

PRACTICE **MOCK**



WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

DECEMBER 2024 - WEEK 1

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NATIONAL AFFAIRS

1. **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** attended the **59th All India Conference of Director Generals/ Inspector Generals of Police** held at the State Convention Centre, Lok Seva Bhawan in **Bhubaneswar, Odisha**.

The three-day conference was held from November 29 to December 1, 2024.

DGsP/IGsP from all States/UTs and heads of CAPF/CPOs participated physically, while over 750 officers of various ranks joined virtually in the hybrid-format event.

The conference included in-depth discussions on various national security issues, including counter-terrorism, left-wing extremism, coastal security, economic security, immigration, and narco-trafficking.

The deliberations were also held on emerging security concerns along the border with Bangladesh and Myanmar, trends in urban policing, and strategies for countering malicious narratives.

The conference highlighted the importance of leveraging technology to tackle challenges such as digital fraud, cybercrimes, and the potential threats posed by AI, including deepfakes.

2. The **New Pamban Bridge**, India's first vertical lift railway sea bridge, replaced the **105-year-old Pamban Bridge**.

It connects the mainland to **Rameswaram** in **Tamil Nadu**.

The **2.05 km** long bridge, built for **Rs 535 crore** by Rail Vikas Nigam Limited (RVNL), features a fully automated vertical lift span that provides 22 meters of air clearance for ships.

The original Pamban Bridge, constructed in **1914**, was decommissioned in December 2022 due to corrosion.

The new bridge will significantly enhance rail operations between **Mandapam** and **Rameswaram**, reducing travel time and supporting increased traffic.

3. Oxford University Press named '**brain rot**' as the **Oxford Word of the Year 2024**.

It describes cognitive decline caused by consuming trivial social media content.

The term gained popularity amid trends like digital detoxes to counter mental fatigue. It reflects concerns about technology's impact on human thought and habits.

Public voting chose 'brain rot' over contenders like 'heat domes' and 'neurospicy.' Over 37,000 people participated in the voting, highlighting its cultural relevance.

The term's casual tone appeals to younger audiences and raises awareness about mental health.

The first recorded use of 'brain rot' was found in **1854** in **Henry David Thoreau's** book **Walden**.

It has gained new prominence, with a 230% increase in usage frequency between 2023 and 2024.

4. The Ministry of Coal achieved a significant milestone in its coal gasification program by announcing the **Selected Applicants** under **Category I and III** of the Financial Incentive Scheme.

The Selected Applicants for the Financial Incentive are as follows:

Category I (Government Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) / Joint Ventures (JVs) of Government PSUs):

- Bharat Coal Gasification and Chemicals Limited
- Coal India Limited (for CIL – GAIL Consortium)
- Coal India Limited

Category III (Demonstration Projects / Small-Scale Product-based Plants):

- New Era Cleantech Solution Private Limited

This announcement marks the successful completion of the process under Categories I & III and demonstrates the growing confidence of the industry in the future of coal gasification in India.

Background:

The **Ministry of Coal** launched **Financial Incentive Scheme** with an outlay of **Rs.8,500 crore**.

The scheme was approved by the Cabinet for the promotion of **Coal/Lignite Gasification Projects**, a crucial step towards India's target of **100 million tonnes of coal gasification** by **2030**.

The Scheme launched under **three Categories** has gained interest with five applications received under Categories I and III.

The Coal Gasification Incentive Scheme is expected to drive innovation in clean coal technologies and create thousands of new jobs, contributing significantly to India's transition to a clean energy future.

5. The **4th** edition of **India- Malaysia** Joint Military exercise **Harimau Shakti** was held at Bentong camp, **Pahang** district, **Malaysia**.

The exercise aimed to enhance the joint military capability of both sides to undertake counter-insurgency operations in jungle terrain under Chapter VII of the United Nations Mandate.

Indian contingent comprising 78 personnel was represented by a **Battalion of MAHAR** Regiment.

The Malaysian contingent was represented by 123 personnel from **The Royal Malaysian** Regiment.

The exercise was conducted in two phases. The first phase was focused on cross-training between both the Armies including lectures, demonstrations, and practices of various drills in jungle terrain.

In the final phase, both Armies took an active part in a simulated exercise, wherein troops executed various drills including Anti-MT Ambush, Occupation of Harbour, Carried out Recce Patrol, Ambush, and an Attack on an area taken over by the terrorists.

The exercise is an annual training event conducted in India and Malaysia.

The last edition was conducted in November 2023 at Umroi Cantonment in Meghalaya, India.

6. The **Serious Fraud Investigation Office (SFIO)** has conducted search operations at three companies engaged in manufacturing electric vehicles namely **Hero Electric Vehicles Private Limited, Benling India Energy and Technology Private Limited**, and **Okinawa Autotech International Private Limited**.

These cases arise from the fraudulent availing of subsidies amounting to **Rs. 297 crores** cumulatively by all three companies under the **Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles (FAME) II** scheme of the **Ministry of Heavy Industries (MHI)**, Government of India.

The three companies, for claiming subsidies had deceptively shown compliance with the applicable guidelines to the MHI, which was subsequently found to be incorrect and false.

Upon investigations by SFIO, it is revealed that several restricted parts under the PMP guidelines were either directly or indirectly imported from China thereby flouting the PMP guidelines under FAME – II.

FAME II Scheme:

The FAME II scheme was launched in the year **2019** to promote electric and hybrid vehicles in India.

The FAME II scheme and the **Phased Manufacturing Programme (PMP)** guidelines, stipulated manufacturing of some key components in India, for the vehicle to be eligible for subsidy under the scheme.

7. Uber launched **Asia's first** water transport service, **Uber Shikara**, in the **Dal Lake** in **Srinagar**, Jammu and Kashmir.

In its first phase, the company has onboarded seven Shikaras.

The aim is to blend technology with the traditional Shikara ride, improving the accessibility and overall tourism experience in the Kashmir Valley.

The service brings innovation to a centuries-old tradition, enhancing its appeal to modern-day tourists.

The Shikara is a wooden boat found on Dal Lake and other water bodies in Srinagar. It comes in different sizes and is used for transportation.

8. The 1st edition of Joint Table Top Exercise, **CINBAX**, between the Indian Army and the Cambodian Army, was held at the **Foreign Training Node** in **Pune, Maharashtra**.

The exercise was held from 1st to 8th December 2024.

The exercise focused on counter-terrorism operations, United Nations (UN) peacekeeping missions, hybrid warfare, and logistics.

With contingents comprising 20 personnel each from the Cambodian Army and the Indian Army's Infantry Brigade, CINBAX aims to strengthen military cooperation and foster trust through a systematic and theme-based training program.

The exercise was divided into three phases:

- Orientation and Preparation of participants for CT operations during UN peacekeeping missions.
- Conduct the tabletop exercise.
- Finalization of the plans and review of the exercise.

A significant aspect of CINBAX 2024 was to showcase of Indian-made defense test indigenous defense manufacturing.

9. The Union Health Ministry of India declared **snakebite** a **notifiable disease** at the national level.

India accounts for **nearly 50%** of global snakebite deaths. This initiative aims to reduce the high mortality and morbidity rates associated with snakebites, particularly in rural and tribal areas.

Key states which needed prior action are **Karnataka** and **Tamil Nadu**.

It aligns with the **World Health Organization's (WHO)** target of reducing global snakebite deaths and injuries by **50%** by **2030**.

All government and private healthcare facilities, including medical colleges, must report suspected or confirmed snakebite cases and deaths under the relevant State Public Health Act.

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, has launched the "National Action Plan for Prevention and Control of Snakebite Envenoming (NAPSE) from India by 2030" to address the issue of snakebites. The objective of the action plan is to halve snakebite-related deaths by the year 2030.

Snakebites are an issue of public health concern and in certain cases, they cause mortality, morbidity, and disability.

10. The World Maritime Technology Conference (WMTTC) was hosted at the **Institute of Marine Engineers (India) Chennai** Branch from December 4-6 2024.

This marks the return of the conference to India after a gap of **15 years**, with the last edition hosted in Mumbai.

Indian Register of Shipping is a "Knowledge and Technology Partner" for the Conference.

It is a global event held every **three years** under the auspices of the **World Maritime Technology Congress**.

Key Highlights:

- The participants were from 21 member organizations from 17 countries representing professionals in maritime technology and related sectors.
- The sessions on themes, Maritime innovation, sustainability, AI integration, and global trade connectivity were held.
- The objectives of the conference include knowledge sharing, showcasing advancements, addressing challenges, and fostering international cooperation.
- The conference was focused on various futuristic developments and present challenges in the Maritime World.

11. The National Small Industries Corporation Limited (NSIC), a **Mini Ratna** enterprise under the **Ministry of MSME**, achieved a milestone by paying its highest-ever dividend of **Rs. 37.97 crore** to the Government of India for the financial year 2023-24.

It reported a Revenue from Operations of **Rs. 3,273 crore**, up by **18.16%**, and a **Profit After Tax (PAT)** of **Rs. 126.56 crore** a **14.55%** increase compared to the previous year.

12. The 10th India International Science Festival (IISF) held at **IIT Guwahati** was started on November 30th and ended on December 4th, 2024.

The **4-day** mega science festival featured 24 different events in which 7000 delegates and 45000 people including a large number of students participated.

The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) is the nodal department for this year's IISF and a constituent laboratory of CSIR namely the National Institute for Interdisciplinary Science and Technology (CSIR-NIIST, Thiruvananthapuram) coordinated the whole festival in collaboration with Vijnana Bharati.

The theme of this 10th edition of IISF is **"Transforming India into an S&T-driven Global Manufacturing Hub."**

Key Highlights:

- **The Vigyanika: Science Literature Festival:**

It was one of the most prominent events of the IISF 2024. The event was focused on the theme **"From Folklore to Future: An Indian Literary Exploration"**.

It was organized by the **CSIR-National Institute of Science Communication and Policy Research (NIScPR)**. Panel discussion on “Science Writing in the Age of Artificial Intelligence (AI),” was held.

A scientific session on, “Shaping Indian Science Narrative with Literature” was conducted.

- **S&T Media Conclave:**

The conclave was a platform for science communicators that featured a range of exciting sessions, including panel discussions, interactions, and a science mentalism show during a two-day scheduled program.

The event was spread into 6 sessions, 3 on each day having various themes to cover every aspect of science communication and dissemination.

- A giant 10-metre high ‘**real surface**’ replica of the **Moon** was the highlight of the festival.
- **Sagarika – The Tale of Earth Sciences** event aimed to engage and educate people on different areas of earth science such as meteorology, oceanography, ecology, etc.
- **Science beyond Borders** - aimed at fostering international collaboration, partnerships, and exchange of dialogues among scientists, researchers, and institutions to address global challenges in S&T.
- **Fusion Forum – The Atomic Assembly** event discussed the current perspectives, future benefits, and challenges in implementing nuclear energy in India for various sectors such as generation of power, nuclear medicine, agriculture, additive manufacturing, etc.
- **Saga of Science Chronicles** event told the history and recent developments of Indian science and scientists through the LED light show.

IISF:

IISF is a unique festival of science society engagement that was initiated in the year **2015** and the very first IISF was organized at **IIT Delhi**.

13. The Inland Waterways Authority of India’s Intermodal Terminal (IMT) at Kalughat in Bihar has received a **five-star SVAGRIHA rating** from the GRIHA council.

The terminal is one among several infrastructural interventions made by the Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) under the **World Bank-funded Jal Marg Vikas Project (JMVP)** for capacity augmentation of **National Waterway 1 – River Ganga**.

The award was received by Arvind Kumar, Director, JMVP.

IMT Kalughat received a five-star rating for its efforts to ensure environmental sustainability by ensuring the usage of recyclable materials like fiber, recyclable glasses, paint, sanitary fixtures, etc during the building of the terminal.

SVAGRIHA rating:

SVAGRIHA stands for **Simple Versatile Affordable GRIHA** – supports the concept of green buildings and sustainability under **Green Rating for Integrated Habitat Assessment (GRIHA)** - a joint venture of **Union Ministry of New and Renewable Energy** and **Delhi-based The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI)**.

The rating recognizes the environmentally sustainable practices followed by IWAI while building the necessary IWT infrastructure to facilitate cargo and passenger movement on National Waterway 1 (NW 1) - River Ganga.

IMT Kalughat:

Kalughat IMT has a sewage treatment plant for recycling water and relies on optimum usage of renewable energy during operations. The utilization of construction and demolition waste during the construction work was one of the key features of the IMT's planning and building work.

Built at a cost of 82.48 crore and a capacity of 77,000 TEU per annum, IMT Kalughat on NW 1 is critical for the transportation of cargo originating or destined for the hinterland of North Bihar. Besides, it provides connectivity to Nepal for EXIM cargo.

- 14. Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Bhupender Yadav**, announced the notification of the **Ratapani Tiger Reserve, Madhya Pradesh**, as the **57th** Tiger Reserve of the country.

Ratapani Tiger Reserve has a core area of **763.8 sq km**, a buffer area of 507.6 sq km, and a total area of **1271.4 sq km**.

It is the **8th** tiger reserve of Madhya Pradesh.

This conservation initiative will strengthen wildlife management in the forests of Ratapani, **Bhopal Sehore** area.

Standard protection, habitat management, ecotourism, community engagement activities, etc shall be adopted which will strengthen Wildlife conservation in the Ratapani Tiger landscape.

The local communities will get the desired ecotourism benefits with this and it will help in the development of the region.

Note:

Guru Ghasidas- Tamor Pingla Tiger Reserve in Chhattisgarh was the 56th Tiger Reserve of India.

- 15. India** has been selected to chair the **68th** Session of the **UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND)**, marking its first leadership role in this global body.

Ambassador Shambhu S Kumaran, India's Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Vienna, has officially assumed the chairmanship of the forum.

As Chair, India aims to represent the interests of the Global South, ensuring that the voices of developing nations are heard in global drug policy discussions.

The 68th session's agenda will prioritize international collaboration to address pressing issues like illicit drug trafficking, substance abuse, and health-related impacts.

UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND):

The CND is responsible for monitoring global drug trends, advising member states on drug policy, and overseeing the implementation of international drug conventions.

It is a governing body of the **United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)**, based in Vienna. It is a functional commission of the **UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)**.

- 16. India's first underground shooting range** specifically for **National Cadet Corps (NCC) cadets** has been inaugurated in **New Delhi** by **Chief Minister Aatishi Singh**.

The launch is part of an initiative to better NCC training infrastructure and encourage young people into sports.

The new shooting range will feature many advanced features like automated target systems and modern equipment, which will be at par with international standards.

This facility is a total strength to cadets who are developing this as a competitive sport; it allows them to train in a professional environment without financial strain.

- 17. The final Sherpa and Sous-Sherpa meeting** of **Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS)** in Ekaterinburg was concluded in Ekaterinburg, Russia.

During the meeting, the ceremonial handover of the BRICS chairmanship was done from Russia to **Brazil** for the year 2025.

During the event, **Sergey Ryabkov, Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister** and **BRICS Sherpa**, reflected on the achievements of Russia's presidency during the past year.

During its tenure, Russia organized over 250 events to strengthen cooperation within BRICS.

A major highlight of Russia's presidency was the XVI BRICS Summit, held in Kazan from October 22 to 24, which resulted in the adoption of the Kazan Declaration.

The summit also marked the addition of **Egypt, Iran, the UAE, and Ethiopia** to the BRICS as full members.

Belarus, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand joined as BRICS partners in the year 2024.

Note: The first BRICS Summit was held in the year 2009.

- 18. The Cao Bang crocodile newt, or Tylototriton koliaensis**, is a newly discovered species found in **Vietnam**.

It inhabits mountainous forests at elevations over 3,300 feet, experiencing both dry and rainy seasons. These medium-sized newts are around 5 inches long, with stout, rough bodies and crocodile-like, knobby skin.

They are entirely black, with bright orange markings on their fingertips, and toes, and an orange stripe down the center of their gray belly and tail. They breed in slow-moving streams or pools in the rainy season and hide under rocks during winter.

Known as "crocodile newts" for their textured skin, they belong to a genus of **Asian salamanders**.

Researcher **Trung My Phung** mentioned that there are a total of **38** species that are found throughout Asia.

19. US President Joe Biden's administration has approved a **USD 1.17 billion** package under the **Foreign Military Sales (FMS)** program to supply advanced communication systems, sensors, and logistical support to enhance the capabilities of the Indian Navy's **Sikorsky MH-60R multi-role** helicopters.

A deal to sell **24 MH-60R** multi-role helicopters from **Lockheed Martin** under foreign military sales was cleared by the US during Donald Trump's presidency.

The Indian Navy has already received six MH-60R helicopters which are deployed in **Kochi** with the same configuration used by the US Navy.

The remaining 18 helicopters will include customized configurations to meet Indian requirements.

MH-60R helicopters:

These helicopters have emerged as a major force multiplier for the Indian Navy amidst the growing challenges from China and Pakistan in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

The MH-60R, a **fourth-generation** helicopter, is designed for **anti-submarine** and surface combat missions, featuring **Mk 54 torpedoes** for targeting hidden submarines, and Hellfire missiles for air-to-surface strikes.

The advanced **radar** and **sonar** systems onboard MH-60R enabled it to carry out operations in challenging conditions. These are replacing the aging fleet of **Sea King** choppers, which served the Indian Navy for over three decades.

20. President Droupadi Murmu has laid the foundation stones for different projects including three railway projects worth **6,294 crore rupees** in north **Odisha**, connecting Kendujhar and Mayurbhanj districts.

She also initiated projects for a **Tribal Research and Development Centre**, a 52.4 crore rupees **100-bed hospital**, and a development project for upgrading the **Dandbose airstrip** at **Rairangpur** in **Mayurbhanj**.

Chief Minister of Odisha Mohan Charan Majhi, Union Minister for Railways Aswhini Baishnaw, and Union Tribal Affairs Minister Jual Oram were present at the foundation laying ceremony.

Three rail projects inaugurated namely are:

- The 86-km **Bangiriposi-Gorumahisani** worth 2,549 crore rupees rail line will enhance connectivity within the Mayurbhanj district of Odisha.
- The 82-km **Badampahar-Kendujhargarh** worth 2,106 crore rupees rail line will pass through the Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar districts of Odisha.
- The 60-km **Buramara-Chakulia** worth 1,639 crore rupees rail line will connect the Mayurbhanj district of Odisha and the East Singhbhum district of Jharkhand.

The rail projects were recently approved by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

- 21. The National Minorities Development and Finance Corporation (NMDFC) and the Dalit Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DICCI) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to promote entrepreneurship among marginalized communities.**

This partnership is expected to add a new dimension to the socio-economic empowerment of minorities and marginalized communities by combining the expertise and resources of NMDFC and DICCI to foster inclusive growth and self-reliance.

Through this MoU, both organizations aim to:

- **Create Awareness:** Encourage entrepreneurship as a viable option for economic development.
- **Provide Credit Support:** Enable entrepreneurs to establish self-employment ventures that generate employment for others.
- **Policy Advocacy:** Facilitate sustainable business practices and ground-level implementation of policies for developmental results.
- **Inspire Youth:** Promote entrepreneurship as a rewarding career path for aspiring individuals.

- 22. Atal Innovation Mission (AIM), under the NITI Aayog and the Office of Science & Innovation, at the Embassy of Sweden, in partnership with Nordic collaborators - Innovation Norway, Innovation Centre Denmark, and Business Finland announced the successful conclusion of SheSTEM 2024.**

Ambassador of Sweden to India, Jan Thesleff, Mission Director, Atal Innovation Mission (AIM), and Dr. Chintan Vaishnav were present at the event.

This annual initiative celebrates the contributions of women in STEM and catalyses to inspire the next generation of innovators by encouraging young minds to explore careers in **science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM)**.

The SheSTEM 2024 challenge invited students from grades 6–12 across India to submit innovative ideas focused on Battery Technology and Energy Storage (BEST) systems.

The challenge aims to foster sustainability by advancing energy solutions.

The participants were tasked with presenting their prototypes or concepts for energy storage and sustainability in a two-minute video format.

The competition received an exceptional response, with over 1000 submissions demonstrating the creativity, problem-solving skills, and forward-thinking mindset of India's youth.

- 23. Nafithromycin, India's first indigenous Macrolide antibiotic, has been officially launched by Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh.**

The antibiotic "Nafithromycin" has been developed with the support of the **"Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council" (BIRAC)**, a unit of the Department of Biotechnology, and has been brought to market under the trade name **"Miqnaf"** by the pharma company **"Wolkardt"**.

It is the country's first indigenously developed antibiotic aimed at tackling Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR).

This innovation is designed to treat Community-Acquired Bacterial Pneumonia (CABP), a severe illness caused by drug-resistant bacteria, which disproportionately affects vulnerable populations, including children and the elderly as well as immune-compromised hosts like Patients with Diabetes, Cancers, etc.

This antibiotic is **ten times** more **effective** than current treatments like **azithromycin** and offers a three-day treatment regimen, significantly shortening the recovery time while improving patient outcomes.

It is designed to treat both typical and atypical drug-resistant bacteria, making it a crucial tool in addressing the global health crisis of **AMR (Anti-microbial Resistance)**. It boasts superior safety, minimal side effects, and no significant drug interactions.

It has undergone extensive clinical trials across the **U.S., Europe, and India**, has been developed with an investment of **₹500 crores**, and is now awaiting final approval from the **Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO)**.

24. The Ministry of Labour and Unemployment has released the data of the annual **Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS)**.

The survey has been conducted by the **Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI)**.

Key Highlights:

- Unemployment rate decreased from 6% to 3.2% between 2017 and 2024.
- The Worker Population Ratio (WPR) rose from 46.8% to 58.2% during the same period.
- The unemployment rate for youth (ages 15-29) has significantly decreased from 17.8% in 2017-18 to 10% in 2022-23.
- Employment in India grew by 36%, adding 170 million jobs between 2016-17 and 2022-23, with GDP growth averaging over 6.5% during this period.
- Agriculture continues to employ over 45% of India's workforce, but there has been a notable shift towards manufacturing and services, with larger industrial units creating more jobs than smaller ones.
- EPFO net payroll additions increased from 61.1 lakh (FY 2019) to 131.5 lakh (FY 2024).

25. The first annual review meeting of the **Rural Technology Action Group (RuTAG) 2.0** projects was held at the **Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology (SKUAST), Srinagar, Kashmir**.

The meeting was chaired by **Prof. Ajay Kumar Sood**, Principal Scientific Adviser (PSA) to the Government of India.

He also launched the official **RuTAG logo**, symbolizing a unified visual identity that strengthens communication and cooperation among stakeholders.

During the meeting, the **RuTAG Smart Village Centres (RSVC) Initiative** from the Office of the PSA was also introduced, highlighting a vision to transform villages into economic hubs through the deployment of innovative, affordable, and context-specific technologies tailored to local needs.

RuTAG:

Rural Technology Action Group (RuTAG) is an initiative of the Office of the PSA since **2004**. RuTAG, supported by the Office of the PSA, was conceptualized as a mechanism to provide a higher level of S&T intervention and support for rural areas.

Under this initiative, the interventions are designed to be primarily demand-driven, focusing on bridging technology gaps at the grassroots level, upgrading technology, and providing training and demonstrations through innovative projects.

The Office of the PSA launched RuTAG 2.0 in April 2023, with a focus on commercialization and broader dissemination of developed technologies as products, ensuring wider accessibility and socio-economic impact.

26. Two Indian astronauts chosen for the upcoming **Axiom-4** mission to the **International Space Station (ISS)** have completed the initial phase of training.

The two Gaganyatris (Prime-Group Captain **Shubhanshu Shukla** and Backup-Group Captain **Prasanth Balakrishnan Nair**) assigned for Axiom Mission 4 (Ax-4) commenced their training in the USA in the first week of **August 2024**.

The training included familiarization sessions with the SpaceX Dragon spacecraft and various onboard systems of the International Space Station, including photography from space, daily operations routine, and communication protocols.

One of the highlights of this phase was training for various types of emergencies in space, including medical emergencies.

Upcoming training will primarily address the remaining modules of the US Orbital Segment of the space station along with training towards conducting scientific research experiments in the microgravity environment during the mission.

"In addition, the crew will train and perform different mission scenarios in the **SpaceX Dragon spacecraft**."

Axiom-4 Mission:

- The Axiom-4 Mission (Ax-4) is a private spaceflight to the International Space Station (ISS) that will launch in **April 2025**.
- **Mission operator:** Axiom Space, a US-based space-infrastructure development company
- **Launch provider:** SpaceX, which will transport astronauts to and from the ISS using the reusable Crew Dragon spacecraft
- **Duration:** About 14 days
- **Launch site:** Kennedy Space Center in Florida
- **Crew:** Includes Indian astronauts Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla as the prime mission pilot and Group Captain Prasanth Balakrishnan Nair as the backup
- The Ax-4 mission is a collaboration between **Axiom Space** and the **National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)** and is the fourth flight of its kind.
- It will set new benchmarks in astronaut training, and the knowledge gained by the Indian astronauts will contribute to India's first human spaceflight program, Gaganyaan.

27. The **60th** raising day of the **Border Security Force** was celebrated on **1st December 2024**.

Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation Amit Shah attended the 60th Raising Day Parade of the Border Security Force (BSF) as the Chief Guest in Jodhpur, Rajasthan.

He highlighted in 2024, a total of 1992 BSF personnel have sacrificed their lives, and 1330 of them have been awarded medals to date. These include 1 Maha Vir Chakra, 6 Kirti Chakras, 13 Vir Chakras, 13 Shaurya Chakras, 56 Sena Medals, and 1,241 Police Medals.

BSF Punjab celebrated the day with the neutralization of the 250th drone this year.

Border Security Force:

It was initially raised with **25** battalions in the year **1965**. It is one of the seven Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs). It is headquartered in New Delhi.

Daljit Singh Chaudhary is the current Director-General of BSF.

28. The **Bharat National Cyber Security Exercise (Bharat NCX 2024)**, a landmark initiative to fortify India's cybersecurity resilience, was organized by the **National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS)** in collaboration with **Rashtriya Raksha University (RRU)** in New Delhi.

The aim is to strengthen India's cybersecurity resilience and prepare professionals to tackle modern cyber threats effectively.

The event featured two major milestones: the **launch of the National Cybersecurity Reference Framework** by **DG NCIIPC**, and the **inauguration of the Bharat National Cyber Range 1.0**, developed indigenously by **Rashtriya Raksha University (RRU)**.

The **Bharat CISOs Conclave** and the **BHARAT Cybersecurity Startup Exhibition** provided platforms for strategic discussions and showcased cutting-edge innovations in cybersecurity.

29. The **Armed Forces Medical Services (AFMS)** and the **All India Institute of Medical Science (AIIMS) New Delhi** have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to address critical scientific and technological challenges in the fields of high-altitude, aerospace (aviation), and marine medicine.

The Director-General of Armed Forces Medical Services (DGAFMS) and the Director of All India Institute of Medical Science (AIIMS) signed the MoU.

Under this MoU, "**High Altitude, Aerospace (Aviation) and Marine Medicine**", the two organizations announced the first scientific 'Continuing Medicine Education' (CME).

This collaboration marks the beginning of a transformative journey in the field of extreme medicine.

30. The **Media & Entertainment Association of India (MEAI)**, in collaboration with the **Ministry of Information & Broadcasting**, has successfully hosted the electrifying **WAM! (WAVES Anime & Manga Contest)** in Delhi.

It was held at the **Indian Institute of Mass Communication Delhi**.

Building on its success in Guwahati, Kolkata, Bhubaneswar, and Varanasi, WAM! Delhi featured 199 participants across categories including **Manga (Japanese-style comics), Webtoon (digital comics), and Anime (Japanese-style animation).**

The event also hosted **28 vibrant Cosplay** and **voice-acting** participants, bringing beloved anime and gaming characters to life.

The event was graced by Vietnamese actress, director, and producer **Mai Thu Huyen**, American-Vietnamese producer and actress **Jacqueline Thao Nguyen**, **Sushil Kumar Bhasin**, President of the Media & Entertainment Association of India, and **Kamal Pahuja**, Vice President of the Media & Entertainment Association of India.

The event featured an exclusive sneak peek of TRIO, India's first anime currently under development by Vaibhavi Studios, igniting inspiration and anticipation among the audience.

The winners' list of WAM Delhi is as follows:

Category	Position	Winner	Prize Money (INR)
Cosplay	Winner	Vish	5000
	Second Place	Dhruv Tuli	3000
Voice Acting	Winner	Resham Talwar	5000
	Second Place	Deepak Saini	3000
	Third Place	Yajin Vadehra	2000
Manga	Student Category	Harshika	
	Professional Category	Rohan Das	
Webtoon	Student Category	Nishant Deswal	

The special mention was made of **Resham Talwar** – India's first mainstream voice actor with vision impairment.

WAM:

As part of **WAVES (World Audio Visual Entertainment Summit, WAM!)** is at the forefront of efforts to elevate India's animation, gaming, and manga sectors. With each city, it inspires a new wave of creators, fostering innovation and celebrating the vibrant art forms that captivate audiences worldwide.

31. The **14th Asia-Oceania Meteorological Satellite Users' Conference (AOMSUC-14)** was held from December 4-6, 2024, in New Delhi, India.

The conference was hosted by the **India Meteorological Department (IMD)**, under the Ministry of Earth Sciences, and featured high-quality oral and poster presentations, panel discussions, and a training workshop focused on applying current satellite data for meteorological and climatological applications.

The AOMSUC was followed by an **international coordination meeting of members of the Regional Association (RA)-II and RA-V countries** at IMD, New Delhi, on the **7th of December 2024**.

The conference aims to:

- Promote the importance of satellite observations
- Advanced satellite remote sensing science
- Provide a platform for dialogue and collaboration between satellite operators and users
- Inform the community about the current status and plans of international space programs
- Encourage the development of new technologies for weather satellite sensing
- Engage young scientists in the field

The **first** AOMSUC was held in **Beijing, China, in 2010**. Since then, the conference has been hosted annually in various locations across Asia and Oceania.

The AOMSUC has become a premier event for meteorologists, earth scientists, satellite operators, and students from across the region and the globe.

32. Abdullah Ali Al Yahya, Foreign Minister of the State of Kuwait, has visited India on 03-04 December 2024 at the invitation of External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar (EAM).

This is the **first** official visit of H.E. Abudullah Ali Al Yahya as the Foreign Minister of Kuwait to India.

Both Ministers reviewed the entire spectrum of India-Kuwait ties in areas including political, trade, investment, energy, food security, and people-to-people ties. They also exchanged views on regional and international issues of mutual interest.

Both Ministers also signed an MoU on establishing a **Joint Commission for Cooperation (JCC)** at the level of Foreign Ministers. New Joint Working Groups in areas of Trade, Investment, Education, Technology, Agriculture, Security, and Culture, will be set up under the JCC.

The JCC mechanism will act as an umbrella institutional mechanism to comprehensively review and monitor the entire gamut of our bilateral relations under the new Joint Working Groups and the existing ones in areas including Hydrocarbons, Health, and Consular matters.

33. Octanom Tech has been named among Forbes India's prestigious "**Select 200 Companies with Large Global Business Potential**" at the **D Globalist Entrepreneur Mobility Summit (DGEMS) 2024** in New Delhi.

This exclusive list celebrates organizations poised to make a substantial global impact through their groundbreaking solutions and scalable business models.

Octanom's flagship platform, **Hedged. in** is India's first "**Hedged Style**" trading solution which empowers traders with low-risk structured products to safeguard against market downturns and volatility.

It was founded by visionary financial expert **Rahul Ghose**, Octanom Tech is on a mission to revolutionize investment risk management. Its objective is to reduce global investment losses by USD 100 billion.

34. The Parliament has passed the **Bharatiya Vayuyan Vidheyak (BVV) Bill, 2024**, which seeks to replace the **Aircraft Act of 1934** (last amended in 2020) and bring major reforms to the aviation sector.

The bill aims to streamline aviation regulations, align with international standards, and support the sector's exponential growth.

It addresses safety, affordability, governance, and consumer protection while fostering investment and self-reliance in aircraft manufacturing.

The Bill retains the provisions from the Aircraft Act of 1934, which established the DGCA (Directorate General of Civil Aviation), BCAS (Bureau of Civil Aviation Security), and AAIB (Aircraft Accidents Investigation Bureau).

- These bodies will continue to oversee safety, security, and accident investigations, respectively.
- The Bill provides a mechanism for appeals against the orders of DGCA or BCAS to the central government, which will be the final authority.

The BVV Bill, 2024, moves the responsibility for managing **Radio Telephone Operator Restricted (RTR)** certifications from the Department of Telecom (DoT) to the DGCA.

The Bill empowers the DGCA to regulate not only the manufacture, repair, and maintenance of aircraft but also the design and locations where aircraft are being designed.

The Bill allows the Central government to unilaterally appoint an arbitrator (a person who is or has been qualified for appointment as a Judge of a High Court) to resolve compensation disputes related to land acquisition near airports.

STATES AFFAIRS

35. The Government of **Arunachal Pradesh** has launched "**Mission Arun Himveer**" to enhance market linkages for local agricultural and horticultural producers.

The **Arunachal Pradesh Agriculture Marketing Board (APAMB)** signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the **Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP)**, North East Frontier, in the presence of **Chief Minister Pema Khandu**.

MoU was signed by APAMB CEO Okit Palling and ITBP NE Frontier Inspector General Akun Sabharwal.

Key Features:

- ITBP will purchase fruits, vegetables, meat, and poultry directly from local farmers through APAMB.
- Payments will be processed via a revolving fund of ₹4 crore, reimbursed after reconciliation by ITBP.
- Farmers will receive 100% of the funds from this initiative.
- Rs.10 crore annual business is expected under the Mission.

36. **West Bengal's** tourism sector has received international recognition with UNESCO declaring it a top destination for heritage tourism.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamta Banerjee stated state is a leading destination for heritage tourism, highlighting the state's progress in developing religious, heritage, and tea tourism.

The state's concerted efforts to develop religious sites like the **Dakshineswar** and **Kalighat** temples are transforming it into a hub for pilgrims and heritage tourists. Additionally, the under-construction **Jagannath** temple at **Digha** is expected to attract even more devotees upon completion.

The **Gangasagar Mela**, an important religious gathering, has gained attention as one of the largest pilgrimages in India, second only to the Kumbh Mela.

37. Gujarat's iconic handicraft '**Gharchola**' has received the Geographical Indication (GI) tag, bringing the state's GI count to **27**, with 23 focused on handicrafts.

This recognition enhances Gharchola's prestige and market presence globally.

The GI tag for Gharchola handicrafts was presented to Gujarat at the "**GI and Beyond – Virasat Se Vikas Tak**" program in New Delhi, hosted by the Handlooms Development Commissioner of the Ministry of Textiles, Government of India.

Along with the Gharchola saree, several other remarkable handicrafts have also earned GI tags under the **Hastakala Setu Yojana**.

These include **Surat's** vanishing '**Saadeli**' art, **Banaskantha's** intricate '**Soof**' embroidery, **Bharuch's** '**Sujni**' craft, **Ahmedabad's** distinctive '**Saudagiri Print**,' and the vibrant 'Maata Ni Pacchedi' handicrafts, all of which were honored last year.

Gharchola saree is a very special part of Gujarati weddings. It is made of cotton or silk. Zari work is done on it and figures of peacocks, lotus, flowers, and leaves are made. The making of Gharchola started from the Khambhat district of Gujarat.

- 38.** The **2nd** edition of **Krishnaveni Sangeetha Neerajanam Music Festival** was conducted in **Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh**.

The festival was held from **6-8 December 2024**.

The **three-day** festival was held across three iconic locations in Vijayawada, featuring over 140 talented artists and 35 mesmerizing programs that celebrate the rich legacy of Carnatic music.

During the event, Kandula Durgesh, Minister for Tourism, Culture, and Cinematography, announced plans to preserve the legacy of great composers such as **Tyagaraja** and **Annamacharya** and to honor artistic luminaries like **Pinakini** and **Dwaram Venkataswami**.

A key highlight of the festival was the showcase of **GI-tagged handicrafts** and **handlooms** from **Andhra Pradesh** and **Telangana**, presented by the Development Commissioner for Handicrafts and Development Commissioner for Handlooms, Ministry of Textiles.

- 39.** The **Hornbill Festival 2024**, also known as the "Festival of Festivals", was inaugurated in **Naga Heritage Village, Kisama**.

The festival is celebrated from **1st December to 10th December** every year.

The year 2024 marks the **25th** edition of this festival.

The festival is named after the bird Hornbill which is globally respected and displayed in the folklore in most of the state's tribes.

The Hornbill Festival 2024, themed **"Cultural Connect,"** is a grand celebration of Nagaland's rich heritage and cultural diversity.

All the tribes of Nagaland take part in the festival. The main aim of the festival is to revive and protect the rich culture of Nagaland and display its extravaganza and traditions.

The festival was conceptualized in the year 2000.

- 40.** The State of **Nagaland** was formed on **1 December 1963**, as the **16th** state of the Indian Union, and a democratically elected government took office in **1964**.

The year 2024 marks the **62nd** statehood day of Nagaland.

Chief Minister, **Neiphiu Rio** graced the occasion at Nagaland Civil Secretariat Plaza Kohima.

On the occasion, he mentioned promoting Water Transport and Tourism in the State, the State Government is pursuing with the Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways for developing Inland Water projects at Tizu-Zungki and Doyang Reservoir Dam, Noune Lake, Shilloi Lake.

The Department of Animal Husbandry & Veterinary Services has established two Veterinary Hospitals at Tseminyu and Mangkolemba and three veterinary Hospitals in Shamator, Chumoukedima, and Niuland are in the pipeline.

To establish a robust and reliable transmission system and to meet the projected load demand of 360 Mega Watt of the State by 2030, the Department of Power has finalized a comprehensive transmission plan with the Central Electricity Authority (CEA) Ministry of Power.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

- 41. Nepal and China** have signed a **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) Cooperation Framework** during Nepal's Prime Minister **K P Sharma Oli's** visit to **China**.

The initiative aims to connect Asia, Europe, and other regions through infrastructure.

The agreement aims to implement long-pending BRI projects focusing on infrastructure like roads, railways, and telecommunication to transform Nepal into a land-linked country.

Both countries finalize the **Trans-Himalayan Multi-Dimensional Connectivity Network (THMDCN)** and related initiatives, aligning with Nepal's aspirations for political stability and economic growth.

Belt and Road Initiative (BRI):

The BRI is a mega connectivity project that connects China with Southeast Asia, Central Asia, Russia, and Europe.

It was initiated as 'One Belt One Road' in 2013. It comprises the Silk Road Economic Belt (A trans-continental passage) and the Maritime Silk Road (A sea route).

- 42. China** has launched its **first atmospheric monitoring station** in **Antarctica**, marking a significant expansion of its research presence on the continent.

It is located in **Larsmann Hills, East Antarctica**, the **Zhongshan National Atmospheric Background Station** aims to provide continuous and long-term observations of atmospheric components, contributing valuable data on climate change and the impact of human activity on the environment.

This station supports China's growing role in Antarctic research, aligning with its broader goals as a **'polar power.'**

This new station joins China's network of **six research stations** in Antarctica, the first of which was built in **1985**.

It also follows the opening of China's Ross Sea scientific research station earlier this year.

- 43. US-state Nebraska** Governor Jim Pillen has proclaimed **December 6th** as **"A Day of Remembrance for Mahatma Gandhi"** and unveiled a statue of Gandhi at the State Capitol in Lincoln.

This marks the first such statue in the nine states under the Seattle Indian Consulate's jurisdiction, honouring Gandhi's legacy of peace and non-violence.

The event was a collaboration between the **Indian Consulate in Seattle** and the **Governor's Office in Nebraska**, reflecting cultural understanding and long-term partnership.

The unveiling ceremony was attended by Lieutenant Governor Joe Kelly, former Senator Ben Nelson, and Indian Consul General Prakash Gupta.

The bust, gifted by the Indian government, symbolizes Gandhi's enduring legacy and the universal values he championed, such as Ahimsa (non-violence) and Satyagraha (truth force).

- 44.** Marking 20 years since the devastating 2004 **Indian Ocean tsunami**, the **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)** urged governments and policymakers worldwide to bolster investments in tsunami preparedness.

The organization unveiled a **roadmap** at an international conference in **Banda Aceh, Indonesia** to achieve **100%** tsunami-ready coastal communities globally by **2030**.

Key Highlights:

Under the UNESCO Tsunami Ready program over 30 countries have established critical early warning systems, with 26 Indian and 12 Indonesian coastal communities recognized tsunami-ready. Globally 700 million people reside in tsunami-prone areas, a figure projected to reach 1 billion by 2050.

The conference culminated in the adoption of the **Banda Aceh Statement**, a global commitment to improving tsunami warning and mitigation systems.

The initiative calls on states and civil society to accelerate investments to meet the 2030 goal.

REPORTS & INDICES

- 45.** The BBC revealed its list of 100 inspiring and influential women from around the world for 2024.

The list acknowledges the toll this year has taken on women by celebrating those who – through their resilience – are pushing for change, as the world changes around them.

The list includes astronaut Sunita Williams, actress Sharon Stone, and Nobel laureate Nadia Murad, among others.

Aruna Roy, Pooja Sharma, and Vinesh Phogat from India have made to the list.

Astronaut Sunita Williams and AI expert Sneha Revanur are two Indo-American women on the list.

Aruna Roy:

- She is a social activist and former civil servant who engages with rural communities, volunteering for their rights.
- She is the co-founder of **Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS)**, an organization that played a key role in enacting the Right to Information Act in 2005.
- She served as an Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer from 1968 to 1975 and then resigned to work with rural people in Rajasthan.

- In **2000**, she received the **Ramon Magsaysay Award** for her work in community leadership.
- She is President of the **National Federation of Indian Women**.
- Her memoir, '**Personal is Political**', was published this year.

Pooja Sharma:

- She was born on July 7, 1996, in New Delhi.
- She has founded an NGO, named **Bright The Soul Foundation**, which works towards the welfare of marginalized communities, to inspire and empower people.
- She lost her elder brother on March 12, 2022. She performed the last rites by tying a turban on her head after nobody came forward to help them.
- Over the past three years, she has performed the last rites for thousands of unclaimed bodies in Delhi.

Vinesh Phogat:

- She is one of India's most decorated wrestlers known not only for her sporting achievements but also for her outspoken stance against gender bias in sports.
- She won the **gold** medal in the **2018 Asian Games** and became the **first** Indian woman wrestler to win a gold medal at both the **Commonwealth** and **Asian Games**.
- She has also won **two bronze** medals at the **World Wrestling Championships**.
- She is a **three-time Olympian**, having competed in three different weight classes: 48 kg in 2016, 53 kg in 2020, and 50 kg in 2024.
- In 2024, she made history as India's **first female wrestler** to reach an **Olympic final**.
- She is currently a member of the **Legislative Assembly (MLA)** in Haryana. She won the 2024 assembly election from the **Julana** constituency representing the Indian National Congress.

- 46.** The **2024 Real-Time Billionaire List**, an annual compilation by **Forbes Magazine**, was released. The list includes detailing the wealthiest individuals worldwide, gauged by their estimated net worth.

The list of the top ten richest people in the world is as follows:

Rank	Name	Net Worth	Source of Wealth	Country
1	Elon Musk	\$362 Billion	Tesla, SpaceX	USA
2	Jeff Bezos	\$ 240 Billion	Amazon	USA
3	Mark Zuckerberg	\$ 215 Billion	Meta Platforms, INC.	USA
4	Larry Ellison	\$ 202 Billion	Oracle	USA
5	Bernard Arnault & Family	\$ 174 Billion	LVMH	France
6	Bill Gates	\$ 166 Billion	Software Company	USA
7	Larry Page	\$ 156 Billion	Google	USA
8	Steve Ballmer	\$ 153 Billion	Google	

9	Warren Buffet	\$ 147 Billion	Berkshire Hathaway	USA
10	Sergey Brin	\$147 Billion	Google	USA

47. ICRA ESG Ratings Limited (formerly known as Pragati Development Consulting Services Limited) released its report, '**Science Based Target Initiative (SBTi) Commitments by Indian Companies**'.

SBTi is a voluntary target-setting initiative whereby companies can commit to setting science-based targets and have their objectives independently assessed and validated. Commitments and target-taking are done through stated sector-wise guidelines by SBTi.

Key Highlights:

- The top five performing countries where companies committed to SBTi targets were the **UK (702), the USA (425), China (233), Germany (203), and Sweden (143)**.
- Europe leads with 2,998 companies followed by Asia with 1,846 companies committed to emission reduction targets.
- India ranks **sixth** globally with 127 companies in the nation committing to net-zero targets.
- The report states power, cement, metal, and mining are high-emission sectors contributing **55%** to India's overall emissions.
- However, 127 companies in India committing to SBTi net-zero targets are primarily from non-hard-to-abate sectors like textiles, software, and pharmaceuticals.
- India contributes approximately **7%** of the global emissions.
- Around **25** companies from the power, cement, and mining sectors have committed to emission reduction through SBTi. This includes companies specifically targeting net-zero emissions too.
- Within the power sector, only **six** Indian companies have adopted SBTi, with three of them from the renewable energy space.
- Among the companies with SBTi targets, only **Adani Energy Solutions** has managed to reduce absolute emissions by 11% in the last six years by transitioning towards renewable energy.
- **JSW Energy**, with a capacity of 6,677 megawatts (MW) witnessed no change in absolute emissions due to its efforts towards renewable energy expansion, carbon capture initiatives, implementation of waste heat recovery systems, etc.
- With a capacity of 14,707 MW, **Tata Power Ltd.**, which has a self-declared net-zero target, witnessed a 15% increase from FY2019 to FY2024.
- In the cement sector, of the eleven companies with SBTi commitments, **ACC Ltd** has been successful in reducing its emission intensity by 11% over 2019–2024.

48. The **Vice Chairperson** of NITI Aayog, **Suman Bery** released NITI Aayog's latest publication analyzing India's trade statistics for the first quarter of the financial year 2024 (April to June) in New Delhi.

The dignitaries present from NITI Aayog namely V.K. Saraswat and Arvind Virman, **BVR Subrahmanyam, CEO, NITI Aayog**.

The trade watch publication offers a holistic snapshot of India's trade position, combining global demand-supply perspectives, sectoral performance, and insights into emerging trade opportunities.

Key Highlights:

- India's total trade in the first half of 2024 was **USD 576 billion** with year-on-year growth of **5.45%** compared to 2023.
- Imports increased by **8.40%** to **USD 173 billion**.
- India's **Current Account Deficit (CAD)** reached **USD 9.7 billion** in quarter 1 FY 25.
- India's exports of iron and steel saw a significant decline of **33%**.
- The report shows that India's Trade Intensity Index (TII) was greater than 1 with **84** countries.
- North America accounted for 21% of India's exports followed by the European Union 18.61%.
- Imports were largely from North East Asia, West Asia, and the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) all together accounted for 51% of India's imports.
- India's share in global services exports has reached 4.6% in 2023 compared to 2% in 2005.
- India's share in global services exports in Information Technology was found to be 10.20% while 7.16% in other business sectors.

National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Aayog):

It is a policy think tank of India which was established on **1st January 2015**. The Chairman of NITI Aayog is Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and it is headquartered in New Delhi.

GOVERNMENT SCHEMES & PROGRAMMES

- 49.** The Union Cabinet chaired by the report titled '**From Gridlock to Growth: How Leadership Enables India's PRAGATI Ecosystem to Power Progress**', was released by **Oxford's Saïd Business School**, in collaboration with the **Gates Foundation** at the Indian Institute of Management Bengaluru.

The study highlighted the **Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation (PRAGATI)** as a game-changer in India's digital governance landscape.

Key findings of the study:

- By June 2023, the PRAGATI platform fast-tracked **340 projects** worth **₹17.05 lakh crore (\$205 billion)**, since its inception in **2015**, showcasing India's use of digital tools and government collaboration as a model for emerging economies.
- PRAGATI promotes a sense of driving accountability and resolving roadblocks.
- The study highlights India's remarkable digital transformation, showcasing how platforms like **PRAGATI, PM Gati Shakti, PARIVESH, and the Project Monitoring Group (PMG)** portal have revolutionized governance and infrastructure development.
- PRAGATI has been instrumental in accelerating social sector schemes, by bringing key programs under the Prime Minister's purview. A prime example is the Jal Jeevan Mission which saw significant progress through PRAGATI reviews, increasing rural coverage from 17% in 2019 to 74% in 2024.

Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation (PRAGATI) platform:

The platform was launched on **March 25, 2015**.

The system has been designed in-house by the PMO team with the help of the National Informatics Center (NIC).

The platform uniquely bundles the three latest technologies: **Digital data management, video conferencing, and geospatial technology.**

50. The Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan, also known as the Accessible India Campaign, has completed its **9 years** on 3rd December 2024.

The campaign was launched by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment on the **International Day of Persons with Disabilities** in the year **2015**.

The campaign aimed to ensure universal accessibility across three vital domains: **built infrastructure, transport systems**, and the **information and communication technology (ICT) ecosystem**.

The campaign introduced a structured approach, focusing on making public buildings, transport networks like buses and trains, and digital platforms accessible to Divyangjans.

The campaign's objectives have been absorbed into the Creation of a Barrier-Free Environment Scheme under the broader umbrella of the **Scheme for Implementation of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (SIPDA)**.

Key achievements:

- Accessibility audits of 1,671 government buildings were conducted under the target of auditing 25-50 buildings in 50 cities.
- A fund of ₹562 crore was released for retrofitting 1,314 buildings.
- Accessibility features have been incorporated into 1,748 government buildings, including 648 buildings under State/UT governments and 1,100 Central Government buildings retrofitted by the CPWD.
- All 35 international airports and 55 out of 69 domestic airports now feature ramps, accessible toilets, helpdesks, and lifts with Braille and auditory systems.
- Aerobridges have been provided at all international/customs airports.
- 709 railway stations have been made fully accessible, while 4,068 stations are partially accessible.
- Out of 1,45,747 buses, 8,695 (5.96%) are fully accessible, and 42,348 (29.05%) are partially accessible.
- Across 24 States/UTs, 3,120 out of 3,533 bus stations have been equipped with accessibility features.
- 95 Central Government websites have been made accessible under the Content Management Framework by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY).
- 676 State Government websites have been made accessible, with 476 of them live.
- The Indian Sign Language Research and Training Centre (ISLRTC) was established in September 2015 to promote the use, teaching, and research of Indian Sign Language. Over 1,013 individuals have been trained in Indian Sign Language through diploma and short-term courses offered by ISLRTC. A total of 183 students have completed the Diploma in Indian Sign Language Interpretation (DISLI) course between 2016-17 and 2023.

- Accessibility in TV content is being implemented in phases, with 19 news channels having telecast 2,447 accessible news bulletins and 17 General Entertainment Category (GEC) channels broadcasting 3,686 accessible programs and movies.

International Day of Persons with Disabilities 2024:

On the occasion of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities 2024, the **President of India, Droupadi Murmu** conferred the **National Awards** to **33** exemplary individuals and institutions for Empowering Persons with Disabilities, in New Delhi.

She mentioned the Rashtrapati Bhavan website has been developed as the country's **first inclusive website**, adhering to **GIGW3** standards and accessible to visually impaired individuals.

The **Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD)**, under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MoSJE), launched **16** initiatives to empower Divyangjans across India.

The list is as follows:

- **Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan:** An online platform for the empanelment of accessibility auditors for built environments was introduced, reflecting the government's commitment to creating inclusive infrastructure.
- **Sugamya Bharat Yatra:** A unique initiative in partnership with the Association for Persons with Disabilities, where Divyangjans will assess the accessibility of public spaces using the AI-enabled **"Yes to Access"** app.
- **Pathways to Access – Part 3 Compendium:** The third installment of the series highlights key government documents on employment, financial services, and healthcare for persons with disabilities, empowering them with knowledge and access to resources.
- **High-Power Spectacles:** Developed by **CSIR-CSIO**, these glasses cater to individuals with low vision, offering superior optical clarity and improving quality of life.
- **Divyasha E-Coffee Table Book: ALIMCO's e-book,** launched to commemorate its 50-year journey, showcases inspiring stories and achievements in providing assistive devices to Divyangjans.
- **Kadam Knee Joint:** An indigenous innovation developed by **IIT Madras** and **SBMT**, offering enhanced mobility and durability, launched as a major leap in assistive technology.
- **Awareness Generation and Publicity Portal:** A digital platform for seamless application under the Awareness Generation and Publicity Scheme was inaugurated to enhance transparency and efficiency.
- **Accessible Storybooks:** In collaboration with NIEPVD and NBT, **21** accessible books in **Braille, audio**, and large print formats were launched to promote inclusive education.
- **Standard Bharti Braille Code:** A draft for standardized **Braille scripts in 13 Indian languages** was introduced for public consultation, ensuring consistency and compatibility with Unicode standards.
- **Braille Books Portal:** An online submission portal for creating Braille books was unveiled, fostering inclusive education.
- **MoU with Infosys BPM:** A significant partnership to enhance employment opportunities for Divyangjans through the **PM DAKSH** portal's **Divyangjan Rozgar Setu** initiative.
- **Employability Skills Book:** Released in 11 Indian languages, this book bridges the gap between education and employment for Divyangjans, promoting economic independence.

- **Infosys Springboard Skill Programme:** Infosys Springboard recently collaborated with Yunikey to help deaf learners across India. The courses offered through the Yunikey channel on Infosys Springboard empower millions of young deaf learners to develop skills across various fields and acquire marketable abilities. Through this collaboration, the goal is to empower 10,000 learners in the next year.
- **Google Extension for Persons with Hearing Impairment: SignUp Media and Yunikey** are partnering to provide the most robust, reliable, accessible source of sign language communication in entertainment, information, and educational media for the Deaf community in India. For the first time, the Deaf Community will have its primary language available in media & education across the country.
- **E-Sanidhya Portal:** By **Tata Power Community Development Trust** and **National Institute for Empowerment of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities (NIEPID)**, Secunderabad. The **Tata E-Sanidhya Neuro-Diversity Platform** is a specialized online and offline (digital) service designed to assist individuals with neuro-diversity conditions, particularly those affected by autism.
- **Computer-Based Indian Intelligence Test by NIEPID:** NIEPID has developed an indigenous Indian Test of Intelligence, which was inaugurated by the Union Minister Dr. Virendra Kumar, MSJ&E, on December 11, 2023, in New Delhi.

51. The **Union Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution**, and **New & Renewable Energy, Pralhad Joshi**, launched the '**Anna Chakra**' and **SCAN (Subsidy Claim Application for NFSA) portal**.

Anna Chakra: PDS Supply Chain Optimization Tool:

- It was created in collaboration with the **World Food Programme (WFP)** and the **Foundation for Innovation and Technology Transfer (FITT)**, IIT-Delhi.
- It utilizes advanced algorithms to identify optimal routes for food grain movement.
- It has been linked with **FOIS (Freight Operations Information System)** through the **Unified Logistics Interface Platform (ULIP)**.
- It is integrated with the **PM Gati Shakti platform**, including geo-locations of FPSs and warehouses.
- It is estimated to save **Rs.250 crore** annually.
- QKM (quantity in quintal x distance in KMs) which is the objective function of this entire exercise has been reduced by 58 crores.
- This exercise has covered 4.37 Lakhs Fair Price Shops and approx. 6700 warehouses involved in the PDS supply chain.

SCAN (Subsidy Claim Application for NFSA) Portal:

- It is aimed at streamlining the subsidy claim process under the **National Food Security Act (NFSA)**.
- It provides Single-window submission of subsidy claims by states.
- End-to-end workflow automation for claim scrutiny, approval, and settlement.
- Uses rule-based processing for efficient subsidy release.
- It will enhance transparency and accountability in subsidy disbursement.

- 52.** The **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP)** scheme has achieved notable progress in improving the Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB) and Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for girls.

The provisional data from the **Health Management Information System (HMIS)** shows that **SRB** improved from **918 in 2014-15 to 930 in 2023-24**.

As per the data of the Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE +) of the Department of School Education and Literacy, the **National Gross Enrollment ratio** of girls in school at the secondary level has increased from **75.51 percent in 2014-15 to 79.4 percent in 2021-22** including rural areas.

Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) Scheme:

The Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) scheme was launched on **January 22, 2015**, as a collaborative effort by the Ministry of Women & Child Development with the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

It focuses on preventing gender-biased sex-selective practices, ensuring the survival and protection of the girl child, and promoting her education.

BBBP is a **centrally sponsored scheme** with 100% funding by the Central Government in all the districts of the country under the Sambal vertical of Mission Shakti.

The government of **West Bengal** is not implementing BBBP.

The Ministry of Women and Child Development monitors the progress of the overall activities under BBBP.

- 53.** The Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare, **Jagat Prakash Nadda**, has officially launched the ambitious **100-Day TB Elimination Campaign** in **Panchkula, Haryana**.

This campaign aims to accelerate the fight against TB by improving case detection, reducing diagnostic delays, and enhancing treatment outcomes, particularly for vulnerable populations.

The **347 districts** across 33 States/UTs have been selected based on indicators such as death rate, presumptive TB examination rate, and incidence rate as compared to the national average.

The 100-Day Campaign is a part of the broader framework of the National TB Elimination Programme (NTEP) under the aegis of the National Health Mission (NHM), which is aligned with the National Strategic Plan (NSP) for TB Elimination 2017–2025.

The NSP focuses on reducing TB incidence, enhancing diagnostic and treatment capabilities, and addressing the socio-economic impact of the disease.

This ambitious initiative reflects the vision set by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the 2018 End TB Summit, where he pledged to achieve a **TB-free India by 2025**.

The focus of this campaign will be the strengthening of diagnostics and treatment services, particularly for the most vulnerable groups. These include people living in remote and underserved areas, marginalized communities, and individuals with co-morbidities such as diabetes, HIV, and malnutrition.

The campaign will target high-burden areas with specialized strategies designed to improve access to advanced diagnostics and reduce the delay in treatment initiation.

The campaign will leverage existing health infrastructure, including the extensive network of Ayushman Aarogya Mandirs, which have been instrumental in bringing TB services to the grassroots level.

The initiative will also expand nutritional support through the Ni-kshay Poshan Yojana, which provides financial aid to TB patients for better nutrition.

During the launch event, the Union Minister also unveiled national guidelines for the implementation of the new drug-resistant TB regimen, **BPaLM**. These guidelines are designed to standardize and streamline the administration of this advanced treatment, which offers improved outcomes for patients struggling with drug-resistant TB.

Note: The TB incidence rate decreased by 17.7%, from 237 per 100,000 in 2015 to 195 per 100,000 in 2023. Similarly, TB-related deaths have declined by 21.4%, from 28 per lakh population in 2015 to 22 per lakh population in 2023.

BUSINESS & ECONOMY

54. Hyundai Motor Group has partnered with **three** Indian Institutes of Technology i.e. **IIT Madras, IIT Bombay, and IIT Delhi** to establish a research work project in the field of batteries and electrification.

The **Hyundai Centre of Excellence (CoE)**, which will be set up on the IIT Delhi campus will operate through sponsorships from Hyundai Motor Group.

The group plans to invest around **USD 7 million** over five years, from **2025 to 2029**, to jointly conduct battery and electrification-related research.

The collaboration will expand into areas like software and hydrogen fuel cells.

The CoE will not only conduct joint research on academic-industrial cooperation tasks but also facilitate technical and human exchanges between battery and electrification experts from Korea and India.

55. Tata Power Company Ltd has collaborated with **Druk Green Power Corporation Ltd (DGPC)** to develop at least **5,000 MW** of clean energy generation capacity in **Bhutan**.

The MoU was signed in Thimpu, Bhutan between Dasho Chhewang Rinzin, MD, DGPC, and Praveer Sinha in the presence of Bhutanese Prime Minister Dasho Tshering Tobgay and Tata Sons chairman N. Chandrasekaran.

The projects to be developed through the partnership would include 4,500 MW of hydropower comprising the 1,125 MW Dorjilung hydroelectric project; 740 MW Gongri Reservoir; 1,800 MW Jeri pumped storage project and the 364 MW Chamkharchhu IV. Another 500 MW of solar projects will be developed by Tata Power Renewable Energy Ltd (TPREL), a subsidiary of Tata Power.

The development is in line with Bhutan's vision for its energy sector, which is to raise its overall power generation capacity to 25,000 MW by 2040, from 2,300 MW currently, for its energy security and regional energy integration.

56. The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has imposed a penalty of **Rs. 213.14 crores (USD252 million)** on **Meta** for abuse of dominant position.

The penalty was imposed on the privacy policy of the Meta-owned **WhatsApp service**, issued cease-and-desist directions, and ordered the implementation of remedial behavior.

The penalty was imposed under **Section 4 (2) (a) (i)** of the **Competition Commission Act**.

In **2021**, WhatsApp updated its privacy policy, which included a mandatory condition that users had to agree to their data being collected and shared with other Meta companies and products if they wished to continue to use WhatsApp's services.

The CCI found this **"take-it-or-leave-it"** policy an imposition of unfair conditions, and without the option to opt out Meta had undermined the users' autonomy and constituted an abuse of its dominant position.

Hence, it issued the following directions:

- WhatsApp cannot share any user data with other Meta companies or products for advertising purposes for five years.
- Meta must include a detailed explanation of its data-sharing policies with other Meta companies or products, specifying and linking each data type to a corresponding purpose.
- Remove the condition that data collected on WhatsApp shall be shared with other Meta companies and products to access WhatsApp services in India.
- To share data other than to provide WhatsApp services, all users (including the ones who previously accepted the policy) will be provided with an option prominently placed in the app to: Manage the data shared by way of an opt-out; and Review and modify their choice about sharing such data.

57. Tata Electronics has signed a deal to acquire a **60%** stake in **Taiwanese** contract manufacturer **Pegatron's** iPhone plant in **Chennai, Tamil Nadu**.

With joint capacities of both the Wistron and the Pegatron facilities, along with the expansion Tata is undertaking at its Hosur facility will increase the production capacity significantly.

The plant currently makes the greatest number of iPhones in India.

This deal strengthens Tata's position as an Apple supplier and aims to enhance iPhone manufacturing in India.

iPhones in India are manufactured by three companies Foxconn, Pegatron, and Tata Group (previously Western Group).

- 58.** The **Competition Commission of India** has approved the subscription to optionally **convertible debentures** of **GMR Infra Enterprises Private Limited** by **Platinum Stone A 2014 Trust** (acting through its trustee **Platinum Rock B 2014 RSC Limited**).

The proposed combination involves a subscription to **unlisted and unrated optionally convertible debentures (OCDs)** of GMR Infra Enterprises Private Limited by Platinum Stone A 2014 Trust (acting through its trustee Platinum Rock B 2014 RSC Limited).

Before the issuance of OCDs as well as after the Acquirer subscribes to the OCDs, the Target SPV will acquire a cumulative of **approximately 9%** of the shareholding (on a fully diluted basis) of GMR Airports Limited (GAL) from its promoter, i.e., GMR Enterprises Private Limited (GEPL).

Such shareholding of GAL held by the Target SPV will be pledged in favor of the Acquirer to secure the OCD subscription amount (Proposed Combination).

Platinum Stone A 2014 Trust:

It is a trust established under the laws of the Abu Dhabi Global Market, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (acting through its Trustee, Platinum Rock B 2014 RSC Limited), whose sole beneficiary is **The Abu Dhabi Investment Authority**, a public institution established by the Government of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi as an independent investment institution.

GAL:

GAL is a public company with its shares listed on the stock exchanges. GAL, through its subsidiaries, is engaged in developing, managing, and operating airports in India and around the world, while also being engaged in associated business activities.

GAL currently operates and manages three operational airports, Delhi International Airport Limited, GMR Hyderabad International Airport Limited, and GMR Goa International Airport Limited.

- 59.** The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has approved the acquisition of certain shareholding in **Shiprocket Private Limited** by **KDT Venture Holdings, LLC**.

KDT Venture Holdings:

KDT is incorporated in the **United States of America (US)** and is an early-stage venture capital firm that invests in startups in countries/ geographies including the US, Israel, and the United Kingdom in the healthcare, supply chain and manufacturing, cyber security, semiconductors, connectivity, fintech, enterprise software, and energy transformation sectors.

KDT is a wholly owned subsidiary company of **Koch, Inc.**

Shiprocket Private Limited:

Shiprocket operates a logistics platform whereby it provides logistics services to other businesses, domestically and internationally, through logistics service providers listed on its platform.

60. The **Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD)** released its 'Economic Outlook December 2024'.

Key Projections:

- It has increased India's GDP forecast for FY 25 by 20 basis points to **6.8%** from its previous projection of 6.6% in May 2024.
- It has also revised its projection of GDP for FY 26 to 6.9%.
- The report predicted India's inflation forecast for FY 26 & FY 27 to be 4.2% and 4% respectively.
- The report estimated India's headline inflation for FY 25 to be 4.8%. Previously it was projected 4.5% in September 2024.
- India's general government deficit is estimated to fall below 8% of GDP, including states.
- The fiscal deficit of India for FY 25 & FY 26 is projected as (-8.2%) and (-7.5%), respectively.
- Global GDP forecast in 2024 - 3.2%
- While the global GDP growth for FY 25 & FY 26 are projected to be 3.2% and 3.3%, respectively.

BANKING & FINANCE

61. **Punjab National Bank (PNB)**, the country's second-largest public sector bank, has become a signatory to the globally recognized **Partnership for Carbon Accounting Financials (PCAF)**.

PNB's decision to join PCAF aligns with the **Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) draft framework** on climate-related financial risk disclosures, which requires banks to begin reporting on governance, strategy, and risk management for climate-related financial risks and opportunities from FY 2025-26 onwards.

As a PCAF signatory, PNB joins an international network of financial institutions committed to addressing climate change through robust **Greenhouse Gas (GHG)** accounting practices.

This association offers PNB access to technical support, industry-leading training, and country-specific emission data, including insights tailored for India.

PNB will actively engage in global working groups to refine GHG accounting standards and benefit from peer-to-peer knowledge sharing through workshops and webinars.

62. The **Competition Commission of India (CCI)** approved the acquisition of certain shareholding of **Shiprocket Private Limited** by **MUFG Bank, Ltd.**

MUFG Bank is incorporated in **Japan** and is a wholly-owned subsidiary of **Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group, Inc. (MUFG)**, being the ultimate parent company. It is engaged in banking services in India.

Shiprocket Private Limited operates a logistics platform whereby it provides logistics services to other businesses, domestically and internationally, through logistics service providers listed on its platform.

- 63.** The **World Bank** has launched a significant initiative aimed at enhancing forest landscapes in the northeastern states of **Tripura** and **Nagaland**.

The total cost of the project is **USD 225.5 Million**.

The fund is provided by the **International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD)** for **12 years** including a grace period of 4.5 years.

The project will also receive a grant of USD 2.4 million from the Global Partnership for Sustainable and Resilient Landscapes (PROGREEN).

The project, named **ELEMENT (Enhancing Landscapes for Environmental Management and Transformation)**, is expected to positively impact over 700,000 people across these regions.

It will conserve and restore 100,000 hectares of forest.

The primary goals of the project are to promote economic growth, reduce carbon emissions by 435,000 tons, and create job opportunities (around 60,000) by focusing on sustainable forest management and conservation practices.

One of the key components of the ELEMENT project is its focus on community-based management.

The project will generate new economic opportunities, particularly in the fields of ecotourism, non-timber forest products, and agroforestry.

The Project will also benefit from a complementary Global Partnership for Sustainable and Resilient Landscapes (PROGREEN) grant in the amount of \$2.4 million.

- 64.** The **Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)** has imposed a **Rs 9 lakh** penalty on **Reliance Securities Ltd (RSL)** for breaching stock broker norms and market regulations following an inspection.

The action was triggered after a review of RSL's records and documents by SEBI, NSE, and BSE from **April 2022 to December 2023**.

SEBI highlighted numerous violations by RSL and its authorized persons (APs). These included inadequate systems for recording client orders, discrepancies in terminal usage, and failure to segregate office spaces shared with other brokers.

SEBI found that offline client order records linked to specific APs, Jitendra Kambad and Naitik Shah, were not properly maintained.

Reliance Securities Ltd. is part of the Anil Ambani Group. It is registered as a Non-Banking Finance Company (NBFC).

- 65.** **Canara HSBC Life Insurance** has launched **OmniGen AI**, a groundbreaking generative AI solution aimed at optimizing risk evaluation in underwriting.

This innovative system leverages cutting-edge technology on **Amazon Web Services (AWS)**, enabling underwriters to make faster, more precise decisions based on a comprehensive set of data points.

Key Features:

This will serve as a co-pilot for **underwriters**, automating complex tasks by analyzing underwriting guidelines, risk profiles, and model outputs. This will lead to swift, objective decisions while minimizing manual oversight and judgment errors.

Advanced algorithms help identify trends and patterns in risk profiles, improving the accuracy of underwriting decisions.

By leveraging generative AI, the solution ensures a seamless experience from policy buying to claims settlement.

Canara HSBC Life Insurance:

It was established in **2008**. It is headquartered in Gurugram, Haryana with over 100 branch offices across India.

Shareholders are Canara Bank (51%), HSBC Insurance (26%), and Punjab National Bank (23%).

- 66.** The **National Securities Depository Limited (NSDL)** has appointed **Vijay Chandok** as the new **Managing Director (MD)** and **Chief Executive Officer (CEO)** of the company.

He has been appointed for five years or up to the age of 65, whichever comes earlier.

He succeeded Padmaja Chunduru who was appointed in the year 2021.

He has served as the MD and CEO of ICICI Securities. He held pivotal roles at the ICICI Group, including on the board of ICICI Bank as an executive director.

National Securities Depository Limited:

It is a SEBI-registered market infrastructure institution established in 1996, it offers a wide range of products and services to the financial and securities markets in India.

Following the introduction of the **Depositories Act in 1996**, NSDL pioneered the dematerialization of securities in India in November 1996.

It is India's **first securities depository** to reach **Rs 500 lakh crore (USD 6 trillion)** in value of assets held in custody in September 2024.

In October, NSDL received Sebi's approval to launch its initial public offering (IPO), which is a complete offer-for-sale (OFS) of more than 5.72 crore equity shares by shareholders.

Those selling shares in the OFS include the **National Stock Exchange of India (NSE)**, the **State Bank of India (SBI)**, and **HDFC Bank**.

- 67.** The **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** Board of Governors has elected **Masato Kanda** as ADB's **11th President**.

He currently serves as **Special Advisor** to **Japan's Prime Minister** and **Minister of Finance**.

He will assume office on **24 February 2025**, succeeding **Masatsugu Asakawa**, who will leave office on 23 February 2025.

He will complete the unexpired term of President Masatsugu Asakawa, which ends on **23 November 2026**.

Masato Kanda:

- He has been actively engaged in the **G7, G20**, and other international forums, addressing key policy challenges such as multilateral development bank (MDB) evolution, pandemic prevention, preparedness and response, and debt sustainability and transparency.
- During his tenure as **Vice-Minister of Finance for International Affairs**, Japan made a record contribution of more than **\$1 billion** to the **Asian Development Fund 13th replenishment (ADF 14)**.
- He has served as the Chair of the **Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Corporate Governance Committee**.
- He also served as Alternative Executive Director for Japan at the World Bank.

Asian Development Bank:

- It was established in **1966** and is headquartered in **Manila, Philippines**.
- It is owned by **69 members—49** from the region.
- **Japan** and the **USA** hold the largest share **15.6%** each.
- ADB is committed to achieving a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and the Pacific while sustaining its efforts to eradicate extreme poverty.

68. Angel One Asset Management Company, a wholly owned subsidiary of Angel One, has received approval from the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) to act as the asset management company for Angel One Mutual Fund.

With this milestone, Angel One marks its entry into the asset management space, focusing exclusively on passive investment solutions.

Its main focus is on passive investing through **Exchange Traded Funds (ETF) & Index Fund** products reflecting our commitment to making financial products more accessible, affordable, and transparent for all.

SEBI has also approved **Unifi Asset Management** to launch mutual fund operations.

Angel One Limited:

Angel One Limited was founded in 1996. It is an Indian stockbroking firm associated with NSE, BSE, National Commodity Derivatives Exchange (NCDEX), and Multi Commodity Exchange of India (MCX).

69. SBI Card has reached a significant milestone by surpassing **20 million credit cards** in circulation.

The company maintained an impressive **CAGR of 25%** in cards issued and **26%** in spending from **FY19 to FY24**.

The milestone reinforced SBI Card's position as the second-largest card issuer in India, following **HDFC Bank**, which also reached the 20 million milestone in **January 2024**.

As per the latest data released by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) for October, SBI Cards in circulation stood at nearly 19.8 million as compared to 19.58 million cards in September 2024.

Meanwhile, HDFC Bank had 22.64 million cards in circulation in October. The total number of outstanding credit cards in the system increased 12.85 percent Year-on-Year (YoY) to 106.88 million led by HDFC Bank which added 241,119 cards followed by SBI Cards with 220,265 card additions.

70. Sachin Bansal-owned Navi has climbed the **Unified Payment Interface (UPI)** leaderboard to become the **fourth largest** player in the ecosystem.

The company processed **157.51 million** transactions in October, overtaking **Bengaluru-based Cred**, which recorded 152.28 million transactions in the same month.

Flipkart-backed Super.money, which launched operations in July 2024, processed 49.68 million transactions in October. This was twice the number of transactions in September when the firm processed 25.75 million transactions.

As of October 2024, PhonePe's market share on UPI was pegged at 47.67 percent, followed by Google Pay and Paytm with 37.39 percent and 7.02 percent share, respectively.

71. Mumbai-based RBL Bank, formerly known as Ratnakar Bank Limited, has appointed Chess grandmaster **D. Gukesh** as its new brand Ambassador.

Gukesh Dommaraju is the youngest-ever contender to compete in the World Chess Championship and the **third-youngest** grandmaster to achieve a rating of **2700**.

He is the second Indian after Vishwanathan Anand to compete in a World Championship match.

With this partnership, RBL Bank reinforces its commitment to being a thoughtful, strategic partner for customers at every stage of life, aligning their financial goals with the expertise of a grandmaster's winning moves.

72. The transactions processed through the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) on RuPay credit cards doubled in the **first seven months** of financial year 2025 (FY25) compared to the same period of FY24, as per the latest data from the Ministry of Finance.

Till October, **over 750 million** such transactions amounting to **Rs 63,825.8 crore** were processed. In FY24, UPI RuPay credit card transactions were recorded at 362.8 million with a cumulative value of Rs 33,439.24 crore.

Rupay:

RuPay is India's payment network system. It was launched in **2012** by the **National Payments Corp of India (NPCI)**.

Rupay Credit Card:

The RuPay credit card was started in **June 2017**. After five years of its launch, the NPCI linked RuPay credit cards to UPI in **September 2022**. Users could link their RuPay credit cards to UPI apps to make merchant payments.

73. Razorpay has partnered with the **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** and the **Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C)** to improve **cybersecurity** in India's digital payments sector.

The partnership aims to:

- **Educate businesses and consumers:** Provide businesses and consumers with the knowledge they need to protect themselves.
- **Raise awareness:** Promote widespread awareness of cybersecurity across India.
- **Strengthen the digital economy:** Combine Razorpay's technological expertise with I4C's strategic initiatives.

The partnership comes at a time when digital fraud incidents in India are increasing rapidly.

Between January and April 2024, over 7,000 complaints were reported daily, with 85% of them involving financial fraud. Victims lost more than \$21.2 million to cyber crimes during that time.

Razorpay has connected over 1600 cybercrime stations across 25 states and union territories.

RBI IN NEWS

74. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) lifted the supervisory restrictions imposed on **Navi Finserv**, a non-banking financial company (NBFC).

The restrictions were imposed on October 17, 2024, due to concerns over loan pricing and regulatory non-compliance.

In response, Navi Finserv worked closely with the RBI, implementing corrective actions to realign its processes with regulatory guidelines.

The company revamped its loan pricing practices, ensuring fairness, transparency, and compliance. It also updated its systems to meet RBI standards for borrower assessments and lending operations.

Previously, the company had to cancel a Rs 100 crore fundraising plan, and its ratings were put on "rating watch" by CRISIL.

With the restrictions lifted, Navi Finserv aims to drive financial inclusion with customer-first, compliant financial solutions, focusing on governance and operational excellence.

75. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has accorded approval to **Canara Bank** for divesting its shareholding in **Canara Robeco Asset Management Company Ltd** and **Canara HSBC Life Insurance Company Ltd** by **13 percent** and **14.5 percent**, respectively through an **Initial Public Offer (IPO)**.

RBI has intimated that by the exemption granted by the Government of India, the bank should adhere to the **October 31, 2029** timeline for bringing its stake in these entities up to **30%**.

Canara HSBC Life Insurance Company:

It was established in 2008, is a joint venture company with a 51 percent stake owned by Canara Bank and a 26 percent stake held by HSBC Insurance (Asia Pacific) Holdings, and the remaining 23 percent stake by Punjab National Bank (PNB).

Canara Robeco Asset Management Company:

It is the country's second-oldest asset manager. The state-run lender had floated the company in 1993, partnering with Robeco, now part of Orix, in 2007.

Canara Bank owns a **51%** stake in Canara Robeco Asset Management Company while Japan's Orix Corporation has the remaining stake in the AMC.

76. The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** announced its **fifth bi-monthly** monetary policy of FY25.

The **six-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)** led by **RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das** decided by a 4 to 2 majority to keep the benchmark repo rate unchanged at 6.5% for the **eleventh** straight meeting.

The repo rate last saw a change in **February 2023**, when it was raised to the current 6.5%.

It maintained the monetary policy stance 'Neutral' and remained focused on a durable alignment of inflation with the target while supporting growth.

Key Highlights:

- The rate-setting panel reduced the **cash reserve ratio (CRR)** by **50 basis points (bps) to 4%**.
- The CRR cut only serves as a band-aid to ease money markets as liquidity tightens from December 2024 to March 2025.
- This announcement will release ₹90,000 crore in December and ₹1.16 lakh crore by March 2025.
- RBI's inflation forecast for Q4 has been raised to **4.5%** which highlights the challenges of bringing down the headline inflation to near 4%.
- **Repo rate** - 6.50 percent
- **Standing Deposit Facility (SDF) rate** - 6.25 percent
- **Marginal Standing Facility (MSF) rate** - 6.75 percent
- **Bank Rate** - 6.75 percent
- **Reverse Repo rate** - 3.35 percent

Monetary Policy Committee:

MPC was constituted under **Section 45 ZB** of the **Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934** as an initiative to bring more transparency and accountability in fixing the Monetary Policy of India.

Members:

- **Saugata Bhattacharya,**
- **Dr. Rajiv Ranjan,**
- **Dr. Michael Debabrata Patra**

- **Shaktikanta Das**
- **Dr. Nagesh Kumar and Professor Ram Singh**

77. The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has announced that **Small Finance Banks (SFBs)** are now permitted to offer pre-sanctioned credit lines through the **Unified Payments Interface (UPI)**.

The aim is to support underserved groups, including small businesses, micro-entrepreneurs, and individuals in rural and semi-urban regions.

RBI allowed **Scheduled Commercial Banks** to link pre-sanctioned credit lines to UPI accounts in **September 2023**.

Previously, this feature was unavailable to SFBs, Regional Rural Banks, and Payments Banks.

The feature will enable customers to access pre-approved credit lines directly on the UPI platform, facilitating immediate credit for payments, and thus reducing dependency on funds from personal accounts.

Small Finance Banks:

The SFBs are set up on the recommendations made by the **Nachikat Mor committee** which was formed in the year **2013**.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has laid down several criteria for Small Finance Banks (SFBs) to meet, including:

- **Paid-up capital:** SFBs must have a minimum paid-up capital of Rs 200 crore.
- **Name:** The name of the financial institution must include "Small Finance Bank".
- **Capital Adequacy Ratio (CRAR):** SFBs must maintain a minimum CRAR of 15% of their risk-weighted assets (RWA).
- **Net worth:** SFBs must have a minimum net worth of Rs 1,000 crore.
- **Performance:** SFBs must have a satisfactory performance track record for at least five years.
- **Profit:** SFBs must have a net profit in the last two financial years.
- **Non-performing assets:** SFBs must have gross non-performing assets (NPAs) of less than or equal to 3% and net NPAs of less than or equal to 1% in the last two financial years.
- **Stock listing:** SFBs must have shares listed on a recognized stock exchange.
- **Priority sector lending:** SFBs must extend 75% of their Adjusted Net Bank Credit (ANBC) to sectors eligible for priority sector lending (PSL).
- **Loan portfolio:** At least 50% of an SFB's loan portfolio must be loans and advances of up to Rs 25 lakh.

78. **Reserve Bank of India** Governor **Shaktikanta Das** has announced that the central bank will launch a podcast series to communicate with the public.

This initiative marks the RBI's continued efforts to expand its communication tools.

The proposal to add 'podcasts' to its communication toolkit for wider dissemination of information would enhance transparency and better connect with the people.

Along with the podcast, he also informed that a new committee, **FREE-AI (Framework for Responsible and Ethical Enablement of AI)**, is being developed to address AI-related risks in the financial sector.

The RBI Innovation Hub in Bengaluru has developed a new AI-powered tool, **MuleHunter.AI**, to detect and manage mule accounts, which are often used in digital fraud.

79. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) added 27 tonnes of gold to its reserves, according to the World Gold Council (WGC) data.

India added 27 tonnes of gold in October 2024, bringing its total **gold purchases to 77 tonnes from January to October**, according to WGC data based on reported monthly data from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The total gold reserve of the RBI rose to **882 tonnes** in October 2024 with 510 tonnes held domestically.

RBI bought a **five-fold increase** as compared to the same period of 2023.

According to the report, emerging market central banks accounted for **60%** of global net purchases in 2024.

The top three gold buyers during the period January- October 2024 are:
India: 77 tonnes., Turkey: 72 tonnes, Poland: 69 tonnes.

80. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has organized the RBI90Quiz as a part of the 90th-year commemoration of RBI.

The quiz was a nationwide quiz for **undergraduate college students** and was launched on **20th August 2024**.

The quiz attracted widespread interest with the participation of 1,58,206 students from 13,961 colleges, spread across 734 districts of the country.

It was a multi-level team-based competition, which commenced with an online selection round in September 2024, followed by State and Zonal level rounds.

It culminated in the **National Final**, which was held on **December 6, 2024**, in **Mumbai, Maharashtra**.

The team from **Osmania Medical College, Hyderabad, Telangana** comprising Syed Mohammad Hashmi and Hussain Ahmed won the quiz and became the winners.

The teams from **Gujarat National Law University, Gandhinagar**, Gujarat, and **Netaji Subhash Mahavidyalaya, Tripura** secured the second and third places, respectively. The top three teams won prizes of **₹10 lakh, ₹8 lakh, and ₹6 lakh**, respectively, apart from trophies and certificates.

Governor **Shaktikanta Das** and Deputy Governors **T. Rabi Sankar** and **Swaminathan J.** felicitated the prize winners.

AWARDS & RECOGNITION

81. The **55th International Film Festival of India (IFFI)** was held at the **Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Indoor Stadium, Goa**.

This year's festival was unique, with a theme centered on **"Young Filmmakers: The Future is Now."**

Australia was designated as the 'Country of Focus' at the festival.

The closing ceremony ended with the screening of the film **"Dry Season"** by Czech filmmaker **Bohdan Sláma**.

Director, Shekhar Kapur was the Festival Director for this year.

The 25th anniversary of the film **Taal** was celebrated with its screening.

The Central Bureau of Communication (CBC), under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, hosted an exhibition **'Safarnama'**.

A panel discussion, **"Will Artificial Intelligence Alter Filmmaking Forever?"** was held.

IFFI celebrated the centenary of the legendary actor and filmmaker **Raj Kapoor** with a tribute.

The **4th** edition of **Creative Minds of Tomorrow (CMOT)** was inaugurated.

Prasar Bharati launched **WAVES**, an OTT Platform for family entertainment and cultural connection.

The **Press Information Bureau (PIB)**, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, in collaboration with the **Film and Television Institute of India (FTII)**, Pune, organized a specialized Film Appreciation Course titled **'Reviewing Films: From Critiquing to Reading Cinema.'**

The winners list of various awards presented at IFFI 2024 is as follows:

Award Title	Winner	Film/Project	Country
Golden Peacock (Best Film)	Saulė Bliuvaitė	Toxic	Lithuania
Silver Peacock (Best Director)	Bogdan Muresanu	The New Year That Never Came	Romania

Silver Peacock (Best Actor – Male)	Clément Faveau	Holy Cow	France
Silver Peacock (Best Actor – Female)	Vesta Matulytė, Ieva Rupeikaitė	Toxic	Lithuania
Special Jury Award	Louise Courvoisier	Holy Cow	France
Best Debut Feature Film	Sarah Friedland	Familiar Touch	USA
Best Debut Director of Indian Film	Navjot Bandiwadkar	Gharat Ganpati	India
ICFT-UNESCO Gandhi Medal	Levan Akin	Crossing	Georgia
Best Web Series (OTT)	Nipun Dharmadhikari	Lampan	India
Indian Film Personality of the Year	Vikrant Massey	For his exceptional contributions to Indian cinema.	India
Satyajit Ray Lifetime Achievement Award	Phillip Noyce		Australia

Indian Director **Ramesh Sippy** and Actor **Jaya Prada** were specially felicitated for their contribution to Indian Cinema.

Filmmaking Challenge at Creative Minds of Tomorrow (CMOT) at IFFI 2024:

The event was the 48-Hour Filmmaking Challenge, where participants, divided into five teams of 20 members each, created short films on the theme ***"Relationships in the Age of Technology."***

List of winners of the 48-hour filmmaking challenge at CMOT:

Best Film: Gullu

Best Film (Runners-up): We Hear the Same Music

Best Director: Arshaly Jose (Gullu)

Best Script: Adhiraj Bose (Lovepix Subscription)

Best Actress: Vishakha Nair (Lovepix Subscription)

Best Actor: Pushpendra Kumar (Gullu)

International Film Festival of India (IFFI):

- IFFI is the only film festival in South Asia that is accredited by the International Federation of Film Producers Associations (FIAPF) of the 44th international festivals in the Competitive Feature Films Category.
- The festival was started in the year 1952.
- Since 2004, IFFI has moved to its permanent venue in Goa.

- It is jointly organized each year by the National Film Development Corporation (NFDC), the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, the Government of India, and the Entertainment Society of Goa (ESG), the Government of Goa.

82. The **5th** edition of the Filmfare OTT Awards was held in Mumbai, Maharashtra. The event highlighted the outstanding contributions from both films and series in the OTT space, with notable achievements in various categories.

The awards were given in three categories.

The list of the winners is as follows:

Category	Award	Winner
Series Category	Best Series	The Railway Men
	Best Director Series	Sameer Saxena and Amit Golani (Kaala Paani)
	Best Actor, Series (Male): Comedy	Rajkummar Rao (Guns & Gulaabs)
	Best Actor, Series (Male): Drama	Gagan Dev Riar (Scam 2003 – The Telgi Story)
	Best Actor, Series (Female): Comedy	Geetanjali Kulkarni (Gullak Season 4)
	Best Actor, Series (Female): Drama	Manisha Koirala (Heeramandi: The Diamond Bazaar)
	Best Supporting Actor, Series (Female): Comedy	Nidhi Bisht (Maamla Legal Hai)
	Best Supporting Actor, Series (Female): Drama	Mona Singh (Made In Heaven Season 2)
	Best Original Story, Series	Biswapati Sarkar (Kaala Paani)
	Best Comedy (Series/Specials)	Maamla Legal Hai
	Best (Non-Fiction) Original (Series/Special)	The Hunt For Veerappan
	Best Dialogue, Series	Sumita Arora (Guns & Gulaabs)
	Best Production Design, Series	Subrata Chakraborty and Amit Ray (Heeramandi: The Diamond Bazaar)
	Best Debut Director, Series	Shiv Rawail (The Railway Men)
Films Category	Best Film, Web Original	Amar Singh Chamkila
	Best Director, Web Original Film	Imtiaz Ali (Amar Singh Chamkila)

	Best Actor, Web Original Film (Male)	Diljit Dosanjh (Amar Singh Chamkila)
	Best Actor, Web Original Film (Female)	Kareena Kapoor (Jaane Jaan)
	Best Supporting Actor, Web Original Film (Male)	Jaideep Ahlawat (Maharaj)
	Best Supporting Actor, Web Original Film (Female)	Wamiqa Gabbi (Khufiya)
	Best Dialogue (Web Original Film)	Imtiaz Ali and Sajid Ali (Amar Singh Chamkila)
	Best Cinematographer (Web Original Film)	Sylvester Fonseca (Amar Singh Chamkila)
	Best Production Design (Web Original Film)	Suzanne Caplan Merwanji (The Archies)
	Best Editing (Web Original Film)	Aarti Bajaj (Amar Singh Chamkila)
	Best Background Music (Web Original Film)	A R RAHMAN (Amar Singh Chamkila)
	Best Story (Web Original Film)	Zoya Akhtar, Arjun Varain Singh, Reema Kagti (Kho Gaye Hum Kahan)
	Best Music Album, Film	A R RAHMAN (Amar Singh Chamkila)
	Best Debut Director, Film	Arjun Varain Singh (Kho Gaye Hum Kahan)
	Best Debut Male, Film	Vedang Raina
Critics Category	Best Series, Critics	Guns & Gulaabs
	Best Director, Critics	Mumbai Diaries Season 2
	Best Actor, Series (Male), Critics: Drama	Kay Kay Menon (Bambai Meri Jaan)
	Best Actor, Series (Female), Critics: Drama	Huma Qureshi (Maharani S03)
	Best Film, Critics	Jaane Jaan
	Best Actor (Male), Critics – Film	Jaideep Ahlawat
	Best Actor (Female), Critics – Film	Ananya Panday
	Special Recognition	Arjun Varain Singh (Kho Gaye Hum Kahan)

The Filmfare OTT Awards were established in **2020** to honor excellence in OTT series and films.

- 83. Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI) Ltd** under the **Ministry of New and Renewable Energy** won the **3rd PSU Transformation Award** under the **"Innovative Product Development"** category for **'Firm and Dispatchable RE (FDRE) Supply to DISCOMs on a Demand Following Basis'**.

The award was conferred in a felicitation ceremony held on 5th December 2024 in New Delhi.

The award was received by Sanjay Sharma, Director (Solar) along with Joshit Ranjan Sikidar, Director (Finance), and Sivakumar V Vepakomma, Director (Power System).

SECI has introduced the innovative power supply model of Firm and Dispatchable RE (FDRE) working with several DISCOMs and States to understand their energy demands and design models that cater to their renewable power requirements.

- 84. Thryve Digital Health**, a leading provider of healthcare technology and operations services to some of the United States' foremost payors and providers received **two** prestigious honors at the **Indian CSR Awards 2024**, for its exceptional work in the field of **Corporate Social Responsibility**.

The company was awarded **Best CSR Head of the Year**, recognizing the leadership of **Arvind Srinivasan**, CSR Head and CFO, and the **Best CSR Brand Activation Award**, which highlighted the impact of the company's innovative initiatives under its flagship CSR program, **Thryve for Good**.

The Indian CSR Awards:

The Indian CSR Awards, organized by **Marketing & Brand Honchos**, honor the exemplary efforts of individuals, corporations, and organizations making a tangible difference to society through sustainable and innovative practices.

- 85. Nurse Maria Victoria Juan** has been honored with the **Aster Guardians Global Nursing Award 2024**.

She was awarded **Rs 2 crore** at an award ceremony held in **Bengaluru**.

The award was presented by Dr. Azad Moopen, founder chairman of Aster DM Healthcare.

She was chosen for this award for her outstanding efforts in transforming the healthcare landscape, particularly in the Philippine Army Health Services and the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

She is a Consultant at Philippines Army Health Services and Colonel, at the Reserve Force of the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

At the age of 54, she took on the challenging task of completing a **nine-month aeromedical evacuation training program**.

Aster Guardians Global Nursing Award:

The award was launched in **2021** and aims to honor nurses who have demonstrated exceptional leadership, innovation, and contributions to healthcare.

86. India has been honored with the **International Social Security Association (ISSA) Good Practice Award for Asia and Pacific 2024.**

The award was presented by **Dr. Mohammed Azman**, President of ISSA, at the Regional Social Security Forum in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Employees' Provident Fund Organization (EPFO) received **five** Certificates of Merit for Communication channels, E-proceedings: A case on the use of information and communication technology in justice delivery, Massive district outreach program (Nidhi Aapke Nikat), Multilingual call centers, and Prayaas initiative.

The awards were received by Mr. Ashok Kumar Singh, DG, ESIC on behalf of EPFO.

The five award categories and a brief description of each are as follows:

Communication Channels: - Reaching stakeholders through different Media

EPFO has adopted the ISSA Guidelines on Communication by Social Security Administrations and implemented it by preparing a communication framework document (CFD) to effectively and efficiently communicate with stakeholders.

Digital and non-digital communication strategies are being adopted for efficient and timely communication.

E-proceedings: A case on the use of information and communication technology in justice delivery

Ensuring regular compliance is a critical aspect of a contributory social security system. In this process, the regulators conduct judicial proceedings to determine the dues from the defaulting employers.

It has made the inquiry process online end-to-end, ensuring fairness, and enhanced transparency, in addition to reducing the average inquiry time.

Nidhi Aapke Nikat 2.0: Ensuring last-mile delivery of Services

To enhance convenience for members, pensioners, and employers, and bring services closer to their residences the Nidhi Aapke Nikat program was started.

Nidhi Aapke Nikat 2.0 is held throughout the country on the 27th of every month, where grievances are resolved on the spot. This has also promoted the Government's policy of ease of doing business and ease of living.

Multilingual Call Centres: Effort towards an inclusive grievance redressal

To address the challenge of multi-lingual states, EPFO has made the information.

Accessible and free of charge in 12 major regional languages, in alignment with the ISSA Guidelines on Service Quality. These call centers help in efficient grievance redressal and ensure member satisfaction by resolving doubts and problems in the language of the member.

Prayaas: Prioritizing Pensioners

It is an initiative undertaken by EPFO for handing over pension payment orders (PPO) to retiring members of the Employees' Pension Scheme, 1995 on the day of retirement itself. Number of the PPOs issued under this initiative is rising consistently.

EPFO has also received a **Special Mention for Digital Life Certificate (Jeevan Pramaan Patra)**, highlighting the commitment of EPFO to support pensioners with digital ease.

The Digital Life Certificate also known as the **Jeevan Pramaan Certificate** is an additional facility for filing Life Certificates for pensioners enabled by the biometric authentication system that is Aadhaar-based.

BOOKS & AUTHORS

87. Chief Minister Thakur Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu has released the book '**Loh Purush Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Ka Jeevanvrit.**'

The book has been authored by **Dr. Rakesh Kumar Sharma**.

Dr. Rakesh Kumar Sharma, a resident of Hamirpur district, is currently serving as an Assistant Professor at Sardar Patel University, Mandi.

He was a former research fellow at the Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR), New Delhi.

He has also authored several notable books, including.

- Loh Purush Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel: Jeevan Darshan aur Rashtra Nirman Mei Bhumika (2022)
- Loh Purush Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel: Swaraj Sangharsh even Rashtra Eikikaran Mein Bhumika (2023)
- Loh Purush Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel ka Jeevan Parichay (2024)
- Iron Man Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel: Role in Swaraj Struggle and National Integration (2023)

PERSON IN NEWS

88. US President-elect Donald Trump has named **Kashyap 'Kash' Patel** as the next Director of the **Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)**.

He will succeed **Christopher Wray**.

He is an Indian American lawyer and former federal prosecutor at the U.S. Department of Justice.

Previously, he served as **Chief of Staff** to **U.S. Secretary of Defense** Christopher C. Miller, and senior advisor to the acting **Director of National Intelligence**, both during the first presidency of Donald Trump.

He transitioned from a legal to a political career in 2016 as an aide to Devin Nunes.

He played a significant role during the 2016 Russiagate investigation.

89. Jay Shah, cricket administrator and Secretary of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), has become the new **Chairman** of the **International Cricket Council (ICC)**.

At the age of 36, he became the youngest and fifth Indian to head the global sports body.

He succeeded Canadian-New Zealand cricket administrator **Greg Barclay**.

The ICC chairman's term now is three years.

Several key positions he holds:

- He is Secretary of BCCI since 2019.
- He is a former district and state-level cricket administrator with the Gujarat Cricket Association (GCA).
- He is the President of the Asian Cricket Council.
- He also chairs ICC's Finance and Commercial Affairs Committee.

90. Eurogrip Tyres, a leading Indian brand known for its 2, 3-wheeler, and off-highway tyres, has signed **M.S. Dhoni**, the legendary cricketer, as its brand ambassador.

He will endorse the entire range of products in Eurogrip's portfolio. These consist of two-wheeler, three-wheeler, and off-highway equipment tyres.

The partnership emphasizes innovation, reliability, and performance for new-age riders.

91. Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah of the SWAPO Party has become **Namibia's first female president**, securing 57% of the vote in the November 2024 election.

She defeated her closest rival, Panduleni Itula of the Independent Patriots for Change (IPC), who received 26% of the vote.

She succeeded **Nangolo Mbumba**, the incumbent President of Namibia.

She was instrumental in passing the Combating of Domestic Violence Act in 2002 and has consistently pushed for gender equality in a traditionally male-dominated political sphere.

92. Justice Murdu Nirupa Bindushini Fernando was ceremonially sworn in as the **Chief Justice of Sri Lanka**.

President **Anura Kumara Dissanayake** administered the oath ceremony.

She became the **48th** Chief Justice of Sri Lanka and after Justice **Shirani Bandaranaike**, she became the **second woman** to hold the position.

She was appointed following the retirement of Chief Justice **Jayantha Jayasuriya**.

Her nomination was approved by the Constitutional Council.

She began her career in the Attorney General's Department in 1985. She was appointed to the Supreme Court in March 2018.

She also served as Senior Additional Solicitor General and senior-most judge on the Supreme Court.

OBITUARIES

93. Noted Indian squash player Brigadier Raj Manchanda, a six-time national champion and Arjuna Award winner, has passed away in New Delhi.

He was affectionately known as the '**Old Fox**'.

He was born in Abohar, Punjab on 5 August 1945.

He won **six** straight **National Squash Championships** from 1977 to 1982.

At the Asian Team Squash Championships, he won a silver medal in 1981 and a bronze medal in 1984.

He received the **Arjuna Award** in **1980**.

In **1981**, he received the **Best Services Sportsman Award**.

Two squash courts were named in his honor at the **National Defence Academy (NDA)** and the **Indian Military Academy (IMA)**.

94. Sivapatham Vittal, regarded as the father of endocrine surgery in India, has passed away at the age of 83.

He was born on 30 August 1941 in Madras.

He was also known as the **Father of Surgical Endocrinology in India**.

Key Achievements:

- He was the founder and president of the **Indian Association of Endocrine Surgeons**.
- He was the president of the **Association of Surgeons of India** and the International College of Surgeons, India chapter.
- He served as the surgical tutor at the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh and held the chair of its India chapter.
- He was also a member of the **British Association of Endocrine and Thyroid Surgeons**.
- He was a recipient of the **1995 Dr. B. C. Roy Award**, the highest Indian award in the medical category.
- The **Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh** honored him with the Silver Medallion in 1997 and in 1998, the Government of Tamil Nadu awarded him the **Tamil Nadu Scientist Award**.
- In 2001, he received the Human Excellence Award from the Vivekananda Institute of Human Excellence.
- The Association of Surgeons of India conferred Dr. B M Sundaravadanam Best Teacher Award on Vittal in 2005 and the same year, he received the Overseas Gold medal from the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh.
- The **Teachers' Teacher Award** reached him in 2007 and Madras Medical College awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award from Madras Medical College in 2010
- In **2011**, he was awarded India's fourth-highest civilian award, **Padma Shri**.

SPORTS

- 95.** India's **Pawan Kampeli** won the **bronze** medal in the **e-football** event at the **2024 Asian Esports Games** in **Bangkok, Thailand**.

This is **India's first medal** in the Asian Esports Games.

He defeated 2022 eFootball World Finals Winner (Mobile), **Asgard Azizi** of Indonesia, 2-1, to win the bronze medal.

Pawan Kampeli, also known as '**Mr. Tomboy**', won the **Waves Esports Championship 2025** for e-football in November 2024.

Esports is becoming popular in the world, where players play games over the internet through electronic devices like mobile phones, gaming consoles etc.

Note: The International Olympic Committee will host the inaugural Olympic Esports Games in Saudi Arabia in 2025.

- 96.** The **Asian Shooting Confederation (ASC)** awarded the right to host the **Asian Rifle/Pistol Cup 2024** to **India**.

The competition is set to take place in **New Delhi** in 2026.

The decision to give India the continental tournament was taken by the executive committee of the Asian Shooting Confederation (ASC).

India had previously hosted the **8th Asian Air Gun competition** in **2015** followed by the **Asian Olympic Qualifiers** in 2016.

India has also hosted a total of six top International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) competitions additionally, including **two World Cup Finals**, the most recent being the one held in November in New Delhi.

Asian Shooting Confederation:

It was established in the year **1966** and is headquartered in **Hawally, Kuwait**. The President of ASC is **Sheikh Salman Al Sabah**.

- 97.** The **Indian hockey team** won the **Men's Hockey Junior Asia Cup 2024** after defeating **Pakistan** in the finals held in **Muscat, Oman**.

This was the **11th** edition of the tournament.

India secured their **third consecutive** men's junior Asia Cup title defeating rivals Pakistan 5-3.

This victory marked India's **fifth** junior Asia Cup championship, adding to their previous wins in **2004, 2008, 2015, and 2023**.

The 2021 tournament was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Japan secured third place with a 2-1 victory over Malaysia.

Men's Hockey Junior Asia Cup:

It is a men's international under-21 field hockey tournament organized by the **Asian Hockey Federation**. The tournament has been held since **1988** and serves as a qualification tournament for the Men's FIH Hockey Junior World Cup.

- 98.** The Syed Modi International Tournament 2024 badminton was held at Babu Banarasi Das Indoor Stadium in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh.

It was the 37th tournament of the 2024 BWF tour.

The Prize money of the Syed Modi International Tournament was USD 210,000 (Rs. 1.8 Crore)

Category	Winners
Men's Singles	Lakshya Sen (India)
Women's Singles	Pusarla Venkata PV Sindhu (India)
Men's Doubles	Huang Di & LiuYang (China)
Women's Doubles	Gayatri Gopichand & Trissa Jolly (India)
Mixed Doubles	Dechapol Puavaranukroh & Supisaara Paewsampran (Thailand)

Syed Modi International Tournament:

It was inaugurated in 1991. It was introduced to the badminton circuit as a BWF Grand Prix event in 2009.

- 99.** **Grandmaster Arjun Erigaisi** has become the **second Indian**, after Viswanathan Anand, to surpass the **2800 ELO rating** in classical chess, ranking **4th** globally with a rating of **2801**.

He ranks just below **Magnus Carlsen**, who holds the top spot with **2831**, and **Caruana (2805)**. This achievement follows his stellar performances in 2024, including winning individual and team gold at the Chess Olympiad.

He is a **21-year-old** Grandmaster who hails from Warangal, Telangana.

International Chess Federation (FIDE) announced his entry into the elite group, highlighting his exceptional year.

He earned his Grandmaster title at just 14 years, 11 months.

IMPORTANT DAYS

100. Mahaparinirvan Diwas is observed annually on **December 6** to commemorate the death anniversary of **Bharat Ratna Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar**, fondly known as Babasaheb Ambedkar, the chief architect of the Indian Constitution.

The Mahaparinirvan Diwas 2024, which marks the **69th** death anniversary of Babasaheb Ambedkar, was observed by the **Dr. Ambedkar Foundation (DAF)** on behalf of the **Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment** at Prerna Sthal, Parliament House Complex.

According to Buddhist texts, Lord Buddha's death is considered to be Mahaparinirvan, the Sanskrit term for '**nirvana after death**'. Parinirvan is considered liberation from Samara, karma, and the cycle of death and birth.

Ambedkar's admirers and followers believe he was as influential as **Lord Buddha**, which is why his death anniversary is celebrated as Mahaparinirvan Divas.

Dr. B.R Ambedkar:

- He was born on April 14, 1891, in Mhow, Madhya Pradesh, and dedicated his life to uplifting marginalized communities, especially Dalits, women, and laborers, who faced systemic social discrimination.
- As a social reformer, he launched the newspaper **Mooknayaka (Leader of the Silent)** to amplify the voices of the downtrodden.
- He established the **Bahishkrit Hitkarini Sabha (Outcastes Welfare Association)** in 1923 to spread education, improve economic conditions, and address societal inequalities.
- His leadership in historic movements such as the **Mahad March (1927)** for access to public water and the temple entry movement at **Kalaram Temple (1930)** challenged caste hierarchies and priestly dominance.
- His pivotal role in the **Poona Pact of 1932**, which replaced separate electorates with reserved seats for Dalits
- His doctoral thesis inspired the establishment of the **Finance Commission of India**.
- His ideas were instrumental in framing the guidelines for the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Act, of 1934.
- He presented a draft in **1948** of the Constitution that was adopted in 1949 with minimal changes.
- He died on **December 6, 1956**.
- He was posthumously awarded the **Bharat Ratna** by the Government of India in the year **1990**.

Important Day	Date/Month	Theme for 2024	Remark
World AIDS Day	1 st December	Take the rights path: My health, my right!"	The first World AIDS Day took place in 1988
World Computer Literacy Day	2 nd December	Empowering Generations Through Digital Literacy	The day was first observed in 2001.
National Pollution Control Day	2 nd December	Clean Air, Green Earth: A Step	The year 2024 marks the 40th anniversary of the Bhopal Gas Tragedy.

		Towards Sustainable Living	
International Day for the Abolition of Slavery	2 nd December		
International Day of Persons with Disabilities	3 rd December	Amplifying the leadership of persons with disabilities for an inclusive and sustainable future	
International Day of Banks	4 th December		
International Cheetah Day	4 th December		In 2010, Dr. Laurie Marker designated December 4th as International Cheetah Day.
National Navy Day	4 th December		
Indian Navy Week	1 st to 7 th December		
World Soil Day	5 th December	Caring for soils: measure, monitor, manage	The day was first observed in 2014.
International Volunteer Day or International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development	5 th December		The day was first observed by the UN General Assembly in 1985.
Mahaparinirvan Divas	6 th December		The day commemorates the death anniversary of Dr Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar
Maitri Diwas	6 th December		The day is observed annually by India to celebrate diplomatic relations with Bangladesh. It was started in the year 2021.
International Civil Aviation Day	7 th December	Safe Skies. Sustainable Future: Together for the next 80 years	
National Armed Forces Flag Day	7 th December		