
CURRENT AFFAIRS
DECEMBER 2024

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NATIONAL NEWS

Ratapani Tiger Reserve, Madhya Pradesh notified as the 57th Tiger Reserve of the country

- India has added the 57th tiger reserve to its tally with Ratapani Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh.
- The tiger reserve is situated in the Raisen and Sehore districts of Madhya Pradesh, and it has a core area of 763.8 sq. km, a buffer area of 507.6 sq. km and a total area of 1271.4 sq. km.
- It is the eighth tiger reserve in Madhya Pradesh.

Key Points

| | | |
|--------------------------|---|-------------|
| Madhya Pradesh's capital | — | Bhopal |
| Chief Minister | — | Mohan Yadav |

Indore Airport to become India's first zero-waste airport

- IndiGo, through its CSR initiative IndiGoReach, has collaborated with the Airports Authority of India (AAI) and AAS Foundation, Indore, to implement the Zero Waste Airport Project at Indore Airport.
- This initiative is focused on adopting the 4R strategy—Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Recover—to minimise the environmental impact of airport operations, setting a new benchmark for sustainable waste management in aviation.
- The project aims to reduce dependency on traditional waste disposal methods by processing daily airport waste of 750 kg on-site.

Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) reclassified packaged drinking water and mineral water

- The FSSAI has reclassified packaged drinking water and mineral water as a high-risk food category, mandating stricter regulatory controls and annual facility inspections.
- The move requires manufacturers to undergo mandatory third-party food safety audits and comply with enhanced quality standards.
- Central licence holders in this category must now undergo annual inspections to mitigate potential health risks associated with packaged water production.
- The reclassification by FSSAI follows recent amendments to the Food Safety and Standards (Prohibition and Restrictions on Sales) Regulations, 2011, which previously removed mandatory BIS certification requirements for certain food products.

Key Points

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|--------------------|---|-------------------------|
| FSSAI headquarters | — | New Delhi |
| Chairperson | — | Punya Salila Srivastava |

Central government scraps 'No Detention Rules' in schools

- The Central Government has abolished the “no-detention” policy for Classes 5 and 8 in schools governed by it including Kendriya Vidyalayas and Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas.
- This was done through a gazette notification titled “Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (Amendment) Rules, 2024. It will allow schools to fail students who do not clear the year-end exams.

India conducts first-ever Ganges River Dolphin tagging

- India has completed the first-ever satellite tagging of the Ganges River Dolphin in Assam, marking an important milestone for Project Dolphin.
- This is part of the Wildlife Institute of India (WII)'s plan to protect the iconic yet elusive species through a better understanding of its habitat needs and movement patterns.
- The tagging exercise will help researchers understand the dolphins' seasonal and migratory patterns, range, distribution and habitat utilisation, particularly in fragmented or disturbed river systems, which is crucial for any scientific conservation interventions.
- The Ganges River Dolphin (*Platanista gangetica*) is under threat due to its rapidly degrading natural habitat, river pollution and the construction of dams and barrages. In 2020, the government launched Project Dolphin to conserve the vital species. It is classified as endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Delhi zoo trials 'Nano Bubble Technology'

- Union Minister Kirti Vardhan Singh launched the 'Nano Bubble Technology' for cleaning and purifying water of the National Zoological Park in Delhi to promote the health of aquatic animals.
- This technology is being used for the first time and can clean dirty pond water by removing algae and similar growths.

- The technology, currently in its trial phase, employs advanced filtration and recycling methods to remove impurities and prevent algae growth. It also minimises water wastage by enabling efficient recycling.

India's first Hyperloop test track completed at IIT Madras

- In a major leap forward for transportation technology, IIT Madras has completed a 410-metre Hyperloop test track, marking a significant milestone in India's journey toward futuristic transport systems.
- The project is being led by IIT Madras's Avishkar Hyperloop team in partnership with TuTr, a start-up incubated at the institute.
- The Hyperloop concept, originally popularised by Elon Musk in 2012, is now gaining traction worldwide, and this development takes India closer to adopting cutting-edge transportation technology. The technology will be implemented in two phases: the first phase will feature an 11.5-kilometre test track to validate and certify the technology.
- Upon successful trials, the second phase will expand the track to nearly 100 kilometres.
- Hyperloop trains are designed to reach speeds of up to 1,100 km/h, with an operational speed of around 360 km/h.

IIT Madras unveils detailed 3D images of human foetal brain

- The Indian Institute of Technology, IIT Madras has achieved a groundbreaking milestone by releasing the most detailed, high-resolution 3D images of the human foetal brain.
- This achievement was made by researchers at the Sudha Gopalakrishnan Brain Centre.
- On a global scale, it is the first of its kind project showcasing over 5,132 digitally captured brain sections at a cellular level using advanced brain mapping technology.
- The dataset, aptly named DHARANI, is now openly accessible to researchers worldwide through the platform brainportal.humanbrain.in.
- This initiative significantly advances neuroscience, promising breakthroughs in understanding brain development and treating disorders such as learning disabilities and autism.

IIT Ropar unveils new Bluetooth system

- The Agriculture and Water Technology Development Hub (AWaDH) at IIT Ropar has revealed a new

Bluetooth Low Energy (BLE) Gateway and Node System.

- It is a first-of-its-kind cost-effective system that connects Bluetooth-enabled sensors to cloud platforms, enabling seamless data transmission, real-time environmental monitoring and advanced analytics across diverse sectors such as agriculture, logistics and ecological resilience.

Kisan Kavach–Bharat's indigenous anti-pesticide bodysuit

- Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh unveiled Kisan Kavach, Bharat's first anti-pesticide bodysuit, designed to protect farmers from the harmful effects of pesticide exposure.
- This will ensure farmer safety and empower the agricultural community through science and technology.
- It has been developed by BRIC-inStem in Bangalore, in collaboration with Sepio Health Pvt. Ltd.
- The bodysuit provides essential protection against pesticide-induced toxicity.
- The Kisan Kavach Protective Shield includes a full-body suit, mask, headshield and gloves, offering comprehensive protection.
- Priced at ₹4,000, the suit is washable, reusable, and can last up to two years with up to 150 washes. The suit features advanced fabric technology that deactivates harmful pesticides upon contact, ensuring maximum safety for farmers.
- The fabric works through a process where a nucleophile is covalently attached to cotton fibres, allowing it to neutralise pesticides via nucleophilic-mediated hydrolysis.

Vice President, Jagdeep Dhankhar inaugurates GSI Geoscience Museum in Gwalior

- Vice President of India, Jagdeep Dhankhar, inaugurated the state-of-the-art Geological Survey of India (GSI) Geoscience Museum at the Victoria Market Building in Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh.
- The Gwalior Geoscience Museum serves as a gateway to the wonders of Earth's story—a sanctuary of knowledge where science and art converge to inspire curiosity. It houses two exceptional galleries, offering a glimpse into the mysteries of our planet and the chronicles of life's journey through time.

ICMR sets up India's first diabetes biobank in Chennai for research

- The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) in collaboration with the Madras Diabetes Research Foundation (MDRF) established India's first diabetes biobank in Chennai.
- It is a repository of population-based biological samples to support scientific research in Chennai. It aims to gather, process, store and distribute biospecimens to assist scientific studies with the permission of the ICMR.
- It will facilitate advanced research on the causes of diabetes, the variations of the Indian type of diabetes and related disorders.
- The biobank has blood samples from two ICMR-funded studies—the ICMR–India Diabetes (ICMR–INDIAB) study, which was conducted across all states and Union Territories in phases from 2008 to 2020, and the “Registry of People with Diabetes in India at a Young Age at the Onset”, launched in 2006 and still ongoing.

Key Points

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| ICMR's headquarters | — | New Delhi |
| Director General | — | Rajiv Bahl |

Republic Day 2025: tableaux theme “Swarnim Bharat: Virasat aur Vikas”

- The Ministry of Defence announced that the theme for the Republic Day 2025 tableaux is “Swarnim Bharat: Virasat aur Vikas” (Golden India: Heritage and Development). This annual display on Kartavya Path features creative and cultural exhibits from states, Union Territories and central ministries.
- Due to time constraints during the Republic Day Parade, only 15 states and Union Territories—Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chandigarh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli & Daman and Diu, Goa, Gujarat, Haryana, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Tripura, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal—were selected.

PM Modi lays the foundation for Ken–Betwa river linking project

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone of the interstate Ken–Betwa river linking project to channel excess water from the Ken river in Madhya Pradesh into the Betwa.

- The project is estimated to cost ₹44,605 crore, and overall, a million hectares of farmland covering 2,000 villages will benefit from the project that is also projected to generate 103MW of hydropower and 27MW of solar energy.
- In August 2005, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed between Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and the Union Government for the preparation of a detailed feasibility report, which was completed in 2014. In 2023, approval was received from the environment ministry, clearing all decks for the project.

ISRO's LVM3 rocket achieves multi-orbit capability

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has recently marked a milestone with its LVM3 rocket, which allows the rocket to place satellites in various orbits during a single mission.
- HLVM3 is a three-stage vehicle with a payload capacity of about 10 tonnes to LEO. The vehicle is 53 metres tall and weighs 640 tonnes.
- The development of a “multi-element ignitor” for the CE-20 Cryogenic engine was crucial for this capability.

Key Points

| | | |
|---------------------|---|------------|
| ISRO's headquarters | — | Bengaluru |
| ISRO's chairman | — | S. Somnath |

India's first bio-bitumen stretch inaugurated by Nitin Gadkari

- Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways, Nitin Gadkari, inaugurated India's first bio-bitumen-based National Highway stretch on NH-44 in Mansar, Nagpur, Maharashtra.
- Developed using lignin-based bio-bitumen technology by Praj Industries in collaboration with CSIR-CRRI, NHAI and Oriental, this development represents a significant milestone in sustainable road construction.
- The innovative use of lignin as a binder addresses bitumen scarcity, reducing India's dependency on imports, which currently accounts for 50% of the supply. This development supports global sustainability goals by generating revenue for bio-refineries, reducing stubble burning, and lowering greenhouse gas emissions by more than 70% compared to conventional fossil-based bitumen.

NEWS IN SHORT

- UNESCO has declared West Bengal as a top destination for heritage tourism, asserting that the sector has generated employment for lakhs of youths.
- Uber has introduced its first water transport service in India, allowing users to book a shikara ride at Dal Lake, Srinagar, via its app.
- Gorakhpur is developing India's first Integrated Waste Management City-cum-Learning Centre by September 2025. The 40-acre facility will process 700 tonnes of dry and wet waste daily, producing charcoal and Bio-CNG. A hazardous waste plant will also operate, serving Gorakhpur and eight neighbouring areas.
- The Maha Kumbh Mela 2025 in Prayagraj will use AI cameras, RFID wristbands and mobile app tracking for crowd management. An AI-powered chatbot in 11 languages and QR-coded passes will be included. The 'Netra Kumbh' initiative will offer free eye exams, aiming to dispense three lakh spectacles.
- India has achieved a Total Fertility Rate (TFR) of 2.0 as per National Family Health Survey-5 (NFHS-5) (2019–21). This aligns with the National Population Policy 2000 and the National Health Policy 2017 (TFR of 2.1).
- India became the first country in the world to define "green steel" – emissions lower than 2.2 per tonne of carbon dioxide per tonne of finished steel produced – while announcing a "star-rated grading system" for such green steel.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi participated in 'Ek Varsh-Parinaam Utkarsh': Completion of 01 year of State Government of Rajasthan' programme during which he inaugurated and laid the foundation stone for 24 projects related to Energy, Road, Railways and Water worth over ₹46,300 crores at Jaipur, Rajasthan.
- India's pharmaceutical industry holds a prominent position globally, ranking as the third-largest by volume, and is valued at \$50 billion for the 2023–24 financial year, worth \$23.5 billion, while exports contribute \$26.5 billion.
- Masali village of Suigam taluka in Banaskantha, Gujarat has become the first border solar village in the country. It is located nearly 40 kilometres from the international Pakistan border.
- Madhya Pradesh has been recognised by the Wall Street Journal as one of the "Go-To Global Destinations for 2025" for its rich heritage, wildlife and natural beauty.
- Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation, Amit Shah, inaugurated 10,000 newly established Multipurpose Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (MPACS), along with Dairy and Fisheries Cooperative Societies, in New Delhi.
- Uber launched 'Moto Women' pilot programme in Karnataka, offering safe and empowering rides for female two-wheeler riders.
- The Union Home Ministry has reinstated the 'Protected Area Permit' system in Manipur, Nagaland and Mizoram in view of security concerns arising from people coming from neighbouring countries. The government has taken this step after reports of foreign interference in Manipur.
- Researchers at IIT Guwahati have developed a biological method to convert methane and carbon dioxide into biofuels using methanotrophic bacteria. This process, which is more energy-efficient and environmentally friendly than traditional chemical methods, produces bio-methanol and reduces emissions by up to 87%.
- In line with his commitment to energy sufficiency and promoting green energy, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Omkareshwar Floating Solar Project, established at Omkareshwar in Khandwa district of Madhya Pradesh.

GOVERNMENT SCHEMES**NAP-SE launched**

- The National Action Plan for Prevention and Control of Snakebite Envenoming (NAP-SE) in India was launched to reduce snakebite deaths by half by 2030. In India, around 50,000 deaths occur from an estimated 3–4 million snakebites annually which accounts for half of all snakebite deaths globally.
- NAP-SE provides a broad framework for states to develop their own action plan for the management, prevention and control of snakebites through the 'One Health' approach.
- The activities envisaged under human, wildlife, tribal and animal health components will be undertaken by concerned stakeholders at all levels.

- A Snakebite Helpline number (15400), a vital resource that provides immediate assistance, guidance, and support to individuals and communities affected by snakebite incidents, will be piloted in five States (Puducherry, Madhya Pradesh, Assam, Andhra Pradesh and Delhi). This initiative aims to ensure prompt access to medical care and information to the general public.

India's first sign language TV channel launched

- Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan launched India's first television channel in Indian Sign Language (ISL), Channel 31, as part of the PM-eVidya initiative.
- Channel 31 will be run by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) in an effort to ensure the accessibility of news, learning and entertainment for individuals with hearing-disability.
- This initiative aligns with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which encourages the promotion of ISL to create a more inclusive educational environment.
- As per the NEP, ISL will be standardised across India, and materials for the curriculum will be developed for students with hearing impairments.

Key Points

NCERT Director — Dr Dinesh Prasad Saklani
Headquarters — Delhi

AICTE and NQM launch India's first UG minor programme in quantum technologies

- The All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) in collaboration with the National Quantum Mission (NQM) under the Department of Science and Technology (DST) has launched an Undergraduate (UG) minor programme in 'Quantum Technologies' aiming to prepare India's workforce for the quantum revolution and positioning the nation as a global leader in cutting-edge quantum innovation.
- This will be India's first UG minor programme in quantum technologies.

Key Points

AICTE Chairman — TG Sitharam
Headquarters — New Delhi

Government of India has introduced the Jalvahak scheme

- The Union government launched the 'Jalvahak' scheme to incentivise cargo movement via inland

waterways, marking a major step towards promoting sustainable and cost-effective transportation across National Waterways 1 (Ganga), 2 (Brahmaputra), and 16 (Barak River).

- Under the scheme, cargo owners transporting goods over distances exceeding 300 km via waterways will be eligible for up to 35% reimbursement on operating costs.
- The cargo promotion scheme is projected to facilitate a modal shift of 800 million tonne-kilometres with an estimated investment of ₹95.4 crore by 2027.
- The fixed-schedule sailing service will ply vessels between Kolkata–Patna–Varanasi and Kolkata–Pandur (Guwahati) routes, demonstrating the readiness of waterways for efficient and eco-friendly cargo transportation.

Key Points

Union Minister of Ports, — Sarbananda Sonowal
Shipping & Waterways

Maharashtra Prisons and Correctional Services Act, 2024

- In a historic move, the Maharashtra assembly unanimously passed the bill to bring in the 'Maharashtra Prisons and Correctional Services Act' (MPCSA)-2024 aimed at transforming the state's prison system.
- The comprehensive bill introduces progressive reforms such as open prisons for women, segregated facilities for women and transgender individuals, and dedicated spaces for civil prisoners.
- The government has also proposed to repeal three existing laws – The Prisons Act 1894, Prisoners Act 1900 and Transfer of Prisoners Act 1950.

Key Points

Maharashtra Chief Minister — Devendra Fadnavis
Capital — Mumbai and
Nagpur (Winter)

Department of Consumer Affairs launch 'Jago Grahak Jago App', 'Jagruti App' and 'Jagruti Dashboard'

- Department of Consumer Affairs launched 'Jago Grahak Jago App', 'Jagruti App' and 'Jagruti Dashboard' for public use on National Consumers Day 2024 – 24 December 2024.
- The 'Jago Grahak Jago App' provides essential e-commerce information about all URLs during a consumer's online activities, alerting them if any URL may be unsafe and requires caution.

- Meanwhile, the 'Jagriti App' allows users to report URLs where they suspect the presence of one or more dark patterns declared illegal. These reports are then registered as complaints to the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) for possible redressal and subsequent action.
- Additionally, the CCPA is being strengthened with the 'Jagriti Dashboard' which is used to generate real-time reports on e-commerce URLs for the presence of the aforementioned dark patterns, enhancing the capability to monitor and regulate online consumer interactions effectively.

Key Points

Union Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution — Pralhad Venkatesh Joshi

Parliament passes 'Bharatiya Vayuyan Vidheyak bill 2024', replacing 90-yr-old Act

- The Bharatiya Vayuyan Vidheyak, 2024 was passed to remove redundancies and replace the Aircraft Act of 1934. The bill received assent from President Droupadi Murmu.
- The Aircraft Act of 1934 had received the then Governor General's assent on 19 August 1934 and has been amended 21 times over the years.
- The Bharatiya Vayuyan Vidheyak bill focuses on enhancing safety, regulatory oversight and consumer protection while aligning with international standards.
- It also promotes self-reliance in aircraft manufacturing, encourages investment, and establishes robust governance structures for civil aviation authorities.

Key Points

Union Civil Aviation Minister — K Rammohan Naidu

Credit-Guarantee Scheme launched

- The Union Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution and New & Renewable Energy, Pralhad Joshi launched the Credit Guarantee Scheme for e-NWR based Pledge Financing (CGS-NPF).
- This scheme provides a corpus of ₹1,000-crore for post-harvest finance availed by farmers against electronic negotiable warehouse receipts (e-NWRs) after depositing commodities in Warehousing Development and Regulatory Authority (WDRA) accredited warehouses. It will minimise distress selling by farmers.

- CGS-NPF Scheme has been introduced to instil confidence in bankers, encouraging the extension of pledge finance against electronic Negotiable Warehouse Receipts (e-NWRs) for farmers /traders who store their agricultural/horticultural produce in warehouses registered with the WDRA.

Arunachal Pradesh launches 'Mission Himveer'

- Arunachal Pradesh launched 'Mission Arun Himveer' with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) among the Arunachal Pradesh Agriculture Marketing Board (APAMB) and the Indo Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), North East Frontier.
- As a part of this, the state government will supply fruits, vegetables, meat and poultry products to the ITBP procured from local farmers, Self Help Groups, Farmer Producer Organisations and farmer cooperatives, through the APAMB.
- The mission aims to achieve the short-term goals of the Marketing Board in providing ready-made markets from far-flung villages and circles with low marketable surplus and creating a vibrant economy besides solving employment issues across the state.

Key Points

Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister — Pema Khandu

PAATHAI initiative for youth rehabilitation launched

- Social Welfare and Women Empowerment Minister Geeta Jeevan launched the PAATHAI (Personality Affirming Attitude, Transformation, Holistic Approach Intervention) in Chennai.
- It aims to support first-time child offenders, addressing their unique needs through a comprehensive approach.

MEA to establish nine One-Stop Centres (OSCs)

- The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has launched an initiative to support Indian women in vulnerable situations abroad with the establishment of nine One-Stop Centres (OSCs).
- These include seven OSCs with provisions for shelter homes in Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, UAE, Saudi Arabia (Jeddah & Riyadh) and two OSCs without shelter homes in Toronto and Singapore.
- Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) has been set up in all Indian Missions and Posts abroad to meet the contingency expenditure incurred by them for carrying out various on-site welfare activities for Overseas Indian citizens on a means-tested basis.

Key Points

Union External Affairs Minister — Subrahmanyam Jaishankar

Govt introduces 'Anna Chakra' to improve food supply chain

- The Union Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution and New & Renewable Energy, Pralhad Joshi launched 'Anna Chakra', the Public Distribution System (PDS) Supply chain optimisation tool and SCAN (Subsidy Claim Application for NFSA) portal a significant step towards modernising the Public Distribution System and subsidy claim mechanisms of the States.
- "Anna Chakra" PDS Supply Chain optimisation, spearheaded by the Department of Food Public Distribution, is a landmark initiative to enhance the efficiency of the PDS logistics network across the country. Developed in collaboration with the World Food Programme (WFP) and Foundation for Innovation and Technology Transfer (FITT), IIT-Delhi, the project leverages advanced algorithms to identify optimal routes and ensure seamless movement of food grains across supply chain nodes.

Lok Sabha passes Railways Amendment Bill 2024

- The Lok Sabha passed the Railways (Amendment) Bill, 2024 during the Winter Session of Parliament. The amendment primarily grants statutory powers to the Railway Board.
- The Bill was amended to add provisions granting the Central government authority to determine the composition of the Railway Board, including the number of members, their qualifications, experience and terms of service.
- It aims to enhance the overall functioning and independence of the Railway Board.
- The amendment is expected to speed up the approval process for these train services, helping to meet long-standing demands from the region.

Key Points

Union Railways Minister – Ashwini Vaishnaw

Department of Consumer Affairs developing National Legal Metrology Portal (eMaap)

- The Department of Consumer Affairs, Government of India, is developing the National Legal Metrology

Portal (eMaap) to integrate State Legal Metrology Departments and their portals into a unified national system.

- This initiative aims to streamline processes for issuing licenses, conducting verifications and managing enforcement and compliance.
- By creating a centralised database, eMaap eliminates the need for stakeholders to register on multiple State Portals, fostering ease of doing business and transparency in trade practices.

NHAI introduces performance rating system for highways

- To enhance accountability and assess the quality of construction and maintenance of National Highways, NHAI has introduced a comprehensive rating system for performance assessment of the concessionaires engaged in the National Highway development and maintenance.
- The assessment methodology will be based on Pavement Condition Index (PCI) and defect rectification compliance on NHAI One App—where over 95 defects can be notified and monitored digitally—shall also form a part of rating assessment.
- 80% weightage would be given to PCI and 20% weightage would be given to compliance on NHAI One App.
- PCI, a scientific metric ranging from 0 to 100, reflects pavement conditions from 'Excellent' to 'Failed', as per IRC 82:2023 guidelines. PCI will be calculated based on six functional parameters that include roughness, potholes, cracking, ravelling, rut depth and patchwork. The data for PCI value will be calculated using the latest technology such as Laser Crack Measurement Systems through Network Survey Vehicles (NSV) and will be surveyed and processed through centrally deployed agencies by NHAI under supervision of a dedicated team.
- As per the assessed 'Concessionaire Rating Value', concessionaires will be divided under different categories. Contractors scoring less than 70 out of 100 rating will be declared 'non-performers', thus becoming ineligible to secure new National Highway projects till improvement in its rating.

Key Points

Chairman NHAI — Santosh Kumar Yadav
Headquarters — Delhi

Union Cabinet approves 'One Nation, One Election' Bill

- The Union Cabinet approved the One Nation, One Election (ONOE) bill, a landmark proposal aimed at conducting simultaneous elections across the country.
- The ONOE initiative proposes synchronised elections for the Lok Sabha, state assemblies, urban local bodies and panchayats, all to be conducted within a 100-day period.
- This approach represents a significant milestone in Indian governance, aimed at streamlining election processes and reducing costs.
- The initiative was thoroughly analysed by a high-level committee chaired by former President Ram Nath Kovind.

Hab-1: India's first analog space mission

- ISRO launched its first analog space mission in Leh, Ladakh, to study the challenges of extraterrestrial conditions that will help in future space missions.
- Analog space missions are field tests in locations on Earth that have physical similarities to the extreme space environments and play a significant role in problem-solving for spaceflight research.
- Ladakh was chosen for such a mission because the area's geographical features—dry and cold climate, barren land, high-altitude terrain and extreme isolation—closely resemble Martian and lunar landscapes, making it an ideal training ground for scientific missions aimed at exploring planets.

Rajya Sabha passes bill seeking to replace 100-year-old Boiler Act

- The Rajya Sabha cleared a bill to provide for the regulation of boilers, safety of life and property of persons from the danger of explosions of steam-boilers and uniformity in registration.
- The Boilers Bill, 2024 seeks to repeal the century old Boilers Act, 1923.
- The bill aims to decriminalise seven offences and promote ease of doing business. It also has provisions to ensure the safety of persons working inside a boiler. It also mentions the repair of boilers to be undertaken by qualified and competent persons.
- Out of the seven offences, to ensure the safety of boilers and personnel, in four major offences which may result in loss of life and property, criminal penalties are retained.

- For the other offences, a provision is being made for a financial penalty. For all non-criminal offences, the term 'fine' has been changed to 'penalty', which will be levied through an executive mechanism instead of courts, as was the case earlier.

Govt distributes property cards under SVAMITVA scheme

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi distributed over 50 lakh property cards under SVAMITVA scheme to property owners in over 46,000 villages in 200 districts across ten States and two Union Territories through video conferencing.
- SVAMITVA scheme was launched in 2020 with a vision to enhance the economic progress of rural India by providing 'Record of Rights' to households possessing houses in inhabited areas in villages through the latest surveying drone technology.
- It also helps facilitate the monetisation of properties and enables institutional credit through bank loans, reduces property-related disputes, facilitates better assessment of properties and property tax in rural areas and enables comprehensive village-level planning.

UDAN Yatri Cafe launched

- To address the issue of overpriced food and beverages at airports, the Ministry of Civil Aviation and the Airports Authority of India (AAI) launched a UDAN Yatri Cafe at Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose International Airport in Kolkata.
- The cafe offers budget-friendly food options for travellers.

Key Points

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| AAI Headquarters | — | New Delhi |
| Chairman | — | Vipin Kumar |

NEWS IN SHORT

- Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma launched the Assam State Commission for the Right to Public Services, emphasising its role in ensuring greater accountability in the provision of public services.
- Uttarakhand is striving to become the first state in the country to implement a dedicated yoga policy.
- The e-Courts Mission Mode Project is a flagship initiative aimed at leveraging Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for the modernisation and development of the Indian Judiciary. Spearheaded by

the Department of Justice, Government of India, this transformative project is being implemented in close collaboration with the e-Committee of the Supreme Court of India.

- Bharti Airtel has become the first private telecom operator to launch mobile services in around seven border villages of Kupwara, Baramulla and Bandipore districts of Jammu and Kashmir.
- Singrauli-based Coal India arm Northern Coalfields Limited (NCL) has rolled out 'CHARAK' – "Community Health: A Responsive Action for Koylanchal", an innovative health-centric CSR Initiative. This project aims to provide free treatment for the patients suffering from identified life-threatening diseases belonging to economically weaker sections of Singrauli region.
- "Yuva Sahakar – Cooperative Enterprise Support and Innovation Scheme" is being implemented by the National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) a statutory corporation under the administrative control of the Ministry of Cooperation, across the country, with the aim to encourage newly formed cooperative societies with new and/or innovative ideas. The scheme encourages young entrepreneur Cooperative Societies which are in operation for a minimum of three months.
- Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Thakur Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu launched six new schemes and distributed financial assistance to beneficiaries. He also introduced "Him Bhog Atta," prepared from maize grown using natural farming practices to promote natural farming. One key scheme, Indira Gandhi Sukh Shiksha Yojana, was rolled out with ₹1.38 crore disbursed to 5,145 beneficiaries.
- The Government has launched Fast Track Immigration –Trusted Traveller Programme (FTI-TTP) at Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGI) Airport, T-3 Terminal, New Delhi. FTI-TTP aims to facilitate international mobility with faster, smoother and secure immigration clearance.
- The Lok Sabha passed the Banking Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024, which allows bank account holders to have up to four nominees in their accounts.
- The Uttar Pradesh government, under Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, has officially declared the Maha Kumbh area in Prayagraj as a new district.
- The Rajya Sabha passed the Oilfields Amendment Bill, 2024 that aims to delink petroleum operations from mining, clarify the grant and extension of petroleum leases and create a new dispute resolution mechanism for the exploration and production sector.
- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved the opening of 85 new Kendriya Vidyalayas (KVs) under Civil/Defence sector across the country and the expansion of one existing KV, i.e., KV Shivamogga, District Shivamogga, Karnataka to facilitate increased number of Central Government employees by adding two additional sections in all the classes under the Kendriya Vidyalaya Scheme (Central Sector Scheme).
- The Union Cabinet has approved the Rithala–Narela–Nathupur (Kundli) corridor of Delhi Metro's Phase - IV project consisting of 26.463 km which will further enhance connectivity between the national capital and neighbouring Haryana.
- The Karnataka government revealed the plan to develop a SWIFT (Startups, Workspaces, Innovation, Finance and Technology) city near Bengaluru's Sarjapur, a similar city to the recently announced KWIN city. SWIFT city will enhance the start-up ecosystem in Bengaluru and will be one of the major industrial hubs in the tech capital.
- Himachal Pradesh's Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu announced plans to establish drone stations across the state as part of a transformative project to enhance disaster management.
- Uttar Pradesh has become the first state in India to completely adopt the central government's GeM system.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the 'Bima Sakhi Yojana' of Life Insurance Corporation, in Panipat, Haryana, in line with his commitment to women's empowerment and financial inclusion. He also laid the foundation stone of the main campus of Maharana Pratap Horticultural University, Karnal.
- The Union Ministry of Tourism has allocated ₹25 crore for infrastructure development in and around Sri Brahadeeswarar Temple, popularly known as Thanjavur Big Temple.
- Andhra Pradesh's Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu launched the AP Urjaveer Scheme to promote energy efficiency. The scheme trains 1,12,000 private electricians to handle energy-efficient appliances.

- The Union Minister of State for Science & Technology and Space, Jitendra Singh, announced that India will achieve major milestones in space exploration with plans to establish its own space station, Bharat Antariksha Station, by 2035 and to land an Indian astronaut on the Moon by 2040.
- Gujarat became the first State in the country to generate farmer IDs for 25% of the targeted number of farmers

in the State. This breakthrough represents a significant step towards creating a comprehensive standards-driven digital agriculture ecosystem as a part of the 'Agri Stack initiative' of the Government of India.

- The Delhi government launched Dr. Ambedkar Samman Yojana, which promises to cover the cost of education for Dalit students who choose to pursue higher education in top foreign universities.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Russia develops mRNA cancer vaccine

- Russia claimed to develop its own mRNA-based vaccine to treat cancer, which will be available for free to patients from early 2025.
- An mRNA vaccine is a type of vaccine that uses a copy of a molecule called messenger RNA (mRNA) to produce an immune response.

Key Points

| | | |
|----------------|---|----------------|
| Russia Capital | — | Moscow |
| President | — | Vladimir Putin |

Russia's RS-28 Sarmat Missile

- Russia is set to deploy the RS-28 Sarmat intercontinental ballistic missile, known as 'Satan 2', to replace older missiles.
- It can carry up to fifteen nuclear warheads, arranged as Multiple Independently Targetable Re-Entry Vehicles (MIRVs), allowing it to strike multiple targets simultaneously.
- The missile is 116 feet in length and weighs 220 tonnes. It boasts a range of 6,200 to 11,180 miles, enabling it to target regions across the U.S. or Europe.
- First tested in April 2022, it entered combat service in 2023. It's a critical part of Russia's military strategy.
- Coupled with a top speed exceeding 12,000 mph, it can reach distant European targets in as little as three minutes, making it highly effective in surprise strikes.

Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan finalise border agreement

- Central Asian neighbours Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan announced a border demarcation deal on the last contested frontier in the region, potentially ending decades of territorial disputes.
- Since the fall of the Soviet Union, the border between the impoverished countries has seen sporadic deadly

clashes, with the neighbours fighting over access to water and resources in the remote region.

- This comes almost two years after an intense and bloody border conflict killed around 100 people in September 2022.

Key Points

| | | |
|--------------------|---|----------------|
| Kyrgyzstan capital | — | Bishkek |
| President | — | Sadyr Japarov |
| Tajikistan capital | — | Dushanbe |
| President | — | Emomali Rahmon |

China's first type 076 amphibious assault ship

- China has launched its first next-generation amphibious assault ship-Type 076 amphibious ship. The ship was named Sichuan after a southwestern Chinese province.
- It is an independently developed ship, and is hailed as a "key asset" for advancing the Navy's transformation and enhancing its long-range operational capabilities.
- With a full-load displacement of over 40,000 tonnes, the Type 076 ranks among the world's largest amphibious assault ships, featuring a twin-island superstructure and a full-length flight deck.
- It adopts an electromagnetic catapult system, which allows it to carry fixed-wing aircraft along with helicopters and amphibious equipment usually found on this type of warship

Key Points

| | | |
|-----------------|---|------------|
| China's capital | — | Beijing |
| President | — | Xi Jinping |

China expands its presence in Antarctica with its first atmospheric monitoring station

- China has opened its first overseas atmospheric monitoring station in Antarctica.

- The station will help study concentration changes in the atmospheric components and support global climate change responses.
- This is part of China's expanding efforts in polar resource exploration. The new station offers unique geographical and scientific advantages for studying the impact of human activities on the environment.

China unveils the world's fastest high-speed train prototype

- China unveiled the CR450 bullet train prototype, which has a test speed of 450 kilometres (280 miles) per hour.
- CR450 will feature a 22% reduction in overall operational resistance and a 10% decrease in weight compared to its predecessors.
- The train features a water-cooled, permanent magnet traction system, and more than 4,000 sensors "for the real-time monitoring of key systems, including car body, high-voltage pantograph, train control and fire detection systems.
- With this, China would break records already set by China for the fastest high-speed train. The CR400, which was introduced in 2017 and holds the record, operates at speeds of 350 kilometres per hour.

Nvidia unveils Jetson Orin Nano Super, a compact generative AI supercomputer

- Nvidia, a global leader in computing and artificial intelligence (AI), has unveiled its most affordable generative AI supercomputer, the Jetson Orin Nano.
- This compact yet powerful device aims to democratise AI development by offering cutting-edge capabilities at an accessible price point.
- The Nvidia Jetson Orin Nano Super Developer Kit is compact enough to fit in the palm of your hand and offers enhanced generative AI capabilities. It also provides performance for a wide range of users, including commercial AI developers, hobbyists and students.

International advisory body for submarine cable resilience launched

- The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the International Cable Protection Committee (ICPC) have jointly launched the International Advisory Body for Submarine Cable Resilience to address the growing challenges and ensure the continued resilience of this critical infrastructure.

- The body will work towards promoting best practices across governments and industries to improve cable resilience, reduce risks of damage and ensure the swift repair and deployment of these vital systems.
- It comprises 40 members including ministers, heads of regulatory authorities and senior experts in telecommunications. The body will meet twice a year.
- It will be co-chaired by H.E. Minister Bosun Tijani, Minister of Communications, Innovation, and Digital Economy of Nigeria and Prof. Sandra Maximiano, Chair of the Board of Directors of Portugal's National Communications Authority (ANACOM).

European Space Agency (ESA) successfully launches Sentinel-1C satellite

- ESA successfully launched the Copernicus Sentinel-1C satellite. Vega C launcher (VV25 mission) lifted off from the Guiana Space Centre, French Guiana and successfully placed the Copernicus Sentinel-1C satellite into Sun-synchronous orbit (SSO) at an altitude of 700 km.
- This mission will provide crucial environmental data about our planet, while also carrying out Arianespace's commitment of guaranteeing Europe's independent access to space.
- Sentinel-1C is the sixth Copernicus Sentinel satellite successfully launched by Arianespace.

Key Points

| | | |
|------------------|---|------------------|
| ESA headquarters | — | Paris, France |
| Director General | — | Josef Aschbacher |

Mysterious dark spots discovered on Jupiter

- Astronomers at the University of California, Berkeley have made a new discovery on Jupiter, revealing the presence of Earth-sized dark ovals at the planet's poles just as the Great Red Spot.
- These enigmatic features, visible only in ultraviolet light, appear and disappear seemingly at random, adding a new layer of complexity to our understanding of the gas giant.
- The dark ovals, embedded in stratospheric haze layers capping Jupiter's poles, are typically found just below the planet's auroral zones.
- They absorb more UV light than their surroundings, making them appear dark in images captured by NASA's Hubble Space Telescope.

Bald eagle officially recognised as America's national bird

- The bald eagle, a symbol of the United States' power and strength for more than 240 years, is now officially the national bird of the country. It is indigenous to North America.
- The bald eagle has been a national emblem in the US for years, appearing on the Great Seal of the US – used on US documents – since 1782. The Great Seal of the United States is a national symbol used in official documents such as treaties and commissions. The final design was approved in 1782 and includes a bald eagle, an olive branch, arrows, a flag-like shield, the motto E Pluribus Unum (which translates to “out of many, one”) and a constellation of stars.
- Congress, that same year, designated the bald eagle as the national emblem, and its image appears in a host of places, ranging from documents and the presidential flag to military insignia and U.S. currency, according to USA.gov website.

NEWS IN SHORT

- SpaceX and Tesla CEO, Elon Musk, has become the first person in history to reach \$400 billion in net worth.
- Moldova has officially joined the International Solar Alliance (ISA), signalling its commitment to renewable energy and sustainability. ISA is a treaty-based organisation and aims at mobilising more than USD 1000 billion of investment needed by 2030 for the massive deployment of solar energy.
- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service proposed listing the monarch butterfly as a threatened species, citing a significant decline in the iconic black and orange insects that have pushed them toward extinction.
- The International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague will hear testimony from nearly hundred countries including Vanuatu, the Pacific island nation that initiated the effort to get a legal opinion. It has begun hearing evidence in a significant case that may clarify the legal responsibilities of governments in relation to climate change.
- A mysterious illness called “Dinga Dinga,” causing shaking, fever and weakness, is affecting women and girls in Uganda's Bundibugyo district.
- British lawmakers gave initial approval to a bill to help terminally ill adults end their lives in England and Wales, following an impassioned debate that saw people sharing personal stories of loss and suffering.
- Australia's House of Representatives recently passed the “Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Bill, 2024” which imposes an obligation on certain social media platforms to take reasonable steps to prevent children under 16 years of age from having an account.
- The Italian government has granted Argentine President Javier Milei citizenship in recognition of his Italian heritage. His grandparents migrated from Italy to Argentina, and he was granted Italian citizenship based on his ancestral ties.
- The UK has officially become a member of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), joining eleven existing members including Australia, Japan and Canada. CPTPP is a Free Trade Agreement across the Pacific signed originally by the eleven countries in March 2018 in Santiago, Chile and entered into force on 30 December 2018, after the US withdrew from the original Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) in 2017.
- Microsoft-backed artificial intelligence company OpenAI has announced the rollout of its video generation model Sora, which is designed to take text, image and video inputs and generate a new video as an output.
- Researchers from Virginia Tech and the College of Natural Resources and Environment achieved a significant milestone by successfully tagging a young shortfin mako shark in the Mediterranean—marking the first instance of such an accomplishment in this region. Shortfin mako sharks are critically endangered, not only in the Mediterranean but also worldwide.
- The World Bank has reached a \$100 billion funding target for its lending arm dedicated to the world's poorest countries, raising hopes for a boost in climate resilience financing. Donor countries pledged \$23.7 billion to the International Development Association (IDA) at a replenishment meeting in Seoul, South Korea.
- Disease X is an unidentified flu-like illness causing significant illness and deaths in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), with symptoms like fever, cough and breathing. Scientists in Japan have demonstrated a new proof-of-concept reactor that can harvest renewable hydrogen fuel from sunlight and water. The new 1,076-square-foot (100 square metres) reactor uses photocatalytic sheets to split apart the

oxygen and hydrogen atoms found in water molecules, thus siphoning the hydrogen away to be used as fuel.

- The UAE has emerged as Africa's largest backer of new business projects, with Emirati companies committing \$110bn (£88bn) to projects between 2019 and 2023, including \$72bn in renewable energy.
- The United States announced a new \$988 million security assistance package for Ukraine as Washington races to provide aid to Kyiv before President-elect Donald Trump takes office. The outgoing administration of President Joe Biden is working to get as much aid as possible to Ukraine before Trump – who has repeatedly criticized US assistance for Kyiv and claimed he could secure a ceasefire within hours – takes over.
- The Oxford Word of the Year 2024 is 'brain rot'. It is used to describe both the cause and effect of this phenomenon, referring to low-quality, low-value

content found on social media and the internet, as well as the subsequent negative impact that consuming this type of content is perceived to have on an individual or society.

- The Merriam-Webster Word of the Year 2024 is 'Polarization'. Polarization is the "division into two sharply distinct opposites; especially, a state in which the opinions, beliefs, or interests of a group or society no longer range along a continuum but become concentrated at opposing extremes".
- The Nepal and China governments launched the "Phewa Dialogue" series together as a part of a collaborative effort to formulate regional prosperity and peace policies. The two-day initiative held in Pokhara derives its name from the famous lake in Kathmandu. The dialogue was inaugurated by former President Bidya Devi Bhandari.

INDIA AND WORLD

India and France collaborate on a new national museum

- The Union Ministry of Culture announced a partnership with the France Museums Développement (FMD) to develop the Yuga Yugeen Bharat National Museum (YYBNM) in Delhi.
- It is part of the Central Vista Redevelopment Project. The site will span approximately 1,55,000 square metres across the North and South Blocks in Delhi and have eight segments showcasing 10,000 years history of India.
- The Yuga Yugeen Bharat National Museum was first introduced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the International Museum Expo in May 2023.

India and Nicaragua sign impactful agreement

- Indian Ambassador to Panama, Nicaragua, Costa Rica Sumit Seth and the Foreign Minister of Nicaragua, Valdrack Jaentschke signed an umbrella agreement to implement Quick Impact Projects.
- Under this umbrella MoU, the GOI will provide grant assistance for each Quick Impact Project. The focus will be on key areas such as physical infrastructure, including roads and community centres and social infrastructure, such as education, healthcare, sanitation, etc.
- The projects are designed to yield immediate and visible benefits for the people of Nicaragua.

- Implementation of these quick impactful projects will underscore India's active role in supporting global development through partnerships that directly benefit local communities.

Switzerland suspends the 'Most Favoured Nation Status' to India

- Starting from 1 January 2025, Switzerland will suspend the MFN clause in its Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) with India.
- It will revert to the earlier withholding tax rate of 10% on Indian entities.
- DTC IN-CH (India-Switzerland Direct Tax Convention) was signed on 2 November 1994, to avoid double taxation on income between India and Switzerland. It was revised in 2000 and 2010.

Japan and India join forces to tackle space debris

- Two space startups, namely India's Inspecity and Japan's Orbital Lasers, are partnering to explore using lasers on satellites to clear space debris.
- The collaboration will examine Orbital Lasers' technology, which employs laser energy to stabilize space debris by vaporising small portions of its surface.
- The companies plan to demonstrate this system in space after 2027, subject to regulatory approval from both nations.

- It is also part of broader efforts between India and Japan to work together on space exploration, which includes a joint lunar mission and initiatives in rocket and satellite technology.

India–Kuwait strengthen strategic partnership

- India and Kuwait elevated their relationship to a strategic partnership as Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Kuwaiti leadership focused on a roadmap to expand cooperation in areas such as defence, energy, trade, investment and technology.
- Both the countries signed an MoU on defence that will lead to an increase in cooperation in training, joint exercises, defence industry and supply of defence equipment.
- India is among Kuwait's top trading partners, with two-way trade worth \$10.47 billion during 2023–24. Kuwait is India's sixth-largest crude supplier and fourth-largest LPG supplier, meeting 3% of the country's energy needs.
- Narendra Modi is the first Indian Prime Minister to visit Kuwait in 43 years.

China plans to build the world's largest dam on Brahmaputra River

- The Chinese government has approved the construction of a hydropower project in the lower reaches of the Yarlung Zangbo River, the Tibetan name for the Brahmaputra.
- The dam is to be built at a huge gorge in the Himalayan reaches where the Brahmaputra River makes a huge U-turn to flow into Arunachal Pradesh and then to Bangladesh.
- It is stated to be the planet's biggest infra project costing USD 137 billion.

Breakthrough discovery for malaria and Covid-19 treatment

- In a groundbreaking study, scientists from Jawaharlal

Nehru University (JNU) have made a new discovery that could change malaria and Covid-19 treatment. The team from JNU's Special Centre for Molecular Medicine, identified a human protein, Hsp70, as a critical factor in the spread of diseases like malaria and Covid-19.

- Working alongside Russian and Indian researchers, they have also developed a small molecule inhibitor of Hsp70 that could act as a broad-spectrum treatment for multiple infections.
- Hsp70 (Heat Shock Protein 70) is a type of molecular chaperone, a protein that plays a vital role in helping other proteins fold into their proper shapes and preventing misfolding.

NEWS IN SHORT

- India, along with several other UN members, has approved General Assembly resolutions, demanding an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and backing UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees that Israel is seeking to ban. Israel and the US opposed the resolutions.
- India and Vietnam held the third India–Vietnam Security Dialogue in Ha Noi, Vietnam. The dialogue facilitated an exchange of views on global and regional security issues, as well as the discussions on strengthening cooperation in areas like countering terrorism, combating organised crime, and sharing of information between law enforcement agencies.
- December 6 was proclaimed as the day of remembrance for Mahatma Gandhi in the US's Nebraska.
- NISAR, the joint NASA-ISRO mission is reportedly the world's most expensive satellite at ₹12,505 crore which is scheduled to launch in March. This satellite will scan nearly all land and ice every 12 days and will have very high resolution.

FINANCE, ECONOMY & BANKING

'Trend and Progress of Banking in India 2023–24' – surge in bank fraud cases in 2024

- The Reserve Bank of India released the Report on Trend and Progress of Banking in India 2023–24 which presents the performance of the banking sector, including commercial banks, co-operative banks and non-banking financial institutions, during 2023–24 and 2024–25 so far.

- The report said the number of frauds during April–September stood at 18,461 involving ₹21,367 crore compared to 14,480 cases involving ₹2,623 crore in the comparative period of the last financial year, based on the date of fraud reporting.
- In 2023–24, internet and card frauds constituted 44.7% of the total fraud amount and a remarkable 85.3% of the number of cases. This indicates that digital platforms

are becoming increasingly vulnerable to fraudulent activities.

- Private sector banks accounted for 67.1% of all reported fraud cases, but public sector banks faced the highest financial impact from these frauds, particularly in the realm of card and internet fraud.

Key Points

| | | |
|--------------|---|-----------------|
| RBI Governor | — | Sanjay Malhotra |
| Headquarters | — | Mumbai |

RBI increases Unified Payment Interface (UPI) Lite wallet and transaction limits

- RBI increased the UPI Lite wallet limit to ₹5,000 and the per-transaction limit to ₹1,000 in order to encourage wider adoption of the popular instant payment system through mobile phones.
- Currently, the upper limit of an offline payment transaction is ₹500 and the total limit for offline transactions on a payment instrument is ₹2,000 at any point in time.

RBI's innovation unit, RBIH, has introduced MuleHunter.AI

- RBI's dedicated innovation unit, Reserve Bank Innovation Hub (RBIH) is making progress in combating financial fraud by promoting the use of MuleHunter.AI, an advanced artificial intelligence tool.
- This technology specialises in detecting and flagging mule accounts, which are often exploited for money laundering activities. These accounts serve as crucial links in illicit financial activities, making tools like MuleHunter.AI essential for safeguarding the financial system and reducing cybercrime risks.
- The tool has successfully been piloted in two public sector banks.

Key Points

| | | |
|-------------------|---|----------------------|
| RBIH Headquarters | — | Bengaluru, Karnataka |
| CEO | — | Rajesh Bansal |

India surpasses \$1 Trillion in FDI

- According to data from the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), India has surpassed the \$1 trillion mark in cumulative Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflows from April 2000 to September 2024, cementing its position as a global investment hub.

- This milestone includes \$109,219 million in total FDI during the period, with equity investments amounting to ₹45.96 trillion (\$708.65 billion).
- Over 69% of these inflows were recorded in the last decade (April 2014–September 2024).

Max Life rebrands to Axis Max Life Insurance after regulatory approval

- Max Life Insurance changed its corporate name to Axis Max Life Insurance after receiving the corporate and regulatory approval.
- Earlier this year, Axis Bank's board of directors approved the proposal to acquire Max Life shares, raising Axis entities' total holding in the insurance company to 19.99% from 19.02%. Following this stake acquisition by Axis Bank, the stake of MFSL in Max Life was reduced to 81% from 87% earlier.

Key Points

| | | |
|--------------|---|-------------------|
| Headquarters | — | New Delhi |
| Chairman | — | Rajiv Anand |
| MD & CEO | — | Prashant Tripathy |

DPIIT inks MoU with Flipkart to invest in and mentor Indian startups

- In a significant move, the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) has partnered with Flipkart, India's homegrown e-commerce market and signed an MoU with the former to support and empower tech start-ups across India.
- The collaboration is an extension of Flipkart's ongoing efforts under its Leap and Ventures initiative, which includes a USD 100 million venture fund.
- This partnership is expected to accelerate innovation and create a conducive environment for budding entrepreneurs.

Key Points

| | | |
|--------------|---|--------------------------------|
| CEO Flipkart | — | Kalyan Krishnamurthy |
| Founders | — | Sachin Bansal and Binny Bansal |

UNICEF and BMW group collaborate to empower children in Rural India

- UNICEF partnered with BMW Group in India, aiming to transform the educational landscape for 100,000 children in four states, focusing on foundational learning and STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) skills from early years through adolescence.

- The partnership will provide access to quality STEM education to adolescent girls from Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas and Tribal Ashramshalas, belonging to the most marginalised groups in hard-to-reach rural areas in the states of Assam, Jharkhand, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal.

Google launches its latest quantum chip, Willow

- Google has launched its quantum chip, Willow, which significantly reduces errors in quantum computing while improving qubit retention times.
- This advancement paves the way for practical applications in various fields, including drug discovery and clean energy.

Key Points

Google headquarters — California, US
CEO — Sundar Pichai

Google inks pact to set up safety engineering centre in Hyderabad

- The Telangana government entered into a strategic agreement with Google to establish India's first Google Safety Engineering Centre (GSEC) at Hyderabad.
- The GSEC in Hyderabad would be the first-of-its-kind in the APAC region, after Tokyo, and only the fifth in the world, with similar facilities in Dublin, Munich and Malaga.
- GSEC is a specialised international cybersecurity hub that will play a vital role in developing advanced security and online safety products for the Indian context.
- The centre will focus on cutting-edge research, AI-driven security solutions, and creating a collaborative platform for leading experts and researchers in cybersecurity. It also aims to foster skill development, boost employment and enhance cybersecurity capabilities in India.

Google unveils 'GenCast' for weather forecasting

- Google DeepMind has introduced a new artificial intelligence tool, 'GenCast' claiming it possesses unmatched skill and speed to devise 15-day weather forecasts.
- It is much faster than the traditional methods. Not only can it predict day-to-day weather reports but it is also capable of tracking extreme events like deadly storms.

Adani to acquire 85.8% stake in Air Works

- Adani Group will acquire aviation maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) services firm Air Works for an enterprise value of ₹400 crore.
- With operations spanning 35 cities and a workforce of over 1,300 personnel, Air Works brings extensive expertise in servicing both fixed-wing and rotary-wing aircraft.

Reliance acquires Karkinos Healthcare for ₹375 crore

- Reliance Industries, through its subsidiary RSBVL, has acquired oncology platform Karkinos Healthcare for ₹375 crore.
- Karkinos specializes in early cancer detection and treatment, partnering with 60 hospitals and setting up a cancer hospital in Imphal, Manipur.

India's women-owned Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) rise to 2.2 crore

- As many as 2.21 crore women-owned MSMEs have registered on Udyam Registration Portal (URP) and Udyam Assist Platform (UAP) between 1 July 2020 and 30 November 2024 in the country.
- The new policy makes it mandatory for Central Ministries/Departments/ and public sector undertaking to buy at least 3% of their annual procurement from women entrepreneurs.
- To support Women Entrepreneurs under Credit Guarantee Scheme for Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs), 10% concession is given in annual Guarantee fees; 90% Guarantee coverage is given to women-owned MSEs, as against the 75% for other entrepreneurs.

RBI raises collateral-free loan limit for farmers to ₹2 lakh

- In a significant move to support the agricultural sector and address rising input costs, RBI has announced an increase in the limit for collateral-free agricultural loans, including loans for allied activities.
- The existing loan limit of ₹1.6 lakh per borrower has been raised to ₹2 lakh.
- It aims to provide enhanced financial access to farmers, ensuring they have sufficient resources to meet their operational and developmental needs without the burden of providing collateral.

DPIIT signs MoU with private company 'boat' to help startups

- Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) has entered into a strategic alliance with

boAt, an Indian company in the audio and wearables market.

- This collaboration aims to foster innovation and provide tailored support to DPIIT recognised startups including startups in D2C and manufacturing domains.
- The key features of this mutual partnership include: curating dedicated programme(s)/ initiative(s) for mentoring startups, innovators and entrepreneurs, providing resources, guidance, and support for different milestones such as prototype development; and offering connections and insights for international expansion, wherever applicable and feasible.

GST Council implements “Track and Trace Mechanism”

- In a significant move to plug leakage, the GST Council approved a proposal to implement a ‘Track and Trace Mechanism’ for specified evasion-prone commodities, under which a unique mark will be affixed on such goods or packages to trace them throughout the supply chain.
- The system shall be based on a Unique Identification Marking which shall be affixed on the said goods or the packages thereof.
- This will provide a legal framework for developing such a system and will help in the implementation of a mechanism for tracing specified commodities throughout the supply chain.

NEWS IN SHORT

- As per the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, currently, there are more than 73,000 startups in the country with at least one woman director, recognised

under the ‘Startup India Initiative’. It is almost half of the 1,57,066 government-supported startups.

- The Competition Commission of India (CCI) gave its approval for the acquisition of India Cements Limited (ICL) by Ultra Tech Cement Limited for ₹3,954-crores.
- Coca-Cola reached an agreement with Jubilant Bhartia Group to sell a 40% stake in Hindustan Coca-Cola Holdings (HCCH). HCCH is the parent company of Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages (HCCB), Coca-Cola’s largest bottler in India.
- The provisional figures of Direct Tax collections for the Financial Year 2024–25 (as of 17.06.2024) show that Net collections are at ₹4,62,664 crore, compared to ₹3,82,414 crore in the corresponding period of the preceding Financial Year (i.e., FY 2023–24), representing an increase of 20.99%.
- India has achieved a remarkable milestone in mobile connectivity, with a total of 115.12 crore mobile subscriptions. This achievement reflects the ongoing efforts to enhance communication access across rural and remote areas.
- The Government of India and ADB signed a \$500 million loan to support green and sustainable infrastructure projects aligned with the country’s climate commitments.
- The Government of India and ADB signed a \$50 million loan aimed at enhancing water security by constructing water-harvesting systems to improve access to water and reduce community vulnerability against climate change impacts in Meghalaya.
- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a \$42 million loan to strengthen coastal and riverbank protection ecosystems in Maharashtra, India.

DEFENCE NEWS

Defence Acquisition Council approves major military purchases

- DAC accorded Acceptance of Necessity (AoN) for five capital acquisition proposals amounting to over ₹21,772 crores.
- These include the Procurement of Water Jet Fast Attack Crafts, Fast Interceptor Craft, Electronic Warfare Suite (EWS), Next-Generation Radar Warning Receiver and Advanced Light Helicopters for surveillance in coastal areas.

US approves helicopter sale to India

- The US Congress approved the sale of MH-60R multi-mission helicopter equipment and related supplies at an estimated cost of \$1.17 billion.
- The proposed sale will improve India’s capability to deter current and future threats by upgrading its anti-submarine warfare capabilities.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh commissions INS Tushil (F 70)

- Guided missile frigate INS Tushil (F 70) was commissioned into the Indian Navy at Kaliningrad in Russia.

- INS Tushil is the Russian-manufactured, seventh multirole stealth frigate in the series of Project 1135.6 and the first of the additional follow-on class ships.
- It is designed for operations across the spectrum of naval warfare in air, surface, underwater and electromagnetic dimensions.
- It is a 3,900-tonne ship with a length of 125 metres and is armed with a range of advanced weapons, including supersonic cruise missiles, Surface-to-Air Missiles with enhanced ranges, upgraded medium-range anti-air and surface guns with advanced stealth features, optically controlled close-range rapid fire gun system, anti-submarine torpedoes and rockets and advanced electronic warfare and communication suite.

India signs ₹13,500 crore defence contract with HAL for 12 Su-30MKL aircraft

- In a major boost to the Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiative of the government, a contract for the procurement of 12 Su-30MKI aircraft along with associated equipment has been signed between the Ministry of Defence and M/s Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) at an approximate cost of ₹13,500 crore inclusive of taxes and duties.
- The aircraft would have an Indigenous content of 62.6%, enhanced due to the indigenisation of many components to be manufactured by the Indian defence industry.
- These aircraft would be manufactured at the Nasik division of HAL. The supply of these aircraft would enhance the operational capability of the Indian Air Force and strengthen the defence preparedness of the country.

Key Points

HAL Headquarters — Bengaluru, Karnataka
Chairman and MD — DK Sunil

Indian Navy launches SAMPARK 4.0 initiative

- The fourth edition of 'SAMPARK', an ECHS (Navy) outreach initiative, is part of the Indian Navy's unwavering commitment to providing quality healthcare services to the Naval Veterans/ Veer Naris and their families covering various locations in Maharashtra.
- 'Sampark' also aims to foster a deeper sense of trust among veterans and their families, ensuring that they feel heard, supported, and cared for.

Key Points

Chief of Naval Staff (CNS) — Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi

INS Nirdeshak: Indian Navy's new survey ship commissioned

- INS Nirdeshak, the second ship of the Survey Vessel (Large) project, was commissioned into the Indian Navy. The ship is designed to conduct hydrographic surveys, aid in navigation and support maritime operations.
- The vessel will contribute significantly to the Indian Ocean Region's security and environmental health and strengthen India's leadership in regional collaboration, scientific exploration, and peacekeeping missions.
- It will strengthen the SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) initiative by promoting shared maritime data with friendly foreign countries.
- The construction of the ship was a collaborative endeavour of the Indian Navy's Warship Design Bureau, GRSE, L&T, SAIL, IRS and a significant number of MSMEs exemplifying India's commitment to self-reliance in defence manufacturing and maritime capabilities.

Indian Army launches Artificial Intelligence Incubation Centre (IAAIIIC) in Bengaluru, Karnataka

- The Indian Army collaborated with Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) to launch an AI Incubation Centre (IAAIIIC) in Bengaluru, Karnataka.
- The initiative represents the Indian Army's resolve to integrate cutting-edge Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies into its operations, empowering its personnel and enhancing its capabilities to address contemporary security challenges.

Key Points

Chief of Army Staff — General Upendra Dwivedi

INS Sarvekshak conducts Survey in Mauritius

- INS Sarvekshak arrived at Port Louis, Mauritius to undertake a Joint Hydrographic Survey.
- INS Sarvekshak will engage with Mauritian authorities through technical knowledge exchange, professional interactions and training sessions on hydrography.
- This crucial survey will enable Mauritius to develop maritime infrastructure, resource management and coastal development planning.

- The visit highlights the strong maritime partnership between India and Mauritius, reflecting a shared commitment to regional development and deeper bilateral cooperation in line with India's vision of SAGAR (Security And Growth for All in the Region).

| Name of the Exercise | Countries | Venue |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------|---|
| CINBAX-2024 (Army) | India and Cambodia | Pune |
| HARIMAU SHAKTI-2024 (Army) | India and Malaysia | Bentong camp, Pahang district, Malaysia |
| Desert Knight Exercise (Air Force) | India, France, and the UAE | Arabian Sea |
| SLINEX 24 (Naval) | India and Sri Lanka | Visakhapatnam, India |
| Sahayog Hop Tac (Coast Guard) | India and Vietnam | Ambala, Haryana |

APPOINTMENTS

| Name | Designation |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Sanjay Malhotra | New governor of RBI |
| V. Ramasubramanian | Chairman, National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) |
| Praveena Rai | CEO and MD of Multi Commodity Exchange of India (MCX) |
| Justice Madan Lokur | Chairperson of the United Nations Internal Justice Council |
| Justice G.S. Sandhawalia | Chief Justice of the Himachal Pradesh High Court |
| Justice Narender G | Chief Justice of the Uttarakhand High Court |
| Ajay Kumar Bhalla | Governor of Manipur |
| Arif Mohammed Khan | Governor of Bihar |
| Hari Babu Kambhampati | Governor of Odisha |
| General (Dr.) Vijay Kumar Singh | Governor of Mizoram |
| Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar | Governor of Kerala |
| Justice Gurmeet Singh Sandhawalia | Chief Justice of the Himachal Pradesh High Court |
| Itaru Otani | Chairman of India Yamaha Motor |
| Rahul Bhawe | Managing Director and CEO of Financial Services Institutions Bureau (FSIB) |
| M.S. Dhoni | Brand Ambassador of Eurogrip Tyres |
| Harsha Vardhan Agarwal | President-Elect of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) |
| Bhavesh Jain | MD & CEO of TransUnion CIBIL |
| Dr Sandip Shah | Chairperson of the National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL) |
| Preeti Lobana | Country Manager and Vice President for India, Google |
| Dr. Shankar Prasad Sharma | Nepal's Ambassador to India |
| Salman Khan | Brand Ambassador for Kho Kho World Cup |
| Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah | Namibia's first female president |
| John Mahama | President of Ghana |

| | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Rimtalba Jean Emmanuel Ouedraogo | Prime Minister of Burkina Faso |
| Mohammad al-Bashir | Prime Minister of Syria |
| Giorgia Meloni | Italy's Prime Minister and named the Most Powerful Person in Europe |
| Mikheil Kavelashvili | President of Georgia |
| Maia Sandu | President of the Republic of Moldova |
| Aisake Valu Eke | Prime Minister of Tonga |
| Dr Jacqueline d'Arros Hughes | Secretary General of the World Agriculture Forum |
| Murdu Fernando | Second Female Chief Justice of Sri Lanka |
| Kash Patel | Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) |
| Harmeet Dhillon | Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights |
| Sriram Krishnan | Senior Policy Advisor for Artificial Intelligence (AI) at the White House |

BOOKS AND AUTHORS

| Books | Authors |
|---|-------------------|
| BRING IT ON: The Incredible Story of My Life | Dr. Deepa Malik |
| My Beloved Life | Amitava Kumar |
| Dalai Lama's Secret to Happiness | Dr. Dinesh Shahra |
| The Unyielding Judge: A Tribute to Justice A.N. Grover's Legacy | Gauri Grover |

OBITUARIES (NATIONAL)

| Name | Occupation |
|-------------------------|---|
| Ustad Zakir Hussain | Tabla maestro |
| Shyam Benegal | Filmmaker |
| SM Krishna | Politician (Architect of Brand Bengaluru) |
| Madan Mohan Somtiya | Freedom fighter and Member of Mewar Praja Mandal |
| Om Prakash Chautala | Former Chief Minister of Haryana |
| Meena Ganesh | Malayalam actor and theatre artist |
| Tulsi Gowda | Renowned environmentalist, Encyclopedia of Forests |
| Pandit Sanjay Marathe | Renowned Singer and Musician |
| Brigadier Raj Manchanda | Squash player (Old Fox) |
| Purushottam Upadhyay | Gujarati Singer |
| Rohan Mirchandani | Co-founder of the well-known brand Epigamia |
| Dr. Manmohan Singh | Economist and Politician (ex-Prime Minister of India) |
| MT Vasudevan Nair | Writer, screenwriter, and filmmaker |

OBITUARIES (INTERNATIONAL)

| Neale Fraser | Tennis |
|----------------|--|
| Nikki Giovanni | Poet (Black Arts Icon) |
| Osamu Suzuki | Former Suzuki Chairman |
| Jimmy Carter | Former (39 th) U.S. President and Nobel Laureate |

DAYS AND THEMES

| Date | Day | Theme |
|-------------|--|--|
| December 1 | World AIDS Day | Take the rights path: My health, my right |
| December 2 | National Pollution Control Day | Clean Air, Green Earth: A Step Towards Sustainable Living |
| December 2 | International Day for the Abolition of Slavery | |
| December 2 | World Computer Literacy Day | |
| December 3 | World Day of the Handicapped or International Day of Persons with Disabilities | Amplifying the leadership of persons with disabilities for an inclusive and sustainable future |
| December 4 | Indian Navy Day | Strength and Power through Innovation and Indigenisation |
| December 5 | International Volunteer Day | Diverse Volunteers, Stronger Communities |
| December 5 | World Soil Day | Caring for Soils: Measure, Monitor, Manage |
| December 7 | Armed Forces Flag Day | |
| December 7 | International Civil Aviation Day | Safe Skies. Sustainable Future: Together for the next 80 years |
| December 9 | International Anti-Corruption Day | Uniting with Youth Against Corruption: Shaping Tomorrow's Integrity |
| December 9 | International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide | |
| December 10 | Human Rights Day | Our Rights, Our Future, Right Now |
| December 11 | International Mountain Day | Mountain solutions for a sustainable future – innovation, adaptation and youth. |
| December 12 | Universal Health Coverage Day | Health: It's on the government |
| December 14 | National Energy Conservation Day | Powering Sustainability: Every Watt Counts. |
| December 16 | Vijay Diwas | |
| December 18 | International Migrants Day | #ItTakesACommunity |
| December 20 | International Human Solidarity Day | |
| December 22 | National Mathematics Day | Playing With Math |
| December 23 | National Farmer's Day or Kisan Diwas | Empowering 'Annadatas' for a Prosperous Nation |

| | | |
|-------------|--|---|
| December 24 | National Consumer Rights Day | Virtual Hearings & Digital Access to Consumer Justice |
| December 25 | Good Governance Day | India's Path to a Viksit Bharat: Empowering Citizens through Good Governance and Digitalisation |
| December 26 | Veer Bal Diwas | |
| December 27 | International Day of Epidemic Preparedness | |

REPORTS, RANKINGS AND INDEX

India leads in mobile malware attacks

- According to the Zscaler ThreatLabz 2024 Mobile IoT and OT Threat Report, India has emerged as the most targeted nation for mobile malware attacks, surpassing the United States and Canada. India accounted for 28% of global mobile malware attacks, surpassing the US (27.3%) and Canada (15.9%).
- The report was based on an analysis of 20 billion mobile threat transactions captured by the team between June 2023 and May 2024.
- This highlights the pressing need for Indian organisations to boost their cybersecurity defences amid rapid digitalisation and escalating cyber threats.

Indigo ranks among the worst global airlines- AirHelp

- In its 2024 report, AirHelp gave IndiGo a score of 4.80, placing it at the 103rd spot among 109 airlines in the list. The only other Indian airline on the list is Air India, which has been ranked 61 with a score of 6.15.
- AirHelp releases an annual ranking of international airlines and airports. The rankings for airlines are based on three criteria — on-time performance, customer opinion, and processing of compensation claims.
- Brussels Airlines has been ranked at the pole position, followed by Qatar Airways, and United Airlines with scores of 8.12, 8.11, and 8.04, respectively.

India State of Forest Report 2023

- The Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Bhupender Yadav released the 'India State of Forest Report 2023 (ISFR 2023)' at Forest Research Institute, Dehradun.
- As per the present assessment, the total Forest and Tree cover is 8,27,357sq km, which is 25.17% of the geographical area of the country. The Forest Cover has an area of about 7,15,343sq km (21.76%) whereas the Tree Cover has an area of 1,12,014 sq km (3.41%).

- The top four states showing a maximum increase in forest and tree cover are Chhattisgarh (684 sq km) followed by Uttar Pradesh (559 sq km), Odisha (559 sq km) and Rajasthan (394 sq km).
- The top three states showing a maximum increase in forest cover are Mizoram (242 sq km) followed by Gujarat (180 sq km) and Odisha (152 sq km).
- Area wise top three states having the largest forest and tree cover are Madhya Pradesh (85,724 sq km) followed by Arunachal Pradesh (67,083 sq km) and Maharashtra (65,383 sq km).
- In terms of the percentage of forest cover with respect to total geographical area, Lakshadweep (91.33% has the highest forest cover followed by Mizoram (85.34%) and Andaman & Nicobar Island (81.62%).
- The total mangrove cover is 4,992 sq km in the country.
- The ISFR has been brought out by the Forest Survey of India (FSI) on a biennial basis since 1987.
- FSI carries out in-depth assessment of the forest and tree resources of the country based on the interpretation of Remote Sensing satellite data and field-based National Forest Inventory (NFI), and the results are published in the ISFR.

World Malaria Report 2024

- WHO released the World Malaria Report 2024. Globally, Malaria cases rose to 263 million in 2023, with an incidence of 60.4 per 1000 population at risk, up from 58.6 in 2022.
- The WHO African Region accounted for 94% of global cases.
- The report suggests that India's achievements include a significant reduction in malaria cases and malaria-related deaths between 2017 and 2023.

- This success is further highlighted by India's exit from the WHO's High Burden to High Impact (HBHI) group in 2024, signifying a turning point in its fight against malaria.
- The Malaria cases reduced by 69%, from 6.4 million in 2017 to 2 million in 2023. The deaths declined by 68%, from 11,100 in 2017 to 3,500 in 2023.

India's Crypto Portfolio 2024

- CoinSwitch, India's largest crypto trading platform, has released its third annual investor report, India's Crypto Portfolio 2024.
- Delhi-NCR (20.1%) continues to lead the charge in crypto adoption for the third consecutive year followed by Bengaluru (9.6%), which ranked second, followed closely by Mumbai (6.5%).
- The under-35 age group dominates crypto investments, comprising nearly 75% of the investor base.
- Women account for 11% of the investor base, indicating room for greater inclusivity within the crypto ecosystem.

Gujarat, Maharashtra and UP top rooftop solar installation under PM Surya Ghar Scheme

- In a significant milestone for India's clean energy mission, PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana has achieved 6,85,763 solar installations since its launch in February 2024.
- This accounts for 86% of the country's rooftop solar growth in the past decade.
- Gujarat leads with 2,86,545 installations, followed by Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh. The scheme aims to reach 1 crore rooftop solar installations by FY 2027.

India tops Global Remittances for 2024

- India was the topmost recipient of remittances in 2024 with an estimated inflow of \$129 billion, followed by Mexico, China, the Philippines and Pakistan, driven by a recovery in the job markets in high-income countries.
- The growth rate of remittances this year is estimated to be 5.8%, compared to 1.2% registered in 2023.
- The recovery of the job markets in the high-income countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), following the onset of the pandemic, was the key driver of remittances.

- Officially recorded remittances to low-and middle-income countries (LMICs) are expected to reach \$685 billion in 2024.

Travel and Tourism Development Index 2024

- According to the Travel and Tourism Development Index (TTDI) 2024 report published by the World Economic Forum (WEF), India is ranked 39th among 119 countries.
- In the previous index published in 2021, India was ranked 54th. However, due to a revision in the WEF's methodology, India's 2021 rank was adjusted to 38th place.
- The Ministry of Tourism under the schemes of 'Swadesh Darshan', 'National Mission on Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Heritage Augmentation Drive (PRASHAD)' and 'Assistance to Central Agencies for Tourism Infrastructure Development' provides financial assistance to State Governments/Union Territory Administrations/Central Agencies for the development of tourism-related infrastructure and facilities at various tourism destinations in the country.

NEWS IN SHORT

- The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) released the report "The World Drought Atlas," which warns that by 2050, approximately 75% of the global population will face drought challenges.
- The Central Water Commission (CWC) in its study titled 'Assessment of Water Resources of India 2024' estimated that India's average annual water availability, between 1985 and 2023, stood at 2,115.95 billion cubic meters (BCM).
- India has become the third largest exporter of smartphones globally, rising from the 23rd rank in 2019, with exports surpassing ₹20,000 crore in November 2024 alone.
- India's e-waste generation increased by 73% in five years, from 1.01 million metric tonnes (MT) in 2019-20 to 1.751 million MT in 2023-24.
- Nearly 20% of species found in 21 of 51 UNESCO World Heritage marine sites have reached or exceeded their living thermal limits.

EVENTS

14th Asia-Oceania Meteorological Satellite Users' Conference (AOMSUC-14)

- The 14th Asia-Oceania Meteorological Satellite Users' Conference (AOMSUC-14) was held from December 4-6, 2024, in New Delhi, India.
- The conference is hosted by the India Meteorological Department (IMD), Ministry of Earth Sciences, and will feature high-quality oral and poster presentations, panel discussions, and a training workshop focused on applying current satellite data for meteorological and climatological applications.

Atal Innovation Mission, Swedish Embassy celebrate SheSTEM 2024

- Atal Innovation Mission (AIM), under the NITI Aayog and the Office of Science & Innovation, at the Embassy of Sweden, in partnership with Nordic collaborators - Innovation Norway, Innovation Centre Denmark, and Business Finland successfully concluded SheSTEM 2024.
- This annual initiative celebrates the contributions of women in STEM and serves as a catalyst to inspire the next generation of innovators by encouraging young minds to explore careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).
- The SheSTEM 2024 challenge invited students from grades 6–12 across India to submit innovative ideas focused on Battery Technology and Energy Storage (BEST) systems.

16th GRIHA Summit 2024

- The 16th GRIHA Summit, the annual flagship event organised by the GRIHA Council, commenced in New Delhi, with a focus on the theme "Accelerating Climate Action in the Built Environment".
- The Summit brings together industry leaders, policymakers and sustainability experts to explore innovative approaches for sustainable urban development and climate resilience in the construction and infrastructure sectors, addressing the challenges of climate change.

25th Hornbill Festival of Nagaland

- The 25th edition of the Hornbill Festival commenced with new vigour and pomp and gaiety to showcase a

collaborative cultural experience at the Naga Heritage village in Kisama near Kohima.

- This year the international partners of the Hornbill Festival are the United Kingdom, the United States, Japan, and Peru.
- Sikkim and Telangana are the partner states for the festival.

India chairs the 68th session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND).

- India has been chosen to Chair the 68th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND).
- The CND is the principal policy-making body of the United Nations on drug-related matters.
- It is mandated to monitor global drug trends, support Member States in formulating balanced policies, and oversee the implementation of the major international drug conventions.
- The CND is one of the functional commissions of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and a Governing Body of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) which is headquartered in Vienna.

India Internet Governance Forum 2024

- India Internet Governance Forum (IIGF) 2024 was held at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi.
- It is supported by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology and the National Internet Exchange of India.
- Its fourth edition is being held under the theme "Innovations in Internet Governance for India."
- The hybrid editions of IIGF have been successfully organised in the years 2021, 2022 and 2023.

Eaglenest Bird Festival-2025

- In a significant boost to Arunachal Pradesh's eco-tourism and biodiversity conservation efforts, Chief Minister Pema Khandu unveiled the new logo of the Eaglenest Bird Festival.
- The festival's fourth edition is scheduled to be held from January 17 to 19, 2025, spanning Khellong (Doimara) and Thongre village.
- The festival is expected to draw ornithologists, conservationists, eco-tourists, and adventure seekers

from across the globe, spotlighting Arunachal Pradesh as a premier destination for biodiversity and sustainable tourism.

Gita Jayanti 2024

- Gita Jayanti is marked annually on the Shukla Ekadashi of the Margashirsha month in the Hindu calendar. In 2024, it was observed on December 11, 2024.
- Bhagwad Gita is the most widely known sacred Hindu literature, which Lord Krishna imparted to Arjuna over 5000 years ago on the battlefield of Mahabharata in Kurukshetra.
- On the occasion of Gita Jayanti, Bhopal set a Guinness World Record as for the first time, over 5000 acharyas collectively recited the third chapter of the holy Gita 'Karma Yog' in unison.
- In Kurukshetra, 18,000 children led a Gita chant joined by 1.5 crore people worldwide through an online platform.

NEWS IN SHORT

- The first India Maritime Heritage Conclave (IMHC 2024), a landmark event organized by the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW) was centred around the theme, "Towards Understanding India's Position in Global Maritime History."
- The Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan) (DEPwD), under the Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, through the National Divyangjan Finance and Development Corporation (NDFDC), organised the 22nd Divya Kala Mela at the iconic India Gate, New Delhi.
- Manipur commemorated Nupi Lal Numit by offering profound tributes to women freedom fighters who participated in 'Nupi Lal' (women's war) against British actions in 1904 and 1939.
- The Ministry of Textiles organised 'Viraasat Sari Festival 2024' at Handloom Haat, Janpath, New Delhi.

AWARDS

Veronica Michelle Bachelet Jeria awarded Indira Gandhi Peace Prize 2024

- Former President of Chile Veronica Michelle Bachelet Jeria was awarded the Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development 2024 for her advocacy for gender equality and the rights of vulnerable populations.
- The award was announced by the international jury of the Indira Gandhi Memorial Trust, chaired by former Foreign Secretary and National Security Advisor Shivshankar Menon.
- Michelle Bachelet is a founding member of UN Women and served as the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. She has consistently advocated for gender equality and the rights of the most vulnerable populations globally.

Jasleen Kaur wins 2024 Turner Prize

- Glasgow-born artist of Indian heritage Jasleen Kaur, whose works are inspired by her life growing up in Scotland's Sikh community, has won Britain's prestigious Turner Prize 2024 for her considered weaving together of the "personal, political and spiritual".
- Turner Prize is one of the world's best-known prizes for the visual arts and was established in 1854.

- It aims to promote public debate around new developments in contemporary British art.
- The prize is named after the radical painter JMW Turner (1775—1851) and is awarded each year to a British artist for an outstanding exhibition or other presentation of their work, with British Indian sculptor Anish Kapoor among its past winners.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi honoured with the Order of Mubarak Al-Kabeer

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi was awarded the Wisam Mubarak al-Kabeer, or the Order of Mubarak the Great, by Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Amir of Kuwait.
- The Order of Mubarak Al-Kabeer is conferred by the Kuwaiti government on Heads of State, Sovereigns of foreign countries, and on members of foreign royal families as a sign of friendship and goodwill.
- The award was instituted in 1974, in the memory of Mubarak Al Sabah, who ruled Kuwait from 1896 to 1915. Under his reign, Kuwait got more autonomy from the Ottoman Empire.
- Before PM Modi, recipients include Queen Elizabeth II of England, former American Presidents George HW Bush and Bill Clinton, King Salman of Saudi Arabia, and former French President Nicolas Sarkozy, among others.

Ayodhya Ram temple wins UK's 'Sword of Honour'

- The Ram temple project in Ayodhya has earned the prestigious 'Sword of Honour' from the British Safety Council, marking a significant milestone in safety management practices.
- The Sword of Honour award is one of the highest accolades in safety management and is given to projects that meet the highest standards where safety is concerned.
- The British Safety Council conducts a comprehensive audit of processes and practices before performing an on-site assessment.
- Projects that have a five-star rating in safety assessments are then eligible to compete for the 'Sword of Honour' award.
- The construction of the temple was led by M/s Larsen & Toubro.

Tom Cruise receives US Navy's top civilian honour

- Hollywood actor Tom Cruise was awarded the Department of Navy Distinguished Public Service (DPS) Award, recognising the Top Gun actor's lasting contributions to the US Navy through his iconic film roles.
- The DPS Award is the highest honour the Navy can bestow upon a civilian outside the Department of the Navy.
- In 2020, he was named the US Navy's 36th Honorary Naval Aviator, a prestigious title granted for his advocacy and dedication to the Navy's mission.
- The impact of Top Gun and its sequel Top Gun: Maverick, which grossed over \$1 billion globally, has reignited interest in the Navy and its service members, especially among younger audiences.

Indian educator Arun Kapur honoured by Bhutan's king

- Renowned Indian educationist Arun Kapur, who set up schools in India, Bhutan and Oman, has been conferred the 'Bura Marp' (red scarf) and 'Patang' (ceremonial sword) by Bhutan's King Jigme Khesar Namgyel.
- The honour is rarely given to non-Bhutanese residents and comes with the honorific 'Dasho' title, otherwise used for senior officials.
- Kapur was previously awarded the 'Druk Thuksey' in 2019 for his work in setting up The Royal Academy school, and in developing the Bhutan Baccalaureate educational system.

UN Champions of the Earth 2024

- The 2024 Champions of the Earth award was announced by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) in Nairobi, Kenya. They are:
 - I. Sonia Guajajara, Brazil's Minister of Indigenous Peoples, was honoured in the Policy Leadership category.
 - II. Amy Bowers Cordalis, an Indigenous rights advocate, received the award in the Inspiration and Action category.
 - III. Gabriel Paun, a Romanian environmental defender, was honoured in the Inspiration and Action category.
 - IV. Madhav Gadgil, an Indian ecologist was named as the laureate in the Lifetime Achievement category.
 - V. Chinese scientist Lu Qi was honoured in the Science and Innovation category.
 - VI. The SEKEM initiative in Egypt was honoured in the Entrepreneurial Vision category for helping farmers transition to more sustainable agriculture.

Sahitya Akademi awards 2024

- Sahitya Akademi announced its annual Sahitya Akademi Awards in 21 languages.
- Eight books of poetry, three novels, two short story collections, three essays, three literary criticism, one play, and one work of research have won this year's awards. Awards in Bengali, Dogri and Urdu will be announced later.
- The winning writers will receive a casket containing an engraved copper plaque, a shawl and a cash prize of ₹1 lakh.
 - I. Assamese: Pharingbore Bator Katha Jane (Poetry), Sameer Tanti.
 - II. Bodo: Swrni Thakhai (Novel), Aron Raja
 - III. English: Spirit Nights, Easterine Kire
 - IV. Gujarati: Bhagwan-ni Vato (Poetry), Dileep Jhaveri
 - V. Hindi: Main Jab Tak Aai Bahar (Poetry), Gagan Gill
 - VI. Kannada: Nudigala Alivu (Literary criticism), KV Narayana
 - VII. Kashmiri: Psychiatric Ward (Novel), Sohan Koul
 - VIII. Konkani: Rangtarang (Essays), Mukesh Thali

- IX. Maithili: Prabandh Sangrah (Essays), Mahendra Malangia
- X. Malayalam: Pingalakeshini (Poetry), K Jayakumar
- XI. Manipuri: Mainu Bora Nungshi Sheirol (Poetry), Haobam Satyabati Devi
- XII. Marathi: Vindanche Gadyarop (Criticism), Sudhir Rasal
- XIII. Nepali: Chhichimira (Short stories), Yuva Baral
- XIV. Odia: Bhuti Bhakti Bibhuti (Essays), Baishnab Charan Samal
- XV. Punjabi: Sun Gunvanta Sun Budhivanta: Itihaasnama Punjab (Poetry), Paul Kaur
- XVI. Rajasthani: Gaon Ar Amma (Poetry), Mukut Maniraj
- XVII. Sanskrit: Bhaskaracaritam (Poetry), Dipak Kumar Sharma
- XVIII. Santali: Seched Sawnta Ren Andha Manmi (Play), Maheswar Soren

- XIX. Sindhi: Purzo (Short stories), Hundraj Balwani
- XX. Tamil: Tirunelveli Ezuciyum Vaa Vuu ci Yum 1908 (Research), AR Venkatachalapathy
- XXI. Telugu: Deepika (Criticism), Penugonda Lakshminarayana

NEWS IN SHORT

- India was honoured with the International Social Security Association (ISSA) Good Practice Award for Asia and Pacific 2024.
- Two Indian heritage conservation projects—the Abathsahayeswarar Temple Conservation Project in Thukkatchi, Tamil Nadu, and the BJPCI Conservation Project of Mumbai, Maharashtra—have won UNESCO's Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation 2024.
- External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar was awarded the Sri Chandrasekarendra Saraswathi National Eminence Award for Public Leadership by the South Indian Education Society (SIES).

SPORTS NEWS

India wins Women's Junior Asia Cup 2024 title

- Indian women's hockey team beat China in the final of the Women's Junior Asia Cup in Muscat, Oman.
- With this, India qualified for the 2025 FIH Women's Junior Hockey World Cup in Chile, alongside China, Japan, South Korea, and Malaysia.

India lifts Fifth Men's Junior Hockey Asia Cup Title 2024

- In a thrilling final of the Men's Junior Asia Cup 2024, the Indian hockey team triumphed over their arch-rivals Pakistan, securing a 5-3 victory to claim their record-extending fifth title. The match was held in Muscat, Oman.

Syed Modi International badminton tournament

- P V Sindhu clinched the Syed Modi International women's singles crown, ending her title drought after over two years. She defeated China's Wu Luo Yu in the final.
- In the men's singles final, Lakshya defeated Singapore's Jia Heng Jason Teh to win the title.
- Indian women's doubles pair Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand won their maiden Super 300 title with a win over China's Bao Li Jing and Li Qian. Treesa and Gayatri became the first Indian women's doubles team to win the title at this tournament.

Arjun Erigaisi becomes the second Indian to Cross the 2800 ELO Rating.

- The 21-year-old Grandmaster Arjun Erigaisi has achieved a remarkable feat, becoming the second Indian in history to reach the prestigious 2800 Elo rating in classical chess.
- He joins the legendary Viswanathan Anand in this exclusive club. Erigaisi also currently holds the world number four ranking.

38th National Games 2025

- Uttarakhand will host the National Games from January 28 to February 14, 2025. The event will see over 10,000 athletes, officials, and coaches from across the country, including institutional teams like the Services, competing in 38 sports.
- The mascot, named "Mauli," is inspired by the Monal, the state bird of Uttarakhand, symbolizing the region's uniqueness and encouraging young athletes to aim high. The logo, also inspired by the Monal, highlights the natural beauty and diversity of Uttarakhand.
- The tagline for the Games, "Sankalp Se Shikhar Tak" (From Resolve to Zenith), was also revealed during the event.

D Gukesh becomes the youngest chess champion ever

- India Grandmaster Gukesh Dommaraju became the youngest world chess champion at 18 years after beating Ding Liren of China.
- Before Gukesh's feat, the legendary Garry Kasparov of Russia was the youngest world champion when he won the title at the age of 22, dethroning Anatoly Karpov in 1985.
- He is the second Indian after the legendary Viswanathan Anand to win the global title. Anand, a five-time world champion, had last held the title in 2013 before going down to Magnus Carlsen.

Saudi Arabia to host 2034 FIFA World Cup

- FIFA has officially announced Saudi Arabia as the host nation for the 2034 men's football World Cup.
- Saudi Arabia will become the second nation from the Middle East to host the mega football event, 12 years after neighbours Qatar staged the 2022 edition, where Argentina lifted the prestigious trophy.
- Meanwhile, FIFA also confirmed that Spain, Portugal and Morocco will co-host the 2030 edition with one-off matches in three South American countries.
- South American nations Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay will be hosting the celebratory games to mark the World Cup's centenary during the 2030 edition as the tournament will be played across three continents.
- The opening match of the 2030 edition will be played in Uruguay, which hosted the 1930 tournament, with the next two games to be staged in Argentina and Paraguay, respectively, before the rest of the tournament is played in the three main co-host countries.

Khelo India Winter Games

- As a part of the Khelo India Winter Games, the Union Territory of Ladakh will host the ice sports (Ice Hockey & Ice Skating) while J&K will stage the snow sports (Alpine Skiing, Nordic Skiing, Ski Mountaineering, and Snowboarding).
- The Union Territory of Ladakh will host the ice events from January 23 to 27, 2025 while the UT of Jammu & Kashmir will host the snow events from February 22 to 25, 2025.
- The Winter Games will flag off the Khelo India season with the Youth & Para Games scheduled in Bihar in April next year.

Aarit Kapil becomes the youngest Indian to beat a chess Grandmaster

- At 9 years, 2 months and 18 days, Delhi boy Aarit Kapil has become the youngest Indian to beat a chess Grandmaster as he emerged victorious against Raset Ziatdinov of the United States in the ninth and penultimate round of the KIIT International open tournament.
- The youngest player in the world to beat a GM is Indian-origin Singapore boy Ashwath Kaushik who won against Jacek Stupa of Poland when he was just 8 years and six months old earlier this year.

Lakshya Sen wins the bronze medal at the King Cup International

- India's Lakshya Sen defeated French star Alex Lanier to finish third at the inaugural King Cup International Badminton Open in Bangkok, Thailand.
- He had earlier lost in the semifinals to reigning world junior champion Hu Zhe'an of China.

Sachin Tendulkar accepts prestigious MCC's membership

- Indian cricket icon Sachin Tendulkar has been awarded honorary membership of the prestigious Melbourne Cricket Club (MCC).
- MCC was founded in 1838 and is one of the oldest and most influential sporting institutions in Australia.
- MCC oversees the management of the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG), a venue that has hosted countless historic matches.

Bihar to host Women's Kabaddi World Cup 2025

- Bihar will host the Women's Kabaddi World Cup, in the indoor hall of the Rajgir Sports Academy in March 2025.
- A total of 14 countries, including India, China, Japan, South Korea, Nepal, Pakistan, Iran, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Poland, Argentina, and South Africa, are expected to participate.
- Previously, Bihar hosted the world cup in 2012.

Delhi to host 2025 Para Athletics World Championships

- Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, New Delhi was finalised as the venue for the 2025 Para Worlds slated for 26 September to 5 October 2025. This is the first time India will host para-athletics' biggest sporting event.
- The 2025 event is the 12th edition of the championships and the fourth time it is hosted in Asia, following Doha 2015, Dubai 2019 and Kobe 2024.

- New Delhi will also host a World Para Athletics Grand Prix from 11 to 13 March at the same venue in 2025. The Grand Prix event will serve as a trial event before the big competition scheduled for October.

Jay Shah became the youngest International Cricket Council (ICC) chairman in history

- At 36, Jay Shah becomes the youngest, and fifth Indian, to head the global sports body.
- He will take over from New Zealand's Greg Barclay, who ended his four-year tenure.
- His elevation to the top post makes him the third Indian among the last four ICC chairmen. The previous two were N Srinivasan (2014-15) and Shashank Manohar (2015—20).

Kaamya Karthikeyan: youngest female to conquer seven summits

- Kaamya Karthikeyan, a 17-year-old from Mumbai, became the youngest girl to complete the Seven Summits Challenge, climbing the highest mountains on all seven continents.

- She is a Class 12 student at Navy Children School in Mumbai, she has previously conquered Mt Kilimanjaro in Africa, Mt Elbrus in Europe, Mt Kosciuszko in Australia, Mt Aconcagua in South America, Mt Denali in North America, and Mt Everest in Asia.

National Dope Testing Laboratory (NDTL), New Delhi, receives approval from the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA)

- WADA has approved the NDTL, New Delhi as an Athlete Passport Management Unit (APMU) to manage the Athlete Biological Passport (ABP).
- ABP is an advanced anti-doping tool that monitors an athlete's biological markers over time. By analyzing variations in parameters such as blood and steroid profiles, the ABP helps to ensure fair play in sports and to protect clean athletes.
- Now, India is part of a group of 17 APMUs approved by WADA worldwide. India's APMU would serve the country as well as the anti-doping organizations of neighbouring countries.

QUICK POINTS (NEWS IN SHORT)

- India won 55 medals, including 8 gold, 18 silver and 29 bronze to finish the Games in the fifth position on the medal tally. Iran emerged as the overall champion of the Games with 62 Medals, including 24 gold medals.
- Kerala defeated Chandigarh 34-31 to clinch their maiden Senior National Men's Handball Championship title.
- India's Pavan Kampelli claimed the bronze medal in eFootball, the country's first-ever podium finish in the event, at the 2024 Asian Esports Games in Bangkok. On way to the bronze medal, Pavan, popularly known as 'Mr Tomboy', also defeated the 2022 eFootball World Finals Winner (Mobile), Asgard Azizi of Team Indonesia, 2-1.
- The BCCI appointed Devajit Saikia as the board's acting secretary. He replaced Jay Shah.
- Lando Norris won the season-ending Abu Dhabi Grand Prix to seal the constructors' title for McLaren.
- Bangladesh successfully defended their ACC U19 Men's Asia Cup title by defeating India with 59 runs.
- Russian Tennis Player, Daniil Savelev was handed a two-year suspension for violating doping regulations
- Ace seamer Shaheen Afridi etched his name in history by becoming Pakistan's first bowler to take 100 wickets in each format of international cricket.
- Jasprit Bumrah became India's highest wicket-taker in Test cricket on Australian soil, surpassing Kapil Dev's tally of 51 wickets.
- Kush Maini became the first Indian racer to win the Formula 2 Constructors' Championship.
- Mumbai defeated Madhya Pradesh by five wickets in the final to win its second Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy title 2024.
- India will host the World Boxing Cup Final and Third World Boxing Congress in New Delhi in November 2025.
- The Indian women's cricket team won the ACC U-19 Women's Asia Cup 2024 and became the inaugural champions after beating Bangladesh Women by 41 runs in the final.
- Natalie Sciver-Brunt racked up the fastest Women's Test hundred in the match against South Africa at the Mangaung Oval in Bloemfontein. She broke the record of Sri Lanka's Chamani Seneviratna.