

WEEKLY
CURRENT
AFFAIRS
PDFs



March 2025



A Complete and Comprehensive Current Affairs
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NATIONAL AFFAIRS / GOVERNMENT SCHEME**1. Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal Launches New Maritime Initiatives to Enhance India's Global Trade.**

On February 27, 2025, Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal, Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways (MoPSW), launched several initiatives, including One Nation-One Port Process (ONOP), Bharat Global Ports Consortium, and the MAITRI Application (App), aimed at modernizing India's maritime infrastructure and enhancing its position in global trade.

- These announcements were made during a stakeholder meeting in Mumbai (Maharashtra) focused on opportunities outlined in the Union Budget 2025-26 for the maritime sector.

Key Points:-

(i) The ONOP initiative was launched to streamline processes with Immigration, the Port Health Organization (PHO), and Port Authorities. It aims to reduce container documentation by 33% (from 143 to 96) and bulk cargo documents by 29% (from 150 to 106), addressing inefficiencies, costs, and operational delays.

(ii) The consortium comprises India Ports Global Limited (IPGL) in Mumbai (Maharashtra), Sagarmala Development Company Limited (SDCL) in New Delhi (Delhi), and India Port Rail & Ropeway Corporation Limited (IPRCL) in New Delhi. It aims to enhance India's global port connectivity and trade infrastructure.

(iii) The MAITRI Application (Master Application for International Trade and Regulatory Interface) was launched to streamline trade processes, reduce bureaucratic redundancies, and expedite clearances, improving efficiency in India's

maritime sector.

2. MOSPI's TUS 2024 Reveals Women Spend 71 Minutes Daily on Employment-Related Activities.

In February 2025, the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MOSPI) released the 2nd edition of the all-India Time Use Survey (TUS) conducted during January-December 2024 by the National Statistics Office (NSO) under MoSPI.

- As per TUS 2024, the time spent by women in 'employment-related activities' was 71 minutes per day in 2024, which is 10 minutes more compared to TUS 2019.

- Meanwhile, the time spent by men in 'employment-related activities' increased from 263 minutes (in TUS 2019) to 287 minutes (in TUS 2024).

Key Points:-

(i) The survey showed that 75% of males and 25% of females in the age group of 15-59 years participated in employment and related activities during a 24-hour day in 2024, compared to 70.9% for males and 21.8% for females in 2019.

(ii) The time spent by female participants aged 15-59 years in unpaid domestic service declined from 315 minutes (in 2024) to 305 minutes (in 2019), signifying a shift from unpaid to paid activities.

3. CSE and DTE Unveil 12th Edition of State of India's Environment Report 2025.

In February 2025, the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) based in New Delhi, Delhi, and Down To Earth (DTE) Magazine released the 12th

edition of the Annual State of India's Environment Report 2025.

- The report was launched at the Anil Agarwal Dialogue 2025, held at the Anil Agarwal Environment Training Institute in Nimli, Rajasthan.
- The State of India's Environment Report 2025 provides a comprehensive analysis of key environmental developments and challenges faced by India.
- The report was officially released by Sunita Narain, Director General (DG) of CSE, alongside notable figures such as India's G20 Sherpa Amitabh Kant, former Planning Commission Deputy Chairperson Montek Singh Ahluwalia, and management expert Raj Liberhan.

Key Points:-

- (i) The report highlights rising temperatures, increasing extreme weather events, air pollution, and biodiversity loss. It also marks the 40th anniversary of the Bhopal Gas Tragedy.
- (ii) 140,000 new chemicals have been introduced into the environment, with 220 billion tonnes released annually, including 65 kg of cancer-causing substances per second. India uses 255,000 tonnes of pesticides yearly, raising health and ecological concerns.
- (iii) India faced 255 days of extreme weather in 2024, damaging 3.2 million hectares of farmland. 2024 was the hottest year ever recorded, with global temperatures 1.60°C above pre-industrial levels.

4. Rajasthan Launches SSBY, Offering Rs 1.3 Lakh Accident Insurance Cover to School Students.

In February 2025, Madan Dilawar, the Education and Panchayati Raj Minister of Rajasthan, launched the 'Shiksha Sanjeevani Bima Yojana (SSBY)' during a special event held at Residency Girls Higher Secondary School in Udaipur, Rajasthan.

- This is the first-of-its-kind scheme that aims to provide personal accident insurance coverage ranging from Rs 1 lakh to Rs 1.30 lakh to students in government schools.
- Initially, the scheme will cover schools in the Udaipur Division of Rajasthan.
- The scheme offers insurance coverage in case of accidental death or injury to students. It also provides insurance coverage in case of accidental death of a student's parent.

Key Points:-

- (i) Wonder Cement, Zurich Kotak General Insurance, and State Bank of India (SBI) are partners in the Shiksha Sanjeevani Bima Yojana.
- (ii) The state government plans to eventually expand the scheme, with the goal of benefiting approximately 1 crore school children across the state.

5. PM Narendra Modi Inaugurates Advantage Assam 2.0 Investment & Infrastructure Summit in Guwahati, Assam.

In February 2025, Prime Minister (PM) of India, Narendra Modi inaugurated the two-day Advantage Assam 2.0 Investment & Infrastructure Summit at Khanpara locality, Guwahati, Assam, held from February 25 to 26. Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia announced major initiatives to improve

digital connectivity in Northeast India during the Advantage Assam 2.0 Summit.

- **Union Minister Scindia announced the launch of a 5G Laboratory (Lab) at Gauhati University in Guwahati, to promote research and skill development in advanced telecom technologies, supporting cost-effective testing and future 6G advancements.**
- **The Ministry of Communications (MoC) is investing Rs 1,800 crore through Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL), based in New Delhi, to expand 4th Generation (4G) and 5th Generation (5G) connectivity across Northeast (NE) India, including remote villages in Assam.**
- **Under the Samridhi Gram Yojana, each block in Assam will have a 5G Use Application Service to support telemedicine and online education.**

Key Points:-

- (i) Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal, Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways (MoPSW), announced an investment of over Rs 4,800 crore to boost Assam's inland waterways sector during the Advantage Assam 2.0 Summit.
- (ii) Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) based in Mumbai, Maharashtra, Vedanta Limited also based in Mumbai, and the Adani Group based in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, have pledged to invest over Rs 1.5 lakh crore in Assam across various sectors, as announced by their respective leaders at the Advantage Assam 2.0 Summit.

6. Gujarat Recently Led India with 19,020 Hectares of Mangrove Plantation in Two Years Under the 'MISHTI' Scheme.

In February 2025, Gujarat recently emerged as the national leader in mangrove afforestation by planting mangroves across approximately 19,020 hectares at a cost of over Rs 76 crore under the Mangrove Initiative for Shoreline Habitats and Tangible Incomes (MISHTI) scheme.

- **Gujarat remains determined to environmental conservation, aligning with the vision of 'Viksit Gujarat to Viksit Bharat.'** This determination has positioned Gujarat at the leading edge of the Central Government's MISHTI scheme implementation.
- **Gujarat's mangrove environment is strategically placed, with Kutch leading the charge at 799 square kilometers (sq km).**

Key Points:-

- (i) In 2023, the Government of India (GoI) recently launched the MISHTI scheme on the occasion of World Environment Day (June 5) to increase mangrove forests across coastal states and Union Territories (UTs), ensuring a sustainable future for both communities and ecosystems.
- (ii) The GoI aims to plant 540 sq km of mangroves in five years under the 'MISHTI' scheme.
- (iii) The scheme was recently implemented by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC).

7. NITI Aayog Report: Women's Credit Monitoring Jumps 42% to Reach 27 Million in 2024.

On March 3, 2025, the Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP) of the National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog, in collaboration with TransUnion CIBIL Limited (formerly Credit Information Bureau (India) Limited) and Lucknow

(Uttar Pradesh, UP)-based MicroSave Consulting (MSC), released a new report titled "From Borrowers to Builders: Women's Role in India's Financial Growth Story."

- The report, launched by B.V.R. Subrahmanyam, CEO of NITI Aayog, highlights a notable surge in financial awareness among women, with 27 million actively monitoring their credit as of December 2024, reflecting a 42% increase compared to the previous year.

- In December 2024, women's share in the total self-monitoring base increased to 19.43% from 17.89% in 2023. Non-metro women showed higher engagement, with 48% growth compared to 30% in metro areas. Additionally, Gen Z women led credit monitoring, recording a 56% year-over-year (YoY) increase.

- The number of business accounts opened by women surged 4.6 times, from 8 lakh in 2019 to 37 lakh in 2024. Business loan disbursements rose to ₹1.9 lakh crore in 2024, up from ₹0.7 lakh crore in 2019, though these loans accounted for only 3% of the total loans availed by women.

Key Points:-

(i) Since 2019, women's share in business loan origination has grown by 14%, while their gold loan share increased by 6%. By December 2024, women made up 35% of business borrowers.

(ii) Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu (TN), Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh (UP), and Telangana contributed 49% of all self-monitoring women, with the southern region leading at 10.2 million in 2024.

(iii) Northern and central states like Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh (UP), and Madhya Pradesh (MP) recorded the highest Compounded Annual Growth Rates (CAGR) in active women borrowers over

the last five years.

8. PM Modi Releases India's First Riverine Dolphin Estimation Report Showing 6,327 Dolphins Across 28 Rivers in 8 States.

In March 2025, Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi released India's first-ever riverine dolphin estimation report during his visit to Gir National Park (NP) in Gujarat, where he chaired the 7th meeting of the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL). The report was released on the eve of World Wildlife Day (WWD), observed annually on March 3 worldwide.

- According to the report, India has 6,327 riverine dolphins across 28 rivers in 8 states, with 6,324 dolphins found across the Ganga and Brahmaputra river basins, and the remaining 3 Indus river dolphins in the Beas river basin in Punjab.

- Assam, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh (MP), Punjab, and Lakshadweep are identified as the key dolphin hotspot states.

Key Points:-

(i) The survey was conducted between 2021 and 2023 by the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) in partnership with state forest departments of Punjab, Uttar Pradesh (UP), Bihar, Assam, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, and non-profit organizations including Aaranyak, World Wildlife Fund (WWF), Turtle Survival Alliance, and Wildlife Trust of India.

(ii) UP, with 2,397 dolphins, topped among the 8 states with the highest number of dolphins in the country, followed by Bihar (2,220), West Bengal (WB) (815), and Assam (635).

9. Union Minister Amit Shah Inaugurates 'Workshop on Sustainability & Circularity in Dairy Sector' in New Delhi.

In March 2025, Union Minister Amit Shah of the Ministry of Cooperation (MoC) inaugurated the 'Workshop on Sustainability and Circularity in the Dairy Sector' at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi (Delhi).

- The workshop was organized by the Department of Animal Husbandry & Dairying (DAHD) under the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry, and Dairying (MoFAH&D) in collaboration with the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB).
- Sustainability, efficiency, and circularity of resources in the dairy sector will play a key role in fulfilling Prime Minister Modi's vision of 'Sahkar se Samridhhi'.

Key Points:-

- (i) During the workshop, NDDB signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) to promote sustainable and inclusive growth in the dairy sector by providing technical, financial, and implementation support.
- (ii) NDDB introduced a new financing scheme with an estimated budget of Rs. 1,000 crores aimed at providing financial assistance for small biogas, large-scale biogas plants, and Compressed Biogas (CBG) projects, supporting the scaling up of various manure management models over the next 10 years.

10. India's First World Peace Center Officially Inaugurated in Gurugram, Haryana.

In March 2025, India's first World Peace Center was established under the leadership of Ahimsa Vishwa Bharti founder, Jain Acharya Lokesh Muni, and the efforts of Ahimsa Vishwa Bharti and was inaugurated in Gurugram, Haryana.

- The inauguration ceremony was graced by Ram Nath Kovind, former President of India, along with other dignitaries, including Gulab Chand Kataria, Governor of Punjab, Arif Mohammad Khan, Governor of Bihar, Nayab Singh Saini, Chief Minister (CM) of Haryana, and Rekha Gupta, CM of Delhi.

Key Points:-

- (i) Acharya Lokesh highlighted that the World Peace Center will serve as a beacon of spirituality and social unity, offering a platform for peace education, environmental conservation, equality, and institutional peace-building initiatives.
- (ii) The World Peace Center will play a key role in fostering awareness, promoting social responsibility, supporting sustainable development, and creating institutional networks to enhance peace and harmony.

11. Gol's PM-SYM Yojana Strengthens Financial Security for Millions of Unorganised Workers.

Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maandhan (PM-SYM) Yojana is a significant initiative launched by the Government of India (Gol) to provide financial security to millions of unorganised workers in India. It is a part of the Government's broader social security efforts and supports the goal of providing universal pension coverage for workers in the unorganised sector.

- The scheme is specifically designed for workers in the unorganised sectors, which contribute 50% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).
- It is a voluntary and contributory pension scheme, aimed at offering social security to unorganised workers.

Key Points:-

- (i) The scheme ensures a minimum pension of Rs 3,000 per month after the age of 60 for workers who are part of the unorganised sector and earn up to Rs 15,000 per month.
- (ii) The scheme is overseen by the Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoL&E), in collaboration with Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) and Common Services Centres e-Governance Services India Limited (CSC SPV), to ensure smooth implementation.
- (iii) As of December 31, 2024, more than 30.51 crore unorganised workers were registered on the e-Shram portal.

12. Dasra and Bain & Company Release 15th Edition of India Philanthropy Report (IPR) 2025.

In February 2025, Dasra, a venture philanthropy firm based in Mumbai (Maharashtra), and Bain & Company, Inc., a global management consulting firm based in the United States, released the 15th edition of the India Philanthropy Report (IPR) 2025.

- The report revealed that private funding in India's social sector is expected to grow annually by 10% to 12% over the next five years. This growth is mainly driven by family philanthropy from Ultra-High-Net-Worth Individuals (UHNIs), High-Net-Worth Individuals (HNIs), and wealthy individuals.

- UHNIs are individuals with a net worth of Rs 1,000 crore or more, HNIs have a net worth between Rs 200 crore and Rs 1,000 crore, and the "Affluent" category includes individuals with a net worth ranging from Rs 7 crore to Rs 200 crore.

Key Points:-

- (i) The total size of India's social sector funding, which includes areas like education, healthcare, and gender equality, is approximately Rs 25 lakh crore (USD 300 billion), making up 8.3% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).
- (ii) Public spending contributed 95% of the total funding, amounting to Rs 23 lakh crore. Private spending increased by 7% from FY 2023 to FY 2024, reaching around Rs 1.3 lakh crore (USD 16 billion).

13. India's EPHL and Belgium's JCD have formed a joint venture (JV) in India for the Light Tank Program.

In March 2025, John Cockerill Defence (JCD), a leading manufacturer of tank turrets based in Seraing (Belgium), and Electro Pneumatics and Hydraulics Private Limited (EPHL) from Pune (Maharashtra), announced a joint venture (JV) in India.

- This collaboration is an important step in strengthening defense ties between India and Belgium while enhancing India's self-reliant military capabilities.

Key Points:-

- (i) The JV will mainly focus on the Indian Army's (IA) Light Tank program, specifically the Zorawar tank. Zorawar is a light tank developed jointly by the Defence Research and Development

Organisation (DRDO) and Larsen & Toubro (L&T), and is currently undergoing advanced trials.

(ii) The JV will operate on a 60:40 ratio, with JCD holding the majority share. This ensures that advanced turret technology is transferred to India, supporting the country's Aatmanirbhar Bharat (Self-Reliant India) defense initiative.

(iii) Additionally, Thales Belgium, based in Brussels (Belgium), has teamed up with India's state-owned Armoured Vehicle Nigam Ltd (AVNL) in Avadi (Chennai). Together, they will integrate a 70mm rocket system onto military vehicles for the Indian armed forces. In 2025, a key milestone will be a joint demonstration, including live firing exercises, as per Belgian embassy officials.

14. Union Minister Pralhad Joshi Inaugurates India's First AI-Driven Solar Manufacturing Line in Gujarat.

In March 2025, Union Minister Pralhad Joshi, from the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), launched India's first Artificial Intelligence (AI)-powered solar manufacturing line at Goldi Solar Private Limited's new facility in Kosamba, Surat, Gujarat.

- The AI-enabled facility enhances precision, scalability, and efficiency, revolutionizing solar manufacturing and supporting India's shift towards a net-zero future.

Key Points:-

(i) The facility uses high-speed stringers that can produce an impressive 10,000 cells per hour with AI-driven automation. This ensures consistent quality, reduces errors, and minimizes material waste.

(ii) It also incorporates AI-powered Automated Optical Inspection (AOI) technologies for real-time quality control. These systems use advanced computer vision to detect and eliminate microscopic defects.

(iii) Additionally, the plant features AI-powered 3-Display Electro Luminescent (EL) and visual inspection devices, which check both the front and back of solar modules.

15. Cabinet approves Revision of Livestock Health and Disease Control Programme (LHDCP).

The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, has approved the revision of the Livestock Health and Disease Control Programme (LHDCP) to strengthen livestock healthcare and disease prevention.

- The revised LHDCP consists of three main components: National Animal Disease Control Programme (NADCP), LH&DC, and Pashu Aushadhi. The LH&DC component has three sub-components: Critical Animal Disease Control Programme (CADCP), Establishment & Strengthening of Veterinary Hospitals and Mobile Veterinary Units (ESVHD-MVU), and Assistance to States for Control of Animal Diseases (ASCAD).

- The Pashu Aushadhi component has been newly added to the scheme, aiming to provide good-quality and affordable generic veterinary medicines to farmers, with an allocated budget of Rs. 75 crore.

- The total budget allocated for the revised LHDCP is Rs. 3,880 crore for two years (2024-25 and 2025-26), ensuring adequate funding for livestock disease control, veterinary healthcare, and medicine distribution.

Key Points:-

- (i) The scheme focuses on controlling livestock diseases such as Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD), Brucellosis, Peste des Petits Ruminants (PPR), Cerebrospinal Fluid (CSF), and Lumpy Skin Disease through immunization and disease surveillance.
- (ii) The LHDCP will enhance access to veterinary services through Mobile Veterinary Units (ESVHD-MVU) and ensure the availability of generic veterinary medicines under Pashu Aushadhi through PM-Kisan Samriddhi Kendra and Cooperative Societies.
- (iii) The scheme will help improve livestock productivity, reduce economic losses for farmers, generate employment, promote entrepreneurship in rural areas, and support overall economic growth in the livestock sector.

16. PM Narendra Modi Inaugurates 'Vantara' in Gujarat & Chairs 7th NBWL Meeting and Announces Asiatic Lion Population Estimation 2025.

During his visit from March 1 to March 3, 2025, PM Narendra Modi inaugurated Vantara, a 3,000-acre animal rescue and rehabilitation center in Jamnagar, Gujarat, and chaired the 7th meeting of the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) at Gir National Park, Gujarat.

- He also visited Somnath Temple, Gujarat, offered prayers, and chaired a meeting of the Shree Somnath Trust.
- Vantara, established by Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) and the Reliance Foundation, is a mega wildlife rescue center in Jamnagar, Gujarat.

- It houses the world's largest hospital for elephants, equipped with hydrotherapy pools and jacuzzis to treat arthritis and foot ailments.

Key Points:-

- (i) PM Narendra Modi announced the 16th Asiatic Lion Population Estimation, scheduled for May 2025.
- (ii) He laid the foundation for the National Referral Centre for Wildlife in Junagadh to enhance wildlife health management and disease control.
- (iii) The National Board for Wildlife (NBWL), constituted by the Government of India (GoI) under Section 5A of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 (WLPA), is a 47-member committee headed by the Prime Minister, with the Minister of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change serving as the Vice-Chairperson.

17. GSI Marks 175th Foundation Day and Unveils Two Key Digital Initiatives.

On March 4, 2025, the Geological Survey of India (GSI) celebrated its 175th Foundation Day with a grand ceremony at its headquarters in Kolkata, West Bengal.

- The event was graced by Union Minister G. Kishan Reddy, Ministry of Coal (MoC) and Ministry of Mines (MoM).
- G. Kishan Reddy unveiled a commemorative plaque and a special postal cover to honor the 175-year journey of GSI.
- Union Minister G. Kishan Reddy launched two significant digital initiatives during the event: the Field Data Acquisition Application (App) and the Geo-

heritage App 'Bhuvirasat', aimed at improving the efficiency of data collection and promoting awareness of India's rich geo-heritage.

Key Points:-

- (i) On March 2, 2025, GSI organized a nationwide walkathon across 27 locations to kick off its 175th Foundation Year celebrations.
- (ii) The walkathon was designed to promote fitness and raise awareness about geoscience, with the theme "Geoscience for a Safe World".
- (iii) The GSI is one of the oldest geological surveys in the world and the second oldest survey in India after the Survey of India (founded in 1767).

18. Jaipur, Rajasthan Hosts 12th Regional 3R and Circular Economy Forum for Asia & the Pacific.

The 12th Regional 3R and Circular Economy Forum in Asia & the Pacific was held from March 3 to March 5, 2025, at Rajasthan International Centre in Jaipur, Rajasthan.

- The theme of the 2025 forum was 'Realizing Circular Societies Towards Achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Carbon Neutrality in Asia-Pacific'.
- The 3-day conference was organized by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), Government of India (GoI), in collaboration with the United Nations Centre for Regional Development (UNCRD) and Institute for Global Environment Strategies (IGES).
- Union Minister Manohar Lal and Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajanlal Sharma jointly inaugurated the 3R India Pavilion during the event.

Key Points:-

(i) Manohar Lal also announced the launch of Cities Coalition for Circularity (C-3), a multi-nation alliance aimed at city-to-city collaboration, knowledge sharing, and fostering private sector partnerships.

(ii) The forum concluded with the adoption of the Jaipur Declaration (2025-2034) by the member countries.

(ii) The declaration serves as a non-political, non-binding commitment to guide resource efficiency and sustainable urban growth for the next 10 years.

19. NITI Aayog Unveils NITI-FTH & Publishes Paper on "Quantum Computing: National Security & Strategic Preparedness".

In March 2025, NITI Aayog launched the 'Frontier Tech Hub (NITI-FTH)', a transformative initiative aimed at making India a technology-driven economy. It focuses on advancing frontier technologies for India's economic and social development.

- NITI-FTH will act as a technology action tank to promote cutting-edge technologies that contribute to human progress and environmental sustainability.
- NITI Aayog, in collaboration with the Data Security Council of India (DSCI), released a strategic paper titled "Quantum Computing: National Security Implications & Strategic Preparedness."

Key Points:-

(i) The paper addresses the rapid progress of quantum computing and its implications for sectors such as defence, intelligence, and

cybersecurity.

(ii) The paper emphasizes the need for a proactive, multi-pronged approach to safeguard national security in the era of quantum computing.

(iii) The Government of India launched the National Quantum Mission (NQM) in 2023 with a budget of Rs.6,003 crore to develop an indigenous quantum technology ecosystem.

20. Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal Launches New Maritime Initiatives to Enhance India's Global Trade.

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based in Mumbai, and the Adani Group based in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, have pledged to invest over Rs 1.5 lakh crore in Assam across various sectors, as announced by their respective leaders at the Advantage Assam 2.0 Summit.

25. Gujarat Recently Led India with 19,020 Hectares of Mangrove Plantation in Two Years Under the 'MISHTI' Scheme.

In February 2025, Gujarat recently emerged as the national leader in mangrove afforestation by planting mangroves across approximately 19,020 hectares at a cost of over Rs 76 crore under the Mangrove Initiative for Shoreline Habitats and Tangible Incomes (MISHTI) scheme.

- Gujarat remains determined to environmental conservation, aligning with the vision of 'Viksit Gujarat to Viksit Bharat.' This determination has positioned Gujarat at the leading edge of the Central Government's MISHTI scheme implementation.
- Gujarat's mangrove environment is strategically placed, with Kutch leading the charge at 799 square kilometers (sq km).

Key Points:-

(i) In 2023, the Government of India (GoI) recently launched the MISHTI scheme on the occasion of World Environment Day (June 5) to increase mangrove forests across coastal states and Union Territories (UTs), ensuring a sustainable future for both communities and ecosystems.

(ii) The GoI aims to plant 540 sq km of mangroves in five years under the 'MISHTI' scheme.

(iii) The scheme was recently implemented by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate

Change (MoEFCC).

26. NITI Aayog Report: Women's Credit Monitoring Jumps 42% to Reach 27 Million in 2024.

On March 3, 2025, the Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP) of the National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog, in collaboration with TransUnion CIBIL Limited (formerly Credit Information Bureau (India) Limited) and Lucknow (Uttar Pradesh, UP)-based MicroSave Consulting (MSC), released a new report titled "From Borrowers to Builders: Women's Role in India's Financial Growth Story."

- The report, launched by B.V.R. Subrahmanyam, CEO of NITI Aayog, highlights a notable surge in financial awareness among women, with 27 million actively monitoring their credit as of December 2024, reflecting a 42% increase compared to the previous year.
- In December 2024, women's share in the total self-monitoring base increased to 19.43% from 17.89% in 2023. Non-metro women showed higher engagement, with 48% growth compared to 30% in metro areas. Additionally, Gen Z women led credit monitoring, recording a 56% year-over-year (YoY) increase.
- The number of business accounts opened by women surged 4.6 times, from 8 lakh in 2019 to 37 lakh in 2024. Business loan disbursements rose to ₹1.9 lakh crore in 2024, up from ₹0.7 lakh crore in 2019, though these loans accounted for only 3% of the total loans availed by women.

Key Points:-

(i) Since 2019, women's share in business loan origination has grown by 14%, while their gold

loan share increased by 6%. By December 2024, women made up 35% of business borrowers.

(ii) Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu (TN), Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh (UP), and Telangana contributed 49% of all self-monitoring women, with the southern region leading at 10.2 million in 2024.

(iii) Northern and central states like Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh (UP), and Madhya Pradesh (MP) recorded the highest Compounded Annual Growth Rates (CAGR) in active women borrowers over the last five years.

27. PM Modi Releases India's First Riverine Dolphin Estimation Report Showing 6,327 Dolphins Across 28 Rivers in 8 States.

In March 2025, Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi released India's first-ever riverine dolphin estimation report during his visit to Gir National Park (NP) in Gujarat, where he chaired the 7th meeting of the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL). The report was released on the eve of World Wildlife Day (WWD), observed annually on March 3 worldwide.

- According to the report, India has 6,327 riverine dolphins across 28 rivers in 8 states, with 6,324 dolphins found across the Ganga and Brahmaputra river basins, and the remaining 3 Indus river dolphins in the Beas river basin in Punjab.
- Assam, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh (MP), Punjab, and Lakshadweep are identified as the key dolphin hotspot states.

Key Points:-

(i) The survey was conducted between 2021 and 2023 by the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) in

partnership with state forest departments of Punjab, Uttar Pradesh (UP), Bihar, Assam, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, and non-profit organizations including Aaranyak, World Wildlife Fund (WWF), Turtle Survival Alliance, and Wildlife Trust of India.

(ii) UP, with 2,397 dolphins, topped among the 8 states with the highest number of dolphins in the country, followed by Bihar (2,220), West Bengal (WB) (815), and Assam (635).

28. Union Minister Amit Shah Inaugurates 'Workshop on Sustainability & Circularity in Dairy Sector' in New Delhi.

In March 2025, Union Minister Amit Shah of the Ministry of Cooperation (MoC) inaugurated the 'Workshop on Sustainability and Circularity in the Dairy Sector' at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi (Delhi).

- The workshop was organized by the Department of Animal Husbandry & Dairying (DAHD) under the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry, and Dairying (MoFAH&D) in collaboration with the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB).

- Sustainability, efficiency, and circularity of resources in the dairy sector will play a key role in fulfilling Prime Minister Modi's vision of 'Sahkar se Samridhi'.

Key Points:-

(i) During the workshop, NDDB signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) to promote sustainable and inclusive growth in the dairy sector by providing technical, financial, and implementation

support.

(ii) NDDB introduced a new financing scheme with an estimated budget of Rs. 1,000 crores aimed at providing financial assistance for small biogas, large-scale biogas plants, and Compressed Biogas (CBG) projects, supporting the scaling up of various manure management models over the next 10 years.

29. India's First World Peace Center Officially Inaugurated in Gurugram, Haryana.

In March 2025, India's first World Peace Center was established under the leadership of Ahimsa Vishwa Bharti founder, Jain Acharya Lokesh Muni, and the efforts of Ahimsa Vishwa Bharti and was inaugurated in Gurugram, Haryana.

- The inauguration ceremony was graced by Ram Nath Kovind, former President of India, along with other dignitaries, including Gulab Chand Kataria, Governor of Punjab, Arif Mohammad Khan, Governor of Bihar, Nayab Singh Saini, Chief Minister (CM) of Haryana, and Rekha Gupta, CM of Delhi.

Key Points:-

(i) Acharya Lokesh highlighted that the World Peace Center will serve as a beacon of spirituality and social unity, offering a platform for peace education, environmental conservation, equality, and institutional peace-building initiatives.

(ii) The World Peace Center will play a key role in fostering awareness, promoting social responsibility, supporting sustainable development, and creating institutional networks to enhance peace and harmony.

30. EC President Ursula von der Leyen Leads Historic EU Delegation Visit to India, Strengthening Bilateral Ties.

In February 2025, European Commission (EC) President Ursula von der Leyen, along with the European Union (EU) College of Commissioners, undertook a two-day visit to India from 27th to 28th February 2025. This marked the first-ever visit of the College of Commissioners outside the European continent and also the first visit in the history of India-EU bilateral relations.

- The visit focused on trade and investment, emerging technologies, innovation, talent, digital and green industrial transition, space, defense, and people-to-people exchanges.
- EC President von der Leyen met with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi, Delhi, to strengthen the EU-India strategic partnership, emphasizing trade, technology, climate change, and security cooperation.
- On 28th February 2025, the 2nd India-EU Trade and Technology Council (TTC) meeting was held in New Delhi, where India and the EU committed to strengthening food security and sustainability, including early warning systems for active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) supply, and advancing renewable energy cooperation through solar energy, offshore wind, and green hydrogen technologies.

Key Points:-

- (i) India and the EU set a year-end deadline to finalize the long-negotiated bilateral Free Trade Agreement (FTA), which would become the world's largest trade deal of its kind.
- (ii) India and the EU renewed their Science & Technology (S&T) partnership, originally signed in

2001, renewed in 2015 and 2020, and now extended for 2025-2030.

(iii) On 28th February 2025, Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh hosted a high-level European Union (EU) delegation led by Commissioner Andrius Kubilius in New Delhi to discuss expanding current and future collaborations between India and the EU in space exploration.

31. CCI Grants Approval for Key Mergers and Acquisitions on March 4, 2025.

On March 4, 2025, the Competition Commission of India (CCI) approved multiple acquisition proposals across various industries. TPG Scion Singapore Private Limited, based in Singapore, acquired a stake in Schott Poonawalla Private Limited (SPPL), a Pune (Maharashtra)-based company, through a secondary purchase from Serum Institute of India (SII) Private Limited.

- Adani Infra (India) Limited (AAIL), a subsidiary of Adani Enterprises Limited, acquired a 30.07% equity stake in PSP Projects Limited, an Ahmedabad (Gujarat)-based firm, for Rs. 685.36 crore.
- Ambuja Cements Limited (ACL), headquartered in Mumbai (Maharashtra), acquired up to a 72.8% stake in Orient Cement Limited (OCL), a company based in New Delhi (Delhi).
- Shell Deutschland GmbH, a subsidiary of Shell Plc, a global energy company based in the Netherlands, acquired 100% ownership of Raj Petro Specialities Private Limited, located in Mumbai (Maharashtra), through Shell Overseas Investments B.V..

Key Points:-

- (i) Roquette Frères S.A, a France-based

company, acquired the Pharma Solutions and specific product lines from the Nourish segment of International Flavors & Fragrances Inc. (IFF), a USA-based company.

(ii) Alpha Wave Ventures II, LP, based in Florida (USA), acquired a 12.44% stake in Advanta Enterprises Limited, a company headquartered in Mumbai (Maharashtra).

(iii) JSW Energy Limited (JSWEL), a Mumbai (Maharashtra)-based company, acquired 100% shareholding in KSK Mahanadi Power Company Limited, based in Hyderabad (Telangana), for nearly Rs. 16,000 crore.

32. EC President Ursula von der Leyen Leads Historic EU Delegation Visit to India, Strengthening Bilateral Ties.

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- (iii) On 28th February 2025, Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh hosted a high-level European Union (EU) delegation led by Commissioner Andrius Kubilius in New Delhi to discuss expanding current and future collaborations between India and the EU in space exploration.

33. GoI Launches Pilot Projects for Hydrogen-Fuelled Vehicles Under NHGM.

In March 2025, the Government of India (GoI) launched five pilot projects to deploy hydrogen-fuelled buses and trucks under the National Green Hydrogen Mission (NGHM). This initiative aims to promote clean energy in the transport sector and reduce carbon emissions.

- The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) had issued guidelines in February 2025 for implementing pilot projects in the transport sector under NGHM. These guidelines outline the framework

for hydrogen-based vehicle trials and refuelling infrastructure development.

- MNRE has approved five pilot projects involving 37 vehicles, including both trucks and buses. These projects will also establish nine hydrogen refuelling stations to support the operation of hydrogen-fuelled vehicles.
- The trial includes 15 hydrogen fuel cell-based vehicles and 22 hydrogen internal combustion engine-based vehicles. These vehicles will be tested on ten different routes across India, including Greater Noida - Delhi - Agra, Bhubaneswar - Konark - Puri, Ahmedabad - Vadodara - Surat, and several others.

Key Points:-

- (i) Several major companies have been awarded these projects, including TATA Motors Limited (TML), Reliance Industries Limited (RIL), National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) Limited, Ashok Leyland, Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL), and Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL).
- (ii) The GoI has allocated financial support of ₹2.08 billion for these projects, which are expected to be completed within 18 to 24 months. The pilot projects will assess the feasibility, safety, and economic viability of hydrogen-powered mobility in India.
- (iii) The National Green Hydrogen Mission (NGHM) was launched in January 2023 by MNRE with an outlay of ₹19,744 crores up to the Financial Year 2029-30. The mission aims to decarbonize the economy, reduce fossil fuel dependency, and position India as a leader in green hydrogen technology and market

development.

34. "MoPR Launches 'Model Women-Friendly Gram Panchayats (MWFGP)' Initiative to Empower Women in Local Governance".

On March 5, 2025, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR), Government of India, launched the 'Model Women-Friendly Gram Panchayats (MWFGP)' initiative at the National Convention in Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi, as part of International Women's Day celebrations.

- The initiative aims to enhance women's participation, safety, and leadership in local governance by establishing at least one Model Gram Panchayat in each district of India, reflecting gender-sensitive and girl-friendly governance practices.
- The event was attended by Union Minister of State (MoS) Anupriya Patel, Union MoS S.P. Singh Baghel, MoPR officials like Vivek Bharadwaj (Secretary of MoPR), Sushil Kumar Lohani (Additional Secretary of MoPR), and representatives from various ministries and organizations, including UNFPA.
- The model panchayats are designed to align with PM Narendra Modi's vision of creating safer, more inclusive, and socially just Gram Panchayats, contributing to a 'Viksit Bharat' through 'Viksit Panchayats.'

Key Points:-

- (i) Two major initiatives were launched: Virtual Training Programs for developing Model Women-Friendly Gram Panchayats and a Real-Time Monitoring Dashboard to track progress and enhance the performance of women-friendly gram

panchayats across India.

(ii) The digital platform will use technology to track, analyze, and enhance women's participation and welfare at the grassroots level. It will provide real-time insights and data-driven support to empower women leaders nationwide.

(iii) On March 8, 2025, MoPR will organize a nationwide Mahila Gram Sabha in all Gram Panchayats to promote the goals of the MWFGP initiative and to empower women at the grassroots level.

Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the American Spice Trade Association (ASTA) to strengthen international cooperation in the spice trade.

(iii) Paresh Shah, Chairman of the Sub-Committee, Scientific Panel on Pesticide Residues, Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), announced that a revised Maximum Residue Level (MRL) for spices and culinary herbs is under development, which is expected to enhance global market access for Indian spice exporters.

INTERNATIONAL

1. AISEF Hosts International Spice Conference 2025 in Bengaluru, Karnataka.

Ernakulam (Kerala)-based All India Spices Exporters Forum (AISEF) Hosted International Spice Conference (ISC) 2025 in Bengaluru, Karnataka. The All India Spices Exporters Forum (AISEF), headquartered in Ernakulam, Kerala, organized the International Spice Conference (ISC) 2025 from February 24 to February 27, 2025, at Leela Bhartiya City, Bengaluru, Karnataka.

- The conference focused on fostering discussions to create a resilient and responsible future for the spice industry.
- Theme of ISC 2025: 'Building Trust Beyond Borders: Transparency, Sustainability, Conference'.

Key Points:-

(i) The conference was inaugurated by Krishna M. Ella, Executive Chairman, Bharat Biotech International Limited.

(ii) During ISC 2025, AISEF signed a

2. Forbes Releases List of Highest-Paid Actors of 2024 Dwayne Johnson Tops with USD 88 Million.

In February 2025, Forbes released its annual list of "The Highest-Paid Actors of 2024," highlighting the massive earnings of Hollywood's top stars across various platforms.

- American actor and professional wrestler Dwayne Douglas Johnson, popularly known as "The Rock," secured the top position globally with earnings of USD 88 million (approximately 73.58 crore), primarily from blockbuster films like Red One and voicing Maui in Moana 2.
- Canadian-American actor and film producer Ryan Rodney Reynolds ranked 2nd with an impressive USD 85 million (approximately 70.98 crore), attributed to his roles as lead producer, co-writer, and star of Deadpool & Wolverine.

Key Points:-

(i) American comedian and actor Kevin Darnell Hart secured the 3rd spot, earning USD 81 million (approximately 67.73 crore), driven by his diverse

entertainment ventures, including films, television (TV) series, stand-up comedy, and podcasting.

(ii) American actress Nicole Mary Kidman emerged as the highest-paid actress of 2024, ranking 8th overall with earnings of USD 31 million.

3. Brand Finance 2025: Accenture Tops IT Services Rankings, TCS and Infosys Secure 2nd and 3rd Spots.

In March 2025, Brand Finance released its annual IT Services 25 2025 rankings, highlighting the top Information Technology (IT) services brands worldwide. These rankings are based on their financial performance, market position, and brand perception.

- Accenture PLC, an American multinational company, holds the top spot globally, with a brand value of USD 41.50 billion.

- Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) Limited and Infosys Limited, both Indian IT firms, are ranked 2nd and 3rd, showing India's strong presence in the industry.

- For the first time, Hexaware Technologies Limited from India has entered the rankings at Rank 24, showing its growing market influence.

Key Points:-

(i) Brand Finance 2025 methodology evaluates IT services brands based on brand value, market strength, financial performance, brand perception, investment, and business performance.

(ii) The combined brand value of the top 25 IT services brands in 2025 is USD 163 billion.

(iii) The top five brands alone account for over USD 99.32 billion, highlighting the critical role of IT

services in the global economy.

4. India Ranked 4th Globally with 85,698 HNWI's in The Wealth Report 2025 and Behind US, China, and Japan.

In March 2025, Knight Frank, a global property consultant firm based in London (UK), released the 19th edition of The Wealth Report 2025. According to the report, India ranks 4th globally with an estimated 85,698 High Net-Worth Individuals (HNWIs) in 2024, marking a 6% increase compared to 80,686 HNWIs in 2023. This means India is home to 3.7% of the world's wealthy individuals.

- The United States (USA) with 905,413 HNWI's emerged as the top wealth creator globally in 2024, followed by China (471,634 HNWI's) and Japan (122,119 HNWI's).

Key Points:-

(i) India's HNWI's population is projected to increase by 9.4% to 93,753 by 2028.

(ii) India ranks 3rd globally with 191 billionaires in 2024, including 26 new entrants, marking a significant growth compared to just 7 in 2019.

(iii) The cumulative wealth of India's billionaires is estimated at USD 950 billion, ranked 3rd globally, behind the USA (USD 5.7 trillion) and Mainland China (USD 1.34 trillion).

5. AISEF Hosts International Spice Conference 2025 in Bengaluru, Karnataka.

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- Theme of ISC 2025: 'Building Trust Beyond Borders: Transparency, Sustainability, Conference'.

Key Points:-

- (i) The conference was inaugurated by Krishna M. Ella, Executive Chairman, Bharat Biotech International Limited.
- (ii) During ISC 2025, AISEF signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the American Spice Trade Association (ASTA) to strengthen international cooperation in the spice trade.
- (iii) Paresh Shah, Chairman of the Sub-Committee, Scientific Panel on Pesticide Residues, Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), announced that a revised Maximum Residue Level (MRL) for spices and culinary herbs is under development, which is expected to enhance global market access for Indian spice exporters.

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- (ii) American actress Nicole Mary Kidman emerged as the highest-paid actress of 2024, ranking 8th overall with earnings of USD 31 million.

BANKING & FINANCE

1. RBI Levies Monetary Penalty on Bombay Mercantile Co-operative Bank Limited and Two Other Banks.

In February 2025, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) imposed a monetary penalty of Rs 33.30 lakh on Bombay Mercantile Co-operative Bank Limited, based in Mumbai (Maharashtra), for violating certain provisions and earning income from business activities not permitted under the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.

- As of March 31, 2023, the RBI conducted a statutory inspection of the bank with reference to its financial position.

- The penalty was imposed under the powers conferred on the RBI by Section 47A(1)(c) read with Sections 46(4)(i) and 56 of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.

Key Points:-

(i) The RBI also imposed a monetary penalty of Rs 1 lakh each on two other co-operative banks: Business Co-operative Bank Limited (Nashik, Maharashtra) and Lasalgaon Merchant Co-operative Bank Limited (Nashik).

(ii) These two banks were found violating certain provisions and failing to adhere to directions issued by the RBI regarding "Income Recognition, Asset Classification, Provisioning, and Other Related Matters for Urban Co-operative Banks (UCBs)."

2. BoB Introduces Merchant Loyalty and Cashback Program to Promote CBDC.

On 27 February 2025, Bank of Baroda (BoB), based in Vadodara (Gujarat), launched a pilot for a "Merchant Loyalty/Cashback Programme" using programmable Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) for its customers through the "bob Merchant App."

- The project, developed under the guidance of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), allows small and medium-sized merchants to create and manage their own loyalty programs.

- Merchants banking with BoB and registered on the app can set up cashback offers without incurring additional infrastructure costs.

- Pharmacies, grocery stores, and local retailers can customize their loyalty campaigns by adjusting the duration, cashback percentage, and expiry date.

Key Points:-

(i) Customers using the digital rupee app for purchases will receive cashback in the form of programmable CBDC. This offer is currently available only to BoB account holders. The cashback can be redeemed at the same merchant outlet before its expiry.

(ii) The initiative aims to promote the usage of CBDC by making digital payments more attractive to both retailers and customers. It also seeks to support small businesses by improving customer retention and driving repeat business.

3. Japan and India Renew Bilateral Swap Agreement Worth USD 75 Billion.

On February 28, 2025, Japan and India renewed the 2nd Amendment and Restatement Agreement of the Bilateral Swap Arrangement (BSA), maintaining the agreement of up to USD 75 billion.

- The agreement was signed by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), based in Mumbai (Maharashtra), and the Bank of Japan (BOJ), based in Tokyo (Japan), acting as the agent for Japan's Ministry of Finance.

- The arrangement aims to enhance financial cooperation between Japan and India, complementing other global and regional financial safety nets.

Key Points:-

(i) The BSA is a two-way financial arrangement allowing both countries to swap their local currencies in exchange for United States (US) dollars.

(ii) This arrangement ensures liquidity support during market stress and plays a critical role in strengthening the financial systems of both nations.

(iii) The renewed agreement, effective from February 28, 2025, enhances regional and global financial stability, contributing to a long-term strategy for fostering economic ties and maintaining financial resilience during crises.

Funds in India (AMFI) to issue necessary guidelines and standards for SIFs by March 31, 2025.

(ii) Investors are required to maintain a minimum investment of Rs 10 lakh across all strategies under an SIF, which will not include investments made in regular MF schemes of the same AMC.

(iii) To launch SIFs, Asset Management Companies (AMCs) are required to have a minimum of 3 years of operation and an average Asset Under Management (AUM) of Rs 10,000 crore over the last 3 years.

4. SEBI Recently Introduced a Framework for Specialized Investment Funds, Effective From April 1, 2025.

In February 2025, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) introduced a new framework for Specialized Investment Funds (SIF), a new category of investment product aimed at bridging the gap between Mutual Funds (MFs) and Portfolio Management Services (PMS) in terms of portfolio flexibility.

- This framework was introduced by SEBI through a circular issued in exercise of powers under Section 11(1) of the SEBI Act, 1992, read with Chapter VI-C of the SEBI (Mutual Funds) Regulations 1996, to protect investors' interests in securities and to promote the development and regulation of the securities market.

- The new framework will come into force on April 1, 2025.

Key Points:-

(i) SEBI has directed the Association of Mutual

5. Federal Bank Recently Launched 'Annuity Deposit' for Resident Customers.

Aluva (Kerala)-based Federal Bank Limited, one of India's leading private sector banks, recently launched a new term deposit product, "Annuity Deposit," specifically designed for resident customers, offering stable income for a period ranging from 5 to 20 years.

- Customers have the flexibility to select their preferred payout frequency: monthly, quarterly, half-yearly, or annually, with each payout consisting of both principal and interest earned.

Key Points:-

(i) The product was recently launched by Shalini Warriar, Executive Director (ED), Federal Bank.

(ii) To open an annuity deposit, the minimum investment required is Rs. 15 lakh, while the maximum investment limit is Rs. 2 crore.

(iii) The product is designed for customers seeking a reliable, pension-like income over an extended period, with the flexibility to prematurely close their

accounts in case of emergencies.

6. SEBI allows NBFCs and HFCs to invest in Security Receipts (SRs) issued by Asset Reconstruction Companies (ARCs).

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has allowed all Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs), including Housing Finance Companies (HFCs), to invest in Security Receipts (SRs) issued by Asset Reconstruction Companies (ARCs).

- All NBFCs, including HFCs, regulated by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), are now considered qualified buyers. This means they can invest in SRs under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (SARFAESI Act), subject to certain conditions.
- This important change by SEBI aims to encourage investment in the bad loans sector and expand the pool of investors who can buy SRs from ARCs, which will improve liquidity in the distressed asset market.

Key Points:-

- (i) SEBI has extended the deadline for reporting differential rights issued by Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs) to March 31, 2025 (previously it was February 28, 2025). This extension followed requests from the industry for more time to comply.
- (ii) This change comes from amendments to the SEBI (Alternative Investment Funds) Regulations, 2012, which were notified on November 18, 2024. The goal is to ensure that investors receive their rights and share of proceeds in proportion to their investments within a scheme, while maintaining equal treatment (pari-passu).

7. Mintoak has acquired Digiledge in India's first E-Rupee deal, valued at USD 3.5 million.

On March 3, 2025, Mintoak Innovations Private Limited, an Indian startup based in Mumbai (Maharashtra), and supported by PayPal and HDFC Bank (formerly Housing Development Finance Corporation Bank), acquired Digiledge, a company based in Bengaluru (Karnataka). This marks the first acquisition in the emerging Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) sector, valued at USD 3.5 million.

- The integration of Digiledge's services will enable Mintoak's partner banks, including HDFC Bank, Axis Bank (based in Mumbai, Maharashtra), and State Bank of India (SBI, also based in Mumbai), to offer better CBDC-related payment solutions to their customers.

Key Points:-

- (i) In December 2022, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), based in Mumbai (Maharashtra), started a pilot program for the e-rupee, which is a digital alternative to physical currency. The program expanded in April 2024 to include payment firms, allowing companies like Mintoak to actively participate.
- (ii) Mintoak aims to make digital payment processes simpler for merchant acquirers and support the growth of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) by helping them access digital financial services.
- (iii) In January 2025, CRED (based in Bengaluru, Karnataka) and MobiKwik (based in Gurugram, Haryana) became the first non-banking companies to offer India's CBDC, the e-Rupee (eRs).

8. India Provides USD 1 Million for Food Fortification Initiative in Lao PDR.

On February 28, 2025, the Government of India (GoI) provided a grant of approximately USD 1 million to the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) under the India-United Nations (UN) Development Partnership Fund.

- The grant will support the project titled "Strengthening Large-scale Food Fortification: The Case of Investing in Rice Fortification."
- The project, implemented by the Rome (Italy) based World Food Programme (WFP), aims to strengthen food systems, address long-term nutrition-specific strategies, promote food fortification programs, and improve nutritional diversity to overcome micro-nutrient deficiencies in Lao PDR. The project focuses on fortifying rice, an essential food widely consumed across the country, to tackle ongoing malnutrition challenges.
- The project's support reflects India's longstanding and multifaceted collaboration with Lao PDR.

Key Points:-

- (i) The Fund adheres to the principles of South-South cooperation, prioritizing national ownership, sustainability, and the development of local competence.
- (ii) The Government of India has invested USD 150 million into this Fund, which has supported 85 projects across 65 countries.
- (iii) The India-UN Development Partnership Fund was established by the GOI in 2017 to support projects in developing countries aimed at

contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

9. RBI Levies Monetary Penalty on Bombay Mercantile Co-operative Bank Limited and Two Other Banks.

In February 2025, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) imposed a monetary penalty of Rs 33.30 lakh on Bombay Mercantile Co-operative Bank Limited, based in Mumbai (Maharashtra), for violating certain provisions and earning income from business activities not permitted under the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.

- As of March 31, 2023, the RBI conducted a statutory inspection of the bank with reference to its financial position.
- The penalty was imposed under the powers conferred on the RBI by Section 47A(1)(c) read with Sections 46(4)(i) and 56 of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.

Key Points:-

- (i) The RBI also imposed a monetary penalty of Rs 1 lakh each on two other co-operative banks: Business Co-operative Bank Limited (Nashik, Maharashtra) and Lasalgaon Merchant Co-operative Bank Limited (Nashik).
- (ii) These two banks were found violating certain provisions and failing to adhere to directions issued by the RBI regarding "Income Recognition, Asset Classification, Provisioning, and Other Related Matters for Urban Co-operative Banks (UCBs)."

10. BoB Introduces Merchant Loyalty and Cashback Program to Promote CBDC.

On 27 February 2025, Bank of Baroda (BoB), based in Vadodara (Gujarat), launched a pilot for a "Merchant Loyalty/Cashback Programme" using programmable Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) for its customers through the "bob Merchant App."

- The project, developed under the guidance of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), allows small and medium-sized merchants to create and manage their own loyalty programs.
- Merchants banking with BoB and registered on the app can set up cashback offers without incurring additional infrastructure costs.
- Pharmacies, grocery stores, and local retailers can customize their loyalty campaigns by adjusting the duration, cashback percentage, and expiry date.

Key Points:-

(i) Customers using the digital rupee app for purchases will receive cashback in the form of programmable CBDC. This offer is currently available only to BoB account holders. The cashback can be redeemed at the same merchant outlet before its expiry.

(ii) The initiative aims to promote the usage of CBDC by making digital payments more attractive to both retailers and customers. It also seeks to support small businesses by improving customer retention and driving repeat business.

11. Japan and India Renew Bilateral Swap Agreement Worth USD 75 Billion.

On February 28, 2025, Japan and India renewed the 2nd Amendment and Restatement Agreement

of the Bilateral Swap Arrangement (BSA), maintaining the agreement of up to USD 75 billion.

- The agreement was signed by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), based in Mumbai (Maharashtra), and the Bank of Japan (BOJ), based in Tokyo (Japan), acting as the agent for Japan's Ministry of Finance.
- The arrangement aims to enhance financial cooperation between Japan and India, complementing other global and regional financial safety nets.

Key Points:-

(i) The BSA is a two-way financial arrangement allowing both countries to swap their local currencies in exchange for United States (US) dollars.

(ii) This arrangement ensures liquidity support during market stress and plays a critical role in strengthening the financial systems of both nations.

(iii) The renewed agreement, effective from February 28, 2025, enhances regional and global financial stability, contributing to a long-term strategy for fostering economic ties and maintaining financial resilience during crises.

12. SEBI Recently Introduced a Framework for Specialized Investment Funds, Effective From April 1, 2025.

In February 2025, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) introduced a new framework for Specialized Investment Funds (SIF), a new category of investment product aimed at bridging the gap between Mutual Funds (MFs) and Portfolio Management Services (PMS) in terms of portfolio flexibility.

- This framework was introduced by SEBI through a circular issued in exercise of powers under Section 11(1) of the SEBI Act, 1992, read with Chapter VI-C of the SEBI (Mutual Funds) Regulations 1996, to protect investors' interests in securities and to promote the development and regulation of the securities market.
- The new framework will come into force on April 1, 2025.

Key Points:-

- (i) SEBI has directed the Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI) to issue necessary guidelines and standards for SIFs by March 31, 2025.
- (ii) Investors are required to maintain a minimum investment of Rs 10 lakh across all strategies under an SIF, which will not include investments made in regular MF schemes of the same AMC.
- (iii) To launch SIFs, Asset Management Companies (AMCs) are required to have a minimum of 3 years of operation and an average Asset Under Management (AUM) of Rs 10,000 crore over the last 3 years.

13. Federal Bank Recently Launched 'Annuity Deposit' for Resident Customers.

Aluva (Kerala)-based Federal Bank Limited, one of India's leading private sector banks, recently launched a new term deposit product, "Annuity Deposit," specifically designed for resident customers, offering stable income for a period ranging from 5 to 20 years.

- Customers have the flexibility to select their preferred payout frequency: monthly, quarterly, half-

yearly, or annually, with each payout consisting of both principal and interest earned.

Key Points:-

- (i) The product was recently launched by Shalini Warriar, Executive Director (ED), Federal Bank.
- (ii) To open an annuity deposit, the minimum investment required is Rs. 15 lakh, while the maximum investment limit is Rs. 2 crore.
- (iii) The product is designed for customers seeking a reliable, pension-like income over an extended period, with the flexibility to prematurely close their accounts in case of emergencies.

14. India Provides USD 1 Million for Food Fortification Initiative in Lao PDR.

On February 28, 2025, the Government of India (GoI) provided a grant of approximately USD 1 million to the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) under the India-United Nations (UN) Development Partnership Fund.

- The grant will support the project titled "Strengthening Large-scale Food Fortification: The Case of Investing in Rice Fortification."
- The project, implemented by the Rome (Italy) based World Food Programme (WFP), aims to strengthen food systems, address long-term nutrition-specific strategies, promote food fortification programs, and improve nutritional diversity to overcome micro-nutrient deficiencies in Lao PDR. The project focuses on fortifying rice, an essential food widely consumed across the country, to tackle ongoing malnutrition challenges.

- The project's support reflects India's longstanding and multifaceted collaboration with Lao PDR.

Key Points:-

- (i) The Fund adheres to the principles of South-South cooperation, prioritizing national ownership, sustainability, and the development of local competence.
- (ii) The Government of India has invested USD 150 million into this Fund, which has supported 85 projects across 65 countries.
- (iii) The India-UN Development Partnership Fund was established by the GOI in 2017 to support projects in developing countries aimed at contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

15. ARCIL has acquired the stressed loan portfolio of Ujjivan SFB for Rs. 34 crore.

On March 3, 2025, Asset Reconstruction Company (India) Limited (ARCIL), based in Mumbai (Maharashtra) and supported by the Avenue Capital Group (USA) and the State Bank of India (SBI), acquired the non-performing microfinance loan portfolio of Ujjivan Small Finance Bank (SFB) from Bengaluru (Karnataka) for Rs. 34.26 crore. The total value of the loan portfolio was Rs. 365.5 crore.

- This transaction resulted in a recovery rate of about 9.39%, meaning the lender faced a loss of approximately 90%.

Key Points:-

- (i) ARCIL started the deal with its anchor bid, which led to a 'Swiss Challenge' auction for the

loan portfolio.

(ii) Ujjivan SFB invited counterbids, offering a 5% higher bid than the anchor bid. However, no higher bids came in, and ARCIL's offer was accepted.

(iii) This sale is part of Ujjivan SFB's ongoing efforts to clean up its balance sheet and improve asset quality by reducing Non-Performing Assets (NPAs).

MOUs and Agreement

1. TRIFED Recently Signed MoUs with NIFT & HPMC to Boost Tribal Entrepreneurship.

In February 2025, New Delhi (Delhi)-based Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Limited (TRIFED), under the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MOTA), recently signed Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with New Delhi-based National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT) and Shimla (Himachal Pradesh, HP)-based Himachal Pradesh Horticultural Produce Marketing and Processing Corporation (HPMC) to promote tribal businesses.

- The MoUs were recently signed during the flagship event 'Aadi Mahotsav,' held in New Delhi, Delhi, from 16 to 24 February 2025.

- The MoU between TRIFED and NIFT was recently signed and exchanged between TRIFED General Manager (GM) Sandeep Pahalwan and NIFT Director Head Office Gaurav Mishra.

- The MoU between TRIFED and HPMC was recently signed and exchanged between TRIFED GM Mamta Sharma and HPMC GM Sunny Sharma.

Key Points:-

(i) The collaboration aims to strengthen tribal marketing strategies by shifting from a business-to-consumer (B2C) model to a business-to-business (B2B) approach.

(ii) These strategic partnerships focus on empowering tribal artisans and entrepreneurs by promoting handloom, handicrafts, and forest products, while also enhancing horticultural and forest product processing.

2. India and Nepal Ink MoU to Enhance Collaboration in WASH Sector.

On 3 March 2025, the Government of India (GoI) and the Government of Nepal signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to enhance cooperation in the Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) sector, including waste management.

- The agreement aims to improve access to clean drinking water and sanitation by fostering collaboration between both nations and strengthening intergovernmental cooperation in the WASH sector.
- The MoU was signed in New Delhi, Delhi, in the presence of Union Minister Chandrakant Raghunath Patil, Ministry of Jal Shakti (MoJS), India, and Pradeep Yadav, Minister of Water Supply, Nepal, along with senior officials from both countries.

Key Points:-

(i) Both countries will engage in capacity-building initiatives, including training programs for Nepali personnel in water resource management and related fields.

(ii) India and Nepal will exchange technological expertise and best practices in the WASH sector, while also collaborating on groundwater projects,

including rainwater harvesting, artificial recharge, and quality enhancement.

(iii) The MoU reflects a shared commitment to public health, sustainability, and regional cooperation, strengthening ties between the two nations in the WASH sector.

3. ISM, TEPL & TSMPL Ink Fiscal Support Agreement for Semiconductor Fabrication.

On March 5, 2025, India Semiconductor Mission (ISM), Tata Electronics Private Limited (TEPL), and Tata Semiconductor Manufacturing Private Limited (TSMPL) signed a Fiscal Support Agreement (FSA) to establish India's first commercial semiconductor fabrication unit in Dholera, Gujarat.

- TEPL's semiconductor fab in Dholera Special Investment Region (SIR) involves an investment of over ₹91,000 crore and has a capacity of 50,000 wafer starts per month (WSPM).
- The Government of India (GoI), through ISM, has committed to providing 50% fiscal support on a pari-passu basis for qualified project expenses, showcasing its dedication to building a world-class semiconductor ecosystem.
- The project is expected to create over 20,000 direct and indirect skilled jobs. TEPL will collaborate with Taiwan-based Powerchip Semiconductor Manufacturing Corporation (PSMC) to bring global expertise to India's semiconductor industry.

Key Points:-

(i) The semiconductor fab will cater to global markets in sectors such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), communications, computing, and automobiles, strengthening India's role in the

global semiconductor supply chain.

(ii) ISM was launched in 2021 under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) with a financial outlay of ₹76,000 crore to promote semiconductor, display manufacturing, and design ecosystems in India.

(iii) ISM oversees four key schemes under the Semicon India Programme, including the Scheme for setting up Semiconductor Fabs, the Scheme for setting up Display Fabs, the Scheme for Compound Semiconductors, Silicon Photonics, Sensors, ATMP/OSAT facilities, and the Design Linked Incentive (DLI) Scheme.

4. Solar Defence and Aerospace Secures Rs 239 Crore Contract with Ministry of Defence.

In March 2025, Nagpur (Maharashtra)-based Solar Industries India Limited (SIIL) announced that its wholly owned subsidiary, Solar Defence and Aerospace Limited, has signed a contract worth Rs 239 crore with the Ministry of Defence (MoD), Government of India (GoI), for the supply of multi-mode hand grenades.

- The project involves the supply of multi-mode hand grenades for the MoD, to be completed within 1 year.

Key Points:-

(i) The agreement will boost India's defence manufacturing capabilities and aligns with the government's vision of self-reliance in defence.

(ii) SIIL is the flagship company of the Solar Group, which produces bulk explosives, packaged explosives, and initiating systems for use in the mining, infrastructure, and building sectors.

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7. India and Thailand Sign Three MoUs to Boost Gem and Jewellery Exports.

A high-level Indian delegation of 18 members from the Mumbai (Maharashtra)-based Gem and Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC), Jaipur (Rajasthan)-based Jewellers Association Jaipur (JAJ), and Jaipur (Rajasthan)-based Sitapura Gems and Jewellery Industry Association (SGJIA) visited Thailand from 22 to 24 February 2025.

- During the visit, the delegation signed three Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) at the 71st Bangkok Gem and Jewellery Fair (BGJF) held in Bangkok, Thailand on 22 February 2025.
- These MoUs aim to enhance collaboration, research, innovation, and market expansion between the jewellery industries of India and Thailand.

Key Points:-

- (i) The first MoU was signed between GJEPC's Jaipur-based Indian Institute of Gems and Jewellery Research and Laboratories Centre (IIGJ-RLC) and Gem and Jewellery Institute of Thailand (GIT Thailand). This partnership focuses on gemstone standardization, joint research, and increased knowledge exchange to improve industry transparency and quality.
- (ii) The second MoU was signed between JAJ and Chanthaburi-based Chanthaburi Gem and Jewellery Traders Association (CGTA). This collaboration aims at strengthening the coloured gemstone trade, creating new trade opportunities, and enhancing global market participation.
- (iii) The third MoU was signed between SGJIA and Bangkok-based Thai Silver Exporter Association (TSEA). This agreement intends to promote innovation, improve design excellence, and broaden the market reach of silver jewellery.

8. GRSE Recently Signed MoU with Indian Army for Modular Steel Bridge in Arunachal Pradesh.

Kolkata (West Bengal) based Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE) Limited has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Indian Army (IA) for the construction of a 130-foot-long Single Lane Modular (SLM) Steel Bridge (70R) in Arunachal Pradesh (AR).

- The agreement was signed by Natarajan Partheepan, General Manager (GM) (Bailey Bridges), representing GRSE with the IA.
- In 2022, GRSE became the sole Indian company to be awarded the Green Channel Certification for Portable Steel Bridges (Bailey Type) by the Indian Army.

Key Points:-

- (i) Previously, GRSE provided 44 Modular Bridges to the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) for installation across India, as well as to various state governments and friendly countries such as Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka.
- (ii) In 2024, GRSE and the National Highway Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL) made an agreement for delivering Class 70R Double-Lane Bridges.
- (iii) As of February 2025, GRSE has supplied more than 5,800 Modular Bridges. This aligns with the Government of India's Make in India and Atmanirbhar Bharat initiatives.

9. IIFT & APEC-Antwerp Sign MoU to Strengthen Trade and Logistics Education.

In March 2025, New Delhi-based Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT), an autonomous body under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoC&I), and Antwerp (Belgium)-based APEC-Antwerp/Flanders Port Training Center, a leading training institute affiliated with the Port of Antwerp-Bruges International, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to enhance academic collaboration and knowledge exchange in the fields of global trade, logistics, and supply chain management.

- The MoU aims to bolster trade education and training ties between India and Belgium by facilitating faculty and student exchanges for improved cross-cultural business learning.
- The MoU was signed in the presence of key dignitaries, including Union Minister Jitin Prasada and Ajay Bhadoo from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoC&I), Professor Rakesh Mohan Joshi, Vice-Chancellor of IIFT, along with senior faculty from IIFT. The Belgian delegation included His Excellency Matthias Diependaele, Minister-President of the Flemish Government, and Jacques Vandermeiren, CEO of Port of Antwerp-Bruges International.
- The strategic partnership between IIFT and the Port of Antwerp was initiated in 2019 when 206 IIFT students visited the port for practical learning experiences. This collaboration has since focused on enhancing the academic and professional understanding of global trade, logistics, and supply chain management.

Key Points:-

- (i) The MoU includes collaborative efforts in joint research on port management, international logistics, and trade facilitation. It also aims to provide specialized training programs, workshops,

and foster industry interactions to enhance practical learning and skill development in these critical sectors.

(ii) The partnership will focus on transferring knowledge in vital emerging areas such as e-governance, digital trade, and new business technologies. This will help to equip students and professionals with the skills necessary to navigate modern challenges in the global trade and logistics sector.

(iii) Following the MoU signing, a roundtable discussion was held, where the Minister-President of Belgium interacted with IIFT alumni who had previously visited APEC. They shared their insights and key takeaways from the experience, highlighting how the collaboration has benefited their professional growth and understanding of global trade practices.

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SPORTS

1. Aleksandra Goryachkina Clinches Monaco GP 2025, Leads FIDE Women's Grand Prix Standings.

Russian Grandmaster (GM) Aleksandra Goryachkina emerged victorious at the Fédération Internationale des Échecs (International Chess Federation, FIDE) Monaco Grand Prix (GP) 2025, held from February 18-28, 2025, in Monte Carlo, Monaco.

- The tournament concluded with a thrilling three-way tie, but Aleksandra Goryachkina secured the title with her superior tactical play and a higher Sonneborn-Berger tiebreak score.
- The third leg of the FIDE Women's Grand Prix (GP) 2024-2025 featured a 10-player round-robin format, with competitors battling over nine intense rounds.
- Three players—Aleksandra Goryachkina (FIDE), Humpy Koneru (India), and Batkhuyag Munguntuul (Mongolia)—finished tied with 5.5 points each.

Key Points:-

- (i) Aleksandra Goryachkina clinched the gold with a Sonneborn-Berger score of 23.50, followed by Humpy Koneru securing silver and Batkhuyag Munguntuul taking bronze.
- (ii) The 41,500 Euro prize pool was equally distributed among the top three, with each receiving 13,833 Euro.
- (iii) Sonneborn-Berger Score: A tiebreak system that rewards wins against higher-ranked opponents.

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3. IOC Grants Provisional Recognition to World Boxing Federation.

In February 2025, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) Executive Board (EB) granted provisional recognition to World Boxing (WB) as the International Federation (IF) governing global boxing within the Olympic Movement. This decision marks a significant step toward boxing's inclusion in the Los Angeles 2028 Olympics.

- **World Boxing, founded in April 2023, currently has 78 member associations across five continents and has established four continental federations.**
- **Over half of the boxers and medalists at the 2024 Paris Olympics are affiliated with WB.**

Key Points:-

- (i) On May 7, 2024, World Boxing is scheduled to have its first official meeting with the IOC to begin planning for boxing's Olympic future.
- (ii) Boxing has been part of the Olympic Games since 1904, but in 2019, the IOC suspended recognition of the International Boxing Association (IBA) due to various issues.
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AWARDS

1. AWBI Presents "Prani Mitra" & "Jeev Daya" Awards 2025 for Excellence in Animal Welfare and Protection.

On 27 February 2025, the Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI) conferred the Prani Mitra and Jeev Daya Awards at a ceremony held in New Delhi, Delhi. AWBI was established under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (PCA) Act of 1960 to ensure that animals are not subjected to undue pain or suffering.

- **This event aims to recognize outstanding individuals and organizations for their extraordinary contributions to animal welfare and protection.**

- The awards will be presented under two major categories: Prani Mitra Award and Jeev Daya Award. The Prani Mitra Award was introduced in 1966, and the Jeev Daya Award in 2001.

- The Prani Mitra Award will be presented under five sub-categories, namely Advocacy (Individual), Innovative Idea (Individual), Lifetime Animal Service (Individual), along with two awards each for Animal Welfare Organizations and for Corporate, Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs), Government Bodies, or Cooperatives.

Key Points:-

(i) The Jeev Daya Award will be presented in three sub-categories: Individual, Animal Welfare Organization, and for either Schools, Institutions, Teachers, or Children.

(ii) During the ceremony, four important books were released to support the effective implementation of rules and guidelines for animal welfare in India. These include the Handbook for Veterinary Officers on Animal Welfare Laws, the Law Enforcement Handbook on Animal Welfare Laws, and the Animal Law Handbook for Urban Local Bodies, which provide essential guidance for veterinary professionals, law enforcement authorities, and urban local bodies in enforcing and implementing animal protection regulations.

(iii) Another key release was the Revised Animal Birth Control (ABC) Module, which focuses on street dog population management, rabies eradication, and reducing human-dog conflict, ensuring a more effective and humane approach to animal control.

2. Chinese architect Liu Jiakun has been awarded the 2025 Pritzker Architecture Prize.

On March 4, 2025, Chinese architect Liu Jiakun was named the '2025 Pritzker Architecture Prize Laureate,' the highest honor in the field of architecture. He will be celebrated in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (UAE) in May 2025.

- Liu Jiakun became the 54th winner of the Pritzker Prize and the second Chinese architect to receive this honor, following Wang Shu in 2012. He was awarded for his respect for culture, history, and nature, as well as his ability to imagine and build new worlds without being restricted by any specific style or aesthetic.

- The Pritzker Architecture Prize, created in 1979 by businessman Jay A. Pritzker and his wife Cindy through their Hyatt Foundation in Chicago, USA, is an international prize awarded annually to a living architect whose work demonstrates continuous excellence in architecture.

- The Pritzker Prize, often referred to as "architecture's Nobel" and "the profession's highest honor," includes a USD 100,000 grant and a bronze medallion. In 2024, the prize was awarded to Japanese architect Riken Yamamoto. Notably, Indian architect Balkrishna Vithaldas (BV) Doshi became the first Indian to win the Pritzker Prize in 2018 for his outstanding lifelong contribution to architecture.

Key Points:-

(i) In 1999, Liu Jiakun founded 'Jiakun Architects' in Chengdu, China. Over the past four decades, he has completed over 30 projects across China, including work in education, culture, public spaces, commerce, and urban planning.

(ii) His designs focus on a human-centered

approach, sensitivity to context, and innovation in materials. His work often blends traditional Chinese elements with local materials, and his Rebirth Brick Project (inspired by the 2008 Wenchuan earthquake) emphasizes sustainability.

(iii) Some notable projects by Liu Jiakun include the Luyeyuan Stone Sculpture Art Museum (2002), Sichuan Fine Arts Institute Sculpture Department (2002), West Village (2015), Suzhou Museum of Imperial Kiln Brick (2016), and the Tianbao Cave District Renovation (2020).

3. Nithin Kamath of Zerodha Awarded EY Entrepreneur of the Year 2024.

In March 2025, Nithin Kamath, Founder and CEO (Chief Executive Officer) of Zerodha, a company based in Bengaluru (Karnataka), was named the Ernst & Young (EY) Entrepreneur of the Year (EOY) 2024.

- Union Minister Bhupender Yadav (Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change) presented the awards to the EOY 2024 winners at an event held in New Delhi.

Key Points:-

(i) Nithin Kamath is a self-made entrepreneur who turned Zerodha into a billion-dollar company. He was recognized for his innovative low-margin, high-volume brokerage model that changed the industry.

(ii) Nithin will now represent India at the EY World Entrepreneur of the Year (WEOY) Awards in Monte Carlo, Monaco, in June 2025.

(iii) Other Awards: K.V. Kamath, Chairman of Jio Financial Services Limited (JFSL), received the

Lifetime Achievement Award for his contributions to India's financial sector. S. Somanath, former Chairman of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), was honored with the Special Jury Award for his key role in advancing India's space missions.

4. AWBI Presents "Prani Mitra" & "Jeev Daya" Awards 2025 for Excellence in Animal Welfare and Protection.

On 27 February 2025, the Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI) conferred the Prani Mitra and Jeev Daya Awards at a ceremony held in New Delhi, Delhi. AWBI was established under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (PCA) Act of 1960 to ensure that animals are not subjected to undue pain or suffering.

- This event aims to recognize outstanding individuals and organizations for their extraordinary contributions to animal welfare and protection.

- The awards will be presented under two major categories: Prani Mitra Award and Jeev Daya Award. The Prani Mitra Award was introduced in 1966, and the Jeev Daya Award in 2001.

- The Prani Mitra Award will be presented under five sub-categories, namely Advocacy (Individual), Innovative Idea (Individual), Lifetime Animal Service (Individual), along with two awards each for Animal Welfare Organizations and for Corporate, Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs), Government Bodies, or Cooperatives.

Key Points:-

(i) The Jeev Daya Award will be presented in three sub-categories: Individual, Animal Welfare Organization, and for either Schools, Institutions,

Teachers, or Children.

(ii) During the ceremony, four important books were released to support the effective implementation of rules and guidelines for animal welfare in India. These include the Handbook for Veterinary Officers on Animal Welfare Laws, the Law Enforcement Handbook on Animal Welfare Laws, and the Animal Law Handbook for Urban Local Bodies, which provide essential guidance for veterinary professionals, law enforcement authorities, and urban local bodies in enforcing and implementing animal protection regulations.

(iii) Another key release was the Revised Animal Birth Control (ABC) Module, which focuses on street dog population management, rabies eradication, and reducing human-dog conflict, ensuring a more effective and humane approach to animal control.

5. Dr. Uma Sharma Recognized at the 5th BRICS CCI WE Annual Women's Summit & Awards Ceremony.

In March 2025, Dr. Uma Sharma, Chairperson of Kailash Group of Hospitals, received a National Award at the "5th Annual Summit of BRICS Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI) Women's Entrepreneurship & Empowerment (WE) and Felicitations 2025" held in New Delhi. The theme of the Summit was "Women Changemakers: Transforming the World, Shaping the Future."

- The event, organized just before International Women's Day (March 8), aimed to promote women's entrepreneurship and economic empowerment across BRICS nations (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa).

- The event was attended by notable figures, including former Union Minister Smriti Irani (Ministry of Women and Child Development), Rekha Gupta (Chief Minister of Delhi), former Union Minister of State Meenakshi Lekhi, Ruby Sinha (President of BRICS CCI), and Dr. BBL Madhukar (Co-Chairman and Director General of BRICS CCI).

Key Points:-

(i) Dr. Uma Sharma is a well-known Obstetrician and Gynecologist, and serves as a Director on the Board of Kailash Group. With nearly 40 years of experience, she has played a key role in improving healthcare access and empowering women through self-reliance.

(ii) The award recognizes her significant contributions on both national and international levels, especially in healthcare and women's empowerment.

(iii) During the event, a new initiative was launched to support women traders and entrepreneurs, helping them grow their businesses, build networks, and foster collaboration.

IMPORTANT DAYS

1. Rare Disease Day Observed on 28 February 2025.

Rare Disease Day is observed globally on the last day of February, either 28 or 29 in leap years (the rarest day of the year), to raise awareness about the challenges faced by individuals impacted by rare diseases and to unite people from over 100 nations. Rare Disease Day 2025, observed on 28 February 2025, marks the 18th annual Rare Disease Day.

- The theme for Rare Disease Day 2025, "More than You Can Imagine; An Anthology of Rare Experiences," aims to spotlight the challenges, resilience, and experiences of people living with rare diseases.

- Rare Disease Day was introduced in 2008 by the European Organisation for Rare Diseases (EURORDIS) - Rare Diseases Europe and its Council of National Alliances (CNA). The first Rare Disease Day was held in 2008, with events across 18 countries.

Key Points:-

(i) According to the World Health Organization (WHO), rare diseases are classified based on their epidemiology, with the frequency of such diseases being less than 6.5-10 per 10,000 individuals.

(ii) EURORDIS-Rare Diseases Europe is a non-governmental, non-profit alliance consisting of over 1,000 rare disease patient organizations from 74 countries and individuals engaged in Europe's rare disease community.

2. National Science Day Observed on 28 February 2025

National Science Day (NSD) is celebrated every year on February 28 across India to commemorate the groundbreaking discovery of the 'Raman Effect' by Sir Chandrasekhara Venkata Raman (CV Raman), a renowned Indian physicist, in 1928. The day aims to emphasize the significance of science in daily life and honors the immense contributions of scientists in the advancement of India.

- 28th February 2025 marks the 39th observance of NSD.

- The theme of NSD 2025, "Empowering Indian Youth for Global Leadership in Science and Innovation for Viksit Bharat," focuses on the crucial role of young minds in driving India's scientific and technological progress, aligning with the Viksit Bharat 2047 vision of a developed and self-reliant India.

Key Points:-

(i) In 1986, the National Council for Science and Technology Communication (NCSTC) recommended to the Government of India (GoI) that February 28 be declared as NSD.

(ii) The first National Science Day was observed on February 28, 1987.

3. Zero Discrimination Day Observed on 1 March 2025.

The United Nations (UN) observes 'Zero Discrimination Day' annually on March 1st across the globe to promote equality, inclusion, peace, and diversity. The day aims to raise awareness about the harmful effects of discrimination and stresses the right of every individual to live a fulfilling and dignified life.

- March 1, 2025, marks the observance of the 11th Zero Discrimination Day.

- The theme for Zero Discrimination Day 2025 is "We Stand Together," focusing on a specific aspect of discrimination.

Key Points:-

(i) In 2013, on the occasion of World Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) Day (December 1), UNAIDS launched the Zero Discrimination Campaign, aiming for a global transformation toward equality and inclusion.

(ii) This campaign was introduced under the leadership of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, Nobel Peace Prize laureate and 'UNAIDS Global Advocate for Zero Discrimination,' with the hashtag #zerodiscrimination. The first-ever Zero Discrimination Day was observed on March 1, 2014.

(iii) The 'butterfly' symbolizes Zero Discrimination Day, representing transformation and change.

4. World Civil Defence Day 2025 Observed on 1 March 2025.

World Civil Defence Day (WCDD), also known as World Civil Protection Day, is observed annually on March 1 to raise awareness about civil defence and its vital role in protecting communities and individuals during emergencies and disasters. The day also honors the dedication and sacrifices of civil defence personnel. The 36th WCDD will be observed on March 1, 2025.

- "Civil Defence, Guarantee of Security for the Population," which highlights the critical role of civil defence organizations in ensuring public security.

Key Points:-

(i) WCDD was officially established by the International Civil Defence Organization (ICDO) during the 9th General Assembly held on December 18, 1990, at the International Conference Center in Geneva, Switzerland.

(ii) The first WCDD was observed on March 1, 1990, under the guidance of the United Nations (UN).

(iii) In 2012, ICDO officially inaugurated Civil Defence Day (CDD) to further strengthen the

observance.

5. World Seagrass Day Observed on 1 March 2025.

The United Nations (UN)'s World Seagrass Day is annually observed on 1 March across the globe to raise awareness of the importance of seagrasses as a fundamental element of marine biodiversity, the challenges they face, and their role in sustainable development and climate change mitigation and adaptation.

- 1 March 2025 marks the observance of the 3rd World Seagrass Day.

- On 23 May 2022, the UN General Assembly (UNGA) adopted A/RES/76/265 declaring 1 March as World Seagrass Day.

- This initiative started with a resolution from Sri Lanka, stressing the need to protect seagrass for future generations.

Key Points:-

(i) UNGA invited the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) to facilitate the observance of the Day.

(ii) The first-ever World Seagrass Day was observed on 1 March 2023.

6. Civil Accounts Day Observed on 1 March 2025.

Civil Accounts Day is celebrated every year on 1st March in India to commemorate the Foundation Day of the Indian Civil Accounts Service (ICAS), which operates under the Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance (MoF).

- 1st March 2025 marks the 49th Civil Accounts Day.

Key Points:-

- (i) The Indian Civil Accounts Service (ICAS) is one of India's Civil Services, established in 1976 as a result of the Government of India's (GoI) significant reform in public financial administration.
- (ii) On March 1, 1976, the President of India issued two Ordinances to begin the process of separating the auditing and accounting functions of the Union Government accounts from the Indian Audits and Accounts Service.
- (iii) The Act came into effect on March 1, 1976, and ever since, March 1 has been commemorated as "Civil Accounts Day" or the "Foundation Day of ICAS."

(i) In November 2019, UNESCO declared March 4th as World Engineering Day for Sustainable Development, following a proposal by the World Federation of Engineering Organizations (WFEO), during UNESCO's 40th General Conference (40 C/64).

(ii) The first World Engineering Day (WED) was observed on March 4th, 2020.

(iii) In 2025, UNESCO, together with WFEO, will celebrate World Engineering Day (WED) with the theme "Shaping a Sustainable Future Through Engineering" at the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, France. This is part of the International Decade of Sciences for Sustainable Development (IDSSD).

7. World Engineering Day will be celebrated on 4 March 2025.

World Engineering Day (WED) for Sustainable Development, organized by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization), is observed every year on March 4th. This day highlights the important role of engineering in modern life.

- The day focuses on how engineering helps fight climate change and promotes sustainable development, especially in Africa and Small Island Developing States (SIDS).
- March 4th, 2025, will mark the 6th observance of World Engineering Day.
- The theme for World Engineering Day 2025, set by UNESCO, is "Unleashing the power of engineers to advance the Sustainable Development Goals."

Key Points:-**8. UN Observes International Day for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Awareness on March 5th.**

The United Nations (UN) observes the International Day for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Awareness every year on March 5th to raise awareness about disarmament issues, especially among young people.

- The day highlights how disarmament efforts can promote peace, prevent conflicts, and reduce the suffering caused by weapons.
- March 5, 2025, will mark the 3rd observance of this day.

Key Points:-

(i) The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted resolution A/RES/77/51 on December 7, 2022, declaring March 5th as the International Day for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Awareness each year.

(ii) The first observance of the day took place on March 5, 2023.

9. World Seagrass Day Observed on 1 March 2025.

The United Nations (UN)'s World Seagrass Day is annually observed on 1 March across the globe to raise awareness of the importance of seagrasses as a fundamental element of marine biodiversity, the challenges they face, and their role in sustainable development and climate change mitigation and adaptation.

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- On 23 May 2022, the UN General Assembly (UNGA) adopted A/RES/76/265 declaring 1 March as World Seagrass Day.
- This initiative started with a resolution from Sri Lanka, stressing the need to protect seagrass for future generations.

Key Points:-

- (i) UNGA invited the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) to facilitate the observance of the Day.
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Key Points:-

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Key Points:-

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12. Zero Discrimination Day Observed on 1 March 2025.

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Key Points:-

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- "Civil Defence, Guarantee of Security for the Population," which highlights the critical role of civil defence organizations in ensuring public security.

Key Points:-

(i) WCDD was officially established by the International Civil Defence Organization (ICDO) during the 9th General Assembly held on December 18, 1990, at the International Conference Center in Geneva, Switzerland.

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14. Civil Accounts Day Observed on 1 March 2025.

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DEFENCE

1. IAF Recently Conducted 'Desert Hunt 2025' Exercise in Rajasthan.

The Indian Air Force (IAF) recently conducted the integrated Tri-Service Special Forces exercise named Exercise 'Desert Hunt 2025' at Air Force

Station Jodhpur, Rajasthan, from 24 to 28 February 2025.

● The exercise brought together elite Special Forces units from the Indian Army (IA), the Indian Navy (IN), and the IAF to practice interoperability, coordination, and combat efficiency in simulated real-world scenarios.

● During the exercise, Para (Special Forces) of IA, Marine Commandos (MARCOS) of IN, and Garud (Special Forces) of IAF participated together in a simulated combat environment.

● This high-intensity exercise aimed to improve interoperability, coordination, and synergy among the three Special Forces units to respond quickly and effectively to recent emergent security challenges.

Key Points:-

(i) The exercise comprised airborne insertion, precise strikes, hostage rescue, counter-terrorism operations, combat free falls, and urban warfare scenarios that assessed the combat readiness of the forces under realistic situations.

(ii) Senior military officials supervised the exercise, which validated joint doctrines. It also provided a platform to reinforce the IAF's commitment to strengthening national security through seamless inter-service cooperation.

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SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**1. Indian-Origin Tushar Mehta Joins Blue Origin Crew for 10th Space Tourism Mission.**

In February 2025, Indian-origin Tushar Mehta was among the six crew members selected for the 10th space tourism mission of billionaire Jeff Bezos' space company, Blue Origin Enterprises, L.P., based in Washington, USA.

- Tushar Mehta is a partner and co-head of research at a quantitative hedge fund in New York, United States of America (USA). He became the second Indian-origin person, after Gopi Thotakura, to take a Blue Origin flight as part of the NS-25 Mission.
- The suborbital New Shepard (NS) vehicle of Blue Origin was launched from the West Texas facility on February 25, 2025.
- The flight was designated as NS-30 by Blue Origin, marking the New Shepard's 30th overall flight.

Key Points:-

- (i) The six-member crew included Lane Bess, Jesús Calleja, Elaine Chia Hyde, Dr. Richard Scott, Tushar Mehta, and an undisclosed sixth crew member.
- (ii) The NS-30 mission was Lane Bess' second flight with Blue Origin.
- (iii) This mission was also called "Perfect 10" as it marked the 10th crewed mission of the New Shepard vehicle.

2. China Successfully Launches Two High-Resolution Satellites Aboard Long March-2C.

In February 2025, China successfully launched two new satellites, 'Siwei Gaojing-1 03' and 'Siwei Gaojing-1 04,' into sun-synchronous orbit approximately 500 kilometers (km) above Earth using the Long March-2C carrier rocket. The rocket was launched from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in Northwest China.

- These satellites are equipped with high-resolution optical imagers and will be used for data collection to

support natural resource management, urban planning, and other commercial applications.

- This launch marks the 561st flight mission of the Long March carrier rocket series.
- In February 2025, China successfully launched two high-resolution satellites, 'Siwei Gaojing-1 03' and 'Siwei Gaojing-1 04', into a 500 km sun-synchronous orbit using the Long March-2C rocket from Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center. These satellites will support natural resource management, urban planning, and commercial operations.

Key Points:-

- The satellites are part of the China Siwei New Generation Commercial Remote Sensing Satellite System (SuperView constellation), operated by China Siwei under CASC. The Shanghai Academy of Space Technology (SAST) developed these satellites, adding to the existing 9-satellite constellation deployed in near-polar orbits.
- Developed by CALT (China Academy of Launch Vehicle Technology), the Long March-2C is a two-stage launch vehicle with storable propellants.
- It measures 43 meters in length, 3.35 meters in width, and has a lift-off mass of 242.5 metric tons (MT). This mission marks the 561st flight of the Long March series.

3. DRDO Successfully Tests Indigenous Life Support System for Tejas Fighter Jet.

On March 4, 2025, the Defence Bio-Engineering & ElectroMedical Laboratory (DEBEL), a Bengaluru-based DRDO lab under the Ministry of Defence (MoD), successfully conducted high-altitude trials

of the On-Board Oxygen Generating System (OBOGS)-based Integrated Life Support System (ILSS) for the Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas.

- DEBEL, specialized in aerospace life-support systems, designed and developed the OBOGS-ILSS and tested it on the Tejas Prototype Vehicle-3 under extreme conditions, including altitudes up to 50,000 feet and high-G maneuvers, with validation from the Centre for Military Airworthiness & Certification (CEMILAC).
- Larsen & Toubro (L&T) manufactured the system under DRDO's guidance, ensuring technical precision. The ILSS features 90% indigenous components, showcasing L&T's capabilities and supporting India's self-reliance goals.
- The OBOGS-ILSS replaces traditional liquid oxygen systems by generating oxygen in real time using molecular sieve technology. It integrates critical components like the Anti-Gravity Valve (Anti-G Valve) and Emergency Oxygen System (EOS) to enhance pilot safety during combat.

Key Points:-

- The system's development involved multiple R&D partners, including DEBEL, Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA), Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), and the Indian Air Force (IAF), with certification and quality assurance from CEMILAC, Directorate General of Aeronautical Quality Assurance (DGAQA), and the National Flight Test Center (NFTC).
- The OBOGS-ILSS eliminates reliance on imported liquid oxygen, enhances Tejas' combat readiness by providing a lighter and safer life-support system, and increases operational flexibility for the Indian Air Force.
- The technology can be adapted for other

fighter aircraft, including the MiG-29K, expanding its strategic impact beyond Tejas and strengthening India's defense capabilities.

4. NASA and Nokia Unveil the First Mobile Network on the Moon.

In February 2025, NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) from Washington, D.C. (USA) and Nokia from Espoo (Finland) are set to launch the first mobile network on the Moon. This will be part of the IM-2 mission by Intuitive Machines.

- This project is a key part of NASA's Artemis program, which aims to bring humans back to the Moon by 2027.

Key Points:-

- (i) As part of the IM-2 mission, the Athena lander will be sent to the Moon to deploy Nokia's Lunar Surface Communication System (LSCS), which will use Earth-based cellular technology to establish connectivity on the Moon.
- (ii) The network will operate on 4G Long-Term Evolution (LTE) technology, ensuring fast and reliable connectivity for future lunar missions.
- (iii) This mobile network will allow astronauts, lunar vehicles, and mission control to communicate with each other. It will help with real-time data transmission, video calls, and remote operations on the Moon.

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OBITUARY

1. Russian Chess Grandmaster Boris Spassky Dies.

On 27 February 2025, Russian chess grandmaster Boris Spassky passed away at the age of 88 in Moscow, Russia. He was born on 30 January 1937 in Leningrad (now Saint Petersburg), Russia.

- He became the 10th World Chess Champion in 1969 and held the title from 1969-1972.

Key Points:-

- (i) Boris Spassky famously competed with American Bobby Fischer in 1972, a match that became a Cold War conflict between the East (Soviet Union) and West (United States). This match was referred to as the "match of the century" against Bobby Fischer in 1972.
- (ii) He represented France in three chess Olympiads in 1984, 1986, and 1988, and played in the Jardin du Luxembourg in Paris, France during the 1990s.

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