

WEEKLY
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AFFAIRS
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January 2025



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NATIONAL AFFAIRS / GOVERNMENT SCHEME

1. PM Narendra Modi Inaugurates and Lays Foundation Stone for Railway Projects in Jammu & Kashmir, Telangana, and Odisha.

On January 06, 2025, Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi inaugurated and laid the foundation stones for various railway projects, including the Jammu Railway Division in Jammu & Kashmir (J&K), the Rayagada Railway Division Building of East Coast Railway in Odisha, and the Charlapalli New Terminal Station in Telangana, via video conferencing from New Delhi.

- These projects are designed to create employment opportunities, develop infrastructure, promote tourism, and contribute to the overall socio-economic development of the region.

- In January 2025, India marked a significant milestone with the inauguration of the 'Namo Bharat' train in Delhi-NCR (National Capital Region) and the launch of a new Delhi Metro project. These efforts are part of India's ongoing push to enhance connectivity, with the metro rail network now expanding to over 1,000 km across 11 states and 23 cities.

- With this expansion, India now boasts the third-largest metro network in the world, following China and the United States of America (USA).

Key Points:-

- (i) i. PM Narendra Modi inaugurated the new Jammu Railway Division, which spans a total length of 742.1 kilometers (km).
- (ii) PM Narendra Modi also inaugurated the Charlapalli New Terminal Station in Medchal-Malkajgiri District, Telangana, including a new coaching terminal and the provision of a second

entry at a cost of around Rs 413 crore.

- (iii) PM Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone for the Rayagada Railway Division Building under the East Coast Railway in Odisha, with an estimated cost of Rs 107 crore.

2. Government Launches PLI Scheme 1.1 for Specialty Steel to Enhance Domestic Production.

On January 6, 2025, Union Minister of Steel and Heavy Industries, H. D. Kumaraswamy, launched the second round of the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for Specialty Steel, termed as PLI Scheme 1.1, at Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi.

- The scheme will operate within the already allocated funds of Rs. 6,322 crore and will be implemented from Financial Year (FY) 2025-26 to FY 2029-30.

- The Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme was introduced in March 2020 with the goal of enhancing India's manufacturing capabilities, decreasing dependency on imports, and promoting exports. The scheme provides financial incentives based on measurable outcomes, including increased production and higher incremental sales.

Key Points:-

- (i) The PLI Scheme 1.1 targets 5 product categories, building upon the existing PLI Scheme: Coated/Plated Steel Products, High Strength/Wear-Resistant Steel, Specialty Rails, Alloy Steel Products & Steel Wires, and Electrical Steel.
- (ii) In the second round of the PLI Scheme, investment and capacity creation thresholds for Cold-Rolled Grain-Oriented (CRGO) steel have been reduced to Rs. 3,000 crore and 50,000

tonnes to encourage participation in this category.

3. MHA Introduces 'e-Student Visa' and 'e-Student-X Visa' for International Students.

On January 5, 2025, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) introduced two new specialized visa categories: the 'e-student visa' and the 'e-student-x visa', aimed at facilitating foreign students pursuing higher education at Indian academic institutions.

- The e-student visa is available to eligible foreign students who are registered on the Study in India (SII) portal.
- The e-student-x visa is designated for the dependents of e-student visa holders.
- Students interested in these visas are required to register on the SII portal, an initiative by the Ministry of Education (MoE), which streamlines the admission process for international students enrolling in long-term or short-term courses in India.

Key Points:-

(i) The Study in India (SII) portal, launched in 2018, streamlines the admission process for international students and connects them to over 600 partner institutes in India offering more than 8,000 courses across various disciplines, including engineering, management, agriculture, law, and niche fields like Buddhist Studies and Yoga.

(ii) Foreign students applying through the SII portal are eligible for financial assistance, such as the Study in India Scholarship (worth USD 3,200), awarded to students excelling in the PRAGATI Exam, or a Fee Waiver.

4. Union Minister Rajiv Ranjan Singh presided over the "Northeast Region States Meet 2025," which took place in Guwahati, Assam.

In January 2025, Union Minister Rajiv Ranjan Singh, also known as Lalan Singh, who oversees the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry, and Dairying (MoFAH&D) and the Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR), chaired the 'Northeast Region States Meet 2025' held in Guwahati, Assam.

- The event was organized by the Department of Fisheries (DoF) under MoFAH&D to assess the progress of the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY), a scheme aimed at promoting sustainable fisheries development.

Key Points:-

(i) During the event, the Union Minister distributed certificates to fisheries beneficiaries, including registration certificates for the National Fisheries Digital Platform (NFDP), Kisan Credit Card (KCC) cards, awards for the best Fisheries-based Farmer Producer Organizations (FFPOs), and Fisheries Start-ups.

(ii) He also inaugurated and laid the foundation stone for 50 major projects, worth Rs 50 crores, under PMMSY, covering all Northeast Region (NER) states, except Arunachal Pradesh (AR) and Mizoram.

(iii) Additionally, he launched India's first organic fisheries cluster in Soreng district of Sikkim, which aims to boost farmers' incomes and promote sustainability in aquaculture.

5. CSIR-NPL celebrated its 79th Foundation Day, highlighting its contributions to advancing metrology for the nation's development.

On 4th January 2025, CSIR-National Physical Laboratory (CSIR-NPL) celebrated its 79th Foundation Day in New Delhi.

- CSIR-NPL is India's National Metrology Institute (NMI), responsible for developing, maintaining, and distributing National Standards to various industries, strategic sectors, and scientific research.

Key Points:-

(i) During the event, CSIR-NPL signed Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with IITM (Indian Institute of Technology Madras, Chennai, Tamil Nadu) to foster academic and research collaboration, and with CSIR-Central Institute of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (CIMAP) for the production of Bharatiya Nirdeshak Dravya (BND), which are Certified Reference Materials derived from plant-based sources.

(ii) During the event, CSIR-NPL introduced two new Bharatiya Nirdeshak Dravyas (BNDs): Lanthanum Hexaboride Powder (BND-2025), designed as a calibration standard for powder X-ray diffraction, and White Portland Cement Standard (BND-5064), developed in collaboration with the National Council for Cement and Building Materials (NCCBM).

6. The Chief Minister of Odisha inaugurates the Adivasi Mela 2025 and launches the Shahid Madho Singh Scheme.

On January 5, 2025, Odisha's Chief Minister, Mohan Charan Majhi, inaugurated the Adivasi Mela 2025 at the Exhibition Grounds in Bhubaneswar,

Odisha, ahead of the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) event.

- During the event, he launched the Shahid Madho Singh Haath Kharcha Scheme, with a budget of Rs 156 crore, to support tribal students. He also honored nine tribal talents and ten tribal farmers for their exceptional contributions.

- A special edition of the journal Banja-2025, published by the Tribal Language and Culture Academy of Odisha, was also released during the event.

- The 18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention will be held in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, from January 8 to 10, 2025, in collaboration with the Odisha State Government.

Key Points:-

(i) The Adivasi Mela is an annual event celebrating Odisha's tribal heritage and culture. This year, it will be held from January 5 to January 15, 2025.

(ii) The scheme, named after Shaheed Madho Singh, a freedom fighter from Odisha, aims to reduce dropout rates and encourage students to continue their education.

(iii) The scheme offers a one-time incentive of Rs 5,000 per year to tribal students who pass Class 8 and advance to Class 9 or 10, as well as to those enrolling in Class 11. This benefit is available for the academic year 2024-2025 and is exclusively for Scheduled Tribe (ST) students whose family income does not exceed Rs 2,50,000 per year.

7. Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw Inaugurates NIELIT Deemed University in Assam.

In January 2025, Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, holding portfolios in the Ministry of Railways (MoR), Ministry of Information & Broadcasting (MIB), and Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY), along with Assam Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya and Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, jointly inaugurated the 'National Institute of Electronics & Information Technology' (NIELIT) Deemed University.

- The event took place in Guwahati, Assam, and marked the establishment of NIELIT at 12 locations, including five in the North Eastern States.
- Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw announced the development of a new NIELIT campus in Jagiroad, Assam, with a focus on semiconductor and electronics manufacturing.

Key Points:-

(i) Established in 1994, NIELIT is the only university under MeitY, dedicated to advancing education and research in Electronics and Information Technology (IT).

(ii) During the event, NIELIT and Tata Electronics Private Limited (TEPL), based in Bangalore, Karnataka, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen the semiconductor skill development ecosystem in India.

8. Chhattisgarh Becomes India's First State to Include Forest Ecosystems in Green GDP.

In January 2024, Chhattisgarh became the first state in India to introduce an innovative plan that connects its forest ecosystem services to the Green Gross Domestic Product (Green GDP).

- The initiative seeks to directly connect the environmental benefits of forests, such as clean air, water conservation, and biodiversity, with the state's economic growth. It aligns with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision for a 'Developed India 2047'.

- With 44% of its land covered by forests, Chhattisgarh depends on its abundant natural resources to sustain the livelihoods of millions.

- Green GDP is a measure of economic growth that factors in the environmental and social costs of economic activities, calculated by subtracting the environmental and social costs from the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Key Points:-

(i) Forests in Chhattisgarh play a dual role by boosting the rural economy with products like tendu leaves, lac, honey, and medicinal plants, while also combating climate change as carbon sinks; the action plan aims to balance economic growth with environmental conservation to protect the ecosystem for future generations.

(ii) By linking the benefits of forests, such as climate regulation, soil enrichment, water purification, and carbon absorption, to Green GDP, Chhattisgarh aims to enhance budget planning and promote policies for sustainable development while incorporating these environmental contributions into the state's economic planning.

(iii) Scientists will assess the economic value of essential ecosystem services provided by forests, including the market value of carbon dioxide absorbed by trees for clean air, the economic impact of water conserved by forests through rivers and springs, and the role of forest

biodiversity in maintaining ecological balance and supporting agriculture, all of which will be integrated into the Green GDP.

9. Titagarh Rail delivers India's first "Make-in-India" driverless trainset to Bengaluru Metro.

In January 2025, Titagarh Rail Systems Limited (previously known as Titagarh Wagons Limited) took a major step forward in India's urban transportation by delivering the country's first driverless, Made-in-India trainset to Bengaluru Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL).

- The delivery is an important milestone for the Yellow Line of Bengaluru Metro, which covers an 18-kilometer stretch starting from Electronics City. This move is in line with India's vision of becoming a Viksit Bharat (Developed India) by 2047.

- It is an automated, stainless steel-bodied train designed for excellent performance.

Key Points:-

(i) The trainset was built at Titagarh Rail's metro manufacturing facility in Uttarpara, West Bengal (WB).

(ii) Titagarh Rail will deliver two more trainsets to BMRCL by April 2025, and they plan to increase production to two units per month by September 2025.

(iii) This achievement highlights India's commitment to improving urban transport while promoting local manufacturing through the 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' (Self-Reliant India) initiative.

10. Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah launched the KSRTC Arogya Scheme, offering cashless medical services.

In January 2025, Karnataka's Chief Minister, Siddaramaiah, launched the Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) Arogya health insurance scheme at the Vidhana Soudha in Bangalore. The scheme aims to provide cashless medical treatment to KSRTC employees and their families.

- The scheme will cover around 1.5 lakh people, including 34,000 KSRTC employees and their dependents, across more than 275 hospitals.

- Each beneficiary will have Rs 650 deducted monthly from their salary. This amount will increase by Rs 50 every year.

- The scheme offers unlimited inpatient treatment costs and covers eye care, dental care, Ayurvedic, Unani, Prakriti, and Homoeopathic treatments, with eligibility restricted to permanent residents of Karnataka who are KSRTC employees, providing selected employees with medical coverage of up to Rs 5 lakh.

Key Points:-

(i) The scheme will be extended to employees of *Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC), North Western Karnataka Road Transport Corporation (NWKRTC), and Kalyana Karnataka Road Transport Corporation (KKRTC) within three months.

(ii) KSRTC has signed agreements (MOUs) with 275 hospitals and four diagnostic centers to provide cashless Inpatient (IP) and Outpatient (OPD) services, and SR Srinivasa launched the internal magazine 'Saarige Sampada' along with

the KSRTC Arogya Manual.

(iii) Samparka Sarige is a non-AC bus service with a white and pink color scheme. It operates as a shuttle between Kempegowda Bus Station and Mysuru Road Bus Station in Bangalore.

11. BDL Collaborates with Ultra Maritime to Provide Sonobuoys for the Indian Navy.

In January 2025, Hyderabad-based Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL), an Indian Defence Public Sector Undertaking, partnered with Ultra Maritime, a United States (US)-based global leader in undersea warfare systems, to supply and manufacture sonobuoys adhering to US Navy standards for the Indian Navy (IN).

- The collaboration was announced by US National Security Advisor (NSA) Jake Sullivan during his visit to India from January 5 to 6, 2025.
- These innovations aim to enhance sonar performance in the Indian Ocean, enabling advanced wide-area search capabilities with custom solutions under the US-India Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies (iCET), launched in May 2022.
- Sonobuoys are small, disposable sonar devices used to detect submarines and underwater threats for about 24 hours. Deployed by naval helicopters or aircraft in specific patterns, they activate automatically upon hitting water. Active sonobuoys emit sound and relay echoes, while passive sonobuoys listen for underwater sounds and transmit them to aircraft.

Key Points:-

(i) Sonobuoys, crucial for anti-submarine warfare (ASW), will be produced locally at BDL's facilities in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh (AP), under a

Joint Venture (JV) with Ultra Maritime. The production facility is expected to become operational by 2027.

(ii) The Ultra Maritime sonobuoys manufactured in India will be compatible with systems used by the U.S. Navy, Indian Navy, and allied forces, including platforms such as P-8, MH-60R, and MQ-9B Sea Guardian aircraft.

(iii) The Indian Navy currently operates 12 P-8I maritime patrol aircraft, which deploy sonobuoys for anti-submarine operations. In August 2024, US President Joe Biden's administration approved a USD 52.8 million government-to-government deal for the sale of US-made sonobuoys to India.

12. Union Minister Nitin Gadkari Launches 'Cashless Treatment' Scheme for Road Accident Victims.

On January 7, 2025, Union Minister Nitin Jairam Gadkari, Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH), announced the upgraded 'Cashless Treatment Scheme' for road accident victims, scheduled to launch by March 2025. The announcement was made during a meeting with transport ministers from all states and Union Territories (UTs) held at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, Delhi.

- He also introduced a nationwide scheme to establish Driver Training Institutes (DTIs), offering incentives for setting up DTIs and additional rewards for integrating the infrastructure of Automated Testing Stations (ATSS) with DTIs.
- The government will offer cashless treatment for road accident victims nationwide, covering up to Rs. 1.5 lakh per person for a maximum of 7 days, if the accident is reported to the police within 24 hours.

Additionally, families of deceased victims in hit-and-run cases will receive an ex-gratia payment of Rs. 2 lakh.

Key Points:-

- (i) The program offers health benefit packages for trauma and polytrauma cases to eligible victims at hospitals accredited under the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri-Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY).
- (ii) The National Health Authority (NHA) will oversee the program's implementation in coordination with the police, hospitals, and State Health Agencies (SHA).
- (iii) The program will be implemented through an Information Technology (IT) platform that integrates the MoRTH's e-Detailed Accident Report (eDAR) application with the NHA's Transaction Management System.

13. MeitY Collaborates with IITs to Enhance Skill Development in the Semiconductor Sector.

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has partnered with various Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and private institutions to provide training activities, including skill development in semiconductor manufacturing. This initiative was announced by S. Krishnan, Secretary of MeitY, in New Delhi on January 08, 2025.

- Microsoft Corporation has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with MeitY under the IndiaAI Mission.
- The collaboration aims to provide skill development training to 5 lakh students, teachers, and professionals in AI by 2026.

Key Points:-

- (i) Microsoft, in partnership with MeitY, will establish an AI Center of Excellence (COE) called 'AI Catalysts' to promote rural AI innovation and support 1 lakh AI innovators and developers through hackathons, community-building initiatives, and an AI marketplace.
- (ii) Microsoft also announced collaborations with five major Indian industries, including Apollo Hospitals Enterprise Limited, RailTel Corporation of India Limited (RailTel), upGrad Education Private Limited, Mahindra & Mahindra Limited, and Bajaj Finserv Limited.
- (iii) These collaborations will focus on sectors such as transport, healthcare, finance, agriculture, and education.

14. UJALA Scheme and SLNP Program Celebrate 10 Years of Advancing Energy-Efficient Lighting.

On January 5, 2025, the Unnat Jyoti by Affordable Light Emitting Diodes (LEDs) for All (UJALA) scheme, a transformative initiative by the Government of India (GoI) in energy efficiency, and the Street Lighting National Programme (SNLP) celebrated 10 years of successful implementation.

- Both programmes were launched by Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi on January 5, 2015.
- The schemes are being implemented by Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL) under the Ministry of Power (MoP).
- It was initially launched as the Domestic Efficient Lighting Programme (DELP) and later renamed UJALA, with the goal of delivering affordable, energy-efficient

LED bulbs, tube lights, and fans to millions of households across India.

Key Points:-

(i) By January 6, 2025, the scheme has distributed 36.87 crore LED bulbs, leading to annual electricity savings worth Rs 19,153 crore.

(ii) As of January 6, 2025, over 1.34 crore LED streetlights have been installed across Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) and Gram Panchayats (GPs) under the SNLP programme.

(iii) Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL) is a joint venture of four power sector PSUs: NTPC Limited, Power Finance Corporation Limited, REC Limited, and POWERGRID Corporation of India Limited.

15. Union Minister Piyush Goyal Unveils 8th Edition of National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP) in New Delhi.

On January 09, 2025, Union Minister Piyush Goyal, Ministry of Commerce & Industry (MoC&I), launched the 8th edition of the National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP) at the Bharat Ratna C. Subramaniam Auditorium, National Agricultural Science Complex (NASC), Pusa, New Delhi.

- The event was organized by the Agricultural & Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) in collaboration with the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI).

Key Points:-

(i) Union Minister Piyush Goyal unveiled several

key portals: NPOP portal, TraceNet 2.0, Organic Promotion Portal, APEDA portal, and AgriXchange portal.

(ii) He also distributed the first 5 registration certificates generated on the newly launched TraceNet 2.0 to organic operators.

(iii) Addressing the gathering, the Union Minister emphasized that India's organic farming exports have the potential to reach Rs 2,000 crore in the next three years.

16. India has become a member of the UN-CEBD (United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration).

On January 11, 2025, India became a member of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Big Data and Data Science for Official Statistics (UN-CEBD). This membership highlights India's growing influence in the global statistical community and its commitment to using data and technology for better policy-making.

- India also joined the United Nations Statistical Council (UNSC) in 2024.

- India's inclusion in the expert committee on Big Data and Data Science for official statistics emphasizes its role in shaping global standards and highlights its pioneering initiatives, such as establishing a Data Innovation Lab for experimenting with new data technologies and exploring alternative data sources like satellite imagery and machine learning for policymaking.

- Data Science is an interdisciplinary field combining statistics, mathematics, programming, and domain knowledge to derive insights from data, while Big Data

refers to large, complex datasets beyond the capacity of traditional data tools to process effectively.

Key Points:-

- (i) India aims to align its Big Data advancements with global objectives and modernize statistical processes using innovative data sources like IoT, satellite imagery, and private sector data for improved accuracy and efficiency.
- (ii) India's participation aims to enhance real-time, evidence-based decision-making and streamline statistical production by innovating data collection, processing, and analysis.
- (iii) The UN-CEBD, established in 2014 and headquartered in New York, USA, comprises 31 member countries and 16 international organizations, focusing on leveraging Big Data for monitoring Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with its Advisory Board serving as the management body.

17. Union Minister Piyush Goyal has launched the Bharat Cleantech Manufacturing Platform in New Delhi.

On January 10, 2025, Union Minister Piyush Goyal, from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoC&I), launched the 'Bharat Cleantech Manufacturing Platform' at the inaugural Bharat Climate Forum 2025 in New Delhi.

- The initiative aims to strengthen India's cleantech industries in sectors like solar, wind, hydrogen, and battery storage.
- He also emphasized that Product Linked Incentives (PLIs) and subsidies could harm the long-term growth and development of the clean energy sector.

- Hosted by the Centre for Indigenous Economic Understanding (CIEU) and Dalberg Advisors, the Bharat Climate Forum is supported by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), NITI Aayog, and the International Solar Alliance (ISA).

Key Points:-

- (i) The goal of Bharat Climate Forum 2025 is to position India as a global leader in clean technology manufacturing, with self-reliance as the key principle in achieving Net-Zero goals and progressing towards a developed India (Viksit Bharat).
- (ii) The Bharat Cleantech Manufacturing Platform aims to drive innovation, collaboration, and global investment in India's cleantech industry, supporting the nation's goal of achieving 500 GW of clean energy capacity by 2030.
- (iii) The Bharat Cleantech Manufacturing Platform will drive technological advancements, foster global partnerships, and expand India's clean energy infrastructure, supporting its top-performing status in meeting Paris Agreement commitments.

18. Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav has launched the PARTH Yojana.

On January 10, 2025, Mohan Yadav, the Chief Minister (CM) of Madhya Pradesh (MP), launched the PARTH (Police Army Recruitment Training & Hunar) Yojana during the State Level Youth Festival. This scheme is designed to train the youth of MP for recruitment in the Indian Army, police, paramilitary forces, and other related services.

- The main goal of this initiative is to promote patriotism, develop skills, and improve employment

opportunities for the state's energetic and patriotic youth.

Key Points:-

- (i) Under this scheme, candidates will receive full pre-recruitment training, including physical fitness, coaching for written exams (covering general knowledge, mathematics, and English), and personality development.
- (ii) A key part of the PARTH Yojana is the MPYP (Madhya Pradesh Youth Platform) Portal. This digital platform aims to connect all young people in the state for skill development, career guidance, and job opportunities.
- (iii) The MPYP Portal, along with the Yuva Prerak Abhiyan, provides a comprehensive approach to youth development, ensuring that everyone has access to the resources and support needed to achieve their full potential.

19. MoE Releases UDISE+ 2023-24 Report and School Enrollment Sees a Decline of Over 1 Crore Compared to 2018-19.

In January 2025, the Ministry of Education (MoE) released the 'Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+) 2023-24' report on school education in India. The report indicated a decline in school enrollment from 25.17 crore (2022-23) to 24.8 crore (2023-24), a decrease of 1.22 crore students (6%) compared to 2018-19.

- The report highlighted that school enrollment across India remained above 26 crore from 2018-19 to 2021-2022, showing consistent annual increases, except for the COVID year of 2020-21.

- The number of boys enrolled in school decreased by 4.87%, from 13.53 crore (2018-19) to 12.87 crore (2023-24).

- Similarly, the number of girls enrolled in school declined by 4.48%, from 12.49 crore (2018-19) to 11.93 crore (2023-24).

Key Points:-

- (i) The UDISE+ report showed that the number of single-teacher schools in the country decreased by 7,219, from 1,18,190 (in 2022-23) to 1,10,971 (in 2023-24).
- (ii) Among the states, Madhya Pradesh (MP) recorded the highest number of single-teacher schools with 13,198, followed by Andhra Pradesh (AP) with 12,611 schools.

20. Telangana will observe Savitribai Phule's birth anniversary as 'Women Teacher's Day'.

The Telangana government has decided to celebrate Savitribai Phule's birth anniversary on January 3rd every year as a state function, calling it 'Women Teacher's Day' to honor her contributions to women's education.

- Savitribai Phule was a social worker, poet, and teacher who played a key role in improving women's freedom and their status in Indian society.

Key Points:-

- (i) In 1848, she opened India's first school for girls in Pune, becoming the country's first woman teacher and the first female headmistress.
- (ii) In 1854, she published her first poetry collection, Kavya Phule ('Poetry's Blossoms'), and in 1892, she also published Bavan Kashi Subodh

Ratnakar ('The Ocean of Pure Gems').

(iii) Pune University in Maharashtra is named after Savitribai Phule as a tribute to her efforts in promoting women's education in India.

21. India and Malaysia hold their inaugural Security Dialogue to enhance bilateral cooperation.

On January 7, 2025, India and Malaysia held their first-ever India-Malaysia Security Dialogue in New Delhi to improve their cooperation in defence and security. The goal was to strengthen the ties between the two countries, especially in areas that are important to both nations' interests.

- The dialogue was co-chaired by Ajit Doval, India's National Security Adviser (NSA) to the Prime Minister, and Raja Dato' Nushirwan Bin Zainal Abidin, Malaysia's Director General (DG) of the National Security Council.
- Both countries agreed to strengthen cooperation in counter-terrorism, fighting extremism, cybersecurity, the defense industry, and maritime security, while also institutionalizing the dialogue as a regular event with annual meetings to ensure sustained discussions and collaboration.
- Strategic and Security Collaboration: Both sides discussed enhancing cooperation in critical minerals and rare earths, essential for technology and industry, and exchanged views on global and regional security, reaffirming their shared commitment to addressing evolving security challenges.

Key Points:-

(i) This security dialogue came after a visit by Malaysian Prime Minister Dato' Seri Anwar bin

Ibrahim to India in August 2024, at the invitation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

(ii) Malaysia is India's 13th largest trade partner and the 3rd largest trade partner among the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries.

(iii) In 2023, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh opened Hindustan Aeronautics Limited's (HAL) first regional office in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

22. WEP Unveils 'EmpowHER Biz' in Partnership with New Shop to Support Women Entrepreneurs.

On January 8, 2025, the Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP) of the National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog partnered with New Shop, a 24/7 convenience retail chain based in New Delhi, to launch the initiative 'EmpowHER Biz - Sapno Ki Udaan.' This was part of WEP's Award to Reward (ATR) initiative.

- The collaboration aims to empower women entrepreneurs and promote growth in the organized retail sector.
- The ATR initiative, launched in 2023, provides a framework for collaborative projects with measurable impact.
- The EmpowHER Biz - Sapno Ki Udaan initiative aims to equip women with essential skills and support for success in retail entrepreneurship. Open to women from Delhi-NCR, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh (UP), Haryana, Madhya Pradesh (MP), and Gujarat, this initiative ensures support across these states, empowering women to pursue retail entrepreneurship with the necessary tools and guidance.

Key Points:-

(i) Fifty women, aged 18-35, will be selected through an online application process. The top 20 participants will receive a full waiver on New Shop franchise fees, enabling them to establish their ventures with ease.

(ii) The initiative offers expert mentorship, training in retail management, financial literacy, digital tools, and business development, aiming to enhance women's entrepreneurial skills.

(iii) Through this partnership, New Shop aims to assist 10,000 entrepreneurs by 2030 and expand its franchising model to support first-time entrepreneurs across India.

23. Union Minister G. Kishan Reddy inaugurated the "5G Use Case Test Lab" at CMPDI in Jharkhand.

On January 9, 2025, Union Minister G. Kishan Reddy, from the Ministry of Coal (MoC) and Ministry of Mines (MoM), inaugurated the "5G Use Case Test Lab" and launched a new corporate logo for the Central Mine Planning and Design Institute Limited (CMPDI) in Ranchi, Jharkhand. CMPDI is a subsidiary of Coal India Limited (CIL).

- The aim is to promote digital transformation in India's coal sector using 5G technology and tackle the industry's evolving challenges.

- The event was attended by several key figures, including Vikram Dev Dutt (Secretary, Ministry of Commerce - MoC), Vismita Tej (Additional Secretary, MoC), P.M. Prasad (Chairman, Coal India Limited - CIL), Manoj Kumar (Chairman and Managing Director - CMD, CMPDI), Nilendu Kumar Singh (CMD, Central Coalfields Limited - CCL), and Satish Jha (CMD, Eastern Coalfields Limited - ECL), along with other senior officials.

Key Points:-

(i) During the event, the Union Minister of State (MoS) also unveiled a sculpture titled 'Replica of CMPDI services', made from scrap materials used at CMPDI, such as delivery hose pipes, NQ drilling rods, core boxes, and more.

(ii) The Ministry of Coal (MoC) has designated CMPDI as the Centre of Excellence (CoE) to set up the 5G Use Case Test Lab, which will help the coal industry make effective use of 5G technology.

24. Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal Chairs 2nd IWDC Meeting in Assam.

The 2nd Inland Waterways Development Council (IWDC) meet, organized by the Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI), the nodal agency for the development of waterways under the Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways (MoPSW), took place from 9th January to 10th January 2025, in Kaziranga, Assam.

- The meeting focused on policies to enhance inland waterways and infrastructure development in India.

- The meeting was presided over by Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal, Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways (MoPSW).

Key Points:-

(i) During the event, Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal unveiled initiatives worth over Rs. 1,400 crore to boost inland waterways transport networks across 21 Inland Waterway States.

(ii) The National River Traffic and Navigation System (NRT&NS) was launched to ensure safe, seamless, and sustainable movement of inland

vessels.

(iii) The Union Minister also announced an investment of Rs. 50,000 crore over the next five years to strengthen infrastructure on national waterways.

25. Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw has launched a One VEGA-based SoC and two DIR V VEGA processor-based development boards in Maharashtra.

In January 2025, Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw from the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (Meity) launched one VEGA-based System on Chip (SoC) named THEJAS64 and two DIR V VEGA processor-based development boards, ARIES ECO and ARIES NOVA.

- The event took place at the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC) campus in Pune, Maharashtra.
- These products were designed and developed by C-DAC as part of the Government of India's (GoI) Digital India RISC-V Microprocessor (DIR-V) program.

Key Points:-

During the event, the Union Minister emphasized that computing and technological advancements are key to India becoming a developed nation by 2047.

the 10th full member of the BRICS group (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa).

- Indonesia's membership aligns with Brazil's theme for its presidency: "Enhancing Global South Cooperation for a More Inclusive and Sustainable Governance."

- In 2024, BRICS countries agreed to admit Indonesia as a new member, following decisions made during the 2023 BRICS meeting in Johannesburg, South Africa. This expansion shows BRICS' effort to strengthen ties with emerging economies.

- BRICS was officially established in 2006 with its founding members: Brazil, Russia, India, and China. Its headquarters is located in Shanghai, China.

Key Points:-

(i) The first BRICS Summit was held in Yekaterinburg, Russia, in 2009, and in 2010, the group expanded from BRIC to BRICS with the addition of South Africa. In 2024, BRICS grew further by welcoming four new members: Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). With Indonesia joining in 2025, the group now comprises 10 members.

(ii) The 16th BRICS Summit was held in Kazan, Russia, in 2024, under Russia's leadership.

(iii) The 17th BRICS Summit will take place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in July 2025.

INTERNATIONAL

1. Indonesia has become the 10th full member of BRICS.

On 6th January 2025, Brazil, which is chairing BRICS in 2025, announced that Indonesia, the world's fourth-most populous country, has become

2. GEAPP partners with ISA to drive India's green energy future.

On January 7, 2025, the Global Energy Alliance for People and Planet (GEAPP) teamed up with the International Solar Alliance (ISA) to launch three

important initiatives aimed at advancing India's renewable energy sector. These initiatives include the Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF), Digitalization of Utilities for Energy Transition (DUET), and Energy Transitions Innovation Challenge 2.0 (ENTICE 2.0).

- These partnerships will help India achieve its ambitious goal of generating 500 gigawatts (GW) of renewable energy by 2030.
- GEAPP has strengthened its relationship with ISA by signing the MDTF, with a target of raising USD 100 million to support solar energy projects in India.
- The DUET program aims to modernize India's power grid systems. It focuses on creating a digital database for grid assets, including their locations and specifications.

Key Points:-

- (i) This platform, launching in January 2025, is designed to support startups by providing funding, market access, and mentorship to help scale up innovative solutions for India's clean energy transition.
- (ii) GEAPP was launched by the Rockefeller Foundation at the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26). Its goal is to promote universal energy access and help meet critical climate goals.
- (iii) GEAPP focuses on three key areas: distributed renewable energy, green grids, and the green economy. It provides country-level support to 7 foundation countries and works on scalable and replicable solutions in 13 additional countries, reaching over 80 countries in total.

3. Henley Passport Index 2025 Singapore Reclaims Title of World's Most Powerful Passport and India Ranks 85th.

On January 08, 2025, Henley & Partners, based in London (United Kingdom), released the annual Henley Passport Index 2025. According to the index, Singapore has regained its position as the world's most powerful passport, offering visa-free access to 195 out of 227 destinations worldwide.

- India's rank has fallen from 80th position in 2024 to 85th position in 2025 on the Henley Passport Index. The country now offers visa-free access to only 57 destinations, a decline from 62 destinations in 2024.
- Japan secured the 2nd rank, providing visa-free access to 193 destinations.

Key Points:-

- (i) According to the index, several European Union (EU) member states, including France, Germany, Italy, and Spain, saw a drop in their ranking from 2nd place in 2024 to 3rd place in 2025.
- (ii) These EU countries are now ranked alongside Finland and South Korea, each offering visa-free access to 192 destinations worldwide.
- (iii) The index, created by Dr. Christian H. Kaelin, compares 199 passports and 227 travel destinations annually over the past 19 years, ranking countries based on visa-free access available to holders of that country's passport.

4. The World Bank has approved a funding of USD 35 million to improve education in Meghalaya.

On January 7, 2025, the World Bank's (WB) Board of Executive Directors approved a loan of USD 35 million for the "Meghalaya Multisectoral Project for

Adolescent Wellbeing, Empowerment and Resilience" (MPOWER). The goal of this project is to improve education quality in Meghalaya. It aims to support the state's youth by enhancing resources and infrastructure.

- The loan comes from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), which is part of the World Bank Group. The loan has a 15-year term, with a 5-year grace period before repayments begin.

- The project aims to empower 500,000 adolescents by helping them transition from school to work. It will focus on reducing school dropouts, improving learning outcomes, and providing support for finding jobs and starting businesses.

- The project is inspired by similar initiatives in Jharkhand and successful World Bank projects in Tanzania and Bangladesh.

Key Points:-

(i) The MPOWER project, aimed at improving academic results in grades 6-12 and closing gaps in reading and math, has a total cost of USD 45 million, with USD 35 million funded by the World Bank and the rest by the Government of India.

(ii) The project aims to reduce dropout rates in Meghalaya, with a focus on providing career guidance, mental health awareness, and life skills training to both current and former students, as the state has one of the highest dropout rates in India.

(iii) The project will also provide business skills training to aspiring entrepreneurs and out-of-school adolescents, in partnership with the Meghalaya State Skills Development Society (MSSDS).

BANKING & FINANCE

1. RBI issues Master Direction on Credit Information Reporting.

On January 6, 2025, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) released the 'Master Direction Reserve Bank of India (Credit Information Reporting) Directions, 2025'. This document brings together various guidelines for banks and financial institutions regarding the reporting of Customer Credit Information (CCI).

- The RBI issued these directions using its powers under Section 11 of the Credit Information Companies (CICs) (Regulation) Act, 2005.

- The aim of this Master Direction is to create a standardized system for reporting and sharing credit information. It also focuses on ensuring the confidentiality and security of sensitive credit data, while addressing other related concerns.

- Credit Information Companies (CICs) must notify customers via SMS or email whenever their Credit Information Report (CIR) is accessed by Specified Users (SUs). Notifications are sent only when the inquiry is reflected in the CIR.

Key Points:-

(i) Credit Institutions (CIs), including banks and Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs), are required to inform customers about the reasons for rejecting their requests for data correction to help them understand and address issues in their CIR.

(ii) Complainants are entitled to compensation of Rs. 100 per day if their complaint is not resolved within 30 calendar days of the initial filing with a CI or CIC.

(iii) The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) mandates all lenders to update credit bureau records every 15 days, effective January 1, 2025.

2. SEBI Eases Settlement Norms for Inactive Brokerage Accounts.

On January 06, 2025, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) eased settlement norms for brokerage accounts that remain inactive for over 30 calendar days. This change takes effect immediately and replaces SEBI's August 2024 circular on the same issue.

- The modification aims to reduce procedural inefficiencies for brokers, simplifying the process by eliminating the daily settlement requirement.
- Previously, brokers were required to identify inactive clients and return their funds within 3 working days.

Key Points:-

- (i) Under the new SEBI guidelines, brokers can settle the funds of clients who haven't traded for 30 calendar days on the upcoming settlement dates, as per the monthly cycle specified in stock exchanges' annual calendars.
- (ii) A brokerage account is considered inactive if the client has not made any trades (buying or selling stocks) for 30 days in a row.

3. "MFIN Postpones New Rule to Limit Lenders to 3 per Borrower, Effective April 1, 2025.

In January 2025, the Microfinance Institutions Network (MFIN), the self-regulatory organization (SRO) for the microfinance sector based in Mumbai (Maharashtra), announced the postponement of its

new rule that limits the number of lenders to 3 per borrower, down from 4, to better manage microfinance risks.

- Initially set to take effect on January 1, 2025, the implementation of this rule has been postponed to April 1, 2025.
- The regulation aims to ensure better financial management and prevent over-indebtedness.

Key Points:-

- (i) The postponement is to allow financial institutions adequate time to adapt their Information Technology (IT) systems and business rule engines for a smoother implementation of the new rule.
- (ii) Other regulations, such as capping outstanding loans at Rs. 2 lakh per borrower and halting lending to delinquent customers, took effect on January 1, 2025. MFIN also directed its members to stop providing loans to customers whose overdue amounts exceed ₹3,000 and have been pending for more than 60 days.

4. CCI Approves Key Proposals on January 7, 2025, Boosting Business Developments in India.

On January 7, 2025, the Competition Commission of India (CCI) approved the following proposals:

- Tata Electronics Private Limited (TEPL), a wholly-owned subsidiary of Tata Sons, to acquire a majority stake in Apple's contract manufacturer Pegatron Technology India Private Limited (Pegatron India).
- Gentari Renewables India Management Private Limited to acquire 21 Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs) owning renewable power generation plants, along

with the holding companies of certain SPVs, to enhance Gentari's renewable energy portfolio and sustainable energy objectives.

- The USA-based global investment firm CA Carob Investments to acquire up to a 68.9% stake in Roop Automotives Limited (RAL), a major player in India's automotive components industry.

Key Points:-

The Competition Commission of India (CCI) is a regulatory body established to ensure fair competition in the Indian market. It is responsible for promoting and sustaining competition in various sectors of the economy to protect consumers and prevent anti-competitive practices.

5. WEF Future of Jobs Report 2025 Predicts 78 Million New Job Opportunities by 2030.

On January 7, 2025, the World Economic Forum (WEF) released the 5th edition of the "Future of Jobs Report 2025 - Insights Report January 2025," highlighting that job disruption will impact 22% of jobs globally by 2030. This transformation is driven by factors such as technological advancements, demographic changes, economic pressures, and geopolitical tensions.

- The report predicts the creation of 170 million new jobs while 92 million jobs will be displaced, resulting in a net increase of 78 million jobs.
- This analysis is based on feedback from over 1,000 global employers representing more than 14 million workers from 55 economies.

Key Points:-

The report also discusses key macrorends that

will shape jobs and skills, as well as the workforce transformation strategies companies will adopt from 2025 to 2030.

6. KredX Gets RBI Approval to Function as TReDS Platform.

On January 9, 2025, Bengaluru-based KredX, India's largest supply chain finance platform, received approval from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to operate as a Trade Receivables Discounting System (TReDS) platform.

- The new business will operate under the brand name DTX (Domestic Trade Exchange).
- KredX becomes the fifth company to obtain this license, joining Receivables Exchange of India (RXIL), M1 Exchange, Invoice Mart, and C2FO (Collaborative Cash Flow Optimization) Factoring Solutions.
- Launched in 2018, the TReDS platform operates under RBI regulations and the PSS Act, requiring companies to have a minimum paid-up equity capital of Rs 25 crore and businesses with a turnover of Rs 250 crore or more to register.

Key Points:-

(i) To set up a TReDS platform, companies must have a minimum paid-up equity capital of Rs 25 crore, and businesses with a turnover of Rs 250 crore or more are required to register on the platform.

(ii) Sellers must have been in operation for over a year to participate on the TReDS platform, where they upload invoices listed as Factoring Units (FUs) for financiers to bid on, and choose the most favorable bid for advance payment.

(iii) TReDS transactions are expected to grow significantly, from around USD 30 billion annually in January 2025 to approximately USD 50 billion by 2026, ensuring timely payments and better cash flow for sellers.

credit scores will be reflected quickly.

(iii) Regular updates will help lenders manage risks more effectively by giving them timely information about a borrower's financial behavior, which can help reduce the chances of defaults.

7. The RBI has introduced a new 15-day credit reporting rule, effective from January 1, 2025.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has introduced a new rule for credit reporting. It now requires all lenders to update credit bureau records every 15 days instead of the previous monthly update cycle. This change is effective from January 1, 2025.

- The goal of this change is to improve the accuracy of credit scores and ensure that a borrower's financial activities are reflected quickly.
- The RBI had announced this change in August 2024, giving lenders and credit bureaus time to switch to the new 15-day cycle and update their systems and processes.
- The new 15-day credit reporting cycle will prevent loan "evergreening" by enabling lenders to identify debt cycles early and provide faster updates to credit scores, ensuring accurate and timely information for financial decisions.

Key Points:-

- (i) The new 15-day credit reporting cycle ensures up-to-date credit histories, enabling timely improvements in credit scores for consistent borrowers and faster access to loans for those with a good repayment record.
- (ii) This change will help borrowers understand their financial health better, as updates to their

8. Exim Bank has raised USD 1 billion by issuing 10-year bonds.

In January 2025, Export-Import Bank of India (EXIM Bank), based in Mumbai, raised USD 1 billion (Rs. 8,570 crores) by issuing 10-year bonds in the international market. This was done at the lowest-ever spread of 100 basis points (bps) over the 10-year US Treasury securities.

- This achievement makes EXIM Bank the first Indian organization to issue dollar bonds in 2025, marking a significant milestone for Indian issuers in global capital markets.
- The funds raised will be used by the bank to finance its current and future projects around the world.

Key Points:-

- (i) The bonds were issued in the 144A/Reg-S format under Rule 144A, which allows Qualified Institutional Buyers (QIBs) to trade debt securities without needing registration or review by the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).
- (ii) The main managers and book runners for this bond offering were Bank of America Securities (BofA Securities), Citigroup, HSBC, J.P. Morgan Chase, and Standard Chartered Bank (SCB).
- (iii) India Exim Bank, established in 1982, has been rated as Baa3 (Stable) by Moody's Investors Service, BBB- (Positive) by Standard & Poor's

(S&P), and BBB- (Stable) by Fitch Ratings.

(iii) These firms act as middlemen, facilitating transactions in different financial markets.

9. Tamilnad Mercantile Bank (TMB) has partnered with Bajaj Broking to launch a 3-in-1 account solution.

On January 8, 2025, Tamilnad Mercantile Bank (TMB) from Thoothukudi (Tamil Nadu) partnered with Bajaj Broking, a Pune (Maharashtra)-based company and the broking arm of Bajaj Finance Limited (BFL). Together, they launched a 3-in-1 account solution that combines banking, broking, and investment services.

- This partnership aims to provide TMB customers with easy online trading through Bajaj Broking's platform, while helping Bajaj Broking expand its digital services. Both companies plan to focus on offering solutions for their clients and finding new opportunities.
- The 3-in-1 account makes transferring funds easier, reduces paperwork, and provides a tech-driven platform to invest in various financial products.
- The partnership strengthens TMB's commitment to meeting customers' financial needs by offering expert investment services through a trusted partner.

Key Points:-

- (i) Bajaj Broking aims to offer technology-based services and research insights to a wider range of investors. This collaboration will improve decision-making tools and help expand its presence across India.
- (ii) A broking firm, also known as a brokerage firm, is a financial company that helps buyers and sellers trade securities (such as stocks, bonds, commodities, and derivatives).

10. GSEDPL has secured a loan of Rs 21.28 billion from IREDA for the Smart Meter Project in Uttar Pradesh (UP).

On January 9, 2025, GMR Smart Electricity Distribution (GSEDPL), a company based in Uttar Pradesh (UP) and a subsidiary of Grandhi Mallikarjuna Rao (GMR) Power and Urban Infra (GPUIL), received approval for a Rs 21.28 billion (USD 247.66 million) loan from the Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency Limited (IREDA).

- This loan will be used to install 7.57 million smart meters across UP as part of a larger project worth Rs 34.67 billion (USD 403.75 million).
- GSEDPL will operate and maintain these smart meters under a 10-year contract with the local electricity distribution companies (DISCOMs).
- The project will cover five areas: Varanasi, Azamgarh, Prayagraj, Mirzapur, Agra, and Aligarh, and will be managed by two state-owned DISCOMs: Purvanchal Vidyut Vitran Nigam (PuVNL) and Dakshinanchal Vidyut Vitran Nigam (DVVNL).

Key Points:-

- (i) The project will be carried out through three Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs): GMR Agra Smart Meters Limited, GMR Kashi Smart Meters Limited, and GMR Triveni Smart Meters Limited.
- (ii) Bosch Global Software Technologies Private Limited (BGSW) is the technical partner for the project.

(iii) GPUL has provided a corporate guarantee of Rs 440 crore (USD 51.21 million) to each SPV until the Commercial Operation Date (COD).

11. DSP Asset Managers Launches India's First BSE Sensex Next 30 Index Fund and ETF.

In January 2025, DSP Asset Managers Private Limited, headquartered in Mumbai, Maharashtra, and recognized as one of India's leading asset management companies (AMC), introduced a unique investment opportunity in the financial market. The company launched two innovative schemes: the DSP BSE (Bombay Stock Exchange) Sensex Next 30 Index Fund and the DSP BSE Sensex Next 30 ETF (Exchange-Traded Fund).

- These schemes aim to provide investors with diversified exposure to the next 30 companies listed on the BSE Sensex, offering a first-of-its-kind approach to mutual fund and ETF investments in India.
- The New Fund Offer (NFO) for these groundbreaking schemes began on January 10, 2025, and will remain open for subscription until January 24, 2025.
- These open-ended equity funds track the performance of the BSE Sensex Next 30 Index, providing investors with exposure to 30 large companies that have strong growth potential but are not part of the BSE Sensex.

Key Points:-

(i) The index is diversified across key sectors such as Financial Services (19%), Consumer Discretionary (18%), Commodities (18%), Energy (10%), Healthcare (10%), FMCG (8%), and Industrials (8%), ensuring balanced exposure.

(ii) Investors can contribute through lump-sum

investments or set up a Systematic Investment Plan (SIP) with a minimum investment of Rs. 100 for both options, providing flexibility to investors of all types.

(iii) The fund will allocate 95-100% of its assets to equities and equity-related securities within the BSE Sensex Next 30 Index, with a small portion (0-5%) held in cash or cash equivalents for liquidity management.

12. SEBI Issues License to Strata for SM REIT Approval.

On January 9, 2025, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) granted a license to Bengaluru (Karnataka)-based Strata Capital Management Private Limited (SCMPL), a leading real estate fractional ownership platform, for its Small and Medium Real Estate Investment Trust (SM REIT), named Strata SM REIT.

- This marks SEBI's fourth license for SM REITs, following approvals granted to Property Share, Rudrabhishek Enterprises Limited (REPL), and Emberstone.
- Strata Capital will act as the Investment Manager for the SM REIT, while Axis Trustee will function as the trustee.
- Strata SM REIT offers retail and institutional investors an opportunity to invest in premium commercial properties located in key areas, simplifying real estate investments.

Key Points:-

(i) The initiative ensures transparency, safeguards investors, and adheres to SEBI's regulatory framework to provide a structured and regulated

investment model.

(ii) Strata SM REIT supports SEBI's vision for secure fractional ownership, with plans to list Rs. 2,000 crore in assets and launch up to six schemes by FY 2025-26, offering accessible commercial real estate investments.

(iii) Small and Medium Real Estate Investment Trusts (SM REITs), introduced by SEBI in March 2024, allow individual investors to invest in properties like offices, hotels, and malls with lower capital requirements, encouraging broader participation in real estate.

13. Groww Asset Management introduces India's first Groww Nifty India Railways PSU ETF.

Groww Mutual Fund, an Asset Management Company, has launched two new funds: the Groww Nifty India Railways PSU Index Fund and the Groww Nifty India Railways PSU ETF. Both are passive funds that track the Nifty India Railways PSU Index, which focuses on public sector companies in the railway sector.

- The Groww Nifty India Railways PSU ETF will be the first of its kind in India. The New Fund Offer (NFO) for this ETF will be available from January 16 to January 30, 2025. The scheme will re-open for investments on or before February 13, 2025.

- Both funds aim to provide long-term capital growth by investing in the stocks and related instruments of the companies included in the Nifty India Railways PSU Index.

- The Groww Nifty India Railways PSU ETF is an open-ended fund that tracks the Nifty India Railways PSU Index - TRI (Total Return Index), adhering to SEBI's

rules and regulations for compliance with the latest standards. The fund does not impose an exit load, and investors can start with a minimum investment of Rs. 500, with increments in multiples of Rs. 1.

Key Points:-

(i) The fund's asset allocation involves 95-100% in Nifty India Railways PSU Index stocks and 0-5% in money market or debt instruments. Its strategy is to closely replicate the index while maintaining minimal tracking error, ensuring efficient performance aligned with its benchmark.

(ii) The Groww Nifty India Railways PSU Index Fund has an exit load of 1% for redemptions within 30 days and none thereafter. Investors can start a SIP with a minimum of Rs. 100. The fund allocates 95-100% to Nifty India Railways PSU Index stocks and 0-5% to debt instruments or ETFs, aiming to minimize tracking error through regular portfolio rebalancing.

(iii) The Nifty India Railways PSU Index has shown strong performance, even outperforming the Nifty 500 Index, which highlights the growth potential of this sector.

14. RBI Removes Restrictions on Ashirvad Micro Finance Limited (AMFL) and DMI Finance Private Limited (DFPL).

On January 8, 2025, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) lifted the business restrictions on Ashirvad Micro Finance Limited (AMFL) based in Chennai (Tamil Nadu) and DMI Finance Private Limited (DFPL) based in New Delhi (Delhi). This was done after the companies took corrective actions and promised to follow fair loan pricing and regulatory rules.

- The RBI had previously ordered these two Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) to stop approving and disbursing loans from October 21, 2024.

Key Points:-

The RBI had found that AMFL and DFPL were charging high-interest rates and not following regulatory rules, especially concerning the Weighted Average Lending Rates (WALR) and interest spreads.

15. IBBI Mandates eBKray Platform for Auctioning Assets in Liquidation Process.

On January 10, 2025, the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI), based in New Delhi, mandated that all asset auctions under the liquidation process must be conducted on the 'eBKray platform' (now known as Bank Asset Auction Network, BAANKET) starting from April 01, 2025. This move aims to simplify the auction process, enhance transparency, and improve recovery rates in liquidation cases.

- IBBI has instructed Insolvency Professionals (IPs) to list all unsold assets from ongoing liquidation cases on the eBKray platform by March 31, 2025, to enhance efficiency, accountability, and buyer access in the liquidation process.
- The decision is intended to address challenges associated with manual and fragmented auction processes.

Key Points:-

(i) Launched in 2019, eBKray is an advanced property listing and e-auction platform designed for banks and lending institutions to recover non-performing asset (NPA) loans by facilitating the

efficient sale of distressed assets through digital auctions.

(ii) IBBI has extended the deadline for Insolvency Professionals (IPs) to submit electronic forms related to liquidation and voluntary liquidation processes to March 31, 2025, following concerns over technical issues in form submission.

(iii) This extension marks the second change in deadline; the original deadline was September 30, 2024, which was first extended to December 31, 2024.

16. The RBI has kept the FRSB interest rate unchanged for the period from January to June 2025.

In January 2025, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced that the interest rate for the RBI Floating Rate Savings Bonds (Taxable) FRSB 2020 (T) for the period from January 1 to June 30, 2025, will remain at 8.05%. This rate includes the National Savings Certificate (NSC) rate of 7.70% plus an additional spread of 0.35%.

- The interest rate on RBI FRSB is not fixed; it is adjusted every six months based on the interest rate of the NSC.
- Interest earned on RBI FRSB is taxable, and no tax deductions are available for the investment. Tax Deducted at Source (TDS) will apply if the annual interest exceeds Rs.10,000.

Key Points:-

(i) The bonds require a minimum investment of Rs.1,000, with additional investments in multiples of Rs.1,000. There is no upper limit for the investment, and the bonds cannot be pledged as collateral for loans.

(ii) The RBI FRSB has a lock-in period of seven years and does not allow early withdrawal, except for senior citizens.

(iii) Seniors can withdraw early with a penalty after a minimum lock-in period: six years for those aged 60-70, five years for those aged 70-80, and four years for those aged over 80.

17. The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has granted automatic approval for the Avenue-Mavco acquisition of MHM Holding GmbH.

On January 4, 2025, the Competition Commission of India (CCI) granted automatic approval for the Avenue-Mavco acquisition of MHM Holding GmbH under its Green Channel route. This fast-track approval means the deal doesn't raise significant competition issues or cause market overlaps in India.

- The target company, MHM Holding GmbH, is the parent company of Hubergroup, a global leader in printing inks and chemicals with a major presence in India and Europe.

- Avenue India Emergence Private Limited (Avenue), part of the Avenue Capital Group, specializes in specialty lending and investments, operating in markets across the United States (US), Europe, and Asia.

- Mavco Investments Private Limited (Mavco) is a privately held company owned by individuals and trusts.

Key Points:-

(i) The acquisition will see Avenue and Mavco jointly acquire 100% ownership of MHM Holding. A joint venture will be set up in India to manage the

business and oversee the transaction locally.

(ii) This approval simplifies the regulatory process for mergers and acquisitions, allowing faster clearances for deals that do not negatively affect competition in the market.

18. WhiteOak Capital Mutual Fund has launched India's first actively managed Quality Factor Theme Fund.

On January 8, 2025, WhiteOak Capital Mutual Fund, based in Mumbai (Maharashtra), launched the WhiteOak Capital Quality Equity Fund, an open-ended equity scheme focused on the Quality Factor theme, through a New Fund Offer (NFO).

- India's first actively managed Quality Factor fund, focusing on companies with strong fundamentals, opens for subscription from January 8 to January 22, 2025.

- The minimum investment for the WhiteOak Capital Quality Equity Fund is Rs. 500 for lump-sum purchases and Rs. 100 for SIPs, with flexible installment options starting from six monthly payments.

- The fund primarily invests 80%-100% in equity instruments associated with the quality factor theme, along with up to 20% in debt securities and money market instruments, and up to 10% in Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) and Infrastructure Investment Trusts (InVITs).

Key Points:-

(i) The fund is benchmarked against the BSE Quality TRI and managed by Ramesh Mantri, CIO of WhiteOak Capital Asset Management.

(ii) An NFO is launched by an asset management

company (AMC) to introduce a new mutual fund. It's similar to an Initial Public Offering (IPO), but for mutual funds.

(iii) During the subscription period (10 to 15 days), investors can buy fund units at a fixed price of Rs. 10 per unit, after which the fund is listed on the stock market, and its value fluctuates based on its Net Asset Value (NAV).

19. The Government of India (GOI) has approved Suzuki Motor Corporation to acquire a 26% stake in NDDB Mirda Ltd.

In January 2025, the Government of India (GoI) approved Suzuki Motor Corporation, based in Shizuoka, Japan, to acquire a 26% stake in NDDB (National Dairy Development Board) Mirda Limited, a bio-gas venture of NDDB, located in Anand, Gujarat.

- Suzuki Research and Development (R&D) Center India Private Limited, a subsidiary of Suzuki Motor Corporation, signed an agreement with NDDB to invest in NDDB Mirda Limited.
- The total investment for this acquisition is Rs 34 crore. Suzuki will first invest Rs 8.84 crore, with the remaining Rs 25.16 crore to be invested later.

Key Points:-

- (i) This collaboration is part of Suzuki's strategy to use Compressed Bio-Gas (CBG) to improve the sustainability and performance of its vehicles.
- (ii) The agreement also allows Suzuki to gradually increase its stake to 49%.
- (iii) In 2023, Suzuki, Banas Dairy, and NDDB signed an agreement to set up four dung-based

CBG plants in Banaskantha district, Gujarat. NDDB will build the plants, Banas Dairy will operate them, and Suzuki will provide the funding.

20. PhonePe and ICICI Lombard Partner for Maha Kumbh Mela Insurance.

On January 9, 2025, Bengaluru-based PhonePe, in collaboration with Mumbai-based ICICI Lombard General Insurance Company Limited, introduced a unique insurance plan specifically designed for travelers attending the Maha Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh. This exclusive coverage will be available during the event, which is scheduled to take place from January 13 to February 26, 2025.

- The insurance plan comes in two affordable options to accommodate various travelers: ₹59 per person for those traveling by train or bus, and ₹99 per person for those flying domestically.
- The product provides a total sum insured of ₹1 lakh, covering multiple risks with designated amounts allocated for each type of coverage.

Key Points:-

- (i) The plan offers comprehensive coverage for devotees, including hospitalization, doctor consultations, outpatient services, personal accidents, lost baggage, trip cancellations, missed flights, and repatriation of remains.
- (ii) Users can purchase this plan through PhonePe until February 25, 2025, ensuring full coverage during their journey and stay at the Maha Kumbh Mela, providing a safe pilgrimage experience for millions.

MOUs and Agreement

1. FIU-IND has signed a MoU with IRDAI to strengthen cooperation in the fight against money laundering.

On January 6, 2025, the Financial Intelligence Unit-India (FIU-IND) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) to strengthen cooperation between the two organizations in key areas related to Anti-Money Laundering (AML) and Combating the Financing of Terrorism (CFT) within the insurance sector.

- This MoU is part of a broader plan to effectively implement the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA) and its associated rules.
- The IRDAI is a statutory body established by the IRDA Act, 1999, to oversee and promote the development of the insurance sector in India.
- The MoU aims to facilitate the exchange of relevant information and intelligence to ensure prompt action on suspicious activities.

Key Points:-

- (i) The MoU was signed by Vivek Aggarwal, Director of FIU-IND, and Satyajit Tripathy, Member (Distribution) of IRDAI, in New Delhi.
- (ii) The MoU establishes guidelines for insurance companies to report suspicious transactions under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) and includes training programs by FIU-IND and IRDAI to enhance risk identification skills in the insurance sector.
- (iii) Regular evaluations will address vulnerabilities in the insurance sector, enhance AML/CFT compliance, and include appointing nodal officers from FIU-IND and IRDAI for implementation

oversight.

2. GHI and H2Carrier have signed a MoU to promote green hydrogen and ammonia solutions.

On January 9, 2025, Greenstat Hydrogen India (GHI) Private Limited, based in New Delhi (Delhi) and a part of the Norwegian renewable energy company Greenstat ASA, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with H2Carrier AS (H2C), a company based in Norway. The MoU aims to speed up the development of green hydrogen and ammonia projects in India and Sri Lanka.

- The MoU focuses on supporting the global energy transition by producing green hydrogen and ammonia in a scalable, cost-effective, and flexible way.
- The partnership will involve feasibility studies, project identification, and the implementation of green hydrogen and ammonia production facilities, with a special focus on floating production solutions.

Key Points:-

- (i) The floating production solution will use H2Carrier's P2XFloater technology, which is the world's first floating green ammonia production facility.
- (ii) These projects will help meet the growing demand for green ammonia, which is crucial for clean fuel and decarbonizing industries like shipping, agriculture, and heavy manufacturing.
- (iii) GHI was established in 2020 to focus on developing green hydrogen and its derivatives in Asia and the Middle East.

SPORTS

1. Australia Defeats India 3-1 to Clinch Border-Gavaskar Trophy After a Decade.

Australia defeated India 3-1 in a 5-match Test series to win the Border-Gavaskar Trophy after 10 years, with the final Test held on January 5, 2025, at the Sydney Cricket Ground in Sydney, Australia.

- The Border-Gavaskar Trophy 2024-25 was scheduled from November 22, 2024, to January 7, 2025, in Australia.
- This marks the first time Australia has won the series against India in the last 10 years, since their victory at home in 2014-15.
- India had won four consecutive series (2016-17, 2018-19, 2020-21, and 2022-23), including two in Australia.

Key Points:-

- (i) India won the 1st match of the series at Perth by 295 runs, but Australia won the 2nd one in Adelaide by 10 wickets.
- (ii) The 3rd match ended in a draw in Brisbane, but Australia triumphed in the 4th Test in Melbourne by 184 runs and clinched the final Test in Sydney.
- (iii) India off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin announced his retirement from international cricket, having secured a total of 765 wickets for India across all formats.

2. New Zealand Cricketer Martin Guptill Announces Retirement from International Cricket.

On January 9, 2025, 38-year-old New Zealand cricketer Martin Guptill announced his retirement

from international cricket. Over his 14-year international career, he played 367 matches for New Zealand, scoring a total of 13,463 runs.

- Martin Guptill played 198 One Day Internationals (ODIs), 122 Twenty20 Internationals (T20Is), and 47 Tests, scoring 23 centuries across these formats, setting numerous white-ball batting records.
- He became the first New Zealand cricketer to score an ODI double-century, achieving an unbeaten 237 runs during the ICC Cricket World Cup 2015 quarter-final against the West Indies at Wellington Stadium, New Zealand.

Key Points:-

Martin Guptill is the current captain of the Auckland Aces and will continue to play in T20 franchise and domestic cricket matches.

3. Bangladesh batsman Tamim Iqbal Khan announces his retirement from international cricket.

On January 10, 2025, Tamim Iqbal Khan, a 35-year-old left-handed batsman from Bangladesh, announced his retirement from all forms of international cricket.

- This is his second retirement; he had first announced his retirement in July 2023, but after Bangladesh's Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, intervened, he reversed the decision within 24 hours.
- Tamim made his debut in One Day Internationals (ODIs) in 2007 and played his first Test match in 2008.
- He became the first Bangladeshi cricketer to score 50 half-centuries in ODIs.

Key Points:-

(i) Tamim Iqbal is the only Bangladeshi cricketer to score centuries in all three formats of the game (ODIs, Tests, and T20Is).

(ii) In 2011, he was named one of the four "Cricketers of the Year" by the Wisden Cricketers' Almanack.

(iii) He has scored more than 15,000 runs in his international career, the highest by any Bangladeshi batsman so far.

(i) CSMIA has set new standards of excellence with its innovative initiatives, such as the Aviio app launched in September 2024 by AAHL, which provides passengers with real-time information at seven airports in India, including CSMIA.

(ii) The Pawfect programme is another important initiative, featuring 9 comfort dogs stationed at Terminal 2 Departures to improve the passenger experience.

(iii) CSMIA has also expanded its digital gateway programme, increasing the number of e-gates from 24 to 68, making it the highest in India.

AWARDS

1. Mumbai's CSMIA becomes the first airport in India to receive Level 5 accreditation from ACI.

In January 2025, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA) in Mumbai (Maharashtra), which is operated by Adani Airports Holding Limited (AAHL), a subsidiary of Adani Group, became the first airport in India and the third in the world to receive the prestigious Level 5 Accreditation. This is the highest recognition given by the Airports Council International (ACI) for outstanding customer service standards.

- This recognition strengthens CSMIA's position as a leader in passenger service and operational excellence.
- ACI Level 5 Accreditation is the highest award in the Airport Customer Experience Accreditation Programme.
- The accreditation is given based on strict evaluation criteria, including customer feedback, service quality, and airport operations, creating a comprehensive framework for excellence in customer service.

Key Points:-

2. "Anju Bobby George Named Chairperson of AFI Athletes Commission, Neeraj Chopra Joins as Member".

On 8 January 2025, legendary long-jumper Anju Bobby George was appointed as the Chairperson of the Athletics Federation of India (AFI)'s Athletes Commission. The commission also includes two-time Olympic medallist and javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra as one of its members.

- The commission consists of nine athletes from India, including six women and three men.
- The commission comprises six women athletes: Anju Bobby George, a 2003 World Championships bronze medallist and senior vice president of the AFI; runner Jyotirmoyee Sikdar; discus thrower Krishna Poonia; hurdler M.D. Valsamma; steeplechaser Sudha Singh; and runner Sunita Rani.
- The commission also includes three male athletes: javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra, 3000m steeplechaser Avinash Sable, and newly-elected AFI President Bahadur Singh Sagoo, a shot put gold medallist at the

2002 Asian Games. Bahadur Singh Sagoo was the chairman of the previous Athletes Commission.

Key Points:-

(i) Former AFI President Adille Sumariwalla, who served three consecutive terms since 2012, will remain part of the executive council as an ex-officio member due to his position on the World Athletics Council.

(ii) The Athletes Commission represents the viewpoints and interests of athletes within the governing bodies of the Athletics Federation of India, with eligibility requiring athletes to be champions at the Asian or Commonwealth Games or participants in the Olympics or World Championships.

(iii) The commission's tenure is four years, with the current members serving the 2025-2029 cycle.

3. MDL hands over the 6th Scorpene Submarine, 'INS Vaghsheer,' to the Indian Navy.

On January 9, 2025, Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL) delivered the 6th and final Scorpene-class submarine, Indian Navy Ship (INS) Vaghsheer (S26), to the Indian Navy (IN) in Mumbai, Maharashtra, marking the successful completion of Project P-75.

- The Acceptance Document was signed by Sanjeev Singhal, Chairman & Managing Director (CMD) of MDL, and Rear Admiral (RAdm) R. Adhisrinivasan, Chief Staff Officer (CSO) (Technical), Western Naval Command.

- India aims to achieve full self-reliance in defence by 2047, with numerous ships and submarines currently under construction in domestic shipyards.

- The other five Scorpene-class submarines delivered under Project P-75 are INS Kalvari (2015), INS Khanderi (2017), INS Karanj (2018), INS Vela (2021), and INS Vagir (2020).

Key Points:-

(i) Launched on April 20, 2022, INS Vaghsheer (S26) underwent year-long trials to ensure combat readiness. Built under Project 75, it was constructed by MDL using technology transfer from France's Naval Group, supporting India's "Make in India" initiative.

(ii) INS Vaghsheer (S26) is armed with wire-guided torpedoes and anti-ship missiles, capable of being launched underwater or at the surface. It features high automation with an Integrated Platform Management System (IPMS) and a Combat Management System (CMS).

(iii) The submarine is equipped with indigenously developed systems, such as the Air Conditioning Plant, Internal Communication & Broadcast System, Main Batteries, and Ku-Band SATCOM (Rukmini).

4. Kerala's Kappad and Chal Beaches Receive 'Blue Flag' Certification.

On January 10, 2025, Kerala's famous Kappad beach in Kozhikode and Chal beach in Kannur both received the prestigious 'Blue Flag certification' from the Denmark-based non-profit organization, Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE).

- The Blue Flag certification is given to beaches and marinas that meet 33 criteria, focusing on areas like environmental education, water quality, safety, services, and waste management.

- Kappad Beach has earned the Blue Flag certification for the 4th consecutive year. The beach was upgraded in 2020 with solar-powered lights, bio-toilets, and accessible pathways for people with disabilities to meet the strict requirements for certification.
- Chal Beach also received the Blue Flag certification, further boosting Kerala's reputation as a sustainable tourism destination.

Key Points:-

- (i) Kappad Beach holds historical significance as it is the site where Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama first landed in 1498.
- (ii) The Blue Flag is an internationally recognized eco-label awarded to beaches, marinas, and sustainable boating tourism operators meeting high environmental and safety standards. It started in Europe in 1987, and in 2024, over 5,000 sites across 51 countries received this certification.
- (iii) India has become the 4th country in Asia, after South Korea, Japan, and the UAE, to have Blue Flag-certified beaches, marking a significant milestone in environmental excellence.

5. Bihar Sports University has received recognition from the UGC and is set to offer academic courses in sports and physical education.

On January 11, 2025, Bihar Sports University, located in Rajgir (Bihar), was recognized by the University Grants Commission (UGC) under Section 2(f) of the UGC Act, 1956. This recognition allows the university to offer academic courses in physical education and sports sciences, including undergraduate programs, diplomas, and Post Graduate (PG) diplomas.

- The Bihar government has appointed retired Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer Shishir Sinha as the first Vice-Chancellor (VC) of the university.
- The Chief Minister (CM) of Bihar, Nitish Kumar, inaugurated Bihar Sports University, the state's first sports-focused educational institution, along with the State Sports Academy (SSA) on August 29, 2023, which is also National Sports Day.
- These projects are part of the International Sports Complex in Rajgir, aimed at promoting sports education and developing skilled sports professionals in the state.

Key Points:-

- (i) The university will begin academic programs in 2025-2026, offering diplomas and PG diplomas in sports coaching and yoga, along with a four-year Bachelor of Physical Education (B.P.Ed.) program (pending NCTE approval).
- (ii) An Ombudsperson must be appointed within two months of starting academic activities to ensure adherence to UGC grievance redressal regulations.
- (iii) The academic programs aim to focus on specialized training in sports and physical education to meet national standards.

6. The 82nd Golden Globe Awards 2025 saw Jacques Audiard's film Emilia Perez winning 4 awards.

The 82nd Golden Globe Awards 2025 were held on 5th January 2025 at the Beverly Hilton, Beverly Hills, California, hosted by the Hollywood Foreign Press Association (HFPA). Emilia Perez, a French musical crime comedy, led with 10 nominations, including Best Motion Picture (Musical or Comedy),

Best Director (Jacques Audiard), and Best Actress (Karla Sofia Gascon), winning 4 awards: Best Picture, Best Supporting Actress (Zoe Saldana), Best Non-English Feature, and Best Original Song.

- The 2025 awards recognized excellence in both American and international films, as well as American television (TV) for the year 2024.

- American comedian and actress Nikki Glaser made history by becoming the first woman to solo-host the Golden Globe Awards ceremony in 2025.

- The nominations for the 82nd Golden Globe Awards, covering 27 categories, were announced by American comedian and actress Mindy Kaling, along with American actor Morris Chestnut.

Key Points:-

(i) The event marked the first time the organization hosted a special ceremony for recipients of two historic honors at the 2025 Golden Globes: 'The Cecil B. DeMille Award' and 'The Carol Burnett Award,' with American actor and three-time Golden Globe winner Ted Danson receiving the inaugural 'Carol Burnett Award 2025' for his role in Netflix's A Man on the Inside.

(ii) The Brutalist (an A24 film) secured 7 nominations and won 3 awards, including Best Actor (Adrien Brody), Best Director (Brady Corbet), and Best Movie (Drama), while Shogun swept all 4 of its categories, winning Best Series, Best Actor, Best Supporting Actor, and Best Supporting Actress.

(iii) American actress and producer Viola Davis received the 'Cecil B. DeMille Award 2025' for her outstanding performances in Fences and The Woman King, while the film All We Imagine As Light, directed by Indian filmmaker Payal Kapadia,

earned double nominations for Best Motion Picture (Non-English Language) and Best Director (Motion Picture).

IMPORTANT DAYS

1. Pravasi Bharatiya Divas 2025 was celebrated on January 9.

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD), also known as Non-Resident Indian (NRI) Day, is celebrated every two years on January 9. It is an important event that recognizes the contributions of the Overseas Indian community (Indian diaspora) in India's development.

- PBD has been observed every year on January 9 since 2003 to mark the day in 1915 when Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, popularly known as Mahatma Gandhi, returned to India from South Africa to lead the country's freedom struggle.

- From 2015 onwards, the PBD Convention has been held every two years with theme-based conferences.

Key Points:-

(i) The PBD Convention, a key event organized by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), was first introduced in 2003 by the Government of India (GoI), led by the late Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. It aims to honor and connect with the Indian diaspora.

(ii) The 18th PBD Convention took place for the first time in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, from January 8 to 10, 2025.

(iii) The theme for PBD Convention 2025 was "Diaspora's Contribution to a Viksit Bharat" (Developed India).

2. AICTE has declared 2025 as the 'Year of AI' to position India as a global leader in artificial intelligence.

The All-India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) has declared 2025 as the "Year of Artificial Intelligence (AI)" to establish India as a global leader in AI.

- This initiative will be adopted by all AICTE-approved institutions, impacting around 14,000 colleges and benefiting 40 million students across the country.
- Institutes will take an AI Affirmation Pledge to make India a global leader in AI through innovation, ethics, and education.
- A nationwide campaign called "AI for All: The Future Begins Here" will be organized. It will include workshops, hackathons, and guest lectures to raise awareness about AI's potential among students. The AICTE will also organize workshops and certification programs to train faculty in AI education.

Key Points:-

- (i) Institutes will be encouraged to introduce interdisciplinary courses and research programs related to AI. They will also be encouraged to set up AI labs with industry collaboration and promote socially responsible AI practices.
- (ii) Students will gain real-time experience through internships, projects, and mentorships, with collaborations from global companies like Adobe, CISCO, and IBM.
- (iii) The best-performing institutions will be recognized by AICTE and will serve as role models for AI excellence for other institutes.

3. National Road Safety Week Day Observed from January 11 to 17, 2025.

The National Road Safety Week, organized by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH), is observed annually across India from January 11-17 to raise awareness about road safety. The week emphasizes the importance of responsible driving, pedestrian safety, and improved road infrastructure to reduce accidents and save lives.

- The 36th National Road Safety Week is being observed in 2025.
- The first National Road Safety Week was introduced by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) in 1989.
- The first National National Road Safety Month (RSM) was observed in 2021.

Key Points:-

- (i) National Road Safety Month (RSM) is an annual observance introduced by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) to raise awareness among citizens and road users about the critical challenges of road safety.
- (ii) The annual observance is led by the MoRTH to promote and raise awareness about essential road safety measures.

4. National Youth Day was celebrated on 12 January 2025.

National Youth Day, also called 'Rashtriya Yuva Divas' in Hindi and 'Vivekananda Jayanti', is celebrated every year on January 12 across India

to honor the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda. He was a Hindu spiritual leader, philosopher, and social reformer who played a significant role in shaping modern India.

- **January 12, 2025, marks the 162nd birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda.**

Key Points:-

- (i) In 1984, the Government of India (GoI) declared Swami Vivekananda's birth anniversary as National Youth Day to honor his teachings and ideals.
- (ii) The first National Youth Day was observed on January 12, 1985.
- (iii) On January 11, 2025, Union Minister Mansukh L. Mandaviya from the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports (MYAS) inaugurated the 'Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue' at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi.

5. Earth's Rotation Day Celebrated on January 8, 2024.

Earth's Rotation Day is celebrated worldwide on January 8 to emphasize the importance of Earth's rotation. This day marks the anniversary of the scientific demonstration by French physicist Léon Foucault in 1851.

- **- January 8, 2025, will mark the 174th anniversary of Foucault's demonstration. The day honors Foucault's first public display of Earth's rotation in Paris, showcasing its scientific significance.**
- **Rotation refers to the Earth spinning around its own axis. The Earth completes one full rotation every 23 hours and 56 minutes (approximately 24 hours).**

- **Earth rotates from West to East, causing the day and night cycles, with one complete rotation representing one Earth Day, while the Sun and Moon appear to move from East to West across the sky.**

Key Points:-

- (i) In 470 BC, ancient Greeks believed Earth rotated on its own axis, and later, in the 16th century, Polish astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus proposed the heliocentric model, suggesting that Earth rotates on its axis and revolves around the Sun.
- (ii) Galileo Galilei confirmed Earth's rotation in 1610 through his observations of Jupiter's moons, while French physicist Léon Foucault provided clear evidence in 1851 using the Foucault Pendulum experiment, demonstrating Earth's rotation for the first time with laboratory equipment.
- (iii) Earth rotates on an imaginary axis through the North and South Poles, with a speed of about 1,670 km/h at the equator. The Earth's diameter is 12,714 km from pole to pole and 12,756 km across the equator.

6. World Hindi Day 2025 is celebrated on January 10.

World Hindi Day, or Vishwa Hindi Diwas, is celebrated every year on January 10 to highlight the importance of the Hindi language and its role in connecting people around the world.

- **The day is observed to honor Hindi's global significance, showcase its cultural diversity, and promote it as an international language.**
- **The theme for this year is "A Global Voice of Unity and Cultural Pride," which aims to encourage linguistic**

exchange and global interaction through the use of Hindi.

- Hindi Diwas, also known as Hindi Day, is celebrated annually on September 14 to mark the adoption of Hindi, written in Devanagari script, as one of India's 22 official languages. In 1949, Hindi was first spoken at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in New York, USA.

Key Points:-

- (i) Hindi, derived from Persian and a descendant of Sanskrit, is the third most spoken language globally, with 4.46% of the population speaking it. Declared the official language of India in 1950 under Article 343, it is also one of the 22 scheduled languages in the Indian Constitution.
- (ii) The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) celebrates this day globally by organizing various events and activities through Indian embassies and cultural centers.
- (iii) The first-ever World Hindi Day was celebrated on January 10, 2006, to mark the anniversary of the first World Hindi Conference held in Nagpur, Maharashtra, on January 10, 1975.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. Pixxel has announced a partnership with SIIS to provide Hyperspectral Satellite Data in South Korea.

In January 2025, Pixxel, a space technology startup based in Bengaluru (Karnataka) and specializing in hyperspectral earth-imaging technology, announced a partnership with SIIS Co., Ltd., a company based in Korea. This partnership aims to provide hyperspectral satellite data in South Korea.

- The agreement was signed in November 2024 at the Satellite Utilization Conference in Seoul, South Korea. This marked an important step in supplying hyperspectral data to relevant institutions and companies in the country.

- The partnership is designed to provide valuable insights that will help businesses and industries address complex challenges.

- Pixxel's hyperspectral data offers much higher spectral resolution than traditional multispectral data, enabling precise analysis of the Earth's surface and atmosphere (including both physical and chemical properties).

Key Points:-

- (i) By partnering with Pixxel, SIIS aims to enhance its market position by combining material insights from hyperspectral imaging with high-resolution spatial data.
- (ii) Pixxel plans to launch its "Fireflies" constellation of six commercial-grade hyperspectral satellites in 2025.
- (iii) These satellites will offer 5-meter (m) resolution, a 40-kilometer (km) wide coverage, and the ability to revisit areas daily across hundreds of spectral bands.

2. DRDO Successfully Concludes User Trials of HIMKAVACH Clothing System for Cold Weather Military Operations.

On January 10, 2025, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) announced the successful completion of user trials for its HIMKAVACH multi-layer clothing system in extreme cold weather conditions.

- The HIMKAVACH multi-layer clothing system aims to enhance soldier performance by improving mobility, comfort, and durability in extreme cold environments.
- Designed to protect soldiers in temperatures ranging from +20°C to -60°C, it is especially suitable for high-altitude military operations, particularly in the Himalayan region.

Key Points:-

- (i) The system features a modular, multi-layer structure, enabling soldiers to add or remove layers according to weather conditions, ensuring optimal comfort and mobility.
- (ii) Previously, the Indian Army (IA) utilized the Extreme Cold Weather Clothing System (ECWCS), a 3-layered outfit developed by DRDO's Defence Institute of Physiology and Allied Sciences (DIPAS). This system offered insulation, waterproofing, and a reversible outer layer for camouflage in both snowy and non-snowy terrains.

BOOKS & AUTHORS**1. Amitabh Kant's Book 'How India Scaled Mt G20: The Inside Story of the G20 Presidency' Released in January 2025.**

In January 2025, the book titled 'How India Scaled Mt G20: The Inside Story of the G20 Presidency', authored by Amitabh Kant, was released. The book was published by Rupa Publications India.

- The book explores India's pivotal role in hosting and shaping the Group of Twenty (G20) during its presidency from December 1, 2022, to November 30, 2023.

- It delves into India's initiatives to address critical global challenges, such as economic disparities, climate change, and technological innovation.

Key Points:-

Amitabh Kant, who served as G20 Sherpa of India, was also the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog, Government of India (GoI).

OBITUARY**1. Former Greek Prime Minister Costas Simitis has passed away.**

Former Greek Prime Minister (PM) Costas Simitis, a law professor and reformist, passed away at the age of 88 in Corinth, Greece. He was born on June 23, 1936, in Piraeus, Greece.

- He served as Prime Minister of Greece for eight years, from 1996 to 2004.
- He is credited as the key figure behind Greece's adoption of the euro as its currency.
- Costas Simitis was a well-known Greek politician and academic. He was also a founding member of the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) party.

Key Points:-

- (i) In 1996, he became the President of PASOK at the party's 4th Congress, following the death of former PM Andreas Papandreou.
- (ii) He led PASOK from 1996 to 2004 and served as Greece's Prime Minister during the same period.
- (iii) During his tenure, he reduced public debt and budget deficit and played a crucial role in Greece

joining the eurozone in 2001.

2. Renowned Kannada novelist and writer Na D'Souza has passed away at the age of 87.

On January 5, 2025, prominent Kannada novelist and writer Norbert D'Souza, popularly known as Dr. Na D'Souza, passed away at the age of 87 in Mangalore, Karnataka. He was born in Sagar, Karnataka, on June 6, 1937.

- He was known for his influential works on social justice, human rights, and human relationships. He was also one of the early Kannada writers who raised awareness about environmental issues and climate change.
- His stories depicted the struggles faced by the people of the Malnad region.
- Na D'Souza started his career as a typist in Karnataka's Department of Public Works and worked there for 37 years.

Key Points:-

- (i) In 2014, he presided over the 80th Kannada Sahitya Sammelana held in Madikeri, Karnataka.
- (ii) Some of his works were adapted into critically acclaimed films such as Kadina Benki, Dweepa, Baluvali, Antharya, and Bettada Puradaditta Makkalu.
- (iii) Na D'Souza received several awards, including the Karnataka Sahitya Academy Award in 1993 for his work Mulugadeya Oorige Bandavaru, the Karnataka Rajyotsava Award in 1998, and was honored with the Pampa Award by the Karnataka government in 2024.

3. PM Modi Launches ₹2 Lakh Crore Projects in AP, Odisha and Inaugurates Green Hydrogen Hub and Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention.

Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi visited Andhra Pradesh (AP) and Odisha from 8th January to 9th January 2025 to launch various projects worth over Rs 2 lakh crore, aimed at promoting sustainable development, industrial growth, and infrastructure enhancement. The key projects include:

- Laid the foundation stone and inaugurated multiple railway and road projects worth over Rs. 19,500 crore in AP.
- Launched the first Green Hydrogen Hub under the National Green Hydrogen Mission (NGHM) in Pudumadaka, AP.
- Inaugurated the 18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) convention and remotely flagged off the inaugural journey of the Pravasi Bharatiya Express in Bhubaneswar, Odisha.

Key Points:-

- (i) PM Narendra Modi laid the foundation stones for a Bulk Drug Park in Anakapalli district and the Krishnapatnam Industrial Area (KRIS City) in Tirupati district, Andhra Pradesh, to boost economic activity through their proximity to the Visakhapatnam-Chennai Industrial Corridor and the Chennai-Bengaluru Industrial Corridor.
- (ii) In 2023, the Union Cabinet launched the National Green Hydrogen Mission (NGHM) with an investment of Rs. 19,744 crore, spanning from the Financial Year (FY) 2023-24 to FY 2029-30, aiming to position India as a global hub for the production, usage, and export of Green Hydrogen and its derivatives.

(iii) On 9th January 2025, PM Modi launched the Pravasi Bharatiya Express, a special tourist train that will begin its journey from Nizamuddin Railway Station in New Delhi.

4. Renowned writer, filmmaker, and Padma Shri awardee Pritish Nandy has passed away.

On January 8, 2025, renowned writer, filmmaker, and Padma Shri awardee Pritish Nandy passed away at the age of 73 in Mumbai, Maharashtra. He was born on January 15, 1951, in Bhagalpur, Bihar.

- Pritish Nandy received several awards, including the prestigious Padma Shri.
- Pritish Nandy was a versatile figure – a writer, journalist, poet, filmmaker, and animal rights activist. He started his career as a writer and published his first poetry collection, *Of Gods and Olives*, in 1967.
- Over the years, he published more than 40 volumes of poetry and translated works from Bengali, Urdu, Punjabi, and Sanskrit into English.

Key Points:-

(i) In the 1980s, Pritish Nandy became the Publishing Director of The Times of India Group (Bennett Coleman & Co Limited). He also served as the Editor for notable publications, including The Illustrated Weekly of India, The Independent, and Filmfare.

(ii) Pritish Nandy, founder of Pritish Nandy Communications Limited (PNC), significantly contributed to Indian cinema with hit films like *Sur*, *Kaante*, and *Chameli*. He also founded People for Animals (PFA), India's first animal rights NGO, and opened India's first cyber café in Mumbai in

1996.

(iii) Pritish Nandy was honored with the Padma Shri in 1997 for his contributions to Indian literature. He also received the KarmaVeer Puraskar (2008), the International Humanitarian Award (2012), and several other accolades, including the Friends of Liberation War Honour and the UNESCO Asia Pacific Heritage Award.

5. Renowned playback singer P. Jayachandran has passed away.

On January 9, 2025, renowned playback singer P. Jayachandran, affectionately known as 'Bhava Gayakan,' passed away at the age of 80 in Thrissur, Kerala. He was born on March 3, 1944, in Ernakulam.

- He won numerous awards, including the prestigious 'National Film Award.'
- P. Jayachandran was a celebrated playback singer, known for his versatility in singing in multiple languages, including Malayalam, Tamil, Kannada, Telugu, and Hindi. His career began in 1966 with the song "Manjalayil Mungi Thorthi" from the Malayalam film *Kalithozhan*.
- Over his 50-year career, he recorded more than 16,000 songs in various Indian languages and made his acting debut in the 1986 Malayalam film *Nakhakshathangal*.

Key Points:-

(i) In 1986, he won the 'National Film Award' for Best Male Playback Singer for his outstanding contribution to Indian cinema.

(ii) He was honored with the 'J C Daniel Award,'

the highest recognition in Malayalam cinema, in 2020 for his contributions to the industry.

(iii) He also received 5 Kerala State Film Awards and 4 Tamil Nadu (TN) State Film Awards, including the TN State Film Award (1994) and the TN Kalaimamani Award (1997).

6. Veteran Soldier Havaladar Baldev Singh, Who Fought Four Wars, Passes Away at 93 in Jammu and Kashmir.

In January 2025, Veteran soldier (retired) Havaladar Baldev Singh, who fought in four wars against Pakistan, passed away at the age of 93 in Rajouri district, Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). He was born on 27th September 1931 in Nanihal village, Nowshera, J&K.

- Baldev Singh volunteered at the age of 16 to join the Bal Sena Force under the leadership of Brigadier Usman, Commander of the 50 Para Brigade, during the battle of Nowshera and Jhangar in 1947-48.

Key Points:-

(i) In 1950, Baldev Singh joined the Indian Army and served for nearly three decades. He participated in several crucial battles, notably during the India-Pakistan conflicts in 1961, 1962, and 1965.

(ii) Baldev Singh retired from service in 1969, but was recalled during the India-Pakistan war in 1971 and served for an additional eight months.

7. H. Lakshmanan, the former Executive Director of TVS, has passed away.

On January 10, 2025, H. Lakshmanan, the former Executive Director (ED) of Sundaram Clayton

Limited (SCL) (now TVS Holding Limited), and the Director of Thirukkurugudi Vengaram Sundaram (TVS) Motor Company Limited, passed away at the age of 92 in Chennai, Tamil Nadu. He was born in 1933 in Shenkottai, Tamil Nadu.

- H. Lakshmanan was a key figure in the TVS Group with over 7 decades of experience. He began his career at the age of 20 as a typist.

- He played an important role in setting up the Padi manufacturing unit in the 1960s and worked alongside T.S. Srinivasan from 1960 to 1980. He was the Executive Director of SCL from 2000 to 2015.

Key Points:-

Lakshmanan also served on the TVS Motors board since 2000, becoming one of the most trusted mentors for the company, and retired in 2022.

ENVIRONMENT

1. A new ant species, *Tapinoma onaele*, has been discovered in the Western Ghats.

In January 2025, researchers from Goa, Dehradun (Uttarakhand), and Karnataka discovered a new ant species called *Tapinoma onaele* in the Western Ghats, Kodagu district, Karnataka. The species is named after the Kannada word 'onaele', meaning "dried leaves," reflecting its natural habitat in the leaf litter on the forest floor.

- This discovery adds to other significant finds, such as *Protanilla flamma* and *Probolomyrmex procne*, a species that had not been seen in India for 30 years.

- Goa is the third known location in India where this species has been documented.

Key Points:-

(i) Leaf litter, made up of fallen leaves and organic material, is essential for the ecosystem as it provides shelter and food for various organisms, including ants.

(ii) These ants play a key role in decomposition, soil movement, and pest control, making them vital for forest ecology.

(iii) He also played a key role in helping Cyprus become a member of the European Union (EU) in 2004.

under the Order Neuroptera.

(iii) *Indophanes barbara* is an antlion species belonging to the *Myrmeleontidae* family, characterized by its long, distinct antennae.

2. ZSI Team Discovers New Pangolin Species in Arunachal Pradesh.

In January 2025, researchers from the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) discovered a new pangolin species, named the Indo-Burmese Pangolin (*Manis indoburmanica*), in Arunachal Pradesh (AR). This species diverged from the Chinese Pangolin (*Manis pentadactyla*) approximately 3.4 million years ago.

- The newly discovered species belongs to the family *Manidae*, featuring dark brown to olive-brown scales and a pinkish-colored face. Its body is covered with bristle-like fur, similar to other Asian pangolins.

Key Points:-

(i) Researchers from the Shadpada Entomology Research Lab (SERL) at Christ College, Irinjalakuda, Kerala, have discovered two rare species from the Order Neuroptera: *Glenochrysa zeylanica* and *Indophanes barbara*.

(ii) *Glenochrysa zeylanica* is a green lacewing species from the *Chrysopidae* family, classified