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Message from the Founder and Chief Mentor



Dr. Bhabani Shankar Chayani

Dear students,

The present issue of "LISAS CAREER IN FOCUS" with added features and analytical articles is intended to help the candidates appearing in the Civil Services Exams.

The students should go through the articles of this issue to understand and remember both the facts and the concepts. They should practise writing answers in a structured manner. I am sure that such type of exercises will enable students to be successful.

I wish you "ALL THE BEST"

ALL THE BEST

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Message from the Editor



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Dear students,

In this edition of **“LISAS CAREER IN FOCUS”**, we continue our endeavour to educate you Current Affairs which will be helpful for your preparation for the competitive examinations.

For a candidate to be successful in competitive exams. is easier if you follow proper procedure. While dealing with different topics we have tried to make you learn the techniques of analyzing facts in a critical manner. Analytical skills give you an added advantage rather than just memorizing facts. You must strive for perfection in all the subjects. When perfection is the final destination, success will be a mere milestone for you to achieve.

BEST OF LUCK

Dr. Linu Chayani

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ISSUES OF THE MONTH

REVIVING REGIONALISM THROUGH BIMSTEC

India's renewed outreach at the 6th BIMSTEC Summit in Bangkok has revitalised regional cooperation and reinforced its Indo-Pacific vision. With Thailand's visa waiver and deepening defence ties, India showcased its commitment to regionalism amid shifting geopolitics. BIMSTEC emerges as a vital platform to institutionalise connectivity, counter political volatility, and promote



collective resilience. This aligns with India's Act East and Neighbourhood First policies, offering strategic depth and recalibrated engagement with Southeast Asia in an era of stalled multilateralism.

What is BIMSTEC?

- **Regional Cooperation Platform:** The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) is a regional grouping for fostering cooperation between South and Southeast Asian countries across multiple sectors.
- It includes seven nations: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand from the Bay of Bengal region.
- **Formation and Evolution:** Founded in 1997 as BIST-EC, it was renamed BIMST-EC after Myanmar joined the same year.
- Nepal and Bhutan joined in 2004, completing the current membership; it became BIMSTEC formally.
- **Institutional Foundation:** The Colombo Summit of 2022 adopted the BIMSTEC Charter, establishing it as a legal, institutionalised regional body.
- The Charter outlines objectives, principles, and operational structures; it came into force after all members ratified it.
- **Secretariat and Structure:** The BIMSTEC Secretariat was established in 2014 in Dhaka.
- It coordinates sectoral work and facilitates inter-governmental cooperation among members in priority areas.
- **Expansion of Sectors:** BIMSTEC started with six areas of cooperation; over time, it expanded to 14 key priority sectors.
- Each member state leads specific sectors, with India heading Security, Counterterrorism, Disaster Management, and Energy.
- **Strategic Connectivity Bridge:** The grouping functions as a bridge between SAARC and ASEAN, bypassing SAARC's limitations caused by Indo-Pak tensions.
- It aligns with India's Act East and Neighbourhood First policies, pushing

regionalism through connectivity and collaboration.

What is the Significance of BIMSTEC for India and the Indo-Pacific?

- **Strategic Relevance in Indo-Pacific:** BIMSTEC connects two geostrategic subregions, giving India a central role in Indo-Pacific regionalism.
- The Bay of Bengal is crucial to maritime trade routes and regional connectivity in the Indo-Pacific theatre.
- **Counterweight to SAARC's Limitations:** BIMSTEC provides an alternative to SAARC, which remains paralyzed due to India-Pakistan hostilities.
- India has used BIMSTEC post-2016 Uri attack to enhance engagement, evident in the BRICS-BIMSTEC outreach.
- **Trade and Economic Value:** BIMSTEC countries represent 22% of the global population with a combined GDP of \$5.2 trillion (2023).
- **The Framework Agreement on the BIMSTEC Free Trade Area**, though unimplemented since 2004, could significantly boost intra-regional trade beyond the current sub-10%.
- **India's Sectoral Leadership:** India leads four crucial sectors: Security, Counterterrorism, Energy, and Disaster Management within BIMSTEC.
- This allows India to institutionalise regional public goods and shape strategic discourse across multiple domains.
- **Connectivity and Integration Goals:** The BIMSTEC Master Plan on Transport Connectivity is a blueprint for improving regional logistics and movement.
- It includes 264 projects across maritime, road, rail, and aviation sectors, helping regional trade corridors flourish.

- **Link to East and Southeast Asia:** Projects like the Kaladan Multimodal Transit and India-Myanmar-Thailand Highway are India's gateway to ASEAN.
- These routes strengthen India's economic and people-to-people ties with Thailand, Myanmar, and beyond.
- **BIMSTEC and India's Diplomacy:** India's use of BIMSTEC reflects its multi-alignment in the Indo-Pacific with QUAD, Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), and ASEAN.
- **MoUs with IORA and The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)** signed at the 6th Summit expand India's diplomatic and functional footprint.
- **Focus on Inclusive Growth:** Through BIMSTEC, India can advance inclusive development aligned with SDGs and regional welfare imperatives.
- Sectors like public health, climate resilience, and blue economy offer opportunities for targeted, people-centric diplomacy.

Why has India increasingly shifted its focus from SAARC to BIMSTEC?

Criteria	BIMSTEC	SAARC
Member Countries	BIMSTEC = SAARC – (Pakistan, Afghanistan, Maldives) + (Myanmar, Thailand)	Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.
Strategic Focus	Indo-Pacific bridge, connectivity, maritime	South Asian identity, socio-economic issues
Functionality	Active institutional reforms, vision documents	Dormant due to political stalemates

India's Role	Leading sectoral efforts (security, energy)	Hindered by bilateral tensions with Pakistan
Key Bottleneck	Funding, FTA delay, institutional weakness	Indo-Pak rivalry blocks implementation
Recent Progress	Bangkok Vision 2030, Maritime Transport Pact	Last summit in 2014, no recent outcomes

- **BIMSTEC Offers A Smoother And Obstruction-Free Platform:** India prefers BIMSTEC as it excludes Pakistan, ensuring fewer political hurdles and enabling functional cooperation in connectivity and regional projects.
- **BIMSTEC Aligns With India's Strategic And Leadership Goals:** With cordial ties among members and India leading key sectors, BIMSTEC supports India's Act East Policy and regional agenda-setting more effectively than SAARC.

Major Outcomes of 6th BIMSTEC Summit

- **Adoption of Bangkok Vision 2030:** The Bangkok Vision 2030 is BIMSTEC's new strategic blueprint, anchored in the UN SDGs and Thailand's Bio-Circular-Green (BCG) economy model.
 - It focuses on shaping a Prosperous, Resilient, and Open BIMSTEC for the region's 1.7 billion people.
- **Introduction of PRO BIMSTEC:** PRO BIMSTEC is a thematic framework with three pillars: Prosperity, Resilience, and Openness.
 - It promotes trade and investment, strengthens agriculture and health systems, and advances sustainable tourism.

- **Maritime Transport Cooperation Agreement:** Members signed the Agreement on Maritime Transport Cooperation to enhance cargo and passenger movement.
 - It supports maritime safety, regional logistics, and blue economy development in the Bay of Bengal.
- **Institutional Strengthening Measures:** The Rules of Procedure for BIMSTEC mechanisms were adopted, enhancing transparency and institutional efficiency.
 - These rules ensure procedural clarity for summits, ministerial meetings, and working groups.
- **External Collaborations Enhanced:** MoUs were signed with IORA and UNODC to broaden international collaboration and thematic convergence.
 - IORA partnership supports maritime connectivity; UNODC engagement targets crime prevention and governance.
- **Strategic Guidance from EPG Report:** The Eminent Persons Group (EPG) Report on BIMSTEC's future direction was finalised after year-long consultations.
 - It recommends prioritisation of sectors, institutional rationalisation, and performance-based implementation metrics.
- **Bilateral Diplomacy at Margins:** The Indian Prime Minister held talks with Myanmar's military leadership and Bangladesh's senior political figure during the summit.
 - These talks focused on earthquake aid, border security, and recalibration of bilateral ties post-political transitions.

Challenges Undermine the Effectiveness of the BIMSTEC Grouping

- **FTA Implementation Delay:** The BIMSTEC Free Trade Area, initiated in 2004, remains

unimplemented after two decades of negotiations.

- This delays trade liberalisation, undermining economic integration and investor confidence within the bloc.
- **Underfunded Secretariat:** The Secretariat in Dhaka suffers from staffing shortages, limited mandate, and poor financial autonomy.
- This restricts its operational effectiveness, particularly in programme coordination and monitoring.
- **Connectivity Project Delays:** Transport connectivity plans like the BIMSTEC Master Plan for Transport Connectivity face implementation delays and cost overruns.
- Lack of funding and coordination across ministries and countries hampers infrastructure delivery.
- **Political Instability in Region:** Myanmar's civil conflict and regime change in Bangladesh threaten regional harmony and collaborative planning.
- Such instability disrupts consensus-building and slows down progress on common regional goals.
- **Lack of Financial Mechanism:** Absence of a dedicated BIMSTEC fund means projects depend on voluntary national contributions.
- This results in inconsistent financing and gaps in implementing multi-country initiatives.
- **Consensus Decision-Making Hurdle:** The consensus-based model, while inclusive, leads to frequent policy paralysis on sensitive subjects.
- Security, counterterrorism, and migration cooperation suffer due to divergent political interests.

Strategic steps to strengthen BIMSTEC's role and relevance in the region

- **Enhance Institutional Capacity:** The Secretariat should be strengthened with technical experts, adequate funding, and a broader functional mandate.
- It must lead cross-sectoral integration and performance tracking of BIMSTEC programmes.
- **Create BIMSTEC Development Fund:** A dedicated funding mechanism is essential for financing connectivity, climate resilience, and digital public goods.
- Member-state contributions and donor partnerships could sustain long-term cooperation.
- **Fast-track FTA and Trade Cooperation:** Set timelines for BIMSTEC FTA implementation covering goods, services, and investment.
- This will boost intra-regional trade and reduce dependence on global north economies.
- **Accelerate Connectivity Masterplan:** Prioritise key infrastructure nodes under the BIMSTEC Master Plan on Transport Connectivity.
- Regular updates and cross-border facilitation can address coordination failures.
- **Broaden Sectoral Depth:** New cooperation areas like digital economy, green technology, and public health must be institutionalised.
- Post-Covid resilience requires regional preparedness in health and disaster systems.
- **Promote Stakeholder Engagement:** Track 1.5 and 2.0 diplomacy should bring in academia, civil society, and business networks.
- This ensures inclusive ownership and bottom-up feedback for policy design.


- Balance Leadership and Consensus: India must lead without dominating, fostering equitable cooperation and trust among smaller members.
- Leadership should focus on capacity sharing, humanitarian aid, and regional stability.

Conclusion

BIMSTEC must evolve from vision to verifiable action. Institutional reforms, trade frameworks,


and inclusive engagement are pivotal to its credibility. With consistent leadership, shared financing, and resilient diplomacy, the group can transition from aspirational dialogue to a functional pillar of Indo-Pacific integration, enabling stability, prosperity, and regional cohesion.

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INDIA'S STRATEGIC COLLABORATION WITH GULF

India and Kuwait have elevated their centuries-old ties to a comprehensive strategic partnership, marking the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister to Kuwait in over four decades. The partnership transcends traditional energy trade dynamics, with Kuwait holding 6.5% of global oil reserves and serving as India's 6th-largest crude supplier, to encompass defence cooperation, technology transfer, and infrastructure development. This strategic upgrade reflects the broader geopolitical shifts in the Gulf region, where India's growing economic and diplomatic influence has become increasingly crucial for regional stability and prosperity.

What is the Gulf Region?

- The Gulf Region, also known as the Persian Gulf Region or Arabian Gulf Region, refers to the area surrounding the Persian Gulf, which is a marginal sea of the Indian Ocean located between the Arabian Peninsula and south-western Iran.
- Key Features of the Gulf Region:
 - Geography: Comprises countries that border the Persian Gulf: Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).
 - Strategic Significance: The Persian Gulf is connected to the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea via the Strait of Hormuz, a crucial maritime choke point for global oil transportation
 - The Gulf is a hotspot for geopolitical tensions, including disputes between the US and Iran, the Saudi-Iran rivalry, and the Yemeni Civil War.
 - Economic Diversification Efforts: Countries like Saudi Arabia and UAE are pursuing

economic diversification plans (e.g., Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030) to reduce dependence on oil through investments in



technology, tourism, and renewable energy.

- Global Influence: Gulf countries are influential players in international organizations like Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), G20, and the UN.
- They host a significant expatriate workforce, particularly from South Asia, and serve as key trading and financial hubs (e.g., Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Doha).

Significance of the Gulf Region for India

- Energy Security: The Gulf region is pivotal for India's energy security, fulfilling 55.3% of India's crude oil demand in 2022–23 and recovering from a dip caused by increased Russian imports post-Ukraine war.
- Recent agreements, like the \$78 billion deal with Qatar to import 7.5 million tonnes of LNG annually till 2048, underline India's reliance on Gulf resources to sustain economic growth and energy transition.
- Trade and Economic Ties: The Gulf is India's largest regional trading partner,

contributing 15.8% of total trade in FY 2022–23, surpassing trade with the European Union.

- The UAE is India's 3rd largest trading partner, and Saudi Arabia ranks 4th targeting India's infrastructure and manufacturing sectors.
- These engagements have resulted in trust-building, exemplified by joint infrastructure projects like the \$44 billion Ratnagiri Refinery and active dialogue on regional stability.
- **Diaspora and Remittances :** Approximately 8.8 million Indians live in the Gulf, contributing significantly to regional economies and remitting around \$60 billion annually to India.
- This expatriate population forms a critical bridge in India-Gulf relations, especially during crises like the Covid-19 pandemic, when India facilitated repatriation under the Vande Bharat Mission.
- **Strategic and Defence Cooperation:** Defence ties are deepening, with bilateral exercises like Desert Flag (UAE) and trilateral engagements like India-France-UAE air combat exercises (Desert Knight).
- The Gulf's proximity to key maritime chokepoints ensures its importance in India's "mission-based naval deployments" for securing the Gulf of Aden and the Arabian Sea.
- **Emerging Geo-Economic Frameworks:** India is actively participating in initiatives like I2U2 (India-Israel-UAE-USA) and IMEC (India-Middle East-Europe Corridor) to enhance connectivity and diversify trade routes.
- Despite challenges from the Hamas-Israel war, these frameworks symbolize India's

growing geo-economic influence in the region.

- **Non-Oil Trade and Technology:** India and the Gulf are diversifying trade, with sectors like technology, pharmaceuticals, and renewable energy emerging as focal points.
- Examples include the rising exports of 'Made in India' automobiles and the UAE's \$15.3 billion FDI, making it the 7th largest source of investments in India.
- Also, recently the 2024 IPL auction was held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, marking the first time a cricketing event of this scale was hosted in the country.

Key areas of friction between India and the Gulf

- **Geopolitical Alignments and Diverging Interests:** India's growing ties with Israel, including participation in I2U2 (India-Israel-UAE-USA) and defence collaborations, sometimes create discomfort among Gulf nations sensitive to the Palestine issue.
- While India has supported a two-state solution, the Gulf's criticism of Israel's actions, especially during the 2023 Hamas-Israel war, contrasts with India's more neutral stance, risking strategic tensions.
- For example, India abstained on a UN resolution for ceasefire in Gaza, a decision that drew mixed reactions from Gulf partners.
- **Energy Supply Vulnerabilities:** India's diversification of oil imports post-Ukraine war, with Russia fulfilling 55% of India's crude imports in 2024, has reduced Gulf's share.
- While Middle Eastern oil imports have rebounded in mid-2023, Gulf suppliers face competition, straining their traditional dominance over India's energy market.
- India's focus on renewable energy and green hydrogen partnerships with

nations like Japan and Australia could further diminish the Gulf's role in India's energy landscape.

- **Trade and FTA Negotiations Stalemate:** Despite announcements to revive negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the Gulf



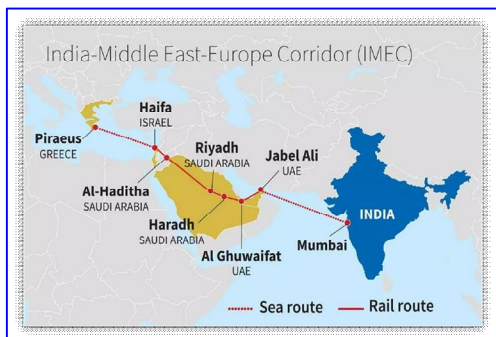
Cooperation Council (GCC) in 2022, progress has been slow due to disagreements over tariff reductions and non-oil trade diversification.

- Trade with the GCC constitutes 15.8% of India's total trade, but sectors like pharmaceuticals face barriers, including pricing policies and market access restrictions.
- **Maritime Security and Strategic Gaps:** While India plays a key role in maritime security in the Arabian Sea, gaps remain in coordinated anti-piracy operations and regional naval partnerships, partly due to Gulf nations' reliance on US-led security frameworks.
- The Indian Navy's deployment of 12 ships in 2024 in response to Red Sea and Gulf of Aden tensions underscores India's commitment but also highlights its limited

direct influence on regional security policies.

- Initiatives like bilateral naval exercises with UAE and Oman are steps forward but fall short of fully integrated Gulf-India maritime security collaboration.
- **Diaspora-Related Visa and Employment Policies:** Gulf countries are increasingly prioritizing nationalization policies like Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 and UAE's Emiratization, which aim to reduce dependence on foreign workers, including Indians.
- This shift threatens the livelihoods of 8.8 million Indian expatriates, whose remittances account for \$60 billion annually and contribute significantly to India's economy.
- For example, Saudi Arabia's Nitaqat policy has led to tighter visa rules, forcing some Indian workers to return home or adapt to lower-paying jobs.
- Also, instances of wage delays and unsafe working conditions, especially during the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar, have sparked domestic and global scrutiny.
- **Economic Corridor and Connectivity Rivalries:** While India is a key player in the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), the Gulf's focus on China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) creates competing visions for regional connectivity.
- For example, Saudi Arabia's \$50 billion deal with China in 2024 underlines its strategic pivot, contrasting with India's preference for diversifying away from Beijing-led frameworks.
- These competing alignments risk diluting joint initiatives like IMEC and delaying implementation amid geopolitical complexities.

- **Border Security and Illegal Trade:** The Gulf's proximity to conflict zones like Yemen has resulted in challenges like illegal arms and drug trafficking



spilling over into India's maritime borders.

- Despite India's efforts in monitoring maritime chokepoints, incidents such as 2022, a Pakistani boat carrying 10 crew members, along with arms, ammunition, and 40 kg of narcotics valued at ₹300 crore, was intercepted off the Gujarat coast, highlighting gaps in coordinated security efforts with Gulf partners.
- The lack of a structured GCC-India anti-trafficking framework further exacerbates vulnerabilities in this area.
- **Food Security and Agricultural Policies:** Gulf nations rely heavily on food imports, but India's frequent bans on wheat and rice exports, as seen during 2022 and 2023 inflationary pressures, strain the relationship.
- For instance, India's ban on non-basmati rice exports in 2023 caused disruptions in Gulf markets, which are dependent on Indian staples for their food supply chains.
- The lack of a long-term, stable food trade agreement creates uncertainties, impacting both Gulf consumers and Indian farmers.
- **Cyber Security and Digital Governance:** Gulf nations, especially the UAE, have advanced significantly

in cybersecurity frameworks, often adopting Western standards or collaborating with China's digital initiatives, which may conflict with India's indigenous approaches.

- India's push for data localization laws and stricter control of digital ecosystems clashes with Gulf countries' reliance on open systems to facilitate global business.
- For example, India's exclusion from China's Digital Silk Road including Gulf States like UAE highlights emerging gaps in digital cooperation.

What Measures can India Adopt to Enhance its Relations with Gulf Countries?

- **Deepening Energy Cooperation Beyond Oil:** Shift focus from a buyer-seller relationship to a co-development model in energy, such as joint ventures in green hydrogen, solar, and wind energy projects.
- Encourage Gulf Sovereign Wealth Funds (SWFs) like the UAE's Mubadala and Saudi's PIF to invest in India's renewable energy infrastructure under initiatives like the National Green Hydrogen Mission.
- For instance, India can co-develop green hydrogen facilities with Gulf nations, leveraging their financial capital and India's technological edge in solar energy.
- **Strengthening Economic Partnerships via FTAs:** Fast-track the negotiation of a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) to unlock trade potential in sectors like pharmaceuticals, food processing, and technology.
- Develop long-term frameworks for staple food trade stability, ensuring uninterrupted supply chains for Gulf nations dependent on Indian exports like rice and wheat.
- India could also use its Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)

with the UAE as a template to expand trade ties with other Gulf states.

- **Co-Developing Maritime and Logistics Infrastructure:** Collaborate with Gulf countries on building resilient and efficient maritime corridors, leveraging initiatives like the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC).
- Set up joint logistics hubs in key Gulf ports (e.g., Dubai, Jeddah) to streamline supply chains and enhance connectivity to Africa and Europe.
- For instance, co-developing smart ports using Indian IT expertise and Gulf capital can strengthen economic and strategic interdependence.
- **Enhancing Defence and Security Cooperation:** Collaborate on maritime security by establishing joint naval task forces to protect vital chokepoints like the Strait of Hormuz and combat piracy in the Gulf of Aden.
- Develop cybersecurity pacts to jointly counter cyber threats, leveraging India's IT capabilities and Gulf nations' investments in digital infrastructure.
- **Leveraging Diaspora Diplomacy:** Establish a Gulf-India Expatriate Council to address issues like employment, remittances, and labour rights collaboratively.
- Promote bilateral agreements for skilled worker mobility, focusing on sectors like healthcare and technology where Gulf nations face shortages.
- For example, expand the scope of India's eMigrate system to include Gulf labor market forecasts, enabling a smoother flow of skilled Indian workers.
- **Expanding Cooperation in Healthcare and Pharmaceuticals:** Co-develop pharma hubs in Gulf countries, enabling faster access to Indian generic medicines and vaccines through joint production facilities.

- Streamline regulatory approvals for Indian pharmaceutical exports, creating fast-track pathways under a Gulf-wide healthcare agreement.
- For example, India could set up vaccine manufacturing units in the Gulf to cater to West Asian and African markets.
- **Enhancing Food and Water Security Ties:** Partner on agri-tech solutions, such as using Indian expertise in crop diversification and Gulf funding to enhance food production and supply chains.
- Co-develop desalination and water conservation technologies, addressing shared challenges of water scarcity.
- India could collaborate with the UAE's Water Alliance to expand these efforts into regions like the Arabian Peninsula.
- **Aligning on Climate Goals and Sustainability:** Develop a Gulf-India Sustainability Forum to co-invest in carbon capture, solar desalination, and renewable energy technologies.
- Jointly promote initiatives in clean energy research, particularly in hydrogen and biofuels, aligning with India's energy transition and Gulf nations' diversification strategies.
- For example, India could partner with Saudi Arabia in its Green Initiative to expand tree plantation and desert greening technologies.
- **Strengthening Multilateral Engagement:** Build stronger coordination with Gulf nations in global forums like the G20, UN, and International Energy Agency (IEA) to advocate shared interests in energy pricing, climate change, and trade.
- For example, India's 2023 G20 Presidency and partnerships with Saudi Arabia and UAE on global energy governance showcased the potential for deeper multilateral ties.

- Cultural and Educational Diplomacy
Establish Indian cultural centers like BAPS Hindu Mandir Abu Dhabi in major Gulf cities to deepen people-to-people ties through festivals, language training, and tourism promotion.
- Enhance collaboration in education by opening Indian university branches in Gulf nations, catering to both Indian diaspora and Gulf citizens.
- For instance, co-developing STEM-focused education programs could address skill shortages in Gulf economies while enhancing India's soft power.

Conclusion:

The strategic elevation of India-Kuwait relations signifies a transformative phase in India-Gulf Relations, leveraging centuries-old ties to address contemporary challenges and opportunities. By focusing on energy, trade, defence, and technology, India and the Gulf can unlock their full potential while addressing global and regional dynamics. Strengthening people-to-people ties and embracing shared development goals will ensure long-term sustainability in their partnership.

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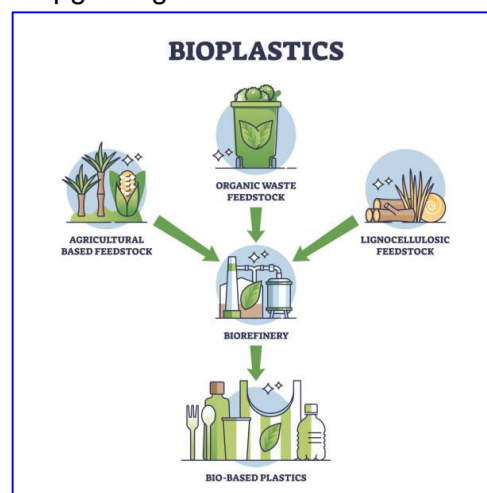
PLASTIC WASTE TO WEALTH REVOLUTION

Plastics have revolutionized modern life but now pose a severe environmental challenge, persisting in our ecosystems for centuries and contributing to climate change. Scientists at Korea's Advanced Institute of Science and Technology have engineered E. coli bacteria to produce a promising biodegradable plastic alternative that combines nylon's strength with the breakdown potential of polyesters. India needs to work hard to adopt and develop such innovative solutions to address its growing plastic waste crisis.

Key Emerging Advancements in Plastic Recycling

- **Bioengineered Microbial Plastics:** Using synthetic biology, scientists are engineering microbes like E. coli to produce biodegradable plastics from renewable plant-based sources like glucose.
- These "bio-plastics" (e.g., Kerala's eco-friendly water bottles made from potato starch based material) are designed for easier natural decomposition, potentially replacing petroleum-based plastics. It marks a shift from linear production to circular, biologically integrated economies.
- In 2025, Korea's KAIST researchers developed microbial plastic with amino acids, combining nylon's strength with biodegradability.
- Also, researchers in Japan have designed a revolutionary biodegradable plastic that dissolves in seawater.
- The material of this plastic is also strong and can be adjusted to fit various uses such as packaging materials to medical devices

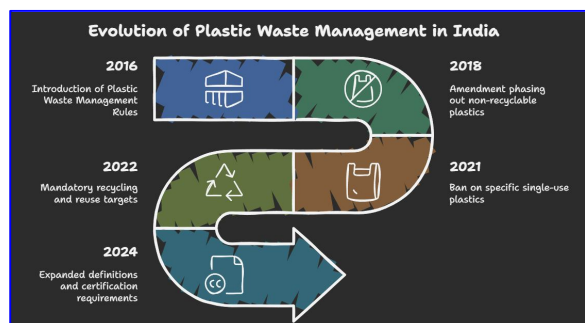
- **Fair Trade Plastic Recycling (Socially Inclusive Models):** Innovative models like Plastics For Change promote ethical recycling by integrating informal workers into formal systems with fair pay and traceable supply chains.
- These models address both environmental concerns and social equity by formalizing and upgrading the informal sector.



- Plastics For Change diverts plastic from oceans/landfills and supports waste-picker livelihoods, promoting circular economy and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption).
- **Chemical Recycling (Advanced Depolymerization):** Unlike mechanical recycling, which downcycles plastics, chemical recycling breaks polymers back into monomers for reuse in high-quality applications.
- This allows even low-grade or contaminated plastics to be recycled effectively, closing the loop.
- Companies like Pyrowave and Carbios are leading this globally.
- **AI-Driven Waste Sorting Systems:** Using artificial intelligence and machine learning, automated sorting systems can identify and

segregate different types of plastics with high precision.

- This reduces contamination and improves the efficiency of recycling processes, especially in urban MRFs.
- Recykal and NEPRA in India are pioneering smart sorting systems; global players like AMP Robotics are deploying AI for real-time segregation.



- **Plastic-to-Fuel (Pyrolysis Technology):** Pyrolysis converts plastic waste into fuel oils or industrial chemicals under high heat and absence of oxygen.
 - Though still debated environmentally, it offers a way to handle non-recyclable plastic in waste-to-energy schemes.
 - India's GAIL and IIT Delhi have piloted pyrolysis units. IIT Delhi has also successfully produced diesel from single-use plastic
- **Deposit Refund Systems (DRS) for Packaging Waste:** DRS incentivizes consumers to return used plastic containers (bottles, milk pouches) in exchange for refunds or discounts.
 - It helps recover high-quality recyclable plastics and encourages behavior change at the consumer level.
 - Germany's system recovers 98% of plastic bottles using this approach.
- **Plastic Roads and Infrastructure:** Plastic waste is repurposed as a binder in bitumen

mix to construct roads, providing durability and reuse in civil infrastructure.

- This reduces waste load and enhances road quality, especially in high-rainfall regions.
 - More than 3 lakh kilometres of roads in India have been converted into plastic tar roads, including the roads at the border.
- Key issues associated with Plastic Management in India**

- **Ineffective Waste Collection and Underreported Data:** Despite claims of high waste collection coverage, a large volume of plastic remains uncollected, especially in rural and peri-urban areas.
 - This results in open dumping and mismanagement which severely undermines formal management systems.
 - India's official waste collection is cited at 95%, but researches suggest actual collection is around 81%.
- The discrepancy between official and actual collection rates creates a policy-blind spot.
- **Open Burning and Toxic Pollution:** The widespread practice of open burning of plastic waste contributes significantly to air pollution and public health hazards.
 - It releases highly toxic chemicals such as dioxins and furans, worsening India's already critical air quality scenario.
 - This is especially prevalent in urban slums and rural areas due to lack of safe disposal alternatives.
- India burns 5.8 million tonnes of plastic waste and releases another 3.5 million tonnes into the environment each year, highlighting the gravity of the issue.
- **Dominance of Single-Use Plastics Despite Ban:** Regulatory efforts like the 2022 ban on select single-use plastics have had minimal success due to poor enforcement and cheap availability.

- These plastics still dominate daily consumption patterns, from packaging to cutlery. Without viable and affordable alternatives, compliance remains weak.
- For instance, 43% of India's plastic waste is still composed of single-use items, and these continue to be sold widely despite the 2022 ban.
- Weak Enforcement of EPR and Policy Frameworks: India's Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) regime lacks effective monitoring and accountability.
- Smaller manufacturers often escape compliance, and the absence of centralized tracking results in fragmented execution.
- Regulations like Plastic Waste Management Rules (2016, 2021, 2024) exist more on paper than practice.
- Despite mandatory EPR, only 60% of plastic waste is recycled (largely by informal sectors), and multi-layered plastics (MLPs) remain hard to regulate
- Lack of Infrastructure for Segregation and Processing: India's municipal solid waste infrastructure is underprepared to handle complex plastic types, especially non-recyclables.
- Absence of source segregation and inadequate MRFs (Material Recovery Facilities) lead to dumping or incineration. Investment in waste processing tech is minimal.
- For instance, 77% of urban waste is dumped untreated into landfills; sanitary landfills are outnumbered 10:1 by uncontrolled dump sites (Nature, 2024).
- Environmental and Health Hazards from Microplastics: Plastic waste is now breaking down into microplastics and entering food, water, and soil systems, posing a new-age health crisis.
- Agricultural and water systems are increasingly contaminated, with long-term implications on food security and human health.
- For instance, Microplastics are found in 83% of Indian tap water samples, and studies confirm their presence in agricultural soils via wastewater sludge.
- The impact of microplastic on marine biota is an issue of concern as it leads to the entanglement and ingestion which can be lethal to marine life.
- Challenges in Adoption of Sustainable Alternatives: Eco-friendly alternatives like biodegradable plastics, plant-based packaging, jute bags and cloth bags are often expensive, unavailable, or lack scalability.
- Small businesses and vendors struggle to transition due to cost constraints. Additionally, there is inadequate R&D investment in developing cost-effective, durable, and scalable substitutes for conventional plastics.
- Due to lack of availability of cheap alternatives, e-commerce plastic packaging market size still stands at \$23-34 billion as of 2023.
- Food delivery sector is another big contributor, generating approximately 3,50,000 tonnes of single-use plastic waste annually.

Measures India to adopt for Enhanced Plastic Management

- Decentralized Waste Management through Urban Local Bodies: Empowering ULBs with technical training and financial resources can help implement ward-level waste segregation, collection, and processing.
- This decentralization enables area-specific innovations and enhances accountability. It can be operationalized via convergence with the 15th Finance Commission

Grants and Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban 2.0.

- Strengthening the capacity of municipal staff and promoting citizen participation will ensure local ownership.
- Enforceable and Digitally Tracked Extended Producer Responsibility: Strengthening EPR with digital platforms to trace plastic use, recovery, and recycling can ensure producers are held accountable.
- A centralized tracking mechanism using QR codes or blockchain-based traceability systems should be deployed.
- Integration with Digital India and the National Dashboard for EPR Compliance can create transparency and ease audits. Third-party audits and penalties for non-compliance can reinforce enforcement.
- Formalization of Informal Waste Sector: Recognizing and integrating waste pickers into formal recycling chains through cooperatives or SHGs will improve collection efficiency and livelihoods.
- Formalization should include access to social security (Indore Model), training, and safety gear. Linking this effort with Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NULM) can ensure dignity and upward mobility.
- Local governance bodies can help identify and register workers.
- Strict Enforcement of Ban with Parallel Eco-Alternative Ecosystem: Policy bans on single-use plastics must be accompanied by incentivizing the production and distribution of affordable biodegradable alternatives.
- The government should provide MSMEs with R&D and marketing support to scale eco-friendly packaging.
- Linking Start-Up India, MSME Ministry, and KVIC can create a full value chain for green alternatives. This dual-track approach ensures both restriction and substitution.
- Incentivized Source Segregation at Household Level: Households should be rewarded through rebates, discounts, or utility bill credits for consistent waste segregation.
- Urban bodies can develop reward-linked dashboards for compliant societies.
- Integrating Behavioral Insights Unit (NITI Aayog) and SBM-Urban 2.0 nudging campaigns can drive adoption. Tech-based gamification of segregation practices can build a culture of responsible waste behavior.
- Strengthening Infrastructure for Material Recovery Facilities (MRFs): Establishing zonal-level MRFs equipped with automated segregation technology can vastly improve recycling efficiency.
- These facilities should be built on public-private partnership models and tied into smart city projects.
- Smart Cities Mission and AMRUT 2.0 can co-fund such infrastructure. Training ULBs in operating these efficiently is crucial for long-term sustainability.
- Localized Plastic Action Plans at District Level: Each district should develop its own Plastic Waste Management Action Plan tailored to its volume, geography, and infrastructure.
- These plans must be made mandatory under District Environment Plans (DEPs) overseen by State Pollution Control Boards.
- Integrating them with State Action Plans on Climate Change (SAPCCs) will align plastic management with broader sustainability goals.

- Circular Economy Innovation Hubs: Establish innovation clusters focused on circular economy solutions, with support for startups, research institutions, and recyclers. These hubs can drive R&D on biodegradable materials, upcycling technologies, and scalable recycling models.
- Ministries like MoEFCC, DST, and MSME can co-create these under the Mission LiFE framework. Local industrial associations can help pilot and scale emerging solutions.

Conclusion:

Innovative plastic recycling technologies are crucial for tackling India's mounting plastic waste crisis while fostering a circular economy. Solutions like bioengineered plastics, AI-driven waste sorting, and advanced chemical recycling align with SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and SDG 13 (Climate Action) by promoting sustainable waste management.

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STRENGTHENING INDIA'S DISASTER SAFETY

Nearly 2 decades after the devastating 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami, which claimed over 230,000 lives, India has transformed its disaster management approach. Through the Disaster Management Act of 2005, it established the National Disaster Management Authority and the National Disaster Response Force, evolving from a victim to a regional leader. Yet, with its vast coastline, diverse geography, and growing



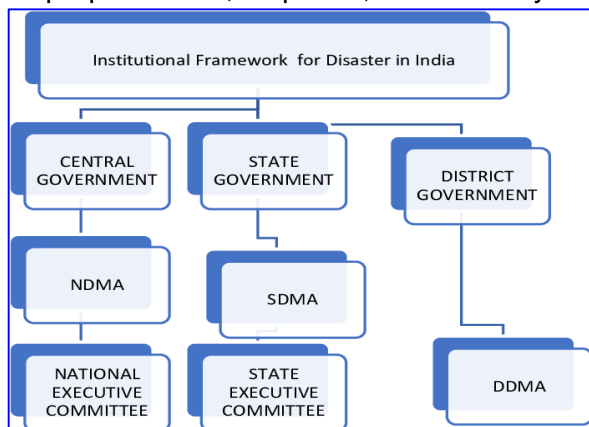
climate vulnerabilities, persistent challenges remain, demanding continuous vigilance and advancements in disaster response mechanisms.

How has the Approach to Disaster Management Evolved in India?

- **Early Years: Relief-Centric and Reactive Approach (Pre-1980s)**
 - **Focus on Relief and Rehabilitation:** In the initial years post-independence, disaster management was limited to reactive relief efforts, such as food distribution, temporary shelters, and medical aid.
- The responsibility primarily lay with state governments, supported by central assistance during major calamities.
- Events like the Bihar famine (1966-67) and Drought of 1972 revealed inefficiencies in relief distribution and lack of preventive measures.

- **Shift Toward Planning and Preparedness (1980s-2000s)**
 - **Increased Institutional Focus:** The establishment of the Department of Environment (1980), later the Ministry of Environment and Forests, addressed disaster-linked environmental concerns.
 - **Response to Major Events:** The Bhopal Gas Tragedy (1984), one of the worst industrial disasters, highlighted the need for stricter safety regulations and disaster management in industries.
- **Cyclones in Andhra Pradesh (1990) and Latur Earthquake (1993)** led to improvements in relief coordination, but prevention and mitigation remained limited.
- **Formation of National Organizations:** In 1990, the Cyclone Warning Directorate was established in New Delhi to coordinate cyclone warning activities across the country and serve as the Regional Specialized Meteorological Centre-Tropical Cyclones (RSMC-TC) for providing regional guidance.
- **Institutionalization of Disaster Management (2000s)**
 - **Key Disasters as Turning Points:** The Bhuj Earthquake (2001) exposed vulnerabilities in urban planning and infrastructure safety, prompting systemic reforms in preparedness.
 - The Indian Ocean Tsunami (2004) caused massive devastation, leading to a paradigm shift in India's disaster management strategies.
 - **Enactment of the Disaster Management Act (2005):** The Act institutionalized disaster management in India, creating a dedicated framework.

- The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) was established, with state (SDMAs) and district (DDMAs) counterparts.
- The focus shifted to the four pillars of disaster management: mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery.



- Proactive and Resilience-Focused Approach (2010-Present)
 - Shift to Mitigation and Resilience: Emphasis on risk reduction under global frameworks like the Hyogo Framework for Action (2005-2015) and Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030).
 - Adoption of Technology: Advanced systems like Doppler Radar, flood forecasting and real-time data sharing platforms.
 - Community-Centric and Inclusive Strategies: Programs like Aapda Mitra and school disaster management plans empower local communities to act as first responders.
 - Global Collaborations: India contributes to and benefits from global frameworks such as SAARC Disaster Management Centre and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction.

- Participation in Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) to develop resilient infrastructure

- Evolving Focus Area:

- Addressing Climate-Induced Disasters: India incorporated climate resilience into disaster management plans due to increasing climate-related risks.
- Focus on nature-based solutions like mangrove restoration under programs like Namami Gange to mitigate flooding.
- Urban Disaster Management: Integration of urban resilience into development frameworks under the Smart Cities Mission to address risks like urban flooding.
- Bengaluru's flood management plans post-2022 floods emphasize wetland restoration and stormwater infrastructure upgrades.

What are the Major Disaster Challenges Confronting India?

- Escalating Climate-Induced Disasters: India is experiencing an increasing frequency of extreme weather events due to climate change, exposing gaps in mitigation frameworks.
- Cyclone Mocha (2023) impacted Sundarbans, while record-breaking rainfall in Himachal Pradesh (2023) caused over ₹10,000 crore in losses, exacerbated by deforestation and unregulated development.
- A recent study revealed that India faced extreme weather events on 314 out of 365 days in 2023.
- The lack of climate-resilient infrastructure amplifies both human and economic vulnerabilities.
- Urban Flooding as a Result of Chaotic Urbanization: Rapid urban expansion without sustainable planning has turned cities into flood hotspots.

- Rapid urbanisation intensifies the challenge of urban flooding, leading to peak water levels rising 1.8 to 8 times in developed cities.
- Chennai's 2021 floods, caused by outdated drainage systems and illegal construction on wetlands, disrupted life and led to economic losses.
- The 2022 Bengaluru floods were largely due to rampant corruption in the civic body, resulting in extensive encroachments on lakes, lake beds, storm-water drains (rajakaluves), and buffer zones.
- Himalayan Fragility and Glacial Retreat: Melting glaciers and unstable Himalayan geology are leading to high-magnitude disasters like landslides and glacial lake outbursts.
- The Kedarnath flood (2013) and the Chamoli disaster (2021) highlighted cascading risks due to unchecked hydropower projects and deforestation.
- From 1975 to 2000, Himalayan glaciers lost an average of 4 billion tonnes of ice annually, which doubled to 8 billion tonnes per year between 2000 and 2016.
- This endangers not just livelihoods but also water security for millions downstream.
- Industrial Hazards and Rising Chemical Disasters: India's lax enforcement of industrial safety norms has resulted in repeated industrial accidents.
- The Vizag gas leak (2020) exposed over 10,000 people to toxic fumes, while the Ludhiana gas tragedy (2023) highlighted the lack of real-time monitoring of hazardous materials.
- Government data reveals that an average of 3 workers lose their lives daily in Indian factories due to inadequate safety measures yet implementation of NDMA's chemical disaster guidelines remains fragmented, especially in Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities.
- Agricultural Vulnerabilities and Drought Risks: Erratic monsoons, heatwaves, and groundwater depletion have worsened drought conditions, crippling India's agrarian economy.
- The 2022 Latur drought saw crop failures. More than 60% of the people in Latur are engaged in agriculture, making drought a serious issue
- 40% of Indians will have no access to drinking water by 2030 (NITI Aayog). Despite schemes like PMKSY (Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana), irrigation infrastructure and rainwater harvesting remain inadequate.
- Forest Fires and Loss of Carbon Sinks: Forest fires in India are increasing both in frequency and intensity due to climate change and human-induced factors.
- The India State of Forest Report (ISFR) 2023, revealed that Uttarakhand alone recorded 5,351 forest fires between November 2022 to June 2023.
- The Simlipal fires in Odisha (2021) lasted for over 10 days, affecting close to one-third area.
- Health Crises Following Disasters: Disasters exacerbate public health emergencies, with disrupted sanitation, contaminated water supplies, and weakened healthcare systems.
- For instance, after the 2018 Kerala floods, waterborne diseases increased, with leptospirosis and cholera being the most common.
- Limited deployment of mobile health units and slow response times highlight glaring gaps in disaster healthcare infrastructure.

- **Weak Early Warning Systems and Coordination Failures:** Although technological advancements have improved forecasting, gaps in last-mile connectivity remain critical.
- A 2023 World Meteorological Organization (WMO) report highlighted that India ranked 14th out of 21 countries in early warning system effectiveness, with below-average scores in risk knowledge, observation, forecasting, warning, dissemination, and preparedness.
- **Gendered and Social Inequities in Disasters:** Disasters amplify existing social vulnerabilities, with women, children, and marginalized groups disproportionately affected.
- For example, following cyclones like Amphan and Yaas, women and children in affected areas were targeted by traffickers, and social inequalities worsened as communities struggled with recovery.
- **Gaps in Institutional Frameworks and Funding:** India's disaster management frameworks remain reactive rather than proactive, with insufficient funding for mitigation efforts.
- A total of ₹68,463 crore has been allocated for the NDRMF from 2021-22 to 2025-26, with 80% for the National Disaster Response Fund leaving just 20% for the National Disaster Mitigation Fund.
- Weak institutional accountability and fragmented policies hinder effective disaster risk reduction and resilience-building.

Lessons India to learn from other Countries in Disaster Management

- **Japan's Earthquake Preparedness:** Japan's strict building codes, retrofitting of infrastructure, and regular earthquake

drills ensure minimal casualties during seismic events.

- India can adopt similar seismic safety norms in high-risk zones like the Himalayas.
- **Bangladesh's Cyclone Management:** Bangladesh's efficient evacuation strategies drastically reduced cyclone-related fatalities. India can improve community-based disaster planning in coastal regions.
- **Netherlands's Flood Management:** The Netherlands has a network of dikes, dams, and floodgates to protect against storm surges from the sea.
- India's urban flood management can benefit from replicating these solutions in cities like Mumbai and Chennai.
- **South Korea's Technological Integration:** South Korea uses integrated digital platforms for disaster response coordination across agencies. India can adopt centralized command systems for better inter-agency coordination.
- **Sweden's Climate Adaptation:** Sweden's proactive climate adaptation policies include integrating disaster risk reduction with urban planning.
- India can align its Smart Cities Mission with climate resilience strategies.

Measures India to adopt to enhance Disaster Resilience and Mitigation

- **Strengthening Climate-Resilient Infrastructure:** India needs to invest in climate-resilient infrastructure that can withstand extreme weather events such as cyclones, floods, and heatwaves.
- Developing green buildings, flood-resistant urban drainage systems, and cyclone-proof housing in coastal areas is essential.
- For example, Odisha's cyclone shelters have saved countless lives, a model that can be replicated nationwide.

- Integrating the Smart Cities Mission with climate-resilience planning can ensure urban growth aligns with disaster mitigation goals.
- Implementing Community-Based Disaster Risk Reduction (CBDRR): Local communities must be empowered to manage risks through training, capacity building, and disaster preparedness exercises.
- Combining Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) with community-led hazard mapping can create sustainable assets like embankments and check dams.
- Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) to Combat Urban and Rural Flooding: A unified approach to water management can address flooding and drought challenges simultaneously.
- This includes restoring wetlands, building urban rainwater harvesting systems, and strengthening embankments along rivers.
- Integrating Namami Gange with city-level flood prevention plans can address urban flooding while enhancing river health.
- Modernizing Early Warning Systems with Technology: India must adopt advanced technologies like AI, IoT, and geospatial mapping to modernize early warning systems.
- Expanding the scope of the Common Alerting Protocol (CAP) to integrate mobile alerts with local language support can enhance last-mile communication.
- Leveraging ISRO's satellite capabilities to monitor high-risk zones, combined with AI-powered models, can reduce response times.
- Retrofitting Seismic Zones and Enforcing Building Codes: India needs to enforce stringent compliance with seismic safety codes, especially in urban areas and high-risk zones like the Himalayas.
- Retrofitting old structures, particularly schools and hospitals, can minimize casualties during earthquakes.
- Linking such efforts with Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) can ensure affordable housing adheres to disaster-resilient norms.
- Scaling Up Insurance Coverage for Disaster Losses: Developing microinsurance schemes tailored to farmers, small businesses, and vulnerable populations can mitigate financial losses post-disasters.
- Linking crop insurance under the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) with parametric insurance models for faster payouts can provide timely relief.
- Integrating disaster insurance into the financial inclusion agenda under Jan Dhan accounts can ensure wide coverage, especially in rural areas prone to recurrent disasters.
- Strengthening Urban Disaster Preparedness via Smart Cities Mission: Urban centres must prioritize integrating disaster management into their development plans.
- Cities under the Smart Cities Mission can be mandated to adopt risk-sensitive zoning and automated weather monitoring systems.
- For example, Surat's early flood-warning system reduced damages during monsoons.
- Collaborating with startups under the Startup India scheme can foster innovation in urban disaster resilience technologies.
- Integrating Climate Change Mitigation with Disaster Risk Management: India must align its climate change mitigation

strategies with disaster resilience efforts by adopting nature-based solutions.

- A recent study found mangroves reduce flood damage by \$65 billion globally each year. Implementing mangrove restoration programs in coastal areas, as in Sundarbans, can reduce cyclone impacts while sequestering carbon.
- Institutional Capacity Building and Unified Response Systems: Streamlining coordination among institutions like NDMA, SDRFs, and local governments can ensure a faster response during disasters.
- Establishing unified command centres equipped with real-time data analytics can enhance coordination.
- Linking National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) operations with tech platforms like GIS-based planning tools can further improve efficiency.
- Gender-Inclusive Disaster Policies for Equitable Recovery: Disaster policies must incorporate gender-sensitive approaches to address the unique vulnerabilities faced by women and marginalized groups.
- Integrating women-led self-help groups (SHGs) under the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana into disaster relief and recovery efforts can ensure inclusive outcomes.
- Creating a Transboundary Disaster Management Framework: India should collaborate with neighbouring countries to develop transboundary mechanisms for shared disaster risks.

- Regional cooperation with China and Bangladesh can enhance cyclone preparedness in the Bay of Bengal.
- Integrating transboundary mechanisms into the SAARC Disaster Management Centre's initiatives can create a regional safety net.
- Institutionalizing Disaster Education and Awareness: Incorporating disaster preparedness education into school curriculums can build a culture of safety from a young age.
- Programs like the Aapda Mitra scheme for disaster volunteers can be expanded to rural schools to train students in basic response techniques.
- Linking disaster education through Social Media influencers can amplify outreach.

Conclusion:

The implementation of the Disaster Management Act of 2005, along with the incorporation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, has significantly strengthened national preparedness. However, challenges such as climate-induced disasters, urban flooding, and industrial hazards persist. India's approach to disaster management needs to be evolved from a reactive, relief-focused model to a proactive, resilience-driven framework.

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INDIA'S SPACE POWER REVOLUTION

India's space program has entered a new era of sophistication with ISRO's latest SpaDeX Mission - a pioneering attempt at space docking that could place India alongside the US, Russia, and China in an elite group of nations. This milestone comes after the successful Chandrayaan-3 lunar landing and Aditya-1 solar mission in 2023, showcasing ISRO's rapid evolution from a satellite-launching agency to a leader in planetary exploration. ISRO's growing expertise across all aspects of space exploration signals its readiness to emerge as a global space power, capable of contributing significantly to humanity's understanding of the cosmos.

How is India Strengthening its Space-Based Capabilities?

- Mastery in In-Orbit Docking and Space Station Development: India's SPADEX mission (Space Docking Experiment), launched by ISRO recently, exemplifies its move towards advanced space technologies.
- The experiment involves two satellites, Chaser and Target, autonomously performing docking maneuvers, crucial for future missions like on-orbit satellite servicing and assembling a potential Indian space station.
- This complements ISRO's Gaganyaan program, aiming for human space exploration by 2025.
- Such initiatives place India among the select few nations mastering autonomous docking technologies, with broader implications for interplanetary missions.
- Strengthening Indigenous Satellite Constellations: India has prioritized

building home-grown satellite constellations to reduce dependency on foreign data.

- 30 Indian companies are collaborating to build and operate Earth observation satellite constellations for defence, infrastructure management, and mapping
- ISRO's NavIC upgrade aims to enhance India's navigation system to compete with global counterparts like GPS.



- This initiative boosts data sovereignty and aligns with India's vision for self-reliance in critical infrastructure, fostering public-private collaboration.
- Expanding Small Satellite Capabilities and Global Launch Services: India's Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV), caters to the booming demand for launching nanosatellites.
- By tapping into the \$14 billion small satellite market expected by 2031, India

has emerged as a cost-effective global player.

- The PSLV-C56 mission in 2023 successfully deployed commercial payloads, reflecting India's reliability in the space launch sector.
- Additionally, SSLVs are enabling universities and startups to deploy experimental satellites, accelerating technological innovation.
- **Boosting Space Startup Ecosystem and Private Sector Involvement:** The 10 billion rupee fund for space startups, approved in 2024, has catalyzed innovation in the private sector.
- Companies like Pixxel and Skyroot Aerospace are revolutionizing Earth imaging and rocket technologies, with Pixxel launching hyperspectral satellites and Skyroot's Vikram-S marking India's first private rocket launch.
- This strategy fosters entrepreneurial participation, with over 40 startups contributing to India's space economy and creating employment opportunities across sectors.
- **Advancements in Defence and Dual-Use Technologies:** The launch of defence-oriented satellites, such as GSAT-7, strengthens India's strategic surveillance and communication capabilities.
- India's Anti-Satellite (ASAT) test in 2019 demonstrated its readiness for space warfare, complemented by a dedicated Defence Space Agency (DSA) operational from 2020.
- This ensures India's preparedness in addressing emerging security challenges, especially in the context of militarization of space by global powers.
- **Strategic International Partnerships and Outreach:** India is forging strategic

partnerships to enhance its global space standing.

- Axiom Space, U.S.-based startup, plans to utilize Indian rockets for space station missions, showcasing India's cost-efficient launch capabilities.
- Collaboration with NASA and ESA under climate and planetary science missions, like the NISAR satellite, also boosts India's role in addressing global challenges.
- Such partnerships align India's space ambitions with geopolitical objectives, fostering soft power.
- **Enhancing Space Sustainability and Global Contribution:** India is advocating sustainable space practices, as demonstrated by missions like Aditya-L1 for solar observation, aimed at mitigating space weather impacts on satellites.
- Additionally, India is contributing to global debris management through ISRO's NETRA program for space situational awareness.
- By balancing growth with sustainability, India aligns with international norms like the Artemis Accords, fostering responsible behaviour in outer space.
- **Pursuit of Lunar and Interplanetary Exploration:** India's Chandrayaan-3 success in 2023 marked its entry into the lunar south pole exploration, a feat accomplished by very few nations.
- ISRO's plans for Shukrayaan-1, Venus exploration, signify its ambitions to lead interplanetary research.
- These missions provide critical insights into planetary sciences, boosting India's academic and research credentials globally.
- **Utilization of Space for Socio-Economic Benefits:** Space-based services are transforming sectors like agriculture,

- disaster management, and urban planning.
 - For instance, ISRO's Bhuvan Geoportal assists in real-time disaster monitoring, while satellite data supports crop monitoring under the PM Kisan Scheme.
 - India's space initiatives align with SDG goals, enhancing resilience and inclusivity in governance.
 - Space Policy and Vision for the Future: The 2023 Indian Space Policy emphasizes democratizing space by enhancing private sector participation and integrating space assets into national security and economic frameworks.
 - With plans for a national space station by 2035, India is charting a robust roadmap for space dominance.
- Key issues related to India's Space Sector**
- Limited Budget Allocation and Financial Constraints: India's space ambitions are restricted by a relatively modest budget, impacting large-scale projects and technological advancements.
 - While India is achieving high returns on its investments, its space budget pales compared to global counterparts, limiting exploration programs, infrastructure, and R&D.
 - India only spends 0.04% of its GDP on space, whereas the United States spends 0.28% of its economy on space.
 - ISRO's budget for 2024-25 is Rs.13,042.75 crore (about \$1.95 billion). In contrast, NASA operates with a much larger budget of around \$25 billion
 - Technological Dependence on Foreign Players: Despite progress, India relies heavily on foreign suppliers for critical components like advanced sensors, propulsion systems, and semiconductors.
 - Indigenous technology development lags behind global standards, limiting India's ability to achieve self-reliance in areas like deep-space exploration and satellite manufacturing.
 - India largely depends on space-tech dependence along with imports. India's solar sector imports reached \$7 billion in FY 2024. The cryogenic CE-20 engine for GSLV Mk III took a long time to develop, highlighting delays in indigenous innovation.
 - Regulatory and Policy Gaps: India lacks a robust legal framework governing its space activities, deterring private sector participation and international partnerships.
 - While the Indian Space Policy 2023 was a positive step, it does not adequately address liability, intellectual property rights, or dispute resolution mechanisms.
 - The Outer Space Treaty (1967) mandates liability for damages caused by space objects, but India has no dedicated Space Act to codify such provisions.
 - Delays in launching private satellites stem from the absence of clear licensing mechanisms, affecting startups like Pixxel and Agnikul Cosmos.
 - Space Debris and Sustainability Concerns: India's increasing satellite launches and defunct satellites contribute to growing space debris, posing risks to operational assets.
 - ISRO's growing footprint in orbit is accompanied by environmental concerns, with limited mitigation strategies and debris removal mechanisms.
 - By 2022, India had 103 active or defunct spacecraft and 114 objects categorised as 'space debris' in orbit

- Limited Defence and Security Preparedness: India's space capabilities for defence remain underdeveloped compared to global powers, despite growing threats of space militarization.
- The absence of robust anti-satellite systems, space-based early warning systems, and a cohesive military-space policy leaves India vulnerable.
- India conducted its first ASAT test in 2019, while the U.S. and China maintain dual-use satellites capable of offensive operations.
- India's GSAT-7 is designed for Navy communications but lacks integration with ground-based and space-based surveillance systems.
- Brain Drain and Human Capital Deficit: The migration of skilled professionals to global space giants undermines India's domestic innovation capabilities.
- With better funding, infrastructure, and career opportunities abroad, India faces a talent gap in advanced space research.
- 70% of Indian students studying abroad opt for STEM fields reducing retention rate for top scientists in India.
- Indian-origin scientists contribute to major NASA and SpaceX projects, including Mars Perseverance and Starship development.
- Inadequate Global Market Share: India's contribution to the global space economy is disproportionately small, considering its cost-effective capabilities.
- India's share of the global space economy is 2-3%. Missions like PSLV-C56 have attracted commercial payloads but fall short of maximizing international contracts compared to SpaceX.
- Lagging Human Spaceflight Capabilities: India lags behind global leaders in human space exploration, with no operational capacity for sustained manned missions.
- While the Gaganyaan mission is promising, delays in development and reliance on foreign life-support systems highlight gaps in India's capabilities.
- India's first manned mission is planned for 2025, nearly 20 years behind China and 55 years after the U.S. Apollo mission.
- Rising Geopolitical and Strategic Challenges: The global competition for space dominance creates geopolitical challenges for India, especially with China's rapid advancements.
- India's focus on civilian applications leaves it lagging in space diplomacy and dual-use technologies compared to aggressive competitors.
- China's Tiangong Space Station became operational in 2022. India's regional navigation system, NavIC, has limited international adoption compared to China's BeiDou.

Measures India to adopt to ensure Sustained Space Exploration and Strengthen Its Space-Based Capabilities

- Enhance Budgetary Allocation and Diversify Financing Mechanisms: Increase the space sector's share of GDP to support high-priority projects like human spaceflight and deep-space exploration.
- Introduce sovereign space bonds and public-private co-financing models to attract long-term investments.
- Establish an Indian Space Fund under IN-SPACe to support R&D, startups, and disruptive innovation.
- Promote Public-Private Collaboration: Operationalize seamless public-private partnerships (PPPs) by granting private players access to ISRO's infrastructure, such as launchpads and testing facilities.

- Develop joint venture models for satellite constellations, reusable launch vehicles, and lunar missions.
- Simplify the regulatory ecosystem with single-window clearances for private space missions under IN-SPACe.
 - Prioritize Indigenous Technology Development: Accelerate the establishment of dedicated Space Technology Innovation Hubs focusing on propulsion systems, AI in satellite operations, and space-grade semiconductors.
- Collaborate with academic institutions and startups to create disruptive tech solutions, including reusable rockets and in-orbit docking systems.
- Implement import substitution policies for critical components to achieve strategic autonomy.
 - Focus on Talent Retention and Workforce Development: Launch specialized space education programs in universities, integrating disciplines like robotics, astrophysics, and aerospace engineering.
- Establish national-level space training academies to groom a skilled workforce for advanced missions like Gaganyaan and Shukrayaan-1.
- Incentivize research fellowships and retain talent through lucrative career pathways and international collaborations.
 - Develop Modular Space Station and Advanced Space Infrastructure: Commit to building a modular space station to support long-term human presence in space.
- Expand launch capacity by upgrading Satish Dhawan Space Centre and establishing new launch sites with cutting-edge technology for hypersonic and reusable vehicles.
- Develop in-orbit servicing and assembly systems for satellite maintenance and expansion of mission capabilities.
 - Strengthen Satellite Constellation Development: Accelerate deployment of indigenous Earth observation, navigation, and communication constellations like NavIC and RISAT to enhance data sovereignty.
- Integrate dual-use satellites that serve civilian and defence needs for applications such as disaster management and military surveillance.
- Encourage private participation in satellite manufacturing through policy incentives.
 - Foster Space Sustainability and Debris Mitigation: Adopt space situational awareness (SSA) technologies to track and manage space debris and prevent collisions.
- Invest in de-orbiting technologies and adherence to international standards on debris mitigation.
- Introduce a National Space Sustainability Plan to ensure India's compliance with global norms and promote leadership in sustainable space exploration.
 - Strengthen Strategic Space-Based Defence Capabilities: Expand the role of the Defence Space Agency (DSA) to develop counter-space technologies, including satellite jammers and anti-satellite (ASAT) weapons.
- Focus on developing dual-use platforms that enhance India's strategic advantage in communication, reconnaissance, and navigation.
- Collaborate with DRDO to integrate space technologies into national defence frameworks.
 - Advance International Collaborations for Technology Sharing: Deepen cooperation with global agencies like NASA, ESA, and

Roscosmos to gain access to advanced technology and shared resources.

- Leverage bilateral agreements to participate in international missions like Artemis and planetary defence initiatives.
- Strengthen ties with emerging space nations in Africa and Southeast Asia for space diplomacy and capacity-building.
- Establish a Comprehensive Space Act: Draft a dedicated Space Act to provide a robust legal framework governing space activities, ensuring clarity on licensing, intellectual property rights, and dispute resolution.
- Codify India's liability under international treaties like the Outer Space Treaty and promote ease of doing business in space ventures. Include provisions for private sector indemnification to attract foreign investments.
- Expand Socioeconomic Applications of Space Technology: Leverage satellite-based geospatial data for precision agriculture, water resource management, and urban planning.
- Expand the scope of programs like Bhuvan Geoportal to include telemedicine and e-education for rural areas.
- Integrate space assets into national missions like PM-Kisan, Digital India, and Smart Cities for transformative impact.
- Build Reusable and Hypersonic Launch Systems: Accelerate the development of Reusable Launch Vehicles (RLVs) to reduce launch costs and enhance mission frequency.

- Invest in hypersonic propulsion systems to support rapid deployment of satellites and exploration payloads.
- Collaborate with private firms to operationalize technologies like scramjets and spaceplanes for next-generation launch capabilities.
- Promote Space-Based Entrepreneurship: Create a National Space Innovation Framework to encourage startups and MSMEs in areas like satellite manufacturing, data analytics, and payload development.
- Offer incubation support through ISRO's facilities and mentorship programs for entrepreneurs.
- Launch hackathons and space innovation challenges to tap into youth-driven ideas and solutions

Conclusion

India's space program is at a transformative juncture, marked by significant advancements in technology, strategic collaborations, and a growing ecosystem of public-private synergy. While challenges persist in terms of funding, regulatory frameworks, and indigenous capability development, India's cost-effective innovations and ambitious missions position it as a rising global space power.

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INDIA'S DIASPORA AND VIKSIT BHARAT

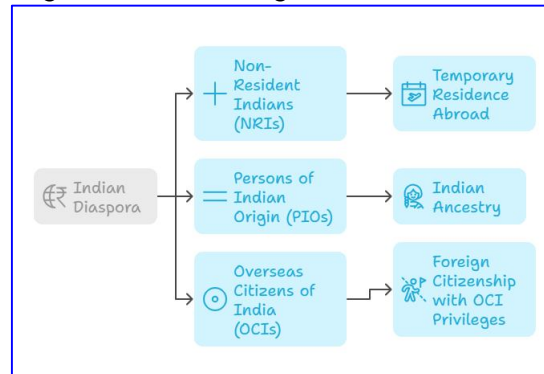
The Indian diaspora, encompassing over 35 million people globally in 2024, symbolizes India's vast reach and influence. Representing the largest diaspora worldwide, these individuals serve as economic drivers, cultural ambassadors, and strategic allies for India. Their contributions, including \$129.1 billion in remittances in 2024, are celebrated during the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD), held biennially on 9th January to honour their role in shaping India's global identity. With a strong presence in over 200 countries, the diaspora bridges India with the world, fostering innovation, strengthening diplomatic ties, and enhancing India's global stature in the 21st century.

What Defines the Indian Diaspora?

- **Indian Diaspora:** The Indian diaspora refers to individuals of Indian origin who reside outside India, including both Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) and Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs).
- According to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), as of November 2024, the total population of Overseas Indians was 35,421,987.
- The top three countries with the largest Indian overseas populations are the United States (5.4 million), the United Arab Emirates (3.6 million), and Malaysia (2.9 million).
- **Categories of the Diaspora:**
- **Non-Resident Indians (NRIs):** These are Indian citizens residing abroad temporarily for work, education, or other purposes.
- **Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs):** These are foreign citizens of Indian ancestry, who may have been born or settled abroad for

generations but retain a strong cultural connection to India.

- **Overseas Citizens of India (OCIs):** This category includes individuals of Indian origin who hold foreign citizenship but are granted specific privileges by the Indian government through the OCI card.



What is the Significance and Contribution of the Indian Diaspora ?

- **Economic Significance:** In 2024, India received an astounding \$129.1 billion in remittances, the highest for any country in a single year.
- This represented 14.3% of global remittances, a remarkable feat that underlines India's dominance in this sector.
- Remittances accounted for 3.3% of India's GDP, providing critical support to families and supporting consumption expenditure and investment in local economies.
- By bridging Indian enterprises with global markets and fostering collaborations, the diaspora enriches India's business landscape, supports underserved regions, and propels the country toward its goal of becoming a developed economy.
- **Role in Administration and Soft Power:** The Indian diaspora plays a crucial role in

influencing administrative frameworks and strengthening bilateral relations with key global powers.

- Indian-origin professionals and lawmakers in the US and UK promote India-US collaborations in trade, defence and technology.
- For example, Indian-origin officials have contributed significantly to the discussions around the India-UK Free Trade Agreement, showcasing their pivotal role in enhancing strategic partnerships.
- Enhancing Cultural Connectivity: Acting as cultural ambassadors, the diaspora strengthens India's soft power by promoting its traditions, art, and heritage in host countries.
- Initiatives like declaring Diwali as a holiday in several US states highlight the successful integration of Indian culture abroad, fostering greater acceptance and appreciation.
- Indian festivals, yoga, Bollywood, and cuisine have gained global popularity, enhancing India's soft power.
- Knowledge Economy: Indians have a significant presence in global tech hubs, for instance, CEOs of major tech firms like Google, Microsoft, and Adobe are of Indian origin.
- Many diaspora members are returning to India, bringing their expertise and fostering innovation, particularly in sectors like IT and healthcare.
- Philanthropic Contributions: Indian-origin philanthropists contribute generously to causes in India, supporting education, healthcare, and rural development.
- For example, initiatives like the India Development Foundation of Overseas Indians (IDF-OI) facilitate such contributions.

What are Government Initiatives to Engage with the Indian Diaspora?

- Employment and Welfare Support:
 - E-Migrate: This online platform regulates recruitment and provides safe avenues for Indian workers seeking overseas employment.
 - It ensures transparency, protects workers from exploitation, and simplifies the recruitment process for both employers and employees.
- Madad Portal: The Madad (Help) portal provides a grievance redressal mechanism for Indians abroad.
- It addresses issues ranging from legal assistance to repatriation in emergencies, ensuring timely support to distressed Indians.
- Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojana (PBBY): Introduced in 2003, it is a mandatory insurance scheme for Indian emigrant workers in the Emigration Check Required (ECR) category.
- It offers insurance coverage of Rs. 10 lakhs for accidental death or permanent disability, with premiums of Rs. 275 for two years and Rs. 375 for three years.
- Cultural and Heritage Engagement:
 - Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) Scheme: Grants lifelong visa-free travel and other privileges to PIOs, fostering stronger ties with India.
 - Benefits include property ownership, financial investments, and access to educational institutions in India.
- Chalo India Programme: Encourages Indian-origin youth worldwide to visit India and reconnect with their heritage.
- This program includes cultural tours, heritage site visits, and interactions with local communities.
- Bharat Ko Jaaniye Quiz (BKJ): An online quiz designed to connect diaspora youth

with India's history, culture, and contemporary developments, fostering a sense of pride and belonging.

- **Research and Academic Initiatives:**

- **Visiting Advanced Joint Research (VAJRA) Faculty Scheme:** Attracts overseas scientists to work in Indian institutions, fostering high-quality collaborative research in cutting-edge areas.
- **Ramanujan Fellowship:** Provides opportunities for Indian researchers abroad to work in Indian institutions in science, engineering, and medicine.
- **Ramalingaswami Re-entry Fellowship:** Supports scientists returning to India to pursue research in life sciences and biotechnology.
- **Biomedical Research Career Programme (BRCP):** Facilitates career development for researchers in biomedical and public health sectors in India.
- For instance, DBT/Wellcome Trust India Alliance is a collaborative partnership between the Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Government of India, and The Wellcome Trust, UK, aimed at supporting the Biomedical Research Career Program (BRCP).
- **Scholarship Programmes for Diaspora Children:** Offers financial assistance for higher education in India to children of NRIs and PIOs.
- **Community Support and Welfare:**
- **Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF):** Provides emergency assistance to Indians citizens abroad, including repatriation during crises, legal aid, and financial support in emergencies.
- **Pravasi Bharatiya Kendra:** A hub for diaspora-related activities and a resource centre in New Delhi, offering facilities for conferences and events.

- **Senior Research Associateship (SRA) - Scientist's Pool Scheme:** Administered by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), the scheme offers temporary placement to highly qualified Indian scientists, engineers, technologists, and medical personnel returning from abroad without employment in India.

- **Crisis Management and Evacuations:**

- The government has conducted several large-scale evacuation operations to protect its citizens during crises, demonstrating robust crisis management capabilities.
- Operation Ganga (2022), Operation Kaveri (2023), Operation Rahat (2015), and Operation Devi Shakti (2021) were all successful Indian government-led evacuation missions that rescued thousands of nationals and foreign allies from conflict zones.

Challenges associated with the Indian Diaspora

- **Economic Challenges:**

- Indian workers in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations often face job insecurity due to volatile oil prices and changing labour laws.

- This exposes them to financial instability and uncertain futures.

- Many diaspora members, especially in low-skilled jobs, are unable to fully utilize their potential, leading to underemployment and income disparity.

- **Social and Cultural Challenges:**

- Second and third-generation Indians face challenges in maintaining their cultural identity, balancing integration with host cultures while preserving their heritage.
- Instances of racism and xenophobia remain significant concerns in

many host countries, affecting the well-being of diaspora members.

- **Political and Legal Issues:**
 - Stricter immigration policies in countries like the US and UK create challenges for NRIs and their families, limiting their opportunities for settlement and growth.
 - Marital and property disputes often complicate the lives of overseas Indians, requiring diplomatic and legal interventions.
- **Engagement Barriers:**
 - Many diaspora members are unaware of government schemes aimed at engaging them, resulting in underutilization of these initiatives.
 - Complex processes and red tape can deter effective participation in diaspora-focused programs.

Way Forward to tap the Potential of Indian Diaspora

- **Economic Strategies:** Enhance skill-building initiatives to prepare workers for global markets, focusing on high-demand sectors such as IT, healthcare, and engineering.
- Streamline processes to encourage diaspora investments in India, including simplified taxation and regulatory frameworks.
- **Cultural Integration:** Develop programs to teach Indian languages to diaspora children, ensuring cultural continuity.

- Organize Indian festivals abroad to strengthen cultural ties and foster community spirit.
- **Policy Reforms:** Simplify voting mechanisms for NRIs to encourage political participation and representation.
- Offer more privileges to OCIs, such as participation in local governance and access to more public services.
- **Strengthening Community Support:** Strengthen the ICWF to provide better crisis support, including mental health services and repatriation assistance.
- Develop apps and portals for real-time engagement with the diaspora, ensuring accessibility and ease of use.
- **Strategic Partnerships:** Leverage the diaspora for stronger bilateral relations and global influence, emphasizing mutual benefits.
- Focus on youth-centric initiatives, such as cultural exchange programs and scholarships, to ensure sustained connections with future generations.

Conclusion

The Indian diaspora stands as a pillar of India's global identity, significantly contributing to its economy, culture, and soft power. With proactive engagement and robust policies, India can further strengthen these ties, ensuring mutual growth and prosperity.

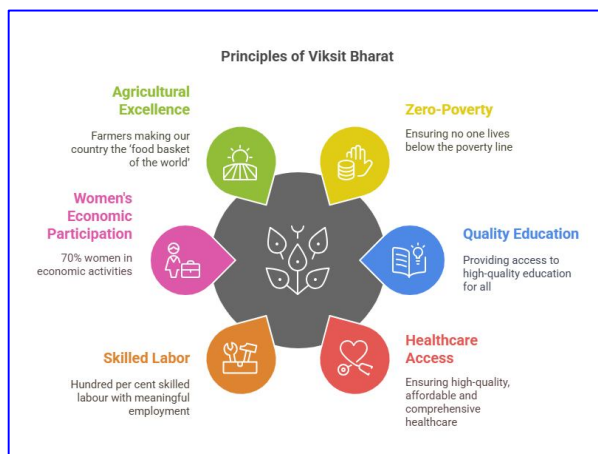
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UNION BUDGET 2025-26

The Union Budget 2025-26 was presented by the Union Finance Minister in the Parliament recognising 4 engines of development- agriculture, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME), investment and exports.

- The Union Budget 2025-26, with the theme Sabka Vikas, aims to stimulate balanced growth across all regions.
- In line with the Budget theme, the Finance Minister outlined the broad principles of Viksit Bharat.



- The Budget proposes development measures focusing on the poor (Garib), Youth, farmers (Annadata) and women (Nari).

4 Engines of Development in the Union Budget 2025-26

- 1st Engine- Agriculture:
 - Prime Minister Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana: Announced to cover 100 low agricultural productivity districts, benefiting 1.7 crore farmers, enhancing irrigation, and post-harvest storage facilities.

- A 'Rural Prosperity and Resilience' programme will be launched with states to address agricultural underemployment through skilling, investment, and technology.
- Atma Nirbharta in Pulses: A 6-year mission focusing on Tur, Urad, and Masoor announced launched, ensuring climate-resilient seeds and remunerative prices.
- Central agencies (NAFED and NCCF) will be prepared to procure these 3 pulses from farmers over the next 4 years.
- Enhanced Kisan Credit Card (KCC) Limit: Raised from ₹3 lakh to ₹5 lakh to facilitate credit flow for 7.7 crore farmers.
- National Mission on High Yielding Seeds: To strengthen research, ensuring availability of 100+ high-yielding and pest-resistant seed varieties.
- Mission for Cotton Productivity: A 5-year initiative promoting sustainable farming, increasing extra-long staple cotton production, and improving quality.
- Makhana Board in Bihar: To be established to enhance production, processing, and value addition of Makhana.
- Comprehensive Program for Fruits and Vegetables: To promote efficient supply chains and ensure better market prices for farmers.
- Fisheries Development: New framework for sustainable fishing in the Indian Exclusive Economic Zone and High Seas, focusing on Andaman & Nicobar and Lakshadweep.
- Urea Plant in Assam: A new urea plant in the premises of Brahmaputra Valley Fertilizer Corporation Ltd (BVFCL) with

12.7 lakh metric ton capacity to boost agricultural productivity.

- 2nd Engine- MSMEs:
- Revised MSME Classification: Investment and turnover limits increased to 2.5 times, expanding credit opportunities for small businesses.

₹ in Crore	Investment		Turnover	
	Current	Revised	Current	Revised
Micro Enterprises	1	2.5	5	10
Small Enterprises	10	25	50	100
Medium Enterprises	50	125	250	500

- Micro Enterprise Credit Cards: Rs 5 lakh credit facility for 10 lakh micro enterprises, promoting financial inclusion and economic participation.
- Credit Cover for MSMEs: Guarantee cover increased from ₹5 crore to ₹10 crore, enabling higher loan access.
- Focus Product Scheme for Leather and Footwear: Expected to generate 22 lakh jobs and ₹4 lakh crore turnover, and exports of over ₹ 1.1 lakh crore.
- Toy Sector Development: Clusters and innovation-based manufacturing fostering 'Made in India' brand in global markets.
- National Institute of Food Technology: A National Institute of Food Technology, Entrepreneurship and Management to be established in Bihar, promoting food processing, skilling, and entrepreneurship.
- Fund of Funds for Startups: To be established with an expanded scope and an additional contribution of ₹10,000 crore.
- 3rd Engine- Investment
- Urban Challenge Fund: ₹1 lakh crore allocated to support 'Cities as Growth Hubs,' 'Creative Redevelopment of Cities,'

and 'Water and Sanitation,' with ₹10,000 crore allocated for 2025-26.

- Jal Jeevan Mission: With total budget outlay enhanced to Rs 67,000 Crore and extension till 2028, ensuring universal piped water coverage with enhanced funding for rural water projects.
- 15 crore households representing 80% of India's rural population have benefitted by the mission.
- Maritime Development Fund: ₹25,000 crore fund (49% contribution by the Government), supporting long-term financing for shipbuilding, ports, and logistics infrastructure.
- Expansion of IITs: Additional infrastructure for 6,500 more students, boosting India's technical education capacity.
- PM Research Fellowship: 10,000 fellowships for advanced research in IITs and IISc.
- Day Care Cancer Centres: To be set up in all district hospitals in the next 3 years, with 200 Centres in 2025-26, ensuring affordable cancer treatment accessibility.
- Bharatiya Bhasha Pustak Scheme: Digital Indian language books to enhance school and higher education accessibility.
- Nuclear Energy Mission for Viksit Bharat: To be set up with a ₹20,000 crore outlay for Small Modular Reactors (SMRs), with at least 5 indigenously developed SMRs operational by 2033.
- Amendments to the Atomic Energy Act and the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act will be taken up for active partnership with the private sector.
- UDAN - Regional Connectivity Scheme: A revised UDAN scheme will enhance regional connectivity to 120 new destinations, aiming to carry 4 crore passengers over the next 10 years.

- It will also support helipads and smaller airports in hilly, aspirational, and North East regions.
- Greenfield Airport in Bihar: Greenfield airports will be developed in Bihar, alongside the expansion of Patna airport and a brownfield airport at Bihta (Patna).
- Western Koshi Canal ERM Project: Financial support for irrigation infrastructure in Mithilanchal, Bihar.
- Tourism for Employment-led Growth: The top 50 tourist destinations across the country will be developed in partnership with states through a challenge mode.
- 4th Engine- Export Promotion:
 - Export Promotion Mission: It will be established, with sectoral and ministerial targets, led collaboratively by the Ministries of Commerce, MSME, and Finance.
 - BharatTradeNet (BTN): A unified digital platform facilitating international trade documentation and financing solutions.
 - National Framework for GCC: Policy incentives to promote outsourcing hubs (Global Capability Centres) in emerging Tier-2 cities.
 - Warehousing Facility for Air Cargo: Development of storage infrastructure for high-value perishable exports.

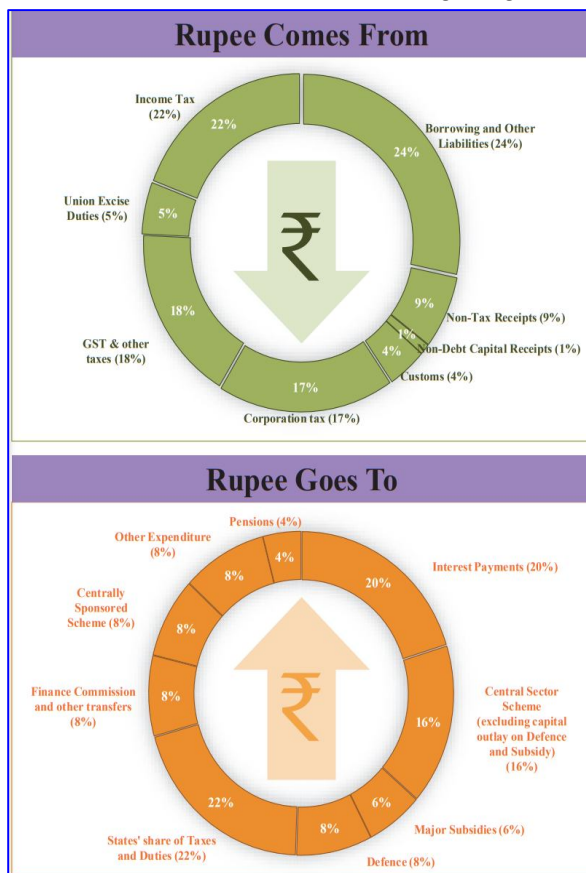
What are Other Major Highlights of the Union Budget 2025-26?

- Taxation and Financial Reforms:
 - Direct Taxes: No Income Tax for annual incomes up to ₹12 lakh, extended to ₹12.75 lakh for salaried taxpayers with deductions.

Income (in ₹)	Tax Rate
₹0 - ₹4 lakh	Nil
₹4 - ₹8 lakh	5%
₹8 - ₹12 lakh	10%
₹12 - ₹16 lakh	15%
₹16 - ₹20 lakh	20%
₹20 - ₹24 lakh	25%
Above ₹24 lakh	30%

- Tax Deducted at Source (TDS): TDS on Rent increased from ₹2.4 lakh to ₹6 lakh, reducing tax compliance burden.
- Tax Returns: Time limit for updated tax returns extended from 2 years to 4 years, facilitating voluntary tax compliance.
- Basic Customs Duty (BCD) Exemptions: 36 life-saving drugs for cancer, chronic, and rare diseases fully exempted from BCD.
- Lithium-ion battery manufacturing capital goods for EVs and mobile devices exempted to boost domestic production.
- Textile and electronics sector components exempted to encourage local manufacturing and reduce dependency on imports.
- Social Welfare and Inclusion:
 - PM SVANidhi Scheme: UPI-linked credit cards with ₹30,000 limit for street vendors to enhance financial inclusion.
 - Identity Cards for Gig Workers: Registration on e-Shram portal, ensuring social security and health benefits under PM Jan Arogya Yojana.

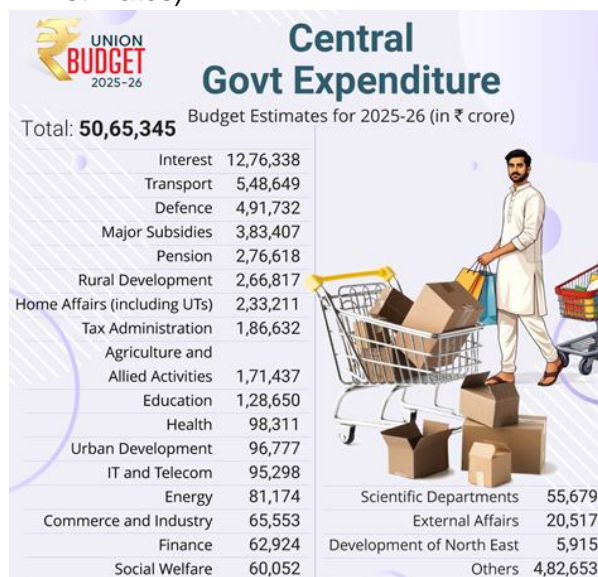
- 50,000 Atal Tinkering Labs: To be established in government schools in the next five years to promote innovation.
- Expansion of Medical Education: 10,000 new medical seats, targeting a



total increase of 75,000 seats in five years.

- Financial Sector Reforms:
 - Grameen Credit Score: A framework enabling SHG members and rural borrowers to access formal credit facilities more efficiently.
 - Jan Vishwas Bill 2.0: Decriminalizing 100+ legal provisions, easing business operations and reducing regulatory compliance burdens.
 - SWAMIH Fund 2.0: A ₹15,000 crore fund to complete 1 lakh more dwelling units, with contributions from the government, banks, and private investors.


- FDI in Insurance Sector: The FDI cap in the insurance sector will be increased from 74% to 100% for companies that invest the entire premium in India.
- Investment Friendliness Index of States: A new ranking framework for states to promote competitive cooperative federalism.
- Credit Enhancement Facility: NaBFID will establish a 'Partial Credit Enhancement Facility' to support corporate bonds for infrastructure.
- Pension Sector: A forum will be established for regulatory coordination and the development of pension products.
- High-Level Committee for Regulatory Reforms: A High-Level Committee will be formed to review all non-financial sector regulations, certifications, licenses, and permissions.
- Major Sources of Revenue and the Expenditure from the Budget:
- Major Central Govt Expenditure (Budget Estimates):



Financial trends and Budgetary estimates (2023-24 & 2024-25)

- Receipts and Expenditure: In 2023-24, revenue receipts were ₹27.3 lakh crore, rising to ₹31.3 lakh crore (BE) for 2024-25.
- Effective capital expenditure fell from ₹17.1 lakh crore to ₹16.3 lakh crore (RE). Revenue expenditure increased from ₹34.9 lakh crore to ₹37.0 lakh crore (RE).
- Capital expenditure rose from ₹12.5 lakh crore to ₹15.0 lakh crore (BE) but was later revised to ₹13.2 lakh crore.
- Deficit Trends (as a percentage of GDP): The fiscal deficit was 3.3% in 2023-24, and the estimate for 2024-25 (RE) remains unchanged at 3.3%.
- The revenue deficit was 0.3% in 2023-24, which increased slightly to 0.8% in 2024-25 (RE).
- The effective revenue deficit in 2023-24 was 0.3%, and for 2024-25 (RE), it stood at 0.8%.
- Total Transfers to States & UTs: In 2023-24, the total transfers to States and Union Territories amounted to ₹20.65 lakh crore.
- This figure was revised to ₹22.76 lakh crore in 2024-25 (RE) and is projected to increase further to ₹25.60 lakh crore in 2025-26 (BE).
- Net Receipt of the Central Government: The net tax revenue collected by the Centre in 2024-25 (RE) was ₹28.4 lakh crore, while non-tax revenue stood at ₹5.8 lakh crore.

- Additionally, non-debt capital receipts, which include disinvestment proceeds and recoveries of loans, amounted to ₹0.8 lakh crore in 2024-25 (RE).



In ₹ crore	2023-24 (Actuals)	2024-25 (Budget Estimates)	2024-25 (Revised Estimates)	2025-26 (Budget Estimates)
Revenue Receipts	27,29,036	31,29,200	30,87,960	34,20,409
Capital Receipts	17,14,411	16,91,312	16,28,527	16,44,936
Total Receipts	44,43,447	48,20,512	47,16,487	50,65,345
Total Expenditure	44,43,447	48,20,512	47,16,487	50,65,345
Effective Capital Expenditure	12,53,111	15,01,889	13,18,320	15,48,282
Revenue Deficit	7,65,216	5,80,201	6,10,098	5,23,846
Effective Revenue Deficit	4,61,300	1,89,423	3,10,207	96,654
Fiscal Deficit	16,54,643	16,13,312	15,69,527	15,68,936
Primary Deficit	5,90,771	4,50,372	4,31,587	2,92,598

Conclusion

The Union Budget 2025-26, centred on the theme "Sabka Vikas," lays a strong foundation for Viksit Bharat by promoting inclusive growth, poverty eradication, quality education, and economic empowerment. By prioritizing youth, women, farmers, and the middle class, the Budget aims to stimulate sustainable development and private sector investment while ensuring social equity. If effectively implemented, these measures can accelerate India's transformation into a globally competitive and economically resilient nation.

EMPOWERING WOMEN FOR SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH

According to recent Periodic Labour Force Survey data (2023-24), women's labour force participation has shown significant growth, particularly in rural areas where it nearly doubled from 18.2% to 35.5% over 6 years. However, deeper analysis reveals concerning patterns - there's a sharp rise in participation among teenage girls (15-19) and elderly women (60+), often driven by economic necessity rather than empowerment. While the increasing participation marks progress, significant structural barriers remain to be addressed before we can achieve a truly gender-sensitive economy that offers equal opportunities and choices to all workers.

What are the Factors Driving India's Improved Female Labour Force Participation?

- Reduced Household Drudgery through Welfare Schemes: Government schemes like Ujjwala Yojana (free LPG connections) and Har Ghar Jal (tap water to households) have eased women's domestic burdens, creating more time for economic activities.
- With less time spent on firewood collection or fetching water, women, especially in rural areas, have moved into agriculture and allied activities.
- The number of total refills taken by Ujjwala Yojana beneficiaries has risen from 159.9 million in 2018-19 to 344.8 million in 2022-23, and household tap water connections under Jal Jeevan Mission reached 78% of rural homes as of October 2024, directly reducing drudgery for women.
- Increased Employment under Government Schemes: Women have benefited from wage employment schemes like MGNREGA, which provide local opportunities with equal wages for men and women.
- In 2021-22, women constituted 54.54% of the MGNREGA workforce, according to the Ministry of Rural Development.
- Similarly, initiatives like National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) have empowered over 9.89 crore women as of 2023 through self-help groups (SHGs), helping them engage in micro-enterprises and financial activities.
- Declining Fertility Rates and Smaller Families: India's declining fertility rate, now at 2.0 (NFHS-5, 2021), has reduced the burden of child-rearing on women, allowing them more time to participate in paid work.
- Smaller family sizes, especially in urban areas, have enabled women to enter the workforce and focus on career development.
- This demographic shift is evident in the rising FLFP in younger age groups (20-35 years) in urban areas, as per PLFS 2023-24.
- Improved Literacy and Education Levels: Women's literacy and access to education have steadily improved, enhancing their employability and participation in the workforce.
- Schemes like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao and Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan have helped boost female literacy, now at 77%.
- Additionally, programs like Skill India Mission and Digital Saksharta Abhiyan are equipping women with vocational and

digital skills, enabling participation in emerging fields like e-commerce and gig work.

- **Shift Towards Self-Employment and Entrepreneurship:** Women are increasingly entering self-employment and entrepreneurship, aided by financial inclusion initiatives like PM Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) and Stand-Up India Scheme.
 - 55% of Jan Dhan account holders are women, providing them with formal banking access and enabling credit linkages.
 - As of March 2023, loans amounting to ₹40,710 crore were sanctioned under the Stand-Up India scheme, with 80% allocated to women entrepreneurs, fostering economic independence.
- **Technology and Digitization as Enablers:** The rapid expansion of internet access and digital platforms has created new opportunities for women to participate in gig and remote work.
 - Platforms like Amazon Saheli and Mahila E-Haat are enabling women to sell products and services from home.
 - With rural India accounting for 53% of internet consumption, more women are leveraging digital tools to join the workforce, reducing the constraints of mobility.
- **Supportive Legal Frameworks:** Progressive legal measures like Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017, which provides 26 weeks of paid maternity leave, and POSH Act, 2013, have created a more supportive environment for women to remain in the workforce.
 - Recent steps like the passage of the Women Reservation Act, 2023 indicate a political commitment to improving women's representation and

opportunities, creating a ripple effect on workforce participation.

- **Rising Role of Self-Help Groups:** Self-help groups under Ministry of Rural Development's Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM) and other state-level programs have empowered women through credit access, skill development, and collective bargaining.
 - Till February 2024, Self-Help Groups (SHGs) had mobilized over ₹1.7 lakh crore in loans for women-led enterprises.
 - States like Tamil Nadu and Kerala, where SHGs are particularly active, have seen a direct correlation with higher FLFP compared to the national average.

Structural challenges in India's Female Labour Force Participation

- **Gendered Social Norms and Cultural Constraints:** Despite economic development, traditional social norms discourage women from participating in paid work, confining them to domestic roles.
 - The stigma of women working outside the home, especially in rural areas, limits their access to opportunities.
- Moreover, societal expectations for women to prioritize caregiving over careers reduce workforce inclusion.
 - According to the Global Gender Gap Report 2023, India ranks 127th out of 146 in economic participation, highlighting deeply entrenched gender biases.
- **Inadequate Access to Quality Education and Skill Training:** Many women lack access to higher education and vocational training, creating a skills mismatch in emerging job markets.
 - Female literacy and enrollment in STEM fields remain low, limiting employability in

high-growth sectors like IT and manufacturing.

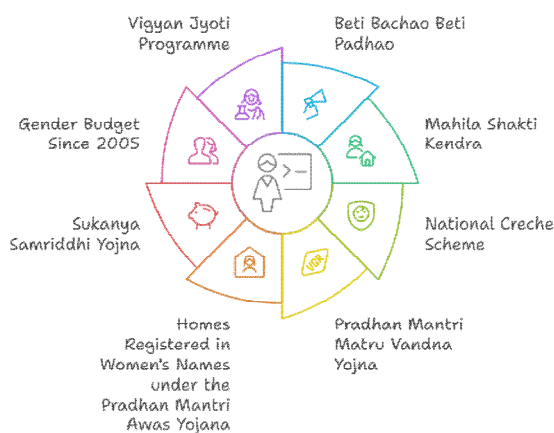
- In 2022-23, only 18.6% of women aged 18-59 received vocational training, with just 7% of skill trainees being women in 2021, despite 17% of ITIs being women-only.
- This under-preparedness leaves women confined to informal and low-paying sectors, perpetuating economic dependency.
- **Unpaid Care Work Burden:** The disproportionate burden of unpaid care work—childcare, eldercare, and household chores—leaves women with little time for paid work.
- Welfare measures like Ujjwala Yojana and Har Ghar Jal have reduced household chores but have not fully translated into workforce inclusion.
- According to NFHS (2019-21) data, approximately 85% of women aged 15-59 engage in unpaid domestic work, with minimal variation between urban and rural areas.
- This inequality limits women's ability to access full-time employment.
- **Structural Informality and Gender Wage Gap:** A significant share of women in India's workforce are in informal jobs, such as agriculture and garment manufacturing, which are low-paying and lack social security.
- This structural informality results in precarious employment and a persistent gender wage gap.
- According to the World Inequality Report 2022 estimates, men earn 82% of the labour income in India, whereas women earn 18%.
- Additionally, over 90% of women workers are in the informal sector, as per

the Economic Survey 2023, making decent work conditions inaccessible.

- **Weak Implementation of Gender-Sensitive Workplace Policies:** Poor enforcement of maternity benefits, flexible work policies, and crèche facilities discourages women from continuing in the workforce.
- Private sector compliance with The Maternity Benefit Act, 2017, remains low, especially in smaller enterprises.
- According to a report by OP Jindal Global University, 93.5% of women workers in the country cannot access maternity benefits.
- This lack of structural support for working mothers forces many women to drop out of the workforce post-childbirth.
- Despite laws like POSH Act, 2013, enforcement remains weak in informal and small enterprises.
- **Persisting Security Concerns:** The National Crime Records Bureau (2022) revealed a 12.9% rise in crime against women between 2018 and 2022, leading many families to discourage women from traveling for work.
- However, more than half of the women who died by suicide in the 2020-2022 were housewives, a 2022 report by National Crime Records Bureau.
- Furthermore, lack of safety infrastructure in cities limits women's mobility and reduces their access to employment opportunities.
- **Economic Necessity Driving Constrained Choices:** The recent surge in rural women's LFPR, especially in agriculture, highlights participation driven by necessity rather than agency.
- Women are often forced to step in as primary earners due to male out-migration or the absence of earning members in small households (feminisation of agriculture).

- The PLFS (2023-24) shows elderly rural women and teenage girls entering the workforce, often reflecting economic vulnerability rather than empowerment. This indicates that many women remain trapped in low-value, survival-driven jobs.
- Limited Representation in Leadership Roles: Women continue to face significant barriers in breaking the "glass ceiling" and reaching leadership positions in both public and private sectors.
- As of April 2024, there are 77 women lawmakers in India, making up 14.7% of the total seats. The Women's Reservation Act, 2023 will come into effect after 2029.
- A 2024 report on 'Women in Leadership in Corporate India,' revealed that women held only 18.3% of senior leadership roles (managerial levels and above).
- This lack of representation limits women's role in decision-making and perpetuates gender stereotypes.

Empowering Women in India



What strategies can address Structural Issues and Promote Effective Economic Empowerment of Women

- Strengthen Skill Development with a Focus on Emerging Sectors: Launch tailored skill development programs for women in high-growth sectors like IT, renewable energy,

and healthcare, alongside traditional sectors like textiles and handicrafts.

- Programs under Skill India Mission and Digital India can integrate gender-specific initiatives like digital literacy for rural women or advanced STEM training for urban women.
- Ensuring convergence with initiatives like Stand-Up India will provide financial and entrepreneurial support, encouraging women to become job creators.
- Expand Access to Affordable Childcare and Crèche Facilities: Introduce a nationwide Childcare Support Mission to scale up implementation of crèche facilities under the National Creche Scheme in both urban and rural areas.
- Link this with workplace policies under the Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017, mandating affordable daycare centres for all enterprises, including informal setups.
- This would enable women, especially in the 25-40 age group, to re-enter the workforce without the burden of caregiving.
- Enhance Women's Access to Formal Credit: Expand the outreach of PM Jan Dhan Yojana and ensure seamless access to affordable credit under Mudra Yojana for women-led businesses.
- Combine this with financial literacy programs under National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) to empower self-help groups (SHGs) with entrepreneurial skills.
- Support women entrepreneurs by simplifying loan procedures, offering mentorship programs, and setting up gender-sensitive financial support desks at banks.
- Promote Gender-Responsive Infrastructure Development: Invest in gender-sensitive public infrastructure like safe and affordable transport, separate

- sanitation facilities, and well-lit roads, especially in rural and urban peripheries.
- Expand urban safety initiatives like Safe City Projects to enhance women's mobility and reduce workplace barriers.
 - Partner with state governments to implement such infrastructure under the Smart Cities Mission for better inclusivity and accessibility.
 - Strengthen Workplace Policies for Gender Equality: Mandate gender-sensitive workplace policies, including flexible working hours, paid maternity leave, and anti-harassment measures under the POSH Act, 2013.
 - Promote hybrid work opportunities and remote jobs, particularly for women in urban areas, to retain them in the workforce post-childbirth.
 - Incentivize companies to conduct gender audits and improve workplace diversity under corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives.
 - Promote Representation in Leadership and Decision-Making Roles: Introduce capacity-building programs for women under Mission Shakti to prepare them for leadership roles in politics, governance, and corporate sectors.
 - Encourage private companies to adopt diversity benchmarks and ensure at least 30% representation of women in leadership positions.
 - Focus on Digital Inclusion to Leverage Technology: Bridge the gender digital divide by expanding the Digital Saksharta Abhiyan and providing women with subsidized smartphones and internet connections in rural areas.
 - Promote gig economy opportunities, e-commerce platform work avenues for women through digital literacy training.
 - Initiatives like Mahila E-Haat and Amazon Saheli should be scaled up to connect women entrepreneurs with larger markets and provide them with marketing, logistics, and financial support.
 - Develop Gender-Responsive Social Protection Frameworks: Design social protection programs that prioritize the needs of working women, including universal healthcare, old-age pensions, and unemployment benefits.
 - Strengthen insurance schemes like PM Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY) and PM Shram Yogi Maandhan Yojana to ensure income security for informal women workers.
 - Introduce conditional cash transfers linked to women's workforce participation to incentivize their economic activity.
 - Address Region-Specific Barriers with Targeted Interventions: Design state-specific strategies to address regional challenges, such as low FLFP in northern states (e.g., Haryana and Uttar Pradesh) versus relatively higher participation in southern states (e.g., Kerala and Tamil Nadu).
 - States with low FLFP can launch targeted campaigns for gender sensitization, vocational training, and transport access.
 - Collaborative efforts between states and central programs like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao can help bridge regional disparities.
 - Recognise Women's Role in the Care Economy: Recognize the care economy as a key sector for employment and invest in training women as caregivers, nurses, and childcare workers.
 - Initiatives under Ayushman Bharat can expand opportunities for women in healthcare and allied services.

- Create public-private partnerships to set up affordable elder care and childcare centres, where trained women can take up employment, while enabling other women to join the workforce.

Conclusion

The rise in women's labour force participation in rural India highlights both progress and persistent challenges. Economic necessity, particularly among teenage girls and elderly women, reveals deep structural barriers to

empowerment. To achieve genuine gender equality, reforms in education, skills, and work conditions are crucial. Aligning with SDGs 5 (Gender Equality) and 8 (Decent Work), policies must focus on breaking systemic barriers. Empowering women fully will unlock India's economic potential, fostering a more inclusive and sustainable future.

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INDIA-ASEAN : PARTNERS FOR PROGRESS

Indonesia's participation in India's Republic Day celebrations reflects the deep-rooted cultural and strategic ties between India and ASEAN. As ASEAN's largest economy and a key G20 member, Indonesia exemplifies India's broader engagement with the region, particularly in maritime security and economic cooperation. From the Bandung Conference to BRICS, India-ASEAN ties have evolved from anti-colonial solidarity to a strategic partnership aimed at ensuring regional stability in the face of shifting geopolitical dynamics, including China's Indo-Pacific assertiveness.



How India-ASEAN Relations Have Evolved Over Time?

- Early Engagement: Historical and Cultural Ties
- Ancient Trade and Cultural Links: Indian influence on Southeast Asia through Buddhism, Hinduism, and Sanskrit (e.g., Angkor Wat, Ramayana traditions).

- Flourishing trade routes linked India with Southeast Asian kingdoms.
- Colonial Era and Anti-Colonial Struggles: Shared struggle against colonial rule; India supported Indonesia's independence.
- Bandung Conference (1955): Marked India's engagement with newly independent Asian and African nations.
- Post-Independence Period: Limited Interaction (1950s–1980s)
- Non-Alignment and Regional Priorities: India's focus on domestic issues and Cold War non-alignment policy led to limited ASEAN engagement.
- Minimal Economic and Strategic Cooperation: India's inward-looking economy restricted trade and investment.
- ASEAN prioritized engagement with Western economies majorly the United States.
- Post-Cold War: Economic and Strategic Engagement (1990s–2000s)
- Look East Policy: Launched after economic liberalization to strengthen ties with Southeast Asia.
- India became a Sectoral Dialogue Partner of ASEAN in 1992, Full Dialogue Partner in 1996 and Summit-level Partner in 2002.
- Early Trade and Security Agreements: ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (2009) boosted trade and investment.
- India-ASEAN Trade in Services Agreement (2015) further boosted economic ties.
- Strengthening Strategic Partnership (2011–Present)
- Act East Policy (2014): Expanded Look East to focus on deeper political, economic, and security ties.

- India upgraded relations with ASEAN to a Strategic Partnership in 2012.
- Also, in November 2022, they upgraded their relationship to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP).
- 15th ASEAN-India Summit (2017): Security and economic cooperation in the maritime domain was prioritized.
- Proposal for joint naval exercises and fleet review with ASEAN navies.
- Announcement of ASEAN-India Startup Festival and Pravasi Bharatiya Divas..
- India-ASEAN Plan of Action (2016-2020): Signed at the 3rd ASEAN-India Summit in 2004; the current iteration was adopted in 2015.
- 70 out of 130 activities implemented, covering trade, security, and cultural cooperation.
- Financial Mechanisms Supporting India-ASEAN Cooperation
- ASEAN-India Fund (2016): \$50 million to support the Plan of Action.
- ASEAN-India Science & Technology Fund (2015): Increased to \$5 million.
- ASEAN-India Green Fund (2007): \$5 million for climate change adaptation projects.
- ASEAN-India Project Development Fund: Rs. 500 crore SPV to facilitate investments.

What are the Key Areas of Convergence Between India and ASEAN?

- Maritime Security & Indo-Pacific Cooperation: India and ASEAN share concerns over China's assertiveness in the South China Sea, making maritime security a key area of cooperation.
- India supports ASEAN centrality in the Indo-Pacific and has increased joint naval exercises and capacity-building initiatives.
- India's Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) aligns with ASEAN's Outlook on the

Indo-Pacific (AOIP), focusing on freedom of navigation and regional stability.

- India's SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) doctrine also complements ASEAN's maritime objectives.



- Trade and Economic Integration: ASEAN is India's fourth-largest trading partner, and India-ASEAN trade has grown significantly in the last decade.
- The India-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (FTA) is being reviewed to address trade imbalances and enhance supply chain resilience.
- India's Act East Policy focuses on deeper integration with ASEAN economies through digital trade, fintech, and regional value chains.
- India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI) and Singapore's PayNow are now officially connected allowing for "real-time payment linkage."
- ASEAN also benefits from India's emerging role as a manufacturing hub amid China+1 strategies.
- Connectivity & Infrastructure Development: India and ASEAN seek greater physical and digital

connectivity to enhance economic ties and regional integration.

- In 2017, India committed \$1 billion in credit for ASEAN connectivity and maritime projects.
- The India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway and Kaladan Multimodal Transit Project aim to link India's Northeast with Southeast Asia.
- Digital infrastructure and 5G collaboration are also emerging areas of focus
- Defense and Counterterrorism Cooperation: India and ASEAN have intensified defense cooperation through military training, joint exercises, and intelligence sharing.
- Terror threats from radical extremism in Southeast Asia and India's concerns over cross-border militancy in the Northeast make counterterrorism a shared priority.
- Defense exports, including BrahMos missiles to the Philippines, signal a shift towards deeper military ties.
- India's defence exports surged by 78% in the first quarter of FY 2024-25, with ASEAN as a key market.
- Energy Security & Green Transition: Both India and ASEAN are pushing for renewable energy cooperation, reducing fossil fuel dependency, and expanding clean energy investments.
- India's International Solar Alliance (ISA) aligns with ASEAN's Clean Energy Pathway.
- ASEAN nations are also exploring nuclear energy, where India can offer expertise in thorium-based reactors.
- Space & Technology Collaboration: India's advancements in space technology, AI, and digital governance present a strong area of cooperation with ASEAN.

- ASEAN nations are keen on leveraging ISRO's satellite capabilities for disaster management and telecommunication.
- ISRO is helping ASEAN set up a Regional Satellite Tracking Station in Vietnam.
- India's Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) model, including Aadhaar and UPI, offers a template for ASEAN's fintech expansion.
- Tourism & Cultural Diplomacy: India and ASEAN share centuries-old cultural and religious linkages, including Buddhism and Hinduism.
- Strengthening people-to-people ties through visa liberalization, spiritual tourism, and cultural exchanges can boost engagement.
- Increased direct flights and tourism infrastructure development can further enhance connectivity.
- Indonesia's Ramayana Ballet and Thailand's Ayutthaya city which is known as the "Ayodhya of Thailand" celebrate shared heritage.
- Geopolitical Cooperation & Multipolarity: India and ASEAN are key players in regional stability, balancing US-China tensions.
- Both emphasize a rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific, avoiding military bloc politics while strengthening multilateralism through BRICS, EAS, and G20.
- India also backed ASEAN's Five-Point Consensus on the Myanmar Crisis .

What are the Key Areas of Friction Between India and ASEAN? •

- Trade Imbalance & RCEP Withdrawal: India has a trade deficit of over \$43 billion with ASEAN, raising concerns over market access and unfair trade practices.

- India withdrew from the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) in 2019, citing concerns over Chinese goods flooding its market through ASEAN nations.
- India has called for FTA renegotiation to address tariff asymmetry and non-tariff barriers, but progress remains very slow.
 - Slow Progress in Connectivity Projects: Despite strategic importance, India's connectivity projects with ASEAN face delays due to funding issues, political instability, and bureaucratic bottlenecks.
- The India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway has been repeatedly postponed due to slow execution and unrest in Myanmar.
- Similarly, the Kaladan Multimodal Project, crucial for India's Northeast connectivity, has suffered from security concerns and lack of progress.
- These delays impact India's credibility in regional infrastructure development.
 - Limited Defense Cooperation & ASEAN's China Tilt: While India and ASEAN conduct military exercises, ASEAN's divergent security priorities and reluctance to counter China directly limit deeper defense engagement.
- Most ASEAN nations are hesitant to align with India's Indo-Pacific vision due to economic dependence on China.
- ASEAN has not strongly supported India's stance on freedom of navigation in the South China Sea.
- In 2023, trade between ASEAN and China reached a record high of USD 702 billion, while ASEAN-India bilateral trade stood at merely USD 122.67 billion during 2023-24, highlighting ASEAN's economic reliance on China.
 - Differences in Indo-Pacific Strategy: India promotes an open and inclusive Indo-Pacific with a focus on ASEAN centrality, but ASEAN countries remain divided on openly endorsing India's strategic goals.
- While Vietnam and the Philippines support India's stronger Indo-Pacific presence, others like Cambodia prefer neutrality to avoid antagonizing China.
- This limits India's ability to build a unified Indo-Pacific strategy with ASEAN as a whole.
 - Myanmar Crisis and Divergent Political Stances: India and ASEAN differ on their approach to Myanmar's political crisis following the 2021 military coup.
- ASEAN has pushed for diplomatic engagement through its Five-Point Consensus, while India has maintained pragmatic ties with Myanmar's junta due to border security and connectivity interests.
- This has created friction, as some ASEAN members view India's approach as inconsistent with democratic principles.
- India handed over military hardware to Myanmar's junta in 2022, while ASEAN imposed restrictions.
 - Digital Trade & Data Protection Issues: India and ASEAN differ on data localization, cybersecurity, and digital trade regulations, slowing fintech and e-commerce expansion.
- ASEAN prefers a liberal digital trade regime, while India enforces data sovereignty rules (e.g., restrictions on cross-border data flow under India's Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023).
- This has created regulatory mismatches affecting businesses in fintech, e-commerce, and AI collaborations.
- India's UPI linkage with Singapore (2023) is an exception but remains limited to bilateral agreements.

What Measures can be Adopted to Strengthen India-ASEAN Relations?

- Fast-Track Connectivity Projects for Economic Integration: Accelerating the completion of the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway and Kaladan Multimodal Project will improve physical connectivity and trade.
- Establishing special economic zones (SEZs) along the corridor can attract investment and manufacturing, reducing ASEAN's overdependence on China.
- India should engage ASEAN in Public-Private Partnership (PPP) models to overcome delays in execution.
- Strengthening air and maritime links, especially with Indonesia, Vietnam, and the Philippines, will further boost trade and tourism.
- Strengthen the India-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (FTA): Revising the India-ASEAN FTA to address India's trade deficit and non-tariff barriers (NTBs) will enhance economic cooperation.
- India should push for sector-specific agreements in electronics, pharmaceuticals, and green energy where it has a competitive edge.
- ASEAN nations must ensure better market access for Indian goods, particularly in services, agriculture, and digital trade.
- Mutual recognition agreements (MRAs) for skilled professionals will facilitate greater labor mobility and knowledge exchange.
- India must ensure ASEAN removes discriminatory palm oil import tariffs hurting Indian exporters
- Co-Develop Critical and Emerging Technologies: Instead of relying on tech imports, India and ASEAN should focus on joint development in AI, quantum computing, and semiconductor fabrication.
- India's Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) model (Aadhaar, UPI) can be adapted for ASEAN fintech ecosystems, ensuring digital sovereignty.
- ASEAN can be pursued to invest in India's semiconductor mission, reducing dependence on China-Taiwan supply chains.
- India should push for joint space collaborations through ISRO for disaster management and communication satellites.
- Expand Maritime Security and Defense Collaboration: India should deepen maritime security cooperation through expanded naval exercises, intelligence sharing, and joint patrolling.
- Strengthening India-ASEAN Coast Guard Cooperation can help counter piracy, illegal fishing, and drug trafficking in the Indo-Pacific.
- ASEAN nations should be encouraged to buy Indian defence equipment (e.g., BrahMos missiles) under favourable financing models.
- Establishing an India-ASEAN Indo-Pacific Security Forum can create a structured mechanism for strategic dialogue.
- Foster Supply Chain Resilience through Co-Manufacturing: India should integrate ASEAN into its Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme, encouraging ASEAN firms to set up manufacturing bases in India.
- Co-developing alternative supply chains in semiconductors, rare earth elements, and pharmaceuticals will reduce China's dominance.
- ASEAN nations can be part of India's Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (SCRI) with Japan and Australia, creating diversified trade networks.
- Expand Renewable Energy and Climate Cooperation: India should lead ASEAN

in green hydrogen, solar power, and biofuels, reducing dependence on fossil fuels.

- Establishing India-ASEAN Green Energy Parks will promote joint investments in solar and wind power generation.
- Facilitating technology transfers for EV battery production and carbon trading mechanisms will align with ASEAN's net-zero goals.
- Promote Cultural and People-to-People Exchanges: Enhancing cultural diplomacy through mutual visa liberalization, direct flight connectivity, and educational collaborations will strengthen ties.
- Establishing India-ASEAN scholarships, student exchange programs, and Buddhist tourism circuits will foster greater socio-cultural engagement.
- India can support ASEAN's digitization of ancient manuscripts and historical archives to preserve shared civilizational heritage.

- The Nalanda University ASEAN Fellowship can be expanded for cultural research programs.

Conclusion:

India-ASEAN relations have evolved significantly from historical and cultural ties to a comprehensive strategic partnership. Despite challenges such as trade imbalances and differences in defence priorities, both sides have strengthened cooperation. Moving forward, addressing connectivity gaps, boosting trade, and fostering people-to-people exchanges will be crucial. India's proactive engagement with ASEAN offers opportunities for deeper collaboration.

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INDIA'S MIDDLE EAST STRATEGY

The India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), launched at the G-20 Summit 2023 highlights India's expanding strategic influence in West Asia. Despite strong backing from partners like Greece, which sees it as a "project for peace," the initiative has hit roadblocks due to the ongoing Israel-Gaza conflict. At its core, IMEC represents more than just a trade route – it embodies India's ambition to forge deeper economic and diplomatic ties across the Middle East while establishing itself as a key player in reshaping global supply chains.



Why is the Middle East Crucial to India's Foreign Outlook?

- **Energy Security and Economic Stability:** India's crude oil imports from the Middle East rose from 51% (December 2024) to 53.89% in January 2025, making it indispensable for sustaining economic growth.

- In January 2023, India and the UAE signed an MoU to collaborate on green hydrogen development and an undersea cable under the 'One Sun, One World, One Grid' initiative.
- In February 2024, India extended its LNG deal with Qatar until 2048 for 7.5 million tonnes per annum, ensuring long-term energy stability.
- **Trade, Investment, and Economic Corridors:** During FY 2023-24, India-GCC bilateral trade stood at USD 161.59 billion, with the Middle East being a key partner.
- India's strategic economic engagement, including Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) and economic corridors, aims to enhance connectivity and market access.
- The India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) will strengthen supply chains and reduce trade costs.
- The UAE ranks as India's third-largest trading partner and second largest export destination, with exports over US\$ 35.62 billion in FY 2023-24.
- **Remittances and Workforce Contributions:** The Middle East hosts over millions Indian expatriates, whose remittances significantly contribute to India's forex reserves and economic stability.
- More than 66% of India's 1.34 crore Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) live in the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman and Bahrain.
- Saudi Arabia's Nitaqat reforms are reshaping labour policies, prompting India to negotiate favourable migration policies.

- India received \$111 billion in remittances in 2022, the largest in the world, with a major share coming from the Gulf region.
- Geopolitical and Strategic Cooperation: Amid rising regional tensions, India's balanced diplomacy between rival blocs, including Saudi Arabia-Iran and Israel-Arab nations, secures strategic autonomy.
- Defence ties are expanding, with India engaging in joint military exercises and securing defence exports.
- For instance in 2021, India and Saudi Arabia started their first-ever Naval joint exercise called the Al-Mohed Al-Hindi Exercise.
- The India-Iran Chabahar Port Agreement enhances connectivity with Central Asia, bypassing Pakistan.
- Food and Maritime Security: India depends on the Middle East for food exports, with Gulf countries being top buyers of Indian rice, wheat, and eggs.
- For instance, in FY 2022-23, the UAE became India's second-largest importer of agricultural products, accounting for \$1.9 billion (6.9% of India's total agricultural exports).
- Also, India exports rice, textile, garments, machinery, cereals, automobiles and gems and jewellery to Saudi Arabia.
- Cultural, Religious, and Soft Power Diplomacy: India's historical ties with the Middle East, rooted in shared heritage, Sufi traditions, and diaspora, foster strong diplomatic relations.
- The region's religious significance for millions of Indian Muslims (Hajj, Umrah) deepens bilateral engagement.
- Bollywood, yoga, and Ayurveda enhance India's cultural outreach in Gulf nations.
- Also, the recently built BAPS Temple in the UAE, constructed with pink sandstone from

Rajasthan, stands as a cornerstone of India-UAE cultural ties.

What are the Key Issues in India-Middle East Relations?

- Energy Price Volatility and Supply Disruptions: India's heavy reliance on Middle Eastern oil and gas makes it vulnerable to price fluctuations and geopolitical crises.
- Rising tensions, such as the Houthi attacks in the Red Sea (2023-24) and OPEC+ production cuts, disrupt supply chains and increase import costs.
- Additionally, India's push for energy diversification, including Russian oil imports, sometimes strains traditional energy partnerships.
- For instance, several OPEC+ nations voluntarily agreed to reduce oil production by 2.2 million barrels per day in Q1 2024, raising global oil prices, impacting India's energy costs.
- Geopolitical Instability and Regional Conflicts: Persistent conflicts in Israel-Palestine, Yemen, and Iran-Saudi Arabia tensions create diplomatic challenges for India.
- Balancing relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia while maintaining neutrality in the Israel-Gaza conflict is crucial.
- Disruptions in West Asia impact Indian trade, diaspora (Operation Ajay was launched by India to evacuate 18,000 Indians from Israel), and energy security, forcing India into complex diplomatic maneuvering.
- The IMEC project launch has been delayed due to the Israel-Gaza Conflict, affecting regional trade plans. Though, the conflict has seen ceasefires, tensions and issues continue to persist.
- Trade Barriers and Delayed Economic Agreements: Despite strong trade ties, the

- absence of a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the GCC limits full economic potential.
- Regulatory issues, tariff barriers, and labour laws hinder business expansion.
 - While CEPA with the UAE (2022) boosted bilateral trade, negotiations for an India-GCC FTA have seen slow progress due to regional complexities.
 - Also, the IMF has reported that economies in the Middle East, North Africa, Caucasus, and Central Asia face shifting trade patterns with deteriorating growth prospects over two decades.
 - These challenges could hinder India's efforts to enhance trade with Middle eastern countries.
 - Maritime Security and Threats to Trade Routes: The Red Sea, Persian Gulf, and Arabian Sea are vital for India's trade, yet they face rising security threats from piracy, and geopolitical conflicts.
 - Attacks on commercial vessels increase shipping costs, delay cargo movement, and threaten India's Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs).
 - India's navy has intensified patrols, but instability persists.
 - Houthi attacks (2023-24) in the Red Sea forced many shipping companies to reroute. It disrupted Indian trade as well, impacting crude oil imports (65% via Suez Canal),
 - Rising shipping costs (40-60%), delays (up to 20 days), and higher insurance premiums (15-20%) posed major challenges.
 - Labour Rights and Migration Issues: India's workforce in the Middle East faces issues like job losses, wage delays, and labour exploitation.
 - While Gulf countries are reforming labour laws (e.g., Saudi Nitaqat policy) challenges persist.
 - India is negotiating new migration frameworks to ensure job security and workers' rights, but illegal migration remains a concern.
 - In 2024, the tragic deaths of 46 Indian migrant workers in a Kuwait fire rekindled safety concerns over their living conditions.
 - Strategic Rivalries and External Influence: China's growing footprint in the Middle East, through Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) investments and defense ties, poses a challenge to India's influence.
 - In March 2023, Iran and Saudi Arabia, with China's mediation, agreed to restore diplomatic ties, showcased China's diplomatic clout, raising concerns for India's regional engagement.
 - Also, between the years 2005 and 2022, China made investments exceeding \$273 billion in the Middle East.
- What Role do Infrastructure Projects Play in Shaping India's Foreign Policy Outlook?
- Strengthening Regional Connectivity and Trade Expansion: India's infrastructure projects play a crucial role in enhancing trade routes and integrating with global markets.
 - Initiatives like the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) and Chabahar Port strengthen India's supply chain resilience and reduce dependence on traditional trade routes.
 - Geopolitical Leverage and Strategic Influence: Investing in infrastructure abroad helps India expand its geopolitical influence and balance regional power dynamics.
 - Through projects like the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project (Myanmar) and Trilateral Highway (India-Myanmar-Thailand), India

strengthens its presence in Southeast Asia.

- India's investment in Africa's digital and physical infrastructure (AAGC) counters China's BRI investments in Africa.
- Securing Energy and Maritime Interests: Infrastructure projects in the energy sector ensure long-term security and diversification of supply sources.
- Projects like the TAPI (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India) gas pipeline and investments in Middle Eastern ports strengthen India's energy security.
- With Assumption Island in Seychelles and Agalega in Mauritius under development, Duqm in Oman aligns with India's proactive maritime security strategy.
- Enhancing Soft Power and Development Partnerships: India's foreign infrastructure projects also serve as tools of soft power by promoting sustainable and inclusive development.
- Through initiatives like the International Solar Alliance (ISA) and investments in water and sanitation projects in Africa, India builds goodwill and long-term diplomatic trust.
- These projects strengthen India's global standing as a responsible development partner

What Measures India Can Adopt to Enhance Its Relations with the Middle East?

- Strengthening Energy Partnerships through Co-Development: India should shift from being a passive energy importer to an active co-investor in energy infrastructure across the Middle East.
- Joint ventures in renewable energy, hydrogen production, and oil refining will create long-term interdependence and reduce price volatility risks.

- Partnering on strategic oil reserves and LNG infrastructure will also ensure stable supply chains for both sides.
- Saudi Aramco's stake in India's \$44 billion Ratnagiri refinery (delayed but viable) could secure long-term energy ties.
- Expanding Trade and Economic Integration Beyond Oil: Diversifying trade beyond hydrocarbons by promoting manufacturing, IT, space technology, and defence exports will create a deeper economic link.
- Finalizing India-GCC FTA will accelerate investment flows and reduce trade barriers.
- Strengthening the IMEC corridor's implementation will make India a critical part of the global supply chain.
- The IMEC corridor, announced at G20 (2023), must be fast-tracked despite delays from the Israel-Gaza conflict.
- Co-Development in Defence and Security Cooperation: India should deepen joint defence production rather than just selling arms, making Gulf countries co-developers.
- Establishing defence technology parks in the UAE and Saudi Arabia will integrate supply chains, reducing dependency on Western defence manufacturers.
- Strengthening intelligence sharing and anti-terror frameworks will also enhance security cooperation.
- Strengthening Investment in Digital and Technology Sectors: Encouraging Middle Eastern sovereign funds (such as Saudi PIF, UAE ADIA, and Qatar Investment Authority) to co-invest in India's AI, fintech, digital infrastructure, and smart cities will create mutual economic interdependence.
- India can also position itself as a technology partner by offering IT,

cybersecurity, and space tech collaborations.

- Enhancing Food and Water Security through Agri-Tech Cooperation: India can co-develop agricultural tech parks in the Middle East, ensuring food security while boosting Indian agri-tech exports.
- Collaborations in desalination, hydroponics, and smart irrigation will make Gulf countries less dependent on food imports while giving Indian firms a stake in local production.
- The India-Middle East Food Corridor represents a pivotal alliance between India and the UAE, driven by the shared goal of ensuring food security. It can be expanded for joint research and innovation in water conservation.
- Institutionalizing Migration Frameworks: Rather than just sending low-skilled workers, India should collaborate on upskilling and creating labour mobility agreements for high-skilled sectors like healthcare, engineering, and AI.
- Jointly establishing vocational training centres in Gulf countries will improve wages, working conditions, and mutual economic benefits.
- Also, the Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojana (PBBY), a mandatory insurance scheme for ECR-category Indian migrants, has the potential to be expanded and made more inclusive.
- Strengthening Maritime and Logistics Infrastructure: India should co-develop port infrastructure and logistics hubs in the Middle East to strengthen maritime trade and supply chain connectivity.

- Expanding port investments in Saudi Arabia, Oman, and Greece will make India a logistics hub for IMEC and beyond.
- Adani Ports, exploring investments in Greek ports (2024) to expand India's trade footprint in Europe, is a significant step.
- Strengthening Counter-Terrorism Through Beyond Borders Principle: India should enhance counter-terrorism collaboration with Middle Eastern nations by institutionalizing intelligence-sharing mechanisms, joint counter-terrorism exercises, and cyber-surveillance networks.
- Establishing a regional counter-terrorism centre with Gulf nations can improve real-time threat assessment and crisis response.
- Inclusion of Middle Eastern States in SCO as dialogue partners opens a window for India to collaborate through Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure.
- Cooperation on tracking terror financing through joint financial intelligence units will strengthen security frameworks.

Conclusion:

India's engagement with the Middle East is no longer just about energy imports—it has evolved into a multi-dimensional partnership encompassing trade, strategic connectivity, defence collaboration, and cultural diplomacy. To maximize its potential, India must accelerate infrastructure development, finalize trade agreements, and deepen security cooperation while maintaining its strategic autonomy.

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WORLD AFFAIRS

Sea Dragon 2025 Naval Exercise Commenced off the Guam Coast

The Sea Dragon 2025 naval exercise, a multilateral Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW)



drill, is being held from March 4 to March 19, 2025, off the Guam coast in the

western Pacific Ocean. Hosted by the United States (US) Navy's 7th Fleet, it includes India, Japan, Australia, and South Korea. The exercise aims to enhance ASW techniques, improve tactical coordination, and strengthen maritime security in the Indo-Pacific region. Each participating nation deploys Maritime Patrol and Reconnaissance Aircraft (MPRA) for submarine detection and tracking. The Indian Navy (IN) has deployed its P-8I MPRA, manufactured by Boeing (USA). The exercise features simulated ASW drills, tactical discussions, and practical training to enhance collective defence readiness. Sea Dragon began in 2019 as a US-Australia joint drill and has since expanded. The 2024 edition included Quad nations (India, US, Japan, Australia) and South Korea. The exercise fosters military cooperation and strategic deterrence against submarine threats in the region.

Glass-Ceiling Index: Top 10 Best Countries for Working Women in 2025

The Glass-Ceiling Index (GCI) 2025, released by The Economist Group on International Women's Day (March 8), ranks Sweden as the best country for working women, replacing Iceland, which held the top position for the last two years and is now ranked 2nd. Among the

top 10 countries, five are Nordic nations: Sweden (1st), Iceland (2nd), Finland (3rd), Norway (4th), and Denmark (9th). New Zealand showed the most improvement, moving up 8 places to 6th position. The index evaluates working conditions for women across 29 OECD member countries, considering factors like wage equality, workplace participation, and leadership opportunities. The bottom three countries are Japan (27th), South Korea (28th), and Turkey (29th), where deep-rooted societal norms and wage gaps contribute to the underrepresentation of women in leadership. The report highlights the continued progress in gender equality in Nordic nations, while Asian countries face structural challenges in workplace inclusivity.

World Meteorological Organization launched iClimate Action Project to boost Global Climate Intelligence

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO), in collaboration with GCOS, GEO, and the European Commission, launched the iClimateAction project in Geneva, Switzerland, to enhance global climate resilience. The project is supported by the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2023-2025 and coincides with WMO's 75th anniversary on March 23, 2025. Funded with 3 million Euros, iClimateAction aims to standardize climate data collection by improving coordination among WMO, GCOS, and GEO, ensuring better accessibility and usability of Essential Climate Variables (ECVs). It addresses fragmentation in climate data management, supporting initiatives like Early Warnings for All, the Global Greenhouse Gas Watch, and

GEO's Global Heat Resilience Service. The initiative will benefit WMO's 193 member states and territories, strengthening science-driven climate action and improving decision-making for policymakers, scientists, and communities worldwide.

16th CoP to the Convention on Biological Diversity Resumed in Rome, Italy

The 16th Conference of the Parties (COP16) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) resumed from February 25-27, 2025, at FAO headquarters in Rome, Italy, after previous interruptions in Cali, Colombia (October 2024) and December 2024. The conference resulted in a landmark biodiversity funding agreement to support the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) by addressing the biodiversity finance gap and implementing Article 21 of the CBD. A new international 'Cali Fund' was launched to promote biodiversity protection and fair benefit-sharing from Digital Sequence Information (DSI) on genetic resources. FAO called for bold actions to transform Agrifood Systems (AFS) to meet global biodiversity targets, emphasizing an integrated approach for sustainable development.

Denmark launched GTAI to strengthen Sustainable Energy Collaboration

Denmark launched the Green Transition Alliance India (GTAI) to enhance collaboration with India in sustainable energy solutions, reinforcing both nations' commitment to global carbon neutrality. GTAI aims to connect businesses, government agencies, researchers, and financial stakeholders to drive innovation and meet environmental objectives. India targets net-zero emissions by 2070, while Denmark aims for 2045. The alliance is a key initiative under the Green Strategic Partnership (GSP) of 2020, following the success of the Green Fuels Alliance India (GFAI) and Wind Alliance India (WAI). GTAI

will operate through three working groups focusing on Renewable Energy (RE), Green Fuels, and Energy Efficiency (EE) to adapt to evolving industry trends in both countries. This initiative strengthens international collaboration and supports India's ambitious climate goals by fostering sustainable energy solutions.

Highlights of FATF Plenary meeting held from 19-21 February 2025

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) held its second Plenary under Mexico's Elisa de



Anda Madrazo Presidency from February 19-21, 2025, in Paris, France. Kenya joined FATF's Guest Jurisdiction Initiative, alongside the Cayman Islands and Senegal. Russia's suspension (since February 2024) remains due to sanctions evasion

concerns. Giles Thomson (UK) was selected as the next FATF Vice President, succeeding Jeremy Weil (Canada) from July 1, 2025. Laos and Nepal were added to the Grey List for deficiencies in AML/CFT frameworks, while the Philippines was removed after strengthening casino supervision, beneficial ownership data access, and terrorism financing investigations. FATF urged continued collaboration with the Asia/Pacific Group to sustain reforms.

UNESCO launched "Imagine a World with more Women in Science" Campaign

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) launched the campaign "Imagine a world with more women in science" to mark the 10th anniversary of the International Day of Women and Girls in Science (11 February 2025), with support from Canada's International Development Centre (IDRC).

The UNGA declared 11th February as this day in 2015. Using the hashtag #EveryVoiceInScience, the campaign builds on UNESCO's Call to Action Closing the Gender Gap in Science (2024) and highlights the crucial role of women in scientific progress. UNESCO also conducted a global survey with over 700 responses from various scientific disciplines to shape this initiative.

Brazil to join major Oil-Exporting Nations in OPEC+ Group

Brazil's government approved its membership in Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC+) plus, a coalition of 22 major oil-producing nations, marking a significant move for the country. Brazil was officially invited to join in 2023. The 'National Council for Energy Policy' (Conselho Nacional de Política Energética, CNPE) authorized the move, marking a key step in Brazil's emergence as a significant contributor in the global oil market. This decision comes ahead of Brazil's role as the host of the 30th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP30) in November 2025.

Brazil to host 'BRICS Summit 2025' in Rio de Janeiro in July

Brazil will host the BRICS Summit 2025 in Rio de Janeiro on July 6-7, 2025, prioritizing global governance reform and cooperation among developing nations. BRICS, originally formed in 2009 with Brazil, Russia, India, and China, expanded with South Africa (2010) and further in 2024, adding Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia, UAE, and inviting Saudi Arabia. At the 2024 Kazan Summit (Russia), Indonesia joined as the 11th member, while Nigeria was designated a partner country. Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Malaysia have applied for membership.



Panama became first Latin American Nation to Exit China's BRI

Panama's President José Raúl Mulino Quintero announced the country's withdrawal from China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), making it the first Latin American nation to do so. The decision follows U.S. pressure over Panama's ties with China. Panama joined the BRI in 2017, but concerns over high project costs and debt burden led to growing criticism. The BRI, launched by China's President Xi Jinping in 2013, involves over 140 countries, with major projects like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Italy withdrew in 2023 over similar concerns.

UNICEF released National Roadmap for Child & Adolescent Road Safety in India

UNICEF, in collaboration with the WHO Collaborating Centre (WHOCC) for Injury Prevention and Safety, launched a National Roadmap to address Road Traffic Injuries (RTIs) among children and adolescents in India at NIMHANS, Bengaluru. RTIs are the leading cause of child deaths, accounting for 10% of road fatalities in India, with 16,443 deaths in 2022. The roadmap focuses on road safety management, vehicular regulations, school safety, and post-crash care. Unsafe roads, lack of helmets, and poor child safety measures contribute to the crisis. NIMHANS plans to set up a Level 1 polytrauma center in Bengaluru.

Mali, Burkina Faso & Niger Officially Withdraw from ECOWAS

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), based in Abuja, Nigeria, officially acknowledged the withdrawal of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger from the regional bloc. The exit was prompted by ECOWAS's demand for a return to civilian rule, which the three nations rejected, accusing the bloc of being influenced by France and failing to protect its members. Relations worsened after

ECOWAS imposed sanctions following the July 2023 coup in Niger that ousted President Mohamed Bazoum. In response, the three countries announced their departure in January 2024 and formed the Alliance of Sahel States in September 2024 to enhance security cooperation under military rule. ECOWAS has advised its remaining 12 members to continue recognizing the passports of the departing nations and maintain trade relations. Established on 28 May 1975 through the Treaty of Lagos, ECOWAS now comprises 12 member states, including Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal, and Côte d'Ivoire, focusing on regional economic integration.

Elon Musk's X Corp to launch 1st Digital Wallet with Visa Partnership

Elon Musk owned social media platform, X Corp (formerly known as Twitter, Inc.), a wholly owned subsidiary of X Holdings Corp, unveiled its 1st Digital Wallet, peer-to-peer (P2P) payment service 'X Money' in partnership with Visitors International Stay Admission (VISA), to launch a real-time payment system aiming to create an "everything application (app)." VISA, one of the largest United States of America (USA) credit card networks, will be the 1st partner for X's Money Account service, set to launch later in 2025. The company will utilize Visa Direct, Visa's real-time money transfer solution, to

fund X Money's wallet, link to a debit card for payments to other users, and facilitate smooth transfers back to your bank account. X Money will enable users to transfer funds instantly to their bank accounts through Visa Direct.

WHO declared Niger as the first Country in Africa to eliminate Onchocerciasis

The World Health Organization (WHO) declared Niger the first African country to eliminate Onchocerciasis (river blindness). This marks Niger's second success in eliminating a Neglected Tropical Disease (NTD), following its certification as free of Guinea-worm disease in 2013. Niger joins Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, and Guatemala in achieving this milestone. WHO aims for 100 countries to eliminate at least one NTD by 2030. Onchocerciasis, caused by the *Onchocerca volvulus* parasite, is transmitted through infected black fly bites in riverine areas and is the second leading infectious cause of blindness after trachoma. It also causes severe skin conditions and disabilities. For a country to be declared free of Onchocerciasis, all endemic areas must demonstrate elimination with 95% statistical confidence before stopping Mass Drug Administration (MDA). Rural populations in sub-Saharan Africa and Yemen are most affected, with limited cases in Latin America.

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NATIONAL AFFAIRS

Union Minister Amit Shah released 24 reprinted Sastu Sahitya Books, Rs 150 Coin in Ahmedabad

Union Minister Amit Shah, Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and Ministry of Cooperation,



released 24 reprinted books by Sastu Sahitya Mudranalaya Trust during the Akhand

Anandotsav event in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. He also unveiled a Rs 150 commemorative coin marking the 150th birth anniversary of Acharya Bhagwant Shri Buddhi Sagar Surishwar Maharaj. The trust, founded in 1907, promotes knowledge and literature, with Amit Shah serving as its president since 2023. He has written the preface for all 24 books. Additionally, he laid the foundation stone for a ₹350 crore High-Performance Sports Center for para-athletes. He chaired the Golden Centenary Closing Ceremony of ADC Bank, inaugurating the Cyber Safety and Security Pilot Project under the motto 'Be Aware, Be Secure.' Furthermore, he virtually laid the foundation stone for the Super Mall of Jetalpur Seva Sahakari Mandali.

Gujarat CM Bhupendrabhai Patel inaugurated Gujarat Semi Connect Conference 2025 & 19th IESA Vision Summit in Gandhinagar

Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel inaugurated the Gujarat SemiConnect Conference 2025, a three-day event held from March 5-7, 2025, at the Mahatma Mandir Convention and Exhibition Centre (MMCEC), Gandhinagar, under the theme "Gujarat

Silicon Gujarat: Powering India's Semiconductor Revolution." The conference featured three key events: Building Local to Global Value Chain, the 19th India Electronics and Semiconductor Association (IESA) Vision Summit, and the 2nd Indian Semiconductor and Packaging Ecosystem Conference (ISPEC 2). Highlights included industry report launches, Technovation Awards by IESA, poster session awards, signing of over 30 MoUs worth ₹1.04 lakh crore to boost semiconductor and electronics manufacturing in Gujarat, and seven-panel discussions. The Building Local to Global Value Chain event hosted country-specific roundtables with Japan, Taiwan, Korea, Singapore, the Netherlands, and the USA. The IESA Vision Summit focused on India's semiconductor and electronics industry, while ISPEC 2, co-located with the summit, emphasized global R&D and workforce development in partnership with international industry leaders.

PM Narendra Modi's visit to Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Daman & Diu and Gujarat

Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited the Union Territory (UT) of Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Daman and Diu (DNHDD), and Gujarat, where he inaugurated and laid the foundation stones for multiple development projects worth over ₹2,580 crore. During his visit to Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Daman and Diu, he inaugurated the Narendra Modi (NAMO) Hospital (Phase I) in Silvassa on March 7, 2025, and launched several development projects aimed at infrastructure and social welfare. Additionally, he distributed appointment letters under the 'Rozgar Mela', benefiting recipients of various schemes such

as the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana – Urban (PMAY-U), Gir Adarsh Aajeevika Yojana, and the Sylvan Didi Scheme. Later, in Gujarat, PM Modi participated in programs focused on healthcare, women empowerment, and rural development, further strengthening welfare initiatives in the region.

Madhav National Park in MP becomes India's 58th Tiger Reserve

Union Minister Bhupender Yadav, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), announced Madhav National Park in Madhya Pradesh (MP) as India's 58th Tiger Reserve (TR) and the 9th in MP. The reserve, located in Shivpuri district within the Gwalior-Chambal region, spans 1,751 sq km, with a core area of 375 sq km and a buffer zone of 1,276 sq km. As of March 2025, Madhav TR has five tigers, including two recently born cubs, with plans to release two more tigers. Under MP's tiger reintroduction project, three tigers, including two females, were introduced in 2023. The designation follows Section 38V of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, on the advice of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA). MP's other Tiger Reserves include Bandhavgarh, Kanha, Panna, Sanjay, Satpura, Pench, Veerangana Durgavati, and Ratapani. India hosts over 70% of the world's wild tigers, with an estimated 3,682 tigers.

Union Minister Bhupender Yadav inaugurated WSDS 2025 in New Delhi

Union Minister Bhupender Yadav, Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change (MoEFCC), inaugurated the 24th World Sustainable Development Summit (WSDS) 2025 in New Delhi from March 5 to 7, 2025. Hosted annually by The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) since 2001, the theme for WSDS 2025 was "Partnerships for Accelerating Sustainable Development and Climate Solutions." The event featured plenary sessions, exhibitions, and discussions

on climate action. Key attendees included Guyana's PM Brigadier Mark Phillips, Brazil's Minister of Environment and Climate Change Marina Silva, TERI Chairman Nitin Desai, and TERI DG Dr. Vibha Dhawan. The Sustainable Development Leadership Award (SDLA) 2025 was presented to Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo, Vice President of Guyana, and Marina Silva of Brazil. Guyana's PM accepted the award on behalf of Dr. Jagdeo.

IWAI signed MoU with J&K to enhance River Cruise Tourism

The Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI), under the Ministry of Ports, Shipping,



and Waterways (MoPSW), signed an MoU with the Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) government to promote river cruise tourism on three National

Waterways: River Chenab (NW-26), River Jhelum (NW-49), and River Ravi (NW-84). The initiative aims to boost tourism, generate employment, and drive economic growth in the region. IWAI will develop waterside infrastructure, including ten floating jetties and landside facilities such as waiting halls. Key locations for floating jetties include Akhnoor and Reasi (Chenab), Pantha Chowk, Zero Bridge, and others (Jhelum), and Sohar (Ravi). The J&K government will provide land, approvals, and appoint cruise operators, while IWAI will offer technical support. The project, with a budget of ₹100 crore, aligns with national efforts to expand river cruise tourism from Kashmir to Kerala and Assam to Gujarat as announced in January 2025.

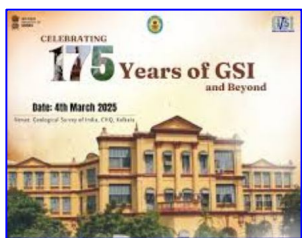
Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw launched AI Compute Portal, Dataset Platform AIKosha and Other Key Initiatives

Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw launched key initiatives under the IndiaAI mission during

its one-year anniversary celebration in New Delhi. The initiatives include the AI Compute Portal, AIKosha (IndiaAI Datasets Platform), AI Competency Framework for Public Sector Officials, iGOT-AI Mission Karmayogi, IndiaAI Startups Global Acceleration Program, IndiaAI Application Development Initiative, and IndiaAIFutureSkills. These efforts aim to democratize AI access, enhance research-driven innovation, and strengthen India's global AI leadership. The IndiaAI Compute Portal will provide AI compute, storage, platform, and cloud services at a discounted rate of ₹67 per hour for startups, MSMEs, researchers, students, and government agencies. AIKosha is a secure platform offering a repository of datasets, models, and AI use cases to promote AI innovation. These initiatives mark a major step in advancing AI research, skill development, and AI-driven growth in India.

GSI celebrates 175th Foundation Day & launched two significant Digital Initiatives

The Geological Survey of India (GSI) celebrated its 175th Foundation Day with a



grand ceremony at its headquarters in Kolkata, West Bengal. Union Minister G. Kishan Reddy (MoC& MoM) graced the event,

unveiling a commemorative plaque and a special postal cover to honor GSI's 175-year journey. He also launched two digital initiatives: the Field Data Acquisition App and the Geo-heritage App 'Bhuvirasat,' aimed at enhancing data collection efficiency and promoting India's geo-heritage awareness. As part of the celebrations, GSI organized a nationwide walkathon on March 2, 2025, across 27 locations under the theme

"Geoscience for a Safe World," promoting fitness and geoscience awareness.

Ministry of Panchayati Raj launched 'MWFGP Initiative' for Women's Empowerment

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR), Government of India, launched the 'Model Women-Friendly Gram Panchayats (MWFGP)' initiative at the National Convention in Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi, as part of International Women's Day celebrations on March 8, 2025. The initiative aims to enhance women's participation, safety, and leadership in local governance, targeting the establishment of at least one model Gram Panchayat in each district. Union Ministers Anupriya Patel and S. P. Singh Baghel, along with key officials and international representatives, attended the event. Key initiatives include virtual training programs, a real-time monitoring dashboard to track progress, and a nationwide Mahila Gram Sabha on March 8, 2025. The initiative aligns with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of inclusive governance and the goal of Viksit Bharat through Viksit Panchayats.

ISM, TEPL & TSMPL signed Fiscal Support Agreement for Semiconductor Fab

The India Semiconductor Mission (ISM), Tata Electronics Private Limited (TEPL), and Tata Semiconductor Manufacturing Private Limited (TSMPL) signed a Fiscal Support Agreement (FSA) to establish India's first commercial semiconductor fabrication unit in Dholera, Gujarat. With an investment of over ₹91,000 crore, the plant will have a capacity of 50,000 wafer starts per month (WSPM). The Government of India, through ISM, will provide 50% fiscal support for eligible project expenses. The project, in collaboration with Taiwan-based PSMC, is expected to generate over 20,000 skilled jobs and support sectors like AI, communications, and automobiles.

Launched in 2021 under MeitY with an outlay of ₹76,000 crore, ISM supports semiconductor manufacturing through four schemes, including semiconductor fabs, display fabs, compound semiconductors, and the Design Linked Incentive (DLI) scheme, aiming to boost India's self-reliance in chip production.

Solar Defence and Aerospace signed a contract Worth Rs 239 Crore with MoD

Solar Industries India Limited (SIIL), through its subsidiary Solar Defence and Aerospace Limited, signed a ₹239 crore contract with the Ministry of Defence (MoD) for supplying multi-mode hand grenades. The project will be completed within a year and strengthens India's defence manufacturing capabilities, aligning with the government's *Aatmanirbhar Bharat* initiative. SIIL, a leading company in the Solar Group, specializes in bulk and packaged explosives, initiating systems, and defence production for mining, infrastructure, and construction sectors.

Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maandhan Yojana ensuring Financial Security for India's Unorganised Workforce

The Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maandhan (PM-SYM) Yojana, launched by the Government of India, aims to provide financial security to millions of unorganized workers, contributing 50% of the country's GDP. As a voluntary and contributory pension scheme, it ensures a minimum pension of ₹3,000 per month after the age of 60 for workers earning up to ₹15,000 per month. The scheme is overseen by the Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoL&E) in collaboration with the Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) and Common Services Centres e-Governance Services India Limited (CSC SPV). As of December 31, 2024, over 30.51 crore unorganized workers were registered on the e-Shram portal.

The Government of India launched pilot projects of Hydrogen-Fuelled Vehicle under NHGM

The Government of India launched five pilot projects under the National Green Hydrogen Mission (NGHM) to deploy hydrogen-fuelled buses and trucks. The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) approved 37 vehicles (15 fuel cell-based and 22 internal combustion engine-based) and nine hydrogen refuelling stations across 10 routes, including Delhi-Agra, Ahmedabad-Vadodara-Surat, and Pune-Mumbai. Major companies like TATA Motors, Reliance Industries, NTPC, and IOCL are implementing these projects with ₹208 crore in financial support. The pilots aim to assess feasibility, safety, and economic viability, laying the foundation for hydrogen-based mobility in India. NGHM, launched in January 2023 with a ₹19,744 crore outlay till FY 2029-30, aims to decarbonize the economy, reduce fossil fuel dependence, and position India as a leader in green hydrogen technology, supporting *Aatmanirbhar Bharat* and the global clean energy transition.

Union Minister Pralhad Joshi launched India's first AI-Powered Solar Manufacturing Line in Gujarat

Union Minister Pralhad Joshi inaugurated India's first AI-powered solar manufacturing



line at Goldi Solar's facility in Kosamba, Surat, Gujarat. This AI-enabled facility enhances precision, scalability, and efficiency in solar

manufacturing, supporting India's net-zero transition. It features high-speed stringers capable of producing 10,000 cells per hour, reducing errors and material waste. AI-powered Automated Optical Inspection (AOI) ensures real-time quality control using

advanced computer vision to detect defects. Additionally, AI-driven 3-Display Electro Luminescent (EL) and visual inspection devices analyze both the front and back of solar modules. The initiative represents a significant step in leveraging AI for sustainable and efficient solar energy production in India.

PM Modi released India's first ever Riverine Dolphin Estimation Report: 6,327 dolphins, highest in UP

Prime Minister Narendra Modi released India's first-ever riverine dolphin estimation report during his visit to Gir National Park, Gujarat, where he chaired the 7th National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) meeting. The report, launched ahead of World Wildlife Day (March 3), states that India has 6,327 riverine dolphins across 28 rivers in 8 states. Of these, 6,324 dolphins are found in the Ganga and Brahmaputra basins, while 3 Indus river dolphins inhabit the Beas River in Punjab. Uttar Pradesh (2,397 dolphins) recorded the highest population, followed by Bihar (2,220), West Bengal (815), and Assam (635). The survey (2021-2023) was conducted by the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), state forest departments, and NGOs like WWF and Aaranyak.

India's First World Peace Centre Inaugurated in Gurugram, Haryana

India's first World Peace Centre, established under the leadership of Jain Acharya Lokesh



Muni, founder of Ahimsa Vishwa Bharti, was inaugurated in Gurugram, Haryana. The event was attended by former

President Ram Nath Kovind, Punjab Governor Gulab Chand Kataria, Bihar Governor Arif Mohammad Khan, Haryana CM Nayab Singh Saini, and Delhi CM Rekha Gupta. Acharya

Lokesh stated that the centre will promote peace education, environmental preservation, equality, and institutional peace-building. It aims to raise awareness, foster social responsibility, and support sustainable development through institutional networks, promoting global peace and harmony.

Government of India Elevated Railways CPSE's IRCTC and IRFC to Navratna Status

The Department of Public Enterprises (DoPE), Ministry of Finance, upgraded Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) and Indian Railway Finance Corporation (IRFC) to Navratna status, making them the 25th and 26th Navratna CPSEs. This upgrade grants enhanced financial autonomy, allowing investments of up to Rs 1,000 crore without prior government approval. Introduced in 1997, Navratna status is awarded to Miniratna Category-I CPSEs meeting financial and performance criteria, including a score of at least 60/100 on key parameters and a strong MoU rating. Navratna companies can invest up to 15% of their net worth per project or 30% annually, within a Rs 1,000 crore cap.

Gujarat leads India with 19,020 hectares of Mangrove Plantation in two years under 'MISHTI' Scheme

Gujarat emerged as the national leader in mangrove afforestation, by planting mangroves across approximately 19,020 hectares at a cost of over Rs 76 crore under the Mangrove Initiative for Shoreline Habitats and Tangible Incomes (MISHTI) scheme. Gujarat remains determined to environmental conservation, aligning with the vision of 'Viksit Gujarat to Viksit Bharat.' This determination has positioned Gujarat at the leading edge of the Central Government's MISHTI scheme implementation. Gujarat's mangrove environment is strategically placed, with Kutch

leading the charge at 799 square kilometers (sq km).

SWAYATT initiative on GeM celebrated 6 Years of Transformative Impact

The Government e-Marketplace (GeM) under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoC&I) celebrated six years of the SWAYATT initiative at its headquarters in New Delhi. Launched on 19th February 2019, SWAYATT promotes the participation of women-led enterprises, startups, and youth in public procurement. The initiative is part of GeM's social inclusion strategy, aimed at improving ease of business and direct market access for MSMEs, self-help groups (SHGs), and marginalized entrepreneurs. During the event, GeM signed an MoU with FICCI-Ladies Organisation (FLO) to provide women entrepreneurs direct access to government buyers, eliminating intermediaries. This partnership is expected to enhance product pricing, create jobs, and drive inclusive economic growth.

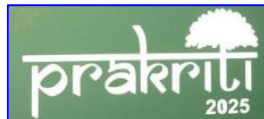
IIT Madras unveiled India's First Hyperloop Test Track

India marked a major milestone in transportation with the unveiling of its first hyperloop test track at IIT Madras, Chennai, supported by the Ministry of Railways (MoR). The 422-meter-long facility is part of a larger initiative to develop a full-scale Hyperloop system, with the Mumbai-Pune corridor identified for potential commercial implementation. Hyperloop technology, first proposed by Elon Musk in 2013, uses a magnetically levitated pod inside a vacuum tube, significantly reducing friction and air resistance. This could cut travel time between New Delhi and Jaipur (300 km) to just 30 minutes. The system offers collision-free, weather-independent, and energy-efficient transport at speeds twice that of airplanes. Key technologies include vacuum tubes for

low resistance, electromagnetic propulsion for rapid acceleration, and specially designed capsules ensuring passenger safety and comfort. Capable of reaching speeds up to 1,100 km/h, the hyperloop aims to revolutionize long-distance travel in India.

Union Minister Manohar Lal inaugurated Prakriti 2025 Conference

Union Minister Manohar Lal, Minister of Power (MoP) and Housing & Urban Affairs (MoHUA),



inaugurated Prakriti 2025, an international conference on carbon markets in New Delhi.

Organized by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) under MoP, the event aimed to enhance awareness, knowledge, and resources for climate action and a low-carbon future. The minister emphasized switching to renewable energy (RE) to reduce fossil fuel dependency and meet emission targets. He also highlighted India's traditional ecological practices, such as Ganga Deep Puja and Govardhan Puja, aligning them with modern sustainability efforts. As part of India's compliance mechanism, carbon reduction targets include a 40% reduction by 2027 and full implementation by 2030.

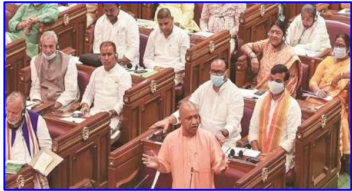
Desh Ka Prakriti Parikshan Abhiyaan's first Phase achieved 5 Guinness World Records

The Desh Ka Prakriti Parikshan Abhiyaan, under the Ministry of AYUSH, achieved five Guinness World Records, highlighting India's commitment to holistic healthcare and Ayurveda. Launched on Ayurveda Day (October 29, 2024), the initiative aims to educate people about their Prakriti (Ayurvedic body type). The campaign, led by NCISM, reached 1.29 crore individuals, surpassing its 1 crore target. It set records for most health campaign pledges in a week, month, and overall, the largest online photo album (62,525 photos), and the largest online video

album (12,798 videos). 1.81 lakh volunteers, including Ayurveda students, teachers, and physicians, contributed. The records were officially recognized in Mumbai, with Union Minister Jadhav Prataprao Ganpatrao receiving the certificates.

UP Assembly became first in India to introduce Translation Facility

In February 2025, the Uttar Pradesh (UP) Assembly made history by



becoming the first legislative body in India to implement a translation

facility. This innovative service will enable discussions in Awadhi, Braj, Bhojpuri, Bundelkhand, and English to improve accessibility and inclusivity in legislative proceedings. The arrangement was reviewed by Chief Minister (CM) of UP, Yogi Adityanath, who observed translation rehearsals in multiple languages.

RuTAGe Smart Village Center launched in Haryana for Rural Technological Empowerment

The Rural Technology Action Group (RuTAG) Smart Village Center (RSVC) was inaugurated in Mandaura village, Sonipat, Haryana, by Professor Ajay Sood, PSA to the GoI, alongside key partners. The RSVC aims to bridge rural technological needs with innovations, fostering sustainable rural development. It serves as a hub for technology integration at the Panchayat level, impacting 15-20 villages over time. The center also enhances market access for rural producers through collaborations with ONDC, Amazon, and Market Mirchi (IIT Bombay's RuTAG innovation) to expand sales opportunities.

PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana completed One Year

The Prime Minister Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana (PMSGMBY), the world's largest domestic rooftop solar initiative, marked its 1st anniversary. Launched by PM Narendra Modi on February 13, 2024, and implemented by MNRE, the scheme aims to provide 300 units of free electricity per month to 1 crore households by March 2027. Installations will be phased, reaching 10 lakh by March 2025 and 40 lakh by March 2026. As of January 2025, Gujarat led with 41.47% of beneficiaries, followed by Maharashtra (22.79%) and UP (8.69%).

Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh launched India's First indigenous Automated BWTP 'Srjanam' at AIIMS, New Delhi

Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh launched India's first Indigenous Automated Bio-Medical Waste Treatment Plant (BWTP), "Srjanam," at AIIMS New Delhi. Developed by CSIR-NIIST, Thiruvananthapuram, it offers a sustainable alternative to traditional biomedical waste disposal. Srjanam can sanitize harmful biomedical waste, replacing costly incinerators. With a 400 kg daily capacity, it processes 10 kg of degradable medical waste per day. Independent tests confirm its antimicrobial properties, making treated waste safer than organic fertilizers. India generates 743 tonnes of biomedical waste daily, and Srjanam aligns with the "Viksit Bharat 2047" vision, advancing environmental sustainability and healthcare innovation.

Nuclear Energy initiatives in Union Budget 2025-26

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented the Union Budget 2025-26, emphasizing nuclear energy development. The budget highlights the promotion of

indigenous nuclear technology, private sector participation, and infrastructure investment. India aims to achieve 100 GW of nuclear power by 2047 to enhance energy security and reduce fossil fuel dependence under the Nuclear Energy Mission for Viksit Bharat. The government allocated ₹20,000 crore to develop five Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) by 2033. Additionally, India's nuclear capacity is set to expand from 8,180 MW (2024) to 22,480 MW by 2031-32, strengthening its domestic nuclear capabilities.

Union MoS Jayant Chaudhary Virtually launched Swavalambini, Women Entrepreneurship Programme in 3 NE States

Union Minister of State Jayant Chaudhary (MSDE & MoE) launched Swavalambini, a women entrepreneurship programme in nine colleges and universities across Assam, Meghalaya, and Mizoram. The initiative, led by MSDE through the Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship (IIE), Guwahati, in coordination with NITI Aayog, aims to empower female students in Northeast India with entrepreneurial skills, resources, and mentorship. For the first time, a structured stage-wise entrepreneurial process is introduced, covering awareness, development, mentorship, and funding support. The Entrepreneurship Awareness Programme (EAP) will train 600 female students through a two-day session on basic entrepreneurial concepts and opportunities.

India modernized Army's Firepower with Rs 10,147 Crore Defence contracts

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) signed defence contracts worth Rs 10,147 crore to enhance the Indian Army's firepower. The deals focus on procuring advanced ammunition for the PINAKA Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS) and upgrading critical

software systems. Contracts were awarded to Economic Explosive Limited (EEL), Munitions India Limited (MIL), and Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL). This initiative aligns with the 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' vision, promoting self-reliance in defence manufacturing while strengthening national security.

TN CM M.K.Stalin inaugurated India's largest Single-Location Solar Point in Tirunelveli

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin inaugurated India's largest single-location solar manufacturing plant, a 4.3 GW solar cell and module facility by Tata Power Solar Systems Ltd. (TPSSL)



in Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu. Established with an investment of Rs 3,800 crore, it is expected to create 4,000 jobs, with 80% of the workforce being women. The plant features advanced TOPCon and PERC technologies to meet India's growing renewable energy demand. Additionally, he laid the foundation stone for Vikram Solar Ltd.'s 3 GW solar cell and 6 GW module manufacturing plant in West Bengal, set up with an investment of Rs 2,574 crore, generating 2,500 jobs. These initiatives align with India's clean energy goals, enhancing domestic solar manufacturing and self-reliance. The TPSSL facility will initially cater to Tata Power's projects before expanding to a broader market.

IA's Eastern headquarters 'Fort William' renamed as 'Vijay Durg'

The Indian Army's Eastern Headquarters, Fort William in Kolkata, was renamed 'Vijay Durg' to eliminate colonial influences. Built by the British in 1781 and named after King William III, the fort now draws inspiration from Maharashtra's Vijaydurg fort, a key Maratha naval base under Chhatrapati Shivaji. Fort

William, covering 170 acres, became the Eastern Army Command headquarters in 1963. As part of the renaming, 'Kitchener House' was renamed Manekshaw House, and St. George's Gate became Shivaji Gate. Initiated in December 2024, these changes align with India's broader efforts to remove colonial legacies, similar to the Indian Navy's adoption of a new ensign in 2022.

IICA & CMAI Signed MoU to boost India's Carbon Market

The Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs (IICA), Gurugram, signed an MoU with the Carbon Markets Association of India (CMAI), New Delhi, during the IICA-



CMAI Masterclass on Global & Indian Carbon Markets at India Climate Week 2025 (Feb 3-7). The partnership aims to strengthen carbon markets, support decarbonization, and train industry professionals. CMAI will serve as IICA's knowledge partner, collaborating on training programs, research, policy advocacy, and events to promote low-carbon industrial solutions, sustainable finance, and India's net-zero goals.

PM Narendra Modi inaugurated Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2025

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2025, India's largest and the world's 2nd largest automotive expo, at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi. The event spanned three venues: Bharat Mandapam, Yashobhoomi India International Convention and Expo Centre (IIC), Dwarka, and India Expo Centre & Mart, Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh. Themed "Beyond Boundaries: Co-creating Future Automotive Value Chain," the expo saw 239 launches, including 90 vehicle launches at the Auto Expo Motor Show 2025. Notable innovations included India's first solar-powered Electric Vehicle

(EV), "Vayve EVA," by Vayve Mobility Private Limited (VMPL), Pune, and India's first fully stainless-steel luxury electric bus, "EKA COACH," by EKA Mobility, Pune. The event showcased advancements in sustainable and electric mobility, reinforcing India's position as a global automotive hub.

4 New Wetlands, 2 from Tamil Nadu, 1 from Jharkhand, and 1 from Sikkim Added to Ramsar List

Union Minister Bhupender Yadav, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) announced the inclusion of four new wetlands from India in Ramsar Convention list, bringing the total number of internationally recognized Ramsar sites in India to 89. The newly added sites are the Sakkarakottai Bird Sanctuary and Therthangal Bird Sanctuary in Tamil Nadu (TN), Khecheopalri Wetland in Sikkim, and Udhwa Lake in Jharkhand. This also marks the first Ramsar sites for both Sikkim and Jharkhand. Tamil Nadu now has 20 Ramsar sites, the highest number in India, followed by Uttar Pradesh (UP) with 10. Globally, there are 2,529 Ramsar wetlands. Wetlands are unique ecosystems that play a crucial role in supporting diverse species of plants and wildlife, both aquatic and terrestrial.

IIT Indore in Collaboration with MeitY launched 'AgriHub' as a CoE for Agritech

Indian Institute of Technology Indore (IIT-I), Indore, Madhya Pradesh (MP) in collaboration with Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) launched 'Agri Hub', an Artificial Intelligence (AI)-driven Centre of Excellence (CoE) to foster technological innovation, startup incubation, and industry collaboration in agritech sector. The CoE will utilize AI, Machine Learning (ML), and Deep Learning

(DL) which will help in addressing the critical agricultural challenges such as: drought, floods, and low productivity and will also promote sustainable agriculture in India. The inauguration event of AgriHub was graced by S. Krishnan, Secretary, MeitY, as the Chief Guest. The project is jointly funded by the MeitY and the government of MP for a period of 5 years. It is supported by the MP government, ICAR-IISR Indore(MP), ICAR-CIAE Bhopal(MP), and C-DAC Pune(Maharashtra).

CCS approved Project worth over Rs. 10,000 crore for Procurement of Ammunition for IA's Pinaka MBRL

The Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS), chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved a ₹10,000 crore project to procure ammunition for the Indian Army's (IA) Pinaka Multi-Barrel Rocket Launcher Systems (MBRLs). The ammunition will be manufactured domestically to meet IA's requirements for the next 10 years. Under the contract, two types of ammunition—Pinaka Mk-I (Enhanced) Rocket System (EPRS) and Area Denial Munitions (ADM)—will be produced by Munitions India Limited (MIL), Pune, and Economic Explosives Limited (EEL), Nagpur. EEL, a subsidiary of Solar Industries India Limited (SIIL), was established in 1995 and specializes in metals, chemicals, and explosive products.

MoMSME, ONDC launched Rs.277 Crore initiative to empower 5 lakh Small Businesses

The Ministry of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MoMSME), in collaboration with Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC),

launched the Trade Enablement and Marketing (TEAM) Initiative to help Small and Micro Enterprises (SMEs) adopt digital commerce. With a ₹277.35 crore budget over 3 years, the initiative aims to onboard 5 lakh MSMEs, with 50% being women-led businesses. TEAM is a sub-scheme under the Raising and Accelerating MSME Performance (RAMP) program, focusing on supporting women-owned MSMEs in tier 2 and tier 3 cities. The initiative provides logistics, account management, packaging, design, catalogue preparation, and digital operations support. It also offers digital storefronts, integrated payment systems, and logistics solutions to help businesses reduce operational barriers and expand market reach. TEAM complements existing programs like Startup India, PM Vishwakarma Scheme, and the Digital MSME scheme, further strengthening the MSME ecosystem.

Union Minister Rajiv Ranjan Singh launched India's First Organic Fisheries Cluster in Sikkim

Union Minister Rajiv Ranjan Singh inaugurated India's first Organic Fisheries Cluster in Soreng, Sikkim, at the North Eastern Region (NER) State Meet-2025 in Guwahati, Assam. NABARD is a key stakeholder in developing this initiative, which promotes organic fish farming by avoiding harmful chemicals and adopting eco-friendly aquaculture practices.

This project aims to enhance the fisheries sector's competitiveness and aligns with Sikkim's status as India's first fully organic state (certified in 2016).

STATE NEWS

Assam FM Ajanta Neog presented Rs.2.63 Lakh Crore Budget for FY26

Assam Finance Minister Ajanta Neog presented a ₹2.63 lakh crore budget for FY26



in the Assam Legislative Assembly, with a fiscal deficit of ₹620.27 crore. The

budget saw a 250% rise in expenditure, and capital expenditure (CapEx) increased to ₹24,964 crore. A key proposal includes exempting professional tax for those earning up to ₹15,000 per month under the Assam Profession, Trades, Callings, and Employments Taxation Act, 1947. The government allocated ₹342 crore for a one-time ₹5,000 support to tea workers. Under the 'Chief Minister's Jibon Prema' scheme, ₹2,500 monthly assistance will be provided for one year to 2025 graduates from government universities and colleges. Additionally, ₹391 crore has been allocated for the Mukhya Mantri Nijut Moina Asoni (MMNMA) scheme, aimed at promoting girls' higher education and combating child marriage.

Maharashtra FM Ajit Pawar presented Rs 7.2 lakh crore State Budget for FY26

Maharashtra Deputy CM and Finance Minister Ajit Pawar presented a ₹7.20 lakh crore budget for FY26, focusing on industries, infrastructure, agriculture, employment, and social welfare. The total expenditure is ₹7.20 lakh crore, with revenue receipts projected to rise to ₹5,60,964 crore from ₹5,36,463 crore (RE 2024-25). Maharashtra is the 2nd state after Uttar Pradesh to propose such a large budget. The fiscal deficit stands at ₹1,36,234 crore, remaining within the 3% GSDP limit

under the FRBM Act, 2006. Revenue receipts for 2024-25 are estimated at ₹4,99,463 crore, up from ₹4,86,116 crore in 2023-24. The budget allocates ₹9,000 crore for agriculture, including ₹500 crore for AI-based farming projects covering over 1 lakh hectares and 50,000 farmers. Additionally, the government has approved the construction of 20 lakh houses under PMAY-R Phase-2 by 2026.

Union Minister JP Nadda announced 2 New schemes for Girl Child Welfare in Tripura

Union Health Minister Jagat Prakash Nadda announced two new welfare schemes for female children in Tripura during the BJP-led government's two-year celebration in Agartala. The schemes, Mukhyamantri Balika Samridhi Yojana and Mukhyamantri Kanya Atmanirbhar Yojana, aim to promote financial security and education for girls. Under Mukhyamantri Balika Samridhi Yojana, the Tripura government will deposit ₹50,000 as a one-time bond for every girl born in a BPL family, which is expected to grow to ₹8-10 lakh by the time she turns 18. The Mukhyamantri Kanya Atmanirbhar Yojana provides scooters to meritorious girl students to support higher education and career opportunities. Initially awarded to the top 100 girls in Higher Secondary examinations, the scheme has been expanded to benefit 140 students from all educational boards in the state.

Nagaland CM Neiphiu Rio presented Rs.24,849 Crore Budget for FY26

Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio, who also holds the finance portfolio, presented a ₹24,849 crore state budget for FY 2025-26 in the Nagaland Legislative Assembly, Kohima. The budget estimates total receipts at ₹24,849.01 crore and total expenditure at ₹24,699.01 crore. The total development outlay stands at ₹5,819.24 crore, including ₹1,200 crore from the state's own resources,

marking an 18.81% increase over the previous year. The budget allocated ₹5 crore for the Nagaland Skill Mission to train 5,000 youth in self-employment and private-sector jobs, linked to the Chief Minister's Micro Finance Initiative (CMMFI). Additionally, ₹15 crore was earmarked for the Chief Minister's Life Insurance Scheme (CMLIS) premium for the next year; the scheme, launched on October 1, 2024, has already enrolled nearly 4 lakh beneficiaries.

J&K CM Omar Abdullah presented Rs.1.12 lakh Crore Budget for FY26 with Zero-deficit

Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, who also holds the finance portfolio, presented a ₹1.12 lakh crore budget for FY 2025-26 at the J&K Assembly, Jammu, focusing on a zero-deficit budget. This is the first budget by an elected government in J&K in seven years, following the last budget in 2018 under the PDP-BJP coalition before J&K became a Union Territory after the abrogation of Article 370 on August 5, 2019. The total receipts are estimated at ₹1,40,309.99 crore, including a ₹28,000 crore overdraft provision, with revenue receipts of ₹97,982 crore and capital receipts of ₹14,328 crore. The total gross expenditure is also projected at ₹1,40,309.99 crore. Key welfare measures include free public transport for all women in the UT from April 1, 2025, 10 kg of free ration per person for Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) beneficiaries, and an increase in marriage assistance for AAY women beneficiaries from ₹50,000 to ₹75,000.

Chhattisgarh Finance Minister Om Prakash Choudhary presented Rs 1.65 Lakh Crore Budget for FY26

Chhattisgarh Finance Minister Om Prakash Choudhary presented the Rs 1,65,000 crore state budget for FY 2025-26, an increase of Rs 17,554 crore from the previous year. The

budget follows the theme 'GATI' (Good Governance, Accelerating Infrastructure, Technology, and Industrial Growth) and marks the state's silver jubilee, coinciding with Atal Bihari Vajpayee's 100th birth anniversary. Key initiatives include the Road Plan 2030 for improved connectivity, the Mukhyamantri Mobile Tower Scheme for better network access, and the Mukhyamantri Parivahan Yojana for transport in underserved areas. The Chhattisgarh Growth and Stability Fund has been established for financial security post-2039, alongside a new pension fund for government employees. Additionally, a new land registration system will reduce asset division and relinquishment costs to Rs 500.

Mizoram CM Pu Lalduhoma presented Rs.15,198.76 Crore State Budget for FY26

Mizoram Chief Minister Pu Lalduhoma, who also holds the finance portfolio, presented a Rs 15,198.76 crore budget for FY 2025-26 in the state legislative assembly, with no new taxes imposed. The budget allocates Rs 350 crore for the state's flagship 'Bana Kaih Scheme (Hand Holding),' a 75% increase from the previous year's Rs 200 crore allocation. A supplementary demand of Rs 3,512.33 crore was also presented for FY 2024-25. Revenue expenditure for FY26 is estimated at Rs 12,540.20 crore, constituting 82.51% of the total expenditure and reflecting a 4.88% rise from the current fiscal year. Additionally, Rs 500 crore is allocated for power purchases, and Rs 100 crore for road maintenance. The government aims to strengthen tax administration and boost revenue through the online lottery system.

Jharkhand Finance Minister Radhakrishna Kishore presented Rs 1.45 Lakh Crore Budget for FY 26

Jharkhand's Finance Minister Radhakrishna Kishore presented the state budget for FY 2025-26, amounting to ₹1,45,400 crore, an

increase from the previous year's ₹1.28 lakh crore budget. Named the "Abua Budget," it reflects the state's commitment to inclusive development, prioritizing the welfare of the poor, farmers, tribals, and women. The state's economy is projected to grow at a rate of 7.5%, with a fiscal deficit of ₹11,253 crore and an estimated revenue generation of ₹35,200 crore from its own tax sources. Jharkhand's Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) stood at ₹4.6 trillion in FY24, with a goal of reaching ₹10 trillion by FY30. The budget allocates ₹4,587 crore for agriculture and farmers' welfare, ₹9,841 crore for infrastructure and rural development, and ₹62,844 crore for various social sector initiatives, while also making provisions to strengthen education and healthcare infrastructure.

Bihar FM Samrat Choudhary presented Rs 3.17 lakh crore State Budget for FY26

Bihar's Deputy Chief Minister and Finance Minister, Samrat Choudhary, presented a ₹3.17 lakh crore (₹3,16,895.02 crore) state budget for FY 2025-26, an increase of ₹38,169 crore from the previous year's estimate. The education sector received the highest allocation of ₹60,954 crore, followed by the health department (₹20,335 crore), rural development department (₹16,193 crore), and energy department (₹13,483 crore). The revenue expenditure for FY26 is estimated at ₹2,52,000 crore, ₹26,323 crore higher than the previous year, while capital expenditure stands at ₹64,894.76 crore, making up 79.52% and 20.48% of total expenditure, respectively. The estimated fiscal deficit for 2025-26 is ₹32,718 crore, or 2.98% of the Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) of ₹10,97,264 crore.

Assam designated Chirang-Ripu Elephant Reserve as 8th National Park & renamed as 'SikhnaJwhlwao National Park'

Assam has designated the Chirang-Ripu Elephant Reserve as its 8th National Park (NP), naming it SikhnaJwhlwao National Park to honor Bodo legend Jaolia Dewan. The decision, first announced by CM Himanta Biswa Sarma in 2024, was approved by the Assam Cabinet on February 16, 2025. Spanning 316 sq km along the India-Bhutan border, it is located between Raimona NP in the west and Manas NP in the east. The park includes the Runikhata Range (Chirang), Jharbari Forest Range (Kokrajhar), and Haltugaon Forest Division. It is home to diverse wildlife, including golden langurs, Asian elephants, one-horned rhinoceroses, royal Bengal tigers, and various bird and reptile species.

Andhra Pradesh Government presented Rs 3.22 Lakh Crore Budget for 2025-26

Andhra Pradesh Finance Minister Payyavula Keshav presented the state's Annual Budget for FY 2025-26, with a total outlay of Rs 3,22,359 crore. The budget includes Rs 2,51,162 crore for revenue expenditure and Rs 40,635 crore for capital expenditure. Key allocations include Rs 47,456 crore for Backward Classes' welfare and Rs 31,805 crore for school education. The revenue deficit is Rs 33,185 crore (1.82% of GSDP), and the fiscal deficit is Rs 79,926 crore (4.38% of GSDP). Major schemes include Rs 9,407 crore for the TallikiVandanam Scheme, Rs 6,300 crore for AP AnnadataSukhibhava, and Rs 19,264 crore for health. Additionally, Rs 48,341.14 crore was allocated for agriculture, with Rs 12,903.41 crore for irrigation projects.

Gujarat Finance Minister Kanu Desai presented Rs 3.70 lakh Crore State Budget for FY26

Gujarat's Finance Minister Kanubhai Mohanlal Desai presented a ₹3.70 trillion budget for FY 2025-26 in the state legislative assembly, with an 11.3% increase over the previous year and

no new taxes. The budget is based on five key pillars: social security, human resource development, infrastructure, green growth, and economic development. The government provided ₹148 crore tax relief by reducing stamp duty on mortgage deeds and motor vehicle tax on EVs. The total allocation includes ₹2.36 trillion for revenue expenditure and ₹1.34 trillion for capital expenditure. Additionally, ₹1,020 crore was allocated for the Garvi Gujarat High-Speed Corridor, covering 1,367 km across 12 corridors.

Uttarakhand Finance Minister Premchand Aggrawal presented Rs 1,01,175 crore budget for FY26

Uttarakhand Finance Minister Premchand Aggrawal presented a ₹1,01,175.33 crore Budget for FY 2025-26, focusing on innovation, agriculture, industry, infrastructure, connectivity, tourism, and social welfare. The budget follows the 'GYAN' model (Gareeb, Yuva, Annadata, and Naari), prioritizing the poor, youth, farmers, and women. Revenue expenditure is ₹59,954.65 crore, and capital expenditure is ₹41,220.68 crore, marking a 13% increase from the previous year. Total receipts are ₹1,01,034.75 crore, with ₹62,540.54 crore from revenue receipts and ₹38,494.21 crore from capital receipts. The fiscal deficit is estimated at ₹12,604.92 crore (2.94% of GSDP), while a revenue surplus of ₹2,585.89 crore is expected. The budget aims to boost economic growth and welfare programs without a revenue deficit.

Rajasthan Finance Minister Diya Kumari unveiled State's first Green Budget worth Rs 27,854 Cr for sustainability

Rajasthan Budget 2025-26, presented by Deputy CM and FM Diya Kumari, has an outlay of ₹5.37 lakh crore, focusing on electricity, roads, water, health, and agriculture with sustainability integration. The state's first Green Budget allocates ₹27,854

crore (11.34% of scheme expenditure, 5.18% of total budget) for sustainability initiatives. The government aims to make Rajasthan a \$350 billion economy by 2030 and announced free solar plants and 150 electricity units per month. Key fiscal indicators include revenue receipts of ₹2.94 lakh crore, expenditure of ₹3.25 lakh crore, revenue deficit of ₹31,009 crore, and fiscal deficit of ₹84,643 crore (4.25% of GSDP). The budget prioritizes economic growth while ensuring sustainable development.

2nd edition of Simolu Festival held in Assam

The 2nd Simolu Festival was held on February 15-16, 2025, in Nagaon, Assam, celebrating the Bombax Ceiba (Silk Cotton) flowers and promoting environmental awareness. Organized by the Nagaon Wildlife Division under Kaziranga National Park, the festival showcased traditional performances, ethnic cuisine, and community activities. Key events included a 20 km cyclothon and a nature orientation program for students. The festival aims to preserve Assam's biodiversity and instill environmental consciousness, particularly among the youth, amid growing ecological challenges.

Gujarat launched G-SAFAL to empower 50,000 Underprivileged Women

The Gujarat government, led by CM Bhupendra Patel, launched G-SAFAL (Gujarat



Scheme for Antyodaya Families for Augmenting Livelihoods) to enhance livelihoods, empower women, and promote economic self-sufficiency among Antyodaya families. The initiative targets

50,000 families holding Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) cards across 25 talukas in 10 districts over five years. Implemented by the Gujarat Livelihood Promotion Company Limited (GLPC), it aligns with the Aspirational

Blocks Programme (ABP) of the Government of India. Key pillars include social security, livelihood creation, financial inclusion, and social empowerment. Beneficiaries receive training and a grant of ₹80,000 to support financial stability and create new opportunities.

Karnataka launched Revamped Single Window System to accelerate Investments and Ease of Doing Business

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah unveiled a revamped Single Window System (SWS) at Invest Karnataka 2025 to streamline industrial approvals and attract investments. The digital-first platform integrates over 150 business services across 30+ departments, enabling faster approvals through a unified portal. Key features include Udyog Mitra Assistant (UMA), an AI chatbot for policy assistance, and a GIS-based land management system for risk-free land acquisition. The SWS supports Karnataka's Industrial Policy 2024–29, aiming for Rs. 7.5 lakh crore in investments and 20 lakh jobs by 2029. At the event, Karnataka secured USD 115 billion in commitments, including major investments from Mahindra Group (Rs. 40,000 crore in renewable energy and EVs), JSW Group (Rs. 1.2 lakh crore in steel and green hydrogen), and Lam Research (Rs. 10,000 crore in semiconductors). The system also integrates with the National SWS, strengthening Karnataka's leadership in semiconductors and aerospace.

Kerala Finance Minister KN Balagopal presented State Budget for 2025-26

Kerala Finance Minister K.N. Balagopal presented the 2025-26 state budget, the last full budget of the Pinarayi Vijayan government's second term. The budget focuses on tax revisions, infrastructure, social security, education, and technology. Revenue receipts are estimated at ₹1,52,352 crore and

expenditure at ₹1,79,476 crore. The State's Own Tax Revenue (SOTR) is expected to rise by ₹9,888 crore, and non-tax revenue by ₹1,240 crore. Kerala's Social Security Pensions (SSPs), currently at ₹1,600 per month for 60 lakh beneficiaries, may see a minor hike. A ₹750 crore project is planned for Wayanad landslide rehabilitation. ₹21 crore was allocated for Stroke Care Units (SCUs) in hospitals across Kerala, making it the first Indian state with SCU facilities in all district hospitals.

WB Finance Minister Chandrima Bhattacharya presented Rs 3.89 Lakh Crore Budget for FY26

West Bengal Finance Minister *Chandrima Bhattacharya* presented a ₹3.89 lakh crore budget for FY 2025-26, an 8% increase from the previous year. The state's *outstanding debt* is projected at ₹7.71 lakh crore, with a *fiscal deficit* estimated at ₹73,177 crore. The *grant-in-aid* from the *Government of India* is set at ₹37,157 crore. A 4% *Dearness Allowance (DA) hike* for state employees and pensioners will bring the total DA to 18% from April 2025.

Key allocations include: 44,000 crore for rural development and Panchayats. 1,500 crore for rural road upgrades. 200 crore for the 'Nadi Bandhan' project to prevent riverbank erosion. 9,600 crore for the 'Banglar Bari' housing project to construct 16 lakh new houses.

Karnataka Governor Thaawar Chand Gehlot launched Braille-enabled Version of Indian Constitution



Karnataka Governor Thaawar Chand Gehlot launched a Braille-enabled version of the Indian Constitution in Bengaluru to mark its 75th anniversary.

This initiative, a collaboration between Sankara Eye Hospital and CII Young Indians (Yi), Bengaluru, aims to empower

visually impaired individuals by enabling them to read and understand their rights and responsibilities. The Braille version will be distributed across key institutions to ensure broader accessibility. This effort promotes *inclusivity* by making fundamental national knowledge accessible to all, allowing visually impaired citizens to independently engage with their constitutional rights.

HP Government initiated North India's First 1-MW Green Hydrogen Plant at Dabhota

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu laid the foundation stone for North India's first 1 MW green hydrogen plant in Dabhota, Solan district. Developed by Himachal Pradesh Power Corporation Limited (HPPCL) and Oil India Limited (OIL) with an investment of Rs 9.04 crore, this project supports HP's goal of becoming India's first Green Energy State by March 2026. The plant, spread over 4,000 square meters, will use renewable energy to produce hydrogen through electrolysis with an alkaline potassium hydroxide solution, reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It is expected to produce 423 kg of green hydrogen daily (1,54,395 kg annually), requiring 13 liters of water and 52.01 units of electricity per kg. The hydrogen will be used as a clean fuel in industries like transportation and manufacturing. In April 2023, HP signed an MoU with OIL for solar, green hydrogen, geothermal energy, and compressed biogas development.

Inland Mangrove Guneri became Gujarat's first Biodiversity Heritage Site

The Gujarat Biodiversity Board (GBB) declared the Inland Mangrove Guneri in Guneri village, Kutch district, as Gujarat's first Biodiversity Heritage Site (BHS). This unique ecosystem, covering 32.78 hectares, consists of rare inland mangroves growing in a non-tidal environment, unlike typical coastal mangroves. It is located 45 km from the

Arabian Sea and 4 km from Kori Creek. Inland mangroves are globally rare, reported from only eight locations. The declaration follows recommendations from Gujarat's leadership to enhance conservation. GBB will implement a management plan to protect the site's flora and fauna. The Gujarat government is also conducting capacity-building programs for local communities and forest staff. Under Section 37 of the Biological Diversity Act, 2002, states can notify BHS in consultation with local bodies. As of December 2024, India has 47 BHS, with the first being the Tamarind Grove in Bengaluru, Karnataka.

Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport among top 10 Busiest Global Airports in 2025; Dubai International Airport Tops: OAG

The Official Airline Guide (OAG) ranked Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA) as the 8th busiest airport globally in its 'World's Busiest Airports 2025' report. Delhi Airport recorded the highest capacity growth among the top 10 airports, with a 3.4% increase in seats, reaching 3.6 million in February 2025. Dubai International Airport (DXB) remains the world's busiest airport with 4.8 million seats, followed by Atlanta Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport (ATL) with 4.6 million seats. London Heathrow Airport (LHR) is Europe's busiest airport, ranking 5th globally with 3.85 million seats. The report highlights Delhi's growing global aviation significance, reflecting India's expanding air travel sector.

ODISHA NEWS

Scientists discover Soil Nematode 'Crassolabiumdhritiae' in Odisha

Scientists from the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI), Kolkata, discovered a new species of soil-dwelling nematode, *Crassolabiumdhritiae*,

in the Deccan Peninsula biogeographic zone in Keonjhar, Odisha. The findings, published in *Acta ZoologicaBulgarica*, highlight the region's rich biodiversity and the vital role of nematodes in soil ecosystems. The species is named in honor of Dr. Dhriti Banerjee, Director of ZSI, for her contributions to taxonomy and zoological research. *Crassolabiumdhritiae* has a medium-sized, slender body, rounded lip area, large odontostyle, long pharynx, distinctive female reproductive traits, and a unique tail shape. The *Crassolabium* genus exhibits omnivorous and predatory behaviors, though further research on their feeding patterns is ongoing. With this discovery, the total number of *Crassolabium* species worldwide reaches 39, including 9 species recorded in India.

Odisha Cabinet approved 'Antyodaya Gruha Yojana' to provide Pucca Houses for Weaker Sections

The Odisha Cabinet, headed by Chief Minister (CM) Mohan Charan Majhi, has approved the



launch of the Antyodaya Gruha Yojana, a housing scheme aimed at

providing pucca houses to eligible vulnerable families. An outlay of Rs. 7,550 crores have been allocated for the implementation of the scheme. Each beneficiary under this scheme will receive financial assistance of Rs 1.2 lakhs to build a 25-square-meter (sq m) pucca house (excluding the toilet area). Under the scheme, the Odisha government aims to build at least 2,25,000 houses over the next 3 years. Antyodaya Gruha Yojana aims to improve the standard of living for weaker sections of society in Odisha by providing them with permanent housing. This initiative complements the existing schemes such as the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana- Gramin

(PMAY-G) and the Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM-JANMAN), reinforcing Odisha's commitment to affordable housing for all. The beneficiary must be a permanent resident of Odisha and must belong to the Economically Weaker Section (EWS). The beneficiary categories include: Families affected by natural or Man-Made Disasters (MMD), Those displaced by government projects, Households with Differently Abled (DA) primary earners, Forest Rights Act (FRA) beneficiaries, Eligible families not covered under existing housing schemes. Beneficiaries who complete their houses within 4 months, qualify for an additional incentive of Rs 20,000, while those finishing within 6 months get Rs 10,000, encouraging faster construction.

Odisha CM Mohan Charan Majhi launched 'Bikashita Gaon, Bikashita Odisha' Scheme for Rural Development

The Chief Minister (CM) of Odisha, Mohan Charan Majhi launched the



'Bikashita Gaon, Bikashita Odisha (BGBO) Scheme' with a budget of Rs 5,000 crore for five years for the rural

infrastructural development project in Odisha. The scheme aims to enhance the basic infrastructure of villages and improving connectivity in rural areas. The BGBO scheme aims to carry out development activities in all 53,845 villages of Odisha, with an annual allocation of Rs 1,000 crore, in the next five years between the Financial Years (FY) 2024-25 and 2028-29. The Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water Department, Government of Odisha, is the responsible authority to clarify and modify the guidelines when needed. Up to 35% of the total funds can be used for road projects, 40% for blocks under the Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA) and and a

maximum of 5% for new innovative community projects. The scheme will focus on linking unconnected roads and improving village roads, while also covering civic services, sports, education, and small-scale tourism to enhance rural living standards. The initiative supports the Odisha government's goal of becoming a developed state by 2036 and aligns with the national vision of a 'Viksit Bharat by 2047'.

PM Narendra Modi visited to Odisha and Uttarakhand

Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Odisha and Uttarakhand to inaugurate the 'Utkarsh Odisha – Make in Odisha Conclave 2025' and the 38th National Games. In Odisha, he inaugurated the two-day Utkarsh Odisha Conclave in Bhubaneswar (January 28-29, 2025). The state received ₹16.73 lakh crore in investments across 593 industrial projects in 20 sectors and signed 145 MoUs worth ₹12.89 lakh crore across 16 sectors. In Uttarakhand, PM Modi inaugurated the 38th National Games at the Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium, Dehradun, marking 25 years of Uttarakhand's formation. The theme 'Green Games' emphasizes sustainability. Yoga and Mallakhamb were included in the National Games for the first time.

Odisha Govt and EESL collaborated to enhance Energy Efficiency Initiatives

The Odisha Department of Energy signed an MoU with Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL) to enhance energy efficiency initiatives in the state. The partnership focuses on sustainable development, cost reduction, and public infrastructure improvement through energy-efficient projects, clean cooking, electric mobility, and capacity building. Odisha aims to lead in energy sustainability, supporting India's Net Zero goals and a low-

carbon future through modern technology and public-private partnerships.

Avaada Group partnered with Casale to develop India's largest Green Ammonia Plant in Odisha

Mumbai (Maharashtra)- based Avaada Group partnered with Casale, a company fully owned by Casale Holding and headquartered in Lugano, Switzerland, to develop India's largest green ammonia plant in Gopalpur, Odisha. This project will help India transition away from fossil fuel-based ammonia production, aligning with the country's net-zero emission commitments. The facility will have a production capacity of 1,500 tonnes per day (TPD) and aims to drive clean energy adoption, reduce carbon emissions, and support sustainable industrial growth. Casale will provide the Green Ammonia Process License, engineering designs, key equipment, and technical expertise to establish the facility. Casale had licensed a total green ammonia capacity of 5,700 metric tonnes per day (MTD) in India till now.

DRDO successfully conducted 3 Flight-trials of indigenous VSHORADS from off the Coast of Odisha

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) successfully conducted three consecutive flight-trials of the Very Short-Range Air Defence System (VSHORADS) from Integrated Test Range (ITR), Chandipur off the coast of Odisha. These tests were conducted against high-speed targets flying at very low altitude. During these tests, the surface-to-air missiles intercepted and completely destroyed the targets having reduced thermal signature simulating low flying drones at different flying conditions. These flight-tests were carried out in final deployment configuration where in two field operators carried out weapon readiness, target acquisition and missile firing.

PM Narendra Modi inaugurated 'Utkarsh Odisha – Make in Odisha Conclave 2025' in Bhubaneswar

Prime Minister (PM) of India, Narendra Modi inaugurated the 'Utkarsh Odisha – Make in Odisha Conclave 2025' and the 'Make in Odisha Exhibition' in Bhubaneswar, Odisha. The two-day event, brought together industry leaders, investors, and policymakers from over 16 countries, including partner countries Singapore, Malaysia, and Australia, to explore investment opportunities in Odisha. A total

of 145 Memorandums of Understanding were signed during the conclave, attracting investment commitments worth Rs 16.73 lakh crore across various sectors, including chemicals & petrochemicals, textiles, mining & metallurgy, renewable energy (RE), Information Technology/Information Technology Enabled Services (IT/ITeS), tourism, and food processing.

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INDIA AND THE WORLD

External Affairs Minister Dr. Subrahmanyam Jaishankar's visit to UK & Ireland

External Affairs Minister (EAM) Dr. S. Jaishankar embarked on a 6-day visit to the



UK and Ireland to strengthen bilateral engagements. In the UK, he held discussions with

UK Foreign Secretary David Lammy, emphasizing the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, covering Defence, Trade, Economy, Health, Education, and People-to-People (P2P) ties. He reinforced the GBP 41 billion (USD 53 billion) bilateral trade relationship and inaugurated two new Indian consulates in Belfast and Manchester to boost regional economic ties. As a symbolic gesture, he was presented with a Tottenham Hotspur No. 1 Jersey by David Lammy. In Ireland, he focused on enhancing bilateral ties based on shared democratic values and cultural connections. He and Irish Minister Simon Harris agreed to establish a Joint Economic Commission (JEC) to enhance trade, investment, and technological cooperation. Both nations also signed an MoU for annual exchange of diplomats, strengthening diplomatic relations.

SIPRI Report 2024: Ukraine topped as world's largest arms importer; India ranks 2nd

According to the 'Trends in International Arms Transfers, 2024' report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Ukraine became the world's largest importer of major arms (2020–2024), with a

nearly 100-fold increase compared to 2015–2019. India ranked as the 2nd-largest arms importer, though its imports declined by 9.3%, reflecting higher domestic production and diversified sourcing. Qatar and Saudi Arabia ranked 3rd and 4th, respectively. The USA, France, and Russia were the top 3 arms exporters globally. India's top arms suppliers included Russia (36%), though its share dropped from 55% (2015–2019) to 36% (2020–2024) due to India's push for indigenous defence manufacturing. France (33%) emerged as India's 2nd-largest supplier, mainly due to Rafale jets, followed by Israel (13%).

India-Kyrgyzstan Military Exercise 'Khanjar-XII' conducted in Kyrgyzstan

The 12th edition of the India-Kyrgyzstan Joint Military Exercise 'Khanjar-XII' commenced on March 10, 2025, in Tokmok, Kyrgyzstan, and will continue until March 23, 2025. Initiated in 2011, this annual exercise alternates between India and Kyrgyzstan, with the 11th edition held in Bakloh, Himachal Pradesh, India (2024). The exercise aims to enhance military cooperation and interoperability between the Indian Army's Parachute Regiment (Special Forces) and the Kyrgyzstan Army's Scorpion Brigade. Key focus areas include urban warfare, counter-terrorism tactics, and precision sniping under a United Nations (UN) mandate. The training emphasizes counter-terrorism (CT) and Special Forces operations in urban and high-altitude terrains, strengthening both nations' commitment to combating terrorism and extremism. The exercise also features cultural exchanges,

including the celebration of Nowruz, fostering bilateral ties and regional peace and security.

India & Bangladesh conducted 6th 'CORPAT' & 4th 'BONGOSAGAR' Exercise in Bay of Bengal

The 6th edition of the India-Bangladesh Coordinated Patrol (CORPAT) and the 4th edition of the bilateral exercise 'BONGOSAGAR' commenced under the supervision of Commander Flotilla West and will conclude on March 12, 2025, in the Bay of Bengal. The Bangladesh Navy (BN) is represented by BNS Abu Ubaidah and a maritime patrol aircraft, while the Indian Navy (IN) has deployed INS Ranvir and a helicopter. Initiated in 2018, CORPAT aims to curb illegal fishing, smuggling, human trafficking, piracy, and drug trafficking along the maritime boundaries of both nations, while BONGOSAGAR enhances maritime security, crime prevention, and data sharing. The operations include patrolling along the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL), communication drills, surface gun-shoots, tactical maneuvers, and a steam past. These exercises strengthen regional maritime security, interoperability, and cooperation between India and Bangladesh, contributing to the stability of the Bay of Bengal region.

India chaired 68th Session of UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs for the first time

India has been elected to chair the 68th session of the United Nations (UN) Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND), marking its first time in this role. Ambassador Shambhu S. Kumaran, India's Permanent Representative to the UN in Vienna, assumes the chairmanship at the UN Office in Vienna, Austria, from March 10 to 14, 2025. The session hosts 2,000 delegates from over 150 countries, including the Vice President of Bolivia and Foreign Ministers from Ecuador,

Colombia, and Turkmenistan. India is represented by a 10-member inter-ministerial delegation, including officials from the Department of Revenue (DoR), Ministry of Finance (MoF), Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), and AIIMS. The event features side events and exhibitions, including India's special exhibition on Opium and Alkaloid Factories and two side events on 'Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyan' (March 11, 2025) and digital technologies in drug law enforcement (March 12, 2025). The CND agenda focuses on drug policy, treaty-based responsibilities, and UNODC's work.

The Wealth Report 2025: India ranked fourth globally with 85,698 HNWI; behind US, China and Japan

London-based Knight Frank released the 19th edition of "The Wealth Report 2025",



highlighting India's growing presence in global wealth creation. India ranked 4th globally with 85,698 High Net-Worth Individuals

(HNWIs) in 2024, marking a 6% increase from 80,686 in 2023 and accounting for 3.7% of the global HNWI population. The United States (905,413 HNWIs) topped the list, followed by China (471,634) and Japan (122,119). The report projects India's HNWI population to grow by 9.4%, reaching 93,753 by 2028. India also ranked 3rd globally in billionaire count, with 191 billionaires, adding 26 new billionaires in 2024, compared to just 7 in 2019. The cumulative wealth of Indian billionaires stands at \$950 billion, making India the third-largest wealth hub globally, behind the USA (\$5.7 trillion) and China (\$1.34 trillion). Additionally, India's billionaire population saw 12% year-on-year (YoY) growth in 2024, reinforcing the country's emergence as a global wealth powerhouse.

6th edition of India-Japan Joint Military Exercise 'Dharma Guardian' begins in Japan

The 6th edition of the India-Japan joint military exercise, 'Dharma Guardian,' commenced on



February 24, 2025, at the East Fuji Manoeuvre Training Area in Japan and will continue until March

9, 2025. The exercise, held annually since 2008, alternates between India and Japan and aims to enhance interoperability, joint urban warfare, and counter-terrorism operations under the UN mandate. The exercise involves 120 personnel each from the Indian Army's Madras Regiment and Japan's 34th Infantry Regiment, focusing on physical fitness, joint planning, tactical drills, and disaster response strategies. It strengthens India-Japan defence ties, promotes cultural understanding, and reinforces regional security in the Indo-Pacific. Other key India-Japan military exercises include JIMEX (naval exercise, last held in June 2024 in Japan) and Veer Guardian (air exercise, first held in January 2023 in Japan). These engagements highlight India and Japan's commitment to peace, security, and military cooperation.

India, Bangladesh agreed to launch new 'Hotline' between Border Forces

India and Bangladesh have agreed to establish a new hotline for effective border communication between the BSF Eastern Command (Kolkata) and BGB Headquarters (Dhaka). This was finalized during the 55th DG-level Border Coordination Conference held in New Delhi from February 18-20, 2025. The meeting was led by BSF DG Daljit Singh and BGB DG Major General Mohammad Ashrafuzzaman Siddiqui. The 56th meeting will be held in Bangladesh in July 2025.

Existing hotlines between force chiefs and field officers facilitate real-time intelligence sharing to curb cross-border crimes. India emphasized completing border fencing along the 4,096 km-long frontier, spanning Assam, Tripura, Mizoram, Meghalaya, and West Bengal. Currently, 864.48 km remain unfenced, including 174.51 km of 'non-feasible' gaps. Both sides discussed initiating fencing at 99 patches (70-72 km) after joint inspections. Earlier, 92 patches covering 95.8 km were approved for fencing.

India expanded collaboration with UK in key areas of Telecom, AI & Emerging Technologies

Neeraj Mittal, Secretary, Department of Telecommunications (DoT), Ministry of Communications (MoC), visited the United Kingdom (UK) to enhance collaboration in next-generation telecom, AI, and space technology. He engaged with UK officials, including Chris Johnson and Dave Smith from the Department of Science, Innovation, and Technology (DSIT). He also visited a Federated Telecom Hub (FTH) and participated in a roundtable on telecom security and innovation under the UK-India Technology Security Initiative (TSI). During the visit, CDOT (India) and SONIC Labs (UK) signed an MoU to strengthen cooperation in telecom security and innovation.

India elected as Vice President of IALA in Singapore

India was elected Vice President (VP) of the International Organization for Marine Aids to Navigation (IALA) during its 1st General Assembly in Singapore (Feb 18-21, 2025). This marks IALA's transition from an NGO to an Inter-Governmental Organization (IGO). India's election highlights its leadership in maritime safety, navigational aids, and international cooperation. The Indian delegation was led by T.K. Ramachandran,

Secretary, MoPSW. India will host the IALA Council meeting in December 2025 and the IALA Conference & General Assembly in September 2027 in Mumbai. IALA, founded in 1957, transformed into an IGO in August 2024 after 34 member states ratified the change. As an IGO, IALA sets international standards for marine navigation, promotes safety, and harmonizes global maritime systems. India's VP role strengthens its influence in global maritime governance.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar participated at 8th IOC in Oman

External Affairs Minister (EAM) S. Jaishankar participated in the 8th Indian Ocean Conference (IOC) in Muscat, Oman, themed "Voyage to New Horizons of Maritime Partnership", emphasizing regional cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). He delivered the keynote address highlighting India's commitment to maritime partnerships. During his visit, he held a bilateral meeting with Omani Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr Albusaidi to strengthen India-Oman ties. Both ministers unveiled a logo commemorating 70 years of diplomatic relations and launched the book "Mandvi to Muscat", showcasing historical India-Oman ties. On the sidelines, Jaishankar held discussions with foreign ministers of Brunei, Bangladesh, Iran, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Mauritius, and Nepal, addressing regional and global issues. The visit reinforced India's commitment to maritime security, economic cooperation, and historical partnerships in the IOR.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited to France & USA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited France and the United States (USA) to strengthen bilateral ties. From February 10-12, 2025, he was in France at the invitation of President

Emmanuel Macron, marking his 6th visit. Both leaders led the AI Action Summit in Paris, where PM Modi announced that India will host the next summit in 2026. In the USA, during his 10th visit and 4th meeting with President Donald Trump, PM Modi and Trump launched the 'Autonomous Systems Industry Alliance (ASIA)', aiming to advance autonomous technologies. The visit reinforced India's global partnerships in AI and emerging technologies.

IN's participation in 'International Fleet Review 2025' and 'Exercise Komodo'

The Indian Navy (IN) participated in the International Fleet Review (IFR) 2025 and the



5th Multilateral Naval Exercise Komodo in Bali, Indonesia, from February

15-22, 2025. The delegation included INS Shardul and a P-8I Maritime Surveillance Aircraft. IFR 2025, reviewed by Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto, aimed at fostering maritime cooperation. The IN engaged in maritime security discussions, tactical exercises, and environmental initiatives. Following IFR, the Multilateral Naval Exercise Komodo 2025 began on February 16, promoting interoperability, disaster management, and humanitarian aid. Over 30 countries, including the USA, Russia, China, and Australia, participated. This aligns with India's SAGAR vision, reinforcing regional security. The participation follows the IN's LA PEROUSE exercise in January 2025 and the Indonesian Navy Chief's visit during Republic Day 2025.

India & Indonesia signed pact to strengthen Traditional Medicine Quality Assurance

India and Indonesia signed an MoU to enhance quality assurance, standardization, and global promotion of traditional medicine systems. This partnership builds on a January

2025 exchange between India's Pharmacopoeia Commission for Indian Medicine & Homeopathy (PCIM&H) and Indonesia's Food and Drug Authority. The MoU focuses on establishing standardized protocols for production, testing, and certification of traditional medicines to ensure safety and efficacy. It also aims to combat counterfeit products and develop regulatory frameworks to facilitate trade. The agreement promotes joint research to validate traditional medicine practices and encourages collaboration among academic institutions and industry stakeholders. Economically, it boosts bilateral trade, expanding market access for Ayurvedic and Jamu products. The initiative aligns with India's goal of globalizing Ayush products and supports the WHO Traditional Medicine Strategy. This partnership strengthens India and Indonesia's leadership in integrating traditional medicine into global healthcare systems, setting an example for other nations.

USGBC: India retained 3rd Spot Globally for LEED Green Building Certification in 2024; China topped the List

The United States Green Building Council (USGBC) released its *Annual List of Top 10*



Countries and Regions for LEED in 2024, where India

retained the 3rd spot globally. India has 370 LEED-certified projects covering 8.50 million GSM, reaffirming its commitment to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030. China topped the list with 1,860 projects (25 million GSM), followed by Canada with 300 projects (10 million GSM). The ranking is based on LEED-certified space from January to December 2024. The bottom five countries include Mexico (6th), Hong Kong SAR (7th), Italy (8th), Brazil (9th), and Turkey (10th).

India & Panama signed MoU to Implement QIP

India signed its first Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Panama to implement Quick Impact Projects (QIP) aimed at improving socio-economic infrastructure. The MoU was signed by India's Ambassador Dr. Sumit Seth and Panama's Foreign Minister Javier Martínez-Acha Vásquez in Panama City. Supported by India's grant assistance, QIP will focus on physical and social infrastructure, including roads, community centers, education, healthcare, and sanitation. Previously, India provided COVID-19 medical aid (2020) and upgraded an IT center (2015) in Panama, strengthening bilateral cooperation.

India and Nepal signed MoU to strengthen Cooperation in WASH Sector

The Government of India (GoI) and the Government of Nepal signed an MoU to enhance cooperation in the Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) sector, including waste management. Signed in New Delhi, the agreement aims to improve access to clean drinking water and sanitation. Union Minister Chandrakant Raghunath Patil (MoJS) and Nepal's Minister of Water Supply, Pradeep Yadav, were present during the signing. Key areas of collaboration include capacity building (training for Nepali personnel), technology and knowledge transfer, and groundwater management (rainwater harvesting, artificial recharge, and quality enhancement). The MoU underscores both nations' commitment to public health, sustainability, and regional cooperation.

Overview of EC President Ursula von der Leyen's visit to India

European Commission (EC) President Ursula von der Leyen, along with the EU College of Commissioners, visited India from February 27-28, 2025, marking the first such visit

outside Europe. Discussions focused on trade, technology, climate change, security, and space cooperation. EC President met Prime Minister Narendra Modi to strengthen the EU-India strategic partnership. The 2nd India-EU Trade & Technology Council (TTC) meeting on February 28 led to commitments on food security, pharmaceutical supply chains, and clean energy technologies like solar, offshore wind, and green hydrogen. Both sides set a year-end deadline for concluding the long-negotiated India-EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA). The Science & Technology (S&T) cooperation agreement, originally signed in 2001, was extended for 2025-2030. Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh hosted an EU delegation led by Andrius Kubilius to discuss ongoing and future space projects. The visit reinforced India-EU ties in trade, innovation, and strategic sectors.

Australia invested USD 16 million to strengthen economic ties with India

Australia-India Trade and Investment Accelerator Fund (TIAF) was launched by the Australian government with a USD 16 million investment to enhance bilateral trade and investment with India. The initiative focuses on four key sectors: clean energy, education and skills, agribusiness, and tourism, where Australia holds a competitive edge. Additionally, USD 4 million will be allocated to expand the Maitri Grants Program to strengthen business and cultural ties. The strategy also promotes cooperation in defence, sports, space, and technology, aiming to boost economic resilience. Developed through extensive consultations, the roadmap aligns with India's projected growth as the third-largest economy by 2030. Australia seeks to deepen engagement with Indian businesses and communities, recognizing India's significant trade and investment potential.

Overview of Prime Minister of Bhutan DASHO Tshering Tobgay's visit to India

Bhutan's Prime Minister DASHO Tshering Tobgay visited India to strengthen bilateral ties and participate in the inaugural SOUL Leadership Conclave 2025. He held meetings with Indian PM Narendra Modi, reaffirming the tradition of high-level exchanges between the two nations. On February 21, 2025, PM Modi inaugurated the SOUL Leadership Conclave at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, with PM Tobgay as the Guest of Honor, delivering the keynote address. The two-day conclave (Feb 21-22, 2025) brought together leaders from politics, business, media, arts, spirituality, and public policy to share leadership insights and experiences.



Overview of Amir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani's visit to India

The Amir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, visited India at the invitation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, marking his second bilateral visit after 2015. He met President Droupadi Murmu and PM Modi in New Delhi to strengthen ties. On February 18, 2025, the India-Qatar Joint Business Forum was organized by CII and DPIIT. Several MoUs and agreements were signed, covering strategic partnerships, economic cooperation, cultural exchange, and energy collaboration, enhancing bilateral relations between India and Qatar.

India & Argentina signed MoU to strengthen cooperation in Lithium Exploration and Mining

India and Argentina signed an MoU to enhance lithium exploration and mining cooperation. The agreement was formalized in New Delhi between MECL (India) and Catamarca Provincial Government (Argentina)

in the presence of Union Minister G. Kishan Reddy and Governor Raúl Alejandro Jalil. Argentina, part of the “Lithium Triangle,” holds over 50% of global lithium reserves, crucial for EV batteries and renewable energy storage. The MoU aims to diversify India's lithium supply chain, reducing dependence on China. KABIL and Greenko are already engaged in lithium exploration, with KABIL securing a \$200 million project for lithium brine exploration. The partnership focuses on sustainable mining, knowledge exchange, and regulatory cooperation, supporting India's RE and EV goals while strengthening Latin American ties.

India & Oman signed EPC to enhance Archival Cooperation

The National Archives of India (NAI) and National Records and Archives Authority (NRAA) of Oman signed an Executive Programme of Cooperation (EPC) for 2025-2028 in New Delhi.



The EPC aims to enhance cultural and historical ties through the exchange of archival materials, expertise, and technology. The agreement includes document exchange, preservation of historical manuscripts, and joint cultural publications. It promotes conferences, exhibitions, and workshops on archives management to strengthen research and expertise sharing. It also facilitates research into Omani documents in India and the preservation of Indian archives in Oman, fostering a long-term bilateral cultural partnership.

Indo-Russia JV IRRPL delivered 40,000 AK-203 Assault Rifles to IA

Indo-Russian Rifles Private Limited (IRRPL), a joint venture between India and Russia, delivered 40,000 AK-203 assault rifles to the Indian Army. Manufactured at the Korwa Ordnance Factory in Amethi, Uttar Pradesh,

these rifles are produced with full technology transfer from Russia, aiming for 100% localization. This initiative supports India's “Make in India” and “Atmanirbhar Bharat” programs, enhancing self-reliance in defence manufacturing and strengthening India's defence capabilities.

India and Thailand signed three MoUs to enhance Gem & Jewellery Exports

A high-level Indian delegation from GJEPC, JAJ, and SGJIA visited Thailand from 22-24 February 2025 and signed three MoUs at the 71st Bangkok Gem and Jewellery Fair to enhance industry collaboration. The MoUs include: (i) GJEPC's IIGJ-RLC and Thailand's GIT for gemstone standardization and research; (ii) JAJ and CGTA to strengthen the coloured gemstone trade; and (iii) SGJIA and TSEA to promote innovation and market expansion in silver jewellery. These agreements aim to boost research, innovation, and market opportunities between India and Thailand's jewellery industries.


Japan and India Renewed Bilateral Swap Arrangement of USD 75 Billion India and Japan renewed the *2nd Amendment and Restatement Agreement* of the *Bilateral Swap Arrangement (BSA)*, maintaining the *USD 75 billion* agreement. Signed between the *Reserve Bank of India (RBI)* and the *Bank of Japan (BoJ)*, the arrangement aims to strengthen financial cooperation and complement global financial safety nets. The *BSA* is a *two-way swap* mechanism allowing both nations to exchange local currencies for *US dollars*, ensuring *liquidity support* during market stress. Effective from *February 28, 2025*, the renewal enhances regional and global financial stability, fostering *economic ties* and financial resilience during crises.

Air India & Kenya Airways entered Codeshare Partnership to expand connectivity

Air India, owned by the Tata Group and Singapore Airlines, has entered into a codeshare agreement with Kenya Airways to enhance connectivity and offer seamless travel for passengers. Under this agreement, Air India will assign its AI designator code to Kenya Airways' twice-daily flights between Nairobi (Kenya) and Mumbai (India). In return, Kenya Airways will place its KQ designator


code on Air India flights between Delhi and Nairobi. This partnership enables passengers to book single-ticket journeys on both airlines, with extended connectivity to Bangkok, Colombo, Dhaka, Malé, Melbourne, and Singapore via Mumbai. As of January 2025, Air India has 16 codeshare agreements and around 100 interline agreements. Both airlines plan to expand their codeshare network further, enhancing travel options between India, Africa, and beyond.

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BUSINESS AND ECONOMY

ICRA Projects India's GDP growth at 6.5% for FY26

India's credit rating agency, ICRA Limited, has projected the country's GDP growth at 6.5% for FY26, up from 6.3% in FY25, driven by improved rural and urban demand and increased investment activity.



The Gross Value Added (GVA) at basic prices is expected to grow by 6.3%, supported by a recovery in consumption and investment activity.

Infineon Technologies and CDIL signed MoU to strengthen India's Power Semiconductor Manufacturing

Munich-based Infineon Technologies AG signed its first MoU with Continental Device India Limited (CDIL) to boost domestic production of power semiconductors in India. This collaboration supports India's Semiconductor Mission under the Make in India initiative, aiming to reduce import dependency. Infineon will supply bare semiconductor wafers, which CDIL will process, assemble, and package into discrete and module semiconductor products for applications in solar technology, Electric Vehicles (EVs), power inverters, and energy-efficient appliances. The Indian government plans to roll out the first 'Made in India' semiconductor chip by late 2025, with five semiconductor manufacturing units under construction. The focus areas include EVs, renewable energy, industrial automation, and IoT devices. The partnership also paves the way for Silicon Carbide (SiC) and advanced

semiconductor technologies. CDIL, India's first semiconductor manufacturer, supplies high-reliability components to ISRO, HAL, and BEL. Its new Mohali assembly line has expanded its annual capacity to 600 million units, strengthening domestic semiconductor production.

India must grow 7.8% annually to achieve high-income status by 2047: World Bank

The World Bank released its report *India Country Economic Memorandum: Becoming a High-Income Economy in a Generation*, analyzing India's economic prospects and policy agenda. The report states that India must sustain an average growth rate of 7.8% over the next 22 years to achieve High-Income Nation (HIN) status by 2047. While India's past growth (6.3% from 2000-2024) provides a strong foundation, ambitious reforms are necessary. The report recommends four key policy areas: increasing investment, enhancing job opportunities, promoting structural transformation, and enabling balanced state-level growth. It suggests raising investment from 33.5% to 40% of GDP by 2035 and expanding labor force participation (currently at 56.4%) through growth in labor-intensive sectors like agro-processing, hospitality, and transportation. These measures aim to strengthen India's economic trajectory toward high-income status.

Yes Bank topped S&P Global CSA 2024, CDP, & featured in Sustainability Yearbook 2025

S&P Global's Corporate Sustainability Assessment (CSA) 2024 and the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP) ranked Yes Bank as

India's highest-rated bank in sustainability for the third consecutive year. The bank secured a CSA score of 72/100 and retained its A (Leadership Band) rating from CDP, highlighting its strong ESG and climate risk management. Yes Bank is the only Indian lender in the S&P Global Sustainability Yearbook 2025, which recognizes the top 15% of global banking leaders. The bank's ESG initiatives include a net-zero target for Scope 1 & 2 emissions by 2030 and disclosure of financed emissions. It is also part of the FTSE4Good Index Series and holds ISS ESG 'Prime' status, making it the only Indian bank with this distinction.

RBI reported 3.1% increase in All-India HPI for Q3 FY25

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) released its quarterly House Price Index (HPI) for Q3 FY25, showing a 3.1% year-on-year increase, lower than 4.3% in Q2 FY25 and 3.8% in Q3 FY24. On a quarter-on-quarter basis, HPI rose by 0.4%. Kolkata recorded the highest annual growth at 8.1%, while Kanpur saw the lowest at 0.1%. The data, sourced from registration authorities, covers 10 major cities, including Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru, Chennai, and Ahmedabad, reflecting regional variations in India's housing market trends.

GRSE signed MoU with Indian Army for Modular Steel Bridge in Arunachal Pradesh

Kolkata (West Bengal) based Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE) Limited has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Indian Army (IA) for the construction of a 130-foot-long Single Lane Modular (SLM) Steel Bridge (70R) in Arunachal Pradesh (AR). The agreement was signed by Natarajan Partheepan, General Manager (GM) (Bailey Bridges), representing GRSE with the IA.

INOX India became first to Earn IATF 16949 Certification for Cryogenic Fuel Tanks

INOX India Limited became the first Indian manufacturer of cryogenic equipment to receive the IATF 16949 Certification for cryogenic fuel tank production. Granted by Bureau Veritas Certification (BVC), this certification covers the design and manufacturing of vacuum-insulated cryogenic fuel tanks at INOX India's Kalol facility, Gujarat. This milestone strengthens India's presence in the LNG fuel tank sector, integrating cryogenic technology with automotive applications. The IATF 16949 Certification is a mandatory quality standard for automotive OEM suppliers, ensuring adherence to high-quality management practices in the automotive industry. It is based on ISO 9001 but tailored specifically for automotive needs. INOX India Limited, a key player in cryogenic storage, re-gas, and distribution systems for LNG, industrial gases, and cryo-scientific applications, operates in India, Brazil, and Europe.

RBI reduced Risk Weights for Banks lending to NBFCs and MFIs

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI), under Sections 21 and 35A of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949, has reduced risk weights on Scheduled Commercial Banks' (SCBs) loans to Non-Banking Financial



Companies (NBFCs) and Microfinance Institutions (MFIs) to enhance credit flow. Risk weights on NBFC loans were reduced by 25 basis points (bps) from 125% to 100%, effective April 1, 2025. For microloans, the risk weight is 75%, while loans for consumption purposes now carry a 100% risk weight. Microfinance loans by Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) and Local Area Banks (LABs) will also have 100%

risk weight, effective immediately. The move is expected to free up ₹40,000 crore in capital, enabling banks to extend up to ₹4 lakh crore in loans to AAA-rated companies. This rollback follows RBI's November 2023 decision to increase risk weights to curb the rapid rise in unsecured lending.

RBI launched Financial Literacy Week 2025 to focus on Women's Prosperity

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) launched the Financial Literacy Week (FLW) 2025 from



February 24 to 28, 2025, under the theme 'Financial Literacy – Women's Prosperity', aligning with the National Strategy for Financial Education

2020-2025. RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra inaugurated the event in Mumbai, Maharashtra. Initiated in 2016, FLW aims to enhance financial awareness across India. As part of FLW 2025, banks will promote financial literacy through RBI-developed posters on their websites, ATMs, mobile apps, and branch display boards. The campaign focuses on risk diversification, responsible borrowing, credit score maintenance, and household budgeting, with special emphasis on homemakers, working women, and women entrepreneurs. Additionally, RBI has planned multimedia campaigns to highlight the importance of financial literacy for women, reinforcing their financial independence and security.

S&P Global Market Intelligence Projects India's GDP to grow at 6.4% in FY25 and FY26

S&P Global Market Intelligence has projected India's GDP growth at 6.4% for FY25 and FY26, citing monetary and fiscal stimulus as key factors in supporting economic resilience

amid global challenges. The latest estimate for FY25 is slightly lower than the previous 6.5% projection, while the FY26 forecast remains unchanged. Looking ahead, GDP growth is expected to slow to 6.2% in FY27 before rising to 6.6% in FY28. The firm highlighted that tax relief measures in the Union Budget for FY25 and a 25 basis point rate cut by RBI in February 2025 will aid domestic demand but may not fully counter external economic pressures.

MP Govt & SECI signed MoU for 200 MW Solar Project at Dhar

The Madhya Pradesh government signed an MoU with Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI) to establish a 200 MW solar project in Dhar and a 1000 MWh battery storage project. The agreement was signed during the Global Investors Summit 2025 in Bhopal, inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The solar project is part of a 500 MW agreement with MPPMCL under the CPSU Scheme for 25 years. SECI, a Navratna CPSU under MNRE, also plans to invest ₹2,500 crore in renewable energy development in Madhya Pradesh.

Moody's Projects India's GDP Growth to slow to 6.4% in 2025

Moody's report 'Asia-Pacific (APAC) Outlook: Chaos Ahead' projects India's GDP growth to slow to 6.4% in 2025, down from 6.6% in 2024, due to global economic headwinds, U.S. tariffs, and weak export demand. The report forecasts India's GDP to remain at 6.4% in 2026 and 2027. It highlights that APAC's economic growth will slow in 2025 due to rising trade tensions and shifting global tariffs. Global growth is expected to decline from 3.9% (2024) to 3.7% (2025) and 3.5% (2026). While India's GDP trails 2% below its pre-pandemic trend, it is better positioned than ASEAN economies, which lag by 5%.

HMA & DIAT collaborate to enhance Aerospace Research and Innovation

Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) Management Academy (HMA), Bengaluru, signed an MoU with Defence Institute of Advanced Technology (DIAT), Pune, under DRDO to enhance research and technological advancements in aerospace. The partnership enables HAL executives to pursue Master's and Ph.D. programs at DIAT, participate in specialized modules on emerging technologies, and engage in faculty and student exchanges. It also facilitates joint conferences, seminars, and collaborative research projects to strengthen India's defence and aviation capabilities, bridging the gap between industry and academia.

SBI estimated India's Q3FY25 GDP Growth at 6.2% to 6.3%

According to the State Bank of India (SBI) Research report, India's GDP grew by 6.2% to 6.3% in Q3 FY25 (October-December 2024). SBI economists used a "Nowcasting Model", incorporating 36 high-frequency indicators to estimate GDP. The report forecasts 6.3% GDP growth for FY25, assuming no major revisions by the National Statistical Office (NSO). In Q2 FY25 (July-September 2024), GDP grew by 5.4%, below the Reserve Bank of India (RBI)'s 7% projection. The manufacturing sector, measured by the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), improved from 3.3% in Q2 to 4.3% in Q3 FY25, reflecting economic recovery.

ICRA estimated India's GDP Growth to rise to 6.4% in Q3 FY2025

ICRA has projected India's GDP growth at 6.4% in Q3 FY2025, up from 5.4% in Q2, driven by higher government spending. GVA growth is expected at 6.6%, supported by industrial (6.2%), services (7.7%), and agricultural (4.0%) sectors. The Govt's CapEx surged 47.7% YoY, the highest in six quarters,

while 24 states (excluding four) saw a 9.9% YoY rise in capital outlay. Service exports hit \$36.9 billion in Dec 2024, with Q3 exports growing 17.5% YoY. Merchandise exports rebounded with 3.3% YoY growth, reversing a Q2 contraction of 4.3%.

India's Solar Share to Surge, Renewables to contribute 27% of Energy Mix by 2027: IEA

India's renewable energy (RE) share is projected to rise from 21% in 2024 to 27% by 2027, driven mainly by a 28% increase in



solar power. Wind energy is expected to grow from 7% CAGR (2018-

2024) to 11% CAGR (2025-2027), while hydropower is forecasted to grow at 7% CAGR, with 21.1 GW potential identified. Nuclear energy capacity grew 13% in 2024, with plans to triple capacity from 8.2 GW to 22.5 GW by 2032, balancing economic growth, energy security, and sustainability.

RBI penalized SFL, NTB, USFB for Regulatory Non-Compliance

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) imposed penalties on Nainital Bank (Rs 61.40 lakh) for non-compliance with interest rate and customer service norms, Ujjivan Small Finance Bank (Rs 6.70 lakh) for violations related to loans and advances, and Shriram Finance (Rs 5.80 lakh) for non-compliance with KYC norms and credit information guidelines. The action highlights RBI's strict enforcement of regulatory compliance.

RBI imposed restrictions on New India Co-operative Bank on Supervisory Concerns

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) imposed restrictions on Mumbai-based New India Co-operative Bank Limited, barring it from issuing new loans and suspending deposit withdrawals due to financial concerns.

Enforced under Section 35A of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949, these restrictions took effect on February 13, 2025, for six months, subject to review. The bank cannot grant loans, make investments, or accept new deposits without RBI approval but can set off loans against deposits under certain conditions. Essential expenses like salaries and rent are permitted. Eligible depositors will receive up to ₹5 lakh from the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC). Additionally, the RBI superseded the bank's Board of Directors for 12 months under Section 36 AAA, appointing former SBI CGM Shreekant as administrator. A committee of advisors was also formed to stabilize operations and work towards the bank's revival.

SEBI allowed Retail Investors to join Algo trading from August 1 2025

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) introduced a framework to regulate algorithmic (algo) trading for retail investors, granting them Direct Market Access (DMA) through registered brokers.

Previously dominated by institutional players, this move aims to enhance transparency and oversight. Brokers must obtain exchange approval for each algo offered to retail investors, with any modifications requiring prior consent. Algo orders will have unique identifiers for clear audit trails. Retail investors developing their own algos must register them with exchanges if their trading exceeds a set order-per-second limit, allowing use for personal and family accounts. Stock exchanges must establish SOPs for testing, monitoring, and simulating algo trading, including a "kill switch" for risk control. The Brokers' Industry Standards Forum will finalize implementation details by

**SEBI's new
rules on algo
trading**

April 1, 2025, with the new norms effective from August 1, 2025.

NTPC & IA signed PPA for Solar-Hydrogen Microgrid in Ladakh

NTPC Limited and the Indian Army signed a 25-year Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) for supplying 200 kW of renewable energy from a solar-hydrogen-based microgrid at Chushul, Ladakh. This project aims to replace diesel generators, reducing fossil fuel dependence and cutting CO₂ emissions by 1,500 tons annually. Located at 4,400 meters, the microgrid operates in extreme winter conditions (-30°C) and supports the Army's off-grid locations. It contributes to the decarbonization and modernization of defence operations in the Himalayan region. NTPC targets 60 GW of renewable energy capacity by 2032.

'The 1% Club' became first Finfluencer Firm to Get SEBI RIA license

The 1% Club, founded by internet personality Sharan Hegde, became the first finfluencer-led company to obtain a Registered Investment Advisor (RIA) license from SEBI. It aims to disrupt India's wealth management market with scalable solutions like stock recommendations, thematic portfolios, and high-yield debt solutions. The firm's Personal CFO division manages ₹750 crore in assets, and it plans to expand its advisory team across major cities. With 85,000 members and 250,000 users impacted through workshops, the firm is set to launch more SEBI-approved investment products.

RBI launched Regulatory Sandbox for Testing Offline Digital Payment Solution

the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) launched a Regulatory Sandbox (RS) to test the "On Tap" application facility under the theme of 'Retail Payments'. Chennai (TamilNadu, TN) based Extio India Technologies Private

Limited was selected to participate in the 'Test Phase' of this initiative. The company tested an offline digital payment solution integrating Distributed Ledger Technology (DLT) with private biometric authorization, enabling offline card-to-card and card-to-phone transactions. The key features of the innovation include the use of cryptography in distributed ledgers, on-card biometric authentication, and time-limited balances, to prevent issues like double spending. The product after testing was found acceptable under the RS and may be adopted by Regulated Entities, subject to compliance with applicable regulatory requirements.

MoD signed contract with Russia for Procurement of Anti-Ship Cruise Missile

In February 2024, Ministry of Defence (MoD), Government of India (GoI) signed a contract with Russia for procurement of anti-ship cruise missiles. The agreement was signed in the presence of Rajesh Kumar Singh, Secretary, MoD in New Delhi, Delhi. The purchase of these anti-ship cruise missiles will significantly enhance the combat capabilities of the Indian Navy (IN)'s submarine fleet.

T-Hub & ITFA Sign MoU to boost India-Türkiye Trade & Cultural Ties

Hyderabad-based startup incubator T-Hub signed an MoU with the Indo-Türkiye Friendship Association (ITFA) to enhance collaboration between the innovation ecosystems of India and Türkiye. The agreement focuses on cross-border mentorship, market access, and cooperation in key sectors such as IT, pharmaceuticals, defence, aerospace, cybersecurity, green energy, and critical minerals. It also promotes joint academic and accelerator programs in AI, IoT, and technology-driven initiatives. The MoU aims to facilitate Indian startups' entry into Turkish markets while helping Turkish startups navigate the Indian ecosystem. ITFA and T-Hub will work together on initiatives like the Türkiye Tourism Roadshow scheduled for February 26, 2025, in Hyderabad. The partnership seeks to strengthen economic and technological ties as both nations emerge as global leaders. In 2024, bilateral trade between India and Türkiye reached USD 13 billion, reflecting growing economic engagement.

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SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

DRDO unveiled BM-04 SRBM to enhance India's defence capabilities

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) unveiled the BM-04 Short-Range Ballistic Missile (SRBM) at Vigyan Vaibhav 2025 in Hyderabad, Telangana, showcasing India's advancement in hypersonic missile technology. The canister-launched missile features a two-stage solid-fuel propulsion system, a range of 400-1,500 km, and a 500 kg conventional warhead. It employs GPS and IRNSS-based inertial navigation with high accuracy (CEP < 30 m). Measuring 10.2 m in length, 1.2 m in diameter, and weighing 11,500 kg, the missile is designed to counter enemy anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) capabilities. It incorporates a boost-glide vehicle concept, achieving hypersonic speeds (Mach 5+), and features a re-entry vehicle (RV) with fixed mid-body wings and delta control tailfins. Launched from a six-axle Tatra-based Transporter Erector Launcher (TEL), BM-04 positions India among the few nations—Russia, the USA, and China—with hypersonic missile capabilities.

DRDO successfully tested Indigenous Life Support System for LCA Tejas

The Defence Bio-Engineering & ElectroMedical Laboratory (DEBEL), a DRDO lab in Bengaluru, successfully conducted high-altitude trials of the On-Board Oxygen Generating System (OBOGS)-based Integrated Life Support System (ILSS) for the Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas. Designed and tested by DEBEL, the system underwent trials at altitudes up to 50,000 feet, validated by CEMILAC. Manufactured by Larsen & Toubro (L&T) with 90% indigenous

components, the ILSS replaces traditional liquid oxygen systems with real-time oxygen generation using molecular sieve technology. It integrates features like an Anti-Gravity Valve and Emergency Oxygen System for pilot safety. The project involved ADA, HAL, and the IAF, ensuring certification from DGAQA and NFTC. Strategically, the system enhances Tejas' combat readiness, reduces import dependency, and has potential adaptability for aircraft like the MiG-29K.

NASA & Nokia launched the First Mobile Network on Moon

NASA and Nokia are set to establish the first mobile network on the Moon as part of the Intuitive Machines (IM)-2 mission under NASA's Artemis program, which aims to return humans to the lunar surface by 2027. The Athena lander will deploy Nokia's Lunar Surface Communication System (LSCS), utilizing Earth-based 4G LTE technology to provide high-speed and reliable connectivity. This network will facilitate communication between astronauts, lunar vehicles, and mission control, enabling real-time data transmission, video calls, and remote operations, significantly enhancing lunar exploration capabilities.

Firefly Aerospace's Blue Ghost Lander Landed on the Moon

Texas-based Firefly Aerospace successfully landed its uncrewed Blue Ghost lander on the Moon, making it the first commercial firm to achieve a soft landing as part of NASA's Commercial Lunar Payload Services (CLPS) program. Launched on January 15, 2025, Blue Ghost Mission 1, also known as *Ghost Riders in the Sky*, landed near Mons Latreille in Mare Crisium after a 45-day journey. The 2-

meter-tall lander carries 10 payloads under a \$101.5 million contract, conducting experiments on lunar heat flow, surface composition, and solar wind interactions. It also tests a radiation-resistant computer and a dust shield. The mission, operating for 14 Earth days, will capture images of a solar eclipse on March 14, 2025. Firefly is the second private firm to achieve a lunar landing after Intuitive Machines in 2024.

China launched two Satellites Featuring Highest Spatial Resolution

China successfully launched two high-resolution remote sensing satellites, 'Siwei Gaojing-1 03' and 'Siwei Gaojing-1 04', using the Long March-2C rocket from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre. Placed in a 500 km sun-synchronous orbit, these satellites will aid in natural resource management, urban planning, and commercial applications. Operated by China Siwei under CASC, they are part of the SuperView constellation, which now consists of nine satellites. Developed by SAST, this marks the 561st flight mission of the Long March carrier rocket series.

Indian-origin Tushar Mehta joins Blue Origin crew on 10th space tourism mission

Indian-origin Tushar Mehta was among six crew members on Blue Origin's 10th space tourism mission, NS-30, launched on February 25, 2025, from West Texas. Mehta, a hedge fund partner in New York, became the second Indian-origin person after Gopi Thotakura to take a Blue Origin flight. The suborbital New Shepard (NS) vehicle carried six crew members, including Lane Bess, Jesús Calleja, Elaine Chia Hyde, Dr. Richard Scott, and one undisclosed astronaut. The mission, also called "Perfect 10," marked Blue Origin's 30th New Shepard flight.

DRDO & IN successfully conducted Flight Trials of First-of-its-Kind 'NASM-SR' in Odisha

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), in collaboration with the Indian Navy (IN), successfully conducted flight trials of the Naval Anti-Ship Missile Short Range (NASM-SR) at the Integrated Test Range (ITR), Chandipur, Odisha. The missile was launched from the Sea King 42B Helicopter, marking a significant advancement in India's indigenous defense capabilities. The NASM-SR is designed to replace the Sea Eagle missiles currently in use with the Indian Navy. It features Man-in-Loop capability, allowing human intervention during operations. The missile was tested in Bearing-only Lock-on after Launch (LOAL) mode, initially guided broadly before precisely striking a target. It successfully hit a small ship at its maximum range of 50 km using a sea-skimming trajectory, enhancing its effectiveness against naval threats.

SpaceX successfully launched 3rd Moon landing Mission with Athena Lander

SpaceX successfully launched the Intuitive Machines (IM-2) mission, the third Moon landing mission of 2025, aboard a Falcon 9 rocket from NASA's Kennedy Space Center, Florida, USA. The mission carries Athena lander, a Nova-C class robotic lunar lander developed by Intuitive Machines Inc. (Houston, Texas). The 15-feet (4.7 m) tall Athena lander is expected to land on Mons Mouton, a flat-topped mountain 160 km from the Moon's South Pole, on March 6, 2025. The mission is a crucial part of NASA's Commercial Lunar Payload Services (CLPS) initiative and the Artemis program. Athena also carries Grace, a 3-foot (1 m) drone named after computer pioneer Grace Hopper. The drone will perform test hops and explore a 65-

ft-deep lunar crater, contributing to future Moon exploration strategies.

First detailed Geological Map of Moon's South Pole from Chandrayaan Data

Astronomers have created the first-ever detailed geological map of the Moon's south pole, where India's Chandrayaan-3 lander, Vikram, landed on 23 August 2023. The map was developed by researchers from PRL Ahmedabad, Panjab University, and ISRO's LEOS Bengaluru. The Pragyan rover, deployed by Vikram, collected chemical data on lunar regolith. Findings, published in *Advances in Space Research*, confirm the presence of an underground ocean of molten rock beneath the lunar surface, supporting past discoveries by Apollo, Luna, and Chang'e missions. The Schomberger crater was identified as the primary source of debris in Vikram's landing area, which is 3.7 billion years old. The site lies near the South Pole-Aitken Basin, one of the Solar System's oldest impact craters. Scientists believe the Moon formed 4.5 billion years ago due to a massive planetary collision with early Earth.

China launched ChinaSat-10R Communication Satellite into Orbit

China successfully launched the ChinaSat-10R (Zhongxing-10R) communication satellite using a Long March-3B carrier rocket from the Xichang Satellite Launch Center in Sichuan Province. This satellite replaces ChinaSat-10 (launched in 2011) and marks China's 8th orbital launch of 2025 and the 560th mission of the Long March series. Developed by the China Academy of Space Technology (CAST) and operated by China Satcom, a subsidiary of CASC, the satellite will provide communication services for transportation, emergency response, energy, forestry, and Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) regions. The Long March-3B rocket, designed for Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO)

missions, is a 3-stage heavy-lift launch vehicle with 4 strap-on boosters, developed by CASC's China Academy of Launch Vehicle Technology (CALT). It stands 56.3 meters tall and weighs 456 metric tons.

India's 4th-Generation Deep-Ocean Submersible 'Matsya-6000' Completes Wet Testing

India's 4th-generation deep-ocean submersible, Matsya-6000, successfully completed wet testing at L&T Shipbuilding, Kattupalli Port, Chennai. Developed by the National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT) under the Samudrayaan Project, it is designed for deep-sea exploration and scientific research. Before wet testing, it underwent dry tests at 500m depth to assess integration and performance. From January 27 to February 12, 2025, it completed 8 dives (5 unmanned, 3 manned), focusing on power control, buoyancy, stability, maneuverability, safety, and scientific instrument functionality, ensuring its readiness for advanced trials.

DRDO's ADA & MIDHANI signed MoU to develop MDN100 Steel for Aeronautical Applications

The Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) of DRDO and Mishra Dhatu Nigam Limited (MIDHANI) signed an MoU for the indigenous development of MDN100 steel, a high-strength, high-toughness special-grade steel for aerospace applications. This steel will support India's 5th-generation Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA) program and aligns with the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative. The MoU was signed at Aero India 2025. MDN100 offers excellent forgeability and weight-saving benefits, enhancing aircraft performance. MIDHANI, a key supplier for DRDO and HAL, also showcased SuperNi 41, a superalloy for aero engines. ADA's ongoing combat aircraft programs include LCA Mk2, AMCA, and Twin-Engine Deck-Based Fighter

(TEDBF) for the Indian Navy, strengthening India's self-reliance in aerospace technology.

SpaceX Launched 21 Starlink Satellites into Orbit aboard

SpaceX's Falcon 9 successfully launched 21 Starlink satellites into Low-Earth Orbit (LEO) from Cape Canaveral, marking its 19th mission of 2025, with 13 dedicated to Starlink. This brings the total Starlink satellites in orbit to 6,994, with 6,957 operational. Starlink, developed by SpaceX, is the world's largest satellite constellation providing internet to remote areas. The satellites orbit at 550 km with a five-year lifespan. The latest V2 satellites weigh 800 kg, nearly three times heavier than the previous version. Direct-to-cell connectivity, launched with T-Mobile Starlink, enables smartphones to connect directly to satellites, eliminating the need for cell towers. It uses an eNodeB modem, functioning like a space-based cell tower, supporting LTE phones and IoT devices.

ISRO in partnership with IIT Madras developed indigenous Semiconductor Chip 'IRIS'

ISRO's Inertial Systems Unit (IISU) and IIT Madras have developed IRIS, an indigenous semiconductor chip for space applications, based on the SHAKTI processor. It is India's third SHAKTI-based microprocessor after RIMO (2018) and MOUSHIK (2020). Supported by MeitY's DIR-V program under 'Digital India,' IRIS advances India's self-reliance in space and semiconductor technology, aligning with 'Make in India' and 'Atmanirbhar Bharat.' The project, led by Dr. Veezhinathan Kamakoti of IIT-M, aims to strengthen indigenous microprocessor-based product development.

ISRO successfully carried out ignition trial of Indigenous CE20 Cryogenic Engine

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) successfully conducted the ignition

trial of the CE20 cryogenic engine, which powers the upper stage of the Launch Vehicle Mark-3 (LVM3). The Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre (LPSC) developed the engine, and the test was conducted at the High Altitude Test Facility in Mahendragiri, Tamil Nadu. The trial successfully simulated engine ignition in vacuum conditions, crucial for in-space operations. ISRO is exploring bootstrap mode turbo pump initiation instead of the stored gas system, allowing re-ignition under tank head conditions. The CE20 engine is designed for thrust levels between 19-20 tonnes and will be used in the Gaganyaan mission. LVM3, previously known as GSLV Mk-III, is a three-stage launch vehicle with solid, liquid, and cryogenic stages, capable of launching 4,000 kg satellites into Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO).

China's Shenzhou-19 Crew produced Oxygen & Rocket Fuel in Space through Artificial Photosynthesis

The *Shenzhou-19* crew aboard China's *Tiangong* space station successfully produced oxygen and rocket fuel ingredients using *Artificial Photosynthesis (AP)*—a first-ever in-orbit experiment. This aligns with China's goal of a crewed Moon landing by 2030. The astronauts—*Cai Xuzhe*, *Song Lingdong*, and *Wang Haoze*—launched on *October 30, 2024*, and in *January 2025*, they successfully created *ethylene (C₂H₄)*, a key rocket fuel component, and oxygen by converting *CO₂* and water using a semiconductor catalyst. This method is *more energy-efficient* than the *International Space Station's electrolysis process* and supports long-term space missions by reducing dependence on Earth's resources. China plans to use this technology for its *lunar base* by 2035, enabling astronauts to generate essential resources from lunar water. China also aims to develop a *nuclear*

reactor on the Moon in collaboration with Russia.

ISRO unveiled FEAST Software at IIT-Hyderabad

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) launched the latest version of the Finite Element Analysis of Structures (FEAST) software at the 8th National Finite Element Developers' Meeting held at the Indian Institute of Technology – Hyderabad(IIT-H) in Hyderabad (Telangana). FEAST was developed by ISRO's Bengaluru (Karnataka) based Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC), to analyse the behaviour of structures under various loads in aerospace, automobile, civil, mechanical, and marine engineering. It allows engineers to test designs virtually before physical construction. The software will be crucial for upcoming ISRO projects such as the Human Mission, Bharatiya Antariksh Station (BAS) and the Next Generation Launch Vehicle (NGLV). Over the years, multiple versions have been launched, with over 4,000 licenses sold across India.

Researchers discover two New Green Cardamom Species in Western Ghats

An international team of researchers discovered two new species, *Elettaria facifera* and *Elettaria tulipifera*, closely related to green cardamom (*Elettaria cardamomum*), in the Western Ghats of Kerala. The findings, published in *Taxon*, contribute to spice production and conservation. The research team includes experts from multiple countries, including India's Mamiyl Sabu from KSCSTE-Malabar Botanical Garden. *Elettaria facifera*, found in Periyar Tiger Reserve, has sessile leaves and pure white labellum with purple-red markings. *Elettaria tulipifera*, found in Agasthyamalai Hills and Munnar, features tulip-shaped inflorescence and red whorled bracts. The *Elettaria* genus now consists of

seven species, with recent reclassification adding four species previously under *Alpinia*. The seed capsules of *Elettaria cardamomum* produce commercially available green cardamom. Globally, Guatemala is the largest cardamom producer, followed by India and Tanzania. In India, cardamom cultivation is concentrated in Kerala, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu.

Two New Species of Jumping Spiders discovered in Western Ghats

Researchers from the University of Kerala discovered two new species of jumping spiders, *Epidelaxia falciformis* sp. nov and *Epidelaxia palustris* sp. nov, from Shendurney Wildlife Sanctuary in Kerala. This marks the first record of the *Epidelaxia* genus in India, previously thought to be endemic to Sri Lanka. The discovery, published in *Zootaxa* (February 2025), highlights the biodiversity of the Western Ghats. The species were found in 2022 and 2023, exhibiting distinct markings and copulatory organ features. *E. falciformis* measures 4.39 mm, while *E. palustris* varies from 4.57 mm (males) to 3.69 mm (females). These spiders are well-adapted to dense forest habitats.

ISRO's Astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla to pilot NASA's Private Axiom Mission 4, Marking first Indian Astronaut to travel to ISS

Indian Air Force (IAF) Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla has been named the pilot for Axiom Mission 4 (Ax-4), a private spaceflight to the International Space Station (ISS). He will be the first Indian astronaut to visit the ISS on a private mission and the first Indian in space in 40 years. A fighter combat leader and test pilot, he has around 2000 hours of flying experience on various aircraft. He is also one of four astronaut-designates for India's Gaganyaan mission. Ax-4, organized by Axiom Space with SpaceX as the launch

provider, is scheduled for a 2025 launch from NASA's Kennedy Space Center, Florida. The mission will dock with the ISS for 14 days, conducting scientific experiments and commercial activities in collaboration with NASA and ISRO. The mission crew includes Peggy Whitson (USA) as commander, Sławosz Uznański-Wiśniewski (Poland), and Tibor Kapu (Hungary) as specialists.

New Species of Phytopathogenic Fungus 'Epicoccum indicum' discovered

Researchers at Banaras Hindu University (BHU), Uttar Pradesh, discovered a new phytopathogenic fungus species, *Epicoccum indicum*, associated with a leaf spot disease in vetiver (*Chrysopogon zizanioides*). The species name reflects its Indian origin. The discovery was made by Dr. Raghvendra Singh and Soumyadeep Rajwar from BHU's Department of Botany. Identification was based on morpho-cultural traits and multilocus sequencing. Phytopathogenic fungi cause 70-80% of plant diseases, leading to significant agricultural losses, and can be necrotrophic or biotrophic in nature.

GRSE Limited & AMS Private Limited signed MoU for Defence and Aerospace Collaboration

Kolkata, (West Bengal, WB) based Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers Limited (GRSE) and Hyderabad (Telangana) based Apollo Micro Systems (AMS) Private Limited signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for a 5-year partnership aimed at advancing cutting-edge technologies and strengthening India's Defence and Aerospace capabilities. The partnership focuses on joint Research and Development (R&D), co-production, and the supply of a wide range of Underwater Weapons and Vehicles, Underwater Mines, Underwater Communication Systems, and Air Defence Systems and Vehicles.

IAF conducted Exercise 'Desert Hunt 2025' in Rajasthan

The Indian Air Force (IAF) conducted Exercise 'Desert Hunt 2025,' an integrated Tri-Service Special Forces exercise, at Air Force Station Jodhpur, Rajasthan, from February 24-28, 2025. The exercise involved elite Special Forces from the Indian Army (Para SF), Indian Navy (MARCOS), and IAF (Garud) to enhance interoperability, coordination, and combat efficiency. It included airborne insertion, precision strikes, hostage rescue, counter-terrorism, combat free falls, and urban warfare scenarios. Senior military officials supervised the exercise, validating joint doctrines and reinforcing inter-service cooperation to strengthen national security.

Indian Army signed MoU with L&T for ACADA systems

The Indian Army (IA) signed a ₹80.43 crore contract with Larsen & Toubro (L&T) for procuring 223 Automatic Chemical Agent Detection and Alarm (ACADA) systems under the Buy Indian-Indigenously Designed, Developed, and Manufactured (Indian-IDDMM) category. Developed by DRDO's Defence Research and Development Establishment (DRDE), Gwalior, ACADA enhances India's Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear (CBRN) defence. The system detects chemical warfare agents (CWA) and toxic industrial chemicals (TICs) using Ion Mobility Spectrometry (IMS) technology, enabling continuous monitoring of hazardous environments. Over 80% of its components are locally sourced, supporting the Atmanirbharta initiative. This procurement strengthens the Indian Army's defensive CBRN capabilities, aiding both military operations and disaster relief efforts related to industrial accidents.

Security exercise 'Sagar Kavach' was conducted by ICG in WB

A two-day coastal security exercise, 'Sagar Kavach', was conducted in West Bengal (WB), coordinated by the Coast Guard Region (North East), Kolkata. The State Coastal Security Operation Centre (SCSOC) at Coast Guard District No. 8, Haldia, served as the nerve center. The exercise aimed to validate coastal security SOPs across WB's 158 km coastline. It included simulated scenarios such as hijacking of fishing boats, smuggling, IED planting, and attacks on vital assets. The drill also featured coordinated sea and air surveillance by the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) to enhance preparedness against potential terror threats.

IA and IAF conducted joint Airborne Operations Exercise 'Ex Winged Raider'

The Indian Army (IA) and Indian Air Force (IAF) conducted Exercise Winged Raider in Eastern India, focusing on special airborne operations. The exercise demonstrated high operational readiness and IA-IAF integration. It involved airborne insertion techniques using fixed-wing and rotary-wing aircraft, including the first-ever use of Chinook Helicopters in the Eastern Theatre. The training enhanced troops' rapid deployment skills and mission readiness. The exercise emphasized the strategic role of airborne forces in modern warfare and highlighted seamless IA-IAF coordination, reaffirming their commitment to national security and operational preparedness.

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SPORTS

ICC Champions Trophy 2025: India beat New Zealand by 4 wickets, Claims 3rd Champions Trophy title

India won the 9th ICC Champions Trophy by defeating New Zealand by 4 wickets in the



final at Dubai International Cricket Stadium, UAE. This marks

India's third title, having previously won in 2002 and 2013. Chasing 252 runs, India scored 254/6 in 49 overs, with captain Rohit Sharma top-scoring with 76 runs, and Shreyas Iyer adding 48 runs. New Zealand posted 251/7 in 50 overs, with Daryl Mitchell (63 runs) and *Michael Bracewell (53 runs)** leading their innings. Notably, India has won 23 out of 24 matches in the last three ICC men's tournaments since 2023.

India clinched '2025 Asian Women's Kabaddi Championship Title' for the 5th time, by Defeating Iran

The Indian women's Kabaddi team won the 6th Asian Women's Kabaddi Championship title by defeating Iran 32-25 in the final held in Tehran, Iran. This victory marked India's 5th title, with previous wins in 2005, 2007, 2008, and 2017, except in 2016, when South Korea won. Captain Sonali Shingate led India as the defending champion. The Asian Women's Kabaddi Championship 2025, held from March 6-8, 2025, featured 7 teams divided into two groups. India was in Group A alongside Bangladesh, Thailand, and Malaysia, while Group B included Iran, Nepal, and Iraq. The tournament followed a round-robin format, with the top two teams from each group advancing to the semifinals. India dominated the tournament, securing big wins

in the group stage and defeating Nepal 56-18 in the semifinal before overcoming Iran in the final. India is set to host the Women's Kabaddi World Cup 2025 at Rajgir Sports Academy, Bihar.

Karnataka CM Siddarmaiah presented Rs 4.09 Lakh Crore Budget for FY26

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah presented a ₹4.09 lakh crore budget for FY 2025-26 (FY26), marking a 12% increase from the ₹3.65 lakh crore in the Revised Estimates (RE) for FY25. The budget prioritizes six key areas, including welfare programs, agriculture, rural and urban development, investment, job creation, and governance reforms. The total estimated receipts for FY26 stand at ₹4,08,647 crore, with ₹2,92,477 crore in revenue receipts, including ₹2,08,100 crore in state tax revenue, ₹16,500 crore in non-tax revenue, and ₹67,877 crore in central funds. Karnataka contributes 8.4% to India's GDP, with a projected 7.4% growth in FY25. The budget allocates ₹51,339 crore to agriculture, up from ₹44,000 crore in FY25, and ₹45,286 crore to education, constituting 10% of the total outlay. The allocation for the five guarantee schemes is ₹51,034 crore, reduced from ₹56,000 crore in FY25.

Punjab Govt launched 'Project Hifazat' to Ensure Women and Child Safety

The Punjab Government launched Project Hifazat on March 8, International Women's Day, to protect women from violence. Inaugurated by Dr. Baljit Kaur, Minister of Social Security, Women, and Child Development, in Chandigarh, the initiative aims to strengthen the response system for domestic violence, workplace harassment, and abuse. It encourages women to report

incidents without fear through the 181 Women Helpline and 1098 Child Helpline, available 24/7 under Mission Shakti and Mission Vatsalya, with emergency cases transferred to ERSS-112 for immediate action. The project promotes inter-departmental collaboration among Health and Family Welfare, Punjab Police, Women and Child Development, and Social Security to ensure quick legal, medical, psychological, and social support for victims, fostering a safer environment for women in Punjab.

FIFA banned Russia, Congo from 2026 World Cup

The International Federation of Association Football (FIFA) has banned Russia and Congo from the 2026 FIFA World Cup, which will be jointly hosted by the USA, Canada, and Mexico from June 11 to July 19, 2026, featuring 104 matches across 16 cities. Russia remains banned from FIFA and UEFA competitions since its 2022 invasion of Ukraine, while Congo was excluded due to third-party interference in its football federation (FECOFOOT). Pakistan was previously banned but has regained eligibility for the 2027 AFC Asian Cup qualifiers after meeting governance requirements. Following these exclusions, FIFA redistributed qualification slots in the expanded 48-team format, increasing Europe's spots from 13 to 16, Africa securing 10 additional slots, and Asia gaining 9 spots. Since 1950, FIFA has banned 17 nations, including Germany, Japan, South Africa, Mexico, and Chile, for regulatory violations.

Veteran Bangladeshi Cricketer Mushfiquir Rahim announced Retirement from ODIs

Mushfiquir Rahim, veteran Bangladeshi wicket-keeper batsman, has announced his retirement from One Day International (ODI) cricket with immediate effect. Making his ODI debut nearly 20 years ago, he is Bangladesh's

second-highest run-scorer with 7,795 runs in 274 matches, averaging 36.42, with 9 centuries and 49 half-centuries. Apart from ODIs, he has played 94 Test matches and 102 T20s. He is also one of only three Bangladeshi batters to score a century in an ODI World Cup.

Australian Cricketer & Former Captain Steve Smith announced retirement from ODI Cricket

Steven Peter Devereux Smith, Australia's stand-in captain, announced his retirement



from One Day International (ODI) cricket following Australia's semi-final loss to India in the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 in Dubai, UAE. His 15-

year ODI career saw him play 170 matches, scoring 5,800 runs at an average of 43.28, with 12 centuries, 35 half-centuries, and 28 wickets. However, he will continue playing Test and T20I cricket. Smith's achievements include being named ICC Cricket World Cup Player of the Tournament (2015) for scoring 402 runs, including a crucial century in the semi-final. He also won the Sir Garfield Sobers Trophy for ICC Men's Cricketer of the Year (2015) and was named ICC Test Player of the Year (2015). His contributions to Australian cricket were further recognized with three Allan Border Medals (2015, 2018, 2021) for being Australia's best player across all formats. Additionally, he was awarded the Australian Men's ODI Player of the Year (2015, 2021) for his exceptional performances in ODIs.

Mohun Bagan Super Giant won 2024–25 ISL Shield Title

Mohun Bagan Super Giant (MBSG) secured the 2024–25 Indian Super League (ISL)

League Winners' Shield, becoming the first team in ISL history to defend the title consecutively. The Kolkata-based club clinched the Shield with a 1–0 victory over Odisha FC at Vivekananda Yuba Bharati Krirangan, Kolkata. With 52 points, MBSG was declared the winner, as second-placed FC Goa (42 points) could not surpass them even with remaining matches. This victory also qualified MBSG for the AFC Champions League Two. Goalkeeper Vishal Kaith set a record as the first goalkeeper to achieve 50 clean sheets in ISL history. The ISL, founded in 2013, is organized by Football Sports Development Limited (FSDL) and AIFF, featuring 13 teams, with the Shield winner and top six teams advancing to playoffs. Mohun Bagan, established in 1889, is one of Asia's oldest football clubs and is majority-owned by the RPSG Group (80%).

2025 Archery Asia Cup World Ranking Tournament, Stage I: India topped Medal Tally with 5 Gold Medals

India concluded the '2025 Archery Asia Cup-World Ranking Tournament, Stage I'

Asia Cup Archery: India tops medal tally with 8 medals, including 5 gold

organized by World Archery Asia (WAA), held

from February 16 to 23, 2025 in Bangkok, Thailand. Indian Archers topped the medal tally with an outstanding performance of securing 8 medals in the competition including 5 Gold, 2 Silver and 1 Bronze. South Korea finished second in the medal tally with 5 medals, including 2 gold. India set a new Under-21 World Record by scoring 2129 in Men's Compound Team.

Indonesia won their first ever 'Badminton Asia Mixed Team Championship 2025' over China

Indonesia won their first-ever title at the 4th Badminton Asia Mixed Team Championship 2025 by defeating defending champions

China 3-1 in the final. The tournament was held from February 11 to 16, 2025, in Qingdao, China. Muhammad Shohibul Fikri captained Indonesia, while Chen Xujun led China. Indonesia secured the gold medal, China won silver, and Japan and Thailand shared the bronze. This victory marks a historic achievement for Indonesia in the tournament.

Saudi Arabia to host First-Ever Olympic Esports Games in 2027

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) announced that the inaugural Olympic Esports Games will be held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in 2027 as part of a 12-year partnership with the Saudi Olympic and Paralympic Committee (SOPC). The Esports World Cup Foundation (EWCF) will collaborate in organizing the event. The initiative aims to bridge traditional sports and esports. The "Road to the Games" will begin in 2025, featuring esports competitions leading up to the main event in 2027.

Asian Winter Games 2025: China dominated

The 9th Asian Winter Games (Harbin 2025), held in Harbin, Heilongjiang Province, China, from February 7 to February 14, 2025, marked a significant milestone in the promotion of winter sports across Asia. Organized by the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) and supported by the International Skating Union (ISU), the event brought together athletes from 34 countries. Asian Winter Games 2025 featured 64 events across 11 winter sports disciplines. China topped the medal tally with 32 Gold, 27 Silver, and 26 Bronze medals, total 85 medals.

Sri Lanka's Former Captain Dimuth Karunaratne announced retirement from International Cricket

Former captain of Sri Lankan national cricket team Frank Dimuth Madushanka Karun

aratne, popularly known as Dimuth Karunaratne, announced his retirement from International Cricket following his 100th Test match against Australia in Galle, Sri Lanka.

Real Madrid & Brazil Legend Marcelo announced retirement from Football

Former Real Madrid and Brazil left-back Marcelo announced his retirement from professional football at the age of 36. He began his career with Fluminense FC in 2005 before joining Real Madrid in 2007, where he played for 16 seasons, making 546 appearances and winning 25 trophies, including six La Liga and five UEFA Champions League titles. He played a key role in Real Madrid's La Decima (10th European title) in 2014 and was part of the team that won three consecutive Champions League titles (2016-2018). Marcelo earned 58 caps for Brazil, winning the 2013 Confederations Cup and Olympic bronze (2008) and silver (2012) medals.

Shrachi Rarh Bengal Tigers won 6th 'Men's HIL 2024-25' Title

Shrachi Rarh Bengal Tigers clinched the first-ever Men's Hockey India League (HIL) 2024-25 title by defeating Hyderabad Toofans 4-3 in the final at Birsa Munda International Hockey Stadium, Rourkela, Odisha. The 6th edition of the tournament, featuring 8 teams, was held from December 28, 2024, to February 1, 2025. Captain Rupinder Pal Singh led the champions, while Sumit Walmiki captained Hyderabad Toofans. The Hockey India League (HIL), organized by Hockey India, resumed after a hiatus since 2017, when Kalinga Lancers won the 5th edition. In the Women's HIL 2024-25, Odisha Warriors defeated Soorma Hockey Club 2-1 to win the inaugural title at Marang Gomke Jaipal Singh Munda AstroTurf Hockey Stadium, Ranchi, Jharkhand.

Indian Wicketkeeper-Batter Wriddhiman Saha retired from All Forms of Cricket

In February 2025, Indian wicketkeeper-batter Wriddhiman Saha announced his retirement from all forms of cricket. His retirement was marked by his final 'Ranji Trophy' appearance for West Bengal (WB) against Punjab at Eden Gardens, Kolkata, WB. The 40-year-old made his debut for India in February 2010 and represented India in 49 international matches, including 40 Tests and 9 One Day Internationals (ODIs). In domestic cricket, he played 142 First-Class and 116 List A matches, notably for WB and Tripura.

India won ICC U19 Women's T20 World Cup 2025 by defeating South Africa for 2nd consecutive time

India won the 2nd edition of the ICC Under-19 Women's T20 World Cup 2025, defeating South Africa by 9 wickets in the final at Bayuemas Oval, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Led by captain Niki Prasad, India secured back-to-back titles after winning the inaugural edition in 2023. Gongadi Trisha was awarded 'Player of the Match' and 'Player of the Series' for her outstanding performance. The BCCI announced a prize of Rs 5 crore for the team. The next edition of the tournament is scheduled to be hosted by Bangladesh and Nepal in 2027.

R Praggnanandhaa won 'Tata Steel Chess Masters 2025', Defeats World Champion D Gukesh in Tiebreaker

Indian Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa won the Tata Steel Chess Masters 2025, defeating World Chess Champion D Gukesh in the tiebreaker in Wijk aan Zee, Netherlands. He became the first Indian since Viswanathan Anand (2006) to win the title. Praggnanandhaa, ranked World No. 8 in July 2024, was also the runner-up at the Chess World Cup 2023, where he lost to Magnus

Carlsen. The Tata Steel Chess Tournament, known as the "Wimbledon of Chess," has a legacy of winners including former world champions like Anand, Carlsen, and Kasparov.

Australia Wins ICC Women's Championship Trophy for the 3rd time

Australia won International Cricket Council (ICC) Women's Championship trophy 2022-2025. Australia



secured the championship for the third consecutive time. This was the 3rd edition of the

ICC Women's Championship. Australia finished the 3rd edition series with the highest total of 39 points (17 wins, three no-results, three losses) in 24 matches.

India secured 2nd position with 37 points in the table. Top 6 team from the points table will be directly qualified for the 2025 Women's Cricket World Cup hosted by India.

23rd National Para Athletics Championship: Official Logo and Mascot launched

The official logo and mascot of the 23rd National Para Athletics Championship 2025 were unveiled in an event in Chennai, Tamil Nadu (TN). The Sports Development Authority

of Tamil Nadu (SDAT), in collaboration with the Tamil Nadu Paralympic Sports Association (TNPSA), is supporting the event. The logo includes elements that symbolize the dynamic nature of para athletics and the inclusive spirit of the event. The logo highlights the championship's core values of empowerment and equality. The mascot is an elephant, representing strength and determination. The mascot, an elephant, symbolizes resilience, reflecting the unwavering spirit of para-athletes.

BCCI Awards 2025: Jasprit Bumrah & Smriti Mandhana named Best International Cricketers of 2023-24

At the BCCI Awards 2025 (Naman Awards), Jasprit Bumrah and Smriti Mandhana won the Best International Cricketer of the Year 2023-24 in the Men's and Women's categories, respectively. Former cricketer Sachin Tendulkar received the Colonel CK Nayudu Lifetime Achievement Award 2024. The award, instituted in 1994, honors India's first cricket captain, CK Nayudu. A total of 26 winners were recognized at the event held in Mumbai. Additionally, BCCI presented a special award to Ravichandran Ashwin, who retired from international cricket in December 2024.

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AWARDS

YouGov India Value Rankings 2025: Amazon, Flipkart and Amul Rank as India's top Brands

The YouGov India Value Rankings 2025 have ranked Amazon, Flipkart, and Amul as the top three most valued brands in India. Amul, India's largest milk cooperative, is the only FMCG brand in the top three. The



rankings, based on consumer preferences, cover six key sectors: airlines, consumer electronics, automobiles, general insurance, travel

booking platforms, and e-commerce. The report also highlights gender-based preferences, with men favoring Tata Motors and Air India, while women prefer Swiggy and Malabar Gold & Diamonds, reflecting their interest in convenience services and jewelry.

PM Narendra Modi conferred 'Honourary Order of Freedom of Barbados'

Prime Minister Narendra Modi was awarded the Honorary Order of Freedom of Barbados, one of the highest national honours of Barbados, in recognition of his strategic leadership and critical assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic. The award, conferred by Barbados President Dame Sandra Mason, was received on his behalf by Union MoS Pabitra Margherita (MEA). The honour is given to non-citizens for outstanding contributions in areas like leadership, international relations, and social development. Barbadian PM Mia Amor Mottley announced the award on November 20, 2024, during the 2nd India-CARICOM

Leaders' Summit in Guyana, acknowledging PM Modi's role in global pandemic response efforts. Since establishing diplomatic ties in 1966, India and Barbados have maintained strong bilateral relations, with this award symbolizing their deepening friendship and cooperation in global initiatives.

Nithin Kamath of Zerodha named EY Entrepreneur of the Year 2024

Nithin Kamath, Founder and CEO of Zerodha, was named the Ernst & Young (EY) Entrepreneur Of The Year (EOY) 2024 at an event in New Delhi, where Union Minister Bhupender Yadav (MoEFCC) presented the awards. A self-made entrepreneur, Kamath transformed Zerodha into a billion-dollar brokerage firm through an innovative low-margin, high-volume model. He will represent India at the EY World Entrepreneur Of The Year (WEOY) Awards in Monte Carlo, Monaco, in June 2025. Other awardees included K.V. Kamath, Chairman of Jio Financial Services Limited (JFSL), who received the Lifetime Achievement Award for his contributions to India's financial sector, and S. Somanath, former ISRO Chairman, who was honoured with the Special Jury Award for his role in advancing India's space missions.

97th Academy Awards – Oscars 2025: 'Anora' Won 5 awards, 'The Brutalist' won 3 awards

The 97th Academy Awards (Oscars 2025) were held on March 2, 2025, at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles, USA, hosted by Conan O'Brien. *Anora* was the biggest winner with five Oscars, including Best Picture and Best Director (Sean Baker). *The Brutalist* won three awards, including Best

Actor (Adrien Brody), while *Emilia Pérez* secured two awards. Adrien Brody won his second Oscar for *The Brutalist*. The ceremony honoured films released in 2024 across 23 categories. The Indian film *Anuja* was shortlisted for Best Live Action Short Film but lost to *I'm Not Robot*. The nominations were announced on January 23, 2025.

India received 'Prince Michael ecade of Action Road Safety Award' for Advancements in Vehicle Safety & Infrastructure

India was awarded the 'Prince Michael Decade of Action Road Safety Award', the highest honor in road safety, at the 4th Ministerial Conference on Road Safety in Marrakech, Morocco. India shared this recognition with Morocco for significant efforts in improving road safety. The conference, organized by Morocco and WHO, focused on the theme "Commit to Life", aiming to reduce global road fatalities by 50% by 2030. India was recognized for vehicle safety advancements since 2014, including the introduction of a new car safety assessment program and mandatory Anti-lock Braking Systems (ABS) in all new two-wheelers. The award was presented by Etienne Krug (WHO) to Ajay Tamta, Union MoS for Road Transport and Highways, on behalf of India.

Bharti Enterprises Chairman, Sunil Bharti Mittal presented with 'Honourary Knighthood Medal'

Sunil Bharti Mittal, Founder and Chairman of Bharti Enterprises, was honored with the 'Knight Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire' (KBE) for strengthening UK-India business relations. The award was presented by Lindy Cameron, British High Commissioner to India, in New Delhi. Mittal is the first Indian citizen to

receive the KBE under King Charles III. He leads Bharti Enterprises, a diversified conglomerate with interests in telecom, insurance, real estate, and more. He chairs Airtel Africa Plc, serving over 100 million customers across 17 African countries, and heads Bharti Airtel, one of India's largest telecom operators, with 550 million customers. Mittal has held key global business roles, including Chairman of the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) and member of the India-UK CEO Forum. He received the Padma Bhushan in 2007 and was ranked India's 7th richest person (2024) with a net worth of \$30.7 billion (Forbes India).

Goa's Mopa Airport became first in India to win 'Sarvashrestha Suraksha Puraskaar'

Goa's Manohar International Airport (GOX), also known as Mopa Airport, became the first



Indian airport to receive the "Sarvashrestha Suraksha Puraskar (Golden Trophy)" at the NSCI Safety Awards 2024 in the 'Service Sector' category. Developed by GMR Goa International Airport Limited (GGIAL) under the Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) model, the airport was evaluated on safety performance, awareness, training, and

innovations. The NSCI, under the Ministry of Labour and Employment, awards organizations for exemplary Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) practices. GOX achieved zero fatal, non-fatal, and permanent disability incidents, leading to the award. The airport is named after Manohar Parrikar, former Defence Minister and Chief Minister of Goa.

Purnima Devi Barman: Assam's Conservation Champion featured in TIME's Women of the Year 2025

Purnima Devi Barman, a wildlife biologist from Assam, India, has been named in TIME



Magazine's 2025 Women of the Year list for her conservation efforts. She is recognized for saving the greater adjutant stork (Hargila) from extinction while empowering rural women. The stork population, once down to

450, has risen to over 1,800, leading the IUCN to upgrade its status from endangered to near threatened (2023). She founded the Hargila Army, a 10,000-member women-led group protecting stork nesting sites. As Director of WiNN India and a member of the IUCN Specialist Group, she promotes conservation globally. Her accolades include India's Nari Shakti Puraskar (2017), the UK's Whitley Award (2017), and the UNEP Champion of the Earth (2022), highlighting her impact in conservation and women-led environmental initiatives.

Forbes' Top 10 Richest Women in the world in 2025: USA's Alice Louise Walton tops, India's Savitri Devi Jindal ranks 7th

Forbes India released the 5th edition of the "Top 10 Richest Women in the World 2025" list. Alice Walton (USA), daughter of Walmart founder Sam Walton, topped the list with a net worth of \$112.5 billion. India's Savitri Devi Jindal and Family secured the 7th position with \$32.3 billion, representing the JSW Group. The combined net worth of the top 10 women exceeds \$500 billion, showcasing their leadership across various industries globally.

Nagaland Forest Management Project received the SKOCH Award

The Nagaland Forest Management Project (NFMP) won the SKOCH Award 2024 for enhancing forest ecosystems and supporting income generation. The award was presented on 15th February 2025 at the 100th SKOCH Summit in New Delhi and received by officials from the Nagaland Department of Environment, Forests & Climate Change (DEFCC). Implemented by DEFCC with Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) assistance, NFMP (2017-2027) aims to restore Jhum areas, support livelihoods, and cover 79,096 hectares across 185 villages in 11 districts. It plans to establish 555 Self-Help Groups (SHGs). The SKOCH Award, instituted in 1997, recognizes excellence in governance, technology, and social sectors.

Tata Sons Chairman N Chandrasekaran conferred with UK's Honorary Knighthood

Natarajan Chandrasekaran, Chairman of Tata Sons, was conferred with the United Kingdom's "Knight Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (KBE)" under King Charles III for his contributions to UK-India business relations. The KBE/DBE is among the highest British honors for foreign nationals. Other Indian recipients include Sunil Bharti Mittal (2024), Ratan Tata (2009), Pandit Ravi Shankar (2001), and Jamshed Irani (1997). The Order of the British Empire's highest rank is the GBE, which was awarded to Ratan Tata in 2014. Chandrasekaran, who became Chairman of Tata Sons in 2017, also leads Tata Steel, Tata Motors, Tata Power, and Air India. He received France's "Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur" in 2023 and India's Padma Bhushan in 2022 for his contributions to trade and industry.

Sportstar Aces Awards 2025: PR Sreejesh, Manu Bhaker Bagged top Honours “Sportstar of the Year Male & Female

The 7th edition of the Sportstar Aces Awards 2025 was held at the Taj Mahal Palace, Mumbai, celebrating achievements in Indian sports across 24 categories. PR Sreejesh won Sportstar of the Year (Male), while Manu Bhaker won Sportstar of the Year (Female) and Sportswoman of the Year (Olympic Sport). The event featured 5 Popular Choice Awards and 16 Jury Awards, with over 2 lakh votes cast. PV Sindhu received the Inspirational Icon Award 2025 for her dedication to badminton, and Jay Shah was honored with the Special Recognition Game Changer Award 2025 for his contributions to cricket. Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) was recognized for its role in sports development. Downtown Heroes FC from Srinagar, J&K, received the Chairperson's Award for Sports for Social Good 2025 for promoting sports at the grassroots level.

Forbes India ‘30 Under 30’ Class of 2025 Lists: Featured 42 individuals, including Actress Aparna Balamurali

Forbes India unveiled its 12th edition of the *30 Under 30* list for 2025, recognizing 30 young professionals and entrepreneurs across 19 categories, including the newly added Artificial Intelligence. The list features 42 individuals, including actress Aparna Balamurali, actor Rohit Saraf, and entrepreneur Aniket Shah. Chess champion D. Gukesh was the youngest awardee. Launched in 2014, the *30 Under 30* list highlights emerging talent in fields like technology, healthcare, finance, and entertainment. It has evolved over the years, adding new categories such as Education during the edtech boom and Cryptocurrency (Web3) in 2023.

MoC Honours Chaman Arora with Sahitya Akademi Award 2024 in Dogri

The Ministry of Culture announced that late Chaman Arora has been selected for the *Sahitya Akademi Award 2024* in the Dogri language for his short story book "*Ik Hor Ashwthama*." The award, approved by Sahitya Akademi President Madhav Kaushik, was based on recommendations from a jury. It will be presented to the awardee's nominee on *March 8, 2025*, at Kamani Auditorium, New Delhi. The award includes a copper plaque, a shawl, and ₹1 lakh. The 2024 awards cover 8 poetry books, 3 novels, 2 short stories, and works in essays, criticism, drama, and research.

67th Annual Grammy Awards: India's Chandrika Tandon bagged Grammy Award for “Triveni”

Indian-American Chandrika Krishnamurthy Tandon won her first Grammy Award in the



Best New Age, Ambient, or Chant Album category for *Triveni* at the 67th Grammy Awards in Los Angeles, USA. She shared the award with South African flutist Wouter Kellerman and Japanese cellist Eru

Matsumoto. Other key winners include Beyoncé, who won Album of the Year for *Cowboy Carter*, becoming a 35-time Grammy winner and the first Black artist to win Best Country Album. Amy Allen became the first woman to win Songwriter of the Year (Non-Classical).

South Africa's TshegoGaelae won 40th Mrs World Title

TshegoGaelae, a 33-year-old model from South Africa, made history by becoming the first Black South African woman to win the 40th edition of the Mrs. World title in 2025. The grand finale took place in Las Vegas, USA, where she was crowned by Viktoria Horshkova, the 2024 winner. Sri Lanka's Ishadi Amanda and Thailand's Ploy Panperm were named first and second runners-up, respectively. Established in 1984, the Mrs. World competition is the first beauty pageant exclusively for married women. Born in Soweto, Gaelae is also a lawyer and labor relations manager. She actively supports women and children affected by domestic violence through her organization, We Are Our Children's Keepers. She is the second South African to win the title after Candice Abrahams in 2016 and currently holds the title of Mrs. South Africa 2024.

Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri announced winners of 'Avinya'25' & 'Vasudha' Startup Challenges

Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri, Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas (MoPNG), announced the winners of 'Avinya'25' and 'Vasudha', two startup competitions aimed at fostering innovation in the energy sector. The awards were presented during the 'Energize India: Catalyzing Growth Through Startup Innovation' conclave, held at ONGC headquarters, New Delhi. Avinya'25, India's premier energy startup competition, attracted 173 startup applications nationwide, showcasing advancements in sustainable and innovative energy solutions. The event also featured panel discussions on emerging opportunities in the energy sector, emphasizing India's commitment to promoting clean and efficient energy technologies.

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MISCELLANEOUS

APPOINTMENT

Christian Stocker sworn in as the new Chancellor of Austria

Austria ended a five-month political deadlock with the swearing-in of Christian Stocker as



the new chancellor, replacing Alexander Schallenberg. The three-party coalition government, comprising the Austrian People's

Party (ÖVP), Social Democrats (SPÖ), and Neos party, was formed after the far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ) failed to secure a governing agreement despite winning the most votes in the September 2024 elections. The coalition's agenda includes stricter asylum policies, economic recovery measures, and budget stabilization. Christian Stocker, a former deputy mayor of Wiener Neustadt, brings regional political experience but lacks national governance exposure. Andreas Babler (SPÖ) has been appointed Vice Chancellor. Stocker, a lawyer and former ÖVP Secretary-General, became the acting chair of ÖVP after Karl Nehammer's resignation in January 2025.

Padma Shri Awardee Koneru Humpy, India's Youngest-ever Woman Grand Master appointed Brand Master of SOG Grandmaster Series

Skillhub Online Games Federation (SOGF), based in New Delhi, appointed Padma Shri awardee and chess Grandmaster Koneru Humpy as the Brand Ambassador of the SOGF Grandmaster Series. Humpy, India's youngest female Grandmaster at 15 (2002),

recently won her second Women's World Rapid Chess Championship in December 2024, previously securing the title in 2019. She is the only player after China's Ju Wenjun to win it twice. Honored with the Arjuna Award (2003) and Padma Shri (2007), she was also named BBC Indian Sportswoman of the Year in 2019 for her contributions to chess.

Tuhin Kanta Pandey appointed as 11th Chairman of SEBI

Tuhin Kanta Pandey, Finance Secretary and Secretary of the Department of Revenue (DoR), was appointed as the *11th Chairman of SEBI* for a three-year term, succeeding *Madhabi Puri Buch* on *March 1, 2025*. A *1987-batch IAS officer (Odisha cadre)*, he has held key positions in *DIPAM, DPE, DoR, Planning Commission (now NITI Aayog), and the Cabinet Secretariat*. He played a crucial role in drafting the *Union Budget 2025-26*, introducing *Rs 1 lakh crore tax reliefs* and working on the *new Income Tax Bill* to replace the *1961 Act*.

Rekha Gupta sworn-in as fourth Women CM of Delhi, Parvesh Verma sworn-in as Deputy CM

Rekha Gupta, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader, took oath as the 9th Chief Minister (CM) of Union Territory (UT) of Delhi at Ramlila Maidan, New Delhi, Delhi. She succeeded Atishi Marlena Singh. She has also become Delhi's fourth woman CM, following Sushma Swaraj, Sheila Dikshit, and Atishi Marlena Singh. Along with her, six cabinet ministers were sworn in, including Parvesh Singh Verma, who took oath as the Deputy CM. Lieutenant Governor (L-G) of Delhi Vinai Kumar

Saxena administered oath of office and secrecy to the CM and the ministers at the function.

Gyanesh Kumar appointed as 26th Chief Election Commissioner of India

Gyanesh Kumar was appointed as the 26th Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) by a selection committee led by PM Narendra Modi, becoming the first CEC appointed under the new selection law. He will serve until January 26, 2029. A 1988-batch Kerala-cadre IAS officer, he previously served in key roles, including Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Defence, Additional Secretary in MHA, and Cooperation Secretary. He played a role in major reforms, including the abrogation of Article 370 and the Multi-State Cooperative Societies (Amendment) Act, 2023. The Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service, and Term of Office) Act, 2023 introduced a new selection process, where the President appoints the CEC based on recommendations from a selection committee. The term remains six years, with eligibility criteria emphasizing integrity and experience in election management. The reform follows the Supreme Court's recommendation for an independent selection process.

President's Rule imposed in Manipur, After CM Biren Singh's Resignation

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) imposed President's Rule in Manipur following the resignation of CM N Biren Singh on February 9, 2025, marking the 11th instance since 1951. The decision came amid ongoing ethnic violence between the Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities, which began in May 2023, causing over 250 deaths and mass displacement. The Manipur Assembly, with a tenure until 2027, was placed under suspended animation as it failed to meet the

constitutional deadline to reconvene by February 12, 2025 (Article 174(1)). President's Rule, imposed under Article 356, suspends the state government, transferring executive powers to the Governor, who acts on behalf of the President of India. It remains effective for six months, extendable up to three years with parliamentary approval. Since 1950, President's Rule has been imposed 134 times, with Manipur and Uttar Pradesh experiencing it most frequently, while Jammu & Kashmir holds the record for the longest duration.

Konstantinos Tasoulas elected as Greece's New President

Konstantinos Tasoulas, former Speaker of the Hellenic Parliament and a candidate from



the ruling New Democracy (ND) party, was elected as the President of Greece for a five-year term starting March 13, 2025. He secured 160 votes in the 300-member Greek Parliament, succeeding Katerina Sakellaropoulou. A lawyer and seasoned politician, Tasoulas has served as an MP since 2000, held key roles in the ND party, and served as Defense Deputy Minister (2007), Minister of Culture and Sports (2014-15), and President of the Hellenic Parliament (2019-2025).

Flemish Nationalist Bart Albert Liliane De Wever sworn-in as New PM of Belgium

Bart Albert Liliane De Wever, the first Flemish Nationalist, was sworn in as the new Prime Minister of Belgium after seven months of negotiations, forming a coalition with an 81-seat majority in the 150-seat Parliament. He succeeds Alexander De Croo, who served as a caretaker PM since June 2024. De Wever, the former Mayor of Antwerp (2013-2025), founded the New Flemish Alliance (N-VA) in 2004 and led it until 2025,

advocating for a confederal state and Flemish independence. He previously served in the Flemish Parliament, Senate, and Chamber of Representatives. Under his leadership, the N-VA became Belgium's largest party, securing victories in the 2010, 2014, 2019, and 2024 federal elections.

Ahmed al-Sharaa appointed as interim President of Syria

an Islamist Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) leader Ahmed al-Sharaa was appointed interim President of Syria after the



'The Conference for Announcing the Victory of the Syrian Revolution' event in Damascus, Syria. He succeeds former Syrian Ba'ath Party

leader Bashar al-Assad whose government fell on December 8, 2024, ending his nearly 14-year struggle to retain power. Syria's old constitution and parliament had been dissolved and Ahmed al-Sharaa was authorised to form a temporary legislative council for the transitional phase.

OBITUARIES

Indian Domestic Cricketer Padmakar Shivalkar passed away

Indian cricketer Padmakar Shivalkar passed away at the age of 84 in Mumbai, Maharashtra. He was born on 14 September, 1940 in Mumbai. He was known as 'Paddy' and renowned for his achievements in the Ranji Trophy as the best left-arm spinner of India and as Bombay's prominent player.

Renowned Gujarati Poet and Sahitya Akademi Awardee Anil Ramanath Joshi passed away

Renowned Gujarati poet, essayist, and Sahitya Akademi Awardee Anil Ramanath

Joshi passed away in Mumbai. Born on 28th July 1940 in Gondal, Gujarat, he began his literary journey in 1970 with the poetry collection *Kadach*. He further enriched Gujarati literature with *Baraf Na Pankhi* (1982) and the essay collection *Pavan Ni Vyaspithe* (1988), which earned him the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1990. He also authored children's stories and fables, including *Chakli Bole Chi ChiChi*. Notably, on October 11, 2025, he returned his award in protest against the increasing attacks on literary writers.

Oscar-Winning Actor Gene Hackman passed away

Oscar-winning actor Gene Hackman passed away at the age of 95 in New Mexico, USA. Born on January 30, 1930, in San Bernardino, California, he had a distinguished career spanning over four decades. Hackman won two Academy Awards: Best Actor for *The French Connection* (1971) and Best Supporting Actor for *Unforgiven* (1992). Starting his career in the United States Marine Corps, he later transitioned to acting, appearing in television series like *Route 66* and *Naked City*. Hackman starred in over 100 films, including *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967), *Superman* (as Lex Luthor), *The Conversation*, *Runaway Jury*, and *The Royal Tenenbaums*. His final major film was *Welcome to Mooseport* (2004). He received two BAFTA Awards, four Golden Globes, and a Screen Actors Guild Award, along with Oscar nominations for *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967), *I Never Sang for My Father* (1970), and *Mississippi Burning* (1988).

Padma Shri Awardee & 'Father of Odissi Dance' Mayadhar Raut passed away

Eminent Odissi dancer Mayadhar Raut, known as the "Father of Odissi Dance," passed away at 92 in New Delhi. Born on July 6, 1933, in Cuttack, Odisha, he was

instrumental in reviving and modernizing Odissi. Awarded the Padma Shri in 2010, he pioneered the Gotipua dance form, founded Kala Vikas Kendra (1952), introduced Mudra Viniyoga (1955), and co-established Jayantika (1959) to standardize Odissi. He was the first to perform Gitagovinda's Ashtapadi on stage. His major works include "Pashyati Dishī Dishī" and "Priya Charu Shile." He received prestigious honors, including the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award (1985) and Upendra Bhanja Samman (2005).

Veteran Space Scientist & Padma Shri Awardee R. Manicka Vasagam passed away

Veteran ISRO space scientist and Padma Shri awardee R.M. Vasagam passed away at 84 in Bengaluru. He joined India's space program in 1965 under INCOSPAR (now ISRO). As Project Director (1977-1983), he led APPLE, India's first experimental geostationary satellite, and Bhaskara, the first low-earth orbit Earth observation satellite. He later served as Director at ISRO (1994) and Vice-Chancellor of Anna University (1996-1999). He also held key positions at TANITEC, Karunya Institute, and Dr. M.G.R. Educational Institute. His accolades include the Hari Om Ashram Dr. Vikram Sarabhai Research Award (1982) and the IEEE Centennial Medal (1984).

Renowned Classical singer Pandit Prabhakar Karekar passed away

Renowned Hindustani classical singer Pandit Prabhakar Karekar passed away at 80 in Mumbai, Maharashtra. Born in 1944 in Goa, he was known for his soulful devotional songs like *Bolava Vithal Pahava Vithal* and *Vakratund Mahakay*. A graded artist with All India Radio (AIR) and Doordarshan (DD), he was also a dedicated teacher. Founder and Chairman of Swarprabha Trust, he received

prestigious awards, including the Tansen Samman, Sangeet Natak Akademi Award, and Gomant Vibhushan Award for his contributions to classical music.

Folk artist and Padma Shri Awardee Sukri Bommagowda passed away

Renowned folk singer Sukri Bommagowda, also known as 'Sukrajji,' passed away at 88 in Bengaluru, Karnataka.



Born in 1937 in Badigeri, Karnataka, she belonged to the Halakki Vokkaliga tribe. Honored with the Padma Shri in 2017 for her contribution to folk

music, she was known as the "Nightingale of the Halakki Vokkaliga community" and composed over 4,000 folk songs. She played a key role in preserving Halakki traditions and led an anti-alcohol movement in Ankola. Her contributions earned her several awards, including the Rajyotsava Award (1988), Janapada Shri Award (1999), and Nadoja Award (2006).

Samuel Nujoma, Namibia's first President & Fiery Freedom Fighter passed away

Samuel Shafiishuna Daniel Nujoma, Namibia's first President and a key figure in its independence from apartheid South Africa, passed away at 95 in Windhoek, Namibia. Born on May 12, 1929, he co-founded the Ovamboland People's Organization (OPO) in 1959, which later became SWAPO in 1960, leading the liberation struggle. He launched the Namibian War of Independence (1966) and served as President (1990–2005), focusing on reconciliation and development. He received several honors, including the Lenin Peace Prize (1970), Indira Gandhi Peace Prize (1989), and Ho Chi Minh Peace Prize

(1990). His autobiography, "Where Others Wavered", was published in 2005.

Navin Chawla, Former CEC passed away

Former Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) of India, Navin Chawla, passed away at 79 in New Delhi. A 1969-batch IAS officer of the AGMUT cadre, he served as Election Commissioner from 2005 to 2009 and as CEC from 2009 to 2010, overseeing the 2009 Lok Sabha elections and introducing third-gender voter inclusion. He received the *Mazzini Award* (Italy) in 2005 and the *Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan, Mumbai Award* in 2014. In 1992, he authored the *Authorized Biography of Mother Teresa*, later translated into 14 languages.

Former Papua New Guinea's PM Sir Julius Chan passed away

Sir Julius Chan, former Prime Minister and last founding father of Papua New Guinea (PNG), passed away at 85 in New Ireland Province. Born on 29 August 1939, he served as PNG's PM twice (1980-82, 1994-97) and was one of the country's longest-serving politicians. He played a key role in PNG's independence in 1975 and was known as "Sir J" and the "last man standing" from the first post-colonial government. His political career began in 1968, and he became the leader of the People's Progress Party (PPP) in 1970.

World Oldest Living Olympic Gold Medalist in Athletics, Greg Bell, passes away

Gregory Curtis Bell (Greg Bell), the American long jump legend and the world's oldest living Olympic gold medalist in athletics, passed away at the age of 94 in Indiana, the United States of America (USA). He was born on November 7, 1930, in Indiana. Greg Bell was the world's leading men's long jumper during the 1950s. In 1956 Melbourne Olympics, Greg Bell won the gold medal in the long jump with a leap of

7.83 meters (m) under challenging conditions to win by 15 centimeters (cm) ahead of his compatriot John Bennett. He set a personal best of 8.10 m in Austin, the USA, in 1957, which was just 3 cm short of the world record set by Jesse Owens in 1935. In 1982, he was inducted into the Indiana University (IU) Hall of Fame and was inducted into the USA Track and Field (USATF) Hall of Fame in 1988.

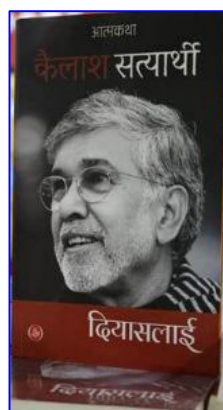
BOOKS

Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Kailash Satyarthi's Autobiography titled 'Diyasalai' Explored at IGCNA

Nobel laureate and social reformer Kailash Satyarthi launched his autobiography *Diyasalaai* at the Jaipur Literature Festival in Rajasthan. Published by Rajkamal Prakashan, the book was unveiled by former President Ram Nath Kovind. The title, meaning "matchstick," reflects Satyarthi's inspiration to ignite change against child labor, a vision he developed at 15. The autobiography, consisting of 24 chapters, chronicles his journey from a humble background in Vidisha, Madhya Pradesh, to his relentless fight against child exploitation, culminating in his 2014 Nobel Peace Prize.

Namita Gokhale released her 25th Book 'Life on Mars: Collected Stories'

Eminent Author and Sahitya Akademi Awardee, Namita Gokhale released her 25th book titled 'Life on Mars: Collected Stories', published by Speaking Tiger Books. The book is a collection of 15 stories which explores themes of love, lust,



fate, and death. The book is divided into two sections namely, 'Love and Other Derangements' and 'The Mirror of the Mahabharata'. So far, Namita Gokhale has written 24 books including fiction and non-fiction. Some of her famous books are: 'Shakuntala', 'Paro: Dreams of Passion', 'Things to leave behind', among others.

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar, launched book "I Am?"

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar unveiled the book "I Am?", compiled by Gopichand P.



Hinduja, Chairman of the Hinduja Group. The launch event took place at the

Vice-President's Enclave in New Delhi, Delhi. The book was published by the Hinduja Foundation. The book delves into themes of unity, spirituality, and interfaith dialogue, emphasizing the importance of harmony in diversity. It includes contributions from

scholars like Zeenat Shaukat Ali, a former professor at St. Xavier's College, Mumbai, who contributed to the concluding chapter that focuses on common grounds among religions.

General Upendra Dwivedi launched memoir titled "I Am a Soldier's Wife : The Life and Love of Toni Lidder"

General Upendra Dwivedi, Chief of Army Staff, launched the memoir *I Am a Soldier's Wife: The Life and Love of Toni Lidder* by Geetika Lidder at the Manekshaw Centre, New Delhi. Published by Roli Books, the book honors Brigadier Lakhwinder Singh Lidder's life as a soldier, husband, and leader, emphasizing the 4 C's of leadership—Character, Competence, Conduct, and Commitment. A decorated officer, Brig. Lidder served as Defence Assistant to the CDS and played a key role in military reforms before tragically losing his life in the 2021 IAF Mi-17 crash alongside General Bipin Rawat.

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MATCH POINT

- Govindghat to Hemkund Sahib Ji Ropeway Project which has been approved by the Centre is it located in – **Uttarakhand**
- The 'PraniMitra' National Award, recently in the news, is given for outstanding contribution in– **Animal Welfare**
- Theme of National Science Day 2025 – "**Empowering Indian Youth for Global Leadership in Science and Innovation for Developed India**"
- Newlyappointed Chairman of SEBI– **TuhinKantaPandey**
- The India-Japan joint military exercise 'Dharma Guardian' conducted at - **the Fuji Training Area in Japan**
- Indian Coast Guard led a two-day coastal security drill 'SagarKavach' to test - **response mechanisms against maritime threats.**
- In this country was the statue of Tamil poet and philosopher Thiruvalluvar recently unveiled – **Philippines**
- This personality was recently honoured with the title of Honorary Knighthood in the UK - **N. Chandrasekaran**
- 5th Multilateral Naval Exercise 'Komodo' being was conducted in– **Indonesia**
- Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) and National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) jointly launched 'AI for Entrepreneurship' micro-learning module - **Intel India**
- India conducted 6th edition of the joint military exercise 'Dharma Guardian' with– **Japan**
- Recently launched Mutual Credit Guarantee Scheme for MSMEs and expanded Swami Fund – Finance Minister Sitharaman
- The name of Foy Sagar Lake has recently been changed. It is located in – **Rajasthan**
- Winner of the National Snooker Championship 2025 – **PankajAdvani**
- First Indian to score 4,000 international runs against England– **ViratKohli**
- Theme of the 14th Asian Fisheries and Aquaculture Forum 2025– "**Greening the Blue Growth in Asia-Pacific**"
- "Donate Organs, Save Lives" initiative was organised by – **ICC**
- Artificial Intelligence (AI) Action Summit 2025 was hosted by – **France**
- Winner of gold medal in the men's 50m rifle 3 positions event at the 38th National Games – **Neeraj Kumar**
- The conclave on 'Towards Viksit Bharat@2047: Strengthening Economy, National Security, Global Partnerships, and Law' was hosted by – **NITI Aayog**
- "Chandrayaan Se ChunaoTak" initiative was launched by - **the Election Commission of India (ECI)**

- India introduced the 'AYUSH' visa for foreign nationals for - **traditional medical treatments**
- ChamanArora received the SahityaAkademi Award 2024 in Dogri for his book - **IkHorAshwatthama**
- ChandrikaTandon won the Grammy Award 2025 for her album - **Triveni(in the Best New Age Album category)**
- India conducted the military exercise "Ekuverin" with - **Maldives**
- In this Indian state the country's first White Tiger Breeding Centre was recently approved - **Madhya Pradesh**
- Primary objective of the "GyanBharatam Mission" - **Conservation and documentation of one crore manuscripts**
- This country recently unveiled two missiles, Etemad and Ghadr-380 – **Iran**
- Group Captain ShubanshuShukla has been selected as a pilot for this private space mission - **Axiom Mission 4 (Ax-4)**
- This state recently approved a pilot study for regulated cannabis cultivation - **Himachal Pradesh**
- Under this mission India is ready to launch the first manned submarine- **Deep Sea Mission**
- First state of India to implement Uniform Civil Code–**Uttarakhand**
- Young Indian mountaineer ShivangiPathak recently hoisted the tricolor on the highest peak of – **Australia**
- The two cities of India recently got international recognition as 'Wetland City' under the Ramsar Convention- **Udaipur and Indore**
- India's rank in the Global Firepower Index 2025– **Fourth**
- Main objective of 'Sanjay - Battlefield Surveillance System (BSS)'- **Increasing battlefield transparency and providing information to the decision system**
- PrabawoSubianto is the chief guest of Republic Day 2025, the President of – **Indonesia**
- Theme of the joint tableau of the three armies for the first time in the Republic Day Parade 2025- **'Strong and Secure India'**
- Recently, Virgin coconut oil of this city has been awarded the Geographical Indication (GI) tag– **Nicobar**
- This country will host the Chess World Cup 2025– **India**
- 47th President of the United States- **Donald Trump**
- This African country has recently become the ninth partner country of BRICS– **Nigeria**
- Archaeological Experimental Museum has been inaugurated in –**Vadnagar**
- India's rank in the 'Future of Works' category under the QS World Future Skills Index – **Second**
- With this country has India signed a deal for the export of Brahmos supersonic cruise missiles– **Indonesia**
- With this country India has declared the year 2026 as the 'Double Year' for Culture, Tourism and AI– **Spain**

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MCQ ON CURRENT AFFAIRS

1. Consider the following statements regarding Ashwini Radar, recently seen in the news:
 1. It is an active electronically scanned phased array radar.
 2. It is a fully indigenous radar jointly developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL).Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 - (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) Both 1 and 2
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2
2. With reference to Automated Permanent Academic Account Registry (APAAR) ID, consider the following statements:
 1. It is a unique and permanent 12-digit ID to every student, offering a comprehensive record of their academic achievements.
 2. APAAR prioritizes data security and confidentiality, sharing information only with necessary government agencies if and when required.
 3. Consent-based document sharing ensures that students have control over the information shared through APAAR.How many of the statements given above are correct?
 - (a) Only one
 - (b) Only two
 - (c) All three
 - (d) None
3. Pilibhit Tiger Reserve lies in which state?
 - (a) Assam
 - (b) Karnataka
 - (c) Rajasthan
 - (d) Uttar Pradesh
4. Consider the following statement with respect to United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD):
 1. It supports developing countries to access the benefits of a globalized economy more fairly and effectively.
 2. UNCTAD published the World Investment Report, and the Least Developed Countries Report.Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 - (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) Both 1 and 2
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2
5. Consider the following statements regarding the Pradhan Mantri – Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission (PM-ABHIM):
 1. PM-ABHIM is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS).
 2. The scheme aims to establish Block Public Health Units and District Integrated Public Health Labs.
 3. The Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoHFW) directly implements the scheme, with limited involvement from State Governments.How many of the statements given above are correct?
 - (a) Only one
 - (b) Only two
 - (c) All three
 - (d) None
6. 'Supersolid', recently seen in news, is related to
 - (a) Quantum mechanics
 - (b) High-temperature superconductors
 - (c) Nanotechnology-based solid-state materials
 - (d) Crystallography and mineral formation

7. Consider the following:
1. The SpaDeX mission successfully demonstrated docking, and undocking operations, making India the fourth country to achieve this milestone.
 2. The primary objective of the mission is to test high-speed interplanetary propulsion technology for deep-space exploration.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) Both 1 and 2
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2
8. Consider the following statements about the Prime Minister's Scheme for Mentoring Young Authors (PM-YUVA 3.0).
1. PM-YUVA 3.0 aims to nurture young authors in India by providing them with mentorship and financial support.
 2. The scheme exclusively focuses on promoting creative writing in English language.
 3. The National Book Trust, India, is the implementing agency for the PM-YUVA 3.0 scheme.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 and 2
 - (b) 1 and 3
 - (c) 2 and 3
 - (d) All three
9. Consider the following statements about the Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram (PMJVK).
1. The program is aimed at the socio-economic development of minority communities.
 2. It is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS).
 3. Under this scheme, 80% of the resources are earmarked for projects related to education, health, and skill development, of which at least 33-40% shall be earmarked for creating assets/facilities for women/girls.
- How many of the statements given above are correct?
- (a) Only one
 - (b) Only two
 - (c) All three
 - (d) None
10. Consider the following statements about the Mission Amrit Sarovar
1. It aims to develop and rejuvenate 50,000 Amrit Sarovar's in each district of the country.
 2. The mission targets the creation of new ponds only, not the rejuvenation of existing ones.
- Choose the incorrect statements:
- (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) Both 1 and 2
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2
11. Hantavirus, a group of viruses that can cause severe illness in humans, is primarily transmitted through:
- (a) Mosquito bites.
 - (b) Contaminated food or water.
 - (c) Inhalation of aerosolized rodent urine, droppings, or saliva.
 - (d) Direct person-to-person contact.
12. Consider the following statements about the Hydrogen-powered fuel cells
1. Hydrogen fuel cells convert chemical energy into electrical energy through an electrochemical reaction between hydrogen and oxygen.
 2. The primary byproduct of hydrogen fuel cell operation is water, making them a zero-emission technology.
- Choose the correct statements:
- (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) Both 1 and 2
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2
13. Which among the following best describes 'INS Imphal', recently seen in the news?
- (a) It is a multi-purpose amphibious assault ship.

- (b) It is a Shivalik- class stealth multi-role frigate.
 (c) It is a diesel-electric submarine.
 (d) It is a guided-missile destroyer.
14. Where is the Fuego Volcano, recently seen in the news, located?
 (a) Honduras
 (b) Ethiopia
 (c) Indonesia
 (d) Guatemala
15. Plastic Ice VII, recently seen in news, refers to:
 (a) an exotic phase of ice that forms under extreme conditions
 (b) a biodegradable plastic alternative designed to replace single-use plastic
 (c) a synthetic polymer-based material used to mimic ice for industrial cooling
 (d) a microplastic contamination found in polar ice sheets due to environmental pollution
16. KHANJAR Exercise, recently seen in the news, is bilateral exercise between India and:
 (a) Kazakhstan
 (b) Kyrgyzstan
 (c) Iran
 (d) Russia
17. Vanuatu, a Pacific Island nation, is best known for
 (a) Its advanced space exploration program.
 (b) Its frequent volcanic activity and unique "yasur" volcano.
 (c) Being a major global hub for financial technology.
 (d) Its large-scale production of rare earth minerals.
18. Which of the following best explains the ecological significance of Satkosia Tiger Reserve?
 (a) It is located at the confluence of the Mahanadi and Godavari rivers, making it one of India's largest riparian tiger reserves.
 (b) Satkosia Tiger Reserve is a completely uninhabited protected area, ensuring minimal human-wildlife conflict.
 (c) It was the first Tiger Reserve in India to successfully reintroduce tigers from another state under Project Tiger.
 (d) It acts as a transitional zone between the Eastern Ghats and Deccan Plateau, supporting a unique blend of biodiversity.
19. Which of the following best describes the concept of Reciprocal Tariffs in international trade?
 (a) A trade policy where a country imposes tariffs equal to the tariff rates imposed by other nations on its exports.
 (b) A World Trade Organization (WTO) principle mandating member countries to charge the same tariffs on all trading partners.
 (c) A protectionist policy that only applies to agricultural products, preventing excessive subsidies in global markets.
 (d) A system where countries agree to reduce tariff rates in a mutual exchange, known as Preferential Trade Agreements (PTAs).
20. Consider the following:
 1. It was the hunting ground of Mughal emperors and Maharaja of Gwalior.
 2. Sakhya Sagar and Madhav Sagar are the two lakes in the southern part of the park.
 3. Recently it has become the 58th tiger reserve of India.
 Which of the following national parks has been discussed above?
 (a) Park Panna National Park
 (b) Kuno National Park
 (c) Madhav National
 (d) Sanjay National Park

21. Consider the following statements about the Carbon intensity
1. Carbon intensity refers to the amount of greenhouse gas emissions produced per unit of economic output.
 2. A lower carbon intensity indicates a more efficient use of resources and a reduced environmental impact.
 3. Carbon intensity is solely determined by the amount of carbon dioxide emitted, disregarding other greenhouse gases.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 and 2
 - (b) 1 and 3
 - (c) 2 and 3
 - (d) All three
22. Consider the following statements about the Bangus Valley
1. Bangus Valley is being promoted as a major ecotourism destination in the Union Territory of Ladakh.
 2. Efforts are being made to develop sustainable tourism infrastructure in the valley while preserving its fragile ecosystem.
- Choose the correct statements:
- (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) Both 1 and 2
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2
23. Consider the following statements regarding the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995):
1. It called for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and girls in public and private spheres.
 2. It led to the formation of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women).
 3. The declaration introduced a quota system requiring at least 33% representation of women in all political institutions.
4. It recognized violence against women as a public health issue, not just a human rights concern.
- Which of the statements given above are correct?
- (a) 1, 2, and 4
 - (b) 2, 3, and 4
 - (c) 1 and 3 only
 - (d) 1 and 4 only
24. In the context of insider trading, what does UPSI stand for?
- (a) Unregulated Price Share Index
 - (b) Unpublished Price Sensitive Information
 - (c) Unified Public Stock Investment
 - (d) Unverified Private Stock Information
25. Amrut Biodiversity Park, recently seen in news, is located in:
- (a) Haryana
 - (b) Madhya Pradesh
 - (c) Delhi
 - (d) Gujarat
26. Consider the following statements with reference to the creation of woolly mice:
1. Scientists used CRISPR technology to modify some genes in laboratory mice.
 2. The project involved creating genetic modifications that would increase the body fat levels in mice to match those found in mammoths.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) Both 1 and 2
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2
27. Consider the following with reference to Ladki Bahin Yojana:
1. The scheme provides financial assistance of Rs 1,500 per month to eligible women through Direct Benefit Transfer.
 2. The primary objective of the scheme is to support economically disadvantaged women.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2
28. World's oldest known meteorite impact crater has been discovered in
(a) South America
(b) Asia
(c) Europe
(d) Australia
29. Consider the following statements regarding the Parvatmala Pariyojana:
1. The main objective is the development of self-sustainable and world-class highways in hilly regions.
2. The projects under the programme are being implemented through Public-Private Partnership with around 60% contribution support by the Government of India.
3. Constructing a network of ropeways to improve connectivity in hilly areas.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
(a) 1 and 3
(b) 2 only
(c) 1 and 2
(d) 2 and 3
30. Which of the following statements best describes Viatina-19, recently in the news?
(a) A genetically modified wheat variety developed to withstand extreme drought conditions
(b) A genetically superior Nelore breed cow from Brazil
(c) A newly discovered exoplanet with atmospheric conditions similar to Earth
(d) A quantum computing model designed to improve cryptographic security
31. Consider the following statements regarding the Pashu Aushadhi Initiative:
1. It has been modeled after the Pradhan Mantri Bharatiya Janaushadhi Kendras (PMBJK) to provide affordable generic veterinary medicines.
2. The initiative is part of the Livestock Health and Disease Control Programme (LHDCP).
3. Pashu Aushadhi Kendras will be operated exclusively by private pharmaceutical companies.
How many of the above statements are correct?
(a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) All three
(d) None
32. Consider the following statements regarding AI Kosha:
1. AI Kosha provides an open-source AI sandbox with an integrated development environment, tools, and tutorials.
2. It is an initiative by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY).
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2
33. Consider the following statements:
1. The Supreme Court has the power to invalidate only those laws that are in direct violation of the Fundamental Rights.
2. The Doctrine of Severability allows the unconstitutional parts of a law to be invalidated while preserving the rest.
3. The Doctrine of Eclipse allows a law infringing Fundamental Rights to be suspended until it is brought in line with the Constitution.
How many of the above statements is/are correct?
(a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) All three
(d) None

34. Which of the following cases reaffirmed the right to a speedy trial as a fundamental right under Article 21?
- Justice K.S. Puttaswamy vs. Union of India (2017)
 - Delhi Excise Policy Case (2024)
 - Shreya Singhal vs. Union of India (2015)
 - Maneka Gandhi vs. Union of India (1978)
35. Which of the following is a major producing country of 'Gum Arabic', recently seen in the news?
- Iraq
 - Saudi Arabia
 - United Arab Emirates
 - Sudan
36. Consider the following statements regarding *Crassolabium dhritiae*, recently seen in the news:
- It is a new species of soil-dwelling nematode.
 - It was discovered in the Deccan peninsular biogeographic zone.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- 1 only
 - 2 only
 - Both 1 and 2
 - Neither 1 nor 2
37. When the RBI buys securities in the market, what happens?
- It raises interest rates and contracts the money supply.
 - It lowers interest rates and adds liquidity to the market.
 - It reduces the money supply and makes loans more expensive.
 - It lowers interest rates but does not affect liquidity.
38. Consider the following statements with respect to Semi-Cryogenic Engine:
- It uses liquid oxygen as an oxidizer and refined kerosene as fuel.
 - The use of kerosene increases the overall mission costs.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- 1 only
 - 2 only
 - Both 1 and 2
 - Neither 1 nor 2
39. The theme for World Obesity Day 2025 is
- Changing Systems, Healthier Lives
 - Promoting Individual Dietary Choices
 - Exercise: The Ultimate Solution
 - Personal Responsibility for Health
40. Consider the following statements with respect to Ayushman Arogya Mandir:
- It is a selective approach to health care to deliver a comprehensive range of services.
 - It will deliver free and universal Comprehensive Primary Health Care to users.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- 1 only
 - 2 only
 - Both 1 and 2
 - Neither 1 nor 2
41. The "Swavalambini" initiative, recently seen in news, is primarily associated with which of the following sectors?
- Digital literacy and financial inclusion for women.
 - Renewable energy development in rural areas.
 - Skill development and entrepreneurship promotion for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs).
 - Sustainable agriculture practices in drought-prone regions.
42. Consider the following statements about the River dolphins
- All species of river dolphins are classified as critically endangered or endangered by the IUCN.
 - River dolphins use echolocation to navigate and hunt in turbid waters.
- Choose the correct statements:
- 1 only
 - 2 only
 - Both 1 and 2
 - Neither 1 nor 2

43. Where is Mount Erebus, recently seen in the news, located??
 (a) Iceland
 (b) Mexico
 (c) Italy
 (d) Antarctica
44. Consider the following statements regarding the Dragon Copilot:
 1. It is the new healthcare AI tool which is being offered as part of Microsoft Cloud for Healthcare.
 2. It harnesses the natural language voice dictation and ambient listening technology.
 Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 (a) 1 only
 (b) 2 only
 (c) Both 1 and 2
 (d) Neither 1 nor 2
45. Consider the following statements about the Gyan Bharatam Mission
 1. It is a national mission focused on enhancing research and innovation capabilities in higher education institutions.
 2. The mission aims to establish a centralized digital platform for sharing research data and resources across all universities.
 3. It emphasizes the integration of traditional Indian knowledge systems with modern scientific research methodologies.
 How many of the statements given above are correct?
 (a) Only one
 (b) Only two
 (c) All three
 (d) None
46. Which of the following is the primary objective of India's Samudrayaan Mission?
 (a) To establish a permanent research station on the Antarctic ice shelf.
 (b) To develop deep-sea exploration capabilities for resource mapping and scientific studies.
 (c) To launch a manned mission to the International Space Station.
 (d) To deploy a network of underwater communication cables across the Indian Ocean
47. Consider the following statements about the Point Nemo
 1. Point Nemo is the point in the ocean farthest from any land, also known as the "oceanic pole of inaccessibility."
 2. Due to its remote location, it is a designated "spacecraft cemetery" where decommissioned satellites and space stations are intentionally crashed.
 Choose the correct statements:
 (a) 1 only
 (b) 2 only
 (c) Both 1 and 2
 (d) Neither 1 nor 2
48. What is the theme for World Wildlife Day 2025?
 (a) Ecosystem Restoration: Healing Nature
 (b) Wildlife Conservation Finance: Investing in People and Planet
 (c) Nature's Harmony: A Sustainable Future
 (d) Biodiversity for a Better World
49. Mission 300, recently in news, is a/an:
 (a) initiative of NASA to send 300 students Space station in 2025
 (b) target of WHO to eliminate TB across Globe
 (c) initiative to plant trees in tropical region by 2030
 (d) initiative to provide electricity to 300 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa by 2030
50. Consider the following statements about the Amir Khusrau
 1. He was a court poet primarily during the reign of the Mughal Emperor Akbar.
 2. He is credited with the invention of the musical instruments, the Sitar and the Tabla.
 Choose the correct statements:

- (a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2
51. Which of the following correctly describes the jurisdiction of Lokpal under the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013?
- (a) Lokpal can investigate only Ministers and Members of Parliament but not Group A officers.
(b) Lokpal has jurisdiction over the Prime Minister in all matters, including national security.
(c) Lokpal can initiate suo-motu investigations without a formal complaint or reference.
(d) NGOs receiving foreign contributions above a prescribed limit also fall under Lokpal's jurisdiction.
52. Consider the following statements regarding the global impact of volcanic eruptions:
1. Large-scale volcanic eruptions can lead to a temporary cooling of the Earth's climate due to sulfur dioxide emissions.
 2. Volcanic eruptions contribute to the formation of new landmasses, such as the Hawaiian Islands.
 3. Volcanic eruptions have no effect on global ocean circulation.
 4. Some volcanic eruptions release gases that contribute to the depletion of the ozone layer.
- Which of the above statements are correct?
- (a) 1, 2, and 4
(b) 2, 3, and 4
(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) All of the above
53. Juanga Tribe primarily resides in which Indian state?
- (a) Jharkhand
(b) Arunachal Pradesh
(c) Kerala
(d) Odisha
54. Consider the following statements regarding the Aadhaar Good Governance Portal:

1. It is aimed at streamlining the approval process for Aadhaar authentication requests.
2. It is launched by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2
55. Consider the following statements about the Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI)
1. The AWBI is a statutory advisory body established under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960.
 2. The AWBI provides grants to animal welfare organizations and advises the government on animal welfare issues.
 3. The AWBI operates under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.
- How many of the statements given above are correct?
- (a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) All three
(d) None
56. Consider the following statements about the Biodiversity Leak
1. Biodiversity leak" refers to the unintended spread of invasive alien species from controlled environments, such as research facilities or botanical gardens, into natural ecosystems.
 2. The primary driver of biodiversity leak is the increased global trade in live organisms and the expansion of captive breeding programs.
 3. Biodiversity leak is a phenomenon exclusively observed in terrestrial ecosystems, with negligible impact on aquatic environments.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2
- (b) 1 and 3
- (c) 2 and 3
- (d) All three

57. The Svalbard Global Seed Vault, often referred to as the "Doomsday Vault," is primarily designed to:

- (a) Store nuclear waste for long-term safety.
- (b) Preserve a wide variety of plant seeds as a safeguard against global catastrophes.
- (c) Serve as a research facility for advanced genetic engineering.
- (d) Monitor and predict global climate change patterns.

58. Consider the following statements about the 16th Conference of the Parties (COP16) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

- 1. COP16 will focus on the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.
- 2. COP16 is scheduled to be held in Turkey.

Choose the correct statements:

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

59. Consider the following statements with reference to the Green Sea Turtle:

- 1. It is found only in the Indian Ocean Region.
- 2. It is classified as endangered under the IUCN Red List.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

60. Consider the following statements regarding the Geological Survey of India:

- 1. It undertakes functions of creation and updating of national geoscientific information and mineral resource assessment.
- 2. It works under the union Ministry of Earth Science.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

61. Lankamalleswara Wildlife Sanctuary, is located in:

- (a) Kerala
- (b) Bihar
- (c) Maharashtra
- (d) Andhra Pradesh

62. Consider the following statements with respect to the Solar Ultraviolet Imaging Telescope (SUIT):

- 1. It is one of the remote sensing payloads on board the Aditya-L1.
- 2. Located at the first Lagrange point, SUIT observes the Sun 24x7 without any interruption.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

63. Consider the following statements regarding Ocelot Chip:

- 1. It is a new quantum computing chip fabricated by the Amazon.
- 2. It intrinsically suppresses certain forms of errors and reduces the resources required for quantum error correction.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2

64. Exercise Desert Hunt, recently in news, is a:

- (a) rescue exercise

- (b) multilateral naval exercise
(c) bilateral army exercise
(d) tri-service special forces exercise
65. Consider the following statements regarding Naval Anti-Ship missile (NASM-SR):
1. It has a Man-in-Loop feature – which allows in-flight retargeting accurately.
 2. It is developed by the Defence Research & Development Organisation.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2
66. Consider the following statements about the Black Plastic
1. Black plastic is often difficult to recycle due to the carbon black pigments used in its production, which interfere with optical sorting technology at recycling facilities.
 2. The absorption of solar radiation by black plastic contributes to increased localized temperatures, potentially impacting urban heat islands and environmental degradation.
 3. Regulations concerning black plastic are uniform across all Indian states, ensuring consistent waste management practices nationwide.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 and 2
(b) 1 and 3
(c) 2 and 3
(d) All three
67. The Herath Festival is primarily associated with the celebrations of:
- (a) Holi in the Braj region.
(b) Navratri in Gujarat.
(c) Maha Shivratri by Kashmiri Pandits.
(d) Onam in Kerala.
68. Which among the following best describes *Minervarya ghatiborealis*, recently seen in the news?
- (a) A newly discovered species of frog in Western Ghats
(b) A rare species of snake found in the Eastern Ghats
(c) A type of freshwater fish discovered in the Ganga River basin
(d) A newly identified medicinal plant from the Nilgiri Hills
69. Consider the following statements regarding Anti-Retroviral Therapy (ART):
1. It is a combination of medications that treat human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).
 2. It helps to increase the number of CD4 (T-helper) cells in the body.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2
70. Consider the following statements regarding the Doomsday Fish:
1. It is filter feeders and primarily eats krill and plankton.
 2. It is known as Orafish and most often thriving in the epipelagic zone.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2
71. Consider the following statements regarding Blood Moon:
1. It happens when Earth's moon is in a total lunar eclipse.
 2. It is caused due to a process called Rayleigh scattering.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2

72. Consider the following statements about the Delimitation exercise
1. The delimitation exercise is conducted by the Election Commission of India.
 2. The Delimitation Commission's orders have the force of law and cannot be questioned before any court.
 3. The last delimitation exercise in India, based on the 2001 census, was completed in 2008.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 and 2
 - (b) 2 and 3
 - (c) 1 and 3
 - (d) All three
73. Consider the following statements regarding the international legal framework for Geographical Indications (GIs):
1. The Paris Convention was the first international agreement to recognize Geographical Indications.
 2. GIs are protected under the TRIPS Agreement of the World Trade Organization (WTO).
 3. The Madrid Agreement is exclusively focused on the protection of GIs.
- Which of the above statements is/are correct?
- (a) 1 only
 - (b) 1 and 2 only
 - (c) 2 and 3 only
 - (d) 1, 2 and 3
74. What does the term "petrification" mean?
- (a) Decay of organic material without mineralization
 - (b) Complete replacement of organic matter by minerals
 - (c) Fossilization through freezing
 - (d) The preservation of biological material by drying
75. Kundi, a traditional water harvesting system, is mainly found in:
- (a) Kerala
 - (b) Karnataka
 - (c) Bihar
 - (d) Rajasthan
76. Consider the following statements about the Tea Horse Road
1. It was a network of trade routes primarily used for the exchange of tea for horses between Tibet and Yunnan.
 2. The road primarily traversed through the Himalayan mountain ranges, including the Tibetan Plateau.
 3. The trade along the Tea Horse Road was active primarily during the medieval period and declined with the advent of modern transportation.
- How many of the statements given above are correct?
- (a) Only one
 - (b) Only two
 - (c) All three
 - (d) None
77. Consider the following statements about the Pagri Sambhal Jatta Movement
1. It was a peasant movement primarily focused on issues related to land revenue and water rights in Punjab.
 2. It was led by Bhagat Singh's uncle, Ajit Singh.
 3. The movement was a direct response to the British government's Colonisation of the Government Lands (Punjab) Act, 1907.
- How many of the statements given above are correct?
- (a) Only one
 - (b) Only two
 - (c) All three
 - (d) None
78. With reference to Dwarf Galaxies, consider the following statements:
1. They are small galaxies that typically contain just a few billion stars.
 2. They are the most abundant type of galaxy in the universe.
 3. They are most commonly found in galaxy clusters, often as companions to larger galaxies.
- How many of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) All three
(d) None
79. SWAYATT Initiative, recently in news, is a:
(a) e- learning platform launched by the Ministry of Education
(b) platform launched by the RBI for Rural Regional Banks
(c) an initiative for rural households to learn basic computer skills online
(d) an initiative which invigorate participation of women-led enterprises and youth in public procurement
80. Consider the following statements about the Category of major minerals
1. Major minerals are defined as those specified in the First Schedule of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957.
 2. They include both metallic and non-metallic minerals, but exclude fossil fuels.
 3. Limestone, iron ore, and manganese are classified as major minerals.
- How many of the statements given above are correct?
- (a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) All three
(d) None
81. Which of the following best describes the primary objective of the Naxalite movement when it originated in Naxalbari, West Bengal?
- (a) To promote communal harmony
(b) To demand constitutional reforms
(c) To redistribute land and resources to oppressed communities
(d) To impede industrialization in tribal areas
82. Consider the following statements about the Lepakshi temple
1. The temple is renowned for its hanging pillar, one of its architectural marvels.
 2. The Lepakshi Temple is constructed in the Vijayanagara architectural style.
 3. The temple complex features the largest monolithic Nandi statue in India.
- How many of the statements given above are correct?
- (a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) All three
(d) None
83. The Ali Ai Ligang festival, recently seen in news, is primarily celebrated by which community?
- (a) Bodo community of Assam
(b) Karbi community of Assam
(c) Mising community of Assam
(d) Dimasa community of Assam
84. Consider the following statements regarding National Commission for Indian System of Medicine:
1. It frames policies for regulating medical institutions and medical professionals of Indian System of Medicine.
 2. It consists of 29 members, appointed by the central government.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2
85. Soliga Tribe, recently in news, mainly resides in:
- (a) Bihar and Jharkhand
(b) Telangana and Odisha
(c) Maharashtra and Karnataka
(d) Karnataka and Tamil Nadu
86. Consider the following statements about the Critical mineral in India
1. The discovery of Lithium reserves in the Jammu and Kashmir region is a significant step towards reducing India's import dependency.
 2. India is a member of the Minerals Security Partnership.

3. India has identified a list of 30 critical minerals essential for its economic development and national security.
- How many of the statements given above are correct?
- Only one
 - Only two
 - All three
 - None
87. Purchasing Managers' Index for India is given by:
- Reserve Bank of India
 - NITI Aayog
 - World Economic Froum
 - S&P Global
88. Jhumoir dance, recently in news, is performed in:
- Assam
 - Ladakh
 - Himachal Pradesh
 - Rajasthan
89. With reference to Technology Adoption Fund, consider the following:
- It aims to accelerate the development of indigenous space technology, reducing reliance on imported solutions.
 - It consists of a corpus of Rs 500 crore to support the growth of India's space startups.
 - It is an initiative of the Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Centre (IN-SPACe).
- How many of the above statements are correct?
- Only one
 - Only two
 - All three
 - None
90. Consider the following statements:
- Minicoy Island is the southernmost island in the Lakshadweep group.
 - The Eight Degree Channel separates Minicoy Island from the Maldives.
 - The Nine Degree Channel separates Minicoy Island from the Lakshadweep Islands.
- How many of the above statements is/are correct?
- Only one
 - Only two
 - All three
 - None
91. Which among the following best describes Majorana 1, recently seen in the news?
- A newly discovered subatomic particle.
 - A new spacecraft designed for Mars exploration.
 - A propulsion technology developed for faster space travel.
 - A quantum computing chip.
92. Consider the following statements regarding the UN-Habitat:
- It is mandated by the UN General Assembly to promote socially and environmentally sustainable towns.
 - Its Executive Board is composed of 36 member states elected by the UN-Habitat Assembly and meets three times a year.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- 1 only
 - 2 only
 - Both 1 and 2
 - Neither 1 nor 2
93. With reference to the National Dam Safety Authority (NDSA), consider the following statements:
- It is a statutory body set up with a clear mandate to regulate, oversee, and inspect dams.
 - It plays a crucial role in formulating policies and guidelines that govern the construction, maintenance, and operation of dams nationwide.
 - In the face of natural calamities or unforeseen events, the NDSA ensures that comprehensive emergency response plans are in place.
- How many of the statements given above are correct?
- Only one

- (b) Only two
(c) All three
(d) None
94. With reference to Evo 2 AI System, consider the following:
1. It is a powerful new foundation model that understands the genetic code for all domains of life.
 2. It can be applied to biomolecular research applications including predicting the form and function of proteins.
 3. It is developed by the Indian Institute of Science Bengaluru.
- How many of the above statements are correct?
- (a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) All three
(d) None
95. Consider the following statements about the APEDA Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority
1. APEDA is a statutory body established under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India.
 2. APEDA provides financial assistance and support to exporters for infrastructure development, quality improvement, and market development.
 3. It plays a crucial role in implementing the Geographical Indication (GI) registration of agricultural products in India.
- How many of the statements given above are correct?
- (a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) All three
(d) None
96. The “rarest of rare” doctrine, which guides the imposition of the death penalty in India, was established by the Supreme Court in which of the following cases?
- (a) A. K. Gopalan v. State of Madras
(b) Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India
(c) Bachan Singh v. State of Punjab
(d) Indra Sawhney v. Union of India
97. Consider the following statements regarding the ‘Rarest of Rare’ doctrine:
1. The Supreme Court has provided a clear numerical threshold to define a ‘rarest of rare’ case.
 2. The doctrine aims to ensure that the death penalty is awarded in a fair and uniform manner.
 3. The doctrine is derived from Article 21 of the Constitution, which protects the right to life.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 and 2
(b) 2 and 3
(c) 1 and 3
(d) All three
98. TrailGuard AI was developed primarily to combat which of the following threats?
- (a) Deforestation in tropical rainforests
(b) Poaching and illegal wildlife trade
(c) Human-wildlife conflict in urban areas
(d) Illegal fishing in marine protected areas
99. Consider the following statements regarding the Soil Health Card Scheme:
1. The scheme provides farmers with a detailed analysis of pH, and organic carbon of the soil.
 2. Under the scheme, soil samples are collected once every five years,
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2
100. Consider the following statements about the Parambikulam Tiger Reserve
1. PTR is located in the Western Ghats and spans across the states of Kerala and Tamil Nadu.
 2. The reserve is known for its diverse flora and fauna, including the

presence of endangered species like the Nilgiri Tahr and the Great Hornbill.

3. The Parambikulam Dam, a crucial water source for the region, is located within the core zone of the tiger reserve.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

101. Consider the following statements regarding the NAKSHA Programme:

- 1. It aims to create and update land records in urban areas to ensure accurate and reliable documentation of land ownership.
- 2. It will empower citizens and improve ease of living in urban areas.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

102. Consider the following statements regarding Ovoid cells:

- 1. These are highly specialized neurons which get activated each time when we encounter something new.
- 2. These are present within the hippocampus of humans.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

103. Which of the following statements about Project Waterworth is correct?

- (a) It is an Indian government initiative to clean the Ganges River.
- (b) It is a joint project between India and Nepal to manage shared water resources.

- (c) It is a UK-funded initiative focused on improving water access and management in certain regions of India.

- (d) It is a World Bank program aimed at promoting water conservation in arid and semi-arid regions globally.

104. Consider the following statements regarding Prime Minister Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana (PMDKY):

- 1. The scheme focuses on promoting smart irrigation techniques such as drip irrigation and solar-powered pumps.
- 2. It is applicable only to marginal and small farmers with landholdings of less than 2 hectares.
- 3. PMDKY encourages crop diversification by incentivizing farmers to switch from cereals to pulses and oilseeds.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2
- (b) 1 and 3
- (c) 2 and 3
- (d) All three

105. What is the primary mechanism of action for an mRNA-based cancer vaccine?

- (a) It delivers mRNA to cells, instructing them to produce tumor-specific antigens
- (b) It modifies the patient's DNA to resist cancer cell growth
- (c) It injects synthetic antibodies that target cancerous cells
- (d) It activates dormant cancer-fighting bacteria in the gut microbiome

106. Consider the following statements regarding International Classification of Diseases:

- 1. It is a flagship World Health Organization product.
- 2. It provides critical knowledge on the extent, causes and consequences of human disease.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2
107. Exercise Komodo, recently in news, is a:
(a) multilateral army exercise
(b) rescue exercise
(c) bilateral air force exercise
(d) multilateral naval exercise
108. With reference to Prime Minister's Yoga Award, consider the following:
1. It was established to honor the profound impact of Yoga on society.
2. An individual applying for this award must be 40 years or older.
3. It is conferred only to an individual should have at least 20 years of dedicated service in Yoga promotion.
How many of the above statements are correct?
(a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) All three
(d) None
109. Consider the following statements regarding the TrailGuard AI system:
1. It is a camera-based alert system designed for enhancing wildlife conservation and promoting human-wildlife coexistence.
2. It autonomously detects target objects and transmits real-time alerts.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2
110. Consider the following statements about the removal of High Court judge
1. A judge of a High Court can be removed from office only on grounds of proved misbehavior or incapacity.
2. The process for removal of a High Court judge is initiated by a motion passed by a special majority in both Houses of Parliament.
3. The President of India has the power to remove a High Court judge after a motion is passed by Parliament.
How many of the statements given above are correct?
(a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) All three
(d) None
111. Consider the following statements about the Censure motion
1. A Censure Motion can be moved only in the Lok Sabha.
2. It can be moved against an individual minister, a group of ministers, or the entire Council of Ministers.
3. If a Censure Motion is passed, the government is required to resign.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
(a) 1 and 2
(b) 1 and 3
(c) 2 and 3
(d) All three
112. The India-US TRUST initiative primarily focuses on:
(a) Enhancing cooperation in defense technology and military hardware.
(b) Strengthening collaboration in critical minerals, advanced materials, and pharmaceuticals.
(c) Promoting joint research and development in artificial intelligence and quantum computing.
(d) Facilitating trade and investment in renewable energy technologies.
113. Sudan Virus (SUDV) is classified as a Category A Bioterrorism Agent by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) because:
(a) It mutates frequently, leading to multiple genetically distinct strains every year
(b) It spreads through aerosol transmission, similar to influenza viruses
(c) It is naturally occurring only in Sudan and has not spread outside Africa

- (d) It has a high mortality rate and lacks an effective vaccine or treatment
114. Consider the following statements regarding National Skill Development Corporation:
1. NSDC acts as a catalyst in skill development by providing funding to enterprises, companies, and organizations that provide skill training.
 2. It also develops appropriate models to enhance, support and coordinate private sector initiatives.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) Both 1 and 2
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2
115. What does the term "colorectal disease" refer to?
- (a) Diseases affecting the stomach
 - (b) Diseases affecting the colon and rectum
 - (c) Diseases of the liver
 - (d) Diseases of the pancreas
116. Consider the following statements regarding the NAMASTE Scheme:
1. It targets sewer and septic tank sanitation workers (SSWs) and wastepickers in urban areas of India.
 2. It is jointly being implemented by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MoSJE) and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) Both 1 and 2
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2
117. Consider the following statements regarding Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR):
1. It is a metric used to determine the revenue that telecom operators must share with the government in the form of licensing charges.
 2. AGR incorporates revenues from non-telecom sources such as deposit interests and sale of assets.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) Both 1 and 2
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2
118. Consider the following statements regarding the U.S.-India COMPACT Initiative:
1. It will lay the foundation for deepening military partnerships.
 2. Under this initiatives India and US aim to double bilateral trade to \$500 billion by 2030 under "Mission 500."
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) Both 1 and 2
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2
119. Corruption Perceptions Index, recently in news, is prepared by:
- (a) Germanwatch
 - (b) World Bank
 - (c) World Economic Forum
 - (d) Transparency International
120. Under the current income tax system in India, what does the term "Assessment Year" refer to?
- (a) The year in which income is earned.
 - (b) The calendar year in which income is assessed.
 - (c) The previous year before the financial year.
 - (d) The year following the financial year in which income is earned.

121. Climate Risk Index, recently in news, is prepared by:
- World Meteorological Organization
 - World Bank
 - UNEP
 - Germanwatch
122. Consider the following statements about the South China Sea deepwater 'space station'
- The facility is planned to be located on the seabed and will serve as a research platform for marine science and technology.
 - The project has raised concerns among neighboring countries due to its potential military applications and implications for regional security.
 - The development of this facility is seen by some as a part of China's broader strategy to assert its presence and influence in the South China Sea.
- How many of the statements given above are correct?
- Only one
 - Only two
 - All three
 - None
123. Consider the following features of the new 'Tax Year' concept:
- It replaces the assessment year system.
 - It aligns income taxation within the same financial year.
 - It increases the tax compliance burden on businesses.
- Which of the statements is/are correct?
- 1 and 2 only
 - 2 and 3 only
 - 1 and 3 only
 - 1, 2, and 3
124. Srjanam, recently in news, is a:
- artificial Intelligence system to curb fake currency notes
 - a cloud computing tool to improve service delivery system in India
 - new water purifying technology to provide safe drinking water to children
 - automated biomedical waste treatment rig
125. With reference to Dokra Artwork, consider the following:
- It is a form of folk art practiced by the Dhokra Damar tribes.
 - This artwork is mainly found in West Bengal and Odisha region of India.
 - It is done by using lost wax technique.
- How many of the above statements are correct?
- Only one
 - Only two
 - All three
 - None
126. Which of the following statements is correct regarding the Seva Bhoj Yojana?
- It is a scheme to provide financial assistance for the construction of community kitchens in urban areas.
 - It is a scheme to reimburse the GST and central excise paid by charitable or religious institutions on food items used for seva (free food) to the general public.
 - It is a scheme to provide free meals to students in government schools across the country.
 - It is a scheme to promote organic farming practices among small and marginal farmers.
127. Consider the following statements about the National Commission for Safai Karamcharis (NCSK)
- The NCSK is a statutory body established to study and monitor the working conditions of Safai Karamcharis and recommend measures for their improvement.
 - The NCSK has the power to investigate complaints of atrocities against Safai Karamcharis and recommend appropriate action to the concerned authorities.

Choose the correct statements:

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

128. Consider the following statements regarding the Panchayat Devolution Index:

1. It evaluates framework, capacity building and accountability of the Panchayats.
2. It provides transparency in tracking Panchayat functioning and resource allocation to citizens.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

129. With reference to United Kingdom (UK)-India Young Professionals Scheme, consider the following:

1. It allows Indian citizens between 18 and 30 years old to live and work in the UK for up to 2 years.
2. It was conceived as part of an India-U.K. Migration and Mobility Memorandum of Understanding.
3. The selected candidate from India is not eligible to do research in sensitive subjects in the UK.

How many of the above statements are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

130. Consider the following statements about the Liquidity Coverage Ratio (LCR)

1. The LCR requires banks to hold a stock of high-quality liquid assets (HQLA) that can cover their net cash outflows over a 30-day stress scenario.
2. A higher LCR indicates a bank's stronger liquidity position.

Choose the correct statements:

- (a) 1 only

- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

131. Consider the following statements regarding the R-37M Missile, recently seen in the news:

1. It is an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM).
2. It was developed by Russia.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

132. Consider the following statements regarding the Pradhan Mantri Anusuchit Jaati Abhyuday Yojana (PM- AJAY) Scheme:

1. It is aimed at reducing poverty among the Scheduled Castes communities through various initiatives.
2. It is a 100% Centrally Sponsored Scheme.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

133. Exercise Cyclone 2025, recently in news, is conducted between India and:

- (a) Australia
- (b) Japan
- (c) France
- (d) Egypt

134. Consider the following statements:

1. It is located in Odisha.
2. It is the meeting point of two biogeographic regions of India; the Deccan Peninsula and the Eastern Ghats.
3. The river Mahanadi flows through the valleys in the middle of the reserve.

The above statements correctly describe which one of the following protected areas?

- (a) Nagarhole National Park
(b) Satkosia Tiger Reserve
(c) Kuno National Park
(d) Simlipal National Park
135. What is the type of liability that the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damages Act (CLNDA), 2010 imposes on nuclear plant operators?
(a) No-fault liability
(b) Criminal liability
(c) Civil liability based on negligence
(d) Liability based on contributory fault
136. Consider the following statements regarding Kashmir Hand-knotted Carpet:
1. It is locally known as "Kal baffi" and attained the high degree of perfection after 15th century.
2. It has received the Geographical Indications tag.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2
137. Consider the following statements regarding the Bombay Blood Group:
1. It is a rare blood group first discovered in Mumbai.
2. People with this type blood group lack the H antigen which makes them incompatible with all standard blood types.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2
138. Consider the following statements about the Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY)
1. It provides financial assistance to farmers for adopting organic farming practices.
2. The scheme focuses on cluster-based organic farming.
3. PKVY aims to improve soil health and enhance the marketability of organic produce.
How many of the statements given above are correct?
(a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) All three
(d) None
139. Consider the following statements about the 'bank.in' domain initiative:
1. It is mandatory for all scheduled banks in India to use 'bank.in' for their official online presence starting April 2025.
2. The domain shift requires banks to enhance multi-factor authentication (MFA) for online banking transactions.
3. 'bank.in' is part of RBI's broader strategy to transition to a cashless economy by 2030.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
(a) 1 and 2
(b) 1 and 3
(c) 2 and 3
(d) All three
140. Baneshwar Fair is related to which one of the following tribes?
(a) Bhil
(b) Santhal
(c) Gonds
(d) Munda
141. Klub-S Missile System, recently seen in the news, is developed by which country?
(a) United States
(b) North Korea
(c) Iran
(d) Russia
142. Dashavatar Theatre, recently in news, is performed in:
(a) Tripura and Assam region
(b) Punjab and Haryana region
(c) Kerala and Tamil Nadu region
(d) Maharashtra and Goa region

143. M23, or the March 23 Movement, is an armed group, fighting in which one of the following countries?

- (a) Sudan
- (b) Nigeria
- (c) Central African Republic
- (d) Democratic Republic of Congo

144. Consider the following statements regarding the TROPEX Exercise:

1. It is an operational level exercise which is conducted every year.
2. It is being conducted in various phases - both in harbour and at sea, integrating various facets of combat operations.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

145. Consider the following statements about the Chandrayaan-4

1. The mission aims to study the permanently shadowed regions and search for water ice.
2. It will involve a lander, rover, and potentially a sample return module.

Choose the correct statements:

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

146. Consider the following statements regarding the 'Donkey Route' illegal immigration network:

1. The Donkey Route avoids direct flights to the US and instead relies on transit through multiple countries.
2. It is primarily used by individuals from India attempting illegal immigration to the UK and Canada.
3. Fake documents, including counterfeit visas, are often used to facilitate passage.
4. It has been linked to an increase in security concerns for national and international agencies.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1,3 and 4
- (b) 1, 2 and 3
- (c) 2,3 and 4
- (d) All of the above

147. Consider the following statements regarding "Geo-Economic Fragmentation (GEF)" as discussed in the Economic Survey 2024-25:

1. It refers to the increasing economic and trade fragmentation globally due to geopolitical tensions.
2. The Survey suggests reducing reliance on foreign investments and focusing solely on domestic industries.
3. It highlights the need to strengthen domestic economic growth levers to mitigate external risks.

Which of the above statements are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 1 and 3 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2, and 3

148. Which of the following factors contribute to the slow degradation of plastics by bacteria?

1. High molecular weight and crystallinity of plastics
2. Limited microbial enzyme specificity for synthetic polymers
3. Presence of stabilizers and additives in plastics
4. Low microbial growth rates in anaerobic environments

Select the correct answer using the codes below:

- (a) 1, 2, and 3
- (b) 2, 3, and 4
- (c) 1, 3, and 4
- (d) 1, 2, 3, and 4

149. Consider the following statements regarding Navigation with Indian Constellation (NavIC):

1. It is a satellite-based navigation system developed by the Indian

Space Research Organization (ISRO).

2. It provides service to users in India as well as the region extending about 5000 km beyond the Indian landmass.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

150. Consider the following statements regarding the Grameen Credit Score:

- 1. It aims to formalize self help group (SHG) transactions within the central credit system of India.
- 2. It will help in promoting financial inclusion for self help group (SHGs) women entrepreneurs.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

151. Consider the following statements regarding GREAT scheme:

- 1. It was launched with the aim to develop the startup ecosystem in technical textiles in India.
- 2. It has evolved under the Research, Development, and Innovation Component of National Technical Textiles Mission.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

152. Which of the following best describes the key assumption behind the Trickle-Down economic approach?

- (a) Economic benefits directed towards lower-income groups lead to overall growth

- (b) Government subsidies to lower-income groups lead to sustained economic growth

- (c) State-driven redistributive policies are necessary for equitable economic development

- (d) Wealth creation at the top eventually benefits lower-income groups through job creation and investments

153. Consider the following provisions under the Waqf Act, 1995:

- 1. Waqf properties can only be sold or mortgaged with prior approval of the State Waqf Board.
- 2. The Waqf Tribunal has exclusive jurisdiction to resolve disputes related to Waqf properties.
- 3. The Act provides for the digitization of Waqf records to prevent encroachments.

How many of the above provisions are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

154. Consider the following statements regarding the PRASHAD scheme:

- 1. It is aimed at transforming the cultural preservation and spiritual travelling across identified pilgrimage destinations across India.
- 2. It was launched by the Union Ministry of Tourism.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

155. Consider the following statements regarding the National Youth Parliament Scheme 2.0:

- 1. It will strengthen the roots of democracy and tolerance of the views of others.

2. Under this scheme only individuals can participate in the Youth Parliament programme.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

156. Consider the following statements about Makhana

- 1. It is a type of aquatic seed, primarily cultivated in the wetlands of the Mithila region of Bihar.
- 2. It is a rich source of protein, fiber, and micronutrients, making it a nutritious food option.
- 3. Its cultivation is highly water-intensive and contributes significantly to the depletion of groundwater resources.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2
- (b) 1 and 3
- (c) 2 and 3
- (d) All three

157. What is the primary objective of the Gyan Bharatam Mission, recently seen in the news?

- (a) To promote online education.
- (b) To conserve India's manuscript heritage.
- (c) To establish new academic institutions across India.
- (d) To preserve India's ancient monuments and heritage sites.

158. Consider the following statements regarding GARBH-INI-DRISHTI:

- 1. It is a data dashboard that provides a comprehensive overview of one of South Asia's largest pregnancy cohort datasets.
- 2. It will help researchers to conduct research which is aimed at improving maternal and neonatal health outcomes.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

159. The Prime Minister Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana primarily focuses on which of the following aspects?

- (a) Enhancing agricultural productivity in low-yield districts
- (b) Promotion of organic farming across India
- (c) Establishing direct cash transfers to farmers
- (d) Expanding the Minimum Support Price (MSP) coverage

160. Consider the following statements regarding the World Wetlands Day:

- 1. It is celebrated annually on February 2.
- 2. It aims to spread awareness about conserving wetlands.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

161. Consider the following statements regarding the Ocean Coordination Mechanism (OCM):

- 1. The OCM was established under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).
- 2. It focuses on sustainable fisheries, marine biodiversity protection, and pollution control in the Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf region.
- 3. The initiative is fully funded by UNESCO and its associated bodies.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 1, 2, and 3
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 2 only

162. What is the primary aim of the Bharatiya Bhasha Pustak Scheme, recently seen in the news?
- To offer subsidized printed books to students in rural areas.
 - To replace physical textbooks with digital ones.
 - To offer digital textbooks and study materials in various Indian languages.
 - None of the above.
163. Inland mangrove of Guneri, recently in news, is located in:
- Karnataka
 - West Bengal
 - Tamil Nadu
 - Gujarat
164. Consider the following statements regarding the National Geospatial Mission:
- It is aimed at modernising land records and enhancing urban planning across India.
 - It will leverage the existing PM Gati Shakti framework to develop foundational geospatial infrastructure and data.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- 1 only
 - 2 only
 - Both 1 and 2
 - Neither 1 nor 2
165. Consider the following statements regarding Devi Ahilyabai Holkar:
- She made a landmark decision of removing traditional law of confiscating the property of childless widows.
 - She granted land to merchants and weavers to promote the textile industry.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- 1 only
 - 2 only
 - Both 1 and 2
 - Neither 1 nor 2
166. What is the Axiom-4 Mission (Ax-4), recently seen in the news?
- A scientific mission to study asteroid impacts on Earth.
 - A commercial space mission sending astronauts to the Moon.
 - A mission to send a crew to Mars for the first time.
 - A private astronaut mission to the International Space Station.
167. Consider the following statements regarding e-Shram microsite:
- It is a state-specific digital platforms seamlessly integrated with the national e-Shram database.
 - It is launched by the Union Ministry of Labour & Employment.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- 1 only
 - 2 only
 - Both 1 and 2
 - Neither 1 nor 2
168. With reference to Human African Trypanosomiasis, consider the following:
- It is a parasitic disease transmitted through the bite of infected tsetse flies.
 - It is more prevalent amongst rural populations
 - India recently becomes the first country to successfully eliminate this disease.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- 1 and 2
 - 1 and 3
 - 2 and 3
 - All three
169. What is the primary reason for the recent change in colour of Greenland's crystal blue lakes to brown?
- Increased industrial pollution from nearby countries.
 - Thawing permafrost due to rising temperatures, releasing organic matter into the lakes.

- (c) A decrease in the amount of sunlight reaching the lakes due to cloud cover.
 - (d) The introduction of invasive species that disrupt the lake ecosystems.
170. Which of the following statements regarding the Paris AI Summit 2025 is correct?
- (a) It is the first global AI Summit focused on AI governance.
 - (b) It was co-chaired by India's Prime Minister and the President of the European Commission.
 - (c) It aims to establish a global framework for ethical AI regulation and governance.
 - (d) It focuses solely on European AI leadership and does not involve non-European countries.

171. Consider the following statements regarding the Mutual Credit Guarantee Scheme for micro, small and medium enterprises (MCGS-MSMEs):

1. It aims at providing 60 per cent guarantee coverage by National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company Limited (NCGTC) to Member Lending Institutions.
2. Under this scheme a borrower should be an MSME with valid Udyam Registration Number.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) Both 1 and 2
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2
172. Consider the following statements about the Unified Pension Scheme (UPS)
1. The UPS provides for a guaranteed minimum pension of ₹10,000 per month upon retirement after a minimum of 10 years of service.
 2. The scheme is applicable to all government employees, including those in the armed forces, who joined service after April 1, 2004.

Choose the correct statements:

- (a) 1 only

- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

173. Consider the following statements regarding Lezim Dance:

1. Lezim dance was originally developed as a form of martial training among Maratha soldiers.
2. It is mainly performed by female dancers as part of Navratri celebrations in Maharashtra.
3. The dance involves synchronized movements accompanied by traditional Dhol or Nagara drums.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2
- (b) 1 and 3
- (c) 2 and 3
- (d) All three

174. Consider the following statements regarding WASP-127b, recently seen in the news:

1. It is a large exoplanet located in our Milky Way galaxy.
 2. It is a rocky planet that orbits very far from its host star.
- (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) Both 1 and 2
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2

175. With reference to Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY), consider the following statements:

1. It aims to provide financial assistance to farmers suffering from crop damage or loss arising out of unforeseen events.
2. All farmers, including sharecroppers and tenant farmers, growing the notified crops in the notified areas are eligible for coverage.
3. PMFBY integrates advanced technologies like satellite imaging, drones, and mobile apps for precise estimation of crop loss.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) All three
(d) None
176. Fentanyl, recently in news, is a/an
(a) antibiotic
(b) herbicide
(c) anti-malarial drug
(d) synthetic opioid drug
177. Consider the following statements regarding Etikoppaka toys:
1. These are exquisite wooden toys which are mainly crafted in Andhra Pradesh.
2. These toys have received official recognition with a Geographical Indication tag.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2
178. With reference to the Unified Pension Scheme (UPS), consider the following statements:
1. Both current and future Central Government employees covered under National Pension System (NPS) are eligible to opt for the Unified Pension Scheme (UPS).
2. Under the UPS, employees who complete 25 years of service will receive 50% of the average basic pay earned during the 12 months prior to retirement.
3. If the payout holder passes away after superannuation, the legally wedded spouse will receive a family payout equal to 60% of the payout that was admissible to the holder.
How many of the statements given above are correct?
(a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) All three
(d) None
179. Consider the following statements regarding the Reserve Bank-Integrated Ombudsman Scheme:
1. It covers all commercial banks and non-banking financial companies.
2. Under this a regulated entity will not have any right to appeal in cases where an award is issued by the ombudsman against it.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2
180. Consider the following statements regarding the Inland Waterways Authority of India:
1. It develops and maintains inland waterway transport infrastructure on national waterways.
2. It works under the union Ministry of Jal Shakti.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2
181. Consider the following statements about the NVS-02 satellite
1. It is the second of the second-generation satellites to be a part of the Navigation with Indian Constellation (NavIC) system.
2. It is equipped with an indigenous atomic clock, contributing to precise timekeeping and location accuracy.
3. It operates in the L1, L5, and S bands, improving interoperability with other global navigation satellite systems.
How many of the statements given above are correct?
(a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) All three
(d) None

182. Consider the following statements about the the NITI Aayog's Fiscal Health Index (FHI) 2025
1. The FHI 2025 is the first report of its kind, providing a comprehensive assessment of the fiscal health of Indian states.
 2. Odisha state tops the index .
- Choose the incorrect statements:
- (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) Both 1 and 2
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2
183. The primary aim of the Cauvery-South Vellar Link Project is:
- (a) To generate hydroelectric power for Tamil Nadu.
 - (b) To regulate water sharing between Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.
 - (c) To divert surplus floodwater for irrigation and water conservation.
 - (d) To establish water transport channels across Tamil Nadu.
184. Consider the following statements regarding the SANJAY Surveillance System:
1. It is battlefield automated surveillance system which integrates the inputs from all ground and aerial battlefield sensors.
 2. It is jointly developed by the Indian Army and Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL).
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) Both 1 and 2
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2
185. Consider the following statements about the Chinar trees
1. The Chinar tree (*Platanus orientalis*) is native to the Kashmir Valley and is not found naturally in any other region of the Indian subcontinent.
 2. Chinar trees are known for their distinctive foliage, which changes color dramatically with the seasons, displaying vibrant hues of red, amber, and yellow in autumn.
3. The Mughal emperors played a significant role in popularizing the planting of Chinar trees in Kashmir, incorporating them into their gardens and landscapes.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 and 2
 - (b) 2 and 3
 - (c) 1 and 3
 - (d) All three
186. Consider the following statements about the Deep Ocean Mission (DOM):
1. It aims to establish India's presence in the International Seabed Authority (ISA) by exploring deep-sea mining rights.
 2. It is fully funded by the Ministry of Earth Sciences.
 3. Technologies like Matsya6000 and Varaha are being developed in collaboration with private industries.
 4. DOM aligns with India's blue economy policy for sustainable use of ocean resources.
- Which of the statements are correct?
- (a) 1 and 2 only
 - (b) 1, 3, and 4 only
 - (c) 2, 3, and 4 only
 - (d) All of the above
187. Which of the following best describes the origin of the M23 Armed Group?
- (a) A splinter faction from the Congolese army due to disputes over a peace agreement
 - (b) A separatist movement aiming for an independent state in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)
 - (c) A political movement advocating democratic reforms in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)
 - (d) A rebel group formed to resist international mining operations in the

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

188. Which one of the following is the best description of 'Guillain-Barre Syndrome (GBS)', that was in the news recently?

- (a) It is a disorder caused by poor blood circulation.
- (b) It is viral infection that damages lungs.
- (c) It is a hormonal disorder causing excessive growth of tissues.
- (d) It's a neurological disorder in which the body's immune system attacks the peripheral nervous system.

189. Consider the following statements regarding the Indian Partnership Act, 1932:

- 1. It is a comprehensive law that defines a partnership, its formation, its rights, and its dissolution.
- 2. It is applicable to all types of partnerships in India formed for any purposes.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

190. Consider the following statements regarding the Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar:

- 1. It is awarded to selfless service rendered by individuals and organisations in India in the field of disaster management.
- 2. Under this cash prize given to the winning institution shall be utilized for disaster management related activities only.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

191. Consider the following statements regarding Eurodrone:

- 1. It is a twin-engine -turboprop unmanned aerial vehicle.
- 2. It is designed for long-endurance missions such as intelligence and surveillance.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

192. Consider the following statements about the Enemy Property Act

- 1. The Enemy Property Act was enacted in 1968 following the Indo-Pakistan War of 1965.
- 2. The Act defines "enemy property" as any property belonging to, held, or managed on behalf of an enemy, an enemy subject, or an enemy firm.
- 3. The 2017 amendment to the Act allows for the transfer of enemy property to legal heirs who are Indian citizens.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2
- (b) 1 and 3
- (c) 2 and 3
- (d) All three

193. Consider the following statements about types of whips issued by political parties:

- 1. A one-line whip requires members to remain present but allows them to abstain from voting.
- 2. A two-line whip directs members to vote in favour of the party's stance without exception.
- 3. A three-line whip mandates both presence and voting in alignment with party instructions.
- 4. Whips are legally enforceable in all parliamentary democracies.

Which of the above statements are correct?

- (a) 1, 2, and 3 only
- (b) 3 and 4 only
- (c) 2 and 4 only
- (d) 1 and 3 only

194. During a planet parade, why do the outer planets (e.g., Jupiter and Saturn) appear to move slower than inner planets like Venus and Mercury?
- Outer planets have longer orbital periods due to greater distances from the Sun.
 - Their visibility is affected by their retrograde motion.
 - Outer planets are more massive and experience stronger gravitational forces.
 - Inner planets travel slower because of their smaller orbital radii.
195. With reference to the Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana (SSY), consider the following statements:
- A SSY account can be opened by a parent or legal guardian of the girl's child until she attains the age of 18 years.
 - Only one account is allowed for a girl child and a family can open a maximum of two SSY accounts.
 - The amount invested, interest earned and maturity amount in the SSY account is tax-free.
- How many of the statements given above are correct?
- Only one
 - Only two
 - All three
 - None
196. Consider the following statements regarding the National Voters' Day:
- It is observed annually on January 25 to commemorate the foundation day of the Election Commission of India.
 - It aims to underline the centrality of the voter and raise electoral awareness among citizens.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- 1 only
 - 2 only
 - Both 1 and 2
 - Neither 1 nor 2
197. The Hema Committee, recently in news, is associated with which of the following issues?
- Review of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012
 - Studying the problems faced by women in the Malayalam film industry
 - Examining the impact of demonetization on the informal sector
 - Reforming the All India Services recruitment process
198. Consider the following statements about Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) Scheme:
- It focuses solely on the financial incentives for girl child education.
 - It integrates advocacy campaigns to address gender-biased practices.
 - It is now part of the broader Mission Shakti program.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- 1 and 2
 - 2 and 3
 - 1 and 3
 - All three
199. Consider the following statements about the One Nation, One Legislative Platform:
- It focuses exclusively on digitizing Parliament's records.
 - It integrates all legislative bodies, including local government institutions.
 - It utilizes artificial intelligence to streamline legislative functioning.
- Which of the above statements is/are correct?
- 1 only
 - 2 only
 - 3 only
 - None
200. Consider the following statements regarding Pralay Missile:
- It is long-range surface-to-surface missile.

2. It is powered by a solid-propellant rocket motor.
 3. It has the ability to change its path after covering a certain range midair.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 and 2
 - (b) 2 and 3
 - (c) 1 and 3
 - (d) All three
201. Consider the following statements about the Dark oxygen
1. Dark oxygen" refers to oxygen produced in deep ocean environments where sunlight cannot penetrate, thus precluding photosynthesis.
 2. The process of "dark oxygen" production is primarily driven by chemosynthesis carried out by specialized bacteria near hydrothermal vents.
 3. Metallic nodules found on the ocean floor have been identified as playing a role in "dark oxygen" production through electrochemical reactions.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 and 2
 - (b) 1 and 3
 - (c) 2 and 3
 - (d) All three
202. Consider the following statements about the NDRF (National Disaster Response Force)
1. NDRF is a specialized force constituted under the Disaster Management Act, 2005.
 2. It is mandated to respond to and mitigate all types of disasters, including natural and man-made disasters.
- Choose the correct statements:
- (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) Both 1 and 2
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2
203. Consider the following statements regarding White Goods:
1. White goods, by definition, include large domestic appliances used for household tasks.
 2. Air conditioners under the PLI scheme focus on developing components like compressors and heat exchangers.
 3. The inclusion of LED lights in white goods is due to their use in essential household functions.
- Which of the above statements are correct?
- (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 and 3 only
 - (c) 1 and 3 only
 - (d) 1, 2, and 3
204. What is the primary aim of Exercise La Perouse?
- (a) To promote interoperability and maritime security among navies in the Indo-Pacific
 - (b) To conduct anti-piracy drills in the Gulf of Aden
 - (c) To counter illegal fishing activities in the Indian Ocean
 - (d) To develop multilateral naval strategies for Arctic exploration
205. World Employment and Social Outlook report, recently seen in the news, is published by:
- (a) World Bank
 - (b) International Monetary Fund
 - (c) World Economic Forum
 - (d) International Labour Organization
206. Consider the following statements regarding the National Disaster Response Force:
1. It was established under the Disaster Management Act, 2005.
 2. It works under the supervision of the Union Ministry of Home Affairs.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) Both 1 and 2
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2

207. Consider the following statements regarding the World Economic Forum:
1. It was established in 1971 as a not-for-profit foundation.
 2. It publishes the Global Competitiveness Report.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2
208. What does the Information Ratio (IR) measure?
- (a) The risk-free rate of return in an investment.
 - (b) The ability of a portfolio to match and exceed a benchmark's returns.
 - (c) The number of trades executed by a portfolio manager.
 - (d) The impact of interest rates on stock market performance.

209. With reference to New Sanchar Saathi Mobile App, consider the following:

1. It is designed to fortify telecom security and empower citizens.
2. It has a feature of directly reporting suspected calls and SMS using app from mobile phone logs.
3. It helps in verifying the authenticity of mobile handsets.

How many of the above statements are correct?

- (a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) All three
(d) None
210. Consider the following statements regarding Prime Minister's Wi-Fi Access Network Interface (PM-WANI) Scheme:
1. The primary objective is to provide free internet access to all citizens.
 2. It encourages local shops and establishments to provide Wi-Fi for last-mile internet delivery.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 only

- (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2

211. Consider the following statements regarding ISRO's Third Launch Pad:

1. It will be established at Satish Dhawan Space Centre of Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) at Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh.
2. It will be configured for the next generation launch vehicles of ISRO.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2
212. Consider the following statements regarding the Bharat Ranbhoomi Darshan App:

1. It is aimed at promoting connectivity, tourism, and socio-economic development in border regions.
2. It is developed by the Ministry of Defence in collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2
213. Consider the following statements about the Pay commission

1. Pay Commissions are constituted by the President of India.
2. The primary function of Pay Commissions is to review and recommend revisions to the salaries and allowances of central government employees.
3. The recommendations of Pay Commissions are binding on the government.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2

- (b) 1 and 3
(c) 2 and 3
(d) All three
214. Consider the following statements about the rupee weakening
1. A weaker Rupee can make Indian exports more competitive in the global market.
 2. It can lead to higher import costs, thus increasing inflation.
 3. It can benefit Indian tourists traveling abroad.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 and 2
(b) 1 and 3
(c) 2 and 3
(d) All three
215. Which of the following statements about the SVAMITVA Scheme is correct?
- (a) It aims to provide free Wi-Fi connectivity in rural areas.
(b) It is a scheme for promoting digital literacy among farmers.
(c) It aims to provide an integrated property validation solution for rural India.
(d) It is a scheme for providing financial assistance to small and marginal farmers.
216. Consider the following statements about the Human Papillomavirus (HPV)
1. Vaccination against HPV is available and highly effective in preventing HPV-related cancers.
 2. HPV only affects women.
- Choose the incorrect statements:
- (a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2
217. Consider the following statements about Interest Equalisation Scheme
1. It is primarily targeted towards Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).
 2. It is implemented by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
- Choose the correct statements:
- (a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2
218. What is the primary goal of the “One Rocket, Two Missions” initiative?
- (a) To showcase the capabilities of private-sector companies in lunar exploration.
(b) To explore the lunar South Pole using a single spacecraft.
(c) To reduce the cost of interplanetary missions by using a reusable rocket system.
(d) To establish a permanent human presence on the Moon.
219. The Kokborok language is spoken primarily by people of which Indian state?
- (a) Himachal Pradesh
(b) Tripura
(c) Jharkhand
(d) Sikkim
220. With reference to Fast Track Immigration–Trusted Traveller Program (FTI-TTP), consider the following:
1. It is introduced with the purpose of facilitating international mobility with faster and secure immigration clearances
 2. Under this initiative Indian nationals and foreign nationals holding OCI cards are eligible to register.
 3. The FTI registration will be valid for lifetime.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 and 2
(b) 1 and 3
(c) 2 and 3
(d) All three

ANSWER KEYS

1	C	51	D	101	C	151	C	201	B
2	C	52	A	102	C	152	D	202	C
3	D	53	D	103	C	153	C	203	D
4	C	54	C	104	B	154	C	204	A
5	B	55	C	105	A	155	A	205	D
6	A	56	A	106	C	156	A	206	C
7	A	57	B	107	D	157	B	207	C
8	B	58	C	108	B	158	C	208	B
9	C	59	B	109	C	159	A	209	C
10	C	60	A	110	C	160	C	210	B
11	C	61	D	111	A	161	D	211	C
12	C	62	C	112	B	162	C	212	C
13	D	63	C	113	D	163	D	213	A
14	D	64	D	114	C	164	C	214	A
15	A	65	C	115	B	165	C	215	C
16	B	66	A	116	C	166	D	216	B
17	B	67	C	117	C	167	C	217	C
18	D	68	A	118	C	168	A	218	A
19	A	69	A	119	D	169	B	219	B
20	C	70	A	120	D	170	C	220	A
21	A	71	C	121	D	171	C		
22	C	72	B	122	C	172	A		
23	A	73	B	123	A	173	B		
24	B	74	B	124	D	174	A		
25	C	75	D	125	C	175	C		
26	A	76	C	126	B	176	D		
27	C	77	C	127	C	177	C		
28	D	78	C	128	C	178	C		
29	D	79	D	129	B	179	C		
30	B	80	C	130	C	180	A		
31	B	81	C	131	B	181	C		
32	C	82	C	132	C	182	D		
33	C	83	C	133	D	183	C		
34	B	84	C	134	B	184	C		
35	D	85	D	135	A	185	B		
36	C	86	C	136	C	186	B		
37	B	87	D	137	C	187	A		
38	A	88	A	138	C	188	D		
39	A	89	C	139	A	189	A		
40	C	90	C	140	A	190	C		
41	C	91	D	141	D	191	C		
42	C	92	C	142	D	192	A		
43	D	93	C	143	D	193	D		
44	C	94	B	144	B	194	A		
45	C	95	C	145	A	195	B		
46	B	96	C	146	A	196	C		
47	C	97	B	147	B	197	B		
48	B	98	B	148	D	198	B		
49	D	99	A	149	A	199	C		
50	B	100	C	150	C	200	B		



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