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Polity & Governance

Panchayati Raj Divas Date Change: Stirring Emotions in Odisha

Odisha Government's Decision:

- The **date for Panchayati Raj Divas** has been changed by the state government, sparking a significant emotional response.
- **BJP government** on Monday announced that **March 5**, the birthday of former chief minister **Biju Patnaik**, will not be celebrated as **Panchayati Raj Divas** from this year.
- The Panchayati Raj Divas will be observed on **April 24** in line with the **National Panchayati Raj Day**.
- The observance, traditionally linked to the legacy of **Biju Patnaik**, is seen by many as a symbol of Odisha's rich democratic and developmental heritage.

Emotional Reaction from Leadership:

- **Former Odisha CM (or long-time leader) Naveen Patnaik** expressed deep sentiments regarding the change, emphasizing the historical and emotional importance of the original date.
- His response underscores how deeply intertwined the date is with the state's **political legacy** and **developmental milestones**.

Key Aspects of the Issue

Historical Significance:

- The original Panchayati Raj Divas date commemorates the contributions of leaders like **Biju Patnaik**, whose efforts in modernizing Odisha continue to inspire.
- The date has traditionally been a reminder of the **Panchayati Raj reforms** that decentralized power and empowered local governance across India.

Impact on Local Governance:

- **Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs)**, a critical pillar of rural governance, owe much of their evolution to historical reforms linked with the celebrated date.
- The change may influence how these institutions are remembered and studied.

Political and Administrative Dimensions:

- The decision reflects broader **administrative recalibrations** and may be a subject of debate among policymakers and scholars alike.
- It highlights the evolving dynamics between historical legacy and current governance priorities.

E-Shram Portal: Empowering India's Unorganised Workforce

- Over **30.68 crore unorganised workers** have registered on the **E-Shram portal**, as per the latest data.

- Women constitute a significant **53.68%** of the total registrations, highlighting their active participation in the initiative.

Key Highlights:

- **Purpose of the Portal:**
 - The **E-Shram portal** was launched by the **Ministry of Labour and Employment** to create a **centralized database** of unorganised workers.
 - It aims to provide access to **social security schemes** and improve the delivery of welfare benefits.
- **Demographics:**
 - The majority of registrants belong to sectors like **agriculture, construction, and domestic work**.
 - A significant number of workers are from **Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, and Madhya Pradesh**.
- **Benefits:**
 - Registered workers are eligible for **accidental insurance coverage** under the **Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana**.
 - The database will help in the implementation of targeted welfare schemes.

Suspension of Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) Lifted

- **Action Taken:** The **Sports Ministry** has lifted the **suspension** of the **Wrestling Federation of India (WFI)** and restored its **recognition**.
- **Leadership:** **Sanjay Singh**, close aide of former president **Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh**, now has **full control** of WFI.
- **Reason for Suspension:** WFI was suspended on **December 24, 2023**, due to alleged **procedural violations** and influence of **former office-bearers**.
- **Compliance Measures:**
 - All amendments made during the suspension must be **reverted within 4 weeks**.
 - A balance of power among office bearers must be ensured, with a **transparent decision-making process**.
 - **Undertakings** to prevent involvement of suspended or terminated officials are required.
- **Participation in Events:** The lifting of suspension enables Indian wrestlers to compete in the **Asian Championships (March 25–30, 2025)** and other international events like the **Senior World Championships** in September.
- **Sports Ministry Directives:**

- Selections for international events must follow **transparent and fair guidelines**.
- Strict adherence to the **Sports Code** and UWW regulations.

India's Solar Revolution: PM Surya Ghar Achieves Milestone of 10 Lakh Installations

India's ambitious **PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana (MSGMBY)** has reached a significant milestone, with **10 lakh homes now equipped with rooftop solar systems**. Launched in **February 2024**, this initiative is transforming the nation's energy landscape by promoting renewable energy adoption.

Scheme Overview:

- The scheme aims to provide **free electricity** through subsidized rooftop solar installations.
- It targets **1 crore households** by **2026-27**, with **47.3 lakh applications** already received.
- Subsidies worth **₹4,770 crore** have been disbursed to over **6.13 lakh beneficiaries**.

Financial Support:

- Offers **collateral-free loans** up to **₹2 lakh** at a subsidized interest rate of **6.75%** through **12 public sector banks**.
- Subsidies of up to **₹78,000** are provided for installations up to **3 kW**.

Environmental Impact:

- Each solar installation offsets carbon emissions equivalent to **planting 100 trees**.
- The scheme is expected to save the government **₹75,000 crore annually** in electricity costs.

State-Level Achievements:

- States like **Gujarat, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu** have shown remarkable progress.
- **Chandigarh** and **Daman & Diu** have achieved **100% rooftop solar targets** for government buildings.

Oilfield Regulatory and Development Amendment Bill 2024: A Step Towards Energy Reform

The **Lok Sabha** has passed the **Oilfield (Regulatory and Development) Amendment Bill, 2024**, marking a significant milestone in India's energy sector. This bill aims to modernize the regulatory framework, attract investments, and boost oil and gas exploration and production.

Simplified Regulatory Framework:

- The bill introduces a **single permit system** called **petroleum leases**, replacing the need for multiple licenses for different hydrocarbon activities.

- It delinks **mining operations** from **petroleum operations**, addressing long-standing inefficiencies.

Ease of Doing Business:

- Focuses on reducing regulatory burdens and promoting collaboration between the government and contractors.
- Provides a **stable and predictable legal framework** to attract global investors.

Technological Advancements:

- Encourages the adoption of new technologies like **Carbon Capture Utilization and Storage (CCUS)** and **green hydrogen**.
- Facilitates the development of comprehensive energy projects.

Support for Small Operators:

- Enables resource and infrastructure sharing among operators to improve the viability of smaller oil blocks.

Enhanced Penalties and Dispute Resolution:

- Introduces higher penalties for non-compliance, up to **₹25 lakh** and **₹10 lakh per day** for continuing infractions.
- Establishes an **adjudication authority** and an **appellate mechanism** for efficient dispute resolution.

Cooperative Federalism:

- Ensures that states retain their rights to grant petroleum leases and collect royalties.

Indian Railways Joins Mission Amrit Sarovar to Combat Water Scarcity

- The **Indian Railways** has partnered with the Union Government's **Mission Amrit Sarovar** to address the critical issue of **water scarcity** in India.
- This initiative focuses on constructing and rejuvenating ponds to ensure sustainable water resources and groundwater recharge.

Mission Amrit Sarovar:

- Launched in **April 2022** as part of the **Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav** celebrations.
- Aims to construct or rejuvenate **75 ponds per district** across India.
- Over **68,000 ponds** have been completed as of **October 2024**, significantly improving water availability.

Role of Indian Railways:

- Railways will **desilt existing water bodies** and construct new ponds near railway sites.
- Excavated material will be reused for **railway embankments**, promoting sustainable practices.
- Collaboration with **district authorities** ensures site identification and implementation.

Community Participation:

- Emphasizes **Jan Bhagidaari (community involvement)** to foster ecological balance and climate resilience.
- Encourages local communities to actively participate in water conservation efforts.

Sansad Bhashini Initiative: Transforming Parliamentary Documentation with AI

- The **Sansad Bhashini initiative** is a groundbreaking project launched by the **Lok Sabha Secretariat** in collaboration with the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)** to modernize parliamentary processes using **artificial intelligence (AI)**.
- This initiative aims to enhance **multilingual accessibility**, streamline operations, and improve access to **parliamentary debates and records**.

Key Features of the Initiative:

AI-Powered Translation:

- Real-time translation of parliamentary content, including debates, committee meetings, and agenda files, into various **regional languages**.
- Supports linguistic diversity and accessibility for citizens across India.

Speech-to-Text Conversion:

- Converts spoken debates into written text with **real-time transcription**.
- Features include **background noise reduction** and customizable vocabulary for improved accuracy.

Automatic Summarization:

- Summarizes lengthy debates to assist in quicker decision-making and better record-keeping.

AI Chatbot:

- Designed to help MPs and officials retrieve parliamentary rules, documents, and procedural information efficiently.

Rashtriya Karmayogi Jan Seva Programme:

Building a Citizen-Centric Workforce

- The **Ministry of Ayush** launched the **Rashtriya Karmayogi Jan Seva Programme** on **March 18, 2025**, with the aim of fostering a more **accountable, compassionate, and citizen-centric workforce**.
- This initiative is part of the **Capacity Building Commission**, which seeks to transform the mindset of **Central Government employees** towards public service.

Key Objectives of the Programme:

Promoting Seva Bhav (Spirit of Service):

- Encourages public servants to view their roles as opportunities to bring **meaningful change** to people's lives.
- Aims to instill a sense of **service and accountability** among government employees.

Upskilling and Broadening Perspectives:

- Focuses on **training employees** to recognize their privileges and contribute to the well-being of others.
- Includes interactive sessions on **teamwork, problem-solving, and structured discussions**.

Enhancing Citizen Services:

- Encourages employees to adopt the right approach to public service for **timely service delivery** and a more organized work environment.

Training Methodology:

Interactive Approach:

- Replaces traditional lecture-based methods with **hands-on activities** like teamwork exercises and leadership stories.
- Participants reflect on their roles and engage in dialogue to improve **citizen services**.

Focus on Self-Discovery:

- Encourages employees to draw inspiration from **successful initiatives** and apply learnings to their daily work.

Capacity Building Commission:

- **Established by:** The **Government of India** under the **National Programme for Civil Services Capacity Building (NPCSCB)**.
- **Objective:** To enhance the capacity of civil servants and align their skills with the vision of a **New India**.
- **Key Initiatives:**
 - Development of **iGOT Karmayogi Platform** for online training.
 - Focus on **competency-based learning** and **continuous professional development**.

Balancing Development and Environmental Rights: Supreme Court's Landmark Ruling

- The **Supreme Court of India** has ruled that the **right to development through industrialization** holds equal priority with the **right to a clean environment**, both being fundamental rights under the **Indian Constitution**.
- This judgment was delivered on **March 18, 2025**, overturning previous orders by the **National Green Tribunal (NGT)** and the **Madras High Court** that had halted developmental activities in Auroville, Puducherry.

Key Highlights of the Judgment:

Sustainable Development:

- The court emphasized the need for a “**golden balance**” between economic growth and environmental conservation.
- It upheld the principle of **sustainable development**, which aims to meet present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs.

Fundamental Rights Involved:

- **Right to Clean Environment:** Guaranteed under **Articles 14** (equality) and **21** (right to life).
- **Right to Development:** Recognized under **Articles 14, 19** (right to engage in any profession, trade, or business), and **21**.

Overreach by NGT:

- The court found that the NGT had exceeded its jurisdiction by halting the Auroville Foundation's developmental activities, which were part of an approved **Master Plan**.

Case Background:

- The dispute arose when residents of Auroville alleged that the construction of roads, including the **Crown Road** and **Outer Ring Road**, was damaging the **Darkali Forest**, a man-made plantation.
- The NGT had directed the Auroville Foundation to halt construction and obtain environmental clearance, but the Supreme Court ruled that these directions were beyond the NGT's authority.

Delhi Joins National e-Vidhan Application (NeVA) Platform

- The **Delhi Legislative Assembly** has become the **28th legislature** to adopt the **National e-Vidhan Application (NeVA)** platform by signing a tripartite Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the **Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs (MoPA)** and the **Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (GNCTD)** on **March 22, 2025**.
- The MoU was signed in the presence of **Shri Kiren Rijiju**, Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Minority Affairs, and **Shri Vijender Gupta**, Speaker of the Delhi Legislative Assembly.

National e-Vidhan Application (NeVA)

- **Objective:** The National e-Vidhan Application (NeVA) aims to digitize legislative processes across India, fostering **transparency, efficiency**, and **accessibility**.
- **Features:**
 - Enables **paperless legislative practices** by providing real-time access to agendas, bills, and reports.
 - Supports **multilingual functionalities** to accommodate India's linguistic diversity.

- Accessible on various devices, ensuring convenience for users.
- **Environmentally sustainable**, reducing paper usage significantly.

- **Implementation:**

- Developed by the **Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs (MoPA)**.
- Adopted by **28 legislatures**, including the Delhi Legislative Assembly, as part of the "One Nation, One Application" vision.

- **Significance:**

- Enhances coordination among legislators and secretariat staff.
- Empowers legislative bodies to align with modern digital governance practices.

- **Accessibility:**

- Hosted on **Meghraj 2.0**, India's cloud infrastructure, ensuring scalability and security.
- Device-agnostic platform accessible via smartphones, tablets, laptops, and desktops.

Elon Musk's X Challenges Indian Government Over IT Act Violations

- Social media platform **X Corp** (formerly Twitter), owned by **Elon Musk**, has filed a lawsuit in the **Karnataka High Court** against the Indian government, alleging **unlawful content regulation** and **arbitrary censorship**.
- The petition challenges the government's use of **Section 79 (3)(b)** of the **Information Technology Act, 2000**, arguing that it bypasses the structured legal process outlined in **Section 69A** of the Act.

Key Issues Raised:

- **Violation of Supreme Court Rulings:** X contends that the government's actions contradict the **Shreya Singhal case (2015)** ruling, which mandates judicial scrutiny for content blocking under Section 69A.
- **Sahyog Portal Concerns:** The government's **Sahyog portal**, designed to facilitate takedown requests, is criticized for enabling **opaque and arbitrary censorship**.
- **Impact on Free Expression:** X argues that the misuse of Section 79 (3)(b) threatens **online freedom of expression** and undermines its business model.

Information Technology Act, 2000:

- **Section 69A:**
 - Empowers the government to block public access to digital content for reasons like **national security** and **public order**.
 - Requires a structured review process to prevent misuse.
- **Section 79:**
 - Provides legal protection to intermediaries for third-party content but mandates removal of unlawful content when notified.

Shreya Singhal Case (2015): A Landmark Judgment on Free Speech

- **Background:**
 - The case arose after two young women were arrested under **Section 66A of the Information Technology Act, 2000** for posting comments on social media criticizing a bandh following the death of a political leader.
 - The arrests sparked widespread outrage, leading to petitions challenging the constitutionality of Section 66A.
- **Key Issues:**
 - Whether **Section 66A**, which criminalized sending "offensive" messages online, violated the **right to freedom of speech and expression** under **Article 19(1)(a)** of the Indian Constitution.
 - Whether the provisions of **Section 69A** and **Section 79** of the IT Act were consistent with constitutional safeguards.
- **Supreme Court Judgment:**
 - **Section 66A** was struck down as unconstitutional for being vague and overbroad, leading to potential misuse and chilling effects on free speech.
 - The court upheld **Section 69A**, which allows the government to block online content for reasons like national security, but emphasized that blocking orders must follow due process and be subject to judicial review.
 - **Section 79**, which provides legal protection to intermediaries, was upheld with safeguards to ensure takedown requests are based on court orders or government directives.

Supreme Court Collegium Recommends Transfer of Orissa High Court Acting Chief Justice

- The **Supreme Court Collegium** has proposed the transfer of **Justice Arindam Sinha**, Acting Chief Justice of the **Orissa High Court**, to the **Allahabad High Court**.
- Justice Sinha has been serving as Acting Chief Justice since the superannuation of **Chief Justice Chakradhari Sharan Singh** on **January 19, 2025**.
- The Collegium has also recommended **Justice Harish Tandon**, the senior-most judge of the **Calcutta High Court**, for appointment as the Chief Justice of the Orissa High Court.

Justice Arindam Sinha's Career:

- Born on **September 22, 1965**, Justice Sinha enrolled as an advocate in **1991** and practiced primarily at the **Calcutta High Court**.

- Elevated as an **Additional Judge** of the Calcutta High Court in **2013** and became a **Permanent Judge** in **2016**.
- Transferred to the Orissa High Court in **2021**, where he took oath as a judge.

Impact on Allahabad High Court:

- If Justice Sinha's transfer is approved, the Allahabad High Court will have **80 serving judges**, with **80 posts still vacant**.
- The Allahabad High Court has been facing challenges due to **judicial vacancies**, which have affected its efficiency.

Supreme Court Collegium:

- The **Supreme Court Collegium** is responsible for recommending appointments and transfers of judges in the **higher judiciary**.
- Composed of the **Chief Justice of India** and the **four senior-most judges** of the Supreme Court.
- Decisions are made through consensus and aim to ensure judicial independence and efficiency.

Unified Pension Scheme (UPS): A New Era for Government Employees

- The **Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA)** has notified the **Unified Pension Scheme (UPS)** for central government employees, effective from **April 1, 2025**.
- This scheme offers an **assured pension** of **50% of the average basic pay** drawn over the last 12 months prior to superannuation, providing a more predictable retirement benefit compared to the **National Pension System (NPS)**.

Eligibility:

- Central government employees in service as of **April 1, 2025**, covered under the NPS.
- Newly recruited employees joining central government services on or after **April 1, 2025**.
- Employees must have a **minimum qualifying service of 25 years** to avail of the full assured payout.

Contributory Nature:

- Employees contribute **10% of their basic salary and dearness allowance**.
- The central government contributes **18.5%**.

Comparison with NPS:

- Unlike the market-linked returns of the NPS, the UPS guarantees a fixed payout.
- Employees can choose between the two schemes, but the decision is **final and irrevocable**.

Operational Details:

- Enrolment and claim forms will be available online on the **Protean CRA** website from **April 1, 2025**.
- Physical submission of forms is also an option.

Government Notifies Salary, Allowance, and Pension Hike for MPs

- The **Central Government** has announced a **24% increase** in the salaries, allowances, and pensions of Members of Parliament (MPs), effective from **April 1, 2025**.
- This revision aligns with the **Cost Inflation Index** under the **Income Tax Act, 1961**, ensuring adjustments to inflation and rising living costs.

Revised Salary and Allowances:

- Monthly salary increased from **₹1,00,000 to ₹1,24,000**.
- Daily allowance raised from **₹2,000 to ₹2,500**.
- Monthly pension for former MPs revised from **₹25,000 to ₹31,000**.
- Additional pension for every year of service beyond five years increased from **₹2,000 to ₹2,500**.

Additional Benefits:

- MPs receive allowances for **office expenses, constituency engagement, and communication tools**.
- Entitled to **free domestic flights, rail travel, and housing accommodations** in New Delhi.
- Benefits include **electricity, water, and furniture allowances**.

Historical Context:

- The last revision occurred in **2018**, when salaries were increased from **₹50,000 to ₹1,00,000**.
- Mechanism for automatic revision based on inflation was introduced to avoid frequent legislative debates on salary adjustments.

Salary, Allowances, and Pension of Members of Parliament Act, 1954:

- Governs the remuneration and benefits of MPs.
- Ensures periodic revisions to align with economic conditions.

Supreme Court Forms Task Force to Address Student Suicides

- The **Supreme Court of India** has established a **National Task Force (NTF)** to tackle the alarming rise in **student suicides** across higher educational institutions.
- This decision comes in response to the increasing number of suicides, which have now surpassed those of farmers, highlighting the urgent need for intervention.

Key Objectives of the Task Force:

Mental Health Focus:

- Address mental health concerns of students and create a supportive academic environment.
- Identify predominant causes of suicides, such as **academic pressure, ragging, caste-based discrimination, and financial burdens**.

Policy Review:

- Assess the effectiveness of existing laws and institutional frameworks.
- Recommend measures to strengthen protections and inclusivity on campuses.

Preventive Measures:

- Propose strategies to reduce stigma around mental health and ensure timely support for students in distress.

Contributing Factors to Student Suicides:

- **Academic Pressure:** The relentless focus on scores and competition for limited seats in premier institutions.
- **Discrimination:** Reports of **caste-based discrimination** and harassment in educational institutions.
- **Lack of Institutional Support:** Inadequate mechanisms to address mental health issues and provide counselling.

National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) Data:

The **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)**, under the **Ministry of Home Affairs**, Government of India, collects and publishes data on various types of crimes and suicides in India. Their reports provide crucial insights into the trends and patterns of suicides across different demographics, including students and farmers. The NCRB data highlights the severity of the student suicide issue and the need for effective interventions.

Ministry of Education Initiatives:

The **Ministry of Education**, Government of India, also plays a crucial role in addressing student mental health. Some initiatives by the ministry include:

- **Manodarpan:** An initiative launched to provide psychosocial support to students, teachers, and families for their mental health and well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. It includes a national toll-free helpline, a website, and handbooks.
 - **Guidelines for Mental Health and Well-being of School Students and Teachers during COVID-19:** These guidelines provide a framework for schools and educators to address the mental health needs of students.
 - The ministry also emphasizes the importance of integrating mental health and well-being into the curriculum and promoting a supportive school environment.
-

Disaster Management Bill 2024: Strengthening India's Preparedness

- The **Disaster Management (Amendment) Bill 2024** was recently debated in the **Rajya Sabha**, aiming to enhance India's disaster response and preparedness mechanisms.
- Union Home Minister **Amit Shah** emphasized the bill's focus on improving **transparency, accountability, and efficiency** in disaster management across all levels of governance.

Key Features of the Bill:

- **Strengthening Local Institutions:** Empowers **District Disaster Management Authorities (DDMAs)** under state control to ensure better coordination during disasters.
- **Zero Casualty Approach:** Shifts focus from minimizing casualties to achieving zero casualties during disasters.
- **Financial Support:** Increased allocation through the **National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF)** to states for disaster relief and recovery.

Opposition Concerns:

- **Centralization of Power:** Critics argue that the bill may lead to excessive centralization, potentially undermining the federal structure.
- **PM CARES Fund Transparency:** Questions raised about the lack of clarity on the utilization of funds for disaster management.

The Disaster Management Act, 2005:

The **Disaster Management Act, 2005**, is the principal legislation governing disaster management in India. Key features of this act include:

- Establishment of the **National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)**, headed by the Prime Minister, as the apex body for disaster management in India.
- Creation of the **State Disaster Management Authorities (SDMAs)**, headed by the Chief Ministers, at the state level.
- Constitution of the **District Disaster Management Authorities (DDMAs)** at the district level.
- Provisions for the preparation of national, state, and district disaster management plans.
- Establishment of the **National Disaster Response Force (NDRF)** and the **State Disaster Response Forces (SDRFs)** for specialized response to disasters.
- Legal framework for financial mechanisms, including the National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) and the State Disaster Response Funds (SDRFs).

Boilers Bill 2024: Modernizing Boiler Safety and Business Practices

- The **Boilers Bill 2024** was introduced in the **Lok Sabha** to replace the century-old **Boilers Act of 1923**, aiming to enhance **safety standards** and promote **ease of doing business**.
- The bill was presented by **Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal**, emphasizing the need to align boiler regulations with modern industry practices.

Key Features of the Bill:

Decriminalization of Minor Offences:

- Out of **seven offences**, three have been decriminalized, converting fines into fiscal penalties.
- Serious offences that risk life and property retain criminal penalties.

Ease of Doing Business:

- Simplifies compliance processes, especially benefiting **MSMEs**.
- Consolidates provisions into six chapters for better clarity and accessibility.

Enhanced Safety Measures:

- Mandates that boiler repairs be conducted by **qualified and competent personnel**.
- Introduces specific provisions to ensure worker safety inside boilers.

Boilers and their Importance:

- **Boilers** are closed vessels in which water or other fluid is heated under pressure to generate steam or hot water for various industrial and commercial applications.
- They are widely used in power plants, manufacturing industries (like textiles, chemicals, and food processing), and for heating purposes.
- Ensuring the safe and efficient operation of boilers is critical due to the potential hazards associated with high pressure and temperature.

The Boilers Act, 1923:

- The **Boilers Act, 1923**, is the existing legislation that governs the manufacture, import, use, and sale of boilers in India.
- Over time, this act has been considered to be outdated and not fully aligned with the advancements in technology and the evolving needs of the industry.
- The Boilers Bill 2024 is intended to replace this older act with a more contemporary and effective regulatory framework.

Central Boilers Board:

- The **Central Boilers Board (CBB)** was constituted under the Boilers Act, 1923.
- It is responsible for framing rules and regulations related to boilers in India, setting standards for their design and construction, and overseeing their inspection and certification.

- It is likely that the Boilers Bill 2024 will also address the structure and functions of this important regulatory body.

Supreme Court Cracks Down on Misleading Medical Ads

- The **Supreme Court of India** has recently directed all **State Governments** to appoint dedicated officers to ensure the strict enforcement of the **Drugs and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisements) Act, 1954**.
- This order comes in response to the growing concern over the proliferation of **misleading medical advertisements** that can have serious implications for public health.
- The court emphasized the need for states to take proactive measures to curb such advertisements and protect citizens from false claims.

Key Directives from the Supreme Court:

- **Appointment of Enforcement Officers:** States are mandated to appoint qualified officers specifically tasked with monitoring and taking action against misleading medical advertisements.
- **Strict Enforcement of the Act:** The appointed officers will be responsible for ensuring that the provisions of the Drugs and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisements) Act, 1954, are strictly adhered to.
- **Public Awareness:** The court also stressed the importance of creating public awareness about the dangers of relying on unsubstantiated medical claims made in advertisements.
- **Regular Monitoring:** States are expected to establish mechanisms for regular monitoring of advertisements across various media platforms.

Significance of the Act and the Supreme Court's Intervention:

- **Drugs and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisements) Act, 1954:** This act aims to control the advertisement of drugs and remedies that claim to have magic qualities or are related to certain diseases and conditions.
- **Preventing Misinformation:** The act seeks to prevent the dissemination of false or misleading information about the efficacy of drugs and treatments.
- **Protecting Public Health:** By regulating medical advertisements, the act aims to safeguard public health by preventing people from being misled into using ineffective or harmful remedies.
- **Supreme Court's Role:** The Supreme Court's intervention highlights the judiciary's commitment to upholding public health and ensuring that regulatory frameworks are effectively implemented by the executive.

Impact of Misleading Medical Advertisements:

- **False Hope and Exploitation:** Such advertisements often prey on vulnerable individuals seeking cures for serious illnesses, offering false hope and leading to financial exploitation.
- **Delayed or Inadequate Treatment:** Relying on misleading advertisements can cause individuals to delay seeking proper medical consultation and treatment, potentially worsening their condition.
- **Health Risks:** Some advertised remedies may contain harmful substances or have adverse side effects, posing significant health risks.
- **Erosion of Trust:** The spread of misleading medical information can erode public trust in legitimate healthcare professionals and systems.

Drugs and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisements) Act, 1954:

- **Objective:** To control the advertisement of drugs in certain cases, to prohibit the advertisement for certain purposes of remedies alleged to possess magic qualities, and to provide for matters connected therewith.
- **Key Provisions:** The Act prohibits advertisements related to:
 - Miscarriage or prevention of conception in women.
 - Maintenance or improvement of the capacity of human beings for sexual pleasure.
 - Prevention of venereal diseases or female disorders.
 - Correction of menstrual disorder in women.
 - Diagnosis, cure, mitigation, treatment or prevention of any disease, disorder or condition specified in the Schedule of the Act (which includes serious conditions like cancer, diabetes, tuberculosis, etc.).
- **Penalties:** The Act prescribes penalties for contravention of its provisions, including imprisonment and fines.

Digital Crop Survey (DCS): Revolutionizing Agricultural Data Collection

- The **Digital Crop Survey (DCS) System** was launched by the **Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare** to ensure accurate and real-time crop data collection.
- The system utilizes a **mobile interface** to gather crop-sown details directly from the field, providing precise information for every agricultural plot.

Key Features of the DCS System:

Real-Time Data Collection:

- Enables accurate estimation of crop production by capturing data directly from farmers.
- Facilitates better planning and decision-making for agricultural policies.

Privacy and Security:

- Developed in compliance with the **Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023**.
- Farmers' data is collected only with their **consent** and shared securely using **encrypted APIs**.

Inclusivity:

- Farmers without mobile phones can access the system through **Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs)**, **Krishi Sakhis**, and **Common Service Centres (CSCs)**.
- States are organizing camps to ensure all farmers benefit from the system.

State Farmer Registry:

- Covers all landholder farmers, including **women farmers**.
- Provides options for states to onboard **tenant and lessee farmers**, ensuring inclusivity.

Benefits of the DCS System:

Enhanced Agricultural Planning:

- Accurate data helps in forecasting crop yields and managing resources effectively.
- Supports the government's initiatives for **food security** and **sustainable agriculture**.

Empowerment of Farmers:

- Provides farmers with better access to government schemes and benefits.
- Promotes transparency and accountability in agricultural practices.

Modernizing Fire Services: ₹1,604 Crore

Approved for Five States

- A **High-Level Committee**, chaired by Union Home Minister **Amit Shah**, has approved projects worth **₹1,604 crore** for the **modernization and expansion of fire services** in five states: **Bihar, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, and Kerala**.
- The decision was announced on **March 28, 2025**, as part of the government's efforts to strengthen disaster management infrastructure.

Key Allocations:

- **Bihar:** ₹340.90 crore.
- **Gujarat:** ₹339.18 crore.
- **Jharkhand:** ₹147.97 crore.
- **Kerala:** ₹162.25 crore.
- **Maharashtra:** ₹614.09 crore.

Additional Initiatives:

- **Disaster Recovery in Sikkim:**
 - ₹555 crore allocated for recovery and reconstruction following the **Glacial Lake Outburst Flood** in October 2023.
 - **State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF):**
 - ₹19,074 crore released to 28 states for disaster management.
 - **State Disaster Mitigation Fund (SDMF):**
 - ₹3,229 crore allocated to 16 states for disaster risk reduction.
-

Environment

World Seagrass Day 2025: Protecting Underwater Meadows

- **World Seagrass Day** is observed for the first time on **March 1st, 2025**, as proclaimed by the **United Nations General Assembly**.
- This inaugural day aims to highlight the critical role of **seagrass meadows** for a healthy planet.
- It emphasizes the need for **conservation efforts** to protect these vital marine ecosystems.

Significance of Seagrass Meadows:

- **Biodiversity Hotspots:** Seagrass meadows are highly diverse ecosystems that support a wide array of marine life, including:
 - **Fish**
 - **Sea turtles**
 - **Dugongs**
 - **Seabirds**
 - **Invertebrates**
- **Carbon Sinks:** They are powerful **carbon sinks**, absorbing and storing vast amounts of **blue carbon** from the atmosphere, helping to combat **climate change**.
- **Water Filtration:** Seagrasses act as natural **water filters**, improving water quality by trapping sediments and pollutants.
- **Coastal Protection:** They stabilize coastlines and reduce **erosion** by buffering wave energy.
- **Economic Importance:** Support fisheries and tourism, providing livelihoods for coastal communities.

Threats to Seagrass Meadows:

- **Coastal Development:** Destruction due to **construction**, **dredging**, and **land reclamation**.
- **Pollution:** Runoff from agriculture, industry, and urban areas introduces **nutrients and toxins**.
- **Climate Change:** Rising sea temperatures, ocean acidification, and sea-level rise stress seagrass ecosystems.
- **Destructive Fishing Practices:** Bottom trawling and other damaging fishing methods destroy seagrass beds.
- **Invasive Species:** Non-native species can outcompete and displace native seagrasses.

- Global negotiators have agreed on a **\$200 billion biodiversity protection plan** to bolster conservation efforts worldwide.

Key Highlights:

- **Funding Commitment:**
 - The agreement outlines a robust financial framework, aiming to channel **\$200 billion** into biodiversity conservation.
 - It is designed to support projects on **ecosystem restoration**, **species protection**, and **sustainable natural resource management**.
- **Global Cooperation:**
 - The plan is a result of intense, multilateral negotiations involving both **developed** and **developing countries**.
 - It emphasizes **international solidarity** by ensuring that nation's most in need receive support for biodiversity protection.
- **Conservation Priorities:**
 - The funding will help address critical challenges like **habitat loss**, **climate change impacts**, and **unsustainable land use**.
 - It aims to enhance **nature-based solutions**, which are essential for achieving broader **sustainable development goals (SDGs)**.

India's SDG Progress: Mixed Performance and Challenges Ahead

- A recent '**State of States**' report indicates that India is **lagging behind in achieving nine out of 16 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.
- The report highlights **uneven and slow progress** across various SDGs, casting a shadow on India's ability to meet the **2030 deadline**.
- While India has shown progress in some areas, significant challenges remain in achieving comprehensive sustainable development.

Key Findings of the 'State of States' Report:

- **SDGs with Lagging Performance:** India is struggling to achieve targets in the following SDGs:
 - **SDG 2 (Zero Hunger)**
 - **SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being)**
 - **SDG 5 (Gender Equality)**
 - **SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth)**
 - **SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure)**
 - **SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production)**
 - **SDG 13 (Climate Action)**
 - **SDG 14 (Life Below Water)**
 - **SDG 15 (Life on Land)**

COP16: Landmark \$200 Billion Biodiversity Protection Plan

Event Overview:

- The **16th Conference of the Parties (COP16)** under the **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)** has secured a **historic funding agreement**.

- **SDGs on Track or Showing Progress:** India is performing relatively better in areas like:
 - **SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation)**
 - **SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy)**
 - **SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities)**
- **Uneven Progress Across States:** Significant disparities exist in SDG progress across different Indian states, with some states performing much better than others.
- **Impact of Pandemic:** The **COVID-19 pandemic** has further slowed down progress on several SDGs, exacerbating existing challenges.
- **Need for Accelerated Action:** The report emphasizes the urgent need for **accelerated and focused efforts** to get back on track to achieve the SDGs by 2030.

Challenges and Concerns:

- **Poverty and Inequality:** Persistent poverty and rising inequalities hinder progress across multiple SDGs.
- **Environmental Degradation:** Environmental challenges like pollution, deforestation, and climate change are major obstacles.
- **Healthcare Access:** Ensuring universal access to quality healthcare remains a significant hurdle.
- **Gender Disparities:** Deep-rooted gender inequalities continue to impede progress on gender equality and related SDGs.
- **Data Gaps:** Lack of reliable and timely data in certain sectors makes it challenging to effectively monitor and track progress.

Investing in Nature: World Wildlife Day 2025

Date of Observation:

- World Wildlife Day is celebrated on **March 3, 2025**.
- This date commemorates the adoption of **CITES** (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species) in **1973**.

Theme for 2025:

- **“Wildlife Conservation Finance: Investing in People and Planet”**
- This theme underscores the need for innovative financial strategies to support conservation efforts and ensure sustainable funding for protecting biodiversity.

Origins & History:

- Established by the **United Nations** in **2013** to promote global awareness on the importance of wildlife protection.
- The day honours the signing of **CITES**, a treaty with **184 member countries** that regulates international wildlife trade to prevent species extinction.

12th Regional 3R and Circular Economy Forum in Asia & the Pacific

Event Overview:

- The **12th Regional 3R and Circular Economy Forum** in Asia & the Pacific kicked off in **Jaipur** on **March 3, 2025**.
- The forum brings together international delegates, industry leaders, policymakers, and researchers to discuss sustainable urban development through the **3R (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle)** and **Circular Economy** principles.

Key Highlights:

- **Prime Minister's Message:**
 - **PM Narendra Modi** emphasized the **Pro Planet People (P-3) Approach**, underscoring India's commitment to sustainable practices and knowledge sharing in its journey towards a **Circular Economy**.
 - He highlighted initiatives like **Mission LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment)** and the **Panchamrit Goals** announced at COP26, which reinforce India's vision for a **net-zero future**.
- **Union Minister's Address:**
 - **Union Minister Manohar Lal** of Housing & Urban Affairs outlined the significance of integrating traditional sustainable practices with modern technologies for resource efficiency.
 - He announced the launch of the **Cities Coalition for Circularity (C-3)**, a digital platform for city-to-city collaboration and knowledge exchange.
- **Innovative Agreements:**
 - Under **CITIIS 2.0**, agreements worth **₹1,800 crores** are set to be signed, benefiting 18 cities across 14 states for enhanced waste management and urban sustainability.
- **Inauguration of the 3R India Pavilion:**
 - The pavilion, jointly inaugurated by **Union Minister Manohar Lal** and **Rajasthan CM Bhajanlal Sharma**, showcased innovative solutions in waste management from over 40 Indian and Japanese businesses and startups.
- **Jaipur Declaration (2025-2034):**
 - A non-political commitment was adopted to guide the next decade of sustainable urban growth and resource efficiency.

International Participation:

- The forum saw participation from global representatives, including ministers from the **Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Maldives**, and a virtual message from **Japan's Minister of Environment**.

- Prominent state leaders from **Uttarakhand, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh** were also present, highlighting a collaborative approach across regions.

River Dolphins Survey: A Milestone in India's Wildlife Conservation

Survey Highlights:

- A comprehensive survey under **Project Dolphin** estimated a total of **6,327 river dolphins** across India.
- The study covered over **8,000 km** along **58 rivers** in **8 states: Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Assam, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Punjab.**
- **Uttar Pradesh** recorded the highest count with **2,397 dolphins**, followed by **Bihar** with **2,220 dolphins.**

Key Details:

- Conducted between **2021 and 2023**, this is one of the world's largest freshwater surveys.
- Both **boat and road surveys** were used to ensure accurate data collection.
- The findings reveal that dolphins thrive in areas with **adequate water depth** and **minimal human disturbances.**

Species Focus:

- The primary species, the **Ganges River Dolphin (*Platanista gangetica*)**, inhabits the **Ganga-Brahmaputra-Meghna River system** found across India, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Bhutan.
- A small population of the **Indus River Dolphin** was also recorded in the **Indus River system.**

Conservation & Government Initiatives:

- **Project Dolphin** was launched on **15 August 2020** by **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** as part of efforts to conserve India's aquatic ecosystems.
- The project is spearheaded by the **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)** and the **Wildlife Institute of India.**
- Authorities are now focusing on establishing **Dolphin Conservation Zones** in regions with high dolphin density.

Ganges River Dolphin (*Platanista gangetica*):

- **Scientific Classification:** Belongs to the order **Cetacea** and family **Platanistidae.**
- **IUCN Status:** Classified as '**Endangered**' by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).
- **National Aquatic Animal:** Declared as the **National Aquatic Animal of India** in **2009.**
- **Physical Characteristics:**
 - Characterized by a long, pointed snout and a rounded belly.

- Have a low triangular dorsal fin and large flippers.
- Unique echolocation system that helps them navigate and hunt in murky river waters.

- **Habitat:** Primarily found in the **Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna** and **Karnaphuli-Sangu River systems** of India, Nepal, and Bangladesh.
- **Ecological Role:** Plays a vital role in maintaining the river ecosystem by controlling fish populations and indicating river health.

World Sustainable Development Summit 2025: Pioneering India's Climate Action

Summit Inauguration:

- **Bhupender Yadav** inaugurated the **World Sustainable Development Summit 2025**, setting the stage for robust discussions on sustainable development and climate action.
- The event underscores **India's leadership** and commitment to combating climate change on the global stage.

Key Highlights of the Summit:

- **Global Collaboration:**
 - Brings together international leaders, policymakers, and experts to share insights on **sustainable development.**
 - Focus on **innovative solutions** and cross-border cooperation to tackle climate challenges.
- **Emphasis on Climate Action:**
 - Highlights India's proactive measures in reducing carbon emissions and boosting **renewable energy** initiatives.
 - Discussion panels on **green technology, energy efficiency,** and **climate finance** strategies.
- **Policy and Innovation:**
 - Showcases government initiatives aimed at integrating **environmental sustainability** into economic growth.
 - Reinforces the need for **policy reforms** and **investment in R&D** to drive forward the sustainable development agenda.

Amrut Biodiversity Park: Delhi's New Green Lung

- **Amrut Biodiversity Park**, a sprawling **90-hectare** green space, has been developed in **Delhi** along **NH-24**, within the **Yamuna floodplains.**
- This park is an initiative by the **Delhi Development Authority (DDA)** to **restore** and **rejuvenate** the crucial **floodplain ecosystem** of the Yamuna River.

- Designed as an **ecological park**, it aims to serve multiple purposes, from environmental conservation to providing recreational space in the bustling city.

Key Features of the Park:

- Ecological Restoration:**
 - The park was transformed from agricultural land and settlements into a thriving biodiversity hub.
 - It includes **six water bodies** with a capacity of **225 million litres**, designed to manage stormwater and mitigate flood risks.
 - Jute-reinforced slopes** and **riverine grasses** were introduced to stabilize the flood-prone land and enhance groundwater recharge.
- Biodiversity Enhancement:**
 - Approximately **14,500 trees** of diverse species, including **Neem, Peepal, Mango, and Ashoka**, were planted.
 - Over **18,000 shrubs** and **3.21 lakh riverine grasses** were added to create a vibrant ecosystem.
 - The park aims to attract various bird species and promote ecological balance.
- Public Engagement:**
 - Two public spaces have been developed along NH-24 to encourage interaction with nature.
 - The park features **thematic tracks** named after events from India's freedom struggle, such as the **Dandi March** and **First War of Independence**.
- Environmental Significance:**
 - The park's design addresses **flood management, water conservation, and pollution control**.
 - It contributes to the **rejuvenation of the Yamuna floodplains** and enhances Delhi's green spaces.

Modified Ethanol Scheme: Boosting Year-Round Production at Cooperative Sugar Mills

Government Initiative:

- The **Government of India** has announced a **modified ethanol scheme** aimed at enabling **cooperative sugar mills** to produce ethanol throughout the year, not just during the traditional crushing season.

Key Objectives:

- Year-Round Production:** The new modifications address the seasonal bottlenecks, ensuring a consistent supply of ethanol.
- Economic Support:** The scheme is designed to boost the income of cooperative sugar mills and, by extension, the rural economy, benefiting both mill operators and sugarcane farmers.

- Energy Security:** By increasing domestic ethanol production, the initiative supports the government's push towards higher **ethanol blending in petrol**, reducing reliance on imported fossil fuels and promoting cleaner energy alternatives.

Incentives and Modifications:

- The modifications include enhanced financial incentives and policy support, making it economically viable for mills to operate beyond the traditional season.
- The scheme aims to optimize the use of surplus sugarcane, ensuring that excess raw material is efficiently converted into ethanol.

Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) Programme:

- Launched by: Government of India.**
- Objective:** To promote the use of **ethanol as a biofuel** by blending it with petrol.
- Goals:**
 - Reduce import dependence** on crude oil, saving foreign exchange.
 - Increase farmers' income** by creating demand for ethanol produced from sugarcane and other agricultural feedstocks.
 - Reduce air pollution** as ethanol is a cleaner burning fuel compared to petrol.
 - Achieve ethanol blending targets:** The government has set ambitious targets for ethanol blending, aiming for **20% ethanol blending with petrol by 2025-26**.
- Feedstocks for Ethanol Production:**
 - Sugarcane molasses:** Traditional feedstock.
 - Sugarcane juice:** Increasingly promoted for direct ethanol production.
 - B-heavy molasses:** A byproduct of sugar production, now being encouraged for year-round ethanol production.
 - Grains and other agricultural products:** Future potential feedstocks to further diversify ethanol sources.
- Impact:** The EBP programme is a key component of India's strategy for energy security and sustainable development, with significant environmental and economic benefits.

Madhav National Park Declared India's 58th Tiger Reserve

- Designation:** Madhav National Park in **Madhya Pradesh** officially declared as **India's 58th Tiger Reserve** on **March 9, 2025**.
- Location:** Spread across **1,751 sq km** in **Shivpuri District**, Madhya Pradesh.
- Historical Importance:** Formerly a **royal hunting ground**, established in **1959**, and home to **Sakhya Sagar Lake**, a **Ramsar site since 2022**.

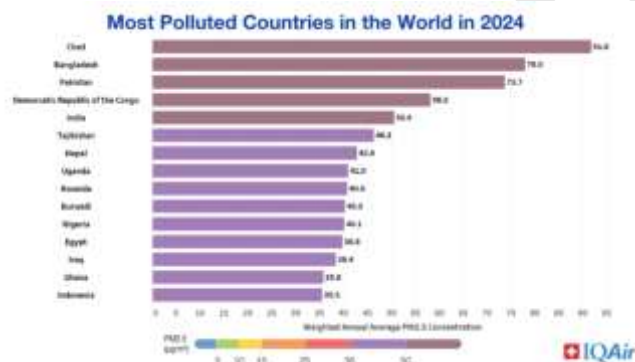
- **Tiger Reintroduction Program:** Initiated in **2023**, with **5 tigers recorded**, including **two cubs**.
- **Biodiversity:** Habitat for **leopards, chinkaras, nilgais**, various **deer species**, and diverse birdlife.

Global Air Quality Crisis: Only Seven Nations Meet WHO Standards in 2024

- Recent data reveals a concerning state of global air quality, with only **seven countries** meeting the **World Health Organization (WHO)** air quality standards in **2024**.
- This data was compiled by **IQAir**, a Swiss organization specializing in air quality technology, and was published in its **2024 World Air Quality Report**.
- The report analyzed air quality data from **7,812 locations** across **134 countries, territories, and regions**.
- The findings highlight a widespread failure to meet WHO's recommended annual average PM2.5 (fine particulate matter) concentration of **5 µg/m3** (micrograms per cubic meter).

Key Findings of the Report:

- **Countries Meeting WHO Standards:**
 - Only **seven countries** achieved the WHO PM2.5 guideline: **Australia, Estonia, Finland, Grenada, Iceland, Mauritius, and New Zealand**.
- **Most Polluted Countries:**



- **India, Tajikistan, and Burkina Faso** were identified as among the countries with the **worst air quality**.
- **Pakistan** was identified as the country with the **most polluted air globally**.
- In terms of regions, **South Asia** was identified as the **most polluted**, while **Central and West Africa** was the **most improved**.
- **PM2.5 Levels:**
 - **PM2.5 pollution** remains a significant global health threat.
 - **92.5%** of the 7,812 locations monitored exceeded the WHO annual PM2.5 guideline.
 - **Asia** continues to be the continent with the highest PM2.5 concentrations, with regions like **South Asia, Southeast Asia, and East Asia** experiencing particularly high levels.
- **Capital Cities Air Quality:**

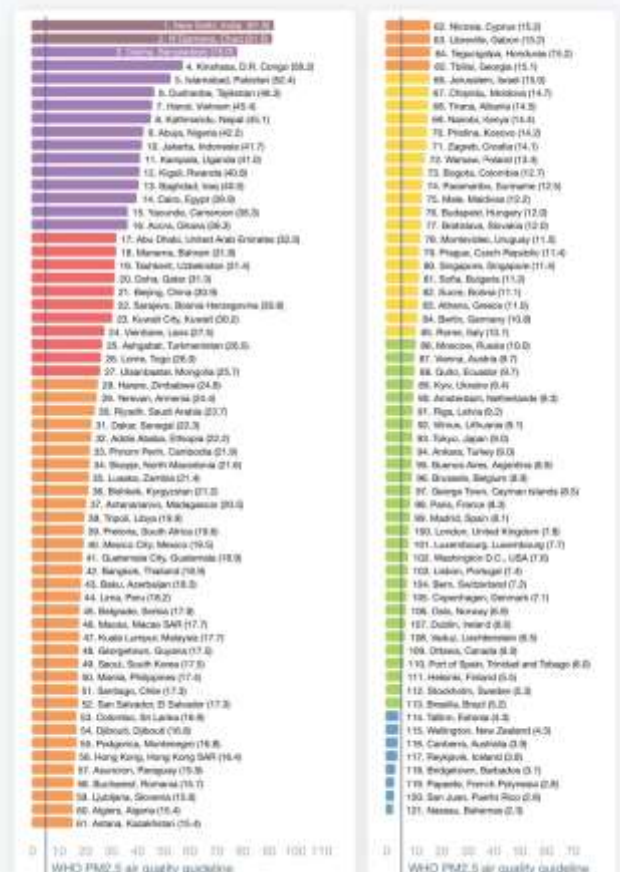
2024 Country/region ranking

Population weighted, 2024 average PM2.5 concentration (µg/m³) for countries, regions, and territories in descending order

1	Chad	118.8	47	South Africa	18.9	93	Uruguay	11.8
2	Bangladesh	78.0	48	Malaysia	18.3	94	Singapore	11.4
3	Pakistan	73.7	49	Azerbaijan	18.3	95	Austria	10.2
4	D.R. Congo	58.2	50	Montenegro	18.3	96	Lithuania	10.1
5	India	50.6	51	Sri Lanka	17.8	97	Panama	10.1
6	Tajikistan	46.3	52	Macao SAR	17.7	98	Bolivia	10.0
7	Nepal	42.8	53	Guyana	17.6	99	Russia	9.8
8	Uganda	41.0	54	Taiwan	17.5	100	Ecuador	9.7
9	Rwanda	40.6	55	Mexico	17.4	101	Ukraine	9.5
10	Burundi	40.3	56	El Salvador	17.3	102	Latvia	9.2
11	Nigeria	40.1	57	Israel	17.2	103	Germany	9.0
12	Egypt	39.8	58	Peru	17.1	104	Netherlands	8.9
13	Iraq	38.4	59	South Korea	17.0	105	Belgium	8.8
14	Ghana	35.8	60	Djibouti	16.9	106	Argentina	8.7
15	Indonesia	35.6	61	Mozambique	16.7	107	Spain	8.7
16	Gambia	35.2	62	Chile	16.6	108	Japan	8.6
17	United Arab Emirates	33.7	63	Hong Kong SAR	16.3	109	Cayman Islands	8.6
18	Bahrain	31.8	64	Paraguay	16.3	110	France	8.1
19	Uzbekistan	31.4	65	Algeria	16.3	111	Luxembourg	7.5
20	Qatar	31.3	66	Romania	16.3	112	Anguilla	7.4
21	China	31.9	67	Turkey	16.3	113	United Kingdom	7.4
22	Kuwait	30.2	68	Slovenia	16.2	114	Switzerland	7.3
23	Vietnam	28.7	69	Honduras	16.2	115	Denmark	7.2
24	Cameroon	27.8	70	Gabon	16.2	116	USA	7.1
25	Laos	27.5	71	Kazakhstan	16.1	117	Costa Rica	7.0
26	Turkmenistan	26.5	72	Georgia	16.1	118	Portugal	6.9
27	Togo	26.0	73	Brazil	16.0	119	Canada	6.7
28	Mongolia	25.8	74	Philippines	16.0	120	Norway	6.6
29	Bosnia Herzegovina	23.3	75	Poland	16.0	121	Liechtenstein	6.6
30	Myanmar	23.2	76	Nicaragua	16.0	122	Ireland	6.6
31	Saudi Arabia	23.1	77	Moldova	16.0	123	Trinidad and Tobago	6.5
32	Zimbabwe	24.8	78	Albania	15.9	124	Andorra	6.5
33	Ivory Coast	24.8	79	Kenya	15.9	125	Sweden	6.5
34	Armenia	24.4	80	Italy	15.9	126	Finland	6.5
35	North Macedonia	23.2	81	Croatia	15.9	127	Estonia	6.6
36	Libya	22.3	82	Colombia	15.9	128	Australia	6.5
37	Senegal	22.3	83	Slovakia	15.9	129	New Zealand	6.4
38	Ethiopia	22.2	84	Hungary	15.9	130	Iceland	6.9
39	Zambia	22.0	85	Kosovo	15.9	131	Grenada	6.3
40	Cambodia	21.9	86	Cyprus	15.9	132	Barbados	6.1
41	Kyrgyzstan	21.1	87	Czech Republic	15.7	133	Montserrat	6.7
42	Pakistan	21.1	88	Suriname	15.7	134	Puerto Rico	6.7
43	Madagascar	20.5	89	Bulgaria	15.6	135	U.S. Virgin Islands	6.8
44	Serbia	20.2	90	Maldives	15.6	136	French Polynesia	6.8
45	Thailand	18.8	91	Malta	15.7	137	Bermuda	6.8
46	Guatemala	18.8	92	Greece	15.6	138	Bahamas	6.3

2024 Regional capital city ranking

2024 average PM2.5 concentration (µg/m³) for capital cities in descending order



Impact and Concerns:

- **Health Impacts:**

- Exposure to air pollution, especially PM_{2.5}, is linked to numerous health problems, including **asthma, heart disease, stroke, lung cancer, and other respiratory illnesses**.
- WHO estimates that air pollution causes **millions of premature deaths** each year globally.
- **Climate Change Link:**
 - Air pollution and climate change are interconnected. Many sources of air pollution also contribute to greenhouse gas emissions.
 - Addressing air pollution is crucial for both public health and environmental sustainability.
- **Data Gaps:**
 - Significant data gaps exist in certain parts of the world, particularly in **Africa**, hindering a complete global assessment of air quality.
 - More ground-level monitoring stations are needed to provide comprehensive and accurate data.

WHO Air Quality Guidelines

Pollutant	Averaging Time	2005 AQGs	2021 AQGs
PM _{2.5} , µg/m ³	Annual	10	5
	24-hour ^a	25	15
PM ₁₀ , µg/m ³	Annual	20	15
	24-hour ^a	50	45
O ₃ , µg/m ³	Peak season ^b	-	60
	8-hour ^c	100	100
NO ₂ , µg/m ³	Annual	40	10
	24-hour ^a	-	25
SO ₂ , µg/m ³	24-hour ^a	20	40
CO, mg/m ³	24-hour ^a	-	4

India Ranks 5th Globally in Air Pollution: IQAir Report 2024

- India has been ranked as the **fifth most polluted country** in the world in the **IQAir World Air Quality Report 2024**.
- Despite a **7% decline in PM_{2.5} levels** compared to 2023, India continues to face severe air quality challenges.

Key Findings:



- **13 of the World's 20 Most Polluted Cities:**
 - Indian cities dominate the list, with **Byrrihat (Assam)** being the most polluted globally.

- Other cities include **Delhi, Mullanpur, Faridabad, Loni, Gurugram, Ganganagar, Greater Noida, Bhiwadi, Muzaffarnagar, Hanumanagar, and Noida**.

- **Delhi** remains the **most polluted capital city** in the world, with an annual PM_{2.5} concentration of **91.6 µg/m³**.
- India's average PM_{2.5} concentration in 2024 was **50.6 µg/m³**, over **10 times higher** than the WHO guideline of **5 µg/m³**.

Major Sources of Pollution:

- **Vehicular Emissions:** A leading contributor in urban areas like Delhi.
- **Industrial Discharges:** Factories and construction activities add significantly to pollution levels.
- **Crop Residue Burning:** Particularly in states like Punjab and Haryana during winter months.
- **Biomass Burning:** A common practice in rural areas.

Health Impacts:

- Air pollution reduces life expectancy in India by an estimated **5.2 years**.
- Long-term exposure to PM_{2.5} is linked to **respiratory diseases, cardiovascular issues, and cancer**.

Government Initiatives:

- **National Clean Air Programme (NCAP):**
 - Aims to reduce PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀ levels by **20-30% by 2024**.
 - Focuses on expanding air quality monitoring networks and promoting cleaner energy solutions.
- **Promotion of Electric Vehicles (EVs):**
 - Encouraging the adoption of EVs to reduce vehicular emissions.
- **Subsidies for Cleaner Cooking Fuels:**
 - Promoting the use of LPG over biomass to reduce indoor and outdoor pollution.

14th ETF Meeting on Ganga Conservation: A Step Towards Sustainability

- **Union Minister of Jal Shakti, C.R. Patil**, chaired the **14th Empowered Task Force (ETF) meeting on March 12, 2025**, reaffirming the government's commitment to a **cleaner and sustainable Ganga**.
- The meeting emphasized a **technology-driven approach** to conservation, focusing on **time-bound execution of projects, pollution control, and inter-ministerial coordination**.

Namami Gange Mission:

- Reviewed **492 projects** with a total outlay of **₹40,121 crore** across **10 states**.
- **307 projects** worth **₹19,478 crore** have been completed, significantly improving **water quality and pollution control**.

- Achievements include:
 - Creation of **3,346 MLD sewage treatment capacity**.
 - Completion of a **4,543 km sewerage network** to prevent untreated wastewater discharge.

Environmental Flow (e-Flow) Compliance:

- Ensured regulated water flows from **Devprayag to Haridwar** and up to **Unnao district in Uttar Pradesh**.
- Reviewed e-Flow assessments for rivers like **Yamuna, Ramganga, Son, Damodar, Chambal, and Tons**.

Industrial Pollution Control:

- Inspected **4,246 Grossly Polluting Industries (GPIs)** in the Ganga Basin.
- **2,682 industries** were found compliant, while strict actions were taken against violators.

GIS Layer & Dashboard:

- Launched a **real-time monitoring tool** for wetlands, integrating **wetland health scores, threat assessments, and priority classifications**.

Namami Gange Mission:

- **Objective:** To rejuvenate the Ganga River by addressing pollution and promoting sustainable practices.
- **Key Components:**
 - **Sewage Treatment:** Establishing treatment plants and sewerage networks.
 - **Riverfront Development:** Enhancing public access and ecological health.
 - **Biodiversity Conservation:** Protecting aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems.
- **Significance:** A flagship initiative under the **Ministry of Jal Shakti**, it plays a crucial role in balancing **development with ecological preservation**.

Environmental Flow (e-Flow):

- **Definition:** The minimum flow required to maintain a river's ecological health.
- **Importance:**
 - Supports biodiversity and aquatic life.
 - Ensures sustainable water use for agriculture, industry, and domestic needs.

India's Forest and Tree Cover: A Growing Green Legacy

India has made significant strides in environmental conservation, with its **forest and tree cover now spanning 25.17% of the country's geographical area**. This achievement reflects the nation's commitment to sustainable development and ecological balance.

Forest and Tree Cover Expansion:

- According to the **India State of Forest Report (ISFR) 2023**, the total forest and tree cover has increased to **827,357 square kilometers**.
- This marks a positive trend from previous assessments, showcasing India's efforts in afforestation and forest conservation.

Government Initiatives:

- Programs like the **National Mission for a Green India (GIM)**, **Development of Wildlife Habitats (DWH)**, and **Nagar Van Yojana (NVY)** have been instrumental in promoting afforestation.
- The **Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA)** focuses on ecological restoration and rehabilitation of degraded forest areas.
- Substantial funds have been allocated, including **₹38,502.21 crore** under CAMPA for various conservation initiatives.

State-Level Efforts:

- States and Union Territories have been actively involved in afforestation activities, supported by financial and technical assistance from the central government.
- Measures include surveying and demarcation of forest areas, installation of boundary pillars, and regular patrolling to prevent encroachment.

Seabirds and Plastic Pollution: Hidden Health Impacts Revealed

A groundbreaking study has unveiled the **slow and insidious health impacts** of plastic ingestion on seabirds, shedding light on the broader consequences of plastic pollution on wildlife. The research focused on young **sable shearwaters (Ardenna carneipes)** and revealed alarming findings.

Health Impacts of Plastic Ingestion:

- Birds with plastic in their stomachs showed signs of **neurodegenerative diseases, kidney dysfunction, and liver damage**.
- Microplastics embedded in the stomach lining caused proteins to leak into the bloodstream, indicating significant internal damage.
- Reduced levels of critical proteins, such as **albumin** (linked to liver function) and **brain-derived neurotrophic factor** (essential for cognitive functions), were observed.

Behavioral and Reproductive Challenges:

- Birds exposed to plastic may face **reduced cognitive functions**, affecting their ability to recognize songs and court mates.
- This could lead to challenges in reproduction and long-term population decline.

Broader Implications:

- While the study focused on seabirds, it highlights the potential risks of plastic pollution to other wildlife and ecosystems.
- The findings emphasize the need for urgent action to address plastic waste and its environmental impact.

Plastic Pollution and Wildlife:

- **Global Issue:** Over **8 million tons of plastic** enter the oceans annually, posing a threat to marine life.
- **Plasticosis:** A condition caused by plastic ingestion, leading to inflammation and scar tissue formation in the digestive tract.

Proteomics in Wildlife Studies:

- **Definition:** The study of protein composition and regulation in organisms.
- **Significance:** Provides insights into the subtle health impacts of environmental stressors, such as plastic pollution.

International Day of Forests 2025

- The **International Day of Forests (IDF)** is observed annually on **March 21**, as proclaimed by the **United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)** in **2012**.
- The theme for **2025** is "**Forests and Food**", emphasizing the critical role forests play in ensuring **food security, nutrition, and sustainable livelihoods**.
- Forests are vital for **biodiversity, climate resilience, and global food systems**.

Role of Forests in Food Security:

- Forests provide **nutrient-rich food sources** like fruits, nuts, and medicinal plants.
- They support **pollinators** essential for agricultural productivity.
- Forests contribute to **soil fertility** and **water conservation**, ensuring healthy agricultural landscapes.

Economic and Cultural Importance:

- Forests offer **sustainable income opportunities** through products like timber, honey, and medicinal herbs.
- For **Indigenous communities**, forests are a lifeline, providing sustenance, economic stability, and cultural significance.

Climate Change Mitigation:

- Forests act as **carbon sinks**, absorbing and storing **carbon dioxide**, thus helping regulate the planet's temperature.

India's Initiatives for Forest Conservation:

National Agroforestry Policy (2014):

- Promotes integration of **trees and crops** to enhance agricultural productivity and improve soil fertility.

- Encourages **tree plantations** on farmland for economic and environmental benefits.

Green India Mission (GIM):

- Aims to expand forest and tree cover by **5 million hectares** and improve the quality of an additional **5 million hectares**.
- Focuses on **biodiversity conservation, water resource management, and livelihood enhancement**.

Van Dhan Yojana:

- Supports **tribal communities** by promoting value addition to forest products and creating sustainable livelihoods.

EU Delays 2040 Climate Target Proposal

- The **European Commission** has postponed its **2040 climate target proposal**, originally planned for **Q1 2025**, due to **political opposition**.
- The proposal aims to set a **90% emissions reduction target** compared to **1990 levels**, bridging the gap between the **2030 emissions goal** and the **2050 net-zero target**.

Challenges:

- Resistance from member states and lawmakers over the **cost of energy transition**.
- Concerns about the impact of environmental rules on industries struggling with **high energy prices**.

Climate Commitments:

- Despite delays, the EU remains committed to its **green agenda**, addressing climate change through policies like:
 - **CO2-cutting rules for carmakers**.
 - **Energy transition plans** for coal-reliant nations.

Melioidosis in Odisha: A Rising Concern During Monsoon

- **Melioidosis**, a bacterial infectious disease caused by *Burkholderia pseudomallei*, has been found to peak during the **monsoon season** in Odisha, according to recent environmental mapping studies.
- The disease is primarily acquired through **inoculation, inhalation, or ingestion** of soil and water contaminated with the bacteria.
- Odisha's **agricultural landscape** and **extreme weather events** provide ample opportunities for human exposure to the bacteria.

Key Findings of the Study:

- **Seasonality:** Infections peak during and after the monsoon season due to favorable environmental conditions like **rainfall, temperature, and humidity**.
- **Global Impact:** South Asia, including India, contributes to **44% of the global burden** of

meliodosis, with an estimated **1,65,000 cases annually**.

- **Challenges in Diagnosis:**
 - The bacteria can mimic other common pathogens, leading to frequent **misdiagnosis**.
 - Requires **prolonged incubation** and specialized laboratory expertise for accurate detection.
- **Treatment Complexity:**
 - Initial **intravenous therapy** followed by a prolonged **eradication phase** of 12-20 weeks.
 - Mismanagement can lead to **recurrence** and high fatality rates, especially in **septicaemic cases**.

Government and Medical Response:

- **AIIMS Bhubaneswar** has reported an increase in cases over the years, emphasizing the need for better diagnostic facilities and awareness campaigns.
- Focus on addressing **comorbidities** like diabetes and chronic renal diseases, which increase susceptibility to the disease.

About *Burkholderia pseudomallei*:

- ***Burkholderia pseudomallei*** is a gram-negative bacterium found in **soil and water** in tropical regions.
- Known for causing a wide range of symptoms, from **skin infections** to **severe pneumonia** and **sepsis**.
- First described over a century ago, it remains a **medical enigma** due to its diverse clinical manifestations.

Ambitious Climate Action: A Boost to Global Economy by 2040

- A recent study by the **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)** and **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)** reveals that **accelerated climate action** could increase global GDP by **0.2% by 2040**, compared to current policies.
- The findings emphasize that **well-designed climate policies** not only reduce emissions but also enhance **efficiency, productivity, and innovation**.

Key Insights from the Study:

Economic Benefits:

- Investing in **clean energy** and **efficiency** drives productivity and innovation, offsetting the economic impact of policy-driven price changes.
- Reinvesting **carbon revenues** could further boost GDP and build public support for climate action.

Policy Certainty:

- Clear and ambitious **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)** provide markets with confidence to mobilize resources toward sustainable growth.
- Unclear policies could delay private investment and reduce GDP by **0.75% as early as 2030**.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD):

- The **OECD** is an international organisation that works to build better policies for better lives.
- Its goal is to shape policies that foster prosperity, equality, opportunity and well-being for all.
- The OECD provides a forum where governments can work together to share experiences and seek solutions to common problems.
- It works with over 100 countries worldwide, covering issues from economic growth and employment to trade, education, development and science.
- The OECD's studies and reports provide valuable insights and recommendations for policymakers on a wide range of global issues, including climate change.

Society

Zero Discrimination Day 2025: Uniting for Equality and Inclusion

- **Zero Discrimination Day** is observed on **March 1**.
- The 2025 theme is **“We Stand Together”**, emphasizing collective action against all forms of discrimination.
- It promotes a **worldwide movement** to end discrimination in all its forms, from gender and race to health status and sexual orientation.
- **Launched by UNAIDS in December 2013**, with the first official Zero Discrimination Day observed on **March 1, 2014**.
- **Symbol:** The **butterfly** is widely recognized as a symbol of Zero Discrimination Day, representing transformation and change.

Purpose and Significance:

- **Inclusion and Equality:** A day dedicated to ensuring that every individual, regardless of background, can access opportunities without bias.
- **Human Rights Advocacy:** Highlights the importance of **human rights** and works toward a society free from stigma and exclusion.
- **Public Health Focus:** Initially linked to challenges like **HIV/AIDS stigma**, the day now covers broader issues including mental health, disabilities, and social justice.

Swavalambini: Empowering Women Entrepreneurs Across India

Overview:

- **Swavalambini** is a government initiative aimed at **empowering women entrepreneurs** across India.
- Launched by the **Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE)** in collaboration with **NITI Aayog**, the programme is implemented by the **National Institute for Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development (NIESBUD)**.

Key Features:

- **Structured Training Framework:**
 - **Entrepreneurship Awareness Programme (EAP):** A two-day session for 600 female students to introduce them to basic business concepts and market opportunities.
 - **Women Entrepreneurship Development Programme (EDP):** An intensive 40-hour training for 300 selected participants covering business development, financial planning, market linkages, compliance, and legal support.

- **Mentorship:** Six months of follow-up support to help participants turn their ideas into sustainable ventures.

- **Faculty Development Programme (FDP):** A five-day training module for educators in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to enhance their ability to mentor aspiring entrepreneurs.
- **Recognition and Rewards:** An Award to Rewards Initiative to celebrate and motivate successful women entrepreneurs, inspiring future leaders.

Geographical Coverage & Expansion:

- **Initial Focus:** The programme was first launched in the **Northeastern region** and Eastern states, including institutions such as **IIT Bhubaneswar, Utkal University, North-Eastern Hill University (NEHU)**, and various colleges in Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Assam.
- **Expansion:** The initiative is now expanding to other parts of India, with recent launches at **Chaudhary Charan Singh University in Meerut, Banaras Hindu University (BHU), the University of Hyderabad, and Maulana Azad National Urdu University**.

India's Overweight Surge: A 2050 Outlook

Study Findings:

- A recent **Lancet** study predicts that by **2050**, India could have over **440 million overweight people**.
- This includes **144.7 million obese people**.
- This projection places India **second** globally in terms of overweight population size.
- This alarming figure is based on current trends in urbanization, dietary habits, and physical inactivity.

Key Factors Contributing to the Crisis:

- **Changing Lifestyles:**
 - Rapid **urbanization** and the shift to **sedentary jobs** have significantly reduced daily physical activity.
 - Increased consumption of **processed foods** and **sugary beverages** contributes to higher calorie intake.
- **Health Implications:**
 - A rise in overweight individuals can lead to a surge in **non-communicable diseases** such as **diabetes, cardiovascular disorders, and hypertension**.
 - The healthcare system may face increased pressure due to the burden of managing these chronic conditions.

Comparative Global Context:

- India is on track to be among the top nations facing an obesity crisis, with projections indicating it will

rank **second after China** in terms of the number of overweight individuals.

Study Methodology:

- The study was conducted by the **World Obesity Federation**.
- It used data from 183 countries.
- Projections were made to estimate overweight and obesity prevalence in 2030 and 2050.

Vividhta Ka Amrit Mahotsav: Celebrating India's Cultural Tapestry

Inauguration by President Droupadi Murmu:

- The **President of India, Droupadi Murmu**, inaugurated the festival, underscoring the importance of embracing and celebrating India's **diversity**.
- The event, as highlighted in the official **PIB press release**, marks a significant cultural milestone.

Festival Overview:

- **Vividhta Ka Amrit Mahotsav** is designed to showcase India's rich **cultural heritage** by bringing together varied art forms, traditions, and regional practices.
- It aims to foster a spirit of **unity in diversity**, reflecting the country's ethos where different cultures blend to form a vibrant national identity.

Government Initiatives for Cultural Promotion:

- **Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav:**
 - An initiative by the **Government of India** to celebrate 75 years of independence and the glorious history, culture, and achievements of India.
 - It officially commenced on **12th March 2021** and will continue till **15th August 2023** (extended further).
 - Aims to showcase India's strengths and achievements across various sectors and promote a sense of patriotism and unity.
- **Schemes for promotion of art and culture:**
 - The Ministry of Culture runs several schemes aimed at promoting and preserving India's rich cultural heritage. These include schemes for:
 - **Financial Assistance to Cultural Organizations**
 - **Scholarships and Fellowships for promotion of art and culture**
 - **Preservation and Conservation of Cultural Heritage**
 - **Promotion of tribal and folk art forms**

Jan Aushadhi Diwas 2025: Promoting Affordable Healthcare

- **Jan Aushadhi Diwas 2025** is observed on **7th March 2025** to spread awareness about **generic medicines** and the benefits of the **Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP)**.
- Organized by the **Pharmaceuticals & Medical Devices Bureau of India (PMBI)** under the **Department of Pharmaceuticals (DoP)**, Ministry of **Chemicals & Fertilizers (MoC&F)**, this day highlights the importance of providing quality medicines at affordable prices.

Key Highlights of Jan Aushadhi Diwas Week 2025

Week-Long Observance (1st – 7th March 2025):

- **1st March: Union Minister Jagat Prakash Nadda** kick-started the event with a **Rath Yatra** to promote PMBJP.
- **2nd March: A Jan Arogya Mela** was held featuring heritage walks and over **500 health camps** aimed at senior citizens.
- **3rd March: Focus on children's participation** with distribution of **nutraceutical products**.
- **4th March: Distribution of sanitary pads** to emphasize women's health and engagement, showcasing the affordability of Jan Aushadhi products.
- **5th March: Pharmacist awareness seminars** were conducted in **30 cities** to educate healthcare professionals.
- **6th March: The Jan Aushadhi Mitra Campaign** was launched nationwide to boost community participation.
- **7th March: The week concluded with the celebration of Jan Aushadhi Diwas.**

What Are Generic Medicines?

- **Generic Medicines** contain the same active ingredients as their branded counterparts, ensuring the same chemical composition and therapeutic effect.
- They are marketed under a **non-proprietary name** and are available at a **lower cost** once the original drug's patent expires.

Surge in Salaries for Women in Small-Town India

- A recent report by **Apna.co** shows that the **median salary** of women job seekers in **Tier-II and Tier-III cities** has increased by **34% over the past three years**.
- The study reveals that the number of women job seekers from smaller cities has **quadrupled** between 2021 and 2024, with job applications reaching **12.8 million in 2024**.

Key Findings of the Report:

- **Salary Growth:**

- Median salaries for women in Tier II and Tier III cities have increased by **34%** between **2022 and 2024**.
- This growth is particularly notable in smaller cities where economic opportunities for women have traditionally been limited.
- **Industry Sectors:**
 - Sectors showing significant hiring of women include **IT, BFSI (Banking, Financial Services and Insurance), and Consulting**.
 - These sectors are increasingly recognizing the value of diversity and inclusion in their workforce.
- **Experience Levels:**
 - The salary surge is observed across various experience levels, from **entry-level to senior professionals**.
 - This suggests a broad-based improvement in compensation for women in smaller cities.
- **Remote Work Impact:**
 - The rise of **remote and hybrid work models** has played a crucial role in expanding job opportunities for women in Tier II and Tier III cities.
 - Remote work eliminates geographical barriers, allowing women to access jobs previously concentrated in metropolitan areas.
- **Improved Work-Life Balance:**
 - Many women in smaller cities prioritize **work-life balance** and are finding suitable opportunities in their hometowns or nearby areas.
 - This trend is supported by companies offering flexible work arrangements.

Factors Driving the Salary Surge:

- **Increased Digital Penetration:** Greater internet access and digital literacy in smaller towns are enabling women to explore online job platforms and remote work opportunities.
- **Company Focus on Diversity:** Organizations are increasingly focusing on **diversity and inclusion** initiatives, actively seeking to hire women from diverse geographical locations.
- **Skill Development:** Women in Tier II and Tier III cities are actively upskilling and acquiring new competencies to meet the demands of evolving job roles.
- **Entrepreneurial Growth:** Alongside salaried jobs, there's a rise in **female entrepreneurship** in smaller towns, contributing to overall economic growth and opportunities.

Urban Women's Employment: A 10% Rise in Six Years Amid Persistent Gaps

- **Urban women's employment rate** in India has surged by **10%** over the past six years, signaling progress in economic participation.
- Despite this improvement, over **89 million urban Indian women** remain outside the labour market, highlighting ongoing challenges in workforce inclusivity.
- The report, titled "**The Great Upskilling Opportunity: India Skills Report 2025**," is a collaborative effort by the **Wheebox, PeopleStrong, and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)**.
- This report analyses employment trends and skill development across India, providing valuable insights into the evolving job market.

Key Findings of the Report:

- **Employment Rate Increase:**
 - Urban women's employment rate has risen by **10 percentage points** in the last six years.
 - This growth reflects increasing opportunities and participation of women in urban areas.
- **Overall Female Employment Rate:**
 - Despite the increase, the overall female employment rate in urban India stood at only **26%** in **2023-24**.
 - This indicates a substantial untapped potential in the female workforce.
- **Rural vs. Urban:**
 - In contrast to urban areas, rural India has a higher female employment rate of **37%**.
 - However, the nature of employment and economic opportunities differ significantly between rural and urban settings.
- **Unemployment Figures:**
 - Even with the rise in employment, over **89 million** women in urban India are still not part of the labour force.
 - This highlights the need for continued efforts to encourage and enable women's participation in the workforce.
- **Upskilling Imperative:**
 - The report emphasizes the crucial role of **upskilling and reskilling** for women to enhance their employability and bridge the skills gap.
 - Targeted training programs can help women acquire in-demand skills and access better job opportunities.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- **Societal Barriers:** **Social norms, family responsibilities, and safety concerns** continue to be significant barriers for women seeking employment in urban areas.
- **Skills Gap:** A **mismatch between available skills and industry requirements** limits women's access to quality jobs.

- **Need for Flexible Work:** Promoting **flexible work arrangements, remote work, and supportive workplace policies** can encourage greater female participation.
- **Government and Industry Initiatives:** Continued government programs and industry initiatives focused on **skill development, job creation, and inclusive workplaces** are essential to further improve women's employment rates.

International Women's Day 2025: For ALL Women and Girls

- **International Women's Day (IWD)** is celebrated annually on **March 8**, and in 2025, it marks the **30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action**, a landmark blueprint for women's rights.
- The **theme for 2025** is "**For ALL Women and Girls: Rights. Equality. Empowerment**", emphasizing inclusivity and collective action to address systemic barriers.

History:

- The roots of International Women's Day can be traced back to early 20th-century labor movements in North America and Europe.
- The first National Woman's Day was observed in the United States on **February 28, 1909**.
- In **1910**, Clara Zetkin proposed the idea of an International Women's Day at the International Conference of Working Women in Copenhagen.
- The first International Women's Day was celebrated in **1911** in Austria, Denmark, Germany, and Switzerland.
- It was officially recognized by the **United Nations** in **1975**.

Model Women-Friendly Gram Panchayats Initiative: Empowering Rural Development

Launch Event & Purpose:

- The **National Convention on Model Women-Friendly Gram Panchayats** was held on **5 March 2025** in New Delhi, as part of the **International Women's Day 2025** celebrations.
- Aims to establish at least **one Model Gram Panchayat in each District** that is both **women and girl friendly**.

Key Initiatives Announced:

- **Virtual Training Programs** for enhancing the skills of women leaders at the grassroots level.
- A **Real-Time Monitoring Dashboard** to measure and improve women's participation and welfare in Gram Panchayats through data-driven interventions.

Participation & Leadership:

- Over **1500 elected representatives and officials** participated in physical and virtual modes.
- **Union Minister of State for Health & Family Welfare, Smt. Anupriya Patel** and **Union Minister of State for Panchayati Raj, Prof. S. P. Singh Baghel** were the chief guests.
- Senior officials including **Secretary Shri Vivek Bharadwaj** and **Additional Secretary Shri Sushil Kumar Lohani** played key roles in the event.

Health & Welfare Emphasis:

- Smt. Anupriya Patel highlighted government health initiatives such as:
 - **Village Health, Sanitation, and Nutrition Committees** in every Gram Panchayat.
 - **Ayushman Aarogya Mandir**, which provides 12 types of medical services including **geriatric care, dental care, cancer screening, and telemedicine**.
 - **Janani Suraksha Yojana** and **Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram** to promote safe motherhood and institutional deliveries.
- The emphasis was on ensuring that central government schemes reach the most vulnerable through active engagement by women leaders.

Empowerment & Leadership Development:

- **Prof. S. P. Singh Baghel** announced the selection of **770 Model Women-Friendly Gram Panchayats** (one per District) for specialized training in leadership.
- Women **Gram Pradhans** are encouraged to spearhead the implementation of central schemes like:
 - **Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana**
 - **Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana**
 - Pension schemes for **widows and divyans**
 - **Ayushman Bharat** and initiatives such as **organ donation**.

National Safety Week 2025: Prioritizing Safety for a Developed India

- The **54th National Safety Week (NSW)** is being observed across India from **March 4th to 10th, 2025**.
- This annual campaign is spearheaded by the **National Safety Council (NSC)** and supported by the **Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India**.
- The week-long observance aims to promote a **culture of safety** and raise public awareness about **safety measures** in all aspects of life - at workplaces, homes, roads, and the environment.
- The theme for National Safety Week 2025 is "**Safety and Well-being Crucial for Viksit Bharat**", emphasizing the integral role of safety in India's journey towards becoming a developed nation (**Viksit Bharat**).

Historical Context and Significance:

- **Origin:**
 - The observance of National Safety Day began in **1972** and evolved into National Safety Week from **1991** onwards.
 - Initiated to commemorate the foundation day of the **National Safety Council** on **4th March**.
- **Evolution:**
 - Initially focused primarily on industrial safety, the scope has broadened to encompass road safety, environmental protection, human health, and overall well-being.
 - Reflects the changing nature of safety concerns and the need for a holistic approach to safety management.
- **Significance in Present Times:**
 - With India's rapid industrialization and infrastructure development, ensuring safety is paramount for sustainable and inclusive growth.
 - Aligned with national missions like '**Make in India**' and '**Skill India**', which require a safe and productive workforce.
 - Contributes to the achievement of **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, particularly those related to decent work and economic growth, and good health and well-being.

- Recent cases of work-related stress leading to untimely deaths underscore the importance of addressing this issue.

World Consumer Rights Day 2025: A Just Transition to Sustainable Lifestyles

Date & Theme:

- Observed on **March 15, 2025**.
- The theme, "**A Just Transition to Sustainable Lifestyles**", focuses on making sustainable, healthy choices accessible and affordable to all, ensuring that consumer rights remain at the forefront of global sustainability efforts.

Historical Background:

- Initiated in **1983** to honor the legacy of **President John F. Kennedy's 1962 address** to the US Congress, which first recognized the importance of consumer rights.
- Embodies the four fundamental rights: **Right to Safety, Right to be Informed, Right to Choose, and Right to be Heard**.

Government & Regulatory Framework:

- **Consumer Protection Act, 2019:**
 - Replaced the older 1986 Act, introducing a modern three-tier system known as **Consumer Commissions** (District, State, and Central levels) for speedy grievance redressal.
- **Digital Grievance Redressal Systems:**
 - **E-Daakhil Portal:** A user-friendly online platform that simplifies filing and tracking consumer complaints.
 - **e-Jagriti:** Launched to further streamline the process, ensuring reduced paperwork and faster case resolution.
- **National Consumer Helpline (NCH) 2.0:**
 - Enhanced with **AI-powered speech recognition**, multilingual support, and integrated with bodies like **FSSAI** and **BIS**, handling a significant increase in consumer queries (from **12,553 calls in 2015** to **1,55,138 in 2024**).

E-Commerce and Digital Regulations:

- **Consumer Protection (E-commerce) Rules, 2020:** Designed to hold online marketplaces accountable, ensuring transparent practices and proper redressal for unfair trade practices.
- **CCPA Guidelines for Dark Patterns, 2023:** Measures aimed at eliminating deceptive digital practices that mislead consumers.
- **Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS):** Drafting standards for ethical e-commerce operations, ensuring fair disclosure and consumer data protection.

Employee Burnout in India: The Work-Life Balance Crisis

- A recent survey by **Vertex Group**, a New York-based business process management company, revealed that **52% of employees in India** experience burnout due to **poor work-life balance**.
- The survey gathered insights from over **1,500 working individuals** across five states: **Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Punjab, and Andhra Pradesh**.

Extended Working Hours:

- Over **23% of employees** work beyond regular hours.
- Employees are productive for only **2.5 to 3.5 hours** during an **8-9 hour shift**, indicating that longer hours reduce productivity and creativity.

Demand for Flexibility:

- There is a growing demand for **flexible working hours** and a healthier balance between personal and professional life.
- Employees emphasize the importance of **weekends for rest and rejuvenation**.

Mental Health Concerns:

- The survey highlights the urgent need to prioritize **mental well-being** in high-stress occupations.

Consumer Welfare Initiatives:

- **Consumer Welfare Fund:** Provides seed money to states/UTs for projects promoting consumer rights; ₹32.68 crore was released during FY 2024-25.
- **Global Outreach & Member Activities:**
 - **Consumers International**, a global federation with over 200 members from 100 countries, is driving campaigns, workshops, and social media initiatives to embed sustainable lifestyles in everyday consumer choices.

India Ranks 118th in World Happiness Report 2025

- **India** has been ranked **118th** out of 147 countries in the **World Happiness Report 2025**, an improvement from its **126th position** in the previous year.
- The report was released on **March 20, 2025**, coinciding with the **International Day of Happiness**.
- **Finland** continues to hold the top spot as the happiest country for the **eighth consecutive year**, followed by **Denmark, Iceland, and Sweden**.
- **Afghanistan** remains the unhappiest country, ranked **147th**.

Key Factors Considered in the Report:

- The rankings are based on **life evaluations** and six key indicators:
 - **GDP per capita:** Economic strength of a country.
 - **Healthy life expectancy:** Average lifespan in good health.
 - **Social support:** Availability of help from family or friends.
 - **Freedom:** Perceived freedom to make life choices.
 - **Generosity:** Willingness of people to help others.
 - **Perception of corruption:** Trust in public institutions.

India's Performance:

Strengths:

- Ranked **10th** in volunteering and **57th** in donations, reflecting strong community bonds.
- Improved **life evaluation score** to **4.389** (out of 10), up from **4.054**.

Weaknesses:

- Low rankings in **social support** (128th) and **GDP per capita** (93rd).
- High perception of corruption, ranking **56th**.

About the World Happiness Report:

- **Published by:** The **Wellbeing Research Centre** at the University of Oxford in collaboration with **Gallup** and the **UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network**.

- **Objective:** To measure global well-being and promote policies focusing on mental health, social trust, and quality of life beyond economic growth.
- **First Published:** In **2012**, inspired by Bhutan's emphasis on **Gross National Happiness**.

India's Social Security Coverage Doubles: A Milestone Achievement

- **India's social security coverage** has doubled, reaching **48.8% in 2024**, up from **24.4% in 2021**, as per the **International Labour Organization (ILO) World Social Protection Report 2024-26**.
- This remarkable progress is attributed to key government initiatives that have extended benefits such as **health insurance, pensions, and employment support** to millions.
- Nearly **920 million people**, or **65% of the population**, are now covered by at least one form of social protection, whether in **cash or in-kind**, through central government schemes.

Key Government Initiatives Driving Social Security Expansion:

- **Ayushman Bharat:**
 - Over **39.94 crore Ayushman Cards** issued under **Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY)**, offering free health coverage of up to **₹5 lakh per family**.
- **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY):**
 - Provides free food grains to vulnerable populations, benefiting **81.35 crore beneficiaries**.
- **eShram Portal:**
 - Over **30.68 crore unorganized workers** registered, with **53.68% being women**.
- **Atal Pension Yojana (APY):**
 - Strengthens the social security system for the poor and unorganized sector workers, with an accumulated corpus of **₹43,369.98 crore**.

Social Security in India:

- Encompasses various measures aimed at providing income security, healthcare, and other forms of support to individuals and families, especially during times of need.
- Includes schemes like pensions, insurance (health, life, accident), maternity benefits, unemployment benefits, and social assistance programs.
- A significant portion of India's workforce is in the informal sector, making the extension of social security benefits to this segment a key challenge and priority.

Key Government Schemes Contributing to Social Security:

- **Atal Pension Yojana (APY):** Provides a guaranteed minimum pension to subscribers in the unorganized sector.
- **Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY):** Offers affordable life insurance cover.
- **Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY):** Provides affordable accidental death and disability cover.
- **Ayushman Bharat - Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY):** Provides health insurance coverage to vulnerable families.
- **Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO):** Manages mandatory provident fund schemes for employees in the organized sector.
- **Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC):** Provides social security benefits like medical care and cash benefits in times of sickness, maternity, disablement, and death due to employment injury.
- **National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP):** Provides financial assistance to the elderly, widows, and persons with disabilities.

Importance of Social Security:

- Reduces poverty and inequality.
- Enhances human capital by ensuring access to healthcare and education.
- Provides economic stability during times of crisis.
- Promotes social cohesion and reduces social unrest.
- Contributes to overall economic development by increasing productivity and consumption.

Supreme Court's Concern Over Erosion of Family Values in India

- The **Supreme Court of India** has raised alarms about the **erosion of family values** and the weakening of the traditional concept of family unity.
- Justices **Pankaj Mithal** and **S.N. Bhatti** highlighted the shift towards a "**one person, one family**" model, reflecting a significant cultural change.
- The court emphasized the importance of **Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam**, meaning "the world is one family," but noted that even nuclear families are struggling to maintain unity.

Key Observations:

Legal Case:

- The remarks were made during a property dispute case where a woman sought to evict her eldest son from the family home.
- The court ruled that eviction could only be justified under the **Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act** if necessary for the protection of senior citizens.

Cultural Shift:

- Increasing familial conflicts and litigation over property and maintenance reflect the erosion of traditional family structures.
- The court expressed concern over the growing trend of individualism, which undermines communal support and togetherness.

Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act

- **Purpose:** To ensure **maintenance** and **welfare** of parents and senior citizens.
- **Beneficiaries:** Covers **parents** (biological, adoptive, step) and **senior citizens** (Indian citizen, 60 years and above, unable to maintain themselves).
- **Maintenance:** Includes provision for **food, clothing, housing, medical attendance, and treatment**.
- **Obligation:** Places a legal **obligation** on **children** and **relatives** to maintain their parents and senior citizens.
- **Maintenance Tribunals:** Establishes **Maintenance Tribunals** to hear and decide on maintenance applications.
- **Welfare Measures:** Mandates the government to establish and manage **old age homes** and provide **medical facilities** for senior citizens.
- **Protection from Abuse:** Provides mechanisms to protect senior citizens from **abuse, neglect, and abandonment**.
- **Penalties:** Prescribes **penalties** for children or relatives who fail to maintain parents or senior citizens, or who abuse or neglect them.
- **Transfer of Property:** Declares transfer of property by a senior citizen void if basic needs are not provided by the transferee.

Hurun Global Rich List 2025: India's Billionaire Boom

- India now boasts **284 billionaires**, ranking third globally behind the **United States** and **China**.
- The combined wealth of Indian billionaires stands at **₹98 lakh crore**, accounting for approximately **one-third of India's GDP**.
- **Mumbai**, with **90 billionaires**, remains India's billionaire hub but has lost its title as **Asia's billionaire capital** to **Shanghai**, which now has **92 billionaires**.

Top Billionaires:

- **Mukesh Ambani:** Wealth of ₹8.6 lakh crore, remains Asia's richest person despite a ₹1 lakh crore decline in wealth.
- **Gautam Adani:** Wealth of ₹8.4 lakh crore, recorded India's highest absolute wealth gain of ₹1 lakh crore.
- **Roshni Nadar Malhotra:** Chairperson of HCL Technologies, became the first Indian woman to

enter the global top 10 richest women, with a net worth of ₹3.5 lakh crore.

Youngest Billionaires:

- **Shashank Kumar** and **Harshil Mathur**, co-founders of Razorpay, are India's youngest billionaires at **34 years old**, each with a net worth of ₹8,643 crore.
-

UNESCO Advocates for Better Quality School

Meals

- **UNESCO** has released a report titled "**Education and Nutrition: Learn to Eat Well**", emphasizing the importance of improving the **nutritional quality of school meals** globally.
- The report highlights that nearly **47% of primary school pupils** worldwide benefit from school meals, but many lack adequate nutritional value.
- UNESCO calls for the inclusion of **fresh, locally sourced produce** and the reduction of **ultra-processed foods** in school meals.

Key Findings:

- **Impact on Learning:** Nutritious school meals increase **enrolment rates by 9%** and **attendance by 8%**, while also improving learning outcomes.
- **Global Standards:**
 - Only **93 out of 187 countries** have legislation or guidelines on school food and drink.
 - Among these, only **65%** regulate food sold in school cafeterias and vending machines.
- **Health Concerns:** Childhood obesity rates have more than **doubled since 1990**, while food insecurity continues to rise.

Successful Initiatives Worldwide:

- **Brazil:** Restrictions on ultra-processed foods in the national school feeding program.
 - **China:** Introduction of vegetables, milk, and eggs in rural schools, boosting nutrient intake and attendance.
 - **Nigeria:** The **Home-Grown School Feeding Programme** has increased primary school enrolment by **20%**.
 - **India:** Fortified organic pearl millet in Maharashtra has improved adolescents' attention span and memory.
-

Economics

India's Q3 GDP Growth: Economy Shows

Resilience at 6.2%

- India's **Gross Domestic Product (GDP)** grew at **6.2%** in the **third quarter (Q3)** of fiscal year 2025 (FY25), as per the data released on **February 29, 2025**.
- This growth rate indicates a **rebound** compared to the previous quarter and highlights the **resilience** of the Indian economy.
- The **National Statistical Office (NSO)**, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, released these figures.

Key Highlights of Q3 GDP Data:

- Sector-wise Performance:**
 - Manufacturing sector** showed strong growth, indicating a revival in industrial activity.
 - Agriculture sector** growth remained steady, supported by favourable monsoon and government initiatives.
 - Services sector** continued to be a major contributor to overall GDP growth, driven by sectors like finance and real estate.
 - Construction sector** also witnessed significant expansion.
- FY25 Growth Forecast:**
 - The Q3 GDP data contributes to the overall **FY25 growth forecast**, which is projected to be around **6.5%**.
 - This projection suggests that India remains one of the **fastest-growing major economies** globally, despite global economic headwinds.
- Factors Driving Growth:**
 - Government spending** on infrastructure and development projects.
 - Improved consumer demand**, particularly in urban areas.
 - Positive business sentiment** and investment inflows.
 - Effective macroeconomic management** by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

Key Findings:

- 42% YoY Growth in Credit Awareness:**
 - As of December 2024, **27 million** women are actively monitoring their credit scores—a **42% increase** from the previous year.
- Rising Self-Monitoring Base:**
 - Women's share of the total self-monitoring base grew from **17.89% in 2023 to 19.43% in 2024**.
- Regional Variations:**
 - Non-metro regions** witnessed a **48%** growth in self-monitoring, compared to **30%** in metro areas.
 - States like **Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, and Telangana** account for **49%** of self-monitoring women, with the **Southern region** leading at **10.2 million**.
- Loan Origination Trends:**
 - Since 2019, women's share in **business loan origination** increased by **14%**.
 - Their share in **gold loans** has grown by **6%**, with women representing **35%** of business borrowers by December 2024.

Government Initiatives for Women's Financial Inclusion:

- Mahila Samman Savings Certificate:**
 - A scheme launched by the government to encourage savings among women.
 - Offers a **fixed interest rate of 7.5%** for a tenure of two years.
- Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY):**
 - National Mission for Financial Inclusion to ensure access to financial services, including banking, remittance, credit, insurance & pension.
 - A significant number of **accounts opened under PMJDY are held by women**, promoting their financial inclusion.
- Stand-Up India Scheme:**
 - Promotes entrepreneurship among women and Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes.
 - Facilitates **loans to women entrepreneurs** to set up greenfield enterprises.
- Mudra Yojana:**
 - Provides funding to **Non-Corporate Small Business Segment (NCSBS)** including women entrepreneurs.
 - A significant portion of Mudra loans have been availed by women entrepreneurs.

Women Empowering India's Financial Growth

Report Launch:

- NITI Aayog** launched the report titled **"From Borrowers to Builders: Women's Role in India's Financial Growth Story"** on **March 3, 2025**.
- The report is a collaborative effort with **TransUnion CIBIL**, the **Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP)** of NITI Aayog, and **MicroSave Consulting (MSC)**.

Navratna Status for IRCTC & IRFC

What is Navratna Status?

- A prestigious recognition granted to select **public sector enterprises (PSEs)**, allowing them **enhanced financial autonomy** and **managerial freedom**.
- The status enables companies to make strategic decisions independently, boosting **efficiency** and **competitiveness**.

Key Players: IRCTC & IRFC

- **IRCTC (Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation):**
 - Manages railway catering, tourism, and online ticketing services.
 - With Navratna status, it can further innovate and expand its services, contributing significantly to the Indian travel and tourism sector.
- **IRFC (Indian Railway Finance Corporation):**
 - Responsible for raising funds for railway projects, including modernization and expansion.
 - The enhanced autonomy under Navratna status will facilitate quicker decision-making on investments and strategic projects.

Key Benefits of Navratna Status:

- **Enhanced Financial Autonomy:**
 - **Increased Investment Limit:** Navratna companies can now invest up to **₹1,000 crore** or **15% of their net worth** on a single project, or **₹3,000 crore** or **30% of their net worth** in aggregate annually, without seeking government approval.
 - **Joint Ventures and Subsidiaries:** Greater freedom to enter into **joint ventures**, form **alliances**, and establish **subsidiaries** both domestically and internationally.
- **Operational Flexibility:**
 - **Organizational Restructuring:** More autonomy in deciding on **organizational structure** and **human resource management**.
 - **Technology Adoption:** Easier to adopt **advanced technologies** and modernize operations to improve service delivery.
- **Improved Market Position:**
 - **Enhanced Brand Image:** Navratna status enhances the **brand image** and credibility of these companies, making them more attractive to investors and partners.
 - **Global Expansion:** Increased capabilities to expand operations and explore **business opportunities globally**.
- **Boost to Efficiency and Competitiveness:** Overall, the Navratna status aims to make these Public

Sector Enterprises (PSEs) more efficient, competitive, and profitable.

Navratna Status:

- **Category of PSEs:** 'Navratna' is a prestigious status conferred by the Indian government to select **Public Sector Enterprises (PSEs)** that have shown strong financial performance and operational efficiency.
- **Objective:** To provide these identified PSEs with greater autonomy to compete effectively in the globalized market.
- **Criteria for Navratna Status:**
 - Must be a **Miniratna Category-I** company and listed on the stock exchange.
 - Should have obtained a score of **60 out of 100** based on parameters like net profit, net worth, total manpower cost, total cost of production, capital employed, etc.
- **Other Higher Categories:** Above Navratna, there are also **Maharatna** and **Miniratna** categories which denote different levels of financial and operational autonomy.
 - **Maharatna:** The highest status, allowing even greater investment limits and decision-making power.
 - **Miniratna:** Further divided into Category-I and Category-II, with varying degrees of autonomy.

India's Startup Ecosystem: Global Ranking and R&D Boost

Global Ranking in Startups:

- India now ranks **3rd globally** in the startup ecosystem, a significant achievement highlighted by **Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh**.
- The country's impressive performance is reflected in the growing number of **unicorns** and a rapidly evolving **innovation landscape**.

Key Government Initiatives:

- **R&D Investment:**
 - The government has allocated **₹20,000 crore** for research and development in the Budget 2025-26.
 - This investment builds on the previous year's **₹1 lakh crore corpus** aimed at accelerating private-sector R&D.
- **Policy and Innovation Frameworks:**
 - India's Global Innovation Index ranking improved from **81st to 39th** over the past decade.
 - A 17-fold surge in **patent grants** underscores the country's focus on **deep-tech** and **sunrise sectors** like **semiconductor manufacturing**, **AI**, **5G**, and **quantum computing**.
- **Talent Development:**

- The government is tripling **Prime Minister's Research Fellowships (PMRF)** to support **10,000 young researchers** over the next five years.
- Initiatives like the **Gyan Bharatam Mission** are being launched to digitize over one crore ancient manuscripts, ensuring preservation and accessibility.

Post-Budget Webinar Highlights Key Reforms and Initiatives

- **Event:** Ministry of Finance hosted a **Post-Budget Webinar** on "**Regulatory, Investment, and Ease of Doing Business (EODB) Reforms**".
- **Objective:** Timely implementation of **Budget 2025-26 announcements** for economic growth and reforms.

Key Announcements:

- **Jan Vishwas Bill 2.0:** Aims to **decriminalize over 100 provisions** in various laws, reducing regulatory burdens.
- Increased **MUDRA loan limit** under the Tarun category from **₹10 lakh to ₹20 lakh**.
- Implementation of the **PM Internship Scheme**, creating **1.25 lakh internships** in top companies.
- Expansion of **SIDBI branches** in MSME clusters for enhanced financial access.
- **Capital Expenditure:** Proposed **₹15.48 lakh crore** (4.3% of GDP) with **₹11.21 lakh crore** allocated as core capex (3.1% of GDP).

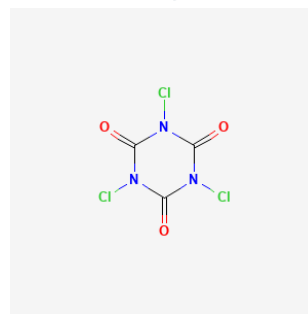
Focus Areas:

- **Ease of Doing Business:** Enhanced trust-based governance and streamlined compliances.
- **Financial Inclusion:** Expanding services of **India Post Payments Bank (IPPB)** and simplifying **KYC** processes.
- **Investment Friendliness:** Improving FDI norms and rationalizing legal frameworks.

India Imposes Anti-Dumping Duty on Water Treatment Chemical

- **India** has imposed an **anti-dumping duty** on **Trichloroisocyanuric acid**, a chemical used for **water treatment**, imported from **China** and **Japan**.
- The duty, set at **up to USD 986 per tonne**, will be effective for **five years**.
- The move follows recommendations from the **Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR)**, which found that domestic manufacturers suffered **material injury** due to below-cost imports.

Trichloroisocyanuric acid



Key Details

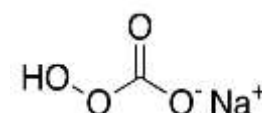
- **Purpose of Anti-Dumping Duty:**
 - **Protect Domestic Industry:** The duty is meant to shield Indian manufacturers from **cheap imports** that can harm local production.
 - **Ensure Fair Trade:** It helps maintain a **level-playing field** in international trade, in line with **WTO guidelines**.
- **Process and Implementation:**
 - The **DGTR** conducted an investigation into the dumped imports.
 - Based on its findings, the **Finance Ministry** imposed the duty within three months of the DGTR's recommendation.
- **Duration and Scope:**
 - The anti-dumping duty will be in place for **five years**, unless amended or revoked earlier.
 - Both **China** and **Japan**—key trading partners of India—are affected by this measure.

Additional Information:

What is Anti-Dumping Duty?

- **Definition:** A tariff imposed on imports priced below fair market value to protect domestic industries.
- **Purpose:** Ensures fair competition and prevents harm to local manufacturers.
- **WTO Guidelines:** Anti-dumping duties are permitted under WTO rules if investigations prove that dumping is causing injury to domestic industries.

Sodium Percarbonate:



- **Description:** An **inorganic chemical compound** with the formula **Na₂H₃CO₆**. It is an adduct of sodium carbonate and hydrogen peroxide.
- **Uses:**
 - Primarily used as an **oxidizing agent**, and a source of hydrogen peroxide.
 - Common ingredient in **laundry detergents, cleaning products, and bleaching agents**.

- Also used in **water treatment, textile bleaching**, and as a laboratory chemical.
- In water treatment, it can be used for **oxygenating water bodies** and **disinfecting**.

India's Pharmaceutical Exports: A Global Perspective

- **India ranked 11th globally** in pharmaceutical exports in **2023**, contributing **3% of the total global pharmaceutical exports**.
- This information was shared by **Union Minister Anupriya Patel** in the **Rajya Sabha**, citing a **Bain & Company** market research analysis.
- The **Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO)** and the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** have implemented measures to ensure the **quality, safety, and efficacy** of medicines.

Quality Assurance:

- Risk-based inspections of **905 drug manufacturing and testing units** were conducted in collaboration with state regulators.
- **694 enforcement actions** were taken, including production stoppages and license suspensions.

Transparency in Pricing:

- The **National Pharmaceuticals Pricing Policy (NPPP)** ensures transparency in drug pricing.
- The **Pharma Sahi Daam (PSD)** mobile app provides details on drug prices, including **brand name, composition, ceiling price, and maximum retail price**.

Regulatory Updates:

- Amendments to the **Drugs Rules, 1945**, introduced **QR codes** for tracking and tracing drugs, enhancing accountability.

Surge in India's Venture Capital Funding in 2024

- **India's venture capital (VC) funding** witnessed a remarkable **43% increase** in 2024, reaching **\$13.7 billion**, as per a report by **Bain & Company** and the **Indian Venture and Alternate Capital Association (IVCA)**.
- This growth was driven by a **45% rise in deal activity**, with **1,270 transactions** recorded, reinforcing India's position as the **second-largest market for VC funding in the Asia-Pacific region**.

Sectoral Contributions:

- **Consumer Technology**: Secured **\$5.4 billion**, more than doubling compared to 2023. Key investments included **Zepto (\$1.4 billion)**, **Meesho (\$275 million)**, and **Lenskart (\$200 million)**.
- **Software and SaaS (including Generative AI)**: Attracted **\$1.7 billion**, driven by demand for

development tools and international market strategies.

- **Fintech**: Continued to be a significant contributor to the funding landscape.

Deal Dynamics:

- **Small- and Medium-Ticket Deals (<\$50 million)**: Accounted for **95% of total deals**, growing **1.4x**.
- **Megadeals (\$100 million+)**: Increased by **1.6x**, reflecting investor confidence in high-quality companies.

Policy Reforms:

- Elimination of the **angel tax** and reduction in **long-term capital gains (LTCG) tax rates**.
- Simplification of **Foreign Venture Capital Investor (FVCI) registrations**.
- Removal of the **National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) process**.

Exit Environment:

- Exit values reached **\$6.8 billion**, with **public markets driving 75% of the total exits**.
- **IPOs** saw a **sevenfold increase**, showcasing the maturity of India's startup ecosystem.

Venture Capital (VC):

Venture Capital (VC) is a type of **private equity** financing that is provided by firms or funds to **startups, early-stage, and emerging companies** that are deemed to have high growth potential or which have demonstrated high growth in recent times.

- **Purpose:**
 - To provide capital to young companies that may not have access to traditional financing options like bank loans.
 - To fuel innovation and economic growth by supporting the development of new technologies and business models.
 - To generate high returns for investors through equity stakes in successful startups.
- **Investment Stages:**
 - **Seed Funding**: Initial capital to start operations and develop a proof of concept.
 - **Early-Stage Funding (Series A, B, C)**: Capital for product development, market expansion, and scaling operations.
 - **Late-Stage Funding (Series D, E, etc.)**: Capital for further expansion, acquisitions, or preparing for an Initial Public Offering (IPO).
- **Key Players in Indian VC Ecosystem:**
 - **VC Funds**: Specialized firms that raise capital from institutional investors and high-net-worth individuals to invest in startups (e.g., Sequoia Capital India, Accel, Tiger Global).
 - **Angel Investors**: Individual investors who provide seed funding to startups in exchange for equity.

- **Government Initiatives:** Programs like the **Startup India Initiative** and **Fund of Funds for Startups (FFS)** promote and support the VC ecosystem in India.

India's Housing Sector: Growth Amid Policy Reforms

- The **National Housing Bank (NHB)** released its **2024 report** on the housing sector, highlighting robust growth driven by **policy reforms, urbanisation, and technological advancements**.
- **Outstanding individual housing loans** as of September 2024 stood at **₹33.53 lakh crore**, marking a **14% year-on-year (Y-o-Y) increase**.
- The **NHB-RESIDEX House Price Index** recorded a **6.8% Y-o-Y increase** in housing prices for the quarter ending September 2024.

Government Initiatives:

- **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY):**
 - **PMAY-Gramin (PMAY-G)** and **PMAY-Urban (PMAY-U)** have significantly improved housing accessibility and affordability.
 - The launch of **PMAY 2.0** aims to further enhance affordable housing availability, especially in **Tier-II and Tier-III cities**.
- **Urban Infrastructure Development Fund (UIDF)** and **Affordable Rental Housing Complexes (ARHC)** schemes have contributed to sectoral growth.

Loan Distribution:

- **Economically Weaker Section (EWS)** and **Low-Income Group (LIG)** accounted for **39%** of outstanding loans.
- **Middle-Income Group (MIG)** held **44%**, while **High-Income Group (HIG)** accounted for **17%**.

Technological Advancements:

- **Digitisation of land records** and **transit-oriented development (TOD)** are reshaping the housing market.
- Use of **AI and blockchain** in property transactions is improving transparency and efficiency.

India's Warehousing Sector: A 12% Growth in 2024

- **India's warehousing sector** recorded a **12% year-on-year (Y-o-Y) growth** in 2024, with transaction volumes reaching **56.4 million square feet (mn sq ft)** across eight primary markets, as per a report by **Knight Frank India**.
- **Mumbai** emerged as the largest warehousing market, accounting for **18% of total transactions** at **10.3 mn sq ft**, driven by the **Third-Party Logistics (3PL)** sector.

Sectoral Contributions:

- **Manufacturing Sector:** Contributed **39% of total demand**, with **22 mn sq ft** leased in 2024, marking an **18% Y-o-Y increase**.
- **3PL Sector:** Held a **30% market share**, despite a **9% decline** in volume.
- **E-commerce:** Showed recovery, increasing its share from **5% in 2023** to **9% in 2024**.

Regional Insights:

- **Delhi-NCR:** Ranked second, contributing **16% of total transactions**, driven by **3PL (38%)** and **manufacturing (24%)** sectors.
- **Bengaluru, Kolkata, Chennai, and Ahmedabad:** Experienced **25-29% Y-o-Y growth** in transaction volumes.

Investment Growth:

- Private equity (PE) investments in the sector surged by **136%**, reaching **\$1,877 million** in 2024.
- Expansion into secondary markets contributed to overall growth, with **6% Y-o-Y growth** in transaction volumes in these areas.

India's Infrastructure Milestones: Second-Longest Road Network and Third-Largest Metro Network

India has achieved remarkable progress in infrastructure development, as highlighted by **Union Home Minister Amit Shah** during the inauguration of various developmental projects in Gujarat. The country now boasts the **world's second-longest road network** and the **third-largest metro network**.

Road Network:

- India has the **second-longest road network globally**, a testament to the rapid expansion of highways and rural roads.
- The **national highway network** has grown by **60% in the last decade**, with **36.5 km of highways constructed daily**.
- This development has significantly improved connectivity and boosted economic activities across the country.

Metro Network:

- India has the **third-largest metro network**, with **1,011 km of operational metro lines** across **23 cities**.
- An additional **979 km of metro lines** are under construction, aiming to expand the network to **29 cities**.
- The metro system has become a vital mode of urban transportation, reducing traffic congestion and promoting sustainable mobility.

Development Projects in Gujarat:

- Amit Shah inaugurated projects worth **₹146 crore** in Gandhinagar, including a **500-bed hospital** and infrastructure improvements.
 - Gujarat has emerged as a leader in infrastructure, hosting the **world's largest green energy park** and **Asia's largest green city**.
-

India's First Exploration Licence Auction and AI-Driven Mineral Targeting Hackathon

- India's inaugural **Exploration Licence (EL) auction** was launched on **March 13, 2025**, in Goa by **Union Minister G. Kishan Reddy** and **Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant**.
- This initiative marks a significant reform aimed at unlocking **critical and deep-seated mineral resources** across the country.

Exploration Licence Auction:

- A total of **13 exploration blocks** were auctioned, covering critical minerals like **Rare Earth Elements (REEs)**, **zinc**, **diamonds**, **copper**, and **Platinum Group Elements (PGE)**.
- The auction process is **transparent and online**, designed to boost **private sector participation** and reduce **import dependency**.

AI-Driven Mineral Targeting Hackathon:

- The **AI Hackathon 2025**, themed **"Mineral Targeting using Artificial Intelligence"**, was inaugurated during the event.
- Participants will use **geoscience data** and **AI techniques** to identify new mineral-rich zones, focusing on concealed and deep-seated deposits.

Reforms and Goals:

- The initiative is part of the **5th Tranche of Critical Mineral Blocks Auction**.
- Aims to create a **self-reliant mineral ecosystem** aligned with India's **clean energy and industrial ambitions**.

Government Initiatives:

- **Amendments to the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957:**
 - Introduced in **2023**, these amendments enable systematic exploration and private sector involvement.
 - Address gaps in India's legal framework for mining exploration.
 - **Economic Impact:**
 - Revival of mining operations in Goa is expected to boost the **state's economy** and contribute to the **Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP)**.
-

Nationwide Financial Literacy Campaigns by RBI and NCFE

- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** and the **National Centre for Financial Education (NCFE)** have launched **nationwide campaigns** to enhance financial literacy and inclusion across India.
- These initiatives aim to empower citizens with the knowledge and skills required for effective financial management and fraud prevention.

Financial Literacy Centres (FLCs):

- Lead banks have been directed to establish FLCs to provide structured financial education.
- These centres conduct **specialized financial literacy camps** targeting diverse groups, including youth and senior citizens.

Public Awareness Campaigns:

- The **"RBI Kehta Hai"** campaign uses multilingual and multimedia platforms like TV, radio, print, and digital media to educate the public on:
 - Safe banking practices.
 - Online fraud prevention.
 - Investment awareness.
 - Responsible financial decision-making.

FAME Booklet:

- RBI has developed the **Financial Awareness Messages (FAME)** booklet, featuring customized content for different demographics, including senior citizens.

NCFE Initiatives:

- NCFE has conducted **54 financial literacy programs** in the last three years, particularly in the **North-Eastern states**.
 - These programs focus on financial concepts, grievance redressal mechanisms, and fraud prevention.
-

RBI Wins Digital Transformation Award 2025 for Sarthi and Pravaah Initiatives

- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has been honored with the **Digital Transformation Award 2025** by **Central Banking, London**, for its innovative digital initiatives, **Sarthi** and **Pravaah**.
- These initiatives have modernized the RBI's operations, making it one of the most digitally advanced central banks globally.

Sarthi:

- Launched in **January 2023**, Sarthi digitized the RBI's **internal workflows**.
- Features include:
 - **Secure document sharing**.
 - **Enhanced data analysis** through dashboards and reports.

- **Improved record management** across RBI's network of over **13,500 employees** in more than **40 locations**.
- Replaced fragmented manual and digital processes with a **centralized information repository**.

Pravaah:

- Introduced in **May 2024**, Pravaah digitized **external regulatory applications**.
- Benefits include:
 - **Real-time tracking** and analytics for applicants and RBI managers.
 - Integration with the Sarthi database for seamless processing.
 - Digitization of over **70 regulatory applications**, leading to an **80% increase in monthly submissions**.

Impact:

- Reduced reliance on **paper-based submissions**, enhancing efficiency and transparency.
- Strengthened **cybersecurity systems** and digital tracking mechanisms.

India's Goods Trade Deficit Hits 42-Month Low

- India's **goods trade deficit** has dropped to a **42-month low** of **\$14.05 billion** in February 2025, as per data from the **Ministry of Commerce and Industry**.
- This improvement is attributed to a significant reduction in **gold, silver, and crude oil imports**.
- Imports fell to a **22-month low** of **\$50.9 billion**, while exports were valued at **\$36.9 billion**.

Key Highlights:

- **Gold and Silver Imports:**
 - Reduced to **\$2.7 billion**, the lowest since **June 2024**.
- **Crude and Petroleum Imports:**
 - Declined to **\$11.89 billion**, the lowest since **July 2023**.
- **Year-on-Year Trends:**
 - Exports dipped by **10.84%**, partly due to the **base year effect** related to the leap month.
 - Imports shrunk by **16.3%** compared to the same period last year.

Economic Implications:

- The trade deficit was significantly lower than the average of **\$23 billion** during the first 10 months of FY2025.
- Economists predict a **current account surplus** of around **\$5 billion** in Q4 FY2025, equivalent to **0.5% of GDP**.

Trade Deficit:

- A **trade deficit** occurs when a country's imports exceed its exports.

- It is a critical indicator of a nation's economic health and its dependency on foreign goods.

Boosting Digital Payments: ₹1,500 Crore Incentive Scheme for UPI Transactions

- The **Union Cabinet**, chaired by **Prime Minister Narendra Modi**, has approved a ₹1,500 crore incentive scheme to promote **small-value UPI transactions** (Person-to-Merchant or P2M) for the financial year 2024-25.
- The scheme aims to encourage **low-value BHIM-UPI transactions** (up to ₹2,000) among small merchants and rural areas.

Key Highlights:

Incentive Structure:

- A **0.15% incentive** will be provided per transaction to acquiring banks.
- **80% of the claim amount** will be disbursed upfront, with the remaining 20% tied to performance metrics like:
 - **System uptime** above 99.5%.
 - **Technical decline rate** below 0.75%.

Focus Areas:

- Expanding UPI usage in **Tier-3 to Tier-6 towns** and rural areas.
- Promoting innovative solutions like **UPI Lite** for offline transactions.

Benefits:

- Encourages **financial inclusion** by making digital payments accessible to small merchants.
- Supports a **less-cash economy**, ensuring faster cash flow and better credit access for small businesses.

SEBI Partners with DigiLocker to Reduce Unclaimed Assets in Securities Market

- The **Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)** has collaborated with **DigiLocker**, a government-backed digital document storage platform, to address the issue of **unclaimed assets** in the Indian securities market.
- This initiative aims to enhance **investor protection** and streamline the process of managing financial assets.

Key Features of the Initiative:

Access to Financial Holdings:

- Investors can now store and access their **demat account holdings, mutual fund statements, and Consolidated Account Statements (CAS)** through DigiLocker.
- This expands DigiLocker's existing services, which already include **bank account**

statements, insurance policies, and NPS account details.

Nomination Facility:

- Users can appoint **Data Access Nominees** within DigiLocker.
- In the event of the user's demise, nominees will receive **read-only access** to the DigiLocker account, ensuring seamless access to financial information.

Automated Notifications:

- Upon notification of the user's demise by **KYC Registration Agencies (KRAs)**, DigiLocker will automatically notify the nominees via **SMS and email**.
- This facilitates the initiation of the **asset transmission process** with relevant financial institutions.

Benefits for Investors:

- **Minimizing Unclaimed Assets:** Helps reduce dormant accounts and unclaimed dividends by ensuring timely access to financial information.
- **Simplified Asset Transmission:** Nominees can easily manage the deceased's financial assets, reducing delays and complexities.
- **Enhanced Transparency:** Consolidates all financial holdings in a single digital location, making it easier for investors and their families to track assets.

ULIP Surpasses 100 Crore API Transactions: A Milestone in India's Logistics Sector

- The **Unified Logistics Interface Platform (ULIP)** has achieved a significant milestone by surpassing **100 crore API transactions**, marking a transformative step in India's logistics ecosystem.
- This achievement aligns with the vision of **Viksit Bharat 2047**, aiming to create a **world-class, technology-driven logistics sector**.
- The announcement was made by **Union Minister of Commerce & Industry, Piyush Goyal**, who emphasized ULIP's role in enhancing the **Ease of Doing Business** and positioning India as a **global trade and manufacturing powerhouse**.

Key Features and Benefits of ULIP:

Automation and Real-Time Tracking:

- Enables **real-time cargo tracking** and **streamlined regulatory compliance**.
- Bridges critical data gaps, benefiting businesses across industries.

Democratization of Logistics Data:

- Provides equal opportunities for **MSMEs, start-ups**, and large enterprises.
- Processes an average of **1 crore API transactions weekly**, driving widespread adoption.

Multi-Modal Integration:

- Offers APIs across **road, rail, ocean, and air**, ensuring **just-in-time inventory management** and cost savings.

Sustainability Efforts:

- Helps businesses adopt **greener transport options**, reducing emissions and aligning with India's **carbon reduction goals**.

Impact on the Manufacturing Sector:

- Companies like **Prism Johnson, Asian Paints**, and **Tata Steel** are leveraging ULIP's APIs for:
 - **Transporter verification.**
 - **Process automation.**
 - **Supply chain optimization.**

India Achieves 7% Growth in Textile Exports

- India has recorded a **7% increase in textile and apparel exports**, including handicrafts, from **April to December 2024**, compared to the same period in the previous year.
- The country holds a **4% share in global textiles and apparel exports**, ranking among the top textile-exporting nations.
- Key export markets include the **USA, European Union, and UK**, which collectively account for **53% of total exports** during FY 2023-24.

Government Initiatives to Strengthen the Textile Sector:

PM Mega Integrated Textile Regions and Apparel (PM MITRA) Parks Scheme:

- Aims to develop **world-class textile infrastructure**.
- Focuses on creating **integrated textile value chains** to enhance competitiveness.

Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme:

- Targets **man-made fibre (MMF) fabric**, apparel, and **technical textiles**.
- Encourages **large-scale manufacturing** and export growth.

National Technical Textiles Mission:

- Promotes **research and development** in specialty fibres and application-based textiles like **geotextiles, medical textiles, and sports textiles**.
- Focuses on **biodegradable textiles** using natural fibres like **milkweed and bamboo**.

SAMARTH Scheme:

- A **capacity-building program** designed to provide **placement-oriented skilling** in the textile sector.

Rebate of State and Central Taxes and Levies (RoSCTL) and Remissions of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP):

- Enhance competitiveness by promoting **zero-rated exports**.

Free Trade Agreements (FTAs):

- India has signed **14 FTAs** and **6 Preferential Trade Agreements (PTAs)** to enhance export potential.
- Recent agreements include deals with the **UAE**, **Australia**, and the **European Free Trade Association (EFTA)**.

Cotton Support Mechanisms:

- The government sets a **Minimum Support Price (MSP)** for cotton annually to protect farmers and ensure steady supply.
- Custom duty on Extra-Long Staple (ELS) cotton** was reduced to zero in February 2024, allowing duty-free imports under the **India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA)**.

India's Bioeconomy Reaches \$165 Billion

- India's **bioeconomy** has grown **16-fold** over the past decade, from **\$10 billion in 2014** to an impressive **\$165 billion in 2024**.
- The **India BioEconomy Report 2025** was launched by **Dr. Jitendra Singh**, Union Minister of State for Science and Technology, during the **13th BIRAC Foundation Day**.
- The bioeconomy now contributes **4.25% to India's GDP**, showcasing its importance in the country's economic landscape.

Bio-Sarthi Initiative:

- A global mentorship program for **biotech startups**, fostering innovation and collaboration.
- Structured as a **six-month cohort**, it connects startups with international mentors.

BIO-E3 Policy:

- Focuses on **Biotechnology for Economy, Employment, and Environment**.
- Includes initiatives like **Bio-AI Hubs**, **Bio foundries**, and **bio-enabler hubs** to integrate advanced technologies.

Biotech Startup Ecosystem:

- India now has over **10,000 biotech startups**, compared to just **50 a decade ago**.
- Public-private partnerships and policy-driven approaches have created an enabling environment.

Research and Development:

- India's **Gross Expenditure on Research and Development (GERD)** has more than doubled in the last decade.
- Groundbreaking achievements include **indigenous antibiotics**, **gene therapy trials**, and **whole genome sequencing projects**.

India Crosses 1 Billion Tonnes in Coal

Production

- India achieved a historic milestone by surpassing **1 billion tonnes (BT)** of coal production on **March 20, 2025**, during the fiscal year 2024-25.
- This achievement comes **11 days ahead** of the previous fiscal year's total production of **997.83 million tonnes**.
- The coal sector contributes to **55% of India's energy mix**, with **74% of electricity** generated by coal-based power plants.

Government Reforms:

- Amendments to the **Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act**.
- Introduction of **commercial auctioning of coal blocks**, opening the sector to private players.
- These measures have increased domestic coal availability and reduced dependence on imports.

Economic Impact:

- From **April to December 2024**, coal imports declined by **8.4%**, saving approximately **\$5.43 billion (₹42,315.7 crore)** in foreign exchange.
- The milestone aligns with the government's vision of **Atmanirbhar Bharat** (self-reliant India).

Workforce and Technology:

- Over **5 lakh mine workers** across **350+ coal mines** contributed to this achievement.
- Adoption of **advanced mining technologies** and **sustainable practices** played a crucial role.

Coal Sector in India:

- India is the **second-largest consumer of coal** globally.
- The country has the **fifth-largest coal reserves** in the world.
- Coal remains a critical resource for **industrial growth**, **agriculture**, and **energy security**.

DAC Approves Defence Procurement Worth ₹54,000 Crore

- The **Defence Acquisition Council (DAC)**, chaired by **Defence Minister Rajnath Singh**, approved procurement proposals worth **₹54,000 crore** on **March 20, 2025**.
- This decision aims to enhance the operational capabilities of the **Indian Army, Navy, and Air Force**.

Indian Army:

- Approval for **1350 HP engines** to upgrade the existing **1000 HP engines** in **T-90 tanks**.
- This upgrade will significantly improve the **battlefield mobility** of tanks, especially in **high-altitude areas**.

Indian Navy:

- Procurement of **Varunastra Torpedoes**, an **indigenously developed anti-submarine torpedo** by the **Naval Science and Technological Laboratory**.
- These torpedoes will enhance the Navy's ability to counter **submarine threats**.

Indian Air Force:

- Acquisition of **Airborne Early Warning and Control (AEW&C) Aircraft Systems**.
- These systems will exponentially boost **battlefield awareness** and the **combat potential** of other weapon systems.

Year of Reforms:

- As part of celebrating **2025 as the Year of Reforms**, the DAC approved guidelines to **reduce timelines** in the capital acquisition process, making it more efficient.

Telecom Fraud Crackdown: DoT Disconnects 3.4 Crore Mobiles, Blocks 17 Lakh WhatsApp Accounts

- The **Department of Telecommunications (DoT)** has taken significant action against telecom fraud by:
 - Disconnecting over **3.4 crore mobile connections**.
 - Blocking **3.19 lakh IMEI numbers** linked to fraudulent activities.
 - Deactivating **16.97 lakh WhatsApp accounts** using **AI and Big Data analytics**.

Sanchar Saathi Portal:

- A government initiative enabling citizens to report suspicious communications via the **Chakshu facility**.
- Uses **crowdsourced data** and **AI-based tools** to identify and curb misuse of telecom resources.

Reduction in Spam Complaints:

- Complaints against **unregistered telemarketers (UTMs)** dropped from **1,89,419 in August 2024** to **1,34,821 in January 2025**.
- Over **20,000 bulk SMS senders** were blacklisted under the initiative.

Regulatory Amendments:

- The **Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI)** revised the **Telecom Commercial Communications Customer Preference Regulations (TCCPR), 2018**:
 - Increased the time limit for reporting spam from **3 days to 7 days**.
 - Reduced the action time for telecom operators from **30 days to 5 days**.

India's Economic Milestone: Doubling GDP in a Decade

- India has achieved a remarkable milestone by **doubling its GDP** in the last decade, growing from **\$2.1 trillion in 2015** to an estimated **\$4.3 trillion by 2025**.
- This growth rate of **105%** positions India as the **world's fifth-largest economy**, with projections to surpass **Japan by 2025** and **Germany by 2027**.

Key Drivers of Growth:

- **Structural Reforms:**
 - Implementation of the **Goods and Services Tax (GST)** streamlined taxation and boosted economic efficiency.
 - Initiatives like **Make in India** enhanced manufacturing and exports.
- **Digital Transformation:**
 - Expansion of the **digital economy** fostered innovation and entrepreneurship.
- **Infrastructure Development:**
 - Government-led projects improved connectivity and supported economic activities.

Global Context:

- India's growth rate outpaces other major economies, including **China** and the **United States**, which recorded slower GDP growth during the same period.
- This economic surge reflects India's rising influence in the global economic landscape.

Goods and Services Tax (GST):

- **Introduced:** July 1, 2017.
- **Purpose:** To unify India's indirect tax system and eliminate cascading taxes.
- **Impact:** Simplified compliance, reduced tax evasion, and boosted revenue collection.

Make in India:

- **Launched:** September 25, 2014.
- **Objective:** To transform India into a global manufacturing hub.
- **Focus Areas:** Automobiles, electronics, textiles, and renewable energy.

India Achieves Record ₹1.27 Lakh Crore in Indigenous Defence Production

- India has achieved a **record ₹1.27 lakh crore** in indigenous defence production for the financial year **2023-24**, marking a **174% increase** from **₹46,429 crore in 2014-15**.
- This milestone reflects the success of the **Make in India** initiative, which has significantly boosted domestic manufacturing capabilities in the defence sector.

Defence Exports:

- Defence exports reached an all-time high of **₹21,083 crore**, a **30-fold increase** over the past decade.
- India now exports to over **100 countries**, showcasing its growing global footprint in defence manufacturing.

Indigenous Defence Platforms:

- Development of advanced systems like:
 - Dhanush Artillery Gun System**
 - Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas**
 - Akash Missile System**
 - Advanced Towed Artillery Gun System (ATAGS)**
 - Naval assets such as **indigenous aircraft carriers, submarines, and frigates**.

Private Sector Contribution:

- The private sector accounts for **21%** of total defence production, fostering innovation and efficiency.
- Over **16,000 MSMEs** and **430 licensed companies** are actively contributing to the defence ecosystem.

Future Goals:

- India aims to achieve **₹3 lakh crore** in defence production and **₹50,000 crore** in exports by **2029**.

Revised Criteria for MSME Classification

- The **Government of India** has notified revised criteria for classifying **Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)**, effective from **April 1, 2025**.
- These changes aim to enhance the inclusivity and competitiveness of MSMEs, aligning with the evolving economic landscape.

Revised Investment Limits:

- Micro Enterprises:** Investment limit increased from **₹1 crore to ₹2.5 crore**.
- Small Enterprises:** Investment limit raised from **₹10 crore to ₹25 crore**.
- Medium Enterprises:** Investment limit expanded from **₹50 crore to ₹125 crore**.

Revised Turnover Limits:

- Micro Enterprises:** Turnover limit doubled from **₹5 crore to ₹10 crore**.
- Small Enterprises:** Turnover limit increased from **₹50 crore to ₹100 crore**.
- Medium Enterprises:** Turnover limit raised from **₹250 crore to ₹500 crore**.

RBI Grants Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) Five-Year Extension for Pension Liability Amortisation

- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has granted **Regional Rural Banks (RRBs)** an

additional **five years** to amortise their **pension liabilities** under the **RRB Employee Pension Scheme 2018**, effective from **November 1, 1993**.

- This decision aims to ease the financial burden on RRBs, allowing them to spread the increased liability over a longer period.

Amortisation Guidelines:

- RRBs must recognise pension liability as per **applicable accounting standards**.
- If the liability is not fully charged to the **Profit and Loss Account** in FY 2024-25, it can be amortised over a period of **five years**, starting from FY ending **March 31, 2025**.
- A minimum of **20% of the total pension liability** must be expensed annually.

Disclosure Requirements:

- RRBs must disclose the **accounting policy** followed in the **Notes to Accounts** of their financial statements.
- They must also disclose the **amount of unamortised expenditure** and its impact on **net profit**.

Impact on Tier-I Capital:

- Pension-related unamortised expenditure will not be deducted from the **Tier-I capital** of RRBs.

Regional Rural Banks (RRBs):

- Established under the **Regional Rural Banks Act, 1976**, RRBs aim to provide **credit and financial services** to rural areas.
- Operate under the joint ownership of the **Government of India, State Governments, and Sponsor Banks**.

Pension Scheme for RRB Employees:

- The **RRB Employee Pension Scheme 2018** was introduced to provide retirement benefits to RRB employees.
- Covers employees who joined service on or after **November 1, 1993**.

Public Sector Banks' Dividend Payouts Surge by 33% in FY24

- Public Sector Banks (PSBs) in India have reported a **33% increase** in dividend payouts for the financial year **2023-24 (FY24)**, disbursing a total of **₹27,830 crore** to shareholders.
- This marks a significant improvement in the financial health of PSBs, driven by robust profitability and improved asset quality.

Record Net Profit:

- PSBs collectively achieved a net profit of **₹1.41 lakh crore** in FY24, a **35% increase** from ₹1.05 lakh crore in FY23.

- The **State Bank of India (SBI)** emerged as the largest contributor, accounting for over **40% of the total profit**, with a net profit of ₹61,077 crore.

Dividend Distribution:

- SBI declared a dividend of **₹13.70 per share**, up from ₹11.30 in the previous year.
- Other notable contributors include:
 - **Bank of Baroda**: ₹7.60 per share.
 - **Canara Bank**: ₹16.10 per share.
- Approximately **65% of the total dividends** (₹18,013 crore) were paid to the government, reflecting its major stake in PSBs.

Turnaround Story:

- PSBs have transitioned from record losses of **₹85,390 crore in FY18**

Banking Laws Amended: More Nomination

Options for Account Holders

- The **Parliament** has recently passed the **Banking Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2023**.
- A key feature of this bill is the increase in the number of nominees that can be appointed for a bank account, from the previous limit of **one** to a maximum of **four**.
- This amendment aims to provide greater flexibility and ease for account holders in managing their financial assets and ensuring smooth transfer to their loved ones.

Key Provisions of the Amended Bill:

- **Increased Nomination Limit:** Account holders can now nominate up to **four individuals** to receive the funds in their account in the event of their demise.
- **Clarity in Nomination Process:** The bill seeks to streamline and simplify the nomination process in banking.
- **Amendments to Existing Laws:** The Banking Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2023, makes changes to the **Banking Regulation Act, 1949**, and the **Negotiable Instruments Act, 1881**.
- **Focus on Depositor Convenience:** The primary objective of this amendment is to enhance the convenience and protection of bank depositors.

Benefits of the Increased Nomination Facility:

- **Greater Flexibility:** Account holders with larger families or specific wishes for asset distribution can now nominate multiple individuals.
- **Reduced Legal Hassle:** Having multiple nominees can potentially simplify the process of claim settlement and reduce legal complexities for the beneficiaries.
- **Improved Financial Security for Families:** It ensures that the funds can be easily accessed by the intended beneficiaries without unnecessary delays.
- **Addresses Practical Difficulties:** The previous limit of one nominee often posed challenges for

individuals with more than one immediate family member they wished to nominate.

India Becomes World's Second-Largest Tea Exporter

- India has achieved a significant milestone by becoming the **world's second-largest exporter of tea** in **2024**, surpassing Sri Lanka. Kenya retains the top position.
- According to the **Tea Board of India**, India exported **255 million kilograms** of tea in 2024, marking a **10-year high** and a **10% growth** compared to 2023.
- The export value increased by **15%**, reaching **₹7,111 crore** in 2024.

Major Export Markets:

- India exports tea to over **25 countries**, with **UAE, Iraq, Iran, Russia, USA, and the UK** being the primary markets.
- Iraq accounted for **20% of India's tea exports**, with expectations of further growth.

Types of Tea Exported:

- **Black tea** dominates exports, making up **96%** of the total.
- Other varieties include **green tea, herbal tea, masala tea, and lemon tea**.

Government Initiatives:

- Formation of **352 Self-Help Groups (SHGs)**, **440 Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs)**, and **17 Farmer Producer Companies (FPCs)** to support small tea growers.
- Establishment of **mini tea factories** to encourage entrepreneurship and provide opportunities for unemployed youth.

Employment Impact:

- The Indian tea industry employs **1.16 million workers directly** and supports an equal number indirectly.

Major Tea Producing Regions in India:

- **Assam:** Known for its strong, malty black tea, Assam is the largest tea-producing state in India.
- **Darjeeling:** Famous for its delicate and aromatic black tea, often referred to as the "Champagne of Teas."
- **Nilgiris:** Produces a variety of black, green, and white teas with distinct flavours.
- **Other significant tea-producing states:** West Bengal (including Dooars and Terai), Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttarakhand.

GIFT City Rises in Global Financial Centres

Index 37

- **Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT City)** has climbed to the **46th position** in the **Global Financial Centres Index (GFCI 37)**, improving from its previous rank of 52.
- GIFT City also secured the **top rank in the 'Reputational Advantage' category** and advanced from **45th to 40th in the FinTech ranking**.
- It remains among the **top 15 financial centres in the Asia-Pacific region**, reflecting India's growing influence in global finance.

Reputational Advantage:

- GIFT City's rise in rankings highlights its growing reputation as a trusted financial hub.
- It has gained investor confidence due to its strong performance in FinTech and overall competitiveness.

Global Financial Centres Index (GFCI):

- Compiled by the **Z/Yen Group**, the GFCI evaluates financial hubs worldwide based on **140 instrumental factors** provided by organizations like the **World Bank, OECD, and United Nations**.
- Parameters include **business environment, infrastructure, human capital, financial sector development**, and overall competitiveness.

Commitment to Excellence:

- GIFT City is focused on enhancing its **ease of doing business, infrastructure, regulatory framework, and talent ecosystem** to position itself as a leading international financial hub.

GIFT City:

- **Location:** Gandhinagar, Gujarat.
- **Significance:** India's first operational smart city and maiden **International Financial Services Centre (IFSC)**.
- **Key Features:**
 - Offers world-class infrastructure and facilities for financial services.
 - Promotes innovation in FinTech and global trade.

Sahkar Taxi: Government to Launch

Cooperative-Based Taxi Service

- The government is set to launch a new cooperative-based taxi service named "**Sahkar Taxi**".
- This announcement was made by **Union Home Minister Amit Shah** in the **Lok Sabha**.
- The initiative aims to provide a reliable and affordable taxi service across the country based on the **cooperative model**.
- The **National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC)** will play a key role in implementing this scheme.

- This move is expected to empower local communities and create employment opportunities.

Key Highlights of the Initiative:

- **Cooperative Model:** The service will be operated on a cooperative basis, meaning it will be owned and run by its members, who will likely be the drivers themselves.
- **Nationwide Reach:** The "Sahkar Taxi" service is envisioned to have a nationwide presence, offering transportation solutions in various cities and towns.
- **Role of NCDC:** The **National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC)**, an apex autonomous development finance institution under the **Ministry of Cooperation**, will be instrumental in supporting the establishment and growth of these taxi cooperatives.
- **Empowerment and Employment:** This initiative is expected to empower drivers by making them owners and stakeholders in the service, thereby improving their livelihoods and creating new employment opportunities in the transportation sector.
- **Affordable and Reliable:** The cooperative model often leads to cost-effectiveness and better service quality as the focus is on the members' benefit rather than maximizing profits for external entities.

Cooperatives in India:

- A **cooperative** is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise.
- The cooperative movement in India has a long history and plays a significant role in various sectors like agriculture, banking, and now transportation.
- The **Ministry of Cooperation**, established in **July 2021**, aims to strengthen the cooperative movement in the country.
- Cooperatives are based on principles like self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity, and solidarity.

National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC):

- Established in **1963**.
 - Statutory corporation under the **Ministry of Cooperation**.
 - Functions as an apex autonomous development finance institution.
 - Provides financial assistance to cooperatives in various sectors, including agriculture, agro-processing, and now transportation.
 - Aims to promote and develop a farmer-owned cooperative structure in the country.
-

Gold Monetisation Scheme: Medium and Long-Term Deposits Discontinued

- The **Government of India** has announced the discontinuation of the **Medium-Term Government Deposit (MTGD)** and **Long-Term Government Deposit (LTGD)** components of the **Gold Monetisation Scheme (GMS)**, effective **March 26, 2025**.
- This decision follows a review of the scheme's performance and evolving market conditions. However, the **Short-Term Bank Deposit (STBD)** option will continue, subject to the commercial viability of individual banks.
- Existing deposits under the MTGD and LTGD categories will remain valid until maturity, as per the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** guidelines.

Key Features of the Gold Monetisation Scheme:

- **Launched:** November 2015, to reduce India's reliance on gold imports and mobilize idle gold for productive use.
- **Components:**
 - **Short-Term Bank Deposits (STBD):** 1-3 years, managed by banks.
 - **Medium-Term Government Deposits (MTGD):** 5-7 years, managed by the government.
 - **Long-Term Government Deposits (LTGD):** 12-15 years, managed by the government.
- **Minimum Deposit:** 10 grams of raw gold (bars, coins, or jewelry without stones/metals).
- **Interest Rates:**
 - MTGD: 2.25% per annum.
 - LTGD: 2.5% per annum.

Government's Borrowing Plan for FY26: ₹8 Lakh Crore in H1

- The **Government of India** plans to borrow **₹8 lakh crore** from the market during the **first half (H1) of FY26**, as announced by the **Ministry of Finance** on **March 27, 2025**.
- This amount constitutes **54% of the total borrowing target of ₹14.82 lakh crore** for FY26, aimed at bridging the revenue gap and funding developmental programs.
- The borrowing will be conducted through **26 weekly auctions**, with securities maturing between **3 and 50 years**.

Key Features of the Borrowing Plan:

- **Sovereign Green Bonds (SGrBs):**
 - ₹10,000 crore will be raised through **SGrBs** to fund environmentally sustainable projects.
- **Treasury Bills (T-Bills):**
 - Weekly issuance of **₹19,000 crore** in T-Bills during Q1 FY26, including:

- ₹9,000 crore in **91-day T-Bills**.
- ₹5,000 crore in **182-day T-Bills**.
- ₹5,000 crore in **364-day T-Bills**.

Debt Management:

- The government plans to conduct **buyback and switching operations** to smoothen the redemption profile and manage future obligations.

Fiscal Deficit:

- **Projected:** 4.4% of GDP for FY26, lower than the 4.8% estimated for FY25.
- **Absolute Figures:** Fiscal deficit pegged at **₹15,68,936 crore** for FY26.

Reserve Bank of India (RBI):

- **Ways and Means Advances (WMA):**
 - Limit set at **₹1.50 lakh crore** for H1 FY26 to address temporary mismatches in government accounts.

Electronics Component Manufacturing Scheme: Boosting India's Self-Reliance

- The **Union Cabinet**, chaired by Prime Minister **Narendra Modi**, approved the **Electronics Component Manufacturing Scheme** on **March 28, 2025**, with a funding of **₹22,919 crore**.
- The scheme aims to make India **Atmanirbhar (self-reliant)** in the electronics supply chain by attracting **₹59,350 crore in investments** and generating **₹4,56,500 crore worth of products**.
- It is expected to create **91,600 direct jobs** and numerous indirect employment opportunities over its **six-year tenure**.

Key Features of the Scheme:

- **Incentives for Manufacturers:**
 - Differentiated incentives tailored for various categories of components and sub-assemblies.
 - Focus on **display modules, camera modules, multi-layer PCBs, Li-ion cells**, and more.
- **Integration with Global Value Chains (GVCs):**
 - Enhances **Domestic Value Addition (DVA)** by building capacity and capabilities.
 - Encourages Indian companies to integrate with GVCs.
- **Employment-Linked Incentives:**
 - Part of the incentive payout is tied to achieving employment targets.

Electronics Industry in India:

- **Significance:** One of the fastest-growing industries globally, with strategic importance for economic and technological development.
- **Growth:**

- Domestic electronics production increased from **₹1.90 lakh crore in 2014-15** to **₹9.52 lakh crore in 2023-24**.
- Exports rose from **₹0.38 lakh crore in 2014-15** to **₹2.41 lakh crore in 2023-24**.

India's Current Account Deficit (CAD) in Q3 FY25

- **India's Current Account Deficit (CAD)** rose to **\$11.5 billion** in the third quarter of FY25, accounting for **1.1% of GDP**.
- This marks an increase from **\$10.4 billion** in the same quarter of FY24 but a decrease from **\$16.7 billion** in Q2 FY25.
- The widening CAD is attributed to a **higher merchandise trade deficit**, which increased to **\$79.2 billion** from **\$71.6 billion** in Q3 FY24.

Key Factors Contributing to CAD:

- **Merchandise Trade Deficit:** Increased due to higher imports compared to exports.
- **Net Services Receipts:** Rose to **\$51.2 billion** from **\$45 billion** a year ago, driven by growth in **computer services, business services, transportation, and travel services**.
- **Primary Income Account:** Net outgo increased to **\$16.7 billion**, reflecting higher payments of investment income.
- **Private Transfer Receipts:** Representing remittances by Indians employed overseas, rose to **\$35.1 billion** from **\$30.6 billion**.

Impact on Forex Reserves:

- India's **foreign exchange reserves** saw a depletion of **\$37.7 billion** during Q3 FY25, compared to an accretion of **\$6 billion** in Q3 FY24.

What is Current Account Deficit (CAD)?

- **Definition:** CAD occurs when the value of a country's imports of goods and services exceeds its exports.
- **Components:**
 - **Trade Balance:** Difference between exports and imports.
 - **Net Income:** Includes investment income and remittances.
 - **Net Transfers:** Includes foreign aid and remittances.

Role of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI):

- The **RBI** monitors CAD closely as it impacts the country's economic stability.
- **Forex Reserves:**
 - Act as a buffer to manage external shocks and currency volatility.
 - Include foreign currency assets, gold reserves, Special Drawing Rights (SDRs), and India's reserve position with the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)**.

Art & Culture

Sahitya Akademi's Festival of Letters 2025: A Literary Extravaganza

- The **Sahitya Akademi**, India's premier literary institution under the **Ministry of Culture**, is hosting its annual **Festival of Letters** from **March 7 to March 12, 2025**, at **Rabindra Bhavan, New Delhi**.
- This year's theme is "**Indian Literary Traditions: Heritage and Evolution**", celebrating the richness and diversity of Indian literature.

Key Highlights of the Festival:

- Inauguration and Awards:**
 - Inaugurated by **Union Minister for Culture and Tourism, Gajendra Singh Shekhawat**.
 - Prestigious **Sahitya Akademi Awards** in **23 languages** will be presented.
 - Eminent playwright **Mahesh Dattani** is the chief guest for the award ceremony.
 - Upamanyu Chatterjee**, a renowned writer and scholar, will deliver the **Samvatsar Lecture**.
- Participation and Sessions:**
 - Features **700+ writers** from over **50 languages**.
 - Includes **100+ sessions** with discussions, readings, and presentations by authors, poets, translators, and critics.
 - Special focus on **young writers, women writers, Dalit writers, tribal writers, LGBTQ writers**, and authors from the **North-East**.
- Cultural Performances:**
 - Evening performances by artists like **Rakesh Chaurasia (flute recital)**, **Nalini Joshi (Hindustani vocal)**, and **Fouzia Dastango and Ritesh Yadav (Dastan-e-Mahabharata)**.
- Children's Program:**
 - A day-long event, "**Spin A Tale**", dedicated to children, fostering creativity and storytelling.

Shashwat Mithila Mahotsav 2025: Celebrating Mithila's Legacy

- Event:** Union Home Minister **Amit Shah** addressed the **Shashwat Mithila Mahotsav 2025** in Gandhinagar, Gujarat.
- Cultural Significance:** Mithila celebrated as the **land of scholars, debates, and traditions** since ancient times.
- Historical Roots:**
 - Associated with texts like the **Ramayana, Mahabharata, and Vedas**.
 - Birthplace of **Mata Sita** and **Rajarshi Janak**.

- Renowned for philosophical debates like those of **Mandan Mishra** and **Adi Shankaracharya**.
- Role of Women:** Highlighted contributions of scholars like **Gargi, Maitreyi, and Bharti**, symbolizing the **high status of women in Mithila**.

World Theatre Day 2025: Fostering Peace and Empathy Through Storytelling

- World Theatre Day** is celebrated annually on **March 27** to honour the cultural significance of theatre and its role in promoting global unity and peace.
- Initiated in **1961** by the **International Theatre Institute (ITI)**, the first celebration coincided with the opening of the **Theatre of Nations** season in Paris in **1962**.
- The theme for **2025** emphasizes **theatre's power to foster empathy, peace, and cultural understanding** through storytelling and live performances.

Key Highlights of World Theatre Day 2025:

Global Celebrations:

- Events such as **performances, workshops, panel discussions, and seminars** were held worldwide.
- The official **World Theatre Day Message** was delivered by **Theodoros Terzopoulos**, a renowned theatre director and educator.
- The message was translated into over **50 languages**, emphasizing the unifying power of theatre.

Significance of Theatre:

- Theatre serves as a **mirror to society**, offering a platform for **powerful storytelling** and **social commentary**.
- It nurtures **creativity**, inspires **positive change**, and promotes **cultural reflection**.
- Theatre is not just entertainment; it is a medium for **education** and **societal transformation**.

Special Events in 2025:

- The **ITI World Congress** was held in **Rio de Janeiro, Brazil**, showcasing diverse theatrical traditions from countries like **South Korea, China, Thailand, and Chile**.
- Street plays and open-air performances** were organized to engage the public and raise awareness about the importance of theatre.

Geography

Unprecedented Methane Emissions from Mount Fentale

- **Large-scale methane emissions** detected from **Mount Fentale**, an active stratovolcano in Ethiopia's Great Rift Valley.
- **Implications:** Potential indicator of **untapped natural gas reserves** beneath the rift's tectonic layers.

Sources Explored:

- **Geothermal Methane:** Minor compared to detected emissions.
- **Buried Organic Deposits:** Methane from decomposed ancient organic matter.
- **Deep Hydrocarbon Reservoirs:** Similar to known natural gas-rich regions like the Ogaden Basin.
- **Magma-Gas Interaction:** Heating of underground organic-rich rock layers by rising magma.

Challenges:

- Determining the exact methane source.
- Drilling and extraction complexities due to seismic activity and volcanic hazards.
- **Environmental Risks:** Methane as a potent greenhouse gas.
- Aligning with Ethiopia's renewable energy goals.

Climate Change Suspected in Three Simultaneous Cyclones in South Pacific

- **Event:** Three tropical cyclones – **Rae, Seru,** and **Alfred** – active simultaneously in the South Pacific.
 - **Timeline:** Developed within a span of **five days** in waters off the eastern coast of Australia.
 - **Impact:** Significant damage in affected areas, including **Fiji** and **Queensland**.
 - **Scientific Insight:** **Rising ocean temperatures** from climate change provide additional energy for these storms.
 - **Context:** Occurs during a **La Niña** phase, which typically reduces cyclone frequency.
 - **Historical Comparison:** Last instance of three simultaneous cyclones in the region was in **January 2021**.
-

Science & Technology

Aditya-L1: First Image of a Solar Flare Kernel

Mission Overview:

- **Aditya-L1** is India's first dedicated solar mission, launched by **ISRO** to study the Sun's outer layers and its dynamic processes.
- The mission aims to understand the Sun's atmosphere, solar corona, and space weather impacts on Earth.

Historic Capture:

- For the first time, the **SUIT** (Solar Ultraviolet Imaging Telescope) payload onboard Aditya-L1 has captured a high-resolution image of a **solar flare kernel**.
- The **solar flare kernel** represents the intensely bright and energetic core region of a solar flare, where the release of energy is most pronounced.

Scientific Significance:

- The image provides unprecedented details on the **energy release** process during a solar flare.
- It aids scientists in deciphering the **dynamics of solar flares**, contributing to improved forecasting of **space weather** phenomena.
- Insights from this image help in understanding potential impacts on **satellites, communications, and power grids**.

Understanding Solar Flares and Kernels:

- **Solar Flares:**
 - Sudden and intense bursts of energy from the Sun's surface.
 - Among the most powerful explosions in our solar system.
 - Release energy in the form of electromagnetic radiation across the spectrum, from radio waves to gamma rays.
- **Solar Flare Kernel:**
 - The **brightest and hottest core region** at the base of a solar flare.
 - Considered the **origin point** of the flare's energy release.
 - Studying the kernel is vital to understanding the physics of flare initiation and evolution.

Aditya-L1 Mission:

- **India's first dedicated scientific mission to study the Sun.**
- **Launched by:** Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on **September 2, 2023**.
- **Orbit:** Placed in a **Halo orbit around the Lagrange point 1 (L1)** of the Sun-Earth system.
 - **Lagrange Point 1 (L1)** provides a continuous, unobstructed view of the Sun.
 - Located approximately **1.5 million kilometers** from Earth.
- **Primary Objectives:**

- To study the **Sun's Corona, Chromosphere, and Photosphere**.
- To investigate **solar flares, coronal mass ejections (CMEs)**, and other solar phenomena.
- To understand **space weather dynamics**.
- **Payloads:** Carries **seven payloads** for observing the Sun in different wavelengths.
 - **Visible Emission Line Coronagraph (VELC)**
 - **Solar Ultraviolet Imaging Telescope (SUIT)**
 - **Aditya Solar Wind Particle Experiment (ASPEX)**
 - **Plasma Analyser Package for Aditya (PAPA)**
 - **Solar Low Energy X-ray Spectrometer (SoLEXS)- High Energy L1 Orbiting X-ray Spectrometer (HEL1OS)**
 - **Magnetometer**

DRDO's High Altitude Trials Boost Tejas

Operational Readiness

- **DRDO** has successfully conducted high altitude trials of its **integrated life support system (ILSS)** for pilots onboard the **LCA Tejas**.
- These trials simulate extreme flight conditions to validate the system's performance and ensure **pilot safety** during high altitude missions.
- The **indigenous ILSS** is designed to provide enhanced **oxygen supply**, effective **environmental control**, and overall life support, ensuring that pilots remain safe and alert even in challenging conditions.

Key Highlights

- **Rigorous Testing:**
 - The system underwent extensive testing under simulated high altitude environments, proving its **reliability, endurance**, and **functional integrity** in extreme conditions.
- **Strategic Importance:**
 - The trial underscores India's commitment to developing **indigenous defense technology**, reducing reliance on foreign systems.
 - Enhancing the operational capabilities of the **Tejas jets** directly contributes to the **modernization and readiness** of the Indian Air Force.
- **Technological Advancement:**
 - The success of these trials marks a significant leap in ensuring that pilots are equipped with state-of-the-art **life support** and **safety systems** during high-altitude operations.

India's Telecom Revolution Takes Center Stage at Mobile World Congress 2025

- India effectively showcased its rapid **telecom transformation** at the **Mobile World Congress (MWC) 2025** held in **Barcelona, Spain**.
- The **Indian Pavilion** at MWC 2025 highlighted the nation's advancements in **5G, 6G**, and other cutting-edge telecom technologies.
- This strong presence underscores India's emergence as a significant player in the global telecom landscape and its commitment to **digital empowerment**.

Government Initiatives Driving Telecom Transformation:

- **Digital India Program:**
 - A flagship program of the Government of India with a vision to transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy.
 - It focuses on three key vision areas: **Digital Infrastructure as a Core Utility to Every Citizen, Governance & Services on Demand**, and **Digital Empowerment of Citizens**.
- **BharatNet Project:**
 - Aims to provide broadband connectivity to all **Gram Panchayats** in India.
 - This ambitious project is crucial for expanding digital access in rural areas and enabling e-governance, e-health, and e-education services.
- **Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for Telecom Sector:**
 - The PLI scheme encourages domestic manufacturing of telecom and networking products in India.
 - It aims to attract large investments in the telecom sector, boost domestic manufacturing, and reduce import dependence.
- **5G Spectrum Auctions and Rollout:**
 - The successful auction of 5G spectrum and the rapid rollout of 5G services across India demonstrate the government's commitment to staying at the forefront of telecom technology.
 - Government policies are facilitating faster and wider 5G deployment to unlock its economic and social benefits.

Revised Livestock Program: Paving the Way for Improved Animal Health

Cabinet Approval and Announcement:

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** has announced the Cabinet's approval for a **Revised Livestock**

Program, marking a **big step towards better animal health**.

- The program is a strategic initiative to boost **livestock productivity** and modernize the **animal husbandry sector** across the country.

Key Features of the Revised Livestock Program:

- **Enhanced Preventive Measures:**
 - Emphasis on strengthening **vaccination drives** and implementing robust **disease control measures** to protect animal health.
- **Upgraded Veterinary Services:**
 - Investment in improved **infrastructure** and **training programs** for veterinary professionals to ensure timely and quality healthcare for livestock.
- **Farmer-Centric Approach:**
 - Provision of technical and financial support to **livestock farmers** to enhance productivity and income, thereby improving rural livelihoods.
- **Integration of Modern Technology and R&D:**
 - Adoption of modern technologies and focused **R&D initiatives** to keep pace with global standards in animal health management.

Firefly's Blue Ghost Mission 1 Successfully Lands on the Moon

- **Event:** Firefly Aerospace's **Blue Ghost** lander successfully landed on the moon.
- **Date:** The landing occurred on **March 1, 2025**.
- **Significance:** Blue Ghost is the **second privately built spacecraft** to make a soft landing on the moon.
- **Location:** Landed on a **lava plain** on the moon's near side.
- **Achievement:** Marked a significant milestone for **private space exploration**.
- **Future Plans:** Two more private lunar landers are expected to join Blue Ghost soon.

Sleep Disorders in India: The Role of Bedtime Routines and Technology

- A recent survey conducted by **YouGov and Amazon Alexa** in February 2025 highlights that **53% of Indians** experience **sleep-related issues** due to inconsistent bedtime routines.
- The survey, which included over **1,000 respondents** from 10 cities like Bengaluru, Delhi, and Mumbai, sheds light on the growing sleep crisis in urban India.

Key Findings:

- **Impact of Inconsistent Routines:**

- Over half of the respondents reported sleep disorders when they did not follow a consistent bedtime routine.
- However, **54% noticed significant improvements** in sleep quality when adhering to regular sleep patterns.
- **Role of Technology:**
 - **52% of respondents** use **voice assistants** like Alexa to establish and maintain bedtime routines.
 - Popular uses include playing **meditation sessions, relaxing sounds,** and **audiobooks**, as well as controlling **smart home devices** like lights and air conditioners.
- **Bedtime Activities:**
 - Common pre-sleep activities include:
 - Watching video content (**63%**).
 - Connecting with family and friends (**59%**).
 - Listening to music, podcasts, or audiobooks (**58%**).
 - Scrolling through social media (**57%**).

Health Implications:

- Sleep disorders are linked to **reduced productivity, mental health issues,** and **chronic illnesses** like cardiovascular diseases and diabetes.
- The survey emphasizes the importance of consistent sleep schedules and reducing screen time before bed.

World Sleep Day:

- **Observed:** World Sleep Day is observed annually on the Friday before the March Equinox.
- The first World Sleep Day was held on 14 March 2008.
- **Objective:** To raise awareness about the importance of sleep and its impact on health.
- **Theme for 2025:** "Make Sleep Health a Priority"

Chronic Pain and Mental Health: A Global Concern

- A recent study published in **JAMA Network Open** reveals that **40% of adults with chronic pain** also experience **anxiety or depression**.
- The study analyzed data from **376 surveys** involving nearly **3.5 lakh participants** across **50 countries**.

Key Findings:

- **Vulnerable Groups:**
 - Women and younger individuals are more likely to experience anxiety and depression alongside chronic pain.
 - Conditions like **fibromyalgia, low back pain,** and **rheumatoid arthritis** are commonly associated with mental health issues.

Nociplastic Pain:

- This type of pain arises from changes in the central nervous system's processing of pain, rather than tissue damage.
- It is prevalent in conditions like fibromyalgia and is strongly linked to anxiety and depression.

Health Implications:

- Chronic pain not only affects physical health but also significantly impacts **mental well-being, work productivity,** and **social relationships**.
- The study emphasizes the need for **routine mental health screenings** for individuals with chronic pain.

Fibromyalgia:

- **What is it?**
 - A chronic condition characterized by widespread pain, fatigue, and mood disturbances.
- **Causes:**
 - The exact cause is unknown, but it is believed to involve genetic, environmental, and psychological factors.
- **Treatment:**
 - Includes medication, physical therapy, and psychological support.

Biopsychosocial Model of Pain:

- **Definition:**
 - This model explains pain as a result of biological, psychological, and social factors.
- **Significance:**
 - Highlights the importance of addressing mental health in pain management.

India's Web3 Developer Ecosystem: A Rising Global Leader

- **India added 4.7 million Web3 developers** in 2024, marking a **28% growth** in its developer community, according to the **India Web3 Landscape Report (2024)** by Hashed Emergent.
- The country now hosts the **second-largest crypto developer base globally**, accounting for **11.8% of the global Web3 developer community**.
- India is projected to **overtake the US as the largest Web3 developer hub by 2028**.

Developer Contributions:

- **45.3%** of Indian Web3 developers contribute to coding.
- **29.7%** focus on bug fixes, while **22.4%** work on documentation.
- Popular areas include **gaming, NFTs, DeFi (Decentralized Finance),** and **Real World Assets (RWAs)**.

Youth Dominance:

- Over **50% of Web3 developers** in India entered the field in the last two years.
- **85%** of these developers are under the age of 27.

Startup Ecosystem:

- India ranks **third globally** in Web3 startup founders, with over **1,200 startups**.
- Investments in Indian Web3 startups surged by **109%**, reaching **\$564 million** in 2024.
- Key focus areas include **staking solutions, tokenization platforms, and decentralized exchanges**.

Web3:

Web3, also known as **Decentralized Web**, represents the **third generation of the internet**. It envisions a more open, decentralized, and user-centric online experience built on **blockchain technology**.

- **Key Characteristics:**
 - **Decentralization:** Data and control are distributed across a network rather than being centralized with large corporations.
 - **Blockchain Technology:** Utilizes blockchain for secure, transparent, and tamper-proof data management and transactions.
 - **Tokenization:** Employs cryptocurrencies and tokens for economic incentives, governance, and access within Web3 ecosystems.
 - **User Empowerment:** Aims to give users greater control over their data, digital assets, and online identities.
- **Applications:**
 - **Decentralized Finance (DeFi):** Offers financial services like lending, borrowing, and trading without traditional intermediaries.
 - **Non-Fungible Tokens (NFTs):** Enables digital ownership and unique representation of assets like art, collectibles, and virtual real estate.
 - **Decentralized Autonomous Organizations (DAOs):** Community-led organizations governed by code and blockchain-based voting mechanisms.
 - **Metaverse:** Immersive digital worlds that can be built on Web3 principles, offering decentralized and user-owned virtual experiences.

Blockchain Technology:

Blockchain is a **distributed ledger technology** that records transactions across many computers. It is the foundational technology behind Web3 and cryptocurrencies.

- **Key Features:**
 - **Decentralized:** Data is distributed across a network of computers, making it resistant to censorship and single points of failure.

- **Immutable:** Once data is recorded on the blockchain, it is extremely difficult to alter or delete, ensuring data integrity.
- **Transparent:** Transaction records are publicly viewable on the blockchain, enhancing transparency (though privacy-focused blockchains also exist).
- **Secure:** Cryptography is used to secure transactions and prevent unauthorized access or modification.

- **Significance:**
 - Blockchain technology is transforming various industries beyond cryptocurrencies, including supply chain management, healthcare, voting systems, and digital identity.
 - Its decentralized and secure nature makes it suitable for applications requiring trust, transparency, and data integrity.

NASA's SPHEREx and PUNCH Missions to Revolutionize Space Exploration

SPHEREx Mission:

- Aims to study **cosmic light** from **hundreds of millions of galaxies**.
- Focuses on uncovering the universe's **origins** and **early expansion**.
- Utilizes **infrared detectors** to create a detailed map of the sky.
- Will examine the **aftermath of the Big Bang** and the **collective light** of galaxies.

PUNCH Mission:

- Complementary to SPHEREx; focuses on studying the **solar corona** and **solar winds**.
- Designed to enhance understanding of the **Sun's interactions** with space weather.

Innovative Technology:

- SPHEREx will orbit Earth at **400 miles altitude**, conducting **four complete surveys** over two years.
- PUNCH uses advanced imaging techniques to map the Sun's outer layers.

ISRO's SpaDeX Mission: Pioneering India's Lunar Exploration

The **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** has successfully undocked the **SpaDeX (Space Docking Experiment)** satellites, marking a significant milestone in India's space exploration journey. This achievement demonstrates India's growing expertise in space docking technology, a critical capability for future missions.

SpaDeX Mission Overview:

- The mission involved two satellites, **SDX-01 (Chaser)** and **SDX-02 (Target)**, launched on **December 30, 2024**, using the **PSLV-C60** rocket.
- The satellites were docked on **January 16, 2025**, showcasing India's capability in automated docking operations.
- The recent undocking further solidifies India's advancements in space docking technology.

Technological Significance:

- Space docking and undocking are essential for assembling space stations, interplanetary missions, and satellite servicing.
- The success of SpaDeX paves the way for ambitious projects like **Chandrayaan-4**, **Gaganyaan**, and the **Bharatiya Antariksha Station (BAS)**.

Future Prospects:

- ISRO plans to conduct multiple docking trials to refine its technology and ensure reliability.
- These advancements will play a crucial role in India's lunar exploration and human spaceflight programs.

ISRO Earns ₹3,827 Crores Through Foreign Satellite Launches

- The **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** has generated a revenue of **₹3,827 crores** from launching foreign satellites over the past decade (January 2015 to December 2024).
- This achievement highlights ISRO's growing prominence in the **global satellite launch market**.

Satellite Launches:

- ISRO successfully launched **393 foreign satellites** and **3 Indian customer satellites** using its **PSLV**, **LVM-3**, and **SSLV** launch vehicles.
- These satellites were launched for **34 countries**, with the **United States** being the largest customer (232 satellites).

Revenue Breakdown:

- The revenue includes **\$143 million** and **272 million euros**, equivalent to approximately **₹3,827 crores** at current exchange rates.

Global Collaborations:

- ISRO has signed **space cooperation agreements** with **61 countries** and **5 multilateral organizations**.
- Notable collaborations include:
 - **NISAR**: A joint satellite mission with NASA.
 - **TRISHNA**: A thermal imaging satellite project with the French space agency CNES.
 - **Lunar Polar Exploration Mission**: A feasibility study with Japan's JAXA.

GRIDCON 2025: Advancing Innovations in Grid Resilience

- **Event: GRIDCON 2025**, an international conference and exhibition in the **power sector**, inaugurated on **March 9, 2025**, at **Yashobhoomi, Dwarka, New Delhi**.
- **Inauguration**: Union Minister of Power and Housing & Urban Affairs **Shri Manohar Lal**, alongside **Shri Shripad Yesso Naik**, presided over the ceremony.
- **Organizer**: Hosted by **Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (POWERGRID)** under the Ministry of Power, in collaboration with **CIGRE, India**.
- **Theme**: Focused on **"Innovations in Grid Resilience"**, emphasizing technologies to revolutionize **energy generation, transmission, and consumption**.
- **Participants**:
 - Over **2000 delegates**, **150 technical papers**, and **150 exhibition companies**.
 - Representatives from **30 countries**.
- **Focus Areas**: Included discussions on **renewable integration, grid resilience, asset management, and digital transformation**.

ISRO and SCL Develop 32-Bit Microprocessors for Space Applications

- The **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)**, in collaboration with the **Semiconductor Laboratory (SCL)**, has developed **Vikram 3201** and **Kalpana 3201**, two 32-bit microprocessors designed for **space applications**.
- These processors mark a significant milestone in India's journey towards **self-reliance in high-reliability space technology**.

Key Features of the Microprocessors:

Vikram 3201:

- The first fully **Indian-made 32-bit microprocessor** qualified for use in **launch vehicles**.
- Fabricated using **180nm CMOS technology** at SCL.
- An advanced version of the **16-bit Vikram 1601**, which has been in use since 2009.

Kalpana 3201:

- Based on the **SPARC V8 RISC architecture** and compatible with **open-source software toolsets**.
- Features **floating-point computation capability** and supports high-level programming languages like **Ada**.

Applications and Achievements:

- These processors are designed for **onboard navigation, guidance, and control systems** in launch vehicles.
- Successfully validated in space during the **PSLV-C60 mission**.

- Represent a step forward in achieving **Atmanirbhar Bharat** in the field of space technology.

Supersolid Light: A Quantum Physics Breakthrough

- Scientists have achieved a groundbreaking discovery by transforming **light into a supersolid**, a state of matter that combines the properties of a solid and a superfluid.
- This phenomenon was observed in a **Bose-Einstein condensate (BEC)**, where photons (light particles) exhibit **quantum coherence** and form a structured lattice.

Key Features of Supersolid Light:

- **Dual Nature:** Exhibits the rigidity of a solid while maintaining the flow properties of a superfluid.
- **Quantum Coherence:** The photons in the supersolid state remain in a coherent quantum state, enabling unique interactions.
- **Applications:** Potential uses in **quantum computing, precision measurement,** and **advanced optical systems.**

Bose-Einstein Condensate (BEC):

- A **Bose-Einstein condensate** is a state of matter formed when particles, cooled to near absolute zero, occupy the same quantum state.
- First predicted by **Satyendra Nath Bose** and **Albert Einstein** in the 1920s.
- Known for enabling the study of quantum phenomena on a macroscopic scale.

Quantum Coherence:

- Refers to the property of particles to exist in a synchronized quantum state.
- Essential for technologies like **quantum computers** and **quantum communication systems.**

Indian Railways Advances Hyperloop Technology with IIT Madras Collaboration

- The **Research Designs and Standards Organisation (RDSO)**, under the **Ministry of Railways**, has signed a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** with **IIT Madras** to advance **Hyperloop technology** in India.
- The initiative has received **₹20.89 crore funding** to establish a **Centre of Excellence for Hyperloop Innovation** at IIT Madras.
- The announcement was made by **Union Minister of Railways, Ashwini Vaishnaw**, in the **Lok Sabha** on **March 19, 2025.**

Key Objectives of the Collaboration:

Development of Hyperloop Components:

- Creation of a **sub-scale model of a Hyperloop pod.**
- Establishment of a **test track** and **vacuum tube facility** for technology validation.

Promoting Sustainable Transportation:

- Hyperloop is envisioned as a **faster, energy-efficient, and sustainable** mode of transport.
- It aims to revolutionize India's transportation landscape by reducing travel time and carbon emissions.

Astroscale Partners with Digantara and Bellatrix Aerospace

- Japan's **Astroscale**, a leading space debris removal company, has partnered with India's **Digantara** and **Bellatrix Aerospace** to address the growing challenge of **orbital debris.**
- This collaboration marks Astroscale's **first operations in the Asia-Pacific region** outside Japan and is expected to launch **on-orbit services for Indian clients** within **1-2 years.**

Astroscale's Expertise:

- Specializes in **active debris removal** and **end-of-life disposal** for satellites.
- Has successfully demonstrated advanced proximity and docking operations through missions like **ELSA-d** and **ADRAS-J.**

Digantara's Role:

- Provides **space situational awareness services** to monitor orbital objects.
- Has contracts with multiple **U.S. defense agencies** and plans to expand operations globally.

Bellatrix Aerospace's Contribution:

- Manufactures **satellite propulsion systems** and has successfully space-qualified technologies like **Green Propulsion** and **Electric Propulsion-based Hall-Effect Thrusters.**

India's Space Policy:

- Recent liberalization of the space sector has opened opportunities for private players.
- A **₹10 billion fund** supports domestic space startups, fostering innovation and collaboration.

India Advocates Ethical AI Usage at the UN

- **India's Permanent Representative to the United Nations**, Ambassador **Parvathaneni Harish**, emphasized the need for **ethical and responsible use of artificial intelligence (AI)** during a session at the UN on **March 21, 2025.**

- India showcased its efforts to integrate AI into **good governance** and **developmental practices**, citing examples like:
 - National biometric systems** for financial inclusion.
 - Digital payment systems** accessible to all, including illiterate individuals.
 - Open-source digital governance tools made publicly available for global adaptation.

Global AI Framework:

- India proposed a **cooperative framework** for AI governance to ensure inclusivity and prevent digital divides.
- Advocated for **open, modular, scalable, and interoperable AI systems**.

AI for Development:

- Highlighted AI's role in bridging societal gaps and empowering marginalized populations.
- Stressed the importance of making AI tools accessible to all nations, regardless of economic status.

ISRO's Ambitious Goals: Moon Mission by 2040 and Space Station by 2030

- The **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** has unveiled ambitious plans to send an **Indian astronaut to the Moon by 2040** and establish an **Indian Space Station by 2030**.
- These announcements were made by **ISRO Chairman Dr. V. Narayanan** during an event at Lovely Professional University, Jalandhar.

Moon Mission:

- ISRO aims to achieve a **crewed lunar landing** by 2040, marking a significant milestone in India's space exploration journey.
- The mission will involve advanced technologies for safe landing and return.

Space Station:

- India plans to establish its own **space station** by 2030, enhancing its capabilities in long-term space missions and research.
- The station will serve as a hub for scientific experiments and international collaborations.

India's First Indigenous MRI Machine: A Milestone in Medical Technology

- India has developed its **first indigenous MRI machine**, set to be installed at **AIIMS Delhi** by **October 2025** for clinical trials.
- Spearheaded by the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)**, this initiative aims to reduce dependency on imported medical devices and lower the cost of MRI scans by **50%**.

Key Features of the Indigenous MRI Machine:

- Cost Reduction:** Expected to make MRI scans more affordable and accessible, especially in rural areas.
- Self-Reliance:** Promotes the **Atmanirbhar Bharat** initiative by reducing reliance on foreign imports.
- Advanced Technology:** Developed with cutting-edge technology by **SAMEER**, an autonomous R&D organization under MeitY.

Society for Applied Microwave Electronics Engineering and Research (SAMEER):

- Established:** Under the **Department of Electronics, Government of India**.
- Role:**
 - Focuses on research and development in microwave electronics and medical technology.
 - Collaborated with **AIIMS Delhi** for the installation and evaluation of the indigenous MRI machine.

Gaia Mission: End of Observations and Legacy

- The **Gaia spacecraft**, operated by the **European Space Agency (ESA)**, concluded its scientific observations on **January 15, 2025**, after more than a decade of transformative contributions to astronomy.
- Gaia's mission was extended beyond its planned five-year lifespan, but dwindling fuel reserves led to its retirement.
- The spacecraft will be passivated and placed in a **heliocentric orbit** on **March 27, 2025**, ensuring it does not interfere with other missions.

Key Achievements of Gaia:

Mapping the Milky Way:

- Gaia created the most precise **three-dimensional map** of the Milky Way, charting nearly **two billion celestial objects**.
- It provided insights into **galactic mergers, star clusters, exoplanets, black holes, and asteroids**.

Data Releases:

- Gaia's **Data Release 4** is expected in **2026**, covering 5.5 years of mission data.
- The final **Data Release 5**, encompassing the full 10.5 years of observations, is anticipated by the end of the decade.

Lagrange Point L2:

- Definition:** A stable orbital position 1.5 million kilometres from Earth, opposite the Sun.
 - Significance:** Ideal for space telescopes like Gaia, **James Webb Space Telescope**, and **Euclid** due to minimal interference and optimal solar power usage.
-

International Relations

UK's \$2 Billion Deal to Fund Air Defence

Missiles for Ukraine

Deal Announcement:

- The UK government, along with **Keir Starmer**, announced a **\$2 billion deal** aimed at funding advanced **air defence missiles** for **Ukraine**.
- This initiative is designed to bolster Ukraine's capabilities in countering **Russian air attacks** amid the ongoing conflict.

Strategic Importance:

- **Enhanced Security:** The deal is expected to significantly upgrade Ukraine's **air defence systems**, reducing vulnerability to aerial assaults.
- **International Support:** It underscores the UK's strong commitment to supporting Ukraine, reinforcing its role in global efforts against **Russian aggression**.
- **Bipartisan Endorsement:** The announcement, involving both the UK government and opposition leader **Keir Starmer**, reflects cross-party unity on the issue of supporting Ukraine's security.

Implications for the Conflict:

- **Deterrence:** By providing state-of-the-art missile systems, the deal aims to deter further **Russian air operations** and enhance overall **defence preparedness** in Ukraine.
- **Technological Edge:** The funding will facilitate the acquisition and deployment of **cutting-edge missile technology**, ensuring Ukraine remains competitive in modern air defence warfare.

2nd Asian Yogasana Championship: India to Host in March 2025

Event Details:

- **Dates:** March 29–31, 2025
- **Venue:** **Indira Gandhi Arena, New Delhi**
- Organized by the **Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports**, in collaboration with the **Sports Authority of India (SAI)** and **Yogasana Bharat**.
- The championship is designed to promote **Yogasana** as a competitive sport on an international platform while honouring its rich cultural roots.

Key Objectives:

- **Global Recognition:** The event aims to establish Yogasana as a globally recognized sport and work toward its inclusion in multi-sport events like the **Olympics**.
- **Athletic Excellence:** It will feature top athletes from across Asia, showcasing balance, strength,

flexibility, and the discipline required in competitive Yogasana.

- **Cultural Heritage:** Celebrates India's legacy as the birthplace of Yoga, emphasizing its benefits for both physical fitness and holistic well-being.

Strengthening WASH Cooperation: India & Nepal Forge a New Partnership

Key Event:

- **India and Nepal** have signed a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** to boost cooperation in the **Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH)** sector, including waste management.
- The signing ceremony took place at **Sushma Swaraj Bhawan, New Delhi**.

Officials Present:

- **Shri C R Patil**, Union Minister of **Jal Shakti**, Government of India.
- **Shri Pradeep Yadav**, Hon'ble Minister of **Water Supply**, Government of Nepal.

Main Objectives of the MoU:

- **Capacity Building:** Launch of training programs for Nepali personnel in water resource management and related fields.
- **Technology & Knowledge Transfer:** Sharing of technological expertise and best practices to enhance WASH initiatives in both countries.
- **Groundwater Management:** Joint efforts in monitoring, assessing, and managing groundwater resources, including quality improvement measures, artificial recharge, and rainwater harvesting.

EU Commission Proposes 800-Billion-Euro Defence Plan

- **Proposal:** European Commission proposes **joint EU borrowing of 150 billion euros** for defence.
- **Overall Plan:** Part of an **800 billion euros** financing effort to boost Europe's defence capabilities.
- **Objectives:** Enhance **interoperability among EU member states**, build pan-European defence systems.
- **Specific Focus:** Investment in **air and missile defence, artillery systems, missiles, drones, anti-drone systems, cyber, and military mobility**.
- **Spending Flexibility:** Proposal includes lifting limits on government spending for defence investments.
- **EU Budget:** Governments can use EU budget funds for defence purposes.

- **Potential Impact:** Creating fiscal space of up to **650 billion euros** if member states increase defence spending by 1.5% of GDP.
- **Outcome:** Mobilize close to **800 billion euros** for a safe and resilient Europe, strengthening the defence industrial base.

Trump Declares English as Official Language of the US

- **Executive Order:** Donald Trump signed an executive order making **English** the official language of the United States.
- **Rescinded Policy:** The order overturns a **2000 mandate** requiring federal agencies to provide language assistance to non-English speakers.
- **Objective:** Aim to **streamline communication** and **reinforce shared national values**.
- **Impact:** Largely symbolic with no changes required to federal programs; agencies may continue current language assistance policies.
- **Reactions:**
 - **Supporters:** View it as a step towards **national unity**.
 - **Critics:** Argue it may **harm non-English speakers** and reduce the US's global competitiveness.

International Day for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Awareness: Promoting Global Peace

- **International Day for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Awareness** is observed annually on **March 5th**.
- The day was officially declared by the **United Nations General Assembly** in **December 2022**, with the first observance in **2023**.
- This day serves as an important reminder of the critical need for **global disarmament** and **prevention of the spread of weapons**, especially weapons of mass destruction.
- It highlights the significance of **arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation efforts** in fostering international peace and security.

Importance of Disarmament and Non-Proliferation:

- **Preventing Catastrophic Wars:** Disarmament and non-proliferation are crucial to prevent the outbreak of wars, especially those involving **nuclear weapons**, which could have devastating global consequences.
- **Reducing Global Military Spending:** Resources spent on weapons could be redirected towards **economic development, poverty reduction, healthcare, education**, and tackling **climate change**.

- **Enhancing International Security:** Reducing the number of weapons and preventing their spread can significantly enhance global security and stability, making the world safer for all.
- **Promoting Peaceful Conflict Resolution:** Disarmament efforts encourage peaceful means of resolving conflicts through **diplomacy, negotiation, and mediation**, rather than resorting to arms.

Culmination of Indian Navy's TROPEX 2025

- **Exercise Name:** Theatre Level Operational Exercise (TROPEX) 2025, conducted by the Indian Navy.
- **Duration:** Held from **January to March 2025**.
- **Purpose:** Validated the Navy's **concepts of operations**, focusing on **national maritime security interests**.
- **Key Components:**
 - **AMPHEX** (Amphibious Exercise).
 - **Cyber and Electronic Warfare** simulations.
 - Tactical scenarios for **joint operations**.
- **Participation:**
 - **65-70 Naval ships, 9-10 submarines, and over 80 aircraft**.
 - Collaborated with the **Indian Army, Indian Air Force, and Indian Coast Guard**.
 - Over **600 infantry troops** and more than **10 Coast Guard ships** participated.
- **Theatre of Operations:** Covered a vast area from the **Strait of Hormuz** to the **Sunda and Lombok Straits**.

India-Kyrgyzstan Joint Special Forces Exercise KHANJAR-XII

- **Event:** The **12th** edition of the India-Kyrgyzstan Joint Special Forces Exercise KHANJAR-XII will take place from **March 10 to 23, 2025**.
- **Location:** To be held in **Kyrgyzstan**.
- **Participants:** Indian **Parachute Regiment (Special Forces)** and Kyrgyzstan's **Scorpion Brigade**.
- **Focus Areas:**
 - Sharing experiences and best practices in **Counter-Terrorism** and **Special Forces Operations**.
 - Training in **urban and mountainous high-altitude terrain scenarios**.
 - Developing advanced skills such as **sniping, building intervention, and mountain craft**.
- **Cultural Exchange:** Features celebration of the **Kyrgyz festival Nowruz**, strengthening bilateral ties.
- **Significance:** Reaffirms the commitment of **India and Kyrgyzstan** to regional **peace, stability, and**

security while addressing global concerns of **terrorism and extremism**.

India Signs \$248 Million Deal with Russia for T-72 Tank Engines

- The **Ministry of Defence (MoD)** has signed a **\$248 million contract** with **Rosoboronexport**, a Russian state-owned defense exporter, for the procurement of **1,000 HP engines** for **T-72 tanks**.
- The engines will be delivered in **fully assembled, completely knocked down, and semi-knocked down** conditions.
- This deal includes a **Transfer of Technology (ToT)** to the **Armoured Vehicles Nigam Limited (AVNL)**, located in Avadi, Chennai, for the integration and licensed production of these engines.

Key Highlights:

- **Upgrading T-72 Tanks:**
 - The T-72 tanks, which currently operate with **780 HP engines**, will be upgraded to **1,000 HP engines**.
 - This upgrade will significantly enhance the **battlefield mobility** and **offensive capabilities** of the Indian Army.
- **Boost to 'Make in India' Initiative:**
 - The ToT agreement aligns with the **'Make in India'** initiative, promoting **indigenous defense manufacturing**.
 - The AVNL will play a pivotal role in integrating and producing these engines domestically.
- **Strategic Importance:**
 - The T-72 tanks are a **mainstay of the Indian Army's armored fleet**, and this upgrade ensures their **operational readiness**.
 - The deal strengthens India's **defense capabilities** amid evolving regional security challenges.

Global Terrorism Index 2025: Pakistan's Alarming Surge in Terrorism

Key Findings of the GTI 2025 Report:

- **Pakistan** has emerged as the **world's second-most terrorism affected country** in 2025, climbing from its previous fourth position.
- This surge has placed it just behind **Burkina Faso**, which **topped the index**.
- Terrorism-related **fatalities increased by 45%**, rising from **748 in 2023** to **1,081 in 2024**.
- The number of terrorist attacks more than doubled, from **517 in 2023** to **1,099 in 2024**, marking the first time attacks crossed the **1,000 mark**.

Contributing Factors:

- A significant factor is the **escalation of militant activities** by groups such as the **Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)**, which accounted for **52%** of all terrorism-related deaths in Pakistan.
- The report links the surge in terrorism to increased **Afghan Taliban influence** in Kabul, contributing to the intensification of cross-border militant operations.

Regional Impact and Notable Incidents:

- **Balochistan** and **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa** are the most affected regions, suffering the highest toll in terms of both fatalities and the number of attacks.
- A recent terrorist attempt on the **Bannu Cantonment** in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa saw security forces thwarting an intrusion, but tragically resulted in the deaths of **five soldiers** and **13 civilians**.

Data and Methodology:

- The **Global Terrorism Index 2025** report by the **Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP)** ranks 163 countries based on terrorism's impact, considering factors such as frequency of attacks, fatalities, injuries, and hostages taken.
- The report compiles data from **17 years** of trends, providing a comprehensive overview of global terrorism patterns.

Indo-Bangla Talks on Ganga Water Treaty Renewal: Key Developments

- The **India-Bangladesh Joint Rivers Commission (JRC)** convened in Kolkata on **March 6-7, 2025**, to discuss the renewal of the **Ganga Water Treaty**, which is set to expire in **2026**.
- The treaty, originally signed in **1996** by Indian Prime Minister **H.D. Deve Gowda** and Bangladeshi Prime Minister **Sheikh Hasina**, governs the sharing of Ganga River water between the two nations.

Key Highlights of the Meeting:

- **Technical Discussions:**
 - Focused on water-sharing during the **lean season (January-May)**, when the Ganga's flow is at its lowest.
 - Both sides exchanged data on water flow and erosion observed at the **Farakka Barrage**.
- **Formation of a Technical Committee:**
 - A six-member committee will be established to finalize the terms of the renewed treaty within the next three months.
- **West Bengal's Role:**
 - Representatives from the **West Bengal government** participated, emphasizing the treaty's impact on the state's water availability and the **navigability of Kolkata Port**.

Atal Bihari Vajpayee Institute: Strengthening India-Mauritius Ties

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** and **Mauritius Prime Minister Navinchandra Ramgoolam** jointly inaugurated the **Atal Bihari Vajpayee Institute of Public Service and Innovation in Reduit, Mauritius**, on **March 12, 2025**.
- This landmark project, implemented under the **India-Mauritius development partnership**, underscores India's commitment to **capacity building** in Mauritius.

Purpose of the Institute:

- Serves as a **hub for learning, research, and public service**.
- Aims to foster **new ideas and leadership** for the future.
- Strengthens institutional linkages between **India and Mauritius**.

Funding and Implementation:

- Funded through a **grant of \$4.74 million** under a **2017 Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)**.
- Designed to cater to the **training needs of Mauritian civil servants** across ministries, public offices, and government enterprises.

Cultural and Diplomatic Significance:

- PM Modi dedicated the institute to the **shared cultural and historical bonds** between India and Mauritius.
- Reflects India's role as a **trusted partner in the Indian Ocean Region** and its commitment to the **Global South**.

India-Armenia MoU: Strengthening Medical Product Regulation

- **India and Armenia** signed a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** on **March 11, 2025**, to enhance cooperation in the **regulation of medical products**.
- The agreement was inked between **India's Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO)** and **Armenia's Center of Drug and Medical Technology Expertise (CDMTE)** during the visit of **Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan** to India.

Scope of Cooperation:

- Focuses on **regulatory frameworks** for medical products, ensuring **quality, safety, and efficacy**.
- Includes **knowledge sharing, capacity building, and technical collaboration**.

Bilateral Engagements:

- Discussions between **External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar** and **Ararat Mirzoyan** covered areas like **trade, connectivity, education, and culture**.
- Both nations agreed to explore partnerships in **digital technologies** and **pharmaceuticals**.

PM Modi Receives Mauritius' Highest Civilian Honor

- **Award:** Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** was conferred Mauritius' **highest civilian award, Grand Commander of the Order of the Star and Key of the Indian Ocean**.
- **Historic Achievement:** Modi becomes the **first Indian** to receive this prestigious accolade.
- **Recognition:** Acknowledged for his contributions to **strengthening India-Mauritius relations**.
- **Presentation:** Award announced by Mauritius Prime Minister **Navinchandra Ramgoolam**.
- **Notable Recipients:** Joins the ranks of global leaders like **Nelson Mandela (1998)** who have received this honor.
- **Significance:** Reflects the **deep-rooted historical and strategic ties** between India and Mauritius.
- **Past International Honors:** Marks Modi's **21st international award**, with previous awards from countries like **France, Russia, UAE, Bhutan, and Dominica**.

China to Host SCO Defence Officials Meet for Future Security Cooperation

- **China** is set to host a two-day meeting of **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)** defence officials in **Qingdao, Shandong Province**, on **March 26-27, 2025**.
- The meeting will focus on enhancing **defence and security cooperation** among SCO member states.

Participants:

- Representatives from the defence ministries of **10 SCO member states**, including **India, China, Russia, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Belarus**, will attend.
- Officials from the **SCO Secretariat** will also participate.

Agenda:

- Discussions on **future defence strategies** and **regional security cooperation**.
- Strengthening the SCO's **counter-terrorism mechanism**, the **Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (RATS)**.

China's Role:

- As the **rotating president** of the SCO, China is organizing over **100 events** in 2025 under the

theme “**Upholding the Shanghai Spirit: SCO on the Move**”.

- The **SCO Leaders' Summit** is scheduled to be held in **Tianjin** later this year.

India Adds Six Properties to UNESCO Tentative List

- On **March 7, 2025**, six new sites from India were added to the **UNESCO Tentative List**, a prerequisite for future nomination to the **World Heritage List**.
- This announcement was made by **Union Minister of Culture and Tourism, Gajendra Singh Shekhawat**, in the **Lok Sabha**.

Newly Added Sites:

1. **Mudumal Megalithic Menhirs** (Telangana):
 - Dates back **3,500–4,000 years**.
 - Features **80 towering menhirs** and **3,000 alignment stones** used for **funerary rites** and **astronomical observations**.
 - Known for its alignment with celestial events like **equinoxes** and **solstices**.
2. **Palace-Fortresses of the Bundelas** (Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh):
 - Represents the architectural legacy of the **Bundela dynasty**.
3. **Kanger Valley National Park** (Chhattisgarh):
 - A biodiversity hotspot with unique **flora and fauna**.
4. **Ashokan Edict Sites along the Mauryan Routes** (Multiple States):
 - Includes inscriptions by **Emperor Ashoka**, showcasing the spread of **Buddhism**.
5. **Chausath Yogini Temples** (Multiple States):
 - Circular temples with **64 Yogini idols**, reflecting ancient **Tantric traditions**.
6. **Gupta Temples** (North India):
 - Exemplifies the **Gupta period's** architectural brilliance.

Importance of the Tentative List:

- The **Tentative List** is an inventory of properties that countries intend to nominate for UNESCO recognition.
 - With these additions, India now has **62 sites** on the list.
 - Currently, **43 Indian properties** are inscribed on the **World Heritage List**, categorized as:
 - **35 Cultural**
 - **7 Natural**
 - **1 Mixed**
-

Strengthening Ties: India and New Zealand's Strategic Partnership

- On **March 17, 2025**, **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** held discussions with **New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon** in New Delhi.
- The meeting focused on enhancing **bilateral relations**, with agreements signed in areas like **defence, trade, education, and agriculture**.

Key Outcomes of the Meeting:

- **Defence and Security Partnership:**
 - Both nations signed a pact to institutionalize defence ties.
 - A roadmap will be developed for collaboration in the **defence industry sector**.
 - Emphasis on combating **terrorism** and addressing **anti-India activities** in New Zealand.
 - **Free Trade Agreement (FTA) Negotiations:**
 - Talks resumed after a decade to establish a **comprehensive and mutually beneficial FTA**.
 - Aims to enhance **market access, supply chain integration, and economic cooperation**.
 - Bilateral trade between the two nations has surpassed **\$1 billion** in the past year.
 - **Indo-Pacific Cooperation:**
 - Both leaders reaffirmed their commitment to a **free, open, and secure Indo-Pacific**.
 - New Zealand joined the **Indo-Pacific Ocean Initiative**, emphasizing shared democratic values.
 - **Migration and Skilled Workforce:**
 - Discussions included addressing **illegal migration** and facilitating the mobility of **skilled professionals**.
 - **Sports Collaboration:**
 - Plans to celebrate **100 years of sports relations** in 2026.
 - Focus on **sports coaching, player exchange, and sports science**.
-

UN80 Initiative: Reforming the United Nations for a Changing World

- On **March 13, 2025**, **UN Secretary-General António Guterres** announced the **UN80 Initiative** to mark the **80th anniversary** of the United Nations.
- The initiative aims to improve the **efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and responsiveness** of the UN amidst challenges like **shrinking resources** and **global uncertainty**.

Key Features of the UN80 Initiative:

- **Efficiency and Improvement:**

- Focus on identifying areas for **rapid efficiency gains**.
- Streamlining processes to ensure better delivery of **peacekeeping, development, and humanitarian aid**.
- **Mandate Review:**
 - Comprehensive review of the implementation of mandates given by **Member States**.
 - Addressing the increasing number of mandates to ensure alignment with current global priorities.
- **Structural Reforms:**
 - Strategic evaluation of deeper **structural changes** and **programme realignment** within the UN system.
 - A dedicated **internal task force**, led by **Under-Secretary-General Guy Ryder**, will oversee these reforms.
- **Addressing Financial Challenges:**
 - The UN has faced a **liquidity crisis** for over seven years due to delayed and incomplete contributions from Member States.
 - The initiative emphasizes the need for timely and full payments to sustain the organization's operations.

Importance of the Initiative:

- The UN80 Initiative reflects the organization's commitment to adapting to the evolving global landscape.
- It seeks to ensure that the UN remains a **relevant and effective platform** for addressing global challenges like **climate change, conflicts, and human rights violations**.

Global Displacement Crisis

- According to the **Danish Refugee Council (DRC)**, global displacement is projected to increase by **6.7 million people** by the end of **2026**.
- This alarming trend is driven by factors such as **armed conflicts, climate change, and socio-economic instability**.

Current Statistics:

- The number of forcibly displaced individuals worldwide stands at over **122.6 million**.
- Nearly **70%** of the newly displaced are expected to be **internally displaced** within their own countries.

Major Contributors:

- **Sudan:** Ongoing civil war has made it the world's most urgent humanitarian crisis, with **12.6 million people** already displaced.
- **Myanmar:** Escalating civil conflict is expected to displace an additional **1.4 million people** by 2026.
- Other affected regions include **Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen, and Venezuela**.

Impact of Aid Cuts:

- Significant reductions in international aid, particularly from major donors like the **United States**, have worsened the crisis.
- Essential programs, such as those protecting adolescent girls from child marriage in **South Sudan**, have been shuttered due to funding shortages.

Government and Global Responses:

- **AI-Driven Forecasting:** The DRC uses an AI model analysing over **100 indicators** (security, politics, economics) to predict displacement trends.
- **Call for Action:** The DRC emphasizes the need for **increased international support** to address the crisis and prevent further humanitarian disasters.

Danish Refugee Council (DRC):

- The DRC is a humanitarian organization focused on assisting refugees and displaced individuals worldwide.
- Established in **1956**, it operates in over **40 countries**.

India and Maldives to Settle Bilateral Trade in Local Currencies

- India and Maldives have agreed to settle **bilateral trade transactions** in their **local currencies**—Indian Rupees (INR) and Maldivian Rufiyaa (MVR)—in addition to the existing **Asian Clearing Union (ACU)** mechanism.
- This decision follows the signing of a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** between the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** and the **Maldives Monetary Authority (MMA)** in **November 2024**.
- The initiative is expected to **boost trade and financial ties** between the two nations, with India being the **largest trade partner** of Maldives, accounting for bilateral trade exceeding **548 million USD**.

Benefits for Maldives:

- Reduces dependency on third-party currencies like the US Dollar.
- Enhances trade efficiency and reduces transaction costs.

India's Role:

- Strengthens its position as a key economic partner in the Indian Ocean region.
- Promotes the use of INR in international trade.

Asian Clearing Union (ACU):

- **Established:** In **1974** to promote regional cooperation in trade and finance.
- **Members:** Includes **India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Iran, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka**.
- **Objective:**

- To facilitate **multilateral payment settlements** for intra-regional transactions.
- To reduce reliance on hard currencies like the **US Dollar**.
- **Mechanism:**
 - Transactions among member countries are settled on a **deferred basis**, reducing transaction costs.
 - Settlements are made in either **Asian Monetary Unit (AMU)** or designated currencies.
- **Significance:**
 - Encourages **economic integration** in Asia.
 - Boosts **trade efficiency** and minimizes forex risks.

Varuna 2025: Strengthening Indo-French Naval Cooperation

- The **23rd edition** of the **Varuna naval exercise** between **India and France** is being held from **March 19 to 22, 2025**, in the **Arabian Sea**.
- This bilateral exercise, initiated in **2001**, is a cornerstone of the **Indo-French strategic partnership**, showcasing their commitment to enhancing **naval interoperability** and **operational synergy**.

Joint Participation:

- Aircraft carriers **INS Vikrant** (India) and **Charles de Gaulle** (France) are participating, along with their **fighter aircraft, destroyers, frigates**, and an **Indian Scorpene-class submarine**.

Advanced Drills:

- Includes **air defense drills, mock air-to-air combat** between **Rafale-M** and **MiG-29K**, and **anti-submarine warfare exercises**.
- Focus on **surface warfare operations, maritime patrol**, and **replenishment-at-sea exercises**.

Indian Navy's INS Vikrant:

- **Commissioned:** In **2022**, it is India's first **indigenous aircraft carrier**.
- **Capabilities:** Equipped with advanced **radar systems, fighter jets**, and **helicopters**.

French Navy's Charles de Gaulle:

- **Commissioned:** In **2001**, it is France's only **nuclear-powered aircraft carrier**.
- **Capabilities:** Houses **Rafale-M fighter jets** and advanced **air defense systems**.

India Strengthens Development Partnership with Suriname: Boosting Passion Fruit Industry

- India has dispatched **\$1 million worth of machinery** to Suriname to support the growth of its **passion fruit industry**.

- This initiative is part of India's **development partnership** with Suriname, aimed at fostering economic growth and strengthening bilateral ties.
- The machinery was sent under a **grant program**, reflecting India's commitment to enhancing agricultural productivity and trade in Suriname.

Key Objectives of the Initiative:

- **Economic Growth:**
 - Boosts Suriname's **passion fruit industry**, a vital sector for the country's economy.
 - Promotes **sustainable agricultural practices** and enhances export potential.
- **Strengthening Bilateral Relations:**
 - Reinforces India's role as a reliable partner in Suriname's development journey.
 - Expands cooperation in areas like **agriculture, trade**, and **technology**.

India Hosts Third Central Asian Youth Delegation: Strengthening Regional Ties

- India is hosting the **third Central Asian Youth Delegation** under the **International Youth Exchange Programme (IYEP)** from **March 22 to 28, 2025**.
- The delegation includes **100 young leaders** from **Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan**.
- This initiative aligns with the vision set forth during the **India-Central Asia Summit** in **January 2022**, where **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** proposed annual youth exchanges to enhance mutual understanding.

Cultural and Heritage Immersion:

- Visits to iconic sites like the **Taj Mahal, Agra Fort, Humayun's Tomb**, and heritage landmarks in **Goa**.
- These experiences showcase India's **architectural grandeur** and **historical significance**.

Academic and Economic Engagement:

- Interaction with students and faculty at **IIT Delhi**.
- Visits to the **Goa Chamber of Commerce & Industry (GCCCI)** and **Goa Institute of Management** to explore India's advancements in **technology, research**, and **entrepreneurship**.

Youth Networking and Volunteerism:

- Engagement with **MY Bharat volunteers** to discuss **youth empowerment, leadership**, and **innovation**.

High-Level Diplomatic Interactions:

- Meetings with **External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar**, **Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant**, and **Goa Governor P.S. Sreedharan Pillai**.

International Youth Exchange Programme (IYEP):

- Organized by the **Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports**, IYEP fosters **cross-cultural understanding** and strengthens **diplomatic ties**.
- Focuses on **leadership development**, **volunteerism**, and **international cooperation**.

India-EU 4th Maritime Security Dialogue: Strengthening Maritime Cooperation

- The **4th India-EU Maritime Security Dialogue** was held on **March 21, 2025**, in **New Delhi**.
- The Indian delegation was led by **Muanpuui Saiawi**, Joint Secretary (Disarmament and International Security Affairs), Ministry of External Affairs, while the EU delegation was headed by **Maciej Stadejek**, Director for Security and Defence Policy, European External Action Service.

Key Discussions and Outcomes:

Focus Areas:

- Sustaining a **secure maritime environment** conducive to inclusive growth and global well-being.
- Strengthening efforts to counter **Illicit Maritime Activities (IMA)**.
- Protecting **critical maritime infrastructure**.
- Enhancing **regional capability development** and **capacity-building activities**.

Cooperation Initiatives:

- Reviewed ongoing collaborations in the maritime domain.
- Explored avenues to reinforce **international and regional mechanisms** for comprehensive maritime security.

Future Plans:

- Both sides agreed to hold the next round of the dialogue on a mutually convenient date.

Maritime Security:

- Maritime security involves protecting the seas from threats like piracy, smuggling, and illegal fishing, ensuring safe and secure trade routes.
- It is crucial for global trade, as over **80% of international trade** is conducted via sea routes.

Noma: The Latest Addition to WHO's List of Neglected Tropical Diseases

- The **World Health Organization (WHO)** has officially recognized **Noma** as a **Neglected Tropical Disease (NTD)** in **December 2023**, marking a significant step towards addressing this devastating condition.
- Noma, also known as **cancrum oris**, is a **rapidly progressing gangrenous disease** that primarily affects the **mouth and face**.

What is Noma?

- Affects mainly **children aged 2–6 years** living in extreme poverty, with poor oral hygiene, malnutrition, and weakened immune systems.
- Begins as a **soft tissue lesion** in the gums, progressing rapidly to destroy facial tissues and bones.
- If untreated, it has a **90% fatality rate**, but early intervention with **antibiotics and improved nutrition** can halt its progression.

Global Impact:

- Predominantly found in **sub-Saharan Africa**, but cases have also been reported in **Asia** and the **Americas**.
- WHO estimates around **140,000 new cases annually**, though many go unreported due to stigma and lack of awareness.

Challenges:

- Survivors often face severe **facial disfigurement**, **social stigma**, and require complex **reconstructive surgeries**.
- Lack of **healthcare infrastructure** and awareness contributes to underdiagnosis and delayed treatment.

Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs):

- NTDs are a group of diseases that disproportionately affect **marginalized communities** in tropical and subtropical regions.
- WHO's NTD list includes diseases like **leprosy**, **dengue**, and now **Noma**, to mobilize global efforts for their eradication.

India-Singapore Green and Digital Shipping Corridor: A Step Towards Sustainable Maritime Operations

- India and Singapore have signed a **Letter of Intent (LoI)** to establish a **Green and Digital Shipping Corridor (GDSC)**, focusing on **maritime digitalization** and **decarbonization**.
- The agreement was formalized during the **Singapore Maritime Week 2025**, attended by Union Minister **Sarbananda Sonowal** and Singapore's Senior Minister of State **Amy Khor**.

Key Features of the Corridor:

Decarbonization Efforts:

- Promotes the adoption of **zero or near-zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emission technologies**.
- Encourages the use of **green marine fuels** to reduce the carbon footprint of maritime operations.

Digital Integration:

- Enhances efficiency through **digital solutions** in shipping and port operations.
- Aims to streamline logistics and improve connectivity between ports.

Collaborative Framework:

- Identifies stakeholders from both nations to contribute to the corridor's development.
- Plans to formalize the partnership through a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)**.

Green Shipping:

- Green shipping** refers to efforts to reduce the environmental impact of maritime transport.
- The International Maritime Organization (IMO) has set targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from shipping by at least 50% by 2050 compared to 2008 levels, with a vision to phase them out entirely as soon as possible this century.
- Key strategies for green shipping include using alternative fuels, improving energy efficiency, and adopting cleaner technologies.

Operation Brahma: India's Humanitarian Assistance to Myanmar

- India has launched **Operation Brahma** to provide humanitarian assistance to **earthquake-hit Myanmar** following a devastating **7.7 magnitude earthquake** on **March 28, 2025**.
- An **80-member National Disaster Response Force (NDRF)** team has been deployed to assist in **search and rescue operations** and deliver relief materials.
- The first consignment of **15 tonnes of relief material**, including **tents, blankets, sleeping bags, food packets, hygiene kits, generators, and essential medicines**, was sent via **Indian Air Force C-130J aircraft** to **Yangon**.

Key Highlights of Operation Brahma:

- Search and Rescue Efforts:**
 - NDRF personnel equipped with advanced tools and accompanied by trained canines.
 - Deployment of **field hospitals** with **118 medical specialists**, including doctors and paramedics.
- Naval Support:**
 - Indian Navy ships **INS Savitri** and **INS Satpura** carrying **50 tonnes of relief material** are en route to Myanmar.
- Diplomatic Coordination:**
 - Relief materials were handed over to **Yangon Chief Minister U Soe Thein** by Indian Ambassador **Abhay Thakur**.
 - Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** expressed condolences and India's solidarity with Myanmar during this crisis.

National Disaster Response Force (NDRF):

- Established:** 2006, under the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- Objective:** Specialized disaster response and relief operations.

- Global Missions:** NDRF has previously assisted in international disasters, including the **Nepal earthquake (2015)** and **Turkey earthquake (2023)**.

Exercise INDRA 2025: Strengthening India-Russia Naval Cooperation

- The **14th edition of Exercise INDRA**, a bilateral maritime exercise between the **Indian Navy** and the **Russian Navy**, commenced on **March 28, 2025**, off the coast of **Chennai**.
- This exercise, which runs until **April 2, 2025**, underscores the enduring maritime partnership between the two nations, fostering **naval interoperability** and **operational synergy**.

Key Highlights of Exercise INDRA 2025:

- Phases of the Exercise:**
 - Harbour Phase** (March 28–30): Includes opening ceremonies, **Subject Matter Expert Exchanges (SMEEs)**, reciprocal visits, sports events, and pre-sail briefings.
 - Sea Phase** (March 31–April 2): Features advanced naval drills such as **tactical maneuvers**, **live weapon firings**, **anti-air operations**, **underway replenishment**, and **helicopter cross-deck landings**.
- Participating Naval Assets:**
 - Indian Navy: **INS Rana**, **INS Kuthar**, and **P-8I Maritime Patrol Aircraft**.
 - Russian Navy: **RFS Pechanga**, **RFS Rezkiy**, and **RFS Aldar Tsydenzhapov**.
- Focus Areas:**
 - Enhancing **maritime cooperation** and exchanging **best operational practices**.
 - Strengthening **diplomatic ties** and building bridges of friendship.

Exercise INDRA:

- Inception:** 2003, as a symbol of the strategic relationship between India and Russia.
- Significance:** Promotes jointness in naval operations and enhances readiness for multi-domain challenges.

India and Japan Strengthen Ties with Loan Agreements for Six Key Projects

- India and Japan have signed loan agreements worth **JPY 191.73 billion** under Japan's **Official Development Assistance (ODA)** program.
- These agreements aim to support six critical projects across sectors like **urban transport**, **water supply**, **forest management**, **aquaculture**, **biodiversity conservation**, and **investment promotion**.

Key Projects Funded:

1. **Delhi Mass Rapid Transport System Project (Phase 4 Additional Corridors):**
 2. Funding: **JPY 79.73 billion.**
 3. Objective: Expand Delhi's metro network to reduce traffic congestion and vehicular pollution.
 4. **Chennai Seawater Desalination Plant (Phase II):**
 5. Funding: **JPY 52.56 billion.**
 6. Objective: Provide a reliable water supply to Chennai's residents and improve living conditions.
 7. **Tamil Nadu Investment Promotion Program (Phase 3):**
 8. Funding: **JPY 36.11 billion.**
 9. Objective: Attract investments, promote emerging sectors, and enhance advanced manufacturing skills.
 10. **Capacity Enhancement for Effective Forest Management:**
 11. Funding: **JPY 8.28 billion.**
 12. Objective: Strengthen forest policies, biodiversity conservation, and climate change mitigation.
 13. **Assam State Aquaculture Promotion and Livelihood Improvement Project:**
 14. Funding: **JPY 3.58 billion.**
 15. Objective: Boost aquaculture production and improve rural livelihoods.
 16. **Punjab Biodiversity and Natural Resources Conservation Project:**
 17. Funding: **JPY 11.48 billion.**
 18. Objective: Enhance ecosystem services and mitigate climate change impacts.
-

Miscellaneous

World Civil Defence Day 2025: Guarantee of Security for the Population

- **Event Date:** Observed on **March 1, 2025**, marking the **36th** annual celebration of World Civil Defence Day.
- **Theme: “Civil Defence, Guarantee of Security for the Population”** – a call to recognize the critical role of civil defence in safeguarding communities during emergencies.
- **Purpose:** To raise global awareness about the importance of civil defence and to honour the dedicated personnel who work to protect lives and property during disasters.

Origins and History:

- **Established by:** The **International Civil Defence Organization (ICDO)**.
- **First Observed:** March 1, 1990, under the guidance of the **United Nations (UN)**.
- **Historical Milestone:** The observance commemorates the adoption of the **ICDO Constitution** on **March 1, 1972**.
- **Foundational Roots:** Traces back to **1931** when Surgeon-General **Georges Saint-Paul** set up the “Association des Lieux de Genève” in Paris, marking the beginning of formal civil defence initiatives.

Functions and Objectives:

- **Development of Protective Structures:** ICDO aids states in creating infrastructures to protect populations during both natural and man-made disasters.
- **Safeguarding Property and Environment:** Emphasizes the need to protect vital assets and the environment against catastrophic events.
- **Global Network:** As of October 2024, ICDO includes **61 member states**, **16 observer states**, and **4 affiliated members**, underscoring its extensive international reach.

Desert Hunt 2025: Indian Special Forces Sharpen Skills for Future Warfare

- **Exercise Desert Hunt 2025**, a **tri-service special forces exercise**, recently concluded in **Jodhpur, Rajasthan**.
- This exercise involved the elite commandos from the **Indian Army, Indian Navy, and Indian Air Force**.
- The aim was to enhance **interoperability** and refine **special operations capabilities** for future warfare scenarios.

Key Highlights of Exercise Desert Hunt 2025:

- **Tri-Service Participation:** Demonstrated seamless coordination and joint operational capabilities among special forces from all three branches of the Indian Armed Forces.
- **Focus on Modern Warfare:** The exercise was designed to simulate complex, future warfare scenarios, emphasizing:
 - **Precision strikes**
 - **Counter-terrorism operations**
 - **Hostage rescue missions**
 - **Advanced infiltration and exfiltration techniques**
- **Desert Terrain Training:** Conducted in the challenging desert environment of Jodhpur, providing realistic training in harsh conditions.
- **Advanced Technologies and Equipment:** Utilized state-of-the-art equipment and technologies, including:
 - **Specialized weaponry**
 - **Communication systems**
 - **Surveillance and reconnaissance assets**
- **Interoperability Enhancement:** Focused on improving communication, coordination, and joint planning among the different special forces' units.

Kailash Satyarthi's Autobiography 'Diyaslai' Launched

- **Event:** Launch of autobiography '**Diyaslai**' by Nobel Peace Laureate **Kailash Satyarthi**.
- **Location:** **Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA)**, New Delhi.
- **Date:** March 1, 2025.
- **Chief Guest:** Former President **Ram Nath Kovind**.
- **Speakers:** Padma Bhushan **Ram Bahadur Rai**, IGNCA Member Secretary **Dr Sachchidanand Joshi**, and social activist **Sumedha Kailash**.
- **Significance:** '**Diyaslai**' is described as a movement dedicated to the **rights of children** and Satyarthi's inspiring journey from a humble village to the Nobel Prize stage.
- **Themes:** Focus on **child rights**, **compassion**, and **patriotism**.

Shaurya Bhattacharya Wins Chhattisgarh Open with Five-Shot Margin

- **Champion:** Shaurya Bhattacharya secured the Chhattisgarh Open title.
- **Final Round:** Shot a six-under **63** in the fourth round.
- **Total Score:** Finished with a **27-under 249**.
- **Prize:** Received a winner's purse of **Rs. 15,00,000**.

- **Order of Merit:** Moved from 59th to **No. 2** in the PGTI Order of Merit.
- **Competitors:** Sachin Baisoya and Sri Lankan Thangaraja secured second and third places respectively.
- **Tournament Location:** Held at Fairway Golf and Lake Resort in Naya Raipur.

Delhi Airport Unveils New System to Enhance Airside Operations

Launch Overview:

- **Delhi Airport** (Indira Gandhi International Airport) has launched an advanced system to **improve airside operations**.
- The system integrates **digital technologies, automation, and real-time data analytics** to streamline operations on the airside.

Key Features & Benefits:

- **Enhanced Efficiency:** Optimizes runway and taxiway management, reducing aircraft turnaround times and ensuring smoother operations.
- **Improved Safety:** Real-time monitoring and automated alerts enhance safety protocols for airside vehicles and personnel.
- **Better Coordination:** Facilitates seamless communication between ground handling teams and air traffic control, leading to reduced delays.
- **Cost-Effective Operations:** The technological upgrade aims to lower operational costs and boost overall resource management.

Oscars 2025: Celebrating Cinematic Excellence

- The **Oscars Ceremony** marks the next milestone in recognizing outstanding achievements in global cinema.
- Organized by the **Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS)**, the event is one of the most prestigious gatherings in the entertainment industry.
- At the **97th Academy Awards (March 2, 2025)** *Conan O'Brien* hosted the ceremony at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles.
- **Best Picture:** "Anora"
- **Best Director:** Sean Baker for "Anora"
- **Best Actor:** Adrien Brody for "The Brutalist"
- **Best Actress:** Mikey Madison for "Anora"
- **Best Supporting Actor:** Kieran Culkin for "A Real Pain"
- **Best Supporting Actress:** Zoe Saldana for "Emilia Pérez"
- **Best Original Screenplay:** Sean Baker for "Anora"
- **Best Adapted Screenplay:** Peter Straughan for "Conclave"
- **Best Animated Feature:** "Flow"
- **Best Documentary Feature:** "No Other Land"

Indian Grandmaster Pa Iniyen Triumphs at Cannes Open

- **Victory:** Indian Grandmaster **Pa Iniyen** wins the **Cannes International Open**.
- **Performance:** Secured **7.5 points**, remaining undefeated with **six wins** and **three draws**.
- **Achievement:** Outperformed fellow Indian **V Pranesh** and International Master **Aradhya Garg**.
- **Rating:** Gained **12 rating points**, bringing his **Elo rating to 2579**.
- **Significance:** Edging closer to the **2600 Elo mark**.
- **Participants:** The tournament featured **147 participants** from **25 countries**, including six Grandmasters and 21 International Masters.

Vidarbha Wins Third Ranji Trophy Title

- **Vidarbha clinched their third Ranji Trophy title** after drawing the final against **Kerala** based on a **first-innings lead**.
- **Previous Titles:** Vidarbha previously won in **2017-18** and **2018-19**.
- **Final Details:** Took a **37-run lead** after the first innings (379 runs vs. Kerala's 342).
- **Key Players:**
 - **Karun Nair** scored 135 in the final, contributing significantly.
 - **Harsh Dubey** set a record for most wickets in a Ranji Trophy season with **69 dismissals**.
 - **Yash Rathod** led the season's scoring charts with **960 runs**.
- **Team Performance:** Vidarbha dominated the season, winning nine out of ten matches.
- **Leadership:** Under captain **Akshay Wadkar** and head coach **Usman Ghani**, they secured victories over top teams.

Manan Kumar Mishra Re-Elected as BCI Chairman for 7th Term

- **Re-election:** Senior advocate **Manan Kumar Mishra** re-elected as **Chairman of the Bar Council of India** for the **seventh consecutive term**.
- **Political Role:** Also serves as a **BJP Member of Parliament** in the **Rajya Sabha** from Bihar.
- **Press Release:** BCI issued a press release after his win, expressing his gratitude.
- **Leadership:** Continuous leadership in the Bar Council of India underscores his significant influence.

Biju Patnaik: A Visionary Leader Remembered

- **PM Narendra Modi** paid tribute to **Biju Patnaik** on his **109th birth anniversary** on March 5, 2025, recalling his pivotal role in **Odisha's development** and his steadfast commitment to **democratic ideals**.
- In a message on **X (formerly Twitter)**, PM Modi stated:

“Remembering **Biju Babu** on his birth anniversary. We fondly recall his contribution towards Odisha's development and empowering people. He was also staunchly committed to democratic ideals, strongly opposing the Emergency.”

Key Highlights of Biju Patnaik's Legacy

- **Transformational Leadership:**
 - Served as a two-time **Chief Minister of Odisha**, steering the state through critical developmental phases.
 - He served as the 3rd **Chief Minister** of the State of Odisha from **1990 to 1995** and from **1961 to 1963**.
 - He was also the **14th Steel and mines** and **1st Coal Union Minister** of India from **1979 to 1980** and from **1977 to 1979** and a **member of Lok Sabha** from **Kendrapara** from **1977 to 1985**.
 - Instrumental in major infrastructure projects such as **Paradip Port**, **Bhubaneswar Airport**, and **Hirakud Dam**.
- **Innovative Reforms:**
 - Launched pioneering **Panchayati Raj reforms**, notably reserving **33% seats for women** in local governance (a model later replicated nationally).
- **International Impact:**
 - Earned renown beyond Indian borders by forging strong ties with **Indonesia**. In 1947, he famously flew to Java in a Dakota aircraft to assist in the rescue of Indonesia's leaders, **Sjahrir** and **Hatta**.
- **Humanitarian Contributions:**
 - Played a key role during tumultuous times, including airlifting Indian troops during the **1947 Kashmir conflict** and supporting efforts during the **Bangladesh Liberation War**.
 - At the start of **2nd World War** he joined the **Royal Indian Air Force**.
- In **1951** he established the **International Kalinga Prize**.

Biographical Snapshot:

- **Born:** 5 March 1916
- **Died:** 17 April 1997

FIFA Bans Pakistan, Russia, Congo from 2026

World Cup

- **FIFA Ban:** Pakistan, Russia, and Congo banned from the **2026 FIFA World Cup**.
- **Reasons:**
 - **Pakistan:** Administrative failures and failure to adopt a revised constitution.
 - **Russia:** Geopolitical sanctions due to the invasion of Ukraine.
 - **Congo:** Third-party interference in the football federation.
- **Impact:** These countries will not participate in the tournament hosted by the **United States, Canada, and Mexico**.
- **Historical Context:** Since 1950, FIFA has banned 17 countries for violating its regulations.

Special Olympics Bharat Sends Largest-Ever Contingent to Winter Games

- **Contingent Size:** **49-member team** including 30 athletes and 19 support staff.
- **Event:** **Special Olympics World Winter Games 2025** in Turin, Italy.
- **Dates:** **March 8 to 15, 2025**.
- **Sports Disciplines:** Athletes will compete in **six winter sports**: Alpine Skiing, Cross Country Skiing, Floorball, Short-track Speed Skating, Snowboarding, and Snowshoeing.
- **Participation:** The event features **1,500 athletes from 102 countries**.
- **Ceremony:** Grand send-off with Sports Minister **Mansukh Mandaviya** and Special Olympics Bharat President **Mallika Nadda**.
- **Significance:** Opportunity for Indian athletes to **showcase their talents** and **inspire national pride**.

Dr. Dinesh Shahra Honored with HBTU Lifetime Achievement Award

- **Award:** Dr. Dinesh Shahra received the **Lifetime Achievement Award** from **Harcourt Butler Technical University (HBTU)**.
- **Contributions:** Recognized for his **transformative contributions** to India's **edible oil industry** over the last **50 years**.
- **Focus:** Emphasized **sustainability** and **innovation** in production.
- **Foundation:** Through his **Dinesh Shahra Foundation (DSF)**, he promotes **ethical leadership**, **education**, **women's empowerment**, and **environmental stewardship**.
- **Event:** The award ceremony was attended by dignitaries, industry figures, and HBTU students.

Dr. Suborno Bose Honored with Lifetime Achievement Award in Hospitality and Education

- **Award:** Dr. Suborno Bose received the **Lifetime Achievement in Hospitality and Education Through Technology** award.
 - **Event:** Presented at the **Vibrant Bharat Global Summit 2025** by Union Tourism Minister **Gajendra Shekhawat**.
 - **Contributions:** Recognized for integrating **AI into hospitality education**.
 - **Book Launch:** Released his book '**Harmonizing Human Touch and AI in Tourism & Hospitality**'.
 - **Initiatives:** Introduced '**NamAlste IIHM HospitalityGPT**' to reshape industry learning.
 - **Global Vision:** Collaboration with institutions from over **50 countries**.
-

Ajay Bhadoo Appointed as CEO of Government e Marketplace

- **Appointment:** Shri **Ajay Bhadoo** appointed as **Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Government e Marketplace (GeM)** effective from **March 3, 2025**.
 - **Current Role:** Also serving as **Additional Secretary** in the Department of Commerce.
 - **Previous Positions:** Former **Deputy Election Commissioner** at the Election Commission of India; Joint Secretary to the former President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind.
 - **Background:** IAS officer from the **1999 Gujarat cadre**.
 - **Achievements:** Over two decades of experience in **policy formulation and implementation**.
 - **Responsibilities:** Leading GeM, India's largest e-marketplace for **government procurement**.
 - **GeM Performance:** Gross Merchandise Value (GMV) of **Rs 4.58 lakh crore**, reflecting a **28.65% year-on-year growth**.
-

Dr. Anju Rathi Rana Appointed Secretary, Department of Legal Affairs

- **Appointment:** Dr. **Anju Rathi Rana**, an ILS officer, has been appointed as **Secretary, Department of Legal Affairs**, Ministry of Law and Justice.
 - **Approval:** The **Appointments Committee of the Cabinet** has approved her tenure for **two years**.
 - **Previous Role:** Served as **Additional Secretary** in the Department of Legal Affairs.
 - **Experience:** Brings extensive expertise in **legal administration and policymaking**.
-

- **Significance:** Expected to play a critical role in **shaping legal frameworks** and **guiding judicial and legislative initiatives** in India.
-

Sunil Chhetri Returns to International Football at 40

- **Announcement:** Indian football icon **Sunil Chhetri**, aged 40, has come out of **international retirement** to play in the upcoming FIFA friendlies in March.
 - **Reason for Return:** Coach **Manolo Marquez** discussed the importance of Chhetri's experience for the **AFC Asian Cup 2027 Qualifiers**, leading to his inclusion in the **26-member squad**.
 - **Career Highlights:**
 - **94 international goals**, making him the **fourth-highest goalscorer in men's football** after Cristiano Ronaldo, Lionel Messi, and Ali Daei.
 - Captained the Indian team for over a decade and ended his career as **India's most-capped player**.
 - **Achievements Post-Retirement:** Continued playing for **Bengaluru FC** in the **Indian Super League**, scoring **12 goals in 23 matches** this season.
 - **Upcoming Matches:**
 - Friendly against **Maldives on March 19**.
 - **AFC Asian Cup Qualifiers** opening match against **Bangladesh on March 25**.
 - **Legacy:** FIFA earlier honoured Chhetri with a documentary titled '**Captain Fantastic**', celebrating his contributions to football.
-

Khelo India Para Games 2025 Announced

- **Event:** Second edition of **Khelo India Para Games (KIPG)** to be held in **New Delhi** from **March 20-27, 2025**.
 - **Participation:** **1230 para-athletes**, including several international para-athletes and Paralympic medallists.
 - **Sports Disciplines:** Competitions in **6 disciplines** – Para Archery, Para Athletics, Para Badminton, Para Powerlifting, Para Shooting, and Para Table Tennis.
 - **Venues:**
 - **Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium:** Para Athletics, Para Archery, Para Powerlifting.
 - **IG Stadium Complex:** Para Badminton, Para Table Tennis.
 - **Dr. Karni Singh Shooting Range:** Para Shooting.
 - **Highlight Athletes:** Gold medallists from **Paris 2024 Paralympics** – Harvinder Singh (Archery), Dharambir (Club Throw), and Praveen Kumar (High Jump).
-

Project HAKK: Supporting Indian Air Force

Veterans and Families

- **HDFC Bank**, in collaboration with the **Indian Air Force (IAF)** and **CSC Academy**, has launched **Project HAKK (Hawai Anubhavi Kalyan Kendra)** to provide comprehensive support to IAF veterans, pensioners, and their families.
- The initiative was formalized through a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** signed on **March 6, 2025**.

Key Features of Project HAKK:

- **Dedicated Service Centers:**
 - 25 centers to be established across key Air Force units, including **New Delhi, Bengaluru, Pune, Guwahati, and Jodhpur**.
 - These centers will assist with **pension-related queries, settlement issues, and documentation**.
- **Access to Over 500 Services:**
 - Includes **Aadhaar services, PAN card issuance, passport assistance, and bill payments**.
 - Offers both **Government-to-Citizen (G2C)** and **Business-to-Citizen (B2C)** services.
- **Skill Development and Training:**
 - Conducted in partnership with **CSC Academy**, focusing on financial products and services.
 - Aims to empower veterans and their families to achieve financial independence.
- **Financial Support:**
 - HDFC Bank will provide a **monthly financial grant** for the first year to ensure smooth operations of the centers.

CSC Academy:

- **Purpose:** CSC Academy is the educational and training arm of Common Services Centers (CSCs) under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), Government of India.
- **Mandate:** To provide skill development, digital literacy, and vocational training in rural and remote areas of India.
- **Activities:**
 - Conducts various training programs in areas such as digital literacy, entrepreneurship, and vocational skills.
 - Provides certification for successful completion of training programs.
 - Works towards bridging the digital divide and empowering rural communities.
- **Significance:** Plays a crucial role in promoting digital inclusion and skill development in India.
- **Common Service Centers (CSCs):**
 - CSCs are access points for delivery of various electronic services to villages in India, contributing to a digitally and financially inclusive society.

Amitava Mukherjee Appointed CMD of NMDC

- **New Appointment:** Amitava Mukherjee appointed as **Chairman and Managing Director (CMD)** of **NMDC**, effective **March 6, 2025**.
- **Tenure:** Will continue until **superannuation on February 29, 2028**, or further orders.
- **Background:** Joined NMDC in **2018** as **Director (Finance)** and served as **Additional CMD** since **March 2023**.
- **Other Positions:** Chairs **NMDC Steel** and **Legacy Iron Ore**.
- **Achievements Under Leadership:**
 - **Historic Milestone:** NMDC became the first Indian company to surpass **45 million tonnes of iron ore output in FY24**.
 - Commissioned the **NMDC Steel Plant**.
 - Achieved record turnover and net worth.
 - Expanded into **gold mining in Australia**.
 - Introduced **advanced digital and technical infrastructure**.
- **Visionary Goal:** Plans to achieve **100 million tonnes mining capacity by 2030**.
- **Company Overview:** India's largest iron ore producer, with a **60.79% government stake** as of December 2024.

India Wins Fifth Asian Women's Kabaddi Championship Title

- **Victory:** Indian women's kabaddi team defeated **Iran 32-25** in the **2025 Asian Women's Kabaddi Championship** final.
- **Achievement:** Secured their **fifth championship title**, maintaining dominance in the tournament's history.
- **Location:** The tournament took place in **Tehran, Iran**, from **March 6 to March 8, 2025**.
- **Group Stage Performance:**
 - India topped **Pool A** with victories over **Bangladesh, Thailand, and Malaysia**, amassing a **+150 score difference**.
- **Semifinal:** India defeated **Nepal 56-18** to advance to the final.
- **Historical Context:** India remains the most successful team in the tournament, while South Korea won the title in **2016**.
- **Significance:** The event served as preparation for the upcoming **Women's Kabaddi World Cup**, scheduled for **June 2025** in Bihar, India.

Pranav Venkatesh Wins World Junior Chess Championship

- **Event:** Indian Grandmaster **Pranav Venkatesh** won the **World Junior Chess Championship 2025**.
- **Date and Location:** Held in **Petrovac, Montenegro**, concluded on **March 7, 2025**.
- **Performance:**
 - Finished **unbeaten** with an impressive score of **9/11 points**.
 - Competed against a field of **157 participants**.
- **Significance:**
 - First Indian to win this title since **Abhijeet Gupta** in **2008**.
 - Fourth Indian to achieve this feat, after **Viswanathan Anand (1987)**, **Pentala Harikrishna (2004)**, and **Abhijeet Gupta (2008)**.
- **Coaching:** Mentee at the **WestBridge-Anand Chess Academy**, founded by **Viswanathan Anand**.
- **Achievements:** Became India's **75th Grandmaster** at the age of 15 in 2022.

Book Launch: Contributions of Women in India's Constitution-Making

- **Launch:** Ministry of Law & Justice released the book "**The Life and Contributions of the Women Members of the Constituent Assembly**" on **International Women's Day 2025**.
- **Focus:** Highlights the **unsung contributions of 15 pioneering women** in drafting the **Indian Constitution**.
- **Key Figures:**
 - **Smt. Ammu Swaminathan:** Advocate for **gender equality** in constitutional provisions.
 - **Begum Qudsia Aizaz Rasul:** Promoted **secularism** and inclusive identity.
 - **Smt. Dakshayani Velayudhan:** First Dalit woman in the Assembly; opposed **untouchability**.
 - **Rajkumari Amrit Kaur:** Architect of India's **public health policies**.
 - **Smt. Sarojini Naidu:** Champion of **civil liberties and democratic values**.
- **Features:** Contains profiles, historical context, and analysis of **key debates and speeches** that shaped India's constitutional principles.
- **Significance:** Serves as a tribute to women's role in **gender equality, social justice, and democratic governance** in India.
- **Historical Context:** Traces the journey from the **Women's Indian Association (1917)** to achieving political representation post-independence.

Justice Joymalya Bagchi Appointed Supreme Court Judge

- **Appointment:** Justice **Joymalya Bagchi** of the Calcutta High Court appointed as a **Supreme Court Judge** on **March 10, 2025**.
- **Chief Justice of India (CJI):** Set to become the **CJI in May 2031**, with a **four-month tenure** before retiring in **October 2031**.
- **Vacancy:** His appointment fills one of the **two vacant positions** in the Supreme Court, which has a **strength of 34 judges**.
- **Recommendation:** Proposed by the **Supreme Court Collegium** led by Chief Justice **Sanjiv Khanna**.
- **Regional Representation:** Addresses a gap, as no judge from the Calcutta High Court has held the top judicial post since **Justice Altamas Kabir (2013)**.
- **Experience:**
 - Began as a judge in **Calcutta High Court** in **2011**.
 - Transferred to **Andhra Pradesh High Court** in **2021**, returned to Calcutta later the same year.
 - Over **13 years of judicial expertise** handling diverse legal matters.

India Clinches ICC Champions Trophy 2025

- **Victory:** India won the **ICC Champions Trophy 2025**, defeating **New Zealand** by **four wickets** in the final.
- **Date and Venue:** Held on **March 9, 2025**, in **Dubai**.
- **Key Performances:**
 - **Rohit Sharma:** Scored a match-winning **76 runs off 83 balls**.
 - **KL Rahul:** Remained unbeaten with **34 runs**, ensuring India's win.
 - **Daryl Mitchell and Michael Bracewell:** Scored **half-centuries** for New Zealand.
- **New Zealand's Total:** Posted **251-7** in 50 overs after choosing to bat.
- **India's Record:** Marked India's **third Champions Trophy win** (2002, 2013, 2025).
- **Tournament Highlights:**
 - India remained **unbeaten** throughout the tournament.
 - Beat teams like **Pakistan, Bangladesh, Australia, and New Zealand**.
- **Rohit's Statement:** Dismissed retirement rumors, confirming his plans to continue in **ODIs**.

Deepti Sharma Achieves Fifth Spot in ICC ODI All-Rounders Rankings

- **Achievement:** Deepti Sharma, Indian cricketer, climbs to **fifth position** in the **ICC ODI Women's All-Rounders Rankings** with **344 points**.
- **Previous Position:** Surpassed **New Zealand's Amelia Kerr** to secure the spot.
- **Leader:** The rankings are led by **Australia's Ashleigh Gardner**.
- **T20 Rankings:** Deepti is also ranked **third** in the **T20 All-Rounders Rankings**.
- **Bowling Rankings:** Holds the **fourth position** in the **ODI Bowling Charts**.
- **Significance:** Highlights her consistent performance and growing stature in **women's cricket**.
- **Smriti Mandhana's Ranking:** Continues to be the **only Indian** in the **top 10 ODI batting rankings**, placed **second** after South Africa's **Laura Wolvaardt**.

Dr. Sridhar Mitta Receives Lifetime Achievement Award

- **Award:** Honored with the **Lifetime Achievement Award** for contributions to **technology, innovation, and entrepreneurship**.
- **Career Highlights:**
 - Wipro's **first CTO**, introduced the **"Lab on Hire" model** to revolutionize R&D services.
 - Founded **NextWealth Entrepreneurs**, creating over **5,000 jobs** in small towns, focusing on empowering **women and fresh graduates**.
 - Co-founded **e4e Inc.** for cross-border collaboration and **EnThink Inc.** for semiconductor IP design.
- **Legacy:** Pioneered impactful, technology-driven enterprises with a focus on **social impact** and **community growth**.
- **Significance:** Highlights **India's IT potential** beyond major cities, promoting **inclusivity** and **sustainability** in tech.

Dalai Lama Honored with Gold Mercury Award 2025

- **Award:** His Holiness the **Dalai Lama** received the **Gold Mercury Award 2025** for promoting **peace, compassion, and sustainability**.
- **Occasion:** Award coincides with his **90th birthday**, celebrating his **life and legacy**.
- **Institution:** Conferred by **Gold Mercury International**, a global governance think tank.
- **Contributions:**

- Advocates for **non-violence, environmental stewardship, and global cooperation**.
- Highlights the ecological importance of the **Tibetan Plateau**, referred to as the "world's **Third Pole**."
- **Significance:** Recognized as a **symbol of non-violence** and for his efforts to **protect the Tibetan environment**.
- **Ceremony:** Scheduled on **March 31, 2025**, in **Dharamsala, Himachal Pradesh**.
- **Legacy:** Dalai Lama emphasizes humanity's shared responsibility for a **sustainable and equitable future**.

India's Success at 2025 Special Olympics World Winter Games: Day 1

- **Event:** India made a strong start at the **2025 Special Olympics World Winter Games** in **Turin, Italy**.
- **Medals Tally:** Indian athletes won **4 medals** on Day 1 – **2 Gold** and **2 Silver** in **Snowboarding**.
 - **Gold Medalists:** **Bharti** and **Sameer** in their respective events.
 - **Silver Medalists:** **Hem Chand** and **Harshita Thakur** in the **Novice Giant Slalom Final**.
- **Indian Contingent:** **49-member team** (30 athletes and 19 support staff).
- **Participants:** Over **1,500 athletes** from **102 countries** competing in **8 sports disciplines**.
- **Significance:** Highlights India's talent and commitment to promoting **inclusive sports** for athletes with **intellectual disabilities**.
- **Upcoming Events:** India aims to further increase its medal tally in events such as **Speed Skating, Floorball, Snowshoeing**, and more.

India's Medal Success at 2025 Special Olympics World Winter Games: Day 2

- **Medals Tally:** India won a total of **9 medals**, including **4 Gold, 4 Silver**, and **1 Bronze**, at the ongoing **2025 Special Olympics World Winter Games**.
- **Outstanding Performers:**
 - **Bharti:** Gold in **Novice Slalom Final** (Snowboarding), her **second gold** of the tournament.
 - **Nirmala Devi:** Gold in **Intermediate Giant Slalom Final** (Alpine Skiing).
 - **Radha Devi:** Silver in the same event.
 - **Abhishek Kumar:** Silver in the **Novice Giant Slalom Final** (Alpine Skiing).
 - **Harshita Thakur:** Bronze in **Snowboarding**.
- **Disciplines:** Indian athletes are competing in **6 sports disciplines**,

including **Snowboarding, Alpine Skiing, and Speed Skating.**

- **Global Participation:** The event has **1,500 athletes** from **102 countries**, showcasing global inclusivity in sports.
- **Significance:** Showcases India's growing strength in **inclusive sports** and highlights the talent of athletes with **intellectual disabilities**.

India Shines at Special Olympics Winter Games 2025

- **Event:** Special Olympics World Winter Games 2025, held in **Turin, Italy**.
- **Achievement:** India concluded its campaign with an impressive tally of **33 medals**:
 - **8 Gold**
 - **18 Silver**
 - **7 Bronze**

Key Highlights:

- **Snowshoeing:**
 - India secured **10 medals**, including **4 on the final day**.
 - Notable winners:
 - **Vasu Tiwari, Shalini Chauhan, and Tanya:** Silver in the **25m Snowshoeing event**.
 - **Jahangir:** Bronze in the same category.
- **Alpine Skiing:**
 - Another **10 medals** were won in this category.
 - Standout performances:
 - **Radha Devi and Nirmala Devi:** Silver in the **Intermediate Slalom** (F01 and F04 categories).
 - **Abhishek Kumar:** Silver in the **Novice Slalom** (M02 category).
- **Snowboarding:**
 - Contributed **6 medals** to the tally.
- **Other Events:**
 - **Short Track Speed Skating:** 4 medals.
 - **Cross Country Skiing:** 2 medals.
 - **Floorball:** 1 medal, with the **Indian Women's Traditional Team** earning a bronze.

National Vaccination Day 2025: A Tribute to Public Health

- **Date:** Observed annually on **March 16**, National Vaccination Day commemorates the launch of the **Pulse Polio Immunisation Programme** in **1995**.
- **Significance:** Highlights the critical role of vaccines in preventing life-threatening diseases and improving public health.

Key Highlights:

- **Pulse Polio Immunisation Programme:**
 - Launched in **1995**, the program aimed to eradicate **polio** in India.
 - The first dose of the **oral polio vaccine** was administered on this day.
 - India was declared **polio-free** by the **World Health Organization (WHO)** in **2014**.
- **Awareness and Advocacy:**
 - Educates the public about the importance of vaccines in combating diseases like **measles, tetanus, and diphtheria**.
 - Encourages participation in vaccination drives to achieve **herd immunity**.
- **Acknowledging Healthcare Workers:**
 - Recognizes the relentless efforts of healthcare professionals in delivering immunisation services across the nation.

Impact of Vaccination Drives:

- **Eradication of Polio:** A landmark achievement in India's public health history.
- **Reduction in Disease Incidence:** Significant decline in vaccine-preventable diseases.
- **Strengthened Healthcare Infrastructure:** Vaccination programs have bolstered India's capacity to deliver essential health services.

Harmanpreet Singh and Savita Punia Win Hockey India Player Awards

- **Winners:**
 - **Harmanpreet Singh:** Named **Balbir Singh Senior Player of the Year** (Men).
 - **Savita Punia:** Named **Balbir Singh Senior Player of the Year** (Women) and awarded the **Baljit Singh Goalkeeper of the Year**.
- **Achievements:**
 - Harmanpreet led India to consecutive **Olympic bronze medals** in Tokyo (2021) and Paris (2024).
 - Savita's contribution led the Indian women's team to notable performances, including at the **Tokyo Olympics**.
- **Event:** Recognitions given at the **7th Hockey India Annual Awards**, celebrating **100 years of Indian hockey** and the **1975 Men's World Cup victory**.
- **Lifetime Achievement:** The **1975 Men's World Cup-winning team** received the **Major Dhyan Chand Lifetime Achievement Award**.
- **Attendees:** The ceremony was graced by dignitaries like **Kiren Rijiju**, Hockey India President **Dilip Tirkey**, and Secretary General **Bhola Nath Singh**.

India Dominates World Para Athletics Grand Prix 2025

- **Event:** World Para Athletics Grand Prix 2025, held at the **Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium**, New Delhi.
- **Achievement:** India topped the medal tally with a remarkable total of **134 medals**:
 - **45 Gold**
 - **40 Silver**
 - **49 Bronze**

Key Highlights:

- **Track Events:**
 - **Men's 200m T35:**
 - **Vinay** won silver with a time of **29.58 seconds**.
 - **Abhishek Babasaheb Jadhav** secured bronze with **31.55 seconds**.
 - **Men's 200m T44:**
 - **Mit Bharatbhai Patel** clinched silver with **26.68 seconds**.
- **Field Events:**
 - **Men's Shot Put F11-F20:**
 - India achieved a **podium sweep**:
 - **Sagar**: Gold with a throw of **11.47 meters**.
 - **Janka Singh**: Silver with **9.91 meters**.
 - **Balaji Rajendran**: Bronze with **9.89 meters**.
 - **Women's Discus Throw F56-F57:**
 - Another **clean sweep** for India:
 - **Fatima**: Gold.
 - **Suman Bala**: Silver.
 - **Asha Jalandar**: Bronze.

Ordnance Factories Day

- **Ordnance Factories Day** is celebrated annually on **March 18** to commemorate the establishment of the first ordnance factory in India at **Cossipore, Kolkata**, in **1801**.
- The day highlights the contributions of the **Indian Ordnance Factories (IOFs)** in strengthening the nation's defence capabilities.

Historical Significance:

- The **Cossipore Gun and Shell Factory**, established in 1801, marked the beginning of India's indigenous defence production.
- Over the years, the ordnance factories have played a pivotal role in manufacturing arms, ammunition, and equipment for the Indian Armed Forces.

Modern Contributions:

- The IOFs are now part of the **Yantra India Limited (YIL)** and **Munitions India Limited (MIL)**, following the corporatization of the Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) in 2021.

- These entities focus on producing state-of-the-art defence equipment, ensuring self-reliance in defence manufacturing under the '**Atmanirbhar Bharat**' initiative.

Government Initiatives:

Corporatization of OFB:

- In 2021, the Ordnance Factory Board was restructured into seven new defence public sector undertakings (DPSUs) to enhance efficiency and competitiveness.
- This move aligns with the government's vision of making India a global hub for defence manufacturing.

Boost to Indigenous Production:

- The government has introduced policies like the **Defence Production and Export Promotion Policy (DPEPP) 2020** to encourage domestic production and exports.
- The focus is on reducing dependency on imports and promoting innovation in defence technology.

Dr. Shivkumar Kalyanaraman Appointed CEO of ANRF

- **Appointment:** Dr. Shivkumar Kalyanaraman assumes charge as **CEO of Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF)** on **March 17, 2025**.
- **Predecessor:** Took over from **Prof. Abhay Karandikar**, Secretary, Department of Science and Technology.
- **Objective of ANRF:** To promote research and innovation across India's **universities, colleges, research institutions, and R&D laboratories**.
- **Professional Achievements:**
 - Former **Chief Technology Officer (CTO)** for the Energy Industry in Asia at Microsoft.
 - Recipient of the **IIT Madras Distinguished Alumnus Award (2021)** and **Ohio State University Distinguished Alumnus Award (2021)**.
 - Fellow of **IEEE**, **Indian National Academy of Engineering**, and **ACM Distinguished Scientist**.

Khelo India Para Games 2025: Anthem, Logo, and Mascot Unveiled

- The **anthem, logo, and mascot** for the **2025 Khelo India Para Games** were unveiled by **Sports Minister Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya** on **March 18, 2025**, at the **Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium Complex, New Delhi**.
- The event is part of the **Fit India Carnival**, which saw participation from over **25,000 people**.

Anthem:

- Titled “**Khelega Khelega Mera India, Jeetega Jeetega Mera India**”, the anthem aims to inspire athletes and fans alike.

Mascot:

- Named “**Ujjwala**”, the mascot is inspired by the **house sparrow**, symbolizing **perseverance and resilience**.

Logo:

- Features an athlete in **orange, green, and blue**, symbolizing **dynamism, inclusivity, and progress**.
- Incorporates iconic landmarks of Delhi, such as the **new Parliament building, Bharat Mandapam, and the Yamuna River**.
- Tagline: “**Champions Beyond Limits**” or “**Haunslon ki Udaan**”.

Event Details:

- **Dates:** March 20–27, 2025.
- **Venues:**
 - **Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium.**
 - **Indira Gandhi Stadium.**
 - **Dr. Karni Singh Shooting Range.**
- **Disciplines:** Includes **para-archery, para-athletics, para-badminton, para-powerlifting, para-shooting, and para-table tennis**.
- **Participants:** Over **1,300 para-athletes** from across India.

BCCI Rewards Team India with ₹58 Crore After ICC Champions Trophy Triumph

- The **Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI)** has announced a **₹58 crore cash reward** for Team India following their victory in the **ICC Champions Trophy 2025**.
- India defeated **New Zealand** in the final on **March 9, 2025**, held at the **Dubai International Cricket Stadium**, to clinch their **third Champions Trophy title**.

Key Highlights of India's Performance:

Unbeaten Campaign:

- India remained undefeated throughout the tournament, showcasing dominance in all matches.
- Victories included:
 - **Group Stage:** Wins against **Bangladesh** and **Pakistan** by six wickets each.
 - **Semifinal:** A four-wicket win over **Australia**.
 - **Final:** A thrilling four-wicket victory against **New Zealand**.

Leadership and Strategy:

- Led by **Rohit Sharma**, the team demonstrated exceptional composure and strategic execution.

- India's top ranking in white-ball cricket was reaffirmed through this triumph.

Kirsty Coventry: Breaking Barriers as IOC President

- **Kirsty Coventry**, a former Olympic swimming champion from **Zimbabwe**, has made history by becoming the **first woman and first African** to be elected as the **President of the International Olympic Committee (IOC)**.
- She secured victory in the **144th IOC Session** held in **Costa Navarino, Greece**, with an **absolute majority of 49 votes** out of **97** in the first round of voting.
- Coventry will officially assume her role on **June 23, 2025**, succeeding **Thomas Bach**, who served as IOC President for **12 years**.

Historic Achievement:

- Coventry's election is a significant milestone in the IOC's **130-year history**, symbolizing progress in **gender equality and diversity**.
- She expressed her commitment to leading the organization with pride and fostering unity among IOC members.

Olympic Legacy:

- Coventry is Africa's most decorated Olympian, with **seven Olympic medals**, including **two golds** in the **200m backstroke** at the **2004 Athens** and **2008 Beijing Games**.
- She has also won **seven World Championship gold medals**.

1st Indian Film Festival in the US: Celebrating Indian Cinema

- The **1st Indian Film Festival** commenced in **Seattle, United States**, on **March 21, 2025**, marking a three-day celebration of Indian cinema.
- Hosted at the **Museum of Pop Culture**, the festival featured excerpts from **Prime Minister Narendra Modi's podcast** with Lex Fridman, highlighting the “**Idea of India**” and its cultural diversity.
- The event was attended by dignitaries like **US Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal, King County Council Member Sarah Perry, and Seattle Port Commissioner Sam Cho**.

Key Highlights:

- **Documentary Screening:** A short documentary on the recently concluded **Mahakumbh at Prayagraj** was showcased, reflecting India's rich cultural heritage.
- **Photo Exhibit:** A special exhibit titled “**History of Indian Cinema**” depicted the evolution of Indian cinema, showcasing iconic milestones and films.

- **Film Screenings:** Critically acclaimed Indian films such as **English Vinglish**, **Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara**, and **Raksha Bandhan** were presented.

Vinod Kumar Shukla Wins Jnanpith Award

- **Vinod Kumar Shukla**, a renowned Hindi poet and writer from **Chhattisgarh**, has been awarded the **Jnanpith Award**, India's highest literary honor.
- Born on **January 1, 1947**, in **Rajnandgaon**, Shukla has been active in literary writing for nearly **50 years**.
- His notable works include:
 - **Poetry:** "Lagbhag Jai Hind," "Woh Aadmi Chala Gaya," "Aakash Dharti Ko Khataкта Hai."
 - **Novels:** "Naukar Ki Kameez," "Khilega To Dekhenge," "Deewar Mein Ek Khidki."
 - **Story Collections:** "Peed Par Kamra," "Mahavidyalaya".
- Shukla's works have been translated into multiple languages, and he has also written books for **children**.
- He has previously received prestigious awards like the **Sahitya Akademi Award**, **Raza Award**, and **Gajanan Madhav Muktibodh Fellowship**.
- **Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnudev Sai** congratulated Shukla, highlighting the pride he brings to the state.

India Clinches Men's and Women's Kabaddi World Cup 2025

- **India** wins **both Men's and Women's Kabaddi World Cup 2025** held in **Wolverhampton, England**.
- **Men's team defeated England** in the final match with a close score of **44-41**.
- **Women's team triumphed over England** in the final match with a dominating score of **57-34**.
- Tournament took place across various venues in the **West Midlands: Birmingham, Coventry, Walsall, and Wolverhampton**.
- This marks the first time the tournament was hosted outside **Asia**.
- India also won both crowns in the **inaugural edition of 2019**, hosted by **Malaysia**.

Khelo India Para Games: Record-Breaking Achievements

- **Jaspreet Kaur**, a powerlifter from Punjab, set a **national record** by lifting **101 kg** in the **45 kg category**, surpassing her previous record of **100 kg**.

Athletics Highlights:

- **Men's Javelin F12/F13:** Gold - Ishwar Rampal Tak, Silver - Manjeet, Bronze - Akshay Kumar Meena.

- **Women's Shot Put F12/F20:** Gold - Khushboo Gill, Silver - Muthu Meena, Bronze - Ananya Bansal.

Shooting Highlights:

- **10M Air Pistol Women SH1:** Gold - Sumedha Pathak, Silver - Rubina Francis, Bronze - Anita Kumari.
- **10M Air Rifle Prone Mixed SH1:** Gold - Sagar Balasaheb Katala, Silver - Mona Agarwal, Bronze - Deepak Saini.

Archery Highlights:

- **Compound Women Open:** Gold - Paralympic medallist Sheetal Devi, Silver - Payal Nag, Bronze - Jyoti.
- **Compound Men's Open:** Gold - Shyam Sundar Swami, Silver - Toman Kumar, Bronze - Rakesh Kumar.

India Qualifies for FIBA Men's Asia Cup 2025

- **India's basketball team** secured a spot in the **FIBA Men's Asia Cup 2025** after a thrilling **81-77** victory against **Bahrain** in **Manama**.
- The match was held at **Khalifa Sports City**, with India showcasing **excellent end-game skills**.
- **Key Performers:**
 - **Harsh Dagar:** Scored **28 points**, including **6 three-pointers**, with **3 rebounds**, **3 assists**, and **2 steals**.
 - **Gurbaz Sandhu** and **Kanwar Sandhu:** Contributed **15 points each**.
 - **Pranav Prince** and **Hafeez:** Added **11 points each**.
- India led **39-38 at halftime** and extended their lead to **62-55 in the third quarter**, maintaining it in the final quarter.
- This marks India's first win against Bahrain since **2013**.
- The team will now compete in the **Continental tournament** in **Jeddah, Saudi Arabia**, from **August 5 to 17, 2025**.

International Day of the Unborn Child

- The **International Day of the Unborn Child** is observed annually on **March 25** to celebrate the value and dignity of unborn children and promote a culture that respects all human life from conception.
- Established in **1999** by **Pope John Paul II**, this day coincides with the **Feast of the Annunciation**, symbolizing the moment of the Incarnation when, according to Christian belief, Jesus was conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary.

Historical Background:

- The observance began in **1993** when **El Salvador** declared a "Day of the Right to Be Born".

- Several predominantly Catholic countries followed suit, including:
 - **Argentina:** Day of the Unborn (1998)
 - **Chile:** Day of the Conceived and Unborn (1999)
 - **Guatemala:** National Day of the Unborn (1999)
 - **Philippines:** Day of the Unborn Child (2004).
- The day reflects a global recognition of the sanctity of unborn life.

Significance:

- **Affirming Life's Value:** Emphasizes the inherent worth of every human being from conception.
- **Raising Awareness:** Highlights the rights of unborn children and advocates against practices like abortion.
- **Promoting a Culture of Life:** Encourages societies to foster environments that respect and protect life at all stages.

Theme for 2025:

- The theme for this year is "**United for Life: Protecting the Unborn and Their Families**", focusing on unity and solidarity in defending the unborn and their families.

International Day of Solidarity with Detained and Missing Staff Members

- Observed annually on **March 25**, the **International Day of Solidarity with Detained and Missing Staff Members** highlights the risks faced by **United Nations personnel** and calls for their protection and justice.
- This day commemorates the abduction of **Alec Collett**, a former journalist working for the **UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)**, who was kidnapped in **1985** and whose remains were found in **2009**.

Purpose:

- To honor detained and missing UN staff members and advocate for their **immediate release**.
- To raise awareness about the **dangers faced by UN personnel**, including threats of **kidnapping, violence, harassment, and detention**.
- To mobilize action for justice and strengthen the resolve to protect UN staff, peacekeepers, and humanitarian workers.

UN's Call to Action:

- **Secretary-General António Guterres** urges governments to ensure the **safety and security** of UN personnel and fulfill obligations under the **1994 Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel**.
- Emphasis on pursuing **accountability and justice** for crimes against UN staff.

Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel:

- Adopted in **1994**, this convention aims to protect UN personnel engaged in peacekeeping and humanitarian missions.
- **Optional Protocol (2005):** Extends protection to personnel delivering **humanitarian, political, or development assistance**.

National Records Set at Khelo India Para Games 2025

- The **Khelo India Para Games 2025** witnessed remarkable achievements as **Seema Rani** from Punjab and **Jhandu Kumar** from Bihar set new **national records** in powerlifting on **March 24, 2025**.
- The event, held in **New Delhi**, showcased the exceptional talent and determination of para-athletes.

Seema Rani's Achievement:

- Lifted **97 kg** in the **women's elite 61 kg category**, setting a new national record.
- This marks her second consecutive gold medal at the Khelo India Para Games.
- Seema, who has had polio since the age of three, began her para powerlifting journey five years ago and has represented India in international tournaments.

Jhandu Kumar's Achievement:

- Lifted **206 kg** in the **men's elite 72 kg category**, breaking the previous national record.
- Jhandu started his powerlifting career in **2014** and aims to represent India on the international stage.

Other Highlights:

- **Mona Agarwal**, a Paris 2024 bronze medallist, won gold in the **Mixed 50m Prone SH1** shooting event.
- **Haryana** led the medal tally with **29 golds**, followed by **Tamil Nadu** and **Rajasthan** with **24** and **22 golds**, respectively.

Purple Day 2025: Raising Epilepsy Awareness

- **Purple Day** is observed annually on **March 26th** to raise awareness about **epilepsy** worldwide.
- In **2025**, this day marks an important opportunity to educate the public, dispel myths, and show support for individuals living with this neurological condition.
- The initiative encourages people to wear **purple**, the internationally recognized color for epilepsy awareness.

History and Significance:

- Purple Day was founded in **2008** by a young girl named **Cassidy Megan** from Nova Scotia, Canada.

- Cassidy, who herself lives with epilepsy, wanted to let people with epilepsy know that they are not alone and to encourage others to talk about the condition openly.
- The **Epilepsy Association of Nova Scotia** officially launched the first Purple Day.
- In **2009**, the **Anita Kaufmann Foundation** in the United States joined forces with Cassidy Megan and the Epilepsy Association of Nova Scotia to take Purple Day to the global stage.
- The significance of Purple Day lies in its aim to:
 - **Increase public awareness** about epilepsy, its causes, and its impact on individuals and families.
 - **Reduce stigma** associated with epilepsy, which often leads to discrimination and social isolation.
 - **Encourage open conversations** about epilepsy and provide support to those affected.
 - **Educate people** on how to respond appropriately if someone is having a seizure.

Key Facts about Epilepsy:

- **Epilepsy** is a chronic neurological disorder characterized by recurrent, unprovoked seizures.
- **Seizures** are brief episodes of abnormal electrical activity in the brain, which can cause a variety of symptoms, from brief staring spells to loss of consciousness and convulsions.
- Epilepsy can affect people of **all ages, genders, races, and socioeconomic backgrounds**.
- The causes of epilepsy are diverse and can include genetic factors, brain injury, stroke, infections, and developmental disorders. In many cases, the cause is unknown.
- It is estimated that around **50 million people worldwide** have epilepsy, making it one of the most common neurological disorders globally.
- While there is currently no cure for epilepsy, it can often be managed effectively with **medication, surgery, and lifestyle adjustments**.
- Early diagnosis and treatment are crucial for improving the quality of life for people with epilepsy.

National Epilepsy Day (India):

In India, **National Epilepsy Day** is observed on **November 17th** every year. This day is organized by the **Epilepsy Foundation of India** to raise awareness about epilepsy within the country. While Purple Day is a global initiative, National Epilepsy Day focuses specifically on the Indian context and the challenges faced by people with epilepsy in India. The observance aims to:

- **Increase awareness** among the general public about epilepsy.
- **Educate people** about the importance of early diagnosis and treatment.
- **Reduce the social stigma** associated with epilepsy in Indian society.

- **Provide support and resources** to individuals and families affected by epilepsy in India.

Tribhuvan Sahkari University: India's First Cooperative University

- **Tribhuvan Sahkari University**, the first cooperative university in India, is set to be established in **Anand, Gujarat**, under the **Tribhuvan Sahkari University Bill 2025**, passed by the **Lok Sabha** on **March 26, 2025**.
- Named after **Tribhuvandas Kishibhai Patel**, the founder of **Amul**, the university aims to revolutionize education, research, and training in the cooperative sector.

Nationwide Jurisdiction:

- Cooperative training institutes across all states will be affiliated with the university.
- Operates on a **hub-and-spoke model**, offering **degree, diploma, and PhD courses**.
- Expected to certify **8 lakh individuals annually**, enhancing skills in cooperative management.

Focus on Rural Development:

- Strengthens the rural economy by promoting **self-employment** and **small-scale entrepreneurship**.
- Encourages innovation and leadership in the cooperative sector.

Government Support:

- ₹10,000 crore allocated to the cooperative dairy sector to promote a **circular economy**.
- Initiatives include cooperative insurance and services like **Sahkar Taxi**, modeled on ride-sharing platforms.

India's Success at Asian Wrestling Championships 2025

- Indian wrestlers showcased remarkable performances at the **Senior Asian Wrestling Championships 2025** held in **Amman, Jordan**.
- **Sunil Kumar** and **Nitesh** secured bronze medals in the **Greco-Roman wrestling category**, marking a strong start for India in the championship.

Sunil Kumar's Achievement:

- Sunil Kumar won a bronze medal in the **87kg Greco-Roman category**.
- He defeated China's **Jiixin Huang** with a score of **5-1** in the bronze medal match.
- Sunil had earlier defeated Tajikistan's **Sukhrob Abdulkhaev** in the quarterfinals but lost to Iran's **Yasin Yazdi** in the semifinals.

Nitesh's Victory:

- Nitesh clinched the second bronze medal for India in the **97kg Greco-Roman category**.

- He defeated Turkmenistan's **Amanberdi Agamammedov** with a commanding **9-0** score in the bronze medal match.
- Nitesh had earlier defeated Kazakhstan's **Ilyas Guchigov** but lost to Iran's **Mohammadhadi Abdollah Saravi** in the semifinals.

Justice Harish Tandon: New Chief Justice of Orissa High Court

- **Justice Harish Tandon** was sworn in as the **35th Chief Justice of Orissa High Court** on **March 26, 2025**.
- The oath of office was administered by **Odisha Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati** at the **Raj Bhavan** in Bhubaneswar.
- Justice Tandon succeeds **Justice Chakradhari Sharan Singh**, who retired in January 2025. **Justice Arindam Sinha** had been serving as the Acting Chief Justice until this appointment.
- The appointment was officially notified by the **Ministry of Law and Justice** on **March 21, 2025**, following a recommendation by the **Supreme Court Collegium** on **March 6, 2025**.

Key Highlights of Justice Harish Tandon's Career:

Legal Background:

- Graduated in law from **Calcutta University** in **1983**.
- Enrolled as an advocate in **1989**, specializing in **civil and constitutional matters**.
- Elevated as a judge of the **Calcutta High Court** on **April 13, 2010**.

Judicial Contributions:

- Known for integrating **cultural references** in judgments, such as quoting the *Ramayana* and *Bhagavad Gita* to emphasize ethics.
- Delivered notable judgments, including overturning a divorce ruling in 2023 and advocating for systemic prevention in child marriage cases.

Exercise Prachand Prahar: Showcasing India's Joint Warfighting Capabilities

- The **Indian Armed Forces** conducted a tri-service integrated multi-domain exercise, **Prachand Prahar**, in the **high-altitude terrain of Arunachal Pradesh** from **March 25 to 27, 2025**.
- This exercise aimed to validate **joint operational capabilities** and enhance preparedness to counter emerging threats along India's **Northern Borders**.
- It involved the **Indian Army, Air Force, and Navy**, showcasing seamless coordination and advanced warfare techniques.

Key Highlights of the Exercise:

Advanced Surveillance and Targeting:

- Deployment of **long-range surveillance aircraft**, **maritime domain awareness aircraft**, **helicopters**, **Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs)**, and **space-based resources**.
- Use of **AI-driven targeting systems** and **electronic warfare** to simulate modern battlefield scenarios.

Precision Firepower:

- Coordinated strikes using **fighter aircraft**, **long-range rocket systems**, **medium artillery**, **swarm drones**, **loitering munitions**, and **kamikaze drones**.
- Operations conducted in an **electronically contested environment** to replicate real-world challenges.

Leadership and Review:

- Reviewed by **Eastern Army Commander Lt. Gen. Ram Chander Tiwari**, **Eastern Air Commander Air Marshal Surat Singh**, and **Navy Commodore Ajay Yadav**.
- Participants were commended for their **professionalism and operational excellence**.

VLSRSAM: A Leap in India's Defense

Capabilities

- The **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** and the **Indian Navy** successfully conducted the flight test of the **Vertically-Launched Short-Range Surface-to-Air Missile (VLSRSAM)** on **March 26, 2025**.
- The test was carried out at the **Integrated Test Range (ITR)**, **Chandipur**, off the coast of Odisha, using a **land-based vertical launcher**.
- The missile demonstrated its **Near-Boundary-Low Altitude capability** by destroying a **high-speed aerial target** at close range and low altitude with **pinpoint accuracy**.

Key Features of VLSRSAM:

Indigenous Technology:

- Equipped with an **indigenous Radio Frequency seeker**, **Multi-Function Radar**, and **Weapon Control System**.
- Developed entirely in India, showcasing the country's **self-reliance in defense technology**.

Combat Configuration:

- All weapon system elements were deployed in combat mode during the test.
- Validated by flight data captured through advanced range instruments.

Force Multiplier:

- Defense Minister **Rajnath Singh** hailed the missile as a **force multiplier** for the Indian Navy, enhancing its operational capabilities.
-

India's Victory at the Asian Wrestling Championship 2025

- **Manisha Bhanwala** clinched **India's first gold medal** at the **Asian Wrestling Championship 2025**, held in **Amman, Jordan**.
- Competing in the **women's 62 kg category**, she defeated **Korea's Ok J Kim** with a score of **8-7**.
- **Antim Panghal** won a **bronze medal** in the **53 kg category** by defeating **Meng H Hsieh** of **Taipei** through technical superiority, without conceding a point.
- Indian wrestlers secured a total of **8 medals: 1 gold, 1 silver, and 6 bronze medals**, including **two Greco-Roman wrestling medals**.
- The **men's freestyle competition** is set to begin on **Saturday**.

Hockey Haryana Clinches Women's National Title

- **Hockey Haryana** clinched the title in the Final Phase of the **National Women's Hockey League 2024-25**.
- They defeated the **Hockey Association of Odisha 3-2** in a closely contested final at the **Marang Gomke Jaipal Singh Munda Astro Turf, Ranchi, Jharkhand**.
- With **four wins, two losses, and a shootout victory**, the team amassed **15 points** and topped the pool stage owing to a **superior goal difference**.
- **Captain Pooja Malik** credited the win to the **team's effective combination** and aggressive, attacking style.
- **Head Coach Dilbag Singh** stressed that their **free-flowing, aggressive gameplay** and solid defensive display were crucial in neutralizing Odisha's penalty corner strengths.
- Key performers included **Supriya** and **Saavi** with **four goals each**, while Pooja contributed **three important goals**, underscoring the team's unified effort.

Manav Thakkar Makes History in Table Tennis

- **Manav Thakkar** became the **first Indian** to reach the **final eight** of a **WTT Star Contender** event.
- He clinched a **3-2 victory** in the men's singles pre-quarterfinal at **Chennai**, defeating **Germany's Andre Bertelsmeier**.
- After losing the first set (**10-12**), Thakkar bounced back by winning the next two sets (**12-10, 15-13**); with the fourth set tied (**2-2**), he secured the final set (**11-5**).
- In the **women's singles**, **Krittwika Roy** bowed out after a **0-3 defeat** to Japan's **Miyu Nagasaki**, a three-time World Championship medalist.

Djokovic Sets New ATP Masters 1000 Record

- **Novak Djokovic** becomes the **oldest man** to reach an **ATP Masters 1000 semi-final** at the **Miami Open**.
- The **37-year-old Serbian** defeated American **Sebastian Korda** with a score of **6-3, 7-6** in the quarterfinals.
- This achievement surpasses **Roger Federer's** previous record (final four appearance at **37 years and 7 months** in 2019).
- Djokovic is aiming for his **seventh Miami Open title**.
- He will face **Bulgarian Grigor Dimitrov** in the semi-final, scheduled for later tonight at **12:30 AM IST** at **Hard Rock Stadium** in Miami Gardens, Florida.

Indian Women Grapplers Excel at Asian Wrestling Championship 2025

- **Medal Haul:** India secured **1 silver** and **2 bronze** medals at the **Senior Asian Wrestling Championship 2025** held in **Amman, Jordan**.
- **Reetika's Performance:**
 - Achieved a **10-0 victory** over South Korea's **Seoyeon Jeong** in the qualification round.
 - Upset Japan's **Nodoka Yamamoto** by fall in the semifinal.
 - Narrowly lost the final **6-7** to Kyrgyzstan's **Aiperi Medet Kyzy**, earning the **silver** medal.
- **Muskan (59kg) Highlights:**
 - Started with a commanding **10-0** win over Philippines' **Arian G. Carpio**.
 - Suffered a **12-2** loss against Japan's **Sakura Onishi**.
 - Made a strong comeback by defeating Mongolia's **Altjin Togtokh 4-0** in the bronze medal match.
- **Mansi Lather (68kg) Highlights:**
 - Dominated her opening bout with a **10-0** win over Chinese Taipei's **Sheng F. Cai**.
 - Advanced due to an opponent's injury, then lost **1-10** to China's **Zelu Li** in the semifinal.
 - Fought back to win the bronze medal by defeating Kazakhstan's **Irina Kazyulina 12-2**.
- **Team Momentum:** The President of the Wrestling Federation of India expressed satisfaction, noting that **Indian wrestling is regaining momentum** after a challenging two-year period.

Centre appoints Nidhi Tewari as PM Modi's private secretary

- **Nidhi Tewari**, a **2014-batch IFS officer**, has been appointed as **Private Secretary** to **Prime Minister Narendra Modi**.

- She has been serving as **Deputy Secretary** in the **Prime Minister's Office (PMO)** since November 2022.
 - Previously, she worked as **Under Secretary** at the **Ministry of External Affairs** in the **Disarmament and International Security Affairs Division**, handling areas like **External Affairs, Atomic Energy, and Security Affairs**, as well as overseeing the state of **Rajasthan**.
 - The appointment was approved by the **Appointments Committee of the Cabinet** based on a memorandum issued by the **Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT)** on March 29, and is effective with immediate effect.
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India's Medal Surge at Asian Wrestling Championships 2025

- **Event Overview:** The **Asian Wrestling Championships 2025** were held in **Amman, Jordan**, where India emerged with a total of **10 medals—1 Gold, 3 Silver, and 7 Bronze**.

Men's Performance:

- **Deepak Punia** secured a **silver medal** in the **92kg freestyle** category after a **10-0 defeat** to Iran's **Amir Hossein Firouzpour** (via technical superiority).
- **Udit** earned a **silver medal** in the **61kg freestyle** category, falling **6-4** to Japan's **Suda Takara**.
- **Dinesh** captured a **bronze medal** in the **125kg** division by overcoming Turkmenistan's **Zyymuhammet Saparov** with a **14-12** victory.

Women's Performance:

- **Manisha Bhanwala** clinched the **only gold medal** for India in the **62kg** weight division.
- **Reetika Hooda** added a **silver medal** in the **76kg** category.
- **Antim Panghal** won a **bronze medal** in the **53kg** division.
- Additional **bronze medals** were secured by **Muskan (59kg)** and **Mansi Lather (68kg)**.

Greco-Roman Highlights:

- **Nitesh (97kg)** and **Sunil Kumar (87kg)** each contributed a **bronze medal** in the Greco-Roman category.
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