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JANUARY 2025

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NATIONAL AFFAIR

- The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has approved the proposal of the Department of Fertilizers for the extension of a **One-time Special Package on Di-Ammonium Phosphate (DAP)** beyond the NBS subsidy @ **Rs 3,500 per MT** for the period from 01 January 2025 till further orders to ensure sustainable availability of DAP at affordable prices to the farmers.
The tentative budgetary requirement for the above would be approximately **Rs. 3,850 crore**. With this, the total amount of special package approved for DAP since April 2024 would be more than Rs. 6,475 cr. to ensure the availability of DAP at affordable prices to farmers. 28 grades of P&K fertilizers are made available to farmers at subsidized prices through fertilizer manufacturers/importers.
The NBS Scheme governs the subsidy on P&K fertilizers w.e.f 1st April 2010. Cabinet in July 2024 had approved a one-time Special Package on DAP beyond the NBS subsidy @ Rs 3,500 per MT from 01.04.2024 to 31.12.2024 with an approximate financial implication of Rs 2,625 crore.

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- Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has chaired a meeting with all the Secretaries of the Ministry of Defence (MoD) to review the progress on various schemes, projects, reforms, and the way ahead. During the meeting, it was decided to observe **2025** as the '**Year of Reforms**' in the **Ministry of Defence**. The aim is to transform the Armed Forces into a technologically advanced combat-ready force capable of multi-domain integrated operations.
The following broad areas are identified for focussed intervention in 2025:

- Reforms should aim to further bolster Jointness & Integration initiatives and facilitate the establishment of Integrated Theatre Commands.
- Reforms should focus on new domains such as Cyber and Space, and emerging technologies like Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, Hypersonics, and Robotics. Associated Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures required to win future wars should also be developed.
- Develop a shared understanding of operational requirements and joint operational capabilities through inter-service cooperation & training.
- Acquisition procedures need to be made simpler and time-sensitive to facilitate swifter and robust capability development.
- Facilitate technology transfer and knowledge sharing between the defence sector and civil industries, promoting public-private partnerships by improving ease of doing business.
- Focus on collaboration across various stakeholders in the defence ecosystem.
- Effective civil-military coordination should aim to eliminate inefficiencies and optimize resources.
- Position India as a credible exporter of defence products, fostering R&D and partnerships between Indian industries and foreign Original Equipment Manufacturers for knowledge sharing & resource integration.
- Ensure the welfare of veterans while leveraging their expertise. Efforts will be made towards the optimization of welfare measures for veterans.

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3. The **18th edition** of the India-Nepal joint military **Exercise Surya Kiran** was held in **Saljhandi, Nepal** from 31st December 2024 to 13th January 2025.

It is an annual training event conducted alternatively in the two countries.

Participants:

- The Indian Army contingent comprising 334 personnel was led by a Battalion from the **11th Gorkha Rifles**.
- The Nepal Army contingent was represented by the **Srijung Battalion**.

The exercise aims to enhance interoperability in jungle warfare, counter-terrorism operations in mountains, and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief under the United Nations Charter. The exercise focuses on enhancing operational preparedness, aviation aspects, medical training, and environment conservation. Through these activities, the troops will enhance their operational capabilities, refine their combat skills, and strengthen their coordination to operate together in challenging situations.

The exercise provides a platform for soldiers from India and Nepal to exchange ideas and experiences; share best practices and foster a deeper understanding of each other's operational procedures.

4. The Union Minister of Railways Ashwini Vaishnaw has flagged off **three new trains** and a new **Road Over Bridge (ROB) at Tetelia station yard in Guwahati, Assam**.

The newly introduced trains include train no. 55818/55817 (Guwahati – New Bongaigaon – Guwahati) Daily Passenger, train no. 15911/15912 (Tinsukia – Naharlagun - Tinsukia) Tri-weekly Express and train no. 12047/12048 (Guwahati – North Lakhimpur - Guwahati) Bi-weekly Jan Shatabdi Express.

These services are expected to bolster regional connectivity and improve travel options for passengers across Assam and neighbouring areas.

A new Road Over Bridge (ROB) at Tetelia station yard was constructed by Northeast Frontier Railway at a total cost of **Rs. 72 crores** replacing level crossing gate no ST-22 at Tetelia station yard.

5. Dr. N. Kalaiselvi, Secretary of DSIR and Director General of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), inaugurated the **Design Clinic Facility** in partnership with the **National Institute of Design, Madhya Pradesh** in **New Delhi**.

The facility was unveiled at the **71st Foundation Day of the National Research Development Corporation (NRDC)**.

This state-of-the-art center is designed to support startups, and small and medium enterprises (SMEs), and foster design innovation across industries.

During the occasion, a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) between NRDC and Dr. Vidya Rakesh, Director of the National Institute of Design, Madhya Pradesh, was also signed. This MoA aims to promote innovation, research, and design excellence, marking a significant step toward advancing India's design landscape.

NRDC also granted one crore funding to Adiuvio Diagnostics Pvt. Ltd. under the Technology Development and Validation (TDVC) Scheme Phase 2. This funding, provided in exchange for equity, underscores NRDC's commitment to fostering the growth of startups and MSMEs in the field of advanced diagnostics, helping them scale and bring innovative solutions to market.

NRDC is currently under the administrative control of the Department of Scientific & Industrial Research (DSIR), Ministry of Science & Technology, Government of India.

6. President of India Droupadi Murmu appointed five new Governors of the state.

- The new **Governor of Manipur** is **Ajay Kumar Bhalla**, who previously served as Union Home Secretary. He took over from Assam Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya, who was holding the additional responsibilities.
- The **24th Army Chief (2010-2012) General (retd.) Vijay Kumar Singh** was appointed as the **Governor of Mizoram**.
- **Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar** was appointed the **23rd Governor of Kerala**.
- **Hari Babu Kambhampati** was appointed the **Governor of Odisha**.
- **Arif Mohammad Khan** was appointed the **42nd Governor of Bihar**.

Article 153 of the constitution provides for a Governor for each state in India. A person can be appointed as a Governor of two or more states. The Governor is appointed by the President of India on the advice of the Union Council of Ministers headed by the Prime Minister.

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7. The **Ministry of Coal** has reported remarkable growth in overall coal production and dispatch during the month of December 2024. As per the data, India's total coal production reached **97.94 million tonnes (MT)** in **December 2024**, recording a growth of **5.33%** compared to 92.98 MT in December 2023.

- The Captive and other mines produced **18.95 MT**, reflecting a significant growth of 29.61% compared to 14.62 MT in the corresponding period of the last year.
- The cumulative coal production up to Dec'24 also witnessed substantial growth, reaching **726.29 MT** (Provisional) in FY 2024-25, compared to 684.45 MT during the corresponding period of FY 2023-24, reflecting an increase of 6.11%.

In terms of **coal dispatch**, the figures for Dec'24 surged to **92.59 MT**, compared to 87.06 MT in December 2023, achieving a growth rate of 6.36%.

- Dispatch from captive and other mines stood at 18.13 MT, marking a growth of 31.83% compared to the corresponding period of last year.

- The cumulative coal dispatch up to December 2024 reached 750.75 MT (Provisional) in FY 2024-25, compared to 711.07 MT in FY 2023-24, recording an impressive growth of 5.58%.

8. According to the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA), India has achieved a **tenfold increase in banana exports** over the past decade and aims to reach **\$1 billion** in the next 5 years.

The surge in exports follows the successful trial shipments to the Netherlands via sea routes, which are expected to open new markets.

In the fiscal year 2023-24, India exported bananas worth **\$300 million**, a substantial leap from \$176 million in 2022-23.

India's global market share in banana exports has risen sharply from 0.21% in 2013 to **1.74% in 2023**, reflecting its growing international footprint.

Currently, exports rely heavily on costly air transport, but the adoption of sea protocols is expected to reduce costs and increase export volumes.

APEDA is working on sea transport protocols for bananas and other fruits like mangoes, pomegranates, and jackfruit to boost exports.

9. **Sevdalinka**, often referred to as the Balkan Blues, was recently included in **UNESCO's National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage**. This is a melancholic and ancient love song from **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, dating back to the 16th century.

Sevdalinka, often performed as a capella or accompanied by traditional instruments like a lute, has been carried from generation to generation through performances at family gatherings.

It is a mix of South Slavic oral poetry and the music of the Ottoman Empire.

Enes Salman and Zanin Berbic are among the key practitioners of Sevdalinka.

10. **Madhya Pradesh** hosted the **31st National Children's Science Congress (NCSC)** in **Bhopal** from 3rd to 6th January 2024.

The theme of the 31st NCSC was **"Understanding Ecosystem for Health and Well-Being"**.

- Sub-theme A: Know your ecosystem
- Sub-theme B: Fostering health, nutrition and well-being
- Sub-theme C: Social and cultural practices for ecosystem and health
- Sub-theme D: Ecosystem-based approach (EBA) for self-reliance
- Sub-theme E: Technological innovation for ecosystem and health

More than 700 child scientists, teachers, and mentors from different states of India participated in this event. Along with this, child scientists from Gulf countries like Bahrain, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Kuwait, Oman, and Saudi Arabia also participated with their presentations.

The event inspired children to develop a scientific temper and use innovation to find solutions to societal problems.

National Children's Science Congress (NCSC):

It is a nationwide Science Communication program started in the year 1993. It is a program of the National Council for Science and Technology Communication (NCSTC), Department of Science and Technology, New Delhi.

It is a forum for children of the age group of 10-17 years, both from the formal school system as well as from out of school, to exhibit their creativity and innovativeness and more particularly their ability to solve a societal problem experienced locally using the method of science.

- 11. The 18th Brigs Military Nursing Service (MNS) work-study conference** was held under the aegis of Adjutant General and DGMS (Army) at Army Hospital (Research & Referral), New Delhi on 3-4 January 2025.
- The theme of the conference was **“Capability Building & Competency in Nursing”**. The conference was chaired by **Maj Gen Ignatius Delos Flora, Addl DGMNS**. During the conference, DGMS (Army) & Sr Col Comdt Lt Gen Sadhna S Nair released the Logo and Slogan of MNS to mark the forthcoming Centenary Celebration of Military Nursing Service in the year 2025-2026.
- The slogan for the Centenary Celebration is 'Honouring the past, Healing the present & inspiring the Future'.
- This conference has been held annually since 2006 to discuss relevant nursing issues having direct or indirect impact on comprehensive quality patient care.
- The Military Nursing Service was established in 1926. It is a part of the Armed Forces Medical Services (AFMS) of the Indian Army. The motto of MNS is 'Service with Smile'.
- 12. Union Minister of Textiles Giriraj Singh** has inaugurated the new campus of **the Indian Institute of Handloom Technology (IIHT) at Fulia in Nadia, West Bengal**.
- The new campus of the institute has been constructed using state-of-the-art technology in a sprawling campus of 5.38 acres of land with an expenditure of **Rs. 75.95 crores**. The building has a modern infrastructure consisting of smart classes, a digital library, and modern and well-equipped testing laboratories.
- The new campus will be a model learning place and will serve as a Centre of excellence in the field of handloom and Textile technology and cater to the educational needs of students from West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand, and Sikkim.
- During the inaugural ceremony, the Union Minister planted saplings under the “Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam” drive along with other dignitaries.
- Medals and merit rank certificates to the top 10 rank holders among all the IIHTs in India have been awarded by the Union Minister of Textiles.
- A book titled *“Computer-aided figured graph designing for jacquard weaving”* was released by the Union Minister during the event.
- The textile ministry is committed to reaching a market size of 300 billion dollars in the year 2030 and providing employment to 6 crore persons in the textile value chain.
- 13. Vice President of India Jagdeep Dhankar** inaugurated the **27th International Congress of Vedanta at Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi**.
- The theme of this conference was **“Re-imagining Vedāntic World Order.”**
- The conference was organized from 3 to 5 January 2025,
- The aim is to get philosophers, scientists, educators, academia, researchers, and scholar students to exchange and share their knowledge, new ideas, research results, and experiences.
- International Congress of Vedānta:**
- International Congress of Vedānta, founded in 1986 in the Department of Philosophy at Miami University, Oxford, Ohio, USA, by Prof. Rama Rao Pappu is now located at the Center for Indic Studies, University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth, USA.
- The Vedanta Congress will continue to be the Program Planner for future conferences but the organizational details of the conference will be handled in the Center for Indic Studies of the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth, USA.
- In 2008, Jawaharlal Nehru University signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth. Besides the exchange of faculty and research scholars between the two Universities, it has also been agreed that the Congress of Vedanta will be held at Jawaharlal Nehru University every fourth year.

14. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has inaugurated and laid the foundation stone for several key development projects in Delhi.

Key projects:

He inaugurated the **1,675** newly constructed flats for the dwellers of Jhuggi Jhopri (JJ) clusters under the In-Situ Slum Rehabilitation Project at **Swabhiman Apartments** in Ashok Vihar. The objective of the project is to provide the residents of the JJ clusters in Delhi with a better and healthier living environment equipped with proper amenities and facilities.

For every Rs 25 lakh spent on the construction of a flat by the government, eligible beneficiaries pay less than 7% of the total amount, comprising Rs 1.42 lakh as a nominal contribution and Rs 30,000 for five years of maintenance.

He also inaugurated two urban redevelopment projects- the **World Trade Centre (WTC)** at Nauroji Nagar and the **General Pool Residential Accommodation (GPRA) Type-II Quarters** at Sarojini Nagar.

He also inaugurated CBSE's **Integrated Office Complex at Dwarka, Delhi** built at around Rs 300 crore. It includes offices, an auditorium, an advanced data center, and a comprehensive water management system among others. The eco-friendly building has been constructed to high environmental standards and was designed as per Platinum Rating standards of the Indian Green Building Council (IGBC).

He also laid the foundation stone of three new projects at Delhi University worth over Rs 600 crore. It includes the **Eastern Campus at Surajmal Vihar in East Delhi and the Western Campus at Dwarka**. It also includes building Veer Savarkar College at Roshanpura, Najafgarh, having state-of-the-art facilities for education.

15. The **CSIR-Central Institute of Mining and Fuel Research (CSIR-CIMFR)** has successfully conducted the first trial blast for the **Dozer Push Mining Method**, integrating advanced digital technologies, for the first time in India.

This innovative approach aims to enhance safety and operational efficiency in mining processes. The trial was conducted at the PEKB (Parsa East and Kanta Basan) Coal Mine operated by M/s Adani Enterprises Limited in the Udaipur block of Ambikapur, Chhattisgarh.

The successful trial was conducted by Adani Natural Resources, one of India's leading private mining companies.

The trial involved the drilling of 108 holes using an automated drill machine (man-less), followed by cast/throw blasting using 60 tons of bulk emulsion explosives.

The dozer push mining method offers a viable alternative to the conventional truck-shovel mining technique or shovel-dumper and dragline methods, with its distinct advantages such as improved efficiency by enabling faster coal recovery, reducing delays caused by adverse weather conditions such as the monsoon season and highly cost-effective, with an estimated 7-10% reduction in operational costs compared to conventional methods.

It enhances productivity by improving the utilization of dragline machines and reducing unit costs. The unmanned operation of the Dozer Push Mining method greatly enhances worker safety, minimizing the risks associated with manual labor and traditional mining techniques.

Note: The CSIR-Central Institute of Mining and Fuel Research (CSIR-CIMFR) is situated in Dhanbad, Jharkhand.

16. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has inaugurated and laid the foundation stone of multiple development projects worth over **Rs 12,200 crore** in Delhi. The key focus of projects is to enhance regional connectivity and ensure ease of travel.

Key projects:

- He inaugurated the **13 km** stretch of the **Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut Namo Bharat** corridor between **Sahibabad and New Ashok Nagar**, worth around **Rs 4,600 crore**. With this inauguration, Delhi gets its first Namo Bharat connectivity.
- He also inaugurated the 2.8 km stretch between Janakpuri and Krishna Park of Delhi Metro Phase-IV worth around Rs 1,200 crore. This is the first stretch of Delhi Metro Phase-IV to be inaugurated. The areas of West Delhi such as Krishna Park, parts of Vikaspuri, and Janakpuri among others will benefit.
- He also laid the foundation stone of the 26.5 km Rithala - Kundli section of Delhi Metro Phase-IV, worth around Rs 6,230 crore. This corridor will connect Rithala in Delhi to Nathupur (Kundli) in Haryana, significantly enhancing connectivity in the North-Western parts of Delhi and Haryana.
- He also laid the foundation stone for the new state-of-the-art building for the Central Ayurveda Research Institute (CARI) at Rohini, New Delhi, to be constructed at the cost of around Rs 185 crore.

Metro in India:

India's metro network has now reached 1,000 kilometers covering 11 states and 23 cities.

India has surpassed **Japan** in Metro Rail Projects in **2022**. Currently, India ranks **third** globally in operational Metro network length.

The **first metro line in India**, covering 3.4 km between Esplanade and Bhowanipur, opened in Kolkata in 1984.

The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) was established in 1995 to bring world-class Mass Rapid Transport to Delhi. The project gained momentum with joint participation from the Central Government and the Government of Delhi.

On December 28, 2020, India launched its first-ever **driverless metro service** on Delhi Metro's Magenta Line, setting a new benchmark for automation in public transport.

Kochi, Kerala, became the first city in India to launch a **Water Metro Project**, connecting 10 islands around the city with electric hybrid boats. This groundbreaking initiative ensures seamless connectivity, with the first boat launched in December 2021.

In 2024, PM Modi inaugurated **India's first underwater metro tunnel** in Kolkata, where the Esplanade-Howrah Maidan section passes beneath the Hooghly River. This remarkable feat showcases India's engineering capabilities.

The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) is currently overseeing the implementation of a metro system in Bangladesh and has offered consultancy services in Jakarta. Countries such as Israel, Saudi Arabia (Riyadh), Kenya, and El Salvador are also exploring collaborations with DMRC for their metro development projects.

- 17.** Ashwini Vaishnaw, Hon'ble Union Minister of Railways, Information & Broadcasting, and Electronics & Information Technology, virtually inaugurated a high-power **10 KW FM Transmitter** at **Akashvani Kokrajhar** in **Assam**.

The newly inaugurated transmitter will provide high-quality FM broadcasts to a radius of 70 kilometers and expand its reach to over 30 lakh residents of Kokrajhar and nearby districts of Dhubri, Bongaigaon, and Chirang.

It will ensure that Akashvani Kokrajhar connects more effectively with farmers, youth, and local communities, fulfilling its role as a national public broadcaster.

Akashvani Kokrajhar will now strengthen its cultural preservation efforts with increased broadcasting of programs featuring Bodo folk music, Rajbongshi songs, and other tribal melodies. Akashvani Kokrajhar, established in 1999, has been a platform for promoting the rich cultural heritage of Kokrajhar's diverse tribal and community groups. This station has played a pivotal role in disseminating educational, informational, and entertainment programs in local languages.

18. The President of India Droupadi Murmu has addressed the **Golden Jubilee Celebrations** of the **National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS)**, which is based in **Bengaluru, Karnataka**.

The President of India noted that the Bellary model of community-based mental healthcare pioneered by NIMHANS has set benchmarks in mental health delivery. She also highlighted that the Tele-MANAS platform, with its 53 centers across the country, has served nearly 70 lakh people in their chosen languages during the last two years.

NIMHANS was also awarded the 2024 Nelson Mandela Award for Health Promotion by the World Health Organization (WHO).

As part of the celebrations, various new facilities were inaugurated by the President of India to further NIMHANS' mission of delivering cutting-edge care in mental health and neurosciences.

These are:

Psychiatry Speciality Block: It will serve to enhance care and human resource development in several specialized areas of mental health. These range from geriatric psychiatry and perinatal psychiatry to facilities for persons with severe mental disorders and for suicide prevention.

Central Laboratory Complex: The Central Laboratory Complex brings together five essential laboratory services under one roof – Neuropathology, Neurochemistry, Clinical Pathology & Haematology, Neuromicrobiology, and Neurovirology.

Bhima Hostel: The Bhima Hostel is designed to create a conducive living environment for our growing strength of students at NIMHANS. The facility comprises a basement, ground floor, and six upper floors, with modern amenities.

Next-Generation 3T MRI Scanner: The new 3T Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) scanner at NIMHANS represents the pinnacle of imaging technology. This system stands out as the most advanced of its kind available for clinical use in India.

Advanced DSA System: The newly installed biplane Digital Subtraction Angiography (DSA) system is an invaluable tool for diagnosing and managing a range of brain disorders. Its capabilities facilitate detailed insights into the blood vessels supplying nutrients to the brain, helping clinicians address complex neurological conditions with accuracy.

The National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS) is an Institute of National Importance governed by the act of Parliament titled NIMHANS Act, 2012. This institute is a multidisciplinary institute for patient care, academic pursuit, and cutting-edge research in the field of mental health and neurosciences. It was established in 1974.

19. Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment (SJ&E), **Dr. Virendra Kumar**, has inaugurated the services of **Composite Regional Centre (CRC), Madurai**, and laid the foundation stone of its new building.

The Centre was established by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India, for Skill Development, Rehabilitation, and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, in the temporary building provided by the Government of Tamil Nadu at Tamil Nadu Housing Board, Villapuram, Madurai in December 2023.

The Government of Tamil Nadu allocated 5.05 acres of land in Y. Pudupatti, Madurai, for the construction of the CRC building.

The new CRC Madurai building will be constructed at an estimated cost of **Rs. 36.41 crores** which includes various blocks, such as the Service and Programme, Administrative Building, Classrooms for HRD Programs, Cross Disabilities Early Intervention Centre (CDEIC) Unit and will feature a universally designed structure with barrier-free access for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs).

The facility will serve the southern region of Tamil Nadu.

During the visit, the Union Minister distributed 186 aids and assistive devices to 120 beneficiaries an amount worth Rs.22,63,000/- under the Pradhan Mantri Divyasha Kendra (PMDK) scheme.

- 20.** Prime Minister Narendra Modi has inaugurated the **Grameen Bharat Mahotsav 2025** at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi. The Mahotsav, through various discussions, workshops, and masterclasses, aims to enhance rural infrastructure, create self-reliant economies, and foster innovation within rural communities.
- The Mahotsav, organized from 4th to 9th January, has the theme '**Building a Resilient Rural India for a Viksit Bharat 2047**' and the motto "गांव बड़े, तो देश बड़े".
- Its objectives include promoting economic stability and financial security among rural populations, with a special focus on North-East India, by addressing financial inclusion and supporting sustainable agricultural practices.
- A significant focus of the Mahotsav is to empower rural women through entrepreneurship; bring together government officials, thought leaders, rural entrepreneurs, artisans, and stakeholders from diverse sectors to build a roadmap for collaborative and collective rural transformation; encourage discussions around leveraging technology and innovative practices to enhance rural livelihoods; and showcase India's rich cultural heritage through vibrant performances and exhibitions.
- 21.** The **Department of Economic Affairs**, Ministry of Finance, has decided to keep the interest rates on various small savings schemes unchanged for the fourth consecutive quarter of the current fiscal year 2024-25 (FY25), which runs from **1st January 2025 to 31st March 2025**.

Instruments	Rates of interest (%) (Q4 of FY25)	Compounding
Savings Deposit (SD)	4.0	Annual
1 Year Time Deposit (TD)	6.9	Quarterly
2 Year Time Deposit (TD)	7.0	Quarterly
3 Year Time Deposit (TD)	7.1	Quarterly
5 Year Time Deposit (TD)	7.5	Quarterly
5 Year Recurring Deposit (RD)	6.7	Quarterly
5 Year Senior Citizens Savings Scheme (SCSS)	8.2	Paid Quarterly
5 Year Monthly Income Scheme (MIS)	7.4	Paid Monthly
5 Year National Savings Certificate (NSC)	7.7	Annual
Public Provident Fund (PPF) Scheme	7.1	Annual
Kisan Vikas Patra (KVP)	7.5 (will mature in 115 months)	Annual
Sukanya Samriddhi Account Scheme (SSAS)	8.2	Annual

- 22.** The Government of India has announced an aid of **USD 500,000** to **Vanuatu**, a Pacific island country, to support relief, rehabilitation, and reconstruction efforts in the country.
- The country was hit by successive earthquakes on 17 December and again on 22 December 2024.
- The first earthquake of 7.4 magnitude hit the country on 17 December which led to the death of around 14 persons and injury to over 200 people.
- The second earthquake of 6.1 magnitude struck the country again on 22 December 2024 causing panic in the country.
- India has been a reliable partner in humanitarian efforts, especially under the Forum for India-Pacific Islands Cooperation (FIPIC).

In 2014, the Indian government along with 14 Pacific Island nations—Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Tuvalu, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Palau, Tonga, Cook Islands and Federated States of Micronesia—announced the Forum for India-Pacific Islands Cooperation (FIPIC), as a framework for ties.

- 23.** The two Fast Patrol Vessels (FPVs) - **Amulya and Akshay** - indigenously designed and constructed by the **Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL)** for the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) were launched in the presence of Secretary (Defence Production) Sanjeev Kumar in Goa. The two FPVs are the third and fourth vessels of the fleet of eight FPVs being constructed by GSL for ICG.

The first two FPVs of the same series - **Adanya and Akshar** – were launched in October 2024.

The contract was concluded in March 2022 for Rs 473 crore.

With over 60% indigenous content, these state-of-the-art FPVs are designed in-house by GSL to meet ICG's specific operational needs.

These vessels, with a length of 52 meters and a displacement of 320 tonnes, will strengthen ICG in protecting offshore assets and island territories.

Its primary role will be fisheries protection and monitoring island territories, exclusively economic zones, and coastal patrol. Vessels shall also perform anti-smuggling, anti-piracy, and search & rescue operations.

- 24.** **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** has inaugurated and laid the foundation stone of various railway projects via video conferencing. He also inaugurated the new **Jammu Railway Division**.

The creation of the Jammu Railway Division, with 742.1 KM comprising Pathankot - Jammu - Udhampur - Srinagar - Baramulla, Bhogpur Sirwal - Pathankot, Batala - Pathankot and Pathankot to Joginder Nagar sections, will significantly benefit Jammu and Kashmir and surrounding regions, fulfilling the long pending aspiration of the people and improving connectivity to other parts of India.

He also laid the foundation stone of the **Rayagada Railway Division Building of the East Coast Railway** and inaugurated the **Charlapalli New Terminal Station in Telangana**.

Charlapalli New Terminal Station in the Medchal-Malkajgiri District of Telangana has been developed as a new coaching terminal along with the provision of a second entry with a cost of around Rs 413 crore. This environment-friendly terminal, having good passenger amenities, will ease congestion on the existing coaching terminals in the city like Secunderabad, Hyderabad, and Kacheguda.

The Rayagada Railway Division Building of East Coast Railway will improve connectivity in Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, and nearby areas and lead to the overall socio-economic development of the region.

- 25.** The **15th edition** of Asia's biggest aero show, **Aero India 2025**, will be held at the Air Force Station, Yelahanka in **Bengaluru, Karnataka** from February 10 to 14, 2025.

The theme of the event is '**The Runway to a Billion Opportunities**'.

The event will provide a platform for forging partnerships between foreign & Indian firms and the discovery of newer avenues in the global value chain to accelerate the indigenization process.

The first three days of the event (February 10th, 11th & 12th) will be business days, while the 13th & 14th have been set as public days to allow people to witness the show.

The event includes both air displays and static exhibitions of a large array of military platforms from the aerospace sector.

The event comprises a curtain raiser event, inaugural event, Defence Ministers' Conclave, CEOs' Round-Table, Manthan start-up event, breath-taking air shows, a large exhibition area comprising India Pavilion and a trade fair of aerospace companies.

India will host the Defence Ministers' Conclave on the theme '*BRIDGE -Building Resilience through International Defence and Global Engagement*'.

Aero India was first organized in 1996.

- 26.** The Department of Fisheries under the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying has organized a **"Northeastern Region States Meet 2025"** to review the implementation of Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana at Hotel Radisson, **Guwahati, Assam**.

The event was held under the chairmanship of **Union Minister, Rajiv Ranjan Singh**, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying (MoFAH&D), and Ministry of Panchayati Raj.

During the event, Union Minister Rajiv Ranjan Singh launched the **Organic Fisheries Cluster in the Soreng District of Sikkim**, being **First of Its Kind in India**, for the development of organic fisheries and aquaculture in the State of Sikkim under the PMMSY.

- The organic fisheries cluster focuses on ecologically healthy fish farming systems avoiding the use of harmful chemicals, antibiotics, and pesticides. This also ensures minimal environmental pollution and prevents damage to aquatic ecosystems, contributing to sustainable fish production practices.
- The **National Bank for Agriculture & Rural Development (NABARD)** is a key stakeholder in developing the fisheries and aquaculture organic cluster in Sikkim. NABARD besides providing financial and technical support for the requisite fisheries infrastructure and capacity building, will also facilitate in growth of the organic cluster by engaging fishers' cooperatives and the formation of fisheries-based Farmer Producer Organizations (FFPOs) in the State.
- This initiative will also encourage private investment in aquaculture infrastructure and technology, branding of Sikkim cold water fisheries, attract tourism as well as strengthen the value chain, empower local fishers and fish farmers, and foster sustainable growth in the fisheries sector in the State of Sikkim.

The Union Minister also inaugurated and laid the foundation for **50 impactful projects** with a total outlay of **₹50 crore**, including a central share of **₹38.63 crore**. These initiatives are designed to enhance the region's fisheries infrastructure, productivity, and employment opportunities.

State-wise Allocations and Key Projects

Summary of Projects for Inauguration/Foundation Stone under PMMSY_NER Meet (Rs. In Lakh)						
S. No.	State	No. of Projects	Total Cost	Central share	State share	Beneficiary share
1	Assam	12	4194.10	3320.75	368.85	504.00
2	Manipur	7	426	337.9	36.3	51.8
3	Meghalaya	1	50	27	3	20
4	Nagaland	3	75	40.5	4.5	30
5	Tripura	3	58	26.92	2.88	28.2
6	Sikkim	24	204	110.2	12.2	81.6
	Total	50	5007.1	3863.27	427.73	715.6

Assam will see the establishment of an **Integrated Aqua Park in Darrang District**, which is expected to produce 150 MT of fish annually, generating ₹10-15 crore in revenue and creating up to 2,000 employment opportunities. A Large Fish Feed Plant in Kamrup District will produce 20,000 MT feed annually, while hatchery projects in various districts aim to produce 50 million spawn per year, significantly boosting local aquaculture.

Manipur will see the establishment of ice plants and cold storage units in Thoubal and Imphal districts to preserve fish produce and reduce post-harvest losses.

Meghalaya's projects will focus on promoting recreational fisheries in the East Khasi Hills District.

Nagaland's three projects will include the construction of freshwater finfish hatcheries in Mokokchung and Kiphire districts. These hatcheries will collectively produce 21 million fry annually.

In **Tripura**, the projects will include the establishment of ornamental fish-rearing units and finfish hatcheries.

Sikkim will implement 24 projects which include the establishment of Recirculatory Aquaculture Systems (RAS) to promote sustainable fish farming, the construction of fish kiosks in Gangtok and other towns, and the development of ornamental fish-rearing units.

- 27. Astronomers from the Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA)** and their collaborators have discovered a new **ultra-diffuse galaxy** forming **430 million light years** from Earth in the constellation **Leo**.

This nascent galaxy is located at the tip of the longest tidal tail ever discovered, stretching out from galaxy **NGC 3785**.

The tidal tail, a long stream of stars and interstellar gas, was formed by the gravitational interaction between NGC 3785 and a neighbouring galaxy.

Measuring an unprecedented 1.27 million light years in length, this tidal tail is not only the longest known to date, but it also holds clues to the formation of ultra-diffuse galaxies (UDGs), which have very low surface brightness and are challenging to detect.

The discovery was first made by **Omkar Bait**, now at SKA, U.K., while he was a student at the National Centre for Radio Astrophysics (NCRA) in Pune. Bait recognized the uniqueness of the tidal tail and shared his observations with NCRA's Dr. Yogesh Wadadekar and IIA's Dr. Sudhanshu Barway.

Together with Chandan Watts, a Ph.D. student at IIA and the lead author of the study, they embarked on a detailed investigation of the phenomenon.

This discovery offers a rare opportunity to observe the creation of new, faint structures in the universe and provides crucial insights into the formation of ultra-diffuse galaxies, which have long been a subject of fascination for astronomers.

The research, which has been published in the November issue of ***Astronomy & Astrophysics Letters***, is authored by Chandan Watts from IIA and Pondicherry University, Dr. Sudhanshu Barway from IIA, Dr. Omkar Bait from SKA, U.K., and Dr. Yogesh Wadadekar from NCRA, Pune.

- 28. Union Minister of Information & Broadcasting Ashwini Vaishnaw** unveiled the **Government of India Calendar for 2025**. The calendar is published in **13 Indian languages**.

The Government of India has chosen **Janbhagidari se Jankalyan** (public welfare through public participation) as the central theme for its 2025 calendar.

The calendar is designed and produced by the **Central Bureau of Communication (CBC)**.

The calendar begins with Moto सर्वेषां मङ्गलं भूयात् i.e., welfare of all. The calendar highlights the sectoral progress in agriculture, women empowerment, youth, and capacity edition in the progress of the nation.

The mantra अन्न का वर्धन हो i.e., more food grains production, शक्ति रूपेण संस्थिता implying giving credit to women in nation building by calling them Shakti and calling upon the youth to gain knowledge by rising, awakening and gaining knowledge, is reflected in the first four months of the calendar.

For infrastructure, the calendar reflects the mantra of “Nation thrives in prosperity” and it also lays emphasis on cleanliness as reflected in the month of May through the motto of “Inner purity leads to outer cleanliness”.

The July month page of the calendar is based on the motto of “**Exercise Is The Surest Recipe For Wellness**” whereas the Independence Day month theme wishes for hundred years long lives through a healthy lifestyle.

The calendar also depicts the Prime Minister of India motivating the enterprises through उद्यमेन हि सिध्यन्ति कार्याणि as the acknowledgment of contribution to the Indian economy.

The Unity Day month is depicted by the Prime Minister saluting the Iron Man of India Sardar Patel. Gratitude to the land is the highlight of November characterized by Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas.

The Calendar ends with December's focus on technological innovation with “अपरिमितं भव्यम्” (**The Future Holds Limitless Possibilities**) signifying the positive mantra of depicting the use of science and technology in governance with a human face.

- 29.** Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation, Amit Shah, has inaugurated the **BHARATPOL portal** developed by the **Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)** at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi.

He also presented police medals to **35 award-winning** CBI officers, who were honored with the President's Police Medal for Distinguished Service and the Home Minister's Medal for Excellence in Investigation.

BHARATPOL portal:

- BHARATPOL connects the CBI (NCB-New Delhi) with all law enforcement authorities in India, including SPs and CPs, ensuring seamless integration.
- The portal enables the CBI to quickly share criminal intelligence and inputs from Interpol member countries with law enforcement agencies across India.
- The portal plays a significant role in crime control by connecting investigative agencies and the police of all states to the INTERPOL network of 195 countries
- It simplifies drafting requests for Red Corner Notices and other Interpol notices, aiding in global tracking of crimes, criminals, and illicit assets.
- The portal offers access to documents, templates, and training resources, improving the skills of frontline officers in conducting international investigations.
- The five key modules of BHARATPOL are **Connect, INTERPOL Notices, References, Broadcast, and Resources.**

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) acts as the National Central Bureau (NCB-New Delhi) for INTERPOL in India.

Note: The International Criminal Police Organisation (INTERPOL) is headquartered in Lyon, France.

- 30.** The **Indian Sign Language Research and Training Centre (ISLRTC)** New Delhi, in collaboration with the **Linguistic Empowerment Cell (LEC)**, **Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU)**, has successfully organized the **International Symposium on 'Interpreter Education and Research: Perspectives from the United States, Canada, and India'**, at JNU, New Delhi. The symposium featured distinguished guest lecturers, Dr. Brenda Nicodemus, Professor Emerita, Gallaudet University, USA, and Dr. Marty Taylor, a renowned expert and author in sign language interpretation from Canada. The technical sessions and panel discussion, moderated by Dr. Andesha Mangla, Assistant Professor, ISLRTC, explored themes such as technological innovations in interpretation, ethical standards, and advancements in interpreter education.

The event witnessed active participation from students/faculty of the Diploma in Indian Sign Language Interpretation (DISLI) and Diploma in Teaching Indian Sign Language (DTISL), along with members of Deaf associations and other stakeholders.
The participants included 370 individuals attending in person and 110 students and faculty of NIs/CRCs joining virtually.

- 31.** Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science and Technology, **Dr Jitendra Singh**, inaugurated the "**Art of India 2025**" Exhibition at the Visual Arts Gallery, India Habitat Centre in **New Delhi**.

This is the **fourth edition** of the exhibition.

The event brought together over 250 exquisite artworks from some of India's most distinguished masters, emerging artists, and indigenous creators, offering a vivid portrayal of the country's artistic evolution.

This year's theme, celebrating Indian Masters, Contemporaries, and Folk Art, encapsulates the essence of hope, peace, and inclusivity.

The Art of India was started in 2022.

- 32.** The **All-India Council for Technical Education (AICTE)** has announced **2025** as the "**Year of Artificial Intelligence (AI)**" to shape India as a global leader in AI.

The initiatives under this declaration by the technical education regulator will span across AICTE-approved institutions, impacting over 14,000 colleges and 40 million students nationwide.

AICTE aims to embed AI within the fabric of higher education, fostering innovation, ethics, and leadership to position India as a global leader in AI-driven progress.

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- 33.** Union Minister of Earth Sciences Dr. Jitendra Singh has announced the establishment of a **Regional Meteorological Centre in Jammu**. The announcement was made during the celebration of the **150th anniversary of the India Meteorological Department (IMD)**.

This new center will cater to the unique geographical and climatic challenges of the Jammu region, contributing to IMD's mission of delivering accurate and timely weather forecasts across the country.

Union Minister also announced upcoming Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) between the **Srinagar Meteorology Centre** and institutions such as the University of Jammu, Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology (SKUAST), and Islamic University of Science and Technology, Avantipura. These collaborations will promote research and innovation in meteorological sciences, fostering a new generation of weather experts.

The Srinagar Meteorology Centre is recognized as a Centennial Centre by the World Meteorological Organization.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) was set up in **1875**.

- 34.** The **Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying**, in collaboration with **Indian Immunologicals Limited** and the **National Dairy Development Board (NDDB)**, has organized a "**Conclave on Pandemic Preparedness & Vaccine Innovation**" in **Hyderabad, Telangana**.

The conclave was inaugurated by **Prof. Dr Vinod K Paul, Member-Health, NITI AAYOG** as the **Chief Guest**.

The Conclave aimed to foster a deeper understanding of various aspects of "One Health," focusing on enhancing vaccination programs, improving livestock health, building resilient supply

chains for pandemic preparedness, strengthening pandemic responses, advancing disease surveillance, and streamlining vaccine testing, fostering artificial intelligence in healthcare, cell and gene therapy vaccines and regulatory pathways for approval.

- 35.** The President of India, **Droupadi Murmu**, has virtually inaugurated a series of impactful initiatives in the dairy and livestock sector in the Mayurbhanj district, Odisha. She has virtually inaugurated the **Cattle Induction, Giftmilk, and Market Support for Odisha State Cooperative Milk Producers' Federation (OMFED)** initiatives of the National Dairy Development Board from Rashtrapati Bhavan.
- The **Cattle Induction Program** has been launched under the Rashtriya Gokul Mission. This initiative included the distribution of **3,000 high-genetic-merit cattle** to identified beneficiaries in the Mayurbhanj district of Odisha.
 - The **Gift Milk Program** is designed to combat malnutrition and improve the health of the children. This program will provide **200 ml of flavoured milk fortified with Vitamins A and D** to approximately 1,200 schoolchildren in the Mayurbhanj district.
 - The **Market Support Program** was launched to strengthen milk procurement, processing, and marketing in the State of Odisha. This initiative is aimed at increasing milk procurement capacity in the state from **5 lakh liters per day to 10 lakh liters per day**.
- 36.** Vice Admiral Sameer Saxena, Chief of Staff, Headquarters, Eastern Naval Command has flagged off a Motorcycle Expedition '**Dare Square**' from **Visakhapatnam to Ayodhya**. The expedition is part of **INS Ranvijay's 37th anniversary** celebrations. The rally is being conducted by **INS Ranvijay** in association with **Bajaj Pulsar**. The rally will traverse through Odisha, Jharkhand, Bihar, and Uttar Pradesh states and culminate at the Dogra Regimental Centre, Ayodhya. The expedition aims to act upon the Chief of the Naval Staff's message of 'Mental Health and Wellness', encouraging individuals to prioritise emotional well-being and resilience. The rally showcases India's proud maritime heritage through awareness drives at schools and colleges, towards broadening the young minds.
- 37.** The Keel-Laying ceremony of a **Training Ship (Yard 16101)** for Indian Coast Guard (ICG) was held at **Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd (MDL), Mumbai**. With a range of **7,500 nautical miles**, the ship will be equipped with specialised facilities such as a training bridge for cadets, a chart house, and dedicated classrooms to ensure a high-quality learning experience at sea. It will also play a crucial role in the training of 70 under-trainee officers, including women officers, after their basic training ashore. The ship with a length of 107 meters will be capable of achieving a maximum speed of 20 knots. It will also feature state-of-the-art machinery and advanced technological systems, including AI-based predictive maintenance systems, a multipurpose drone, Integrated Bridge System & Integrated Platform Management System. The ceremony was presided over by Deputy Director General (Material & Maintenance) Inspector General HK Sharma, in the presence of the Director (Shipbuilding), MDL and other senior officials from the ICG and MDL. The contract for the construction of the ship was concluded in **October 2023**. The ship is being indigenously designed, developed, and constructed by MDL under the Buy (Indian-IDD) category, in line with the Government's vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat.

- 38.** Union Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Railways and Electronics and Information Technology, **Ashwini Vaishnaw** has inaugurated an **Auditorium of the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII)**.
The 586-seat auditorium is equipped with all the modern features such as a cinema projector, a PA system for stage performance, and a state-of-the-art Dolby Atmos surround sound system. One of the auditorium's most distinctive features is its innovative, horizontally movable screen, measuring 50 feet in width and 20 feet in height. This cutting-edge screen can be effortlessly adjusted using a remote control, allowing for the seamless transformation of the auditorium into a cinema theatre.
This pioneering feature is believed to be the first of its kind, setting a new standard for versatility and flexibility in auditorium design.
The Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) was set up by the Government of India in 1960. FTII is an autonomous institute registered as a Society under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. It is based in **Pune, Maharashtra**.
- 39.** The **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)** has hosted an industry meeting to accelerate innovation in Rechargeable Battery Technology under the chairmanship of the Secretary, MeitY.
The event highlighted the progress made by the center in indigenous manufacturing technology for lithium-ion, sodium ion, and lithium polymer. The meeting explored opportunities for industry collaboration in R&D initiatives.
MeitY has established an R&D center, the **"Centre of Excellence (CoE) on Rechargeable Battery Technology (Pre-cell)"** at **CMET, Pune, Maharashtra**.
The center is committed to advancing and scaling up indigenous manufacturing technologies and applications in EV, Mobile, and electronics, with a focus on local machinery for rechargeable battery cells.
During the meeting, **three Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs)** were signed between the center and Watthour Private Limited for sodium ion, Ampere Green Material for lithium-ion, and Brandwork Technologies Pvt Ltd for lithium-ion.
- 40.** The Union Minister for Minority Affairs and Parliamentary Affairs **Kiren Rijju** visited **Saudi Arabia** from 11th January 2025 to 14th January 2025. The visit entailed important engagements pertaining to the preparations for the forthcoming Haj pilgrimage.
The **Bilateral Agreement for Haj-2025** defining the broad contours of the Haj pilgrimage for Indian pilgrims was signed between the Union Minister and the Saudi Minister of Hajj & Umrah H.E. Dr. Tawfiq bin Fawzan Al-Rabiah at Jeddah, as per which a quota of **1,75,025** has been earmarked for India.
The Union Minister attended the inaugural session of the **4th edition of the Hajj & Umrah Conference and Exhibition** organized by the Saudi Ministry of Hajj & Umrah at Jeddah. This international conference is organized annually and includes sessions and workshops by key decision-makers, experts, and researchers in the Haj & Umrah services sector and offers insights on the best practices and facilitates the exchange of ideas and information.
During his visit, the Union Minister undertook a comprehensive review of the arrangements for the Indian Haj pilgrims including transport arrangements, the administrative setup, and healthcare facilities.
- 41.** The **National Statistics Office (NSO)**, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), has released the **First Advance Estimates of Annual Gross Domestic Product**

(GDP) for the Financial Year (FY) 2024-25 along with its expenditure components both at Constant (2011-12) and Current Prices.

Annual Estimates of Gross Value Added (GVA) at Basic Prices by kind of economic activity along with year-on-year percent changes, expenditure components of GDP, and Annual estimates of Gross/Net National Income and Per Capita Income for the Financial Years 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25 at Constant and Current Prices are also given.

Key highlights:

- Real GDP has been estimated to grow by **6.4%** in FY 2024-25 as compared to the growth rate of 8.2% in the Provisional Estimate (PE) of GDP for FY 2023-24. Nominal GDP has witnessed a growth rate of **9.7%** in FY 2024-25 over the growth rate of 9.6% in FY 2023-24.
- Real GVA has grown by **6.4%** in FY 2024-25 over the growth rate of 7.2% in FY 2023-24. Nominal GVA has shown a growth rate of **9.3%** in FY 2024-25 as compared to a growth rate of 8.5% in FY 2023-24.
- Real GVA of Agriculture and allied sector has been estimated to grow by **3.8%** during 2024-25 as compared to the growth of **1.4%** witnessed during the last year, i.e., 2023-24.
- Real GVA of the 'Construction' sector and 'Financial, Real Estate & Professional Services' sector has been estimated to observe good growth rates of **8.6%** and **7.3%**, respectively during the FY 2024-25.
- Private Final Consumption Expenditure (PFCE) at Constant Prices, has witnessed a growth rate of **7.3%** during FY 2024-25 over the growth rate of **4.0%** in the previous Financial Year.
- Government Final Consumption Expenditure (GFCE) at Constant Prices, has rebounded to a growth rate of **4.1%** as compared to the growth rate of **2.5%** in the previous Financial Year.

42. Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal has announced major projects to boost capacity at **Kandla Port** with a likely investment of Rs.57,000 crores. This includes:

The construction of a new **Mega Shipbuilding Project** with an investment of **₹30,000 crores**.

- The facility will develop technical capability in the country to manufacture a big Very Large Crude Carrier (VLCC) or similar class of vessels with a capacity up to 3,20,000 tonnes DWT.
- The facility will have the capacity to produce 32 new ships and repair 50 old ships every year.
- The facility will have components like a Marina, Fishing Harbour, Townships, and Marine Industrial Cluster.

The development of a **new cargo terminal** outside of Kandla Creek at an investment of **₹27,000 crores** which will add an additional **135 MTPA** capacity to the Kandla Port.

- This new port will be developed using the 6 kms available waterfront.
- The new port will handle all existing cargo jetties handling dry bulk cargo, with modern cargo handling equipment and more efficient evacuation systems. This will allow Kandla to be converted into Liquid Jetties, hence, building tremendous scope to handle liquid cargo.

43. Union Minister for Information & Broadcasting Ashwini Vaishnaw has launched a pair of **Mahakumbh songs** produced by AIR & Doordarshan.

The theme song "**Mahakumbh Hai**" was produced by Doordarshan for Mahakumbh 2025. The song is sung by **Kailash Kher**.

- The song encapsulates the spirit of devotion, celebration, and the vibrant cultural essence of the iconic Mahakumbh.

- The profound lyrics, penned by renowned writer **Aalok Shrivastav**, and the soul-stirring music composed and arranged by **Kshitij Tarey**, beautifully showcase the confluence of faith, tradition, and festivity that define the Mahakumbh.

The Union Minister also inaugurated a special composition by Akashvani dedicated to the Prayagraj Mahakumbh. This unique song, 'जय महाकुम्भ जय महाकुम्भ, पग पग जयकारा महाकुम्भ...', encapsulates the spiritual, cultural, and religious significance of the Mahakumbh through a harmonious blend of music and lyrical presentation.

- The song has been brought to life by the soulful vocals of Ratan Prasanna, with the music of Santosh Nahar and Ratan Prasanna.
- The inspiring lyrics, penned by Abhinay Shrivastava, beautifully weave the spiritual connection with the divine.

44. New Delhi hosted the inaugural edition of the '**Capacity for Change: Forging Sustainable Futures**' Conference. The conference was organized by the National Institute of Urban Affairs, under the aegis of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA).

The conference served as a platform for thought leaders, urban officials, and experts to discuss strategies and best practices for building institutional capacity in urban governance. It explored how data and technology can be leveraged to make capacity-building initiatives a catalyst for strengthening urban governance.

The conference included multiple engaging sessions focused on capacity-building as a catalyst for urban transformation. Key topics discussed included:

- Capacity Building as a Catalyst for Sustainable Urban Transformation
- Building Institutional Capacity for Sustainable Urban Governance
- Building for Citizen-Centric Governance
- Building Capacities of Urban Officials for Digital Governance

Several important knowledge products were launched during the conference, aimed at strengthening urban governance and capacity building:

- **Urban Learnathon 2.0**: A challenge to promote innovative urban solutions through collaboration between state/city officials, academics, and industry partners.
- **NULP 4.0**: An on-demand skilling tool that creates India's largest digital learning community for urban practitioners, fostering a culture of collaborative learning and knowledge co-creation.
- **'Know Your Ministry' Course**: A new course offering an overview of MoHUA, its vision, mandate, and historical evolution.
- **'Pathways for Mainstreaming Urban Climate Action'**: A discussion paper addressing climate action in urban settings.

Publications:

- Towards a More Efficient and Equitable Property Tax System: The Next Step.
- Compendium of Coastal Nature-based Solutions (UrbanShift, NIUA).
- Transforming Cities Playbook: Showcasing practical use cases for Integrated Command and Control Centers (ICCCs) in urban governance.
- Cybersecurity Handbook for Smart Cities: Addressing cybersecurity challenges in smart cities.
- City Innovation eXchange (CiX) Compendium of Success Stories: Highlighting transformative innovations by startups tackling urban challenges.
- Vibrant Public Spaces: A compendium of water and parksapes from India's Smart Cities Mission.

45. The Union Minister of Food Processing Industries, **Chirag Paswan** inaugurated the **8th edition of Indusfood 2025** at the India Exposition Mart Ltd in **Greater Noida**, Gautam Budh Nagar.

Baba Ramdev was the **Guest of Honour** at the event.

The Indusfood, Asia's premier Food and Beverage (F&B) Trade Show, was organized by the Trade Promotion Council of India (TPCI) with support from the Department of Commerce. Indusfood 2025 featured 1,800 exhibitors from over 20 countries, with an expansive exhibition space of more than 80,000 square metres. The event attracted over 5,000 international buyers from 180+ countries and over 100 supermarket chains and e-retailers, making it a key platform for global business connections.

This edition also marked a significant milestone as Indusfood debuts as an integrated farm-to-fork trade show.

It also witnessed participation from 35 international chefs and 100 Indian delegates, alongside professionals from Delhi NCR.

The event format of Indusfood 2025, with three concurrent trade fairs – Indusfood Food & Beverage, Indusfood Manufacturing and Indusfood Agri-Tech, was meticulously designed to foster seamless cross-domain synergies across the farm to fork value chain.

Indusfood was first organized in 2017.

- 46.** Prime Minister Narendra Modi has laid the foundation stone, and inaugurated development works worth over **Rs. 2 Lakh Crore** in **Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh**.

He laid the foundation stone for the state-of-the-art **NTPC Green Energy Limited Green Hydrogen Hub Project** at **Pudimadaka near Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh**, which is the **first Green Hydrogen Hub** under the National Green Hydrogen Mission.

- The project entails an investment of approx. ₹1,85,000 Crore.
- This includes investment in 20 GW renewable energy capacities, making it one of India's largest integrated green hydrogen production facilities with a capacity of producing 1500 TPD Green Hydrogen and 7500 TPD Green Hydrogen derivatives including Green Methanol, Green Urea and Sustainable Aviation Fuel, primarily targeting the export market.
- The project will contribute substantially in achieving India's non-fossil energy capacity target of 500 GW by 2030.

He also inaugurated various railway and road projects worth over Rs. 19,500 crore in Andhra Pradesh which includes the foundation stone laying of South Coast Railway Headquarters at Visakhapatnam among various other projects.

He laid the foundation stone for the **Bulk Drug Park** at Nakkapalli in Anakapalli district. The Bulk Drug Park will create thousands of jobs while helping accelerate economic growth due to its proximity to the Visakhapatnam-Chennai Industrial Corridor (VCIC) and Visakhapatnam-Kakinada Petroleum, Chemical and Petrochemical Investment Region.

He also laid the foundation stone of **Krishnapatnam Industrial Area (KRIS City)** under the Chennai Bengaluru Industrial Corridor, in Tirupati District of Andhra Pradesh.

- The Krishnapatnam Industrial Area (KRIS City), a flagship project under the National Industrial Corridor Development Programme, is envisioned as a greenfield industrial smart city.
- The project is set to attract significant manufacturing investments of approximately ₹10,500 crore and is also projected to create around 1 lakh direct and indirect jobs, significantly enhancing livelihoods and driving regional progress.

- 47.** West Bengal-based **Titagarh Rail Systems** has delivered its **first driverless Made in India trainset** to the **Bengaluru Metro Rail Corporation (BMRCL)**.

This is the first stainless steel, automated driverless trainset manufactured at Titagarh's Metro Manufacturing Facility in Uttarpara, West Bengal.

It is set to run on the 18-km **Yellow Line** (RV Road-Bommasandra), linking the Electronics City technology and business hub to the rest of Bengaluru.

These trainsets operate in driverless (GOA4) mode, enhancing efficiency through advanced automation. Their sleek design features modern interiors, reduced power consumption, and improved sustainability, all while prioritizing safety for a seamless and secure passenger experience.

Titagarh will deliver two more trainsets for the Yellow Line by April 2025. The company will then ramp up production to deliver two trains a month by September 2025.

48. Union Minister for Coal and Mines, G. Kishan Reddy, has inaugurated the ‘5G Use Case Test Lab’ at the Central Mine Planning and Design Institute (CMPDI) in Ranchi.

This cutting-edge facility aims to advance the coal sector’s Digital Transformation and technological landscape.

The 5G Use Case Test Lab serves as a testbed for the development, testing, and adaptation of various 5G-based applications, tailored to meet the needs of the coal industry.

The Ministry of Coal nominated CMPDI as the Centre of Excellence (COE) for establishing a 5G Use Case Test lab for the Coal Industry to leverage 5G technology effectively.

The 5G Use Case Lab established by CMPDI is a lab-scale representation of an Industry 5G Private Network, specifically designed to support the coal mining industry.

This lab will serve as a testing and development hub for integrating 5G Radio and Core technologies with 5G-enabled devices, as well as with Edge/Cloud Enterprise IT/OT applications and equipment.

The 5G Use case lab for the coal industry will become a key pillar supporting industry for projects and digital transformation journeys in the coal industry.

Key objectives of 5G Test Lab:

- To outline the requirements and different Innovative Use Cases/applications in the Coal Mining industry associated with the test lab.
- Testing & Development of 5G Use Cases such as Voice, video, and data communication applications; Industrial Internet of Things (IIoT) sensors for Vehicle Management and other applications over 5G networks.
- Create a Scalable and Replicable Model to replicate a real-world Industry 5G Private Network setup, consisting of 5G Radio and Core systems that are compatible with Edge/Cloud IT/OT applications.

The Union Minister also unveiled a ‘**Replica of CMPDI services**’ sculpture made from scrap material from CMPDI like Delivery Hose pipe, NQ Drilling Rod, Core box, etc. This Replica sculpture showcases CMPDI’s commitment to sustainable practices through intricate depictions of its core services i.e., Geomatics, Exploration, Planning & Design, and Environmental monitoring.

49. Prime Minister Narendra Modi flagged off the Pravasi Bharatiya Express, a special tourist train for the Indian diaspora, from New Delhi’s Safdarjung railway station on 9th January 2025.

The launch took place during the 18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas convention held in Bhubaneswar, Odisha.

It is a special state-of-the-art tourist train, exclusively designed and built for the Indian diaspora, and that too for the age group between **45 and 65 years**.

The train will follow the following route: New Delhi – Ayodhya – Patna – Gaya – Varanasi – Mahabalipuram – Rameswaram – Madurai – Kochi – Goa – Ekta Nagar (Kevadia) – Ajmer – Pushkar – Agra.

The train can accommodate **156 passengers**.

This three-week-long tour is being organized under the Ministry of External Affairs 'Pravasi Teerth Darshan Yojana' (PTDY) scheme, in collaboration with the Indian Railways Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC).

January 9 marks the anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi's 1915 return from South Africa to India.

- 50.** The Indian Railways has unveiled a monumental engineering achievement with the completion of the **Anji Khad Bridge, India's first cable-stayed rail bridge.**

This bridge, connecting **Katra and Reasi**, is a key component of the ambitious Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL) Project. It is situated in the challenging terrain of the Reasi district in Jammu and Kashmir.

Length: 725.5 meters

Height: 331 meters above the Anji River (a tributary of the Chenab).

The bridge, designed for speeds of 100 km/h, is divided into four sections, including a 473.25-meter cable-stayed span crossing a deep valley and a 120-meter ancillary viaduct on the Reasi side.

The bridge also features a single railway line, a 3.75-meter-wide service road, and 1.5-meter-wide footpaths on both sides, withstanding wind speeds of up to 213 km/h.

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- 51.** **Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA), Mumbai** has become the **first airport in India and the third globally** to achieve **Level 5 accreditation from the Canada-based Airports Council International (ACI)** for exemplary customer experience management. The ACI Level 5 accreditation, the highest distinction in the Airport Customer Experience Accreditation Programme, reflects a comprehensive approach to enhancing passenger journeys. It involves rigorous review, training, stakeholder engagement, and employee development, creating a 360-degree framework for customer service excellence.

- 52.** **Dr. Himanshu Pathak**, Director General of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and Secretary of the Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE), has unveiled the **Kisan Samridhhi Market Portal** and its **trademark** at the **ICAR-Central Plantation Crops Research Institute, Kasaragod**, during the institute's 109th Foundation Day celebrations. The Kisan Samridhhi Market Portal is developed by **ICAR-Agricultural Technology Application Research Institute, Bengaluru**, and managed by **ICAR-Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Pathanamthitta, Kerala.**

The portal enables direct online sales of seeds, planting materials, bio-products, value-added products, and technological items produced by KVKs, supported FPOs, entrepreneurs, and SHGs. It promotes wider reach, transparency, market access, and fair pricing.

The online portal is currently operational in Karnataka, Kerala, and Lakshadweep, connecting Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVKs), farmers, agri-entrepreneurs, and consumers. It fosters entrepreneurship and expands market access.

The portal is scalable to cover all the KVKs across the 11 ICAR-ATARIs in India. The portal aims to establish a Digital Vyapar Network (DIVYAN) for efficient agricultural marketing.

ICAR-ATARI has obtained the Kisan Samridhhi trademark registration in five classes covering about 150 products and services. A mobile application under pilot testing is also ready for launch to make the platform easily accessible to consumers through the mobile app.

53. The **Inland Waterways Development Council (IWDC)**, during its second meeting held in Kaziranga, Assam, announced an investment of **Rs.50,000 crores** in the next five years to strengthen infrastructure on national waterways. A series of new initiatives across 21 Inland Waterway States were announced worth more than Rs.1400 crore, on the occasion.

The meeting was presided over by the Union Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways, **Sarbananda Sonowal**.

Key highlights of the meeting:

- A major policy initiative in the form of the **Riverine Community Development Scheme** was mooted at the IWDC meeting to improve the socio-economic well-being of coastal communities.
- The **National River Traffic and Navigation System (NRT&NS)** was launched to ensure seamless and sustainable movement of inland vessels and also ensure their safety.
- The **Central Database Module and Issuance of Certificates** was launched to smoothen out the process of certification for vessel owners.
- The Union Minister announced the setting up of **SIX floating steel jetties** on river Godavari (NW 4) at Gandipochamma Temple, Pochavaram, Perantapalli village. A feasibility study on river Penna (NW 79) was also announced along with the DPR of NW 4 to get additional inputs for development.
- The Union Minister announced the setting up of the **Regional Centre of Excellence (RcoE)** in Dibrugarh, Assam. This institution will aim to incubate an ecosystem to train and develop manpower for the IWT sector in the Northeast region encouraging innovations. He also announced the setting up of **FOUR** new Tourist Jetties at Biswanath Ghat, Neamati Ghat, Silghat, and Guijan.
- The Union Minister announced **TEN community Jetties** on River Mandovi (NW 68), River Cumberjua (NW 27), and River Zuari (NW 111) while **THREE** additional jetties on River Sal (NW 88) and River Chapora (NW 25). Proposals for fairway maintenance in NW 68, NW 27, and NW 71 have been approved. VTMS is also to be set up on all NWs of Goa.
- The Union Minister launched **2 Quick Pontoon Opening Mechanism (QPOM)** designed by IIT – Kharagpur which will be deployed in the states of UP and Bihar. **FOUR** locations in Bihar and another **FOUR** locations in Uttar Pradesh have been identified for installation of QPOM.
- The Union Minister also announced the setting up of **7 jetties on river Jhelum (NW 49)** for cruise tourism & urban transportation in Jammu & Kashmir. Sonowal also announced the operationalization of river Chenab (NW 26) and river Ravi (NW 84) for tourism.

54. Union Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Choudhary presided over the **Passing Out Parade of the 74th batch of Indian Revenue Service (Customs and Indirect Taxes) officers** held at the National Academy of Customs, Indirect Taxes, and Narcotics (NACIN), in **Palasamudram, Andhra Pradesh**.

The ceremony marked the culmination of officers' rigorous training and the beginning of their journey as *Karmayogi*, guarding India's economic interests.

The batch comprised 35 officers, including 25 male officers and 10 female officers, who displayed exceptional discipline and commitment during the event.

During the ceremony, exceptional performers of the 74th batch were awarded gold medals for their outstanding achievements:

- **The Finance Minister's Gold Medal:** Awarded to Shri K. Prasad Krishnan for achieving balanced excellence across academics, attendance, and physical training.
- **The Chairman's Gold Medal:** Awarded to Shri Sahil Khare for securing the highest aggregate marks in written examinations.

- **Smt. Kaushalya Narayanan Memorial Gold Medal:** Awarded to Ms. Musale Anuja Anant for her outstanding performance as the best lady officer trainee.
- **Principal Director General's Gold Medal:** Awarded to Shri Pankaj Gujar for consistent performance and excellent conduct throughout the training.
- **Shri N.K. Upadhyay Memorial Gold Medal:** Awarded to Shri Vineet Bansod for exemplary discipline, conduct, and teamwork.

55. Union Minister of Commerce & Industry, Piyush Goyal has launched the **Bharat Cleantech Manufacturing Platform**, an initiative designed to enhance India's cleantech value chains in the solar, wind, hydrogen, and battery storage sectors.

The platform was launched at the Bharat Climate Forum 2025 in New Delhi.

The platform will provide an opportunity for the Indian firms to collaborate, to co-innovate and will help provide a platform for financing, to share ideas, technologies, and resources.

It will help India become an attractive business case and a global leader in the sustainability and cleantech sector.

Bharat Climate Forum 2025:

The Bharat Climate Forum 2025 aims to position India as a global leader in clean tech manufacturing, fostering self-reliance (Atmanirbharta) as the cornerstone of its journey toward a Net-Zero and Viksit Bharat.

The forum focuses on six foundational themes that are critical to driving India's net-zero ambitions through self-reliance and clean tech leadership:

- Clean energy generation and storage
- Manufacturing for Net-Zero
- E-mobility and green transportation
- Climate finance and investment mobilization
- Industrial decarbonization and clean energy transition
- Building partnerships for climate action and leadership

56. Union Minister of Electronics and Information Technology, Ashwini Vaishnaw, inaugurated **Syrma SGS Technology's state-of-the-art laptop assembly line in Chennai, Tamil Nadu.**

This facility, located in the **Madras Export Processing Zone (MEPZ)**, marks a pivotal shift in India's 'Make in India' journey, extending its dominance from mobile phones to IT hardware manufacturing, especially laptops.

The new assembly line will initially produce **100,000 laptops annually**, with a scalable capacity of up to **1 million units within the next 1-2 years**. Syrma SGS currently operates four manufacturing units in Chennai, with Unit 3 now initiating laptop production.

The initiative, part of the **PLI 2.0 scheme for IT Hardware**, highlights India's growing capabilities in high-value electronics production and reinforces the nation's self-reliance in IT hardware.

Key Highlights of the Assembly Line:

- Syrma SGS has partnered with **Micro-Star International (MSI)**, a leading Taiwanese technology company, to manufacture high-quality laptops in India, catering to both domestic and global markets.
- The facility is projected to generate 150-200 specialized jobs in electronics manufacturing by FY26, making a substantial impact on both Tamil Nadu's regional and India's national economy. These roles are anticipated to have a ripple effect, shaping and enhancing the future workforce in the sector.
- The laptops produced will meet international quality benchmarks, showcasing India's evolving technical and manufacturing prowess.

57. India has joined the prestigious **UN Committee of Experts on Big Data and Data Science for Official Statistics (UN-CEBD)**. As part of the committee, India will contribute to shaping global standards and practices in harnessing big data and data science for official statistical purposes. This milestone underscores India's growing stature in the global statistical community and highlights its commitment to leveraging data and technology for informed decision-making. India's active engagement in the Committee of Experts will highlight its pioneering initiatives, including the establishment of the **Data Innovation Lab** and the exploration of **alternate data sources** such as satellite imagery and machine learning for policy making.

This engagement will also complement India's ongoing efforts to:

- **Streamline Statistical Production:** Drive innovation in data collection, processing, and analysis to reduce the time lag in data availability.
- **Improve Decision-Making:** Provide policymakers with real-time insights for evidence-based decisions, addressing key socio-economic challenges.
- **Foster International Collaboration:** Share India's expertise while learning from global best practices to create robust, future-ready statistical frameworks.

UN-CEBD was created in **2014** with Australia as its first Chair. It was created to further investigate the benefits and challenges of Big Data, including the potential for monitoring and reporting on sustainable development goals. It consists of 31 member states and 16 international organizations.

58. The South Eastern Coalfields Limited (SECL), a Chhattisgarh-based subsidiary of Coal India Limited (CIL), has launched a dedicated **Post-Retirement Benefit (PRB) Cell**.

This initiative underscores SECL's commitment to ensuring the welfare and convenience of its retired employees.

The PRB Cell, acting as a single window, consolidates various post-retirement services under one roof, streamlining the process for retired employees.

Previously, retirees were required to liaise with multiple departments, such as Personnel, Finance, and Medical, to address matters related to pensions, provident funds, medical facilities, and other benefits. This approach often resulted in delays, miscommunication, and undue stress for the retirees.

Key benefits of the PRB Cell include:

- The PRB cell will act as a single window for retirees where they can now obtain information and resolve issues.
- All post-retirement benefit services are available under one roof, eliminating the need for retirees to coordinate with multiple departments.
- Dedicated personnel ensure faster response times and better service delivery.

Dr. Prem Sagar Mishra is the current Chairman-cum-Managing Director of SECL.

59. Dr. Jitendra Singh, Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science and Technology, has launched the **Indian Genomic Data Set** at the Genome India Data Conclave, held at Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi.

He has also launched the **'Framework for Exchange of Data Protocols (FeED)' and the Indian Biological Data Centre (IBDC) Portals**, making 10,000 whole genome samples accessible to researchers across India and the globe.

Indian Genomic Data Set:

- It is a compilation of **10,000 human genomes** from India, representing 83 population groups, or about 2% of the country's 4,600 population groups as a database.
- This collection will serve as a template for future investigations into disease and drug therapy.
- It is housed at the **Indian Biological Data Centre (IBDC) in Faridabad, Haryana.**

The launch of the 'Framework for Exchange of Data (FeED)' Protocols under the Biotech-PRIDE Guidelines ensures that high-quality, nation-specific data will be shared in a transparent, fair, and responsible manner. The Biotech-PRIDE Guidelines, introduced in 2021, are a testament to India's commitment to ethical and secure data sharing.

India now ranks 12th globally in biotech and 3rd in the Asia-Pacific region.

India's bioeconomy has surged from \$10 billion in 2014 to over \$130 billion in 2024, with projections to hit \$300 billion by 2030.

Genome India Project:

It was launched in **2020** by the Department of Biotechnology (DBT) and coordinated by the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru. It involved sequencing the genomes of individuals from 99 distinct populations across the country. It accounts for about 2% of India's 4600 population groups.

- 60.** Mumbai-based **Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited** has handed over the Scorpene submarine, **Vaghsheer**, of Project P-75 to the Indian Navy. This is the **sixth Scorpene-class submarine**. Vaghsheer is named after the sandfish, a deep-sea predator of the Indian Ocean. Scorpene-class submarines are **diesel-electric attack submarines** designed for stealth operations, targeting adversary vessels, and intelligence gathering.

Other submarines in Project P-75:

- INS Kalvari (commissioned in 2017)
- INS Khanderi (commissioned in 2019)
- INS Karanj (commissioned in 2021)
- INS Vela (commissioned in 2021)
- INS Vagir (commissioned in January 2023)

- 61.** Union Minister for Electronics and Information Technology **Ashwini Vaishnaw** has launched **one VEGA-based System on Chip (SoC) ASIC and two DIR V VEGA processor-based development boards**, designed and developed by the **Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC)**, at the C-DAC campus in Pashan, Pune.

- **THEJAS64 SoC ASIC:** It is fabricated at the Semiconductor Laboratory (SCL), Chandigarh. This **64-bit** single-core chip is fully indigenous. It highlights India's self-reliance in advanced microprocessor technology, offering robust solutions for embedded and industrial applications.
- **ARIES NOVA Development Board:** It is designed for the Internet of Things, wearable devices, and robotics. This compact, breadboard-friendly hardware platform is powered by the VEGA ET1031 microprocessor. It offers an affordable and versatile option for developers and innovators.
- **ARIES ECO Development Board:** It is a cost-effective platform tailored for embedded systems enthusiasts. It features multiple communication interfaces and GPIOs, supporting standalone operation with various power options.

As part of the Government of India's Digital India RISC-V (DIR-V) program, C-DAC has successfully completed the design and development of the VEGA series of microprocessors including India's first indigenous 64-bit multi-core RISC-V based Superscalar Out-of-order Processor.

The VEGA series comprises 32/64-bit Single/Dual/Quad Core superscalar Out-of-Order high-performance processor cores based on RISC-V Instruction Set Architecture.

- 62.** Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** has inaugurated the **Sonmarg tunnel**, earlier called the Z-Morh tunnel, to improve all-weather connectivity between Ladakh and Kashmir.

The Sonamarg Tunnel project, around 12 km long, has been constructed at a cost of over **Rs 2,700 crore**.

It comprises the Sonamarg main tunnel (Z-Morh tunnel) of **6.4 km** in length, an egress tunnel, and approach roads.

It will enhance all-weather connectivity between **Srinagar and Sonamarg** on the way to Leh.

It is located at an altitude of **8,650 feet** above sea level.

It is a double-lane tunnel built on Srinagar-Leh Highway NH-1.

This two-lane tunnel also includes an emergency escape tunnel, which will be useful in emergencies.

The tunnel has facilities like CCTV cameras, Wi-Fi connectivity, and a modern ventilation system. Along with the Zojila Tunnel, set for completion by 2028, it will reduce the route length from 49 km to 43 km and boost vehicle speed from 30 km/hr to 70 km/hr, ensuring seamless NH-1 connectivity between Srinagar Valley and Ladakh.

- 63. Rajesh Kumar Singh**, Defence Secretary, has inaugurated the second of the two Multi-Purpose Vessels, named **Utkarsh**, being built by **M/s L&T Shipyard** for the Indian Navy, at L&T, Kattupalli, Chennai, Tamil Nadu.

The ship has been named 'Utkarsh' which means '*Superior in Conduct*' and is synonymous to the multi-dimensional role envisaged for the platform.

The contract for two Multi-Purpose Vessels was signed between the Ministry of Defence and M/s L&T Shipyard on 25 March 2022.

These Multi-Purpose Vessels will be capable of towing ships, launch and recover various targets, operate unmanned autonomous vehicles, and act as a trial platform for various indigenous weapons and sensors under development.

The **106 m** vessels are designed to achieve a maximum speed of **15 knots**.

- 64.** Union Minister of Commerce & Industry, Piyush Goyal, has inaugurated the **National Turmeric Board** in New Delhi. The National Turmeric Board will provide leadership, augment efforts, and facilitate coordination with other Government Departments/Agencies in matters pertaining to the turmeric sector and facilitate growth and development of the Turmeric sector in the country.

The Board will pay special attention to the welfare of the turmeric farmers spread across **20 states**, including Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Madhya Pradesh, Meghalaya, and others.

The Board will promote research and development of new turmeric products and will look into the value addition of turmeric-related products for marketing abroad.

The Board will look into creating awareness on the essential and medical properties of turmeric, ways to increase its yield and boost logistics and supply chain to foster trade into newer markets.

The Board will also ensure quality and safety standards of turmeric production and exports.

Palle Ganga Reddy is the first Chairperson of the Board.

The headquarters of the Board has been set up at **Nizamabad, Telangana**.

Note: India is the largest producer, consumer, and exporter of turmeric in the world. India has more than 62% share of world trade. During 2023-24, 1.62 lakh tonnes of turmeric and turmeric products valued at 226.5 million USD were exported.

- 65.** The Union Minister for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry, and Dairying, **Rajiv Ranjan Singh alias Lalan Singh**, has inaugurated the **Entrepreneurship Development Conclave 2025** at G.D. Madulkar Natya Griha in **Pune, Maharashtra**.

The theme of the conclave: "**Empowering Entrepreneurs Transforming Livestock Economics**"

During the conclave, the Union Minister launched a total of 40 projects; 20 projects each respectively under the National Livestock Mission (NLM) and the Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development Fund (AHIDF).

The Ministers visited exhibition stalls, interacted with entrepreneurs, and felicitated top-performing states: Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu for AHIDF, and Karnataka, Telangana, and Madhya Pradesh for the Entrepreneurship Programme.

Banks such as Canara Bank, State Bank of India, and HDFC Bank were also recognized for their credit support under these schemes.

The Ministers unveiled two compendiums highlighting success stories of AHIDF and NLM beneficiaries, launched the NLM Operational Guidelines 2.0, and a Monitoring Dashboard for the NLM scheme.

The Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying declared **January 14 to February 13** as **"Animal Husbandry and Animal Welfare Month,"** during which awareness campaigns and educational activities will be conducted nationwide.

The AHIDF, launched under the Atmanirbhar Bharat Package on June 24, 2020, supports projects in dairy processing, meat processing, feed production, and veterinary infrastructure with an outlay of Rs.17,296 crore, now extended with additional funding and expanded benefits.

The NLM-EDP activity under the realigned NLM scheme which was launched in 2021, provides a 50% capital subsidy up to Rs. 50.00 lakhs for projects in poultry, sheep, goat, pig, camel, and other livestock, as well as feed processing and grading infrastructure.

66. The Government of India has reconstituted the **Atomic Energy Commission (AEC)** to enhance its oversight and policy formulation capabilities. The reconstitution reflects a strategic move to strengthen the governance of atomic energy in the country.
- The reconstituted AEC has **Ajit Kumar Mohanty**, Secretary, the Department of Atomic Energy, as its **Chairman**.
 - The commission has National Security Adviser Ajit Doval, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister Pramod Kumar Mishra, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri, Somanathan and Govil as ex-officio members.
 - Bhabha Atomic Research Centre Director Vivek Bhasin is also an ex-officio member of the commission.
 - Other members include former chairpersons of the AEC M R Srinivasan and Anil Kakodkar, former Secretary Department of Science and Technology P Rama Rao, former principal adviser DAE Ravi B Grover, and former Space Commission chairman K Kasturirangan.

Atomic Energy Commission:

The Atomic Energy Commission was first set up in **August 1948** in the Department of Scientific Research, which was created a few months earlier in June 1948. The Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) was set up on August 3, 1954, under the direct charge of the Prime Minister through a Presidential Order. Subsequently, in accordance with a Government Resolution dated March 1, 1958, the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) was established in the Department of Atomic Energy.

67. **Director General National Cadet Corps (DG NCC) Lt Gen Gurbirpal Singh** has inaugurated the **'Idea and Innovation Competition'**, at the NCC Building, Safdarjung, New Delhi. The aim is to provide cadets with tools & guidance to develop solutions to real-world challenges. This unique initiative was taken up for the first time in NCC Republic Day Camp (RDC). Before the competition, the NCC organized a series of workshops and contests pan India under the aegis of all 17 NCC State Directorates, with the aim to inspire and meet the aspirations of cadets.

The initiative yielded remarkable results, with cadets generating an impressive 256 innovative ideas and solutions. Out of these, 56 top innovations were shortlisted and showcased during the Republic Day Camp 2025.

- 68.** The **National Institute of Science Communication and Policy Research (NIScPR)**, a key constituent laboratory of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), organized a two-day international conference on ***“Aligning Science-Technology-Innovation Indicators for Effective R&D Governance”*** in New Delhi.

The conference commemorates the **4th Foundation Day of NIScPR**.

The two-day international conference was organized on 14th and 15th January 2025.

The conference aims to bring together leading experts, policymakers, scholars, and researchers to discuss emerging issues in research and the challenges of performance evaluation for R&D governance.

The conference focuses on key themes, including methods, approaches, and practices in performance evaluation, open science, open source, and open access, measuring the social impact of connecting R&D and social media, and foresight in R&D governance.

The conference features keynote speeches, panel discussions, and paper presentations, providing a platform for diverse and engaging discussions on R&D governance, access, and inclusion through the application of Science-Technology-Innovation (STI) indicators.

NIScPR, known for its focus on science communication and evidence-based policy studies, acts as a bridge between science, technology, industry, and society.

- 69.** Union Minister of Textiles **Giriraj Singh** inaugurated the **India Pavilion at Heimtextil 2025** held in **Messe Frankfurt, Germany**. The event witnessed enthusiastic participation from industry leaders and exporters, reflecting India's determination to strengthen its position as a global leader in the textile industry.

The Indian delegation, led by the Minister, was accompanied by Rohit Kansal, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Textiles, the Consul General of India in Germany, and other Ministry officials.

The representatives from five Export Promotion Councils (EPCs) and the Jute Board were also present during the inauguration, showcasing a diverse range of products.

During his visit, the Minister toured various stalls at the exhibition, engaging with exhibitors to understand their latest offerings and innovations in home textiles. The craftsmanship of Indian exporters reaffirmed the government's commitment to supporting the sector's global aspirations. The government actively supports Indian exporters to participate in international events like Heimtextil, enhancing their global visibility and promoting their growth in competitive markets.

- 70.** Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment (SJ&E), **Dr. Virendra Kumar**, has laid the foundation stone for the new building of the **Composite Regional Centre (CRC)** for the rehabilitation of Divyangjan in **Jamdoli, Jaipur (Rajasthan)**.

The new CRC building will be constructed at an estimated cost of **Rs. 30 crore** and will include a Cross-Disability Early Intervention Centre. This center will provide medical and educational support for young children with disabilities.

For this project, the Rajasthan Government allocated 2.5 acres of land in the Social Justice Sankul of Jamdoli.

Union Minister requested the Rajasthan Government to allocate an additional 2.5 acres of land for expanding the center to develop residential facilities for Divyang students and professionals.

The Minister also distributed aids and assistive devices to Divyang and senior citizen beneficiaries.

- 71.** Union Minister of Coal & Mines, **G. Kishan Reddy**, has attended the **Ministerial Round Table of the Future Minerals Forum 2025** held at the King Abdulaziz International Conference Center in **Riyadh, Saudi Arabia**.

The Round Table focused on building supply chains in critical minerals and value creation opportunities, besides other related aspects.

With an immense potential to add value to the natural resources in India, the Union Minister invited the global investor community to invest in the vast mining industry of the country.

On the sidelines of the Forum, the Union Minister met the Minister of Industry and Mineral Resources, Saudi Arabia, Bandar bin Ibrahim Alkhorayef.

The Union Minister also met the Ministers of Brazil, Italy, and Morocco separately during which he stressed the importance of economic and technical cooperation, especially in the minerals sector.

- 72.** The **Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY)** has rolled out the **second edition** of the **Cyber Security Grand Challenge (CSGC 2.0)**. The initiative focuses on strengthening the nation's cybersecurity competencies and capability building in key areas paving the way for a more secure digital future.

CSGC 2.0 is being implemented by the **Data Security Council of India (DSCI)**.

The total prize money for CSGC 2.0 is **Rs. 6.85 crores**. It was Rs. 3.2 crores in the first edition.

A unique feature, the Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) of the product being developed as part of the challenge will be owned by the respective startup.

Under the Grand Challenge, participants need to create solutions around **six defined problem statement areas** which include, **API Security, Data Security, Wearable Device Security and Privacy, Clone and Fake App Mitigation, AI for Threat Detection and Incident Response, and Securing Next-Generation Biometric Systems**.

Cyber Security Grand Challenge 2.0 features an additional stage, the Go-to-Market stage, in addition to three stages namely Idea, Minimum Viable Product (MVP), and Final Product Stage. It expands the scope of recognition by qualifying six startups for each problem statement at the Idea Stage, resulting in a total of 36 startups recognized in the early stage receiving INR 5 lakh each, and 18 startups receiving INR 10 lakh each at the Minimum Viable Product stage.

The startups will be provided with technical and business mentorship, helping them mature into successful ventures. At the Final Stage, winners will be declared for each of the 6 problem statements receiving INR 25 lakh each.

After the Go-to-Market Stage, which is the final stage of the Grand Challenge, the Platinum Winner will receive a prize of INR 1 crore whereas the Gold Winner and Silver Winner will receive INR 50 lakh and INR 25 lakh respectively.

- 73.** Union Minister for Education, Dharmendra Pradhan, launched the registration portal for the **3rd edition of Kashi Tamil Sangamam (KTS)**. The KTS 3.0 will commence on 15th February 2025 in **Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh**. This 10-day-long event will conclude on 24th February 2025.

Kashi Tamil Sangamam, a brainchild of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, is an inspirational initiative to celebrate the timeless bonds between Tamil Nadu and Kashi, strengthen the civilizational links, and further the spirit of Ek Bharat Shrestha Bharat.

This year, Kashi Tamil Sangamam holds a special significance as it coincides with the Mahakumbh, and it is also the 1st Sangamam after the 'Pran Pratishtha' of Shri Ram Lalla in Ayodhya.

The main theme of this edition of Kashi Tamil Sangamam will be to highlight the significant contributions of **Sage Agasthyar** to the Siddha System of Medicine (Bharatiya Chikistsa), Classical Tamil literature, and the cultural unity of the Nation.

An exhibition will be held on the different facets of Sage Agasthyar's personality and his contributions to the world of health, philosophy, science, linguistics, literature, polity, culture, art, particularly to Tamil and Tamil Nadu. Further, seminars and workshops on the topics will also be scheduled during this event.

The Banaras Hindu University (BHU) will be the receiving Institute in Varanasi for this event.

Kashi Tamil Sangamam:

It is being organized by the Ministry of Education, Govt. of India in collaboration with other ministries including Culture, Textiles, Railways, Tourism, Food Processing, I&B, etc., and the Govt. of UP. The program aims to provide an opportunity for scholars, students, philosophers, traders, artisans, artists, and people from other walks of life from the two regions to come together, share their knowledge, culture, and best practices, and learn from each other's experiences. It also aims to make the youth aware and experience cultural oneness.

IIT Madras and BHU are the two implementing agencies for the program.

The Government has so far celebrated the Kashi Tamil Sangamam on two occasions earlier; i.e., for one month in 2022 and for a fortnight in 2023, and around 4000 delegates from Tamil Nadu have been a part of this event.

- 74.** As per the latest data released by the Ministry of Commerce & Industry, India's **total exports** during **April-December 2024** are estimated at **USD 602.64 Billion** registering a positive growth of **6.03 percent**.

Total imports during April-December 2024 are estimated at **USD 682.15 Billion** registering a growth of **6.91 percent**.

India's total exports (Merchandise and Services combined) for December 2024 are estimated at USD 70.67 Billion, registering a positive growth of 0.92 percent vis-à-vis December 2023. Total imports (Merchandise and Services combined) for December 2024 are estimated at USD 77.44 Billion, registering a positive growth of 6.40 percent vis-à-vis December 2023.

MERCHANDISE TRADE:

- Merchandise exports during December 2024 were USD 38.01 Billion as compared to USD 38.39 Billion in December 2023. Merchandise imports during December 2024 were USD 59.95 Billion as compared to USD 57.15 Billion in December 2023.
- Merchandise exports during April-December 2024 were USD 321.71 Billion as compared to USD 316.65 Billion during April-December 2023.
- Merchandise imports during April-December 2024 were USD 532.48 Billion as compared to USD 506.39 Billion during April-December 2023.
- Merchandise trade deficit during April-December 2024 was USD 210.77 Billion as compared to USD 189.74 Billion during April-December 2023.
- Non-petroleum and non-gems & jewellery exports in December 2024 were USD 30.96 Billion compared to USD 28.60 Billion in December 2023.
- Non-petroleum, non-gems & jewellery (gold, silver & precious metals) imports in December 2024 were USD 38.28 Billion compared to USD 36.86 Billion in December 2023.
- Non-petroleum and non-gems & jewellery exports in April-December 2024 were USD 251.34 Billion, compared to USD 230.43 Billion in April-December 2023.
- Non-petroleum, non-gems & jewellery (gold, silver & precious metals) imports in April-December 2024 were USD 336.09 Billion, compared to USD 320.63 Billion in April-December 2023.

SERVICES TRADE

- The estimated value of services exported for December 2024 is USD 32.66 Billion as compared to USD 31.63 Billion in December 2023.

- The estimated value of services imports for December 2024 is USD 17.50 Billion as compared to USD 15.63 Billion in December 2023.
- The estimated value of service exports during April-December 2024 is USD 280.94 Billion as compared to USD 251.71 Billion in April-December 2023.
- The estimated value of service imports during April-December 2024 is USD 149.67 Billion as compared to USD 131.64 Billion in April-December 2023.
- The services trade surplus for April-December 2024 is USD 131.27 Billion as compared to USD 120.07 Billion in April-December 2023
- **Top 5 export destinations, in terms of change in value**, exhibiting positive growth in **December 2024** vis a vis December 2023 are USA (8.49%), Saudi Arab (50.46%), France (67.37%), Bangladesh Pr (33.58%) and Sri Lanka Dsr (83.68%).
- **Top 5 export destinations, in terms of change in value**, exhibiting positive growth in **April-December 2024** vis a vis April-December 2023 are USA (5.57%), Netherlands (14.71%), UAE (8.87%), Singapore (16.45%) and UK (14.08%).
- **Top 5 import sources**, in terms of change in value, exhibiting growth in **December 2024** vis a vis December 2023 are China (9.14%), Switzerland (85.65%), Thailand (71.7%), Germany (28.63%) and U S A (9.88%).
- **Top 5 import sources**, in terms of change in value, exhibiting growth in **April-December 2024** vis a vis April-December 2023 are UAE (37.08%), China (9.38%), Russia (8.32%), Taiwan (41.7%) and Thailand (22.46%).
- Services exports are estimated to grow by 11.61 percent during April-December 2024 over April-December 2023.

75. The Union Minister for Civil Aviation, **Rammohan Naidu**, along with the Chief Minister of Manipur, N. Biren Singh, has flagged off **Alliance Air flights on three routes** including two new routes in **Manipur**.

Alliance Air will now connect new routes from Imphal to Kolkata & back, Imphal to Guwahati & back in addition to supplementing additional flights from Imphal to Dimapur & back.

These flights, launched as part of a joint effort by the Ministry of Civil Aviation and the State Government of Manipur, have been made operational with **Viability Gap Funding (VGF)** support from the state.

The new flights will significantly enhance connectivity, improve the investment ecosystem, and impart ease of doing business in the state, creating jobs and new opportunities for the people of Manipur.

The three flights of Alliance Air to and from Imphal, Manipur will witness a boost to its *3 Ts: Trade, Travel, and Tourism*, ultimately delivering *3 Es: Economy, Employment, and Empowerment* to the youth of Manipur.

Since the launch of the UDAN Scheme – Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik, 10 airports, and 2 heliports have been operationalized in the region, along with a total of 90 RCS routes, including 12 helicopter routes.

76. The **Ministry of Labour & Employment (MoLE)**, Government of India, in collaboration with the **Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)**, hosted the “**Conference on Future of Jobs**” in **New Delhi**.

The theme of the conference is “**Shaping Tomorrow’s Workforce: Driving Growth in a Dynamic World.**”

This pivotal event convened policymakers, industry leaders, and experts to deliberate on the evolving employment landscape and curate strategies for a future-ready workforce in India.

The conference spotlighted India's employment transformation, underscoring a significant rise in jobs from **471.5 million** in 2014-15 to **643 million** in 2023-24, according to provisional estimates from the RBI's KLEMS database.

Key growth drivers include increased investments, the PLI scheme, and advancements in technology. MSMEs and startups have played pivotal roles in reshaping the workforce landscape. The conference culminated in actionable policy recommendations to prepare India's workforce for a dynamic global economy.

Key strategies include:

- Enhancing skill development and technological upskilling.
- Fostering public-private partnerships for inclusive growth.
- Promoting digital literacy and eco-friendly workforce values.
- Prioritizing inclusivity and sustainability in workforce development.

77. India has successfully tested its first indigenous micro-missile system, Bhargavastra, designed to counter **swarm drone** threats.

'*Bhargavastra*', the multi-layered counter-drone system, was tested at the Gopalpur Seaward Firing Ranges in Odisha. During the test, the missile engaged the target at a distance of 2,500 meters and an altitude of 400 meters.

Bhargavastra, developed by **Economic Explosives Ltd (EEL)**, a subsidiary of Nagpur-based Solar Group, is equipped with cutting-edge capabilities, including detecting even small, incoming drones at a range of over 6 kilometers.

Key features of the Bhargavastra weapon system:

- Bhargavastra weapon system has a range of around 5-6 kilometers and can neutralize multiple drones through micro munitions.
- The weapon system can be mounted on mobile platforms for rapid deployment in all terrains including desert and high-altitude areas.
- It is a multi-layered weapon system that features a Command-and-Control Centre equipped with advanced C4I (Command, Control, Communications, Computers, and Intelligence) technology.
- The radar of the system can detect unmanned aerial vehicles beyond 5 km and is capable of identifying targets as small as 0.01 square meters.
- The weapon system can track, engage 64 targets, and destroy the target within 16 seconds of its detection.
- The weapon system has micro-missile kill capabilities. The missiles launched by the system have lock-in capabilities on the target and can fire missiles at an interval of one second.
- The weapon system is particularly effective against swarm drones which are resistant to traditional jamming or spoofing techniques employed against aerial threats.

SWARM stands for "**Smart War-Fighting Array of Reconfigured Modules.**" A Swarm Drone typically consists of multiple drones working in coordination, communicating with one another, and sharing information to achieve a common objective. These drones can be of the same or different types, ranging from small quadcopters to larger fixed-wing drones. They are strategic weapons that have proven successful in conflicts such as the Russian-Ukraine conflict.

78. Gangasagar Mela, India's second largest pilgrimage gathering after Kumbh Mela, is observed annually on the banks of the Ganges at **Sagardwip or Sagar Island, West Bengal**. Devotees gather at the confluence of the Ganga and Bay of Bengal to take a sacred dip during Makar Sankranti (mid-January).

In 2025, the festival was observed from **10th January to 18th January**.

Gangasagar is an island in the Ganges delta located on the continental shelf of the Bay of Bengal roughly 100 kilometres south of Kolkata.

79. Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveiled '**Mission Mausam**' to boost India's weather forecasting abilities using advanced tools like AI, as part of the events marking the **150th foundation day** of the **India Meteorological Department (IMD)**.

He also released the IMD Vision-2047 document for weather resilience and climate change adaptation. It includes plans for weather forecasting, weather management, and climate change mitigation.

Mission Mausam:

The Mission aims to upgrade the capabilities of India's weather department in forecasting, modelling, and dissemination.

The mission aims to make the nation '**Weather Ready**' and '**Climate Smart**', meeting global standards.

The budget outlay for the mission is **Rs. 2,000 crores** over two years.

The Mission is being implemented by the **Union Ministry of Earth Science** through its three main institutions - New Delhi-based **India Meteorological Department (IMD)**, Noida-based **National Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasting**, and Pune-based **Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology**.

The objectives of the "Mission Mausam" include:

- Develop Cutting Edge Weather Surveillance Technologies & Systems
- Implement Higher-resolution atmospheric observations with better temporal and spatial sampling/coverage
- Implement Next-generation radars and satellites with advanced instrument payloads
- Implement High-Performance Computers (HPC)
- Improve understanding of weather and climate processes and prediction capabilities
- Develop improved earth system models, and data-driven methods (use of AI/ML)
- Develop Technologies for weather management
- Develop a state-of-art dissemination system for last-mile connectivity
- Capacity building

The mission aims to establish 50 Doppler Weather Radars (DWR), 60 Radio Sonde/Radio Wind (RS/RW) stations, 100 disdrometers, 10 Wind Profilers, 25 radiometers, 1 Urban testbed, 1 Process testbed, 1 Ocean Research station and 10 Marine Automatic Weather Stations with upper air observation.

80. India will host the **28th Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of Parliaments of Commonwealth Countries (CSPOC)** in **2026** in New Delhi.

The announcement was made by Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla at the CSPOC Standing Committee Meeting in Guernsey.

Earlier, India hosted the conference in **1970-71, 1986, and 2010**.

CSPOC:

- The Conference brings together the Speakers and Presiding Officers of the national parliaments of the independent sovereign states of the Commonwealth.
- It was created in 1969 as an initiative of the then Speaker of the House of Commons of Canada, the Honourable Lucien Lamoureux.
- Since its inception, Canada has provided CSPOC with a secretariat to support its activities.
- The Conference is an independent group and has no formal affiliation with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, the Commonwealth Secretariat or the Commonwealth Heads of Government.

- CSPOC operates on a two-year cycle, holding a conference of the full membership every two years, usually early in January, and a meeting of the Standing Committee at the same time the intervening year.

81. The Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL), a Maharatna and largest public sector steelmaker in India, has supplied the entire 4,000 tonnes of special steel for **INS Nilgiri**.

INS Nilgiri was commissioned by the Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 15 January 2025 into the Indian Navy.

The special steel provided by SAIL includes **DMR 249A grade hot-rolled (HR) sheets and plates**.

This entire supply originated from SAIL's Bokaro, Bhilai, and Rourkela Steel Plants. Specifically, SAIL's Bokaro Steel Plant contributed approximately 2,000 tonnes of HR sheets and plates, with an additional 1,600 tonnes and 400 tonnes of plates supplied by the Bhilai and Rourkela Steel Plants respectively.

INS Nilgiri:

INS Nilgiri is India's indigenous lead ship of the Nilgiri-class Project P17A frigates built for the Indian Navy by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL). P17A ships are guided missile frigates, each of which is 149 meters long, with a displacement of approximately 6,670 tonnes and a speed of 28 knots. The Navy had placed orders for seven stealth frigates, four of which went to Mazagon Dock Ltd (MDL) and three to GRSE.

82. Amit Yadav, Secretary (Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India), has launched the '**Divine, Grand, and Digital**' Pavilion of the **Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment** at **Mahakumbh-2025** in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh.

Several pivotal schemes are being showcased at the Pavilion, including the **Vanchit Ikai Samooh aur Vargon ki Aarthik Sahayata Yojana (VISVAS)**, which provides financial assistance to marginalized communities, and the **PM-Daksh Yojana**, dedicated to skill development for the socio-economically disadvantaged.

Additional schemes like the **Senior Citizen Welfare Scheme**, **Nasha Mukh Bharat Abhiyan**, and the **NAMASTE Scheme** are presenting various programs and raising awareness among visitors. One of the Pavilion's key attractions is an interactive touch-screen flipbook on the Indian Constitution, designed to educate attendees about the country's constitutional framework.

Another highlight is a digital selfie point equipped with AI-enabled features, offering an engaging user experience. Also prominent is the **TULIP Brand Initiative**, wherein beneficiary artisans have been provided stalls to display and sell their handmade goods. This initiative supports traditional artisans by offering them opportunities for economic inclusion through various Ministry schemes.

The pavilion acts as a crucial platform to exhibit the Ministry's dedication to social justice and empowerment.

83. Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science and Technology, Dr Jitendra Singh, has released the monograph **Pollution and Health**, a comprehensive publication addressing the adverse effects of pollution on human health.

The monograph is edited by **Prof. Dr. Vitull K. Gupta**, Chief Editor and Chairman of the Association of Physicians of India (API), Malwa Branch.

The book brings together contributions from 86 experts across India, offering a detailed exploration of pollution's impact on various systems of the body.

This monograph, comprising 34 chapters, provides detailed insights into the effects of air, water, soil, and noise pollution on health.

It covers topics such as global warming, climate change, and their implications for cardiovascular health, while also addressing conditions such as cancer, respiratory diseases like asthma and COPD, and neurological and psychiatric disorders.

Unique perspectives, such as the socio-economic impact of pollution in India and the role of artificial intelligence in mitigation efforts, are also explored.

Notably, the monograph includes a chapter on the spiritual dimensions of pollution, adding an important cultural context.

84. Union Home Minister Amit Shah has inaugurated the **Archaeological Experiential Museum in Vadnagar, Gujarat. The museum complex will feature three main structures:**

- **The Main Museum Building:** Housing a comprehensive collection of artifacts and interactive exhibits.
- **A 50-meter Connecting Bridge:** Linking the museum building to the excavation site.
- **A Permanent Structure over the Excavation Site:** Providing visitors with a safe and informative view of the archaeological remains.

The museum complex, spanning 12,500 sq. m., houses nine thematic galleries and features a 4,000 sq. m. excavation site with remains visible up to 16-18 meters deep. With an investment of Rs. 298 Crore, the project ensures long-term sustainability, encompassing capital costs and five years of operations and maintenance.

The museum showcases over 5,000 artifacts that tell the story of Vadnagar's evolution. It displays a wide range of items such as ceramic assemblages, shell manufacturing (products and raw materials), coins, ornaments, weapons and tools, sculptures, play objects, as well as organic materials like food grains, DNA, and skeletal remains.

The project encompasses a series of complementary initiatives - an **International Conference of leading scholars and researchers** to delve deeper into the archaeology of Vadnagar; a **Television Series by Discovery Channel** to showcase the town's rich history to a wider audience; and the **Prerna School**, a unique educational program to inspire young minds and foster leaders of tomorrow for India's heritage, among others.

Other related news:

Union Minister Amit Shah has addressed the **18th convocation ceremony of Ganpat University** in Mehsana, Gujarat.

Union Minister Amit Shah inaugurated the 19 developmental works and laid the foundation stone for 8 projects worth **Rs.194 crore in Kalol, Gandhinagar, Gujarat**. He also inaugurated and laid the foundation stones for several development projects worth approximately **Rs.241 crore in Mansa, Gujarat**.

85. The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the establishment of the **Third Launch Pad (TLP) at **Satish Dhawan Space Centre of the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO)** at **Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh**.**

The Third Launch Pad project envisages the establishment of the launch infrastructure at Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh for the Next Generation Launch Vehicles of ISRO and also to support a standby launch pad for the Second Launch Pad at Sriharikota.

This will enhance the launch capacity for future Indian human spaceflight missions.

The TLP is designed to have a configuration that is as universal and adaptable as possible that can support not only NGLV but also the LVM3 vehicles with Semicryogenic stage as well as scaled-up configurations of NGLV.

TLP is targeted to be established within a duration of **48 months or 4 years**.

The total fund requirement is **Rs. 3984.86 Crore** and includes the establishment of the Launch Pad and the associated facilities.

This will boost the Indian Space ecosystem by enabling higher launch frequencies and the national capacity to undertake human spaceflight & space exploration missions.

86. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has launched the **Bharat Ranbhoomi Darshan app** during the 77th (15th January) Army Day celebrations in Pune, Maharashtra.

The app, developed by the **Ministry of Defence** in collaboration with the **Ministry of Tourism**, opens the doors to India's most iconic battlefields, offering citizens a chance to explore the country's wartime history.

The app connects to an extensive website designed as a one-stop resource for military tourism. It offers in-depth historical narratives of **77 battlefield locations**, providing visitors with a detailed understanding of India's wartime history.

The locations of 1962, 1971, and 1999 conflicts, the Siachen base camp, and even the site of the Galwan clash of 2020 will be accessible to tourists through this app. This also includes Kibithoo and Bum La Pass (Arunachal Pradesh), Rezang La and Pangong Tso (Ladakh), and Doklam (the site of the 2017 conflict).

The platform also includes virtual tours and engaging multimedia content, allowing users to explore iconic sites from the comfort of their homes. For those planning physical visits, the website provides comprehensive travel details, including information about permits required for accessing restricted areas.

This initiative aligns with the **Incredible India campaign**, blending tourism with education.

The initiative also integrates existing war memorials into the tourism circuit, including:

- Dras War Memorial (Kargil War, 1999)
- Walong War Memorial (Battle of Walong, 1962)
- Tawang War Memorial
- Longewala War Memorial
- Operation Meghdoot War Memorial

87. India's entry into the elite group of nations capable of executing space docking operations was marked by the successful completion of the **Space Docking Experiment (SpaDeX) mission's** docking operation on **16th January 2025**.

This technological achievement makes India the **fourth country** to accomplish space docking after the USA, Russia, and China.

The mission, initiated on **30th December 2024** with the launch of the SpaDeX spacecraft via Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV)-C60 from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, aims to demonstrate India's expertise in spacecraft rendezvous, docking, and undocking, which are crucial for satellite servicing, space station activities, and interplanetary missions.

SpaDeX is a **cost-effective technology** demonstrator mission designed to showcase in-space docking using two small spacecraft launched by the **62nd PSLV flight**. This mission is pivotal for India's future space ambitions, including lunar missions, sample returns, and the development of the **Bharatiya Antariksh Station (BAS)**.

Objectives of the SpaDeX mission are:

- Develop and demonstrate technology for rendezvous and docking using two small spacecraft.
- Showcase controllability in the docked condition.
- Demonstrate the potential for extending the life of the target spacecraft.
- Test power transfer between docked spacecraft.

The SpaDeX mission involves two small satellites, **SDX01**, which is the Chaser, and **SDX02**, the Target, each weighing approximately 220 kilograms.

- These spacecraft are androgynous in nature i.e. either of the spacecraft can act as chaser (active spacecraft) during docking.

- They are equipped with solar panels, lithium-ion batteries, and a robust power management system.
- The Attitude and Orbit Control System (AOCS) includes sensors such as star sensors, sun sensors, magnetometers, and actuators like reaction wheels, magnetic torquers, and thrusters.
- The satellites will execute a series of complex manoeuvres to demonstrate the docking process in orbit. Post-docking, the two satellites will operate as a single spacecraft.

88. The **Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)** has launched the "**One Plate, One Bag**" initiative for **Maha Kumbh 2025**. The campaign aims to replace plastic bags and disposable utensils with sustainable alternatives.

As part of the campaign, cloth bags are being distributed to visitors.

To promote sustainability, 2 million steel plates and glasses have been collected from across the country. These reusable items are being distributed to langars (community kitchens) and food outlets within the Maha Kumbh area, replacing single-use plastic and thermocol utensils.

The initiative aligns with the broader goal of ensuring a cleaner, greener environment at Maha Kumbh, the world's largest religious gathering.

89. The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA), chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has approved the revival plan for **Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Ltd (RINL)** for a total of **Rs 11,440 crores**.

The infusion includes Rs.10,300 crore as equity capital into Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Ltd. (RINL) and Conversion of Rs.1140 crore working capital loan as 7% Non-cumulative Preference Share Capital redeemable after 10 years to keep RINL as a going concern.

The equity infusion will help it overcome the operational problems related to raising working capital and start Blast furnace operations most productively.

The financial condition of RINL is critical (as of 31st March 2024, the net worth of RINL was Rs. (-)4538.00 crore, current assets were Rs.7,686.24, and current liabilities were Rs.26,114.92 crores).

RINL has exhausted the sanctioned borrowing limits from banks for working capital and was not in a position to get further loans from Banks. RINL also defaulted on the Capex Loan repayments and Interest payments in June 2024.

Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Ltd. (RINL):

RINL is a Navratna PSE under the administrative control of the Ministry of Steel with 100% ownership of the Government of India. RINL operates the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant (VSP), the only offshore steel plant under the Government sector in the state of Andhra Pradesh. It has an installed capacity of 7.3 Mtpa of liquid steel.

90. The Minister of State (I/C), Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), and the Minister of State, Ministry of Education **Jayant Chaudhary** has flagged off the **Solar Community Hub Mobile Van Training Units** at Kaushal Bhawan in New Delhi.

This transformative initiative is a collaborative effort between the **National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC)**, Learning Links Foundation, **Dell Technologies**, and local stakeholders.

The Solar Community Hubs are state-of-the-art mobile training units powered by solar energy, designed to deliver impactful skilling solutions to underserved communities.

The event marks the beginning of a nationwide deployment of these hubs, with **seven vans** set to operate across districts in **Sikkim, Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, and Maharashtra**.

In FY25, the program will extend to seven new districts and is expected to impact an additional 5.8 million beneficiaries, including community youth, students, women, and veterans.

These hubs, equipped with advanced facilities such as laptops, portable furniture, GPS systems, MiFi routers, panic buttons, and Bluetooth-enabled speakers, offer training on diverse topics, including digital and financial literacy, technical expertise, cybersecurity, and an introduction to Generative AI.

The program aligns with the goals of the Skill India Mission.

The initiative exemplifies Dell Technologies' commitment to fostering digital inclusion and driving sustainable development through meaningful partnerships.

91. Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science and Technology Dr. Jitendra Singh has inaugurated India's first Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR) Innovation Complex through virtual mode in Mumbai, Maharashtra.

The complex aims to enhance India's position as a global hub for startups and innovation, reflecting the government's commitment to empowering the youth and driving economic self-reliance.

The CSIR Innovation Complex in Mumbai is a state-of-the-art facility that spans nine floors. It is equipped with 24 ready-to-move incubation labs and furnished office spaces for startups, MSMEs, and industry partners.

This infrastructure is aimed at addressing critical translational needs, facilitating faster technology transfer from labs to industry.

To further boost innovation and employment generation, **six memorandums of association** were signed between CSIR and prestigious institutes like IIT Bombay and iCreate. These collaborations aim to strengthen startups and facilitate the transfer of technology from CSIR institutes to various stakeholders, including MSMEs and educational institutions.

92. The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) has introduced key amendments to the Cable Television Network Rules, 1994 (the Rules) to streamline the Local Cable Operator (LCO) registration process.

These amendments are effective from **17th January 2025**.

LCO registrations will be conducted entirely online with the MIB itself as its registering authority.

The salient features of the amended Rules in respect of LCO Registration are:

- LCOs shall apply for new registration or renewal of registration online on the Broadcast Seva Portal of MIB and the registration certificate shall be issued online.
- LCO registrations shall be granted or renewed for **five years**;
- The processing fee for registration or renewal is **Rupees five thousand only**;
- LCO Registration shall be valid for operations **throughout the territory of India**;
- The application for renewal of registration shall be made at least **90 days** before the expiry of the registration.
- LCOs can appeal to the Appellate Authority i.e. Under Secretary (DAS) against the decision of the Registering Authority, i.e. designated Section Officer denying registration or renewal of registration within 30 days of such denial.

Existing LCO registration shall remain valid for the period mentioned in the registration certificate.

In a case where the existing registration of the LCO is valid for less than 90 days, the renewal applications, if any, shall be made immediately on the portal.

The applications made to the Post Offices for grant/ renewal of registration, which are pending as of date, would be required to be withdrawn and applications have to be made on the portal.

93. The Union Minister of Communications, Jyotiraditya M. Scindia, has launched a suite of citizen-focused initiatives. This included the launch of the **Sanchar Saathi Mobile App**, **National Broadband Mission (NBM) 2.0**, and the inauguration of the **Intra Circle Roaming facility at DBN Funded 4G Mobile Sites**.

The **Sanchar Saathi Mobile App** is a user-friendly platform designed to fortify telecom security and empower citizens. It provides users with critical tools to secure their telecom resources and combat telecom fraud.

Key features include:

- **Chakshu** - Reporting Suspected Fraud Communications (SFC): Users can report suspected calls and SMS using the app and directly from mobile phone logs.
- **Know Mobile Connections in Your Name**: Citizens can identify and manage all mobile connections issued in their name, ensuring no unauthorized usage.
- **Blocking Your Lost/ Stolen Mobile Handset**: Lost or stolen mobile devices can be swiftly blocked, traced, and recovered.
- **Know Mobile Handset Genuineness**: The app offers an easy way to verify the authenticity of mobile handsets, ensuring users purchase genuine devices.

National Broadband Mission (NBM) 2.0:

Building on the success of NBM 1.0 (2019-2024), the following will be the key benefits of NBM 2.0:

- Extending operational optical fiber cable (OFC) connectivity to **2.70 lakh villages** by 2030 with 95% uptime from ~50,000 as of now.
- To provide broadband connectivity to 90% of anchor institutions like Schools, PHCs, Anganwadi Centre, and Panchayat offices by 2030.
- Improve the Fixed broadband download Speeds- National Average from 63.55 Mbps in November 2024 to a minimum of **100 Mbps by 2030**.
- To achieve 100% mapping of fiber networks owned by government PSUs by 2026 on PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan Platform (PMGS) and use PMGS for the planning of the Additional Bharatnet project.
- For Ease of Doing Business - reduce the Right of Way application average disposal time from 60 days (now) to 30 days by 2030. In 2019 it was 449 days.
- Increase the number of rural internet subscribers per 100 population from the current 45 to 60 by 2030.
- Achieve the target of powering 30% of mobile towers with sustainable energy by 2030.
- Work on enhancing the usage of the '**Call Before u Dig**' (**CBuD**) **mobile app** to protect underground Telecom infrastructure and other utilities. The Hon'ble PM had launched it in March 2023.
- Collaborate with all stakeholders viz. Central Ministries and departments, States, UTs, and municipalities to ensure the effective implementation of the New RoW Rules 2024, issued under the Telecommunications Act, 2023.
- **To facilitate the rollout of the 5G network**, in nook and corner of the country and for futuristic networks of 6G, work to create a robust, ready-to-use street furniture infrastructure across the country.
- To work with all stakeholders for **Common/Shareable telecom ducts and utility corridors in all linear projects** to improve the maintenance and cost efficiency of telecom networks and other utilities.
- **Leveraging Power Sector Assets Such as Optical Ground Wire (OPGW)** for enhanced Broadband Connectivity and to improve broadband network reliability, survivability, and resiliency during disasters, wars, and other emergencies, in far-flung, remote, and hilly regions of the country, where traditional infrastructure might be challenging to deploy.

NBM 1.0:

The Mission is part of the National Digital Communications Policy, 2018. The vision of the Mission is to fast-track the growth of digital communications infrastructure, bridge the digital divide,

facilitate digital empowerment and inclusion, and provide affordable and universal access to broadband for all.

The mission is also aligned with the government's broader vision of improving access to education, healthcare, and e-governance services, fostering economic opportunities, and enhancing social inclusion through digital connectivity.

Key achievements of NBM 1.0 include:

- Expansion of Optical Fiber Cable (OFC) networks to 41.91 lakh kilometers by September 2024.
- Growth in telecom towers to 8.17 lakh and broadband subscribers to 941 million.
- Resolving major Right of Way (RoW) issues and streamlining processes through the "GatiShakti Sanchar" portal.
- Introduction of the "Call Before u Dig" (CBuD) mobile app to protect underground telecom infrastructure.

Intra Circle Roaming (ICR) at DBN-funded 4G mobile sites:

The launch of Intra Circle Roaming (ICR) at DBN-funded 4G mobile sites enables subscribers of BSNL, Airtel, and Reliance to access 4G services from a single tower. This initiative promises seamless 4G connectivity for over 35,400 rural and remote villages served by approximately 27,000 towers.

[Attempt SBI PO 2025 Free Mock test](#)

94. Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the **Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2025**, the largest mobility expo in India, at **Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi**.

The expo was held from 17th to 22nd January 2025 across three separate venues: Bharat Mandapam & Yashobhoomi in New Delhi and India Expo Center & Mart, Greater Noida.

The Expo hosts over 9 concurrent shows, 20+ conferences, and pavilions. In addition, the Expo also featured state sessions to showcase policies and initiatives in the mobility sector to enable collaboration between industry and regional levels.

Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2025 aims to unite the entire mobility value chain under one umbrella. This year's expo has a special emphasis on global significance with participation from across the globe as exhibitors and visitors.

It is an industry-led and government-supported initiative and was coordinated by the Engineering Export Promotion Council of India with the joint support of various industry bodies and partner organizations.

The **Bharat Mobility Expo 2025 - The Components Show** was held in **Yashobhoomi**. It is a part of the Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2025. The show raises the bar for automotive and mobility exhibitions in India. The expo brings together over 1,000 companies to display their latest innovations, technologies, and expertise to a global audience.

This premier event acts as a dynamic platform for collaboration, fostering dialogue and knowledge exchange among key stakeholders, including OEMs, Tier-1 and Tier-2 suppliers, start-ups, policymakers, and academia. It spotlights advancements in automotive components, electric vehicles (EVs), connected technologies, and sustainable mobility solutions, underscoring India's growing role as a global manufacturing hub.

95. The French Carrier Strike Group (CSG), led by the Charles De Gaulle aircraft carrier, organized the **fifth edition** of the multinational exercise **LA PEROUSE 2025** from 16th to 24th January 2025.

Nine Indo-Pacific nations participated in this major exercise:

- Australia with the destroyer HMAS Hobart,
- Canada with the destroyer HMCS Ottawa,
- the United States of America with the LCS USS Savannah,

- France with its French CSG,
- India with the destroyer **INS Mumbai**,
- Indonesia providing base support on land for the Atlantique 2 maritime patrol aircraft of French CSG,
- Malaysia with the destroyer FFG Lekir and its embarked helicopter and the vessel Gagah Samudera,
- the United Kingdom with the offshore patrol vessel HMS Spey; and
- Singapore with the patrol vessel RSN Independence.

The naval exercise was held in the straits between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean:

Malacca, Sunda, and Lombok. These straits, mainstays of global maritime trade, are subject to numerous human-induced risks such as maritime accidents and environmental hazards, illegal immigration, drug trafficking, and natural risks like earthquakes and tsunamis.

The exercise aims to develop common Maritime Situational Awareness by enhancing cooperation in the field of maritime surveillance, maritime interdiction operations, and air operations along with the conduct of progressive training and information sharing.

The exercise provides an opportunity for like-minded navies to develop closer links in planning, coordination, and information sharing for enhanced tactical interoperability.

This edition witnessed the participation of personnel/ surface and sub-surface assets from various maritime partners including the *Royal Australian Navy, French Navy, Royal Navy, United States Navy, Indonesian Navy, Royal Malaysian Navy, Republic of Singapore Navy, and Royal Canadian Navy.*

- 96.** The **Centre for Management of Health Services (CMHS)** and the **Alumni & External Relations Office at the Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad (IIMA)**, in collaboration with the IIMA Healthcare Alumni Special Interest Group (ASIG), organized the **second edition** of the **IIMA Healthcare Summit** on the theme **“Advancing Healthcare for India @ 2047.”**

The conference theme aligns with the Government of India's efforts to strengthen the healthcare system in pursuit of a healthy and developed India by 2047.

Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare and Chemicals & Fertilizers J. P. Nadda addressed the Healthcare Summit at IIMA. He highlighted that the **MedTech sector** is rapidly growing and it is expected to reach **USD 30 billion by 2030.**

Union Minister also felicitated the winners of the **Healthcare Hackathon** organized by IIMA as a pre-summit event for students and startups on the theme of Digital Strategies for Universal Health Coverage by 2047 and Managing Non-communicable Diseases by 2047.

The sessions showcased healthcare research conducted at IIM Ahmedabad and offered opportunities to learn from successful healthcare startups.

- 97.** Union Minister for Chemicals & Fertilizers, **Jagat Prakash Nadda**, has inaugurated multiple projects from the **Central Institute of Petrochemicals Engineering and Technology (CIPET), Ahmedabad.**

Key projects:

- He has inaugurated the **Calibration Laboratory** in **CIPET, Ahmedabad.** This center is designed to ensure precision and accuracy in measurement for industrial applications. The project has been primarily funded by the State Government of Gujarat, with a total project cost of **Rs. 1.43 crore.**
- He has also inaugurated the **Centre for Skilling and Technical Support** at **Bhagalpur.** It has been established at a total cost of **Rs. 40.10 crore**, equally shared between the Central Government and the Government of Bihar. The Centre would provide long-term courses on Diploma in Plastics Technology and Diploma in Plastics Mould Technology, in addition to providing skill development courses in the field of injection moulding and plastic processing.

- He has inaugurated the **Plastic Waste Management Centre at Bhagalpur**. It aims to demonstrate various plastic recycling techniques; provide effective plastic waste management solutions; develop eco-friendly and cost-effective value-added recyclates; facilitate start-ups/ prospective entrepreneurs in the relevant field; create awareness on good practices of recycling and establish digital demonstration facilities on plastic recycling and waste management.
- He has inaugurated the **boys' hostel at CIPET: CSTS, Madurai**. It has been constructed at a total cost of **Rs. 6.40 crore**, contributed by the Government of India as a grant-in-aid to CIPET. The hostel can house 120 people and would help to increase the capacity of the Centre to train more students.

98. The **National Cadet Corps (NCC) cadets** presented the **Annual Horse Show** in the Republic Day Camp at 61 Cavalry Ground, Delhi Cantt. The camp hosts national-level inter-directorate NCC equestrian competitions, culminating with a spectacular horse show. The cadets, both boys and girls, display their finesse through electrifying displays of tent pegging and show jumping.

This year, 40 Senior Division and 20 Senior Wing cadets from across the country participated in the equestrian competition.

The award-winning cadets in horse riding are as follows:

Best Rider (Joint): Under Officer Ansh Karnawat (Rajasthan Directorate) and Junior Under Officer Vadlmudi Lokesh (Andhra Pradesh & Telangana Directorate)

Best Rider (Girls): Sergeant Bhumika Kanwar (Delhi Directorate)

Best Rider Runner up (Girls): Under Officer Swarnika Rathore (Rajasthan Directorate)

Best Tent Pegger:

- **Dr Roop Jyoti Sharma Trophy:** Senior Under Officer Harshit Singh (Uttar Pradesh Directorate)
- **DG RVS Trophy:** Sergeant Vatandeep Singh (Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh & Chandigarh Directorate)

NCC presently has 20 riding units across 12 NCC directorates to provide cadets with ample opportunities to excel in the sport.

99. Union Minister of State (independent charge) for Science and Technology, Dr Jitendra Singh, has inaugurated the **"27th International Congress on Glass (ICG), 2025"** at the Biswa Bangla Convention Centre in **Kolkata, West Bengal**.

The ICG 2025 was organised from January 20-24, 2025 by CSIR-Central Glass and Ceramic Research Institute (CSIR-CGCRI).

The year 2025 marks the **75th anniversary** of the foundation of CSIR-Central Glass and Ceramic Research Institute, Kolkata (**CSIR-CGCRI**).

The theme of the ICG 2025 Congress is **"Glass: A Smart and Indispensable Material for Sustainable Society"**.

The Congress focussed on emerging technologies that can catalyze transformations in the use of glass products in various fields.

The Congress includes a keynote address, several plenary talks, industry presentations, and round table discussions devoted to the theme of the congress, focusing on the contribution of glass in creating a Green World.

The last ICG congress was held in India in the year 1986 and was inaugurated by the then Hon'ble President of India Shri Giani Zail Singh.

ICG Glass Congress is a triennial event organized in different parts of the globe under the aegis of the International Commission on Glass (ICG) for the dissemination of knowledge and to promote research cooperation and partnership with stakeholders.

- 100.** The **Scheme and Web-Portal** for the **Prime Minister's Awards for Excellence in Public Administration 2024** was officially launched by the Department of Administrative Reforms & Public Grievances.
- Registration on the Prime Minister's Awards web portal has commenced w.e.f. from **20th January 2025**. Submission of nominations began from **27th January 2025**. The last date of nomination submission is **14th February 2025**.
- The objective of the Scheme is to encourage Constructive Competition, Innovation, Replication, and Institutionalization of Best practices. Under this approach, the emphasis would be on good governance, qualitative achievement, and last-mile connectivity, rather than only on the achievement of quantitative targets.
- This year, under the Holistic Development Category, the Award Scheme recognizes the performance of the District Collector through targeted individual beneficiaries and implementation with a saturation approach.
- With this focus, the applications for Awards would be evaluated on three parameters, Good Governance, Qualitative, and Quantitative.
- It is expected that all the districts participate in this Scheme of Prime Minister's Awards for Excellence in Public Administration 2024.
- Districts with Aspirational Blocks will participate in the Aspirational Blocks Programme category covering 500 Aspirational Blocks, across 329 districts of India.
- The Period of consideration is **1st April 2022 to 31st December 2024**.
- The total number of Awards under the Prime Minister's Awards for Excellence in Public Administration 2024 would be **16**.
- The evaluation process would include (i) a Short-listing of Districts/Organizations by a Screening Committee (first and second stage), (ii) an Evaluation by an Expert Committee, and (iii) an Empowered Committee. The Prime Minister's approval will be taken on the recommendations of the Empowered Committee for the Awards.
- The Prime Minister's Awards, 2024 will consist of: (i) a Trophy, (ii) a Scroll, and (iii) an incentive of **Rs. 20 lakhs** to the awarded District/organization to be utilized for the implementation of the project/program or bridging resources gaps in any area of public welfare.
- 101.** The **Union Ministry of Mines**, in collaboration with the Odisha Government, hosted the **3rd National Mining Ministers' Conference in Konark, Odisha**.
- During the conference, several initiatives were unveiled.
- The **Best Practices on Mine Closure booklet**, outlining strategies for effective mine closure with minimal environmental and social impacts, and the **States' Best Practices in Mining booklet**, highlighting innovative and sustainable approaches adopted by various states, were released.
 - The conference marked the launch of the **Mining Tenement System (MTS)** by Union Minister G. Kishan Reddy and Chief Minister of Odisha Mohan Charan Majhi. This advanced digital platform is designed to streamline processes, enhance transparency, and improve efficiency in mineral resource management.
 - The conference also marked the launch of the **Fifth Tranche of Critical Mineral Block Auctions**, offering 15 blocks across eight states, including essential minerals like Graphite, Tungsten, Rare Earth Elements (REE), and Nickel. This initiative reflects the government's commitment to leveraging India's mineral wealth for economic growth and strategic self-sufficiency.
- The conference provided a platform for State Mining Ministers to share their visions for the mining sector in their respective states. Ministry officials delivered insightful presentations on topics such as AI in exploration, offshore mining facilitation, and operationalization of mineral blocks.

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102. Union Minister of Labour & Employment and Youth Affairs & Sports, **Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya**, inaugurated a two-day international seminar on “**Formalization and Social Security Coverage for Workers in the Informal Sector: Challenges and Innovations**” in New Delhi.

This international dialogue was organized by the **Ministry of Labour and Employment of India**, in collaboration with the **Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC)** and **International Social Security Association (ISSA)** at the Yashobhoomi - India International Convention and Expo Center.

The technical seminar discussed strategies for formalizing informal sector workers and expanding social security coverage. Senior experts from renowned international organizations such as the World Bank, United Nations, and ILO contributed their insights during the seminar.

The primary goal was to strengthen stakeholders' capacity to extend social protection to informal sector workers, with focused discussions on formalization, incentives, digital solutions, and outreach strategies.

India's landmark initiatives, such as the e-Shram portal, National Career Service portal, and Labour Reforms, were highlighted, along with the progress made by ESIC and EPFO in advancing social security for formal workers.

During the seminar, the Union Minister launched the coffee table book “**Social Protection in India**” which highlights India's journey in ensuring social protection for its citizens through various social welfare schemes.

India's social protection coverage doubled from 24.4% to **48.8%** as per **ILO's World Social Protection Report 2024-26**. Almost 920 million people, 65% of the population, are covered by at least one social protection benefit (cash or in-kind) by schemes of the Central Government.

103. Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, **Bhupender Yadav**, addressed the Special Ministerial Session of the **3rd International Conference on Sustainable Circularity**, organized by the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM), in **New Delhi**.

The theme of the conference was “**Nature Positive Recycling**”.

The conference brought together key stakeholders from the automotive industry to discuss sustainable development and circularity.

During the conference, the Union Minister detailed key government policies supporting sustainability in the automotive sector:

- **Vehicle Scrappage Policy (2021):** Mandates fitness tests for passenger vehicles older than 20 years and commercial vehicles older than 15 years, replacing polluting vehicles with BS-VI-compliant models. This is projected to reduce up to 17% NOx and 11% PM2.5 emissions from freight trucks.
- **End-of-Life Vehicles (ELVs) Rules, 2025:** To be effective from April 1, 2025, these rules ensure environmentally sound scrapping of vehicles, with manufacturers fulfilling Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) by ensuring ELVs are properly scrapped in registered facilities. The scrapping of vehicles is also incentivized.
- **Promotion of Electric Vehicles (EVs):** Initiatives like the Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles (FAME) and the Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes are driving EV adoption on a huge scale. EV sales are expected to reach 35% of total vehicle sales by 2030, avoiding 5 metric tonnes of CO₂ emissions annually.

The Union Minister also unveiled the SIAM Strategy Paper, titled “**Towards Circular Future in the Automobile Industry: Integrating EPR Regime in Waste Stream Regulation**”.

104. The **National eGovernance Division (NeGD)**, under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), has developed **Entity Locker**, a cutting-edge digital platform designed to transform the management and verification of business/organization documents. 'Entity Locker' is a robust, cloud-based platform designed to streamline the management, sharing, and verification of documents for various entities.

It caters to large organizations, corporations, micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), trusts, startups, and societies, ensuring secure and efficient document handling.

The platform is a critical component of India's **Digital Public Infrastructure**.

It aligns with the vision of the **Union Budget 2024-25**.

Entity Locker is built on a robust technological framework that integrates with multiple government and regulatory systems, offering:

- Real-time access and verification of documents through integration with government databases
- Consent-based mechanisms for secure sharing of sensitive information
- Aadhaar-authenticated role-based access management to ensure accountability
- **10 GB** of encrypted cloud storage for secure document management
- Legally valid digital signatures for authenticating documents

Entity Locker's seamless integration with systems such as the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, the Goods and Services Tax Network (GSTN), the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT), and other regulatory institutions provides businesses instant access to critical documents. The platform supports various use cases, including:

- Vendor verification on the procurement portal
- Expedited loan applications for MSMEs
- FSSAI compliance documentation
- Vendor verification during registration in GSTN, MCA, and tendering process
- Streamlined corporate annual filings

105. India's coffee exports have grown significantly due to the increasing global demand for its rich and unique flavors. In the first half of **January 2025**, **India exported over 9,300 tonnes of coffee with top buyers including Italy, Belgium, and Russia.**

Approximately three-fourths of India's coffee production consists of Arabica and Robusta beans. These are primarily exported as unroasted beans.

India is now the seventh-largest coffee producer globally with exports reaching **\$1.29 billion in FY 2023-24, almost double the \$719.42 million in 2020-21.**

Domestic consumption has increased from 84,000 tonnes in 2012 to 91,000 tonnes in 2023. This surge reflects a broader shift in drinking habits, as coffee becomes a staple in daily life.

Top 3 Coffee Producers in India:

- **Karnataka** leads the coffee production, contributing **248,020 MT in 2022-23.**
- **Kerala** placed **second** with the production of 72,425 MT in 2022-23.
- **Tamil Nadu** placed **third** with the production of 18,700 MT in 2022-23.

106. The Chairman of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), **Anil Kumar Lahoti**, has inaugurated the **South Asian Telecommunication Regulators' Council (SATRC) Workshop on Spectrum** at Hotel Double Tree by Hilton, Goa.

This three-day workshop was attended by delegates representing SATRC member countries, Working Group Members, Industry experts, delegates representing many government departments, etc.

This workshop aims to address the critical importance of effective spectrum management in the rapidly evolving telecommunications landscape.

The workshop is organized by the Asia Pacific Telecommunity (APT) and hosted by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI).

This SATRC Workshop on Spectrum enhanced understanding among participants regarding key spectrum management issues, leading to actionable guidelines for the SATRC Working Group. The workshop aims to foster collaboration between member countries and industry experts, resulting in the development of best practices and strategies for effective spectrum utilization.

South Asian Telecommunication Regulators' Council (SATRC):

The South Asian Telecommunication Regulators' Council (SATRC) was formed in 1997 by an initiative of APT and ITU Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific. It functions under the umbrella of the Asia-Pacific Telecommunity (APT) as one of the sub-regional activities.

At present, the Council is composed of the Heads of the regulatory bodies of nine South Asian countries namely, **Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Iran, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.**

107. The Union Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways, Sarbananda Sonowal launched multiple projects worth nearly **Rs 2,000 crore** to expand capacity at the **Jawaharlal Nehru Port, Mumbai, Maharashtra.**

The Union Minister also launched one solar-powered boat, two indigenously developed 70T tugs, and three fire tenders, boosting the safety and efficiency of the port.

In 2024, the port handled the highest-ever container volume of 7.05 million TEUs, performing at more than 90 percent capacity. It had an annual growth of 11 percent Y-o-Y last year as compared to the previous calendar year.

As part of Rs 2,000 crore capacity enhancement projects at JNPA, the Union Minister also launched the development of a state-of-the-art **Agro Processing Facility**. This pioneering initiative, with an investment of Rs 284 crore, marks a significant milestone in bolstering India's agricultural trade infrastructure.

Key MoUs signed:

- A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between **Vadhvan Port Project Limited (VPPL) and Reliance Industries Limited (RIL)** for the development of the liquid jetty (for the handling of liquefied chemicals). The MoU includes the development of 50 acres of land at the port under the Public Private Partnership (PPP) model. This investment is estimated at Rs.645 crore and is likely to commence by 2030.
- An MoU was signed between **VPPL and Dr Balasaheb Konkan Krishi Vidyapeeth Dapoli (DBKKVD)** for the development of an integrated agricultural and horticultural plan for villages in Dahanu and Palghar, in and around Vadhvan.
- A partnership has also been established between **VPPL and HUDCO**, to provide funding of up to Rs 25,000 crore for the development of new ports and PPP projects.
- A MoU was signed to pave the way for setting up a warehousing facility in the Port area under JNPA's initiative to monetize vacant land parcels along with capacity development. An investment of Rs 300 crore is being fixed for the development of these ambient and temperature-controlled warehousing and CFS facilities. Once fully operational, it will generate 1,20,000 TEUs annually.

108. The **Ministry of Defence (MoD)** has signed a contract with **Heavy Vehicles Factory**, a unit of Armoured Vehicle Nigam Limited, for the procurement of **47 Tank-72 Bridge Laying Tanks (BLT)** for the Indian Army at a total cost of **Rs 1,560.52 crore.**

The BLT is a critical equipment that is employed to launch bridges during offensive/defensive operations by Mechanised Forces. It provides integral bridging capability to the Tank and Armoured Vehicle fleet enhancing the battlefield mobility and offensive capability.

The present case being a Buy (Indian-Indigenously Designed Developed and Manufactured) will give impetus to the Make-in-India initiative in defence.

- 109.** The **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** has successfully conducted a ground test of a scramjet combustor, demonstrating its potential for operational use in hypersonic missiles.

Defence Research & Development Laboratory (DRDL), a Hyderabad-based laboratory of DRDO, has taken the initiative in developing a long-duration supersonic combustion ramjet or **scramjet-powered hypersonic technology**.

DRDL recently developed these technologies and demonstrated a cutting-edge active-cooled Scramjet Combustor ground test for 120 seconds for the first time in India.

The successful ground test marks a crucial milestone in developing next-generation hypersonic missiles.

Hypersonic missiles are a class of advanced weaponry that travel at speeds greater than Mach 5 *i.e.*, five times the speed of sound or more than 5,400 km/hr. These advanced weapons have the potential to bypass existing Air Defence Systems and deliver rapid and high-impact strikes. Scramjets are air-breathing engines capable of sustaining combustion at supersonic speeds without using any moving parts.

A new advanced ceramic **Thermal Barrier Coating (TBC)** having high thermal resistance & capable of operating beyond the melting point of steel has been jointly developed by DRDL and the Department of Science & Technology (DST) Laboratory. The coating is applied inside the Scramjet engine using special deposition methods that enhance their performance and longevity.

- 110.** Union Minister for Culture and Tourism, **Gajendra Singh Shekhawat**, inaugurated the '**Bhagwat**' exhibition, which is based on miniature paintings, at the **Allahabad Museum**. The 'Bhagwat' exhibition, curated by this historic museum of Prayagraj, is a meaningful attempt to embellish this special occasion.

Through this exhibition, the spiritual significance of the Maha Kumbh and stories related to Lord Ram are showcased.

This exhibition offers a chance to understand the depth of art present in our country.

The Union Minister also released the museum's publications, the quarterly magazine '**Vividha**', and a special Maha Kumbh ticket for museum entry.

- 111.** The **ePlane Company**, incubated at **IIT Madras** and developer of electric Vertical Takeoff and Landing (eVTOL) aircraft, has become the first private Indian company to secure acceptance from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) for the Type Certification of its electric **Vertical Takeoff and Landing (eVTOL) aircraft**, the e200X.

It aims to launch its eVTOL services by 2026 and is targeting the movement of over 500,000 people daily within three years.

The e200X features a compact wingspan that reduces infrastructure needs, making it accessible globally to diverse regions across India and similar markets.

ePlane Company, founded in 2019, is based in Chennai, Tamil Nadu.

- 112.** The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, was apprised of the **Progress under the National Health Mission (NHM)** during the years **2021-22, 2022-23, and 2023-24**.

Key achievements:

Human Resource:

- In the fiscal year 2021-22, NHM enabled the hiring of 2.69 lakh additional healthcare workers, such as General Duty Medical Officers (GDMOs), specialists, staff nurses, ANMs, AYUSH doctors, allied healthcare workers, and public health managers. Furthermore, 90,740 Community Health Officers (CHOs) were also engaged.
- This number saw substantial growth in the following years, with 4.21 lakh additional healthcare professionals, including 1.29 lakh CHOs, hired in FY 2022-23, and 5.23 lakh workers, which included 1.38 lakh CHOs, engaged in FY 2023-24.

Health indicators:

- The **Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR)** has declined from 130 per lakh live births in 2014-16 to 97 per lakh in 2018-20, signifying a 25% reduction. Since 1990, the MMR has decreased by **83%**, compared to the global decline of 45%.
- The Under-5 Mortality Rate (U5MR) dropped from 45 per 1,000 live births in 2014 to 32 in 2020, reflecting a 75% reduction relative to the global decrease of 60% since 1990.
- The Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) also fell from 39 per 1,000 live births in 2014 to 28 in 2020.
- The Total Fertility Rate (TFR) declined from 2.3 in 2015 to 2.0 in 2020, according to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5).

Elimination and control of various diseases:

- Under the **National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme (NTEP)**, tuberculosis (TB) incidence has decreased from 237 per 100,000 population in 2015 to 195 in 2023, and the mortality rate has reduced from 28 to 22 during the same period.
- Regarding malaria, cases and deaths fell by 13.28% and 3.22%, respectively, in 2021 compared to 2020. In 2022, an increase in malaria surveillance and cases was observed, with a rise of 32.92% and 9.13%, respectively, although deaths decreased by 7.77% compared to 2021. In 2023, surveillance and cases of malaria increased by 8.34% and 28.91%, respectively, compared to 2022.
- **Kala-azar** elimination efforts have been effective, with 100% of endemic blocks achieving the goal of fewer than one case per 10,000 population by the end of 2023.
- The **Measles-Rubella Elimination Campaign**, part of Intensified Mission Indradhanush (IMI) 5.0, successfully vaccinated over 34.77 crore children, reaching **97.98%** coverage.

Health initiatives:

- The **Pradhan Mantri TB Mukh Bharat Abhiyaan**, launched in September 2022, has seen the registration of 1,56,572 lakh Ni-kshay Mitra volunteers who are supporting over 9.40 lakh TB patients.
- In FY 2023-24, the **Pradhan Mantri National Dialysis Programme (PMNDP)** has provided over 62.35 lakh haemodialysis sessions, benefiting more than **4.53 lakh dialysis patients**.
- The **National Sickle Cell Anemia Elimination Mission**, launched in 2023, has screened 2.61 crore individuals in tribal areas, aiming to eliminate sickle cell disease by 2047.
- In January 2023, the **U-WIN platform** was launched to ensure timely vaccination for pregnant women, infants, and children across India. By the end of FY 2023-24, it had expanded to 65 districts across 36 States/UTs, enabling real-time vaccination tracking and improving overall immunization coverage.
- NHM has contributed to a 17.3% reduction in tobacco use over the past decade.
- In FY 2022-23, the **National Action Plan for Snakebite Envenoming (NAPSE)** was launched, with efforts focused on the prevention, education, and management of snakebites.

Public Health Facilities:

- As of March 2024, 7,998 public health facilities have been certified, with over 4,200 of them receiving national certification.
- The number of operational Ayushman Arogya Mandir (AAM) centers, which provide a range of healthcare services, has increased to 1,72,148 by the end of FY 2023-24, with 1,34,650 of these centers offering 12 key healthcare services.

- By March 2024, 12,348 Primary Health Centres (PHCs) had been converted to 24x7 services, and 3,133 FRUs were operational across the country.
- The fleet of mobile medical units (MMUs) has expanded, with 1,424 MMUs now operating to ensure healthcare access in remote and underserved areas. The introduction of the MMU Portal in 2023 further strengthened monitoring and data collection on health indicators for vulnerable tribal groups.

The National Rural Health Mission was launched in 2005 to build public health systems to provide accessible, affordable, and quality health care to the rural population, especially the vulnerable groups, up to the District Hospitals (DH) level. In 2012, the National Urban Health Mission (NUHM) was conceptualized and the NRHM was rechristened as the National Health Mission (NHM) with two Sub Missions viz. the NRHM and the NUHM.

- 113.** The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA), chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has approved the **Minimum Support Prices (MSP) of Raw Jute for Marketing season 2025-26**. The MSP of Raw Jute (TD-3 grade) has been fixed at **Rs.5,650/- per quintal** for the 2025-26 season. This would ensure a return of 66.8 percent over the all-India weighted average cost of production.

The approved MSP of raw jute for Marketing season 2025-26 is in line with the principle of fixing MSP at a level of at least 1.5 times all India's weighted average cost of production as announced by the Government in the Budget 2018-19.

The MSP of Raw Jute for Marketing season 2025-26 is an increase of Rs.315/- per quintal over the previous Marketing season 2024-25. Government of India has increased MSP of Raw jute from Rs.2400 /-per quintal in 2014-15 to Rs.5,650/- per quintal in 2025-26, registering an increase of Rs. 3250/- per quintal (2.35 times).

The MSP amount paid to Jute growing farmers during the period 2014-15 to 2024-25 was Rs. 1300 Crore while during the period 2004-05 to 2013-14, the amount paid was Rs. 441 Crore.

- 114.** The Government of India has set a target of reaching **10,000 Geographical Indication (GI) tags by 2030**. This announcement was made by Union Minister of Commerce and Industry, **Piyush Goyal**, during the GI Samagam held in New Delhi.

The Gi Samagam was organized by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) in collaboration with the India Today Group.

Currently, India has issued **605 GI tags**, reflecting an opportunity for growth in this sector.

To achieve the target of 10,000 GI tags, a committee will be established to oversee this initiative.

This approach aims to streamline processes and enhance collaboration across various sectors.

The number of authorized users for GI tags increased from 365 to 29000 and the number of patents granted increased from 6000 to 100000, in the last 10 years.

Geographical Indications refer to signs used on products that have a specific geographical origin. These products possess qualities or a reputation that are due to that origin. GI tags help protect local products from misuse and promote their uniqueness.

- 115.** The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) announced that **eSankhyiki**, India's premier platform for statistical data dissemination, has **134 million records** in its repository within just seven months of its launch in **June 2024**.

This achievement aligns with India's role as a member of the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC), reinforcing its global commitment to statistical excellence and open data. eSankhyiki, developed using open-source tools and in-house expertise, provides a comprehensive repository of time-series data across key domains, including National Accounts

Statistics (NAS), Price Statistics, NSS Surveys, Economic Census, and Index of Industrial Production (IIP).

The platform empowers researchers, policymakers, businesses, and citizens with user-friendly dashboards that allow filtering, visualization, and data export in multiple formats through APIs in line with the principles of Data as a public good.

116. The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) notified amendments to the Income-Tax Rules of 1962 to prescribe conditions for the applicability of a presumptive taxation regime for non-resident cruise ship operators.

As a measure to promote investment and employment, the **Finance Act of 2024**, introduced a presumptive taxation regime for non-residents engaged in the business of operating cruise ships. An exemption has been provided for income of a foreign company from lease rentals of cruise ships, received from a related company operating such ships in India.

The applicability of this presumptive taxation regime is subject to prescribed conditions, which include the requirement that:

- The passenger ship being operated must have a carrying capacity of more than **200 passengers** or a length of **75 meters or more**, be used for leisure and recreational purposes, and have appropriate dining and cabin facilities for passengers.
- The ship being operated must also be on a scheduled voyage or shore excursion, touching at least **two seaports in India** or the **same sea ports in India twice**.
- The ship must be primarily for **passenger transport**, not for cargo.
- The ship must be operated according to the procedures and guidelines issued by the **Ministry of Tourism or Ministry of Shipping**.

117. Chief Justice of the Telangana High Court Justice Alok Aradhe was sworn in as the Chief Justice of the Bombay High Court.

Maharashtra Governor C. P. Radhakrishnan administered the oath of office to him at a brief swearing-in ceremony held at Darbar Hall in Raj Bhavan Mumbai.

He succeeded Justice Devendra Kumar Upadhyaya who demitted office on January 17 after heading the HC for a year and a half.

Other appointment:

Justice Devendra Kumar Upadhyaya was officially sworn in as the **Chief Justice of the Delhi High Court** in a formal ceremony. The oath was administered by Delhi Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena at the Raj Niwas.

118. Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation, Amit Shah, has inaugurated the Hindu Adhyatmik Aur Seva Mela in Ahmedabad, Gujarat.

The Mela, organized by the Hindu Aadhyatmik Seva Sansthan, brought together more than 200 'Seva Sanstha' on one platform. The fair features stalls offering urban visitors a glimpse into the tribal lifestyles.

The Union Minister also inaugurated and laid the foundation stone for various development projects worth **Rs. 651 Crore** of the **Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC)**.

- He announced the development of amusement parks and markets on both sides of the road to benefit the residents of Naranpura, Vadaj, Ranip, Chandlodia, and Ghatlodia.
- He also announced the inauguration of long-pending development projects in Chainpur and D Cabin, which will significantly reduce the travel distance between Ranip, Nava Ranip, Chainpur, and D Cabin.

- He introduced the initiative to construct step-wells (Bavdis) for rainwater harvesting in 350 societies in Ranip, ensuring that no society incurs any costs, as the Central and State Governments and AMC fund the project.

Union Minister Amit Shah also inaugurated **Shri Babulal Roopchand Shah Mahavir Cancer Hospital and Shri Phoolchandbhai Jaikishandas Vakharia Sanatorium** in **Surat, Gujarat**. The hospital is built at a cost of about Rs. 250 crores with a 110-bed facility.

119. Union Minister for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry, and Dairying & Panchayati Raj, **Rajiv Ranjan Singh alias Lalan Singh** inaugurated the "**Conclave on Dialogue for Holistic Development of Livestock Sectors in the North-East Region**" held in **Shillong, Sikkim**.

During the conclave, the Union Minister launched and inaugurated several significant projects.

- These included 15 Entrepreneurship Development Projects (EDPs) under the National Livestock Mission (NLM), with a total value of Rs.10.93 crore, and the establishment of four Fodder Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) facilitated by the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB).
- A Regional Semen Production Laboratory and Goat Semen Bank were announced to be set up in Khanapara under the NLM, backed by an investment of Rs.337.29 lakh.
- The NDDB would initiate a Baseline Village Survey to facilitate the formation of multipurpose dairy cooperative societies in Arunachal Pradesh, focusing on the Namsai, Lohit, and Lower Dibang Valley districts.
- He inaugurated the **Intensive Cattle Development Project in Khliehtyrshi, Meghalaya**, with an investment of Rs.31.86 lakhs, and the **Multiplier Pig Farm in Kyrdemkulai, Ri Bhoi District**, at a cost of Rs.10.23 crore.
- A "**Poultry Song**" in the Khasi language, titled "Ka Kam Ri Syiar, Kyntiew Ka loh Ka Kot," was launched to promote poultry farming in the region, along with the release of the **Meghalaya Animal Administrative Report 2023-2024**.
- He also launched a Development and Conservation Program for Siri Cattle in Sikkim, which is supported by an investment of ₹215.6 lakh. A Regional AI Training Centre was established in Gangtok under the Rashtriya Gokul Mission (RGM) at a cost of ₹450 lakh.
- He also launched an AI Training Centre focused on pigs at the Central Livestock Farm in Debipur, Tripura, which boasts a budget of ₹84 lakhs.
- A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed with the Transforming Rural India Foundation (TRIF) and the State Government of Assam to enhance convergence on awareness programs and provide technical assistance.
- An additional MoU was established for the handover of a Milk Processing Plant located at Ghungoor, Silchar, Assam, facilitated by the Directorate of Dairy Development, Government of Assam.

120. Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), **Bhupender Yadav**, chaired the meeting of the Parliamentary Consultative Committee of the Ministry, in **Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu**.

The meeting focused on the implementation of the **Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA)**.

During the meeting, the committee members appreciated the efforts made under CAMPA to enhance forest cover and maintain ecological balance. They also provided valuable suggestions for further improvement in the implementation of CAMPA.

A book titled 'Glimpses: Success Stories of CAMPA 2022-24', showcasing the works carried out by CAMPA between the years 2022 and 2024, was also released after the meeting.

The Committee also inspected the research activities at the Institute of Forest Genetics and Tree Breeding (IFGTB), Coimbatore.

- 121.** The Government of India notified **rules for radar equipment** for the measurement of speed of vehicles under the Legal Metrology (General) Rules, 2011. These rules will come into force on **1st July 2025**.

The Rules provide that all such equipment shall be verified and stamped to ensure their correctness for the protection of human beings. The rules will also ensure precise measurement of speed, distance, and other relevant parameters.

The verified radar equipment will help in enforcement personnel to measure speed limits effectively, which in turn significantly enhances the effectiveness and credibility of law enforcement officers in traffic enforcement.

The verified & stamped Radar equipment for the measurement of the speed of vehicles is crucial for preventing accidents, wear & tear of roads, etc.

Radar devices emit radio waves that bounce off moving vehicles, calculating speed based on the Doppler Effect. Modern radar systems are highly accurate and can measure the speed of multiple vehicles simultaneously and often include features like automatic target tracking.

- 122.** The **Pangsau Pass International Festival**, a three-day event celebrating border trade and cultural exchange, was observed in **Nampong, Arunachal Pradesh**.

The festival celebrates the region's cultural heritage and its historical significance during **World War II**. This year's festival coincides with the **80th anniversary** of the war's conclusion.

The festival offers a platform for cross-border trade and cultural exchange with the neighboring country Myanmar to exhibit its culture and other products.

The festival conjoins the tribes of both North East and Myanmar and gives them the opportunity to showcase their culture and traditions to the world.

Note: Pangsau Pass (Pan Saung Pass) is located on the India-Myanmar border at an altitude of 3,727 feet (1,136 meters). It lies on the crest of the Patkai Hills and is part of the famous Ledo Road (Stilwell Road). It is named after the Myanmar village Pangsau, located 2 km east of the pass.

- 123.** The **Union Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare** has launched its **first-ever survey** on the **'MyGov'** portal to assess **edible oil consumption** patterns in India.

This initiative aims to support the effective implementation of the National Mission on Edible Oils-Oilseeds (NMEO-Oilseeds).

The primary aim of this survey is to understand edible oil consumption trends and provide actionable data to shape policies under NMEO-Oilseeds.

The Survey involved a **45-day questionnaire** from various stakeholders like consumers and distributors of edible oil.

The survey, started on 9th January 2025, ended on 23rd February 2025.

The survey also analyses the behaviour pattern and influence of advertisement, labelling, and willingness to pay for premium oils.

The survey results will help determine which oilseeds should be prioritized under the NMEO-Oilseeds program. This program aims to increase domestic production of oilseeds, reducing the dependency on imports.

- 124.** The **National Security Council Secretariat, Government of India** organized the **Second Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Cyber Security Cooperation** in New Delhi.

The First BIMSTEC Experts Group Meeting on Cyber Security was also hosted by India in 2022 in New Delhi.

The BIMSTEC Expert Group meeting aimed to establish an **Action Plan** to strengthen coordination and collaboration among BIMSTEC Member States to enhance cyber security in ICT use.

- This Action Plan includes procedures for exchanging cyber-related information, tackling cybercrime, safeguarding critical information infrastructures, responding to cyber incidents, and keeping up with international cyber norms.
- The plan is intended to be carried out over a span of five years.

During the second meeting, key developments included forming a **CERT-TO-CERT** cooperation mechanism, a Cybercrime Cooperation Framework for Law Enforcement agencies, and capacity-building programs focused on cyber security in the region.

India also presented its initiatives of the Indian Cybercrime Coordination Centre (I4C) on “Cyber Hygiene for school children.”

It was agreed that the successful implementation of the Action Plan would significantly bolster cyber security cooperation within BIMSTEC.

125. The conference on ‘**Sun, Space Weather, and Solar-Stellar Connections**’ was organized by the **Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA)** to commemorate the **125th anniversary** of the **Kodaikanal Solar Observatory**.

The Observatory has been providing invaluable insights into the Sun's behaviour and its impact on Earth through its repository of photographic images and was the harbinger of the birth of solar astrophysics in the country.

The conference featured a diverse program of presentations, discussions, and poster sessions with themes like Solar magnetism over long time scales, Solar magnetism in high resolution, energetic phenomena, Solar-stellar connection, and Heliosphere and space weather, allowing participants to share their latest findings, exchange ideas, foster collaborations, and strengthen international cooperation.

This conference celebrates the birth and growth of solar astronomy and solar physics in the country.

The Kodaikanal Solar Observatory (KSO) of the Indian Institute of Astrophysics, a cornerstone of Indian astronomy, established in 1899, has been at the forefront of solar research.

126. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh flagged off a **Battlefield Surveillance System (BSS)** named ‘**SANJAY**’ to transform Indian Army operations with integrated data from sensors providing real-time battlefield insights.

SANJAY has been indigenously & jointly developed by the **Indian Army and Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL)**.

This system will be inducted to all operational Brigades, Divisions & Corps of the Indian Army in three phases *w.e.f.* March to October of 2025, which has been declared as the ‘Year of Reforms’ by the Ministry of Defence (MoD).

This system has been developed under the Buy (Indian) category at a cost of **Rs 2,402 crore**. SANJAY is an automated system that integrates the inputs from all ground and aerial battlefield sensors, processing them to confirm their veracity, preventing duplication, and fusing them to produce a Common Surveillance Picture of the battlefield over a secured Army Data Network & Satellite Communication Network.

The BSS is equipped with state-of-the-art sensors and cutting-edge analytics. It will monitor the vast land borders, prevent intrusions, assess situations with unparalleled accuracy, and prove to be a force multiplier in Intelligence, Surveillance & Reconnaissance.

127. The **Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI)** under the Union Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways has upgraded its existing sub-office at **Varanasi** to a full-fledged Regional Office. This has been done for the effective implementation of Inland Water Transport (IWT) activities in National Waterway-1 (NW-1), River Ganga.

The decision is aimed at streamlining IWAI projects and related works in the state of Uttar Pradesh.

IWAI presently has five regional offices in **Guwahati (Assam), Patna (Bihar), Kochi (Kerala), Bhubaneswar (Odisha) and Kolkata (West Bengal)**. It will now have its **sixth regional office in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh**.

The Varanasi regional office with its sub-office at Prayagraj will oversee works in the 487-kilometre stretch from Majhua to Varanasi MMT (Multi-Modal Terminal) and further up to Prayagraj, apart from other NWs in Uttar Pradesh.

The implementation of the World Bank-supported **Jal Marg Vikas Project (JMVP)** will be one of its key priorities.

There are about 30 rivers in Uttar Pradesh, of which 10 have been declared as National Waterways. The Varanasi Regional Office of IWAI shall look after development works not only on the River Ganga but its various tributaries and other national waterways in Uttar Pradesh. These include rivers like Betwa, Chambal, Gomti, Tons, Varuna, and parts of Gandak, Ghaghra, Karamnasa, and Yamuna rivers.

It will also be coordinating with the State IWT Authority set up for the development of waterways in Uttar Pradesh.

Jal Marg Vikas Project (JMVP):

JMVP is aimed at the capacity augmentation of River Ganga, i.e., NW-1 through various river conservancy works like bandalling and maintenance dredging in addition to already constructed MMT at Varanasi to promote cruise tourism and smooth cargo movement along the waterway.

Three Multi-Modal Terminals – one each at Varanasi, Sahibganj, and Haldia along with an Inter-Modal Terminal at Kalughat and a new navigational lock at Farakka in West Bengal have been built under JMVP to facilitate easy navigation along River Ganga.

Besides, 60 community jetties are being built along NW-1 in four states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, and West Bengal – to facilitate local commuters, small and marginal farmers, artisans, and fishermen communities.

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128. The **first edition** of the **Technology Dialogue** was held at the **Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru, Karnataka** from 24 & 25 January 2025 in a hybrid mode with both virtual and physical presence.

The theme of the dialogue was "**Exploring New Frontiers in Technology Diplomacy**".

The **External Affairs Ministry** organized the dialogue in partnership with the Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India and IISc Bengaluru.

The summit was inaugurated with a keynote address on the International Technology Engagement Framework (ITEF) by **Dr Jitendra Singh**, Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science and Technology.

During the event, the Union Minister unveiled "**Vision India Techade**", envisaging a global leadership role for India, particularly in innovation and technology.

The event also featured the **India-France AI Policy Roundtable: Roadmap for the AI Action Summit 2025**. The roundtable focused on the following key objectives:

- Unified Global AI Governance
- Understanding AI Technologies and Implications
- Addressing the Digital Divide and Market Concentration
- Common and Open AI Infrastructure

- Cultural and Linguistic Diversity in AI
- Sustaining AI Innovation and Addressing Resource Needs

129. The **Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE)**, Ministry of Power, Government of India, and **The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI)** have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to jointly establish a **Centre of Excellence for Energy Transition (CoEET)**.

The CoEET will be housed at TERI's Institute of Energy Transition (IoET) at its campus in **Hyderabad**.

The Centre will act as a catalyst for clean energy adoption, enabling to lead the global transition to a low-carbon economy.

The CoEET will conduct comprehensive research and studies across various sectors to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve energy efficiency, and promote the adoption of low-carbon technologies. Its scope will include exploring innovative solutions for emission reductions in industries, MSMEs, buildings, transport, power, and mining sectors.

The Centre will also focus on advancing energy-efficient technologies such as motors, HVAC systems, advanced boilers, smart manufacturing, and waste heat recovery systems.

The Centre will support the formulation of policy and regulatory recommendations for building codes, energy performance standards, and appliance labeling while promoting circular economy practices and integrating advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence and real-time energy monitoring.

As part of its mandate, the Centre will contribute to enhancing energy efficiency in power generation, transmission, and distribution systems to minimize losses and support India's energy security goals.

130. Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation, **Amit Shah**, addressed the inaugural function of **International Year of Cooperatives 2025** in **Mumbai, Maharashtra**.

The Ministry of Cooperation has outlined a 12-month program to celebrate the Year of Cooperatives in India.

The Union Minister virtually inaugurated the umbrella organization for cooperative banks, the **National Urban Cooperative Finance and Development Corporation (NUCFDC)**. This organization will provide multidimensional benefits to the urban cooperative sector.

The focus will be on better utilization of resources, improving banking processes, and unifying the accounting systems of all cooperative banks.

India currently has a total of 1,465 urban cooperative banks, nearly half of which are located in Gujarat and Maharashtra. The country also has 49 scheduled banks and over 8.25 lakh cooperative institutions.

The training program for the **10,000 M-PACS (Multipurpose Primary Agricultural Cooperative Societies)** formed under the new bylaws started during the event.

131. The **Ministry of Tourism**, Government of India, participated in the **International Tourism Trade Fair**, better known as **FITUR**, held in **Madrid, Spain**. The aim is to position India as a potential leading destination in the source market of Spain and Latin America.

The exhibition at FITUR is considered to be a benchmark event in the tourism sector.

FITUR is the global meeting point for tourism professionals and the leading fair for inbound and outbound markets in Ibero-America.

The Incredible India pavilion at FITUR was inaugurated by **Dinesh K. Patnaik**, Ambassador of India to Spain, in the presence of officials from the Ministry of Tourism, State governments, and co-exhibitors.

The India Pavilion showcased India's rich cultural and natural heritage, including renowned museums, wildlife sanctuaries, spiritual destinations, and dance forms, all of which together combine to make India a popular destination for travelers seeking unique and authentic experiences.

The Ministry of Tourism also launched the '**Chalo India Initiative**'. The Indian diaspora members can register themselves on the Chalo India portal - www.chaloindia.gov.in to receive a unique referral code and send 5 non-Indian friends to travel to India to explore the grandeur and diverse experiences that India offers.

Note: The year 2026 will be marked as the Dual Year of Culture, Tourism, and Artificial Intelligence on the occasion of the 70th year of diplomatic relations between India and Spain.

132. Indian Railways has achieved a significant milestone by upgrading **over 23,000 track kilometers (TKM)** of the Indian Railways network to support train speeds of up to **130 kilometers per hour (kmph)**.

This remarkable progress underscores the government's commitment to modernizing railway infrastructure, improving connectivity, and reducing travel times for millions of passengers nationwide.

Nearly **one-fifth** of India's railway network is now equipped for higher speeds.

The modernization of track infrastructure involves comprehensive upgrades, including the strengthening of tracks to ensure stability and durability for high-speed operations, the implementation of advanced signalling systems for precise communication and safe train operations, and the installation of safety measures such as fencing at vulnerable locations to enhance security and mitigate risks.

The upgrades prominently feature sections of the **Golden Quadrilateral** and **Golden Diagonal** networks, vital corridors linking the nation's major cities.

Around **54,337 TKM** of tracks have been upgraded to support speeds up to **110 kmph**.

Compared to the previous year, specialized train services during periods of peak demand increased significantly by **54%**, reaching to **57,169** services.

A **4% rise** in **earnings** between **April and December** of the current fiscal year, 2024-25 with **₹1.26 lakh crore** revenue from freight operations. The **passenger segment earnings** increased by **6%**, reaching **Rs 55,988 crores**.

A **2%** higher capital expenditure in 2024-25 where the capital investments increased to **₹1.92 lakh crore** during the current fiscal year, 2024-25 showcasing the government's commitment to infrastructure development.

For the January-24 to November-24 period, the revenue earning freight loading on Indian Railways was **1473.05 metric tonnes**, recording a growth of **3.86%** over the corresponding period of last year.

133. THDC India Limited, a Mini-Ratna PSU, marked a significant milestone by declaring the Commercial Operation Date (COD) of Unit #1 of the **1320 MW Khurja Super Thermal Power Plant (KSTPP)**.

Traditionally focusing on hydropower, THDCIL's landmark achievement now demonstrates its prowess in the thermal power sector, highlighting the company's journey towards further energy self-reliance in India.

The Commercial Operation Declaration (COD) is a significant milestone as it marks the official point when the plant is considered commercially operational and capable of generating and supplying electricity to the grid.

With this achievement, the Khurja Super Thermal Power Plant (KSTPP) will start feeding reliable electricity to UP (64.7%), Rajasthan (21.3%), Uttarakhand (3.9%) and Unallocated regions (10.1%).

The **Flue Gas De-sulphurization (FGD)** system has been integrated into the Khurja Thermal Power Plant to control emissions, specifically targeting the removal of Sulphur Di Oxide (SO₂) from flue gas. This system reduces the environmental impact of burning fossil fuels, thus improving air quality.

R. K. Vishnoi is the current CMD of THDC India Limited.

- 134. Chhattisgarh-based Coal India Subsidiary South Eastern Coalfields Limited (SECL)** has achieved a remarkable **281 million cubic meters (MCuM)** in **overburden removal (OBR)** from April 2024 to date, surpassing **105%** of its pro-rata target and noting a 19.82 MCuM (7.58%) increase compared to last year's same time.

OBR is a crucial pre-coal extraction process that involves clearing soil and rock layers to access coal reserves.

With this momentum, SECL is confident of surpassing its annual target and achieving an additional 40-45 million cubic meters of OBR, marking the highest ever in the company's history. SECL has deployed the vertical ripper technique, an environmentally friendly, blast-free method for overburden removal in its megaprojects. This approach ensures minimal environmental impact while maintaining high efficiency in operations.

Dr. Prem Sagar Mishra is the current Chairman-cum-Managing Director of SECL.

- 135.** The Department of Consumer Affairs has notified the **Draft Legal Metrology (Indian Standard Time) Rules, 2025**, for the "One Nation, One Time" initiative to establish synchronized and precise **Indian Standard Time (IST)** across the country.

The project, undertaken in collaboration with the **National Physical Laboratory (NPL)** and the **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)**, seeks to disseminate IST with millisecond to microsecond accuracy.

To achieve this precision, infrastructure will be established in **five Legal Metrology laboratories** across India.

This precision is vital for sectors such as navigation, telecommunications, power grid synchronization, banking, digital governance, and cutting-edge scientific research, including deep space navigation and gravitational wave detection.

At present, many Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) and Internet Service Providers (ISPs) rely on foreign time sources like GPS instead of IST, posing risks to cybersecurity and the reliability of critical infrastructure.

Recognizing these challenges, a high-powered inter-ministerial committee, chaired by the Secretary of Consumer Affairs, has been constituted.

The committee includes representatives from NPL, ISRO, IIT Kanpur, NIC, CERT-In, SEBI, and various government departments, including Railways, Telecom, and Financial Services. Its mandate is to develop a policy framework and regulations to ensure the mandatory adoption of IST across all sectors.

IST, based on Coordinated Universal Time (UTC) with a 5:30-hour offset, is maintained by the **CSIR-National Physical Laboratory (CSIR-NPL)**.

The draft rules propose synchronization of all legal, administrative, and commercial activities with IST, prohibiting the use of alternative time references unless explicitly permitted by the government.

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- 136. Birla Institute of Management Technology (BIMTECH)** has introduced a blockchain-based digital currency, '**BIMCOIN**', which is designed exclusively for BIMTECH's ecosystem.

BIMCOIN facilitates secure, transparent, and instant transactions among students, vendors, and administrators through a permissioned blockchain platform.

Following IIT Madras, BIMTECH became India's first business management institute to launch a blockchain-based digital currency.

BIMCOIN operates on a blockchain, offering decentralization, transparency, and programmable features like smart contracts.

BIMCOIN streamlines payments, promotes transparency, and introduces advanced financial tools, ensuring enhanced security, fraud protection, and ethical practices.

137. The **Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO)** has successfully launched its historic **100th launch** from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota.

The **GSLV-F15** with the **NVS-02 satellite** lifted off from the spaceport's second launch pad.

The GSLV-F15 is the **17th flight** of India's Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV) and the **11th flight** with the Indigenous Cryo stage. It is the 8th operational flight of GSLV with an indigenous Cryogenic stage.

NVS-02:

- The NVS-02 satellite was designed, developed, and integrated at the **U. R. Satellite Centre (URSC)** with the support of other satellite-based work centers.
- NVS-02, the second satellite in the NVS series, is configured with navigation payload in L1, L5, and S bands in addition to ranging payload in C-band like its predecessor-NVS-01.
- It is configured on standard I-2K bus platforms with a lift-off mass of 2,250 kg and a power handling capability of ~3 kW.
- It will be placed at 111.75°E, replacing IRNSS-1E.
- NVS-02 uses a combination of indigenous and procured atomic clocks for precise time estimation.

ISRO first launched the satellite on **August 10, 1979**. It was the experimental flight of Satellite Launch Vehicle-3 (SLV-3 E10) carrying the Rohini Technology Payload, which was only partially successful.

138. The **Ministry of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME)** has launched the **Trade Enablement and Marketing (TEAM) initiative** to help MSMEs adopt digital commerce by leveraging the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC).

It has been launched under the World Bank-supported "**Raising and Accelerating MSME Productivity (RAMP)**" Programme of the Ministry of MSMEs.

The initiative will leverage Digital Public Infrastructure through ONDC to support micro and small enterprises (MSEs)

The total outlay of the initiative is **Rs.277.35 crore**.

The duration of the initiative is from **FY 2024-2025 to FY 2026-2027**.

Target:

- **5 lakh MSEs** to benefit from the scheme in three years, **50 percent** of which would be Women-owned enterprises.
- **150 Workshops** will be organized preferably in tier 2, and 3 cities to create awareness about the initiative among MSMEs and onboarding onto the ONDC network, along with demand generation drives through digital marketing.

NSIC (National Small Industries Corporation), a Mini Ratna CPSE under the Ministry of MSME, Govt of India is the implementing agency for this Initiative.

Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) is an initiative of the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce, aimed at democratizing digital commerce. Unlike traditional platforms, ONDC enables interoperability across buyer & seller applications.

T Koshy is the current Managing Director and CEO of ONDC.

STATES AFFAIRS

139. Tamil Nadu Chief Minister **MK Stalin** has inaugurated **India's first glass bridge in Kanyakumari**, connecting the **Vivekananda Rock Memorial to the Thiruvalluvar statue**.

- The Bowstring Arch Bridge (Mirror Bridge) is constructed at a cost of ₹37 crore.
- The glass bridge spans 77 meters in length and 10 meters in width. This covered bridge will provide visitors with a unique vantage point of the sea while facilitating easy access between the two iconic monuments.
- The glass bridge is designed to withstand harsh marine conditions, including corrosion and strong sea winds.

During the event, the Chief Minister also declared that the **Thiruvalluvar statue** will now be referred to as the '**Statue of Wisdom**.'

140. **Prakash Utsav** marks the birth anniversary of the tenth Sikh Guru, **Guru Gobind Singh**, a spiritual leader, warrior, poet, and philosopher. It takes place on the 15th day (New Moon) of Bhadon, the sixth month of the Punjabi calendar.

On this day, Sikhs all over the world send greetings to one another and vow to follow the path and teachings of Guruji. Gurudwaras across India and the world are lit up with beautiful lights and decorations.

In addition to this, a 'Langar' is organized in every gurudwara and Sikhs perform community service as well. In some places, the 'Nagar Prabhat Pheri' is also organized wherein Sikhs join in with great fervor and enthusiasm.

During Prakash Parv, Ardas is done, and prayers are offered in the Gurdwaras.

In 2025, the Prakash Utsav was observed on 6th January.

141. The state government of **Gujarat** has approved the creation of a new district named **Vav-Tharad** by dividing the existing Banaskantha district in North Gujarat.

The decision was made at the cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel in Gandhinagar.

This will be the 34th district of Gujarat, with its headquarters at Tharad.

The state cabinet also approved the proposal to grant the status of Municipal Corporation to 9 municipalities in the state including Navsari, Vapi, Anand, Nadiad, Mehsana, Surendranagar, Morbi, Porbandar, and Gandhidham. With this, the state will now have 17 Municipal Corporations and 149 Municipalities.

142. The **Maharashtra** government has introduced a new initiative, "**Reading Resolution of Maharashtra**", to encourage students to develop reading habits.

This initiative will be held every year from **January 1 to January 15**.

Under this initiative, universities, colleges, and public libraries will organize a series of events designed to engage students in collective reading and improve their social awareness through literature.

The universities and colleges will host “Reading Skills Workshops” aimed at helping students develop consistent reading habits. These workshops will guide how to select books and read them effectively.

The “Reading Dialogues” will be organized, inviting local authors to engage in discussions with students and introduce them to new literature.

A major feature of the initiative is the “Book Review and Narration Competition”, which will be held at the college level. All students will be encouraged to select a book outside of their regular curriculum, write a 500-word review, or narrate a five-minute reflection on it. The best entries will be awarded certificates and prizes, with the winning review published in the college’s annual magazine.

The committees at various levels will oversee the campaign, ensuring that the activities are carried out effectively throughout the state.

The initiative **Vachan Sankalp Maharashtra** is also being implemented under the initiative of the Department of Higher and Technical Education Government of Maharashtra.

143. The **Mira Bhayandar Municipal Corporation (MBMC), Maharashtra** has partnered with the **Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP) of NITI Aayog** and formally launched the ‘**Faral Sakhi**’ initiative under the Award to Reward initiative of WEP.

The ‘Faral Sakhi’ initiative aims at creating permanent employment opportunities for women by engaging them in the production and sale of traditional festive snacks (‘Faral’).

A central kitchen, set up by MBMC, enables women from self-help groups (SHGs) to prepare these snacks professionally.

MBMC supports these women by providing sales spaces and promoting their products through municipal advertisements. During the Diwali season, the initiative achieved remarkable success, selling over 3 tons of snacks due to their superior quality and taste.

25 women from Mira Bhayandar will be selected for technical training in business operations. This training, facilitated by the Centre for Education, Governance, and Public Policy (CEGP Foundation), will equip participants with the skills and knowledge needed to establish sustainable businesses and contribute to the local economy.

The initiative will provide comprehensive training and support to help women entrepreneurs engaged in traditional snack production to scale their ventures sustainably and effectively.

The ‘Award to Reward’ initiative under WEP offers a plug-and-play framework for stakeholders to develop impactful programs.

WEP, incubated in NITI Aayog in 2018 as an aggregator platform, transitioned into a public-private partnership in 2022.

WEP aims at empowering women entrepreneurs by overcoming information asymmetry and providing continuum of support across different pillars - Access to Finance; Market Linkages; Training and Skilling; Mentoring & Networking; Compliance & Legal Assistance and Business Development Services.

144. **Odisha** became the **34th state** to implement the **Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY)** after the National Health Authority (NHA) of the Union Ministry of Health entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Department of Health and Family Welfare, Government of Odisha.

The Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY) will be implemented in convergence with the existing **Gopabandhu Jan Arogya Yojana (GJAY)** in Odisha.

It will provide a cover of **Rs 5 lakh** per family per annum with an **additional Rs 5 lakh** for women members.

A total of approximately 1.03 crore families will come under the converged scheme with 67.8 lakh families supported by the Union Government.

The converged schemes will cumulatively benefit around 4.5 crore people of Odisha with the help of a single card.

- 145.** The state government of **Uttar Pradesh** has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with **Google Cloud (India)** to launch the **Gemini-powered** and **Beacon-enabled Uttar Pradesh Open Network for Agriculture**.

This is India's **first** state-level initiative leveraging AI for agriculture.

The initiative, designed as a digital public infrastructure (DPI), seeks to empower millions of farmers with one-stop access to advisory services, credit, mechanization, and market connectivity for selling their produce.

Farmers will also gain real-time, accurate information on microclimates and market prices, a significant step towards achieving the state government's vision of doubling farmers' income.

The open and decentralized network allows participation from various service providers, including input suppliers, financial institutions, and government agencies, while enabling entrepreneurs to curate and deliver tailored solutions for farmers.

The MoU was signed between UP chief secretary Manoj Kumar Singh and Google Cloud (India) vice-president Anil Bhansali.

- 146.** **Madhya Pradesh** has launched the **PARTH Yojana (Police Army Recruitment Training & Hunar)** to provide pre-recruitment training to the youth aspiring to join the Indian Army, Police, and Para-Military forces.

The scheme was launched by the Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh **Mohan Yadav** during the State Level Youth Festival.

The scheme emphasizes both physical and mental preparation while instilling patriotism and discipline among participants.

The primary objectives include encouraging patriotism, enhancing skill development, and improving employability.

Under this scheme, candidates will receive comprehensive pre-recruitment training, which includes physical fitness preparation, written examination coaching (focusing on subjects like general knowledge, mathematics, and English), and personality development guidance.

Training centers will be established at divisional levels, and the entire program will be overseen by district sports and youth welfare officers.

A key component of the PARTH is the development of the **MPYP (Madhya Pradesh Youth Platform) Portal**, which aims to bring all young individuals in the state onto a unified digital platform.

- 147.** The **Odisha** government has launched the **Shahid Madho Singh Haath Kharcha Scheme** to reduce the dropout rate among Scheduled Tribe (ST) students in the state.

The scheme was introduced at the **Adivasi Mela 2025**, which took place in Odisha from January 5th to 15th.

The scheme provides a one-time incentive of **Rs.5,000** for ST students enrolling in Class IX and Class XI. It is designed to encourage higher enrolment and completion rates for secondary and higher secondary education.

The financial support is exclusively available for ST students with an annual family income not exceeding **Rs.2,50,000**.

The Principal or Headmaster of the school will recommend eligible students and process applications through the Odisha State Scholarship Portal.

- 148. Chhattisgarh** has become the **first state in India** to introduce a pioneering initiative linking the ecosystem services of forests to the **Green Gross Domestic Product (Green GDP)**. The initiative ensures forests are valued not just for their resources but for their broader ecological services.

With **44% of its land** under forest cover, Chhattisgarh's natural resources are vital for the livelihoods of millions and play a significant role in mitigating climate change.

The initiative aligns with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Developed India 2047' vision, focusing on long-term ecological and economic sustainability.

Green GDP:

Green GDP is an alternative metric for assessing economic growth that includes the environmental costs of economic activities. It subtracts the value of natural resource depletion and environmental degradation from traditional GDP to provide a more accurate picture of economic well-being.

Formula: Green GDP = Traditional GDP – Costs of Environmental Degradation – Costs of Resource Depletion.

- 149. The Karnataka** state government launched a health insurance scheme for the employees of **Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC)** called '**KSRTC Arogya**'.

The scheme will benefit over 34,000 employees and their families, covering around 1.5 lakh people.

The scheme aims to ensure equitable and cashless medical treatment. It includes a wide range of healthcare services, such as eye and dental care, as well as alternative therapies such as Ayurveda, Unani and homeopathy.

Employees and their dependents will have no cap on inpatient treatment expenses, providing extensive coverage.

To fund the scheme, a monthly deduction of **Rs 650** will be made from employees' salaries, with an annual increment of **Rs 50**.

The programme is supported by a **Rs 20 crore** corpus fund established by the KSRTC Trust. KSRTC has partnered with 275 hospitals and four diagnostic centres across Karnataka to implement the scheme effectively.

- 150. Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Jagat Prakash Nadda** has visited key healthcare facilities in **Assam**, including the **Lokopriya Gopinath Bordoloi Regional Institute of Mental Health (LGBRIMH)**, **Mangaldai District Civil Hospital**, and **AIIMS Guwahati**, to inaugurate new initiatives and review ongoing healthcare projects aimed at enhancing medical services for the people of the region.

During his visit to LGBRIMH in Tezpur, the Union Health Minister inaugurated the institute's new Library and Informatics Centre.

He also visited Mangaldai District Civil Hospital in Darrang district, where he laid the foundation stone for a state-of-the-art 50-bedded **Critical Care Block (CCB)**. The CCB, to be constructed with a financial support of **Rs 23.75 crore** under PM ABHIM, will significantly improve access to advanced healthcare services for the people of Assam.

He also inspected ongoing treatments at the cancer hospital and visited a cancer care project under Tata Trusts.

- 151. The Assam government** has launched the first phase of '**Gunotsav 2025**,' a state-wide assessment to evaluate the performance of government schools' students, from 6th to 9th January 2025.

The theme of 'Gunotsav 2025' is "Ensuring Quality Education".

In the first phase, 11 districts of the state 16,056 schools, and 14,11,874 students were evaluated with the support of 6,365 external evaluators.

In the first phase, the Gunotsav was held in Barpeta, Bajali, Sribhumi, Kamrup, Karbi Anglong, Kokrajhar, Lakhimpur, Nagaon, Sivasagar, South Salmara Mankachar and Udalguri districts. The initiative covers all government elementary and secondary schools in the state.

- 152.** The **Telangana** government has decided to celebrate the birth anniversary of **Savitribai Phule**, on **January 3**, as '**Women Teacher's Day**' every year to honour the late social reformer and teacher's contributions to women's education.

State Chief Secretary Santhi Kumari issued a Government Order to this effect.

The government declared that the day would be celebrated as a state function.

The year 2025 marks the commemoration of the **194th** birth anniversary of Savitribai Phule.

Savitribai Phule fought against the caste system, patriarchy, and untouchability. She started the first girls' school in Pune in 1848 and became India's first woman teacher and first Indian headmistress.

- 153.** The **Karnataka Forest Department** has launched the '**Garudakshi**' online FIR system to curb forest encroachments, illegal tree-felling, poaching, and unauthorized entry into forest areas.

Garudakshi Portal:

- It is software modelled on the online FIR system to curb wildlife and forest crimes.
- It will be implemented on a pilot basis in the Bengaluru Urban, Bhadravathi, Sirsi, and Male Mahadeshwara Wildlife Sanctuary divisions of Karnataka.
- It will enable the online handling of forest crime cases under the Forest and Wildlife Protection Acts.
- The software consists of a Legacy Case Registration Module, Online Forest Offence Registration, Investigation Module, and Reporting and Analytics Module.
- The portal will also allow the public to register complaints on forest offenses using mobile phones or email addresses.
- It is developed in collaboration with the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI).

- 154.** The **Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath** has launched a special FM channel of **All India Radio Kumbhvani (103.5 MHz)**, dedicated to Maha Kumbh 2025, at Circuit House, Prayagraj.

He has also inaugurated the **Kumbh Mangal Dhvani** on this occasion.

The live commentary on Kumbhvani will be especially beneficial for those who would not be able to come to Prayagraj to participate in the Kumbh. This initiative of Prasar Bharati, the country's public service broadcaster, will not only promote the historical tradition of faith in India, but will also disseminate important information to the devotees and make them feel the cultural vibes at their homes.

Kumbhvani Channel: Introduction and Broadcast Duration

- Broadcast Period: 10 January 2025 to 26 February 2025
- Broadcast Time: 5:55 AM to 10:05 PM
- Frequency: FM 103.5 MHz

Special Events of Kumbhvani:

Live Broadcast:

- Live Broadcast of the main bathing rituals (14 and 29 January, 3 February).
- Daily live reporting on Kumbh area activities.
- Special Presentation on Cultural Heritage.
- Broadcast of Serial 'Shiva Mahima'.

- Special programmes based on Indian cultural heritage.

Talk Shows:

- 'Namaskar Prayagraj' (9:00-10:00 A.M.).
- 'From the Bank of Sangam' (4:00-5:30 P.M.).

Special Health Counselling:

- Live health consultation by doctors from the studio in the 'Hello Doctor' program.

Kumbh News:

- Main News Bulletins (8:40 AM, 2:30 PM and 8:30 PM).

Special Coverage:

- Coverage of cultural programs organized by the state government and various departments.
- Special program for youth, women, and foreign visitors.

155. Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren has launched the enhanced '**Maiyan Samman Yojana**' at a function in Namkum by transferring assistance for two months totaling **Rs 5,000 each** to the accounts of over **56.61 lakh** women beneficiaries.

The scheme was initially launched in **August 2024** providing **Rs 1,000** to women of 18-50 years numbering 56 lakhs.

From December 2024, the Government of Jharkhand enhanced the financial assistance to **Rs.2,500 per month**, offering stronger support to women beneficiaries.

156. The Andhra Pradesh State Skill Development Corporation (APSSDC) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with **Infosys** to enhance employment prospects and provide technical assistance for the **skill census** program.

The skill census is a **first-of-its-kind** initiative of the Andhra Pradesh government to assess the skill set and competencies of 35 million people in the state's working-age population.

Under this MoU, Infosys will extend its support to the state government in recording the skill sets of the participants by leveraging generative AI and facilitating the integration of a digital learning platform in the skill census framework to bridge skill gaps.

As part of its corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiative, Infosys will connect students to learning pathways and create a user-friendly interface to provide them with continuous learning opportunities.

157. The Musi River Historic Buildings in Hyderabad, Telangana, and Bhuj Historic Water Systems in Gujarat have been included in the **2025 World Monuments Watch** by the New York-based World Monuments Fund (WMF).

These sites face risks from climate change and water crises, highlighting the need for advocacy and preservation.

The WMF is a biennial nomination-based advocacy program featuring 25 historic places facing major challenges such as climate change, tourism, conflict, and natural disasters.

The World Monuments Watch, launched in 1996, is announced every two years and includes sites nominated by individuals and community-based organizations that span the globe.

The WMF has recently announced **25 sites** on the 2025 World Monuments Watch.

This year's Watch includes a wide variety of cultural heritage sites facing major challenges, such as Gaza's Historic Urban Fabric; Ukraine's Teacher's House in Kyiv; Africa's Swahili Coast; the Old City of Antakya, Turkey; and Chapel of the Sorbonne, France.

The 25 sites represent 29 countries across five continents and the Moon.

Bhuj Historic Water Systems:

Hamirsar Lake, at the heart of historic Bhuj, serves as a lifeline, symbolizing the city's enduring relationship with water. Celebrations occur each time it overflows, reaffirming this connection. Built-in the sixteenth century during Rao Khengarji's reign, the lake sustained Bhuj's development.

Over three centuries, a network of step-wells, tanks, and canals grew around it, ingeniously collecting rainwater and recharging groundwater.

As Bhuj's urban planning evolved, centralized systems overshadowed traditional methods. Modern infrastructures often struggle to meet demands, particularly during droughts, exacerbated by climate change. Bhuj now faces a water crisis, compromising traditional systems and reducing water resilience, weakening its sustainable heritage.

Musi River Historic Buildings:

The Musi River, flowing through Hyderabad, represents the city's rich cultural evolution and turbulent history. It connects iconic landmarks like the High Court and Osmania General Hospital, an Indo-Saracenic marvel vital to public health, and the former British Residency, now a women's university.

In recent decades, the river has faced another crisis: severe pollution, driven by rapid growth and industrial expansion. Its poor ecological health is impacting the Musi's everyday functions.

Note: The year 2025 marks the World Monuments Fund's 60th anniversary. It was established in 1965.

158. Gujarat hosted the **1st International Olympic Research Conference** at the Rashtriya Raksha University (RRU) campus in Gandhinagar from 27-30 January 2025.

The conference is organized by the Indian Olympic Association.

The conference addresses financial challenges and creates a sustainable roadmap for hosting the Olympics.

The four-day conference, in collaboration with the Union Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, featured keynote sessions on topics such as "2036 Vision: Pathway to Become an Olympic Host," "Global Best Practices and Comparative Analysis in Olympic City Selection and Urban Legacy," "Financing the Future: Innovative Economic Models for Hosting Olympics in India, Insights into Sustainable Funding and Investment," and "Greening the Games: Integrating Sustainability into the Indian Olympic Plan Strategies."

159. Uttarakhand has become the **first state** in India to implement the **Uniform Civil Code (UCC)**.

The state fully adopted the UCC on **27th January 2025**.

The UCC seeks to bring uniformity across personal laws relating to marriage, divorce, succession, and inheritance, ensuring equal rights regardless of caste, religion, or gender.

- The Uttarakhand Assembly passed the UCC bill on **7th February 2024** and received the President's assent on **13th March 2024**.
- The **Uttarakhand Uniform Civil Code Act, 2024**, covers a wide range of legal matters, including the creation and cancellation of wills, marriage registrations, and succession.
- It establishes clear guidelines for marriage eligibility, such as the legal age and mental capacity of both parties and mandates the registration of all marriages within 60 days.
- While the Act applies to all residents of Uttarakhand, it excludes Scheduled Tribes and protected persons.
- The government has set a six-month window for the registration of marriages conducted before March 26, 2010, or outside the state.

Note: Article 44 of the Indian Constitution advocates for the implementation of a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) across India.

160. Indore (Madhya Pradesh) and Udaipur (Rajasthan) have become the **first two Indian cities** to make it to the global list of **Accredited Wetland Cities** under the **Ramsar Convention on Wetlands**.

- **Indore:** Sirpur Lake (Ramsar Site) is recognized for water bird congregation and is being developed as a bird sanctuary.
- **Udaipur:** Surrounded by five major wetlands, namely, Pichola, Fateh Sagar, Rang Sagar, Swaroop Sagar, and Doodh Talai.

The Ramsar Convention promotes conservation and wise use of wetlands globally across 172 member countries. Accreditation recognizes cities valuing and conserving natural and human-made wetlands.

The latest round accredited **31 cities**, including these two, bringing the global total to **74 wetland cities**.

India currently has **85 protected wetlands** under the Ramsar treaty.

Wetland City Accreditation (WCA):

- It is a voluntary Accreditation system that provides an opportunity for cities that value their natural or human-made wetlands to gain international recognition and positive publicity for their efforts.
- It was approved in Uruguay in COP12 of the Ramsar Convention (2015).
- It is valid for 6 years, after which it must be renewed.

161. Secretary, Ministry of Coal, Vikram Dev Dutt, virtually inaugurated digital classrooms of government schools in Jharkhand. These classrooms are installed under '**Digi Vidya**', a CSR initiative of **Coal India Limited subsidiaries**.

'Digi Vidya' aims to ensure students of schools situated in mining areas of eight states where CIL's subsidiaries operate get quality education and none of them are left behind in the journey of 'Viksit Bharat'.

In the first phase, 272 government schools were upgraded under Digi Vidya with Smart classrooms.

- **Bharat Cooking Coal Ltd (BCCL)** has implemented Smart Classrooms and ICT labs in 79 schools of Dhanbad district, with an investment of over Rs. 10.69 crores.
- **CCL**, another Jharkhand-based subsidiary of CIL, is implementing Digi Vidya in 193 schools, situated in Chatra, Bokaro, Ramgarh, Pakur, Hazaribagh, Latehar, Ranchi, and Giridih.
- **Mahanadi Coalfields Limited (MCL)**, as part of its CSR initiative, has launched "Project Sambalpur Sikshothan – MCL Ke Shayog Say" to significantly improve the educational infrastructure in Sambalpur district. In this connection, an MoU was signed between MCL and the District Administration, Sambalpur, marking the commencement of the project. Under this initiative, 20,617 dual desk benches will be provided for 809 elementary schools in the district. This project, valued at ₹22.51 crore, will directly benefit over 40,000 students annually by providing proper sitting arrangements.
- **Northern Coalfields Limited (NCL)** launched a project worth Rs. 1.46 Crore in the operational district of Sonbhadra (U.P) covering the renovation of the infrastructure of three schools.
- As part of Coal India & WCL's Golden Jubilee Celebrations, WCL (**Western Coalfields Limited**) launched The Happy School project at Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia Government School. The project aims to redesign Government Schools using the innovative Building as Learning Aid (BaLA) concept. As a pilot, five Nagpur Municipal Corporation (NMC) schools were selected for the project benefiting 1,055 students.

- 162.** Union Minister of Housing & Urban Affairs, Manohar Lal Khattar visited **Karimnagar Smart City in Telangana** and inaugurated 4 prominent projects working in the sector of education, solid waste management, and social infrastructure.

Key projects inaugurated:

- **Development of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Stadium:** This Rs.22 crore project includes a commercial complex, renovation of the indoor hall, modern toilets, parking area, and landscaping, providing an inclusive space for recreation and sports.
- **Multi-purpose School Park:** Spread over 5.96 acres, this Rs.12.35 crore park has a walking track, musical fountain, and recreational facilities, providing a vibrant public space for families.
- **24x7 Water Supply:** This Rs.18 crore initiative has introduced a new water distribution network in the Housing Board Colony, increasing efficiency and accessibility in water management for residents.
- **Social Infrastructure in Schools and smart classrooms in govt schools:** Renovations carried out at a cost of Rs.9.20 crore, such as construction of toilet blocks, compound walls, borewells, and sports facilities, ensure a better learning environment for students in 27 govt schools. Also, smart classrooms were developed in 53 govt schools in Karimnagar to enhance the learning methodology in the city.

Karimnagar Smart City has implemented 50 projects worth Rs.1,117 crore. Of these, 36 projects worth ₹884 crore have been completed, and 14 projects worth ₹233 crore are under implementation. These initiatives contribute to key areas such as smart mobility, water supply, sanitation, and social infrastructure.

- 163.** Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has launched the **Kerala Warnings, Crisis, and Hazard Management System (KaWaCHaM)** to enhance disaster preparedness and response in the state, utilizing advanced technology for timely alerts regarding extreme weather events.

KaWaCHaM is developed by the **Kerala State Disaster Management Authority (KSDMA)** with support from the **National Disaster Management Authority** and the **World Bank**.

It is supported under the **National Cyclone Risk Mitigation Project (NCRMP)**.

It offers hazard assessment, alert issuance, and threat-based action planning. It provides updates for extreme weather events such as heavy rain, etc.

The entire system includes a network of 126 siren-strobe light units, 93 emergency operation centres connected via a Virtual Private Network (VPN), decision support software, and a large data centre.

- 164.** Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha has announced that the **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** has approved the **new state emblem**.

The proposal of the State Emblem of the government of Tripura has been examined in terms of Rule 4(2) of the State Emblem of India (Regulation of Use) Rules, 2007 (as amended in 2010), and has been found in order.

The state's newly designed emblem comprises the national emblem in the center of an outline of the Tripura map that is within a circle of saffron colour with the Tripura government written below.

- 165.** The **Gujarat Biodiversity Board** has announced the designation of the '**Inland Mangrove Guneri**' as the state's first Biodiversity Heritage Site (BHS). The aim is to protect a unique mangrove ecosystem that thrives in a non-tidal environment.

The initiative seeks to encourage conservation ethics and improve the quality of life for local communities. It also addresses the rapid loss of biodiversity in intensively managed areas.

The 'Inland Mangrove Guneri' site is located at Guneri in Lakhpat taluka of **Kutch** district.

Mangroves are commonly found along coasts with tidal movements occurring every 24 hours, resulting in persistent swampiness and mud. In contrast, the mangrove at Guneri, which is 45 km from the Arabian Sea and 4 km from Kori Creek, is an exception. This mangrove forest, covering a flat land area of 32.78 hectares, does not experience water inflow, nor is it muddy or swampy. This is a unique feature.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

166. China has introduced the **CR450** prototype, the **world's fastest high-speed train**, achieving test speeds of 450 km/h.

The CR450, developed by China State Railway Group Co (China Railway), surpassed its predecessor, the CR400 Fuxing, which operates at a maximum speed of 350 km/h.

The new prototypes are two CR450 models: the CR450AF and the CR450BF, both featuring an eight-car formation with four powered and four non-powered carriages.

The trains are equipped with an advanced, multi-level emergency braking system and over 4,000 sensors for the real-time monitoring of key systems, including car body, high-voltage pantograph, train control, and fire detection systems.

The new model aims to revolutionize domestic travel by reducing journey times and enhancing overall connectivity across the country.

167. The first India-Malaysia Security Dialogue was organized in **New Delhi**. The dialogue was co-chaired by **Ajit Doval**, National Security Adviser to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and **Raja Dato Nushirwan Bin Zainal Abidin**, Director General of the National Security Council of Malaysia. During the security dialogue, both sides exchanged views on the global and regional security environment and reviewed ongoing bilateral cooperation in the security, defense, and maritime fields.

The two sides agreed to deepen cooperation in counter-terrorism and deradicalization; cyber security; defense industry; and maritime security. They also explored ways to enhance cooperation in critical minerals and rare earths.

It was agreed to institutionalize the dialogue by holding annual meetings.

The dialogue is an outcome of the visit of the Prime Minister of Malaysia Dato Seri Anwar Ibrahim to India in August 2024 at the invitation of H.E. Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi. During this visit, India- Malaysia bilateral ties were elevated to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and both leaders agreed to strengthen bilateral security cooperation.

168. Indonesia, the world's fourth-most populous nation, officially became the **tenth full member** of the **BRICS group** on 6th January 2025. The announcement came from Brazil, a founding member and the rotating president for 2025.

Indonesia's candidacy was initially endorsed by BRICS leaders in August 2023.

BRICS was formed in 2009 by Brazil, Russia, India, and China, with South Africa joining in 2010. In 2024, the bloc expanded to include Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia, and the United Arab Emirates.

The bloc was conceived as a counterweight to the Group of Seven (G7) developed economies, made up of the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy and Japan.

Note: Brazil will host the BRICS Summit 2025 in Rio de Janeiro in July.

- 169. China** has launched the '**Shijian-25**' satellite into geostationary transfer orbit (GTO) to test on-orbit refueling and mission extension technologies. The satellite was lifted off through a **Long March 3B** rocket, climbing into the night sky above Xichang Satellite Launch Center, southwest China.
- Shijian-25 was developed and manufactured by the Shanghai Academy of Spaceflight Technology (SAST), a major CASC (China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation) subsidiary. The spacecraft will be used for satellite fuel replenishment and life extension service technology verification.
- This launch marked China's first rocket launch in 2025 and the 555th mission of the Long March series carrier rockets.
- 170.** The **UNESCO** Regional Office for South Asia, in collaboration with the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)**, Government of India, and **Ikigai Law** as the implementing partner, hosted a two-day stakeholder consultation on AI Readiness Assessment Methodology (RAM) in India.
- The event was held at IIIT Bangalore on 16th January 2025 and at the Nasscom AI office on 17th January 2025.
- This consultation marked the second in a series of five consultations under the AI RAM initiative by UNESCO and MeitY.
- The initiative aims to craft an India-specific AI policy report, identifying strengths and growth opportunities within India's AI ecosystem. The report will provide actionable insights to promote the responsible and ethical adoption of AI across sectors.
- The AI RAM serves as a diagnostic tool to identify opportunities for governments to engage, particularly in AI regulatory and institutional capacity-building efforts.
- The consultation brought together diverse stakeholders from government, academia, industry, and civil society to explore strategies for aligning India's AI ecosystem with ethical principles in UNESCO's Global Recommendation on the Ethics of AI, emphasizing transparency, inclusiveness, and fairness.
- 171. Pixxel**, a Bengaluru-based space technology company backed by Google and building the world's highest-resolution hyperspectral satellite constellation, has launched '**Firefly**', India's first private satellite constellation.
- The first three satellites of the Firefly constellation were successfully launched aboard SpaceX's Transporter-12 mission from Vandenberg Space Force Base, California.
- Firefly is Pixxel's flagship Hyperspectral Imaging (HSI) satellite constellation, featuring six of the highest-resolution commercial hyperspectral satellites to date.
- The satellites are the world's highest-resolution commercial-grade hyperspectral satellites with the capability to observe the earth in over 150 bands, a technology that is useful in sectors as diverse as agriculture and defence.
- Hyperspectral Imaging (HSI) Satellites:**
- HSI analyses a wide spectrum of light instead of just assigning primary colours (red, green, blue) to each pixel, effectively spectrally fingerprinting the Earth. HSI provides more information on what is imaged. For instance, while a typical satellite can identify a forest from space, HSI can distinguish between different types of trees and determine the health of each individual tree.
- Other related news:**
- Digantara Aerospace** has launched the world's first commercial satellite - **Space Camera for Object Tracking (SCOT)** - for surveillance of objects as small as 5 cm orbiting the earth to ensure safer space operations.

- 172. Nigeria** now stands as the **9th BRICS partner country**, alongside Belarus, Bolivia, Cuba, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Thailand, Uganda, and Uzbekistan. The country has the world's 6th largest population and Africa's largest, in addition to being the 4th largest economy in Africa. Within BRICS, a "partner country" signifies nations or organizations invited to attend summits, ministerial meetings, or engage in collaborative efforts, but without having membership status or formal decision-making rights. BRICS was formed by Brazil, Russia, India, and China in 2009, with South Africa added in 2010 as a counterweight to G7 countries. **Member countries:** Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Iran (2023), Egypt (2023), Ethiopia (2023), the UAE (2023), and Indonesia (2025).
- 173.** High Commissioner of India to Sri Lanka H.E Santosh Jha and Minister of Buddhasasana, Religious, and Cultural Affairs Hiniduma Sunil Senevi jointly announced the naming of the **Cultural Centre in Jaffna** as '**Thiruvalluvar Cultural Center**', in honour of the great Tamil poet-philosopher Thiruvalluvar. The Center, built with Indian grant assistance of **USD 12 million**, provides a space where the rich traditions, arts, and aspirations of the people of the Northern Province could thrive. The iconic structure is a state-of-the-art facility consisting of multiple facilities such as a museum of two floors; an advanced theatre-style auditorium for more than 600 people; an 11-storeyed learning tower; a public square that could also act as an amphitheater, etc. The foundation stone for the Cultural Center was laid by the Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, during his historic visit to Jaffna in March 2015. The facility was subsequently inaugurated in March 2022 and dedicated to the people of Sri Lanka in February 2023.
- 174.** The **Government of India and the Republic of Korea** conducted the signing of the Exchange of Notes for the Technical Cooperation Project titled '**Strengthening Vocational Education and Training in Mechatronics in India**' in New Delhi. The project will be implemented in collaboration with the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) of the Government of the Republic of Korea. This is the first project being implemented with the assistance of KOICA in India. The Project, which spans over two years, aims to establish a basis of vocational education and training in mechatronics in India and will be implemented by **NCERT** at the **Regional Institute of Education (RIE), Bhopal**, where it will help build an environment to pilot education in mechatronics by preparing curriculum, textbooks, teacher's manual and equipment. The project will help build the capacity of teachers in mechatronics while also facilitating networking between industry and RIE, Bhopal. **Note:** The Republic of Korea was designated as India's Official Development Assistance (ODA) partner for development cooperation in October 2016. The bilateral relationship between the two countries was upgraded to 'Special Strategic Partnership' in the year 2015.
- 175.** The **United Nations General Assembly** has declared **2025** as the **International Year of Glaciers' Preservation** to raise awareness on the vital role glaciers, snow, and ice play in the climate system and water cycle, as well as the far-reaching impacts of rapid glacial melt. UNESCO and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) are the lead agencies coordinating this international effort supported by over 75 international organizations and 35 countries. The International Year of Glacier Preservation will focus on several critical areas:
- Expanding global glacier monitoring systems to enhance data collection and analysis.
 - Developing early warning systems for glacier-related hazards.

- Promoting sustainable water resource management in glacier-dependent regions.
- Preserving cultural heritage and traditional knowledge related to glacial environments.
- Engaging youth in glacier preservation efforts and climate action.

It has also been decided to observe **March 21** of each year as **World Day for Glaciers**, starting in 2025.

176. India granted **Observer Status** in the OCCAR-managed **MALE RPAS (Eurodrone)**

Programme. With this, India became the **second** Asia-Pacific country to gain such status after Japan.

Eurodrone programme:

- Eurodrone or **European Medium Altitude Long Endurance Remotely Piloted Aircraft System (MALE RPAS)** is a twin-turboprop MALE unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV).
- It can be used for long-endurance missions such as intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition, and reconnaissance (ISTAR), maritime surveillance, etc.
- The Eurodrone program is a 4-nation initiative involving **France, Germany, Spain, and Italy**. It is led by the Bonn-based OCCAR (Organisation for Joint Armament Cooperation).

Notably, India requested on 27 August 2024 to be granted Observer Status in the Eurodrone programme.

REPORTS & INDICES

177. The Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Bhupender Yadav released the **18th edition** of the '**India State of Forest Report 2023 (ISFR 2023)**' at Forest Research Institute, Dehradun.

- The ISFR has been brought out by the Forest Survey of India (FSI) on a biennial basis since 1987.
- FSI carries out an in-depth assessment of the forest and tree resources of the country based on the interpretation of Remote Sensing satellite data and field-based National Forest Inventory (NFI), and the results are published in the ISFR.
- The report contains information on forest cover, tree cover, mangrove cover, growing stock, carbon stock in India's forests, instances of forest fire, Agroforestry, etc.

Key highlights of the report:

The **total Forest and Tree cover** is **8,27,357sq km**, which is 25.17 percent of the geographical area of the country. The Forest Cover has an area of about 7,15,343sq km (21.76%) whereas the Tree Cover has an area of 1,12,014 sq km (3.41%).

As compared to the assessment of 2021, there is an increase of **1445 sq km** in the forest and tree cover of the country which includes 156 sq km increase in the forest cover and 1289 sq km increase in tree cover.

The top four states showing a **maximum increase in forest and tree cover** are **Chhattisgarh (684 sq km)** followed by **Uttar Pradesh (559 sq km)**, **Odisha (559 sq km)**, and **Rajasthan (394 sq km)**.

The top three states showing a **maximum increase in forest cover** are **Mizoram (242 sq km)** followed by **Gujarat (180 sq km)** and **Odisha (152 sq km)**.

Area wise top three states having the **largest forest and tree cover** are **Madhya Pradesh (85,724 sq km)** followed by **Arunachal Pradesh (67,083 sq km)** and **Maharashtra (65,383 sq km)**.

Area wise top three states having the **largest forest cover** are **Madhya Pradesh (77,073 sq km)** followed by **Arunachal Pradesh (65,882 sq km)** and **Chhattisgarh (55,812 sq km)**.

In terms of the **percentage of forest cover** with respect to the total geographical area, **Lakshadweep (91.33 percent)** has the **highest forest cover** followed by **Mizoram (85.34 percent)** and **Andaman & Nicobar Island (81.62 percent)**.

The present assessment also reveals that 19 states/UTs have above 33 percent of the geographical area under forest cover. Out of these, eight states/UTs namely Mizoram, Lakshadweep, A & N Island, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Manipur have forest cover above 75 percent.

The total mangrove cover is **4,992 sq km** in the country, representing **0.15%** of the total geographical area, with a **net decrease of 7.43 km²** since 2021. Gujarat saw a decrease of 36.39 km² in mangrove cover, while Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra experienced increases of 13.01 km² and 12.39 km², respectively.

The total growing stock of India's forest and trees outside forests is estimated as **6430 million cum**, of which 4479 million cum is inside the forests and 1951 million cum outside the forest area. There is an increase of 262 million cum of total growing stock as compared to the previous assessment which includes an increase of 91 million cum inside the forest and 171 million cum outside the forest area.

The extent of bamboo bearing area for the country has been estimated as **1,54,670sq km**. As compared to the last assessment done in 2021 there is an increase of 5,227 sq km in bamboo area.

The total annual potential production of timber from trees outside the forest has been estimated as **91.51 million cum**.

In the present assessment, the **total carbon stock** in the country's forest is estimated to be **7,285.5 million tonnes**. There is an increase of 81.5 million tonnes in the carbon stock of the country as compared to the last assessment.

The current assessment shows that India's carbon stock has reached 30.43 billion tonnes of CO₂ equivalent; which indicates that as compared to the base year of 2005, India has already reached 2.29 billion tonnes of additional carbon sink as against the target of 2.5 to 3.0 billion tonnes by 2030.

The top 3 states in carbon stock are Arunachal Pradesh (1,021 Mt) followed by Madhya Pradesh (608 Mt), Chhattisgarh (505 Mt) and Maharashtra (465 Mt).

Class	Area (km ²)	Percentage of GA
Forest Cover	7,15,342.61	21.76%
Tree Cover	1,12,014.34	3.41%
Total Forest and Tree Cover	8,27,356.95	25.17%
Scrub	43,622.64	1.33%
Non-Forest	24,16,489.29	73.50%
Geographical Area of the Country	32,87,468.88	100.00%

178. The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) has released the results of the **Annual Survey of Unincorporated Sector Enterprises (ASUSE) 2023-24**, covering the reference period October 2023 to September 2024.

This comprehensive survey sheds light on the economic and operational dynamics of the unincorporated non-agricultural sector, highlighting its critical contribution to employment, Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and the overall socio-economic landscape of India.

Key significant sectoral growth:

- The unincorporated sector has shown robust growth, with the number of establishments rising from 6.50 crore in 2022-23 to **7.34 crore** in 2023-24, a remarkable 12.84% increase.
- The number of establishments in the "Other Services" sector recorded a growth of 23.55% followed by a 13% increase witnessed by the manufacturing sector.
- During the same period, the Gross Value Added (GVA) which is a key indicator of economic performance rose by 16.52% driven by a 26.17% growth in the 'other services' sector.

Labour Market Expansion:

- Employment in the sector grew significantly, with over 12 crore workers employed in 2023-24, an increase of more than one crore from the previous year.
- The "Other Services" sector led the way with a **17.86%** growth in employment, followed by a 10.03% rise in the manufacturing sector.
- The sector also marked a milestone in gender inclusivity, with female-owned proprietary establishments increasing from 22.9% in 2022-23 to **26.2%** in 2023-24.
- Average emoluments per hired worker increased by 13%, reflecting improved wage levels and strengthening economic demand. The manufacturing sector reported the highest wage growth, exceeding 16%.

Labour productivity:

- **Gross Value Added (GVA) per worker** which is a measure of labour productivity of the sector, rose to **Rs. 1,49,742 in 2023-24 from Rs. 1,41,769 in 2022-23** in current prices showing a **5.62% increase**.
- During the same period, the **Gross Value of Output (GVO) per establishment** also increased from **Rs. 4,63,389 to Rs. 4,91,862** in current prices.

Digital Adoption:

Digital adoption also saw significant improvement, with internet usage among establishments increasing from **21.1% in 2022-23 to 26.7% in 2023-24**.

179. Union Minister of Commerce & Industry, Piyush Goyal has released the "**Logistics Ease Across Different States (LEADS) 2024**" report in New Delhi.

It is the **6th edition** of the LEADS report.

It was conceived on the lines of the **Logistics Performance Index of the World Bank** in 2018 by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

In LEADS 2024, the report evaluates logistics performance across **four key pillars**: *Logistics Infrastructure, Logistics Services, Operating and Regulatory Environment*, and the newly introduced *Sustainable Logistics*.

Category	Achievers	Fast Movers	Aspirers
Coastal Group	Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Odisha, Tamil Nadu	Andhra Pradesh, Goa	Kerala, West Bengal

Landlocked Group	Haryana, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand	Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Rajasthan	Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand
North-Eastern	Assam, Arunachal Pradesh	Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura	Manipur
Union Territories	Chandigarh, Delhi	Dadra and Nagar Haveli & Daman and Diu, Jammu and Kashmir, Lakshadweep, Puducherry	Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Ladakh

The Union Minister also recognized and felicitated exceptional contributions to the logistics sector with prestigious **Logistics Excellence, Advancement, and Performance Shield (LEAPS 2024) Awards** across various categories, including core logistics services, MSMEs, startups, and institutions.

Winners of LEAPS 2024 Include:

Core Logistics:

- Air Freight Service Provider: Kerry Indev Logistics Private Limited
- Maritime Freight Service Provider: Visakha Container Terminal Pvt Ltd
- Multimodal Transport Operators: Avana Logistek Limited
- Rail Freight Service Provider: DP World Rail Logistics Private Limited
- Road Freight Service Provider: CJ Darcl Logistics Ltd.
- Warehouse Service Provider (Industrial and Consumables): APM Terminals India Private Limited
- Warehouse Service Provider (Agriculture): Globus Warehousing and Trading Private Limited

Startups:

- Logistics Operations: Myzek Logistics Pvt Ltd
- Logistics Technology: Sarvodaya Infotech Pvt Ltd

MSMEs:

- Logistics Service Provider: Shipwaves Online Limited

Institutions:

- Education and Skill Development in the Logistics Sector: Indian Institute of Management, Mumbai

Special Categories:

- Logistics service delivery for e-commerce operations: Delhivery Limited
- Multimodal logistics service provider: Pushpak Logistics Solutions LLP

The Union Minister also launched the **PM GatiShakti Course of GatiShakti Vishwavidyalaya (GSV)**, a 15-hour course on "PM GatiShakti Concept for Efficient Infrastructure Planning and National Development".

The course will be hosted on the iGOT Karmayogi platform and UGC SWAYAM portal to ensure broad accessibility and will be integrated into the curriculum of Central Training Institutes (CTIs) and State Administrative Training Institutes (ATIs) across the country.

180. The Government of India has constituted an 18-member Working Group, under the chairmanship of **NITI Aayog Member Ramesh Chand**, for base revision of the current series of **Wholesale Price Index (WPI)** from the base 2011-12 to 2022-23.

The members of the group include representatives from the RBI, Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Statistics, Department of Agriculture, Department of Consumer Affairs, Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas; Soumya Kanti Ghosh, Chief Economist, SBI Group.

The non-official members include Economist Surjit Bhalla; Shamika Ravi, Member, Economic Advisory Council to PM; Dharmakirti Joshi, Chief Economist, Crisil; Nilesh Shah, MD, Kotak Mahindra Asset Management; and Indranil Sengupta, Co-Head and Economist, Bank of America Merrill Lynch.

The Terms of Reference of the Working Group will be as follows: -

- To suggest the commodity basket of WPI and PPI with the base year 2022-23 in light of structural changes in the economy.
- To review the existing system of price collection and suggest changes for improvement.
- To decide on the computational methodology to be adopted for WPI / PPI.
- To examine the methodology for compilation of PPI approved by the Technical Advisory Committee on Statistics of Prices & Cost of Living suggest further improvement in compilation and presentation and recommend a roadmap for switchover from WPI to PPI.
- To examine the method of computing the linking factor adopted so far and suggest appropriate changes in the method of computing the linking factor, if necessary.
- To suggest any other improvements that may be necessary for enhancing the reliability of WPI / PPI.

The Chairman of the Working Group may co-opt experts/ representatives of other agencies, as may be considered necessary.

The Working Group will submit its final report to the Office of the Economic Adviser within 18 months of the issue of this notification.

181. The **United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA)**, in partnership with UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the five UN regional commissions, has published its flagship report, **'World Economic Situation and Prospects (WESP) 2025.'**

Key highlights of the report:

- The **global economic growth** is forecast at **2.8% for 2025** and **2.9% for 2026**.
- The **Indian economy** is expected to grow by **6.6 percent in 2025** and **6.8 percent in 2026**.
- The report highlighted that capital expenditure on infrastructure development is expected to have strong multiplier effects on growth in the coming years.
- Expansion in the manufacturing and services sectors will continue to drive the economy, while strong export growth in services and certain goods categories, such as pharmaceutical and electronics, will bolster economic activity.
- It also noted that favorable monsoon rains in 2024 have improved summer-sowing areas for all major crops, boosting agricultural output expectations for 2025.
- The economic growth in South Asia is expected to remain robust in 2025, primarily driven by strong performance in India. The region is projected to grow at 5.7 percent in 2025 and 6 percent in 2026.
- It also highlighted the opportunity for resource-rich developing countries, such as India, to boost growth, create jobs, and increase public revenues for investment through rising demand for critical minerals.

182. According to the latest Ministry of Home Affairs report based on new terms of reference for measuring coastal accretion and erosion, **India's coastline** has expanded from **7,516 km in 1970** to **11,098 km in 2023-24**.

This reflects a **48% increase** over the past 53 years.

West Bengal recorded the highest percentage increase (357%) while **Kerala (5%) reported the smallest increase**.

Puducherry's coastline, including Karaikal, Yanam, and Mahe, contracted by 4.9 km i.e., 10.4 percent.

Gujarat retains its position as the state with the longest coastline. Gujarat's recalculated coastline contributed the most to this growth, almost doubling from 1,214km in 1970 to 2,340 km in the past 53 years.

Gujarat is followed by **Tamil Nadu**, with a revised length of 1,068 km (previously 906km). The state has overtaken Andhra Pradesh (1,053km).

The upward revision is attributed to a new methodology to measure India's maritime status established by the National Maritime Security Coordinator. It measures complex coastal formations like bays, estuaries, and inlets, unlike older methods that used straight-line distances.

183. UK-based Henley & Partners has released the **2025 Henley Passport Index**. It is the original, authoritative ranking of all the world's passports according to the number of destinations their holders can access without a prior visa.

The index is based on exclusive data from the International Air Transport Association (IATA), the largest, most accurate travel information database.

Key highlights of the 2025 Henley Passport Index:

- **Singapore has obtained the top spot in the 2025 Henley Passport Index**, offering visa-free access to 195 destinations.
- Japan follows in second place with access to 193 destinations. France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Finland, and South Korea, share third place with access to 192 destinations each.
- **India** has secured the **85th position**, dropping five places from its previous position of 80th in 2024. The Indian passport now provides visa-free access to 57 countries, sharing its rank with Equatorial Guinea and Niger.
- The U.S. passport has fallen to 9th place in 2025, a sharp decline from its usual first or second position a decade ago. Currently, U.S. passport holders enjoy visa-free access to 186 destinations.
- Pakistan and Yemen share the 103rd position, each offering visa-free access to 33 destinations.
- Iraq ranks 104th with access to 31 destinations, followed by Syria at 105th with 27 destinations.
- **Afghanistan** remains at the bottom of the list, ranked **106th**, with visa-free access to only 26 destinations.

184. The **World Economic Forum (WEF)** has published the **5th edition** of the **Future of Jobs Report 2025**. It is a result of data gathered from more than 1,000 leading global companies, collectively representing over 14 million workers across 22 industry sectors and 55 economies from across the world.

Key findings:

- The report projects 170 million new jobs globally by 2030, with a net increase of 78 million jobs after accounting for 92 million displaced roles.
- Fast-growing roles include AI and machine learning specialists, big data experts, FinTech engineers, and farmworkers, driven by technological advancements and the green transition.
- Clerical jobs like data entry clerks and cashiers are declining due to automation.
- Employers anticipate that 39% of skills will change by 2030, with a growing demand for AI proficiency, creative thinking, and resilience.
- Businesses are focusing on reskilling, with 85% investing in upskilling programs.
- The collaboration among governments, academia, and industries is vital to bridge the skills gap and align with future job demands.

185. The **Quick Estimates of Index of Industrial Production (IIP)** are released on the 12th of every month (or the previous working day if the 12th is a holiday) with a six weeks lag and compiled with data received from source agencies, which in turn receive the data from the producing factories/ establishments.

The Quick Estimates for November 2024, the first revision for October 2024, and the final revision for August 2024 have been compiled at weighted response rates of 87 percent, 94 percent, and 96 percent respectively.

Key highlights:

- The IIP growth rate for the month of November 2024 is **5.2 percent** which was 3.5 percent (Quick Estimate) in the month of October 2024.
- The growth rates of the three sectors, **Mining, Manufacturing, and Electricity** for the month of November 2024 are **1.9 percent, 5.8 percent, and 4.4 percent** respectively.
- The Quick Estimates of IIP stands at 148.4 against 141.1 in November 2023. The Indices of Industrial Production for the Mining, Manufacturing, and Electricity sectors for the month of November 2024 stand at 133.8, 147.4, and 184.1 respectively.
- Within the manufacturing sector, 18 out of 23 industry groups at the NIC 2-digit level have recorded a positive growth in November 2024 over November 2023. The top three positive contributors for the month of November 2024 are – “Manufacture of basic metals” (7.6%), “Manufacture of electrical equipment” (37.2%), and “Manufacture of other non-metallic mineral products” (12.0%).
- In the industry group “**Manufacture of basic metals**”, item groups “Galvanized products of Steel (including colour coated tin plates, TMBP and Tin free steel)”, “Pipes and tubes of Steel”, “Flat products of Alloy Steel” have shown significant contribution in growth.
- In the industry group “**Manufacture of electrical equipment**”, item groups “Electric heaters”, “Transformers (Small)”, and “End facing connector for optical fibers and cables” have shown significant contributions in growth.
- In the industry group “**Manufacture of other non-metallic mineral products**” item groups “Pre-fabricated Concrete blocks (including RMC)”, “Cement- all types”, and “Fiberglass” have shown significant contribution in growth.
- As per the use base classification, the indices stand at 147.7 for Primary Goods, 106.8 for Capital Goods, 158.8 for Intermediate Goods, and 180.6 for Infrastructure/ Construction Goods for November 2024. Further, the indices for Consumer durables and Consumer non-durables stand at 120.5 and 158.1 respectively.
- The corresponding growth rates of IIP as per Use-based classification in November 2024 over November 2023 are 2.7 percent in Primary goods, 9.0 percent in Capital goods, 5.0 percent in Intermediate goods, 10.0 percent in Infrastructure/ Construction Goods, 13.1 percent in Consumer durables and 0.6 percent in Consumer non-durables.
- Based on use-based classification, the top three positive contributors to the growth of IIP for November 2024 are – Infrastructure/ construction goods, Consumer durables, and Primary goods.

186. London-based Brand Finance, the world’s leading brand valuation consultancy, has released the **Brand Finance IT Services 2025 ranking report**.

In 2025, the value of the **top 25 IT services brands** has reached **USD 163 billion**.

Accenture (brand value up 2% to USD 41.5 billion) named the **world’s most valuable IT services brand** for the **seventh year** running and clinches the title of strongest IT services brand. The company has also overtaken **IBM Consulting** to become the strongest IT Services brand in 2025, with a brand strength index score of 89.6/100 and an equivalent AAA+ rating. It has the **highest Sustainability Perceptions Score (4.31 out of 5)** among the world’s top 25 IT Services brands.

TCS (brand value up 11% to USD 21.3 billion) retains its position as the world's second most valuable IT services brand for the fourth consecutive year. Notably, TCS is the second IT services brand to surpass the major milestone of USD 20 billion in brand value, on the back of its investments in its brand and its growing prowess in AI and new technologies.

Infosys (brand value up 15% to USD 16.3 billion) is recognized as the world's third most valuable IT Services brand for the fourth consecutive year.

HCLTech (brand value up 17 percent to \$8.9 billion) has emerged as the **world's fastest-growing IT Services brand** in 2025.

India has achieved the **second position**, contributing 36 percent of the overall brand value, driven by a remarkable 14 percent increase, as per the Brand Finance 2025 ranking. The **USA** continues to lead in IT services brand value, holding 40 percent of the total share.

187. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has released its flagship **World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2025 (WESO Trends) Report**.

Key points from the report:

- **Global unemployment** rate stable at **5%** in 2024.
- Youth unemployment remains high at 12.6%.
- Geopolitical frictions, climate change costs, and sovereign debt risks are key challenges.
- Low-income countries struggle with slow progress in decent work creation.
- Real wage growth was noted only in a few advanced economies, despite steady global unemployment.
- Shift towards employer power in labor markets weakens real wage growth, affecting vulnerable groups.
- Concerns over gender participation gaps as women's labor market involvement remains low.
- Increased labor force participation seen only in advanced economies, especially among older workers and women.

188. Bengaluru-based Tracxn Technologies Limited has published the '**Annual India Fintech Report 2024**'. The report states that India secured the **third position** globally in fintech funding despite a **33% decline** in Year-on-Year (YoY) funding, which dropped to Rs. 16,475 crore (US\$ 1.9 billion) in 2024.

The fintech sector had raised Rs. 24,279 crore (US\$ 2.8 billion) in 2023 and Rs. 48,558 crore (US\$ 5.6 billion) in 2022, underlining a significant decline over the past two years.

Despite this, India remains one of the top three globally funded fintech ecosystems, only trailing the **US and the UK**.

Noteworthy developments include two new unicorns, **Money View and Perfios**, compared to just one in 2023.

The fintech sector saw a late-year recovery, with Q3 raising the highest funding of Rs. 6,980.16 crore (US\$ 805 million), a 61% increase from the previous year.

Digital lending dominated the funding, comprising 64% of the total raised. However, late-stage funding saw a sharp 42% decline, dropping to Rs. 9,538 crore (US\$ 1.1 billion) from Rs. 16,475 crore (US\$ 1.9 billion) in 2023.

Early-stage and seed-stage funding also experienced downturns.

The sector showcased resilience, with **eight IPOs** in 2024, a 300% increase from 2023.

Bengaluru remained the leading hub for fintech funding, followed by Mumbai and Delhi. The sector's robust performance, particularly in the H2 FY24, positions it for continued growth in the future.

- 189.** The inaugural **Future Skills Index**, released by London-based Quacquarelli Symonds (QS), evaluates countries on their readiness to meet evolving job market demands. The index assesses four main areas: skills fit, academic readiness, future of work, and economic transformation. The index placed India **25th** overall across four indicators, identifying it as a Future Skills Contender. India ranked **second** globally in the Future of Work indicator, with a score of 99.1, just behind the United States. The country is ahead of Canada and Germany. The country's ability to attract venture capital funding and its readiness to integrate AI into the workforce were also highlighted in the report.

	Skills Fit	Academic Readiness	Future of Work	Economic Transformation	Overall
Score	59.1	89.9	99.1	58.3	76.6
Global position	37th	26th	2nd	40th	25th

- 190.** India's economy is expected to grow at a steady rate of **6.7 percent** in both **FY26 and FY27**, according to the **January 2025 edition** of the **World Bank's Global Economic Prospects (GEP) report**.

The latest GEP report marks a significant milestone by offering the first comprehensive review of the performance of developing economies since the beginning of the 21st century.

This edition features two analytical chapters. One examines the opportunities and challenges faced by middle-income emerging and developing economies, while the other focuses on the progress and hurdles of the world's poorest nations.

Key Findings in the January 2025 Report:

- Growth in India's services sector is expected to remain robust, while manufacturing activity will strengthen, supported by government efforts to improve logistics infrastructure and streamline tax systems.
- Private consumption in India is likely to gain momentum, driven by a stronger labour market, increased access to credit, and lower inflation.
- India's Investment growth is expected to remain steady, supported by rising private investments, improved corporate balance sheets, and favourable financing conditions.
- **Global economic growth** is projected to hold steady at **2.7 percent** in **2025-26**, highlighting India's outperformance.
- Emerging Markets and Developing Economies (EMDEs) have undergone significant transformation since 2000, now contributing about 45 percent of global GDP, compared to 25 percent at the start of the century.
- **India, China, and Brazil**, the three largest EMDEs, have collectively driven approximately **60 percent** of annual global growth since the start of the century.

Global Economic Prospects (GEP) report:

The Global Economic Prospects (GEP) report is a flagship publication of the World Bank Group that examines trends and projections in the global economy. It places a special emphasis on emerging markets and developing economies, offering insights into their growth trajectories and challenges. Published twice a year in January and June, the report serves as a vital resource for policymakers, economists, and researchers. The January edition delves into detailed analyses of pressing policy issues, while the June edition provides shorter, focused analytical pieces.

- 191.** The **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)** has released a comprehensive report titled '**Estimation and Measurement of India's Digital Economy.**'

Key findings of the report:

- As per the report, India's digital sector accounted for **11.74 percent** of national income, amounting to Rs.31.64 lakh crore in GDP in 2022-23.
- The **digital-enabling industry**, which includes sectors such as information and communication-related services, telecommunication (traditionally referred to as the ICT sector), and manufacturing of electronic components, computers, and communication equipment, is the highest contributor, accounting for **7.83% of GVA**.
- The **new digital industries**, which include Big Tech players, other digital platforms and intermediaries, and firms dependent on digital intermediaries, account for nearly **2% of GVA**.
- The digital contribution of three traditional industries (BFSI, trade, and education) amounts to 2% of the national GVA.
- India's digital economy is expected to grow almost **twice as fast** as the overall economy, contributing to nearly **one-fifth** of national income by **2030**. In the short run, the highest growth is likely to come from the growth of digital intermediaries and platforms, followed by higher digital diffusion and digitalization of the rest of the economy.
- In 2022-23, the **digital economy** accounted for **14.67 million workers** or 2.55% of India's estimated workforce.

The report acknowledges that its estimates remain conservative due to data gaps, particularly in smaller digital platforms, the informal sector, and industries like health and logistics.

192. The Chairman of the 16th Finance Commission, Dr. Arvind Panagariya, launched the inaugural issue of **NITI Aayog's** report titled "**Fiscal Health Index (FHI) 2025**" in New Delhi.

The report provides a comprehensive assessment of the fiscal health of 18 major States, based on five key sub-indices:

- Quality of Expenditure
- Revenue Mobilisation
- Fiscal Prudence
- Debt Index
- Debt Sustainability

It will be an annual publication and offers a systematic approach to assess the state's fiscal health, identify areas for improvement, and promote best practices across states.

The report uses data from the **Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG)** for the fiscal year **2022-23**, supplemented by trends from **2014-15 to 2021-22**.

Key findings:

- **Odisha** excels in fiscal health with the highest overall index score of 67.8. It tops the Debt Index (99.0) and Debt Sustainability (64.0) rankings with better-than-average scores under Quality of Expenditure and Revenue Mobilization. The state has maintained low Fiscal Deficits, a good debt profile, and an above average Capital Outlay/GSDP ratio.
- **Chhattisgarh and Goa** follow, with scores of 55.2 and 53.6, respectively. Chhattisgarh stands out for its Debt Index, while Goa stands for Revenue Mobilization. Both states have effectively balanced expenditure with revenue, contributing to Fiscal Prudence.
- Goa, Telangana, and Odisha are leading in Revenue Mobilization and Fiscal Prudence.
- Karnataka faces a decline due to weaker performance in expenditure quality and debt management.
- States like Punjab, Kerala, and West Bengal faced challenges in debt sustainability and revenue mobilization, highlighting the need for fiscal reforms.
- Odisha and Jharkhand maintained fiscal prudence with lower fiscal deficits, enabling better allocation of resources toward development.
- Maharashtra and Gujarat demonstrated robust debt management practices, maintaining low debt-to-GSDP ratios.

States	FHI Score	Rank 2022-23	Quality of Expenditure	Revenue Mobilization	Fiscal Prudence	Debt Index	Debt Sustainability
Odisha	67.8	1	52.0	69.9	54.0	99.0	64.0
Chhattisgarh	55.2	2	55.1	56.5	56.0	79.6	29.0
Goa	53.6	3	45.5	87.1	59.4	51.0	25.2
Jharkhand	51.6	4	47.3	45.7	62.4	66.9	35.7
Gujarat	50.5	5	40.0	48.7	52.7	69.0	42.0
Maharashtra	50.3	6	37.1	59.1	41.8	76.4	36.8
Uttar Pradesh	45.9	7	45.8	34.6	44.7	59.9	44.5
Telangana	43.6	8	36.9	75.2	40.8	53.3	11.7
Madhya Pradesh	42.2	9	59.7	27.6	35.6	61.0	27.2
Karnataka	40.8	10	47.4	43.9	43.9	62.2	6.7
Tamil Nadu	29.2	11	32.0	41.2	25.8	36.0	11.1
Rajasthan	28.6	12	38.3	35.4	19.9	32.3	16.8
Bihar	27.8	13	56.1	5.3	11.5	47.2	18.8
Haryana	27.4	14	24.8	47.8	26.1	24.1	14.3
Kerala	25.4	15	4.2	54.2	34.0	23.1	11.3
West Bengal	21.8	16	32.3	12.4	25.4	18.3	20.6
Andhra Pradesh	20.9	17	31.4	22.1	13.3	37.8	0.0
Punjab	10.7	18	4.7	28.1	5.6	0.0	15.2

193. Times Higher Education (THE) has unveiled the **World University Rankings by Subject 2025**.

These rankings cover **11 disciplines**: Arts and Humanities, Business and Economics, Computer Science, Education Studies, Engineering, Law, Life Sciences, Medical and Health, Physical Sciences, Psychology, and Social Sciences.

The 2025 rankings include 2,092 ranked universities.

Top-3 universities:

- University of Oxford
- University of Cambridge
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology

For the first time, an Indian institution, **IISc Bengaluru**, has secured a place (**99th rank**) among the elite top 100 universities.

The Indian Institute of Science (IISc) Bengaluru has secured a spot in the world's top 100 institutions offering **computer science**.

In the ranking released last year, IISc led Indian universities by achieving a slot in the 251-300 band.

Number one-ranked institutions across World University Rankings 2025: by subject

Ranking	Top institution	Country/territory
Arts and Humanities	Massachusetts Institute of Technology	United States
Business and Economics	Massachusetts Institute of Technology	United States
Computer Science	University of Oxford	United Kingdom
Education Studies	Stanford University	United States
Engineering	Harvard University	United States
Law	Stanford University	United States
Life Sciences	Harvard University	United States
Medical and Health	University of Oxford	United Kingdom
Physical Sciences	California Institute of Technology	United States
Psychology	Stanford University	United States

194. According to the **Global Firepower Index 2025**, **India** ranked as the **fourth** most powerful military in the world. It secured a score of **0.1184**.

The index evaluates the military strength of 145 countries based on over 60 parameters, including manpower, natural resources, finance, and geography. A score of 0.0000 represents an ideal military strength, which no country possesses.

The index **doesn't** include a country's nuclear weapon capability but only includes conventional military capabilities.

The **United States of America** holds the **first position**, followed by Russia and China in the Global Firepower Index 2025.

The top 10 countries on the Global Firepower Index 2025 are:

- United States of America: score 0.0744
- Russia: score 0.0788
- China: score 0.0788
- India: score 0.01184
- South Korea: score 0.1656
- United Kingdom: score 0.1785
- France: score 0.1878
- Japan: score 0.1839
- Türkiye: score 0.1902
- Italy: score 0.2164

Bhutan was ranked at the **bottom** of the index at 145th position.

Pakistan which was ranked 9th in 2024 dropped to 12th position in the 2025 ranking.

195. The **Forbes 50 Over 50 Global list**, published for the first time ever, is a list of entrepreneurs, investors, inventors, artists, activists, and other high-achievers who make a lasting impact through their work.

The list is topped by **Quarraisha Abdool Karim (South Africa)**. She's currently the cofounder and associate director of the Center for the AIDS Programme of Research in South Africa (CAPRISA).

Rafaela Aponte-Diamant (Switzerland) **ranked 2nd** in the list. She is the co-owner of the Mediterranean Shipping Company (MSC), the world's largest shipping line.

The list included the names of **three Indian women**. They are:

Urmila Asher (ranked 3rd):

At the age of 80, Urmila Asher, fondly known as Gujju Ben, stands as a testament to resilience and reinvention. At 75, she embarked on a new venture by launching **Gujju Ben na Nasta**, a food business specializing in Gujarati cuisine. She is now a TEDx speaker, YouTuber, and former MasterChef India contestant.

Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw (ranked 32nd):

Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw is the Chairperson and Managing Director of **Biocon**, Asia's leading biopharmaceuticals enterprise. Named among TIME magazine's 100 most influential people in the world, she is recognized as a global thought leader for Biotechnology. She has been recognized with the Padma Shri (1989) & the Padma Bhushan (2005), two of India's prestigious civilian honors.

Sheela Patel (ranked 37th):

Sheela Patel, born in 1952, is a distinguished activist and scholar who has dedicated her life to advocating for the rights of slum dwellers and fostering equitable urban spaces. In 1984, she co-founded the **Society for Promotion of Area Resource Centres (SPARC)** in Mumbai, which has

played a pivotal role in addressing the housing needs of low-income communities and championing the cause of pavement dwellers.

GOVERNMENT SCHEMES & PROGRAMMES

196. Union Minister of Rural Development Shivraj Singh Chauhan has reviewed various works of the ministry in New Delhi. He also highlighted the achievements of **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana Gramin** from June 2024 to December 2024. Some are:

- The scheme has been extended for the next five years in August 2024, under which the target is to build **2 crore additional houses** for the financial year **2024-29**. Three major changes have also been made in the eligibility rules in the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, so that additional eligible families can be given the benefit of this scheme and the target of housing for all can be achieved.
- The **Awas Plus-2024** mobile app was launched by the Prime Minister in **September 2024**.
- The **Awas Sakhi app** was launched by the Minister in **October 2024**.
- There has been a continuous increase in the year-wise budget in the housing scheme and the highest budget of **Rs. 54,500 crore** was allocated for the financial year 2024-25.
- As against the target of 42 lakh under the housing scheme, 31.65 lakh houses were sanctioned and 4.19 lakh houses were completed from June to December 2024, which includes 71 thousand houses of PM Janman.

In **January 2025**, emphasis will be laid on sanctioning the pending **10 lakh houses** against the target allocated earlier in the year 2024-25 and the first instalment will also be released to the beneficiaries.

197. The Government of India launched the “**One Nation, One Subscription**” (ONOS) scheme on **1st January 2025** to provide seamless access to digital knowledge resources.

The Union Cabinet approved the One Nation One Subscription (ONOS) scheme on 25th November 2024.

The scheme's objective is to provide all eligible students, faculty, researchers, and scientists with access to top-tier international research articles and journals. It covers more than 6,300 government-managed higher education institutions and central government-managed research and development institutions across the country.

The scheme provides:

- Access to more than 13,000 scholarly journals from 30 major international publishers.
- Benefits about 1.8 crore students, faculty, and researchers across disciplines such as STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics), Medicine, Social Sciences, Finance & Accounts, etc.
- Inclusive access to research for institutions in tier 2 and tier 3 cities, ensuring equitable access to knowledge.

Key Objectives and Goals:

- **Access to Scholarly Knowledge:** The scheme provides access to high-quality scholarly journals and publications across various fields. This aims to democratize access to knowledge to enhance the research capabilities of students, faculty, and researchers.
- **Inclusion of Diverse Institutions:** The scheme ensures that institutions, regardless of their geographic location—in urban centers or remote areas—have access to world-class research resources. This is crucial for advancing core and interdisciplinary research in the country.

- **Global Research Participation:** It aligns with the goals of Viksitbharat@2047, helping India to emerge as a global leader in research and development by enabling its academic and research institutions to engage with international scholarly communities.

The entire subscription process will be centrally coordinated by **INFLIBNET** (Information and Library Network), an autonomous inter-university center under the University Grants Commission (UGC).

A total of **Rs.6,000 crore** has been allocated for the PM-ONOS initiative, covering three years—**2025, 2026, and 2027.**

ONOS will also provide central funding support of **Rs. 150 Crore** per year for beneficiary authors to publish in selected good quality Open Access (OA) journals.

ONOS phase I, starting from 1 January 2025, will provide access to over 13,000 journals for more than 6,300 government academic and R&D institutes including central and state-govt universities and colleges. This translates to nearly 1.8 Crore students, faculty, and researchers getting access to high-quality research publications.

- The subscription charges for journals from 30 publishers under ONOS Phase I will be centrally paid by INFLIBNET, covering payments from library consortia, higher education institutions (HEIs), and R&D institutions under central ministries. Independent subscriptions will continue for resources not included in Phase I.
- This phase will establish the program's framework and ensure that key research resources are made available to a large number of institutions across India.
- Payment of Article Processing Charges (APC) to publishers for selected high-quality research publications of the researchers from these participating institutions have also been envisaged in this phase.
- Experience of ONOS phase I will be used for designing subsequent phases of ONOS.

The ONOS scheme will complement the existing Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF), which is designed to promote R&D activities across India.

198. The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved the continuation of the **Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY)** and the **Restructured Weather-Based Crop Insurance Scheme** until **2025-26.**

The schemes have been allocated an enhanced outlay of **Rs.69,515.71 crore** for the period 2021-22 to 2025-26.

The Union Cabinet has also approved the creation of the **Fund for Innovation and Technology (FIAT)** with a corpus of **Rs.824.77 Crore.** The fund will be utilized towards funding technological initiatives under the scheme namely, YES-TECH, WINDS, etc as well as Research and Development studies.

Yield Estimation System using Technology (YES-TECH) uses Remote Sensing Technology for yield estimation, with a minimum 30% weightage to Technology-based yield estimates. Nine major States are currently implementing it (namely AP, Assam, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, MP, Maharashtra, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka).

Weather Information and Network Data Systems (WINDS) envisages setting up Automatic Weather Stations (AWS) at the block level and Automatic Rain Gauges (ARGs) at the panchayat level.

Under WINDS, 5 times increase in current network density is envisaged to develop hyper-local weather data.

Under the initiative, only data rental costs are payable by Central and State Governments.

Nine major states are in the process of implementing WINDS (namely Kerala, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh Puducherry, Assam, Odisha, Karnataka, Uttarakhand & Rajasthan are in progress), while other States have also expressed willingness to implement.

199. Gujarat has launched the '**Atlas of Indian Wolf Habitats**' to protect biodiversity and conserve the Indian Wolf. The initiative focuses on identifying suitable habitats for wolves across 13 districts of Gujarat.

The atlas prepared by the GEER Foundation and Forest Department shows that the ideal habitats for wolves mainly consist of open scrub areas and grasslands with the availability of water sources.

The latest census conducted by the Gujarat Forest and Environment Department has estimated the population of Indian wolves to be 222 in the state.

Bhavnagar district has recorded the highest number of wolves in Gujarat i.e., 80, followed by 39 in Narmada district, 36 in Banaskantha, 18 in Surendranagar, 12 each in Jamnagar and Morbi, and 9 in Kutch district.

Porbandar, Mehsana, Navsari, Patan, Aravalli, and Surat districts have also recorded the wolf presence.

Wolves are mainly found in forest and desert areas in Gujarat. Their natural habitats also include the Bhal area in Bhavnagar, which includes the Blackbuck National Park in Velavadar and surrounding Dholera.

200. The Ministry of Power has successfully completed **ten years** of distributing and selling LED lights under its flagship **UJALA (Unnat Jyoti by Affordable LEDs for All) program**.

As of 6th January 2025, the UJALA scheme has distributed **36.87 crore LED bulbs**.

So far, the UJALA scheme has germinated the sale of **407.92 crore LED bulbs** in the Indian market.

Key outcomes of the UJALA scheme include:

- Cost savings per year: Rs.19,153 crore
- Avoided peak demand: 9,586 MW
- Reduction in carbon-di-oxide emissions per year: 3,87,84,952 tonnes
- Energy saved per year: 47,883 million kWh

The UJALA scheme was launched on 5th January 2015 and was initially introduced as the **LED-based Domestic Efficient Lighting Programme (DELP)**. It aims to **promote the efficient usage of energy for all** i.e., its consumption, savings, and lighting.

The UJALA scheme enables consumers to purchase LED appliances at significantly reduced rates: Rs 70 per LED bulb, Rs 220 per LED tube light, and Rs 1110 per energy-efficient fan.

Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL) was designated as the implementing agency for the programme.

In terms of energy consumption, an LED bulb uses only 1 unit of electricity when operated for 140 hours, whereas a CFL and an ICL consume 2 units and 9 units respectively over the same period.

201. Union Minister of Steel and Heavy Industries, H. D. Kumaraswamy, launched the second round of the **Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for Specialty Steel**, termed as **PLI Scheme 1.1**.

PLI Scheme 1.1 shall be implemented during the production period of **FY 2025-26 to FY 2029-30**.

It covers **five (5) product categories** in line with the existing PLI Scheme, namely Coated / Plated Steel Products, High Strength / Wear-resistant Steel, Specialty Rails, Alloy Steel Products & Steel wires, and Electrical Steel.

These products have a wide range of applications, from white goods to transformers to Automobiles and other niche sectors.

The scheme will operate within the funds originally allocated for the scheme, i.e., **Rs.6,322 crore**.

Key changes in the scheme:

- Reduction in threshold investment & capacity for the Cold-rolled grain-oriented steel (CRGO) product sub-categories, allowing carry forward of excess production to the immediately following year for the purpose of claiming incentive and reduction in threshold investment under capacity augmentation mode.
- Not all companies would need to install new mills.
- Recognising the importance of producing quality steel, energy efficiency and other process improvements, companies investing in augmentation of existing capacities will be allowed to participate in the scheme.

The first round of the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for Specialty Steel was notified on July 29th, 2021 by the Ministry of Steel with a budgetary outlay of Rs.6,322 Crore. The objective of the PLI scheme for specialty steel is to promote the manufacturing of value-added steel grades within the country and help the Indian steel industry mature in terms of technology as well as move up the value chain.

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202. The fourth edition of **Project 'Veer Gatha 4.0'**, a joint initiative by the **Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Education** as part of Republic Day celebrations, has garnered an incredible nationwide response.

This year, approximately **1.76 crore students** from around 2.31 lakh schools participated in the competition.

100 winners are selected at the national level. The winners are divided into four categories, with 25 winners from each: Preparatory Stage (Grades 3-5), Middle Stage (Grades 6-8), Secondary Stage (Grades 9-10) and Secondary Stage (Grades 11-12).

Project Veer Gatha 4.0, launched on September 5, 2024, presented a variety of thought-provoking topics for essay and paragraph writing. Students had the opportunity to write about their chosen role models, particularly focusing on Gallantry Award recipients. They were also encouraged to explore the inspiring lives of freedom fighters such as Rani Laxmibai, the 1857 First War of Independence, and the significant role of Tribal Uprisings in India's Freedom Struggle.

Project Veer Gatha was launched in 2021 as part of 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' to commemorate India's 75th year of Independence. The project aims to raise awareness of Gallantry awardees' acts of bravery and the life stories of these heroes. The initiative helps instil patriotism and civic values in students.

203. The Department of Land Resources, Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD), has announced the sanction of **56 new Watershed Development Projects** under the **Watershed Development Component of Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (WDC-PMKSY) Scheme.**

The total cost of these projects is **Rs.700 Crores.**

These projects will be implemented in **10 best performing States** viz., *Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Assam, Nagaland, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Sikkim.*

Each project will approximately have an area of **5,000 hectares**, but in hill States, it may be lesser.

The initiative prioritizes visible field impacts by allocating Rs.700 crore to cover approximately **2.8 lakh hectares**, ensuring timely recovery of degraded land and efficient utilization of funds.

These projects would further help in increasing the income of farmers, addressing land degradation, and strengthening climate resilience efforts.

WDC-PMKSY Scheme aims to develop degraded and rainfed areas of the country, by undertaking watershed development projects in an integrated approach.

In 2021-22, 1150 projects covering an area of about 50 Lakh hectares have been sanctioned with a cost of Rs.12303 Crores under WDC-PMKSY 2.0.

204. AI Touch LLP has received funding under the Department of Telecommunications' TTDF scheme of USOF (now "Digital Bharat Nidhi") to develop components for disaggregated **5G RAN (Radio Access Network)** including RAN Intelligent Controller (RIC), Service Management and Orchestration (SMO), and Network Data Analytics Function (NWDAF) modules.

The project aims to develop a platform integrating SMO, RIC, and NWDAF modules for 5G RAN with an AI/ML-powered intent engine. It facilitates intelligent and automated control of RAN and Core nodes through AI/ML-based applications and closed-loop automation.

The platform will demonstrate a sample application for managing user experience during congestion scenarios and provide interfaces for onboarding third-party applications.

The platform will integrate Non-Real-Time RIC, Near-Real-Time RIC, SMO, and NWDAF to enhance network automation and performance.

The RIC modules will support AI/ML-driven network optimization, SMO will enable cross-domain orchestration, and NWDAF will provide analytics and insights for better decision-making. These solutions will bring operational efficiency to the 5G network.

The Centre for Development of Telematics (C-DOT), the premier telecom R&D center under the Department of Telecommunications (DoT), Government of India, will oversee the implementation of the project.

RAN:

It is a key component of wireless telecommunication systems, enabling devices like cell phones and computers to connect to a network via a radio link. It facilitates communication between user equipment and the core network, which manages subscriber data and location information.

205. Union Minister of Commerce & Industry, Piyush Goyal has launched the **8th edition** of the **National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP)** at the Bharat Ratna C. Subramaniam Auditorium (NASC Complex), Pusa in **New Delhi**.

India's total export value of organic farming has the potential to reach Rs 20,000 crore in the next three years.

Key portals unveiled during the event:

- **NPOP portal:** The dedicated portal for the National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP) will provide more visibility and ease of operations for Organic stakeholders.
- **Organic Promotion Portal:** Farmers, FPOs and exporters can showcase their certified organic products, generate Trade Leads and connect with global buyers. This will also include online Training and capacity building sessions for operators on Organic production and also information on Organic Trade events.
- **TraceNet 2.0:** The upgraded online Organic traceability system for seamless operations and enhanced tools for regulatory oversight. It will ensure transparency, traceability, and compliance for organic agricultural and processed food products from farm to market. By integrating technology with agriculture, TraceNet empowers stakeholders to streamline operations and meet global organic certification standards.
- **APEDA portal:** Redesigned and revamped APEDA portal with enhanced user experience and information for the benefit of Agri and Processed food products' stakeholders.
- **AgriXchange portal:** Redesigned and revamped AgriXchange portal enables more user-friendly data analysis and generation of reports & data of Agricultural exports making it accessible for the general public. Exporters can seamlessly connect with international buyers and sellers as well as explore comprehensive trade insights at their fingertips.

The National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP) is a key government programme that strengthens India's organic certification system, promoting sustainable farming practices and opening new opportunities for farmers and exporters.

206. The **Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP)** of **NITI Aayog**, has launched **EmpowHER Biz – Sapno Ki Udaan** in collaboration with **New Shop**, India's largest 24/7 convenience retail chain under its Award to Reward (ATR) program.

This initiative aims to empower women entrepreneurs by equipping them with the skills and resources needed to succeed in the organized retail sector.

EmpowHER Biz will offer mentorship and comprehensive training, covering retail management, digital tools, financial literacy and business development to aspiring women entrepreneurs.

Through this collaboration with New Shop, WEP aims to create a robust retail ecosystem that empowers women entrepreneurs and drives sustainable growth in the sector.

Under the initiative, 50 participants aged 18–35, will be selected through an online application process based on specific criteria.

Top twenty of these participants will receive a 100% waiver on New Shop franchise fees, empowering them to own and operate their retail businesses with significantly reduced barriers to entry.

The program is being launched for women from Delhi NCR, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, and Gujarat.

WEP, incubated in NITI Aayog in 2018 as an aggregator platform, transitioned into a public-private partnership in 2022.

WEP aims at empowering women entrepreneurs by overcoming information asymmetry and providing continuum of support across different pillars- Access to Finance; Market Linkages; Training and Skilling; Mentoring & Networking; Compliance & Legal Assistance and Business Development Services.

207. The Union Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution and New & Renewable Energy, Pralhad Joshi, has announced a significant revision in the **Open Market Sale Scheme (Domestic) [OMSS(D)] Policy** for the year **2024-25**.

This policy aims to enhance food security and ensure the efficient distribution of rice to various stakeholders.

The following key decisions have been taken under the revised policy:

The reserve price of rice has been fixed at **Rs.2,250 per quintal** (Pan-India) for sale to State Governments, State Government Corporations, and Community Kitchens, without the requirement of participating in e-auctions.

The reserve price of rice for sale to ethanol distilleries for the production of ethanol has also been fixed at **Rs.2,250 per quintal** (Pan-India).

These decisions reflect the Government of India's commitment to supporting states in fulfilling their obligations under state schemes, promoting food security, and bolstering ethanol production as part of the national energy strategy.

208. Union Minister for Rural Development and Agriculture & Farmers Welfare **Shivraj Singh Chouhan** on behalf of the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India has distributed house allotment letters to **8.21 lakh poor families** in **Madhya Pradesh** under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Gramin.

The house allotment letters were distributed during an event in Vidisha, Madhya Pradesh.

In Madhya Pradesh, these pucca houses will be built for the poor at a cost of **Rs 12,636 crores**.

The 8.21 lakh families will also get houses by April-May, for which the Union Minister handed over the approval letter to the Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh Mohan Yadav. With this, Madhya Pradesh will get a total of about **14 lakh houses** from the Centre in a **year**. Madhya Pradesh had previously received 3.68 lakh houses in September 2024. The Union Minister also announced that another 8.21 lakh houses will be provided by April, bringing the total value of housing projects in Madhya Pradesh to Rs 30,672 crore. Madhya Pradesh has also received Rs 5,628 crore under MNREGA and Rs 263 crore under the PM Gram Sadak Yojana, with an additional Rs 500 crore to be released soon. Rs 312.74 crore has been allocated to the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) to support women in becoming financially independent.

209. Startup India completed **nine years** on 16th January 2025. Startup India, launched as a flagship initiative of the Government of India in 2016, aimed to nurture innovation and catalyze the growth of startups across the country.

Key milestones:

- The number of Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) - recognized startups has grown from around 500 in 2016 to **1,59,157** as of January 15, 2025.
- As of October 31, 2024, a total of **73,151** recognized startups include at least one-woman directors, showcasing the rise of women entrepreneurs in India.
- From 2016 to October 31, 2024, recognized startups have reportedly created over **16.6 lakh direct jobs**, significantly contributing to employment generation. The IT Services industry leads with 2.04 lakh jobs, followed by Healthcare & Lifesciences with 1.47 lakh jobs, and Professional & Commercial Services with around 94,000 jobs.

In 2025, DPIIT launched **PRABHAAV Factbook (Powering a Resilient and Agile Bharat for the Advancement of Visionary Startups)**. PRABHAAV Factbook is the ultimate guide to India's thriving startup ecosystem and its growth story from 2016-2024. PRABHAAV captures the achievements of every region.

210. The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) has recently issued operational guidelines for the implementation of the 'payment security mechanism' component and 'central financial assistance' component for RESCO models under the **'PM-Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana'**.

The scheme offers two alternative implementation models for the installation of rooftop solar plants for consumers:

- The **RESCO (Renewable Energy Service Company) model**, where third-party entities invest in rooftop solar installations, allowing consumers to pay only for the electricity consumed without bearing the upfront costs;
- The **Utility-Led Aggregation (ULA) model**, where DISCOMs or state-designated entities will install rooftop solar projects on behalf of individual residential sector households.

Under this scheme component, a **Rs.100 crore corpus fund** has been earmarked for a **Payment Security Mechanism (PSM)** for de-risking investments in RESCO-based grid-connected rooftop solar models in the residential sector, which may be supplemented through other grants, funds, and sources after due approval of the Ministry.

The **Central Financial Assistance (CFA)** aims to support **1 crore residential consumers** in installing rooftop solar systems.

The Centre approved the PM-Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana on February 29, 2024, to increase the share of solar rooftop capacity and empower residential households to generate their electricity. The scheme has an outlay of Rs 75,021 crore and is to be implemented till 2026-27.

211. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has presided over the largest-ever distribution of property cards ceremony under the **SVAMITVA (Survey of Villages Abadi and Mapping with Improved Technology in Village Areas) Scheme** of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, empowering 65 lakh rural citizens with legal ownership documents in a single day.

He distributed **65 lakh Property Cards** under the SVAMITVA Scheme that covered more than **50,000 villages** across 10 States (Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Mizoram, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh) and 2 Union Territories (Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh) on 18th January 2025.

The SVAMITVA scheme was launched on 24th April 2020.

Key achievements of the SVAMITVA scheme (as of January 2025):

- The SVAMITVA Scheme aims to provide the '**Record of Rights**' to village household owners possessing houses in inhabited rural areas in villages and issuance of Property cards to the Property owners, **31 States/UTs have on-boarded the Scheme**.
- At the national level, a total of 3,46,187 villages have been notified under the scheme, with **drone flying completed in 3,17,715 villages**, marking **92%** achievement.
- Maps have been handed over for State inquiries, and **property cards have been prepared for 1,53,726 villages**, resulting in the **issuance of nearly 2.25 crore property cards**.
- States like **Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh have achieved 100% drone surveys**, with substantial progress in property card preparation at 73.57% and 68.93%, respectively.
- **Haryana and Uttarakhand stand out with 100% completion in both drone surveys and property card preparation. Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka, and Rajasthan have made commendable progress in drone surveys, with Maharashtra and Gujarat achieving over 98%**, though further acceleration is needed in property card preparation.
- A total of **67,000 sq.km of rural Abadi land** has been surveyed, valued at Rs.132 lakh crore, emphasizing the economic significance of the initiative.
- A **centralized online monitoring and reporting dashboard** enables real-time tracking of implementation progress. Property cards are seamlessly accessible to beneficiaries through the **DigiLocker app**, allowing them to view and download their cards digitally.
- The scheme also employs survey-grade drones coupled with the **Continuous Operating Referencing System (CORS)** network to produce high-resolution maps swiftly and accurately, revolutionizing the process of rural land demarcation.

212. The National Internet Exchange of India (NIXI) launched its **Internet Governance Internship and Capacity Building Scheme** to generate awareness and develop expertise in internet governance among citizens.

The program was launched by **S. Krishnan, Secretary, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), Govt. of India and Chairman, NIXI**.

This program aims to equip participants with the knowledge to effectively engage in global internet governance processes with I-Star organizations like Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), Internet Society or Information Security Operations Center (ISOC), Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE), Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) and collaborate closely with leading experts in the field.

The program offers a bi-annual internship with two parallel tracks: a six-month program and a three-month program. Each intern will be mentored by subject matter experts from international organizations like ICANN APNIC or APTLD, members from Special Interest Group, high-ranked retired government officials, and faculty advisors from recognized institutions/universities.

A fixed stipend of Rs. 20,000/- per month will be provided to interns along with support to conduct mandatory outreach programs.

National Internet Exchange of India (NIXI):

- The National Internet Exchange of India (NIXI) is a not-for-profit (Section 8) company under the aegis of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Government of India.
- It was set up on **19th June 2003**.
- It is tasked with increasing internet penetration and adoption in India by facilitating various infrastructure aspects to enable the internet ecosystem to be managed and used by the masses.
- The four services under NIXI include: Internet Exchange Points (IXPs) for building Internet Exchange Points, .IN Registry for building the .in domain digital identity, IRINN for IPv4 and IPv6 addresses adoption.

213. The **Department of Commerce**, Government of India has announced the **Diamond Import Authorization (DIA) Scheme** on the **21st of January 2025**, aiming to enhance the global competitiveness of India's diamond sector.

This scheme provides a streamlined mechanism for the duty-free import of Natural Cut and Polished Diamonds, thereby promoting value addition and boosting exports.

The Scheme will be implemented with effect from **1st April 2025**.

Key Features of the Scheme:

- This scheme allows the duty-free import of Natural Cut and Polished Diamonds of **less than ¼ Carat (25 Cents)**.
- This scheme mandates export obligation with a value addition of **10%**.
- All Diamond exporters holding Two Star Export House status and above and having **USD 15 Million** exports per year, are eligible for availing the benefit under this scheme.

The scheme is made in response to Beneficiation policies undertaken in several natural diamond mining countries like Botswana, Namibia, Angola, etc. where diamond manufacturers are obliged to open cut and polishing facilities for a minimum percentage of value addition.

The scheme is designed to provide a level playing field for Indian diamond exporters, particularly MSME exporters, enabling them to compete effectively with larger peers.

It aims to prevent the potential flight of investments by Indian diamond manufacturers to diamond-mining destinations. Additionally, the scheme is expected to generate more employment opportunities, particularly for diamond sorters and in the processing of semi-finished diamonds in factories. By facilitating Indian exporters, it seeks to protect the domestic diamond processing industry and sustain the associated employment.

214. The Ministry of Finance notified the operationalization of the **Unified Pension Scheme (UPS)** as an option under the National Pension System (NPS) for central government employees.

- The UPS shall apply to Central Government employees who are covered under the National Pension System and who choose this option under the National Pension System.
- The effective date for operationalization of the Unified Pension Scheme shall be **April 1, 2025**.
- The new UPS will offer **50%** of the average basic pay drawn by a Central government employee during the 12 months prior to retirement, provided they complete **25 years** of service.
- Employees with less than 25 years of service but more than 10 years will receive a pension on a proportionate basis.
- The **Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA)** may issue regulations for operationalizing the UPS.

Background:

The Government of India had set up a high-level committee, headed by cabinet secretary-designate **T.V. Somanathan**, the then-finance secretary, in April 2023 to rework the existing pension system, known as the New Pension Scheme (NPS).

The Cabinet approved the new pension policy for nearly 2.3 million central government employees on **August 24, 2024**.

- 215.** The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has approved the launch of the **National Critical Minerals Mission (NCMM)** with an expenditure of **Rs.16,300 crore** and expected investment of Rs.18,000 crore by PSUs, etc.
The Union Finance Minister announced the setting up of the Critical Mineral Mission in the **Union Budget for 2024-25 on 23rd July 2024**.
The mission will encompass all stages of the value chain, including mineral exploration, mining, beneficiation, processing, and recovery from end-of-life products.
The mission will intensify the exploration of critical minerals within the country and in its offshore areas. It aims to create a fast-track regulatory approval process for critical mineral mining projects.
The mission will offer financial incentives for critical mineral exploration and promote the recovery of these minerals from overburden and tailings.
The mission includes provisions for setting up mineral processing parks and supporting the recycling of critical minerals. It will also promote research in critical mineral technologies and proposes setting up a Centre of Excellence on Critical Minerals.

- 216.** The Government of India has approved the introduction of the **Mutual Credit Guarantee Scheme for MSMEs (MCGS- MSME)** for providing 60% guarantee coverage by National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company Limited (NCGTC) to Member Lending Institutions (MLIs*) for credit facilities up to Rs.100 crore sanctioned to eligible MSMEs under MCGS-MSME for purchase of equipment/machinery.
- Salient Features of the Scheme:**
- The borrower should be an MSME with a valid Udyam Registration Number;
 - The loan amount guaranteed **shall not exceed Rs.100 crore**
 - Project Costs could be of higher amounts also.
 - The minimum cost of equipment /machinery is **75%** of the project cost
 - Loan up to **Rs.50 crore** under the Scheme shall have a repayment period of up to **8 years** with up to **2 years moratorium period** on principal instalments. For loans above Rs.50 crore, a higher repayment schedule and moratorium period on principal instalments can be considered.
 - An upfront (initial) contribution of **5%** of the loan amount shall be deposited at the time of application of guarantee cover.
 - **Annual Guarantee Fee** on loan under the Scheme shall be **Nil** during the year of sanction. During the next 3 years, it shall be **1.5% p.a.** of loan outstanding as of March 31 of the previous year. Thereafter, the Annual Guarantee Fee shall be **1% p.a.** of the loan outstanding as of March 31 of the previous year.
 - The Scheme will be applicable to all loans sanctioned under MCGS-MSME during the period of 4 years from the date of issue of operational guidelines of the scheme or till a cumulative guarantee of Rs. 7 lakh crore is issued, whichever is earlier.

BUSINESS & ECONOMY

217. India has a share of **3.9%** of the **global trade in textiles and apparel**. Major textile and apparel export destinations for India are the USA and the European Union (EU) with around **47%** share in total textile and apparel exports.

India is the **6th** largest exporter of Textiles & Apparel in the world in 2023.

The share of textile and apparel (T&A) including handicrafts in India's total exports stands at a significant **8.21%** in 2023-24.

The overall export of Textiles & Apparel (including handicrafts) marked growth of **7%** during April-October period of FY 2024-25 (\$ 21,358 Mn) compared to the same period of FY 2023-24 (\$ 20,007 Mn).

The Ready-Made Garments (RMG) category with an export of \$ 8,733 Mn has the largest share (41%) in the total exports (\$ 21,358 Mn) during the period of April-October of FY 2024-25, followed by Cotton Textiles (33%, \$ 7,082 Mn), Man- Made Textiles (15%, \$ 3,105 Mn).

Growth of exports is observed in all principal commodities during the period of April-October of FY 2024-25 compared to corresponding period of FY 2023-24, except wool and handloom which declined by 19% and 6% respectively.

Import of textiles and apparel products by India during FY 2023-24 (\$ 8,946 Mn) has decreased by approximately **15%** in comparison to FY 2022-23 (\$10,481 Mn).

The overall import of Textiles & Apparel (including handicrafts) declined 1% during April-October period of FY 2024-25 (\$ 5,425 Mn) compared to the same period of FY 2023-24 (\$ 5,464 Mn)

The Man-made textiles category with imports of \$1859 Mn has the largest share (34%) in the total imports (\$ 5,425 Mn) during the period of April-October of FY 2024-25, as there is a demand-supply gap in this sector.

218. The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), under the Ministry of Commerce & Industry, has teamed up with the **Startup Policy Forum (SPF)**, a reputed industry organization representing India's leading new-age companies, to boost the startup ecosystem.

The **SPF Baithak**, a gathering of founders and policymakers, will be organized on **January 15-16** at Bharat Mandapam, as part of National Startup Week celebrations. The event will offer a meaningful platform to announce new collaborations between DPIIT and SPF members.

The SPF will partner with DPIIT to organize specialized immersive programs, enabling global investors to engage with Indian startups and witness firsthand the groundbreaking innovations emerging from across the country.

The DPIIT has also partnered with **Stride Ventures**, a leading venture debt firm, to catalyze the growth of Indian startups and widen their global footprint.

219. Lakshman Prasad Acharya, Governor of Assam, **Ashwini Vaishnaw**, Union Minister of Railways, Information & Broadcasting and Electronics & Information Technology along with **Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma**, Chief Minister of Assam, jointly inaugurated the **National Institute of Electronics & Information Technology (NIELIT) Deemed to be University** at **12 locations** including 5 locations in North Eastern States.

The university will provide higher education in digital Technologies like Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, Blockchain Technology, Industry 4.0, Semiconductor Design & Manufacturing, Automotive Electronics, Drone Technology, Cybersecurity & Forensics, Bioinformatics and many more.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was also signed between **NIELIT and Tata Electronics Private Limited (TEPL)** to collaboratively enhance the semiconductor skilling ecosystem in India.

- The MoU aims to establish skill centers, develop diploma and certification programs, and conduct workshops in Semiconductor ATMP (Assembly, Testing, Marking, and Packaging) technologies.

- TEPL will offer technical expertise and internship opportunities, while NIELIT will focus on education, training, and outreach. Both organizations will also jointly pursue research and funding initiatives, with a special emphasis on creating opportunities in the Northeastern region of India.

NIELIT:

The National Institute of Electronics & Information Technology (NIELIT), an Autonomous Scientific Society under MeitY, has been conferred the status of "Deemed to Be University" under the distinct category by the Ministry of Education.

The main campus of NIELIT Deemed to be University is in **Ropar, Punjab**, and eleven constituent units are located in **Aizawl, Agartala, Aurangabad, Calicut, Gorakhpur, Imphal, Itanagar, Kekri, Kohima, Patna, and Srinagar**.

The university is aligned with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which emphasizes accessibility, flexibility, and industry relevance in education. The university provides a flexible, student-centered learning environment through a robust digital ecosystem.

220. Gurugram-based **Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (POWERGRID)**, a 'Maharatna' Public Sector Enterprise under the Ministry of Power, Government of India, has signed a green loan agreement with **Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation (SMBC)** at GIFT City, Gandhinagar, Gujarat.

This loan facility, denominated in the Japanese yen (JPY), is valued at an equivalent of **USD 200 million** with a green shoe option of **USD 150 million**.

The green loan emphasizes POWERGRID's commitment to supporting India's energy transition goals while adhering to the highest environmental, social, and governance (ESG) standards.

The funds will be instrumental in facilitating renewable energy projects, enhancing grid reliability, and promoting sustainable development across the country.

221. The **Financial Intelligence Unit-India (FIU-IND)** and the **Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI)** have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) as part of continued coordinated efforts in the effective implementation of requirements of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act and Rules framed thereunder, in New Delhi.

The MoU was signed by Vivek Aggarwal, Director, FIU-IND, and Satyajit Tripathy, Member (Distribution), IRDAI.

As per the MoU, FIU-IND, and IRDAI will cooperate with each other in the areas of mutual interest, including the following:

- Appointment of a nodal officer and an alternate nodal officer by each party to the MoU.
- Sharing of relevant intelligence and information, available in their respective databases.
- Laying down the procedure and manner in which the regulated entities/ reporting entities report to FIU-IND under the PML Rules.
- Conducting outreach and training for regulated entities /reporting entities.
- Upgradation of AML/CFT skills in the regulated entities / reporting entities regulated by IRDAI.
- Assessment of Anti-Money Laundering/Combating Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) risks and vulnerabilities in the insurance sector.
- Identification of red flag indicators for Suspicious Transaction Reports (STRs) in the insurance sector.
- Supervising and monitoring the compliance of regulated entities / reporting entities with their obligations under PMLA, PML Rules, and IRDAI Guidelines.
- Compliance with each other's obligations under the relevant international standards.

Conduct of quarterly meetings to discuss the above in addition to typologies/trends in AML/CFT crimes, cases where sanctions have been imposed, etc.

- 222.** The **Centre for Development of Telematics (C-DOT)**, the premier Telecom R&D center of the Department of Telecommunications (DoT), Government of India, has signed an agreement with the **Indian Institute of Technology Delhi (IIT Delhi)** for the development of **"Building Blocks for THz Communication Front Ends"** for **6G**.

The agreement is signed under the **Telecom Technology Development Fund (TTDF)** 6G Call for proposal of the Department of Telecommunications, Government of India.

The aim of this project is the development of basic devices and components that are essential for THz systems envisaged for 6G communications, as well as other THz systems such as military communications and material characterization.

This project is being initiated to develop some of the core components at IIT Delhi facilities, in association with SAMEER (Society for Applied Microwave Electronics Engineering and Research) Kolkata.

This work will seamlessly lead to the fabrication of THz components at the production level.

C-DOT is the implementing agency for this project.

The agreement was signed during a ceremony attended by Dr. Rajkumar Upadhyay, CEO, C-DOT, Prof. Ananjan Basu the principal investigator from IIT Delhi, along with the Directors of C-DOT - Dr. Pankaj Kumar Dalela and Ms. Shikha Srivastava.

Other collaborations:

The **Centre for Development of Telematics (C-DOT)** and **IIT Mandi** signed an agreement for **'Developing Semiconductor Chip of Wideband Spectrum Sensor for Dynamic Spectrum Access'** under the TTDF scheme.

- 223.** The Competition Commission of India has approved the proposed acquisition of **34%** equity shareholding of **Ashoka Concessions (ACL) by Ashoka Buildcon (ABL)** and certain convertible instruments of ACL by ABL and Viva Highways (Viva); and **26%** shareholding of **Jaora Nayagaon Toll Road Company (JN) by Viva**.

The proposed combination envisages the acquisition of 34% equity shareholding of ACL by ABL and certain convertible instruments of ACL by ABL and Viva, and 26% shareholding of JN by Viva. ABL is primarily engaged in engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) in various sectors and operation and maintenance (O&M) of roads and highways. ABL operates its road assets through various models *i.e.*, EPC, Build Operate and Transfer (BOT) and Hybrid Annuity Model (HAM) models.

ACL, the infrastructure arm of the Ashoka Group, is active in the operation and maintenance of roads and highways in India through its various subsidiaries, which operate road assets. It was floated by ABL to bring the various BOT-based road and highway projects under one umbrella.

JN, a BOT concessionaire, has been granted a concession by the Madhya Pradesh Road Development Corporation for reconstruction, strengthening, widening, and rehabilitation of 125 Km to 250 Km of State Highway (SH)-31 in the state of Madhya Pradesh.

- 224.** Bengaluru-based space technology startup **Pixxel** has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with **Korea-based SIIS Co., Ltd.** to supply hyperspectral satellite data in **Korea**.

This partnership marks a significant step towards providing hyperspectral data to relevant institutions and companies in the country.

Pixxel's hyperspectral data offers far greater spectral detail than traditional multispectral data, enabling precise analysis of the physical and chemical properties of the Earth's surface and atmosphere.

Under this MoU, SIIS intends to enhance its market competitiveness by combining precise spatial information obtained from ultra-high-resolution imagery with the material-specific properties of hyperspectral data.

SIIS plans to strengthen its Earth observation business with the launch of its ultra-high-resolution satellite, **SpaceEye-T**, in March 2025.

Pixxel plans to launch its **Fireflies constellation**, consisting of six commercial-grade hyperspectral satellites, in early 2025.

225. The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has approved the proposed acquisition of **21 special purpose vehicles (SPVs)**, owning renewable power generation plants, and the holding companies of certain SPVs by **Gentari Renewables India Private Ltd.**

The Acquirer is an indirect subsidiary of **Petrolim Nasional Berhad**. The Acquirer is focused on delivering clean energy solutions through three initial core pillars: Renewable Energy, Hydrogen, and Green Mobility.

The target entities are engaged in the business of generation and sale of power through wind turbines and solar power plants.

Other CCI approvals:

- CCI has approved the acquisition of certain shareholding of **Pegatron Technology India Pvt. Ltd.** (Pegatron India) by **Tata Electronics Pvt. Ltd. (TEPL)** and the transfer of **TEL Components Pvt. Ltd. (TEL)**'s business undertaking to Pegatron India.
- CCI has approved the proposed combination involving inter-connected steps resulting in inter alia the acquisition of up to **68.9%** shareholding in **Roop Automotives Limited** by **CA Carob Investments (Investor)**.

226. **IndiaAI**, an Independent Business Division (IBD) under the Digital India Corporation, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with **Microsoft** to drive the adoption and development of artificial intelligence (AI) in India.

The key highlights of the MoU are as under:

- **Microsoft**, in partnership with **IndiaAI**, will skill **500,000 individuals**, including students, educators, developers, government officials, and women entrepreneurs by 2026.
- Establish "AI Catalysts," a Center of Excellence, to promote rural **AI innovation in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities** and equip 100,000 AI innovators and developers through hackathons, community building, and an AI marketplace.
- Set up **AI Productivity Labs** in 20 National Skill Training Institutes (NSTIs)/NIELIT centers across 10 states to train 20,000 educators and empower 100,000 students with foundational AI courses in 200 Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs).
- Focus on developing **AI-enabled solutions** for critical sectors, leveraging Microsoft Research (MSR)'s expertise.
- Microsoft's Founders Hub program will extend benefits, including Azure credits, business resources, and mentorship, to up to **1,000 AI startups under the IndiaAI Mission**, fostering innovation and growth in India's startup ecosystem.
- Develop foundational models with Indic language support to address **India's linguistic diversity** and unique requirements, ensuring cultural and contextual relevance.
- Support IndiaAI in building a robust and scalable dataset platform, including tools for dataset curation, annotation, and synthetic data generation.
- Collaborate to create frameworks, standards, and evaluation metrics for responsible AI development, supporting the establishment of an **AI Safety Institute in India**.

This strategic partnership is aligned with the core objectives of India AI Mission.

- 227. Tata Elxsi** has inked a pact with Bengaluru based-**CSIR-National Aerospace Laboratories (CSIR-NAL)** to explore innovations in emerging areas such as Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), Urban Air Mobility (UAM), and electric vertical take-off and landing (eVTOL) aircraft. The partnership combines NAL's deep aeronautical expertise and Tata Elxsi's technological capabilities in electrification, AI/ML, sensor fusion, and certification processes to support global and Indian markets. Tata Elxsi and CSIR-NAL will jointly focus on technologies such as aerodynamic design, autonomous systems, and secure communications to address the unique needs of both manned and unmanned air mobility systems.
- 228. Coal India Limited (CIL)** and **IREL (India) Limited** have signed a non-binding Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to cooperate and collaborate on the development of critical minerals. The MoU aims to promote the development of mutually agreed assets of critical minerals, including mineral sands and rare earth elements (REE). Both companies will work together to acquire assets, source raw materials domestically or internationally, and develop mining, extraction, and refining capabilities. This MoU is part of CIL's efforts to reduce India's import dependence on critical minerals including lithium and cobalt.
- 229. The Global Energy Alliance for People and Planet (GEAPP)** has signed a Multi-Donor Trust Fund with **International Solar Alliance (ISA)** aiming to mobilize **\$100 million** to fund high-impact solar energy projects. ISA also announced two other initiatives – **Digitalization of Utilities for Energy Transition (DUET)** and **Energy Transitions Innovation Challenge (ENTICE 2.0)**.
- DUET (Digitalization of Utilities for Energy Transition) is a program focused on the digitalization of grid systems through the development of a technology suite in which all grid assets are digitally captured (including geo-coordinates, specifications, etc.) and integrated with live smart sensors for real-time data.
 - ENTICE 2.0 (Energy Transitions Innovation Challenge), powered by GEAPP, is a platform designed to identify, nurture, and scale innovative solutions that have the potential to accelerate India's startup ecosystem and help achieve its sustainability goals. First launched in 2023, ENTICE aims to help scale innovations for the energy transition by facilitating access to funding, market linkages and mentorship.
- These initiatives bridge financing gaps, enhance institutional capacity and foster cost-efficient scalable solutions to support India's clean energy transition. GEAPP, through its Project Management Unit, will support ISA by providing governance oversight, facilitating fundraising efforts, and leveraging its expertise in energy transition planning, financing, and project implementation.
- Note:** The International Solar Alliance is a global initiative launched in 2015 by India and France at the COP21 in Paris, with 120 Member and Signatory countries. It is based in Gurugram, Haryana.
- 230. The Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI)**, a statutory body of the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with **NALSAR University of Law, in Hyderabad**. The MoU was signed by Dr. Abhijit Mitra, Chairman, AWBI, and Prof. Shrikrishna Deva Rao, Vice-Chancellor, NALSAR University.

The MoU formalized a strategic partnership aimed at providing high-quality, professional legal training to civil society members who support District Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCAs) and State Animal Welfare Boards in their efforts to assist animals.

This MoU between AWBI and NALSAR University of Law, Hyderabad will help in providing specialized training and education to the applicants of **Honorary Animal Welfare Representatives (HAWRs)** with AWBI wherein participants will be equipped with essential knowledge in animal welfare laws, procedures, investigative techniques, and related subjects. The training will be conducted in batches, with a maximum of 25 participants per session and will span a minimum of 3 days.

Upon successful completion of training, AWBI will issue Honorary Animal Welfare Representative (HAWR) certifications based on assessments conducted by NALSAR. Intellectual property rights for the training materials remain with NALSAR while AWBI will have exclusive usage rights for HAWR training.

The AWBI also held its 53rd General meeting at the National Animal Resource Facility for Biomedical Research (NARFBR) in Hyderabad.

The meeting addressed various matters for the furtherance of animal welfare in the country including administrative issues. The AWBI will be celebrating **Animal Welfare Fortnight** from **14th to 30th January 2025** across the country with activities highlighting the diversity of life on Earth and the vital role animals play in our ecosystems.

231. Hyderabad-based **Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL)** has formed the first-of-its-kind partnership with **Ultra Maritime of the USA** for manufacturing **sonobuoys** in India for the Indian Navy.

The two entities will manufacture the sonobuoys in India and the US. It is expected to become operational by **2027**.

Both entities will pursue new sonobuoy technologies to optimize their acoustic performance in the unique environment of the Indian Ocean, enabling wide area search through bespoke multi-static active solutions.

The USA had earlier approved a \$ 52.8 million government-to-government deal for the sale of US sonobuoys to India.

The sonobuoys are small and expendable devices used in underwater acoustics and sonar systems to detect submarines and other hostile objects and to carry out precision attacks to eliminate threats.

232. The Ministry of Defence (MoD) has signed a contract with **Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL)** for the supply of **Medium-Range Surface-to-Air Missiles (MRSAM)** for the Indian Navy.

The total cost of the contract is **Rs 2,960 crore**.

The missiles would be supplied by BDL under the 'Buy (Indian)' category with largely indigenous content.

The MRSAM system is a standard fit, onboard multiple Indian Naval Ships and is planned to be fitted on the majority of the future platforms planned for acquisition. The contract marks a critical milestone in the ongoing efforts to bolster India's defence capabilities and indigenize advanced military technology.

233. The **Centre for Development of Telematics (C-DOT)**, the premier Telecom R&D center of the Department of Telecommunications (DoT), Government of India, has signed an agreement with the **Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay (IIT Bombay)** for the development of "**Optical Transceiver Chipset for High-Bandwidth 6G Wireless Links**".

The agreement is signed under the Telecom Technology Development Fund (TTDF) 6G Call for proposal from the Department of Telecommunications, Government of India.

This call for proposal is for accelerated research on the 6G Eco-system, to lead in the design, development, and deployment of 6G technology by 2030 on the pillars of Affordability, Sustainability, and Ubiquity.

The aim of the project is to develop a chipset for high-bandwidth free-space coherent optical links. These links are meant for 6G applications including last-mile high-speed terrestrial connectivity in rural areas, and in terrains where deployment / laying out of optical fibers becomes a challenge. The objective is to develop solutions for providing uninterrupted high-bandwidth communication links to remote areas via satellites.

234. The **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)**, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, has collaborated with **ITC Limited**, one of India's leading diversified conglomerates, to accelerate startup growth and technological advancement besides the creation of viable market opportunities for startups across the country.

Under this collaboration, ITC is looking to deploy startup solutions in key areas such as digital platforms for Manufacturing Execution Systems (MES), integrating renewable energy opportunities for manufacturing locations, energy storage systems, etc.

ITC's vast experience and expertise with its extensive market network will complement DPIIT's initiative for supporting startups across the country.

235. **Indichip Semiconductors Ltd**, in collaboration with Yitoe Micro Technology (YMTL) from Japan, has signed an agreement with the Andhra Pradesh government to establish **India's first private semiconductor manufacturing facility** in **Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh**.

The facility will be located in the Orvakal Mega Industrial Hub.

The project entails an investment of **Rs.14,000 crores**.

This cutting-edge facility will focus on manufacturing Silicon Carbide (SiC) chips, contributing to India's technological advancement and sustainability goals.

The new SiC fab facility will begin with a production capacity of 10,000 wafers per month, ramping up to 50,000 wafers per month within two to three years.

236. **Bharat Heavy Electricals (BHEL)** has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the **Oil & Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC)** to explore joint projects and collaboration in the new and Renewable Energy business, including Fuel Cell, Electrolyser, and Battery Energy Storage system-based Projects.

This MoU will help in contributing towards the country's National Green Hydrogen Mission, as well as leveraging the combined strengths of both organizations for collaborating in emerging areas within the clean energy ecosystem.

This MoU is a critical step toward achieving India's renewable energy goals and boosting the use of sustainable energy solutions.

237. The **Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency Ltd. (IREDA)** has inked a Joint Venture Agreement with **SJVN Ltd., GMR Energy Ltd., and Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA)** for the development of the **900 MW Upper Karnali Hydro-electric Project** in Nepal.

The agreement was formalized in New Delhi in the presence of senior officials from IREDA, SJVN, and GMR Energy Ltd.

This agreement aims to strengthen regional energy security and accelerate renewable energy growth.

The joint venture agreement lays out a comprehensive framework for the project development, construction, operation, and maintenance under a Build-Own-Operate-Transfer (BOOT) model, with a **25-year** project term from the Commercial Operation Date (CoD).

238. The **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)** has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the **Bhaane Group**, a subsidiary of Shahi Exports Pvt Ltd, the largest manufacturer of apparel.

This MoU will launch incubation programs for startups specializing in manufacturing, along with other production areas, and foster relationships with international startup ecosystems.

This is part of the government's thrust on promoting new manufacturing entrepreneurs in the country.

The firm will support upcoming startups by providing access to market insights. The firm will facilitate them to create a holistic understanding of the workings of foreign markets, along with guidance on operational knowledge throughout the startup lifecycle.

Anand Ahuja is the current CEO and Co-Founder of Bhaane Group.

239. The **Directorate General of Shipping (DGS)** and the **Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC)**, a Scientific Society under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), signed an umbrella Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to advance technological innovation and excellence in India's maritime sector.

The MoU was signed by **Shyam Jagannathan, Director General of Shipping (DGS)**, and **E. Magesh, DG C-DAC** at an event held at MeitY.

This partnership aligns with DGS's vision of being a globally recognized and progressive maritime administration.

By integrating C-DAC's expertise in high-performance computing, cybersecurity, Blockchain, and e-Governance, the collaboration aims to:

- Digitalization and Automation of Maritime Processes
- Maritime Data Analytics and Predictive Modeling
- Cybersecurity and Maritime IoT
- Maritime Education and Training
- Research and Development in Maritime Technologies

240. The **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)** has collaborated with **Apna**, a jobs and professional networking platform, to enhance talent acquisition for DPIIT-registered startups.

The aim is to address hiring challenges and create job opportunities for young individuals while strengthening the startup ecosystem.

This collaboration formalized through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), brings a monetary value of **Rs 2000 per entity** registered on the **Bharat Startup Registry (Bhaskar) platform** in hiring credits on Apna's platform for each of the 7,00,000 entities. This will be currently valued at **Rs 140 crore**.

As the startup ecosystem gradually grows, the initiative's value will scale up, touching an estimated Rs 300 crore.

India is the world's third-largest startup ecosystem, with over 110 unicorns and 159,690 DPIIT-recognised startups to date.

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BANKING & FINANCE

241. Yes Bank, in collaboration with **FICCI FLO**, South East Asia's largest women's chamber of commerce, has recently launched the '**YES PowherUp**', a specialized MSME program designed to empower women entrepreneurs in scaling their businesses. The program offers a comprehensive suite of financial solutions tailored to the unique needs of women-led enterprises.

Key features of YES PowherUp include:

- **SME Loans:** Comprehensive funding solutions, including a 50% processing fee waiver for FICCI FLO members.
- **YES First Business Account:** Premium transactional accounts with exclusive benefits for women entrepreneurs.
- **Trade & Forex Solutions:** Access to international markets with a variety of trade and forex solutions.
- **Investment Solutions:** Trade up to **Rs.1.5 Cr** at zero brokerage for **60 days** with YES Securities.
- **Card Solutions:** Business credit cards for domestic and international travel, featuring low foreign currency markups.
- **Insurance Plans:** Specialized offerings for asset protection, cancer coverage, and discounted term plans.

242. Mumbai-based **RBL Bank Limited** sold its entire **8.16 percent** stake in **DAM Capital Advisors Limited** through an offer for sale (OFS) after the latter's initial public offering (IPO), held from December 19 to 23, 2024.

The sale involved 5.77 million equity shares with a face value of Rs 2 each, representing 8.16 percent of DAM Capital's equity capital, sold at Rs 283 per share.

The total transaction value was **Rs 163.32 crore** (excluding taxes and related expenses).

Following this transaction, RBL Bank no longer holds any equity in DAM Capital.

Prior to the IPO, RBL Bank had divested 1.06 million shares, representing a 1.5 percent stake in DAM Capital, through a secondary market transaction.

Mumbai-based DAM Capital is a financial services company providing a range of offerings. It was incorporated on May 7, 1993.

243. Swiggy Limited, an Indian online food delivery and e-commerce platform, has partnered with the **National Stock Exchange of India (NSE)** to introduce a financial literacy program for its delivery partners.

The program aims to enhance financial awareness and planning among gig workers, with a particular focus on women.

Swiggy has set a target of onboarding **1 lakh women** as delivery partners by **2030**, who will be among the beneficiaries of this program.

The financial literacy modules will be integrated into Swiggy's delivery partner apps, with content available in regional languages to ensure wider accessibility. Topics such as budgeting, investments, debt management, and understanding capital markets will be covered through interactive sessions led by SEBI-certified trainers.

The program will be part of Swiggy's broader initiatives, including *She the Change* and *Swiggy Skills*, aimed at empowering its workforce and contributing to financial inclusion. The current CEO of Swiggy is Sriharsha Majety.

244. M. Nagaraju, Secretary, Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Finance, has launched a revamped e-auction portal '**BAANKNET**' in New Delhi.

This platform consolidates information on **e-auction properties** from all Public Sector Banks (PSBs) and offers a one-stop destination for buyers and investors to discover a wide range of assets.

The listings include residential properties such as flats, independent houses, and open plots, as well as commercial properties, industrial land and buildings, shops, vehicles, plant and machinery, and agricultural and non-agricultural land.

The new portal is equipped with improved and enhanced features:

- Single Portal with the entire pre-auction, auction, and post-auction journeys in a single application.
- Automated and integrated payment gateway and KYC tools.
- Microservices-based architecture with open APIs for 3rd party integration.
- Dashboard feature for 'Spend Analytics' and various 'MIS Reports' on a click.
- Dedicated helpdesk and call center facility with callback request facility for the customers.

245. **Axis Max Life Insurance Ltd**, formerly known as Max Life Insurance Company Ltd, has launched the **Axis Max Life Sustainable Wealth 50 Index Fund**.

This customized Index Fund, computed and maintained by **NSE Indices Limited**, aims to invest in cash flow-generating companies to fuel their growth.

The Axis Max Life Sustainable Wealth 50 Index Fund invests in 50 top-performing stocks. These are selected using a proprietary, equal-weight, factor-based quantitative index. Stocks are identified from the NSE 500 universe based on free cash flow yield (FCF Yield) for non-financial companies and dividend yield for financial companies.

The fund maintains a strategic asset allocation of **80-100 percent** in equity and **0-20 percent** in cash and money market instruments.

Currently, the fund is available through Axis Max Life's Online ULIP products, including the Online Savings Plan and Flexi Wealth Advantage Plan.

246. The **Assam** government has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the **State Bank of India (SBI) and Union Bank of India (UBI)** to provide insurance benefits to state government employees.

The MoU aims to provide **zero-premium insurance coverage** and additional benefits to more than 4 lakh permanent state government employees.

Under this MoU, the state government employees will get benefits at zero cost that include a minimum of Rs 10 lakh for Term Life Insurance (coverage for employees in the event of natural death, including death due to illness or accident), minimum Rs 1 crore for accidental death, upto Rs 1 crore for Permanent Total Disability, upto Rs 80 lakh for Permanent Partial Disability, minimum Rs 2 crore for Air Accidental Insurance (coverage for employees in case of death due to an air crash).

The Treasury Officer of each district headquarters will serve as the Nodal Officer for coordination and grievance redressal, liaising with banks, ensuring smooth implementation of salary benefits, and assisting with claim submissions.

247. Kerala-based **Federal Bank**, in collaboration with **Nucleus Software**, has launched a new digital transaction banking platform called **FedOne** to help streamline treasury operations for its corporate clients.
The new offering is being powered by Nucleus Software's **FinnAxia** solution.
The FedOne platform includes real-time reporting features, bulk Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) payment capabilities, and more.
FinnAxia enables financial institutions to manage collections, payments, trade finance, liquidity and financial supply chain management, and other transaction banking operations within a single platform.

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248. The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) extended the deadline for **Third-Party App Providers (TPAPs)** to comply with the **30% transaction cap** on **UPI (Unified Payment Interface) transaction volumes** till **31st December 2026**.
This marks the third time the NPCI has extended the deadline for enforcing the market share cap. In November 2020, NPCI introduced a cap of 30% on UPI transaction volumes per TPAP to mitigate concentration risks and ensure a balanced ecosystem. However, the deadline was extended in December 2022.
The cap is based on the average UPI transaction volume over the past three months, with existing TPAPs exceeding the cap given two years to comply in phases.
This decision impacts major TPAPs like PhonePe and Google Pay, which collectively hold over 80% of UPI transactions.

249. The **State Bank of India (SBI)**, the country's largest bank, has launched two new deposit schemes, Har Ghar Lakhpati and SBI Patrons, designed to provide customers with greater financial flexibility and enhanced value.

Har Ghar Lakhpati:

- The Har Ghar Lakhpati is a pre-calculated **recurring deposit scheme** designed to accumulate a sum of Rs.1 lakh or its multiple.
- This scheme is available to minors, encouraging early financial planning and savings habits.
- The minimum tenure of SBI recurring deposits is **12 months (one year)**, and the maximum is **120 months (10 years)**.

SBI Patrons:

- SBI Patrons is a specialized **Term Deposit scheme** tailored for **seniors 80 years and above**.
- SBI is available to existing and new term deposit customers.
- SBI Patron's depositors would earn an additional 10 basis points higher interest rate than what is offered to senior citizens.

250. The **National Bank for Financing Infrastructure and Development (NaBFID)**, headquartered in Mumbai, Maharashtra, has invested **Rs 745 crore** in long-term bonds issued by **NDR InvIT**.
NDR InvIT is an Infrastructure Investment Trust managed by NDR InvIT Managers and sponsored by NDR Warehousing Private Limited.
These 15-year bonds, rated AAA/Stable by India Ratings (FITCH) and CARE, underscore NDR InvIT's key role in advancing India's warehousing and industrial parks sector.
The funds raised will enable the NDR InvIT's to capitalize on market opportunities, strengthen our portfolio, and deliver high-quality infrastructure that drives economic growth.

- 251. SBI Life** has acquired a **10% stake** in **Bima Sugam India Federation**, an insurance marketplace platform, for a cash consideration of Rs 6.6 crore. The investment aims to support the growth of the insurance marketplace.
Bima Sugam India Federation, an unlisted company, incorporated on June 18, 2024, aims to create and operate a centralized marketplace of insurance products and services.
The company will invest Rs 6.6 crore comprising 66 lakh equity shares having a face value of Rs 10 each in the equity share capital of Bima Sugam.
- 252.** A recent (in January 2025) research report by the **State Bank of India (SBI)** highlights a remarkable decline in poverty rates across rural and urban India.
As per the report, **rural poverty** was reduced to **4.86%** in FY24 from 7.2% in FY23 and 25.7% in 2011-12.
In comparison, the poverty ratio in **urban areas** reduced to **4.09%** from 4.6% in FY23 and 13.7% in 2011-12.
The report notes this decline in the rural poverty ratio is on account of higher consumption growth in the 0-5 percent fractile, leading to a shift in the poverty line from the 5-10 percent decile in FY23 to 0-5 percent decile in FY24.
The report notes another reason for the declining rural-urban gap was the rise in transfer schemes such as Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT).
The report estimated the new poverty line for FY24 at Rs 1,632 per month for rural areas and Rs 1,944 for urban areas. Earlier in 2011-12, an expert group headed by Tendulkar had estimated the poverty line at Rs 816 for rural areas and Rs 1,000 for urban areas.
The report also mentions the poverty rate in India could now be in the range of 4-4.5 percent.
- 253.** The **Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency Limited (IREDA)** has secured an '**Excellent**' rating for its performance in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed with the Ministry of New & Renewable Energy (MNRE) for the financial year 2023-24 with a score of 98.24 (rounded off 98).
This marks the **fourth consecutive year** that IREDA has received the highest rating.
In the previous three years, IREDA consistently delivered exceptional results, achieving an 'Excellent' rating with scores of 93.50 in FY 2022-23, 96.54 in FY 2021-22, and 96.93 in FY 2020-21.
These consistent achievements underline the organization's dedication to driving India's renewable energy goals.
Pradip Kumar Das is the current Chairman & Managing Director (CMD) of IREDA.
Other related news:
Solar Energy Corporation of India Ltd (SECI) has also achieved "Excellent" rating for its performance under the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Ministry of New & Renewable Energy (MNRE) for the financial year 2023-24, earning a score of 96 out of 100. This achievement highlights SECI's unwavering dedication to operational excellence and upholding the highest standards of corporate governance.
- 254.** The **World Bank** has approved a **USD 35 million loan** for a **Meghalaya Multisectoral Project for Adolescent Wellbeing, Empowerment and Resilience (MPOWER)** project that will help strengthen learning outcomes for adolescents in **grades 6-12**, by closing gaps in students' reading and math skills.

The project, in partnership with Meghalaya State Skills Development Society, will also impart business skills to budding entrepreneurs and out-of-school adolescents.

The \$35 million variable spread loan from the International Bank of Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) has a final maturity of **15 years**, including a grace period of **5 years**.

Meghalaya's adolescents, who constitute over 24 percent of the state population, are facing barriers to their education, and to their physical and mental health.

School dropout at the upper primary level is 11 percent, three times the national average, and 22 percent at the secondary level, close to double the national average.

Auguste Tano Kouamé is currently the World Bank's Country Director for India.

255. PhonePe has collaborated with **ICICI Lombard General Insurance** to offer insurance coverage for people travelling to the Maha Kumbh Mela 2025.

The insurance plan, available from January 13, 2025, to February 25, 2025, will be offered in two variants.

- **Rs 59** per traveller for individuals travelling by train or bus.
- **Rs 99** per traveller for individuals travelling by domestic flights.

The overall sum insured is up to **Rs 1 lakh**.

The product provides devotees with extensive coverage for various risks, with individual sum insured amounts for each risk as follows:

- Hospitalisation cover: up to Rs 50,000
- Outpatient Department (OPD) cover: up to Rs 1,500
- Personal accident cover (Death + Permanent Total Disability (PTD) + Permanent Partial Disability (PPD)): up to Rs 1 lakh

The trip cancellation coverage extends to Rs 5,000, and the repatriation of remains is covered up to Rs 10,000.

For air travellers, coverage includes loss of checked-in baggage and missed connecting flights, both extending up to Rs 5,000 each. This is applicable only for domestic flight policyholders.

The **Maha Kumbh Mela 2025** is renowned globally as the largest peaceful congregation of people. It is scheduled from 13th January to 26th February 2025.

256. Groww Mutual Fund has launched two passive funds based on Railways PSU: **Groww Nifty India Railways PSU Index Fund** and **Groww Nifty India Railways PSU Exchange Traded Fund (ETF)**.

Groww Nifty India Railways PSU ETF is India's first Nifty India Railways PSU ETF.

The New Fund Offer opens on 16 January 2025 and closes on January 30, 2025, with continuous sales starting on 13 February 2025.

The funds aim for long-term capital appreciation, focusing on equity in the Nifty India Railways PSU Index.

The schemes will be benchmarked against the Nifty India Railways PSU Index –TRI and will be managed by Abhishek Jain.

Groww Nifty India Railways PSU Index Fund:

- An exit load of 1% will be applicable if redeemed within 30 days from the date of allotment. If redeemed after 30 days from the date of allotment, the exit load will be nil.
- The minimum amount for the SIP facility will be Rs 100, and in multiples of Re 1 thereafter.
- The scheme will allocate 95-100% to equity and equity-related securities of companies constituting the underlying Nifty India Railways PSU Index, and 0-5% to debt and money market instruments, units of debt schemes, or debt ETFs.

Groww Nifty India Railways PSU ETF:

- The exit load is nil. The minimum investment amount is Rs 500, and in multiples of Re 1 thereafter.
- The units will be allotted in whole figures, and any balance amount will be refunded, even if it falls below the minimum investment amount.
- The scheme will allocate 95-100% in constituents of the Nifty India Railways PSU Index and 0-5% in money market instruments, debt securities, or units of debt/liquid schemes of domestic mutual funds.

257. Bengaluru-based **Strata Capital Management Private Limited**, which facilitates fractional ownership of commercial real estate, has received a license from the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) to launch small and medium-scale real estate investment trusts (SM REITs). The SM-REIT will be named **Strata SM REIT**, which will enable retail and institutional investors to invest in high-quality commercial assets in major cities. The company aims to initially launch up to six SM REIT schemes in 2025-26, and gradually increase it to one scheme every month. **Strata Capital** will be the Investment Manager for the SM REIT. Strata was previously a tech-enabled real estate investment platform that allowed investors to own and sell fractions of pre-leased, Grade-A commercial properties like office spaces, warehouses, industrial assets, etc.

258. **DSP Mutual Fund** has launched a **first-of-its-kind** investment opportunity with the launch of two new schemes: **DSP BSE Sensex Next 30 Index Fund and DSP BSE Sensex Next 30 ETF**. These are open-ended equity schemes tracking the BSE Sensex Next 30 Index, aiming to provide investors with an opportunity to gain exposure to the **30 largest companies** beyond the BSE SENSEX, which are poised for growth and could be the next set of leaders. The New Fund Offer (NFO) for the DSP BSE SENSEX Next 30 Index Fund and DSP BSE SENSEX Next 30 ETF will be from January 10 to January 24, 2025. The BSE Sensex Next 30 Index includes companies that are not part of the BSE SENSEX but represent significant market capitalization and potential for future growth. This index brings a differentiation by focusing on the middle segment of the large-cap universe. This segment houses some of the fastest-growing large-cap leaders and challengers but is often under-represented in most existing large-cap indices with an allocation of just 10-40%. The index offers diversification by providing exposure to a broader range of companies, allowing investors to tap into emerging market leaders across various sectors. Financial Services account for only 19% compared to 38% in BSE Sensex, while Consumer Discretionary and Commodities contribute 18% each. The index also maintains meaningful exposure to Energy (10%), Healthcare (10%), FMCG (8%), and Industrials (8%), providing investors access to a well-diversified portfolio of quality large-cap companies.

259. New Delhi-based **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI)** has mandated all insolvency professionals (IPs) handling liquidation processes to exclusively use the **Baanknet (Bank Asset Auction Network)** auction platform (earlier known as **eBKray**), for conducting auctions with effect from **April 1, 2025**. The unsold assets in all ongoing liquidation cases must be listed by **March 31, 2025**. eBKray, launched in 2019, is an advanced property listing and e-auction platform designed for banks and lending institutions. The platform facilitates the recovery of non-performing asset (NPA) loans by leveraging the sale of distressed assets through online auctions.

According to the IBBI, 210 assets have already been listed on the eBKray platform, with 25 auctions conducted or scheduled.

260. Tamil Nadu-based **Tamilnad Mercantile Bank** has teamed up with **Bajaj Broking**, a leading stockbroking firm, to launch a comprehensive **3-in-1 account solution**, integrating banking, broking, and investment services on a single platform.

The collaboration aims to offer Tamilnad Mercantile Bank customers a seamless online trading experience through Bajaj Broking's platform.

The 3-in-1 account will simplify fund transfers, reduce paperwork, and provide a tech-driven interface for investments across a wide range of financial products.

The platform facilitates easy fund transfers, reduces paperwork, and offers technology-driven investment options across various products.

Salee S. Nair is the current Managing Director & CEO of Tamilnad Mercantile Bank.

261. **GMR Smart Electricity Distribution (GSEDPL)**, a subsidiary of GMR Power and Urban Infra (GPUIL), has received approval for a **Rs 21.28 billion loan** from the **Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA)**.

The loan will be disbursed in tranches to part-finance the installation of 7.57 million smart meters in **Uttar Pradesh**.

The project was awarded to GSEDPL in July 2023 following tenders floated by two state distribution companies (DISCOMs), Purvanchal Vidyut Vitran Nigam and Dakshinanchal Vidyut Vitran Nigam.

The meters will be installed across five zones: Varanasi, Azamgarh, Prayagraj, Mirzapur, Agra, and Aligarh.

The total project cost is estimated at Rs 34.67 billion (~USD 403.75 million), and GSEDPL will operate and maintain the smart meters under a 10-year contract with the DISCOMs.

The project is being implemented through three special purpose vehicles (SPVs): GMR Agra Smart Meters, GMR Kashi Smart Meters, and GMR Triveni Smart Meters.

For technical implementation, GSEDPL has partnered with Bosch Global Software Technologies.

262. The **State Bank of India (SBI)**, in its latest Ecowrap Research Report, revised its forecast for India's GDP growth in the financial year 2024-25 (FY25) to **6.3 percent**, down from the National Statistical Office's (NSO) projection of 6.4 percent.

The bank attributed the downgrade to multiple economic challenges, including a slowdown in lending and manufacturing.

The bank highlighted that a general slowdown in aggregate demand is evident in the first advance estimates for GDP, which indicate tempered expectations for FY25.

The first advance estimates, released by the government, for FY25 suggest a GDP growth rate of 6.4 percent, a sharp decline from 8.2 percent in FY24. The gross value added (GVA) growth is also pegged at 6.4 percent.

263. The **Microfinance Institutions Network (MFIN)** has extended the deadline for adhering to the maximum **three-lenders** per borrower rule by another three months.

In November 2024, MFIN directed its members to ensure that no borrower should have loans from more than three lenders from the beginning of 2025. It has now extended the deadline for this particular rule to the **end of March 2025**.

The rule aims to reduce borrower indebtedness and improve asset quality.

Other guidelines, such as capping outstanding loans at Rs.2 lakh per borrower and halting lending to delinquent customers, took effect from January 1, 2025.

MFIN has also directed its members to stop lending to delinquent customers who have overdue loans for more than 60 days with an outstanding amount exceeding Rs 3,000.

264. The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has relaxed settlement norms for **brokerage accounts** remaining inactive for more than **30 days**.

Brokers will now have to return the money lying in such idle accounts on a pre-decided settlement date every month.

Earlier, brokers were required to return funds within three working days of identifying inactivity.

It has been decided that the funds of such clients who have not traded in the last 30 calendar days shall be settled on the upcoming settlement dates of the monthly running account settlement cycle as notified by Exchanges in the annual calendar issued by them from time to time.

The new norms will lead to ease of doing business for brokers as it will save them from the hassle of settling accounts daily.

265. EXIM Bank is the first Indian organization to issue dollar bonds in 2025. The lender has raised **USD 1 billion** by issuing **10-year bonds** in the international market.

The amount has been raised in **144A/Reg-S format**.

Under Rule 144A, Qualified Institutional Buyers (QIBs) can trade debt securities without registration and review by the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).

The Reg S bond type is available for offers and trades of securities outside of the U.S.A. to U.S. and non-U.S. QIBs.

This transaction also marks the tightest spread ever achieved for a 10-year public issuance out of India and the tightest BBB -10-year USD public issuance out of Asia ex-Japan.

BofA Securities, Citigroup, HSBC, J.P. Morgan, and Standard Chartered Bank acted as Joint Lead Managers and Joint Bookrunners for the bond offering.

266. WhiteOak Capital Mutual Fund has launched **WhiteOak Capital Quality Equity Fund**, an open-ended equity scheme following the Quality Factor theme.

The new fund offer (NFO) opened for subscription on January 8 and will close on January 22.

The scheme will re-open for continuous sale and repurchase within five business days from the date of allotment.

The scheme is **India's first actively managed quality factor theme** mutual fund that primarily focuses on companies with strong fundamentals.

The minimum amount for lumpsum investment is Rs 500 and in multiples of Re 1 thereafter. For weekly, fortnightly, and monthly SIP, the minimum investment amount is Rs 100 (plus in multiple of Re 1) with a minimum of six installments.

The fund portfolio allocation will include 80%–100% in equity & equity related instruments of companies following the Quality Factor theme, 0% - 20% in equity & equity related instruments of other companies, 0% - 20% in debt securities, and money market instruments and 0% - 10% in units issued by REITs and InvITs.

The scheme will be benchmarked against **BSE Quality TRI** and will be managed by Ramesh Mantri (Equity), Trupti Agarwal Dheeresh Pathak (Assistant Fund Manager, Equity), and Piyush Baranwal (Debt).

267. The Ministry of Finance has appointed two new members to the **Governing Council** of the **National Investment and Infrastructure Fund Trustee Ltd (NIIFTL)**.

The new members include **C.S. Setty**, Chairman of SBI, who replaces Dinesh Khara, and **Uday Kotak**, director at Kotak Mahindra Bank, who takes over from T.V. Mohandas Pai. Other members of the council include Ajay Seth, Secretary of the Department of Economic Affairs; M. Nagaraju, Secretary of the Department of Financial Services; and Hemendra Kothari, Chairman of DSP Group.

The National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF), a quasi-sovereign wealth fund with a corpus of Rs 400 billion, was established in December 2015 to promote infrastructure financing by investing in greenfield, brownfield, and stalled projects.

In November 2020, the Union Cabinet approved a Rs 60 billion equity infusion into the NIIF Debt Platform, which includes Aseem Infrastructure Finance Ltd (AIFL) and NIIF Infrastructure Finance Ltd (NIIF-IFL).

The Finance Minister serves as the Chairman of the Governing Council of NIIF Trustee.

268. Punjab National Bank has launched its **first Cybersecurity Hackathon 2024-25** to combat rising cybercrime. This hackathon is aimed to bring together innovators, researchers, and academicians from across India to address the growing threat of malware and strengthen the nation's cybersecurity defences.

Theme: 'Code Against Malware'

The hackathon will focus on intelligence-driven malware detection and removal, real-time threat monitoring and mitigation, ransomware resilience solutions, and next-generation antivirus tools and attack surface management.

Participants must develop a robust cybersecurity framework for the banking sector, featuring state-of-the-art solutions that can detect, mitigate, and prevent malware attacks.

Winners will receive prizes worth up to Rs 11 lakhs and have the chance to solve critical cybersecurity challenges with real-world implications and deploy their successful solutions in live environments with PNB.

The PNB Cybersecurity Hackathon 2024-25 is held under the guidance of the Ministry of Finance and is in line with the Department of Financial Services (DFS) directive for Public Sector Banks (PSBs) to host annual hackathons.

269. Shriram Life Insurance has introduced the **Sunishchit Laabh savings plan**, which guarantees returns of up to 668% of the total premiums paid.

The plan offers flexible entry options for individuals aged from **30 days to 60 years**, with a minimum ticket size starting at **Rs 30,000** annually, Rs 15,500 half-yearly, Rs 8,000 quarterly, and Rs 3,000 monthly.

The plan features flexible maturity income payout options, including tax-free payouts for up to **40 years** (up to a maximum age of 101), ensuring consistent income even in retirement for the long term. It offers death benefits of up to **160 times** the annualized premium.

270. The Power Finance Corporation (PFC) has inked an agreement with the **Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC)** for a **120 billion Japanese yen** (around Rs 6,600 crore) loan facility to support Renewable Energy (RE) projects in India.

Under the agreement, JBIC will provide funding of JPY 72 billion, and the balance will be funded by commercial banks.

This long-term (up to 20 years) loan to PFC will be provided under JBIC's initiative 'Global Action for Reconciling Economic Growth and Environmental Preservation' (GREEN).

271. Mumbai-based **Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL)** has signed a **Rs 31,802 crore** loan agreement with the **SBI-led consortium** to support the development of a petrochemical complex and the brownfield expansion of BPCL's refinery capacity at **Bina, Madhya Pradesh**. The consortium, led by the State Bank of India (SBI), includes Punjab National Bank, Union Bank of India, Canara Bank, Bank of India, and Export-Import Bank of India. The oil marketing company (OMC)'s capacity at Bina will be expanded from 7.8 million tonnes per annum (MMTPA) to 11 MMTPA, catering primarily to the feedstock needs of the petrochemical plants.

272. Mumbai-based **IDBI Bank** has unveiled a new specialized fixed deposit scheme, '**IDBI Chiranjeevi-Super Senior Citizen FD**'. The scheme targets customers aged **80 years and above**.

Special Utsav FD Buckets and Interest Rates:

- 375 days: 7.90% p.a.
- 444 days: 8.00 p.a.
- 555 days: 8.05% p.a.
- 700 days: 7.85% p.a.

The premature withdrawal is permitted under the scheme.

IDBI Chiranjeevi-Super Senior Citizen FD rates are valid only for the duration of the respective Utsav FD buckets.

Exclusions: Rates for Retired Staff Super Senior Citizens and General Super Senior Citizens do not apply to NRO (Non-Resident Ordinary) and NRE (Non-Resident External) term deposits.

273. The Government of India appointed **Ashok Chandra as the Managing Director (MD) and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Punjab National Bank** and **Binod Kumar as the MD and CEO of Indian Bank**.

These appointments are effective from January 2025.

Ashok Chandra:

- He has been appointed as the MD & CEO of the Punjab National Bank for a three-year term.
- He has succeeded Atul Kumar Goel.
- Earlier, he was an executive director at Canara Bank. He began his banking career at the erstwhile Corporation Bank in September 1991 as a probationary officer.

Binod Kumar:

- He has been appointed as the MD & CEO of Indian Bank for a three-year term and will be eligible for an extension of up to two more years, following a performance review.
- He has succeeded S L Jain.
- Earlier, he was an executive director at PNB.

274. Shriram Housing Finance, a housing finance company in India, has rebranded as **Truhome Finance**. The rebranding follows its acquisition by Warburg Pincus and its co-investors, including QIA, Qatar's sovereign wealth fund.

Truhome Finance aims to empower individuals to achieve homeownership dreams. The focus remains on providing transparent and supportive financial services to all, regardless of socio-economic status.

Shriram Finance Group received an investment of **Rs 1,225 crore** as part of the acquisition agreement. This investment increased the company's net worth to over Rs 3,300 crore.

275. NPCI International Payments Limited (NIPL), an international arm of the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), has collaborated with Middle Eastern payment solutions provider **Magnati** to extend QR (Quick Response)-based UPI merchant payments in the United States of America (UAE).

This will allow merchants to offer UPI to over 12 million Indians who visit Dubai and the UAE annually.

This collaboration will enhance the payment landscape for Indian travellers by integrating UPI with Magnati's point-of-sale terminals.

The UPI acceptance will be initially provided across Dubai Duty-Free (DDF).

Dubai Duty Free (DDF) is a travel retail operator, tasked with duty-free selling operations at Dubai International Airport and Al Maktoum International Airport.

276. Bank of Baroda has introduced a unique alternative to traditional fixed deposits (FDs) i.e. **Bob Liquid Fixed Deposits**. It combines the benefits of earning higher returns from FDs with the convenience of easy liquidity associated with a Savings Account.

It gives depositors the flexibility of a partial withdrawal facility without closing the entire FD, ensuring that they can address their urgent financial needs as and when required.

Key Features of Bob Liquid FD:

- Minimum Deposit Amount: **Rs.5,000** (and in multiples of ₹1,000/ thereafter)
- Maximum Deposit Amount: No Upper Limit
- Minimum Duration: 12 Months
- Maximum Duration: 60 Months
- As per prevailing Interest Rates on Term Deposits as decided by the Bank from time to time.
- Premature Payment/Partial Withdrawal Facility: Allowed, in multiples of Rs.1,000/-, as many times as required during the tenure of the FD.
- No penalty is levied for premature payments in term deposits up to Rs. 5.00 lakh that have been in place for a minimum of 12 months.
- Fixed Deposits below Rs.1 crore - A penalty of 1% from the applicable interest rate for the completed period or the contracted rate, whichever is lower.
- Fixed Deposit of Rs.1 crore and above – Penalty of 1.5% from the applicable interest rate for the completed period or the contracted rate, whichever is lower.

277. The Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU-IND) and the **National Housing Bank (NHB)** have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) as part of continued coordinated efforts in the effective implementation of requirements of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act and Rules framed thereunder in New Delhi.

The MoU was signed by Vivek Aggarwal, Director, FIU-IND and Sanjay Shukla, Managing Director, NHB.

According to the MoU, FIU-IND and NHB will cooperate with each other in the areas of mutual interest including the following:

- Each Party to the MoU will appoint a nodal officer and an alternate nodal officer to interact with the other party.
- Sharing of relevant intelligence and information, available in their respective databases, for the purpose outlined in this MoU.
- Laying down the procedure and manner in which the supervised entities / reporting entities report to FIU-IND under the PML Rules.
- Conducting outreach and training for supervised entities /reporting entities.
- Upgradation of AML/CFT skills in the supervised entities / reporting entities.
- Assessment of AML/CFT risks and vulnerabilities in Housing Finance Companies in India.

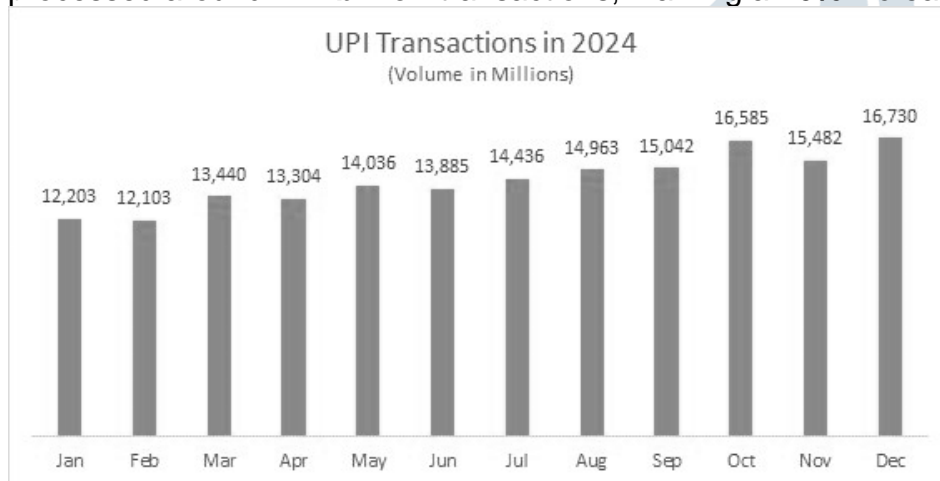
- Identification of red flag indicators for Suspicious Transaction Reports in the Housing Finance Companies in India.
- Supervising and monitoring the compliance of supervised entities / reporting entities with their obligations under PMLA, PML Rules, and the guidelines issued by the Reserve Bank of India/NHB.
- Compliance with each other's obligations under the relevant international standards.
- Conduct of quarterly meetings to discuss the above in addition to typologies/trends in AML/CFT crimes, cases where sanctions have been imposed, etc.

278. India's digital transaction landscape has seen an unprecedented rise in recent years, marking a crucial step towards a cashless economy.

The **Unified Payments Interface (UPI)** has been at the forefront of this revolution, achieving a record 16.73 billion transactions in December 2024.

Alongside UPI, **Immediate Payment Service (IMPS)** and **National Electronic Toll Collection (NETC) FASTag** has become a vital player, enhancing the speed, accessibility, and security of financial transactions.

As of recent data from the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), **UPI** has set a new record by processing over **16.73 billion transactions**, with a staggering transaction value of **Rs 23.25 lakh crore**. This is a notable jump from Rs 21.55 lakh crore in November. In 2024, UPI processed around **172 billion** transactions, marking a **46%** increase from 117.64 billion in 2023.



IMPS transactions have surged with **441 million transactions** recorded in **December 2024**, compared to 407.92 million in November 2024. The transaction value also saw a notable increase, touching **Rs 6.01 lakh crore in December**, up from Rs 5.58 lakh crore the previous month.

FASTag transactions grew in volume to **381.98 million in December**, against 358.84 million in November. The value also increased to **Rs 6,642 crore** against Rs 6,070 crore in November.

279. HSBC India, the Indian arm of London-headquartered HSBC, has received approval from the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** to open **20 branches** across 20 cities.

With the addition of 20 branches, HSBC India's branches in the country will reach **46**.

The cities in which HSBC India will open branches are Amritsar, Bhopal, Bhubaneswar, Dehradun, Faridabad, Indore, Jalandhar, Kanpur, Ludhiana, Lucknow, Mysuru, Nagpur, Nashik, Navi Mumbai, Patna, Rajkot, Surat, Thiruvananthapuram, Vadodara, and Vishakhapatnam.

HSBC India is focused on India's wealth market, with the number of ultra-high-net-worth individuals alone set to grow by 50 percent by 2028.

This expansion signifies a notable shift from **HSBC's 2016 strategy**, where the bank closed **24 branches in 14 cities** to consolidate its network and focus on online retail and wealth management services.

280. UK-based GlobalData, a leading international data analytics and research organization, ranked **HDFC Bank, State Bank of India (SBI), and ICICI Bank** among the **Top 25 Global Banks by market capitalization for Q4 2024**.

HDFC Bank was placed at the **13th** position, ICICI Bank at the **19th**, and SBI at the **24th**. The rankings were based on market capitalization, reflecting the banks' global financial performance. By the end of Q4 2024, HDFC Bank's market capitalization was USD 158.5 billion, a 1.6% growth from the previous quarter. ICICI Bank reported USD 105.7 billion, and SBI stood at USD 82.9 billion.

Overall, the market capitalization of the Top 25 banks increased by **27.1%** compared to Q4 2023, reaching USD 4.6 trillion in Q4 2024.

USA-based JP Morgan Chase has the **highest market cap** (as of January 2025) among all banks in the world at \$674.91 billion.

USA-based Bank of America Corp secured the **2nd position** with USD 337.2 billion, while **China's Industrial and Commercial Bank of China** ranked **3rd** with USD 328.2 billion.

281. IDFC FIRST Bank, in partnership with **RuPay**, a global card payment network from India, has launched the UPI-enabled **RuPay Credit Card called - FIRST EARN**.

This secured credit card requires a fixed deposit and is available to everyone instantly.

This is a virtual credit card and is issued instantly with seamless UPI integration for immediate use.

The new cardholders get 100 percent cashback on their first UPI transaction amount up to ₹500, within 15 days of card creation. Effectively the first year's Fees are paid back as cash back.

It offers 1 percent cashback on UPI transactions via the IDFC FIRST Bank app, and 0.5 percent cashback on transactions made through other UPI apps, as well as on insurance, utility bills, and e-commerce purchases.

282. HSBC has introduced the **TravelOne Credit Card**, designed to cater to the needs of frequent travelers in India. The card was previously launched in Singapore and Malaysia.

The card offers a range of features, including instant reward redemptions across multiple airline and hotel partners, enabling users to convert points into air miles and hotel stays via the HSBC mobile app.

Key features of the HSBC TravelOne Credit Card:

- New users who spend ₹10,000 within the first 30 days will receive ₹1,000 cashback, ₹3,000 PostCard vouchers, and three months of EazyDiner Prime Membership.
- Users who spend ₹1 lakh in the first 90 days will earn 3,000 bonus reward points. The card also allows users to earn 4 reward points for every ₹100 spent on flights, travel aggregators, and foreign currency transactions, while all other purchases earn 2 reward points per ₹100.
- For users who spend over ₹12 lakh annually, the card offers an additional 10,000 bonus reward points.
- Travel benefits include 6 local and 4 international airport lounge visits per year and discounts on holiday bookings, car rentals, and lifestyle experiences.
- The card also provides purchase protection up to \$20,000 annually.

283. Yes Bank, in collaboration with the **Reserve Bank Innovation Hub (RBIH)** and **S.P. Jain Institute of Management and Research (SPJIMR)**, launched the **Frictionless Finance Accelerator Programme**.

The aim is to empower fintech startups to overcome challenges, scale innovations, and drive financial inclusion in India.

The Frictionless Finance Accelerator reinforces YES BANK's commitment to fostering innovation and collaboration in this dynamic sector.

The program will focus on emerging technologies like digital lending, AI-powered risk management, blockchain-based payments, and financial inclusion.

284. The **Government of India Floating Rate Bonds, 2035 (GOI FRB 2035)** will have an interest rate of **6.66% per annum** applicable for the period from **January 25, 2025, to January 24, 2030**. These bonds were initially issued on January 25, 2005, by the Government of India to the Reserve Bank of India on a private placement basis against the transfer of IDFC's subordinated debt. The interest rate will be reset by the Bank every five years based on the prevailing 5-year yield on Government of India securities as of the last working day before the start of each five-year period. The coupon rate for the GOI FRB 2035 has been fixed according to secondary market transactions in Government of India securities as of January 24, 2025. From **January 25, 2020, to January 24, 2025**, the bond carried an interest rate of **6.58%** per annum.

285. **Tata AIA Life Insurance** has launched '**Shubh Muhurat**,' a life insurance solution that helps parents save for their child's wedding. The solution is suited for parents aged between **31 and 50 years**, having children in the age group of 1 to 20 years. Shubh Muhurta gives a capital guarantee with equity exposure. The guaranteed lump sum ensures that wedding plans remain on track, unaffected by market uncertainties. Shubh Muhurat ensures that the funds intended for the child's marriage are legally protected and will only be available to the nominee regardless of external financial claims. In the event of the insured's demise, the family receives financial assistance to continue their life's aspirations without disruption. According to a report by investment banking and capital market firm Jefferies, India hosted over 80 lakh weddings last year with an estimated spend of Rs.10.7 lakh crore. On average, Indian weddings cost about Rs.12.5 lakh, twice as much as the expenditure on education from pre-school to graduation. Luxury weddings dominate the market, with expenses often rising above Rs 1 crore.

286. The **Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI)** has issued a directive that mandates insurers to not revise health insurance premiums for senior citizens by more than **10 percent annually**, with immediate effect. If an insurer needs to increase premiums by more than 10 percent in a year, prior approval from the regulator would be required. Prior approval of the regulator would also be required in case of withdrawal of individual health insurance products offered to senior citizens. Insurance companies have also been directed to give wide publicity to the various measures taken for the benefit of senior citizens while offering health insurance products. IRDAI has directed the insurance companies to take necessary steps for the common empanelment of hospitals and negotiate package rates on the lines of Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY). As per the regulator, it is observed that there has been a steep increase in premium rates under some of the health insurance products offered to senior citizens (aged 60 years and above).

287. Bajaj Finance has teamed up with **Bharti Airtel** to create a digital platform for financial services.

This association brings together Airtel's customer base of 370 million, about 12 lakhs strong distribution network, and Bajaj Finance's diversified suite of 27 product lines, and distribution heft of 5,000 more branches and 70,000 field agents.

Airtel will initially offer Bajaj Finance's retail financial products on its **Airtel Thanks App** for a seamless and secure customer experience, and later through its nationwide network of stores.

288. A recent report by the **State Bank of India (SBI)** has highlighted trends in investment announcements, the private sector's contribution, and the role of external commercial borrowings (ECBs) in corporate financing.

As per the report, investment activity in India continues to grow at a rapid pace, with significant contributions from the private sector.

- In the nine months of FY25 (April-December 2024), total investment announcements stood at **₹32.01 lakh crore**.
- This marks a **39% increase** from ₹23 lakh crore in 9MFY24, reflecting a positive investment outlook.
- The private sector accounted for nearly **56% (FY24)** and nearly **70% (9MFY25)** of these announcements, signaling strong corporate confidence.

Gross Block of Indian Corporates:

- As of March 2024, the gross block of Indian corporates reached ₹106.50 lakh crore, compared to ₹73.94 lakh crore in March 2020.
- Over the last five years, an average of more than ₹8 lakh crore has been added annually to the corporate gross block.
- Additionally, capital work in progress stood at ₹13.63 lakh crore in March 2024, indicating strong ongoing project development.

Household Net Financial Savings (HNFS) in India improved to 5.3% of GDP in FY24 from 5.0% in FY23. Additionally, savings in physical assets increased from 12.9% of GDP in FY23 to 13.5% in FY24.

Investment as a Percentage of GDP:

- In FY23, government investment reached **4.1% of GDP, the highest since FY12**.
- Private corporate investment rose to **11.9% of GDP** in FY23, its **highest level since FY16**.
- The share of private investment is projected to further increase to around **12.5%** in FY24, reflecting improved business sentiment.

External Commercial Borrowings (ECBs) (as of September 2024):

- The total outstanding ECBs stood at **\$190.4 billion** as of September 2024.
- Of this, the non-Rupee and non-FDI components accounted for approximately **\$154.9 billion**.
- The private sector held **63% (\$97.58 billion)**, while the public sector accounted for **37% (\$55.5 billion)**.
- Hedging remains a critical aspect, with private companies hedging approximately **74%** of the total hedged corpus.

ECBs in FY25 (Up to November 2024)

- By November 2024, total ECB registrations stood at **\$33.8 billion**.
- Nearly half of the registration, in FY24, are for the import of capital goods, modernization, local capital expenditure, and new projects.
- ECB registration as a percentage of GDP, declined from 1.9% in FY20 to 1.2% in FY24, suggesting improved domestic financing options.

ECB Cost Trends (April-November 2024)

- The overall cost of ECBs fell by 12 basis points year-over-year to 6.6% during April-November 2024.
- In November 2024, the overall cost of ECBs further declined to 5.8%, a reduction of 71 basis points from the previous month.

- 289. PNB MetLife India Insurance Company Limited (PNB MetLife)** has collaborated with **Truhome Finance**, formerly known as Shriram Housing Finance Limited, to provide Group Credit Life insurance to home loan customers of Truhome Finance.
- The collaboration is a significant step in PNB MetLife's mission, Milkar Life Aage Badhein, emphasizing the insurer's commitment to expanding its reach and enhancing financial inclusion. The Group Credit Life Insurance solutions will be available across 165 Truhome Finance branches in 17 states, offering homeowners and their families the assurance of financial protection by covering outstanding loan liabilities in unforeseen circumstances.
- 290. Jio BlackRock Investment Advisers Private Limited**, a joint venture between Mumbai-based Jio Financial Services (JFS) and **USA-based BlackRock**, incorporated a wholly-owned subsidiary named **Jio BlackRock Broking Private Limited** on 20th January 2025.
- This new entity will focus on **stock broking** activities, subject to obtaining regulatory approvals. Jio BlackRock Investment Advisers Private Limited was established in September 2024 to primarily offer investment advisory services. Both JFS and BlackRock invested ₹3 crores each in the joint venture.
- Jio BlackRock Investment Advisers received in-principle approval from SEBI to start its mutual fund business in October 2024. This was part of the company's diversification in the financial services sector.
- 291. HDFC Life**, one of India's leading life insurers, has recently entered into a Corporate Agency tie-up with **CARS24 Financial Services Pvt. Ltd.**
- This partnership will enable CARS24 Financial Services Pvt. Ltd. to distribute products of HDFC Life to existing and future customers of CARS24.
- The life insurance solutions of HDFC Life will be offered across the branches as well as the digital platforms of the partner. Both partners aim to work together with the objective of increasing the reach of life insurance across locations where CARS24 has a presence.
- This in turn would contribute towards the larger objective of Insurance for all by 2047.
- CARS24 Financial Services Private Limited ("CARS24 Financial Services"), founded in 2015, is a professionally managed Non-Banking Financial Company ("NBFC") registered with the Reserve Bank of India and with IRDAI as an Insurance Corporate Agent.
- 292. USA-based International Finance Corporation (IFC)**, a member of the World Bank Group, has sanctioned a **\$100 million Sustainability-Linked Loan (SLL)** to **JK Tyre**, a leading Indian tyre manufacturer with a global presence.
- The funding includes \$30 million for JK Tyre & Industries Limited and up to \$70 million for Cavendish Industries Limited (CIL), a subsidiary of JK Tyre.
- JK Tyre is a flagship company of JK Organisation, a global conglomerate.
- The funding will support the expansion of tyre manufacturing capacity, focusing on Passenger Car Radial (PCR) tyres at JK Tyre's Banmore plant in Madhya Pradesh and Truck and Bus Radial (TBR) tyres at CIL's Laksar plant in Uttarakhand.
- The initiative aims to promote energy-efficient tyre production, strengthen local supply chains, and create jobs.

293. TATA AIG General Insurance Company has launched '**CyberEdge**', a robust cyber insurance solution tailored to protect businesses of all kinds.

The policy offers robust financial and operational support, covering forensic investigations, legal fees, data recovery, extortion payments, and losses from business interruptions.

Key Features of CyberEdge Include:

- **First Response cover:** Provides Insured with immediate access to Tata AIG's panel of incident response experts 24/7/365 during a cyber incident. The first 24 hours are critical, and the First Response service ensures top-notch legal and IT forensics within 2 hours of contacting the dedicated hotline.
- **Bricking recovery expenses:** Covers the costs of replacing damaged equipment and helps resume normal business operations if a cyber incident renders the computer system inoperable.
- **Comprehensive network loss calculation:** Gives clients the option to calculate losses on a gross profit or net profit basis, based on the business's preference. The policy also covers third-party forensic accounting firm's professional fees.
- **Wider computer system protection:** Extends coverage to BYOD (Bring Your Own Device), OT systems, industrial control systems, and SCADA systems.
- **Network Interruption coverage:** Addresses interruptions up to 120 days post-incident, including proactive mitigation costs.
- **Insured events:** Under the Network Interruption section, the policy covers security and system failures, including voluntary or regulatory shutdowns, and OSP-related security and system failures (if opted).
- **Mitigation costs and Loss Prevention services:** Provides coverage beyond indemnity with Loss Prevention services at no additional premium.
- **Coverage for cybercrimes:** Protects against losses resulting from cyber-related crimes.
- **Multimedia activity protection:** Covers liabilities from digital media content published on websites or social platforms.

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294. Bengaluru-based fintech firm **CheQ** has launched **CheQ Wisor**, India's first AI-powered credit card expert.

The tool is designed to help individuals manage their credit cards by offering personalized insights, real-time assistance, and comprehensive analyses of credit usage.

CheQ Wisor is designed to empower users, especially those aged 25-45, to make smarter financial decisions and maximize the value of their credit cards with ease and efficiency.

Key features of CheQ Wisor:

- Users can view a comprehensive summary of their spending patterns at a glance on the dashboard.
- All credit card rewards can be conveniently accessed and analyzed in a single, unified location by the users.
- The app offers personalized recommendations, enabling users to optimize their rewards and minimize costs based on their unique spending behavior.

295. The Department of Financial Services under the Ministry of Finance has released **Rs.500 crore** capital infusion to New Delhi-based **IFCI Limited**, formerly known as the Industrial Finance Corporation of India, for subscribing to its share capital in the Financial Year 2024-25 (FY 25) through the **Preferential Issue of shares**.

With the infusion, the government's holding in the company is expected to further increase from the existing **71.72 percent** as of September 2024.

The capital infusion plan for IFCI was approved through the passage of the first Supplementary Demand for Grants for 2024-25 in the Lok Sabha in December 2024.

The Finance Ministry, in November 2024, in principle approved the 'Consolidation of IFCI Group', which entails the merger/amalgamation of IFCI Limited and StockHolding Corporation of India Limited and other group companies.

The Industrial Finance Corporation of India was set up by the government on July 1, 1948, as the first development financial institution in the country.

RBI IN NEWS

296. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) approved the voluntary **merger of The National Co-operative Bank Ltd., Bengaluru with Cosmos Co-operative Bank Limited, Maharashtra.**

The Scheme of Amalgamation has been sanctioned in the exercise of the powers conferred under Sub-Section (4) of Section 44A read with Section 56 of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.

The Scheme came into force with effect from **January 6, 2025.**

The branches of the National Co-operative Bank Ltd., function as branches of Cosmos Co-operative Bank Limited with effect from January 6, 2025.

National Cooperative Bank Ltd. has a total of 13 branches - 12 in Bangalore and one in Mysore.

Mumbai-based Maratha Sahakari Bank (with 7 branches) and Sahebrao Deshmukh Sahakari Bank (with 11 branches) merged into Cosmos Bank in the financial year ending March 2024.

297. TATA AIG General Insurance, a leading general insurance provider, has appointed **Amit Ganorkar** as the **Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Managing Director (MD)** of the company. His appointment is effective from 1st January 2025.

He succeeded **Neelesh Garg** after the approval of the Board of Directors.

He previously served as the Managing Director of Royal Sundaram General Insurance. He also served as the Chief Operating Officer at TATA AIG.

298. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has released its **Financial Stability Report (FSR), December 2024** highlighting several critical aspects of the Indian and global financial landscapes.

FSR is published by RBI bi-annually on behalf of the Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC), a non-statutory apex-level body by the Government of India set up in 2010.

FSR is released twice a year, in June and December.

The report covered both international and domestic economic conditions, the performance of Scheduled Commercial Banks (SCBs) and Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs), and the solvency of the insurance sector.

Key highlights of the report:

- The report projects that the Indian economy will expand by **6.6% in FY25 (2024-25)**, driven by a revival in rural consumption, increased government spending, and strong services exports.

- The central government's **debt-to-GDP ratio** is expected to decrease from 62.7% in 2020-21 to **56.8% by 2024-25**. Similarly, states' outstanding liabilities are projected to decline from 31% to 28.8%.
- Macro stress tests demonstrate that most SCBs have adequate capital buffers relative to the regulatory minimum even under adverse stress scenarios. Stress tests also validate the resilience of mutual funds and clearing corporations.
- Non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) remain healthy with sizable capital buffers, robust interest margins and earnings, and improving asset quality.
- The consolidated solvency ratio of the insurance sector also remains above the minimum threshold limit.
- **Gross bad loans** may rise to **3% by March 2026** in normal conditions and up to 5.3% under high-risk situations. Despite this, all banks are projected to maintain their capital adequacy ratio above the 9% regulatory minimum.
- **Penalties** imposed by the RBI on banks and institutions dropped by **47%**, signaling better adherence to regulations. Fines totaled ₹30 crore compared to ₹57 crore during the same period last year.
- **Retail inflation** decreased to **5.5% in November 2024**, aided by softer food prices and a favorable base effect.
- The report indicates a potential rise in the share of bad loans among commercial banks. Under baseline stress scenarios, the **Gross Non-performing Asset (GNPA) ratio** could increase from **2.6% in September 2024** to **3% by March 2026**.

299. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has removed supervisory restrictions imposed on **Arohan Financial Services Limited, Kolkata** due to fair loan pricing, ensuring compliance with regulations.

Arohan Financial Services Limited is a leading NBFC-MFI with operations in financially under-penetrated Low-Income States of India.

In October 2024, the RBI barred Arohan, Asirvad Micro Finance, and two other non-banks – Navi Finserv and DMI Finance -- from lending due to "unfair and usurious practices" and non-adherence to the regulatory guidelines.

In December 2024, the restrictions were removed from Sachin Bansal's Navi Finserv.

The other two entities are Asirvad Micro Finance, a subsidiary of Manappuram Finance, and DMI Finance, where the restrictions are still in place.

300. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has approved the reappointment of **Dr. Anup Kumar Sinha** as the **Non-Executive Chairman of Bandhan Bank**, for the period from January 07, 2025, up to July 04, 2026, i.e., up to the date of his attaining the age of 75 years including remuneration, subject to the approval of the RBI, from time to time. Initially appointed in 2019, his leadership was extended in 2021 for a 3-year term starting January 2022.

He is the former Director of Heritage Business School ('HBS') and is currently designated as Chief Mentor. He has also served on the Board of NABARD.

301. The Reserve Bank of India has issued a new guideline starting from **1st January 2025**, which mandates the closure of **3 types of bank accounts**. These accounts are dormant accounts, inactive accounts, and zero balance accounts.

- **Dormant Accounts:** Accounts that have not shown any transaction for two or more years will be classified as dormant.

- **Inactive Accounts:** If an account has had no transactions for over 12 months, it will be considered inactive.
- **Zero Balance Accounts:** Accounts that have been maintaining a zero balance for an extended period may also be closed.

Steps to Avoid Account Closure:

- **Reactivate Inactive Accounts:** If your account has been inactive for over 12 months, make a transaction to reactivate it.
- **Engage with Dormant Accounts:** Accounts that have been dormant for two years should be reactivated by visiting the bank branch.
- **Maintain a Positive Balance:** Avoid leaving your account with a zero balance for long periods to keep it active.

302. The Reserve Bank of India has released its annual **Report on Trends and Progress of Banking in India 2023-24** under the **Banking Regulation Act, 1949**, highlighting the performance of the banking sector in 2023-24.

Key highlights of the report:

- The **gross non-performing assets (GNPAs)** ratio of scheduled commercial banks (SCBs) declined to the lowest in more than **13 years at 2.5 percent** at the end of **September 2024**.
- In FY24, the consolidated balance sheet of commercial banks in the country remained robust, marked by sustained expansion in both credit and deposits.
- The gross NPA of banks stood at 2.35 percent in the financial year ended March 2010-11.
- The GNPA ratio remained the highest for the **agricultural sector at 6.2 percent** and the lowest for retail loans at 1.2 percent in September 2024.
- The GNPA ratio of **education loans** fell from 5.8 percent in March 2023 to **3.6 percent in March 2024** and **2.7 percent in September 2024** but it remained the highest across retail loan segments, followed by credit card receivables and consumer durables.
- The asset quality of the industrial sector has been improving since March 2018, with the GNPA ratio declining to 2.9 percent in September 2024. The GNPA ratio of sectoral credit across bank groups has converged over the years.
- **Banks' net NPA (NNPA) ratio** also declined to a decadal low of **0.62 percent in March 2024**, driven by stronger provision buffers. At the end of September 2024, the NNPA ratio improved further to **0.57 percent**.
- For the **third consecutive year**, the **slippage ratio of private sector banks (PVBs) remained higher** than public sector banks (PSBs) on account of the former's larger fresh accretion to NPAs.
- The special mention accounts-1 (SMA-1) ratio declined for both PVBs and PSBs, overall as well as for large borrowal accounts. Loans in the SMA-1 category indicate accounts with interest or principal payments overdue between 31-60 days.
- Banks' profitability continued to rise with **return on assets (RoA) at 1.4% (first half of 2024-25) and return on equity (RoE) at 14.6%** in FY24, marking six consecutive years of profit growth.
- RBI recommended banks to adopt strategies such as improved onboarding, training, mentorship, competitive benefits, and fostering a supportive workplace culture to curb attrition.

303. The Reserve Bank of India has introduced new guidelines for **Fixed Deposits (FDs)** offered by **Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) and Housing Finance Companies (HFCs)** which will come into effect from **1st January 2025**.

- **Small deposits** (those worth less than **Rs.10,000**) may be paid to depositors ahead of schedule if the depositor requests that the deposit amount be paid out, interest-free, within **three months** of the date of acceptance.
- For other public deposits, individual depositors may request early payment of up to 50% of the deposit's principal or **₹5 lakh**, whichever is less, before the three-month period from the date of acceptance of such deposits has passed, without interest.
- In cases of critical illness, individual depositors may request that **100%** of the deposit's principal be reimbursed to them early, interest-free, before three months from the date the deposit was accepted.
- Emergent costs include medical emergencies resulting from natural disasters or calamities that the government has declared.
- The sum specified in these clauses will also apply to current deposit contracts in which the depositor is not entitled to withdraw the deposit early before the three-month period has passed.
- Until now, NBFCs were supposed to inform the depositor of the maturity details at least two months before the maturity date. According to the RBI's most recent directives, this time frame should be shortened from two months to **fourteen days**.

Fixed deposit (FD) is an initial payment made to a bank, post office, or non-bank financial institution (NBFC) that generates returns at a set rate of interest over a certain period of time.

304. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has decided to keep the interest rate on the **Floating Rate Savings Bonds (Taxable) – FRSB 2020 (T)** unchanged for the period from **January 1 to June 30, 2025**.

This means the interest rate for this half-year will stay at **8.05 percent**, comprising the **National Savings Certificate (NSC) rate of 7.70 percent** plus an additional spread of **0.35 percent**.

The interest rate for RBI floating-rate savings bonds is adjustable, linked to the NSC rate, and revised twice a year.

Interest payments are made semi-annually on January 1 and July 1 each year.

The bond has a lock-in period of seven years without premature withdrawal, except for senior citizens, who can withdraw earlier with penalties based on age.

The minimum subscription is Rs 1,000, with investments in multiples of Rs 1,000 and no upper limit.

Interest earned is taxable, with TDS applicable if annual interest exceeds Rs 10,000.

305. The **Reserve Bank Innovation Hub (RBIH)**, the innovation arm of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), has collaborated with **IIMA Ventures**, the startup incubator of IIM Ahmedabad, to launch the latest cohort of its **Swanari TechSprint 3.0 program**.

The initiative aims to support fintech startups in developing solutions that address the financial needs of women in India and drive financial inclusion for this under-represented group.

The Swanari TechSprint 3.0 program will provide mentorship, grants, and other funding resources to help startups conceptualise, develop, and scale their products. The focus is on creating gender-inclusive financial solutions that cater to women's unique needs.

The program is currently inviting applications from startups that are working on gender-inclusive financial solutions, especially those with a minimum viable product (MVP) and a proven track record of pre-seed to pre-Series A funding or early revenue traction.

The Swanari program was specifically created to increase access to finance for women, aiming to impact over 556 million women aged 15 to 64, according to World Bank data.

The previous winners of the Swanari program include notable fintech startups such as **Kaleidofin, Merakal, Vitto, Anniyam Payment, MaksPay, Manipal Business Solutions, Sampatti Card, Haqdarshak, and Agripal**.

306. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has mandated **lenders** to update **credit bureau records** every **15 days**. This is effective from **1st January 2025**.

This regulation aims to provide a more accurate and timely representation of borrowers' financial activities, ultimately transforming how credit scores are calculated and published.

Earlier, credit bureaus received updates from lenders only once a month.

The RBI's directive, first announced in August 2024, allows lenders and credit bureaus a transition period to upgrade their systems and processes. With these new bi-monthly updates, financial institutions will be able to report borrowers' activities much more frequently, which should help in providing a clearer picture of an individual's creditworthiness.

Under the previous monthly reporting system, missed payments or defaults could take up to 40 days to appear on a borrower's credit report.

307. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has released the **Master Direction – Reserve Bank of India (Credit Information Reporting) Directions, 2025**.

These directions are issued by RBI in exercise of the powers conferred under Section 11 of the Credit Information Companies (Regulation) Act, 2005.

These directions aim to establish a standardised framework for reporting and dissemination of credit information; safeguard the confidentiality and security of sensitive credit data; provide mechanisms for consumers to access their credit information and grievance redressal on matters related to credit information reporting.

Key points:

- Under the new framework, credit information companies (CICs) are required to send alerts via SMS or email to customers whenever their Credit Information Report (CIR) is accessed by authorized users. These alerts will only be triggered when a CIR inquiry is recorded.
- The credit institutions (CIs), including banks and Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs), must inform customers of the reasons for rejecting their requests for data correction. This measure aims to help customers better understand discrepancies in their credit reports.
- The compensation of **Rs.100 per day** is charged if complaints filed with credit institutions or CICs remain unresolved beyond 30 days.
- All CIs shall become members of all the CICs registered with the RBI.
- The one-time membership fee charged by the CICs from the CIs to become their members shall not exceed **Rs.10,000/-** each.
- The annual fees charged by the CICs from the CIs shall not exceed **Rs.5,000/-** each.
- CICs shall undertake periodic exercises/checks, at least once in a quarter, to identify identifier inconsistencies in its database and share the findings of such identifier inconsistencies with the respective CIs to confirm the accuracy of the same. The list of CIs who do not respond in a timely manner (say within a month) to such data cleansing exercises shall be sent to the Department of Supervision, Central Office at half-yearly intervals (as of March 31 and September 30) for information.

308. Bengaluru-based **KredX**, a supply chain finance platform, has received final approval from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to commercially launch its **Trade Receivables Discounting System (TReDS) platform** under the brand name **DTX (Domestic Trade Exchange)**.

KredX's DTX is the **fifth platform** to receive the banking regulator's nod to operate TReDS.

RXIL, M1xchange, Invoicemart, and C2treds are existing TReDS operators.

The company targets \$2 billion disbursal by the end of the current financial year.

In 2023, the company received the International Financial Services Centre Authority (IFSCA) license for cross-border trade finance (GTX).

TReDS is an electronic platform for online discounting of bills of MSMEs for supplies to large Corporations. It addresses the issue of delayed payments to MSMEs.

309. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has appointed **Deputy Governor M. Rajeshwar Rao** to oversee the **Monetary Policy and Economic Research Departments**.

The deputy governor in charge of monetary policy is also a member of the rate-setting panel – the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC).

In October 2024, the Indian government extended his tenure as Deputy Governor by one year, effective from October 9, 2024, or until further orders.

He succeeded **Michael Patra**, whose term ended on January 15, 2025.

Michael Patra was first appointed as the RBI deputy governor in January 2020 for three years. In 2023, his term was extended by one year, and by another year in 2024.

310. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has introduced new rules for the settlement of borrower dues by **Asset Reconstruction Companies (ARCs)**. These guidelines mandate a more organized approach to ensure ARCs maintain transparency and accountability.

These guidelines are issued in the exercise of the powers conferred by the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (**SARFAESI Act**).

- As per the new guidelines, every ARC must establish a Board-approved policy that governs the settlement of borrower dues. The policy is required to address critical aspects such as eligibility criteria for one-time settlements, permissible sacrifices based on exposure categories, and methodologies to determine the realizable value of securities.
- For borrowers with outstanding dues exceeding Rs 1 crore, settlements can only proceed after a thorough evaluation by an Independent Advisory Committee (IAC). This committee has to comprise experts with technical, financial, or legal expertise, who will assess the borrower's financial position, projected earnings, and recovery prospects before making recommendations to the ARC.
- The Board of Directors, including at least two independent directors, must deliberate on the IAC's recommendations and evaluate alternative recovery options.
- For dues of Rs 1 crore or below, ARCs can process settlements based on criteria defined in the Board-approved policy. However, officials involved in acquiring the financial asset cannot participate in the approval of the settlement to prevent conflicts of interest. The Board must review quarterly reports detailing trends and recovery timelines for these accounts.

Asset Reconstruction Company (ARC):

An Asset Reconstruction Company (ARC) is a financial institution that acquires Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) or bad debts from banks and financial institutions, enabling them to clean up their balance sheets. It is registered as a company under the SARFAESI Act, 2002, by the RBI.

An ARC must have a minimum net owned fund (NOF) of Rs 300 crore to commence securitization or asset reconstruction activities, and this requirement must be sustained continuously. They must ensure a capital adequacy ratio of at least 15% of their total risk-weighted assets.

311. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has allowed **HDFC Bank and its group companies**, including HDFC Mutual Fund, HDFC Life Insurance, HDFC Pension Management, HDFC ERGO General Insurance, and others, to collectively acquire up to **9.5 percent** of paid-up share capital or voting rights in **Kotak Mahindra Bank, AU Small Finance Bank and Capital Small Finance Bank**.

The RBI's approval is valid until **January 2, 2026**.

HDFC Bank must ensure that the "aggregate holding" by its group entities in the above-mentioned banks does not exceed 9.50 percent of the paid-up share capital or voting rights of the respective banks, at all times.

The RBI Directions 2023 specify that "aggregate holding" includes shares owned by the bank, its affiliates, mutual funds, trustees, and promoter group entities.

312. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI), in collaboration with the central government, has reviewed the current regulations under the **Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999** to promote cross-border transactions in rupees and other local or national currencies.

Key amendments have been made to the existing FEMA guidelines:

- The authorized dealer banks' overseas branches can now open INR accounts for residents outside India, facilitating the settlement of all permissible current and capital account transactions with residents in India.
- The residents outside India can use the balances in their repatriable INR accounts, such as the Special Non-resident Rupee Account (SNRA) and SRVA, to settle legitimate transactions with other non-resident individuals.
- The residents outside India can use their repatriable INR account balances for foreign investments, including Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in non-debt instruments.
- Indian exporters are now allowed to open foreign currency accounts abroad to settle trade transactions, receive export proceeds, and use those funds to pay for imports.

In December 2023, the Foreign Exchange Management (Manner of Receipt and Payment) Regulations were updated to enable cross-border transactions in all foreign currencies, including the local currencies of trading partner countries, as well as the INR.

313. The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has decided to conduct daily **variable rate repo (VRR)** auctions to boost the banking liquidity amid the deficit.

The initial amount for these auctions is set at approximately **Rs.50,000 crore**.

Reversals will occur the next working day, except for Fridays, when it will be on the following Monday.

The banking system's liquidity deficit has surpassed Rs 2 trillion in recent days, reaching Rs 2.09 trillion and peaking at Rs 2.5 trillion.

Variable Rate Repo:

The variable rate repo is a lending rate set by the RBI that adjusts based on economic conditions. It directly influences the interest rates banks charge on loans. A higher repo rate increases borrowing costs, while a lower rate reduces them.

314. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has established the **Standing External Advisory Committee (SEAC)** to evaluate applications for Universal Banks and Small Finance Banks.

The tenure of the SEAC will be for three years.

The composition of SEAC is:

1.	Shri M. K. Jain , former Deputy Governor, Reserve Bank of India	Chairperson
2.	Ms. Revathy Iyer, Director, Central Board, Reserve Bank of India	Member
3.	Smt. Parvathy V. Sundaram, former Executive Director, Reserve Bank of India	Member

4.	Shri Hemant G. Contractor, former MD of the State Bank of India and former Chairman of the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA)	Member
5.	Shri N. S. Kannan, former MD & CEO, ICICI Prudential Life Insurance Co. Ltd.	Member

The secretarial support to the committee would be provided by the Department of Regulation, Reserve Bank of India.

According to the licensing guidelines, applications for Universal Banks and Small Finance Banks will be initially screened by the Reserve Bank to ensure prima facie eligibility of the applicants which will thereafter be evaluated by the committee composed of eminent people with experience in banking, financial sector and other relevant areas.

The first committee was formed in March 2021 and was headed by former Deputy Governor Shyamala Gopinath for three years.

315. RMBS Development Company Limited (RDCL) has received a Certificate of Registration (CoR) from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to commence operations.

- **National Housing Bank (NHB)**, a statutory body under the Government of India, has set up RMBS Development Company Limited (RDCL) as the single largest shareholder and is supported by a strong mix of investor classes across Banks, HFC/ NBFC and Insurance companies.
- The Company is envisioned to play the role of a commercially sustainable market intermediary to facilitate the growth and development of the **Residential Mortgage-Backed Securitisation (RMBS)** market in the country.
- The operationalization of the Company will provide investment avenues to long-term institutional investors viz., Insurance Companies, Pension and Provident Funds in the RMBS market. The diverse set of investors shall instil confidence in the ecosystem and bring valuable experience in RMBS market development.
- As part of its key business activities, the Company will invest in RMBS issuances, extend second loss credit enhancements, support liquidity, promote standard process and documentation, and other related activities for market development.
- The paid-up Capital of the Company is **₹500 crore** with its Registered Office in **Mumbai**.

The Company is expected to commence operations in **March 2025**.

During the last 5 years, individual housing loans outstanding have grown from ₹ 17.95 Lakh Crore as of March 31, 2019, to ₹ 33.19 Lakh Crore as of 31st March 2024 with a CAGR of 13.1%, and this growth is expected to continue.

316. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has released the **Payment System Report (December 2024)**. It is a bi-annual report that analyses the trends in payment transactions carried out using different payment systems in the last 5 calendar years (CY) up to CY-2024.

Key findings of the report:

- In the calendar year (CY)-2013 there were 222 crore **digital transactions** valued at Rs 772 lakh crore. It has increased **94 times in volume and more than 3.5 times in value** to over 20,787 crore transactions valued at Rs 2,758 lakh crore in CY-2024.
- In the last five years, digital payments in India have increased 6.7 times in volume and 1.6 times in value. This amounts to a five-year CAGR of 45.9 percent in terms of digital payment volume and 10.2 percent in terms of digital payment value.
- At the end of December 2024, the **number of credit cards had more than doubled** to around 10.80 crore as compared to December 2019, when there were 5.53 crore cards in circulation.

- The **number of debit cards** has remained **relatively stable**, with a marginal increase from 80.53 crore in December 2019 to slightly more than 99.09 crore in December 2024.
- The Reserve Bank of India has been working towards enhancing **cross-border payments** by linking UPI with the fast payment systems of other countries. The fast payment systems of India (UPI) and Singapore (PayNow) were linked in February 2023.
- RBI has also joined **Project Nexus**, a multilateral international initiative to enable instant cross-border retail payments by interlinking domestic fast payment systems of multiple countries.
- Payments to merchants using Indian UPI apps via **QR codes** have been enabled in Bhutan, France, Mauritius, Nepal, Singapore, Sri Lanka, and the UAE.
- Retail digital payments in India have grown from 162 crore transactions in the financial year 2012-13 to over 16,416 crore transactions in the financial year 2023-24 i.e., approximately a 100-fold increase over 12 years.
- The volume of **UPI transactions** reflects a CAGR of **74.03 %**, and the value of the transactions represented a CAGR of 68.14% in the last 5 years.

317. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced a series of measures to inject **Rs.1.5 lakh crore** into the banking system in January 2025. These measures aim to address the liquidity shortfall caused by the central bank's intervention in selling dollars to stabilize the rupee.

Key measures announced:

- RBI will conduct a **govt bond buy-back** worth **Rs 60,000 crore** in three tranches scheduled for Jan 30, Feb 13, and Feb 20, 2025.
- RBI will hold a long-term **56-day variable rate repo auction** for Rs 50,000 crore on 7th February 2025.
- RBI will execute a **US dollar-rupee buy/sell swap auction of USD 5 billion** with a six-month tenure. This swap essentially involves RBI borrowing dollars in exchange for rupees, with the interest cost determined by the price at which it agrees to repurchase the dollars at the end of the term.

318. A Bengaluru-based cross-border payment firm, **Skydo**, received in-principle approval from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to operate as a **Payment Aggregator-Cross Border (PA-CB)** entity.

Skydo also secured **Payment Service Provider (PSP) approval from Amazon**, enabling it to process payments for exporters participating in Amazon's Global Selling programme.

At present, only five entities have received final approval from the banking regulator to operate as PA-CB. These include **Adyen India Technology Services, Amazon Pay (India), Cashfree Payments, Indialdeas.com, and Pay10 Services.**

319. The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has cancelled the Certificate of Registration (CoR) of **X10 Financial Services Ltd.**, a Mumbai-based non-banking financial company (NBFC), due to irregularities in its digital lending operations.

The company outsourced key functions like credit appraisal and customer verification to service providers without due diligence, violating outsourcing guidelines.

The company was providing loans through several service providers (mobile apps), including Wecash Technology, XNP Technology, Yarlung Technology, Xinrui International, Omelette Technology, Mad-Elephant Network Technology and Huidatech Technology.

The CoR has been cancelled as the company violated guidelines on the code of conduct in outsourcing of financial services in its digital lending operations by outsourcing its core decision-

making functions such as credit appraisal, fixing of the rate of interest as well as Know Your Customer verification, to the Service Provider (SP) and failed to conduct due diligence on the SPs. The CoR was issued to X10 Financial Services Ltd, previously known as Abhishek Securities Ltd, in June 2015.

The company cannot transact the business of a NBFC.

AWARDS & RECOGNITION

320. The **Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL)** has earned the prestigious '**Great Place to Work**' certification for **January 2025 to January 2026**, awarded by the Great Place to Work Institute, India.

This marks the **second** consecutive certification for SAIL, having first been certified for December 2023 to December 2024.

This recognition highlights the company's innovative HR initiatives including the Work Other than Workplace (WoW) scheme, flexible timings for city-based employees, self-paced learning through LinkedIn Learning Hub and E-Pathshala, high-end IT and digital training with NASSCOM, Leadership Development programs in collaboration with IIMs and ASCI, e-counseling under the Employee Assistance Programs, enhancement of healthcare services and Leadership Coaching for senior executives.

Amarendu Prakash is the current Chairman of SAIL.

321. **Kappad Beach in Kozhikode** and **Chal Beach in Kannur** were awarded the prestigious **Blue Flag certification** by the Denmark-based Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE).

Both beaches are located in the state of **Kerala**.

Kappad Beach earned the Blue Flag certification for the **4th consecutive year**.

This certification recognizes beaches that meet high standards in environmental protection, safety, and sustainability.

The Blue Flag status enhances Kerala's appeal as a sustainable tourism destination and serves as a global benchmark for eco-friendly tourism practices. The beaches were recognized for meeting 33 criteria, including environmental sustainability, safety, and hygiene practices.

The Blue Flag is an international eco-label awarded to beaches, marinas, and sustainable boating operators as a mark of their environmental excellence.

322. The **82nd Golden Globe Awards 2025** was held in Beverly Hills, California, USA. The awards are held annually for excellence in film and American television productions.

The event was hosted by comedian Nikki Glaser which made her the first solo female host in Golden Globes history.

Emilia Pérez, with ten nominations, became the most nominated comedy or musical film in Golden Globes history. *The Brutalist* received the second-most in film with seven nominations, followed by *Conclave* with six.

Winners of the 82nd Golden Globe Awards 2025:

Category	Winners
Best Performance by an Actor in a Motion Picture — Drama	Adrien Brody, "The Brutalist"

Best Performance by an Actress in a Motion Picture — Drama	Fernanda Torres, "I'm Still Here"
Best Motion Picture — Drama	"The Brutalist" "A Complete Unknown"
Best Performance by an Actress in a Supporting Role in any Motion Picture	Zoe Saldaña, "Emilia Pérez"
Best Performance by an Actor in a Supporting Role in Any Motion Picture	Kieran Culkin, "A Real Pain"
Best Performance by an Actress in a Television Series — Musical or Comedy	Jean Smart, "Hacks"
Best Performance by an Actor in a Television Series — Drama	HiroYuki Sanada, "Shōgun"
Best Screenplay — Motion Picture	Peter Straughan, "Conclave"
Best Original Song — Motion Picture	"El Mal," by Clément Ducol, Camille, and Jacques Audiard (from "Emilia Pérez")
Best Motion Picture — Non-English Language	"Emilia Pérez" "All We Imagine as Light"
Best Director — Motion Picture	Brady Corbet, "The Brutalist"
Best Motion Picture — Animated	"Flow"
Best Television Series — Drama	"Shōgun"
Best Performance by an Actor in a Television Series — Musical or Comedy	Jeremy Allen White, "The Bear"
Best Television Series — Comedy or Musical	"Hacks"
Best Performance by an Actress in a Limited Series, Anthology Series or Motion Picture Made for Television	Jodie Foster, "True Detective: Night Country"
Best Television Limited Series, Anthology Series or Motion Picture Made for Television	"Baby Reindeer"

323. Kiren Rijiju, the Union Minister of Parliamentary Affairs (MoPA) and Minister of Minority Affairs presided over the function and distributed the prizes to the prize-winning students and schools for their meritorious performance in the **34th National Youth Parliament Competition, 2023-24 for Kendriya Vidyalayas**.

The prize distribution ceremony was held at GMC Balayogi Auditorium, Parliament Library Building, Parliament House Complex, New Delhi.

The 34th Competition in the series was organized among 150 Kendriya Vidyalayas spread over 25 regions of Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan.

The students of **PM Shri Kendriya Vidyalaya, IIT, Kharagpur, (Kolkata Region, East Zone)** stood first at the National Level in the 34th National Youth Parliament Competition, 2023-24 for Kendriya Vidyalayas. They were honoured with the "Nehru Running Shield" and Trophy. Zonal winner trophies were awarded to the following 4 Vidyalayas for standing first at the Zonal level in the competition:

Sl. No.	Name of Kendriya Vidyalaya	Zone
1.	Kendriya Vidyalaya, NSG Manesar (Gurugram Region)	North
2.	Kendriya Vidyalaya, Mhow (Bhopal Region)	Central
3.	PM Shri Kendriya Vidyalaya No. 1, Kota (Jaipur Region)	West
4.	PM Shri Kendriya Vidyalaya, HVF Avadi (Chennai Region)	South

Regional-level winner trophies were awarded to the following 20 Vidyalayas for standing first at the regional level in the competition:

Sl. No.	Name of Kendriya Vidyalaya	Region
1.	Kendriya Vidyalaya No. 1, Roorkee	Dehradun
2.	Kendriya Vidyalaya No. 2, PLW, Chandigarh	Chandigarh
3.	PM Shri Kendriya Vidyalaya AFS Bawana	Delhi Region
4.	Kendriya Vidyalaya No. 2, Jammu Cantt.	Jammu
5.	Kendriya Vidyalaya No. 4, Tezpur University, Tezpur	Guwahati
6.	PM Shri Kendriya Vidyalaya No. 1, Bhubaneswar	Bhubaneswar
7.	Kendriya Vidyalaya, ONGC Srikona	Silchar
8.	PM Shri Kendriya Vidyalaya, AFS, Chabua	Tinsukia
9.	Kendriya Vidyalaya, SECL Jhagrakhand	Raipur
10.	Kendriya Vidyalaya, Jamlapur	Patna
11.	Kendriya Vidyalaya No. 2, Armapur, Kanpur	Lucknow
12.	Kendriya Vidyalaya BLW Varanasi	Varanasi
13.	Kendriya Vidyalaya, Meghahatuburu	Ranchi
14.	Kendriya Vidyalaya IIT Powai, Mumbai	Mumbai
15.	Kendriya Vidyalaya, Ahmedabad Cantt.	Ahmedabad
16.	Kendriya Vidyalaya Babina Cantt.	Agra
17.	Kendriya Vidyalaya No.1 Chhindwara	Jabalpur
18.	Kendriya Vidyalaya Calicut No. 1	Ernakulam
19.	Kendriya Vidyalaya BRBNMPL, Mysuru	Bengaluru
20.	Kendriya Vidyalaya Nellore	Hyderabad

324. The Prize Distribution Ceremony for the **25th National Youth Parliament Competition, 2023-24**, for **Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas (JNV)** was held at the GMC Balayogi Auditorium within the Parliament Library Building, Parliament House Complex, New Delhi.

The Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for the Ministry of Law and Justice, and Minister of State in the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, Arjun Ram Meghwal, graced the event and presented awards to the winning teams of JNV.

Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya (JNV), Chandrapur, Maharashtra (Pune region) bagged the first prize in the 25th National Youth Parliament Competition 2023-24.

Apart from JNV Chandrapur, Maharashtra, the following 7 regional winning Vidyalayas also received prizes:

Name of Vidyalayas	Region
Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya, Patiala	Chandigarh
Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya, Kozhikode, Kerala	Hyderabad
Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya, Jagatsinghpur, Odisha	Bhopal
Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya, Saharanpur, Uttar Pradesh	Lucknow
Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya, Rajgir, Bihar	Patna
Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya, East Khasi Hills-I, Meghalaya	Shillong
Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya, Barmer, Rajasthan,	Jaipur

Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs has been organizing Youth Parliament Competitions in Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas for the past 28 years. Under the scheme of the National Youth Parliament Competition for Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas, the 25th Competition in the series was organized

during 2023-24 among 80 Vidyalyayas spread over 8 regions of Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti, all over India.

325. Professor Urbasi Sinha, faculty in the Light and Matter Physics theme at the Raman Research Institute (RRI), was honored with the **Gates-Cambridge Impact Prize 2025** by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation at Cambridge, UK.

She has been recognized for her groundbreaking contributions to quantum communication, computing, and optics.

She is among the eight winners of Gates-Cambridge's Impact Prize to celebrate its 25th anniversary.

She is a researcher in both quantum fundamentals and technologies, and she heads the Quantum Information and Computing (QulC) lab at RRI, an autonomous institute of the Department of Science and Technology.

Her lab was one of the first in India to manufacture and establish the usage of heralded and entangled photon sources for various applications in the following areas: quantum communication, quantum computing, quantum optics, and quantum fundamentals and information processing.

She has leadership roles in the recently announced 'National Quantum Mission'.

She was awarded the prestigious Rashtriya Vigyan Yuva Puraskar by the Government of India.

She is also a recipient of the Canada Excellence Research Chair (CERC) in Photonic Quantum Science and Technologies, at the University of Calgary, Canada. She has played a leading role in the creation of the Open Quantum Institute (OQI), a first-of-its-kind multi-stakeholder institution, launched at CERN in March 2024.

She is an affiliate member of the Institute for Quantum Computing, Waterloo, Canada, and the Centre for Quantum Information and Quantum Computing at the University of Toronto.

326. The International Cricket Council (ICC) announced the winners of the **ICC Awards 2024**. The winners of the ICC Awards are determined after a round of voting by the ICC Voting Academy, a larger panel of global media representatives and global cricket fans.

Winner List of ICC Awards 2024

ICC Men's T20I Cricketer of the Year	Arshdeep Singh (IND)
ICC Women's T20I Cricketer of the Year	Amelia Kerr (NZL)
ICC Men's T20I Team of the Year	Rohit Sharma (c), Travis Head, Phil Salt, Babar Azam, Nicholas Pooran (wk), Sikandar Raza, Hardik Pandya, Rashid Khan, Wanindu Hasaranga, Jasprit Bumrah, Arshdeep Singh.
ICC Women's T20I Team of the Year	Laura Wolvaardt (c), Smriti Mandhana, Chamari Athapaththu, Hayley Matthews, Nat Sciver Brunt, Melie Kerr, Richa Ghosh (wk), Marizanne Kapp, Orla Prendergast, Deepti Sharma, Sadia Iqbal.
ICC Men's Test Team of the Year	Yashasvi Jaiswal, Ben Duckett, Kane Williamson, Joe Root, Harry Brook, Kamindu Mendis, Jamie Smith (wk), Ravindra Jadeja, Pat Cummins (c), Matt Henry, Jasprit Bumrah.
ICC Men's ODI Team of the Year	Saim Ayub, Rahmanullah Gurbaz, Pathum Nissanka, Kusal Mendis (wk), Charith Asalanka (c), Sherfane Rutherford, Azmatullah Omarzai, Wanindu Hasaranga, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Haris Rauf, AM Ghazanfar.

ICC Women's ODI Team of the Year	Smriti Mandhana, Laura Wolvaardt (c), Chamarti Athapaththu, Hayley Matthews, Marizanne Kapp, Ashleigh Gardner, Annabel Sutherland, Amy Jones (wk), Deepti Sharma, Sophie Ecclestone, Kate Cross.
ICC Umpire of the Year	Richard Illingworth (ENG)
ICC Men's Associate Cricketer of the Year	Gerhard Erasmus (NAM)
ICC Women's Associate Cricketer of the Year	Esha Oza (UAE)
ICC Emerging Men's Cricketer of the Year	Kamindu Mendis (SRI)
ICC Emerging Women's Cricketer of the Year	Annerie Dercksen (RSA)
ICC Men's ODI Cricketer of the Year	Azmatullah Omarzai (AFG)
ICC Women's ODI Cricketer of the Year	Smriti Mandhana (IND)
ICC Men's Test Cricketer of the Year	Jasprit Bumrah (IND)
Rachael Heyhoe Flint Trophy for ICC Women's Cricketer of the Year	Amelia Kerr (NZ)
Sir Garfield Sobers Trophy for ICC Men's Cricketer of the Year	Jasprit Bumrah (IND)

327. The Indian short film '**Anuja**' secured a nomination in the **Best Short Film (Live Action) category** at the **97th Academy Awards**. The film is directed by **Adam J Graves and Suchitra Mattai**.

The film is pitted against A Lien, I'm Not a Robot, The Last Ranger, and The Man Who Could Not Remain Silent at the awards gala.

- "Anuja" follows a gifted nine-year-old Anuja, who must make a choice between education and factory work alongside her sister - a decision that will shape both their futures. It stars Sajda Pathan and Ananya Shanbhag.
- The film has two-time Oscar-winning producer Guneet Monga on board as executive producer and Hollywood star-writer Mindy Kaling as producer.
- It is produced in collaboration with the Salaam Baalak Trust (SBT), a nonprofit founded by filmmaker Mira Nair's family in support of street and working children, alongside Shine Global, and Krushan Naik Films.
- Actor Priyanka Chopra Jonas boarded the project as an executive producer.

Besides "Anuja", "**I Am Ready, Warden**" is another movie with an India connection. It is nominated in the Documentary Short Film category. The film is directed by Indian-origin American filmmaker **Smriti Mundhra**.

- "I Am Ready, Warden" is about Texas death row prisoner John Henry Ramirez who seeks redemption from his victim's son in the days leading up to his execution in 2022.
- The film is produced by Mundhra, Maya Gnyp, Keri Blakinger and Nina Anand Aujla.

328. For the year 2025, the President of India, Droupadi Murmu has approved the conferment of **139**

Padma Awards including a duo case (in a duo case, the Award is counted as one).

The list comprises **7 Padma Vibhushan, 19 Padma Bhushan, and 113 Padma Shri Awards.**

23 of the awardees are women and the list also includes 10 persons from the category of Foreigners/NRI/PIO/OCI and 13 Posthumous awardees.

Padma Vibhushan (7):

Name	Field	State/Country
Shri Duvvur Nageshwar Reddy	Medicine	Telangana
Justice (Retd.) Shri Jagdish Singh Khehar	Public Affairs	Chandigarh
Smt. Kumudini Rajnikant Lakhia	Art	Gujarat
Shri Lakshminarayana Subramaniam	Art	Karnataka
Shri M. T. Vasudevan Nair (Posthumous)	Literature and Education	Kerala
Shri Osamu Suzuki (Posthumous)	Trade and Industry	Japan
Smt. Sharda Sinha (Posthumous)	Art	Bihar

Padma Bhushan (19):

Name	Field	State/Country
Shri A Surya Prakash	Literature and Education-Journalism	Karnataka
Shri Anant Nag	Art	Karnataka
Shri Bibek Debroy (Posthumous)	Literature and Education	NCT Delhi
Shri Jatin Goswami	Art	Assam
Shri Jose Chacko Periappuram	Medicine	Kerala
Shri Kailash Nath Dikshit	Others-Archaeology	NCT Delhi
Shri Manohar Joshi (Posthumous)	Public Affairs	Maharashtra
Shri Nalli Kuppaswami Chetti	Trade and Industry	Tamil Nadu
Shri Nandamuri Balakrishna	Art	Andhra Pradesh
Shri P R Sreejesh	Sports	Kerala
Shri Pankaj Patel	Trade and Industry	Gujarat
Shri Pankaj Udhas (Posthumous)	Art	Maharashtra
Shri Rambahadur Rai	Literature and Education-Journalism	Uttar Pradesh
Sadhvi Ritambhara	Social Work	Uttar Pradesh
Shri S Ajith Kumar	Art	Tamil Nadu
Shri Shekhar Kapur	Art	Maharashtra
Ms. Shobana Chandrakumar	Art	Tamil Nadu
Shri Sushil Kumar Modi (Posthumous)	Public Affairs	Bihar
Shri Vinod Dham	Science and Engineering	United States of America

Padma Shri (113):

Name	Field	State/Country
Shri Adwaita Charan Gadanayak	Art	Odisha
Shri Achyut Ramchandra Palav	Art	Maharashtra
Shri Ajay V Bhatt	Science and Engineering	United States of America
Shri Anil Kumar Boro	Literature and Education	Assam
Shri Arijit Singh	Art	West Bengal
Smt. Arundhati Bhattacharya	Trade and Industry	Maharashtra

Shri Arunoday Saha	Literature and Education	Tripura
Shri Arvind Sharma	Literature and Education	Canada
Shri Ashok Kumar Mahapatra	Medicine	Odisha
Shri Ashok Laxman Saraf	Art	Maharashtra
Shri Ashutosh Sharma	Science and Engineering	Uttar Pradesh
Smt. Ashwini Bhide Deshpande	Art	Maharashtra
Shri Baijnath Maharaj	Others-Spiritualism	Rajasthan
Shri Barry Godfray John	Art	NCT Delhi
Smt. Begam Batool	Art	Rajasthan
Shri Bharat Gupta	Art	NCT Delhi
Shri Bheru Singh Chouhan	Art	Madhya Pradesh
Shri Bhim Singh Bhavesh	Social Work	Bihar
Smt. Bhimavva Doddabalappa Shillekyathara	Art	Karnataka
Shri Budhendra Kumar Jain	Medicine	Madhya Pradesh
Shri C S Vaidyanathan	Public Affairs	NCT Delhi
Shri Chaitram Deochand Pawar	Social Work	Maharashtra
Shri Chandrakant Sheth (Posthumous)	Literature and Education	Gujarat
Shri Chandrakant Sompura	Others-Architecture	Gujarat
Shri Chetan E Chitnis	Science and Engineering	France
Shri David R Syiemlieh	Literature and Education	Meghalaya
Shri Durga Charan Ranbir	Art	Odisha
Shri Farooq Ahmad Mir	Art	Jammu And Kashmir
Shri Ganeshwar Shastri Dravid	Literature and Education	Uttar Pradesh
Smt. Gita Upadhyay	Literature and Education	Assam
Shri Gokul Chandra Das	Art	West Bengal
Shri Guruvayur Dorai	Art	Tamil Nadu
Shri Harchandan Singh Bhatta	Art	Madhya Pradesh
Shri Hariman Sharma	Others-Agriculture	Himachal Pradesh
Shri Harjinder Singh Srinagar Wale	Art	Punjab
Shri Harvinder Singh	Sports	Haryana
Shri Hassan Raghu	Art	Karnataka
Shri Hemant Kumar	Medicine	Bihar
Shri Hriday Narayan Dixit	Literature and Education	Uttar Pradesh
Shri Hugh and Colleen Gantzer (Posthumous)(Duo)*	Literature and Education-Journalism	Uttarakhand
Shri Inivalappil Mani Vijayan	Sports	Kerala
Shri Jagadish Joshila	Literature and Education	Madhya Pradesh
Smt. Jaspinder Narula	Art	Maharashtra
Shri Jonas Masetti	Others-Spiritualism	Brazil
Shri Joynacharan Bathari	Art	Assam
Smt. Jumde Yomgam Gamlin	Social Work	Arunachal Pradesh
Shri K. Damodaran	Others-Culinary	Tamil Nadu
Shri K L Krishna	Literature and Education	Andhra Pradesh
Smt. K Omanakutty Amma	Art	Kerala
Shri Kishore Kunal (Posthumous)	Civil Service	Bihar
Shri L Hangthing	Others-Agriculture	Nagaland
Shri Lakshmiopathy Ramasubbaiyer	Literature and Education-Journalism	Tamil Nadu

Shri Lalit Kumar Mangotra	Literature and Education	Jammu And Kashmir
Shri Lama Lobzang (Posthumous)	Others-Spiritualism	Ladakh
Smt. Libia Lobo Sardesai	Social Work	Goa
Shri M D Srinivas	Science and Engineering	Tamil Nadu
Shri Madugula Nagaphani Sarma	Art	Andhra Pradesh
Shri Mahabir Nayak	Art	Jharkhand
Smt. Mamata Shankar	Art	West Bengal
Shri Manda Krishna Madiga	Public Affairs	Telangana
Shri Maruti Bhujangrao Chitampalli	Literature and Education	Maharashtra
Shri Miriyala Apparao (Posthumous)	Art	Andhra Pradesh
Shri Nagendra Nath Roy	Literature and Education	West Bengal
Shri Narayan (Bhulai Bhai) (Posthumous)	Public Affairs	Uttar Pradesh
Shri Naren Gurung	Art	Sikkim
Smt. Neerja Bhatla	Medicine	NCT Delhi
Smt. Nirmala Devi	Art	Bihar
Shri Nitin Nohria	Literature and Education	United States of America
Shri Onkar Singh Pahwa	Trade and Industry	Punjab
Shri P Datchanamoorthy	Art	Puducherry
Shri Pandi Ram Mandavi	Art	Chhattisgarh
Shri Parmar Lavjibhai Nagjibhai	Art	Gujarat
Shri Pawan Goenka	Trade and Industry	West Bengal
Shri Prashanth Prakash	Trade and Industry	Karnataka
Smt. Pratibha Satpathy	Literature and Education	Odisha
Shri Purisai Kannappa Sambandan	Art	Tamil Nadu
Shri R Ashwin	Sports	Tamil Nadu
Shri R G Chandramogan	Trade and Industry	Tamil Nadu
Smt. Radha Bahin Bhatt	Social Work	Uttarakhand
Shri Radhakrishnan Devasenapathy	Art	Tamil Nadu
Shri Ramdarash Mishra	Literature and Education	NCT Delhi
Shri Ranendra Bhanu Majumdar	Art	Maharashtra
Shri Ratan Kumar Parimoo	Art	Gujarat
Shri Reba Kanta Mahanta	Art	Assam
Shri Renthlei Lalrawna	Literature and Education	Mizoram
Shri Ricky Gyan Kej	Art	Karnataka
Shri Sajjan Bhajanka	Trade and Industry	West Bengal
Smt. Sally Holkar	Trade and Industry	Madhya Pradesh
Shri Sant Ram Deswal	Literature and Education	Haryana
Shri Satyapal Singh	Sports	Uttar Pradesh
Shri Seeni Viswanathan	Literature and Education	Tamil Nadu
Shri Sethuraman Panchanathan	Science and Engineering	United States of America
Smt. Sheikha Shaikha Ali Al-Jaber Al-Sabah	Medicine	Kuwait
Shri Sheen Kaaf Nizam (Shiv Kishan Bissa)	Literature and Education	Rajasthan
Shri Shyam Bihari Agrawal	Art	Uttar Pradesh
Smt. Soniya Nityanand	Medicine	Uttar Pradesh
Shri Stephen Knapp	Literature and Education	United States of America
Shri Subhash Khetulal Sharma	Others-Agriculture	Maharashtra

Shri Suresh Harilal Soni	Social Work	Gujarat
Shri Surinder Kumar Vasal	Science and Engineering	Delhi
Shri Swami Pradiptananda (Kartik Maharaj)	Others-Spiritualism	West Bengal
Shri Syed Ainul Hasan	Literature and Education	Uttar Pradesh
Shri Tejendra Narayan Majumdar	Art	West Bengal
Smt. Thiyam Suryamukhi Devi	Art	Manipur
Shri Tushar Durgeshbhai Shukla	Literature and Education	Gujarat
Shri Vadiraj Raghawendracharya Panchamukhi	Literature and Education	Andhra Pradesh
Shri Vasudeo Kamath	Art	Maharashtra
Shri Velu Aasaan	Art	Tamil Nadu
Shri Venkappa Ambaji Sugatekar	Art	Karnataka
Shri Vijay Nityanand Surishwar Ji Maharaj	Others-Spiritualism	Bihar
Smt. Vijayalakshmi Deshamane	Medicine	Karnataka
Shri Vilas Dangre	Medicine	Maharashtra
Shri Vinayak Lohani	Social Work	West Bengal

'Padma Vibhushan' is awarded for exceptional and distinguished service; 'Padma Bhushan' for distinguished service of high order and 'Padma Shri' for distinguished service in any field. These Awards are conferred by the President of India at ceremonial functions which are held at Rashtrapati Bhawan usually around March/ April every year.

329. President Droupadi Murmu has approved **Gallantry awards** to **93 Armed Forces** and Central Armed Police Forces personnel, including 12 posthumous, on the eve of 76th Republic Day. These include two Kirti Chakras, including one posthumous; 14 Shaurya Chakras, including three posthumous; one Bar to Sena Medal (Gallantry); 66 Sena Medals, including seven posthumous; two Nao Sena Medal (Gallantry) and eight Vayu Sena Medals (Gallantry), including one posthumous.

The President also approved 305 defence decorations to the Armed Forces and other personnel. These include 30 Param Vishisht Seva Medals; five Uttam Yudh Seva Medals; 57 Ati Vishisht Seva Medals; 10 Yudh Seva Medals; one Bar to Sena Medals (Devotion to Duty); 43 Sena Medals (Devotion to Duty); eight Nao Sena Medals (Devotion to Duty); 15 Vayu Sena Medals (Devotion to Duty); four Bar to Vishisht Seva Medal and 132 Vishisht Seva Medals.

Kirti Chakra:

- IC-83449Y MAJOR MANJIT, PUNJAB, 22 RR ARMY
- 15240290F NAIK DILWAR KHAN, ARTY, 28 RR (POSTHUMOUS)

Shaurya Chakra:

- IC-81258L MAJOR ASHISH DAHIYA, ENGRS, 50 RR
- IC-82035A MAJOR KUNAL, ASC, 1 RR
- IC-83753H MAJOR SATENDER DHANKAR, ARMD, 4 RR
- IC-85773P CAPTAIN DEEPAK SINGH, SIGS, 48 RR (POSTHUMOUS)
- AR-446P ASSISTANT COMMANDANT ESHENTHUNG KIKON, 4 ASSAM RIFLE
- JC-414610L SUBEDAR VIKAS TOMAR, 1 PARA (SF)
- JC-492279P SUBEDAR MOHAN RAM, 20 JAT
- 20002941F HAVILDAR ROHIT KUMAR, DOGRA, HAWS (POSTHUMOUS)
- 5852332P HAVILDAR PRAKASH TAMANG, 9 GR, 32 RR
- FLIGHT LIEUTENANT AMAN SINGH HANS (36412), FLYING (PILOT)
- CORPORAL DABHI SANJAY HIFFABAI ESSA (953327)
- EXGS-178067A OEM Gde-1 LATE VIJAYAN KUTTY G (POSTHUMOUS)
- SHRI VIKRANT KUMAR, DEPUTY COMMANDANT, CRPF
- SHRI JEFFREY HMINGCHULLO, INSPECTOR(GD), CRPF

Note: The order of precedence of gallantry awards is the *Param Vir Chakra, the Ashoka Chakra, the Mahavir Chakra, the Kirti Chakra, the Vir Chakra, and the Shaurya Chakra*.

76th Republic Day 2024:

India has observed its 76th Republic Day on 26th January 2025. The day marks and celebrates the date on which the Indian Constitution came into effect on 26th January 1950.

- Chief Guest of the 76th Republic Day was **Prabowo Subianto, President of Indonesia**.

330. The President of India, Droupadi Murmu has approved the conferment of **Jeevan Raksha Padak Series of Awards – 2024** on **49 persons** which includes Sarvottam Jeevan Raksha Padak to 17, Uttam Jeevan Raksha Padak to 09 and Jeevan Raksha Padak to 23 persons. The 6 awardees are posthumous.

Sarvottam Jeevan Raksha Padak:

1.	Shri Pintu Kumar Sahni (Posthumous), Bihar
2.	Shri Manesh K M (Posthumous), Kerala
3.	Shri Dawa Tshering Lepcha (Posthumous), Sikkim
4.	Dr. Pema Tenzing Lachungpa (Posthumous), Sikkim
5.	Gunner Anis Kumar Gupta (Posthumous), M/o Defence
6.	Shri Vazeel Hassan, NHIDCL, M/o Road Transport and Highways
7.	Shri Munna Qureshi, NHIDCL, M/o Transport and Highways
8.	Shri Ankur Kumar, NHIDCL, M/o Road Transport and Highways
9.	Shri Monu Kumar, NHIDCL, M/o Road Transport and Highways
10.	Shri Devendra, NHIDCL, M/o Road Transport and Highways
11.	Shri Mohammed Rashid, NHIDCL, M/o Road Transport and Highways
12.	Shri Firoz Qureshi, NHIDCL, M/o Road Transport and Highways
13.	Shri Jatin Kashyap, NHIDCL, M/o Road Transport and Highways
14.	Shri Saurabh Kashyap, NHIDCL, M/o Road Transport and Highways
15.	Shri Mohammed Irshad, NHIDCL, M/o Road Transport and Highways
16.	Shri Nasruddin, NHIDCL, M/o Road Transport and Highways
17.	Shri Naseem, NHIDCL, M/o Road Transport and Highways

Uttam Jeevan Raksha Padak:

1.	Shri Ritik Chauhan, Himachal Pradesh
2.	Shri Shashikant Ramkrushna Gajbe, Maharashtra
3.	NK Shankar Singh Kharayat, Border Roads Organisation
4.	Havildar Leki Passang, M/o Defence
5.	Sep Rajesh Ranjan Kujur (Posthumous), M/o Defence
6.	Shri Rakesh Singh Rana, M/o Defence
7.	Shri Manmohan Singh, National Disaster Response Force
8.	Shri Pradeep Kumar, National Disaster Response Force
9.	Shri Sachin Kumar, National Disaster Response Force

Jeevan Raksha Padak:

1.	Shri Nelli Srinivasa Rao, Andhra Pradesh
2.	Shri Vikas Yadav, Bihar
3.	Sushri Manishaben Amarshibhai Malakiya, Gujarat
4.	Kumari Diya Fathima, Kerala
5.	Shri Muhammad Hashir N K, Kerala
6.	Shri Kishor Kumar Arney, Madhya Pradesh
7.	Shri Dadarao Govindrao Pawar, Maharashtra

8.	Shri Dnyaneshwar Mukundrao Bhedodkar, Maharashtra
9.	Shri K. Shimreingam Shimray, Manipur
10.	Master Elambok Dkhar, Meghalaya
11.	Master Kisen Wanniang, Meghalaya
12.	Shri Laltlanzova, Mizoram
13.	Shri Y Pongba, Nagaland
14.	Dr. Ranjana Bhandari, Odisha
15.	Shri C. Anbarasan, Puducherry
16.	Shri Bandakindi Shravan Kumar, Telangana
17.	Shri Aakash Pradhan, West Bengal
18.	Shri Kali Kinkar Manna, West Bengal
19.	Naik Ajith R Nair, M/o Defence
20.	Shri Dhanbeer Singh Negi, M/o Defence
21.	Shri Dhanesh Chand Yadav, M/o Defence
22.	Sgt Ram Kumar Jaiswal, M/o Defence
23.	Ms. Pallabi Biswas, M/o Railways (RPF)

Jeevan Raksha Padak Series of Awards are given to a person for meritorious acts of human nature in saving the life of a person. The award is given in three categories, namely, Sarvottam Jeevan Raksha Padak, Uttam Jeevan Raksha Padak, and Jeevan Raksha Padak. Persons of all walks of life are eligible for these awards. The award can also be conferred posthumously. The decoration of the award consists of a Medal, a Certificate signed by the Union Home Minister, and a lump sum Monetary Allowance. It is presented to the awardees by the respective Union Ministries/Organizations/State Government to which the awardee belongs.

331. Doordarshan received the prestigious award in the **Electronic Media** category for its 360-degree comprehensive campaign on **Voter Awareness and Education**. The recognition came for its impactful coverage, including the "Chunav Ka Parv Desh Ka Garv" series during the Lok Sabha Elections 2024, which emphasized the importance of informed and responsible voting. The campaign, conducted nationwide during the Parliamentary Elections 2024, showcased Doordarshan's dedication to fostering an informed and active citizenry. It included:

- **Innovative Programming:** Development and broadcast of 30 voter education short films.
- **Multilingual Outreach:** Extensive dissemination across DD National, DD India, and DD News Channels, ensuring messages reached every corner of the country.
- **Engaging Advertisements:** Engaging L-band advertisement, Mug Branding, and Advertisements (45 sec/spots) aimed at motivating millions to participate in democracy.

332. President Droupadi Murmu has awarded the **Best Electoral Practices Award 2024-25** in the best Government department for Voter education & electoral participation on **Indian Railways** on the occasion of the 15th National Voters' Day.

The award was received by Satish Kumar, the Chairman and CEO of the Railway Board. Indian Railways has been honored with this award for making the best use of its infrastructure and partnering with the Election Commission of India to enhance voter awareness nationwide. This recognition highlights Indian Railways' crucial role in the Lok Sabha Elections 2024, where it significantly contributed to voter awareness and logistical support.

The Indian Railways, in collaboration with the Election Commission of India, leveraged its **Rail Display Network (RDN)** across stations, official websites, and mobile applications to disseminate voter helpline details. Pre-recorded announcements were also made at Railway stations.

A special train, the **SVEEP Express**, was operated in the **Kashmir Valley** in coordination with local authorities to engage and inspire youth to actively participate in the electoral process. Social media campaigns with hashtags like #ChunavKaParv and #DeshKaGarv promoted participation.

Railways also facilitated secure and seamless transportation of over 3,74,000 para-military personnel through 383 trains across the Nation for conducting fair elections. Indian Railways effectively promoted civic engagement, emphasizing the importance of voting in shaping the Nation's democracy.

333. The **Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS)** has been awarded the **Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar-2025**, in the Institutional Category, for its excellent work in Disaster Management.

- INCOIS was established in 1999 in **Hyderabad, Telangana**.
- The INCOIS is integral to India's disaster management strategy, specializing in early alerts for ocean-related hazards.
- It established the Indian Tsunami Early Warning Centre (ITEWC).
- It has been recognized by UNESCO as a top Tsunami Service Provider.

Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar:

Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar, first awarded in **2019**, recognizes and honours the invaluable contribution and selfless service rendered by individuals and organizations in India in the field of disaster management. The award is announced every year on **23rd January**, the birth anniversary of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose. The award carries a cash prize of **Rs. 51 lakh** and a certificate in the case of an institution and **Rs. 5 lakh** and a certificate in the case of an individual.

BOOKS & AUTHORS

334. Union Minister for Home Affairs and Cooperation, **Amit Shah** has released a book titled '**Jammu Kashmir & Ladakh Through the Ages: A Visual Narrative of Continuities and Linkages**' while attending an event as a Chief Guest in New Delhi.

Union Minister for Education, Shri Dharmendra Pradhan was the Guest of Honour at the event.

The book seeks to present the story of Jammu Kashmir and Ladakh.

The title attempts to document the story of Jammu Kashmir and Ladakh from a perspective and format that enables an overview for both the subject specialist and those less conversant. It is presented in seven sections that cover over three thousand years of the region's history.

The book is published in Hindi and English.

This book is the result of collaborative efforts of the National Book Trust, India, and the Indian Council of Historical Research.

335. Former Indian wicketkeeper **Syed Kirmani** has released his autobiography on his 75th birthday. The book '**Stumped: Life Behind and Beyond the Twenty-Two Yards**' was unveiled at a glittering ceremony in Bengaluru, Karnataka.

The book was published by *Penguin Play*.

The autobiography traces his journey from his early days in Bengaluru to becoming a stalwart of Indian cricket. It covers his pivotal role in India's historic 1983 World Cup triumph, where his sharp wicketkeeping and crucial partnerships played a vital part in the team's success.

The book is co-authored by **Debashish Sengupta and Dakshesh Pathak**.

- 336. French-Indian Sanskrit scholar Professor Pierre-Sylvain Filliozat** has passed away at the age of 88 in Paris, France. He was born on 15 February 1936 in France. He worked in India from 1963 to 1967 as a Member of Ecole frangaised'Extreme-Orient (French School of Asian Studies), in its Pondicherry branch. During his stay in Pondicherry, he was trained in Sanskrit by two traditional Sanskrit Pandits, N. Ramachandra Bhat and M. S. Narasimhacharya. He conducted research in the following areas of Sanskrit Studies: Sanskrit language and Indian grammatical tradition (Vyakarana), Sanskrit philology, paleography of Sanskrit manuscripts, Sanskrit epigraphy, Sanskrit poetical, religious, especially Shaivagamas, and scientific literature, and also on Indian religious architecture and iconography, with special reference to Karnataka monuments and the extraordinary site of Hampi and History of Indology. He has published 23 books and around 250 articles. He was awarded the **Padma Shri in 2024** for his contributions to Sanskrit studies.

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- 337. Amitabh Kant** has authored a book titled '**HOW INDIA SCALED MT G20: THE INSIDE STORY OF THE G20 PRESIDENCY**'. The book is published by Rupa Publications India. The book offers a rare, behind-the-scenes look at the intense negotiations, strategic manoeuvring, and backroom diplomacy that defined India's presidency. From climate action and digital transformation to tackling inequality, this insider's account reveals how India shaped the future of global governance under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and rallied the G20 towards a new era of unity and cooperation. Amitabh Kant is India's G20 Sherpa. He has served as the CEO of the National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog, the Government of India's premier policy think tank. Before that, he was Secretary of the Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion. He is a 1980-batch Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer of the Kerala cadre. **Notable works:** *Made in India: 75 Years of Business and Enterprise; Incredible India 2.0: Synergies for Growth and Governance;* and *Branding India: An Incredible Story;* and the editor of *The Path Ahead: Transformative Ideas for India*.

- 338.** Jnanpith awardee **Amitav Ghosh** penned a new book named '**Wild Fictions**'. The book explores climate change, societal issues, and political instability in the "time of monsters" addressing urgent global crises like biodiversity loss, climate change, and emerging diseases. The book is published by Fourth Estate India. **Other writings of him:** *The Shadow Lines, The Glass Palace, The Hungry Tide,* the Ibis Trilogy (comprising the novels *Sea of Poppies, River of Smoke* and *Flood of Fire*), *Gun Island, The Great Derangement, The Nutmeg's Curse, Jungle Nama* and *The Living Mountain*.

- 339.** The Vice-President of India, **Jagdeep Dhankar**, launched the book "**Parliament: Powers, Functions & Privileges; a Comparative Constitutional Perspective**" in New Delhi. The book is authored by **Dr. K.S. Chauhan**. The book, consisting of two volumes, provides crucial insights into Parliament's role and responsibilities, particularly in government oversight. It discusses the importance of dialogue, debate, and deliberation in ensuring accountability.

The book highlights the significance of parliamentary privileges and the need for responsible use by MPs.

- 340.** Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation **Amit Shah** has released the "**Indian Renaissance: The Modi Decade**" book in New Delhi. The book is edited by **Dr Aishwarya Pandit**.

The book provides a comprehensive analysis of India's political, economic, social, and cultural evolution under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership.

The book, featuring essays from 27 distinguished authors, delves into the profound transformation of India during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's tenure from 2014 to 2024.

The book is published by Westland Non-Fiction.

Dr. Aishwarya Pandit serves as an Associate Professor at Jindal Global Law School and has also taught as a visiting faculty member at IIM Indore. She is the author of *Claiming Citizenship and Nation: Muslim Politics and State Building in North India, 1947–1986*, published by Routledge in 2022.

PERSON IN NEWS

- 341.** **Jyoti Sharma** has been appointed as the new **Chief Executive Officer (CEO)** of **NASSCOM Foundation** with immediate effect.

She succeeded Nidhi Bhasin, who has been appointed as the CEO of Digital Green Trust. She will work towards strengthening the NASSCOM Foundation's TechForGood legacy by broadening its reach and deepening its impact.

Earlier, she held leadership roles at Organic Cotton Accelerator, the European Commission, World Resources Institute, Magic Bus India Foundation, Action Aid, and Save the Children.

- 342.** **Air Marshal Jeetendra Mishra** has been named the **Chief of the Indian Air Force's Western Air Command**. His appointment is effective from 1st January 2025.

He succeeds Air Marshal Pankaj Mohan Sinha who superannuated on 31 December 2024 after putting in more than 39 years of distinguished service in the IAF.

He was commissioned into the Indian Air Force as a fighter pilot on 06 December 1986.

He is an alumnus of the National Defence Academy Pune, Air Force Test Pilots School, Bangalore, Air Command and Staff College, USA, and Royal College of Defence Studies, UK. A Fighter Combat Leader and an experimental Test Pilot, Air Marshal Mishra has more than 3000 hours of flying experience.

He is a recipient of 'Ati Vishisht Seva Medal' and 'Vishisht Seva Medal'.

- 343.** **Bhuvnesh Kumar** has become the **Chief Executive Officer (CEO)** of the **Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI)**. His appointment is effective from 31st December 2024.

He has succeeded Amit Agrawal who has been appointed as the new Pharma Secretary.

He is an officer of the 1995 batch IAS from the Uttar Pradesh cadre.

Along with CEO UIDAI, he continues to be an **Additional Secretary in the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)**, Government of India. Earlier, he has also served as the Joint Secretary in MeitY.

In Uttar Pradesh, he served as the Principal Secretary in the Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairy Development, and Fisheries.

Previously, he was the Secretary of Finance, Secretary of MSME, Secretary of Technical Education, and Divisional Commissioner Department of Land Revenue in the Government of Uttar Pradesh.

He was also the Secretary in charge of Sports and Youth Welfare, Planning, and Vocational Education among many other important positions in his cadre.

UIDAI is a statutory authority under MeitY that is responsible for issuing Aadhaar numbers and maintaining the Central Identities Data Repository (CIDR), the centralized database of demographic and biometric data of people issued the identification number.

344. A 17-year-old school girl **Kaamya Karthikeyan** has become the youngest female in the world to conquer the highest peaks on the seven continents of the earth.

She achieved this feat while climbing **Vinson Massif** in Antarctica along with her father Commander S. Karthikeyan on 24th December 2024.

She completed the challenge of climbing the highest mountain peaks in **Asia (Mount Everest), Africa (Mount Kilimanjaro), Europe (Mount Elbrus), Australia (Mount Kosciuszko), South America (Mount Aconcagua) and North America (Mount Denali).**

She was honored with Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Shakti Puraskar in 2021.

She will now attempt to conquer the Explorer's Grand Slam. The Grand Slam includes conquering the Seven Mountain Peaks of Mount Everest, Mount Kilimanjaro, Mount Elbrus, Mount Kosciuszko, Mount Aconcagua, and Mount Denali and reaching the North Pole, and the South Pole.

345. Indian diplomat **Sanjiv Ranjan** has been appointed as the **Secretary General of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)**. He succeeds **Salman Al-Farisi of Indonesia**.

He is an Indian Foreign Service officer from the 1993 batch.

His term, starting on 1st January 2025, will continue until his superannuation on 31 January 2026, or until further orders, whichever comes first.

Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA):

The Indian Ocean Rim Association is an inter-governmental organization that was established on **7 March 1997**. It aims to foster regional economic cooperation across the Indian Ocean. The association has grown into a significant regional body, with its Secretariat based in **Mauritius** and led by a Secretary General appointed for a fixed term.

IORA consists of 23 member states, including India, Australia, Indonesia, and South Africa, and is supported by 12 dialogue partners, such as China, the European Union, and the United States.

346. Air Vice Marshal **Manmeet Singh** has assumed the position of **Senior Officer-in-Charge Administration** at the Headquarters of the **Western Air Command** of the Indian Air Force in New Delhi.

He was commissioned in the Administration Branch of the Indian Air Force on 13 June 1992.

He is an alumnus of the prestigious National Defence College, Defence Services Staff College (DSSC), Wellington, and holds a Master's Degree in Defence Studies and a Post Graduate Diploma in Financial Management from NIFM, Faridabad.

347. **Faiz Ahmed Kidwai**, a 1996-batch Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer, has been appointed as the **Director General (DG) of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA)**. He is presently serving as an Additional Secretary in the Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.

He is a Madhya Pradesh cadre officer.

He succeeds Vikram Dev Dutt, a 1993-batch IAS officer who previously served as DG of the aviation regulator from February 28, 2023, stepped down on October 20, 2024 after he was appointed the coal secretary. Since then, Dinesh Chand Sharma, the senior most joint director general of DGCA, has held additional charge.

Other appointments:

- **Ashutosh Agnihotri**, a 1999-batch IAS officer from the Assam-Meghalaya cadre, has been appointed as the Chairman and Managing Director of the Food Corporation of India. He serves as an additional secretary in the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- **Akash Tripathi**, a 1998 batch IAS officer who is CEO of MyGov, has been appointed as additional secretary in the power ministry.

348. Devajit Saikia, an advocate and a former wicket-keeper batsman from Assam, has been named the new **Secretary of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI)**.

He succeeded Jay Shah who took over the role of ICC Chairman in December 2024.

Earlier, he served as BCCI's joint secretary.

He played four first-class matches between 1990 and 1991 and was a wicketkeeper. After retiring from cricket, he became a practicing advocate at the Gauhati High Court.

Before joining the Gauhati HC, he had also secured jobs in the Northern Frontier Railways and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) through sports quotas.

Other appointments:

Prabtej Singh Bhatia from Chhattisgarh State Cricket Sangh (CSCS) has been named the new **treasurer of BCCI** as he replaced Ashish Shelar, who became the Information and Technology minister in the Maharashtra government.

349. The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has appointed **Brijendra Pratap Singh**, Director-in-Charge, Burnpur and Durgapur Steel Plant, Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) as the **Chairman-cum-Managing Director (CMD)** of the **National Aluminium Company Limited (NALCO)**, a Schedule 'A' Central Public Sector Undertaking (PSU).

He replaced Sridhar Patra who had retired on 31st October 2024.

He has been appointed till the date of his superannuation i.e., 29th February 2028.

350. Joseph Khalil Aoun, a Lebanese politician and general, has become the **14th President of Lebanon**. He won the parliamentary election by securing 99 votes out of 128 votes.

The session was the legislature's 13th attempt to elect a successor to former President Michel Naim Aoun whose term ended in October 2022.

He is the fifth army commander to become President in Lebanon's history.

Currently, he is serving as the Commander of the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF).

Note: The capital of Lebanon is Beirut.

351. Nicolás Maduro Moros has become the **53rd President of Venezuela** for the 3rd consecutive term. The swearing-in ceremony was held at the National Assembly in Caracas, Venezuela.

He will be serving as the President of Venezuela for a period of 6 years until 2031.

Earlier, he was the 24th Vice President of Venezuela from 2012 to 2013, the Minister of Foreign Affairs from 2006 to 2012, and the 3rd President of the National Assembly of Venezuela from 2005 to 2006.

352. John Dramani Mahama has become the **President of Ghana** for a third term. He is the 14th President of Ghana. He succeeded Nana Akufo-Addo. He defeated the then-incumbent vice president Mahamudu Bawumia in the 2024 elections. He served as the 12th president of Ghana from 2012 to 2017 and as the fifth vice president from January 2009 to July 2012. He took office as President for the first time on 24 July 2012, following the death of his predecessor, John Atta Mills.

353. Zoran Milanović has secured his **second** consecutive term as **President of Croatia**. Initially elected in 2020, he is known for his critical stance on the European Union and NATO. In the December 2024 elections, Zoran Milanović, supported by the opposition Social Democratic Party, garnered 49.1% of the votes, while Dragan Primorac of the Croatian Democratic Union received 19.2%. Since no candidate achieved the required 50% majority, a second round of voting took place on January 12, 2025, where Zoran Milanović won with 74% of the votes.

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354. V Narayanan has been appointed as the new **Chairman of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** and Secretary of the Department of Space. His appointment is effective from 14th January 2025. He has succeeded **S Somanath**. Earlier, he served as the Director of the Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre (LPSC) of the ISRO in Valiamala, Kerala. He is a distinguished scientist with nearly four decades of experience in rocket and spacecraft propulsion. He is a rocket and spacecraft propulsion expert, joined ISRO in 1984, and functioned in various capacities before becoming director of LPSC.

355. Donald Trump became the **47th President of the United States of America (USA)**. He took the oath of office for his second term. Chief Justice John Roberts administered the oath at the Capitol Rotunda in Washington, DC, USA. He replaced Joe Biden as the oldest president to take the oath of office. Earlier, he served as the President of the USA from 2017 to 2021. **JD Vance** took the oath as **Vice President**, administered by Justice Brett Kavanaugh. He became the 50th vice president and the third youngest in US history.

356. German sportswear giant PUMA India has signed a multi-year partnership with Indian badminton player and two-time Olympic medallist **PV Sindhu** as a brand ambassador. PV Sindhu is the **first badminton player** to promote PUMA. This partnership marks PUMA's official entry into the badminton sector. This move aims to capitalize on the sport's growing popularity in India, where badminton enjoys a fan base of over 57 million. This partnership will make its debut at the India Open 2025 in New Delhi.

- 357. Vineet Joshi** has become the **Secretary of the Department of Higher Education**, Ministry of Education, Government of India. Before this appointment, he served as the **Chief Secretary of Manipur**.
He has held several prominent positions in the education sector, including Director-General of the National Testing Agency (NTA), Chairman of the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), and Additional Secretary in the Ministry of Education, among others.
He holds a degree in Mechanical Engineering from IIT Kanpur and an MBA from the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade.
- 358. Gyanendra Pratap Singh**, a 1991-batch IPS officer from the Assam-Meghalaya cadre, has been appointed as the **Director General of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF)**.
He has been appointed as CRPF DG till November 30, 2027.
He took over from Vitul Kumar, the Special DG of CRPF, who had been officiating since December 30 after the retirement of Anish Dayal Singh on December 31, 2024.
Earlier, he served as the Director General of Police (DGP) in Assam.
- 359.** The **Institute of Company Secretaries of India (ICSI)** has elected **CS Dhananjay Shukla** as the **President** of the Institute for the year 2025. Earlier, he was the vice president of the ICSI for 2024.
CS Pawan G Chandak has been elected as the **Vice-President of the ICSI**. He has varied experience in the fields of Corporate Law, Foreign Exchange Law, Industrial Law, Legal Metrology, Secretarial Audits, Arbitration matters, etc. He has worked with large corporate houses and multinational corporations (MNCs).
Both the appointments are effective from 19th January 2025.
ICSI: The Institute of Company Secretaries of India (ICSI) is a premier professional body set up under an Act of Parliament, i.e., the Company Secretaries Act, 1980, for the regulation and development of the profession of Company Secretaries in India. It functions under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Government of India.
- 360. Rakesh Sharma** has been re-appointed as the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer (MD & CEO) on the Board of **IDBI Bank Limited**.
He has been appointed for 3 years with effect from 19th March 2025.
He was initially appointed as the MD & CEO of IDBI Bank in 2018.
He served as Chief General Manager in the Patna Circle before moving to Lakshmi Vilas Bank Ltd. as MD & CEO.
He joined Canara Bank as MD & CEO in 2015.
He also worked in SBI's International Banking Group, managed retail operations in multiple states, and led the Mid Corporate Group in Undivided Andhra Pradesh.
- 361.** The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has approved the appointment of senior IPS officer **Rajesh Nirwan** as the **Director General of the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS)** under the Ministry of Civil Aviation.
His appointment will be effective from the date he assumes charge and will continue until further orders.
He is a 1992-batch Indian Police Service (IPS) officer of the Rajasthan cadre.
In 2007, he was promoted to Deputy Inspector General of Police, serving a two-year tenure at the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). He became Inspector General (IG) of Police in 2010 and led the Ajmer Range till 2012.

From 2016 to 2023, he held senior leadership positions as IG and Additional Director General of Police in the Border Security Force (BSF), New Delhi.

362. Micheal Martin, leader of the Fianna Fáil party, has been re-elected as the **Prime Minister of Ireland** for the second time.

Earlier, he served as the Prime Minister of Ireland from 2020 to 2022.

He will serve as the PM of Ireland until November 2027.

He will lead a coalition government comprising Fianna Fáil, its long-standing rival Fine Gael, and independent lawmakers.

Under the coalition agreement, Fine Gael's Simon Harris is scheduled to take over as prime minister in 2027.

363. US President Donald Trump appointed **Janet Petro**, an American engineer and civil servant, as the **acting Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)**.

With this, she became the **first woman** to lead the organization.

She succeeded the 14th NASA administrator, Bill Nelson.

In her new role, she will guide Nasa's programs and budget till the permanent administration is confirmed.

In 2021, she was appointed as the director of the John F. Kennedy Space Center.

364. Mahesh Kumar Aggarwal, a 1994-batch Indian Police Service (IPS) officer from the Tamil Nadu cadre, has been appointed as the **Additional Director General (ADG) of the Border Security Force (BSF)**.

He has been appointed for four years from the date he assumes charge or until further orders, whichever is earlier.

Earlier, he served as the Special Director General of Police, Armed Police, in Tamil Nadu.

365. Alok Agarwal has been appointed as the **Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of Zurich Kotak General Insurance**. His appointment is effective from 1st January 2025.

He succeeds Suresh Agarwal in this role.

He spent 22 years at ICICI Lombard General Insurance, holding various leadership positions across corporate, SME, government, rural, crop, and retail business lines.

366. Angel One, formerly known as Angel Broking Limited, has announced the appointment of **Ambarish Kenghe** as its **Group Chief Executive Officer**.

His appointment will be effective from **March 2025**.

He previously served as Vice President and General Manager at Google Pay APAC, where he played a crucial role in the platform's growth. Under his leadership, Google Pay became a significant player in the Indian Unified Payments Interface (UPI) ecosystem.

He also served as the Chief Product Officer at Myntra, Consultant at Bain & Company, and Engineer at Cisco.

367. Jay Shah, a former Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) secretary and current International Cricket Council (ICC) chairman, has been elected as a **board member** of the **Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) Advisory Board**.

He is among the 13 founding members of the new **World Cricket Connects Advisory Board**, which will be headed by former Sri Lanka captain and MCC president **Kumar Sangakkara**.

Other founding members include former India captain Sourav Ganguly, former South Africa opener Graeme Smith, former Director of England Cricket Andrew Strauss, England women's captain Heather Knight, and JioStar's CEO (Sports) Sanjog Gupta.

This advisory board replaces the MCC World Cricket Committee, which has been active since 2006.

In 2024, the MCC hosted the first World Cricket Connects forum at Lord's, bringing together over 120 leading voices in cricket to address the sport's challenges.

The second World Cricket Connects forum will take place on 7-8 June 2025 before the World Test Championship (WTC) final at Lord's between Australia and South Africa.

OBITUARIES

368. Padma Awardee and eminent botanist, **Dr. KS Manilal**, has passed away in Thrissur, Kerala. He was born in the Kingdom of Cochin on 17 September 1938.

He is an emeritus professor of the University of Calicut, a botany scholar, and a taxonomist, who devoted over 35 years of his life to research, translation, and annotation work of the Latin botanical treatise *Hortus Malabaricus*.

He was equally passionate about the history and culture of Kerala.

He was conferred with the **Padma Shri** award, the fourth-highest civilian honour in India, for his contribution to the field of Science and Engineering in 2020.

369. Eminent physicist **Rajagopala Chidambaram**, a key figure in India's nuclear program, has passed away in Mumbai, Maharashtra.

He was born on 11 November 1936 in Chennai, Tamil Nadu.

He was one of the key architects of India's nuclear program and made ground-breaking contributions in strengthening India's scientific and strategic capabilities. He coordinated test preparation for the Pokhran-I (1975) and Pokhran-II (1998).

He previously served as the Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India, as the Director of the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC), and later as Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission of the Government of India.

Awards:

- **Padma Shri: 1975**
- **Padma Vibhushan: 1999**
- C.V. Raman Birth Centenary Award of the Indian Science Congress Association: 1995,
- Distinguished Materials Scientists of the Year Award of the Material Research Society of India (MRSI): 1996
- R.D. Birla Award of the Indian Physics Association: 1996,
- Homi Bhabha Lifetime Achievement Award of the Indian Nuclear Society: 2006
- The Lifetime Achievement Award of the Indian National Academy of Engineering: 2009
- C.V. Raman Medal of the Indian National Science Academy: 2013

370. **Costas Simitis**, the former **Greek Prime Minister**, has passed away at the age of 88 in Corinth, Greece. He was born in Piraeus on 23rd June 1936.

He served as Prime Minister of Greece from 1996 to 2004.

He also served as leader of the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) from 1996 to 2004.

He was instrumental in the founding of PASOK in 1974 and held a number of ministerial posts as the party rose to power.

He was focused on implementing economic reforms in Greece's economy and advancing the country's social and economic integration with the EU.

371. H Lakshmanan, former **Executive Director of Sundaram Clayton (now TVS Holding Limited)** and a key member of the Chennai-based TVS group, has passed away at the age of 92 in Chennai, Tamil Nadu.

He was born in 1933 in Shenkottai, Tamil Nadu.

He was a key figure in the TVS Group spanning over 7 decades of experience.

He also served on the TVS Motors board since 2000 as one of the most trusted mentors for the automaker and retired in 2022.

372. Noted playback singer **P Jayachandran**, affectionately called Bhava Gayakan, has passed away at the age of 81 in Thrissur, Kerala. He was born on 3 March 1944 in Ravipuram, Ernakulam.

In 1986, he won the **National Film Award** for Best Male Playback Singer and also won Kerala State Film Award five times.

In 2020, he was awarded the J. C. Daniel Award, the highest award in Malayalam cinema, for his outstanding contributions to Malayalam cinema.

He has recorded songs in Malayalam, Tamil, Kannada, Telugu and Hindi.

373. Noted heart surgeon **Dr Kotturathu Mammen Cherian**, who did India's first successful coronary artery bypass surgery in 1975, has passed away in Bengaluru, Karnataka. He was born on 8 March 1942 in Kerala.

He was awarded **Padma Shri** by the Government of India in **1991**.

He was honorary surgeon to the President of India from 1990 to 1993.

He received a Harvard Medical Excellence Award in 2005, through a panel organized by Harvard Medical School.

He is the first Indian to become the President of the World Congress of Thoracic Cardiac Surgeons and the first member of the American Association of Thoracic Surgery from India.

He was also secretary and president of the Indian Association of Cardiac Thoracic Surgeons.

He was also President of the Pediatric Cardiac Society of India.

He was the Founding Vice President and Director of Madras Medical Mission (MMM), Chennai, and founding Chairman of PIMS Pondicherry.

He is the first Indian member of the American Association for Thoracic Surgery, as well as a Fellow of the Royal Society of Medicine, London, and an honorary member of the Malaysian Association for Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery.

374. Noted Indian sculptor **Latika Katt** has passed away at the age of 76 in Jaipur, Rajasthan. She was born on 20 February 1948 in Uttar Pradesh.

She specializes in stone carving, metal casting, and bronze sculpting. She is notable for winning the **Beijing Art Biennale Award** for her bronze work titled "**Makar Sankranti at Dashawmeth Ghat, Varanasi.**"

She was the **first Indian woman sculptor** to be awarded a gold medal in sculpture from the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda. She received a research scholarship from the Slade School of Art, London in 1981.

SPORTS

375. Haryana Steelers, a professional kabaddi team based in Haryana, won the **Pro Kabaddi League (PKL) Season 11** with a 32-23 victory over **Patna Pirates**, a professional kabaddi team based in Bihar, in a final match held at the Shree Shiv Chhatrapati Sports Complex in Pune, Maharashtra.

This was the maiden title of Haryana Steelers.

The champions were awarded INR 3 crore whilst the runners-up Patna Pirates bagged Rs 1.8 Crore.

PKL Season 11 Awards:

- HPCL Gen6 Raid of Season 11: Manjeet (Telugu Titans)
- Shriram Finance Tackle of Season 11: Ankit (Patna Pirates)
- Best Raider of Season 11: Devank Dalal (Patna Pirates)
- Best Defender of Season 11: Nitesh Kumar (Tamil Thalaivas)
- Mashal Sports New Young Player of Season 11: Ayan Lohchab (Patna Pirates)
- Most Valuable Player of Season 11: Mohammadreza Shadloui (Haryana Steelers)
- Mother Dairy Super Coach of Season 11: Manpreet Singh (Haryana Steelers)

Note: The first tournament of the Pro Kabaddi League was held in 2014.

376. World Boxing has announced the formation of a new **Asian Boxing Confederation (ASBC)** to enhance the development, representation, and promotion of boxing throughout **Asia**.

The Boxing Federation of India (BFI) has secured seven key positions in the interim organizational structure of the new body, including BFI President **Ajay Singh**, who has been appointed as a **board member**.

Tokyo Olympic medalist **Lovlina Borgohain** will join the newly established Athletes' Commission, representing athletes' voices in both Asian and global boxing.

BFI Secretary General **Hemanta Kumar Kalita** will serve on the Olympic Commission, while BFI Treasurer Digvijay Singh will serve on the Finance and Audit Committee.

BFI Vice President (North Zone) **Narender Kumar Nirwan** will serve on the Constitution Commission, while BFI Disciplinary & Disputes Commission Chairman D.P. Bhatt will join the Sports and Competition Commission.

Dr. Karanjeet Singh will serve on the Medical Commission within the new Asian body.

377. The Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports announced the **National Sports Awards 2024**.

The awardees will receive their awards from the President of India at a specially organized function at Rashtrapati Bhavan on 17th January 2025.

Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award 2024

S. No.	Name of the Sportsperson	Discipline
1.	Shri Gukesh D	Chess
2.	Shri Harmanpreet Singh	Hockey
3.	Shri Praveen Kumar	Para-Athletics
4.	Ms. Manu Bhaker	Shooting

Arjuna Awards for outstanding performance in Sports and Games 2024

S. No.	Name of the Sportsperson	Discipline
1.	Ms. Jyothi Yarraji	Athletics
2.	Ms. Annu Rani	Athletics
3.	Ms. Nitu	Boxing
4.	Ms. Saweety	Boxing
5.	Ms. Vantika Agrawal	Chess
6.	Ms. Salima Tete	Hockey
7.	Shri Abhishek	Hockey
8.	Shri Sanjay	Hockey
9.	Shri Jarmanpreet Singh	Hockey
10.	Shri Sukhjeet Singh	Hockey
11.	Shri Rakesh Kumar	Para-Archery
12.	Ms. Preeti Pal	Para-Athletics
13.	Ms. Jeevanji Deepthi	Para-Athletics
14.	Shri Ajeet Singh	Para-Athletics
15.	Shri Sachin Sarjerao Khilari	Para-Athletics
16.	Shri Dharambir	Para-Athletics
17.	Shri Pranav Soorma	Para-Athletics
18.	Shri H Hokato Sema	Para-Athletics
19.	Ms. Simran	Para-Athletics
20.	Shri Navdeep	Para-Athletics
21.	Shri Nitesh Kumar	Para-Badminton
22.	Ms. Thulasimathi Murugesan	Para-Badminton
23.	Ms. Nithya Sre Sumathy Sivan	Para-Badminton
24.	Ms. Manisha Ramadass	Para-Badminton
25.	Shri Kapil Parmar	Para-Judo
26.	Ms. Mona Agarwal	Para-Shooting
27.	Ms. Rubina Francis	Para-Shooting
28.	Shri Swapnil Suresh Kusale	Shooting
29.	Shri Sarabjot Singh	Shooting
30.	Shri Abhay Singh	Squash
31.	Shri Sajan Prakash	Swimming
32.	Shri Aman	Wrestling

Arjuna Awards (Lifetime) for outstanding performance in Sports and Games 2024

S. No.	Name of the Sportsperson	Discipline
1.	Shri Sucha Singh	Athletics
2.	Shri Murlikant Rajaram Petkar	Para-Swimming

Dronacharya Award for outstanding coaches in Sports and Games 2024**A. Regular Category:**

S. No.	Name of the Coach	Discipline
1.	Shri Subhash Rana	Para-Shooting
2.	Ms. Deepali Deshpande	Shooting
3.	Shri Sandeep Sangwan	Hockey

B. Lifetime Category:

S. No.	Name of the Coach	Discipline
1.	Shri S Muralidharan	Badminton
2.	Shri Armando Agnelo Colaco	Football

Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Puraskar

S. No.	Name of the Entity
1.	Physical Education Foundation of India

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (MAKA) Trophy 2024:

S. No.	Name of University	
1	Chandigarh University	Overall winner University
2	Lovely Professional University, (PB)	1 st runner-up University
3	Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar	2 nd runner-up University

National Sports Awards are given every year to recognize and reward excellence in sports.

- 'Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award' is given for the spectacular and most outstanding performance in the field of sports by a sportsperson over the period of the previous four years.
- 'The Arjuna Award for Outstanding Performance in Sports and Games' is given for good performance over a period of the previous four years and for showing qualities of leadership, sportsmanship, and a sense of discipline.
- The Arjuna Award (Lifetime) is given to honor and motivate those sportspersons who have contributed to sports by their performance and continue to contribute to the promotion of sports even after their retirement from active sporting careers.
- 'The Dronacharya Award for Outstanding Coaches in Sports and Games' is given to coaches for doing outstanding and meritorious work on a consistent basis and for enabling sportspersons to excel in international events.
- The overall top-performing university in the Khelo India University Games is given the Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (MAKA) Trophy.
- 'Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Puruskar' is given to corporate entities (both in private and public sector), Sports Control Boards, NGOs, including sports bodies at the State and National level, who have played a visible role in the area of sports promotion and development.

378. Kerala won the **Senior National Men's Handball Championship 2024 title** by defeating Chandigarh 34-31 in the finals held at Changanassery in Kerala. This is the maiden title of Kerala. Kerala reached the final for the first time, defeating Services in the semi-finals. Chandigarh secured their spot by defeating Indian Railways. Kerala's Devendar was named Best Player of the Championship, while Rahul received the award for Best Goalkeeper.

379. West Bengal defeated **Kerala** 1-0 in the final to lift the **2024-25 Santosh Trophy** title at the Gachibowli Stadium in Hyderabad, Telangana. West Bengal won the Santosh Trophy for a record **33rd time**. Robi Hansda scored the only goal of the match in the added time of the second half at the GMC Balayogi Athletic Stadium. The 2024-25 Santosh Trophy was the 78th edition of the Santosh Trophy, the premier competition in India for senior men's football teams representing their respective states/union territories and government institutions.

Prize money:

- Winners – West Bengal (INR 5,00,000/-)
- Runners Up – Kerala (INR 3,00,000/-)

Awards:

- Top goal scorer: Robi Hansda (West Bengal)
- Tulsidas Balaram player of the final match: Robi Hansda (West Bengal)
- Peter Thangaraj player of the championship: Robi Hansda (West Bengal)

380. The **24th National Vanvasi Sports Competition** was held in **Raipur, Chhattisgarh** from 28th to 31st December 2024. A total of 579 tribal boys and girls from twenty-nine states of the country and a Nepalese team participated in the competition.

Santhal Pargana won the title by defeating Kerala by four goals to one in a tie-breaker. Kerala's team was the runner-up and Jharkhand's team secured the third position. Mainly, football and archery matches were held in this competition.

Awards:

- Santhal Pargana's goalkeeper, Vinay Kundu, received the Best Goalkeeper Medal for saving four penalty shots during the final.
- Vimal Marandi from Santhal Pargana was named the 'Man of the Tournament'.
- Kerala's Abhinand was named the 'Man of the Match' in the final.

381. The Kho Kho Federation of India (KKFI) has unveiled the prestigious trophies for the first-ever **Kho Kho World Cup**, scheduled for **January 13–19, 2025**.

Under the aegis of the Sports Authority of India (SAI), the tournament will showcase 21 men's and 20 women's teams from 24 countries across six continents at the **Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium** in **New Delhi**.

The World Cup will feature two magnificent trophies: a blue trophy for the men's championship and a green trophy for the women's event.

KKFI also introduced '**Tejas**' and '**Tara**,' a dynamic duo of gazelles serving as the official mascots for the tournament.

Tejas, symbolizing brilliance and energy, and Tara, representing guidance and aspiration, are depicted in vibrant blue and orange sporting attire adorned with traditional Indian motifs, celebrating both the sport's heritage and its modern appeal.

[Attempt SBI PO 2025 Free Mock test](#)

382. The **National ASMITA Khelo India Women's Yogasana League 2024-25** has been held at the Anand Dham Ashram, Bakkarwala, Nangloi Najafgarh Road from 5-7 January 2025.

The event, organized by Yogasana Bharat, witnessed healthy competition among athletes from 22 States and Union Territories.

The participants for the national league qualified through zonal championships held across India, last year, where over 7000 women athletes competed.

The league featured five categories: traditional yogasana, artistic yogasana (single), artistic yogasana (pair), rhythmic yogasana (pair), and artistic yogasana (group).

The top eight athletes each from Under-18 and Above-18 age categories from the four zones of India took part across the five categories.

The four zones where competitions were held last year were in Bihar (East zone), Rajasthan (West zone), Tamil Nadu (South zone), and Uttar Pradesh (North zone).

In 2024, 163 ASMITA women's leagues were held, with over 17000 women participating across 12 sports disciplines.

Following are the winners in the five categories:

- **Traditional Yogasana:** Anushka Chatterjee (West Bengal), Sapna Pal (Madhya Pradesh)
- **Artistic Yogasana Single:** Seema Neopane (Delhi), Sarbeshree Mandal (West Bengal)

- **Artistic Yogasana Pair:** Nisha Godbole & Avika Mishra (Madhya Pradesh), Kalyani Chute & Chhakuli Selokar (Maharashtra)
- **Rhythmic Yogasana Pair:** Kavya Saini & Yatri Yashvi (Uttarakhand), Khushi Thakur & Geeta Anjali (Delhi).
- **Artistic Yogasana Group:** Teams from Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan.

The Ministry of Sports, Government of India, provided prize money of approximately Rs.25 lakhs to the winning athletes.

Note: Yogasana is included as a demonstrative sport in the 2026 Asian Games (Japan), and is also added as a competitive sport at the upcoming 38th National Games in Uttarakhand.

383. Asian Games champion in Men's Shot Put, **Bahadur Singh Sagoo**, has been elected as the new **President of the Athletics Federation of India (AFI)**.

He will serve a four-year term as AFI president.

He replaced Adille Sumariwalla, who was the President of the athletics body for three consecutive terms.

He represented India at the Sydney 2000 and Athens 2004 Olympics. He also won the gold medal in the shot put with a throw of 19.03m at the Asian Games 2002 in Busan. His personal best of 20.40m came at a meet in Kyiv in 2004.

Other appointments:

- **Sandeep Mehta**, a top official from the Delhi unit and the senior joint secretary in the outgoing executive council, was elected unopposed as the new **AFI secretary**.
- Telangana's **Stanely Jones** will be the new **treasurer** and former middle-distance runner Jyotirmoyee Sikdar, who won bronze in the women's 800m and 1500m at the 1998 Asian Championships, will be the **joint secretary** in AFI.

384. The **Border–Gavaskar Trophy (BGT)** is an International Test cricket trophy played between **India and Australia**. The series is named after distinguished former captains, Australia's Allan Border and India's Sunil Gavaskar.

In 2024-25, **Australia** clinched the **Border–Gavaskar Trophy** by defeating **India** by **six wickets** in the fifth and final Test match held in Sydney.

Australia, led by Pat Cummins, won the series 3-1.

With this victory, Australia has also qualified for the final of the ICC World Test Championship 2023-2025. They will face South Africa in the final, which is to be held in June 2025.

This was the first Test series between India and Australia comprising five matches since 1992.

Player of the match (final): Scott Boland (Aus)

Player of the Series: Jasprit Bumrah (India)

385. **Futbol Club (FC) Barcelona** won the **2025 Spanish Super Cup** after defeating **Real Madrid** by 5-2 in the finals held at King Abdullah Sports City in **Jeddah, Saudi Arabia**.

This is the 41st edition of the Spanish Super Cup, an annual football competition for clubs in the Spanish football league system.

Barcelona won the tournament for their record-extending **15 times**.

Man of the Match: Raphinha (Barcelona)

386. The **2025 India Open**, a badminton tournament, was held at the **K. D. Jadhav Indoor Stadium** in **New Delhi** from 14 to 19 January 2025.

Denmark's Viktor Axelsen won the **Men's singles title**. He defeated Hong Kong's C. Yiu Lee in straight sets 21-16. 21-8 in the final match.

In Women's singles, **South Korea's An Se Young** defeated Thailand's P. Chochuwong 21-12, 21-9 in the final to win the title.

In Men's doubles, **Goh Sze Fei and Nur Izzuddin** of Malaysia won the title. In the final, they defeated the pair of Won Ho and Seo Seung Jae of South Korea 21-15, 13-21, 21-16.

In Women's doubles, the Japanese pair of **Arisa Igarashi and Ayako Sakuramoto** defeated South Korea's pair of Kim Hye Jeong and Kong Hee Yong 21-15, 21-13.

China's pair of **Jiang Zhen Bang and Wei Ya Xin** won the Mixed Doubles title, beating France's duo of Thom Gicquel & Delphine Delrue 21-18, 21-17 in the final match.

387. India's men's and women's teams won the **Kho Kho World Cup 2025** after beating **Nepal** in the final match held at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium in New Delhi.

This was the **inaugural edition** of the Kho Kho World Cup. It is backed by the Indian Olympic Association (IOA).

The Indian men's kho kho team beat Nepal 54-36 in the title clash, and the women's team outplayed the Nepalese eves by a 78-40 scoreline.

The tournament featured 20 men's and 19 women's teams.

388. The Karnataka team, led by Mayank Agarwal, won the **Vijay Hazare Trophy 2024-25** by defeating the Vidarbha team, led by Karun Nair, by **36 runs** in the final held at **Kotambi Stadium in Vadodara, Gujarat**.

This was Karnataka's **fifth title** in the history of the tournament. The team previously won in 2013-14, 2014-15, 2017-18, and 2019-20.

This was the **32nd edition** of the Vijay Hazare Trophy, an annual List A cricket tournament in India. It was played from 21 December 2024 to 18 January 2025.

- **Player of the match (final):** Smaran Ravichandran (Karnataka)
- **Player of the series:** Karun Nair (Vidarbha)
- **Most runs:** Karun Nair (779 runs) (Vidarbha)
- **Most wickets:** Arshdeep Singh (20 wickets) (Punjab)

389. Odisha Warriors defeated Soorma Hockey Club 2-1 in the final of the **Women's Hockey India League 2024-25** held at the Marang Gomke Jaipal Singh Munda Astro Turf Hockey Stadium in Ranchi, Jharkhand.

- **Best Goalkeeper of the Tournament:** Savita Punia (Soorma Hockey Club)
- **Upcoming Player of the Tournament:** Sonam (Soorma Hockey Club)
- **Top Scorers of the Tournament:** Yibbi Jansen (Odisha Warriors), Charlotte Englebert (Soorma Hockey Club)
- **Player of the Tournament:** Jyoti (Soorma Hockey Club)

The women's HIL 2024-25 was conducted in a league format where each team faced the other three teams twice in the competition. This marked the sixth edition of the Hockey India League (HIL). The tournament included the women's event for the first time, which started on January 12 and concluded on January 26.

390. Leh, the capital of Ladakh, hosted the **first phase of the Khelo India Winter Games (KIWG) 2025** at the NDS Stadium from January 23 to 27.

Two sports, ice hockey, and ice skating, were hosted by Ladakh.

Leh hosted the games for the second time.

Results:

- The Union Territory of **Ladakh topped the medal tally** with seven medals, including four golds.
- **Tamil Nadu** followed with five medals, including three golds, while **Maharashtra**, despite winning the highest number of medals (10), finished third with only two golds.
- The Indian Army successfully defended their ice hockey title, prevailing in a nail-biting final against ITBP.

The **second and final phase of KIWG 2025** is scheduled to take place in **Gulmarg, Jammu & Kashmir**, from February 22 to 25.

391. The **2025 Australian Open**, a Grand Slam-level tennis tournament, was held at Melbourne Park from 12–26 January 2025.

It was the 113th edition of the Australian Open, the 57th in the Open Era, and the first major of the year.

Category	Winner	Runner-up
Men's singles	Jannik Sinner (Italy)	Alexander Zverev (Germany)
Men's doubles	Harri Heliövaara (Finland) and Henry Patten (UK)	Simone Bolelli and Andrea Vavassori (Italy)
Women's singles	Madison Keys (USA)	Aryna Sabalenka (Belarus)
Women doubles	Kateřina Siniaková (Czech Republic) and Taylor Townsend (USA)	Hsieh Su-wei (Taiwan) and Jeļena Ostapenko (Latvia)
Mixed doubles	Olivia Gadecki and John Peers (Australia)	Kimberly Birrell and John-Patrick Smith (Australia)

392. Scottish footballer and Manchester United legend **Denis Law** has passed away at the age of 84 in Aberdeen, Scotland. He was born on 24 February 1940 in Aberdeen, Scotland. He is the **only Scottish player** to win both the **Ballon d'Or award and the European Player of the Year** award in 1964.

He was nicknamed "The King" and "The Lawman" by supporters, and "Denis the Menace" by opposing supporters.

He spent 11 years at **Manchester United**, where he scored 237 goals in 404 appearances. His goals place him third in the club's history, behind Wayne Rooney and Bobby Charlton.

393. Berhane Tesfay of Eritrea and **Joyce Chepkemai of Kenya** won the men's and women's elite races, respectively, at the **Tata Mumbai Marathon 2025** held in Mumbai, Maharashtra. This was the 20th edition of the Mumbai Marathon, which is a World Athletics Gold Label Road Race, organized by Procam International Limited.

Among the Indians, **Anish Thapa** finished first among men, while **Nirmaben Thakor** defended her title among women.

The top three winners each took home prize money of USD 50,000, USD 25,000, and USD 15,000 respectively.

IMPORTANT DAYS

- 394. Global Family Day**, also known as World Peace Day, is observed annually on **1st January** to promote the concept of harmony and unity in the world. The day was started in 1997, when the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) launched the International Decade for the Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, with effect from the 1st day of the new millennium.
- 395. International Mind-Body Wellness Day** is observed annually on **3rd January** to promote the harmonious coexistence of physical and mental health.
The day promotes self-care, mindfulness, and holistic health practices among people around the world in recognition of the mind-body connection.
- 396. World Braille Day** is observed annually on **4th January** to recognize the right of access to braille by blind people and raise awareness of the importance of braille as a means of communication in the full realization of the human rights for blind and partially sighted people. The day was first observed in **2019**.
The day is also observed to mark the birth anniversary of **Louis Braille**, the inventor of Braille – for people with visual disabilities. Louis Braille was born on 4th January 1809 in the town of Coupvray in northern France.
The year 2025 marks his **216th** birthday.
The National Institute for Empowerment of Persons with Visual Disabilities (NIEPVD), Dehradun, celebrated World Braille Day 2025 where Rajesh Aggarwal, Secretary, Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD) released the book '**Standard Bharati Braille Codes**'.
Note: The Election Commission of India (ECI) introduced Braille voter slips for visually impaired voters in the 2019 Lok Sabha election. Electronic voting machines (EVMs) already have the Braille feature.
- 397. World Introvert Day** is observed annually on **2nd January** to understand and value the exceptional characteristics of introverted people. An introvert person is somebody who is shy, calm, and likes to invest energy alone instead of frequently being with others.
World Introvert Day was started from a blog post by psychologist and author Felicitas Heyne named, "Here's Why We Need a World Introvert Day" on her site "iPersonic".
The date January 2 was chosen in light of the fact that it denotes the end of the holiday season beginning from Christmas to New Year and permits introverts to take a collective full breath.
- 398. Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh**, Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science and Technology, has addressed the **40th Foundation Day** of the **Department of Scientific and Industrial Research** at Dr Ambedkar International Centre in New Delhi.
During the event, the Union Minister announced the indigenously developed drug "**Paracetamol**", commonly used in pain, fever, etc, by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) which is affiliated with the Ministry of Science & Technology, Govt of India. Karnataka-based Satya Deeptha Pharmaceuticals Ltd will utilize this breakthrough to produce affordable paracetamol domestically.
The DSIR Foundation Day marked 16 more technology transfers: 9 CSIR-CSIO Chennai and 6 from CSIR-CEERI, Pilani the technology transfer between CSIR and MSME units registered under LAGHU UDYOG BHARATI under the campaign 100 days 100 technology program.
LAGHU UDYOG BHARATI is a registered all-India organization of MSME in India since 1994 with more than 60,000 registered members.

The technologies transferred by CSIO are in the area of design and development of scientific and industrial instruments with IoT-enabled technologies, while transfers by CEERI are in the area of healthcare and societal implications.

One MoU is signed between CSIO and ELCIA, Bengaluru towards mutual collaboration in the development of sensors.

DSIR (Department of Scientific and Industrial Research) is a part of the Ministry of Science and Technology, which was announced through a Presidential Notification, dated **January 4, 1985**. DSIR's primary mandate is to promote indigenous industrial research by focusing on technology development, transfer, and utilization. The department aims to encourage industries to engage in research and development (R&D) to create commercially viable and globally competitive technologies.

DSIR administers the **Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)**, an autonomous organization, and two public sector enterprises—the **National Research Development Corporation (NRDC)** and **Central Electronics Ltd (CEL)**.

It hosts and supports the **Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology (APCTT)**, a regional institution under the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN-ESCAP).

399. World Day of Peace is observed annually on **1st January** by the Catholic Church. The day is dedicated to universal peace on the Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God.

Pope Paul VI established this day in 1967, being inspired by the encyclical *Pacem in Terris* of Pope John XXIII and with reference to his own encyclical *Populorum Progressio*.

The day was first observed on **1 January 1968**.

On this occasion, the Pope generally makes authoritative declarations on the Catholic Social Teachings (C.S.T.).

Note: The United Nations observes the International Day of Peace (IDP) annually on 21 September.

400. The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO's) Foundation Day is observed annually on **January 1** to commemorate the excellent work of the organisation in making the nation strong and self-reliant in terms of science and technology and especially military technologies.

The year 2025 marks the observance of the **67th Foundation Day of DRDO**.

- It is a premier defence research and development agency under the Ministry of Defence, Government of India.
- DRDO's first project for the Indian military was in surface-to-air missiles (SAM) known as Project Indigo.
- It aims to make India self-reliant in critical defence technology and systems.
- DRDO was formed in **1958** from the amalgamation of the then-already functioning Technical Development Establishment (TDEs) of the Indian Army and the Directorate of Technical Development & Production (DTDP) with the Defence Science Organisation (DSO).
- It is headquartered in New Delhi and its current Chairman is Samir V Kamat.

401. The Tobacco Board has observed its formation day on **1st January 2025**. It was established on **1st January 1976** by an Act of Parliament Tobacco Board Act, 1975 (Act 4 of 1975) for the overall development of the tobacco industry.

The Board's primary role is to ensure the smooth functioning of the farming system and to ensure fair and remunerative prices for tobacco farmers and the promotion of exports.

Key achievements:

- During 2023-24, the value of Indian tobacco exports reached **Rs.12005.89 crore** (1449.54 in US dollars) as against Rs.6,408.15 crore in 2019-20. This is an increase in export growth by 87% during the past 5 years.
- During 2023-24, the export volumes increased from 218.84 million kgs to 315.51 million kg.
- Tobacco farmer's income has also doubled over the last 5 years.
- The Flue Cured Virginia (FCV) tobacco farmers' earnings have more than doubled between 2019-20 and 2023-24 **from Rs.124.00 per kg in 2019-20 to Rs.279.54 in 2023-24.**

Notably, India is the **2nd largest** producer of tobacco in the world after China. India is the 4th largest producer of FCV tobacco in the world after China, Brazil, and Zimbabwe. India is the 2nd largest exporter of unmanufactured tobacco (quantity terms) after Brazil.

- 402.** The **207th Shaurya Diwas** was celebrated at **Koregaon Bhima in Maharashtra** on 1st January 2025.

Koregaon Bhima, a village in Pune district, Maharashtra, is known for the historic battle fought on **January 1, 1818**, on the banks of the Bhima River. This battle was between the **British East India Company and the Peshwas** and was part of the third Anglo-Maratha War, which marked the end of Peshwa's rule.

After this, the British East India Company gained control over most of western, central, and southern India.

In 1927, Bharat Ratna Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar visited and saluted this victory pillar. Since then, lakhs of people gather every year on January 1 to pay their respects.

- 403. Copyright Law Day** is celebrated annually on **1st January** to emphasize the need to give credit where it is due. The first copyright statute was made by the British Statute of Anne 1710 and applied only to books.

In 1787, the United States Constitution protected copyrights to promote the progress of science and useful arts.

Copyright is a legal term used to describe the rights that creators have over their literary and artistic works. Works covered by copyright range from books, music, paintings, sculpture, and films, to computer programs, databases, advertisements, maps, and technical drawings.

- 404. National Human Trafficking Awareness Day** is observed annually on **11th January** to raise awareness about the prevention of illegal practice of human trafficking and slavery. The day was established by the United States Senate in 2007.

Note: In 2010, President Obama dedicated the entire month of January to awareness and prevention of human trafficking.

- 405.** The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways provides a platform to celebrate **National Road Safety Week** every year. This significant week in 2025 has been observed from **January 11 to 17** to create awareness around road safety.

National Road Safety Week aims to educate the public about the perils of reckless or irresponsible driving.

The year 2025 marks the observance of the **36th National Road Safety Week**.

The week was first observed in 1989.

406. National Youth Day is observed annually on **12th January** to commemorate the birth anniversary of **Swami Vivekananda** who always motivated the youth of the country and spoke about the right use of the youth in the development of the country. The decision to celebrate Swami Vivekananda's birthday as National Youth Day was taken in 1984, and it was first observed on 12th January 1985. The year 2025 marks the observance of the **28th** National Youth Day and the **162nd** birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda (12 January 1863). The youth, defined as those within the age group of **15-29 years**, make up nearly 40% of India's total population. To commemorate Swami Vivekananda's 162nd birth anniversary, **Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya, Union Minister of Youth Affairs & Sports and Labour & Employment** formally inaugurated the **Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue 2025** in New Delhi.

- The Department of Youth Affairs organised the Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue – National Youth Festival 2025 from 10-12 January 2025.
- It aligns with the Prime Minister's Independence Day call to engage 1 lakh youth in politics without political affiliations and provide them a national platform to make their ideas for Viksit Bharat, a reality.
- The 3,000 dynamic and motivated youths participated in the Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue, through the Viksit Bharat Challenge, a meticulously crafted, merit-based multi-level selection process to identify and showcase the most motivated and dynamic young voices from across the nation. It included three stages with participants ranging from 15 - 29 years.
- The event aims to break the 25-year-old tradition of holding the National Youth Festival in a conventional manner.

407. Pravasi Bhartiya Divas (PBD), also known as Non-Resident Indian Day, is observed annually on **9th January** to strengthen the engagement of the overseas Indian community with the Government of India and reconnect them with their roots. The day was first observed in **2003**. Since 2015, its format has been revised to celebrate the PBD once every two years and to hold theme-based PBD Conferences during the intervening period with participation from overseas diaspora experts, policy makers and stakeholders.

Background:

In the year 1915, Mahatma Gandhi returned to India from South Africa on this day. Following his return, he began and headed India's freedom struggle and changed the lives of millions of Indians forever.

Note: The year 2015 marked 100 years of the return of Mahatma Gandhi.

Additional Information:

The 18th PBD Convention was held from 8–10 January 2024 in **Bhubaneswar, Odisha**. The theme for this year is the **"Diaspora's contribution to a Viksit Bharat"** (Developed India).

408. The Armed Forces Veterans' Day is observed annually on **14th January**, as on this day in 1953, the First Indian Commander-in-Chief of Indian Army Field Marshal KM Cariappa, who led the Indian forces to victory in the 1947 war, formally retired from the Service. The day was first observed in 2016. The year 2025 marks the observance of the **9th Armed Forces Veterans' Day**. To mark the day celebrations in 2025, **Defence Minister Rajnath Singh** elevated a 108-foot-high National Flag and officially inaugurated the **'Akhnoor Heritage Museum'** at Tanda Artillery Brigade, Akhnoor in Jammu. This museum is dedicated to the rich cultural and historical heritage of the region. Nestled on NH-144A, which links Jammu to Poonch, the museum highlights the region's vibrant history.

- 409. Earth's Rotation Day** is observed annually on **8th January** to recognize the pivotal discovery of Earth's rotation on its axis. This day is observed to mark the discovery made by French Physicist Leon Foucault regarding the rotation of earth.
In 470 BC, the Greeks claimed that the earth rotates on its own back.
In 1851, Leon Foucault demonstrated the earth's rotation with the help of a pendulum.
There is a hypothetical line that passes almost vertically through the earth that determines the axis around which the earth rotates. The axis connects the north and the south pole.
- 410. Army Day** is observed annually across India on **15th January** to salute the valiant soldiers who sacrificed their lives to protect the country and its citizens. The day is also marked to commemorate the day when General (later Field Marshal) **KM Cariappa** took over the command of the Army from General Sir FRR Bucher, the last British Commander-in-Chief in 1949 and became the first Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army post Independence.
The year 2025 marks the observance of the 77th Indian Army Day.
- 411. World Hindi Day**, also known as Vishwa Hindi Diwas, is observed annually on **10th January** to promote the language at the global stage. The day also marks the anniversary of the **first World Hindi Conference** which was inaugurated on **10th January 1975** in Nagpur, by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.
The celebration of first World Hindi Day was commenced on **10th January 2006** by former Prime Minister **Dr Manmohan Singh**. This was also the first time that the Ministry of External Affairs started celebrating the day abroad.
- 412. 16th January** of every year is observed as '**Lokpal Day**'. The day commemorates the establishment of the Lokpal via Notification issued on 16th January 2014 under Section 1(4). The Lokpal of India, during its meeting on 14th March 2024, decided that 16th January each year will be celebrated as 'Lokpal Day'.
The year 2025 marked the **first** observance of this day.
The first commemoration of the Lokpal day, in the auspicious presence of the Hon'ble the Chief Justice of India Shri Justice Sanjiv Khanna as the Chief Guest, was organized at Zorawar Auditorium, Manekshaw Centre, Delhi Cantt, New Delhi- 110010.
Note: Justice A. M. Khanwilkar is the present and the second Chairperson of the Lokpal of India. Presently, the Body consists of the Chairperson and six Members, since March 2024.
- 413. The NDRF Raising Day** is observed annually on **19th January** by the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) in India to highlight the role of the NDRF personnel for their help and assistance during disaster situations in India.
In 2025, the day marks the celebration of the **20th NDRF Raising Day**.
The National Disaster Response Force was constituted in 2006 for the purpose of a special response to a threatening disaster situation under the Disaster Management Act, 2005.
Motto: Aapada Seva Sadaiv Sarvatra
- 414. National Startup Day** is observed annually on **16th January** to appreciate and promote the Indian Startup Ecosystem. This day celebrates the entrepreneurial spirit of India, recognizing the contribution of startups to the nation's economy.

The day was inaugurated by the Honorable Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, in **2022**, underscores the critical role of startups in driving economic growth, fostering innovation, and empowering entrepreneurial ambition.

415. International Customs Day is observed annually on **26th January** to commemorate the inaugural session of the World Customs Organisation (WCO), which was held on this day in 1953. The day also raises awareness about the importance of customs authorities and their role in the smooth movement of goods across borders. The day was first observed in 1983. The year 2025 marks the observance of the **72nd** anniversary of the WCO.

Theme 2025: 'Customs Delivering on its Commitment to Efficiency, Security and Prosperity'

416. Data Privacy Day is annually observed across the globe on **28th January** to spread awareness about the significance of protecting Data Privacy Day 2025, promoting trust, and respecting privacy.

- The day commemorates the anniversary of the opening for signature of Convention 108, the global data protection Convention, on 28th January 1981.
- The day was first observed in 2007.

417. International Holocaust Remembrance Day is observed annually on **27th January** to commemorate the anniversary of the tragedy of the Holocaust, also known as the Shoah, which was the genocide of European Jews during World War II.

Theme 2025: "Holocaust remembrance and education for dignity and human rights".

The year 2025 marks 80 years since the end of the Second World War and the Holocaust.

The United Nations designated the day in 2005 to serve as a date for official commemoration of the victims of the Nazi regime and to promote Holocaust education throughout the world. The day was first observed in 2006.

418. World Leprosy Day is observed globally on the **last Sunday of January** to raise global awareness of this deadly ancient disease and call attention to the fact that it can be prevented, treated, and cured.

In 2025, World Leprosy Day falls on **26th January**.

- The day was initiated in 1954 by French philanthropist and writer, **Raoul Follereau**, as a tribute to the life of Mahatma Gandhi who had compassion for people afflicted with leprosy.
- **Theme 2025:** "Unite. Act. Eliminate"

Note: In India, World Leprosy Day is celebrated every year on 30 January, the anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi's death.

Leprosy is a chronic infectious disease caused by a bacillus, *Mycobacterium leprae* (M. leprae).

The symptoms of the disease occur generally after a long period of getting an infection on average 5 years, as M. leprae multiplies very slowly. The disease mainly affects the skin, the peripheral nerves, the mucosa of the upper respiratory tract, and the eyes.

419. National Voters' Day (NVD) is observed annually on **25th January** to mark the foundation day of the Election Commission of India (ECI), i.e. 25th January 1950. The main purpose of the NVD celebration is to create electoral awareness amongst citizens and encourage them to participate in the electoral process. The day was first observed in 2011.

The year 2025 marks the **15th National Voters' Day**.

Theme 2025: 'Nothing Like Voting, I Vote for Sure'

Additional Information:

The President of India, Droupadi Murmu graced and addressed the 15th National Voters' Day celebration in New Delhi. She presented the Best Electoral Practices Awards to state and district officials who demonstrated exemplary performance in ensuring the smooth conduct of elections, on the occasion.

She also received the first copy of the book *"India Votes 2024: A Saga of Democracy"* from the Chief Election Commissioner, Rajiv Kumar.

A short clip of the upcoming **docu-drama series "India Decides"** produced by Warner Bros Discovery was also released at the event.

An ECI publication "Belief in the Ballot: Human Stories Shaping India's 2024 Elections" was also presented to the President by the Commission.

420. 'Parakram Diwas' (Courage Day) is observed annually across India on **23rd January** to commemorate the birth anniversary of **Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose**. The day is celebrated to honour and remembers Netaji's indomitable spirit and selfless service to the nation. The day was first observed in 2021.

The year 2025 marks the observance of the **128th** birth anniversary of him.

Union Minister of State for Youth Affairs & Sports, Raksha Nikhil Khadse, undertook '**Jai Hind Padyatra**' on 23rd January 2025 in **Port Blair, Andaman and Nicobar Islands**.

Subhas Chandra Bose:

- He was born on 23rd January 1897, in Cuttack, Orissa Division, Bengal Province, to Prabhavati Dutt Bose and Janakinath Bose.
- He joined the Indian National Congress in 1921.
- He started a newspaper called "Swaraj".
- He had written a book called "The Indian Struggle". The book covers the Indian Independence movement between 1920 and 1942.
- The term "Jai Hind" was coined by Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose.
- With the slogan "Give me blood and I will give you freedom", he awakened the country towards fighting against the British.
- He won the Congress presidential elections at Haripura in 1938.
- Again in 1939 at Tripuri, he won the presidential elections against Gandhi's candidate Pattabhi Sitarammaya. Due to ideological differences with Gandhi, Bose resigned and left Congress. Rajendra Prasad was appointed in his place.
- He founded a new party, 'the Forward Bloc'. The purpose was to consolidate the political left and major support base in his home state Bengal.
- He built a force known as the Azad Hind Fauj (Indian National Army) giving the slogan of "Dilli Chalo".

421. The National Girl Child Day (NGCD) is observed annually across India on **24th January** to focus on the inequalities faced by girls, to promote the education, health & nutrition of the girl child, and to spread awareness about the rights of a girl child. The day was observed for the first time in **2008** as an initiative by the Ministry of Women and Child Development and the Government of India.

Important Day	Date/Month	Theme for 2025	Remark
Global Family Day	1 st January		The day was first observed in 1997.

World Day of Peace	1 st January		
World Introvert Day	2 nd January		
International Mind-Body Wellness Day	3 rd January		
Power System Operation Corporation (POSOCO) Day	3 rd January		
World Braille Day	4 th January		The day was first observed in 2019.
World Day of War Orphans	6 th January		
Pravasi Bhartiya Divas (PBD)	9 th January		The day was first observed in 2003.
World Hindi Day	10 th January		
Startup India Innovation Week	10th January to 18th January		
National Human Trafficking Awareness Day	11 th January		
National Road Safety Week	11 th to 17 th January 2025		
National Youth Day	12 th January		The year 2025 marks the 28th National Youth Day and the 162 nd birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda (12 January 1863).
Armed Forces Veterans Day	14 th January		The day was first observed in 2016.
Army Day	15 th January		The year 2025 marks the 77th Indian Army Day.
National Start-up Day	16 th January		The day was first observed in 2022.
Lokpal Day	16 th January		
NDRF Raising Day	19 th January		In 2025, the day marks the celebration of the 20th NDRF Raising Day.
Parakram Diwas	23 rd January		The day commemorates the birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. The year 2025 marks the 128th birth anniversary of him.
National Girl Child Day	24 th January		The day was first observed in 2008.
International Day of Education	24 th January	AI and education: Preserving	

		human agency in a world of automation	
National Tourism Day	25 th January		
National Voters' Day	25 th January	Nothing Like Voting, I Vote for Sure	The day was first observed in 2011.
International Customs Day	26 th January		
International Holocaust Remembrance Day	27 th January	Holocaust remembrance and education for dignity and human rights	
Data Privacy Day	28 th January		
World Leprosy Day	Last Sunday of January (26 th January 2025)	Unite. Act. Eliminate	
World Neglected Tropical Diseases Day	30 th January		

PRACTICE