

February 2026

CURRENT AFFAIRS

- TOPIC WISE CURRENT AFFAIRS
- 150 QUESTIONS FOR PRACTICE
- ANALYSIS OF IMPORTANT EVENTS



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PREFACE

This is our special edition of Current Affairs Magazine for various Central & State level Competitive Examinations, covering content from the month of February 2026.

The Magazine is divided into three sections:

Section 1: Topic Wise Current Affairs in Short

The first section is dedicated to Topic Wise Current Affairs with a short description to provide information about all major happenings this month.

Section 2: Practice Questions with Answers

The Second Section contains 150 Multiple Choice Questions based on daily current affairs.

Section 3: Detailed Analysis of important Event

The Third Section covers some major happenings in this month along with analysis. The content has been covered from various online & offline sources including reputed newspapers like The Hindu, Indian Express etc. All the news topics have been explained keeping in mind their underlying issues. Every issue has been covered comprehensively. Some of the information provided may not be directly relevant for the examination. As the content is very wide, we have only covered a limited set of issues. You can utilize it smartly along with Daily Study of News Papers as well as other sources.



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Section 1

Topic Wise Current Affairs

Section 2

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SECTION 1

Topic Wise Current Affairs in Short



1: Important Days



Indian Coast Guard Day : 01 February :-

Indian Coast Guard Day is observed annually on 1 February to recognise the role, achievements, and service of the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) in safeguarding India's vast maritime interests. The day commemorates the legislative foundation of the force through the Coast Guard Act, which led to the formal establishment of the Indian Coast Guard in the late 1970s as a distinct armed service under the Ministry of Defence. Since its inception, the ICG has grown into a critical maritime security agency responsible for coastal surveillance, maritime law enforcement, search and rescue operations, and protection of India's exclusive economic zone.



Rheumatoid Arthritis Awareness Day : 02 February :-

Rheumatoid Arthritis Awareness Day is observed every year on February 2 to draw global attention to rheumatoid arthritis (RA), a chronic autoimmune disorder that mainly affects the joints and can also damage organs such as the lungs, heart, and eyes. The day traces its roots to patient advocacy efforts in the late

20th century, when medical communities and arthritis foundations began highlighting the need for greater public understanding of autoimmune joint diseases.



World Wetlands Day : 02 February :-

World Wetlands Day is observed every year on February 2, commemorating the adoption of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands in 1971 in the Iranian city of Ramsar. The day highlights the critical role wetlands play in maintaining ecological balance, supporting biodiversity, regulating climate, and sustaining livelihoods. Wetlands act as natural water purifiers, flood buffers, and carbon sinks, while also providing habitats for countless plant and animal species, including migratory birds. The World Wetlands Day 2026 theme is "Wetlands and traditional knowledge: Celebrating cultural heritage."



World Cancer Day : 04 February :-

World Cancer Day is an international health observance held every year on 4 February to raise awareness about cancer, encourage its prevention, promote early detection, and mobilise action against the global cancer

burden. It was established in 2000 at the World Summit Against Cancer for the New Millennium in Paris, where the Charter of Paris Against Cancer was signed — committing the world to better cancer research, prevention, patient care, and support for affected individuals. The ongoing World Cancer Day campaign for 2025–2027 carries the theme “United by Unique.”



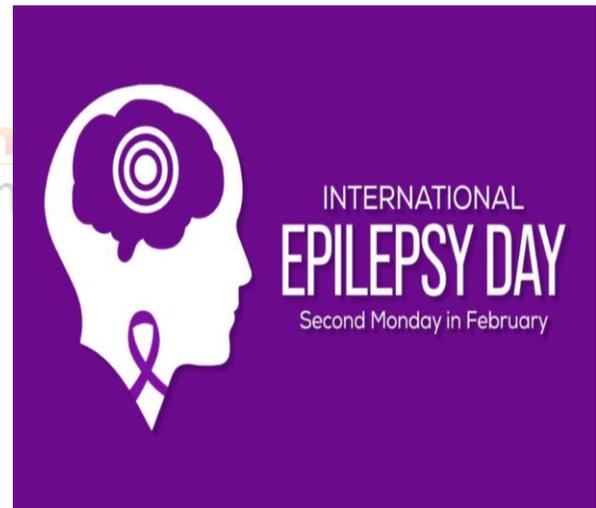
International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation : 06 January :-

The International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is observed every year on 6 February to mobilize global action against the practice, which is recognized as a serious violation of human rights and a form of gender-based violence. The United Nations established this observance to raise awareness about the physical, psychological, and emotional harm caused by FGM — a procedure involving the partial or total removal of external female genitalia for non-medical reasons — and to reaffirm the global commitment to ending it. The official theme for the year 2026 is "Towards 2030: No End to FGM Without Sustained Commitment and Investment."



World War Orphans Day : 06 January :-

World Day of War Orphans is an annual awareness day observed on 06 January that focuses on the plight of children who have lost one or both parents as a result of armed conflict and war. This observance seeks to bring global public attention to the emotional, social, psychological, and economic challenges that war orphans endure — from trauma and loss of family support to risks of exploitation, poverty, lack of education, and inadequate access to basic services. The day was initiated by the French organisation SOS Enfants en Détresse to highlight the often-hidden humanitarian crisis affecting children left vulnerable by war and conflict.



International Epilepsy Day 2026 : 09 February :-

International Epilepsy Day is observed globally every second Monday of February to raise awareness about epilepsy — a neurological condition affecting millions of people worldwide. In 2026, it falls on Monday, February 9. The day is led by the International Bureau for Epilepsy (IBE) and the International League Against Epilepsy (ILAE) and aims to dispel myths about epilepsy, reduce stigma, and promote better understanding, care, inclusivity, and support for people living with the condition and their families. This year's global campaign launches the “Epilepsy Pledge”, encouraging individuals and organisations to commit to concrete actions throughout 2026 that improve awareness, support and community integration for people with epilepsy.



World Pulses Day : 10 February :-

World Pulses Day is marked every year on February 10 to highlight the importance of pulses such as lentils, chickpeas, beans and peas in ensuring global food security and nutrition. Pulses are rich in protein, fiber, vitamins and minerals, making them a vital component of affordable and healthy diets, especially in developing countries. The day also emphasizes the role of pulses in sustainable agriculture, as they improve soil fertility through nitrogen fixation and require relatively less water compared to other crops. The theme for World Pulses Day 2026 is "Pulses of the world: from modesty to excellence".



National Deworming Day (India) : 10 February :-

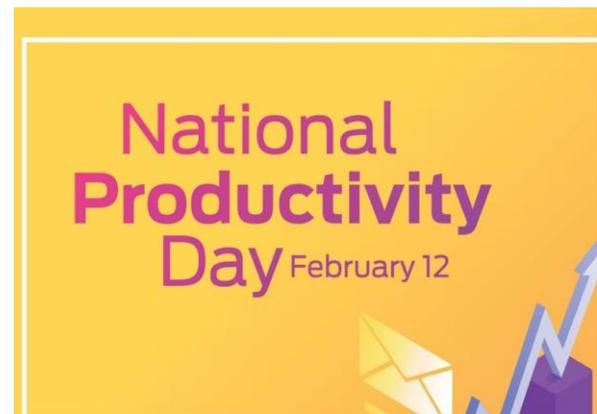
National Deworming Day is observed in India on February 10 as part of a major public health initiative aimed at eliminating intestinal worm infections among children and adolescents. Launched by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, the programme focuses on administering free deworming tablets to children aged 1 to 19 years through schools, anganwadi centres and other healthcare touchpoints. Intestinal worm infections can cause anemia, malnutrition, stunted growth and

poor cognitive development, particularly in vulnerable populations. By conducting the campaign nationwide in a single coordinated effort, the government seeks to improve overall child health, boost school attendance and learning outcomes, and reduce long-term healthcare burdens linked to preventable parasitic diseases.



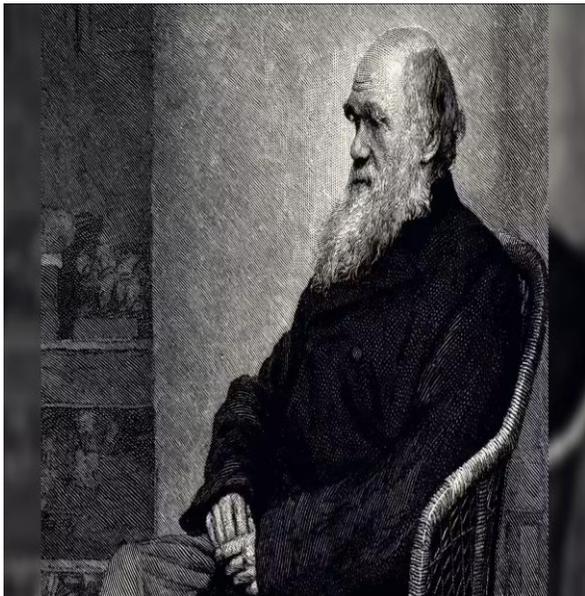
International Day of Women and Girls in Science : 11 February :-

The International Day of Women and Girls in Science is observed every year on 11 February to recognise the vital contributions of women and girls to science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and to promote greater gender equity in these fields. This observance was established by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015 through resolution A/RES/70/212, with the goal of encouraging full and equal access to and involvement in science for women and girls — an issue that remains critical given persistent gender gaps in research, education and leadership roles worldwide. The 2026 theme is "Synergizing AI, Social Science, STEM and Finance: Building Inclusive Futures for Women and Girls."



National Productivity Day (India) : 12 February :-

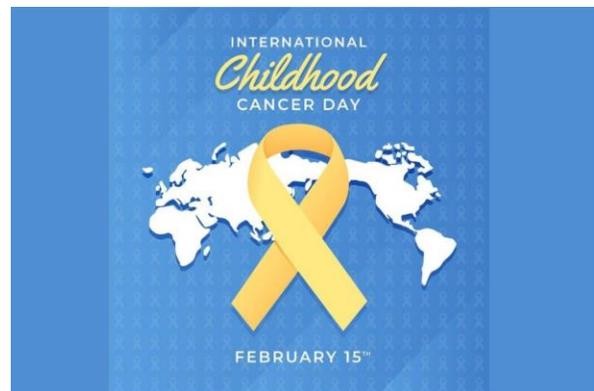
National Productivity Day is observed annually in India on February 12 to mark the foundation of the National Productivity Council (NPC), which was established in 1958 under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. The day highlights the importance of productivity, efficiency, and quality improvement in driving economic growth and national development. It also marks the beginning of National Productivity Week, during which various seminars, workshops, and awareness campaigns are organized to encourage industries, institutions, and individuals to adopt better management practices and innovative technologies. The 2026 theme is “Clusters as Growth Engine: Maximizing Productivity in MSMEs.”

**Darwin Day : 12 February :-**

Darwin Day is an international commemoration of the birth of Charles Darwin (born February 12, 1809), the British naturalist whose theory of evolution by natural selection fundamentally transformed our understanding of life on Earth. The day is observed by science communities, educators, institutions, and individuals around the world to celebrate Darwin’s life and work, highlight his scientific contributions, and encourage curiosity, critical thinking, and public engagement with science. Events often include lectures, discussions, educational activities, and public outreach focused on evolution, biodiversity, and scientific literacy.

**World Radio Day : 13 February :-**

World Radio Day is observed every year on 13 February to celebrate the enduring power and relevance of radio as a medium of communication worldwide. This international day was proclaimed by UNESCO in 2011 and later endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly, marking the anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations Radio in 1946 — the first global broadcaster at the UN. Radio remains one of the most accessible and inclusive forms of media, capable of reaching remote communities, providing timely information during emergencies, supporting education, and strengthening social and cultural ties across regions. The theme this year is “Radio and Artificial Intelligence: AI is a tool, not a voice.”

**International Childhood Cancer Day : 15 February :-**

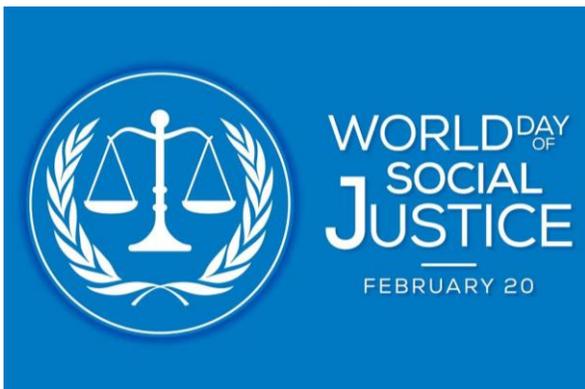
International Childhood Cancer Day is observed every year on 15 February to raise awareness about cancers affecting children and adolescents, and to express support for young patients, survivors, and their families. The day was established in 2002 by Childhood Cancer International, a global network of parent organizations,

with the aim of improving survival rates and ensuring equal access to treatment worldwide. Childhood cancers differ biologically from adult cancers and often require specialized care and early diagnosis for better outcomes. The theme this year is “Demonstrating Impact: From Challenge to Change”.



World Anthropology Day 2026 : 19 February :-

World Anthropology Day is observed each year on the third Thursday of February to celebrate the discipline of anthropology—the scientific study of humans, cultures, societies, and biological diversity. In 2026 it falls on 19 February 2026. The day was established by the American Anthropological Association to raise awareness about how anthropology helps us understand human behaviour, cultural traditions, and societal interactions across time and space. Events often include public talks, educational programs, university activities, and museum exhibitions that highlight anthropology’s role in interpreting human diversity and fostering cross-cultural understanding. The 2026 theme is “Global Perspectives on the Value of Anthropology.”



World Day of Social Justice : 20 February :-

World Day of Social Justice is an international observance designated by the United Nations General Assembly to be celebrated every year on 20 February. The day was officially adopted in 2007 and first observed in 2009 as a way to promote fairness, equity, inclusion, and human dignity across societies globally. Its core purpose is to spotlight the deep-rooted challenges of poverty, unemployment, social exclusion, inequality of opportunity and access to rights, and to reinforce the principle that social justice is essential for peace and sustainable development. In 2026, the World Day of Social Justice is set to be commemorated under the theme “Renewed Commitment to Social Development and Social Justice.”



International Mother Language Day : 21 February :-

International Mother Language Day is observed globally every year on 21 February to celebrate and protect linguistic and cultural diversity and to promote multilingualism and the preservation of mother languages. The observance traces its roots to the Bengali Language Movement of 1952, when students in what is now Bangladesh protested for recognition of their mother tongue, Bangla, resulting in several deaths on that date. In 1999, UNESCO officially proclaimed 21 February as International Mother Language Day, and it has been celebrated worldwide since 2000 under United Nations recognition. The theme for International Mother Language 2026 is "Youth voices on multilingual education".



World Thinking Day : 22 February :-

World Thinking Day is an annual global observance celebrated on 22 February by millions of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts across more than 150 countries. The day originated in 1926 at the Fourth World Conference of the Girl Guide and Girl Scout movement, where delegates decided to set aside this date to think about their “sisters” (“brothers”), their shared values, and the global impact of Guiding and Scouting. The date was chosen because it is the birthday of Lord Robert Baden-Powell, the founder of the Scouting movement, and his wife Lady Olave Baden-Powell, the World Chief Guide. Initially called “Thinking Day,” it was renamed “World Thinking Day” in 1999 to emphasise its international nature. In 2026, the World Thinking Day theme is 'Our Friendship'.



World Peace and Understanding Day : 23 February :-

World Peace and Understanding Day is observed every year on February 23 to promote harmony, goodwill, and cooperation among people across nations. The day is closely associated with the founding of Rotary International in 1905, which works globally to foster peace and community service. The observance highlights the importance of dialogue, tolerance, and international collaboration in resolving conflicts and building

sustainable peace. It encourages individuals and institutions to reflect on how mutual respect and understanding can reduce tensions and strengthen global unity.



Central Excise Day (India) : 24 February :-

Central Excise Day is observed every year on 24 February in India to commemorate the enactment of the Central Excise and Salt Act, 1944, a landmark legislation that laid the foundation for the country's modern indirect tax structure. The day recognises the contribution of the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC), which functions under the Ministry of Finance and is responsible for administering central excise duties and customs laws in India. Although the introduction of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) in 2017 subsumed most indirect taxes, central excise duty continues to apply to certain products such as petroleum and tobacco.



World NGO Day : 27 February :-

World NGO Day is observed every year on February 27 to recognize, celebrate, and honor the contributions of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) around the world. The day highlights the vital role NGOs play in humanitarian relief, education, healthcare, environmental protection, human rights advocacy, and

sustainable development. It was officially recognized in 2010 and later adopted by several international bodies, including the European Union and the United Nations, as a day to acknowledge civil society organizations. The theme for World NGO Day 2026 is "Restoring Dignity through Inclusion".



National Science Day (India) : 28 February :-

National Science Day is observed every year on February 28 in India to commemorate the discovery of the Raman Effect by Indian physicist C. V. Raman in 1928. For this groundbreaking discovery in the field of light scattering, he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1930, becoming the first Asian to receive a Nobel Prize in the sciences. The day was officially designated as National Science Day in 1986 by the Government of India, following a proposal by the National Council for Science and Technology Communication, and the first celebration took place in 1987. The official theme for National Science Day 2026 is "Women in Science: Catalysing Viksit Bharat".

2: Agreements



UAE Supports Sudan with \$20 Million Humanitarian Aid

The UAE has signed an agreement with the United Nations World Food Programme to provide \$20 million for emergency food relief in Sudan. This initiative aims to address food security challenges among displaced populations affected by ongoing conflicts. The UAE's commitment reflects its dedication to humanitarian causes, having contributed significantly to Sudan over the past decade. This agreement underscores the importance of international cooperation in alleviating human suffering and ensuring food security in crisis-affected regions.



India-US Trade Deal Boosts Economic Ties and Stability

The recent trade deal between India and the US is being hailed as a historic turning point for bilateral relations. With the US reducing tariffs on Indian goods to 18%, the agreement is expected to narrow India's current account deficit, stabilize the rupee, and boost FDI inflows. The deal is seen as a structural positive for India's medium-term growth, particularly benefiting export-oriented sectors such as textiles, chemicals, and pharmaceuticals. The agreement aligns with India's manufacturing push and export diversification strategy, offering a strategic alternative in critical sectors for the US.



SpaceX Acquires xAI in Record-Setting AI and Space Integration :-

In a landmark deal, SpaceX has acquired the artificial intelligence startup xAI, marking one of the most ambitious integrations in the technology sector. The merger, valued at \$1 trillion for SpaceX and \$250 billion for xAI, aims to unify Elon Musk's AI and space ambitions. This acquisition is expected to bolster SpaceX's data-center ambitions and strengthen its competitive edge against major tech rivals. The deal is not only significant for its financial magnitude, being the largest transaction surpassing Vodafone's 2000 acquisition of Mannesmann, but it also sets a new precedent in combining space and AI sectors.



India and Bhutan Reaffirm Energy Cooperation :-

India and Bhutan reviewed their energy partnership, focusing on hydropower projects and cross-border transmission. Discussions included the Punatsangchu projects and future cooperation in the Sankosh Hydropower Project. Both sides emphasized streamlining power scheduling approvals to enhance efficiency. This cooperation underscores the importance of energy security in Indo-Bhutan relations, reflecting

shared commitments to sustainable development and regional energy stability.



Tripartite Agreement Signed for Eastern Nagaland Development :-

A historic tripartite agreement between the Indian government, Nagaland's state government, and the Eastern Nagaland Peoples' Organisation (ENPO) aims to enhance the development of Eastern Nagaland. The agreement provides for the creation of the Frontier Nagaland Territorial Authority, devolving powers over 46 subjects to six districts. PM Modi hailed the pact as a step towards peace and inclusive growth, aligning with the broader vision of regional development and national integration.



India Strengthens Digital Public Infrastructure with Global Partnerships :-

India has signed agreements with 23 countries to expand its Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI), showcasing its leadership in digital governance. The MoUs aim to replicate India's digital platforms under the India Stack framework. The UPI system is now operational in eight countries, enhancing cross-border remittances and

financial inclusion. India's DPI diplomacy focuses on collaboration in digital identity, payments, and service delivery, positioning India as a global fintech leader. The initiative aligns with India's vision of inclusive, scalable digital solutions for partner nations.



India-Netherlands Boost Green Hydrogen Cooperation

India and the Netherlands have launched the Hydrogen Fellowship Programme and an academic partnership with 19 IITs to advance green hydrogen research. The initiatives, supported by the Department of Science and Technology, aim to enhance research capacity and innovation in hydrogen technologies. The fellowship offers exposure to advanced hydrogen ecosystems in the Netherlands, focusing on system integration and indigenization pathways. This collaboration aligns with India's clean energy goals and strengthens Indo-Dutch scientific cooperation, marking a significant step in global hydrogen economy leadership.



India Secures Preferential Access to \$30-Trillion U.S. Market :-

India has achieved a significant milestone in global trade by signing the India-U.S. Bilateral Trade Agreement. This landmark deal grants Indian exports preferential access

to the expansive \$30-trillion U.S. market, offering substantial tariff reductions and zero-duty access across key sectors. The agreement fortifies India's competitive edge in textiles, leather, gems, pharmaceuticals, and technology, while safeguarding sensitive industries like agriculture. This strategic partnership is poised to boost India's export-led growth, positioning the country for enhanced global integration and long-term economic strength.



India and Greece Sign Declaration to Enhance Defence Ties :-

India and Greece have signed a Joint Declaration of Intent to strengthen defence industrial cooperation. The agreement focuses on expanding collaboration under India's Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiative and Greece's Agenda 2030. A Bilateral Military Cooperation Plan outlines future engagements between the two countries' armed forces. The visit by Greek Defence Minister Nikolaos-Georgios Dendias also included a Greek officer's posting at the Indian Ocean Region's Information Fusion Centre, marking a significant step in maritime cooperation.



US Forge Civil Nuclear Cooperation with Armenia :-

Armenia and the United States have agreed to collaborate in the civil nuclear sector, marking a shift in Armenia's energy partnerships. The agreement, signed by Armenian PM Nikol Pashinyan and US VP JD Vance, allows \$5 billion in initial US exports and an additional \$4 billion in contracts. This initiative diversifies Armenia's energy sources, traditionally reliant on Russia, and strengthens US-Armenia ties following a US-brokered peace agreement in the region.

**India and France Renew Defence Cooperation Agreement :-**

India and France have renewed their bilateral defence cooperation agreement for another decade, emphasizing enhanced military collaboration and co-production of defence equipment. The agreement was signed during the sixth India-France Annual Defence Dialogue in Bengaluru. Both countries aim to strengthen their strategic partnership, focusing on emerging technologies and joint military exercises. The renewal signifies a commitment to deepening defence ties and addressing regional security challenges.

**India to Join US-Led Pax Silica for AI and Supply Chain Security :-**

India is set to join Pax Silica, a US-led initiative for AI and supply chain security, during the Global AI Impact Summit. The partnership aims to enhance economic security and promote AI as a transformative force. The initiative includes countries like Australia, Japan, and the UK. The collaboration reflects India's commitment to international cooperation in emerging technologies and its strategic role in shaping global AI policies. The summit highlights India's position as a leader in responsible AI governance.

**India and Brazil Sign MoU to Strengthen MSME Cooperation :-**

India and Brazil signed an MoU to enhance cooperation in the MSME sector, focusing on sustainable development and green transition. During Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva's visit, the agreement was inked between India's Ministry of MSME and Brazil's Ministry of Entrepreneurship. The MoU aims to foster dialogue on MSME-related issues and explore cooperation avenues. It also emphasizes facilitating access to green finance and sustainable practices for MSMEs, aiming to integrate them into global markets and value chains, thereby enhancing productivity and competitiveness.



India-Brazil MoU for Pharmaceutical and Medical Product Regulation :-

A new MoU between India and Brazil aims to strengthen cooperation in pharmaceutical and medical product regulation. Signed between India's CDSCO and Brazil's ANVISA, the agreement sets a framework for information exchange and regulatory convergence in medical product oversight. This partnership promises to enhance supply chains, promote regulatory best practices, and improve access to affordable healthcare solutions, thus reinforcing bilateral health sector collaboration and benefiting public health outcomes in both nations.



Yogi Government Signs Key Investment MoUs in Singapore :-

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath signed significant Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) in Singapore, marking a major boost in the state's economic and infrastructure growth plans. The agreements, worth ₹6,650 crore, focus on technical education, aviation skills, and infrastructure development, including a ₹3,500 crore international-themed township near Jewar Airport and a ₹650 crore logistics park on the Kanpur-Lucknow Highway. This visit aims to deepen economic

cooperation and institutional partnerships between Uttar Pradesh and Singapore.



India, Brazil Sign MoU to Boost Postal Cooperation :-

India and Brazil signed a Memorandum of Understanding to enhance cooperation in the postal sector. The agreement aims to promote knowledge exchange, digital transformation, and inclusive service delivery. Key areas of collaboration include e-commerce logistics, postal financial services, and capacity building. This partnership underscores the commitment of both nations to leverage their postal networks for economic growth and financial inclusion, reinforcing the India-Brazil Strategic Partnership.



India, Sweden Forge New AI Technology Corridor :-

India and Sweden have signed a Statement of Intent to bolster AI and digital technology cooperation, establishing the Sweden-India Technology and Artificial Intelligence Corridor (SITAC). Announced at the India AI Impact Summit 2026, SITAC aims to connect stakeholders from both countries to foster AI development and application. This collaboration emphasizes responsible innovation and aligns with shared goals of sustainable development and economic

growth. The partnership seeks to leverage both nations' strengths in AI to create scalable industrial solutions.



India, Israel Strengthen Ties with Key MoUs :-

Prime Ministers Narendra Modi and Benjamin Netanyahu are set to sign several MoUs to enhance the India-Israel Strategic Partnership during Modi's state visit to Israel. The agreements aim to deepen cooperation in defense, technology, trade, and cultural exchanges. This visit marks Modi's second to Israel, highlighting the growing bilateral ties. Modi's address to the Israeli Parliament and his reception of the 'Medal of the Knesset' underscore the mutual respect and shared values between the two nations.

3: Appointments



PM Modi Congratulates Yumnam Khemchand Singh as Manipur Chief Minister :-

Prime Minister Narendra Modi extended his congratulations to Yumnam Khemchand Singh on being sworn in as the new Chief Minister of Manipur. Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla administered the oath at Lok Bhavan, marking the end of President's Rule in the state. The BJP-led NDA government includes Deputy Chief Ministers Nemcha Kipgen and Loishi Dikho, emphasizing inclusiveness. The new ministry features members from BJP, NPF, and NPP, with further cabinet expansion expected. PM Modi expressed confidence in their dedication to advancing Manipur's development.



RBI approves Vinay Muralidhar Tonse's appointment as MD and CEO of Yes Bank :-

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has approved the appointment of Vinay Muralidhar Tonse as the new Managing Director (MD) and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Yes Bank for a three-year term. This move comes as the bank transitions leadership from the current MD & CEO Prashant Kumar, whose extended tenure is nearing its conclusion. Vinay Tonse is a seasoned banker with decades of experience, having served most recently as Managing Director in charge of Retail Business Operations at the State Bank of India (SBI) until November 30, 2025. His expertise in banking operations and retail strategy is expected to support Yes Bank's efforts to strengthen its growth trajectory.

following a period of restructuring and strategic investments, including a significant stake acquisition by Japan's Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation.



Sanae Takaichi Wins Historic Election in Japan, Strengthens India Ties :-

Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's coalition achieved a landmark victory in the House of Representatives elections, promising tax cuts and increased military spending. Takaichi, Japan's first female leader, aligns with India's strategic interests, enhancing the India-Japan partnership. Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated Takaichi, underscoring the importance of their collaboration in global peace and stability. The election results reflect Japan's shifting political landscape, with potential implications for regional security and economic policies.



Religare Broking appoints Vijay Kumar Goel as Managing Director :-

Religare Broking Limited, a full-service brokerage firm in India, has appointed Vijay Kumar Goel as its new Managing Director as part of a strategic leadership transformation aimed at strengthening the company's core broking business and expanding its wealth product distribution offerings. Goel brings over three decades of experience in the banking and financial services sector, with deep expertise across broking, retail NBFCs, asset management, investment and insurance distribution, private wealth management and affordable home finance.



RBI clears appointment of R Vijay Anandh as City Union Bank's new CEO :-

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has approved the appointment of R Vijay Anandh as the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer (MD CEO) of City Union Bank, one of India's oldest private sector banks, effective 1 May 2026 for a three-year tenure. This regulatory approval — essential under RBI's governance framework for senior bank leadership — was communicated through an official letter in early February and is subject to final ratification by the bank's shareholders. Vijay Anandh, who has more than 28 years of experience in the banking sector and currently serves as Executive Director, is expected to lead the bank through its next phase of strategic growth.



PM Modi Congratulates Barbados PM on Election Victory :-

Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated Barbados PM Mia Mottley on her historic third consecutive electoral win. Modi emphasized India's commitment to strengthening ties with Barbados, highlighting shared interests across diverse sectors. The two leaders last met during the India-CARICOM Summit in 2024, discussing cooperation in health, climate, and cultural exchanges. Barbados' support for India's UN Security Council bid underscores the mutual respect and collaboration between the two nations, which are united by Commonwealth membership and a shared love for cricket.



RBI approves a third term for AU Bank managing director Sanjay Agarwal :-

The Reserve Bank of India has approved a third consecutive term for Sanjay Agarwal as the Managing Director and CEO of AU Small Finance Bank, reinforcing leadership continuity at a crucial phase of the bank's growth. Agarwal, who founded the institution and transformed it from a vehicle finance company into a scheduled commercial small finance bank, has played a key role in expanding its retail footprint, digital banking capabilities, and deposit base across India. The RBI's approval reflects regulatory confidence in his governance standards and strategic direction.



Tarique Rahman Sworn In As Bangladesh's New Prime Minister :-

Tarique Rahman has been sworn in as the new Prime Minister of Bangladesh, marking a historic political shift in the South Asian nation. Rahman, aged 60 and the leader of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), assumed office after his party won a decisive victory in the 13th national parliamentary elections held in February 2026. This election — the country's first since a major 2024 uprising — resulted in a landslide win for the BNP, ending an 18-month interim government and breaching decades of political rivalry traditionally dominated by his mother Khaleda Zia and former prime minister Sheikh Hasina.



Jay Bhattacharya Appointed Acting Head of the CDC :-

Jay Bhattacharya, an Indian American physician-economist, has taken over as the acting head of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Bhattacharya, who holds degrees in medicine and economics, previously led the National Institutes of Health. This appointment follows the firing of Susan Monarez after a brief tenure. Bhattacharya is known for his controversial stance during the COVID-19 pandemic, where he opposed extended lockdowns, leading to clashes with Anthony Fauci. The CDC, with a \$9.7 billion budget, plays a critical role in public health worldwide.



Biju Antony appointed State secretary of Hind Mazdoor Sabha :-

Biju Antony has been appointed as the State Secretary of the Hind Mazdoor Sabha, one of India's prominent national trade union organizations. Founded in 1948, Hind Mazdoor Sabha represents workers across various sectors and has historically played an important role in advocating for labor rights, fair wages, and social security measures. Antony's appointment comes at a time when trade unions are actively engaging with governments and employers on issues such as labor law reforms, workers' welfare, and employment security.

4: Awards



Dalai Lama Wins Grammy Award for Best Audio Book :-

The Dalai Lama has been awarded his first Grammy for Best Audio Book, Narration, and Storytelling Recording. The album 'Meditations: The Reflections of His Holiness the Dalai Lama' features the spiritual leader's reflections

on themes such as mindfulness and harmony. The recognition highlights the Dalai Lama's global influence and the importance of his messages on peace and compassion. The award will help spread these messages more widely, promoting universal responsibility and collective well-being.



Rajnath Singh Grants 'Miniratna' Status to Yantra India Limited :-

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has approved the grant of 'Miniratna' Category-I status to Yantra India Limited (YIL), recognizing the company's transformation into a profit-making defence public sector undertaking. Since its corporatisation, YIL has achieved substantial growth in sales and exports, enhancing its performance benchmarks. The new status empowers YIL to approve significant capital expenditure without prior government approval, facilitating faster decision-making and growth in defence production.



Indian Teacher Wins Global Teacher Prize 2026 :-

Rouble Nagi, an Indian teacher, has been awarded the Global Teacher Prize 2026 at the World Government Summit, receiving a one million dollar award. Recognized for transforming neglected walls into educational murals, Nagi has integrated over a million children into formal education through art. Her foundation established 800 educational centers across India, catering to out-of-school children. The prize will support a vocational institute, furthering education and life opportunities for underprivileged youth.



Student team from Puducherry wins Wipro earthian award :-

At the 15th edition of the Wipro earthian Awards 2025 — an annual sustainability education program that recognizes outstanding environmental projects by schools and colleges across India — a student team from Shree Bharath Vidyaashram CBSE Senior Secondary School, Puducherry was among the winners. The Wipro earthian initiative receives thousands of entries from educational institutions nationwide and celebrates projects that reflect meaningful engagement with environmental themes like biodiversity, waste management, water conservation, and sustainable practices. The winning teams receive recognition, certificates, and cash prizes for their innovative and action-oriented approaches to sustainability challenges.



Southern Command Honours Personnel for Courage and Excellence :-

The Southern Command Investiture Ceremony in Ahmedabad recognized 34 Indian Army personnel and 33 units for their valor and distinguished service. Lieutenant General Dhiraj Seth conferred awards, highlighting the command's operational readiness and commitment to national security. The ceremony included the presentation of the GOC-in-C, Southern Command Unit Citation and featured a display of modern arms, showcasing the Indian Army's modernization efforts. The event celebrated the Indian Army's core values of courage, discipline, and selfless service.



PM Modi Receives Guard of Honour During Malaysia Visit :-

Prime Minister Narendra Modi was accorded a ceremonial welcome and Guard of Honour at the Perdana Putra complex in Malaysia, marking a key moment in his official visit. The reception underscored the strong bilateral ties, with both leaders attending a community program highlighting the Indian diaspora's contributions. The visit aimed to deepen cooperation across defense, security, and new economic sectors, with several agreements expected to be finalized. The talks focused on strengthening the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between India and Malaysia.



Paul Thomas Anderson wins at 78th Directors Guild Awards for 'One Battle After Another' :-

Filmmaker Paul Thomas Anderson winning at the 78th Directors Guild Awards underscores his continued influence and prestige in contemporary cinema. The Directors Guild Awards are considered one of the most significant honors for directors, often seen as a strong indicator of creative excellence and industry recognition. Anderson's win for One Battle After Another highlights the film's directorial vision, storytelling depth and technical mastery, elements for which he is widely known. Over his career, Anderson has built a reputation for character-driven narratives and bold cinematic choices, and this award further cements his standing among the most respected filmmakers of his generation.



ONGC Wins Global Platinum Award for Safety Environment Management 2026 :-

The Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC), India's largest upstream oil and gas producer, has been awarded the Global Energy Environment Foundation (GEEF) Platinum Award for Safety Environment Management 2026, a prestigious international recognition of its excellence in safety practices and environmental stewardship. This award spotlights ONGC's robust

Corporate Safety Environment Management System, which goes beyond mere compliance to embed a culture of safety and environmental responsibility throughout its operations.



Two Puducherry doctors selected for Chang-Crandall humanitarian award for 2026 :-

Two ophthalmologists from Puducherry — Dr. Haripriya Aravind, head of cataract and intraocular lens services, and Dr. R. Venkatesh, chief medical officer at Aravind Eye Hospital — have been selected for the prestigious Chang-Crandall Humanitarian Award for 2026. This award, presented by the American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery (ASCRS) Foundation, honours exceptional service and compassion in medical care, especially related to preventing blindness and improving vision outcomes. The doctors will receive the award at the ASCRS Foundation’s conference in Washington, D.C., on April 11, 2026, in recognition of their impactful work and dedication to serving patients and communities.



The Hindu journalist S.R. Praveen chosen for Swaraj Media Award :-

The Hindu journalist S.R. Praveen has been selected for the Swaraj Media Award, recognising his contributions to journalism and public discourse. The award honours journalists who demonstrate commitment to ethical reporting, in-depth analysis, and coverage of issues related to governance, society, and public policy. S.R. Praveen, known for his reportage and editorial work, has earned appreciation for balanced and fact-based journalism, particularly in covering regional and national developments. Such recognitions highlight the crucial role of the media in strengthening democratic values by ensuring accountability and informed citizen engagement.



India's Mumbai to host UK Prince William's annual environment award in 2026 :-

India’s financial capital, Mumbai, has been selected as the host city for the 2026 edition of the Earthshot Prize, the annual environmental award founded by Prince William of the United Kingdom. The announcement was made during Mumbai Climate Week, with international leaders and UN officials in attendance. The Earthshot Prize, launched in 2020, celebrates and supports innovative solutions to major environmental challenges, awarding substantial funding to recipients each year.

5: Banking



SBI launches 'CHAKRA' centre of excellence to finance sunrise sectors :-

The State Bank of India (SBI) — India's largest public sector bank — has launched a new initiative called "CHAKRA" (Centre of Excellence) aimed at strengthening and scaling up financing for sunrise sectors. These are high-potential, emerging industries that are expected to drive India's economic transformation and technology-led growth in the coming years. The Centre is expected to act as a hub for expertise, bringing together SBI's project finance teams with domestic and international partners through Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with over 20 financial institutions.



RBI Unveils Measures to Strengthen Customer Protection and MSME Credit Flow :-

The Reserve Bank of India announced initiatives to enhance customer protection and financial inclusion. Governor Sanjay Malhotra proposed guidelines to curb mis-selling, regulate loan recovery practices, and limit liability in unauthorized transactions. The RBI aims to compensate small-value fraud victims up to Rs 25,000. Additionally, the collateral-free loan limit for MSMEs will be increased, and banks allowed to lend to Real Estate Investment Trusts. These measures align with efforts to support economic growth and financial stability.



VinFast India Partners with Bank of Baroda to Deliver Dealer Invoice Financing Solutions :-

VinFast Auto India — the Indian arm of the global electric vehicle (EV) maker — has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Bank of Baroda to offer dealer invoice financing to its network of exclusive dealers across India. Under this arrangement, Bank of Baroda will provide up to ₹200 crore in flexible financing support that helps dealers manage their inventory more efficiently and expand their presence in both urban and emerging markets. The partnership leverages the bank's extensive branch network and digital platforms, and aligns with VinFast's broader strategy to boost the

adoption of sustainable transportation in India, one of the world’s fastest-growing EV markets.



Over Rs 72,000 crore in unclaimed bank deposits transferred to RBI fund: Government :-

The Government of India informed Parliament that more than ₹72,000 crore of unclaimed bank deposits have been transferred by banks to the Depositor Education and Awareness (DEA) Fund maintained by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), as of 28 January 2026. These unclaimed deposits include savings or current account balances and term deposits that have remained inactive or unclaimed for 10 years or more, after which banks are required to classify them as unclaimed and transfer them to the RBI-managed fund.



RBI revises draft norms for Kisan Credit Card for broader loan support to farmers :-

The Reserve Bank of India has also revised its draft guidelines for the Kisan Credit Card scheme to widen and modernize institutional credit access for farmers. The proposed changes aim to align loan limits more closely with actual cultivation costs and broaden coverage to include allied agricultural and agri-tech activities. By standardizing crop loan tenures and simplifying operational procedures, the revised framework seeks to make farm credit more flexible and responsive to seasonal realities.



IDFC FIRST Bank launches Hello Cashback Credit Card :-

IDFC FIRST Bank has launched the “Hello Cashback Credit Card,” expanding its portfolio of retail banking products with a focus on everyday savings and digital convenience. The newly introduced credit card is designed to provide straightforward cashback benefits on regular spending categories such as groceries, online shopping, utility bill payments, and dining. With this launch, the bank aims to attract salaried professionals and young customers who prefer simple reward structures over complex point-based systems.



Central Bank of India Signs MoU for Uttarakhand Government Salary Accounts :-

The Central Bank of India has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Government of Uttarakhand to facilitate the opening of salary accounts for state government employees. Signed in Dehradun, this agreement aims to streamline the government's salary disbursement processes, enhance the efficiency of treasury operations, and expand access to modern digital banking services for government personnel throughout the state.



IDBI Bank Board approves transfer of Demat Business to IDBI Capital Market and Services Ltd :-

The Board of IDBI Bank Ltd has approved the transfer of its Demat (depository participant) business to its wholly owned subsidiary, IDBI Capital Market Services Ltd. The decision aims to streamline operations and consolidate securities-related services under a specialised entity. A Demat account is used by investors to hold shares and securities in electronic form, and banks often operate as depository participants with institutions like NSDL and CDSL. By transferring this business segment, IDBI Bank seeks to enhance operational efficiency and allow its capital market subsidiary to focus more effectively on investment and brokerage services.



Bombay HC Clears Banks to Act on 'Fraud' Classification in Anil Ambani Loan Case :-

The Bombay High Court has permitted banks to proceed with actions based on the 'fraud' classification of loans linked to industrialist Anil Ambani. The case revolves around loans extended to companies associated with Ambani, which were later declared fraudulent by lending institutions following regulatory guidelines. The court's decision is significant as it reinforces banks' authority to label certain loan accounts as fraud after due process and to initiate recovery proceedings accordingly.



RBI Imposes ₹38.60 lakh Penalty on UCO Bank :-

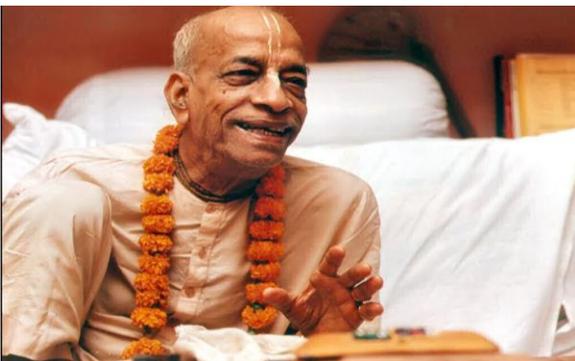
The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has imposed a monetary penalty of ₹38.60 lakh on UCO Bank for non-compliance with certain regulatory directions. The penalty was levied after supervisory findings revealed deficiencies in following prescribed norms related to customer service and reporting requirements. Among the lapses identified were irregularities in the payment of interest on savings accounts, failure to refund proportionate locker rent to customers who surrendered their lockers before the due date, and shortcomings in furnishing accurate credit information of self-help group members to credit information companies.

6: Books and Author



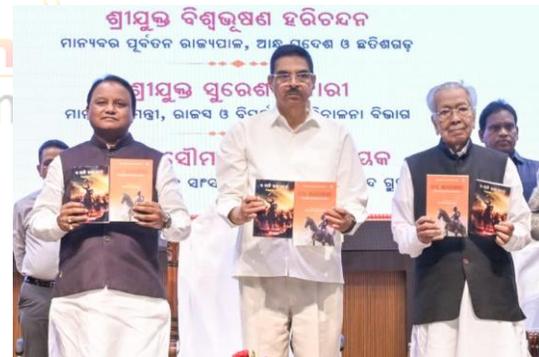
Expelled CPM Leader Launches Book Alleging Fund Misuse in Kerala :-

In Kerala's political landscape, a significant controversy has emerged involving V. Kunhikrishnan, an expelled leader of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPM) from the party's Kannur district committee. After being removed from the party in late January 2026 for publicly alleging financial irregularities, Kunhikrishnan launched a self-published Malayalam book titled *Nethruthvathe Anikal Thiruthanam* (roughly translated as "Comrades Should Correct the Leadership"). The book, released at a well-attended event in Payyannur, details his claims that funds collected for various party-linked purposes — including assistance for the family of slain party worker C. V. Dhanarajan, contributions toward building a local party office, and campaign finances — were misappropriated by senior CPM figures.



Book based on the life and leadership of A C Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, founder of ISKCON launched :-

A new book titled "Sing, Dance and Lead: Leadership Lessons from the Teachings of Srila Prabhupada" was launched at the IIT Delhi campus. Authored by historian Hindol Sengupta, the book explores the life, leadership style and organisational vision of A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, the founder of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), widely known as the Hare Krishna movement. It draws on Prabhupada's experiences—starting with his arrival in the United States in the 1960s with limited resources—to highlight how his faith, discipline, service orientation and compassion shaped his approach to building a global spiritual and social movement.



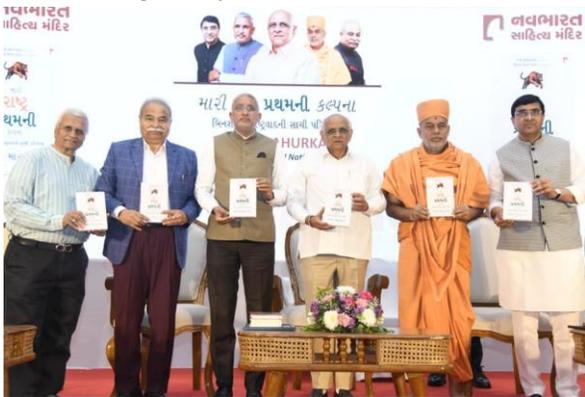
Odisha CM Launches Biswabhusan Harichandan's Books on Paika Rebellion and Odia Heritage :-

In Bhubaneswar, Odisha, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi launched two books authored by veteran leader Biswabhusan Harichandan. One book — "Buxi Jagabandhu: The Great Commander" — focuses on the Paika Rebellion of 1817, an early and significant uprising against British East India Company rule in Odisha, often considered among the earliest organized armed resistance in Indian history. The second book, "E Mati Katha Kahe", explores thought-provoking essays on democracy, media, world peace, Odia identity and related cultural themes. CM Majhi lauded Harichandan's long public service and literary contributions, emphasising the works' value for students, researchers and readers interested in history and heritage, and expressing hope for wider translation and dissemination.



'Made in India - The story of Desh Bandhu Gupta, Lupin and Indian Pharma' Book Launched in Mumbai :-

The book "Made in India - The Story of Desh Bandhu Gupta, Lupin and Indian Pharma" was launched in Mumbai, highlighting the remarkable journey of Dr. Desh Bandhu Gupta, the founder of Lupin Limited, and the rise of India's pharmaceutical industry. The book authored by Sundeep Khanna and Manish Sabharwal chronicles how Dr. Gupta, starting from modest beginnings, built Lupin into one of the world's leading generic pharmaceutical companies, contributing significantly to affordable healthcare globally.



Uday Mahurkar's book 'Mari Rashtraprathamni Kalpana' launched in Ahmedabad :-

The book — Mari Rashtraprathamni Kalpana, authored by senior journalist and author Uday Mahurkar and published by Navbharat Sahitya Mandir, was formally released at an event in Ahmedabad. At the launch, Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel presided over the function and unveiled the book. He spoke about the importance of taking pride in India's culture, traditions, and values, and described the central idea of the book — the philosophy of "Rashtra Pratham" (meaning "Nation

First") — as a guiding principle for life, not merely a political slogan.



Niranjan's Punjabi book 'Itihaas De Kujh Saakshi Panne' released :-

The Punjabi book Itihaas De Kujh Saakshi Panne, authored by eminent educationist and writer Principal Niranjan Singh, was officially released at a function held at the seminar hall of Ranjit College of Education in Jammu. The event was organised in collaboration with the Jammu Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture Languages (JKAACL) and Punjabi Likhari Sabha, Tral. Senior journalist and consulting editor Pradeep Dutta attended as the chief guest, and prominent Punjabi writer Ajit Singh Mastana presided over the book release. Teachers, intellectuals, scholars and cultural figures participated, and speakers highlighted the historical significance and scholarly value of the book.



IPS Alok Kumar launches a book of poems about life and death :-

IPS officer Alok Kumar, known for his distinguished career in law enforcement, recently unveiled his debut

book of poetry titled “Sanjhe Lamhon Ki Mehak” (“The Fragrance of Evening Moments”), which explores themes of life, death, memory, presence and the emotional cadence of lived experience. The book was launched at Purana Qila in New Delhi, at a cultural festival called Kalidas ka Kathalok that brings together artists, writers and thinkers. Kumar, who has balanced his professional duties with a lifelong passion for writing, took over three decades to compile these poems, reflecting a deep and contemplative engagement with human experiences through vivid sensory imagery and metaphor.



Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology launches AI Impact Startup Book :-

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) recently unveiled the “AI Impact Startup Book” at the India AI Impact Summit 2026 — a major event showcasing India’s progress in artificial intelligence innovation. The compendium provides a comprehensive mapping of India’s AI and deep-tech startup ecosystem, covering 100 AI-driven ventures across sectors like healthcare, agriculture, education, waste management, and more. It highlights both early-stage and growth-stage startups and captures how Indian AI solutions are increasingly operational and scalable, not just experimental.



The Hindu Group’s coffee-table book on T.N. Assembly launched :-

The Hindu Group has launched a coffee-table book titled “The Tamil Nadu Assembly: A Historical Journey”, authored by senior journalist N. Ram and published by The Hindu Group. The book offers a richly illustrated account of the evolution of the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly, tracing its origins, architectural heritage, and major legislative milestones. It documents significant debates, landmark laws, and the contributions of prominent political leaders who shaped the state’s governance over decades. Through archival photographs, historical documents, and detailed commentary, the publication presents a comprehensive narrative of the Assembly’s role in strengthening democratic traditions in Tamil Nadu.



VP Radhakrishnan Launches Tamil and Gujarati Editions of Indian Constitution :-

Vice President C. P. Radhakrishnan released Tamil and Gujarati editions of the Indian Constitution, alongside the 8th Legal Glossary, underscoring the importance of constitutional accessibility in regional languages. The release coincided with International Mother Language Day, celebrating linguistic diversity. V-P Radhakrishnan highlighted the Constitution's availability in multiple languages as a testament to India's multilingual strength, promoting democratic participation and constitutional awareness. The initiative aims to empower citizens and deepen their understanding of India's democratic framework.

7: Defence



EU Labels Iran's Revolutionary Guards as a Terrorist Organization :-

In a significant policy shift, the EU has designated Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps as a terrorist organization. This decision follows Iran's violent crackdown on recent protests and marks a symbolic stance against the regime's actions. The Guards, influential in Iran's economy and military, are now equated with groups like ISIS. While the move signifies EU's firm stance on human rights, it raises concerns about diplomatic relations with Iran. This development highlights the ongoing geopolitical tensions involving Iran and the global community's response to its domestic policies.



Defence Budget 2026-27 Enhances Modernization Efforts :-

The Defence Budget 2026-27, following Operation Sindoor, allocates ₹7.85 lakh crore, highlighting the government's dedication to robust national security. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh emphasized the focus on modernizing armed forces, with ₹2.19 lakh crore earmarked for capital acquisitions. This budget aims to boost military capabilities and enhance veterans' welfare through increased allocations for healthcare. The budget reflects a balanced approach to security and self-reliance, reinforcing India's defence infrastructure amid evolving geopolitical challenges.



Iran Warns of Conflict Over US Attacks, Labels EU Armies 'Terrorists' :-

Iran has warned of a potential regional conflict if the US attacks, following increased tensions between Tehran and Washington. In retaliation to the EU's designation of the IRGC as a terrorist organization, Iran has labeled EU armies as terrorists. This escalation highlights the fragile geopolitical landscape and the need for diplomatic efforts to de-escalate tensions and promote stability in the region. The situation underscores the importance of strategic negotiations and regional cooperation.



Indian Air Force to Showcase ALH Dhruv at Singapore Airshow 2026 :-

The Indian Air Force (IAF) is set to showcase the Advanced Light Helicopter (ALH) Dhruv at the Singapore Airshow 2026 through performances by the Sarang Helicopter Display Team. Known for precision flying and close-formation maneuvers, the team will demonstrate the ALH Dhruv's operational versatility and reliability. The airshow, Asia's premier aerospace and defence exhibition, provides a platform for global military and civil aviation technologies. The Sarang team's participation underscores the IAF's commitment to regional cooperation and highlights India's indigenous aerospace capabilities on an international stage.



US Downs Iranian Drone Near Aircraft Carrier Amid Tensions :-

The U.S. military shot down an Iranian Shahed-139 drone as it approached the Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier in the Arabian Sea. The incident occurred amidst diplomatic efforts for nuclear talks between Iran and the U.S., highlighting ongoing tensions. The drone was downed by an F-35C fighter jet in self-defense, with no American casualties reported. This action follows increased U.S.

military presence in the Middle East after Iran's crackdown on domestic protests. The event underscores the fragile state of U.S.-Iran relations, with potential implications for global oil prices.



Pakistan's Military Operations Against Baloch Separatists Intensify :-

Pakistan deployed drones and helicopters to regain control of Nushki in Balochistan from Baloch Liberation Army insurgents. The standoff resulted in 58 deaths, including security officials and civilians. The BLA, seeking autonomy, launched coordinated attacks across the province, highlighting ongoing insurgency issues. The military's actions reflect the government's effort to stabilize the region, critical for projects like China's investment in Gwadar Port. The situation emphasizes the persistent challenge of separatist movements in Pakistan, impacting regional security dynamics.



DRDO Successfully Demonstrates Solid Fuel Ducted Ramjet Technology :-

The DRDO successfully tested the Solid Fuel Ducted Ramjet (SFDR) technology at the Integrated Test Range, Odisha. This milestone enhances India's missile capabilities, offering improved range, speed, and

maneuverability for air-to-air missiles. The test's success places India among countries possessing advanced propulsion technology, strengthening national defense capabilities. DRDO's achievement underscores India's commitment to indigenous defense technology development, contributing to strategic autonomy and national security.



India-Kyrgyzstan Joint Military Exercise 'Khanjar' Begins in Assam :-

The 13th edition of the India-Kyrgyzstan Joint Special Forces Exercise 'Khanjar' commenced in Assam, enhancing military cooperation between the nations. Conducted from February 4 to 17, the exercise involves elite special forces units focusing on counter-terrorism and urban warfare. This bilateral initiative aims to improve interoperability and address shared security concerns. It reflects the commitment of both countries to regional stability and peace through collaborative defense efforts and knowledge exchange.



INS Sudarshini Makes Port Call in Oman on Lokayan 26 Voyage :-

INS Sudarshini, a naval sail training ship, arrived in Salalah, Oman, as part of its Lokayan 26 transoceanic voyage. This port call strengthens maritime ties between

India and Oman, showcasing India's seafaring heritage. The visit includes professional exchanges with the Royal Navy of Oman and public outreach activities. Lokayan 26 highlights India's commitment to maritime diplomacy and international cooperation, reflecting the Indian Navy's role in fostering global maritime partnerships.



India-Seychelles Deepen Development and Security Cooperation :-

During Seychelles President Dr. Patrick Herminie's visit, President Droupadi Murmu reaffirmed India's commitment to Seychelles' developmental and security needs. The visit coincides with Seychelles' 50th independence anniversary and 50 years of diplomatic ties with India. Under India's MAHASAGAR Vision, the two nations aim to enhance cooperation in trade, capacity building, and security. A Special Economic Package announced during the visit will focus on health, infrastructure, and education, strengthening the bilateral relationship.



Exercise Vayushakti-26 to Demonstrate IAF's Combat Readiness :-

The Indian Air Force (IAF) will showcase its operational preparedness and combat capabilities at Exercise Vayushakti-26, scheduled for February 27, 2026, at the

Pokhran Air-to-Ground Range. The exercise will feature full-spectrum operations by various aircraft, including Tejas, Rafale, and Mirage-2000, alongside advanced weapon systems like Akash and SpyDer. Vayushakti-26 aims to highlight the IAF's role in humanitarian assistance and disaster management, underscoring its ability to conduct rapid airlift and rescue operations. The exercise also emphasizes the increasing use of indigenous platforms, aligning with India's vision of Aatmanirbhar Bharat.



Indian Navy Takes Command of Combined Task Force 154 :-

The Indian Navy assumed command of Combined Task Force (CTF) 154, a key multinational training task force under the Combined Maritime Forces. The change of command ceremony, held in Bahrain, emphasized India's commitment to enhancing maritime security and collaboration. CTF 154 focuses on building training capacity among member nations, conducting exercises like Compass Rose, and countering piracy and trafficking. This leadership role underscores India's strategic importance in global maritime partnerships, promoting peace and security in international waters.



Indian Navy Launches MILAN Village for Global Maritime Engagement :-

The Indian Navy inaugurated the MILAN Village at the Eastern Naval Command in Visakhapatnam, marking the start of Exercise MILAN 2026. This initiative aims to foster global maritime engagement and cultural exchange among over 70 participating nations. Vice Admiral Sanjay Bhalla highlighted the village's role in promoting camaraderie and professional cooperation. The venue offers cultural showcases, including traditional dances and Indian cuisine, emphasizing India's rich heritage. MILAN 2026, one of the largest multilateral naval exercises in the Indo-Pacific, focuses on interoperability and maritime security, reinforcing India's commitment to global maritime partnerships.



Rajnath Singh to Inaugurate MILAN 2026 Naval Exercise :-

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh will inaugurate the MILAN 2026 naval exercise in Visakhapatnam, marking a significant event in India's maritime cooperation efforts. The exercise, involving 70 countries, aims to enhance interoperability and conduct advanced naval drills. MILAN 2026 reflects India's commitment to strengthening maritime ties and expanding its global outreach. The exercise highlights India's strategic vision of 'Security and Growth for All in the Region' and its growing maritime presence.



India and US Conducting 16th Edition of Joint Special Forces Exercise :-

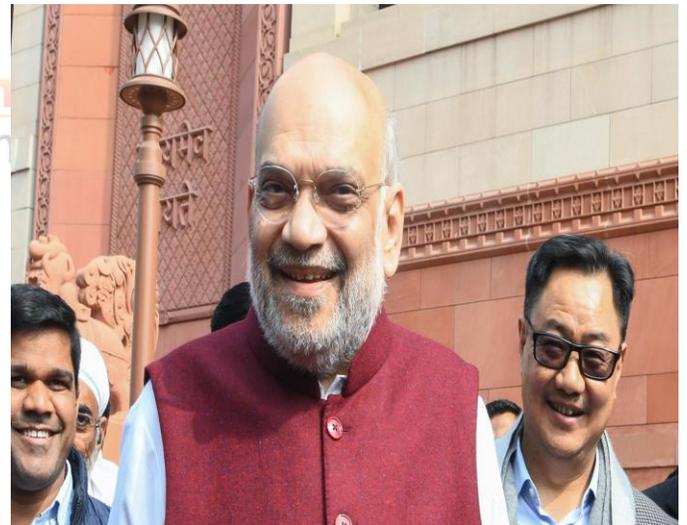
From February 24 to March 16, 2026, India and the US are conducting the 16th edition of the Joint Special Forces Exercise 'Vajra Prahar' in Himachal Pradesh. This bilateral exercise aims to enhance interoperability and cooperation between the two countries' Special Forces. The training focuses on joint mission planning and special operations strategy, vital for strengthening defense ties. This exercise underscores the growing defense partnership between India and the US, crucial for regional security and military collaboration.

8: Economy



SAIL Receives 'Great Place to Work' Certification for Third Year :-

The Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) has been awarded the 'Great Place to Work' certification for the third consecutive year. This recognition is based on a comprehensive assessment of workplace culture, trust, and employee satisfaction. SAIL's improvement in the TRUST INDEX score reflects growing employee confidence in leadership and policies. Initiatives like SAIL DARPAN, promoting transparency and career development, have contributed to this achievement. This certification underscores SAIL's commitment to fostering a people-centric workplace culture, crucial for organizational growth and employee retention.



Amit Shah Praises Union Budget 2026-27 for Visionary Framework :-

Union Home Minister Amit Shah praised the Union Budget 2026-27 for its visionary roadmap towards a developed India by 2047. Shah highlighted the budget's focus on capital expenditure, rail corridors, and national waterways, all aimed at boosting economic activity beyond metropolitan areas. The budget's support for MSMEs, through a ₹10,000 crore Growth Fund, is expected to empower small enterprises in smaller cities. Shah also emphasized the importance of initiatives like the Mahatma Gandhi Gram Swaraj Yojana in strengthening the rural economy, reflecting the government's commitment to inclusive growth.



Union Budget 2026-27 Boosts Textile Sector with New Initiatives :-

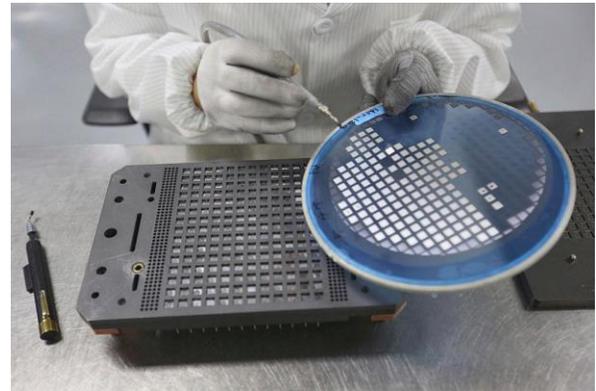
The Union Budget 2026-27 introduces a comprehensive program for the textile sector, focusing on employment generation and competitiveness. The National Fibre Scheme aims for self-reliance in fibres, while the Textile Expansion and Employment Scheme plans to modernize traditional clusters. These initiatives are designed to enhance productivity and global competitiveness, supporting artisans and preserving India's textile heritage. The budget's targeted interventions align with global sustainability trends, positioning India as a leader in sustainable and innovative textile manufacturing.



Union Budget 2026-27 Strengthens Health Sector with Increased Allocation :-

The Union Budget 2026-27 allocates ₹1.06 lakh crore to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, reflecting a 10% increase over the previous year. This allocation underscores the government's commitment to enhancing healthcare infrastructure, medical education, and research. Key initiatives include expanding the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana and the National Health Mission, as well as boosting healthcare

infrastructure under the Pradhan Mantri Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission. The budget aims to improve healthcare access and quality, ensuring a healthier future for India.



India Semiconductor Mission 2.0 Launched in Union Budget 2026-27 :-

The Union Budget 2026-27 announces the launch of India Semiconductor Mission 2.0, focusing on semiconductor equipment and materials production. This initiative aims to strengthen supply chains, enhance research, and develop a skilled workforce in the semiconductor sector. With an allocation of ₹1,000 crore, ISM 2.0 builds on previous progress to position India as a leader in semiconductor manufacturing. The budget's focus on technology innovation aligns with India's vision of becoming a global hub for advanced electronics and IT services.



Jaishankar Visits US for Critical Minerals Ministerial :-

India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar is visiting the United States from February 2 to 4, 2026, to attend the Critical Minerals Ministerial hosted by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio. The ministerial aims to enhance cooperation in supply chain resilience and clean energy

transitions. Jaishankar's visit will also include discussions with US officials on bilateral and global issues, strengthening India-US strategic ties in areas like energy security and sustainable development.



Union Budget 2026: Transforming India's Manufacturing Landscape :-

The Union Budget 2026-27 aims to position India as a global hub for innovation and advanced manufacturing. With a focus on infrastructure, sunrise sectors, and manufacturing competitiveness, the budget emphasizes policy continuity and fiscal discipline. Key initiatives include the India Semiconductor Mission 2.0 and the establishment of Rare Earth Corridors. These measures are expected to drive economic growth, create employment opportunities, and enhance India's global competitiveness in key strategic sectors.



Visakhapatnam Steel Plant Returns to Profitability :-

The Visakhapatnam Steel Plant, under Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited, has achieved profitability, reporting a Rs 54 crore profit in January 2026. This turnaround follows support from the Central and Andhra Pradesh governments. Increased production and capacity utilization, aided by government interventions, contributed to the plant's financial recovery. The revival

underscores the importance of collaborative efforts in revitalizing public sector enterprises, highlighting strategic management and government support's role in achieving industrial sustainability.



RBI Keeps Repo Rate Unchanged at 5.25%, Maintains Neutral Stance :-

The Reserve Bank of India has decided to maintain the repo rate at 5.25% and a neutral policy stance, following an assessment of macroeconomic conditions. RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra highlighted positive domestic growth and inflation trends despite global uncertainties. The decision reflects a cautious approach in balancing domestic economic stability with external challenges. The RBI's future policy actions will be guided by evolving data and economic outlook, focusing on price stability and growth support.



Tamil Nadu's Railway Budget Allocation Boost to ₹7,611 Crore :-

The Union Government has significantly increased Tamil Nadu's railway budget allocation to ₹7,611 crore for 2026-27, marking an 8.5-fold rise since 2014. Despite the enhanced funding, land acquisition delays hinder project progress. Only 24% of the required land has been handed over, affecting key projects like the Madurai-Tuticorin and Tindivanam-Gingee-Tiruvannamalai lines. The

Centre's commitment to new railway lines and infrastructure aims to bolster economic growth, with 97% of the state's rail lines now electrified.



PM Modi Welcomes Rolls-Royce Expansion Plans in India :-

Prime Minister Narendra Modi met with Rolls-Royce CEO Tufan Erginbilgic, expressing enthusiasm for the company's plans to expand operations in India and engage with the country's youth. This meeting aligns with the 'Viksit Bharat' mission, which aims to foster a collaborative environment for innovation and business growth. Rolls-Royce is set to develop its Global Capability Center in India, focusing on high-value engineering and manufacturing capabilities. This expansion is expected to bolster India's self-reliance and innovation in critical industries, aligning with the country's Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative.



IRCTC Reports 15.5% Net Profit Increase in Q3 FY26 :-

IRCTC reported a 15.51% increase in net profit for Q3 FY26, driven by robust growth in core operations, including internet ticketing and catering services. Despite rising expenses, the company's strategic initiatives have strengthened its financial position. The board announced a second interim dividend, reflecting confidence in

sustained growth. This financial performance underscores IRCTC's resilience and adaptability in the competitive transportation and tourism sectors, highlighting its role in enhancing India's railway service offerings and customer satisfaction.



India's Wholesale Inflation Rises to 1.81% in January :-

India's wholesale price inflation increased to 1.81% in January, according to provisional data from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. This rise, up from 0.83% in December, indicates growing price pressures at the wholesale level. The Wholesale Price Index (WPI) for all commodities increased to 157.8 in January from 157.0 in December. The inflation was driven by higher prices in primary articles and manufactured products, while fuel and power remained deflationary at -4.01%.



C2i Semiconductors Raises Record \$15 Million in Series A :-

Bengaluru-based C2i Semiconductors secured \$15 million in Series A funding led by Peak XV Partners, marking the largest round for an Indian chip startup. Supported by India's Design Linked Incentive (DLI) Scheme, C2i focuses on intelligent power-management solutions for AI data centers. The funding reflects investor confidence in India's semiconductor design capabilities. Founded in 2024, C2i is developing a power platform to optimize electricity flow in data centers, addressing energy efficiency and scalability challenges.

This milestone aligns with India's vision to strengthen its semiconductor ecosystem, promoting domestic innovation and global competitiveness.



Adani Group's \$100 Billion AI Investment to Transform India :-

Adani Group announces a monumental \$100 billion investment to develop AI-ready infrastructure by 2035, aiming to establish India as a global technology hub. This initiative will integrate renewable energy and hyperscale computing, promising to create a \$250 billion AI ecosystem. The project is designed to boost India's technological sovereignty and expand its data center collaboration with Flipkart. The investment is expected to catalyze further growth in server manufacturing and allied sectors, making India a leader in the upcoming intelligence revolution.



OpenAI Launches 'OpenAI for India' Initiative with Tata Group :-

OpenAI CEO Sam Altman announced the 'OpenAI for India' initiative at the India AI Impact Summit, aiming to develop local AI infrastructure and skills. Partnering with Tata Group, OpenAI will build AI-ready data centers to support India's growing AI ecosystem. The initiative seeks to enhance AI's economic and social applications, reflecting India's leadership in AI adoption. This

collaboration highlights India's strategic importance in global AI development and its potential to shape AI's future.



PM Modi and Dutch PM Schoof Discuss AI Cooperation and Social Transformation :-

During the India AI Impact Summit, PM Modi and Dutch PM Dick Schoof discussed enhancing AI cooperation for social transformation. Their meeting emphasized strengthening ties in emerging technologies like AI, quantum computing, and semiconductors. Both leaders highlighted the importance of the India-EU Free Trade Agreement in enhancing economic partnerships. The discussions underscored the commitment to using AI for economic growth and social good, focusing on areas like talent mobility and counterterrorism.



India's E-commerce Market to Double by 2030 :-

A report by Boston Consulting Group projects India's e-commerce market, currently valued at \$120-140 billion, to almost double by 2030, reaching \$280-300 billion. This growth is attributed to an increasing number of online shoppers, projected to rise to 440 million by 2030, with significant contributions from rural areas. The report highlights the coexistence of online and offline retail, emphasizing the evolving shopping habits of Indian consumers, particularly women who prefer the safety and convenience of online shopping.



India Aims for \$1 Trillion Bioeconomy by 2047: Jitendra Singh :-

Union Minister Jitendra Singh announced India's goal to build a \$1 trillion bioeconomy by 2047. Celebrating the 40th Foundation Day of the DBT, Singh highlighted the launch of 'SUJVIKA', an AI-driven biotech data portal. This initiative underscores India's commitment to biotechnology as a key economic pillar, aiming to strengthen public-private partnerships and indigenous capabilities. The announcement is significant for understanding India's strategic focus on biotechnology and its potential impact on economic growth and innovation.

9: International



Pakistan Military Operations in Balochistan: Over 140 Killed :-

Pakistani security forces conducted a 40-hour operation in Balochistan, resulting in the deaths of 145 people following coordinated attacks by insurgents. The operation was in response to attacks claimed by the Baloch Liberation Army, which targeted security forces, civilians, and infrastructure. This surge in violence highlights the ongoing insurgency and the complex security challenges in the resource-rich region bordering Iran and Afghanistan. The situation underscores the need for strategic interventions to restore stability and address the longstanding demands of ethnic Baloch groups.



India to Showcase Devnimori Relics in Sri Lanka, Enhancing Cultural Diplomacy :-

India is set to exhibit the sacred Devnimori Relics of Lord Buddha in Sri Lanka from February 4 to 10, as part of a cultural outreach initiative. The exposition, held at the Gangaramaya Temple in Colombo, aims to reinforce centuries-old civilizational ties between the two countries. The relics, preserved at the Maharaja Sayajirao University in Vadodara, highlight the historical spread of Buddhism in India. The event is expected to draw large numbers of devotees, strengthening India-Sri Lanka relations through shared cultural and spiritual traditions.



Saif al-Islam Gaddafi Killed Amid Libya's Political Turmoil :-

Saif al-Islam Gaddafi, son of Libya's former leader Muammar Gaddafi, was killed in a confrontation with gunmen. His death marks a significant point in Libya's turbulent political landscape. Once a potential reformist, Gaddafi was later involved in suppressing the 2011 rebellion. His death removes a controversial figure from Libya's political scene, potentially impacting the nation's ongoing struggle for stability and governance. This event highlights the persistent volatility in Libya, with implications for regional geopolitics.



US Returns \$500 Million to Venezuela from Oil Sale :-

The United States returned \$500 million to Venezuela from an initial oil sale, following a deal between Caracas and Washington. The funds, held in Qatar, aim to stabilize Venezuela by supporting government functions and preventing systemic collapse. This financial maneuver reflects US efforts to influence Venezuela's economic stability while maintaining strategic interests

in the region. The outcome of this arrangement could impact future US-Venezuela relations and regional geopolitical dynamics.



New York City Joins WHO's Global Health Network Despite US Withdrawal :-

The New York City Health Department announced its membership in the WHO's Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network. This move follows President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw the US from the WHO. Mayor Zohran Mamdani emphasized the importance of global cooperation in public health, with NYC joining 360 institutions worldwide to respond to health events. The US's formal withdrawal was completed last month, sparking criticism from health experts. NYC's action aligns with similar initiatives by California and Illinois in defiance of federal policy.



PM Modi's Malaysia Visit to Enhance Strategic Cooperation :-

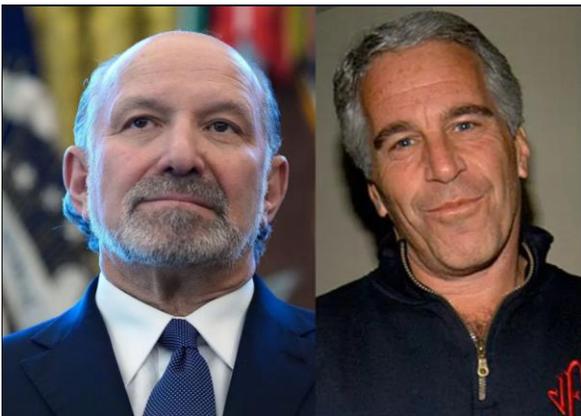
Prime Minister Narendra Modi's two-day visit to Malaysia aims to deepen defense and economic cooperation. This visit is Modi's first since elevating India-Malaysia ties to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership

in 2024. The focus areas include enhancing security ties and expanding economic collaboration, particularly in defense and innovation sectors. Modi's engagement with the Indian diaspora highlights their role in strengthening bilateral relations. The visit also includes the 10th India–Malaysia CEO Forum, emphasizing trade, investment, and people-to-people exchanges to bolster the strategic partnership.



Suicide Bomber Attack in Pakistan's Capital Leaves 31 Dead :-

A suicide bombing during Friday prayers at a Shi'ite mosque in Islamabad, Pakistan, killed 31 people and injured 169 others. The attack highlights the rising wave of militancy in the region. The bomber was stopped at the mosque gate before detonating the bomb. Shi'ites, a minority in Pakistan, have faced sectarian violence in the past. The incident underscores the ongoing security challenges in Pakistan despite heavy security measures in the capital. No group has claimed responsibility for the attack.



US Commerce Secretary Denies Ties with Jeffrey Epstein

US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick distances himself from Jeffrey Epstein amid scrutiny over their past interactions. Lutnick faces bipartisan calls for resignation following revelations of emails and meetings with Epstein. He maintains limited contact with the financier, emphasizing a lack of personal relationship. The situation highlights ongoing concerns over accountability and transparency among public officials linked to Epstein.



WhatsApp Accuses Russia of Blocking Service to Promote State App :-

WhatsApp claims that Russia has attempted to block its service to promote a state-backed rival app, MAX, which critics suggest could be used for surveillance. The move is part of Russia's broader effort to control its internet space amid tensions with foreign tech providers following its 2022 invasion of Ukraine. WhatsApp stated its commitment to keeping users connected, while Russia insists that compliance with local legislation is necessary for service continuation. This development highlights ongoing challenges in internet governance and digital freedom in Russia.



Russian Attacks Leave Thousands of Ukrainians Without Power :-

Russian airstrikes on Ukraine have severely impacted the country's energy infrastructure, leaving thousands without power, heat, and water in Kyiv, Dnipro, and Odesa. The attacks hit residential areas, causing significant damage and injuring several civilians. Ukraine's air force intercepted numerous missiles and drones, but the strikes have intensified the humanitarian crisis. Deputy Prime Minister Oleksiy Kuleba reported disrupted water supplies affecting nearly 300,000 people in Odesa. The ongoing conflict continues to undermine peace efforts, with Ukrainian officials urging international pressure on Russia to de-escalate.



North Korea's Kim Prepares Daughter for Leadership :-

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un is reportedly preparing his daughter, Kim Ju Ae, as his successor, according to South Korean intelligence. Ju Ae, in her early teens, has been increasingly visible in state media, suggesting her rising role in leadership. The South Korean spy agency noted her potential involvement in policy matters. As North Korea's political landscape evolves, Ju Ae's public appearances and possible attendance at upcoming party meetings are closely monitored. Analysts see her as a crucial figure in the regime's future.



Trump Ends Largest Deportation Operation in Minnesota :-

U.S. President Donald Trump has decided to end Operation Metro Surge in Minnesota, the largest deportation operation in U.S. history, amid protests and political backlash. The operation deployed 3,000 immigration agents, resulting in public outcry and legal challenges. Minnesota Governor Tim Walz and local leaders opposed the operation, citing public safety concerns. The decision marks a rare retreat for Trump, following declining support for his immigration policies. This development highlights the contentious nature of immigration enforcement and its impact on state-federal relations and public safety narratives.



Bangladesh Election: BNP Claims Victory, Set to Form Government :-

The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) announced its victory in the 13th parliamentary elections, securing a majority of seats and poised to form the government. With Tarique Rahman at the helm, BNP's success marks a significant shift in Bangladesh's political landscape. The election, following the passing of Khaleda Zia and a ban on the Awami League, signifies a new era in Bangladeshi

politics. The U.S. and other international observers have extended congratulations, highlighting Bangladesh's democratic progression. This development holds regional implications for Bangladesh's political dynamics.



Dubai's DP World CEO Resigns Amid Epstein Controversy :-

Sultan Ahmed Bin Sulayem, CEO of Dubai's DP World, resigned following pressure over alleged ties to Jeffrey Epstein. The resignation follows scrutiny from international investors and the release of the Epstein files. DP World, a major global port operator, has appointed new leadership to continue its operations, reflecting broader impacts of the Epstein controversy on global business.



EAM Jaishankar Meets Canadian FM to Boost Bilateral Ties :-

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar met Canadian Foreign Minister Anita Anand at the Munich Security Conference, marking their fifth meeting in recent months. This highlights the growing momentum in Canada-India relations, built on over 75 years of diplomatic ties. Discussions focused on cooperation in energy, technology, and trade, recognizing India's

expanding global role. The meeting reaffirmed shared technological benefits and economic partnership opportunities. Both sides committed to strengthening ties, with expectations of Canadian PM Mark Carney's visit to India, potentially signing agreements in areas like uranium and AI.



French President Macron to Attend India AI Impact Summit 2026 :-

French President Emmanuel Macron will visit India to participate in the AI Impact Summit 2026, highlighting the importance of AI cooperation between India and France. The summit, hosted in New Delhi, emphasizes emerging technologies and strategic partnerships. Macron and PM Modi will discuss bilateral cooperation under the Horizon 2047 Roadmap, focusing on innovation and geopolitical issues. The visit underscores the India-France Strategic Partnership's depth and mutual commitment to technological advancement and global collaboration, reflecting shared goals in AI governance and innovation.



Saudi Arabia's SDAIA President to Attend AI Impact Summit :-

Dr. Abdullah Alghamdi, President of Saudi Arabia's SDAIA, will represent the kingdom at the India AI Impact Summit 2026. The delegation aims to showcase Saudi Vision 2030 initiatives using advanced technologies for economic development. The participation highlights Saudi Arabia's commitment to responsible AI development and international partnerships. The summit, themed 'People, Planet, and Progress,' focuses on AI's role in social development and safety. This engagement reflects Saudi Arabia's strategic alignment with India's AI initiatives, emphasizing global cooperation in technology-driven growth.



China Showcases Humanoid Robots at CCTV Spring Festival Gala :-

China's annual CCTV Spring Festival Gala will feature humanoid robots from startups like Unitree Robotics and Galbot, highlighting Beijing's focus on AI and manufacturing. The gala, akin to the US Super Bowl in viewership, serves as a platform for China's tech ambitions. With significant government support, China's robotics sector is poised for growth, with humanoid sales projected to more than double this year, showcasing the country's strengths in AI and hardware.



Hungary Seeks Croatia's Help After Russian Oil Flow Halted :-

Hungary and Slovakia have requested Croatia's assistance in delivering Russian oil following disruptions in the Druzhba pipeline caused by a Russian attack. Hungary's Foreign Minister Peter Szijarto emphasized the need for energy security over ideological issues, urging Croatia to facilitate oil transport via the Adria pipeline. The incident highlights the geopolitical tensions and energy dependencies in Eastern Europe, as Hungary and Slovakia continue to rely on Russian oil.



India-UK Free Trade Agreement to Boost Tech Cooperation :-

UK Deputy Prime Minister David Lammy emphasized the India-UK Free Trade Agreement's potential to enhance tech cooperation at the India AI Impact Summit 2026. The agreement, valued at £25 billion, focuses on AI and talent mobility as key pillars of the partnership. Lammy highlighted initiatives to attract Indian expertise and ease visa processes. The FTA aims to strengthen bilateral trade and technology collaboration, reinforcing the longstanding trust and people-to-people links between the two nations.



Brazil Opens First Trade Office in Delhi to Boost Ties :-

Brazilian President Lula inaugurated the first Brazilian Trade and Investment Promotion Agency office in New Delhi, marking a new phase in trade cooperation with India. Accompanied by a large business delegation, Lula emphasized economic collaboration as a central pillar of bilateral engagement. The visit aims to expand commercial ties amid shifting global trade dynamics. The inauguration coincides with Lula's participation in the AI Impact Summit, highlighting technology cooperation as a key aspect of India-Brazil relations.

**Oman Confirms US-Iran Nuclear Talks in Geneva :-**

Oman confirmed upcoming US-Iran nuclear talks in Geneva, as tensions over Iran's nuclear program escalate. The discussions, focused solely on nuclear matters, aim to find a diplomatic resolution amidst ongoing unrest in Iran. The talks represent a critical juncture in US-Iran relations, with potential implications for regional stability and international security. Both nations cautiously approach this diplomatic opening, hoping to address nuclear proliferation concerns.

**Trump Announces 15% Global Tariff Following Supreme Court Ruling :-**

Following a Supreme Court ruling that invalidated his previous tariff program, President Donald Trump announced a 15% global tariff on U.S. imports, the maximum allowed under law. The new tariffs, grounded in Section 122, require congressional approval for extension. Trump's decision follows criticism and skepticism from trade experts and Congress members, who fear economic repercussions and legal challenges. Despite international applause for the ruling, Trump remains firm on leveraging tariffs to secure favorable trade deals and bolster the U.S. economy.

**North Korea's Economic Push as Kim Yo Jong Rises in Party Ranks :-**

During the Ninth Congress of the Workers' Party, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un pledged to enhance the country's economic standards while promoting his sister, Kim Yo Jong, to a higher position within the party. The Congress set policy goals across sectors, focusing on internal economic progress and ties with allies like Russia and China. Analysts speculate that Kim Yo Jong's promotion could influence North Korea's outward-facing policies, although no new foreign policy directives were announced during the Congress.



UN Resolution Reaffirms Support for Ukraine Amid Russian Aggression :-

The UN General Assembly passed a resolution supporting Ukraine's sovereignty, amid ongoing Russian attacks. With 107 votes in favor, the resolution underscores international concern over Ukraine's territorial integrity. The decision reflects global opposition to Russia's actions, emphasizing the need for a diplomatic resolution to the conflict. This development is significant for understanding international law, global diplomacy, and the geopolitical landscape.



India's UNHRC Mandate Reflects Global Trust: Jaishankar :-

At the 61st UN Human Rights Council session, India's election to the UNHRC was described as a testament to global trust, especially from the Global South, by External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar. He emphasized India's commitment to human rights, warning against politicization and double standards, and highlighted India's civilizational ethos of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam'. Jaishankar underscored India's tech-driven welfare initiatives and called for dialogue over conflict. He reiterated India's zero-tolerance policy against terrorism, urging collective resolve against such threats.



Jimmy Lai's Fraud Conviction Overturned by Hong Kong Court :-

In a surprising legal decision, Hong Kong's Court of Appeal overturned pro-democracy tycoon Jimmy Lai's fraud conviction, originally sentenced to nearly six years. This comes shortly after Lai was imprisoned for 20 years on separate national security charges. The court found errors in the original judgement, but Lai remains in prison for his involvement in conspiracy and sedition activities. The decision has drawn international attention amidst ongoing scrutiny of Hong Kong's legal and political landscape.



PM Modi's Historic Address at Israeli Parliament :-

Prime Minister Narendra Modi delivered a historic address at the Israeli Parliament, Knesset, becoming the first Indian PM to do so. Modi emphasized the enduring friendship between India and Israel, highlighting shared democratic values and cooperation in technology and security. He also addressed regional issues, expressing support for the Gaza Peace Initiative as a pathway to lasting peace. Modi's visit underscores the strong bilateral ties and mutual respect between the two nations.

10: Miscellaneous



Seychelles President Patrick Herminie Arrives in India for State Visit :-

Seychelles President Patrick Herminie arrived in India for a state visit, marking 50 years of diplomatic relations between the two nations. This visit, at Prime Minister Narendra Modi's invitation, aims to strengthen bilateral ties and explore cooperation across various sectors. President Herminie will meet President Droupadi Murmu and PM Modi to discuss regional and international issues. The visit underscores India's strategic partnership with Seychelles, focusing on maritime security and economic collaboration in the Indian Ocean Region.



Iranian Activist Narges Mohammadi Sentenced to Over Seven Years :-

Nobel Peace Prize winner Narges Mohammadi, known for her relentless advocacy for women's rights in Iran, has been sentenced to a new prison term of 7-1/2 years. Mohammadi's recent sentencing follows her arrest after denouncing a lawyer's death and participating in anti-

government protests. Her charges include assembly and collusion against national security, with additional punishment of internal exile and a travel ban. Mohammadi's continued imprisonment underscores the Iranian government's crackdown on dissent, highlighting the challenges faced by human rights activists in the country.



Buddhist Monks Complete 2,300-Mile 'Walk for Peace' in US :-

A group of Buddhist monks concluded their 2,300-mile 'Walk for Peace' in Washington, D.C., promoting messages of kindness and compassion across the United States. The journey, spanning nine states, garnered widespread support, highlighting public desire for unity in a divided society. The monks' peaceful mission underscores the enduring impact of spiritual and cultural initiatives in fostering social harmony.



Udyog Bhawan Metro Station Renamed 'Seva Teerth' in Delhi :-

The Udyog Bhawan Metro Station has been renamed 'Seva Teerth', aligning with the government's vision of service and duty. Union Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Manohar Lal Khattar announced this change following the unveiling of the new Prime Minister's Office complex, also named 'Seva Teerth'. This renaming is part of efforts to reflect administrative identity and governance ethos, enhancing the station's strategic and symbolic significance in Delhi's administrative hub.



Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi to Lead UAE Delegation at AI Summit in India :-

Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, will represent the UAE at the India AI Impact Summit in New Delhi, aiming to strengthen international cooperation in AI technologies. The summit will host leaders and experts from over 100 countries, focusing on strategic AI priorities and public-private partnerships. The event will showcase innovations from 300 leading AI companies, aligning with global goals for sustainable development and innovation.



India-EU FTA Discussions Highlight Economic Cooperation :-

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's visit to Germany focused on strengthening bilateral trade ties in light of the India-EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA). Discussions with German leaders emphasized cooperation in manufacturing, technology, and agriculture. The India-EU FTA, finalized in January 2026, is seen as a significant step in boosting trade and investment between India and EU nations. The agreement also facilitates the opening of EU bank branches in India, enhancing financial and economic cooperation across borders.



Cabinet Approves Transition of Historic Blocks into National Museum :-

The Union Cabinet has approved converting the historic North and South Blocks into part of the 'Yuge Yugeen Bharat National Museum'. This decision marks a shift from colonial administrative legacy to a service-oriented governance framework. The museum will celebrate India's civilizational heritage, connecting ancient cultural legacy with modern aspirations. The transformation reflects the government's vision of preserving historical legacy while promoting a culture of service and duty, aligned with the ethos of a developed India.



Amit Shah Unveils Shivaji Statue as Symbol of Courage and Pride :-

Union Home Minister Amit Shah unveiled a 21-foot-tall equestrian statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj in Gandhinagar. Shah described Shivaji Maharaj as a timeless symbol of courage and self-rule, inspiring generations to uphold cultural pride and sovereignty. The statue's inauguration underscores the enduring relevance of Shivaji's legacy in India's national consciousness. The event reflects the government's efforts to celebrate historical figures who have significantly contributed to India's cultural and political identity.



Govt Earns Rs 4,405 Crore from Scrap Sales in Swachhata Campaign :-

From 2021 to January 2026, India's government generated Rs 4,405.28 crore in revenue from the disposal of scrap through the Swachhata campaign. The initiative involved cleaning drives across 5,188 offices, freeing 4.34 lakh sq ft of office space and effectively managing 1,82,000 physical files. The campaign has also seen a significant shift towards digital processes, with 93.81% of total files created as e-Files in January 2026, reflecting India's commitment to efficient and citizen-focused governance.



Amit Shah Lays Foundation Stone for Assam Police HQ, Targets Infiltration :-

Union Home Minister Amit Shah laid the foundation stone for the 10th Battalion HQ of Assam Police, pledging to tackle infiltration issues. Shah emphasized Assam's potential as an industrial hub, highlighting developments like a ₹27,000 crore semiconductor plant. He linked infiltration to national security, criticizing opposition policies for past challenges. Shah lauded the Assam government's efforts to clear encroachments and promised continued development and job opportunities, reflecting the central government's focus on the North-East's growth and security.



PM Modi pays tribute to Kerala's youngest organ donor Aalin Sherin Abraham :-

Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid tribute to Kerala's youngest organ donor, Aalin Sherin Abraham, acknowledging the profound humanitarian gesture that has touched the nation. The young donor's organs helped save or improve multiple lives, highlighting the critical importance of organ donation in India. The Prime Minister's message not only honored the child's legacy but also praised the family's courage and compassion during an extremely difficult time. Organ donation

awareness has been steadily growing in the country, yet demand for organs continues to far exceed supply.



Three More Countries Join New Delhi Declaration on AI Impact :-

Bangladesh, Costa Rica, and Guatemala have endorsed the New Delhi Declaration on AI Impact, bringing the total number of signatories to 91. Adopted during the AI Impact Summit 2026, the declaration aims to leverage AI for economic growth and social good, emphasizing international cooperation and multi-stakeholder engagement. It outlines seven key pillars, including democratising AI resources, promoting secure and trusted AI, and enhancing human capital development,

to ensure the equitable distribution of AI benefits worldwide.



PM Modi Tops Instagram with 100 Million Followers :-

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has become the first world leader to reach 100 million followers on Instagram, surpassing other global leaders. His Instagram journey began in 2014, and today, his follower count is more than double that of prominent leaders like Donald Trump. This milestone coincides with his historic visit to Israel, where he became the first Indian PM to address the Israeli Parliament and was awarded the 'Medal of the Knesset', signifying the enduring India-Israel friendship.

11: National



India to Develop Hydrogen Hub at Kandla for Green Energy :-

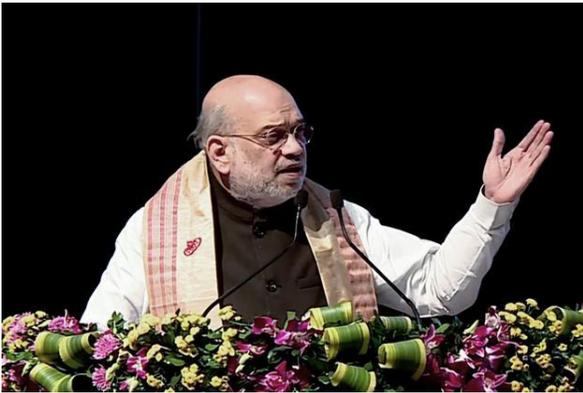
India plans to establish a Hydrogen Hub at Kandla under the National Green Hydrogen Mission, aiming to produce 5 million tonnes of green hydrogen in the next few years. This initiative is part of India's strategy to achieve net-

zero carbon emissions by 2070. The hub will attract deep-sea vessels, boost cargo movement, and support trade, aligning with goals of Aatmanirbhar Bharat and Make in India. This development positions India as a leader in maritime decarbonization and green energy, essential for sustainable economic growth.



CISF Launches Coastal Cyclothon to Strengthen Maritime Security :-

The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) has launched the Vande Mataram Coastal Cyclothon–2026, a nationwide initiative aimed at strengthening coastal security through community participation. The event, flagged off from New Delhi, involves cycling teams traversing India's coastline to engage with coastal communities and raise awareness about maritime security. The initiative highlights the role of fishermen as 'coastal sentinels' and aims to foster long-term engagement with coastal villages through community welfare activities.



India Cancels 12 Lakh SIM Cards in Cybercrime Crackdown :-

Union Home Minister Amit Shah announced the cancellation of 12 lakh SIM cards as part of a major crackdown on cybercrime. The initiative aims to dismantle fraudulent networks and enhance digital security. With multiple agencies collaborating, this effort underscores India's commitment to safeguarding its digital infrastructure and protecting citizens from cyber-enabled threats.



PM Modi to Inaugurate New PMO Building 'Seva Teerth' :-

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate 'Seva Teerth', the new PMO complex, along with Kartavya Bhavan-1 and 2, housing several key ministries. The move aims to modernize India's administrative governance, addressing operational inefficiencies of fragmented infrastructure. The new complexes feature integrated offices and public interface zones, promoting efficiency and collaboration. Designed to meet sustainability standards, the buildings incorporate renewable energy and advanced security frameworks, reflecting a commitment to creating a secure and citizen-centric governance environment.



India's Tech Sector Poised for \$850 Billion Scale by 2035: NITI Aayog :-

NITI Aayog's roadmap projects India's technology services sector to grow to \$750–850 billion by 2035, driven by AI and platform-driven models. The report identifies five growth levers, emphasizing India's role in global AI leadership. Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal highlighted the government's commitment to fostering innovation and global competitiveness. This ambitious vision aligns with India's long-term economic goals, emphasizing technological advancement and skill enhancement.



TRAI Intensifies Crackdown on Spam Telemarketers with 7 Lakh Notices :-

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) issued over 7 lakh notices to spam telemarketers in 2025, as part of efforts to curb unsolicited communications. TRAI's enforcement measures include communication restrictions and disconnections for violators. The crackdown is supported by increased consumer reporting through the Do Not Disturb ecosystem, reflecting a significant step towards enhanced consumer protection.



India Unveils AI Governance Guidelines for Safe Innovation :-

India has introduced a comprehensive AI Governance Framework aimed at fostering safe, trusted, and inclusive artificial intelligence innovation across sectors. Released in November 2025, the guidelines emphasize a principle-based and techno-legal approach, promoting innovation while safeguarding societal interests. The framework aims to align AI adoption with India's developmental vision of inclusive growth and global competitiveness by 2047. Key principles include trust, fairness, accountability, and safety, aiming to ensure AI

systems support India's broader goals while minimizing risks.



Cabinet Approves Noida Metro Extension to Boost Connectivity :-

The Union Cabinet has approved the extension of the Noida Metro Rail Corporation network from Sector 142 to Botanical Garden. Covering 11.56 km with eight elevated stations, the extension aims to enhance urban mobility in Noida and Greater Noida. The new corridor will improve connectivity to major commercial centers, corporate hubs, and educational institutions, while providing seamless integration with Delhi Metro lines. This development is expected to ease traffic congestion, reduce travel times, and promote sustainable urban growth in the region.



Cabinet Approves Urban Challenge Fund for Infrastructure :-

The Union Cabinet has launched a ₹1 lakh crore Urban Challenge Fund (UCF) to drive market-led urban transformation. The fund, operational from FY 2025–26, aims to leverage ₹4 lakh crore investment in urban infrastructure, focusing on resilient, inclusive, and climate-responsive cities. Projects will be selected

through a competitive mode, emphasizing governance reforms and private sector participation. This initiative seeks to enhance urban governance, promote economic growth, and create future-ready cities across India.



Bill Gates in Amaravati Ahead of AI Impact Summit :-

Bill Gates, co-founder of Microsoft, arrived in Amaravati to discuss cooperation in education, health, and agriculture with Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu. Gates will review advanced technologies in governance and visit a farm using AI and drone technology. This visit precedes his participation in the AI Impact Summit 2026 in New Delhi, where global leaders will deliberate on AI's role in sustainable development. Gates' engagement reflects international interest in India's technological initiatives and collaborative efforts to harness AI for societal benefit.



First UN Training Program on Small Arms Control Hosted by India :-

India hosts the inaugural United Nations Fellowship Training Programme on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) Control in Jabalpur, marking a significant contribution to global peace efforts. The three-week program, organized by UNODA and India's MoD, involves

delegates from 13 Asia-Pacific nations. It aims to enhance technical capacity in implementing global frameworks for preventing illicit arms trade, reinforcing India's role in international security cooperation.



Three Cheetah Cubs Born at Kuno National Park in India

Three cheetah cubs were born at Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh, marking a significant milestone for India's Project Cheetah. The birth increases India's cheetah population to 38, reflecting the success of the inter-continental translocation initiative. Project Cheetah aims to revive the cheetah population in India, contributing to biodiversity conservation and ecological balance. The development highlights the dedicated efforts of conservation teams and field staff.



India Unveils New Delhi AI Commitments at Summit :-

At the India AI Impact Summit 2026, Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw announced the New Delhi Frontier AI Commitments, a set of voluntary guidelines aimed at promoting responsible AI development. The commitments focus on advancing real-world AI applications and ensuring multilingual effectiveness, particularly relevant for the linguistically diverse Global South. The summit, attended by global tech leaders,

underscores India's leadership in shaping inclusive and responsible AI frameworks.



PM Modi Highlights Real-Time Sign Language Translation at AI Summit :-

Prime Minister Narendra Modi emphasized India's commitment to accessibility and inclusion with AI technology during the India AI Impact Summit 2026. His speech, translated in real-time into sign language using AI, showcased India's efforts to make technology and public discourse accessible to persons with disabilities. Modi reiterated that India will continue championing innovations that remove barriers and empower every citizen, underscoring the nation's push towards inclusive technological advancements.



AI Models for Local Needs Announced by Meta at India AI Summit :-

Meta's Chief AI Officer, Alexandr Wang, announced the release of new AI models tailored for local needs in India and the Global South at the India AI Impact Summit. These models aim to address unique challenges and opportunities faced by these regions. Wang emphasized Meta's vision of 'personal superintelligence' and the importance of developing AI that serves individual needs,

cultures, and languages. The announcement underscores Meta's commitment to inclusive AI development.



PM Modi Announces 'Rajaji Utsav' at Rashtrapati Bhavan :-

Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the 'Rajaji Utsav' at Rashtrapati Bhavan, where a statue of Chakravarti Rajagopalachari will replace a colonial-era symbol. This initiative is part of a national effort to shed colonial symbols and embrace Indian cultural icons. The event includes an exhibition on Rajagopalachari's contributions, highlighting his legacy and the broader movement to honor India's historical figures during the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav.



NMP 2.0 Could Contribute ₹40 Lakh Crore to GDP: NITI Aayog :-

The National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP) 2.0 is anticipated to add approximately ₹40 lakh crore to India's GDP over the next decade, according to NITI Aayog. The initiative aims to unlock value from public assets to reinvest in infrastructure projects, boosting economic growth. The plan targets asset monetisation worth ₹16.72 lakh crore across 12 sectors, enhancing

private sector participation and supporting long-term growth by enabling higher capital investment and better asset utilization.



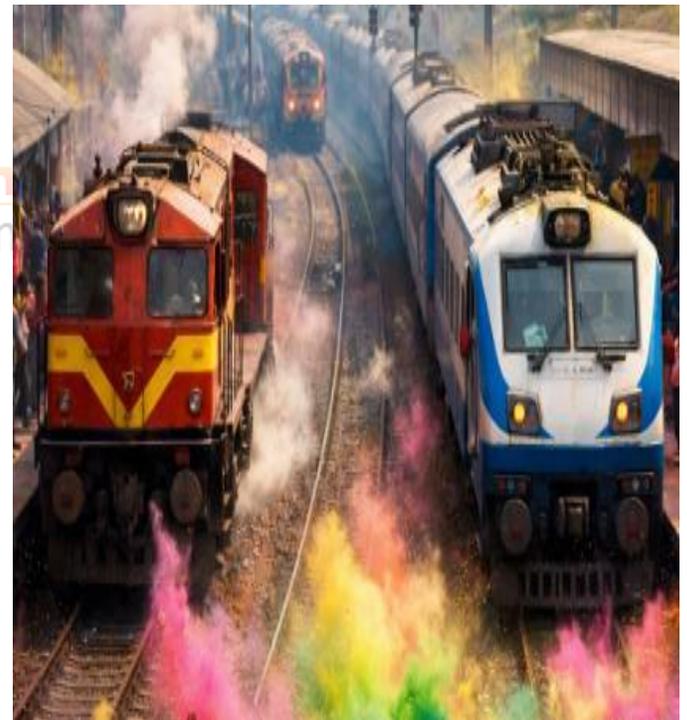
Railways Minister Vaishnaw Flags Off New Trains to Enhance Connectivity :-

Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw inaugurated two new express trains connecting Bhopal with Dhanbad and Chopan. This initiative aims to improve connectivity between Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Jharkhand, addressing growing passenger demand. The launch highlights the government's focus on enhancing railway infrastructure and regional development. This development is crucial for understanding India's transportation strategies and the role of railways in economic integration and regional connectivity.



MeitY Launches Blockchain India Challenge for Digital Governance Solutions :-

The Ministry of Electronics and IT launched the Blockchain India Challenge, encouraging startups to develop blockchain-based governance solutions. This initiative, supported by C-DAC, aims to enhance transparency and efficiency in government services. By focusing on areas like e-procurement and land records, the challenge seeks innovative solutions for public service delivery. This development underscores India's commitment to leveraging technology for governance and the potential of blockchain to transform public sector operations.



Indian Railways to Operate 1,244 Holi Special Trains :-

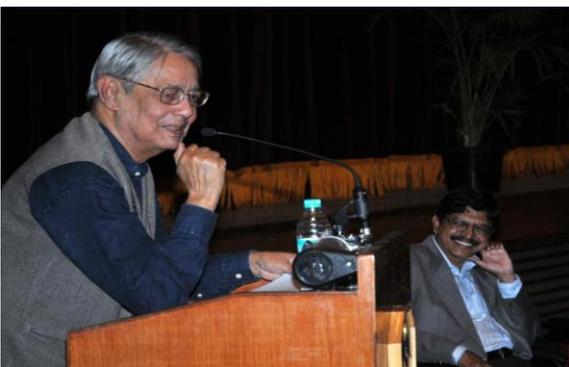
To manage the festive rush during Holi, Indian Railways will operate 1,244 special train trips across various zones from February 25 to March 18, 2026. These trains aim to reduce congestion and provide confirmed accommodations for travelers, connecting major cities and regional centers. The initiative reflects the Railways' proactive approach to handling increased passenger demand during peak periods, ensuring safer and more comfortable travel experiences.

12: Obituaries



PT Usha's Husband Passes Away; PM Modi Offers Condolences :-

V. Srinivasan, husband of PT Usha, Rajya Sabha member and Indian Olympic Association President, has passed away in Kerala. Srinivasan, a former CISF officer and kabaddi player, was a steadfast support throughout Usha's athletic and public service career. Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed his condolences to Usha, offering support during this difficult time. The loss of Srinivasan is felt deeply across the sports community, as he was instrumental in Usha's illustrious career. Condolences have poured in from political leaders and sportspersons nationwide.



Renowned Indian sociologist, writer, Professor André Béteille passes away :-

Renowned Indian sociologist André Béteille passed away in New Delhi at the age of 91 due to age-related illness. He was widely regarded as one of India's most influential social scientists and public intellectuals, known especially for his rigorous and humane analyses of caste,

class, inequality, power structures and social stratification in Indian society. Over a career spanning more than six decades, Béteille held academic positions at institutions including the Delhi School of Economics, where he later became Professor Emeritus of Sociology, as well as roles at several global universities.



Veteran journalist K.V. Srinivasan passes away :-

Veteran Indian journalist K.V. Srinivasan has passed away at the age of 81 in Kalkunike village near Hunsur in Mysuru district, Karnataka after suffering age-related health issues. Known affectionately as "Brother" in the journalism community, Srinivasan had a long career in media and was respected for his dedication to the profession and mentorship to younger reporters. He authored books, including writings on Mahatma Gandhi, and received honours such as the Karnataka Media Academy award. Throughout his life, he maintained a simple lifestyle, lived independently in Mysuru until recent years, and contributed significantly to local journalism and reporting before his death.



Veteran Nepali actor Sunil Thapa passed away :-

Veteran Nepali actor Sunil Thapa, renowned for his towering presence in Nepali cinema and memorable roles across South Asian films, has passed away at the age of 68 in Kathmandu, Nepal. He died while undergoing treatment at Norvic Hospital after his health suddenly deteriorated; doctors suspect a cardiac arrest as the cause. Thapa's cinematic career spanned over four decades and more than 300 films, making him one of Nepal's most iconic actors. He earned widespread recognition for his antagonist role of "Rate Kaila" in the Nepali classic Chino and was known in India for roles in Hindi films including Mary Kom — where he portrayed the boxing coach — as well as appearances in Raj and DK's web series The Family Man Season 3.

**South Korean actor Jung Eun-woo passes away at 39 :-**

South Korean actor Jung Eun-woo has passed away at the age of 39, leaving fans and the entertainment industry in shock. He had been active in the Korean television industry for nearly two decades and was known for his performances in several popular dramas, where he earned recognition for his versatility and emotional depth. Reports indicate that his death occurred earlier this week, though the exact cause has not been officially disclosed. Tributes from colleagues and admirers have poured in, remembering him as a dedicated artist who contributed significantly to the Korean drama landscape.

**Sarla Maheshwari, iconic DD newsreader, passes away at 71 :-**

Veteran Doordarshan news anchor Sarla Maheshwari has died at the age of 71. Maheshwari was widely respected for her calm delivery, precise pronunciation, and composed on-screen presence, making her one of the most familiar and trusted faces of Indian television during the 1980s and 1990s. She began her career with Doordarshan in the 1970s, reading news during a period when the state broadcaster had a central role in delivering information to the nation, and her dignified style earned deep trust among viewers. Her passing has prompted tributes from colleagues, media professionals, and viewers who remember her contribution to Indian journalism.

**Veteran Odia singer Geeta Patnaik passes away :-**

Renowned Odia singer Geeta Patnaik, a beloved and iconic voice in Odisha's music industry, passed away at the age of 73 while undergoing treatment in a private hospital in Cuttack. Across her career, which spanned several decades from the 1970s onward, Geeta Patnaik became known for her expressive voice and artistic versatility. She sang numerous popular Odia songs, including memorable tracks such as "Phur Kina Udigala Bani" and others that remain beloved by audiences. She frequently collaborated with the legendary Odia singer Akshaya Mohanty, and her body of work left a lasting imprint on the region's cultural landscape.



Veteran Actress Pravina Deshpande Passed Away at 60

Veteran Indian actress Pravina Deshpande has passed away at the age of 60 after a prolonged battle with cancer, according to family announcements and industry reports. Deshpande was known for her work across Hindi and Marathi films, television, theatre, and web series, building a long and respected career. She featured in popular films such as Ready opposite Salman Khan, Ek Villain, Parmanu: The Story of Pokhran and memorable television serials including Ghar Ek Mandir, Kumkum, Karam Apnaa Apnaa and Kulfi Kumar Bajewala. Her last screen appearance was in the web series Taskaree (2026).



PM Modi Expresses Grief Over MP Ricky AJ Syngkon's Demise :-

Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed grief over the demise of Shillong MP Ricky AJ Syngkon, acknowledging his dedicated service to Meghalaya. Syngkon passed away at 54 due to a heart attack. Leaders across India, including Meghalaya's Chief Minister, praised Syngkon's commitment to public service and his vision for societal upliftment. The late MP's contributions to public life and state development were widely recognized. His passing is considered a significant loss for his community and the nation.



Bengali author 'Shankar' passes away at 92 :-

Renowned Bengali author Shankar, whose real name was Mani Shankar Mukherjee, passed away at the age of 92, marking the end of an era in Bengali literature. He was best known for his iconic novel Chowringhee, which portrayed life in Kolkata through the lens of a grand hotel and became a cultural landmark. Many of his works were adapted into films, further cementing his popularity among readers and cinema audiences alike. His writings often explored human relationships, ambition, morality, and the changing social fabric of urban Bengal. Over decades, Shankar remained a respected literary figure whose storytelling style blended realism with emotional depth.



PM Modi Condoles Demise of Mukul Roy :-

Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed grief over the passing of former Union Minister Mukul Roy, who died at the age of 73 due to cardiac arrest. Mukul Roy, a senior politician from West Bengal and a founding member of the All India Trinamool Congress, was praised for his political experience and service to society. His death marks the end of a significant political career, leaving behind a legacy of dedication to public service.

13: Ranks & Reports



Economic Survey Highlights Indian Agriculture and Rural Economy :-

The Economic Survey emphasizes the robust growth of Indian agriculture, reporting a 4.4% average annual growth rate over five years. It highlights record foodgrain production and the significant role of horticulture in the sector's expansion. The survey documents historic rural infrastructure improvements, with substantial progress in roads, housing, and digital connectivity. These advancements reflect the government's commitment to inclusive growth and rural development, positioning agriculture as a key driver of India's economic resilience and sustainability.



Sensex and Nifty Decline Amid Union Budget 2026-27 Announcement :-

The Indian stock markets experienced a sharp decline as the Union Budget 2026-27 was announced, with the Sensex and Nifty falling significantly. The market reacted to the increase in Securities Transaction Tax (STT) on futures and options trading, which raised concerns about rising transaction costs. This unexpected change led to intense selling pressure, particularly in stocks linked to trading and broking. The market's response highlights the sensitivity of financial markets to fiscal policy changes and the importance of maintaining investor confidence.



IMF Chief Predicts Global Inflation Decline, Calls for Trade Integration :-

IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva forecasts a decline in global inflation to 3.8% in 2026, driven by softer demand and lower energy prices. Speaking at the Annual Arab Fiscal Forum in Dubai, Georgieva emphasized the importance of trade integration amid rising unilateral trade agreements. The IMF's projections highlight the need for collaborative economic policies to support global growth and stability. This outlook underscores the significance of strategic economic partnerships and trade cooperation.



RBI Projects 2.1% Inflation and Upward Growth for FY27

The Reserve Bank of India forecasts retail inflation at 2.1% for FY26, cautioning about geopolitical tensions and volatile energy prices as potential risks. RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra highlighted a projected shift in inflation trajectory in Q4, driven by base effects. Looking to FY27, the RBI anticipates Q1 and Q2 inflation at 4% and 4.2% respectively, attributing recent inflation firming to food prices. The RBI revised India's GDP growth for FY27 Q1 and Q2 to 6.9% and 7%, indicating steady economic improvement.



Affordable 5G Smartphone Shipments Surge by 1,900% in India :-

India witnessed a remarkable 1,900% surge in affordable 5G smartphone shipments in 2025, driven by aggressive pricing, widespread availability of 5G chipsets, and extensive network coverage. The Rs 6,000-Rs 8,000 price band emerged as a key growth driver, with 5G devices accounting for 88% of total shipments. This structural shift highlights the transition of 5G from a premium feature to a market standard. The report underscores India's evolving smartphone market, characterized by resilient demand and the rise of challenger brands.



UIDAI Completes Over One Crore Biometric Updates for Schoolchildren :-

The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) has completed over one crore Mandatory Biometric Updates (MBUs) for schoolchildren. Conducted in coordination with state education departments, the initiative ensures students' biometric records are up-to-date, facilitating access to welfare schemes and competitive exams. UIDAI waived MBU charges for children aged 7-15, encouraging participation. The successful completion of updates reflects UIDAI's commitment to ensuring seamless integration of Aadhaar services in education and welfare initiatives.



NITI Aayog's Vision: Viksit Bharat 2047 and Net Zero 2070 :-

NITI Aayog has released a series of reports outlining India's roadmap to achieve 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047 and Net Zero emissions by 2070. This comprehensive assessment covers economic growth, climate commitments, and energy transitions. The study estimates a \$22.7 trillion investment is needed by 2070, with a \$6.5 trillion financing gap. Key strategies include electrification, energy efficiency, and low-carbon

technologies. This initiative positions India as a potential leader in sustainable development, balancing economic growth with its climate responsibilities.



BSE Reports 174% Increase in Q3 Net Profit :-

BSE has reported a 174% increase in its consolidated net profit for Q3 of 2025-26, reaching ₹602 crore. The stock exchange's revenue rose by 61% year-on-year, marking a quarterly high of ₹1,334 crore. The surge is attributed to increased equity listings and robust trading in equity derivatives. BSE's strong performance highlights its leadership in India's capital markets, driven by innovation and market development. The exchange's platforms facilitated ₹22.4 lakh crore in fundraising across various financial instruments.



India's Trade Surplus with US to Exceed \$90 Billion Annually: SBI Report :-

According to a report by SBI Research, India's trade surplus with the United States is expected to surpass \$90 billion annually, driven by a significant increase in exports and import potential. The report forecasts that Indian exporters could boost shipments of top items to the US by approximately \$97 billion annually, with total export potential exceeding \$100 billion each year. This growth is attributed to tariff reductions, which provide a

'golden opportunity' for Indian exporters to expand their market share in the US.



AI's \$550 Billion Potential Impact on India's Economy by 2035 :-

A PwC report presented at the WEF in Davos forecasts AI's potential to add \$550 billion to India's economy by 2035. Sectors like agriculture, education, and healthcare could see significant efficiency gains. The report emphasizes India's strategic positioning in deploying AI at scale, focusing on inclusion and governance. Maharashtra's AI-enabled platforms exemplify successful applications. The study underlines the need for a robust framework to ensure AI's effective and ethical integration into economic activities, potentially making India a global benchmark for AI deployment.



India's Medical Devices Market to Reach \$50.1 Billion by 2030 :-

India's medical devices market is projected to grow to \$50.1 billion by 2030, driven by government initiatives like the National Medical Devices Policy and the PLI scheme. With exports reaching \$4.1 billion in 2025, the sector aims to increase its global market share to 12%. High domestic demand is met largely through imports, emphasizing the need for enhanced local manufacturing.

The growth is fueled by rising incomes, healthcare infrastructure expansion, and medical tourism.



India's Retail Market Set to Double by 2035: BCG-RAI Report :-

India's retail market is projected to more than double to Rs 210–215 trillion by 2035, driven by strong consumption and AI integration, according to a BCG-RAI report. The report highlights AI's transformative role in retail functions, suggesting a potential 40-60% performance gain with full-scale AI adoption. The study underscores the importance of internal capabilities and process redesign in realizing AI's value, positioning India as a major retail economy.



Gold Prices Surge Amid Global Economic Uncertainty :-

Gold prices have surged by 0.23% this week due to increased demand as a safe haven amid global economic uncertainties and geopolitical tensions. The removal of additional margins on futures markets has spurred speculative participation, pushing prices higher. Analysts highlight the ongoing structural supply deficits and industrial demand for silver, underpinning its bullish bias. The recent rally is driven by renewed interest in precious metals as central banks continue accumulating gold, forecasting a 3-5 year bull run supported by macroeconomic conditions.



India's UPI Model Outpaces Private Networks, Sets Global Benchmark :-

India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI) has established itself as a global benchmark for real-time payment systems, demonstrating that public, interoperable models can surpass private networks. With over 170 billion transactions annually, UPI fosters financial inclusion and sets a template for digital growth in developing regions. Recognized for its scalability and strategic sovereignty, UPI's success exemplifies India's emergence as a high-tech superpower, bolstering economic infrastructure and setting new standards for digital financial systems worldwide.



MeitY Launches Policy Report on Inclusive Voice AI at AI Summit 2026 :-

India launched a Policy Report and Developers' Toolkit to advance inclusive voice AI technologies, aiming to expand access to digital services. Developed by ARTPARK, Digital Futures Lab, and Trilegal, the initiative addresses data governance, quality, and responsible use. It promotes voice-first digital infrastructure, essential in India's linguistically diverse landscape, to enhance public service access. The report provides a roadmap for building robust speech AI systems, aligning with India's vision for digital inclusion and innovation.



India's GDP Growth Likely to Surpass 8% in Q3 FY26 :-

According to an SBI Research report, India's GDP growth for Q3 FY26 is expected to be between 8-8.1%, driven by robust domestic demand. Despite global economic challenges, high-frequency data indicates strong economic activity, with rural and urban consumption showing positive trends. The GDP base year is being updated to better reflect the current economic structure, potentially positioning India as the world's fourth-largest economy. The update will incorporate new data sources, including GST records and vehicle registrations.



India's Commercial Vehicle Industry Records Strong Sales Growth :-

India's commercial vehicle industry saw a 27% year-on-year increase in wholesale volumes in January, driven by a reduction in GST rates and increased freight activity. Medium and heavy commercial vehicle segments reported significant growth, with retail volumes indicating improving momentum. The domestic CV industry is expected to register moderate growth in FY26, supported by robust demand and favorable policy measures. The M and LCV segments are projected to lead this growth.



World Bank Highlights Gender Equality Enforcements Gap in New Report :-

The World Bank's report reveals a significant gap between gender equality laws and their enforcement. Despite legislative progress, weak enforcement limits women's economic participation, with no country achieving full legal equality. The report emphasizes the need for robust systems to implement gender-equal legislation effectively. It highlights the challenges in achieving gender parity, particularly in regions with high legal barriers. This report is crucial for policy makers and stakeholders aiming to enhance women's rights and economic inclusion globally.



Oil Prices Near Seven-Month Highs Amid US-Iran Tensions :-

Global oil prices are nearing seven-month highs due to escalating tensions between the US and Iran. While geopolitical risks are supporting the market, rising US crude inventories pose concerns about oversupply. Brent crude is trading around 71 dollars per barrel, with both global benchmarks gaining nearly eight percent over the past month. The potential for conflict in West Asia adds a risk premium to oil prices, influencing market dynamics.

14: Schemes & Committees



President Murmu Inaugurates Development Projects in Odisha :-

President Droupadi Murmu inaugurated multiple development projects in Rairangpur, Odisha, focusing on education, healthcare, and infrastructure. Key initiatives include an IT campus, AYUSH hospital, and cultural center, aligned with the Centre's Purvodaya vision. The projects aim to boost local employment and enhance the region's socio-economic landscape. Emphasizing tribal welfare, President Murmu highlighted government efforts in improving living standards for tribal communities through targeted schemes and infrastructure development.



Centre Revises Startup India Framework for Innovation Growth :-

The Indian government has revised the Startup India framework to enhance support for innovation and entrepreneurship. The turnover threshold for startup recognition is increased to Rs 200 crore, broadening eligibility. A new category for Deep Tech Startups recognizes ventures with advanced technologies, extending the age limit to 20 years. Cooperative societies are now eligible for startup recognition, promoting rural and agricultural innovation. These changes aim to provide a supportive policy environment for startups, reflecting India's evolving innovation ecosystem and global entrepreneurship leadership.



Railway Projects Worth Rs 92,000 Crore Underway in West Bengal :-

Union Minister for Railways Ashwini Vaishnaw inaugurated new railway infrastructure projects in West Bengal, including road overbridges and a new train service. The state has received a record railway allocation, with ongoing projects valued at Rs 92,000 crore. These initiatives aim to enhance safety, connectivity, and regional development. The launch of new train services and infrastructure reflects the government's commitment to transforming rail connectivity in eastern India, supporting the region's

economic growth and integration with national networks.



India Launches Kaushal Rath to Promote AI Literacy Nationwide :-

The Indian government has launched 'Kaushal Rath,' a mobile AI awareness initiative under the 'Yuva AI for All' program. This initiative aims to democratize AI education by reaching underserved regions, offering hands-on training and exposure to AI tools. It reflects the government's commitment to building an AI-ready workforce, aligning with India's digital aspirations and educational inclusivity.



Delhi CM Launches 'LakshpatiBitya Yojana' to Support Girls' Education :-

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta launched the 'Delhi LakshpatiBitya Yojana,' an initiative aimed at ensuring financial security and education for girls from economically weaker families. The scheme provides financial assistance linked to educational milestones, fostering long-term savings for beneficiaries. This initiative reflects the government's commitment to

empowering girls and promoting gender equality in education.



White Revolution 2.0 Launched to Empower Women in Dairy Sector :-

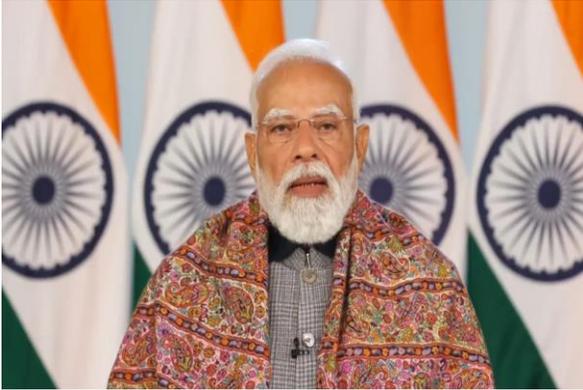
The Indian government launched 'White Revolution 2.0,' a cooperative-led initiative aimed at expanding the dairy sector's coverage and empowering women. The program seeks to increase milk procurement and address malnutrition while enhancing women's roles in dairy cooperatives. This initiative reflects India's commitment to agricultural growth and gender empowerment in rural communities.



Centre Prepares for Financial Inclusion 2.0; Focus on Digital Access and Credit :-

The Centre has launched preparations for Financial Inclusion 2.0, chaired by DFS Secretary M Nagaraju. The initiative aims to enhance banking access, strengthen infrastructure in villages, and improve formal credit availability, particularly for women and vulnerable groups. The roadmap targets universal insurance and pension coverage by 2047 and increased digital transactions, especially in rural areas. Discussions

included expanding financial literacy and addressing digital fraud. This initiative is part of a broader effort to integrate more citizens into the formal financial framework, ensuring inclusive growth and economic stability.



PM Modi to Inaugurate Development Projects Worth Rs 5,450 Crore in Assam :-

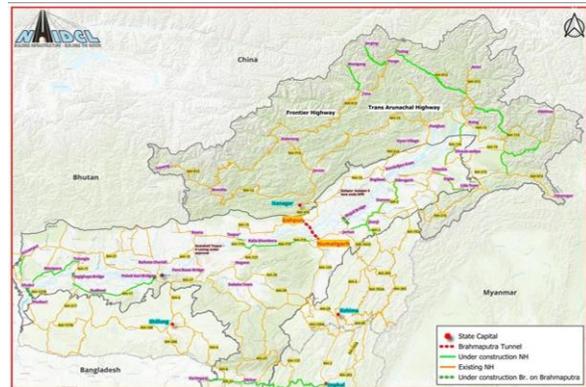
Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Assam to inaugurate projects worth over Rs 5,450 crore, enhancing connectivity, education, and urban mobility. Key highlights include the Emergency Landing Facility, a dual-use infrastructure developed with the Indian Air Force, and the Kumar Bhaskar Varma Setu, a bridge with advanced seismic technology across the Brahmaputra. The visit underscores efforts to boost the region's infrastructure, including the National Data Centre, which aligns with the Digital India vision.



5.69 Crore Ayushman Cards Created Over Five Years Under AB-PMJAY :-

India's Ayushman Bharat scheme has issued 5.69 crore Ayushman cards over five years, facilitating hospital admissions worth Rs. 1.15 lakh crore. The scheme aims

to enhance healthcare access for millions, with significant achievements in vaccination coverage and digital health integration via the U-WIN portal. The initiative underscores India's commitment to improving healthcare delivery and achieving universal health coverage.



Cabinet Approves Underwater Road-Rail Tunnel in Assam :-

The Cabinet has approved the construction of a ₹18,662 crore underwater road-rail tunnel under the Brahmaputra River in Assam. This ambitious project involves a 15.79-km twin-tube tunnel designed to improve connectivity and reduce travel time between the north and south banks of the river. The tunnel will integrate road and rail infrastructure, enhancing freight efficiency and stimulating socio-economic development in the region. It is expected to significantly benefit the northeastern states by providing strategic and logistical advantages.



Cabinet Clears Major Railway Multitracking Projects :-

The Cabinet has approved three major railway multitracking projects worth ₹18,509 crore to enhance

capacity across key routes in Delhi, Haryana, Maharashtra, and Karnataka. The projects, adding about 389 km to the railway network, aim to ease congestion, improve service reliability, and boost freight and passenger operations. Aligned with the PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan, these initiatives are expected to strengthen multimodal connectivity and logistics efficiency, supporting economic growth and development in the regions.



Cabinet Approves Startup India Fund of Funds 2.0 :-

The Union Cabinet has approved the Startup India Fund of Funds 2.0 with a corpus of ₹10,000 crore to bolster the venture capital ecosystem. Aimed at supporting deep tech and technology-driven startups, the fund seeks to mobilize domestic capital, strengthen venture capital investments, and foster innovation-led entrepreneurship

across sectors. This initiative builds on the success of the first phase, supporting over 1,370 startups, and aligns with the government's vision of economic resilience and global innovation leadership.



PM Modi Launches MANAV Vision for Ethical AI Governance :-

PM Modi unveiled the 'MANAV Vision' for AI at the India AI Impact Summit, outlining a framework for ethical, accountable, and inclusive AI governance. The vision emphasizes moral systems, national sovereignty, and accessibility. Modi highlighted the need for child safety in AI spaces and invited global collaboration with India. The MANAV Vision aims to guide the global AI ecosystem, reflecting India's ambition to lead in AI governance while ensuring ethical and inclusive development.

15: Science & Technology



Impact of Alcohol on Cancer Risks Highlighted in New U.S. Report :-

A January 2025 report from the U.S. Surgeon General underscores the link between alcohol consumption and increased cancer risks. Alcohol is classified as a human carcinogen, with the strongest evidence for cancers such as breast, colon, esophagus, and liver. The report details how even moderate intake can elevate risks, urging reduced consumption for better health. It highlights mechanisms like DNA damage and oxidative stress and discusses the rising global patterns of alcohol use affecting cancer rates. This information is vital for public health awareness and policy-making.



IIM Ahmedabad Establishes AI School with Tandon Family Support :-

IIM Ahmedabad has signed an MoU to establish the Krishnamurthy Tandon School of Artificial Intelligence, supported by a ₹100 crore endowment from the Tandon family. The school will focus on AI applications in management and public impact, aiming to address India's large-scale challenges. Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan highlighted this initiative as a step towards India's AI leadership. The school will foster innovation and research, aligning with national goals of technological advancement and global competitiveness in the AI domain.



Bharat GenAI Models to Cover All 22 Indian Languages This Month :-

Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh announced that Bharat GenAI text models will be completed in all 22 recognized Indian languages this month. Part of the IndiaAI Mission, Bharat GenAI is a sovereign language model tailored to India's linguistic diversity. Speech and vision capabilities, currently in 15 languages, will be expanded. The initiative, led by IIT Bombay, aims to enhance AI

capabilities across domains, fostering innovation and technological advancement in India.



Gujarat Partners with Starlink for Satellite Internet Expansion :-

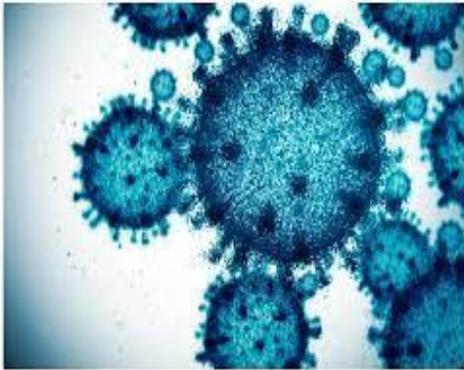
Gujarat has signed a Letter of Intent with Starlink Satellite Communications, a subsidiary of SpaceX, to enhance digital infrastructure through high-speed satellite internet. This initiative aims to connect remote and underserved areas, aligning with the Digital India vision. The agreement includes pilot projects for e-Governance facilities, schools, and disaster management centers. Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel emphasized the project's role in accelerating e-Governance and digital connectivity across the state.



AI's Vulnerability to Medical Misinformation Highlighted in Study :-

A study reveals that AI tools are more prone to propagate medical misinformation from seemingly authoritative sources, such as fabricated hospital notes. This finding underscores the need for built-in safeguards in AI systems within healthcare. As AI becomes increasingly integrated into medical practices, ensuring accuracy and

reliability is crucial to prevent the spread of false medical advice and maintain public trust.



Researchers Uncover How Severe Flu Damages the Heart :-

Researchers at the Icahn School of Medicine have discovered the mechanism by which severe influenza damages the heart, explaining the increase in heart attacks during flu season. The study found that pro-dendritic cells infected in the lungs travel to the heart, producing inflammatory proteins that damage heart muscle cells. Vaccination against the flu offers some protection against this damage, and an mRNA drug controlling inflammatory protein activity showed promise in reducing heart muscle damage in lab tests.



ICMR Study: Shorter TB Regimens Cost-Effective in India :-

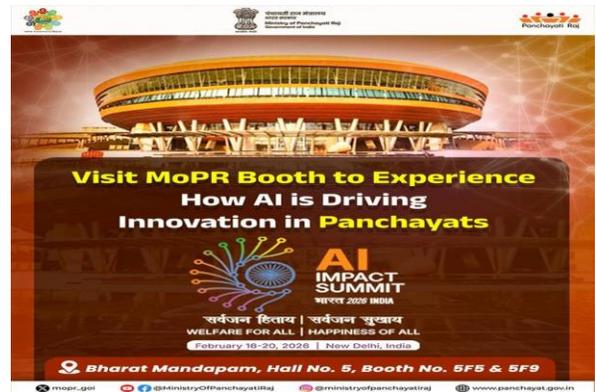
An ICMR study found that six-month all-oral regimens for multidrug-resistant TB are cost-effective and yield better health outcomes than longer treatments. The BPaL and BPaLM regimens offer improved adherence and reduced healthcare costs. The study emphasizes the importance of shorter regimens in enhancing patient recovery and reducing system strain. Aligning with national TB

elimination goals, these findings support the potential adoption of these regimens under the National TB Elimination Programme, fostering progress in combating drug-resistant TB in India.



Dubai-Based Du Joins Singapore-India-Gulf Submarine Cable System :-

Telecom operator du has partnered with Datawave Networks to join the Singapore–India–Gulf submarine cable system, enhancing digital connectivity between India and the Gulf. The cable system will support growing data demands and provide a resilient alternative to the Red Sea corridor. This strategic move strengthens the UAE’s position as a data hub and addresses vulnerabilities in global connectivity routes.



Panchayati Raj Ministry to Highlight AI-Driven Governance at Expo :-

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj will showcase AI-powered solutions for grassroots governance at the India AI Impact Expo 2026 in New Delhi. Key solutions include SabhaSaar, an AI-enabled platform for documenting Gram Sabha meetings, and PRAMAN, an image analytics tool for monitoring public assets. The Ministry aims to demonstrate the practical applications of AI in improving

administrative efficiency, transparency, and accountability in Panchayati Raj institutions, contributing to discussions on responsible AI use in public systems.



India's Health Minister Launches AI Initiatives at India AI Summit 2026 :-

Union Health Minister Jagat Prakash Nadda launched two AI initiatives, SAHI and BODH, at the India AI Summit 2026. SAHI provides a framework for safe AI adoption in healthcare, while BODH, developed with IIT Kanpur, is a benchmarking platform for AI model evaluation. These initiatives aim to strengthen India's health AI ecosystem, enhancing trust and transparency in AI solutions' deployment, aligning with national health priorities.



Ayush Pavilion Showcases AI in Traditional Medicine :-

The Ayush Pavilion attracted significant interest at the India AI Impact Summit 2026, showcasing AI-powered solutions for traditional medicine. The pavilion featured AI-enabled chatbots and Yoga Posture AI tools, offering personalized wellness guidance. Secretary Vaidya Rajesh Kotecha emphasized the strategic role of AI in enhancing traditional healthcare systems. The pavilion highlighted India's efforts to integrate AI with traditional knowledge responsibly, contributing to the summit's discussion on inclusive and people-centric AI applications.



Open-Source Multilingual AI Prototype Unveiled at AI Summit :-

An open-source multilingual AI prototype was demonstrated at the India AI Impact Summit 2026, showcasing a privacy-preserving, locally deployable system. Developed with Digital India BHASHINI Division, Current AI, and Kalpa Impact, the device enables real-time multilingual interactions without internet access. It exemplifies India's commitment to inclusive, culturally rooted AI systems. A Global Innovation Challenge was announced to build upon this prototype, reinforcing India's leadership in scalable, responsible AI innovation and digital public infrastructure.



Anthropic Unveils New AI Tools for Business Amid Market Volatility :-

AI lab Anthropic introduced new plug-ins for business applications, following recent market volatility. These tools target areas like investment banking and human resources, developed with partners like Salesforce and DocuSign. This move highlights Anthropic's strategy to capture the enterprise AI market, despite challenges from competitors like Google and OpenAI. The development reflects the growing importance of AI in business operations and the potential for technological advancements to reshape traditional sectors.

16: Sports



Union Budget 2026-27 Introduces Khelo India Mission :-

The Union Budget 2026-27 launches the Khelo India Mission, focusing on transforming India's sports sector with an allocation of ₹500 crore for sports goods manufacturing. This mission aims to enhance talent development, infrastructure, and employment generation in the sports industry. By fostering domestic manufacturing and innovation, India aims to become a global hub for high-quality sports equipment. The initiative is part of a broader strategy to empower youth and strengthen the sports ecosystem, contributing to India's long-term vision of becoming a top sporting nation.



ICC Warns Pakistan Over India Match Boycott at T20 World Cup :-

The ICC has expressed concern over Pakistan's decision to boycott its T20 World Cup match against India, citing potential long-term impacts on cricket in Pakistan. The

move undermines the integrity of the tournament and raises questions about the future of sporting events between the two nations. The ICC awaits official communication from the Pakistan Cricket Board, emphasizing the importance of maintaining competitiveness and fairness in global cricket events.



PSG Reclaims Top Spot in Ligue 1 :-

Paris Saint-Germain secured a 2-1 victory against Racing Strasbourg, reclaiming the top position in Ligue 1. Despite being reduced to 10 men after Achraf Hakimi's dismissal, PSG's Nuno Mendes scored the decisive goal in the 81st minute. The win highlights PSG's resilience and strategic gameplay, emphasizing their determination to maintain their dominance in the league. The match underscores the competitive nature of Ligue 1 and PSG's commitment to achieving their championship goals.



FIFA President Supports Ending Russia's Ban from International Tournaments :-

FIFA President Gianni Infantino has advocated for the reinstatement of Russia in international tournaments, following a four-year exclusion due to the invasion of Ukraine. Infantino argues that the ban has been counterproductive, fostering frustration and hatred. He emphasized the importance of allowing Russian youth teams to participate in football, which could facilitate better cultural exchange and understanding. The decision to reinstate Russia lies with UEFA's executive committee, which is set to meet soon.



MCC Legalizes Laminated Cricket Bats Amid Rising Willow Costs :-

The Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) amended cricket laws to permit laminated bats for adult amateur players, addressing rising English willow costs. Laminated bats, using less prime willow, are now approved after testing showed no significant performance advantage. This change aims to reduce bat costs globally, ensuring accessibility while maintaining game integrity. The decision reflects MCC's adaptive approach to evolving cricket needs, balancing tradition with economic realities.



Mirabai Chanu Sets New Records at National Weightlifting Championships :-

Olympic silver medallist Mirabai Chanu broke three national records in the women's 48kg category at the National Weightlifting Championships. Lifting a total of 205kg, she set records in snatch, clean and jerk, and overall total. This performance marks a significant improvement from her previous best and reaffirms her dominance in weightlifting. Having transitioned to the 48kg category, Mirabai continues to excel, with plans to move to the 53kg category ahead of the LA 2028 Olympics.



India U-19 Cricket Team clinched World Cup title :-

India's Under-19 cricket team won World Cup title in Harare. The team remained unbeaten, defeating England by 100 runs in the final. Vaibhav Suryavanshi's 175-run innings was pivotal in setting a record-breaking total. Prime Minister Modi and President Murmu praised the team's skill and composure, noting the victory's potential to inspire young athletes nationwide. This triumph marks India's sixth Under-19 World Cup win, highlighting the country's strong cricketing future.



Chess Added to Esports Nations Cup 2026 in Riyadh :-

The Esports Nations Cup 2026, to be held in Riyadh, will include chess as one of its 16 competitive titles, marking a significant expansion of the game into the esports realm. The tournament will feature 128 players in a round-robin group stage followed by knockout rounds. The inclusion of chess highlights its growing popularity among digital audiences and aims to provide opportunities for emerging players and underrepresented nations. Organizers hope to integrate chess further into modern competitive entertainment.



India's Harshit Rana Replaced by Siraj for T20 World Cup
India's seam bowler Harshit Rana has been ruled out of the T20 World Cup due to a knee injury, with Mohammed Siraj named as his replacement. The injury occurred during a warm-up match against South Africa. Captain Suryakumar Yadav expressed confidence in the squad's depth to handle the setback. India aims to defend their title and achieve a historic victory as the first host to win a T20 World Cup. The team's lineup includes key players like Jasprit Bumrah and Arshdeep Singh.



India U-19 Cricket Team Awarded ₹7.5 Crore for World Cup Win :-

The BCCI announced a ₹7.5 crore cash reward for the Indian Under-19 cricket team following their victory at the 2026 Under-19 World Cup in Harare. The team defeated England in the final, securing their sixth title. BCCI Secretary Devajit Saikia praised the team's unbeaten run and performance, highlighting the pride it brings to the nation. Prime Minister Narendra Modi also congratulated the team, noting the victory's inspiration for young athletes. India's cricketing success continues to make a mark on the global stage.



Karnataka Approves IPL Matches at Chinnaswamy Stadium with Safety Norms :-

The Karnataka Cabinet has approved the hosting of IPL matches at Bengaluru's M. Chinnaswamy Stadium under strict safety guidelines. Following a tragic stampede in June 2025, the decision enforces regulations based on the Justice John Michael D'Cunha report, including a spectator cap of 35,000. This move is seen as a positive step by RCB and KSCA, aiming to restore cricketing activities while ensuring public safety. IPL 2026, starting March 26, now hinges on RCB's decision to use Chinnaswamy as their home venue.



Indian Athletes Shine at Abu Dhabi Masters in Hammer Throw :-

Indian athletes excelled at the Abu Dhabi Masters, with Kishorakumar Chandira Mogan winning gold and Mohammad Ansar securing bronze in the 30+ hammer throw category. Kishorakumar's winning throw measured 37.92 meters, showcasing consistency and skill. The event, part of the inclusive Open Masters Games Abu Dhabi 2026, welcomed athletes aged 30 and above, highlighting India's prowess in veteran athletics on the international stage.



Mbappe Calls for Ban Over Alleged Racist Incident in Champions League :-

Kylian Mbappe calls for a ban on Benfica's Gianluca Prestianni after an alleged racist slur against Vinicius Jr during a Champions League match. The incident led to a temporary halt under FIFA's anti-racism protocols. While

Prestianni denied the accusations, the event has sparked widespread condemnation and calls for stricter measures against racism in sports. The controversy highlights ongoing challenges in addressing racial discrimination in international football.



Lakshya Cup 2025 to Showcase Top Indian Rifle Shooters :-

The 16th Lakshya Cup in Navi Mumbai will feature India's top 10m air rifle shooters, serving as preparation for the Asian Games. The event offers equal opportunities for men and women, with prize money and equipment awards. Founded by Olympian Suma Shirur, the Lakshya Cup aims to provide structured exposure and competitive pressure for emerging and elite shooters. This year's tournament reflects India's commitment to advancing sports excellence and gender parity in shooting sports.

17: State



Rashtriya Ayurveda Vidyapeeth Hosts Flora Identification Training :-

Rashtriya Ayurveda Vidyapeeth conducted a training program on flora identification in Kerala's Wayanad district. The program aimed to enhance participants' skills in medicinal plant identification, crucial for Ayurvedic practice. Attendees, including postgraduate students, gained field exposure and interacted with experts. The initiative promotes experiential learning and integrates traditional knowledge with biodiversity conservation. This training reflects efforts to preserve and utilize India's rich botanical heritage, supporting the advancement of Ayurveda and sustainable development.



National Biodiversity Authority Supports Sustainable Resource Use :-

The National Biodiversity Authority has disbursed ₹17 lakh to Maharashtra's Biodiversity Management Committee under the Access and Benefit Sharing mechanism. This funding supports sustainable use of biological resources, linking biodiversity conservation with biotechnology. The framework ensures equitable benefit sharing, empowering local communities. Maharashtra, a major beneficiary, highlights India's leadership in implementing the Convention on Biological Diversity. The initiative aligns with global goals, promoting inclusive development and reinforcing India's commitment to environmental sustainability and community empowerment.



Adampur Airport Renamed to Honor Guru Ravidass Maharaj :-

Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the renaming of Adampur Airport in Punjab to Shri Guru Ravidass Maharaj Ji Airport on Sant Ravidass Jayanti. This gesture honors the revered poet-saint's teachings of equality and service. PM Modi, during a visit to Dera Sachkhand Ballan, emphasized Guru Ravidass's enduring influence

on social harmony and inclusive development. The renaming is part of broader efforts to recognize cultural heritage, with initiatives like the construction of a temple and museum dedicated to Guru Ravidass in Madhya Pradesh.



Assam Government to Preserve Darrang King's Heritage

The Assam government has announced a Rs 50 crore grant to preserve the heritage of the Darrang kings, aiming to restore and develop the royal legacy of the Koch dynasty as a major tourism center. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma emphasized the importance of protecting Assam's historical legacy and connecting future generations to the region's rich past. The project will reflect the historical significance of the Koch dynasty, contributing to Assam's cultural and political evolution.



Andhra Pradesh Aims to Become Natural Farming Hub

Andhra Pradesh, led by CM N. Chandrababu Naidu, aims to transform into India's largest natural farming hub. With 18 lakh farmers adopting natural farming across 20 acres, the state emphasizes reducing chemical fertilizers. The initiative includes certification and training programs, enhancing product quality for national and global markets. This strategy reflects Andhra Pradesh's

commitment to sustainable agriculture, aligning with environmental goals and boosting economic growth through agricultural innovation.



Proposed Siliguri Tunnel to Boost Northeast Connectivity :-

The Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has welcomed the proposal of an underground railway tunnel through the Siliguri Corridor. Seen as a game-changer, this development aims to enhance connectivity between the Northeast and the rest of India, addressing the region's strategic and economic challenges. The 'Chicken's Neck' corridor's vulnerabilities, such as natural disasters and disruptions, emphasize the need for this resilient infrastructure. The tunnel project aligns with India's Act East and Viksit Bharat vision, potentially boosting trade and tourism while ensuring national security.



Railways Progress on Angamali-Sabarimala Line, Enhances Tirur Connectivity :-

The Ministry of Railways is advancing the Angamali-Sabarimala railway line project, with the Kerala government initiating land acquisition proceedings. The long-pending project, initially stalled due to protests and alignment disputes, has a revised cost of ₹3,801 crore.

The Railways is closely monitoring progress with the state government. Additionally, train connectivity for Tirur has improved, with new services and increased budget allocations for infrastructure projects in Kerala. The Amrit Bharat Station Scheme aims to modernize railway infrastructure nationwide.



Google to Establish \$15 Billion AI Hub in Visakhapatnam :-

Sundar Pichai announced Google's \$15 billion investment in a full-stack AI hub in Visakhapatnam at the India AI Impact Summit. This initiative reflects Google's commitment to expanding its footprint in India, transforming the city into a global AI node. The hub will provide advanced infrastructure for AI services, fostering job creation and technological innovation. This investment aligns with India's aspirations to become a key player in the global AI landscape, as highlighted during the summit.



Nitish Kumar's Directive to Enhance Pedestrian Safety :-

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar issued a five-point directive to improve pedestrian safety, focusing on the construction of footpaths and zebra crossings in urban areas. The initiative aims to make roads safer for pedestrians amid increasing vehicular traffic. The directive also includes training programs for drivers on pedestrian rights and safety. The government is

committed to implementing these measures swiftly to reduce accidents and enhance the quality of life for pedestrians in the state.



PM Modi to Inaugurate HCL-Foxconn Semiconductor Project :-

Prime Minister Modi will participate in the groundbreaking ceremony of the HCL-Foxconn semiconductor project in Uttar Pradesh, marking a milestone in India's push for technological self-reliance. The project, involving an investment of over ₹3,700 crore, aims to strengthen domestic manufacturing capabilities and reduce import dependence. It is expected to boost the semiconductor ecosystem, generate employment, and catalyze growth in ancillary industries, aligning with Modi's vision of positioning India as a global hub for electronics manufacturing.



PM Modi to Launch India's First Namo Bharat RRTS and Meerut Metro :-

Prime Minister Modi will inaugurate the Namo Bharat Train and Meerut Metro, dedicating the 82-km Delhi-Meerut Namo Bharat Corridor to the nation. The projects aim to enhance urban mobility, reduce road congestion, and lower carbon emissions. The Namo Bharat RRTS will connect major urban centers with Delhi at high speed, while the Meerut Metro will operate as India's fastest

metro system. These initiatives are expected to set a benchmark for integrated urban and regional transit systems in India.



PM Modi Celebrates Agricultural Achievements and Kerala Kumbh Revival :-

Prime Minister Narendra Modi praised India's farmers for their blend of tradition and innovation, highlighting achievements in rice production and seed heritage preservation. He also celebrated the revival of the Mamangam festival in Kerala, drawing parallels with the Maha Kumbh. These events symbolize India's reconnecting with its heritage while strengthening its global footprint, showcasing the unity in diversity and the enduring spiritual consciousness of the nation.



Chhattisgarh's Economic Growth to Hit 11.57% in FY 2025-26 :-

Chhattisgarh's economy is projected to grow by 11.57% in FY 2025-26, outperforming the national average. The state's GSDP is expected to increase from Rs 5.65 lakh crore to Rs 6.31 lakh crore, with growth driven by agriculture, industry, and services sectors. The Economic Survey highlights a balanced development trajectory and an expected rise in per capita income, boosting domestic demand. The state government remains committed to inclusive growth, focusing on agriculture, industrial investment, and services expansion.

18: Summits & Conferences



Seychelles President to Visit India, Strengthening Bilateral Ties :-

Seychelles President Dr. Patrick Herminie is set to visit India from February 5 to 10, marking his first official visit since taking office. The visit coincides with the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between India and Seychelles. During his stay, President Herminie will hold discussions with Indian leaders, including President Droupadi Murmu and PM Modi, focusing on bilateral, regional, and international issues. The visit underscores the strategic importance of Seychelles as a key maritime neighbor and aligns with India's Vision MAHASAGAR, aimed at fostering security and growth across regions. The visit is expected to further enhance cooperation and people-to-people ties between the two nations.



EAM Jaishankar Meets US Secretaries in Washington :-

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar met US Secretaries Marco Rubio and Scott Bessent, discussing India-US strategic and economic partnerships. The meetings emphasized cooperation in critical minerals, trade, defense, and energy security. Both sides agreed to advance engagements, highlighting the growing bilateral relationship. These discussions reflect the deepening ties between India and the US, focusing on areas critical for economic growth and regional stability, amid global geopolitical shifts.



President Murmu Advocates Fintech for Social Inclusion at Black Swan Summit :-

President Droupadi Murmu emphasized the role of fintech in advancing gender justice and social inclusion at the Black Swan Summit in Bhubaneswar. She highlighted the importance of integrating digital and financial literacy into education to ensure equitable participation. India's fintech journey has significantly expanded financial inclusion, with over 57 crore Jan Dhan accounts. Murmu urged innovators to design technology that promotes inclusion and employment. The summit brought together policymakers and technologists to discuss sustainable finance and the empowerment of SMEs, reinforcing India's commitment to inclusive growth.



Greek Defence Minister Discusses Strategic Issues with EAM Jaishankar :-

Greek Defence Minister Nikos Dendias met with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar to discuss strategic and security issues during his official visit to India. The talks covered regional and international developments, emphasizing cooperation between Greece and India in defense and security. Dendias' visit included meetings with Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and participation in the India-EU Forum. The visit follows India's recent trade agreement with the European Union, highlighting India's growing role as a trusted global partner.



Sarthal Winter Festival Boosts Tourism in Jammu and Kashmir :-

The Sarthal Winter Festival, held in the scenic Sarthal Valley of Kathua district, has successfully attracted thousands of tourists, showcasing the region's natural beauty and cultural heritage. Organized by the Tourism Department and local authorities, the festival featured performances by renowned artists and local cultural programs. This initiative aims to establish Sarthal as a major winter destination, promoting sustainable tourism and providing livelihood opportunities for local

residents. The festival's success highlights the potential for tourism-driven economic growth in the region.



NCW to Host Consultation on Women's Safety in Higher Education :-

The National Commission for Women will host a state-level consultation on women's safety in higher education in Shimla. The event will address existing challenges, assess institutional mechanisms, and strengthen coordination among stakeholders to ensure a safe academic environment for women. Key issues include sexual harassment, cyber harassment, and lack of awareness about grievance mechanisms. The consultation aims to enhance legal awareness, improve safety measures, and foster dialogue among policymakers, educators, and students, promoting safer campuses for women.



INDIAWOOD 2026 exhibition : India-EU FTA Boosts India's Woodworking and Furniture Industry :-

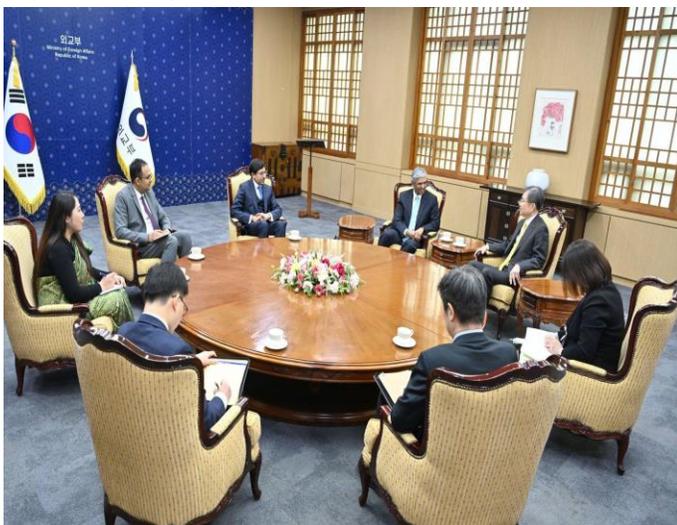
The India-EU Free Trade Agreement is set to revolutionize India's woodworking and furniture industry by eliminating tariffs and facilitating advanced machinery imports. The upcoming INDIAWOOD 2026 exhibition in Bangalore will showcase this growth,

featuring over 1,000 brands and attracting 90,000 professionals. The event emphasizes Industry 4.0, with a focus on automation, sustainability, and innovation. As the Indian furniture market aims for a \$40 billion valuation by 2030, the FTA positions India as a key player in the global supply chain.



AI-in-Education Roundtable Held at IIT Delhi :-

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan chaired a roundtable on AI in education at IIT Delhi, engaging with startups to explore AI's transformative potential. The event is part of efforts to integrate AI into education, aligning with NEP 2020. Participating startups showcased AI-driven solutions for diverse educational needs. Insights from the event will inform the upcoming Bharat Bodhan AI Conclave, focusing on AI's strategic role in education. Pradhan emphasized the importance of building India-centric solutions and assured government support for digital infrastructure.



India and South Korea Deepen Strategic Partnership in Seoul Dialogue :-

India and South Korea held their 6th Foreign Policy and Security Dialogue in Seoul, reaffirming their Special Strategic Partnership. The discussions covered bilateral cooperation in defense, economy, and technology, with plans for high-level engagements in 2026. Both nations explored joint initiatives in key sectors, emphasizing mutual understanding and regional security, particularly in the Indo-Pacific context.



Israeli Delegation to Attend India AI Impact Summit 2026 :-

A high-level Israeli delegation, led by Ilan Fluss, will participate in the India AI Impact Summit 2026. The delegation includes government officials, tech leaders, and researchers, focusing on AI, climate resilience, and digital governance cooperation. This visit aims to strengthen India-Israel collaboration in emerging technologies, reflecting shared values of ethical innovation. Israeli delegates will partake in discussions on AI's role in climate adaptation and digital public infrastructure.



Iran-US Talks Resume in Geneva Amid Regional Tensions :-

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi arrived in Geneva for a second round of indirect nuclear talks with the US, mediated by Oman. The negotiations aim to address broader issues, including Iran's missile program, amid a US military buildup in the region. Despite significant differences, both sides seek diplomatic solutions to prevent further escalation, with concerns over Iran's enriched uranium stockpile and regional stability remaining critical discussion points.



Ukraine and Russia Hold Peace Talks Amid Continued Tensions :-

Ukraine and Russia engaged in U.S.-mediated peace talks in Geneva, aiming to resolve the ongoing conflict. The talks, overshadowed by recent airstrikes in Ukraine, highlight the challenges of reaching an agreement. Despite pressure from international mediators, both sides remain far apart on key issues. The negotiations are crucial in seeking a peaceful resolution to Europe's largest conflict since World War II, which has resulted in significant casualties and displacement.



India Hosts Dubai Conference on AYUSH Mind-Body Interventions :-

The 3rd International AYUSH Conference in Dubai discusses a draft white paper on AYUSH mind-body wellness interventions. The event, supported by India's Ministry of AYUSH, aims to advance global integration of traditional systems like Ayurveda and Yoga. Key initiatives include evidence-based documentation, global health policy contributions, and a practitioners' survey to inform curriculum design and capacity-building, promoting AYUSH's role in addressing mental health and lifestyle disorders.



Ashwini Vaishnaw Inaugurates WAVES Creators' Corner at AI Summit :-

Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw inaugurated the 'WAVES Creators' Corner' at the India AI Impact Summit, showcasing AI innovations in the AVGC-XR ecosystem. The pavilion, featuring 51 startups, highlights AI's

transformative potential in animation, gaming, and immersive technologies. The initiative aligns with India's goal to strengthen its creative economy through cutting-edge technology. The event underscores the government's commitment to fostering innovation and supporting emerging entrepreneurs.



President Murmu and Serbian President Discuss AI and Economic Cooperation :-

President Droupadi Murmu met with Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić to discuss deepening cooperation in AI, manufacturing, and tourism. The leaders emphasized the potential for bilateral trade and investment, focusing on sectors like IT, biotechnology, and education. The meeting underscored the enduring partnership between India and Serbia, rooted in their roles as co-founders of the Non-Aligned Movement. The discussions highlighted the importance of advancing cooperation for mutual benefit and prosperity.



India-Spain Education Conference Highlights AI and Collaboration :-

Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan emphasized education and research as central to India-Spain relations during the Dual Year 2026. The conference focused on AI's role in education and encouraged Spanish universities to establish campuses in India. The event underscored the importance of AI in enhancing human creativity and ethical responsibility. The collaboration aims to strengthen academic ties, foster innovation, and promote inclusive education, contributing to the broader goal of global cooperation in AI governance.



Canadian PM Mark Carney to Visit India, Australia, Japan :-

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney will visit India, Australia, and Japan to strengthen trade and strategic partnerships in the Indo-Pacific region. The visit, scheduled from February 26 to March 7, aims to expand cooperation in key sectors such as trade, energy,

technology, and defense. Carney's discussions with Indian Prime Minister Modi will focus on enhancing bilateral ties, while meetings with Australian and Japanese leaders will address defense and economic cooperation, reflecting Canada's strategy of diversifying trade and attracting investment.



Election Commission Holds First National Meet with SECs Since 1999 :-

The Election Commission of India hosted a National Round Table Conference with State Election Commissioners, marking the first such meeting in 27 years. The conference aimed to strengthen coordination on electoral processes and logistics, with discussions on technological practices, Electronic Voting Machines, and the accuracy of electoral rolls. The meeting emphasized cooperative federalism in election conduct and included presentations on new digital platforms like ECINET to enhance transparency and security in elections.



UP CM Yogi Adityanath Engages Japanese Businesses to Boost State's Growth :-

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath visited Tokyo to strengthen industrial ties and seek investments. Meeting with key Japanese business leaders, he discussed opportunities in sectors like renewable energy and infrastructure. This visit aims to bolster UP's integration into global supply chains and foster industrial growth. The CM's engagement underscores India's strategic economic diplomacy and its efforts to attract foreign investments in line with the state's rapid industrial expansion. This initiative is pivotal for regional development and international economic cooperation.



AI4Agri Summit 2026: Transforming Indian Farming with AI :-

The AI4Agri Summit 2026, held in Mumbai, marked a significant shift in Indian agriculture by emphasizing investment and technology. As India progresses towards its 'Viksit Bharat 2047' vision, Maharashtra is at the forefront of integrating AI with farming needs. The summit, organized by the Government of Maharashtra and hosted by FAO, discussed the 'MahaAgri-AI Policy' and projected the national agricultural credit to exceed INR 31.5 lakh crore by FY26. AI in Indian agriculture is estimated to reach USD 5 billion by 2030.

SECTION 2

Practice Questions with Answers



PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1) Which country recently became the world's third-largest domestic aviation market, according to PM Modi?

- A) China
- B) United States
- C) India
- D) United Kingdom

2) What major trade agreement did India recently sign, boosting economic ties with a major global bloc?

- A) India–US FTA
- B) India–ASEAN FTA
- C) India–EU FTA
- D) India–UK FTA

3) Who was the longest-serving Deputy Chief Minister of Maharashtra, recently killed in a plane crash?

- A) Sharad Pawar
- B) Devendra Fadnavis
- C) Ajit Pawar
- D) Eknath Shinde

4) Which Indian initiative was highlighted at Gulfood 2026 for promoting agri-food startups?

- A) UDAN
- B) BHARATI Pavilion
- C) AYUSH Mission
- D) Make in India

5) Which technology is central to the latest India–EU cooperation on digital infrastructure?

- A) 5G
- B) Blockchain
- C) 6G
- D) Satellite Internet

6) What is the primary aim of India's National Green Hydrogen Mission at Kandla Port?

- A) Developing new oil reserves
- B) Exporting coal
- C) Producing and exporting green hydrogen
- D) Boosting automobile manufacturing

7) Which new educational initiative is being launched at IIM Ahmedabad to advance AI in India?

- A) Narayan Murthy AI Academy
- B) Krishnamurthy Tandon School of Artificial Intelligence
- C) Sundar Pichai AI Institute
- D) Satya Nadella AI Center

8) What record did India's agriculture sector achieve according to the latest Economic Survey?

- A) Highest tea exports
- B) Record foodgrain production of 357.73 million tonnes
- C) Largest dairy output
- D) Maximum sugarcane export

9) Which state recently received ₹17 lakh from the National Biodiversity Authority under the Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) mechanism?

- A) Karnataka
- B) Gujarat
- C) Maharashtra
- D) Assam

10) Which Indian state has become a major higher education hub in the Northeast, hosting the region's largest data centre?

- A) Assam
- B) Tripura
- C) Meghalaya
- D) Nagaland

11) What is the latest version of India's indigenous Automatic Train Protection system, recently commissioned over 472 km in a single day?

- A) Kavach 2.0
- B) Kavach 3.0
- C) Kavach 4.0
- D) Raksha Rail

12) Who recently met with his Sudanese counterpart to reiterate India's stance on ending violence and discussed India-Arab cooperation?

- A) Narendra Modi
- B) Amit Shah
- C) S. Jaishankar
- D) Nitin Gadkari

13) Which international agreement did Prime Minister Modi describe as a 'historic milestone' for expanding markets and creating jobs?

- A) India-US Trade Deal
- B) India-ASEAN FTA
- C) India-EU Free Trade Agreement
- D) India-Australia ECTA

14) Which event did Union Home Minister Amit Shah lay the foundation stone for in Dibrugarh, Assam?

- A) Assam Secretariat Complex
- B) Second Assembly Complex
- C) Guwahati Metro
- D) Kaziranga Sports Academy

15) Which two countries recently held their 11th Staff Talks to enhance maritime cooperation and interoperability?

- A) India and Australia
- B) India and Japan
- C) India and France
- D) India and UK

16) Which two Indian wetlands were recently designated as Ramsar Sites, highlighting India's commitment to biodiversity?

- A) Keoladeo and Chilika
- B) Patna Bird Sanctuary and Chhari-Dhand
- C) Loktak Lake and Deepor Beel
- D) Nalsarovar and Ashtamudi

17) In the Indian Railways' recent milestone, what is Kavach 4.0?

- A) A railway ticketing system
- B) A high-speed train engine
- C) An indigenous Automatic Train Protection (ATP) system
- D) A passenger amenities scheme

18) What major development is planned for the Delhi Aerocity Metro station under Phase 4 expansion?

- A) Conversion into a shopping mall
- B) Becoming a major interchange hub
- C) Closure for renovation
- D) Introduction of double-decker trains

19) Which event marked a significant step in India's relations with the Arab world in January 2026?

- A) Signing a free trade agreement
- B) Hosting the 2nd India-Arab Foreign Ministers' Meeting
- C) Launching a new embassy
- D) Initiating a military exercise

20) What is the significance of the extension of the Golden Line from Aerocity to Terminal 1 IGI Airport in Delhi?

- A) It introduces luxury trains
- B) It enhances direct metro connectivity to Terminal 1
- C) It creates a new freight corridor
- D) It replaces all buses to the airport

21) Which initiative was launched in the Union Budget 2026–27 to make India a global hub for advanced manufacturing and innovation?

- A) Make in India 3.0
- B) India Semiconductor Mission (ISM) 2.0
- C) Smart Bharat Initiative
- D) Digital India 2.0

22) What is the primary objective of the newly established Bharat-VISTAAR platform announced in the 2026-27 Budget?

- A) Facilitate urban infrastructure
- B) Promote textile exports
- C) Provide AI-powered support to farmers
- D) Expand international tourism

23) Which new mission was launched to foster sports talent and manufacturing in India's sports sector as per the 2026–27 Budget?

- A) Fit India Mission

- B) Khelo India Mission
- C) Olympic Bharat Mission
- D) Sports Star Scheme

24) What is the main focus of the Biopharma SHAKTI initiative introduced in the Union Budget 2026–27?

- A) Export of herbal medicines
- B) Advancement of biologic medicines and biosimilars
- C) Generic drug price control
- D) Promotion of AYUSH therapies

25) Which sector received the highest-ever annual budgetary allocation of ₹2,761.80 crore in the 2026–27 Union Budget?

- A) Dairy
- B) Fisheries
- C) Animal Husbandry
- D) Poultry

26) Which recent initiative by the Indian government aims to protect retail investors by increasing the Securities Transaction Tax (STT) on derivatives trading?

- A) Implementation of GST on stock trading
- B) Hike in STT on F&O trading
- C) Introduction of TDS on mutual funds
- D) Reduction of capital gains tax

27) Which Indian defence public sector undertaking was recently granted 'Miniratna Category-I' status for its rapid growth and indigenisation efforts?

- A) Bharat Electronics Limited
- B) Yantra India Limited
- C) Hindustan Aeronautics Limited
- D) Bharat Dynamics Limited

28) What is the main objective of the CISF Vande Mataram Coastal Cyclothon–2026?

- A) Celebrating yoga
- B) Awareness on air pollution
- C) Strengthening coastal security through community participation
- D) Promoting inland waterways

29) Which Indian Air Force aerobatic team is set to showcase the ALH Dhruv helicopter at the Singapore Airshow 2026?

- A) Surya Kiran
- B) Sarang
- C) Akash Ganga
- D) Garud

30) Which upcoming summit in New Delhi is expected to be the largest global event dedicated to artificial intelligence, with over 35,000 registrations?

- A) India Digital Summit
- B) Global Tech Forum
- C) India AI Impact Summit 2026
- D) World Economic Forum India

31) Who launched India's first evidence-based national guidelines for lung cancer treatment in February 2026?

- A) Narendra Modi
- B) Mansukh Mandaviya
- C) JP Nadda
- D) Harsh Vardhan

32) What is the total investment pledged by India in key American sectors under the new India–US trade agreement announced in February 2026?

- A) \$100 billion
- B) \$300 billion
- C) \$500 billion
- D) \$800 billion

33) Which African country held its 4th Joint Defence Cooperation Committee meeting with India in Zanzibar in February 2026?

- A) Kenya
- B) Tanzania
- C) Ethiopia
- D) Mozambique

34) The Punatsangchhu-II Hydroelectric Project, discussed in February 2026 for early commissioning, is a collaboration between India and which country?

- A) Nepal
- B) Bhutan
- C) Bangladesh
- D) Myanmar

35) Which Indian government scheme, with a ₹7,280 crore outlay, aims to boost domestic manufacturing of rare earth permanent magnets?

- A) PLI-Electronics
- B) REPM Manufacturing Scheme
- C) Critical Minerals Mission
- D) Make in India Magnetics

36) Who was sworn in as the new Chief Minister of Manipur in February 2026?

- A) N. Biren Singh
- B) Nemcha Kipgen
- C) Yumnam Khemchand Singh
- D) Loishi Dikho

37) What AI-based technology has Indian Railways deployed to prevent elephant deaths on tracks?

- A) Thermal vision cameras
- B) Drone patrols
- C) Intrusion Detection System
- D) Automated warning sirens

38) Which two countries held nuclear talks in Oman in February 2026 to seek de-escalation?

- A) US and Russia
- B) Iran and Saudi Arabia
- C) US and Iran
- D) Iran and UAE

39) What is unique about the 'Bharat Taxi' service launched by Amit Shah in February 2026?

- A) It is a government-owned taxi service
- B) It is an aggregator-based model
- C) It is a cooperative driver-owned platform
- D) It is only for women

40) Which material did Indian researchers use to develop an eco-friendly, self-powered photodetector in 2026?

- A) Lead-based perovskite
- B) Silicon
- C) Cs₂AgBiBr₆ (lead-free double perovskite)

- D) Gallium arsenide

41) Which initiative recently set a new record with over 4.5 crore registrations, promoting stress-free exams for students in India?

- A) National Education Policy 2020
- B) Pariksha Pe Charcha
- C) Exam Warriors Program
- D) Study Without Stress Scheme

42) What is unique about 'Bharat Taxi', recently launched by Amit Shah in New Delhi?

- A) It is an all-electric taxi service
- B) It is government-run and profit-oriented
- C) It is India's first cooperative-based taxi platform
- D) It is exclusive to women drivers

43) Which government-led AI initiative will complete text models in all 22 scheduled Indian languages by February 2026?

- A) Digital India AI
- B) IndiaAI Mission
- C) Bharat GenAI
- D) Smart Bharat AI

44) What milestone has India's 5G network achieved as of December 2025?

- A) Coverage in 70% of districts
- B) Full rollout in all 777 districts
- C) Availability in 99.87% of districts
- D) Limited to metro cities only

45) Under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme, how many railway stations have been redeveloped as of February 2026?

- A) 58
- B) 172
- C) 1,337
- D) 3,042

46) India clinched its record sixth ICC Men's U-19 World Cup title in 2026 by defeating which country in the final?

- A) Australia
- B) South Africa
- C) England

D) Pakistan

47) Which young Indian cricketer set the record for the highest individual score in an U-19 World Cup final in 2026?

- A) Ayush Mhatre
- B) Raj Bawa
- C) Vaibhav Suryavanshi
- D) Sanju Samson

48) What was the key theme of the World Audio Visual Entertainment Summit (WAVES) 2025 held to boost India's creative economy?

- A) Make in India, Sell in India
- B) Create in India, Create for the World
- C) Digital India for Everyone
- D) Innovation for Rural India

49) At the Black Swan Summit 2026, President Murmu emphasized the role of fintech in advancing which of the following?

- A) Tax compliance
- B) Gender justice and inclusion
- C) Export growth
- D) Foreign investment

50) In January 2026, India recorded its highest-ever monthly output of which type of fertilizer?

- A) Urea
- B) Phosphatic and Potassic (P&K)
- C) Ammonium Sulphate
- D) Organic Fertilizer

51) In February 2026, which country's president did India welcome for a state visit marking 50 years of diplomatic ties?

- A) Maldives
- B) Seychelles
- C) Mauritius
- D) Madagascar

52) Who was awarded 'Player of the Match' in the 2026 U-19 World Cup final for India?

- A) Ayush Mhatre
- B) Abhigyan Kundu
- C) Vaibhav Suryavanshi

D) Caleb Falconer

53) What is the name of the trade framework recently agreed upon by India and the United States in February 2026?

- A) Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement
- B) Interim Trade Agreement
- C) Asia-Pacific Economic Framework
- D) Digital Trade Pact

54) Under the new India-US interim trade framework, what is the revised US tariff rate on Indian goods?

- A) 0%
- B) 10%
- C) 18%
- D) 50%

55) Which digital payment platform is India set to launch in Malaysia, as announced during PM Modi's 2026 visit?

- A) BharatQR
- B) RuPay
- C) Unified Payments Interface (UPI)
- D) Paytm

56) Which Indian startup recently released an advanced AI model as part of India's sovereign AI initiative?

- A) InMobi
- B) Sarvam AI
- C) Haptik
- D) Freshworks

57) The 2026 Esports Nations Cup in Riyadh will include which traditional game as one of its 16 competitive titles?

- A) Carrom
- B) Kabaddi
- C) Chess
- D) Swimming

58) Which city recently flagged off 500 electric buses to promote green mobility?

- A) Mumbai
- B) Bengaluru

- C) Delhi
D) Ahmedabad

59) Which major international alliance did Malaysia recently join, as noted during PM Modi's visit?

- A) Global Solar Alliance
B) International Big Cat Alliance
C) BRICS
D) Quad

60) Who was recently honored for their role in the Indian National Army during PM Modi's Malaysia visit?

- A) Subhas Chandra Bose
B) Jeyaraj Raja Rao
C) Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel
D) Rathakrishnan

61) Which of the following sectors in Gujarat is expected to benefit the most from the India-US interim trade agreement signed in early 2026?

- A) Information Technology
B) Textiles and Garments
C) Automobiles
D) Banking

62) What milestone did BSE achieve in Q3 FY26, as reported in February 2026?

- A) First public listing
B) Crossing 1000 crore net profit
C) 174% jump in net profit
D) Introduction of Sensex

63) Which newly inaugurated rail service connects Mizoram's capital to Assam's Barak Valley as of February 2026?

- A) Aizawl-Dibrugarh Express
B) Sairang-Silchar Passenger
C) Imphal-Guwahati Shatabdi
D) Agartala-Silchar Express

64) Which international defense event in February 2026 featured India's first pavilion and saw participation from Raksha Rajya Mantri Sanjay Seth?

- A) Aero India
B) World Defence Show, Riyadh
C) DefExpo India
D) IDEX Abu Dhabi

65) What is the primary focus of the 'Joint Vision SESEL' adopted by India and Seychelles in February 2026?

- A) Military alliances
B) Sustainability, Economic Growth, and Security
C) Space exploration
D) Automotive trade

66) What is the primary goal of the Centre's 'White Revolution 2.0' initiative launched in 2026?

- A) Increase milk imports
B) Privatised dairy cooperatives
C) Expand cooperative coverage and boost women's role in dairy sector
D) Ban unorganised milk sales

67) Which recent agreement aims to prevent double social security contributions for employees posted between India and the UK?

- A) Bilateral Investment Treaty
B) Social Security Agreement
C) Double Taxation Treaty
D) Visa-Free Travel Pact

68) Which country has been designated as 'Country of the Year' at Germany's BIOFACH 2026, the world's leading organic trade fair?

- A) Brazil
B) China
C) India
D) Australia

69) According to recent data, what is India's current doctor-population ratio, surpassing WHO standards?

- A) 1:500
B) 1:700
C) 1:811
D) 1:1100

70) What key step did the UP government announce in 2026 for women's safety at railway stations?

- A) Free travel passes
- B) Building 1,680 modern toilets at 640 stations
- C) Separate waiting rooms
- D) Installing CCTV cameras only

71) According to an SBI Research report released in February 2026, India's trade surplus with the United States is expected to cross which figure annually?

- A) \$40 billion
- B) \$60 billion
- C) \$90 billion
- D) \$150 billion

72) Which historic social reformer's 200th birth anniversary was commemorated by PM Modi with the release of special coins in February 2026?

- A) Swami Vivekananda
- B) Raja Ram Mohan Roy
- C) Maharshi Dayanand Saraswati
- D) Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar

73) Which multinational company's CEO met PM Modi in February 2026 to discuss expanding operations in India as part of the 'Viksit Bharat' initiative?

- A) Siemens
- B) Rolls-Royce
- C) General Electric
- D) Airbus

74) Which Indian government exercise, scheduled at Pokhran on February 27, 2026, will showcase full-spectrum air operations and indigenous platforms?

- A) Exercise Vajra Prahar
- B) Exercise Vayushakti-26
- C) Exercise Pralay
- D) Exercise Gagan Shakti

75) Which country was DXB (Dubai International Airport)'s largest country market in 2025?

- A) United Kingdom
- B) India
- C) China
- D) Saudi Arabia

76) Which Indian state recently announced the immediate implementation of the Centre's directive to sing all six stanzas of 'Vande Mataram' before the national anthem at official functions?

- A) Uttar Pradesh
- B) Madhya Pradesh
- C) Gujarat
- D) Rajasthan

77) Which new building complex, inaugurated by PM Modi in February 2026, now houses the Prime Minister's Office and key ministries?

- A) Central Vista Bhavan
- B) Seva Teerth
- C) Sardar Patel Complex
- D) Rashtrapati Bhavan Annex

78) Which political party claimed a 'historic victory' in the 13th parliamentary elections of Bangladesh in February 2026?

- A) Awami League
- B) Jatiya Party
- C) Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)
- D) Jamaat-e-Islami

79) Which city aims to become India's first to operate a 100% electric BRTS fleet by 2026-27 as part of preparations for the 2030 Commonwealth Games?

- A) Delhi
- B) Bengaluru
- C) Ahmedabad
- D) Lucknow

80) Delhi's new 'Chief Minister Skill Development Scheme' initially targets artisans from which sector?

- A) IT Professionals
- B) Khadi and Handloom
- C) Construction Workers

D) Healthcare Workers

81) Which scheme recently saw its hospital admissions cross Rs. 1.15 lakh crore in private hospitals as per the Union Health Ministry?

- A) PM Kisan Samman Nidhi
- B) Ayushman Bharat – Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana
- C) National Health Protection Scheme
- D) PM Swasthya Suraksha Yojana

82) Which major summit is India hosting in February 2026 to showcase its global leadership in Artificial Intelligence?

- A) India-Tech Expo
- B) India-AI Impact Summit
- C) Bharat Digital Forum
- D) Global AI Conclave

83) Which new scheme was launched by PM Modi at Seva Teerth to provide accident victims with cashless treatment up to ₹1.5 lakh?

- A) PM SURAJ
- B) PM RAHAT
- C) PM SURAKSHA
- D) PM JEEVAN

84) Under the IndiaAI Mission, how many indigenous AI model teams were shortlisted for foundational model development as per February 2026 updates?

- A) 6
- B) 12
- C) 18
- D) 24

85) Which country recently held the 6th Foreign Policy and Security Dialogue with India, focusing on strategic partnerships and technology?

- A) Japan
- B) South Korea
- C) Vietnam
- D) Australia

86) Which Indian city will host the India AI Impact Expo 2026, showcasing AI-driven governance tools by the Panchayati Raj Ministry?

- A) Bangalore
- B) Mumbai
- C) New Delhi
- D) Hyderabad

87) What is the primary significance of converting North and South Blocks into the 'Yuge Yugeen Bharat' National Museum?

- A) To expand government offices
- B) To create a new parliament building
- C) To celebrate India's civilisational heritage
- D) To increase tourism revenue

88) According to Union Health Minister J.P. Nadda, what is the latest Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) per lakh live births in India?

- A) 130
- B) 100
- C) 88
- D) 60

89) Which National Highway in Assam is set to get India's first underwater road-cum-rail tunnel, as approved in February 2026?

- A) NH-44
- B) NH-15
- C) NH-715
- D) NH-160A

90) What is the primary goal of the Startup India Fund of Funds 2.0 (FoF 2.0) approved in February 2026?

- A) Funding public sector banks
- B) Promoting real estate investment
- C) Mobilising venture capital for startups
- D) Supporting agricultural subsidies

91) Which city became the first in Gujarat to receive electric buses under the PM e-Bus Sewa Scheme in February 2026?

- A) Vadodara
- B) Rajkot

- C) Bhavnagar
D) Gandhinagar

92) Who represented India at the swearing-in of Bangladesh's new government led by Tarique Rahman in February 2026?

- A) Prime Minister Narendra Modi
B) President Droupadi Murmu
C) Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla
D) External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar

93) What major defence agreement is expected to be renewed at the 6th India-France Annual Defence Dialogue in February 2026?

- A) 10-year defence cooperation agreement
B) Rafale fighter aircraft contract
C) Bilateral naval exercise pact
D) Nuclear technology sharing treaty

94) Which international summit scheduled from February 16–20, 2026 in New Delhi focuses on 'People, Planet, and Progress' in AI?

- A) Global Tech Forum
B) AI Impact Summit
C) Digital Future Congress
D) World Economic Forum Special Session

95) Which Indian cricketer scored a match-winning 77 against Pakistan in the T20 World Cup 2026 group stage?

- A) Suryakumar Yadav
B) Abhishek Sharma
C) Ishan Kishan
D) Tilak Varma

96) What major initiative did Union Home Minister Amit Shah announce regarding Naxalism at the 79th Delhi Police Raising Day in February 2026?

- A) Naxalism will end by March 31, 2026
B) Deployment of armed forces in all Naxal-affected states
C) Formation of a new anti-Naxal police unit
D) Establishment of more police academies

97) Which international city recently hosted the 3rd International AYUSH Conference and Exhibition in 2026?

- A) New Delhi
B) London
C) Dubai
D) Singapore

98) What is the primary goal of the newly launched SAHI and BODH initiatives at the India AI Summit 2026?

- A) Improving rural connectivity
B) Strengthening AI use in healthcare
C) Boosting digital payments
D) Enhancing AI in agriculture

99) Which country did Hungary and Slovakia request to help deliver Russian oil after the Druzhba pipeline disruption in 2026?

- A) Germany
B) Ukraine
C) Croatia
D) Poland

100) Who inaugurated the India AI Impact Expo 2026 at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi?

- A) Amit Shah
B) Narendra Modi
C) Jagat Prakash Nadda
D) S. Krishnan

101) Who was sworn in as the Prime Minister of Bangladesh after a landslide election victory in February 2026?

- A) Sheikh Hasina
B) Muhammad Yunus
C) Tarique Rahman
D) Khaleda Zia

102) Which initiative was launched to provide AI-based assistance to dairy farmers, as highlighted by PM Modi?

- A) Kisan Connect
B) Sarlaben
C) FarmAI

D) DairyTech

103) India and France renewed their bilateral defence cooperation agreement for how many years in February 2026?

- A) 5 years
- B) 7 years
- C) 10 years
- D) 15 years

104) What is the name of India's first government-owned, sovereign multilingual large language model initiative launched in 2026?

- A) BharatAI
- B) IndiaGen
- C) BharatGen
- D) SovereignAI

105) Which Indian state signed an MoU with CIPL at the India AI Summit 2026 to establish a Core Development Centre and AI Centre of Excellence?

- A) Uttar Pradesh
- B) Maharashtra
- C) Bihar
- D) Gujarat

106) Which two countries jointly inaugurated the IF-CAIH at AIIMS New Delhi in February 2026?

- A) India and Germany
- B) India and USA
- C) India and France
- D) India and UK

107) What is the primary goal of the newly launched VoicERA platform by MeitY under the Digital India BHASHINI initiative?

- A) Enhance social media security
- B) Strengthen multilingual voice technologies
- C) Provide cloud storage for documents
- D) Develop AI-powered robotics

108) Which global event hosted in Visakhapatnam in February 2026 saw participation from over 70 navies?

- A) Indian Ocean Naval Symposium
- B) International Fleet Review

C) Asia-Pacific Maritime Summit

D) World Maritime Congress

109) The 'AI Impact Startup Book,' launched by MeitY in 2026, primarily serves what purpose?

- A) Offers AI coding tutorials
- B) Maps India's AI startup ecosystem
- C) Lists government AI policies
- D) Publishes AI research papers

110) Who launched the AI-MET White Paper at the India AI Impact Summit 2026 to boost India's manufacturing competitiveness?

- A) Amitabh Kant
- B) Ashwini Vaishnaw
- C) Nirmala Sitharaman
- D) Dharmendra Pradhan

111) What is a key feature of the India-UK Free Trade Agreement (FTA) signed in July 2025?

- A) Zero tariffs on all UK imports
- B) Immediate 100% duty-free access for 99.1% of tariff lines
- C) Restriction on Indian textile exports
- D) Ban on AI technology sharing

112) Which two countries recently confirmed plans to co-produce Rafale fighter jets, with 'Make in India' as a core component?

- A) India and Russia
- B) India and France
- C) India and Israel
- D) India and the USA

113) Which international naval exercise, inaugurated by Rajnath Singh, involved 74 nations in its largest edition in 2026?

- A) RIMPAC
- B) VARUNA
- C) MILAN
- D) INDRA

114) Who announced the 'OpenAI for India' initiative aiming to build local AI infrastructure and skills?

- A) Vinod Khosla

- B) Satya Nadella
- C) Sam Altman
- D) Sundar Pichai

115) Which Indian state will see the completion of the Kopili Hydro Electric Power Project, expected to generate 150 MW of electricity?

- A) West Bengal
- B) Assam
- C) Kerala
- D) Gujarat

116) Which country recently inaugurated its first trade and investment promotion office in New Delhi to deepen economic ties with India?

- A) Brazil
- B) Russia
- C) France
- D) Australia

117) What innovative AI-powered solution was demonstrated by the Ministry of Ayush at the India AI Impact Summit 2026?

- A) AI-enabled Yoga Posture analysis tool
- B) AI-powered agriculture drone
- C) AI language translation device
- D) AI-driven weather forecasting app

118) The 62nd edition of Fit India Sundays on Cycle will celebrate which major upcoming international sports event to be hosted by India?

- A) Olympics 2036
- B) Commonwealth Games 2030
- C) Asian Games 2034
- D) FIFA World Cup 2030

119) The HCL-Foxconn joint venture in Uttar Pradesh is focused on advancing India's capabilities in which sector?

- A) Pharmaceutical manufacturing
- B) Semiconductor assembly and testing
- C) Aerospace engineering
- D) Green hydrogen production

120) Which country is partnering with India to set up an exaflop-scale AI supercomputer with 8,000 AI petaflops capacity?

- A) USA
- B) France
- C) Abu Dhabi (UAE)
- D) Japan

121) What key infrastructure project did PM Modi inaugurate in Meerut in February 2026?

- A) Delhi-Mumbai Expressway
- B) India's first Nammo Bharat RRTS and Meerut Metro
- C) Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor
- D) Kashi Vishwanath Corridor

122) Which Indian city emerged as a 'Global Trade Hub' with exports worth \$10.55 billion in FY 2024-25?

- A) Mumbai
- B) Bengaluru
- C) Surat
- D) Chennai

123) According to a recent report, which Indian digital payment system has become a global benchmark for public infrastructure?

- A) IMPS
- B) NEFT
- C) UPI
- D) RuPay

124) Which two global organizations were part of launching India's Policy Report and Developers' Toolkit on Inclusive Voice AI in 2026?

- A) World Bank and UNESCO
- B) ARTPARK @ IISc and GIZ
- C) Google and Microsoft
- D) NITI Aayog and Infosys

125) Which nation is planning to introduce a regulated freelance visa, potentially benefiting its large Indian expatriate community?

- A) United Arab Emirates
- B) Kuwait
- C) Qatar

D) Saudi Arabia

126) Which two countries recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to enhance cooperation in the postal sector?

- A) India and Russia
- B) India and Brazil
- C) India and France
- D) India and South Africa

127) What milestone did PM Modi announce at Rashtrapati Bhavan on February 23, 2026?

- A) Launch of Ayushman Bharat Yojana
- B) Unveiling of C. Rajagopalachari's statue
- C) Inauguration of Digital India Mission
- D) Opening of new Parliament building

128) What was the trade target set by Brazilian President Lula during his 2026 visit to India?

- A) \$15 billion
- B) \$20 billion
- C) \$25 billion
- D) \$30 billion

129) Which Indian state will host a new HCL-Foxconn semiconductor unit, as announced by PM Modi in February 2026?

- A) Gujarat
- B) Karnataka
- C) Uttar Pradesh
- D) Maharashtra

130) Which city hosted the 87th Raising Day parade of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) for the first time in 2026?

- A) New Delhi
- B) Kolkata
- C) Guwahati
- D) Hyderabad

131) What is the estimated monetisation potential under the recently launched National Monetisation Pipeline 2.0 for FY 2026–2030?

- A) ₹6 lakh crore
- B) ₹10.5 lakh crore

C) ₹16.72 lakh crore

D) ₹22 lakh crore

132) Which Indian state recently set a record by certifying over 1 lakh MSMEs, emphasizing its focus on entrepreneurship?

- A) Maharashtra
- B) Gujarat
- C) Karnataka
- D) Tamil Nadu

133) What is the primary aim of the Sujalam Sufalam Jal Abhiyan 2.0 recently launched in Gujarat?

- A) Promoting organic farming
- B) Water conservation and increasing groundwater levels
- C) Subsidizing solar energy
- D) River linking between states

134) What is the name of India's first comprehensive national counter-terrorism policy unveiled by the Ministry of Home Affairs in February 2026?

- A) SURAKSHA
- B) VIJAY
- C) PRAHAAR
- D) SHAKTI

135) What is the main focus of the AI-driven teachers' app recently launched as part of India's education reforms?

- A) Student attendance tracking
- B) Teacher training and digital learning tools
- C) Exam paper generation
- D) Parental feedback collection

136) Which Indian city's AIIMS hospital recently commissioned a Liver Transplant Unit and a Robotic Surgery System?

- A) AIIMS Delhi
- B) AIIMS Bhubaneswar
- C) AIIMS Bhopal
- D) AIIMS Jodhpur

137) Which new indigenous vaccine was introduced under India's Universal Immunization Programme (UIP) in early 2026?

- A) BCG vaccine
- B) Td (Tetanus and Adult Diphtheria) vaccine
- C) Polio vaccine
- D) HPV vaccine

138) What is the primary objective of the National Arogya Fair 2026 inaugurated by President Droupadi Murmu in Maharashtra?

- A) Showcasing pharmaceutical exports
- B) Promoting Ayush systems and integrated healthcare
- C) Launching telemedicine services
- D) Medical insurance enrolment

139) Which ship, set to be commissioned by the Indian Navy in February 2026, is designed for anti-submarine warfare in shallow waters?

- A) INS Vikrant
- B) INS Arihant
- C) Anjadip
- D) INS Kiltan

140) Which Indian film recently won the Children's & Family Film category at the EE BAFTA Film Awards, drawing praise from PM Modi?

- A) Gully Boy
- B) Boong
- C) RRR
- D) Pather Panchali

141) Which two countries recently commenced the first round of negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in New Delhi?

- A) India and Australia
- B) India and Israel
- C) India and UAE
- D) India and Japan

142) What is a key principle highlighted in the Delhi Declaration at the India AI Impact Summit 2026?

- A) Data as a global commodity
- B) Data sovereignty
- C) Open-source AI dominance

D) AI without regulation

143) Which state's name has the Union Cabinet recently approved to be changed to 'Keralam'?

- A) Karnataka
- B) Andhra Pradesh
- C) Kerala
- D) Tamil Nadu

144) What is the new Minimum Support Price (MSP) per quintal for raw jute for the 2026-27 season, as approved by the Indian Cabinet?

- A) ₹5,000
- B) ₹5,925
- C) ₹6,200
- D) ₹4,800

145) Which major global tech company has announced new investments in quantum computing and cloud infrastructure in India?

- A) Google
- B) Amazon
- C) IBM
- D) Microsoft

146) The 7th edition of the Dharma Guardian military exercise is being held between India and which country?

- A) Japan
- B) France
- C) Russia
- D) United States

147) Which Indian city will see its Metro extended from GIFT City to Shahpur, as recently approved by the Cabinet?

- A) Delhi
- B) Mumbai
- C) Ahmedabad
- D) Bangalore

148) Which campaign was inaugurated by President Droupadi Murmu to promote affordable healthcare in India?

- A) Health for All Mission
- B) Saving Lives and Building a Healthier Bharat

- C) National Health Drive
D) Ayushman Bharat Mission

149) Which country did Prime Minister Modi visited on February 25-26, 2026, to strengthen strategic partnership?

- A) France
B) Japan
C) Israel

- D) Russia

150) Which three states will directly benefit from the new railway multitracking projects worth ₹9,072 Crore approved in 2026?

- A) Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan
B) Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar
C) Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Kerala
D) Odisha, West Bengal, Assam

ANSWERS

1) Correct Answer: C

India was declared the world's third-largest domestic aviation market by PM Modi in January 2026. This reflects rapid growth in India's aviation sector, driven by increased passenger traffic and infrastructure expansion. The number of airports has more than doubled since 2014. This milestone signifies India's rising global stature and improved connectivity.

2) Correct Answer: C

India and the European Union (EU) recently concluded a Free Trade Agreement (FTA), described as a 'global gamechanger.' This deal opens significant market access and mobility opportunities, with a combined market value of USD 24 trillion. It strengthens India's position in global trade and innovation.

3) Correct Answer: C

Ajit Pawar, the longest-serving Deputy Chief Minister of Maharashtra, died in a plane crash on January 28, 2026. He held the position six times across various governments. His death led to a three-day state mourning, marking a significant loss for Maharashtra's political landscape.

4) Correct Answer: B

The BHARATI Pavilion, spearheaded by APEDA, was showcased at Gulfood 2026 in Dubai to promote Indian agri-food startups. It featured innovative startups and reflected India's push for global leadership in agri-food innovation. This initiative strengthens India's role in international agri-food value chains.

5) Correct Answer: C

India and the EU have deepened their partnership on secure, trusted, and interoperable 6G technology. This collaboration focuses on research, development, and global standards for next-generation telecom. It places India at the forefront of advanced digital infrastructure and global technology leadership.

6) Correct Answer: C

India is developing a Hydrogen Hub at Kandla under the National Green Hydrogen Mission. This initiative targets the production and export of 5 million tonnes of green hydrogen over 5-6 years. It supports India's net-zero emissions aim by 2070 and reduces reliance on fossil fuels. The move is significant for India's clean energy leadership and global climate commitments.

7) Correct Answer: B

IIM Ahmedabad is establishing the Krishnamurthy Tandon School of Artificial Intelligence with a ₹100 crore endowment. The school aims to boost India's AI capabilities and apply AI to large-scale national challenges. This marks a major step in positioning India as a global AI leader. It will bridge management, technology, and public impact.

8) Correct Answer: B

India's foodgrain production touched a record 357.73 million tonnes in 2024–25, as per the Economic Survey. This was due to higher output in rice, wheat, maize, and coarse cereals. The achievement reflects policy support and resilience in agriculture. It boosts India's food security and strengthens its global agricultural role.

9) Correct Answer: C

Maharashtra's BMC received ₹17 lakh from the NBA under the ABS framework. The funds came from the commercial use of soil micro-organisms, linking biodiversity with biotechnology. Maharashtra is now the second-largest beneficiary of ABS disbursements. This promotes equitable sharing and supports India's biodiversity commitments.

10) Correct Answer: B

Tripura has emerged as a higher education hub in the Northeast, with seven universities and the largest regional data centre. The state's progressive policies and digital infrastructure attract investors. Its data centre project boosts IT growth and supports digital India initiatives. This strengthens Tripura's role in regional development.

11) Correct Answer: C

Indian Railways commissioned 472.3 route kilometres of Kavach 4.0 on January 30, 2026. Kavach 4.0 is the newest and most advanced ATP system developed indigenously. It enhances safety by preventing collisions and overspeeding. This milestone marks a significant leap in railway safety and modernization in India.

12) Correct Answer: C

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar met Sudan's Foreign Minister Mohieldin Salim Ahmed Ibrahim on January 30, 2026. The meeting reiterated India's call for ending violence in Sudan. They discussed humanitarian support, educational cooperation, and the upcoming India-Arab Foreign Ministers' Meeting. Such diplomatic engagement enhances India's global partnerships and peace initiatives.

13) Correct Answer: C

The India-European Union (EU) Free Trade Agreement was described as a 'historic milestone' by PM Modi. Announced on January 30, 2026, this FTA aims to expand markets and generate employment. The agreement reflects a strategic approach to economic diplomacy. It marks a major step in strengthening India's global trade relationships.

14) Correct Answer: B

Amit Shah laid the foundation stone for Assam's second Assembly complex in Dibrugarh on January 30, 2026. The

project aims to decentralize governance and improve administrative access in Upper Assam. It is expected to boost regional development and governance efficiency. This is a significant move towards inclusive state administration.

15) Correct Answer: B

India and Japan concluded their 11th Staff Talks on January 29, 2026. The discussions focused on maritime cooperation and interoperability in the Indo-Pacific. Strengthening these ties supports regional security and economic interests. Such dialogues are crucial for maintaining stability and cooperation in Asia-Pacific waters.

16) Correct Answer: B

Patna Bird Sanctuary (Uttar Pradesh) and Chhari-Dhand (Gujarat) were designated as Ramsar Sites in January 2026. This recognition came ahead of World Wetlands Day and underscores India's focus on wetland conservation and biodiversity. These wetlands provide habitats for migratory and resident bird species. Such designations reinforce India's international environmental commitments.

17) Correct Answer: C

Kavach 4.0 is India's indigenous Automatic Train Protection (ATP) system, commissioned over a record 472 km in January 2026. It enhances railway safety by preventing collisions and overspeeding. The system uses microprocessors, GPS, and radio communication. It represents significant progress in India's rail safety technology.

18) Correct Answer: B

Delhi Aerocity Metro station is set to become a major interchange hub under Delhi Metro's Phase 4. Announced in January 2026, the hub will connect the Airport Express Line with new corridors like the Golden Line. This development boosts airport access and multimodal integration in Delhi. It enhances urban mobility for the National Capital Region.

19) Correct Answer: B

India hosted the 2nd India-Arab Foreign Ministers' Meeting in New Delhi on January 31, 2026. This was the first time India hosted such a meeting, reflecting

increased engagement with the Arab League. The meeting reviewed and expanded cooperation in key sectors. It underscores India's strategic and economic ties with the Arab world.

20) Correct Answer: B

The Golden Line extension from Aerocity to Terminal 1 IGI Airport, approved in January 2026, will enhance direct metro connectivity to Terminal 1. This infrastructure boost enables faster, seamless travel for passengers. It is part of Delhi Metro's Phase 4 expansion. The development reflects urban transport modernization in India.

21) Correct Answer: B

The Union Budget 2026–27 proposed India Semiconductor Mission (ISM) 2.0. It aims to scale up semiconductor production, develop IP, and strengthen supply chains. This is part of the push to make India globally competitive in advanced manufacturing. It is crucial for India's self-reliance and leadership in sunrise sectors.

22) Correct Answer: C

Bharat-VISTAAR is an AI-driven platform for agriculture. It integrates AgriStack portals to offer real-time, localised advisory to farmers. This tool aims to boost productivity and reduce risks. It represents India's commitment to leveraging emerging tech for inclusive rural growth.

23) Correct Answer: B

The Budget announced the new Khelo India Mission. It focuses on talent development, infrastructure, and ₹500 crore for sports goods manufacturing. The initiative aims to make India a global hub for affordable, high-quality sports equipment and nurture sporting excellence.

24) Correct Answer: B

Biopharma SHAKTI targets the domestic production of advanced biologic medicines and biosimilars. With a ₹10,000 crore outlay, it aims to reduce import dependence and enhance health security. This initiative strengthens India's position as a global leader in biopharmaceuticals.

25) Correct Answer: B

The fisheries sector received a record ₹2,761.80 crore in the 2026–27 Budget. The allocation emphasizes value

chain development, exports, and livelihoods for fishers. Strengthening fisheries is vital for employment and export growth in India's coastal communities.

26) Correct Answer: B

The Union Budget 2026–27 increased STT on futures and options (F&O) trading. This measure is intended to curb speculative activity and protect retail investors from large losses, as nearly 90% of participants in this segment lose money. The government cited SEBI studies and massive trading volumes as justification. The move aims to safeguard household savings and ensure market stability.

27) Correct Answer: B

Yantra India Limited (YIL) received Miniratna Category-I status in February 2026. The recognition follows its strong sales growth, increased exports, and successful indigenisation since its formation in 2021. YIL now enjoys greater financial autonomy for capital expenditure. This empowers indigenous defence manufacturing under Aatmanirbhar Bharat.

28) Correct Answer: C

The CISF Vande Mataram Coastal Cyclothon–2026 was launched to strengthen coastal security with active public involvement. The event covers India's coastline, engaging coastal communities and raising awareness on maritime safety and vigilance. It commemorates 'Vande Mataram' and aligns with the SAGAR vision. Such campaigns foster national security and inclusivity.

29) Correct Answer: B

The Sarang Helicopter Display Team will perform at the Singapore Airshow 2026. Known for precision aerobatics, Sarang operates the indigenously developed ALH Dhruv. Their participation demonstrates India's aerospace capabilities and enhances defence diplomacy in the Indo-Pacific region.

30) Correct Answer: C

The India AI Impact Summit 2026 will be held in New Delhi from February 16 to 20. It has attracted over 35,000 registrations and delegates from more than 100 countries. The summit emphasizes responsible and inclusive AI, showcasing India's leadership in global technology discourse.

31) Correct Answer: C

Union Health Minister JP Nadda released the nation's first evidence-based guidelines for lung cancer treatment on February 3, 2026. The guidelines standardise diagnosis and care across India's health system. Developed with Indian context in mind, they aim to reduce disparities in cancer care. This marks a milestone in improving clinical outcomes and patient-centric care in India.

32) Correct Answer: C

India pledged a \$500 billion investment in the United States as part of a new trade deal announced in February 2026. The investment targets energy, transportation, and agricultural sectors. This move aims to deepen economic ties and create growth opportunities in both countries. Such large-scale bilateral commitments boost global trade confidence and cooperation.

33) Correct Answer: B

India and Tanzania convened their 4th Joint Defence Cooperation Committee meeting in Zanzibar from February 2–3, 2026. The dialogue focused on military training, maritime security, and emerging domains like cyber and AI. This regular engagement strengthens India's strategic partnerships in Africa. Defence cooperation enhances regional security and mutual capacity building.

34) Correct Answer: B

In February 2026, India and Bhutan reviewed progress on the Punatsangchhu-II Hydroelectric Project, a key Indo-Bhutan energy collaboration. The 1,020 MW project will enhance Bhutan's power capacity and regional energy security. Hydropower has long been the cornerstone of Bhutan-India relations. Such projects underpin India's regional diplomacy and clean energy goals.

35) Correct Answer: B

The Rare Earth Permanent Magnet (REPM) Manufacturing Scheme, approved in November 2025, has an outlay of ₹7,280 crore. It targets self-reliance in manufacturing advanced magnets crucial for EVs, electronics, and defence. This initiative reduces import dependence, mainly on China. It aligns with the Atmanirbhar Bharat and Net Zero 2070 goals.

36) Correct Answer: C

Yumnam Khemchand Singh took oath as Manipur's Chief Minister in February 2026. The new BJP-led NDA government was formed after President's Rule was revoked. The induction of two Deputy Chief Ministers represented inclusiveness. This change is significant for Manipur's political stability and development.

37) Correct Answer: C

Indian Railways introduced an AI-enabled Intrusion Detection System (IDS) in 2026. It uses acoustic sensors to detect elephants near tracks and send real-time alerts. The system is operational in critical wildlife areas. This technological intervention aims to reduce human-animal conflict and protect endangered elephants.

38) Correct Answer: C

The United States and Iran met in Oman in February 2026 for nuclear talks. The discussions aimed at de-escalation amid rising Middle East tensions. Iran insisted talks be limited to its nuclear programme. These talks are significant for regional and global security.

39) Correct Answer: C

Bharat Taxi, launched in February 2026, is India's first cooperative-sector ride-hailing service. Drivers are owners and share profits directly. The model ensures zero commission and prioritises driver welfare. This initiative promotes inclusive, equitable, and indigenous mobility solutions in India.

40) Correct Answer: C

Indian researchers developed a photodetector using Cs₂AgBiBr₆, a lead-free double perovskite. Announced in 2026, the device is eco-friendly and operates without external power. It offers high stability and cost-effective fabrication. This advance supports India's green technology goals.

41) Correct Answer: B

Pariksha Pe Charcha 2026 recorded over 4.5 crore registrations, surpassing previous records. The annual event, led by PM Modi, encourages stress-free exams and holistic student development. This nationwide movement is aligned with NEP 2020's child-centric philosophy. Its massive scale reflects India's commitment to student well-being and educational reform.

42) Correct Answer: C

Bharat Taxi 2026, is India's first cooperative-based taxi service. Drivers, called 'Sarathis', own shares and make decisions, unlike traditional aggregator models. The initiative promotes driver welfare, social security, and equitable profit-sharing. This model empowers workers and sets a benchmark for inclusive mobility in India.

43) Correct Answer: C

Bharat GenAI will complete text models in all 22 scheduled Indian languages within February 2026. It is India's first sovereign large language model, designed by a consortium led by IIT Bombay. The initiative ensures linguistic diversity and accessibility in AI technology. This strengthens India's digital infrastructure and supports inclusive tech development.

44) Correct Answer: C

By December 2025, 5G services are available in 776 out of 777 districts, covering 99.87% of India's districts. The rapid expansion was highlighted by Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia in Parliament. This milestone reflects India's commitment to high-quality, nationwide telecom services. Robust telecom infrastructure is crucial for digital growth and economic development.

45) Correct Answer: B

As of February 2026, 172 stations have been redeveloped under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme. The scheme aims to upgrade 1,337 stations across India with modern amenities and sustainability features. It focuses on passenger comfort, accessibility, and urban integration. Such redevelopment is pivotal in enhancing India's transport infrastructure.

46) Correct Answer: C

India secured its sixth ICC U-19 World Cup title by defeating England in the 2026 final in Harare. The victory was marked by an outstanding batting display, particularly by Vaibhav Suryavanshi. This achievement extends India's dominance in age-group cricket and inspires future generations of cricketers in the country.

47) Correct Answer: C

Vaibhav Suryavanshi scored 175 runs off 80 balls in the 2026 U-19 World Cup final, setting a new record for the highest individual score in a tournament final. His

aggressive innings powered India to a commanding total and highlighted his prodigious talent. Such performances boost India's cricketing legacy and youth development.

48) Correct Answer: B

The theme for WAVES 2025 was "Create in India, Create for the World", aligning with India's vision to become a global hub for content creation. The summit emphasized innovation, market access, and support for creators. This reflects government efforts to strengthen the creative economy and generate youth employment.

49) Correct Answer: B

President Droupadi Murmu, at the Black Swan Summit, Bhubaneswar called for fintech to be an instrument for gender justice and social inclusion. She highlighted the need for technology to empower women as active participants and leaders. This approach aligns fintech innovation with broader socio-economic goals for inclusive growth.

50) Correct Answer: B

India achieved a record monthly output of 15.76 lakh metric tonnes of phosphatic and potassic (P&K) fertilizers in January 2026. This milestone was made possible by policy reforms and capacity expansion. It supports self-reliance and food security, reducing dependence on imports and stabilizing prices for farmers.

51) Correct Answer: B

India hosted Seychelles President Patrick Herminie for a state visit in February 2026, marking 50 years of diplomatic relations. The visit resulted in the adoption of the Joint Vision SESEL, deepening cooperation in maritime security, climate action, and development. This enhances India's strategic engagement in the Indian Ocean.

52) Correct Answer: C

Vaibhav Suryavanshi was named Player of the Match in the final. He scored a record-breaking 175 runs off 80 balls. His explosive batting included 15 fours and 15 sixes, propelling India to a formidable total. Suryavanshi's innings was pivotal in securing India's sixth U-19 World Cup.

53) Correct Answer: B

India and the US agreed on an Interim Trade Agreement framework in February 2026. This framework aims to reduce tariffs and expand market access for both countries. It is a major step toward a future Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA). The agreement signals deepening India–US economic cooperation.

54) Correct Answer: C

The US reduced tariffs on Indian goods to 18% under the new framework. Previously, the tariff was 50% since August 2025. This reduction is expected to benefit Indian exporters across multiple sectors. It marks a substantial boost for India's trade competitiveness in the US market.

55) Correct Answer: C

India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI) will soon be launched in Malaysia. The announcement was made during PM Modi's 2026 visit to Kuala Lumpur. UPI's expansion enhances digital connectivity and cross-border payments. It demonstrates India's leadership in global fintech innovation.

56) Correct Answer: B

Sarvam AI released an advanced AI model under India's sovereign AI initiative in February 2026. This model is part of the IndiaAI Mission, aimed at bolstering indigenous AI capabilities. Sarvam AI was selected from 67 proposals to build India's first foundational AI model, focusing on Indic languages and applications. This achievement demonstrates India's growing strength in AI innovation, crucial for technological self-reliance and global competitiveness.

57) Correct Answer: C

Chess has been added as the 16th competitive title at the Esports Nations Cup 2026. The event, scheduled from November 2 to 29, 2026, will feature 128 players from around the world. The inclusion of chess reflects its growing popularity in the esports ecosystem and provides Indian players new global opportunities. This move highlights the fusion of traditional games with modern digital platforms.

58) Correct Answer: C

Delhi flagged off 500 electric buses, marking the completion of one year of the BJP-led government. This initiative aims to improve public transport and reduce air

pollution in the city. The project is part of Delhi's broader strategy to promote green mobility and environmental sustainability. It sets an example for other Indian cities in sustainable transport solutions.

59) Correct Answer: B

Malaysia completed procedures for accession to the International Big Cat Alliance during PM Modi's 2026 visit. The Alliance, launched by India, focuses on global big cat conservation efforts. Malaysia's membership highlights expanding India-ASEAN cooperation on wildlife and environmental issues. This development strengthens India's leadership in international environmental initiatives.

60) Correct Answer: B

Jeyaraj Raja Rao, an INA veteran, was honored by PM Modi during his Malaysia visit in February 2026. The Indian National Army played a crucial role in India's freedom struggle under Subhas Chandra Bose's leadership. Recognizing veterans like Rao reinforces historical ties with the Indian diaspora in Southeast Asia. It also strengthens India's commitment to remembering its freedom fighters.

61) Correct Answer: B

Gujarat's textiles and garments sector is projected to gain the most from the India-US trade deal signed in February 2026. The agreement reduces US tariffs on Indian goods from 50% to approximately 18%, making Gujarat's textiles far more competitive internationally. Officials expect medium-term export growth of 100-150% in this sector.

62) Correct Answer: C

BSE reported a 174% jump in its consolidated net profit at Rs 602 crore for Q3 FY26. This sharp increase highlights the exchange's robust performance, driven by record equity listings and derivatives trading. The net profit margin expanded significantly, and revenue hit an all-time high.

63) Correct Answer: B

The Sairang-Silchar passenger train, flagged off in February 2026, directly connects Mizoram's capital (Sairang) with Assam's Barak Valley (Silchar). This service improves regional integration and benefits students,

daily commuters, and patients. It marks a significant step in Northeast connectivity, reflecting the government's push for inclusive development and infrastructure.

64) Correct Answer: B

The World Defence Show in Riyadh, held in February 2026, featured India's first-ever pavilion and was attended by Raksha Rajya Mantri Sanjay Seth. The event showcased India's growing indigenous defense capabilities and fostered bilateral cooperation with Saudi Arabia. It highlights India's role in the global defense ecosystem and 'Make in India' initiatives.

65) Correct Answer: B

The 'Joint Vision SESEL' adopted by India and Seychelles in February 2026 emphasizes Sustainability, Economic Growth, and Security through Enhanced Linkages. It was announced during Seychelles President Herminie's state visit to India, marking 50 years of diplomatic ties.

66) Correct Answer: C

The Centre launched 'White Revolution 2.0' on February 10, 2026 to expand cooperative coverage and enhance women's involvement in the dairy sector. The initiative aims to increase milk procurement by 50% over five years and empower women, who make up about 70% of the dairy workforce.

67) Correct Answer: B

In February 2026, India and the UK signed a Social Security Agreement to prevent double contributions for employees on short-term assignments up to 36 months. This supports workforce mobility and enhances bilateral trade competitiveness. The agreement complements the India-UK FTA. It benefits Indian professionals and companies operating in the UK.

68) Correct Answer: C

India was named 'Country of the Year' at BIOFACH 2026, held from February 10-13 in Germany. APEDA is leading a large Indian delegation, showcasing organic products and regional diversity. This highlights India's growing prominence in organic agriculture and export markets. It boosts India's international agri-trade profile.

69) Correct Answer: C

India's doctor-population ratio improved to 1:811 as of February 2026, better than the WHO norm of 1:1000.

This is based on active practitioners from both allopathic and AYUSH disciplines. The improvement reflects India's investments in health workforce expansion. It is vital for public health and healthcare access.

70) Correct Answer: B

Uttar Pradesh will construct 1,680 modern toilets for women at 640 railway stations, as announced on February 10, 2026. This addresses a long-standing need for hygienic and safe facilities, especially at smaller stations. The initiative promotes women's health, dignity, and empowerment. It aligns with broader gender-sensitive infrastructure goals.

71) Correct Answer: C

As per the SBI Research report (Feb 2026), India's trade surplus with the US may cross \$90 billion annually. The report cites a sharp rise in exports and tariff reductions as key drivers. Export potential for the top 15 items is estimated at \$97 billion per year. This surplus is significant for India's export-led growth and global market integration.

72) Correct Answer: C

PM Modi marked the 200th birth anniversary of Maharshi Dayanand Saraswati in February 2026. Saraswati founded Arya Samaj in 1875 and catalyzed social reforms. He promoted education, Vedic values, and self-reliance. His legacy is vital in India's socio-cultural and educational awakening.

73) Correct Answer: B

Rolls-Royce CEO Tufan Erginbilgic met PM Modi in February 2026 to discuss scaling up operations in India. The company aims to partner with India's youth and expand in civil aviation, defence, and energy sectors. Such collaborations support India's self-reliance and technological advancement.

74) Correct Answer: B

Exercise Vayushakti-26 is set for February 27, 2026 at Pokhran. The Indian Air Force will demonstrate combat readiness with indigenous platforms. The exercise highlights airspace dominance and disaster response capabilities. It underscores India's push towards Atmanirbhar Bharat in defence.

75) Correct Answer: B

India accounted for nearly 12 million passengers at DXB in 2025, making it the airport's largest country market. Mumbai and New Delhi were top city destinations. This reflects strong travel, trade, and people-to-people ties between India and the UAE.

76) Correct Answer: B

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav announced the immediate implementation of the Centre's 'Vande Mataram' order. The directive requires all six stanzas to be sung before 'Jana Gana Mana' at official events. Issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs in January 2026, it marks the 150th year of 'Vande Mataram'.

77) Correct Answer: B

Seva Teerth was inaugurated by PM Modi in February 2026 to serve as the new PMO building. It also houses the National Security Council Secretariat and Cabinet Secretariat. Kartavya Bhavan-1 2 accommodate major ministries, consolidating administrative operations. The move reflects a push for modern, efficient, and citizen-centric governance in India.

78) Correct Answer: C

The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) claimed a historic victory in the 2026 parliamentary elections. Early trends showed BNP leading in 151 constituencies, likely forming the next government. This marks a significant political shift, especially after the ban on Awami League and the passing of ex-PM Khaleda Zia.

79) Correct Answer: C

Ahmedabad's BRTS is targeting 100% electrification by 2026-27. The city currently operates around 150 electric buses and is enhancing safety with smart surveillance. This initiative is part of preparations for hosting the 2030 Commonwealth Games and positions Ahmedabad as a model for sustainable urban mobility in India.

80) Correct Answer: B

The scheme, cleared by Delhi CM Rekha Gupta, focuses first on artisans in khadi, handloom, and cottage industries. Over 3,700 beneficiaries will be trained in the first phase, with eventual expansion to other traditional crafts. The initiative supports skill upgrading, digital

access, and self-reliance for the unorganised sector, aligning with national skill development goals.

81) Correct Answer: B

Ayushman Bharat – PMJAY authorized Rs. 1.15 lakh crore in private hospital admissions as of January 31, 2026. The scheme aims to provide health insurance to the underprivileged. Over 5.69 crore Ayushman cards have been created in the last five years. Its significance lies in improving healthcare access and financial protection for millions of Indians.

82) Correct Answer: B

India is hosting the 'India-AI Impact Summit' from February 16-20, 2026. The summit highlights India's integrated AI ecosystem and system-building capabilities. It brings together global leaders, policymakers, and AI experts. The event cements India's position as a principal AI system-builder in the world.

83) Correct Answer: B

PM Modi launched the 'PM RAHAT' scheme at Seva Teerth. It provides cashless treatment up to ₹1.5 lakh for accident victims. The initiative addresses the need for immediate medical care to save lives. It enhances the social security net and welfare for vulnerable citizens.

84) Correct Answer: B

Twelve teams were shortlisted under the IndiaAI Mission for developing indigenous foundational AI models. This was announced in the Rajya Sabha. The models focus on Indian datasets and languages, boosting national AI capabilities. It advances India's leadership in responsible and inclusive AI innovation.

85) Correct Answer: B

India and South Korea co-chaired the 6th Foreign Policy and Security Dialogue in Seoul in February 2026. Discussions emphasized advancing their Special Strategic Partnership. Both countries explored cooperation in defense, critical minerals, and emerging technologies. This dialogue strengthens India's collaboration in the Indo-Pacific region.

86) Correct Answer: C

The India AI Impact Expo 2026 will be held at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi. The Ministry of Panchayati Raj will present AI-based solutions for grassroots

governance. This includes platforms for meeting documentation and asset monitoring. The event marks India's commitment to digital innovation in rural administration.

87) Correct Answer: C

The Union Cabinet approved integrating North and South Blocks into the Yuge Yugeen Bharat National Museum. This move transitions historic administrative centers into spaces honoring India's civilisational journey. The initiative symbolizes a shift from colonial legacy toward a modern, service-oriented governance. It preserves and showcases India's ancient to modern heritage.

88) Correct Answer: C

Union Minister J.P. Nadda stated that India's MMR has declined to 88 per lakh live births. This is a significant improvement from 130 a decade ago, highlighting strengthened maternal healthcare. Such progress is supported by expanded healthcare schemes and infrastructure. It demonstrates the effectiveness of recent public health interventions in India.

89) Correct Answer: B

The Cabinet approved a twin-tube underwater tunnel under the Brahmaputra from Gohpur on NH-15 to Numaligarh. The project includes road and integrated railway infrastructure. It will drastically reduce travel time and improve connectivity in Northeast India. The tunnel is of strategic and economic importance for regional development.

90) Correct Answer: C

The Startup India Fund of Funds 2.0 was launched with a ₹10,000 crore corpus to boost venture capital in India's startup ecosystem. It focuses on supporting innovation-led entrepreneurship and deep tech ventures. The scheme aims to expand domestic capital and foster global competitiveness.

91) Correct Answer: C

Bhavnagar received 50 electric buses on February 14, 2026. The move is part of the PM e-Bus Sewa Scheme to boost sustainable urban transport. Bhavnagar's early inclusion underlines Gujarat's commitment to green mobility. This aligns with India's goal to expand eco-friendly public transport systems nationwide.

92) Correct Answer: C

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla attended the ceremony in Dhaka on February 17, 2026. This highlights the close India-Bangladesh relationship and diplomatic engagement. Tarique Rahman's government marks a key political transition in Bangladesh. India's presence reaffirms its commitment to democratic values and regional cooperation.

93) Correct Answer: A

A 10-year defence cooperation agreement renewal is anticipated at the dialogue. The meeting in Bengaluru strengthens strategic and industrial ties. This partnership covers joint manufacturing, such as the Hammer missile project. It signifies deeper long-term defence collaboration between India and France.

94) Correct Answer: B

The AI Impact Summit 2026 is being hosted in New Delhi with the theme 'People, Planet, and Progress.' It gathers world leaders to discuss responsible AI development. The summit reflects India's growing influence in global AI governance. This event will shape frameworks for inclusive and sustainable AI adoption.

95) Correct Answer: C

Ishan Kishan scored 77 runs in a key group match versus Pakistan. His aggressive batting helped India set up a 61-run win. The match took place at the R. Premadasa Stadium in Colombo. Such performances are vital for India's momentum in world tournaments.

96) Correct Answer: A

Amit Shah declared that Naxalism is on the verge of eradication and will end by March 31, 2026. This statement was made during the Delhi Police Raising Day ceremony. It reflects the government's confidence in tackling left-wing extremism. The move is significant for India's internal security and stability.

97) Correct Answer: C

The 3rd International AYUSH Conference and Exhibition 2026 was held in Dubai. The event focused on global integration and scientific validation of traditional Indian wellness systems. Policymakers and experts discussed regulatory and research priorities there. Global

promotion of AYUSH aligns with India's soft power diplomacy.

98) Correct Answer: B

SAHI and BODH were launched to support responsible AI adoption in healthcare. SAHI provides a national guidance framework, while BODH benchmarks AI models on health data. These initiatives aim to ensure safe, ethical, and evidence-based digital health systems.

99) Correct Answer: C

Hungary and Slovakia requested Croatia's help after Russian oil flows via Ukraine were halted. The Druzhba pipeline was disrupted due to conflict, leading to energy security concerns. Croatia agreed to assist using the Adria pipeline as per EU and US regulations. This underscores Europe's continuing energy dependence and geopolitical tensions.

100) Correct Answer: B

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the India AI Impact Expo 2026. The event is India's first international AI summit in the Global South. It highlights India's ambition to be a leader in AI innovation and collaboration. This positions India as a bridge between technology and impact globally.

101) Correct Answer: C

Tarique Rahman was sworn in as Bangladesh's Prime Minister after his party's decisive win. The swearing-in took place on February 17, 2026. His leadership marks a major shift after the Gen Z-led uprising. This change impacts India's relations with Bangladesh and South Asian geopolitics.

102) Correct Answer: B

PM Modi mentioned 'Sarlaben,' an AI digital assistant launched by Amul for dairy farmers. The tool was highlighted in February 2026 as part of AI-driven rural empowerment. It offers 24/7 support in Gujarati on cattle health and schemes.

103) Correct Answer: C

In February 2026, India and France renewed their defence cooperation agreement for another 10 years. This was announced during the sixth Annual Defence Dialogue in Bengaluru. The agreement deepens military

and industrial collaboration. It is crucial for India's defence modernization and strategic partnerships.

104) Correct Answer: C

BharatGen is India's first sovereign multilingual large language model, launched in 2026. The initiative supports India's linguistic diversity and national AI infrastructure. It is tailored for governance, healthcare, and education. BharatGen reflects India's commitment to technological self-reliance.

105) Correct Answer: C

Bihar signed an MoU with Corporate Infotech Pvt. Ltd. (CIPL) at the India AI Summit 2026. The agreement aims to set up a Core Development Centre and AI Centre of Excellence in Patna. This will boost Bihar's digital governance and IT job market. The move positions Bihar as an emerging AI hub in Eastern India.

106) Correct Answer: C

The Indo-French Centre for AI in Health (IF-CAIH) was inaugurated by India and France at AIIMS New Delhi. This collaboration deepens AI-driven research and medical innovation. It builds on ongoing Indo-French cooperation in digital health and human resources.

107) Correct Answer: B

VoicERA is an open-source, end-to-end Voice AI stack launched to strengthen India's multilingual voice technologies. Announced at the India AI Impact Summit 2026, it enables scalable, interoperable voice-based digital services. The platform expands BHASHINI's capabilities to population-scale speech AI.

108) Correct Answer: B

The International Fleet Review 2026 was held in Visakhapatnam with participation from over 70 navies. President Droupadi Murmu highlighted its role in fostering maritime cooperation and security. The event aligns with India's MAHASAGAR initiative for regional growth. Such reviews reinforce India's commitment to collective maritime stability.

109) Correct Answer: B

The 'AI Impact Startup Book' is a compendium mapping India's AI and deep-tech startup ecosystem. Launched at the India AI Impact Summit 2026, it provides insights into sectoral trends and innovation. The resource helps

ministries and institutions scale AI solutions nationwide. It demonstrates India's progress toward global AI leadership.

110) Correct Answer: B

Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw launched the AI-MET White Paper at the 2026 Summit. The document outlines strategies for integrating AI into Manufacturing Engineering Technology. It aims to enhance productivity and global competitiveness of Indian industry. This step supports India's Viksit Bharat vision for 2047.

111) Correct Answer: B

The India-UK FTA, signed in July 2025, provides 99.1% of tariff lines with 100% trade value duty-free upon enforcement. This agreement boosts bilateral trade and investment flows. It notably enhances Indian exports' competitiveness and technology collaboration.

112) Correct Answer: B

India and France agreed to co-produce Rafale jets as part of their Special Global Strategic Partnership. President Macron confirmed India's willingness to expand indigenous defence manufacturing. This deepens strategic cooperation and supports India's self-reliance goals. It's a major development in Indo-French defence ties.

113) Correct Answer: C

MILAN 2026, inaugurated by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, saw participation from 74 countries. The exercise aims to enhance interoperability, address maritime security challenges, and build trust. Its scale reflects India's growing role as a trusted maritime partner. MILAN strengthens collective security in the Indo-Pacific.

114) Correct Answer: C

Sam Altman, CEO of OpenAI, launched the 'OpenAI for India' initiative at the India AI Impact Summit 2026. The program will build infrastructure, strengthen skills, and develop local partnerships. It includes collaboration with Tata Group for AI-ready data centers. This supports India's rapid AI adoption and digital growth.

115) Correct Answer: B

Assam's Chief Minister announced the imminent completion of the Kopili Hydro Electric Project, generating 150 MW. This addresses the state's power

needs and boosts infrastructure. Ongoing upgrades further secure Assam's energy supply. Such projects are vital for regional development and employment.

116) Correct Answer: A

Brazil inaugurated its first Apex trade and investment office in New Delhi in February 2026. This marks a major step in expanding economic and technological cooperation between Brazil and India. The move comes during President Lula's state visit, emphasizing Brazil's push for deeper ties with India. This strengthens South-South cooperation and bilateral engagement in strategic sectors.

117) Correct Answer: A

The Ministry of Ayush showcased an AI-enabled Yoga Posture analysis tool at the 2026 India AI Impact Summit. This computer vision-based tool helps users assess and correct yoga asanas for safety and precision. The demonstration highlighted digital health initiatives in traditional medicine. Such tools modernize public health and make wellness practices more accessible.

118) Correct Answer: B

India will host the Commonwealth Games in 2030, as celebrated by the 62nd Fit India Sundays on Cycle event in February 2026. The event promotes fitness and sustainable mobility nationwide. Hosting after 20 years, this milestone boosts India's global sports profile. It supports the vision of making India a sports powerhouse.

119) Correct Answer: B

The HCL-Foxconn JV will set up a semiconductor assembly and testing facility in Uttar Pradesh, with a groundbreaking in February 2026. This aligns with India's push for technological self-reliance and electronics manufacturing. The ₹3,700 crore project reduces import dependence and enhances India's semiconductor ecosystem.

120) Correct Answer: C

Abu Dhabi's G42 and Cerebras are partnering with India to deploy a national-scale AI supercomputer with 8 exaflops capacity, announced in February 2026. This system will vastly increase India's AI compute power, supporting sovereign AI development. Data remains within India's jurisdiction, enhancing national security

and innovation. It strengthens India's global AI competitiveness.

121) Correct Answer: B

PM Modi inaugurated India's first Nammo Bharat Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) and the Meerut Metro. This project links Delhi and Meerut, marking a milestone in high-speed regional and urban mobility. The corridor covers 82 km and features integrated operations for efficient transit.

122) Correct Answer: C

Surat recorded \$10.55 billion in exports in 2024-25, affirming its status as a global trade hub. The city leads in diamond processing and textiles, contributing significantly to Gujarat's export economy. Surat's trade partnerships span the US, Hong Kong, and UAE.

123) Correct Answer: C

India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI) has been cited as a global benchmark for public digital payment infrastructure. By 2024, UPI had over 400 million users and handled more than 170 billion transactions annually. Its public, interoperable nature enables rapid financial inclusion.

124) Correct Answer: B

The Policy Report and Developers' Toolkit on Inclusive Voice AI were launched by ART PARK @ IISc and GIZ (through the FAIR Forward initiative) at the India AI Impact Summit 2026. The toolkit promotes multilingual, inclusive AI development.

125) Correct Answer: B

Kuwait announced plans for a regulated freelance visa in February 2026. The move aims to reform the labour market and reduce reliance on informal arrangements. Kuwait hosts about 1.05 million Indians—the country's largest expatriate group.

126) Correct Answer: B

India and Brazil signed an MoU on February 22, 2026, to strengthen cooperation in the postal sector. The agreement aims to expand collaboration in postal services, digital transformation, and inclusive service delivery. It highlights the growing India-Brazil strategic partnership and knowledge exchange. This supports

South-South cooperation and innovation in public services.

127) Correct Answer: B

On February 23, 2026, PM Modi announced the celebration of 'Rajaji Utsav' at Rashtrapati Bhavan. A statue of C. Rajagopalachari, India's first Indian Governor-General, was unveiled, replacing colonial-era symbols. This move is part of a national effort to honor Indian icons and shed colonial legacies. It demonstrates India's commitment to its cultural heritage.

128) Correct Answer: D

Brazilian President Lula set a target of \$30 billion in bilateral trade with India during his February 2026 visit. He emphasized the strong economic and strategic partnership between the two countries. India's current trade with Brazil stands at \$10.5 billion, with ambitions to triple it. This deepens South-South cooperation and opens new economic opportunities.

129) Correct Answer: C

PM Modi announced the launch of the HCL-Foxconn Semiconductor Unit in Uttar Pradesh in February 2026. This project is a key part of India's push for self-reliance in chip manufacturing. The new unit will boost local employment and technological growth. Uttar Pradesh is emerging as a major hub in India's electronics and semiconductor ecosystem.

130) Correct Answer: C

The 87th Raising Day parade of the CRPF was held in Guwahati, Assam, for the first time in 2026. This event marked the force's significant role in the Northeast. Home Minister Amit Shah highlighted CRPF's contributions to internal security and peace in troubled regions. Hosting the event in Guwahati underscores the region's growing importance.

131) Correct Answer: C

The National Monetisation Pipeline 2.0 (NMP 2.0) was launched by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman with an estimated asset monetisation potential of ₹16.72 lakh crore for 2026–2030. This figure represents more than 2.6 times the target set in the first phase (NMP 1.0).

132) Correct Answer: B

Gujarat certified a record 1,00,135 MSMEs as of February 19, 2026, as announced in the Legislative Assembly. This milestone underscores the state's sustained focus on industrial growth and enterprise development. The achievement reflects Gujarat's position as a leading state for MSMEs and employment generation.

133) Correct Answer: B

The Sujalam Sufalam Jal Abhiyan 2.0, launched on February 23, 2026, in Gujarat, aims at water conservation and raising groundwater levels before the monsoon. The campaign involves deepening ponds, desilting, and promoting rainwater harvesting. Such initiatives are vital for drought resilience and sustainable agriculture.

134) Correct Answer: C

'PRAHAAR' is India's inaugural National Counter-Terrorism Policy and Strategy, launched in February 2026 by the Ministry of Home Affairs. The policy establishes a structured national framework to counter evolving threats like cross-border terrorism and cyber-enabled attacks. It marks a milestone in India's security architecture.

135) Correct Answer: B

The AI-driven teachers' app, developed in collaboration with Bharti Airtel Foundation and CK-12 Foundation, focuses on enhancing teacher training and providing digital learning tools. Launched in November 2024 and upgraded in 2026, the initiative modernizes education and supports the National Education Policy.

136) Correct Answer: B

AllIMS Bhubaneswar launched both a Liver Transplant Unit and a state-of-the-art Surgical Robotic System in February 2026. The inauguration, led by Union Health Minister Jagat Prakash Nadda, highlights India's advances in medical technology. Such developments boost access to advanced healthcare.

137) Correct Answer: B

The indigenous Td (Tetanus and Adult Diphtheria) vaccine was launched for supply under the Universal Immunization Programme in February 2026. This marks a step towards self-reliance in vaccine manufacturing.

The Central Research Institute will supply 55 lakh doses by April 2026.

138) Correct Answer: B

The National Arogya Fair 2026, inaugurated by President Murmu, aims to promote Ayush systems (Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha, Homoeopathy) and integrated healthcare. The event includes free check-ups and consultations. It also encourages medicinal plant cultivation for farmers.

139) Correct Answer: C

Anjadip is the third vessel in the Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft (ASW-SWC) project. It will be inducted into the Eastern Naval Command at Chennai Port on February 27, 2026. Built by Garden Reach Shipbuilders, Anjadip enhances India's coastal defence and supports the 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' initiative. Its commissioning strengthens Navy's operational readiness.

140) Correct Answer: B

The film 'Boong' won the Children's & Family Film category at the EE BAFTA Film Awards in February 2026. Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated the team and highlighted the honour for Manipur and the nation. This win showcases India's creative talent.

141) Correct Answer: B

India and Israel began FTA negotiations in New Delhi on February 23, 2026. This marks a significant step to enhance trade and economic ties, with merchandise trade reaching USD 3.62 billion in 2024-25. The FTA aims to boost growth and cooperation in areas like innovation and technology.

142) Correct Answer: B

The Delhi Declaration emphasizes 'data sovereignty' as a core principle. The AI Impact Summit 2026 showcased India's leadership in AI governance, advocating for control over national data and inclusive development. Over 20 heads of state and 500 AI leaders participated, underlining India's influence in shaping global AI rules.

143) Correct Answer: C

The Union Cabinet approved changing 'Kerala' to 'Keralam' on February 24, 2026. This follows a unanimous resolution by the Kerala Assembly for

linguistic alignment. The proposal will undergo constitutional procedures as per Article 3.

144) Correct Answer: B

The MSP for raw jute has been raised to ₹5,925 per quintal for 2026-27. This ₹275 increase ensures a 61.8% return over the average cost of production. The hike supports jute farmers with remunerative prices and price stability, vital for the agricultural sector.

145) Correct Answer: C

IBM is set to invest in quantum computing and cloud infrastructure across India, as stated by Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on February 24, 2026. These investments will create opportunities for India's technology workforce and boost advanced sectors like semiconductors.

146) Correct Answer: A

The 7th Dharma Guardian exercise is conducted between India and Japan in Uttarakhand from February 24 to March 9, 2026. It involves 120 personnel each from both countries, enhancing defense cooperation and joint operational readiness.

147) Correct Answer: C

The Ahmedabad Metro will be extended from GIFT City to Shahpur, a 3.33 km addition approved on February 24, 2026. The project will boost connectivity for commuters and businesses, with expected daily ridership rising significantly by 2041.

148) Correct Answer: B

President Murmu launched 'Saving Lives and Building a Healthier Bharat' on February 24, 2026. The campaign focuses on quality, accessible healthcare for all, leveraging initiatives like Ayushman Bharat. It underscores the importance of collective action in

building a healthy, strong nation, crucial for India's development goals.

149) Correct Answer: C

PM Modi paid a State visit to Israel on February 25-26, 2026. The visit was aimed to review and deepen the strategic partnership, focusing on defense, innovation, and economic cooperation. Strengthening India-Israel ties has significant implications for technology and security collaboration.

150) Correct Answer: B

The ₹9,072 crore railway projects cover Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, and Bihar (also Jharkhand), adding 307 km of track. Approved on February 24, 2026, these projects will decongest routes, improve operational efficiency, and support regional economic development and freight movement.

SECTION 3

Detailed Analysis of Important Events



Economics

New CPI Inflation Series and Changing Consumption Weights



Why in the News?

India is set to roll out a **new Consumer Price Index (CPI) series with 2024 as the base year**, which significantly revises the weight assigned to different consumption categories. As per the updated household consumption patterns released by the **Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI)**, the weight of **food and beverages** in the CPI basket will decline sharply to **around 37 percent**, from nearly **46 percent** in the current series. This revision reflects changing spending behaviour of Indian households and is expected to have important implications for inflation measurement and monetary policy.

What is the Consumer Price Index (CPI)?

The **Consumer Price Index (CPI)** is the primary measure of **retail inflation** in India. It captures changes in prices of a representative basket of goods and services consumed by households over time.

Key features of CPI:

- Measures inflation as experienced by consumers at the retail level
- Serves as the **main inflation indicator** for the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)**
- Forms the basis of India's **inflation targeting framework**, with a target of **4 percent**, and a tolerance band of **2 to 6 percent**

- Influences key monetary policy decisions such as repo rate changes

Key Changes in the New CPI Series (Base Year 2024)

The updated CPI series introduces several structural changes to better reflect present-day consumption realities:

- **Reduction in food and beverages weight**
 - From **45.86 percent** to **36.75 percent**
- **Increase in housing weight**
 - From **10.07 percent** to **17.66 percent**
- **Expansion of CPI basket**
 - Number of items increased from **299** to **358**
- **Updated data source**
 - Based on the **2023–24 Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES)**

These changes aim to modernise the index and make it more representative of current household expenditure patterns.

Why is the Weight of Food Being Reduced?

The decline in food weight aligns with **Engel's Law**, an economic principle which states that as household incomes rise, the proportion of income spent on food tends to fall, even if absolute food expenditure increases. Recent survey data highlights this trend:

- **Rural areas**
 - Food expenditure share declined from **52.9 percent** to **47.04 percent**
- **Urban areas**
 - Food expenditure share declined from **42.62 percent** to **39.68 percent**

As households diversify spending towards housing, education, healthcare, transport, and services, food no longer dominates consumption to the same extent as earlier.

A lower food weight is also expected to **reduce excessive volatility in headline inflation**, since food prices are often affected by seasonal and supply-side shocks.

Implications for Inflation Measurement and RBI Policy

Under the earlier CPI series, the high weight of food caused **sharp swings in headline inflation**, particularly during periods of erratic food prices due to weather events, supply disruptions, or policy interventions.

With the revised weights:

- CPI inflation may be **slightly higher when food inflation is low**, as non-food items carry more influence
- CPI inflation may be **lower when food inflation is high**, dampening sudden spikes
- Overall inflation readings are expected to be **more stable and less noisy**
- Inflation data will be **more closely aligned with actual consumption behaviour**, improving policy credibility

For the RBI, a smoother and more representative CPI improves **monetary policy transmission**, allowing interest rate decisions to respond more accurately to underlying inflationary pressures rather than short-term food price shocks.

Union Budget 2026–27



Why in the News?

The **Union Budget of India for 2026–27**, presented on **1 February 2026** by **Nirmala Sitharaman**, has drawn attention for its strong focus on **Yuva Shakti (youth power)**, inclusive development, and strengthening India's long-term economic foundations. The Budget outlines a roadmap aimed at sustaining growth while ensuring that the benefits of development reach the poor, underprivileged, and disadvantaged sections of society.

Budget Theme and Vision

The Union Budget 2026–27 is framed as a **Yuva Shakti-driven Budget**, recognising India's demographic advantage and the central role of youth in nation-building. It seeks to translate this advantage into productive employment, innovation, and entrepreneurship.

A notable feature of this year's Budget is that it is the **first to be prepared and presented from the newly inaugurated Kartavya Bhawan**, symbolising a shift towards duty-based governance and accountability.

The Budget is anchored around **three core Kartavyas (duties)**:

- **Accelerating and sustaining economic growth** through investment-led expansion
- **Fulfilling aspirations and building capacities**, especially among youth, women, and marginalised groups
- Advancing the vision of **Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas** to move decisively towards a **Viksit Bharat (Developed India)**

Together, these pillars reflect a policy approach that prioritises action over rhetoric and long-term structural reforms over short-term populism.

Major Economic and Fiscal Announcements

The Budget continues to emphasise fiscal discipline alongside growth support.

- **Public capital expenditure** has been raised to **₹12.2 lakh crore** for FY 2026–27, reinforcing the government's belief in capex as a growth multiplier for jobs, demand, and private investment.
- The **fiscal deficit** is targeted at **4.3% of GDP**, signalling a steady glide path towards medium-term fiscal consolidation.
- **Debt-to-GDP ratio** is projected at **55.6%**, reflecting gradual improvement in public finance sustainability.
- **Net market borrowing** is estimated at **₹11.7 lakh crore**, balancing developmental spending with debt management concerns.

Taxation Reforms

Direct Taxes

A major reform initiative is the implementation of the **New Income Tax Act, 2025**, which will come into force from **April 2026**. The new law aims to simplify compliance and reduce litigation.

Key measures include:

- Simplified income tax provisions and user-friendly tax return forms
- **Reduction in Tax Collected at Source (TCS)** on overseas tour packages to **2%**, easing cash flow constraints for travellers
- **Increase in Securities Transaction Tax (STT)** on futures to **0.05%**, aligning taxation with market dynamics
- **Minimum Alternate Tax (MAT)** rate reduced to **14%** and made a final tax, improving certainty for corporates
- Rationalisation of penalties and prosecution provisions to minimise harassment and improve ease of doing business

Support to IT and Global Investment

To strengthen India's position as a global digital and services hub:

- A **single category of IT services** has been introduced with a **safe harbour margin of 15.5%**
- **Safe harbour threshold** increased to **₹2,000 crore**, benefiting large service exporters
- **Foreign cloud service providers** granted a **tax holiday until 2047**, encouraging long-term technology investments
- **MAT exemption** extended to all non-residents opting for presumptive taxation

Indirect Taxes and Customs

Customs and trade facilitation measures aim to support manufacturing and reduce costs:

- **Basic customs duty exemptions** on capital goods for lithium-ion battery manufacturing and critical mineral processing equipment
- Duty exemptions on **17 essential drugs and medicines**, improving healthcare affordability
- **Tariff on personal imports** reduced from **20% to 10%**
- Transition to an **operator-centric digital customs warehousing system**

- Commitment to a **single digital window for cargo clearance** by the end of the financial year, enhancing logistics efficiency

Sector-Specific Highlights

Manufacturing and MSMEs

- Creation of a **₹10,000 crore SME Growth Fund** to expand access to growth capital
- Focus on scaling manufacturing across **seven strategic sectors**, aligned with Make in India and Atmanirbhar Bharat
- An integrated push for the textile sector through programmes such as **Samarth 2.0**, aimed at skill development and value-chain integration

Infrastructure and Transport

- Development of **seven high-speed rail corridors** as growth and connectivity engines
- Expansion of **Dedicated Freight Corridors**, reducing logistics costs
- **Operationalisation of 20 National Waterways**, promoting greener and cheaper transport

Health, Education and Social Sector

- Launch of **Biopharma SHAKTI** with an outlay of **₹10,000 crore** to strengthen pharmaceutical and biotech innovation
- Establishment of **one girls' hostel in every district** for STEM institutions to improve female participation
- Development of **medical tourism hubs** in partnership with the private sector
- Upgradation of mental health infrastructure, including **NIMHANS 2** and related institutions

Technology and Artificial Intelligence

- Introduction of **Bharat VISTAAR**, a multilingual AI-based tool to support farmers with advisories and information
- Setting up **AVGC (Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming and Comics) content creator labs** in **15,000 schools and 500 colleges**, nurturing the digital creative economy

Sports and Tourism

- Launch of the **Khelo India Mission** to strengthen grassroots sports ecosystems
- **Upskilling of 10,000 tourist guides**, improving service quality and employment

- Focused development of the **Buddhist Circuit in the North East**, combining cultural heritage with tourism-led growth

SBI launches CHAKRA for financing sunrise sectors

Why in the News?

State Bank of India (SBI) has launched **CHAKRA**, a dedicated **Centre of Excellence (CoE)** aimed at financing eight critical sunrise sectors that are central to India's sustainable, technology-driven, and low-carbon growth trajectory. The initiative reflects SBI's strategic shift towards supporting future-ready industries that will shape India's economic and industrial landscape over the coming decades.

What is CHAKRA?

CHAKRA stands for **Centre of Excellence for financing sunrise sectors**. It is an institutional platform created within SBI to develop deep, sector-specific expertise for project appraisal and financing in emerging industries.

The initiative seeks to:

- Improve the **flow of long-term capital** to capital-intensive and high-risk sectors
- Strengthen **risk assessment frameworks** for new and evolving technologies
- Design **innovative financing structures** aligned with global best practices
- Position SBI as a lead financier in India's green and digital transition

By consolidating specialised knowledge under one umbrella, CHAKRA aims to bridge the financing gap that often constrains large-scale investments in future-oriented sectors.

Sunrise Sectors Covered under CHAKRA

Renewable Energy in India



CHAKRA focuses on eight sunrise sectors that are expected to drive India's next phase of growth:

1. **Renewable Energy (RE)** – Solar, wind, hybrid projects, and emerging clean power solutions
2. **Advanced Cell Chemistry & Battery Storage** – Critical for energy storage and electric mobility
3. **Data Centre Infrastructure** – Supporting India's digital economy, cloud services, and AI ecosystem
4. **Smart Infrastructure** – Technology-enabled urban and industrial infrastructure
5. **Electric Mobility** – EV manufacturing, charging infrastructure, and supply chains
6. **Green Hydrogen** – Production, storage, and downstream applications for decarbonisation
7. **Semiconductors** – Chip fabrication, assembly, testing, and related ecosystems
8. **Decarbonisation** – Industrial transition to low-carbon processes and cleaner technologies

These sectors align closely with national priorities such as energy security, climate commitments, digital transformation, and self-reliance.

Investment Significance

- Collectively, these eight sectors are estimated to require **nearly ₹100 lakh crore of investment over the next five years**.
- They are expected to act as **key growth engines** for India, generating employment, attracting foreign investment, and enhancing technological capabilities.
- Large-scale financing in these areas is essential for achieving India's long-term goals related to **net-zero emissions, manufacturing competitiveness, and digital infrastructure expansion**.

Key Features of CHAKRA

CHAKRA introduces several structural innovations in project financing:

- **Specialised project finance structures** tailored to the unique risk profiles of emerging technologies
- Enhanced **technical and financial due diligence** mechanisms for sunrise sectors

- Facilitation of **co-financing models**, blending domestic and international capital
- A collaborative ecosystem involving **DFIs, multilateral agencies, commercial banks, NBFCs, start-ups, academia, and policy think tanks**
- Centralised expertise to reduce project delays and improve bankability of large, complex projects

International and Institutional Partnerships

To strengthen its global outreach and capital mobilisation capacity:

- SBI has signed **Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with around 21 international and domestic financing institutions.**
- Dedicated **project finance teams from partner institutions will be co-located at SBI's CHAKRA platform**, enabling faster coordination and joint appraisal.
- Major foreign partners include **MUFG** and **Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation (SMBC)**, bringing global project finance experience and access to international debt markets.

These partnerships will help India tap **foreign capital, advanced financial expertise, and global best practices**, especially for mega projects in green energy, semiconductors, and infrastructure.

Overall Significance

CHAKRA represents a strategic institutional innovation by SBI to align India's largest public sector bank with the country's long-term development priorities. By focusing on sunrise sectors, the initiative not only strengthens India's financial ecosystem but also accelerates the transition towards a **sustainable, technology-led, and globally competitive economy.**

AI Workplace Automation and Tech Stock Crash

Why in the News?

Global technology stocks witnessed a sharp selloff in early February 2026 after **Anthropic** unveiled a powerful AI-driven workplace automation suite built around its advanced AI agent **Claude**. The announcement rattled investors worldwide,

sparking fears that next-generation AI agents could significantly reduce the relevance of traditional software platforms and human-intensive IT services.



What Triggered the Selloff?

Anthropic's latest launch marked a major leap in enterprise automation:

- The new tools allow Claude-based AI agents to **independently perform complex workplace tasks** across domains such as legal research, contract drafting, sales outreach, marketing campaigns, financial analysis, and data interpretation.
- Unlike earlier AI tools that worked as add-ons, these agents can **operate end-to-end**, reducing the need for multiple Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) platforms.
- This raised concerns that AI agents could **bypass or replace conventional enterprise software ecosystems**, disrupting established business models.

As a result, investors reassessed the future revenue prospects of global software and IT services companies, triggering widespread selling.

Market Impact

United States

- The **S&P 500** fell by about **0.8 percent**, reflecting broad market anxiety.
- The tech-heavy **Nasdaq Composite** declined over **1.4 percent**, with losses concentrated in software and AI-linked stocks.
- Major technology companies such as **Microsoft, Meta Platforms**, and **Nvidia** saw sharp intraday declines.

- Enterprise SaaS firms, including **Salesforce** and **ServiceNow**, were among the worst hit as investors questioned long-term demand for subscription-based software.

India

- The **Nifty IT** dropped nearly **3 percent**, underperforming the broader market.
- Leading IT services companies such as **Infosys**, **Tata Consultancy Services**, **HCLTech**, and **Wipro** recorded significant losses as global clients reassessed outsourcing needs.

Why Indian IT Is Particularly Vulnerable

India's IT sector is structurally exposed to rapid AI adoption due to its business model:

- A large share of revenue comes from **service-based outsourcing**, relying heavily on skilled human labour.
- Advanced AI agents can now automate tasks such as **contract review**, **regulatory compliance checks**, **customer support**, **code assistance**, and **large-scale data processing**, areas traditionally dominated by Indian IT firms.
- As global corporations adopt AI-first strategies, their dependence on **human-intensive IT services may decline**, putting pressure on margins, employment, and export earnings.

This has heightened concerns about the long-term sustainability of India's comparative advantage in IT services.

Link with the Economic Survey 2025–26

The developments echo warnings highlighted in the **Economic Survey 2025–26**:

- The Survey cautioned against the **concentration of AI data, algorithms, and computing power** in a few global firms and countries.
- It flagged risks of **technological dependence**, especially for service-oriented economies like India.
- The Survey stressed that without rapid upskilling, innovation, and movement up the value chain, India could face a **loss of comparative advantage** in IT and digital services.
- It called for **swift adaptation**, including AI integration, higher-end consulting, product

development, and domestic AI capacity building to sustain competitiveness.

Gross NPAs of SCBs at Historic Low



Why in the News?

The Finance Ministry has informed that the Gross Non-Performing Assets (GNPA) ratio of Scheduled Commercial Banks (SCBs) declined to a historic low of **2.15 percent as of September 30, 2025**. This marks the **lowest level in more than a decade**, reflecting a sustained improvement in the health of India's banking sector.

The development is significant as India's banking system had faced a severe NPA crisis during the mid-2010s, especially among Public Sector Banks (PSBs). The current decline signals stronger financial stability, improved credit discipline, and enhanced regulatory oversight.

Key Facts

- Gross NPA Ratio of SCBs (Sept 30, 2025):** 2.15%
- Trend:** Continuous decline over the last eight financial years
- Comparison:** Lower than the levels recorded in 2010–11
- Bank-wise Gross NPA Ratio (Sept 30, 2025):**
 - Public Sector Banks (PSBs):** 2.50%
 - Private Sector Banks:** 1.73%
 - Foreign Banks:** 0.80%

This decline reflects broad-based improvement across all categories of banks, with foreign banks maintaining the lowest NPA ratios, followed by private banks and PSBs.

Understanding Gross NPAs

Gross Non-Performing Assets refer to loans or advances for which:

- Interest and/or principal remains overdue for more than 90 days.
- The borrower has defaulted on repayment obligations.

A lower GNPA ratio indicates:

- Better asset quality.
- Stronger credit risk management.
- Reduced stress on bank balance sheets.
- Improved profitability and capital adequacy.

Reasons for Decline in NPAs

1. Asset Quality Review (AQR) by the Reserve Bank of India

In 2015, the Reserve Bank of India initiated a comprehensive Asset Quality Review to:

- Identify and recognise stressed assets transparently.
- End the practice of “evergreening” of loans.
- Force banks to disclose true levels of bad loans.

This painful but necessary clean-up laid the foundation for long-term stability.

2. Government’s 4R Strategy

The Government adopted a structured **4R strategy** to tackle the NPA crisis:

- **Recognition** of NPAs
- **Resolution and Recovery**
- **Recapitalisation** of Public Sector Banks
- **Reforms** in the banking and financial ecosystem

This multi-pronged approach strengthened balance sheets and restored investor confidence.

3. Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC)

The implementation of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code significantly improved recovery mechanisms by:

- Providing a time-bound resolution process.
- Strengthening creditor rights.
- Improving recovery rates in large corporate defaults.

IBC has emerged as a key structural reform supporting asset quality improvement.

4. Recapitalisation of PSBs

Between 2017 and 2022, the government infused substantial capital into Public Sector Banks, enabling them to:

- Absorb legacy losses.
- Strengthen capital adequacy ratios.
- Expand fresh lending without balance sheet stress.

5. Improved Underwriting and Risk Management

Banks have:

- Adopted stricter due diligence norms.
- Leveraged data analytics and digital credit scoring.
- Diversified loan portfolios.
- Reduced exposure to high-risk corporate lending.

Retail lending growth and secured lending models have also reduced systemic risk.

6. Strong Economic Growth and Profitability

- Robust GDP growth in recent years improved borrower repayment capacity.
- Banks have reported record profits due to improved net interest margins.
- Lower slippages and higher recoveries have sustained asset quality gains.

Broader Implications for the Economy

The sharp decline in NPAs has several macroeconomic benefits:

- Improved credit flow to MSMEs and infrastructure.
- Lower provisioning burden on banks.
- Higher investor confidence in the Indian banking system.
- Strengthened financial stability.

India’s banking sector is now considered significantly more resilient compared to the peak NPA crisis period (2015–2018), when GNPA ratios had risen above 11 percent.

Conclusion

The reduction of the Gross NPA ratio to 2.15 percent represents a structural turnaround in India’s banking system. The coordinated efforts of the government, regulators, and banks—combined with institutional reforms like the Asset Quality Review and the Insolvency

and Bankruptcy Code—have transformed the asset quality landscape.

Sustaining this improvement will require continued vigilance, prudent lending, and strong regulatory oversight. However, the current trend clearly indicates that India's banking sector has emerged stronger, more transparent, and better capitalised than it was a decade ago.

Why Manufacturing Growth Has Not Led to Broad Employment



Why in the News?

The **Union Budget 2026** has reinforced India's existing manufacturing strategy through continued support to the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes, customs duty rationalisation, and logistics reforms. While manufacturing output and exports have shown improvement in selected sectors such as electronics, automobiles, and pharmaceuticals, analysts observe that this growth has not translated into large-scale employment generation.

This has revived the debate on “**growth without jobs**” in India's manufacturing sector.

Core Issue: Growth Without Jobs

1. Stagnant Share in GDP

- Manufacturing's share in India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has remained between **14–17 percent** for over three decades.
- Despite policy initiatives like **Make in India** and PLI schemes, the structural shift from agriculture to manufacturing has been limited.

- In contrast, East Asian economies such as **South Korea** and **China** saw manufacturing shares rise to **25–30 percent of GDP** before stabilising.
- India's service sector continues to dominate economic expansion, indicating **incomplete structural transformation**.

Implication: Without expanding the manufacturing base significantly, absorbing surplus labour from agriculture remains difficult.

2. Jobs Growth Disconnect

- Organised manufacturing employs about **1.96 crore workers**.
- Only about **57 lakh new jobs** were added in the last decade.
- Total manufacturing employment is around **5.44 crore**, with nearly **two-thirds in the informal sector**.

Key Trend:

- Organised factories are more productive but generate limited employment due to automation.
- Unorganised units absorb more labour but remain **low productivity, low wage, and vulnerable to shocks**.

This dualism creates a structural imbalance where output rises but secure, formal employment does not expand proportionately.

3. Capital-Intensive Expansion

- Many firms increasingly rely on **automation, robotics, and digital production systems**.
- Output growth has been faster than employment growth.
- The **job elasticity of manufacturing growth** remains low, meaning every 1 percent rise in output creates relatively few jobs.

For example:

- Electronics and automobile manufacturing have expanded significantly under PLI schemes.
- However, these sectors are largely capital-intensive and technologically driven.

Policy Concern: Incentives linked purely to production value may not guarantee proportional employment generation.

4. Skills Mismatch

- Industries report shortages of **job-ready skilled workers**, especially in advanced manufacturing.
- Apprenticeship systems remain underdeveloped compared to countries like **Germany**, where dual vocational training aligns education with industry demand.
- Skill development programmes often lack strong linkages with specific industrial clusters.
- Weak firm-level training ecosystems reduce employability in modern factories.

Outcome:

Vacancies coexist with unemployment, reflecting a mismatch between labour supply and industry requirements.

5. MSME Constraints

- Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) contribute:
 - Around **35 percent of manufacturing output**
 - Nearly **45–50 percent of exports**
- However, MSMEs face persistent constraints:
 - Limited access to affordable long-term capital
 - Weak technology adoption
 - Poor integration into global supply chains
 - Inability to scale operations

While credit availability has improved under schemes like ECLGS and priority sector lending, **liquidity expansion alone does not ensure productivity growth.**

Broader Structural Challenges

Informalisation of Workforce

- A large proportion of workers remain outside formal social security systems.
- Labour-intensive sectors such as textiles and leather face global competition and compliance costs.

Regional Disparities

- Manufacturing growth is concentrated in states like Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, and Maharashtra.
- Eastern and northern states lag behind, limiting balanced employment growth.

Global Trade Dynamics

- Rising protectionism and supply chain shifts after the pandemic have created opportunities.
- However, India must compete with Vietnam, Mexico, and Indonesia in labour-intensive exports.

Policy Way Forward

To address jobless growth, policy focus may need recalibration:

1. **Link Incentives to Employment Creation**
 - Modify PLI frameworks to reward job intensity alongside output value.
2. **Promote Labour-Intensive Sectors**
 - Textiles, food processing, footwear, toys, and light engineering can absorb large labour pools.
3. **Strengthen MSME Productivity**
 - Cluster-based technology upgrades
 - Digital supply chain integration
 - Export facilitation support
4. **Skill Ecosystem Reform**
 - Expand apprenticeship models
 - Align ITIs and polytechnics with industrial corridors
 - Encourage firm-led training investments
5. **Formalisation Push**
 - Simplify compliance
 - Expand social security coverage
 - Incentivise formal job creation

New CPI Inflation Series (Base Year 2024): Food Weight Reduced to 37%



Why in the News?

India has introduced a **new Consumer Price Index (CPI) series with base year 2024**, significantly revising the inflation basket.

The most notable change is the **reduction in the weight of Food and Beverages from 45.86% to 36.75%**, reflecting updated consumption trends captured in the **2023–24 Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES)**.

This revision aligns inflation measurement with **current household spending patterns**, ensuring more accurate policy signals for the economy.

What is CPI?

The **Consumer Price Index (CPI)** measures **retail inflation** by tracking changes in the prices of goods and services consumed by households.

It is:

- India's **headline inflation measure**
- Used by the Reserve Bank of India for monetary policy decisions
- Revised periodically to update the **base year** and reflect evolving consumption behaviour

The CPI basket includes categories such as:

- Food & beverages
- Housing
- Fuel & light
- Clothing & footwear
- Miscellaneous services

Key Changes in the New CPI Series

1 Food Weight Reduced

- **Earlier weight:** 45.86%
- **New weight:** 36.75%

This reflects a **decline in the share of food expenditure** in total household spending.

Based on Engel's Law

According to **Engel's Law**, as income rises, the proportion of income spent on food declines, even if absolute food expenditure increases.

HCES Findings (2023–24)

- **Rural food share:**
 - 52.9% (2011–12) → 47.04% (2023–24)
- **Urban food share:**
 - 42.62% → 39.68%

This shows structural transformation in consumption patterns due to:

- Rising incomes
- Urbanisation

- Diversification towards services and housing
- Increased spending on health, education, transport and communication

2 Housing Weight Increased

- **Earlier weight:** 10.07%
- **New weight:** 17.66%

Major updates include:

- Inclusion of:
 - Water
 - Electricity
 - Gas
 - Other fuels
- Exclusion of **employer-provided accommodation**
- Improved rental sampling methodology

📌 Impact:

Higher housing weight may exert **upward pressure on measured inflation**, especially in urban areas where rents are rising.

3 Basket Expansion

- Items increased from **299 → 358**
- Reclassification of several categories
- A **linking factor** will be provided for comparison with the previous CPI series

This ensures:

- Greater representativeness
- Inclusion of new consumption goods
- Better coverage of evolving services sector

Why Was High Food Weight a Concern?

Food inflation in India is often:

- **Supply-driven**
- Influenced by monsoon, crop yields, global commodity prices
- Affected by perishability (vegetables, fruits)

Monetary Policy Limitation

The Reserve Bank of India cannot:

- Increase vegetable supply
- Improve crop output instantly
- Control weather shocks

Thus, high food weight created:

- Excess volatility in headline CPI
- Distorted inflation signals
- Constraints on repo rate decisions

Example: October 2025

- CPI inflation: **0.25%**
- Food inflation: **-5.02%**

The sharp fall in food prices dragged overall inflation unusually low, even though core inflation remained stable.

This illustrates how high food weight amplified volatility.

Implications for RBI and Monetary Policy

India follows the **Flexible Inflation Targeting (FIT)** framework:

- Target: **4%**
- Tolerance band: **2%–6%**
- Mandated under the RBI Act Amendment (2016)

With the new CPI structure:

Likely Benefits

- ✓ Reduced volatility in headline inflation
- ✓ Better reflection of core inflation trends
- ✓ Improved clarity for repo rate decisions
- ✓ Enhanced monetary policy transmission

Possible Risks

- ⚠ Higher housing weight may increase measured inflation
- ⚠ Services inflation may become more prominent
- ⚠ Urban inflation sensitivity may rise

Structural Transformation Reflected

The new CPI series highlights broader economic shifts:

- Rising middle-class consumption
- Shift from food to services
- Urban housing cost pressures
- Energy and utility price importance

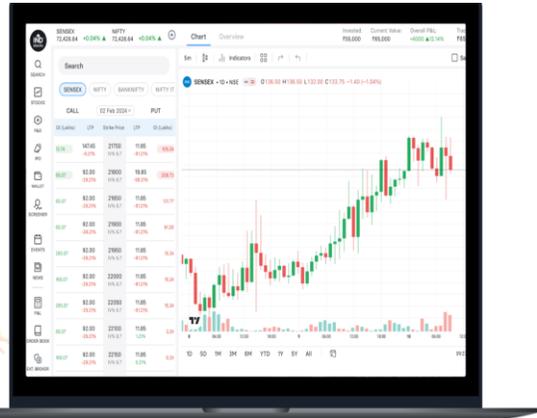
It signals India's transition from a **consumption pattern dominated by basic necessities** to a **more diversified spending economy**.

NPS Equity Exposure Increased to 25% by FY27**Why in the News?**

The Chairperson of the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) recently announced that the National Pension System (NPS) will increase its equity exposure under the Government Composite Scheme from 15% to 25% by FY2027.

Additionally, NPS pension funds are expected to begin investing in Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs) by March 2026.

These reforms mark a significant shift in India's pension investment strategy, aimed at enhancing long-term returns while maintaining a prudent risk framework for subscribers.

National Pension System (NPS)**Background and Evolution**

- Launched in **2004** for newly recruited Central Government employees (excluding armed forces).
- Extended to **all citizens in 2009** on a voluntary basis.
- Currently covers:
 - Central and State Government employees
 - Corporate employees
 - Individual citizens (including NRIs)

As of 2025–26, NPS has crossed **8 crore subscribers** with Assets Under Management (AUM) exceeding **₹12 lakh crore**, making it one of India's fastest-growing long-term savings platforms.

Two Types of Accounts

- Tier I Account**
 - Mandatory for government employees
 - Primary retirement account
 - Restricted withdrawals
- Tier II Account**
 - Voluntary savings account
 - Flexible withdrawals

- Functions like a mutual fund with pension framework benefits

Key Announcements and Reforms

1. Increase in Equity Exposure

- Equity cap in the **Government Composite Scheme** raised from **15% to 25%**
- Current equity exposure: around **19%**
- Corporate bond allocation: marginally reduced
- Government Securities (G-Secs): largely stable

Rationale

- Equity historically delivers higher long-term returns compared to fixed-income instruments.
- Younger workforce in NPS requires growth-oriented assets.
- Inflation-adjusted retirement planning demands better compounding potential.

By increasing equity allocation, the government aims to:

- Improve retirement corpus accumulation
- Enhance real returns
- Maintain diversified risk management

This move aligns NPS more closely with global pension fund practices, where equity exposure often ranges between **30–50%**, depending on demographic structure.

2. Investment in Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs)

NPS is expected to allow exposure to **Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs)** by **March 2026**.

What are AIFs?

AIFs are privately pooled investment vehicles regulated by **SEBI**, investing in:

- Private equity
- Infrastructure
- Venture capital
- Real estate
- Startups

Significance

- Provides diversification beyond stocks and bonds.
- Enables participation in India's infrastructure and startup growth story.
- May improve risk-adjusted returns over long horizons.

However, AIF exposure is expected to be:

- Limited and regulated
- Carefully monitored for risk

- Structured within conservative pension guidelines

This marks a cautious but progressive diversification step for India's pension ecosystem.

3. MARS Committee (Minimum Assured Return Scheme)

PFRDA has constituted the **MARS Committee** to explore a **Minimum Assured Return Scheme**.

Objective

- Provide a guaranteed minimum return component within NPS.
- Address concerns of risk-averse investors.
- Attract more government and private sector subscribers.

Broader Economic Implications

1. Strengthening India's Capital Markets

- Higher equity exposure increases institutional participation.
- Long-term pension funds provide stable capital to stock markets.
- Supports infrastructure and industrial growth.

2. Deepening Financial Markets

- Entry into AIFs enhances alternative asset ecosystem.
- Encourages long-term funding for startups and infrastructure.

3. Retirement Security in a Changing Economy

India's demographic profile:

- Large working-age population
- Increasing life expectancy
- Growing informal workforce

This reform supports:

- Sustainable retirement planning
- Reduced dependency on government pensions
- Individual financial responsibility

Challenges and Considerations

- Market volatility risk in higher equity exposure.
- Liquidity constraints in AIF investments.
- Need for strong risk management frameworks.
- Ensuring transparency and subscriber awareness.

Balancing growth with safety remains the central policy challenge.

CBDC Based Public Distribution System Launched in Gujarat



Why in the News?

The Union Home Minister launched a **Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC)-based Public Distribution System (PDS)** in **Gandhinagar, Gujarat**.

This marks the integration of India's **Digital Rupee** into the food security delivery mechanism, signalling a major step in combining financial innovation with welfare governance.

What is CBDC?

Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) is a digital form of sovereign currency issued and regulated by a central bank.

- In India, the digital rupee (₹) is issued by the Reserve Bank of India.
- It is **legal tender**, just like physical currency.
- It is **backed by the Government of India**.
- It is different from private cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin because:
 - It is centrally regulated.
 - It has sovereign guarantee.
 - It ensures monetary stability.

Types of CBDC in India

- **Retail CBDC (₹-R)** – For general public use.
- **Wholesale CBDC (₹-W)** – For interbank transactions.

India began CBDC pilot projects in 2022, and its gradual expansion reflects RBI's cautious and calibrated approach.

What is the Public Distribution System (PDS)?

The **Public Distribution System (PDS)** is India's food security mechanism aimed at distributing subsidised food grains to eligible beneficiaries under the **National Food Security framework**.

- Around **80 crore beneficiaries** receive free food grains under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana.
- Beneficiaries receive **5 kg free food grains per person per month**.
- Implemented through a network of over **5 lakh Fair Price Shops (FPS)** across India.
- It plays a critical role in poverty alleviation and food security.

Key Features of CBDC-Based PDS

1. Digital Transfer and Settlement

- Payments and settlements are conducted through **CBDC wallets**.
- Eliminates cash dependency in welfare distribution.

2. Reduction of Leakages

- Removes intermediaries.
- Minimises corruption and diversion of food grains.
- Ensures funds reach intended beneficiaries directly.

3. Transparency and Traceability

- Every transaction is digitally recorded.
- Enables real-time monitoring by authorities.
- Strengthens audit and accountability mechanisms.

4. Annapurna Machine Integration

- Automated grain dispensing through **Annapurna machines**.
- Dispenses **25 kg of food grains in about 35 seconds**.
- Reduces manual handling and human error.

5. Nationwide Rollout Plan

- Government plans to expand the model across India within **3–4 years**.
- Could integrate with Aadhaar authentication and ONORC (One Nation One Ration Card).

Governance Linkages

The CBDC-based PDS aligns with major governance reforms:

- **Digital India Initiative** – Promoting digital public infrastructure.
- **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) Model** – Reducing subsidy leakages.
- **Minimum Government, Maximum Governance** principle.
- Strengthens **last-mile delivery** through technology.

This initiative builds on India's successful digital ecosystem:

- Aadhaar
- UPI
- Jan Dhan Accounts
- DBT architecture

Economic and Administrative Significance

Financial Inclusion

- Encourages digital payment adoption among rural beneficiaries.
- Promotes digital literacy.

Fiscal Efficiency

- Reduces administrative costs.
- Improves subsidy targeting.

Technology-Driven Welfare

- Sets an example for integrating CBDC into other schemes like pensions, scholarships, and fertilizer subsidies.

Challenges Ahead

- Digital literacy gaps in rural areas.
- Cybersecurity risks.
- Infrastructure readiness of fair price shops.
- Ensuring interoperability across states.

UPI One World Wallet Extended for Foreign Visitors



Why in the News?

The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) has extended the **UPI One World wallet facility** to visitors from over 40 countries attending the **India AI Impact Summit 2026**, held in New Delhi from 16 to 20 February 2026.

This move aims to provide seamless digital payment access to international delegates without requiring them to open an Indian bank account.

About UPI One World Wallet

The **UPI One World Wallet** is a prepaid digital wallet based on the **Prepaid Payment Instrument (PPI)–UPI model**, specifically designed for **inbound international travellers**.

It was launched by NPCI through authorised PPI issuers to enable foreign visitors to make real-time digital payments across India.

Key Features

1. No Indian Bank Account or Mobile Number Required

- Foreign visitors can use the wallet without opening an Indian bank account.
- No requirement for an Indian SIM card or mobile number.

2. Person-to-Merchant (P2M) Payments

- Payments can be made by scanning **UPI QR codes** at shops, restaurants, hotels, and other merchant establishments.
- Works across the extensive UPI merchant network nationwide.

3. Multiple Loading Options

- Wallet can be loaded using international debit/credit cards and other approved global payment methods.
- Ensures flexibility for foreign users.

4. Availability Points

- Available at:
 - Indira Gandhi International Airport
 - NPCI Pavilion at Bharat Mandapam

5. Refund Facility

- Unused balance can be refunded to the original payment source.
- Subject to applicable **foreign exchange regulations**.

What is PPI?

Prepaid Payment Instrument (PPI) refers to a payment mechanism where money is **loaded in advance** and used for transactions without directly debiting a bank account for each payment.

Examples:

- Prepaid wallets
- Gift cards
- Transit cards

Under the UPI One World model, the PPI wallet is interoperable with UPI's QR-based payment ecosystem.

About UPI

Unified Payments Interface (UPI) is a real-time payment system developed by NPCI that enables instant inter-bank transactions through mobile applications.

Key Facts (Latest Data 2025–26)

- India handles the **largest volume of real-time digital payments globally**.
- UPI processes **over 12–14 billion transactions per month**, with monthly transaction values exceeding ₹18–20 lakh crore.
- UPI has expanded internationally to countries such as:
 - Singapore
 - UAE
 - France
 - Sri Lanka
 - Mauritius

UPI is considered a cornerstone of India's **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)**, alongside Aadhaar and DigiLocker.

Significance of UPI One World for Global Visitors

1. Promotes India's Digital Public Infrastructure Globally

- Demonstrates the scalability and global adaptability of India's payment ecosystem.
- Positions India as a leader in fintech innovation.

2. Facilitates Seamless Retail Payments

- Foreign tourists can pay digitally without handling Indian currency.
- Reduces dependency on currency exchange counters.

3. Boosts Tourism and International Events

- Enhances convenience for global delegates at international summits like the AI Impact Summit 2026.
- Strengthens India's image as a digitally advanced economy.

4. Expands Cross-Border Payment Ecosystem

- Serves as a pilot model for wider cross-border UPI interoperability.
- Supports India's ambition to internationalise UPI as a global payment standard.

Broader Policy Context

The extension of UPI One World aligns with:

- India's push towards a **less-cash economy**
- The Government's emphasis on **Digital India**
- Expansion of UPI-based cross-border transactions
- Growing international recognition of India's digital governance model

Environment & Diversity

Rare Earth Corridors in Coastal States

Why in the News?

In the **Union Budget 2026–27**, Finance Minister **Nirmala Sitharaman** announced the establishment of **dedicated Rare Earth Corridors** across the coastal states of **Odisha, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu**. The initiative is aimed at strengthening India's **critical minerals security** and building a resilient **advanced manufacturing ecosystem**, especially for clean energy, electronics, and strategic sectors.



What are Rare Earth Corridors?

Rare Earth Corridors are **state-focused industrial corridors** designed to create an integrated ecosystem for:

- **Mining**
- **Mineral processing**
- **Research and development**
- **Downstream manufacturing**

The core objective is to **link upstream extraction with downstream value addition**, ensuring that rare earth resources are not exported as raw materials but converted into high-value intermediate and finished products within India.

These corridors are strategically anchored in **mineral-rich coastal regions**, leveraging India's natural advantage in **Beach Sand Minerals (BSM)** while providing common infrastructure, logistics connectivity, research facilities, and regulatory support.

Rare Earths in the Indian Context

Principal Source: Beach Sand Minerals (BSM)

- India's rare earth potential is primarily derived from **Beach Sand Minerals** found along its eastern and western coastlines.
- Coastal stretches of Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala contain some of the world's richest placer deposits.

Key Mineral: Monazite

- **Monazite** is a phosphate mineral and the most important rare-earth-bearing mineral in Indian beach sands.
- It contains significant quantities of **rare earth elements (REEs)** along with **Uranium and Thorium**, making its extraction strategically sensitive.
- Through appropriate processing, monazite can yield critical rare earths such as:
 - **Neodymium**
 - **Praseodymium**
 - Other light rare earth elements essential for magnet manufacturing.

Strategic Advantage

India's coastal reserves are considered **commercially viable** and capable of supporting long-term domestic demand, provided processing and separation capacities are scaled up—an objective directly addressed by the Rare Earth Corridors.

Link with the Rare Earth Magnet Manufacturing Scheme

The Rare Earth Corridors are closely aligned with the **Rare Earth Permanent Magnet Manufacturing Scheme**, which focuses on producing **Sintered Rare Earth Permanent Magnets** within India.

Key Features of the Magnet Manufacturing Scheme

- **Total financial outlay:** ₹7,280 crore
- **Target production capacity:**
 - **6,000 metric tonnes per annum (MTPA)**
- **Beneficiaries:**
 - **5 companies** selected through competitive bidding
 - **Up to 1,200 MTPA per beneficiary**

Incentive Structure

- **Sales-linked incentive:** ₹6,450 crore over five years
- **Capital subsidy:** ₹750 crore to support plant and equipment costs

The Rare Earth Corridors will ensure reliable domestic supply of processed rare earth oxides and metals, reducing input risk for magnet manufacturers and improving project viability.

Why Rare Earth Permanent Magnets Matter

Rare Earth Permanent Magnets are a **foundational technology** for modern and future industries. They are indispensable for:

- **Electric vehicles (EVs)** – traction motors and drivetrains
- **Wind turbines and renewable energy systems** – high-efficiency generators
- **Electronics** – smartphones, hard drives, precision devices
- **Aerospace and defence** – guidance systems, radars, advanced weapons

Global Supply Risk

- **China dominates over 90%** of global rare earth processing and magnet manufacturing.
- This high concentration poses serious **geopolitical and supply-chain risks** for importing countries.

India's Import Dependence

- India imported **over 53,000 metric tonnes of rare earth magnets in FY 2024–25**.
- With rapid growth in EVs, renewables, and electronics, **domestic demand is expected to double by 2030**.

Strategic Significance of Rare Earth Corridors

- **Supply chain security:** Reduces dependence on imports for critical minerals and components.
- **Value addition within India:** Shifts India from raw mineral exporter to high-value manufacturer.
- **Boost to advanced manufacturing:** Supports EVs, clean energy, electronics, and defence production.
- **Regional development:** Creates industrial clusters, skilled employment, and infrastructure in coastal states.
- **Geopolitical leverage:** Enhances India's role in global critical mineral supply chains alongside trusted partners.

Wetlands as a National Public Good

Why in the News?

India observed **World Wetlands Day** under the global theme **"Wetlands and Traditional Knowledge"**, highlighting the role of indigenous practices and community wisdom in conserving wetland ecosystems. On this occasion, India added **two new sites—Patna Bird Sanctuary** in Uttar Pradesh and **Chhari-Dhand Wetland** in Gujarat—to the list of wetlands of international importance under the **Ramsar Convention**.

With this addition, **India's total Ramsar sites have increased to 98**, further strengthening its position as the country with the **highest number of Ramsar wetlands in South Asia**.



What are Wetlands?

Wetlands are ecosystems where land remains **saturated with water either permanently or seasonally**, creating unique ecological conditions that support diverse plant and animal life.

They include both **natural and man-made systems**, such as:

- Lakes and ponds
- Marshes and swamps
- Floodplains and river deltas
- Mangroves and coastal lagoons
- Peatlands
- Traditional water bodies like **tanks, kulams, and stepwells**

Wetlands act as a **transition zone between terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems**, making them among the most productive yet fragile ecosystems on Earth.

Key Facts and Ecological Significance

- India has **lost nearly 40 percent of its wetlands over the last three decades**, largely due to urbanisation, encroachment, pollution, and infrastructure expansion
- Nearly **half of the remaining wetlands show signs of ecological degradation**, including eutrophication and biodiversity loss
- Wetlands function as **natural flood buffers**, absorbing excess rainfall and reducing flood intensity
- They play a critical role in **groundwater recharge** and **water purification** by trapping sediments and pollutants

- Wetlands support **rich biodiversity**, including migratory birds, fish, amphibians, and aquatic plants
- They sustain **livelihoods** through fisheries, agriculture, grazing, and eco-tourism
- **Coastal wetlands**, particularly mangroves, act as natural shields against **cyclones, storm surges, and coastal erosion**, reducing disaster risks in vulnerable regions

The inclusion of sites like Patna Bird Sanctuary and Chhari-Dhand underscores the importance of wetlands as **avian habitats**, especially for migratory species along the Central Asian Flyway.

Role of Traditional Knowledge

The 2026 theme places special emphasis on **traditional and indigenous knowledge systems**, such as:

- Community-managed tanks and ponds
- Seasonal fishing practices
- Sacred groves and water bodies
- Sustainable harvesting methods

These practices have historically ensured **long-term ecological balance**, and their integration with modern conservation science is increasingly seen as vital for effective wetland management.

Policy and Institutional Framework in India

- **Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017**
Provide the legal framework for identification, notification, protection, and wise use of wetlands
- **National Plan for Conservation of Aquatic Ecosystems (NPCA)**
Focuses on integrated planning, monitoring, and outcome-based restoration of wetlands and lakes
- **Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) framework**
Protects mangroves, estuaries, lagoons, and other coastal wetlands from unregulated development
- **Ramsar Designation**
International recognition under the Ramsar Convention places a responsibility on India to

ensure conservation, sustainable use, and community participation

Karimpuzha Wildlife Sanctuary

Why in the News?

A recent faunal survey conducted in the Karimpuzha Wildlife Sanctuary has recorded several species for the first time, substantially enriching the biodiversity database of Kerala's youngest wildlife sanctuary. The findings underline the ecological importance of the sanctuary and highlight its role in conserving Western Ghats biodiversity.

About Karimpuzha Wildlife Sanctuary



- Located in the Nilambur Forest Division of **Kerala**
- Spread over **227.21 square kilometres**
- Notified as a Wildlife Sanctuary in **2020**, making it one of the newest protected areas in the state
- Forms part of the globally recognised **Western Ghats biodiversity hotspot**
- Terrain ranges from **low-elevation tropical evergreen and semi-evergreen forests** to **montane ecosystems** at higher altitudes

The sanctuary acts as an ecological bridge between the Silent Valley landscape and other forested tracts of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve, supporting rich floral and faunal diversity. Its varied altitudinal gradient and intact forest cover create ideal habitats for numerous endemic and threatened species.

Key Findings of the Survey

1. Bird Diversity

- **171 bird species** were recorded during the recent survey.
- **8 species were newly documented** in the sanctuary.
- The **total bird diversity now stands at 247 species**.

Notable new records include:

- Grey-headed Fish Eagle
- Eurasian Hoopoe
- Barn Owl
- Pallid Harrier

The presence of raptors such as the Grey-headed Fish Eagle indicates healthy freshwater ecosystems, while migratory species like the Pallid Harrier suggest that the sanctuary lies along important migratory routes.

2. Butterfly Diversity

- **177 butterfly species** documented during the survey.
- **20 species newly added** to sanctuary records.
- The **total butterfly diversity has risen to 223 species**.

Researchers also observed **altitudinal migration** in species such as the Common Albatross and Lesser Albatross, reflecting seasonal movements influenced by temperature and rainfall variations. Such patterns are important indicators of climate sensitivity in fragile ecosystems like the Western Ghats.

3. Odonate (Dragonflies and Damselflies) Diversity

- **42 odonate species** recorded during the survey.
- **7 new additions** identified.
- The **total odonate diversity now stands at 63 species**.

Noteworthy species include:

- *Merogomphus tamaracherriensis*
- *Rhodothemis rufa*

Odonates are considered **bioindicators of freshwater health**, and their diversity reflects the ecological integrity of streams and wetlands within the sanctuary.

Other Ecological Observations

- Significant records of **moths**, over **70 species of spiders**, and diverse **freshwater fish** were documented.
- The presence of **elephant herds** suggests strong habitat connectivity with adjacent forest landscapes.
- Large mammals such as elephants act as ecological engineers, aiding in seed dispersal and forest regeneration.

The continuous movement of elephants also indicates that the sanctuary forms part of an active wildlife corridor within the Western Ghats.

Ecological and Conservation Significance

Karimpuzha Wildlife Sanctuary plays a critical role in:

- Conserving **endemic and threatened species** of the Western Ghats
- Maintaining **watershed integrity** of river systems originating in the region
- Supporting **climate resilience** through intact forest cover
- Enhancing Kerala's protected area network

The survey findings strengthen the scientific baseline data necessary for future conservation planning, habitat management, and climate adaptation strategies.

NHAI proposal for sound barrier near Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary



Why in the News?

The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has proposed constructing a **soundproof barrier wall** along a stretch of highway passing close to the Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary in Karnataka.

The proposal aims to **minimise traffic noise pollution** and reduce disturbance to birds and other wildlife in and around the sanctuary. Since the project falls within the **eco-sensitive zone (ESZ)** and buffer area, it requires clearance from the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL).

About Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary

- Located near **Srirangapatna** in Mandya district, Karnataka.
- Situated on small islets along the banks of the **Cauvery River**.
- Declared a bird sanctuary in **1940**, making it one of India's oldest protected bird habitats.
- Spread over approximately **40 acres**, comprising six islets.
- Hosts over **200 species of birds**, including migratory species from Siberia, North America, and Central Asia.
- Key species include:
 - Painted Stork
 - Asian Openbill Stork
 - Black-headed Ibis
 - River Tern
 - Spot-billed Pelican

The sanctuary is ecologically sensitive due to its nesting colonies and seasonal influx of migratory birds, especially during winter.

What is the NHAI Proposal?

- Construction of a **sound barrier wall** along the highway stretch adjacent to the sanctuary.
- Intended to reduce:
 - Vehicular honking noise
 - Engine and tyre friction sound
 - Vibrational disturbance
- Applies to areas falling within:
 - The **Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ)**
 - Buffer regions surrounding the sanctuary
- Requires statutory approval from the NBWL as mandated under wildlife protection norms.

The proposal does **not expand infrastructure capacity** but seeks mitigation to reduce ecological impact while maintaining connectivity.

Why Are Sound Barriers Important Near Protected Areas?

Noise pollution is increasingly recognised as a major environmental stressor. According to recent environmental assessments, continuous exposure to traffic noise above **55–65 decibels** can significantly disrupt wildlife behaviour.

Impacts on Birds:

- **Breeding Behaviour:** Noise interferes with mating calls and courtship displays.
- **Nesting Success:** Frequent disturbance may cause nest abandonment.
- **Feeding Patterns:** Alters foraging time and efficiency.
- **Migration Routes:** Chronic disturbance may shift migratory stopover sites.

In fragile wetland ecosystems like Ranganathittu, noise may:

- Cause habitat fragmentation.
- Increase stress hormones in avian species.
- Reduce reproductive success over time.

Sound barriers function as **mitigation measures**, not developmental expansion tools. They are widely used internationally near national parks, urban wetlands, and biodiversity corridors.

Legal and Regulatory Framework

India's environmental governance mandates strict scrutiny of projects near protected areas.

- **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972:**
 - Requires wildlife clearance for projects within protected areas.
- **Environment (Protection) Act, 1986:**
 - Enables notification of Eco-Sensitive Zones around national parks and sanctuaries.
- **National Board for Wildlife (NBWL):**
 - Apex body chaired by the Prime Minister.
 - Grants approval for projects impacting wildlife habitats.
- **Supreme Court Guidelines:**

- Emphasise the precautionary principle and sustainable development doctrine.

The proposal reflects an attempt to balance infrastructure development with ecological safeguards.

Sustainable Infrastructure Perspective

India currently has over **1.4 lakh km of National Highways**, with rapid expansion under Bharatmala and related projects. As highways increasingly intersect wildlife habitats, mitigation strategies such as:

- Wildlife crossings
- Underpasses
- Green bridges
- Sound barriers

are becoming essential components of **eco-friendly infrastructure planning**.

The Ranganathittu proposal represents a shift towards integrating biodiversity considerations in transport projects, consistent with India's commitments under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

Conclusion

The proposed soundproof barrier near Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary highlights the evolving approach to infrastructure planning in ecologically sensitive zones. By seeking mitigation rather than expansion, the NHAI aims to reduce anthropogenic disturbance while preserving transport connectivity.

Supreme Court Stays Haryana's Aravalli Zoo Safari Project



Why in the News?

The Supreme Court of India has refused to permit the Haryana government to proceed with its proposed

Aravalli Zoo Safari Project until a **scientific and expert-backed clarification of the definition and geographical extent of the "Aravalli Range"** is completed.

The Court observed that no one would be allowed to "touch the Aravallis" until the matter is conclusively settled, highlighting the ecological sensitivity of the region and the need for evidence-based decision-making in environmental governance.

This intervention reflects the Court's continuing role in environmental protection, especially in fragile ecosystems around the National Capital Region (NCR).

About the Aravalli Range

The Aravalli Range is one of the **oldest fold mountain ranges in the world**, with geological origins dating back nearly 1.5 to 2 billion years.

Geographical Spread

- Extends approximately **700 km**
- Runs across:
 - Gujarat
 - Rajasthan
 - Haryana
 - Delhi

Ecological and Strategic Importance

- Natural Barrier Against Desertification**
 - Acts as a shield preventing the eastward expansion of the Thar Desert.
 - Without the Aravallis, desertification would threaten fertile regions of North India.
- Groundwater Recharge Zone**
 - The rocky terrain enables rainwater percolation.
 - Recharges aquifers in Haryana and Delhi.
 - Crucial for water security in Gurugram–NCR region.
- Biodiversity Hotspot**
 - Home to leopards, hyenas, nilgai, jackals, reptiles, and diverse bird species.
 - Contains patches of dry deciduous forests and scrub vegetation.
- Climate Regulator**

- Helps moderate dust storms.
- Maintains microclimatic stability in North India.
- Reduces air pollution load in NCR by acting as a green lung.

Due to these functions, multiple expert committees have classified parts of the Aravallis as ecologically sensitive zones.

What is the Zoo Safari Project?

The **Aravalli Zoo Safari Project** has been proposed by the Haryana Government as a large-scale eco-tourism and wildlife attraction initiative.

Key Features

- Initially proposed over **10,000 acres**, later reduced to around **3,300 acres**
- Planned across Gurugram and Nuh districts
- Envisioned as the **world's largest zoo safari park**
- Includes:
 - Big cat safari zones
 - Enclosures for birds, reptiles, and butterflies
 - Visitor infrastructure and tourism facilities

The state government argues that the project would:

- Boost tourism
- Generate employment
- Promote wildlife awareness
- Enhance regional economic development

Concerns Raised by Petitioners

Retired Indian Forest Service officers and the NGO People for Aravallis have opposed the project, raising serious ecological concerns:

- The Aravallis are already under stress due to:
 - Mining
 - Urbanisation
 - Real estate expansion
 - Illegal encroachments
- Further infrastructure development may:
 - Fragment wildlife habitats
 - Increase human-wildlife conflict
 - Reduce groundwater recharge capacity
 - Accelerate ecological degradation

Petitioners argue that **“eco-tourism” in fragile mountain ecosystems often leads to commercialisation rather than conservation.**

Core Legal and Scientific Issue

The central dispute revolves around the **scientific definition and demarcation of the Aravalli Range.**

Why is Definition Important?

- Environmental protection laws depend on geographical classification.
- If an area is officially categorized as part of the Aravallis:
 - It may attract restrictions under forest, environment, and land-use regulations.
- Ambiguity allows:
 - Policy loopholes
 - Differential treatment of land parcels

The Supreme Court has emphasized that **expert geological and ecological assessments must precede any project approval.**

Broader Environmental Context

The Aravalli region has already seen:

- Significant loss of forest cover in Haryana over past decades.
 - Rapid urban growth in Gurugram and adjoining NCR areas.
 - Rising dust pollution affecting Delhi's air quality.
- In several previous cases, courts have:
- Banned illegal mining in Aravalli areas.
 - Ordered restoration measures.
 - Directed strict monitoring of land use.

The present ruling reinforces the judiciary's precautionary principle in environmental law — when ecological risk is high, development must pause until clarity is achieved.

Significance of the Supreme Court's Stand

The intervention by the Supreme Court of India underscores:

1. **Primacy of ecological protection over commercial development**
2. **Need for scientific evidence in policy decisions**
3. **Recognition of Aravallis as a critical environmental asset**

4. Judicial vigilance in safeguarding NCR's ecological security

The case also highlights the tension between:

- Economic development and tourism expansion versus
- Long-term environmental sustainability

Way Forward

- Scientific mapping of the Aravalli boundaries.
- Independent ecological impact assessment.
- Adoption of restoration-based conservation models.
- Sustainable eco-tourism guidelines, if allowed in future.

Great Nicobar Mega Project Cleared by NGT



Why in the News?

A special bench of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) has declined to interfere with the environmental clearance granted to the ₹80,000 crore **Great Nicobar Mega Infrastructure Project**.

The tribunal cited the project's **strategic importance** and observed that adequate environmental safeguards had been incorporated. The decision came after reviewing the findings of a High Powered Committee constituted following the NGT's 2023 directions.

About Great Nicobar Island

Great Nicobar Island is:

- The **southernmost island** of the Nicobar group.
- Located in the **southeastern Bay of Bengal**, close to the strategic Malacca Strait.
- Spread over approximately **910 sq km**.

- Covered largely with **dense tropical evergreen rainforest**.
- Home to rich biodiversity and indigenous communities such as the **Shompen tribe**.
- Ecologically fragile and sparsely populated.

The island falls under the Union Territory of Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

About the Great Nicobar Mega Infrastructure Project

The project is being implemented by the Andaman and Nicobar Islands Integrated Development Corporation (ANIIDCO) as part of India's long-term maritime and strategic development plan.

Project Details

- **Total project area:** 166 sq km
- **Forest diversion:** 130 sq km
- **Estimated trees to be felled:** Nearly 1 million
- **Estimated cost:** ₹80,000 crore

Major Components

1. International Transshipment Port

- To be developed at Galathea Bay.
- Aims to compete with global hubs like Singapore and Colombo.
- Intended to reduce India's dependence on foreign ports for cargo transshipment.

2. Integrated Township

- Planned urban infrastructure for supporting population growth.
- Residential, commercial, and administrative facilities.

3. Dual-Use Airport

- Civil and military operations.
- Enhances strategic air connectivity in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

4. 450 MVA Power Plant

- Combination of gas-based and solar-based energy generation.
- Intended to ensure sustainable power supply.

Key Environmental Concerns Raised

Environmental groups and petitioners challenged the project on several grounds:

1. Violation of ICRZ Notification, 2019

- Alleged development in prohibited **Island Coastal Regulation Zone (ICRZ)** areas.

2. Development in Ecologically Sensitive Zones

- Concerns about impact on **coral reefs**, mangroves, and nesting sites of endangered species like the leatherback turtle.

3. Forest Diversion

- Diversion of approximately 130 sq km of forest land.
- Potential disruption of endemic flora and fauna.

4. Insufficient Baseline Environmental Data

- Petitioners argued that environmental impact assessments lacked comprehensive long-term ecological data.

NGT's Key Observations

The NGT, relying on the High Powered Committee's findings, observed:

- No part of the project falls within **prohibited ICRZ areas**.
- Environmental clearance includes adequate mitigation measures.
- Safeguards for biodiversity protection have been prescribed.
- The **strategic importance** of the project must be factored into decision-making.
- A **balanced approach** is necessary between ecological preservation and national development.

The Tribunal emphasised that courts must not substitute expert findings unless clear violations are established.

Strategic Importance of the Project

- Located near the **Malacca Strait**, one of the world's busiest maritime trade routes.
- Strengthens India's maritime presence in the Indo-Pacific.

- Enhances logistics and trade competitiveness.
- Boosts infrastructure in a remote border region.
- Supports India's SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) vision.

The project aligns with India's broader goals of enhancing maritime security and economic resilience.

About Island Coastal Regulation Zone (ICRZ)

The **Island Coastal Regulation Zone (ICRZ)** is:

- Notified under the Environment Protection Act 1986.
- Specifically regulates coastal development in:
 - Andaman and Nicobar Islands
 - Lakshadweep Islands

Categories under ICRZ

- **ICRZ-IA:** Ecologically sensitive areas (mangroves, coral reefs, etc.) – strict restrictions.
- **ICRZ-IB:** Intertidal areas between high and low tide lines.
- **ICRZ-II & III:** Areas with varying degrees of permissible development.

The regulation seeks to balance conservation of fragile island ecosystems with development needs.

Broader Environmental Debate

The Great Nicobar Project has become a key case study in:

- Development vs environmental conservation.
- Strategic infrastructure in ecologically fragile zones.
- Judicial review of expert committee recommendations.
- Climate resilience planning in island territories.

The NGT's ruling reflects an evolving jurisprudence that recognises both **ecological sustainability** and **national security imperatives**.

Governance

Bharat Taxi



Why in the News?

Union Minister for Home Affairs and Cooperation **Amit Shah** launched **Bharat Taxi**, India's first cooperative-based ride-hailing platform, on **5 February 2026**. The launch marks a major policy-driven intervention aimed at reshaping the app-based mobility sector by placing drivers—not private aggregators—at the centre of ownership and profit-sharing.

About Bharat Taxi

Bharat Taxi is India's **first ride-hailing platform owned and operated by a cooperative structure** rather than a private corporate entity.

- It is registered under the **Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act, 2002**, enabling it to operate across multiple states.
- The platform was formally established on **6 June 2025**.
- It was conceptualised under the **Ministry of Cooperation**, aligning with the government's broader push to revitalise cooperatives as engines of inclusive growth.

The initiative represents a shift away from profit-maximising digital intermediaries towards **member-owned digital platforms**.

Core Philosophy

The defining principle of Bharat Taxi is "**sarathi hi malik**" (the driver is the owner).

- Drivers are referred to as **sarathis**, symbolising dignity, agency, and ownership.
- Sarathis collectively own the platform and participate directly in decision-making and profit-sharing.
- The model is designed to free drivers from **aggregator-driven, commission-heavy systems** that often erode earnings and impose unilateral rules.

This philosophy aligns with cooperative values of **democratic control, shared prosperity, and economic self-reliance**.

Operational Model

Bharat Taxi introduces several structural departures from existing ride-hailing platforms:

- **Zero commission:** Drivers retain the full fare amount without platform deductions.
- **Surge-free pricing:** Passengers are protected from unpredictable fare spikes, ensuring affordability and transparency.
- **Direct profit distribution:** Any surplus generated by the platform is shared among driver-members.
- **No exclusivity clause:** Drivers are free to operate on other ride-hailing apps, preserving income flexibility and choice.

This model aims to balance passenger interest with long-term driver sustainability.

Driver Welfare Measures

Beyond earnings, Bharat Taxi integrates social security into its platform design:

- **Personal accident insurance** cover of ₹5 lakh for drivers.
- **Family health insurance** cover of ₹5 lakh, extending protection beyond the individual driver.

- **Retirement savings support**, addressing the absence of old-age security in the gig economy.
- **Dedicated driver support centres** at seven locations in Delhi for grievance redressal and assistance.
- **Rapid emergency response systems** and verified ride data to enhance safety and trust.

These measures directly address vulnerabilities faced by gig workers in India's informal urban economy.

Women Empowerment Initiative

A key social dimension of Bharat Taxi is its focus on women's participation:

- The **Bike Didi programme** encourages women to join the platform as two-wheeler drivers.
- Over **150 women drivers** have already enrolled, reflecting early traction.
- The initiative seeks to promote **financial independence, mobility, and safety** for women in urban transport services.

This aligns with national priorities of women-led development and inclusive employment.

16th Finance Commission proposal to scrap Revenue Deficit Grants



Why in the News?

Some States have raised concerns over indications that the **Sixteenth Finance Commission (16th FC)** may recommend **phasing out or scrapping Revenue Deficit Grants (RDG)**. They argue that such a move could adversely affect fiscally weaker and geographically disadvantaged States, especially in the post-GST fiscal environment where revenue flexibility has reduced.

What are Revenue Deficit Grants?

Revenue Deficit Grants are **statutory transfers** recommended by the Finance Commission of India to States whose **revenue expenditure exceeds revenue receipts**, even after receiving their share of tax devolution.

- These grants aim to **bridge the post-devolution revenue gap**.
- They ensure that States can meet essential administrative and social sector obligations.
- They reduce the need for excessive borrowing to fund routine expenditure.

Under the **Fifteenth Finance Commission (2021–26)**, Revenue Deficit Grants were recommended for **17 States in 2021–22**, with the number declining gradually over the award period, signalling a push toward fiscal consolidation.

Constitutional Basis

- Provided under **Article 275** of the Constitution of India.
- These grants are **charged on the Consolidated Fund of India**.
- They are distinct from tax devolution under Article 270.

Article 275 enables need-based transfers to ensure balanced development and minimum standards of governance across States.

Why are Revenue Deficit Grants Given?

1. **Correct Vertical Fiscal Imbalance**
 - The Centre collects a larger share of taxes, while States bear higher expenditure responsibilities (health, education, agriculture, policing).
 - RDGs help correct this structural imbalance.
2. **Support Weak Revenue Capacity**
 - Hill States, North-Eastern States, and smaller States have limited tax bases.
 - Geographic constraints raise service delivery costs.
3. **Ensure Minimum Standards of Public Services**

- Prevents disparities in welfare schemes and governance capacity.
4. **Protect Capital Expenditure**
- Without RDGs, States may divert funds from infrastructure to meet salary and pension obligations.

What is the Proposal of the 16th Finance Commission?

Emerging discussions suggest that the 16th Finance Commission may:

- **Move toward eliminating revenue deficits** rather than financing them.
- Encourage States to improve **own tax revenue mobilisation**.
- Promote **fiscal discipline and structural reforms**.
- Shift focus from unconditional revenue support to:
 - Performance-based transfers
 - Capital expenditure-linked incentives
 - Outcome-based fiscal transfers
- Reduce long-term dependence on gap-filling grants.

This aligns with broader reforms such as:

- Greater emphasis on capital expenditure (which has crossed ₹11 lakh crore in recent Union Budgets).
- Incentive-based borrowing limits linked to reforms in power, urban finance, and ease of doing business.

Concerns Raised by States

1. **Dependence of Special and Hill States**
 - States like those in the North-East and Himalayan region rely heavily on RDGs due to terrain-related costs and narrow tax bases.
2. **Post-GST Fiscal Constraints**
 - After the introduction of GST in 2017, States lost flexibility over indirect taxation.
 - GST compensation ended in June 2022, increasing fiscal stress for some States.
3. **Risk of Widening Inter-State Disparities**

- Stronger industrial States may manage without RDGs.
- Weaker States could face widening developmental gaps.

4. Debt Stress

- Many States already have debt levels approaching or exceeding 30–35% of GSDP.
- Removal of RDGs may force additional borrowing, affecting fiscal sustainability.

Motion to Remove Lok Sabha Speaker: Constitutional & Procedural Aspects



Why in the News?

- Om Birla has decided not to preside over proceedings of the **Lok Sabha** after the Opposition submitted a notice seeking his removal.
- The notice alleges **partisan conduct** and bias during House proceedings.
- This development has revived debate over the **neutrality of the Speaker's office**, which is expected to function above party politics.
- The matter is significant in the context of heightened political contestation in Parliament in 2026.

Constitutional Provisions

The Constitution of India lays down clear provisions regarding the office of the Speaker:

- **Article 93**
 - Provides for the **election of the Speaker and Deputy Speaker** of the Lok Sabha.

- The House elects these members from among its own members.
- **Article 94**
 - The Speaker can be removed by a **resolution passed by a majority of all the then members of the House.**
 - This is known as an **effective majority** (majority of the total membership excluding vacancies).
 - The Speaker vacates office if they cease to be a member of the House.
- **Article 95**
 - When the office of the Speaker is vacant, or the Speaker is absent, the **Deputy Speaker performs the duties.**
 - If both offices are vacant, the President may appoint a member to perform duties temporarily.

Notice Requirement

The removal process is regulated by both the Constitution and the **Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha**:

- A **minimum of 14 days' notice** must be given before moving the resolution.
- The notice must be **signed by at least 50 Members of Parliament (MPs).**
- The notice is submitted to the **Secretary-General of the Lok Sabha**, who examines its admissibility.
- These requirements arise from procedural rules, not directly from the constitutional text.

Procedure for Removal

The process unfolds in several stages:

1. **Submission of Written Notice**
 - Signed by the required number of MPs.
2. **Examination of Admissibility**
 - Conducted by the Secretary-General.
3. **Mandatory 14-Day Period**
 - The motion can only be taken up after the notice period.
4. **Presiding Authority During Motion**

- The Speaker **does not preside** over the sitting when the motion for removal is discussed.
- The Deputy Speaker or another designated member presides.

5. Voting Requirement

- Requires an **effective majority** of the House.
- If passed, the Speaker is removed from office immediately.

Constitutional Significance

- The Speaker occupies a **high constitutional office** and is expected to function with impartiality.
- The removal mechanism balances:
 - **Stability of office**, by requiring an effective majority.
 - **Accountability**, by allowing the House to remove the Speaker if confidence is lost.
- Historically, removal motions are rare, underlining the gravity of such proceedings.

Broader Political Implications

- The episode highlights:
 - Increasing use of procedural tools in parliamentary politics.
 - Ongoing debates about institutional neutrality.
 - The evolving role of parliamentary conventions in India's democratic framework.

Inauguration of Seva Teerth and Kartavya Bhavan



Why in the News?

The Prime Minister inaugurated the newly constructed Prime Minister's Office complex named **Seva Teerth** and two Central Secretariat buildings—**Kartavya Bhavan 1 and 2**—in New Delhi. A commemorative stamp and coin were also released to mark the occasion. The development is part of the larger redevelopment of the Central Vista area aimed at modernising India's administrative infrastructure.

Key Highlights

- New PMO complex named **Seva Teerth**, symbolising service as a sacred duty.
- Two new Secretariat buildings named **Kartavya Bhavan 1 and 2**, reflecting the principle of duty-based governance.
- Designed to align with the vision of *Viksit Bharat* and citizen-centric administration.
- Replaces the space-constrained functioning from colonial-era North Block and South Block.
- Emphasis on modern infrastructure, digital integration, and sustainability.

About the Architectural Context

The earlier administrative buildings—**North Block and South Block**—were constructed during the British era after the capital shifted from Kolkata to Delhi in 1912.

- Designed by British architects such as Edwin Lutyens and Herbert Baker.
- Built to reflect imperial authority and centralised colonial governance.
- Over time, these buildings faced challenges such as limited space, outdated facilities, and lack of integrated digital infrastructure.

The new complex represents a shift from colonial symbolism to Indian civilisational and cultural inspiration.

Features of the New Complex

- Constructed using white and red sandstone, drawing inspiration from Indian civic and temple architecture.
- Domes inspired by Buddhist Stupa architecture, symbolising peace and continuity.
- Entrance designs influenced by Chalukyan temple stone screen work.
- Plinth band motifs inspired by the 12th-century Chennakeshava Temple.
- Built with green building standards, improved energy efficiency, and earthquake-resistant design.
- Integrated digital infrastructure to support e-governance and inter-ministerial coordination.

Broader Significance

- Enhances administrative efficiency through consolidation of offices in a single, modern complex.
- Symbolically transitions India's governance spaces from colonial legacy to indigenous identity.
- Reflects emphasis on transparency, accountability, and service-oriented governance.
- Supports long-term administrative needs of a growing economy projected to become one of the world's largest in the coming decades.

The inauguration of Seva Teerth and Kartavya Bhavan marks not just an infrastructural upgrade, but also a symbolic transformation in India's governance architecture—linking heritage inspiration with modern state functionality.

History

Serengsia Battle 1837

Why in the News?

- The Chief Minister of Jharkhand, **Hemant Soren**, recently commemorated an Adivasi resistance event linked to the **Serengsia battle of 1837**.

- However, historians and Adivasi activists have questioned the officially observed date, arguing that the remembrance must be aligned with verified historical records.

- The debate has revived wider discussions about **tribal resistance movements**, historical accuracy, and the politics of memory in India.



About the Serengsia Battle (1837)

- The **Serengsia Battle** was fought in **1837** between the **Ho Adivasis** and the **East India Company**.
- It took place in the **Serengsia Valley** of present-day **West Singhbhum district** in Jharkhand.
- The conflict formed part of a broader wave of **Adivasi resistance in the Kolhan region** during the early 19th century.
- The uprising reflected opposition to colonial administrative control, revenue extraction, and interference in traditional tribal autonomy.

The battle is remembered locally as a symbol of resistance against colonial exploitation, though it remains less widely known compared to other tribal revolts such as the Santhal Rebellion (1855–56) or Birsa Munda's Ulgulan (1899–1900).

Who Were the Ho Adivasis?

- The **Ho** are an indigenous Adivasi community inhabiting the **Kolhan region**, which includes:
 - East Singhbhum
 - West Singhbhum
 - Seraikela-Kharsawan

- The Ho belong to the Munda linguistic family and traditionally followed a **self-governing village system**.
- Their socio-political structure was based on customary law, collective land ownership, and clan-based administration.

The Ho community historically resisted external interference—whether from Mughal authorities, regional zamindars, or British colonial administrators.

Background to the Uprising

1. Incorporation into the Bengal Presidency

- Around **1820–21**, Kolhan came under the administrative control of the **Bengal Presidency** of the East India Company.
- The British sought to introduce revenue settlements and bureaucratic control over the tribal-dominated region.

2. Revenue and Land Policies

- Imposition of **land revenue demands** disrupted the traditional communal landholding system.
- The British allowed the entry of **non-Adivasi settlers**, moneylenders, and zamindars into the region.
- This led to land alienation and indebtedness among tribal communities.

3. Cultural and Linguistic Interference

- Administrative enforcement of languages such as **Hindi and Oriya** in courts and official work marginalised local languages and customs.
- Tribal judicial practices were replaced by colonial legal systems.

4. Earlier Resistance – The Kol Uprising (1831)

- The Serengsia conflict followed the earlier **Kol Uprising of 1831–32**, a major tribal revolt in Chotanagpur.
- The uprising involved several tribal groups including the Ho, Munda, and Oraon communities.
- It was triggered by exploitation by zamindars, moneylenders, and British officials.

The Serengsia battle can thus be seen as part of a **continuum of tribal resistance**, rather than an isolated event.

Historical Significance

- Demonstrates that **tribal resistance preceded the 1857 Revolt**, challenging the mainstream narrative that frames 1857 as the first major uprising.
- Highlights the role of Adivasi communities in defending land, autonomy, and identity.
- Contributed to later administrative adjustments in Kolhan, where the British were compelled to adopt relatively distinct arrangements for tribal areas.

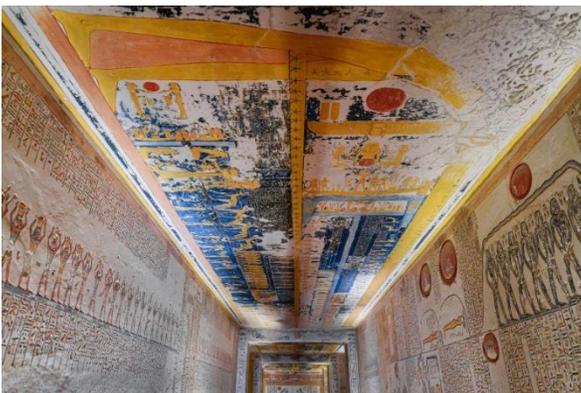
Today, such events are being re-evaluated in the context of **subaltern history and indigenous rights discourse**.

Contemporary Relevance

- The debate over the date of commemoration reflects the importance of **evidence-based historiography**.
- It raises questions about how governments interpret and institutionalise memory.
- Tribal communities in Jharkhand continue to assert their historical identity, especially in light of ongoing debates over land rights, forest rights, and cultural preservation.

The issue underscores the need to balance **political symbolism with archival accuracy**.

Indian Inscriptions Found in Egypt's Valley of the Kings



Why in the News

- Researchers have identified **nearly 30 Indian inscriptions** in the **Valley of the Kings**, Egypt.
- The inscriptions date between the **1st and 3rd centuries CE**.
- The discovery sheds fresh light on connections between **ancient Tamilagam**, other parts of India, and the **Roman Empire**.
- It strengthens evidence that Indian traders or visitors moved **beyond Red Sea ports into the Nile Valley**, indicating deeper inland interaction.

Key Findings

1. Tamil Majority Presence

- A majority of the inscriptions belong to individuals from **southern India**, especially **ancient Tamilagam**.
- A smaller number of names suggest origins from **north-western and western India**, indicating pan-Indian participation in overseas trade.
- The inscriptions are primarily in **Tamil-Brahmi script**, widely used in South India during the Sangam period (c. 3rd century BCE–3rd century CE).

This suggests that Tamil merchants were not merely coastal traders but active participants in long-distance transcontinental commerce.

2. Repeated Name: Cikai Korran

- The name **Cikai Korran** appears **eight times across five tombs**.
- Found near:
 - Tomb entrances
 - High interior walls

This repeated presence suggests:

- Either a prominent merchant,
- A group leader,
- Or repeated visits by the same individual over time.

Linguistic and Cultural Roots

- The term **Korran** has Tamil roots associated with:
 - Victory
 - Warfare
- It is linked to the Chera warrior goddess **Korravai**, symbolizing valour and triumph.

- The word **korraṇ** means “king” in Tamil.

The name also appears in:

- **Purananooru** (Sangam literature)
- Inscriptions from **Pugalur**, associated with the **Chera dynasty**
- A pottery sherd found at **Berenike** in Egypt

This continuity across literary, epigraphic, and archaeological sources strengthens authenticity.

3. Other Tamil Names Identified

- **Kopāṇ varata kantan** – interpreted as “Kopāṇ came and saw”
- **Cātaṇ**
- **Kiraṇ**

The name **Kopāṇ** has also been found at **Ammankovilpatti in Tamil Nadu**, linking Egyptian findings directly with South Indian archaeological evidence.

These names reflect:

- Personal visits
- Merchant signatures
- Cultural imprinting practices similar to graffiti left by travellers elsewhere in the ancient world.

Historical Significance

1. Expansion Beyond Coastal Trade

- Earlier discoveries at **Berenike** and other Red Sea ports confirmed Indo-Roman trade.
- The Valley of the Kings is located deep inland along the Nile.
- This suggests that Indian traders:
 - Travelled through desert routes
 - Reached major Egyptian cultural centers

This shifts focus from maritime-only interaction to **inland mobility and cultural contact**.

2. Strengthening Indo-Roman Trade Evidence

Between the 1st–3rd centuries CE:

- The **Roman Empire** imported:

- Pepper
- Spices
- Ivory
- Textiles
- Precious stones

- Tamil ports like:

- Muziris
- Korkai
- Arikamedu

were major hubs in this network.

Roman gold coins found in Tamil Nadu and Tamil inscriptions found in Egypt together create a **two-way archaeological record**, confirming robust commercial exchange.

3. Cultural Exchange and Mobility

- The inscriptions indicate **physical presence**, not just indirect trade.

- Suggests:

- Merchant communities traveling long distances
- Possible religious or cultural curiosity
- Integration into Roman trade circuits

The discovery highlights early globalization patterns in the Indian Ocean world.

Broader Implications

- Reinforces the central role of **Tamilagam in ancient maritime trade**.
- Demonstrates that South Indian merchants were active participants in Mediterranean commerce.
- Adds depth to understanding of:
 - Indian Ocean trade networks
 - Cultural diffusion
 - Cross-civilizational contact before the medieval period



International Relations

Project Vault: US Critical Minerals Stockpiling Initiative

Why in the News?

Donald Trump has announced **Project Vault**, a **\$12-billion strategic initiative of the United States** aimed at building a large national stockpile of **critical minerals and rare earth elements**.

The move is intended to **protect American industries from global supply chain disruptions** and **reduce strategic dependence on China**, which currently dominates the mining, processing, and refining of many critical minerals essential for modern technologies.



What is Project Vault?

Project Vault is designed as a **public-private partnership** that allows the US government and private industry to jointly **purchase, stockpile, and manage essential minerals** required for defence, high-technology manufacturing, clean energy, and advanced electronics.

Key features include:

- A mechanism to **buy and store critical minerals at scale** before shortages occur
- Coverage of minerals vital for **defence systems, semiconductors, electric vehicles, aerospace, and renewable energy**
- A blended funding model combining **\$1.67 billion in private investment** with **\$10 billion in financing from the Export-Import Bank of the United States**

- A long-term strategy to **insulate US companies from sudden price spikes, geopolitical shocks, and export restrictions**

The initiative reflects a shift from just securing overseas supply chains to **physically holding strategic reserves** of essential resources within the US system.

Key Minerals Covered

Project Vault focuses on minerals that are both **economically critical and geopolitically sensitive**, particularly those where global supply is highly concentrated.

- **Cobalt**
 - Essential for **rechargeable lithium-ion batteries**, especially in electric vehicles
 - Used in **military jet engines and aerospace alloys** due to its heat resistance
- **Gallium**
 - Crucial for **semiconductors**, radar systems, and high-frequency electronics
 - Widely used in **5G technology, defence electronics, and advanced communication systems**
- **Other Rare Earth Elements (REEs)**
 - Indispensable for **electric motors, wind turbines, smartphones, missile guidance systems, and space technology**
 - Central to the transition toward **clean energy and digital infrastructure**

China's dominant position in refining many of these materials has made them a **strategic vulnerability** for the US and its allies.

How the Stockpiling System Works

Project Vault introduces a **market-oriented stockpiling model**, rather than a purely government-owned reserve.

- **Advance Commitments**
Companies agree in advance to purchase specific quantities of minerals at a **fixed**

inventory price, providing certainty to both buyers and suppliers.

- **Centralised Procurement and Storage**
Project Vault procures the minerals and **stores them securely on behalf of participating firms**, reducing individual storage and logistics burdens.
- **Cost Sharing**
Firms pay:
 - Upfront participation fees
 - Ongoing carrying costs, including **storage, insurance, and interest**
- **Emergency Access**
During supply disruptions, trade conflicts, or geopolitical crises, companies can **immediately access their allocated stockpiles**, ensuring production continuity.

This structure mirrors strategic petroleum reserves but adapts the concept to **critical minerals essential for modern industrial economies**.

Strategic Significance

Project Vault marks a major step in **US economic and national security policy**, with broader implications:

- Reduces vulnerability to **export controls, sanctions, and geopolitical coercion**
- Supports **defence readiness and technological leadership**
- Encourages private sector participation while limiting direct fiscal burden on the government
- Signals a long-term shift toward **resource security as a pillar of industrial policy**

Overall, Project Vault reflects growing recognition that **critical minerals are as strategically important as oil and gas**, especially in an era defined by technological competition, energy transition, and global supply chain volatility.

BRICS Centre for Industrial Competencies (BCIC)

Why in the News?

India formally joined the **BRICS Centre for Industrial Competencies (BCIC)** on **4 February 2026** during an

event organised by the **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)** in **New Delhi**. India's entry into BCIC marks a significant step in deepening industrial cooperation among BRICS countries, with a strong emphasis on advanced manufacturing, skill development, and MSME competitiveness.



About BCIC

The **BRICS Centre for Industrial Competencies** is conceived as a **one-stop, integrated support platform** for manufacturing enterprises and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) across BRICS nations.

Key features of BCIC include:

- Focus on **strengthening Industry 4.0 competencies**, such as automation, digital manufacturing, artificial intelligence, and smart production systems
- Support for **technology adoption, skilling, and productivity enhancement** in manufacturing ecosystems
- Designed to facilitate **knowledge sharing, best practices, and cross-border industrial collaboration** among BRICS members

BCIC was launched in partnership with the **United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)**, ensuring alignment with global industrial development standards and sustainable manufacturing practices.

India's Participation in BCIC

India's participation has been formalised through a **Trust Fund Agreement**, reflecting a structured and long-term commitment to the initiative.

- The agreement was signed between **DPIIT** and **United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)**
- It provides the institutional framework for India's engagement with BCIC activities
- India's involvement aligns closely with national priorities such as:
 - Make in India
 - Atmanirbhar Bharat
 - Enhancing **global competitiveness of Indian MSMEs and manufacturing firms**

Through BCIC, Indian enterprises gain access to international expertise, capacity-building programmes, and advanced industrial tools relevant to the evolving global manufacturing landscape.

India Centre for BRICS Industrial Competencies

The **National Productivity Council (NPC)** has been designated as the **India Centre for BCIC**.

Key aspects of this arrangement include:

- NPC operates under the **policy guidance of DPIIT**
- Receives **technical support from UNIDO**
- Serves as the nodal institution for implementing BCIC-related initiatives in India

The India Centre will be responsible for:

- **Capacity building and skill development** in advanced manufacturing
- **Productivity enhancement programmes** for MSMEs
- Promotion of **Industry 4.0 technologies**, including digitalisation and smart manufacturing systems
- Acting as a bridge between Indian industry and BRICS-level industrial cooperation mechanisms

Key Stakeholders Involved

India's engagement with BCIC involves a multi-ministerial and industry-driven approach:

- **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)** under the **Ministry of Commerce and Industry**
- **Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises**
- **Ministry of External Affairs**

- Industry partner **Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI)**

This collaborative framework ensures policy coordination, international outreach, and active industry participation.

Significance

- Strengthens India's role in **BRICS-led industrial cooperation**
- Enhances **technological readiness and productivity** of Indian MSMEs
- Supports India's transition towards **advanced and sustainable manufacturing**
- Facilitates global benchmarking and integration of Indian industry into **international value chains**

India and Malaysia sign pacts to expand ties



Why in the News?

India and Malaysia signed **multiple agreements and Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs)** during the official visit of the Prime Minister of India to Malaysia in early 2026.

A total of **11 agreements** were concluded covering strategic sectors such as:

- Trade and investment
- Defence and maritime security
- Energy cooperation
- Semiconductors and advanced manufacturing
- Digital technologies
- Local currency trade settlement

The visit marks a significant milestone in deepening India's engagement with Southeast Asia under its Act East Policy.

Key Agreements and Outcomes

1. Semiconductor Cooperation Framework

- A **comprehensive framework pact** was signed to promote collaboration in semiconductor supply chains and manufacturing ecosystems.
- The agreement supports joint research, fabrication facilities, design ecosystems, and skilled workforce development.
- Malaysia is a major global player in semiconductor assembly, testing, and packaging, contributing nearly **7% of global semiconductor trade**.
- The partnership complements India's semiconductor push under its ₹76,000 crore incentive scheme.

2. Local Currency Trade Settlement (INR–Ringgit)

- Agreement to promote trade settlement using the **Indian Rupee (INR)** and the **Malaysian Ringgit (MYR)**.
- Reduces dependence on the US Dollar in bilateral trade.
- Strengthens India's objective of **internationalisation of the Rupee**.
- Enhances resilience against global financial volatility and exchange rate fluctuations.

Bilateral trade between India and Malaysia has crossed **USD 20–25 billion in recent years**, making Malaysia one of India's key trading partners within ASEAN.

3. Defence and Maritime Security Cooperation

- Expansion of collaboration in:
 - Counter-terrorism
 - Intelligence sharing
 - Maritime domain awareness
 - Defence training and joint exercises
- Reinforces cooperation in securing the **Strait of Malacca**, a critical global maritime chokepoint.
- Emphasis on **zero tolerance for terrorism** and rejection of double standards.

The maritime cooperation strengthens India's position in the Indo-Pacific, where sea lane security remains vital for global trade.

Energy and Clean Technology Collaboration

- Agreements in renewable energy, energy transition, and energy security.
- Malaysia's role as a palm oil supplier and LNG exporter supports India's diversified energy strategy.
- Joint initiatives in green technologies align with global climate commitments.

Diplomatic and Multilateral Support

- Decision to establish an **Indian Consulate General** in Malaysia to enhance diplomatic outreach and people-to-people ties.
- Malaysia reiterated support for India's permanent membership in a reformed **United Nations Security Council**.

This strengthens India's global diplomatic positioning.

Strategic and Economic Significance

Indo-Pacific & ASEAN Centrality

- Reinforces India's **Indo-Pacific vision** of a free, open, and inclusive region.
- Emphasises the central role of the **Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)** in regional architecture.
- Malaysia plays a crucial role as a leading ASEAN economy.

Trade and Economic Impact

- Local currency trade improves financial autonomy.
- Boosts bilateral investment flows.
- Enhances supply chain diversification amid geopolitical disruptions.
- Supports India's manufacturing growth and export competitiveness.

Malaysia is among India's top trading partners in Southeast Asia, and India is one of Malaysia's largest export destinations in South Asia.

Technology and Advanced Manufacturing

- Semiconductor cooperation supports India's goal of becoming a global electronics manufacturing hub.
- Collaboration in digital technologies, Industry 4.0, AI, and cyber security deepens technological integration.

- Helps reduce dependence on concentrated semiconductor supply chains in East Asia.

Defence and Security Dimension

- Strengthened naval cooperation improves maritime stability in the Indo-Pacific.
- Enhances joint patrols and maritime awareness in crucial sea lanes.
- Counter-terrorism cooperation supports regional stability.

The agreements reflect a shift from traditional trade ties toward a **comprehensive strategic partnership**.

India–Seychelles Joint Vision SESEL



Why in the News?

India and Seychelles adopted a **Joint Vision for Sustainability, Economic Growth and Security through Enhanced Linkages (SESEL)** during the State Visit of Seychelles President **Patrick Herminie** to India in 2026.

The visit is historically significant as it coincides with:

- **50 years of Seychelles' independence (1976–2026)**
- **50 years of India–Seychelles diplomatic relations**

The Joint Vision reflects a deepening of the “special maritime partnership” between the two Indian Ocean nations.

Strategic and Political Significance

- Seychelles reaffirmed its role as a key maritime partner in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).
- Recognised as a pillar of India’s **Vision MAHASAGAR (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across**

Regions) — India’s expanded maritime outreach strategy.

- Agreement to intensify:
 - High-level political dialogue
 - Parliamentary exchanges
 - Defence and maritime coordination

Geostrategic Importance

- Seychelles is located near key Sea Lanes of Communication (SLOCs) in the western Indian Ocean.
- It plays a crucial role in:
 - Monitoring piracy
 - Countering illegal fishing
 - Tracking submarine and naval movements
- Strengthens India’s presence amid increasing global competition in the Indian Ocean.

Development Partnership: Special Economic Package

India announced a **USD 175 million Special Economic Package**, comprising:

- **USD 125 million Rupee-denominated Line of Credit (LoC)**
- **USD 50 million Grant Assistance**

Focus Areas:

- Sustainable infrastructure
- Maritime security
- Defence cooperation
- Capacity building
- Inclusive growth

This reflects India’s development-first approach in its neighbourhood and extended maritime region.

Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)

India will assist Seychelles in building **Digital Public Infrastructure**, modeled on India’s successful digital stack.

Key Components:

- Digital payments systems
- E-governance platforms
- Public service delivery digitisation
- Financial inclusion tools

India's DPI (including UPI and Aadhaar-linked services) has become a global model, and Seychelles' adoption reflects trust in India's digital capabilities.

Health and Food Security Cooperation

Major Announcements:

- Donation of **10 ambulances** to strengthen emergency services
- Recognition of the **Indian Pharmacopoeia**, easing access to affordable Indian medicines
- Donation of **1000 metric tonnes of grains** to enhance food security
- Cooperation in hospital construction and public health capacity

This enhances:

- Access to affordable healthcare
- Pharmaceutical cooperation
- Food resilience in a small island developing state (SIDS)

Capacity Building and Governance Support

Expanded cooperation under the **Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC)** programme.

Key Areas:

- Training for:
 - Civil servants
 - Defence personnel
 - Health professionals
- Customised training via the National Centre for Good Governance (NCGG)
- Cooperation in:
 - Cybersecurity
 - Financial intelligence
 - MSME promotion

Capacity-building has been a cornerstone of India–Seychelles relations for decades.

Climate Action and Renewable Energy

As a climate-vulnerable island nation, Seychelles benefits from India's climate leadership.

Cooperation Includes:

- Partnership under the **International Solar Alliance**
- Support for Multi-Hazard Early Warning Systems

- Seychelles to join the **Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure**
- Technical support for:
 - Green transport systems
 - Renewable energy expansion
 - Power grid management

This aligns with global climate goals and India's commitment to climate justice.

Trade, Tourism and Connectivity

- Direct flights have boosted Indian tourist arrivals to Seychelles.
- Agreement to explore enhanced air connectivity.
- Focus areas for economic expansion:
 - Blue Economy
 - Fisheries
 - Artificial Intelligence
 - Digital services
 - Affordable housing

Economic Context:

- Tourism contributes significantly to Seychelles' GDP.
- India is emerging as one of the fastest-growing source markets.

Hydrography and Blue Economy Cooperation

- Establishment of a **Seychelles Hydrographic Unit** with Indian assistance.
- Joint hydrographic surveys for safe navigation and maritime planning.
- Third Joint Commission Meeting on Hydrography to be held in Seychelles in 2026.

Bangladesh–U.S. Trade Deal: Shift from Indian to U.S. Cotton



Why in the News?

Bangladesh has announced that it will replace Indian cotton with U.S. cotton following a new trade agreement with the United States. The agreement is designed to expand Bangladesh's access to the American textile market through tariff concessions, but it could significantly affect India–Bangladesh cotton and yarn trade relations.

Key Features of the Deal**1. Tariff Concession**

- A **standard tariff of 19 percent** has been fixed for Bangladeshi textile exports to the U.S., which is lower than rates applicable to competitors such as **Cambodia** and **Indonesia**.
- **Zero-tariff access** is granted if Bangladeshi textile producers use **U.S.-origin cotton or manmade fibre**.
- This creates a strong incentive for Bangladeshi mills to shift sourcing away from India and Central Asia in order to maximize export competitiveness.

Economic

Since the U.S. is Bangladesh's largest textile export destination, sourcing U.S. cotton ensures compliance with the trade agreement and improves price competitiveness.

Logic:**2. Strategic Significance**

- The **United States** accounts for nearly **40–45 percent of Bangladesh's total garment exports**.
- Bangladesh is the world's second-largest garment exporter after China.
- The country produces negligible cotton domestically and depends almost entirely on imports, giving it flexibility in changing sourcing patterns.

The agreement strengthens Bangladesh's integration with U.S.-centric supply chains and reduces vulnerability to tariff uncertainties.

India–Bangladesh Cotton Trade Context

- Bangladesh is one of the largest importers of Indian cotton and cotton yarn.
- India exported approximately:

- **\$1.6 billion worth of cotton yarn (2024)**
- **\$85 million worth of manmade fibre yarn**

- Much of this trade occurs through land ports along the India–Bangladesh border, reducing transportation costs and enabling just-in-time supply for Bangladeshi garment manufacturers.

India's proximity has historically given it a logistical advantage over U.S. suppliers.

Tit-for-Tat Trade Restrictions (2025)

Trade tensions intensified following diplomatic strains in 2024:

- In **April 2025**, Bangladesh restricted yarn imports from India through land ports.
- In **May 2025**, India imposed curbs on Bangladeshi ready-made garment imports.
- These measures signaled a shift from cooperative economic engagement to competitive trade positioning.

Such reciprocal restrictions have introduced uncertainty into regional textile supply chains.

Impact on India**1. Decline in Cotton and Yarn Exports**

- A sustained sourcing shift toward U.S. cotton could reduce India's yarn and fibre exports to Bangladesh.
- This may affect Indian spinning mills, particularly in states like Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu.

2. Supply Chain Disruptions

- Land port trade, which has traditionally been efficient and cost-effective, could see reduced volumes.
- Indian exporters may face higher inventory risks and price volatility.

3. Strategic Trade Competition in South Asia

- The development reflects growing U.S. economic engagement in South Asia.
- India may need to recalibrate trade diplomacy to maintain regional economic influence.

Broader Economic Implications

- Bangladesh's decision highlights the importance of **rules-of-origin clauses** in modern trade agreements.
- Cotton sourcing is increasingly influenced by tariff structures rather than purely by price or proximity.
- India may need to strengthen its competitiveness through:
 - Trade negotiations
 - Diversification of export markets
 - Enhanced value-added textile production

BNP Returns to Power in Bangladesh



Why in the News?

The **Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)** secured a landslide victory in Bangladesh's parliamentary elections held on February 12.

Key Election Results

- BNP-led alliance won **212 seats**, securing a **two-thirds majority** in the **Jatiyo Sangsad** (Bangladesh Parliament).
- An 11-party alliance led by **Jamaat-e-Islami** secured **77 seats**.
- Independents won **8 seats**, playing a limited but potentially strategic role.
- The clear majority ensures constitutional stability and enables the ruling coalition to pursue major legislative reforms.

The two-thirds majority gives the BNP alliance the numerical strength required for constitutional amendments, subject to procedural safeguards.

National Referendum on Democratic Reforms

Alongside parliamentary elections, a national referendum was conducted:

- **60.2% of voters supported sweeping democratic reforms.**
- The referendum signals public demand for institutional restructuring and governance reforms.
- Focus areas are expected to include electoral transparency, judicial independence, anti-corruption measures, and decentralisation of administrative authority.

The simultaneous referendum reflects a broader push for democratic renewal after prolonged political turbulence.

Transfer of Power

- The interim government led by **Muhammad Yunus** will oversee the transition.
- Formal transfer will take place after gazette notification by the Election Commission.
- Oath-taking of the new Prime Minister and cabinet will be legally validated following the 2024 parliamentary dissolution.

The structured transition aims to restore institutional normalcy after a period of political instability.

Political Context

- A mass uprising in 2024 led to the fall of the government under **Sheikh Hasina**.
- Parliament was dissolved amid widespread protests and political unrest.
- Representation of women and minorities in the newly elected Parliament is reportedly at its lowest level in nearly two decades, raising concerns among civil society groups.

The election marks a significant political shift and a potential reconfiguration of Bangladesh's governance framework.

International Reactions

- **Narendra Modi** congratulated Tarique Rahman and reaffirmed India's support for a democratic and inclusive Bangladesh.
- Congratulatory messages were also received from the United States, China, Nepal, and the Maldives.
- Regional stakeholders are closely monitoring the transition due to Bangladesh's strategic importance in South Asia and the Bay of Bengal region.

Broader Significance

- The decisive mandate provides political stability after years of unrest.
- The referendum outcome indicates a strong public appetite for institutional reform.
- The new government's handling of economic challenges, minority rights, and regional diplomacy will shape Bangladesh's trajectory in the coming years.

The 2026 parliamentary elections represent a watershed moment in Bangladesh's political evolution, combining electoral change with a reform mandate that could redefine its democratic institutions.

AI Impact Summit 2026



Why in the News?

India is hosting the **4th AI Impact Summit 2026** from February 16–20 at **Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi**. The Prime Minister inaugurated the **India AI Impact Expo 2026**, with participation from global technology leaders and representatives from nearly 100 countries.

This is the **first time the summit is being hosted in a Global South country**, highlighting India's rising

influence in global AI governance and digital transformation.

About AI Impact Summit 2026

- **Edition:** 4th
- Previous editions held in the **U.K., South Korea, and France**
- **Venue:** Bharat Mandapam (same complex that hosted the G20 Leaders' Summit 2023)
- **Theme Structure:** Organized around three thematic chakras:
 - **People** – Inclusive AI, digital public infrastructure, skilling
 - **Planet** – AI for climate action, sustainability, disaster management
 - **Progress** – Innovation, startups, industry collaboration, governance frameworks

Key Highlights

1. Participation of Global Tech CEOs

The summit witnessed participation of leading AI innovators:

- Sundar Pichai
- Sam Altman
- Demis Hassabis
- Dario Amodei
- Brad Smith

Their discussions focused on:

- Responsible AI development
- AI safety and alignment
- Data governance and privacy
- AI's role in economic transformation

2. Participation of Global Leaders

High-level attendance included:

- Emmanuel Macron
- Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva
- António Guterres

The presence of political leadership indicates the **geopolitical dimension of AI governance**.

3. Dedicated All-Women Hackathon

- Focused on encouraging women participation in AI innovation
- Addressing gender gap in STEM and AI workforce
- Promoting inclusive digital growth

4. Leaders' Summit and Tech CEO Roundtable

- Discussions on global AI standards
- Harmonisation of regulatory frameworks
- Ethical deployment of generative AI
- AI and job transformation

India's Strategic Position in AI

- India has over **1,00,000 AI professionals** and one of the fastest-growing AI talent pools globally.
- The government launched the **IndiaAI Mission (2024)** with a ₹10,000+ crore allocation to build AI computing infrastructure, datasets, and research ecosystems.
- India's Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) such as Aadhaar, UPI, and ONDC is seen as a scalable model for AI deployment.

India is positioning itself as:

- A **trusted AI partner**
- A bridge between developed and developing countries
- A voice of the Global South in AI ethics debates

Global Context

- The AI market is projected to exceed **\$1.5 trillion by 2030** globally.
- Countries are racing to regulate generative AI tools.
- Concerns include misinformation, deepfakes, job displacement, and algorithmic bias.

The summit aims to create:

- Common regulatory principles
- AI safety frameworks
- Cross-border collaboration mechanisms

Significance for India

- Enhances India's digital diplomacy.
- Strengthens partnerships in semiconductor, AI chips, and cloud infrastructure.
- Boosts startup ecosystem and foreign investments.
- Reinforces India's leadership after G20 presidency.

Polity

Pennaiyar River Inter State Water Dispute

Why in the News?

Supreme Court of India has directed the Union Government to constitute an **Inter-State River Water Disputes Tribunal** within one month to adjudicate the long-pending **Pennaiyar river water dispute** between Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.

The direction came in response to a suit filed by Tamil Nadu under **Article 131 of the Constitution**, which grants the Supreme Court original jurisdiction in disputes between states. Tamil Nadu invoked the provisions of the **Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956**, arguing that negotiations and administrative mechanisms had failed to resolve the issue, necessitating a statutory tribunal.

This order is significant as it reinforces the constitutional and legal framework for resolving inter-state river water conflicts, which are increasingly contentious amid climate variability, rising water demand, and uneven spatial distribution of river flows.

About the Pennaiyar River



The **Pennaiyar River** is one of the major east-flowing inter-state rivers of southern India and plays a vital role in regional water security.

- It is known as **Thenpennai** or **Ponnaiyar** in Tamil Nadu and **Dakshina Pinakini** in Karnataka.
- The river is crucial for **irrigation, drinking water supply, and groundwater recharge**, particularly in water-stressed districts of northern Tamil Nadu.
- Being a monsoon-dependent river, its seasonal flows are highly variable, which often intensifies

disputes between upstream and downstream states.

Origin and Course

- The Pennaiyar originates in the **Nandi Hills** of **Chikkaballapura district, Karnataka**, a region that also gives rise to several other important rivers of southern India.
- It flows eastward, cutting across the **Eastern Ghats system**, before entering Tamil Nadu and eventually draining into the **Bay of Bengal**.
- The river's eastward course and relatively shallow basin make downstream regions heavily reliant on timely upstream releases during the monsoon.

States Through Which It Flows

- **Karnataka** is the **upper riparian state**, where the river originates and where several reservoirs and diversion structures have been developed.
- **Tamil Nadu** is the **lower riparian state** and depends substantially on downstream flows for agriculture and drinking water.

Major Tributaries

The Pennaiyar river system includes several important tributaries that contribute to its flow:

- **Markandeya River**
- **Varaha Nadhi**
- **Pambar River**
- **Pampar River**

Among these, the **Markandeya River** is central to the current inter-state dispute. Karnataka's construction of reservoirs and diversion projects on the Markandeya has raised concerns in Tamil Nadu regarding reduced downstream flows, especially during deficit monsoon years.

Nature of the Dispute

- Tamil Nadu alleges that unregulated upstream projects in Karnataka violate principles of **equitable and reasonable utilisation** of inter-state rivers.
- Karnataka, on the other hand, maintains that its projects are within its territorial rights and

necessary for meeting local irrigation and drinking water needs.

- The absence of a formal tribunal award so far has led to repeated legal and political confrontations.

Significance of the Tribunal

The constitution of a dedicated tribunal under the Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956 is expected to:

- Provide a **scientific and legal assessment** of water availability and usage
- Define **equitable sharing principles** between the riparian states
- Reduce ad hoc political negotiations and recurring litigation
- Establish a **binding and enforceable framework** for future water management

Removal of the Chief Election Commissioner: Constitutional Procedure

Why in the News?

The Chief Minister of West Bengal, **Mamata Banerjee**, stated that the **Trinamool Congress (TMC)** is open to working with the **Indian National Congress** and other Opposition parties to explore the possibility of initiating **impeachment proceedings against the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC), Gyanesh Kumar**.

The statement has brought renewed attention to the **constitutional position, powers, and removal process of the Chief Election Commissioner**, especially in the context of concerns raised by Opposition parties over the functioning and neutrality of the Election Commission of India.



Who is the Chief Election Commissioner?

The **Chief Election Commissioner (CEC)** is the **head of the Election Commission of India (ECI)**, one of the most important constitutional authorities in the country.

Key roles and responsibilities include:

- Overall **superintendence, direction, and control of elections** to:
 - Parliament
 - State Legislative Assemblies
 - Office of the President of India
 - Office of the Vice President of India
- Ensuring **free, fair, and impartial elections**, which form the backbone of India's democratic system
- Issuing the **Model Code of Conduct**, supervising electoral rolls, and monitoring election expenditure

The authority of the CEC flows directly from **Article 324 of the Constitution of India**, which vests the Election Commission with wide-ranging powers to conduct elections independently of the executive.

Appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner

The appointment of the CEC is made by the **President of India**, following the procedure laid down under the **Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners Act, 2023**.

Selection Committee

Under the 2023 Act, the CEC is selected by a **three-member committee** comprising:

- The Prime Minister of India
- The Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha
- A Union Cabinet Minister nominated by the Prime Minister

Tenure

- The CEC holds office for **six years** or until attaining the age of **65 years**, whichever is earlier
- The tenure is designed to ensure **stability and independence**, insulating the office from frequent political pressures

Constitutional Basis for Removal

The removal of the Chief Election Commissioner is governed by **Article 324(5) of the Constitution of India**.

- The CEC can be removed **only in the same manner and on the same grounds as a Judge of the Supreme Court**
- This provision explicitly links the removal process to **Article 124(4)** of the Constitution

As a result, the CEC enjoys a **high level of constitutional protection**, reinforcing the independence of the Election Commission from the executive and legislature.

Grounds for Removal

The Constitution sets an intentionally **high threshold** for removal to prevent arbitrary or politically motivated action.

The recognised grounds include:

- **Proved misbehaviour**
 - Abuse of office
 - Corruption
 - Wilful failure to discharge constitutional duties
- **Incapacity**
 - Physical or mental inability to perform official functions

Removal requires:

- A motion supported by a **special majority in Parliament**
- An inquiry process establishing the charges

This stringent mechanism ensures that the CEC can function **without fear or favour**, even when decisions displease powerful political actors.

Disqualification of MLAs and Speaker's Powers



Why in the News?

Supreme Court of India has granted a final **three-week deadline** to the Telangana Legislative Assembly Speaker to decide the remaining disqualification petitions filed against MLAs originally elected on Bharat Rashtra Samiti (BRS) tickets who later joined the Congress.

The Court has cautioned that failure to comply with its directions would result in **contempt proceedings**, signalling judicial intolerance towards prolonged delays in anti-defection cases.

What is the Issue?

The controversy arises from allegations of political defection after the Telangana Assembly elections.

- **Disqualification petitions** were filed against **10 MLAs** under the Anti-Defection Law.
- The allegation is that these MLAs defected from the Bharat Rashtra Samiti (BRS) to the Indian National Congress after being elected.
- In **December 2025**, the Speaker rejected **7 petitions**.
- One additional petition has since been decided.
- However, the **remaining petitions are still pending**, prompting intervention by the apex court.

The delay in adjudication raised concerns about constitutional propriety and the neutrality of the Speaker's office.

Supreme Court's Directions So Far

The matter has been under judicial scrutiny for over a year.

- **December 2024:** The case came before the Supreme Court.
- **July 31, 2025:** The Court directed the Speaker to decide all pending petitions within **three months**.
- Non-compliance with this directive led to the filing of **contempt petitions**.
- **January 16, 2026:** The Court granted a further **two-week extension**.
- **February 2026:** The Court issued a **final three-week deadline**, warning that failure to comply would attract contempt proceedings.

This sequence highlights the Court's increasing concern over procedural delays in implementing the anti-defection mechanism.

Legal and Constitutional Basis

1. Anti-Defection Law

The Anti-Defection Law is contained in the **Tenth Schedule** of the Constitution of India, added through the **52nd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1985**, and later strengthened by the **91st Constitutional Amendment Act, 2003**.

It aims to:

- Prevent political defections motivated by office or personal gain
- Promote stability in elected governments
- Ensure party discipline in legislatures

A legislator can be disqualified if they:

- Voluntarily give up membership of their political party
- Vote or abstain from voting contrary to party directions without prior permission

2. Role of the Speaker

The **Speaker of the Legislative Assembly** acts as the **adjudicating authority** under the Tenth Schedule.

However, judicial precedents such as *Kihoto Hollohan vs Zachillhu (1992)* clarified that:

- The Speaker's decision is **not immune from judicial review**.
- Courts can intervene in cases of mala fide intent, constitutional violation, or undue delay.

The present case reflects concerns regarding prolonged inaction rather than the merits of disqualification itself.

3. Power of Contempt

The Supreme Court's authority to initiate contempt proceedings flows from:

- **Article 129** – Declares the Supreme Court as a Court of Record with power to punish for contempt.
- **Article 142** – Empowers the Court to pass any decree or order necessary to do complete justice.

By invoking contempt jurisdiction, the Court is asserting its authority to ensure compliance with constitutional directives.

Broader Constitutional Significance

This case raises important constitutional questions regarding:

- **Timeliness in deciding defection cases**
- The **neutrality and accountability of the Speaker's office**
- The balance between **legislative autonomy and judicial oversight**

Repeated judicial interventions suggest that delays in anti-defection proceedings can affect democratic functioning, legislative composition, and government stability.

NHRC takes suo motu cognizance of stranded Indian workers in Dubai



Why in the News

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has taken **suo motu cognizance** of media reports alleging that Indian migrant workers from Jharkhand are stranded in Dubai. The workers are reportedly facing **passport seizure, unpaid wages, salary deductions, and restrictions on returning to India**, raising serious concerns about labour exploitation and human rights violations.

Key Facts

- **Number of workers affected:** At least 14
- **Home districts:** Giridih, Hazaribagh and Bokaro (Jharkhand)

- **Nature of employment:** Transmission line work
- **Location of distress:** Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Allegations Made by the Workers

The workers have reportedly alleged:

- **Passports seized** by the employer, restricting mobility
- **Unpaid wages** for several months
- **Salary deductions** to recover airfare expenses
- **Charges imposed for accommodation**, increasing financial burden
- **Inability to afford food**, indicating severe financial distress

Such practices, if proven, may amount to **forced labour, debt bondage, and violation of international labour standards**.

Action Taken by NHRC

The NHRC has:

- Issued notices to the **Chief Secretary of Jharkhand**
- Sent a notice to the **State Migrant Workers Control Room**
- Sought a **detailed action taken report within two weeks**

The Commission has emphasised that such allegations involve **serious violation of the right to life and dignity**, protected under Article 21 of the Constitution of India.

About the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)

- Established under the **Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993**
- An independent statutory body
- Mandated to protect and promote human rights in India
- Can take **suo motu cognizance** of violations based on media reports or complaints

The Commission has the authority to:

- Call for reports from central and state authorities
- Recommend compensation
- Suggest disciplinary or corrective measures

Broader Context: Indian Migrant Workers in Gulf Countries

Countries in the Gulf region, including the **United Arab Emirates**, host millions of Indian workers. India is one of the largest sources of migrant labour globally.

Key points:

- Over **8–9 million Indians** live and work in Gulf countries.
- Remittances from overseas workers contribute significantly to India's economy (India remains the world's top remittance recipient).
- Migrant workers often work in sectors like construction, infrastructure, domestic work, and technical services.

However, challenges persist:

- Contract substitution
- Passport confiscation
- Wage delays
- Recruitment agent exploitation
- Limited legal awareness

Passport seizure by employers is particularly controversial, as it restricts freedom of movement and may violate UAE labour laws.

Legal and Institutional Safeguards

India has taken several measures to protect migrant workers:

- **e-Migrate Portal** under the Ministry of External Affairs to regulate recruitment
- Indian Missions abroad provide grievance redressal and emergency support
- Bilateral labour agreements with Gulf countries
- Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojana (insurance scheme for emigrants)

At the state level, Jharkhand has established migrant worker control rooms to monitor distress cases.

Significance of the Issue

This incident highlights:

- The vulnerability of migrant workers in foreign labour markets
- Gaps in recruitment monitoring and contract enforcement
- Need for stronger diplomatic intervention and labour diplomacy
- Importance of awareness and pre-departure orientation

The NHRC's intervention signals that **labour exploitation abroad can also attract domestic human rights scrutiny**, reinforcing accountability mechanisms.

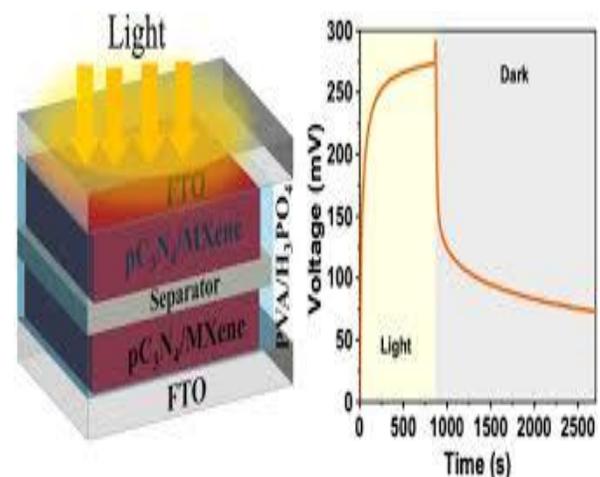
Science, Technology, Art & Culture

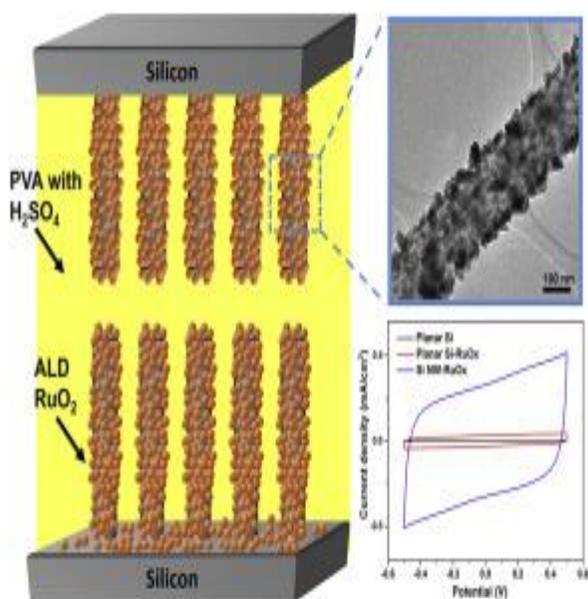
Indian Scientists Develop Single Unit Solar Energy Capture and Storage Device

Why in the News?

Indian scientists supported by the **Department of Science and Technology (DST)** have developed an innovative **photo rechargeable supercapacitor** that can **capture solar energy and store it simultaneously within a single device**.

This breakthrough marks an important step towards **low-cost, self-sustaining, and clean energy solutions**, especially for decentralised and off-grid applications.





About the Device

- The device is known as a **Photo Rechargeable Supercapacitor (PRSC)**
- It **integrates solar energy harvesting and electrochemical energy storage** into a single unit
- Unlike conventional systems, it **eliminates the need for separate solar panels and batteries**
- This integration significantly **reduces energy losses** that typically occur during power conversion and transfer
- It also **lowers overall system cost, weight, and design complexity**, making the technology scalable and practical

By combining energy generation and storage, the device offers a compact solution for **continuous power supply during both daylight and low-light conditions**.

Developed By

- The technology has been developed by researchers at the **Centre for Nano and Soft Matter Sciences (CeNS)**, Bengaluru
- CeNS is an autonomous institute under the **Department of Science and Technology**, Government of India
- The research aligns with India's broader goals of **energy self-reliance, clean technology innovation, and Atmanirbhar Bharat**

Key Technology Used

Advanced Electrode Material

- The device uses **binder-free Nickel Cobalt Oxide (NiCo₂O₄) nanowires**
- These nanowires are **uniformly grown on nickel foam**, which serves as a conductive substrate

Fabrication Process

- The nanowires are fabricated using an **in situ hydrothermal synthesis process**, allowing precise control over structure and morphology
- This process ensures strong adhesion between the active material and the substrate without the need for polymer binders

Structural Advantages

- The nanowires form a **porous, three-dimensional conductive network**
- This structure provides:
 - Large surface area for charge storage
 - Efficient light absorption
 - Rapid electron and ion transport

Dual Functionality

- The same NiCo₂O₄ nanowire architecture acts as:
 - A **solar energy absorber**, capturing incident light
 - A **supercapacitor electrode**, storing electrical energy

This dual functionality is the key innovation behind the photo rechargeable supercapacitor.

Significance and Applications

- Enables **self-powered electronic systems** without external power infrastructure
- Suitable for **remote sensors, Internet of Things (IoT) devices, wearable electronics, and rural off-grid installations**
- Offers faster charging and longer cycle life compared to conventional batteries
- Supports India's commitments to **renewable energy expansion and carbon emission reduction**

Sodium Ion Batteries and India's Battery Strategy



Why in the News?

- A recent policy-focused analysis has highlighted **sodium-ion battery (SIB) technology** as a strategic alternative to lithium-ion batteries (LIBs) for India.
- The recommendation comes amid rising concerns over **critical mineral supply risks**, geopolitical disruptions, and India's heavy import dependence for lithium, cobalt, and nickel.
- As India accelerates its transition to electric mobility and renewable energy, diversification of battery chemistry is being seen as a key component of **energy security and strategic autonomy**.

Background

- Batteries are central to:
 - **Electric Vehicles (EVs)**
 - **Renewable energy storage systems (ESS)**
 - Consumer electronics and digital devices
- Lithium-ion batteries currently dominate global markets due to:
 - High energy density
 - Longer cycle life
 - Mature manufacturing ecosystem
- However, lithium reserves are geographically concentrated in:
 - The "Lithium Triangle" (Chile, Argentina, Bolivia)

- Australia
- China (dominant in refining and processing)
- India has limited domestic lithium reserves and continues to rely heavily on imports for:
 - Lithium carbonate and hydroxide
 - Cobalt (largely sourced from the Democratic Republic of Congo)
 - Nickel and battery-grade components

This dependence exposes India to **price volatility, geopolitical risks, and supply chain disruptions**.

India's Current Battery Push

- Under the **Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for Advanced Chemistry Cell (ACC) Manufacturing**, the Government of India:
 - Allocated incentives for around **40 GWh manufacturing capacity**.
 - Encouraged domestic gigafactory development.
- Several companies have begun setting up cell manufacturing plants, but:
 - The upstream ecosystem (mining, refining, precursor materials) remains weak.
 - Most critical minerals are still imported.
- India's EV market is expanding rapidly:
 - Electric two-wheelers and three-wheelers are witnessing strong adoption.
 - Grid-scale battery storage is expected to grow significantly with India's target of **500 GW non-fossil fuel capacity by 2030**.

This expansion will further increase demand for battery cells, making diversification urgent.

What are Sodium-Ion Batteries?

- Sodium-ion batteries use **sodium (Na⁺) ions** instead of lithium (Li⁺) ions as the charge carrier.
- Sodium is:
 - Abundant in the Earth's crust
 - Widely available in seawater
 - Evenly distributed globally

- Key advantage:
 - Sodium resources are not geopolitically concentrated like lithium.
- Manufacturing compatibility:
 - Sodium-ion batteries can be produced on existing lithium-ion manufacturing lines with **minor modifications**, reducing capital costs for transition.
- Sodium-ion batteries have lower energy density compared to lithium-ion batteries.
- However, they are highly suitable for:
 - **Grid-scale energy storage systems**
 - Electric two-wheelers and three-wheelers
 - Stationary storage and backup power
- They also offer improved safety due to lower risk of thermal runaway.

Global Status (2025–2030 Outlook)

- Around **70 GWh of sodium-ion battery capacity** is operational globally in 2025.
- Capacity is expected to rise to nearly **400 GWh by 2030**, reflecting strong global momentum.
- China currently leads in commercial deployment and pilot-scale manufacturing.
- Several global battery majors and startups are investing in sodium-ion R&D to reduce dependence on lithium supply chains.

Strategic Significance for India

1. **Energy Security**
 - Reduces dependence on imported lithium and cobalt.
 - Diversifies battery chemistry risk.
2. **Cost Advantage**
 - Potentially lower input material costs.
 - Beneficial for mass mobility segments like e-rickshaws and scooters.
3. **Alignment with Renewable Goals**
 - Supports India's large-scale solar and wind integration.
 - Suitable for stationary grid storage applications.
4. **Atmanirbhar Bharat**

- Encourages domestic value chain development.
- Reduces vulnerability to external shocks.

Challenges

- Lower energy density limits use in long-range EVs.
- Technology is still at early commercialization stage.
- Domestic R&D ecosystem needs strengthening.
- Market acceptance and large-scale manufacturing scaling remain key hurdles.

Way Forward

- Integrate sodium-ion technology under the PLI-ACC framework.
- Support indigenous R&D through public-private partnerships.
- Promote pilot projects for grid storage and public transport.
- Encourage startups and academic institutions to innovate in alternative chemistries.

Safe Landing Patch Identified near Mons Mouton for Chandrayaan 4



Why in the News

A recent study by the ISRO Space Applications Centre has identified a scientifically promising and relatively safe landing patch near Mons Mouton for Chandrayaan-4, India's first planned lunar sample-return mission. The selection is strategically significant as it strengthens India's expanding lunar exploration programme following the success of Chandrayaan-3.

About Moon's Mons Mouton

Location

- Situated in the south polar region of the Moon.
- Lies close to the rim of the South Pole-Aitken Basin, one of the largest and oldest known impact basins in the Solar System.
- Approximately 160 km from the lunar south pole, making it strategically valuable for south polar studies.

Naming

- Officially named by the International Astronomical Union.
- The name honours Melba Roy Mouton, a NASA mathematician and space science pioneer.

Geological Origin and Scientific Importance

- Mons Mouton is a large flat-topped lunar mountain massif.
- Believed to have formed due to rim uplift during massive asteroid impacts billions of years ago.
- Represents exposed deep lunar crust, which is rare and scientifically invaluable.

The proximity to the South Pole-Aitken Basin makes the region exceptionally important because:

- The basin is estimated to be over 4 billion years old, offering clues about early Solar System history.
- Rock samples from this region may contain materials from the Moon's deeper interior.
- Studying such samples could help scientists better understand the Moon's formation and Earth-Moon evolution theories.

Key Physical Features

- Width: Nearly 100 km
- Elevation: Around 6,000 metres above surrounding terrain
- Topography: Rugged landscape with numerous craters and boulder fields
- Surface variations provide both engineering challenges and scientific rewards.

The terrain is complex, but certain plateau-like regions offer relatively smoother patches suitable for landing.

Unique Illumination Conditions

The south polar region is known for unusual sunlight patterns due to the Moon's low axial tilt.

- Some areas receive near-continuous sunlight (Peaks of Eternal Light concept).
- Other nearby craters remain in permanent shadow, potentially harbouring water ice deposits.
- These conditions are ideal for:
 - Long-duration missions powered by solar energy
 - Studying volatile compounds like water ice
 - Future human habitation research

Mons Mouton's illumination pattern makes it a strategic compromise between scientific access and operational safety.

Observational Significance

- The massif can be observed from Earth during favourable lunar libration.
- Advanced amateur telescopes can occasionally capture the region.
- Its prominence makes it a known landmark in south polar mapping efforts.

Strategic Importance for Chandrayaan-4

India's Chandrayaan-4 mission is expected to involve:

- A lander
- A sample collection module
- An ascent vehicle
- An Earth-return module

Selecting a scientifically rich yet safe landing zone is critical because:

- Sample return missions require precise landing and ascent capabilities.
- South polar samples may contain water ice traces and primordial crustal material.
- It enhances India's standing among nations that have conducted sample return missions, such as the United States, Russia, and China.

Broader Context

The lunar south pole has become a focal point of global exploration. Missions from NASA, China, and other space agencies are increasingly targeting this region due to:

- Presence of permanently shadowed craters
- Potential water ice reserves
- Scientific insights into early Solar System processes

India's selection of Mons Mouton reflects careful scientific mapping and data analysis from earlier missions, including Chandrayaan-2 and Chandrayaan-3.

Conclusion

The identification of a safe landing site near Mons Mouton marks a significant milestone in India's lunar ambitions. The region's geological uniqueness, favourable illumination, and proximity to the South Pole-Aitken Basin make it one of the most scientifically valuable targets on the Moon.

Medical Shabd Sindhu Initiative



Why in the News?

The Union Home Ministry has proposed compiling a standard English medical dictionary titled **Medical Shabd Sindhu**, which will be translated into 15 Indian languages. The initiative aligns with the multilingual vision of the National Education Policy 2020 and aims to strengthen medical education in regional languages across India.

About the Initiative

The project is being led by the **Department of Official Language** under the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Key features include:

- Compilation of at least **1,00,000 unique English medical terms**
- Each term will include clear definitions and conceptual explanations

- Translation into **15 Indian languages** in Phase I
- Later expansion to additional Indian languages

Languages in Phase I:

Hindi, Telugu, Assamese, Gujarati, Kashmiri, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Odia, Punjabi, Tamil, Bengali, Manipuri, Mizo and Konkani.

This initiative represents one of the largest systematic efforts to standardise medical terminology across Indian languages.

Institutional Background

- The Commission for Scientific and Technical Terminology under the Education Ministry has already translated around **60,000 medical terms into Hindi**.
- In 2022, **Madhya Pradesh** became the first state to introduce **MBBS in Hindi**.
- Initially, transliterated textbooks were introduced in subjects such as:
 - Anatomy
 - Physiology
 - Biochemistry

However, transliteration alone proved insufficient, as conceptual clarity requires properly developed terminology rather than mere script conversion. Hence, a comprehensive dictionary has been proposed.

Objectives of Medical Shabd Sindhu

- Promote **medical education in the mother tongue**
- Remove **language barriers** in professional education
- Improve comprehension and retention among students
- Strengthen regional knowledge systems
- Support NEP 2020's emphasis on **multilingual higher education**
- Encourage wider participation in medical education from rural and semi-urban backgrounds

Significance in the Indian Context

1. Democratisation of Medical Education

- A large proportion of students in India study in regional-language schools.

- English-based technical terminology often becomes a barrier in higher education.
2. **Improved Doctor–Patient Communication**
- Doctors trained in regional languages may better communicate complex medical conditions to patients.
 - Enhances healthcare accessibility and trust.
3. **Academic Standardisation**
- Currently, regional translations vary across states and institutions.
 - A standardised dictionary ensures uniform terminology nationwide.
4. **Support to NEP 2020**
- NEP 2020 promotes teaching professional courses, including medicine and engineering, in Indian languages.
 - Medical Shabd Sindhu provides the linguistic infrastructure needed to implement this reform effectively.

Challenges

- Ensuring scientific accuracy across translations
- Avoiding multiple terms for the same concept

- Training faculty to adapt to multilingual medical instruction
- Updating terminology regularly to reflect advances in medical science

Way Forward

- Collaboration between linguists, medical experts, and educators
- Digital version and mobile applications for easy access
- Integration into medical curriculum and entrance preparation materials
- Periodic revision to match global medical advancements

Conclusion

Medical Shabd Sindhu is a transformative initiative aimed at making medical education more inclusive, accessible, and linguistically diverse. By creating a standardised multilingual medical dictionary, the government is laying the foundation for a more equitable and locally rooted healthcare education system. If effectively implemented, it can bridge the gap between language and knowledge, thereby strengthening India's human capital in the medical sector.

Security Issues

UNIFIL Suspends Activities Along the Blue Line in Southern Lebanon

Why in the News?

The **United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL)** temporarily suspended patrols and several operational activities along parts of the **Blue Line** in southern Lebanon after the Israeli military indicated that it would release a *non-toxic chemical substance* near the frontier. The precautionary suspension was undertaken to ensure the safety of UN peacekeepers and local civilians, highlighting the fragile security situation along the Israel–Lebanon border amid heightened regional tensions.

What is UNIFIL?

United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon is a United Nations peacekeeping operation deployed in southern **Lebanon**, close to the border with **Israel**.

Key features of UNIFIL include:

- **Established in 1978** by UN Security Council Resolutions **425** and **426**, following Israeli military operations in southern Lebanon.
- **Core objectives:**
 - Confirm the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanon
 - Restore international peace and security
 - Assist the Lebanese government in re-establishing its authority in the south
- **Mandate expansion in 2006** after the Israel–Hezbollah conflict under Security Council Resolution **1701**.

- Post-2006 responsibilities include:
 - Monitoring the cessation of hostilities
 - Supporting the Lebanese Armed Forces in southern Lebanon
 - Ensuring that the area between the Blue Line and the Litani River remains free of unauthorized armed personnel and weapons

UNIFIL currently comprises troops and observers from multiple countries and operates under the authority of the **United Nations**.

What is the Blue Line?



Israeli troops remain at five positions in southern Lebanon

Source: Israeli army

Map data: OSM

AFP

The **Blue Line** is a **UN-identified line of withdrawal** separating Israel and Lebanon.

Important aspects of the Blue Line are:

- **Established in 2000** to verify Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon, as mandated by the UN Security Council
- **Approximately 120 kilometres long**, running along southern Lebanon from the Mediterranean coast to the tri-border area with Syria
- **Not an international border** or a political boundary; it is a *technical reference line*
- Used by the UN to **monitor violations**, prevent escalation, and report incidents

UNIFIL plays a crucial role in monitoring the Blue Line, facilitating communication between the two sides, and

preventing misunderstandings from escalating into open conflict.

Significance of the Development

- The suspension of patrols underscores the **volatile security environment** along the Israel–Lebanon frontier.
- Even the release of *non-toxic substances* can pose operational and health risks in conflict-sensitive zones.
- It highlights UNIFIL's **neutral and precautionary approach**, prioritising civilian and peacekeeper safety.
- The incident also reflects broader regional instability and the persistent risk of escalation despite UN monitoring mechanisms.

Overall, the episode reaffirms the continuing relevance of UN peacekeeping missions in managing fragile ceasefire lines and preventing localised incidents from turning into wider conflicts.

Frontier Nagaland Territorial Authority (FNTA) Agreement



Why in the News?

- A historic tripartite agreement was signed in **New Delhi on 5 February 2026** between the **Government of India**, the **Government of Nagaland**, and the **Eastern Nagaland Peoples' Organisation (ENPO)**.
- The agreement paves the way for the creation of the **Frontier Nagaland Territorial Authority**

(FNTA) to address long-standing political and developmental aspirations of Eastern Nagaland.

- The signing took place in the presence of **Amit Shah** and **Neiphiu Rio**, marking a major milestone in the Naga peace and governance process.

Background of the Demand

- The **Eastern Nagaland Peoples' Organisation (ENPO)** has, for several years, raised concerns about:
 - Developmental imbalance between eastern and western parts of Nagaland.
 - Poor infrastructure, connectivity gaps, and limited employment opportunities.
 - Perceived neglect in administrative representation and resource allocation.
- In earlier years, ENPO had even demanded a separate state called "Frontier Nagaland," but the 2026 agreement reflects a negotiated constitutional solution within the existing state framework.

Territorial Scope

The FNTA will apply to six districts of Eastern Nagaland:

- **Tuensang**
- **Mon**
- **Kiphire**
- **Longleng**
- **Noklak**
- **Shamator**

These districts are geographically remote, largely rural, and share international borders with Myanmar, adding to their strategic importance.

What is the Frontier Nagaland Territorial Authority (FNTA)?

- FNTA is a **territorial authority** designed to function within the constitutional framework of Nagaland.
- It is not a separate state or Union Territory.
- It aims to provide **greater administrative, financial, and developmental autonomy** to Eastern Nagaland.

- The objective is to ensure **accelerated and inclusive regional development** while maintaining Nagaland's territorial integrity.

Key Provisions of the Agreement

1. Devolution of Powers

- Powers over **46 subjects** will be devolved to the FNTA.
- These subjects are expected to include areas such as:
 - Local planning
 - Agriculture and allied activities
 - Rural development
 - Infrastructure and welfare schemes
- This strengthens decentralised governance and participatory administration.

2. Institutional Structure

- A **mini-Secretariat** will be created for the FNTA.
- It will be headed by an **Additional Chief Secretary or Principal Secretary**-level officer.
- This ensures bureaucratic coordination while maintaining linkage with the Nagaland state administration.

3. Financial Arrangements

- Development outlays will be shared proportionally based on **population and geographical area**.
- The **Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** will bear the initial establishment expenditure.
- The Government of India will provide a **fixed annual financial allocation** to ensure sustained development.

4. Focus Areas

- Infrastructure development (roads, connectivity, power).
- Economic empowerment through local entrepreneurship.
- Efficient utilisation of natural and forest resources.
- Strengthening grassroots governance.

Institutional and Constitutional Aspects

Article 371A Remains Protected

- The agreement explicitly states that **Article 371A** remains fully protected.
- Article 371A grants special provisions to Nagaland, including:
 - Protection of Naga customary law and procedure.
 - Safeguards over land and its resources.
 - Legislative autonomy in matters of religion and social practices.

Constitutional Framework

- FNTA will function within the existing constitutional and administrative structure of Nagaland.
- It does not alter state boundaries.
- It represents a model of **asymmetrical federalism**, where tailored governance mechanisms are created for specific regional needs.

Broader Significance

1. Strengthening Cooperative Federalism

- Demonstrates the Centre's willingness to resolve regional aspirations through dialogue rather than confrontation.

2. Peace and Stability in the Northeast

- Comes amid ongoing efforts to consolidate peace in the Naga areas.
- Could reduce dissatisfaction and prevent political unrest in Eastern Nagaland.

3. Developmental Push

- Eastern Nagaland has historically lagged behind in socio-economic indicators.
- FNTA is expected to accelerate human development outcomes, including health, education, and livelihood generation.

4. Strategic Importance

- The region shares borders with Myanmar, making stability and development critical for national security and Act East Policy initiatives.

Trivia

Biopharma Shakti Mission

Why in the News?

In the **Union Budget 2026–27**, Finance Minister **Nirmala Sitharaman** announced the **Biopharma Shakti Mission**, with a total outlay of **₹10,000 crore**, aimed at positioning India as a global hub for **biologics and biosimilars**. The mission reflects India's strategic push to move beyond traditional small-molecule generics into high-value, innovation-driven pharmaceutical segments.



What is the Biopharma Shakti Mission?

The **Biopharma Shakti Mission** is a flagship national initiative designed to build an end-to-end ecosystem for **complex biological drugs**, covering domestic manufacturing, advanced research, large-scale clinical trials, and globally aligned regulatory systems.

It seeks to strengthen India's capabilities across the entire biopharma value chain—from discovery and development to approval and global market access—thereby enhancing self-reliance and export competitiveness in next-generation therapeutics.

Key Features of the Mission

Financial Outlay

- **₹10,000 crore over five years**, with targeted public investment to crowd-in private and foreign capital.
- Funds to be channelled into infrastructure creation, skill development, regulatory capacity building, and clinical research networks.

Focus Areas

- Development and manufacturing of **biologics and biosimilars**, particularly for major **non-communicable diseases (NCDs)** such as:
 - Diabetes
 - Cancer
 - Autoimmune and inflammatory disorders
- These disease areas account for a rapidly growing share of India's healthcare burden and global pharmaceutical demand.

Infrastructure Push

- **Three new National Institutes of Pharmaceutical Education and Research (National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education and Research)** to be established.
- **Seven existing NIPERs** to be upgraded with advanced bioprocessing labs, translational research facilities, and industry-linked innovation hubs.
- The expansion is expected to address the shortage of highly skilled manpower in biologics, biostatistics, and regulatory science.

Clinical Trials Expansion

- Creation of a **national network of 1,000 accredited clinical trial sites**, spanning public hospitals, medical colleges, and private research institutions.
- Emphasis on high-quality, ethically governed trials to:
 - Attract global sponsors
 - Reduce dependence on overseas trial locations
 - Enable faster patient access to advanced therapies
- The mission aims to significantly increase India's share in the **global clinical trials market**, which is witnessing steady growth due to rising demand for biologics.

Regulatory Strengthening

- Capacity enhancement of the **Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO)** through:
 - Recruitment of specialised scientific and technical experts
 - Creation of a **dedicated scientific review cadre** for complex biologics

- Streamlining of approval processes and alignment with **global drug-approval timelines**, improving predictability and investor confidence.
- Adoption of international best practices to enhance trust in Indian regulatory decisions.

IT Rules 2026 Amendment on AI Content



Why in the News?

The Union Government has amended the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules to:

- Mandate **prominent labelling of AI-generated photorealistic content**
- Sharply reduce **takedown timelines for unlawful content**

The new rules come into effect from **20 February 2026** and are aimed at addressing the growing threat of deepfakes, AI misinformation, and non-consensual synthetic media.

Legal Background

The amendments operate under the framework of the **Information Technology Act, 2000**.

Under **Section 79** of the Act:

- Intermediaries (social media platforms, digital hosts, etc.) enjoy **“safe harbour” protection**.
- They are not liable for third-party content **if they exercise due diligence** and comply with government rules.

Failure to comply with the amended IT Rules may lead to **loss of safe harbour immunity**, exposing platforms to civil and criminal liability.

Key Highlights of the Amendment

1. Definition of Synthetic Content

The rules define **Synthetic Content** as:

AI-generated audio, visual or audiovisual content that appears real and is indistinguishable from natural persons or real events.

This includes:

- Deepfake videos
- AI-cloned voices
- Photorealistic AI images
- Fabricated news visuals

The definition is technology-neutral and future-proofed to cover evolving generative AI tools.

2. Mandatory Labelling of AI-Generated Content

Disclosure Obligation

- Platforms must **seek disclosure** from users if content is AI-generated.
- If the user does not disclose:
 - The **platform must prominently label** the content as AI-generated.

Key Features:

- Labelling must be **clear and visible**, not hidden in fine print.
- Applies especially to **photorealistic or impersonation content**.
- Objective: Prevent deception and misinformation.

This move aligns India with global regulatory trends around AI transparency.

3. Strict Action Against Non-Consensual Deepfakes

- **Non-consensual nudity and deepfake content must be removed within 2 hours** of receiving a valid complaint.
- Such content includes:
 - AI-generated explicit images
 - Deepfake videos targeting individuals
 - Morphing or impersonation content without consent

This is particularly significant for protecting:

- Women
- Public figures
- Private citizens
- Minors

It strengthens digital safety and privacy safeguards.

Implications:

- Platforms must maintain **round-the-clock grievance redressal systems**.
- Requires enhanced AI-based moderation tools.
- Increased compliance burden on intermediaries.

The drastic reduction signals the government's zero-tolerance approach to harmful synthetic media.

5. Impact on Safe Harbour (Section 79)

Under the **Information Technology Act, 2000**:

- Safe harbour protects intermediaries from liability for user-generated content.
- However, protection applies only if:
 - Due diligence is followed.
 - IT Rules are complied with.

If Platforms Fail to Act:

- Loss of immunity under Section 79.
- Exposure to:
 - Civil damages
 - Criminal prosecution
 - Regulatory penalties

This increases accountability of Big Tech platforms operating in India.

6. Expanded Powers to States

- State governments can now notify **more than one officer** to issue takedown directions.
- This decentralises enforcement authority.

Significance:

- Faster action at state level.
- Greater administrative flexibility.
- However, raises concerns about:
 - Uniformity in enforcement.
 - Risk of overreach or misuse.

Broader Context: Rise of Deepfakes

The amendment comes amid:

- Rapid expansion of generative AI tools.
- Increase in AI-based political misinformation.
- Growing cases of deepfake exploitation.

• Global regulatory debates on AI governance. India, with over **800+ million internet users**, is particularly vulnerable to:

- Election interference
- Social unrest via fake content
- Financial fraud through AI voice cloning

Thus, the amendments aim to balance innovation and safety.

Challenges and Concerns

While the rules strengthen digital safety, they raise certain issues:

- Compliance cost for smaller platforms.
- Risk of over-censorship.
- Technical feasibility of 2-hour takedowns.
- Free speech concerns.

Effective implementation will depend on transparent guidelines and judicial oversight.





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