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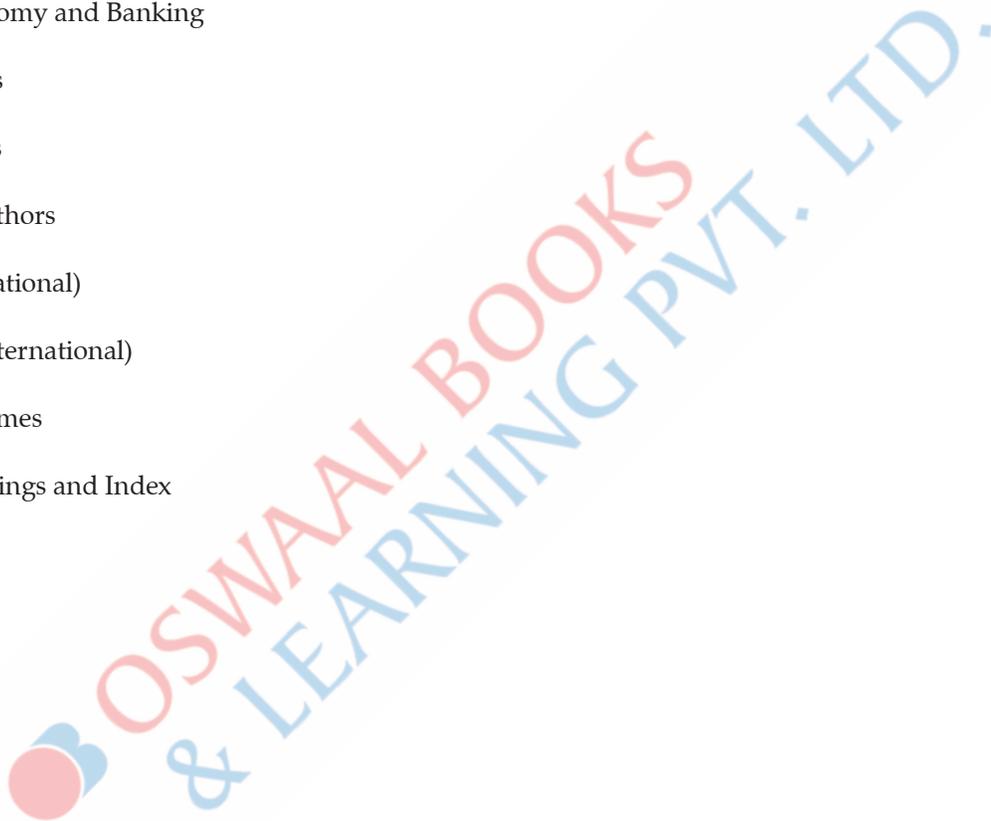
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## NATIONAL NEWS

### Deepavali Added to UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage List

- Deepavali, the festival of lights, has been inscribed on the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO's) list of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. It is the 16<sup>th</sup> Indian element on this list.
- The inscription was adopted in the presence of delegates from 194 member states, international experts, and representatives of UNESCO's global network.
- Deepavali, also known as Diwali, is celebrated on Kartik Amaavasya, which typically falls in October or November. The fundamental philosophy of Deepavali encompasses the celebration of prosperity, renewal, and abundance for all individuals.

#### Key Points

Headquarters	—	Paris, France
Director General	—	Khaled El-Enany

### VoxelGrids Unveils India's First Indigenous MRI Scanner

- VoxelGrids, a start-up backed by Zoho, has developed India's first indigenous Magnetic Resonance Imaging scanner.
- It marks a significant step in reducing the country's dependence on imported diagnostic equipment.
- The scanner has been installed at the Chandrapur Cancer Care Foundation near Nagpur.
- The development is the outcome of a 12-year effort led by founder Arjun Arunachalam and his team to design and build an MRI system entirely in India. MRI machines are critical diagnostic tools for hospitals and are currently dominated by foreign manufacturers.
- The MRI scanner has a magnetic field strength of 1.5 tesla and is not a locally assembled version of systems from global manufacturers such as Siemens or GE HealthCare.

### India's First Wildlife-Safe Road Launched on NH-45

- The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has introduced India's first wildlife-safe road on National Highway 45 (NH-45) in Madhya Pradesh. The initiative has been implemented on a 2 km ghat section of an 11.96 km highway project passing through the Veerangana Durgavati Tiger Reserve.

- This move aims to reduce animal-vehicle collisions and balance road infrastructure development with wildlife conservation, particularly in the ecologically sensitive Veerangana Durgavati Tiger Reserve and Nauradehi Wildlife Sanctuary.
- The road is inspired by Sheikh Zayed Road in Dubai.
- It has a table-top red marking, and is a 5 mm thick, red-coloured surface with a slightly raised texture to alert drivers and slow down vehicles naturally, without causing discomfort or sudden braking. The design has been supported by international research and guidelines.

### Prime Minister Narendra Modi Inaugurated Rashtra Prerna Sthal in Lucknow, UP

- PM Modi inaugurated the Rashtra Prerna Sthal in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, to honour the life and ideals of Former PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee.
- December 25, 2025, marked Atal Bihari Vajpayee's 101<sup>st</sup> Birth Anniversary.
- Rashtra Prerna Sthal was constructed at an approximate cost of ₹230 crore and spread across an expansive area of 65 acres.
- The complex features 65-foot-high bronze statues of Dr Syama Prasad Mookerjee, Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya, and Former Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, symbolising their seminal contributions to India's political thought, nation-building, and public life.
- It also houses a state-of-the-art museum designed in the form of a lotus-shaped structure, spread over approximately 98,000 square feet.

### India tests the Intermediate-Range Ballistic Missile K-4 Missile from INS Arighaat

- India has tested the K-4 missile, an intermediate-range ballistic missile from the nuclear-powered submarine INS Arighaat in the Bay of Bengal.
- It is designed to hit targets 3,500 km away, and the missile provides a massive boost to the sea-based nuclear attack capability of the forces.
- The K-4 submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) was commissioned into the Indian Navy on August 29, 2024, making India part of a small group of nations capable of firing a nuclear missile from land, air, and undersea.

- Derived from the Agni-III land-launched missile, it is the country's longest-range sea-launched strategic weapon.
- The land-based version of the missile has been modified for sea launch, including the ability to emerge from a submarine launch silo, rise to the ocean surface, and then activate its rocket motor to blast into the air.
- The missile has been built to deliver a 2.5-ton nuclear warhead and can be launched from India's Arihant-class submarines.
- The 'K' in the K-series of missiles is a tribute to APJ Abdul Kalam, who played a key role in India's Integrated Guided Missile Development Program (IGMDP).

#### Param Rudra Supercomputer Launched at IIT-Patna

- The first Param Rudra supercomputer in Bihar has gone live at the Indian Institute of Technology, Patna, under the National Supercomputing Mission, marking a milestone moment for the state.
- "PARAM Rudra" series of supercomputers is built using indigenously designed and manufactured high-performance computing "Rudra" servers, along with an indigenously developed system software stack.
- These supercomputers are available to the young researchers, scientists, and engineers for facilitating advanced studies in physics, earth sciences, and cosmology.
- The systems are being used efficiently, with most running at over 81% capacity and a few exceeding 95%. These supercomputers have supported over 13,000 researchers, including more than 1,700 PhD scholars from over 260 academic and research institutions.
- The National Supercomputing Mission (NSM) was launched in April 2015 with an outlay of ₹4,500 crore.
- It is jointly implemented by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) and the Department of Science and Technology (DST) through the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC), Pune and the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru.
- So far, 37 supercomputers with a total computing power of 40 Petaflops have been deployed under the NSM.

#### ISRO Successfully Launches US AST Spacemobile's Bluebird Block-2 Communication Satellite

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) successfully launched a next-generation US communi-

cation satellite BlueBird Block-2 onboard its heaviest vehicle LVM3-M6 from Satish Dhawan Space Station, Sriharikota in Andhra Pradesh.

- The BlueBird Block-2 communication satellite of US-based AST SpaceMobile is the heaviest satellite ever lifted from Indian soil using an Indian launcher.
- The Bluebird Block-2 mission is part of a global LEO (Low Earth Orbit) constellation to provide direct-to-mobile connectivity through satellite. This constellation would enable 4G and 5G voice and video calls, texts, streaming, and data for everyone, everywhere, at all times.
- The mission was undertaken as part of the commercial agreement signed between NewSpace India Ltd (NSIL) and US-based AST SpaceMobile (AST and Science, LLC).
- NSIL is the commercial arm of ISRO. The LVM3-M6 is the sixth operational flight of LVM3 and the third dedicated commercial mission to launch the Bluebird Block-2 spacecraft.
- The LVM3 has a spectacular pedigree of completing eight consecutive successful launches, including the ambitious Chandrayaan-2 and Chandrayaan-3 missions.

#### Key Points

ISRO Chairman	—	V Narayanan
Headquarters	—	Bengaluru, Karnataka

#### Centre Launches First-Ever National Weapon Database

- In a significant move to bolster India's fight against organised crime, terrorism, and extremism, the first-ever weapons database, the 'Lost, Looted, and Recovered Firearm' database, was launched.
- The National Investigation Agency (NIA), India's central anti-terror agency under the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), prepared this database.
- The newly developed database is designed to include detailed records of government-owned weapons that have been looted, stolen, lost, or recovered from state police forces and Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs).
- It aims to create a centralised repository that can be easily accessed and utilised by all state police forces, paramilitary units, and law enforcement agencies nationwide.
- The launch of this database is part of a broader strategy by the NIA and MHA to modernise law enforcement tools, improve coordination among states, and leverage technology in intelligence gathering.

- This database will allow law enforcement agencies to conduct detailed investigations, identify criminal networks, and prevent weapons from being used in terror acts or violent crimes.

### **IIT Delhi Develops AI Agent AILA for Autonomous Lab Experiments**

- Indian Institute of Technology, IIT Delhi researchers have developed an AI-Agent AILA - Artificially Intelligent Lab Assistant.
- This system works on an AI Agentic Framework that can conduct real scientific experiments like a human scientist.
- AILA has a simple chat interface like a chatbot where the instructions are given in English language and the agent converts them into code and performs the experiments.
- AILA can control the Atomic Force Microscope instrument and make real-time decisions during experiments, and analyse results independently.

### **Indian Railways Deploys AI Systems to Prevent Wildlife Deaths**

- The Railway Ministry has announced that an AI-enabled Intrusion Detection System (IDS) in place to detect the presence of wild animals around rail lines will be extended to a further 981-km track in the northeastern region.
- The IDS, which gives early alerts to loco pilots in case elephants come on the railway track, has already been implemented at 141-route km section on a pilot basis on the Northeast Frontier Railway.
- The system generates real-time alerts for loco pilots, station masters, and control rooms about the movement of elephants in proximity of railway tracks, enabling timely preventive action.
- Besides ISD, AI-based cameras will be installed to alert loco pilots 0.5 km in advance to save lions, tigers, and other wild animals along with elephants.

### **Veer Bal Diwas Observed Nationally**

- The Government of India observes Veer Bal Diwas on December 26 every year in remembrance of the martyrdom of Guru Gobind Singh ji's sons Sahibzada Zorawar Singh ji and Sahibzada Fateh Singh ji.
- The objective is to honour the bravery of the two young heroes of the country and help inculcate the spirit of exemplary courage and sacrifice in the youth.

- Sahibzada Zorawar Singh Ji and Sahibzada Fateh Singh Ji, the two youngest sons of Guru Gobind Singh Ji, the tenth Sikh Guru, were bricked alive and martyred at Sirhind (present-day Fatehgarh Sahib, Punjab) on December 26, 1704 for refusing to abandon their faith under coercion.

### **Manufacturing of India's First Hydrogen-Powered Train-Set Completed**

- As per specifications framed by the Research, Design & Standards Organisation (RDSO) to demonstrate the use of hydrogen powered train technology in Railways, Indian Railways has taken up a state-of-the-art project for running of its first hydrogen train, on pilot basis.
- The manufacturing of the Hydrogen Train-set has been completed.
- For providing hydrogen for use in this train-set, a hydrogen plant has been conceived at Jind. In this plant, hydrogen is being produced using the electrolysis process, which is a key element of green hydrogen generation.
- Presently, the Hydrogen Train-set is the world's longest (10 coaches) and most powerful (2400 kW) Hydrogen Train-set on the Broad Gauge platform.

### **Bannerughatta Park Imports Capuchin Monkeys from South Africa**

- Bannerughatta Biological Park (BBP) in Bengaluru has imported eight black-capped capuchin monkeys from South Africa's Induna Primate and Parrot Park.
- The exchange involved four males and four females.
- Black-capped capuchin monkeys (*Sapajus apella*) are native to South America and are known for their high intelligence and social behaviour.
- It was done under an animal exchange programme aimed at strengthening conservation and genetic diversity of captive species.

### **President Droupadi Murmu Inaugurates the Param Vir Dirgha**

- President Droupadi Murmu inaugurated the Param Vir Dirgha (Gallery of Supreme Bravery) at Rashtrapati Bhavan on December 16, 2025, commemorating Vijay Diwas.
- The Gallery has the portraits of all 21 Param Vir Chakra awardees on display. It aims to educate visitors about our national heroes who displayed dauntless resolve and unconquerable spirit in defending our nation. It is also an initiative to honour the memory of our

bravehearts who have laid down their lives in the service of the motherland.

- The corridors where the Param Vir Dirgha has now been created, earlier displayed portraits of British ADCs. The initiative to display portraits of Indian national heroes marks a meaningful step toward shedding the colonial mindset and embracing, with pride, the richness of India's culture, heritage, and timeless traditions.
- The Param Vir Chakra is India's highest military decoration, awarded for displaying the most exceptional acts of valour, courage, and self-sacrifice during war.

### News in Short

- India will take over as the Vice Chair of Kimberley Process from today, before assuming the chairpersonship from January 1, 2026. The Kimberley Process is a tripartite initiative involving governments, the international diamond industry, and civil society to prevent the trade in conflict diamonds.
- The Bombay High Court has stated that titles like Padma Shri or Bharat Ratna cannot be used as prefixes before a person's name. Such usage is illegal and against established norms.
- Ferric maltol (Accrufer) is now FDA-approved for children 10+ with iron deficiency, expanding treatment options for this demographic.
- Rajasthan has become the first state in India to accomplish 100% digitisation of voter lists under the Special Intensive Revision-2026 (SIR-2026) programme. Only 3% of voters will need to submit documents during the claims and objections phase, translating to an estimated 30 voters per polling booth requiring additional verification.
- Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA) has become the first airport to achieve water positive status in the country, with a capacity of more than 40 million passengers per annum.
- The Uttar Pradesh government has announced the establishment of India's first dedicated forest university in Gorakhpur, with an investment of ₹500 crore.
- In November 2025, UIDAI recorded a record 231 crore (2.31 billion) Aadhaar authentication transactions, an 8.47% year-on-year jump from November 2024, showcasing increased Aadhaar use in India's growing digital economy and welfare delivery, with Face Authentication and e-KYC also seeing significant growth.
- Tesla has opened its first charging station in Gurugram at DLF Horizon Center, following the recent launch of its Tesla Center in the city. This development adds to Tesla's growing charging infrastructure in India, now totaling three stations with 12 Superchargers and 10 Destination Chargers.
- The Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) has issued a high-severity advisory regarding a new cyber campaign called "GhostPairing", which exploits WhatsApp's legitimate "Linked Devices" feature to hijack accounts without needing a password, OTP, or SIM swap.
- The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) has confirmed that a tiger has settled in the Ratanmahal Wildlife Sanctuary in Dahod district and has included Gujarat in the national tiger population census. This marks the state's return to India's tiger map after it was excluded from the census in 1992 following the extinction of tigers in 1989.
- Tamil Nadu recently added five new products—Woraiyur Cotton Sarees, Kavindapadi Nattu Sakkarai (jaggery), Namakkal Makkal Pathirangal (soapstone pots), Thooyamalli Rice, and Ambasamudram Choppu Saman (wooden toys)—to its Geographical Indication (GI) portfolio, bringing the state's total to 74 recognised products, highlighting its rich heritage in textiles, agriculture, and traditional crafts.
- Union Minister Pralhad Joshi released IS 19412:2025, a dedicated standard for incense sticks (agarbattis) developed by the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS). Products conforming to this standard will be eligible to carry the BIS Standard Mark.
- Vice-President C.P. Radhakrishnan has released a commemorative postage stamp in honour of Emperor Perumbidugu Mutharaiyar II Suvaran Maran in New Delhi recognising his significant contributions to Tamil culture, administration, justice, and patronage of literature and temples, aligning with national efforts to acknowledge unsung heroes and promote cultural pride.
- India's total installed power capacity hit 5.05 lakh MW (505 GW) by October 2025, with non-fossil fuels (mainly renewables) exceeding fossil fuels for the first time, marking a significant step towards its 2030 clean energy goals, driven by strong government policies like transmission charge waivers and aggressive renewable deployment. Non-fossil sources now make up over

51% of the mix (around 2.59 lakh MW), showing India's commitment to decarbonisation, featuring major contributions from solar and wind.

- According to the Indian Association for the Study of Population (IASP), India's population is expected to stabilise around 1.8 to 1.9 billion by 2080.
- Maharashtra set a Guinness World Record by installing a record 45,911 off-grid solar agricultural pumps in just 30 days (November 2025), a massive leap in clean energy for farming under the Magel Tyala Saur Krushi Pump Yojana, making it a global leader in rapid solar pump deployment, second only to China by region.
- India's first medical colleges under the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model are being set up in tribal-dominated districts of Madhya Pradesh.
- The President of India, Droupadi Murmu, released the Constitution of India in the Santhali language at a function held at Rashtrapati Bhavan. It is in the Santhali language, written in the Ol Chiki script. The Santhali language, which was included in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution through the 92<sup>nd</sup> Amendment Act, 2003, is one of the most ancient living languages of India. It is spoken by a significant number of tribal people in Jharkhand, Odisha, West Bengal and Bihar.
- India achieved a record foodgrain production of over 357 million tonnes (MT) for the 2024-25 agricultural year, a landmark achievement announced by the government in late 2025, marking a significant 100 MT jump in a decade and highlighting increased farmer productivity, modern tech, and policy support.
- Esther Lalduhawmi Hnamte, a 9-year-old singing prodigy from Mizoram, gained national fame with her viral performance of 'Vande Mataram'. She was recently awarded the Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar for her contribution to music and culture, marking her as a rising star and a symbol of
- The Delhi Metro operated its first-ever train, TS#01, as a special service to mark the anniversary of the commencement of passenger services on the network in 2002. The train was run on the 8.3-km Shahdara-Tis Hazari section. TS#01 was decorated with flowers and a commemorative banner on the occasion, while passengers travelling on the special service train were greeted with flowers.
- According to the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), India's internet subscriber base hit 1.017 billion (101.78 crore) in Q2 FY26 (July-Sept 2025), growing 1.49% from Q1, with wireless users dominating at 95.6%, highlighting mobile-first access.
- Renowned sand artist and Padma Shri awardee Sudarsan Pattnaik created a world-record sand art installation at Niladri Beach in Puri, Odisha. It was created using 1.5 tonnes of apples along with sand. The sculpture measures an impressive 60 feet in length, 45 feet in width and 22 feet in height.
- Homebound is among 15 films that have become 'eligible' for 'final' nominations in the International Feature Film category at the Oscars 2026. The International Feature Film shortlist showcases cinema from around the world.
- The new snakehead fish species, Channa bhoi, was discovered in the Ri-Bhoi district of Meghalaya, India, in a small mountain stream. It is named to honour the indigenous Bhoi community of the Khasi tribe.

## GOVERNMENT SCHEMES

### India Launches GIRG to Strengthen its Global Rankings and Performance

- The Government of India has undertaken the Global Indices for Reforms and Growth (GIRG) initiative for monitoring the progress of 26 select Global Indices via inter-ministerial coordination for driving reforms and growth in the country.
- These 26 key Global Indices are published by 16 international agencies, spanning four broad themes: economy, development, governance, and industry.
- The Development Monitoring and Evaluation Office (DMEO), NITI Aayog, serves as the knowledge partner and central coordinator for this exercise.
- Under the GIRG framework, the 26 selected indices have been allocated to 17 nodal Ministries, which are entrusted with specific responsibilities to spearhead improvements.
- These nodal Ministries are required to conduct a thorough review of the index methodologies and proactively engage with the respective publishing agencies/international bodies and the concerned line ministries to ensure that the most recent official Indian data sources are utilised in the computation of these indices.
- Furthermore, nodal/line Ministries are mandated to identify performance gaps and implement appropriate

remedial measures and policy reforms to address the underlying issues, thereby driving tangible progress in India's standing on the global stage.

#### **Government launches the Credit Assessment Model for MSMEs**

- The government has recently launched Credit Assessment Model (CAM) for Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) to provide a uniform, efficient way to evaluate MSME creditworthiness using digital tools.
- The model leverages the digitally fetched and verifiable data available in the ecosystem and devise automated journeys for MSME loan appraisal using objective decisioning for all loan applications and model-based limit assessment for both Existing to Bank (ETB) as well as New to Bank (NTB) MSME borrowers.
- The move is part of a broader plan to strengthen India's digital financial network.

#### **Sikkim Opens Cho La and Dok La for Border Tourism**

- Chief Minister of Sikkim Prem Singh Tamang, under the "Bharat Ranbhoomi Darshan", officially declared Cho La & Dok La, two strategically significant border destinations, open for tourists.
- 'Bharat Ranbhoomi Darshan' is a flagship initiative by the Ministry of Defence & Ministry of Tourism.
- The initiative aims to promote border tourism while simultaneously strengthening infrastructure and improving the livelihoods of people living in remote border villages.

#### **100 villages to Be Tsunami Ready in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR)**

- India will be the first country to have over 100 tsunami-ready villages and will have this distinction in the region.
- A tsunami-ready village is certified to those that have high awareness about tsunamis, hazard preparedness and mapping, public display of evacuation maps, 24-hour warning systems, participation in mock drills, among others.
- The certification is awarded by UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC).
- Tsunami-ready is a voluntary community-based programme that facilitates tsunami preparedness by actively collaborating with the public, community leaders, local, and national emergency management agencies.

- The Indian National Center for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS), Hyderabad, operates the Indian Tsunami Early Warning Centre (ITEWC), which tracks earthquakes globally and issues tsunami warnings for the Indian Ocean region. It is the coordinating institute for implementing the UNESCO-IOC 'Tsunami Ready' initiative.

#### **Cabinet Approves Scheme of Conduct of Census of India 2027**

- The Union Cabinet has approved the proposal for conducting the Census of India 2027 at a cost of ₹11,718.24 crore.
- The Indian Census is the largest administrative and statistical exercise in the world and it would be conducted in two phases: (i) Houselisting and Housing Census – April to September, 2026, and (ii) Population Enumeration (PE) – February 2027 (For the UT of Ladakh and snow bound non-synchronous areas of UT of Jammu & Kashmir and states of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, PE shall be conducted in September, 2026).
- The use of a mobile app for data collection and the central portal for monitoring purposes will ensure better quality data.
- The Census of India 2027 will cover the entire population in the country.
- The Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India, under the Ministry of Home Affairs, conducts the Census.

#### **Centre Rolls Out SabhaSaar AI Tool for Gram Sabha Meetings**

- The Ministry of Panchayati Raj has launched SabhaSaar, an AI-powered meeting-summarisation tool that generates structured 'minutes of meetings' from Gram Sabha and other Panchayat meetings using audio/video recordings.
- SabhaSaar is integrated with BHASHINI, the National Language Translation Mission, and currently supports 22 Indian languages for text-to-text translation and 13 Indian languages for voice-to-text transcription, ensuring accessibility across diverse linguistic regions.
- It has been made available to all States/UTs, and Gram Panchayats are progressively adopting the tool for summarisation of meetings.

### Government to Set Up Bureau of Port Security to Boost Port and Vessel Safety

- The government will establish a statutory body, the Bureau of Port Security (BoPS), to enhance the security infrastructure of ports.
- It will ensure the timely analysis, collection, and exchange of security-related information for ports and vessels. It will be responsible for regulatory and oversight functions relating to the security of ships and port facilities.
- A senior IPS officer will head BoPS as its director general.
- It will be modelled on the lines of the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security, and will be constituted as a statutory body under the new Merchant Shipping Act, 2025.
- It will work under the aegis of the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways.
- The government has designated the Central Industrial Security Force as a recognised security organisation, responsible for undertaking security assessments and preparation of security plans for port facilities. The Central Armed Police Force will train and build the capacities of private security agencies engaged in port security.

### Parliament Approves Sabka Bima Sabki Raksha Insurance Amendment Bill

- The Sabka Bima Sabki Raksha (Amendment of Insurance Laws) Bill, 2025, has been passed by the Parliament.
- The bill amends three Acts related to the insurance sector, namely, The Insurance Act, 1938, The Life Insurance Corporation Act, 1956 and The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority Act, 1999.
- The bill allows up to 100% Foreign Direct Investment in Insurance Companies, opening doors to more foreign players in India.
- Ease of doing business is being promoted for intermediaries through the introduction of a one-time licensing and the provision of suspension of license rather than straight away cancellation.
- For insurers, the limit of seeking prior regulatory approval for transfer of share capital has been raised from 1% to 5%, and the net owned fund requirement of foreign reinsurance branches has been reduced from ₹5,000 crore to ₹1,000 crore.

- LIC has been provided autonomy to open zonal offices in the country and to align its foreign offices with the laws and regulations of their respective jurisdiction.
- To protect the interests of policyholders, a dedicated fund, namely Policyholders' Education and Protection Fund, will be set up to spread awareness about insurance. Policyholders' data would now be required to be collected and protected in alignment with the DPDP Act 2023.
- Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) has been given the power to disgorge wrongful gains from insurers and intermediaries. Penalties are being rationalised, and factors for the imposition of penalties are being introduced.

#### Key Points

IRDAI Headquarters	—	Hyderabad
Chairperson	—	Ajay Seth
LIC CEO & MD	—	R. Doraiswamy
Headquarters	—	Mumbai, Maharashtra

### Cabinet Approves CoalSETU Window

- The Union Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved of the Policy for Auction of Coal Linkage for Seamless, Efficient & Transparent Utilisation (CoalSETU) by creation of new window named "CoalSETU window" in the NRS Linkage Policy to utilise coal for any industrial use and export.
- The new policy adds to the series of coal sector reforms being undertaken by the government.
- The policy will allow allocation of coal linkages on an auction basis for long-term use for any industrial use and export by adding a separate window named CoalSETU in the NRS (Non-Regulated Sector) Linkage Auction Policy of 2016, wherein any domestic buyer requiring coal can participate in the linkage auction.
- The cooking coal shall not be offered under this window.

### NIRDC Launches InDApp

- The National Industries Research and Development Council (NIRDC) launched InDApp, a unified digital platform for Indian MSMEs, to simplify approvals, provide market insights, connect to government schemes, and offer financial/tech support.
- It will act as a single window for growth, aiming to boost transparency, ease of doing business, and access to national/global opportunities for small businesses.

- It integrates tools for digitising operations, innovation, and technology upgrades.
- InDApp bridges the gap for MSMEs struggling with fragmented information and processes, supporting India's vision for a self-reliant (Atmanirbhar Bharat) and digitally empowered economy by fostering innovation and competitiveness.

#### **MeitY & MEA Enable Paperless Passport Verification via DigiLocker**

- The National e-Governance Division (NeGD) under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), in collaboration with the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), has announced a major enhancement to citizen services through the enablement of the Passport Verification Record (PVR) on the DigiLocker platform.
- DigiLocker is a secure, cloud-based platform under the Digital India programme that enables the issuance, storage, sharing, and verification of digital documents and certificates.
- This initiative marks a significant step in advancing the vision of Digital India by simplifying document management for citizens and reducing reliance on physical records.
- With this integration, Passport Verification Records can now be securely accessed, stored, shared, and digitally verified within the DigiLocker ecosystem, promoting paperless, contactless, and citizen-centric service delivery.

#### **Department of Post Launches DHRUVA (Digital Hub for Reference and Unique Virtual Address)**

- The Department of Posts released a comprehensive policy document titled DHRUVA, and this policy lays out the framework for a national Digital Address Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI).
- The DHRUVA envisions a standardised interoperable, and geocoded digital addressing system that supports secure, consent-based, and seamless sharing of address information.
- Instead of typing full textual addresses, users would be able to share a virtual address such as name@entity.
- This label would act as a proxy for the person's full physical address. When an individual authorises a platform, the company receives the exact geo-coordinates and full address instantly.
- The initiative aims to make India's addressing system interoperable, secure, and as easy to use as email IDs or UPI handles.

#### **Union Jal Shakti Minister, C.R. Patil, Unveils the New Sujalam Bharat App for Rural Water Management**

- Union Jal Shakti Minister C R Patil virtually launched Jal Seva Aankalan to strengthen service delivery and community ownership under the Jal Jeevan Mission.
- Jal Seva Aankalan is a Gram Panchayat-led digital drinking water service functionality assessment tool on the Jal Jeevan Mission portal.
- It has been conceptualised as a community-owned self-assessment, enabling villages to collectively reflect on their water service delivery systems rather than relying solely on infrequent and costly third-party surveys. All Har Ghar Jal Gram Panchayats are expected to complete the exercise by 26<sup>th</sup> January 2026.

#### **India's First Indigenous Hydrogen Fuel Cell Passenger Vessel Begins Commercial Service In Varanasi**

- The Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal flagged off India's first indigenous hydrogen fuel cell passenger vessel, which started commercial service in Varanasi on the Ganga River.
- It marked a major step in green inland transport using low-temperature Proton Exchange Membrane (PEM) fuel cells, offering zero-emission, silent rides for 50 passengers, and showcasing indigenous tech by Cochin Shipyard Ltd (CSL) for cleaner water transport.

#### **Union Cabinet Approves SHANTI Bill**

- The Union Cabinet approved the SHANTI Bill (Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India) in December 2025.
- It is a landmark move that significantly reforms the civil nuclear sector by ending the government monopoly and allowing private sector investment and participation, aiming to boost nuclear capacity towards 100 GW by 2047 and accelerate clean energy goals.
- It granted statutory status to the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB), making it a stronger, independent nuclear safety regulator.
- This legislation replaces older acts, modernises the legal framework, encourages public-private partnerships (PPPs) for projects like Small Modular Reactors (SMRs), and introduces new oversight bodies for safety and accountability.

#### **President Gives Assent to Viksit Bharat—Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB—G RAM G) Bill, 2025**

- The President of India has given assent to the VB—G RAM G Bill, 2025, marking a significant milestone in the transformation of rural employment policy.

- The Act enhances the statutory wage employment guarantee to 125 days per financial year for rural households and seeks to advance empowerment, inclusive growth, convergence of development initiatives, and saturation-based delivery, thereby strengthening the foundation for a prosperous, resilient, and self-reliant Rural Bharat.
- The fund-sharing pattern between the Central and State governments will be 60:40 for all states, except the North-Eastern and Himalayan states, where the sharing arrangement will be 90:10. The State governments will continue to pay unemployment allowance and compensation.
- Microsoft has \$17.5 billion investment in India (2026-2029) which is its largest in Asia, and is focused on building cloud/AI infrastructure, skilling 20 million Indians in AI, and supporting national AI goals, building on a prior \$3B investment, aiming to create an AI-first future through skills, sovereignty, and scaled diffusion in sectors like agriculture, aligning with India's digital push.
- The Delhi government has rolled out the Atal Canteen Scheme, providing full meals for just ₹5 to underprivileged residents across the national capital.
- Banaras Hindu University researchers have developed the world's first molecular classification of oral cancer, enabling targeted therapy.
- The Right to Disconnect Bill, 2025, introduced in India's Lok Sabha by MP Supriya Sule, aims to protect workers from 'always-on' digital pressure by granting them the legal right to ignore work calls/emails after hours without penalty, promoting work-life balance by reducing burnout.

### Subansiri Lower Project Unit-2 Commissioned, Boosting Clean Power

- Manohar Lal, Union Minister of Power, Housing & Urban Affairs, inaugurated the commercial operation of Unit-2 (250 MW) of the 2000 MW (8 × 250 MW) Subansiri Lower Hydroelectric Project through virtual mode.
- It is India's largest hydropower project and comprises 8 units of 250 MW each. It is designed as a Run-of-the-River scheme with small pondage, diverting water through eight Head Race Tunnels (HRTs) to generate 7,422 million units (MU) of renewable electricity annually, contributing significantly to India's green energy future.
- The project features the largest dam in North-East India, a 116-metre-high concrete gravity dam, which not only strengthens regional infrastructure and grid resilience, but also enhances flood moderation and water management in the Subansiri River basin.
- The Development Communication and Information Dissemination (DCID) scheme is a central sector scheme of India's Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB), implemented through its units like the Central Bureau of Communication (CBC), Press Information Bureau (PIB), and New Media Wing (NMW), focusing on reaching citizens with information about government schemes via digital and local media.
- The Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan bill aims to empower the universities and other higher educational institutions to achieve excellence in teaching, learning, research, and innovation. It is also intended to promote excellence through a robust and transparent system of accreditation and autonomy.

### News in Short

- Prime Minister Modi laid the foundation for a major ₹10,601-crore ammonia-urea fertiliser plant at Namrup, Assam, under the Assam Valley Fertiliser and Chemical Company Ltd (AVFCCL), targeting commissioning by 2030 to boost regional fertiliser production with a 12.7 lakh MT annual capacity, leveraging local natural gas for self-sufficiency in the Northeast.
- Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal virtually flagged off the steel-cutting ceremony for India's first all-electric, zero-emission green tug, marking a significant step in the country's maritime decarbonisation efforts. The vessel is being built for the Deendayal Port Authority (DPA) in Kandla, Gujarat.
- Tamil Nadu has launched a focused conservation initiative to protect the smooth-coated otter in the Cauvery Delta, responding to rising human-wildlife conflict and shrinking freshwater habitats.
- Karnataka's new legislation, the Social Boycott (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Bill, 2025, criminalises social exclusion based on grounds such as morality, social acceptance, political inclination, or sexuality, extending beyond traditional caste discrimination. The bill broadly targets arbitrary, informal social control.
- Lok Sabha passed the Central Excise (Amendment) Bill 2025 allowing higher excise duties on tobacco and pan

masala to replace the expiring GST compensation cess, ensuring continued high taxation on these 'sin goods' and funding health/security initiatives.

- Nagaland launched Mission Watershed PUNARUTTHAN during the state-level Watershed Mahotsav 2025 in Kohima (December 8, 2025) to revive traditional water bodies, restore degraded land, and strengthen watershed systems, focusing on community participation, water security, and rural sustainability
- The Rajasthan government has introduced 'e-Swasthya Samvad', a digital communication platform designed to enhance governance, transparency, and operational coordination within the medical education department.
- Bharat Taxi, India's new zero-commission, driver-owned cooperative ride-hailing service, has started trials in Delhi and Gujarat, aiming to offer a fairer

alternative to Uber/Ola with transparent fares, driver benefits, and integrated public transport (like Delhi Metro) for a seamless experience, challenging existing players with its unique cooperative model.

- Jharkhand passed the Platform Based Gig Workers (Registration and Welfare) Act, 2025, a landmark law providing a formal welfare system, registration, social security (like health insurance & minimum wages) for gig workers (delivery, transport, etc.), establishing a Welfare Board, and penalising non-compliant aggregators, making Jharkhand one of India's first states with such dedicated legislation.
- Karnataka has introduced e-Swathu 2.0 for Rural Property Digitalisation. It is an upgraded system building on the original e-Swathu portal, aiming to issue millions of digital property records (e-Khatas) directly to rural citizens.

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

### Saudi Airstrikes Deepen Rift in Southern Yemen

- A rare rift has erupted between Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates after Saudi forces bombed the port city of Mukalla in Yemen, accusing Abu Dhabi of shipping weapons to separatist forces.
- The episode highlights growing tensions over the Southern Transitional Council (STC), a UAE-backed separatist group seeking an independent southern Yemen, which Saudi-backed authorities accuse of rebelling against state authority.
- The UAE has flatly denied the charge and announced it will withdraw its remaining forces, a move that escalates tensions between two long-time Gulf allies.

### China Opens World's Longest Expressway Tunnel in Xinjiang

- China inaugurated Tianshan Shengli tunnel, which traverses through the central Tianshan Mountains in northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region.
- China claims that it is the longest expressway tunnel in the world, with a length of 22.13-km and has the deepest vertical shaft for a highway tunnel.
- The tunnel is a key part of the G0711 Urumqi-Yuli Expressway, and the travel time between Urumqi and Korla has been reduced from around seven hours to about three hours.

### Kuwait Signs \$4.1 Billion Deal with China for Mubarak Port

- Kuwait has signed a deal worth \$4.1 billion with China to complete the construction of Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port. The project will cost 1.28 billion Kuwaiti dinars (\$4.164 billion).
- This project would "enhance Kuwait's share in the regional and international trade and global supply chain.
- In 2023, Kuwait signed seven memoranda of understanding with China on projects including the Mubarak al-Kabeer Port, as well as housing, water treatment and renewable energy.
- China has been focusing on the Middle East as part of its Belt and Road Initiative, a vast global infrastructure project developed over the last decade under President Xi Jinping.

### Israel-Egypt Gas Deal

- Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced a \$35 billion gas deal with Egypt as the US pushes for a summit between the leaders of the two countries.
- It is the largest gas deal in Israel's history and was valued at 112 billion shekels (about \$34.6 billion).
- This deal greatly strengthens Israel's status as a regional energy power and contributes to stability in our region. It encourages other companies to invest in gas exploration in Israel's economic waters.

### Operation Hawkeye Strike Targets ISIS in Syria

- The United States, supported by Jordan, launched massive airstrike campaigns consisting of at least 100 munitions across Syria on Islamic State infrastructures, targeting 70 targets.
- This operation followed the December 2025 Palmyra attack, which killed two U.S. soldiers and a U.S. civilian interpreter.
- The operation employed more than 100 precision munitions targeting known ISIS infrastructure and weapons sites.
- This operation is critical to preventing ISIS from inspiring terrorist plots and attacks against the U.S. homeland.

### Sudan Approved an Agreement Allowing Russia to Establish its Very First Naval Base

- Sudan has confirmed its agreement to allow Russia to establish its first naval base in Africa on the Red Sea coast. The announcement was made during a visit by Sudanese Foreign Minister Ali Youssef Ahmed al-Sharif to Moscow, where he met with his Russian counterpart, Sergei Lavrov.
- This finalised a long-delayed deal that grants Moscow a crucial logistical and military foothold on one of the world's most critical maritime trade routes.
- The Red Sea is a crucial waterway, connecting the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean via the Suez Canal and handling approximately 12% of global maritime trade.
- By establishing a presence here, Russia joins the United States and China, which already operate bases in nearby Djibouti.

### Pakistan Inducts Second Turkiye-Built MILGEM Warship

- The Pakistan Navy commissioned PNS Khaibar in Istanbul, marking a significant step in its defence partnership with the Republic of Turkiye.
- The addition of the warship boosts Pakistan's surface fleet and highlights ongoing technology-transfer cooperation under the bilateral naval programme.
- PNS Khaibar is the second MILGEM-class ship constructed in Turkiye for Pakistan under the agreement.
- Pakistan signed a contract in July 2018 to purchase four corvettes from Turkish state-owned defence firm ASFAT. The MILGEM project is Turkiye's warship programme designed to produce multipurpose corvettes and frigates capable of missions ranging from reconnaissance and

surveillance to early warning, anti-submarine warfare, surface combat, and amphibious operations.

- The first of the four vessels, PNS Babur, was delivered in 2023.

### Oman Launches First Polymer One-Rial Banknote

- Oman has introduced its first polymer one-rial banknote, designed to last longer and stay more secure than previous ones.
- The new banknote, which will start circulating from January 11, 2026, also highlights the country's cultural and economic achievements.
- The note measures 145 by 76 millimetres. Its front side features the Oman Botanic Garden, representing the nation's commitment to preserving its natural heritage. On the rear side, the Sayyid Tariq bin Taimur Cultural Complex appears alongside the Duqm Port and Refinery, showing Oman's cultural landmarks and economic progress. Together, these images offer a clear picture of the country's identity and achievements.
- Security features have been given special attention. A large transparent window, inspired by the arched windows of the Oman Botanic Garden, adds both visual appeal and protection.

### Pakistan Secures \$4 Billion Arms Deal with Libyan Force

- In one of its largest weapons exports, Pakistan has signed an arms agreement worth \$4 billion-plus dollars with the Libyan National Army (LNA), even as a United Nations arms embargo has been in place on the African nation since 2011.
- The deal could be worth as much as \$4.6 billion and would be implemented over two and a half years.
- The LNA is set to purchase 16 JF-17 fighter jets, a multirole combat aircraft, jointly developed by Pakistan and China, along with 12 Super Mushak trainer aircraft used for basic pilot training.
- The package includes land, sea and air equipment, while two others described it as Pakistan's largest arms export deal to date.

### Trump Announces 'Trump-class' Battleships for US Navy

- U.S. President Donald Trump unveiled plans for a new "Trump-class" battleship, declaring it would be "the fastest, the biggest, and by far, 100 times more powerful than any battleship ever built."
- The size of the proposed battleship would be measuring more than 840 feet. They will be displacing more than 35,000 tons.

- The USS Missouri, completed in 1944 and the last U.S. battleship built, famously hosted Japan's surrender in 1945.
- The U.S. Navy recommissioned four World War II battleships in the 1980s as part of its 600-ship fleet expansion strategy during the Cold War to counter the Soviet Union.
- Israel plans to open an embassy in Fiji in 2026, a move announced by Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar following Fiji's establishment of its own embassy in Jerusalem in September 2025, aiming to deepen ties, boost regional presence, and enhance cooperation in development, security, and economic fields in the Pacific.

#### **NASA Loses Contact with MAVEN Mars Orbiter**

- NASA has lost contact with Mars Atmosphere and Volatile Evolution (MAVEN) as the probe went silent on December 6, 2025, as it passed behind Mars - a routine part of its orbit.
- While the spacecraft was operating normally before the event, NASA was unable to re-establish communication once it re-emerged from behind the planet.
- MAVEN launched in November 2013 and entered orbit around Mars in September 2014. The spacecraft's primary science mission is to study the planet's upper atmosphere and interactions with the solar wind, including how the atmosphere escapes into space.
- The sudden loss of contact has prompted concern among mission scientists.
- UNESCO added numerous endangered traditional arts and crafts, like Pakistan's Borendo instrument, Kenya's Mwazindika dance, and Vietnam's Dong Ho painting, to its Urgent Safeguarding List, aiming to protect cultures at risk from modernisation by supporting community-led conservation and ensuring that the vital skills are passed down.
- Tesla CEO Elon Musk became the first person to cross the \$700 billion mark in net worth after the Delaware Supreme Court reinstated Tesla stock options worth \$139 billion that had been voided last year.
- Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said his government would invite Israeli President Isaac Herzog to visit Australia following a deadly anti-Semitic shooting in Sydney targeting the Jewish community.

#### **News in Short**

- Israel has become the first country to recognise Somaliland as a sovereign state, a breakthrough in its quest for international recognition since it declared independence from Somalia 34 years ago.
- Poland is set to build a roughly \$2.2 billion multi-layered anti-drone fortification along its eastern border amid rising Russian military pressure, deploying jammers, missiles, and cannons, with first capabilities expected within six months and full completion in two years.
- The James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) discovered PSR J2322-2650b, a Jupiter-sized exoplanet orbiting a pulsar. It has an extreme lemon-like shape caused by intense gravitational tidal forces and a bizarre helium-carbon atmosphere. This challenges planetary formation theories with its soot clouds and potential diamond rain, making it a significant find in exoplanet research.
- Luana Lopes Lara, 29, is the world's youngest self-made woman billionaire. She is the co-founder of the prediction market platform Kalshi, which recently hit an \$11 billion valuation, making her net worth over \$1.3 billion.
- China separated Hainan Island from mainland customs to support entry into a trans-Pacific trade deal and develop a Hong Kong-style commercial hub.
- Coforge has launched EvolveOps.AI, an agentic AI-powered IT operations management platform to help enterprises prepare for an AI-first era and improve business resiliency from the edge to the cloud. The platform is built to deliver end-to-end autonomous operations across the lifecycle of enterprise systems running on hybrid cloud environments.
- Italy became the first country to receive UNESCO recognition for its entire national cuisine with its culinary traditions inscribed as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.
- Thousands of stunning, 210-million-year-old dinosaur footprints, some up to 40cm wide with clear toe and claw marks, were recently discovered on a steep mountain face in Stelvio National Park, Italy. These revealed rare evidence of large herds of long-necked prosauropods moving together in synchronised paths during the Late Triassic period, a "goldmine" find for paleontologists.

## INDIA AND THE WORLD

### India–Oman CEPA Signed with Major Tariff and Services Gains

- India and Oman signed a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) that will give duty-free access to over 98% of India's exports to Oman.
- Oman has offered zero-duty access on over 98% of its tariff lines, covering 99.38% of India's exports to the country. Immediate tariff elimination will apply to 97.96% of product categories.
- All major labour-intensive sectors, including gems and jewellery, textiles, leather, footwear, sports goods, plastics, furniture, agricultural products, engineering goods, pharmaceuticals, medical devices, and automobiles, will see full tariff elimination. At present, such goods attract around 5% import duty in Oman.
- Oman has raised the cap for the Indian workforce in companies to 50%, up from 20%, allowing greater flexibility for Indian firms and professionals, particularly in skilled sectors like IT, engineering, and healthcare, with provisions for longer visas for certain roles, significantly boosting labour mobility and business operations. The agreement introduces a "standstill clause" for the 50% cap, ensuring its stability, and facilitates smoother movement for skilled Indian talent

### Oman Honours PM Modi with Highest Civilian Award

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi was conferred with the Order of Oman, the Sultanate's uniquely distinct civilian honour, by Sultan Haitham bin Tarik for his contributions to strengthening bilateral ties.
- He received the award during his ongoing two-day visit to Oman, the final leg of his three-nation tour that included Oman, Jordan, and Ethiopia.
- This is the latest addition to PM Modi's distinguished list of over 28 highest civilian awards from foreign nations, including recent honours such as Ethiopia's Great Honour Nishan of Ethiopia and Kuwait's Order of Mubarak Al-Kabeer.
- His visit to Muscat marks the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of diplomatic relations between India and Oman, with both sides focusing on deepening strategic partnership in trade, investment, energy, defence, and culture.

### India Delivers Three Quick Impact Projects to Strengthen Myanmar Ties

- India recently handed over three Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) in Myanmar's Mandalay Region, focusing on

skill development (Indian rapier loom), women's empowerment (Girls Training School building), and clean energy (agricultural waste gasification) to boost local livelihoods and sustainable development, reinforcing India's "Act East" policy through the Mekong-Ganga Cooperation framework.

- These visible, short-term projects, enhance community well-being and demonstrate India's commitment as a reliable partner for Myanmar's socio-economic growth.

### India- New Zealand Sign FTA (Free Trade Agreement)

- India and New Zealand announced negotiations for an FTA in March 2025. Following several rounds of negotiations, the India-New Zealand FTA was concluded in December 2025, becoming one of India's fastest-concluded FTAs.
- This FTA enhances market access and tariff preferences for Indian exports to New Zealand, while serving as a gateway to the wider Oceania and Pacific Island markets. The agreement opens opportunities for India to emerge as a key supplier of skilled workforce, alongside prospects for future cooperation in areas such as AYUSH and services such as Yoga Instructors, Indian Chefs, and Music Teachers, and services under the sector of interests like IT, Engineering, Healthcare, Education, and Construction.
- Currently, New Zealand is India's second-largest trading partner in Oceania.
- The FTA eliminates duty on 100% of Indian Exports and a USD 20 billion investment commitment over 15 years strengthens long-term economic and strategic cooperation.

### PM Modi Visits Jordan

- PM Modi arrived in Jordan's capital, Amman, for a two-day visit at the invitation of King Abdullah II. Prime Minister Modi and King Abdullah II addressed the India-Jordan Business Forum.
- He sought to double India-Jordan bilateral trade to USD 5 billion over the next five years, as he invited Jordanian companies to take advantage of the country's high economic growth and reap handsome returns.
- India is Jordan's third-largest trading partner.

### PM Modi Visits Ethiopia

- PM Modi arrived in Addis Ababa on his first bilateral visit to Ethiopia, where he was accorded a ceremonial welcome at the National Palace.

- He held wide-ranging discussions with Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali, covering a broad range of bilateral matters and issues of mutual interest.
- Dr. Abiy Ahmed conferred the highest award of Ethiopia, the 'Great Honour Nishan of Ethiopia' upon Prime Minister Modi for his exceptional contribution towards strengthening the bilateral partnership and for his visionary leadership as a global statesman
- PM Modi laid a wreath and paid his respects at the Adwa Victory Monument in Addis Ababa. The memorial is dedicated to the brave Ethiopian soldiers who gave the ultimate sacrifice for the sovereignty of their nation at the Battle of Adwa in 1896. The memorial is a tribute to the enduring spirit of Adwa's heroes and the country's proud legacy of freedom, dignity, and resilience.

### 23<sup>rd</sup> India-Russia Annual Summit

- Russian President Vladimir Putin arrived in New Delhi on a state visit to India for the 23<sup>rd</sup> India-Russia Annual Summit.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi received him at the airport, and the Russian President was accorded a ceremonial reception at Rashtrapati Bhavan.
- During this visit, India and Russia reaffirmed their Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership on the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the India-Russia Strategic Partnership Declaration (2000), signing 16 agreements across defence, healthcare, trade, and culture.
- An MoU was signed between the Indian and Russian Health Ministries on medical education, public health, and research.
- An MoU was signed between FSSAI (India) and Russia's consumer health watchdog on food safety cooperation.
- An MoU was signed for training Indian specialists for navigating polar waters — a strategic Arctic initiative.
- An MoU was signed between Shipping Ministries to strengthen maritime links and infrastructure cooperation.
- An MoU was signed between the Russian company UralChem and Indian PSUs for fertiliser supply assurance.
- A Tripartite agreement was signed between Mumbai University, Moscow State University, and a Russian investment fund.
- A collaboration took place between DIAT Pune and Tomsk State University for defence and scientific research.
- Russia joined the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA).
- India has announced a free 30-day e-Tourist Visa for Russian citizens visiting India on a reciprocal basis.

### News in Shorts

- Japan has approved the restart of its largest nuclear facility, the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa plant, with Unit 6 expected to begin operations in January 2026. This marks a significant pivot back to nuclear energy for energy security and decarbonisation after the Fukushima disaster, despite strong local opposition and ongoing safety concerns.
- India and Saudi Arabia signed a visa waiver agreement in December 2025 for holders of diplomatic, special, and official passports, eliminating short-stay visa requirements to boost strategic ties, facilitate government travel, and enhance collaboration under their Strategic Partnership Council.
- India and the Netherlands announced the establishment of the India-Netherlands Joint Trade and Investment Committee (JTIC) through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), marking an important milestone in further strengthening bilateral trade, investment, and economic cooperation between the two countries. The JTIC will serve as a dedicated mechanism to review bilateral trade relations, promote two-way investments, address investment and trade barriers, and explore collaboration in sectors of mutual interest.
- India will provide a USD 15 million package to assist in the reconstruction of areas affected by Cyclone Ditwah in Sri Lanka.
- Brazil formally transferred the BRICS presidency to India at the conclusion of the bloc's fourth Sherpas meeting.
- India and the Netherlands have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to collaborate on developing the National Maritime Heritage Complex (NMHC) at Lothal, Gujarat, leveraging Dutch expertise from the National Maritime Museum in Amsterdam for museum design, curation, conservation, research, and exhibitions to promote India's ancient maritime history globally.
- India has been re-elected to the UNESCO Executive Board for the 2025-29 term.
- India has been re-elected to the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) Council for the 2026-2027 term with the highest vote count in the Category B (countries with the largest interest in international seaborne trade).

## FINANCE, ECONOMY AND BANKING

### National Strategy for Financial Inclusion (NSFI) 2025–30: A Roadmap for Inclusive Banking in India

- Reserve Bank Governor Sanjay Malhotra released the National Strategy for Financial Inclusion: 2025-30.
- The framework lays down five strategic objectives towards elevating the state of financial inclusion in the country. This was approved by the Sub-Committee of the Financial Stability and Development Council.
- These Panch-Jyoti and a menu of 47 action points to achieve them, include improving the availability and use of an equitable, responsible, suitable, and affordable bouquet of financial services to achieve financial safety and financial security for households and micro enterprises.
- It also aims to adopt a gender-sensitive approach for women-led financial inclusion and differentiated strategies for improving the financial resilience of households, especially for the underserved and vulnerable segments.
- The strategy has been framed under the aegis of the Technical Group on Financial Inclusion and Financial Literacy, following country-wide discussions with various stakeholders.

#### Key Points

RBI's headquarters — Mumbai, Maharashtra

### SEBI Launches Swagat-Fi to Simplify Access for Low-Risk Foreign Investors in India

- The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has launched the SWAGAT-FI framework to provide a single-window clearance mechanism for low-risk foreign investors, simplifying their entry and compliance in the Indian securities markets
- SWAGAT-FI stands for the Single Window Automatic & Generalised Access for Trusted Foreign Investors.
- The framework would provide easier investment access to low risk foreign investors, enable a unified registration process across multiple investment routes and reduce repeated compliance and documentation for such entities.

#### Key Points

SEBI's headquarters — Mumbai, Maharashtra  
SEBI's chairman — Tuhin Kanta Pandey

### SEBI Allows Zero-Coupon Bonds (ZCBs) to be Issued in Smaller Denominations

- SEBI recently allowed ZCBs to be issued in smaller ₹10,000 denominations via private placement, a benefit previously limited to interest-bearing debt, making them accessible to more retail investors by recognising their discount-based returns.
- This regulatory change aims to deepen the corporate bond market and diversify investment options, as ZCBs offer compounded returns through price appreciation rather than periodic interest.

### HDFC Bank Gets RBI Nod to Acquire up to 9.5% Stake in IndusInd Bank

- RBI approved the HDFC Bank group to collectively acquire up to a 9.5% stake in IndusInd Bank, allowing its subsidiaries (like HDFC Mutual Fund, HDFC Life, etc.) to hold more than the usual 5% limit.
- This will be valid for one year until December 2026, as part of normal investment activities and will not be a takeover.
- This increased limit facilitates investments by HDFC's financial arms, which were set to cross the prior threshold of 5%, with the key condition that the total group holding stays below 9.5% and the HDFC Bank entity itself doesn't get board seats at IndusInd.

#### Key Points

HDFC Bank Chairman — Atanu Chakraborty  
Headquarters — Mumbai, Maharashtra  
MD & CEO IndusInd Bank — Rajiv Anand  
Headquarters — Mumbai, Maharashtra

### Fino Payments Bank Becomes First to Receive RBI Nod to Transition into SFB

- Fino Payments Bank (Fino) has become the first such entity to get an in-principle approval from RBI to transition into a Small Finance Bank (SFB).
- The transition will allow Fino to accept larger deposits, provide loans and credit facilities to individuals and small businesses, and expand its customer base and services, which are currently restricted to payments banks.

- The in-principle approval comes nearly two years after Fino applied for a licence to become an SFB. Fino had applied for the licence under the RBI's guidelines for "on tap" licensing of private sector SFBs.
- A payments bank is eligible to apply to transition into an SFB after completing five years of operations, subject to meeting compliance and regulatory requirements. Fino began operations as a payments bank in 2017.
- Fino will join a list of 11 other SFBs — AU SFB, Equitas SFB, Suryoday SFB, Utkarsh SFB, Jana SFB, Unity SFB, Capital SFB, ESAF SFB, Ujjivan SFB, Shivalik SFB, and Slice SFB. AU SFB has, in the meantime, received RBI's approval to transition into a universal bank.
- Other payments banks in India include Airtel Payments Bank, Jio Payments Bank, Paytm Payments Bank, NSDL Payments Bank, and India Post Payments Bank.

#### Key Points

Fino Bank headquarters	— Navi Mumbai, Maharashtra
MD & CEO	— Rishi Gupta

#### "Your Money, Your Right Campaign" Campaign Launched to Help Citizens Claim Unclaimed Assets

- The Government of India has launched a nationwide campaign titled "Your Money, Your Right" to facilitate the settlement of unclaimed financial assets, including bank deposits, insurance, dividends, shares, mutual funds, and pension, to their legitimate claimants.
- The campaign is built on the 3A Framework — Awareness, Accessibility, and Action.
- This three-month drive (October–December 2025) was implemented across every State and Union Territory.
- The campaign entails collaborative participation of all major financial sector fund regulators—Reserve Bank of India (RBI), Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI), Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) and Investor Education and Protection Fund Authority (IEPFA).
- Existing platforms such as RBI's UDGAM (for unclaimed bank deposits), IRDAI's Bima Bharosa (for unclaimed insurance proceeds), and SEBI's MITRA (for unclaimed mutual funds) have empowered citizens to trace their unclaimed assets more efficiently.

#### ADB Commits \$4.26 Billion in Sovereign Lending to India in 2025

- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) committed \$4.258 billion in sovereign lending to India in 2025, supporting projects across workforce skilling, renewable energy, urban infrastructure, metro and rail networks, healthcare services, and ecotourism.
- Of the 16 new projects committed during the year, nearly 32% were in the human and social development sector, while about 26% focused on energy—primarily renewable energy—and over 18% were in urban development.
- A key component of the 2025 portfolio is an \$846-million financing initiative for PM-SETU, India's flagship skilling programme, which aims to modernise hundreds of Industrial Training Institutes across states to improve employability and workforce readiness.
- ADB is also providing \$650 million to support the PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana, the national rooftop solar programme designed to expand household-level solar adoption across the country.

#### Key Points

ADB's Headquarters	— Mandaluyong, Philippines
President	— Masato Kanda

#### SEBI Launches PaRRVA

- In a major move to boost transparency in India's financial markets, SEBI launched the Past Risk and Return Verification Agency (PaRRVA).
- It is a new verification mechanism designed to authenticate past performance claims made by regulated market intermediaries.
- PaRRVA would serve as a pioneering framework that allows SEBI-registered investment advisers, research analysts and algorithmic stock brokers to present independently validated past returns to investors.

#### RBI Retains SBI, HDFC Bank, and ICICI Bank as Domestic Systemically Important Banks (D-SIBs)

- RBI said that State Bank of India (SBI), HDFC Bank, and ICICI Bank will continue to be classified as D-SIBs.
- Systemically important banks are those that are too big to fail due to their size, cross-jurisdictional activities, complexity, lack of substitutability, and interconnectedness.
- The disorderly failure of these banks has the potential to cause significant disruption to the essential services

they provide to the banking system, and in turn, to the overall economic activity.

- RBI had announced SBI and ICICI Bank as D-SIB in 2015 and 2016. In 2017, HDFC Bank was added to the list.
- The D-SIB framework, which was issued in 2014 by RBI, requires the central bank to disclose the names of banks designated as D-SIBs and place these banks in appropriate buckets depending upon their systemic importance scores (SISs).

### NHAI Signs MoU with Reliance Jio

- To enhance safety and offer a seamless travel experience on National Highways, NHAI has signed an MoU with Reliance Jio to introduce a telecom-based safety alert system across the National Highway network.
- Using Jio's existing 4G and 5G network, travellers will receive advance warnings on their mobile phones as they approach identified risk locations such as accident-prone stretches, stray-cattle zones, fog-affected areas and emergency diversions.
- The initiative aims to strengthen road-safety by providing timely information to National Highway users, enabling them to adjust speed and driving behaviour well in advance.
- The system will be integrated in a phased manner with NHAI's digital platforms, including the 'Rajmargyatra' mobile application and emergency helpline number 1033.
- The automated system will work for all Jio mobile users on or near the National Highways and will provide early warning to National Highway commuters before they enter a hazardous zone. The solution will use existing telecom towers and can be deployed quickly, without additional roadside hardware.

#### Key Points

NHAI Chairman — Santosh Kumar Yadav

### NHAI's Raajmarg Infra InvIT Gets SEBI's In-Principle Approval for Public Listing

- In a significant step toward strengthening NHAI's asset monetisation program, SEBI has granted in-principle approval of registration to 'Raajmarg Infra Investment Trust' (RIIT) as an Infrastructure Investment Trust under the SEBI (Infrastructure Investment Trusts) Regulations, 2014. The InvIT aims to unlock the monetisation potential of the National Highway assets

while creating a high-quality, long-term investment instrument primarily targeting retail and domestic investors.

- As a part of the process to secure final registration, Raajmarg Infra Investment Trust will be required to meet specific conditions over the next six months, which include the appointment of directors, submission of requisite financial statements, and compliance with other regulatory requirements.

### Tata-Lockheed Martin Build New MRO Facility for C-130J Super Hercules in India

- Tata Advanced Systems (TASL) and Lockheed Martin have broken ground on a new C-130J Super Hercules Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul (MRO) facility in Bengaluru, India.
- It will be the first dedicated heavy maintenance center for the aircraft outside the US/Europe, boosting the Indian Air Force's (IAF) readiness and creating local aerospace skills, with operations expected to start in early 2027, after construction finishes in 2026.

### Tata Electronics and Intel Sign MoU to Explore Chip Manufacturing and Packaging in India

- Tata Electronics and Intel have signed an MoU to explore the possibility of manufacturing and packaging of Intel's products for the Indian markets.
- As part of the MoU, Tata Electronics will look at options of manufacturing Intel's products at the former's chip fabrication unit at Dholera as well as packaging some of Intel's chips at the Guwahati Outsourced Semiconductor Assembly and Test (OSAT) facility.

### News in Short

- Google Pay and Axis Bank have launched a first-of-its-kind credit card integrated with the UPI system. This new card offers instant rewards and flexible repayments, aiming to transform credit usage in India's digital payments landscape.
- Netflix will buy Warner Bros. Discovery's (WBD) film & TV studios and streaming business (HBO Max) for \$72 billion.
- On its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, IFFCO-TOKIO General Insurance Company has introduced a program to make insurance more accessible to underserved communities across India.
- Amul renewed its partnership with the Argentine Football Association (AFA) as its Official Regional

- Sponsor for India and SAARC markets through the 2026 FIFA World Cup.
- RBI recently issued final guidelines for transaction accounts across regulated entities, effective April 1, 2026, aiming to streamline cash credit/overdraft (CC/OD) rules, remove some restrictions (like limiting borrowers to two accounts), and enhance borrower flexibility, while retaining strict KYC/monitoring for fraud prevention; these changes follow stakeholder feedback and apply to various banks, modernising working capital finance and ensuring better compliance.
  - According to the RBI, India's retail Digital Rupee (CBDC) has seen significant adoption, crossing 120 million transactions and over ₹28,000 crore in value.
  - Gautam Adani, Chairman of the Adani Group, announced that the Group will invest over USD 75 billion in the energy transition over the next five years.
  - In a major feat, India has moved past Japan to become the world's fourth-largest economy in nominal GDP terms, according to the government's year-end economic review.
  - State Bank of India (SBI) and Bank of India (BOI) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to establish a Centre of Excellence (CoE) for strategic partnership to build leadership and expertise in project financing in India.
  - Google has launched its first-ever global credit card in India in partnership with Axis Bank on the RuPay network. The card is UPI-linked, offers instant rewards on every transaction, and highlights India's leadership in digital payments innovation.
  - State Bank of India (SBI) and Bank of Baroda (BoB) have received the go-ahead from the Reserve Bank of India to establish Section 8 companies under the Companies Act, 2013, for a digital payments intelligence platform. The Section 8 companies are designed for non-profit objectives.
  - Deloitte India has officially launched its AI-powered 'Tax Pragya' platform, an AI-led search and summarisation tool designed to revolutionise tax research for professionals across India.
  - Bank of Baroda was recognised as the 'Best Bank in India' at The Banker's Bank of the Year Awards 2025 due to its strong financial performance, innovative digital transformation, and commitment to customer-centric initiatives.
  - The International Monetary Fund (IMF) report on 'Growing Retail Digital Payments (The Value of Interoperability)' dated June 2025 had recognised Unified Payments Interface (UPI) as the world's largest retail fast-payment system (FPS) by transaction volume. Further, as per ACI Worldwide report on 'Prime Time for Real-Time' 2024, UPI has around 49% share in the global real-time payment system transaction volume.
  - The Income Tax Department has launched a "NUDGE" campaign for Assessment Year (AY) 2025-26, using advanced data analytics to flag potentially ineligible deductions and exemptions claimed in filed Income Tax Returns (ITRs). The initiative aims to promote voluntary compliance and allow taxpayers to correct errors by filing a revised return by December 31, 2025.
  - Jan Dhan accounts across the country currently hold balances of about ₹2.75 lakh crore, translating to an average of ₹4,815 per account.
  - JPMorgan is setting up Asia's largest Global Capability Centre (GCC) in Powai, Mumbai, a massive 2 million sq ft facility for up to 30,000 employees, slated for completion by 2029, marking a significant investment in India's financial and tech sectors for high-value operations, analytics, and technology development.
  - The Adani Group is setting up a 48-megawatt cutting-edge AI green data centre in Telangana at an outlay of ₹2,500 crore. This facility will be at the forefront of cutting-edge AI, cloud technology, and high-performance computing, and will play a crucial role in meeting the needs of rapidly digitising India.
  - The Finance Ministry recently launched a new, single logo for Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) to create a unified brand, symbolising financial trust (dark blue) and rural growth (green) under the "One State, One RRB" initiative, enhancing their identity and reach for rural development and inclusion. At present, 28 RRBs operate across the country with a vast network of over 22 thousand branches in more than 700 districts, playing a crucial role in promoting financial inclusion and supporting rural development.
  - According to data released by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), UPI processed 21.63 billion transactions in December 2025, the highest monthly volume recorded so far, up from 20.47 billion transactions in November.

## DEFENCE NEWS

### Indian Navy Commissions INAS 335 Ospreys at INS Hansa

- The Indian Navy commissioned its second MH 60R helicopter squadron, INAS 335 (Ospreys), at INS Hansa, Goa, in the presence of Adm Dinesh K Tripathi, the Chief of the Naval Staff.
- It has advanced weapons, sensors, and an avionics suite that makes the helicopter a versatile and capable asset for the Indian Navy.
- It offers enhanced capabilities to address conventional as well as asymmetric threats.

### GRSE Delivers Fifth Warship to Navy in 2025

- 'Anjadip', the third of eight ASW SWC (Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft) was delivered to the Indian Navy at Chennai.
- It is indigenously designed and built by Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE), Kolkata.
- The ASW SWC ships have been designed and constructed as per the Classification Rules of the Indian Register of Shipping (IRS) under a Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) of GRSE with M/s L&T Shipyard, Kattupalli, thus demonstrating the success of collaborative defence manufacturing.
- These ships are at approx. 77m length, are the largest Indian Naval Warships propelled by Waterjets and are equipped with state of the art Lightweight Torpedoes, indigenously designed Anti-Submarine Rockets, and shallow water SONAR, enabling effective detection and engagement of underwater threats.
- The ship will strengthen the Navy's anti-submarine, coastal surveillance and mine-laying capabilities.
- The ship is a reincarnation of the erstwhile INS Anjadip, a Petya-class Corvette decommissioned in 2003. The ship derives its name from Anjadip Island located off the coast of Karwar, Karnataka, underscoring India's commitment to safeguarding its expansive maritime domain.
- It has over 80% indigenous content.

### INS Sindhughosh Decommissioned After 40 Years of Naval Service

- The Indian Navy decommissioned the Kilo-class submarine INS Sindhughosh at the Naval Dockyard, Mumbai.

- She was the lead submarine of her class with the Indian Navy and was decommissioned after 40 years of glorious service to the nation.
- The ceremony honoured its significant role in maritime security and strategic operations.

### Indian Coast Guard Inducts First Pollution Control Vessel Samudra Pratap

- The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) inducted the first in-built Pollution Control Vessel (PCV), SAMUDRA PRATAP (Yard 1267) under the 02 PCV project of Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL).
- 'Samudra Pratap' is the first indigenously designed and built Pollution Control Vessel of the Indian Coast Guard. It is the largest ship in the ICG fleet, significantly enhancing the Coast Guard's operational reach and capability.
- It measures 114.5 metres in length and 16.5 metres in breadth, with a displacement of 4,170 tonnes.
- The vessel is equipped with state-of-the-art technology, including a 30mm CRN-91 gun, two 12.7mm stabilised remote-controlled guns with integrated fire control systems, an indigenously developed Integrated Bridge System, Integrated Platform Management System, an Automated Power Management System, and a high-capacity External Firefighting System.
- The PC Vessel is the first Indian Coast Guard ship to be equipped with Dynamic Positioning capability (DP-1), holding FiFi-2 / FFV-2 notation certificate. It is equipped with advanced systems to detect oil spills, viz. Oil Finger Printing Machine, Gyro stabilised Standoff Active Chemical Detector, and PC Lab Equipment, enabling comprehensive pollution response operations within the Exclusive Economic Zone and beyond. It is capable of high precision operations like recovering pollutants from viscous oil, analysing contaminants, and separating oil from contaminated water.

### INSV Kaundinya to Begin Maiden Overseas Voyage

- INSV Kaundinya, the Indian Navy's pioneering stitched sailing vessel that revives India's ancient shipbuilding and seafaring traditions, undertook its maiden overseas voyage.
- It was flagged off from Porbandar, Gujarat, for Muscat, Oman, symbolically retracing the historic maritime routes that connected India with the wider Indian Ocean world for millennia.

- The ship is named after the legendary mariner Kaundinya, who is believed to have sailed from India to Southeast Asia in ancient times.
- The project was undertaken through a tripartite MoU between Ministry of Culture, Indian Navy, and M/s Hodi Innovations as part of India's efforts to rediscover and revive indigenous knowledge systems.
- INSV Kaundinya's wooden planks are stitched together using coconut coir rope and sealed with natural resins, reflecting a shipbuilding tradition once prevalent along India's coasts and across the Indian Ocean. This technology enabled Indian mariners to undertake long-distance voyages to West Asia, Africa and Southeast Asia long before the advent of modern navigation and metallurgy.
- It was built under the guidance of master shipwright Shri Babu Sankaran and supported by extensive research, design, and testing by the Indian Navy and academic institutions.

#### **Sai Jadhav Breaks 93-year Record at Indian Military Academy (IMA), Becomes First Woman Officer**

- Lieutenant Sai Jadhav, who passed out from IMA in December 2025, was commissioned as a Lieutenant in the Territorial Army.
- She marked a historic first for the 93-year-old IMA by becoming the first woman officer to graduate from IMA.
- At present, eight women officer cadets are in training with the Indian Army, forming the first batch selected through the National Defence Academy's 2022 intake.
- Sai Jadhav's entry into this space came through special permission, followed by six months of rigorous training at the Indian Military Academy.
- In June 2026, the newly commissioned officer will take part in the parade in front of the Chetwode Building, an honour reserved for IMA graduates, marking yet another moment that signals the shifting landscape of opportunities in the armed forces.

#### **DRDO Successfully Completes User Evaluation Trials of Akash-Ng Missile System**

- Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has completed the User Evaluation Trials (UET) of the Next Generation Akash missile (Akash-NG) system.
- During the trials, the missiles successfully intercepted aerial targets at different range & altitude including

the near-boundary-low-altitude and 'long range, high altitude' scenarios.

- Akash-NG, equipped with an indigenous RF seeker and propelled by solid rocket motor, is a potent system for ensuring air defense against different types of aerial threats.
- All the systems & sub-systems including the Multi Function Radar (MFR), Command and Control Unit, Missile Launch vehicle (MLV) etc. have been designed by various laboratories of DRDO with the help of Indian industries. The trials were witnessed by senior scientists of DRDO & user reps from the Indian Air Force (IAF).

#### **Key Points**

DRDO chairman — Samir V. Kamat

#### **President Droupadi Murmu's Historic Submarine Sea Sortie**

- President Droupadi Murmu added a striking chapter to India's naval history by undertaking a submarine sortie onboard the indigenously built frontline submarine INS Vaghsheer.
- The submarine set out from the Karwar Naval Base on the Western Seaboard, giving the President a firsthand look at its capabilities beneath the waves.
- It was President Murmu's first submarine sortie, and importantly, she became only the second President of India ever to experience such an underwater mission. The late Dr APJ Abdul Kalam was the first when he embarked on a submarine sortie in 2006.
- INS Vaghsheer is a part of the Indian Navy's Kalvari-class fleet. It is part of India's Project-75 Scorpene programme and was commissioned into service earlier this year. It is the sixth and final submarine in the series, designed for versatile operations including anti-surface and anti-submarine warfare, area surveillance and intelligence gathering.

Name of the Exercise	Countries	Venue
Desert Cyclone II	India and the United Arab Emirates	Abu Dhabi

#### **News in Shorts**

- As part of the ongoing Operation Sagar Bandhu, which was launched to provide urgent Search & Rescue, and Humanitarian Assistance & Disaster Relief (HADR) support to Sri Lanka, Indian Navy has deployed four more ships INS Gharial, LCU 54, LCU 51 and LCU 57, for supplying HADR stores to cyclone-affected regions

of Sri Lanka. INS Vikrant, INS Udaygiri and INS Sukanya had earlier rendered relief assistance and heli borne SAR support.

- In a major milestone in the Make-in-India program, India Optel Limited (IOL), a Mini Navratna Defence Public Sector Undertaking, has signed a collaboration agreement with Safran Electronics & Defense for the

transfer of Production of two high-precision, combat-proven systems, paving the way for their local manufacturing. The systems are: SIGMA 30N Digital Ring Laser Gyro Inertial Navigation System, used in artillery guns, air defence systems, missiles and radars; and CM3-MR Direct Firing Sight, designed for artillery guns and anti-drone systems.

## APPOINTMENTS

Name	Designation
Vikram Sahu	CEO of Bank of America
Raj Kumar Goyal	Chief Information Commissioner of the Central Information Commission
Ashwini Kumar Tewari	Managing Director, State Bank of India
Usha Janakiraman	Executive Director, Reserve Bank of India
Andrej Babis	Prime Minister, Czech Republic
Anu Garg	Odisha's First Woman Chief Secretary
Praveen Kumar	Additional charge as the Director General of the BSF (Border Security Force)
Dr Renuka Iyer	Chief Medical Officer of NCCN (National Comprehensive Cancer Network)
Jeyandran Venugopal	President & CEO of Reliance Retail Ventures Ltd
Manali Kshirsagar	First Female Vice-Chancellor, Nagpur University
Harmanpreet Kaur	First-Ever Female Brand Ambassador, Punjab National Bank (PNB)
Henrique Braun	CEO of The Coca-Cola Company
Vivek Chaturvedi	Chairman, Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC)
Raj Kumar Goyal	Chief Information Commissioner
Suresh Goyal	Director General, National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER)
Air Marshal Tejbir Singh	Director General (Inspection & Safety), Indian Air Force
Sangeeta Barooah Pisharoty	First Woman President, Press Club of India
Srikant Nagulapalli	Director General, Directorate General of Hydrocarbons, Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas
B. Sairam	Chairman-cum-Managing Director of Coal India Limited
Sonal Mishra	Chief Labour Commissioner (Central), Ministry of Labour & Employment
Rabindra Kumar Agarwal	Chairman & Managing Director, Food Corporation of India (FCI)
Lav Aggarwal	Director General of Foreign Trade
Rakesh Aggarwal	Additional charge, Director General of the National Investigation Agency (NIA)
Ajai Kumar Shukla	MD & CEO, PNB Housing Finance
Amar Subramanya	Vice President of AI, Apple
PV Sindhu	Chair of BWF Athletes Commission (2026–2029)
Saleem Ahmad	Chairman and Managing Director, Rail Vikas Nigam Limited (RVNL)

Shashwat Sharma	MD & CEO of Airtel India
B P Kanungo	Non-executive Chairman, IIFL Finance
José Antonio Kast	President, Chile
Brendan Nelson	Chairman of HSBC
Paschal Donohoe	Managing Director & Chief Knowledge Officer, World Bank Group
Cristiano Ronaldo	Investor and Brand Ambassador, Perplexity AI
Milan Nedeljković	CEO, BMW
Amin Vahdat	Chief Technologist for AI infrastructure, Google
Major General Roman Gofman	Director of Mossad

### BOOKS AND AUTHORS

Books	Authors
Economic Empowerment of Bharat in the Modi Era	Sikander Kumar
Sanatan Sanskriti Ki Atal Drishti	Vasudev Devnani
Salman Khan: The Sultan of Bollywood	Mohar Basu
The One: Cricket, My Life and More	Shikhar Dhawan

### OBITUARIES (NATIONAL)

Name	Occupation
Ram Sutar	Renowned Indian Sculptor
Ranjana Sharma Bordoloi	Veteran Assamese Actress
Vinod Kumar Shukla	Eminent Hindi Writer and Jnanpith Award Recipient
K Shekhar	Veteran Malayalam Cinema Art Director
Biswabandhu Sen	Speaker of the Tripura Legislative Assembly
Sreenivasan	Malayalam Actor, Writer, and Director
Shivraj Patil	Politician
Baba Adhav	Social Activist
Kalyan Chatterjee	Bengali Actor
Simone Tata	Businesswoman

### OBITUARIES (INTERNATIONAL)

Name	Occupation
Gil Gerard	American Actor
Mohammad Bakri	Palestinian Actor
Peter Arnett	Journalist

Tom Stoppard	British Playwright and Oscar-winning Screenwriter
Ike Schab	American World War II Veteran and U.S. Navy Sailor
Hugh Morris	Cricketer (England)
Sophie Kinsella	Author
Frank Gehry	Architect
Brigitte Bardot	French Actress and Singer
Khaleda Zia	Bangladesh's First Woman Prime Minister
Great Robin Smith	Cricketer

### DAYS AND THEMES

Date	Day	Theme
December 1	World AIDS Day	Overcoming Disruption, Transforming the AIDS Response
December 2	National Pollution Control Day	
December 2	International Day for the Abolition of Slavery	
December 2	World Computer Literacy Day	
December 3	International Day of Persons with Disabilities	Fostering Disability Inclusive Societies for Advancing Social Progress
December 4	International Day of Banks	
December 4	International Day against Unilateral Coercive Measures	
December 4	Indian Navy Day	Combat Ready, Cohesive, and Self-Reliant
December 5	International Volunteer Day	Every Contribution Matters
December 5	World Soil Day	Healthy Soils for Healthy Cities
December 7	Armed Forces Flag Day	Welfare and Gratitude
December 7	International Civil Aviation Day	Safe Skies and a Sustainable Future for All
December 9	International Anti-Corruption Day	Uniting with Youth Against Corruption: Shaping Tomorrow's Integrity
December 9	International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide	
December 10	Human Rights Day	Human Rights, Our Everyday Essentials
December 11	International Mountain Day	Glaciers matter for water, food, and livelihoods in mountains and beyond
December 11	UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund) Day	My Day, My Rights
December 12	Universal Health Coverage Day	Unaffordable health costs? We're sick of it!
December 12	International Day of Neutrality	
December 14	National Energy Conservation Day	
December 14	International Day Against Colonialism in All Its Forms and Manifestations	

December 16	Vijay Diwas	
December 18	International Migrants Day	My Great Story: Cultures and Development
December 18	World Arabic Language Day	Innovative Pathways for Arabic: Policies and Practices for a More Inclusive Linguistic Future.
December 20	International Human Solidarity Day	Solidarity for Sustainable Development: Uniting Communities for a Shared Future
December 21	World Basketball Day	
December 21	World Meditation Day	
December 22	National Mathematics Day	
December 23	National Farmer's Day or Kisan Diwas	
December 24	National Consumer Rights Day	
December 24	International Anti-Cybercrime Day	
December 25	Good Governance Day	
December 26	Veer Bal Diwas	
December 27	International Day of Epidemic Preparedness	

## REPORTS, RANKINGS AND INDEX

### India Ranks Third In Global AI(Artificial Intelligence) Index After Us And China

- According to Stanford University's Global AI Vibrancy Tool report, India has emerged as the world's third most competitive country in AI. The ranking underscores how India's fast-growing tech ecosystem and strong talent base are helping the country play a key role in the global AI race.
- India ranks third in the 2024 Global Vibrancy Index (score of 21.59), followed by South Korea (17.24), and the United Kingdom (16.64). India made a notable leap from seventh place in 2023 to third, while the United Kingdom rose one spot from sixth to fifth.
- The United States leads the ranking with a total weighted score of 78.60. China ranked second in the 2024 Index with a score of 36.95.

### Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Index 2025-26

- The 2025/26 global Women, Peace and Security Index (WPS Index) scores and ranks 181 countries on women's well-being.
- It uses 13 indicators that span women's inclusion, justice, and security to generate scores from 0 (worst) to 1 (best). Denmark continues to lead the rankings,

while Afghanistan performs the worst. India is ranked 131<sup>st</sup> with a score of 0.607.

- The fifth edition of the WPS Index reveals that progress on women's status is stalling globally. It also shows that improvements can come from some of the most conflict-affected places.
- The WPS Index is produced by The Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, in collaboration with the Peace Research Institute Oslo and with support from the Government of Norway.

### World Inequality Report 2026

- According to the latest World Inequality Report 2026, Income inequality in India remains among the highest in the world, with the top 10% of earners capturing 58% of national income, while the bottom 50% receive only 15%.
- Wealth inequality is even greater in India, with the richest 10% holding around 65% of total wealth and the top 1% holding about 40%.
- The World Inequality Lab released the report, and this was edited by economists Lucas Chancel, Ricardo Gómez-Carrera, Rowaida Moshrif, and Thomas Piketty.

- According to the report, the global top 10% owns three-quarters of all wealth, while the bottom 50% holds just 2%.
- Average annual income per capita is around 6,200 euros (PPP), and average wealth stands at about 28,000 euros (PPP).
- The findings are crucial for achieving inclusive growth, social justice, welfare economics, SDGs, and climate equity across India and the globe.

### **Internationalisation of Higher Education in India: NITI Aayog Policy Report & Strategic Roadmap**

- NITI Aayog launched a comprehensive policy report titled 'Internationalisation of Higher Education in India: Prospects, Potential, and Policy Recommendations'.
- The report is an outcome of a collaborative endeavour between NITI Aayog and an IIT Madras led consortium of knowledge partners, is a pioneering publication in the Global South.
- It focuses on 'internationalisation at home' as envisioned in NEP 2020.
- The Report presents 22 Policy Recommendations, 76 Action Pathways, 125 Performance Success Indicators, along with nearly 30 Indian and global practices currently pursued. The recommendations are aimed at improving 5 thematic areas including Strategy, Regulation, Finance, Branding, Communication & Outreach, and Curriculum & Culture for making India the global hub of higher education and research by 2047.

### **India Tops WADA's Global Doping List for Third Consecutive Year**

- According to the latest World Anti-Doping Agency's (WADA) 2024 report, India recorded the highest number of doping offenders globally for the third consecutive year. India recorded 260 positive doping cases from 7,113 samples— a 3.6% positivity rate. This figure is more than double of any other nation's numbers, as no other country exceeded a 1.75% positivity rate in 2024.
- Norway documented the second-highest proportion of positive cases at 1.75%, followed by the U.S. at 1.15%. In terms of absolute figures, France registered the next highest volume of violations in 2024 with 91 cases, followed closely by Italy with 85.
- Russia and the U.S. reported 76 cases each, while Germany and China recorded 54 and 43 cases, respectively.

### **Deepinder Goyal Tops Hurun Rich List 2025 for India's Self-Made Entrepreneurs**

- According to the latest IDFC FIRST Private & Hurun India Top 200 Self-Made Entrepreneurs of the Millennia 2025 report, India is rapidly evolving its startup ecosystem to become a global hub for innovation and entrepreneurship, with its self-made entrepreneurs now having a total business value of ₹42 lakh crore, a rise from ₹36 lakh crore in the last year.
- The report features entrepreneurs across 51 cities in India, with Bengaluru, Mumbai, and New Delhi together accounting for more than half the list.
- Deepinder Goyal, CEO of Zomato and district parent company Eternal, led the list for the first time, overtaking veteran investor Radhakishan Damani, the founder of DMart parent Avenue Supermarts, who now follows in second.
- India saw a rise of young founders driving entrepreneurship, with Zepto's founders, Kaivalya Vohra, 22, and Aadit Palicha, 23, leading as the youngest entrepreneurs.
- Happiest Minds Technologies' Ashok Soota, 82, is at the forefront of the list of veteran founders who continue to lead with experience and vision.

### **Asia Power Index 2025, India Ranks 3<sup>rd</sup> Among Asia's Strongest Nations**

- Australia-based think tank, Lowy Institute, recently released its annual Asia Power Index, which assesses the ability of nations, particularly of those in the Asian continent, to influence their external environment.
- India has secured third ranking with a score of 40 in the Asia Power Index 2025, while the U.S. and China occupy the first and second spots. India's score of 40.0 places it as the only "major power" besides the US and China in this comprehensive assessment of regional influence.
- India is classified as a "Major Power," a significant step up from its previous "Middle Power" status.
- The seventh edition of the Asia Power Index evaluates the power of 27 countries and territories across Asia, based on 131 indicators across eight thematic measures, including Military Capability and Defence Networks, Economic Capability and Relationships, Diplomatic and Cultural Influence, as well as Resilience and Future Resources.

### News in Shorts

- Mughal-era mausoleum Taj Mahal in Agra was the most-visited centrally protected ticketed monument for both domestic and foreign tourists in the financial year 2024-25.
- According to India's Women and Child Development Ministry, a total of 33.54% of children were found to be stunted, and 14.41% were underweight. Another 5.03% of children were in the wasted (underweight) category.
- India leads globally in daily and monthly active users for AI apps like ChatGPT, Gemini, and Perplexity, driven by a huge online population, cheap data, and young tech users.
- According to the Coffee Board of India, India is now one of the world's leading coffee producers, ranking as the seventh-largest producer of coffee and contributing about 3.5% to global coffee production. India produces approximately 3.6 lakh tonnes of coffee annually, with nearly 70% exported to 128 countries, underscoring the growing global demand for Indian coffee.
- According to the Passport Index by Arton Capital, the UAE passport has indeed been named the world's strongest for 2025. It was ranked on the top for the 7<sup>th</sup> year. India stands 67<sup>th</sup> globally with a mobility score of 74.

## EVENTS

### Vigyanika: Science Literature Festival 2025

- CSIR–National Institute of Science Communication and Policy Research (CSIR–NIScPR), New Delhi in association with Vijnana Bharti (VIBHA), Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), Pune and Panjab University, Chandigarh, successfully organised Vigyanika: Science Literature Festival 2025 during 8–9 December 2025 as an integral part of the India International Science Festival (IISF), 2025.
- The two-day festival celebrated the convergence of science, literature, language, and creative communication, bringing together leading science communicators, scientists, editors, scholars, and science poets from across the country.
- The event aimed to strengthen the culture of scientific temper through multilingual and culturally rooted forms of science communication.

### 26th Edition of Hornbill Festival Takes Place in Nagaland

- The 26<sup>th</sup> edition of Nagaland's famed Hornbill Festival – the "Festival of Festivals" was inaugurated by Nagaland and Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla as the Chief Host, with Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio.
- This year's Edition- Six countries, namely Austria, France, Ireland, Malta, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom, are the partner countries and Arunachal Pradesh is the State Partner.
- The Hornbill Festival, celebrated from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup> of December each year, continues to be a major cultural showcase that draws visitors, promoting Nagaland's rich tribal heritage and global cultural engagement.

### Anti-Terrorism Conference-2025

- Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation Amit Shah inaugurated the 'Anti-Terrorism Conference-2025' in New Delhi.
- The two-day conference was organised by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) under the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.
- It was attended by senior police officers from States/UTs, officers from Central agencies/Departments dealing with issues related to Counter Terrorism and experts from related fields such as law, forensics, technology etc.

### World's Largest Open-Air Theatre 'Dhanu Yatra'

- The largest open-air theatre in the world, 'Dhanu Yatra', was inaugurated at Bargarh in Odisha.
- The event is a dramatic re-enactment of the mythological tale of lord Krishna's life, from his birth to the death of his demon uncle, King Kansa. Streets, palaces and courtyards become live performance spaces, including the 'Rangamahal' and Nanda Raja's court, where episodes from the life of Lord Krishna unfold.
- The Central Government has accorded National Festival status to 'Dhanu Yatra'.

### Second Global Summit on Traditional Medicine

- The Second WHO Global Summit on Traditional Medicine was organised at the Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi. It was co-hosted by the World Health Organisation and the Ministry of Ayush, Government of India.
- The Summit was held under the theme "Restoring balance: The science and practice of health and well-being."

- It is a three-day event that brought together policymakers, scientists, practitioners, Indigenous knowledge holders, and civil society leaders from across the world to advance a shared vision of balanced, inclusive, and sustainable health systems.
- PM Modi releases a commemorative postal stamp on Ashwagandha, symbolising the global resonance of India's traditional medicinal heritage. He also released the WHO technical report on training in Yoga and the Book "From Roots to Global Reach: 11 Years of Transformation in Ayush".
- It is the oldest Hindustani classical music festival in the country.
- The festival was organised in collaboration with the North Zone Cultural Centre (NZCC), Patiala, of the Union Ministry of Culture, Govt. of India and supported by the state government.
- The three-day festival was dedicated to the 350th martyrdom anniversary of Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji and acclaimed Banaras Gharana vocalist Pt Chhannu Lal Mishra, who passed away in October this year.

### 150<sup>th</sup> Harivallabh Sangeet Sammelan Held in Jalandhar, Punjab

- The 150<sup>th</sup> Shree Baba Harivallabh Sangeet Sammelan was hosted at Shree Devi Talab Temple, Jalandhar.

### News in Shorts

- Tripura hosted the Second Prabashi Tripurabasi Summit 2025–26, a crucial event aimed at connecting with natives (Prabashis) of the state living outside Tripura, fostering engagement and strengthening ties with its diaspora for development and cultural exchange.

## AWARDS

### Bloomberg's World's richest families 2025

- The Ambani family, led by Reliance Industries chairman and managing director Mukesh Ambani, is the only Indian family on Bloomberg's 2025 ranking of the world's 25 richest families. Ambani family's estimated wealth stands at \$105.6 billion, securing its position among the world's most influential business dynasties.
- The United States' Walton family, proprietors of retail behemoth Walmart, claims the top spot on the list with a staggering combined net worth of \$513.4 billion.
- The 2025 list welcomes four new families representing four continents. Mexico's Larrea Mota Velasco family and Chile's Luksics both built their fortunes through copper mining operations. Italy's Del Vecchio family derives its wealth from EssilorLuxottica SA, which experienced significant stock growth following its venture into AI-enhanced eyewear. Saudi Arabia's Olayan family has strengthened its standing domestically and internationally through its worldwide business network and Wall Street connections.

### Filmfare OTT Awards 2025

The sixth edition of Filmfare OTT Awards took place in Mumbai, Maharashtra.

#### Series

- Best Series (Critics): Paatal Lok Season 2
- Best Director (Series): Nagesh Kukunoor (The Hunt: The Rajiv Gandhi Assassination Case)

- Best Director, Series (Critics): Anubhav Sinha (IC 814: The Kandahar Hijack)
- Best Actor (Male), Drama: Jaideep Ahlawat (Paatal Lok Season 2)
- Best Actor (Female), Drama: Monika Panwar (Khauf)
- Best Actor (Male), Critics, Drama: Zahan Kapoor (Black Warrant)
- Best Actor (Female), Critics, Drama: Rasika Dugal (Shekhar Home)
- Best Comedy (Series/Special): Raat Jawaan Hai (Sumeet Vyas)
- Best Actor (Male), Comedy: Barun Sobti (Raat Jawaan Hai), Sparsh Shrivastava (Dupahiya)
- Best Actor (Female), Comedy: Ananya Panday (Call Me Bae)
- Best Supporting Actor (Male), Drama: Rahul Bhat (Black Warrant)
- Best Supporting Actor (Female), Drama: Tillotama Shome (Paatal Lok Season 2)
- Best Supporting Actor (Male), Comedy: Vinay Pathak (Gram Chikitsalay)
- Best Supporting Actor (Female), Comedy: Renuka Shahane (Dupahiya)

#### Films

- Best Film: Girls Will Be Girls
- Best Director: Shuchi Talati (Girls Will Be Girls)

- Best Film (Critics): The Mehta Boys (Boman Irani)
- Best Actor (Male): Abhishek Banerjee (Stolen)
- Best Actor (Female): Sanya Malhotra (Mrs)
- Best Actor (Male), Critics: Vikrant Massey (Sector 36)
- Best Actor (Female), Critics: Preeti Panigrahi (Girls Will Be Girls)
- Best Supporting Actor (Male): Deepak Dobriyal (Sector 36)
- Best Supporting Actor (Female): Kani Kusruti (Girls Will Be Girls)
- Best Story: Karan Tejpal & team (Stolen)

#### Short Films

- Best Short Film (People's Choice): Divorce (Raaghav Kansal)
- Best Actor (Female): Fatima Sana Shaikh (Ayesha)
- Best Actor (Male): Ayan Khan (Chashma)
- Best Short Film (Fiction): Ayesha (Nihat Bhav)
- Best Short Film (Non-Fiction): Langur (Haider Khan)
- Best Director: Renuka Shahane (Dhaavpatti)

#### President Donald J. Trump Awarded "FIFA Peace Prize – Football Unites the World"

- The President of the United States, Donald J. Trump, was presented with the inaugural "FIFA Peace Prize – Football Unites the World" by FIFA President Gianni Infantino during the Final Draw for the FIFA World Cup 2026 at the iconic John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington DC.
- Trump, who has campaigned aggressively this year for a Nobel Peace Prize, was given FIFA's inaugural peace prize for his efforts to promote dialogue and peace across the world.
- The FIFA Peace Prize is presented at the draw to "reward individuals who have taken exceptional and extraordinary actions for peace."

#### President Droupadi Murmu Confers Rashtriya Vigyan Puraskar 2025

- President Droupadi Murmu conferred the Rashtriya Vigyan Puraskar 2025 at a function held at Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi.
- This is the nation's highest recognition for exceptional contributions in the fields of science, technology, and innovation.
- In the second edition of Rashtriya Vigyan Puraskar, the awards were given under four categories, including

Vigyan Ratna, Vigyan Shree, Vigyan Yuva-Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar and Vigyan Team.

- Rashtriya Vigyan Puraskar has been instituted to honour outstanding and inspiring contributions of scientists, technologists and innovators working individually or in teams across the broad landscape of science and technology and technology-led innovations.
- Padma Vibhushan Prof. Jayant Vishnu Narlikar has been honoured with the Vigyan Ratna award posthumously. Prof. Narlikar was a renowned Indian astrophysicist and cosmologist who developed the Hoyle-Narlikar theory to unify gravitation and matter creation, providing a framework for a steady-state universe in the 1960s.
- Eight scientists, including Dr Yusuf Mohammad Seikh, Jayan N, Prof. Mahan Maharaj, were conferred with the Vigyan Shree award. Fourteen young scientists, including Ankur Garg of ISRO, Prof Amit Kumar Agarwal of IIT Kanpur, Prof. Arkaprava Basu of IISc Bengaluru, were awarded under the Vigyan Yuva-Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar category, while the Vigyan Team award was given to Team Aroma Mission CSIR.

#### Singapore Changi Airport Named World's Best International Airport 2025

- Skytrax crowned Singapore's Changi Airport as the 'World's Best Airport' in 2025. It serves as the Republic of Singapore's main international airport. The airport, which occupies an area of roughly 25 square kilometres, is located inside the Changi planning area in the country's east.
- The readers' votes ranked Changi highest for overall travel experience, comfort, and facilities among global airports.

#### Advocate Shubham Awasthi Receives 40 Under 40 Lawyer Award

- Advocate Shubham Awasthi, a lawyer at the Supreme Court of India, received the prestigious "40 Under 40 Lawyer Award 2025" from BW Legal World in New Delhi.
- This award recognises his outstanding legal work in public interest litigation and constitutional law, alongside his dedication to humanitarian causes and public service, highlighting his role in shaping India's legal landscape.

#### Supriya Sahu Wins UNEP Award

- Supriya Sahu, Tamil Nadu's Additional Chief Secretary for Environment, has won the UNEP Champions of

the Earth Award 2025 in the Inspiration and Action category.

- She was awarded for her pioneering work in climate leadership, ecosystem restoration (like mangroves), sustainable cooling projects (Cool Roofs), creating green jobs, and boosting climate resilience in Tamil Nadu.
- It is the UN's highest environmental honor.

#### **Malayalam Publisher Receives French Chevalier Honour**

- Ravi Deecee, the CEO of DC Books, will be conferred the French civilian honour, Knight of the Order of Arts and Letters. It is a rare international recognition of Indian language publishing. Deecee is the founder and chief facilitator of the Kerala Literature Festival (KLF), held annually in Kerala's historic city of Kozhikode, which was named City of Literature by UNESCO two years ago.
- The award was set up in 1957 and recognises significant contributions to the arts and literature.
- Previous recipients of the honour include Roli Books founder Pramod Kapoor and Aditi Maheshwari, the CEO of Vani Prakashan Group.

#### **Jayshree Ullal Tops Hurun India Rich List 2025**

- Hurun India, in its latest rich list for 2025, has named Jayshree Ullal, President and CEO of Arista Networks, as the wealthiest Indian-origin leader in the world.
- Ullal, a British-born Indian businesswoman, has been leading Arista Networks for the past 17 years. Arista Networks is a Santa Clara-based cloud networking company that designs and sells high-performance, software-driven switches and networking solutions catering to large data centres, cloud service providers, and enterprise campus environments.
- With this, Ullal has surged ahead of global big tech chiefs such as Google's Sundar Pichai and Microsoft's Satya Nadella, taking the top spot among Indian-origin executives in the technology sector.

#### **PGIMER Awarded as India's Best Health Technology Assessment Institute**

- The PGIMER, Chandigarh, has been conferred the title of Best Health Technology Assessment (HTA) Institute in the country for the second consecutive year by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW).
- The award was presented at a national conclave entitled ARISE 2025, held at Sushma Swaraj Bhawan, New Delhi.

- It was organised by Health Technology Assessment in India (HTAI) — the central HTA body under the MoHFW.

#### **News In Shorts**

- Fourteen-year-old Aishi Prisha Borah from Jorhat, Assam, received the award for Excellence in Science and Technology. Her work focuses on sustainable innovations, including natural farming practices, and a machine that makes pencils from recycled newspaper waste.
- Scottish artist Nnena Kalu has been awarded the Turner Prize for work that includes vivid abstract drawings and hanging sculptures. She is the first artist with a learning disability to win Britain's most famous visual art award.
- Indian-origin Arkin Gupta was named for the Forbes 30 Under 30 list for his significant contributions to financial innovation, particularly for developing data-driven investment frameworks and creating accessible, scalable fintech products that empower new investors. His work focuses on using analytics and automation to simplify complex financial processes, making smart investing more transparent and available to a broader audience.
- YouTube will stream the Oscars globally from 2029 to 2033. ABC retains broadcast rights until the 100th Oscars in 2028. The deal reportedly exceeds \$100 million in value.
- Director-actor Sasikumar added another significant milestone to his career by winning the Best Actor award at the Chennai International Film Festival for his performance in "Tourist Family".
- The President of India, Droupadi Murmu, conferred the Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar on children for their exceptional achievements in the fields of Bravery, Social Service, Environment, Sports, Art & Culture, and Science & Technology at a ceremony held in New Delhi.
- Jay Shah received the 'Transformational Leader of the Year' Award At NDTV Indian of the Year 2025
- Anant Ambani became the youngest and first Asian recipient of the Global Humanitarian Award for Animal Welfare. He was recognised for his work with Vantara, a massive wildlife rescue and conservation initiative.
- TIME magazine named 'Architects of AI' as its person of the year for 2025. The magazine cited 2025 as the year when the potential of artificial intelligence "roared into view" with no turning back.

- Neal Mohan, the Indian-origin CEO of YouTube, was named TIME Magazine's "2025 CEO of the Year," recognised for steering the platform to greater dominance amid intense competition, influencing global culture, and focusing on creator growth and AI.
- Time magazine named Leonardo DiCaprio '2025 Entertainer of the Year', recognising his powerful performance in the film "One Battle After Another," his significant environmental advocacy, and his lasting cultural impact.

## SPORTS NEWS

### Tennis Premier League Title

- The seventh season of the Tennis Premier League concluded with GS Delhi Aces lifting their first-ever title after a commanding performance in the grand finale.
- The summit clash was held at the Gujarat University Tennis Stadium, where the Delhi-based franchise outplayed Yash Mumbai Eagles in a high-intensity contest.

### Virat Kohli Surpasses Sachin Tendulkar with Record-Breaking 52<sup>nd</sup> ODI Century

- Virat Kohli surpassed Sachin Tendulkar with his 52<sup>nd</sup> ODI century against South Africa in Ranchi, setting a new record for the most centuries in any single international format (ODIs), moving past Tendulkar's 51 Test centuries.
- This historic knock of 135 runs also made him the first player with over 50 centuries in one format and extended his tally of international hundreds to 83, second only to Tendulkar's 100.

### Smriti Mandhana Becomes First Indian Woman to Cross 4,000 T20I Runs

- Indian women's cricket star Smriti Mandhana etched her name into the record books during the first Women's T20 International against Sri Lanka in Visakhapatnam, becoming the first Indian woman cricketer to surpass 4,000 runs in T20 internationals, a major milestone in her career and Indian women's cricket.
- Mandhana now ranks second overall on the all-time women's T20I run-scorers list, behind New Zealand veteran Suzie Bates.

### Sukhman Singh Wins IGU 124<sup>th</sup> Amateur Championship

- Noida's Sukhman Singh won the IGU 124<sup>th</sup> Amateur Golf Championship in Kolkata, defeating Haryana's Harman Sachdeva 7 & 6 (7UP after 29 holes) in the 36-hole final, marking a significant victory in one of the world's oldest amateur match play events held at Tollygunge Club.

### Archery Premier League Wins Big at India Sports Awards 2025

- The Archery Premier League (APL) has been awarded the prestigious 'Emerging Professional Sports Event of the Year' at the India Sports Awards 2025, held during FICCI TURF 2025 15<sup>th</sup> Global Sports Summit at the FICCI Federation House, New Delhi.
- The honour caps a landmark debut year for the league.
- The league has been widely praised for bringing fast-paced style archery with unprecedented scale, professionalism, and fan engagement, as per a release from APL.
- APL is the World's first professional archery league and is organised by the Archery Association of India (AAI).
- Its inaugural season, held at the Yamuna Sports Complex, New Delhi, from October 2 to 12, 2025, featured top Indian and international archers, both men and women, across recurve and compound categories.

### Rohit Sharma Writes History with Most Sixes in ODI Cricket

- Rohit Sharma breaks Shahid Afridi's ODI sixes record, hitting 352 sixes during his 278<sup>th</sup> match against South Africa.
- He achieved this milestone in his 277<sup>th</sup> ODI, marking a significant feat in limited-overs cricket.

### Armand Duplantis and Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone Named World Athletes of the Year 2025

- Sweden's pole vault star Armand Duplantis and American sprinter Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone were named the World Athletes of the Year at the 2025 World Athletics awards.
- In 2025, Duplantis broke the men's pole vault world record four times and was unbeaten in all 16 of his competitions, including sweeping both the indoor and outdoor world titles. He has become the first male pole vaulter in modern athletics history to remain undefeated in a single event for two consecutive years.

- American McLaughlin-Levrone won the women's 400 metre title in Tokyo with a time of 47.78 seconds, breaking a 42-year-old World Championships record. She became the first athlete in history to win world titles in both the 400 metre flat and the 400 metre hurdles.

### 2025 FEI Asian Equestrian Championships

- Indian equestrians won five medals at the FEI Asian Equestrian Championships 2025, Pattaya, Thailand.
- Of those five, Shruti Vora claimed three medals while Ashish Limaye played a role in two, including a gold medal.
- There were over 80 athletes from 13 countries who participated in the competition at an event that was originally scheduled for 2023. It moved to 2025 following the rescheduling of the Asian Games to 2023.
- This was the second edition of the Asian Equestrian Championships; the inaugural FEI Asian Championship was held in 2019. The event will now be held every two years. It is designed to offer competition during the years between the Olympic and Paralympic Games, FEI World Championship, and Asian Games.

### FIH Men's Junior Hockey World Cup 2025

- Defending champions Germany defeated Spain 3-2 to lift the FIH Men's Junior Hockey World Cup 2025. The finals were played at the Mayor Radhakrishnan Stadium in Chennai, Tamil Nadu.
- It was Germany's eighth title.
- India defeated Argentina 4-2 to win the bronze medal for the first time, adding to their previous tally of two gold and one silver medals.
- The FIH Men's Junior Hockey World Cup was a 13-day event held across Chennai and Madurai.

### Sunil Narine Makes T20 History with 600-Wicket Milestone

- West Indies right-arm off spinner Sunil Narine became the first cricketer to achieve 600 T20 wickets during a World ILT20 match for Abu Dhabi Knight Riders.
- He secured his 600<sup>th</sup> wicket by dismissing the Sharjah Warriors' Tom Abell. To celebrate the moment, Abu Dhabi Knight Riders presented Narine with a specially crafted jersey featuring the number 600 on the back.

### Argentine Footballer Lionel Messi Conducted the GOAT (Greatest of All India) Tour

- Argentine superstar Lionel Messi indeed conducted "G.O.A.T. (Greatest of All Time) India Tour" in

December 2025, visiting Kolkata, Hyderabad, Mumbai, and New Delhi for fan interactions, cultural events, and promotional activities.

- A 21-meter statue of Messi was unveiled in Kolkata.
- The Government of Maharashtra inaugurated the state-level sports initiative 'Project Mahadeva' in Mumbai, Maharashtra. It was launched in the presence of global football star Lionel Messi. This initiative aims to find and develop young football talent (U-13) across the state, offering 60 selected kids a five-year residential scholarship, advanced training, and world-class mentorship to build a strong future for Indian football and hopefully a pathway to the 2034 World Cup. 'Project Mahadeva' is being implemented with the participation of Maharashtra Institution for Transformation (MITRA), Village Social Transformation Foundation (VSTF), Western India Football Association (WIFA), CIDCO, and the Sports Department of the Government of Maharashtra.
- Lionel Messi visited Vantara, the wildlife rescue and rehabilitation center in Jamnagar, Gujarat, India as the final leg of his "GOAT India Tour". He was accompanied by Inter Miami teammates Luis Suárez and Rodrigo De Paul. He participated in Indian rituals and even had a lion cub named "Lionel" in his honor.

### Jasprit Bumrah Scripts History with this Remarkable Feat

- Jasprit Bumrah is the first Indian and only the fifth bowler in international cricket to clock 100 or more wickets in all three formats of the game.
- He now has 234 wickets in 52 Tests, 149 wickets in 89 ODIs, and 101 wickets in 81 T20Is, a rare blend of brilliant efficiency across formats.
- Sri Lanka's Lasith Malinga was the first to get there in 2019, followed by Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan and New Zealand seamer Tim Southee. Pakistan's Shaheen Shah Afridi became the youngest to complete the treble in December 2024.

### The 33<sup>rd</sup> Southeast Asian Games

- The 33<sup>rd</sup> Southeast Asian (SEA) Games, or SEA Games 2025, officially began in Thailand with a grand opening ceremony in Bangkok's Rajamangala National Stadium.
- They were conducted across host cities like Bangkok, Chonburi, and Songkhla.
- It brought together approximately 13000 athletes from 11 Southeast Asian nations to compete across 50 medal sports.

- These were conducted under the theme 'We Are One — Connected by the SEA.'
- The event concluded with Malaysia taking over hosting duties for the 2027 Games.

#### **SDAT Squash World Cup 2025**

- India became the first Asian country to win the Squash World Cup and fourth after Australia, England and Egypt.
- Anahat Singh applied the finishing touches as India created history by defeating top seeds Hong Kong, China in the final to win the Squash World Cup 2025.
- India hosted the Squash World Cup for the third consecutive time, with the tournament taking place at SDAT Stadium in Chennai, Tamil Nadu.
- Twelve nations competed, including hosts India, defending champions Egypt, and 2023 runners-up Malaysia.
- Each team has two men and two women, and matches follow the format introduced in the 2023 games to seven points with sudden-death tiebreaks at 6-6.
- The first Squash World Cup was held in 1996 in Malaysia, won by Australia.

#### **Jaiswal Becomes the Sixth Indian to Hit Tons in All Formats**

- Yashasvi Jaiswal became the sixth Indian cricketer to score centuries in all three international formats (Tests, ODIs, T20Is) after hitting his maiden ODI hundred in December 2025 against South Africa.
- Before Jaiswal, Suresh Raina, Virat Kohli, KL Rahul, Rohit Sharma, and Shubman Gill were the five Indian batters with centuries in all formats of international cricket.
- Jaiswal now has seven centuries in Tests and one century in ODIs and T20Is to his name.

#### **Rohit Sharma Became the Fourth Indian to Enter the 20000 Runs Scored Club**

- Rohit Sharma reached a historic milestone by surpassing 20,000 runs across Tests, ODIs, and T20Is. The achievement came during India's 3<sup>rd</sup> ODI against South Africa in Visakhapatnam.
- He reached the milestone after Sachin Tendulkar, Virat Kohli, and Rahul Dravid.

#### **Yuvraj Singh and Harmanpreet Kaur Honoured with Stadium Stands at Mullanpur Stadium**

- Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann felicitated the members of the 2025 ICC Women's World Cup-winning Team India from Punjab.

- He inaugurated stands named after World Cup-winning skipper Harmanpreet Kaur and 2011 World Cup-winning all-rounder Yuvraj Singh at the Maharaja Yadavindra Singh International Cricket Stadium.
- World Cup-winning players, skipper Harmanpreet, Harleen Deol and Amanjot Kaur were given ₹11 lakh while Indian fielding coach Munish Bali was given ₹5 lakh.

#### **SAFF Women's Club Championship 2025**

- East Bengal FC has clinched the title of the inaugural SAFF Women's Club Championship 2025 with a dominant 3-0 win against hosts Nepal's APF (Armed Police Forces) in the final at Dasrath Stadium in Kathmandu, Nepal.
- With this win, East Bengal has become the first Indian women's club to win an international tournament.

#### **Khelo India Tribal Games 2026**

- Chhattisgarh will host the first-ever Khelo India Tribal Games (KITG) 2026, with the inaugural edition scheduled from 14 February 2026 in Bilaspur.
- The official mascot of the games is 'Morveer'. It symbolises the pride and spirit of tribal communities.
- There will be seven competitive sports — Archery, Athletics, Football, Hockey, Wrestling, Swimming, and Weightlifting.
- The Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports, Sports Authority of India, Indian Olympic Association, and National Sports Federations are jointly organising the Games.

#### **MYAS Launches Comprehensive Internship Policy for Sports Ecosystem**

- The Union Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports has launched a Comprehensive Internship Policy aimed at creating a structured, large-scale platform for nurturing young talent and strengthening the country's sports ecosystem.
- The scheme has been launched at a budget of ₹5.30 crore. It will provide 452 paid internships each year and give students hands-on experience in sports administration and governance.
- The internship policy aims to provide students with structured and practical experience. Interns will be placed in premier institutions such as the Sports Authority of India (SAI), the National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA), and the National Dope Testing Laboratory (NDTL).

- Interns will receive a stipend of ₹20,000 per month. They will work in areas such as sports management, event operations and legal affairs. They will also contribute to initiatives like Khelo India and the Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS).

### News in Shorts

- Pakistan won the Under-19 Asia Cup final by defeating India. The finals were held in Dubai.
- Andre Russell, Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) legend, has decided to call time on his IPL career after not being retained by the franchise ahead of the 2026 season, and announced that he would be joining the team's support staff as its "power coach".
- Ayush Mhatre has been named India's captain for the upcoming ICC Men's Under-19 World Cup, to be held in Zimbabwe and Namibia from January 15 to February 6.
- John Cena, a 17-time World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) champion, announced his retirement from in-ring competitions with effect from 2025. Cena lost his final match to Gunther via submission.
- In cricket, Josh Tongue scripted history after he became the first England bowler this century to claim a five-wicket haul in Men's Tests at the Melbourne Cricket Ground. Tongue's effort ended a 27-year gap since Darren Gough and Dean Headley last achieved a five-for at the MCG in 1998.
- Two-time Olympic medallist and former world champion PV Sindhu has been elected Chair of the BWF Athletes' Commission for the 2026-2029 term.
- Jharkhand created history by lifting their maiden Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy title at the Maharashtra Cricket Association Stadium, Pune. They defeated Haryana to lift the trophy.
- Lando Norris secured his maiden Formula 1 World Drivers' Championship in 2025 by finishing third at the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix.
- Indian Chess prodigy Praggnanandhaa Rameshbabu officially secured his place at the Candidates Tournament 2026 after clinching the FIDE Circuit 2025.
- Bhutan's Sonam Yeshey etched his name into cricket history by becoming the first bowler ever to claim an eight-wicket haul in T20 Internationals.
- Jammu and Kashmir hosted its first-ever International Indian Style Wrestling (Dangal) and Rustam-e-Jammu Kashmir Title 2025 at the iconic Maulana Azad Stadium in Jammu. It was introduced for wrestlers above 85 kg.
- Three-year-old Sarwagya Singh Kushwaha from Sagar, India, became the world's youngest FIDE-rated chess player, achieving an official rapid rating of 1572 at just 3 years, 7 months, and 20 days old, surpassing previous records by defeating multiple rated players in tournaments.
- India will host the first-ever Commonwealth Kho Kho Championship from March 9 to March 14, 2026.
- 14-year-old Vaibhav Suryavanshi smashed a record 36-ball century for Bihar against Arunachal Pradesh in the Vijay Hazare Trophy. With this, he became the youngest player ever to score a hundred in men's List A cricket, also achieving the second-fastest Indian List A century ever.
- In a historic IPL 2026 auction, Chennai Super Kings made two massive uncapped signings - first buying Prashant Veer for ₹14.20 crore, and then matching that exact amount for Kartik Sharma, making them joint-holders of the record for costliest uncapped players in IPL history.
- In Chess, Indian Grandmasters R Praggnanandhaa and Anish Giri's Alpine SG Pipers clinched the Global Chess League 2025 Season 3 title, beating defending Champions Triveni Continental Kings in the finals in Mumbai, Maharashtra.

