

WEEKLY
CURRENT
AFFAIRS
PDFs



February 2025



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NATIONAL AFFAIRS / GOVERNMENT SCHEME

1. Rajnath Singh Inaugurates 15th Aero India Edition in Bengaluru.

In February 2025, Union Minister Rajnath Singh, the Ministry of Defence (MoD), inaugurated the 15th edition of Aero India, Asia's largest aerospace and defence exhibition, at Yelahanka Air Force Station in Bengaluru, Karnataka. The five-day event took place from February 10 to 14, 2025, with the theme "The Runway to a Billion Opportunities."

- The first three days, from February 10 to 12, were designated as business days, while February 13 and 14 were reserved as public days for visitors.
- Union Minister Rajnath Singh inaugurated the India Pavilion, Innovations for Defence Excellence (IDEX Pavilion), and Karnataka Pavilion at Aero India 2025.
- Department of Defence Production, MoD, Secretary Sanjeev Kumar unveiled the new name of Hindustan Jet Trainer HJT-36, now called 'Yashas'.

Key Points:-

(i) Ahmedabad (Gujarat)-based Adani Defence & Aerospace, in partnership with New Delhi (Delhi)-based Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) operating under MoD, introduced a Vehicle-Mounted Counter-Drone System at Aero India 2025.

(ii) General Electric (GE) Aerospace, headquartered in Ohio, United States of America (USA), signed a five-year Performance-Based Logistics (PBL) contract with the Indian Air Force (IAF) to support the sustainment of T700-GE-701D engines powering its AH-64E-I Apache helicopters.

(iii) ideaForge Technology Limited (Mumbai) introduced the NETRA 5 UAV, SWITCH V2 Tactical UAV, and a logistics UAV concept, while Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) partnered with France-based Safran Electronics & Defense to establish a joint venture (JV) for manufacturing and maintaining HAMMER weapons in India.

2. Panchayati Raj Devolution Index 2024 Ranks Karnataka at the Top Followed by Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

On February 13, 2025, Union Minister of State (MoS) S.P. Singh Baghel, Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) and Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying (MoFAH&D), released the comprehensive Devolution Index Report titled "Status of Devolution to Panchayats in States - An Indicative Evidence-Based Ranking 2024" at the Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA), New Delhi.

- As per the report, Karnataka secured the 1st rank in devolution of power to panchayats, excelling in funds, functions, and functionaries, followed by Kerala, Tamil Nadu (TN), Maharashtra, and Uttar Pradesh (UP).
- The report was prepared by the IIPA, assessing 31 States and Union Territories (UTs), with a sample of 172 Panchayats across 68 districts, and 1,594 respondents interviewed.

Key Points:-

(i) The Devolution Index is based on extensive research and empirical analysis, providing insights into decentralization progress across States and UTs.

(ii) The Index evaluates six key dimensions:

Framework, Functions, Finances, Functionaries, Capacity Building, and Accountability of Panchayats.

23, 2019. It is an international collaboration of 49 members focused on climate and disaster-resilient infrastructure solutions.

3. DoT and CDRI Unveil Roadmap to Enhance Telecom Resilience in India.

In February 2025, the Department of Telecommunications (DoT), Ministry of Communications (MoC), in collaboration with the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), released a comprehensive report on the Disaster Risk and Resilience Assessment Framework (DRRAF). This initiative aims to strengthen India's telecom sector against disasters.

- The report was launched as part of a national and sub-national disaster risk and resilience assessment study for the telecommunications sector, conducted by CDRI.
- The study covered five Indian states—Assam, Odisha, Tamil Nadu (TN), Uttarakhand, and Gujarat—analyzing disaster risks and resilience strategies tailored to the telecom sector.
- A multi-hazard risk assessment was conducted across 0.77 million telecom towers, evaluating threats from floods, cyclones, earthquakes, and other natural disasters.

Key Points:-

- (i) A disaster risk and resilience index was developed to assess telecom infrastructure vulnerability based on disaster intensity, frequency, and impact.
- (ii) Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi announced the launch of CDRI at the United Nations Climate Action Summit in New York, USA, on September

4. Ministry of Ayush and DOSJE Sign MoU to Enhance Geriatric Healthcare.

On February 12, 2025, the Ministry of Ayush (Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homoeopathy) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment (DOSJE) under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MoSJE) in New Delhi.

- The MoU aims to implement Ayush-based interventions to improve geriatric healthcare and address substance abuse, marking a significant step in combining Ayush systems with social justice efforts to create a healthier and more inclusive society.
- The MoU signing ceremony was attended by Union Minister of State (MoS) (Independent Charge, IC) Prataprao Ganpatrao Jadhav, Ministry of Ayush; Union MoS Banwari Lal Verma, MoSJE; Vaidya Rajesh Kotecha, Secretary of Ministry of Ayush; Amit Yadav, Secretary of DOSJE, and other distinguished officials.
- The MoU focuses on geriatric healthcare and substance abuse, critical areas for supporting an aging population in leading healthy lives. It aims to enhance the well-being of senior citizens through joint initiatives by both ministries, including awareness programs, training for service providers, and the establishment of geriatric health and de-addiction units under Ayush autonomous bodies.

Key Points:-

- (i) The Ministry of AYUSH and DOSJE will

collaborate on innovative initiatives to promote senior citizens' health, reduce drug demand, address substance abuse, and support mental rehabilitation through awareness programs and training service providers using AYUSH systems.

(ii) Encouraging research in geriatric health, substance abuse, and mental health, focusing on the therapeutic benefits of traditional healthcare practices.

(iii) Supporting health promotion activities tailored for the elderly and individuals dealing with substance abuse.

5. Aero India 2025: DRDO Unveils Indigenous VHF Radar, HAL Expands Partnerships, and Russia Proposes Su-57E Localization.

The 15th edition of Aero India 2025, Asia's largest aerospace and defense exhibition, was held from February 10 to 14, 2025, in Bengaluru, Karnataka, under the theme "The Runway to a Billion Opportunities." Here are the key highlights from Part 2 of the event:

- The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), based in New Delhi, unveiled India's first indigenous Very High Frequency (VHF) radar, designed to detect fifth- and sixth-generation stealth aircraft, which pose significant threats to national security.

- Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) Management Academy, the training wing of HAL headquartered in Bengaluru, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Indian Institute of Information Technology (IIIT) Dharwad, Karnataka, at Aero India 2025 to enhance collaboration between industry and academia.

- HAL entered into an agreement with Collins Aerospace, a North Carolina (USA)-based aerospace and defense company and a subsidiary of RTX Corporation (formerly Raytheon Technologies Corporation), to set up a Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul (MRO) facility at the HAL Accessories Complex in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh.

Key Points:-

(i) Union Minister of State (MOS) Sanjay Seth from the Ministry of Defence (MoD) handed over Restricted Military Type Certificates (RMTTC) for the Astra Beyond Visual Range (BVR) missile and the Hindustan Turbo Trainer-40 (HTT-40) aircraft during the 15th Aero India International Seminar, held in Bengaluru before the main event.

(ii) During Aero India 2025, Russia-based Rosoboronexport, in collaboration with its Russian aerospace and defense corporation Unit United Aircraft Corporation (UAC), proposed a partnership with India for the production of the Sukhoi-57 Export Variant (Su-57E), Russia's fifth-generation fighter jet, and is ready to initiate its localization at Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) facilities.

6. RuTAGE Smart Village Center Launched in Haryana to Boost Rural Technological Empowerment.

In February 2025, the Rural Technology Action Group (RuTAGE) Smart Village Center (RSVC) was inaugurated in Mandaura village, Sonipat, Haryana.

- The inauguration was led by Professor Ajay Sood, the Principal Scientific Adviser (PSA) to the Government of India (GOI), alongside key partners: Commodore Sridhar Kotra, Founder of the Modern

Village Foundation, and DP Goel, Chairman of the Chaalis Gaon Vikas Parishad.

- The RSVC aims to bridge the gap between rural technological needs and advanced innovations, fostering sustainable rural development.

Key Points:-

(i) The RSVC functions as a permanent hub for technological integration at the Panchayat level, impacting 15-20 villages over several years and offering a comprehensive suite of 12 technology tracks to address diverse rural challenges.

(ii) Additionally, the center enhances market access for rural producers by collaborating with platforms such as the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC), Amazon.com Inc., and Market Mirchi (a RuTAG innovation by IIT Bombay in Mumbai), enabling rural entrepreneurs to expand their market reach and sell their products effectively.

7. Union Minister JP Nadda Launches National MDA Campaign to Eradicate Lymphatic Filariasis (LF).

In February 2025, Union Minister Jagat Prakash Nadda, along with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW), launched the Annual Nationwide Mass Drug Administration (MDA) Campaign aimed at eliminating Lymphatic Filariasis (LF), commonly known as Hathi Paon. The launch was conducted through a video conference, with participation from State Health Ministers and senior officials from 13 LF-endemic states.

- The campaign focuses on door-to-door distribution of anti-filarial medication, ensuring that all eligible individuals receive and consume the prescribed

medicine to prevent the transmission of Lymphatic Filariasis (LF).

- Led by the National Center for Vector Borne Diseases Control (NCVBDC) under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW), India is committed to eliminating Lymphatic Filariasis by 2027.

- Lymphatic Filariasis (LF) is a parasitic disease transmitted through the bites of infected Culex mosquitoes.

Key Points:-

(i) The State Health Ministers who participated in the meeting included Satya Kumar Yadav (Andhra Pradesh), Ashok Singhal (Assam), Shyam Bihari Jaiswal (Chhattisgarh), Rushikesh Ganeshbhai Patel (Gujarat), Irfan Ansari (Jharkhand), Dinesh Gundu Rao (Karnataka), Rajendra Shukla (Madhya Pradesh), Mukesh Mahaling (Odisha), Mangal Pandey (Bihar), Prakashrao Abitkar (Maharashtra), and Brijesh Pathak (Uttar Pradesh).

(ii) The MDA campaign will take place twice a year, covering 111 endemic districts across 13 states: Andhra Pradesh (AP), Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh (MP), Maharashtra, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh (UP), and West Bengal (WB). Starting from February 10, 2025, anti-filarial medicines will be provided free of cost to over 17.5 crore people across these endemic districts.

8. Union Minister Jyotiraditya M. Scindia Unveils Commemorative Postage Stamps for Maha Kumbh 2025.

In February 2025, the Department of Posts (DoP) released a special commemorative souvenir sheet

featuring 3 postage stamps dedicated to the Maha Kumbh Mela 2025, taking place in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh (UP) from 13th January to 26th February 2025.

- Union Minister Jyotiraditya Madhavrao Scindia, from the Ministry of Communications (MoC), unveiled the stamps at the Arail Ghat Post Office (PO) in Prayagraj.
- The commemorative postage stamps, designed by Sankha Samanta, highlight three prominent aspects of Triveni Tirtha: Maharshi Bharadwaj Ashram, an ancient center of learning; Snan, the holy dip at Triveni Sangam; and Akshayvat, the immortal Banyan tree.

Key Points:-

- (i) Other philatelic releases focusing on Maha Kumbh include special covers and cancellations on sacred Snan days, 'Divya, Bhavya, and Digital Mahakumbh', and a picture postcard celebrating 'Prakhyat Prayagraj'.
- (ii) The Kumbh Mela is rooted in Hindu mythology, linked to the churning of the ocean (Samudra Manthan). Maha Kumbh occurs once every 144 years at Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh (UP).

- The metal composition of the Rs 100 commemorative coin includes 50% Silver (Ag), 40% Copper (Cu), 5% Nickel (Ni), and 5% Zinc (Zn). The coin will weigh 35 grams and have a diameter of 44 millimeters, with 200 serrations along the edge.
- The Lion Capital of Ashoka Pillar will be in the center, accompanied by the legend "Satyamev Jayate" inscription, with the Rupee symbol (₹) and denominational value "100" in international numerals located below it.
- The peripheries will feature the words "Bharath" in Devanagari script on the left and 'INDIA' in English on the right.

Key Points:-

- (i) Mohammed Rafi (24 December 1924 – 31 July 1980), often referred to as Rafi Sahab, was born in Punjab. He was awarded the Padma Shri in 1967 for his contribution to Art.
- (ii) Previous commemorative coins were issued in honor of legendary singers like Begum Akhtar (renowned Ghazal artist) in 2014 and Dr. M.S. Subbulakshmi (iconic Carnatic singer) in 2017.

9. Government to Issue Rs 100 Commemorative Coin to Celebrate Birth Centenary of Mohammed Rafi.

In December 2024, the Government of India (GOI) announced the issuance of a Rs 100 commemorative coin to mark the birth centenary of legendary playback singer Padma Shri Mohammed Rafi, which concluded on 24 December 2024. The circular, non-circulating coin will be minted by the India Government Mint (IGM) in Mumbai, Maharashtra.

10. Gujarat Launches G-SAFAL Initiative to Empower 50,000 Underprivileged Women.

In February 2025, the Gujarat government, led by Chief Minister (CM) Bhupendra Rajnikant Patel, launched the G-SAFAL (Gujarat Scheme for Antyodaya Families for Augmenting Livelihoods), an initiative aimed at enhancing the livelihoods of underprivileged families, empowering women, and promoting economic self-sufficiency.

- The initiative will empower 50,000 families holding Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) cards across 25 talukas in 10 districts of Gujarat over the next 5 years.
- It is being implemented by Gujarat Livelihood Promotion Company Limited (GLPC) under the Rural Development Department of Gujarat.
- The scheme aligns with the Aspirational Blocks Programme (ABP), launched by the Government of India (GoI) in January 2023, aimed at improving the quality of life in 500 aspirational blocks across 27 states and 4 Union Territories (UTs).

Key Points:-

- (i) The four key pillars of G-SAFAL for women's empowerment are Social Security, Livelihood Creation, Financial Inclusion, and Social Development and Empowerment.
- (ii) The scheme will provide beneficiaries with thorough training and support, along with a grant of Rs. 80,000 to help them create new opportunities for financial stability.
- (iii) The initiative will cover around 10 districts and talukas of Gujarat.

11. DoT and ITU Partner to Advance Future Infrastructure with AI-Powered Digital Twin Technologies.

On February 17, 2025, the Department of Telecommunications (DoT), Ministry of Communication (MoC), Government of India (GoI), and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in Geneva, Switzerland, signed a Letter of Intent (LoI) to collaborate on advanced infrastructure planning using Artificial Intelligence (AI)-driven digital twin technologies.

- This partnership aims to leverage cutting-edge technologies for the sustainable development of infrastructure.

Key Points:-

- (i) The LoI was signed by Doreen Bogdan-Martin, Secretary-General (SG), ITU, and Dr. Neeraj Mittal, Secretary (Telecom), DoT, MoC, during his official visit to Geneva.
- (ii) In addition to infrastructure planning, DoT and ITU signed an agreement to initiate a 'Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) fellowship scheme' focused on telecommunications and emerging technologies.
- (iii) The proposed scheme envisions supporting PhD fellowships over five years in the ITU focus areas.

12. Volvo Trucks Introduces India's First Road Train to Enhance Logistics Efficiency.

On February 17, 2025, India's first Road Train was flagged off in Nagpur, Maharashtra by Union Minister Nitin Jairam Gadkari, Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH). It was developed by Bengaluru (Karnataka)-based Volvo Trucks (Volvo Group India Private Limited) and operated by Gurgaon (Haryana)-based Delhivery Limited.

- This innovation marks a major shift in India's long-haul transportation system, offering higher efficiency and increased capacity in logistics.

Key Points:-

- (i) The Volvo FM "Forward Control Medium Height Cab" 420 4x2 Road Train features a 24-foot intermediate trailer and a 44-foot semi-trailer, providing a total cargo volume of 144 cubic meters

(m), which is 50% higher than standard semi-trailers.

(ii) The Road Train is certified by MoRTH and Pune, Maharashtra-based Automotive Research Association of India (ARAI) for operations between Nagpur and Bhiwandi, Maharashtra.

(iii) The Road Train is equipped with advanced safety features, including the Electronic Braking System (EBS), Electronic Stability Program (ESP), and a 360-degree camera system, ensuring a safe and stable journey.

garments.

(ii) Union Minister Giriraj Singh, MoT, inaugurated the Indie Haat at the National Crafts Museum & Hastkala Academy (NCMHA), New Delhi, which featured traditional weaves and crafts, promoting the blend of tradition and innovation in the textile sector.

(iii) Union Minister of State (MoS) Pabitra Margherita, MoT, inaugurated the 'International Conference on Emerging Technologies in Silk Sector – SILKTECH 2025' organized by the Central Silk Board (CSB) at Bharat Mandapam as part of Bharat Tex 2025.

13. Bharat Tex 2025: India's Biggest Textile Event Organized in New Delhi and Greater Noida.

Bharat Tex 2025, the 2nd edition of India's largest global textile event, was organized by a consortium of 12 Textile Export Promotion Councils (EPCs) with the support of the Ministry of Textiles (MoT) to highlight India's exceptional capabilities in the textile industry. The 2025 edition was centered around the twin themes of "Resilient Global Value Chains" and "Textile Sustainability."

- **Bharat Tex 2025 was held at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi (14 to 17 February 2025), covering the entire textile value chain from raw materials to finished products.**

- **India Expo Centre and Mart (IECM), Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh (12 to 15 February 2025): Hosted related exhibitions and textile industry showcases.**

Key Points:-

(i) Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi addressed Bharat Tex 2025 at Bharat Mandapam, emphasizing its role in showcasing India's rich cultural diversity through traditional textiles and

14. Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana Completes Nine Years of Empowering Farmers and Securing Livelihoods.

The Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY), launched in 2016 by Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi, celebrated its nine-year anniversary on February 18, 2025. PMFBY is India's flagship crop insurance scheme aimed at safeguarding farmers from financial distress due to natural calamities.

- **This scheme has become a key pillar of India's agricultural resilience, benefiting over 23.22 crore farmers by providing protection against crop losses and disbursing claims worth Rs.1.75 lakh crore over the past nine years.**

- **With its recent extension until 2025-26 and a budget allocation of Rs.69,515.71 crore, PMFBY continues to reinforce farmer welfare and promote sustainable agriculture.**

Key Points:-

(i) Farmers pay only 2% (Kharif crops), 1.5%

(Rabi crops), or 5% (horticulture/commercial crops), with the remaining amount subsidized by the government.

(ii) Includes yield losses, prevented sowing (up to 25% of the sum insured), post-harvest losses (14 days post-harvest), and localized calamities.

15. The 5th International Conference on Green Metro Systems was held in New Delhi.

On February 18, 2025, the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC), under the i-Metro initiative, in collaboration with the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and the Indian Green Building Council (IGBC), organized the '5th International Conference on Green Metro Systems - The Future of Urban Mobility' in New Delhi.

- The conference focused on the future of eco-friendly metro systems and their important role in shaping the cities of the future.

- The event was attended by Union Minister Manohar Lal Khattar, Ministry of Power (MoP) and Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA); Union Minister of State (MOS) Tokhan Sahu, MoHUA, along with officials from IGBC, Indian Metros, and other guests.

- During the conference, Union Minister Manohar Lal Khattar (MoP and MoHUA) inaugurated India's first vertical bi-facial solar plant installed on the Metro Viaduct at Okhla Vihar Metro Station in New Delhi, aiming to make metro operations more sustainable.

Key Points:-

(i) These efforts support India's renewable energy (RE) goal of achieving 500 GW from non-fossil sources by 2030, including a 50 KW vertical solar plant at Okhla Vihar Metro Station using bi-facial

panels that capture sunlight from both sides.

(ii) Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) plans to install a 60 MW solar power plant using the elevated metro structure during Phase-4, eliminating the need for extra land.

(iii) Several metro systems in cities like Bengaluru (Karnataka), New Delhi (Delhi), Hyderabad (Telangana), Jaipur (Rajasthan), Kochi (Kerala), Lucknow (Uttar Pradesh), Mumbai (Maharashtra), Nagpur (Maharashtra), and Pune (Maharashtra) have earned IGBC Certification for their commitment to eco-friendly designs, use of green materials, and solar power integration.

16. Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan inaugurated NAKSHA to modernize urban land records.

On February 18, 2025, Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, along with the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare (MoA&FW), launched the National Geospatial Knowledge-based Land Survey of Urban Habitations (NAKSHA).

- This program aims to modernize land records in 152 urban local bodies (ULBs) across 26 states and 3 Union Territories (UTs) in India.

Key Points:-

(i) The inauguration of NAKSHA took place in Raisen district, Madhya Pradesh (MP). The project is expected to cost around Rs. 194 crore, fully funded by the Government of India (GoI).

(ii) The goal of the NAKSHA program is to create and update land records in urban areas, ensuring accurate and reliable documentation of land

ownership.

17. The Rajasthan government has renamed Foy Sagar as Varun Sagar and King Edward Memorial as Maharishi Dayanand Vishrant Grih.

In February 2025, the Rajasthan government renamed a lake and a building in Ajmer, Rajasthan, both over a century old and previously named during British rule. The 132-year-old Foy Sagar Lake was renamed Varun Sagar, and the 113-year-old King Edward Memorial Bhawan was renamed Maharishi Dayanand Vishrant Grih.

- The official renaming process was carried out by the Ajmer Municipal Corporation.
- Foy Sagar Lake was built in 1892 as a famine relief project and was named after a British engineer, Foy, during British rule. It has now been renamed in honor of Lord Varun, the god of water.
- A ghat (a series of steps leading down to the water) and a statue of Lord Varun will also be constructed around the lake for people to sit and pray.

Key Points:-

- (i) King Edward Memorial Bhawan was built between 1912 and 1913 and named after King Edward VII during British rule. It is located on Railway Station Road, Ajmer, Rajasthan.
- (ii) The building has now been renamed to honor Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati, the founder of the Arya Samaj, who attained nirvana (spiritual liberation) in Ajmer.
- (iii) The renaming process removes symbols of slavery and creates symbols of freedom and inspiration.

18. MSDE has partnered with Intel to introduce the AI for Entrepreneurship initiative aimed at empowering the youth.

In February 2025, the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), and Intel Technology India Private Limited (based in Bengaluru, Karnataka) announced a partnership to launch a new Artificial Intelligence (AI) training program called 'AI for Entrepreneurship.'

- The program is a micro-learning module available on the Skill India Digital Hub (SIDH) under MSDE, aiming to provide AI and entrepreneurial skills to 1 lakh young innovators by 2025.
- It will help simplify AI concepts and combine them with entrepreneurial thinking, enabling learners to create AI-driven business ideas.

Key Points:-

- (i) The program is designed for people from all socio-economic backgrounds, including rural areas, and offers a certification jointly issued by MSDE, NSDC, Skill India, and Intel upon completion.
- (ii) The curriculum covers the use of AI in business, entrepreneurial strategies, and real-world problem-solving.
- (iii) In addition to theoretical learning, the program includes interactive video lectures, case studies of AI-powered startups, and practical experience applying AI tools, helping learners understand the concepts clearly.

19. Amir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani's India Visit Strengthens Bilateral Ties (Feb 17-18, 2025).

The Amir of Qatar, His Highness (HH) Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani visited India from February 17 to 18, 2025, at the invitation of Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi. This visit marked his 2nd bilateral trip to India, following his first official visit in March 2015. He was accompanied by high-level delegations, including Ministers, Senior Officials, and a Business Delegation.

- During his visit, he engaged in significant discussions with Indian President Droupadi Murmu and PM Narendra Modi in New Delhi (Delhi).

Key Points:-

- On the sidelines of the visit, the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), New Delhi (Delhi), in partnership with the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoC&I), organized the 'India-Qatar Joint Business Forum' on February 18, 2025, in New Delhi (Delhi).
- As part of his visit, both countries signed several pivotal agreements and Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs), ranging from strategic partnerships and economic cooperation to cultural and energy exchanges.

20. NSO 25th PLFS Quarterly Bulletin Reports India's Urban Unemployment Rate Drops to 6.4% in Q3 FY25.

The National Statistics Office (NSO) under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) launched its 25th Quarterly Bulletin of the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), presenting data for the period

October - December 2024 (Q3) for the Financial Year (FY) 2024-25.

- As per the data, India's urban Unemployment Rate (UR) in Current Weekly Status (CWS) among persons aged 15 years and above decreased to 6.4% during Q3 FY25 from 6.5% in Q3 FY24.
- UR among males aged 15 years and above remained the same at 5.8% during Q3 FY24 and Q3 FY25, while the UR among females aged 15 years and above decreased to 8.1% in Q3 FY25 from 8.6% in Q3 FY24.
- The Unemployment Rate (UR) is defined as the percentage of unemployed persons among the total labour force. The Current Weekly Status (CWS) of a person refers to their activity status based on the reference period of the last 7 days preceding the survey date.

Key Points:-

- Overall Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) in urban areas for individuals aged 15 years and above increased to 50.4% in Q3 FY25 from 49.9% in Q3 FY24. Male LFPR increased to 75.4%, and Female LFPR increased slightly to 25.2%.
- Overall Worker Population Ratio (WPR) for urban areas among individuals aged 15 years and above increased to 47.2% in Q3 FY25 from 46.6% in Q3 FY24. Male WPR rose to 70.9%, and Female WPR increased to 23.2%.
- LFPR is the percentage of persons in the labour force (working, seeking, or available for work) in the population, while WPR is the percentage of employed persons in the population.

21. MeitY Launches Digital Brand Identity Manual to Standardize Government Websites and Digital Platforms.

On 18 February 2025, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) unveiled the Digital Brand Identity Manual (DBIM) to standardize government websites and digital platforms.

- The DBIM was launched by Union Minister of State (MoS) Jitin Prasada, MeitY, during the inaugural Chief Information Officer (CIO) Conference 2025 in New Delhi.

- As part of the 'Gov.In: Harmonization of Government of India's Digital Footprint' initiative, the DBIM aims to establish a unified online presence for all ministries, departments, and agencies.

Key Points:-

(i) The DBIM defines key elements of digital identity, including visual components such as logos, color palettes, typography, and imagery, along with verbal identity aspects like brand voice, messaging frameworks, and taglines, to create a consistent digital brand for the Government of India (GoI).

(ii) This toolkit is powered by Bhashini's multilingual support, enhancing content discovery and service accessibility by making government apps more user-friendly, compliant, and available in all official languages.

22. 2nd Edition of Simolu Festival Held in Assam.

The 2nd Edition of the Simolu Festival, a vibrant celebration of the stunning Bombax Ceiba flowers, was held from February 15 to 16, 2025, in Nagaon, Assam. The festival celebrates nature, culture, and

community, drawing nature enthusiasts, cyclists, and culture lovers to explore the beautiful Simolu track.

- The festival focuses on the majestic Bombax Ceiba trees, also known as Simul or Silk Cotton trees, which bloom with striking red flowers.

- A key theme of the festival is fostering environmental awareness, especially among the youth.

Key Points:-

(i) Organized by the Nagaon Wildlife Division under Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve (Assam), the two-day event showcased the region's rich cultural heritage through traditional performances, ethnic cuisine, and community activities.

(ii) The festival featured a 20-kilometer cyclothon and a nature orientation program for school students.

(iii) The event also emphasized the importance of preserving Assam's biodiversity, which faces various environmental challenges.

23. Madhya Pradesh Becomes the First State in India to Launch a Dedicated Global Capability Centre (GCC) Policy 2025.

Madhya Pradesh has introduced India's first dedicated GCC Policy 2025, positioning itself as a key hub for global innovation, technology, and business collaboration. The Madhya Pradesh State Electronics Development Corporation Limited (MPSEDC) will serve as the nodal agency responsible for implementing the policy.

- A dedicated Policy Implementation Unit (PIU) will oversee project approvals, incentive distribution, and compliance monitoring.

- Unveiled ahead of the Global Investors Summit (GIS) 2025 in Bhopal, MP, on 24 and 25 February 2025, the GCC Policy 2025 strengthens Madhya Pradesh's role in India's USD 110 billion GCC market vision for 2030.

- The Madhya Pradesh GCC Policy 2025 aims to transform tier-2 cities like Bhopal, Indore, and Gwalior into global operations centers, offering a competitive edge to businesses looking to expand in India.

Key Points:-

(i) The policy focuses on sectors like IT, Finance, Engineering, HR, and Emerging Technologies (ET), with special emphasis on AI and Cybersecurity, while offering incentives for CapEx, payroll subsidies, upskilling programs, and R&D.

(ii) The policy aims to attract over 50 GCCs, generating more than 37,000 direct jobs in sectors such as IT, ITES, advanced analytics, R&D, and digital transformation.

(iii) Madhya Pradesh's IT exports have tripled in the last three years, with an annual growth rate of 43%. Additionally, MP ranked 4th in the Ease of Doing Business (EoDB) 2023 rankings released by the DPIIT, Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoC&I).

24. Union Minister Nirmala Sitharaman launched the Mutual Credit Guarantee Scheme for MSMEs in Mumbai.

In February 2025, Union Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, from the Ministry of Finance (MoF) and the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MOCA),

launched the 'Mutual Credit Guarantee Scheme for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MCGS-MSME)' in Mumbai, Maharashtra to support the MSME sector in India.

- This is a major initiative announced by the Government of India (GOI) in the Union Budget for the Financial Year 2024-25 (FY25).

- The scheme aims to provide loans of up to Rs 100 crore to MSMEs for purchasing machinery or equipment without requiring collateral.

Key Points:-

(i) During the event, Union Minister Nirmala Sitharaman also virtually inaugurated the first 'Sachal Aaykar Seva Kendra' in Navy Nagar, Colaba, Mumbai. This center will offer digital services, guidance for grievance redressal, and promote tax awareness.

(ii) She also introduced a new scheme called the 'Prime Minister Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana (PMDKY)', which aims to improve agricultural productivity in 100 districts with low agricultural output.

25. West Bengal Records Highest Bird Species in India During GBBC 2025 for Third Consecutive Year.

In February 2025, West Bengal (WB) recorded the highest number of bird species across 37 states and union territories (UTs) in India, with 543 species, securing the top position in the national list for the third consecutive year. This recognition was achieved during the 28th annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), one of the world's largest birding events, held from February 14 to February 17, 2025.

- As per preliminary results, the total number of bird species in India increased to 1,068 in 2025, compared to 1,036 in 2024. Additionally, the number of checklists (a list of birds observed, heard, or identified) submitted from India rose to 44,300 in 2025.

- In the GBBC India 2025 rankings, WB secured the highest number of species, followed by Uttarakhand in second place with 446 species. Other states in the rankings included Assam and Maharashtra with 414 species each, Karnataka with 380 species, and Kerala with 342 species.

Key Points:-

(i) In 2025, WB uploaded 1,909 checklists, a slight decrease from 2,223 entries in 2024. Kerala led India in checklist submissions with 9,856 entries. Darjeeling recorded the highest number of species in WB with 252 species, though lower than last year's 308 species.

(ii) South 24 Parganas emerged as the top district in WB with 513 checklists, while in 2024, Darjeeling held the top position with 342 checklists.

(iii) The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) is a global annual bird-watching event held every February, launched in 1998 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society (USA). It helps monitor bird populations through eBird, an online platform. India joined GBBC in 2013 with 200 participants.

26. PM Narendra Modi Virtually Inaugurates 3rd India Energy Week 2025 at Yashobhoomi, New Delhi.

On 11 February 2025, Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi virtually addressed the inaugural session of the 3rd edition of the India Energy Week

(IEW) 2025, held at Yashobhoomi India International Convention & Expo Centre (IICC) in New Delhi, Delhi, from 11-14 February 2025.

- The event was conducted under the patronage of the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MoPNG) and jointly organized by the Federation of Indian Petroleum Industry (FIPI) and DMG Events, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Daily Mail and General Trust plc (DMGT).

Key Points:-

(i) The event provided a platform for policymakers, industry leaders, and stakeholders to collaborate on sustainable energy solutions, shaping the future of energy on a global scale.

(ii) India Energy Week 2025 serves as a crucial forum for global discussions on energy security, innovation, and sustainability, fostering international cooperation in the energy sector.

27. Recently, the 3rd Edition of India Energy Week Concluded in New Delhi – Part II.

The 3rd edition of the India Energy Week (IEW) 2025 recently concluded at Yashobhoomi - India International Convention & Expo Centre (IICC) in New Delhi, Delhi.

- IEW 2025 gathered over 700 exhibitors, 500+ speakers, and 70,000+ attendees, making it the world's second-largest global energy event. With nine dedicated themes, IEW 2025 showcased cutting-edge innovations and policy discussions shaping the global energy sector.

- IEW 2026 is scheduled to take place in Goa.

Key Points:-

(i) Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) has recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Shipping Corporation of India (SCI) to develop a dedicated and efficient maritime infrastructure.

(ii) Azerbaijan's State Oil Company of Azerbaijan Republic (SOCAR), India's Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Limited (MRPL), and Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Limited (ONGC) recently signed a non-binding MoU to explore strategic opportunities in the energy sector.

President Prabowo Subianto, and Union Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar (Minister of External Affairs - MEA).

Key Points:-

(i) The MoU focuses on quality assurance and standardization by establishing protocols for the production, testing, and certification of traditional medicines. It ensures safety, efficacy, and quality to meet global standards, combats counterfeit products, and develops regulatory frameworks to facilitate trade in traditional medicines.

(ii) The MoU promotes research and innovation by encouraging joint studies to scientifically validate traditional medicine practices and facilitating knowledge exchange through collaboration between academic institutions, researchers, and industry stakeholders.

(iii) The MoU boosts bilateral trade in traditional medicinal products, creating opportunities for manufacturers and exporters while enhancing market access for Ayurvedic and Jamu products, supporting industry growth. It aligns with India's vision to globalize Ayush products and strengthens global leadership in traditional medicine by supporting the WHO Traditional Medicine Strategy, promoting integration into global healthcare systems, and positioning India and Indonesia as pioneers in the field.

INTERNATIONAL

1. India and Indonesia Ink Agreement to Enhance Traditional Medicine Quality Assurance.

In February 2025, India and Indonesia signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to enhance quality assurance, standardization, and global promotion of traditional medicine systems. This strategic partnership aims to foster collaboration in traditional medicine quality assurance, with both nations committing to various forms of cooperation.

- The MoU is a recent development following an earlier exchange in January 2025 between India's Pharmacopoeia Commission for Indian Medicine & Homeopathy (PCIM&H)—under the Ministry of Ayush—and Indonesia's Food and Drug Authority.

- PCIM&H, certified under International Organisation for Standardisation (IS/ISO 9001:2015), ensures robust quality management systems in traditional medicine.

- The MoU was signed by India's Union Minister of State (MoS) (Independent Charge, IC), Prataprao Jadhav (Ministry of AYUSH) and Indonesia's Health Minister, Budi Gunadi Sadikin, in the presence of Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi, Indonesian

2. PM Narendra Modi Visits France & USA to Strengthen Bilateral Ties and Announces AI Summit 2026.

Prime Minister (PM) of India, Narendra Modi, went on official visits to both France and the United States (USA) to strengthen and improve bilateral relations.

- PM Narendra Modi visited France for three days from February 10 to 12, 2025, at the invitation of French President Emmanuel Macron. This was PM Modi's 6th visit to France.

Key Points:-

(i) On February 11, 2025, PM Modi and President Emmanuel Macron led the Artificial Intelligence (AI) Action Summit in Paris, France. During the summit, PM Modi announced that India will host the next AI summit in 2026.

(ii) On February 13, 2025, PM Modi arrived in the USA for an official visit. This marked his 10th visit to the USA as Prime Minister and the 4th time he visited with Donald Trump as President.

(iii) PM Modi and President Donald Trump launched a new initiative called the 'Autonomous Systems Industry Alliance (ASIA)'.

3. Brazil will host the 'BRICS Summit 2025' in Rio de Janeiro in July.

In February 2025, Brazil announced that the next 'BRICS Summit 2025' will be held in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) on July 6-7, 2025. Throughout 2025, Brazil will lead the group of developing nations and focus on global governance reforms and strengthening cooperation among countries of the Global South.

- BRICS is an intergovernmental organization that was initially formed in 2009 by Brazil, Russia, India, and China.

- South Africa joined in 2010, expanding the group. In 2024, BRICS expanded again by adding Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Saudi Arabia was also invited to join.

Key Points:-

(i) Countries like Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Malaysia have applied for membership

(ii) At the 2024 summit in Kazan (Russia), Indonesia became the 11th member, while Nigeria was named a "partner country".

4. FutureBrand Index 2024: Samsung Ranks 1st, India's Reliance Industries Secures 2nd Spot.

According to 'The FutureBrand Index 2024', a global brand perception study, South Korea's Samsung has secured the top spot in the global rankings, reflecting its strong brand perception and adaptability to market demands.

- India's Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) ranks 2nd and made an impressive leap, rising 11 spots from 13th in 2023. This marks the first time an Indian company has made it to the top three on the list.

- Reliance, the only Indian brand on the list, ranks ahead of well-known global brands like Apple, Nike, Walt Disney, Netflix, Microsoft, Intel, and Toyota.

Key Points:-

(i) The FutureBrand Index is an annual report that evaluates the top 100 global brands based on the PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) Market Capitalization ranking. The report analyzes brand evolution from 2014 to 2024, highlighting key trends shaping growth and sustainability in the marketplace.

(ii) Samsung ranks 1st, excelling in innovation and sustainability, while Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) ranks 2nd, marking the first time an Indian company has made it to the top three, followed by

Apple (3rd), Nike (4th), and ASML (5th), with other notable brands like Danaher, Disney, MOUTAI, TSMC, and IHC securing top spots.

(iii) Top Gainers include China Construction Bank (Rank 23, up 147 places) for financial stability, Agricultural Bank of China (Rank 24, up 84 places) for B2B growth, and Bank of America (Rank 61, up 27 places) for improved digital banking. Top Decliners are Shell (Rank 144, down 83 places) due to environmental concerns, Meta (Rank 57, down 35 places) for data privacy issues, and Berkshire Hathaway (Rank 106, down 71 places) due to governance and financial challenges.

Charter of Cooperation (CoC), a forum for oil-producing countries to discuss production strategies.

(ii) Brazil is the 7th-largest oil producer globally, producing approximately 4.3 million barrels per day, which accounts for 4% of global oil output. In 2024, crude oil became Brazil's top export, contributing 13.3% to the country's foreign sales, surpassing its soy exports.

(iii) OPEC+ is a coalition of OPEC members and 10 non-OPEC oil-producing nations that collaborate on oil production targets to influence global prices. Formed in 2016, it includes countries like Russia, Mexico, and Malaysia, with Russia being the largest non-OPEC member.

5. Brazil to Become a Member of OPEC+ Alliance of Major Oil-Exporting Nations.

In February 2025, Brazil's government approved its membership in the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries Plus (OPEC+), a coalition of 22 major oil-producing nations, marking a significant milestone for the country. Brazil was officially invited to join in 2023.

- **The National Council for Energy Policy (Conselho Nacional de Política Energética, CNPE) authorized this move, reinforcing Brazil's position as a key player in the global oil market.**
- **This decision comes ahead of Brazil hosting the 30th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP30) in November 2025.**
- **As of January 2025, OPEC+ consists of 22 member countries.**

Key Points:-

(i) Brazil's participation in OPEC+ is limited to the

6. Indian Navy Participates in 'International Fleet Review 2025' and 'Exercise Komodo'.

The Indian Navy (IN) participated in the 'International Fleet Review (IFR) 2025' and the '5th Multilateral Naval Exercise Komodo' in Bali, Indonesia, from February 15 to 22, 2025, with INS Shardul (Landing Ship Tank) and a P-8I Long-Range Maritime Surveillance Aircraft representing India.

- **The International Fleet Review (IFR) 2025, reviewed by Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto, brought together naval forces from multiple countries to enhance global maritime cooperation and security.**
- **As part of IFR 2025, IN participated in high-level discussions at the International Maritime Security Symposium, Tactical Floor Games, and joint environmental initiatives, including beach cleaning, coral and mangrove plantation, and baby turtle release.**

- The 'Multilateral Naval Exercise Komodo 2025' officially commenced on February 16, 2025, at Benoa Port, Bali, focusing on maritime interoperability, regional security cooperation, and disaster relief operations.

Key Points:-

- (i) The exercise saw participation from over 30 countries, including the USA, Russia, China, Australia, and Singapore, under the theme 'Maritime Partnership for Peace and Stability', emphasizing humanitarian aid, natural disaster response, and crisis management.
- (ii) IN's participation aligns with India's 'Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR)' vision, following its involvement in Exercise LA PEROUSE in January 2025, where INS Mumbai and a P-8I aircraft participated.
- (iii) Strengthening bilateral naval ties, Admiral Muhammad Ali, Chief of Staff of the Indonesian Navy, visited India as part of a high-level delegation accompanying Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto during the Republic Day Parade 2025.

7. LIC introduces 'One Man Office' to empower agents through digital services.

In February 2025, Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) introduced 'One Man Office' (OMO), a digital service platform designed to help its agents and sales associates by making it easier to sell policies, provide customer service, and track business performance through mobile phones.

- OMO is an important tool for promoting life insurance and delivering excellent customer service.

This initiative will also support LIC's long-term goal of achieving 'Insurance for All by 2047'.

- OMO is created to improve the productivity and efficiency of LIC's sales team, which includes Agents, Development Officers, Senior Business Associates, Chief Life Insurance Advisors, LIC Associates, and Chief Organisers.
- It is integrated with the ANANDA (Atma Nirbhar Agents New Business Digital Application) platform from LIC. ANANDA helps agents onboard clients and forms the basis for this service.

Key Points:-

- (i) OMO provides features like a Premium calculator, benefit illustrations, Electronic National Automated Clearing House (E-NACH) registration, address change, online loan requests, premium renewal payments, claim-related submissions, and more.
- (ii) Additionally, it offers a knowledge center, various health and insurance-related calculators, an office locator, National Electronic Funds Transfer (NEFT) search, and other tools to help agents serve their customers better.

BANKING & FINANCE**1. RBI Grants Approval to Easebuzz for Online Payment Aggregator Operations.**

In February 2025, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) granted approval to Pune (Maharashtra)-based Easebuzz Private Limited, a digital payment solution provider, to operate as an Online Payment Aggregator (PA) for facilitating secure digital transactions.

- This approval allows Easebuzz to continue as an authorized payments platform, enabling it to process online transactions for Indian businesses across multiple sectors, including e-commerce, travel, tourism, education, and real estate.
- With this approval, Easebuzz joins the ranks of Razorpay, MSwipe, Google Pay (GPay), Cashfree, Zomato, CC Avenue, and Innoviti Payments, which have also secured Payment Aggregator (PA) licenses from the RBI.

Key Points:-

- (i) Earlier, Easebuzz expanded into B2B (business-to-business) payments and launched an invoice management and payments platform in collaboration with the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) Bharat BillPay (NBBL).
- (ii) Easebuzz has also been certified as a Biller Operating Unit (BOU) under Bharat Connect (formerly known as Bharat Bill Payment System, BBPS).
- (iii) A PA license allows companies to handle e-commerce transactions, offer early settlements to select merchants, and provide credit in the form of term loans in partnership with Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) and banks.

2. REC and CVPPL Sign ₹2,147.51 Crore Term Loan Agreement for Pakal Dul HEP.

On February 11, 2025, New Delhi (Delhi)-based REC Limited (formerly Rural Electrification Corporation Limited), a Maharatna Central Public Sector Enterprise (CPSE) and a leading Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC) under the Ministry of Power (MoP), signed an agreement with

Chenab Valley Power Project Limited (CVPPL) to provide a term loan of ₹2,147.51 crore for the development and construction of the Pakal Dul Hydro Electric Project (HEP) in Jammu & Kashmir (J&K).

- The agreement was signed by Ramesh Mukhiya, Managing Director (MD) of CVPPL, and Bhupesh Chandolia, Chief Project Manager (CPM) of REC Limited, at the Regional Office of J&K, in the presence of other officials.
- The Pakal Dul HEP aims to utilize renewable energy resources, enhancing J&K's energy security and supporting India's transition to clean energy.

Key Points:-

- (i) The project is being developed on the Marusudar River, located in the Kishtwar District of J&K.
- (ii) The project has a capacity of 1,000 megawatts (MW), with an estimated total cost of ₹12,669.67 crore.
- (iii) CVPPL is a joint venture established in 2011 between National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC) Limited (51%) and J&K State Power Development Corporation (JKSPDC) (49%).

3. RBI Imposes Restrictions on New India Co-operative Bank Due to Supervisory Concerns.

In February 2025, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) imposed restrictions on Mumbai (Maharashtra)-based New India Co-operative Bank Limited, preventing it from issuing new loans and suspending deposit withdrawals due to concerns about its financial position. The restrictions were

imposed under Section 35A of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949, to safeguard the interests of depositors.

- These measures came into effect on February 13, 2025, and will remain in force for six months, subject to future review by the RBI.
- As per RBI directions, New India Co-operative Bank is prohibited from granting or renewing loans, making new investments, or accepting new deposits without prior RBI approval, though loan set-offs against deposits are permitted under specific conditions.
- RBI has allowed New India Co-operative Bank to incur essential expenses like employee salaries, rent, and electricity bills, while ensuring eligible depositors receive up to Rs 5 lakh insurance from DICGC as per the provisions of the DICGC Act, 1961.

Key Points:-

- (i) The RBI superseded the Board of Directors (BoDs) of New India Co-operative Bank for 12 months to address governance issues under Section 36 AAA and Section 56 of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.
- (ii) Shreekant, a former Chief General Manager of State Bank of India (SBI), has been appointed as the administrator to manage the bank's affairs.
- (iii) A committee of advisors, including Ravindra Sapra (former GM of SBI) and Abhijeet Deshmukh (Chartered Accountant), has been formed to assist in stabilizing operations, examining the financial situation, and working towards the bank's revival.

4. RBI Extends Vakrangee's White Label ATM (WLA) Authorization Until March 2026.

On February 12, 2025, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) extended the authorization of Mumbai (Maharashtra)-based Vakrangee Limited to set up, own, and operate White Label ATMs (WLAs) across India until March 31, 2026.

- As of January 31, 2025, Vakrangee operates 6,036 WLAs, with 76% of them located in Tier-4 to Tier-6 regions, enhancing financial accessibility in unserved and underserved areas.
- Vakrangee Limited provides a range of services, including banking, insurance, e-governance, e-commerce, and logistics solutions.

Key Points:-

- (i) The company also operates 22,395 Vakrangee Kendra outlets, with 81% of them situated in Tier-4 to Tier-6 locations.
- (ii) Vakrangee has set a target of achieving a revenue of USD 1 billion and a gross transaction value of USD 150 billion by 2030.
- (iii) As of December 2024, the Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) held a 4.41% stake in Vakrangee Limited.

5. RBI Lifts Regulatory Restrictions on Kotak Mahindra Bank.

In February 2025, the Mumbai-based Reserve Bank of India (RBI) lifted the restrictions on Kotak Mahindra Bank (KMB) Limited, headquartered in Mumbai, Maharashtra, allowing the bank to resume digital onboarding of new customers and issuance of new credit cards.

- The RBI had imposed these restrictions on April 24, 2024, under Section 35A of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949, after identifying significant Information

Technology (IT)-related regulatory violations, including deficiencies in IT inventory management, security protocols, and disaster recovery measures.

- The restrictions had barred the bank from onboarding new customers via online and mobile banking and from issuing fresh credit cards.

Key Points:-

(i) To address these issues, KMB implemented corrective measures, submitted compliance reports, and conducted an external audit with RBI's approval. After evaluating the bank's improvements and compliance efforts, the RBI decided to remove the restrictions.

(ii) Consequently, the "cease and desist" directive has been lifted for all banks and non-banking financial companies (NBFCs), except for Paytm Payments Bank.

6. RBI Grants Approval for Zulia Investments to Raise Stake in AU Small Finance Bank.

In February 2025, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) approved Zulia Investments Pte. Ltd., a subsidiary of Singapore's Temasek Holdings (Private) Limited, to raise its stake in AU Small Finance Bank (SFB), based in Jaipur, Rajasthan, to 7%.

- On February 12, 2025, AU SFB received an official RBI letter allowing Zulia and its associated entities to acquire up to 7% of the bank's paid-up capital or voting rights within one year. If the acquisition is not completed by February 12, 2026, the approval will lapse.
- Currently, Zulia holds a 1.37% stake in AU SFB, while foreign institutional and portfolio investors own 39.35%.

- If Zulia increases its stake, it may become the largest foreign investor in the bank.

Key Points:-

AU SFB, established in April 2017, focuses on providing credit to retail customers and MSMEs (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises) and offers deposit and branch banking services.

7. IFC Invests Rs 860 Crore in India's First SLB in Road Sector Issued by Cube InvIT.

In February 2025, the International Finance Corporation (IFC), based in Washington (USA) and part of the World Bank Group (WBG), invested Rs 860 crore (approximately USD 98.35 million) in India's first Sustainability-linked Bond (SLB) in the road sector, issued by Cube Highways Trust (Cube InvIT), located in Noida (Uttar Pradesh, UP).

- The investment aims to enhance critical road infrastructure and bolster climate resilience in highway development across India.
- The SLB will fund the acquisition of NAM Expressway Limited (NAM), a key highway linking Chennai (Tamil Nadu) and Hyderabad (Telangana), and support Cube InvIT's long-term corporate goals, including sustainability and inclusion initiatives.

Key Points:-

(i) Cube InvIT raised funds through long-term non-convertible debentures, offering a 7.67% coupon, with a tenure of 17 years and 10 months. The debentures include an anchor portion of Rs 258 crore.

(ii) IFC's investment will mobilize additional capital, driving advancements in India's road

infrastructure while maintaining adherence to international Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) standards.

(iii) Cube InvIT is an irrevocable trust formed under the Indian Trusts Act, 1882 and is registered with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) as an InvIT.

8. Exim Bank to Extend USD 300 Million Credit to Vietnam for Acquisition of Guard Boats and Patrol Vessels.

In February 2025, Mumbai (Maharashtra)-based Export-Import Bank of India (EXIM Bank) announced that it will provide a USD 300 million line of credit to Vietnam for procuring high-speed boats and offshore patrol vessels.

- In July 2024, EXIM Bank signed an agreement with the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (GO-VNM), wherein the Government of India (GoI) pledged a Line of Credit (LoC) of USD 180 million for the procurement of 4 Offshore Patrol Vessels (OPV).

Key Points:-

(i) Additionally, the bank signed another agreement for a LoC of USD 120 million for the procurement of high-speed guard boats.

(ii) Both agreements are effective from January 20, 2025, with the last date for disbursement being 60 months after the scheduled completion of the project.

9. South Indian Bank Launches 'SIB Quick FD' for Effortless Fixed Deposit Investments.

On February 14, 2025, South Indian Bank Limited, based in Thrissur (Kerala), introduced 'SIB Quick FD', a new digital service that enables individuals to open Fixed Deposits (FDs) without requiring a savings account with the bank.

- This initiative aims to provide a seamless and convenient digital banking experience for both existing and new customers.

- The service offers digital-first solutions designed to meet the evolving needs of customers, with minimal setup, affordable entry amounts, and insured deposits, ensuring a secure, simple, and convenient investment experience.

- Deposits made through the 'SIB Quick FD' service are insured under the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC), offering coverage up to Rs. 5 lakh per depositor, ensuring a secure and reliable investment experience for customers.

Key Points:-

(i) Individuals do not need a savings account with South Indian Bank to open a Fixed Deposit (FD), providing greater flexibility and accessibility for all customers. The entire process is digital and paperless, allowing customers to set up an FD in just 5 minutes.

(ii) The UPI fund transfer feature streamlines the payment process, making it more convenient. Only two documents, PAN and Aadhaar, are required to open an FD, and the service is available 24/7, offering customers flexibility to manage their investments at any time.

(iii) The minimum investment amount to start an FD is just Rs. 1,000, making it accessible to a wide range of investors. South Indian Bank also offers competitive interest rates on its FDs, with

the added benefit of flexibility for premature withdrawals, catering to various customer needs.

10. IRDAI Launches Bima Trinity Schemes to Revolutionize the Insurance Sector.

On February 13-14, 2025, the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) hosted the 9th edition of Bima Manthan, a quarterly meeting with Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of insurance companies. During this meeting, IRDAI introduced the 'Bima Trinity' initiative, designed to improve the accessibility, affordability, and efficiency of insurance services across India.

- The initiative includes three key components: Bima Sugam, Bima Vistaar, and Bima Vahaak.
- This strategic plan aims to drive insurance inclusion and digital transformation, aligning with IRDAI's Vision of 'Insurance for All' by 2047.

Key Points:-

- (i) A pioneering composite insurance product that provides coverage for life, personal accidents, property, and surgical hospitalization.
- (ii) A localized, women-centric insurance field sales force aimed at improving insurance penetration in underserved areas. Bima Vahaak is set for a soft launch in April 2025.
- (iii) The Bima Sugam India Federation (BSIF), established to develop and operate this platform, has completed its foundational processes and is now prepared for industry participation and capitalization.

11. SEBI has introduced new rules for the disclosure of approvals related to transactions with related parties.

In February 2025, SEBI (Securities and Exchange Board of India), the market regulator based in Mumbai (Maharashtra), introduced new industry standards. These standards require listed companies to provide essential information to the audit committee and shareholders when seeking approval for Related Party Transactions (RPT).

- The new disclosure rule will be effective from April 1, 2025.
- SEBI issued these new standards through a circular, using the powers granted under Section 11 (1) and 11A of the SEBI Act, 1992, along with regulation 101 of LODR (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations.

Key Points:-

- (i) Under the new rules, SEBI has made it mandatory for listed companies to provide the audit committee with the required information, as specified in the new standards, when submitting any proposal for the review and approval of an RPT.
- (ii) SEBI also announced that it has relaxed the timeline for Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs) to hold investments in dematerialized (demat) form.
- (iii) All provisions of SEBI's circular have come into effect immediately.

12. Karnataka Bank Marks 101st Founders' Day with Launch of Two New Products.

On 18 February 2025, Karnataka Bank Limited (KBL) commemorated its 101st Founders' Day, celebrating over a century of its operations, by

launching two new products: 'KBL Stri' and 'KBL One Family Banking Programme.' The bank also introduced a children's savings account and a high-interest term deposit scheme.

- During the event, KBL released a Rs 100 commemorative coin and a special postal stamp. Additionally, the bank expanded its reach by inaugurating 15 new branches across various locations.
- To mark this milestone, KBL distributed 101 symbolic lapel pins, launched new products, and presented Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) commitment letters to three eligible beneficiaries.
- Furthermore, KBL inaugurated a centenary building and two museums at its headquarters in Mangaluru (Karnataka), showcasing the bank's 100-year journey.

Key Points:-

- (i) P Pradeep Kumar, Chairman of KBL; Srikrishnan K, Managing Director (MD) and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of KBL; and spiritual leader Sadguru Madhusudan Sai were present at the event.
- (ii) 'KBL Stri' is a savings bank account designed to empower women in determining their success, whether they are homemakers, professionals, or entrepreneurs. The account offers two variants: the Signature account and the Premium account.

13. IRDAI Introduces Bima-ASBA to Simplify Insurance Premium Payments Through UPI.

In February 2025, the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) introduced a One-Time Mandate (OTM) on Unified Payments Interface (UPI) for insurance companies through a

new payment mechanism called Bima-Applications Supported by Blocked Amount (Bima-ASBA).

- This initiative aims to simplify the payment process for life and health insurance policies, enabling policyholders to block funds in their bank accounts for premium payments, ensuring smooth transactions without immediate debits.
- The new payment mechanism will come into effect on March 1, 2025.
- Bima-ASBA allows insurers to offer a One-Time Mandate (OTM) via UPI to block a specific amount in the bank account of the prospect, transferring money only after the insurance coverage is granted.

Key Points:-

- (i) The insurance premium amount will be deducted when the insurer accepts the proposal. If the insurer rejects the proposal, the funds will be unblocked and released.
- (ii) The blocked funds remain in the policyholder's account until an underwriting decision is made. The premium is deducted after the insurance is issued. If rejected, the funds will be unlocked within one business day. The block remains valid for up to 14 days or until the underwriting decision is made.
- (iii) Insurers must send a proposal form with a standard declaration to policyholders to block the amount using UPI, and the UPI-OTM service allows consumers to authorize a block on money instead of a direct debit, ensuring faster transaction processing.

14. Federal Bank Introduces Prospera NRE Savings Account for NRIs.

On February 19, 2025, Aluva (Kerala)-based Federal Bank Limited, an Indian Private Sector Bank (PVB), launched a new savings account called "Prospera Non-Resident External (NRE) Savings Account," an exclusive banking solution designed for Non-Resident Indians (NRIs), Persons of Indian Origin (PIO), and Overseas Citizens of India (OCIs).

- This account offers attractive benefits, including complimentary insurance benefits worth Rs 60 lakh, competitive interest rates, special reward points for debit card expenditures, etc.

Key Points:-

- (i) The insurance coverage is provided by Mumbai, Maharashtra-based TATA AIG General Insurance Company Limited.
- (ii) Customers of the Prospera NRE Savings Account must maintain an Average Monthly Balance (AMB) of Rs 25,000. This balance can be maintained in either the NRE Prospera Savings Account alone or in the NRE Prospera and Non-Resident Ordinary (NRO) accounts together (with a maximum of one NRO account permitted).
- (iii) The account follows the Savings Bank (SB) interest rate slab of Federal Bank and comes with a Mastercard Prospera Debit Card. There are no Account Maintenance Charges (AMC) for Prospera NRE Savings Account holders.

15. CCI Approves Amalgamation of SHPL and CIFCPL into SMPL.

In February 2025, the Competition Commission of India (CCI) approved the amalgamation of Svantra Holdings Private Limited (SHPL) based in Mumbai, Maharashtra, and Chaitanya India Fin

Credit Private Limited (CIFCPL) based in Bengaluru, Karnataka, a Non-Banking Financial Company - Micro Finance Institution (NBFC-MFI), into Svantra Microfin Private Limited (SMPL), an NBFC-MFI based in Mumbai, Maharashtra.

- The amalgamation will occur according to the Scheme of Amalgamation agreed upon by SHPL, CIFCPL, SMPL, and their respective shareholders, with the approval from the boards of directors.

- As a result of this merger, Svantra Micro Housing Finance Corporation Limited (SMHFCL), a Non-Banking Financial Company Housing Finance Company (NBFC HFC) (Middle Layer) based in Mumbai, Maharashtra, will become a wholly-owned subsidiary of SMPL.

- SHPL is involved in investing in equity shares, preference shares, and other securities. It is an unregistered Core Investment Company as per the Core Investment Companies (Reserve Bank) Directions, 2016.

Key Points:-

- (i) CIFCPL and SMPL provide microfinance and personal loans to low-income individuals and households in rural and semi-urban areas, while SMHFCL offers secured housing loans, loans against property, and loans to corporations/institutions for construction and real estate projects.
- (ii) NS Blackwater and JFE Steel BW are newly formed special-purpose vehicles created for the proposed combination, while BW Coal Mine imports and supplies coking coal.
- (iii) The acquisition aligns with India's growing demand for high-quality coking coal, a key raw material in steel production.

16. UGRO Capital has collaborated with FMO and secured Rs 2,600 million through Non-Convertible Debentures (NCDs).

In February 2025, UGRO Capital, a data-driven Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC) based in Mumbai, Maharashtra, announced a new financing partnership with FMO, the Dutch development bank that supports entrepreneurial growth to promote economic and social progress in India.

- **UGRO Capital has raised Rs 260 crore (INR) through Non-Convertible Debentures (NCDs) to fund projects focused on women empowerment, addressing regional inequalities, and promoting youth empowerment.**

Key Points:-

- (i) FMO fully subscribed to the INR-denominated NCD issuance, showing its commitment to supporting sustainable growth and helping entrepreneurs succeed.
- (ii) A successful transaction in December 2023, which mainly supported green finance with an unlisted NCD issue of USD 30 million (Rs 2,490 million), has strengthened UGRO Capital's reputation as a trusted partner for impact financing.
- (iii) UGRO Capital has raised Rs 1.5 billion from both global and domestic development financial institutions and impact funds, including IFU (Denmark Government Sovereign Fund), Asian Development Bank (ADB), ResponsAbility, Calvert Impact Capital, Enabling Capital, GMO, Water Equity, Microvest, and Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency Limited (IREDA).

17. LTIMindtree has formed a partnership with Eurobank to drive banking technology transformation.

In February 2025, L&T Infotech Limited (LTI) Mindtree Ltd, a subsidiary of Larsen & Toubro (L&T) Limited, based in Mumbai, Maharashtra, announced a partnership with Eurobank S.A., Greece's largest banking services provider.

- **This collaboration is aimed at a multi-year banking technology program designed to improve customer experience, simplify operations, and create innovative IT (Information Technology) solutions for Eurobank and its subsidiaries.**
- **The partnership is supported by Fairfax Digital Services, a company based in Canada.**
- **As part of the agreement, Eurobank S.A. has chosen LTIMindtree as the service partner for the Temenos implementation program at Eurobank Luxembourg.**

Key Points:-

- (i) LTIMindtree will handle services such as maintenance, data migration, quality assurance, and post-production support.
- (ii) In addition, LTIMindtree will work on advancing the technology for Eurobank Group's operations in Cyprus, Luxembourg, and Greece.
- (iii) As part of this partnership, LTIMindtree and Eurobank launched a new Global Delivery Center in Pune (Maharashtra), reaffirming their commitment to developing new banking technologies.

18. NPCI Introduces New UPI Rule for Automatic Acceptance and Rejection of Chargebacks from February 15, 2025.

In February 2025, the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), based in Mumbai (Maharashtra), introduced a new rule to streamline chargeback management in Unified Payments Interface (UPI) transactions.

- According to the new UPI rule, chargebacks will now be automatically accepted or rejected based on Transaction Credit Confirmation (TCC) and Return Requests (RET) raised by beneficiary banks in the subsequent settlement cycle after the chargeback has been initiated.

- This new feature has been implemented in the UPI Dispute Resolution System (URCS) with effect from February 15, 2025.

- A chargeback is a process that reverses a completed UPI transaction due to disputes, fraud, or technical errors. It is initiated by the payer's bank, and upon approval, the transaction amount is refunded to the payer.

Key Points:-

(i) Currently, remitting banks can initiate chargebacks from 'T+0' onwards in the UPI Dispute Resolution System (URCS), which doesn't provide sufficient time for beneficiary banks to reconcile transactions, leading to rejected Return Requests (RET).

(ii) In some instances, chargebacks are closed automatically with deemed acceptance, resulting in penalties imposed by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

(iii) The new UPI rule applies solely to bulk upload options and the Unified Dispute Resolution Interface (UDIR), excluding front-end dispute resolution options, and allows beneficiary banks to reconcile transactions more effectively before

chargebacks are automatically deemed approved.

19. Decentro Unveils India's First Self-Hosted CKYC Solution to Comply with CERSAI's New Mandate.

In February 2025, Bengaluru (Karnataka)-based Decentro Tech Private Limited, a leading fintech infrastructure platform, launched India's first fully compliant, self-hosted Central Know Your Customer (CKYC) solution. This solution will enable financial institutions to transition smoothly to the new compliance framework set by the Central Registry of Securitisation Asset Reconstruction and Security Interest of India (CERSAI).

- The new offering eliminates the need for third-party dependencies, allowing banks, Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs), and insurers to onboard customers more quickly while maintaining regulatory compliance.

Key Points:-

(i) Key benefits of this innovation include 80% faster processing, 75% lower compliance costs, and zero vendor dependencies.

(ii) CERSAI was established under Section 20 of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act (SARFAESI Act, 2002) and incorporated as a company under Section 25 of the Companies Act, 1956. The Government of India (GoI) holds a 51% stake in the company.

20. RBI Imposes Penalties on SFL, NTB, and USFB for Regulatory Non-Compliance.

In February 2025, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) levied penalties on three financial institutions for

failing to comply with regulatory guidelines. The affected institutions include Nainital Bank Limited (NTB), Ujjivan Small Finance Bank Limited (USFB), and Shriram Finance Limited (SFL).

- **Nainital Bank (NTB), based in Uttarakhand, was fined Rs 61.40 lakh for not following RBI's directions on 'Interest Rate on Advances' and 'Customer Service in Banks.'**

Key Points:-

(i) Ujjivan Small Finance Bank (USFB), based in Bengaluru, Karnataka, received a penalty of Rs 6.70 lakh for non-compliance with RBI's directions regarding 'Loans and Advances Statutory and Other Restrictions.'

(ii) Shriram Finance Limited (SFL), an NBFC based in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, was fined Rs 5.80 lakh for violations related to 'Know Your Customer' (KYC) guidelines and 'Data Format for Furnishing Credit Information to Credit Information Companies (CICs).'

- **OMO is created to improve the productivity and efficiency of LIC's sales team, which includes Agents, Development Officers, Senior Business Associates, Chief Life Insurance Advisors, LIC Associates, and Chief Organisers.**

- **It is integrated with the ANANDA (Atma Nirbhar Agents New Business Digital Application) platform from LIC. ANANDA helps agents onboard clients and forms the basis for this service.**

Key Points:-

(i) OMO provides features like a Premium calculator, benefit illustrations, Electronic National Automated Clearing House (E-NACH) registration, address change, online loan requests, premium renewal payments, claim-related submissions, and more.

(ii) Additionally, it offers a knowledge center, various health and insurance-related calculators, an office locator, National Electronic Funds Transfer (NEFT) search, and other tools to help agents serve their customers better.

21. LIC introduces 'One Man Office' to empower agents through digital services.

In February 2025, Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) introduced 'One Man Office' (OMO), a digital service platform designed to help its agents and sales associates by making it easier to sell policies, provide customer service, and track business performance through mobile phones.

- **OMO is an important tool for promoting life insurance and delivering excellent customer service. This initiative will also support LIC's long-term goal of achieving 'Insurance for All by 2047'.**

MOUs and Agreement

1. Gyanesh Kumar Takes Charge as India's 26th Chief Election Commissioner.

On February 17, 2025, Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar was appointed as the 26th Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) by the Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi-led selection committee. He succeeds Rajiv Kumar and becomes the first CEC appointed under the newly established law governing the selection of Election Commission (EC) members.

- He will assume office on February 19, 2025, and will serve until January 26, 2029.
- Before his appointment, he held the position of Election Commissioner (EC) from March 2024 to February 2025.
- Additionally, Dr. Vivek Joshi, a 1989-batch Haryana-cadre Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer, has been appointed as an Election Commissioner. He is currently serving as the Chief Secretary (CS) of Haryana.

Key Points:-

- Gyanesh Kumar, a 1988-batch Kerala-cadre IAS officer, has held key positions, including Joint Secretary (Defence Production) in MoD (2007-2012) and Additional Secretary in MHA (2019), where he contributed to the abrogation of Article 370.
- He served as India's Parliamentary Affairs Secretary (2021-2022) and later as Cooperation Secretary (2022-2024), playing a key role in enacting the MSCS (Amendment) Act, 2023 and establishing three national cooperative bodies: BBSSL, NCOL, and NCEL.
- The CEC and ECs are now appointed by the President based on a PM-led panel's recommendation under the 2023 Act. A search committee proposes names, service conditions match a Cabinet Secretary, and the 6-year term has no reappointment, ensuring independence as per SC's advice.

2. India and Argentina Sign MoU to Enhance Cooperation in Lithium Exploration and Mining.

On February 19, 2025, India and Argentina formalized a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen cooperation in lithium exploration and mining.

- The agreement was formalized during a meeting chaired by Union Minister G. Kishan Reddy, Ministry of Coal (MoC) and Ministry of Mines (MoM), along with H.E. Raúl Alejandro Jalil, Governor of Catamarca, Argentina, in New Delhi.
- The MoU was signed between Mineral Exploration and Consultancy Limited (MECL), a Public Sector Undertaking (PSU) based in Nagpur (Maharashtra) under the Ministry of Mines (MoM), and Argentina's Catamarca Provincial Government.
- The collaboration aims to strengthen cooperation in the development of critical mineral resources, particularly lithium, a vital component for electric vehicle (EV) batteries and renewable energy (RE) storage.

Key Points:-

- Argentina, part of the "Lithium Triangle," holds over 50% of global lithium reserves. This collaboration aims to diversify India's lithium supply chain, reducing dependency on China. Khanij Bidesh India Limited (KABIL) and Greenko are already engaged in lithium exploration in Catamarca, with KABIL and Argentina's CAMYEN having signed a USD 200 million agreement for exclusive exploration rights to five lithium brine blocks in 2024.
- The partnership emphasizes eco-friendly mining, knowledge exchange, and establishing regulatory frameworks to ensure mutual benefits. This initiative promotes sustainable exploration and mining practices while advancing both

nations' energy and environmental goals.

(iii) Access to lithium supports India's 500 GW renewable energy (RE) target by 2030 and bolsters its electric vehicle (EV) adoption goals. The agreement also strengthens India's geopolitical presence in Latin America, promoting trade diversification and regional alliances.

SPORTS

1. Sportico's 4th Annual List of 100 Top Highest-Paid Athletes Reveals Cristiano Ronaldo as the World's Highest-Paid Athlete for 2024.

In February 2025, sports industry news site Sportico released its 4th Annual List of 100 Top Highest-Paid Athletes. Portuguese professional footballer Cristiano Ronaldo topped the list for the 2nd consecutive year, earning USD 260 million in 2024. His earnings include USD 215 million from salary/winnings (from Saudi Pro League club Al Nassr) and USD 45 million from endorsements.

- **Stephen Curry (USD 153.8 million), American professional basketball player, secured 2nd place.**
- **Tyson Fury (USD 147 million), British former professional boxer, claimed 3rd place on the list.**

Key Points:-

(i) For the 2nd straight year, female athletes were absent from the top 100, and the list also does not feature any sportsperson from India.

(ii) Coco Gauff, American professional tennis player, was the highest-paid female athlete in 2024, with earnings of USD 30.4 million for the 2nd consecutive year.

2. SSCB Dominates 38th National Games in Uttarakhand with 121 Medals.

The Services Sports Control Board (SSCB) secured the top position at the 38th edition of the National Games, held in Uttarakhand from January 26, 2025, to February 14, 2025. SSCB won a total of 121 medals, including 68 gold, 26 silver, and 27 bronze. With this victory, SSCB continued its dominance in the National Games, topping the medal tally for the fifth time in the last six editions, except in 2023.

- **SSCB secured the Raja Bhalindra Singh Trophy, awarded to the team with the highest number of gold medals at the National Games.**
- **Maharashtra secured 2nd place in the overall medal tally with 201 medals (54 gold, 71 silver, and 76 bronze), followed by Haryana in 3rd place with 153 medals (48 gold, 47 silver, and 58 bronze).**
- **The event, themed 'Green Games,' emphasized sustainability with eco-friendly welcome kits, e-waste medals, and tree plantations for medalists.**

Key Points:-

(i) The latest edition of the National Games witnessed the participation of over 16,000 athletes from 28 states, 8 Union Territories (UTs), and the Services Sports Control Board (SSCB). Competitions were held in 35 different sports, with 33 medal events, awarding a total of 448 gold, 448 silver, and 594 bronze medals.

(ii) 14-year-old swimmer Dhinidhi Desinghu from Karnataka and India's top backstroke swimmer Srihari Nataraj (Bengaluru, Karnataka) were honored as the Best Female Athlete and Best Male Athlete, respectively, at the 38th National Games.

(iii) Meghalaya is set to host the 39th edition of the National Games, tentatively scheduled for February or March 2027.

3. 9th Asian Winter Games 2025 Concludes in Harbin, Showcasing 64 Events Across 11 Sports.

The 9th Asian Winter Games (Harbin 2025), held in Harbin, Heilongjiang Province, China, from February 7 to February 14, 2025, marked a significant milestone in the advancement of winter sports across Asia. Organized by the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) and supported by the International Skating Union (ISU), the event witnessed participation from athletes representing 34 countries.

- Asian Winter Games 2025 featured 64 events across 11 winter sports disciplines.
- The mascots of the 9th Asian Winter Games are "Binbin" and "Nini," both tigers, and the official motto is "Dream of Winter, Love among Asia."
- China dominated the 9th Asian Winter Games (Harbin 2025), topping the medal tally with 32 Gold, 27 Silver, and 26 Bronze medals, totaling 85 medals. The Republic of Korea secured the second position with 16 Gold, 15 Silver, and 14 Bronze medals, totaling 45 medals. Japan followed closely in third place with 10 Gold, 12 Silver, and 15 Bronze medals, totaling 37 medals, excelling in short-track speed skating and skiing.

Key Points:-

(i) India sent its largest-ever contingent of 59 athletes to the Asian Winter Games 2025. Although India ended its campaign without any medals, the athletes showcased significant

potential. Tara Prasad, India's skater, delivered a personal best performance, securing 8th place in the women's skating event.

(ii) For the first time in the Asian Winter Games, Saudi Arabia participated in alpine skiing and snowboarding, while Cambodia made its debut in cross-country skiing, marking their historic entry into the competition.

(iii) Saudi Arabia officially received the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) flag as the host of the 10th Asian Winter Games (NEOM) 2029, making it the first country in West Asia to host the prestigious continental sporting event.

4. Saudi Arabia to Host First-Ever Olympic Esports Games in Riyadh in 2027.

On February 11, 2025, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) announced that Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, will host the first-ever Olympic Esports Games in 2027. This historic decision follows a 12-year partnership between the IOC and the Saudi Olympic and Paralympic Committee (SOPC), aimed at attracting younger audiences through the inclusion of esports.

- The SOPC, in collaboration with the Esports World Cup Foundation (EWCF), will work alongside the IOC to organize the Games.

Key Points:-

(i) The goal of the Olympic Esports Games is to merge traditional sports with esports, creating more opportunities for athletes and teams. The "Road to the Games" will begin in 2025, with initial Olympic esports competitions leading up to the main event in 2027.

(ii) This initiative was announced during the 142nd IOC Session in July 2024.

during the edtech boom, and incorporating Cryptocurrency (Web3) in 2023.

AWARDS

1. Forbes India Unveils 12th Edition of '30 Under 30' List, Honoring 30 Young Innovators Across 19 Categories, Including Artificial Intelligence.

In February 2025, Forbes India unveiled its 12th Edition of the Forbes India 30 Under 30 list, recognizing 30 young professionals and entrepreneurs who have made remarkable contributions across 19 categories, including the newly added Artificial Intelligence.

- The 2025 list features 42 individuals, including actress Aparna Balamurali, actor Rohit Saraf, and Swiss founder Aniket Shah, who were acknowledged across diverse sectors.
- The list includes 12 professionals and 11 women, showcasing a balanced representation of talent.
- World Chess Champion of 2024, D. Gukesh, emerged as the youngest award winner in the 2025 list.

Key Points:-

(i) The 2025 list spans various sectors such as technology, healthcare, finance, and entertainment, reflecting the dynamic and multifaceted talents of India's youth.

(ii) The Forbes India 30 Under 30 list, launched in 2014, has evolved into a premier platform for recognizing young professionals and entrepreneurs across a variety of sectors.

(iii) The list has continually adapted to market trends, introducing updates such as separating Music and Entertainment, adding Education

2. Sportstar Aces Awards 2025: PR Sreejesh and Manu Bhaker Honoured as Sportstar of the Year (Male & Female).

On February 14, 2025, the 7th edition of the Sportstar Aces Awards 2025 was held at the Taj Mahal Palace in Mumbai, Maharashtra. The event celebrated exceptional achievements in Indian sports, honoring winners across 24 distinct categories, recognizing athletes, coaches, and organizations for their contributions.

- PR Sreejesh, the Indian hockey legend, won the Sportstar of the Year 2025 (Male), while Manu Bhaker won the Sportstar of the Year 2025 (Female) and also the Sportswoman of the Year (Olympic Sport) award.
- The event featured 5 Popular Choice Awards and 16 Jury Awards, with over 2 lakh votes cast for the Popular Choice categories, highlighting the strong engagement of sports fans.
- In 2025, two special awards were introduced: the "Special Recognition Gamechanger 2025" and the "Inspirational Icon Award 2025", recognizing individuals who have made significant contributions to sports and inspired future generations.

Key Points:-

(i) Pusarla Venkata Sindhu was honored with the "Inspirational Icon Award 2025" for her exceptional achievements and unwavering dedication to the sport of badminton.

(ii) Jay Shah, Chairman of the International Cricket Council (ICC), received the "Special Recognition Game Changer Award 2025" for his

transformative contributions to Indian cricket and the sport globally.

(iii) Reliance Industries Limited (RIL), led by Mukesh Ambani, was recognized for its significant contributions to sports development, while the "Chairperson's Award for Sports for Social Good 2025" was awarded to Downtown Heroes FC, a football club based in Srinagar, Jammu & Kashmir (J&K).

3. NTPC Limited has been honored with the Forward Faster Sustainability Award 2025 for its efforts in Water Resilience.

In February 2025, NTPC Limited (previously known as National Thermal Power Corporation Limited), an Indian 'Maharatna' Public Sector Undertaking (PSU) under the Ministry of Power (MoP), was awarded the Forward Faster Sustainability Award 2025 in the 'Water Resilience' category. This recognition is for NTPC's outstanding efforts in water conservation and sustainable water management.

- Harekrushna Dash, Executive Director (Sustainability, Environment & Ash) and K. Karthikeyan, Additional General Manager (AGM), NTPC Limited, received the award at a ceremony organized by the United Nations (UN) Global Compact Network India (UN GCNI) in Chennai, Tamil Nadu (TN).

- NTPC is actively applying the Reduce, Reuse & Recycle (RRR) approach to optimize water usage.

Key Points:-

(i) The Forward Faster Sustainability Awards honor organizations in India that have made significant contributions to promoting sustainability

and corporate responsibility, in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

(ii) NTPC Limited, the largest integrated power utility in India, meets 25% of the country's power needs. It has an installed capacity of over 77 Giga Watt (GW) and is building an additional 29.5 GW capacity, including 9.6 GW of Renewable Energy (RE) capacity.

(iii) The company has set a goal to achieve 60 GW of RE capacity by 2032.

4. Tata Sons Chairman N. Chandrasekaran Awarded Honorary Knighthood by the UK.

On February 14, 2025, Natarajan Chandrasekaran, Chairman of Tata Sons Private Limited, was honored with the United Kingdom's "The Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (KBE)" under the reign of King Charles III for his outstanding contributions to UK-India business relations.

- The KBE/DBE is one of the highest honors conferred by the British Sovereign to civilians, recognizing the exceptional achievements of foreign nationals in various fields.

- The GBE (Knight or Dame Grand Cross) is the highest rank within the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire. In 2014, the late Ratan Tata, former Chairman of the Tata Group, became the only Indian to be awarded the GBE (Knight or Dame Grand Cross) since 1950.

Key Points:-

(i) The "Knight Commander (KBE for men) or Dame Commander (DBE for women)" of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire is the second-highest rank within the Order of the British

Empire. In 2024, Sunil Bharti Mittal, Founder and Chairman of Bharti Enterprises Limited, was conferred with the Knight Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (KBE).

(ii) Other Indian recipients of the honorary KBE include the late Ratan Tata (2009), the late sitar virtuoso Pandit Ravi Shankar (2001), and the late Tata Steel veteran Jamshed Irani (1997), who were honored by the late Queen Elizabeth II.

(iii) Natarajan Chandrasekaran joined the Board of Tata Sons Private Limited in 2016 and became its Chairman in 2017. He also chairs the boards of key Tata Group companies, including Tata Steel Limited, Tata Motors Limited, Tata Power Limited, and Air India Limited. In 2023, he was awarded France's highest civilian honor, the 'Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur' (Knight of the Legion of Honour), and in 2022, he was honored with the Padma Bhushan, India's third-highest civilian award, in the field of Trade and Industry.

(i) The women featured in the list have achieved significant wealth through industries such as retail, cosmetics, energy, finance, and technology, leading their family businesses to global prominence.

(ii) The top 10 wealthiest women globally, as highlighted by Forbes, have collectively accumulated a net worth exceeding approximately USD 500 billion.

(iii) According to the Forbes Billionaire List 2024, women now represent 3% of the global billionaire population.

5. Forbes' Top 10 Richest Women in the World 2025: Alice Louise Walton of the USA Ranks 1st, India's Savitri Devi Jindal Secures 7th Position.

In February 2025, Forbes India unveiled its 5th Edition of the "Top 10 Richest Women in the World in 2025" list, showcasing the immense wealth amassed by women across diverse sectors.

- Alice Louise Walton, the daughter of Walmart Inc. founder Sam Walton, claimed the top global position with a net worth of USD 112.5 billion.
- India's Savitri Devi Jindal and Family secured the 7th spot with a net worth of USD 32.3 billion, representing the JSW (Jindal South West) Group.

Key Points:-

6. Nagaland Forest Management Project Wins the SKOCH Award.

The Nagaland Forest Management Project (NFMP) was honored with the prestigious SKOCH Award 2024 for its efforts in improving forest ecosystems and supporting income generation.

- The award was presented on 15th February 2025 during the 100th SKOCH Summit at Silver Oak Hall, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi.
- Ango Konyak, Deputy Project Director of NFMP, along with Wennyei Konyak, Resident Commissioner of Nagaland House, New Delhi, received the award on behalf of the Department of Environment, Forests & Climate Change (DEFCC), Government of Nagaland (GON).
- The NFMP is a project implemented by the Department of Environment, Forests & Climate Change (DEFCC), Government of Nagaland, with assistance from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

Key Points:-

(i) The project aims to enhance forest ecosystems and income generation by re-establishing Jhum areas and supporting livelihoods through village-specific interventions carried out by Joint Forest Management Committees.

(ii) The project, running from 2017 to 2027, will cover 185 villages across 11 districts and 22 Forest Ranges. It plans to cover an area of 79,096 hectares under Forest Intervention and establish 555 Self Help Groups (SHGs) to improve livelihoods.

(iii) The SKOCH Award is one of the highest independent honors, awarded since 1997, recognizing states and organizations in the fields of governance, technology, economics, and the social sector for their dedicated and independent outcome-based assessment process.

7. Manu Bhaker Wins Top Honour at BBC Indian Sportswoman of the Year Awards 2024.

On February 17, 2025, the 5th edition of the "British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Indian Sportswoman of the Year (ISWOTY) Award 2024" took place in New Delhi, Delhi. The prestigious event celebrates and honors the exceptional achievements of Indian sportswomen, recognizing their excellence across various fields of competition.

- Indian shooter Manu Bhaker was honored with the 'BBC Indian Sportswoman of the Year Award 2024', becoming the first Indian woman to win 2 bronze medals in a single edition of the Paris 2024 Olympics.

- Para shooter Avani Lekhara was named the 'BBC Para Sportswoman of the Year 2024', becoming the first Indian woman to win 3 Paralympic medals,

including a gold at the Paris 2024 Olympics, following a gold and bronze in Tokyo 2020 Olympics.

Key Points:-

(i) The nominations for the 2024 award were announced on January 16, 2025, showcasing 5 remarkable Indian sportswomen.

(ii) The shortlisted nominees, who proceeded to the public vote, included Aditi Ashok (professional golfer), Manu Bhaker (professional shooter), Avani Lekhara (professional shooter), Smriti Mandhana (India women's cricket vice-captain), and Vinesh Phogat (professional freestyle wrestler).

8. Massachusetts Governor Honors Nita Ambani for Philanthropic Contributions with Citation.

In February 2025, Nita Mukesh Ambani, a renowned Indian philanthropist and the Founder and Chairperson of the Reliance Foundation, the charitable arm of Reliance Industries Limited (RIL), was awarded the Governor's Citation by Maura Healey, Governor of Massachusetts (United States of America, USA), during a special ceremony in Boston, USA.

- The citation recognizes Ambani for her compassionate philanthropy and her dedication to making a transformative impact in education, healthcare, sports, arts, culture, and women's empowerment in India and globally.

Key Points:-

(i) In 2016, she became the first Indian woman to join the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

(ii) In 2017, she received the Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Puruskar (National Sports Promotion

Award in India) and was honored by Vogue India with the Global Philanthropist and Leader of the Year award.

INDEX

1. MSCI Equity Indexes February 2025: HMIL Added, AGEL Excluded.

In February 2025, the United States-based Morgan Stanley Capital International Incorporated (MSCI), a leading global service provider for the investment community, announced the MSCI Equity Indexes February 2025 Review.

- The review revealed that Gurugram (Haryana)-based Hyundai Motor India Limited (HMIL) has been added to the MSCI Emerging Markets (EM) Index and the MSCI India Domestic Index, while Ahmedabad (Gujarat)-based Adani Green Energy Limited (AGEL) has been removed from the index.

- These changes will be implemented around February 28, 2025, with effect from March 3, 2025. As a result, India's weight in the index rises to 19%, up from 18.8% in the previous review.

- Hyundai Motor is the only large-cap stock added to the list.

Key Points:-

(i) United Airlines Holdings, Reddit A, and Natera Inc. (USA) will be the largest additions to the MSCI ACWI, with 23 securities added and 107 removed. Emaar Developments (UAE) and J&T Global Express Limited (China) will join the MSCI EM Index.

(ii) 20 Indian stocks, including Afcons Infrastructure, Ola Electric, and Cartrade Tech, have been added to the MSCI India Domestic

Small Cap Index. Meanwhile, 17 Indian stocks, such as Bajaj Hindusthan Sugar, DCB Bank, and Sun Pharma Advanced, have been excluded. Additionally, 8 Indian stocks saw an increase in their weight, while 9 experienced a decrease.

(iii) The MSCI Emerging Markets Index tracks the performance of growing economies worldwide and includes large and mid-cap companies from 24 Emerging Markets (EM) countries. With 1,251 constituents, the index covers 85% of the free-float-adjusted market capitalization in each of these countries.

IMPORTANT DAYS

1. Global Tourism Resilience Day Observed on 17 February 2025.

The United Nations (UN) Global Tourism Resilience Day (GTRD) is celebrated annually on February 17 to raise awareness about the need to strengthen resilience in the tourism industry. This day underscores the sector's vulnerability to various crises and emergencies, while promoting the importance of preparedness and adaptability.

- The 17th of February, 2025, marks the observance of the 3rd GTRD.

Key Points:-

(i) On February 6, 2023, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted resolution A/RES/77/269, officially designating February 17 as GTRD. The first-ever GTRD was celebrated on February 17, 2023.

(ii) The annual observance aims to emphasize the necessity of enhancing resilience within the tourism sector to better manage disruptions and

challenges.

2. International Childhood Cancer Day 2025 was observed on February 15.

International Childhood Cancer Day (ICCD) is a global campaign observed every year on February 15 to raise awareness about childhood cancer. It highlights the unique challenges faced by children with cancer and shows support for children, adolescents, survivors, and their families who are fighting cancer.

- The 3-year campaign for ICCD (2024-2026) focuses on addressing the difficulties faced by childhood cancer patients, caregivers, survivors, and healthcare professionals around the world.
- The theme for ICCD 2025 is "Inspiring Action."
- ICCD is an annual event established in 2002 by Childhood Cancer International (CCI), a global organization that brings together national and grassroots parent groups of children with cancer.

Key Points:-

- (i) The first ICCD was held on February 15, 2002.
- (ii) The ICCD campaign is a joint effort between CCI and the International Society of Paediatric Oncology (SIOP), also known as the Société Internationale d'Oncologie Pédiatrique (SIOP).
- (iii) CCI is a global network of 183 organizations, including parent groups, survivor associations, support groups, and cancer societies, operating in 94 countries across 5 continents.

World Pangolin Day is observed annually on the third Saturday of February to celebrate pangolins, or scaly anteaters, the most unique mammals on Earth, and raise awareness about their conservation. The day aims to highlight the critical threats faced by these unique mammals, primarily due to illegal poaching and trafficking for their scales and meat.

- In 2025, World Pangolin Day falls on February 15, marking the observance of the 14th World Pangolin Day.
- The 13th World Pangolin Day was observed on February 17, 2024, and the 15th World Pangolin Day will be observed on February 21, 2026.
- The first-ever World Pangolin Day was celebrated in February 2012 and has since gained international recognition from animal welfare organizations and individuals around the globe, serving as a powerful reminder of the urgent need to protect pangolins and raise awareness about their endangered status.

Key Points:-

- (i) Pangolins, also known as scaly anteaters, get their name from the Malay word "penggulung," meaning "roller," which refers to their unique self-defense behavior of curling up into a tight ball when threatened.
- (ii) These creatures are the only mammals fully covered in scales made of keratin, the same material found in human nails.
- (iii) With their distinct armor-like appearance and curled-up defense mechanism, pangolins stand out in the animal kingdom.

3. World Pangolin Day Observed on 15 February 2025.

4. Indonesia Clinches First-Ever Badminton Asia Mixed Team Championship 2025 Title, Defeating China.

On February 16, 2025, Indonesia secured their first-ever title at the 4th Edition of the Badminton Asia Mixed Team Championship 2025 by defeating two-time defending champions China with a 3-1 victory in the final. The tournament took place from February 11 to 16, 2025, at the Conson Gymnasium in Qingdao, China.

- **Muhammad Shohibul Fikri captained the Indonesia team, while Chen Xujun led the China team.**
- **Indonesia, for their historic triumph, claimed the gold medal, China settled for silver, while Japan and Thailand secured bronze medals for their strong performances.**
- **Rinov Rivaldy and Siti Fadia Silva Ramadhanti set the stage for Indonesia's victory by defeating China's Gao Jiaxuan and Wu Mengying with a commanding 21-11, 21-13 scoreline, giving Indonesia an early 1-0 lead.**

Key Points:-

- (i) Alwi Farhan secured a 21-15, 21-13 victory over China's World Junior Champion Hu Zhe'an, extending Indonesia's lead to 2-0. However, China fought back as Xu Wenjing defeated Indonesia's Putri Kusuma Wardani 21-12, 21-13, bringing the score to 2-1.
- (ii) China narrowed the gap to 2-1 as Xu Wenjing defeated Indonesia's Putri Kusuma Wardani 21-12, 21-13 in the Women's Singles match. However, in the Men's Doubles, Muhammad Shohibul Fikri and Daniel Marthin secured Indonesia's historic victory by defeating China's Chen Xujun and Huang Di 21-15, 21-9, sealing the championship and igniting celebrations among the Indonesian team.

- (iii) Team India was eliminated in the Quarterfinals and finished in 6th place in the final standings.

5. World Day of Social Justice 2025 Observed on February 20.

The United Nations (UN) observes World Day of Social Justice annually on February 20 to emphasize the importance of social justice across the globe. This day raises awareness on key issues such as poverty alleviation, employment, gender equality, and access to essential services like education, healthcare, and social services.

- **The theme for World Day of Social Justice 2025 is "Strengthening a Just Transition for a Sustainable Future," emphasizing the importance of inclusive policies and social protection to address systemic inequality.**

Key Points:-

- (i) On November 26, 2007, during its 62nd session, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted resolution A/RES/62/10, declaring February 20th of each year as World Day of Social Justice, starting from the 63rd session of the UNGA.
- (ii) The first-ever World Day of Social Justice was observed on February 20, 2009.

DEFENCE

1. Military Exercise 'Jal-Thal-Raksha 2025' Conducted in Gujarat to Strengthen Coastal Security.

On February 16, 2025, the Indian Army (IA) conducted a large-scale military exercise, 'Jal-Thal-Raksha 2025,' at Bet Dwarka, Gujarat. The primary

objective was to strengthen security in Dwarka and its surrounding islands, addressing recent illegal encroachments.

- The exercise saw participation from 11 Ahmedabad and 31 Jamnagar Army units, along with the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) and Marine Police.
- The exercise aimed to enhance coordination between government departments, paramilitary forces, and defense forces during emergencies such as terrorist attacks or wartime situations.

Key Points:-

- (i) During the exercise, security personnel were deployed to the coast via hovercraft. The exercise simulated securing critical infrastructure and responding to potential land-based threats, enhancing overall preparedness.
- (ii) The District Administration of Devbhoomi Dwarka, along with the Forest Department, Maritime Board of Gujarat Energy, and National Security Guard (NSG), supervised the operations, ensuring smooth coordination and effective response strategies.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. DRDO's ADA and MIDHANI Ink MoU to Develop MDN100 Steel for Aerospace Applications.

The Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA), based in Bengaluru (Karnataka) and part of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Mishra Dhatu Nigam Limited (MIDHANI), a Defence Public Sector Undertaking (PSU). The MoU aims to facilitate the indigenous development of "MDN100," a high-

strength, high-toughness special-grade steel, specifically designed for aerospace applications.

- This collaboration will enhance aeronautical capabilities, particularly supporting the 5th generation Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA) program. The MoU was formalized at the Aero India 2025 airshow, held from February 10-14, 2025, in Bengaluru.
- ADA serves as the central organization for combat aircraft development in India.
- The MDN100 Steel offers excellent forgeability and is ideal for manufacturing highly stressed aircraft parts, providing significant weight-saving benefits.

Key Points:-

- (i) This initiative aligns with the "Atmanirbhar Bharat" (self-reliant India) campaign, contributing to India's combat aircraft programs.
- (ii) MIDHANI has been a crucial supplier of critical materials for DRDO and Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL) in various aeronautical projects. MIDHANI also showcased SuperNi 41 plates at Aero India 2025, a nickel-chromium-based superalloy designed to withstand extreme temperatures in aero engines.
- (iii) ADA's ongoing combat aircraft programs include Light Combat Aircraft Mark 2 (LCA Mk2), Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA), and Twin-Engine Deck Based Fighter (TEDBF) for the Indian Navy.

2. Indian Navy Commissions 8th Missile Cum Ammunition Barge, LSAM 11 (Yard 79).

On February 14, 2025, the Indian Navy (IN) successfully launched its 8th Missile Cum Ammunition (MCA) Barge, Large Scale Additive

Manufacturing (LSAM 11) (Yard 79) at Mira Bhayandar, Maharashtra. The launch took place at the facility of M/s SECON Engineering Projects Private Limited (SEEPL), a Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh (AP)-based company.

- The launch ceremony was attended by Commodore N. Gopinath, Assistant Chief of Materiel (Planning), Naval Dockyard (ND), Mumbai, Maharashtra.

- The contract for constructing this 8th MCA Barge was signed on February 19, 2021, with the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) Shipyard, M/s SECON Engineering Projects Private Limited.

- The barge has been indigenously designed and built in collaboration with an Indian ship design firm and the Indian Register of Shipping (IRS).

Key Points:-

(i) Model testing was conducted at the Naval Science and Technological Laboratory (NSTL), Visakhapatnam (AP), to ensure seaworthiness.

(ii) The MCA Barges play a crucial role in the IN's operational capabilities, assisting in the transportation, embarkation, and disembarkation of ammunition and materials to naval platforms, both at jetties and outer harbors.

(iii) These MCA Barges align with the Government of India's (GoI) 'Make in India' and 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' initiatives, reinforcing India's self-reliance in defense manufacturing.

3. India's Next-Gen Deep-Ocean Submersible 'Matsya-6000' Successfully Completes Wet Trials.

On February 17, 2025, India's 4th-generation deep-ocean submersible, 'Matsya-6000,' successfully

completed its wet testing at the L&T Shipbuilding facility in Kattupalli Port, Chennai (Tamil Nadu).

- It was developed and tested by the National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT), Chennai, under the Samudrayaan Project and is designed for deep-sea exploration and scientific research.

Key Points:-

(i) Before wet testing, Matsya-6000 completed dry tests at a 500-meter operational range to evaluate integration and performance, ensuring its readiness for advanced trials.

(ii) From January 27 to February 12, 2025, Matsya-6000 underwent wet testing at Kattupalli Port, conducting eight dives: five unmanned and three manned.

(iii) The tests assessed key parameters, including power control, buoyancy, stability, maneuverability, safety, and the functionality of its scientific instruments.

4. PRL Scientists Discover New Exoplanet TOI-6038A b Using PARAS-2 Spectrograph.

In February 2025, scientists at the Physical Research Laboratory (PRL), an autonomous unit of the Department of Space (DOS) of the Government of India (GOI) in Ahmedabad, discovered a new exoplanet, TOI-6038A b. It is classified as a dense sub-Saturn-sized planet with a mass of 78.5 Earth masses and a radius of 6.41 Earth radii in a wide binary system. The planet orbits the main F-type star every 5.83 days in a circular orbit.

- The TOI-6038A b lies in the transition region between Neptune-like and gas-giant exoplanets, called "Sub-Saturn" (a category absent in our solar system),

offering a rare opportunity to study planetary formation and evolution.

- This is the 2nd exoplanet discovered using the PRL Advanced Radial-velocity All-sky Search-2 (PARAS-2) spectrograph attached to the 2.5-meter (m) telescope at PRL's Mount Abu Observatory at Gurushikhar, Rajasthan.
- It is also the 5th exoplanet detected using the combined efforts of PRL Advanced Radial Velocity Abu Sky Search (PARAS-1) and PARAS-2 spectrographs. It is only the 5th sub-Saturn exoplanet discovered in a binary system.

Key Points:-

- (i) TOI-6038A b has a high density of 1.62 grams per cubic centimeter (g/cm^3), suggesting its formation through High-Eccentricity Tidal Migration (HEM) or early disk-driven migration. Its internal structure analysis indicates that 75% of its mass consists of a massive rocky core, while the remaining 25% is a Hydrogen-Helium (H/He) envelope.
- (ii) Its host star, TOI-6038A, is part of a binary system with a companion K-type star, TOI-6038B, which is located 3217 Astronomical Units (AU) away.
- (iii) PARAS-2 is Asia's highest-resolution stabilized radial velocity (RV) spectrograph.

5. Indo-Russia JV IRRPL Successfully Delivers 40,000 AK-203 Assault Rifles to the Indian Army.

In February 2025, Indo-Russian Rifles Private Limited (IRRPL), a Joint Venture (JV) between India and Russia, delivered 40,000 Avtomat

Kalashnikova (AK)-203 assault rifles to the Indian Army (IA).

- These rifles were manufactured at the Korwa Ordnance Factory in Amethi, Uttar Pradesh (UP).
- The production is being carried out with full technology transfer from Russia, aiming for 100% localization in India.
- This initiative aligns with India's "Make in India" and "Atmanirbhar Bharat" programs, reinforcing self-reliance in defense manufacturing.

Key Points:-

- (i) In July 2021, Union Minister Rajnath Singh, Ministry of Defence (MoD), Government of India (GOI), and Russian Defence Minister General Sergey Shoigu signed a contract worth ₹5,124 crore.
- (ii) The agreement involves a Joint Venture (JV) between Indo-Russian Rifles Private Limited (IRRPL) and Rosoboronexport (ROE) for the production of over 6.1 lakh 7.62×39 millimeter (mm) AK-203 rifles in India, with technology transfer from Russia.
- (iii) On January 25, 2022, the first batch of 70,000 AK-203 rifles was delivered to the Indian Army (IA). An additional batch of 35,000 AK-203 rifles was delivered between May and July 2024.

BOOKS & AUTHORS

1. Arun Shourie Releases Book "The New Icon: Savarkar and the Facts" in February 2025.

In February 2025, a book titled "The New Icon: Savarkar and the Facts" was authored by Arun Shourie, a scholar, author, and former Minister for

Disinvestment, Communications, and Information Technology (IT).

● **Published by Penguin Random House India (PRHI), the book analyzes various myths surrounding Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, an Indian freedom fighter, activist, writer, and President of Hindu Mahasabha.**

Key Points:-

(i) He served as an economist with the World Bank (WB) from 1967 to 1976 and as Editor of the Indian Express (IE) from 1987 to 1990.

(ii) He was a nominated Member of Parliament (MP) and held the position of Minister of Disinvestment, Communications, and IT in Atal Bihari Vajpayee's cabinet.

(iii) He was honored with the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Journalism, Literature, and Creative Communication Arts in 1982. In 1990, he received the Padma Bhushan for Literature and Education.

OBITUARY

1. Renowned classical singer Pandit Prabhakar Karekar has passed away.

In February 2025, renowned Hindustani classical singer Pandit Prabhakar Karekar passed away in Mumbai, Maharashtra, at the age of 80. He was born in 1944 in Lingakaden, Fatorda (which was known as Mhadd back then) in Goa.

● **He was famous for his soulful singing, particularly in devotional songs like Bolava Vithal Pahava Vithal and Vakratund Mahakay.**

Key Points:-

(i) Apart from being a remarkable performer, Pandit Prabhakar Karekar was also a dedicated

teacher. He was a graded artist with All India Radio (AIR) and Doordarshan (DD), which helped him reach a wide audience across the country.

(ii) Prabhakar Karekar was the founder and Chairman of the Swarprabha Trust.

(iii) Over the course of his career, he received many prestigious awards, including the Tansen Samman, Sangeet Natak Akademi Award, and Gomant Vibhushan Award, all recognizing his significant contributions to classical music.

2. Veteran space scientist and Padma Shri awardee R. Manicka Vasagam has passed away.

In February 2025, veteran space scientist Ramaswamy Manicka (R.M) Vasagam, a Padma Shri awardee and former member of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), passed away at the age of 84 in Bengaluru (Karnataka).

● **In 1982, he was honored with the Padma Shri, India's fourth-highest civilian award, for his contributions to Science and Engineering.**

● **In 1965, R.M. Vasagam joined India's space program through the Indian National Committee for Space Research (INCOSPAR), which later became ISRO.**

Key Points:-

(i) In 1994, R. Manicka Vasagam was appointed as the Director of the Directorate of Advanced Technology and Planning at ISRO in Bengaluru (Karnataka), and from 1996 to 1999, he served as the Vice-Chancellor of Anna University, Chennai (Tamil Nadu), later becoming the Chairman of the Tamil Nadu Institute of Information Technology (TANITEC).

(ii) He also served as the Director of the Karunya

Institute of Technology and Sciences in Coimbatore (Tamil Nadu) and was the Chancellor of Dr. M.G.R. Educational and Research Institute in Chennai.

(iii) In 1982, he received the Hari Om Ashram Prerit Dr. Vikram Sarabhai Research Award and in 1984, the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) Centennial Medal.