

**WEEKLY**  
**CURRENT**  
**AFFAIRS**  
**PDFs**



**March 2025**



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## NATIONAL AFFAIRS / GOVERNMENT SCHEME

### 1. MoE Launches PM-YUVA 3.0 to Foster Young Authors and Celebrate Indian Heritage.

In March 2025, the Department of Higher Education (DHE) under the Ministry of Education (MoE) launched the 3rd edition of the Prime Minister's Young, Upcoming, and Versatile Authors (PM-YUVA 3.0) Scheme to Mentor Young Authors.

- PM-YUVA 3.0 builds upon the participation of young authors in 22 Indian languages and English from previous editions.
- This initiative aims to offer a platform for fresh perspectives on Indian culture, history, and modern achievements.

#### Key Points:-

- (i) The scheme is designed to encourage young writers under 30 years old, fostering reading, writing, and a strong literary culture in India. It supports the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, promoting a knowledge-driven society.
- (ii) The program begins with a national-level competition on the MyGov Portal, running from March 11, 2025, to April 10, 2025.
- (iii) The National Book Trust (NBT), based in New Delhi, will manage the scheme and guide the selected authors. Their works will be published and translated into various Indian languages to encourage literary exchange.

### 2. Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw Announces USD 1 Billion Fund for Creator Economy Ahead of WAVES 2025.

In March 2025, Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting (MIB), announced a USD 1 billion fund aimed at boosting the creator economy, during a high-level session at the World Audio-Visual and Entertainment Summit (WAVES 2025) held at Sushma Swaraj Bhawan, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi (Delhi).

- The fund will support creators in accessing capital, improving their skills, enhancing production levels, and reaching global markets.
- The fund will be supported under a Public Private Partnership (PPP) model, with further details on its modalities to be announced later.

#### Key Points:-

- (i) The Government of India (GoI) also allocated Rs 391 crore for the establishment of India's first Indian Institute of Creative Technology (IICT) in Goregaon Film City, Mumbai (Maharashtra).
- (ii) Additionally, MIB and the Government of Maharashtra signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to enhance collaboration in media, entertainment, and digital outreach.

### 3. BWSSB Becomes India's First Water Board to Attain BIS Certification.

In March 2025, Bengaluru (Karnataka)-based Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) became the first water board in India to receive certification from the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) under the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution (MoCAF&PD) for its piped drinking water supply management system.

- This certification acknowledges BWSSB's commitment to maintaining international water quality standards and providing safe and sustainable drinking water to its consumers.
- The certification was granted after a thorough six-month evaluation by BIS.

**Key Points:-**

(i) The certification will be valid for three years, from March 6, 2025, to March 5, 2028, and BWSSB will undergo regular surveillance audits during this period. The next evaluations are scheduled for December 2025 and September 2026, followed by a renewal audit in November 2027.

(ii) BWSSB satisfied stringent requirements for efficient, safe, and sustainable water management practices, covering all stages of water supply, including intake, treatment, distribution, and quality assurance.

**4. DGCA Grants Aerodrome License to Amravati Airport for Flight Operations in Maharashtra.**

In March 2025, the Amravati Airport, located in Belora, Maharashtra, was officially granted an aerodrome license by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) under the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MOCA). This designation officially makes the airport a licensed Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS) airport, paving the way for the commencement of flight operations.

- Mumbai-based Alliance Air Aviation Limited will operate flights on the Mumbai-Amravati-Mumbai route, using an ATR-72 aircraft three times a week. The operations are set to begin by the end of March 2025.

**Key Points:-**

(i) Once operational, Amravati Airport will become the third commercial airport under the Maharashtra Airport Development Company Limited (MADC), joining Babasaheb Ambedkar International Airport (Nagpur) and Shirdi Airport (Shirdi).

(ii) The airport, developed by the Public Works Department (PWD) in 1992, had remained non-operational for public use until now.

(iii) MADC has undertaken significant upgrades to the airport, including extending the runway and adding other facilities to meet DGCA licensing requirements.

**5. National Archives of India Celebrates 135th Foundation Day with Exhibition, Book Launch, and Digitization Initiatives on 11th March 2025.**

On 11th March 2025, the National Archives of India (NAI) in New Delhi celebrated its 135th Foundation Day by organizing an exhibition called "Indian Heritage through Architecture." The event was inaugurated by Union Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat from the Ministry of Culture (MoC) and Ministry of Tourism (MoT).

- As part of the celebrations, NAI launched a book titled 'Thumb Printed: Champaran, Indigo Peasants Speak to Gandhi Volume III,' which features 423 testimonies from the Champaran Satyagraha, including stories from women and minors.
- The exhibition displayed India's rich architectural heritage, showcasing structures from the Indus Valley Civilization, medieval temples, Mughal monuments, and colonial-era buildings. It highlighted the nation's cultural, spiritual, and historical growth.



**Key Points:-**

- (i) NAI is also working on the world's largest digitization project, preserving over six lakh pages each month and digitizing millions of records daily.
- (ii) Thanks to the success of this digitization effort, the 'Gyan Bharatam Mission' was launched to make India's historical knowledge more accessible to the public.
- (iii) The NAI, which is part of the Ministry of Culture (MoC), was founded on 11th March 1891 in Kolkata (then Calcutta), West Bengal (WB), as the Imperial Record Department. After the capital moved to Delhi in 1911, a new building designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens was completed in 1926, and all records were fully relocated by 1937.

**6. GoI Launches Vigyan Dhara Scheme to Strengthen Scientific Research & Innovation.**

The Government of India (GoI) launched the unified Vigyan Dhara scheme on 16 January 2025 to enhance India's scientific research, innovation, and technological development. It consolidates three existing umbrella schemes under the Department of Science and Technology (DST), Ministry of Science and Technology (MoS&T): Science and Technology (S&T) Institutional and Human Capacity Building, Research and Development (R&D), and Innovation, Technology Development, and Deployment.

- The Vigyan Dhara scheme focuses on building advanced R&D infrastructure, promoting collaborative research, driving innovation in schools and industries, ensuring gender parity in S&T, and positioning India as a global scientific leader.

- With a total outlay of ₹10,579.84 crore for 2021-26, the scheme's annual allocation has increased 4.31 times from ₹330.75 crore (2024-25) to ₹1,425 crore (2025-26). It will be implemented nationwide as a Central Sector Scheme under DST, MoS&T.

- The Vigyan Dhara scheme focuses on upgrading R&D labs in academic institutions, supporting faculty development, student research, and fostering international collaborations. It also promotes R&D in sustainable energy, water, nanotechnology, quantum science, and biotechnology, while providing access to international mega facilities.

**Key Points:-**

- (i) The scheme funds startups and technology commercialization, encouraging grassroots innovation through initiatives like INSPIRE-MANAK, aimed at students in Classes VI-X, to augment national aspirations and knowledge.
- (ii) India ranks 3rd globally in scientific publications with 2.44 lakh papers in 2022. The scheme has benefited 57,869 individuals, including students under INSPIRE-MANAK. Telangana has allocated Rs. 3.3 crore for 4,002 beneficiaries as of March 2025.
- (iii) The scheme aligns with the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) for global-standard research and supports DST's 5-year goals to increase India's researcher count and strengthen its R&D base.

**7. Indore Unveils India's First PPP-Based Green Waste Processing Plant.**

Indore, the cleanest city in India for 7 consecutive years, is set to launch India's first green waste

processing plant under the Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban (SBM-U) through a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model. This initiative aims to convert green waste into valuable products, supporting sustainability and economic growth. The project aligns with the vision of Garbage-Free Cities under SBM-U, advancing efforts toward a cleaner, greener, and more sustainable urban environment.

- The plant will be constructed on a 55,000 square feet (sq ft) plot in Bicholi Hapsi, Indore, Madhya Pradesh (MP). The plant will recycle wood and branches to produce wood pellets, serving as an alternative to coal and promoting energy conservation.
- Indore generates approximately 30 tons of green waste daily, including wood, branches, leaves, and flowers. This volume may increase to 60-70 tons during autumn.

#### Key Points:-

- (i) IMC will provide land for the plant and manage the collection and transportation of green waste. The IMC will earn Rs. 3,000 per ton in royalty fees for supplying wood and branches to the facility.
- (ii) Located in Indore (MP), this company will handle the establishment of infrastructure, including sheds, electricity, and water facilities, and will oversee the plant's operations.
- (iii) Private firms have established the Meghdoot and sub-grade plants in Sirpur, Chhattisgarh, covering 10,000 to 15,000 sq ft, which process garden waste like leaves and small twigs from the municipal corporation.

#### 8. IndiaAI and GSI Unveil 'IndiaAI Hackathon 2025' to Transform Mineral Targeting with AI.

In March 2025, IndiaAI, an Independent Business Division (IBD) under New Delhi (Delhi)-based Digital India Corporation (DIC), Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), in collaboration with the Geological Survey of India (GSI), Ministry of Mines (MoM), launched the 'IndiaAI Hackathon 2025' with the theme "Mineral Targeting using Artificial Intelligence."

- The initiative aims to harness Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) technologies to advance mineral discovery and geological analysis in India.

#### Key Points:-

- (i) The focus is on identifying concealed, deep mineral deposits using depth modeling and developing AI/ML algorithms for data cleaning, integration, modeling, and validation.
- (ii) Kolkata (West Bengal, WB)-based Coal India Limited (CIL), a Maharatna Central Public Sector Enterprise (CPSE) under the Ministry of Coal (MoC), signed a non-binding Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Hyderabad (Telangana)-based Non-Ferrous Materials Technology Development Centre (NFTDC), an autonomous Research and Development (R&D) institution under MoM.

#### 9. DoT and WhatsApp Partner to Strengthen Digital Safety in India.

In March 2025, the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) under the Ministry of Communications (MoC), and WhatsApp, a subsidiary of Meta Platforms, Inc., collaborated to

expand Meta's safety campaign 'Scam Se Bacho' (Stay Safe from Scams) to enhance digital safety in India.

- This collaboration aims to educate citizens on identifying and reporting fraudulent communications, thus combating digital scams and the misuse of telecom resources.
- The 'Scam Se Bacho' awareness campaign was launched in 2024 in collaboration with the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), Indian Cybercrime Coordination Centre (I4C), and the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB).

**Key Points:-**

- (i) Key initiatives under the collaboration between DoT and WhatsApp include the launch of the 'Sanchar Saathi portal' and mobile app, enabling users to report fraud, track connections, and manage lost or stolen devices.
- (ii) Additionally, a Digital Intelligence Platform (DIP) will facilitate real-time intelligence exchange between DoT and over 550 stakeholders, including banks and law enforcement, to tackle telecom misuse.
- (iii) To further promote awareness, DoT will conduct workshops for officials, Telecom Service Providers, and Sanchar Mitras, while WhatsApp will translate safety materials into multiple regional languages for better accessibility.

**10. International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Rafael Mariano Inaugurates S N Bose Building at GCNEP.**

On March 18, 2025, Rafael Mariano Grossi, Director General (DG) of the Vienna-based

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), inaugurated the S N Bose Building at the Global Centre for Nuclear Energy Partnership (GCNEP), a Research and Development (R&D) unit in Haryana under the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE).

- During the event, held at Sushma Swaraj Bhavan in New Delhi, he also launched a Certificate Course in Nuclear Engineering.
- The event was attended by Dr. Ajit Kumar Mohanty, Secretary of DAE and Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, along with diplomats from GCNEP partner countries and senior officials from the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and DAE.

**Key Points:-**

- (i) The S N Bose Building, named after the renowned Indian Physicist Dr. Satyendra Nath Bose, will serve as an advanced hub for research and training in nuclear science and technology.
- (ii) The facility houses advanced laboratories that support GCNEP's specialized schools, enhancing its capabilities in nuclear security, reactor technology, radiation safety, nuclear material analysis, and radioisotope applications.

**11. Rashtriya Ayurveda Vidyapeeth Holds 28th Convocation & Shishyopanayaniya Samskara in New Delhi.**

In March 2025, Rashtriya Ayurveda Vidyapeeth (RAV), under the Ministry of AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homoeopathy), hosted its 28th Convocation & Shishyopanayaniya Samskara ceremony in New Delhi. The event focused on enhancing the quality of Ayurveda education and promoting its global presence. Union Minister of State (Independent

Charge) Prataprao Jadhav, Ministry of AYUSH, graced the event.

- The event saw the recognition of prominent Ayurvedic practitioners, accreditation of leading institutions, and the unveiling of initiatives to advance Ayurveda education and practice globally.

- During the event, one international institution and six national institutions were accredited for maintaining high standards in Ayurveda education and practice.

#### Key Points:-

(i) The prestigious Fellow of RAV (FRAV) Award was presented to 13 distinguished Vaidyas and scholars for their outstanding contributions in research, clinical practice, education, and propagation of Ayurveda.

(ii) Rashtriya Ayurveda Vidyapeeth (RAV) also presented the Lifetime Achievement Award to four distinguished individuals for their exceptional contributions to Ayurveda.

### 12. Indian Railways Partners with Mission Amrit Sarovar to Combat Water Scarcity.

In March 2025, Indian Railways (IR) announced its collaboration with Mission Amrit Sarovar to tackle the critical issue of water scarcity across India. Under this collaboration, IR will assist in desilting, excavating, or constructing new Amrit Sarovars (ponds) near railway lines.

- A significant number of ponds are expected to be rejuvenated or constructed by 15 August 2025.

- For implementation, IR will coordinate with district authorities to identify suitable sites for creating new

water bodies near railway worksites and with the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) for effective execution.

#### Key Points:-

(i) Mission Amrit Sarovar, launched on 24 April 2022, aims to develop and rejuvenate 75 water bodies in each district of India, with a total target of 50,000 ponds nationwide. As of October 2024, over 68,000 ponds have been completed, enhancing surface and groundwater availability across various regions.

(ii) Phase II of the Mission focuses on ensuring water availability, promoting community participation (Jan Bhagidaari), and strengthening climate resilience and ecological balance.

(iii) Every Amrit Sarovar will have a pondage area of at least 1 acre (0.4 hectares) with a water holding capacity of about 10,000 cubic meters, surrounded by trees such as Neem, Banyan, etc.

### 13. Union MoS Jitendra Singh Announces North India's First Nuclear Power Plant in Gorakhpur, Haryana.

In March 2025, Union Minister of State (MoS), Independent Charge (I/C), Jitendra Singh, Ministry for Development of North Eastern Region (MDONER), announced that North India's first nuclear power plant is being established in Gorakhpur, Haryana. This initiative aligns with India's strategy to expand nuclear energy production while reducing carbon emissions.

- The Union Minister also reaffirmed commitment to the Jaitapur Nuclear Power Project (JNPP) in Maharashtra, which is set to become India's largest nuclear power plant.



- The project has faced delays due to shifts in agreements with French stakeholders and procedural issues related to environmental clearance, which expired in December 2022.
- The Jaitapur Nuclear Power Project (JNPP) will feature six reactors of 1,730 MW each, totaling 10,380 MW, contributing around 10% to India's 100 GW nuclear energy target by 2047. Under India's Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage (CLND) framework, operators hold primary responsibility for incidents, with a dedicated ₹1,500 crore insurance pool to address liability concerns.

**Key Points:-**

- (i) India targets net-zero emissions by 2070, with nuclear power projects like Jaitapur and Gorakhpur playing a crucial role in clean energy expansion.
- (ii) The Viability Gap Funding (VGF) target for battery energy storage system (BESS) capacity has been increased to 13,200 MWh from 4,000 MWh, supporting India's renewable energy push.
- (iii) India plans to invest ₹15 lakh crore in green energy, while the Philippines is considering India as a key buyer for nickel, essential for EV batteries.

**14. Union Cabinet Approves Key Proposals, Including Revised Dairy Program, UPI Incentive Scheme, and Major Infrastructure Projects.**

On March 19, 2025, the Union Cabinet approved the Revised National Program for Dairy Development (NPDD) with an additional Rs 1,000 crore, bringing the total budget to Rs 2,790 crore

for the period from 2021-22 to 2025-26 (15th Finance Commission cycle).

- The Cabinet approved an Incentive Scheme for the promotion of low-value Bharat Interface for Money (BHIM)-Unified Payments Interface (UPI) transactions under the Person-to-Merchant (P2M) category. The estimated budget for Financial Year 2024-25 is Rs 1,500 crore.
- The Cabinet also approved a revised Rashtriya Gokul Mission (RGM) with an additional allocation of Rs 1,000 crore, bringing the total to Rs 3,400 crore for the 15th Finance Commission cycle (2021-22 to 2025-26).
- Approval was granted for the establishment of a new Brownfield Ammonia-Urea Complex at Namrup, Assam. The complex will have an annual production capacity of 12.7 Lakh Metric Tonnes (LMT) of urea, with an estimated project cost of Rs 10,601.40 crore.

**Key Points:-**

- (i) The Union Cabinet approved the construction of a 6-lane, access-controlled Greenfield National Highway (NH) to connect Jawaharlal Nehru Port Authority (JNPA) Port (Pagote) with Chowk in Maharashtra. The project will span 29.219 kilometers with an estimated cost of Rs 4,500.62 crore.
- (ii) The approved initiatives are aligned with the goals of fiscal responsibility and ensure that they fall within the limits set by the Fiscal Responsibility and Budgetary Management (FRBM) Act.
- (iii) These approved schemes are expected to drive significant growth and development across multiple sectors, including dairy, digital payments, agriculture, infrastructure, and the urea production industry, benefiting the economy and rural areas.



### 15. UIDAI Collaborates with Sarvam AI to Enhance Aadhaar Services.

In March 2025, New Delhi (Delhi)-based Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) partnered with Bengaluru (Karnataka)-based Sarvam Artificial Intelligence (Sarovam AI), an indigenous full-stack Generative AI (GenAI) company, to enhance the Aadhaar system's user-friendliness, security, and accessibility for citizens.

- The collaboration aims to provide AI-driven voice interactions, fraud detection, and multilingual support.

#### Key Points:-

- (i) Sarvam AI will deploy its AI solution to facilitate voice-based interactions with Aadhaar number holders, offering near real-time feedback on enrollment and update processes, including detecting any overcharging by service providers.
- (ii) The agreement includes fraud detection, where real-time alerts will be sent to Aadhaar number holders if any suspicious activity is detected during authentication.
- (iii) The AI solution will support 10 languages, including Hindi, English, Telugu, Tamil, Marathi, Gujarati, Kannada, Odia, Punjabi, and Malayalam, with plans for additional language options in the future.

### 16. Union Minister G. Kishan Reddy Launches India's First Critical Minerals Exploration Licence Auction in Goa.

In March 2025, Union Minister Gangapuram (G) Kishan Reddy, Ministry of Mines (MoM) and Ministry of Coal (MoC), launched India's first-ever

auction of Exploration Licences (ELs) for 13 exploration blocks for critical minerals. The event was held in Dona Paula, Panaji, Goa, in the presence of Pramod Sawant, Chief Minister (CM) of Goa.

- For the initial phase, licenses will be auctioned for exploration of critical minerals such as Rare Earth Elements (REE), Zinc (Zn), Diamond, Copper (Cu), and Platinum Group Elements (PGE) through a transparent online bidding process.
- The event also featured a roadshow on the 5th Tranche of Critical Mineral Blocks and the launch of Artificial Intelligence (AI) Hackathon 2025, a Mineral Exploration Hackathon focused on 'Mineral Targeting Using AI'.

#### Key Points:-

- (i) The exploration access will be granted exclusively to private entities, allowing them to explore up to 1,000 square meters per licence, which will accelerate mineral exploration, boost private sector participation, and enhance India's mineral security and self-reliance in critical minerals.
- (ii) ELs were introduced through the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) (MMDR) Amendment Act, 2023, enabling private participation in reconnaissance and prospecting of 29 critical and deep-seated minerals, including Lithium (Li), Copper (Cu), Cobalt (Co), Gold (Au), and Silver (Ag), as listed in the new 7th Schedule of the Act.
- (iii) In October 2024, the Government of India (GoI) issued an order under Section 20A of the MMDR Act, 2023, to conduct the EL auction process.

## INTERNATIONAL

### 1. Iran, Russia, and China Hold Joint Naval Exercises 'Maritime Security Belt 2025' in Gulf of Oman.

In March 2025, Iran, Russia, and China began the 7th Maritime Security Belt joint naval drills in the Gulf of Oman, near the Strait of Hormuz. This marks the 5th consecutive year of such exercises, which aim to enhance maritime security and military cooperation among the participating nations.

- The exercises take place amid heightened tensions in the region, particularly due to Iran's expanding nuclear program and threats from Yemen's Houthi rebels targeting commercial ships.

#### Key Points:-

- (i) China, Russia, and Iran have been conducting joint naval exercises in this region annually since 2018, with the goal of strengthening military coordination in response to Western presence.
- (ii) Azerbaijan, South Africa, Oman, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Qatar, Iraq, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Sri Lanka are attending the 2025 exercise as observers.
- (iii) The drills include maritime target strikes, damage control operations, and joint search and rescue missions. Crews are also practicing daytime and nighttime firing using large-caliber machine guns and small arms against simulated enemy drones and unmanned boats.

### 2. Six Indian sites have been added to the tentative list for UNESCO's World Heritage Sites in 2025.

In March 2025, six Indian sites were added to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) Tentative List of World Heritage Sites. This list is the first step before a site can be nominated to the official World Heritage List. With these new additions, India now has 62 sites on the Tentative List.

- The six Indian sites recently added to the tentative list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites include Kanger Valley National Park in Chhattisgarh, known for its biodiversity and limestone caves. Telangana's Mudumal Megalithic Menhirs, an ancient burial site, also made the list. The Ashokan Edict Sites along the Mauryan Routes, spread across multiple states, highlight India's rich historical legacy.

- Additionally, the Chausath Yogini Temples, located in multiple states, represent unique circular temple architecture. The Gupta Temples in North India, showcasing the architectural brilliance of the Gupta period, have also been included. Lastly, the Palace-Fortresses of the Bundelas, spread across Madhya Pradesh (MP) and Uttar Pradesh (UP), reflect the grandeur of Bundela architecture.

#### Key Points:-

- (i) The Tentative List is a list of sites that a country considers for future nomination to the UNESCO World Heritage List. Sites must be included in this list before they can be officially nominated.
- (ii) The Tentative List contains sites that are either cultural, natural, or a combination of both, and are considered to have outstanding universal value.
- (iii) Being on the Tentative List ensures that these heritage sites meet the necessary criteria and are properly evaluated before being nominated for the UNESCO World Heritage List.

### 3. "GOI and UN-Women Co-host Ministerial Roundtable on Women's Empowerment at 69th CSW".

In March 2025, the Government of India (GOI), in collaboration with UN-Women, hosted a Ministerial Roundtable on the sidelines of the 69th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, USA. The session was co-chaired by Union Minister Smt. Annpurna Devi, Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoWCD), and Sima Bahous, Executive Director of UN-Women.

- The roundtable emphasized the critical role of digital and financial inclusion in empowering women and fostering leadership.
- It highlighted that investments in women's education, health, and economic independence are key to bridging gender gaps, driving development, combating poverty, and nurturing leadership across various sectors.

#### Key Points:-

- (i) The event served as an international platform for exchanging experiences on emerging issues and strategies to implement the 12 key areas of concern outlined in the Beijing Platform for Action.
- (ii) The discussions were held through two ministerial roundtables focusing on the interconnected themes of: 'Digital Public Infrastructure to Accelerate Women-Led Development' and 'Financing Inclusion: Criticality of Core Resources.'
- (iii) The roundtable saw participation from Ministers and high-level representatives from across the globe, including members of Group-20 (G20) countries such as Indonesia, Australia,

South Africa, as well as other nations like Panama and Qatar. During the event, ministers shared their countries' experiences and perspectives on advancing women's rights.

### 4. UNCTAD Global Trade Update March 2025 Shows Strong Trade Growth in Q4 2024 for Developing Countries Led by China and India.

In March 2025, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), based in Geneva (Switzerland), released its latest report, Global Trade Update (March 2025). According to the report, developing countries, particularly China and India, saw better-than-average trade growth in the 4th Quarter (Q4) of 2024. In contrast, many developed countries experienced a decline in trade during the same period.

- The report highlighted that rising deficits in countries like the United States (USA), the European Union (EU), and India, among others, along with changes in energy tariffs, investment shifts, and restrictions, could increase economic uncertainty.
- The report revealed that developing economies grew faster than developed countries, with both imports and exports increasing by 4% for the year and 2% in Q4 of 2024. This growth was mainly driven by East and South Asia.

#### Key Points:-

- (i) The report showed that global trade expanded significantly to USD 33 trillion in 2024, a 3.7% increase (USD 1.2 trillion) from 2023. This growth was led by developing economies and strong services trade, except in regions like Europe and Central Asia.

(ii) The report stated that India saw an 8% growth in goods imports in Q4 2024 compared to the previous quarter and a 6% year-on-year (Y-O-Y) increase in imports.

### 5. In WMO Report Atmospheric CO2 Levels Hit 420 ppm in 2023, Highest in 800,000 Years.

In March 2025, the Geneva-based World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) released its report titled State of the Global Climate Report 2024, stating that atmospheric Carbon Dioxide (CO2) levels reached 420 parts per million (ppm) in 2023, the highest in the last 800,000 years.

- According to WMO, 420 ppm of CO2 is equivalent to 3,276 Gigatonnes (Gt) or 3.276 trillion tons of CO2 in the atmosphere. The CO2 levels in 2023 were 2.3 ppm higher than in 2022 and 151% of the pre-industrial level (1750).

- The report projected that long-term global warming is expected to be between 1.34°C and 1.41°C compared to the 1850-1900 baseline.

#### Key Points:-

(i) The report indicated that 2024 is likely the first calendar year (CY) to exceed 1.5°C above the pre-industrial era, with a global average temperature of 1.55°C  $\pm$  0.13°C above the 1850-1990 average, marking it as the warmest year in a 175-year observational record.

(ii) Nearly 90% of the additional heat trapped by greenhouse gases (GHGs) is absorbed by the oceans, which is further warming ocean waters and impacting marine life, weather patterns, and sea levels.

### 6. 23rd Edition of India-France Bilateral Naval Exercise 'VARUNA' Begins.

The 23rd edition of the bilateral naval exercise 'VARUNA' between the Indian Navy and the French Navy commenced on March 19, 2025, in the Arabian Sea and will conclude on March 22, 2025, featuring Harbour and Sea Phases.

- VARUNA 2025 includes maritime operations across sub-surface, surface, and air domains, enhancing interoperability, strengthening maritime security, and reinforcing stability in the Indo-Pacific region.

- Initiated in 1993 and formally named 'VARUNA' in 2001, the exercise is a key component of Indo-French maritime cooperation, held annually along Indian or French coasts and sometimes in international waters.

- The 22nd edition took place in the Mediterranean Sea from September 2-4, 2024.

#### Key Points:-

(i) India is represented by INS Vikrant, MiG-29K fighter jets, destroyers, frigates, and a Scorpene-class submarine, while France has deployed its nuclear-powered aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle, Rafale-M fighter jets, destroyers, and frigates.

(ii) The Harbour Phase (March 19-20) focuses on professional and cultural interactions, while the Sea Phase (March 21-22) involves advanced air defense drills, anti-submarine warfare, surface warfare, maritime patrol operations, and replenishment-at-sea exercises.

(iii) VARUNA 2025 highlights India and France's shared commitment to maintaining a free, open, and secure maritime environment.



## BANKING & FINANCE

### 1. IRDAI Awards First Private Reinsurance License to Valueattics Reinsurance.

On March 12, 2025, the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) granted the 'R2' reinsurance license to Bengaluru-based Value Attics Reinsurance Limited, making it the first private-sector reinsurer in India.

- The approval was given during the 129th meeting of the IRDAI board, which was chaired by Debasish Panda.
- The 'R2' category license signifies that Value Attics Reinsurance is authorized to exclusively conduct reinsurance business in India, marking a significant development in the country's insurance sector.
- Value Attics Reinsurance is promoted by Oben Ventures LLP, led by Kamesh Goyal, and Mauritius-based FAL Corporation, associated with Prem Watsa, the CEO of Canada-based Fairfax Financial Holdings Limited. The company will begin operations with a paid-up capital of Rs. 210 crore.

#### Key Points:-

(i) Before this approval, General Insurance Corporation of India (GIC Re), a public-sector company based in Mumbai, was the sole domestic reinsurer in India since 1972. GIC Re became the national reinsurer post-2001 insurance sector liberalization.

(ii) In the same meeting, IRDAI designated Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), New India Assurance Company, and GIC Re as Domestic Systemically Important Insurers (D-SIIs) for the financial year 2024-25, recognizing their critical importance in the Indian insurance sector.

(iii) India currently hosts 13 foreign reinsurance branches, including global players like Munich Re, Swiss Re, and Lloyd's of London, contributing to the diversity and competition within the Indian reinsurance market.

### 2. BRISKPE has received in-principle authorization from the RBI for cross-border payments.

On March 12, 2025, Brisk Payment Exchange (BRISKPE), a payment aggregator backed by global investment firm Prosus and based in Mumbai (Maharashtra), received in-principle authorization from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to operate as a Payment Aggregator for Cross-Border (PA-CB) transactions. Key Points:

- This authorization allows BRISKPE to manage both export and import transactions under the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007.
- BRISKPE is one of the first platforms focused exclusively on cross-border payments, and it complies with the updated regulatory framework introduced by the RBI in October 2023.
- The startup will now work with Category-1 banks (RBI licensed banks that can deal in foreign exchange) to handle export and import collection accounts, allowing businesses to make secure payments.

#### Key Points:-

(i) Currently, BRISKPE processes around 10,000 export transactions monthly. With the addition of import services, the company expects this number to increase to 100,000 transactions by the end of the next financial year (2025-26).

(ii) This development aims to improve the efficiency, security, and transparency of

international payment systems for businesses involved in global trade.

### 3. NABARD has signed a MoU with J&K Grameen Bank to provide financing for Joint Liability Groups (JLGs).

In March 2025, the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), based in Jammu, Jammu & Kashmir (J&K), signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with J&K Grameen Bank, also based in Jammu. This agreement aims to promote and finance 2,000 Joint Liability Groups (JLGs).

- Des Raj, Deputy General Manager (GM) of NABARD, and Sanjay Gupta, Chairman of J&K Grameen Bank, signed the MoU on behalf of their respective organizations.

- The main goal of the MoU is to address the credit needs of Economically Weaker Sections (EWSs) of society by forming and linking JLGs with credit support.

#### Key Points:-

(i) According to the MoU, J&K Grameen Bank will establish and finance 2,000 JLGs across the Union Territories (UTs) of J&K and Ladakh.

(ii) Additionally, NABARD will provide a promotional grant of Rs 4,000 to each JLG through J&K Grameen Bank, helping to strengthen financial empowerment in the region.

### 4. "APCRDA and HUDCO Sign Rs 11,000 Crore Loan Agreement for Amaravati Development".

In March 2025, the Andhra Pradesh Capital Region Development Authority (APCRDA), based in

Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh (AP), and the Housing and Urban Development Corporation Limited (HUDCO), based in New Delhi, under the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), signed a Rs 11,000 crore loan agreement for the construction of Amaravati, the greenfield capital city of AP.

- The Rs 11,000 crore loan is part of the Rs 26,000 crore required for Phase-1 of Amaravati's construction. This loan aims to bridge the funding gap for the development of Amaravati, expediting the construction of AP's new capital city.

- The agreement was signed by Nara Chandrababu Naidu, the Chief Minister (CM) of AP, in the presence of P Narayana, the Minister for Municipal Administration and Urban Development (MAUD) of AP, Sanjay Kulshrestha, the Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) of HUDCO, and other officials.

#### Key Points:-

(i) The total estimated cost for Amaravati's development is Rs 50,000 crore.

(ii) The World Bank (WB) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) have committed Rs 15,000 crore for the project.

(iii) Additionally, HUDCO has sanctioned Rs 4,400 crore for Township and Infrastructure Development Corporation (TIDCO) housing projects in AP.

### 5. Piramal Capital & Housing Finance Collaborates with Punjab & Sind Bank to Boost Rural and Semi-Urban Lending.

In March 2025, Piramal Capital & Housing Finance Limited (PCHFL) (Piramal Finance), based in

Mumbai (Maharashtra), formed a strategic co-lending partnership with Punjab & Sind Bank, a public sector bank headquartered in New Delhi (Delhi). The goal of this partnership is to increase credit access for middle- and low-income borrowers, with a focus on underserved areas like rural and semi-urban regions across India.

- The partnership aims to help micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and individuals looking for home loans.

#### Key Points:-

- (i) The agreement intends to offer customized credit solutions with attractive interest rates, focusing on Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities to improve access to formal loans.
- (ii) Punjab & Sind Bank, with 1,575 branches, brings strong financial expertise, while Piramal Finance, with over 514 branches covering 13,000 pin codes, serves 4.5 million customers across 26 states.
- (iii) Together, they combine solid underwriting practices with advanced credit evaluation tools to provide efficient credit solutions.

#### 6. RBI and Bank of Mauritius Ink MoU to Boost INR-MUR Bilateral Transactions.

In March 2025, India's central bank, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), and the central bank of Mauritius, the Bank of Mauritius (BOM), signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to establish a framework for promoting the use of the Indian Rupee (INR) and the Mauritian Rupee (MUR) in cross-border transactions.

- The MoU was signed by RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra and BOM Governor Rama Krishna Sithanen in Port Louis, Mauritius, in the presence of Indian Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi and Mauritius PM Navinchandra Ramgoolam.

#### Key Points:-

- (i) This agreement aims to enhance bilateral trade by facilitating the use of INR and MUR for payments in all current account transactions and permissible capital account transactions.
- (ii) It will enable exporters and importers to invoice and settle payments in their respective domestic currencies, thereby fostering a market for INR-MUR exchange.

#### 7. Paytm Collaborates with SBI Mutual Fund to Introduce JanNivesh ₹250 SIP.

Paytm, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Noida (Uttar Pradesh, UP)-based One 97 Communications Limited, has partnered with Mumbai (Maharashtra)-based SBI Mutual Fund, a subsidiary of the State Bank of India (SBI), to launch the JanNivesh ₹250 Systematic Investment Plan (SIP) initiative.

- The scheme was launched by Securities and Exchange Board of India's (SEBI) Chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch on February 17, 2025.

#### Key Points:-

- (i) This scheme allows individuals to start investing with as little as ₹250, offering daily, weekly, or monthly SIP options to cater to diverse financial needs.
- (ii) The scheme, starting at just ₹250, makes investing accessible for first-time investors and

small savers. Investors can set up SIPs through the Paytm application (app), SBI You Only Need One (YONO), and other digital platforms.

(iii) This initiative aims to democratize investing and contribute to long-term financial security for millions of Indians, particularly those in rural, semi-urban, and urban areas.

### 8. Paytm Money Limited Secures SEBI Approval as a Research Analyst.

On March 18, 2025, Noida (Uttar Pradesh, UP)-based Paytm Money Limited, a wholly-owned subsidiary of One 97 Communications Limited (OCL), received a Certificate of Registration (CoR) as a Research Analyst (RA) from the Mumbai (Maharashtra)-based Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) under the 'SEBI (Research Analysts) Regulations, 2014'.

- This registration allows Paytm Money to offer SEBI-compliant research services, including investment insights, research reports, and data-driven analysis, enhancing user experience for retail and institutional investors.

#### Key Points:-

(i) Paytm Money is now authorized to provide expert-backed research and advisory services for retail and institutional investors.

(ii) The platform continues to support Mutual Funds (MF), stocks, Initial Public Offerings (IPOs), Exchange-Traded Funds (ETFs), and the National Pension System (NPS), promoting financial inclusion.

(iii) Paytm Money has integrated features such as Unified Payments Interface (UPI) Trading Blocks

for seamless payment deductions and advanced tools to assist investors in making informed decisions.

### 9. Bajaj Finserv to Purchase Allianz SE's 26% Stake in Insurance JVs for Rs 24,180 Crore.

In March 2025, Pune (Maharashtra)-based Bajaj Finserv Limited (BFS), India's most diversified Non-Banking Finance Company (NBFC), will acquire Munich (Germany)-based Allianz SE's 26% stake in their Indian non-life and life insurance Joint Ventures (JVs) for Rs 24,180 crore.

- The consideration for acquiring a 26% stake in Bajaj Allianz General Insurance Company Limited (BAGIC) and Bajaj Allianz Life Insurance Company Limited (BALIC) is Rs 13,780 crore and Rs 10,400 crore, respectively.

#### Key Points:-

(i) Post-acquisition, BFS will hold 75.01% in both ventures, while the promoter entities will hold 24.99%. This will increase Bajaj Group's ownership in the JVs to 100%.

(ii) The acquisition is subject to regulatory approvals. Under the Share Purchase Agreement (SPA), BFS will directly acquire approximately 1.01% of each company, Bajaj Holdings & Investment will acquire approximately 19.95%, and Jamnalal Sons (promoter entities) will acquire approximately 5.04%.

(iii) Once the acquisition is completed, Allianz will no longer be a promoter of these JVs, and the JV agreements between Allianz SE and BFS will be terminated, marking the end of a 24-year partnership between Bajaj and Allianz.



### 10. World Day of Theatre for Children and Young People Observed on 20 March 2025.

World Day of Theatre for Children and Young People is celebrated annually on March 20 to raise awareness about the significance of theatre for children and young people, emphasizing its impact in communities.

- The observance was established in 2001 by the International Association of Theatre for Children and Young People (ASSITEJ).

#### Key Points:-

- (i) The first World Day of Theatre for Children and Young People was observed on March 20, 2001.
- (ii) An initiative by ASSITEJ International, celebrating a series of global art-focused days from March 20 to March 27, in collaboration with other international organizations involved in live performance arts.

### 11. ADB Launches Frontier Seed Program (Pacific) to Boost Local Industries and Economic Growth.

On March 17, 2025, the Philippines-based Asian Development Bank (ADB) introduced the Frontier Seed (Pacific) program to strengthen local capital markets, foster entrepreneurship, and support businesses that drive inclusive and sustainable economic growth in frontier Pacific markets.

- The initiative aims to provide funding and technical assistance to businesses with transformative potential. ADB seeks to de-risk investments, encourage private-sector participation, and help local industries become globally competitive.

- Under the ADB Frontier Seed (Pacific) program, two USD 200,000 cost-recoverable technical assistance agreements have been signed to support key industries in Fiji, marking the program's initial investments.

- The first two recipients of the program are SeaPAC Pte Ltd, a leading saltwater prawn producer in Fiji, which received funding to expand production and enhance food security, and Kahuto Pacific, an aerial mapping company, which will use the funding to develop coastal mapping technologies for climate adaptation and disaster resilience.

#### Key Points:-

- (i) The Frontier Seed (Pacific) program, supported by various partners, focuses on agriculture, renewable energy, fisheries, and technology to foster sustainable development and economic resilience in the Pacific region.
- (ii) ADB has allocated USD 2 million for the program, with an additional USD 2 million from the Philippines-based Ocean Resilience and Coastal Adaptation (ORCA) Trust Fund.
- (iii) The program is supported by key partners, including the Finland-based Nordic Development Fund (NDF) and the United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office (FCDO).

### 12. SEBI Joins Forces with DigiLocker to Minimize Unclaimed Assets in the Indian Securities Market.

In March 2025, the Mumbai (Maharashtra)-based market regulator, Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), announced its partnership with DigiLocker to address the issue of unclaimed assets in the securities markets.

- SEBI issued a circular titled 'Harnessing DigiLocker as a Digital Public Infrastructure for Reducing Unclaimed Assets in the Indian Securities Market' under Section 11(1) of the SEBI Act, 1992, to protect investors' interests and regulate the securities market.

**Key Points:-**

- (i) This initiative allows investors to store and access information on their demat and mutual fund (MF) holdings, along with Consolidated Account Statement (CAS) through DigiLocker, a key Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI).
- (ii) The DigiLocker system will be notified about the user's death by Know Your Customer (KYC) Registration Agencies (KRAs), and the system will automatically notify the data access nominees.

**13. NPCI International Payments Limited (NIPL) Collaborates with Singapore's Hitpay to Facilitate UPI Payments.**

On March 19, 2025, Mumbai (Maharashtra)-based NPCI International Payments Limited (NIPL), the international arm of the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), partnered with Singapore-based HitPay, a full-stack payments infrastructure firm, to enable Unified Payments Interface (UPI) payments in Singapore.

- Indian travelers can now make payments using UPI Quick Response (QR) codes at tourist spots, restaurants, and shops, with over 12,000 merchants in Singapore accepting UPI.
- This marks NIPL's second partnership in Singapore, following the launch of UPI-PayNow in 2023 for cross-border transactions.

**Key Points:-**

- (i) In January 2025, NIPL also partnered with Middle East-based payment solution provider Magnati to expand QR-based UPI merchant payments in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).
- (ii) UPI is now operational in Singapore, Maldives, Qatar, Sri Lanka, Mauritius, Bhutan, Nepal, UAE, and Canada.
- (iii) HitPay is a comprehensive payments infrastructure platform designed for growing businesses across the Asia Pacific (APAC) region, providing unified solutions for e-commerce, point-of-sale (POS), and business-to-business (B2B) payments.

**14. IndusInd International Holdings Limited (IIHL) Finalizes Acquisition of RCAP for Rs. 9,650 Crore.**

In March 2025, Mumbai (Maharashtra)-based IndusInd International Holdings Limited (IIHL) successfully completed the acquisition of Mumbai (Maharashtra)-based Reliance Capital Limited (RCAP) for Rs. 9,650 crore.

- The acquisition was finalized by transferring the bid amount to lenders under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), with the business value estimated at approximately Rs. 20,000 crore based on conservative assessments.
- IIHL has received the necessary regulatory approvals from the RBI, Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI), and relevant stock exchanges.

**Key Points:-**

- (i) The acquisition aims to expand IIHL's footprint in India's Banking, Financial Services, and Insurance (BFSI) sector, with a focus on long-term

value creation.

(ii) The acquisition process follows IIHL's successful bid in April 2023 under the Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP), which was initiated by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) due to financial irregularities in the Anil Ambani-led Reliance Group.

to regulatory issues and do not affect the validity of any agreements or transactions the companies have with their customers.

(iii) Additionally, the RBI announced that new Rs 100 and Rs 200 banknotes will be released soon, featuring the signature of the new Governor, Sanjay Malhotra.

### 15. The RBI has imposed penalties on JM Financial Products and Experian India for failing to comply with regulatory requirements.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has imposed monetary penalties on two companies based in Mumbai for not following regulatory guidelines:

- **JM Financial Products Limited (JMFL) has been fined Rs 3.1 lakh for violating rules related to non-banking financial companies (NBFCs), especially concerning systemically important non-deposit-taking and deposit-taking companies.**
- **The penalty was imposed after the RBI found that the company did not disclose a key related-party transaction in its annual report.**
- **This was discovered after an inspection of the company's financial position as of March 31, 2023, and a review of its response to a show-cause notice.**

#### Key Points:-

(i) Experian Credit Information Company of India Private Limited (ECICI) has been fined Rs 2 lakh for not following certain provisions of the Credit Information Companies (Regulation) Act, 2005 (CICRA) and the Credit Information Companies (CIC) Rules, 2006.

(ii) The RBI clarified that these penalties were due

### 16. SEBI Reduces Rights Issue Timeline to 23 Days to Accelerate Fundraising.

In March 2025, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), based in Mumbai (Maharashtra), reduced the timeline for completing rights issues from 126 days to just 23 days. This is a significant improvement compared to the current average timeline of 317 days. The new rule will come into effect on April 7, 2025.

- **Rights issues must now stay open for 7 to 30 days. The verification of application bids and the finalization of allotments will be handled by stock exchanges (SE), depositories, and registrars.**
- **Additionally, exchanges and depositories must develop an automated validation system within six months to make the process smoother.**

#### Key Points:-

(i) To simplify the process, SEBI has simplified the Letter of Offer (LoF), which will now only require key details like the purpose of the issue, price, record date, and entitlement ratio.

(ii) A monitoring agency must now oversee how the funds raised from all types of rights issues are used. Previously, issuers raising less than Rs 50 crore through rights issues didn't need to appoint a monitoring agency.

(iii) With the new system, companies can raise funds more quickly than through the preferential allotment route, which takes 40 working days. This makes rights issues more efficient and investor-friendly.

exchanging technical and documentary information, and facilitating dialogue between their business communities.

## MOUs and Agreement

### 1. India Grants Retroactive Approval to MoU on Financial and Economic Cooperation with Qatar.

In March 2025, the Government of India (GOI) granted retroactive approval to the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on financial and economic cooperation between India and Qatar. This MoU was initially established by the Ministry of Finance (MoF), India, and the Ministry of Finance of the State of Qatar on February 18, 2025, during the visit of Amir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani to India.

- The MoU was signed by Shri Baldeo Purushartha, Joint Secretary (JS), Department of Economic Affairs (DEA), MoF, India, and Mr. Mohammed Hassan Jabir Al-Jabir, Ambassador of the State of Qatar, on March 5, 2025, in New Delhi, Delhi.

#### Key Points:-

- (i) The MoU aims to enhance cooperation in economic policies, financing tools, public-private partnerships, and investment. This collaboration will strengthen the bilateral relationship with Qatar, fostering mutual growth. Additionally, it seeks to explore new and emerging sectors for investment opportunities in both countries.
- (ii) This MoU marks a significant step toward shared goals between both nations. The Finance Ministries will collaborate by hosting expert workshops, seminars, and conferences,

### 2. "REC Signs MoU Worth Rs 18,360 Crore with Kerala's EMC for Pumped Storage Projects".

REC Limited (formerly Rural Electrification Corporation Limited), a Maharatna Central Public Sector Enterprise (CPSE) under the Ministry of Power (MoP), has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Energy Management Centre (EMC), Government of Kerala, for collaboration and financing of Pumped Storage Projects (PSP) in Kerala.

- Under this MoU, REC will finance Rs 18,360 crore for the PSP segment in Kerala over the next 5 years.
- The MoU was signed during the Global Green Hydrogen & Renewable Energy Summit 2025, held in Kochi, Kerala, from 12 to 13 March 2025.
- The summit was organized by the Government of Kerala with support from the Kerala State Electricity Board (KSEB) and EMC.

#### Key Points:-

- (i) The MoU was exchanged by Saurabh Rastogi, Executive Director (ED), REC, and Dinesh Kumar, Joint Director (JD), EMC, in the presence of key officials.
- (ii) REC Limited, based in New Delhi, was incorporated in 1969 and is registered with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) as a Non-Banking Finance Company (NBFC), Public Financial Institution (PFI), and Infrastructure Financing Company (IFC).



(iii) EMC, based in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, was established in February 1996. EMC is an autonomous organization under the Department of Power, Government of Kerala. The Kerala Government became the first State Government in India to establish an EMC at the State level.

and rule book.

(iii) Drone Federation India (DFI) is a non-government, not-for-profit, industry-led organization dedicated to promoting a safer and scalable unmanned aviation industry in India.

### 3. Lok Sabha Secretariat and MeitY Sign MoU to Develop AI-Powered 'Sansad Bhashini' for Multilingual Parliamentary Operations.

In March 2025, the Lok Sabha (LS) Secretariat signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) to develop 'Sansad Bhashini', an Artificial Intelligence (AI)-powered solution aimed at enhancing multi-lingual support and optimizing parliamentary operations.

- The collaboration will see the integration of AI products and tools using Parliamentary corpus data, with LS providing the data and resources necessary for AI learning, while Bhashini (BHASHa INterface for India) will deliver translation capabilities and technical expertise.

#### Key Points:-

(i) MeitY, in partnership with the Drone Federation India (DFI) based in New Delhi, launched the National Innovation Challenge for Drone Application and Research (NIDAR) under the 'SwaYaan-Capacity Building for Human Resource Development in Unmanned Aircraft Systems' initiative.

(ii) S. Krishnan, Secretary of MeitY, formally inaugurated the challenge and launched the official website and registration portal (<https://nidar.org.in/>), along with the NIDAR poster

### 4. Andhra Pradesh (AP) Signs MoU with Gates Foundation to Strengthen Tech Support.

On March 19, 2025, the government of Andhra Pradesh (AP) and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (Gates Foundation), based in the United States, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in New Delhi to collaborate on public welfare initiatives.

- The partnership aims to integrate cost-effective and scalable solutions across key sectors such as healthcare, medtech, education, and agriculture.
- The MoU was signed during a meeting between Nara Chandrababu Naidu, Chief Minister (CM) of AP, and Bill Gates, Chairman of the Gates Foundation.

#### Key Points:-

(i) The collaboration will focus on leveraging Artificial Intelligence (AI) and advanced technologies to achieve transformative outcomes. In healthcare, AI will be utilized for predictive health analytics and automated diagnostics, while in agriculture, AI-driven advisory tools and satellite systems will be used for precision farming and resource management.

(ii) The initiative will also support foundational learning improvements in education. The Gates Foundation will assist implementation partners, co-identified with the Government of AP, to execute targeted interventions within state-driven

programs.

(iii) The collaboration aims to create scalable models that can be replicated in other regions of India and globally.

## SPORTS

### 1. Fifth Edition of Khelo India Winter Games 2025 Held in Leh, Ladakh & Gulmarg, J&K.

In January 2025, the fifth edition of the Khelo India Winter Games (KIWG) commenced on January 23 in Leh, Ladakh. This event, funded by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MYAS), is part of the Government of India's (GoI) Khelo India initiative, which promotes sports across the country.

- The 2025 edition of KIWG witnessed participation from over 400 athletes, representing states, Union Territories (UTs), and institutions, competing in 19 teams across six winter sports.
- Chief Minister (CM) of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), Omar Abdullah, unveiled the mascot for KIWG 2025, featuring a snow leopard.
- CM Omar Abdullah also launched the official website for KIWG 2025 at the Civil Secretariat in Jammu, with the platform accessible at [winter.kheloindia.gov.in](http://winter.kheloindia.gov.in).

#### Key Points:-

- (i) The first phase of KIWG 2025 took place at the Nawang Dorjay Stobdan (NDS) Sports Complex and Guphuk Pond in Leh, Ladakh, from January 23 to 27, 2025.
- (ii) The second phase of KIWG 2025 was held from March 9 to 12 at Kangdoori Phase 1 and the Golf Course Club in Gulmarg, J&K.

(iii) The Indian Army (IA) won the KIWG 2025 title, securing 18 medals, including seven gold, five silver, and six bronze.

### 2. Bangladesh All-Rounder Mahmudullah Riyad Announces Retirement from International Cricket.

On March 12, 2025, veteran Bangladeshi cricketer Mahmudullah Riyad, an all-rounder for the Bangladesh National Cricket Team, announced his retirement from international cricket, concluding an 18-year-long career. He had previously retired from Test cricket in 2021 and Twenty20 Internationals (T20Is) in 2024.

- He represented Bangladesh in 50 Test matches, 239 One Day Internationals (ODIs), and 141 T20Is, totaling 430 international appearances.
- As captain, he led Bangladesh in 6 Test matches, achieving 1 win, 4 losses, and 1 draw. In T20Is, he captained in 43 matches, securing 16 victories and 29 defeats. Throughout his career, he accumulated a total of 11,047 runs across all formats, including 9 centuries.

#### Key Points:-

- (i) Mahmudullah Riyad made his ODI debut against Sri Lanka in Colombo on July 20, 2007, and became Bangladesh's 4th-highest run-scorer in ODIs with 5,689 runs at an average of 36.46.
- (ii) He remains the only Bangladeshi cricketer to score three centuries in the ODI World Cup—two in 2015 and one in 2023.
- (iii) As a bowler, he took 166 wickets across formats, including a five-wicket haul (5/51) against West Indies in 2009.

### 3. India Wraps Up Special Olympics World Winter Games 2025 with 33 Medals in Turin, Italy.

India concluded the Special Olympics World Winter Games 2025 held in Turin, Italy, securing an impressive 33 medals: 8 gold, 18 silver, and 7 bronze. The country earned 10 medals each in Snowshoeing and Alpine Skiing, 6 in Snowboarding, 4 in Short-track Speed Skating, 2 in Cross-Country Skiing, and 1 in Floorball. On the final day, March 15, 2025, Indian athletes clinched 12 medals across four events.

- The 12th edition of the Special Olympics World Winter Games was held from March 8 to 15, 2025, marking Italy's first time hosting the event.
- Over 1,500 athletes from 100 countries competed in 8 sports, including Alpine Skiing, Cross-Country Skiing, DanceSport, Figure Skating, Floorball, Short Track Speed Skating, Snowboarding, and Snowshoeing.

#### Key Points:-

- (i) Vasu Tiwari, Shalini Chauhan, and Tanya earned silver in the 25-meter Snowshoeing event, while Jahangir added a bronze.
- (ii) Radha Devi and Nirmala Devi clinched silver medals in Intermediate Slalom, F01 and F04 categories, respectively. Abhishek Kumar also secured a silver in the Novice Slalom, M02 category.

### 4. India Tops Medal Tally with 134 Medals at World Para Athletics Grand Prix 2025.

India concluded the 2025 World Para Athletics Grand Prix, held at Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in New Delhi, securing the top position on the medal table with a total of 134 medals, including 45 Gold,

40 Silver, and 49 Bronze. The Neutral Para Athletes finished 2nd with 26 medals, consisting of 13 Gold, 9 Silver, and 4 Bronze. Uzbekistan claimed 3rd place with 4 Gold, 4 Silver, and 4 Bronze medals.

- The 12th edition of the World Para Athletics Grand Prix made history as India hosted its first-ever international para-athletics event.
- Held from 11th to 13th March 2025, the competition featured 150 Indian athletes competing across 90 events, with participation from 283 athletes representing 20 countries.
- Top nations such as Germany, Japan, Australia, Saudi Arabia, Brazil, Russia, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan participated in the event.

#### Key Points:-

- (i) The World Para Athletics Grand Prix will be an annual event in India until 2028, as confirmed by the World Para Athletics Federation.
- (ii) The World Para Athletics Federation is the global governing body for the sport of para-athletics, established in 1989 as part of the International Paralympic Committee (IPC).

### 5. Union Minister Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya Unveils Anthem, Mascot, and Logo for Khelo India Para Games 2025.

In March 2025, Union Minister Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya, Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports (MYAS), released the mascot, logo, and anthem for the 2nd Khelo India Para Games (KIPG 2025) at Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium Complex in New Delhi.

- The mascot for KIPG 2025 is named "Ujjwala," inspired by Delhi's house sparrow, which symbolizes perseverance and resilience. The sparrow was once close to extinction but has made a remarkable recovery.
- The logo for KIPG 2025 was launched by Devendra Jhalaria, President of the Paralympic Committee of India, and Sminu Jindal, founder of Svayam. The logo features an athlete in orange, green, and blue, symbolizing dynamism, movement, and inclusivity. Iconic landmarks of Delhi, including the new Parliament building and Bharat Mandapam, are depicted at the bottom, and a bilingual tagline "Champions Beyond Limits/Hauslon ki Udaan" emphasizes the resilience of para-athletes.
- The anthem for KIPG 2025, "Khelega Khelega Mera India, Jeetega Jeetega Mera India" (My India will play, my India will win), aims to inspire both fans and athletes alike.

**Key Points:-**

- (i) The second edition of KIPG will take place from March 20 to 27, 2025, at three venues in New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, Indira Gandhi Arena, and Dr. Kanti Singh Shooting Range.
- (ii) This edition will feature six para-sports: para-archery, para-badminton, para-athletics, para powerlifting, para shooting, and para table tennis, with over 1,300 para-athletes competing.
- (iii) KIPG 2025 is part of the Khelo India Mission and will be organized by the Sports Authority of India (SAI), further promoting sports inclusivity and engagement. The inaugural KIPG was held in December 2023 in New Delhi, featuring events across 7 sports disciplines at three venues.

**6. Mumbai Indians Win 'WPL Title 2025' for the 2nd Time, Defeating Delhi Capitals.**

In March 2025, Mumbai Indians Women's cricket team (MI-W) secured their second Women's Premier League (WPL) title by defeating Delhi Capitals Women's cricket team (DC-W) by 8 runs in the final at Brabourne Stadium, Mumbai (Maharashtra). With this victory, MI-W became the first team in WPL history to win the title twice, after their debut win in 2023.

- Mumbai Indians (MI) were captained by Harmanpreet Kaur, while Delhi Capitals (DC) were led by Meghann Moira Lanning. MI-W received a cash prize of Rs 6 crore, while the runner-up DC-W received Rs 3 crore.

**Key Points:-**

- (i) The 3rd edition of WPL was held from 14 February to 15 March 2025, with matches played across four cities: Vadodara (Gujarat), Bengaluru (Karnataka), Lucknow (Uttar Pradesh, UP), and Mumbai (Maharashtra).
- (ii) The tournament, branded as TATA WPL 2025, featured 5 teams: Gujarat Giants Women (GG-W), Royal Challengers Bengaluru Women (RCB-W), Mumbai Indians Women (MI-W), Delhi Capitals Women (DC-W), and UP Warriorz Women (UPW-W).
- (iii) In the final, MI-W batter Natalie Ruth Sciver-Brunt became the first player to score 1000 runs in WPL history.

**7. India Masters Win Inaugural IML 2025 Title, Defeat West Indies Masters by 6 Wickets.**



In March 2025, the India Masters Cricket Team won the inaugural International Masters League (IML) 2025 by defeating the West Indies Masters Cricket Team by 6 wickets in the final at the Shaheed Veer Narayan Singh International Stadium in Raipur, Chhattisgarh. India Masters successfully chased down the target of 149 runs with 17 balls to spare, securing their first title in the tournament.

- India Masters was led by Captain Sachin Ramesh Tendulkar, while the West Indies Masters was led by Captain Brian Charles Lara.
- The tournament took place from February 22 to March 16, 2025, with matches held in Navi Mumbai (Maharashtra), Raipur (Chhattisgarh), and Vadodara (Gujarat).
- The India Masters, as the winners, were awarded Rs. 1,00,00,000 (1 crore rupees), while the West Indies Masters, as the runners-up, received Rs. 50,00,000 (50 lakh rupees) in prize money.

#### Key Points:-

- (i) The IML is a Twenty20 International (T20I) cricket tournament featuring former international cricketers.
- (ii) The inaugural season was held in 2025, with 6 teams participating: Australia Masters, England Masters, India Masters, South Africa Masters, Sri Lanka Masters, and West Indies Masters.
- (iii) The tournament structure included a round-robin group stage, followed by knockout semifinals and the final.

## AWARDS

### 1. Hockey India 7th Annual Awards: Harmanpreet Singh and Savita Punia Win Hockey India Player of the Year Award.

In March 2025, Harmanpreet Singh, captain of the Indian Men's Hockey Team, was awarded the prestigious Hockey India Balbir Singh Sr. Award for Player of the Year 2024 in the men's category at the Hockey India 7th Annual Awards 2024. The event was held at Le Meridien, Connaught Palace in New Delhi (Delhi). This is Harmanpreet's second Hockey India Player of the Year award (his first was in 2021).

- Meanwhile, Savita Punia, the former goalkeeper of the Indian Women's Hockey Team, was honored with the Hockey India Balbir Singh Sr. Award for Player of the Year 2024 in the women's category.
- This is her third Hockey India Player of the Year award (she won in 2022 and 2023). Both Harmanpreet and Savita received a cash prize of Rs 25 lakh as part of the Balbir Singh Sr. Award.

#### Key Points:-

- (i) This year, the Major Dhyan Chand Lifetime Achievement Award was given to the winning team of the 1975 Men's World Cup, along with a cash prize of Rs 50 lakh. The Indian Men's Hockey team, captained by Ajit Pal Singh, defeated Pakistan in the finals of the 1975 Hockey World Cup held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
- (ii) Savita Punia was also named the Hockey India Baljit Singh Goalkeeper of the Year 2024 and received a cash prize of Rs 5 lakh.
- (iii) Prasara Bharati, the official broadcaster of the Hero Hockey India League 2024-25, received the Hockey India Jaman Lal Sharma Award for its

significant contribution in expanding the league's reach both in India and internationally.

## 2. Pravaig Dynamics Launches World's First E-TATV 'VEER' and Secures IDEX Award.

In March 2025, Bengaluru (Karnataka)-based Pravaig Dynamics Private Limited, an Electric Vehicle (EV) startup, unveiled VEER Electric Tactical All-Terrain Vehicle (E-TATV), the world's first operational EV designed for tactical defense use, including forward patrolling, reconnaissance, and Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) operations.

- **Atima Corporation Private Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary of Pravaig Dynamics based in New Delhi (Delhi), received the iDEX (Innovations for Defence Excellence) Award for advancing India's defense sovereignty through cutting-edge technologies.**

- **The VEER E-TATV is a military-grade vehicle featuring class-leading stealth, high power, and full field-repairability. It has successfully undergone military trials in challenging terrains and high altitudes, proving its operational readiness.**

- **Ensuring complete data ownership for India with no foreign control, it reinforces strategic autonomy. The vehicle boasts a top speed of 160 km/h, a range of over 500 km, a payload capacity of 690 kg, and a torque of 620 Nm.**

### Key Points:-

(i) In 2021, the Government of India (GOI) launched the iDEX Scheme with a budgetary allocation of Rs. 498.78 crore for five years, spanning from 2021-22 to 2025-26.

(ii) The award is conferred by the Defence

Innovation Organisation (DIO), under the Department of Defence Production (DoDP), the Ministry of Defence (MoD), and the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) of India.

(iii) The iDEX scheme aims to foster innovation and technology development in the defence sector, ensuring that India builds, owns, and operates its advanced defence systems. The award is considered the first step toward induction into the Indian Defence Services.

## 3. Indian Literary Theorist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak Honored with the 2025 Holberg Prize.

In March 2025, Indian literary theorist and postcolonial scholar Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak was announced as the recipient of the 2025 Holberg Prize. The award honors her pioneering contributions to postcolonial studies, feminist theory, and literary criticism.

- **The prestigious prize, worth USD 540,000 (Rs. 4.6 crore), will be conferred on June 5, 2025, at the University of Bergen, Norway, by Crown Prince Haakon of Norway.**

- **The Holberg Prize is an international award presented annually by the Norwegian government to scholars for outstanding contributions in arts, humanities, social sciences, law, and theology. Established in 2003 in honor of Danish-Norwegian writer Ludvig Holberg, it is often considered the equivalent of the Nobel Prize in these disciplines.**

### Key Points:-

(i) Born in West Bengal (WB), Gayatri Spivak became a University Professor in the Humanities at Columbia University, USA, in 2007. She is

widely known for translating Jacques Derrida's *De la Grammatologie* and her influential essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?*.

(ii) She received the Kyoto Prize in Arts and Philosophy in 2012, Japan's highest private award for lifetime achievement in arts and sciences. In 2013, she was honored with the Padma Bhushan, India's third-highest civilian award, for her contributions to Literature and Education.

(iii) Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has authored nine books, including *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (1987) and *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (1999). Her works have been translated into over 20 languages, shaping postcolonial studies worldwide.

#### 4. Sanmar Group Chairman Vijay Sankar Awarded Denmark's Knight's Cross for Consular Services.

In March 2025, Vijay Sankar, Chairman of Chennai-based Sanmar Group and Honorary Consul General of Denmark for Southern India, was awarded the 'Knight's Cross of the Order of Dannebrog' by His Majesty King Frederik André Henrik Christian of Denmark.

- The award was presented by Rasmus Abildgaard Kristensen, Ambassador of Denmark to India, in recognition of Sankar's exceptional consular services.

- Ambassador Kristensen praised Sankar for his significant role in strengthening Indo-Danish relations during his tenure.

#### Key Points:-

(i) In March 2018, Vijay Sankar was appointed the Honorary Consul General of Denmark in Chennai, with jurisdiction over Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh,

Telangana, Puducherry, and other regions.

(ii) He previously served as the Honorary Consul of Spain in Chennai for 10 years. He became a Director of Sanmar Group in 2021 and had been on its board from 1999 to 2004.

(iii) Vijay Sankar served as the President of the Indian Chemical Council from 2018 to 2020.

#### 5. President Droupadi Murmu Confers the 19th Ramnath Goenka Awards for Excellence in Journalism 2025.

On March 19, 2025, the 19th edition of the 'Ramnath Goenka Excellence in Journalism Awards' was held in New Delhi, where 27 journalists across 20 categories were honored for their exceptional work, including investigative journalism, sports, politics and government, books, feature writing, and regional languages.

- President Droupadi Murmu graced the event as the Chief Guest and presented the awards to the winners.

- The Ramnath Goenka Excellence in Journalism Awards were established in 2005 by the Indian Express Group, based in Noida (Uttar Pradesh), to honor its founder Ramnath Goenka on his birth centenary.

#### Key Points:-

(i) The awards recognize the courage and excellence of Print, Digital, and Broadcast journalists who maintain journalistic integrity despite political and economic challenges.

(ii) The awardees were presented with a citation, a trophy, and a cash prize of Rs. 1 lakh.

(iii) In 2025, Mridulika Jha of Aaj Tak received the Ramnath Goenka Award for Excellence in

Journalism for her impactful coverage of the "Dunki route", the illegal immigration pathway used by Haryana's youth to enter the United States.

#### 6. "RBI Wins UK's Digital Transformation Award 2025 for Technological Initiatives".

In March 2025, Mumbai (Maharashtra)-based India's central bank, Reserve Bank of India (RBI), was selected as the recipient of the Digital Transformation Award 2025 by London (United Kingdom, UK)-based Central Banking Publications.

- The RBI received this prestigious award in recognition of its technology-driven initiatives, specifically the 'Sarathi' and 'PRAVAAH (Platform for Regulatory Application, Validation, and Authorisation)' systems, developed by its in-house developer team.
- The award committee highlighted how these initiatives have significantly reduced the use of paper-based submissions, thereby transforming both internal and external processes of the RBI.
- The word 'Sarathi,' derived from Hindi meaning 'Charioteer,' is a system formally launched in 2023 to digitize all internal workflows of the RBI. It enables employees to securely store and share documents, enhancing record management and improving data analysis through reports and dashboards.

#### Key Points:-

- (i) Launched by RBI in 2024, 'PRAVAAH' (meaning 'smooth flow' in Hindi) is a centralized, secure web-based platform that enables individuals and entities to apply online for regulatory approvals, licenses, and authorizations.
- (ii) All submitted documents are stored in the

Sarathi database and managed digitally across RBI's offices with centralized cybersecurity systems and digital tracking. Since its launch, the platform has digitized over 70 regulatory applications across 9 departments, with over 2,000 applications filed by the end of 2024, marking an 80% increase in monthly submissions due to its user-friendly interface.

(iii) The 12th annual industry awards recognize excellence in the central banking community, featuring 16 central bank categories and 15 partner and service provider categories. The official award ceremony is scheduled for June 2025 at One Whitehall Place, London (UK).

### IMPORTANT DAYS

#### 1. International Day of Mathematics Observed on 14 March 2025.

International Day of Mathematics (IDM) is observed annually on 14th March across the globe to highlight the significance of mathematics in various fields, including Artificial Intelligence (AI), climate change, energy, and sustainable development.

- This date was chosen as it aligns with Pi Day, representing the mathematical constant  $\pi$  (pi) approximately equal to 3.14.
- 14th March 2025 marks the observance of the 6th IDM.
- The theme of IDM 2025, "Mathematics, Art, and Creativity," celebrates the intersection of mathematical discovery and artistic expression, showcasing how mathematics inspires and enhances creative endeavors.

#### Key Points:-



- (i) The 40th General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), held in November 2019, officially proclaimed March 14 as the IDM.
- (ii) The first-ever IDM was observed on March 14, 2020.

(MAB).

- ii. Representatives from 20 countries decided that the International Day of Action would take place on 14 March, coinciding with Brazil's Day of Action Against Large Dams.
- (iii) The 1st International Day of Action for Rivers was observed on 14 March 1998.

## 2. International Day of Action for Rivers Observed on 14 March 2025.

The International Day of Action for Rivers is annually observed on 14 March worldwide to raise awareness about the importance of rivers and the need to protect them. This Day highlights the significance of rivers in sustaining life and ecosystems, recognizes the tireless efforts of communities that protect and restore rivers, and promotes the sustainable management of water resources.

- 14 March 2025 marks the observance of the 28th International Day of Action for Rivers.
- The 2025 theme of the International Day of Action for Rivers is "Our Rivers, Our Future," which emphasizes the crucial role rivers play in supporting planetary health and maintaining all life on Earth.
- The Day was previously known as International Day of Action Against Dams and For Rivers, Water, and Life.

### Key Points:-

- (i) The International Day of Action Against Dams and For Rivers, Water, and Life was adopted by the participants of the 1st International Meeting of People Affected by Dams (IMPAD) in 1997 in Curitiba, Brazil. The idea for the 1st IMPAD originated during an annual meeting of Brazil's Movement of People Affected by Large Dams

## 3. International Day of Happiness Celebrated on 20 March 2025.

The United Nations (UN) observes the International Day of Happiness annually on March 20 to emphasize the significance of well-being and happiness in people's lives. The day promotes inclusive, equitable, and balanced economic growth while advocating for sustainable development and poverty eradication.

- Theme of International Day of Happiness 2025: "Caring and Sharing".
- In 2012, the UN General Assembly (UNGA) adopted resolution A/RES/66/281, officially designating March 20 as the International Day of Happiness each year.
- The resolution was proposed by Bhutan, a country that has prioritized national happiness over national income since the early 1970s. The first-ever International Day of Happiness was celebrated on March 20, 2013.

### Key Points:-

- (i) According to the World Happiness Report (WHR) 2025, Finland remains the happiest country in the world for the 8th consecutive year, followed by Denmark, Iceland, and Sweden.
- (ii) India has improved its ranking to 118th place

(up from 126th in 2024), though it still reflects low levels of happiness.

#### 4. World Oral Health Day Observed on 20 March 2025.

World Oral Health Day (WOHD) is observed annually on March 20 across the globe to raise awareness about the importance of oral health and to support efforts aimed at reducing the burden of oral diseases on individuals, health systems, and economies.

- This day also empowers individuals with the knowledge and tools to prevent and control oral diseases, which affect 3.5 billion people worldwide.
- The global observance is led by the FDI World Dental Federation (Fédération Dentaire Internationale - FDI), bringing together the world of dentistry to achieve optimal oral health for everyone.
- World Oral Health Day Campaign Theme for 2024-2026: "A Happy Mouth is... A Happy Mind."

##### Key Points:-

- (i) WOHD was first declared in 2007 and was originally celebrated on September 12, the birth date of FDI founder Dr. Charles Godon.
- (ii) In 2013, the observance date was changed to March 20 to avoid conflict with the FDI World Dental Congress taking place in September.

#### 5. International Day to Combat Islamophobia 2025 Observed on March 15.

The United Nations (UN) annually observes the International Day to Combat Islamophobia on March 15 to raise awareness and combat hate

crimes, discrimination, and intolerance against Muslims.

- March 15, 2025, marks the 3rd International Day to Combat Islamophobia.
- On March 15, 2022, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted resolution A/RES/76/254, proclaiming March 15 of every year as the International Day to Combat Islamophobia.
- The resolution was introduced by Pakistan's UN envoy Munir Akram on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) under the agenda item "Culture of Peace".

##### Key Points:-

- (i) The inaugural observance of the day took place on March 15, 2023.
- (ii) The OIC (formerly Organization of the Islamic Conference) is the world's second-largest inter-governmental organization, following the United Nations (UN), with 57 member states spanning four continents.

#### 6. UN French Language Day Observed on 20 March 2025.

The United Nations (UN) French Language Day is annually observed worldwide on March 20 to promote multilingualism, cultural diversity, and the equal recognition of the six official languages of the UN.

- The day is also recognized by the International Organization of La Francophonie (OIF) as the International Day of La Francophonie or International Francophonie Day.

- "Francophonie" refers to the global community of individuals who share French as a common language.

**Key Points:-**

- (i) Theme: 'I educate myself, therefore I act'.
- (ii) The theme emphasizes the importance of providing equitable access to quality education for all, especially in a world shaped by rapid technological advancements.

**7. World Consumer Rights Day Observed on 15 March 2025.**

World Consumer Rights Day (WCRD) is observed annually across the globe on March 15 to raise global awareness about consumer rights, protection, and empowerment.

- Consumers are the economy's backbone; safeguarding their rights ensures ethical practices and empowers informed choices.
- The theme for WCRD 2025 is "A Just Transition to Sustainable Lifestyles."

**Key Points:-**

- (i) World Consumer Rights Day (WCRD) was inspired by a special message sent by John F. Kennedy, the former President of the United States of America (USA), to the USA Congress on March 15, 1962.
- (ii) He became the first world leader to formally recognize the importance of consumer rights on a global stage.
- (iii) The first-ever WCRD was observed on March 15, 1983.

**DEFENCE****1. Union MoS Bhupathiraju Srinivasa Varma Unveils R&D Initiatives under SRTMI.**

On March 12, 2025, Union Minister of State (MoS) Bhupathiraju Srinivasa Varma, Ministry of Steel and Ministry of Heavy Industries (MoHI), launched three Research and Development (R&D) schemes and the 'SteelCollab' web portal under the Steel Research Technology Mission of India (SRTMI) to enhance steel sector innovation. The launch took place during the event "Catalyzing R&D in the Indian Steel Sector" in New Delhi (Delhi).

- The launched schemes include the Challenge Method, Open Innovation Method, and Start-up Accelerator Scheme, each designed to address critical challenges, encourage research, and support emerging steel technologies.
- Key steel companies such as Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL), Jindal Stainless Limited (JSL), Jindal Steel and Power Limited (JSPL), Jindal South West (JSW) Steel Limited, Tata Steel Limited, National Mineral Development Corporation (NMDC), Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited (RINL), and Metallurgical & Engineering Consultants (MECON) (India) Limited participated in the event.
- The initiative saw participation from leading research organizations, including Council of Scientific and Industrial Research-Institute of Minerals and Materials Technology (CSIR-IMMT) (Bhubaneswar, Odisha), the Swedish Energy Agency (Sweden), and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) (Philippines).

**Key Points:-**

- (i) The SteelCollab web portal was launched as a digital platform to connect industry leaders, academia, researchers, and startups for

collaboration on decarbonization, digitalization, and advanced steel development.

(ii) The Challenge Method Scheme aims to tackle critical steel industry challenges like improving plant efficiency and reducing carbon emissions. The Open Innovation Method Scheme promotes research collaboration between academia and the steel industry, while the Start-up Accelerator Scheme provides funding and mentorship to early-stage startups working on advanced steel technologies.

(iii) These initiatives focus on innovation, sustainability, and industry collaboration, supporting India's goal of achieving 300 million tonnes (MT) of steel production capacity by 2030.

(ii) ISRO Chairman V. Narayanan announced that the Government of India (GoI) has approved the ambitious 'Chandrayaan-5/LuPEX' mission during an event held in Chennai, TN. For this mission, GoI has collaborated with Japan.

(iii) The mission is a step towards achieving India's goal of landing on the Moon by 2040.

## 2. ISRO and SCL Collaborate to Develop 32-bit Microprocessors for Space Missions.

In March 2025, the Bengaluru (Karnataka)-based Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and Chandigarh (Punjab)-based Semiconductor Laboratory (SCL) successfully delivered the first production batch of two 32-bit microprocessors, 'VIKRAM3201' and 'KALPANA3201,' for space applications.

- These microprocessors were designed and developed by the Thiruvananthapuram (Kerala)-based Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC) of ISRO in collaboration with SCL.

- The microprocessors were handed over to Dr. V. Narayanan, Secretary of the Department of Space (DOS) and Chairman of ISRO, by S. Krishnan, Secretary of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), during a ceremony in New Delhi (Delhi).

### Key Points:-

(i) VIKRAM3201: India's first fully 'Make-in-India' 32-bit microprocessor, specifically designed for the extreme environmental conditions of launch vehicles. It was fabricated at SCL's 180-nanometer (nm) Complementary Metal-Oxide-Semiconductor (CMOS) semiconductor facility.

## SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

### 1. ISRO Successfully Conducts Flight Acceptance Hot Test of Cryogenic Engine for LVM3-M6 Mission.

In March 2025, Bengaluru (Karnataka)-based Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) successfully conducted the flight acceptance hot test of the indigenous CE20 cryogenic engine designated for the 6th operational mission of the LVM3 launch vehicle (LVM3-M6) at the ISRO Propulsion Complex (IPRC) in Mahendragiri, Tamil Nadu (TN).

- Cryogenic engines for every mission must undergo hot testing as part of their flight acceptance process.

### Key Points:-

(i) In the latest test, the engine was fired for a maximum duration of 100 seconds for the first time under non-vacuum conditions using the Nozzle Protection System.



(ii) KALPANA3201: A 32-bit microprocessor based on the SPARC V8 (Scalable Processor Architecture, version 8) Reduced Instruction Set Computing (RISC) microprocessor, adhering to the IEEE 1754 Instruction Set Architecture.

### 3. ISRO Successfully Achieves SpaDeX De-Docking, Key Milestone for Future Missions like Chandrayaan-4.

In March 2025, the Bengaluru (Karnataka)-based Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) achieved a major milestone in space technology by successfully completing the de-docking of its Space Docking Experiment (SpaDeX) satellites.

- This makes India the fourth country, after China, Russia, and the United States of America (USA), to demonstrate space docking technology.
- These advancements are crucial for future missions such as the Bharatiya Antariksha Station, human spaceflight (Gaganyaan), and lunar sample return missions (Chandrayaan-4).
- The SpaDeX mission was launched on December 30, 2024, aboard the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV)-C60 from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh (AP).

#### Key Points:-

- (i) The satellites, SDX-01 (Chaser) and SDX-02 (Target), were designed and developed by the Bengaluru-based U R Rao Satellite Centre (URSC) with support from multiple ISRO centers.
- (ii) Each satellite weighed 220 kilograms (kg) and was launched into orbit to test space docking capabilities. The docking was successfully carried out on January 16, 2025, demonstrating India's

growing expertise in orbital maneuvers.

- (iii) The de-docking process involved a series of planned operations, including the extension of SDX-02, the release of Capture Lever 3, the final disengagement of the Capture Lever, and decapture commands, resulting in flawless separation.

### 4. ISRO Chairman Dr. V. Narayanan Inaugurates 'Shri S. Ramakrishnan Centre of Excellence' at IIT Madras.

In March 2025, Dr. V. Narayanan, Chairman of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), inaugurated the 'Shri S. Ramakrishnan Centre of Excellence (CoE) in Fluid and Thermal Science Research' at the Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT-M), Chennai, Tamil Nadu.

- The centre is named after S. Ramakrishnan, the former Director of the Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre (LPSC) and Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC), Thiruvananthapuram, who made significant contributions to launch vehicle engineering.

#### Key Points:-

- (i) The 'Arcot Ramachandran Seminar Hall' was also inaugurated at IIT Madras by Professor Kamakoti.
- (ii) Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, Ministry of Railways (MoR), announced the development of the longest hyperloop test track at the IIT Madras, Thaiyur Campus in Chennai.
- (iii) The hyperloop features the world's longest student-run hyperloop infrastructure, with Asia's longest 410-meter tube developed by IIT Madras researchers in collaboration with the Ministry of Railways (MoR).

minutes of spacewalks.

### 5. NASA Astronauts Sunita Williams and Butch Wilmore Return to Earth After 9-Month Space Mission.

On March 19, 2025, Indian-American astronaut Sunita Lyn Williams and American astronaut Barry Butch E. Wilmore from NASA successfully returned to Earth after spending 9 months aboard the International Space Station (ISS).

- As part of NASA's Crew-9 rotation mission, the 4-person crew, which also included American astronaut Nick Hague and Russian cosmonaut Aleksandr Gorbunov, concluded their mission with a safe splashdown off the coast of Tallahassee in the Florida Panhandle, USA.
- Their return was facilitated by the SpaceX Crew Dragon capsule, following the arrival of Crew-10, launched on March 14, 2025, to relieve Crew-9.

#### Key Points:-

- (i) Sunita Williams, a distinguished NASA astronaut and retired USA Navy Captain, was selected by NASA in 1998. She has completed three space missions—Expeditions 14/15, 32/33, and 71/72—accumulating a total of 608 days in space. During Expedition 14, she set a record for female spacewalks, totaling 29 hours and 17 minutes.
- (ii) Williams ranks second for the most days spent in space by a U.S. astronaut, with 608 days and 20 minutes, after Peggy Whitson's 675 days.
- (iii) Barry E. Wilmore, also a retired USA Navy Captain, joined NASA in 2000 and has completed three spaceflights, totaling 464 days in space. He served as Flight Engineer during Expedition 41 and Commander of Expedition 42, logging 167 days aboard the ISS, with 31 hours and 60

### BOOKS & AUTHORS

#### 1. Justice P.N. Prakash Launches 'Memories and Milestones' to Commemorate 60 Years of Blue Cross of India.

On March 15, 2025, Justice P.N. Prakash, former judge of the Madras High Court (HC) and former Special Public Prosecutor of the National Investigation Agency (NIA), Government of India (GoI), released the book 'Memories and Milestones' in Chennai, Tamil Nadu (TN).

- The book, authored by historian V. Sriram and Lashman, chronicles the 60-year journey of the Blue Cross of India.
- The event was attended by Maneka Sanjay Gandhi, animal rights activist and environmentalist; A. L. Somayaji, former Advocate General of the TN government; Dr. Chinny Krishna, co-founder of Blue Cross of India and recipient of the Praani Mitra Award, India's highest honor for animal welfare, awarded by the Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI).

#### Key Points:-

- (i) Established in 1964 and headquartered in Chennai (TN), Blue Cross is India's leading and most active animal welfare organization.
- (ii) The organization pioneered the Animal Birth Control (ABC) program, the world's first global initiative for the humane sterilization of street dogs.

#### 2. CSK Unveils Its Book "Leo: The Untold Story".

A new book titled "Leo - The Untold Story", written by senior advocate and former Tamil Nadu Cricket Association (TNCA) vice-president P.S. Raman, was officially unveiled in Chennai, Tamil Nadu.

- The book was launched by former Indian Test cricketer Chingleput Doraikannu "C.D." Gopinath at a grand event, which was graced by former Chennai Super Kings (CSK) captain Mahendra Singh (M.S.) Dhoni.

#### Key Points:-

(i) During the launch event, musician Anirudh Ravichander was presented with the first copy of the book.

(ii) The book provides a deep and unique insight into the life, career, and lasting impact of M.S. Dhoni, shedding light on his journey both on and off the field, his contributions to Indian cricket, and his leadership of the CSK franchise.

### 3. Book Titled 'March of Glory' Unveiled to Celebrate Golden Jubilee of India's 1975 Hockey World Cup Victory.

In March 2025, the book titled 'March to Glory: The Story of India's 1975 World Cup Triumph' was released to commemorate the Golden Jubilee of India's first-ever victory in the Hockey World Cup. India defeated Pakistan in the final of the 1975 tournament held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The book was published by Hockey Citizen Group.

- The book has been co-authored by hockey historian K. Arumugam, co-founder of the Non-Government Organisation (NGO) One Thousand Hockey Legs (OTHL), and eminent journalist Errol D'Cruz.

#### Key Points:-

(i) The book features detailed match statistics along with over 250 rare photographs capturing both on-field and off-field moments from the tournament.

(ii) It narrates the journey of Ajit Pal Singh and his determined teammates as they battled fiercely to secure India's historic World Cup victory in Malaysia.

## OBITUARY

### 1. Renowned Odia Poet and Padma Bhushan Awardee Ramakanta Rath Dies.

In March 2025, Ramakanta Rath, the renowned Odia poet and Padma Bhushan awardee, passed away at the age of 90 in Bhubaneswar, Odisha. Born on 13 December 1934 in Cuttack, he was a distinguished modernist poet and former civil servant.

- Rath joined the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) in 1957 and held several significant positions, retiring as the Chief Secretary of Odisha in 1992.

- Known for his philosophical and modernist approach to Odia poetry, he explored themes of mysticism, existentialism, and the human condition.

- His notable works include "Kete Dinara" (1962), "Aneka Kothari" (1967), and "Sri Radha" (1984), the latter earning him the Saraswati Samman in 1992.

#### Key Points:-

(i) Ramakanta Rath's magnum opus, "Sri Radha," delves into the spiritual complexities of Radha's devotion to Krishna.

(ii) He served as the Vice-President and later as the President of the Sahitya Akademi, promoting

regional languages and Indian literature on national and international stages.

(iii) His contributions were recognized with multiple prestigious awards, including the Sahitya Akademi Award, Sarala Award, and the Padma Bhushan in 2006 for his exceptional contributions to literature.

## 2. Arvind Singh Mewar, Member of the Former Royal Family of Mewar & Chairman of HRH Group of Hotels, Passes Away.

In March 2025, Arvind Singh Mewar, a prominent member of the erstwhile royal family of Mewar and a descendant of the Rajput king Maharana Pratap, passed away at the age of 81 at the City Palace in Udaipur, Rajasthan. Born on December 13, 1944, in Udaipur, he was the Chairman of the Historic Resort Hotels (HRH) group of hotels in Udaipur and the Chairman and Managing Trustee of the Maharana of Mewar Charitable Foundation (MMCF), Udaipur.

- Mewar was an active cricketer during the 1960s and 1970s, making his debut in the Ranji Trophy (Rajasthan) in December 1961.
- The second son of the late Bhagwat Singh Mewar, he was the 76th Custodian of the House of Mewar and was popularly known as Shriji.
- Under his leadership, 'The Cricket Institute, Udaipur' was established, promoting sports and athletes in the region.

### Key Points:-

(i) To encourage professional polo in the UK, Mewar created 'The Udaipur Cup' at the Cambridge and Newmarket Polo Club in England

and formed the Mewar Polo team in Udaipur. His Mewar Polo team made history by defeating the 61st Cavalry players in the 1991 President's Cup, leaving a lasting legacy in Indian polo.

(ii) Arvind Singh Mewar received several prestigious awards, including the 'Lifetime Achievement Award' (2021) from Hotelier India, the VIII Annual Gala WT Institution Award (2012) for 'Contribution to Universal Culture' at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in New York, USA, and the 'Agastya Award' (2001) from the Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI).

## 3. Former Union Minister Debendra Pradhan Passes Away.

In March 2025, Former Union Minister Debendra Pradhan, father of Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), passed away at the age of 84 in New Delhi (Delhi).

- He was born on 16 July 1941 in Nalam, Dhenkanal district, Orissa Province, British India (present-day Odisha, India).
- Dr. Debendra Pradhan was a prominent Indian politician and a founding member of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Odisha.
- He began his career as a medical officer in Talcher, Odisha. He joined the BJP in 1980 and served as the Odisha BJP state president and a national executive member of the BJP.

### Key Points:-

(i) Debendra Pradhan served as a Member of Parliament (MP) for two consecutive terms from 1998 to 2004, representing the Deogarh



constituency in Odisha.

(ii) During his tenure, he held the position of Minister of State (MoS) for Surface Transport from 1998 to 1999 and later as MoS for Agriculture from 1999 to 2001.

(iii) He also served as the National Vice President of the BJP between 2001 and 2002.

## ENVIRONMENT

### 1. New Eel Species Discovered Off Thoothukudi Coast Named in Honor of Tamil Language.

In March 2025, researchers at the Lucknow (Uttar Pradesh, UP)-based Indian Council of Agricultural Research-National Bureau of Fish Genetic Resources (ICAR-NBFGR) discovered a new species of Congrid eel off the Thoothukudi coast in Tamil Nadu (TN).

● The eel belongs to the genus *Ariosoma* and has been named *Tamilicum* in honor of the world's oldest language, 'Tamil'.

#### Key Points:-

(i) *Tamilicum* possesses unique features, including a dorsal surface of the head with a single whitish band across the anterior eye margin, a long vomerine teeth patch reaching half the length of the maxillary, and 120-129 total vertebrae.

(ii) This marks the 14th eel species discovered in Indian waters by the NBFGR team.

(iii) The species' identity was validated by international experts in eel taxonomy, and the findings were published in the international peer-reviewed journal *Zoo taxa*.