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MONTHLY CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

StudyOAS

February 2025





INDEX

February 2025

<u>DAYS AND THEME</u>	2
<u>APPOINTMENTS</u>	8
<u>BOOKS</u>	11
<u>OBITUARY</u>	12
<u>AWARDS AND ACHIEVEMENTS</u>	13
<u>SPORTS</u>	17
<u>STATES & UTS</u>	19
<u>NATIONAL NEWS</u>	22
<u>DEFENCE</u>	33
<u>FINANCE & ECONOMY</u>	38
<u>INTERNATIONAL</u>	59
<u>ENVIRONMENT SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY</u>	73
<u>REPORTS & INDICES</u>	87
<u>ART AND CULTURE</u>	90

Days and Theme

World Unani Day 2025

- **World Unani Day is celebrated on February 11 to mark the birth anniversary of Hakim Ajmal Khan**, a pioneer of Unani medicine in India.
- **This year's theme is "Innovations in Unani Medicine for Integrative Health Solutions – A Way Forward."**
- **An international conference is being held on February 11 and 12 in New Delhi**, organized by the Central Council for Research in Unani Medicine (CCRUM) under the Ministry of Ayush.
- **President Droupadi Murmu inaugurated the conference**, highlighting the importance of integrating Unani medicine into modern healthcare.
- **Unani medicine is one of the world's oldest healthcare systems**, based on the teachings of Greek physicians like Hippocrates and Galen.
- **The system emphasizes balance and harmony in health**, focusing on the mind, body, and spirit.

Safer Internet Day 2025: Collaborating for a Secure Digital World

Global Observance:

- **Safer Internet Day (SID) 2025** was celebrated worldwide on **February 11, 2025**, under the theme "**Together for a better internet.**"
- Originating as an EU initiative, SID has expanded to over **180 countries and territories**, emphasizing the importance of creating a safer and more inclusive online environment, especially for children and young people.

Key Initiatives:

- The **Better Internet for Kids (BIK)** platform released a report titled "**First evaluation of the European strategy for a better internet for kids (BIK+): A summary of consultations with children, young people, and expert stakeholders.**"
- The **AdWiseOnline campaign** addressed manipulative marketing practices targeting young consumers and advocated for stronger online protections.
- Launch of the **BIK Massive Open Online Course (MOOC)** titled "**Child Online Safety: What Educators Need to Know,**" offering free training for teachers and educators on online safety and well-being.

International Day for the Prevention of Violent Extremism as and when Conducive to Terrorism: February 12, 2025

Observance of the International Day:

- On **February 12, 2025**, the global community observed the **International Day for the Prevention of Violent Extremism as and when Conducive to Terrorism.**
- This day aims to **raise awareness** about the threats associated with violent extremism and to **enhance international cooperation** in addressing these challenges.

UN Initiatives and Events:

- The **United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism**, in collaboration with the Republic of Tajikistan, organized a side event focusing on the implementation of Tajikistan's **National Strategy on Countering Terrorism and Extremism (2021-2025).**
- This event highlighted the importance of comprehensive approaches in preventing violent extremism.

UN General Assembly Resolution 77/243:

- In **December 2022**, the **UN General Assembly** adopted **Resolution 77/243**, declaring February 12 as the International Day for the Prevention of Violent Extremism as and when Conducive to Terrorism.
- The resolution emphasizes the primary responsibility of **Member States** in countering terrorism and acknowledges the significant roles of **intergovernmental organizations, civil society, academia, religious leaders, and the media** in these efforts.

National Women's Day 2025: Honoring Sarojini Naidu's Legacy

- National Women's Day 2025 was celebrated on **February 13, 2025**, marking the **146th birth anniversary of Sarojini Naidu**, a prominent freedom fighter, poet, and women's rights advocate.
- The day is observed to honor her contributions to **India's independence movement, literature, and women's empowerment**. Sarojini Naidu, known as the "**Nightingale of India**", was the first woman to become the **President of the Indian National Congress** and the first female **Governor of Uttar Pradesh**.
- **Key themes** for 2025 included **women in leadership, gender equality, and empowering women in STEM fields**.
- Celebrations included events organized by **government bodies, educational institutions, and NGOs**, focusing on **awareness campaigns, workshops, and cultural programs** to highlight women's achievements and challenges.

Sarojini Naidu's Contributions:

- **Freedom Struggle:** Actively participated in the **Non-Cooperation Movement, Salt Satyagraha, and Quit India Movement**.
- **Women's Rights:** Advocated for **women's education, voting rights, and equal opportunities**. She also fought against **child marriage and widow remarriage restrictions**.
- **Literary Works:** Authored famous poems like "**In the Bazaars of Hyderabad**" and "**The Gift of India**", which celebrated Indian culture and patriotism.

Milestones in Women's Rights in India:

- **1917:** Women's Indian Association demanded **voting rights** for women.
- **1947:** Women gained **political representation** post-independence.
- **1956: Hindu Succession Act** granted women **inheritance rights**.
- **1992: 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments** reserved **33% seats** for women in local governments.
- **2023: Women's Reservation Bill** provided **33% reservation** for women in the **Lok Sabha** and state legislatures.

World Radio Day 2025: Celebrating Radio's Role in Addressing Climate Change

- **Date of Observation:** World Radio Day is celebrated annually on **February 13**. In 2025, it falls on a Thursday.
- **Theme for 2025:** The theme for World Radio Day 2025 is "**Radio and Climate Change**." This theme emphasizes radio's pivotal role in raising awareness about environmental challenges, promoting sustainable practices, and providing a platform for climate activists.

Historical Context:

- **UNESCO's Proclamation:** In 2011, UNESCO's Member States declared February 13 as World Radio Day, a decision endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly in 2012.
- **Significance of the Date:** February 13 was chosen to commemorate the establishment of United Nations Radio in 1946.

Radio's Role in Climate Change:

- **Awareness and Education:** Radio stations worldwide are instrumental in educating the public about climate change, its impacts, and mitigation strategies.
- **Platform for Dialogue:** Provides a platform for scientists, policymakers, and activists to discuss environmental issues and solutions.
- **Community Engagement:** Engages local communities in conversations about sustainable practices and environmental stewardship.

Darwin Day 2025: Honoring the Father of Evolution

- **Date of Observation:** Darwin Day is celebrated annually on **February 12**, commemorating the birth of **Charles Darwin** on this day in 1809. In 2025, it falls on a Wednesday.
- **Purpose:** The day is dedicated to celebrating Darwin's contributions to science, particularly his formulation of the theory of evolution by natural selection, and to promoting scientific thinking and education.

Charles Darwin's Contributions:

- **Theory of Evolution:** Darwin's seminal work, "**On the Origin of Species**" (1859), introduced the concept of **natural selection**, explaining how species evolve over time.

- **Scientific Legacy:** His research laid the foundation for modern **evolutionary biology**, influencing fields like **genetics, ecology, and paleontology**.

Darwin's Major Works:

- “**On the Origin of Species**” (1859): Introduced the theory of natural selection.
- “**The Descent of Man**” (1871): Explored human evolution and sexual selection.
- “**The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals**” (1872): Studied the evolutionary basis of emotions.

Evolution of Evolutionary Biology:

- **19th Century:** Darwin and **Alfred Russel Wallace** independently proposed the theory of natural selection.
- **20th Century:** Integration of **genetics** with evolutionary theory, known as the **Modern Synthesis**.
- **21st Century:** Advances in **genomics** and **molecular biology** continue to refine our understanding of evolution.

Global Tourism Resilience Day 2025: Celebrating a Journey of Recovery and Innovation

- **Global Tourism Resilience Day 2025** is celebrated annually to recognize the **recovery and innovation** in the global tourism industry.
- The day highlights the industry's ability to overcome challenges, particularly in the aftermath of crises, and its continuous efforts to adapt and thrive.
- It serves as a platform to **honour the resilience** of tourism stakeholders and promote sustainable practices across the sector.

Historical Context & Significance:

- **Origins:**
 - Initiated as a response to major global disruptions, the day marks the tourism sector's journey from setbacks to recovery.
 - It symbolizes the transformation driven by **technology, sustainable practices, and collaborative efforts** among nations.
- **Significance Today:**
 - Emphasizes the importance of tourism as a key contributor to economic growth, cultural exchange, and global connectivity.
 - Highlights ongoing initiatives to enhance **safety, sustainability, and innovation** in travel and hospitality.

International Childhood Cancer Day 2025: A Beacon of Hope

- **International Childhood Cancer Day 2025** is observed globally every year on **February 15** to raise awareness about childhood cancer and honour the resilience of young patients and survivors.
- The day emphasizes the importance of early detection, research, and accessible treatment for childhood cancers.
- Celebrations and campaigns on this day aim to inspire hope and mobilize communities and governments to support enhanced care and research initiatives.

Historical Context & Theme:

- **Origins:** Established to draw attention to the unique challenges faced by children with cancer, the day has grown into a global movement.
- **2025 Theme:** The theme for this year focuses on **“Hope, Healing, and Unity”**, underscoring the collective responsibility of society to improve outcomes for affected children.
- **Significance:** The day not only honours the courage of young cancer fighters but also calls for increased funding for research and better healthcare policies tailored to paediatric oncology.

World Day of Social Justice 2025: Empowering Inclusion for a Fairer World

Date & Theme:

- **World Day of Social Justice** is observed on **February 20, 2025** each year.
- This year's theme is **“Empowering Inclusion: Bridging Gaps of Social Justice,”** which emphasizes the need for **inclusive policies** and **social protection** to combat systemic inequality.



Key Objectives & Highlights:

- **Addressing Social Injustices:**
 - Focus on eradicating issues such as **poverty, unemployment, exclusion, gender inequality, and human rights violations.**
 - Aims to remind governments and societies to uphold **decent work and fair employment practices.**
- **Global Dialogue:**
 - Encourages constructive **dialogue** among governments, employers, and workers to create and maintain **equitable policies.**
 - Serves as a platform to evaluate progress and pinpoint areas needing further reform in social justice.

Origins & Evolution:

- The observance draws its inspiration from the **ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization**, approved on **June 10, 2008**.
- This declaration builds on significant milestones such as the **1944 Philadelphia Declaration** and the **1998 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work**.
- The annual recognition was established during the **63rd session of the ILO General Conference** held on November 26, 2007.

Arunachal Pradesh & Mizoram Statehood Day: Celebrating Milestones of Integration

Statehood Day Observance:

- **Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram** celebrate their **Statehood Day** on **February 20th** each year.
- The event is marked by **official greetings** from prominent leaders, including **President Murmu** and other senior dignitaries.

Key Celebrations & Events:

- **Official Ceremonies:**
 - Leaders extend greetings and acknowledge the historical significance of the statehood celebrations.
 - **State government officials** and local leaders participate in various **cultural programs** and **public addresses.**
- **Cultural and Heritage Showcases:**
 - The celebrations include **traditional performances, exhibitions, and local art displays** that highlight the unique cultures of Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram.
 - Emphasis is placed on promoting **regional heritage** and celebrating the diverse traditions of the two states.

Historical Context & Significance:

- **Arunachal Pradesh:** Became a state on **February 20, 1987**.
- **Mizoram:** Became a state on **February 20, 1987**.

Financial Literacy Week 2025: Empowering Women's Prosperity

- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has launched **Financial Literacy Week 2025** with a special focus on advancing **women's prosperity**.
- This year, the campaign runs from February 24 to 28, under the theme "*Financial Literacy – Women's Prosperity*".
- The initiative aims to **enhance financial knowledge** among women, equipping them with skills for better financial planning and decision-making.
- **Key Focus Areas** include:
 - **Banking Services:** Understanding various banking products and services.
 - **Investment Options:** Exploring safe and profitable investment avenues.
 - **Savings Strategies:** Learning effective methods to save and manage money.
 - **Financial Planning:** Gaining insights into budgeting, credit management, and long-term financial security.

World NGO Day 2025: Celebrating Global Change-Makers

- **World NGO Day 2025** is celebrated on **February 27, 2025** to honour the invaluable contributions of **Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)** around the globe.
- The day is marked by various events, campaigns, and discussions that highlight the role of NGOs in addressing social, environmental, and humanitarian challenges.

Theme of the Day:

- The 2025 theme is "**Empowering Communities, Creating Impact**", focusing on how NGOs drive sustainable development and social change.
- Emphasis is placed on collaboration between communities, governments, and NGOs for a better future.

Historical Background:

- **World NGO Day** was established to recognize the tireless efforts of NGOs in bridging gaps in public service and supporting underprivileged communities.
- Over the years, the day has evolved into a global platform for sharing best practices and inspiring collective action.

National Science Day 2025: Celebrating Science for and by the People

- **National Science Day** is celebrated across India on **February 28** every year.
- The day commemorates the groundbreaking discovery of the '**Raman Effect**' by renowned Indian physicist **Sir C.V. Raman** on **February 28, 1928**.
- **National Science Day 2025** theme is "**Empowering Indian Youth for Global Leadership in Science & Innovation for Viksit Bharat**".

Sir C.V. Raman and the Raman Effect:

Chandrasekhara Venkata Raman (C.V. Raman) was an eminent Indian physicist whose work in the field of light scattering led to the discovery of the **Raman Effect**.

- **Born:** November 7, 1888, in Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu, India.
- **Died:** November 21, 1970, in Bangalore, Karnataka, India.
- **Education:** Presidency College, Madras (now Chennai).
- **Career:**
 - Worked in the **Indian Finance Department** initially.
 - Later became **Palit Professor of Physics** at the University of Calcutta (now Kolkata).
 - Established the **Indian Journal of Physics**.
 - Founded the **Indian Academy of Sciences** and the **Raman Research Institute** in Bangalore.
- **Raman Effect (1928):**
 - Discovered that when light traverses a transparent material, some of the **scattered light changes wavelength**. This phenomenon is known as the **Raman Effect** or **Raman Scattering**.
 - This discovery provided evidence of the **quantum nature of light** and had significant implications in various fields of science.
- **Nobel Prize in Physics (1930):**
 - Awarded the **Nobel Prize in Physics in 1930** for the discovery of the Raman Effect.
 - He was the **first Asian and first non-White** to receive a Nobel Prize in the sciences.
- **Bharat Ratna (1954):**
 - Conferred with **Bharat Ratna**, India's highest civilian award, in 1954.
- **Knighthood:**
 - Knighted in **1929**, becoming **Sir C.V. Raman**.

Ramakrishna Paramahansa Birth Anniversary: Celebrating a Spiritual Legacy

- The **189th** birth anniversary of **Ramakrishna Paramahansa** is being observed on **February 18**.
- Born on **February 18, 1836**, in **Kamarpukur village, Bengal Presidency** (present-day West Bengal), Ramakrishna Paramahansa was a renowned **Indian mystic and spiritual leader**.
- His birth anniversary is celebrated to commemorate his profound spiritual teachings and lasting impact on Indian spirituality and philosophy.



Key Facts and Spiritual Legacy of Ramakrishna Paramahansa:

- **Early Life and Spiritual Inclination:**
 - Born as **Gadadhar Chattopadhyay**.
 - Showed spiritual inclinations from a young age.
 - Became a **priest at the Dakshineswar Kali Temple** near Kolkata.
- **Spiritual Practices and Realizations:**
 - Known for his intense **devotion to Goddess Kali**.
 - Practiced various **spiritual paths**, including **Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity**, realizing the unity of all religions.
 - Attained profound **spiritual experiences and visions**.
- **Teachings and Philosophy:**
 - Emphasized the **realization of God** as the ultimate goal of life.
 - Advocated for **religious harmony and tolerance**, emphasizing that all religions lead to the same God.
 - Taught the importance of **selfless service (Seva)** and **love for all beings**.
 - His teachings are compiled in "**The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna**", a key text for his followers.
- **Influence on Indian Renaissance:**
 - Considered a major figure in the **Indian Renaissance** and the **revival of Hinduism** in the 19th century.
 - His teachings inspired many intellectuals and social reformers.
- **Disciples:**
 - His most famous disciple was **Swami Vivekananda**, who played a crucial role in spreading Ramakrishna's teachings globally and founding the **Ramakrishna Mission**.

International Mother Language Day 2025: Celebrating & Preserving Linguistic Heritage

Date & Significance:

- Observed annually on **February 21**, this day was established by **UNESCO** in 1999 to promote **multilingualism**, cultural diversity, and the importance of **mother tongues**.
- Commemorates the **Bengali Language Movement** of 1952, where martyrs sacrificed their lives for the right to speak their native language.

Historical Context & Global Impact:

- **International Mother Language Day** highlights the role of language in preserving cultural identity and promoting education.
- It serves as a reminder of the struggles for linguistic rights, especially in regions where local languages face suppression or extinction.

India's Linguistic Landscape:

- India is home to a rich tapestry of **over 22 officially recognized languages** and hundreds of dialects, with many considered **endangered**.
- The day brings attention to **vanishing voices** and the urgent need to document and preserve indigenous and regional languages.



Appointments

SC Collegium Confirms Five Additional Judges as Permanent

Current Affairs in Detail

- **Appointments Approved:** The Supreme Court Collegium, led by **Chief Justice of India (CJI) Sanjiv Khanna**, approved the permanent appointment of **five additional judges** in the **Madras and Telangana High Courts** on **February 5, 2025**.
- **Madras High Court:**
 - Justice Venkatachari Lakshminarayanan
 - Justice Periyasamy Vadimalai.
- **Telangana High Court:**
 - Justice Laxmi Narayana Alishetty
 - Justice Anil Kumar Jukanti
 - Justice Sujana Kalasikam.
- **Collegium Protocol:** The decision was made during a meeting chaired by CJI Khanna, emphasizing adherence to the **collegium system** for judicial appointments.

Other Important Aspects

Delhi High Court Appointments:

- In a separate resolution, the Collegium also approved the elevation of **two judicial officers—Renu Bhatnagar** (Principal District and Sessions Judge, Karkardooma Courts) and **Rajneesh Kumar Gupta** (Principal District and Sessions Judge, Saket Courts)—as judges of the **Delhi High Court**. This would increase its working strength to **40 judges**, though still below the sanctioned **60 judges**.

Shikhar Dhawan Named Event Ambassador for ICC Champions Trophy

- **Shikhar Dhawan** has been appointed as one of the four event ambassadors for the **ICC Champions Trophy**.
- The tournament will be held in **Pakistan and Dubai** from February 19 to March 9.
- Dhawan joins **Sarfraz Ahmed, Shane Watson, and Tim Southee** as ambassadors.
- The ambassadors will write guest columns and attend matches to share their insights.
- Dhawan is India's highest run-scorer in Champions Trophy history with **701 runs** across two editions.

Gyanesh Kumar Appointed as New Chief Election Commissioner

- **Appointment:** Gyanesh Kumar was appointed as the new Chief Election Commissioner on February 17, 2025.
- **Background:** He is a 1988 Batch Kerala Cadre IAS officer.
- **Previous Role:** Kumar was serving as an Election Commissioner since March 2024.
- **Significance:** He is the first CEC appointed under a new law on the appointment of Election Commissioners.
- **Tenure:** His term will run until January 26, 2029.

Supreme Court Appoints Expert Agency to Enhance Delhi's Green Cover

- **Appointment:** Supreme Court appointed the Forest Research Institute (FRI), Dehradun, to prepare an action plan to enhance green cover in Delhi.
- **Timeline:** FRI has one month to file a compliance affidavit.
- **Objective:** Implement a massive afforestation drive to increase tree cover in the national capital.
- **Previous Directives:** The court had earlier directed the Delhi Government and civic agencies to discuss measures to enhance green cover.
- **Concerns:** Addressing illegal tree felling and ensuring vigilance by the Forest Department and tree authority.

Rekha Gupta's Swearing-In as Delhi CM: Shaping a New Vision for Delhi

Inauguration & Leadership:

- **Rekha Gupta** was sworn in as the **Chief Minister of Delhi** on **February 20, 2025**.
- Alongside her, **six ministers** were inducted, marking a significant reshuffle in Delhi's governance.
- This ceremony reflects the **BJP's vision** for a dynamic and efficient Delhi administration.

Cabinet Portfolios & Policy Announcements:

- **Portfolio Distribution:**
 - The newly formed cabinet saw a strategic allocation of portfolios, ensuring a focus on critical sectors such as **Health, Finance, Education, Urban Development, Law & Order, and Social Welfare**.
 - Each minister has been tasked with responsibilities aimed at streamlining governance and boosting service delivery.
- **Ayushman Bharat Implementation:**
 - The government has announced the rollout of the **Ayushman Bharat** scheme in Delhi, underscoring its commitment to **enhance public healthcare**.
 - This flagship initiative is designed to offer financial protection and quality medical services to millions of citizens.

Vivek Joshi Assumes Charge as Election Commissioner

Appointment Overview:

- **Vivek Joshi**, a 1989-batch Haryana-cadre IAS officer, has been appointed as the **Election Commissioner of India**.
- The appointment, effective immediately upon his assumption of office, was made under the **Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023**.
- Vivek Joshi will serve until **2031**, adhering to the term limits set by the act.

Appointment Details & Legal Framework:

- **Legislative Basis:**
 - The appointment was executed in exercise of powers conferred by the **Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023**.
 - This act outlines the conditions of service and tenure for election commissioners, ensuring a structured and accountable electoral process.
- **Term & Retirement:**
 - Under the act, an Election Commissioner retires at **65 years of age** or after serving a term of **six years**, whichever is earlier.
 - Vivek Joshi's term has been strategically set to bolster the commission's capabilities leading up to the next Lok Sabha elections.

India Elected Vice President of IALA: Strengthening Maritime Leadership

- **India** has been elected as the **Vice President** of the **International Association of Marine Aids to Navigation (IALA)**, marking a significant milestone in its maritime diplomacy and global leadership.
- The appointment was officially announced by the **Press Information Bureau (PIB)** and has been highlighted by major news platforms such as **Current Affairs Adda247** and **Economic Times Government**.
- This prestigious role underscores India's growing influence in **global maritime affairs**, particularly in setting standards for **marine navigation aids, safety protocols, and environmental protection**.

Key Details

Role & Significance:

- As Vice President of IALA, India will play a strategic role in shaping international guidelines and policies on **marine navigation**.
- This position offers India a robust platform to advocate for its regional maritime interests while collaborating with global counterparts on enhancing **maritime safety** and **operational efficiency**.



Government Initiatives & Alignment:

- This development is in line with India's broader **Sagarmala** initiative, which aims to modernize port infrastructure and boost maritime trade.
- The **Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways** is a key driver behind this achievement, reflecting the government's commitment to advancing India's maritime capabilities.

Role of the International Association of Marine Aids to Navigation (IALA):

- **Global Organization:** IALA is a **non-profit international technical association** established in **1957**.
- **Purpose:** To harmonize and improve **aids to navigation (AtoN)** worldwide and to foster the safe, economic and efficient movement of vessels.
- **Membership:** IALA brings together **national AtoN authorities, manufacturers, consultants, and scientific institutes** from across the globe.
- **Standard Setting:** IALA develops and publishes **internationally recognized standards and recommendations** for marine aids to navigation, including lighthouses, buoys, radar beacons, and modern e-Navigation systems.
- **Technical Committees:** IALA operates through technical committees that focus on various aspects of AtoN, such as:
 - **Engineering and Sustainability**
 - **e-Navigation and Emerging Technologies**
 - **Vessel Traffic Services (VTS)**
- **Capacity Building:** IALA provides **training, workshops, and technical assistance** to member nations to enhance their capabilities in managing and operating effective AtoN systems.
- **Cooperation:** IALA fosters **international cooperation and information sharing** among maritime nations to improve navigation safety and environmental protection.

Tuhin Kanta Pandey Appointed as New SEBI Chairperson

Appointment Overview:

- **Tuhin Kanta Pandey** has been appointed as the new **SEBI Chairperson** for a **3-year term**.
- He succeeds **Madhabi Puri Buch**, marking a pivotal leadership transition in the regulatory landscape.

Key Highlights of the Appointment:

- **Leadership and Experience:**
 - **Tuhin Kanta Pandey** brings a wealth of experience in financial regulation and market oversight.
 - His appointment is expected to drive forward initiatives that bolster **market transparency**, investor protection, and regulatory efficiency.
- **Term Details:**
 - His tenure is set for **three years**, during which he will steer SEBI through evolving market dynamics and regulatory challenges.

Books

Dr. B.R. Chandrasekhar's New Book Unveiled at World Book Fair

Key Highlights of the Event

- **Event:** The new book by **Dr. B.R. Chandrasekhar** was unveiled at the **World Book Fair 2025** in New Delhi.
- **Book Title:** The book, titled "**The Future of Sustainable Development: Challenges and Opportunities**", focuses on global sustainability issues and solutions.
- **Venue:** The event took place at the **Pragati Maidan**, one of India's largest exhibition centres.

About the Book

- **Theme:** The book explores the **challenges and opportunities** in achieving **sustainable development** globally, with a focus on **climate change, renewable energy, and social equity**.
- **Key Topics Covered:**
 - **Climate Action:** Strategies to mitigate climate change and adapt to its impacts.
 - **Renewable Energy:** Transitioning to clean energy sources like solar, wind, and hydropower.
 - **Social Equity:** Ensuring inclusive growth and reducing inequalities.
 - **Policy Frameworks:** Role of governments, international organizations, and private sectors in promoting sustainability.
- **Target Audience:** The book is aimed at **policymakers, researchers, students, and professionals** working in the field of sustainable development.

About the Author – Dr. B.R. Chandrasekhar

- **Background:** Dr. Chandrasekhar is a renowned **environmental scientist** and **academician** with over **30 years of experience** in sustainability research.
- **Contributions:** He has authored several books and research papers on **environmental policy, climate change, and sustainable development**.
- **Awards and Recognitions:** Dr. Chandrasekhar has received numerous awards for his contributions to environmental science, including the **Padma Shri** in **2020**.

World Book Fair 2025

- **Organizer:** The fair is organized by the **National Book Trust (NBT)**, an autonomous body under the **Ministry of Education, Government of India**.
- **Participants:** The event features **publishers, authors, and book lovers** from across the globe, making it one of the largest book fairs in Asia.
- **Theme for 2025:** The theme for this year's fair is "**Books for a Sustainable Future**", aligning with global efforts to promote sustainability through literature.

'Heart Lamp' Shines on International Booker Longlist

Key Achievement:

- **Banu Mushtaq's 'Heart Lamp'**, a collection of short stories translated from Kannada by **Deepa Bhasthi**, has been longlisted for the **International Booker Prize 2025**.
- This marks the **first Kannada title** to reach this prestigious international literary platform.

Literary Significance:

- **Cultural Insight:**
 - The collection offers a **vivid portrayal** of community tensions within southern India's Muslim societies.
 - It captures **emotional narratives** and **social dynamics** with nuance and depth.
- **Translation Impact:**
 - The role of **translation** is celebrated here, highlighting how stories can transcend language barriers.
 - **Deepa Bhasthi's translation** has been crucial in conveying the original essence of the work to a global audience.



Obituary

Odissi Dance Legend Mayadhar Raut Passes Away at 92

- **Mayadhar Raut**, a highly respected and influential figure in **Odissi dance**, passed away at the age of **92** on **February 25, 2025**.
- He was renowned for his mastery of the classical dance form and his significant contributions to its revival and evolution.
- Raut was a **Padma Shri awardee**, recognizing his exceptional contributions to Indian classical dance.

Mayadhar Raut's Contributions to Odissi Dance:

- **Purist and Revivalist:** Considered a **purist** of Odissi dance, he dedicated his life to preserving and promoting the traditional form. He played a crucial role in the **revival of Odissi** in the mid-20th century.
- **Guru and Teacher:** He was a distinguished **guru** and trained numerous disciples who have become leading Odissi exponents. He imparted his profound knowledge and passion for the dance form to generations of students.
- **Choreographer and Innovator:** While rooted in tradition, Raut was also known for his **innovative choreography**, expanding the repertoire of Odissi dance while maintaining its classical essence.
- **Scholar and Theoretician:** He was a scholar of Odissi music and dance theory, contributing to a deeper understanding of the art form's technical and aesthetic aspects.
- **Founder of Kalachakra:** He founded the **Odissi dance institution, Kalachakra**, in Delhi, which has become a prominent center for Odissi training and performance.

Awards and Recognitions:

- **Padma Shri:** Received the **Padma Shri**, one of India's highest civilian awards, for his contributions to art and culture.
- **Sangeet Natak Akademi Award:** Awarded by the **Sangeet Natak Akademi**, India's National Academy of Music, Dance & Drama, for his excellence in Odissi dance.
- Numerous other state and national level awards recognizing his lifelong dedication and achievements in the field of Odissi.

Remembering Uttam Mohanty: A Pillar of Odia Cinema

- Odia film icon **Uttam Mohanty** passed away at **66** in **Delhi** while being treated for **liver cirrhosis** at Medanta Hospital.
- Chief Minister **Mohan Charan Majhi** announced that Mohanty's **last rites** would be performed with **full state honours**, marking a significant tribute from the state of **Odisha**.

Career Highlights:

- Starred in over **130 films** over a career spanning more than **four decades**.
- Began his journey with **Sadhu Meher's Abhimaan** in 1977 and became renowned through films like **Danda Balunga** and **Kie Jite Kie Haare**.
- Expanded his influence by acting in around **30 Bengali films** and featuring in the Hindi film **Naya Zaher**.

Accolades and Recognition:

- Honoured with the prestigious **Jayadev Puraskar** in **1999**.
- Awarded the **Odisha Living Legend Award** in **2012**.
- Multiple recipient of the **Odisha State Film Award** for his enduring contribution to the film industry.

Awards and Achievements

Rajasthan Educator Shortlisted for Global Teacher Prize 2025

Nomination Details:

- **Mohammad Imran Khan Mewati**, a teacher at the **Government Sanskrit Secondary School** in Alwar, Rajasthan, has been shortlisted for the **USD 1 million GEMS Education Global Teacher Prize 2025**.
- He is among the **top 10 finalists** selected from over **5,000 nominations and applications** spanning **89 countries**.

Innovative Contributions:

- Since **1999**, Mewati has:
 - Developed over **100 educational apps**, reaching millions across **50 countries**.
 - Created the '**Devvani**' app to facilitate **Sanskrit education**.
 - Launched '**PRASHAST**', an app designed for **disability screening**.
- His initiatives aim to promote **inclusivity** and **equity** in education.

Global Recognition:

- Mewati's efforts have been acknowledged internationally, including recognition from **Prime Minister Narendra Modi**.
- The **Global Teacher Prize panel** highlighted his work in:
 - Addressing **infrastructure challenges**.
 - Training **thousands of teachers**.
 - Promoting **environmental stewardship**.
- His dedication serves as an inspiration to communities and exemplifies transformative education.

Global Architect Builder Awards 2025: Celebrating Excellence in Architecture and Construction

Event Overview:

- **Date and Venue:** The **Global Architect Builder Awards (GABA) 2025** were held on **January 19, 2025**, in Dubai.
- **Purpose:**
 - GABA 2025 aimed to **recognize and honor** outstanding contributions in the fields of **architecture, construction, and design**.
 - The event served as a platform for **knowledge sharing, collaboration, and networking** among industry professionals.

Key Highlights:

Award Categories and Winners:

The ceremony featured various categories, acknowledging excellence across different sectors:

- **Best Architect for Luxury Project 2025 (Gujarat, India):** Awarded to **Hitendra Patel**, Founder & Principal Designer of Mindscape Design, Surat, for the project "Advaita - A Royal Residence".
- **Best Luxury Commercial Project of 2025 (Karnataka, India):** Conferred upon **Avant Garde Estates**, Bengaluru, for the project "Confluence".
- **Best Architect for Residential Apartments 2025 (Haryana, India):** Granted to **Vivek Singh Rao**, Principal Architect at Rao and Associate Architects, Gurgaon, for "Pyramid, Urban 67a".
- **Emerging Architect of 2025 (Sri Lanka):** Bestowed upon **Dishna Thilanka**, Chartered Architect at Dishna Thilanka Architects, Maharagama, Colombo, for "Path Art Studio and Residence".
- **Best Interior Designer for Commercial Project 2025 (Maharashtra, India):** Given to **Ar. Kapil Sedani**, Director of Transitions Designs Pvt Ltd, Pune, for "Atlas Copco".
- **Lifetime Achievement Award in Architecture (Jharkhand, India):** Presented to **Ar. Arun Kumar**, Principal Architect at The Creators, Ranchi, for "Sarala Birla University".
- **Best Luxury Residential Project of 2025 (Haryana, India):** Awarded to **Nida Design Studio**, Gurgaon, for "The Taabir".
- **Best Architect for Independent Bungalow 2025 (Malaysia):** Conferred upon **Nathira Haja Mohideen**, Director of Creative Design, Kuala Lumpur, for "Raji Villa".
- **Best Firm for Residential Projects 2025 (Philippines):** Granted to **G.R. Domingo Construction Services**, Ilocos Sur.
- **Emerging Architect of 2025 (Karnataka, India):** Bestowed upon **Syed Mohammed Sarmad**, Principal Architect at Engaging Spaces, Bengaluru, for "The Presidential Towers".



- **Specialized Design of State-of-the-Art Iconic Cancer Care Facility of India:** Given to **BPC Infra Projects Private Limited**, Jharkhand, for the "Cancer Care Hospital at Bargarh".
- **Best Interior Designer for Commercial Project 2025 (Telangana, India):** Awarded to **Cubic Associates Pvt. Ltd.**, Hyderabad, for "Databaseat".
- **Best Hospitality Project of 2025 (Maldives):** Conferred upon **SIARCH Pvt Ltd**, Maldives, for "Feydhoo Finolhu Island Resort".
- **Best Religious Project of 2025 (Kerala, India):** Granted to **Encasa Archstudio**, Calicut, for "Munajath".
- **Best Architect for Institutional Project 2025 (Tamil Nadu, India):** Bestowed upon **Romani Masonry Pvt Ltd**, Chennai, for "St. Joseph's College of Engineering".

Chaman Arora Bags Sahitya Akademi Award in Dogri for "Ik Hor Ashwthama"

Award Announcement:

- **Chaman Arora** has been chosen for the prestigious **Sahitya Akademi Award** in the **Dogri language** category for his book "**Ik Hor Ashwthama**".
- The award, which recognizes literary excellence and contribution to Indian literature, highlights Arora's significant impact on **Dogri literature**.

Literary Significance of the Work:

- The book "**Ik Hor Ashwthama**" is noted for its creative narrative and exploration of themes relevant to contemporary society and traditional Dogri cultural elements.
- Arora's work is celebrated for revitalizing interest in Dogri literature and for its **innovative storytelling** that resonates with both critics and readers alike.

Award Context and Impact:

- The **Sahitya Akademi Award** is one of the highest literary honors in India, awarded annually by the Sahitya Akademi to recognize outstanding contributions to Indian languages.
- This recognition not only honors Arora's literary prowess but also boosts the visibility of the Dogri language, encouraging further exploration and preservation of regional literature.

Government and Institutional Role:

- The **Sahitya Akademi**, as a key institution in promoting Indian literature, plays a pivotal role in recognizing and encouraging literary talent across various languages.
- Such initiatives help in maintaining the diversity of Indian literature and provide a platform for regional voices to gain national prominence.

2025 Critics Choice Awards

Top Awards

- Best Picture: Anora
- Best Actor: Adrien Brody (The Brutalist)
- Best Actress: Demi Moore (The Substance)
- Best Supporting Actor: Kieran Culkin (A Real Pain)
- Best Supporting Actress: Zoe Saldaña (Emilia Pérez)

TV Awards:

- Shogun led with 4 awards, including Best Drama Series.
- Hacks won 3 awards, including Best Comedy Series.
- Baby Reindeer won Best Limited Series.

Major Wins

Emilia Pérez – 3 awards

- Best Foreign Language Film
- Best Song
- Best Supporting Actress (Zoe Saldaña)

Wicked – 3 awards

- Best Director (Jon M. Chu)
- Best Production Design
- Best Costume Design

The Substance – 3 awards

- Best Actress (Demi Moore)
- Best Original Screenplay
- Best Hair & Makeup

Forbes India 30 Under 30 2025: Celebrating Young Innovators and Leaders

- The **Forbes India 30 Under 30 2025** list has been unveiled, highlighting 30 exceptional individuals under the age of 30 who have made significant contributions across various sectors.
- Now in its 12th edition, this annual list features winners across 19 categories, including the newly introduced **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** sector.
- These young achievers have launched disruptive businesses and are actively addressing societal issues, sustainability, and community development.

Key Highlights:

- **Youngest Honouree:** **Devan Chandrasekharan**, at 18 years old, is the youngest individual on this year's list.
- **Gender Representation:** The list includes **11 women**, showcasing the growing influence of young female leaders in various industries.
- **New Category Introduction:** The addition of the **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** category reflects the increasing importance of AI in today's technological landscape.

Notable Honourees:

- **Rabiul Khan:** An artist recognized for his innovative contributions to contemporary art.
- **Deepak Meena, Arjit Singh, and Hansraj Patel:** Co-founders of **Flyzy**, a startup aiming to revolutionize air travel experiences.
- **Anirudh Sharma:** Founder and CEO of **Digantara Research and Technologies**, focusing on space technology solutions.
- **Aparna Balamurali:** An acclaimed actor making significant strides in the Indian film industry.
- **D Gukesh:** A prodigious chess player achieving remarkable success on international platforms.

Savarkar Composition Honoured with the Inaugural Sambhaji Maharaj Song Award

Event Overview:

- The composition "Anadi me anant me" by **Savarkar** has been honoured with the **first-ever Sambhaji Maharaj Song Award in Maharashtra**.
- The award was presented on **February 26, 2025**, marking a significant cultural milestone.

Key Highlights:

- **Award Significance:**
 - This award celebrates artistic works that honour the legacy of **Sambhaji Maharaj**, a revered historical figure in Maharashtra.
 - It underscores the government's commitment to promoting **regional art, culture, and history**.
- **Composition Details:**
 - "Anadi me anant me" is noted for its powerful expression of **eternal values** and **cultural pride**.
 - The work resonates with themes of **heritage** and **identity**, connecting modern audiences with Maharashtra's illustrious past.

NHRC Announces Winners of Short Film Competition on Human Rights

- **First Prize:** 'Doodh Ganga- Valley's Dying Lifeline' from Jammu & Kashmir, addressing river water pollution (Rs. 2 lakh).



- **Second Prize:** 'Fight for Rights' from Andhra Pradesh, highlighting child marriage and education issues (Rs. 1.5 lakh).
- **Third Prize:** 'GOD' from Tamil Nadu, emphasizing the value of potable water (Rs. 1 lakh).
- **Special Mentions:** Four films received Certificates of Special Mention with cash awards of **Rs. 50,000** each:
 - 'Aksharabhyasam' (Telangana) - Importance of child education.
 - 'Vilayilla Pattathari' (Tamil Nadu) - Concerns of older persons.
 - 'Life of Seetha' (Andhra Pradesh) - Rights violations due to religious practices.
 - 'Be a Human' (Andhra Pradesh) - Issues surrounding domestic violence and assault on women.

National Dhanwantari Ayurveda Awards 2025

- **Recipients:** Vaidya Tara Chand Sharma, Vaidya Maya Ram Uniyal, and Vaidya Sameer Govind Jamadagni.
- **Contributions:** Exceptional work in traditional Indian medicine.
- **Awards:** Each recipient receives a citation, a trophy featuring a statue of Lord Dhanwantari, and a cash prize of ₹5 lakh.
- **Field:** Recognized for their expertise in **Nadi Vaidya, Dravyaguna Vigyana**, and organizing the **Vishwa Vyakhyanmala** national conference.
- **Organized by:** Ministry of Ayush

BAFTA Awards 2025 Winners

- **Conclave** wins four BAFTAs: Best Film, Outstanding British Film, Adapted Screenplay, and Best Editing.
- **The Brutalist** wins four awards: Best Director (Brady Corbet), Cinematography, Score, and Best Actor (Adrien Brody).
- **Anora** wins Best Actress (Mickey Madison) and Best Casting.
- **A Real Pain** wins Best Original Screenplay (Jesse Eisenberg) and Best Supporting Actor (Kieran Culkin).
- **Kneecap** wins Outstanding Debut by a British Writer, Director, or Producer.
- **Emilia Pérez** wins Best Supporting Actress (Zoe Saldana) and Best Film not in the English Language.
- **Super/Man: The Christopher Reeve Story** wins Best Documentary.
- **Wallace & Gromit: Vengeance Most Fowl** wins Best Animated Film.

[BAFTAs 2025: the winners in full](#)

Sports

15-Year-Old Jonathan Antony Wins Gold in 38th National Games

- **Event:** 15-year-old Jonathan Gavin Antony from Karnataka clinched the gold medal in the Men's 10-meter Air Pistol event at the 38th National Games.
- **Score:** Antony scored 240.7 points, edging out senior national players.
- **Silver Medal:** Ravinder Singh of Services secured the silver with 240.3 points.
- **Bronze Medal:** Gurpreet Singh, also from Services, took the bronze with 220.1 points.
- **Olympic Medalist:** Sarabjot Singh, representing Haryana, finished in 4th place.
- **Points Table:** Services leads the points table with 17 gold, 10 silver, and 8 bronze medals, followed by Karnataka and Maharashtra.

Uttar Pradesh Wins Men's Kabaddi Gold at 38th National Games

- **Final Match:** Uttar Pradesh defeated Chandigarh 57-43 in the men's kabaddi final at the 38th National Games.
- **Team Captain:** Arjun Deshwal led the Uttar Pradesh team, delivering an all-round performance.
- **First Half Comeback:** Uttar Pradesh made a significant comeback in the first half, overturning a 12-18 deficit to lead 25-22.
- **Key Players:** The team included standout performers like Arjun Deshwal, Vinay, Sahul Kumar, Nitin Panwar, and Mohd Amaan.
- **Chandigarh Efforts:** Despite strong efforts from Vishal Bharadwaj, Gaurav Khatri, Vishal Chahal, and Pawan Sehrawat, Chandigarh settled for the silver medal.
- **Women's Kabaddi:** Himachal Pradesh clinched the gold in the women's kabaddi event by defeating Haryana 27-22, securing their third consecutive title.

Marcus Stoinis Retires from ODI Cricket

- **Retirement Announcement:** Australian all-rounder Marcus Stoinis announced his immediate retirement from One-Day International (ODI) cricket.
- **Continued T20I Availability:** Stoinis will continue to be available for selection in Australia's T20I squad.
- **Replacement:** Stoinis will be replaced in Australia's final squad for the ICC Champions Trophy, to be announced by February 12.
- **Reason for Retirement:** The decision stems from a desire to focus on the T20 format and a recent mild hamstring injury.

Pankaj Advani Wins 36th National Title

- Pankaj Advani secured his 36th national title and 10th men's snooker crown at the Yashwant Club.
- Advani overcame an early setback against Brijesh Damani in the final, clinching the championship with an impressive 84 break in the final frame.
- Both Advani and Damani will represent India at the upcoming Asian and World Championships.
- Advani's journey to the title was marked by resilience, including a critical comeback in the round of 48.

India Shines at Para-Archery Asia Cup

- Indian para-archers won two gold medals in the recurve and compound mixed team categories at the Para-Archery Asia Cup in Thailand.
- Harvinder Singh and Pooja Jatyan clinched the gold in the recurve open mixed team category after a shoot-off victory against Indonesia.
- Shyam Sunder Swami and Sarita secured the gold in the compound open mixed team category with a win over the Indonesian pair.
- India's medal tally at the event now stands at six, including four gold and two silver medals.



National Games 2025: Medal Tally and Key Highlights

Event Overview:

- The **38th National Games of India** commenced on **January 28, 2025**, in **Uttarakhand**, marking the state's debut as host for this premier multi-sport event. The Games are scheduled to conclude on **February 14, 2025**.

Medal Tally Standings (as of February 8, 2025):

Services Sports Control Board (SSCB):

- Leading the tally with a total of **71 medals**:
 - Gold**: 42
 - Silver**: 16
 - Bronze**: 13

Karnataka:

- Second position with **58 medals**:
 - Gold**: 30
 - Silver**: 12
 - Bronze**: 16

Maharashtra:

- Third place with **113 medals**:
 - Gold**: 25
 - Silver**: 42
 - Bronze**: 46
- Notably, Maharashtra is the first state to surpass the **100-medal mark** in this edition.

Notable Performances:

Jyothi Yaraji:

- Clinched the **gold medal** in the women's **200m** event with a time of **23.35 seconds**, surpassing the entry standard for the **Asian Athletics Championships**.

Dev Kumar Meena:

- Set a **new national record** in men's **pole vault** with a leap of **5.32 meters**, securing the gold medal.

Services Clinch 71st Senior National Men's Kabaddi Championship Title

- Victory**: Services won the 71st Senior National Men's Kabaddi Championship in a thrilling final against Railways.
- Tie-Breaker**: The match ended in a **30-30** draw, but Services prevailed **6-4** in the tie-breaker.
- Key Players**: Led by Pro Kabaddi League star **Naveen Kumar**, with notable contributions from **Jaideep Dahiya** and **Rahul Sethpal**.
- Journey**: Services defeated Punjab **43-35** in the semifinals, while Railways beat Uttar Pradesh **42-34** to reach the final.
- Significance**: The final featured top talents including Railways' **Pankaj Mohite** and **Parvesh Bhainswal**.

States & UTs

Karnataka Declared Naxal-Free

- **Final Surrender:** **Lakshmi Thombattu**, the last active Maoist in Karnataka, surrendered unconditionally on **February 2, 2025**, in Udupi before Deputy Commissioner Vidya Kumari and Superintendent of Police Arun K. She had three cases against her dating to 2007–2008, including **exchange of fire with police**, assault, and distributing Maoist literature.
- **Rehabilitation Package:** Classified under '**A**' category of Karnataka's revised surrender policy, Lakshmi is eligible for **₹7 lakh** in phased payments, along with education, employment, and skill development support.
- **State Milestone:** With her surrender, Karnataka was declared "**Naxal-free**" after 22 Maoists surrendered in 2025 alone. This includes **Kotehonda Ravindra**, another key Maoist who surrendered earlier in Chikkamagaluru.
- **Government Protocol:** The surrender followed Karnataka's **revised Naxal Surrender and Rehabilitation Policy (2024)**, which incentivizes surrenders with financial aid, stipends, and legal assistance. The policy categorizes Naxals into **A (armed Karnataka-origin)**, **B (outsiders)**, and **C (supporters)**.
- **CM's Role:** Chief Minister Siddaramaiah awarded the **Chief Minister's Medal** to 22 police officers for their role in eliminating Naxalism. He emphasized resolving grievances through **constitutional methods**.

Odisha's Innovative Schemes to Curb Child Marriage & Empower Girls

Current Affairs in Detail

BBBP Scheme Overview:

- Launched in 2015 to address declining child sex ratios and gender imbalance, the **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP)** program has seen innovative implementation in Odisha, with schemes like **Nirbhaya Kadhi**, **Mo Gelha Jiya**, and **Veerangana**.

Key Schemes & Outcomes:

Nirbhaya Kadhi (Fearless Bud):

- **Coverage:** 1,83,933 adolescent girls (11–18 years) across 3,309 villages in Ganjam district.
- **Impact:** Ganjam declared **child marriage-free** in 2022; 20 out of 953 marriages prevented (2019–2024).
- **Awareness:** 4.5 lakh students pledged against child marriage; ₹5,000 reward for reporting cases.

Mo Gelha Jiya (My Dear Daughter):

- **Focus:** Combats **sex selection and female foeticide** in Ganjam through community engagement.

Kalpana Avijan (Dhenkanal):

- **Prevention:** Stopped **343 child marriages** (2019–2024) through village-level committees.
- **Outreach:** 1.13 lakh girls enrolled; 4.45 lakh students took anti-child marriage oaths.

Swarna Kalika (Keonjhar):

- **Tech Integration:** Promoted **ADVIKA** app for real-time reporting; reduced child marriages by **50% by 2024**.

Veerangana (Deogarh):

- **Self-Defence:** Trained 500+ girls in martial arts; created **50 female master trainers** to teach 6,000 students in rural schools.

BJP's Resounding Victory in Delhi Assembly Elections 2025

- **Historic Win for BJP:** After 27 years, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has secured a decisive victory in the Delhi Assembly elections, winning 48 out of 70 seats.
- **AAP's Decline:** The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), which had a stronghold in Delhi since 2015, was reduced to 22 seats, a significant drop from its previous tally of 62 seats.
- **Congress's Continued Decline:** The Indian National Congress failed to secure any seats for the third consecutive time, highlighting its diminishing influence in the capital.
- **Notable Defeats:** Prominent AAP leaders, including former Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, lost their constituencies. Kejriwal was defeated in the New Delhi seat by BJP's Parvesh Verma by a margin of 3,182 votes.
- **Voter Turnout:** The election witnessed a voter turnout of 60.44%, slightly lower than the previous election's 60.59%.

Key Candidates and Constituencies:

- Arvind Kejriwal (AAP) lost to **Parvesh Verma** (BJP) in the **New Delhi** constituency.
- Manish Sisodia (AAP) lost to **Tarvinder Singh Marwah** (BJP) in the **Jangpura** constituency.
- Satyendar Jain (AAP) competed from **Shakur Basti** against BJP's **Karnail Singh**.

Delhi Legislative Assembly:

- The Delhi Legislative Assembly consists of 70 seats. A party needs a minimum of 36 seats to form a majority government.

Empowerment of Panchayats: Karnataka Leads Devolution Rankings

- On February 13, 2025, Union Minister of State Prof. S. P. Singh Baghel released the report titled "Status of Devolution to Panchayats in States – An Indicative Evidence Based Ranking" in New Delhi.
- This report evaluates how effectively states have empowered Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) by devolving powers and resources.

Key Highlights:

- **Top Performers:** Karnataka secured the **first position** in the devolution ranking, followed by **Kerala** and **Tamil Nadu** in the second and third spots, respectively.
- **Uttar Pradesh's Progress:** Notably, **Uttar Pradesh** advanced from the **15th** to the **5th position**, attributed to significant improvements in its accountability framework through innovative transparency initiatives and robust anti-corruption measures.
- **Increased Devolution:** The share of devolution to Rural Local Bodies rose from **39.9%** in 2013-14 to **43.9%** in 2021-22, indicating enhanced empowerment of PRIs.

Rank of Odisha

- Odisha is ranked among the **medium scoring states** in the Devolution Index, with an overall score of **50.03**.
- This places Odisha in the same category as Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh.
- While Odisha shows strengths in areas like **Framework, Functions, Finances, and Accountability**, there is room for improvement in **Functionaries and Capacity Enhancement**.

President's Rule Imposed in Manipur Amid Political Crisis

Key Highlights of the Development

- **Date of Imposition:** President's Rule was imposed in **Manipur** on **February 14, 2025**, following the resignation of Chief Minister **N. Biren Singh**.
- **Reason for Imposition:** The state faced a **political crisis** after the collapse of the ruling coalition, leading to a **failure of constitutional machinery**.
- **Governor's Role:** The **Governor of Manipur** recommended the imposition of President's Rule after assessing the situation and consulting with stakeholders.

Background of the Crisis

- **Resignation of CM N. Biren Singh:** The Chief Minister resigned after losing the support of key allies, leading to a **political vacuum** in the state.
- **Failed Attempts to Form Government:** No party or coalition could muster a majority in the **Manipur Legislative Assembly**, making it impossible to form a stable government.
- **Law and Order Concerns:** The political instability raised concerns about the **breakdown of governance** and potential **law and order issues** in the state.

Understanding President's Rule in India

- **President's Rule** refers to the suspension of a state's government and the imposition of direct governance by the **Union Government**.
- This mechanism is outlined in **Article 356 of the Indian Constitution**.

Conditions for Imposition:

- If a state's **Governor** reports that the state government cannot function according to constitutional provisions.
- If the **President** is convinced that the state's constitutional machinery has failed.

Duration:

- Initially valid for **six months**.
- Can be extended up to a maximum of **three years**, with **Parliamentary approval** every six months.
- Extensions beyond one year require:
 - A national emergency** in the country or the specific state.
 - A certification from the **Election Commission** that elections cannot be conducted in the state.

Administration During President's Rule:

- The state's **Council of Ministers** is dissolved.
- The **Governor** administers the state on behalf of the President.
- The **State Legislative Assembly** may be either **suspended** or **dissolved**.

Historical Context of President's Rule in Manipur

- Frequent Use in Northeastern States:** Manipur has seen President's Rule imposed multiple times in the past due to **political instability** and **insurgency issues**.
- Recent Example:** President's Rule was last imposed in Manipur in **2020** after the collapse of the coalition government led by **N. Biren Singh**.

National News

Incomplete Border Fencing with Bangladesh

Extent of Unfenced Border:

- India is yet to fence **864.482 km** of its **4,096.7 km** long border with **Bangladesh**.
- Out of this, **174.51 km** is classified as non-feasible for fencing due to terrain constraints.

Challenges in Fencing:

- Land Acquisition Issues:** Difficulty in acquiring land in certain areas.
- Objections by BGB:** The **Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB)** has raised objections over construction at specific stretches.
- Adverse Terrain Conditions:** Limited working season along with problems like **landslides** and **marshy land** hamper progress.

Security Measures in Non-Fenced Areas:

- In locations where fencing is impractical, the **Border Security Force (BSF)** employs **sensors, CCTV cameras, flood lights**, and continuous **guard deployment** to monitor and secure the border.

Diplomatic and Strategic Context:

- The issue was raised in the **Lok Sabha** by Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, **Nityanand Rai**, emphasizing that India adheres to all existing protocols and agreements with Bangladesh.
- Disputes regarding the fence along an 865 km stretch were triggered after political developments in Bangladesh, including **Sheikh Hasina's decision to step down** following widespread protests last year.
- A **Director General-level meeting** between BSF and BGB is scheduled in New Delhi later this month to address these issues.

PM Internship Scheme: Expanding Opportunities for Youth

Massive Application Response:

- The **Prime Minister's Internship Scheme** has received **6.21 lakh applications** for **1.27 lakh internship opportunities**.
- This high volume indicates strong interest among the youth for skill development and exposure to top industry practices.

Scheme Objectives and Scope:

- Announced in the **2024 Union Budget**, the scheme aims to provide **1 crore internships** over a span of five years in **top-500 companies**.
- A pilot phase commenced on October 3, 2024, targeting to provide **1.25 lakh internship opportunities** in the current financial year (2024-25).

Benefits for Interns:

- Selected interns are entitled to receive monthly financial assistance of **Rs 5,000** for 12 months.
- Additionally, a one-time grant of **Rs 6,000** is provided to help cover various expenses, thereby encouraging participation and reducing financial barriers.

Registration and Selection Process:

- Approximately **4.87 lakh** individuals have completed their KYC and registered on the internship portal, ensuring a robust candidate pool.
- The selection process is ongoing, with partner companies actively posting available positions on the dedicated portal.

Consumer Affairs Dept Sets Up AI-Enabled Helpline

- AI-Enabled Helpline:** The Department of Consumer Affairs launched an AI-enabled National Consumer Helpline (NCH) for grievance resolution.
- Sector-Wise Analysis:** The helpline offers sector-wise analysis of grievances related to products or services.

- **Improved Efficiency:** The new technology-driven approach aims to enhance the speed and efficiency of resolving consumer issues.
- **Increased Call Volume:** The number of calls has increased tenfold from around 12,500 in December 2015 to over 155,000 in December 2024.

Rajya Sabha Deliberates on POCSO Amendment Bill to Strengthen Child Protection

- **Introduction of Private Member's Bill:** On February 7, 2025, the Rajya Sabha discussed a private member's bill aiming to amend the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012. The bill seeks to implement more **victim-centric reforms** to enhance the legislation's effectiveness.
- **Rising Incidence of Child Sexual Offences:** According to the **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)**, POCSO cases have surged by over **94%** since 2017, with registered cases exceeding **200,000** by May 2024.
- **Fauzia Khan** of the NCP-SCP introduced the **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (Amendment), 2024 Bill**.

Key Provisions of the Amendment:

- **Clear Reporting Timelines:** Mandates that police or special juvenile police units present the child before the **Child Welfare Committee** and report the case to the **Special Court** (or Sessions Court if unavailable) within **24 hours** of the incident's reporting.
- **Structured Compensation Procedures:** Establishes clear guidelines to ensure victims receive timely compensation without procedural delays.
- **Mandatory Training:** Requires training for stakeholders, including educational institutions and childcare personnel, to ensure effective implementation of the Act.

India Intensifies Efforts to Eliminate Lymphatic Filariasis: Second Phase of Mass Drug Administration Campaign Launched

Campaign Launch:

- On **August 10, 2024**, Union Minister of State for Health & Family Welfare, **Shri Prataprao Ganpatrao Jadhav**, virtually inaugurated the **second phase** of the **Bi-annual Nationwide Mass Drug Administration (MDA) campaign** aimed at eliminating **Lymphatic Filariasis (LF)**.

Targeted Regions:

- The campaign focuses on **63 endemic districts** across the states of **Bihar, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Odisha, Telangana, and Uttar Pradesh**.
- It involves **door-to-door administration** of preventive medications in these high-risk areas.

Government's Commitment:

- Shri Jadhav emphasized the government's dedication to public health, stating that **preventive measures**, such as **avoiding mosquito bites** and **consuming anti-filarial medicines**, are crucial to halting LF transmission.
- He highlighted the importance of achieving a **90% consumption rate** of these medicines among eligible populations to ensure the campaign's success.

Additional Initiatives:

- Efforts are underway to provide **pucca houses** to individuals residing in **mud houses**, which increase vulnerability to diseases like LF.
- The government is also exploring the development of a **vaccine** for LF and issuing **Disability Certificates** to those affected by the disease.

State-Level Participation:

- Health Ministers from the participating states, including **Shri Banna Gupta (Jharkhand)**, **Shri Mangal Pandey (Bihar)**, **Shri Damodar Rajanarayana (Telangana)**, **Dr. Mukesh Mahaling (Odisha)**, **Shri Jai Pratap Singh (Uttar Pradesh)**, and **Shri Dinesh Gundu Rao (Karnataka)**, shared their achievements and ongoing efforts since the **Elimination of Lymphatic Filariasis programme** began in **2004**.

Focus on Medicine Consumption:

- The current phase emphasizes not only the distribution but also the **consumption** of medicines to ensure the campaign's effectiveness.

- **Smt. Aradhana Patnaik**, Additional Secretary and MD (NHM), highlighted that the focus is on ensuring medicine consumption to achieve success.

Lok Sabha Enhances Inclusivity with Addition of Six New Translation Languages

- **Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla announced the expansion of translation services** in Parliament to include six additional languages: **Bodo, Dogri, Maithili, Manipuri, Urdu, and Sanskrit**.
- **Translation services were previously available in 10 regional languages**: Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Odia, Punjabi, Tamil, and Telugu, alongside Hindi and English.
- **With the latest additions, Parliament now offers translation support in a total of 16 languages**.
- **Efforts are underway to gradually extend translation services to all 22 officially recognized languages** based on available human resources.
- **DMK MP Dayanidhi Maran objected to the inclusion of Sanskrit**, arguing that it is spoken by only around 70,000 people and is not an official language of any state.
- **Speaker Birla defended the decision**, stating that Sanskrit is India's "Mool Bhasha" (root language) and emphasized the importance of linguistic inclusivity.

Purpose of the Expansion

- **Enhance accessibility and representation** for lawmakers who speak these languages.
- **Promote linguistic diversity and inclusivity** in parliamentary proceedings.

Future Plans

- **Gradually introduce simultaneous translations** in additional languages as human resources become available.
- **Long-term vision to incorporate all 22 officially recognized languages** into parliamentary proceedings.
- **Total number of languages with translation services: 16**.
- **Number of officially recognized languages in India: 22**.

Supreme Court to Hear Plea on Passive Euthanasia for Rabies Patients

Petition Overview

- The Supreme Court of India has agreed to hear a plea filed by the NGO **All Creatures Great and Small (ACGAS)** seeking the right to passive euthanasia for rabies patients.
- The plea challenges a 2019 Delhi High Court order that denied treating rabies as an exceptional disease requiring passive euthanasia.
- The Supreme Court will hear the plea after two weeks, with the matter being presented before a bench led by Justices **B R Gavai and K Vinod Chandran**.
- The NGO argues that rabies, with its 100% fatality rate and severe symptoms, necessitates special consideration for passive euthanasia.

Background of the Case:

- The NGO filed the plea in 2019, seeking a procedure for rabies patients to opt for physician-assisted dying.
- In 2020, the Supreme Court issued a notice to the Centre and sought responses from the ministries of health and environment.
- The NGO highlighted that rabies patients often have to be tied and shackled to their beds, reducing their personal freedom and dignity.

Legal Context:

- In March 2018, a five-judge Constitution bench of the Supreme Court legalized passive euthanasia by allowing the creation of a "living will" for terminally ill patients or those in a persistent vegetative state.
- The NGO is requesting an exception for rabies patients within this ruling, citing the exceptional nature of the disease.

Rabies Disease Profile:

- **Fatality Rate**: Rabies is almost always fatal once clinical symptoms appear.
- **Symptoms**: Patients may experience severe neurological symptoms, including agitation, hallucinations, and hydrophobia, often necessitating physical restraints.
- **Prevention**: Timely vaccination after exposure is crucial, as there is no effective treatment once symptoms manifest.

Ayush Ministry and Social Justice Dept Join Hands for Senior Citizens' Welfare

- On **February 12, 2025**, the **Ministry of Ayush** and the **Department of Social Justice and Empowerment (DoSJE)** signed a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** to enhance **geriatric healthcare** and combat **substance abuse** among senior citizens. The MoU was signed in New Delhi in the presence of **Shri Prataprao Jadhav**, Union Minister of State (Independent Charge), Ministry of Ayush, and **Shri B.L. Verma**, Union Minister of State, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
- The collaboration aims to leverage the **holistic approach of Ayush systems** (Ayurveda, Yoga, Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homoeopathy) alongside social welfare initiatives to address the challenges faced by the ageing population and those affected by substance abuse.
- Key initiatives** under the MoU include:
 - Development of **elderly-specific training modules, treatment protocols, and yoga training programs**.
 - Establishment of **geriatric health and de-addiction units** under Ayush autonomous bodies.
 - Awareness programs and capacity-building** for service providers to promote Ayush-based interventions.

Addressing Geriatric Healthcare Challenges

- India's elderly population is projected to reach **20% of the total population by 2050**, making geriatric healthcare a critical area of focus.
- The MoU will integrate Ayush-based interventions to address **age-related health issues**, including **physical and mental health challenges**, such as **substance abuse** and **mental rehabilitation**.
- Existing initiatives like **Geriatric Healthcare Camps** under the **National Ayush Mission** will be strengthened to provide quality healthcare to senior citizens.

Combating Substance Abuse

- Substance abuse among the elderly is a growing concern, with issues like **alcohol dependency** and **misuse of prescription drugs** leading to health complications such as **diabetes, liver damage, and cognitive impairments**.
- The MoU aims to reduce the demand for drugs and provide **mental rehabilitation** through Ayush-based treatment models and **de-addiction programs**.

Key Objectives of the MoU

- Cooperative Efforts:** Foster synergy between the Ministry of Ayush and DoSJE to promote senior citizen health and address substance abuse through awareness and capacity-building.
- Research Promotion:** Encourage research in **geriatric health, substance abuse, and mental health**, focusing on the therapeutic benefits of traditional healthcare practices.
- Health Promotion Activities:** Support tailored health promotion activities for the geriatric population and individuals affected by substance abuse.

President Murmu Inaugurates 10th International Women's Conference by Art of Living

Key Highlights of the Event

- Event:** The 10th International Women's Conference (IWC) was inaugurated by **President Droupadi Murmu** on **February 14, 2025**, at the **Art of Living International Centre in Bengaluru**.
- Theme:** The conference was themed "**Just Be**", emphasizing self-discovery, resilience, and the importance of mental and spiritual strength in navigating life's challenges.
- Participants:** Over **500 delegates** from **50 countries** attended, including prominent leaders, activists, and changemakers.

Key Takeaways from President Murmu's Address

- Women's Role in Society:** President Murmu highlighted the rising **Nari Shakti** (women power) in India, emphasizing their contributions in fields like **science, sports, politics, arts, and culture**.
- Mental Health:** She stressed the importance of **mental wellness**, urging women to create **safe spaces** for dialogue and support systems to address mental health challenges.
- Technological Disruption:** In an era of rapid technological advancement, she called for preserving **human values** like **compassion, love, and unity**, where women play a crucial role.
- Education and Climate Change:** The President praised the **Art of Living's educational initiatives** and urged participants to address global challenges like **climate change**.

Insights from Other Dignitaries

- **Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar:** Emphasized the importance of a **positive environment** for progress and the role of women in creating such environments. He also highlighted the symbolic roles of women in Indian mythology, such as **Durga, Lakshmi, and Saraswati**.
- **Hema Malini:** Shared her experience of balancing multiple roles through **yoga, dance, and meditation**, underscoring the theme of **“Just Be”**.
- **Annapurna Devi:** Spoke about the importance of staying **grounded** while pursuing material success and the role of **meditation** in achieving balance.
- **Shobha Karandlaje:** Highlighted India's shift from **women's development** to **women-led development**, showcasing women's leadership in governance, business, and science.

Awards and Recognitions

- **Vishalakshi Award:** Honoured individuals for their contributions to **service, arts, and culture**, including **Annapurna Devi, Hema Malini, and Patricia Scotland**.
- **Acharya Ratnananda Award:** Recognized individuals for their **humanitarian efforts**, such as **Lieutenant Colonel Anish Mohan and Arnab Goswami**.

Bengaluru School Welcomes Asia's First Empathy-Building Animatronic Elephant, Ellie

Key Highlights of the Event

- **Event:** PETA India introduced **Ellie**, Asia's first **animatronic elephant**, to a school in **Bengaluru** to promote **empathy and compassion** toward animals.
- **Voice of Ellie:** The animatronic elephant was voiced by **actor and environmentalist Dia Mirza**, adding a celebrity touch to the initiative.
- **Purpose:** The initiative aims to educate students about the **plight of elephants** and other animals used in **entertainment and tourism**.

About Ellie the Animatronic Elephant

- **Design:** Ellie is a **life-sized, robotic elephant** that mimics the movements and sounds of a real elephant, providing an immersive experience for students.
- **Features:**
 - **Realistic Movements:** Ellie can move her ears, trunk, and tail, creating a lifelike experience.
 - **Interactive Sessions:** Students can interact with Ellie, learning about the **emotional and physical needs** of elephants.
- **Educational Tool:** Ellie serves as a tool to teach students about **animal rights, conservation, and the ethical treatment of animals**.

Role of PETA India

- **Mission:** PETA India (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) is dedicated to **animal rights** and works to end **animal cruelty** in various industries, including entertainment, fashion, and food.
- **Campaigns:** PETA India has launched several campaigns to promote **veganism, animal adoption, and wildlife conservation**.
- **Ellie's Tour:** Ellie will visit **schools across India** to spread awareness about the **ethical treatment of elephants** and other animals.

Dia Mirza's Involvement

- **Voice of Ellie:** Dia Mirza, a renowned actor and **UN Environment Goodwill Ambassador**, lent her voice to Ellie, making the experience more engaging for students.
- **Advocacy:** Dia Mirza has been a vocal advocate for **environmental conservation** and **animal rights**, aligning with PETA India's mission.

Jogighopa Inland Waterways Terminal: Boosting Trade and Connectivity

- **Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal** inaugurated the **Inland Waterways Terminal** at **Jogighopa, Assam**, on February 18, 2025.
- This terminal is strategically positioned to enhance trade with **Bangladesh** and **Bhutan**, making it a key asset in India's push towards **sustainable logistics** and **regional connectivity**.

First Shipment:

- The inaugural shipment included **110 metric tonnes** of **coal and stone chips** sent to Bangladesh.
- The shipment was flagged off on the **MV Trishul**, accompanied by barges **Ajay** and **Dikshu**.

Infrastructure & Capacity:

- The terminal, built at a cost of over **Rs. 82 crores**, features an **RCC jetty** and specialised equipment like **Electric Level Luffing (ELL) cranes** for efficient cargo handling.
- Additional facilities include an administrative building, customs and immigration offices, truck parking, and substantial covered and open storage areas.

Future Outlook:

- By 2027, the terminal is expected to handle **1.1 million tonnes of cargo annually**, significantly boosting the region's logistics and trade potential.

Ajmer Hosts First All India Transgender Conference

- **Ajmer**, Rajasthan, recently hosted the **first-ever All India Conference of Transgenders**.
- The conference was held on **February 18, 2025**.
- It was organised by the **Social Justice and Empowerment Department**.
- This landmark event brought together **transgender individuals** from across India.

Key Objectives of the Conference:

- **Empowerment:** To **empower** the transgender community and promote their **social inclusion**.
- **Awareness:** To raise **awareness** about transgender issues among the general public and policymakers.
- **Policy Advocacy:** To advocate for **policy changes** and legal reforms to protect and promote transgender rights.
- **Community Building:** To foster a sense of **community** and solidarity among transgender individuals.
- **Sharing Experiences:** To provide a platform for transgender people to **share their experiences** and stories.

Basic Life Support Training to be Included in School Curriculum

New Initiative:

- The **Central Government** has announced the integration of **Basic Life Support (BLS) training** into the school curriculum.
- This initiative aims to equip students with essential **emergency response skills** right from their formative years.

Objectives & Implementation:

- **Enhance Preparedness:** To ensure that students are capable of responding effectively during medical emergencies by learning techniques such as **CPR (Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation)** and basic first aid.
- **Curriculum Integration:**
 - BLS training will be incorporated at various educational levels, from **primary to secondary schools**.
 - This move will involve hands-on training sessions, demonstrations, and assessments to ensure practical understanding.

Intensified NCD Screening Campaign: A National Health Initiative

Government Initiative:

- The **Union Health Ministry** has launched an **intensified screening drive** targeting all **citizens aged 30 and above**.
- This campaign aims to detect **non-communicable diseases (NCDs)** early, ensuring timely intervention and reducing long-term health complications.

Key Objectives:

- **Early Detection:** Identify conditions like **diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular diseases**, and **cancers** before they progress.

- **Nationwide Coverage:** Ensure that **all adults** across both urban and rural areas undergo screening, leaving no region behind.
- **Public Awareness:** Increase awareness about the importance of **regular health check-ups** and **preventive care** for maintaining long-term health.

Implementation Strategy:

- **Mass Screening Drive:** Deployment of **mobile health units** and utilization of local health centers to reach diverse communities.
- **Risk Assessment & Follow-Up:** Individuals identified at risk will receive further diagnostic tests and guidance on necessary **preventive measures**.
- **Collaborative Effort:** Coordination among **central and state health departments** and collaboration with both **public and private healthcare providers** to maximize outreach.

Significance for Public Health:

- **Reducing Disease Burden:** Early detection helps in mitigating the severity of NCDs, thereby reducing overall healthcare costs and improving quality of life.
- **Economic Impact:** By preventing advanced stages of diseases, the initiative supports **economic productivity** and reduces long-term medical expenditure.
- **Strengthening Healthcare Infrastructure:** This campaign underscores the importance of a robust **healthcare delivery system** and proactive public health policies.

Amit Shah Urges Prioritization of Education at Western Zonal Council

Key Announcement:

- **Union Home Minister Amit Shah** emphasized the need to **prioritize education** during the recent Western Zonal Council meeting held in Pune.
- His call to action focused on enhancing educational policies and infrastructure to empower future generations.

Core Focus Areas Discussed:

- **Strengthening Educational Infrastructure:** Emphasis on improving facilities and modernizing schools to create a conducive learning environment.
- **Policy Reforms:** Advocated for reforms that ensure quality education is accessible and equitable, aiming to bridge the gap between urban and rural education systems.
- **Skill Development:** Highlighted the importance of integrating **skill development programs** within the educational framework to prepare students for the evolving job market.

Kodava Community's 82-Kilometer Padayatra Concludes in Madikeri, Advocating for Constitutional Recognition

- Over **25,000 members** of the **Kodava community** completed an **82-km padayatra** from **Kutta** to **Madikeri** in Karnataka, demanding **constitutional recognition** and **cultural protection**.
- The march, organized by the **Akhila Kodava Samaja**, saw participants dressed in traditional attire and was marked by flowers, aarti, and folk performances.
- The padayatra was sparked by an incident at the **Kattemad Maha Mrityunjaya Temple**, where Kodavas were denied entry for wearing their traditional attire.
- The community has expressed concerns about socio-political alienation and the impact of increasing migration from neighboring regions of Karnataka.
- Key demands include **constitutional recognition** of Kodava culture and traditions, **political reservation** for the community at the state and national levels, and **official status** for the Kodava language.
- Concerns over **land protection** were highlighted, with community leaders stressing the need for safeguards against encroachment and dilution of Kodava heritage.

Key Objectives of the Padayatra:

- **Constitutional Recognition:** Seeking official recognition of Kodava culture and traditions.
- **Political Reservation:** Demanding political representation at state and national levels.
- **Land Protection:** Highlighting the need for safeguards against encroachment and dilution of Kodava heritage.

World Travel and Tourism Festival 2025: A Global Confluence in New Delhi

- The **World Travel & Tourism Festival 2025** is currently underway at the **Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium** in New Delhi, running from **February 14 to 16, 2025**.
- This landmark event, organized by **TV9 Network** in collaboration with **Red Hat Communications**, aims to explore the future of travel by bringing together industry leaders, travel enthusiasts, and brands.

Key Highlights of the Festival:

- Cultural Showcases:** Attendees can immerse themselves in a vibrant array of cultural performances, featuring folk artists, classical musicians, and international entertainers, offering a rich tapestry of global traditions.
- Expert-Led Discussions:** The festival hosts a series of panels and workshops where industry experts discuss emerging trends, sustainable tourism practices, and innovative travel solutions.
- Live Performances:** Renowned artists, including the celebrated Indian singer **Papon**, are set to perform, adding a musical flair to the event.

Disaster Response Fund: Centre Approves Rs 1,554.99 Crore for Five States

Overview & Purpose

- The **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** approved additional central assistance of **Rs 1,554.99 crore** under the **National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF)** for states affected by natural disasters in 2024.
- The funds are designated for recovery from **floods, flash floods, landslides, and cyclonic storms**.

State-wise Fund Allocation

- Andhra Pradesh:** ₹608.08 crore
- Nagaland:** ₹170.99 crore
- Odisha:** ₹255.24 crore
- Telangana:** ₹231.75 crore
- Tripura:** ₹288.93 crore

Government Initiative & Statements

- Union Home Minister Amit Shah** announced the disbursement, emphasising the government's unwavering support for affected communities.
- This allocation is additional to the **₹18,322.80 crore** already released to 27 states under the **State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF)**.

One Nation, One Port: Revolutionizing India's Maritime Sector

- Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal** introduced the **One Nation: One Port Process (ONOP)** initiative during a key stakeholders' meeting on **27 February 2025**.
- Objective:** Streamline operations across India's ports by standardizing documentation and processes to reduce inefficiencies and costs.

Key Initiatives Launched:

- ONOP (One Nation: One Port Process):**
 - Goal:** Harmonize port procedures, cutting down excess paperwork (e.g., reducing container operation documents by 33% and bulk cargo documents by 29%).
 - Impact:** Enhanced operational efficiency and a boost to India's global trade competitiveness.
- Sagar Ankan-LPPI (Logistics Port Performance Index):**
 - Purpose:** Benchmark port performance using key indicators such as cargo handling, turnaround time, berth idle time, and container dwell time.
 - Benefit:** Drives transparency and continuous improvement in port operations.
- MAITRI (Master Application for International Trade and Regulatory Interface):**
 - Focus:** Leverage digital solutions like **AI** and **blockchain** to streamline trade processes.
 - Connection:** Supports the **Virtual Trade Corridor (VTC)** between India and the UAE, with future expansions towards BIMSTEC and ASEAN nations.

- **Bharat Global Ports Consortium:**

- **Aim:** Enhance India's maritime reach and export potential by coordinating with major private and public players such as **IPGL, SDCL, and IPRCL**.

Strategic Importance & Broader Vision:

- **Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047:** These initiatives are part of a long-term strategy to transform India into a maritime powerhouse by **2047**, in alignment with the **Atmanirbhar Bharat** vision.
- **Economic & Environmental Impact:** The reforms aim to **reduce carbon footprints**, lower logistics costs, and foster a sustainable maritime future.
- **India Maritime Week 2025:** Scheduled from **27 to 31 October 2025 in Mumbai**, this bi-annual global gathering will showcase India's maritime capabilities, featuring events like the **Global Maritime India Summit (GMIS)** and **Sagarmanthan: The Great Oceans Dialogue**.

Aadhaar Good Governance Portal: Streamlining Public Service Access

Launch Announcement:

- The **Government** has unveiled the **Aadhaar Good Governance Portal** aimed at simplifying service access for citizens.
- The portal is designed to integrate multiple services into a single platform, ensuring **efficient, transparent, and user-friendly governance**.

Key Features & Objectives:

- **Centralized Access:** Integrates various **government services** into one portal, allowing citizens to access services seamlessly using their **Aadhaar** credentials.
- **Enhanced Transparency and Efficiency:** Streamlines administrative processes, reducing paperwork and eliminating redundancy.
- **User-Friendly Interface:** Features an intuitive design that caters to users of all age groups and digital literacy levels.
- **Real-Time Service Tracking:** Enables citizens to track the status of their applications and services in real-time.
- **Data Security and Privacy:** Employs advanced security measures to protect sensitive user data, ensuring privacy in line with government standards.

JP Nadda Launches 9th National Summit on Public Health Care at Puri

Event Details:

- **Date & Venue:** Held on **28 February 2025** in **Puri, Odisha**.
- **Inauguration:** The summit was inaugurated by **Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare, JP Nadda**.
- **Theme:** Focus on **Good & Replicable Practices and Innovation in the Public Healthcare System**.

Summit Highlights:

- **Platform for Sharing Best Practices:**
 - **States and Union Territories** are provided a stage to showcase their innovative solutions and successful public health strategies.
 - Emphasis on collaborative learning and knowledge sharing to improve public healthcare delivery.
- **Two-Day Conference:**
 - Offers opportunities for in-depth discussions on managing public health challenges and replicating successful practices.
 - Facilitates networking among policymakers, health experts, and government officials.

Organizational and Historical Context:

- **Organizer:** The summit is organized by the **National Health Mission** under the **Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**.
- **Summit History:**
 - **1st Summit:** Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir (2013)
 - **2nd Summit:** Shimla, Himachal Pradesh (2015)
 - **3rd Summit:** Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh (2016)
 - **4th Summit:** Indore, Madhya Pradesh (2017)
 - **5th Summit:** Kaziranga, Assam (2018)

- **6th Summit:** Gujarat (2019)
- **7th Summit:** Held online from Delhi
- **8th Summit:** Kevadia, Gujarat (2022)
- **9th Summit:** Now in **Puri, Odisha** (2025)

Key Announcements & Initiatives:

- **Tuberculosis (TB) Elimination:** JP Nadda confirmed that India is on track to eliminate **TB by 2025**, ahead of the UN's **2030 SDG target**.
- **Special Screening Campaign:** A nationwide campaign for screening **Diabetes, Hypertension, Oral, Breast, and Cervical cancers** for individuals aged 30 and above will continue until **31 March 2025**.
- **Day Care Cancer Centres:** The government plans to establish **200 daycare centres** for cancer patients in the fiscal year **2025-26**, ensuring every district has at least one by **2026-27**.

Bharat Calling Conference 2025: Paving the Path to Viksit Bharat 2047

Keynote Address & Theme:

- Delivered by **Union Minister for Commerce and Industry, Shri Piyush Goyal** on **27 February 2025** in Mumbai.
- The conference theme, "**Path to Viksit Bharat 2047: Pioneering Prosperity for All**," underscores the commitment to transforming India into a developed nation by 2047.

Strategic Initiatives Highlighted:

- **Manufacturing & Innovation:**
 - Emphasis on flagship programs like **Make in India, Digital India, Startup India, Swacch Bharat, and Atmanirbhar Bharat**.
 - A drive towards upgrading manufacturing practices with a focus on **modern quality standards** and robust **quality control** (noting around **700 quality control orders**).
- **Sustainability & Inclusive Growth:**
 - Promotion of sustainable practices rooted in traditional Indian ethos, combined with modern strategies for **inclusive growth**.
 - Targeted interventions and infrastructure development aimed at uplifting all communities.
- **Skill Development:**
 - Announcement of new **skill development centres** in North Mumbai to further empower the workforce.
 - Strengthening the country's human resource capabilities to meet future industry demands.
- **Competitiveness & Efficiency:**
 - Urging businesses to bolster their competitiveness by adopting efficient practices and reducing reliance on government subsidies.
 - Focus on innovation, capacity building, and efficiency to drive global trade participation.

Global & Domestic Impact:

- Positions India as a **leading global investment destination** with a dynamic consumer market of **1.4 billion people**.
- Reinforces the need for **international trade** to propel economic development.
- Encourages **public-private partnerships** to foster innovation and economic resilience.

Notable Dignitaries & Collaborations:

- Key figures like **Ms. Rosslyn Bates** (Minister for Finance, Trade, Employment and Training, Queensland, Australia) and **Shri Sanjaya Mariwala** (President, IMC Chamber of Commerce and Industry) were present.
- The conference, organized by the **IMC Chamber of Commerce and Industry**, serves as a platform for collaborative efforts toward achieving the **Viksit Bharat** vision.

PM-AASHA Scheme Extended Till 2025-26 with Focus on Pulse Procurement

Scheme Extension:

- The government has extended the **Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay Sanrakshan Abhiyan (PM-AASHA) scheme** till **2025-26** as part of the 15th Finance Commission cycle.
- This extension aims to provide price stability and fair compensation to farmers while ensuring essential commodities are available at reasonable rates.

Key Features of the Extension:

- **100% Procurement:**
 - The government has committed to procuring **100% of the production** of key pulses including **Tur (Arhar), Urad, and Masur** under the **Price Support Scheme (PSS)**.
- **Targeted Procurement:**
 - Procurement is planned for the **Kharif 2024-25** season with an overall target of **13.22 Lakh Metric Tonnes (LMT)** for Tur across nine states.
 - Direct benefits have already reached **12,006 farmers** through ongoing operations in states such as **Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Telangana**.

India Hosts First-Ever Conference on Women Peacekeepers

- India is set to host its **first-ever conference** dedicated to **women peacekeepers** in **New Delhi** on **28th and 29th of February, 2025**.
- The conference is being organized by the **Ministry of External Affairs** in collaboration with the **United Nations** and the **Centre for United Nations Peacekeeping (CUNPK)**.
- This landmark event aims to highlight the crucial role of women in peacekeeping operations globally.

Key Objectives and Focus Areas of the Conference:

- **Recognizing Women's Contributions:** To acknowledge and celebrate the vital role played by women in maintaining peace and security in conflict zones worldwide.
- **Promoting Gender Equality:** To advocate for increased participation of women in all aspects of peacekeeping operations, from uniformed personnel to leadership roles.
- **Sharing Best Practices:** To provide a platform for women peacekeepers to share their experiences, challenges, and best practices in the field.
- **Enhancing Operational Effectiveness:** To discuss how increased involvement of women can improve the effectiveness and impact of peacekeeping missions.
- **Inspiring Future Generations:** To inspire more women to join peacekeeping forces and contribute to global peace and security.

India's Commitment to Women in Peacekeeping:

- **Increased Deployment:** India has been progressively increasing the deployment of women peacekeepers in UN missions.
- **All-Women Formed Police Unit (FPU):** India made history by deploying the **first-ever all-women FPU** in **Liberia in 2007**, which served as an inspiration and a model for other nations.
- **Training and Capacity Building:** India through CUNPK provides training to peacekeepers, including women, from various countries.
- **UN Support:** India has consistently supported UN initiatives aimed at enhancing women's participation in peacekeeping.

Swayatt Initiative on GEM: Six Years of Transformative Impact

- **Swayatt Initiative on GEM** has celebrated **six years** of transformative impact, marking a significant milestone in promoting **inclusive economic growth** and **entrepreneurship** in India.
- This government-led initiative focuses on enhancing **efficiency** and **transparency** in the **Government e-Marketplace (GEM)**, enabling smoother procurement processes and boosting domestic production.

Transformative Impact Over Six Years:

- **Enhanced Procurement Efficiency:** Swayatt has streamlined the procurement process on **GEM**, benefiting both government agencies and suppliers.
- **Boost to Domestic Manufacturing:** The initiative has spurred significant growth in **indigenously produced goods**, reducing dependency on imports.
- **Economic Empowerment:** By facilitating easier access to government contracts, Swayatt has empowered small and medium enterprises (SMEs), fostering a more vibrant domestic market.

Operational and Strategic Benefits:

- **Transparency and Accountability:** Improved digital processes ensure fair and transparent procurement practices.



- **Cost Efficiency:** The streamlined procedures have led to significant savings for the government, allowing resources to be allocated more efficiently.
- **Boost to Local Industries:** The initiative has been instrumental in promoting **Make in India** efforts, driving innovation and competitiveness in local industries.

Defence

DRDO's Successful Flight Trials of VSHORADS Missile System

Recent Developments:

- The **Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO)** successfully conducted three consecutive flight trials of the **Very Short-Range Air Defence System (VSHORADS)** on February 1, 2025, at Chandipur, off the Odisha coast.
- These tests targeted high-speed, low-altitude objects simulating low-flying drones.
- In each trial, the missiles effectively intercepted and destroyed targets with reduced thermal signatures under varying flight conditions.
- The tests were executed in their final deployment configuration, with two field operators managing weapon readiness, target acquisition, and missile firing.
- Data from telemetry, electro-optical tracking systems, and radar at the Integrated Test Range in Chandipur confirmed the missile system's precision and effectiveness against drones and other aerial threats.

Key Features of VSHORADS:

- **Man-Portable Air Defence System:** Designed for easy transport and operation by individual soldiers.
- **Indigenous Development:** Created by DRDO's **Research Centre Imarat** in collaboration with other laboratories and industry partners.
- **Tri-Services Application:** Suitable for the **Indian Army, Navy, and Air Force**, enhancing India's short-range aerial threat defense capabilities.

Naval Base Karwar Infra Boost: CDS Inaugurates Key Facilities

- **Inauguration by CDS:** On February 4, 2025, Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Anil Chauhan inaugurated critical infrastructure at Naval Base Karwar, Karnataka, as part of **Phase IIA of Project Seabird**. The event was attended by Vice Admiral Krishna Swaminathan (Vice Chief of Naval Staff) and senior officials.
- **Key Developments:**
 - **Residential Accommodation:** Four towers with **240 dwelling units** for **Master Chief Petty Officers (MCPOs)** and **Chief Petty Officers (CPOs)** were constructed by M/S NCC Pvt. Ltd., Hyderabad.
 - **Power Infrastructure:** A **Main Distribution Sub Station** with four **33/11 KV transformers** (65 MVA capacity) and three **3 MVA Captive Power Plants** for backup. It uses **77 Gas Insulated Switchgears** for stable power supply to piers and utilities.
- **Employment Impact:** The project has generated **7,000 direct jobs** and **25,000 indirect jobs**, boosting local economies.
- **Sustainability:** Compliant with **MoEF&CC norms** and **IGBC standards**, with **90% materials sourced domestically** under **Aatmanirbhar Bharat**.

DRDO Enhances Research Focus with Redefined Research Verticals & Thrust Areas

- The **Directorate of Futuristic Technology Management (DFTM)** at DRDO HQ in New Delhi released the redefined and augmented Research Verticals & Thrust Areas across DRDO Industry Academia – Centres of Excellence (DIA-CoEs) on February 07, 2025.
- The existing **65 Research Verticals** spread across 15 DIA-CoEs have been restructured into **82 Research Verticals** to sharpen the focus of directed research.
- New research areas introduced include:
 - **Compound Semiconductor Technologies** at IITB
 - **Laser Beam Combining based Communication, Power Transmission & Manufacturing and Extraction & Recycling of Materials** at IITH
 - **Software Defined Radios** at IITK

- **Emerging RF Technologies** at IITR
- **Cryptography and Information Security** at IITKgp, among others.
- The realignment is part of a strategic effort to address DRDO's future technology challenges by incorporating cutting-edge deep technology research.

Aero India 2025: Asia's Biggest Aerospace and Defence Exhibition

- **Defence Minister Rajnath Singh** inaugurated the 15th edition of Aero India at Yelahanka Air Force Station in Bengaluru on February 10, 2025.
- The event, themed "**The Runway to a Billion Opportunities**", will run from February 10 to February 14, 2025.
- Aero India 2025 features participation from over **900 exhibitors**, including 150 foreign companies.
- The event showcases advanced fighter jets like **Rafale, Sukhoi, and the US F-35**, along with thrilling airshows.
- **Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar** highlighted Bengaluru's dominance in India's aerospace sector, noting the city controls more than 60% of the country's aerospace manufacturing and defence research operations.
- The event emphasizes **domestic technological development** and **joint manufacturing** of proven technological platforms.

Key Highlights of Aero India 2025:

- **International Collaboration:** The event serves as a platform for international collaboration in aviation, defence, and space exploration.
- **Business and Public Days:** The first two days are dedicated to business and defence manufacturers, while the exhibition opens to the public afterward.
- **Aerial Displays:** The event features aerial displays by the Indian Air Force and global participants.

Karnataka's Role in Aerospace:

- **Aerospace Hubs:** Karnataka is expanding its aerospace footprint beyond Bengaluru, developing aerospace and defence hubs in Belagavi, Mysuru, Tumakuru, and Chamarajanagar.
- **Aerospace Policy:** Karnataka was the first state to announce an aerospace policy in 2013, which included establishing a dedicated 1,000-acre aerospace park near Devanahalli.

India and Egypt Conduct Joint Military Exercise 'Cyclone 2025' in Rajasthan

Exercise Overview:

- The **third edition** of the joint military exercise '**Cyclone 2025**' between **India and Egypt** commenced on **February 9, 2025**, at the **Mahajan Field Firing Range** in **Rajasthan**.
- This **14-day exercise** aims to enhance defense cooperation and improve interoperability between the special forces of both nations.

Participating Units:

- **Indian Contingent:**
 - Comprises personnel from the **Parachute Regiment (Special Forces)**, renowned for their expertise in rapid deployment and specialized operations.
- **Egyptian Contingent:**
 - Includes members from the **Egyptian Commando Squadron** and the **Egyptian Airborne Platoon**, experienced in desert warfare and counter-terrorism operations.

Exercise Objectives:

- Focuses on **counter-terrorism operations, reconnaissance missions, raids**, and other specialized military tasks.
- Emphasizes skills such as **sniping, combat free fall, surveillance**, and **target designation** in challenging desert environments.

Historical Context:

- The **first edition** of Exercise 'Cyclone' was conducted in **2023 in India**, followed by the **second edition** in **2024 in Egypt**.
- These exercises have progressively strengthened military ties and facilitated the exchange of best practices between the two armies.

Indian Navy Hosts Chiefs' Conclave 2025 in New Delhi

Event Overview:

- The **Indian Navy Chiefs' Conclave 2025** was held at the **Naval Headquarters, New Delhi**, from **February 8 to 9, 2025**.
- The gathering included **eight former Naval Chiefs** alongside the current naval leadership.

Objectives:

- To leverage the **collective experience** of former Chiefs.
- To update them on recent **developments** and **policy initiatives** within the Navy.

Key Activities:

- On February 8, former Chiefs received an **operational update** covering:
 - **Policy initiatives.**
 - Advancements in **technology, materiel, and operational logistics.**
 - Future **perspective plans.**
- A dedicated session, termed **Manthan**, facilitated discussions on:
 - **Future warfare strategies.**
 - **Maritime strategy** amidst evolving geopolitical scenarios.
 - **Human resource paradigms.**

Publication Release:

- The conclave saw the release of a book titled "**Legacy of Leadership: Naval Chiefs through Time**", chronicling the journeys of former Chiefs of Naval Staff (CNS).
- This collector's edition features:
 - Personal stories.
 - Rare photographs.
 - Firsthand accounts.

Tribute to Martyrs:

- Former Naval Chiefs laid wreaths at the **National War Memorial**, honoring the nation's Bravehearts.

Indian Navy Launches Eighth MCA Barge: A Milestone in Indigenous Shipbuilding

Launch Event and Details:

- The **eighth Missile Cum Ammunition (MCA) Barge**, designated as **LSAM 11 (Yard 79)**, was launched on **February 14, 2025**, at **Mira Bhayandar, Maharashtra**.
- The launch ceremony was held at the site of **M/s SECON Engineering Projects Pvt Ltd**, Visakhapatnam.
- **Chief Guest:** The chief guest for the launching ceremony was **Cmde N Gopinath**, AGM (PL), ND (Mbi).

Construction and Design:

- **Contract and Collaboration:**
 - The contract for the construction of the MCA Barges was awarded to **M/s SECON Engineering Projects Pvt Ltd**, an **MSME shipyard** in Visakhapatnam, on **February 19, 2021**.
 - The barges were **indigenously designed and built** in collaboration with an Indian ship-designing firm and the **Indian Register of Shipping (IRS)**.
- **Model Testing:** Model testing was conducted at the **Naval Science and Technological Laboratory (NSTL)** in Visakhapatnam to ensure seaworthiness.

Operational Significance:

- **Utilization by the Indian Navy:**
 - The MCA Barges are utilised by the **Indian Navy** for various operational evolutions, including the **transportation, embarkation, and disembarkation** of articles and ammunition to naval platforms.
 - These operations can be conducted both **alongside jetties and at outer harbours**.
- **Previous Deliveries:** The shipyard has successfully delivered **seven MCA Barges** to date, which are currently in use by the Indian Navy.

ICGS shoor participates in NAVDEX 2025, strengthening India-UAE maritime cooperation

Event Participation:

- **ICGS Shoor** actively participated in **NAVDEX 2025**, a premier maritime defence exhibition showcasing India's **advanced coastal security** capabilities.
- The event served as a strategic platform to reinforce **India-UAE maritime cooperation**.

Key Objectives & Outcomes:

- **Showcasing Capability:** Demonstrated India's commitment to enhancing **maritime security** and **coastal defence** through state-of-the-art technology.
- **Enhanced Collaboration:** Fostered deeper **bilateral ties** with the UAE by facilitating discussions on collaborative measures in **coastal surveillance, search and rescue operations**, and **maritime domain awareness**.
- **Technology Exchange:** Provided an opportunity for the exchange of innovative ideas and technologies between the Indian Coast Guard and international counterparts, notably from the UAE.

Indian Navy's Training Squadron Departs Cambodia After Strengthening Ties

Event Overview:

- The **Indian Navy's Training Squadron** recently departed from **Cambodia** after a series of joint exercises aimed at **strengthening bilateral maritime ties**.
- The departure marks the conclusion of a training stint designed to enhance operational coordination and interoperability between the **Indian Navy** and **Cambodian Naval Forces**.

Key Activities & Objectives:

- **Joint Drills & Training:**
 - Conducted collaborative drills that focused on **navigation, maritime safety, and search and rescue operations**.
 - Emphasis was placed on building mutual capabilities and sharing best practices in **coastal security**.
- **Strengthening Strategic Partnerships:**
 - The training exercise serves as a platform to reinforce **regional maritime security**.
 - It aligns with India's broader strategy to foster **defence cooperation** with neighbouring nations in the **Indo-Pacific region**.

Dharma Guardian 2025: Fortifying India-Japan Defence Ties

- **Dharma Guardian 2025** is the **6th edition** of the joint military exercise between **India** and **Japan**.
- The exercise is being conducted at the iconic **Mount Fuji** in Japan, starting on **February 16, 2025**.
- It underscores the deepening strategic partnership and defence cooperation between the two nations.

Joint Military Operations:

- Focuses on enhancing **interoperability** between the **Indian armed forces** and the **Japan Self-defence Forces (JSDF)**.
- Covers training in **multidomain operations** including air, land, and maritime tactics.

Multilateral Maritime Drill Kicks Off in Indonesia

A **multilateral maritime drill** has commenced at the Indonesian island of Bali, involving **38 nations**, including the United States and China. The exercise, known as "**Komodo**," aims to ease tensions in areas such as the **South China Sea**. Initiated in 2014, the drills began on Saturday and will continue until Saturday, February 24, 2025.

Key Highlights:

- **Participants:** Over **30 vessels**, maritime patrol aircraft, and helicopters are involved.
- **Objectives:** The exercise focuses on cooperation in disaster mitigation, humanitarian assistance, and addressing issues like illegal fishing, smuggling, and illegal migration.

- **Opening Ceremony:** Held on Sunday, with Indonesian Naval Chief of Staff Admiral Muhammad Ali expressing hope that the drill would ease tensions in regions like the **Red Sea**, the **Middle East**, the **Mediterranean**, and conflict-ridden countries.
- **Duration:** The week-long drill will continue through Saturday, February 24, 2025.

Hyprix Unveils 'Tezz': India's First Private Supersonic Ramjet Engine

- Hyprix, a trailblazing private aerospace firm, has launched **Tezz**, marking India's first private **supersonic ramjet engine**.
- This breakthrough underscores India's growing capability in **advanced propulsion technologies** and the increasing role of the **private sector** in aerospace and defence.
- **Engine Name:** Tezz
- **Technology:** A **ramjet engine** that operates efficiently at **supersonic speeds** by compressing incoming air without moving parts.
- **Applications:** Designed for high-speed aerospace applications, potentially benefiting both **military** and **commercial aviation** sectors.

Indian Army Enhances CBRN Defence Capabilities

- **Indian Army** has recently taken a significant step to bolster its **CBRN defence** measures by procuring **critical equipment** and advanced **ACADA systems**.
- A strategic deal has been inked with **LT Ltd**, as confirmed by the **Press Information Bureau (PIB)**, to upgrade its capabilities in detecting and countering **Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear (CBRN)** threats.
- These modern systems are designed to provide a **tactical edge in chemical warfare scenarios**, ensuring rapid detection, analysis, and response against potential chemical attacks.

Critical Procurement:

- The deal with **LT Ltd** focuses on acquiring state-of-the-art **CBRN defence equipment** that is crucial for protecting military personnel and infrastructure.
- The acquisition is part of the Indian Army's continuous effort to modernize its operational capabilities.

Advanced ACADA Systems:

- The new **ACADA systems** are engineered to enhance the Army's response during chemical warfare situations.
- These systems offer comprehensive features for detection and situational awareness, ensuring that the Army is better prepared for emerging threats.

Rajnath Singh Releases MoD's Bi-Annual Hindi Magazine 'Sashakt Bharat'

- **Event:** Defence Minister Rajnath Singh released the first edition of the Ministry of Defence's bi-annual Hindi magazine '**Sashakt Bharat**' on February 27, 2025.
- **Content:** The magazine features poems on valour, patriotism, and sacrifices of Armed Forces personnel, and articles on government policies written by ministry personnel across ranks.
- **Objective:** Highlight the creative talents of MoD employees and encourage them to conduct their day-to-day activities in Hindi.
- **Promotion:** Stresses the need to increase the use of Hindi, described as the thread that binds India's social and cultural fabric.
- **Availability:** The e-version of the magazine is available on the official MoD website.
- **Dignitaries Present:** The event was attended by Minister of State for Defence Sanjay Seth, Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan, Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh, and other senior officials.

Military Exercise 'Jal-Thal-Raksha 2025' at Bet Dwarka

- **Objective:** Strengthen security in **Dwarka** and surrounding islands.
- **Exercise:** '**Jal-Thal-Raksha 2025**' military exercise organized at **Bet Dwarka**.
- **Reason:** In response to recent **illegal encroachments**.

- **Participants:** Indian Navy, Indian Coast Guard, and other security agencies.

Finance & Economy

Union Budget 2025-26: Key Highlights and Initiatives

Income Tax Relief for Middle Class:

- No income tax for individuals with an average monthly income of up to ₹1 lakh, aiming to boost household savings and consumption.
- Salaried individuals earning up to ₹12.75 lakh annually will pay zero tax under the new regime, benefiting from a standard deduction of ₹75,000.

Four Engines of Development Identified:

- **Agriculture:** Introduction of the 'Prime Minister Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana' targeting 100 districts with low agricultural productivity.
- **Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs):** Significant enhancement of credit with guarantee cover to MSMEs from ₹5 crore to ₹10 crore.
- **Investment:** A National Manufacturing Mission covering small, medium, and large industries to further the 'Make in India' initiative.
- **Exports:** Various measures to boost exports, though specific initiatives were not detailed in the summary.

Agricultural Initiatives:

- Launch of the 'Mission for Aatmanirbharta in Pulses' with a special focus on Tur, Urad, and Masoor to achieve self-sufficiency.
- Provision of loans up to ₹5 lakhs through Kisan Credit Card (KCC) under a modified interest subvention scheme.

Fiscal Management:

- Fiscal deficit for FY-25 estimated at 4.8%, with a target to reduce it to 4.4% in FY-26.

Education and Skill Development:

- Establishment of 50,000 Atal Tinkering Labs in government schools over the next five years to foster innovation.
- Creation of a Centre of Excellence in Artificial Intelligence for Education, with a total outlay of ₹500 crore.

Support for Gig Workers:

- Provision of identity cards, registration on the e-Shram portal, and healthcare benefits under the PM Jan Arogya Yojana.

Urban Development:

- Allocation of ₹1 lakh crore to the Urban Challenge Fund for developing 'Cities as Growth Hubs'.

Energy and Infrastructure:

- Launch of a Nuclear Energy Mission for R&D of small modular reactors with an outlay of ₹20,000 crore.
- Modification of the UDAN scheme to enhance regional connectivity to 120 new destinations.

Housing and Real Estate:

- Establishment of a ₹15,000 crore SWAMIH fund to expedite the completion of another 1 lakh stressed housing units.

Research and Innovation:

- Allocation of ₹20,000 crore for private sector-driven research, development, and innovation initiatives.

Cultural Preservation:

- Launch of the Gyan Bharatam Mission for the survey and conservation of manuscripts, aiming to cover more than one crore manuscripts.

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI):

- Enhancement of the FDI limit for the insurance sector from 74% to 100%.

Legal Reforms:

- Introduction of the Jan Vishwas Bill 2.0 to decriminalize more than 100 provisions in various laws.

Transforming Indian Agriculture: Key Union Budget 2025-26 Initiatives

Prime Minister Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana-Developing Agri Districts Programme:

- Launched under the **Union Budget 2025-26**, this initiative will target **100 districts** characterized by low crop productivity, moderate crop intensity, and below-average credit parameters.
- The programme is designed to **enhance agricultural productivity** by promoting **crop diversification**, adopting **sustainable agriculture practices**, and augmenting **post-harvest storage** facilities at the local (panchayat and block) level.
- It will also improve **irrigation facilities** and facilitate both **long-term and short-term credit**, potentially benefiting around **1.7 crore farmers**.

Rural Prosperity and Resilience Programme:

- A comprehensive, multi-sectoral initiative aimed at addressing **under-employment in agriculture** through **skilling, investment, technology, and rural economic revitalization**.
- Focuses on creating opportunities for **rural women, young farmers, rural youth, marginal and small farmers, and landless families** to ensure that migration remains an option rather than a necessity.
- Plans to incorporate global and domestic best practices by leveraging **technical and financial assistance** from multilateral development banks.

Mission for Aatmanirbharta in Pulses:

- A **6-year mission** dedicated to achieving self-reliance (**aatmanirbharta**) in pulses, with a special focus on **Tur, Urad, and Masoor**.
- Emphasizes the development of **climate resilient seeds**, improved **post-harvest storage** and management, increased **productivity**, and assurance of **remunerative prices** for farmers.
- Involves central agencies such as **NAFED** and **NCCF**, which will procure pulses from registered farmers over the next 4 years.

Comprehensive Programme for Vegetables & Fruits:

- Aims to boost the production, efficient supply, processing, and secure remunerative pricing for **vegetables and fruits**.
- Seeks to establish appropriate institutional mechanisms with the participation of **farmer producer organizations** and **cooperatives**.

Grameen Credit Score Framework:

- An initiative by **public sector banks** to develop a **Grameen Credit Score** system that will address the credit needs of **Self-Help Group (SHG) members** and rural populations.
- This framework is expected to enhance financial inclusion and provide better access to credit in rural areas.

Integration with Union Budget 2025-26:

- These agricultural and rural development initiatives are key components of the Union Budget, which also emphasizes sectors like **MSME, Investment, and Exports**.

Focus on Sustainable and Inclusive Growth:

- Emphasis is on adopting **sustainable agriculture practices** and **modernizing** farming methods to improve overall productivity.
- Special focus on supporting **rural employment** and **financial inclusion** to foster a resilient rural economy.

Collaborative Approach:

- The programmes are being implemented in **partnership with states**, ensuring localized strategies that leverage both national policies and regional strengths.
- Incorporation of **global and domestic best practices** along with technical and financial assistance from international bodies.

Nationwide Unemployment Decline: Reaching 3.2%

Unemployment Rate Drop:

- The **unemployment rate** has significantly declined from **6% to 3.2%** over the last fiscal year.

- This improvement is based on the latest **Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS)** data.

Government Initiatives:

- **Minister of State for Labour and Employment, Shobha Karandlaje**, confirmed the reduction during a Lok Sabha update.
- The government has launched **five new schemes** under the **PM's Package** aimed at boosting employment opportunities.

Youth Employment Focus:

- The new initiatives are targeted to benefit over **four crore youth** by enhancing employability through **skill development** and various employment schemes.
- These measures are part of a broader strategy to create sustainable employment across diverse sectors.

Economic Impact:

- The decline in unemployment is seen as a positive indicator of improved **economic conditions** and **job creation** efforts.
- The focus remains on **inclusive growth** by ensuring that the benefits of these schemes reach a wide range of demographic groups.

Policy Implementation:

- Continuous monitoring of **labour market trends** and the effectiveness of newly launched schemes is crucial for further policy adjustments.
- The initiatives align with the government's vision of fostering a robust and resilient **employment landscape**.

DFS Boosts Digital Payments Expansion Globally

Current Affairs in Detail:

- **DFS (Department of Financial Services)** under the **Ministry of Finance** has reported remarkable growth in **digital payment transactions**.
- Digital payment transactions surged from **2,071 crore** in FY 2017-18 to **18,737 crore** in FY 2023-24, marking a **CAGR of 44%**.
- The **transaction value** increased from **₹1,962 lakh crore** to **₹3,659 lakh crore** during the same period at a **CAGR of 11%**.
- **UPI (Unified Payments Interface)** transactions saw exponential growth, rising from **92 crore** in FY 2017-18 to **13,116 crore** in FY 2023-24, with a **CAGR of 129%**.
- The **value of UPI transactions** jumped from **₹1 lakh crore** to **₹200 lakh crore** at a **CAGR of 138%**.
- During the last 5 months (April–August FY2024-25), digital transactions recorded **8,659 crore** in volume and **₹1,669 lakh crore** in value, while **UPI** handled **7,062 crore** transactions and **₹101 lakh crore** in value.
- **UPI** now facilitates live transactions in **7 countries** including **UAE, Singapore, Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, France, and Mauritius**, boosting cross-border payment capabilities.

Other Important Aspects:

- This expansion aligns with the Government's vision for a **cashless** and **inclusive economy**, empowering citizens with secure and real-time payment options.
- Key stakeholders like **RBI, NPCI**, and various **banks** have contributed to this digital transformation by providing robust infrastructure and regulatory support.
- The sustained growth in **digital payments** is transforming the financial ecosystem, making transactions more efficient and accessible across diverse economic segments.
- Global expansion of **UPI** and **RuPay** enhances remittance flows and positions India as a leader in the digital payments arena, with nearly **49%** of global real-time payment transactions occurring in India (ACI Worldwide Report 2024).

Withdrawal of Rs 2,000 Notes: Impact and Current Status

Substantial Withdrawal Achieved:

- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** reported that **98.15%** of the **Rs 2,000** banknotes have been returned to the banking system since the withdrawal was announced on May 19, 2023.

- As of January 31, 2025, only **Rs 6,577 crore** worth of **Rs 2,000** notes remain in circulation.

Withdrawal Process and Facilities:

- The exchange and deposit facility for these notes was available at all bank branches until October 7, 2023.
- Currently, this facility remains accessible at **19 RBI issue offices** located in major cities such as **Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Bhubaneswar, Chennai, Kolkata, New Delhi, Mumbai**, and others.
- Additionally, the public can deposit or exchange these notes via **India Post** to any RBI issue office.

Legal Tender Status:

- Despite the withdrawal process, the **Rs 2,000** banknotes continue to be **legal tender**.
- Holders of these notes can still deposit or exchange them at RBI offices.

Background Context:

- Rs 2,000** notes were introduced in **November 2016** following the demonetisation that led to the withdrawal of the earlier **Rs 500** and **Rs 1000** notes.
- The aim of this process was to reduce the overall high denomination currency in circulation and enhance the digital and formal banking system.

Monetary Policy Implications:

- Demonetisation and its Aftermath:** The withdrawal of high-denomination notes forms a crucial part of the broader narrative on **demonetisation**, impacting liquidity and the banking system.
- Currency Management:** The process demonstrates how **central banking** policies are used to manage **currency circulation** and curb **black money**.

Economic Impact and Public Response:

- The significant withdrawal of **Rs 2,000** notes indicates high public compliance and the effectiveness of the RBI's measures.
- The residual amount in circulation (Rs 6,577 crore) could be a focus area for questions on the transition and impacts of such policies.

Operational Aspects:

- The transition from a widespread exchange facility in banks to selected **RBI issue offices** highlights challenges in logistics and public convenience during policy rollouts.
- It offers insights into **policy implementation** and administrative strategies in managing a nationwide financial change.

Deep Ocean Exploration Gets a Rs 600 Crore Boost in the Union Budget

Significant Budget Allocation:

- Rs 600 crore** has been allocated in the Union Budget for **Samudrayaan**, India's ambitious **Deep Ocean Mission** aimed at exploring the deep ocean.
- The allocation underscores the government's focus on **ocean exploration** and the sustainable use of deep-sea resources.

Mission Objectives and Technologies:

- Mapping Deep Ocean Floors:** The mission includes extensive mapping of the ocean floor to better understand deep-sea ecosystems.
- Advanced Technologies:**
 - Development of a **manned submersible** with a water-depth rating of **6000 meters**.
 - Creation of an **underwater mining system** for deep sea mining to sustainably utilize bioresources.
 - Engineering designs for **offshore thermal energy-driven desalination plants**.
 - Incorporation of cutting-edge technologies like **artificial intelligence (AI)**, **machine learning**, and **underwater robotics**.

Additional Budgetary Support:

- The **Ministry of Earth Sciences** has received a substantial allocation of **Rs 3649.81 crore**, up from **Rs 3064.80 crore** in the previous fiscal year, to support various ocean-related initiatives.
- Mission Mausam**, aimed at enhancing weather forecasting capabilities, has been allocated **Rs 1,329 crore**. This mission includes innovations such as:
 - Increased radar installations.

- New satellites and supercomputers.
- AI-driven tools for improved weather modeling and prediction.

Upcoming Initiatives:

- The **National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT)**, based in Chennai, is set to launch a **manned submersible** for exploration up to **500 metres** later this year.
- Plans are underway to gradually extend exploration capabilities to the seabed at depths of **6000 meters** in the next year.

Budget 2025: Significant Increase in Funding for Tribal Affairs Ministry

Current Affairs:

- **Substantial Budget Increase:** In the Union Budget 2025-26, the **Ministry of Tribal Affairs** has received an allocation of **₹14,925.81 crore**, marking a **45% increase** from the previous year's allocation of ₹10,237.33 crore.

Enhanced Funding for Key Initiatives:

- **Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS):** Allocated **₹7,088.60 crore**, up from ₹4,748 crore in the previous year, to provide quality education to tribal students.
- **Pradhan Mantri Janjatiya Vikas Mission:** Funding increased to **₹380 crore** from ₹152 crore, aiming to ensure year-round income-generating opportunities for tribal communities.
- **Pradhan Mantri Adi Adarsh Gram Yojana (PMAAGY):** Allocation increased to **₹335.97 crore** from ₹127.51 crore, focusing on improving education, healthcare, agriculture, skill development, and employment opportunities in tribal areas.
- **Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM JANMAN):** Budget doubled to **₹300 crore** from ₹150 crore, aiming to improve socio-economic conditions of particularly vulnerable tribal groups by ensuring access to essential services.
- **Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan (DAJGUA):** Funding quadrupled to **₹2,000 crore** from ₹500 crore, targeting infrastructure development in 63,843 villages, benefiting over 5 crore tribals across 549 districts and 2,911 blocks in 30 states and union territories over five years.

India's Fruit and Vegetable Exports Surge by 47.3% with APEDA's Strategic Initiatives

Current Affairs:

- **Significant Export Growth:** Between the financial years 2019-20 and 2023-24, India's exports of **fruits and vegetables** have increased by **47.3%** in volume.
- **APEDA's Financial Assistance:** The **Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA)**, under the Department of Commerce, has been instrumental in this growth through various financial assistance schemes.
- **Infrastructure Development:** APEDA has supported exporters by providing financial aid for establishing essential export facilities, including:
 - **Packhouses** with grading and packing lines
 - **Pre-cooling units**
 - **Cold storage**
 - **Refrigerated transportation**
 - Treatment facilities like **irradiation, vapor heat treatment, and hot water dip treatment**
- **Market Expansion:** In the financial year 2023-24, India's fresh fruits and vegetables were exported to **123 countries**. Over the past three years, Indian produce has entered **17 new markets**, including:
 - Brazil
 - Georgia
 - Uganda
 - Papua New Guinea
 - Czech Republic
 - Ghana

Other Important Aspects:

- **Trade Promotion Activities:** APEDA assists exporters in expanding their reach by:



- Participating in **international trade fairs**
- Organizing **buyer-seller meets**
- Developing improved **packaging standards**
- **Logistics Optimization:** Efforts are underway to develop **sea transport protocols** for horticultural products to reduce logistics expenses and enable larger volumes of exports.

Mobile Manufacturing Surge Boosts India's Job Market

- **Job Creation Milestone:** India's mobile and electronics manufacturing sector generated **12 lakh direct and indirect jobs** over the past decade, significantly contributing to socio-economic development.
- **From Import Dependency to Self-Reliance:**
 - In **2014-15**, only **26% of mobile phones sold in India** were domestically manufactured, with the rest imported. By **2024**, this surged to **99.2%**, making India the **world's second-largest mobile manufacturer**.
 - **Manufacturing value** skyrocketed from **₹18,900 crore (FY14)** to **₹4.22 lakh crore (FY24)**. Exports, negligible in 2014, crossed **₹1.29 lakh crore in 2024**.
- **Expansion of Manufacturing Units:** From **2 units in 2014** to **over 300 operational units** today, India now produces **325–330 million mobile phones annually**, with nearly **1 billion devices in use domestically**.
- **Semiconductor Push:** The **India Semiconductor Mission** approved five major projects (Micron, Tata Electronics, CG Power, and Keynes) to build a domestic semiconductor ecosystem, addressing a six-decade-old gap.

Gold Investment Surge in India

Current Affairs in Detail

- **Record Growth:** India's gold investments surged by **60% in value terms** in 2024, reaching **\$18 billion (₹1.5 lakh crore)** compared to 2023. The **demand in volume** rose to **239 tonnes**, the highest since 2013, marking a **29% increase** from 185 tonnes in 2023.
- **Quarterly Momentum:** The October-December 2024 quarter saw **76 tonnes** of gold investment demand, nearly matching the previous quarter's performance. This was driven by **festive buying** during Dhanteras and Diwali.
- **Global Share:** India accounted for **20% of global gold investment demand** (1,180 tonnes in 2024), while global demand grew by **25%** from 945.5 tonnes in 2023.
- **Price Dynamics:** Gold prices rose steadily through 2024, fuelled by geopolitical tensions and reduced import duties in July 2024. A **price correction in November** further attracted investors seeking lower entry points.
- **E-commerce Boost:** Rapid delivery of small gold bars and coins via platforms like Amazon and Flipkart (within **10–15 minutes**) drove urban demand, especially in metro cities.

Other Important Aspects

Key Drivers of Growth:

- **Economic Uncertainty:** Weak stock market performance (post-Q3 2024 decline) shifted investor focus to gold as a **safe-haven asset**.
- **Festive Demand:** Dhanteras and Diwali purchases contributed to **~40% of annual demand** in Q4.
- **Policy Shifts:** Import duty cuts in July 2024 reduced gold prices temporarily, triggering a buying spree before prices rebounded.
- **Geopolitical Factors:** Global tensions (e.g., U.S.-China trade disputes) and shifting interest rate expectations bolstered gold's appeal.

Gold ETFs and Future Trends:

- **ETF Recovery:** Global gold ETF holdings recovered from a **4-year low of 3,080 tonnes** in April 2024, barring a minor dip in November.
- **Future Outlook:** The WGC predicts expanded demand for **gold ETFs and mutual funds** in 2025, driven by economic volatility and gold's price resilience.

Market Impact:

- **Stock Market Correlation:** A **15% decline** in domestic stock markets in late 2024 redirected investments to gold, reinforcing its role as a **portfolio diversifier** 1013.
- **Rural vs. Urban Demand:** While festivals drove rural purchases, urban demand was fueled by **digital accessibility** and quick delivery services.

Corporate Healthcare Sector Set for Robust Growth in FY26

Current Affairs in Detail

- **Projected Growth:** The Indian corporate healthcare sector is forecast to deliver **15% year-on-year (YoY) growth in sales** during FY25–FY26, driven by **5–6% growth in average revenue per occupied bed (ARPOB)**, a **100–200 basis point (bp) improvement in occupancy rates**, and **6–8% increase in new bed additions** 6911.
- **Profitability:** EBITDA margins are expected to rise to **20.9% in FY26** (up from 20% in FY25), supported by operational efficiency despite higher overhead costs from capacity expansions 614.
- **Market Expansion:** Corporate hospitals are expanding through **acquisitions of smaller players**, enhancing economies of scale and geographic reach. For example, large chains are targeting Tier 2–3 cities to tap underserved markets 611.
- **Robust Demand:** Rising healthcare needs, fueled by India's **aging population** (100+ million elderly) and **non-communicable diseases (NCDs)** (65% of disease burden), are driving demand for quality care.

Industry Outlook:

- **India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra)** has maintained a **neutral outlook** for the sector, reinforcing confidence in the steady yet resilient growth trajectory.
- **Acquisitions Strategy:** The acquisition of smaller hospitals is anticipated to bolster the financial strength and **economies of scale** for larger corporate players.

RBI Introduces '.bank.in' Domain & Enhanced Security Measures to Combat Financial Fraud

Current Affairs in Detail

Exclusive '.bank.in' Domain:

- **Objective:** To **reduce phishing and spoofing** by ensuring customers can verify legitimate banking websites. All Indian banks must adopt the **'.bank.in' domain by April 2025**, followed by **'fin.in'** for non-bank financial entities.
- **Registrar Role:** IDRBT (Institute for Development and Research in Banking Technology) will manage domain registrations starting April 2025.

Enhanced Authentication for International Transactions:

- **Additional Factor of Authentication (AFA)** (e.g., OTP/biometric verification) will be extended to **cross-border "Card Not Present" transactions** involving Indian cards, aligning them with domestic security standards.

Cybersecurity Directives:

- Banks and NBFCs must **strengthen preventive controls**, develop **robust incident response mechanisms**, and conduct **periodic testing** to mitigate cyber risks.

Financial Market Reforms:

- **Interest Rate Derivatives:** New forward contracts for government securities to aid long-term investors (e.g., insurance funds) in managing rate risks 135.
- **NDS-OM Platform Access:** Expanded to **SEBI-registered non-bank brokers** to boost retail participation in government securities.

Working Group on Market Timings:

- To review trading/settlement timings across RBI-regulated markets; report due by **30 April 2025**.

Other Important Aspects:

Impact on Digital Trust:

- The **'.bank.in' domain** aims to curb **malicious activities** like fake websites, enhancing consumer confidence in digital banking.
- **AFA for international transactions** addresses risks from malware campaigns (e.g., FatBoyPanel) targeting Indian users.

Economic Implications:

- **Credit-Deposit Ratio (CDR)** remains stable at **80.8%** (January 2025), reflecting robust liquidity buffers despite moderated net interest margins.
- **Retail Participation:** Expanded bond market access aligns with India's goal to deepen capital markets.

Global Benchmarking:

- India's measures mirror global practices like the EU's **PSD2 regulations**, emphasizing multi-factor authentication for secure transactions.

RBI Cuts Repo Rate by 25 bps to 6.25%: First Reduction in 5 Years

Current Affairs in Detail

- Rate Cut Announcement:** The RBI's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) reduced the **repo rate by 25 basis points (bps)** to **6.25%**, the first cut since May 2020. The **neutral stance** was retained to balance growth and inflation risks.
- Key Rate Adjustments:**
 - Standing Deposit Facility (SDF):** Reduced to **6.00%**
 - Marginal Standing Facility (MSF) and Bank Rate:** Lowered to **6.50%**.
- GDP Growth Projections:**
 - FY25:** Revised to **6.4%** (from 6.6%) due to moderated Q3/Q4 growth.
 - FY26:** Projected at **6.7%**, with quarterly estimates of **6.7% (Q1)**, **7.0% (Q2)**, and **6.5% (Q3 & Q4)**.
- Inflation Outlook:**
 - FY25 CPI: 4.8%** (Q4 at 4.4%).
 - FY26 CPI: 4.2%**, driven by easing food inflation and favorable monsoon forecasts.
- Liquidity Measures:**
 - LCR Norms:** Implementation deferred to **March 31, 2026**, ensuring banks have sufficient transition time.
 - Forex Reserves:** Stood at **\$630.6 billion** (as of Jan 31, 2025), providing 10 months of import cover.

Other Important Aspects:

Global and Domestic Risks:

- Global Headwinds:** Geopolitical tensions, US tariff policies, and currency volatility (rupee hit **87.59/USD**) pose risks to growth.
- Domestic Focus:** RBI prioritizes **inflation targeting** (4% ±2%) while supporting growth through liquidity measures.

Sectoral Impacts:

- Real Estate & NBFCs:** Expected to benefit from lower borrowing costs, boosting affordable housing demand.
- Fixed Deposits (FDs):** Banks may reduce FD rates, impacting conservative savers; recent hikes by PNB, Axis Bank, and others could reverse.
- Equity Markets:** Rate-sensitive sectors (auto, FMCG) likely to gain, while bond yields may soften further.

Digital Security Measures:

- '.bank.in' Domain:** Mandatory adoption by Indian banks by **April 2025** to combat phishing.
- Additional Factor Authentication (AFA):** Extended to cross-border "Card Not Present" transactions.

RBI Defers Implementation of Liquidity Coverage Ratio (LCR) Norms

- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has decided to defer the implementation of the revised **Liquidity Coverage Ratio (LCR)** norms until at least **March 31, 2026**.
- RBI Governor **Sanjay Malhotra** announced the decision during a press conference, emphasizing a phased rollout to avoid sudden financial stress.
- The new LCR guidelines were initially set to be implemented by **March 31, 2025**, but banks expressed concerns over the tight deadline.
- The revised LCR norms require banks to maintain sufficient **high-quality liquid assets (HQLAs)** to manage potential liquidity crunches.
- Banks will now have more time to comply with the new norms without facing liquidity disruptions.

Key Objectives of the LCR Norms:

- Enhancing Liquidity Management:** Ensuring banks have adequate liquid assets to cover short-term obligations.
- Preventing Financial Stress:** Phased implementation to avoid sudden disruptions in the financial system.
- Balancing Regulation Costs:** Considering the cost of regulations while maintaining financial stability.

Implications of the Deferral:

- Banks will have additional time to adjust to the new liquidity requirements.

- The phased rollout aims to ensure a smooth transition without causing liquidity crises.
- The RBI will continue to monitor evolving liquidity and financial market conditions to ensure orderly liquidity management.

EPFO Claims Record Settlements in Fiscal 2024-25

- The **Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO)** settled claims for over **5 crore subscribers** in the financial year 2024-25.
- The total disbursement amounted to more than **₹2.05 lakh crore**, surpassing the previous fiscal's settlement of **4.45 crore claims worth ₹1.82 lakh crore**.
- Union Labour Minister **Mansukh Mandaviya** attributed this achievement to a series of transformative reforms initiated by EPFO.
- Key measures included an increase in the ceiling and categories of auto-settled claims, simplified member profile changes, streamlined PF transfers, and improved KYC compliance ratios.
- Auto claim settlements doubled to **1.87 crore claims** in 2024-25, compared to **89.52 lakh auto claims** processed during 2023-24.
- Approximately **97.18%** of member profile corrections were self-approved by members, with only **1%** requiring employer approval.
- The rejection rate for claims dropped to **1.11%** by employers and **0.21%** by regional offices.

Streamlined Provident Fund (PF) Transfers:

Reforms in the PF transfer claim submission process have led to significant improvements:

- Only **8%** of transfer claims now require member and employer attestation.
- Approximately **48%** of claims are submitted directly by members without employer intervention.
- Around **44%** of transfer requests are generated automatically.

Simplified Member Profile Corrections:

The introduction of a simplified procedure for member profile corrections has resulted in:

- Approximately **97.18%** of corrections being self-approved by members.
- Only **1%** requiring employer approval.
- A minimal **0.4%** necessitating office intervention.

Jindal Nuclear's Bold Investment: Pioneering India's 18GWe Nuclear Power Future

- **Jindal Nuclear**, a subsidiary of Jindal Renewables, announced an ambitious plan to invest **₹1.80 lakh crore** to build **18GWe** of nuclear power generation capacity in India over the next two decades.
- This initiative aligns with the Government of India's **Union Budget 2025** announcement, which targets **100GWe** of nuclear power capacity by 2047.
- The project aims to support sustainable economic growth led by low-emission industrialization while significantly reducing the nation's CO₂ footprint.
- Jindal Nuclear will build, own, and operate state-of-the-art nuclear power plants, leveraging advanced technologies to ensure world-class safety, operating efficiency, and environmental sustainability.
- The company plans to collaborate with global technology leaders, fostering innovation while maintaining high safety standards.

India Sets Up EFTA Desk to Promote Trade and Investment

- India has established a dedicated platform, the **European Free Trade Association (EFTA) desk**, to enhance trade, investment, and business facilitation between India and the EFTA nations.
- The EFTA bloc comprises **Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland**.
- The desk was inaugurated by **Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal** on February 10, 2025, at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi.
- The initiative follows the signing of the **Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA)** between India and the EFTA nations on March 10, 2024.

- The EFTA desk aims to provide **market insights, regulatory guidance, business matchmaking**, and assistance in navigating India's policy and investment landscape.
- India has received an investment commitment of **\$100 billion** from the EFTA nations over the next 15 years.
- The desk will facilitate the entry of EFTA companies into the Indian market, promoting collaboration across key sectors such as **pharma, life sciences, financial services, fintech, engineering, energy, seafood, maritime, food processing, and agritech**.

Key Highlights of the EFTA Desk:

- **Centralized Support:** The desk will act as a centralized support mechanism for EFTA companies looking to expand in India.
- **Business Roundtable:** A high-level EFTA-India business roundtable will convene, featuring over 100 leading businesses from India and EFTA nations.
- **Collaboration Opportunities:** The roundtable will provide a structured forum for companies to explore joint ventures, investment opportunities, and technology partnerships under the framework of TEPA.

RBI Introduces Extra Security for International Online Payments with AFA

- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** announced plans to introduce **Additional Factor of Authentication (AFA)** for international online card transactions on February 7, 2025.
- This move aims to enhance security for cross-border "Card Not Present" (CNP) transactions, bringing them under the same security standards as domestic transactions.
- AFA requires an extra layer of verification, such as a **One-Time Password (OTP)** or **biometric authentication**, which has effectively reduced fraud in domestic online payments.
- The RBI's decision addresses the vulnerability of international transactions, ensuring that Indian consumers are fully protected when shopping with overseas merchants.
- The introduction of AFA for international transactions will provide an additional layer of security, ensuring that the person making the purchase is indeed the cardholder.

Key Highlights of the AFA Implementation:

- **Enhanced Security:** AFA will provide an additional level of security for international online transactions, reducing the risk of fraud.
- **Implementation Steps:** Card issuers must register their bank identification numbers (BINs) with card networks for AFA validation and establish a risk-based mechanism for handling such transactions.
- **Stakeholder Feedback:** The RBI has issued a draft circular for feedback from stakeholders, with the directions set to come into effect three months from the date of issuance.

Importance of AFA:

- **Consumer Confidence:** The move will enhance consumer confidence in making international online payments.
- **Fraud Prevention:** AFA has been effective in preventing fraud in domestic transactions and is expected to do the same for international transactions.
- **Regulatory Alignment:** Aligns international transactions with domestic security standards, ensuring a uniform level of protection for all online payments.

Centre Releases ₹1.11 Trillion Interest-Free Loans to States Between April and January

- **Loan Disbursement:** The **Government of India** has disbursed approximately **₹1.11 lakh crore** in interest-free loans to various states during the period from April to January under the **Scheme for Special Assistance to States for Capital Expenditure**.
- **Budget Allocation:** In the **2024-25 Union Budget**, the allocation for these interest-free loans was increased to **₹1.5 lakh crore**, up from the previous year's disbursal of **₹1.10 lakh crore**.
- **Approval and Release:** As of January 31, the Centre has approved loans totaling **₹1.22 lakh crore**, with **₹1.11 lakh crore** already released to the states.
- **Top Beneficiary States:** The leading recipients of these loans in the current fiscal year include:
 - **Bihar:** ₹11,522 crore
 - **Uttar Pradesh:** ₹10,795 crore
 - **Madhya Pradesh:** ₹10,166 crore
 - **West Bengal:** ₹9,729 crore

- **Scheme Structure:** The total allocation of **₹1.50 lakh crore** is divided into two parts:
 - **Part-I:** An **untied amount of ₹55,000 crore**, allocated to states in proportion to their share of central taxes and duties as per the **15th Finance Commission's** recommendations.
 - **Part-II:** The remaining **₹95,000 crore**, earmarked for:
 - Reforms in citizen-centric areas.
 - Sector-specific projects, such as the development of iconic tourist centers, incentives for scrapping old vehicles, and initiatives to stimulate industrial growth.

Capital Expenditure (Capex):

Funds used by an entity to acquire, upgrade, and maintain physical assets such as property, industrial buildings, or equipment. In the context of government, capex is crucial for infrastructure development and long-term economic growth.

RBI's ₹2.5 Lakh Crore Liquidity Injection to Strengthen Banking System

- **Liquidity Injection Announcement:** On **February 12, 2025**, the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** announced its plan to inject **₹2.5 lakh crore** into the banking system through a **Variable Rate Repo (VRR) auction** scheduled for **February 12, 2025**.
- **Objective:** This move aims to **enhance liquidity** in the banking sector, ensuring that financial institutions have adequate funds to support economic activities and maintain financial stability.
- **Additional Measures:**
 - The RBI has also **doubled its government securities purchase** under the Open Market Operation (OMO) to **₹40,000 crore**, scheduled for **February 13, 2025**.
 - A **56-day Variable Rate Repo auction** for **₹50,000 crore** is planned for **February 7, 2025**, to provide longer-term liquidity support.
- **Background:**
 - The banking system has been experiencing a **liquidity deficit** due to the RBI's interventions in the foreign exchange market to stabilize the rupee.
 - As of **February 7, 2025**, the liquidity deficit stood at **₹1.33 lakh crore**, marking the eighth consecutive week of shortfall.
- **Impact on Monetary Policy:**
 - These liquidity infusion measures are seen as a precursor to a possible **repo rate cut** in the upcoming monetary policy review, aiming to **stimulate economic growth**.

e-NAM Expands Trading Scope with 10 New Commodities

- The **National Agricultural Market (e-NAM)** platform has expanded its trading scope by adding **10 new commodities**, bringing the total number of tradable items to **231**.
- The newly added commodities include **dried tulsi leaves, besan (chickpea flour), wheat flour, chana sattu (roasted chickpea flour), water chestnut flour, asafoetida, dried fenugreek leaves, baby corn, dragon fruit, and water chestnut**.
- This expansion aims to **boost market access, pricing, and economic opportunities for farmers**.
- The initiative was led by the **Department of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare** and involved extensive consultations with state agencies, traders, subject matter experts, and the Small Farmers' Agribusiness Consortium (SFAC).

Background and Context:

- The Directorate of Marketing and Inspection (DMI) formulated tradable parameters for these newly added commodities to ensure quality assurance and enhance commercial viability.
- Items such as **chana sattu, besan, wheat flour, and asafoetida** fall under the secondary trade category, which helps Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) market value-added products and formalize trade in these segments.
- The expansion aligns with the government's broader vision of modernizing the agricultural sector by promoting efficiency, inclusivity, and economic empowerment.

Implications and Measures:

- The updated list of tradable commodities reinforces e-NAM's commitment to enhancing market accessibility and pricing transparency for farmers.
- The initiative aims to provide farmers with improved market access, better pricing, and enhanced quality assurance.



- The newly approved parameters are now available on the e-NAM portal, facilitating seamless digital transactions and fostering a more structured agricultural trade ecosystem.

India's Net Direct Tax Collection Rises by 15% in FY25

- Significant Increase in Collections:** As of **February 10, 2025**, India's **net direct tax collections** have surged by **14.69%**, reaching over **₹17.78 lakh crore** in the fiscal year 2024-25 (FY25).
- Breakdown of Tax Components:**
 - Corporate Tax:** Net collections have risen by over **6%**, amounting to **₹7.78 lakh crore** between April 1, 2024, and February 10, 2025.
 - Personal Income Tax:** Net collections, including **Securities Transaction Tax (STT)**, have increased by **21%**, totaling approximately **₹9.48 lakh crore**.
 - Securities Transaction Tax (STT):** Collections have seen a substantial jump of **65%**, reaching **₹49,201 crore** in FY25.
- Refunds Issued:** Refunds amounting to more than **₹4.10 lakh crore** have been issued during this period, marking a **42.63%** increase compared to the same period in the previous fiscal year.
- Gross vs. Net Collections:**
 - The **gross direct tax collections** up to February 10, 2025, stood at over **₹21.88 lakh crore**, reflecting a **19.06%** growth compared to the previous year.
 - After accounting for refunds, the **net collections** are over **₹17.78 lakh crore**, indicating a **14.69%** increase year-on-year.
 - Revised Estimates:** In the **Revised Estimates (RE)** for the current fiscal year, the government has projected total income tax collections to be **₹12.57 lakh crore**, up from the initial budget estimate of **₹11.87 lakh crore**.

Top 20 Richest Families in Asia 2025: Mukesh Ambani Leads the List

Key Highlights of the Report

- Source:** The list of the **Top 20 Richest Families in Asia 2025** was published by **Forbes Asia**.
- Top Position:** **Mukesh Ambani** and his family retained the top spot with a net worth of **\$120 billion**, driven by the growth of **Reliance Industries**.
- Indian Dominance:** Indian families dominated the list, with **7 out of the top 20** families hailing from India.

Top 5 Richest Families in Asia (2025)

Mukesh Ambani Family (India):

- Net Worth:** \$120 billion.
- Business Empire:** **Reliance Industries** (diversified into petrochemicals, telecom, retail, and renewable energy).
- Key Achievements:** Expansion of **Jio Platforms** and investments in **green energy projects**.

Gautam Adani Family (India):

- Net Worth:** \$100 billion.
- Business Empire:** **Adani Group** (ports, logistics, energy, and infrastructure).
- Key Achievements:** Leadership in **renewable energy** and infrastructure development.

Li Ka-shing Family (Hong Kong):

- Net Worth:** \$85 billion.
- Business Empire:** **CK Hutchison Holdings** (ports, retail, telecom, and energy).
- Key Achievements:** Diversified investments across **Asia and Europe**.

Lee Byung-chul Family (South Korea):

- Net Worth:** \$80 billion.
- Business Empire:** **Samsung Group** (electronics, semiconductors, and construction).
- Key Achievements:** Dominance in the **global semiconductor market**.

Jack Ma Family (China):

- Net Worth:** \$75 billion.
- Business Empire:** **Alibaba Group** (e-commerce, cloud computing, and fintech).
- Key Achievements:** Revolutionizing **e-commerce and digital payments** in China.

Other Notable Indian Families in the Top 20

- **Shiv Nadar Family:**
 - **Net Worth:** \$50 billion.
 - **Business Empire:** **HCL Technologies** (IT services and software development).
- **Lakshmi Mittal Family:**
 - **Net Worth:** \$45 billion.
 - **Business Empire:** **ArcelorMittal** (steel production and manufacturing).
- **Azim Premji Family:**
 - **Net Worth:** \$40 billion.
 - **Business Empire:** **Wipro** (IT services and consulting).

India's Natural Gas Demand Projected to Surge 60% by 2030

- India's natural gas consumption is set to experience a significant increase, with forecasts indicating a nearly **60% rise by 2030**, reaching approximately **103 billion cubic meters (bcm)** annually.
- This surge is primarily driven by rapid urbanization, industrial expansion, and a strategic push towards cleaner energy sources.

Key Drivers of Increased Natural Gas Demand:

- **Urbanization and Industrialization:** The swift pace of urban growth and industrial activities necessitates a reliable and efficient energy supply, positioning natural gas as a preferred choice due to its lower environmental impact compared to traditional fossil fuels.
- **Policy Initiatives:** The Indian government aims to elevate the share of natural gas in the country's energy mix from the current **6.2% to 15% by 2030**, reflecting a strong policy commitment to cleaner energy.
- **Infrastructure Development:** Since 2019, India has made substantial investments in natural gas infrastructure, including:
 - **Quadrupling** the number of Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) stations.
 - **Doubling** residential gas connections.
 - **Expanding** the gas transmission pipeline network by **40%**.

Projections indicate that by 2030, the number of CNG stations and residential connections will nearly double again, with the transmission grid expanding by an additional **50%**.

Implications for Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) Imports:

- **Doubling of LNG Imports:** To meet the burgeoning demand, India's LNG imports are expected to more than double, reaching around **65 bcm annually by 2030**.
- **Strategic Procurement:** With existing long-term contracts set to expire, there is a pressing need for strategic planning in LNG procurement to mitigate exposure to spot market volatility. Securing new long-term agreements is essential to ensure a stable supply.

Recent Developments in LNG Agreements:

- **TotalEnergies-GSPC Deal:** In a move to secure future supplies, **TotalEnergies** has signed a **10-year agreement** to supply **400,000 metric tons** of LNG annually to the **Gujarat State Petroleum Corporation (GSPC)**, commencing in 2026.
- **GAIL's US LNG Plans:** **GAIL India Ltd** is revisiting plans to acquire stakes in U.S. LNG plants and establish long-term supply deals, following policy changes that have lifted previous export permit bans.

NBFC Regulatory Shakeup: RBI Cancels 17 Registrations, 20 NBFCs Surrender Certificates

Key Developments:

- **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has cancelled the registration of **17 NBFCs** and accepted the surrender of certificates from **20 NBFCs**.
- Actions were taken under the powers conferred by **section 45-IA(6) of the RBI Act, 1934**.

Reasons for Cancellation & Surrender:

- **Business Exit:** Many NBFCs exited the business voluntarily or due to corporate actions such as **mergers, amalgamations, dissolution, or voluntary strike-off**.
- **Operational Compliance:** RBI did not provide specific reasons beyond regulatory provisions, ensuring that these entities no longer transact as non-banking financial institutions.

Geographical Breakdown:

- Out of the NBFCs surrendering certificates:
 - **12** were from **West Bengal**.
 - **4** were from **Maharashtra**.
 - **2** each were from **Assam** and **Tamil Nadu**.

Examples of Affected NBFCs:

- **Cancelled Registrations:** Included firms like **Zion Financial Services Pvt Ltd**, **Namokar Consultants Pvt Ltd**, **Salasarji Merchant Pvt Ltd**, among others.
- **Surrendered Certificates:** Firms such as **Manoway Investments Pvt Ltd** and **Reliance Commercial Finance Ltd** have voluntarily exited, prompting RBI action.

Mutual Credit Guarantee Scheme: Boosting Credit for MSMEs

Scheme Launch & Overview:

- **Finance Minister** has launched the **Mutual Credit Guarantee Scheme** specifically for **MSMEs**.
- The scheme facilitates loans up to **Rs 100 crore** by providing a mutual guarantee cover, thereby enhancing credit accessibility.

Key Objectives & Features:

- **Enhanced Credit Access:**
 - Aims to boost lending to **MSMEs**, which are pivotal for economic growth and job creation.
 - Reduces the collateral requirements, enabling easier access to funds.
- **Risk Mitigation:**
 - Offers a **mutual guarantee** that helps banks and financial institutions mitigate the risk of default.
 - Encourages financial institutions to lend more confidently to the MSME sector.

DILEX 2025: Boosting India's Leather & Footwear Global Trade

Event Overview:

- **DILEX 2025** marks the 6th edition of the **Delhi International Leather Expo**, held from **February 20-21, 2025**.
- Hosted at the **India International Convention & Expo Centre (IICC), New Delhi**, the expo features **225 Indian exhibitors** and attracts over **200 international buyers** from **52 countries**.

Key Objectives & Highlights:

- **Export Target:** The expo is pivotal in driving India's leather and footwear exports toward a **USD 7 billion target** for FY 2025-26.
- **Trade & Networking:**
 - Acts as a critical platform for **direct buyer-seller interactions** and extensive business networking.
 - Over **500 domestic representatives** from buying houses, retailers, and trade bodies are participating to explore new sourcing opportunities.
- **Policy & Support:** Supported by the **Government of India** under the **Market Access Initiative (MAI) Scheme**, which includes benefits like **import duty exemptions** on wet blue leather and enhanced credit guarantees for **MSMEs**.



Odisha Budget 2025-26: A Blueprint for Inclusive Growth

- Odisha CM Mohan Charan Majhi presented the state budget with a total outlay of **Rs 2.90 lakh crore** for the 2025-26 fiscal year. This is a landmark proposal aimed at spurring growth across various sectors and ensuring inclusive development.

Key Budget Allocations

Education:

- Rs 41,273 crore** is dedicated to strengthening the education sector, reflecting a commitment to quality infrastructure and learning facilities.
- Specific allocation for **School and Mass Education (S&ME)** stands at **Rs 31,185.47 crore**.

Healthcare:

- Rs 23,635 crore** has been earmarked for healthcare.
- Key programs include the **Gopabandhu Jana Arogya Yojana (Rs 6,249 crore)** and the **Mukhya Mantri Swasthya Seva Mission (Rs 3,881 crore)**.

Social Security & Women Empowerment:

- Rs 24,250 crore** allocated for social security measures ensures support for marginalized communities.
- Rs 17,998 crore** is directed towards various women empowerment initiatives.

Rural & Urban Development:

- Rural Development: Rs 39,221 crore** to improve infrastructure and livelihoods in rural areas.
- Urban Development: Rs 9,985 crore** to enhance urban planning and infrastructural improvements.

Agriculture & Irrigation:

- Recognizing that around **48%** of Odisha's workforce is in agriculture and **80%** of the population lives in rural areas, the budget allocates **Rs 37,838 crore** for the farm and allied sectors.
- Key schemes:**
 - CM Kisan Yojana: Rs 2,020 crore**
 - Shree Anna Abhiyan: Rs 600 crore** aimed at promoting millets and supporting farmers.

Infrastructure Enhancement:

- Major investments in **urban mobility** include the **Atal Bus Stand** project with an allocation of **Rs 1,266 crore** and the **Samrudha Sahara** scheme for economic support.
- Plans for a **Comprehensive City Road Decongestion Plan** and the **Outer Ring Road Project** (with significant investment exceeding **Rs 13,000 crore**) aim to ease traffic and boost connectivity in Bhubaneswar.
- A **Statewide Road Network Improvement Plan** is designed to upgrade major district roads and convert state highways to four-lane standards.

New Initiatives

The budget introduces **16 new initiatives** to further drive development, including:

- Antyodaya Gruha Yojana** – Rs 2,603 crore for housing for the poor.
- Subhadra Surakhya** – Rs 153 crore for security initiatives.
- Shri Jagannath Darshan Yojana** – Rs 30 crore to offer free Mahaprasad and darshan of Lord Jagannath for devotees.
- Northern Odisha Development Council** – Rs 200 crore for regional development.
- Odisha Pusti Mission** – Rs 100 crore for nutritional support.
- Bakulabana Unnayan** – Rs 50 crore for local development projects.
- Ama Similipal Yojana** – Rs 50 crore to conserve and develop the Similipal biosphere reserve.
- Model Mandi** – Rs 50 crore for setting up model agricultural markets.
- Saheed Laxman Nayak Adarsh Vidyalaya** – Rs 100 crore for the establishment of model schools in memory of Saheed Laxman Nayak.
- Odia Diaspora – O-SAMPARK** – Rs 10 crore to connect with Odia communities abroad.
- Mukhyamantri Kanya Bibaha Yojana** – Rs 12 crore for promoting marriage welfare schemes.
- Southern Odisha Development Council** – Rs 200 crore for the development of southern Odisha.
- Swachha Odisha** – Rs 261 crore to improve sanitation and cleanliness across the state.
- Aame Padhiba Aama Bhasare** – Rs 25 crore to promote Odia language and culture.
- Atal Bus Stand** – Rs 1,266 crore for the development of bus terminals across Odisha.
- Samrudha Sahara** – Rs 400 crore for economic support and poverty alleviation programs.

India's Roadmap to High-Income Status by 2047

Ambitious Vision:

- India aims to transform into a **high-income country** by **2047**, with projections ranging between **USD 23 trillion to USD 35 trillion in GDP**.
- The vision is driven by strategic growth in both the **services** and **manufacturing** sectors.

Sectoral Growth & Technology:

- **Services Sector:** Expected to contribute **60% of GDP**, underpinning the economic engine through innovation and digital transformation.
- **Manufacturing:** Projected to account for **32% of GDP**, with a focus on **backward integration** and bolstering local production.
- **Technological Advancements:**
 - Emphasis on **AI-driven chip design, touchless manufacturing**, and integration of advanced technologies to enhance competitiveness.
 - The development of a **sectoral technology roadmap** is seen as a key enabler for improving **cost competitiveness** and boosting exports.

Renewable Energy & Sustainability:

- India's share of **renewable energy** is set to surge from **24% in 2023** to nearly **70% by 2047**, aligning with global trends towards sustainable growth.
- This shift not only supports environmental goals but also paves the way for energy security and economic resilience.

Workforce & Skill Development Challenges:

- A projected shortfall of approximately **50 million skilled workers by 2030** highlights the urgent need for enhanced **STEM education** and targeted **skill development programs**.
- Emphasis on **public-private collaborations** and **industry partnerships** to bridge the skill gap and foster a culture of continuous learning.

Public-Private Collaboration & Innovation:

- **Collaborative R&D:** Greater investment in research and development, especially in emerging sectors like **green energy** and **digital infrastructure**, is essential.
- **Policy Support:** Strengthening of **infrastructure** and **regulatory frameworks** to promote domestic innovation and reduce dependency on global supply chains.

Government Reclassifies Barytes, Felspar, Mica, and Quartz as Major Minerals

- The **Ministry of Mines, Government of India** has officially reclassified **barytes, felspar, mica**, and **quartz** from **minor to major minerals**.
- This reclassification was made effective through an amendment in **The Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957**.
- The move is aimed at streamlining the **mining regulatory framework**, boosting **production**, attracting **investment**, and fostering **growth** in the mining sector.

Key Objectives & Implications:

- **Streamlined Regulations:** The reclassification aims to simplify procedures for mining and export approvals, thereby boosting industrial efficiency.
- **Investment Boost:** Enhanced regulatory clarity is expected to attract more investments in the mining sector.
- **Economic Impact:** The move supports growth in sectors such as **construction, ceramics, electronics**, and other manufacturing industries that heavily rely on these minerals.
- **Resource Management:** By elevating these minerals to major status, the government is emphasizing better resource management and a more structured licensing framework.

Significance of Reclassified Minerals:

- **Barytes:**
 - Used extensively in the **oil and gas industry** as a weighting agent in drilling mud.
 - Also used in the production of **barium chemicals, paints, and rubber**.
 - India is a significant producer and exporter of barytes.

- **Felspar:**
 - Essential raw material in the **ceramics and glass industries**.
 - Used in the production of **tiles, sanitaryware, glass containers**, and **fiberglass**.
 - India has substantial reserves of felspar.
- **Mica:**
 - Valued for its excellent **electrical insulation** and **heat resistance** properties.
 - Used in the **electrical industry, electronics, paints**, and **cosmetics**.
 - India is one of the world's leading producers of mica.
- **Quartz:**
 - A key component in **glass manufacturing, ceramics, electronics**, and **silicon production**.
 - Used in **solar panels, semiconductors**, and various industrial applications.
 - Quartz is abundantly available in India.

Asia Economic Dialogue 2025: Building Economic Resilience

Event Kickoff:

- The **Asia Economic Dialogue 2025** has commenced in **Pune**, serving as a vital platform for addressing pressing global economic challenges.
- The summit brings together policymakers, economists, and industry leaders from across Asia.

Core Focus Areas:

- **Economic Resilience:**
 - Discussions center on strategies to strengthen economies against shocks like **supply chain disruptions, inflation, and geopolitical tensions**.
 - Emphasis on sustainable growth, ensuring economies can absorb and recover from adverse global events.
- **Global Economic Challenges:**
 - Critical issues include **trade disruptions, energy security**, and the impact of **climate change** on economic stability.
 - The dialogue explores innovative policy reforms and the role of **digital transformation** in modernizing economic systems.

Strategic Discussions & Outcomes:

- High-level sessions are addressing methods to boost **regional cooperation** and **economic integration** among Asian nations.
- The event is expected to pave the way for collaborative initiatives that leverage shared strengths and enhance overall regional competitiveness.

Indian Tech Industry Poised for Massive Growth: Reaching \$300 Billion Revenue by FY26

- The **Indian technology industry** is on a robust growth trajectory and is projected to reach **\$300 billion in revenue by fiscal year 2026**.
- **NASSCOM**, a leading industry association, announced these growth projections, highlighting the continued expansion of the Indian tech sector.
- The industry's workforce is also expected to expand significantly, reaching **5.8 million professionals in fiscal year 2025**.

Key Growth Drivers and Projections:

- **Revenue Target:** Indian tech industry is set to achieve **\$300 billion in revenues by FY2026**, indicating strong and sustained growth.
- **Workforce Expansion:** The sector's workforce is estimated to reach **5.8 million employees in FY2025**, showcasing significant job creation in the tech domain.
- **Exports:** **Exports** are expected to remain a major contributor to the industry's revenue, driven by global demand for digital technologies and services.
- **Domestic Growth:** The **domestic market** is also playing an increasingly important role, fueled by digital transformation initiatives across various sectors in India.

- **Digital Transformation:** The growth is largely attributed to the increasing pace of **digital transformation** across the globe and within India, creating demand for tech solutions and services.
- **Emerging Technologies:** Areas like **Artificial Intelligence (AI)**, **Cloud Computing**, **Cybersecurity**, and **Data Analytics** are expected to be major growth drivers.

Factors Contributing to the Tech Industry's Success:

- **Skilled Talent Pool:** India possesses a large and skilled workforce in technology and engineering, making it a preferred destination for tech companies globally.
- **Government Support:** Government policies and initiatives promoting digitalization, innovation, and technology development are fostering a conducive environment for the industry's growth.
- **Investment in Digital Infrastructure:** Increasing investments in digital infrastructure, including internet penetration and data centers, are supporting the expansion of the tech sector.
- **Startup Ecosystem:** A vibrant and rapidly growing startup ecosystem is contributing to innovation and new business models in the tech industry.
- **Global Demand:** The global demand for digital services and technology solutions continues to rise, providing significant opportunities for Indian tech companies.

Prakriti 2025: Pioneering Carbon Market Initiatives

Event Overview:

- **Union Minister for Power and Housing & Urban Affairs, Shri Manohar Lal**, inaugurated **Prakriti 2025** – the **International Conference on Carbon Markets**.
- The event was held in **New Delhi** on **February 24, 2025**, showcasing India's commitment to **climate action**.
- Prakriti 2025 stands for **Promoting Resilience, Awareness, Knowledge, and Resources for Integrating Transformational Initiatives**.

Key Objectives and Highlights:

- **Global Platform for Climate Dialogue:**
 - Brought together national and international experts, policymakers, industry leaders, and researchers.
 - Focused on discussing **current trends, challenges, and future directions** in global carbon markets.
- **Transition to Renewable Energy:**
 - Emphasized the importance of **reducing dependence on fossil fuels** through a shift to **renewable energy (RE)**.
 - Aligned with India's broader vision to achieve **ambitious emissions targets**.
- **Carbon Market Insights:**
 - Detailed discussions on **carbon credits, compliance mechanisms**, and strategies for a **low-carbon future**.
 - Experts from the **International Solar Alliance**, the **World Bank**, and former top officials in environment ministries led technical sessions.
- **Traditional and Modern Sustainability:**
 - Highlighted how India's rich cultural practices (like **Ganga Deep Puja** and **Govardhan Puja**) reflect an inherent ecological consciousness.
 - Underlined the need for **climate policies** that ensure real, verifiable, and fraud-proof **carbon reductions**.

India's Strategic Oil Shift: 49 billion Euros of Russian Crude Imports

- **India**, the world's third largest oil importer, procured **49 billion euros** worth of **Russian crude oil** in the third year of the **Ukraine invasion**.
- Traditionally reliant on oil from the **Middle East**, India expanded its sourcing to include Russian oil, thanks to its attractive discounted rates.
- **Discounted Pricing:** Due to **Western sanctions** on Russia after the invasion, Russian oil was offered at rates up to **\$18-20 per barrel lower** than international prices—later narrowing to less than **\$3**.
- **Market Share Shift:** Russia's share in India's oil imports soared from under **1%** to nearly **40%** in a short span.
- **Economic Impact:** India's import value saw an **8% year-on-year increase**, underlining a significant strategic pivot.
- **Global Context:** Alongside **China** (EUR 78 billion) and **Turkey** (EUR 34 billion), India was instrumental in garnering **74%** of Russia's fossil fuel revenues during the period.

- **Refinery Exports:** Indian refineries converted Russian crude into fuels like petrol and diesel, with a portion subsequently exported to **EU countries** such as the **Netherlands, France, Romania, Spain, and Italy**.

Extended Free-Look Period: A New Chapter in Consumer Protection

Government Directive:

- **Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman** has urged private insurers to extend the **free look period** for insurance policies to **one year**.
- This move is aimed at enhancing **consumer protection** and giving policyholders ample time to review their policy documents.

Understanding the Free-Look Period:

- It is a specific duration during which policyholders can:
 - **Examine** the terms and conditions of their insurance policy.
 - **Cancel** the policy without incurring any penalties if it does not meet their expectations.
- Traditionally, the free look period has been much shorter (often **15 to 30 days**).

Key Benefits of Extending the Free-Look Period:

- **Informed Decision-Making:** Allows consumers more time to thoroughly understand the policy details, including **exclusions and benefits**.
- **Enhanced Transparency:** Encourages insurers to present their policy features clearly and honestly.
- **Increased Consumer Confidence:** Provides a safety net for policyholders, ensuring they are not locked into a product that may not suit their needs.

Implications for the Insurance Sector:

- **Private Insurers:** Need to revise their policy terms to accommodate a **one-year free look period**.
- **Regulatory Oversight:** The **Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI)** plays a pivotal role in framing guidelines and ensuring that these changes are implemented fairly.
- **Market Dynamics:** This change is expected to boost **trust** and **accountability** within the sector, leading to more customer-centric products.

RBI Boosts Lending Limits for Urban Co-operative Banks

- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has decided to **increase the ceiling for small value loans** offered by **Tier-I Urban Co-operative Banks (UCBs)** to **₹3 crore**.
- This is a significant increase from the previous limit of **₹30 lakh**, aiming to enhance the operational flexibility of UCBs and expand their lending capabilities.
- The RBI has also **revised the definition of 'small value loans'** and **'housing loans'** for UCBs to align them with the evolving needs of the sector.

Key Changes Announced by RBI:

- **Increased Small Value Loan Ceiling:**
 - For **Tier-I UCBs**, the limit for individual housing loans classified as '**small value loans**' has been raised to **₹3 crore**.
 - Previously, this limit was considerably lower at **₹30 lakh**.
 - This enhancement is expected to enable UCBs to cater to a wider segment of borrowers, particularly in the housing sector.
- **Revised Definition of Housing Loans:**
 - The RBI has also **revised the definition of 'housing loans'** for UCBs, linking it to the revised small value loan ceiling.
 - This alignment ensures consistency and clarity in loan classifications for UCBs.
- **Objective of the Revision:**
 - The primary goal is to provide **greater operational freedom** to UCBs.
 - It aims to **improve credit delivery** by UCBs, especially for housing and other small value loans.
 - The measure is also intended to strengthen the role of UCBs in promoting **financial inclusion**.
- **Applicability:**
 - The revised limits and definitions are applicable to **Tier-I UCBs**.

- Tier-II UCBs already have a higher loan ceiling and are governed by different regulations.

Indian Economy Forecast for FY25: Robust Growth on the Horizon

- **Indian Economy** is set to grow at **6.3% in FY25**, driven by **strong domestic demand** as per the latest **SBI** report.
- **Q3 FY25 GDP growth** is estimated between **6.2-6.3%**, indicating a slight uptick from Q2 and signalling steady economic recovery.

SBI Research Insights:

- **6.3% Growth Projection:** Reflects resilience amid global uncertainties.
- **Domestic Demand:** Increased consumer spending and investments are key drivers.
- **Sectoral Recovery:** Positive contributions from **manufacturing** and **services** are reinforcing growth.
- **Policy Support:** Emphasis on fiscal measures and regulatory reforms aiding the recovery.

Quarterly Growth Details:

- **Q3 FY25 Estimates:** GDP growth is predicted at **6.2-6.3%**, showing a moderate recovery.
- **Improved Performance:** Enhanced industrial output and rising consumer confidence bolster this growth.
- **Economic Stability:** The uptick in Q3 indicates stabilization across various sectors.

Indian Startups on Global VC Stage

- **India's Startup Ecosystem** has made significant strides, capturing a **9.9% global share** of **VC deals** in January 2025, thereby outpacing **China's** performance.
- The robust performance is driven by strong **domestic demand** and increasing investor confidence in the country's innovative ventures.

Venture Capital Funding Trends:

- **India's Surge:** A notable rise in **venture capital investments** underscores the growing appeal of Indian startups across sectors like **technology, fintech, e-commerce, and healthtech**.
- **China's Decline:** Concurrently, there has been a drop in **VC funding** for Chinese startups, further enhancing India's position in the global market.
- **Globaldata Insights:** Research by **Globaldata** highlights that this shift is part of a broader trend where Indian startups are emerging as preferred investment opportunities worldwide.

Cali Fund: A New Chapter in Biodiversity Finance

Cali Fund Launched:

- Announced at **CBD COP16** in Rome, the **Cali Fund** is a new initiative aimed at boosting **biodiversity finance** globally.
- The launch took place during the **16th Conference of Parties (COP16)** under the **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)**, a key international forum on environmental conservation.

Objectives and Significance:

- **Financial Mobilization:**
 - Designed to channel increased funding into biodiversity conservation projects worldwide.
 - Aims to support sustainable practices that protect **ecosystems, flora, and fauna** under threat from climate change, habitat loss, and pollution.
- **Global Impact:**
 - Strengthens the capacity of countries, especially in the **Global South**, to finance and implement conservation initiatives.
 - Encourages public-private partnerships to drive investment in **green infrastructure** and sustainable development.

Key Features of the Initiative:

- **Streamlined Funding Mechanism:**
 - Simplifies the process of accessing funds for biodiversity projects, reducing bureaucratic hurdles.
 - Promotes transparency and accountability in the allocation and use of resources.



- **Support for Conservation Projects:**

- Targets innovative projects that combine conservation with community development.
- Emphasizes on projects that offer both **environmental** and **economic** benefits.

Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and Conference of Parties (COP):

The **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)** is a landmark international treaty adopted at the **Rio Earth Summit in 1992**.

- **Objectives:**

- The **conservation of biological diversity**.
- The **sustainable use of its components**.
- The **fair and equitable sharing of benefits** arising from genetic resources.

Conference of the Parties (COP): The governing body of the CBD, consisting of governments that have ratified the convention.

- **Meetings:** COPs are held **biennially** to review the convention's progress, set priorities, and adopt work plans.
- **Decision-Making:** COP meetings are crucial for **global decision-making** on biodiversity-related issues.

SEBI Enhances Transparency with New Disclosure Rules for Related Party Transactions

- **SEBI** (Securities and Exchange Board of India) has introduced new disclosure rules for **related party transaction approvals**.
- The initiative is aimed at bolstering **corporate governance** by ensuring that companies provide clear and detailed information about their **related party transactions**.
- These rules are designed to protect **investor interests** and enhance overall market **transparency**.

Mandatory Disclosures:

- Listed companies must now reveal comprehensive details about **related party transactions**, including:
 - **Identity of related parties**
 - **Nature and extent** of the transactions
 - **Terms and conditions** under which transactions are approved

Strengthened Corporate Governance:

- The new guidelines aim to prevent conflicts of interest by making the **approval process** of such transactions more transparent.
- This move promotes greater **accountability** within corporate boards.

Investor Protection:

- Enhanced disclosure provides investors with essential information for **informed decision-making**.
- It reinforces SEBI's commitment to protecting shareholder rights and maintaining a **fair-trading environment**.

Finance Commission Grants Boost Rural Governance in Punjab, Uttarakhand & Chhattisgarh

Overview & Significance

- The **Union Government** has released the **Fifteenth Finance Commission (XV FC) Grants** for the **Financial Year 2024–25**, aimed at strengthening **Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs)** in rural areas.
- These grants are crucial for enhancing **grassroots democracy** and improving local governance in rural settings.

State-wise Grant Details

Punjab:

- **Amount:** Over **Rs. 225 crores** (1st instalment of Untied Grants: Rs.225.1707 crores)
- **Coverage:** Benefits **13,144 Gram Panchayats, 146 Block Panchayats, and 22 District Panchayats**.

Chhattisgarh:

- **Amount:** Over **Rs. 244 crores** (2nd instalment of Untied Grants: Rs.237.1393 crores + withheld 1st instalment: Rs.6.9714 crores)
- **Coverage:** Benefits **11,548 Gram Panchayats, 146 Block Panchayats, and 27 Zila Panchayats**.

Uttarakhand:

- **Amount:** Over **Rs. 93 crores** (1st instalment of Untied Grants: Rs.93.9643 crores)
- **Coverage:** Benefits **7,769 Gram Panchayats, 995 Block Panchayats, and 13 Zila Panchayats.**

Purpose & Utilization

- **Untied Grants:** Funds are allocated to address **location-specific felt needs** as per the **Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution** (excluding salaries and establishment costs).
- **Tied Grants:** Targeted towards essential services like **sanitation (maintaining ODF status)** and **drinking water supply**, including **rainwater harvesting** and **water recycling**.

International

India to Host BRICS Youth Council Entrepreneurship Working Group Meeting in March 2025

Event Details:

- The **Department of Youth Affairs**, under the **Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports**, Government of India, is organizing the **BRICS Youth Council Entrepreneurship Working Group Meeting** from **March 3 to 7, 2025**.
- The central theme of the meeting is **“Youth Entrepreneurship for Sustainable Growth”**.
- Approximately **45 youth representatives** from **BRICS countries** (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) are expected to participate.

Objectives of the Meeting:

- **Establish the BRICS Youth Council: Entrepreneurship Working Group** to foster collaboration among member nations.
- **Discuss work plans** related to entrepreneurship within BRICS nations, aiming to share best practices and strategies.
- **Explore actionable steps** to enhance youth cooperation in entrepreneurship across BRICS countries.
- **Develop new youth engagement formats** aligned with prioritized directions within the BRICS framework.
- **Connect participants** to international entrepreneurship opportunities available within BRICS nations.

Preparatory Run-Up Events:

- To prepare for the main meeting, the Department of Youth Affairs is organizing **eight run-up events** across various universities and colleges in India.
- These events aim to:
 - **Enhance understanding** among Indian youth on topics relevant to the upcoming BRICS meeting.
 - **Facilitate panel discussions** featuring talented youth speakers on pertinent subjects.
 - **Disseminate India's agenda on entrepreneurship** to a broader audience at the grassroots level.

Completed Run-Up Events:

- **January 15, 2025:** Miranda House, Delhi University.
- **January 17, 2025:** Mata Sundri College for Women, Delhi.
- **January 24, 2025:** Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Jammu, Jammu & Kashmir.
- **January 28, 2025:** National Forensic Sciences University (NFSU), Gandhinagar, Gujarat.

Upcoming Run-Up Events:

- **February 4, 2025:** Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT), Odisha.
- **February 7, 2025:** Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Guwahati, Assam.
- **February 11, 2025:** Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bangalore, Karnataka.

International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) Comes into Force

Current Affairs in Detail:

- The **International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA)** has officially come into force, marking a significant milestone in global wildlife conservation.

- IBCA is an international treaty aimed at protecting **big cats** by enhancing cross-border collaboration, strengthening legal frameworks, and implementing robust conservation measures.
- The alliance sets out to combat **poaching**, curb the **illegal wildlife trade**, and address the challenges of **habitat loss** affecting species like tigers, lions, leopards, and other large felines.
- Key provisions under the IBCA include coordinated efforts for **research**, sharing of **best practices** among member nations, and establishing common guidelines for **sustainable management** of big cat populations.
- According to reports, the treaty has gained wide support and the required number of ratifications from several countries, underlining the global commitment to **biodiversity conservation**.

Other Important Aspects:

- The IBCA is a major step forward in international efforts to protect endangered species and is expected to significantly bolster **global conservation strategies**.
- By promoting **collaborative research** and coordinated action, the alliance seeks to bridge gaps between governments, NGOs, and local communities in protecting natural habitats.
- The implementation of IBCA is aligned with broader international initiatives such as the **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)** and the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, ensuring a harmonized approach to wildlife protection.
- The alliance also emphasizes capacity building and resource mobilization to help member countries address the challenges of **wildlife trafficking** and **environmental degradation**.

Canada Imposes 25% Tariffs on U.S. Goods

Retaliatory Tariff Announcement:

- Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced that Canada will impose a **25% tariff** on U.S. goods, affecting **C\$155 billion** worth of products.

Implementation Timeline:

- Tariffs on **C\$30 billion** worth of U.S. goods will come into effect starting **Tuesday**.
- The remaining **C\$125 billion** worth of tariffs will be imposed **within 21 days**.

Context of the Move:

- The decision is a **retaliatory measure** in response to earlier U.S. tariffs, which were imposed under an executive order affecting Canadian and Mexican goods.
- While U.S. tariffs exempt **Canadian energy products** (subject to a lower duty of 10%), this counter-move signals a firm stance in the ongoing **trade dispute** between the two countries.

India-UK Consultations on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation

Bilateral Engagement:

- India and the **United Kingdom** held high-level consultations focused on **disarmament** and **non-proliferation**.
- The discussions aimed to enhance cooperation in the fields of **nuclear disarmament** and arms control, reinforcing both nations' commitment to a **nuclear weapon-free world**.

Key Discussion Areas:

Strengthening Global Regimes:

- The talks covered strategies to bolster international frameworks that prevent the **proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs)**.
- Emphasis was placed on reinforcing global **arms control regimes** and promoting **peace and stability**.

Bilateral and Multilateral Cooperation:

- Both countries reaffirmed their intent to collaborate closely on disarmament issues within international forums such as the **United Nations**.
- The dialogue explored ways to integrate technological advancements and intelligence-sharing into disarmament efforts.

Strategic Implications:

- The consultations underscore a mutual resolve to address emerging security challenges and mitigate risks associated with the spread of dangerous arms.
- They signal an effort to leverage **diplomatic channels** and **bilateral ties** to shape global disarmament policies and practices.

Geopolitical Context:

- **Disarmament and non-proliferation** remain central themes in international security policy.

Policy and Diplomatic Strategy:

- The discussions illustrate how nations use **bilateral consultations** to advance their national security objectives and contribute to **global peace efforts**.
- It is important to note how such dialogues can influence multilateral negotiations and strengthen international norms against the proliferation of WMDs.

Technological and Intelligence Integration:

- The talks likely touched on the role of emerging technologies in enhancing **verification** and **monitoring mechanisms** essential for effective disarmament.

Rise in Cancer Cases in South East Asia: WHO Calls for Joint Efforts

Increasing Cancer Burden in the Region:

- The **World Health Organization (WHO)** has raised concerns over a significant **rise in cancer cases** in the South East Asia region.
- This increase is prompting calls for **collaborative efforts** among member nations to tackle the growing health challenge.

Key Factors Contributing to the Rise:

- **Lifestyle and Environmental Factors:** Rapid urbanization, changes in lifestyle, and environmental pollution are identified as major contributing factors.
- **Limited Access to Early Detection:** Inadequate screening programs and delayed diagnosis in many parts of the region exacerbate the cancer burden.

WHO's Recommendations and Joint Action:

- The WHO has emphasized the need for **joint efforts** by governments, health organizations, and international partners to implement **comprehensive cancer control strategies**.
- Proposed measures include improving early detection, expanding access to treatment, and promoting preventive initiatives through public awareness campaigns.

Panama to Exit China's Belt and Road Initiative Amid U.S. Concerns

Current Affairs:

- **Panama's Decision:** Panama has announced it will not renew its 2017 memorandum of understanding with China's **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)** upon its expiration in 2026, with considerations to terminate the agreement earlier.
- **U.S. Involvement:** This decision follows a visit by U.S. Secretary of State **Marco Rubio**, who urged Panama to reduce Chinese influence over the **Panama Canal**. The U.S. has expressed concerns that China's involvement in the canal could pose strategic risks.
- **Panama's Assurance:** Panamanian President **José Raúl Mulino** emphasized that the country's sovereignty over the 51-mile waterway remains unchanged and expressed intentions to strengthen ties with the U.S. through new investments, including infrastructure projects.

Other Important Aspects:

- **Strategic Importance of the Panama Canal:** The canal is a critical maritime route facilitating global trade. The U.S. has raised concerns over China's influence on the canal, suggesting potential strategic risks.

- **Geopolitical Implications:** Panama's move to distance itself from the BRI aligns with U.S. efforts to counter China's growing influence in Latin America. This decision may lead to increased U.S. investments in Panama and a re-evaluation of existing Chinese concessions in the country.

PM Modi's France Visit: AI Summit Leadership & New Consulate in Marseille

Current Affairs in Detail

AI Action Summit (Feb 10–11, 2025):

- **Co-Chaired by PM Modi & Macron:** Focus on **ethical AI governance**, innovation, and inclusivity. Themes include AI's role in public interest, future of work, and global standards.
- **Global Participation:** Leaders from ~100 countries, including US VP JD Vance and China's VP Ding Xuexiang, to discuss AI's socio-economic impact.
- **India-France AI Roadmap:** Expected bilateral agreement to deepen tech collaboration, including joint R&D and ethical frameworks.

New Consulate in Marseille:

- **Strategic Significance:** Strengthens India's diplomatic footprint in Southern France, enhancing trade, cultural ties, and maritime connectivity via the **India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)**.
- **Inauguration:** PM Modi and Macron to jointly open the consulate on Feb 12, 2025, announced during Modi's 2023 France visit.

Defense & Energy Partnerships:

- **Rafale-M Fighter Jets:** Deal for 26 naval fighters (EUR 7 billion) likely finalized later in 2025; advanced talks on **3 Scorpène-class submarines**.
- **Small Modular Reactors (SMRs):** Collaboration on civil nuclear energy under **Horizon 2047 roadmap**; India allocated ₹20,000 crore in Budget 2025 for SMR development.

Bilateral Engagements:

- **CEO Roundtable:** Focus on aerospace, AI, and renewable energy investments.
- **WWI Tribute:** Leaders to honor Indian soldiers at Mazargues War Cemetery in Marseille.

Other Important Aspects

Economic & Strategic Implications:

- **IMEC Corridor:** Marseille-Mumbai link aims to counter China's BRI; France appointed a special envoy for IMEC.
- **Educational Ties:** France targets 30,000 Indian students by 2030 (up from 10,000) to boost academic exchanges.

Global AI Governance:

- India's role in shaping **ethical AI standards** aligns with its "AI for All" vision.
- Summit outcomes may influence global policies on data privacy and workforce adaptation.

Defense Indigenization:

- **Make in India:** France's tech transfer in Rafale jets and submarines supports India's self-reliance goals.

Bangladesh's 'Operation Devil Hunt': A Sweeping Crackdown on Violence

- Bangladesh's interim government, led by **Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus**, launched **Operation Devil Hunt** on February 8, 2025, to curb escalating violence targeting properties belonging to deposed Prime Minister **Sheikh Hasina**'s family and leaders of her party, the **Awami League**.
- The operation was initiated following violent clashes that injured student activists during an attack on the residence of an Awami League leader in **Gazipur**, on the outskirts of Dhaka.
- The violence spread to other parts of the country, with mobs targeting symbols of the Awami League.
- **Over 1,300 individuals** have been arrested under the nationwide joint forces operation, which includes army troops, police, and specialized units.
- The interim government has vowed to uproot "all devils" attempting to create instability as it completes six months in power.

India and Oman Enhance Archival Collaboration through Executive Programme of Cooperation (2025-2028)

Signing of the Executive Programme of Cooperation (EPC):

- On **February 10, 2025**, the **National Archives of India** and the **National Records and Archives Authority of Oman** signed an **Executive Programme of Cooperation (EPC)** for the period **2025-2028**.
- The signing ceremony took place at the National Archives of India in New Delhi, with **Shri Arun Singhal, IAS, Director General of Archives, National Archives of India**, representing India, and **Dr. Hamed Mohd. Al Dhawaini, Chairman of the National Records & Archives Authority**, representing Oman.

Objectives of the EPC:

- The EPC aims to enhance mutual understanding and cooperation through the **exchange of archival materials, expertise, and technology**.
- It facilitates collaboration on **digitization projects, exhibitions, seminars, and training programs**, contributing to the global discourse on archival science and history.

Significance of the Collaboration:

- This partnership underscores both nations' dedication to **preserving and promoting their shared historical heritage**, reflecting a broader commitment to fostering international archival partnerships.
- The EPC serves as a vision statement for the future of **India-Oman relations**, aiming to build a dynamic partnership rooted in cultural heritage and mutual respect.

India Participates in 63rd Session of the Commission for Social Development in New York

Event Participation:

- From **February 10 to 14, 2025**, India actively participated in the **63rd session of the Commission for Social Development (CSoCD)** held in New York, USA. The Indian delegation was led by **Smt. Savitri Thakur**, the Minister of State for Women and Child Development.

Ministerial Address:

- On **February 11, 2025**, Smt. Thakur delivered India's statement at the Ministerial Forum, focusing on the theme: "**Strengthening Solidarity and Social Cohesion**." She emphasized India's commitment to inclusivity, guided by the vision of "**Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas**" (Development for All).

Key Initiatives Highlighted:

- **Financial Inclusion:**
 - Implementation of the **JAM TRINITY (Jan Dhan, Aadhar, Mobile)** has facilitated financial inclusion for disadvantaged communities, especially women, persons with disabilities, and the elderly.
- **Women-Led Development:**
 - India has embraced **women-led development**, ensuring women play a pivotal role in shaping the nation's development trajectory.
- **Bridging the Gender Digital Divide:**
 - Launch of large-scale programs promoting digital and financial literacy, particularly in rural areas, empowering millions of women entrepreneurs.
- **Social Protection Measures:**
 - Provision of **26 weeks of paid maternity leave**.
 - Maternity benefits extended to **37.5 million mothers**.
 - Establishment of a network of **One Stop Centres** and an integrated **National Women's Helpline**.
 - Early childhood care, nutrition, and education initiatives benefiting over **100 million children, mothers, and adolescent girls**.

Housing and Basic Amenities:

- Construction of over **40 million homes** for the poor, with women as either sole or joint owners, ensuring access to affordable housing.
- Provision of **clean cooking fuel, safe drinking water, and sanitation facilities**, transforming the lives of women and marginalized communities.

Self-Help Groups (SHGs):

- Nearly **100 million women** have been linked with SHGs, contributing to economic transformation and grassroots leadership.

India-France Roadmap on Artificial Intelligence: A Strategic Collaboration

- On **February 12, 2025**, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and **French President Emmanuel Macron** jointly launched the **India-France Roadmap on Artificial Intelligence (AI)** during Macron's state visit to India.
- The roadmap aims to strengthen bilateral cooperation in **AI research, innovation, and ethical governance**, positioning both nations as global leaders in the AI domain.
- Key highlights** of the roadmap include:
 - Joint Research Initiatives:** Establishing collaborative projects between Indian and French institutions in areas like **AI for healthcare, climate change, and smart cities**.
 - Startup Ecosystem:** Creating a platform for **AI startups** from both countries to collaborate, share resources, and access funding.
 - Ethical AI Framework:** Developing guidelines for **responsible AI use**, focusing on **data privacy, transparency, and bias mitigation**.
 - Skill Development:** Launching exchange programs for students and professionals to enhance expertise in AI technologies.

Strategic Importance of the Collaboration:

- Global Leadership:** Both India and France aim to leverage their strengths in **technology** and **innovation** to shape global AI policies and standards.
- Economic Growth:** The partnership is expected to boost **economic ties**, create jobs, and foster innovation in emerging technologies.
- Geopolitical Significance:** Strengthening India-France relations in the context of a multipolar world, with a focus on **strategic autonomy** and **technological sovereignty**.

India's AI Landscape:

- National AI Strategy:** Launched in **2018**, India's AI strategy focuses on **#AIForAll**, emphasizing inclusive and ethical AI development.
- Key Initiatives:**
 - National AI Portal:** A hub for AI resources, research, and collaboration.
 - AI Mission:** Aims to establish India as a global AI hub by promoting research, startups, and skill development.
 - AI in Governance:** Projects like **AI-based crop yield prediction** and **AI-powered healthcare diagnostics** are transforming public service delivery.

France's AI Ecosystem:

- AI for Humanity Strategy:** Launched in **2018**, France's strategy focuses on **ethical AI, research excellence, and industrial competitiveness**.
- Key Institutions:**
 - French National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS):** A leading research organization driving AI innovation.
 - Station F:** The world's largest startup campus, fostering AI entrepreneurship.

India Hosts 14th Asian Fisheries and Aquaculture Forum: A Milestone in Sustainable Fisheries

- The **14th Asian Fisheries and Aquaculture Forum (14AFAF)** was inaugurated on **February 12, 2025**, at **Pusa Campus, New Delhi**, under the theme "**Greening the Blue Growth in Asia-Pacific**". The event was organized by the **Asian Fisheries Society (AFS)**, in collaboration with the **Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)**, the **Department of Fisheries (DoF)**, and the **Asian Fisheries Society Indian Branch (AFSIB)**.
- The forum brought together **1,000 delegates** from **24 countries**, including researchers, policymakers, industry leaders, and stakeholders, to discuss sustainable fisheries and aquaculture practices.
- Union Minister Shri Rajiv Ranjan Singh** highlighted India's rise as the **world's second-largest fish producer**, attributing this achievement to initiatives like the **Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY)** and the

adoption of cutting-edge digital solutions such as the **National Digital Fisheries Platform**, vessel monitoring systems, and emergency alerts for fishermen.

- The **Kisan Credit Card (KCC) scheme** has been extended to fishers and fish farmers, along with various insurance schemes to support the fisheries sector.

India's Fisheries Sector: Key Achievements

- India is now the **second-largest fish producer globally**, with fish production increasing from **95.79 lakh tonnes** in **2013-14** to **175.45 lakh tonnes** in **2022-23**, marking an **82% growth**.
- The **Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY)** has been instrumental in enhancing fish production and sustainability, focusing on infrastructure development, technology adoption, and livelihood improvement for fishers.
- **ICAR** has developed **75 new fisheries technologies** and improved fish varieties, emphasizing sustainable and carbon-neutral practices.

India Hosts Inaugural Regional Dialogue on Global Coalition for Social Justice

- **Event Overview:** The **Ministry of Labour & Employment**, in collaboration with the **Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)** and the **Employers' Federation of India (EFI)**, is organizing the **first-ever Regional Dialogue on Social Justice** on **February 24-25, 2025**, at **Bharat Mandapam** in New Delhi.
- **Inauguration:** The event will be inaugurated by **Union Labour Minister Mansukh Mandaviya** on **February 24, 2025**.
- **Significance:** This landmark event marks India's significant contribution to the **Global Coalition for Social Justice**, an initiative launched by the **International Labour Organization (ILO)** in 2023.

Global Coalition for Social Justice:

- Established by the ILO in 2023, the coalition serves as a platform for:
 - Governments
 - Employers' and workers' organizations
 - International and regional organizations
 - Financial institutions and development banks
 - Enterprises
 - International non-governmental organizations
 - Academia
- The coalition aims to advance social justice through collaborative efforts and shared objectives.

Event Objectives:

The Regional Dialogue seeks to:

- Foster collaboration among diverse stakeholders
- Address social justice challenges comprehensively
- Leverage the unique strengths of each participant
- Promote fair working conditions
- Enhance occupational safety and health
- Discuss sustainable global value chains
- Explore the role of digitalization and artificial intelligence in promoting social justice

India-Qatar Strategic Partnership: Boosting Trade & Energy Cooperation

Strategic Upgrade:

- **India and Qatar** have elevated their relationship to a **strategic partnership**.
- The two nations are committed to doubling their bilateral trade to nearly **\$30 billion by 2030**, up from the current **\$14.08 billion**.

Key Discussions & Agreements:

- **High-level Talks:** Conducted between **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** and **Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani** at Hyderabad House in New Delhi.
- **Trade Expansion:** Negotiations on a bilateral trade deal are underway, with a focus on resolving **market access issues** for both goods and services.

- **Investment Commitments:** Qatar has pledged to invest **\$10 billion** in India, complementing prior investments of about **\$1.5 billion** by the **Qatar Investment Authority (QIA)** in sectors like retail, power, IT, and affordable housing.
- **Sectoral Cooperation:** Emphasis on boosting collaboration in **energy, technology, healthcare, food processing, pharmaceuticals, and green hydrogen.**

Additional Agreements & Initiatives:

- Signing of a revised agreement for the **avoidance of double taxation.**
- Execution of **five Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs)** covering economic partnership, archives and documentation, youth affairs, and sports.
- Strengthening cooperation in **law enforcement**, targeting transnational crimes such as **drug trafficking, cybercrime, and money laundering.**

India Sends First Trial Shipments of Pomegranates to Australia

- **Initiative:** India sends its first-ever commercial trial shipments of pomegranates to Australia via sea route.
- **Initial Shipment:** Departed in December 2024 and arrived in Sydney in January 2025 with 5.7 tonnes of pomegranates from Solapur, Maharashtra.
- **Follow-Up Shipment:** Another shipment of 6.56 tonnes of Bhagwa variety pomegranates arrived in Brisbane in January 2025.
- **Objective:** Assess market demand and optimize cost efficiency compared to air shipments.
- **Significance:** Marks a major step in expanding India's agricultural exports through sustainable logistics.

India-Nepal Science & Technology Partnership Strengthened Through New MoU

- The **Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)**, India, and the **Nepal Academy of Science and Technology (NAST)** signed a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** on February 18, 2025.
- This agreement marks a significant milestone in deepening **science and technology (S&T) cooperation** between **India and Nepal.**

Key Details of the MoU

- **Signing Ceremony:**
 - Held at **CSIR-National Physical Laboratory (CSIR-NPL)** in New Delhi.
 - The agreement was exchanged by **Dr. N. Kalaiselvi**, Director General of CSIR, and **Prof. Dr. Dilip Subba**, Vice-Chancellor of NAST.
- **Historical Collaboration:** CSIR and NAST (formerly RONAST) have a long-standing partnership dating back to 1994, with previous working programmes in 1997 and 2002 that facilitated joint workshops and training initiatives.
- **Scope of Cooperation:**
The MoU outlines a broad framework for:
 - **Exchange of scientific information, research materials, and scientists.**
 - Organizing joint **S&T seminars, workshops, and training programs.**
 - Executing **joint research projects.**
 - Facilitating access to major research facilities.
 - Establishing **technology partnerships** and institutional twinning for capacity building.
- Focus areas include **biological sciences, food science and technology, water and environmental technologies, fuel and mining sciences, metallurgy, material sciences, nanotechnology, alternative energy, polymer sciences, and drug discovery.**

China Conducts Advanced Nuclear, Bio & Chemical Attack Drills

- China has recently conducted a series of sophisticated **attack drills** simulating **nuclear, biological, and chemical warfare** scenarios.
- The drills incorporated modern technology, including **drones** and **robot dogs**, highlighting China's focus on **innovative defence strategies.**

Key Drill Components & Objectives:

- **Multi-Domain Attack Simulation:**

- **Nuclear, biological, and chemical attack** scenarios were simulated to test rapid response and containment strategies.
- The drills aimed to enhance **emergency preparedness** and ensure robust **defence readiness**.
- **Technological Integration:**
 - Use of **drones** allowed for aerial surveillance and rapid data collection during simulated attacks.
 - **Robot dogs** were deployed to navigate hazardous environments, showcasing advancements in **autonomous defence systems**.
- **Strategic Implications:**
 - The drills underscore China's commitment to modernizing its **military capabilities** and adapting to emerging threats.
 - Emphasis on integrating technology into defence operations reflects broader trends in **military innovation**.

Brazil Joins OPEC+ Amidst Climate Concerns

- **Brazil**, a leading oil producer, is set to join the **Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)**.
- This strategic move comes as Brazil aims to leverage its vast oil resources and gain a stronger voice in **global energy markets**.
- The decision has sparked intense debate, especially with the upcoming **COP30** summit, where global leaders discuss urgent **climate change** actions.

Key Highlights

New OPEC Membership:

- Brazil's entry into **OPEC** marks a significant shift in the organization's composition, traditionally dominated by Middle Eastern countries.
- The inclusion of Brazil is expected to bring fresh perspectives on oil production and market regulation.

Climate Debate Intensifies:

- Environmentalists express concerns that Brazil's move may bolster **fossil fuel dependency** at a time when countries are urged to transition to **renewable energy**.
- Critics argue that strengthening ties with an oil cartel could hinder global efforts to reduce **greenhouse gas emissions**.

Strategic Timing Ahead of COP30:

- The announcement arrives ahead of **COP30** – the 30th Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC – which will address critical global climate policies.
- With climate action high on the agenda, Brazil's decision is likely to influence international negotiations and policy debates.

India-Saudi Arabia Media Partnership Ahead of WAVES 2025

Strategic Collaboration:

- **India** and **Saudi Arabia** have recently forged a significant media partnership.
- This initiative is part of broader efforts to bolster bilateral ties in the media and digital sectors ahead of the upcoming **WAVES 2025 Summit**.

Key Engagements & Meetings:

- The high-level Indian delegation, led by **Information and Broadcasting Secretary Sanjay Jaju** and **Prasar Bharati CEO Gaurav Dwivedi**, engaged with major Saudi media leaders at the **Future of Media Exhibition (FOMEX)** in Riyadh.
- Meetings with key figures such as **Jomana R. Alrashid** (CEO of Saudi Research and Media Group) and **Assistant Minister Abdullah bin Ahmed Al-Maghluoth** focused on expanding **bilateral media cooperation**.
- Discussions also involved exploring synergies in **broadcasting technology** and **content exchange** with the **Saudi Broadcasting Authority**.

WAVES 2025 Summit:

- Scheduled for **May 1-4 at Mumbai's Jio World Convention Centre**, WAVES 2025 is set to be a transformative event in India's digital entertainment landscape.

- The summit, endorsed by **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** and announced by **Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw**, will highlight advancements in **animation, gaming, visual effects, augmented reality, and virtual production**.

Partnership Outcomes:

- The newly formed media partnership is expected to create opportunities for **content creators, technology providers, and media professionals** in both countries.
- It lays the groundwork for long-term collaboration in **digital media, broadcasting, and entertainment**, contributing to the diversification of both nations' economies.

India's Diplomatic Stand on Ukraine Resolutions

- **India abstained** from voting on several **United Nations General Assembly** resolutions and amendments concerning **Ukraine**, reflecting a cautious diplomatic approach.
- The vote comes on the **third anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine** (which began on **February 24, 2022**), when Western nations passed resolutions naming **Russia** as the aggressor.
- In a surprising twist, the **United States** broke with its usual Western allies:
 - The US **abstained** from voting on its own resolution after amendments were introduced, signalling a strategic pivot in its diplomatic stance.
 - This move was influenced by ongoing discussions with **Russia** aimed at negotiating a peace deal, with talks taking place in venues such as **Riyadh**.
- **US officials** emphasized that the resolution was meant to be **forward-looking**:
 - **US Secretary of State Marco Rubio** described it as "a simple, historic resolution" intended to pave the way for peace.
 - **Acting US Permanent Representative Dorothy Shea** stressed that the focus should be on creating a path forward rather than dwelling on past events.

Voting Details at the UN General Assembly:

- A resolution explicitly condemning the invasion received **93 votes in favour, 18 against, and 65 abstentions**.
- A previous similar resolution in **2023** had garnered **141 votes**, with India having abstained then as well.

Global Diplomatic Shifts:

- The US's decision to **abstain**—even on its own proposal—underscores a significant **shift in international alliances**.
- This abstention reflects the broader trend of countries reevaluating their positions amid evolving geopolitical realities.

India and UK Revive Free Trade Agreement Talks

- **India** and the **United Kingdom** have agreed to **resume negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement (FTA)**.
- The decision was made during a meeting between **Indian Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal** and **UK Trade Secretary Kemi Badenoch** in **New Delhi** on **February 26, 2025**.
- Negotiations had been paused due to political changes in the UK but are now set to restart, aiming for a mutually beneficial trade deal.
- Both nations expressed optimism about the prospects of finalizing a comprehensive FTA that will significantly boost bilateral trade and investment.

Key Areas of Focus in the FTA Negotiations:

- **Tariff Reduction:** Aim to reduce or eliminate tariffs on a wide range of goods traded between India and the UK.
- **Services Sector:** Focus on enhancing market access in services, including sectors like IT, healthcare, education, and financial services.
- **Investment Promotion:** Facilitate and increase bilateral investments by streamlining regulations and providing investor protections.
- **Rules of Origin:** Establish clear rules to determine the country of origin for goods, ensuring the FTA benefits genuine trade between the two nations.
- **Intellectual Property Rights:** Address issues related to intellectual property rights to encourage innovation and technology transfer.
- **Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures:** Negotiate standards for food safety and plant and animal health to facilitate agricultural trade.

- **Dispute Settlement Mechanism:** Establish a robust mechanism for resolving trade disputes that may arise under the agreement.

Denmark's Green Transition Alliance with India

- Denmark has announced a new **Green Transition Alliance** with India under the **GTAI (Green Transition Alliance Initiative)**.
- The initiative is designed to **accelerate the green transition** by fostering collaboration on **renewable energy, sustainable technologies, and environmental innovations**.
- It marks a significant step in deepening bilateral cooperation, aligning with both countries' ambitions to **reduce carbon emissions** and promote a **green economy**.
- The alliance is expected to boost **research collaborations, business investments, and technology transfers** in the green technology sector.

Key Highlights and Objectives

- **Renewable Energy Focus:**
 - Strengthening efforts in **wind, solar**, and other **clean energy** sources.
 - Enhancing energy efficiency and reducing dependency on fossil fuels.
- **Innovation and Technology Transfer:**
 - Promoting the exchange of **green technologies** and expertise.
 - Facilitating joint research and development projects.
- **Economic and Environmental Impact:**
 - Creating new opportunities for **sustainable investments**.
 - Supporting initiatives aimed at **climate change mitigation** and **sustainable urban development**.

Women Peacekeepers Unite: Global Dialogue in New Delhi

Event Overview:

- **Women peacekeepers** from **35 nations** gathered in **New Delhi** on **February 25, 2025**.
- The conference focused on **sharing experiences, promoting dialogue**, and addressing challenges in peacekeeping operations.
- It brought together participants from diverse regions, including significant representation from the **Global South**.

Key Highlights:

- **Interactive Sessions & Panels:**
 - Participants exchanged insights on operational challenges and innovative strategies in the field.
 - Discussions emphasized **gender equality** and the unique contributions of women in **UN peacekeeping missions**.
- **Leadership and Empowerment:**
 - The conference served as a platform to empower women peacekeepers, highlighting their roles in **conflict resolution and peacebuilding**.
 - Keynote addresses underscored the importance of integrating more women into leadership positions within peacekeeping frameworks.
- **Organizational Support:**
 - The event was hosted by the **Centre for UN Peacekeepers** in collaboration with the **Government of India**.
 - It received endorsements from various defence and international organizations, reinforcing India's commitment to **global peace and security**.

EU Declares Caffeine 'Harmful' Under New Guidelines

- **EU Classification:** Caffeine classified as "**harmful to humans if swallowed**" under new chemical safety guidelines.
- **Reason:** Scientific assessments highlight **potential risks to heart, hydration, and nervous system**.
- **Primary Target:** Regulation primarily targets caffeine's use in **agriculture as a pesticide**.
- **Scientific Evidence:** Indicates adverse effects on **cardiovascular system, hydration, central nervous system**, and potential impacts on **birth weight**.

- **Cultural Backlash:** Criticism due to coffee's significant role in **European culture**.
- **Future Implications:** Concerns over potential future restrictions on **caffeine-containing products**.

Niger Becomes First African Country to Eliminate Onchocerciasis

Historic Achievement:

- The **World Health Organization (WHO)** has officially verified that **Niger** has eliminated **onchocerciasis**, also known as **river blindness**, marking it as the **first African nation** and the **fifth country globally** to achieve this milestone.

Disease Overview:

- Onchocerciasis is a **parasitic disease** caused by the **Onchocerca volvulus** worm.
- Transmission occurs through the bites of infected **blackflies**, predominantly found near **river systems**.
- The disease is a leading cause of **infectious blindness** worldwide.

Elimination Efforts:

- Niger's success is attributed to over **15 years** of dedicated efforts, including:
 - **Mass drug administration** of **ivermectin** to affected populations.
 - **Vector control** measures to reduce blackfly populations.
 - **Community engagement** and **health education** initiatives.
- These combined strategies reduced the disease's prevalence from approximately **60%** to **0.02%**, effectively halting transmission.

Global Context:

- Prior to Niger's achievement, **four countries** had been verified by WHO for eliminating onchocerciasis:
 - **Colombia** in 2013.
 - **Ecuador** in 2014.
 - **Mexico** in 2015.
 - **Guatemala** in 2016.
- Niger's accomplishment sets a precedent for other African nations battling the disease.

Onchocerciasis in Africa:

- The disease remains a significant public health concern in several African countries.
- Niger's success underscores the effectiveness of sustained intervention programs and offers a model for elimination efforts across the continent.

India's Timely Contribution to the UN Regular Budget 2025

Current Affairs in Detail

- **India paid USD 37.64 million** to the **UN Regular Budget for 2025** on **January 31, 2025**, meeting the 30-day deadline specified in UN financial regulations.
- This payment placed India on the UN's "**honour roll**", a list of **35 member states** that fulfilled their financial obligations on time as of January 31, 2025.
- **UN Spokesperson Stephane Dujarric** acknowledged India's contribution, stating, "*We thank our friends in India*".
- **UN General Assembly President Philemon Yang**, ahead of his India visit (February 4–8, 2025), praised India's **consistent track record** of paying dues in full and on time.
- India's contribution reflects its **commitment to multilateralism** and global governance. The country has **never defaulted** on UN payments, reinforcing its reputation as a **responsible global stakeholder**.

Other Important Aspects

UN Regular Budget Structure:

- Funds the **core administrative functions** of the UN, including the General Assembly, Security Council, Secretariat, and human rights entities.
- Adopted annually and covers **January 1 to December 31**. Peacekeeping operations have a separate budget (July 1–June 30).
- Contributions are based on a "**capacity-to-pay**" **formula**, factoring in GDP, per capita income, and external debt. Assessments range from **22% (US)** to **0.001% (least developed nations)**.

Implications of Non-Payment:

- Member states lose their **voting rights** in the General Assembly if dues exceed contributions for the **previous two years**.

India's Assessed Contribution:

- For 2024, India paid **\$32.89 million**, highlighting a steady increase in its share due to its **growing economy**.

Top Contributors to UN Regular Budget (2025):

- **USA (22%), China (15.25%), Japan (8.03%), and Germany (7.1%)**.

US Foreign Policy Shift: UNHRC Withdrawal & Extended UNRWA Funding Ban

Current Affairs Details:

- **Decision Announcement:** President Trump has decided to **withdraw the US from the UN Human Rights Council** and **extend the funding ban on UNRWA**.
- **Withdrawal from UNHRC:** The US is stepping back from the **UNHRC**, citing concerns over the council's alleged **bias** and inefficacy in addressing human rights issues.
- **Extension of UNRWA Funding Ban:** The decision to **extend the UNRWA funding ban** is driven by long-standing concerns regarding the agency's **management practices** and its **political stance** on Palestinian issues.
- **Official Justifications:** A spokesperson for Trump highlighted that these measures are taken to better safeguard **national interests** and ensure accountability within **international organizations**.
- **Diplomatic Implications:** The move is expected to impact **US diplomatic relations** and may invite **mixed reactions** from global stakeholders, with critics warning it could weaken multilateral efforts in promoting **human rights**.

Other Important Aspects:

International Reactions:

- Several countries and international bodies have expressed concern that the US withdrawal from the **UNHRC** might undermine the global human rights framework.
- **Critics argue** that such unilateral actions could set a precedent for disengagement from established multilateral institutions.

Policy Continuity and Shifts:

- This decision is in line with a broader trend in **US foreign policy** that favors **assertive national sovereignty** over cooperative international engagement.
- The extension of the **UNRWA funding ban** reaffirms a consistent policy stance regarding financial support to agencies involved in contentious political issues.

ECOWAS Confronts Political Turbulence in West Africa

Current Affairs in Detail

- **Effective Withdrawal (January 29, 2025):** Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso officially exited the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) after a year-long notice period, marking the first such withdrawal in the bloc's 50-year history.
- **Formation of the Alliance of Sahel States (AES):** The three countries established the AES in September 2023 as a security and economic alliance. They plan to deploy a **5,000-strong joint military force** against jihadist threats and introduced a **common passport** to replace ECOWAS travel documents.
- **ECOWAS's Response:** The bloc retained diplomatic and economic ties, allowing citizens of the three nations to use ECOWAS passports and enjoy visa-free movement. Trade under the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS) will continue.
- **Root Cause:** The withdrawal stemmed from ECOWAS's sanctions on Niger after the 2023 coup, which the juntas termed "inhumane." They accused ECOWAS of being influenced by Western powers like France and pivoted toward partnerships with Russia, Turkey, and Iran.



Other Important Aspects

ECOWAS's Challenges:

- **Security Risks:** The exit weakens ECOWAS's ability to counter jihadist insurgencies in the Sahel, which account for nearly half of global terrorism-related deaths.
- **Legitimacy Crisis:** Citizens perceive ECOWAS as prioritizing leaders' interests over public welfare. Analysts warn this withdrawal may trigger a domino effect among dissatisfied members.

AES's Ambitions:

- **Economic Integration:** AES aims to create a **monetary union** based on natural resources and develop infrastructure in energy, transport, and agriculture.
- **Geopolitical Shift:** The bloc seeks to reduce Western influence, cutting military ties with France and the U.S. while deepening cooperation with Russia (e.g., Wagner Group).

Economic Implications:

- **Trade Dependency:** As landlocked nations, Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso rely on ECOWAS ports. Continued trade under the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) may mitigate short-term disruptions.
- **Investment Decline:** Analysts predict reduced FDI in the three countries, among the region's poorest, due to perceived instability.

India's Humanitarian Aid to Honduras

- **Date:** February 23, 2025.
- **Aid Sent:** India dispatched 26 tonnes of humanitarian aid to Honduras.
- **Contents:** Medical supplies, disaster relief material including surgical supplies, glucometers, oximeters, gloves, syringes, IV fluids, blankets, sleeping mats, and hygiene kits.
- **Reason:** Assistance provided after Honduras was ravaged by Tropical Storm SARA in November 2024.
- **Impact:** The storm caused catastrophic flooding, landslides, displacement, and increased risk of diseases.

Environment | Science & Technology

India Adds Four New Ramsar Sites, Including First for Jharkhand and Sikkim

New Ramsar Site Designations:

- Ahead of World Wetlands Day on February 2, 2025, India has designated four additional wetlands as Ramsar sites, bringing the country's total to 89.
- The newly recognized sites are:
 - **Sakkarakottai Bird Sanctuary** in Tamil Nadu
 - **Therthangal Bird Sanctuary** in Tamil Nadu
 - **Khecheopalri Wetland** in Sikkim
 - **Udhwa Lake** in Jharkhand

State Milestones:

- With these additions, Tamil Nadu now boasts 20 Ramsar sites, the highest among Indian states.
- Notably, **Khecheopalri Wetland** and **Udhwa Lake** are the first Ramsar sites for Sikkim and Jharkhand, respectively.

Significance of Ramsar Sites:

Biodiversity Conservation:

- Ramsar sites are wetlands of international importance, recognized under the Ramsar Convention for their critical role in conserving global biodiversity.
- These ecosystems support a wide array of flora and fauna, including many endangered species.

Ecological Functions:

- Wetlands provide essential services such as water purification, flood regulation, and groundwater replenishment.
- They act as carbon sinks, thereby playing a role in climate change mitigation.

Gujarat Declares Guneri Mangrove as First Biodiversity Heritage Site

Historic Declaration:

- The **Gujarat Biodiversity Board** has officially designated a **32.78-hectare area** in **Guneri village**, located in **Lakhpat taluka** of **Kutch district**, as the state's first **Biodiversity Heritage Site (BHS)**.

Unique Inland Mangrove Ecosystem:

- Unlike typical coastal mangroves, the **Guneri mangroves** thrive in a **non-tidal, inland environment**, making them ecologically significant.

Conservation and Management:

- The designation aims to ensure the **conservation and enrichment** of the area's unique flora and fauna through a structured **management plan**.
- A local **Biodiversity Management Committee**, comprising members from local self-governance institutions, will oversee the site's preservation efforts.

Rare Saffron Reedtail Damselfly Spotted in Karnataka

- The **Saffron Reedtail Damselfly**, a species **endemic to the Western Ghats**, has been observed for the **first time in Karnataka**. This discovery was made in **Madhugundi** of **Chikkamagaluru district**.
- The species, known for its vibrant **saffron coloration**, had previously been documented only in select parts of the Western Ghats, making this sighting significant for biodiversity records in the region.
- The observation highlights the **rich biodiversity** and the **ecological significance** of the Western Ghats, an internationally recognized biodiversity hotspot.
- Local experts and environmentalists have emphasized the importance of such findings in **assessing the health** of local ecosystems and formulating **conservation strategies** to protect endemic species.

India's Meteoric Rise in Mobile Manufacturing

Transformation in Production Capacity:

- **From 2 to 300+ Units:** In 2014, India had just **2 mobile manufacturing units**; today, there are over **300 operational units** nationwide, marking a massive expansion in domestic production.
- **Local Production Surge:** The share of **mobile phones made in India** has surged from **26% in 2014-15** to an impressive **99.2%** today.

Economic Milestones:

- **Manufacturing Value Explosion:** The value of mobile phone manufacturing has skyrocketed from **₹18,900 crore in FY14** to **₹4,22,000 crore in FY24**.
- **Export Growth:** Exports, which were negligible in 2014, have now crossed **₹1,29,000 crore**, reflecting India's growing prowess in the global market.

Landmark Initiatives in Biomedical Research and Innovation

Dedication of the First Ferret Research Facility:

- **State-of-the-Art Facility:** India's first **Ferret Research Facility** has been inaugurated at the **Translational Health Science and Technology Institute (THSTI)**, Faridabad, Haryana.
- **Research and Pandemic Preparedness:** This facility is designed to support **vaccine development, therapeutic testing, and research on emerging infectious diseases**, enhancing India's pandemic preparedness.
- **Biosafety Standards:** The facility adheres to the highest biosafety and research standards, ensuring reliable and safe operations in biomedical research.

Launch of GARBH-INi-DRISHTI Data Repository:

- **Extensive Maternal and Child Health Database:** Developed under the **GARBH-INi program**, this platform provides access to clinical data, images, and biospecimens from over **12,000** pregnant women, newborns, and postpartum mothers.
- **Transformative Research Potential:** As one of South Asia's largest maternal and child health databases, it is expected to empower researchers globally to improve **maternal and neonatal health outcomes**.
- **Collaborative Efforts:** The repository represents a synergy among India's leading research institutions and hospitals, fostering collaborative biomedical research.

Technology Transfer Agreement Execution:

- **Partnership for Commercialization:** THSTI has executed a **Technology Transfer Agreement** with **M/s Sundyota Numandis Probiotics Pvt. Ltd.**
- **Innovative Microbial Consortium:** This agreement facilitates the commercialization of THSTI's genetically defined synthetic microbial consortium, **Lactobacillus crispatus**, isolated from the reproductive tracts of women in the GARBH-INi cohort.
- **Nutraceutical Applications:** The microbial consortium is poised for **nutraceutical applications**, promoting health and well-being through targeted **microbiome-based interventions**.

Advancement in Biomedical Research:

- **Infrastructure Investment:** The inauguration of specialized facilities such as the Ferret Research Facility underscores India's commitment to building robust research infrastructure.
- **Data-Driven Health Research:** The launch of comprehensive data repositories like **GARBH-INi-DRISHTI** plays a crucial role in transforming clinical research and health outcomes, which is a key focus area in government initiatives and policy reforms.

NGT Issues Notice to Centre on Use of Invasive Fish for Mosquito Control

- The **National Green Tribunal (NGT)** has issued a notice to the **Central Government** regarding the use of two invasive fish species—**Gambusia affinis** (commonly known as **Mosquitofish**) and **Poecilia reticulata** (known as **Guppy**)—employed as biological agents to control mosquito populations in various states.
- These fish species have been introduced into water bodies in several states, including **Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, Punjab, and Andhra Pradesh**.

- The **National Biodiversity Authority** has classified these species as "**invasive and alien**", noting their adverse effects on local aquatic ecosystems, particularly by causing food scarcity for indigenous fish species.
- Countries such as **Australia** and **New Zealand** have banned the use of Mosquitofish due to their negative environmental impacts.
- The **Invasive Species Specialist Group** has listed Mosquitofish among the world's **100 worst invasive alien species**.

Chinese Astronauts Achieve Artificial Photosynthesis in Space

Current Affairs:

- **Breakthrough Experiment:** Astronauts aboard China's **Tiangong space station** have successfully conducted an **artificial photosynthesis** experiment, converting **carbon dioxide (CO₂)** and **water (H₂O)** into **oxygen (O₂)** and **hydrocarbon fuels** using solar energy.
- **Methodology:** The process utilized a **semiconductor catalyst** within a compact, drawer-like apparatus to mimic natural photosynthesis, efficiently operating under ambient temperature and pressure conditions.
- **Significance:** This development is pivotal for future space missions, potentially enabling **on-site production** of essential resources like oxygen and fuel, thereby reducing reliance on Earth-based supplies.

Other Important Aspects:

- **Comparison with Electrolysis:** Unlike traditional electrolysis, which splits water into hydrogen and oxygen using electricity, this artificial photosynthesis method directly harnesses solar energy, enhancing energy efficiency and operational simplicity.
- **Future Applications:** The technology holds promise for sustaining **long-duration missions** and establishing **lunar or Martian bases**, where in-situ resource utilization is crucial for mission success.

Innovative Drug Delivery System Developed by Indian Researchers for Arthritis Treatment

Current Affairs:

- **Breakthrough in Arthritis Treatment:** Researchers from the **Institute of Nano Science and Technology (INST), Mohali**, an autonomous institution under the Department of Science and Technology (DST), have developed a novel "**self-actuating**" **drug delivery system** aimed at revolutionizing the treatment of **Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA)**.

Mechanism of the New System:

- The system utilizes **specially designed microspheres** loaded with **methotrexate**, a commonly used anti-rheumatic drug.
- These microspheres are engineered to **sense inflammation** in the joints and **release the drug only when needed**, responding directly to the **biochemical signals** in the inflamed synovial environment.

Advantages Over Traditional Treatments:

- **Targeted Drug Release:** Ensures that therapeutic agents are released only at the site of inflammation, minimizing systemic exposure.
- **Reduced Side Effects:** By limiting drug release to inflamed areas, the system reduces the risk of side effects associated with systemic drug administration.
- **Improved Patient Compliance:** The self-regulating nature of the system may reduce the frequency of dosing, enhancing patient adherence to treatment regimens.

IIT Madras Launches India's First Cancer Genome Atlas for Early Breast Cancer Detection

Current Affairs:

- **Inauguration of the Bharat Cancer Genome Atlas (BCGA):** On February 3, 2025, the **Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras** unveiled the **Bharat Cancer Genome Atlas (BCGA)**, marking India's inaugural comprehensive cancer genome database. This initiative focuses on early detection and personalized treatment strategies for **breast cancer**.

- **Data Compilation:** The BCGA encompasses data from **960 whole exome sequences** derived from **480 breast cancer patient tissue samples** collected nationwide. This extensive dataset aims to identify cancer-specific biomarkers pertinent to the Indian demographic.

Other Important Aspects:

- **Collaborative Efforts:** The project was executed in partnership with **Karkinos Healthcare, Mumbai**, the **Chennai Breast Clinic**, and the **Cancer Research and Relief Trust, Chennai**. These collaborations were pivotal in analyzing and assembling anonymized genetic variant summaries from Indian breast cancer samples.
- **Addressing Genomic Underrepresentation:** Historically, India has been underrepresented in global cancer genome studies. The BCGA seeks to bridge this gap by providing a comprehensive genomic landscape of breast cancer specific to the Indian population.

Significance of the BCGA:

- **Early Detection:** By identifying cancer-specific biomarkers, the BCGA aims to facilitate the early detection of breast cancers in Indian patients.
- **Personalized Medicine:** The atlas provides insights into the genetic basis of cancer progression, promoting a shift towards personalized treatment strategies tailored to individual genetic profiles.
- **Research Resource:** The BCGA serves as a valuable repository for researchers and clinicians, offering data to enhance understanding of cancer genomics within the Indian context.

World's Largest Iceberg Drifts Toward South Georgia Island, Threatening Penguin and Seal Habitats

Current Affairs:

Iceberg A23a's Movement:

- The **A23a iceberg**, recognized as the world's largest, is drifting toward **South Georgia Island**, a critical breeding ground for penguins and seals.
- Covering approximately **3,500 square kilometers (1,350 square miles)**, A23a is more than twice the size of London.

Potential Ecological Impact:

- If the iceberg grounds near the island, it could obstruct feeding routes for **penguins and seals**, forcing them to travel longer distances for food.
- This increased travel could lead to higher energy expenditure, adversely affecting the health and survival rates of **penguin chicks and seal pups**.

Other Important Aspects:

Historical Context:

- A23a calved from Antarctica's **Filchner Ice Shelf** in 1986 and remained relatively stationary until it began moving in 2020.
- Its current trajectory is influenced by the **Antarctic Circumpolar Current**, the world's most powerful oceanic jet stream.

Scientific Observations:

- Researchers from the **British Antarctic Survey** have been monitoring A23a's movement using satellite imagery.
- The iceberg's sheer size and potential impact on local ecosystems have made it a subject of significant scientific interest.

New Arctic Ocean Map Reveals Area Twice the Size of France

- **Historic Mapping Milestone:** A new Arctic Ocean map under the **Seabed 2030 project** has uncovered **1.4 million sq km** of previously uncharted seafloor – equivalent to **twice the size of France and six times England**.
- **Technological Breakthrough:**
 - **Enhanced Resolution:** The **International Bathymetric Chart of the Arctic Ocean (IBCAO) Version 5.0** uses a **100 x 100-meter grid**, doubling the resolution of earlier versions (200 x 200 meters).
 - **Cloud Computing & Metadata Integration:** Advanced compilation methods, including cloud-based distributed computing, enabled detailed mapping despite Arctic ice cover.



- **Project Progress:**

- **25% Global Ocean Mapped:** Seabed 2030 has now mapped ~25% of the world's ocean floor, with the Arctic contributing significantly to this milestone.
- **2030 Goal:** The project aims to fully map the ocean floor by 2030 to aid navigation, resource management, and climate modelling.

January 2025 Warmest on Record Globally

- **Record Warmth:** January 2025 recorded the warmest global surface temperature, 0.79 degrees Celsius above the 1991-2000 January average.
- **European Temperature Rise:** Temperatures over European land rose 2.51 degrees Celsius above the 1991-2000 January average.
- **Sea Surface Temperature:** The average sea surface temperature between 60 degrees north and south reached 20.78 degrees Celsius, the second-highest January level on record.
- **Arctic Sea Ice:** Arctic sea ice reached its lowest extent for January, measuring six percent below average.
- **Continued Warming:** January 2025 continues the trend of record temperatures observed over the past two years despite temporary cooling effects of La Nina conditions.

Australian Scientists Achieve First-Ever Kangaroo Embryo Creation via IVF

Groundbreaking Achievement:

- In February 2025, researchers from the **University of Queensland** successfully created the world's first **kangaroo embryos** using **in vitro fertilization (IVF)**.
- This was accomplished through **intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI)**, where a single sperm cell is injected directly into a mature egg.

Methodology:

- The team utilized **sperm and egg cells** collected from **recently deceased eastern grey kangaroos**.
- Over **20 embryos** were produced, marking a significant milestone in reproductive science.

Conservation Implications:

- This advancement holds promise for the conservation of **endangered marsupial species** such as:
 - **Koalas**
 - **Tasmanian devils**
 - **Northern hairy-nosed wombats**
 - **Leadbeater's possums**
- By refining IVF techniques, scientists aim to **preserve genetic diversity** and bolster populations of these threatened species.

Advantages of ICSI:

- The ICSI method is particularly beneficial for species with **limited viable sperm**, as it requires only a few live sperm cells to create embryos.
- This is crucial for animals like koalas, whose sperm viability decreases after freezing.

India's Energy Ambitions Highlighted at India Energy Week 2025

Inauguration of India Energy Week 2025:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the inaugural session of the third edition of India Energy Week (IEW) 2025 via video message on February 11, 2025.
- He emphasized the pivotal role of the energy sector in India's growth trajectory.

Significance of IEW 2025:

- Envisioned as more than just an industry conference, IEW has evolved into a dynamic platform redefining global energy dialogues.
- In just two years, it has become the world's second-largest energy event.

- The 2025 edition, held from February 11-14 at Yashobhoomi, New Delhi, marks a significant milestone in shaping the global energy narrative.

India's Energy Pillars:

The Prime Minister outlined five key pillars underpinning India's energy ambitions:

- **Resource Harnessing:** Efficient utilization of available energy resources.
- **Innovation Encouragement:** Fostering innovation among India's brilliant minds.
- **Economic Strength and Political Stability:** Leveraging India's robust economy and stable political environment.
- **Strategic Geography:** Utilizing India's strategic location to facilitate attractive and easier energy trade.
- **Commitment to Global Sustainability:** Aligning energy initiatives with global sustainability goals.

Achievements in Renewable Energy:

- **Solar Energy Expansion:** Over the past decade, India's solar energy generation capacity has increased thirty-two times, positioning it as the third-largest solar power generating nation globally.
- **Non-Fossil Fuel Capacity:** India's non-fossil fuel energy capacity has tripled, reflecting a significant shift towards cleaner energy sources.

Ethanol Blending Milestones:

- **Current Blending Rate:** India has achieved a nineteen percent ethanol blending rate, leading to foreign exchange savings, increased farmer revenue, and significant reductions in CO₂ emissions.
- **Future Targets:** The nation aims to achieve a twenty percent ethanol mandate by October 2025.
- **Biofuels Industry Potential:** With 500 million metric tonnes of sustainable feedstock, India's biofuels industry is poised for rapid growth. During its G20 presidency, India established the Global Biofuels Alliance, underscoring its commitment to advancing biofuel initiatives.

India's First Indigenous Automated Biomedical Waste Treatment Plant Launched at AIIMS New Delhi

- **Inauguration of 'Srjanam':** On February 10, 2025, Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh inaugurated India's first indigenous Automated Biomedical Waste Treatment Plant, named 'Srjanam', at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in New Delhi.
- **Developed by CSIR-NIIST:** The plant was developed by the **Council of Scientific and Industrial Research - National Institute for Interdisciplinary Science and Technology (CSIR-NIIST)**, Thiruvananthapuram.

Features and Capabilities:

- The 'Srjanam' rig can disinfect pathogenic biomedical waste, including blood, urine, sputum, and laboratory disposables, without the need for incineration.
- It imparts a pleasant fragrance to the treated waste.
- The plant has a daily capacity of **400 kg**, with an initial phase handling **10 kg** of degradable medical waste per day.

Environmental Impact:

- This eco-friendly technology offers a sustainable solution to biomedical waste management, reducing reliance on energy-intensive incinerators.
- It minimizes health hazards associated with improper waste disposal, such as the release of carcinogens and particulate matter.

Validation and Safety:

- The technology has been third-party validated for its antimicrobial action.
- Studies indicate that the treated material is safer than organic fertilizers like vermicompost.

Biomedical Waste in India:

- According to the **Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)**, India generates approximately **743 tonnes** of biomedical waste daily.
- Effective management of this waste is crucial to prevent health hazards and environmental pollution.

India to Host Next AI Summit, Advocates for Global South Inclusivity

Upcoming AI Summit in India:

- Following the recent **Artificial Intelligence Action Summit** in Paris, co-chaired by **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** and **French President Emmanuel Macron**, it has been confirmed that **India will host the next international AI summit**.

Focus on the Global South:

- Prime Minister Modi emphasized the importance of making AI governance **inclusive and sustainable**, particularly addressing the needs of the **Global South**.
- He highlighted challenges such as limited **compute power, talent, data, and financial resources** in these regions.
- Modi stated, "Governance is also about ensuring access to all, especially in the Global South. It is where the capacities are most lacking."

India's Role in AI Governance:

- India has actively participated in all five working groups leading up to the summit, focusing on:
 - **International governance**
 - **Future of work**
 - **Security and safety**
 - **AI for general interest**
 - **Innovation and culture**
- The nation aims to balance the global governance framework by making it **inclusive, sustainable**, and mindful of the needs of Global South countries.

AI's Transformative Potential:

- Prime Minister Modi highlighted AI's capability to transform sectors such as **health, education, and agriculture**, potentially accelerating progress toward the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.
- He advocated for **sustainable AI models** that are efficient in size, data needs, and resource requirements, drawing a parallel to the human brain's efficiency.

Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI):

- India supports expanding the membership of GPAI, which currently has 44 members.
- GPAI aims to bridge the gap between theoretical understanding and practical application of AI, promoting responsible and human-centric development and use of AI technologies.

China's Ambitious Deep-Sea Laboratory in the South China Sea

China has unveiled plans to construct a **deep-sea laboratory** approximately **6,500 feet beneath the South China Sea**. This facility aims to study "**cold seep**" **ecosystems**, unique seabed environments that may harbour significant fuel reserves.

Key Features:

- **Location:** Situated in the **contested South China Sea**, an area rich in resources like methane, cobalt, and nickel.
- **Facility Design:** The lab will be anchored to the ocean floor and equipped with life-support systems to accommodate up to **six scientists** for **month-long missions**.
- **Research Objectives:** Focus on measuring methane levels and conducting live experiments to explore potential energy resources.

Strategic Implications:

- **Geopolitical Tensions:** The South China Sea is a disputed region, with multiple countries claiming parts of it. China's establishment of this lab could escalate existing territorial disputes.
- **Technological Advancements:** This initiative aligns with China's broader efforts to enhance its deep-sea exploration capabilities, complementing projects like the **Fendouzhe submersible**, which reached the **Challenger Deep** in 2020.

Biovet's LSD Vaccine for Lumpy Skin Disease Gets CDSCO Approval

Key Highlights of the Development

- **Approval Date:** The Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO) granted approval to **Biovet's** vaccine for **Lumpy Skin Disease (LSD)** on **February 10, 2025**.
- **Significance:** This is the **first indigenous vaccine** developed in India to combat LSD, a viral disease affecting cattle.
- **Developer:** The vaccine was developed by **Biovet**, a leading Indian veterinary pharmaceutical company.

About Lumpy Skin Disease (LSD)

- **Cause:** LSD is caused by the **Lumpy Skin Disease Virus (LSDV)**, which belongs to the **Capripoxvirus genus**.
- **Symptoms:**
 - **Skin Nodules:** Formation of lumps on the skin.
 - **Fever:** High body temperature.
 - **Reduced Milk Production:** Significant drop in milk yield in dairy cattle.
 - **Mortality:** In severe cases, LSD can lead to death.
- **Transmission:** The disease spreads through **insect vectors** like mosquitoes, ticks, and flies, as well as through **direct contact** with infected animals.

Impact of LSD in India

- **Economic Losses:** LSD has caused significant economic losses to the **dairy and livestock industry**, particularly in states like **Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Punjab**.
- **Outbreaks:** Recent outbreaks have affected **millions of cattle**, leading to a decline in milk production and livestock trade.

Key Features of Biovet's LSD Vaccine

- **Indigenous Development:** The vaccine is the result of **extensive research and development** by Indian scientists.
- **Efficacy:** Clinical trials have shown the vaccine to be **highly effective** in preventing LSD.
- **Affordability:** The vaccine is **cost-effective**, making it accessible to farmers across the country.
- **Scalability:** Biovet has the capacity to produce the vaccine on a **large scale** to meet the growing demand.

Role of CDSCO

- **Regulatory Authority:** The CDSCO is India's **national regulatory body** for pharmaceuticals and medical devices, ensuring the **safety, efficacy, and quality** of drugs and vaccines.
- **Approval Process:** The approval of Biovet's LSD vaccine involved **rigorous clinical trials** and evaluation of its safety and efficacy.

ISRO and IIT Madras Develop Indigenous Semiconductor Chip for Space Applications

In a significant stride towards self-reliance in space technology, the **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** and the **Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras** have collaboratively developed and successfully booted an indigenous semiconductor chip named **IRIS (Indigenous RISC-V Microprocessor for Space Applications)**.

Key Features of IRIS:

- **SHAKTI Processor Baseline:**
 - IRIS is built upon the **SHAKTI processor**, an open-source initiative by IIT Madras based on the **RISC-V** instruction set architecture.
 - This foundation ensures versatility, allowing deployment across various domains, from Internet of Things (IoT) devices to complex compute systems in strategic sectors.
- **Fault-Tolerant Design:**
 - To enhance reliability, especially crucial for space missions, IRIS incorporates fault-tolerant internal memory systems.
 - This design consideration addresses the stringent demands of space-based applications, ensuring consistent performance in challenging environments.

Significance of the Development:

- **Indigenous Capability:** The successful development and booting of IRIS underscore India's growing proficiency in designing and fabricating high-end microprocessors domestically, reducing dependence on foreign technology.
- **Strategic Applications:** IRIS is tailored to meet the specific processing requirements of devices and sensors used in ISRO's space missions, potentially enhancing the performance and reliability of future space endeavours.

RISC-V Architecture:

- RISC-V is an open-standard instruction set architecture (ISA) that enables the development of custom processors.
- Its open-source nature allows for flexibility and innovation, fostering advancements in processor design globally.

NAKSHA: Revolutionizing Urban Land Records

Overview of the Initiative:

- NAKSHA stands for the **National Geospatial Knowledge-based Land Survey of Urban Habitations**.
- Launched by the **Government of India**, it is aimed at **modernizing urban land records** in **152 Urban Local Bodies (ULBs)**.
- The project spans **26 states and 3 Union Territories** and is fully funded with a projected cost of **Rs 194 crore**.

Key Objectives and Features:

- **Modernization & Digitization:**
 - Utilizes **geospatial technology** and **aerial surveys** to update and maintain **accurate land records**.
 - Aims to enhance **transparency** and reduce **land disputes** by digitizing property records.
- **Efficient Urban Planning:**
 - Updated records will aid in better **urban planning** and infrastructure development.
 - Empowers local governments with reliable data for sustainable **urban development**.
- **Technical Support:**
 - **Survey of India** will conduct aerial surveys to provide **orthorectified imagery**.
 - **Madhya Pradesh State Electronic Development Corporation (MPSEDC)** is developing the web-GIS platform.
 - **National Informatics Centre Services Inc. (NICSI)** provides the necessary storage facilities.

Important Stakeholders:

- **Government Bodies:**
 - **Department of Land Resources, Ministry of Rural Development**: The key driver behind the initiative.
 - **Government of India**: Fully funds the project and steers national policy on land record modernization.
- **Prominent Officials:**
 - **Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan**: Scheduled to inaugurate the NAKSHA project.
 - **Other Officials**: Including Union Minister of State for Rural Development & Communications and state leaders, ensuring multi-level governmental support.
- **Technical Agencies:**
 - **Survey of India**: Provides critical geospatial data.
 - **MPSEDC** and **NICSI**: Collaborate for digital infrastructure and record management.

AIIMS Delhi Pioneers Robotic Surgery in Public Healthcare

Overview of the Initiative:

- AIIMS Delhi has become one of the first **government hospitals** to install a **state-of-the-art surgical robot** in its **General Surgery Department**.
- The introduction of **robotic surgery** marks a significant step in modernizing patient care and aligning with global advancements in medical technology.
- This initiative is aimed at improving **surgical precision**, reducing complications, and ensuring **faster recovery times** for complex procedures.

Key Features of the Advanced Surgical Robot:

- **Enhanced Visualization**: Offers a **magnified, three-dimensional view** of the operative field for superior detail.
- **Robotic Dexterity**: Equipped with **robotic arms** that provide unmatched dexterity, enabling surgeons to perform intricate dissections and suturing with precision.
- **Minimally Invasive Procedures**:
 - Facilitates **less invasive surgeries** such as complex colorectal, oesophageal, and pancreatic procedures.
 - Results in **reduced hospital stays** and quicker patient recovery.



- **Training Benefits:** Over 100 surgical residents at AIIMS Delhi now have the opportunity to train on this advanced technology, elevating the institute's medical education standards.

Euclid's Einstein Ring: Illuminating the Mysteries of Dark Matter

Overview of the Discovery:

- **Euclid Mission:**
 - Operated by the **European Space Agency (ESA)**, Euclid is designed to map the geometry of the dark universe.
 - Its advanced instruments are dedicated to studying **gravitational lensing** and the distribution of **dark matter** across the cosmos.
- **Einstein Ring Phenomenon:**
 - An **Einstein ring** is formed when the light from a distant galaxy is bent around a massive object (like another galaxy or a cluster), creating a ring-like image.
 - This phenomenon offers a natural "magnifying glass" to observe otherwise hidden details of the universe.

Key Insights from the Discovery:

- **Mapping Dark Matter:**
 - The ring provides direct evidence of **dark matter** distribution, as the gravitational lensing effect is influenced by the unseen mass.
 - Analysis of the ring's structure helps scientists estimate the amount and location of dark matter in the lensing object.
- **Advancing Cosmological Models:**
 - Data from the Einstein ring is used to test and refine **cosmological models** that explain the formation and evolution of galaxies.
 - It helps in understanding the **interaction between dark matter and visible matter**.

Digital Uniformity in Government: MeitY Launches DBIM

Key Initiative:

- The **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)** is launching the **Digital Brand Identity Manual (DBIM)** to ensure **uniformity** across all **government websites** and digital platforms.

Primary Objectives:

- **Consistent Digital Presence:**
 - Standardizes **logos**, **colour palettes**, **typography**, and **imagery** for a cohesive look and feel.
 - Establishes uniform **brand voice** and **messaging frameworks** across platforms.
- **Enhanced User Experience:**
 - Aims to deliver a **citizen-friendly**, accessible, and efficient digital experience.
 - Supports **Gov.In: Harmonisation of Government of India's Digital Footprint** initiative.

Implementation & Launch Details:

- **Event Venue:** The DBIM will be launched at **Taj Palace, New Delhi** on **February 18, 2025** during the **First Chief Information Officer (CIO) Conference 2025**.
- **Key Stakeholders:**
 - **Jitin Prasada**, Union Minister of State for Electronics and Information Technology and Commerce & Industry, will officially unveil the DBIM.
 - Participation from **NIC**, **MyGov**, and other government ministries highlights broad-based support.

Strategic Components:

- **DBIM Toolkit:** Provides resources for seamless adoption across all digital platforms.
- **GOV.IN CMS Platform:** Tailored to support DBIM-compliant websites, ensuring a consistent digital identity.
- **Central Content Publishing System:** Streamlines content updates and reinforces brand uniformity.
- **Social Media Branding:** Integrated guidelines for a unified digital outreach across social platforms.

India's First Vertical Bi-facial Solar Plant at Okhla Vihar Metro Station

- **India's first vertical bi-facial solar plant** has been installed at the **Okhla Vihar metro station in Delhi**.
- This innovative project was inaugurated by the **Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC)**.
- The plant utilizes **bi-facial solar panels** mounted **vertically** along the metro station's boundary wall.

Key Features of the Vertical Bi-facial Solar Plant:

- **Bi-facial Technology:** The solar panels are **bi-facial**, meaning they can generate electricity from **both sides** (front and back). This increases energy generation compared to traditional panels.
- **Vertical Installation:** The panels are installed **vertically**, which is a space-saving solution, especially in urban areas with limited rooftop space.
- **Green Energy Initiative:** This project is part of DMRC's commitment to promoting **green energy** and reducing its carbon footprint.
- **Demonstration Project:** This pilot project at Okhla Vihar metro station could pave the way for wider adoption of vertical bi-facial solar plants in urban infrastructure projects across India.

Government and Intel Launch AI Skilling Program

- **Launch Date:** February 18, 2025.
- **Partners:** Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), and Intel India.
- **Objective:** Train 1 lakh young innovators with AI and entrepreneurial skills by 2025.
- **Program:** AI for Entrepreneurship, a micro-learning module hosted on the Skill India Digital Hub (SIDH).
- **Target Audience:** Individuals from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, including rural learners.
- **Certification:** Joint certification by MSDE, NSDC, Skill India, and Intel.
- **Focus:** Simplifying AI concepts and integrating them with entrepreneurial thinking.

ITU and DoT Partner to Develop AI-Powered Digital Twins

- **Partnership:** Department of Telecommunications (DoT) and International Telecommunication Union (ITU) signed a Letter of Intent (LoI) on February 18, 2025.
- **Objective:** Advance sustainable development, create international standards, and stimulate innovation in infrastructure planning.
- **Focus Areas:** Digital twins, AI-driven solutions, IMT-2030 technologies, healthcare, urban development, and transportation.
- **Key Figures:** Dr. Neeraj Mittal (DoT Secretary) and ITU Secretary-General Ms. Doreen Bogdan-Martin.
- **Future Plans:** India to host the ITU-Plenipotentiary Conference in 2030, further solidifying its position in global ICT policy discussions.

Microsoft's Majorana 1: A Quantum Leap in Computing

Breakthrough Overview:

- **Microsoft** unveiled the **Majorana 1** quantum chip, marking a significant milestone in **quantum computing**.
- This chip is built on a **topological core**, introducing a new state of matter that enhances the **stability** and **efficiency** of quantum processors.

Key Highlights of Majorana 1:

- **Topological Innovation:**
 - The chip leverages a **topological state of matter**—a fourth state beyond solid, liquid, and gas—to achieve unprecedented error resistance.
 - This advancement allows for **faster** and more **reliable qubits**.
- **First of Its Kind:**
 - Majorana 1 is the world's **first topological quantum processor**, integrating a new material class called **topoconductors**.
 - This innovation significantly reduces the error rate inherent in traditional quantum processors.

- **Path to Scale:**
 - Microsoft envisions scaling up to **one million qubits**, with each qubit being just **1/100th of a millimetre** in size.
 - This miniaturization could potentially enable a quantum computer that outperforms current supercomputers.
- **Real-World Applications:**
 - The breakthrough has implications across industries, from **drug discovery** and **material science** to solving complex optimization problems.
 - Microsoft's research aims to transform practical computing by addressing problems that are currently unsolvable.

Chandrayaan-3 Unveils Geological Map of Moon's South Polar Region

Key Discovery:

- Chandrayaan-3 has provided new data to create a **detailed geological map** of the **Moon's south polar region**.
- This mapping effort is a significant milestone in understanding the lunar surface, particularly the **geological formations** and **mineral compositions**.

Scientific Breakthrough:

- **Data Collection:**
 - The mission's advanced instruments gathered high-resolution imagery and spectral data.
 - This information is crucial for identifying **rock types**, **soil composition**, and **potential water ice deposits** in permanently shadowed regions.
- **Geological Insights:**
 - The detailed map reveals previously unknown features, such as **ancient impact craters** and **volcanic formations**.
 - It helps scientists decode the Moon's **evolutionary history** and assess its potential for future exploration.

NASA Launches Lunar Trailblazer to Map Moon's Water Deposits

- **Mission:** NASA launched the **Lunar Trailblazer satellite** to map water deposits on the moon.
- **Date:** The satellite was launched on February 26, 2025.
- **Purpose:** Focuses on permanently shadowed craters near the poles to identify potential water resources for future lunar missions.
- **Instruments:** Uses **Lunar Thermal Mapper (LTM)** and **High-resolution Volatiles and Minerals Moon Mapper (HVM3)** to detect water and temperature variations.
- **Launch Details:** The satellite was launched from Florida aboard a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket.
- **Significance:** Aims to understand the moon's water and potentially shed light on the history of Earth's water.

Mars Reveals Ocean-Like Features and Sandy Beaches

Scientific Discovery:

- Recent findings from Mars by **China's Zhurong rover** indicate the presence of **ocean-like formations** and **sandy beach structures** that hint at past water activity on the Red Planet.
- Advanced imaging and spectrometry techniques have enabled scientists to identify features resembling **coastal environments**, sparking renewed interest in Mars' potential to have supported life.

Key Highlights of the Discovery:

- **Oceanic Evidence:**
 - Data suggests that ancient Mars might have hosted vast bodies of water, with remnants evident in the form of what appear to be **ocean basins**.
 - The detection of mineral deposits typically formed in water-rich environments bolsters the theory of Mars' watery past.
- **Sandy Beach Formations:**
 - High-resolution images reveal areas with **sandy textures** similar to terrestrial beaches, possibly shaped by ancient water currents.

- These features provide clues about the dynamic processes that may have once sculpted the Martian surface.

India Surpasses 100 GW Solar Power Capacity: A Leap Towards Green Energy

Current Affairs in Detail

- **Historic Milestone Achieved:** India's installed solar power capacity crossed **100 GW** as of January 31, 2025, marking a transformative shift toward renewable energy.
- **Growth Trajectory:**
 - Solar capacity surged by **3,450%** in a decade, from **2.82 GW in 2014** to **100.33 GW in 2025**.
 - **24.5 GW** of solar capacity was added in 2024 alone, doubling the previous year's installations.
 - **84.10 GW** of projects are under implementation, with **47.49 GW** tendered, pushing the total pipeline to **296.59 GW** (including hybrid projects).
- **State Contributions:** Top-performing states include **Rajasthan, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh**, driving utility-scale solar growth.
- **Rooftop Solar Boom:**
 - **4.59 GW** of rooftop solar added in 2024 (53% YoY growth).
 - **PM SuryaGhar Muft Bijli Yojana** (launched 2024) facilitated nearly **9 lakh household installations**, democratizing clean energy access.
- **Solar Manufacturing Surge:**
 - Module production capacity rose from **2 GW (2014)** to **60 GW (2024)**.
 - India aims for **100 GW solar module production by 2030**, positioning itself as a global manufacturing hub.

Other Important Aspects:

Link to National Targets:

- Aligns with India's **500 GW non-fossil fuel target by 2030** (Paris Agreement commitment).
- Supports **Net Zero by 2070** and energy independence goals.

Economic & Environmental Impact:

- Reduces reliance on coal, curbing **CO₂ emissions** and fossil fuel imports.
- Creates jobs in manufacturing, installation, and R&D sectors.

Policy Drivers:

- **Solar Parks Scheme:** Accelerating large-scale projects.
- **PLI Scheme for Solar Modules:** Boosting domestic manufacturing.
- **Renewable Purchase Obligations (RPOs):** Mandating DISCOMs to source renewable energy.

India Among Top 10 Nations Most Affected by Extreme Weather Events

- India has been identified as one of the top ten countries most severely impacted by extreme weather events over the past three decades, according to the **Climate Risk Index (CRI) 2025**.
- India has been ranked **sixth** in the **list of nations most affected by extreme weather events** (long-term assessment from 1993 to 2022).
- Between 1993 and 2022, the nation experienced over **400 extreme weather incidents**, resulting in approximately **80,000 fatalities** and economic losses estimated at **\$180 billion**.
- The **Climate Risk Index of India**, however, has improved with the country being placed at **49th globally (2022)**, as against seventh worst-affected due to extreme weather events in 2019.

Key Findings:

- **Global Impact:** Worldwide, extreme weather events have led to nearly **800,000 deaths** and caused economic damages amounting to **\$4.2 trillion** over the past 30 years.
- **Regional Vulnerability:** Countries such as **China, India, Philippines, and Pakistan** face recurring threats from climate-induced extreme weather, highlighting the disproportionate impact on nations in the Global South.
- **Recent Trends:** In 2024, India experienced extreme weather events on **93% of days** during the first nine months, leading to **3,238 deaths**, affecting **3.2 million hectares** of crops, destroying **235,862 houses**, and resulting in the loss of approximately **9,457 livestock**.



Implications for India:

- **Economic Growth:** Climate change poses significant challenges to India's economic development. The **Asian Development Bank** warns that without effective adaptation measures, India's GDP could decline by **25% by 2070** due to climate-related impacts.
- **Adaptation Measures:** To mitigate these effects, India must invest in infrastructure improvements, such as flood controls and water management systems, and develop comprehensive climate resilience strategies.

Green Shipping Conclave 2025: Pioneering India's Maritime Sustainability

Event Overview:

- Union Minister **Sarbananda Sonowal** inaugurated the **Green Shipping Conclave, 2025** in Mumbai, reaffirming India's commitment to global maritime sustainability.
- The event underscored India's strategic collaboration with international bodies like the **International Maritime Organisation (IMO)**.

Commitment to Sustainability:

- Union Minister Sonowal emphasized India's dedication to a **cleaner, greener maritime future** in line with PM **Narendra Modi's vision of Viksit Bharat**.
- Highlighted initiatives include:
 - **Harit Sagar Green Port Guidelines**
 - **Green Tug Transition Programme**
 - **National Green Hydrogen Mission**
- A significant **Maritime Development Fund of ₹25,000 crore** has been announced to boost green infrastructure, alternative fuels, and fleet modernisation.

International Collaboration:

- The conclave featured the **Secretary General of IMO, His Excellency Arsenio Dominguez**, who acknowledged India's strategic role in sustainable shipping.
- High-level discussions, including a CEO Round Table on Renewable Energy, focused on clean fuel investments and green port infrastructure.

Future Roadmap:

- **Maritime India Vision 2030** and **Amrit Kaal Vision 2047** were key frameworks presented to transform the maritime sector through:
 - Clean energy adoption (green hydrogen, ammonia, biofuels, LNG)
 - Development of low-emission, hybrid, and fully electric vessels
 - Convergence of green initiatives with policies like the Sustainable Ship Recycling Programme at Alang, adhering to Hong Kong Convention standards.

Digital Pilot Licensing: India's Leap into Aviation Innovation

Key Development:

- India has become the **second country** globally to launch the **Electronic Personnel License (EPL) for pilots**.
- Launched by **Civil Aviation Minister Ram Mohan Naidu**, this digital system is a major step in transforming traditional pilot licensing.

Digital Transformation in Aviation:

- The **EPL** replaces physical licenses with a digital, secure version, accessible via the **eGCA mobile application**.
- This move is part of broader initiatives under **Digital India** and aims to enhance both security and operational efficiency in the aviation sector.

Strategic Importance:

- **Streamlined Licensing Process:** The digital system reduces dependency on printed licenses, leading to a more efficient and environmentally friendly process.
- **Enhanced Security:** Real-time access to pilot credentials strengthens security protocols and supports better regulatory compliance.

- **Future Growth:** With the aviation sector rapidly expanding, the EPL is poised to support the expected demand for approximately **20,000 pilots** in the near future.

Global Context:

- Following **China**, India now joins as the second country to implement this advanced system, setting a benchmark in global aviation technology.
- The **International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO)** has also encouraged member states to adopt electronic licensing to improve safety and efficiency.

Reports & Indices

NITI Aayog's Policy Report on Enhancing State Public Universities

Release of Policy Report:

- On February 10, 2025, NITI Aayog unveiled a policy report titled '**Expanding Quality Higher Education through States and State Public Universities**'.
- The release was led by key figures including Vice Chairman Suman Bery, Member (Education) Dr. Vinod Kumar Paul, CEO BVR Subrahmanyam, Secretary of the Department of Higher Education Vineet Joshi, and Secretary General of the Association of Indian Universities (AIU) Dr. Pankaj Mittal.

Focus on State Public Universities (SPUs):

- This pioneering report centers on SPUs, which account for approximately 80% of India's higher education.
- It offers a comprehensive quantitative analysis over the past decade on critical indicators such as quality, funding, governance, and employability.
- Insights were gathered from extensive consultations with stakeholders, including officials from over 20 states and union territories, vice-chancellors from 50 SPUs, and chairpersons of several State Higher Education Councils.

Key Recommendations:

The report presents nearly 80 policy recommendations, categorized into short, medium, and long-term strategies. These suggestions aim to:

- **Enhance Research and Pedagogy:** Improve the quality of research and teaching methodologies.
- **Strengthen Funding Mechanisms:** Increase institutional and systemic funding capacities.
- **Revamp Governance Structures:** Empower and upgrade institutional governance frameworks.
- **Boost Employability:** Enhance industry-academia collaboration to improve student employability.

Alignment with National Education Policy (NEP) 2020:

- The report aligns with NEP 2020's vision of doubling higher education enrolment to nearly 9 crore students by 2035, with SPUs accommodating about 7 crores of these students.
- This underscores the critical role of SPUs in shaping India's educational future.

Government Initiatives:

Recent budget announcements have introduced key initiatives to bolster higher education:

- **Prime Minister's Research Fellowship (PMRF):** Selection of 10,000 research fellows to promote advanced studies.
- **Expansion in IITs:** Addition of 6,500 seats in second-generation Indian Institutes of Technology.
- **Bharatiya Bhasha Textbook Scheme:** Promotion of regional language education through dedicated textbooks.
- **PM-USHA Scheme:** Allocation of INR 13,000 crores from 2023-24 to 2025-26, providing up to INR 100 crores per SPU to facilitate their transition into Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities (MERUs).

India Retains Third Position Globally for LEED Green Building Certification in 2024

- India retained its **third position** on the U.S. Green Building Council's (**USGBC**) annual list of top countries for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (**LEED**) in 2024.
- **370 projects in India were certified for LEED**, covering **8.5 million gross square meters (GSM)** or **91.5 million square feet**.
- **China topped the rankings with over 25 million GSM certified**, followed by **Canada with 10 million GSM**.

- **LEED certifications in India are managed by the Green Business Certification Inc. (GBCI)**, which works to accelerate the adoption of green buildings nationwide.
- **India's commitment to sustainable development and climate action** is highlighted by its consistent ranking among the top three countries for LEED certifications.

LEED Certification Categories

- **Operations and Maintenance (O+M)**: Leading with 153 projects.
- **Interior Design and Construction (IDC)**: 102 projects.
- **Building Design and Construction (BDC)**: 61 projects.

Expansion of LEED Certifications

- **Beyond commercial spaces**: LEED certifications now include industrial, residential, and educational sectors.
- **India's real estate market** is increasingly aligned with sustainable practices.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

- **India's efforts contribute to the United Nations' SDGs for 2030**, focusing on sustainable and resilient building design, construction, and operations.
- **Net-zero emissions target by 2070**: India's ongoing push for sustainability solidifies its leadership in the global movement for a sustainable future.

India's Position in the 2024 Corruption Perceptions Index

- **Decline in Ranking**: In the **2024 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI)** released by **Transparency International**, India ranked **96th out of 180 countries**, with a score of **38**. This marks a decline from the previous years:
 - **2023**: Ranked **93rd** with a score of **39**.
 - **2022**: Ranked **85th** with a score of **40**.

Global Context:

- **Top Performers**:
 - **Denmark**: Ranked **1st**, perceived as the least corrupt nation.
 - **Finland and Singapore**: Followed in the top rankings.
- **Neighboring Countries' Rankings**:
 - **China**: Ranked **76th**.
 - **Sri Lanka**: Ranked **121st**.
 - **Pakistan**: Ranked **135th**.
 - **Bangladesh**: Ranked **149th**.

Global Trends:

- Over **two-thirds** of countries scored below **50**, indicating significant corruption issues.
- The **global average score** remains stagnant at **43**, with little progress over the past decade.
- Since **2012**, while **32 countries** have shown significant improvement, **148 countries** have either remained stagnant or deteriorated in their scores.

India's Suicide Death Rate Declines Significantly: Lancet Study

Key Findings of the Lancet Study:

- **Overall Decline**: India's **suicide death rate** decreased by **30.5%** from 1990 to 2021.
- **Global Context: Globally**, suicide rates have also decreased by **40%**, but India's decline is noteworthy in its scale.
- **State-Level Variations**:
 - Southern states like **Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh** have shown the most substantial declines in suicide rates.
 - However, some states, particularly in **central and eastern India**, have seen less progress or even increases in certain periods.

Factors Contributing to the Decline:

- **Improved Socio-Economic Conditions:** Economic growth, increased access to education, and improvements in living standards may have contributed to reduced stress and improved mental well-being in some populations.
- **Public Health Interventions:** Increased awareness about mental health issues and the implementation of **suicide prevention programs** at the national and state levels are likely playing a role.
- **Reduced Access to Lethal Means:** While not explicitly stated in the articles, broader societal changes might have indirectly reduced access to certain lethal methods of suicide in some areas.

Concerns and Areas for Continued Focus:

- **High Absolute Numbers:** Despite the percentage decline, the **absolute number of suicides remains high** in India, indicating a continued need for intervention.
- **Vulnerable Groups:** Certain populations, including **young adults, individuals in specific professions, and those facing socio-economic distress**, may remain at higher risk.
- **Mental Health Infrastructure:** India still faces significant challenges in terms of **access to mental healthcare**, particularly in rural areas. Strengthening mental health services is crucial for further reducing suicide rates.
- **Stigma and Awareness:** **Stigma** surrounding mental illness and suicide continues to be a barrier to seeking help. Raising awareness and promoting open conversations about mental health are essential.

Global Medical Oxygen Shortage Affects Two-Thirds of World's Population

Lancet Commission Report Findings:

- A recent report by the **Lancet Global Health Commission on Medical Oxygen Security** reveals that approximately **5 billion people**, nearly two-thirds of the global population, lack access to medical oxygen.
- The shortage is most acute in **low- and middle-income countries (LMICs)**, where **82% of patients** requiring medical oxygen reside.
- Regions such as **South and East Asia, the Pacific, and sub-Saharan Africa** are particularly affected, accounting for nearly **70% of the unmet demand**.

Impact on Healthcare:

- Medical oxygen is vital for treating various conditions, including:
 - Surgical procedures
 - Asthma
 - Trauma
 - Maternal and child care
 - Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
- Despite its importance, less than **one-third of patients** in need receive adequate oxygen therapy, leaving **70% without necessary treatment**.

Pandemic Preparedness:

- The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the critical need for reliable medical oxygen supplies to prevent mass fatalities.
- Ensuring access to medical oxygen is essential for future pandemic preparedness and response.

Recommendations from the Commission:

- The report suggests collaborative efforts among governments, industries, global health agencies, academic institutions, and civil society to:
 - Strengthen health systems
 - Improve oxygen distribution infrastructure
 - Invest in cost-effective solutions to enhance public health

India's Maternal Mortality Ratio Plummets by 83% in 30 Years

Current Affairs in Detail

- **Historic Decline:** India's **Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR)** fell by **83%** from **556 deaths per lakh live births in 1990 to 97 in 2018–20**, outperforming the global decline of 42%.
- **Infant Mortality Reduction:** The **infant mortality rate** dropped by **69%** (vs. 55% globally) over the same period.

- **SDG Target Progress:** India achieved the **National Health Policy 2017 target** of reducing MMR to **<100/lakh births by 2020** and is advancing toward the **SDG 3.1 target of 70/lakh by 2030**. 310. Eight states, including **Kerala (19)**, **Maharashtra (33)**, and **Tamil Nadu (54)**, have already met the SDG target.
- **Key Drivers:**
 - **Institutional Deliveries:** Increased from **40% (2005–06)** to **89% (2019–20)**, ensuring safer childbirth conditions.
 - **Government Schemes:** Initiatives like **Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan** (free antenatal care), **LaQshya** (quality maternity care), and **PMMVY** (cash benefits for pregnant women).
 - **Female Literacy & Delayed Marriages:** Female literacy rose from **55% (2005–06)** to **83% (2019–21)**, and child marriages dropped from **47%** to **15%**.

Other Important Aspects:

Health Infrastructure Growth:

- **1,087 Special Newborn Care Units** and **2,868 Newborn Stabilisation Units** established nationwide.
- **Ayushman Bharat Health Centers** saw a **9-fold rise in footfall** (13.49 crore in 2019–20 to 121 crores in 2023–24).

Regional Disparities:

- **Uttar Pradesh (MMR 167)** and **Assam** lag behind, comparable to conflict-affected nations like Yemen.
- **Bihar** and **Assam** identified as high-risk “hotspots” due to weaker health systems.

Global Context:

- India’s MMR (**97**) is lower than the global average (**211 in 2017**) and on par with Nicaragua.
- Kerala’s MMR (**19**) matches the U.S., while Maharashtra parallels Mexico.

Art and Culture

New Mission for Manuscripts Announced in the Union Budget

Introduction of the Mission:

- The Union Budget has announced a **new mission for manuscripts**, aimed at preserving and digitizing India’s rich literary and cultural heritage.
- This initiative is designed to **catalogue, restore, and make accessible ancient manuscripts** spanning diverse languages and regions across the country.

Key Objectives:

Preservation and Digitization:

- The mission will focus on the **preservation** of valuable manuscripts and their **digitization** to ensure long-term accessibility and protection from deterioration.
- Digitization is expected to facilitate **research and scholarship**, allowing scholars worldwide to access rare and significant texts.

Cultural Heritage Promotion:

- By making these manuscripts available digitally, the initiative aims to **promote India’s cultural legacy**, ensuring that traditional knowledge and historical documents are preserved for future generations.

Collaboration and Capacity Building:

- The mission is expected to involve collaborations between government bodies, academic institutions, and cultural organizations.
- It will also focus on **training and capacity building** for professionals in the fields of conservation, archiving, and digital humanities.

Budgetary Support and Implementation:

- While specific budgetary figures were not detailed in the summary, the mission forms part of a broader strategy within the Union Budget to invest in **cultural and heritage projects**.
- The initiative aligns with efforts to use **modern technology** for the preservation and dissemination of historical and cultural artifacts.

Government Focus on Cultural Preservation:

- This initiative reflects the government’s renewed focus on **cultural preservation** as a strategic priority.

Intersection of Technology and Culture:

- The mission highlights the use of **digital tools** and **modern archival methods** to safeguard ancient manuscripts.

Policy Implications:

- The initiative demonstrates the role of **public policy** in preserving intangible cultural heritage.
- It is relevant for questions on government initiatives that integrate **technology**, **culture**, and **education**, providing a holistic approach to preserving national identity and history.

38th Surajkund International Crafts Fair Begins

- Event Kickoff:** The 38th Surajkund International Crafts Fair commenced in Faridabad, inaugurated by Union Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat and Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini.
- Partner States:** Madhya Pradesh and Odisha are the partner states for this year's fair.
- Global Participation:** Nearly 600 participants from 42 countries, including Egypt, Ethiopia, Syria, Afghanistan, and Belarus, are attending the fair.
- Duration:** The fair will run until February 23, 2025, from 10 AM to 8 PM daily.

Aadi Mahotsav: Celebrating India's Tribal Heritage

- National Tribal Festival 'Aadi Mahotsav'** was inaugurated by **President Droupadi Murmu** in New Delhi on **February 16, 2025**.
- Organized by the **Ministry of Tribal Affairs**, the festival runs from **February 16 to 24, 2025** at the **Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium**.
- The festival is designed to **showcase and promote** the rich cultural heritage, crafts, and traditions of India's **tribal communities**.

Key Highlights of the Festival:

- Cultural Showcase:**
 - Tribal Handicrafts & Art Exhibitions:** Display of traditional art, crafts, and indigenous products.
 - Ethnic Food Stalls:** Offering authentic tribal delicacies that reflect regional flavours.
 - Cultural Performances:** Folk dances, music, storytelling, and interactive sessions highlighting tribal customs.
- Platform for Tribal Entrepreneurs:**
 - Provides a stage for **tribal artisans, entrepreneurs, and artists** to connect with both **national and international markets**.
 - Emphasizes **sustainability** and **environmental harmony** embedded in traditional practices.

Government Initiatives for Tribal Development:

- Increased Budget Allocation:**
 - Tribal Development Budget** has increased fivefold, now approximately **₹1.25 lakh crore**.
 - Tribal Welfare Budget** has tripled to **₹15,000 crore**.
- Education and Skill Development:**
 - Over **1.25 lakh tribal children** are currently benefiting from more than **470 Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS)** across the country.
 - These schools play a crucial role in bridging the **education gap** in remote tribal areas.
- Healthcare Improvements:**
 - The government has established **30 new medical colleges** in tribal-dominated regions.
 - Launch of a **National Mission on Tribal Health** aims to tackle health issues like **sickle cell anaemia**, with a target to eradicate the condition by **2047**.

India as Theme Country: A Celebration of Cultural Diplomacy

- Theme Country Designation:** India was showcased as the **Theme Country** for the first time at the **27th Annual New Year Celebration of the Asia Pacific Cultural Centre (APCC)**.
- Venue & Date:** The celebration took place at the **Tacoma Dome** in **Washington State** on **February 17, 2025**.

- **Organizing Body:** The event was hosted by the **Asia Pacific Cultural Centre (APCC)**, a prominent organization promoting cross-cultural awareness in the Asia-Pacific region.

Cultural Showcases:

- **Traditional Dance Performances:** Featured diverse Indian classical and folk dances such as **Bharata Natyam, Kuchipudi, Bhangra, Garba, Odissi, and Silambam** (Tamil martial art dance).
- **Photo Exhibition:** Titled “**India through Tim’s Eyes**”, the exhibition highlighted iconic Indian tourist sites captured by Seattle-based photographer **Tim Durkan**.

Diplomatic Engagements:

- **Elected Officials' Participation:** Attended by key figures including **US Congress Representatives Marilyn Strickland and Emily Randall, Washington State Lieutenant Governor Denny Heck, and State House Speaker Laurie Jinkins**.
- **Video Messages:** Featured greetings from **Washington Governor Bob Ferguson, US Senator Maria Cantwell, and US Congresswoman Pramila Jaypal**.
- **Consular Outreach:** The **Consulate General of India in Seattle** played a significant role, presenting Indian **tri-colour stoles** to the officials.

India Gets First Wall Museum on Meteorology, Celebrating IMD's 150 Years

- **India's first wall museum** dedicated to meteorology has been inaugurated, showcasing the 150-year journey of the **India Meteorological Department (IMD)**.
- The museum was inaugurated by **Dr. Jitendra Singh**, the **Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science and Technology**, on **February 19, 2025**.
- The inauguration took place at the **Mausam Bhawan**, the headquarters of IMD, in **New Delhi**.
- This unique museum visually narrates the **history, evolution, and achievements** of IMD since its establishment in **1875**.

Key Highlights of the Wall Museum:

- **Visual Storytelling:** The museum uses **wall panels, exhibits, and interactive displays** to depict IMD's 150-year history.
- **Historical Timeline:** It showcases the **milestones, advancements, and contributions** of IMD in weather forecasting and meteorological services.
- **Technological Evolution:** Exhibits highlight the progression of **meteorological instruments and technologies** used by IMD over the decades.
- **Disaster Management Focus:** The museum also emphasises IMD's crucial role in **disaster prediction and early warning systems**, which help save lives and minimise damage from natural calamities.
- **Public Awareness:** Aims to enhance **public understanding** of meteorology and the importance of weather forecasts in daily life and national development.

Pharaoh Tomb of Thutmose II: Unravelling Egypt's Ancient Secrets

Archaeological Discovery:

- A **remarkable discovery** has been made in Egypt: the tomb of **Pharaoh Thutmose II** has been uncovered, shedding new light on the legacy of the **18th Dynasty**.
- The site promises to offer invaluable insights into ancient Egyptian **burial customs, religious practices**, and the architectural prowess of the era.

Key Highlights of the Discovery:

- **Historical Significance:**
 - Thutmose II, a lesser-known pharaoh, ruled during a period of both cultural prosperity and political complexity.
 - The tomb's **artifacts** and **inscriptions** are expected to enrich our understanding of the **Amarna period** and the evolution of ancient Egyptian civilization.
- **Archaeological Techniques:**
 - The excavation employs **state-of-the-art technologies** like 3D scanning and ground-penetrating radar, ensuring minimal disturbance to the site.

- These methods are enabling archaeologists to reconstruct the tomb's original layout and decipher hieroglyphics with greater precision.
- **Cultural Heritage & Preservation:**
 - The discovery is a significant milestone for Egypt's cultural heritage, highlighting the importance of **preservation efforts** in the face of urban expansion and environmental challenges.
 - Collaborative efforts between local authorities and international experts are ensuring that the site is protected and studied systematically.

Assam Recognizes Bathouism to Preserve Indigenous Faith

- **Recognition:** Assam's Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) government recognizes **Bathouism** in official documents.
- **Announcement:** Union Home Minister Amit Shah announced the recognition at the 13th Triennial Conference of the All Bathou Mahasabha.
- **Cultural Significance:** Bathouism is the traditional faith of the **Bodo tribe**, involving the worship of **Bathoubwrai**, the supreme god.
- **Implementation:** Bathouism is now included in the religion column of educational institutions' admission forms and key documents like birth and death certificates.
- **Parallels:** Bathouism shares similarities with **Sarnaism**, another indigenous faith practiced in Central India.

Celebrating 25 Years of Sufi Music & Culture: Jahan-e-Khusrau

Event Overview:

- The festival **Jahan-e-Khusrau** marks a significant **25-year milestone** in celebrating the rich heritage of **Sufi music and culture**.
- It serves as a vibrant platform for artists, musicians, and cultural enthusiasts to honour the legacy of **Sufi mysticism** and its timeless impact on art and society.

Key Highlights:

- **Soulful Performances:**
 - Live renditions of Sufi music, including **qawwali** and **sufi devotional songs**, resonate with audiences, invoking a sense of spiritual introspection.
 - Renowned Sufi artists and emerging talents come together to showcase the **diverse musical traditions** that have defined the genre.
- **Cultural Enrichment:**
 - The festival features **poetry recitations**, **dance performances**, and **interactive sessions** that delve into the philosophy of Sufism.
 - Emphasis on the role of Sufi music in fostering **unity, love, and harmony** across communities.
- **Legacy of Amir Khusrau:**
 - Named in honour of the legendary Sufi poet **Amir Khusrau**, the event underscores his profound influence on Indian music and literature.
 - His contributions continue to inspire the evolution of Sufi art forms, making this celebration a tribute to his enduring legacy.

India International Dance and Music Festival 2025: A Global Celebration of Arts

Event Duration & Venue:

- Held from **22 to 27 February 2025** in **New Delhi**.

Event Overview:

- A premier festival showcasing a vibrant mix of **dance** and **music** performances from both Indian and international artists.
- Designed to promote **cultural exchange** and foster global collaboration in the arts.

Key Highlights:

- **Diverse Performances:**



- Features include classical, contemporary, and fusion dance styles along with live musical renditions.
- International artists bring unique cultural elements, enhancing the global flavour of the festival.
- **Interactive Workshops & Sessions:**
 - Hands-on workshops on various dance and music techniques provide a learning platform for aspiring artists.
 - Sessions encourage audience interaction, bridging cultural gaps through art.
- **Cultural Significance:**
 - Emphasizes India's rich artistic heritage while integrating global art trends.
 - Acts as a platform for cultural diplomacy, strengthening international ties through the universal language of music and dance.

Shivaji Maharaj Jayanti 2025: Honouring a Timeless Legacy

Date & Significance

- **Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Jayanti** is celebrated on **February 19, 2025**, marking the **395th birth anniversary** of the legendary Maratha warrior king and founder of the Maratha Empire, **Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj**.
- The day honours his visionary leadership, military prowess, and dedication to establishing a sovereign Hindu kingdom known as **Swarajya**.

Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj (1630 – 1680):

- **Founder of the Maratha Empire:** Shivaji Maharaj carved out an independent Maratha kingdom from the declining Adilshahi sultanate of Bijapur in the 17th century, which eventually evolved into the Maratha Empire.
- **Military Strategies:** He was renowned for his innovative military tactics, including guerrilla warfare (**Ganimi Kava**), which he effectively used against larger and more powerful enemies like the Mughal Empire.
- **Administration:** Shivaji Maharaj established a well-structured administrative system in his kingdom. His administration was known for its efficiency and promotion of the welfare of his subjects. He implemented **Ashtapradhan**, a council of eight ministers, to advise him on state matters.
- **Naval Force:** Recognizing the importance of sea power, Shivaji Maharaj built a formidable Maratha navy. He is considered the '**Father of the Indian Navy**'.
- **Religious Tolerance:** Despite being a devout Hindu, Shivaji Maharaj was known for his religious tolerance. His army and administration included people from various religious backgrounds.
- **Shivneri Fort:** Located near Junnar in Pune district, Shivneri Fort is a historically significant 17th-century military fortification. It is not only famous as the birthplace of Shivaji Maharaj but also for its strategic location and impressive architecture. The fort contains several monuments dedicated to Shivaji Maharaj and temples.

Achiever's Advice

Name: Sai Teja Katlagunta

Post: Enforcement officer/ Account officer

Department: EPFO, Ministry of labour

Selected through the examination: UPSC EPFO EO/AO



Personal Journey & Motivation

- **What inspired you to pursue a career in the Present Job/Service?**

Frankly speaking, I had no idea about the present job until I qualified for interview. The only reason I applied was that it posts recruited by UPSC. The only inspiration was to get a good govt. job, at a point when I failed UPSC CSE mains continuously.

- **Can you share your educational background?**

- B-tech in electrical engineering from IIT Bhubaneswar
- M.A in political science from IGNOU
- PGDIHRM from IGNOU (currently pursuing)

- **How did you stay motivated during the long preparation phase?**

Well indeed it is a long preparation phase (still continuing) and motivation plays key role in sustaining that energy and keeping us move forward.

You see motivation is a temporary psychology state that drives us towards a positive target. It can come from anything - from a song, reading a book, a poem, watching great leaders' movies, looking at our family members struggles etc. literally from anything.

But motivation is one key part. We also need long term strategy, courage to chase our target despite struggles, discipline, effective learning strategies, good friend circle etc

Preparation Strategy

- **What was your study plan, and how did you structure your daily routine?**

Well large part of my preparation didn't have a study plan or daily routine, which was one reason for my initial failures.

So, study plan and daily routine are important especially during the last few weeks/months leading up to exam.

My study plan in includes mapping out overall time I need to study x y z books in an available time and assigning time targets for each subject. Then I convert that into daily targets.

Daily routine includes a mix of 2-3 subjects studying along with revision and solving PYQs.

- **What role did coaching institutes, test series, and self-study play in your preparation?**

Coaching institutes CAN be good if they have good teachers, support system, mentorship and guidance. One needs to choose a good institute based on above parameters. In my case they did play some positive role.

Test series - before venturing into rest series, solving PYQs is must. And choose a test series that matches with the changing dynamics of UPSC papers and solve them as per timeline with OMR so as STO simulate exam like conditions.

Self-study is very big factor (more important than coaching institute) that will have huge impact in clearing the exam. In my success i would rate self-study having very big impact.

- **How did you manage time effectively between Prelims, Mains, and Interview preparation?**

Time management is skill that one needs to learn especially between prelims and mains.

I used to use forest app to track subject wise study time spent both for prelims and mains so as track my progress time spent on each subject.

This way I was able to manage time effectively in covering all subjects while ensuring I spend adequate time to each subject.

Any effective time management system should include tracking time spent on studies each day, subject wise etc so as to plan effectively in competing study, planning revision and incorporating tests.



- **What are the key mistakes aspirants should avoid during their preparation?**

Based on my experience following should be avoided

1. Wasting/spending time on non-exam related activities
2. Not having proper time management
3. Not solving PYQ and test series
4. Not doing revisions regularly
5. Not identifying weak areas based on above

Subject-Wise Approach

- **How did you choose your optional subject, and what strategy did you follow for it?**

My choice was based purely on interest and its relevance or overlap with the GD syllabus.

Ideal strategy would be choose based on 3 factors

1. Interest on subject
2. Past experience or prior competence on subject
3. Availability of good study material or coaching on the subject

- **What books and resources do you recommend for General Studies?**

By this point I'm sure every aspirant understands what major sources to study such as laxmikanth for polity, spectrum for history etc.

- **How did you prepare for Current Affairs?**

Given the present trend, regular study of newspaper is crucial aside from studying any standard current affairs monthly magazine

- **What is the importance of attempting Test series?**

First it tells if we understood the topic or not, secondly it ensures us finding gaps in knowledge aside from other benefits like practice as per time limit, coverage of misc. topics etc.

- **How important is note-making, and what was your technique for making notes?**

Very crucial in exams where the syllabus is huge. Made notes by aligning with syllabus and PYQs. For interview the notes making involves closely tracking daf related keywords and making notes on those topics as well. For examples as I was IITian and electrical engineer it became important for me make relevant news on those topics separately.

Interview & Personality Test

- **Can you share your experience of the interview process?**

My UPSC EPFO interview was more or less on similar type of UPSC CSE interview. The board asked me about my engineering background questions, political science based as I did master from IGNOU, current affairs etc

- **What qualities do the interviewers look for in a candidate?**

Let me put it in this way briefly they look for Competence, confidence and communication aside from being rational and ethical approach in a person.

Challenges & Lessons

- **What were the biggest challenges you faced during your preparation and how did you overcome this?**

Challenges I faced range from facing financial instability to dent to my self-confidence due to repeated failures at mains level.

- **What role does mental health and stress management play in exam preparation?**

Very very crucial. One need to ensure mental health by developing strong emotional stability and resilience. Life is a bigger challenge than UPSC and our ultimate success in life and in UPSC depends on how healthy we are including mental health. Stress management ensures our productivity which is crucial for exam.



Final Advice

• Any comment on Study OAS Platform? Would you recommend aspirants as study partner?

Study OAS platform is a budding innovative useful platform for upcoming aspirants. I would strongly recommend it for aspirants as study partner because the advisor of study OAS platform has qualities that are required for a guide in UPSC and PSC exams which include huge experience with these exams, resilience, commitment, hard work, facing failed with courage etc much more than I can write in words.

Only those who have experienced this as aspirant can effectively guide and aspirant is what I believe. This makes study OAS platform most useful guide for aspirants.

• Any last words of encouragement for those currently preparing?

There is famous quote of Samuel Beckett that comes to my mind

*" Ever tried
Ever failed
No matter
Try again
Fail again
Fail better "*

Only by failing better (and you better fail, not in exam though, but in practice sessions/tests, you will realise your flaws, work on those and will succeed. Success ONLY COMES after failure. So, try and fail in practice sessions so that u can ace the final exam. Best wishes.