

WEEKLY
CURRENT
AFFAIRS
PDFs



February 2025



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NATIONAL AFFAIRS / GOVERNMENT SCHEME

1. Soil Health Cards Swasth Dharaa Khet Haraa Successfully Completed 10 Years.

On February 19, 2025, the Soil Health Card (SHC) scheme, launched by the Government of India (GoI) to support state governments in issuing soil health cards to all farmers across the country, completed 10 years of successful implementation.

- The scheme was officially introduced by Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi on February 19, 2015, in Suratgarh, Rajasthan.
- It is promoted by the Department of Agriculture & Cooperation (DA&C), Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare (MoA&FW), and implemented through the Department of Agriculture of all state and Union Territory (UT) governments.

Key Points:-

(i) The SHC provides the soil status based on 12 parameters, including macronutrients (Nitrogen (N), Phosphorus (P), Potassium (K), and Sulphur (S)), micronutrients (Zinc (Zn), Iron (Fe), Copper (Cu), Manganese (Mn), and Boron (B)), along with pH (Acidity or Basicity), Electrical Conductivity (EC), and Organic Carbon (OC).

(ii) Under the Soil Health Card (SHC) scheme, soil samples are collected twice a year—after the harvesting of Rabi and Kharif crops or when no crop is standing in the field. As of February 2025, a total of 24.74 crore SHCs have been generated, and 8,272 soil testing laboratories have been established across the country.

2. Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh Inaugurates India's First Open-Air Art Wall Museum.

In February 2025, Union Minister of State (MoS) (Independent Charge, IC) Dr. Jitendra Singh, Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) inaugurated India's first Open-Air Art Wall Museum at Mausam Bhawan, New Delhi, Delhi.

- This initiative marks the 150th anniversary of the India Meteorological Department (IMD), New Delhi, honoring its contributions to weather science.
- The project, developed by IMD and Delhi Street Art, has transformed the walls of IMD's headquarters on Lodhi Road, New Delhi into a vibrant display.
- This initiative is a first-of-its-kind effort, celebrating IMD's legacy and contributions through public art.

Key Points:-

(i) A total of 38 murals showcase key moments in weather forecasting, meteorological advancements, and their impact on society.

(iii) The murals depict significant weather events in India's history, advancements in meteorological technology like satellites and radars, and highlight IMD's role in disaster management, agriculture, daily life, and its efforts in issuing early warnings for cyclones, monsoons, and extreme weather conditions.

(iii) Delhi Street Art was founded by Late Yogesh Saini.

3. Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal Inaugurates Inland Waterways Transport Institute (IWTI) at Jogighopa, Assam.

In February 2025, Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal, Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways (MoPSW), inaugurated the Inland Waterways Terminal (IWT) at Jogighopa in the Bongaigaon

district of Assam, situated along the Brahmaputra River. To mark the occasion, the Motor Vessel (MV) Trishul, MV Padma Navigation II, along with barges Ajay and Dikshu, were flagged off carrying 110 metric tonnes (mt) of coal and stone chips to Bangladesh.

- The new terminal aims to enhance logistics and connectivity in Eastern India while promoting trilateral trade between India, Bangladesh, and Bhutan.

Key Points:-

- (i) The project, costing Rs. 82.03 crores, was managed by the National Highways & Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL), New Delhi, under the Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI), MoPSW.
- (ii) The terminal features a Reinforced Cement Concrete (RCC) Jetty and an Electric Level Luffing Crane for efficient cargo handling.
- (iii) Located 91 km from Gelephu (Bhutan), 108 km from the Bangladesh border, and 147 km from Guwahati, the terminal is projected to handle 1.1 million tonnes of cargo annually by 2027.

4. UP Assembly Becomes the First in India to Introduce Translation Facility.

In February 2025, the Uttar Pradesh (UP) Assembly made history by becoming the first legislative body in India to introduce a translation facility.

- This service will allow discussions in Awadhi, Braj, Bhojpuri, Bundelkhand, and English, enhancing accessibility and inclusivity in legislative proceedings.

- The initiative was reviewed by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister (CM), Yogi Adityanath, who observed translation rehearsals in various languages.

Key Points:-

- (i) The service was introduced on February 18, 2025, during the assembly session, pending approval from the House of Suit.
- (ii) Members can now select the appropriate channel at their seat to listen to live translations in their earplugs in any of the four regional dialects (Awadhi, Braj, Bundeli, and Bhojpuri).

5. NITI Aayog Recently Forms Committee to Draft a Transformation Plan for AIIMS.

NITI Aayog, based in New Delhi, has formed a committee to develop a comprehensive plan aimed at transforming the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in New Delhi, Delhi, into a premier institution for medical practice and research.

- The committee, chaired by Dr. V K Paul, a member of NITI Aayog, will evaluate the existing systems and propose comprehensive reforms with defined timelines.
- The committee has been tasked with identifying ways to strengthen governance systems, create Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for clinical, academic, and research excellence, and propose strategies to improve patient management. Additionally, it will examine methods to ensure financial stability and independence for AIIMS operations.
- NITI Aayog, in collaboration with the Centre for Social and Economic Progress (CSEP) Research Foundation, aims to evaluate the experiences of

countries that have implemented Universal Health Coverage (UHC) systems to derive insights and policy recommendations for India.

Key Points:-

- (i) To improve healthcare delivery, accessibility, quality, and affordability, the draft paper suggests several multifaceted finance strategies that address both supply-side and demand-side issues.
- (ii) The Ayushman Bharat scheme, launched in 2018, has played a crucial role in reducing financial burdens for families.
- (iii) The government aims to strengthen these programs further through policy interventions and stakeholder consultations.

6. Datia Airport Recently Becomes Madhya Pradesh's 8th Public Airport with DGCA License.

On February 22, 2025, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), under the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MOCA), granted Datia Airport, located in Datia, Madhya Pradesh (MP), a public aerodrome license under the 3C/Visual Flight Rules (VFR) category.

- With this approval, Datia Airport has now become the 8th public airport in Madhya Pradesh, enhancing regional connectivity and supporting economic development in the Datia region.
- The other licensed public airports in Madhya Pradesh are Raja Bhoj International Airport (Bhopal Airport) in Bhopal, Devi Ahilya Bai Holkar Airport (Indore Airport) in Indore, Rajmata Vijaya Raje Scindia Air Terminal (Gwalior Airport) in Gwalior, Dumna Airport (Jabalpur Airport) in Jabalpur, Khajuraho

Airport in Khajuraho, Rewa Airport in Rewa, and Satna Airport in Satna.

Key Points:-

- (i) Datia Airport spans approximately 118 acres, featuring a 1810-meter-long and 30-meter-wide runway, a 768 square meter terminal building with a capacity of 100 passengers per hour, and an apron designed to accommodate two ATR-72 (Avions de Transport Régional / Aerei da Trasporto Regionale) aircraft.
- (ii) The airport features modern infrastructure, including X-ray machines, Explosive Trace Detection (ETD), Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) systems, Door Frame Metal Detector (DFMD), Handheld Metal Detector (HHMD), walkie-talkies, Radiotelephony (RT) sets, and a baggage handling system, ensuring passenger convenience and security.
- (iii) It offers various passenger facilities, such as Televisions (TVs), a Flight Information Display System (FIDS), a Public Address (PA) system, a reserved lounge, and Wireless Fidelity (Wi-Fi). Additionally, it houses an Emergency Response Centre (ERC) equipped with a fire truck and an ambulance for emergency situations.

7. Desh Ka Prakriti Parikshan Abhiyaan Recently Sets 5 Guinness World Records in Its 1st Phase.

In February 2025, the Desh Ka Prakriti Parikshan Abhiyaan, under the Ministry of AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homoeopathy), achieved five Guinness World Records, highlighting India's dedication to holistic healthcare and the global recognition of Ayurveda.

- The National Commission for Indian System of Medicine (NCISM), based in New Delhi, Delhi, with support from the Ministry of AYUSH, celebrated the successful completion of the first phase of the Abhiyaan in Mumbai, Maharashtra. During the closing ceremony, the campaign surpassed its target, reaching over 1.29 crore individuals against the initial goal of 1 crore.

- The Desh Ka Prakriti Parikshan initiative aims to bring Ayurveda to every individual's doorstep by educating people about their unique Prakriti, or Ayurvedic body type. It was launched on Ayurveda Day, on October 29, 2024.

Key Points:-

(i) The Desh Ka Prakriti Parikshan Abhiyaan achieved five Guinness World Records, including 6,004,912 pledges for the most pledges received for a health campaign in one week, 13,892,976 pledges for both the most pledges in one month and overall, 62,525 photos for the largest online photo album of people displaying a digital certificate, and 12,798 videos for the largest online video album of people saying the same sentence.

(ii) This achievement involved 1,81,667 volunteers, including 1,33,758 Ayurveda students, 16,155 teachers, and 31,754 physicians, setting a world record in itself.

(iii) Richard Williams Stenning, the Guinness World Records adjudicator, officially announced the successful completion of all five records and presented the certificates to Union Minister of State (MoS) (Independent Charge, IC) Jadhav Prataprao Ganpatrao, Ministry of AYUSH, in Mumbai.

8. Union Minister Manohar Lal Khattar Chairs Regional Meeting of Power Sector 2025; AEML Secures Top Spot in 3 National Rankings.

On February 20, 2025, the Regional Meeting of Power Sector was convened in New Delhi (Delhi) and was chaired by Union Minister Manohar Lal Khattar, Ministry of Power (MoP) and Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), alongside Union Minister of State (MoS) Shripad Yesso Naik, MoP and Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE).

- During the meeting, the 13th Integrated Ratings, the 4th edition of the CSRD Report, and the Distribution Utilities Ranking (DUR) Reports for Financial Year 2023-24 (FY24) were released, highlighting the top-performing distribution utilities across India.

- The meeting discussed strategies for a financially viable power sector, including privatization, tariff rationalization, and support for Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) and Pumped Storage Projects (PSP).

- The meeting was attended by senior officials, including the Union Power Secretary, Additional Chief Secretaries, Secretaries, Principal Secretaries (Power/Energy) from participating States, and Chairmen & Managing Directors (CMDs) of Central and State Power Utilities.

Key Points:-

(i) Mumbai (Maharashtra)-based Adani Electricity Mumbai Limited (AEML) topped the ratings by New Delhi (Delhi)-based Power Finance Corporation Limited (PFC) for the third consecutive year in recognition of operational excellence.

(ii) AEML also earned an A+ rating from New Delhi (Delhi)-based Rural Electrification Corporation

(REC) in recognition of exceptional customer service, while 15 DISCOMs secured the "A" grade.

(iii) The first edition of the Distribution Utilities Ranking (DUR) Report for FY 2023-24 was launched, where AEML ranked as Number 1, followed by TPDDL and NPCL, recognized as the best-performing DISCOMs.

9. 9th Asia Economic Dialogue (AED) Recently Organised in Pune, Maharashtra by MEA and PIC.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and Pune International Centre (PIC) Recently Organised 9th Edition of Asia Economic Dialogue (AED) in Pune, Maharashtra

- **Theme: 'Economic Resilience and Resurgence in an Era of Fragmentation'.**
- **The 9th edition of Asia Economic Dialogue (AED), an annual flagship 'Track 1.5 Dialogue' on geoeconomics, was held from February 20 to 22, 2025, at Pune International Centre (PIC) in Pune, Maharashtra.**

Key Points:-

(i) The dialogue, organized by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) in collaboration with Pune International Centre (PIC), focused on addressing the complexities of economic fragmentation and identifying actionable pathways for resilience and resurgence.

(ii) The key focus areas of the 9th edition of the Asia Economic Dialogue (AED) included Artificial Intelligence (AI), Cyber Security, African Transformation, Blue Economy, International Monetary System (IMS), Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), and Climate

Change. These sectors were explored in depth to address the complexities of economic fragmentation and to identify actionable pathways for resilience and resurgence in the global economy.

(iii) The dialogue brought together a diverse group of academicians, policymakers, and industry experts from various countries, including Australia, Egypt, Indonesia, Japan, Nepal, the Netherlands, Singapore, South Africa, and Sri Lanka.

10. 139 Artists Break World Record with 24-Hour Dance Marathon at Khajuraho Dance Festival in Madhya Pradesh.

In February 2025, 139 classical dancers achieved a 'Guinness World Record' by performing continuously for over 24 hours, 9 minutes, and 26 seconds during the grand 'Classical Dance Relay Marathon' at the inauguration of the 51st Khajuraho Dance Festival in Madhya Pradesh (MP).

- **The marathon, held from February 19-20, 2025, was inaugurated by the Chief Minister (CM) of MP, Mohan Yadav.**

Key Points:-

(i) The marathon featured captivating performances of classical dance forms, including Kathak, Bharatnatyam, Kuchipudi, Mohiniyattam, and Odissi.

(ii) This monumental achievement was registered in the name of MP, with the Guinness World Records team declaring it a world record and presenting the certificate to CM, Mohan Yadav.

(iii) The 51st Khajuraho Dance Festival, held from February 20 to 26, 2025, celebrates and promotes

Indian classical dance forms, attracting artists and audiences from around the world.

11. Bhutanese PM Dasho Tshering Tobgay Visits India to Strengthen Ties and Attend SOUL Leadership Conclave 2025.

The Prime Minister (PM) of Bhutan His Excellency (HE) Dasho Tshering Tobgay visited India from February 20 to 21, 2025, to participate in the inaugural 'Leadership Conclave of the School of Ultimate Leadership (SOUL)' and to strengthen the unique and historical partnership.

- During his visit, he held bilateral meetings with the PM of India, Narendra Modi, reinforcing the tradition of regular high-level exchanges between the two nations.

Key Points:-

(i) On February 21, 2025, PM Narendra Modi inaugurated the inaugural 'SOUL Leadership Conclave 2025' at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi (Delhi).

(ii) PM of Bhutan, Dasho Tshering Tobgay, graced the event and delivered the keynote address as the Guest of Honor.

(iii) The two-day SOUL Leadership Conclave, from February 21 to 22, 2025, served as a premier platform for leaders across diverse fields, including politics, sports, arts, media, spirituality, public policy, business, and social sectors, to share their inspiring journeys and discuss leadership insights.

12. PM Narendra Modi Released the 19th Installment of the PM-KISAN Scheme in Bihar.

On February 24, 2025, Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi released the 19th installment of the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) scheme in Bhagalpur, Bihar.

- With the release of the 19th installment, more than 9.8 crore farmers, including 2.41 crore female farmers across the country, are estimated to benefit from the scheme and will receive direct financial assistance exceeding Rs 22,000 crore through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT).

Key Points:-

(i) It is a Central Sector Scheme (CSS) launched in 2019 and is being implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare (MoA&FW).

(ii) In February 2025, the Ministry of Finance (MoF) allocated Rs 63,500 crore for the scheme in the Union Budget for Financial Year 2025-26 (FY26), which is the same as estimated for FY25.

13. Ministry of AYUSH Honored Ayurveda Stalwarts with 'National Dhanwantri Ayurveda Awards'.

In February 2025, the Ministry of AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga, and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homoeopathy) bestowed the prestigious 'National Dhanwantari Ayurveda Awards' for 2025 on three distinguished practitioners in recognition of their outstanding contributions to the field of traditional Indian medicine.

- The awardees for the National Dhanwantari Ayurveda Awards 2025 include Vaidya Tara Chand Sharma, Vaidya Maya Ram Uniyal, and Vaidya Sameer Govind Jamadagni.

- The awards were conferred by Union Minister of State (MoS) (Independent Charge, IC) Jadhav

Prataprao Ganpatrao, Ministry of AYUSH, and MoS, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoH&FW), to the three recipients during an event held in Mumbai, Maharashtra.

- Vaidya Tara Chand Sharma, known for his mastery as a Nadi Vaidya, is also a distinguished author.

Key Points:-

(i) Vaidya Maya Ram Uniyal, an eminent scholar of Dravyaguna Vigyana with over 60 years of service, has been honoured with the Vanoushadi Vanaspati and Lifetime Achievement Awards, further consolidating his legacy in raising Ayurveda's stature worldwide.

(ii) Vaidya Sameer Govind Jamadagni, founder of the Vishwa Vyakhyanamala national conference and Vishwa Ayurveda Prabodhini, has over 40 years of experience in the field of Ayurveda.

(iii) Instituted by the Ministry of AYUSH, Government of India (GoI), the National Dhanwantari Ayurveda Award recognises the stalwarts who have dedicated their lives to Ayurveda. Each awardee receives a citation, a trophy featuring the Statue of Lord Dhanwantari, and a cash prize of Rs 5 lakh.

14. Union Minister Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya Inaugurates Regional Dialogue on Social Justice in New Delhi.

On February 24, 2025, Union Minister Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya, Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoL&E) and Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MYAS), inaugurated the two-day Regional Dialogue on Social Justice and the 74th Foundation Day of the Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) in New Delhi, Delhi.

- Union Minister of State (MoS) Shobha Karandlaje, MoL&E; Sumita Dawra, Secretary, MoL&E; and Gilbert F. Hounghbo, Director-General (DG) of the International Labour Organization (ILO) were also present at the event.

- The Global Coalition for Social Justice, launched by the ILO in November 2023, has gathered 336 partners, including 90 governments, to promote policy coherence and actions for advancing social justice globally.

- During the event, the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS), India's largest workers' association, joined the Global Coalition for Social Justice. BMS, along with the Confederation of Indian Industry-Employers' Federation of India (CII-EFI), presented a Joint Statement on Responsible Business Conduct.

Key Points:-

(i) Several key publications were launched during the event, including Best Practices on Responsible Business Conduct in India, Position Paper on Transforming India's Social Protection Landscape through Data Pooling, and Shram Samarth: A Journey to Excellence. Additionally, an exhibition showcased the use of technology in labour welfare, social security, and industrial safety.

(ii) The event also commemorated the 74th Foundation Day of the ESIC, featuring an award ceremony that recognized outstanding achievements within the organization.

(ii) As per the World Social Protection Report (WSPR) 2024, India's social protection coverage has risen from 24.4% to 48.8%.

15. ICG Conducts Security Exercise 'Sagar Kavach' in West Bengal (WB).

In February 2025, a two-day coastal security exercise, 'Sagar Kavach', was conducted in West Bengal (WB). The exercise was coordinated by the Kolkata (WB)-based Coast Guard Region (North East, NE). The State Coastal Security Operation Centre (SCSOC) at Headquarters Coast Guard District No. 8, Haldia, served as the nerve centre for the exercise.

- The drill validated coastal security Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) across the 158-kilometre (km) coastline.

Key Points:-

- (i) The exercise included simulated scenarios such as hijacking of fishing boats, smuggling, Improvised Explosive Device (IED) planting, and attacks on vital assets.
- (ii) It also featured coordinated sea and air surveillance by the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) to enhance readiness against terror threats.

16. Union Minister Manohar Lal Inaugurates Prakriti 2025 Conference.

On 24 February 2025, Union Minister Manohar Lal, Ministry of Power (MoP) and Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) inaugurated Prakriti 2025, an international conference on carbon markets, in New Delhi, Delhi.

- The conference was organized by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) under MoP.
- The event aimed to raise awareness, knowledge, and resources to drive transformational climate initiatives and promote a sustainable, low-carbon future.

Key Points:-

- (i) Union Minister Manohar Lal emphasized the importance of switching to renewable energy (RE) to reduce reliance on fossil fuels and achieve emissions targets.
- (ii) He also highlighted India's cultural heritage and traditional practices, such as Ganga Deep Puja and Govardhan Puja, as examples of India's ecological sensitivity, complementing modern sustainability efforts.
- (iii) Carbon reduction targets will be implemented gradually, with a 40% reduction by 2027 and the remaining by 2030.

17. PM Narendra Modi recently embarks on a 3-day visit to Madhya Pradesh, Bihar & Assam, inaugurates key projects and summits.

The Prime Minister (PM) of India, Narendra Modi, recently embarked on a 3-day visit to Madhya Pradesh (MP), Bihar, and Assam from February 23 to 25, 2025.

- During his visit, the PM inaugurated and laid the foundation for key infrastructure projects, attended important summits, and participated in cultural programs aimed at promoting the development and welfare of each state.

Key Points:-

- (i) PM Narendra Modi recently laid the foundation stone for the 'Bageshwar Dham Medical and Science Research Institute' in Garha village, Chhatarpur district, MP, and inaugurated the 'Global Investors Summit (GIS) 2025' in Bhopal, MP.
- (ii) In Bihar, PM Narendra Modi recently launched

the '19th installment of the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) Scheme', providing financial support to farmers nationwide.

(iii) While in Assam, PM Narendra Modi recently attended the 'Jhumoir Binandini (Mega Jhumoir) 2025' and inaugurated the 'Advantage Assam 2.0 Summit 2025' in Guwahati, Assam.

18. SWAYATT Initiative on GeM Marks 6 Years of Transformative Impact.

In February 2025, the Government e-Marketplace (GeM), Department of Commerce (DoC), Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoC&I), celebrated 6 years of the Startups, Women & Youth Advantage through e-Transactions (SWAYATT) initiative at its headquarters in New Delhi, Delhi.

- Launched on February 19, 2019, by MoC&I, the SWAYATT initiative aims to promote the participation of women-led enterprises and youth in public procurement.

Key Points:-

(i) The initiative is a part of GeM's foundational pillar of social inclusion, which is committed to improving ease of doing business and establishing direct market linkages to annual procurement for startups, women entrepreneurs, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), Self-Help Groups (SHGs), and youth, especially those from backward sections of society.

(ii) During the event, GeM signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with New Delhi-based FICCI-Ladies Organisation (FLO), a division of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI).

(iii) Through this MoU, GeM aims to provide direct access for women entrepreneurs with government buyers, sans intermediaries, ensuring better product prices, generating job opportunities, and promoting inclusive growth.

19. CUNPK Hosts Inaugural 'Conference for Women Peacekeepers from the Global South' in New Delhi.

CUNPK hosted the first-ever 'Conference on Women Peacekeepers from the Global South' at the Manekshaw Centre in New Delhi (Delhi) from February 24 to 25, 2025. The conference was organized by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) in collaboration with the Ministry of Defence (MoD). The theme of the conference was "Women in Peacekeeping: A Global South Perspective".

- The event united women peacekeepers from 35 leading Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs) from the Global South, along with senior policymakers from the United Nations (UN).

- The conference featured sessions on topics such as addressing sexual exploitation and abuse, leveraging technology in peacekeeping, and promoting regional cooperation among Global South nations.

- Key dignitaries at the conference included the President of India, Droupadi Murmu, and External Affairs Minister (EAM) Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, who both participated and delivered the keynote address. The UN was represented by Jean-Pierre Lacroix, UN Under-Secretary-General (SG), and Christian Saunders, UN Special Coordinator.

Key Points:-

(i) India has been a key contributor to UN peacekeeping missions for over 70 years,

providing nearly 300,000 troops across 50 missions since the 1950s and pioneering the deployment of women peacekeepers, including the first all-women Formed Police Unit (FPU) in 2007, which served in Liberia until 2016.

(ii) Dr. Kiran Bedi made history as the first female UN Police Advisor, serving from 2003 to 2005, further solidifying India's leadership in peacekeeping operations.

(iii) The Centre for United Nations Peacekeeping (CUNPK), established in 2000 by the Indian Army (IA) with support from the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), is dedicated to enhancing India's contributions to UN peacekeeping and offers comprehensive training programs for both Indian and international military personnel.

20. IIT Madras Launches India's First Hyperloop Test Track.

In February 2025, India marked a significant achievement in transportation with the unveiling of its first hyperloop test track at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras in Chennai (Tamil Nadu, TN). The 422-meter-long facility was developed with support from the Ministry of Railways (MoR). This test track is part of a broader initiative to develop a full-scale Hyperloop system, with the Mumbai-Pune corridor being a key candidate for the first commercial project.

- **Hyperloop technology, first proposed by Elon Musk in 2013, aims to revolutionize long-distance travel by drastically reducing travel times.**

- **The hyperloop technology utilizes a magnetically levitated pod inside a vacuum tube to eliminate**

friction and air resistance, potentially reducing travel time between New Delhi (Delhi) and Jaipur (Rajasthan) – approximately 300 kilometers – to just 30 minutes.

- **This high-speed transport system offers benefits such as immunity to weather conditions, collision-free travel, speeds twice that of airplanes, and low energy consumption.**

Key Points:-

(i) The Hyperloop is a high-speed transportation system that uses capsules or pods traveling through vacuum-sealed tubes, reaching speeds of up to 1,100 km/hour.

(ii) The hyperloop system uses vacuum-sealed tubes to reduce air resistance, electromagnetic propulsion for high-speed travel, and capsules equipped with advanced life support systems for safety and comfort.

(iii) The Ministry of Railways (MoR) has already granted IIT Madras Rs. 8.7 crore (approximately USD 1 million) twice for the hyperloop project's development and has provided an additional USD 1 million grant, marking the third such contribution to accelerate the project's progress.

21. Australia Commits USD 16 Million to Enhance Economic Relations with India.

The strategy focuses on four key "superhighways of growth" where Australia holds a competitive advantage: clean energy, education and skills, agribusiness, and tourism.

- **The initiative aims to enhance cooperation in key sectors such as defence, sports, culture, space, and technology, reinforcing mutual economic resilience.**

- An additional USD 4 million will be allocated to expand the Maitri (Friendship) Grants Program, which aims to strengthen business, cultural, and people-to-people relations between Australia and India.
- The roadmap was developed through extensive consultations across every Australian state and territory, along with key stakeholders in India.

Key Points:-

- (i) The initiative seeks to generate long-term economic benefits for both countries by fostering collaboration and investment, assisting businesses in navigating India's dynamic and growing market.
- (ii) India is projected to become the third-largest economy by 2030. The strategy aligns with India's economic trajectory, with Australia working to strengthen ties with Indian businesses and communities, recognizing the immense trade and investment potential.

22. Bisleri Partners with ASI for Heritage Water Conservation Through MoU.

In February 2025, Mumbai (Maharashtra)-based Bisleri International Private Limited entered into a strategic collaboration by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), Ministry of Culture (MoC), under the 'Adopt a Heritage 2.0 (AAH 2.0) Programme'.

- The MoU was officially signed by Zulfeqar Ali, Director of ASI, and Angelo George, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Bisleri International, followed by the formal exchange of the agreement between Yadubir

Singh Rawat, Director General (DG) of ASI, and Angelo George.

- The partnership, under ASI's 'AAH 2.0 Programme' and Bisleri's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative 'Nayi Umeed', begins with the adoption of four historic water bodies: Chand Baori in Abhaneri (Rajasthan), Baori at Neemrana (Rajasthan), Padma and Rani Talabs at Ranthambore Fort (Rajasthan), and Budha Budhi Pond at Kalinjar Fort (Uttar Pradesh, UP).

- These water bodies will undergo restoration, including desilting, cleaning, ecological rejuvenation, and landscaping with minimal disruption to the historic sites. Informative signage will be installed to enhance visitor experience and community engagement. Through this collaboration, Bisleri aims to ensure the long-term preservation and improvement of India's heritage sites.

Key Points:-

- (i) The 'Adopt A Heritage (AAH)' programme, launched in 2017, is a collaborative initiative of the Ministry of Tourism (MoT), Ministry of Culture (MoC), and the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). In September 2023, a revamped version of the programme was introduced as 'AAH 2.0'.
- (ii) The initiative seeks to establish a framework for collaboration with public and private sector organizations, trusts, societies, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and others, to create or enhance facilities at Protected Monuments using their CSR funds, with the aim of improving the visitor experience and making the adopted monuments more visitor-friendly.
- (iii) The facilities under this program are categorized into four main areas: Hygiene, Accessibility, Wireless Fidelity (Wi-Fi) facility, and

Knowledge. As of February 2025, 21 Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) have been signed between ASI and partnering entities across Delhi, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh (UP), Madhya Pradesh (MP), Tamil Nadu (TN), Odisha, Maharashtra, Goa, and Karnataka.

23. Union Minister Rammohan Naidu Unveils Electronic Personnel License for Pilots.

In February 2025, Union Minister Kinjarapu Rammohan Naidu, Ministry of Civil Aviation (MOCA), launched the Electronic Personnel License (EPL) for pilots, a digital version of the traditional personnel license, replacing physical licenses. This initiative aims to modernize and enhance the safety, security, and efficiency of India's civil aviation sector.

- With this launch, India became the second country globally, after China, to implement EPL, following approval from the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), a United Nations (UN) agency in Montreal, Canada.

- Pilot Ishita Bhargava, a 22-year-old woman from Jabalpur, became the first pilot in India to receive the Electronic Personnel License (EPL).

- EPL will be securely accessible through the electronic-Governance of Civil Aviation (eGCA) Mobile Application. This initiative aligns with the Government of India's (GOI) "Ease of Doing Business" (EoDB) and "Digital India Initiatives" (DII).

Key Points:-

(i) The launch of EPL follows ICAO's Amendment 178 to Annex 1 Personnel Licensing, which encourages Member States to adopt electronic

licenses.

(ii) EPL will phase out printed cards, reducing paper and plastic usage, contributing to environmental sustainability. It provides real-time access to credentials, enhancing global job opportunities for Indian pilots.

(iii) The DGCA had previously issued 62,000 smart card licenses, with the requirement for printed cards in 2024 standing at approximately 20,000.

24. MoM Designates Barytes, Feldspar, Mica, and Quartz as Major Minerals.

In February 2025, the Ministry of Mines (MoM) reclassified Barytes, Feldspar, Mica, and Quartz as major minerals to promote systematic exploration and scientific mining of these key resources, which are essential sources of various critical minerals.

- Following this reclassification, the mining of these minerals will be regulated under Section 8A of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) (MMDR) Act, 1957.

Key Points:-

(i) This decision was based on the recommendation of an inter-ministerial committee on mines and minerals, chaired by Dr. Vijay Kumar Saraswat, a member of the National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Aayog).

(ii) The move aligns with the Union Cabinet's approval of the National Critical Mineral Mission (NCMM) on January 29, 2025, which has been allocated a budget of ₹34,300 crore over seven years.

(iii) The mission aims to enhance the exploration

and mining of critical minerals in India, including their recovery from other mineral mines, overburden, and tailings.

25. Darjeeling Zoo Recently Unveils India's First Bio-Bank and Animal Museum.

In February 2025, the Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park (PNHZP), commonly known as Darjeeling Zoo in Darjeeling, West Bengal (WB), opened India's first bio-bank (Frozen Zoo) and an animal museum. This initiative is part of the national conservation plan, developed in collaboration with the Darjeeling Zoo and the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) based in Hyderabad, Telangana, under the Ministry of Science and Technology (MoS&T).

- The bio-bank, established in July 2024, has already collected Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA) and tissue samples from 60 animals across 23 species.
- The bio-bank collects and stores cells and tissue samples from endangered species, including reproductive cells from deceased animals, to aid preservation. These samples can be used for future research and may play a vital role in the potential revival of critically endangered species that are extinct or near extinction.
- All samples are stored at a temperature of minus 196°C in Liquid Nitrogen (LN2) to maintain a cryogenic state, helping preserve the genetic diversity of species.

Key Points:-

- (i) The samples can be preserved in the bio-bank for a minimum of 40 to 45 years.
- (ii) CCMB plans to establish bio-banks at other zoos, including the National Zoological Park in

Delhi and Nandankanan Zoological Park in Barang, Odisha.

(iii) The animal museum has been created to preserve the bodies and skeletons of deceased animals. It currently houses specimens from 19 species at Darjeeling Zoo, including animals such as the Red Panda, Snow Leopard, and Siberian Tiger.

26. President Droupadi Murmu Inaugurates 'Aadi Mahotsav 2025', National Tribal Festival.

The National Tribal Festival 2025, known as Aadi Mahotsav 2025, was inaugurated by the President of India, Droupadi Murmu, at the Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium in New Delhi (Delhi). The event was organized by the Tribal Co-operative Marketing Development Federation of India Limited (TRIFED) under the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA).

- The festival, held from February 16 to 24, 2025, focused on empowering Tribal Communities through Culture and Commerce by providing them with a vast marketplace to promote their products and reach modern consumers.
- The theme for Aadi Mahotsav 2025 was "A Celebration of the Spirit of Entrepreneurship, Tribal Craft, Culture, Cuisine, and Commerce," which highlighted the essence of tribal life.

Key Points:-

- (i) During the Aadi Mahotsav, TRIFED signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) with several organizations, including Tea Trunk (a Goa-based premium tea brand), Meesho (an Indian e-commerce company based in Bengaluru,

Karnataka), the Indian Federation of Culinary Associations (IFCA) based in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, and the Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Rural Industrialization (MGIRI) in Wardha, Maharashtra, to support tribal businesses.

(ii) TRIFED also signed MoUs with Reliance Retail Limited (Mumbai, Maharashtra), Hindustan Computers Limited Foundation (HCLF, Noida, Uttar Pradesh), and Torajamelo (Indonesia) with the goal of implementing the Business-to-Business (B2B) approach and enhancing the tribal product market.

27. MOSPI and MyGov Announce 'Innovate with GoStats' Hackathon.

On February 25, 2025, the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), in collaboration with MyGov, will launch the "Innovate with GoStats" data-visualization hackathon from February 25 to March 31, 2025. The theme of the hackathon is "Data-Driven Insights for Viksit Bharat".

- The hackathon aims to encourage students and researchers across India to leverage official data provided by the National Statistics Office (NSO) to create innovative data-driven insights.
- Participants will explore and analyze official statistics from reports, microdata, and datasets available on MoSPI's website, including the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), Household Consumer Expenditure Survey (HCES), Annual Survey of Industries (ASI), Consumer Price Index (CPI), and Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

- The objective is to develop impactful visualizations that support evidence-based policymaking for a Viksit Bharat.

Key Points:-

- (i) The hackathon will be hosted on the MyGov platform and is open to undergraduate (UG), postgraduate (PG), and research students.
- (ii) A panel of experts from the industry and academia will evaluate the top 30 entries, with prize money for the winners.
- (iii) The first prize will be Rs 2 lakh, two second prizes of Rs 1 lakh each, two third prizes of Rs 50,000 each, and twenty-five consolation prizes of Rs 20,000 each.

INTERNATIONAL

1. EAM S. Jaishankar Attends 8th Indian Ocean Conference (IOC) in Oman.

In February 2025, External Affairs Minister (EAM) Subrahmanyam Jaishankar attended the inaugural session of the 8th Indian Ocean Conference (IOC) in Muscat, Oman. The conference, themed "Voyage to New Horizons of Maritime Partnership," focused on strengthening regional cooperation and addressing common challenges in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

- During the conference, EAM S. Jaishankar delivered the keynote address, emphasizing India's commitment to fostering regional collaboration and maritime security.
- EAM S. Jaishankar held a meeting with Oman's Foreign Minister, Sayyid Badr Albusaidi, where they reviewed the full spectrum of India-Oman relations

and explored opportunities for further collaboration in areas of mutual interest.

- EAM S. Jaishankar and Oman's Foreign Minister, Sayyid Badr Albusaidi, unveiled a specially designed logo marking 70 years of diplomatic relations between India and Oman, symbolizing their strong historical, cultural, and people-to-people ties.

Key Points:-

- (i) EAM S. Jaishankar and Oman's Foreign Minister, Sayyid Badr Albusaidi, launched the book *Mandvi to Muscat: Indian Community and the Shared History of India and Oman*, published by the Indian Embassy in Muscat. The book highlights the deep historical and cultural ties between the two nations and the significant contributions of the Indian diaspora in Oman.
- (ii) On the sidelines of the conference, EAM S. Jaishankar held bilateral meetings with the Foreign Ministers of Brunei, Bangladesh, Iran, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Mauritius, and Nepal.
- (iii) These discussions covered key regional and global issues of mutual concern, emphasizing India's commitment to strengthening its engagement in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

2. THE World Reputation Rankings 2025 - Harvard University Retains Top Spot and 4 Indian Universities Feature in the List.

According to Times Higher Education (THE) latest 'World Reputation Rankings 2025', Harvard University, based in the United States of America (USA), retained its top position as the world's most reputed institution for the 14th consecutive year, with an overall score of 99.9.

- USA-based Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and United Kingdom (UK)-based University of Oxford jointly shared the 2nd position on the list, both securing an overall score of 99.7. This marks the highest position for any institution from the UK since 2015.

- Bengaluru (Karnataka)-based Indian Institute of Science (IISc) saw a drop in its ranking from 101-123 (in 2023) to 201-300, with an overall score within the range of 26.9-34.2.

- Similarly, Indian Institute of Technology Delhi (IIT-D), based in Delhi, slipped to 201-300 (in 2025) from 151-175 (in 2023).

Key Points:-

- (i) Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT-M), based in Chennai, Tamil Nadu (TN), ranked in the range of 201-300, down from 176-200 (in 2023).
- (ii) Also, Mumbai (Maharashtra)-based Indian Institute of Technology Bombay (IIT-B), which was featured in the previous edition of rankings in the 151-175 range, has not been included in the 2025 rankings.
- (iii) Siksha 'O' Anusandhan (SOA), a private deemed-to-be university based in Bhubaneswar (Odisha), debuted in the latest edition of rankings and has been ranked in the 201-300 range, with an overall score of 26.9-34.2.

3. UNESCAP Releases Asia and Pacific SDG Progress Report 2025.

In February 2025, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) published the report titled "Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report: Engaging

Communities to Close the Evidence Gap 2025," providing a comprehensive assessment of progress on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their 169 targets in the Asia-Pacific region.

- The report emphasizes the importance of engaging communities to close the evidence gap, stressing the need for accurate data collection to support decision-making.
- The Asia-Pacific SDG Progress Report 2025 highlights that urgent action is still required to achieve the 17 SDGs by the 2030 Agenda.
- On 22 September 2024, global leaders adopted the Pact for the Future at the Summit of the Future, reaffirming their commitment to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Key Points:-

(i) The report highlights significant progress in the Asia-Pacific region on SDGs, including reducing income poverty (SDG 1), addressing undernourishment (SDG 2), supporting small-scale industries (SDG 9), reducing hazardous waste (SDG 12), mitigating land degradation (SDG 15), and combating human trafficking and intentional homicide (SDG 16).

(ii) Additionally, the availability of SDG data has increased to 54%.

4. India Strengthens Collaboration with the UK in Telecom, AI, and Emerging Technologies.

In February 2025, Neeraj Mittal, Secretary of the Department of Telecommunications (DoT), Ministry of Communications (MoC), visited the United Kingdom (UK) to engage with the Department of

Science, Innovation, and Technology (DSIT), UK, and explore opportunities for collaboration in next-generation telecommunications, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and space technology, further strengthening Indo-UK ties in these critical areas.

- During the visit, Neeraj Mittal engaged with UK counterparts, including Chris Johnson, National Scientific Adviser, and Dave Smith, National Technology Adviser with the Department of Science, Innovation, and Technology (DSIT).
- He held a field visit at one of the six Federated Telecom Hubs (FTH) in the UK, specializing in Communications Hub for Empowering Distributed Cloud Computing Applications and Research (CHEDDAR).

Key Points:-

(i) A roundtable discussion was held to strengthen UK-India collaboration in telecom security and innovation under the UK-India Technology Security Initiative (TSI).

(ii) During the discussion, the Centre for Development of Telematics (CDOT) under DoT, MoC, and SONIC Labs (SmartRAN Open Network Interoperability Centre) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

5. UNESCO Launches Campaign "Imagine a World with More Women in Science."

In February 2025, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) launched the campaign "Imagine a World with More Women in Science" to mark the 10-year anniversary of the International Day of Women and Girls in Science (11 February 2025), with support

from Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC).

- The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) declared 11th February as International Day of Women and Girls in Science in 2015.

Key Points:-

- (i) The campaign, using the hashtag #EveryVoiceInScience, builds on the momentum of the UNESCO Call to Action Closing the Gender Gap in Science, launched during the 2024 celebration of this International Day.
- (ii) The campaign highlights the vital role of women in advancing scientific progress.
- (iii) To shape the campaign, UNESCO conducted a global survey among its scientific community, gathering over 700 responses from diverse disciplines.

6. FATF Holds 2nd Plenary Under Mexico's Elisa de Anda Madrazo Presidency from February 19-21, 2025 in Paris.

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the global watchdog for financial crimes, held its second Plenary under the Presidency of Elisa de Anda Madrazo of Mexico from February 19 to 21, 2025, in Paris, France.

- Kenya joined the FATF as a guest under the Guest Jurisdiction Initiative to enhance regional representation, alongside the Cayman Islands and Senegal, who began participating in the initiative in October 2024.

- Russia's membership in FATF remains suspended since February 2024 due to concerns over sanctions evasion.

- The Plenary selected Mr. Giles Thomson from the United Kingdom (UK) as the next FATF Vice President, succeeding Mr. Jeremy Weil from Canada, who has served since July 1, 2023, and will step down on June 30, 2025. Mr. Thomson will hold the position for two years, starting July 1, 2025.

Key Points:-

- (i) Laos (Lao People's Democratic Republic) and Nepal were added to the FATF Grey List due to strategic deficiencies in their anti-money laundering and countering terrorism financing (AML/CFT) frameworks. Both countries have committed to addressing gaps in supervision, financial intelligence, and the prosecution of financial crimes.
- (ii) The Philippines was removed from the FATF Grey List after successfully addressing its action plan, which included stricter casino supervision, improved access to beneficial ownership data, and enhanced terrorism financing investigations. The FATF emphasized continued collaboration with the Asia/Pacific Group to maintain these reforms.

7. India and Bangladesh Recently Agreed to Launch a New 'Hotline' Between Border Forces.

In February 2025, India and Bangladesh recently agreed to establish a new 'hotline' for seamless communication between their border forces. This communication link will be set up between the Additional Director General (ADG) of the Border Security Force (BSF) Eastern Command,

headquartered in Kolkata, West Bengal (WB), and his Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) counterpart in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

- This decision was finalized during the 55th Director General (DG)-level Border Coordination Conference, a bi-annual meeting held from February 18 to 20, 2025, at the BSF headquarters in New Delhi, Delhi.

- The Indian delegation was led by Daljit Singh, DG of BSF, while Major General Mohammad Ashrafuzzaman Siddiqui, DG of BGB, represented Bangladesh.

- The 56th edition of the DG-level Border Coordination Conference is scheduled to take place in Bangladesh in July 2025.

Key Points:-

(i) Currently, hotlines exist between the force chiefs of both countries, as well as officers holding ranks such as Inspector General (IG) (regional commander for BGB), Deputy Inspector General (DIG) (sector commander for BGB), and other field-level officers. These communication links facilitate real-time exchange of information and intelligence, enabling effective monitoring of border issues and curbing cross-border crimes.

(ii) During the meeting, India emphasized the importance of completing the fencing along the remaining sections of the 4,096 km-long border shared with Bangladesh, which spans across five Indian states—Assam, Tripura, Mizoram, Meghalaya, and West Bengal. According to official data, 864.48 km of the border remains unfenced, including 174.51 km classified as a 'non-feasible' gap.

(iii) The Directors General (DGs) of India and Bangladesh discussed the need to initiate fencing or the creation of a Single-Row Fence (SRF) at

approximately 99 patches covering around 70-72 km of the border, following joint inspections and consultations. Previously, both sides had agreed to fencing at 92 patches, covering 95.8 km of the border.

8. 6th Edition of India-Japan Joint Military Exercise 'Dharma Guardian' Kicks Off in Japan.

On 24th February 2025, the 6th edition of the India-Japan joint military exercise, 'Dharma Guardian,' commenced at the East Fuji Manoeuvre Training Area in Japan. The exercise will run from 24th February to 9th March 2025.

- The main objective of the exercise is to enhance interoperability between India and Japan, with a focus on joint urban warfare and counter-terrorism operations under the United Nations (UN) mandate.

- Exercise DHARMA GUARDIAN is an annual event conducted since 2008, alternately in India and Japan. The 5th edition of the exercise took place at the Mahajan Field Firing Ranges in Rajasthan, India, from February to March 2024.

- The exercise involves participation from the Indian Army (IA) and the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force (JGSDF). The Indian contingent, comprising 120 personnel, is represented by a battalion of the MADRAS Regiment along with troops from other arms and services. The Japanese contingent, also consisting of 120 personnel, is made up of troops from the 34th Infantry Regiment.

Key Points:-

(i) The exercise aims to strengthen the India-Japan relationship by boosting military ties and promoting cultural understanding for regional

cooperation. It will focus on physical fitness, joint planning, tactical drills, and disaster response strategies to enhance skills, combat readiness, and teamwork for effective operations.

(ii) India and Japan also conduct military exercises such as the Japan-India Maritime Exercise (JIMEX), a bilateral exercise between the Indian Navy (IN) and the Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force (JMSDF). The 8th edition of JIMEX was held in Japan in June 2024.

(iii) A joint air exercise between the Indian Air Force (IAF) and the Japan Air Self-Defense Force (JASDF), with the 1st edition held in Japan in January 2023.

9. India and the UK Resume FTA Negotiations, Targeting to Triple Bilateral Trade in 10 Years.

In February 2025, Union Minister Piyush Goyal of the Ministry of Commerce & Industry (MoC&I) and Jonathan Reynolds, Secretary of State for the Department for Business and Trade, United Kingdom (UK), announced the resumption of negotiations for the proposed Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the two countries in New Delhi, Delhi.

- The FTA is expected to double or even triple bilateral trade, currently valued at USD 20 billion, within the next 10 years.
- In addition to the FTA, both countries are negotiating a Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) and a social security agreement known as the 'Double Contribution Convention Agreement'.
- A Free Trade Agreement (FTA) is an agreement between two or more countries where they agree on certain obligations that affect trade in goods and

services, as well as protections for investors and intellectual property rights, among other topics.

Key Points:-

(i) The negotiations for the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between India and the UK began on January 13, 2022, under the leadership of then UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson. So far, 14 rounds of negotiations have been held, with the 14th round starting in January 2023 and paused in May 2024 due to the UK general elections.

(ii) In November 2024, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer met on the sidelines of the Group-20 (G-20) Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. During their meeting, both leaders agreed to resume negotiations for the FTA.

(iii) Trade between India and the UK has grown significantly, with bilateral trade rising to USD 21.34 billion in FY24. The UK is the 6th largest investor in India, contributing USD 35.3 billion, and India is the 2nd largest source of FDI into the UK, with a 28% Year-on-Year increase in investment.

10. Denmark Launches GTAI to Enhance Sustainable Energy Cooperation.

On February 25, 2025, Denmark launched the Green Transition Alliance India (GTAI), a strategic initiative designed to strengthen cooperation between Denmark and India in sustainable energy solutions. This partnership highlights the shared commitment of both countries to achieve global carbon neutrality.

- The main objective of GTAI is to create a collaborative ecosystem that brings together

businesses, government agencies, researchers, and financial stakeholders from Denmark and India. This alliance aims to drive innovation and support the environmental goals of both nations.

- Leading Danish companies, including Grundfos Holding A/S, Copenhagen Infrastructure Partners, Baettr, Novonesis, MASH Makes, Rockwool A/S, and A.P. Moller Maersk A/S, have become part of the Green Transition Alliance India (GTAI).

- Strategic partners include the Mumbai-based Global Wind Energy Council (GWEC), the Chennai-based Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras Energy Consortium, and Denmark-based Indo-Danish Chamber of Commerce (IDCC) & Confederation of Danish Industry (DI).

Key Points:-

(i) India aims for net-zero emissions by 2070, while Denmark targets 2045, with the Green Transition Alliance India (GTAI) being a crucial part of their collaborative effort to address climate change and promote sustainable energy practices.

(ii) Established as part of the Green Strategic Partnership (GSP) from 2020, GTAI draws inspiration from successful initiatives like the Green Fuels Alliance India (GFAI) and Wind Alliance India (WAI), aiming to support India's climate goals through sector collaboration.

(iii) GTAI will operate through three working groups focused on Renewable Energy, Green Fuels, and Energy Efficiency to keep up with evolving trends and foster a dynamic approach to sustainable energy solutions.

11. Delhi Airport Ranks 8th in World's Busiest Airports of 2025, Reports OAG.

In February 2025, Luton (United Kingdom, UK)-based air consultancy firm Official Airline Guide (OAG) released its latest report titled "World's Busiest Airports in 2025." According to the report, Delhi Airport (DEL), officially named Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA) in New Delhi, ranked 8th among the top 10 busiest airports globally as of February 2025.

- Delhi Airport (DEL) registered the highest capacity growth in February 2025 compared to February 2024, with the number of seats increasing by 3.4% to 3.6 million seats.

Key Points:-

(i) Dubai International Airport (DXB) remained the busiest airport in the world, with 4.8 million seats, reflecting a 1% increase in capacity compared to February 2024.

(ii) Atlanta Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport (ATL) in the USA held the second spot, with 4.6 million seats, marking a 2% increase in capacity over the previous year

(iii) London Heathrow Airport (LHR) retained its position as Europe's busiest airport, ranking 5th globally in 2025 with 3.85 million seats.

12. India Elected as Vice President of the International Association of Marine Aids to Navigation and Lighthouse Authorities (IALA) in Singapore.

On February 19, 2025, India was elected as the Vice President (VP) of the International Association of Marine Aids to Navigation and Lighthouse Authorities (IALA) during its 1st General Assembly

in Singapore. The 1st General Assembly of IALA, held from February 18 to 21, 2025, marked its transition from a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) to an Inter-Governmental Organization (IGO).

- India's election as VP underscores its leadership and significant contributions to maritime affairs, reinforcing its commitment to enhancing maritime safety, improving navigational aids, and fostering international cooperation in the maritime domain.

- India's delegation at the IALA General Assembly was led by T.K. Ramachandran, Secretary of the Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways (MoPSW), along with Mukesh Mangal, Joint Secretary of MoPSW; N. Muruganandam, Director of Directorate General of Lighthouses and Lightships (DGLL), MoPSW; and S. Saravanan, Deputy Director of DGLL.

- India is set to host the IALA Council meeting in December 2025 and the IALA Conference & General Assembly in September 2027, both in Mumbai (Maharashtra). These meetings will provide a platform for India to showcase its advancements in maritime technology, navigation systems, and global maritime partnerships.

Key Points:-

(i) Founded in 1957, IALA (formerly known as the International Association of Marine Aids to Navigation and Lighthouse Authorities) was established as an NGO to unite marine aids to navigation authorities, manufacturers, consultants, and scientific and training organizations from around the world.

(ii) In August 2024, 34 member states ratified IALA's transformation into an IGO, enhancing its ability to regulate and standardize marine

navigation, leading to its name change to the International Organization for Marine Aids to Navigation (IALA).

(iii) As an IGO, IALA sets international standards for safe and efficient navigation, harmonizes global maritime systems, promotes safety initiatives, and works with member states, organizations, and industry partners to tackle emerging challenges in maritime safety and environmental protection.

13. IDEX and NAVDEX 2025 took place in Abu Dhabi from February 17 to 21, 2025.

The 17th edition of the International Defence Exhibition (IDEX) and the 8th edition of the Naval Defence and Maritime Security Exhibition (NAVDEX) were held from February 17 to 21, 2025, at the Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre (ADNEC) in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (UAE).

- These events were held under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE.

- The events were organized by the ADNEC Group in collaboration with the UAE Ministry of Defence and Tawazun Council (UAE).

- The Indian Coast Guard Ship (ICGS) Shoor, an advanced Offshore Patrol Vessel, showcased India's maritime strength at NAVDEX 2025.

Key Points:-

(i) Goa Shipyard Ltd (GSL), based in Goa, presented its locally designed Fast Patrol Vessels (FPVs) and Offshore Patrol Vessels (OPVs) at

NAVDEX 2025.

(ii) Tata Advanced Systems Limited (TASL), based in Hyderabad, introduced its indigenously developed Light Armoured Multi-role Vehicle (LAMV), which meets NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) standards, at IDEX 2025.

(iii) The 18th edition of IDEX will be held from January 25 to 29, 2027, at the ADNEC Centre in Abu Dhabi.

14. India's C-CAMP and France's PariSanté Campus Partner to Establish Indo-French Life Sciences Sister Innovation Hub.

In February 2025, Bengaluru (Karnataka)-based Centre for Cellular and Molecular Platforms (C-CAMP), Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Ministry of Science and Technology (MoS&T), Government of India (GoI), and PariSanté Campus, a leading digital health innovation cluster in France, signed an agreement to launch the Indo-French Life Sciences Sister Innovation Hub.

- The agreement was formalized through a Letter of Intent (LoI) signed by Dr. Taslimarif Saiyed, Director and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of C-CAMP, and Professor Antoine Tesnière, Director of PariSanté Campus.
- The partnership was officially announced by Prime Minister (PM) of India, Narendra Modi, and President of France, Emmanuel Macron, during the Artificial Intelligence (AI) Summit 2025 held from February 10-11, 2025, at the Grand Palais in Paris, France.
- The Indo-French Life Sciences Sister Innovation Hub aims to strengthen bilateral collaboration in the

healthcare domain through innovation, research, and development.

Key Points:-

- (i) The Indo-French Life Sciences Sister Innovation Hub aims to promote healthcare research and innovation by leveraging expertise from both countries to address public health issues and foster collaboration between research institutes, academia, and businesses.
- (ii) The collaboration focuses on two critical areas: One Health and Digital Health, bringing together top innovation hubs from both India and France to work on these key domains.
- (iii) The agreement marks a significant step toward strengthening bilateral ties, supporting research, and enhancing innovation to tackle global healthcare challenges.

BANKING & FINANCE

1. RBI Data Outward Remittances Under LRS Drop 10 Percent to USD 22.82 Billion in 9MFY25.

According to the latest data from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), outward remittances under the Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS) declined by 10.15% Year-on-Year (Y-o-Y) to USD 22.82 billion during the nine months (April to December) of the Financial Year 2024-25 (9MFY25), compared to USD 24.80 billion in 9MFY24.

- The data highlighted a decline in outward remittances across major segments, including deposits, maintenance of close relatives, and the international segment, among others.

Key Points:-

(i) As per RBI data, outward remittances increased by 3.3% Y-o-Y in the 3rd Quarter (October-December) of FY25 to USD 6,670.4 million compared to the same period last financial year.

(ii) The RBI data also revealed that remittances for the maintenance of close relatives dropped by approximately 25.2% to USD 2,757 million, while remittances for gifts decreased by 21.38% to USD 2,215.5 million.

2. JICA and Uttarakhand Sign Agreement for Integrated Horticulture Development Promotion Project.

In February 2025, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the Department of Horticulture and Food Processing (DHFP), Government of Uttarakhand, signed the 'Records of Discussions', an official agreement document for a four-year Technical Cooperation Project (TCP) titled 'Uttarakhand Integrated Horticulture Development Promotion Project'.

- The project aims to enhance horticulture production and improve market systems in Tehri Garhwal and Nainital districts of Uttarakhand. It is expected to create a favorable horticulture model across the state.

- According to the most recent data, the majority of farmers in Uttarakhand own fewer than two hectares of land, and 39% of the state's population works in agriculture.

Key Points:-

(i) TCP will accelerate progress and optimize the impact of JICA's ongoing Official Development Assistance (ODA) loan with the department, focusing on improving supply chains, strengthening Farmer Producer Organizations

(FPOs), and increasing the productivity of high-value crops.

(ii) The Smallholder Horticulture Empowerment and Promotion (SHEP) strategy, a market-driven farming model developed by JICA, is expected to grow with the support of the new TCP.

(iii) This initiative will improve agricultural productivity, contribute to broader socio-economic development by promoting sustainable livelihoods, expanding rural economies, and building long-term resilience of the horticulture industry in Uttarakhand.

3. IRDAI Forms Committee Led by Former SBI Chairman Dinesh Khara to Review Insurance Law Amendments.

On February 20, 2025, the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI), based in Hyderabad (Telangana), established a 7-member committee to review and implement changes to the Insurance Act of 1938. The committee will be headed by Dinesh Kumar Khara, the former Chairman of the State Bank of India (SBI) in Mumbai (Maharashtra).

- These changes are in line with the government's goal of achieving "Insurance for All by 2047," aimed at improving the insurance sector and expanding its reach.

Key Points:-

(i) The committee, led by Dinesh Kumar Khara, is tasked with reviewing the proposed amendments and suggesting a framework for their implementation. The report is expected to be submitted within 3 months.

(ii) Based on the committee's recommendations, the IRDAI will forward proposals to the Ministry of Finance (MoF), and the Department of Financial Services (DFS), MoF will draft a new bill for stakeholder feedback.

(iii) The app incorporates robust security features, including two-factor authentication, ensuring a secure and safe user experience. Both the CDSL MyEasi and NSDL SPEED-e apps offer access to the unified platform's features.

4. NSDL and CDSL Introduce UIP to Offer Consolidated Data to Investors.

In February 2025, National Securities Depository Limited (NSDL) and Central Depository Services Limited (CDSL), both based in Mumbai (Maharashtra), in collaboration with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), launched the Unified Investor Platform (UIP) mobile application.

- This platform integrates CDSL's MyEasi with NSDL's SPEED-e, offering investors a consolidated view of their financial statements, shareholdings, and investments.
- The UIP aggregates data directly from exchanges, depositories, and clearing firms, aiming to address issues related to fraudulent intermediaries.
- This reduces the chances of fraud and unauthorized access, ensuring that investors receive accurate and legitimate information.

Key Points:-

(i) By consolidating all financial data, the platform simplifies the management and transfer of assets, streamlining processes like inheritance and asset transmission.

(ii) Investors can easily view their holdings and recent transactions using a single login, enabling quicker decision-making based on up-to-date financial information.

5. IndusInd Bank has partnered with PGTI as its official banking partner.

In February 2025, IndusInd Bank Limited announced its partnership with the Professional Golf Tour of India (PGTI) as its official banking partner.

- This partnership highlights the bank's commitment to providing its Ultra High Net Worth Individuals (UHNIs) and High Net Worth Individuals (HNIs) with exceptional services under the PIONEER banking program.
- This collaboration is part of IndusInd Bank's ongoing efforts to create valuable, premium experiences for UHNIs and HNIs, especially in the sports sector.
- The bank will actively support PGTI tournaments, helping expand the sport's reach and strengthen professional golf in India. Over 20 tournaments are held each year, led by Kapil Dev, President of PGTI, and Amandeep Johl, CEO of PGTI.

Key Points:-

(i) These include personal banking, business banking, wealth management, and Non-Resident Indian (NRI) banking.

(ii) This program provides tailored financial solutions such as investment products, wealth management, and exclusive golf privileges for members.

(iii) The bank offers various investment products like Mutual Funds, Alternate products, Sovereign Gold Bonds, and the National Pension System (NPS).

6. The RBI has imposed a penalty on Citibank, AMFL, and JMFHL for non-compliance.

In February 2025, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), headquartered in Mumbai, Maharashtra, imposed monetary penalties on Citibank (Mumbai, Maharashtra), Asirvad Micro Finance Limited (AMFL) (Chennai, Tamil Nadu), and JM Financial Home Loans Limited (JMFHL) (Mumbai, Maharashtra) for non-compliance with regulatory norms.

- RBI fined Citibank Rs 39 lakh for failing to upload corrected data in specific sectors within seven days of receiving rejection reports from Credit Information Companies (CICs) and for delayed reporting of violations related to "Large Exposures" restrictions.

Key Points:-

(i) AMFL was penalized Rs 6.20 lakh for failing to report household income details of certain borrowers to CICs.

(ii) Additionally, it did not provide factsheets to certain gold loan customers and lacked an auto-escalation mechanism for complaints that were partially or fully denied by its internal grievance resolution system, preventing their escalation to the internal ombudsman for final resolution.

(iii) JMFHL received a penalty of Rs 1.50 lakh for violating multiple provisions of the "Non-Banking Financial Company Housing Finance Company (Reserve Bank) Directions, 2021."

7. AMFI Launches Three New Initiatives: Chhoti SIP, Tarun Yojana, and MITRA to Boost Financial Inclusion and Investor Awareness.

In February 2025, the Mumbai-based Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI) launched three new initiatives aimed at promoting financial inclusion, investor awareness, and investment recovery. The initiatives introduced by AMFI include Chhoti Systematic Investment Plan (SIP), Tarun Yojana, and Mutual Fund Investment Tracing and Retrieval Assistant (MITRA).

- This initiative introduces a Rs. 250 SIP, designed to make it easier for small investors and first-time participants to invest in mutual funds.

- By lowering the minimum investment requirement, it aims to encourage people from lower-income groups and those unfamiliar with investing to participate in mutual fund investments.

- This initiative aims to integrate financial literacy into school curriculums. Educating students about investment principles early on will help create a financially aware generation capable of making informed financial decisions in the future.

Key Points:-

(i) MITRA is a platform designed to help investors and their legal heirs trace, recover, and reclaim inactive or forgotten investments, ensuring rightful ownership and transparency in the investment process.

(ii) India's Mutual Fund (MF) industry has seen significant growth, with assets under management (AUM) surpassing Rs 65 lakh crore in December 2024, up from Rs 10.51 lakh crore in December

2014, as per the 'Where the Money Flows' study by Motilal Oswal Asset Management Company (MOAMC).

8. RBI Launches Financial Literacy Week 2025 with a Focus on Women's Prosperity.

On 24 February 2025, Mumbai (Maharashtra)-based India's central bank, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), launched the Financial Literacy Week (FLW 2025), which will be observed across India until 28 February 2025.

- **FLW 2025** was inaugurated by RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra in Mumbai, Maharashtra.
- **'Financial Literacy - Women's Prosperity'**. This year's theme aligns with the overall strategic objectives of the National Strategy for Financial Education 2020-2025.
- **The RBI launched this initiative in 2016**, and it has been observed annually across the country to promote financial awareness among the people.

Key Points:-

- As part of FLW 2025, banks have been directed to spread financial literacy awareness by displaying RBI-developed posters on their web portals, Automated Teller Machines (ATMs), mobile applications (apps), and display boards at their branches.
- The campaign will cover topics such as risk diversification, responsible borrowing, maintaining a good credit score, and household budgeting, with a special focus on homemakers, working women, and women entrepreneurs.
- This year's FLW includes multimedia

campaigns by RBI to raise awareness about the importance of financial literacy for women.

9. RBI Revises Lending Norms for Urban Cooperative Banks (UCBs).

On February 24, 2025, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) revised the lending norms for Urban Co-operative Banks (UCBs), permitting them to classify loans up to ₹25 lakh or 0.4% of Tier I capital, whichever is higher, as small-value loans, with a maximum ceiling of ₹3 crore per borrower.

- **Previously**, UCBs were allowed to classify loans up to ₹25 lakh or 0.2% of Tier I capital as small-value loans, with a ceiling of ₹1 crore per borrower.

Key Points:-

- Under the revised norms, housing loans under Priority Sector Lending (PSL) will no longer be included in the exposure to commercial real estate (CRE).
- This exclusion aims to differentiate between priority sector housing and other real estate loans to streamline the exposure guidelines.
- In terms of caps, the new norms allow residential mortgages (non-PSL) to be up to 25% of total loans, compared to the previous limit of 10%. For other real estate loans, excluding housing loans, the cap is now set at 5% of total loans. Additionally, loans to builders and developers are restricted to 5% of total loans.

10. S&P Global Market Intelligence Forecasts 6.4% GDP Growth for India in FY25 and FY26.

In February 2025, S&P Global Market Intelligence, based in New York, USA, projected India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to grow at 6.4% for both Financial Year 2024-25 (FY25) and FY26. The global analytics firm highlighted that monetary and fiscal stimulus will assist the Indian economy in addressing the growing challenges in the global market.

- The latest projection for FY25 is slightly lower than its previous estimate of 6.5%, while the projection for FY26 remains unchanged at 6.4%, as per the December update.

Key Points:-

- (i) The global firm has forecasted India's GDP to slow down further to 6.2% in FY27, with an expected increase to 6.6% in FY28.
- (ii) The firm emphasized that the tax relief measures announced by the Ministry of Finance (MoF) in the Union Budget for FY25, coupled with the 25 basis point (bps) policy rate cut by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in February 2025, are expected to support domestic demand in FY25.
- (iii) However, they may not be enough to completely counterbalance the impact of external headwinds on growth.

- As a part of the 'Speciale' suite of savings accounts, it caters to a variety of clients, including women, working professionals, and senior citizens. HDFC Bank provides cyber fraud cover up to Rs. 1.5 lakh to senior citizens, while the cyber fraud cover ranges from Rs. 25,000 to Rs. 50,000 for professionals.

- Similarly, the 'Speciale Gold Women' account gives a cancer cover of up to Rs. 5 lakh for women.

Key Points:-

- (i) The account offers Cyber Fraud Protection covering up to Rs. 25,000 for account holders. It also provides Family Benefits, allowing up to five family members to open zero-balance salary accounts.
- (ii) Additionally, it includes Insurance Coverage, featuring a health insurance plan with OPD benefits, Rs. 15 lakh accident insurance, and top-up plans of up to Rs. 30 lakh.
- (iii) The account extends Loan Benefits, offering additional home loans beyond company-set limits for Maharatna PSU employees. It also provides an Exclusive Debit Card, which comes with a free Platinum Debit Card and offers eight complimentary domestic airport lounge visits per year.

11. HDFC Bank Unveils India's First 'Anmol Savings Account' for PSU Employees.

In February 2025, Mumbai (Maharashtra)-based HDFC Bank Limited, India's leading private sector bank, launched India's first Public Sector Undertaking (PSU) salary account with cyber fraud protection, the 'Anmol Savings Account.'

12. GIFTCL Collaborates with ZPOS L to Introduce Prepaid Citizen Card and VMS.

In February 2025, Gujarat International Finance Tec-City Company Limited (GIFTCL), based in GIFT City, Gujarat, partnered with Hyderabad (Telangana)-based Zagg Prepaid Ocean Services Limited (ZPOS L), a leading Business-to-Business Software-as-a-Service (B2B SaaS) FinTech

company, to launch a co-branded Prepaid Citizen Card and Visitor Management System (VMS).

- This initiative aims to enhance digital transactions and security within GIFT City.
- GIFTCL and ZPOSIL have signed a five-year agreement, with potential extensions based on future requirements.

Key Points:-

(i) The Prepaid Citizen Card will enable seamless, cashless transactions for essential services within GIFT City and will be accepted nationwide. It will serve as a secure digital identity and payment solution for GIFT City's growing population and workforce.

(ii) The VMS will ensure enhanced security in the Special Economic Zone (SEZ) by tracking, verifying, and regulating visitor access. It will integrate identity verification, visitor pre-registration, and a streamlined check-in/check-out process, allowing only authorized individuals to enter the premises.

13. RBI Lowers Risk Weights for Banks Lending to NBFCs and MFIs.

In February 2025, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) exercised its powers under Sections 21 and 35A of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949, to reduce the risk weights on loans by Scheduled Commercial Banks (SCBs) to Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) and Microfinance Institutions (MFIs). The risk weight on bank loans to NBFCs has been reduced by 25 basis points (bps), from 125% to 100%, based on ratings.

- This reduction is expected to facilitate better credit flow to NBFCs and enhance the availability of credit in the retail segment. The revised risk weight will be applicable from April 1, 2025.

- As per the Reserve Bank of India's directions, the risk weights for microloans provided by banks have been reduced to 75%, while loans for consumption purposes will have a reduced risk weight of 100%, down from the previous 125%.

- Additionally, microfinance loans extended by Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) and Local Area Banks (LABs) will now attract a risk weight of 100%. The revised risk weight for loans to Microfinance Institutions (MFIs) has been implemented with immediate effect.

Key Points:-

(i) The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has clarified that microfinance loans, which are not classified as consumer-type credit and meet certain criteria, will be categorized under the Regulatory Retail Portfolio (RRP). Additionally, banks are required to implement appropriate policies and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to ensure compliance with the qualifying criteria.

(ii) The reduction in risk weights is expected to free up to Rs 40,000 crore in capital, allowing banks to extend loans of up to Rs 4 lakh crore to 'AAA-rated' companies.

(iii) In November 2023, RBI raised risk weights for bank loans to NBFCs to 125% to curb unsecured loans, including consumer credit, but excluding housing, education, and vehicle loans.

14. Axis Bank Hosts 9th Edition of 'Evolve' to Support MSMEs Empowerment.

On February 25, 2025, Mumbai (Maharashtra) based Axis Bank Limited, one of India's leading private sector banks, organized the 9th edition of 'Evolve,' its flagship knowledge-sharing seminar for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Bengaluru, Karnataka.

- The event, centered around the theme "Future-Proofing MSMEs for the New-Age Business," highlighted the importance of digital transformation, innovation, and operational resilience for MSMEs in adapting to the evolving business environment.
- The seminar was attended by over 100 entrepreneurs from Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

Key Points:-

- (i) In 2025, the 'Evolve' initiative is being hosted in 10 key cities across India, including New Delhi (Delhi), Mumbai (Maharashtra), Lucknow (Uttar Pradesh, UP), Kolkata (West Bengal, WB), Chennai (Tamil Nadu, TN), Hyderabad (Telangana), Bengaluru (Karnataka), Kochi (Kerala), Indore (Madhya Pradesh, MP), and Ahmedabad (Gujarat).
- (ii) Launched in 2014, 'Evolve' is a transformative platform designed to empower India's MSMEs, having positively impacted over 9,000 entrepreneurs across more than 50 cities.
- (iii) Through 'Evolve,' Axis Bank aims to provide MSMEs with strategies to optimize operations, boost competitiveness, and expand market presence.

15. Digit Insurance and KMD Launch India's First AQI-based Parametric Insurance.

In February 2025, Go Digit General Insurance Limited (Digit Insurance), in collaboration with K.M. Dastur Reinsurance Brokers (KMD), introduced one of India's first Air Quality Index (AQI)-based parametric insurance policies for migrant labourers impacted by construction bans during high pollution levels in the Delhi National Capital Region (NCR).

- The policy is designed to mitigate salary losses for construction workers during periods of construction bans due to air pollution.
- When the AQI in Delhi exceeds 400 for more than two occasions, the parametric insurance will provide payouts of up to Rs 6,000 for 6,200 migrant workers.
- The policy stipulates that a "strike" is defined when the AQI remains above 400 for at least three of the five preceding days, with a minimum 25-day gap between strikes.

Key Points:-

- (i) Construction bans are often enforced through government and court orders to address severe pollution levels in the region.
- (ii) Parametric insurance offers a straightforward, transparent, and effective solution to address the financial challenges faced by workers due to environmental factors in the area.

16. ADB Sanctions USD 200 Million Loan to Enhance Urban Services in Kolkata.

On 26 February 2025, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) approved a USD 200 million loan to improve the development of climate and disaster-

resilient sewerage and drainage infrastructure in Kolkata, West Bengal, with the aim of enhancing Kolkata's livability.

- The loan agreement was part of the Kolkata Municipal Corporation Sustainability, Hygiene, and Resilience (Sector) Project (KSHARP).
- Kolkata, one of India's most populous and highly populated cities, faces severe issues due to poor drainage and sewerage systems, which result in urban flooding and an unsanitary atmosphere.

Key Points:-

- (i) The project includes 84 kilometers (km) of trunk and secondary sewerage & drainage pipelines, 176 km of lateral sewerage & drainage pipelines connecting homes, 50,000 new domestic sewer connections, the construction of one sewage treatment plant, and five new pumping stations to prevent waterlogging.
- (ii) This project will enhance living conditions and health outcomes, particularly for vulnerable groups such as women and children, by lowering exposure to waterborne and vector-borne diseases and mitigating flood risks.
- (iii) Additionally, the project will assist Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) in developing a comprehensive IT-based asset management system, increasing property tax revenue, expanding an earlier ADB intervention's early flood warning system, raising community awareness on water, sanitation, and hygiene, and promoting women's employment through skill training and internship programs.

17. CCI Approves PRHCL's USD 1.6 Billion Acquisition of Fujitsu General.

In February 2025, the Competition Commission of India (CCI) approved the proposal of Nagoya (Japan)-based Paloma Rheem Holdings Company Limited (PRHCL) to acquire Japanese air-conditioner maker Fujitsu General for USD 1.6 billion.

- Following the approval, Fujitsu General will become a wholly-owned subsidiary of Paloma Rheem Holdings.
- Fujitsu General specializes in air conditioning (A/C) solutions for the home, commercial, and industrial markets, along with related IT systems and devices.

Key Points:-

- (i) The company sells A/Cs under the O General brand and operates in India through its subsidiary Fujitsu General (India).
- (ii) CCI approved the acquisition under the green channel route, as per Section 6(4) of the Competition Act, 2002, read with Rule 3 of the Competition (Criteria of Combination) Rules, 2024.
- (iii) The green channel mechanism provides automatic approval for combinations that do not significantly impact competition once the involved parties file a notice for the combination.

18. IOB Introduces Aadhaar-OTP Based Account Opening and API Banking Services.

On February 18, 2025, Indian Overseas Bank (IOB), a public sector bank based in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, celebrated its 89th Foundation Day by launching Aadhaar-OTP-based account opening and Application Programming Interface (API) banking services.

- This move addresses the increasing demand for automation in corporate banking and aims to enhance banking services for individual and corporate customers.

Key Points:-

(i) The digital onboarding procedure follows the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) Aadhaar OTP-based eKYC (electronic Know Your Customer) guidelines, providing a secure and smooth experience for customers.

(ii) Customers can open accounts easily through the bank's website with minimal documentation, subject to regulatory transaction limits.

(iii) API Banking allows corporates to streamline, automate, and improve financial processes by integrating transactions initiated in corporate accounting systems with the bank's core banking system, reducing the need for manual data entry and duplication.

19. South Indian Bank Unveils 'SIB QUICKPL', a Fully Digital Personal Loan Platform.

On 24 February 2025, Thrissur (Kerala)-based private sector lender South Indian Bank Limited (SIB) launched "SIB QUICKPL," a fully digital personal loan platform designed exclusively for new customers.

- The innovative platform enables both salaried and self-employed individuals with good credit profiles to secure unsecured personal loans within just 10 minutes through a fully digital, paperless process, with the loan amount credited directly to a savings account in any bank across India.

Key Points:-

(i) SIB QUICKPL is integrated with the Account Aggregator (AA) framework and the Income Tax portal for instant verification.

(ii) The platform eliminates the need for document uploads, ensuring that the approved loan amount is credited directly to the applicant's savings account.

(iii) This platform offers a fast, transparent, and customer-centric financing solution, tailored to the evolving financial needs of modern Indians.

20. PNB Signs MoU with ITBP for Financial Benefits and Insurance Coverage.

In February 2025, Punjab National Bank (PNB), based in New Delhi (Delhi), signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) at the ITBP Headquarters in New Delhi (Delhi). The agreement aims to offer special financial benefits and insurance coverage to ITBP personnel, pensioners, and their families.

- The MoU was signed by S.P. Singh, General Manager (GM), PNB, and Sunil Chander Mamgain, Inspector General (IG), ITBP.

- Under the partnership between Punjab National Bank (PNB) and the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), ITBP personnel will receive several key benefits. These include Personal Accidental Insurance (PAI) of Rs. 100 lakhs, Air Accidental Insurance (AAI) of Rs. 150 lakhs, and Permanent/Partial Disability Coverage of Rs. 100 lakhs.

- Additionally, the agreement also provides coverage for death during operations, offering Rs. 10 lakhs, and covers the cost of imported medicines, including transportation, up to Rs. 10 lakhs. Furthermore, the

ITBP personnel will also benefit from air ambulance costs of up to Rs. 10 lakhs.

Key Points:-

- (i) PNB has extended its Rakshak Account benefits to ITBP pensioners receiving their pension from PNB, offering lifetime Personal Accidental Insurance (PAI) coverage of Rs. 50 lakhs and Air Accidental Insurance (AAI) coverage of Rs. 100 lakhs.
- (ii) PNB has demonstrated its commitment to supporting India's armed forces, particularly the 'Himveers' (personnel) of ITBP, by providing specialized financial products and services.

MOUs and Agreement

1. India's NCGG and Sri Lanka's SLIDA Finalize Plan to Train 1,500 Civil Service Officers Under MoU.

In February 2025, India's National Centre for Good Governance (NCGG), under the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions (MoPP&P), and the Sri Lanka Institute of Development Administration (SLIDA) finalized the implementation plan for their Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to train 1,500 Sri Lankan civil service officers over a span of five years.

- The MoU was signed between the two countries during President Anura Kumara Disanayake's visit to India in December 2024.
- An NCGG delegation, led by Director General (DG) Dr. Surendrakumar Bagde, visited Sri Lanka from 17 to 20 February 2025 to finalize the modalities. The delegation met key officials, including Prime Minister (PM) Dr. Harini Amarasuriya and Public Administration Minister Dr. A.H.M.H. Abayaratna.

- The delegation included NBS Rajput, Joint Secretary, Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG), MoPP&P; A P Singh, Associate Professor, NCGG; Prisca Mathew, Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) and Consultant, NCGG; and Mukesh Bhandari, Research Associate, NCGG.

Key Points:-

- (i) The two-day official visit concluded with a clear plan for a five-year collaboration (2024-2028) between SLIDA and NCGG to conduct capacity-building programs for Sri Lankan government workers, aiming to improve public sector efficiency.
- (ii) The NCGG has trained 95 Sri Lankan civil servants to date, and around 8 modules will be held annually under the program. The first training module for 40 officers will take place soon.
- (iii) Prior to the MoU signing, over 200 Sri Lankan police officers had already received training at NCGG, and three capacity-building training programs were previously organized for senior and mid-level officers of Sri Lanka.

2. MoD Signs Two Contracts for Procurement of SDRs and RTFLT.

In February 2025, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) signed two contracts worth approximately Rs. 1,917.47 crore for the procurement of Software Defined Radios (SDRs) and Rough Terrain Forklift Trucks (RTFLT) to enhance the operational capabilities of the Indian Coast Guard (ICG), Indian Army (IA), Indian Navy (IN), and Indian Air Force (IAF).

Key Points:-

(i) The first contract, valued at Rs. 1,220.12 crore, involves the procurement of 149 SDRs from Bengaluru (Karnataka) based Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) for the ICG. SDRs were procured under the 'Buy (Indian-Indigenously Designed, Developed and Manufactured, IDDM)' category of the Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP).

(ii) The second contract, worth Rs. 697.35 crore, involves the procurement of 1,868 RTFLT from Faridabad (Haryana) based Action Construction Equipment (ACE) Limited and Ballabgarh (Haryana) based JCB India Limited, a subsidiary of Joseph Cyril Bamford Excavators Limited in the United Kingdom (UK).

(iii) The RTFLT will be produced under the 'Buy (Indian)' category, which will support the indigenisation effort and the Make in India initiative in defence.

- The first MoU focuses on two critical fields: cyber security and updating manuals and protocols by developing guidelines for auditing digital data to enhance security measures and governance.

Key Points:-

(i) The second MoU was signed between IIT Madras and the International Centre for Environment Audit and Sustainable Development (ICED), Jaipur, Rajasthan, to collaborate on capacity building and research in Environment Audit and Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG).

(ii) This collaboration will leverage Machine Learning (ML), Artificial Intelligence (AI), and other technological developments to enhance the efficacy of these auditing domains.

(iii) The partnership aims to improve the efficacy and efficiency of the audit process by combining the resources and experience of both organizations.

3. CAG and IIT Madras Sign Two MoUs to Boost Data Analytics Skills.

On 24 February 2025, the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) and the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras, Chennai (Tamil Nadu), signed two Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) to enhance innovation, improve data analytic skills, and support technology-driven governance practices.

- The key focus areas of the MoUs include data governance and security, big data and digital infrastructure readiness, academic and research collaboration, advanced auditing practices, sustainability and governance, and joint research and development initiatives.

4. HAL & BEML Sign MoU for Collaboration in Training Programs.

On February 25, 2025, Bengaluru (Karnataka) based Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) and Bengaluru based BEML Limited (formerly Bharat Earth Movers Limited) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to collaborate on leadership and technical training programs focused on skill development and professional excellence.

- The collaboration aims to strengthen the technical expertise and managerial leadership within BEML, thereby contributing to the growth and self-reliance of India's defense manufacturing sector.

- The MoU was signed by Srikantha Sharma, Executive Director (ED) of HAL Management Academy (HMA), and Monideepa Roy, Head of Talent Management at BEML.

Key Points:-

- (i) HAL's training institute, HMA, will offer induction training, middle and senior management programs, specialized workshops, and certification programs in areas like Six Sigma, Quality, Reliability, Data Analytics (DA), and Industry 4.0.
- (ii) The collaboration will also involve industrial visits, knowledge-sharing sessions, joint conferences, internships, and project-based learning opportunities for BEML professionals.

5. DPIIT and Paytm Sign MoU to Boost India's Manufacturing and Fintech Startups.

On February 26, 2025, the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), under the Government of India (GoI) and headquartered in New Delhi, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Paytm (Pay Through Mobile), owned by Uttar Pradesh-based One97 Communications Limited, to promote innovation and accelerate the growth of fintech and manufacturing startups in India.

- The MoU was signed by Dr. Sumeet Kumar Jarangal, Director, DPIIT, and Vijay Shekhar Sharma, Founder and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Paytm, in the presence of senior officials from both organizations.

Key Points:-

- (i) The partnership aims to assist fintech hardware entrepreneurs in developing and scaling payment and financial technology solutions by providing

innovation guidance, mentorship, and regulatory and compliance support through workshops and collaboration with industry and government entities.

- (ii) The agreement provides infrastructure and market access support, enabling businesses to test, validate, and enhance their products while leveraging Paytm's vast merchant network.

- (iii) Additionally, through its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) arm, Paytm Foundation, the initiative will support deep-tech startups in Climate Tech, Web3, Agritech, and Mobility.

6. Indian Army Signs MoU with L&T for ACADA Systems.

In February 2025, the New Delhi-based Indian Army (IA) signed a contract with Mumbai (Maharashtra)-based Larsen & Toubro (L&T) Limited for the procurement of 223 Automatic Chemical Agent Detection and Alarm (ACADA) systems for Rs 80.43 Crore, under the Buy Indian-Indigenously Designed, Developed, and Manufactured (Indian-IDDM) category.

- Over 80% of components and subsystems for the systems will be sourced locally, supporting the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative.

- The ACADA system was designed and developed by the Defence Research and Development Establishment (DRDE) of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), based in Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh (MP).

Key Points:-

- (i) The ACADA system detects chemical warfare agents (CWA) and programmable toxic industrial

chemicals (TICs) by monitoring the air in the area.

(ii) It is based on the Ion Mobility Spectrometry (IMS) principle and includes two highly sensitive IMS cells for continuous detection and monitoring of harmful/toxic chemicals.

(iii) The use of ACADA in field units will significantly enhance the IA's defensive Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear (CBRN) capabilities for both operations and peacetime, particularly in responding to industrial accident-related disaster relief situations.

7. India's CSIR and Nepal's NAST Sign MoU to Enhance Collaboration in Science & Technology.

In February 2025, the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), based in New Delhi (Delhi) under the Ministry of Science and Technology (MoS&T), signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Nepal Academy of Science and Technology (NAST), Nepal. The signing took place at the CSIR-National Physical Laboratory (CSIR-NPL) in New Delhi, Delhi.

- This partnership aims to strengthen Science and Technology (S&T) cooperation between both countries.
- The MoU was signed and exchanged by Dr. N. Kalaiselvi, Director General (DG), CSIR, and Secretary, Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR), MoS&T, along with Prof. Dr. Dilip Subba, Vice-Chancellor, NAST.
- Initial agreements in 1997 and 2002 led to joint workshops and training programs beyond their official duration. The new MoU aims to revive and expand this collaboration for enhanced scientific engagement.

Key Points:-

- (i) The partnership under the 2025 MoU will involve exchanging scientific knowledge, research materials, and experts, along with organizing joint S&T seminars, workshops, and training programs.
- (ii) It includes joint research projects, access to major research facilities, technology collaborations, and institutional twinning for capacity development.
- (iii) The cooperation will cover biological sciences, food technology, water and environmental technologies, mining sciences, metallurgy, biomaterials, nanotechnology, alternative energy, polymer sciences, and drug discovery.

SPORTS

1. IOA Forms Ad-Hoc Committee to Manage Indian Boxing Following BFI Issues.

On February 24, 2025, the Indian Olympic Association (IOA), based in New Delhi, replaced the Boxing Federation of India (BFI) with an ad-hoc committee following ongoing administrative instability within the federation.

- The ad-hoc committee is chaired by Madhukant Pathak, General Secretary of the Jharkhand Olympic Association, with Rajesh Bhandari, BFI Vice-President (VP), as Vice-Chairman (VC), along with boxing officials Dr. D.P. Bhatt, Virendra Singh Thakur, and boxer Shiva Thapa.
- The decision was made because the tenure of the BFI office-bearers, including Ajay Singh as president, ended on February 2, 2025, but elections were not conducted.

Key Points:-

(i) The IOA also cited "numerous complaints" from athletes, coaches, and relevant authorities regarding the non-participation of Indian boxers in several important national and international events, including the lack of medals at the 2024 Summer Olympics in Paris (France).

(ii) The ad-hoc committee will manage the affairs of the BFI and ensure the "smooth functioning of its activities" until free and fair elections are conducted.

(iii) The committee will promptly address the grievances raised by the boxing community, ensure athlete participation in upcoming international competitions, and work towards conducting the elections as soon as possible.

Individual.

(ii) Basanti Mahato won gold in the Women's Recurve, defeating Fong You Jhu of Chinese Taipei after a remarkable comeback from 0-4 down to win 6-4.

(iii) Vishnu Choudhary earned a silver medal in the Mixed Team Recurve alongside women's individual champion Basanti Mahato, after losing to China 6-0 in the final, while Chinese Taipei secured the bronze. Additionally, the Women's Compound Team, comprising Avneet Kaur, Madhuravarshini Muruganantham, and Chikitha Taniparth, won bronze after a shoot-off victory against Iran. South Korea claimed gold, while Kazakhstan secured silver.

2. India Tops Medal Tally with 5 Golds at 2025 Archery Asia Cup World Ranking Tournament, Stage I.

India concluded the 2025 Archery Asia Cup - World Ranking Tournament, Stage I, organized by World Archery Asia (WAA), held from February 16 to 23, 2025, in Bangkok, Thailand. Indian archers topped the medal tally with an outstanding performance, securing 8 medals, including 5 Gold, 2 Silver, and 1 Bronze.

- South Korea finished second in the medal tally with 5 medals, including 2 Gold.
- India set a new Under-21 World Record by scoring 2129 in the Men's Compound Team event.
- Vishnu Choudhary claimed 2 gold in both the Men's Individual and Men's Team in the Recurve category.

Key Points:-

(i) Kushal Dalal secured 2 gold in both the Men's Compound Team and Men's Compound

AWARDS

1. India has been awarded the 'Prince Michael Decade of Action Road Safety Award' for its advancements in vehicle safety and infrastructure.

In February 2025, the Government of India (GOI) received the prestigious 'Prince Michael Decade of Action Road Safety Award' at the 4th Ministerial Conference on Road Safety held in Marrakech, Morocco. This is the highest award in the field of road safety. India shared this honor with the Kingdom of Morocco, as both countries were recognized for their efforts in improving road safety.

- The conference was organized by the Kingdom of Morocco and the World Health Organization (WHO). The theme of the conference was "Commit to Life."
- The conference brought together transportation leaders from various countries to create a strategic plan aimed at reducing global road fatalities by 50% by

2030, focusing on international collaboration to improve road safety.

Key Points:-

(i) India was recognized for its progress in vehicle safety since 2014. This includes introducing a 'new car safety assessment program' and making 'Anti-lock Braking Systems' (ABS) mandatory in all new 2-wheelers.

(ii) The award was presented to Union Minister of State (MoS) Ajay Tamta, Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH), by Etienne Krug, Director of the Department for Social Determinants of Health at WHO, on behalf of the Indian Government.

2. Sunil Bharti Mittal, Chairman of Bharti Enterprises, Awarded 'Honorary Knighthood Medal'.

On February 22, 2025, Sunil Bharti Mittal, Founder and Chairman of Bharti Enterprises, was awarded the 'Knight Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (KBE)' for his outstanding contributions to strengthening business relations between the United Kingdom and India.

- The prestigious KBE medal was presented by British High Commissioner to India, Lindy Cameron, during an investiture ceremony at the British High Commissioner's residence in New Delhi.

- This honor follows the 2024 announcement of Sunil Bharti Mittal as the first Indian citizen to receive the KBE under King Charles III.

- Sunil Bharti Mittal is the founder and chairman of Bharti Enterprises, a conglomerate with diversified interests in telecom, insurance, real estate, education,

and more. He also chairs Airtel Africa Plc, overseeing operations in 17 African countries.

Key Points:-

(i) Bharti Enterprises has formed joint ventures with major global partners, including Singapore Telecommunications Limited (SingTel), SoftBank Group Corp., and the UK and French governments, enhancing its global footprint.

(ii) Sunil Bharti Mittal is a member of influential business bodies like the International Business Council, the India-UK CEO Forum, and the Prime Minister's Council on Trade & Industry, contributing to key global policy discussions.

(iii) In 2007, Sunil Bharti Mittal was awarded the Padma Bhushan for his contributions to trade and industry, and in 2016, he was elected as the Chairman of the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC).

3. Goa's Mopa Airport Becomes the First in India to Receive the 'Sarvashrestha Suraksha Puraskar'.

In January 2025, Goa's Manohar International Airport (GOX), also known as Mopa Airport, became the first airport in India to receive the "Sarvashrestha Suraksha Puraskar (Golden Trophy)" at the National Safety Council of India (NSCI) Safety Awards 2024 in the 'Service Sector' category, held in Mumbai, Maharashtra.

- Developed by GMR Goa International Airport Limited (GGIAL), a subsidiary of GMR Airports Limited, under the Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) model, the airport was evaluated based on safety performance, statistics, commitments, awareness, training, and ground innovations.

- The Sarvashrestha Suraksha Puraskar is awarded by the NSCI, established by the Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoL&E), Government of India (GoI), to recognize exemplary Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) performance.

Key Points:-

- (i) The award acknowledges efforts in reducing workplace injuries, implementing best OSH practices, and promoting continuous improvements.
- (ii) The airport achieved zero fatal, non-fatal, and permanent disability incidents, contributing to its success in securing the award.
- (iii) The airport is named after Manohar Gopalkrishna Prabhu Parrikar, the former Union Minister of Defence (MoD) and Chief Minister (CM) of Goa.

4. AMTZ won an award in the BRICS Industrial Innovation Contest 2024 for its solar-powered tricycle.

In February 2025, the Solar Powered Tricycle developed by Andhra Pradesh MedTech Zone (AMTZ) in Visakhapatnam (Andhra Pradesh) won the Outstanding Project Award at the BRICS Industrial Innovation Contest 2024. This innovative mobility solution was created by the Assistive Technology Centre (ATC) at AMTZ.

- The Solar Powered Tricycle was officially launched by Union Minister Nitin Jairam Gadkari, Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MORTH), in August 2024.
- The award was presented by the BRICS Partner Innovation Center and the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology. It recognizes innovations that

contribute to sustainable development and help empower marginalized communities.

- The Solar Powered Tricycle is designed to improve independence and mobility for people with disabilities.

Key Points:-

- (i) The tricycle is equipped with solar panels and motor assistance, making it an eco-friendly, cost-effective, and sustainable alternative to traditional mobility aids.
- (ii) This innovation not only reduces physical effort but also supports global sustainability goals by promoting renewable energy and clean transportation.
- (iii) The award highlights ATC's commitment to reinventing mobility, improving accessibility, and advancing innovation in assistive technology.

IMPORTANT DAYS

1. National Protein Day 2025 Observed on February 27.

National Protein Day is observed annually on February 27 across India to raise awareness about the vital role protein plays in maintaining a healthy diet. The day highlights the importance of protein for overall growth and development while also promoting the wide variety of protein-rich options available to meet dietary needs.

- February 27, 2025, marks the 6th observance of National Protein Day.

Key Points:-

- (i) National Protein Day, celebrated on February 27, was first observed in India in 2020 with the

launch of the "Right to Protein" (RTP) initiative, a national-level public health campaign aimed at increasing awareness about the importance of adequate protein consumption.

(ii) The first-ever National Protein Day was observed on February 27, 2020.

2. International Mother Language Day Observed on 21 February 2025 .

The United Nations (UN) observes International Mother Language Day (IMLD) every year on February 21 to raise awareness about the significance of preserving and promoting mother languages. The day emphasizes the promotion of linguistic and cultural diversity, encourages multilingualism, and underscores the role of languages in fostering a peaceful, tolerant, and inclusive global society.

- The observance of IMLD in 2025 marks its 25th anniversary.
- The theme of IMLD 2025, "Languages Matter: Silver Jubilee Celebration of International Mother Language Day," serves as a crucial reminder to protect linguistic diversity and promote the use of mother tongues.

Key Points:-

(i) The initiative to celebrate IMLD originated in Bangladesh, where it honors the language martyrs who made the ultimate sacrifice during the 1952 language movement in Dhaka, Bangladesh, in an effort to protect the dignity of their mother tongue, 'Bangla.'

(ii) On November 17, 1999, the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

declared February 21 as "International Mother Language Day" to honor the Bengali people's struggle and sacrifice for their language and culture. The first IMLD was observed on December 21, 2000, following the UNESCO proclamation.

(iii) The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) officially recognized this observance in its resolution (A/RES/56/262) in 2002.

3. World Thinking Day Observed on 25 February 2025.

In February 2025, World Thinking Day (WTD) was celebrated on 22nd February by Girl Scouts and Girl Guides in 153 countries around the world. The day is dedicated to promoting international friendship and sisterhood, while also empowering girls and women globally. The event is organized annually by the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS).

- The theme for WTD 2025, "Our Story," emphasizes the opportunity to reflect on the movement's past, present, and future, inspiring and uplifting communities worldwide.

Key Points:-

(i) In 1926, delegates from Girl Guide and Girl Scout organizations around the world gathered in the United States of America (USA) at the 4th WAGGGS World Conference, where they decided to create Thinking Day as a special day for Girl Guides and Girl Scouts.

(ii) In 1999, at the 30th World Conference in Dublin (Ireland), the name was changed to "World Thinking Day" to better reflect the global reach of the celebration.

4. International Asperger's Day recently observed on February 18, 2025.

International Asperger's Day is observed globally on 18th February to raise awareness about the importance of Asperger syndrome for individuals and the community. It was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2007.

- Asperger syndrome is a developmental disorder that is considered part of the autism spectrum. It primarily affects a person's ability to socialize and communicate effectively with others.
- On this day, the National Institute for Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (NIEPID) under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MOSJE) of the Government of India (GoI) organized various programs at its national and regional centers to raise awareness and promote inclusivity for individuals with Asperger's Syndrome.
- The National Institute for Locomotor Disabilities (NILD) in Kolkata (West Bengal, WB) hosted a webinar on "Understanding Asperger's Syndrome: Insights, Challenges, and Support Strategies."

Key Points:-

(i) The Composite Regional Centre (CRC) in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) organized an awareness program at the Jammu College of Physiotherapy in J&K to educate students and faculty members about the symptoms of Asperger's Syndrome.

(ii) The CRC in Nagpur (Maharashtra) organized a webinar on "Understanding and Supporting Individuals with Asperger's Syndrome," while the CRC in Jaipur (Rajasthan) conducted a virtual

webinar on the challenges of Asperger's Syndrome and effective support strategies.

(iii) The CRC in Guwahati (Assam) organized a special event featuring the screening of a documentary on Asperger's Syndrome, providing participants with a visual and educational insight into the condition.

5. World NGO Day Observed on February 27.

World Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) Day is observed annually on 27 February across the globe to recognize, celebrate, and honor the contributions of NGOs and Non-Profit Organizations (NPOs) that contribute to society all year round. This day also acknowledges the selfless efforts of volunteers who support these organizations.

- 27 February 2025 marks the observance of the 12th Edition of World NGO Day.
- "Empowering Grassroots Movements for a Sustainable Future" highlights the need to empower local communities for a sustainable, inclusive future.
- There is no officially declared theme for World NGO Day 2025, but "Empowering Grassroots Movements for a Sustainable Future" is widely mentioned in news sites.

Key Points:-

(i) World NGO Day was created in the European Union (EU) by Marcis Liors Skadmanis in 2009, a Latvian-British tech entrepreneur and philanthropist from the United Kingdom (UK).

(ii) The first-ever global World NGO Day event was held on 27 February 2014 by the Ministry for

Foreign Affairs of Finland in Helsinki, Finland.

(iii) NGO refers to a non-profit, citizen-based organization that operates independently from government control and is involved in various sectors, such as humanitarian aid, environmental protection, education, and social welfare.

DEFENCE

1. Indian Navy Transfers INS Guldar to MTDC for Development of Underwater Museum and Artificial Reef.

In February 2025, the Indian Navy (IN) handed over the Indian Naval Ship (INS) Guldar, a Landing Ship Tank, to the Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) at Karwar, Maharashtra, on an 'as is where is' basis for conversion into India's first underwater museum and artificial reef.

- The MTDC has taken the ship under its charge to convert it into an underwater museum and artificial reef near the Nivati Rocks, off the coast of Vengurla in Sindhudurg District, Maharashtra.

Key Points:-

- (i) The conversion process will involve a thorough cleaning of the ship to remove any potential pollutants or hazardous materials, ensuring environmental approvals as per guidelines.
- (ii) The INS Guldar was built at Gdynia Shipyard, Poland, and was commissioned into the Indian Navy in 1985.
- (iii) The design was developed in collaboration with the Armament Research & Development Establishment (ARDE) in Pune, Maharashtra, and

the Indian Army.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. DRDO and Indian Navy Successfully Conduct Flight Trials of First-of-its-Kind 'NASM-SR' in Odisha.

On 25 February 2025, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), in collaboration with the Indian Navy (IN), successfully conducted flight trials of the first-of-its-kind, indigenously developed Naval Anti-Ship Missile Short Range (NASM-SR).

- The tests were carried out at the Integrated Test Range (ITR) located at Chandipur, off the coast of Odisha, with the missile being launched from the Indian Navy's (IN) Sea King 42B Helicopter.
- This missile is set to replace the Sea Eagle missiles currently in use by the IN.

Key Points:-

- (i) The NASM-SR demonstrated its Man-in-Loop feature, allowing human intervention during the missile's operation. The NASM-SR demonstrated its Man-in-Loop feature, allowing human intervention during the missile's operation.
- (ii) The missile was launched in Bearing-only Lock-on after Launch (LOAL) mode, initially guided by a broad target direction and then precisely hitting a smaller target.
- (iii) The missile successfully targeted and hit a small ship at its maximum range of 50 kilometers (km) while operating in sea-skimming mode.

2. SpaceX Successfully Launches Third Moon Landing Mission with Athena Lander.

In February 2025, Space Exploration Technologies Corp. (SpaceX) successfully launched its third moon landing mission of 2025, named 'Intuitive Machines (IM-2)' mission, carrying the Athena lander. The Nova-C class robotic lunar lander, developed by Houston, Texas-based Intuitive Machines Inc., was launched onboard the Falcon 9 rocket from NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida, USA.

- The 15-feet tall (4.7 meters) Athena lander is expected to land on Mons Mouton, a flat-topped mountain located about 160 kilometers from the Moon's South Pole on March 6, 2025.
- The mission is a critical component of NASA's Commercial Lunar Payload Services (CLPS) initiative and the Artemis program.

Key Points:-

- (i) The Athena lander is accompanied by a 3-foot (1 meter) drone, Grace, named after the late computer programming pioneer Grace Hopper.
- (ii) The drone will attempt various test hops before venturing into a crater estimated to be 65 feet deep.

OBITUARY

1. Renowned Gujarati Poet and Sahitya Akademi Awardee, Anil Ramanath Joshi, Dies.

On February 26, 2025, renowned Gujarati poet, essayist, and Sahitya Akademi Awardee Anil Ramanath Joshi passed away in Mumbai, Maharashtra. He was born on July 28, 1940, in Gondal, Gujarat.

- In 1990, he was honored with the Sahitya Akademi Award for Gujarati literature for his insightful essay collection, Statue.

Key Points:-

- (i) Anil Ramanath Joshi's literary journey began in 1970 with the publication of his first Gujarati poetry collection, Kadach. He further enriched Gujarati poetry with Baraf Na Pankhi, a collection of poems, in 1982. In 1988, he also published Pavan Ni Vyaspithe, a collection of essays.
- (ii) Anil Ramanath Joshi also authored a collection of children's stories and fables titled Chakli Bole Chi Chi Chi, and his collection of essays, Pavan Ni Vyaspithe, was chosen for the Gujarat Sahitya Akademi Award in 1990.
- (iii) However, on October 11, 2025, he returned the 1990 Sahitya Akademi Award as a protest against the increasing attacks on literary writers.

2. Oscar-Winning Actor Gene Hackman Passes Away.

On 26 February 2025, Oscar-winning Hollywood actor Gene Hackman passed away at the age of 95 in New Mexico, the United States of America (USA). He was born on 30 January 1930 in San Bernardino, California, the USA.

- He won his first Oscar award in 1971 for Best Actor in the movie The French Connection by William Friedkin and won another Oscar award for Best Supporting Actor in the movie Unforgiven, directed by Clint Eastwood, in 1992.
- Gene Hackman, known for his powerful performances, had a career spanning over four decades and began his journey in the United States Marine Corps before transitioning to acting.

- Earlier in his acting career, Gene Hackman worked on television shows such as Route 66 and Naked City, improvisational theatre, and Broadway comedies before starring in more than 100 films, including his iconic role as Lex Luthor in the Superman films of the 1970s and 1980s.

Key Points:-

- (i) Gene Hackman has appeared in popular films like Runaway Jury, The Conversation, and The Royal Tenenbaums. His final significant film appearance was as Monroe Cole in Welcome to Mooseport in 2004.
- (ii) He won two British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) Awards, four Golden Globes, and a Screen Actors Guild Award.
- (iii) He was also nominated for Oscars for his performances in Bonnie and Clyde (1967), I Never Sang for My Father (1970), and Mississippi Burning (1988).