

WEEKLY
CURRENT
AFFAIRS
PDFs



February 2025



A Complete and Comprehensive Current Affairs
Quick Revision PDFs For Every Aspirants.



NATIONAL AFFAIRS / GOVERNMENT SCHEME

1. TN CM M.K. Stalin Inaugurates India's Largest Single-Location Solar Power Plant in Tirunelveli.

In February 2025, Muthuvel Karunanidhi (M.K.) Stalin, Chief Minister (CM) of Tamil Nadu (TN), officially inaugurated the 4.3 Giga Watt (GW) solar cell and module manufacturing facility of Tata Power Solar Systems Limited (TPSSL), a wholly-owned subsidiary of Tata Power Renewable Energy Limited (TPREL). This facility is recognized as India's largest single-location solar manufacturing plant.

- It is situated at Gangaikondan State Industries Promotion Corporation of Tamil Nadu Limited (SIPCOT) Industrial Growth Centre in Tirunelveli district, Tamil Nadu (TN).

- Additionally, he laid the foundation stone for Vikram Solar Ltd's 3 GW solar cell and 6 GW module manufacturing plant, based in Kolkata, West Bengal (WB). This project, with an investment of ₹2,574 crore, is expected to generate 2,500 jobs.

- The event was attended by T.R.B. Rajaa, Minister for Industries & Commerce, Tamil Nadu; Dr. Praveer Sinha, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Managing Director (MD) of Tata Power Solar Systems Limited (TPSSL); and Deepesh Nanda, CEO and MD of Tata Power Renewable Energy Limited (TPREL).

Key Points:-

(i) This facility has been established with an investment of ₹3,800 crore and is expected to generate around 4,000 jobs, with 80% of the workforce comprising women. It is designed to boost employment while supporting India's renewable energy sector.

(ii) Equipped with advanced Tunnel Oxide

Passivated Contact (TOPCon) and Mono Passivated Emitter & Rear Cell (PERC) technologies, the plant is set to meet the growing demand for Renewable Energy (RE) in India. These technologies enhance solar cell efficiency and contribute to sustainable energy production.

(iii) The facility will focus on manufacturing high-efficiency solar cells and modules, aiding India's clean energy goals. Initially, it will cater to Tata Power's ongoing projects before expanding to serve a broader market. TPSSL also operates a manufacturing facility in Bengaluru, Karnataka.

2. Indian Army's Eastern Command Headquarters 'Fort William' Renamed as 'Vijay Durg'.

On February 6, 2025, the Indian Army's (IA) Eastern Headquarters, Fort William in Kolkata, West Bengal (WB), was renamed as 'Vijay Durg' to remove colonial influences. Originally built by the British in 1781 and named after King William III of England, the fort now takes inspiration from the historic Vijaydurg fort in Maharashtra, which served as a key naval base for the Marathas under Chhatrapati Shivaji.

- Spread over 170 acres, the fort features six gates: Chowringhee, Plassey, Calcutta (now Kolkata), Water Gate, St. George's, and Treasury Gate. Fort William has been the Eastern Army Command's headquarters since 1963, following the Sino-India War.

Key Points:-

(i) Additionally, 'Kitchener House' within the fort has been renamed as Manekshaw House, while the South Gate, previously called St. George's Gate, is now known as Shivaji Gate.

(ii) These renaming efforts, initiated in December

2024, are part of broader steps to "Indianize" military traditions, an initiative endorsed by Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi.

(iii) The move aligns with India's larger mission to shed its colonial legacy, following the Indian Navy's (IN) adoption of a new ensign in September 2022.

3. Union Cabinet Approves Key Decisions, Including New Income Tax Bill 2025 & Extension of Skill India Programme.

On 7 February 2025, the Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi, approved the following:

- **New Income Tax (IT) Bill 2025** – Aimed at simplifying tax laws and reducing legal complexities. Effective from the Financial Year (FY) 2025-26, this bill will replace the Income Tax Act of 1961 and apply to taxpayers from the Assessment Year (AY) 2026-27.
- **Extension of National Commission for Safai Karamcharis (NCSK)** – The tenure of NCSK has been extended for three years beyond 31 March 2025, up to 31 March 2028, with a financial implication of approximately Rs. 50.91 crore.

Key Points:-

- (i) The Central Sector Scheme - Skill India Programme (SIP) will continue and be restructured until 2026, with a total allocation of ₹8,800 crore for the period 2022-23 to 2025-26.
- (ii) Ex-post facto approval has been granted for the revision of divisional jurisdiction under the proposed South Coast Railway (SCOR) Zone at Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh (AP).

4. DRDO Restructures Research Verticals to Strengthen DIA-CoEs and Advance Futuristic Defense Technologies.

On February 07, 2025, the Directorate of Futuristic Technology Management (DFTM), under the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) of the Ministry of Defence (MoD), introduced restructured and expanded Research Verticals & Thrust Areas across DRDO Industry Academia - Centres of Excellence (DIA-CoEs) at DRDO headquarters in New Delhi, Delhi.

- This initiative aims to refine and strengthen the focus on future technology requirements in Directed Research (DR) within DIA-CoEs while integrating advanced deep technologies to enhance research outcomes.
- The number of Research Verticals has been expanded from 65 to 82 across 15 DIA-CoEs to optimize research capabilities.
- The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has introduced new research verticals across various DIA-CoEs to enhance advancements in critical defense technologies. IIT Bombay (Maharashtra) will focus on Compound Semiconductor Technologies, crucial for high-performance electronics and defense applications.

Key Points:-

- (i) IIT Hyderabad (Telangana) will specialize in Laser Beam Combining for Communication, Power Transmission & Manufacturing, along with Material Extraction & Recycling, enabling sustainable and efficient resource utilization.
- (ii) IIT Roorkee (Uttarakhand) and IIT Kanpur

(Uttar Pradesh) will drive research in Emerging RF Technologies and Software Defined Radios, respectively, supporting next-generation communication and radar systems.

(iii) IIT Kharagpur (West Bengal) will advance research in Cryptography and Information Security, strengthening cybersecurity and secure communication frameworks for defense operations.

5. Union MoS Jayant Chaudhary Virtually Launches 'Swavalambini' Women Entrepreneurship Programme in Three Northeast States.

In February 2025, Union Minister of State (MoS) (Independent Charge, I/C) Jayant Chaudhary, Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) and Ministry of Education (MoE), virtually launched 'Swavalambini,' a women entrepreneurship programme in nine colleges and universities across three North Eastern (NE) states: Assam, Meghalaya, and Mizoram.

- The programme aims to empower female students in select Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the NE region by equipping them with an entrepreneurial mindset, resources, and mentorship.

Key Points:-

(i) For the first time, MSDE, through the Guwahati (Assam)-based Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship (IIE), in coordination with the National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Aayog), has introduced a structured, stage-wise entrepreneurial process covering awareness, development, mentorship, and funding support.

(ii) The initiative will facilitate structured training through the Entrepreneurship Awareness

Programme (EAP), introducing entrepreneurship as a viable career option for 600 female students via a two-day session covering fundamental entrepreneurial concepts and opportunities.

6. CDAC under MeitY recently signs Lol with LEGO Group to strengthen the Indian toy industry.

In February 2025, the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (CDAC), Noida, Uttar Pradesh (UP), under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), recently signed a Letter of Intent (LoI) with the Creative Play Lab (CPL), a specialized department of The LEGO Group (Denmark), to support the growth of the Indian electronic toy industry.

- The partnership focuses on the project titled "Development of Electronics and Information Technology (IT)-based Control and Automation Solutions for Consumer Electronic Goods (Toy Industry)."

Key Points:-

(i) The aim is to nurture young engineers from under-represented communities such as Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and the North Eastern Region (NER) by providing them with hands-on experience in toy innovation.

(ii) The program is divided into two phases: a 6-month Toy Lab Training at CDAC Noida, UP, where participants will learn to design and develop electronic toys, and a 6-month Industry Internship, offering specialized training to create market-ready toy prototypes.

7. India Achieves Historic Milestone of 100 GW Solar Power Capacity Strengthening Global Renewable Energy Leadership.

In February 2025, Union Minister Pralhad Joshi, Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), announced that India has achieved a historic milestone by surpassing 100 Giga Watt (GW) installed solar energy capacity. This milestone reinforces India's position as a global leader in Renewable Energy (RE).

- This achievement underscores India's commitment to a cleaner and greener future, marking a crucial step toward achieving its ambitious target of 500 GW of non-fossil fuel-based energy capacity by 2030, set by Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi.
- According to MNRE, India's solar power capacity has witnessed an exponential growth of 3450% in the last decade, rising from 2.82 GW in 2014 to 100 GW in 2025.

Key Points:-

- (i) As of January 31, 2025, India's total installed solar energy capacity stands at 100.33 GW, with 84.10 GW under implementation and an additional 47.49 GW under tendering.
- (ii) Solar energy remains the key driver of India's RE sector, contributing 47% of the total installed RE capacity.
- (iii) Top 5 Indian states leading in utility-scale solar installations are: Rajasthan, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu (TN), Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh (MP).

8. GoI Revises Market Intervention Scheme (MIS) Guidelines and Integrates It Under PM-AASHA.

On February 10, 2025, the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare (MoA&FW) revised the guidelines for the Market Intervention Scheme (MIS). As per the revised norms, the Government of India (GoI) has made MIS a component of the integrated scheme of Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay Sanrakshan Abhiyan (PM-AASHA).

- The MIS is implemented at the request of state or Union Territory (UT) governments for the procurement of perishable agricultural commodities such as tomato, onion, and potato, among others. It is activated when there is a minimum 10% reduction in market prices in a state or UT compared to the rates of the last normal season.
- The PM-AASHA scheme was launched in 2018 to provide price assurance for pulses, oilseeds, and copra, ensuring financial stability for farmers. In 2024, the GoI extended the PM-AASHA scheme until 2025-26, with an allocation of Rs. 35,000 crore.
- The Market Intervention Scheme (MIS) is an ad-hoc initiative by the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare (MoA&FW) to prevent distress sales of perishable horticultural and agricultural commodities, ensuring fair prices for farmers during peak harvest periods when market prices drop.

Key Points:-

- (i) MIS will now be implemented only when there is a minimum reduction of 10% in the existing market price compared to the last normal year.
- (ii) As per the revised guidelines, the procurement limit for crops under MIS has been increased from 20% to 25%.
- (iii) State governments now have the option to directly pay the difference between the Market Intervention Price (MIP) and the Selling Price (SP)

into farmers' bank accounts instead of physical procurement.

9. Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan Approves Extension of Groundnut Procurement in Gujarat by 6 Days and Karnataka by 25 Days.

In February 2025, Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare (MoA&FW), approved the extension of the procurement period for groundnut in Gujarat and Karnataka by 6 days and 25 days, respectively, beyond the standard 90-day procurement window, benefiting farmers in these states.

- The Government of India (GoI) approved soybean procurement under the Price Support Scheme (PSS) for Kharif 2024-25 in Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, and Telangana.
- As of February 9, 2025, 19.99 Lakh Metric Tonnes (LMT) of soybean have been procured, benefiting over 8.46 lakh farmers.
- The Government of India (GoI) approved the procurement of soybean and groundnut under the Price Support Scheme (PSS) for Kharif 2024-25 across multiple states. As of February 9, 2025, 19.99 Lakh Metric Tonnes (LMT) of soybean and 15.73 LMT of groundnut have been procured, benefiting over 8.46 lakh and 4.75 lakh farmers, respectively.

Key Points:-

(i) The Government of India (GoI) approved the procurement of Tur, Urad, and Masur under the Price Support Scheme (PSS) up to 100% of state production for 2024-25 to boost domestic pulse production and reduce imports. The Union Budget

FY26 extended this provision for four more years through Central Nodal Agencies (CNAs).

(ii) Launched in 2018, PM AASHA is an umbrella scheme aimed at ensuring remunerative prices for farmers and stabilizing essential commodity prices for consumers. The Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare (MoA&FW) serves as the nodal agency.

(iii) The scheme includes four key components: Price Support Scheme (PSS), Price Deficiency Payment Scheme (PDPS), Market Intervention Scheme (MIS), and Price Stabilisation Fund (PSF).

10. NITI Aayog Releases Policy Report on Enhancing Quality Higher Education in States and Public Universities.

In February 2025, the National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Aayog) released a policy report titled 'Expanding Quality Higher Education through States and State Public Universities', marking the first-of-its-kind policy document in the higher education sector focusing specifically on states and State Public Universities (SPUs).

- The report provides a detailed quantitative analysis of key indicators such as Quality, Funding & Financing, Governance, and Employability over the past 10 years across various themes.

Key Points:-

(i) The report was prepared in consultation with state government officers from Higher and Technical Education departments of over 20 states and Union Territories (UTs), Vice Chancellors (VCs) and senior academicians from 50 SPUs, and heads of State Higher Education

Councils (SHECs).

(ii) Considering higher education expenditure as a percentage of Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP), Bihar ranks highest at 1.56%, followed by Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) at 1.53% and Manipur at 1.45%. The mean per youth expenditure on higher education increased from Rs. 2,174 to Rs. 4,921 between 2005-06 and 2019-20.

(iii) As per the report, India has 495 SPUs, accounting for 81% of total student enrolment among Indian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). States with the highest number of SPUs are Karnataka (43), followed by West Bengal (WB) and Uttar Pradesh (UP) with 38 each.

11. PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana Marks One Year of Implementation.

On February 13, 2025, the Prime Minister Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana (PMSGMBY), the world's largest domestic rooftop solar initiative, marked its 1st anniversary, celebrating a year of empowering households with affordable solar energy and advancing India's transition to a sustainable future.

- The scheme was launched by Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi on February 13, 2024, and is being implemented by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE).

Key Points:-

(i) The scheme aims to provide free electricity of 300 units per month to 1 crore households in India by March 2027. Rooftop solar installations will be implemented in phases, with projections to cross 10 lakh by March 2025, 20 lakh by October 2025, and 40 lakh by March 2026.

(ii) As of January 2025, Gujarat led among all states in the highest number of households benefitting from the scheme, accounting for 41.47% of the total, followed by Maharashtra (22.79%), Uttar Pradesh (8.69%), Kerala (7.73%), and Rajasthan (3.14%).

12. DPIIT to Enforce QCOs for Stainless Steel Seamless Pipes & Tubes from August 2025.

On February 10, 2025, the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoC&I) issued the 'Stainless Steel Pipes and Tubes (Quality Control) Order, 2025,' enforcing quality standards for stainless steel seamless pipes and tubes, effective from August 1, 2025.

- The order aims to restrict the import of sub-standard products, boost domestic manufacturing, prevent unfair trade practices, and ensure consumer safety.

- The Stainless Steel Pipes and Tubes (Quality Control) Order, 2025 mandates a BIS mark for stainless steel seamless pipes and tubes for general service, restricting their production, sale, trade, import, or storage without it, while exempting domestically manufactured goods for export.

- Violations of the BIS Act, 2016, can lead to imprisonment of up to two years or fines starting from ₹2 lakh, increasing to ₹5 lakh or ten times the goods' value for repeat offences.

Key Points:-

(i) Under the BIS Act, 2016, the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) has been issuing QCOs, mandating specified products to obtain mandatory BIS certification.

These QCOs comply with the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade.

(ii) Once a QCO takes effect, no entity can manufacture, import, distribute, sell, store, or display for sale any covered product without a valid BIS certification and standard mark.

(iii) DPIIT has been issuing QCOs since 1987, covering 81 orders for over 330 products under the BIS Act, including essential items such as cement, LPG gas stoves, pressure cookers, air conditioners, and refrigerators.

13. "Union Minister Manohar Lal Khattar and Ed Miliband Co-Chair 4th India-UK Energy Dialogue in New Delhi".

In February 2025, Union Minister Manohar Lal Khattar, Ministry of Power (MoP) and Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), and Ed Miliband, Secretary for the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) for the United Kingdom (UK), co-chaired the 4th India-UK Energy Dialogue in New Delhi.

- During this dialogue, both nations reviewed the progress made in the energy sectors, including power and renewable energy (RE), and reaffirmed their commitment to a sustainable, resilient, and inclusive energy future.

Key Points:-

(i) The Ministers announced the launch of Phase-2 of the India-UK bilateral Accelerating Smart Power & Renewable Energy in India (ASPIRE) programme.

(ii) The Ministers announced the establishment of

a UK-India Offshore Wind Taskforce, with key focus areas such as advancing offshore wind ecosystem development, supply chains, and financing models in both countries.

14. Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh Unveils India's First Indigenous Automated BMWTP 'Srjanam' at AIIMS, New Delhi.

In February 2025, Union Minister of State (MoS) (Independent Charge, IC) Dr. Jitendra Singh, Ministry of Science and Technology (MoS&T) and the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES), launched India's first Indigenous Automated Bio-Medical Waste Treatment Plant (BMWTP) named "Srjanam" at All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi (AIIMS New Delhi), in Delhi.

- It was developed by Thiruvananthapuram (Kerala)-based Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR) - National Institute for Interdisciplinary Science and Technology (NIIST).

- This initiative marks a major step forward in the sustainable handling of biomedical waste. It replaces costly and energy-intensive incinerators, while also imparting a pleasant fragrance to otherwise foul-smelling toxic waste.

- Dr. N. Kalaiselvi (Director General, DG, CSIR), Dr. M. Srinivas (Director, AIIMS New Delhi), Dr. V. K. Paul (Member, NITI Aayog), Dr. Rajiv Bahl (Secretary, Department of Health Research, DHR, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, MoH&FW, and DG, Indian Council of Medical Research, ICMR), and Tanmay Kumar (Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, MoEFCC) were also present at the event.

Key Points:-

(i) The Automated Biomedical Waste Treatment Rig can sanitize harmful biomedical waste like blood, urine, sputum, and lab disposables without relying on costly and energy-intensive incinerators.

(ii) With a daily capacity of 400 kg, it can initially process 10 kg of degradable medical waste per day, providing an eco-friendly alternative to traditional burning methods.

(iii) The initiative supports the government's vision of "Viksit Bharat" by 2047, positioning India as a global leader in environmental and healthcare solutions.

15. MoL&E Collaborates with FoundIt to Enhance Job Opportunities for Youth.

In February 2025, the Ministry of Labour & Employment (MoL&E) entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with FoundIt (formerly known as Monster), a prominent job portal, on June 26, 2024. This partnership seeks to utilize the National Career Service (NCS) Portal to connect job seekers with both domestic and international employment opportunities.

- Union Minister of Labour & Employment and Youth Affairs & Sports, Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya, highlighted the platform's significant role in the government's vision of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas.'

- The NCS Portal, launched in 2015, has over 3.5 crore registered job seekers and 30 lakh employers.

- The integration of the NCS Portal with the e-Migrate platform (Ministry of External Affairs) provides job seekers with access to verified opportunities in countries such as Germany, Finland, and Middle

Eastern nations. Over 500 Recruitment Agencies (RAs) are onboarded to facilitate this.

Key Points:-

(i) NCS is connected with My Bharat and the Skill India Digital Hub (SIDH) to address skill gaps, enhancing employability for youth in both blue-collar and white-collar positions. The partnership also emphasizes providing opportunities for women and Persons with Disabilities (PWD) through fair and inclusive hiring practices.

(ii) FoundIt will utilize Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) to share global job listings on the NCS Portal, offering seamless access for candidates.

(iii) Countries like Germany, Finland, and those in the Middle East are seeking skilled workers for blue-collar and white-collar jobs. This MoU aims to connect Indian job seekers to these high-demand opportunities.

16. India's DPIIT and South Korean Transport Institute Sign MoU for Logistics & Infrastructure Collaboration Under PM GatiShakti.

In February 2025, the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoC&I), Government of India (GoI), signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Korea Transport Institute (KOTI) of the Republic of Korea. The MoU was signed at the Sejong National Research Complex in South Korea by Mr. Youngchan Kim, President of KOTI, and H.E. Amit Kumar, India's Ambassador to the Republic of Korea.

- This collaboration seeks to strengthen cooperation in logistics and infrastructure development by utilizing

KoTI's expertise to support India's ambitious infrastructure projects. It will contribute to the creation of infrastructure and logistics master plans under the esteemed PM GatiShakti National Master Plan.

- PM GatiShakti is a bold infrastructure development initiative launched by the Government of India on October 13, 2021.

- It aims to provide multimodal connectivity infrastructure to various economic zones across India.

Key Points:-

- (i) A GIS-based digital platform that consolidates data from 16 ministries.
- (ii) It aids in tracking and planning roads, railways, airports, ports, waterways, power transmission, and more.
- (iii) It integrates infrastructure schemes from various ministries and state governments, including Bharatmala, Sagarmala, inland waterways, and UDAN, to enhance connectivity and boost the competitiveness of Indian businesses.

17. Assam Cabinet Renames Jagiroad Electronic City to 'Ratan Tata Electronic City.'

On March 4, 2025, the Assam Cabinet officially renamed Northeast India's first Electronic City in Jagiroad, Morigaon district, as "Ratan Tata Electronic City" to honor the contributions of Mumbai (Maharashtra)-based Tata Group and its late Chairman, Ratan Naval Tata.

- This decision acknowledges Ratan Tata's philanthropic legacy and the Tata Group's significant role in Assam's socio-economic development.

- The renaming aligns with Tata Group's plans to establish a semiconductor plant in Assam, expected to create over 30,000 jobs.

Key Points:-

- (i) Indian industrialist and philanthropist Ratan Tata passed away on October 9, 2024. He was renowned for his contributions to education, healthcare, and rural development.
- (ii) He served as the Chairman of the Sir Ratan Tata Trust (SRTT) and Sir Dorabji Tata Trust (SDTT), India's largest private-sector philanthropic trusts.
- (iii) In 2000, he received the Padma Bhushan, India's 3rd-highest civilian honor, for his service in trade and industry. In 2008, he was honored with the Padma Vibhushan, India's 2nd-highest civilian award, for his exceptional contributions.

18. Maharashtra Government Unveils Maitri 2.0 Initiative.

The Maharashtra government has launched the MAITRI (Maharashtra Industry, Trade, and Investment Facilitation Cell) 2.0 Portal, an advanced digital platform aimed at streamlining the investment process and ensuring a seamless experience for investors and businesses.

- Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis officially inaugurated the portal, making it fully operational. The launch comes after Maharashtra secured MoUs worth ₹15.70 lakh crore at the 2025 World Economic Forum's annual summit in Davos, Switzerland.

Key Points:-

- (i) MAITRI is the dedicated agency of the Maharashtra Government for promoting economic growth, fostering innovation, and simplifying the investment process in the state.
- (ii) It plays a crucial role in positioning Maharashtra as a leading investment destination.

19. Union Budget 2025-26 Highlights India's 100 GW Nuclear Power Target by 2047 and ₹20,000 Crore Allocated for Indigenous SMRs.

On February 1, 2025, Union Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Ministry of Finance (MoF), presented the Union Budget 2025-26, emphasizing nuclear energy as a key sector. The budget focuses on developing indigenous nuclear technology, encouraging private sector participation, and making significant investments in nuclear infrastructure.

- India has set an ambitious target of 100 Gigawatts (GW) of nuclear power by 2047, aligning with its long-term energy strategy.
- This initiative aims to enhance energy security, reduce fossil fuel dependence, and support the vision of Viksit Bharat (Developed India).

Key Points:-

- (i) The Nuclear Energy Mission for Viksit Bharat is a significant initiative aimed at advancing research and innovation in nuclear power, thereby enhancing India's domestic nuclear capabilities.
- (ii) To facilitate this, the government has earmarked Rs 20,000 crore (USD 2.6 billion) for the development of five indigenous Small Modular

Reactors (SMRs) by 2033.

- (iii) The Government of India has set a target to increase nuclear power capacity from 8,180 MW in 2024 to 22,480 MW by 2031-32, reinforcing the country's commitment to clean energy and energy security.

20. India Implements New Harmonized System of Nomenclature (HSN) Code for GI-Tagged Rice Varieties.

On February 1, 2025, Union Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Minister of Finance (MoF), proposed an amendment to the Customs Tariff Act to assign Harmonized System of Nomenclature (HSN) codes to Geographical Indication (GI)-recognized rice varieties during the Union Budget for the financial year 2025-26 (FY26). The HSN code is a numerical classification system used in global trade.

- This amendment introduces specific Harmonized System (HS) codes for the export of rice varieties recognized under the GI registry.
- This marks the first instance globally of assigning HS codes to GI-tagged rice, aiming to streamline exports and ensure traceability.
- The newly introduced HS codes for GI-recognized rice varieties are 1006-30-11 for Parboiled rice and 1006-30-91 for White rice, allowing their export without special notifications from the Ministry of Finance (MoF).

Key Points:-

- (i) As of March 2020, the Indian Patent Office had granted GI tags to 20 rice varieties, including Navara, Palakkadan Matta, Pokkali, Wayanad Jeerakasala, Wayanad Gandhakasala, Kalanamak, Kaipad, Ajara Ghansal, Ambemohar,

Joha, Gobindobog, Tulapanji, Katarni, Chokuwa, Bhadara Chinoor, Mushqbudji, Marcha, Khaw Tai (Khamti), Lal Chawl, and Kalonunia.

(ii) Between April 2023 and March 2024, additional rice varieties such as Bhadara Chinoor, Mushqbudji, Marcha, Khaw Tai (Khamti), Uttarakhand's Lal Chawl, Kalonunia, and Koraput Kalajeera received GI tags. Additionally, Andaman Karen Musley Rice, cultivated by the Karen community in the Andaman Islands, recently received a GI tag.

(iii) The Harmonized System (HS), developed by the World Customs Organization (WCO), is a globally recognized product classification system that assigns specific 6-digit codes to commodities, facilitating 98% of international trade across over 200 countries and economies. Governed by the International Convention on the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System, it categorizes more than 5,000 commodity groups, ensuring standardized trade classification worldwide.

- India has consistently ranked among the top 3 countries on USGBC's annual list, reflecting its commitment to achieving the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030.

Key Points:-

- (i) China secured the top rank with 1,860 LEED-certified projects, covering over 25 million GSM, followed by Canada in 2nd place with 300 projects, covering 10 million GSM.
- (ii) The rankings are based on data and analysis of LEED-certified GSM space between January 1 and December 31, 2024.
- (iii) Mexico (6th), Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the People's Republic of China (PRC) (7th), Italy (8th), Brazil (9th), and Turkey (10th).

INTERNATIONAL

1. India Retains 3rd Rank Globally for LEED Green Building Certification in 2024 and China Secures Top Position.

In February 2025, the Washington D.C. (United States of America, USA)-based United States Green Building Council (USGBC) released its latest Annual List of Top 10 Countries and Regions for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) in 2024. India has retained its 3rd spot globally on the list, with 370 LEED-certified projects covering 8.50 million Gross Square Meters (GSM) or 91.5 million square feet (sq. ft.) of area.

2. "India and Oman Sign EPC Agreement to Strengthen Archival Cooperation."

On February 10, 2025, the New Delhi (Delhi)-based National Archives of India (NAI) and the Muscat (Sultanate of Oman)-based National Records and Archives Authority (NRAA) of Oman signed an Executive Programme of Cooperation (EPC) for the period 2025-2028 at NAI, New Delhi (Delhi).

- The EPC aims to strengthen cultural and historical ties by facilitating the exchange of archival materials, expertise, and technology between the two nations.
- This joint initiative marks a significant milestone in India-Oman bilateral relations, fostering a robust and enduring cultural exchange that will benefit scholars, researchers, and the general public in both countries.

- The agreement was signed by Arun Singhal (Indian Administrative Service, IAS, Director General, DG, NAI, Government of India, GoI) and Dr. Hamed Bin Mohammed Al Dhawaini (Chairman, NRAA, Government of the Sultanate of Oman).

Key Points:-

- (i) The agreement outlines a range of collaborative initiatives, including the exchange and reproduction of documents, preservation of historical manuscripts and books, and joint efforts in publishing cultural, literary, and historical works.
- (ii) It emphasizes the importance of organizing conferences, exhibitions, and workshops on archives management, aiming to build capacity, share expertise, and promote scientific research.
- (iii) The agreement facilitates research into NAI's collections to discover valuable Omani documents in India, while also ensuring the examination and preservation of Indian archives in Oman.

3. India Falls to 96th Rank in Corruption Perceptions Index 2024 Scores 38.

On February 11, 2025, Berlin (Germany)-based International Non-Governmental Organization (NGO), Transparency International (TI) released the '2024 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI 2024),' assessing the perceived levels of public sector corruption across 180 countries.

- According to the 2024 CPI Report, India ranks 96th out of 180 countries with a score of 38, reflecting a decline from its 2023 ranking of 93rd with a score of 39. India shares its score and rank with Gambia and Maldives.

- Denmark secured the top position in the 2024 CPI for the 7th consecutive year with a score of 90, followed by Finland (88) and Singapore (84).

Key Points:-

- (i) The 2024 CPI reveals that approximately 85% of the global population (about 6.8 billion people) live in countries experiencing high corruption levels.
- (ii) The most corrupt nations at the bottom of the ranking include South Sudan at 180th (score 8), Somalia at 179th (score 9), Venezuela at 178th (score 10), and Syria at 177th (score 12).

BANKING & FINANCE**1. CCI Approves Proposed Acquisition of Two Subsidiaries of POSCO Holdings Inc.**

In February 2025, the Competition Commission of India (CCI) approved the proposed acquisition by POSCO India Processing Center Private Limited (Acquirer) of the entire shareholding of South Korea-based LX International Corporation (Seller) in POSCO-India Pune Processing Center Private Limited (Target).

- POSCO India Processing Center and POSCO-India Pune Processing Center are engaged in the processing and distribution of hot and cold rolled sheets and plates, galvanized steel, specialty steel, electrical steel, and other products such as wire rods, scrap, and coils.

Key Points:-

Both POSCO entities operate under POSCO Holdings Inc., a South Korean steel manufacturing company.

2. SBI Mutual Fund Increases Stake in Axis Bank to 5.0238%.

In February 2025, Mumbai (Maharashtra)-based SBI Mutual Fund (MF), managed by SBI Funds Management Limited (SBIFML), increased its stake by 0.036% in Mumbai (Maharashtra)-based Axis Bank Limited.

- This stake expansion, executed through an open market operation (OMO), amounts to 11,44,160 equity shares.

Key Points:-

(i) Before this acquisition, SBI MF held a 4.9878% stake in Axis Bank, equivalent to 15,44,18,049 shares.

(ii) After the acquisition, SBI Mutual Fund (SBI MF) increased its stake in Axis Bank to 5.0238%, equivalent to 15,55,32,209 shares.

(i) The RBI Digital Payments Index (DPI) is structured around five key parameters. Payment enablers account for 25%, representing the foundational aspects that support digital transactions. Payment infrastructure (Demand-side) contributes 10%, assessing the accessibility of digital payment systems for consumers, while Payment infrastructure (Supply-side) holds 15%, evaluating the availability and expansion of digital payment services.

(ii) Payment performance, the most significant factor, carries a 45% weight, measuring the efficiency and volume of digital transactions. Lastly, Consumer centricity makes up 5%, focusing on user experience, security, and grievance redressal in digital payments.

(iii) Each parameter comprises sub-parameters with various measurable indicators to evaluate the growth of digital payments in India.

3. RBI's Digital Payments Index Rises to 465.33 in September 2024.

In January 2025, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) reported that its Digital Payments Index (DPI) increased from 445.5 in March 2024 to 465.33 in September 2024, marking an 11.11% Year-on-Year (Y-o-Y) growth.

- The rise in RBI's DPI was primarily driven by enhancements in payment infrastructure and improved payment performance across India.
- RBI-DPI has been published by RBI since January 1, 2021, with March 2018 as the base period (DPI score for March 2018 is set at 100). It tracks the adoption of digital payments across India.

Key Points:-

4. Kerala Receives ₹2,424 Crore World Bank Loan to Enhance Healthcare Infrastructure.

In February 2025, the Government of Kerala (GoK) approved the 'Kerala Health System Improvement Programme (KHSP)' with a ₹2,424.28 crore (approximately USD 280 million) loan from the United States of America (USA)-based World Bank (WB).

- This initiative received approval during a Cabinet meeting chaired by Kerala's Chief Minister (CM) Pinarayi Vijayan and will be implemented under the Programme for Results (P for R) model.
- The programme aims to enhance living standards and life expectancy by focusing on disease prevention, accident reduction, and minimizing premature deaths,

with a particular emphasis on benefiting economically disadvantaged groups in Kerala.

- The programme aims to build a robust health system to address emerging health challenges, including those linked to climate change. Additionally, a 24×7 emergency care network will be developed, featuring ambulances and a trauma registry to enhance trauma and emergency medical services.

Key Points:-

- (i) Efforts will be made to strengthen elderly care by engaging local self-government institutions and improving the efficiency of healthcare professionals to ensure better service delivery.
- (ii) The initiative focuses on expanding the use of universal digital health applications while increasing healthcare investment to modernize and enhance Kerala's medical infrastructure.
- (iii) A comprehensive healthcare ecosystem will be developed to reduce the prevalence of NCDs, ensuring better long-term health outcomes. Kerala has already made significant progress in public health, surpassing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set for 2030.

5. PNB MetLife Collaborates with Policybazaar to Introduce Smart Invest Pension Plan.

On February 6, 2025, Mumbai (Maharashtra)-based PNB MetLife India Insurance Company Limited (PNB MetLife) partnered with Gurugram (Haryana)-based Policybazaar Insurance Brokers Private Limited to introduce the 'PNB MetLife Smart Invest Pension Plan,' a Unit-Linked, Non-Participating Individual Pension Plan. This partnership focuses on delivering accessible and

seamless retirement solutions through digital platforms.

- The plan is specifically designed for individuals aged 40 to 50 years, offering flexibility for early retirement planning and ensuring financial security post-retirement.
- The plan includes two funds—Pension Mid Cap Fund and Pension Bond Fund—available from February 1 to February 14, 2025. It offers a 60% tax-free lump sum withdrawal and a Rs.10 Net Asset Value (NAV) for both funds.

Key Points:-

- (i) The plan ensures maximum investment growth by eliminating premium allocation and policy administration charges. Additionally, it offers flexibility to postpone the vesting age up to 70 years, allowing individuals to align their retirement goals as per their evolving financial needs.
- (ii) Investors can choose between the Pension Mid Cap Fund for higher growth potential or the Pension Bond Fund for stability. The plan also provides unlimited fund switches, premium redirection, and partial withdrawals after 5 years, offering greater financial flexibility.

6. TPREL and Bank of Baroda Sign MoU to Finance Rooftop Solar Projects Under PMSGMBY.

On February 6, 2025, Mumbai (Maharashtra)-based Tata Power Renewable Energy Limited (TPREL) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Vadodara (Gujarat)-based Bank of Baroda (BoB) to provide financial assistance for Residential Rooftop Solar Installations.

- This partnership aims to support the Prime Minister - Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana (PMSGMBY), a government initiative targeting the installation of rooftop solar panels in 1 crore households by March 2027.
- Under the agreement, homeowners can avail loans of up to ₹6 lakh at interest rates starting from 7% per annum, with both fixed and floating rate options available.

Key Points:-

- (i) For solar systems up to 3 kilowatt (kW), homeowners can access loans up to ₹2 lakh without requiring income documentation.
- (ii) The scheme mandates only a 10% margin contribution, with flexible repayment tenures of up to 10 years.
- (iii) Installations between 3 kW and 10 kW qualify for loans up to ₹6 lakh, requiring a 20% margin contribution.

7. IDFC FIRST Bank recently launches an exclusive banking package for senior citizens.

On February 6, 2025, Mumbai (Maharashtra)-based IDFC FIRST Bank Limited, a subsidiary of Infrastructure Development Finance Company (IDFC) Limited, recently launched an exclusive set of banking products and services designed specifically for senior citizens.

- The newly launched offerings include the Senior Citizen Savings Account and Senior Citizen Fixed Deposits (FDs), designed to cater to the unique financial needs of elderly individuals.

- This initiative aims to provide secure, customized, and superior financial solutions tailored to meet the unique needs of this important demographic.

- IDFC FIRST Bank recently introduced the Senior Citizen Savings Account, eliminating over 30 charges associated with regular savings accounts. This account is tailored to meet the financial needs of senior citizens, ensuring greater convenience and cost savings.

Key Points:-

- (i) The bank has also launched Senior Citizen Fixed Deposits (FDs), offering an additional 0.5% interest rate compared to regular deposits. This initiative aims to provide higher returns and financial security to senior customers.
- (ii) A new feature, Senior Citizen Specials, has been integrated into the bank's mobile banking application. It includes customized investment solutions, cyber insurance coverage of ₹2 lakh, and a complimentary 1-year MediBuddy membership, which offers unlimited doctor video consultations for up to four family members, up to 15% discounts at network pharmacies, a full-body health checkup covering 50+ parameters, and a ₹500 wallet balance for healthcare expenses. Additionally, seniors can access a simplified mutual fund investment option backed by research to modify investments based on their risk-reward appetite.
- (iii) To provide greater financial flexibility, IDFC FIRST Bank has also waived penalties on premature FD closures, allowing senior citizens to withdraw their funds anytime without incurring any charges.

8. RBI Cuts Repo Rate to 6.25% in 6th Bi-Monthly Policy for FY25.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) met from February 5 to 7, 2025, and released the 6th bi-monthly monetary policy for the financial year 2024-25 (FY 25). This was the first meeting chaired by Sanjay Malhotra after assuming charge as RBI Governor on December 11, 2024.

- This session marked the 53rd meeting of the MPC and was the last one for FY 25.
- The committee unanimously decided to reduce the policy repo rate under the Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF) by 25 basis points to 6.25% from 6.5%, effective immediately.
- Consequently, the Standing Deposit Facility (SDF) rate was adjusted to 6.00%, while the Marginal Standing Facility (MSF) rate and the Bank Rate were set at 6.50%.

Key Points:-

- (i) RBI projected real GDP growth for FY 26 at 6.7% in Q1 (April-June 2025), 7.0% in Q2 (July-September 2025), and 6.5% in Q3 & Q4.
- (ii) RBI projects retail inflation at 4.2% for FY 26 while retaining the 4.8% forecast for FY 25; introduces 'bank.in' and 'fin.in' domains to enhance cybersecurity.
- (iii) RBI to implement AFA for cross-border digital transactions, allow non-bank brokers access to NDS-OM, form a panel on market timings, and defer LCR & project financing norms to 2026.

9. Angel One AMC Launches India's First Nifty Total Market ETF and Index Fund in February 2025.

In February 2025, Mumbai (Maharashtra)-based Angel One Asset Management Company (AMC) Limited, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Angel One Limited, launched two New Fund Offerings (NFOs)—Angel One Nifty Total Market ETF, India's first Exchange Traded Fund (ETF), and Angel One Nifty Total Market Index Fund.

- The funds are passively managed and aim to track the Nifty Total Market Total Return Index (TRI), providing a low-cost and efficient investment strategy. Both NFOs were opened for subscription on February 10, 2025, and will close on February 21, 2025.

Key Points:-

- (i) Both funds aim to track 750 stocks from the Nifty 500 and Nifty Microcap 250 indices across 22 sectors, covering large (60%), mid (19%), small (10%), and microcap (4%) segments, accounting for 93% of India's total market capitalization.
- (ii) The NFO is priced at Rs 10 per unit with no exit load. The minimum investment amount is Rs 1,000, with subsequent investments allowed in multiples of Re 1.

10. RBI Fines Federal Bank and Karur Vysya Bank ₹35.60 Lakh for Regulatory Violations.

In February 2025, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) imposed monetary penalties totaling ₹35.60 lakh on Federal Bank Limited and Karur Vysya Bank Limited for non-compliance with specific regulatory directions.

- Federal Bank has been fined ₹27.30 lakh for failing to comply with RBI directions on interest rates of deposits. An inspection revealed that the bank had opened certain savings deposit accounts in the names of entities not eligible to hold such accounts.

- In February 2025, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) levied monetary penalties totaling ₹35.60 lakh on Federal Bank Limited and Karur Vysya Bank Limited for failing to comply with specific regulatory directives.

Key Points:-

(i) Federal Bank was fined ₹27.30 lakh for violating RBI guidelines on interest rates of deposits. An inspection found that the bank had opened savings deposit accounts for ineligible entities.

(ii) Karur Vysya Bank faced a ₹8.30 lakh penalty for non-compliance with RBI's loan system for bank credit delivery. The bank failed to maintain the required proportion of outstanding loan amounts in line with sanctioned working capital limits for certain borrowers.

(iii) The penalties were imposed under Section 47A(1)(c) read with Section 46(4)(i) of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949. The RBI carried out statutory inspections and compliance reviews before taking action against both banks.

11. SEBI Unveils MITRA Platform to Assist Investors in Tracking Inactive Mutual Fund Folios.

On February 2025, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) launched a new digital platform, Mutual Fund Investment Tracing and Retrieval Assistant (MITRA). The platform aims to assist investors in tracking and reclaiming inactive or unclaimed Mutual Fund (MF) folios.

- This initiative was introduced through a circular issued by SEBI under the powers granted by Section 11(1) of the SEBI Act, 1992, in conjunction with Regulation 77 of SEBI (Mutual Funds) Regulations, 1996. The objective is to safeguard investor interests and enhance the regulation and development of the securities market.

Key Points:-

(i) As per SEBI's circular, the platform will help investors recover investments that may have been forgotten, lost, or left unclaimed due to outdated Know Your Customer (KYC) details or the demise of the original investor.

(ii) The platform will be jointly hosted by two Qualified Registrar and Transfer Agents (QRTAs): Chennai (Tamil Nadu)-based Computer Age Management Services Limited (CAMS) and Hyderabad (Telangana)-based KFin Technologies Limited. These QRTAs will act as agents for Asset Management Companies (AMCs).

(iii) SEBI has mandated SEBI-registered brokers to establish a separate business unit (SBU) for trading in Government Securities (G-secs) through the Negotiated Dealing System Order Matching (NDS-OM).

12. SIDBI and AFD Ink \$100 Million Deal to Strengthen Green Financing for Indian MSMEs.

On February 12, 2025, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh (UP)-based Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) and Paris (France)-based French Development Agency (Agence Française de Développement, AFD) signed a USD 100 million Credit Facility Agreement (CFA) to enhance green

finance solutions for India's Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).

- This partnership aims to promote sustainable development and aid the transition to a low-carbon economy by offering affordable financing solutions.
- AFD will provide a USD 100 million credit line to SIDBI, enabling MSMEs to access affordable financing for energy-efficient technologies, renewable energy solutions, and climate-friendly business practices, aligning with the goal of promoting green finance.
- The initiative aims to support businesses in transitioning to a low-carbon economy by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and promoting renewable energy adoption.

Key Points:-

- (i) MSMEs play a crucial role in India's commitment to achieving carbon neutrality by 2070, and this collaboration aligns with the efforts of the Greening Indian Financial System (GIFS) Platform.
- (ii) The GIFS Platform focuses on incorporating sustainability and climate considerations into the strategies of Indian financial stakeholders.
- (iii) This partnership highlights the increasing significance of sustainable finance in fostering inclusive and resilient economic growth.

13. SFBs Recently Received RBI Approval to Offer Credit Lines via UPI.

In February 2025, Small Finance Banks (SFBs) recently received the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) approval to provide pre-sanctioned credit lines through the Unified Payments Interface (UPI). This

move, effective from February 12, 2025, aligns with the RBI's December 2024 announcement during the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting.

- UPI, India's real-time payment system developed by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), previously allowed transactions via savings accounts, overdrafts, prepaid wallets, and credit cards.
- The RBI has now expanded this to include pre-sanctioned credit lines issued by SFBs, enabling instant access to credit for individuals and small businesses.
- The Unified Payments Interface (UPI) is a digital payment tool that can help achieve the goals of the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) and promote equitable economic growth.

Key Points:-

- (i) In September 2023, the RBI expanded the scope of UPI by allowing pre-sanctioned credit lines to be linked through the platform. However, this feature was initially limited to commercial banks, excluding Payments Banks, Small Finance Banks (SFBs), and Regional Rural Banks (RRBs).
- (ii) Customers must provide explicit consent before availing credit lines, ensuring transparency. SFBs determine credit limits, interest rates, and repayment tenure under their board-approved policies. Customers are required to review the terms and conditions before opting in.
- (iii) This facility aims to support 'new-to-credit' (NTC) customers, including farmers, small entrepreneurs, and rural businesses, helping reduce dependence on informal lenders charging high-interest rates.

14. AMSL Recently Inks MoU with MIL & TCL for Advanced Defence Solutions.

In February 2025, Hyderabad (Telangana)-based Apollo Micro Systems Limited (AMSL) recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Pune (Maharashtra)-based Munitions India Limited (MIL) under the Ministry of Defence (MoD).

- It aims to design, develop, and deploy advanced defence systems for domestic and international markets.

Key Points:-

- AMSL has also entered into an MoU with Kanpur (Maharashtra)-based Troop Comforts Limited (TCL) under MoD to jointly develop, manufacture, and market next-generation air defence systems, including anti-drone and anti-aircraft solutions.
- These partnerships aim to address the current and future needs of the Indian Defence Forces, paramilitary forces, police organizations, central and state government agencies, the civil sector, and international export markets.
- AMSL, established in 1985, manufactures advanced electronic and electro-mechanical solutions for industries such as infrastructure, transportation, aerospace, and defence.

15. SEBI Introduces Framework Allowing Retail Investors Access to Algo Trading from August 1, 2025.

In February 2025, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) introduced a comprehensive framework to regulate algorithmic (algo) trading for retail investors. Under this new framework, retail investors will gain access to SEBI's Direct Market

Access (DMA) facility through registered brokers, a privilege previously limited to institutional players.

- The Brokers' Industry Standards Forum has been assigned the responsibility of formulating detailed implementation standards by April 1, 2025, with the new regulations scheduled to take effect from August 1, 2025.
- Brokers must obtain stock exchange approval for each algorithm offered to retail investors. Any modifications to approved algorithms also require prior consent from the exchange.
- All algo orders must carry a unique identifier assigned by the exchange to ensure a clear audit trail and enhance transparency in trading activities.

Key Points:-

- Tech-savvy retail investors who develop their own trading algorithms must register them with exchanges through their brokers if their trading activity surpasses a specified order-per-second threshold. These algorithms can only be used for personal accounts, including those of immediate family members.
- Stock exchanges must establish SOPs for testing, monitoring, and simulating algo trading. A "kill switch" mechanism must be implemented to disable specific algos in case of irregularities. Brokers must ensure a clear distinction between algo and non-algo orders.
- To prevent excessive risk-taking and market manipulation, exchanges will impose limits on order frequency and leverage, require backtesting environments to validate algo strategies, enforce stricter oversight on brokers offering algo platforms, and implement technical compliance measures such as audit trails, real-time

monitoring, and circuit breakers.

16. SIDBI and AFD Ink \$100 Million Deal to Strengthen Green Financing for Indian MSMEs.

On February 12, 2025, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh (UP)-based Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) and Paris (France)-based French Development Agency (Agence Française de Développement, AFD) signed a USD 100 million Credit Facility Agreement (CFA) to enhance green finance solutions for India's Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).

- This partnership aims to promote sustainable development and aid the transition to a low-carbon economy by offering affordable financing solutions.
- AFD will provide a USD 100 million credit line to SIDBI, enabling MSMEs to access affordable financing for energy-efficient technologies, renewable energy solutions, and climate-friendly business practices, aligning with the goal of promoting green finance.
- The initiative aims to support businesses in transitioning to a low-carbon economy by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and promoting renewable energy adoption.

Key Points:-

- (i) MSMEs play a crucial role in India's commitment to achieving carbon neutrality by 2070, and this collaboration aligns with the efforts of the Greening Indian Financial System (GIFS) Platform.
- (ii) The GIFS Platform focuses on incorporating sustainability and climate considerations into the strategies of Indian financial stakeholders.

- (iii) This partnership highlights the increasing significance of sustainable finance in fostering inclusive and resilient economic growth.

17. Bajaj Allianz General Insurance recently launches 'HERizon Care', India's first comprehensive health insurance plan exclusively for women.

In February 2025, Pune (Maharashtra)-based Bajaj Allianz General Insurance Company Limited, India's leading private general insurer, recently announced the launch of 'HERizon Care', a new health insurance product designed exclusively to cater to the evolving healthcare requirements of women.

- HERizon Care is India's first comprehensive health insurance plan that offers various specialized covers in a single policy, ensuring holistic protection customized to meet the unique needs of women. This new offering aims to address critical illnesses, maternal and reproductive health, wellness, and more, empowering women with financial security throughout different life stages.

Key Points:-

- (i) The plan provides coverage for Infertility Treatment, Assisted Reproductive Technology, Maternity Expenses, Adoption Expenses, Pre-natal Health (In-Utero Treatment), and Congenital Disability Cover, among others. It also extends coverage to surrogate mothers, oocyte donors, and live-in partners, while also covering legal expenses for sexual assault, kidnapping, and acid attacks.
- (ii) HERizon Care includes two key components, Vita Shield and Cradle Care, along with a range of optional covers to address specific healthcare

requirements.

(iii) Women aged 18 to 80 years and children from 90 days to 35 years are eligible to avail the benefits of this new health insurance product.

18. SBI recently reports an 84.32% surge in NP, reaching ₹16,891 crore in Q3 FY25.

In February 2025, Mumbai (Maharashtra)-based State Bank of India (SBI) recently reported an 84.32% year-on-year (YoY) rise in its Net Profit (NP), reaching ₹16,891 crore, up from ₹9,164 crore in the 3rd Quarter of Financial Year 2024-25 (Q3 FY25). The surge was primarily driven by the absence of a one-time ₹7,100 crore pension provision and a decline in operating expenses.

- The operating profit for the quarter stood at ₹23,551 crore, marking a 15.81% YoY increase, while Net Interest Income (NII) grew by 4.09% YoY to ₹41,446 crore.

- The Return on Assets (ROA) improved by 42 basis points (bps) YoY to 1.04%, and the Net Interest Margin (NIM) for domestic operations stood at 3.15%.

- SBI's total advances surpassed ₹40 lakh crore, marking a 13.49% YoY growth, while total deposits recorded a 9.81% YoY increase.

Key Points:-

(i) SBI's Gross Non-Performing Assets (NPA) ratio declined to 2.07%, while the Net NPA ratio improved to 0.53%, indicating stronger asset quality.

(ii) The bank's Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR) stood at 13.03%, reinforcing a stable financial position.

(iii) SBI strengthened its digital footprint, with 64% of new Savings Accounts (SA) opened via YONO (You Only Need One).

19. Infibeam Avenues' RediffPay Obtains TPAP License from NPCI to Join India's UPI Ecosystem.

In February 2025, Infibeam Avenues Limited, a leading Indian fintech company headquartered in Gandhinagar, Gujarat, announced that its subsidiary, Rediff.com India Ltd., has obtained a Third-Party Application Provider (TPAP) license from the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) for its digital payment platform, RediffPay.

- This approval allows RediffPay to offer Unified Payments Interface (UPI) services, marking Infibeam's entry into India's consumer-facing digital payments sector.

Key Points:-

(i) Axis Bank Limited will act as the PSP bank for RediffPay, facilitating UPI-based transactions. This partnership aims to ensure secure, real-time inter-bank payments, leveraging Axis Bank's banking infrastructure and Infibeam's fintech expertise.

(ii) The TPAP license follows Infibeam Avenues' acquisition of a 54% stake in Rediff.com in August 2024 for Rs. 500 million (USD 5.7 million).

(iii) NPCI (National Payments Corporation of India) is a non-profit umbrella organization responsible for operating retail payments and settlement systems in India, regulated by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the Indian Banks' Association (IBA), and owned by a consortium of major Indian banks, including public, private, and foreign banks.

MOUs and Agreement

1. India & Panama Sign First-Ever MoU to Implement Quick Impact Projects (QIP) for Socio-Economic Development.

In February 2025, India signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Panama for the first time to implement Quick Impact Projects (QIP) in Panama. The MoU aims to enhance socio-economic infrastructure and provide tangible benefits to Panama's local communities.

- The agreement was signed by Dr. Sumit Seth, India's Ambassador to Panama, Costa Rica, and Nicaragua, and Javier Martínez-Acha Vásquez, Panama's Foreign Minister, in Panama City, Panama.
- The QIP will be supported by financial aid from the Government of India (GoI), ensuring rapid and visible community benefits.
- The MoU prioritizes two key sectors: Physical Infrastructure, which includes the development of roads, community centers, and essential public facilities, and Social Infrastructure, focusing on investments in healthcare, education, and sanitation to uplift local communities.

Key Points:-

- (i) In 2020, India provided Panama with medical aid for COVID-19 assistance.
- (ii) In 2015, India upgraded an Information Technology (IT) center in Panama, contributing to the country's technological advancement.

SPORTS

1. Veteran Bangladeshi Cricketer Mushfiquir Rahim Announces Retirement from ODIs.

In March 2025, Mushfiquir Rahim, a veteran wicketkeeper-batsman from Bangladesh, announced his retirement from One Day International (ODI) cricket with immediate effect.

- He made his ODI debut nearly 20 years ago and is Bangladesh's second-highest run-scorer in ODIs, with 7,795 runs in 274 matches at an average of 36.42, including 9 centuries and 49 half-centuries. (Tamim Iqbal holds the record with 8,357 runs.)

Key Points:-

- (i) Apart from ODIs, he has played 94 Test matches and 102 Twenty20 (T20) matches.
- (ii) He is also one of only three Bangladeshi batters to have scored a century in the ODI World Cup.

2. Sri Lanka's Former Captain Dimuth Karunaratne Announces Retirement from International Cricket.

In February 2025, Frank Dimuth Madushanka Karunaratne, the former captain of the Sri Lankan national cricket team, widely known as Dimuth Karunaratne, announced his retirement from international cricket after playing his 100th Test match against Australia in Galle, Sri Lanka.

- Karunaratne made his first-class debut in 2008 for Sinhalese Sports Club (SSC) in Sri Lanka and was set to play his final match for the club against Nondescripts Cricket Club (NCC) in the Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) Major Club three-day tournament from February 14 to 16, 2025.

Key Points:-

- (i) Karunaratne has played 100 Test matches, scoring 7,222 runs at an average of 39.25, including 16 centuries and 39 half-centuries.
- (ii) He has featured in 50 One-Day Internationals (ODIs), accumulating 1,316 runs, with one century and 11 half-centuries.
- (iii) As the captain of Sri Lanka, he led the team in 30 Tests between 2019 and 2023, recording 12 wins and 12 losses under his leadership.

3. India Dominates Para Archery Asia Cup 2025 with Six Gold Medals.

India concluded its participation in the 2025 Para Archery Asia Cup in Bangkok, Thailand with a stellar performance, securing six Gold Medals and topping the medal tally. The Indian contingent, consisting of 27 members, earned a total of 12 medals—6 Gold, 3 Silver, and 3 Bronze—during the competition held from February 2-11, 2025. The tournament featured 11 events as part of the Asia Para Cup World Ranking Archery Tournament 2025.

- Sarita Kumari won gold in the Women's Compound Open category, narrowly defeating Singapore's Nur Syahidah Alim with a score of 143-142. Shyam Sundar Swami claimed victory in the Men's Compound Open, overcoming Indonesia's Ken Swagumilang with a score of 143-141, securing India's sixth and final gold of the competition. He also bagged a silver in another event.
- Rakesh Kumar earned a bronze in the Men's Compound Open after a shoot-off victory against Malaysia's Wiro Julin, with both archers scoring 140. Pooja Jatyan, unfortunately, lost 6-0 to Zina Lavrinc of

Slovakia in the Women's Recurve Open final, settling for silver.

- Paralympic champion Harvinder Singh claimed bronze in the Men's Recurve Open by defeating Nurfaizal Hamzah with a 6-2 scoreline.

Key Points:-

- (i) Adil Mohamed Nazir Ansari secured a bronze in the Men's W1 (Recurve/Compound), defeating Hong Kong's Yung Man Tai 120-116. Para-archery classifications ensure fair competition by grouping athletes based on the severity of their impairments, allowing athletes with different disabilities to compete equitably.
- (ii) The sport features three primary classification categories: Recurve Open, Compound Open, and W1, catering to athletes with varying levels of impairment.

4. Real Madrid & Brazil Icon Marcelo Retires from Professional Football at 36.

In February 2025, Marcelo Vieira da Silva Junior, popularly known as Marcelo, the former Real Madrid and Brazil left-back, announced his retirement from professional football at the age of 36.

- Marcelo began his football career in 2005 with Fluminense Football Club (FC) before joining Real Madrid Club de Fútbol (CF) in 2007.
- He represented Real Madrid from 2007 to 2022, making 546 appearances over 16 seasons and securing 25 major trophies. His achievements include six La Liga titles in 2007, 2008, 2012, 2017, 2020, and 2022.

- Marcelo was an integral part of the Real Madrid squad that won three consecutive UEFA Champions League titles from 2015-16 to 2017-18.

Key Points:-

- (i) In the 2014 UEFA Champions League final, Marcelo played a crucial role in helping Real Madrid secure "La Decima," their long-awaited 10th European title.
- (ii) He won five UEFA Champions League titles with Real Madrid, triumphing in the 2013-14, 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2021-22 seasons.
- (iii) Marcelo earned 58 caps for the Brazil national team, winning the FIFA Confederations Cup in 2013. He was also part of Brazil's Olympic squads, securing a bronze medal in 2008 and a silver medal in 2012.

AWARDS

1. Deepak Kumar Kedia Honored with "CA in Public Service" Award by ICAI.

In February 2025, Deepak Kumar Kedia, Inspector General (IG) Headquarters, National Security Guard (NSG), was honored with the prestigious "CA in Public Service" Award by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) for his exemplary contributions to public service, particularly in law enforcement and national security.

- He received the award at the World Forum of Accountants (WOFA) meet held at Yashobhoomi, India International Convention and Exhibition Centre (IICC) in New Delhi, Delhi.

- Previously, he was also honored with the esteemed 'President Medal for Distinguished Service' on the 76th Republic Day of India (January 26, 2025).

- Deepak Kumar Kedia is a 1999-batch Indian Police Service (IPS) officer from the Assam cadre. Over the years, he has held several key positions in law enforcement and public administration, contributing significantly to national security and governance.

Key Points:-

- (i) Before joining the IPS, he worked with the Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) at its Rourkela Plant in Odisha, serving in the Finance and Accounts (F&A) Department. His financial expertise has complemented his role in law enforcement and public service.
- (ii) Throughout his career, he has held various positions, including Superintendent of Police (SP) in Assam, Director (Left Wing Extremism) at the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), Additional Director at the Enforcement Directorate (ED), and Inspector General of Police (IGP) (Law & Order), Assam. His extensive experience has made him a prominent figure in national security and economic crime investigations.
- (iii) ICAI hosted the World Forum of Accountants (WOFA) 2025 from January 31 to February 2, with the theme "Accountability Meets Innovation (AI): For A Sustainable Planet." The event was inaugurated by Union Minister Rajnath Singh, emphasizing the role of financial professionals in sustainability and innovation.

2. Ministry of Culture Confers Sahitya Akademi Award 2024 in Dogri to Chaman Arora.

In February 2025, the Ministry of Culture (MoC) announced that the late Chaman Arora has been selected for the Sahitya Akademi Award 2024 in the Dogri language for his short story book *Ik Hor Ashwthama* (Short Stories).

- The Sahitya Akademi Award in Dogri has been approved by Madhav Kaushik, President of Sahitya Akademi, and was selected based on the recommendations of jury members Sushma Rani, Veena Gupta, and Jitendra Udhamपुरi.
- The award will be presented to the family member or nominee of the awardee at the ceremony, which will take place on International Women's Day on March 8, 2025, at Kamani Auditorium in New Delhi, Delhi.

Key Points:-

- (i) The winners of the Sahitya Akademi Awards 2024 include 8 books of Poetry, 3 Novels, 2 Short Stories, 3 Essays, 3 Literary Criticism, 1 Play, and 1 Research.
- (ii) The award comprises a casket containing an engraved copper plaque, a shawl, and a cash prize of Rs.1 lakh.
- (iii) In December 2024, the Ministry of Culture (MoC) announced the winners of the Sahitya Akademi Awards 2024 in various languages.

3. Ambani Family Recently Tops Bloomberg's 'Asia's Richest Families 2025' Index with USD 90.5 Billion Net Worth.

According to New York, United States of America (USA)-based Bloomberg Limited Partnership (LP)'s 'Asia's Richest Families 2025' Index, the Ambani family of Reliance Industries (India) has recently

secured the top position as Asia's richest family, with a net worth of USD 90.5 billion.

- The Chearavanont family (Thailand) ranks 2nd with a net worth of USD 42.6 billion, followed by the Hartono family (Indonesia) in 3rd place with a net worth of USD 42.2 billion.
- Among the prominent 6 Indian families featured in the top 20 rankings, the Mistry family holds the 4th position, followed by the Jindal family in 7th place, the Birla family ranks 9th, while the Bajaj family secures the 13th spot, and the Hinduja family ranks 18th.
- The Mistry family of Shapoorji Pallonji Group holds the 4th position with a net worth of USD 37.5 billion (approximately Rs. 3.25 lakh crore).

Key Points:-

- (i) The Jindal family of OP Jindal Group follows at 7th place with a net worth of USD 28.1 billion (approximately Rs. 2.43 lakh crore).
- (ii) The Birla family of Aditya Birla Group occupies the 9th spot with a net worth of USD 23.0 billion (approximately Rs. 1.99 lakh crore).
- (iii) The Bajaj family of Bajaj Group is ranked 13th with a net worth of USD 20.1 billion (approximately Rs. 1.74 lakh crore), while the Hinduja family of Hinduja Group holds the 18th position with a net worth of USD 15.2 billion (approximately Rs. 1.32 lakh crore).

IMPORTANT DAYS

1. Jan Aushadhi Diwas Observed on 7 March 2025.

Jan Aushadhi Diwas, also known as Generic Medicine Day, is observed annually on March 7 across India to raise awareness about the

significance of generic medicines and promote the benefits of the Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP).

- **March 7, 2025, marks the 7th observance of Jan Aushadhi Diwas.**
- **The day is organized annually by the Pharmaceuticals & Medical Devices Bureau of India (PMBI), under the aegis of the Department of Pharmaceuticals (DoP), Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers (MoC&F).**

Key Points:-

- (i) On March 7, 2019, Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi declared March 7 of every year as Jan Aushadhi Diwas.
- (ii) Jan Aushadhi Diwas Week is observed from March 1 to 7, with the last day (March 7) being observed as Jan Aushadhi Diwas.

2. United Nations' World Pulses Day (WPD) 2025 Observed on February 10.

The United Nations (UN) observes World Pulses Day (WPD) annually on February 10 to emphasize the significance of pulse crops like chickpeas, dry beans, and lentils in global food systems.

- **Theme of WPD 2025: "Pulses: Bringing diversity to agrifood systems" – highlighting the essential role of pulses in promoting diversity above and below the ground.**
- **Slogan of WPD 2025: "Love pulses for a healthy diet and planet."**
- **On December 20, 2013, the UN General Assembly (UNGA) proclaimed 2016 as the International Year of Pulses, aiming to raise awareness about their**

nutritional and environmental benefits in sustainable food production.

Key Points:-

- (i) The UNGA adopted resolution A/RES/73/251 on December 20, 2018, officially designating February 10 as WPD every year. The proposal for this observance was made by Burkina Faso, a landlocked West African country.
- (ii) The first-ever WPD was observed on February 10, 2019.
- (iii) The day was established following the successful implementation of the International Year of Pulses (IYP) in 2016 by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

3. UN Observes World Radio Day on February 13 to Celebrate Radio's Global Influence.

The United Nations (UN's) World Radio Day (WRD) is observed annually on February 13 across the globe to honor radio's enduring influence as a powerful and accessible medium for communication, education, and entertainment.

- **13 February 2025 marks the observance of the 14th WRD.**
- **The theme for WRD 2025 is "Radio and Climate Change", highlighting radio's vital role in disseminating information about climate change, amplifying environmental advocacy, and promoting sustainable practices.**

Key Points:-

- (i) In 2011, the Member States of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) adopted a resolution

during its 36th General Conference, proclaiming February 13th as WRD to commemorate the establishment of UN's Radio.

(ii) In 2012, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted the resolution A/RES/67/124 and endorsed UNESCO's resolution, formalizing WRD.

(iii) The first-ever WRD was observed on February 13, 2012.

4. National Women's Day Observed on 13 February 2025 .

National Women's Day is annually observed on 13th February across India to honor the birth anniversary of Sarojini Chattopadhyay Naidu, also known as Sarojini Naidu and popularly called the "Nightingale of India" or "Bharat Kokila."

- **13 February 2025 marks the 146th birth anniversary of Sarojini Naidu.**

- **Sarojini Naidu, born on February 13, 1879, in Hyderabad, Hyderabad State, British Raj (present-day Telangana), was a distinguished poet, freedom fighter, and political leader.**

- **In 1917, alongside Annie Besant and other notable figures, she co-founded the Women's Indian Association (WIA) to advance women's rights and welfare.**

Key Points:-

(i) A prominent figure in India's freedom struggle, Sarojini Naidu played a crucial role in the Indian Nationalist Movement (INM) and was the first woman to become the President of the Indian National Congress (INC) in 1925.

(ii) She served as the President of the All India

Women's Conference (AIWC) in 1930, advocating for women's education, political participation, and social reforms.

5. International Day for the Prevention of Violent Extremism as and When Conducive to Terrorism 2025 Observed on February 12.

The United Nations' (UN) International Day for the Prevention of Violent Extremism (PVE) as and When Conducive to Terrorism is observed annually on February 12 worldwide to raise awareness about the threats associated with violent extremism that can lead to terrorism and to enhance international cooperation in addressing these challenges.

- **February 12, 2025, marks the observance of the 3rd International Day of PVE.**

Key Points:-

(i) On December 20, 2022, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted resolution A/RES/77/243, designating February 12 as the International Day of PVE.

(ii) The first-ever International Day of PVE was observed on February 12, 2023.

(iii) The UNGA invited the Office of Counter-Terrorism, in collaboration with other relevant entities of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact, to facilitate the observance of this day.

6. India Observes National Productivity Day on February 12, 2025, Kicking Off National Productivity Week.

In India, National Productivity Day, also known as National Productivity Council (NPC) Foundation Day, is observed annually on February 12 to promote a culture of productivity, efficiency, and innovation. This day also commemorates the foundation of the National Productivity Council (NPC) of India.

- **National Productivity Day marks the beginning of National Productivity Week, which is observed annually from February 12 to 18.**

Key Points:-

- (i) The event is organized by the NPC of India in collaboration with the Delhi Productivity Council (DPC), based in New Delhi (Delhi).
- (ii) The theme for National Productivity Week 2025 is "From Ideas to Impact: Protecting Intellectual Property for Competitive Startups".

7. International Day of the Arabian Leopard Observed on 10 February 2025.

The United Nations (UN) observes the International Day of the Arabian Leopard annually on February 10 to raise awareness about conserving the critically endangered Arabian leopard (*Panthera pardus nimr*). The 2025 observance marks the second edition of this global event, emphasizing biodiversity and ecosystem resilience.

- **The Royal Commission for AlUla (RCU) launched Arabian Leopard Day in 2022. In June 2023, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted Resolution 77/295, officially designating February 10 as the International Day of the Arabian Leopard. The first observance under the UN designation took place in 2024.**

- **The Arabian leopard is the largest wild cat in the Arabian Peninsula but remains one of the smallest leopard subspecies. Males weigh between 30-40 kg, while females range from 25-35 kg. Its pale, buff-colored coat features small, closely spaced rosettes, adapted for arid environments.**

Key Points:-

- (i) The species is found in limited habitats across Saudi Arabia, Oman, Yemen, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Habitat loss, urbanization, overgrazing, poaching, and illegal wildlife trade are major threats to its survival.
- (ii) Conservation efforts focus on habitat protection, restoring prey populations, reducing human-leopard conflict, and strengthening law enforcement against poaching. Public education campaigns are crucial in fostering coexistence between humans and leopards.
- (iii) The UN aims to restore the Arabian leopard as a flagship species for conservation and sustainability in the region, highlighting its role in maintaining ecological balance.

8. International Day of Women and Girls in Science Observed on February 11, 2025.

The United Nations (UN's) International Day of Women and Girls in Science (IDWGIS) is observed annually on February 11 across the globe to promote equal access and participation for women and girls in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM). This day also highlights gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in the scientific community.

- February 11, 2025, marks the 10th anniversary of IDWGIS and the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

- The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and UN-Women lead the celebration, working alongside various institutions and civil society organizations committed to advancing women and girls in science.

Key Points:-

(i) On December 20, 2013, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted a resolution on science, technology, and innovation for development.

(ii) Building on these efforts, on December 22, 2015, the UNGA adopted resolution A/RES/70/212, officially declaring February 11 as the International Day of Women and Girls in Science.

(iii) The first-ever IDWGIS was observed on February 11, 2016.

9. World Unani Day 2025 Celebrated on February 11.

World Unani Day is observed annually on February 11 across the globe to commemorate the birth anniversary of Mohammad Ajmal Khan, also known as Hakim Ajmal Khan, a prominent social reformer and renowned Unani scholar. He is widely recognized as the pioneer of Unani medicine in India.

- This day serves to promote the Unani system of medicine, highlighting its unique principles and strengths.

- The theme for World Unani Day 2025 is: "Innovations in Unani Medicine for Integrative Health Solutions – A Way Forward."

Key Points:-

(i) In recognition of Hakim Ajmal Khan's contributions to the advancement of Unani medicine, the Ministry of AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homoeopathy), Government of India (GoI), designated his birth anniversary (February 11) as World Unani Day.

(ii) The inaugural World Unani Day was celebrated on February 11, 2017, at the Central Research Institute of Unani Medicine (CRIUM) in Hyderabad, Telangana.

10. Safer Internet Day 2025 Observed on February 11.

Safer Internet Day (SID) is celebrated globally on the second Tuesday of February to raise awareness and promote safe and responsible use of the internet, especially for children and young people. The day also aims to raise awareness about emerging online issues and current concerns.

- SID 2025 is observed on February 11, 2025, marking the 22nd edition of SID.

- The theme for SID 2025 is: "Too good to be true? Protecting yourself and others from scams online."

Key Points:-

(i) In 2004, SID was originally launched by the European Union (EU) SafeBorders project and was later adopted by the Insafe network, a European Network of Safer Internet Centres

(SICs) in 2005.

(ii) SID is organised by the Insafe network and INHOPE (the International Association of Internet Hotlines) on behalf of the European Commission, as part of the Digital Europe Programme (DIGITAL).

(iii) The first SID was observed on February 6, 2004, and was celebrated in 14 countries, including 13 EU countries and Australia.

Tennessee, USA.

(ii) In 2000, Amanda Chesworth joined Robert Stephens to formalize the Darwin Day program in New Mexico, USA.

(iii) In 2002, the initiative became the 'Darwin Day Celebration,' a nonprofit organization based in California, USA.

11. International Darwin Day Observed on 12 February 2025.

International Darwin Day is observed annually on 12 February across the globe to commemorate the birth anniversary of Charles Robert Darwin, the 19th-century British naturalist and geologist renowned for formulating the "Theory of Evolution by Natural Selection." The day serves to inspire continued advancements in scientific research and understanding.

- It highlights the importance of evolutionary biology and encourages the pursuit of knowledge through scientific inquiry.
- International Darwin Day was first championed by three passionate Darwin supporters: Dr. Robert Stephens, Professor Massimo Pigliucci, and Amanda Chesworth.
- In 1995, Dr. Robert Stephens led the effort to celebrate Darwin's legacy in Silicon Valley, United States of America (USA).

Key Points:-

(i) In 1997, Professor Massimo Pigliucci organized the first Darwin Day events at the University of

DEFENCE

1. India Signs ₹10,147 Crore Defence Contracts to Strengthen Army's Firepower.

On February 6, 2025, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) signed defence contracts worth ₹10,147 crore to enhance the Indian Army's firepower. These contracts focus on procuring advanced ammunition for the PINAKA Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS) and upgrading critical software systems.

- The contracts were awarded to Economic Explosive Limited (EEL), Munitions India Limited (MIL), and Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) under this initiative. The signing ceremony took place in New Delhi in the presence of Defence Secretary Shri Rajesh Kumar Singh.
- This move aligns with India's 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' vision, promoting self-reliance in defence manufacturing while addressing modern security challenges.
- Economic Explosive Limited (EEL) secured a contract for Area Denial Munition (ADM) Type-1 rockets, designed to restrict enemy movement by dispersing sub-munitions. These rockets play a crucial role in targeting mechanized forces and enemy personnel.

Key Points:-

(i) Munitions India Limited (MIL) was awarded a contract for High Explosive Pre-Fragmented (HEPF) Mk-1 (Enhanced) rockets. These advanced rockets offer greater range and precision, enabling deep strikes into enemy territory.

(ii) Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) will upgrade the SHAKTI Software, improving navigation, targeting, and firing accuracy for rocket artillery systems.

(iii) The PINAKA MLRS, developed by DRDO, has evolved since its deployment in the 1999 Kargil War, with the ability to fire 12 rockets in rapid succession up to 60 km, while its guided version ensures precision targeting, and future upgrades aim to extend its range beyond 120 km to enhance India's defence capabilities.

2. Saab Successfully Delivers AT4 Anti-Armor Weapons to Indian Armed Forces.

In February 2025, Sweden-based aerospace and defense company Saab AB successfully completed the delivery of its latest Anti-Tank 4 (AT4) weapons, strengthening the advanced weaponry arsenal of the Indian Armed Forces.

- This delivery follows a contract awarded in 2022 for approximately 2,000 AT4 units, which are now actively deployed by both the Indian Army (IA) and the Indian Air Force (IAF).

Key Points:-

(i) Additionally, Saab announced plans to establish a manufacturing facility for the Carl-Gustaf anti-tank weapons system under Saab FFVO India Private Limited.

(ii) The facility, located at MET City in Jhajjar, Haryana, is expected to commence operations by the end of this year or early next year.

3. Indian Army and Indian Air Force Conduct Joint Airborne Operations Exercise 'Ex Winged Raider'.

On February 9, 2025, the Indian Army (IA) conducted a significant training exercise, Ex Winged Raider, emphasizing specialized airborne operations. The exercise showcased high operational preparedness and seamless coordination between the IA and the Indian Air Force (IAF).

- The exercise focused on executing various airborne insertion techniques using both fixed-wing and rotary-wing aircraft to enhance the skills of participating personnel.

- A key milestone in the Eastern Theatre was achieved with airborne operations conducted from the CH-47 Chinook Helicopter for the first time.

- This training served as a vital platform for troops to enhance their operational capabilities, ensuring rapid deployment, mission readiness, and highlighting the crucial role of airborne forces in modern warfare for swift and decisive responses in diverse operational scenarios.

Key Points:-

(i) The joint operation demonstrated seamless coordination between the IA and IAF, highlighting the effectiveness of integrated training programs.

(ii) This exercise reaffirmed both forces' commitment to maintaining a high level of preparedness to counter evolving security threats.

(iii) On February 9, 2025, IA Chief General Upendra Dwivedi and IAF Air Chief Marshal AP Singh undertook a historic flight together in the indigenous Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas, India's single-engine multirole fighter aircraft.

4. India & Egypt Launch 3rd Joint Military Exercise 'Cyclone 2025' in Rajasthan.

The 3rd edition of the India-Egypt joint military exercise 'Cyclone 2025' commenced at the Maharajan Field Range, Rajasthan, focusing on enhancing defence cooperation and special forces interoperability in desert conditions. The exercise will be conducted over 14 days, from February 10-23, 2025.

- Exercise 'Cyclone 2025' aims to foster cooperation between the two armies by facilitating discussions, joint training sessions, and military drills, further strengthening their strategic partnership.
- Exercise Cyclone has been conducted between India and Egypt since 2023 as a joint military training initiative.
- The exercise aligns with Chapter VII of the United Nations (UN) Charter, emphasizing international security and military collaboration, and its 2nd edition was held in Anshas, Egypt, from January 22 to February 1, 2024.

Key Points:-

(i) Cyclone 2025 is a joint military exercise focused on combat in urban areas and hostage rescue. The Indian Army's Parachute Regiment (Special Forces) and Egypt's Commando Squadron and Airborne Platoon are participating under the motto, "Together we train, together we

excel." The operation includes counter-terrorism missions, raids, reconnaissance, and special forces skills such as sniping, combat free fall, surveillance, and target designation.

(ii) The exercise will also feature military demonstrations, discussions, and training on handling Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), countering them, and providing first aid in combat situations. Special focus will be given to operational planning and execution in challenging environments.

(iii) Additionally, India and Egypt conduct another joint exercise, 'Exercise Desert Warrior,' which involves their respective air forces.

5. MoD Signs ₹642 Crore Contract with BEL for 28 EON-51 Systems for Indian Navy.

In February 2025, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) signed a ₹642.17 crore contract with Bengaluru (Karnataka)-based Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) for the procurement of 28 EON-51 Electro-Optical Fire Control Systems (EOFCS) for the Indian Navy (IN).

- This agreement, signed in New Delhi (Delhi), falls under the 'Buy (Indian-IDD (Indigenously Designed, Developed, and Manufactured))' category, reinforcing India's focus on indigenous defense production.
- The EON-51 systems will be installed on 11 New Generation Offshore Patrol Vessels (NGOPVs) and three Cadet Training Ships (CTS).

Key Points:-

(i) The EON-51 is a fully indigenously developed system designed to enhance the Indian Navy's operational efficiency by enabling the search,

detection, and classification of various targets using electro-optical and thermal imaging technology.

(ii) These advanced systems significantly boost the Indian Navy's operational capabilities by providing superior target search, detection, classification, and engagement through state-of-the-art electro-optical and thermal imaging devices.

6. Indian Navy Hosts Chiefs' Conclave 2025 to Discuss Future Warfare and Maritime Strategy.

The Indian Navy (IN) Chiefs' Conclave 2025 was held at Nausena Bhawan, the IN headquarters in New Delhi (Delhi), from February 8 to 9, 2025. The conclave brought together eight former Chiefs of Naval Staff (CNS) alongside the current CNS, Dinesh Kumar Tripathi.

- It was conducted as part of the IN's efforts to achieve full self-reliance by 2047, focusing on strengthening its capabilities in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).
- The conclave aimed to harness the knowledge and collective experience of former CNS while providing updates on the latest developments and policy initiatives of the IN.
- Former CNS were briefed on an operational update, covering policy initiatives, technological advancements, materials, operational logistics, and long-term strategic plans.

Key Points:-

(i) An exclusive session, Manthan, was conducted to facilitate open discussions on critical issues, including future warfare, maritime strategy, shifting

geopolitical dynamics, and evolving HR frameworks.

(ii) The conclave reaffirmed the IN's commitment to continuity, leveraging past leadership's wisdom while shaping the future of India's maritime power.

(iii) A book titled "Legacy of Leadership: Naval Chiefs through Time" was released during the Conclave, chronicling the journeys of former CNSs. This collector's edition features personal stories, rare photographs, and firsthand accounts, offering unique insights into their leadership.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. China's Shenzhou-19 Crew Successfully Generates Oxygen and Rocket Fuel in Space Using Artificial Photosynthesis.

In February 2025, the Shenzhou-19 crew aboard China's Tiangong space station, located in Low Earth Orbit (LEO), successfully generated Oxygen (O₂) and key Rocket Fuel components using Artificial Photosynthesis (AP).

- This marks the first-ever in-orbit application of this technique, supporting China's goal of achieving a crewed moon landing by 2030.
- Artificial Photosynthesis is a chemical process that replicates natural photosynthesis to produce hydrogen from water using solar energy.
- The Shenzhou-19 crew, consisting of Cai Xuzhe, Song Lingdong, and Wang Haoze, was launched from Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center (JSLC), China, on October 30, 2024. In January 2025, the China Manned Space Agency announced that the Taikonauts aboard the mission had successfully produced ethylene, a key component of rocket fuel, along with oxygen.

Key Points:-

- (i) The Shenzhou-19 crew conducted 12 experiments focused on resource production and human survival in space. Using a specialized "drawer-like" device equipped with a semiconductor catalyst, the astronauts successfully converted carbon dioxide (CO₂) and water (H₂O) into oxygen and ethylene, a key component of rocket fuel, mimicking natural photosynthesis. This marks a significant step in space resource utilization.
- (ii) The experiment demonstrated a more energy-efficient method compared to traditional electrolysis used on the International Space Station (ISS). Artificial photosynthesis offers a sustainable way to produce vital resources for astronauts, reducing dependence on Earth for supplies and making long-duration space missions more feasible.
- (iii) China plans to establish a Moon base near the lunar south pole by 2035, where this technology could enable in-situ production of oxygen and fuel from lunar water. Additionally, China, in collaboration with Russia, aims to use robotics to construct a nuclear reactor for powering the Moon base, advancing long-term space exploration goals.

2. ISRO recently successfully conducts an ignition trial of the indigenous CE20 cryogenic engine.

In February 2025, Bengaluru (Karnataka)-based Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) recently successfully conducted the ignition trial of the indigenously built 'CE20' cryogenic engine, which powers the upper stage of Launch Vehicle

Mark-3 (LVM3). The engine was developed by the Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre (LPSC) of ISRO.

- According to ISRO, the multi-element igniter within the engine successfully simulated the engine ignition in the vacuum conditions of space.
- The ignition trial was conducted at the High Altitude Test Facility located at ISRO's complex in Mahendragiri, Tamil Nadu (TN).
- During the test trial, the ignition of the engine's Thrust Chamber was conducted using a multi-element igniter in vacuum conditions. The test simulated tank pressure conditions expected during the in-flight restart of the cryogenic engine.

Key Points:-

- (i) ISRO is exploring a bootstrap mode for initiating turbo pumps instead of the conventional stored gas system. This approach aims to re-ignite both the thrust chamber and gas generator under tank head conditions, enhancing engine efficiency.
- (ii) The CE20 cryogenic engine is already qualified for thrust levels ranging between 19 to 20 tonnes in flight with a single start. It will also play a critical role in India's Gaganyaan mission, which aims to send humans to space.
- (iii) Launch Vehicle Mark-3 (LVM3), formerly known as Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV Mk-III), is a three-stage launch vehicle. It consists of two solid propellant S200 strap-ons, an L110 liquid core stage, and a CE20 cryogenic upper stage. The vehicle stands 43.5 meters tall, has a 4.0-meter diameter, and a liftoff mass of 640 tonnes, with the capability to launch satellites up to 4,000 kg into Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO).

3. SpaceX Successfully Deploys 21 Starlink Satellites into Orbit.

On February 11, 2025, SpaceX's Falcon 9 rocket successfully launched a new batch of 21 Starlink satellites into Low-Earth Orbit (LEO) from Space Launch Complex 40 at Cape Canaveral Space Force Station in Florida, United States of America (USA), marking another milestone in the expansion of its satellite internet constellation.

- This marks SpaceX's 19th Falcon 9 mission of 2025, with 13 of those missions dedicated to deploying Starlink payloads.
- With this launch, there are 6,994 Starlink satellites in orbit, with 6,957 of them fully operational.
- Direct-to-cell is a satellite communication system that allows smartphones to connect directly to satellites in orbit, eliminating the need for traditional cell towers in remote or underserved areas.

Key Points:-

- (i) The system uses an eNodeB (evolved Node B) modem, which functions like a cell tower in space, enabling communication with LTE phones and IoT devices.
- (ii) Starlink, developed by Elon Musk's SpaceX, is the world's first and largest satellite constellation in Low-Earth Orbit (LEO), providing affordable internet access to remote and underserved locations.
- (iii) The V2 Starlink satellites weigh approximately 1,760 lbs (800 kg) at launch, nearly three times heavier than the previous generation satellites, which weighed 573 lbs (260 kg).

4. ISRO Collaborates with IIT Madras to Develop Indigenous Semiconductor Chip 'IRIS'.

In February 2025, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), based in Thiruvananthapuram (Kerala), Inertial Systems Unit (IISU), in collaboration with the Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT-M) based in Chennai (Tamil Nadu), indigenously designed and developed a semiconductor chip named "Indigenous (Reduced Instruction Set Computer) RISC-V Controller for Space Applications (IRIS)." IRIS has been built on the SHAKTI processor baseline.

- It is the third SHAKTI-based microprocessor chip successfully fabricated in India, following RIMO (2018) and MOUSHIK (2020).
- This achievement marks a significant milestone towards self-reliance in space and semiconductor technology, reinforcing India's commitment to the 'Make in India' and 'Atmanirbhar' initiatives.
- The 64-bit IRIS chip was conceptualized by IISU, designed by IIT Madras, and manufactured at Semiconductor Laboratory (SCL) in Chandigarh. It was packaged by Tata Advanced Systems Limited (TASL) in Perjenahalli (Karnataka), with the motherboard PCB manufactured by PCB Power India Limited in Gandhinagar (Gujarat). The motherboard was assembled and mounted by Syrma SGS Technology Limited in Chennai (Tamil Nadu), while the software was developed and successfully booted at IIT Madras.

Key Points:-

- (i) Designed for ISRO's command and control systems, satellite navigation, and other critical space functions. It is also suitable for computing systems needed for national security and strategic

purposes.

(ii) Its versatility makes it useful in Internet of Things (IoT) devices and other advanced technological applications.

(iii) Supported by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) under the 'Digital India RISC-V Microprocessor (DIR-V)' program, this project promotes indigenous microprocessor development. It is led by Dr. Veezhinathan Kamakoti, a professor at IIT Madras.

5. Pakistan Collaborates with China for Chang'e-8 Lunar Mission, Set for 2028.

On February 5, 2025, the Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO) of Pakistan and the China National Space Administration (CNSA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to include Pakistan's first lunar rover in China's Chang'e-8 mission, set for 2028.

- The Chang'e-8 mission will focus on exploring the Moon's south pole, a region of great scientific interest due to its potential resources and unique environment.
- This mission serves as a precursor to China's International Lunar Research Station (ILRS) project, planned for the 2030s.
- Chang'e-8, a Chinese lunar mission set for 2028, will focus on exploring the Moon's south pole, with a goal to study the region's resources and unique environment.

Key Points:-

(i) Pakistan's Space and Upper Atmosphere

Research Commission (SUPARCO) will contribute a 35 kg (440 lb) rover to the mission, further strengthening the partnership between Pakistan and China.

(ii) The mission aims to analyze lunar soil composition, radiation levels, plasma properties, and test new technologies for sustaining human presence on the Moon.

(iii) The lander will carry 10 scientific payloads, including cameras, a seismometer, and a soft X-ray telescope. Preliminary landing sites include Leibnitz Beta, Amundsen crater, Cabeus crater, and the Shackleton-de Gerlache Ridge near the lunar south pole.

BOOKS & AUTHORS

1. Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar Launches Book "I Am?".

On February 8, 2025, Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar launched the book "I Am?", compiled by Gopichand P. Hinduja, Chairman of the Hinduja Group. The event took place at the Vice-President's Enclave in New Delhi, Delhi.

- Published by the Hinduja Foundation, the book explores themes of unity, spirituality, and interfaith dialogue, emphasizing the importance of harmony in diversity.

Key Points:-

The book features contributions from various scholars, including Zeenat Shaukat Ali, a former professor at St. Xavier's College, Mumbai, who authored the concluding chapter on finding common ground among religions.

2. General Upendra Dwivedi Launches Memoir "I Am a Soldier's Wife: The Life and Love of Toni Lidder."

On February 10, 2025, General Upendra Dwivedi, Chief of Army Staff (COAS), launched the memoir titled "I Am a Soldier's Wife: The Life and Love of Toni Lidder" authored by Geetika Lidder, wife of late Brigadier Lakhwinder Singh Lidder, at the Manekshaw Centre in New Delhi, Delhi. The book was published by Roli Books.

- The book honors Brigadier Lakhwinder Singh Lidder's life as a soldier, husband, father, and leader, while emphasizing the 4 C's of leadership: Character, Competence, Conduct, and Commitment.

Key Points:-

(i) Brigadier Lakhwinder Singh 'Toni' Lidder, Seva Medal (SM), Vishisht Seva Medal (VSM), was a distinguished officer of the Indian Army (IA), known for his exceptional leadership and dedication.

(ii) He served as the Defence Assistant to the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) and played a crucial role in strategic military reforms.

(iii) He lost his life in the 2021 Indian Air Force (IAF) Mi-17 helicopter crash in Tamil Nadu's Nilgiri Hills, alongside General Bipin Rawat, India's first CDS, and 12 other personnel.

3. Andhra Pradesh CM N. Chandrababu Naidu Launches Daggubati Venkateswara Rao's Book 'Prapancha Charitra.'

In March 2025, the book titled 'Prapancha Charitra' (World History), authored by former minister and Member of Parliament (MP) Daggubati Venkateswara Rao, was released in

Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh (AP). The book launch event was attended by Nara Chandrababu Naidu, Chief Minister (CM) of AP.

- The book, written in Telugu, was published by Parragon Publishing India Private Limited.

Key Points:-

(i) The event was graced by former Vice President Venkaiah Naidu, Union Minister of Finance Nirmala Sitharaman, and D. Purandeshwari, State President of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

(ii) The book highlights various aspects of history, including linguistic arts, architecture, sculpture, land reforms, social justice, the feudal system, kingdoms, and public administration in AP.

(iii) Daggubati Venkateswara Rao has authored five books, including 'Some Truths in History', 'History of Telugu People Separation Movements', 'World Philosophy and Leadership', and 'Governance Systems of World Nations'.

OBITUARY

1. Namibia's Founding President & Freedom Fighter Samuel Nujoma Passes Away at 95.

In February 2025, Samuel Shafiishuna Daniel Nujoma, the fearless freedom fighter who led Namibia to independence from apartheid South Africa in 1990 and served as its first President for 15 years, passed away at the age of 95 in Windhoek, Namibia. He was born on May 12, 1929, in Ongandjera, Ovamboland, South West Africa (now Omusati Region, Namibia).

- He received numerous awards and honors, including the prestigious 'Lenin Peace Prize.'

- **Samuel Shafiishuna Daniel Nujoma** began his political journey in the early 1950s, engaging in the trade union movement and later co-founding the Ovamboland People's Organization (OPO) in 1959. In 1960, OPO transformed into the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO), with Nujoma as its first president, leading the national liberation movement.
- In 1966, Samuel Nujoma led the Namibian War of Independence, commanding SWAPO's armed wing, PLAN, in a decades-long fight against apartheid. Serving as Namibia's first President (1990-2005), he focused on reconciliation and development. His 2005 autobiography, *Where Others Wavered*, details his journey.

Key Points:-

- (i) The Parliament of Namibia honored Samuel Nujoma with the titles "Founding President of the Republic of Namibia" and "Father of the Namibian Nation" in recognition of his crucial role in the country's liberation.
- (ii) He received the Lenin Peace Prize (1970) for his leadership in the Namibian independence movement and efforts to end apartheid, along with the Indira Gandhi Peace Prize (1989) for his commitment to peace and liberation.
- (iii) In 1990, he was awarded the Ho Chi Minh Peace Prize for his contribution to the global struggle for freedom and justice.

hereditary imam of the Shia Ismaili Muslims and a renowned philanthropist, passed away at the age of 88 in Lisbon, Portugal. He was born on December 13, 1936, in Geneva, Switzerland.

- **Prince Rahim Al-Husseini** has been appointed as the 50th imam of the Shia Ismaili Muslims.
- In 1957, at the age of 20, Prince Karim Al-Husseini Aga Khan became the imam of the Ismaili Muslims, a branch of Shia Islam, following the passing of his grandfather, Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah Aga Khan.
- Queen Elizabeth II bestowed upon him the title of "His Highness" in 1957.

Key Points:-

- (i) In 1959, he founded the Nation Media Group (NMG), which has grown into the largest independent media organization in East and Central Africa.
- (ii) He was the founder and chairman of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), one of the world's largest private development organizations.
- (iii) In 2015, the Government of India (GoI) awarded him the Padma Vibhushan, India's second-highest civilian honor, for his contributions to social development in India.

2. Prince Karim Aga Khan IV, 49th Hereditary Imam of Ismaili Muslims, Passes Away at 88.

In February 2025, Prince Karim Al-Husseini Aga Khan (also known as Aga Khan IV), the 49th