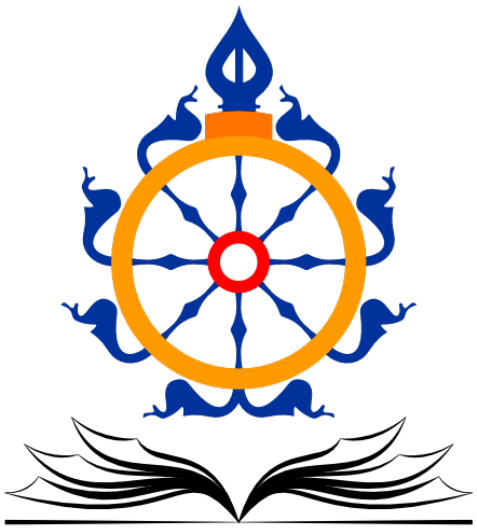

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For A Better Odisha

Monthly Current Affairs Magazine

April 2025

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Governance and Policy

RS Passes Protection of Interests in Aircraft Objects Bill 2025: Boosting Aviation Leasing

- The bill aims to implement the Cape Town Convention (2001) and its Aircraft Protocol in India.
- Its primary objective is to provide legal certainty and enforceability to international agreements concerning aircraft leasing.
- The legislation is expected to lower aircraft leasing costs and strengthen the rights of creditors.
- By doing so, India aims to become a significant global center for aviation leasing and financing.
- The bill grants legal standing to the Cape Town Convention and Aircraft Protocol, standardizing the process of securing rights for valuable aviation assets.
- It empowers creditors to repossess aircraft within two months of a default or as per the terms agreed upon in the lease.
- The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) will serve as the registry authority for aircraft registration and de-registration.
- Airlines and lessors will be required to regularly inform the DGCA about outstanding dues and leasing activities, promoting transparency.

Waqf Amendment Bill 2025

- Parliament has passed the Waqf (Amendment) Bill 2025, with both the Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha approving it after significant debate.
- The bill aims to reform the management and administration of Waqf properties, focusing on streamlining processes and increasing accountability.
- Key provisions include the establishment of a centralized digital portal for automated processes and mandatory regular audits for Waqf institutions with an income exceeding ₹1 lakh.
- The Central Waqf Council will consist of 22 members, with a maximum of 4 non-Muslims, while Waqf Boards will have 3 non-Muslim members out of 11.
- The amendment seeks to uplift poor Muslim communities, particularly widows, divorced women, and orphans, by enhancing the economic and social impact of Waqf properties.
- The bill reduces the mandatory contribution from Waqf institutions from 7% to 5%, potentially freeing up resources for community welfare.
- While the government emphasizes inclusive governance and modernization through the bill, opposition parties have raised concerns about potential communal polarization and constitutional violations.
- The Waqf (Amendment) Bill 2025 reforms the existing 1995 law and also repeals the outdated Mussalman Wakf Act of 1923 to modernize the legal framework for Waqf properties.

Immigration and Foreigners Bill 2025

- Parliament has passed the Immigration and Foreigners Bill 2025, consolidating and replacing several outdated laws like the Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920, and the Foreigners Act, 1946.
- The bill aims to modernize India's immigration laws and enhance the efficiency of immigration management.
- It introduces stricter penalties, including imprisonment up to seven years and fines up to ₹10 lakh, for offenses such as using forged documents, overstaying visas, and trespassing in restricted areas.
- Hotels, universities, hospitals, and other institutions will be required to report foreign visitors to improve tracking.
- The legislation seeks to centralize data collection on foreigners to maintain up-to-date records and ensure robust tracking of visitors.
- Immigration officers are granted extended powers, including the authority to arrest without a warrant, to strengthen national security by tightening controls on potential threats.
- The bill differentiates between foreigners visiting for legitimate purposes like business, education, and investment, and those who may pose a risk.
- The new immigration framework is designed to align with international best practices for managing and monitoring immigration effectively.

Waqf Amendment Act 2025: A Landmark Reform in Waqf Property Management

- President Droupadi Murmu has approved the Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025, signifying a major reform in the management of Waqf properties.
- The Act aims to enhance transparency, accountability, and efficiency in the governance of these properties.
- Its objectives include preventing misuse, favoritism, and encroachments on Waqf assets, as well as ensuring fair representation of different Muslim sects on Waqf boards.
- The legislation introduces measures to protect heritage sites and improve social welfare initiatives supported by Waqf properties.

- It focuses on the economic inclusion of marginalized Muslim women, such as widows and divorcees.
- The Central Waqf Council will consist of 22 members, with up to four non-Muslim members to promote secular and representative governance.
- A key aspect of the Act is the repeal of the Mussalman Wakf Act, 1923, which was considered outdated and potentially inconsistent with the more recent Waqf Act of 1995 (now the UMEED Act, 1995).
- By repealing the older law, the government intends to establish a more unified, consistent, and transparent legal framework for managing Waqf properties in India.

Supreme Court Blasts Governor's Inaction: Bills Deemed Passed

- The Supreme Court criticized Governor RN Ravi's decision to reserve 10 bills for the President's assent, even after the Tamil Nadu Assembly re-passed them.
- These bills included amendments affecting university governance, leading to vacancies in Vice-Chancellor positions and hindering legislative functions.
- The Supreme Court declared the Governor's action as illegal and arbitrary, stating that once the bills were re-presented by the Assembly, they are deemed to have received assent on that day.
- The court clarified that a Governor does not possess veto power over bills passed by the state legislature.
- It emphasized the Governor's constitutional obligation under Article 200 to act on bills in a timely manner and follow established procedures.
- The judgment established specific timelines for the Governor's action on bills, requiring a decision on withholding assent with advice within one month.
- This ruling reaffirms the supremacy of the state legislature and aims to prevent the Governor's office from being used to obstruct the legislative process.
- Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. K. Stalin hailed the verdict as a historic win for democratic norms against gubernatorial overreach.

Odisha University (Amendment) Act, 2024

- The Odisha University (Amendment) Act, 2024, came into effect on April 12, 2025, after receiving the Governor's assent.
- A key reform is the overhaul of faculty recruitment, replacing OPSC with autonomous, university-formed expert committees for timely and subject-relevant appointments.
- The selection process for Vice-Chancellors will now be managed by a three-member committee of educationists, and the age limit for VCs has been increased to 70 years.
- The Act mandates the reintroduction of a 68-member University Senate in each university, serving as the highest advisory body and meeting at least twice a year for inclusive decision-making.
- Dedicated Finance Committees and Building & Construction Committees will be established for transparent fund management and infrastructure development, with CAG audits and reports to the Assembly.
- The Act aims to strengthen institutional autonomy, address administrative delays in appointments, and improve the accessibility and quality of higher education through measures like distance education programs.
- These reforms are intended to transform Odisha into a center for higher education excellence and foster a knowledge-driven economy.

New Draft Rules for Gas Meters

- The Centre has formulated draft rules for gas meters under the Legal Metrology (General) Rules, 2011.
- The primary objectives are to ensure accurate gas measurement, promote transparency in billing, and protect consumers from faulty meters.
- Key provisions mandate rigorous testing, verification, and stamping of all domestic, commercial, and industrial gas meters before deployment.
- The rules also prescribe regular re-verification of gas meters throughout their operational life to maintain accuracy.
- Consumers will benefit from fair billing due to verified meters, while improved measurement standards can lead to better energy efficiency and reduced maintenance costs.
- The framework aims to provide structured compliance for manufacturers and gas distribution companies, aligning with international best practices and OIML standards.
- A technical committee comprising experts from IILM, RRSLs, industry, and VCOs drafted the rules in collaboration with stakeholders.
- The draft rules were circulated for feedback among manufacturers, testing labs, CGD companies, and State Legal Metrology Departments.
- A transitional period will be provided to allow the industry and authorities sufficient time to prepare for compliance without disrupting gas supply.
- This initiative is part of a larger effort to modernize India's measurement infrastructure, enhance consumer-centric governance, and align with global standards, boosting international trade credibility.

Supreme Court Upholds Urdu on Municipal Signboards in Maharashtra

- The Supreme Court dismissed a petition seeking the removal of an Urdu signboard from a municipal building in Akola, Maharashtra.
- The petition argued that using Urdu alongside Marathi violated the Maharashtra Local Authorities (Official Languages) Act, 2022.
- The Court ruled that there is no legal restriction against displaying languages other than a state's official language on public signboards.
- The bench emphasized that language belongs to communities and regions, not to any specific religion.
- The judges urged embracing India's linguistic diversity, stating that misconceptions or prejudices against a language should be tested against the reality of the nation's diversity.
- The Court highlighted that Urdu, like Marathi and Hindi, has evolved in India and is an integral part of the country's composite culture, particularly the Ganga-Jamuni tahzeeb, and is used in everyday communication by many in the region.
- The judgment underscores the importance of multilingualism for effective communication, especially when a significant portion of the local population understands and uses a particular language.
- By dismissing the plea, the Supreme Court reinforces the constitutional protection of linguistic diversity and rejects the notion that Urdu is foreign to India.
- The ruling serves as a precedent against the politicization of language and emphasizes that all languages contribute to a community's cultural richness, irrespective of religious affiliation.
- While promoting regional languages is important, the judgment clarifies that additional languages can coexist on public platforms to accommodate diverse linguistic demographics, aligning with national ideals of pluralism.

Supreme Court Orders Status Quo on Waqf Properties Amid Amendments

- The Supreme Court is currently hearing petitions challenging the Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025.
- The SC has directed the Central government to ensure that no Waqf properties, including those classified as "waqf by user," are denotified or undergo any change in status.
- The Court has also put a hold on all appointments to Waqf Councils and Boards until the next hearing, scheduled for May 5, 2025.
- The government has assured the Supreme Court that the status of all properties recognized as Waqf (by deed or by user) will remain unchanged until further court orders.
- This order aims to safeguard historical and religious endowments from any immediate legal alterations due to the new amendment.
- The controversial non-Muslim appointments to the Waqf Boards are currently on hold.
- The Centre has also confirmed that no new appointments will be made to the central Waqf Council or related bodies until the next hearing.
- Solicitor General Tushar Mehta assured the Court that the government would file a concise response within seven days addressing the concerns raised in the petitions.
- The Supreme Court has acknowledged this assurance amidst the ongoing debates surrounding the Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025.

Justice B.R. Gavai Set to Become the 52nd Chief Justice of India

- Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna has recommended Justice Bhushan Ramkrishna Gavai as his successor.
- Justice Gavai, the senior-most Supreme Court judge after CJI Khanna, is set to become the 52nd CJI on May 14, 2025.
- His tenure will be approximately six months, as he is scheduled to retire on November 23, 2025.
- Justice Gavai's judicial career includes serving as a judge in the Bombay High Court before being elevated to the Supreme Court in 2019.
- He has been part of several landmark judgments, including those related to the abrogation of Article 370, the electoral bonds scheme, and the demonetization verdict.
- He was also part of the seven-judge bench that ruled that states can create sub-classifications within SC categories for targeted reservation benefits.
- He has contributed to environmental and property rights cases, establishing guidelines for property demolition and overseeing forest and wildlife protection matters.
- He has made significant contributions to constitutional bench cases.

Supreme Court Issues Strident Guidelines to Curb Child Trafficking

- The Supreme Court has issued strict guidelines to effectively curb child trafficking and ensure swift trials in these cases, expressing concern over the handling of newborn abduction from hospitals.
- The Court directed that if a newborn is trafficked from a hospital, the immediate first step must be the

suspension of that hospital's license to ensure accountability and the safety of newborns.
- High Courts nationwide are instructed to request status reports on pending child trafficking cases and ensure trials are completed within six months, opting for daily proceedings if needed, to expedite justice.
- The Supreme Court criticized the lenient approach of some High Courts, particularly Allahabad, in granting bail to those accused of child trafficking, and consequently cancelled the bail of such individuals, ordering their surrender and placement in judicial custody.
- The Court emphasized that any failure to strictly implement these guidelines will be considered contempt of court, urging state governments, hospital administrations, and judicial bodies to adhere to these measures to avoid legal repercussions.

Supreme Court Clarifies: Proposed Purchaser Cannot Sue Third Parties Over Property Rights

- The Supreme Court has ruled that a proposed purchaser under an agreement to sell cannot file a lawsuit for a permanent injunction to protect the vendor's interest against a third party claiming title and possession.
- The Court emphasized the core principle that an agreement to sell does not transfer any ownership rights or legal interest in the property to the purchaser.
- Until the final sale deed is executed, the legal right to protect the property's title and possession remains solely with the vendor.
- The Supreme Court reiterated that while an agreement to sell creates contractual rights between the buyer and seller, it does not grant the buyer any enforceable title or possession rights against third parties.
- The Court noted the lack of a contractual relationship (privity of contract) between the proposed purchaser and any third party claiming title, preventing the purchaser from establishing a legal basis to sue them.
- This decision clarifies that any legal action to protect the property's title or possession must be initiated by the vendor, or in specific cases under Section 53A of the Transfer of Property Act, by a subsequent transferee with notice of the earlier agreement.
- The Supreme Court overturned the lower courts' decisions, which had allowed the proposed purchaser's suit, stating that without any transfer of proprietary rights, the purchaser lacks the legal standing to sue a third party to protect the vendor's interest.

Kerala HC Rules: Undertrial Period Cannot Be Counted for Remission

- The Kerala High Court has ruled that the time an accused spends as an undertrial cannot be counted towards the remission of their sentence.
- The court clarified that remission, which is a reduction in the sentence duration granted by the government, only applies to the period served after conviction.
- The judgment emphasized that undertrial detention, the time spent in custody before conviction, is not considered part of the sentence for remission purposes.
- The ruling was delivered by a division bench of the Kerala High Court, which analyzed Section 432 and Section 433A of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC).
- The court stated that granting remission is a discretionary power of the government and is not a right that a convict can claim.
- This judgment provides clear guidelines for authorities in calculating remission periods, promoting uniformity in its application.
- Convicts who have spent a considerable amount of time as undertrials will not have that period counted for remission, potentially increasing their overall time in custody.
- This ruling sets a judicial precedent for similar cases across India, reinforcing the legal distinction between undertrial detention and imprisonment after conviction.

Cybercrime Complaints Surge in 2024; Spoofed Calls Drop by 97% Due to New Measures

- Over 19.18 lakh cybercrime complaints were reported on the NCRP in 2024, resulting in financial losses of ₹22,811.95 crore.
- The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) achieved a 97% reduction in spoofed calls after implementing advanced measures.
- A system launched on October 17, 2024, to identify and block international spoofed calls mimicking Indian numbers blocked 1.35 crore fraudulent calls within 24 hours, reducing such calls to 4 lakh by March 2025.
- The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) established the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) and launched the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal (NCRP) to aid law enforcement and citizens.
- DoT developed the Digital Intelligence Platform (DIP) to facilitate information sharing on telecom resource misuse among 560 organizations, including security agencies, police, and telecom operators.

- Citizen engagement initiatives like the Sanchar Saathi App/Portal and public awareness campaigns through social media, SMS, and collaborations are underway.
- Despite the success in reducing spoofed calls, significant financial losses due to cybercrime persist, highlighting the need for enhanced cyber literacy and a stronger legal framework.

Tahawwur Rana Extradition: After 17 Years, A Key 26/11 Accused Returns to India

- Tahawwur Hussain Rana, a key accused in the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks, has been extradited from the United States to India after 17 years.
- Upon arrival in Delhi, the Pakistani-origin Canadian businessman was produced before a Special NIA Court at Patiala House and remanded to 18 days of custody.
- Rana is accused of playing a central role in facilitating the terror attacks by using his immigration business as a cover and collaborating with David Coleman Headley and terrorist organizations like LeT and HUJI.
- Allegedly, Rana assisted in preparing for the attacks by advising on visa procedures and helping establish a cover immigration office in Mumbai.
- Rana's extradition follows years of legal battles in the United States, where he exhausted all avenues to prevent his transfer to India.
- He departed from the US on April 9, 2025, and arrived in Delhi on April 10, 2025, under heavy security.
- On April 11, 2025, he was formally presented in court, marking a significant step in India's pursuit of justice for the 2008 Mumbai attacks.

Pahalgam Terror Attack

- On April 22, 2025, a deadly terrorist attack occurred in Baisaran meadow near Pahalgam, Anantnag district, J&K, resulting in the deaths of at least 26 people (25 Indian nationals and one Nepalese citizen, including an IAF Corporal) and numerous injuries.
- The Resistance Front (TRF), believed to be an offshoot of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), claimed responsibility, linking the attack to the abrogation of Article 370 and the granting of residency/work rights to non-Kashmiris.
- In the immediate aftermath, a large-scale manhunt was launched by the Indian Army, CRPF, and J&K Police, with increased security across the Kashmir Valley and around 1,500 detentions for questioning.
- Prime Minister Modi chaired a CCS meeting, Union Home Minister Shah reviewed the situation, and Defence Minister Singh assured a strong response. J&K Lieutenant Governor Sinha also held a high-level security review.
- Citing cross-border links, India announced strong measures against Pakistan, including the immediate suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT), closure of the Attari border crossing, cancellation of the SAARC Visa Exemption Scheme for Pakistani nationals, and the expulsion of Pakistani military advisors from New Delhi, along with the withdrawal of Indian military advisors from Islamabad.
- The attack delivered a severe blow to J&K's tourism sector, leading to widespread booking cancellations. It also raised significant security concerns, highlighting the vulnerability of soft targets and the persistent threat of terrorism, necessitating a review of security measures, especially with the upcoming Amarnath Yatra.

Govt Strengthens Fight Against Cyber Fraud: I4C Brought Under PMLA for Info Sharing

- The Union Finance Ministry has brought the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002, through a notification dated April 25, 2025.
- This inclusion under Section 66 of the PMLA formally authorizes I4C to share and receive information with the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and other specified agencies.
- The primary objective is to improve the detection of money laundering activities linked to cyber frauds, identify masterminds (including those operating trans-nationally), and enhance overall coordination in tackling these crimes.
- I4C, operating under the Ministry of Home Affairs, is the nodal center for combating cybercrime in India, focusing on coordination, capacity building, trend analysis, and the National Cybercrime Reporting Portal and helpline.
- The Enforcement Directorate (ED) is a financial investigation agency under the Ministry of Finance that primarily enforces the PMLA (money laundering) and FEMA (foreign exchange violations).
- Section 66 of the PMLA deals with information disclosure, empowering the ED Director to share relevant information with specified regulatory and law enforcement bodies. This notification now enables reciprocal sharing with I4C.
- This move is significant as it creates a formal mechanism for synergy between the agency tracking cybercrimes (I4C) and the agency tracking the laundered proceeds (ED).
- It will aid investigations by allowing the ED to access crucial cybercrime data from I4C, facilitating the tracing of financial trails from cyber offenses like phishing and online scams.

- Enhanced information sharing is crucial for tackling trans-national cybercrime networks and bringing perpetrators to justice.
- This integration is part of the government's broader strategy to strengthen the cybersecurity ecosystem and combat cyber threats.

CBI's Operation Hawk Dismantles Global Online Child Abuse Ring

- The CBI's Operation Hawk dismantled a global online child sexual exploitation (OCSE) ring based on information from US authorities, highlighting the importance of international law enforcement cooperation.
- Individuals in Delhi and Mangalore allegedly used Discord to engage in sexualized chats with minors in the USA, inducing them to share obscene content (CSAM) and threatening them with online leaks for non-compliance.
- The CBI's International Operations Division conducted raids in Delhi, Mumbai, and Mangalore, arresting the accused and seizing electronic devices containing CSAM and incriminating evidence.
- The accused face charges under the IPC (Section 506 for criminal intimidation), the IT Act, 2000 (Sections 66D, 67, and 67B related to online obscenity and child sexual abuse material), and the POCSO Act, 2012 (Sections 11, 12, 14, and 15 concerning sexual harassment and using/storing child pornography).
- Operation Hawk follows previous significant CBI initiatives against OCSE, including Operation Carbon (2021) and Operation Megh Chakra (2022), which also involved international cooperation via Interpol.
- The CBI, as India's nodal agency for Interpol, recently launched the BHARATPOL portal to enhance coordination on transnational crimes. These operations underscore the ongoing threat of online child exploitation and the CBI's commitment to combating it.

Vibrant Villages Programme: Union Cabinet Approves Second Phase

- The Union Cabinet has approved the second phase of the Vibrant Villages Programme (VVP) with a financial outlay of ₹6,839 crore.
- The VVP is a centrally sponsored scheme aimed at the comprehensive development of villages along India's international land borders (ILBs).
- The second phase will focus on villages in 17 states and Union Territories, including Gujarat, Rajasthan, Punjab, and other strategic areas, excluding those covered in the first phase.
- Key objectives of the program include creating better living conditions, ensuring prosperous and safe borders, and integrating border populations with the nation.
- The program emphasizes the development of all-weather roads, telecom connectivity, education infrastructure, tourism circuits, and sustainable livelihood opportunities.
- It also focuses on border-specific outreach activities and value chain development through cooperatives and self-help groups (SHGs).
- The first phase of the VVP, launched in 2023 with an outlay of ₹4,800 crore, covers select villages in Arunachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Uttarakhand, and Ladakh.
- The implementation strategy involves utilizing technology like PM Gati Shakti, adopting a hub-and-spoke model for growth centers, and ensuring active participation of local communities and Gram Panchayats.
- The overall goals of the VVP are to develop essential infrastructure, create livelihood opportunities to prevent migration, and enhance security and a sense of belonging in border areas.

Ministry of Ayush Hosts Rashtriya Karmayogi Jan Seva Programme to Strengthen Public Service Orientation

- The Ministry of Ayush organized the Rashtriya Karmayogi Jan Seva Programme to enhance the service orientation and professional skills of its employees, aligning with Mission Karmayogi principles.
- The program aims to build a responsive, efficient, and citizen-centric workforce within the Ayush sector.
- Conducted in collaboration with the Capacity Building Commission, the recent phase of the program took place on April 16, 2025, at Ayush Bhawan, New Delhi.
- The first phase, inaugurated on March 18, 2025, by Secretary Vaidya Rajesh Kotecha, emphasized applying training to improve daily service delivery.
- The second phase, led by Programme Director Dr. Subodh Kumar and facilitated by Shipra Singh, adopted an interactive, experiential learning format with team-based exercises, discussions, and problem-solving activities.
- The training included four focused sessions on self-awareness, motivation, leadership, and citizen-centric governance.
- Real-world case studies from Ayurveda, Yoga, and other traditional medicine systems were integrated to help employees connect theoretical knowledge with practical challenges in their roles.

Mission Amrit Sarovar: India's Community-Led Revival of Water Bodies

- Launched on April 24, 2022, under Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, Mission Amrit Sarovar aims to construct or rejuvenate 75 traditional water bodies in every district across India to combat groundwater depletion and rural water scarcity.
- By March 2025, over 68,000 Amrit Sarovars have been completed, with 46,000 under MGNREGA, and linked to over 65,000 user groups, signifying a nationwide community-led movement for water security.
- The mission integrates grassroots governance, e-governance through NIC, and traditional practices, contributing to rural livelihoods and nearly doubling groundwater recharge from 13.98 BCM in 2017 to 25.34 BCM in 2024.
- Core objectives include water conservation and sustainable management, empowerment of Gram Panchayats, rural employment generation under MGNREGA, and revival of cultural water heritage with community ownership.
- The institutional framework involves the Ministry of Rural Development (nodal ministry), MGNREGA (employment and asset creation), BISAG-N (geo-spatial technology for planning and monitoring), NIC (e-governance portal), and Panchayati Raj Institutions (local self-governance for planning and execution).
- Implementation involves the convergence of various schemes, local oversight through Panchayat representatives and officers, active participation of user groups for upkeep and management, and a cultural connect by involving freedom fighters' families and celebrating national days at the sites to foster community involvement.

BJP Tops Donation Charts: ₹2,243 Crore in FY 2023-24

- The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) received ₹2,243.94 crore in donations, accounting for 88% of the total donations to national parties.
- The Indian National Congress (INC) received ₹281.48 crore, placing second in terms of donations.
- The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) declared zero donations above ₹20,000, consistent with its filings over the past 18 years.
- Corporate and business entities were the largest donors, contributing ₹2,262.55 crore (88.92% of total donations).
- Individual donors contributed ₹270.87 crore (10.64% of total donations).
- The Prudent Electoral Trust was the largest individual donor, with ₹723.68 crore going to the BJP.
- Total donations to national parties increased by 199% compared to the previous financial year.
- The BJP's donations increased by 211.72%, and the Congress's increased by 252.18%.
- Delhi was the highest contributing state, followed by Gujarat and Maharashtra.
- Most parties, including the BJP and Congress, submitted their donation reports late, while only the BSP and AAP met the Election Commission of India's (ECI) deadline.

Debate on Simultaneous Polls: Constitutional Concerns Raised

- The proposal for simultaneous Lok Sabha and State Assembly elections has raised constitutional concerns, with senior advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi deeming it unconstitutional.
- Critics argue that it threatens the federal structure by potentially undermining state autonomy, as the dissolution of state assemblies could be influenced by central government timelines.
- They also express concerns about democratic disruption, as the natural electoral cycle could be altered, leading to premature dissolutions or term extensions.
- Practical challenges, such as logistical hurdles and security deployment, add to the complexity of implementing simultaneous polls.
- Proponents argue that it could reduce election-related expenditures and minimize disruptions caused by frequent elections, while also ensuring policy continuity.
- Implementing simultaneous elections would necessitate amendments to the Constitution, specifically Articles 83, 85, 172, 174, and 356.
- The Election Commission of India (ECI) would need to significantly revise its operational framework to accommodate the new system.

Panchayat Advancement Index (PAI) Baseline Report FY 2022-23

- The Ministry of Panchayati Raj launched the Panchayat Advancement Index (PAI) to evaluate and monitor the performance of over 2.5 lakh Gram Panchayats in India, aiming for evidence-based rural development aligned with the SDGs for FY 2022-23.
- Out of 2,55,699 Gram Panchayats, 2,16,285 submitted validated data via the PAI portal, forming the basis of the baseline report.
- The index uses 435 unique local indicators (331 mandatory, 104 optional), comprising 566 data points aligned with the National Indicator Framework (NIF), categorized under nine SDG-aligned themes.

- Panchayats are graded into five performance tiers: Achiever (no panchayats yet), Front Runner (0.3%), Performer (35.8%), Aspirant (61.2%), and Beginner (2.7%).
- Gujarat leads with 346 Front Runner Gram Panchayats, followed by Telangana with 270. States like Bihar, Chhattisgarh, and Andhra Pradesh have a higher proportion in the Aspirant category.
- The PAI provides a data-driven framework for evidence-based planning, enabling local bodies to identify gaps and prioritize interventions to achieve localized SDG targets.
- The transparent evaluation mechanism enhances accountability and encourages healthy competition among Gram Panchayats, aiding policymakers in resource allocation and strategic planning for sustainable rural growth.

DBT System: Transforming Welfare Efficiency in India with Massive Savings

- Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) has significantly transformed India's public finance by directly delivering subsidies and benefits to beneficiaries' bank accounts.
- Reports indicate that the DBT system has facilitated savings of approximately Rs 3.48 lakh crore by curbing leakages in welfare expenditures.
- DBT works by directly crediting funds to beneficiaries, eliminating intermediaries and minimizing the potential for misappropriation.
- By bypassing bureaucratic layers, DBT effectively reduces financial leakages from welfare schemes, leading to substantial savings.
- The enhanced transparency and accountability in benefit transfers contribute to a more effective use of public resources and improved social welfare outcomes.
- The DBT system leverages Aadhaar-based authentication to ensure accurate targeting of eligible beneficiaries.
- DBT is a key component of India's broader push towards digitization, aligning with initiatives aimed at creating a more transparent and accountable governance framework.
- Before DBT, subsidy distribution often suffered from corruption and inefficiencies, resulting in significant financial leakages.
- The success of DBT demonstrates how technology-driven reforms can revitalize public administration and serve as a model for effective e-governance.

New High-Level Committee to Oversee Disaster Management

- The Central Government has established a new High-Level Committee (HLC) to oversee matters related to the Disaster Management Act, 2005, aiming to strengthen India's disaster preparedness and response.
- Formed by the Ministry of Home Affairs on April 30, 2025, the committee's legal basis is sub-section (2) of section 8B of the Disaster Management Act, 2005.
- The HLC is chaired by Union Home Minister Amit Shah, and its members include the Minister of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare (Shivraj Singh Chouhan), the Finance Minister (Nirmala Sitharaman), and the Vice Chairman of NITI Aayog (Suman Bery).
- The committee's mandate includes overseeing the implementation of the Disaster Management Act, guiding policy decisions, ensuring coordinated efforts during disasters, overseeing long-term risk reduction, reviewing state preparedness, and strengthening the national disaster response mechanism.
- This multi-sectoral approach, bringing together key ministers and NITI Aayog's Vice Chairman, aims to ensure comprehensive and integrated disaster management, facilitate better resource allocation and planning, and address diverse natural and man-made disasters, including health emergencies.
- The formation of the HLC underscores the government's commitment to enhancing India's resilience and ability to recover from the increasing impact of various disasters and emergencies.

National Critical Mineral Mission 2025

- Launched in 2025 by the Ministry of Mines, the National Critical Mineral Mission aims for self-reliance in critical minerals essential for clean energy technologies.
- Critical minerals like silicon, lithium, and rare earth elements are vital for solar panels, wind turbines, electric vehicles, and energy storage systems, impacting economic development and national security.
- The mission seeks to ensure the long-term availability and processing of these minerals through domestic and foreign sourcing.
- The Geological Survey of India (GSI) will undertake 1,200 exploration projects between 2024-25 and 2030-31.
- A Centre of Excellence on Critical Minerals (CECM) will be established to update the critical mineral list and guide strategy.
- 24 out of 30 identified critical minerals have been included in Part D of Schedule I of the MMDR Act,

granting the Central Government exclusive auction authority.
- The mission aims to strengthen India's global competitiveness in mineral exploration, mining, processing, and recycling.
- It focuses on enhancing the value chain through infrastructure, technology, R&D, and skill development, and fostering innovation in mining operations.

Social Issues

India Records Highest Child Adoptions in 12 Years: FY 2024-25 Milestone

- India recorded 4,515 child adoptions in FY 2024-25, the highest in the past 12 years, with 4,155 domestic and the remainder being international adoptions.
- Several factors contributed to this milestone, including CARA introducing 8,598 newly identified children into the adoption pool and conducting a comprehensive child identification exercise.
- CARA also enhanced the CARINGS portal with new modules for relative and step-parent adoptions, reducing processing time to 3-4 months.
- Awareness campaigns, including state orientations and virtual training for adoption agencies and prospective parents, along with partnerships with 16 states for adoptive parent meets, played a role.
- Government initiatives included setting up 245 new adoption agencies and focusing on foster care for older children.
- Challenges remain, including long waiting periods (average 3.5 years for infants) and the limited availability of children compared to the number of prospective adoptive parents.
- The Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) is a statutory body under the Ministry of Women and Child Development, serving as the central authority for both domestic and inter-country adoptions, ensuring legal, ethical, and transparent processes while safeguarding the best interests of adopted children.
- The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, aims to consolidate and amend laws related to children in conflict with the law and those in need of care and protection, providing a legal framework that prioritizes the child's best interests and regulates adoption procedures, with amendments like the 2021 shift of adoption order authority to District Magistrates to expedite processes.

Migration in North-East and the Inner Line Permit System

- The North-East region of India experiences significant migration, both internal and international, driven by factors like economic opportunities and displacement.
- This migration presents a dual impact: potential economic growth alongside concerns about political tensions and the dilution of indigenous cultures.
- The influx of migrants, particularly from Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Nepal, is perceived by local communities as a threat to social stability and regional resources.
- States like Tripura and Manipur have experienced political instability partly fueled by large-scale migration, raising concerns among indigenous groups about their cultural identity.
- Reliable data on migration in the North-East is limited, hindering accurate analysis of long-term socio-economic and political impacts.
- The Inner Line Permit (ILP) system is a regulatory mechanism used by some North-East states to restrict the entry of outsiders to protect local culture and ensure internal security.
- The ILP aims to control migration and preserve the demographic balance and social fabric of the region, while also acting as a security measure by monitoring population movement.
- Debates exist regarding the balance between the constitutional right to free movement and the need to protect the unique socio-cultural identity of the North-East states through measures like the ILP.
- Migration studies in India have evolved, with earlier censuses defining migrants based on changes in birthplace and last place of residence to track population redistribution and socio-economic changes.
- The implementation of measures like the ILP reflects the tension between the constitutional guarantee of free movement and the desire of regional states in the North-East to maintain their socio-cultural autonomy.

World Social Report 2025

- Released by the UN DESA on April 24, 2025, the World Social Report 2025 highlights escalating global challenges including economic insecurity, rising inequality, and declining social trust, urging a new policy consensus for sustainable development and social cohesion.
- Despite reductions in extreme poverty, over 2.8 billion people globally are economically insecure, living on daily incomes between $2.15 and $6.85.
- The report notes an intensification of wealth and power concentration, leading to social fragmentation and a decline in trust in institutions.

- More than half of the global population lacks trust in their governments, a situation worsened by the spread of misinformation.
- The report proposes a new policy framework based on equity (fair access to opportunities), economic security for all (universal social protection), and solidarity (social cohesion and collective responsibility).
- For India, the report suggests strengthening social protection schemes like MGNREGA and Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, implementing progressive taxation and inclusive policies to address inequality, and enhancing transparency and accountability in governance to rebuild public trust.

Govt Approves Caste Count in Next National Census

- The Union Government has approved the inclusion of caste enumeration in the upcoming National Census, marking a significant policy shift as it will be the first comprehensive caste count in independent India's official Census since 1931.
- The decision was made by the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs (CCPA), chaired by the Prime Minister.
- The next Census, delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and likely to begin in 2025 or 2026, will include questions on caste, unlike post-independence Censuses which only enumerated SCs and STs.
- The government emphasized that conducting the Census is a central government responsibility under Article 246 of the Constitution.
- The government's rationale for including caste now is to ensure transparent and reliable data collection nationwide, prevent the politicization of the issue through fragmented state surveys, empower economically and socially backward classes (including OBCs), promote inclusion, and provide accurate data for effective social and economic planning and policy implementation.
- The government contrasted this decision with the Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) 2011, which was a separate survey whose detailed caste data was never officially released for policy-making due to complexities.
- The upcoming Census is planned to be India's first Digital Census, potentially using a mobile application with an 'other' category and a standardized drop-down code directory of approved caste names.
- The caste data collected through the official Census will have statutory validity and will be crucial for the next delimitation exercise for Lok Sabha and State Assembly constituencies, as well as for the implementation of the 33% women's reservation in legislatures.

Empowerment

Viksit Bharat Youth Parliament 2025: Empowering Young Leaders

- The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports organized the Viksit Bharat Youth Parliament 2025 in New Delhi from April 1 to April 3, 2025.
- The initiative aimed to connect young individuals with politics and public policy, encouraging their involvement in nation-building and governance.
- The selection process involved District Nodal Rounds focusing on topics like "One Nation, One Election," held at 300 district nodes, followed by State Rounds in 17 State Assemblies presided over by State Speakers and Governors.
- The National Round brought together the top 108 participants from across India for high-level discussions and activities.
- Activities included a Question Hour focused on "One Nation, One Election" and "Viksit Bharat," a Masterclass by a senior Member of Parliament on oratory and leadership, attendance at Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha sessions, and a visit to the PM Sangrahalaya.
- The event concluded with the Viksit Bharat Youth Parliament Awards and National Youth Awards on April 3, 2025.
- The Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS), an autonomous organization under the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports established in 1972, played a key role in the event, focusing on youth personality development, leadership qualities, skill development, community service, and youth empowerment.

Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme: Progress in Gender Equality and Education

- The Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) scheme, launched in 2015, has shown significant progress in improving the sex ratio at birth (SRB) and enhancing girls' enrolment in education.
- The national Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB) improved from 918 in 2014-15 to 930 in 2023-24, indicating a positive shift in societal attitudes towards the girl child.
- The gross enrolment ratio of girls at the secondary level increased from 75% in 2014-15 to 78% in 2023-24, signifying enhanced access to education and reduced gender disparities.
- The BBBP scheme, a centrally sponsored initiative launched on January 22, 2015, aims to address the

declining Child Sex Ratio (CSR) and promote the survival, protection, and education of the girl child.
- Key objectives of the scheme include preventing gender-biased sex-selective elimination, ensuring the survival and protection of the girl child, and promoting her education and participation.
- The BBBP scheme is a collaborative effort with 100% central government funding, involving the Ministry of Women & Child Development, the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, and the Ministry of Education.
- Achievements include the noted improvement in SRB and the increase in the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of girls in secondary schools during the specified period.

Stand-Up India Scheme: Empowering Marginalized Entrepreneurs for Seven Years

- The Stand-Up India Scheme, launched on April 5, 2016, has completed seven years of empowering Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and women entrepreneurs.
- As of March 17, 2025, the scheme has sanctioned over ₹61,000 crore in loans to beneficiaries from these marginalized groups.
- Significant growth has been observed in loan accounts for SC beneficiaries (from 9,399 in 2018 to 46,248 in 2024), ST beneficiaries (from 2,841 in 2018 to 15,228 in 2024), and women entrepreneurs (from 55,644 in 2018 to 1,90,844 in 2024).
- The scheme provides loans ranging from ₹10 lakh to ₹1 crore for establishing greenfield enterprises in manufacturing, services, agri-allied activities, or trading.
- Its primary objective is to break barriers for SC, ST, and women entrepreneurs by facilitating their access to credit, thereby promoting economic empowerment and self-reliance.
- The scheme is managed by the Ministry of Finance under the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav initiative.
- For non-individual enterprises to be eligible, at least 51% shareholding must be held by SC/ST or women entrepreneurs.
- The Stand-Up India Scheme has contributed to creating livelihood opportunities, fostering financial inclusion, and aligning with India's vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat (Self-Reliant India).

Culture and Arts

Kamal Haasan Takes Charge as Chairman of FICCI Media and Entertainment Committee South

- Renowned actor and politician Kamal Haasan has been appointed as the Chairman of the FICCI Media and Entertainment Committee South.
- The announcement was made on April 1, 2025, during the FICCI Media and Entertainment Business Conclave South Connect 2025 in Chennai.
- His leadership is expected to guide the South Indian media and entertainment industry towards innovation and global recognition, with a goal to elevate the overall Indian sector to a $100 billion industry.
- Key focus areas under his chairmanship will include animation, VFX, intellectual property, and talent development.
- Kamal Haasan emphasized the need for a bold vision to make Indian cinema a global ambassador of Indian culture, highlighting the importance of regional collaborations and diverse storytelling.
- He also called for government support through regulatory reforms, ease of business, access to credit, and training for aspiring creators.
- He noted India's strengths in animation and VFX, positioning the country as a potential global hub for content production.

Bengal's Traditional Treasures Get GI Tag

- West Bengal has been granted Geographical Indication (GI) tags for seven of its traditional products.
- These GI tags provide official recognition for the unique regional characteristics and heritage of these products.
    - The seven products that received the GI tag are:
    - **Nolen Gurer Sandesh:** A winter sweet made from fresh chhena and nolen gur (date palm jaggery), known for its caramel-like flavor and golden color.
    - **Baruipur Guavas:** Celebrated for their unique taste and region-specific cultivation methods.
    - **Kamarpukur's White Bonde:** A traditional sweet reflecting the region's culinary craftsmanship.
    - **Murshidabad's Chhanabora:** An indigenous product recognized for its distinctive preparation techniques.
    - **Bishnupur's Motichur Laddoo:** Known for its melt-in-the-mouth texture and popularity in the region.
    - **Radhunipagal Rice:** A unique rice variety grown in a specific geographical area with particular agro-climatic conditions.

- **Malda's Nistari Silk Yarn:** A traditional silk textile product valued for its quality and handcrafted excellence.

World Art Day 2025

- World Art Day is observed annually on April 15th.
- Officially launched in 2012 by the International Association of Art (IAA) in Mexico, it honors art's transformative role in society.
- The date was chosen to coincide with the birthday of Leonardo da Vinci, a symbol of creativity, inquiry, and freedom of expression.
- The theme for World Art Day 2025 is "A Garden of Expression: Cultivating Community Through Art," emphasizing art's power to nurture connections, celebrate diversity, and spark dialogue.
- World Art Day reminds us of art's unifying power across different forms, promoting social cohesion and individual expression.
- Honoring Leonardo da Vinci on his birthday celebrates his enduring legacy as a great artist and thinker whose masterpieces continue to inspire.
- Da Vinci's reputed last words reflect his humility and the relentless pursuit of perfection often associated with artistic endeavors.

Banarasi Shehnai Receives GI Tag, Celebrating a Timeless Heritage

- The Banarasi Shehnai, a traditional woodwind instrument made famous by Ustad Bismillah Khan, has been granted a Geographical Indication (GI) tag.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi personally handed over the GI certificate to a renowned artisan from Varanasi, Ramesh Kumar.
- The shehnai is culturally significant for its unique sound and historical role in Indian music, gaining global recognition through Ustad Bismillah Khan's performances.
- The GI tag protects the intellectual property rights of the instrument and helps preserve the rich cultural heritage of Banaras.
- A GI tag is a sign used on products with a specific geographical origin and qualities or reputation linked to that origin, providing legal protection and supporting local artisans' economic development.
- For artisans, the GI tag offers legal recognition, safeguarding traditional manufacturing methods and boosting the instrument's marketability while maintaining its unique identity and traditional value.
- This certification is part of a broader government initiative to protect traditional products under the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999, contributing to the revitalization and global promotion of India's cultural assets.
- Ustad Bismillah Khan is recognized as a pivotal figure who popularized the shehnai globally, highlighting India's musical heritage.
- The GI registration is supported by bodies like the Ministry of Commerce & Industry, DPIIT, and the Geographical Indications Registry, aligning with national efforts to promote indigenous crafts and cultural products.
- Varanasi (Banaras), known for its cultural and craft traditions, further strengthens its position as a global hub for authentic traditional products with this recognition.

Kedarnath and Badrinath Temple Reopenings: Key Dates for Char Dham Yatra 2025

- **Kedarnath Temple** will reopen on **May 2, 2025**. The Shri Badrinath-Kedarnath Temple Committee (BKTC) has confirmed the final preparations and safety measures.
- **Badrinath Temple** will reopen on **May 4, 2025**. The official date has been announced following infrastructure and safety protocol reviews.
- **Madmaheshwar Temple (Second Kedar)** is scheduled to reopen on **May 21, 2025**.
- **Tungnath Temple (Third Kedar)** is set to reopen on **May 2, 2025**.

World Book & Copyright Day 2025: Literature's Role in Achieving SDGs

- World Book and Copyright Day is celebrated globally on April 23rd each year.
- Established by UNESCO, the day aims to promote reading, celebrate literature, encourage publishing, and raise awareness about copyright protection.
- April 23rd was chosen as it is the reported date of death (or birth) of literary giants like William Shakespeare, Miguel de Cervantes, and Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, and it is also Saint George's Day in Catalonia, where books and roses are exchanged.
- The theme for World Book and Copyright Day 2025 is "The role of literature in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)," highlighting how books can foster awareness and inspire action on global issues.
- Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, has been named the World Book Capital for 2025, with a program focusing on literature's power for social change, sustainable publishing, and promoting reading among young people.
- UNESCO is the UN agency that established the day to promote peace through international cooperation

in education, sciences, culture, communication, and information.
- Copyright is a legal right granting creators exclusive control over their original works for a specific period, and in India, it is governed by The Copyright Act, 1957. India is also a signatory to the Berne Convention, an international agreement ensuring copyright protection among member nations.

Kokborok's Quest for Constitutional Recognition

- The Kokborok Sahitya Parishad has requested the Tripura Chief Minister to recommend Kokborok's inclusion in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution for its preservation, development, and national promotion.
- Kokborok, one of Tripura's oldest and most spoken indigenous languages, is vital for cultural expression and identity.
- Inclusion in the Eighth Schedule would grant Kokborok official usage in government and education, boost academic and literary development, and provide equitable opportunities for speakers in competitive exams.
- New languages are added to the Eighth Schedule through constitutional amendments passed by both Houses of Parliament and with the President's assent. The schedule currently includes 22 official languages, with the last additions in 2003.
- A script debate has emerged, with the Parishad favoring Bengali or Devanagari scripts due to historical usage. However, Tipra Motha chief Pradyot Manikya Debbarma advocates for the Roman script for broader accessibility, a demand supported by student protests.
- A challenge in including languages is the lack of fixed criteria to distinguish between languages and dialects, as highlighted by past government committees. Languages also dynamically evolve with socio-cultural and economic changes.

Environment

52 Years of Project Tiger: A Global Conservation Success Story

- India is celebrating 52 years of Project Tiger, a significant wildlife conservation initiative launched on April 1, 1973, by the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change.
- A major achievement is the substantial growth in India's wild tiger population, increasing from 1,411 in 2006 to 3,682 in 2022, making India home to approximately 75% of the world's wild tigers.
- India's network of protected areas for tigers has expanded to 57 tiger reserves, covering around 83,000 sq km of forest land.
- India successfully doubled its tiger numbers four years ahead of the 2022 target set by the St. Petersburg Declaration on Tiger Conservation.
- In 2023, India launched the International Big Cats Alliance to further the conservation of big cats globally.
- The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), established in 2005 under the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, oversees Project Tiger, focusing on habitat restoration, anti-poaching measures, and community involvement in conservation.
- The St. Petersburg Declaration on Tiger Conservation, adopted in 2010, aimed to double the global tiger population by 2022, a goal in which India played a leading role by achieving it early.

4°C Global Temperature Rise Could Slash World GDP by 40% by 2100: Study

- A study by researchers at the University of New South Wales (UNSW) projects that a 4°C rise in global temperatures by 2100 could slash world GDP by 40%, significantly higher than previous estimates of 11%.
- The study, published in Environmental Research Letters, found that even a 2°C rise could lead to a 16% drop in GDP per capita, much higher than earlier predictions of 1.4%, because previous economic models underestimated the impact of global supply chain interdependencies.
- Key drivers of these economic losses include cascading disruptions to global supply chains caused by extreme weather events like floods and droughts, potential global food shortages and instability from simultaneous disasters, and reduced worker productivity due to rising temperatures affecting health and safety.
- The study strongly emphasizes the urgent need for climate action to limit global warming to 1.7°C, aligning with the Paris Agreement goals, and calls for stronger climate policies and investments in decarbonization to mitigate long-term economic damages.

BRICS Nations Unite for Climate Action: India Advocates $1.3 Trillion Mobilization

- At the 11th BRICS Environment Ministers' Meeting in Brasília, Brazil, India urged BRICS nations to enhance climate cooperation and mobilize $1.3 trillion annually to meet global climate goals.

- India, represented by Amandeep Garg from MoEFCC, emphasized the need for collective leadership towards the 2030 Climate Agenda, especially with Brazil hosting COP30 in 2025.
- India stated that the current global climate finance goal of $300 billion per year by 2035 is grossly inadequate compared to the $1.3 trillion needed under the Paris Agreement.
- India reaffirmed the BRICS New Delhi Declaration (2021) promoting a diverse energy mix and advocated for global initiatives like the Green Grids Initiative – One Sun, One World, One Grid.
- India also highlighted the Resource Efficiency and Circular Economy Industry Coalition (RECEIC), initiated during its G20 Presidency, as a replicable model and called for a "Just Transition" with equitable access to finance, technology, and capacity-building for the Global South.
- Challenges identified include insufficient funding, diverse economic realities among BRICS nations, and pressing environmental threats like desertification and biodiversity loss.
- Opportunities for BRICS nations include demonstrating global leadership in climate policy, fostering collaborative initiatives like RECEIC, and driving sustainable development through technological innovation in renewable energy and circular economy practices.
- Relevant Indian policies and initiatives mentioned include the 2030 Climate Agenda, BRICS New Delhi Declaration (2021), Green Grids Initiative, RECEIC, International Solar Alliance (ISA), Leadership Group for Industry Transition (LeadIT), and the Global Biofuel Alliance.

Brazil Proposes Global Climate Council Ahead of COP30

- Ahead of hosting COP30 in Belém in November 2025, Brazil has proposed the creation of a Global Climate Council under the UNFCCC.
- The council's main objective is to streamline and fast-track the implementation of decisions made during COP meetings and enhance the effectiveness of global climate action through better collaboration.
- While the proposal has generated interest, key developed nations like Germany, Sweden, and the Netherlands have expressed cautious support, emphasizing the need to maintain the integrity of the existing UNFCCC framework.
- The idea is expected to be a significant point of discussion at the upcoming COP30 climate summit.

Dire Wolf De-Extinction: Reviving a Lost Ice Age Predator

- Colossal Biosciences, a biotechnology firm, has announced the successful de-extinction of the dire wolf, an apex predator that went extinct approximately 12,500 years ago.
- This marks the world's first effort to revive an extinct species using gene-editing and cloning technologies, resulting in the birth of three pups named Romulus, Remus, and Khaleesi, exhibiting dire wolf traits.
- The de-extinction was achieved by extracting ancient DNA from fossil samples (13,000 to 72,000 years old) and using CRISPR-Cas9 technology to introduce about 20 targeted gene alterations into the DNA of a living gray wolf to resemble the dire wolf's physical features.
- The engineered embryos were then cloned and transferred into surrogate dogs, leading to the birth of the dire wolf–like pups in a secure facility.
- This breakthrough is hailed as a pioneering achievement in de-extinction, with potential applications for reviving other extinct species and demonstrating the utility of genetic engineering in combating biodiversity loss and developing innovative conservation strategies.
- The project also highlights advancements in genetic engineering, specifically the successful integration of ancient DNA with living genomes using CRISPR technology.
- Ethical and ecological considerations are being debated, including whether the animals are "true" dire wolves or hybrids and the potential ecological role and environmental impact of reintroducing them into modern ecosystems.

Wildfires Undermine Arctic Carbon Sink: A Shift Toward Increased Emissions

- Wildfires are intensifying in the Arctic Boreal Zone, a region that has historically acted as a significant carbon sink by absorbing large amounts of carbon dioxide (CO_2).
- The increasing frequency and intensity of these fires are releasing stored CO_2 into the atmosphere and weakening the region's ability to absorb carbon, potentially shifting it to a net carbon emitter.
- Wildfires release CO_2 by burning vegetation and disturbing soil organic carbon, accelerating climate change. They also damage vegetation cover and soil structure, reducing the area's capacity to sequester carbon.
- This creates a feedback loop where increased atmospheric CO_2 intensifies global warming, leading to more wildfires, which in turn release more CO_2, further exacerbating warming.

- The Arctic Boreal Zone, spanning across Alaska, Canada, Northern Europe, and Siberia, contains vast forests and tundra ecosystems that are now threatened by rising wildfire incidents.
- Scientific monitoring using satellites like NASA's Terra and Aqua, along with data from the Copernicus Air Monitoring Service (CAMS), is crucial for tracking wildfire intensity and radiative power released.
- **The 2024 Arctic Report Card indicates that the Arctic tundra is now a net source of carbon dioxide**, supporting the point that the Arctic's long-term role as a carbon sink is being undermined.

Delhi's New Anti-Pollution Moves – Are They Enough to Tackle the City's Chronic Smog?

- Vehicles entering Delhi from other states must now possess a valid Pollution Under Control (PUC) certificate to curb emissions from potentially polluting vehicles.
- Delhi aims to establish 48,000 EV charging points by 2026 (18,000 public, 30,000 semi-private) to encourage the adoption of electric vehicles.
- Six new air quality monitoring stations will be added to provide more comprehensive real-time pollution data across the city.
- A dedicated eco-park is planned to process electronic waste and mitigate pollution arising from its improper disposal.
- The Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) will be more strictly enforced, although some experts view it as a temporary solution.
- Critics argue that the new measures, like previous ones, are largely reactive (implemented closer to the pollution season) and don't address the fundamental causes year-round.
- Despite efforts like CNG and BS6 norms, Delhi's extremely high vehicle density continues to be a major contributor to air pollution.
- Experts suggest that promoting EVs alone won't significantly reduce vehicle numbers without a more robust public transportation system.
- Air pollution from neighboring states significantly affects Delhi's air quality, highlighting the need for a regional approach.

India Set to Experience Above-Average Monsoon Rains in 2025

- The IMD forecasts above-average monsoon rains (June-September) at 105% of the long-period average (LPA).
- India's LPA for the monsoon season is 87 centimeters, suggesting the country could receive approximately 91 cm or more.
- Neutral El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) and a stable Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) conditions are supporting the prediction of a strong monsoon.
- Abundant rainfall is expected to benefit the sowing and growth of key kharif crops like pulses, rice, oilseeds, maize, and cotton.
- Improved crop yields could lead to a decrease in food inflation and enhance India's position as a major exporter.
- A strong monsoon will recharge reservoirs and groundwater, supporting irrigated agriculture and improving rural livelihoods and consumption (FMCG sector).
- Sustained good rainfall can positively impact hydropower generation, water storage, and overall economic stability, potentially stimulating rural investment.
- While most regions will likely receive above-average rainfall, the northwest, northeast, and parts of the southern peninsula might experience relatively lower amounts.
- This forecast follows a favorable monsoon in 2024, setting a positive trend for agriculture and economic planning.
- The forecast is considered a crucial indicator for government policies and business strategies, particularly for retail and FMCG sectors anticipating increased rural sales.

SC Extends Stay on Deforestation Near Hyderabad University

- The Supreme Court has extended its stay on the cutting of trees across 400 acres of land in Kancha Gachibowli, Hyderabad.
- The interim order explicitly prohibits the felling of any trees on the land until further notice from the court.
- The Supreme Court directed the Wildlife Warden of Telangana to immediately take measures to protect the wildlife impacted by deforestation on 100 acres.
- Authorities have been instructed to present a comprehensive plan for the restoration of the affected forest area.
- The court cautioned that state government officials who oppose the restoration efforts could face temporary imprisonment.
- The stay was issued in response to plans by the Telangana Industrial Infrastructure Corporation (TGIIC) to auction the land for IT park development, which led to protests.
- The Supreme Court took up the matter suo moto following reports and protests regarding the extensive deforestation.
- The next hearing on this case is scheduled for May 15, 2025.

- This allows the state government time to respond to the findings of the Central Empowered Committee (CEC) regarding the deforestation.

CPCB Revises Industrial Classification: Introducing the Blue Category

- The CPCB has introduced a new "Blue Category" for industries providing essential environmental services (EES).
- This category aims to incentivize industries involved in managing or mitigating pollution, even if they have a high Pollution Index (PI).
- Industries in the Blue Category include landfill management, biomining, waste-to-energy plants, and certain compressed biogas (CBG) plants.
- These industries are recognized for their role in addressing waste and environmental concerns from domestic or household activities.
- As an incentive, industries classified under the Blue Category will receive an additional two years of validity for their consent to operate.
- The revised classification continues to use the Pollution Index (PI) based on the precautionary principle to assess an industry's potential to pollute.
- Previously, industries like waste-to-energy plants with high PIs (e.g., 97.6) would have fallen into the Red Category but are now in the Blue Category due to their essential service.
- The CPCB initially directed state pollution control boards to implement this new classification in February 2025, with further directives issued in March 2025 to include specific CBG plants.

Digital Platform for Freshwater Biodiversity Conservation Launched

- A new digital platform, www.rivres.in, has been launched by the Union Minister of Jal Shakti to promote freshwater biodiversity conservation.
- The platform acts as a detailed information hub, offering ecological insights, conservation examples, and data on river characteristics.
- It was developed by the Ministry of Jal Shakti in partnership with the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) under the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG).
- The platform provides real-time data on biodiversity, river health, and the physical features of major Indian rivers.
- It showcases successful conservation efforts and models from rivers like the Ganga, Cauvery, Godavari, Barak, Mahanadi, Narmada, and Pamba.
- The platform utilizes advanced technologies such as GPS for data collection, SONAR for depth measurement, and ecological monitoring apps.
- It encourages the participation of local communities and volunteers through initiatives like the Ganga Prahari Conclave.
- The platform also releases knowledge products, including publications on aquatic plants of the Ganga and standardized protocols for handling freshwater biological samples.

SECL Pioneers Green Mining Using Paste Fill Technology at Singhali Mine

- South Eastern Coalfields Limited (SECL) is the first coal PSU in India to introduce paste fill technology for underground coal mining at its Singhali mine in Korba.
- SECL has signed a Rs 7,040 crore agreement with TMC Mineral Resources Private Limited to implement this eco-friendly mining method over the next 25 years.
- Paste fill technology involves filling mined-out underground spaces with a paste made of fly ash, crushed overburden, cement, water, and binding chemicals.
- This technology prevents land subsidence, utilizes industrial waste, reduces the need for new land acquisition, and minimizes environmental impact.
- It enhances safety and allows mining to continue beneath populated areas, roads, and power lines without causing disruption.
- The project at Singhali mine, with a total investment of Rs 7,040 crore over 25 years, is expected to produce around 8.4 million tonnes of coal.
- Paste fill technology provides a solution for mining in areas like Singhali where surface infrastructure makes traditional underground methods difficult.

Climate Change and Arsenic in Rice: Alarming Health Implications for Asia

- Rising temperatures and elevated CO_2 levels due to climate change are increasing arsenic levels in rice in Asia, a major dietary staple.
- A study in *The Lancet Planetary Health* projects that this trend could lead to millions of additional cancer cases in Asia by 2050.
- Researchers analyzed 28 rice strains over 10 years under different climatic conditions and estimated future arsenic-related health risks in seven Asian countries.
- Increased temperatures (above 2°C) and higher CO_2 concentrations alter soil chemistry, making inorganic arsenic more easily absorbed by rice plants.
- Rice absorbs arsenic from contaminated soil and irrigation water and can further accumulate it during cooking with contaminated water.

- Higher arsenic consumption is linked to increased risks of various cancers (lung, bladder, skin) and non-cancerous diseases like cardiovascular issues and diabetes.
- Given the widespread consumption of rice in Asia, the public health consequences of increased arsenic levels could be significant globally.
- The lead author from Columbia University highlights the intersection of climate change and food safety as a growing threat.
- This study is the first detailed investigation into the combined impact of rising CO_2 and temperature on arsenic accumulation in rice.

Earth Day 2025: Celebrating Global Environmental Stewardship

- Earth Day 2025 was celebrated on April 22, marking the 55th anniversary of the global environmental movement.
- The theme for 2025, "Our Power, Our Planet," highlighted the importance of renewable energy in tackling climate change and achieving sustainability.
- Earth Day was first initiated in 1970 by U.S. Senator Gaylord Nelson to raise awareness about environmental issues.
- The inaugural Earth Day in 1970 saw over 20 million participants in the US and led to the creation of the EPA and the enactment of key environmental laws like the Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act.
- Now observed in over 190 countries, Earth Day serves as a major international platform for environmental advocacy and action.
- The Clean Air Act (1970) is a US federal law aimed at controlling air pollution nationwide.
- The Clean Water Act (1972) is the foundational US law regulating pollutant discharges into the nation's waters.
- The Paris Agreement (2015) is an international treaty with 196 signatories committed to limiting global warming to below 2°C, ideally to 1.5°C.

Harnessing Oceans for Carbon Reduction

- A UK-based research project is exploring innovative ways to enhance the ocean's natural ability to absorb and store atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO_2).
- The project investigates methods like increasing ocean alkalinity and optimizing biological CO_2 uptake by marine organisms.
- Oceans currently absorb about 30% of human-caused CO_2, making them crucial for regulating the global carbon balance.
- Enhancing these natural oceanic processes could contribute to achieving global climate goals, including those outlined in the Paris Agreement.
- Improved CO_2 absorption by oceans could help mitigate ocean acidification, which harms marine life.
- The research supports sustainable development policies by integrating natural solutions with engineered carbon capture technologies.
- Globally, ocean-based carbon removal is gaining attention, with companies like Planetary Technologies in Nova Scotia exploring similar methods.
- Research from IIT Madras suggests that the Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal have the potential to act as significant carbon sinks.

Similipal Declared India's 107th National Park

- On April 24, 2025, the Odisha government officially declared Similipal Tiger Reserve as a National Park under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
- Similipal is now the second national park in Odisha (after Bhitarkanika) and either the 107th or 106th in India, depending on the source.
- Spanning 845.70 sq km across 11 ranges, it is the largest national park in Odisha.
- Similipal is a biodiversity hotspot, home to 55 mammal species (including tigers, elephants, gaur, and melanistic tigers), 361 bird species, and diverse reptiles, amphibians, and orchid species.
- It has been a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve since 2009 and a Project Tiger site.
- The national park status brings stricter protection laws and increased funding for wildlife conservation efforts.
- While four villages were relocated, one village (Bakua) with 61 families remains outside the national park zone.
- The declaration is expected to boost eco-tourism, generating employment and income for local communities.
- The declaration process followed Section 35 of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, requiring the area to be free of human habitation and livestock, and included a 60-day claim period for land rights.
- Other key protected areas in Odisha include Bhitarkanika National Park (known for mangroves and saltwater crocodiles) and Chilika Lake (a Ramsar site and Asia's largest brackish water lagoon).

Action Plan 2025: Strengthening Urban River Rejuvenation in India

- The National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) has approved Action Plan 2025 to rejuvenate urban rivers in 145 cities across India.

- The plan focuses on river-centric urban governance, integrating environmental, social, and economic factors into city planning.
- Key objectives include implementing River-Sensitive Master Planning (RSMP), developing Urban River Management Plans (URMPs), fostering inter-city collaborations, and enhancing institutional capacity for river governance.
- The implementation will be carried out under the River Cities Alliance (RCA), a joint initiative of NMCG and the National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA).
- The National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG), established in 2011 under the Ministry of Jal Shakti, is the implementing agency for the Namami Gange Programme.
- The River Cities Alliance (RCA), launched in 2021 by NMCG and NIUA, provides a platform for cities to collaborate on urban river management strategies.

Triumph of Turtle Conservation in the Ganga

- The critically endangered Red-Crowned Roofed Turtle has been reintroduced to the Ganga River after 30 years of local extinction under the Namami Gange Mission.
- On April 26, 2025, 20 turtles (10 males, 10 females, aged 2-3 years) were released in the Haiderpur Wetland Complex and the Ganga's main channel at Hastinapur Wildlife Sanctuary.
- Each turtle has been equipped with a sonic tag for monitoring their movement, habitat use, and survival rates over the next two years.
- This reintroduction effort combines soft release (acclimatization in enclosures) and hard release (direct release into open water) techniques.
- The Red-Crowned Roofed Turtle is critically endangered and had not had viable populations recorded in the Ganga since the early 1990s.
- The reintroduction is spearheaded by the Namami Gange Mission, with support from the National Chambal Sanctuary (providing incubation facilities), the Uttar Pradesh State Forest Department, and conservation organizations like TSAFI.
- Reintroducing this apex freshwater reptile indicates improving water quality and habitat connectivity in the Ganga River ecosystem.
- Local communities and fisherfolk are being involved to promote co-existence and prevent poaching.
- The trial of soft and hard release methods will provide valuable insights for future reintroduction programs for other endangered species in India and globally.

Health

Prevention of Blindness Week 2025: Prioritizing Eye Health

- Prevention of Blindness Week is observed annually in India from April 1 to April 7 to create awareness about preventable blindness and promote eye health.
- The initiative was established in 1960 by Jawaharlal Nehru and Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur.
- Key activities during the week include nationwide free eye screening clinics and camps organized in collaboration with organizations like Sight Savers and Rotary International.
- The focus is on addressing preventable causes of blindness such as cataracts, glaucoma, vitamin A deficiency, and malnutrition, while promoting routine eye check-ups and healthy lifestyles.
- The National Society for the Prevention of Blindness (NSPB), founded in 1960, is a non-profit organization dedicated to combating blindness in India through screening camps, awareness campaigns, and policy advocacy.
- NSPB collaborates with international organizations like the World Bank's International Development Agency to fund blindness prevention programs.
- Glaucoma, a leading cause of irreversible blindness, is a key focus, emphasizing the importance of regular eye exams, especially for those with risk factors like family history, diabetes, or high blood pressure.
- Technological advancements such as telemedicine and mobile eye clinics are improving access to glaucoma care.

Understanding Autism: A World of Unique Perspectives

- World Autism Awareness Day is observed globally on April 2nd each year to increase understanding and acceptance of people with autism and promote a more inclusive society.
- The United Nations General Assembly designated April 2nd as World Autism Awareness Day in 2007 to focus global attention on the rights and well-being of individuals with autism.
- The day aims to educate the public about Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), a developmental disability affecting communication and behavior.
- It emphasizes the importance of creating inclusive environments where autistic individuals can thrive in education, employment, and social settings, while also celebrating their unique strengths.
- ASD is a neurological and developmental condition that affects individuals differently and to varying degrees, potentially impacting social communication, behavior, and sensory sensitivities, but many autistic individuals have exceptional talents.

- Approximately 1 in 36 children is diagnosed with ASD according to the CDC.
- The United Nations (UN), established in 1945 with headquarters in New York City, aims to maintain international peace and security, foster friendly relations among nations, achieve international cooperation, and harmonize the actions of nations; António Guterres is the current Secretary-General.
- The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), an international human rights treaty adopted by the UN in 2006, aims to protect the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities and provides a framework for governments to promote these rights.

Levels and Trends in Child Mortality: Insights from the 2024 Report

- Globally, the under-five mortality rate has decreased by 52% since 2000, reflecting significant progress in healthcare and child welfare.
- In 2023, an estimated 4.8 million children died before reaching their fifth birthday, with 2.3 million of these deaths occurring in newborns.
- These deaths are largely due to unequal access to essential healthcare, nutrition, and protection, particularly in underserved areas.
- Despite past progress, the rate of reduction in child mortality has slowed, indicating a need for renewed and intensified efforts.
- Fragile and underserved regions continue to experience higher child mortality rates due to limited resources and systemic challenges.
- Investments in robust healthcare systems, effective nutrition programs, and comprehensive protection measures have proven to be successful interventions in saving children's lives.
- Without accelerated action, projections estimate that approximately 30 million children could die before their fifth birthday by the year 2030.

Transforming Cancer Care: PM-JAY Achieves Milestone with Over 68 Lakh Treatments

- The Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY scheme has provided over 68 lakh cancer treatments with an expenditure of ₹13,000 crore, significantly improving access to healthcare, especially in rural India.
- A significant 76% of the cancer treatments under PM-JAY have benefited patients residing in rural areas.
- The scheme has also facilitated 4.5 lakh targeted therapy treatments worth ₹985 crore, with 76% of these accessed by beneficiaries in rural regions.
- PM-JAY offers an annual health coverage of ₹5 lakh per family for secondary and tertiary hospitalization, benefiting 55 crore individuals.
- The scheme includes 37 specific packages for targeted cancer therapies like chemotherapy.
- To strengthen cancer care infrastructure, the government has established 19 State Cancer Institutes and 20 Tertiary Cancer Care Centres.
- The initiative also emphasizes early cancer detection and prevention through population-based screening programs for oral, breast, and cervical cancers under Ayushman Arogya Mandirs, reaching underserved areas.
- While India faces a high and growing cancer burden with existing accessibility gaps, the government plans to establish 200 Day Care Cancer Centres in district hospitals by 2025-26 to expand services.
- Relevant government initiatives include PM-JAY (launched 2018), the National Programme for Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases (NP-NCD) under NHM, and the Strengthening of Tertiary Cancer Care Facilities Scheme. The Union Budget 2025-26 announced the 200 Day Care Cancer Centre initiative.

Antibiotic Overprescription in Young Adults: A Growing Concern

- A recent study by University of Manchester epidemiologists has highlighted a concerning increase in antibiotic prescriptions for young adults.
- The study of 15.7 million patient records indicates that younger adults are more likely to receive antibiotics for upper respiratory infections compared to elderly patients (31% less likely) and those with multiple health conditions (7% less likely).
- This inappropriate prescribing contributes to antimicrobial resistance (AMR), recognized as a major global public health threat.
- The study suggests that younger patients are often prescribed antibiotics without proper risk assessment, even when they could recover without them.
- Conversely, older patients who might need antibiotics are less likely to receive them, potentially increasing their risk of complications and hospitalization.
- The likelihood of receiving antibiotics for lower respiratory or urinary tract infections was not strongly linked to hospital admission risk, and for upper respiratory infections, the link was weak.
- Challenges include the acceleration of AMR due to inappropriate antibiotic use and potential healthcare disparities arising from unequal prescribing practices.

- Opportunities for improvement involve implementing risk-based prescribing guidelines for self-limiting infections and conducting awareness campaigns for both clinicians and patients on the risks of AMR and responsible antibiotic use.
- Relevant initiatives include India's National Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance (NAP-AMR) launched in 2017 by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, and the World Health Organization's (WHO) Global Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance adopted in 2015.

India to Develop Real-Time Surveillance Model for Zoonotic Diseases

- The Indian government has launched an initiative to develop a real-time surveillance model for the early detection and diagnosis of zoonotic diseases.
- This project is based on the One Health approach, recognizing the interconnected health of humans, animals, and the environment to prevent zoonotic spillovers.
- The study will be conducted in select bird sanctuaries and wetlands in Sikkim, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu.
- It will focus on populations at high risk of zoonotic disease transmission, including sanctuary workers, nearby residents, and migratory birds.
- The primary objective is to create a robust early warning system for zoonotic diseases.
- This initiative aims to enhance India's preparedness for future outbreaks through proactive surveillance measures.
- The project was initiated at the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) headquarters in New Delhi.

World Health Day 2025: Healthy Beginnings, Hopeful Futures

- World Health Day is observed annually on April 7th, commemorating the founding of the World Health Organization (WHO) in 1948.
- The theme for 2025, "Healthy Beginnings, Hopeful Futures," highlights the critical importance of maternal and newborn health for healthy families and communities.
- The year's focus is on reducing preventable maternal and newborn deaths worldwide.
- The WHO encourages governments and healthcare providers to prioritize women's long-term health and comprehensive postnatal care.
- While the global Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) has decreased by 40% since 2000, progress has slowed due to funding reductions, prompting the WHO to call for intensified efforts to ensure safe pregnancies and births.

Poshan Pakhwada 2025: Advancing Nutrition & Childcare Initiatives

- Poshan Pakhwada 2025, the 7th edition under Poshan Abhiyaan (launched in 2018), is observed from April 8 to April 22, 2025, led by the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) to improve nutrition among women and children.
- The campaign emphasizes maternal and infant nutrition, particularly the critical first 1000 days for a child's development.
- It promotes the use of the AI-enabled Poshan Tracker app for real-time monitoring of nutritional services at Anganwadi centres, with beneficiaries able to register via a web application.
- The campaign incorporates Community-Based Management of Malnutrition (CMAM) protocols for early detection and treatment of acute malnutrition.
- Alongside undernutrition, it focuses on preventing childhood obesity through healthy dietary practices and lifestyle changes.
- The Palna Scheme, under the Samarthya sub-scheme of Mission Shakti, provides quality créche services for children aged six months to six years to support working mothers and facilitate early childhood development, nutrition, growth monitoring, and immunization.
- Government outreach includes village camps, home visits, and educational drives to engage communities. Union Minister Annpurna Devi will visit Arunachal Pradesh, and Minister of State Savitri Thakur will inaugurate the event via webcast.
- The campaign involves a collaborative effort with 18 partner Ministries and various state departments.

World Homoeopathy Day 2025

- World Homoeopathy Day is observed annually on April 10th, the birth anniversary of Dr. Samuel Hahnemann, the founder of Homeopathy.
- The theme for 2025 is "Adhyayan, Adhyaapan, Anusandhaan," meaning Education, Practice, and Research, emphasizing continuous learning and evidence-based research in homeopathy.
- Homeopathy is a 200-year-old healing system based on the principle of "like cures like" using highly diluted substances.
- The celebration began in India in 1997 to raise awareness about the benefits and scientific basis of homeopathy, which is now the world's second-largest system of medicine.
- In 2025, India is hosting its largest Homeopathy Symposium at the Mahatma Mandir Convention &

Exhibition Centre in Gandhinagar, Gujarat, from April 10-11.
- The symposium will include panel discussions, scientific paper presentations, exhibitions, and a "Live Materia Medica" competition.
- Over 8,000 delegates from India and abroad, including academics, clinicians, researchers, students, and industry professionals, are expected to attend.

PM POSHAN Scheme: Material Cost Revision to Boost Nutritional Support

- The Ministry of Education has increased the Material Cost under the PM POSHAN Scheme by 9.5%, effective May 1, 2025, to account for inflation in food material prices.
- For Balvatika and Primary students, the daily material cost has risen from Rs 6.19 to Rs 6.78 per student.
- For Upper Primary students, the daily material cost has increased from Rs 9.29 to Rs 10.17 per student.
- These revised rates are the minimum mandatory amounts, and States/UTs can contribute more from their own funds.
- The revision is based on inflation data from the Labour Bureau's Consumer Price Index – Rural Labourers (CPI-RL).
- The central government will incur an additional expenditure of approximately Rs 954 crore in the 2025-26 financial year due to this increase.
- Annually, the Centre also provides about 26 lakh Metric Tonnes of foodgrains through the Food Corporation of India (FCI).
- The FCI bears the full cost of foodgrains, including an annual subsidy of around Rs 9,000 crore, and covers 100% of the transportation costs from its depots to schools.

National Safe Motherhood Day 2025 – Ensuring Healthy Beginnings, Hopeful Futures

- National Safe Motherhood Day was observed on April 11, 2025, to focus on the health and safety of mothers during and after pregnancy.
- The theme for 2025 was "Healthy Beginnings, Hopeful Futures," emphasizing accessible and quality healthcare for mothers and newborns from the start of pregnancy.
- Established in 2003 by the White Ribbon Alliance India (WRAI), the day commemorates Kasturba Gandhi's birth anniversary and aims to address high maternal mortality rates.
- The core pillars of safe motherhood include family planning, prenatal care, professional birth attendance, emergency care, and postnatal care.
- India faces significant maternal health challenges, including high mortality rates and limited healthcare access in rural and underprivileged areas.
- The day serves to raise public awareness and encourages government and healthcare organizations to improve maternal health policies and implement outreach programs.
- It also highlights the need for a comprehensive approach to women's welfare, addressing issues like child marriage and inadequate health infrastructure.

World Hemophilia Day 2025: A Call for Inclusive Healthcare

- World Hemophilia Day is observed annually on April 17th.
- Founded in 1989 by the World Federation of Hemophilia (WFH) to honor its founder, Frank Schnabel, the day raises global awareness about hemophilia and other inherited bleeding disorders.
- The theme for the 2025 global campaign is "Access for All: Women and Girls Bleed Too."
- This theme emphasizes that bleeding disorders are not limited to males and highlights the underdiagnosis and misdiagnosis of these conditions in women and girls.
- It calls for increased and equitable access to diagnosis, treatment, and support for affected females.
- Hemophilia is typically characterized by a deficiency in clotting factors, leading to prolonged bleeding.
- Common misconceptions have historically portrayed bleeding disorders as primarily affecting males, resulting in women with conditions like von Willebrand disease being overlooked.
- The 2025 theme aims to address healthcare disparities and challenge the stigma surrounding bleeding disorders in women.
- Initiated by the WFH, World Hemophilia Day has become a major global awareness campaign recognized in over 140 countries.
- Initially focused on promoting treatment access, the day's advocacy has expanded to include policy reforms, public education, and fundraising for comprehensive care.
- The day serves as a platform to advocate for early diagnosis, tailored treatment, and psychosocial support for all individuals with bleeding disorders, encouraging investment in research and gender-sensitive care protocols.

Historic Recognition of Type 5 Diabetes

- Type 5 Diabetes has been officially recognized as a distinct form of diabetes by the International Diabetes Federation (IDF).

- This type primarily affects lean, undernourished teenagers and young adults, particularly in low- and middle-income countries.
- Unlike Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes, Type 5 is caused by chronic undernutrition, leading to impaired pancreatic beta cell development and damage.
- Key characteristics include a Body Mass Index (BMI) below 18.5 kg/m^2, severely low insulin production without insulin resistance, extreme fatigue, weight loss, and frequent infections.
- Many cases were previously misdiagnosed as Type 1 or Type 2 diabetes, hindering appropriate treatment.
- Initially identified in 1955 as "J-type diabetes" and briefly recognized by the WHO in 1985, it was later dropped due to limited evidence.
- A 2023 meta-analysis in *The Lancet Diabetes & Endocrinology* re-established the link between malnutrition and impaired pancreatic function, leading to the IDF's official reclassification and endorsement in early 2025.
- An estimated 20-25 million people globally, mainly in Asia and Africa, are affected by this previously under-recognized condition.

World Liver Day 2025: "Food is Medicine" – History, Theme, and Global Significance

- World Liver Day 2025 is observed on April 19, 2025, to increase global awareness about liver health and the growing impact of liver diseases.
- The day emphasizes the significance of early detection, prevention, and treatment of various liver conditions.
- The theme for 2025 is "Food is Medicine," highlighting the crucial role of balanced nutrition in maintaining liver health through a diet rich in whole foods, fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, and healthy fats.
- World Liver Day was established in 2010 by the European Association for the Study of the Liver (EASL) in response to the increasing prevalence of liver disease and the need for public education on the liver's vital functions.
- The date, April 19, also commemorates the founding year of EASL in 1966, linking the day to decades of liver research and advocacy.
- The liver performs over 500 essential functions, including detoxification, metabolism and digestion, immunity support, and energy storage.
- Globally, approximately 1.5 billion people are affected by chronic liver disease, contributing to nearly two million deaths annually.

Underinsurance in India: Nearly 50% of the Insured Have Less Than ₹5 Lakh Health Cover

- A recent study indicates that nearly 50% of individuals with health insurance in India have a coverage limit of less than ₹5 lakh.
- This low level of insurance exposes a significant portion of the insured population to substantial out-of-pocket expenses during medical emergencies.
- Underinsurance can leave individuals financially vulnerable, especially when facing catastrophic medical costs like major surgeries or chronic disease treatments.
- Rising healthcare costs and inflation further exacerbate the inadequacy of low coverage amounts.
- There is a crucial need for increased consumer awareness regarding the importance of opting for higher health insurance coverage limits.
- Insurance providers are encouraged to develop more comprehensive products and educate customers on the benefits of higher coverage.
- Regulators like IRDAI may need to consider guidelines to promote adequate coverage levels in the health insurance market.
- While government schemes like Ayushman Bharat address healthcare financing gaps, private insurance also needs to enhance its offerings.
- Underinsurance can negatively impact household financial security, potentially leading to increased debt or loss of savings, and can also strain public health resources.

Fire Safety Week 2025: Health Ministry Leads Nationwide Drive to Strengthen Fire Safety

- The Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare led a nationwide Fire Safety Week campaign from April 21 to 25, 2025, in collaboration with States, UTs, and central ministries.
- The initiative aimed to enhance fire and electrical safety preparedness in healthcare facilities across India to ensure the safety of patients, healthcare workers, and visitors.
- The campaign began with a pledge ceremony led by Union Health Secretary Punya Salila Srivastava in New Delhi, focusing on the theme 'Fire Safety in Health Facilities'.
- Over 3,000 participants from public and private health facilities virtually attended webinars on emergency evacuation, patient safety strategies, and fire prevention in high-risk healthcare areas.
- A two-day webinar series covered fire prevention in high-risk areas, regulatory compliance, maintenance of fire safety systems, and patient safety during evacuations.

- Activities conducted included fire audits, mock drills, awareness campaigns (poster making, quizzes), and demonstrations on fire detection and suppression equipment.
- An online pledge and fire safety quiz were launched on the MyGov platform to broaden public participation and awareness.
- Primary objectives were to educate the public and institutions on fire safety protocols, promote knowledge of safety equipment and emergency procedures, organize training and drills, ensure infrastructure upgrades in critical buildings like hospitals, review fire safety norms, and facilitate dialogue for future disaster management strategies.

World Immunization Week 2025: "Immunization for All is Humanly Possible"

- The World Health Organization (WHO) led World Immunization Week (April 24-30) with the theme "Immunization for All is Humanly Possible," marking the midpoint of the Immunization Agenda 2030.
- In India, Union Health Minister J.P. Nadda launched the National Zero Measles Rubella Elimination Campaign during this week, aiming to eliminate measles and rubella by 2030.
- Globally, vaccines have saved an estimated 154 million lives since 1974 (6 lives per minute) and are attributed to a 40% reduction in infant mortality, with the measles vaccine alone saving 60% of these lives.
- Immunization has been crucial in preventing diseases such as polio, measles, HPV, malaria, and COVID-19.
- Despite progress, challenges remain, with 22 million children missing their first measles vaccine in 2023 and 14.5 million receiving no essential vaccine doses.
- Vaccine hesitancy and logistical challenges, particularly in conflict zones like Syria and Yemen, continue to hinder immunization efforts.
- India's National Zero Measles Rubella Elimination Campaign aims to achieve 95% vaccination coverage through mass immunization drives and robust surveillance.

World Malaria Day 2025: India's Roadmap to Elimination and Global Challenges

- World Malaria Day was observed globally on April 25, 2025, under the theme "Malaria Ends With Us: Reinvest, Reimagine, Reignite," emphasizing the need for renewed efforts against malaria.
- India reaffirmed its commitment to eliminate malaria by 2030 under the National Framework for Malaria Elimination 2016–2030, with Odisha demonstrating significant progress by reducing cases by 90% since 2018 through partnerships like Malaria No More (MNM) India.
- Globally, in 2023, there were 263 million malaria cases and 597,000 deaths reported, with 95% of cases concentrated in the WHO African Region.
- India's National Framework for Malaria Elimination aims for zero indigenous cases by 2030, focusing on strengthened surveillance, health systems, and community engagement.
- Odisha's successful model in reducing malaria cases by 90% involves AI-powered surveillance, distribution of mosquito nets, and public awareness campaigns.
- Global challenges to malaria control include the disruptive impact of climate change and conflict in endemic regions of Africa and Asia, as well as funding gaps due to cuts in global health funding, prompting the WHO to advocate for increased domestic investments.
- Innovation in malaria prevention and detection includes the rollout of malaria vaccines in 20 African countries like Mali, with the potential to save tens of thousands of children annually, and the development of next-generation insecticide-treated nets and rapid diagnostic kits.

Education

AICTE Forms Expert Committee to Integrate AI Across Academic Streams

- AICTE has formed an expert committee, chaired by Anand Deshpande of Persistent Systems, to integrate Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Applied AI across all technical education streams beyond traditional computer science programs.
- This initiative aligns with 2025 being declared the 'Year of Artificial Intelligence', underscoring AICTE's commitment to future-ready curricula.
- The expert committee, comprising members from IITs and NITs, will advise on embedding AI and data analytics fundamentals and practical applications across disciplines like BBA and Electrical Engineering.
- AICTE follows a bi-annual curriculum review process to ensure content relevance with emerging AI technologies.
- A significant focus will be on upskilling faculty members to adapt teaching methods for AI integration, including evaluating AI-generated assignments and updating question framing.
- AICTE is encouraging partnerships between industry and academia to design cutting-edge, practical AI modules.
- The goal is to create broad-based AI literacy, enhancing employability for graduates across various fields and reducing the digital skills gap.

- The initiative aims to evolve pedagogical approaches, redesigning assignments and evaluations to promote analytical learning over rote memorization.
- This rollout is expected to impact approximately 14,000 colleges and nearly 40 million students in India's technical education system.

BIS Launches Internship Program for 500 Students from Partner Institutions

- The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) has launched an internship program for 500 students from its partner institutions to provide practical exposure and skill development.
- This initiative aims to bridge the gap between academic learning and the real-world application of quality standards and industrial practices.
- The program will offer internship placements for 500 students at BIS facilities across technical, engineering, and management domains.
- The internships are designed to provide hands-on experience with BIS's standardization processes, quality assurance systems, and regulatory practices.
- Key objectives include enhancing students' skills by providing practical exposure to standardization, strengthening the collaboration between industry and academia, and empowering students with insights into modern quality infrastructure.

Economy

India Achieves Record Renewable Energy Capacity Addition: FY 2024-25

- India added a record 25 gigawatts (GW) of renewable energy capacity in FY 2024-25, a 35% increase from the 18.57 GW added in the previous fiscal year.
- As of February 2025, India's total non-fossil fuel-based capacity reached 214.677 GW.
- Solar energy was a major contributor, with capacity surging from 15 GW to nearly 21 GW, a 38% growth, and India surpassed 100 GW of solar capacity this year.
- Solar module manufacturing capacity doubled to 74 GW, and solar cell manufacturing capacity tripled to 25 GW.
- Initiatives like mandated blending of compressed biogas (Bio-CNG) with CNG and PNG also contributed to the growth.
- Government schemes like the PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana benefited over 11 lakh households and disbursed ₹5,437.20 crore in CFA to nearly 7 lakh beneficiaries in its first year.
- The Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme attracted approximately ₹41,000 crore in investments and created around 11,650 direct jobs.
- Challenges include approximately 40-50 GW of renewable energy capacity awaiting Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) signings.
- Future goals include increasing Bio-CNG blending to 5% by FY 2029 as part of decarbonization efforts.

Fiscal Health Index 2025: Odisha Leads the Way in Economic Resilience

- NITI Aayog's inaugural Fiscal Health Index (FHI) 2025 ranks Indian states on their economic resilience and fiscal management.
- Odisha has emerged as the top-performing state with a score of 67.8, followed by Chhattisgarh, Goa, Jharkhand, and Gujarat.
- The FHI evaluates states based on indicators like tax buoyancy, revenue mobilization, debt-to-GSDP ratio, expenditure prioritization, and fiscal deficit management.
- States facing fiscal challenges include Punjab, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, and Kerala, characterized by high deficits and low capital expenditure.
- Odisha's success is attributed to strong debt management, a high capital outlay-to-GSDP ratio, and effective revenue generation, particularly from mining premiums.
- The Index highlights significant disparities in fiscal management across states, with some struggling to balance development and fiscal discipline.
- Challenges include addressing fiscal imbalances in states with high debt and low expenditure quality, and ensuring uniform adoption of best practices.
- Opportunities lie in leveraging economic growth through prioritized capital expenditure (as seen in Odisha and Madhya Pradesh) and using the Index as a guide for improved fiscal governance and resilience.

Indian Railways Revenue Milestone in FY 2023-24

- Indian Railways achieved a record revenue of ₹2.56 Lakh Crore in FY 2023-24, demonstrating strong financial performance.
- This revenue milestone was driven by significant contributions from both freight and passenger services, along with enhanced operational efficiency.
- Increased freight traffic, improved logistics, and diversified cargo handling were key factors boosting freight revenue.

- Investments in technology and infrastructure modernization streamlined operations, contributing to the overall revenue growth.
- Upgrades in safety, punctuality, and customer service enhanced service quality, positively impacting revenue.
- Government schemes and policy reforms aimed at strengthening the rail sector provided a significant boost.
- Challenges include the ongoing need for infrastructure expansion and modernization, managing operational costs, and continuous investment demands.
- Opportunities for further growth lie in revenue diversification, the adoption of advanced digital solutions, strategic partnerships with private players, and leveraging broader economic development.
- The strong performance of Indian Railways supports overall economic development and connectivity in the country.

India's CAD to Remain in Safe Zone During 2025-26

- A recent report projects that India's Current Account Deficit (CAD) will remain within a safe zone during the fiscal year 2025-26.
- This positive outlook highlights India's strong external position amidst global economic uncertainties.
- The report indicates that the CAD is expected to remain a sustainable percentage of the GDP, providing a buffer against external shocks.
- Contributing factors to this favorable projection include strong export performance driven by a diversified base and global demand, managed import growth through controls and a focus on self-reliance, and robust foreign direct investment (FDI) and portfolio investment inflows.
- Ongoing government reforms aimed at enhancing export competitiveness and reducing import dependency have also played a crucial role in maintaining a stable CAD.

Warangal's Chapata Chilli Earns GI Tag: A Boost for Telangana Farmers

- The Warangal Chapata Chilli, also known as Tomato Chilli, has been granted a Geographical Indication (GI) tag by the Government of India, certified on March 28, 2025.
- This recognition acknowledges the chilli's unique characteristics and long cultivation history in Telangana, benefiting around 20,000 farmers in Warangal, Hanumakonda, Mulugu, and Bhupalpally districts.
- The chilli is cultivated across 6,738 acres in these districts, with an annual production volume of approximately 11,000 metric tonnes.
- The GI tag is expected to significantly increase the chilli's price from ₹300 to ₹550 per kilogram.
- The Warangal Chapata Chilli is known for its bright red color, mild pungency, and blocky, tomato-like shape, making it popular in pickle industries and food processing.
- It has been a staple crop in Telangana for over 80 years and is cultivated using traditional and eco-friendly farming methods.
- The harvesting season is typically from February to March, with careful drying processes to maintain its vibrant red color.
- The GI tag provides regional exclusivity, protecting the chilli's name and enhancing its commercial value for the local farmers.

Coal Production Crosses 1 billion Tonnes in FY25

- India's coal production surpassed 1 billion tonnes in FY 2024-25, reaching 1.04 billion tonnes (provisional), a 4.99% increase from the previous fiscal year's 997.83 million tonnes.
- Production from commercial and captive mines saw a significant surge of 28.11%, reaching 197.50 million tonnes.
- Coal dispatch also crossed the 1 billion tonne mark, reaching 1.02 billion tonnes, a 5.34% increase from FY 2023-24, with dispatch from commercial and captive entities rising by 31.39% to 196.83 million tonnes.
- This increased domestic production led to an 8.4% reduction in coal imports, resulting in foreign exchange savings of approximately ₹42,315.7 crore.
- Coal remains a critical part of India's energy strategy, contributing 55% to the energy mix and powering over 74% of electricity generation, despite the growth of renewables.
- India holds the fifth-largest coal reserves globally and is the second-largest consumer of coal, with over 5 lakh mine workers across more than 350 coal mines contributing to this production level.
- Projections indicate that coal-based thermal power will still account for 55% of energy generation by 2030 and 27% by 2047, even with the expansion of renewable energy sources.

NTPC Talcher Kaniha Achieves 100% Ash Utilization

- NTPC Talcher Kaniha, a 3010 MW Super Thermal Power Station, has achieved 100% ash utilization for the financial year 2024-25.
- This environmental milestone aims to minimize ash storage in ponds and promote resource utilization.
- The power station utilized a total of 67 Lakh Metric Tonnes (LMT) of ash during the fiscal year, a 43.2% increase from the previous year.
- Non-dyke ash utilization reached 45%, demonstrating a commitment to reducing environmental impact and enhancing ash use in various applications.
- The fly ash is being supplied for significant national infrastructure projects, including road construction and soil conservation.
- Major road projects benefiting from the fly ash include works on corridors like Cuttack-Angul (NH55), Duburi-Chandikhol-Balasore (NH53), Chandikhol-Paradip (NH53), Berhampur Bypass (NH59), and Khordha Bypass (NH57).

Odisha Secures Rs 1.03 Lakh Crore Investment: A Comprehensive Overview

- The Odisha government has secured over Rs 1.03 lakh crore in investment through 13 Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) worth Rs 98,880 crore and 15 additional investment proposals.
- These investments are projected to create nearly 95,000 jobs in the state.
- A significant MoU was signed with Indian Oil Corporation Ltd (IOCL) for a Dual-Feed Naphtha Cracker Project, expected to attract over Rs 58,042 crore in investment and generate around 24,000 jobs.
- The signing event was led by Odisha's Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, with the presence of Union Ministers Dharmendra Pradhan, Jual Oram, and Hardeep Singh Puri.
- Key collaborations include agreements with Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserves Ltd (ISPRL) and Petronet LNG, highlighting Odisha's growing importance in the petrochemical and energy sectors.
- Odisha's strategic location, especially around Paradip, is being promoted as a key advantage in establishing the state as a major industrial hub, similar to Dahej in Gujarat.

Nationwide Unemployment Marginally Declines: Key Findings from the NSO Survey

- The nationwide unemployment rate (for persons aged 15 years and above under the Current Weekly Status - CWS) saw a marginal decrease from 5.0% to 4.9%.
- In rural areas, the unemployment rate also slightly declined from 4.3% to 4.2%.
- Urban male unemployment increased from 6.0% to 6.1%, while urban female unemployment fell from 8.9% to 8.2%, keeping the overall urban unemployment rate stable at 6.7%.
- Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) in urban areas increased for both males (74.3% to 75.6%) and females (25.5% to 25.8%), resulting in an overall urban LFPR improvement from 50.3% to 51.0%; the nationwide LFPR remained steady at 56.2%.
- The Worker Population Ratio (WPR) in urban areas slightly increased from 47.0% to 47.6%, while the all-India WPR saw a minimal change from 53.4% to 53.5%.
- A notable finding is the decrease in the percentage of unpaid helpers in household enterprises among rural females, declining from 19.9% to 18.1%, suggesting a shift in informal employment patterns.
- Under the Principal and Subsidiary Status (PS+SS) approach, the LFPR marginally decreased from 59.8% to 59.6%, the WPR slightly dipped from 58.0% to 57.7%, and unemployment saw a small increase from 3.1% to 3.2%.

India's Exports Hit Record $820 Billion in FY24-25

- India's goods and services exports reached a record $820 billion in FY 2024-25, a nearly 6% increase from the previous fiscal year's $778 billion.
- This total includes approximately $395.63 billion in merchandise exports and around $354.90 billion in service exports.
- This significant achievement occurred despite global challenges such as the Red Sea crisis, the Israel-Hamas conflict, the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war, and slow growth in some developed economies.
- The record was announced at a meeting chaired by Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal, who commended exporters for their resilience.
- The government is actively working to create a favorable environment for exporters, including discussions on a multi-sectoral Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA) with the United States.
- The meeting also addressed challenges arising from new high US tariffs, encouraging exporters to see these as opportunities.
- Various Export Promotion Councils (EPCs) representing diverse industries participated in the meeting, providing crucial feedback on the evolving global trade landscape.

Cabinet Approves Major Transport Infra Projects to Boost Connectivity & Sustainability

- The CCEA has approved multiple transport infrastructure projects with a focus on enhancing connectivity, reducing logistics costs, and cutting CO_2 emissions over the next five years.
- Railway projects worth ₹6,798 crore include the doubling of the Narkatiaganj-Raxaul-Sitamarhi-Darbhanga and Sitamarhi-Muzaffarpur sections (256 km) in Bihar, improving connectivity to Nepal and North-East India.
- A new 57 km rail line between Errupalem and Namburu via Amaravati in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana will provide direct access to approximately 168 villages with 9 new stations.
- These railway projects are expected to increase freight capacity by 31 MTPA and reduce CO_2 emissions by 168 crore kg (equivalent to planting 7 crore trees), aligning with the PM GatiShakti National Master Plan.
- The doubling of the 104 km Tirupati-Katpadi railway line (₹1,332 crore) will enhance connectivity for pilgrims, tourists, and freight, improving access to Tirupati and Vellore.
- The construction of the six-lane Zirakpur bypass aims to decongest traffic in Zirakpur and provide direct connectivity to Himachal Pradesh and the NCR, also part of the PM GatiShakti initiative.

India's Forex Reserves Surge to $676.3 Billion

- As of April 4, 2025, India's foreign exchange reserves reached $676.3 billion.
- This reserve level provides approximately 11 months of import cover, ensuring stability for external trade.
- The reserves grew by about $10.9 billion in a single reporting week, marking the fifth consecutive week of increase.
- The components of the forex reserves include a significant increase of around $9 billion in Foreign Currency Assets and a rise of about $1.5 billion in Gold Reserves, along with Special Drawing Rights (SDRs).
- This strong reserve position enhances the stability and resilience of the Indian economy against external shocks and currency volatility.
- Robust forex reserves provide the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) with the flexibility to intervene in foreign exchange markets to stabilize the rupee during uncertain times.
- Continuous growth in reserves positively impacts investor and market confidence, indicating strong economic fundamentals.
- RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra emphasized the resilience of India's external sector and the role of these reserves in underpinning the nation's financial stability.
- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) manages the forex reserve portfolio, with the Ministry of Finance playing a key role in shaping fiscal policies that support robust reserves.

NITI Aayog's Report on the Automotive Sector

- The NITI Aayog report, "Automotive Industry: Powering India's Participation in Global Value Chains," aims to identify ways for India to strengthen its position in the global automotive supply chain by addressing opportunities and challenges through fiscal and non-fiscal interventions.
- India is the fourth-largest automobile producer globally, manufacturing nearly 6 million vehicles annually, but its share in the global automotive component trade is only around 3% (approximately $20 billion).
- India's automotive sector faces a cost disadvantage of about 10% compared to competitors like China due to higher raw material costs, import duties, freight expenses, depreciation rates, and costs of funds.
- The report suggests fiscal interventions such as Opex support, developing clusters, incentivizing R&D, and facilitating IP transfers.
- Non-fiscal measures emphasized include adopting Industry 4.0 technologies (AI, IoT, robotics), streamlining regulations, enhancing worker hour flexibility, and expanding international collaborations through FTAs.
- The report envisions boosting domestic auto component production to $145 billion and tripling exports to $60 billion by 2030, increasing India's global value chain share from 3% to 8% and generating an additional 2-2.5 million direct jobs.
- The shift to Electric Vehicles (EVs) and the integration of Industry 4.0 technologies are identified as key technological and market trends that India needs to capitalize on.
- Policy recommendations include developing advanced manufacturing infrastructure, fostering R&D through testing centers and facilities, streamlining trade and regulatory frameworks via FTAs, and upgrading the workforce's skills for advanced manufacturing.

India Showcases BioE3 Policy and Integrated Biorefinery Initiatives at Mission Innovation Annual Gathering 2025

- India presented its BioE3 Policy and Integrated Biorefinery initiatives at the Mission Innovation Annual Gathering 2025 held in Seoul, South Korea from April 9-11, 2025.

- Mission Innovation is a global platform under Mission Innovation 2.0 that aims to accelerate clean energy technology investments and international collaboration, an initiative co-founded by India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- India showcased its BioE3 (Biotechnology for Environment, Energy, and Economy) Policy, which promotes sustainable, low-carbon manufacturing of fuels, chemicals, and materials through biotechnology to foster an innovation-driven low-carbon manufacturing ecosystem.
- India is actively advancing its Integrated Biorefinery Mission, focused on converting biomass into fuels, chemicals, and platform materials, including the integration of Carbon Capture, Utilization, and Bioenergy (CCUB) technologies to reduce carbon emissions in biomanufacturing.
- The Department of Biotechnology (DBT), under the Ministry of Science & Technology, is a key driver of these initiatives, and India co-leads the Mission Integrated Biorefinery with the Netherlands, demonstrating international partnership.
- The DBT actively participated in the gathering through discussions, technical sessions, and site visits to clean energy facilities.
- These initiatives are significant for addressing climate change by developing low-carbon technologies, boosting India's sustainable biomanufacturing capacities, and strengthening its position in the global clean energy sector, paving the way for greener industrial practices and enhanced energy security.

FDI Surge in India's Pharma Sector

- The pharmaceutical and medical devices sector in India attracted approximately Rs 19,134.4 crore in total FDI during the financial year 2024-25.
- This includes Rs 11,888 crore invested between April and December of the last fiscal year, along with an additional Rs 7,246.40 crore from 13 approved brownfield FDI proposals.
- A key driver for this investment surge is the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for pharmaceuticals, which aims to attract investments, reduce import dependency, enhance exports, and strengthen India's global manufacturing base.
- Investments realized under the PLI scheme have already exceeded the initial commitments, indicating the scheme's success in attracting FDI.
- Under the Bulk Drugs PLI scheme, 48 projects have been selected, with 34 already commissioned for the production of 25 essential bulk drugs.
- Notable projects include the Penicillin G Project in Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh (approximately Rs 1,910 crore investment, expected to substitute imports worth around Rs 2,700 crore annually), and the Clavulanic Acid Project in Nalagarh, Himachal Pradesh (around Rs 450 crore investment, anticipated to offer significant import substitution benefits).
- The inflow of FDI is catalysing the upgrade of domestic production capabilities and positioning India as a competitive hub in the global pharmaceutical value chain.

M&A and PE Deals in the Consumer Sector Hit a Three-Year High – $4 Billion in Q1 2025

- Mergers & Acquisitions (M&A) and Private Equity (PE) deals in India’s consumer and retail sector reached nearly $4 billion in Q1 2025.
- The total number of transactions completed in Q1 2025 was 139, a significant increase compared to 78 deals in Q1 2023 and 102 deals in Q1 2024.
- Major investments included Temasek's $1 billion acquisition of a 10% stake in Haldiram Snacks and Wilmar International's $1.4 billion deal to increase its holding in AWL Agri-Business (formerly Adani Wilmar) to nearly 75%.
- A trend of strategic consolidation was observed with Hindustan Unilever (HUL) acquiring the D2C skincare brand Minimalist, ITC taking over the frozen foods brand Prasuma, and Adani Wilmar acquiring GD Foods (Tops sauces and pickles).
- The deal value in Q1 2025 was three times higher than the $1.28 billion in Q1 2023 and more than double the $1.74 billion in Q1 2024, indicating substantial growth.
- These significant deals reflect growing investor confidence in India’s food processing and consumer goods segments, driven by consumer demand for quality products and digital distribution channels.

India Targets 10% Global Market Share in Power Tools, 25% in Hand Tools by 2035

- India aims to achieve $25 billion in exports from the hand and power tools sector within the next decade, targeting 10% of the global power tools market and 25% of the hand tools market, as per NITI Aayog's report.
- Achieving these export targets is projected to create around 3.5 million jobs in India.
- The global trade in hand and power tools is currently about $100 billion and is expected to reach $190 billion by 2035, with hand tools valued at $34 billion (growing to $60 billion) and power tools (including accessories) at $63 billion (growing to $134 billion).
- India's current export market share is approximately 1.8% in hand tools ($600 million) and 0.7% in power tools ($470 million), significantly behind China,

which holds around 50% of the hand tools and 40% of the power tools market.
- To boost competitiveness, the report recommends establishing 3 to 4 world-class industrial clusters over 4,000 acres through PPPs, offering plug-and-play facilities and modern infrastructure.
- Structural and regulatory reforms are crucial to address India's 14-17% cost disadvantage compared to China, including rationalizing import duties, streamlining Quality Control Orders (QCO) and the EPCG scheme, revising labor laws, and upgrading logistics.
- As an interim measure, if market reforms are insufficient, a financial support package of up to Rs 8,000 crore may be needed, which is expected to generate significant tax revenues over five years.

India's Inland Waterways Cargo Movement Reaches a Record High

- India's Inland Water Transport (IWT) sector achieved a record high of 145.5 million tonnes (MT) of cargo movement on National Waterways in FY 2024-25.
- This represents a significant increase from the 18.10 MMT recorded in FY 2014, showing a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 20.86% over the decade.
- In FY 2024-25, cargo movement grew by 9.34% compared to the previous fiscal year.
- The number of operational national waterways expanded from 24 to 29 during FY 2024-25, improving connectivity and capacity.
- The majority of the cargo (over 68%) consisted of coal, iron ore, iron ore fines, sand, and fly ash.
- The Jalvahak Cargo Promotion Scheme, launched in December 2024, incentivizes the shift of cargo to waterways by offering up to 35% reimbursement of operating expenditure.
- Digital and regulatory reforms include a digital portal for No Objection Certificates (NOCs) and the National Waterways (Construction of Jetties/Terminals) Regulations, 2025, to encourage private sector participation in terminal development.
- Modernization initiatives involve end-to-end dredging contracts, the introduction of Ro-Ro and Ro-Pax services, and the deployment of digital tools like CAR-D and PANI portals, along with centralized vessel and crew registration systems (Jalyaan and Navic) and the Naudarshika navigational system.

India Achieves Record Exports of $821 Billion in FY25

- India's total exports (goods and services) reached a record $820.93 billion in FY 2024-25, a 5.5% increase from the $778 billion in FY 2023-24, achieved despite a challenging global economic climate.
- Merchandise exports remained nearly stable at $437.42 billion, with growth in sectors like engineering goods, electronics, pharmaceuticals, and agricultural commodities (rice, cotton, spices) offsetting declines elsewhere.
- Services exports saw robust growth of approximately 12.45%, increasing from $341.06 billion in FY24 to $383.51 billion in FY25, highlighting India's strength in IT, business process outsourcing, and knowledge-intensive industries.
- Goods imports grew by 6.2% to $720.24 billion, resulting in a widening trade deficit as import growth exceeded export growth in certain sectors.
- India's export sector demonstrated resilience despite global uncertainties like rising tariffs, trade tensions, and geopolitical risks.
- Strategic government measures, including bilateral trade negotiations with key partners and continuous engagement with export promotion councils and industry stakeholders, have supported this performance.

India's Record Trade Deficit with China Soars to $99.2 Billion in FY25

- India's trade deficit with China reached a record $99.2 billion in FY 2024-25, driven by a significant increase in imports and a sharp decline in exports.
- Imports from China rose by 11.5% to $113.5 billion, while exports to China fell by 14.5% to $14.3 billion during this period.
- In March alone, imports from China jumped over 25% year-on-year to approximately $9.7 billion.
- The rising imports reflect India's structural dependencies on China, particularly in sectors like electronics, EV batteries, solar cells, and other industrial inputs.
- Despite efforts to boost domestic manufacturing, India's exports to China have been declining, reaching levels not seen since 2013/14.
- Concerns have been raised that US tariff policies might lead Chinese firms to divert surplus goods to Indian markets, further widening the trade deficit.
- In response to the surge in imports and fears of dumping, the Indian government plans to establish a dedicated monitoring unit to track low-cost imports from China, Vietnam, and Indonesia.
- The record deficit has led to calls for strengthening domestic manufacturing capabilities and reducing dependency on Chinese inputs to address India's competitiveness crisis.

Record Pharma Exports & Surging Global Biopharma IPOs

- India's pharmaceutical exports reached a record high of over $30.46 billion in the financial year 2024-25, marking a growth of more than 9% compared to the previous fiscal year.
- In March 2025 alone, exports saw a substantial 31% year-on-year increase, reaching approximately $3.68 billion.
- The United States remains the largest export destination for Indian pharmaceuticals, with shipments growing by over 14% to nearly $9 billion.
- Other significant export markets include the United Kingdom, Brazil, France, and South Africa.
- The growth in pharmaceutical exports is driven by strong global demand for Indian drugs, a robust manufacturing base, and India's position as a major supplier of generic medicines, as highlighted by positive trade data from Pharmexcil.
- The global biopharmaceutical industry experienced a significant rebound in 2024, with companies raising $8.52 billion through Initial Public Offerings (IPOs).
- This surge signifies growing investor confidence in the healthcare and life sciences sectors, fueled by advancements in areas like cancer treatments, rare diseases, gene therapy, and vaccine development.
- The raised capital is primarily intended for accelerating research and development, expanding production capabilities, and fostering further innovation within these companies.
- This robust IPO activity was observed across major markets, including the United States, Europe, and Asia, indicating a renewed global optimism in biopharma companies.

India’s Ambitious Job Creation Drive: 8 Million Jobs Annually for the Next Decade

- India aims to generate 8 million jobs annually for the next 10-12 years to achieve its goal of becoming a developed nation by 2047.
- Chief Economic Advisor V. Anantha Nageswaran emphasizes that increasing the manufacturing sector's contribution to GDP is crucial for global competitiveness alongside job creation.
- Enhancing the small and medium enterprise (SME) sector is considered essential for boosting manufacturing, drawing lessons from China's growth, particularly in the post-COVID context.
- Policymakers need to strike a balance between technological advancement in AI and robotics and safeguarding entry-level and low IT-enabled service jobs from automation.
- The external economic environment in the coming decades is anticipated to be less favorable compared to the conditions India experienced from the early 1990s.
- Generating the required scale of jobs remains a significant challenge for India, given its large population and demographic dividend.
- The government intends to align domestic policies with global value chains to facilitate the seamless integration of Indian businesses into the global economy.
- A combination of labor-centric policies and technological adaptation is envisioned to ensure equitable growth and sustainable job creation in the country.

Core Sector Output Rises 3.8% in March: Cement, Power, and Refinery Products Lead the Surge

- India's core sector output experienced a growth of 3.8% in March, indicating strong performance in key industries during economic recovery.
- The growth was primarily fueled by the cement, power, and refinery products sectors.
- Increased electricity demand played a significant role as a catalyst for the growth in these core industries.
- The cement sector's increased production output was pivotal, highlighting recovery in infrastructure and construction.
- A significant rise in power generation and distribution helped meet both industrial and residential electricity needs.
- Recovery in demand and efficient operations in refineries contributed to the overall increase in core sector output.
- Analysts project that if the current momentum continues, the core sector could potentially grow by around 4.4% in FY25, driven by sustained industrial reforms and revived consumer demand.

India's Untapped Potential in Bioenergy: Challenges and Opportunities

- India's energy mix is heavily reliant on fossil fuels, with coal contributing over 70% to electricity generation.
- Despite substantial agricultural resources, India's bioenergy potential remains largely untapped.
- Bioenergy is derived from organic materials like agricultural residues and animal waste.
- First-generation biofuels are produced from food crops, while second-generation biofuels come from non-food biomass, and third-generation biofuels are sourced from algae.
- Key challenges hindering the harnessing of bioenergy in India include potential conflicts

between land use for biofuel crops and food production, high initial investment costs affecting economic viability, limited access to efficient conversion technologies, and inconsistent policies and a lack of incentives.

IMF: AI's Economic Boost Likely to Outweigh Emission Costs

- The IMF projects that the economic productivity gains from Artificial Intelligence (AI) are likely to outweigh the environmental costs associated with its energy consumption and carbon emissions.
- AI is estimated to boost global GDP by approximately 0.5% annually between 2025 and 2030.
- The rapid adoption of AI is expected to more than triple global electricity demand by 2030, potentially reaching 1,500 terawatt-hours, comparable to India's current annual consumption.
- Under current energy policies, this surge in electricity demand could lead to a cumulative 1.2% increase in global greenhouse gas emissions between 2025 and 2030.
- Despite the environmental concerns, the IMF believes the economic benefits of AI-driven productivity and innovation will likely surpass the social cost of the additional emissions.
- Achieving a net positive outcome depends on powering AI data centers with renewable energy, promoting energy-efficient AI algorithms and hardware, and leveraging AI for climate solutions.
- The IMF highlights the need for policies to address potential inequalities in the distribution of AI's economic benefits.
- Proactive governance from governments, tech companies, and energy providers is crucial to steer AI development towards sustainable and equitable outcomes through measures like R&D funding, regulations, and carbon pricing.

SUFALAM 2025 Conclave Boosts Food Processing Startups

- The second edition of the SUFALAM 2025 conclave, focused on startups in the food processing sector, was held on April 25-26, 2025, at NIFTEM-Kundli, Haryana.
- Organized by the Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI) in collaboration with NIFTEM-Kundli, the event was inaugurated by Union Minister Shri Chirag Paswan.
- SUFALAM aims to foster innovation, sustainability, and entrepreneurship in India's food processing industry by connecting startups with mentors, investors, and policymakers, showcasing technologies, and promoting government schemes.
- The two-day event included keynote addresses, experience-sharing sessions, expert talks, panel discussions, and startup pitching sessions.
- Over 250 startups from 23 states participated, with around 35 startups pitching their ideas to evaluators from organizations like Nestlé and the Indian Angel Network, showcasing innovations such as cell-cultured meat and plant-based foods.
- NIFTEM-Kundli provided mentorship, consultancy services, and access to infrastructure to support the participating startups.
- The MoFPI supports the food processing industry through schemes like the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana (PMKSY) for infrastructure and supply chains (extended till March 2026).
- The Pradhan Mantri Formalisation of Micro food processing Enterprises (PMFME) Scheme (till 2025-26) supports micro-enterprises with financial, technical, and business assistance using the ODOP approach.
- The Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for the Food Processing Industry (till 2026-27) aims to boost domestic manufacturing, encourage investment, and promote Indian food brands globally.

India Launches Electronics Component Manufacturing Scheme (ECMS) to Boost Self-Reliance

- India has launched the Electronics Component Manufacturing Scheme (ECMS) with an outlay of ₹22,919 crore for six years (2025–2031) to boost domestic manufacturing of passive components and sub-assemblies, aiming for self-reliance and reduced import dependency.
- The scheme targets ₹59,350 crore in investments and the creation of 91,600 direct jobs, with a key focus on increasing domestic value addition in electronics manufacturing from the current 10–15% to 20% by 2030.
- The ECMS offers turnover-linked incentives for sub-assemblies, capex-linked incentives for capital equipment manufacturing, hybrid incentives for advanced components like HDI PCBs, and employment-linked payouts.
- The scheme targets the manufacturing of passive components (resistors, capacitors), bare components (PCBs, Li-ion cells, enclosures), and capital goods (precision tools and machinery for electronics manufacturing).
- An online portal (www.ecms.meity.gov.in) has been launched on May 1, 2025, to streamline the application process.
- India's electronics production has grown five-fold and exports six-fold in the last decade, and the

ECMS aims to increase India's share in global electronics manufacturing from 3% to 8% by 2031.
- The electronics sector currently employs 25 lakh people, and the scheme emphasizes skilling youth and women in the industry.
- The ECMS aims to address the current $248 billion deficit in passive component imports through local production, with mandatory adherence to Six Sigma quality benchmarks for manufacturers.
- Industry bodies like Elcina and ICEA have lauded the scheme as a potential "game-changer" for deepening the electronics ecosystem and integrating Indian manufacturing with global value chains, also boosting MSME participation.

UDAN Scheme Soars: Nearly 1.5 Crore Fly Affordable Regional Routes

- India's Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS) UDAN has facilitated affordable air travel for nearly 1.49 crore passengers since its launch on October 21, 2016.
- UDAN aims to enhance regional air connectivity by connecting unserved and underserved airports, particularly in Tier-II and Tier-III cities and remote regions, making air travel affordable.
- The scheme operates on a market-driven model where airlines bid for routes and receive Viability Gap Funding (VGF) from the central and state governments to make operations financially viable with capped fares.
- Airfares on UDAN flights are capped at around ₹2,500 for a one-hour journey on a fixed-wing aircraft.
- Airlines receive concessions from the central government (reduced excise duty), state governments (reduced VAT on ATF, subsidized land and utilities), and airport operators (waiver or discounts on various charges) to lower operating costs.
- As of late April 2025, 625 UDAN routes have been operationalized, connecting 90 airports (including airports, water aerodromes, and heliports).
- Over ₹4,023 crore has been disbursed as VGF under the scheme.
- The scheme has evolved through multiple phases, focusing on connecting helipads, tourism routes, seaplanes, the North-East, and promoting helicopters and small aircraft for last-mile connectivity.
- UDAN has stimulated local economies, supported tourism (including through Krishi UDAN for agricultural produce), and created jobs in the connected regions.
- India's total operational airport count has more than doubled from 74 in 2014 to 159 in 2024, partly due to the UDAN scheme.

India Lifts 171 Million from Extreme Poverty in a Decade: World Bank Report

- India lifted 171 million people out of extreme poverty between 2011-12 and 2022-23, according to the World Bank's Spring 2025 "Poverty & Equity Brief."
- Extreme poverty in India, defined as living on less than USD 2.15 per day (2017 PPP), decreased from 16.2% in 2011-12 to 2.3% in 2022-23.
- Rural extreme poverty fell from 18.4% to 2.8%, and urban extreme poverty declined from 10.7% to 1.1%, significantly narrowing the rural-urban poverty gap.
- Using the lower-middle-income poverty line (USD 3.65 per day), poverty dropped from 61.8% to 28.1%, lifting 378 million people above this line during the same period.
- India's five most populous states accounted for a significant portion of both the initial extreme poverty and its subsequent decline.
- India also witnessed a substantial reduction in Multidimensional Poverty, with NITI Aayog reporting a decline from 29.17% in 2013-14 to 11.28% in 2022-23, meaning 248.2 million people escaped this form of poverty.
- Factors contributing to this poverty reduction include sustained economic growth, structural transformation, and targeted government welfare programs like DBT through JAM trinity, NFSA, PM-GKAY, Ujjwala, Saubhagya, Swachh Bharat Mission, Jal Jeevan Mission, PM Awas Yojana, Ayushman Bharat, and MGNREGA.
- This progress signifies a major step towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 1: No Poverty, particularly Target 1.2.
- The World Bank, established in 1944, plays a crucial role in monitoring global poverty and aims to end extreme poverty by 2030 and promote shared prosperity.
- Poverty in India is measured by both monetary poverty lines (like those used by the World Bank) and the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) released by NITI Aayog, which considers deprivations in health, education, and standard of living.

India's Industrial Growth Slows in FY25, Despite Small Rise in March

- India's industrial output (IIP) grew by 3.0% in March 2025, a slight increase from February but lower than the 5.5% growth in March 2024.
- For the entire financial year 2024-25 (FY25), industrial production grew by 4.0%, the lowest annual growth in four years, down from 5.9% in FY24.

- In March 2025, the manufacturing sector grew by 3.0%, mining by 0.4%, and electricity generation by 6.3%, all showing slower growth compared to March 2024.
- The consumer non-durables category contracted by 4.7% in March 2025, marking the fourth consecutive month of decline and potentially indicating weak consumption demand.
- Consumer durables grew by 6.6%, capital goods by 2.4%, and infrastructure/construction goods showed strong growth at 8.8%.
- The IIP data is crucial for assessing industrial sector performance and informs policy decisions by the government and the RBI, also contributing to GDP calculations.
- The Index of Industrial Production (IIP) measures changes in the volume of industrial goods production, with the current base year being 2011-12.
- The IIP is calculated by the National Statistical Office (NSO) and comprises broad sectors (mining, manufacturing, electricity) and use-based categories.
- Eight core industries (Refinery Products, Electricity, Steel, Coal, Crude Oil, Natural Gas, Cement, Fertilizers) hold a significant weight (40.27%) in the IIP and heavily influence its overall performance.

India's Gold Demand Crosses 800 Tonnes in 2024 Amidst Shifting Trends

- India's total gold demand surpassed 800 tonnes in 2024 for the first time since 2015, marking a 5% increase from 2023.
- The value of gold demand surged by 31% to ₹5.15 lakh crore in 2024, primarily due to rising gold prices.
- Jewellery consumption saw a slight 2% dip to 563.4 tonnes, but India remained the world's largest consumer of gold jewellery.
- Investment demand for gold (bars and coins) witnessed a significant 29% increase to 239.4 tonnes, making India the second-largest global investor in this segment.
- Gold imports saw a slight decline of 4% to 712.1 tonnes, while recycling decreased marginally by 2% to 114.3 tonnes compared to 2023. The Ministry of Commerce has since revised gold imports for 2024 to 812 tonnes.
- Indian investors are increasingly opting for Gold ETFs, with holdings tripling in the last five years to 63 tonnes; globally, Gold ETFs saw strong inflows in Q1 2025.
- Gold outperformed other major asset classes in FY25, delivering a 41% return in dollar terms.
- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has been a significant buyer of gold, ranking as the third-largest official buyer globally over the past three and five years, with gold now over 11% of India's forex reserves.
- The surge in gold demand is driven by cultural affinity, its role as a safe-haven asset amid economic uncertainty, and investors seeking portfolio diversification.
- India's strong demand contributed to a record high global gold demand in 2024, significantly supported by central bank buying; the WGC anticipates India's demand to be in the range of 700-800 tonnes for 2025.

₹22,864 Cr Greenfield Highway Approved for Meghalaya-Assam Connectivity

- The CCEA has approved a ₹22,864 crore greenfield highway project to connect Mawlyngkhung (Meghalaya) to Panchgram (Assam).
- This 166.80 km, four-lane, access-controlled highway will be part of National Highway No. 06 (NH-06), with 144.80 km in Meghalaya and 22.00 km in Assam.
- The project, with a civil construction cost of ₹12,087 crore and land acquisition cost of ₹3,503 crore, will be executed under the Hybrid Annuity Mode (HAM).
- The highway aims to significantly reduce travel time and distance between Guwahati and Silchar, enhancing connectivity to Tripura, Mizoram, Manipur, and the Barak Valley.
- It is expected to improve logistics efficiency, reduce transportation costs, and decongest the existing NH-06 alignment.
- The new corridor will integrate with major highways like NH-27, NH-106, NH-206, and NH-37, benefiting towns like Diengpasoh, Ummulong, and Kalain.
- The highway is expected to boost industrial growth in cement and coal-producing areas of Meghalaya and enhance tourism in the Northeast.
- The project is estimated to generate significant employment: 74 lakh direct and 93 lakh indirect man-days during construction.
- This initiative aligns with the PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan and the vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat, promoting socio-economic development across five Northeastern states.

Finance

EPFO Empanels 15 More Banks: Enhancing Direct Payment Systems

- The EPFO has empanelled 15 additional banks, bringing the total to 32, to streamline contribution collection and improve direct payment systems.

- Contributions through these banks will be available for investment on T+1 day, reducing the previous T+2 day cycle via aggregators.
- Employers can now directly pay contributions through their own banking partners, reducing reliance on third-party aggregators.
- Pensioners can receive payments through the Centralized Pension Payment System in any bank account, removing prior restrictions.
- This initiative is part of EPFO 3.0, aiming to make EPFO services as seamless and efficient as banking.
- Auto-processing has reduced claim settlement time to three days; EPFO settled 2.34 crore claims in FY 2024-25, a 160% increase year-on-year.
- The move aligns with EPFO's goal of improving ease of living for members and ease of doing business for employers.

98.21% of ₹2000 Notes Returned: Legal Tender Status Upheld

- The RBI has confirmed that 98.21% of the ₹2000 banknotes have been returned to the banking system.
- Despite the high return rate, the ₹2000 note continues to be legal tender.
- This indicates the successful absorption of high-denomination notes into the formal banking system without disrupting daily transactions.
- Strategic policy measures by the RBI and the government facilitated the return of these notes.
- Increased adoption of digital payments has reduced the reliance on high-denomination currency.
- Effective public communication encouraged the deposit of these notes back into the system.

ATM Withdrawals to Cost More: RBI Hikes Fee to ₹23 from May 1

- The RBI has increased the ATM withdrawal fee beyond the free monthly limit to ₹23 per transaction, effective May 1, 2025, up from ₹21.
- Customers are entitled to 5 free transactions at their own bank ATMs and 3 free transactions at other bank ATMs in metro cities (5 in non-metro areas).
- The hike is in response to rising operational costs for banks and ATM operators, including maintenance, security, and upgrades.
- The RBI's decision also reflects the push towards digital transactions as cost-effective alternatives to cash withdrawals.
- The increased fees may disproportionately affect frequent ATM users and those in rural areas with limited digital banking access.
- The move presents an opportunity to further encourage the adoption of digital payment methods and may incentivize banks to optimize their ATM operations.
- This development is relevant to government initiatives like the Digital India campaign and the role of NPCI in promoting digital payment frameworks.
- The previous revision in ATM charges occurred in 2021, and the current hike builds upon those established guidelines.

One State-One RRB: Streamlining Rural Banking for Enhanced Efficiency

- The "One State-One RRB" initiative aims to consolidate multiple Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) within a single state or region to enhance operational efficiency and improve services.
- The latest phase consolidates 26 RRBs, reducing the total number of RRBs in India from 43 to 28, effective May 1, 2025.
- This consolidation covers RRBs operating in 10 states and 1 Union Territory, including Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Jammu & Kashmir, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal.
- The consolidation is carried out under the Regional Rural Banks Act, 1976, and each unified RRB will have an authorized capital of ₹2,000 crore.
- This phase follows previous consolidation efforts that reduced the number of RRBs from 196 to 43 between FY 2006 and FY 2021.
- Consolidation aims to improve scale efficiency across over 22,000 branches serving around 700 districts, predominantly in rural and semi-urban areas, and to rationalize costs.
- Post-merger RRBs are expected to benefit from a stronger capital base and improved adoption of digital banking technologies.
- The initiative seeks to minimize competition among sponsoring public sector banks and optimize resource utilization in rural banking.
- The decision for this consolidation followed consultations with state governments, sponsor banks, and other key stakeholders initiated in November 2024.

10 Years of MUDRA: A Decade of Financial Empowerment

- Launched in April 2015, the Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana (PMMY) provides collateral-free loans to micro and small enterprises to foster financial inclusion.
- Over the past decade, more than 52 crore loans have been disbursed, totaling around ₹33 lakh crore, supporting grassroots entrepreneurship.

- Over 70% of MUDRA beneficiaries are women, highlighting the scheme's role in empowering female entrepreneurs.
- A significant portion of loans has reached individuals from SC, ST, and OBC communities, promoting social inclusion.
- MUDRA has contributed to job creation and enhanced the socio-economic fabric of the nation by supporting the growth of micro-enterprises.
- Loans under MUDRA are categorized into Shishu (startups), Kishor (expanding businesses), and Tarun (established businesses aiming for growth).
- The scheme is implemented by MUDRA Ltd. under the Ministry of Finance, with credit delivery facilitated by a wide network of financial institutions.

RBI's Repo Rate Cut: A Shift to an Accommodative Stance

- The RBI has cut the repo rate by 25 basis points to 6%, marking the second consecutive rate cut.
- The RBI's monetary policy stance has shifted from neutral to accommodative, signaling a willingness to lower borrowing costs to stimulate economic growth.
- The decision is driven by a decline in inflation, which is now under control and below the RBI's target range.
- Lower repo rates are expected to make borrowing more attractive, potentially boosting consumption and investment, particularly in sectors like real estate and consumer spending.
- Home loan borrowers may see a reduction in their EMIs as banks are likely to pass on the rate cut.
- Consequent to the repo rate cut, the SDF rate is now 5.75%, and the MSF and Bank Rate are at 6.25%.

RBI Revises LCR Guidelines for Banks, Effective April 2026

- The RBI has issued revised guidelines for the Liquidity Coverage Ratio (LCR) for banks, set to take effect in April 2026.
- The revisions aim to strengthen banks' liquidity risk management and ensure resilience during market stress, aligning with global standards.
- The objective is to ensure banks maintain sufficient High-Quality Liquid Assets (HQLA) to cover potential 30-day stressed funding outflows and minimize systemic risks.
- Major changes include a refined definition of HQLA, updated calculation methodology for the LCR, new disclosure norms for transparency, and risk sensitivity adjustments reflecting recent banking environment changes.
- Banks may need to restructure their asset portfolios, implement operational reforms in liquidity management, and adapt stress testing frameworks to comply with the new rules.
- The revised LCR guidelines will be effective from April 2026, with banks expected to undergo a phased implementation to ensure full compliance.

RBI Mandates 2.5% Additional Run-Off Factor on Digital Deposits

- The RBI has revised its Liquidity Coverage Ratio (LCR) guidelines for commercial banks, effective April 1, 2026, to enhance liquidity resilience, aligning with Basel III standards.
- A key change is the introduction of an additional 2.5% run-off factor for retail and small business customer deposits accessible via Internet and Mobile Banking (IMB) channels (internet banking, mobile apps, UPI).
- Stable retail/small business deposits with IMB access will now have a 7.5% run-off factor (up from 5%), and less stable deposits will have a 12.5% run-off factor (up from 10%).
- The RBI has eased norms for unsecured wholesale funding from certain non-financial entities (trusts, partnerships, LLPs, etc.), reducing the run-off rate from 100% to 40%.
- The valuation of Level 1 High-Quality Liquid Assets (HQLA), primarily government securities, will now be based on current market value after applying haircuts similar to the RBI's LAF and MSF operations.
- The Liquidity Coverage Ratio (LCR), a Basel III component, requires banks to hold sufficient HQLA to cover net cash outflows during a 30-day stress period, with a minimum requirement of 100%.
- The RBI estimates that the net impact of these revisions will be an improvement of the banking system's aggregate LCR by about 6 percentage points, potentially freeing up ₹2.7-3 lakh crore in lendable resources.
- These revised guidelines apply to all Scheduled Commercial Banks (SCBs), excluding RRBs, LABs, and Payments Banks, with an implementation date of April 1, 2026.

RBI Empowers Minors: Independent Bank Account Operations for Kids Above 10

- The RBI, on April 21, 2025, issued guidelines allowing minors aged 10 and above to independently open and operate savings and term deposit accounts.
- This initiative aims to promote financial inclusion and early financial literacy among young individuals.

- Banks have the discretion to set terms like transaction limits and documentation requirements based on their risk management policies.
- Banks can also offer facilities such as internet banking, ATM/debit cards, and cheque books to these minor account holders.
- Children below 10 years can still have bank accounts, but these must be operated by a natural or legal guardian.
- Upon attaining majority, banks will need to obtain fresh operating instructions and signatures from the account holders to continue operations.
- Banks are required to align their policies with these revised guidelines by July 1, 2025.
- The move is intended to encourage financial literacy, align with the digital banking environment, and empower youth through financial inclusion.

1% TCS on Luxury Goods Above ₹10 Lakh

- The CBDT has mandated a 1% Tax Collected at Source (TCS) on the sale of specified luxury goods exceeding ₹10 lakh per item, effective April 22, 2025.
- Sellers of wristwatches, art pieces, collectibles, yachts, boats, helicopters, sunglasses, bags, shoes, sportswear, home theatre systems, and race/polo horses above ₹10 lakh must collect this 1% TCS.
- This measure falls under Section 206C(1F) of the Income Tax Act, 1961, which was amended to include these additional goods.
- The primary objectives are to widen the tax base, track high-value spending, curb tax evasion, and ensure early revenue collection.
- Sellers are responsible for collecting the 1% TCS at the time of sale, depositing it with the government by the 7th of the next month, and filing quarterly TCS returns in Form 27EQ (amended to include these goods).
- Buyers must provide their PAN for these transactions and can claim the 1% TCS as a credit against their income tax liability when filing their ITR, with the possibility of a refund if the TCS exceeds their tax liability.
- This TCS will be reflected in the buyer's Form 26AS.
- TCS is governed by Section 206C of the Income Tax Act, where the seller collects tax from the buyer on specified sales, while TDS (Tax Deducted at Source) involves the payer deducting tax from specified payments.

DRDO and Indian Army Successfully Test Medium-Range Surface-to-Air Missile System

- The DRDO and the Indian Army successfully conducted four flight tests of the Medium-Range Surface-to-Air Missile (MRSAM) system on April 3 and 4, 2025, off the coast of Odisha.
- The tests aimed to validate the MRSAM system's performance against high-speed aerial targets at various ranges and altitudes.
- All four missiles successfully intercepted and destroyed their designated targets with precision, confirming the system's reliability and readiness for deployment.
- The successful trials pave the way for the deployment of the MRSAM system in two regiments of the Indian Army.
- The MRSAM system is jointly developed by DRDO and Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) and includes a multi-function radar, command post, and mobile launcher.
- Designed to defend against aircraft, helicopters, drones, and cruise missiles, the MRSAM has a range of 70 km and can engage multiple targets simultaneously.
- The missile is powered by an indigenously developed rocket motor, enabling high manoeuvrability.

Defence Ministry Signs ₹2,385 Cr Deal with BEL for Mi-17 V5 EW Suites

- The Ministry of Defence has signed a ₹2,385.36 crore contract with Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) for Electronic Warfare (EW) suites and aircraft modification kits for Mi-17 V5 helicopters of the Indian Air Force.
- The EW suites are designed to enhance the operational survivability of the Mi-17 V5 helicopters in hostile environments by enabling them to detect, intercept, disrupt, deceive, or deny the enemy's use of the electromagnetic spectrum.
- This acquisition falls under the Buy (Indian-IDDM) category, emphasizing indigenous design, development, and manufacturing, with most sub-assemblies and components sourced from domestic manufacturers, including MSMEs.
- The project aims to boost the Indian electronics and associated industries and represents a significant step towards achieving self-reliance ('Atmanirbhar Bharat') in defence manufacturing.

DRDO's Long-Range Glide Bomb 'Gaurav' Successfully Tested on Su-30 MKI

- DRDO successfully conducted release trials of the Long-Range Glide Bomb (LRGB) 'Gaurav' from a Su-30 MKI fighter aircraft between April 8 and 10, 2025, achieving a range of nearly 100 km with high accuracy.
- 'Gaurav' is a 1,000-kg class bomb equipped with a hybrid navigation system (INS and GPS) for precise

targeting and can be integrated with multiple stations in various warhead configurations.
- The LRGB has been indigenously designed and developed by DRDO's Research Centre Imarat, ARDE, and ITR, with collaboration from Adani Defence Systems & Technologies, Bharat Forge, and various MSMEs.
- The trials were supported by the Centre for Military Airworthiness & Certification and the Directorate General of Aeronautical Quality Assurance to ensure safety and performance standards.

Naval Commanders Conference 2025

- The inaugural Naval Commanders Conference 2025, a biannual apex-level meeting, was held in two phases at Karwar and New Delhi to review and enhance the Indian Navy's operational preparedness and discuss maritime security challenges.
- Discussions focused on the Navy's readiness, new platforms, modern technologies, and infrastructure development, with the aim of transforming it into a Combat Ready, Credible, Cohesive, and Future Ready Force.
- The conference coincided with the launch of IOS Sagar, an initiative to reinforce India's maritime cooperation, and included the inauguration of new infrastructure under Project Seabird.
- Defence Minister Rajnath Singh presided over the inaugural session, with participation from CDS General Anil Chauhan, Navy Chief Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi, and senior MoD officials.
- The conference facilitated interactions with the Chiefs of the Army and Air Force, promoting tri-service synergy, and included insights from Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri and G20 Sherpa Amitabh Kant on global dynamics and India's role in the Indian Ocean Region.
- Key publications such as the Indian Navy's Space Vision, Indian Naval Air Publication, Operational Data Framework, and a veterans' compendium 'Navy for Life and Beyond' were unveiled.

India Demonstrates Laser Weapon Capability

- India has successfully tested a high-power laser-based weapon system developed by DRDO, demonstrating its capability to neutralize aircraft, missiles, and swarm drones.
- This achievement places India among a select group of nations possessing directed energy weapons (DEWs).
- The indigenous 30-kilowatt laser weapon system, designated Mk-II (A) DEW, can rapidly lock onto aerial targets using integrated radar and electro-optic systems.
- The system can precisely engage and disable enemy drones by causing structural damage and disrupting surveillance sensors, and it is designed to neutralize multiple targets simultaneously.
- The successful field trial was conducted at the National Open Air Range in Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh, where the laser system accurately tracked and shot down unmanned aerial vehicles.

Dustlik-VI: Strengthening Indo-Uzbek Defense Cooperation in Counterterrorism

- The sixth edition of the joint military exercise Dustlik ("friendship" in Uzbek) was held between the Indian and Uzbekistan armies from April 16 to April 28, 2025, at the Foreign Training Node in Aundh, Pune, Maharashtra.
- Dustlik-VI focused on enhancing joint training, interoperability, and the exchange of best practices in counterterrorism and sub-conventional operations in semi-urban environments.
- The Indian contingent comprised 60 personnel, including a battalion from the Jat Regiment and specialized teams from the Indian Air Force (IAF), while the Uzbek contingent was represented by personnel from the Uzbekistan Army.
- The exercise involved practicing responses to terrorist actions, including raids, search-and-destroy operations, and population control measures.
- A Joint Operations Centre was established for joint planning and execution, with tactical drills including small team insertion/extraction, securing helipads, and special heliborne operations.
- The exercise also incorporated multi-domain operations with the deployment of drones, counter-Unmanned Aerial System (UAS) measures, enhanced IAF logistics support, and the use of helicopters for reconnaissance.

Indian Air Force Takes Part in Multinational Exercise "Desert Flag-10" in UAE

- The Indian Air Force (IAF) participated in the multinational exercise Desert Flag-10 at Al Dhafra Air Base in the UAE.
- Hosted by the UAE Air Force, the exercise commenced on April 21, 2025, and concluded on May 8, 2025.
- Desert Flag-10 aimed to simulate diverse combat scenarios, enhance interoperability, and facilitate the exchange of operational knowledge among participating air forces.
- Air force contingents from Australia, Bahrain, France, Germany, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Republic of Korea, Turkey, UAE, UK, and USA participated alongside the IAF.

- The IAF's participation underscores India's commitment to strategic partnerships and its proactive role in international defense collaboration.
- Such exercises contribute to the modernization of IAF's air combat tactics and reinforce India's position in regional and global security dialogues.

Major Leap in Hypersonic Tech: DRDO Tests Scramjet Engine for Over 1000 Seconds

- DRDO has achieved a major milestone in hypersonic technology by successfully ground-testing an Active Cooled Scramjet Subscale Combustor for over 1,000 seconds at its new Scramjet Connect Test Facility in Hyderabad on April 25, 2025.
- Hypersonic speed refers to velocities above Mach 5, and scramjet engines (Supersonic Combustion Ramjets) are air-breathing engines crucial for sustained flight at these speeds by combusting air flowing at supersonic speeds.
- This long-duration test is a significant step for India's Hypersonic Cruise Missile Development Programme and the Hypersonic Technology Demonstrator Vehicle (HSTDV) programme, building upon a Mach 6 flight test in 2020.
- Validating the scramjet combustor design for over 16 minutes signifies a high level of technological maturity and progresses India towards flight-worthy hypersonic engines.
- This achievement underscores India's growing self-reliance (Atmanirbhar Bharat) in critical defence technologies, placing it among a select few nations with proven scramjet capabilities.
- The success is a result of collaborative efforts by various DRDO laboratories, industry partners, and academic institutions.
- DRDO, established in 1958 under the Ministry of Defence, is India's premier agency for military research and development, aiming for self-reliance in critical defence technologies with the motto "Strength's Origin is in Science."

IAF Sharpens Combat Edge with Exercise 'Aakraman'

- The Indian Air Force (IAF) is conducting a major operational exercise named 'Aakraman' in the central sector of the country.
- Exercise Aakraman aims to enhance the IAF's operational readiness for complex combat scenarios and validate various warfighting strategies.
- The exercise involves simulated attacks on ground targets in plains and mountains, as well as electronic warfare drills, with assets moved from multiple airbases, possibly including the Eastern sector.
- Key aircraft participating include the Dassault Rafale and the Sukhoi Su-30 MKI, along with other assets like transport aircraft, refuellers, AWACS, and ground-based air defence systems.
- Highly skilled pilots, including 'Top Guns' from TACDE, are involved in the exercise, which is being closely monitored by Air Headquarters.
- Exercise Aakraman demonstrates the IAF's capability for rapid deployment and high-intensity operations, integrating new platforms and weapons systems like Meteor and SCALP missiles on Rafales, potentially coordinating with S-400 units.
- This large-scale drill signals the IAF's preparedness and acts as a deterrent in the current regional security environment.
- The IAF, established in 1932, is organized into seven commands and its primary mission is to secure Indian airspace and conduct aerial warfare.
- The Dassault Rafale is a 4.5 generation multirole fighter known for its agility, AESA radar, SPECTRA EW suite, and advanced weapons.
- The Sukhoi Su-30 MKI is a twin-engine air superiority fighter with multirole capabilities, forming the backbone of the IAF's fleet and undergoing upgrades.

India Boosts Naval Power with Rafale Marine Fighter Jet Deal

- India has signed an Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA) with France for the procurement of 26 Rafale Marine (Rafale-M) fighter jets for the Indian Navy.
- The deal, valued at approximately ₹63,000 crore, includes 22 single-seater and 4 twin-seater trainer aircraft manufactured by Dassault Aviation.
- These carrier-borne fighters will operate from the Indian Navy's aircraft carriers, INS Vikrant and INS Vikramaditya, as an interim measure until India's indigenous Twin Engine Deck Based Fighter (TEDBF) is ready.
- The agreement encompasses the aircraft, associated equipment, weapons systems, simulators, spares, crew training, and performance-based logistics, along with additional equipment for the Indian Air Force's existing Rafale fleet.
- Deliveries are expected to commence around 2029 and be completed by 2031.
- The induction of Rafale-M jets will significantly enhance the Indian Navy's operational capability and power projection in the Indian Ocean Region and Indo-Pacific.
- The deal includes Transfer of Technology (ToT) for integrating indigenous weapons like the Astra and Rudram missiles onto the Rafale-M, and provisions for setting up MRO facilities and a fuselage

production facility in India, boosting the 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' initiative and creating opportunities for Indian MSMEs.
- The procurement follows approvals from India's Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) and the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS).
- This acquisition further strengthens the strategic defence partnership between India and France, building upon the earlier Rafale deal for the Indian Air Force.

Science

Saturn's Moon Count Skyrockets: 128 New Moons Discovered

- Astronomers have discovered 128 new moons orbiting Saturn, significantly increasing the planet's known satellite count.
- This discovery nearly doubles the number of known moons around Saturn, revealing a more complex gravitational system.
- The new moons were identified through advanced telescopic observations and sophisticated data analysis techniques that enabled the detection of faint objects.

Hadean Protocrust and Early Plate Tectonics: Rethinking Earth's Geological Origins

- The Hadean protocrust refers to Earth's earliest crust, formed during the Hadean Eon (4.6 to 4 billion years ago), a period of extreme conditions with a partially molten surface.
- Early Earth was characterized by intense volcanic activity, magma oceans, and heavy meteoritic bombardment, leading to the solidification of a flaky protocrust.
- Traditionally, plate tectonics was inferred from chemical signatures in old rocks, like a negative niobium anomaly, believed to originate only from subduction.
- A new Macquarie University-led study reveals that these chemical signatures were present in the Hadean protocrust, predating the onset of plate movements and subduction.
- Researchers used mathematical models and laboratory studies to analyze the formation and evolution of Earth's early crust.
- This finding challenges the assumption that these geochemical fingerprints exclusively indicate plate tectonic activity.
- The study suggests a reassessment of the geological timeline for the beginning of plate tectonics on Earth.
- It proposes that the formation of continental crust with modern chemical characteristics could have been an inherent process during the cooling of early Earth, not solely due to later tectonic activities.

Indian Telescope Uncovers Elusive Intermediate-Mass Black Hole

- An intermediate-mass black hole (IMBH) weighing about 22,000 solar masses has been detected in the galaxy NGC 4395.
- IMBHs are considered the missing link in black hole evolution, bridging the gap between stellar and supermassive black holes.
- The discovery enhances our understanding of how black holes grow and evolve, with IMBHs believed to be the seeds of supermassive black holes.
- The detection was made using India’s largest optical telescope, the 3.6-metre Devasthal Optical Telescope (DOT), operated by ARIES.
- Spectrophotometric reverberation mapping was used, measuring the time lag between light from the black hole's accretion disk and echoes from surrounding gas to determine the black hole's mass.
- Gas clouds were observed orbiting the black hole at a distance of 125 light-minutes (2.25 billion km) with a velocity dispersion of 545 km/s.

IIT-Bombay Scientists Discover a Novel Host Protein to Combat Bacterial Infections

- Scientists at IIT-Bombay, led by Prof. Anirban Banerjee, have discovered a host protein, VCP/p97, that uses tweezer-like mechanisms to kill bacteria.
- The protein is activated when human cells tag invading bacteria with ubiquitin, a molecular "red flag" indicating nutrient theft.
- VCP/p97 acts like tiny tweezers, binding to the ubiquitin-tagged bacteria and extracting hair-like surface proteins from their membrane.
- This "plucking" process tears apart the bacteria, neutralizing the infection threat.
- The research, published in Nature Microbiology, utilized advanced techniques like optical trapping, molecular dynamics simulations, in vitro reconstitution, and immunogold transmission electron microscopy.
- Collaboration involved researchers from TIFR and IISc, with PhD student Sourav Ghosh playing a significant role.
- This discovery offers new insights into the innate immune defense and potential strategies to combat antibiotic-resistant bacteria.

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50 Years of Aryabhata: Igniting India's Space Odyssey

- India's first satellite, Aryabhata, completed 50 years on April 19, 2025, having been launched on April 19, 1975, from the Soviet cosmodrome at Kapustin Yar.
- Weighing about 360 kg and designed by Indian scientists at ISRO, Aryabhata was a polyhedron with solar panels, carrying experiments in X-ray astronomy, solar physics, and aeronomy.
- Despite a power failure after five days, Aryabhata demonstrated India's capability in satellite development and launch, inspiring future missions.
- The mission was a collaboration with the USSR under the Interkosmos program, providing crucial launch support.
- The success of Aryabhata established India as the 11th nation to place a satellite in orbit and laid the groundwork for India's subsequent space achievements like Chandrayaan and Mangalyaan.

ISRO's SpaDeX Mission Completes Second Docking of Satellites

- ISRO has successfully achieved the second docking of its SpaDeX satellites, SDX01 (Chaser) and SDX02 (Target), launched on December 30, 2024.
- The first docking occurred on January 16, 2025, followed by an undocking on March 13, 2025, and the second successful docking, demonstrating repeatable in-space docking.
- The docking utilized the indigenously developed Bharatiya Docking System, featuring a specialized mechanism, four rendezvous and docking sensors for autonomous operation, power transfer, and an inter-satellite communication link.
- With this, India becomes the fourth nation to master satellite docking in space, after the US, Russia, and China.
- This technology is crucial for future missions including human spaceflight, the Bharatiya Antariksha Station, satellite servicing, and lunar expeditions like Chandrayaan, enhancing India's capability for complex orbital operations without relying on Earth-based navigation.

Innovative Cell Motility Method Distinguishes Healthy vs. Cancerous Cells

- Researchers in Japan have developed a label-free technique using phase-contrast microscopy to distinguish healthy cells from cancerous ones based on their natural movement with up to 94% accuracy.
- The method tracks individual cell trajectories, focusing on migration speed, the sum of turn angles, and the frequency of shallow turns.
- The study analyzed healthy fibroblasts and malignant fibrosarcoma cells, revealing distinct motility patterns between the two.
- The combination of the sum of turn angles and the frequency of shallow turns proved effective in accurately predicting cell status.
- This innovative approach could provide insights into other biological processes like tissue healing and general cell motility.

China-Led Lunar Base to Harness Nuclear Power on the Moon

- China is leading an initiative to establish a lunar base that will include a nuclear power plant on the Moon's surface.
- The proposed lunar base aims to create a long-term habitat for scientific experiments and future lunar colonization.
- A nuclear power plant will be an integral part of the base, providing a continuous and high-output energy supply, unaffected by the lunar night.
- Integrating nuclear power on the Moon represents a significant technological milestone, advancing reactor design and energy management for extreme environments.
- The project underscores China's ambition to lead in space exploration and supports long-term goals like in-situ resource utilization and autonomous extraterrestrial operations.
- India and other nations are closely observing China's progress towards building a sustainable lunar outpost.

Discovery of the Davis Strait Proto-Microcontinent

- Scientists have discovered a previously unknown proto-microcontinent, the Davis Strait Proto-Microcontinent (DSPM), beneath the Davis Strait between Greenland and Canada.
- The DSPM was identified by researchers using gravity data and seismic reflection techniques to reconstruct the region's tectonic history.
- Initial rifting between Greenland and North America began around 118 million years ago, with significant tectonic activity forming the DSPM between 58 and 49 million years ago.
- The DSPM is characterized by thick continental crust, distinct from the surrounding oceanic crust, and is classified as a "failed" microcontinent due to incomplete separation.
- Microcontinents are fragments of continental crust that have broken off from larger continents.

- Studying microcontinents like the DSPM helps geologists understand continental drift, plate tectonics, and Earth's geological history.
- The Davis Strait is an oceanic channel connecting the Labrador Sea with Baffin Bay.

India's Space Ambition: Own Space Station by 2035

- ISRO Chairman V. Narayanan has announced India's plan to have its own space station by 2035.
- The project aims to strengthen India's satellite technology, scientific research, and space exploration capabilities.
- Establishing an independent orbital outpost will be a significant milestone in indigenous technological capability and self-reliance in space.
- The space station will facilitate astronaut training, long-duration experiments, and in-orbit research.
- It will serve as a laboratory for microgravity, materials science, biotechnology, and other interdisciplinary experiments.
- The project is expected to drive innovations in life-support systems, orbital mechanics, and autonomous spacecraft operations.

ISRO Assumes Leadership Role in Global Space-Based Disaster Management

- India, through ISRO, has assumed the lead role of the "International Charter Space and Major Disasters" for six months, starting in April 2025.
- ISRO's National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC) in Hyderabad will coordinate the responsibilities during this period.
- The leadership commenced after the 53rd meeting of the Charter, hosted by NRSC/ISRO in Hyderabad, with participation from major global space agencies.
- The International Charter is a collaborative agreement among 17 member space agencies and satellite operators to provide rapid access to free satellite data for disaster management.
- As the lead agency, ISRO/NRSC will coordinate global disaster response, manage activation requests for satellite data, ensure rapid data dissemination, lead strategic planning, and facilitate training.
- This role showcases India's expertise in space technology and remote sensing for disaster management and reflects its commitment to international cooperation and humanitarian aid.
- India is a founder member of the Charter, which is celebrating its 25th anniversary in 2025.
- Leading the Charter contributes to strengthening global and national disaster management frameworks, aligning with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and enhances India's global standing in the space community.

Technology

Indigenous EV Wireless Chargers: Accelerating Green Mobility

- Indigenous EV wireless chargers have been developed that can charge up to 90% of an electric vehicle's battery in 3 hours using a 1.5 kW design.
- The charger operates on a standard 230V, 50Hz AC single-phase supply and achieves an efficiency of 89.4% with coil separation of 7.5 to 12.5 cm.
- The technology is a result of collaborative research between CDAC and VNIT Nagpur, utilizing advanced Silicon Carbide-based MOSFETs.
- The technology has been successfully transferred to Global Business Solution Pvt. Ltd. for commercial development, with MoAs and MoUs signed with various industry players.
- This initiative aligns with the National Mission on Power Electronics Technology (NaMPET) under MeitY and supports the Make in India and Aatmanirbhar Bharat campaigns.

Digital Threat Report 2024: Enhancing Cybersecurity in India's BFSI Sector

- The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has launched the Digital Threat Report 2024 for India's Banking, Financial Services, and Insurance (BFSI) sector.
- The report is a collaboration between CERT-In, CSIRT-Fin, and SISA, a global cybersecurity firm.
- It was launched by key government officials including S. Krishnan (Secretary of MeitY), M. Nagaraju (Secretary of the Department of Financial Services), Dr. Sanjay Bahl (Director General of CERT-In), and Dharshan Shanthamurthy (Founder & CEO of SISA).
- The report provides an analysis of current and emerging cyber threats and outlines defence strategies for the BFSI sector.
- It identifies security gaps and emphasizes the systemic repercussions of a single breach in the increasingly digital and interconnected BFSI ecosystem.
- The report serves as a strategic blueprint for BFSI organizations to enhance their cyber defences, minimize risks, and build cyber resilience.
- It highlights the need for a unified cybersecurity framework involving government agencies, regulatory bodies, and industry stakeholders.

AI in Healthcare: Tackling Biases and Ensuring Safety Protocols

- The increasing integration of AI in healthcare for diagnostics and treatment raises concerns about biases and the necessity of stringent safety protocols.
- A recent study indicated that AI models might recommend different treatments for the same condition based on a patient's socioeconomic and demographic characteristics, potentially mirroring and widening existing healthcare inequities.
- High-income virtual patients were more often recommended advanced diagnostics like CT scans or MRI compared to low-income patients with identical clinical details.
- Experts emphasize the need for robust safety standards for AI in healthcare, similar to tamper-evident packaging developed after safety incidents.
- Key safety measures include rigorous testing, continuous oversight, and the use of high-quality, unbiased training data to prevent misinformation and data poisoning.
- Addressing AI biases is crucial for maintaining public trust and ensuring fair and effective clinical decision-making in healthcare.
- Effective safety protocols are essential to guarantee that AI-driven recommendations meet ethical and clinical standards, thereby bolstering patient safety and system reliability.

India Influencer Governing Council Introduces a Code of Conduct

- The India Influencer Governing Council (IIGC), a self-regulatory body comprising influencers, marketing agencies, digital platforms (Google, Meta, JioHotstar), and advertisers, has introduced a code of conduct.
- This initiative follows concerns about unethical practices and aims to foster accountability and trust within the digital ecosystem, opting for self-regulation over anticipated government intervention.
- The code mandates ethical content creation that is legal, honest, transparent, and respectful, encouraging authentic narratives with professional integrity.
- It requires clear disclosure of promotional relationships using tags like #Ad, #Sponsored, and #PaidPartnership, with #Admiration advised for genuine unpaid endorsements.
- The code addresses AI influencers by requiring disclosure of their non-human nature and prohibiting deepfakes, and it also covers payment compliances and ethical boundaries for sensitive content (sexual content, alcohol, gambling).
- Standard definitions for reach, impressions, and engagement are provided, and practices like buying likes or using bots to inflate metrics are prohibited.
- The code introduces standards against unfair or misleading brand criticism ("defluence"), urging honest and constructive communication.
- The 89-page code, with 20 detailed sections, aims to cultivate a culture of ethical behavior among influencers through voluntary adherence.
- The IIGC plans to extend similar guidelines to agencies, platforms, and consumers to holistically uplift the digital marketing landscape.

QpiAI Unveils India's First Full-Stack Quantum Computer

- QpiAI, a Bengaluru-based startup selected under the National Quantum Mission (NQM), has launched QpiAI-Indus, India's first full-stack quantum computer, featuring 25 superconducting qubits.
- Celebrated on World Quantum Day (April 14), QpiAI-Indus integrates advanced quantum hardware, scalable control systems, and optimized hybrid computing software.
- The system utilizes state-of-the-art superconducting qubits offering enhanced stability and longer coherence times.
- Its full-stack architecture combines advanced quantum processors, next-generation Quantum-HPC software platforms, and AI-enhanced quantum solutions for complex problem-solving.
- QpiAI-Indus is designed to drive innovation in life sciences, drug discovery, materials sciences, mobility, logistics, sustainability, and climate action.
- The National Quantum Mission (NQM), coordinated by the Department of Science and Technology (DST), aims to build a strong quantum computing ecosystem in India.
- QpiAI received significant capital support from the Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI).

AI Skilling Initiative Empowers Women Across Six Indian States

- The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) and Microsoft have launched the 'AI Careers for Women' program to skill 20,000 women in Artificial Intelligence across six Indian states.
- 30 Centers of Excellence (CoEs) will be established in women's colleges in Tier-II and Tier-III towns, each supporting a network of 150 educational institutions.
- The 240-hour curriculum, aligned with Microsoft's AI Skilling framework and developed with NCVET,

includes AI certifications, internships, career guidance, and entrepreneurship opportunities.
- The program emphasizes empowering women in rural India to develop AI applications and datasets, enhancing their economic opportunities.
- The Edunet Foundation will implement the program in collaboration with academic institutions, government bodies, and industry partners.
- MSDE, established in 2014, provides policy direction for skilling activities and oversees programs like PMKVY and NAPS.
- NCVET, established in 2020, is the overarching regulator for vocational education and training in India, setting standards and ensuring quality.

Aadhaar Usage Soars: Driving India's Digital Transformation

- Aadhaar authentication transactions crossed 2,707 crore in FY 2024-25, with 247 crore in March 2025 alone, and a cumulative total exceeding 14,800 crore.
- The use of UIDAI's in-house AI/ML-based Face Authentication is rapidly growing, with over 15 crore transactions in March 2025, now utilized by over 100 government and private entities.
- UIDAI received the Prime Minister's Award for Excellence in Public Administration in the Innovation category for its Face Authentication technology.
- Aadhaar e-KYC transactions continue to rise, with over 44.63 crore in March 2025 (a 6% year-on-year increase) and a cumulative total of 2,356 crore.
- In March 2025, 20 lakh new Aadhaar numbers were generated, and over 1.91 crore Aadhaar details were updated, indicating active usage.
- Aadhaar serves as a crucial digital identity infrastructure for various digital services under the Digital India program, improving targeted delivery of benefits in sectors like PDS, healthcare, banking, and telecom.
- Aadhaar-enabled services contribute significantly to financial inclusion and simplify customer verification through e-KYC, enhancing the ease of doing business.
- UIDAI, a statutory authority under MeitY, manages the Aadhaar infrastructure and drives innovations like face authentication using AI/ML.

AI Kiran: New Initiative Launched to Boost Women Leadership in Artificial Intelligence

- 'AI Kiran', a new national movement, has been launched in India to empower women in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML).
- The initiative is co-led by the Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser (PSA) to the Government of India, Verix, and INK Women, and driven by Kirthiga Reddy.
- AI Kiran aims to address the significant gender gap in AI jobs despite increasing female enrollment in STEM fields, and to ensure inclusive development in India's rapidly growing AI market.
- The initiative will build a supportive ecosystem for women in AI through community building, mentorship, learning resources, opportunities, and recognition.
- AI Kiran will recognize and highlight women leaders in AI across various sectors using blockchain technology for digital verification of achievements.
- The initiative encourages collaboration between government, industry, and civil society organizations and is hosted on the government's Manthan Platform.
- AI refers to technologies enabling computers to perform tasks requiring human intelligence like learning, problem-solving, language understanding, pattern recognition, and decision-making.
- The inclusion of women in AI development is crucial for reducing bias in algorithms, bringing diverse perspectives, and leveraging the full talent pool for India's tech sector.
- The Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser (PSA) advises the Prime Minister and Cabinet on science, technology, and innovation policy in India.

Sachet App: India's Early Disaster Warning Tool

- The 'Sachet' mobile app, highlighted by PM Modi, is a tool for citizen safety during disasters, developed by NDMA and C-DOT.
- It provides real-time, geo-targeted disaster alerts based on the Common Alerting Protocol (CAP) from authorized government agencies.
- Users receive alerts relevant to their current GPS location and can subscribe for specific states or districts.
- Sachet covers a wide range of natural and man-made disasters, including floods, cyclones, landslides, and heatwaves.
- Alerts are delivered via in-app notifications, SMS, and browser notifications, with multi-lingual support in 12 Indian languages and accessibility features.
- The app provides IMD weather updates, 'Dos and Don'ts' for different disasters, emergency helpline numbers, information on affected areas, and a satellite receiver connectivity feature.
- Sachet enhances public alertness and provides timely information for preparedness, evacuation, and precautions, empowering citizens with reliable information and improving community resilience.
- The app is available for download on Google Play Store and Apple App Store.

Agriculture

Modernising Irrigation Under PMKSY: Cabinet Approves Rs 1,600 Crore

- The Union Cabinet has approved the Modernisation of Command Area Development and Water Management (M-CADWM) as a sub-scheme under PMKSY with an initial outlay of ₹1,600 crore for 2025-2026.
- The scheme aims to modernize the irrigation water supply network by ensuring efficient water distribution within designated clusters.
- It includes establishing back-end infrastructure for micro-irrigation using underground pressurized piped systems covering up to 1 hectare.
- SCADA and IoT technologies will be implemented for accurate water accounting and management to boost Water Use Efficiency (WUE).
- Irrigation Management Transfer (IMT) will be introduced, handing over asset management to Water User Societies (WUS) with five years of support linking them to FPOs or PACS.
- Pilot projects will be initiated across agroclimatic zones via challenge funding by states, leading to a National Plan for Command Area Development and Water Management from April 2026.

Important Days

International Day of Conscience: A Global Call for Ethical Reflection

- The International Day of Conscience is observed annually on April 5, emphasizing the importance of our inner moral compass for peace, justice, and human rights.
- Established by the UN General Assembly in 2019, this day encourages reflection on actions, moral accountability, and a culture of harmony.
- The theme for 2025 is "Leave No One Behind," promoting integrity, ethical choices, and active contribution to a just and peaceful world.
- The UN General Assembly (UNGA) is a principal organ of the UN, serving as its main deliberative, policymaking, and representative body, comprising all 193 Member States.
- The UNGA deliberates on global issues, approves the UN budget, elects non-permanent Security Council members, appoints the Secretary-General, and promotes international law and human rights.
- The UNGA operates through six main committees focusing on disarmament, economic and financial matters, social and humanitarian issues, special political and decolonization, administrative and budgetary matters, and legal aspects.
- The General Assembly convenes annually in regular sessions from the third Tuesday of September and can hold special sessions as needed.
- UNGA resolutions, though generally non-binding, carry significant moral and political weight, influencing international norms and policies.
- Historically, conscience has been viewed as knowledge of good and evil in Vedic texts, linked to a pure heart and compassion in Buddhism, and associated with rational principles by Roman philosophers like Marcus Aurelius.

International Day of Sport for Development and Peace: Promoting Unity Through Sports

- The International Day of Sport for Development and Peace (IDSDP) is observed annually on April 6th.
- The theme for 2025 is "Levelling the Playing Field: Sport for Social Inclusion," emphasizing equal opportunities and inclusive societies across age, gender, and race.
- Established by the UN General Assembly in 2013, the day commemorates the revival of the Modern Olympic Games on April 6, 1896, and was first observed in 2014.
- IDSDP recognizes sports as a tool for social change, peace-building, and advancing the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- Sports are encouraged for their benefits in physical and mental health, teamwork, leadership, and stress relief.

National Maritime Day 2025: Celebrating 62 Years of India's Maritime Legacy

- National Maritime Day is observed annually on April 5th, commemorating India's maritime heritage and the shipping industry's role in economic development; 2025 marks the 62nd anniversary.
- The theme for National Maritime Day 2025 is "Prosperous Seas – Developed India and Youth for Blue Economy and Green Growth".
- The day celebrates the maiden voyage of the SS Loyalty in 1919, the first Indian-owned ship to sail from Mumbai to London, breaking British dominance.
- National Maritime Day was first celebrated in 1964 to honor this historic achievement.
- India's maritime sector facilitates approximately 95% of the country's trade by volume, with major ports handling 817.98 million tonnes of cargo in FY 2023-24 (a 4.38% increase).
- India is the fifth-largest source of seafarers globally, contributing about 12% of the world's total.

- The Maritime India Vision (MIV) 2030 outlines 150 initiatives for port infrastructure development, logistics efficiency, and aims to position India among the top five shipbuilding nations by 2047.
- The Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways has earmarked ₹2 trillion for maritime projects, aiming to complete 150 projects by September 2025.
- Policy initiatives include establishing a ₹250 billion Maritime Development Fund and revamping the Shipbuilding Financial Assistance Policy.
- India aims for a transition to renewable energy sources for all coastal and inland waterway shipping within five years, aligning with net-zero carbon emissions by 2070, including green vessels and hydrogen hubs.
- Plans are underway to expand the shipping fleet by approximately 1,000 ships in the next decade, and the Indian Navy is bolstering its capabilities with new submarines and warships.
- Challenges remain in infrastructure investment, technological modernization, and environmental sustainability, but initiatives like MIV 2030 aim to position India as a global maritime leader by 2047.

National Pet Day 2025 – Celebrating the Joy and Health Benefits of Pet Companionship

- National Pet Day is celebrated on April 11, 2025, to honor the love and joy pets bring to our lives.
- Founded in 2006 by Colleen Paige, the day aims to raise awareness for pet adoption and promote responsible pet care.
- The significance of the day includes celebrating the unconditional love of pets, promoting adoption from shelters, advocating for animal welfare through proper care, and fostering community engagement.
- Health and well-being benefits of pet companionship include stress reduction through the release of oxytocin and serotonin, improved physical health via exercise, mental health support by reducing loneliness and depression, enhanced social interaction, and teaching responsibility.

Ambedkar Jayanti – Celebrating the Legacy of the Constitution's Architect

- Ambedkar Jayanti is celebrated on April 14th each year, with the upcoming celebration on April 14, 2025, marking the birth anniversary of Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, also known as Equality Day.
- Born on April 14, 1891, Dr. Ambedkar overcame social discrimination and played a pivotal role as the architect of the Indian Constitution, embedding principles of equality, justice, and liberty.
- As a social reformer, he championed the rights of marginalized groups, women, and workers, laying the groundwork for affirmative action policies.
- The first organized observance of Ambedkar Jayanti was in 1928, and in 2015, his birthday was declared a public holiday in many states to honor his contributions.
- Ambedkar Jayanti serves as a reminder of his fight against caste-based discrimination and inspires ongoing movements for social justice and reforms in education, employment, and political representation.
- The day is celebrated as a time for reflection, urging citizens to uphold the constitutional values that Dr. Ambedkar fought for.

Himachal Day 2025

- Himachal Day 2025 will be celebrated on April 15, 2025, commemorating the formation and unification of princely states into Himachal Pradesh.
- In 1948, over 30 princely states merged to form the Chief Commissioner's Province of Himachal Pradesh, which later became a Union Territory before achieving full statehood on January 25, 1971.
- The name "Himachal," derived from Sanskrit meaning "snow-laden region," symbolizes the state's location in the Himalayas.
- Himachal Day celebrates the state's rich cultural heritage, including its traditions, arts, crafts, cuisine, and dialects, and reflects on its journey to becoming a unified and progressive state.
- The day also highlights the state's economic and social development, including infrastructure improvements and initiatives in tourism and sustainable agriculture.
- State leaders, including Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, mark the occasion by emphasizing unity and ongoing development projects across the state.

World Quantum Day 2025

- World Quantum Day is celebrated annually on April 14th to raise public awareness about quantum mechanics and its transformative potential in computing, healthcare, cybersecurity, and energy.
- 2025 is designated by the United Nations as the International Year of Quantum Science and Technology (IYQST), highlighting rapid advancements in the field.
- Quantum mechanics deals with the behavior of matter and energy at the atomic and subatomic levels, introducing concepts like wave-particle duality.
- Quantum superposition allows quantum systems (qubits) to exist in multiple states simultaneously,

enabling quantum computers to perform complex calculations exponentially faster than classical computers.
- Quantum entanglement is a unique connection between particles where the state of one instantaneously affects another, regardless of distance, forming the basis for quantum cryptography.
- Quantum computing utilizes qubits for high-speed computations, promising breakthroughs in drug discovery and optimization.
- Quantum sensing and imaging enhance measurement precision in healthcare and navigation.
- Quantum cryptography aims to develop quantum-safe encryption methods to protect data from future quantum computer threats.
- Quantum research is driving innovations in material science and energy efficiency for various industrial applications.

17th National Civil Services Day: Celebrating Excellence in Public Service

- National Civil Services Day was observed on April 21, 2025, marking its 17th anniversary and honoring the dedication of civil servants in India.
- The day commemorates Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's 1947 address to administrative service probationers, where he referred to civil servants as the "Steel Frame of India."
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi emphasized the crucial role of effective governance and a transformed bureaucracy integrating technology and innovation in achieving a Viksit Bharat.
- The Prime Minister's Awards for Excellence in Public Administration (PMAEPA) were conferred, recognizing outstanding government initiatives with a trophy, scroll, and ₹20 lakh incentive.
- The event highlighted achievements in gender representation, with the recent IAS batch comprising 41% women officers.
- Key policy reforms like Mission Karmayogi, the Lateral Entry Scheme (LES), e-Samiksha, and CPGRAMS were recognized for their efforts in modernizing civil services and improving citizen engagement.
- Emphasis was placed on transforming governance through technology and the active involvement of civil servants in driving change at the grassroots level.

World Day for Safety and Health at Work 2025

- World Day for Safety and Health at Work was observed on April 28, 2025, with the theme "Revolutionising Health and Safety: The Role of AI and Digitalisation at Work".
- The theme highlighted the opportunities and challenges presented by AI and digital technologies in occupational safety and health (OSH).
- Opportunities include automation of hazardous tasks, predictive analytics for accident prevention, smart monitoring systems, and immersive training using VR/AR.
- Challenges include worker surveillance concerns, algorithmic bias, potential job displacement due to automation, and blurring work-life boundaries affecting mental health.
- In India, workplace safety is under the Concurrent List, with the Directorate General Factory Advice Service and Labour Institutes (DGFASLI) playing a key role.
- Key Indian legislations for workplace safety include the Factories Act, 1948, the Mines Act, 1952, and the Building and Other Construction Workers Act, 1996.

World Veterinary Day 2025

- World Veterinary Day was observed on April 26, 2025, with the theme "Animal Health Takes a Teams," acknowledging the contributions of veterinarians to global health.
- Established by the World Veterinary Association (WVA) and the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH), the day was first observed in 2000.
- The purpose of World Veterinary Day is to highlight the crucial work of veterinarians and raise awareness about animal health and welfare.
- Veterinarians play key roles in disease prevention and control, ensuring food safety through livestock health, advocating for animal welfare, and contributing to environmental protection and biodiversity conservation.

World Intellectual Property Day 2025

- World Intellectual Property Day was celebrated on April 26, 2025, with the theme "IP and Music: Feel the Beat of IP".
- Initiated by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), the day aims to raise awareness about the importance of intellectual property (IP) rights in fostering innovation and creativity.
- The 2025 theme emphasized the vital role of IP rights in the music industry by protecting creators, encouraging innovation, and fostering economic growth.
- IP rights ensure that musicians, composers, and producers have legal rights over their creations.
- These rights provide incentives for artists to create new works, knowing their rights are safeguarded.

- By securing revenue streams for creators, IP rights support the music industry's contribution to the global economy.

World Tapir Day 2025: Protecting the Forest's Gentle Gardeners

- World Tapir Day was observed on April 27, 2025, marking its 17th year of raising awareness about these important mammals.
- Tapirs are known as "gardeners of the forest" due to their role in seed dispersal, which aids in forest regeneration.
- These herbivorous mammals have a long evolutionary history, existing for millions of years.
- Major threats to tapir populations include habitat loss due to deforestation, hunting, and the impacts of climate change.
- Global conservation efforts involve captive breeding programs in zoos and wildlife parks like Bioparc Fuengirola.
- Public awareness campaigns, including educational events and social media, are conducted worldwide to highlight the need for tapir conservation.

State Affairs

Utkala Divas 2025: Celebrating Odisha's Foundation Day

- Utkala Divas, or Odisha Foundation Day, is celebrated annually on April 1st, commemorating Odisha's formation as a separate state in 1936.
- Before 1936, Odisha was part of the Bengal Presidency under British rule, along with Bihar and Jharkhand.
- Odisha was the first Indian state formed on a linguistic basis, driven by its distinct Odia language and cultural identity, with leaders like Madhusudan Das and Gopabandhu Das spearheading the movement.
- On April 1, 1936, the British Government officially separated Odisha from the Bihar and Orissa Province, and Sir John Austen Hubback became its first governor.
- In ancient times, Odisha was known as Kalinga, a powerful kingdom famous for maritime trade and architectural brilliance, and the site of the historic Kalinga War.
- Odisha is home to the Jagannath Temple in Puri, a Char Dham pilgrimage site, and the renowned Odissi dance, one of India's eight classical dance forms.
- Rich in natural resources like coal, iron ore, and bauxite, Odisha makes significant contributions to India's economy.

Haryana Announces 20% Reservation for Agniveers in Police Recruitment

- The Haryana government has announced a 20% reservation for Agniveers in state police recruitment, including constables and forest guards.
- A dedicated portal will be created for Agniveers to register and apply for these jobs based on their qualifications.
- Agniveers choosing self-employment or entrepreneurship will be provided loans at affordable rates.
- Industries employing Agniveers with a monthly salary above ₹30,000 will receive an annual subsidy of ₹60,000.
- Priority will be given to Agniveers for gun licenses if they wish to work as private security personnel.

Odisha Launches Unified Health Insurance Scheme

- Odisha has launched a unified health insurance scheme integrating the central Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) with the state's Gopabandhu Jan Arogya Yojana (GJAY).
- Approximately 3.5 crore individuals from 1.03 crore families across Odisha will benefit from an annual health coverage of Rs 5 lakh per family, with an additional Rs 5 lakh for women members.
- The scheme introduces the Ayushman Vay Vandana Card, providing free health coverage of Rs 5 lakh for all citizens aged 70 and above, potentially increasing the overall family cover to Rs 15 lakh.
- Beneficiaries can access cashless treatment at over 29,000 empanelled hospitals nationwide.
- The scheme was inaugurated by Union Health Minister JP Nadda, with the attendance of Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi and other state dignitaries, at an event in Cuttack.
- The Odisha Cabinet has approved a budget of Rs 27,019 crore for a five-year period to support the implementation and sustainability of the unified health insurance scheme.

Meghalaya Honoured with Two UIDAI Awards

- The Government of Meghalaya has been honored with two awards from the UIDAI for its exceptional performance in Aadhaar implementation.
- Meghalaya was recognized as the best-performing region in mandated biometric updates for children and verification of adult Aadhaar enrolments at the Aadhaar Samvaad 2025 in New Delhi.
- Shai Kupar War, the nodal officer for Aadhaar in Meghalaya, accepted the awards on behalf of the state at the event held on April 8, 2025.

- Commissioner and Secretary Dr. Joram Beda credited the awards to the unwavering commitment and concerted efforts of field personnel, district officials, technical experts, and the entire Aadhaar team in Meghalaya.

Karad Sets Benchmark in Sanitary Waste Management with 100% Safe Disposal

- Karad, a city in Maharashtra, has achieved 100% segregation, collection, and processing of sanitary and biomedical waste.
- Approximately 300-350 kg of sanitary waste is collected daily from various sources.
- Women-led groups have raised community awareness, supported by IEC campaigns.
- Red bins are placed in public toilets, and schools have vending machines, incinerators, and disposal systems for sanitary pads.
- Dedicated bins on garbage vehicles ensure segregated collection.
- Collected waste is treated at a Common Biomedical Waste Treatment Facility (CBWTF) managed under a PPP model.
- The Karad Municipal Council (KMC) handles collection and transport, while the Karad Hospital Association operates a 600 kg/day incinerator at up to 1200°C.
- The State Pollution Control Board (SPCB) conducts real-time monitoring to ensure compliance with air quality standards.

MP Government Approves ₹145 Crore Plan to Curb Human-Tiger Conflict

- The Madhya Pradesh government has approved a ₹145 crore plan to curb the increasing human-tiger conflict in the state, aiming to protect human life and property while conserving the tiger population.
- The ₹145 crore budget will be used to implement a comprehensive plan in regions of MP prone to human-tiger encounters, typically areas near tiger reserves.
- The objectives of the plan include mitigating conflict through proactive measures and early-warning systems, ensuring tiger survival through habitat management, and supporting local communities with awareness programs and compensation.
- Strategic measures to be implemented involve advanced monitoring technologies for real-time tracking, enhanced patrolling with rapid-response teams in sensitive zones, habitat restoration to ensure safe tiger movement, and community engagement initiatives focused on education and compensation.
- This initiative aligns with Project Tiger, India's flagship program for tiger conservation and aims to balance human safety with the preservation of the state's biodiversity.

Amaravati Targets World-First: A 100% Renewable Energy Powered Capital

- Amaravati, the planned capital of Andhra Pradesh, aims to become the world's first major city powered entirely by renewable energy, targeting 2,700 MW by 2050 through solar, wind, and hydropower.
- Key strategies include mandatory rooftop solar installations on government buildings, green building standards with net metering, a renewable energy-powered Amaravati Metro and electric bus fleet with EV charging infrastructure, and a District Cooling System (DCS) in partnership with Tabreed.
- The Amaravati capital project, with an estimated cost of ₹65,000 crore, has been revived after a period of uncertainty, with initial installations of 415 kW of rooftop solar already completed.
- The Andhra Pradesh Capital Region Development Authority (APCRDA) is overseeing the project's planning and implementation.
- Amaravati's green vision aligns with the Andhra Pradesh Integrated Clean Energy (ICE) Policy, 2024, which aims for 50% non-fossil fuel power capacity by 2030 at the state level.
- India has national renewable energy targets of 500 GW non-fossil fuel capacity by 2030 and net-zero emissions by 2070, with key agencies like MNRE and SECI and schemes like the National Solar Mission.

Odisha Aims to Triple Steel Production by 2030

- Odisha aims to triple its steel production from 41 MT to 130 MT annually by 2030, targeting 50% of India's projected steel output.
- Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi emphasized a shift towards value creation in downstream industries like aerospace, defence, and engineering goods.
- Strategies to achieve this include auctioning 22 new mineral blocks by March 2026 (with 8 already under auction), boosting infrastructure connectivity, and providing policy support through a new Industrial Policy and Linkage Policy.
- India aims for 330 MT steel capacity by 2030, with Odisha expected to contribute around 40% and supply 240-245 MT of iron ore (70% of India’s needs).
- Odisha received investment proposals worth ₹17 lakh crore in 2025, largely for steel and downstream sectors, with the expansion plan aligning with PM Modi’s Viksit Bharat 2047 vision.

Boosting Odisha's Farm Exports: APEDA & State Govt Host Key Workshop

- APEDA and the Odisha government organized a workshop in Bhubaneswar on April 25, 2025, to promote agricultural exports from the state.
- Over 400 participants, including farmers, FPOs, exporters, and government officials, attended the capacity-building program at OUAT.
- More than 10 stalls showcased Odisha's agricultural products, including GI-tagged items like Koraput Kalajeera Rice and Kandhamal Haldi Powder.
- Technical sessions focused on promoting organic exports under the new NPOP rules, increasing rice exports, and boosting value addition and export of processed goods and GI products.
- APEDA held a separate meeting with organic farmer groups and certification agencies to discuss the updated NPOP guidelines.
- Officials emphasized Odisha's significant potential for agricultural exports, especially in organic products, which can boost farmer income and create a niche in the international market.
- The workshop aimed to strengthen the ecosystem for agricultural exports from Odisha, aligning with national goals like Viksit Bharat 2047 and ODOP.
- APEDA, established in 1986 under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, is responsible for promoting and developing exports of scheduled agricultural products and serves as the Secretariat for NPOP.
- Odisha has a rich diversity of agricultural produce, including several unique GI-tagged items, with significant export potential in rice, vegetables, fruits, spices, coffee, and organic products.
- Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) play a crucial role in helping farmers access better inputs, processing, marketing, and prices, including linking them to export markets.

International Relations

India and China Mark 75 Years of Diplomatic Relations: A Renewed Commitment

- India and China marked the 75th anniversary of their diplomatic relations on April 1, 2025, with Presidents Murmu and Xi, and PM Modi and Premier Li exchanging congratulatory messages emphasizing stable and cooperative ties.
- Both leaders stressed the need for a long-term perspective and strategic mutual trust, using the "Dragon-Elephant Tango" metaphor for harmonious partnership.
- Bilateral trade reached $138.5 billion, and both countries aim to deepen cooperation in trade, culture, and technology.
- Discussions included ensuring peace and stability along the border, with recent disengagement agreements in Eastern Ladakh highlighted.
- India was among the first to establish diplomatic ties with China in 1950 and jointly advocated Panchsheel in 1954.
- While the 2020 Galwan Valley clash strained relations, future goals include resuming initiatives like the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra and enhancing people-to-people exchanges.

Bangladesh Assumes Chairmanship of BIMSTEC: A Step Towards Regional Cooperation

- Bangladesh assumed the chairmanship of BIMSTEC for the next two years on April 4, 2025, taking over from Thailand.
- BIMSTEC comprises Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand, with the chairmanship rotating alphabetically.
- The theme of the Sixth BIMSTEC Summit was "Prosperous, Resilient, and Open BIMSTEC."
- Leaders adopted the Bangkok Declaration and BIMSTEC Vision to guide the organization towards sustainable development and enhanced connectivity.

India Elected to UN's ISAR for 2025–27 Term: A Milestone in Global Financial Reporting

- India has been elected by acclamation to the United Nations Intergovernmental Working Group of Experts on International Standards of Accounting and Reporting (ISAR) for the 2025–27 term.
- ISAR operates under UNCTAD and focuses on enhancing global accounting standards and corporate disclosure practices, including non-financial disclosures like environmental issues and CSR.
- The group consists of 34 members serving three-year terms, representing diverse regions.
- India's uncontested election reflects global confidence in its growing influence on financial reporting frameworks.
- As a member, India can significantly influence the development of transparent, responsible, and uniform financial reporting structures globally.
- India's election underscores its commitment to advancing global accounting standards and promoting financial transparency

India and Israel Forge Strategic Agricultural Partnerships

- India and Israel have signed agreements to deepen agricultural cooperation, focusing on modernizing farming practices and addressing food security.
- Key areas of cooperation include digital agriculture, advanced mechanization, post-harvest technologies, and joint research and development.
- The partnership emphasizes developing climate-resilient seed varieties and a potential Five-Year Seed Improvement Plan.
- Collaboration will focus on improved water management strategies and enhanced soil conservation practices to optimize irrigation and sustainable land use.
- The agreement aims to address long-term food security and enhance the profitability of farming, especially for small landholders.
- Established frameworks like India's 43 Centres of Excellence will facilitate technology exchange and skill development.
- Enhanced bilateral research initiatives will support the implementation of best practices in modern agriculture.

The Domino Effect of U.S. Tariffs and China's Retaliation: A Global Trade War Unfolds

- Former U.S. President Donald Trump initiated a sweeping tariff policy, imposing a 10% baseline tariff on all imports, with higher rates targeting specific countries:
    - 104% on China
    - 49% on Cambodia
    - 46% on Vietnam
    - 20% on the European Union
- These tariffs were justified as measures to address trade imbalances and protect national security.
- The U.S., being the world's largest economy, has a significant influence on global trade.
- Tariffs disrupted supply chains, increased costs for manufacturers, and led to higher prices for consumers worldwide.
- Historical parallels were drawn to the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act of 1930, which exacerbated the Great Depression.
- In response to the 104% tariff, China imposed 34% retaliatory tariffs on U.S. goods, later increasing them to 84%.
- Key sectors affected include agriculture, electronics, and pharmaceuticals.
- China also restricted exports of rare minerals, critical for global industries like electronics and imaging.

U.S. Tariffs on Pharmaceuticals: Implications for Indian Exports

- The U.S. has announced plans to impose significant tariffs on pharmaceutical imports, removing a previous exemption for this sector.
- Indian pharmaceutical exports to the U.S., which amount to around USD 8 billion annually, are likely to be significantly affected.
- Indian manufacturers are major suppliers of generic drugs to the U.S., accounting for nearly 40% of imports and helping to keep healthcare costs down.
- The imposition of tariffs could lead to increased drug prices in the U.S., potentially making medications less affordable and accessible.
- Indian pharmaceutical companies, which often operate with tight profit margins, may find it difficult to absorb these new costs, possibly leading to drug shortages and decreased profits.
- The tariffs on Indian generics could disrupt the global supply chain for affordable medicines, impacting various sectors.
- The U.S. intends to use these tariffs as an incentive for pharmaceutical companies to move their operations back to the U.S., capitalizing on its large domestic market.
- This action is consistent with broader U.S. protectionist policies aimed at reducing reliance on foreign imports.

India-UK Economic Dialogue 2025: Paving the Path for Robust Trade & Financial Cooperation

- The 13th Economic and Financial Dialogue (EFD) was held in London, led by India's Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and UK Chancellor of the Exchequer Rachel Reeves.
- Discussions primarily focused on expediting negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and a Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT), indicating renewed progress.
- Both countries stressed a win-win approach to build a comprehensive economic partnership encompassing trade, investment, and policy reforms.
- The dialogue underscored the significance of boosting bilateral trade, currently valued at over £40 billion, and promoting increased FDI with better access to global capital markets.
- A significant emphasis was placed on strengthening collaboration in the financial services sector, including FinTech, the digital economy, sustainable finance, and enhanced regulatory cooperation.
- India's efforts to internationalize the rupee, such as allowing the opening of rupee accounts overseas, were discussed, recognizing London's role as a

global financial center in integrating Indian financial assets.
- The upcoming signing of the India-UK Defence Industrial Roadmap is anticipated to bolster industrial supply chains and joint manufacturing.
- Both nations aim to leverage their strengths in advanced manufacturing, life sciences, and clean energy to drive economic growth.

India Hosts IBCA Headquarters with Rs 150 Crore Budgetary Support

- India has officially become the host nation for the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) headquarters and secretariat.
- A formal Headquarters Agreement was signed in New Delhi on April 17, 2025.
- The agreement details administrative provisions for the IBCA's operation, including visas, privileges, and immunities for its staff, as well as the use of premises.
- The Government of India will provide budgetary support of Rs 150 crore for the IBCA.
- This funding will be used to establish a corpus, build necessary infrastructure, and cover recurring expenses over five years (2023-24 to 2028-29).
- The IBCA focuses on the conservation of seven big cat species: Tiger, Lion, Leopard, Snow Leopard, Cheetah, Jaguar, and Puma.
- The alliance promotes international cooperation, shares successful conservation methods, and aims to be a global benchmark for wildlife conservation.
- Launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in April 2023 during the 50th anniversary of Project Tiger, the IBCA highlights India's leading role in global wildlife conservation efforts.

Trump Pressures Ukraine to Cede Crimea Amidst Peace Negotiations

- The U.S. President has publicly criticized Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy for not agreeing to cede Crimea to Russia.
- The U.S. President claims Zelenskyy's refusal is extending the conflict and obstructing peace negotiations.
- A reported U.S.-led peace proposal involves freezing the conflict along current frontlines and acknowledging Crimea as Russian territory.
- Ukraine argues that accepting the annexation of Crimea would be a violation of its constitution.
- Following a disagreement with Zelenskyy, the U.S. President has reportedly suspended all U.S. military aid to Ukraine indefinitely, citing Ukraine's perceived lack of commitment to peace talks.
- European allies have voiced concerns about the U.S.'s approach, stressing that any agreement lacking Ukrainian or EU involvement would be ineffective.
- Russia's position includes demands for formal recognition of Crimea and other annexed territories, Ukraine's neutrality from NATO, and additional concessions.

India Revokes 14 Visa Categories for Pakistani Nationals

- Following the Pahalgam terror attack in Jammu and Kashmir, the Indian government has revoked 14 visa categories for Pakistani nationals, including business, conference, pilgrim, visitor, student, and medical visas.
- SAARC visa holders were required to leave India by April 26th, other visa holders (like tourists and business) by April 27th, and those on medical visas by April 29th.
- Exemptions to the revocation include Long-Term Visas (LTVs), as well as diplomatic and official visas, which remain valid.
- Overstaying will result in legal action under the Immigration & Foreigners Act, 2025.
- This action is a direct response to cross-border terrorism, with the Prime Minister vowing to hold terrorists and their supporters accountable.
- It is part of a larger diplomatic strategy, which includes the suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty (1960) due to alleged treaty violations by Pakistan.
- The Union Home Minister has instructed Chief Ministers to ensure compliance, and the Home Secretary has held meetings with state officials to identify and deport visa rule violators.
- This move signifies a stronger stance against Pakistan and reflects India's zero-tolerance policy towards terrorism.
- The Attari border has been closed to Pakistani nationals under the SAARC Visa Exemption Scheme.

India Sends $2 Million Medical Aid to Nepal for Thalassemia and Sickle Cell Disease Patients

- India has provided medical assistance worth $2 million to Nepal under its Neighbourhood First Policy.
- The aid includes 17,030 vials of vaccines specifically for Thalassemia patients, representing the first part of the support.
- This assistance was provided in response to a formal request from the Government of Nepal, highlighting bilateral cooperation.

- The initiative underscores India's commitment to its Neighbourhood First Policy by strengthening ties and offering support to neighboring countries.
- Thalassemia and Sickle Cell Disease are genetic blood disorders that require consistent medical care, which can be challenging to access in some regions, including parts of Nepal.
- India has a history of providing medical and humanitarian aid to its neighbors, particularly during health crises, which helps both address immediate needs and improve diplomatic relations.

International

Farewell to Pope Francis: A Legacy of Compassion and Transformation

- Pope Francis (Jorge Mario Bergoglio), the first Latin American Pope, has passed away at the age of 88 after a prolonged illness, with the immediate cause being complications from a cerebral stroke leading to a coma and heart failure.
- Born on December 17, 1936, in Argentina, his papacy, beginning in 2013, was marked by an emphasis on simplicity and social justice, leading to reforms within the Catholic Church and promoting dialogue on global issues.
- His final days were marked by a decline in health due to multiple conditions, including pneumonia, respiratory insufficiency, diabetes, and hypertension, culminating in the fatal stroke.
- Despite his illness, his last significant public appearance was on Easter Sunday in St. Peter's Square, where he greeted a large crowd.
- Pope Francis is remembered globally as a beacon of compassion and humility, advocating for the poor and marginalized and redefining the papacy through service over formality.
- World leaders, including PM Modi, have expressed their condolences, recognizing his inspiring legacy of spiritual resilience and reform.
- His passing initiates the "sede vacante" period, which will be followed by a conclave to elect his successor.
- Key dates in his life include his birth on December 17, 1936, his election as Pope on March 13, 2013, and his passing on April 21, 2025.

UN English Language Day: Celebrating a Global Language & Multilingualism

- UN English Language Day is observed annually on April 23rd to celebrate the history, culture, and global impact of the English language.
- It's part of a broader UN initiative, established in 2010, to promote multilingualism and the equal use of all six official UN languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish.
- The primary aim of UN Language Days is to increase awareness and respect for the history, culture, and achievements associated with each of the UN's official languages.
- April 23rd was chosen as English Language Day because it is traditionally recognized as both the birth and death date of William Shakespeare, a highly influential writer in the English language.
- For 2025, while there isn't a specific theme, the focus remains on celebrating the English language and its cultural contributions, often highlighting its evolution and influence.
- The United Nations, founded in 1945, is an international organization with 193 member states, dedicated to maintaining peace, fostering cooperation, promoting human rights, and providing a platform for dialogue.
- William Shakespeare, an English playwright, poet, and actor (c. 1564–1616), is considered one of the greatest writers in the English language and significantly contributed to the development of Modern English, including vocabulary and phrases.

TIME 100 Most Influential People 2025: Notable Absence of Indian Nationals

- TIME magazine released its annual list of the 100 Most Influential People on April 17, 2025, recognizing individuals with significant global impact.
- The 2025 list notably does not include any Indian nationals, a change from previous years where Indian citizens like Alia Bhatt and Sakshi Malik (in 2024) were featured.
- While no Indian citizens were on the list, Reshma Kewalramani, an Indian-origin CEO of Vertex Pharmaceuticals, was recognized in the 'Leaders' category for her work in biotechnology.
- The list includes a diverse range of global leaders such as Donald Trump, Elon Musk, Muhammad Yunus (Bangladesh), Keir Starmer (UK), Claudia Sheinbaum (Mexico), and J.D. Vance (USA).
- Other prominent figures from various fields were also recognized, including athletes Serena Williams, Simone Biles, and Jalen Hurts; entertainers Blake Lively, Ed Sheeran, and Scarlett Johansson; and scientist Wesley Sundquist for his HIV prevention research.

UNESCO Designates 16 New Global Geoparks: Firsts for North Korea and Saudi Arabia

- UNESCO has added 16 new sites to its Global Geoparks Network (GGN), which is celebrating its 10th anniversary.
- These new geoparks are located across 11 countries: China, North Korea, Ecuador, Indonesia, Italy, Norway, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, Spain, the UK, and Vietnam.
- This expansion marks the first time that North Korea and Saudi Arabia have sites designated as UNESCO Global Geoparks.
- The addition brings the total number of sites in the GGN to 229 across 50 countries, covering a total area of approximately 855,000 square kilometers.
- UNESCO Global Geoparks aim to preserve geological heritage sites that hold historical, scientific, and cultural significance.
- These geoparks also promote sustainable tourism, provide educational opportunities, and support alternative livelihoods for local communities.
- Furthermore, they play a role in raising awareness about environmental conservation and the importance of disaster risk reduction.

Aid Funding Cuts Disrupt Child Vaccinations Globally

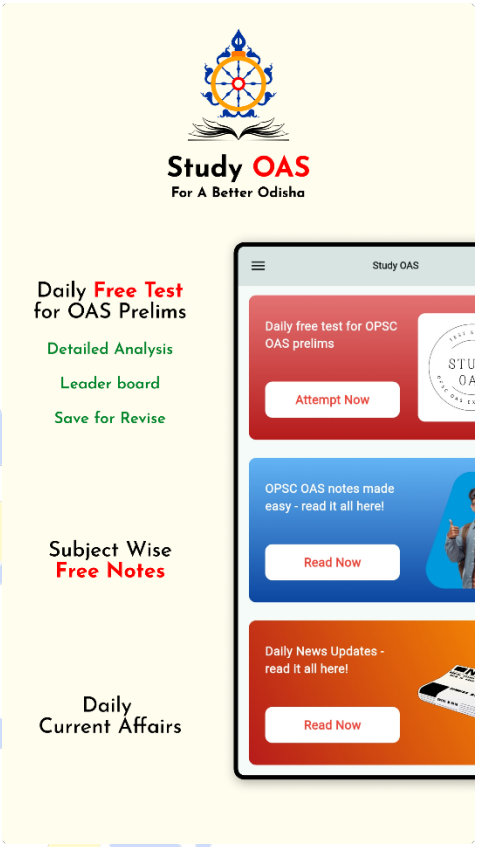
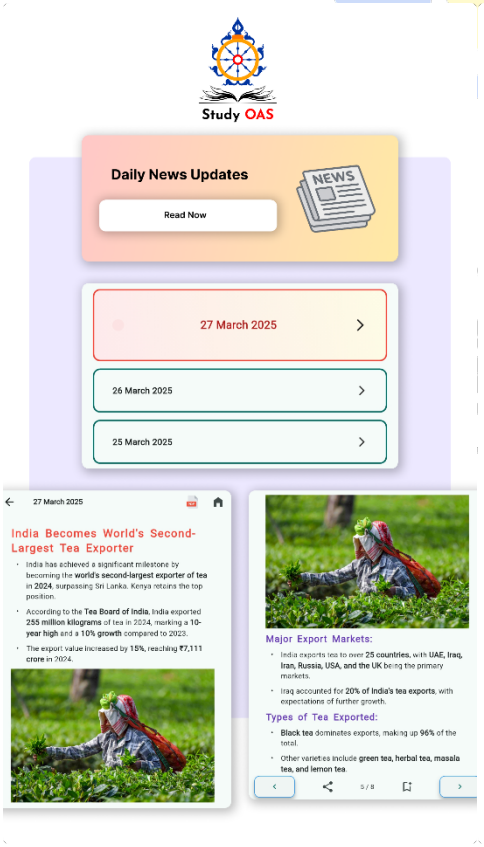
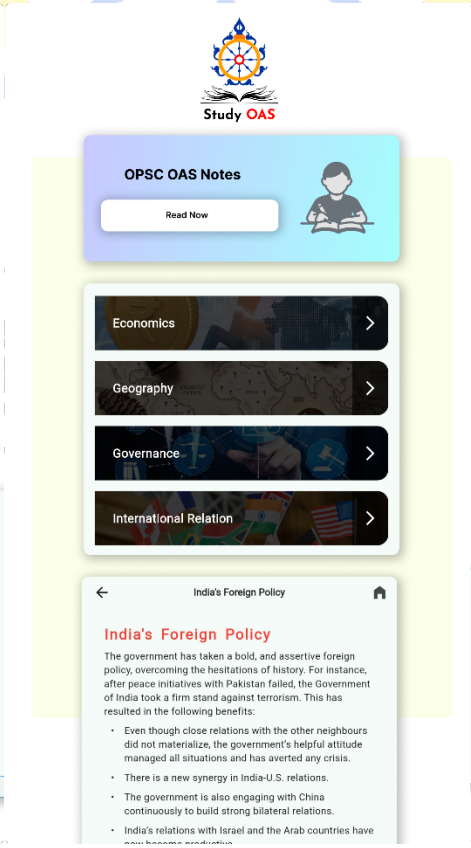
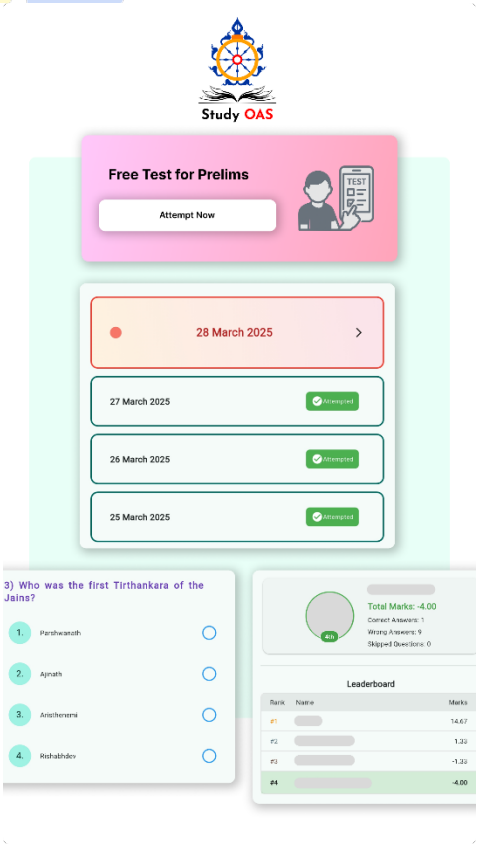
- UN agencies (WHO, UNICEF) and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, have warned that disruptions and cuts in global aid funding are severely impacting childhood immunization programs worldwide, comparable to the setbacks during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Unpredictable funding and recent cuts in Official Development Assistance (ODA) for health are destabilizing national immunization programs in low and lower-middle-income countries.
- These funding issues are leading to reduced vaccine supplies, challenges in maintaining the cold chain, impacts on health worker availability, weakened disease surveillance, and difficulties in conducting vaccination campaigns.
- Concerns are rising about shifts in donor priorities and potential reductions in contributions from major donors like the United States.
- The funding volatility threatens to reverse decades of progress in child survival and disease prevention, affecting nearly half of the surveyed low and lower-middle-income countries.
- This is contributing to a rise in outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases (VPDs) globally, including measles, meningitis, and yellow fever, with a risk of diseases like diphtheria re-emerging.
- Millions of children are missing routine vaccinations, with an estimated 14.5 million 'zero-dose' children in 2023, indicating a stall in post-pandemic recovery.
- WHO, UNICEF, and Gavi are urgently calling for sustained, predictable, and increased funding for immunization programs from donor governments and partners.
- This call precedes Gavi's funding replenishment event in June 2025, where it seeks US$ 9 billion for its 2026-2030 strategy, aiming to vaccinate 500 million children, save 8 million lives, and strengthen health systems.
- The agencies emphasize that immunization is a highly cost-effective public health intervention, estimated to have saved 150 million lives since 1974, with a significant return on investment and providing a platform for other primary healthcare services.

China Tests Non-Nuclear Hydrogen Bomb

- China has reportedly tested a non-nuclear hydrogen bomb, indicating a notable advancement in its military technology and a move towards cleaner energy solutions in weaponry.
- The bomb utilizes magnesium hydride for efficient solid-state hydrogen storage, unlike traditional pressurized tanks.
- The explosion characteristics include a fireball temperature exceeding 1,000°C (1,832°F) lasting over two seconds, and an overpressure of 428.43 kilopascals at two meters, about 40% of TNT's force.
- The bomb was engineered by the 705 Research Institute of the China State Shipbuilding Corporation (CSSC), known for its work on underwater weapon systems.
- Potential military applications include urban warfare and area denial strategies, with effectiveness against underground facilities and densely built-up areas.
- The development reflects China's broader push for cleaner military energy solutions, such as electric warships and long-endurance drones.
- The test takes place against a backdrop of increasing tensions in the South China Sea and growing US defense support for Taiwan, suggesting a strategic effort to strengthen China's deterrence capabilities.

UNSC Condemns Pahalgam Terror Attack, Calls for Global Action

- The UN Security Council (UNSC) unanimously condemned the April 22, 2025, terrorist attack in Pahalgam, Jammu & Kashmir, as a "reprehensible act of terrorism."
- The UNSC reiterated that terrorism in all its forms is a major threat to international peace and security

and is "criminal and unjustifiable," regardless of motive.

- The Council stressed the critical need to hold the perpetrators, organizers, financiers, and sponsors of the attack accountable and bring them to justice.
- The UNSC urged all states to actively cooperate with relevant authorities, in line with international law and UNSC resolutions, to ensure accountability.
- The UNSC expressed deep sympathy and condolences to the families of the victims and the Governments of India and Nepal (as a Nepali national was among the deceased).
- The Pahalgam attack in Baisaran meadow resulted in the deaths of at least 26 people, mostly Indian tourists and one Nepali citizen, and was claimed by The Resistance Front (TRF), believed to be an offshoot of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT).
- This attack is considered a significant escalation and one of the deadliest targeting civilians/tourists in the Kashmir Valley in recent years, impacting the region's tourism.
- The UNSC condemnation provides important international support for India's stance against cross-border terrorism and strengthens its call for global action against terrorist groups and their sponsors.
- The UNSC, with its primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, plays a crucial role in global counter-terrorism efforts through resolutions and sanctions.