy, which states that the state shall endeavor to secure a uniform civil code for citizens throughout the territory of India.

130. The **Yaoshang Festival** (the festival of Holi), celebrated in **Manipur**, reflects the community's resilience in preserving cultural traditions despite challenges.

It serves as a symbol of unity and hope, providing an opportunity for healing and a step toward normalcy amid ongoing tensions.

Yaoshang, a five-day festival in Manipur, begins on the full moon day of the Lamta month (February-March).

The first day begins with the construction of small thatch huts, called "Yaoshang," in various localities. These huts are adorned with colourful decorations and serve as a focal point for the festival.

It features religious rituals, sports, community bonding, and traditional celebrations like the Thabal Chongba dance.

131. The **Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG)** of India signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with **Bhaskaracharya National Institute of Space Applications and Geo-informatics** (BISAG-N), Gandhinagar, to modernize audit processes by harnessing advanced technologies such as geospatial tools, Artificial Intelligence (AI), machine learning, and big data analytics.

This collaboration seeks to enhance audit capabilities by developing a customized platform for audit analysis, leveraging geospatial data and other relevant datasets from the PM GatiShakti initiative.

The CAG aims to strengthen its auditing framework while showcasing the technological prowess of public institutions. This initiative aligns with the broader Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) drive, emphasizing innovation and efficiency in governance.

132. The **Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)** has signed **six Official Development Assistance (ODA)** loan agreements with the Government of India, totaling **¥191.736 billion** (**approximately ₹11,181 crores**).

These loans will support critical projects in infrastructure, environmental conservation, and sustainable development across India.

The six loan agreements were signed between the Government of India and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) at New Delhi for:

- "Tamil Nadu Investment Promotion Program (Phase 3) (TNIPP-III)" (JPY 36.114 billion)

- "Project for Capacity Enhancement for Effective Forest Management (JPY 8.280 billion)

- Project for Construction of Chennai Seawater Desalination Plant (II)" (JPY 52.556 billion)

- "Delhi Mass Rapid Transport System Project (Phase 4 Additional Corridors) (I)" (JPY 79.726 billion)

- "Assam State Aquaculture Promotion and Livelihood Improvement Project" (JPY 3.580 billion) and

- "Punjab Biodiversity and Natural Resources Conservation Project" (JPY 11.480 billion).

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

133. **India and Japan** have renewed their **$75 billion Bilateral Currency Swap Agreement (BSA),** which allows both countries to exchange local currencies for US dollars as needed.

BSA is an agreement between central banks to swap cash flows in different currencies under predetermined terms.

This two-way swap mechanism helps manage exchange rate volatility and provides liquidity support during financial crises, strengthening economic stability between the two nations.

134. NASA delayed the launch of its newest space telescope **SPHEREx** (Spectro-Photometer for the History of the Universe, Epoch of Reionization, and Ices Explorer). It is set to launch to study the early universe, its origins, and the formation of life.

Over two years, it will map 450 million galaxies, creating a 3D sky map in 102 color bands using spectroscopy, which examines the absorption and emission of light by matter.

The mission will explore cosmic inflation, and the rapid expansion following the Big Bang (13.8 billion years ago), and analyze molecular clouds to detect key compounds like water, carbon dioxide, and carbon monoxide.

Moreover, NASA also delayed the **Polarimeter to Unify the Corona and Heliosphere (PUNCH) mission**.

This mission is the first mission specifically designed to make use of the polarization of light to measure the corona and solar wind in 3D.

When particles, such as electrons, scatter sunlight, the waves of light become aligned in a particular way — this is polarized light.

135. The **World Health Organization** (WHO) announced the recommendations for the viral composition of influenza vaccines for the 2025–2026 influenza season in the northern hemisphere.

The announcement was made at an information session at the end of a 4-day meeting on the Composition of Influenza Virus Vaccines, a meeting that is held twice annually.

The WHO recommends that **trivalent** vaccines for use in the 2025–2026 northern hemisphere influenza season contain the following:

Egg-based vaccines

- an A/Victoria/4897/2022 (H1N1) pdm09-like virus
- an A/Croatia/10136RV/2023 (H3N2)-like virus
- a B/Austria/1359417/2021 (B/Victoria lineage)-like virus.

Cell culture-, recombinant protein- or nucleic acid-based vaccines

- an A/Wisconsin/67/2022 (H1N1) pdm09-like virus
- an A/District of Columbia/27/2023 (H3N2)-like virus
- a B/Austria/1359417/2021 (B/Victoria lineage)-like virus.

The recommendation for the B/Yamagata lineage component of quadrivalent influenza vaccines remains unchanged from previous recommendations:

- a B/Phuket/3073/2013 (B/Yamagata lineage)-like virus.

136. The **Malaysian Palm Oil Council** (MPOC) and the **Oil Technologists' Association of India** (OTAI) have formalised a collaboration to enhance awareness of Malaysian palm oil's nutritional benefits and health attributes in the Indian market, with the aim of fostering sustainable trade growth between the two countries.

The agreement paved the way for targeted awareness campaigns to address misconceptions and highlight palm oil's role in health, nutrition, and industrial applications.

The partnership will focus on consumer education, industry engagement, and scientific research to strengthen palm oil's position as a key ingredient in India's food and non-food sectors.

Palm oil possesses a unique balance of saturated and unsaturated fatty acids, and this well-rounded fatty acid profile is crucial for overall health. Natural compounds present in palm oil like tocotrienols and beta- carotene also support cardiovascular health, making it a suitable option for maintaining a balanced diet.

137. **The five-nation Naval exercise Sea Dragon 2025, which includes the Indian Navy, conducted off the Guam coast in the western Pacific Ocean from 6 to 19 March 2025.**

The 2025 edition included India, Japan, Australia, and South Korea, in addition to the United States.
The **Sea Dragon 2025** naval exercise is a multilateral maritime warfare drill.
This **exercise** was hosted by the **United States Navy's 7th Fleet**.
The objective of the Exercise:
The exercise aims to improve interoperability, maritime security, and submarine tracking techniques. It involves tactical coordination, simulated submarine hunting, and real-time intelligence sharing.
Each country deploys its Maritime Patrol and Reconnaissance Aircraft (MPRA), with India's P-8I playing a key role. A grading system determines the winner of the prestigious Dragon Belt Award, with **Japan consistently excelling since 2022**.

138. The **World Meteorological Organization (WMO),** in collaboration with the Global Climate Observing System (GCOS), the Group on Earth Observations (GEO), and the European Commission, has launched the **iClimateAction** project to address gaps in Earth observation and climate data accessibility.

The initiative, supported by the **Horizon Europe Work Programme 2023-2025,** aims to standardize Essential Climate Variables (ECVs) and improve data interoperability, making climate intelligence more actionable.
The project is aligned with global efforts like Early Warnings for All and the Global Greenhouse Gas Watch to enhance resilience against climate hazards.
In 2025, WMO celebrates its 75th anniversary as a specialized agency of the United Nations.

139. The **External Affairs Minister (EAM) S. Jaishankar** paid an official visit to the **United Kingdom** at the invitation of UK Foreign Secretary **David Lammy** from March 4-9, 2025.

During his visit, EAM also traveled to Ireland.
The visit aimed to strengthen the India-UK Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and enhance bilateral cooperation across various sectors.
Key Highlights of the Visit:
- Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to enhancing trade and investment opportunities, emphasizing the need to reduce trade barriers and expand market access.
- EAM inaugurated the **Consulate General of India in Belfast, Northern Ireland,** and the **Consulate General of India in Manchester**, the fourth Indian Consulate in the UK.
- Both sides exchanged views on regional and global developments, including the Ukraine conflict, West Asia, Bangladesh, and the Commonwealth.
- Both leaders interacted with Chevening Scholars from India, recognizing the crucial role that education and youth play, in fostering stronger bilateral ties.
- Both leaders noted the positive momentum in India-UK relations, particularly with the resumption of Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations.

140. **India and Armenia** have strengthened their bilateral ties by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) focused on cooperation in the **regulation of medical products**.

This agreement aims to facilitate collaboration between the regulatory authorities of both countries, ensuring the safety, efficacy, and quality of medical products.
Key Objectives of the MoU:
- The MoU seeks to align regulatory standards and practices between India and Armenia, promoting mutual recognition of medical products.
- Both countries will share expertise, best practices, and technical knowledge to enhance regulatory frameworks.
- The agreement includes provisions for training and capacity-building initiatives for regulatory professionals.
- By ensuring the quality and safety of medical products, the MoU aims to safeguard public health in both nations.

141. The 12th edition of the **India-Kyrgyzstan Joint Special Forces Exercise KHANJAR-XII** was held in **Tokmok, Kyrgyzstan** from 10 March to 23 March 2025.

This biennial exercise aims to enhance military cooperation, share best practices, and improve interoperability between the armed forces of the two nations.
The exercise focuses on counter-terrorism operations in mountainous and rural terrains, reflecting the shared security challenges faced by both countries.
The Indian contingent was represented by troops from The Parachute Regiment (Special Forces) and the Kyrgyzstan contingent was represented by the Kyrgyz Scorpion Brigade.
Exercise KHANJAR was first started in 2011.
The last edition of the same exercise was conducted in India in January 2024.

142. The **India-Bangladesh Naval Exercise Bongosagar 2025** and **Coordinated Patrol** were conducted in the **Bay of Bengal** region.

The exercise saw the participation of **INS Ranvir** from the Indian Navy and **BNS Abu Ubaidah** from the Bangladesh Navy.

The exercise enhanced interoperability between the two navies, facilitating collaborative responses to shared maritime security challenges.

The exercise involved a range of complex operations encompassing surface firing, tactical manoeuvres, underway replenishment, Visit-Board-Search-Seizure (VBSS) cross-boarding, communication drills, quiz for the Ops team and Junior officers on professional topics, and steam past.

The exercise provided the opportunity for both navies to develop closer links in tactical planning, coordination, and information sharing for undertaking seamless maritime operations.

The exercise has strengthened coordination and confidence between the two navies thereby improving the ability to undertake coordinated operations and respond swiftly and effectively against emerging threats at sea.

143. The **1st Joint Working Group (JWG)** meeting on **Agriculture** between **India and Chile** was conducted in virtual mode.

The meeting was co-chaired by Ajeet Kumar Sahu, Joint Secretary (IC), Department of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, India, and Gabriel Layseca, Director of the Department of International Affairs, Bureau of Agricultural Studies and Policies (ODEPA), Chile.

The meeting aimed to strengthen bilateral cooperation in agriculture and allied sectors.

Both sides discussed key issues related to market access, cooperation in horticulture, capacity building in the areas of extension, and research collaboration among other issues.

144. India participated in the **353rd Governing Body Meeting of the International Labour Organisation** (ILO), held in Geneva, Switzerland.

The Indian delegation was led by **Sumita Dawra**, Secretary of the Ministry of Labour and Employment, who emphasized India's achievements in areas such as social protection, fair migration, living wages, and responsible business conduct.

India reiterated its commitment to labor welfare, social justice, and the generation of quality employment while endorsing key ILO initiatives like the Global Coalition for Social Justice and the Second World Summit for Social Development.

India's Interventions on Key Labour Issues:

- Advocated for social protection, responsible business conduct, living wages, and AI and the future of work.
- Supported ILO's Fair Migration Agenda and promoted skills-based migration pathways.
- Highlighted India's progress in **social protection, with coverage increased to 48.8%,** surpassing the global average by 5%.
- Showcased key initiatives like EPFO (7.37 crore members), ESIC (14.4 crore beneficiaries), e-Shram Portal (30.6 crore unorganized workers), PM Jan Arogya Yojana (60 crore beneficiaries), and Targeted PDS (81.35 crore beneficiaries).

India extended its support for ILO's global initiatives, including backing the Second World Summit for Social Development in Doha, Qatar, and endorsing the proposal to convene the first Tripartite Global Forum on Migration.

The delegation reaffirmed India's commitment to the Global Framework on Chemicals and Waste Management and highlighted the importance of worker safety through India's Factories Act, 1948, and the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020.

During bilateral engagements, Sumita Dawra met with ILO Director-General **Gilbert F. Houngbo**, congratulating him on the Global Coalition for Social Justice initiative.

India's Key Contributions Recognized by ILO:

- Hosting of the Regional Dialogue on Social Justice in New Delhi (2024).
- Leading the "Responsible Business for Sustainable and Inclusive Societies" initiative.
- Supporting the feasibility study on the international classification of occupations under India's G20 presidency.

145. NASA's **SpaceX Crew-9 mission** completed the agency's ninth commercial crew rotation mission to the International Space Station. It was launched on Sept. 28, 2024, on a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket from Space Launch Complex 40 at Cape Canaveral Space Force Station in Florida.

NASA astronauts **Nick Hague, Sunita Williams, Butch Wilmore, and Roscosmos cosmonaut Aleksandr Gorbunov** were part of the mission.

It was the fourth flight of the Dragon spacecraft named Freedom. It also previously supported NASA's SpaceX Crew-4, Axiom Mission 2, and Axiom Mission 3.

Key facts of Space -X Crew 9 mission:

- Sunita Williams holds the second-most time spent in space by a US astronaut.
- Sunita Williams and Butch Wilmore traveled 121,347,491 miles during their mission, spent 286 days in space, and completed 4,576 orbits around Earth.
- Even though their 286-day stay exceeded the typical six-month ISS rotation, it ranks as only the sixth longest among US records for single-mission duration.
- Hague and Gorbunov traveled 72,553,920 miles, spent 171 days in space, and completed 2,736 orbits around Earth.
- Sunita Williams set the record for the most time spent spacewalking by a woman, with 62 hours and 6 minutes across nine spacewalks, surpassing Peggy Whitson's record of 60 hours and 21 minutes. Peggy Whitson still holds the record for the most spacewalks by a woman, with 10.
- Sunita Williams conducted two spacewalks, while Butch Wilmore and Nick Hague each completed one spacewalk during the mission.
- Butch Wilmore and Sunita Williams witnessed eight different visiting vehicles at the ISS during their mission.
- During the Crew-9 mission, they conducted more than 150 unique scientific experiments and technology demonstrations, totaling over 900 hours of research.
- Over three flights, Sunita Williams has logged a total of 608 days in space, while Butch Wilmore has accumulated 464 days over three missions. Nick Hague has logged 374 days across two flights. For Gorbunov, this was his first spaceflight.

146. External Affairs Minister of India **S Jaishankar** held a bilateral meeting with **Celinda Sosa Lunda**, Foreign Minister of **Bolivia** to discuss strengthening bilateral relations between both the countries.

The two nations signed an agreement on **Quick Impact Projects**, reflecting India's commitment to deepening diplomatic partnerships.

India recently opened a new embassy in La Paz, signaling increased engagement with Bolivia.

These diplomatic efforts demonstrate India's proactive approach to expanding international cooperation.

147. President of **Peru** Dina Boluarte declared a **state of emergency** following the killing of a popular singer, Paul Flores, the 39-year-old lead singer of the cumbia band Armonia 10, amid a surge in violence in the capital, Lima. The state of emergency will last 30 days, and authorities will restrict some rights, including the freedom of assembly and movement.

148. Singapore and **India** have signed a Letter of Intent (LoI) to cooperate on **maritime digitalization and decarbonization.**

The LoI was signed by **Teo Eng Dih**, Chief Executive of the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore, and R. **Lakshmanan**, Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Ports. Shipping and Waterways (MOPSW) of India.

Under the LoI, both sides will work towards formalizing the partnership through a memorandum of understanding on a Singapore-India Green and Digital Shipping Corridor (GDSC) and uptake of zero or near-zero Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emission technologies and the adoption of digital solutions.

India is a leading player in information technology with the potential to become a major producer and exporter of green marine fuels. Singapore, as a key transshipment and bunkering hub, also supports a dynamic research and innovation ecosystem.

149. TV BRICS has launched a new educational television project aimed at learning the **Russian language** and popularizing Russian culture abroad.

The series of programmes, "**Russian Lessons with Tanya Semke**," is aimed at showcasing them in BRICS+ countries.

The initial video course comprises 99 episodes (four minutes each), structured in an easy and entertaining form.

The project's slogan is **"Russian Language for Bridging Cultures."**

The "Russian Lessons" are broadcast twice a week on the TV BRICS channel in English.

The video course is shown by the network's partners abroad, with whom over 80 major media outlets from 26 countries cooperate.

In 2007, the international information and educational project "Modern Russian" was created to popularise the Russian language, improve the literacy level of the population, and provide linguistic assistance.

TV BRICS:

- The TV BRICS international network was created in 2017 on the initiative of Russian President Vladimir Putin, which received the support of heads of state at the IX BRICS summit in China.
- TV BRICS is the newest system of regular information exchange between the media of the BRICS+ countries.
- TV BRICS is headquartered in Moscow, Russia.
- More than 70 media outlets from many countries have already joined the TV BRICS network: Russia, Brazil, India, China, South Africa, Egypt, Iran, and the UAE, as well as Argentina, Armenia, Venezuela, Zimbabwe, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Cuba, Mozambique, Tunisia, and Chile.

150. The **Lanka India Business Association (LIBA)** has been officially launched in **Sri Lanka** to enhance economic collaboration between India and Sri Lanka.

With India poised to become the world's second-largest economy by 2075, the initiative aims to foster trade, investment, and business networking between both nations.

India is one of Sri Lanka's largest trading partners, fostering investments across multiple sectors.

Key objectives of LIBA:

- Strengthen bilateral trade and investment opportunities.
- Connect Indian and Sri Lankan entrepreneurs for business partnerships.
- Provide business facilitation services for new investors.
- Promote the digital economy, startups, and MSME growth.
- Leverage Sri Lanka's strategic geographical position as a trade hub.

151. The **International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)** released its **first Green Status** assessment for **lions**.

The IUCN classified the lion (Panthera leo) as '**Largely Depleted'.** This assessment marks human impacts that hinder the lion's ecological functionality.

The species is also listed as Vulnerable on the **IUCN Red List**.

Notably, lions are extinct in North Africa and Southwest Asia.

The Green Status assessment was introduced in July 2021. It aims to provide a comprehensive view of a species' conservation status. This tool categorizes species into nine recovery categories.

These include Fully Recovered, Slightly Depleted, Moderately Depleted, Largely Depleted, Critically Depleted, Extinct in the Wild, and Indeterminate. This assessment complements the IUCN Red List by focusing on recovery and conservation success.

Currently, estimates suggest that approximately 23,000 adult and subadult lions inhabit Africa. This data is sourced from the African Lion Database.

In India, around 670 adult and subadult lions are reported, primarily located in the Gir Forest region. These figures tell the precarious state of lion populations globally.

REPORTS & INDICES

152. **NITI Aayog** launched the report titled *"From Borrowers to Builders: Women's Role in India's Financial Growth Story".*

The report launched by CEO NITI Aayog, B.V.R. Subrahmanyam reveals that more women in India are seeking credit and actively monitoring their credit scores.

The report is published by TransUnion CIBIL in collaboration with NITI Aayog's Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP) and Micro Save Consulting (MSC).

It showcases their growing awareness of credit scores and increasing credit-seeking behavior, signalling a positive trend towards economic empowerment.

Key Highlights of the Report:

- As of December 2024, 27 million women were actively monitoring their credit scores, reflecting a **42%** rise from the previous year.
- Non-metro regions saw a 48% increase in self-monitoring women compared to 30% in metro areas.
- In 2024, **Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh and Telangana** accounted for 49% of all self-monitoring women, with the southern region leading at 10.2 million.
- Northern and central states, including **Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh,** saw the highest Compounded Annual Growth Rates (CAGR) in active women borrowers over the past five years.
- Women's share of the total self-monitoring base increased to 19.43% in December 2024, up from 17.89% in 2023.
- The report highlights that women's participation in business loan origination has grown by 14% since 2019, and their share in gold loans has risen by 6%.

153. **World Bank** has released a report titled '**Becoming a High-Income Economy in a Generation'.**

As per the report, India aims to achieve **High-Income Country (HIC)** status by **2047,** requiring an average growth rate of **7.8%** over the next 22 years.

India's share in the **global economy has doubled** from **1.6% in 2000 to 3.4% in 2023**, making it the **5th largest economy** in the world.

India aspires to become a HIC by 2047. To achieve this, its gross national income (GNI) per capita would have to increase by nearly **8 times from USD 2,540 in 2023** (currently India is in the lower-middle-income category).

The report outlines three possible scenarios for India's growth trajectory.

Scenario	Growth Rate (Real GDP)	Outcome
Slow Reforms	Below 6%	India remains upper-middle income, falls short of HIC.
Business as Usual	6.60%	India improves but does not reach high-income status.
Accelerated Reforms	7.80%	India will become a high-income country by 2047.

154. The 15th edition of the **India Philanthropy Report (IPR) 2025**, co-created by **Dasra and Bain & Company**, explores the growing role of family businesses in shaping India's economic and social landscape through personal philanthropy and CSR.
India's social sector spending stands at **6-7%** of GDP annually, reaching ₹25 lakh crore in FY24 and is projected to grow to ₹45 lakh crore by FY29.
Despite economic growth and structural reforms, challenges remain, including low private contributions (5%) primarily from family philanthropy and CSR, and a ₹14 lakh crore funding gap compared to NITI Aayog's 13% GDP recommendation.
Philanthropy is vital in bridging funding gaps, addressing development challenges, and driving innovation through tech-driven initiatives like those by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation supporting the Swachh Bharat Mission.
The private spending stood at around Rs 1.3 lakh crore ($16 billion).
The report noted a more than 20% increase in CSR-compliant firms from around 12,000 in FY22 to roughly 15,000 in FY23.
The report also noted the growth in family offices, which are firms that manage HNIs and their families' assets and wealth. Their numbers grew seven-fold between 2018 and 2023, from 45 to 300.

155. **YouGov**, the United Kingdom based international online research data and analytics technology group, has released the "**India Value Rankings 2025**".

The report reveals the top brands that consumers think offer the best bang for their buck across **6 key sectors** such as:

I.   Airlines
II.   Consumer electronics
III.   Vehicles
IV.   General insurance
V.   Travel booking sites
VI.   e-commerce

Amul is the only Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) brand in the top three list, alongside e-commerce giants Amazon and Flipkart. This recognition is a testament to Amul's cooperative model, which ensures fair pricing for farmers and affordability for consumers, making high-quality dairy products accessible to every Indian household.

India's top 10 brands in terms of Value are:

	Brand name	Score
1	Amazon	56.5
2	Flipkart	53.0
3	Amul	52.8
4	Tanishq	48.4
5	MakeMyTrip	45.4
6	Kalyan Jewellers	43.0
7	Zomato	41.2
8	Samsung	39.9
9	Tata Motors	39.8
10	Tata Tea	38.2

India's top 10 brands in terms of Value by gender are:

	Men			Women	
	Brand name	Value score		Brand name	Value score
1	Amazon	60.2	1	Amazon	52.6
2	Flipkart	56.1	2	Amul	51.1
3	Amul	54.4	3	Flipkart	49.7
4	Tanishq	53.2	4	Tanishq	43.5
5	MakeMyTrip	47.2	5	MakeMyTrip	43.5
6	Kalyan Jewellers	45.7	6	Zomato	40.8
7	Tata Motors	45.5	7	Kalyan Jewellers	40.3
8	Tata Tea	41.9	8	Samsung	39.8
9	Zomato	41.6	9	Swiggy	38.0
10	Air India	41.2	10	Malabar Gold & Diamonds	36.9

156. National Institution for Transforming India **(NITI) Aayog** has launched the **Frontier Tech Hub (NITI-FTH)** and released a strategic paper on "Quantum Computing: National Security Implications & Strategic Preparedness".

Its key objectives are:

- Enabling India's Readiness to advance Frontier Tech Innovation and Use for Accelerated Economic and Societal Development towards Viksit Bharat.

- Championing India's Human-Centric Approach worldwide by advancing development and adoption of emerging technologies that benefit humanity and the environment.

Hub will engage with experts across Industry, Academia and Government to create a deeper understanding of the tech trends early and their implications on India.

NITI Frontier Tech Hub (NITI-FTH) in partnership with the Data **Security Council of India** released a strategic paper on the rapid evolution of Quantum Computing, its implications on National Security and what is needed for India to get ahead of the curve to shape its trajectory.

The paper's insights will serve as a foundation for India's strategic preparedness and policy formulation in the evolving quantum landscape.

Attempt RRB Clerk 2025 Free Mock Test

157. The 19th edition of '**The Wealth Report 2025**' released by London-based Knight Frank analyzes global wealth distribution and the rising number of High Net-Worth Individuals (HNWIs).

The number of high-net-worth individuals (HNWIs) – defined as individuals with more than US$10m in assets – rose by 4.4% globally in 2024, increasing from 2,243,300 a year earlier to 2,341,378.

While **North America (5.2%)** leads in the number of HNWI this year, growth was noted across all world regions.

Asia saw the **second** highest increase at **5%**, followed by Africa at 4.7%.

Other regions also experienced gains: Australasia (3.9%), the Middle East (2.7%), Latin America (1.5%) and Europe (1.4%).

The population of individuals with a net worth of at least US$100 million increased by 4.2%, surpassing the 100,000 mark for the first time.

At the US$10 million+ level, the **US** is home to almost 39% of all wealthy individuals. The **USA** led the report with 905,413 HNWIs, followed by **China** (471,634) and **Japan** (122,119).

India ranked **4th** globally, with 85,698 HNWIs in 2024, marking a 6% increase from the previous year.

Top 10 US$10m+ populations:

	Countries and territories	US $10m+ population	Share of global US$10m+ population
1	US	905,413	38.7%
2	Chinese mainland	471,634	20.1%
3	Japan	122,119	5.2%
4	India	85,698	3.7%
5	Germany	69,798	3%
6	Canada	64,988	2.8%
7	UK	55,667	2.4%
8	France	51,254	2.2%
9	Australia	42,789	1.8%
10	Hong Kong SAR	42,715	1.8%

The report conducted a separate **Next Generation Survey** which is the **first of its kind global survey** of individuals in the age group of 18 to 35 years and income of more than USD 125000.

The survey reveals that the younger affluent generation still favours traditional investments, such as stocks, property, and cash.

158. The report titled **'Dubai FDI Monitor'** has been released by the Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism. As per the report, Dubai attracted 52.3 billion dirhams (14.20 billion) in estimated FDI capital in 2024.

India was the top source country, accounting for **21.5%** of total FDI into Dubai in 2024. This represents a five-fold increase compared to 2023 when India was Dubai's fifth-largest FDI contributor.

The United States followed India with 13.7% of FDI capital, while France, the UK, and Switzerland contributed 11%, 10%, and 6.9%, respectively. In terms of FDI projects, India was the second-largest player, accounting for 15% of projects, preceded only by the UK at 17%.

The surge in Indian investment in Dubai and the wider UAE is attributed to a series of bilateral agreements, particularly the 2022 UAE-India Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA). This agreement has eliminated trade barriers, reduced tariffs, and simplified business operations, enabling companies from both countries to access each other's markets more easily.

Top Sectors for Indian FDI: Business services, software and IT services, consumer products, food and beverages, and real estate.

159. The Economist released the **Glass-Ceiling Index 2025**. This is a report on the **Best Countries for Working Women.**

The Economist assesses gender inequality in senior business roles across 29 OECD countries.
Sweden secured **the 1st rank**, followed by **Iceland** and **Finland** respectively.
According to "The Economist", **Poland ranked 13th** in the 2025 Glass-Ceiling Index, **its lowest position in eight years**, reflecting challenges in workplace gender equality.
While **Nordic countries continue to lead**, Poland's drop suggests challenges in wage equality, leadership representation, and labor force participation.
The U.S. and Britain improved due to a rise in women in corporate leadership.
Portugal's steady rise is driven by strong workplace policies supporting gender parity.
About the Glass-Ceiling Index (GCI):
- It evaluates ten indicators, including higher education, labor-force participation, wage gaps, childcare costs, parental leave, and women's representation in leadership.
- It was introduced in 2013 with five indicators and 26 countries, the index has since expanded. In the 2024 rankings, Iceland, Sweden, Norway, Finland, and France had the lowest gender inequality, while Israel, Switzerland, Japan, Turkey, and South Korea ranked the lowest.
- The GCI highlights persistent barriers preventing women from reaching top corporate positions.

160. According to the **Brand Finance Insurance 100 Report** 2025, the **Life Insurance Corporation of India ranked third** strongest insurance brand globally**,** with a Brand Strength Index (BSI) score of **87.9** out of 100.

Poland-based **PZU** secured the **top** spot with a **BSI score of 94.4,** followed by **China Life Insurance,** which ranked **second** with a BSI score of 93.5.

In terms of overall brand value, only two Indian insurers were in the top 100 as **LIC** also holds the **12th position in brand value among global insurers**, while **SBI Life ranks 74th** out of 100. Only two Indian insurers were in the top 100.

The Brand Finance report also revealed that the top 100 insurance brands have grown 9% in brand value in 2025, driven by improved underwriting results, higher investment income, rising interest rates, and increased profitability.

This growth was supported by a decline in management expenses, particularly employee-related costs.

LIC's financial performance in the December quarter showed strong growth, with its standalone net profit rising 17% YoY to ₹11,056.47 crore from ₹9,444.42 crore, while consolidated net profit increased 16% YoY to ₹11,000 crore.

The company also improved cost efficiency, as management expenses declined, including a 30% reduction in employee compensation and welfare costs. Additionally, the expense ratio dropped 231 basis points to 12.97% from 15.28%, reflecting improved operational efficiency.

161. **IQAir** released its 7th annual **World Air Quality Report**, highlighting alarming trends of the world's most polluted countries, territories, and regions in **2024**.

The five most polluted countries in 2024 were:
- **Chad (91.8 µg/m3):** More than 18 times higher than the WHO PM2.5 annual guideline.
- **Bangladesh (78.0 µg/m3):** More than 15 times higher than the WHO PM2.5 annual guideline.
- **Pakistan (73.7 µg/m3):** More than 14 times higher than the WHO PM2.5 annual guideline.
- **Democratic Republic of the Congo (58.2 µg/m3):** More than 11 times higher than the WHO PM2.5 annual guideline.
- **India (50.6 µg/m3):** More than 10 times higher than the WHO PM2.5 annual guideline.

Only 17% of global cities meet WHO air pollution guideline.

Seven countries met the WHO annual average PM2.5 guideline of 5 µg/m3: Australia, Bahamas, Barbados, Estonia, Grenada, Iceland, and New Zealand.

PM2.5 comes from sources like the combustion of fossil fuels, dust storms and wildfires.

A total of 126 (91.3%) out of 138 countries and regions exceeded the WHO annual PM2.5 guideline value of 5 µg/m3.

Byrnihat (Assam-Meghalaya border), India was the **most polluted metropolitan area of 2024**, with an annual average PM2.5 concentration of 128.2 µg/m3.

Delhi remains the **most polluted capital** globally with a Particulate matter (PM) 2.5 concentration of 91.6 µg/m³ (micrograms per cubic metre).

India saw a **7% decrease** in PM2.5 levels, averaging **50.6 µg/m³** in 2024, down from **54.4 µg/m³** in 2023.

The region of Central & South Asia was home to the top seven most polluted cities in the world.

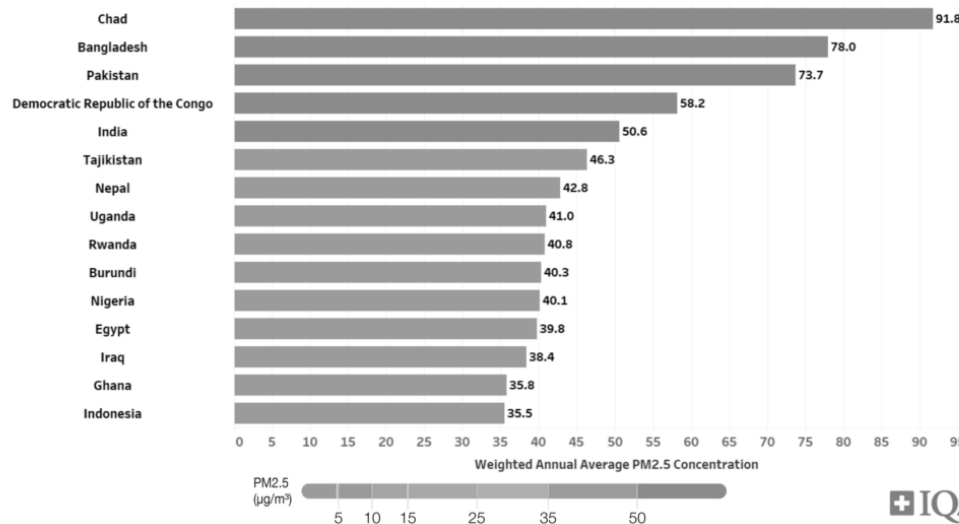India was home to six of the nine most polluted global cities.

Mayaguez, Puerto Rico was the cleanest metropolitan area of 2024, with an annual average PM2.5 concentration of 1.1 µg/m3.

Oceania is the world's cleanest region, with 57% of regional cities meeting the WHO PM2.5 annual guideline value of 5 µg/m3.

The report indicates that **19 of the world's 20 most polluted cities are in Asia**, with India leading the list.

Most Polluted Countries in the World in 2024

Country	Weighted Annual Average PM2.5 Concentration
Chad	91.8
Bangladesh	78.0
Pakistan	73.7
Democratic Republic of the Congo	58.2
India	50.6
Tajikistan	46.3
Nepal	42.8
Uganda	41.0
Rwanda	40.8
Burundi	40.3
Nigeria	40.1
Egypt	39.8
Iraq	38.4
Ghana	35.8
Indonesia	35.5

PM2.5 (µg/m³)   5 10 15   25   35   50

IQAir

162. The **Stockholm International Peace Research Institute** (SIPRI) released its 2024 report on global arms transfers, revealing significant trends in arms imports and exports.

According to the report:
- **Ukraine emerged as the world's largest arms importer in 2020-24**, driven by its ongoing conflict and the need to bolster its defense capabilities. It accounted for **8.8% of global arms imports** during 2020-24.
- Most of the major arms supplied to Ukraine came from the US (45 percent), followed by Germany (12 percent) and Poland (11 percent).
- **India ranks second in arms imports**, reflecting its continued focus on modernizing its military and addressing regional security challenges.
- India's imports decreased by 9.3 percent between 2015-19 and 2020-24.

Top Arms Importers:
Ukraine, India, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and China.

Major Arms Exporters:
The United States, Russia, and France remain the top arms exporters, supplying a significant share of weapons to importers worldwide.

India's Major Arms Suppliers:
- Russia remained the largest arms supplier to India, accounting for 36% of total imports, a sharp decline from 55% (2015-19) and 72% (2010-14).
- France became India's second-largest arms supplier, providing 28% of India's total imports, making India the largest recipient of French arms exports.

163. The **Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)** released its **2025 report on global grain production and the food situation.**

The report provides insights into the production trends of key crops, including wheat, and assesses the global food security scenario.

Key Highlights of the FAO Report 2025:
- The FAO predicts global wheat production to reach **796 million tonnes in 2025.**
- This reflects a steady increase in production, driven by improved agricultural practices and favorable weather conditions in major wheat-producing regions.

- The report also highlights production trends for other grains, such as rice, maize, and barley, which are crucial for global food security.
- The report also highlighted that 45 countries are in need of food assistance. These include 33 countries in Africa, nine in Asia, two in South America and the Caribbean, and one in Europe. The ongoing conflict and insecurity are giving rise to severe food insecurity.
- People in Gaza (Palestine) and Sudan are facing the greatest food crisis

Despite the increase in grain production, the FAO warns of potential challenges, including climate change, supply chain disruptions, and geopolitical tensions, which could impact food availability and prices.

164. The **Future of Free Speech**, a U.S.-based think tank, has released a report titled *"Who in the World Supports Free Speech?"*.

The Future of Free Speech Index is a composite measure based on answers to eight questions about the willingness to allow controversial speech, criticism of the government, media freedom, and an open Internet.
The survey, conducted in **October 2024**, found that:

- Scandinavian countries dominate the index, with **Norway (87.9) and Denmark (87.0)** securing the top positions.

- Indonesia (56.8), Malaysia (55.4), and Pakistan (57.0) showed the biggest improvements despite being lower in the rankings.

- Hungary (85.5) and Venezuela (81.8), despite being authoritarian-leaning, ranked high due to public perception of free speech.

- Countries like Japan, Israel, and the U.S. have experienced significant drops in support for free speech since 2021.

- **India**, with a score of **62.6**, was placed between South Africa (66.9) and Lebanon (61.8).

- The index ranked India **24th** out of 33 surveyed countries in terms of support for free speech.

165. The **World Happiness Report 2025** has been published by the University of Oxford's Wellbeing Research Centre in partnership with Gallup, the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, and our Editorial Board.

The first edition of the report was published in 2012.

Top 5 countries
- Finland (8th consecutive year)
- Denmark
- Iceland
- Sweden
- Netherlands

Bottom 5 countries
- Afghanistan (147th rank)
- Sierra Leone (146th rank)
- Lebanon (145th rank)

- Malawi (144th rank)
- Zimbabwe (143rd rank)

India ranked **118th** out of 147 nations in the World Happiness Report 2025. It was ranked 126th in 2024.

India's neighboring countries: Japan (55th), China (68th), Nepal (92nd), Pakistan(109th), Sri Lanka (133rd), and Bangladesh (134th).

166. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (UN-FAO) based in Rome, Italy, published the **3rd Report on the State of the World's (SoW3) Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (PGRFA)**, raising concerns about the declining diversity of plant genetic resources.

The report was released on the 20th meeting of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA-20) in Rome.

It aimed to evaluate trends, gaps, and priorities in in situ and ex situ conservation of plant genetic resources and guide global action plans for safeguarding plant biodiversity and food security.

First Report (1998):

- Presented at the Fourth International Technical Conference in Leipzig, Germany (1996).
- Based on inputs from 154 countries and 12 regional consultations.
- First global assessment of PGRFA conservation status and management practices.

Second Report (2010):

- Highlighted changes since 1996 and focused on global conservation needs and gaps.
- Emphasized linking conservation with climate resilience and food security.

Key Insights in the Third Report (2025):

- 60% of global food comes from just nine crops (sugarcane, maize, rice, wheat, potatoes, soybeans, oil palm, sugar beet, and cassava).
- Globally, 6% of farmers' varieties (FV/LR) are threatened; this exceeds 18% in nine sub-regions.
- Southern Africa, the Caribbean, and Western Asia face the highest loss of genetic diversity.
- Over 50% of documented FV/LRs across five agroecological zones are under threat.
- Over 5.9 million accessions are conserved globally, with 41% safety-duplicated, many in the Svalbard Global Seed Vault.
- Around 35 million hectares in 51 countries were cultivated with FV/LR to conserve genetic diversity.
- Frequent disasters impact crop diversity, with poor germplasm adaptation to local conditions post-disaster.

167. The **Hurun Global Rich List 2025** has announced a record-breaking total of 3,442 billionaires worldwide, reflecting an increase of 163 compared to the previous year.

India follows the United States and China, maintaining its third-place ranking, with 284 billionaires in 2025.

According to the Hurun Global Rich List for 2025, Reliance Industries chairman **Mukesh Ambani** has reclaimed the title of **'Richest Person in Asia'.**

The world's 10 wealthiest women have a combined net worth of $479 billion, making up 20% of the total wealth held by women on the Hurun Global Rich List 2025.

Roshni Nadar Malhotra, Chairperson of HCL Technologies Ltd, became the first Indian woman to enter the Global Top 10 Women rankings this year. She is the **fifth richest woman in the world.**

Top 10 Women Millionaires:

▲ Rank	Name	Wealth (US$ bn)	% Change YoY	Company	Age	Country of Residence
1	Alice Walton	102	46%	Walmart	75	USA
2	Francoise Bettencourt Meyers	67	-26%	L'Oréal	70	France
3	Julia Koch & family	60	11%	Koch Industries	62	USA
4	Jacqueline Mars	53	33%	Mars	85	USA
5	Roshni Nadar & family	40	-	HCL	43	India
6	MacKenzie Scott	33	Revalued	Amazon	54	USA
6	Miriam Adelson & family	33	-6%	Las Vegas Sands	79	USA
8	Abigail Johnson	32	14%	Fidelity	63	USA
9	Marilyn Simons & family	30	-	Renaissance	74	USA
10	Linda Stephens & family	29	-	Endeavor Energy Resources	50	USA

GOVERNMENT SCHEMES & PROGRAMMES

168. The **Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maandhan Yojana** (PM-SYM) is a voluntary and contributory pension scheme launched by the Government of India to provide social security to unorganized workers. The scheme was introduced in the **Interim Budget 2019.**

The scheme is administered by the **Ministry of Labour and Employment** in collaboration with the **Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC)** and **Common Service Centres e-Governance Services India Limited (CSC SPV)** for seamless implementation.

LIC is the Pension Fund Manager and responsible for Pension pay out.

Key Features of PM-SYM:

- **Minimum Assured Pension**: **Rs.3,000 per month** after **60 years of age.**

- **Government Contribution**: The Government of India matches the worker's contribution on a 1:1 basis.

- **Voluntary and Contributory**: The scheme is voluntary, allowing workers to contribute based on their affordability and requirements.

- **Family Pension**: If the beneficiary passes away, the spouse receives 50% of the pension amount as a family pension. Family pension is applicable only to spouse.

- **Exit Provisions**: Participants can exit the scheme under specified conditions.

- **Easy Enrolment**: Eligible workers can register at Common Service Centres (CSCs) or through the Maandhan portal.

- **Fund Management**: The scheme is administered by LIC, ensuring financial stability and credibility.

- The entry age for the scheme is **18 - 40 years**.

- **Income Limit:** Monthly income should be **Rs.15,000 or less.**

Exclusion Criteria:

- Should not be covered under the Employees' Provident Fund (EPF), Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC), or National Pension Scheme (NPS).

- Should not be an income taxpayer.

- Should not be receiving benefits from any other government pension scheme.

Unorganized Workers engaged in professions such as Street vendors, rag pickers, rickshaw pullers, Construction workers, daily wage labourers, Agricultural workers, beedi workers, Domestic workers, weavers, artisans, fishermen, leather workers, etc.

As of March 03, 2025, over 30.68 crore unorganized workers have registered on the e-Shram portal with more than half of them being female (53.68%).

169. The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the **Revision of the Livestock Health and Disease Control Programme** (LHDCP).

The revised scheme has **three components** namely

A. National Animal Disease Control Programme (NADCP),

B. Livestock Health and Disease Control (LH&DC) which further has three sub-components i.e.,

   i. Critical Animal Disease Control Programme (CADCP),

   ii. Establishment and Strengthening of existing Veterinary Hospitals and Dispensaries – Mobile Veterinary Unit (ESVHD-MVU) and

   iii. Assistance to States for Control of Animal Diseases (ASCAD).

C. **Pashu Aushadhi**, which is **a newly added component** to the scheme.

The total outlay of the scheme is **Rs.3,880 crore** for **two years i.e. 2024-25 and 2025-26**, which includes provision of Rs. 75 crores to provide good quality and **affordable generic veterinary medicine** and incentive for sale of medicines **under Pashu Aushadhi component**.

The implementation of the LHDCP will facilitate reduction in losses caused due to diseases like Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD), Brucellosis, Peste des Petits Ruminants (PPR), Cerebrospinal Fluid (CSF), Lumpy Skin Disease, etc. by preventing diseases through immunization.

The scheme also supports door-step delivery of livestock health care through the subcomponents of Mobile Veterinary Units (ESVHD-MVU) and improving availability of generic veterinary medicine- Pashu Aushadhi through a network of PM-Kisan Samriddhi Kendra and Cooperative Societies.

The scheme will help in prevention and control of livestock diseases through vaccination, surveillance and upgradation of healthcare facilities. It will also improve productivity, generate employment, encourage entrepreneurship in the rural area and prevent economic losses of farmers due to disease burden.

Implementing Ministry: **Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying.**

170. Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, **Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (Meity)** launched several key initiatives under the IndiaAI mission during the celebration of the 1st anniversary of the IndiaAI mission.

The **newly launched initiatives** are:

- AI Compute Portal

- AIKosha: IndiaAI Datasets Platform

- AI Competency Framework for Public Sector Officials

- IGOT-AI Mission Karmayogi

- IndiaAI Startups Global Acceleration Program with Station F

- IndiaAI Application Development Initiative and IndiaAI FutureSkills.

These initiatives are aimed at strengthening AI-driven research, innovation, and skill development.

IndiaAI Compute Portal:

- The portal will offer AI computing, network storage, platform, and cloud services at a discounted rate i.e. at **the rate of Rs 67 per hour**, to startups, Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), academia, researchers, students, startups, and government agencies.

- For the initial phase, the portal will provide easy access to 10,000 Graphic Processing Units (GPUs), and then gradually add 8,693 more GPUs on the platform.

- It will cover mid-range GPUs to high-end GPUs such as NVIDIA H100, H200, A100, L40S, and L4, among others, ensuring cost-effective AI development capabilities and innovation.

- As per Meity, eligible AI users will get up to 40% subsidy on AI computing services on the cloud.

AIKosha: IndiaAI Datasets Platform:

- It is a secured platform that facilitates a repository of datasets, models and use cases to promote AI innovation. It is designed with the objective of providing seamless access to datasets, tools and AI models.

- The platform hosts more than 300 datasets and more than 80 models, promoting the development of diverse and unbiased AI solutions.

- The platform has AI sandbox capabilities through an integrated development environment along with tools and tutorials.

- It also incorporates some unique features like: content discoverability, AI readiness scoring of datasets, permission-based access, and security mechanisms.

India-AI Innovation Challenge: Felicitation of AI Innovators:

- IndiaAI has launched the 'IndiaAI Innovation Challenge' under its IndiaAI Application Development Initiative (IADI) pillar, which focuses on developing, enhancing, and promoting the adoption of impactful AI solutions with the potential for large-scale socio-economic transformation.

- More than 900 AI solutions were submitted and 30 AI solutions have been shortlisted for the next stage across 3 stages of maturity: Idea, Prototype, and Existing Solutions.

Other key initiatives launched:

Release of AI Competency Framework for Public Sector Officials: This framework aims to equip public sector officials with skills related to AI competency mapping, and upskilling initiatives.

i-GOT-AI: It is an advanced AI-powered personalized content recommendation system, aimed at enhancing the learning experience for government officials on the ¡GOT Karmayogi platform.

IndiaAI Startups Global Acceleration Program: IndiaAI mission in collaboration with Paris (France)-based STATION F and HEC Paris, a business school based in Paris, will launch an acceleration program for AI startups in India.

- It will be a 4-month immersive program i.e. 1 month online and 3 months onsite at STATION F, the world's largest startup campus.

- It will provide 10 selected AI startups with access to mentorship, networking, and international market expansion opportunities in Europe.

IndiaAI FutureSkills Fellowship: This initiative aims to reduce barriers to entry into AI programs and will increase AI courses in undergraduate, masters-level, and Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) programs.

IndiaAI Data labs are being set up in tier-2 and tier-3 cities across India to impart foundational-level courses.

IndiaAI has curated two courses for the roles of Data Annotator and Data Curator, which primarily focus on sectors like: healthcare, education, manufacturing, and agriculture to be imparted in IndiaAI Data labs across the National Institute of Electronics and Information Technology (NIELIT) and Industrial Training Institutes (ITI) centres.

IndiaAI Mission:

- On March 7, 2024, the Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi approved the IndiaAI mission with budget outlay of Rs 10,371.92 crore (USD 1.25 billion) for over the next 5 years.

- It is being implemented by IndiaAI, an Independent Business Division (IBD) under the Digital India Corporation (DIC) of MeitY.

- It is based on 7 key pillars: IndiaAI Compute Capacity, IndiaAI innovation center, IndiaAI Datasets platform, IndiaAI application development initiative, IndiaAI future skills, IndiaAI startup financing, and Safe and Trusted AI.

171. The **Ministry of Culture** is implementing the **Scholarships to Young Artists (SYA) scheme** to support young artists.

Under this scheme**, 400 scholars aged 18-25 years receive a ₹5,000/month** scholarship for **2 years** but paid in **four six-monthly installments**.

Eligible candidates must have trained under a Guru or Institution for at least 5 years. Selection is based on a personal interview before an Expert Committee.

The scheme operates under a centralized funding system.

As per the guidelines of the 'Scheme of Scholarship to Young Artists in Different Cultural Fields', the following are the recognized cultural activities/subjects/fields in which scholarship can be awarded:

- Indian Classical Music

- Indian Classical Dance/ Dance Music

- Theatre

- Visual Arts

- Folk, Traditional and Indigenous Arts

- Light Classical Music

172. According to the Ministry of Labour and Employment, as of 3rd March 2025, over 30.68 crore unorganised workers have already registered on the e-Shram portal, with more than half of them being female (53.68%).

13 schemes of different Central Ministries/ Departments have already been integrated/ mapped with the e-Shram including Pradhan Mantri Street Vendors Atmanirbhar Nidhi (PM-SVANidhi), Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY), Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY), National Family Benefit Scheme (NFBS), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana – Gramin (PMAY-G), Ayushman Bharat – Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY), Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana – Urban (PMAY-U) and Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY), Pradhan Mantri Kisan Maan Dhan Yojana (PM-KMY).

e-Shram Portal:

The Ministry of Labour and Employment launched e-Shram portal (eshram.gov.in) on 26th August 2021 for creation of a comprehensive National Database of Unorganised Workers (NDUW) seeded with Aadhaar.

e-Shram portal is meant to register and support the unorganised workers by providing them a Universal Account Number (UAN) on a self-declaration basis.

The Ministry of Labour and Employment launched the **e-Shram "One-Stop-Solution" on 21st October 2024.**

e-Shram– "One-Stop-Solution" entails integration of different social security/ welfare schemes at single portal i.e. e-Shram. This enables unorganised workers registered on e-Shram to access social security schemes and see benefits availed by them.

To enhance the accessibility of the e-Shram portal, the Ministry of Labour and Employment launched multilingual functionality on the e-Shram portal on 7th January 2025, using the Bhashini platform.

This enhancement now allows workers to interact with the e-Shram **portal in 22 Indian languages**, improving accessibility and promoting inclusivity for all.

To make e-Shram and associated services, readily available to unorganized workers, the Ministry of Labour & Employment launched the e-Shram **mobile application on 24th February 2025**. This application provides real-time access to welfare schemes integrated with e-Shram, significantly improving accessibility and convenience.

173. The Ministry of Education, Department of Higher Education, launched **PM-YUVA 3.0 -Prime Minister's Scheme for Mentoring Young Authors**, an Author Mentorship program to train young and budding authors (**below 30 years of age**) to promote reading, writing, and book culture in the country, and project India and Indian writings globally.

PM-YUVA 3.0 intends to bring to the fore the perspectives of the young generation of writers on the following themes:

- Contribution of Indian Diaspora in Nation Building

- Indian Knowledge System

- Makers of Modern India (1950-2025)

The **National Book Trust (NBT),** under the Ministry of Education, is the implementing agency.

The books prepared under this scheme will be published by National Book Trust, India, and translated into other Indian languages, fostering cultural and literary exchange while promoting 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat'.

It aligns with NEP 2020 to support the empowerment of young minds and prepare future leaders.

174. The Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs launched **NYPS 2.0,** an upgraded version of the **National Youth Parliament Scheme (NYPS),** which is now **open to all citizens**, unlike the previous version which was limited to students of recognized institutions.

NYPS 2.0 is an initiative to strengthen democratic values and enhance awareness of parliamentary procedures.

Participation can be facilitated through the following ways: -

- **Institution Participation**: All educational institutions can participate in this category by organizing the Youth Parliament sittings as per the guidelines available on the portal. The students from classes VI to XII may be selected for the "Kishore Sabha" sub-category and Under Graduate and Post Graduate level students may be selected for the "Tarun Sabha" sub-category.

- **Group Participation**: A group of citizens can participate in this category by organizing the Youth Parliament sittings as per the guidelines available on the portal.

- **Individual Participation**: An individual citizen can participate in this category by attempting a quiz on the theme of 'Bharatiya Democracy in Action'.

175. The Government of India launched the **"75/25 Initiative"** on **World Hypertension Day (May 17, 2023)** to ensure standardized care for 75 million individuals with hypertension and diabetes by December 2025.

As of March 2025, **42.01 million** individuals have received treatment for hypertension, while 25.27 million have been treated for diabetes, achieving **89.7%** of the target.

The initiative is part of the National Programme for Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases (NP-NCD), launched in **2010** by the Department of Health and Family Welfare.

Key strategies of NP-NCD include:

- Population-based screening for individuals aged 30 years and above.

- Opportunistic Screening at all healthcare levels.

- Support for Diagnosis and Treatment with cost-effective options.

- Teleconsultation Services to expand healthcare access.

- National NCD Portal for real-time monitoring.

- Awareness Campaigns to promote healthy lifestyles.

The Ministry of Health & Family Welfare launched a nationwide **NCD Screening Campaign** from February 20, 2025, to March 31, 2025, with the goal of 100% screening of individuals aged 30+ years.

176. Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare **Jagat Prakash Nadda** announced two new schemes of the Tripura government for the state's female children, namely **Mukhyamantri Balika Samridhi Yojana** and **Mukhyamantri Kanya Atmanirbhar Yojana.**

Mukhyamantri Balika Samridhi Yojana-

- Under this scheme, the state government will deposit a bond of Rs 50,000 in the name of every girl child born to a BPL family in Tripura.

- When the girl turns 18, she will receive the bond, which will be worth Rs 8-10 lakh.

Mukhyamantri Kanya Atmanirbhar Yojana:

This scheme entails those 140 meritorious girl students appearing for Tripura board, CBSE & ICSE exams will be given a scooty.

177. The **Government e-Marketplace (GeM)** has achieved a significant milestone by surpassing **Rs 5 lakh crore** in **Gross Merchandise Value (GMV)** on its portal for the **financial year 2024-25.**

This achievement highlights GeM's rapid expansion as a primary tool for public procurement, serving a buyer base of over 1.6 lakh government entities.

Notably, the leap from Rs 4 lakh crore to Rs 5 lakh crore was accomplished in less than 50 days since crossing the previous benchmark on January 23, 2025.

GeM has undertaken major policy reforms in recent months to enhance market accessibility and streamline participation for sellers.

Key initiatives such as the reduction in Transaction Charges, Vendor Assessment fees, and Caution Money requirements have made the platform more accessible, particularly benefiting Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs), startups, and women-led enterprises.

As of February 13, 2025, over 22 lakh sellers and service providers were registered on GeM.

This year also marks the sixth anniversary of SWAYATT (Startups, Women, and Youth Advantage Through eTransactions), an initiative that underscores GeM's commitment to integrating priority seller groups into the government procurement framework.

GeM:
- Government e-Marketplace (GeM) is an online platform for public procurement in India which was envisaged by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- The initiative was launched on August 09, 2016, by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry to create an open and transparent procurement platform for government buyers.
- GeM is characterized by three core elements: openness, fairness, and inclusiveness.

178. The Minister of Finance and Corporate Affairs, **Nirmala Sitharaman**, in the presence of MoS Corporate Affairs, and MoS Road and Transport, **Harsh Malhotra** launched a dedicated **mobile app for the Prime Minister's Internship Scheme** in New Delhi.

Features of the App are as follows:

- Intuitive interface with a clean design and effortless navigation
- Easy registration through Aadhaar face authentication
- Effortless navigation - Eligible candidates can sift through opportunities by location etc.
- Personalized dashboard
- Access to a dedicated support team
- Real-time alerts to keep candidates abreast of new updates

With the PMIS application, users can also explore the referral program recently announced by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA). The referral program would enable the registered youth to refer other eligible candidates for the scheme and win rewards.

The Prime Minister's Internship Scheme (PMIS Scheme) announced in the Budget 2024-25, aimed to provide internship opportunities to one crore youth in top 500 companies in five years.

As an initiation to this Scheme, the Pilot Project targeted at providing 1.25 lakh internship opportunities to the youth was launched on 03.10.2024 for the Financial Year 2024-25.

Salient features of the Scheme are as follows:

- **12-month** paid internships in top companies in India.
- This scheme provides an opportunity for the youth to get training and gain experience and skills within the real-life environment (at least six months) of the businesses or organizations that help in bridging the gap between academic learning and industry requirements, in turn, assisting enhancement of her/his employability.
- The scheme targets individuals **aged 21 to 24** who are currently not enrolled in any full-time academic program or not in full-time employment, offering them a unique chance to kick-start their careers.
- Each intern will be supported with monthly financial assistance of **₹5,000**, supplemented by one-time financial assistance of **₹6,000**.

In **round I** of this project (October – December 2024), over 1.27 lakh opportunities in about 745 districts were posted by around 280 companies across 25 sectors. Over 82,000 offers were made to the candidates.

Round II of the Project commenced in January 2025 and about 327 companies have posted more than 1.18 lakh opportunities (both new and edited unfilled opportunities of the previous round) across the country.

Of these, around 37,000 opportunities are for graduates, 23,000 for ITI holders, 18,000 for diploma holders, 15,000 for 12th grade, and 25,000 are available for candidates with 10th qualifications.

The opportunities are spread across 735 districts in all states and union territories of the country.

The internship application window for round II is open till 31ST March 2025.

179. The Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG) has released the **31st monthly report on the Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS) for States and Union Territories (UTs) for February 2025**. The report provides insights into the volume of grievances.

Nearly one lakh 12 thousand grievances were redressed by central ministries and departments in February this year, with an average grievance disposal time of 15 days.

The report states that the Department of Food and Public Distribution, Telecommunications, and Posts topped the Group 'A' category in the rankings, while the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, Ayush, and the Department of Land Resources topped the Group 'B' category.

A total of **50,088 grievances** were redressed by the States and Union Territories in February 2025. The pendency of grievances on the CPGRAMS portal stands at 1,90,994 grievances across the States/UTs Governments, as of 28th February 2025.

A total of 47,599 new users registered in the month of February 2025, with the maximum number of registrations from Uttar Pradesh (7,312) registrations.

Status of Public Grievances (PG) on CPGRAMS:

- In February 2025, 52,464 PG cases were received for the States/UTs and 50,088 PG cases were redressed
- The monthly disposal in States/UTs decreased from 58,586 PG cases at the end of January 2025 to 50,088 PG cases at the end of February 2025.

Status of Pendency of Public Grievances on CPGRAMS:

- 23 States/UTs have more than 1,000 pending grievances as of 28th February 2025.
- For States/UTs, as of 28th February 2025, there exists a pendency of 1,90,994 PG cases.

Uttar Pradesh received the maximum number of grievances in February 2025 with the number standing at 21,763 grievances. 12 States/UTs have received more than 1,000 grievances in the month of February 2025.

Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat disposed of the maximum number of grievances in February 2025, with the number standing at 21,511 and 2,916 grievances respectively. 13 States/UTs have disposed of more than 1,000 grievances in the month of February 2025.

180. Union Jal Shakti Minister C.R. Patil launched the country-wide **Jal Shakti Abhiyan: Catch the Rain – 2025** from **Panchkula, Haryana** on the occasion of the World Water Day 2025 (22nd March).

This campaign has been launched in collaboration with the Ministry of Jal Shakti, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, and the Government of Haryana.

The event aims to emphasize water conservation and management through community participation and innovative strategies.

The campaign, themed **"जल संचय जन भागीदारी: जन जागरूकता की ओर", (Peoples' Action for Water Conservation - Towards Intensified Community Connect)** underscores the importance of water security, rainwater harvesting, and groundwater recharge in the face of climate change and growing water challenges.

The initiative will focus on 148 districts across the country, fostering greater synergy between government agencies, communities, and stakeholders in ensuring the sustainable management of water resources.

The Jal Shakti Abhiyan: Catch the Rain – 2025 aims to drive nationwide awareness and action for water conservation, making the vision of **'हर बूंद अनमोल' (Every Drop Counts)** a reality. The campaign calls upon all citizens to join hands in securing India's water future through innovative solutions and grassroots participation.

During the event, the Union Minister also e-launched the 'Mukhyamantri Jal Sanchay Yojana' and the Water Resources Atlas for Haryana, which assists in scientific water resource management.

He also launched the 'Jal-Jungle-Jan: Ek Prakritik Bandhan Abhiyan', which strengthens the ecological relationship between rivers, springs, and forests.

181. The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) has approved the construction of over **3.52 lakh houses** under the **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana – Urban 2.0 (PMAY-U 2.0).**

The decision was taken during the first meeting of the Central Sanctioning and Monitoring Committee (CSMC) chaired by MoHUA Secretary Srinivas Katikithala.

According to the ministry, a total of **3,52,915 lakh houses** have been sanctioned under the Beneficiary Led Construction (BLC) and Affordable Housing in Partnership (AHP) components.

These houses will be built across ten states and union territories—Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Haryana, Jammu & Kashmir, Odisha, Puducherry, Rajasthan, Telangana, and Uttar Pradesh.

The scheme emphasizes women's empowerment, with over 2.67 lakh houses approved specifically for women beneficiaries, including single women and widows.

Additionally, 90 houses have been allocated to transgender individuals.

The approved list also includes 80,850 houses for Scheduled Caste beneficiaries, 15,928 for Scheduled Tribes, and 2,12,603 for Other Backward Classes, aiming to promote inclusivity across underprivileged groups.

In a special initiative, the **Uttar Pradesh** government has committed additional financial assistance under the scheme, offering ₹30,000 to senior citizen beneficiaries aged over 70, and ₹20,000 each to unmarried women above 40 years of age, widows, and separated women .

PMAY-U 2.0, launched in September 2024, is currently under implementation, with Memorandums of Agreement signed between the Ministry and 31 states and union territories.

Implementation is being carried out through four verticals—Beneficiary Led Construction (BLC), Affordable Housing in Partnership (AHP), Affordable Rental Housing (ARH), and Interest Subsidy Scheme (ISS).

Eligible beneficiaries, particularly families from the EWS, LIG, and MIG categories who do not own a pucca house, are entitled to receive Central assistance of ₹2.50 lakh per housing unit. The total government assistance under PMAY-U 2.0 stands at ₹2.30 lakh crore, with an estimated total investment of ₹10 lakh crore.

Since the launch of PMAY-U in June 2015, 118.64 lakh houses have been sanctioned, with around 92 lakh already constructed and delivered.

182. **Vaidya Rajesh Kotecha**, Secretary of the Ministry of Ayush, inaugurated the **first batch** of the **Rashtriya Karmayogi Jan Seva Programme**, anchored by the Capacity Building Commission.

The program aims to transform Central Government employees' approach to public service by fostering accountability, upskilling individuals, and broadening perspectives.

It emphasizes 'Seva Bhav' (spirit of service) and encourages employees to contribute to citizen well-being through professional and personal growth.

The program also integrates insights from the Ministry of Ayush's successful initiatives, promoting traditional medicine and national development goals.

Through a series of four short sessions, employees will have the opportunity to reflect on their roles, understand their purpose, and actively engage in dialogue on enhancing citizen services.

A key aspect of the program is self-discovery and motivation, encouraging participants to draw inspiration from leadership stories and narratives.

183. The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has approved the **Revised Rashtriya Gokul Mission (RGM)** to boost growth in the livestock sector, with an additional outlay of **₹1,000 crore**, bringing the total budget to **₹3,400 crore** for the **15th Finance Commission period (2021-22 to 2025-26).**

Two New activities added are:

- One-time assistance of 35% of the capital cost for the establishment of **Heifer Rearing Centres** to Implementing Agencies for the creation of 30 housing facilities having a total of 15000 heifers.
- To encourage farmers to purchase High genetic merit (HGM) IVF heifers to provide **3% interest subvention** on loans taken by the farmer from milk unions / financial

institutions/ banks for such purchase. This will help in the systemic induction of high-yielding breeds.

Expected Outcomes of Revised RGM:

- Increased incomes for **8.5 crore farmers** engaged in dairying.

- **Scientific conservation** of indigenous bovine breeds.

184. The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved the **Revised National Program for Dairy Development (NPDD).**

The Revised NPDD, a Central Sector Scheme, has been enhanced with an additional Rs.1000 crore, bringing the total budget to **Rs.2790 crore** for the period of the 15th Finance Commission cycle (**2021-22 to 2025-26**).

Key Objectives of the Revised NPDD:

- Improved milk procurement, processing capacity, and quality control.

- Enhanced market access for farmers and better pricing through value addition.

- Strengthening of the dairy supply chain to increase rural income and development.

Components of the Revised NPDD:

- **Component A**: Focuses on improving dairy infrastructure.

- **Component B:** Dairying through Cooperatives (DTC) in partnership with Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

Expected Outcomes of Revised NPDD:

- Establishment of 10,000 new Dairy Cooperative Societies.

- Additional 3.2 lakh employment opportunities, 70% benefiting women.

185. The **Sagarmala Startup Innovation Initiative (S2I2)**, launched as a part of **Sagarmala 2.0**, aims to empower startups working in areas such as green shipping, smart ports, maritime logistics, shipbuilding technology, and sustainable coastal development.

The initiative was launched during the 4th National Sagarmala Apex Committee (NSAC) meeting held in New Delhi.

It will accelerate **RISE— Research, Innovation, Startups, and Entrepreneurship.**

It will offer funding, mentorship, and industry partnerships to nurture cutting-edge solutions.

<u>**Sagarmala 2.0:**</u>

- It is an upgrade of the Sagarmala Programme with a new focus on shipbuilding, repair, breaking, and recycling.

- It is backed by **Rs.40,000 crore** in budgetary support.

- It is intended to achieve the Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision (MAKV 2047), aims to position India among the world's top five shipbuilding nations, and expand port handling capacity to 10 billion metric tons annually.

186. The **Ministry of Panchayati Raj** launched a groundbreaking initiative, named '**Model Women-Friendly Gram Panchayat'**, aimed at fostering gender-sensitive governance at the grassroots level.

The initiative, which focused on the development of Model Women-Friendly Gram Panchayats (MWFGP), was unveiled at a National Convention at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi.

The initiative aims to establish at least one Model Women-Friendly Gram Panchayat in each district, setting a benchmark for gender-sensitive and girl-friendly governance.

These model panchayats will reflect Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of fostering safer and more inclusive rural communities, contributing to the broader goal of Viksit Bharat through Viksit Panchayats.

Key Features:

- **One Model Women-Friendly Gram Panchayat in each district** across India.

- **Gender-sensitive governance** framework ensuring **safety, equity, and inclusivity**.

- **Dedicated Monitoring Dashboard** to track progress and implementation.

- **Capacity-building programs** for elected representatives and officials.

- **Showcasing best practices** in gender-sensitive governance.

187. The **Centre for Development of Telematics (C-DOT)** has launched **'Samarth'**, a dedicated incubation program aimed at fostering innovation in the telecommunications and IT sectors.

The initiative will support startups and innovators in Telecom Software Applications, Cybersecurity, 5G/6G, AI, IoT, and Quantum Technologies. The Software Technology Parks of India (STPI) is the implementation partner, helping create a dynamic and supportive startup ecosystem.

The program will run in hybrid mode with two cohorts per year, each consisting of 18 startups, providing funding, mentorship, and infrastructure support.

Aim of the Program:

- Promotes next-gen technologies like 5G/6G, AI, IoT, cybersecurity, and quantum tech.
- Encourages scalable, sustainable business models and strengthens India's startup ecosystem.

Key Features:

- Cohort Size: 18 startups per program, totaling 36 startups across two six-month cohorts.
- Hybrid Model: Delivered in both physical and virtual modes for flexibility.
- Support Offered: Grants up to ₹5 lakh, access to C-DOT labs, mentorship, and networking opportunities.
- Eligibility: Startups must be DPIIT-recognized to apply.

188. The **Unified Logistics Interface Platform (ULIP)** has achieved a major milestone, recording over **100 crore Application Programming Interface (API) transactions** to enable seamless, smart, and sustainable logistics.

This marks a significant step towards building a tech-driven logistics ecosystem in India.

ULIP facilitates real-time cargo tracking, automation, and streamlined regulatory compliance. The platform supports businesses of all sizes, including MSMEs and start-ups, by bridging critical data gaps, reducing operational costs, and eliminating monopolistic control in the logistics sector.

Transporters and logistics service providers such as Cuttack Carriers, Road Pilot, and Intugine are utilizing the platform to enable digital documentation, automated gate processes, and seamless freight movement, thereby easing congestion at key logistics hubs.

ULIP:

ULIP, launched under the National Logistics Policy (NLP) by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in September 2022, aims to create an integrated, efficient, and technology-enabled logistics sector. Since its inception, ULIP has connected 43 systems from 11 ministries through 129 APIs, covering more than 1,800 data fields.

ULIP is operated by NICDC Logistics Data Services Ltd. (NLDSL), a joint venture between the Government of India, represented by the National Industrial Corridor Development and Implementation Trust (NICDIT), and Japanese IT firm NEC Corporation.

There are three key components that define the ULIP platform:

- Integration with existing data sources of ministries

- Data exchange with private players

- Unified document reference in the supply chain

189. The **Gold Monetization Scheme** (GMS) was announced on **15th September 2015** to reduce the country's reliance on the import of gold in the long run and to mobilize gold held by households and institutions in the country to facilitate its use for productive purposes.

The GMS comprised of 3 components:
- Short-term bank Deposit (1-3 years)
- Medium-term Government Deposit (5-7 years), and
- Long-term government Deposit (12 - 15 years)

Based on the examination of the performance of the Gold Monetization Scheme (GMS) and evolving market conditions, it has been decided to discontinue the **Medium-Term Government Deposit and Long-Term Government Deposit** components of the GMS with effect from **March 26, 2025**.

The Short-Term Bank Deposits (STBD) offered by the banks under GMS shall continue at the discretion of the individual banks based on the commercial viability as assessed by them.

190. Union Minister of Steel and Heavy Industries **HD Kumaraswamy** launched the second round of the PLI scheme for specialty steel, termed **PLI Scheme 1.1**.

The second round has seen greater enthusiasm, with 25 companies submitting 42 applications and committing investments worth Rs 17,000 crore.

The companies signed memorandums of understanding (MoUs) with the Ministry of Steel to produce **five types of high-grade steel**. These are as follows:

- Coated/plated steel products
- High strength/wear-resistant steel
- Speciality rails
- Alloy steel products
- Steel wires and electrical steel.

The first round of the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for Specialty Steel was notified in July 2021 by the Ministry of Steel with a budgetary outlay of Rs.6,322 Crore.

Production Linked Incentive Scheme (PLI):

The PLI scheme was conceived to scale up domestic manufacturing capability, accompanied by higher import substitution and employment generation.

Launched in March 2020, the scheme initially targeted three industries:

- Mobile and allied Component Manufacturing
- Electrical Component Manufacturing and
- Medical Devices.

Now, the scheme has expanded its target area as it covers mobile manufacturing, manufacturing of medical devices, automobiles and auto components, pharmaceuticals, drugs, specialty steel, telecom & networking products, electronic products, white goods (ACs and LEDs), food products, textile products, solar PV modules, advanced chemistry cell (ACC) battery, and drones and drone components.

BUSINESS & ECONOMY

191. The **Belgium-based John Cockerill Defense and Electro Pneumatics & Hydraulics Pvt Ltd** have formed a **Joint Venture** (JV) to enhance India's defense manufacturing capabilities under the 'Make in India' initiative.

This JV will focus on manufacturing, assembling, and commissioning turrets for the Indian Army's Indian Light Tank (I.L.T) program, strengthening defense operations in extreme terrains.
The partnership aims to provide customized, high-tech defense solutions for India's armed forces.
This JV will support defense modernization by incorporating advanced automation, innovation, and localization in production. The initiative not only enhances India's national security but also aligns with the country's goal of becoming a leading hub for global defense manufacturing.
It would be 60:40 JV with John Cockerill Defence holding the majority stake. Turrets will be manufactured at Electro Pneumatics' Chakan facility in Pune, Maharashtra.

192. India Semiconductor Mission (ISM), Tata Electronics, and Tata Semiconductor Manufacturing signed a Fiscal Support Agreement (FSA) for **India's first commercial semiconductor fab** in Dholera, **Gujarat**.

This agreement is a step to strengthen India's technological self-reliance under the modified programme for semiconductor & display manufacturing ecosystem in India.

The Government of India, through the India Semiconductor Mission, has committed **50% fiscal support** on a pari-passu basis for eligible project costs - demonstrating unwavering national commitment to building a world-class semiconductor ecosystem within Indian borders.

Tata Electronics' semiconductor fab commands a total investment of over **₹91,000 crore** with a capacity of 50,000 wafers starts per month (WSPM).

The project brought Taiwan's Powerchip Semiconductor Manufacturing Corporation (PSMC) expertise to India, creating a powerful technological alliance.

The facility will address critical global semiconductor markets in automotive, computing, communications, and artificial intelligence sectors - transforming India from a technology consumer into a global manufacturing powerhouse.

193. The Competition Commission of India has approved the proposed acquisition of up to **72.8% shareholding** of **Orient Cement Limited** by **Ambuja Cements Limited**.

The proposed transaction comprises the acquisition of 46.80 per cent of the issued share capital in the target (Orient Cement) by the acquirer (Ambuja Cements).

Ambuja Cements Limited (Acquirer) is engaged in the manufacture and sale of grey cement, including Ordinary Portland Cement (OPC), Pozzolona Portland Cement (PPC), and Pozzolona Composite Cement (PCC). The Acquirer (including its subsidiaries) operates 22 integrated cement plants across India, as well as 10 bulk cement terminals and 21 grinding units.

Orient Cement Limited (Target) is involved in the business of manufacturing grey cement, including PPC and OPC. It has three manufacturing facilities at Devapur (Telangana), Chittapur (Karnataka) and Jalgaon (Maharashtra), with distribution in 10 states across India.

194. German semiconductor company **Infineon Technologies** has **signed its first agreement** in India **with CDIL Semiconductors** to supply silicon wafer for manufacturing power chips in the country.

Under the agreement, Infineon will supply bare semiconductor wafers to CDIL, which the Indian firm will process and use for assembly and packaging to make power chipset for use in products like power inverters, solar technology, automobile power solutions, and renewable energy applications, among others.

This partnership aims to drive innovation, strengthen India's semiconductor ecosystem, and support the country's "Make in India" initiative.

Continental Device India (CDIL) is India's first semiconductor manufacturer, specialising in discrete semiconductors and silicon carbide (SiC) devices. It was founded **in 1964**. Its President is Pankaj Gulati.

195. **Mintoak**, a PayPal-backed fintech startup, has **acquired Digiledge** in a deal valued at approximately **$3.5 million**, marking the **first acquisition in India's central bank digital currency** (CBDC) space.

Mintoak, which provides merchant payment solutions to banks, completed the acquisition to enhance its digital payment capabilities.

Digiledge, a firm specializing in CBDC and bill payments, will now integrate its services with Mintoak's platform.

The integration of Digiledge's expertise will enable Mintoak's partner banks including HDFC Bank, Axis Bank, State Bank of India, Absa Bank, Network International, and others to empower merchant acquirers and SMEs globally with advanced payments and commerce solutions.

The **Reserve Bank of India** (RBI) **launched** a pilot for **the e-rupee in December 2022** as a digital alternative to cash. Initially limited to banks, the scope of transactions was extended to payment firms in April 2023.

Earlier, fintech firms like Cred and MobiKwik became the first to enable CBDC transactions for users.

196. The **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade** (DPIIT) and **Mercedes-Benz India Private Limited** have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to enhance India's manufacturing ecosystem, road safety, and environmental sustainability.

The MoU was signed by Director, DPIIT, Dr. Sumeet Kumar Jarangal and Managing Director, Mercedes-Benz India, Shri Santosh Iyer, in the presence of senior officials from both organizations.

This collaboration aims to support startups, innovators, and entrepreneurs by providing infrastructure, mentorship, funding opportunities, and market linkages.

The initiative will facilitate international partnerships and knowledge exchange to drive long-term technological advancements.

Mercedes-Benz India Private Limited will contribute through corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, working with incubators and research institutes to foster meaningful societal impact.

197. The **Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI)** has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Government of **Jammu and Kashmir** (J&K) to develop and promote river cruise tourism in the region.

This initiative is part of a broader effort to establish cruise circuits from Kashmir to Kerala and Assam to Gujarat. The cost of the project is about Rs 10 billion.

Jammu and Kashmir is home to three national waterways out of 111 national waterways in India:

- **River Chenab (NW- 26)**

- **River Jhelum (NW-49)**

- **River Ravi (NW-84)**

Under the MoU, IWAI will develop waterside infrastructure, including ten floating jetties and landside facilities such as waiting halls and passenger amenities.

Out of ten, **two floating jetties** will be installed at **Akhnoor and Reasi (near Jammu)** the declared portion of River Chenab (**NW-26**); seven floating jetties at Pantha Chowk, Zero Bridge, Amira Kadal, Shah-e-Hamdan, Safa Kadal/Chattabal Shrine, Sumbal Bridge and Gund Prang (in Srinagar and Bandipora) River Jhelum (NW-49) and one jetty at Sohar on River Ravi (NW-84).

IWAI will also develop a navigational fairway by executing dredging wherever required, provide navigational aids and conduct regular hydrographic surveys for safe plying of vessels in these waterways.

198. The Ministry of Defence has signed a **USD 248 million** contract with Russian defense firm **Rosoboronexport (RoE) to procure 1,000-horsepower (HP)** engines for **T-72 battle tanks** in fully-assembled, completely knocked-down, and semi-knocked-down conditions.

The deal includes the **Transfer of Technology (ToT)** from the Russian defense manufacturer to **Chennai-based Armoured Vehicles Nigam Limited**, for integration and subsequent licensed production of engines under ToT to boost the 'Make in India' initiative in the defense sector.

T-72 tank:

- The T-72 tank, first introduced in India in the 1970s, remains a key component of the Indian Army's (IA) armored fleet, with around 2,500 tanks in operation.

- These tanks are currently equipped with a 780 HP engine.

The Indian Army has also inducted 1,300 T-90S 'Bhishma' tanks, out of the 1,657 being manufactured under license from Russia by the Heavy Vehicles Factory.

199. The **Central Ayurveda Research Institute** (CARI), Kolkata, under the **Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences** (CCRAS) Ministry of Ayush, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the **School of Natural Product Studies** (SNPS), Jadavpur University, Kolkata **to advance Ayurveda research in diabetes management**.

The agreement, formalized at CARI, Kolkata, marks the beginning of a collaborative research project **titled "Evaluation of Vidangadi Lauham, a Classical Ayurvedic Formulation in the Management of Diabetes in Experimental Animals."**

This research project has significant potential in Ayurveda by aiming to establish a solid scientific foundation for using Vidangadi Lauham in diabetes management.

Through biophysical characterization and the analysis of the biological activity of medicinal plants, this study will contribute to the preservation and restoration of India's rich heritage of medicinal plants.

The findings of this research will be crucial for developing high-quality, safe, and effective Ayurvedic formulations to combat diabetes and its complications.

200. **India**'s Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) and **Armenia**'s Center of Drug and Medical Technology Expertise (CDMTE) have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on **cooperation in regulating medical products**.

The MoU was signed in the presence of External Affairs Minister, Dr S Jaishankar and Foreign Minister of Armenia, Ararat Mirzoyan during his visit to India.

The two ministers agreed to explore cooperation in digital technologies and pharmaceuticals.

They also reviewed the whole range of growing India-Armenia bilateral cooperation including in the areas of political exchanges, trade, economics, connectivity, education, culture, and people-to-people contacts.

The two nations also signed **a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** on cooperation between the **Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service** and the **Diplomatic School** of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia.

This MoU focuses on cooperation in diplomatic training and capacity-building initiatives, reinforcing efforts to enhance knowledge-sharing and professional exchanges between the two nations.

201. **Coal India Limited** (CIL) signed a **memorandum of understanding** (MoU) with **the Indian Institute of Technology, Hyderabad (IIT-H)** to develop clean coal technologies and diversification in coal utilization.

The company will establish a **center of clean coal energy & net zero (CLEANZ) in Hyderabad**.

Both entities will synergize their efforts in developing cutting-edge technology readiness levels (TRL) for sustainable utilization of Indian coal. This is in line with the country's net zero commitments.

The current collaborative model is a research & development (R&D) endeavour under the umbrella of National Centre for Coal and Energy Research (NaCCER). This is an independent R&D unit of CMPDI, the mine development and consultancy arm of CIL.

The CIL management has approved a grant of **Rs 98 crore** to IIT Hyderabad for five years for setting up a center of excellence.

Clean coal technologies encompass a variety of advancements focused on improving coal combustion efficiency and reducing emissions, such as carbon capture and storage (CCS) or carbon capture, use and storage (CCUS), as well as methods for cleaning coal before and after combustion.

202. **Sakthi Aircraft Industry Private Limited (SAIPL)** and the **Aero Club of India (ACI)** signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to manufacture and supply **200 Diamond DA40 NG trainer aircraft** in India.

This partnership is aligned with the Government of India's "Make in India" initiative and aims to revolutionize the commercial pilot training landscape by ensuring a consistent and cost-effective supply of advanced training aircraft to Flight Training Organizations (FTOs) across the country.

Under this agreement:

- ACI will act as the central aggregator, consolidating demand, managing aircraft allocation, and facilitating seamless handovers to FTOs.

- SAIPL, in a joint venture with **Diamond Aircraft Industry, Austria**, will establish a state-of-the-art manufacturing facility in India to produce, sustain, and provide comprehensive lifecycle support for the DA40 NG.

- SAIPL will commence deliveries by **May 2025**, with an initial target of 70 aircraft by the end of 2025, scaling up to produce 100 aircraft annually.

- The collaboration is projected to train 1,000 pilots annually and 10,000 pilots over the next 10 years.

203. The **Competition Commission of India** (CCI) has approved **AMG Green Power B.V.'s** acquisition of a shareholding in **Greenko Energy Holdings (GEH)** from **ORIX Corporation**, along with the subscription of convertible notes of AM Green (Luxembourg) **S.À.R.L** (Société à Responsabilité Limitée, **i.e.** Limited Liability Company) by ORIX Corporation.

ORIX Corporation will also subscribe to certain convertible notes issued by AM Green (Luxembourg) S.À.R.L.

AMG Green Power B.V. (AMG Power) is a newly formed entity and is not engaged in any business operations in India or internationally.

AM Green (Luxembourg) S.À.R.L (AMG Lux) is a holding company with no business operations.

ORIX Corporation, a global financial services company, operates in multiple sectors, including asset management, leasing, financial services, and power generation.

Greenko Energy Holdings (GEH) specializes in renewable energy, managing wind, solar, hydro, and energy storage assets across India.

204. The **National Highways Logistics Management Limited (NHLML)** and the **Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI)** signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to develop a state-of-the-art **Multi-Modal Logistics Park (MMLP)** in **Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh.**

The MoU was signed in the presence of Union Ministers Nitin Gadkari (Road Transport and Highways) and Sarbananda Sonowal (Ports, Shipping, and Waterways).

The MMLP will be located on a 150-acre site and will be strategically connected to National Highway 7 (NH7) via a 650-meter access road. It is positioned just 1.5 kilometers from the crucial NH7-NH2 junction, enhancing connectivity within the region.

The park will integrate with the Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor through a 5.1 km railway line from Jeonathpur Station and connect to National Waterway-1.

It is located 30 km from Lal Bahadur Shastri Airport.

The project aims to boost investment, employment opportunities, and trade efficiency, strengthening India's logistics infrastructure and economic growth.

205. The **Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI)** signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with multiple Delhi government agencies to promote cruise tourism on the Yamuna River.

These agencies are the Irrigation and Flood Control Department, Delhi Development Authority (DDA), Delhi Jal Board (DJB), and Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC).

This MoU is signed to develop and promote cruise tourism on the **4-km stretch of the Yamuna River (National Waterway-110)** between **Sonia Vihar and Jagatpur.**

Key features of the project:

- Eco-friendly river cruises will be launched on the Sonia Vihar–Jagatpur stretch.

- Electric-solar hybrid boats (20-30 passenger capacity) with bio-toilets, PA systems, and life jackets will be deployed.

- Two HDPE jetties will be installed for smooth ferry operations.

- This initiative boosts short-distance navigation and sustainable tourism while improving connectivity and local economic growth.

Note: The Yamuna River, spanning 1,089 kilometers across Delhi, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh, was declared National Waterway-110 in 2014.

206. Yoga Guru Ramdev-led **Patanjali Ayurved** and Rajnigandha maker **Dharampal Satyapal Group (DS Group)** will acquire **Magma General Insurance** from **Sanoti Properties LLP** at a valuation of **Rs.4,500 crore.**

The acquisition, subject to regulatory approvals, marks Patanjali's strategic expansion beyond the FMCG sector into financial services, tapping into India's underpenetrated general insurance market.

Sanoti Properties LLP owned by Adar Poonawalla, approved the sale of its insurance subsidiary Magma General Insurance Ltd (formerly Magma HDI General Insurance Company Ltd).

The transaction is structured through a Share Purchase Agreement (SPA), with Sanoti Properties LLP alongside Celica Developers and Jaguar Advisory Services, collectively referred to as the Majority Sellers.

207. The **National School of Government** (NSG) of **South Africa** and the **Administrative Staff College of India** (ASCI) have inked a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) aimed at advancing governance, capacity building, and public sector performance.

This strategic agreement underscores both institutions' commitment to equipping public servants with the requisite skills and expertise to drive national development and improve service delivery.

Key areas of cooperation under this MoU include:

- Capacity building and training programs for public sector professionals.

- Joint research initiatives to inform policy and governance best practices.

- Advisory and consultancy services.

- Knowledge sharing and networking platforms.

- Exchange programs.

208. The **Central Council for Research in Homoeopathy (CCRH), New Delhi**, and **Adamas University**, **Kolkata,** signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to promote academic and research collaboration in the field of homeopathy.

The agreement was signed by Dr Subhash Kaushik, Director General of CCRH, and Prof. Suranjan Das, Vice-Chancellor of Adamas University, in the presence of Nobel Laureate Sir Gregory Paul Winter and Dr. Samit Ray, Chancellor of Adamas University.

Key Objectives of the MoU:

- The collaboration aims to advance scientific research in homeopathy through knowledge exchange and joint initiatives.

- Both institutions are committed to fostering innovation and evidence-based research in alternative medicine.

- The partnership will enhance academic ties and facilitate joint research projects.

- The collaboration is expected to contribute to the broader acceptance and integration of homeopathy in mainstream healthcare.

209. Airtel and Jio, India's top telecom companies, partnered with **Elon Musk's Starlink** to provide satellite internet services in India.

This move is part of their strategy to expand high-speed internet connectivity to remote and rural areas, where traditional broadband infrastructure is limited.

The partnership aims to enhance Airtel's broadband and enterprise services, particularly in underserved regions.

Jio plans to integrate Starlink's satellite internet with its existing 5G infrastructure to offer seamless connectivity across India.

The collaborations aim to bridge the digital divide by providing high-speed internet to rural and remote areas.

210. Bengaluru-based EV startup **Pravaig Dynamics** has completed military trials for its **VEER Electric Tactical All-Terrain Vehicle (E-TATV)** and secured the prestigious **iDEX Award** from the Ministry of Defence. This recognition marks a significant step toward India's strategic autonomy in defense mobility.

The VEER E-TATV is the world's first operational electric vehicle designed specifically for tactical defense applications. It is built for forward patrolling, reconnaissance, and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) operations.

- VEER is fully designed and built in India, ensuring 100% sovereignty over its technology and data.
- It features class-leading stealth capabilities, is military-grade, and is fully field-repairable.
- Tested in extreme terrains and altitudes, VEER is built for rugged military operations.
- Top speed: 160 kilometers per hour (km/h)
  - Range: More than 500 km
  - Payload: 690 kilograms (kg)
- Torque: 620 Newton-meters (Nm)

211. The **Andhra Pradesh Capital Region Development Authority (APCRDA)** has signed an agreement with the **Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDCO)** for a **₹11,000 crore loan** to support the construction of **Amaravati**, the state's greenfield capital city.

The agreement was signed by senior officials from both APCRDA and HUDCO, including HUDCO Chairman and Managing Director Sanjay Kulshrestha and Andhra Pradesh Municipal Administration Minister P. Narayana.

The agreement follows earlier attempts by the Andhra Pradesh government to secure funding for Amaravati's development. With the approval from HUDCO, the government aims to expedite key projects and strengthen the region's urban framework.

With HUDCO's financial support, the planned infrastructure and civic amenities are expected to take shape, contributing to the long-term urban development goals of Andhra Pradesh.

212. The **Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers Ltd. (GRSE)** has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with **Nagaland's Public Work Department (PWD) (Roads & Bridges)** for the supply of eight sets of double-lane modular Steel Bridges in the state.

This landmark MoU marks the first-ever MoU between GRSE and a North Eastern State, aligning with the Government of India's Make in India initiative for accelerated regional development.

The MoU was signed by DIG Subrato Ghosh, Director (Personnel), GRSE, and Swarai Meru, Chief Engineer, PWD Nagaland in Kohima.

Earlier, the GRSE delivered Modular Bridges to the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) and the National Highway Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd (NHIDCL).

213. **CSIR-Indian Institute of Integrative Medicine (CSIR-IIIM), Jammu** signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with **HAPICO Industries Private Limited** to jointly develop novel biopesticides as an alternative to chemical pesticides.

The MoU was formally signed by Dr. Zabeer Ahmed, Director, CSIR-IIIM, and Mr. Shabeer Ahmed, Managing Director, HAPICO Industries.

This strategic partnership aims to address the detrimental impact of chemical pesticides on human health and the environment.

The collaboration seeks to harness their potential for developing innovative and sustainable biopesticide solutions.

214. The **Centre for Development of Telematics** (C-DOT), under the Department of Telecommunications (DoT), Government of India, has partnered with **IIT Delhi** to develop a Generative AI-enhanced chatbot for disaster early warning and emergency communication.

This initiative aims to improve India's disaster preparedness by providing automated, reliable, and multilingual communication services for disaster managers, first responders, and affected communities.

The AI-powered chatbot will use Natural Language Processing (NLP), Text-to-Speech (TTS), Speech-to-Text (STT), and Image Processing to deliver real-time assistance.

It will integrate with 3GPP-compliant emergency communication protocols and the existing NDMA Disaster Management System developed by C-DOT.

The solution will be fully on-premise, ensuring cybersecurity, data privacy, and high availability for critical applications.

The agreement was signed under the C-DOT Collaborative Research Program (CCRP).

215. Under the Ministry of Coal, **Bharat Coking Coal Limited (BCCL),** a subsidiary of Coal India Limited (CIL), has achieved a historic milestone by successfully monetizing the **2 MTPA Dugda Coal Washery in Bokaro, Jharkhand**.

This marks India's first-ever coal washery monetization, a transformative step in coal sector reforms aimed at enhancing efficiency, optimizing assets, and boosting energy security.

The initiative will improve coal-washing capabilities, reduce import dependency, and save foreign exchange, aligning with the vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat.

Strategic Importance:
- Optimizing underutilized assets and encouraging private sector participation.
- Enhancing coal beneficiation, revenue generation, and supply chain efficiency.
- Creating employment opportunities and boosting industrial growth in Jharkhand and surrounding regions.

This achievement reflects the Ministry of Coal's commitment to modernizing the coal sector, fostering a competitive ecosystem, and ensuring sustainable growth. By leveraging private sector expertise, the initiative aims to maximize coal infrastructure value, reduce wastage, and strengthen India's energy security.

216. A consortium of **6 Japanese majors** - IHI Corporation, Hokkaido Electric Power Co., Mitsubishi Gas Chemical Company, Inc., shipping major Mitsui O.S.K. Lines, Ltd., Inc., Mizuho Bank, Ltd., and Tokyo Century Corporation have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to explore investment opportunities in a green ammonia production project currently under development in India.

As per the MoU, a new green ammonia production facility will be established in **Odisha by 2030** in partnership with Gurugram (Haryana) based ACME Cleantech Solutions Private Limited (part of ACME Group), a leading Renewable Energy (RE) company.

It would produce around **400,000 tonnes** of green ammonia annually which could be exported to Japan to serve its power generation companies and chemical manufacturers.

This green ammonia will be safely and stably transported to Japan, catering to various domestic users such as power generation companies and chemical manufacturers.

217. **JSW Steel Limited** became the **world's most valuable steel company** by market capitalization, **reaching USD 30.31 billion**. This milestone places JSW Steel ahead of industry giants like the United States of America (USA) based Nucor Corporation (USD 29.4 billion) and Luxembourg-based ArcelorMittal S.A. (USD 27.1 billion).

JSW Steel currently trades at a P/E ratio of 28.5x, significantly higher than ArcelorMittal's 20.3x.

Other prominent steel producers, including Japan's Nippon Steel Corp and China's Baoshan Iron & Steel Company Limited, maintain market capitalizations between USD 21 billion and USD 27 billion.

Tata Steel Limited, **India's second most valuable steel company**, has a market capitalization of around USD 23 billion, while Jindal Steel and Power Limited is valued at USD 10.81 billion, and the state-owned SAIL stands at USD 5.5 billion.

India's steel production rose by 3.5% to 37.38 million tonnes (MT) in the 3rd Quarter of the Financial Year 2024-25(Q3 FY25), while steel consumption grew by 6.8% to 38.46 MT.

218. S&P Global Ratings revised India's GDP growth forecast for the fiscal year 2025-26, reducing it to **6.5 percent**, down from its earlier projection **of 6.7 percent**.

The global credit rating agency cited external pressures, including rising US tariffs and a broader pushback against globalization, as key factors contributing to the downward revision.

S&P Global Ratings expects India's domestic demand to remain robust, supported by factors such as cooling food inflation and tax incentives announced in India's Union Budget 2025-26.

S&P also projected that the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) will further cut interest rates by 75 to 100 basis points in the current cycle, bringing inflation closer to the central bank's target of 4 per cent for the fiscal year ending 31 March 2026.

219. GE Aerospace, a leading U.S.-based engine manufacturer, delivered the first of 99 F404-IN20 engines to Bengaluru's **Hindustan Aeronautics Limited** (HAL) for the Tejas Mk 1A fighter jet program.

The engine will undergo final inspections at GE's Lynn plant (USA) before shipment to India by April 2025, with HAL slated to receive 12 engines by December 2025.

Key Highlights:

- The F404-IN20, a customized variant of GE's F404 series, delivers the highest thrust in its class—19,000 lbf (85 kN) with afterburner.
- In 2023, GE and HAL signed an MoU to explore co-producing F414 engines in India, signaling deeper aerospace collaboration.
- The ₹5,375 crore (USD 650 million) deal aligns with India's goal to boost domestic defense production and curb import dependence.

BANKING & FINANCE

220. The **Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)** launched **'Bond Central',** a Centralised Database Portal for Corporate Bonds.

Developed by: Online Bond Platform Providers Association (OBPP Association) in collaboration with Market Infrastructure Institutions (MIIs-Stock Exchanges and Depositories).

Objective: To create a single, authentic source of information on corporate bonds issued in India and is intended as an information repository for the public at large and is accessible free of cost.

Key Features of Bond Central:

- **Comprehensive Bond Listings:** View all corporate bonds from different exchanges and issuers in one place for easy comparison and transparency.

- **Price Comparison:** Compare corporate bond prices with Government Securities (G-Secs) and other fixed-income indices to make better investment choices.

- **Investor-Centric Information:** Access detailed risk assessments, bond documents, and disclosures to help investors evaluate opportunities.

- **Enhanced Transparency:** Standardized bond data reduces information gaps, improving trust in the market.

221. **Bank of Baroda**, under the guidance of the Reserve Bank of India, unveiled the pilot launch of a new functionality for merchants built on the **"Programmability"** functionality of Central Bank Digital Currency (**CBDC**) – the **"Merchant Loyalty/ Cashback Programme"** in collaboration with a fintech company.

This industry-first initiative enables small and medium merchants to independently design and launch loyalty/cashback programs for their customers, usually designed by large brands, using Bank of Baroda's **"bob Merchant App".**

Key features:

- Bank's merchant customers will configure their own cashback or loyalty program using the **"bob Merchant app",** specifying the period of the campaign, percentage of cashback, and validity/expiry date of the cashback received by customers.
- During the campaign period, customers (presently for BOB customers only) who make a purchase using the bob World Digital Rupee app, will receive cashback in the form of PCBDC from the merchant as per the prevailing offer at the merchant outlet.
- These PCBDCs can be used by customers at the specific merchant outlet until expiry.

222. **City Union Bank (CUB)** has partnered with **Chennai Super Kings (CSK)** to launch an exclusive co-branded credit card, enhancing the purchasing experience for CSK fans while allowing them to express their team loyalty.

Significance of the Partnership:

- A major collaboration between banking and sports to increase fan engagement.
- Provides CSK supporters with financial benefits while celebrating their team.

223. **Bank of Baroda** has been awarded 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 capabilities are consistent with global best practices.

ISO 22301:2019 is an international benchmark for business continuity management, focusing on minimizing operational disruptions and ensuring swift recovery in times of crisis.

224. **Paytm** has partnered with **RBL Bank** to enhance digital payment adoption by providing soundbox and card machines to merchants across India. This collaboration aims to improve

payment accessibility, ensuring that businesses, especially small and medium enterprises (SMEs), can seamlessly accept digital transactions.

A key feature of this initiative is Paytm's Soundbox technology, which offers real-time audio confirmation for transactions, reducing errors and providing a smooth payment experience for both merchants and customers.

The merchants will be able to accept payments through multiple modes, including UPI, debit/credit cards, and EMI options, making transactions more flexible.

By integrating Paytm's innovative payment solutions with RBL Bank's extensive banking network, this partnership is set to accelerate financial inclusion, enabling more businesses to shift to cashless payments.

225. The **Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)** has allowed all non-banking financial companies (NBFCs), including housing finance companies (HFCs), to invest in **security receipts (SRs)** issued by Asset Reconstruction Companies (ARCs) under the **SARFAESI Act (the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002).**

ARCs are financial entities set up to acquire bad loans from banks and financial institutions, typically at a discount, after appropriate haircuts.

ARCs acquire non-performing assets (NPAs) from banks and financial institutions at a discount and issue SRs to investors, representing claims on the underlying distressed assets.

By permitting NBFCs and HFCs to invest in these receipts, SEBI aims to enhance liquidity, investor participation, and the overall resolution of NPAs.

226. Indian Overseas Bank (IOB) has partnered with the **Indian Green Building Council (IGBC)** to provide financial support for developers and homebuyers investing in IGBC-certified green buildings. This initiative aims to promote sustainable construction by making eco-friendly projects more financially accessible.

Under the agreement, IOB will offer preferential financing options for real estate projects that meet IGBC's green certification standards. Developers constructing IGBC-rated buildings and homebuyers purchasing units in these projects will be eligible for financial assistance.

The collaboration includes:

- New financing models for IGBC Green Affordable Housing, IGBC NEST, and NESTPLUS projects, targeting economically weaker sections and lower-income groups.
- Awareness campaigns to educate developers and homebuyers on the benefits of green buildings and available financing options.
- With rapid urbanization, green buildings are seen as a key solution to energy inefficiency and resource depletion.

227. State-owned **Bank of India (BoI)** has added **111 new branches across India** to enhance its presence in key urban and semi-urban areas.

BoI has added 17 branches under its Hyderabad Field General Manager Office (FGMO), followed by 14 under Chennai FGMO, 13 under Pune FGMO, 12 under New Delhi FGMO, and 11 under Bhopal FGMO.
Other 10 branches each have been added under Chandigarh and Lucknow FGMO.

As of December 2024, BoI had 5,202 branches in the country, with 993 in metros, 838 in urban centers, 1,501 in semi-urban centers, and 1,868 in rural areas.

228. The **Government of India and Life Insurance Corporation (LIC)** collectively **hold a 95% stake in IDBI Bank**, of which they plan to offload **60.72%.**
The disinvestment process of IDBI Bank has gained momentum as prospective buyers have begun due diligence after a year-long pause.
Potential buyers, including Fairfax Financial, Emirates NBD, Oaktree Capital, and Kotak Mahindra Bank, submitted expressions of interest in January 2024 and now have access to confidential data for assessment.
The next steps in the process include drafting and negotiating the share purchase agreement, followed by the submission of financial bids.
The government aims to complete the disinvestment by the first half of the fiscal year 2025-26 (H1 FY26).
This move aligns with the broader disinvestment strategy, though recent reports indicate that the government may reduce its FY25 disinvestment target by up to 40%, lowering it to below ₹300 billion from the initial ₹500 billion.

229. **Bank of India**, one of India's leading public sector banks, has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the **Indian Army** to extend the **BOI Rakshak Salary Package** to Army personnel, veterans and Agniveers recruited under the **Agnipath Scheme**.

The MoU covers special benefits including enhanced free comprehensive Personal Accident Insurance Cover, attractive offers on debit and credit cards, etc.
BOI's Rakshak Salary Scheme is a specially crafted salary account for personnel working in Defence Forces, Paramilitary, and State Police.
It offers free personal accidental insurance cover of up to ₹100 lakhs, free air accidental coverage of ₹200 lakhs, along with many other privileges and concessions, with applicable terms and conditions.

230. The **Securities and Exchange Board of India** (SEBI) has released a framework for the **Specialized Investment Fund** (SIF) which aims to bridge the gap between Mutual Funds (MFs) and Portfolio Management Services (PMS).

The new framework is set to come into **effect from April 1, 2025**.

This move by Sebi is designed to provide investors with greater portfolio flexibility while ensuring a level of investor protection.

Key Highlights of the New SIF Framework:

- **Eligibility Criteria**: AMCs with at least three years of operation and an average asset under management (AUM) of Rs 10,000 crore over the past three years can launch SIFs.

- **Investment Strategies**: The framework permits various equities, debt, and hybrid long-short investment strategies. Investors must maintain a minimum investment of Rs 10 lakh across all strategies under SIF.

- **Investing in Derivatives**: Investment strategies under SIF are allowed to take exposure of up to 25 percent of net assets in permissible exchange-traded derivative instruments, specifically for purposes beyond hedging and portfolio rebalancing.

- **Subscription & Redemption**: The subscription and redemption frequency of investment strategy under SIF may be based on the nature of investments, including daily, weekly, fortnightly, monthly, quarterly, annually, fixed maturity, or other suitable intervals.

- **On Benchmarking**: The investment strategies of SIF shall follow a single-tier benchmark structure.

- **Offering SIPs and STPs**: AMCs may offer systematic investment options such as Systematic Investment Plan, Systematic Withdrawal Plan and Systematic Transfer Plan for investment strategies launched under the SIF, while ensuring compliance with the Minimum Investment Threshold.

- **On distribution**: Distributors or entities that are currently engaged in the distribution of Mutual Fund products shall also be eligible to offer products under SIF.

231. **Jio Financial Services Limited** (JFSL) is set to acquire **State Bank of India's** (SBI) entire stake **worth ₹104.54 crore** in Jio Payments Bank Limited (JPBL), making it a wholly owned subsidiary.

Currently, JFSL holds an 82.17% stake in JPBL, with the remaining shares owned by SBI.

The acquisition, approved by JFSL's Board of Directors, will give the company full control over JPBL, enhancing its presence in the digital banking and fintech sectors.

The deal is subject to Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) approval and is expected to be completed within 45 days of regulatory clearance.

JFS was a JV between SBI launched on August 30, 2016.

232. **Canara Bank** has launched the **Canara Crest Program**, an exclusive premium banking membership offering personalized banking services and luxury lifestyle benefits.

Members gain access to priority service lounges, airport lounge access, dining rewards, luxury hotel stays, and unlimited fitness memberships.

The program **offers two membership** tiers:

- **Crest:** For customers maintaining a QAB of ₹10 lakhs to ₹50 lakhs.

- **Crest Plus:** For customers maintaining a QAB of ₹50 lakhs and above.

It offers exclusive Debit Cards and Credit cards from Mastercard and RuPay, featuring exceptional benefits tailored for members.

With annual perks worth up to Rs. 10 lakhs, the cards also include Personal Accident Insurance coverage of up to Rs. 20 lakh and Air Accident Insurance of up to Rs. 1.00 crore.

Customers can also choose eligible card(s) that best suit their requirements.

Eligibility is limited to individual savings account holders aged 18 and above, with a minimum account age of one year.

233. **Poonawalla Fincorp Limited** launched their Digital Personal Loan product called **PL Prime Digital 24×7** that targets salaried professionals.

This industry-first offering makes loans up to **Rs15 lakh** instantly accessible for eligible corporate customers from prime corporates with approval within just 15 minutes and paperless approval processes for an easy borrowing experience without collateral requirements.

Customers can access the loan anytime through the company's mobile app, website, or authorised partners.

The offering allows flexible EMI tenures and aims to provide quick financial assistance for both planned and unplanned expenses.

234. **Axis Bank** has become **the first Indian lender** to execute an **aircraft financing deal** through its International Banking Unit at GIFT City IFSC.

The bank extended a long-term US dollar loan to AI Fleet Services, Air India's leasing arm, for the purchase of 34 training aircraft. These will be deployed at Air India's upcoming pilot training institute in Amravati, Maharashtra.

By structuring the transaction entirely within GIFT City, Axis Bank reinforces the hub's growing role in global aviation finance.

The Indian aviation sector is projected to **require USD 30 billion** for fleet expansion over the next decade.

The move aligns with the Government's push for financial self-reliance by promoting GIFT City to emerge as a strategic alternative to global aviation finance centers.

235. **RBL Bank** has appointed **Narendra Agrawal** as **president and head of branch** banking and retail liabilities, and **T S Pari** as the **Chief Operations Officer** (COO) of the bank.

With over 25 years of experience across deposits, lending, distribution, and payments, Narendra Agrawal brings a strong track record of scaling businesses through a digital-first approach.

His focus will be on deposit growth, improving customer engagement via an omnichannel strategy, and enhancing integration between branch banking and asset sales.

With extensive leadership experience in foreign and private sector banks, T.S. Pari will oversee operational efficiencies, customer-centric initiatives, and risk management.

He will report to Alok Rastogi, who continues to lead the Bank's Corporate Centre with a focus on cost optimization, process simplification, and strengthening control mechanisms.

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236. **Rupee112,** a Gurgaon-based fintech startup, has launched **India's first fully automated loan disbursal service through WhatsApp**, to enable employees to access instant unsecured loans.

The platform leverages AI and ML to eliminate paperwork, speed up verification, and ensure secure loan processing.

Users can apply for loans ranging from ₹5,000 to ₹1,00,000 by messaging company's official WhatsApp number, with funds disbursed within minutes after real-time verification.

Rupee112 was **founded** in **2023** and aims to revolutionize digital lending by integrating its services with widely used platforms like WhatsApp.

237. **Niva Bupa Health Insurance Company Limited** has launched **'Rise'**, a health insurance plan designed to make quality healthcare more accessible for India's "Missing Middle."

'Rise' has been designed after comprehensive consumer immersion with consumers in the **middle-class segment** residing in both large and small cities of India to understand their lifestyles, needs, and preferences.

Rise is not only a step forward in bridging the insurance gap for India's Missing Middle but also aligns with IRDAI's vision of Insurance for All by 2047.

This plan ensures that health insurance is affordable, flexible, and tailored to the needs of our underserved population, empowering individuals and families with access to healthcare and financial security."

In India, the "missing middle" population, as defined by the NITI Aayog report published in October 2021, refers to individuals who earn too much to qualify for government-sponsored health schemes but too little to afford the premium of private health insurance.

This segment, comprising nearly 40 crore Indians, which includes a significant portion of the middle class, is particularly vulnerable in times of medical emergencies, as they face the financial burden of high healthcare costs while lacking adequate coverage.

Key Features of Rise Health Insurance Plan:

Flexi-Pay Benefit:

- Designed for individuals with irregular incomes, such as gig workers and daily wage earners.

- Customers can start the policy by paying just 20% of the total premium and pay the rest anytime during the policy tenure.

- Early payment results in additional discounts.

Example: For a ₹10,000 premium, an initial ₹2,000 payment is required, with the balance payable anytime. A 5% monthly subscription is needed to keep the policy active.

Smart Cash Benefit:

- Offers a ₹5,000 cash payout for policyholders who receive treatment in a government hospital instead of making a private hospital claim.

- Requires submission of the hospital discharge summary.

Return Benefit:

- 50% of the total premium paid is returned as an additional sum insured.

- This amount accumulates for a lifetime with a 10% bonus added annually.

- No waiting period or exclusions apply to the return sum insured.

This plan offers flexibility, financial incentives, and smart benefits to make health insurance more accessible and rewarding.

In addition to these benefits, the product offers unlimited digital consultations in **16 vernacular languages** so that customers can consult with general practitioners anytime, anywhere, unlimited times.

'Rise' comes with a host of optional benefits that provide customers the option to modify their room type category, **remove the capping of INR 50,000** on modern treatment, and increase the limit up to the base sum insured.

This would cover comprehensive range of healthcare expenses, including coverage for all treatments needing 2+ hours of hospitalization, domiciliary, and home care treatment as well as 60 days pre and 180 days' post-hospitalization expenses.

The plans are available in Individual, Multi-member, and Family floater variants and will have zone-wise pricing starting from as low as just INR 6,416 to INR 8,669 for a 35-year-old individual for a 10 Lakh sum insured.

Coverage Type	Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 3	Zone 4
35 Year Old for Self only	8,669	7,802	7,802	6,416
Individual Policy for Self & Spouse with age 35 and 32 years	15,605	14,044	14,044	11,546
Floater policy (2A) with age of eldest member being 35 years	14,375	12,937	12,937	10,637
Floater policy (2A1C) with age of eldest member being 35 years	18,222	16,400	16,400	13,484

Note: All premiums shown are for a Sum Insured of 10 Lacs and inclusive of 18% GST.

238. HDFC Bank has renewed its Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the **Indian Army and CSC Academy** to expand **Project NAMAN**, which is designed to provide support and services to Army veterans, their families, and their next of kin.

Project NAMAN, under HDFC Bank's Parivartan program, aims to provide pension-related assistance, Government-to-Citizen (G2C) services, and Business-to-Consumer (B2C) services at defense establishments.

The initiative will establish Common Service Centres (CSCs) across 26 Directorate of Indian Army Veterans (DIAV) locations by March 2025.

Project NAMAN Expansion Details:

- **Phase 1 (September 2023):** 14 DIAV locations were selected for the initial launch of CSCs.

- **Phase 2 (March 2025):** Expansion to 26 DIAV locations across Rajasthan, West Bengal, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Jammu & Kashmir, Meghalaya, Bihar, Odisha, and New Delhi.

239. Kuhoo Finance, a Mumbai-based student loan-focused lending platform, has received **approval** for a **Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC) license** from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), allowing it to lend from its books along with partner NBFCs and banks.

Founded in 2021, Kuhoo Finance offers educational loans ranging from ₹50,000 to ₹2 crore for undergraduate, postgraduate, executive education, and upskilling programs, including study abroad financing.

With the NBFC license, the company aims to expand its loan offerings and strengthen partnerships with educational institutions, banks, and financial entities.

The company competes with Incred Finance, Eduvanz, and Leap Finance in the student loan market.

Kuhoo Finance raised a $20 million seed round from WestBridge Capital in March 2022. Other investors include Konark Trust and MMPL (Mahindra & Mahindra Financial Services Limited Payment Services Private Limited) Trust.

240. Canara HSBC Life Insurance Company Limited ("Canara HSBC Life Insurance") has entered into a strategic distribution **partnership with GIC Housing Finance Limited** ("GICHF") to provide enhanced financial security solutions to GICHF's home loan customers.

Through this collaboration, Canara HSBC Life Insurance will offer its **'Group Asset Secure'** product, a comprehensive **credit life insurance plan** designed to safeguard borrowers and their families from loan liabilities in case of unexpected events.

The partnership aligns with India's ambition of promoting homeownership by integrating robust insurance solutions into the home loan process. GIC Housing Finance's diverse customer base

will benefit from this alliance, gaining access to financial protection that ensures long-term security.

241. The **Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI)** has granted in-principle approval to the promoters of **GoDigit General Insurance**, including founder Kamesh Goyal, to set up **India's first private reinsurance company.**

This approval marks a significant step towards enhancing the domestic reinsurance ecosystem and reducing reliance on foreign reinsurers.

The approval allows GoDigit's promoters to establish a private reinsurance company under the regulatory framework set by the IRDAI.

The reinsurer will focus on providing tailored reinsurance solutions to general and life insurance companies in India.

242. BRISKPE, an emerging financial technology company, has achieved a significant milestone by securing in-principle approval from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to operate as a **cross-border payments aggregator**.

This development positions **BRISKPE** to address the challenges faced by Indian businesses, especially SMEs, in conducting international transactions.

BRISKPE is a Mumbai-based fintech platform specializing in cross-border payment solutions for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), exporters, service providers, marketplace sellers, and freelancers.

The platform integrates account-to-account (A2A) transfers, card collections powered by PayU and PayPal, and wallet-based options to streamline international transactions.

In April 2024, BRISKPE secured $5 million in seed funding from PayU, a global fintech investor.

243. HDFC Bank has launched **Project HAKK (Hawai Anubhavi Kalyan Kendra)** to support Indian Air Force (IAF) pensioners, veterans, and families.

The bank signed an MoU with IAF through the Assistant Chief of Air Staff – Accounts & Air Veterans and CSC (Common Service Centre) Academy.

25 centers will be set up across Air Force units in cities like New Delhi, Bengaluru, Pune, Guwahati, and Chandigarh.

In collaboration with CSC Academy, the bank will offer skill development and financial training to help veterans and their families become financially independent.

244. Bharti Airtel announced the transfer of its **69.94% stake** in **Airtel Payments Bank** to its wholly owned subsidiary, **Airtel Ltd**, following regulatory and corporate approvals.

The move is part of an internal restructuring and does not impact the ownership of the bank.

This transaction is classified as a related party transaction and is conducted on an arm's length basis.

245. The **Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)** recorded a **48%** year-on-year growth in its total income, reaching **₹2,075 crore** in **FY 2023-24.**

The growth was mainly fueled by higher revenue from fees and subscriptions. SEBI's fee income saw a significant surge compared to the previous fiscal year, driven by increased contributions from stock exchanges, market participants, and companies.

Key Highlights

- Total income of SEBI rose by 48% to ₹2,075 crore in FY 2023-24, up from ₹1,404.36 crore in the previous fiscal.

- Major sources of income: Fees and subscriptions, investments, and other income.

- Fee income: Increased to ₹1,851.5 crore from ₹1,213.22 crore in FY 2022-23.

- Investment income: Increased to ₹192.41 crore, compared to ₹161.42 crore in the previous year.

- Other income: Rose to ₹18 crore, up from ₹15 crore in FY 2022-23.

- Total expenditure: Increased to ₹1,006 crore, up from ₹851.33 crore in the previous year.

- Establishment expenses: Grew to ₹696.43 crore from ₹576 crore.

- Administrative expenses: Increased to ₹218 crore from ₹172.42 crore.

- General Fund: Closing balance of ₹5,573 crore, including ₹1,065 crore as surplus income over expenditure.

- Investor Protection & Education Fund (IPEF): Closing balance of ₹533.17 crore, including ₹27.66 crore from investments.

- Disgorgement Fund: Closing balance of ₹7.38 crore in FY 2023-24.

Total Investments

- ₹1,255.31 crore in bonds and government securities.

- ₹1,235.92 crore as deposits with scheduled banks.

- ₹30 crore subscribed towards the National Centre for Financial Education (NCFE).

- Earmarked funds of ₹482 crore invested in bank deposits.

246. **SBI Life Insurance**, a joint venture between State Bank of India (SBI) and BNP Paribas Cardif, launched two new child products**, 'SBI Life - Smart Future Star'** and **'SBI Life - Smart Platina Young Achiever',** specifically curated to empower parents in securing child's future aspiration.

SBI Life - Smart Future Star:

- An Individual, Non-Linked, Participating, Life Insurance Savings Product

- 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:

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

- Guaranteed maturity benefit, offering financial security for the child's education, career aspirations, or marriage

- Flexible maturity pay-out options to meet changing 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.

247. On **International Women's Day 2025**, the **State Bank of India** (SBI) launched **'SBI Asmita'**, a collateral-free digital SME loan exclusively for women entrepreneurs.

The initiative aims to simplify access to financing for women-led MSMEs through a digital, hassle-free process.

SBI also introduced the **'Nari Shakti' platinum debit card,** designed specifically for women, featuring benefits across multiple categories.

SBI Asmita – Digital SME Loan for Women Entrepreneurs:

- Collateral-free SME loan designed to support women entrepreneurs.

- Uses a robust API ecosystem for digital lending and automated data verification.

- No physical documentation required – fetches data from GSTIN, bank statements, and credit information companies (CICs).

- Loan sanction based on the firm's financial needs and business assessment.

- Special add-on: Top-performing women entrepreneurs from SBI Asmita borrowers will receive entrepreneurial and management training.

'Nari Shakti' Platinum Debit Card:

- Eco-friendly RuPay-powered card made from 100% recycled plastic.

- Offers benefits in entertainment, shopping, travel, lifestyle, insurance, and more.

- Aim to enhance financial inclusion for women and promote green banking initiatives.

248. The **Bank of Baroda (BoB)** launched the **'BoB Global Women NRE & NRO Savings Account,'** becoming the first public sector bank to introduce an NRI account tailored specifically for women.

This initiative is designed to empower **women NRIs** by offering premium banking privileges, concessional loan rates, and insurance benefits.

Key Features and Benefits of the BoB Global Women NRE & NRO Savings Account:

- Customised debit card with nil issuance charges and concession on annual renewal fees.

- Complimentary Domestic and International Airport Lounge access.

- Concessional Interest Rates on Home Loans and Auto Loans, along with reduced processing charges.

- 100% concession on Locker rent.

- Free Air Accident Insurance Coverage of Rs 50.00 lakh and Personal Accidental insurance of Rs 5.00

- Lakh with many add-on benefits.

  - Auto sweep facility available on demand to earn more interest.

  - All the above benefits come with a Quarterly Average Balance (QAB) requirement of Rs 1 lakh only

- in CASA or Rs 10 lakh in CASA + Term Deposits.

The bank has also upgraded its **BoB Premium NRE & NRO Savings Account**, offering benefits like a customized debit card with higher transaction limits, free domestic and international lounge access, safe deposit locker, personal and air accident insurance, and concessional rates on home and auto loans with reduced processing charges.

249. ICICI Bank has appointed **Kamal Wali** as the **Head of its Security Operations Center**.

This move underscores the bank's dedication to enhancing cybersecurity and mitigating risks in an increasingly digital landscape.

With over 18 years of expertise in cybersecurity and IT operations, Kamal Wali will spearhead security strategies aimed at fortifying the bank's digital infrastructure.

In his new role, Kamal Wali will oversee security operations and risk mitigation strategies, focusing on strengthening the bank's cybersecurity infrastructure and enhancing digital resilience.

He will also work on improving data protection measures to ensure the delivery of secure and reliable banking services.

Before joining ICICI Bank, he held leadership positions at prominent organizations such as Jio Platforms Limited, Wipro, IBM, Intex Technologies, and Spanco Telesystems.

250. **IIFL Finance**, a prominent non-banking financial company (NBFC) in India, took a significant step toward promoting gender diversity and inclusion by rebranding seven of its existing branches as all-women staffed **'Shakti' branches** on the occasion of **Women's Day 2025.**

In the Delhi National Capital Region (NCR) and Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR), these branches are entirely managed by women professionals, reflecting IIFL Finance's commitment to empowering women in the financial services sector.

The '**Shakti' branches aim** to provide comprehensive financial services to all borrowers, with a special emphasis on women entrepreneurs. They will offer tailored financial literacy programs to help female business owners enhance their financial knowledge and conduct skill development initiatives to assist women in scaling their businesses.

This initiative holds significant importance as it recognizes the vital role women entrepreneurs play in India's economy. It also aligns with IIFL Finance's broader mission of serving millions of underserved customers across the country.

251. Private sector lender **YES Bank Ltd**. launched a seamless **Goods and Services Tax (GST) payment facility**, to expand its digital banking services.

The initiative, authorized by the Government of India, enables businesses and individuals to make GST payments efficiently through **YES BANK's Net Banking** platform and branch network.

Through direct integration with the GST portal, this initiative allows corporates and sole proprietors to fulfill their tax obligations quickly and securely. This can be done using **YES BANK's Retail and Corporate Internet Banking** platforms, as well as through its extensive branch network.

The service is available to both YES Bank customers and non-customers, broadening accessibility for seamless tax payments. The bank highlighted that this initiative aligns with its commitment to supporting India's digital ecosystem and improving the ease of doing business.

252. The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) has approved the R2 license for **Valueattics Reinsurance**, marking it as the first private-sector reinsurance company in the country.

Valueattics Re, backed by Canadian billionaire Prem Watsa's Fairfax Group and Kamesh Goyal, Founder and Chairman of Go Digit General Insurance Ltd, will reportedly commence operations with an initial paid-up capital of Rs 210 crore.

An R2 license is the second stage of regulatory approval required to establish an insurance or reinsurance company in India. It is granted by the IRDAI after a company completes the initial scrutiny process.

Reinsurance:

Reinsurance is insurance that an insurance company purchases from another insurance company to insulate itself (at least in part) from the risk of a major claims event.

253. The **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)** signed an agreement with **Yes Bank** to enhance funding access, mentorship, and infrastructure support for early-stage startups.

This collaboration aims to nurture innovation and offer essential assistance to product startups, innovators, and entrepreneurs throughout the country.

The partnership will utilize DPIIT's Startup India initiative and Yes Bank's financial expertise to enhance market linkages, improve funding access, provide mentorship, and support infrastructure for early-stage ventures.

The DPIIT has also inked a similar agreement with **Kyndryl Solutions** for supporting startups in the manufacturing and IT sectors by leveraging Kyndryl's expertise in digital transformation and Generative AI solutions.

254. Indian payments platform **Brisk Payments Platform** (BRISKPE) has secured an in-principle authorization from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to function as a **payment aggregator for cross-border (PA-CB)** transactions.

Payment Aggregator Cross Border (PA-CB) refers specifically to the facilitation of cross-border online payments for the import and export of permissible goods and services. The RBI has set certain criteria and regulations for entities engaged in PA-CB activities to ensure compliance and accountability.

This allows the company to facilitate both export and import payments under the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007, aligning with the RBI's updated regulatory framework introduced in October 2023.

The authorization enables BRISKPE to expand its operations as a PA-CB, catering to the needs of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) engaged in international trade.

The company, which specializes in cross-border payments, operates a platform that currently processes around 10,000 transactions monthly for export services.

255. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between **NABARD**, J&K Regional Office, Jammu, and **J&K Grameen Bank** for the promotion and financing of **2000 Joint Liability Groups (JLGs).**

Des Raj, Deputy General Manager, NABARD and Sanjay Gupta, Chairman, J&K Grameen Bank, signed the MoU.

The primary objective of the MoU was to enhance the flow of credit to tenant farmers, oral lessees, sharecroppers, landless farmers, and others who may not have formal title to their land holdings.

The initiative also aims to meet the credit requirements of the economically weaker sections of society by forming and credit-linking JLGs.

J&K Grameen Bank successfully financed more than 2500 JLGs under previous MoUs and encouraged the Bank to continue its efforts in financial inclusion.

Under this MoU, J&K Grameen Bank will form and finance 2000 JLGs across J&K and Ladakh.

NABARD will provide a promotional grant support of **Rs. 4000 per JLG** to J&K Grameen Bank, further strengthening financial empowerment in the region.

256. The State Bank of India's Economic Research Department has released the SBI Ecowrap report to provide a detailed analysis of India's economic landscape in February 2025.

Key focusing areas: CPI inflation, industrial growth, imported inflation, and corporate performance.

Key Highlights of the Report:

CPI Inflation:

- India's **CPI inflation** fell to a **7-month low** of **3.6%** in February 2025 due to a substantial decline in food and beverage prices.
- **Food & Beverages inflation eased** by **185 basis points** (m-o-m) to **3.84%**, mainly due to a sharp decline in vegetable prices.
- **Vegetable CPI declined sharply**, entering negative territory **(1.07%)** for the **first time in 20 months**.
- Approximately **80%** of this decline was attributed to garlic, potatoes, and tomatoes.
- A notable drop in garlic prices is potentially linked to dietary changes during the Maha Kumbh, which may have led to reduced consumption of non-vegetarian food.
- **Fruit inflation surged** to **a 10-year high** of **14.8%,** potentially due to increased demand during fasting periods associated with the Maha Kumbh.
- **Fuel** and **light deflation** is continued for **18 months**.
- **Non-vegetarian food inflation** (Egg/Meat/Fish) **decelerated**, possibly due to the Maha Kumbh period.
- While overall inflation moderated, the **core inflation** crossed the 4.0% mark after 14 months to **4.08%.** Core Inflation corresponds to the component of inflation that is likely to **continue for a long period**. Thus, core inflation captures the **underlying trend of inflation** and is, therefore, **more stable**.

Future CPI Inflation Trends:

- CPI inflation is expected to decline to **3.9% in Q4 FY25** and average **4.7% for FY25.**
- FY26 inflation is projected in the range of 4.0-4.2%, while core inflation may range between 4.2-4.4%.
- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) may implement successive rate cuts in April and August 2025, with an overall expected cumulative rate cut of at least 75 basis points.
- The cycle of rate cuts may continue from October 2025, following an intervening gap in August 2025.

State-wise Inflation Analysis:

- 12 states recorded rural inflation above the national rural average.
- 10 states reported urban inflation higher than the national urban average.
- Rural inflation continued to outpace urban inflation due to higher food prices and a larger food basket share (54.2% for rural areas vs. 36.3% for urban areas).
- The **highest inflation** rates were recorded in **Kerala (7.3%) and Chhattisgarh (4.9%).**
- The **lowest inflation** rates were recorded in **Telangana (1.3%) and Delhi (1.5%).**

Rising Share of Imported Inflation:

- The share of imported inflation rose from 1.3% in June 2024 to 31.1% in February 2025.
- Key drivers include rising prices of precious metals, oils, fats, and chemical products.
- The contribution of energy prices to imported inflation remains negative and in declining in absolute amount.
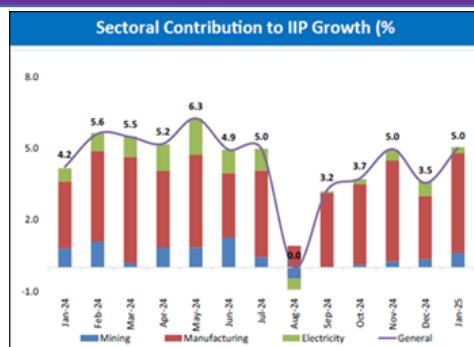
Industrial Growth and IIP Expansion:

India's Index of Industrial Production (IIP) expanded by 5.0% in January 2025, the highest in eight months, compared to 3.2% in December 2024. The growth was driven by:

- Manufacturing sector: 5.5% growth
- Mining sector: 4.4% growth
- Primary goods: 5.5% growth
- Consumer Durables (long-term consumption goods): 7.2% growth
- Intermediate goods: 5.23% growth
- Consumer non-durables (immediate consumption goods) contracted by 0.2%, indicating weak demand in that segment.

Sectoral Growth Trends:

- Capital Goods, Consumer Durables, FMCG, Healthcare, and Pharmaceuticals showed strong year-on-year growth in Q3FY25.
- The **Interest Coverage Ratio** of listed entities improved by **20 basis points in Q3FY25**, reflecting improved margins and financial stability.
- More than 4000 corporates in the listed space reported revenue growth of 6.2%, with earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization (EBITDA) and profit after tax (PAT) growing by 11% and 12%, respectively, in Q3FY25 compared to Q3FY24.
- Corporate ex-BFSI (more than 3400 listed entities) reported revenue and PAT growth of 5% (recovering from negative growth in previous quarters) and 9% in Q3FY25, respectively.

Sectoral Contribution to IIP Growth (%)

Monetary Policy Outlook & Corporate Capex Cycle:

- The combination of a strong balance sheet, comfortable interest coverage, and a downward interest rate cycle is expected to support the next capex cycle for Indian industries.
- Improved corporate margins and liquidity conditions make Indian Inc. well-positioned for capital expenditure growth.
- The aggregate EBITDA margin improved by 44 basis points in Q3FY25, reaching 14.84% from 14.4% in Q2FY25.

257. **Piramal Capital & Housing Finance Limited** (Piramal Finance), a leading Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC), and **Punjab & Sind Bank**, one of India's premier public sector banks, have entered into a strategic co-lending partnership to enhance credit availability for middle- and low-income borrowers, with a special emphasis on rural and semi-urban regions.

This collaboration brings together Punjab & Sind Bank's deep financial expertise and extensive network of 1575 branches (as of March 2025) with Piramal Finance's unique 'High Tech + High Touch' approach.

The partnership will offer competitive interest rates and customized credit solutions, particularly in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities, supporting financial inclusion and economic growth.

258. The **Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)** has reduced the timeline for completing rights issues to **23 days** from 126 days.

Under the framework, rights issues will be completed within 23 working days from the date of board of directors of the issuer approving the issue. This was against the present average timeline of 317 days.

The rights issues will be kept open for subscription for a minimum period of seven days and a maximum period of 30 days.

The exchanges and depositories have been directed to develop a system for automated validation of the applications in a period of six months.

These rules are effective from 7th April 2025.

259. The **Central Board of Direct Taxes** has notified the **Ten-Year Zero-Coupon Bond of Power Finance Corporation Ltd** for the purpose of section 2(48) of the Income Tax.

The Central Government, in the exercise of powers conferred by clause (48) of section 2 of the Income-tax Act, 1961, read with clause (ii), clause (iii), and clause (v) of sub-rule (3) and sub-rule

(6) of rule 8B of the Income-tax Rules, 1962, hereby specifies the following details for the Ten-Year Zero-Coupon Bond of Power Finance Corporation Ltd.

The name of the bond is Ten-Year Zero-Coupon Bond of Power Finance Corporation Ltd.

The period of life of the bond is **ten years** and **one month** from the date of issuance.

The bond is scheduled to be issued on or before **March 31, 2027**. The maturity amount payable on redemption of each bond will be **Rs. 1,00,000.**

The bond will be issued at a discounted price of **Rs. 49,546 per bond**. The total number of bonds to be issued is **10 lakh.**

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 its face value upon maturity. The difference between the issue price and face value represents the return for investors.

260. US-based private investment firm **Bain Capital** will invest Rs.4,385 crore to acquire an **18% stake** and take joint control of Kerala-based non-bank lender and the country's second-largest gold financier **Manappuram Finance Ltd.**

As part of the transaction, the 18% stake will be acquired through affiliate companies, BC Asia Investments XXV Ltd and BC Asia Investments XIV Ltd (Bain Capital), on a fully diluted basis via preferential allotment of equity shares and warrants of Manappuram Finance at Rs.236 per share, a 30% premium over the six-month average trading price.

Based on the open offer subscription, Bain Capital's stake post-investment will vary between 18% and 41.7% on a fully diluted basis (including shares to be issued pursuant to the exercise of warrants).

The existing promoters will hold 28.9% of the company.

261. The **Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)** has announced a reduction in the minimum investment amount for Zero Coupon Zero Principal (ZCZP) instruments on the Social Stock Exchange (SSE) from ₹10,000 to ₹1,000.

The move aims to boost retail participation in social impact investments and increase funding for non-profit organizations (NPOs).
ZCZP instruments allow investors to donate funds to NPOs listed on the SSE without any financial returns. By lowering the investment threshold, SEBI expects to encourage more small investors to contribute, thereby enhancing the flow of funds to social enterprises engaged in sectors such as education, healthcare, and community development.

The regulator clarified that this decision modifies the provisions outlined in its earlier circular dated September 19, 2022, which was previously amended on December 28, 2023.

Following this latest directive, the September 2022 circular will now reflect the revised minimum investment amount of ₹1,000 for ZCZP instruments.

262. NPCI International Payments (NIPL) has partnered with **HitPay** to expand Unified Payments Interface (UPI) acceptance across **Singapore.**

The integration gives businesses access to over 450 million UPI users in India, offering a cost-effective alternative that can save merchants up to 50% on fees compared to traditional credit cards.

The partnership enables merchants to accept payments from Indian consumers using over 50 UPI-supported apps, including BHIM, Google Pay, PhonePe, and Paytm. Transactions can be processed through HitPay's existing integrations with Shopify, Wix, and WooCommerce.

HitPay's streamlined integration also eliminates the need for a local business entity or complex technical implementation.

Through this partnership with NIPL, UPI joins HitPay's rapidly growing ecosystem of local and cross-border payment solutions, which includes existing integrations: PayID (Australia), PromptPay (Thailand), QRIS (Indonesia), QR Ph (Philippines), VietQR (Vietnam), and WeChat Pay (China), and upcoming launches in 2025 such as DuitNow (Malaysia), and others to be announced.

UPI strengthens HitPay's network to deliver a seamless and efficient cross-border payment experience for merchants in Singapore and worldwide.

263. The **Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)** collaborated with **DigiLocker** to reduce unclaimed assets in the Indian securities market.

For this, SEBI has issued a circular titled **"Harnessing DigiLocker as a Digital Public Infrastructure for Reducing Unclaimed Assets in the Indian Securities Market"** to address the issue of unclaimed financial assets.

This initiative enables investors to store and access information on their demat and mutual fund holdings through DigiLocker, a key Digital Public Infrastructure, benefiting investors and their families.

Key Highlights of the Initiative:

- **Access to Securities Holdings**: DigiLocker users can now fetch and store their statement of holdings for shares and mutual fund units from their demat accounts, along with their Consolidated Account Statement (CAS). This expands the existing DigiLocker services, which already include bank account statements, insurance policy certificates, and NPS account statements.
- **Nomination Facility for Seamless Access**: Users can appoint Data Access Nominees within the DigiLocker application. In the event of the user's demise, these nominees will be granted read-only access to the DigiLocker account, ensuring that essential financial information is easily accessible to legal heirs.
- **Automated Notification to Nominees**: Upon notification of the user's demise by KYC Registration Agencies (KRAs) —which are registered with and regulated by SEBI —the DigiLocker system will automatically notify the Data Access Nominees. This access is expected to facilitate the initiation of the transmission process with the relevant financial institutions.

- **Role of KYC Registration Agencies (KRAs):** At this stage, KRAs will serve as the primary source for verifying and triggering notifications to Data Access Nominees, ensuring a smooth transition process.

264. **Paytm Money**, a wholly-owned subsidiary of One97 Communications Ltd (OCL), has been granted a Certificate of Registration as a **research analyst** by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI).

With this approval, Paytm Money can now roll out Sebi-compliant research services, covering investment insights, research reports, and data-driven analysis.

Paytm's wealth management arm will now be able to offer research services that comply with the market regulator's norms, including research reports and analysis.

The registration number for Paytm Money Ltd as a research analyst is INH000020086.

265. **Paytm**, in collaboration with **SBI Mutual Fund**, officially unveiled the **JanNivesh SIP**, a new initiative designed to make mutual fund investments more accessible to a wide range of investors across India.

JanNivesh SIP offers flexible SIP options starting at just **Rs 250**, with daily, weekly, and monthly investment plans.

The facility will be available on the SBI YONO platform and other fintech platforms like Paytm, Groww, and Zerodha. It is tailored to meet the needs of first-time investors, small savers, and individuals from rural, semi-urban, and urban regions.

266. The **Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Center (IN-SPACE)** under the Department of Space (DoS) of the Government of India (GoI) appointed **SIDBI Venture Capital Limited (SVCL),** as the fund manager for a **Rs. 1,000 crore** venture capital (VC) fund aimed at promoting India's space sector.

This initiative is part of the government's broader strategy to encourage private participation and support startups in the space domain.

The fund will be deployed over five years, with Rs. 150 crores allocated in the Financial Year 2025-26 (FY26), followed by Rs. 250 crores in each of the next three financial years, and Rs. 100 crores in 2030.

Companies at various stages of growth can access funding, with Rs. 10 crores to Rs. 30 crores available for growth-stage startups and Rs. 30 crores to Rs. 60 crores for late-stage startups.

The Rs. 1,000 crore fund aims to accelerate the growth of the Indian space economy, which is expected to rise from Rs. 8.4 billion in 2022 to Rs. 44 billion by 2033, while also increasing India's share in the global space economy to 8-10% by 2040.

SVCL, a wholly owned subsidiary of the Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI), has extensive experience in managing venture capital funds across diverse sectors.

267. **Bank of America** appointed **Vikram Sahu** as the new **country head for India**.

Vikram Sahu, who is currently heading global equity research for Bank of America in New York, is set to succeed Kaku Nakhate as the US-based bank's India country executive.

Nakhate has been leading the bank's India operations as country executive and CEO for the past 15 years.

Nakhate will continue as the CEO of Bank of America NA and will focus on the development of senior current and future client relationships across India.

268. **Prudential plc** ("Prudential") announced a joint venture with **Vama Sundari Investments (Delhi) Private Limited** ("Vama"), an HCL Group's Promoter Company, to operate a standalone Indian health insurance business.

The joint venture aims to address the growing healthcare needs of Indian consumers and contribute to the Indian Government's vision of "Insurance for All by 2047."

As per the agreement, Prudential plc's UK subsidiary, Prudential Group Holdings Limited, will have a **70% stake** in the JV. HCL Group's Vama Sundari will hold the remaining **30% stake**. Subsequently, the health insurance will need to obtain regulatory approvals.

Prudential Plc is a member of the UK FTSE100 Index.

In India, Prudential's business primarily consists of a 21.97 percent holding in the Indian Stock Exchange listed life insurance business, ICICI Prudential Life, and 49 percent of the asset manager, ICICI Prudential Asset Management Company Limited, through its asset management business Eastspring Investments.

269. **Axis Max Life Insurance Ltd.,** formerly known as Max Life Insurance Company Ltd., has redefined Out-of-Home (OOH) advertising with an immersive 3D anamorphic display at Garuda Mall, Bangalore.

This high-impact visual experience brought the concept of 'Double Bharosa' to life, reinforcing the brand's commitment to trust and protection in a way that captivated audiences.

The "**Double Bharosa**" campaign used immersive 3D mixed-reality technology to creatively engage people across India. By blending real-life and digital experiences, the campaign effectively communicated the message of trust and reliability in Axis Mutual Fund's services.

Axis Max Life extended the campaign across 200+ sites in 20 cities, integrating cutting-edge technology with high-engagement activations.

This digital-first innovation allowed commuters to scan a QR code and take a virtual picture with brand ambassadors Rohit Sharma and Ritika Sajdeh, transforming brand engagement into a personalized and memorable experience.

270. To boost the micro, small, and medium enterprise (MSME) textile and garment industry in the country, the **Small Industries Development Bank of India** (SIDBI) signed two important MoUs with the **Clothing Manufacturers' Association of India** (CMAI) and the **Sachin Industrial Co-operative Society** (SICS).

The MoUs focus on assisting with textile sector upgrades, including the repair and modernization of water jet and air jet machines, as well as advancements in the garment sector.

The MoUs provide textile entrepreneurs with access to direct loans without needing collateral. If they lack collateral, they can secure a loan by depositing just 25 percent of the total loan amount.

The Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE) scheme previously offered collateral-free loans up to Rs 5 crore, but this limit is set to increase to Rs 10 crore.

Under this scheme, CGTMSE will provide funds of up to 90-95 percent. For loans up to Rs 5 crore without collateral, only 25 percent of the amount needs to be shown as an investment. Interest rates will range from 8.75 percent to 9.75 percent, depending on the unit's credit rating. SIDBI's funding process for new units will be completed within 30 to 45 days.

271. The **Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI)** announced the appointment of **five new members** to the reconstituted **Insurance Advisory Committee.**

These appointments are done under Section 25 of the IRDA Act, 1999, and Regulation 3A of the IRDA (Insurance Advisory Committee) Regulations, 2000.

New Members Appointed:

- **Mangalam Ramasubramanian Kumar** was the former LIC Chairman and is now the non-Executive chairman of Bank of India.
- **Dinesh Kumar Khara** was the former Chairman of the State Bank of India (SBI).
- **Visakha Mulye** is CEO of Aditya Birla Capital.
- **Nilesh Shah** is an MD of Kotak Mahindra Asset Management Company.
- **Alice Geevarghese Vaidyan** was the former CMD of GIC Re and is currently an Independent Director at Air India and Tata AIA Life Insurance.

272. The **National Skill Development Corporation** (NSDC) and **PayPal, California,** the United States of America (USA)-based financial technology (fintech) company signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) as part of **PayPal's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)** program to launch a comprehensive skill development initiative targeting India's Banking, Financial Services, and Insurance (BFSI) sector.

The MoU was exchanged between Dr. Rishikesh Patankar, Vice President, NSDC, and Srini Venkatesan, Global Chief Technology Officer (CTO), PayPal.

The MoU focuses on economic empowerment through skill enhancement, soft skills, and Personality Development Training (PDT).
The program aligns with the National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF) and offers comprehensive training in financial services, customer support, sales, data analysis, and accounting.

The participants will undergo 420 to 480 hours of training to meet industry standards, ensuring their readiness for BFSI roles.

NSDC will implement the project in multiple districts, including Chennai (Tamil Nadu), Patna (Bihar), Hyderabad (Telangana), Surat (Gujarat), Indore (Madhya Pradesh), Bengaluru (Karnataka), Mumbai (Maharashtra), and Ranchi (Jharkhand).

273. According to Government of India's recent data (March 2025), the **dividend payout by public sector banks** (PSBs) **has risen by 33 percent** to **Rs 27,830 crore in FY24** as against Rs 20,964 crore in the previous fiscal year, indicating significant improvement in the financial health of these lenders and this increase reflects a significant improvement in the financial health of these PSBs, compared to record losses of Rs 85,390 crore registered in FY18.

Of the total dividend received, approximately 65% (Rs 18,013 crore) was paid to GoI toward their stake in FY24.

The data further revealed that GoI had received Rs 13,804 crore as a dividend from PSBS, including Mumbai (Maharashtra) based State Bank of India (SBI), India's largest PSB, in FY23.

The data highlighted that the combined net profit of 12 Indian PSBs was at Rs 1.41 lakh crore in FY24 against a net profit of Rs 1.05 lakh crore in FY23 and earned Rs 1.29 lakh crore in nine months (April- December) of FY25.

As per the data, **SBI emerged as the largest contributor** to the overall net profit registered by PSBs during FY24 i.e., over 40% (Rs 61,077 crore), which marks an increase of 22% compared to the previous FY (Rs 50,232 crore).

Highest net profit growth in terms of percentage: Among all Indian PSBs, New Delhi (Delhi)-based Punjab National Bank (PNB) had the highest net profit growth of 228% at Rs 8,245 crore in FY24.

It is followed by Mumbai-based Union Bank of India (UBI) with a 62% increase to Rs 13,649 crore and Mumbai-based Central Bank of India (CBI) with an increase of 61% to Rs 2,549 crore.

PSBs registered over 50% increase in net profit: Mumbai based Bank of India (BOI) with a 57% increase to Rs 6,318 crore in FY24; followed by Bank of Maharashtra (BOM) registered an increase of 56% to Rs 4,055 crore and Chennai (Tamil Nadu, TN)-based Indian Bank recorded an increase of 53% to Rs 8,063 crore.

274. **Dilma Vana Rousseff (Brazil)** was unanimously re-elected as the **President of the New Development Bank** (NDB) (formerly known as BRICS Development Bank) for a term extending until **2030**.

This decision came after Russia proposed the extension during the 2024 BRICS summit in Kazan (Russia).

Her tenure was previously set to conclude in July 2025.

With her reappointment for another term, she will focus on enhancing financial independence for BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) countries, promoting sustainable development projects, and advancing efforts toward de-dollarization.

She became the President of the NDB in March 2023, taking over from Marcos Troyjo.

275. BluPine Energy has successfully closed a **₹1,787 crore** structured financing deal with the **National Bank for Financing Infrastructure and Development** (NaBFID).

This strategic move is aimed at optimizing BluPine's financial structuring, enhancing operational efficiency, and supporting the long-term growth of its renewable energy portfolio.

The transaction is structured around a Restricted Group of 14 Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs), covering solar power projects across Punjab, Uttarakhand, and Karnataka.

The funds will be used to repower existing solar assets, boosting their efficiency and improving operational performance.

NaBFID:

NaBFID is a specialized bank established by an Act of Parliament in 2021 to support long-term infrastructure financing in India. It has structured this transaction to support India's transition to renewable energy.

276. The **Unique Identification Authority of India** (UIDAI), in collaboration with **IIIT Hyderabad**, launched the **Biometric SDK Benchmarking Challenge** to test age invariance in biometric algorithms.

The challenge ensures secure evaluation with anonymized datasets, preventing data sharing with participants.

The first phase of the challenge focuses on fingerprint authentication, testing 1:1 matching algorithms for children aged 5-10 years, with updates after **5-10 years.**

The challenge offers prizes worth Rs. 7.7 lakhs (USD 9,000) and the opportunity to collaborate with UIDAI in advancing biometric technologies.

The challenge runs from March 25, 2025, to May 25, 2025.

Following the fingerprint challenge, UIDAI will also launch SDK benchmarking competitions for iris and face authentication.

277. Punjab & Sind Bank has been honoured with the **Top Improvers award** in the **EASE 6.0 Reforms Index**, highlighting its significant progress in banking services, digital transformation, and customer-centric initiatives.

This recognition is part of the Enhanced Access & Service Excellence (EASE) initiative, which assesses public sector banks (PSBs) based on key performance metrics.

Under the leadership of **Swarup Kumar Saha**, the bank has demonstrated significant improvements, emphasizing modernization and efficiency in banking operations.

The EASE Index evaluates public sector banks (PSBs) on key parameters such as:
- Digital transformation.

- Financial inclusion.

- Customer service excellence.

278. Canara Bank has appointed **S. K. Majumdar** as its new **Executive Director**, marking a key leadership change.

He has over 25 years of banking experience.

He previously served as the bank's **Chief Financial Officer (CFO).**

He has been associated with Canara Bank since January 2000.

Canara Bank:
Canara Bank, founded in 1906 by Ammembal Subba Rao Pai, was established in Mangalore and later nationalized in 1969. It is based in Bengaluru, Karnataka.

279. Mumbai-based Bank of India (BoI) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with **New India Assurance Company Limited (NIACL)**, India's largest nationalized general insurance company, to offer BoI's customers a comprehensive suite of general insurance products, including health, motor, personal accident, home, and commercial insurance.

BOI signed another MoU with IAF for the Rakshak Salary Package:

BoI also signed its first-ever Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Indian Air Force (IAF) to extend tailored banking benefits through the **'BoI Rakshak Salary Package'** to IAF personnel, veterans, and Agniveers recruited under the Agnipath scheme.

The MoU exchange ceremony was held at the IAF Headquarters in New Delhi (Delhi), with Air Vice Marshal Updesh Sharma, Assistant Chief of Air Staff (ACAS), Accounts & Air Veterans (Accts & AV) of the IAF, presiding over the event.

The package includes enhanced financial perks such as:

- Personal Accident Insurance (PAI) coverage of Rs. 100 Lakh.
- Air Accident Coverage of Rs. 200 Lakh.
- Special benefits on debit and credit cards.

280. Bandhan Bank (Kolkata-based) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the **Indian Air Force** (IAF) to introduce the **Bandhan Bank Shaurya Salary Account**, a zero-balance corporate salary account designed exclusively for IAF personnel, veterans, and their families.

The account offers benefits such as personalized insurance coverage, competitive interest rates, and access to over 1,700 branches across India.

The MoU was signed by Air Vice Marshal **Updesh Sharma** (Assistant Chief of the Air Staff - Accounts & Air Veterans, Ministry of Defence) and **Debraj Saha** (Head of Government Business Group, Bandhan Bank) in the presence of senior officials.

This collaboration reinforces **Bandhan Bank's role as a SPARSH** (System for Pension Administration Raksha) Service Centre, supporting defence pensioners.

The bank, in partnership with the Controller General of Defence Accounts (CGDA), operates 557 dedicated branches for pension processing.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has authorized Bandhan Bank as an Agency Bank to handle tax collections (CBDT & CBIC) and disburse Central Civil and Railway Pensions for the Ministry of Finance.

This initiative strengthens Bandhan Bank's commitment to serving defence personnel and government-related financial services.

281. Private sector bank **Axis Bank** became the **first Indian financial institution** to offer near-real-time, 24/7 programmable USD clearing for its commercial clients with **JP Morgan's** digital assets unit **Kinexys.**

Kinexys Digital Payments (KDP) will power this development, leveraging their blockchain deposit accounts launched in 2019.

These accounts are now used by an increasing number of organisations around the world to drive 24/7 multi-currency payment movements across borders.

The average daily transaction volume across the Kinexys platform is over $2 billion and has seen 10x year-over-year growth in payment transactions.

282. Bank of Baroda announced that it has gone live with **the Pradhan Mantri Vidyalaxmi (PM-Vidyalaxmi) Scheme** to provide financial support to meritorious students.

The PM-Vidyalaxmi Scheme is an initiative by the Government of India for students seeking financial assistance to pursue higher education and to ensure that financial constraints do not deprive the youth of India of pursuing quality higher education.

Applicants can digitally apply for an education loan under the PM-Vidyalaxmi Scheme from Bank of Baroda through the PM-Vidyalaxmi portal.

The Bank has 12 dedicated Education Loan Sanctioning Cells (ELSC) and 119 Retail Assets Processing Cells (RAPC), in addition to more than 8,300 branches, to cater to the needs of students from across the country.

The PM-Vidyalaxmi Scheme is a special loan product that enables collateral-free, guarantor-free education loans made accessible through an entirely digital application process.

All students who get admission in the top 860 identified Quality Higher Educational Institutions (QHEIs) of the nation, are eligible to apply for an education loan under this scheme.

Loan amounts up to Rs. 7.5 lakh will be provided a 75% credit guarantee by the Government of India to encourage banks to expand coverage.

The scheme offers partial/full interest subvention to students from low-income families.

283. Hitachi Cash Management Services, a subsidiary of Hitachi Payment Services, announced a leadership transition with **Yusuf Pachmariwala** assuming the role of **Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer**, effective April 1, 2025.

He succeeded **Anup Neogi**.

Earlier, he served as the Director of Operations – Cash Business at Hitachi Payment Services.

He held leadership positions with organizations including Tata AIA Life Insurance, HCL Perot Systems, HDFC Bank, and the Stock Holding Corporation of India.

He is a Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) from the ICFAI and an Associate Member of the Institute of Cost and Works Accountants of India (AICWA).

284. **Luminous Power Technologies Private Limited**, a leading solar energy solutions provider in India, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the **State Bank of India (SBI)**, the country's largest public sector bank, to enhance nationwide access to solar financing.

As part of this collaboration, Luminous has been onboarded as SBI's recommended partner on its dedicated solar loan portal, facilitating seamless financing for customers.

The partnership covers multiple financing categories, including solar solution finance and supply chain finance, offering tailored financial solutions for diverse energy needs.

Under this MoU, eligible customers can secure loans of up to Rs.10 crore. The loans will feature repayment tenures of up to 10 years, with interest rates determined by the customer's credit profile.

285. **Zuno General Insurance Limited** (formerly Edelweiss General Insurance) has launched **'Zuno SmartDrive'**, embedding *Pay-How-You-Drive (PHYD)* as a standard feature in all its motor insurance policies.

With this move, Zuno becomes the first insurer in India to integrate mobile telematics into car insurance at no extra cost, replacing traditional fixed premiums with dynamic, behavior-based pricing.

The PHYD system leverages mobile telematics to assess driving behavior, tracking factors such as:

- Speed
- Braking patterns
- Distraction levels (e.g., phone usage while driving)

Previously offered as an add-on, PHYD is now automatically included in all new and renewed policies. Policyholders can access their real-time driving scores and personalized feedback via the Zuno app, helping them improve their driving habits.

RBI IN NEWS

286. The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has directed large non-banking financial companies **(NBFCs)** to stop and not to renew the practice of extending **'line of credit'** to companies over concerns that the structure of repayment in these advances often disguises the stress faced by the borrower.

A line of credit (LoC) is a **flexible financial arrangement** where a lender, such as a bank or an NBFC, provides a borrower (individual or business) with access **to a set amount of funds**.
The borrower can withdraw money as needed up to the approved limit, repay it, and borrow again within the limit. Interest is usually charged only on the amount utilized, not the entire credit limit.

287. The **29th Meeting of the Standing Advisory Committee (SAC)** to review the flow of credit to Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) was held on March 3, 2025, in Ahmedabad, under the chairmanship of **Swaminathan J,** Deputy Governor, Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
The meeting brought together officials from RBI, the Ministry of MSME, the Ministry of Finance, SIDBI, NABARD, major banks, MSME associations, and other financial institutions.
The meeting also discussed strategies to address credit gaps, cash flow-based lending, digital credit linkage, expansion of TReDS, credit guarantee schemes, and proactive measures for MSME revival and rehabilitation.

288. RBI's liquidity injection measures triggered gains across banking indices and individual stocks.
The Nifty PSU Bank index advanced **1.46%** (86.3 points) to an intraday high of 5,976.75, while the Nifty Bank index climbed 0.72% (349.15 points) to reach 48,839.10
Among PSU bank stocks, **Central Bank** surged 2.85%, followed by PNB at 2.51%, Punjab and Sind Bank at 2.71%, Bank of Maharashtra at 2.35%, and UCO Bank at 2.82%. However, SBI and Indian Bank posted minor losses of up to 0.3%.
In the Nifty Bank index, **Canara Bank** gained 2.05%, AU Small Finance Bank rose 1.99%, and Bank of Baroda increased 1.69%. Other banks such as IDFC First Bank, Federal Bank, ICICI Bank, and HDFC Bank recorded modest gains between 0.1% and 1%.

289. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has appointed **Ajit Ratnakar Joshi** as its **new Executive Director** (ED).

He will oversee the Department of Statistics and Information Management and the Financial Stability Department.

Dr. Joshi has over 30 years of experience in statistics, IT, and cyber risk management.

He has served as a member of the faculty at the Institute of Development and Research in Banking Technology, Hyderabad.

Joshi has also served as a member of several committees and working groups relating to the compilation of macroeconomic statistics and policy issues.

290. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has imposed monetary penalties on Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Limited (HSBC), IIFL Samasta Finance, and three cooperative banks in Maharashtra for regulatory violations.

RBI has levied a monetary penalty of **₹66.6 lakh** on The **Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Limited (HSBC)** for violations related to Know Your Customer (KYC) norms, reporting of unhedged foreign currency exposures, and interest rate rules on deposits.

The action follows a statutory inspection for supervisory evaluation based on the bank's financial position as of March 31, 2023.

RBI imposed a **₹33.1 lakh penalty** on **IIFL Samasta Finance Limited** for multiple regulatory breaches, including charging interest on loans before actual disbursement, misclassifying non-performing assets (NPAs), and allotting multiple customer identification codes instead of a Unique Customer Identification Code (UCIC) for individual clients**.**

RBI also penalised **three cooperative banks in Maharashtra**, with the **Bombay Mercantile Cooperative Bank** facing a hefty **₹33.3 lakh** fine for violating banking regulations.

Lasalgaon Merchants Cooperative Bank and Business Cooperative Bank were each fined **₹1 lakh** for non-compliance with asset classification and regulatory provisions.

291. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has invited applications for a **self-regulatory organization (SRO)** to oversee the **Account Aggregator (AA) ecosystem**.

The SRO will act as a representative body for the AA ecosystem, introduced in 2016, ensuring compliance with regulatory guidelines and promoting best practices.

The objective of the SRO:

- The SRO will ensure compliance with regulatory guidelines, promote best practices, and act as a mediator for dispute resolution among stakeholders.
- It will foster collaboration and maintain transparency within the AA ecosystem.

The framework designates non-banking financial company-account aggregators (NBFC-AAs) as intermediaries between financial information providers (FIPs) and financial information users (FI-Us).

Note: In August 2024, the RBI granted recognition to the Fintech Association for Consumer Empowerment (FACE) as a Self-Regulatory Organisation for the FinTech sector (SRO-FT).

292. The **Reserve Bank of India** (RBI) and the **National Centre for Financial Education (NCFE)** have jointly launched a nationwide financial literacy campaign in March 2025.

RBI Kehta Hai is a multi-media, multilingual public awareness campaign that aims to educate the public on safe banking practices and financial literacy.

The campaign aims to enhance financial literacy across India, equipping individuals with the knowledge and skills needed to manage their finances effectively.

It focuses on empowering people to safeguard against financial fraud and access financial services, thereby promoting financial inclusion.

293. The **Reserve Bank of India** (RBI) imposed penalties totaling **Rs.76.6 lakh** on four non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) for failing to comply with certain provisions of the 'Non-Banking Financial Company – **Peer-to-Peer Lending Platform (Reserve Bank) Directions, 2017'.**

The penalties were distributed as follows:

- Fairassets Technologies India: ₹40 lakh
- Bridge Fintech Solutions: ₹10 lakh
- Rang De P2P Financial Services: ₹10 lakh
- Visionary Financepeer: ₹16.6 lakh

The penalties were levied under the Non-Banking Financial Company – Peer-to-Peer Lending Platform (Reserve Bank) Directions, 2017, which govern the operations of peer-to-peer (P2P) lending platforms.

The RBI's action highlights its focus on ensuring strict adherence to regulatory frameworks in the financial sector.

The penalties aim to address non-compliance issues and reinforce the importance of regulatory compliance among NBFCs operating in the P2P lending space.

294. **The Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has received the **2025 Digital Transformation Award of the Central Banking Award** announced by London-based Central Banking.

The award recognizes the RBI's efforts in digital transformation, particularly for its in-house initiatives like the Pravaah and Sarthi systems.

Key initiatives recognized:

- **Sarthi System:**

Launched in January 2023, Sarthi (meaning "charioteer" in Hindi) is a digital initiative to streamline the RBI's internal workflow.

It enables employees to securely store and share documents, improving record management and providing advanced data analysis through reports and dashboards.

- **Pravaah System:**

Launched in May 2024, Pravaah is a digital portal for external users to submit regulatory applications to the RBI.

The system processes documents and integrates them into the Sarthi database, allowing for centralized digital handling across the RBI's offices.

Pravaah has digitized over 70 regulatory applications and supports the work of nine RBI departments.

295. The **Reserve Bank of India** (RBI) has imposed penalties on **JM Financial Products and Experian Credit Information Company of India** for certain deficiencies in regulatory compliance.

- **JM Financial Products Limited:**

A penalty of **Rs.3.1 lakh** was imposed for non-compliance with specific provisions related to the 'non-banking financial company - systemically important non-deposit taking company and deposit-taking company' guidelines.

- **Experian Credit Information Company of India Private Limited:**

A penalty of **Rs.2 lakh** was imposed for violations of certain provisions under the Credit Information Companies (Regulation) Act, 2005, and the Credit Information Companies Rules, 2006.

The penalties serve as a reminder to financial institutions to maintain compliance with regulatory guidelines to avoid punitive actions.

This move reinforces the RBI's role as a vigilant regulator, ensuring transparency and accountability in the financial sector.

296. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has appointed **Indranil Bhattacharyya** as Executive Director (ED) with effect from March 19, 2025.

As Executive Director, he will look after the Department of Economic and Policy Research.

Prior to his promotion as ED, he was serving as Adviser in the Monetary Policy Department of the Bank.

Earlier, he worked in the areas of monetary policy, fiscal policy, banking, and international economic relations in the Monetary Policy Department, Department of Economic and Policy Research, and the International Department of the Reserve Bank.

He has also served as an Economic Expert in the Technical Office of the Governor at **Qatar Central Bank**, Doha, Qatar for 5 years (2009-14).

297. According to an article titled 'State of Economy published by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in its March bulletin, **net inflows** from **External Commercial Borrowings (ECBs)** have surged over 2 times, to **USD 18.4 billion** in 10 Months (from April 2024 to January 2025) of **Financial Year 2024-25 (FY25),** against FY24, amid declining costs of overseas fundraise.

It further showed that ECB registrations and disbursements reached to USD 47.3 billion and USD 42.3 billion, respectively, in 10MFY25, on a cumulative basis. These figures were significantly higher compared to those registered in the corresponding period of last year.

Key Findings:

- **Net Outflows:** As per the RBI's data, ECB outflows due to principal repayments reached at USD 23.9 billion in 10MFY25.

- **Net Inflows in FY24:** The data showed that net inflows under ECBs were USD 9.5 billion in FY24, significantly higher than the levels registered in FY23.
- **Decline in SOFR:** RBI's data underscored the persistent decrease in the Secured Overnight Financing Rate (SOFR) since August 2024, which has contributed to a reduction in the overall costs of ECBs.
- The overall cost of ECBs decreased by 129 basis points (bps), compared with the corresponding period of the last year.
- Additionally, the global benchmark interest rates, such as SOFR have decreased up to 85 bps since March 2024, thus reducing the overall cost of ECBs by 25 bps in 10MFY25.

Note: SOFR is a benchmark interest rate for dollar-denominated derivatives and loans that replaced the London Interbank Offered Rate (LIBOR).

- The data revealed that the weighted average margin for interest rates over the reference rate dropped from 1.33% (in January 2024) to 0.98% (in January 2025).
- Distribution of ECBs registrations: Of the total ECBs registered in 10MFY25, USD 6.7 billion was for modernization, new projects and infrastructure development compared to USD 10.5 billion in 10MFY24.
- While, registrations for import/local sourcing of capital goods have decreased from USD 10.3 billion (10MFY24) to USD 3.7 billion (10MFY25).
- Those for refinancing old ECBs and rupee loans reached USD 9.3 billion in 10MFY25, an increase from USD 5.3 billion in 10MFY24.

298. The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has highlighted a significant shift in the source of inward remittances to India, with developed nations like the United States and the United Kingdom surpassing Gulf countries as the top contributors.

According to the RBI's paper, *"Changing Dynamics of India's Remittances – Insights from the Sixth Round of India's Remittances Survey,"* published in its March bulletin, **remittances from the U.S. and U.K.** nearly doubled**, accounting for 40% of total inflows in FY24, compared to 26% in FY17**.

This increase is attributed to the growing presence of Indian professionals and students in these countries, while contributions from traditional sources like the UAE and Saudi Arabia have declined.

Key Highlights:

- India has consistently been the top recipient of remittances globally since 2008. (World Bank)
- Remittances have more than doubled from US$ 55.6 billion in 2010-11 to US$ 118.7 billion in 2023-24.
- As a ratio to GDP, India's remittances have been around 3 % of GDP since 2000.
- The share of advanced economies in India's inward remittances has risen, surpassing the share of Gulf economies (such as UAE), reflecting a shift in migration pattern towards skilled Indian diaspora.
- Remittances from the United States (the largest contributor) and the United Kingdom together nearly doubled to 40% of the remittances.

- State-wise Distribution: Maharashtra, followed by Kerala and Tamil Nadu continues to be the dominant recipient state.
- Cost of Remittances declined: For India, it is lower than the global average cost, driven by digitalization.

299. The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the Bank of Mauritius (BoM)** signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for establishing a framework to promote the use of local currencies, viz., the **Indian Rupee (INR)** and the **Mauritian Rupee (MUR)** for cross-border transactions.

The MoU was signed by the Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, Sanjay Malhotra, and the Governor of the Bank of Mauritius, Dr. Rama Krishna Sithanen G.C.S.K.

The MoU aims to promote the use of INR and MUR in bilateral trade.

The MoU covers all current account transactions and permissible capital account transactions as agreed upon by both countries.

This framework would enable exporters and importers to invoice and pay in their respective domestic currencies, which in turn, would enable the development of a market in the INR-MUR pair.

The use of local currencies would optimize costs and settlement time for transactions.

300. Sanjay Malhotra, Governor of the Reserve Bank of India inaugurated **Digital Payments Awareness Week (DPAW) 2025.** This is the 5th edition of the DPAW.

The DPAW was observed from **March 10 to 16, 2025.**

DPAW is an initiative to highlight the impact and importance of digital payments and to create awareness about the safe usage of digital payment products.

During the week, RBI, along with payment system operators, banks, and other stakeholders, conducts nationwide awareness activities, including multimedia campaigns, on-ground educational programs, and social media-based outreach.

Under the mission **'Har Payment Digital'**, the theme for the current year is *'India Pays Digitally'*. This theme reflects India's transformative journey toward a digitally empowered citizenry, with the ubiquity and convenience of digital payments.

The mission 'Har Payment Digital' was launched during Digital Payments Awareness Week (DPAW) 2023.

301. The Reserve Bank of India held a **Conference for the large-sized Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs)** on March 28, 2025, in **Chennai, Tamil Nadu.**

Chairpersons of the Audit Committee of the Board (ACB), MD & CEOs and the Statutory Auditors of the NBFCs attended the Conference.

The Conference was a part of the series of supervisory engagements that the Reserve Bank has been having with key stakeholders of its Regulated Entities.

The theme of the Conference was **'Shared Vision, Shared Responsibility: Strengthening the NBFCs'.**

The Conference was attended by over 200 participants.

AWARDS & RECOGNITION

302. **Chinese architect and educator Liu Jiakun** has been named the laureate of the **2025 Pritzker Architecture Prize.**

He is the **54th laureate** and the **2nd** Chinese architect to receive this distinction, following Wang Shu in 2012.

Notable projects: The Grand Canal Hangzhou Steelworks Park - Phase 1. Hangzhou, China. 2025, Culture The Renovation of Tianbao Cave District of Erlang Town. Luzhou, China. 2020, Neighborhood·Songyang Three-Temple Cultural Communication Center. Lishui, China. 2020, Anren Ancient Town LOFT, (Ningliang Factory) Renovation Project. Sichuan, China. 2017, Suzhou Imperial Kiln Gold Brick Museum. Suzhou, China. 2016, West Village - Basis Yard. Sichuan, China. 2015, Novartis Shanghai Campus C6 Building. Shanghai, China. 2014, Lancui Pavilion, Bailuwan Ecological Wetland. Sichuan, China. 2013, Shuijing Street Winery Ruins Museum. Sichuan, China. 2013, Nanjing "International Architectural Art Practice Exhibition" Guest Room Center. Nanjing, China. 2012, etc.

Pritzker Architecture Prize:

The Pritzker Architecture Prize, which is awarded each year to a living architect/s for significant achievement, was established by the Pritzker family of Chicago through their Hyatt Foundation in 1979. It is granted annually and is often referred to as "architecture's Nobel" and "the profession's highest honor." The award consists of $100,000 (US) and a bronze medallion.

303. The **97th Oscars Awards (Academy Awards)** were held in Los Angeles, USA.

The film **'Anora'** by **Sean Baker** secured the most 5 Oscars including Best Film, Best Director, Best Actress, Best Original Screenplay, and Best Film Editing.

The Awards were established in **1929** are prestigious annual honors recognizing excellence in the global film industry.

They are presented by the **Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS).**

Category	Winners

Best Picture	Anora
Best Actress	Mikey Madison (Anora)
Best Actress in a Supporting Role	Zoe Saldaña (Emilia Pérez)
Best Director	Sean Baker (Anora)
Best Actor	Adrian Brody (The Brutalist)
Best Actor in a Supporting Role	Kieran Culkin (A Real Pain)
Best Original Score	The Brutalist
Best International Feature Film	I'm Still Here
Best Cinematography	The Brutalist
Best Short Film (Live Action)	I'm Not a Robot (Victoria Warmerdam and Trent) – Dutch
Best Visual Effects	Dune: Part Two – Paul Lambert, Stephen James, Rhys Salcombe, and Gerd Nefzer
Best Sound	Dune: Part Two – Gareth John, Richard King, Ron Bartlett, and Doug Hemphill
Best Documentary Feature	No Other Land
Best Documentary Short Subject	The Only Girl in the Orchestra
Best Supporting Actress	Zoe Saldaña, Emilia Pérez
Best Supporting Actor	Kieran Culkin, A Real Pain
Best Original Song	El Mal (Emilia Pérez)
Best Animated Feature Film	Flow
Best Animated Short Film	In the Shadow of the Cypress (Iran)
Best Costume Design	Wicked
Best Original Screenplay	Anora
Best Adapted Screenplay	Conclave
Best Makeup and Hairstyling	The Substance
Best Film Editing	Anora
Best Production Design	Wicked

304. **Nithin Kamath** has been awarded the **EY Entrepreneur of The Year Award 2024.**
He is the **Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Zerodha.**
He will represent India on the global stage at the EY World Entrepreneur Of The Year Award (WEOY) in Monte Carlo to be held in June 2025.
Zerodha is an Indian brokerage and financial services company. It was founded in 2010. It is headquartered in Bengaluru, Karnataka.

305. The Prime Minister of India **Narendra Modi** has been awarded with the **'Honorary Order of Freedom of Barbados'.**

In a ceremony held in Bridgetown, Barbados, Hon'ble Minister of State for External Affairs and Textiles, Pabitra Margherita received the prestigious award bestowed upon PM Modi in recognition of his strategic leadership and valuable assistance during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Barbados President Dame Sandra Mason bestowed the honor in the presence of Prime Minister Mia Amor Mottley, Foreign Minister Kerrie Symmonds, and other dignitaries.

The award announcement was made by Prime Minister Mia Amor Mottley during a meeting with Prime Minister Modi on November 20, 2024, in Georgetown, Guyana.

India and Barbados, since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1966, have fostered a strong partnership through continuous engagement and development initiatives. The award symbolizes the enduring friendship between the two nations.

306. Prime Minister Narendra Modi was honored with **Mauritius'** highest civilian award, the **Grand Commander of the Order of the Star and Key of the Indian Ocean.**

He became the **first Indian** to receive this honor. It was his **21st International honor.**

Events that took place during his visit are as follows, he :

- Met with Mauritius' **President Dharambeer Gokhool** at the State House.

- Handed over **Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) cards** to President Gokhool and First Lady Vrinda Gokhool.

- Paid tribute at the samadhis of **Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam and Sir Anerood Jugnauth**, accompanied by Mauritius' PM Navinchandra Ramgoolam.

- Addressed the Indian community in Mauritius, highlighting the strong cultural and historical ties between both nations.

- Visited the Ayurveda Garden in the State House, established in collaboration with the Government of India, and emphasized the importance of Ayurveda in Mauritius.

- Presented a **Banarasi silk saree** from Varanasi in an intricately inlaid **Sadeli box** from Gujarat to Mrs. Gokhool.

307. Andrew Barto and Richard Sutton, two pioneers of artificial intelligence (AI), have been awarded the **2024 Turing Award**, often referred to as the Nobel Prize of computing, by the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM).

Andrew Barto is Professor Emeritus of Information and Computer Sciences at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

Richard Sutton is a Professor of Computer Science at the University of Alberta, a Research Scientist at Keen Technologies, and a Fellow at Amii (Alberta Machine Intelligence Institute).

The award, sponsored by Google, comes with a $1 million prize and recognizes their groundbreaking contributions to **reinforcement learning**, a machine learning technique that allows AI systems to learn and optimize decision-making through trial and error.

The award is named for Alan M. Turing, the British mathematician who articulated the mathematical foundations of computing.

Reinforcement learning (RL) is a machine learning technique that teaches agents to make decisions by rewarding them for correct actions and punishing them for wrong actions.

308. **Jayshree Vencatesan**, **co-founder** of the Chennai-based **Care Earth Trust**, has been **honored with the Ramsar Award for 'Wetland Wise Use',** making her the **first Indian to receive this prestigious global accolade.**

The award was announced by the Ramsar Secretariat on the eve of International Women's Day 2025.

Ramsar Convention on Wetlands:

- The Ramsar Convention is an international treaty for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands.

- The Ramsar Awards recognize outstanding contributions to wetland conservation.

Jayshree Vencatesan's Achievement and Work:

- She was recognized under the 'Wise Use of Wetlands' category for her decades-long dedication to wetland conservation.

- She is one of the 12 women changemakers acknowledged globally for their pioneering work in wetland conservation.

- She has focused on the Pallikaranai Marsh in Chennai, documenting its biodiversity and advocating for its protection.

- Her research revealed that the marsh is home to over 337 species of flora and fauna.

- She emphasized the role of wetlands in mitigating floods, and influencing urban planning policies.

- As the leader of an all-women research team, she has mentored numerous female conservationists, promoting gender equity in environmental science.

Other Women Changemakers Recognized:

- Celeste Saulo: Secretary General of the World Meteorological Organization.

- Jennifer George: CEO of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership Secretariat.

- Tatiana Minayeva: Consultant of Care for Ecosystems.

309. **Muthoot Microfin,** a leading microfinance institution focused on empowering women entrepreneurs, achieved a double victory **at the SKOCH Awards 2025,** securing **two prestigious Gold Awards**.

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 Award (Top Priority):

- **Mahila Mitra Initiative**: Recognized as the "**Best Customer Application on Digital Financial Inclusion**".

- i-Muthoot Mobile App: 1.73 million downloads and a 4.2-star rating.

- Transformed how women in rural India access financial services, making digital transactions seamless and secure.

BFSI Award (Top Priority):

- **Griha Raksha Insurance Scheme**: Recognized as the **"Best Insurance Scheme".**

- Provided coverage to 2.66 million beneficiaries.

- Reinforced Muthoot Microfin's commitment to financial security and social empowerment.

310. **Indian scholar Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak from West Bengal** has won the **2025 Holberg Prize** for her groundbreaking work in the fields of **literary theory and philosophy**.

- She has held the position of University Professor in the Humanities at Columbia University since 2007.

- Her key works include In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics (1987), A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Towards a History of the Vanishing Present (1999), Death of a Discipline (2003), An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization (2012), and Ethics and Politics in Tagore, Coetzee and Certain Scenes of Teaching (2018).

- Her latest book is Spivak Moving (2024).

The Holberg Prize is awarded annually to a scholar who has made outstanding contributions to research in the humanities, social science, law, or theology, either in one of these fields or through interdisciplinary work. The Prize is worth **NOK 6,000,000.** The Prize is named after the Danish-Norwegian writer Ludvig Holberg, who excelled in all of the sciences covered by the award.

311. Indian **Men's hockey team** captain**, Harmanpreet Singh** was honored with the Hockey India Balbir Singh Sr. Award for Player of the Year 2024 in the men's category, at the Hockey India 7th Annual Awards held at Le Meridien, Connaught Palace in New Delhi, Delhi. It was his 2nd Hockey India Player of the Year award in 2021.
Former hockey women's team goalkeeper, **Savita Punia** was honoured with the Hockey India Balbir Singh Sr. Award for Player of the Year 2024 in the women's category. This marked her **3rd Hockey India Player of the Year award** after 2022 and 2023.
The recipients of Balbir Singh Sr. Award received a monetary prize of Rs 25 lakh.

Winners of Hockey India Awards 2024:

- Hockey India Baljit Singh Award for Goalkeeper of the Year: Savita Punia

- Hockey India Pargat Singh Award for Defender of the Year: Amit Rohidas

- Hockey India Ajit Pal Singh Award for Midfielder of the Year: Hardik Singh

- Hockey India Dhanraj Pillay Award for Forward of the Year: Abhishek

- Hockey India Asunta Lakra Award for Upcoming Player of the Year (Women – Under 21): Deepika

- Hockey India Jugraj Singh Award for Upcoming Player of the Year (Men – Under 21): Araijeet Singh Hundal

- Hockey India Balbir Singh Sr Award for Player of The Year (Women): Savita Punia

- Hockey India Balbir Singh Sr Award for Player of The Year (Men): Harmanpreet Singh

- Hockey India Major Dhyan Chand Lifetime Achievement Award: 1975 World Cup winning team

The Hockey India Annual Awards were introduced in 2014 to recognize hockey players for promoting field hockey as a sport on national and international platforms.

312. **Günter Blöschl**, a renowned hydrologist from Austria, has been awarded the **2025 Stockholm Water Prize** for his pioneering research on flood risks and climate change impacts globally. He developed a comprehensive global database on flood risks.

He established a strong link between climate change and increasing flood frequency.

His research proved that recent decades have seen more severe floods than historical records suggest.

He is currently working as a Professor at the Vienna University of Technology, Austria.

He will receive this honour from King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden during World Water Week in August 2025.

Stockholm Water Prize:

The Stockholm Water Foundation awards the Stockholm Water Prize in cooperation with the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences. It is also called the Nobel Prize of Water. It is presented annually since 1991.

Professor David W. Schindler, Canada was the first recipient of this award.

313. The Executive Board of the Sahitya Akademi, under the Chairmanship of its President, Madhav Kaushik approved the selection of **22 books** for the **Sahitya Akademi Translation Prize 2024.** The books were selected on the basis of recommendations made by the Selection Committees of three members each in the concerned languages in accordance with the rules and procedures laid down for the purpose.

The prize relates, to translations first published during the five years prior to the year immediately preceding the year of the Prize for Translation (i.e. between 1 January 2018 and 31 December 2022).

The Prize carries an amount of **Rs.50,000/-** and a copper plaque.

Language	Title of the Translation	Translator	Name of the Original Book. Genre. Language & Author
Assamese	Prachin Kamrupar Itihas	Anjan Sarma	Early History of Kamarupa, Novel, English, Kanak Lal Barua
Bodo	Kanchan	Uttara Bwiswmuthiary	Kanchan, Novel, Assamese, Anuradha Sharma Pujaree
Dogri	Tamas	Archana Kesar	Tamas, Novel, Hindi, Bhishma Sahani
English	Hazaaron Khwahishein Aisi (The Wonderful World of Urdu Ghazals)	Anisur Rahman	Hazaaron Khwashishein Aisi (Poetry Collection), Urdu, Collection of Various Poets
Gujarati	Kumarjiv	Ramanik Agrawat	Kumar Jiu, Poetry, Hindi, Kunwarn Narain
Kannada	Vidisha Prahasana	Siddhaling Pattanashetti	Malavikagnimitram, Drama, Sanskrit, Kalidas
Konkani	Bhartiya Tathvagineanachi Ruprekha	Milind Mhamal	Outline of Indian Philosophy, Philosophy, English, M. Hiriyanna
Maithili	Aaranyak	Keshkar Thakur	Aaranyak, Novel, Bengali, Bhibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyaya
Malayalam	Yaanam	K.V. Kumaran	Yaana (Novel), Kannada, S.L. Bhairappa
Manipuri	Yurangbi	Soibamcha Indrakumar	Madhubala, Poetry, Hindi, Harivansh Rai Bachchan
Odia	Ruskin Bond Kokishialira	Suvash Satpathy	Lone fox Dancing, Autobiography, English,

	Ekaka Nrutya Mo Atmajeebani		Ruskin Bond
Punjabi	Tere Laee	Chandan Negi	Tumhare Liye, Novel, Hindi, Himanshu Joshi
Santali	Hende Sadom	Nazir Hembram	Kala Ghoda, Novel, Hindi, Nilotpal Mrinal
Sindhi	Dollar Nuhaan	(Late) Shobha Lalchandani	Dollar Bahu, Novel, Hindi, Sudha Murty
Telugu	Eethachettu Devudu	Turlapati Rajeswari	Dadi Budha, Novel, Odia, Gopinath Mohanty
Urdu	No Award		

314. The **25th edition** of the **International Indian Film Academy Awards (IIFA) 2025** was held in Jaipur, Rajasthan.

This year's ceremony featured a special celebration of the iconic film **Sholay**, marking its 50th anniversary.

The biggest winner of the awards was Kiran Rao's **"Laapataa Ladies,"** which swept 10 awards, establishing itself as the most celebrated film.

Best Film Categories

- **Best Picture:** Laapataa Ladies
- **Best Direction:** Kiran Rao (Laapataa Ladies)
- **Best Story (Original) In The Popular Category:** Biplab Goswami (Laapataa Ladies)
- **Best Story (Adapted):** Sriram Raghavan, Arijit Biswas, Pooja Ladha Surti, Anukriti Pandey (Merry Christmas)
- **Best Screenplay:** Sneha Desai (Laapataa Ladies)
- **Best Dialogue:** Arjun Dhawan, Aditya Dhar, Aditya Suhas Jambhale, Monal Thaakar (Article 370)

Acting Categories

- **Best Performance in a Leading Role (Male):** Kartik Aaryan (Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3)
- **Best Performance in a Leading Role (Female):** Nitanshi Goel (Laapataa Ladies)
- **Best Performance in a Supporting Role (Female):** Janki Bodiwala (Shaitaan)
- **Best Performance in a Supporting Role (Male):** Ravi Kishan (Laapataa Ladies)

- **Best Performance in a Negative Role:** Raghav Juyal (Kill)

Debut Categories

- **Best Directorial Debut:** Kunal Kemmu (Madgaon Express)
- **Best Debut (Male):** Lakshya Lalwani (Kill)
- **Best Debut (Female):** Pratibha Ranta (Laapataa Ladies)

Music and Technical Categories

- **Best Music Director:** Ram Sampath (Laapataa Ladies)
- **Best Lyrics:** Prashant Pandey (Sajni from Laapataa Ladies)
- **Best Singer (Male):** Jubin Nautiyal (Dua from Article 370)
- **Best Singer (Female):** Shreya Ghoshal (Ami Je Tomar 3.0 from Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3)
- **Best Choreography:** Bosco-Caesar (Tauba Tauba from Bad Newz)
- **Best Sound Design:** Subash Sahoo, Boloy Kumar Doloi, Rahul Karpe (Kill)
- **Best Editing:** Jabeen Merchant (Laapataa Ladies)
- **Best Cinematography:** Rafey Mahmood (Kill)
- **Best Special Effects:** Red Chillies VFX (Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3)

Lifetime Achievement and Special Honors

- **Outstanding Achievement in Indian Cinema:** Rakesh Roshan

315. Renowned violinist, **R K Shriramkumar** was conferred with the **Sangita Kalanidhi Award for 2025** by **The Music Academy, Madras,** to recognize his exceptional contributions to Carnatic music.
He is an acclaimed violinist trained under V.V. Subrahmanyam & D.K. Jayaraman.

He is a scholar of Muthuswami Dikshitar's compositions with deep expertise in Sangita Sampradaya Pradarsini (a key musicological text).

Notably, the year 2025 marks the 250th birth anniversary of Muthuswami Dikshitar.

The Sangita Kalanidhi Award is the highest honor in Carnatic music and is presented annually by The Music Academy, Madras. This award is conferred upon musicians, composers & scholars who have made exceptional contributions to Carnatic music.

Other Awardees by The Music Academy:

Award	Field	Recent Recipient (2025)
Nritya Kalanidhi	Dance (Bharatanatyam)	Urmila Satyanarayana
Sangita Kala Acharya	Music Education	Shymala Venkateswaran, T.R. Govindarajan
TTK Award	Instrumentalists, Performing Arts	Madambi Subramania Namboothiri (Kathakali), J.T. Jeyaraaj Krishnan & Jayasri Jeyaraaj Krishnan (Veena)

316. The Film Critics Guild has announced the winners of the **Critics' Choice Awards 2025.**
Actor-singer **Diljit Dosanjh** won the Best Actor award for his performance in Netflix's Amar Singh Chamkila.
Darshana Rajendran won the Best Actress award for her role in Paradise.

Ravi Kishan bagged the Best Supporting Actor for Laapataa Ladies and **Kani Kusruti** earned the Best Supporting Actress for her stellar performance in Girls Will Be Girls.

Payal Kapadia's **All We Imagine As Light** (Malayalam-Hindi) won the Best Feature Film award. The film had previously gained global acclaim by winning the Grand Prix at Cannes 2024.

2025 Critics' Choice Awards – Complete Winners List

Feature Film Category

Category	Winner	Film/Work
Best Feature Film	*All We Imagine As Light*	Malayalam-Hindi
Best Director	Payal Kapadia	*All We Imagine As Light*
Best Actor	Diljit Dosanjh	*Amar Singh Chamkila*
Best Actress	Darshana Rajendran	*Paradise*
Best Supporting Actor	Ravi Kishan	*Laapataa Ladies*
Best Supporting Actress	Kani Kusruti	*Girls Will Be Girls*
Best Writing	Anand Ekarshi	*Aattam*
Best Cinematography	Ranabir Das	*All We Imagine As Light*

Web Series Category

Category	Winner	Web Series
Best Web Series	Poacher	
Best Director	Richie Mehta	Poacher
Best Actor	Barun Sobti	Raat Jawaan Hai
Best Actress	Nimisha Sajayan	Poacher
Best Supporting Actor	Dibyendu Bhattacharya	Poacher
Best Supporting Actress	Kani Kusruti	Poacher
Best Writing	Richie Mehta & Team	Poacher

Short Film & Documentary Category

Category	Winner	Film
Short Film		
Best Short Film	Obur	
Best Director	Faraz Ali	Obur
Best Actor	Harish Khanna	Jal Tu Jalaal Tu
Best Actress	Jyoti Dogra	Taak (Tracker)
Best Writing	Faraz Ali	Obur
Best Cinematography	Anand Bansal	Obur
Documentary		
Best Documentary	Nocturnes	

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317. **Yale University** has announced the **eight recipients of the 2025 Windham-Campbell Prizes**, one of the world's most significant international literary awards.
The recipients, honored for their literary achievement or promise, will each receive $175,000 to support their work.

The 2025 recipients are:

- **Fiction:** Sigrid Nunez (United States) and Anne Enright (Ireland)
- **Non-fiction:** Patricia J. Williams (United States) and Rana Dasgupta (United Kingdom)
- **Drama:** Roy Williams (United Kingdom) and Matilda Feyiṣayọ Ibini (United Kingdom)
- **Poetry:** Anthony V. Capildeo (Scotland/Trinidad and Tobago) and Tongo Eisen-Martin (United States)

Rana Dasgupta, a British author of Indian origin, has been awarded the Prize for his literary work.

- The prize was given to him "in recognition of his perceptive critique of global hypercapitalism, industrialisation, politics and class, as seen in his Orwell Prize and Royal Society of Literature Ondaatje Prize shortlisted book *Capital: A Portrait of Twenty-First-Century Delhi.*"
- His 2014 book, ***Capital: The Eruption of Delhi*** (Canongate Books, HarperCollins India), offers a portrait of India's capital city through a combination of reporting and oral history. It examines the dizzying transformation it underwent at the turn of the 21st century.
- His forthcoming book*, After Nations*, explores the "generalised state of crisis" afflicting the nation-state worldwide.
- He is also the author of the novels *Tokyo Cancelled* and *Solo.* He was the founding director of the JCB Prize for Literature in India.

318. Japanese mathematician **Kashiwara Masaki** has won the **Abel Prize 2025**. The award, established by the Norwegian government, is sometimes called the *"Nobel Prize of Mathematics."* He is a professor at the Research Institute for Mathematical Sciences of Kyoto University and is the first Japanese person to win the prize.

He was chosen for his fundamental contributions to algebraic analysis, particularly the development of what is known as the D-Module Theory.

The awards ceremony is scheduled for May 20, 2025, at the University of Oslo.

The honor is accompanied by 7.5 million Norwegian kroner, or about $700,000.

319. Union Minister of Commerce & Industry, Piyush Goyal, presented the **National Intellectual Property Awards 2024.** The award function was held at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi.
The National Intellectual Property Awards 2024 were conferred across the following 13 categories:

S. No.	Category of National IP Awards	Name of Awardee
1	Top Indian Individual - Patents	Sidramappa Shivashankar Dharane (Male)
		Dr. Swagatika Panda (Female)

2	Top Indian Individual - Designs	Dr. Anusha P. (Female)
3	Top Indian Academic Institution - Patents	Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur
4	Top R & D Institution/Organization for Patents Filing, Grant & Commercialization	Anna University
5	Top Public /Private Company for Patents Filing, Grant & Commercialization in India	
	a. Manufacturing Sector	Tata Steel Limited
	b. Services Sector	Jio Platforms Limited
6	Top Indian MSME for Patent Filing, Grant & Commercialization	West Bengal Chemical Industries Ltd.
7	Top Start-up for IP Filing, Grant/Registration and Commercialization	Numeros Motors Pvt. Ltd.
8	Top Indian Company/Organisation - Designs	Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay
9	Top Indian Company /Organization for creating Brand in India and Abroad	Biocon Biologics Ltd.
10	Best Incubator for Nurturing the IP	AIC - Nalanda Institute of Technology Foundation

The National Intellectual Property (IP) Awards are conferred annually to recognize and reward individuals, institutions, organizations, and enterprises for their outstanding contributions to IP creation and commercialization. These awards play a crucial role in strengthening the IP ecosystem in India and fostering innovation and creativity.

320. Eminent Hindi litterateur **Vinod Kumar Shukla** was awarded the **59th Jnanpith Award for 2024** for his contributions to Hindi Literature.

He became the first person from Chhattisgarh state to be awarded this honor.

His first booklet of poetry, 'Lagbhag Jai Hind,' was published in 1971. His major novels include 'Naukar Ki Kameez'. 'Deewar Mein Ek Khidki Rahti Thi' and 'Khilega to Dekhenge," states a release by Bharatiya Jnanpith.

He was honoured with the 1999 Sahitya Akademi Award for his novel "Deewar mein ek Khidki Rehti Thi".

He was awarded the 2023 PEN/Nabokov Award for achievement in international literature.

Jnanpith Award:

- The Jnanpith Award is the highest literary honor in India given to writers who have excelled in literature in different Indian languages.
- The Jnanpith Award is given by the Bharatiya Jnanpith Trust.
- The Award carries a cash prize of Rs 11 lakhs, a citation, and a statue of Vagdevi (Goddess Saraswati).
- The award is given to an Indian Citizen only.
- Since the 18th award, the award is given for a lifetime of work of an author.
- The award is given for work in the Indian language and English.
- Once a language gets the awards, it is not eligible for the award for the next two years.
- The first Janapith winner was eminent Malayalam writer G S Kurup in 1965.
- The first woman to get the Jnanpith Award was Ashapurna Devi (Bangla) in 1976.

BOOKS & AUTHORS

321. Andhra Pradesh's Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu has released the book **'Prapancha Charita' (The Glimpses of World History)** in an event held at GITAM Deemed to be University.

The book was **authored by** former minister **Dr. Daggubati Venkateswara Rao**.

The book is a significant contribution to Telugu literature, highlighting its extensive coverage of world history and human evolution.

The event was attended by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Member of Parliament Daggubati Purandeswari, and former Vice President of India M. Venkaiah Naidu, among others.

Dr. Daggubati Venkateswara Rao:

He is the 2nd son-in-law in order for N. T. Rama Rao, actor and **founder of the Telugu Desam Party** (TDP).

Both Chandrababu Naidu and Venkateswara Rao are co-brother.

The book ended a three-decade-long silence between two popular political leaders, aiding them to strengthen family ties and bringing them closer.

322. The Legislative Department, **Ministry of Law & Justice**, has released a book titled "The Life and Contributions of the Women Members of the Constituent Assembly" on the occasion of International Women's Day 2025.

This work served as a comprehensive tribute to **fifteen distinguished women** who played an instrumental role in drafting the Constitution of India but whose contributions have largely remained unrecognized in mainstream historical and legal discourse.

This publication aimed to bridge the historical gap by offering a detailed analysis of their speeches, debates, and legislative interventions, thereby highlighting their substantive influence on key constitutional provisions.

The book also highlighted the broader historical framework, tracing the evolution of women's constitutional aspirations from the establishment of the **Women's Indian Association in 1917** to the eventual realization of political representation in independent India.

Annie Mascarene played a key role in discussions on federalism and state integration, reinforcing India's unity in diversity.

Begum Qudsia Aizaz Rasul, the **only Muslim woman** in the Assembly, stood as a staunch advocate for secularism, arguing for an inclusive national identity.

Dakshayani Velayudhan, **the first Dalit woman** in the Assembly, fearlessly opposed untouchability and fought for the rights of marginalized communities.

Durgabai Deshmukh was instrumental in shaping social welfare policies and promoting women's education, contributing to India's early framework for social justice.

Hansa Jivraj Mehta played a crucial role in drafting India's fundamental rights, ensuring that **gender justice** remained at the core of constitutional debates.

Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, a pioneering stateswoman, was the **architect of India's public health policies and laid the foundation for modern healthcare** in the country.

323. The **Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India** (IRDAI) released annual data on **Claim Settlement Ratio (CSR)** in its latest *'Handbook on Indian Insurance Statistics 2023-24'.*

This report provides comprehensive information on how different insurers handle claims, which helps policymakers make informed decisions.

As per the report, the overall **CSR for individual death claims within 30 days**, including both private insurers and Mumbai (Maharashtra) based Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) stood at 96.82% for Financial Year 2023-24 (FY24).

Top Life Insurers by Number of Policies:

Among the insurers, **New Delhi-based Axis Max Life Insurance Limited** emerged as the largest insurer in India in terms of the **number of policies settled within 30 days**. The company recorded a **99.79% CSR** by settling **19,569 policies**.

It is closely followed by Mumbai-based HDFC Life Insurance Company Limited with 99.97% CSR, settling about 19,333 policies within a time period of 30 days.

Notably, CSR for individual death claims within 30 days by India's private insurers stood at around 99% for FY24.

Top Life Insurers by Number of Policies Settled:

LIC, India's largest public-sector insurer, topped in terms of the most number of policies settled within 30 days i.e. it has settled 7,99,612 policies in less than 30 days, with a CSR of **96.42%.**

It is followed by Mumbai-based SBI Life Insurance Company Limited which has settled 37,344 policies within the span of 30 days.

Mumbai-based **Kotak Mahindra Life Insurance Company Limited**, Mumbai-based Ageas Federal Life Insurance Company Limited, Mumbai-based Future Generali India Life Insurance Company Limited (FGILI), and Gurugram (Haryana) based Aviva Life Insurance Company India Limited **achieved 100% CSR,** which means they processed all individual death claims within 30 days.

HDFC Life Insurance topped, with **99.98% of the total benefit amount paid out** for claim settlement within 30 days, followed by **Axis Max Life Insurance with 99.97% of the total benefit amount paid** out for claim settlement within 30 days.

The report revealed that private insurers lead with the highest CSR (99%) in terms of number of policies settled i.e. 1,51,770 policies, within the time period of 30 days.

In FY24, Rs 11004.72 crore was paid as a total benefit by private insurers, of which Rs 10738.9 was paid within the time period of 30 days, with CSR by benefit amount standing at 97.58%.

While, the cumulative benefit amount paid (including both private insurers and LIC) in FY24 was Rs 28,867.59 crore, of which Rs 27,750.33 crore was paid within the time period of 30 days, with CSR by benefit amount stood at 96.13%.

Note: The data for 2023-24 does not include Sahara India Life Insurance Company Ltd (SILIC), as its life insurance business was transferred to SBI Life Insurance on June 2, 2023, following an IRDAI directive.

Claim Settlement Ratio (CSR):

- CSR is a critical metric that measures the percentage of claims settled by an insurance company out of the total claims received.

- A higher CSR indicates better reliability and customer trust.

324. A new book titled "**Leo—The Untold Story of Chennai Super Kings**" was launched in Chennai. The book is authored by **P.S. Raman.**

The book delves into the history and journey of the Chennai Super Kings (CSK) franchise.

Former India cricketer C.D. Gopinath, a member of India's first Test-winning team, unveiled the book.

Composer and playback singer Anirudh Ravichander received the first copy of the book.

325. Justice P.N. Prakash, a former judge of the Madras High Court, has released a book titled **'Memories and Milestones'** in Chennai, Tamil Nadu.

The book commemorates the **60-year** journey of the **Blue Cross of India.**

The book is authored by **V. Sriram and Lashman.**

The Blue Cross of India (BCI) is an animal welfare charity based in Chennai, Tamil Nadu. It was established in 1959 by Captain V. Sundaram.

326. The Hon'ble **Union Minister of Jal Shakti, CR Patil,** launched the book, "**Ripples of Change: Gender-Transformative Rural WASH Programmes in India,"** in New Delhi.

A joint publication of the Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation (DDWS), Ministry of Jal Shakti, and UNICEF India, Ripples of Change captures ten powerful stories from rural India.

Documented by UNICEF, the stories reflect the transformational impact of the Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen) and Jal Jeevan Mission through the lens of gender empowerment, community leadership, and grassroots innovation.

He also launched the upgraded Ministry of Jal Shakti (Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation) website portal. The upgraded website is among the first few government platforms to be successfully onboarded and revamped in full compliance with the latest Digital Brand Identity Manual (DBIM) and Guidelines for Indian Government Websites (GIGW) 3.0.

327. The book titled **'March of Glory: The Story of India's 1975 World Cup Hockey Triumph'** was released to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of India's maiden victory in the Hockey World Cup against Pakistan in 1975, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

The book was written by **K. Arumugam**, a hockey historian, and **Errol D'Cruz**, a journalist.

The book was published by **Hockey Citizen Group**.

The book provides key details about matches with statistics and over 250 rare photographs, both on and off the field from the event.

The book focuses on the event's atmosphere and drama, along with the prowess and spirit of the team led by Ajit Pal Singh in its quest to win the title in Kuala Lumpur.

PERSON IN NEWS

328. Christian Stocker has become the **Federal Chancellor of Austria**.
He was sworn in as the Chancellor by the Austrian President Van der Bellen at the Hofburg Palace in Vienna, the capital of Austria.
He will head a three-party coalition government (OVP, Social Democrats, and Neos Party).

329. Mayank Sharma assumed the office of **Controller General of Defence Accounts (CGDA)** on March 01, 2025. He is a 1989-batch officer of the Indian Defence Accounts Service (IDAS) and has had a distinguished career in the government spanning more than three decades.
He has served in various capacities within the Government of India, including the Defence Accounts Department.

He has also held key positions in the Cabinet Secretariat and represented India as the Alternate Permanent Representative at the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, and the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law.

He has represented India at the International Anti-Corruption Academy and the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna.

330. **Levi's**, an American clothing company, has appointed **Diljit Dosanjh** as its global ambassador, making him the first Punjabi artist to be part of its creative community.

This partnership represents a major step in blending music, fashion, and culture while enhancing Levi's presence both in India and globally.

This partnership showcases Levi's(r) expanding menswear range, including on-trend New Loose and Relaxed fits while reflecting Diljit Dosanjh's innate sense of style.

331. The Government of India has appointed Additional Secretary in the Department of Commerce **Ajay Bhadoo**, as the **Chief Executive Officer** (CEO) of **Government e Marketplace** (GeM).

He will assume this role in addition to his existing responsibilities in the Department of Commerce.
In August 2024, Bhadoo was appointed as Additional Secretary in the Department of Commerce.
Previously, he served as the Deputy Election Commissioner at the Election Commission of India.
His extensive career also includes a tenure as Joint Secretary to the former President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind, and leadership roles such as CEO of the Gujarat Maritime Board and Commissioner of Rajkot and Vadodara Municipal Corporations.
Bhadoo holds a degree in Civil Engineering and a Master's in Business Law from the prestigious National Law School of India University, Bengaluru.
The **Government e Marketplace** (GeM) portal was **launched in August 2016** and serves as the central platform for government ministries and departments to procure goods and services online.
Currently, GeM has recorded a Gross Merchandise Value (GMV) of ₹4.58 lakh crore, reflecting a 28.65% year-on-year growth.
Another appointment:
Amitava Mukherjee has been named **Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) of NMDC Limited** following the approval of the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) on March 5, 2025.
He will serve as CMD until his superannuation on February 29, 2028.

332. **Yamandu Orsi**, a telegenic left-leaning former mayor and history teacher, took office as **new president of Uruguay**.

Orsi was sworn in as the country's **43rd president**, succeeding Luis Lacalle Pou.
Orsi won the November election against the ruling center-right coalition.
As a moderate, Orsi has promised to strike a different balance between social welfare and economic growth by ushering in what he described as a "modern left" agenda.

333. **Federal Bank** has appointed actress **Vidya Balan** as its **first brand ambassador**.

The announcement was made at a special ceremony in Mumbai, where Ms. Balan was presented with a commemorative plaque by the bank's Managing Director and CEO KVS Manian.

This partnership will extend to various marketing initiatives including television advertisements and digital campaigns, allowing the bank to create strong engagement with its stakeholders.

334. The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has appointed **Anju Rathi Rana** as the **first woman Secretary of the Department of Legal Affairs** (also called the law secretary), Ministry of Law and Justice, marking a significant step towards gender diversity in senior government roles.

Rana joined the law ministry as a joint secretary in 2017.
Prior to that, she was a public prosecutor in the Delhi government for 18 years.
She has represented India in international forums like the BRICS Ministers of Justice Meeting, focusing on legal reforms and gender representation in the judiciary.
Rana will play a crucial role in shaping legal frameworks and guiding important judicial and legislative initiatives in the country.

335. According to the provisions of the Indian Constitution, **the President of India** appointed **Joymalya Bagchi** as Judge of the Supreme Court of India **after consultation with the Chief Justice of India**: Justice Sanjeev Khanna.

President also appointed Wasim Sadiq Nargal, Rajesh Sekhri, and Yousuf Wani **as Additional Judge** of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh High Court.

336. Honda Motor Co. announced the appointment of **Takashi Nakajima** as the **new President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO)** of **Honda Cars India Limited** (HCIL).

This leadership transition comes at a pivotal time as Honda aims to enhance its presence in the Indian automotive market.
He will take over from Takuya Tsumura, who moves to Japan at Honda's head office after completing his India tenure.
His appointment will be effective from 1st April 2025.

337. Mark Carney was sworn in as the **Prime Minister of Canada**. He succeeded Justin Trudeau, who resigned earlier in the year.

He is a renowned economist and central banker, having served as the Governor of the Bank of England and the Bank of Canada.
He is the leader of the Liberal Party in Canada.

338. The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has announced changes in its representation on the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) Board following Jay Shah's appointment as the Chair of the International Cricket Council (ICC).

Rajeev Shukla: Appointed as the Executive Board Member of the ACC, replacing Jay Shah.
Ashish Shelar: Named as the Ex-Officio Board Member of the ACC.

339. Atul Kumar Goel has assumed charge as the **Chief Executive** (CE) of **the Indian Banks' Association** (IBA).

He has succeeded Sunil Mehta, who served as IBA's Chief Executive from January 2020 to September 2024.

He worked in four major banks:
- Allahabad Bank (now Indian Bank).
- Union Bank of India (as Executive Director).
- UCO Bank (as MD & CEO).
- Punjab National Bank (as MD & CEO).

340. **Shivkumar Kalyanaraman**, a former Microsoft executive, has been appointed as the CEO of the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF).

He succeeded Professor Abhay Karandikar, who was previously serving as the interim CEO.

The ANRF, established through an Act of Parliament in 2023, aims to promote research and development (R&D) and foster a culture of innovation across India's universities, colleges, research institutions, and R&D laboratories.

Earlier, he held the post of Chief Technology Officer (CTO), Energy Industry, Asia at Microsoft.

He is a distinguished Alumnus Awardee of IIT Madras & Ohio State University (2021).

He is also a Fellow of the IEEE (2010), Fellow of Indian National Academy of Engineering (2015), ACM Distinguished Scientist (2010), Microsoft Gold Club (2024), and Technology Review TR100 young innovator (1999).

341. Senior Counsel **Stuart Richard Young** was sworn in as the **eighth Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago**. He was sworn into office by President Christine Kangaloo.

He replaced Dr Keith Rowley.

Camille Robinson Regis was sworn in as Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs.

342. **Jasprit Bumrah** became the **Brand Ambassador of Skechers**, the global Comfort Technology Company, to expand its association with elite cricket athletes.

He will feature in marketing campaigns alongside athletes Ishan Kishan and Yastika Bhatia.

Skechers is also the official kit sponsor of the Mumbai Indians.

Skechers Cricket offers a range of footwear, including full-spike and half-spike options.

The Skechers Cricket Elite, featuring 11 metal spikes, is designed for players seeking exceptional traction and stability, allowing them to perform with confidence and execute powerful movements on the field.

The Skechers Cricket Blade, with seven metal spikes, provides a balanced mix of grip and agility, making it ideal for quick movements and decisive actions.

343. **Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah** has become the **first woman President** of the southern African nation of **Namibia.**

She succeeded Nangolo Mbumba.

She is associated with the SWAPO party, which won both the presidential and parliamentary elections in November 2024.

She previously served as Vice President and won 58 percent of the vote in the recent election.

344. Economic affairs secretary **Ajay Seth** has been named India's new **Finance Secretary**, filling the vacancy created by Tuhin Kanta Pandey's appointment as the chairperson of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI).

He is a 1987-batch Karnataka cadre Indian Administrative Services officer.

He played a key role in shaping India's economic policies as secretary in the Department of Economic Affairs since 2021, overseeing critical initiatives related to infrastructure financing, public-private partnerships, and the management of external borrowings.

In Karnataka, he served in diverse roles including Managing Director of Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL), Principal Secretary in the Infrastructure Development Department, and in Urban Development and Planning portfolios. His tenure with the Bangalore Metro was marked by key expansions and progress in urban mobility infrastructure.

345. Ashok Singh Thakur has been elected as the Chairman of the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (**INTACH**) for **3 years** following the successful elections held during the Annual General Meeting of INTACH on 22nd March 2025 in New Delhi.

- INTACH is India's premier heritage conservation organization, formally constituted on January 27, 1984. It is a nationally registered society under the Societies Registration Act (1860).
- The organization operates nationwide, collaborating with government bodies and civil society to protect historical monuments, artifacts, and ecosystems.
- The INTACH Charter was adopted in 2004 and serves as a foundation document guiding heritage conservation in India.

346. Parminder Chopra has been assigned the additional charge as **Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) of REC Limited** (formerly Rural Electrification Corporation Limited), a 'Maharatna' Central Public Sector Enterprise (CPSE) under the administrative control of the Ministry of Power (MoP).

She has been appointed for period of 3 months or until further orders, whichever is earlier.

She also holds the position of CMD of Power Finance Corporation Ltd.

She succeeds Vivek Kumar Dewangan, who completed his tenure on March 20, 2025.

About REC Ltd:

- REC Ltd was incorporated in 1969, under the Companies Act as a private limited company named "Rural Electrification Corporation Private Limited".

- REC is a "Maharatna" Central Public Sector Enterprise (CPSE) under the administrative jurisdiction of the Ministry of Power.
- REC is registered as a Non-Banking Finance Company (NBFC) and Infrastructure Financing Company (IFC) with the RBI.

347. **Sanjay Singh,** President of the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI), has been elected as a **Bureau Member of United World Wrestling (UWW)-Asia.** He secured 22 out of 38 votes in the election held at the UWW-Asia General Assembly in Amman, Jordan.

UWW had imposed a ban on WFI in August 2023 due to its failure to conduct elections within a stipulated time following the accusations of sexual harassment against former WFI President Brij Bhushan Singh.

In March 2025, the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MYAS) lifted the ban on WFI and restored its recognition as a National Sports Federation (NSF).

United World Wrestling:

The United World Wrestling (UWW) is the international governing body for the sport of amateur wrestling, both for Greco-Roman wrestling and freestyle wrestling. It is based in Corsier-sur-Vevey, Switzerland.

348. **B. Sumeeth Reddy**, who represented India at the Rio 2016 Olympics and was a member of the silver medal-winning mixed team at the Commonwealth Games 2022 in Birmingham, has announced his retirement from professional **badminton** to focus on coaching.

He represented India at the 2014 and 2018 Asian Games, won the 2015 Mexico City Grand Prix and the 2016 Canada Open titles, and was a runner-up at the 2015 US Open and Dutch Open.

He secured gold medals in men's doubles with Manu Attri at the 2016 South Asian Games in Meghalaya (India) and the 2019 South Asian Games in Kathmandu (Nepal).

In 2017, he won a silver medal at the Syed Modi International in India, partnering with Ashwini Ponnappa.

He won a silver medal in the mixed team event at the 2022 CWG held in Birmingham, England.

Prior to his retirement, B Sumeeth Reddy and his wife N Sikki Reddy were ranked 25th in the mixed doubles world rankings.

He established the Sikki Sumeeth Badminton Academy in Hyderabad in 2021 along with his wife and is now part of India's national coaching setup, overseeing women's doubles players.

349. The Ministry of Law and Justice (MoL&J) notified the appointment of **Justice Harish Tandon** as the **Chief Justice (CJ) of the Orissa High Court (HC).**

His appointment comes after the retirement of Justice Chakradhari Sharan Singh on January 19, 2025. Until now, Justice Arindam Sinha had been serving as the acting Chief Justice.

He was previously serving as the Judge of the Calcutta High Court.

The appointment was made under **Article 217(1) of the Constitution of India** by Droupadi Murmu, President of India.

350. The **Government of India** has officially appointed **Rahul Bhave** as the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer (**MD & CEO) of Industrial Finance Corporation of India (IFCI) Ltd**.

He will hold the position for three years from the date, as stated in a government order approved by the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC).

He previously served as Deputy Managing Director at IFCI.

Industrial Finance Corporation of India (IFCI):

IFCI Ltd (IFCI) was set up as a statutory corporation in 1948 to provide medium and long-term finance to industry.
IFCI is registered with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) as a Systemically Important Non-Deposit taking Non-Banking Finance Company (NBFC-ND-SI) and is also a notified Public Financial Institution under Section 2(72) of the Companies Act, 2013.

351. Tunisian President **Kais Saied** appointed **Sarra Zaafrani Zenzri** as the new **Prime Minister** of the country.

With this, she became Tunisia's second woman Prime Minister and the country's third Prime Minister within less than two years.

She is an engineer and has served as the Minister of Equipment and Housing since 2021.

She succeeded Kamel Madouri.

352. Amitabh Nag, Chief Executive Officer of the Digital India Bhashini Division under the Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY), was assigned additional charge **as Director of India Dataset Platform** (AI Kosh) & **Application Development Initiative at IndiaAI**.

IndiaAI, the National Portal on Artificial Intelligence, serves as a central hub for AI-related advancements in India. It is a key initiative under MeitY's IndiaAI Mission, which aims to drive AI innovation, democratize computing access, enhance data quality, foster industry collaboration, and promote responsible AI development.

AI Kosh: IndiaAI Datasets Platform is a unified repository providing secure access to datasets, AI models, and development tools. It features AI sandbox capabilities, dataset readiness scoring, encryption-based security, and real-time filtering mechanisms.

The **IndiaAI Application Development Initiative (IADI)**, another key pillar of the IndiaAI Mission, focuses on developing and scaling AI-driven solutions in critical sectors such as healthcare, climate change, governance, agriculture, and learning disabilities.

353. The **Governor of Punjab**, **Gulab Chand Kataria**, in exercise of the powers conferred under Article 165 of the Constitution of India, appointed **Maninderjit Singh Bedi** as Advocate General for the State of Punjab with effect from the date he assumed charge of his office.

The appointment comes on the heels of the resignation of Senior Advocate Gurminder Singh from the post. Singh was appointed as the AG in October 2023.

Advocate Anu Chatrath was appointed as Senior Additional Advocate General of Punjab. The engagement is on a contractual basis for one year.

354. **Dr. Jay Bhattacharya**, an Indian-origin professor at Stanford School of Medicine, has been confirmed by the US Senate as the **18th Director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH)**, headquartered in Maryland, USA.

The appointment was approved through a 53-47 roll-call vote during the first session of the 119th Congress.

He succeeds Dr. Monica M. Bertagnolli, whose term ended on 17 January 2025.

Dr. Jay Bhattacharya:

- Professor of Health Policy at Stanford University.
- Research Associate at the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER).
- Director of Stanford's Center for Demography and Economics of Health and Aging (CDEHA), where he leads research on government health programs, biomedical innovation, and economic policies.
- In October 2020, he co-authored the *Great Barrington Declaration*, which argued for focused protections instead of broad lockdowns during the COVID-19 pandemic.

355. IAS **Atul Kumar Tiwari** was assigned an additional charge as the **Chairperson of the National Council of Vocational Education & Training (NCVET).**

He is currently serving as **Secretary of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship** and has been granted ex-post facto approval for this role by the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC).

His tenure will extend for three months or until a regular incumbent is appointed or until further orders, whichever is earlier.

IAS **Neha Bansal** (2010 batch) from the AGMUT cadre has been appointed as Deputy Director (Level-13) in the National Archives of India under the Ministry of Culture. Her appointment, approved under the Central Staffing Scheme, will be for a tenure of five years or until further orders.

356. The **Government of India** (GoI) appointed **Rajiv Gauba**, the former Cabinet Secretary (CS) of India, as the **full-time member** of the New Delhi (Delhi) based National Institution for Transforming India (**NITI Aayog**) in the rank of Minister of State with immediate effect.

With this appointment, he becomes the **fourth member** of NITI Aayog, joining **Dr. Vijay Kumar Saraswat, Prof. Ramesh Chand, and Dr. Vinod Paul.**

Currently, **Dr. Suman Bery** serves as the Vice Chairperson in the rank of a Cabinet Minister, while **B.V.R. Subrahmanyam**, former Commerce Secretary, is the CEO of NITI Aayog.

His inclusion in NITI Aayog is expected to strengthen the institution's strategic planning and policy formulation efforts, contributing to India's long-term development goals.

Rajiv Gauba:

- Rajiv Gauba, a 1982-batch Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer from the Jharkhand cadre, has played a crucial role in shaping key government policies and reforms.
- He served as Cabinet Secretary for a record five years (2019-2024), making him the longest-serving in the role, surpassing Pradeep Kumar Sinha's tenure.
- He played a key role in major governance reforms, including the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act of 2019, during his tenure as Union Home Secretary.
- His previous roles include Union Home Secretary, Union Cabinet Secretary, Union Secretary for Housing & Urban Affairs, and Chief Secretary of Jharkhand.

OBITUARIES

357. **Fred Stolle**, an Australian tennis player, has died recently. He is an iconic figure in tennis.

He won two Grand Slam singles titles and 17 major doubles trophies.

He won men's doubles titles at Grand Slams from 1962 to 1969, four each with Bob Hewitt and Emerson and two with Ken Rosewall. Stolle is one of the few to win all four doubles majors.

He won the Davis Cup in 1964, 1965 and 1966.

He coached American Vitas Gerulaitis to the 1977 Australian Open title and would continue playing singles on tour until 1982.

He also worked as a commentator for Australia's Nine Network and U.S. broadcasters.

358. Noted Indian classical devotional singer and composer **Garimella Balakrishna Prasad Garu** has passed away in Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh at the age of 76.

He was born in Rajahmundry, Madras Province (Chennai at Present), India on November 9, 1948.

His Career and Achievements:

- He was a distinguished Indian classical devotional singer and composer, particularly known for his **expertise in Annamacharya Sankeerthanas**.

- He played **Mridangam.**
- He served at Tirumala Tirupati Devastanam's Annamacharya Project as a Special Grade Vocal artist from 1978 to 2006.
- He composed tunes for many of Annamacharya's devotional songs, contributing to their widespread popularity.
- He was recognized for rendering Annamacharya Sankeerthanas in various Indian musical genres.
- He received the **Sangeet Natak Akademi Award** in **2020.**
- He was T.T.D Asthana Vidwaan and Ahobhilamatam Asthana Vidwaan.

He composed tunes for the lyrics of nearly 1400 songs composed by various poets, nearly 1000 of which were **Annamacharya Sankirtanas**.

359. Renowned **Odia poet** and former Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer **Ramakanta Rath** has passed away at the age of 90.

He was born on December 13, 1934 in Cuttack, Bihar and Orissa Province, British India.

His **notable works**, such as **Saptama Ritu, Sri Radha, and Sandigha Mrigaya**, revolutionized **Odia poetry** with their profound philosophical depth and distinctive poetic style.

His awards and Honors:

- Sahitya Akademi Award (1977)
- Saraswati Samman (1992)
- **Padma Bhushan** (2006)
- Atibadi Jagannath Das Award (2018) – **Odisha's highest literary honor**

His career as an Administrator:

- Joined the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) in 1957.
- Served as Chief Secretary of Odisha and Secretary to the Government of India.
- Vice-president and President of the Sahitya Akademi of India.
- Honorary Chairman of the Odisha Maritime Academy.

360. Arvind Singh Mewar, a descendant of Rajput king Maharana Pratap, has passed away in Udaipur, Rajasthan.

He was a member of the erstwhile royal family of Mewar and chairman of the HRH Group of Hotels.

He was a qualified pilot and completed solo flights across India in a microlight aircraft.

He was a renowned player of **cricket and polo.**

- He made his debut in the **Ranji Trophy** as Rajasthan's skipper in 1945-46 and had an eventful career for almost two decades.
- He began to play polo in the 1970s but gave up the sport due to medical reasons. To express his association with the game, he instituted **The Udaipur Cup** at the Cambridge and Newmarket Polo Club.

- In Udaipur city, Mewar Polo was formed as a team of professional players who were handpicked and specially trained for Indian tournaments. The team lifted the prestigious President's Cup in 1991.

361. **Sanjida Khatun** one of the leading figures of Bangladesh's cultural arena, **musicologist,** and co-founder of Chhayanaut, has passed away in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

She was born on 4th April in 1933 in Bangladesh.

She was active during the Language Movement of 1952. Her life was dedicated to enriching the cultural realm of Bangladesh.

Her Achievements and awards:

- **2021 – Padma Shri, by the Government of India**

- 2020 - Bidyastu Accadamic Award by the Government of West Bengal

- 2019 - BRAC Bank-Samakal Literary Award for her essay collection Nazrul Manas

- 2012 – Deshikottoma by Visva-Bharati University

- 2010 – Rabindra Award

- 2010 – Lifetime Achievement Award by 5th Citycell-Channel I Music Awards

- 1998 – Bangla Academy Literary Award

- 1991 – Ekushey Padak

- 1988 - Title of 'Rabindra Tattvacharya'

SPORTS

362. Australian cricket legend **Steve Smith** has announced his retirement from **One Day International (ODI)** cricket.
The decision came after Australia's exit from the Champions Trophy, following a semifinal defeat to India.
He made his ODI debut in 2010 against the West Indies in Melbourne, where he returned figures of 2/78 as Australia defended a massive target of 325.
He took over as Australia's ODI captain in 2015, succeeding Michael Clarke. He led the team in 64 matches and was part of the Australian squads that clinched the ODI World Cup titles in 2015 and 2023.
His captaincy record includes 32 wins, 28 losses, and four no-results, with a win percentage of 50.

363. **Grandmaster (GM) Pa Iniyan** emerged as the winner of **the Cannes International Open** held in **Cannes, France**.

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He secured victory after defeating his compatriot V Pranesh in the final round.

The tournament featured strong competition from several international and Indian chess players.

Pa Iniyan achieved his **Grandmaster title in 2019** and has since been an active competitor in global chess events.

364. The Pakistan Cricket Board successfully hosted the **ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025**, marking Pakistan's first ICC event since 1996.

Pakistan hosted the 2025 Champions Trophy. However, due to India's security concerns about playing in Pakistan, a hybrid model was adopted. This arrangement split the matches between Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), with India's games and the final being held in the UAE.

The 2025 ICC Champions Trophy featured eight participating teams:

Group A	Group B
Pakistan	Australia
India	England
New Zealand	South Africa
Bangladesh	Afghanistan

These teams secured their spots based on their performances in the 2023 Cricket World Cup, with **Afghanistan** making its **debut** in the Champions Trophy.
Notable Non-Qualifying Teams:
- **Sri Lanka**: For the first time, Sri Lanka failed to qualify for the Champions Trophy.
- **West Indies**: The West Indies also missed out on qualification, marking a significant absence given their historical prominence in international cricket.

India won the **ICC Champions Trophy - 2025**, defeating **New Zealand** by four wickets in the final at **Dubai International Stadium.**
ICC Champions Trophy:
The ICC Champions Trophy, inaugurated in 1998 as the ICC KnockOut Trophy, is a One Day International (ODI) cricket tournament.
Initially conceived to raise funds for cricket development in non-Test-playing nations, the tournament featured all ICC full members and, at times, associate members.
In 2002, it was rebranded as the Champions Trophy, adopting a round-robin format followed by knockout stages. After the 2017 edition, the tournament was discontinued but was reinstated in 2025.
Over the years, multiple nations have claimed the title:
- 1998: South Africa
- 2000: New Zealand
- 2002: India and Sri Lanka (joint winners)
- 2004: West Indies
- 2006 & 2009: Australia
- 2013: India
- 2017: Pakistan
- 2025: India

365. **FIFA** has excluded **Russia, Pakistan, and Congo** from the 2026 World Cup. The 2026 FIFA World Cup, jointly **hosted by the United States, Canada, and Mexico**, will feature 48 teams.

The reason why all these three countries have been banned by FIFA:

Pakistan: The Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) did not adopt a new constitution that guarantees free and fair polls, which is mandatory as per FIFA and the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) rules.

The world football body had suspended the PFF on February 6 due to the failure of Congress of Pakistan to amend the constitution as mandated by FIFA. Pakistan football has been governed by a FIFA-appointed committee since June 2019.

Note: FIFA lifted the suspension on the PFF following the successful outcome of the PFF Extraordinary Congress. Pakistan will now be able to participate in the 2027 AFC Asian Cup qualifiers and will face Syria in their Group E opener on March 25.

Russia: Russia will not meet the qualification requirement for the 2026 World Cup as the national football team has been barred from participating in both FIFA and UEFA tournaments since its invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

Congo: The country has been banned from the tournament for "unlawful third-party interference" in the management of the Congolese Football Federation.

366. A 25-year-old Indian Grandmaster, **Aravindh Chithambaram** won the Prague Masters 2025. He trained with Praggnanandhaa under RB Ramesh.

He calls himself a "pawn of 64 squares".

He secured his **first national title** in Jammu in **National Chess Championship 2018**.

As of March 2025, he has achieved a peak FIDE **rating of 2731**.

The Prague International Chess Festival has been held annually since 2019, featuring the prestigious Masters tournament. Below is a list of the Masters tournament winners from 2019 through 2025:

Year	Winner
2019	Nikita Vitiugov (Russia)
2020	Alireza Firouzja (FIDE)
2021	Samuel Shankland (USA)
2022	Pentala Harikrishna (India)
2023	Ray Robson (USA)
2024	Nodirbek Abdusattorov (Uzbekistan)
2025	Aravindh Chithambaram (India)

367. The **Indian women's kabaddi team** clinched their **fifth Asian Women's Kabaddi Championship title** by defeating **Iran 32-25** in the final match held in **Tehran, Iran.**

This victory marked **their third consecutive** championship win, reinforcing their dominance in the sport.

The sixth edition of the Asian Women's Kabaddi Championship was held from March 6 to 8, 2025. It featured seven teams divided into two groups.

Tehran was the first city to hold the Asian Women's Kabaddi Championship twice, having previously hosted the tournament in 2007.

Bangladesh and Nepal secured bronze medals after their semi-final losses to Iran and India, respectively.

The Asian Women's Kabaddi Championship is a premier kabaddi tournament organized by the Asian Kabaddi Federation, showcasing the top women's teams from across Asia. Established in 2005, the championship has played a pivotal role in promoting and developing women's kabaddi in the region.

Here is a table of the **Asian Women's Kabaddi Championship** winners over the years:

Year	Host Country	Winner
2005	India	India
2007	Iran	India
2008	India	India
2017	Iran	India
2025	Iran	India

368. **McLaren's Lando Norris** clinched victory in the season-opening **2025 Australian Grand Prix.**

With this win, the McLaren driver now leads the championship standings.

Red Bulls' Max Verstappen secured the second position, and Mercedes' George Russell secured the third position in the event.

369. Indian gymnast **Pranati Nayak** won the **bronze medal** in the women's vault event at the Fédération Internationale de Gymnastique (FIG) World Cup (WC) in **Antalya, Turkey**.

She scored 13.417 with her routine in the women's vault final to finish behind the **USA's Jayla Hang (13.667)** and **Claire Pease (13.567).**

This marked Pranati Nayak's second medal at the FIG Artistic Gymnastics Apparatus World Cup, following her bronze in the vault event at Cairo in 2024.

She became the third Indian gymnast to secure an international medal in the vault event, following the achievements of Dipa Karmakar and Aruna Reddy.

She represented India at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics. She also clinched bronze medals at the Asian Championships in 2019 (Ulaanbaatar) and 2022 (Doha).

370. The BIHAR SepakTakraw World Cup 2025 was organized by the International Sepaktakraw Federation (ISTAF) and hosted by the Sepaktakraw Federation of India at the Patliputra Indoor Stadium, Kankarbagh Patna, from 20-25 March 2025.

Thailand secured the first position in the tournament with a total of four medals (3 gold and 1 silver), followed by Myanmar (1 gold, 2 silver, and 1 bronze), and Vietnam (1 gold, 2 silver, and 1 bronze).

The Indian contingent finished fourth with a total of seven medals (one gold, one silver, and five bronze) in the BIHAR SepakTakraw World Cup 2025.

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.

371. The **Khelo India Para Games 2025**, the second edition of the multi-sport para event under the Indian government's Khelo India initiative, was held in **New Delhi** from March 20 to 27.

Mascot: 'Ujjwala', inspired by the house sparrow, a symbol of resilience.

The Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, Indira Gandhi Stadium, and the Dr Karni Singh Shooting Range were the three venues that hosted KIPG 2025.

The medal events were held across six sports: para archery, para athletics, para badminton, para shooting, para table tennis, and para powerlifting.

KIPG Medal Winners 2025

Rank	State	Gold medals	Silver medals	Bronze medals	Total medals
1	Haryana	34	39	31	104
2	Tamil Nadu	28	19	27	74
3	Uttar Pradesh	23	21	20	64
4	Rajasthan	22	18	24	64
5	Maharashtra	18	13	12	43
6	Gujarat	12	24	23	59
7	Karnataka	10	5	7	22
8	Delhi	8	11	20	39
9	Punjab	8	2	5	15
10	Andhra Pradesh	4	8	3	15

The Khelo India Para Games is part of the Khelo India mission to provide a platform for talented athletes to showcase their sporting and competitive skills. The 1st edition of the Khelo India Para Games, held in December 2023, was organized in seven sports disciplines across three venues in New Delhi.

372. The **Department of Youth Services & Sports, Union Territory (UT) of Ladakh**, successfully organized the **Zanskar Winter Sports and Tourism Festival 2024-25** at **Atting Village, Zanskar (Ladakh).**

The festival brought together sports, culture, and tourism, offering visitors an opportunity to experience the unique winter heritage of Ladakh amidst the landscapes of Zanskar Valley.

The event was honoured by the presence of Vikram Singh Malik, Administrative Secretary of Tourism, Culture, Youth Services & Sports, UT of Ladakh, as the Chief Guest (CG), and Punchok Tashi, Executive Councilor of Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council-Kargil (LAHDC-Kargil), as the Guest of Honour.

The program showcased engaging cultural performances by several Ama Thoqspa groups, celebrating the vibrant cultural heritage of Zanskar.

373. The **Indian team** secured both the **Men's and Women's Kabaddi World Cup 2025** at Wolverhampton in the **United Kingdom (UK).**

The Indian Men's Team defeated England in the final match 44-41.

The Indian Women's Team defeated England with a dominating score of 57-34 in the final at the same venue.

Captain Ritu Negi led the Indian women's squad, and **Captain Pawan Sehrawat** led the Men's team.

Kabaddi World Cup (KWC) 2025:

- The 2nd edition of the Kabaddi World Cup (KWC), featuring over 60 matches, was held from March 17 to 23, 2025.
- For the first time, this tournament was hosted outside Asia, with matches played across Birmingham, Coventry, Walsall, and Wolverhampton in the UK's West Midlands region.
- The 2025 event was supported by the West Midlands Combined Authority's (WMCA) Commonwealth Games Major Events Legacy Fund.
- It was sponsored by Paddy Power, an Irish gambling company and received an additional GBP 500,000 from the WMCA along with backing from the University of Wolverhampton (England).
- The 1st edition of KWC was organized by the World Kabaddi Federation (WKF)in Malaysia in 2019, where India also secured both the men's and women's titles by defeating Iraq and Chinese Taipei, respectively.

Note: World Kabaddi celebrates World Kabaddi Day annually on March 24, marking the anniversary of its founding date in 2018.

International Kabaddi Federation (IKF):

- **President**: Vinod Kumar Tiwari
- **Headquarters**: Jaipur, Rajasthan
- **Established:** 2004

374. During The Ten 2025 athletics meet at San Juan Capistrano in the USA, India's **Gulveer Singh** broke his own record and created a new national record in the men's 10,000m event.

India's long-distance runner, Gulveer Singh, has eclipsed his national record in the 10,000m race in The Ten competition, an event on the World Athletics Continental Tour, **by clocking 27:00.22** seconds in the United States. He finished 6th at The Ten competition in the USA.

The previous record held by the Hangzhou Asian Games bronze medallist runner was 27:14.88, set in Hachioji, Japan, in November 2024.

The 26-year-old, winner of the bronze medal at the 2023 Asian Athletics Championships in Bangkok, had re-set the national record twice last year. He timed 27:41.81 seconds at San Juan Capistrano in California in March before improving on it in Japan.

Gulveer, who hails from Uttar Pradesh, is also the national record holder in 5,000m with a time of 13:11.82 seconds set last year.

375. Indian wrestlers **Manisha Bhanwala** (62kg) and **Antim Panghal** (53kg) won **gold and bronze**, respectively, at the **Asian Wrestling Championships 2025** in Amman, Jordan.

Manisha Bhanwala secured India's first women's freestyle gold since 2021 by defeating DPR Korea's Ok J Kim 8-7 in a thrilling final.

Antim Panghal, returning post-Paris 2024 Olympics, claimed bronze in 53kg. She beat China's Jin Zhang (10-6) but lost to Japan's Moe Kiyooka (technical superiority) in the semifinals before dominating Chinese Taipei's Meng Hsuan Hsieh for third place.

India finished the Asian Wrestling Championships 2025 in Amman, Jordan, with **10 medals (1 Gold, 3 Silver, and 6 Bronze).**

India's Medal Tally:

- 1 Gold (Manisha Bhanwala, 62 kg)
- 3 Silver: (Reetika Hooda, 76kg), (Deepak Punia, 92 kg), and (Udit, 61 kg).
- 6 Bronze: (Antim Panghal, 53kg), (Muskan-59kg), (Mansi Lather-68kg), (Nitesh-97kg Greco-Roman), (Sunil Kumar-87kg Greco-Roman), and (Dinesh Kumar-125 kg).

376. India's **Anahat Singh** secured the women's squash title at the **Indian Open 2025 PSA Copper** event held in Mumbai, Maharashtra.

She claimed her **sixth consecutive title** by defeating Hong Kong's **Helen Tang** 3-0 (11-9, 11-5, 11-8) in just 24 minutes at the Bombay Gymkhana.

The victory marks her 11th career title, earning her 300 ranking points.

In the **men's final**, Egypt's **Kareem El Torkey** defeated India's Abhay Singh in a hard-fought match, securing the title and 500 ranking points.

IMPORTANT DAYS

377. Jan Aushadhi Diwas is observed annually on **7th March** to raise awareness about the Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP) and promote the use of generic medicines. The week-long events are organized from 1st to 7th March across the country to support this initiative.

Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP):
The **"Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP)"** was launched in **November 2008** by the Department of Pharmaceuticals, Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers, in collaboration with Central Pharma Public Sector Undertakings.
The initiative aims to provide quality medicines at affordable prices to the public through dedicated outlets called **Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Kendras (PMBJK).**
Under the scheme, the Government has set a target to open **25000** Jan Aushadhi Kendras by 31st March, 2027 across the country.

378. World Hearing Day is observed annually on **3rd March** to create awareness on how to prevent deafness and hearing loss and promote ear and hearing care across the world.
Theme 2025: "Changing Mindsets: Empower Yourself to Make Ear and Hearing Care a Reality for All!"
The day was first observed in **2007** by the World Health Organisation (WHO).

379. National Security Day or Rashtriya Suraksha Diwas is observed annually across India on **4th March** to honour the security forces of India and to commemorate the establishment of the National Safety Council (NSC). The day is also observed to show gratitude to all the security forces, including policemen, para-military forces, commandos, guards, army officers, and other persons involved in security.
NSC of India was established by then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee in 1998.
The present National Security Advisor is Ajit Doval.

380. World Wildlife Day (WWD) is observed annually on **3rd March** to spread awareness about the world's wild fauna and flora. The day also reminds us of the need to fight against wildlife crime and the human-induced reduction of species causing various wide-ranging economic, environmental, and social impacts.

The day was proposed by Thailand and recognized in 2013 by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).
Theme 2025: "Wildlife Conservation Finance: Investing in People and Planet".
Key Announcements by the Government of India on World Wildlife Day 2025:

- New sites identified for cheetah reintroduction, including Gandhisagar Sanctuary (Madhya Pradesh) and Banni Grasslands (Gujarat).
- Announcement of a Tiger Conservation Scheme focused on protecting tigers and co-predators outside traditional tiger reserves.

- Launch of a dedicated Project on Gharials to address their dwindling population.
- Announcement of a National Great Indian Bustard Conservation Action Plan to upscale conservation efforts.
- Documentation and research on India's traditional forest and wildlife conservation practices using AI.
- Expansion of India's engagement with the United Nations Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) for enhanced international cooperation.

381. **International Day for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Awareness** is observed annually on **5ᵗʰ March** to spread awareness and understanding of disarmament issues, especially among young people.

The year 2025 marks the observance of the **3rd** International Day for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Awareness.

The day was proposed by Kyrgyzstan and adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2022.

382. **World Obesity Day** is a unified day of action that calls for a cohesive, cross-sector response to the obesity crisis. It takes place on **4 March** and is convened by the World Obesity Federation in collaboration with its global members.

Theme 2025: **Changing Systems, Healthier Lives**.
On the occasion of World Obesity Day, the **National Obesity Summit** was **organized** by **Confederation of Indian Industry** (CII).
The summit saw participation from leading medical experts, policymakers, and industry representatives, all of whom echoed the need for collective action to address obesity at a systemic level.
India, China and the United States are projected to have the highest numbers of people who are overweight or live with obesity by 2050, according to a **new study published in** the journal "**The Lancet**".
India ranked **second** globally **in overweight and obesity cases** among children aged 5-14 years.
In 1990, India had 4.6 million boys and 5.4 million girls with obesity, rising to 13 million boys and 12 million girls by 2021.
By 2050, these figures are expected to reach 16 million boys and 14 million girls.
This rise is linked to the increasing consumption of ultra-processed foods and beverages.

383. Zero Discrimination Day is observed annually across India on March 1ˢᵗ every year.

The day is **initiated** by **UNAIDS (Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS)** to promote equality and inclusion for everyone, regardless of their background, and to highlight the need to end discrimination in all forms.

Theme for 2025: "**We Stand Together**".

The day was inspired by the Zero Discrimination Campaign launched on World AIDS Day in December 2013. The day was **first observed** on **March 1, 2014**.

384. **International Women's Day (IWD)** is observed annually on **8th March** to recognize the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women.

Theme 2025: *"For ALL Women and Girls: Rights. Equality. Empowerment"*

The IWD 2025 campaign theme is *Accelerate Action*.

This day was adopted by the United Nations in the year 1977.

385. **World Glaucoma Day** is observed annually on **12th March** to create awareness about glaucoma and to alert everyone to have regular eye check-ups to detect glaucoma as early as possible.

Glaucoma is one of the leading causes of irreversible blindness.

World Glaucoma Week has also been observed from **9th to 15th March 2025.** The theme of World Glaucoma Week 2025 is **"Uniting for a Glaucoma-Free World."**

386. **CISF Raising Day** is observed every year on **March 10** to acknowledge and honor India's Central Industrial Security forces.

The force provides security to the Department of Space, the Department of Atomic Energy, the Airports, the Delhi Metro, the ports, the historical monuments, and the basic areas of the Indian economy such as petroleum, and natural gas, electricity, coal, steel, and mining.

The Raising Day celebrations typically feature ceremonial parades, award presentations, and addresses by senior officials, honoring the dedication and service of CISF personnel.

The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) is the Union's military force, founded by an Act of Parliament in 1968 (50 of 1968), and was established in 1969.

CISF promotes the safety of public sector initiatives, industrial facilities, and government infrastructure projects.

As of March 2025, the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) is led by **Director General Rajwinder Singh Bhatti,** a 1990-batch Indian Police Service (IPS) officer from the Bihar cadre. He assumed the position on September 1, 2024, succeeding Nina Singh.

387. **World Rotaract Day** is observed annually on **13th March** to acknowledge the services provided by the rotaractors across the world.

The day is also observed to commemorate the founding of the first Rotary Club in 1968.

13th March 2025 marks the observance of the **57th anniversary** of the formation of the 1st Rotaract Club in 1968 in North Carolina, USA.

World Rotaract Week has been organized from 10 March 2025 to 16 March 2025.

388. **International Day of Mathematics**, also known as Pi Day, is observed annually on **14th March** to highlight the significant role played by the mathematical sciences in the achievement of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Theme 2025: "Mathematics, Art, and Creativity"

The day was first observed in 2020.

389. **World Consumer Rights Day** is observed annually on **15th March** to safeguard consumer rights and to ensure that customers are not subjected to market exploitation or social injustice that may jeopardize their rights.

Theme 2025: "A just transition to sustainable lifestyles"

The day was first observed in 1983.

This day was chosen because it was on this day that U.S. President John Fitzgerald Kennedy mentioned four important consumer rights in his speech to Congress:

- Right to safety
- Right to be informed
- Right to choose
- Right to be heard

Note: National Consumers Rights Day is observed annually across India on 24th December.

390. **National Vaccination Day** or National Immunisation Day is observed annually on **16th March** to spread awareness about the importance of vaccines. The day also marks the victory of India against polio disease. The day was first observed in 1995.

Note: India was declared polio-free in 2014.

391. **Global Recycling Day** is observed annually on **18th March** to help recognize, and celebrate, the importance recycling plays in securing the future of our planet.

The day was first observed in 2018.

The day is an initiative of the Bureau of International Recycling (BIR) based in Brussels, Belgium.

392. **World Sparrow Day** is observed annually on **20th March** to create awareness about the house sparrow and the dangers it confronts. The day was first observed in 2010.

Theme 2025: A Tribute to Nature's Tiny Messengers

The day was established by Mohammed Dilawar, the founder of The Nature Forever Society.

393. **World Water Day** is observed annually on **22nd March** to highlight the importance of freshwater and to spread awareness about it.

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), in 1992, adopted a resolution declaring 22nd March as World Water Day.

The day was celebrated for the first time in 1993.

Theme 2025: 'Glacier Preservation'.

Note: India is the largest groundwater user globally, followed by China and Pakistan.

394. **World Forestry Day**, also known as International Day of Forests, is observed annually on **21st March** to celebrate and raise awareness of the importance of all types of forests.

The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 21st March the International Day of Forests in 2012.

The theme for 2025 is "**Forests and Food**"

395. **International Day of Happiness**, also known as World Happiness Day, is observed annually on **20th March** to spread awareness about the importance of happiness in our lives.

Theme 2025: "Caring and Sharing"

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), in 2011, adopted a resolution that recognized happiness as a "fundamental human goal" and called for "a more inclusive, equitable and balanced approach to economic growth that promotes the happiness and well-being of all peoples".

The day was first observed in 2013.

396. Every year, **24 March** is observed as **World TB Day** to amplify the urgency of ending tuberculosis (TB), the world's deadliest infectious disease. TB continues to devastate millions globally, inflicting severe health, social, and economic consequences.

Theme (2025): "Yes! We Can End TB: Commit, Invest, Deliver"

The day was first observed in 1982, marking the 100th anniversary of Dr. Robert Koch's announcement of the discovery of the bacterium that causes tuberculosis.

A stronger commitment is crucial, especially as declining international funding for TB in the current geopolitical climate threatens the achievement of global targets to end TB by 2030.

397. **International Day of the Unborn Child:**

Founder: Pope John Paul II

The first official celebration of the International Day of the Unborn Child was in 1999, declared by President Carlos Menem of Argentina to coincide with the Feast of the Annunciation on March 25th.

International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade:

In commemoration of the memory of the victims, the General Assembly, in its resolution 62/122 of 17 December 2007, declared 25th March the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, to be observed annually.

International Day of Solidarity with Detained Staff:

The United Nations first declared March 25th as the International Day of Solidarity with Detained and Missing Staff Members in 1993. This date marks the anniversary of the abduction of journalist Alec Collett in 1985, a UNRWA staff member who died while on assignment.

398. Drushya Vedika Samskrutika Samstha, in collaboration with Sumadhura Kala Niketan and Andhra Arts Academy, celebrated **World Theatre Day** on **27 March** at Sri Velidandla Hanumantharaya Grandhalayam Hall, Vijayawada.

World Theatre Day was initiated in 1961 by the International Theatre Institute (ITI). It is celebrated annually on 27th March by ITI Centres and the international theatre community.

Various national and international theatre events are organized to mark this occasion.

The first World Theatre Day Message was written by Jean Cocteau in 1962.

Theme 2025: "Theatre and Peace with Culture."

399. The **United Nations (UN)'s International Day of Zero Waste**, also known as **Zero Waste Day**, is annually observed across the globe on **30 March** to underscore the significance of bolstering global waste management and the need to promote sustainable consumption and production patterns to combat the waste pollution crisis.

Theme 2025: "Towards Zero Waste in Fashion and Textiles".

The observance of the day is facilitated jointly by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the leading global authority in the UN system, and the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat).

For the first time, the International Day of Zero Waste was observed on 30 March 2023.

400. World Piano Day is celebrated globally on the **88th day of the year** (usually March 28 or 29), symbolizing the **88 keys of a standard piano**. This day honors the piano, an acoustic, keyboard-based, stringed percussion instrument, by uniting musicians, enthusiasts, and industry professionals worldwide.

Nils Frahm, a renowned German pianist and composer, founded this day in 2015.

The inaugural World Piano Day was observed on March 29, 2015. Since then, it has grown into an annual celebration promoting piano music, performances, and education across cultures.

Important Days	Date/Month	Theme for 2025	Remark
World Civil Defence Day	1st March	Civil Defence, Guarantee of Security for the Population	
Zero Discrimination Day	1st March	We Stand Together	
Civil Accounts Day	1st March		
World Hearing Day	3rd March	Changing Mindsets: Empowering Yourself to Make Ear and Hearing Care a Reality for All	
World Wildlife Day (WWD)	3rd March	Wildlife Conservation Finance: Investing in People and Planet	
Birth Defect Day	3rd March		
World Obesity Day	4th March	Changing System, Healthier Lives	
National Safety Day	4th March		
World Day of Fight Against Sexual Exploitation	4th March		
National Security Day	4th March		
National Safety Week	4th to 10th March	Safety and Well-being crucial for Viksit Bharat	
International Day for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Awareness	5th March		
Jan Aushadhi Diwas	7th March	Daam Kam Dawai Uttam	
Jan Aushadhi Diwas week	1st March to 7th March		
International Women's Day (IWD)	8th March	For ALL Women and Girls: Rights. Equality. Empowerment.	This day was adopted by the United Nations in the year 1977.
International Day of Women Judges	10th March		The day was first observed in 2022.

World Glaucoma Day	12th March	Uniting for a Glaucoma-Free World.	
World Rotaract Day	13th March		The day is also observed to commemorate the founding of the first Rotary Club in 1968.
No Smoking Day	Second Wednesday (This year (2025) the day falls on March 12)	Take back your life this No Smoking Day	The first No Smoking Day was on Ash Wednesday in 1984.
World Kidney Day	Second Thursday (This year (2025) the day falls on March 13)		World Kidney Day was first observed in the year 2006.
International Day of Mathematics	14th March	Mathematics, Art, and Creativity	The day was first observed in 2020.
International Day of Action for Rivers	14th March	Our Rivers, our Future	The International Day of Action and For Rivers" was approved at the first International Meeting of People Impacted by Dams in March 1997 in Curitiba, Brazil.
World Consumer Rights Day	15th March	A Just Transition to Sustainable Lifestyles	In 1983, the first World Consumer Rights Day was celebrated.
International Day to Combat Islamophobia	15th March		The day was introduced by Pakistan's permanent representative to the United Nations (UN), Munir Akram on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) countries. The day was first observed in 2022.
National Vaccination Day	16th March		
World Sleep Day	The day is observed on	Make Sleep Health a Priority	

	Friday before Spring Vernal Equinox. (14th March 2025)		
Global Recycling Day	18th March	#RecyclingHeroes	
Ordnance Factory Day	18th March		
World Oral Health Day	20th March	A HAPPY MOUTH IS… A HAPPY BODY	
World Sparrow Day	20th March	A Tribute to Nature's Tiny Messengers	
International Day of Happiness	20th March	Caring & Sharing	
World Day of Theatre for Children and Young People	20th March		
UN French Language Day	20th March		
World Forestry Day	21st March	Forests and Food	
International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination	21st March	60th anniversary of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms Racial of Discrimination (ICERD)	
World Puppetry Day	21st March	Robots, AI and the dream of the puppet?	
World Poetry Day	21st March	Poetry as a Bridge for Peace and Inclusion	
World Down Syndrome Day	21st March	Improve Our Support Systems	
International Day of Nowruz	21st March		
World Water Day	22nd March	Glacier Preservation	
World Meteorological Day	23rd March	Closing the Early Warning Gap Together	
Martyrs Day	23rd March		
International Day for the Right to the Truth	24th March		
World Tuberculosis Day	24th March	Yes! We Can End TB: Commit, Invest, Deliver	
International Day of Remembrance of the	25th March		

Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade			
International Day of Solidarity with Detained and Missing Staff Members	25th March		
World Theatre Day	27th March	Theatre and a Culture of Peace	
World Piano Day	29th March 2025		
International Day of Zero Waste	30th March	Towards zero waste in fashion and textiles	
International Transgender Day of Visibility	31st March		
International Day of Drug Checking	31st March		
World Backup Day	31st March		