

---

---

**CURRENT AFFAIRS**  
**JANUARY 2025**

---

---

OSWAAL BOOKS  
& LEARNING PRIVATE LTD.

 **OSWAAL BOOKS**<sup>®</sup>  
LEARNING MADE SIMPLE

---

---

## CONTENTS

---

---

|                                |    |
|--------------------------------|----|
| ➤ National News                | 3  |
| ➤ Mahakumbh 2025               | 9  |
| ➤ Government Schemes           | 10 |
| ➤ International News           | 15 |
| ➤ India and The World          | 18 |
| ➤ Finance, Economy and Banking | 19 |
| ➤ Defence News                 | 21 |
| ➤ Appointments                 | 24 |
| ➤ Books and Authors            | 25 |
| ➤ Obituaries (National)        | 25 |
| ➤ Obituaries (International)   | 25 |
| ➤ Days and Themes              | 26 |
| ➤ Reports, Rankings and Index  | 26 |
| ➤ Events                       | 28 |
| ➤ Awards                       | 29 |
| ➤ Sports News                  | 32 |
| ➤ Quick Points (News in Short) | 34 |



OSWAAL BOOKS  
& LEARNING PVT. LTD.

## NATIONAL NEWS

### Republic Day Parade 2025

- India celebrated its 76<sup>th</sup> Republic Day on January 26, 2025, under the theme “Swarnim Bharat: Virasat aur Vikas” (Golden India: Legacy and Progress), highlighting India’s rich cultural legacy and hopes for a brighter future.
- The chief guest of the celebrations was Indonesia’s President Prabowo Subianto. He was accompanied by a 352-member Indonesian marching and band contingent participating in the parade.
- The parade began after President Droupadi Murmu unfurled the national flag, followed by a salute from parade commander Lt General Bhavnish Kumar.
- Earlier, Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid tribute to martyrs at the National War Memorial.
- In a rare coincidence, parade commander Lt General Bhavnish Kumar took part in the R-day parade with his son Lieutenant Ahan Kumar who led the contingent of the iconic 61 Cavalry on Kartavya Path.
- 31 tableaux, including 16 from states and Union Territories and 15 from central ministries and organisations rolled down the Kartavya Path. The Army’s Battle Surveillance System ‘Sanjay’ and the DRDO’s ‘Pralay’ tactical missile also made their debut.
- For the first time, the tri-services had a joint tableau symbolic of the spirit of unity among the country’s armed forces. The DRDO’s tableau, with the theme ‘Raksha Kavach’, showcased multi-layered protection against multi-domain threats.
- Over 5,000 artists performed more than 50 folk and tribal dance forms, showcasing India’s rich heritage on a global stage. The choreography celebrated the themes of Viksit Bharat, Virasat bhi Vikas bhi, and Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat. The event was recognised by the Guinness World Records for ‘The Largest Indian Folk Variety Dance’ a milestone that underscored the global significance of India’s cultural wealth.
- A Bagh Mitra (tiger friend) was invited for the first time by the central government to attend the Republic Day parade in Delhi.
- ‘Sinhtoo’ — the ancient folk dance of the Hatti community settled in the remote Giri region of Sirmaur district, Himachal Pradesh was selected for the first time to be performed at the 76<sup>th</sup> Republic Day parade in Delhi.

### India joins Eurodrone Program as an Observer Nation

- India has officially joined the multinational Eurodrone program as an observer nation.
- The program was launched by Italy, France, Germany and Spain and run by the Europe-based contracting agency Organisation for Joint Armament Cooperation (OCCAR) to build a Medium Altitude Long Endurance (MALE) drone that will give Europe greater autonomy in the drone sector.
- Airbus, France’s Dassault Aviation and Italy’s Leonardo developed Airbus. It has a wing span of 26 meters, specialise in long-endurance Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance (ISTAR) missions.
- The Eurodrone will be able to fly in non-segregated airspace, carry weapons and offer naval anti-submarine warfare as well as electronic-warfare capabilities, featuring a 2.3-ton payload, 40 hours of autonomy and 45,000 feet maximum altitude.

### India’s first wetland cities- Indore and Udaipur

- Indore and Udaipur have become the first two Indian cities on the global list of accredited wetland cities under the Ramsar Convention.
- In its latest round, an independent Advisory Committee on Wetland City Accreditation of the Convention accredited 31 new cities, including two from India, making the global list of such cities reach 74.
- The International Convention on Wetlands, adopted in 1971 in the Iranian city of Ramsar, provides a framework for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources across its 172 member countries including India. At present, 85 wetlands in India are protected under the treaty.

### IMD Vision-2047: Zero Deaths, 100% Weather Detection

- The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has targeted zero-error weather forecasting for up to three days, and 90% accuracy in forecasting up to five days by 2047, a “Vision Document”.
- The document has also targeted zero loss of life for all types of severe weather events by enabling disaster managers, stakeholders, and the general public to take early action following early accurate warning.

- It has targets set for the next two years, the next 10 years, that is till 2035, and the next 22 years, that is till 2047.
- For severe weather forecasts up to seven days, it has targeted an 80% accuracy by 2047, and 70% accuracy for events up to 10 days. Severe weather includes heavy rains, strong winds, floods, etc.
- The IMD has also aimed at 100% detection of all types of severe weather right up to the village and household level, with augmentation of meteorological observational systems up to village level supported by remote-sensing systems such as much-improved radars and satellites by 2047.
- IMD launched “Mission Mausam” to develop cutting-edge weather surveillance technologies and systems, implementing high-resolution atmospheric observations, next-generation radars and satellites, and high-performance computers.
- The CRPF’s VIP security wing currently protects over 200 individuals, including key figures such as Union Home Minister Amit Shah and the Congress family — Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi, and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra.

#### **Smriti Irani and Shekhar Kapur join the PM Museum Council**

- In a significant development, the society and executive council of the Prime Ministers’ Museum & Library (PMML) have been reconstituted with several new names joining the institution’s society. Former Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, Nripendra Mishra, has got another five-year term as the chairperson of the organisation.
- Former Union Minister Smriti Irani, ex-NITI Aayog Vice-chairman Rajiv Kumar, retired Army General Syed Ata Hasnain, renowned filmmaker Shekhar Kapur, and Vasudev Kamath from Sanskar Bharati are among the prominent new members added to the PMML society. These individuals bring diverse expertise and experience to the institution, reflecting the evolving nature of the PMML.
- The key decision-making body of PMML, helmed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi as its president, and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh as vice-president, has also been expanded to now have 34 members, instead of 29 earlier.

#### **Key Points**

IMD’s Headquarters — New Delhi  
IMD’s Director General — Mrutyunjay Mohapatra

#### **India’s first-ever glass bridge inaugurated at Kanyakumari**

- Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin inaugurated India’s first glass bridge over the sea, connecting the Vivekananda memorial and Thiruvalluvar statue in Kanyakumari.
- The glass bridge spans 77 metres in length and 10 metres in width, making it a substantial addition to Kanyakumari’s landscape. It will provide visitors with a unique vantage point of the sea while facilitating easy access between the two iconic monuments.
- This initiative aligns with broader efforts to develop Kanyakumari as a premier tourist destination.

#### **Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF’s) Parliament unit disbanded and merged with VIP security for dignitaries**

- The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) issued an order changing the designation of the approximately 1,400 members of the Parliament Duty Group (PDG) to the VIP Security Group (VSG) under CRPF.
- This change follows a directive earlier this month that involved transferring the CRPF’s battalion number 190, based in Jharkhand’s Chatra district, to the VIP security division. The battalion, originally tasked with anti-Naxal operations in Jharkhand, now contributes to protecting high-profile dignitaries.

#### **Pravasi Bharatiya Express**

- The Pravasi Bharatiya Express is a special state-of-the-art Tourist Train exclusively designed for the Indian Diaspora (PIOs only) that will travel to multiple destinations of prominent tourist interest and religious importance all over India for three weeks starting on January 09, 2025, starting from Safdarjung Railway Station in New Delhi.
- The date of January 9 was chosen to commemorate the return of Mahatma Gandhi from South Africa to India on this date in the year 1915.
- The specially conducted tour is being organised under the Pravasi Teerth Darshan Yojana (PTDY) scheme of the Ministry of External Affairs in collaboration with the M/s Indian Railways Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC).

#### **National Turmeric Board established**

- Union Minister of Commerce & Industry, Piyush Goyal inaugurated the National Turmeric Board in

New Delhi. He announced Palle Ganga Reddy as its first Chairperson.

- The headquarters of the Board was set up at Nizamabad. Turmeric is also known as 'Golden Spice.'
- The newly formed Board will pay special attention to the welfare of the turmeric farmers spread across 20 states.
- The new Board will promote research and development of new turmeric products and will look into the value addition of turmeric-related products for marketing abroad.
- It will also look into creating awareness of the essential and medical properties of turmeric, ways to increase its yield and boost logistics and supply chain to foster trade into newer markets

#### Parbati-Kalisindh-Chambal-Eastern Rajasthan canal project

- An MoU was signed among Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh (MP) with the Union Ministry of Jal Shakti (MoJS) for implementation of the "Modified PKC-ERCP" (integration of original PKC with Eastern Rajasthan Canal Project of Rajasthan), which is the second project under the national perspective plan of interlinking of rivers (ILR) program of Government of India.
- The project proposes to provide drinking and industrial water to 13 districts in eastern Rajasthan, as well as the Malwa and Chambal regions of Madhya Pradesh. Additionally, it aims to provide irrigation to at least 2.8 lakh hectares in each state (a total of 5.6 lakh hectares or more) and supplement en route tanks in both states.

#### Key Points

Union Minister of Jal Shakti — Shri Chandrakant Raghunath Patil

#### India's obesity guidelines updated after 15 years

- Indian doctors have redefined obesity with new guidelines that consider the unique health challenges faced by the population.
- The guidelines were developed using the Delphi process, a method for building expert consensus. Five surveys were conducted from October 2022 to June 2023. The term overweight has been replaced with Obesity — grades I and II.

The new guidelines provide a two-stage classification of obesity:

- Stage 1 Innocuous obesity:** Increased adiposity (BMI > 23 kg/m<sup>2</sup>) without apparent effects on organ functions or routine daily activities. This stage of obesity, currently not causing any pathological problems ("Innocuous obesity"), could progress to Stage 2 obesity, which has an association with mechanical and disease-related problems.
- Stage 2 Obesity with a consequence:** Advanced state of obesity with increased BMI of more than 23 kg/2, and abdominal adiposity, excess Waist Circumference (WC) or Waist-to-Height Ratio (W-HtR). One of these impacts physical and organ functions: mechanical conditions (such as knee arthritis due to excess weight) or the presence of diseases associated with obesity (such as type 2 diabetes).

#### ISRO successfully demonstrates Vikas Engine Restart Capability

- ISRO achieved a significant milestone with the successful demonstration of restarting its Vikas liquid engine.
- The test was conducted at the ISRO Propulsion Complex in Mahendragiri, Tamil Nadu.
- The Vikas engine, a reliable workhorse for powering the liquid stages of ISRO's launch vehicles, is being refined to enable stage recovery and reusability—key technologies for future space missions.
- The engine was fired for 60 seconds before being shut off for 120 seconds. It was then successfully restarted and fired again for seven seconds. This marks the second successful demonstration of the engine's restart capability.

#### Key Points

ISRO's Headquarters Chairman — Bengaluru, Karnataka  
— Dr. V. Narayanan

#### ISRO successfully germinates Black-eyed Pea seeds in space

- In a milestone for ISRO, the cowpea seedlings it sent to space as part of ISRO's first biological experiment in space have sprouted their first leaves.
- The experiment was a part of CROPS (Compact Research Module for Orbital Plant Studies), an automated platform designed to cultivate and sustain plant life in the microgravity environment of space.
- The experiment was developed by the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre, and it involves growing



eight cowpea (*Vigna unguiculata*) seeds within a controlled environment equipped with active thermal management onboard ISRO's POEM-4 module.

### **Cabinet approves the establishment of the "Third Launch Pad"**

- The Union Cabinet approved the establishment of the Third Launch Pad (TLP) at Satish Dhawan Space Centre of ISRO at Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh.
- The Third Launch Pad project envisages the establishment of the launch infrastructure at Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh for the Next Generation of Launch Vehicles of ISRO and also to support a standby launch pad for the Second Launch Pad at Sriharikota. This will also enhance the launch capacity for future Indian human spaceflight missions.
- TLP is targeted to be established within 48 months or 4 years.
- The total fund requirement is ₹3984.86 crore and includes the establishment of the Launch Pad and the associated facilities.

### **Gaganyaan: LPSC delivers Crew Module's Liquid Propulsion System**

- In a key milestone for its Gaganyaan mission, ISRO has integrated liquid propulsion systems into the Crew Module for the first uncrewed mission (G1).
- The important task was performed by ISRO's Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre (LPSC).
- The updated crew module now has an advanced bi-propellant-based Reaction Control System (RCS) for accurate three-axis control.
- The newly integrated system called the Crew Module Propulsion System (CMPS), will control the spacecraft's pitch, yaw, and roll during critical descent and re-entry phases.
- It will be active from the time-of-service module separation to the deployment of a parachute-based deceleration system.
- The CMPS has 12 thrusters generating 100N of force each, a pressurisation system with high-pressure gas bottles and a propellant feed system with fluid control components.

### **Indian courts achieve milestone in case disposals**

- According to the National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG), district courts resolved over 13.4 million cases, leaving approximately 10.5 million still pending. This represents

a considerable improvement from 2023 when only 3.14 million cases were cleared.

- High courts made significant progress as well, with over 1.2 million cases being disposed of in 2024, and the Supreme Court addressing 36,969 cases. The ratio of disposed cases to pending matters improved, dropping from 2.38 in 2023 to 0.79 in 2024.

### **ICAR-NBAGR officially recognised the Gaddi Dog breed**

- The Indian Council of Agricultural Research- National Bureau of Animal Genetic Resources (ICAR-NBAGR) has recognised the Gaddi, an indigenous dog breed from the Himalayas.
- These dogs are named after the Gaddi tribe, known for herding sheep and goats in the high Himalayas.
- These dogs play a vital role in protecting livestock, herding and fostering a deep bond with shepherds.

### **PM Narendra Modi inaugurated Z-Morh Tunnel**

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the strategic Z-Morh tunnel in Sonamarg area, Ganderbal district of Jammu and Kashmir.
- The name "Z-Morh" derives from the Z-shaped roadway that existed before the tunnel's construction, which was situated at an elevation of over 8,500 feet and was susceptible to snow avalanches during winter, which led to the closure of access to Sonamarg throughout the cold months. This will open Sonmarg to tourism all around the year.
- It is a two-lane road tunnel equipped with a parallel 7.5-metre-wide escape passage for emergencies.
- The 'Z-Morh tunnel' is 6.5 km in length situated at an altitude of 8,650 feet and was built at a cost of ₹4200 crores.

### **Gujarat's first coastal bird census begins**

- The Gujarat government will conduct the country's first-ever census of coastal and water birds at the Marine National Park and Sanctuary in Jamnagar, Gujarat.
- The census will be jointly organised by the State Forest Department and the Bird Conservation Society of Gujarat.
- The Marine National Park and Marine Sanctuary in Gujarat is India's first designated marine national park.
- It spans the districts of Devbhoomi Dwarka, Jamnagar, and Morbi and covers approximately 170 km of coastline and 42 islands between Okha and Navlakhi.

This protected area in the Gulf of Kutch was established to conserve marine biodiversity and mangrove ecosystems.

### **IIT-Madras launches Asia's largest shallow wave basin research facility**

- The Indian Institute of Technology-Madras (IIT-M) has commissioned Asia's largest shallow wave basin research facility to cater to research and industry requirements.
- It is an indigenously developed facility, and is located at Discovery — IIT-M's satellite campus in Thaiyur, which is in the city's suburb, about 36 km from IIT Madras.
- This facility has been established through the National Technology Centre for Ports Waterways and Coasts (NTCPWC), a centre dedicated to technological innovations and the evolution of new ideas and breakthroughs in the port and maritime sector.
- It works as the technology arm of the Ministry of Shipping, Government of India and provides the needful technological support to ports, the Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) and other institutions.
- This state-of-the-art research facility can be used for fundamental understanding as well as for application projects, where the influence of 3D waves on the structures can be critical.

### **40-year-old toxic waste from Bhopal gas tragedy site leaves city for disposal**

- On the night of December 2, 1984, a massive release of Methyl Isocyanate (MIC) gas from the Union Carbide plant transformed Bhopal into a gas chamber, killing more than 15,000 people and affecting over 600,000.
- Efforts to remove 337 metric tonnes of toxic waste from Bhopal's Union Carbide factory site, where the 1984 gas tragedy occurred, have begun. As many as 12 leak-proof and fire-resistant containers were being used to transport the waste, with each container carrying an average of 30 tonnes. Around 100 workers were involved in the process, with shifts limited to 30 minutes due to safety concerns.
- The waste comprises five types of materials, including remnants of Sevin, a pesticide produced at the Union Carbide factory. The site also contained methyl isocyanate (MIC), the gas that caused thousands of deaths during the disaster. Additional materials

include reactor residues, contaminated soil and other chemicals used at the plant.

- The toxic waste includes 162 metric tonnes of soil, 92 metric tonnes of Sevin and naphthol residues, 54 metric tonnes of semi-processed pesticides, and 29 metric tonnes of reactor waste.

### **News in Short**

- An adult male elephant has been camera-trapped in Namdapha National Park and Tiger Reserve in Changlang district of Arunachal Pradesh after 12 years. The last recorded sighting of an elephant in the core area of the park was in 2013.
- According to groundbreaking findings announced by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin, the Iron Age in India began in Tamil Nadu 5,300 years ago. This was claimed in a 73-page report, *Antiquity of Iron – Recent Radiometric Dates from Tamil Nadu*, authored by K Rajan and R. Sivanandam.
- The central government has approved the earmarking of a designated site within the "Rashtriya Smriti" complex (a part of the Rajghat precinct) to set up a memorial for Pranab Mukherjee, the former President of India.
- In a historic move, Uttarakhand has become the first state in India to implement the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) from January 27, 2025.
- Over 11 lakh birds of 196 different species thronged Chilika lagoon this year, according to the annual mid-winter waterfowl census 2025.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi virtually inaugurated the Jammu Railway Division, marking it as the 69th division under the Northern Railway Zone. This strategic move aims to enhance connectivity and foster socio-economic development in the northernmost regions of India.
- Retired Supreme Court justice B. N. Srikrishna will chair the ID verification and data sharing platform Equal's newly formed Advisory Board.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated an additional 13-kilometre Delhi section of the Namo Bharat RRTS corridor between Sahibabad in Ghaziabad and New Ashok Nagar in Delhi. With this inauguration, the operational stretch of the Namo Bharat corridor has expanded to 55 km, with a total of 11 stations.
- The Indian Council of Agriculture Research (ICAR) has renamed the Central Tobacco Research Institute (CTRI-

Rajahmundry) after the National Institute for Research on Commercial Agriculture (NIRCA).

- The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has officially announced 2024 has been the hottest year ever recorded in India. The annual average land surface air temperature during 2024 was +0.65 degrees Celsius higher than the long-term average (1991—2020).
- The Jharkhand Forest Department has initiated a study to revive the dwindling population of Bison, popularly known as Gaur, at Palamu Tiger Reserve (PTR)
- The Centre has increased the minimum support price (MSP) for raw jute by ₹315, setting it at ₹5,650 per quintal for the 2025-26 marketing season. This move is expected to provide farmers with a return of 66.8% over the all-India weighted average cost of production.
- Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw revealed that Indian Railways has created the world's most powerful hydrogen fuel-run train engine, with 1,200 horsepower. The first trial is set to occur soon in Haryana. This technology could also be used in trucks and tugboats.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Sri Sri Radha Madanmohanji Temple of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) in Kharghar, Navi Mumbai. It was built over 12 years at a cost of ₹170 crore and is Asia's second-largest ISKCON temple.
- Union Animal Husbandry and Fisheries Minister Rajiv Ranjan Singh launched the country's first organic fisheries cluster in Sikkim. The organic fisheries cluster focuses on ecologically healthy fish farming system avoiding the use of harmful chemicals, antibiotics and pesticides.
- The National Investigation Agency achieved a perfect conviction rate in 2024. NIA convicted 68 individuals in 25 cases.
- A stampede in Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh left at least six devotees dead and many injured, as thousands gathered to secure tickets for a sacred event at the revered Lord Venkateswara Swamy temple in Tirumala Hills.
- In a significant milestone, India joined the prestigious UN Committee of Experts on Big Data and Data Science for Official Statistics. The UN Committee of Experts on Big Data and Data Science for Official Statistics (UN-CEBD) was created to further investigate the benefits and challenges of Big Data, including the potential for monitoring and reporting on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- Union Minister of Commerce & Industry, Piyush Goyal unveiled the Bharat Cleantech Manufacturing Platform, an initiative designed to enhance India's cleantech value chains in the solar, wind, hydrogen, and battery storage sectors at the Bharat Climate Forum 2025 in New Delhi.
- The Foundation Day of the Lokpal of India was held for the first time on January 16 at Manekshaw Centre, New Delhi in the presence of the Chief Justice of India, Justice Sanjiv Khanna. It is on this day, that the Lokpal of India was established by the virtue of coming into force of Section 3 of the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013, on 16.01.2014.
- Researchers from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Guwahati, in collaboration with Bose Institute Kolkata, have developed an advanced injectable hydrogel designed for localised breast cancer treatment. This innovative hydrogel system allows for precise delivery of anti-cancer drugs to tumour sites, minimising side effects commonly seen in conventional treatments like chemotherapy.
- Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi declared the unseasonal rain in December last year a natural calamity to facilitate payment of compensation to the affected farmers from the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF).
- On January 6, 2025, several workers became trapped for over 12 hours in a coal "rat-hole" mine in Dima Hasao district, Assam.
- Union Minister for Steel and Civil Aviation, Jyotiraditya M. Scindia virtually inaugurated India's first Green Hydrogen Plant in Stainless Steel Sector located at Jindal Stainless Limited, Hisar.
- The Global Energy Alliance for People and Planet (GEAPP) signed a Multi-Donor Trust Fund with the International Solar Alliance aiming to mobilise \$100 million to fund high-impact solar energy projects. Additionally, the alliance, in its attempt to accelerate the country's clean energy transition, also announced two other initiatives – Digitalisation of Utilities for Energy Transition (DUET) and Energy Transitions Innovation Challenge (ENTICE 2.0).
- The Standing Committee of the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) has approved oil and gas exploratory drilling in the eco-sensitive zone (ESZ) of Hollongapar Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary in Assam. This decision, taken during the 81st meeting of the committee, has raised questions about balancing energy development



with the need to preserve one of India's most unique wildlife habitats.

- Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation, Amit Shah inaugurated the Archaeological Experiential Museum, Prerna Complex, and Sports Complex in Vadnagar, Gujarat.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the GI tag for seven products from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, including Nicobari Virgin Coconut Oil, Nicobar Coconut, and Andaman Karen Musley Rice, Nicobari Hodi (an outrigger canoe), Nicobari Mat (also known as Chatrai-hileuoi), Nicobari Hut (To Chanvi Pati Nyi hupul), and Padauk Wood Craft. The Virgin Coconut

Oil, made traditionally, is unrefined, unbleached, and free of chemicals or preservatives. Its GI tag recognition underscores its authenticity and high quality.

- PM Modi laid the foundation stone for the new state-of-the-art building for the Central Ayurveda Research Institute (CARI) at Rohini, New Delhi, to be constructed at the cost of around ₹185 crores.
- Bhuj's historic water systems and Hyderabad's Musi River Historic buildings secured a coveted place on the 2025 World Monuments Watch list. These remarkable sites, chosen by the World Monuments Fund (WMF), now urgently need preservation due to environmental pressures and rapid urban development.

## MAHAKUMBH 2025

- Maha Kumbh Mela, the world's largest religious congregation, commenced at Prayagraj district in Uttar Pradesh. It began on January 13, 2025, with the Paush Purnima Snan, and will conclude on February 26, 2025, aligning with Maha Shivratri.
- It is being held at the Triveni Sangam, the confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna, and Saraswati rivers. For the first time, an underwater drone has been deployed for the safety of devotees. It is capable of monitoring underwater activities 24 hours a day.
- The origins of the Kumbh Mela trace back to Hindu mythology, specifically the legend of Samudra Manthan, or the churning of the ocean. According to ancient scriptures, this celestial event was a collaborative effort between the Devas (Gods) and Asuras (demons) to retrieve Amrit, the nectar of immortality. During the process, a Kumbh (pot) filled with sacred nectar emerged. To safeguard it from the demons, Lord Vishnu, disguised as Mohini, seized the pot and fled. Along his journey, a few drops of the nectar spilt at four places: Prayagraj, Haridwar, Ujjain, and Nashik, making them holy sites for the Kumbh Mela. These four sites became sacred, hosting the Kumbh Mela on a rotating basis.
- The Kumbh Mela follows a 12-year cycle based on the celestial positions of the Sun, Moon and Jupiter. The 2025 Maha Kumbh at Prayagraj is especially rare, occurring once every 144 years. This unique alignment is believed to make it an exceptionally auspicious time for prayers and rituals.
- Mahakumbh is recognised by UNESCO as part of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

| Important bathing dates | Occasion                                     |
|-------------------------|--|
| January 13, 2025        | Paush Purnima Snan (Opening Day)             |
| January 15, 2025        | Makar Sankranti Snan                         |
| January 29, 2025        | Mauni Amavasya Snan (Royal Bath/Shahi Snan)  |
| February 3, 2025        | Basant Panchami Snan (Royal Bath/Shahi Snan) |
| February 12, 2025       | Maghi Purnima Snan                           |

### The world's first Mahamrityunjaya Yantra installed in Prayagraj

- The world's first 52-foot-long, 52-foot-wide and 52-foot-tall 'Mahamrityunjaya Yantra' was installed at Tapovan Ashram in Jhunsi Havelis in Prayagraj, the land of Maha Kumbh.
- The Mahamrityunjaya Yantra was created in 52 days at a cost of ₹4 crore.
- A total of 151 'acharyas' have been chanting 'Mahamrityunjaya Mantra' sitting under this Yantra since Makar Sankranti on January 14. These saints are consecrating 11,11,111 Rudrakshas.
- These Rudrakshas will be sent by post to the devotees, who visit Maha Kumbh, free of cost.
- Swami Sahajanand Maharaj, who established this scientific Mahamrityunjaya Yantra, said the main aim behind this move is to remove pollution and depression that the younger generation suffers. This consecrated Rudraksha will keep one stress-free along with bringing positivity in the house as well as cure

increasing depression and suicidal tendencies among youth.

- Mahamrityunjay Yantras will be established at all the 12 Jyotirlingas after Prayagraj.

#### **Kalagram: Cultural Heart of Mahakumbh 2025**

- Kalagram is a cultural gem nestled in the sprawling 10-acre Nagavasuki area, Prayagraj. It is designed as a sensory odyssey rooted in the 3Cs: Craft, Cuisines, and Culture.
- It was conceived and curated by the Union Ministry of Culture.
- Visitors will be greeted by a magnificent 635-ft wide and 54-ft high grand façade entrance, adorned with intricate depictions of the 12 Jyotirlingas and the mythological tale of Lord Shiva consuming Halahal, setting a majestic tone for the journey within.
- The vibrant Kalagram will host a magnificent 10,000-capacity Ganga Pandal, alongside three additional stages in Areil, Jhansi and Triveni areas, accommodating 2,000 to 4,000 spectators each.

#### **‘One Plate, One Bag’ campaign launched**

- The “One Plate, One Bag” campaign was launched to replace plastic bags and disposable items at Mahakumbh to make them plastic-free.
- As a part of this, cloth bags and carry bags are distributed to visitors, with around 70,000 such bags already handed out from six centres.
- Additionally, 2 million steel plates and glasses have been collected from across the country. These steel plates and glasses are being distributed to all langars (community kitchens) and food outlets within the mela area to replace plastic and thermocol utensils.

#### **Cleanliness Initiatives at Maha Kumbh 2025**

- The fairgrounds have been designated as plastic-free zones, with an absolute ban on single-use plastics. This initiative is reinforced by awareness campaigns urging pilgrims to avoid plastic waste and dispose of

their garbage in designated bins.

- To accommodate the vast influx of devotees, a robust sanitation infrastructure has been established. These include Fiber Reinforced Plastic (FRP) toilets with septic tanks and prefabricated steel toilets with soak pits, and Community urinals strategically placed across the fairgrounds.
- In addition to sanitation measures, the government has implemented the Miyawaki afforestation technique to improve air quality and enhance the green cover in Prayagraj. It is often referred to as the “pot plantation method,” and it involves planting trees and shrubs close to one another to accelerate their growth. Trees planted using the Miyawaki technique absorb more carbon, grow faster, and support richer biodiversity compared to traditional forests.

#### **Bhashini revolutionises Mahakumbh experience**

- The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has introduced BHASHINI (BHASHa INterface for India), a groundbreaking initiative under the Digital India program, to bridge communication gaps and enhance accessibility.
- BHASHINI translates critical announcements, schedules and safety protocols into 11 regional languages, ensuring no attendee is left out due to language barriers.
- The integration of BHASHINI’s speech-to-text and text-to-speech tools with mobile apps and kiosks enables pilgrims to navigate the event effortlessly in their native language.

#### **Kumbh Sah’AI’yak: The Multilingual AI-Powered Chatbot**

- Kumbh Sah’AI’yak is an AI-powered, multilingual, voice-enabled chatbot designed to assist millions of visitors during MahaKumbh 2025.
- It is created to enhance the visitor experience by providing seamless, real-time information and navigation assistance to all.

## **GOVERNMENT SCHEMES**

#### **Union Home Minister Amit Shah launches BHARATPOL Portal**

- Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation, Amit Shah inaugurated the BHARATPOL portal developed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

- The five key modules of BHARATPOL – Connect, INTERPOL Notices, References, Broadcast, and Resources – provide a technological platform to support all our law enforcement agencies.
- The portal has a real-time interface — that will enable seamless and effective communication among agencies to enhance crime control measures.

**Key Points**

|                    |   |              |
|--------------------|---|--------------|
| CBI's Headquarters | — | New Delhi    |
| CBI's Director     | — | Praveen Sood |

**NeGD launches Entity Locker**

- The National eGovernance Division (NeGD), under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has developed Entity Locker, a cutting-edge digital platform designed to transform the management and verification of business/organisation documents.
- Entity Locker is a secure, cloud-based solution that simplifies the storage, sharing, and verification of documents for a wide range of entities, including large organisations, corporations, micro, small, and medium Enterprises (MSMEs), trusts, startups and societies.
- The platform is a critical component of India's Digital Public Infrastructure, aligning with the vision of the Union Budget 2024-25 for enhanced digital governance and ease of doing business.

**Key Points**

|  |   |                  |
|--|---|------------------|
| Union Minister of Electronics and Information Technology | — | Ashwini Vaishnav |
|--|---|------------------|

**Union Minister Manohar Lal Khattar launched the toolkit for the ninth edition of Swachh Survekshan**

- The Union Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), Manohar Lal Khattar, launched the toolkit for the ninth edition of Swachh Survekshan (SS), the world's largest urban cleanliness survey, in its new avatar—simpler, sharper, systematic and all-inclusive.
- The Swachh Survekshan was initially launched by MoHUA in 2016, and it drives urban sanitation improvement through citizen participation and third-party validation.
- For the year 2024, a special category - Super Swachh League has been introduced creating a separate league of cities excelling in cleanliness. The cities which have been in the top three in at least two years in the last three years (2021-2023) have cut.
- There are 12 cities in the Super Swachh League. Moving forward, the top three ranking cities in each population category will qualify for the league in the following years.
- ULBs in this league will be assessed on additional aspirational indicators and must maintain a score of 85% or higher to retain their position.

**India launches Indian Genomic Data set & IBDC portals to empower global research**

- Union Science and Technology Minister Dr Jitendra Singh launched the 'Framework for Exchange of Data Protocols (FeED)' and the Indian Biological Data Centre (IBDC) Portals, making 10,000 whole genome samples accessible to researchers across India and the globe.
- The Genome India project was launched in 2020, and completed in February 2024. A total of 10,000 genome samples across diverse sections of Indian society were collected. This provides a rich catalogue of genetic variations.
- The Indian Biological Data Centre (IBDC) will facilitate seamless access to valuable genetic information, enabling researchers to explore genetic variations and design more accurate genomic tools.
- This initiative is set to position India as a leader in genomics, enabling the development of genomic chips tailored to the Indian demographic, thereby enhancing the precision of genetic studies.

**IIT Madras partners with the Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmer Welfare to launch Project VISTAAR**

- The Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT Madras) collaborated with the Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmer Welfare, Government of India, on Project VISTAAR, which seeks to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the agricultural extension system through Digitalisation.
- VISTAAR stands for Virtually Integrated System to Access Agricultural Resources. This pilot initiative aims to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the agricultural extension system through digitalisation, further strengthening support for farmers nationwide.

**Key Points**

|   |   |                       |
|---|---|-----------------------|
| Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare | — | Shivraj Singh Chouhan |
|---|---|-----------------------|

**EmpowHER Biz launched**

- The Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP) of NITI Aayog, launched EmpowHER Biz – Sapno Ki Udaan in partnership with New Shop, India's largest 24/7 convenience retail chain under its Award to Reward (ATR) program.



- EmpowHER Biz will offer mentorship and comprehensive training, covering retail management, digital tools, financial literacy and business development to aspiring women entrepreneurs.
- Through this collaboration with New Shop, WEP aims to create a robust retail ecosystem that empowers women entrepreneurs and drives sustainable growth in the sector.

#### Key Points

|                  |   |                       |
|------------------|---|-----------------------|
| Niti Aayog CEO   | — | B. V. R. Subrahmanyam |
| Vice Chairperson | — | Suman Bery            |

#### Google-backed Pixxel launches India's first private satellite constellation

- Pixxel, a Bengaluru-based space technology company backed by Google and building the world's highest-resolution hyperspectral satellite constellation, has successfully launched the first three satellites of its Firefly constellation.
- The Firefly constellation also marks a watershed moment in India's space journey as the nation's first commercial satellite constellation. The satellites were integrated via Exolaunch and launched aboard the Transporter-12 rideshare mission with SpaceX from Vandenberg Space Force Base, California.

#### Kerala Warnings, Crisis and Hazard Management System (KaWaCHaM) launched

- Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan launched KaWaCHaM, one of the world's fastest weather alert systems. It is designed to enhance rescue and rehabilitation efforts during extreme weather events driven by climate change.
- 'KaWaCHaM' stands for Kerala Warnings Crisis and Hazards Management System, and the word kavacham in Malayalam translates to 'shield', symbolising protection.
- KSDMA developed KaWaCHaM with funding from the National Disaster Management Authority and the World Bank as part of the National Cyclone Risk Mitigation Project. This advanced system unifies Kerala's entire early warning mechanism into one framework.

#### Centre notifies Unified Pension Scheme (UPS) for employees

- The Union finance ministry notified the operationalisation of the Unified Pension Scheme

(UPS) as an option under the National Pension System (NPS) for central government employees from April 1, 2025, which will ensure them guaranteed retirement benefits.

- The Union Cabinet approved the UPS on August 24, 2024, for nearly 23 lakh central government employees.
- It promises a monthly pension equivalent to 50% of the average basic pay drawn by a central government employee during the 12 months before retirement if 25 years of service are completed.
- Additionally, the scheme also ensures a family pension equal to 60% of the government employee's pension in the event of their death and other benefits like gratuity and a lump sum superannuation payout at the time of retirement.
- The following central government employees are eligible for assured benefits under the UPS:
  - If an employee retires after completing 10 years or more of service.
  - If the government retires an employee under FR 56.
  - If an employee takes up voluntary retirement after serving at least 25 years and the service duration has continued to be the same.

#### Cornell University's AnemiaPhone technology transferred to India

- AnemiaPhone, a technology developed by Cornell University researchers to accurately, quickly and cheaply assess iron deficiency, has been transferred to the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) for integration into its programs for anaemia, women's health, and maternal and child health throughout the country.
- The technology requires a small finger stick, a drop of blood on a test strip similar to a COVID-19 home test, and a few minutes for the reader to assess. Then the information is uploaded to a clinical database via mobile phone, wireless tablet, or computer. Healthcare workers can interpret the test and provide guidance, triage referrals, or intervene on the spot.
- Iron deficiency is the leading cause of anaemia, a condition which can cause a range of symptoms, from fatigue and shortness of breath to multi-organ failure and death. Anaemia affects 50–70% of pregnant women in India.



**Key Points**

|                     |   |            |
|---------------------|---|------------|
| ICMR's Headquarters | — | New Delhi  |
| Director General    | — | Rajiv Bahl |

**UP govt, Google Cloud launch AI-powered agri network**

- The UP government has signed an MoU with Google Cloud (India) to launch the Gemini-powered and Beacon-enabled Uttar Pradesh Open Network for Agriculture.
- The initiative seeks to empower millions of farmers with one-stop access to advisory services, credit, mechanisation, and market connectivity for selling their produce.
- Farmers will also gain real-time, accurate information on microclimates and market prices, a significant step towards achieving the state government's vision of doubling farmers' income.

**News in Short**

- The Mira Bhayandar Municipal Corporation (MBMC) has conceptualised a flagship initiative called 'Faral Sakhi', aimed at empowering women entrepreneurs in the city of Mira Bhayandar, Maharashtra. Under this initiative, a permanent employment opportunity for women will be created by engaging them in the production and sale of traditional festive snacks ('Faral').
- Union Minister of Labour & Employment and Youth Affairs & Sports, Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya, launched the multilingual functionality on the e-Shram portal. It is in line with the vision of making e-Shram a 'One-Stop-Solution'. It would facilitate access to a broad spectrum of social security schemes and initiatives.
- Union Ports, Shipping and Waterways Minister Sarbananda Sonowal launched projects worth nearly ₹2,000 crore to expand capacity at the Jawaharlal Nehru Port (JNPA). JNPA is amongst the top global ports and India's largest port.
- The Madhya Pradesh government has announced a ban on liquor at 17 places of worship across the state, adding that liquor shops in these places will be closed permanently.
- IndiaAI, an Independent Business Division (IBD) under the Digital India Corporation, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Microsoft to drive the adoption and development of artificial intelligence (AI) in India. This strategic partnership is aligned with the core objectives of India's AI Mission.
- The revamped e-auction portal 'Baanknet' was launched. This platform consolidates information on e-auction properties from all PSBs and offers a one-stop destination for buyers and investors to discover a wide range of assets.
- In a groundbreaking achievement for the mining industry, the CSIR-Central Institute of Mining and Fuel Research (CSIR-CIMFR) has successfully conducted the first trial blast for the Dozer Push Mining Method, integrating advanced digital technologies, for the first time in India. This approach aims to enhance safety and operational efficiency in mining processes.
- Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren will transfer ₹5,000 to the accounts of over 56 lakh women beneficiaries under the Maiyyaan Samman Yojana.
- The Uttarakhand Forest department has developed an ethnobotanical garden at Haldwani over one acre of land to showcase ecological and environmental knowledge in Mahabharata and grown 37 plant species mentioned in the epic.
- Haryana Women and Child Development Minister Shruti Chaudhary launched the 'Samman Sanjeevani' app to ensure the timely delivery of benefits under the Mahila and Kishori Samman Yojana. Under the scheme, sanitary napkins are distributed to BPL women and girls in the age group of 10 to 45 years through Anganwadi centres and schools, and the app tracks beneficiary data and updates monthly benefits.
- Assam's Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma declared that Dibrugarh will be the second capital of Assam in the next three years.
- After peaking at 923 in 2019, the sex ratio at birth in Haryana dropped to 910 in 2024, an eight-year low. Of the 516,402 children born in Haryana in 2024, 52.35% were boys, while 47.64% were girls.
- The Assam government launched the first phase of its flagship education evaluation programme, Gunotsav 2025 to evaluate the performance of nearly 14.11 lakh students of the state. The theme of 'Gunotsav 2025' is "Ensuring Quality Education".
- Union Minister Sonowal launched the National River Traffic and Navigation System (NRT&NS) to ensure a seamless and sustainable movement of Inland vessels and also ensure their safety.
- INROAD (Indian Natural Rubber Operations for Assisted Development) project in North East received ₹100 crore for improving rubber quality, empowering

growers, and developing model infrastructure. It is a first-of-its-kind project in the world in which the tire industry is directly contributing to the development of rubber plantations.

- From 2022 to 2024, CPGRAMS (Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System) successfully resolved over 70 lakh grievances.
- The Har Ghar Connectivity (Fibre-to-Home) initiative, introduced by Gujarat Fibre Grid Network Limited (GFGNL) under the state's Science and Technology Department, aims to provide rural households with affordable, high-speed internet access.
- The Union Cabinet approved the extension of the National Health Mission (NHM) for another five years after reviewing its progress over the past three years. First launched in 2005 as the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM), the scheme has been extended multiple times, with the most recent extension granted in 2021 to run until 2026.
- Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai launched 'Deendayal Upadhyay Bhoomiheen Krishi Majdoor Kalyana Yojana' in Raipur. Under this scheme, more than 5.62 lakh landless agricultural labourers, Baigas and Gunias of the state will be given financial assistance of ₹10,000 annually.
- Madhya Pradesh has launched the PARTH (Police Army Recruitment Training and Hunar) Yojana to empower the youth with skills for careers in defence and law enforcement.
- Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu unveiled the document for Swarnandhra-2047 (Golden Andhra Pradesh) vision document, with the slogan of health, wealth and happiness for all by removing economic inequalities and eradication of poverty in the next 23 years.
- Chhattisgarh has become the first state in India to link its forest ecosystem to the Green Gross Domestic Product (Green GDP).
- Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal launched the PRABHAAV Factbook (Powering a Resilient and Agile Bharat for the Advancement of Visionary Startups). PRABHAAV Factbook is the ultimate guide to India's thriving startup ecosystem and its growth story from 2016 to 2024.
- The Uttarakhand government inaugurated the Winter Char Dham circuit to attract tourists during the off-season winter months. The Char Dham includes four sacred Hindu shrines – Gangotri, Yamunotri, Kedarnath, and Badrinath.
- Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant launched the 'Bima Sakhi Yojana' in the state with the aim of providing "insurance for all". With this, Goa became the second state after Haryana to launch this flagship scheme.
- In a significant step towards developing Indigenous state-of-the-art next-generation telecommunications technology, the Centre for Development of Telematics (C-DOT), the premier Telecom R&D centre of the Department of Telecommunications (DoT), Government of India has signed an agreement with the Indian Institute of Technology Mandi (IIT Mandi) in collaboration with Indian Institute of Technology Jammu (IIT Jammu), for the development of "Wideband Spectrum-Sensor ASIC-Chip for Enhancing the Spectrum Utilisation".
- India will operate its first human underwater submersible at a depth of 500 meters in the sea as part of the Deep Ocean Mission, Earth Sciences Minister Jitendra Singh.
- President Droupadi Murmu virtually launched a Market Support Program to strengthen milk procurement, processing and marketing in Odisha. This initiative is aimed at increasing milk procurement capacity in the state from 5 lakh litres per day to 10 lakh litres per day.
- Shikari Devi Wildlife Sanctuary, located in Mandi, Himachal Pradesh, spans 7,200 hectares and features diverse flora and fauna, including snow leopards and monals. It has been recently declared an Eco-Sensitive Zone, it aims to reduce urbanisation impacts, safeguard biodiversity, and promote sustainable development, following India's Wildlife Conservation Action Plan and Environmental Protection Act.
- Odisha CM Mohan Charan Majhi launched the Shahid Madho Singh Haath Kharcha scheme to provide ₹5,000 in financial assistance to Scheduled Tribe (ST) students enrolling in Class IX and XI, aiming to reduce dropout rates and promote education.
- Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath inaugurated 'Maa Ki Rasoi,' a community kitchen initiative, offering a full meal for just ₹9.
- Saikumar K. from the Team of Research on Culture and Heritage (TORCH) has unearthed a three-foot idol of the 13<sup>th</sup>-century saint, Narahari Tirtha. He lived during the 13<sup>th</sup> century and was a disciple of Acharya Madhva.

- The Union Home Ministry has amended the prison manual rules to check discrimination and classification of inmates in jails based on their caste.
- AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal announced Pujari Granthi Samman Yojana, a new scheme that offers a monthly honorarium of ₹18000 to Hindu and Sikh priests.
- Tripura has become the first North East State to sign MoU with the Digital India Bhashini Division (DIBD) of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), for Multi-lingual Governance.
- India's space tech startup Pixxel launched three of its six hyperspectral imaging satellites aboard a SpaceX rocket from California, United States. Hyperspectral imaging is a technology that captures highly detailed data across hundreds of light bands to serve industries such as agriculture, mining, environmental monitoring and defence.

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

### Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced his resignation

- Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced his resignation as the leader of his Liberal Party of Canada effectively ending his nine-year tenure as Canada's Prime Minister too.
- He now remains caretaker prime minister till his successor is chosen. The move comes amid rising dissent against him within his party.

### China creates the world's first artificial sun

- In a groundbreaking achievement, China's Experimental Advanced Superconducting Tokamak (EAST), often referred to as the "artificial sun," has set a new world record by sustaining plasma for 1,066 seconds.
- This milestone surpasses the previous record of 403 seconds set in 2023, marking a significant leap in nuclear fusion research.
- Nuclear fusion is the process that powers the sun, involving the merging of light atomic nuclei to form a heavier nucleus, releasing substantial energy.
- The EAST reactor, located in Hefei, China, is designed to mimic these stellar conditions by confining hot plasma within a doughnut-shaped chamber using powerful magnetic fields.

### China successfully launches Pakistani satellite 'PRSC-EO1' into space

- China successfully launched a Pakistani satellite, named PRSC-EO1 into space from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre.
- It was launched by a Long March-2D carrier rocket and it entered its planned orbit successfully. The rocket also carried two other satellites - Tianlu-1 and Lantan-1. This launch marked the 556th flight mission involving the Long March carrier rocket series.

- In 2018, China sent two Pakistan satellites into orbit. The PRSS-1, Pakistan's first optical remote sensing satellite, and the PakTES-1A, a smaller observation craft.

### China unveils the World's longest tunnel, enhances BRI connectivity

- China has completed the construction of the Tianshan Shengli Tunnel in the Xinjiang region, a key infrastructure project under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).
- The 22.13-km expressway tunnel, expected to be the longest of its kind, aims to strengthen connectivity between Central Asia and eastern China.
- Once operational, it will cut travel time through the Tianshan Mountains—a vast mountain range—from three hours to just 20 minutes.

### World's first 300 MW compressed air energy storage plant begins in China

- The world's first 300-megawatt compressed air energy storage demonstration project has achieved full capacity grid connection and begun generating power in Yingcheng, Hubei province, a milestone for China's energy storage technologies.
- The project, "Nengchu-1", has set three world records in terms of single-unit power, energy storage scale and energy conversion efficiency, with total technological self-reliance for key core equipment, said its operator China Energy Engineering Corp (CEEC).
- The completion of this project indicates that China's compressed air energy storage technology has entered a new era of commercial operation, leading the world in the sector and offering solutions to address the intermittency and volatility issues associated with clean energy generation.



- With an annual capacity to generate 500 million kilowatt-hours of electricity, the project will save more than 150,000 metric tons of standard coal each year, serving as a key pillar for building a new power system.

#### Canada's Rural Community Immigration Class (RCIC)

- Canada has introduced a new programme known as the Rural Community Immigration Class (RCIC) that provides a pathway for foreign nationals, including students, to apply for Permanent Residency (PR) if they commit to living and working in designated rural communities.
- For international students, especially those with expiring Post-Graduate Work Permits (PGWPs) who are struggling to meet the Comprehensive Ranking System (CRS) score for PR or secure high-paying jobs, the RCIC offers a viable pathway to Permanent Residency (PR).

#### INTERPOL launches the First Silver Notice for Asset Recovery

- INTERPOL made history by issuing its first-ever Silver Notice, a new tool designed to trace and recover criminal assets.
- The Silver Notice assists in identifying assets such as bank accounts, real estate, and vehicles linked to crimes like fraud and corruption.
- The Silver Notice, launched as part of a pilot programme involving 52 countries and territories, is the latest addition to INTERPOL's colour-coded system of Notices and Diffusions. These mechanisms facilitate international police cooperation by sharing alerts and requests for information across borders.

#### Key Points

|                         |   |                 |
|-------------------------|---|-----------------|
| INTERPOL's Headquarters | — | Lyon, France    |
| Secretary-General       | — | Valdecy Urquiza |

#### US, China renew stalled scientific cooperation agreement

- The US and China renewed a scientific and technological cooperation agreement for five years following criticism by detractors, including US Republicans, that China is being given an advantage.
- The signing is part of an effort to stabilise relations just weeks before the inauguration of US President-elect Donald Trump, who has promised to slap huge tariffs on Chinese imports.
- The agreement, which dates back to 1979, had been renewed every five years for decades, including during

Trump's first term, until last year when diplomatic relations between the two countries were at a record low.

- The protocol "has new provisions" including on data reciprocity, which resulted from months of negotiations.

#### Trump withdraws US from Paris Agreement

- President Donald Trump signed an executive order directing the US withdrawal from the Paris Climate Agreement, weakening what has, over the past four years especially, become a global movement to combat the climate crisis.
- This is the second time Trump has ordered the US to abandon the Paris Agreement — he did so in a 2017 order as well — and the process is expected to take a year.
- The Paris Agreement aims to keep long-term global warming to below 1.5 degrees Celsius over pre-industrial levels — the average between 1850 and 1900 — and, if that is not possible, limit it to below 2 degrees Celsius.
- The US is currently the second largest carbon dioxide emitter in the world (after China) but also, historically, the largest polluter.

#### Mysterious airstrip appears on remote Yemeni island

- A mysterious airstrip is being built on the remote Abd al-Kuri Island in Yemen and is nearing completion. The Island rises out of the Indian Ocean near the mouth of the Gulf of Aden.
- The runway is likely built by the United Arab Emirates, which has long been suspected of expanding its military presence in the region and has backed a Saudi-led war against the Houthis.
- The airstrip could provide a key landing zone for military operations patrolling that waterway.

#### China steps up monitoring of emerging respiratory diseases

- China's National Disease Control and Prevention Administration (NCDPA) has launched a pilot monitoring system aimed at identifying and managing pneumonia of unknown origin.
- This initiative is designed to improve tracking and response to the surge in winter-related respiratory infections.
- The NCDPA's new protocols require laboratories to report infections while disease control agencies verify



and manage the cases, ensuring a more coordinated response to the current crisis.

### Stargate Project

- US President Donald Trump unveiled the Project Stargate a joint venture launched by the three big players—OpenAI, Softbank, and Oracle.
- Stargate will invest at least \$500 billion into Artificial Intelligence (AI) infrastructure in the US, creating over 100,000 American jobs almost immediately.
- It aims to construct massive data centres and campuses that will facilitate the growth of AI technologies and applications.

#### Key Points

|              |   |               |
|--------------|---|---------------|
| OpenAI CEO   | — | Sam Altman    |
| Softbank CEO | — | Masayoshi Son |
| Oracle CEO   | — | Safra Catz    |

### News in Short

- NASA unveiled the successor of its highly successful Ingenuity helicopter, Mars Chopper. It will be able to carry five kilograms at a distance of up to three kilometres.
- Usha Vance became the first Indian-American and Hindu Second Lady after her husband J.D. Vance was sworn in as the 50<sup>th</sup> Vice President of the United States.
- Brazil announced the official entry of Indonesia as a full member of BRICS, marking the group's first expansion under the Brazilian presidency.
- In 2024, Brazil recorded an unprecedented increase in wildfires with over 30.87 million hectares of wilderness burned, marking a staggering 79% increase from the previous year.
- Thailand will ban all plastic waste imports by 2025 in a three-stage plan as part of a greater plastic reduction movement to control pollution and protect people's health.
- WHO's new dietary guidelines suggest replacing regular table salt with potassium-enriched alternatives that reduce sodium levels without compromising taste.
- The administration of United States President Donald Trump has announced a freeze on almost all new funding for foreign assistance programmes, with exceptions for allies Israel and Egypt.
- 2024 is the first calendar year that has reached more than 1.5°C above the pre-industrial level. Each of the past 10 years (2015–2024) was one of the 10 warmest years on record. The monthly global average temperature exceeded 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels for 11 months of the year. A new record high for daily global average temperature was reached on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2024, at 17.16°C.
- Georgia was certified malaria-free by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and with this Georgia joins the ranks of 45 countries and 1 territory that have achieved this milestone.
- The US has quit the World Health Organisation (WHO) as the premier global health body mishandled the COVID-19 pandemic, failed to reform, and wasn't independent of the "political influence" of certain member states.
- Hindenburg Research, known for short-selling activities, was shut down by founder Nate Anderson. The decision comes after completing investigations, including those against Gautam Adani.
- NASA's Mars helicopter, Ingenuity, has completed its final flight due to rotor blade damage, ending its successful mission.
- China has pledged a significant investment of USD 3.7 billion to construct a state-of-the-art oil refinery in Sri Lanka, marking the largest foreign investment in the country.
- Nigeria becomes the ninth BRICS partner country, joining Belarus, Bolivia, Cuba, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Thailand, Uganda, and Uzbekistan. A partner country" refers to nations or organisations invited to attend summits ministerial meetings, or participate in other joint ventures, but without membership status or formal decision-making power.
- Mount Ibu, a stratovolcano in Indonesia erupted frequently in January 2024. Stratovolcanoes are cone-shaped volcanoes built from layers of lava and ash.
- Sweden will assist the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) in its efforts to bolster the alliance's presence in the Baltic Sea by providing up to three warships and other defence equipment to help deter any potential sabotage of undersea infrastructure.
- New York City became the first city in the United States to implement congestion pricing in an attempt to decongest roads in traffic-dense areas. Drivers entering the central business district of Manhattan will pay \$9 during peak hours.

## INDIA AND THE WORLD

### India engages with Taliban amid geopolitical shifts

- In a major diplomatic development, India has officially been referred to as a “strategic regional and economic partner” by the Taliban following a high-level meeting between Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri and Afghanistan’s acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi in Dubai.
- The talks focused on trade via the Chabahar Port in Iran, refugee rehabilitation, and boosting Afghanistan’s ailing healthcare sector.
- This move reflects India’s pragmatic recalibration of its Afghanistan policy amidst the complex dynamics of regional geopolitics, balancing its historical stance against the Taliban’s radical ideology with the necessity of maintaining influence in the war-torn nation.

### India-Saudi Arabia Haj Agreement for 2025

- Union Minister of Minority Affairs Kiren Rijiju signed the Haj agreement with Saudi Minister of Hajj & Umrah H.E. Dr. Tawfiq bin Fawzan AlRabiah and set a quota of 1,75,025 pilgrims for 2025.
- They discussed enhancing the pilgrimage experience with Saudi officials.
- Under the agreement, the 2025 quota will be split between the Hajj Committee of India (HCoI) and private Hajj Group Organisers (HGOs) at a 70:30 ratio. Of the total, HGOs will be allocated 52,507 spots.

### India summons top Bangladesh diplomat, says border fencing in line with pacts

- Bangladesh’s acting high commissioner Mohammad Nural Islam was summoned by the External Affairs Ministry and informed that India has “observed all protocols and agreements” between the two governments and the Border Security Force (BSF) and Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) while undertaking security measures at the border, including fencing.
- The escalation in tensions on the border, including Bangladesh’s opposition to India’s efforts to build a fence at five locations on the frontier, has come at a time when bilateral ties are at a fresh low since the

formation of a caretaker regime led by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus following the ouster of former premier Sheikh Hasina last August.

- The Indian side reiterated its commitment to “ensuring a crime-free border by effectively addressing the challenges of cross-border criminal activities, smuggling, movement of criminals and trafficking”.

### India and US to jointly produce sonobuoys for enhanced naval capabilities

- In a landmark development, India and the United States have announced a collaboration to co-produce sonobuoys, advanced underwater detection devices crucial for anti-submarine warfare and Undersea Domain Awareness (UDA).
- The initiative, part of an evolving defense partnership, aims to bolster the capabilities of the Indian Navy while enhancing interoperability between the two nations’ forces.
- Sonobuoys are small, expendable devices used in underwater acoustics to detect submarines and monitor other undersea activities.
- These devices are deployed from aircraft or ships with a floating radio transmitter and an underwater hydrophone.
- Once activated upon water impact, the hydrophone captures acoustic signals and transmits them via Very High Frequency (VHF) or Ultra High Frequency (UHF) radios for real-time analysis.
- The US Defence Innovation Unit and India’s Innovations for Defence Excellence are working to accelerate the adoption of cutting-edge commercial technologies for military applications.

### News in Short

- India and Spain will mark 2026 as the dual year to celebrate culture, tourism, and Artificial Intelligence (AI) in both countries.
- ISRO is reportedly planning to launch an American communications satellite this year that will allow phone calls using direct connectivity from space.

## FINANCE, ECONOMY & BANKING

### CBIC notifies rules for entities to get temporary GST identification number

- The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) has notified an amendment to GST rules to issue TIN to entities that are not required to register under the GST Act but need to make payments under some specific provision.
- This would ensure smooth tax payments while reducing the compliance burden on those who do not regularly engage in taxable activities.
- Under Goods and Services Tax (GST) rules, registration is mandatory for businesses with an annual turnover of ₹40 lakh and ₹20 lakh in the manufacturing and services sectors, respectively.

#### Key Points

CBIC's Chairman — Sanjay Kumar Agarwal

### Ramesh Chand Committee set to update WPI Base Year

- The Government of India constituted a Working Group under the Niti Aayog member, Ramesh Chand to revise the current series of Wholesale Price Index (WPI) from base 2011-12 to 2022-23.
- The working group would also examine the composition of, and the methodology for compilation of a new Producers' Price Index or PPI, that a technical advisory panel on Statistics of Prices and Cost of Living has approved.

### EPFO launches centralised pension payments system

- Retirement fund body EPFO has completed the Centralised Pension Payments System (CPPS) rollout in all its regional offices across the country which will benefit over 68 lakh pensioners.
- Under CPPS, a beneficiary will be able to withdraw a pension from any bank and there will be no need to visit the bank for verification at the time of commencement of pension, and the amount will be immediately credited upon release.
- The system will ensure the disbursement of pensions throughout India without any need for transfer of pension payment orders (PPO) from one office to another even when the pensioner moves from one location to another or changes his bank or branch

### RBI mandates 15-day credit score updates

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has mandated that all lenders must update credit bureau records every 15 days, effective January 1, 2025.
- This regulation aims to provide a more accurate and timely representation of borrowers' financial activities, ultimately transforming how credit scores are calculated and published.
- With these new bi-monthly updates, financial institutions will be able to report borrowers' activities much more frequently, which should help in providing a clearer picture of an individual's creditworthiness.

#### Key Points

RBI Governor — Sanjay Malhotra  
Headquarters — Mumbai

### Centre launches TEAM Initiative with 227 crores budget

- The Ministry of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) has introduced the MSME Trade Enablement and Marketing (TEAM) initiative to help small businesses embrace digital commerce.
- With a budget allocation of ₹277.35 crores over three years, the initiative aims to bring 5 lakh MSMEs onto the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC), enhancing their digital presence and market reach.
- The initiative will provide MSMEs with access to digital storefronts, payment solutions, and logistics support through the ONDC network, which is designed to reduce operational barriers and expand business opportunities.

#### Key Points

Union MSME Minister — Jitan Ram Manjhi  
MD & CEO, ONDC — T Koshy

### Punjab National Bank (PNB) launches India's First Real-Time NCRP Integration for enhanced cybercrime resolution

- Punjab National Bank (PNB) has become the first bank in India to go live with Clari5's cutting-edge NCRP Integration Solution, a breakthrough in real-time complaint management for the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre's (I4C) National Cybercrime Reporting Portal (NCRP).

- This milestone sets a new gold standard in fraud prevention and automated complaint resolution, reaffirming PNB's leadership in technological innovation and commitment to safeguarding customer interests.
- The Clari5 NCRP Integration Solution is a state-of-the-art platform that empowers banks to process cybercrime complaints seamlessly across all retail banking channels.

#### Key Points

|                  |   |               |
|------------------|---|---------------|
| CEO, Clari5      | — | Rivi Varghese |
| PNB MD & CEO     | — | Ashok Chandra |
| PNB Headquarters | — | Delhi         |

#### MobiKwik, Cred first non-banks to offer CBDC, launches e-rupee wallet

- Fintech platforms MobiKwik and Cred rolled out an e-rupee wallet for users on the platforms becoming the first non-banks to offer the Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC).
- The product was developed in collaboration with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and Yes Bank, which will function as the sponsor bank and enable CBDC issuance for Cred and MobiKwik.
- MobiKwik rolled out a 'full-scale production version' to its users. Meanwhile, Cred launched the beta version of the e-rupee wallet to select users.
- At present, Cred and MobiKwik are Third-Party Application Providers (TPAP) on India's real-time payment rails Unified Payment Interface (UPI). Currently, 15 banks offer CBDC wallets.

#### Key Points

|                             |   |                   |
|-----------------------------|---|-------------------|
| Co-founder and MD, MobiKwik | — | Bipin Preet Singh |
| Founder & CEO, Cred         | — | Kunal Shah        |

#### Government notifies appointment of 24 new members to NCLT

- In a significant move to enhance the functioning of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) has appointed 24 Judicial

and Technical Members to the tribunal's Principal Bench in New Delhi.

- The announcement marks a strategic step towards expediting corporate dispute resolutions and strengthening India's corporate governance framework.
- The new appointees include 11 Judicial Members and 13 Technical Members, who will serve a five-year tenure or until they reach the age of 65, whichever comes first.
- The appointments are expected to reduce pendency and fast-track resolutions, especially in cases under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) and the Companies Act.

#### Key Points

|                     |   |  |
|---------------------|---|--|
| Chairperson of NCLT | — | Chief Justice (Retd.)<br>Ramalingam Sudhakar |
|---------------------|---|--|

#### Sarla Aviation unveils India's first Evtol (Electric Vertical Take-off and Landing) air taxi 'Shunya'

- Sarla Aviation, a Bengaluru-based player in urban air mobility, introduced its innovative electric flying taxi, Shunya.
- The Shunya prototype is designed for short-distance commutes, capable of covering 20–30 km trips at speeds up to 250 km/h.
- With a capacity to carry six passengers and a maximum payload of 680 kg, it is currently touted as the eVTOL with the highest payload in its category.
- Sarla Aviation plans to bring its electric Vertical Take-Off and Landing (eVTOL) vehicles to the skies by 2028.

#### News in Short

- India currently ranks third globally in operational metro network length and is on track to become the second-largest metro network in the world. Blinkit recently launched a rapid-response ambulance service in Gurugram, to help deliver aid within ten minutes.
- SEBI (Securities and Exchange Board of India) introduced 'Dharohar-Milestones in the Indian Securities Market', a dynamic digital knowledge repository celebrating 150 years of India's securities market history.



## DEFENCE NEWS

**Goa Shipyard Ltd. launches two Indigenous fast patrol vessels for the Indian Coast Guard**

- Goa Shipyard Limited launched two Fast Patrol Vessels for the Indian Coast Guard. The vessels, Amulya and Akshay, were launched using the Shipyard's Ship-Lift System.
- The first two FPVs of the same series - Adama and Akshar – were launched in October 2024.
- With over 60% indigenous content, these state-of-the-art FPVs are designed in-house by GSL to meet ICG's specific operational needs.
- With a length of 52 metres and a displacement of 320 tonnes, these vessels will strengthen ICG in protecting offshore assets and island territories.
- Its primary role will be fisheries protection and monitoring island territories, exclusively economic zone and coastal patrol. Vessels shall also perform anti-smuggling, anti-piracy and search & rescue operations.

**Key Points**

|                                       |   |                             |
|---------------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| CMD of Goa Shipyard Ltd.              | — | Brajesh Kumar Upadhyay      |
| Director General ICG Headquarters ICG | — | Paramesh Sivamani New Delhi |

**DRDO launches multi-layer clothing system HIMKAVACH**

- The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has developed the 'HimKavach' clothing system to protect soldiers operating in extreme cold conditions.
- The system, designed to function in temperatures ranging from 20°C to -60°C, has passed all user trials in operational settings.
- The HimKavach system is made up of multiple layers, each tailored for insulation, breathability, and comfort. The modular design allows soldiers to add or remove layers depending on the weather. This feature is seen as critical for troops operating in the Himalayas, where temperatures can drop sharply.

**Key Points**

|                              |   |                           |
|------------------------------|---|---------------------------|
| DRDO's Headquarters Chairman | — | New Delhi Sameer V. Kamat |
|------------------------------|---|---------------------------|

**Indian Army uses SAMBHAV (Secure Army Mobile Bharat Version) smartphone for secure communication**

- Indian Army utilised its indigenously developed 'Sambhav' smartphones to ensure secure communication during border talks with China in October last year.
- The Sambhav smartphones, a product of collaboration between the Indian Army, academia, and industry, have been distributed to as many as 30,000 officers across the force.
- These devices are equipped with advanced encryption technology, ensuring that communications remain secure and free from eavesdropping.
- Sambhav smartphones have been integrated with indigenous satellite-based map systems, enabling precise navigation and strategic planning.
- On October 21, 2024, India and China reached a final understanding and later completed the disengagement of troops at the two remaining friction points of Demchok and Depsang in Eastern Ladakh.

**Key Points**

|                         |   |                         |
|-------------------------|---|-------------------------|
| Chief of the Army Staff | — | General Upendra Dwivedi |
|-------------------------|---|-------------------------|

**Govt. launches 'Bharat Ranbhoomi Darshan' application**

- In a historic move to showcase India's military heritage, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh unveiled the Bharat Ranbhoomi Darshan app.
- It was developed by the Ministry of Defence in collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism.
- This app opens the doors to India's most iconic battlefields, offering citizens a chance to explore the country's wartime history like never before.

**Indian Army celebrates 77<sup>th</sup> Army Day at Pune**

- The Indian Army celebrated its 77<sup>th</sup> Army Day at the Bombay Engineers Group and Centre Parade Ground in Pune, Maharashtra, on January 15, 2025.
- This marks the third occasion that the Army Day Parade was held outside Delhi, following the decision to bring this prestigious event to other parts of the country.

- In a remarkable first, two special contingents participated in the parade: the Women Agniveer Contingent from the Corps of Military Police, symbolising the increasing role of women in the Indian Army, and the Girl's NCC Contingent from Maharashtra Directorate. These contingents reflected the progress and inclusivity of the Indian Armed Forces.

#### **DRDO conducts a Scramjet Engine Ground Test**

- Defence Research & Development Laboratory (DRDL), a Hyderabad-based laboratory of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has taken the initiative in developing a long-duration Supersonic Combustion Ramjet or Scramjet-powered Hypersonic technology.
- DRDL recently developed these technologies and demonstrated a cutting-edge active-cooled Scramjet Combustor ground test for 120 seconds for the first time in India.
- Hypersonic missiles are a class of advanced weaponry that travel at speeds greater than Mach 5 i.e., five times the speed of sound or more than 5,400 km/h.
- These advanced weapons have the potential to bypass existing Air Defence Systems and deliver rapid and high-impact strikes. Several nations including the USA, Russia, India and China are actively pursuing Hypersonic technology.

#### **Indian Army builds two Bailey bridges to connect**

- The Indian Army inaugurated two newly constructed bailey bridges over the Shyok River, enhancing connectivity between the Shyok and Nubra valleys in the Union Territory of Ladakh.
- The bridges are located near Shatse Taknak in the Diskit sub-division of Leh and were constructed by the Fire and Fury Corps Engineers.
- The two bridges are 50 feet wide and 100 feet long. They reduce travel distance by approximately 40 km and cut travel time by around two hours for the farthest villages in the Nubra and Shyok valleys. These bridges are a significant boon to the local population, particularly during the harsh winter months, improving accessibility to essential services and fostering better connectivity for the villages in the Siachen region.

#### **Indian Navy commissions new Warships and Submarine**

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi dedicated to the nation three frontline naval combatants - INS Surat, INS

Nilgiri and INS Vaghsheer - on their commissioning at the Naval Dockyard in Mumbai, Maharashtra.

- It is for the first time that the tri-commissioning of a destroyer, frigate and submarine was being done.
- INS Surat, the fourth & final ship of the P15B Guided Missile Destroyer Project, ranks among the largest and most sophisticated destroyers in the world. It has an indigenous content of 75% and is equipped with state-of-the-art weapon-sensor packages and advanced network-centric capabilities.
- INS Nilgiri, the first ship of the P17A Stealth Frigate Project, has been designed by the Indian Navy's Warship Design Bureau and incorporates advanced features for enhanced survivability, seakeeping, and stealth, reflecting the next generation of indigenous frigates.
- INS Vaghsheer, the sixth and final submarine of the P75 Scorpene Project, represents India's growing expertise in submarine construction and has been constructed in collaboration with the Naval Group of France.

#### **Key Points**

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

#### **CISF gets two new battalions, total strength to touch 2 lakhs**

- The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) sanctioned the creation of two new battalions for the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), adding over 2,000 personnel to the force taking the total strength to 2 lakhs.
- The expansion, along with the recently approved Mahila Battalion, aims to strengthen national security and improve rapid response capabilities.
- These additions will bring the total number of CISF battalions from 13 to 15. The new reserve battalions will consist of 'personnel specifically trained and equipped who are experienced in handling security of high-security jails and other undertakings.

#### **Key Points**

CISF's Director General — Rajwinder Singh Bhatti  
Headquarters — New Delhi

#### **Indian army tests Bhargavastra micro-missile system**

- India has successfully tested the Bhargavastra, its first micro-missile system designed to counter swarm drones.

- The system, developed by Economic Explosives Ltd., can quickly deploy on a mobile platform and hit targets over 2.5 km.
- The new micro-missile system features simultaneous launch capability of over 64 micro missiles. Its design accommodates operations across various terrains, including high-altitude regions, meeting specific military requirements.

#### **SANJAY battlefield surveillance system**

- Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh flagged off 'SANJAY - The Battlefield Surveillance System (BSS)' from New Delhi.
- SANJAY is an automated system which integrates the inputs from all ground and aerial battlefield sensors, processing them to confirm their veracity, preventing duplication and fusing them to produce a Common Surveillance Picture of the battlefield over a secured Army Data Network & Satellite Communication Network.
- It will enhance battlefield transparency and transform the future battlefield through a Centralised Web Application which will provide inputs to Command & Army Headquarters, and the Indian Army Decision Support System.
- SANJAY has been indigenously & jointly developed by the Indian Army and Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) creating a conducive ecosystem towards achieving 'Aatmanirbharta' as a follow up to the Indian Army's 'Year of Technology Absorption'.

#### **India completes field evaluation trials of Indigenous missile Nag Mk 2**

- India completed the field evaluation trials of indigenously developed third-generation Anti-Tank Fire-and-Forget Guided Missile Nag Mk2 at Rajasthan's Pokhran Field Firing Range.
- The missile travels at a speed of 230 metres per second, enabling it to destroy enemy tanks up to 4 kilometres away within 17 to 18 seconds.
- The missile weighing approximately 45 kilograms and measuring 6 feet 1 inch can swiftly neutralise enemy tanks and armoured vehicles.
- It is equipped with infrared technology that locks onto targets before launch ensuring precision strikes and operates on advanced fire-and-forget technology eliminating the need for further guidance once launched. It is capable of functioning effectively in all weather conditions.

#### **Launch of INS Utkarsh**

- Utkarsh, the second of the two Multi-Purpose Vessels, being built by M/s L&T Shipyard for the Indian Navy, was launched.
- These Multi-Purpose Vessels will be capable of towing ships, launching and recovering various targets, operating unmanned autonomous vehicles, and serving as trial platforms for various indigenous weapons and sensors under development. The 106 m vessels are designed to achieve a maximum speed of 15 knots.

#### **MRSAM contract for the Indian Navy**

- India has signed a USD 340 million contract for the procurement of over 70 Medium-Range Surface-to-Air Missile (MRSAM) systems, developed in collaboration with Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI).
- The systems will be manufactured by Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL), IAI's partner in India, and will be deployed on a significant number of the Indian Navy's future warships.
- The MRSAM system, based on the Barak 8 air defence platform, is designed to counter a wide range of aerial threats, with an operational range of up to 70 kilometres.
- It includes a phased array radar, a command-and-control system, mobile launchers, and interceptors equipped with advanced sensors. The system is already in service with the Indian Navy, Army, and Air Force.

#### **News in Shorts**

- The Ministry of Defence decided to observe 2025 as the 'Year of Reforms' to transform the Armed Forces into a technologically advanced combat-ready force capable of multi-domain integrated operations.
- INS Sarvekshak completed the final phase of the hydrographic survey of Mauritius covering an extensive area of over 25,000 sq. nautical miles.
- L&T, India and KNDS France have jointly developed Tarjan, a 52-calibre towed gun system. It is a 155 mm towed artillery gun system. These artillery guns will be inducted by Armenia.
- Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) achieved a significant milestone in its flagship Combat Air Teaming System (CATS) programme with the successful completion of the engine ground run of a full-scale demonstrator, CATS-Warrior loyal wingman.

- The Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) Dhruv Advanced Light Helicopter (ALH) fleet has been temporarily grounded for the second time in two years following a series of crashes. This decision follows the January 5 incident in which an Indian Coast Guard ALH Dhruv Mk III crashed at Gujarat's Porbandar Airport, claiming the lives of three crew members.
- The Indian Ministry of Defence (MoD) has signed a ₹1,560.52 crore contract with the Heavy Vehicles Factory (HVF), a division of Armoured Vehicle Nigam Limited (AVNL), for the procurement of 47 T-72 Bridge-Laying Tanks (BLTs) for the Indian Army.

| Name of the Exercise | Countries/ Organisations                                     | Venue                     |
|----------------------|--|---------------------------|
| Devil Strike         | Indian Army's elite airborne troops and the Indian Air Force | Northern Borders of India |
| Surya Kiran          | India and Nepal  | Saljhandi, Nepal          |

## APPOINTMENTS

| Name                             | Designation  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Dr. V Narayanan                  | Chairman of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and Secretary of the Department of Space |
| Bhuvnesh Kumar                   | CEO of the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI)  |
| Manish Singhal                   | Secretary General of Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM)              |
| Azimul Haque                     | CEO of the Delhi Waqf Board  |
| Faiz Ahmed Kidwai                | Director-General (DG) of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA)                          |
| Ashish Naithani                  | Judge of Uttarakhand High Court  |
| Bahadur Singh Sagoo              | Athletics Federation of India (AFI), President   |
| Dhananjay Shukla                 | President of the Institute of Company Secretaries of India   |
| Justice Alok Aradhe              | Chief Justice of the Bombay High Court   |
| Rajesh Nirwan                    | Director General of Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS)                                       |
| Justice Devendra Kumar Upadhyaya | Chief Justice of the Delhi High Court  |
| Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar      | Governor of Kerala   |
| Arif Mohammad Khan               | Governor of Bihar  |
| Mahesh Kumar Aggarwal            | Additional Director General (ADG) of the Border Security Force (BSF)                               |
| Akhil Gupta                      | Chairman of Bharti AXA Life Insurance  |
| Neeraj Parakh                    | CEO and Executive Director of Reliance Power   |
| Manish Singhal                   | Secretary General, Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM)                |
| Sanjiv Ranjan                    | Secretary General of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)                                       |
| Gyanendra Pratap Singh           | Director General (DG) of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF)                                   |



|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| Arun Mishra           | Ombudsman and Ethics Officer of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) |
| Devajit Saikia        | Secretary of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI)                    |
| Prabhtej Singh Bhatia | Treasurer of the BCCI  |
| Donald Trump          | 47 <sup>th</sup> President of the United States                                  |
| James David Vance     | 50 <sup>th</sup> Vice President of the United States                             |
| Nicolas Maduro        | 46 <sup>th</sup> President of Venezuela  |
| General Joseph Aoun   | President of Lebanon   |
| Mike Johnson          | Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives                                     |
| Zoran Milanovic       | President of the Croatian Democratic Union                                       |

### BOOKS AND AUTHORS

| Books  | Authors          |
|--|------------------|
| How India Scaled Mt G20: The Inside Story of the G20 Presidency                      | Amitabh Kant     |
| The World After Gaza': A Guide to Challenging Times                                  | Pankaj Mishra    |
| Parliament: Powers, Functions & Privileges; A Comparative Constitutional Perspective | Dr. K.S. Chauhan |

### OBITUARIES (NATIONAL)

| Name                            | Occupation   |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Dr. K.S. Manilal                | Botanist   |
| Dr. Rajagopala Chidambaram      | Experimental physicists and the research groups, India's Nuclear Visionary |
| Pritish Nandy                   | Veteran journalist, filmmaker, poet, and former Rajya Sabha member         |
| H Lakshmanan                    | Executive director of Sundaram Clayton                                     |
| P. Jayachandran (Bhava Gayakan) | Renowned playback singer   |

### OBITUARIES (INTERNATIONAL)

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| Costas Simitis       | Former Greek Prime Minister (1996-2004) and leader of the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) |
| Shigemi Fukahori     | Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Survivor  |
| David Lynch          | Hollywood director and writer  |
| Denis Law (The King) | Iconic Manchester United and Scotland striker  |
| Tomiko Itooka        | World's oldest person (116 years)  |

### DAYS AND THEMES

| Date                | Day                                      | Theme  |
|---------------------|--|--|
| January 1           | Global Family Day                        |  |
| January 1- 31, 2025 | National Road Safety Month 2025          | Sadak Suraksha Jeevan Raksha   |
| January 4           | World Braille Day                        |  |
| January 5           | National Bird Day                        | Protecting Our Birds, Protecting Our Future  |
| January 6           | World Day for War Orphans                |  |
| January 8           | African National Congress Foundation Day |  |
| January 9           | Pravasi Bharatiya Divas                  |  |
| January 10          | World Hindi Day                          | A Global Voice of Unity and Cultural Pride   |
| January 12          | National Youth Day                       |  |
| January 15          | Indian Army Day                          | Samarth Bharat, Saksham Sena   |
| January 16          | National Startup Day                     |  |
| January 16          | Lokpal Day, India                        |  |
| January 18          | National Immunisation Day                |  |
| January 20          | Penguin Awareness Day                    |  |
| January 23          | Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Jayanti       |  |
| January 24          | National Girl Child Day                  | Empowering Girls for a Bright Future   |
| January 25          | International Day of Education           | Artificial Intelligence (AI) and education: Preserving human agency in a world of automation |
| January 25          | National Voter's Day                     | Nothing Like Voting, I Vote for Sure   |
| January 25          | National Tourism Day                     | Tourism for Inclusive Growth   |
| January 26          | Republic Day (India)                     |  |
| January 26          | International Customs Day                |  |
| January 27          | International Holocaust Remembrance Day  | Holocaust remembrance and education for dignity and human rights                             |
| January 27          | National Geographic Day                  |  |
| January 28          | Data Privacy Day                         | Privacy in the Age of Artificial Intelligence (AI)   |
| January 30          | Martyr's Day                             |  |
| January 30          | World Leprosy Day                        | Unite. Act. Eliminate  |
| January 31          | International Zebra Day                  |  |

### REPORTS, RANKINGS AND INDEX

#### Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+) Report 2023-24

- The Ministry of Education released the Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+)

2023-24 Report on School Education.

- For the first time, the national level individual student-wise data was collected from all recognised schools in the country through UDISE+ since 2022-23.

- The total student enrolment decreased to 24.8 crore in 2023-24, a drop of over one crore compared to the previous years. This marks a 6% decline from the 26.02 crore recorded in 2018-19.
- The highest drop in enrolments was seen in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra. For boys, the enrolment fell from 13.53 crore in 2018-19 to 12.87 crore in 2023-24, a 4.87% decline. For girls, the enrolment decreased from 12.49 crore in 2018-19 to 11.93 crore in 2023-24, a 4.48% decline.

#### Assam's Elephant population surges in 2024

- Assam recorded an elephant population of 5,828 during the Elephant Population Estimation 2024 conducted by the state forest department, an increase from the last such survey in 2017 with 5,719 elephants.
- The population includes 3,044 adults, 1,042 sub-adults, 717 juveniles and 1,025 calves.
- The estimation was conducted in all 43 forest divisions in Assam.
- It states that 82% of the total population – or 4,777 elephants – are within the five elephant reserves: Sonitpur, Dehing-Patkai, Kaziranga-Karbi Anglong, and Dhansiri-Lungding in the state.
- The highest elephant density is in the Chirang-Ripu Elephant Reserve.

#### Logistics Ease Across Different States (LEADS) 2024

- The Union Minister of Commerce & Industry, Piyush Goyal released the "Logistics Ease Across Different States (LEADS) 2024" report in New Delhi.
- In LEADS 2024, the report evaluates logistics performance across four key pillars: Logistics Infrastructure, Logistics Services, Operating and Regulatory Environment, and the newly introduced Sustainable Logistics.
- LEAPS 2024 showcases leadership and innovation within the logistics sector, celebrating exceptional contributions through a transparent evaluation process backed by a comprehensive and rigorous assessment.

#### Performance Highlights of LEADS 2024

##### Coastal Group

Achievers: Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Odisha, Tamil Nadu

Fast Movers: Andhra Pradesh, Goa

Aspirers: Kerala, West Bengal

##### Landlocked Group

Achievers: Haryana, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand  
Fast Movers: Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Rajasthan

Aspirers: Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand

##### North-Eastern Group

Achievers: Assam, Arunachal Pradesh

Fast Movers: Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura

Aspirers: Manipur

##### Union Territories

Achievers: Chandigarh, Delhi

Fast Movers: Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, Jammu and Kashmir, Lakshadweep, Puducherry

Aspirers: Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Ladakh

#### India in QS World Future Skills Index

- India was ranked 25<sup>th</sup> and categorised as a 'future skills contender' in the Future Skills Index. It excels in the 'future of work' metric, achieving the second-highest global score of 99.1, just behind the United States, which tops the chart with a perfect 100, aided by Silicon Valley and curriculum-adaptive universities.
- The index evaluates how well countries are prepared to meet the evolving demands of the global job market.
- The inaugural edition of the QS World Future Skills Index was published by the UK-based higher education firm QS, which evaluates countries' readiness to meet evolving global job market demands.
- The QS World Future Skills Index classifies economies into four categories based on their performance: aspiring, practitioner, contender, and pioneer. The index evaluated countries using four key indicators-
  - I. Skills fit (alignment between education systems and industry requirements)
  - II. Academic readiness (capacity of education systems to deliver forward-looking skills),
  - III. Future of work (job market's ability to recruit for in-demand skills), and
  - IV. Economic transformation (readiness for skills-driven economic growth).

#### NITI Aayog launches the "Fiscal Health Index 2025"

- NITI Aayog launched the inaugural 'Fiscal Health Index 2025' that provides a comprehensive assessment of the fiscal health of 18 major States, based on five key sub-indices: Quality of Expenditure, Revenue Mobilisation, Fiscal Prudence, Debt Index, and Debt Sustainability,

along with insights into state-specific challenges and areas for improvement.

- The report ranks States on the basis of composite fiscal index, which is based on five major sub-indices viz, quality of expenditure, revenue mobilisation, fiscal

prudence, debt index, and debt sustainability.

- With a cumulative score of 67.8, Odisha tops the ranking in fiscal health among 18 major States, followed by Chhattisgarh and Goa with scores of 55.2 and 53.6, respectively.

## EVENTS

### Gujarat hosts the first Olympic Research Conference

- The first International Olympic Research Conference was held at Rashtriya Raksha University, Gandhinagar, Gujarat from January 27–30, 2025.
- The Indian Olympic Association organised the event to address financial challenges and create a sustainable roadmap for hosting the Olympics.

### Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention 2025

- The eighteenth Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention (PBD), 2025 was held in partnership with the Government of Odisha in Bhubaneswar, Odisha from 8 to 10 January 2025.
- The theme for this year is the “Diaspora’s contribution to a Viksit Bharat” (Developed India).
- This was the first PBD to be held in Eastern India. This approach is in line with the Government of India’s focus on ‘Purvodaya’.
- It is the flagship event of the Ministry of External Affairs. Since 2015, it has evolved into a biennale event.

### Toda Tribe celebrates Modhweth Festival

- The Toda tribe, one of the oldest Dravidian ethnic groups residing in the Nilgiris Hills of Tamil Nadu, celebrated their traditional ‘Modhweth’ festival to mark the New Year.
- The festivities were held at Muthanad Mund, the tribe’s community headquarters, bringing together members of all ages for the vibrant occasion.
- The celebration began with prayers at their temple, seeking blessings for health, agricultural prosperity, and the well-being of their cattle. A shared buttermilk ritual followed, symbolising unity within the community.

### Boda Tyohar Festival

- The vibrant Boda Tyohar festival, the largest annual celebration for the Hatti tribes of the Trans-Giri region in Himachal Pradesh commenced on the eve of Posh Dwadashi.

- It is locally known as Magho ko Tyohar and is a month-long festival.
- It is distinguished by its division into three distinct mini-festivals, each marked by its unique customs and rituals.
- The first day of festivities is known as Bodhto. The celebrations continue the following day at the ‘Sanjha Angan’, a communal courtyard that is typically owned by the village head or ‘Siyana’. In several villages, the festivities begin at temples dedicated to ‘Kul Devtas’ like Shirgul Maharaj, Bijat Maharaj, Mahasu Maharaj, and Thari Devi, a tradition that has been followed for centuries. This day is known as Bhatioj. On Bhatioj, after a communal meal, villagers gather in the evening at the Sanjha Angan with traditional musical instruments, engaging in singing and dancing that continues until the early hours of the following day.
- The next morning, men visit their married sisters, bearing gifts of meat, jaggery, and wheat flour, known as Saje ka Duna. The sisters, in turn, visit their parental homes to collect their share of the meat.
- The festival will culminate at the end of the ‘Magha’ month.

### Kanuma Panduga Festival

- The Kanuma Festival is an important event that celebrates cattle worship. It is observed on the third day of Makar Sankranti and is celebrated in the southern states of India, especially in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana.
- On this auspicious day, farmers begin their days early by bathing, ornamenting their cattle and painting their horns. The decorated cattle are then brought to surrounding temples for worship.

### Kolkata’s ‘Boi Mela’, India’s oldest book fair

- The 48<sup>th</sup> International Kolkata Book Fair 2025 is scheduled from 28 January to 9 February 2025 at Salt Lake City, Kolkata.



- It is organised by the National Council of Education (NCE).
- It is the world's largest non-trade book fair, and Asia's largest book fair.

#### Pangsau Pass Festival 2025

- The Pangsau Pass International Festival (PPIF) 2025, was held in Nampong, Arunachal Pradesh.
- During the festival, visitors from both India and Myanmar were able to enter up to 16 km inside each other's territory under the free movement regime (FMR) that enables entry without visas and passports.
- Originally launched in 2007, the festival was conceived to reinvigorate the historic Stillwell Road and enhance economic relationships between Myanmar and the northeastern states under the Centre's Look East Policy. However, the global COVID-19 pandemic and political instability in Myanmar forced a suspension of the event in 2020.

#### Full Kiswah to be displayed outside Mecca

- For the first time, the full Kiswah will be displayed outside Mecca. Kiswah is made of black silk and embroidered with passages from the Koran in gold thread.
- For centuries, the Kaaba — the cube-shaped building that draws the faithful from all over the world — has

been sheathed with a new Kiswah every year during the Hajj pilgrimage.

- The old one is usually put away in a warehouse; sometimes, it is divided into sections for the Saudi government to give as gifts.
- However, this time it will be the central element of the Islamic Arts Biennale 2025 that begins in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia on January 25.

#### News in Short

- The Uttar Pradesh government organised the 'Sanskriti Utsava' from January 2 to January 26, 2025, to celebrate the state's foundation day, aiming to discover and promote talent in classical, semi-classical, and folk arts, with various competitions spanning multiple levels across the state.
- The Flamingo Festival 2025 concluded at the Nelapattu Bird Sanctuary in Tirupati district, Andhra Pradesh, drawing thousands of students, bird enthusiasts, and tourists from across the region.
- India will host the 28<sup>th</sup> Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of Parliaments of Commonwealth Countries (CSPOC) in 2026. This event will focus on leveraging artificial intelligence (AI) and social media to enhance parliamentary operations, reflecting India's commitment to modernising governance.

## AWARDS

#### Golden Globe Awards 2025

The 82<sup>nd</sup> Golden Globe Awards 2025 were held at the Beverly Hilton Hotel in Beverley Hills, California, US. They honoured the best in the television and film categories. Comedian actress Nikki Glaser was the host.

- Best female actor in a supporting role in a film - Zoe Saldana, Emilia Perez
- Best female actor in a television series (Musical or Comedy) - Jean Smart, Hacks
- Best male actor in a supporting role in a film - Kieran Culkin, A Real Pain
- Best male actor in a television series (Drama) - Hiroyuki Sanada, Shogun
- Best supporting female actor on television - Jessica Gunning, Baby Reindeer
- Best supporting male actor on television - Tadanobu Asano, Shogun
- Best male actor in a television series - Jeremy Allen White, The Bear
- Best screenplay - film - Peter Straughan, Conclave
- Best standup comedy on television - Ali Wong, Ali Wong: Single Lady
- Best film (non-English language) - Emilia Perez (Payal Kapadia's directorial venture 'All We Imagine As Light' was nominated for the Best Motion Picture in the Non-English Feature category.)
- Best male actor in television limited series, anthology or television film - Colin Farrell, The Penguin
- Best female actor in television limited series, anthology or television film - Jodie Foster, True Detective: Night Country
- Best female actor in a film (musical or comedy) - Demi Moore, The Substance
- Best male actor in a film (musical or comedy) - Sebastian Stan, A Different Man

- Best film (animated) - Flow
- Best director (film) - Brady Corbet, The Brutalist
- Best original score (film) - Challengers
- Best original song (film) - El Mal, Emilia Perez
- Cinematic and box office achievement - Wicked

### Urbasi Sinha wins the Gates-Cambridge Impact Prize 2025

- Professor Urvashi Sinha, a faculty member of light and matter physics at the Raman Research Institute (RRI), was awarded the Gates-Cambridge Impact Prize 2025 by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Cambridge, UK, for her contributions to quantum computing and science.
- RRI was founded by Nobel laureate Sir CV Raman in 1948.
- The Gates-Cambridge Impact Prize is a joint award by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the University of Cambridge. The award honors individuals who have made significant contributions in the field of scientific research, technological innovation, or social change.

### Christine Carla Kangaloo receives Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award

- Christine Carla Kangaloo, President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago was awarded Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award in recognition of her outstanding achievements in public affairs and her contribution in enhancing India's global reputation.
- The Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award is the highest honour for overseas Indians.

### Kappad and Chal Beaches receive the prestigious Blue Flag certification

- Kappad beach in Kozhikode and Chal beach in Kannur, Kerala were bestowed with the coveted Blue Flag certification by the Denmark-based Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE) for meeting stringent environmental and safety standards.
- FEE gives the award to beaches, marinas, and boating operators which meet 33 criteria that also include sustainable and safety practices.

### Joe Biden awards Pope Francis Presidential Medal of Freedom with Distinction

- Outgoing US President Joe Biden spoke with Pope Francis and awarded him the Presidential Medal of

Freedom with Distinction, the nation's highest civilian honour.

- It was the first time during his four years in office that Biden awarded the medal "with distinction."
- The Presidential Medal of Freedom is presented to individuals who have made exemplary contributions to the prosperity, values, or security of the US, world peace, or other significant societal, public or private endeavours.

### US's Presidential Medal of Freedom 2025

- Outgoing US President Joe Biden awarded the Medal of Freedom to 19 people, including civil rights icons such as the late Fannie Lou Hamer and prominent political leaders such as former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and billionaire Democratic fundraiser George Soros.
- He also honoured actors and athletes, including Michael J. Fox, and Denzel Washington as well as Argentine soccer star Lionel Messi and Earvin "Magic" Johnson, the retired basketball star who led the Los Angeles Lakers to five championships.

### National Sports Awards 2024

The Union Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs announce the National Sports Awards every year and these are given to the winners by the President of India in a special ceremony. The awards are as follows:

Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award- It is given for the spectacular and most outstanding performance in the field of sports by a sportsperson over the previous four years.

- I. Gukesh D - Chess
- II. Harmanpreet Singh - Hockey
- III. Praveen Kumar - Para-Athletics
- IV. Ms. Manu Bhaker - Shooting

Arjuna Awards for Outstanding Performance in Sports and Games 2024- It is given for good performance over a period of the previous four years and for showing qualities of leadership, sportsmanship and a sense of discipline.

#### Athletics

- I. Jyothi Yarraji
- II. Annu Rani

#### Boxing

- I. Nitu
- II. Saweety

#### Chess

- I. Vantika Agrawal

**Hockey**

- I. Salima Tete
- II. Abhishek
- III. Sanjay
- IV. Jarmanpreet Singh
- V. Sukhjeet Singh

**Para-Archery**

- I. Rakesh Kumar

**Para-Athletics**

- I. Preeti Pal
- II. Jeevanji Deepthi
- III. Ajeet Singh
- IV. Sachin Sarjerao Khilari
- V. Dharambir
- VI. Pranav Soorma
- VII. H Hokato Sema
- VIII. Simran
- IX. Navdeep

**Para-Badminton**

- I. Nitesh Kumar
- II. Thulasimathi Murugesan
- III. Nithya Sre Sumathy Sivan
- IV. Manisha Ramadass

**Para-Judo**

Kapil Parmar

**Para-Shooting**

- I. Mona Agarwal
- II. Rubina Francis

**Shooting**

- I. Swapnil Suresh Kusale
- II. Sarabjot Singh

**Squash**

- I. Abhay Singh

**Swimming**

- I. Sajan Prakash

**Wrestling**

- I. Aman

**Arjuna Awards (Lifetime) for Outstanding Performance in Sports and Games 2024:** It is given to honour and motivate those sportspersons who have contributed to sports by their performance and continue to contribute to promotion of sports even after their retirement from active sporting career.

- I. Sucha Singh - Athletics
- II. Murlikant Rajaram Petkar - Para-Swimming

**Dronacharya Award for Outstanding Coaches in Sports and Games:** It is given for outstanding coaches in Sports and Games' is given to coaches for doing outstanding and meritorious work on a consistent basis and for enabling sportspersons to excel in International events.

**Regular Category**

- I. Subhash Rana - Para-Shooting
- II. Deepali Deshpande - Shooting
- III. Sandeep Sangwan - Hockey

**Lifetime Category**

- I. S Muralidharan - Badminton
- II. Armando Agnelo Colaco - Football

**Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Puraskar 2024**

- I. Physical Education Foundation of India

**Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (MAKA) Trophy 2024:** Overall top performing university in Khelo India University Games

- I. Chandigarh University

**Odia Poet Pratiba Satpathy to Receive Gangadhar National Award**

- Odia poet Pratibha Satpathy was conferred with the Gangadhar National Award for Poetry-2023 during the 58<sup>th</sup> foundation day celebration of Sambalpur University.
- The award, instituted in memory of poet Gangadhar Meher (1862-1924), honours distinguished Indian poets annually.

**INCOIS honoured with Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar-2025**

- The Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) has been awarded the Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar 2025 in the Institutional Category for its outstanding work in disaster management.
- It is an annual award given on January 23, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose's birth anniversary. It carries a reward of ₹51 lakh for institutions and ₹5 lakh for individuals.
- INCOIS was established in 1999, Hyderabad, Telangana and is integral to India's disaster management strategy, specialising in early alerts for ocean-related hazards.

### News In Shorts

- Renowned mridangist T.V. Gopalakrishnan will receive the R.K. Srikantan Trust Award during the Sankranti Music Fest.
- Anuja, a film backed by Guneet Monga and Priyanka Chopra, has secured a nomination in the Best Live Action Short Film category for the 97<sup>th</sup> Academy Awards.
- Eminent director Aparna Sen was honoured with the 'Satyajit Ray Lifetime Achievement Award' at

the annual award ceremony of the West Bengal Film Journalists Association for her contributions to Indian cinema.

- Jammu and Kashmir's Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, was honoured with the Maharaja Hari Singh Award at a ceremony in Jammu.
- Veteran director-writer Sai Paranjpe will be honoured with the Padmapani Lifetime Achievement Award at the Ajanta-Ellora International Film Festival 2025.

## SPORTS NEWS

### Smriti Mandhana hits India's fastest century in women's ODIs

- Smriti Mandhana smashed the fastest century by an Indian in Women's ODIs in just 70 balls in the India vs Ireland Women's third ODI in Rajkot, Gujarat.
- The previous record was held by Harmanpreet Kaur, who made a century of 87 balls.
- Smriti was also the first Indian to smash 10 centuries in the ODI format.

### India Open 2025 (Yonex Sunrise India Open 2025)

- It was a badminton tournament that took place in New Delhi.

| Name of the winner                         | Category        |
|--|-----------------|
| Viktor Axelsen, Denmark                    | Men's singles   |
| An Se-young, South Korea                   | Women's singles |
| Goh Sze Fei and Nur Izzuddin, Malaysia     | Men's doubles   |
| Arisa Igarashi and Ayako Sakuramoto, Japan | Women's doubles |
| Jiang Zhen Bang and Wei Ya Xin, China      | Mixed Doubles   |

### Australian Open (Tennis)

- Jannik Sinner from Italy successfully defended his Australian Open crown after defeating Alexander Zverev of Germany.
- At the age of 23, Sinner became the youngest male player since Jim Courier to win consecutive Australian Open titles (1992-1993).

### Novak Djokovic breaks Roger Federer's all-time Grand Slam record

- Novak Djokovic of Serbia defeated Jaime Faria of Portugal in their second-round match at the Australian Open.
- This was Djokovic's 430<sup>th</sup> grand slam match in singles throughout his career, having started his grand slam journey in 2005 and still going strong at the age of 37.
- With this, Djokovic became the player with the most singles matches played in grand slam tennis. Roger Federer played 429 matches.

### Kho Kho World Cup 2025

- India hosted the inaugural edition of the Kho Kho World Cup at the Indira Gandhi Indoor (IGI) Stadium in New Delhi.
- There were 21 men's and 20 women's teams participating in the tournament.
- The mascots of the tournament are Tejas and Tara. Tejas symbolises brilliance and energy, depicted in blue. Tara represents guidance and aspiration, depicted in orange.
- Indian men's team beat Nepal 54-36 in the final to win the inaugural Kho Kho World Cup title. Pratik Waikar was the captain of the Indian Kho Kho team.
- Indian women's team beat Nepal 78-40 in the final to win the inaugural Kho Kho World Cup title. Priyanka Ingle was the captain of the Indian Kho Kho team.
- The World Cup was held in New Delhi.

### Jay Shah and Sourav Ganguly were inducted into World Cricket Advisory Board

- ICC chairman Jay Shah and former India captain Sourav Ganguly have been inducted into the newly



instituted World Cricket Connects Advisory Board.

- The board is expected to discuss the many challenges and opportunities in the sport during a discussion at the Lord's in June.
- The Connects Board replaces the MCC World Cricket Committee, and many of the areas of the global game which were debated and influenced as part of its remit will now be included and discussed by the Connects Board.

#### **Lionel Messi becomes the first men's footballer to win the US Presidential Medal of Freedom**

- Lionel Messi was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian honour in the United States of America.
- The medal is presented to individuals who have contributed to the prosperity, values, or security of the United States, world peace, or other significant societal, public or private endeavours.
- He became the first men's footballer (soccer player) to win the award and the second from the sport after Megan Rapinoe, who won it in 2022.

#### **Khelo India Winter Games 2025**

- The Khelo India Winter Games 2025 commenced with great enthusiasm at the iconic NDS Stadium in Leh, Ladakh. The first phase of the event was hosted by the Union Territory of Ladakh.
- Nineteen teams, comprising states, Union Territories and institutional outfits like the Army and ITBP, are competing. A total of 594 participants, of which 428 are athletes, are involved in the Ladakh leg of KIWG 2025. This is the second time Ladakh is hosting the Winter Games, into its fifth edition.
- Ladakh topped the medal tally with seven medals, including four golds. It was followed by Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra.

#### **ICC Women's Championship**

- Australia won the ICC Women's Championship after defeating New Zealand. The team was led by Australian captain Alyssa Healy.
- They have won this trophy for the third consecutive time.

#### **ICC Awards**

| Name of the winner                      | Category                |
|---|-------------------------|
| ICC Women's Cricketer of the Year Award | Melie Kerr, New Zealand |

|  |                                 |
|--|---------------------------------|
| ICC Men's Cricketer of the Year Award      | Jasprit Bumrah                  |
| ICC Men's Test Cricketer of the Year       | Jasprit Bumrah                  |
| ICC Women's ODI Cricketer of the Year      | Smriti Mandhana, India          |
| ICC Men's ODI Cricketer of the Year        | Azamtullah Omarzai, Afghanistan |
| ICC Women's T20I Cricketer of the Year     | Melie Kerr, New Zealand         |
| ICC Men's T20I Cricketer of the Year       | Arshdeep Singh, India           |
| ICC Emerging Women's Cricketer of the Year | Annerie Dercksen, South Africa  |
| ICC Emerging Men's Cricketer of the Year   | Kamindu Mendis, Sri Lanka       |

#### **Women's Hockey League**

- Odisha Warriors won the inaugural Women's Hockey India League (HIL) title after defeating Soorma Hockey Club with a 2-1 score.
- The match was held at the Marang Gomke Jaipal Singh Stadium in Ranchi, Jharkhand.

#### **Anju Bobby George named Chairperson of AFI's Athletes Commission**

- Long jump great Anju Bobby George was named chairperson of the Athletics Federation of India, Athletes Commission.
- It is a nine-member commission which features six women. The other women in the new panel are runner Jyotirmoyee Sikdar, discus thrower Krishna Poonia, hurdler MD Valsamma, steeplechaser Sudha Singh, and runner Sunita Rani.
- Two-time Olympic medal-winning Neeraj Chopra is one of the four nominated members after consultations by the AFI's executive council.
- The other two male members of the commission are 3000-m steeplechaser Avinash Sable and newly-elected AFI president Bahadur Singh Sagoo, a shot-put gold medal winner at the 2002 Asian Games.

#### **Key Points**

- President, AFI — Bahadur Singh Sagoo
- Headquarters — New Delhi

**West Bengal wins Santosh Trophy title**

- West Bengal won the Santosh Trophy with a 1-0 win over Kerala. This is the 33<sup>rd</sup> trophy for West Bengal.
- The final of the 78<sup>th</sup> edition of the Santosh Trophy 2024-25 was played at the GMC Balayogi Stadium in Hyderabad, Telangana.
- Santosh Trophy is a premier domestic state-level football tournament for men in India organised by the All-India Football Federation.

**PV Sindhu partners with Puma India**

- Indian shuttler PV Sindhu has become the first badminton player to endorse Puma India by signing a partnership with the leading German sportswear manufacturer.
- She is the first two-time Olympic medallist and the first woman shuttler to achieve this feat from India.

**QUICK POINTS (NEWS IN SHORT)**

- Shreyas Iyer was named the captain of the Punjab Kings for the next season of the Indian Premier League.
- Manush Shah and Diya Chitale won the men's and women's singles titles, respectively, at the Senior National Table Tennis Championships 2025 at the Pandit Dindayal Upadhyay Indoor Stadium in Surat, Gujarat.
- India will host the FIDE Chess World Cup 2025 from October 31 to November 27, 2025.
- Indian grandmaster Arjun Erigaisi won the weekly blitz competition conducted by Chess.com, beating the World No. 1 Magnus Carlsen and World No. 2 Fabiano Caruana.
- Indian Grandmaster Iniyar Panneerselvam clinched the ninth Johor International Open chess tournament by beating Vietnamese GM Nguyen Van Huy. The tournament was held in Malaysia.
- Karnataka won its fifth Vijay Hazare Trophy 2024-25 by defeating Vidarbha by 36 runs in the final at Kotambi Stadium, Vadodara.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the 38<sup>th</sup> National Games at the Maharana Pratap Sports Complex in Dehradun, Uttarakhand. Events will be held across seven cities of the hill state with Dehradun being the main venue.

