

WEEKLY
CURRENT
AFFAIRS
PDFs



January 2025



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NATIONAL AFFAIRS / GOVERNMENT SCHEME

1. PM Narendra Modi Inaugurates Z-Morh Tunnel in Jammu and Kashmir.

On January 13, 2025, Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi inaugurated the Z-Morh Tunnel in Sonamarg, located in the Ganderbal district of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K).

- The tunnel, also referred to as the Sonamarg Tunnel is to boost connectivity to the Ladakh region, holding significant strategic importance for defense and tourism.

- Union Minister Nitin Gadkari, Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH), J&K Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, and former Chief Minister (CM) Omar Abdullah were present at the event.

- The two-lane, bi-directional Z-Morh Tunnel spans 6.5 kilometers (km) in length and 10 meters (m) in width. It is built on the Srinagar-Leh National Highway (NH) at a cost of Rs. 2,700 crore using the New Austrian Tunneling Method (NATM), which is suitable for the fragile Himalayan geology.

Key Points:-

(i) The tunnel includes a main tunnel (10.8 m wide), a parallel escape tunnel (7.5 m wide), a D-shaped ventilation tunnel (8.3 m wide), two major culverts measuring 110 m and 270 m in length, and a smaller culvert of 30 m.

(ii) Located at an altitude of 8,650 feet above sea level, the Z-Morh Tunnel facilitates all-weather connectivity between Srinagar and Sonamarg en route to Leh, bypassing areas prone to landslides and avalanches.

(iii) The Z-Morh Tunnel is designed to handle 1,000 vehicles per hour at a maximum speed of

80 km/h, ensuring uninterrupted travel during winter, with its western portal at Rezan (towards Srinagar) and eastern portal at Shetkari (towards Sonamarg).

2. C-DOT Collaborates with IIT Mandi and IIT Jammu to Develop Spectrum Efficiency Chip.

In January 2025, the Centre for Development of Telematics (C-DOT), a New Delhi-based telecom Research and Development (R&D) center under the Department of Telecommunications (DoT), Ministry of Communications (MoC), collaborated with the Indian Institute of Technology Mandi (IIT Mandi) in Himachal Pradesh and the Indian Institute of Technology Jammu (IIT Jammu) in Jammu and Kashmir to develop a chip aimed at enhancing spectrum efficiency.

- The project is supported by the Telecom Technology Development Fund (TTDF), which promotes telecom innovations by Indian startups, universities, and research institutions to improve broadband and mobile services across India.

- The TTDF was launched on October 1, 2022, by the Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) under the Ministry of Telecommunications (MoT) to support R&D efforts for technologies and products improving telecom services in rural and remote areas.

- The agreement was signed in the presence of Dr. Raj Kumar Upadhyay, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of C-DOT, Dr. Rahul Shrestha, Principal Investigator from IIT Mandi, Dr. Rohit B. Chaurasiya, Co-Investigator from IIT Jammu, as well as C-DOT Directors Pankaj Kumar Dalela and Shikha Srivastava.

Key Points:-

(i) The collaboration aims to develop a Wideband Spectrum-Sensor (WSS), an application-specific integrated circuit (ASIC) chip designed to optimize spectrum usage for broadband services, especially in rural areas. The project also aims to generate intellectual property (IP) for spectrum sensing technology, critical for dynamic spectrum access.

(ii) The project will design an advanced spectrum sensing algorithm to identify unused frequency bands (spectrum holes) in communication systems, enabling interference-free operation.

(iii) The project focuses on developing hardware-efficient communication algorithms to detect underutilized frequency bands above 2 GHz, demonstrating a wideband cognitive radio module for the 6 GHz satellite band and testing designs using Field-Programmable Gate Arrays (FPGA) to improve spectrum utilization.

3. 28th Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of Parliaments of Commonwealth Countries (CSPOC) to be Hosted in India in 2026.

The 28th Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of Parliaments of Commonwealth Countries (CSPOC) will be hosted in New Delhi, India in 2026. This announcement was made by Om Birla, Speaker of Lok Sabha, on January 10, 2025, at the CSPOC Standing Committee Meeting held in Guernsey.

- The CSPOC aims to focus on the application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and social media in parliamentary operations to enhance cooperation among member countries.

- These technologies will be used to provide regional language translations for Members of Parliament (MPs) and make parliamentary papers available in different languages.

Key Points:-

(i) India has emerged as the world's 5th-largest economy and the 3rd-largest startup ecosystem, undergoing transformative growth in sectors such as agriculture, fintech, AI, and research and innovation.

(ii) India's selection as the host for the 28th CSPOC highlights its rich cultural heritage, rooted in the philosophy of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, meaning "the whole world is one family."

(iii) India had previously hosted the CSPOC in 1970-71, 1986, and 2010.

4. Indichip Semiconductors to Set Up India's First Private Semiconductor Manufacturing Facility in Andhra Pradesh.

In January 2025, Indichip Semiconductors Limited, headquartered in Noida, Uttar Pradesh (UP), in partnership with its Joint Venture (JV) partner Yitoo Micro Technology Limited (YMTL) from Japan, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Government of Andhra Pradesh (AP) to establish India's first private semiconductor manufacturing facility at the Orvakal Mega Industrial Hub in Kurnool, AP.

- The project involves an investment exceeding Rs 14,000 crores.

- The MoU was signed between Piyush Bichhoriya, Managing Director (MD) of Indichip Semiconductors Limited, and Saikanth Varma, Chief Executive Officer

(CEO) of the Andhra Pradesh Economic Development Board (APEDB).

- This project aligns with AP's Semiconductor Policy, launched in November 2024, aiming to transform the state into a hub for electronics and semiconductor manufacturing while supporting India's Aatmanirbhar Bharat vision by boosting domestic production and reducing import dependency.

Key Points:-

- (i) The AP government will provide land in the Orvakal Mega Industrial Hub along with essential infrastructure and support to ensure the project's success.
- (ii) The facility will specialize in manufacturing Silicon Carbide (SiC) chips, crucial for energy-efficient technologies, Electric Vehicles (EVs), and Renewable Energy (RE) systems, with an initial production capacity of 10,000 wafers per month, scalable to 50,000 wafers per month within 2-3 years.
- (iii) In November 2024, Gujarat became a pioneer in India's semiconductor industry by launching the Gujarat Semiconductor Policy 2022-2027, setting up the country's first semiconductor facility in Sanand and initiating the construction of India's first AI-enabled semiconductor fabrication plant in Dholera.

5. Jharkhand CM Hemant Soren Launches Maiyyaan Sampan Yojana.

In January 2025, Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren launched the improved 'Maiyan Samman Yojana' in Namkum, Jharkhand. He transferred a total of Rs 5,000 (for two months) to the accounts of over 56.61 lakh women beneficiaries.

- The scheme was first introduced in August 2024, providing Rs 1,000 per month to women aged 18 to 50.

Key Points:-

- (i) Starting from December 2024, the Jharkhand government increased the financial assistance to Rs 2,500 per month, providing stronger support to women beneficiaries.
- (ii) To be eligible for the scheme, the applicant must be a woman and a resident of Jharkhand.
- (iii) The applicant must not have a spouse or be employed herself in any Central or State Government job, Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs), local bodies, government-aided institutions, or be receiving a pension.

6. Odisha Becomes 34th State to Implement Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY Scheme.

In January 2025, the Department of Health and Family Welfare, Government of Odisha, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the National Health Authority (NHA), Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW), to implement Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY) in Odisha.

- This move made Odisha the 34th state in the country to implement Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY Scheme.

- The MoU was signed by LS Changsan, Additional Secretary, MoHFW and CEO of NHA, and Aswasthy S, Commissioner-cum-Secretary of the Department of Health and Family Welfare, Government of Odisha, at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi (Delhi).

Key Points:-

- (i) AB PM-JAY will be implemented in

convergence with the existing Gopabandhu Jan Arogya Yojana (GJAY) in Odisha.

(ii) The scheme will provide health insurance coverage of Rs 5 lakh per family annually, with an additional Rs 5 lakh for women members.

7. India Meteorological Department (IMD) Marks 150th Foundation Day.

On January 15, 2025, the India Meteorological Department (IMD), under the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES), celebrated its 150th Foundation Day with a series of events, activities, and workshops. These initiatives showcased IMD's significant role in enhancing India's climate resilience and providing essential weather and climate services.

- **Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi attended the celebrations held at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi.**
- **During the event, PM Narendra Modi launched 'Mission Mausam,' an initiative aimed at transforming India into a 'Weather-Ready' and 'Climate-smart' nation through the adoption of advanced weather surveillance technologies and high-resolution atmospheric observations.**

Key Points:-

- (i) PM released a commemorative postage stamp and coin to mark the 150th anniversary of IMD.
- (ii) The coin is circular in shape, with a denomination of Rs 150, minted in 99.99% silver, and weighs 40 grams.
- (iii) PM also unveiled a vision document titled "IMD Vision 2047," which outlines strategies for weather resilience and climate change adaptation

as India prepares to celebrate 100 years of independence in 2047.

8. Union Minister Piyush Goyal Launches National Turmeric Board and Appoints Palle Ganga Reddy as Chairman.

In January 2025, Union Minister Piyush Goyal, from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoC&I), launched the National Turmeric Board (NTB) in New Delhi, with the goal of boosting the turmeric industry in India.

- **Palle Ganga Reddy has been appointed as the first Chairperson of the Board, and its headquarters have been established in Nizamabad, Telangana.**

Key Points:-

- (i) The NTB will operate under the Department of Commerce (DoC), MoC&I.
- (ii) The board will include representatives from various departments, such as the Ministry of AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga, Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homoeopathy); Department of Pharmaceuticals (DoP), Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers (MoC&F); Department of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare (DA&FW) under the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare (MoA&FW), and the Department of Commerce, MoC&I.
- (iii) The board will provide leadership and coordinate with other government departments/agencies to foster the growth and development of the turmeric sector in India.

9. INROAD Project Receives Rs 100 Crore to Enhance Natural Rubber Quality in Northeast India.

In January 2025, the Indian Natural Rubber Operations for Assisted Development (INROAD) project secured a financial support of Rs 100 crore aimed at improving the quality of natural rubber in Northeast India.

- INROAD stands as the world's first project where the tyre industry directly contributes to the growth of rubber plantations, with a special focus on women's economic empowerment in rubber cultivation.

Key Points:-

- (i) The project is being implemented by the Rubber Board of India and financially supported by four members of the Automotive Tyre Manufacturers' Association (ATMA), including Apollo Tyres Limited, CEAT Limited, JK Tyre & Industries Limited, and MRF Tyres.
- (ii) New Natural Rubber (NR) plantations across 94 districts in Northeast India and parts of West Bengal (WB) have covered a total area of 1,25,272 hectares in the first four years of the project.
- (iii) The project will also offer skill-based training through digital platforms, alongside the development of infrastructure, including Model Smoke Houses and Model Processing and Grading Centres, specifically designed for the region.

10. Madhya Pradesh CM Mohan Yadav Launches Swami Vivekananda Yuva Shakti Mission.

In January 2025, Dr. Mohan Yadav, Chief Minister (CM) of Madhya Pradesh (MP), launched the "Swami Vivekanand Yuva Shakti Mission" on National Youth Day (12th January),

commemorating Swami Vivekananda's birth anniversary.

- The launch event was held at the Ravindra Bhavan Auditorium in Bhopal, MP. Alongside the mission, he inaugurated the Swami Vivekananda Yuva Shakti Mission Portal and its theme song.

- The logo of the mission, inspired by its motto, "Atma Deepo Bhava- Samvad, Samarthy, Samriddhi," was unveiled by the CM.

- Dr. Mohan Yadav inaugurated the world's largest 3D Rangoli depicting Swami Vivekananda at Shaurya Smarak in Bhopal, MP. The 18,000 sq. ft. artwork was created with eco-friendly natural colors by renowned rangoli artist Shikha Sharma Joshi and her team from Indore, MP.

Key Points:-

- (i) The mission's primary target is to achieve a 100% pass rate for students in Class 10th and 12th board exams by 2030.
- (ii) The mission aims to ensure that every youth earns at least the minimum wage of a skilled worker, completes education up to Class 12th, and actively participates in social initiatives for societal betterment.

11. Union Minister Rajiv Ranjan Singh recently inaugurated the 'Entrepreneurship Development Conclave' in Pune, Maharashtra.

In January 2025, Union Minister Rajiv Ranjan Singh, alias Lalan Singh, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying (MoFAHD) and Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR), inaugurated the 'Entrepreneurship Development Conclave' at G.D. Madulkar Natya Griha in Pune, Maharashtra.

- The event was organized by the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying (DAHD) under MoFAHD with the aim of bringing together key policymakers, industry leaders, and stakeholders from the livestock sector to foster innovation and accelerate growth.
- The theme of the event was "Empowering Entrepreneurs: Transforming Livestock Economies".

Key Points:-

- (i) During the event, Union Minister Rajiv Ranjan Singh launched 40 projects—20 under the National Livestock Mission (NLM) and 20 under the Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development Fund (AHIDF)—with a total outlay of ₹545.04 crores.
- (ii) The NLM - Entrepreneurship Development Programme (NLM-EDP) Dashboard was launched to provide an organized summary of project information for public access.

12. MNRE Recently Issued Operational Guidelines for Implementing Various Components under PMSGMBY.

In January 2025, the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) recently issued operational guidelines for the implementation of various components, such as the 'Payment Security Mechanism' component and 'Central Finance Assistance' component, for Renewable Energy Service Company (RESCO) models/Utility Led Aggregation (ULA) models under the 'Prime Minister-Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana (PMSGMBY)'.

- The guidelines provide comprehensive details about the implementation of two models for the installation of rooftop solar plants for consumers.

- Under the RESCO model, third-party entities will invest in rooftop solar installations, enabling consumers to pay only for the electricity consumed without any additional costs, while under the ULA model, Distribution Companies (DISCOMs) or state-designated entities will install rooftop solar projects on behalf of individual households.
- A ₹100 crore corpus fund has been allocated under the scheme for the Payment Security Mechanism (PSM) to reduce investment risks in RESCO-based grid-connected rooftop solar models for the residential sector, with the possibility of supplementation through additional grants and other sources, subject to MNRE approval.

Key Points:-

- (i) The guidelines issued by MNRE are designed to complement the existing capex-based implementation mode available through the national portal (<https://www.pmsuryaghar.gov.in>) and aim to boost the adoption of rooftop solar systems while addressing key investment and implementation challenges.
- (ii) The Union Cabinet, chaired by PM Narendra Modi, approved the PM-Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana (PMSGMBY) on 29th February 2024, with the Government of India allocating ₹75,021 crore for the scheme, which will be implemented until the Financial Year 2026-27 (FY27).
- (iii) The PM-Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana (PMSGMBY) is considered the world's largest domestic rooftop solar programme, aiming to provide free electricity of 300 units per month to 1 crore households in India by March 2027, with implementation led by a National Programme Implementation Agency (NPIA) at the national level and State Implementation Agencies (SIAs) at

the state level.

13. MEITY and DSCI Launch Cyber Security Grand Challenge (CSGC 2.0) to Foster Cybersecurity Innovations.

On January 15, 2025, S. Krishnan, Secretary of the Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MEITY), launched the second edition of the Cyber Security Grand Challenge (CSGC 2.0). The initiative, implemented by the Data Security Council of India (DSCI) based in Noida, Uttar Pradesh (UP), aims to enhance India's cybersecurity capabilities and prepare for a secure digital future.

- The total prize money for CSGC 2.0 has been significantly increased to ₹6.85 crores, compared to ₹3.2 crores in its first edition.
- Registration for CSGC 2.0 is open from January 15, 2025, and will remain available until February 14, 2025.
- Participants will develop innovative solutions in six key areas: Application Programming Interface (API) Security, Data Security, Wearable Device Security and Privacy, Clone and Fake Application (App) Mitigation, Artificial Intelligence (AI) for Threat Detection and Incident Response, and Securing Next-Generation Biometric Systems.

Key Points:-

- (i) The challenge is divided into three main stages. In the Idea Stage, 36 startups (6 per problem area) will be selected, each receiving ₹5 lakh. Following this, the Minimum Viable Product (MVP) Stage will see 18 startups being chosen and awarded ₹10 lakh each.
- (ii) The next stage is the Final Product Stage,

where winners for each problem area will receive ₹25 lakh.

- (iii) The final stage, called the Go-to-Market Stage, will announce the top three winners. The Platinum Winner will receive ₹1 crore, the Gold Winner will get ₹50 lakh, and the Silver Winner will be awarded ₹25 lakh.

14. C-DOT Collaborates with IIT Delhi to Develop THz Communication Front Ends for 6G Technology.

In January 2025, the Centre for Development of Telematics (C-DOT), a telecom research and development (R&D) center under the Department of Telecommunications (DoT), Ministry of Communications (MoC), has partnered with the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi (IIT Delhi), located in New Delhi, to work on creating "Building Blocks for Terahertz (THz) Communication Front Ends" for 6G (sixth-generation) technology.

- The Society for Applied Microwave Electronics Engineering and Research (SAMEER), based in Kolkata, West Bengal, will assist IIT Delhi in developing these components at its facilities.
- The agreement was signed in the presence of Dr. Rajkumar Upadhyay, CEO of C-DOT, Prof. Ananjan Basu, the principal investigator from IIT Delhi, and C-DOT Directors Dr. Pankaj Kumar Dalela and Shikha Srivastava.

Key Points:-

- (i) This collaboration is part of the Telecom Technology Development Fund (TTDF) 6G Call for Proposal by the Department of Telecommunications, and it supports the Bharat 6G Vision, which aims to develop advanced,

secure, and high-quality 6G networks.

(ii) The project's goal is to develop important devices and components for THz (terahertz) systems, which are essential for the 6G communication network.

15. Cabinet Approvals Announced on January 16, 2025.

On January 16, 2025, the Union Cabinet, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved the following proposals: the construction of a ₹3,984.86 crore Third Launch Pad at Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota. Set to be completed in 4 years, it will support Next Generation Launch Vehicles (NGLV) and Launch Vehicle Mark-3 (LVM3), enhancing India's capacity to launch spacecraft up to 30,000 tonnes into low Earth orbit.

- The Cabinet approved forming the 8th Pay Commission to revise salaries and pensions of 1.2 crore central government employees and pensioners. The minimum basic salary will rise from ₹18,000 to ₹40,000, with an expected salary hike of 25–30%. The commission will take effect after the conclusion of the 7th Pay Commission term in December 2025.

- A ₹2 lakh crore initiative to refarm 687 MHz of spectrum from government ministries and ISRO was approved. This will address growing telecom spectrum demand, with 328 MHz released immediately and the rest by 2030, increasing total available spectrum to 1,587 MHz.

- A ₹11,440 crore revival plan was approved for the Visakhapatnam-based Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited. This includes ₹10,300 crore equity infusion and ₹1,140 crore loan conversion. The plan aims for full

production capacity by August 2025, aligned with the National Steel Policy and Atmanirbhar Bharat goals.

Key Points:-

(i) The Ministry of Home Affairs approved the creation of two new Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) reserve battalions, each comprising 1,025 personnel, increasing CISF battalions from 13 to 15 and creating 2,050 new posts to meet rising security demands.

(ii) The TLP will support India's ambitious space missions, including the Bharatiya Antariksh Station and crewed lunar exploration, marking a significant step in advancing India's space program.

(iii) The refarming of spectrum reallocates resources from ISRO, the Ministry of Defence, and other government bodies to the Department of Telecommunications, strengthening India's position in global telecom advancements and ensuring readiness for future 6G technologies.

16. DPIIT Joins Forces with ITC to Strengthen India's Startup Ecosystem.

In January 2025, the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce & Industry (MoC&I), entered into a strategic partnership with Kolkata-based (Indian Tobacco Company) ITC Limited to enhance innovation and strengthen India's startup ecosystem.

- The partnership aims to leverage ITC's market network and DPIIT's support initiatives to drive technological advancements and create market opportunities for startups across the country.

Key Points:-

(i) Under this collaboration, ITC plans to implement startup solutions in key areas such as energy storage systems, integrating Renewable Energy (RE) sources at manufacturing sites, and developing digital platforms for Manufacturing Execution Systems (MES).

(ii) The focus of this partnership is to improve operational excellence in manufacturing through digital solutions and enhance sustainability by strengthening ITC's renewable energy efforts.

17. Startup India Marks 9 Years with 1.59 Lakh Startups Recognized and 16.6 Lakh Jobs Created.

On January 16, 2025, Startup India, a transformative initiative by the Government of India (GoI) launched in 2016, celebrated its 9th anniversary. This initiative aims to foster innovation and accelerate the growth of startups across the nation. GoI has designated January 16 as National Startup Day to honor India's strides in building a robust and inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem.

- With over 1.59 lakh startups (up from 500 in 2016) recognized by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) as of January 15, 2025, India has emerged as the world's 3rd largest startup ecosystem.

- The Startup India initiative is spearheaded by DPIIT under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoC&I).

- During the celebration of Startup India's 9th anniversary in New Delhi, Union Minister Piyush Goyal (MoC&I) unveiled two significant initiatives: the PRABHAAV Factbook (Powering a Resilient and Agile

Bharat for the Advancement of Visionary Startups), aimed at showcasing the progress and impact of startups in India, and the Bharat Startup Challenge, designed to support and promote entrepreneurial talent across the nation.

Key Points:-

(i) In January 2025, Devendra Fadnavis, Chief Minister of Maharashtra, signed an MoU with the Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) to establish a Rs 100 crore fund aimed at supporting startups and small businesses in the state.

(ii) To commemorate National Startup Day 2025, the Startup Policy Forum (SPF), with support from DPIIT and Startup India, launched two flagship programs: Startup Baithak and Startup Baatchet.

(iii) The 9-year celebration event was held from January 15 to January 16, 2025, at the iconic Group-20 (G20) Summit Room in Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi.

18. Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia Launches Sanchar Saathi App, NBM 2.0, and ICR Facility to Enhance Telecom Connectivity.

In January 2025, Union Minister Jyotiraditya Madhavrao Scindia, Ministry of Communications (MoC), launched several citizen-centric initiatives, including the Sanchar Saathi Mobile Application (App), the National Broadband Mission (NBM) 2.0, and the Intra Circle Roaming (ICR) facility at Digital Bharat Nidhi (DBN)-funded 4G (fourth generation) mobile sites in New Delhi, Delhi.

- The Sanchar Saathi Mobile App is a user-friendly platform designed to enhance telecom security by

empowering citizens to secure their telecom services and protect against fraud.

Key Points:-

(i) NBM 2.0, an expansion of the earlier NBM 1.0, aims to advance India's digital infrastructure and bridge connectivity gaps.

(ii) Under NBM 2.0, the government plans to connect the remaining 1.7 lakh villages and enhance broadband speeds to 100 Mbps (Megabits per second).

(iii) The launch of Intra Circle Roaming (ICR) at Digital Bharat Nidhi (DBN)-funded 4G sites allows subscribers of multiple Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) to access 4G services from a shared tower, enhancing connectivity while reducing costs.

19. Shriram Life Insurance Introduces Sunishchit Laabh Savings Plan for Financial Security.

In January 2025, Shriram Life Insurance introduced the Shriram Life Sunishchit Laabh plan, a non-participating individual savings plan designed to provide guaranteed high returns of up to 668% of the total premium paid.

- (i) The plan combines savings and life insurance benefits, catering to individuals seeking long-term financial security and payout options.

- (ii) Eligible individuals include those aged between 30 days and 60 years, with the annual premium starting at Rs 30,000.

Key Points:-

(i) The premium can also be paid in half-yearly installments of Rs 15,500, quarterly installments of

Rs 8,000, or monthly installments of Rs 3,000. The plan offers tax-free maturity payouts for tenures ranging from 10 to 40 years, with a maximum maturity age of 101 years.

(ii) To enhance financial security for policyholders' families, the plan provides death benefits of up to 160 times the annualized premium.

20. TRAI Releases Draft Telecommunication Tariff (71st Amendment) Order, 2025 to Strengthen PM-WANI Scheme.

On January 15, 2025, the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) issued the 'Draft Telecommunication Tariff (71st Amendment) Order, 2025,' aimed at rationalizing broadband tariffs for Public Data Offices (PDOs) under the Prime Minister's Wi-Fi Access Network Interface (PM-WANI) scheme. The primary objective of the draft is to address challenges impeding the growth of public Wi-Fi hotspots and ensure affordable connectivity for users nationwide.

- In August 2024, TRAI released the 70th Amendment draft, suggesting that broadband tariffs for PDOs under the PM-WANI scheme be aligned with retail broadband tariffs.

- On September 16, 2024, the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) introduced key amendments to the PM-WANI framework, including the removal of the requirement for Public Data Offices (PDOs) to enter commercial agreements with Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) for internet connectivity and allowing PDOs to network up to 100 access points to establish a single Wi-Fi hotspot.

- PM-WANI, launched by the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) in 2020, aims to establish

public Wi-Fi networks through Public Data Office Aggregators (PDOAs) to provide Wi-Fi services across the country, boosting broadband internet proliferation, with 18,19,674 unique users and 58.55 petabytes (PB) of data consumed as of December 15, 2024.

Key Points:-

- (i) TRAI proposed that the broadband tariff (Fiber to the Home, FTTH) for PDOs under the PM-WANI scheme should not exceed twice the retail broadband FTTH tariff of the same capacity offered by service providers, aiming to foster the growth of PM-WANI hotspots.
- (ii) The measure is designed to create a sustainable ecosystem that ensures a balanced relationship between PDOs and service providers.
- (iii) The PM-WANI scheme aligns with the National Digital Communications Policy, 2018, and Bharat 6G Vision, targeting the deployment of 50 million public Wi-Fi hotspots by 2030. As of July 2024, 207,642 PM-WANI hotspots have been deployed across India.

21. India's 6th Astronomical Observatory and Eastern India's First Inaugurated in West Bengal.

In January 2025, the Satyendra Nath Bose Centre for Basic Sciences (SNBCBS), an autonomous institute under the Department of Science and Technology (DST), Ministry of Science and Technology (MoS&T), inaugurated India's sixth and Eastern India's first astronomical observatory in the Garpanchkot Hills of Purulia district, West Bengal (WB).

- The observatory has been named after the renowned scientist Satyendra Nath Bose.

- The other five observatories are located in Ladakh, Nainital (Uttarakhand), Mount Abu (Rajasthan), Girawali Hills (Pune, Maharashtra), and Kavalur (Tamil Nadu, TN).
- Vishvajit Sahay, Additional Secretary of the Union Science and Technology Department, along with other dignitaries, were present at the inauguration event.

Key Points:-

- (i) The observatory is equipped with two telescopes, including a 14-inch diameter telescope, and a 1-meter diameter telescope is set to be installed soon. Its seeing value of 1.3 arc seconds meets the standards of the other five astronomical centers across the country.
- (ii) Located 600 meters above sea level in a pollution-free area, the observatory's best observation period is from November to April. An automatic weather forecasting center has also been established on the hilltop to measure rainfall, temperature, and wind speed.
- (iii) SNBCBS has partnered with Sidhu Kanu Birs University in WB for the observatory's operations and resource sharing.

22. Union Minister Manohar Lal Khattar Launches Toolkit for 9th Edition of Swachh Survekshan.

In January 2025, Union Minister Manohar Lal Khattar, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), launched the toolkit for the 9th edition of Swachh Survekshan (SS), the world's largest urban cleanliness survey, in a new version that is simpler, sharper, systematic, and all-inclusive.

- A special category, Super Swachh League (SSL), has been introduced for 2024 to create a separate league for cities excelling in cleanliness.

- SS(Swachh Survekshan), initially launched by MoHUA in 2016, aims to improve urban sanitation through citizen participation and third-party validation.

Key Points:-

(i) Cities have been classified into five population categories: Very Small, Small, Medium, Big, and Medium-Plus.

(ii) Each category will be evaluated based on population and parameters tailored to its specific size and needs.

(iii) The final phase of SS—the Field Assessment for the 9th edition—will begin on February 15, 2025, and conclude by the end of March 2025.

- Both countries also discussed mutual market access, Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), and duty-related matters.

Key Points:-

(i) India confirmed its approval of Nepal's request for the supply of 2 lakh Metric Tonnes (MT) of wheat.

(ii) At Nepal's request, India agreed to apply the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) regulations to Nepali vehicles, which include a maximum axle weight of 18.5 tonnes for two-axle vehicles and 28 tonnes for three-axle vehicles. These regulations will be applicable for cargo transit on the Kakarbhitta (Nepal)-Banglabandha (Bangladesh) via Phulbari (India) route.

(iii) On the sidelines of the India-Nepal IGC, the second edition of the Joint Business Forum (JBF) was held between India and Nepal on January 11, 2025.

INTERNATIONAL**1. India-Nepal IGC on Trade, Transit, and Unauthorised Trade Cooperation Held in Kathmandu in January 2025.**

The India-Nepal Inter-Governmental Committee (IGC) on Trade, Transit, and Cooperation to Combat Unauthorised Trade was held in Kathmandu, Nepal, from January 10 to January 11, 2025. This bilateral mechanism aims to strengthen trade and relations between India and Nepal.

- The meeting involved a thorough review of the current bilateral trade and economic relations between the two nations.

2. "Union Minister Kiren Rijiju Visits Saudi Arabia to Oversee Preparations for Haj Pilgrimage".

Union Minister Kiren Rijiju, from the Ministry of Minority Affairs (MoMA) and the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs (MoPA), visited Saudi Arabia from 11th to 14th January 2025 to oversee preparations for the upcoming Haj pilgrimage.

- The visit aimed to ensure enhanced arrangements for Indian pilgrims during Haj 2025 and included bilateral meetings with Saudi officials in Jeddah and Madinah.

- India and Saudi Arabia signed a Bilateral Agreement for Hajj 2025, ensuring a quota of 1,75,025 pilgrims for Indian Haj pilgrims.

- The Union Minister attended the 4th edition of the Hajj & Umrah Conference and Exhibition held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, organized by the Saudi Ministry of Hajj and Umrah.

Key Points:-

(i) Under the Hajj Policy 2025, 30% of the Hajj quota (52,507 slots) will be allocated to Private Haj Group Organizers (HGOs), while 70% will be allocated to the Haj Committee of India (HCOI).

(ii) The conference provided a platform for decision-makers, experts, and researchers in the Hajj & Umrah sector to share insights, facilitate discussions, and suggest suitable practices for the pilgrimage.

(iii) The agreement for Hajj 2025 secures a significant quota for Indian pilgrims, with a clear distribution strategy between the Haj Committee of India and Private Haj Group Organizers.

3. China has built the world's first 300 MW CAES plant connected to the grid at full capacity.

In January 2025, Nengchu-1, the world's first 300-Megawatt (MW) Compressed Air Energy Storage (CAES) demonstration project, was fully connected to the grid in Yingcheng, Hubei Province, China.

- This project is the world's first fully green, non-combustion energy plant, developed and invested by China Energy Engineering Group Corporation Limited (CEEC).

- Nengchu-1 is the first large-scale CAES solution in the world that has independent intellectual property rights and a complete industrial supply chain. It stores energy for a long duration.

- The project has set three world records in the areas of single-unit power, storage capacity, and energy conversion efficiency.

Key Points:-

(i) The project's energy storage capacity is 1,500 megawatt-hours (MWh), and it has underground gas storage of 700,000 cubic meters (m³).

(ii) The system can store energy for up to 8 hours and release energy for 5 hours daily, with a service life of over 30 years.

(iii) Nengchu-1 will save 159,000 tons of standard coal and reduce carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions by 411,000 tons each year. This also helps in managing the power grid's functions and the fluctuating nature of renewable energy generation.

4. Indian Navy Joins 5th Edition of La Perouse 25 Multinational Naval Exercise.

On January 16, 2025, the Indian Navy (IN), alongside eight Indo-Pacific nations, commenced participation in the 5th edition of the La Perouse 25 multinational naval exercise. The exercise, organized by the French Carrier Strike Group (CSG), spans eight days (January 16–24, 2025) and is conducted in the strategic maritime straits of Malacca, Sunda, and Lombok.

- The exercise aims to enhance collective response capabilities among navies, preparing them for real-world challenges such as protecting trade routes,

preventing illicit activities, and responding to maritime crises.

- Nine nations are participating in the exercise: India, Australia, Canada, the United States of America (USA), France, Indonesia, Malaysia, the United Kingdom (UK), and Singapore. The Indian Navy is represented by its destroyer, Indian Naval Ship (INS) Mumbai, while other nations have deployed advanced vessels.

- A key highlight of the exercise is the use of the Indian Ocean Regional Information Sharing (IORIS) system. Participating navies trained in using this platform for communication, coordination, and effective information exchange to manage maritime crises collaboratively.

Key Points:-

(i) Training during the exercise emphasized interoperability among participating navies, including ship inspections to detect illicit activities and ensuring the protection of vital maritime trade routes from accidents, illegal activities, and natural disasters.

(ii) The exercise's location in the Malacca, Sunda, and Lombok straits underlines their importance as critical maritime trade routes linking the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean.

(iii) The 4th edition of the La Perouse exercise was held in 2023 in the Bay of Bengal, involving seven nations, highlighting the exercise's growing scale and importance in fostering regional maritime security.

5. ILO's WESO Report 2025 Highlights Global Unemployment Slowdown at 5%.

On January 18, 2025, the International Labour Organization (ILO) released its flagship report, World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2025 (WESO Trends 2025), presenting a detailed analysis of global labour markets and future challenges. The report explores global employment trends, unemployment rates, and the broader social outlook.

- The global unemployment rate slowed to 5% in 2024 and is projected to decrease further to 4.9% by 2026. Youth unemployment, however, remains high at 12.6% in 2024.

- The total number of missing jobs worldwide stood at 402.4 million in 2024.

Key Points:-

(i) Global economic growth remained steady at 3.2% in 2024 and is projected to sustain this rate in 2025, while inflation rates decreased from 6.7% in 2023 to 5.9% in 2024, with a further decline anticipated in 2025.

(ii) The global Labour Force Participation Rate(LFPR) remained steady at 61% in 2024.

(iii) The unemployment rate in India is projected to be 6.2% in 2024 and is expected to improve to 5.8% in 2025.

6. EAM S. Jaishankar Visits Spain, Strengthens Bilateral Ties with Key MoUs and Cultural Initiatives.

In January 2025, Union Minister of External Affairs (MEA) S. Jaishankar embarked on a 2-day visit to Spain from January 13th to 14th, marking his second visit to the country and his first as External Affairs Minister (EAM).

- During his visit, Union Minister Jaishankar had meetings with Spanish King Felipe VI and President Pedro Sanchez.

Key Points:-

- (i) India and Spain signed two Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) focusing on cooperation in sports and sustainable urban development.
- (ii) Union Minister Jaishankar addressed the Indian diaspora in Spain, announcing that 2026 will be celebrated as a 'Dual Year' to promote cultural exchange, tourism, and advancements in AI between the two nations.
- (iii) On January 13, 2025, Union Minister Jaishankar delivered a speech at the 9th Annual Conference of Spanish Ambassadors in Madrid, Spain, with the theme 'A Foreign Policy with Our Own Identity'.

7. USA Removes BARC, IGCAR, and IREL from Restrictive Entity List.

In January 2025, the United States of America (USA) removed three prominent Indian nuclear entities from its restrictive Entity List, marking a significant step in strengthening the bilateral relationship between India and the USA. This move is expected to further promote cooperation in the advanced energy sector.

- The three Indian entities removed from the USA's Entity List are: the Bhabha Atomic Research Center (BARC) based in Trombay, Mumbai, Maharashtra, which is under the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE); IREL (India) Limited, formerly Indian Rare Earths Ltd, also based in Mumbai, Maharashtra; and the Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research (IGCAR) located in Kalpakkam, Tamil Nadu.

- This removal reflects the ongoing efforts by both countries to enhance collaboration, particularly in the field of nuclear and energy technologies. The decision is in line with India's growing role in the global energy landscape and its commitment to promoting advanced energy solutions.

- In addition to removing the three entities, the updated listing from the USA's Bureau of Industry & Security (BIS) includes modifications to one existing entry related to India, signaling a shift toward a more positive and cooperative approach between the nations.

Key Points:-

- (i) The USA had previously imposed restrictions on over 200 Indian entities following India's nuclear tests in Pokhran, Rajasthan, in 1998. This move to lift some of the restrictions signals a thawing of relations and an alignment on common goals in the energy sector and beyond.
- (ii) The US Entity List, managed by the Bureau of Industry & Security, identifies foreign entities requiring special licenses for exports due to activities potentially threatening US national security or foreign policy.
- (iii) Being on the Entity List restricts trade by requiring special licenses for certain transactions. Removing Indian entities eases barriers, promoting nuclear and energy collaboration between India and the USA.

8. Tracxn's Annual India Fintech Report 2024: India Secures 3rd Spot Globally in Fintech Funding.

According to Tracxn Technologies Limited, a prominent global market intelligence platform

based in Bengaluru, Karnataka, the 'Annual India Fintech Report 2024' revealed that India secured the 3rd position globally in fintech funding. This came despite a 33% decline in funding year-on-year (YoY), dropping to USD 1.9 billion from USD 2.8 billion in 2023.

- The report attributed the decline in fintech funding to a broader slowdown in demand and geopolitical challenges.
- The United States of America (USA) topped the global ranking, followed by the United Kingdom (UK) in 2nd position.

Key Points:-

- (i) Bengaluru (Karnataka), Mumbai (Maharashtra), and Delhi (Delhi) emerged as the top three Indian cities for fintech funding in 2024.
- (ii) The top three investing companies in the fintech sector include Peak XV Partners (Karnataka), LetsVenture Technologies Private Limited (Bengaluru, Karnataka), and Y Combinator, LLC (California, USA).

9. CEAT and HUL Recognized by WEF as Part of the Global Lighthouse Network.

In January 2025, the World Economic Forum (WEF), headquartered in Switzerland, announced that CEAT Limited (Sriperumbudur, Tamil Nadu) and Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL, Tinsukia, Assam) have joined its Global Lighthouse Network (GLN) for advancing manufacturing transformation through innovation.

- The GLN welcomed 15 new members from countries including the UAE, China, Germany, Malaysia, Saudi

Arabia, the UK, the USA, and Morocco, which is home to Africa's first Lighthouse site.

- As of January 2025, a total of 16 Indian companies are part of the GLN, including Jubilant Ingrevia (Bharuch, Gujarat), which joined in October 2024.
- The WEF announced the addition of 17 innovative industrial sites to the GLN, raising the total number to 189 facilities, with 25 recognized as Sustainability Lighthouses for leveraging advanced Industry 4.0 technologies to reduce environmental impact.

Key Points:-

- (i) Among the latest Lighthouses, 13 sites have been recognized as 4IR Lighthouses for achieving significant performance improvements through technology-driven transformations, while 5 were named Sustainability Lighthouses.
- (ii) The latest cohort of Lighthouses reported a 53% average increase in labor productivity and a 26% reduction in conversion costs, driven by digital solutions such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning (ML), and Advanced Analytics (AA).
- (iii) The Global Lighthouse Network (GLN), launched in 2018 by the WEF and co-founded with McKinsey & Company, aims to enhance manufacturing and supply chain performance by leveraging Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) technologies, promoting productivity, resilience, and environmental sustainability.

10. Nigeria Becomes the 9th Partner Country to Join BRICS.

In January 2025, the government of Brazil, holding the BRICS presidency, announced that Nigeria, the

world's 6th largest population and Africa's largest country, officially joined BRICS as the 9th Partner Country.

- Other Partner countries of the BRICS bloc include Belarus, Bolivia, Cuba, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Thailand, Uganda, and Uzbekistan.
- BRICS was initiated following the 2006 meeting of the leaders of Russia, India, and China in St. Petersburg, Russia.
- The BRICS grouping was formalized during the first meeting of foreign ministers from BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China) on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in New York, USA, in 2006.

Key Points:-

- (i) The first BRICS summit took place in Yekaterinburg, Russia, in 2009.
- (ii) The group was renamed as BRICS after South Africa was accepted as a full member in 2010.
- (iii) The 16th BRICS Summit, held under the chairmanship of Russian President Vladimir Putin, took place in Kazan, Russia, from October 22 to 24, 2024, with the theme "Strengthening Multilateralism for Just Global Development and Security."

BANKING & FINANCE

1. IDBI Bank Introduces 'Chiranjeevi-Super Senior Citizen FD' Scheme.

On January 13, 2025, Industrial Development Bank of India (IDBI) Limited, based in Mumbai (Maharashtra), launched the 'IDBI Chiranjeevi-Super Senior Citizen Fixed Deposit (FD)' scheme.

This exclusive FD product is tailored for individuals aged 80 years and above, offering them higher interest rates to meet their distinct financial requirements.

- The scheme offers a secure investment option with guaranteed returns for super senior citizens.
- The IDBI Chiranjeevi-Super Senior Citizen FD rates are applicable for the specific Utsav FD buckets, which include durations of 300 days, 375 days, 444 days, and 555 days.
- The interest rates for these buckets are as follows: 7.90% p.a. for 375 days, 8.00% p.a. for 444 days, 8.05% p.a. for 555 days, and 7.85% p.a. for 700 days. These special rates are designed to provide enhanced returns for super senior citizens, ensuring they benefit from higher interest rates for their fixed deposits.

Key Points:-

- (i) The IDBI Chiranjeevi-Super Senior Citizen FD scheme is not applicable to Non-Resident Ordinary (NRO) or Non-Resident External (NRE) term deposits. While premature withdrawal and closure are permitted, they will incur a penalty of 1% on the applicable interest rate. All other terms and conditions of the Fixed Deposit will remain unchanged and applicable to this scheme as well.
- (ii) IDBI Bank also offers the Utsav Callable FD scheme, which provides different interest rates based on the tenure.
- (iii) A recent addition to this scheme is the 555-day tenure, offering 7.40% for general citizens and 7.90% for senior citizens, available until March 31, 2025.

2. PNB Launches Its First 'Cybersecurity Hackathon 2024-25' to Tackle Malware Threats.

In January 2025, Punjab National Bank (PNB), based in Mumbai (Maharashtra), launched its first-ever 'Cybersecurity Hackathon 2024-25' with the theme "Code Against Malware." This hackathon is designed to address the growing threat of malware by inviting innovators, researchers, and academicians from across India to participate.

- The goal is to enhance the country's cybersecurity in the banking sector by creating advanced solutions to detect, reduce, and prevent malware attacks.
- The hackathon is being organized under the Ministry of Finance (MoF) and follows a directive from the Department of Financial Services (DFS) for Public Sector Banks (PSBs) to hold annual hackathons, which was issued on December 9, 2024.

Key Points:-

- (i) The focus of the hackathon will be on key areas like malware detection and removal powered by intelligence, real-time monitoring and mitigation of threats, ransomware protection solutions, next-generation antivirus tools, and managing attack surfaces.
- (ii) The competition is open to students, researchers, and academicians, either as individuals or in teams.
- (iii) The winners will receive prizes worth up to Rs 11 lakhs and will also have the chance to implement their solutions in live environments with PNB.

3. The RBI has decided to conduct daily VRR operations to enhance banking liquidity amid the ongoing deficit.

In January 2025, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) decided to conduct Variable-Rate Repo (VRR) auctions daily until further notice. This move aims to improve banking liquidity amid a shortage.

- The first such VRR auction was held on January 16, 2025, with a value of Rs 50,000 crore. Only standalone primary dealers were allowed to participate in the auction alongside other eligible bidders.
- To manage the liquidity deficit, RBI reduced the Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR) of all banks to 4% of their deposits. This change will happen in two phases, each of 25 basis points (bps), starting from December 14, 2024, and December 28, 2024.
- As of January 14, 2025, according to RBI data, the banking system had a liquidity deficit of Rs 2.09 lakh crore, and VRR auctions allow RBI to inject liquidity into the banking system during such deficits.

Key Points:-

- (i) On January 15, 2025, RBI held a 5-day VRR auction with a notified amount of Rs 75,000 crore, receiving Rs 3,980 crore in bids, amid decreased banking liquidity due to RBI's increased forex market interventions, as India's Forex Reserve dropped to a 10-month low on January 3, 2025.
- (ii) VRR (Variable-Rate Repo) : This is a tool used by the RBI to inject short-term liquidity into the banking system. Through VRR, RBI allows banks to borrow money at a market-determined rate (usually lower than the Repo rate) for a maximum period of 14 days.
- (iii) CRR (Cash Reserve Ratio) : RBI requires all

commercial banks in India to keep a certain percentage of their total deposits in cash with the RBI.

penalty will be imposed on the applicable interest rate for the completed period or the agreed rate.

4. Bank of Baroda Launches 'BoB Liquid FD Scheme'.

In January 2025, Bank of Baroda (BOB), based in Vadodara (Gujarat), launched a new Fixed Deposit (FD) scheme called 'BOB Liquid FD'. This scheme combines the benefits of FD interest rates with the easy liquidity of a Savings Account.

- Depositors can withdraw part of their money without closing the entire FD, allowing them to meet emergency needs. The remaining balance continues to earn interest at the fixed rate in the same FD.
- The scheme offers flexible deposit amounts starting from Rs. 5,000 (and in multiples of Rs. 1,000 after that, with no maximum limit). The deposit duration ranges from 12 to 60 months, and partial withdrawals are allowed in multiples of Rs. 1,000.
- The bank offers interest rates ranging from 4.25% to 7.15% on regular FDs for general citizens, with the highest rate of 7.30% for deposits below Rs. 3 crores, along with an additional interest rate for senior citizens.

Key Points:-

- (i) No penalty is charged for premature withdrawals on FDs up to Rs. 5 lakh, as long as the FD has completed at least 12 months.
- (ii) If the FD amount is below Rs. 1 crore, a 1% penalty will be applied to the interest rate for the completed period or the agreed rate, whichever is lower.
- (iii) For FDs of Rs. 1 crore and above, a 1.5%

5. PFC Signs 120 Billion JPY Loan Agreement with JBIC for Renewable Energy Projects in India.

In January 2025, Power Finance Corporation Limited (PFC), based in New Delhi, signed a 120 billion Japanese Yen (JPY) loan agreement with Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) to support Renewable Energy (RE) projects in India.

- The loan agreement includes a contribution of JPY 72 billion (Rs 40.04 billion) from JBIC, with the remaining amount being provided by commercial banks.
- The loan is aimed at supporting India's commitment to achieving net-zero carbon emissions and transitioning to cleaner energy sources.
- The agreement was signed by Parminder Chopra, Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) of PFC, and Ogawa Kazunori, Senior Managing Director of JBIC, in Japan.

Key Points:-

- (i) The long-term loan has a tenure of up to 20 years and is part of JBIC's 'Global Action for Reconciling Economic Growth and Environmental Preservation' (GREEN) initiative.
- (ii) This agreement marks JBIC's largest green financing deal with any Indian company, underscoring its commitment to sustainable energy projects in India.
- (iii) PFC will use the loan to fund energy projects, including RE, next-generation energy supply, and energy-efficient power generation, contributing to

India's goal of achieving 50% electric power generation from non-fossil fuel-based sources by 2030.

6. NPCI International Collaborates with Magnati to Boost UPI Acceptance in UAE.

NPCI International Payments Limited (NIPL), the global branch of the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), has teamed up with Magnati, a prominent payment solutions provider in the Middle East, to enable QR-based Unified Payments Interface (UPI) merchant payments through Magnati's Point-Of-Sale (POS) terminals in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

- The partnership seeks to broaden the QR-based merchant payment network across more businesses in the UAE, offering seamless payment solutions to over 12 million Indians who travel to Dubai and the UAE each year.

Key Points:-

- (i) Initially, UPI acceptance will be introduced at Dubai Duty Free, improving the shopping and payment experience for Indian tourists.
- (ii) The service will later be extended to other important merchant sectors, such as retail, hospitality, transport, and supermarkets.
- (iii) UPI payments are now accepted in seven countries: Bhutan, Mauritius, Nepal, Singapore, Sri Lanka, France, and the UAE.

7. RBI Implements Changes to FEMA to Support Cross-Border Trade in INR.

On January 16, 2025, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) introduced new measures under the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) 1999 to encourage the use of the Indian Rupee (INR) and other local currencies in international trade.

- These changes follow a detailed review of FEMA regulations in collaboration with the Government of India (GoI). This move comes at a time when the Indian currency is facing depreciation.
- Overseas branches of Indian banks can now open INR accounts for individuals and businesses outside India, allowing current and capital account transactions with Indian residents.
- Non-residents can settle legitimate transactions with other non-residents using balances in their repatriable INR accounts, such as Special Non-Resident Rupee Accounts (SNRR) and Special Rupee Vostro Accounts (SRVA).

Key Points:-

- (i) Balances in repatriable INR accounts can now be used for investments like Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in non-debt instruments.
- (ii) Indian exporters can open foreign currency accounts abroad for receiving export payments and making import payments, simplifying trade settlements.
- (iii) To promote trade in local currencies, the RBI has signed MoUs with the central banks of the UAE, Indonesia, and the Maldives.

MOUs and Agreement

1. C-DOT and IIT Bombay Sign Agreement to Develop Optical Transceiver Chipset for High-Bandwidth 6G Wireless Links.

In January 2025, the Centre for Development of Telematics (C-DOT), under the Department of Telecommunications (DoT), Ministry of Communications (MoC), signed an agreement with the Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay (IIT Bombay), Mumbai, to develop an "Optical Transceiver Chipset for High-Bandwidth 6G Wireless Links."

- The agreement was signed in the presence of Dr. Rajkumar Upadhyay, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of C-DOT, Professor Shalabh Gupta, Principal Investigator from IIT Bombay, and C-DOT Directors Dr. Pankaj Kumar Dalela and Shikha Srivastava.

Key Points:-

- (i) The collaboration is part of the Telecom Technology Development Fund (TTDF) 6G Call for Proposal initiative.
- (ii) The initiative aims to accelerate research in the 6G ecosystem, positioning India as a global leader in the design, development, and deployment of 6G technology by 2030.
- (iii) The focus of the initiative is on affordability, sustainability, and ubiquity, ensuring that advanced communication solutions are accessible to everyone.

2. ISM, CG Power, and CSPL Sign Fiscal Assistance Agreement.

In January 2025, the India Semiconductor Mission (ISM), CG Power and Industrial Solutions Limited (CG Power), and CG Semi Private Limited (CSPL) signed a Fiscal Support Agreement (FSA) to bolster India's semiconductor manufacturing ecosystem. The agreement will support CG Power's Outsourced Semiconductor Assembly and

Test (OSAT) facility, approved under the Modified Programme for the Development of Semiconductor and Display Manufacturing Ecosystem. e

- CG Power will set up its semiconductor OSAT unit in Sanand, Gujarat, with a partnership involving Renesas Electronics America Inc. and Stars Microelectronics, investing Rs 7,600 crore.

- The India Semiconductor Mission (ISM) will provide 50% fiscal support for the eligible capital expenditures (CAPEX) of the project, showcasing the Government of India's commitment to strengthening India's role in the global semiconductor value chain.

- This initiative aligns with India's target of reaching USD 500 billion in electronics production by 2030, a significant step towards realizing the country's vision.

Key Points:-

- (i) CG Power's semiconductor project will boost India's global electronics presence, supported by the India Semiconductor Mission (ISM), launched in 2021 with a Rs 76,000 crore outlay under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (Meity).
- (ii) ISM is set up as an Independent Business Division within Digital India Corporation (DIC), aimed at encouraging investment in semiconductor and display manufacturing.
- (iii) Four key schemes are part of ISM, including those for setting up semiconductor fabs, display fabs, compound semiconductors, and semiconductor assembly, testing, marking, and packaging (ATMP)/OSAT facilities.

3. FIU-IND and NHB Sign MoU to Strengthen Coordination and Information Sharing.

In January 2025, the Financial Intelligence Unit-India (FIU-IND) under the Ministry of Finance (MoF) and the National Housing Bank (NHB) signed an MoU in New Delhi to enhance collaboration in intelligence sharing, capacity building, and risk assessment.

- The partnership focuses on strengthening the implementation of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002, and associated rules to combat money laundering and terrorism financing.
- Both FIU-IND and NHB will appoint nodal and alternate nodal officers to coordinate activities and facilitate smooth collaboration between the two entities.
- The MoU includes provisions for sharing relevant intelligence and database information to improve oversight and compliance.

Key Points:-

- (i) Outreach and training programs will be conducted to enhance the Anti-Money Laundering (AML) and Counter Financing of Terrorism (CFT) skills of supervised entities, including Housing Finance Companies (HFCs).
- (ii) The entities will supervise and monitor reporting entities' adherence to obligations under the PMLA, PML Rules, and guidelines issued by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and NHB.
- (iii) Quarterly meetings will be held to discuss AML/CFT typologies, trends, and red flag indicators for suspicious transactions, along with assessments of risks and vulnerabilities in the housing finance sector.

SPORTS

1. FC Barcelona Defeats Real Madrid 5-2 to Win 41st Spanish Super Cup in Saudi Arabia.

In January 2025, FC Barcelona defeated Real Madrid 5-2 to win the 41st edition of the Spanish Super Cup (also known as Supercopa de España). The final was held at the King Abdullah Sports City stadium in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

- The tournament took place from January 8 to January 12, 2025.
- With this victory, Barcelona won the Spanish Super Cup for the 15th time, two more than Real Madrid, who have won it 13 times.

Key Points:-

- (i) The Supercopa de España 2025 has a prize pool of USD 20.7 million, with FC Barcelona and Real Madrid each receiving USD 6.2 million, Athletic Bilbao getting around USD 2.1 million, and RCD Mallorca receiving USD 880,150.
- (ii) In addition to the prize money, the tournament champions will receive USD 2.1 million, and the runners-up will get USD 1 million.
- (iii) FC Barcelona won their first Super Cup in 1983-84, followed by wins in 1991-92, 1992-93, 1994-95, 1996-97, 2005-06, 2006-07, 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12, 2013-14, 2016-17, 2018-19, 2022-23, and now 2024-25.

AWARDS

1. Singapore Awards Honorary Citizen Title to Tarun Das for Strengthening India-Singapore Ties.

Singapore conferred the prestigious Honorary Citizen Award on Tarun Das, former Director

General of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), recognizing his remarkable contributions to strengthening ties between Singapore and India.

- The Honorary Citizen Award was presented to Tarun Das by Singapore's President, Tharman Shanmugaratnam, during a special ceremony held in New Delhi on 15th January 2025.

- Tarun Das is the second Indian recipient of this esteemed award, following Ratan Tata, the former chairman of the Tata Group, who was awarded the same honor in 2008.

- Tarun Das served as the Director General and Chief Mentor of CII for over 40 years, playing a pivotal role in shaping India's business landscape and fostering economic cooperation between India and Singapore.

Key Points:-

(i) In 1993, Tarun Das led the first delegation of Indian industrialists to Singapore under India's "Look East" policy, paving the way for annual visits to enhance political and business ties between the two nations.

(ii) He was instrumental in establishing the India-Singapore Strategic Dialogue (ISSD), a crucial platform for business leaders, policymakers, and academia to discuss strengthening bilateral cooperation in trade, technology, and more.

(iii) Beyond his work with CII, Tarun Das has held leadership roles in organizations like the Singapore-India Partnership Foundation (SIPF) and contributed to initiatives like the SIPF Students Immersion Programme to India, which aims to promote educational and cultural exchanges between India and Singapore. He was also honored with the Singapore Public Service Medal in 2004 for his exceptional service.

IMPORTANT DAYS

1. India Observes 9th Armed Forces Veterans' Day on January 14.

Armed Forces Veterans' Day is celebrated annually across India on 14 January to honor and recognize the service of Field Marshal Kodandera Madappa Cariappa, the 1st Indian Commander-in-Chief (C-in-C) of the Indian Armed Forces. He retired on this day in 1953 and led Indian forces to victory in the 1947 war.

- 14 January 2025 marks the 9th Armed Forces Veterans' Day observance.

Key Points:-

(i) The Armed Forces Veterans' Day was first celebrated in 2017.

(ii) The day is observed with programs at major military stations and cities, featuring ceremonial parades and gatherings of veterans, Veer Naris (the widows of our soldiers), and their families.

2. National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) Raising Day 2025 Celebrated on January 19.

The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) Raising Day is observed every year on January 19 to commemorate the establishment of the NDRF under the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). The year 2025 marks the observance of the 20th NDRF Raising Day.

- The NDRF is a specialized emergency response force trained to handle both natural disasters like floods, cyclones, and earthquakes, and man-made disasters such as chemical spills and terrorist incidents.

- The 20th NDRF Raising Day celebrations took place at the 10th Battalion of NDRF located in Kondapavuluru, Krishna District, Andhra Pradesh (AP), with Union Minister Amit Shah, MoHA, as the Chief Guest.

- During the event, Union Minister Amit Shah inaugurated various projects and laid foundation stones for initiatives valued at approximately Rs 220 crore to strengthen disaster management infrastructure.

Key Points:-

(i) Notable inaugurations included the National South Campus of the Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM) in Andhra Pradesh and the 10th Battalion of NDRF in Kondapavuluru, AP.

(ii) The event also featured the inauguration of the Regional Response Centre (RRC) at the Supaul Campus (9th Battalion) in Andhra Pradesh and the foundation stone laying for an Integrated Indoor Shooting Range at the National Police Academy (NPA) in Hyderabad, Telangana, costing Rs 27 crore.

(iii) These developments emphasize the government's focus on bolstering disaster response capabilities and providing the NDRF with advanced infrastructure to handle emergencies efficiently.

DEFENCE**1. Ministry of Defence (MoD) and Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL) Sign ₹2,960 Crore Contract for MRSAM.**

On January 16, 2025, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) signed a ₹2,960 crore contract with Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL), based in Hyderabad,

Telangana, for the supply of Medium-Range Surface-to-Air Missiles (MRSAM) for the Indian Navy (IN). The contract was signed in New Delhi in the presence of Rajesh Kumar Singh, the Defence Secretary of MoD.

- The MRSAM system is a joint development between the DRDO and Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI), in collaboration with both public and private sector industries in India, including Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). This collaboration reflects a significant step in indigenizing defence capabilities.

- The MRSAM will be installed on various Indian Naval Ships (INS) and will also be integrated into upcoming naval platforms, enhancing the Navy's air defense capabilities. The missile system will significantly improve India's naval defense, providing better protection against aerial threats.

- Under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiative, BDL will supply the MRSAMs under the 'Buy (Indian)' category, utilizing mostly indigenous components. This move aligns with the government's push for self-reliance in defense production and reduces dependence on foreign suppliers.

Key Points:-

(i) MRSAM is a high-response, quick-reaction, vertically launched supersonic missile designed to counter various aerial threats, including missiles, aircraft, guided bombs, and helicopters. The missile system is used by the Indian Navy, Indian Army, and Indian Air Force in different variants, strengthening the air defense across the three services.

(ii) The missile itself is 4,500 millimeters long, 225 millimeters in diameter, and weighs approximately

275 kilograms. It is capable of engaging multiple targets simultaneously at a range of up to 70 kilometers, providing a comprehensive defense against a variety of aerial threats.

(iii) The missile system is powered by an indigenously developed rocket motor and control system, offering high flexibility, especially in the terminal phase. In December 2020, the DRDO conducted the first successful launch of the MRSAM (Army Version) from the Integrated Test Range in Chandipur, Odisha. The Indian Army established its first MRSAM Regiment in the Eastern Sector in 2023, marking a key milestone in its air defense strategy.

2. Indian Armed Forces Conduct 'Exercise Devil Strike'.

The Indian Armed Forces conducted 'Exercise Devil Strike,' a joint exercise involving the elite airborne forces of the Indian Army (IA) and the Indian Air Force (IAF) from January 16-19, 2025, at the training areas and firing ranges to validate critical drills and improve operational preparedness.

- Exercise Devil Strike evaluates and enhances logistical sustaining plans to ensure troops remain operational and well-equipped under challenging conditions.

Key Points:-

(i) The exercise incorporates state-of-the-art equipment and advanced technologies, facilitating the precise and effective delivery of airborne forces to remote locations.

(ii) It showcases the Indian Armed Forces' commitment to maintaining operational excellence and adaptability in a constantly evolving military

landscape.

(iii) The exercise has bolstered combined operational capabilities and reaffirmed the readiness of the Indian Armed Forces to safeguard national interests and respond effectively to emerging threats.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. India Successfully Test Fires Its First Indigenous Micro-Missile System, 'Bhargavastra'.

In January 2025, Economic Explosives Limited (EEL), a subsidiary of Solar Industries India Limited, successfully test-fired India's first guided micro-missiles as part of its 'Bhargavastra' counter-drone system, developed independently by the private sector without formal requests from the Indian Armed Forces.

- This system, developed by Economic Explosives Limited (EEL) without formal requisitions from the Indian Armed Forces, is designed for the Indian Army and successfully hit virtual targets over 2.5 km away.

- This system, designed to address the growing threat of loitering munitions and weaponized drones, utilizes advanced micro-missiles to efficiently detect, target, and destroy enemy drones at a cost-effective rate.

- Key Trials: In January 2025, the Bhargavastra system underwent successful trials at Gopalpur Seaward Firing Ranges, Odisha, hitting both stationary and moving targets at a range of 2,500 meters. Further extensive trials are planned for potential military induction.

Key Points:-

(i) The Bhargavastra system, designed for the

Indian Army, can detect small flying objects up to 6 km away and operate at altitudes of up to 5,000 meters. Its advanced radar can identify medium to large drones within a 10 km range and small drones at 6 km, even with low radar cross-section (RCS).

(ii) The system can fire over 64 micro-missiles simultaneously, making it an effective and cost-efficient alternative to expensive surface-to-air missiles. It is optimized to counter drone swarms and offers an edge over traditional methods like jamming or spoofing.

(iii) Designed for various terrains, including high-altitude regions, the system is mounted on a mobile platform for rapid deployment, enhancing its adaptability and responsiveness in diverse combat scenarios.

2. Indian Army Day Celebrated Globally on 15th January 2025.

Indian Army Day is celebrated every year on 15th January across the globe to honor the courage and dedication of the Indian Army (IA) soldiers.

- Known as Bhartiya Sena Diwas, it commemorates the appointment of Field Marshal KM Cariappa as the first Indian Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army in 1949.

- On Indian Army Day 2025, Prime Minister Narendra Modi commissioned three key naval combatants—Indian Naval Ship (INS) Surat, INS Nilgiri, and INS Vaghsheer—at the Naval Dockyard in Mumbai, Maharashtra.

Key Points:-

(i) For the first time, the Nepali Army Band

participated in the parade held in Pune, Maharashtra.

(ii) The Indian Army also displayed its Multi-Utility Legged Equipment (MULES), commonly known as robotic dogs.

(iii) 15th January 2025 marks the 77th Indian Army Day observance.

3. FICCI Projects India's GDP Growth at 6.4% for FY25, Down from 7.0% in FY24.

In January 2025, the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) released its Economic Outlook Survey. The survey projects India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth for 2024-25 at 6.4%, marking a decline from the 7.0% estimated in September 2024 and the 8.2% growth achieved in 2023-24

- Conducted in December 2024, the survey attributes the economic moderation to global uncertainties and domestic challenges.

- Consumer Price Index (CPI)-based inflation is projected at 4.8% for 2024-25, consistent with the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) forecast in December 2024, with expectations of a decline in food inflation.

- Consumer spending, agriculture, and rural consumption are expected to recover, with agriculture growing at 3.6%, and industrial and services sectors rising by 6.3% and 7.3% respectively.

Key Points:-

(i) Growth will be supported by government-led investments in infrastructure, housing, logistics, and significant growth in manufacturing, electronics, and pharmaceuticals sectors.

(ii) Growth may be hindered by geopolitical uncertainties, trade disruptions, climate-induced challenges, and rising public debt levels.

(iii) Exports are projected at USD 450.5 billion, and imports at USD 729.6 billion for 2024-25.

showcasing its versatility.

(iii) Along with these MPVs, L&T is constructing three Cadet Training Ships and six other defense vessels for the IN under a Public-Private Partnership (PPP).

4. L&T Unveils Second Multi-Purpose Vessel 'INS Utkarsh' for the Indian Navy.

In January 2025, Mumbai (Maharashtra)-based Larsen & Toubro Limited (L&T) launched the Indian Navy's (IN) second Multi-Purpose Vessel (MPV), named 'Indian Naval Ship (INS) Utkarsh', from its shipyard in Kattupalli, near Chennai, Tamil Nadu (TN).

- This launch comes just three months after the launch of the first MPV, INS Samarthak.
- The vessel was launched by Dr. Sushmita Misra Singh, wife of Union Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh, Ministry of Defence (MoD). The event was attended by senior Navy officials, including Vice Admiral B. Sivakumar and Rear Admiral Vishal Bishnoi.
- The INS Utkarsh was designed at L&T's Warship Design Centre in Chennai and constructed at the L&T Shipbuilding Limited in Kattupalli.

Key Points:-

(i) The MPV is 107 meters (m) long, 18.6 m wide, weighs over 3,750 tonnes (t), and can reach speeds of up to 50 knots.

(ii) It is designed to perform various tasks, including maritime surveillance, humanitarian assistance, pollution control, testing indigenous weapons and sensors to promote self-reliance in defense technology, and aiding in ship navigation,

5. Pixxel, Backed by Google, Launches First Three Satellites of Firefly Constellation.

Mumbai (Maharashtra)-based Pixxel, backed by Google, successfully launched the first three satellites of its Firefly constellation, marking India's first private satellite constellation.

- The satellites were launched aboard SpaceX's Transporter-12 mission from Vandenberg Space Force Base, California, USA. The second phase, with three more Firefly satellites, is scheduled for Q2 2025.
- The Firefly constellation features the world's highest-resolution commercial-grade hyperspectral satellites, with a resolution six times sharper than existing ones.
- The satellites, integrated by Exolaunch, have a resolution of 5 meters, far superior to the standard 30 meters, and can capture data across more than 150 spectral bands.

Key Points:-

(i) These satellites enable precise monitoring of vegetation health, water quality, chemical compositions, and atmospheric conditions, making them vital for agriculture, climate monitoring, resource management, and environmental protection.

(ii) Operating at approximately 550 kilometers in a sun-synchronous orbit, the satellites cover a

swathe width of 40 kilometers, with daily revisit capability, ensuring continuous monitoring of large areas.

(iii) Bengaluru-based aerospace company Digantara, backed by the Aditya Birla Group, launched its Space Camera for Object Tracking (SCOT) mission aboard the same SpaceX Transporter-12 mission, designed for detecting and tracking objects as small as 5 cm.

6. Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin Successfully Launches 'New Glenn Rocket' on First Test Flight.

In January 2025, Blue Origin Enterprises, L.P., the American space technology company founded by Amazon's Executive Chairman Jeff Bezos and headquartered in Washington, USA, successfully launched its reusable 'New Glenn (NG) rocket' on its first test flight from Cape Canaveral Space Force Station in Florida. The rocket was named after John Glenn, the first American to orbit Earth.

- The mission, named NG-1, involved a first-stage booster landing in the Atlantic Ocean, while the rocket's second stage continued towards orbit. The 320-foot (98-meter) rocket successfully deployed a prototype satellite into orbit, designed for satellite deployment.

- The mission aimed to demonstrate the rocket's capabilities by placing the Blue Ring Pathfinder test satellite into orbit and landing the rocket's booster onto a drone ship in the Atlantic Ocean. The rocket is designed to transport spacecraft and eventually astronauts to orbit and the Moon.

- The first-stage booster did not land on a barge in the Atlantic, but the company highlighted that the main mission was successful.

Key Points:-

(i) During the test, the satellite remained inside the second stage while orbiting Earth. The mission was planned to last six hours, with the second stage being placed into a safe orbit after completion to avoid space debris, following NASA's guidelines.

(ii) New Glenn is one of several large rockets launched in recent years, joining United Launch Alliance's Vulcan, Europe's updated Ariane 6, and NASA's Space Launch System (SLS), which replaced the Saturn V for lunar missions.

(iii) SpaceX's Starship, founded by Elon Musk, is the largest rocket ever built, standing about 400 feet (123 meters) tall.

7. SpaceX's Falcon 9 Rocket Launches Blue Ghost and Resilience Lunar Landers from Kennedy Space Center.

On January 15, 2025, SpaceX's Falcon 9 rocket launched two lunar landers—Blue Ghost and Resilience—from Kennedy Space Center, Florida, USA.

- Blue Ghost, the primary payload, is led by Firefly Aerospace from Texas, USA, while the secondary payload, Resilience, is spearheaded by Japan-based ispace Inc.

- The two lunar landers have different timelines, with Blue Ghost expected to reach the Moon first, taking about 45 days to reach lunar orbit and land near Mons Latreille, a volcanic feature in Mare Crisium.

- Blue Ghost's mission, targeting a landing on March 2, 2025, will span 60 days, with 45 days in orbit and 14 days of surface operations. Key payloads include the

LUGRE GNSS Receiver Experiment for lunar navigation and RadPC for radiation-tolerant computing.

Key Points:-

- (i) The Resilience mission, also known as Hakuto-R Mission 2, focuses on deploying innovative technologies and cultural payloads.
- (ii) Resilience will land in Mare Frigoris and carry the Tenacious Micro Rover, built by ispace-Europe, designed to collect lunar regolith, capture HD images, and transmit data to the lander.
- (iii) Both missions are part of ongoing international efforts to expand lunar exploration and technological advancements, with a focus on navigation, robotics, and cultural contributions.

8. China Launches 'Shijian-25' Satellite to Experiment with Orbital Refueling in Space.

In January 2025, China successfully launched the 'Shijian-25' satellite into Geostationary Transfer Orbit (GTO) using a Long March 3B rocket. This marked China's first space mission of 2025.

- The launch took place at the Xichang Satellite Launch Center in southwest China.
- This mission also marked the 555th launch of the Long March series of rockets and China's first rocket launch of the year.
- The 'Shijian-25' satellite, developed by the Shanghai Academy of Spaceflight Technology (SAST), aims to test technologies for in-orbit refueling and extending satellite lifespans, with the Long March 3B rocket serving as a key vehicle for China's GTO launches since 1996.

Key Points:-

- (i) This mission follows the 2021 launch of the Shijian-21 satellite, which focused on space debris mitigation and was also developed by SAST.
- (ii) The mission aims to improve China's sustainability and reduce costs in space operations by verifying technologies for satellite refueling and extending their operational lifespans.
- (iii) The satellite is equipped with advanced Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) technology for high-resolution imaging and precise spatial data collection, while China also plans additional missions in 2025, including crewed missions to the Tiangong space station and the Tianwen-2 asteroid sample return mission.

9. DRDO Successfully Completes Field Trials of Nag Mark 2 Anti-Tank Guided Missile.

On January 13, 2025, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), under the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and headquartered in New Delhi, successfully conducted field trials of the Nag Mark 2, an advanced Fire-and-Forget Anti-Tank Guided Missile. The trials were conducted at the Pokhran Field Range in Jaisalmer, Rajasthan.

- Following the successful trials, the Nag Mark 2 and its carrier system are now ready for induction into the Indian Army (IA), marking a significant milestone in India's 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' (self-reliant India) initiative.
- Nag Mark 2 is a third-generation anti-tank missile, developed indigenously by DRDO, incorporating fire-and-forget technology, allowing high accuracy strikes on targets locked before launch.
- During three field trials, the missile successfully destroyed all targets, proving its effectiveness at both

maximum and minimum ranges, including neutralizing modern armoured threats like tanks with explosive reactive armour (ERA).

Key Points:-

- (i) The Nag Mark 2 travels at 230 meters per second and can destroy enemy tanks up to 4 kilometers away within 17-18 seconds.
- (ii) Weighing approximately 45 kg and measuring 6 feet 1 inch, the missile was developed by DRDO at a cost of ₹300 crore.
- (iii) The Nag Missile Carrier (NAMICA) Version 2, a vehicle-mounted missile carrier, was also successfully tested, ensuring effective deployment of the Nag Mark 2 missile on the battlefield.

BOOKS & AUTHORS

1. VP Jagdeep Dhankhar Unveils Book "Parliament: Powers, Functions & Privileges; A Comparative Constitutional Perspective".

In January 2025, the Vice-President (VP) of India, Jagdeep Dhankhar, launched the book "Parliament: Powers, Functions & Privileges; A Comparative Constitutional Perspective" in New Delhi. The book was authored by Dr. KS Chauhan, Senior Advocate, at VP's Enclave, New Delhi.

- The book is divided into two volumes and was published by Mohan Law House (MLH) Publishing Private Limited.

Key Points:-

The book delves into the functions of Parliament, its special rights, and its crucial role in holding the government accountable, particularly in shaping India's democracy.

2. Amitav Ghosh's New Book "Wild Fictions" Explores Climate Change and Societal Issues.

On January 10, 2025, Amitav Ghosh's new book, Wild Fictions, was launched by Fourth Estate India at the 41st Dr. CD Deshmukh Memorial Lecture at the India International Centre (IIC) in New Delhi, Delhi.

- The book delves into climate change, societal issues, and political instability in what Ghosh calls a "time of monsters," addressing urgent global crises like biodiversity loss, climate change, and emerging diseases.

Key Points:-

- (i) Ghosh is the author of several acclaimed works of fiction and non-fiction, including The Shadow Lines, The Glass Palace, The Hungry Tide, the Ibis Trilogy (comprising the novels Sea of Poppies, River of Smoke, and Flood of Fire), Gun Island, The Great Derangement, The Nutmeg's Curse, Jungle Nama, and The Living Mountain.
- (ii) In 2019, he became the first English-language writer to receive the prestigious 'Jnanpith Award,' India's highest literary honor, for his contributions to writings on the planetary crisis and climate change.

OBITUARY

1. Senior Advocate Iqbal M Chagla Has Passed Away.

In January 2025, Iqbal M Chagla, a senior advocate and one of India's top lawyers, passed away at the age of 85 in Mumbai, Maharashtra. He was born on March 7, 1939, in Mumbai.

- Iqbal Chagla was the son of M C Chagla, who served as the first permanent Chief Justice of India (CJI) at the Bombay High Court (BHC) from 1948 to 1958.
- Iqbal Chagla was known for his outstanding legal skills, honesty, and leadership.

Key Points:-

- (i) Iqbal M Chagla started his career as an advocate at the Bombay High Court, under the guidance of Kharshedji Hormasji Bhabha. He became a Senior Advocate at the age of 39 in 1979.
- (ii) He was the President of the Bombay Bar Association (BBA) three times, serving from 1990 to 1999.
- (iii) He also served as a member of the Executive Committee of the Bar Association of India (BBI) and the National Legal Services Authority (NLSA) in New Delhi.