

WEEKLY
CURRENT
AFFAIRS
PDFs



January 2025



A Complete and Comprehensive Current Affairs
Quick Revision PDFs For Every Aspirants.



NATIONAL AFFAIRS / GOVERNMENT SCHEME

1. Tripura Receives New State Emblem with MHA Approval.

In January 2025, Tripura Chief Minister (CM) Manik Saha announced that the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) had approved the new state emblem, which will prominently feature the state's history and culture in its design.

- The proposal for the state emblem of Tripura was examined under Rule 4(2) of the State Emblem of India (Regulation of Use) Rules, 2007 (as amended in 2010) and found to be in order.

Key Points:-

The newly designed emblem features the map of Tripura within a saffron circle, with the national emblem of India displayed inside the outline of the map. Below the circle, "Government of Tripura" is written.

2. Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana Marks 10 Years of Transforming Lives.

Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana (SSY), a flagship initiative of the Government of India (GoI) aimed at securing the financial future of girl children in India, has successfully completed 10 years of implementation.

- The scheme was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on January 22, 2015, as part of the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) campaign in Panipat, Haryana.

Key Points:-

(i) As of November 2024, over 4.1 crore Sukanya Samriddhi Accounts (SSAs) have been opened

under the SSY.

(ii) Uttar Pradesh (UP) emerged as the largest contributor to the SSY, with 45 lakh accounts opened under the scheme, followed by Tamil Nadu (TN) with 30 lakh accounts and Bihar with 22 lakh accounts.

3. NIFT Hyderabad Unveils 'VisionNxt', a Fashion Forecasting Platform.

In January 2025, the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT), Hyderabad (Telangana), launched 'VisionNxt', India's first fashion forecasting platform that integrates Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Emotional Intelligence (EI).

- The platform was unveiled during NIFT's 40th Foundation Day celebrations in Hyderabad.

Key Points:-

(i) Developed under the Ministry of Textiles (MoT), the platform is designed to provide trend insights specifically tailored to India's fashion and retail industry.

(ii) VisionNxt seeks to reduce India's reliance on international trend forecasting agencies by leveraging the country's strengths in Information Technology (IT) and textiles.

4. National e-Governance Division (NeGD) Introduces 'Entity Locker' for Streamlined Business Document Management.

In January 2025, the National e-Governance Division (NeGD), operating under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), introduced the 'Entity Locker.' This modern digital

platform aims to simplify how businesses manage and verify their documents while aligning with India's Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) and the Union Budget 2024-25's goals of advancing digital governance and streamlining business processes.

- **The Entity Locker is a secure cloud-based platform for businesses, including MSMEs, startups, trusts, and corporations, offering streamlined storage, sharing, and verification of documents to reduce delays and operational challenges.**

- **The platform integrates seamlessly with critical systems like the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA), Goods and Services Tax Network (GSTN), and Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT). This integration reduces delays and enhances efficiency in processes like vendor verification, procurement, and loan applications for MSMEs.**

- **Entity Locker supports multiple use cases, such as vendor verification, compliance documentation for the food industry under the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), and corporate filings like annual returns. It significantly simplifies compliance processes and improves operational efficiency.**

Key Points:-

(i) The platform ensures real-time document verification by integrating with government databases. It provides 10 gigabytes (GB) of encrypted cloud storage for secure document management and enables authentication using legally valid digital signatures. Aadhaar-based authentication ensures secure and accountable access to sensitive information.

(ii) Built-in features of Entity Locker simplify regulatory reporting and compliance by offering tools to track document-related activities,

enhancing transparency and accountability for businesses and organizations.

(iii) Individuals do not have direct access to Entity Locker but can connect their personal accounts to their organization's account to manage and access digital documents. The platform emphasizes user consent for data sharing and ensures a secure and accountable environment for document management.

5. Singapore President Tharman Shanmugaratnam Visited India from January 14 to 18, 2025 and Focuses on Strengthening Bilateral Ties and Strategic Partnership.

Singapore President Tharman Shanmugaratnam visited India from January 14 to 18, 2025, marking his first bilateral state visit to India. He was accompanied by Chee Hong Tat, Minister for Transport and 2nd Minister for Finance, and Sim Ann, Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of National Development.

- **During the visit, President Tharman Shanmugaratnam engaged in discussions with President Droupadi Murmu, focusing on enhancing bilateral ties and elevating them to a 'Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.'**

- **A unique Ministerial Roundtable mechanism was also proposed to further strengthen the partnership.**

Key Points:-

(i) President Tharman Shanmugaratnam and President Droupadi Murmu jointly unveiled the 60th Anniversary Commemorative logo at Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi.

(ii) During his state visit to Odisha, several

Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) were signed between the Odisha government and Singaporean organizations, focusing on cooperation in skills development, green energy, and industrial growth.

6. Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh Inaugurated India's First-Ever CSIR Innovation Complex in Mumbai.

In January 2025, Dr. Jitendra Singh, Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for the Ministry of Science and Technology (MoS&T) and the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES), inaugurated India's first-ever Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR) Mega "Innovation Complex." The event, held virtually, marked the dedication of the facility in Mumbai, Maharashtra, to support startups and industry stakeholders.

- The event was graced by the presence of Dr. V.K. Saraswat and Dr. V.K. Paul, Members of NITI Aayog, along with Dr. N. Kalaiselvi, Secretary of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR) and Director General (DG) of CSIR, and Dr. Ram Vishwakarma.

- The newly inaugurated "Innovation Complex" is a modern, state-of-the-art facility spread across nine floors. It features 24 fully equipped "ready-to-move" incubation labs, along with furnished office spaces and networking areas. The facility is designed to cater to industries, CSIR laboratories, Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), and innovative startups, fostering collaboration and innovation.

Key Points:-

(i) CSIR entered into six Memorandums of Association (MoAs) with esteemed institutions such as the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT)

Bombay, iCreate, and the National Research Development Corporation (NRDC). These agreements aim to promote innovation, foster industrial collaboration, and drive job creation.

(ii) Furthermore, 50 technology transfers were formalized between CSIR institutes and startups, MSMEs, and other organizations, enhancing industry partnerships and generating employment opportunities.

(iii) India ranks as the third-largest startup ecosystem globally, boasting over 100 unicorns that exemplify the nation's entrepreneurial spirit.

7. "RBI Releases NBFC Upper Layer List for 2024-25 under Scale-Based Regulation".

In January 2025, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) released the list of Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) in the Upper Layer (UL) segment under the Scale-Based Regulation (SBR) for NBFCs for the year 2024-25.

- Despite its request to de-register as an NBFC, Tata Sons Private Limited has been retained in the NBFC UL list, and its request is still under examination.

Key Points:-

(i) The updated list includes 15 companies, such as Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) Housing Finance Limited (HFL), Bajaj Finance Limited (BFL), and Shriram Finance Limited (SFL), among others.

(ii) Muthoot Finance Limited (MFL), a part of the Muthoot Group, is the only gold loan NBFC included in RBI's 'UL' list for three consecutive years.

(iii) Piramal Enterprise Limited (PEL), which

qualified for inclusion based on its scoring, has been excluded from the list for the year 2024-25 due to ongoing restructuring in the business group.

8. According to the MoC&I India Becomes 7th Largest Coffee Producing Country in the World.

According to the Ministry of Commerce & Industry (MoC&I), India has emerged as the world's 7th largest coffee-producing country, with exports reaching USD 1.29 billion in Financial Year 2023-24 (FY24), compared to USD 719.42 million in FY21.

- India exported over 9,300 tonnes of coffee in the 1st half of January 2025, with major buyers including Italy, Belgium, and Russia.
- Domestic coffee consumption has increased from 84,000 tonnes in 2012 to 91,000 tonnes in 2023, as per MoC&I.
- India's coffee is predominantly cultivated in the ecologically rich Western and Eastern Ghats.

Key Points:-

- (i) Karnataka led the coffee production in 2022-23 with 2,48,020 Metric Tonnes (MT), followed by Kerala and Tamil Nadu.
- (ii) The top 5 coffee-producing countries in the world are Brazil, Vietnam, Colombia, Indonesia, and Ethiopia.

9. "Seven Products from Andaman and Nicobar Islands Receive GI Tags".

In December 2024, the Geographical Indications (GI) Registry in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, under the Department of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoC&I), granted GI tags to seven indigenous and distinctive products from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, acknowledging their cultural and traditional significance.

- The seven products granted GI tags are: Nicobari Mat (Chatrai-hileuoi), Nicobari Hut (Chanvi Pati - Nyi hupul), Nicobari Hodi craft, Padauk Wood Craft, Andaman & Nicobar Coconut, Nicobari Tavi-i-Ngaich (Virgin Coconut Oil), and Andaman Karen Musley Rice.
- This marks the first time in India that a single Union Territory (UT) has been awarded GI tags for seven products in one instance.

Key Points:-

- (i) The achievement was made possible through the collaborative efforts of the regional office of the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) in Vijayapuram (Andhra Pradesh), along with various stakeholders.
- (ii) Several local organizations, including The Tribals Development Cooperative Society Limited, Sahara Women's Marketing Cooperative Society Ltd., Tribal Development Council, and the Centre for Participatory Training and Learning, played a crucial role in securing the GI tags.
- (iii) The initiative was coordinated by the Human Welfare Association (HWA), under the guidance of Padma awardee Rajani Kant, also known as "the GI Man of India."

10. "Rubber Board of India Launches 'ISNR' and 'INR Konnect' to Enhance Rubber Production."

In January 2025, the Rubber Board (RB) based in Kottayam, Kerala, under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoC&I), launched two key initiatives, 'iSNR (Indian Sustainable Natural Rubber)' and 'INR Konnect', during the platinum jubilee celebrations of the Rubber Act, 1947, and the Rubber Growers' Conference held in Kottayam.

- **These initiatives aim to enhance India's global standing in the rubber industry and boost domestic rubber production.**

Key Points:-

(i) The iSNR initiative ensures that Indian rubber production complies with the European Union Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) standards, promoting sustainability in rubber cultivation.

(ii) INR Konnect is a web-based platform created to link owners of underutilized rubber plantations with potential adopters, thereby increasing plantation productivity.

11. "Union Minister Pralhad Joshi Announces Revisions to OMSS(D) Policy for 2024-25."

Union Minister Pralhad Joshi of the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution (MOCAF&PD) announced revisions to the Open Market Sale Scheme (Domestic) [OMSS(D)] for 2024-25. The updates are designed to strengthen food security and optimize rice distribution nationwide.

- **The updated policy enables State Governments, their corporations, and community kitchens to procure rice directly, bypassing the need for electronic (e)-auctions.**

Key Points:-

(i) The revised reserve price of rice has been reduced to Rs 2,250 per quintal nationwide, down from the previous rate of Rs 2,900 per quintal set in August 2024.

(ii) Ethanol distilleries can also purchase rice at the reduced reserve price of Rs.2,250 per quintal.

(iii) This policy highlights the government's commitment to welfare programs, strengthening food security, and promoting ethanol production.

12. Union Cabinet, Chaired by PM Narendra Modi, Approves Key Proposals on January 22, 2025.

On January 22, 2025, the Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi, approved the following proposals:

- **The Union Cabinet reviewed the significant progress under the National Health Mission (NHM) from 2021-22 to 2023-24, highlighting milestones in improving India's public health outcomes.**

- **It highlighted a significant reduction in Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR), Infant Mortality Rate (IMR), Under-5 Mortality Rate (U5MR), and Total Fertility Rate (TFR).**

- **The Cabinet also approved the continuation of NHM for the next five years.**

Key Points:-

(i) The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA), chaired by PM Narendra Modi, approved the MSP for raw jute (TD-3 grade) at ₹5,650 per quintal for the 2025-26 marketing season.

(ii) This marks an increase of ₹315 per quintal (6%) compared to the MSP for the 2024-25

season.

(iii) These decisions reaffirm the government's focus on enhancing public health outcomes and supporting farmers with fair and remunerative prices for their produce.

13. India's First Edible Oil Consumption Survey Conducted by MoA&FW.

On January 9, 2025, the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare (MoA&FW) launched India's first-ever survey on the "My Gov" portal to assess the edible oil consumption patterns across the country.

- This initiative is designed to support the implementation of the National Mission on Edible Oils-Oilseeds (NMEO-Oilseeds), aiming to improve the oilseeds sector and reduce the country's dependency on imports.
- The survey seeks to fill the gap in recent data regarding edible oil consumption, as India is the world's largest consumer and importer of edible oils.
- The questionnaire-based survey began on January 9, 2025, and will run until February 23, 2025.

Key Points:-

(i) Industry reports indicate that India's per capita annual consumption (PCAC) of edible oil has surpassed 20 kg, exceeding the recommended limits of 12 kg by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and 13 kg by the World Health Organization (WHO).

(ii) Currently, India imports 55-60% of its edible oil requirements from countries like Indonesia, Malaysia, Argentina, Brazil, Russia, and Ukraine.

(iii) During the 2023-24 oil marketing year, India's

total edible oil imports amounted to approximately 15.96 million tonnes (MT).

14. India and France Strengthen Maritime Security Cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

In January 2025, India and France strengthened their maritime security cooperation to ensure peace and security in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). This was achieved through the 7th India-France Maritime Cooperation Dialogue, which took place in New Delhi.

- The meeting was co-chaired by Pavan Kapoor, Deputy National Security Adviser (NSA) of India, and Alice Rufo, Director General for International Relations and Strategy of the French Ministry for the Armed Forces.
- As part of the discussions, both nations agreed to collaborate on developing an analysis of maritime security threats in the IOR. This will focus on preventing illegal maritime activities, including piracy, armed robbery, maritime terrorism, contraband smuggling, and unsustainable fishing practices.
- India and France committed to ensuring secure access to sea lanes of communication by collaborating through maritime assets like the Information Fusion Centre-Indian Ocean Region in Gurugram, the Regional Coordination Operations Centre in Seychelles, and the Regional Maritime Information Fusion Centre in Madagascar.

Key Points:-

(i) India assumed the chairmanship of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) in 2025, marking an important milestone in its engagement with countries in the region. As part of this role, India

and France will continue to prioritize the region's security and stability.

(ii) India and France expanded their bilateral partnership in high-end technologies, focusing on areas such as defence, civil nuclear energy, space, cybersecurity, digital technology, and artificial intelligence (AI), while also strengthening people-to-people exchanges and cultural ties.

(iii) The two countries reviewed progress on the India-France 'Horizon 2047 roadmap,' discussed cooperation on climate change, Indo-Pacific security, and joint development projects in third countries.

of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) and the Ministry of Minority Affairs (MoMA).

Key Points:-

(i) On January 22, 2025, Union Minister Jagat Prakash Nadda (MoH&FW) and Union Minister Annpurna Devi (MoWCD) jointly inaugurated the 10th anniversary celebrations of BBBP at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi.

(ii) The event featured an oath-taking ceremony and the launch of several key initiatives, including a compendium of BBBP practices, the Mission Vatsalya portal, the Mission Shakti portal, and a mobile application for Mission Shakti.

15. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) Completes 10 Years of Successful Implementation.

The Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) scheme, a flagship initiative of the Government of India (GoI) aimed at protecting, educating, and empowering the girl child in India, has successfully completed a decade of impactful implementation.

- **Launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on January 22, 2015, in Panipat, Haryana, the scheme remains a cornerstone of India's commitment to gender equality.**

- **The BBBP scheme operates with 100% funding from the Central Government, implemented across all districts of India under the Sambal vertical of Mission Shakti.**

- **Initially, the scheme was a joint initiative of the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoWCD), the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoH&FW), and the Ministry of Education (MoE); later, its scope was expanded through collaboration with the Ministry**

16. ICRIER Report Highlights India's Digital Economy to Contribute One-Fifth of GDP by 2030.

In January 2025, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) unveiled a comprehensive report titled "Estimation and Measurement of India's Digital Economy," prepared by the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER). This report represents the first effort to quantify the impact of the digital sector on India's income and employment.

- **According to the report, India's digital economy is expected to grow at nearly twice the pace of the overall economy, contributing nearly one-fifth of the national income by 2029-30.**

Key Points:-

(i) In 2022-23, the digital economy accounted for 11.74% of India's income, contributing ₹28.94 lakh crore (approximately USD 368 billion) in Gross Value Added (GVA) and ₹31.64 lakh crore

(approximately USD 402 billion) in Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

(ii) The digital sector supported 14.67 million workers in 2022-23, representing 2.55% of India's workforce.

(iii) The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) proposed investments in inter-state transmission systems to efficiently transfer power from renewable-rich states like Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Madhya Pradesh (MP), supporting the country's growing energy needs.

17. India Achieves Remarkable Growth in Renewable Energy Capacity, Targets 500 GW by 2030.

According to the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), India has made remarkable progress in its Renewable Energy (RE) sector, reinforcing its position as a global leader in clean energy.

- As of December 2024, India's total RE installed capacity reached 209.44 Gigawatt (GW), a 15.84% increase from 180.80 GW in December 2023.
- In 2024, India added a total of 28.64 GW to its RE capacity, reflecting a significant Year-on-Year (YoY) increase of 119.46%, compared to the 13.05 GW added in 2023.
- As of January 20, 2025, India has reached a milestone of 217.62 GW, with a goal to achieve 500 GW of non-fossil fuel-based energy capacity by 2030.

Key Points:-

(i) The Government of India (GOI) focused on enhancing the viability of green hydrogen by reducing costs and attracting investments, positioning India as a global leader in green hydrogen technology.

(ii) Efforts were made to ramp up domestic production of solar photovoltaic (PV) panels and wind turbines, aiming to make India a global hub for renewable energy manufacturing.

18. India and UK Extend 5-Year Partnership to Bolster Health Sectors.

On January 23, 2025, India and the United Kingdom (UK) renewed their health and life sciences partnership by signing a five-year Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in New Delhi. This partnership aims to strengthen collaboration and promote knowledge sharing in areas of mutual interest within health and life sciences.

- The renewed partnership primarily focuses on a shared vision for Universal Health Coverage and addresses global health challenges such as Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR), Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs), digital health innovations, and advancements in pharmaceuticals.
- The ceremony was attended by Union Minister Jagat Prakash (JP) Nadda, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoH&FW); Wes Streeter, UK Secretary of State for Health and Social Care; and Lindy Cameron, Acting High Commissioner of the UK to India.

Key Points:-

(i) The partnership focuses on strengthening health systems through digital health interventions like telemedicine, public health, disease surveillance, and cybersecurity. It addresses the challenges in these areas and outlines strategies

to enhance resilience in the health infrastructure.

(ii) Efforts will be made to improve the resilience of medical supply chains, ensuring preparedness for future disruptions. The MoU also covers regulatory issues such as the regulation, quality assurance of medicines and medical devices, and the establishment of shared quality standards.

(iii) A key focus will be on enhancing human resources for health, emphasizing education, training, and exchange in medical fields like family medicine and nursing. Additionally, the partnership aims to strengthen health security by cooperating on research concerning infectious diseases, emerging infections, and pandemic preparedness, including integrated surveillance across humans, animals, and plants.

19. Dr. Arvind Panagariya Launches NITI Aayog's FHI 2025 Report Highlighting Top States Odisha, Chhattisgarh, and Goa.

In January 2025, Dr. Arvind Panagariya, Chairman of the 16th Finance Commission (FC), unveiled the inaugural issue of the National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog's report titled 'Fiscal Health Index (FHI) 2025' for the Financial Year 2022-23 (FY23) in New Delhi, Delhi.

- Odisha emerged as the top-performing state with a cumulative score of 67.8 out of 100, followed by Chhattisgarh (55.2) and Goa (53.6). The report highlighted that Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Goa, and Gujarat have consistently ranked among the top-performing states across the study's timeline.

Key Points:-

(i) The report evaluates the fiscal health of 18 major Indian states that are key contributors to

India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), demography, total expenditure, revenues, and overall fiscal stability. It also identifies state-specific challenges and areas for improvement.

(ii) States were ranked based on five key sub-indices: Quality of Expenditure, Revenue Mobilisation, Fiscal Prudence, Debt Index, and Debt Sustainability.

(iii) The report utilized data from the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India to calculate the FHI of states.

20. Uttarakhand Becomes the First State to Enforce Uniform Civil Code.

Uttarakhand has become the first state in India to implement the Uniform Civil Code (UCC), which came into effect on 27th January 2025. Uttarakhand Chief Minister (CM) Pushkar Singh Dhami launched the UCC portal and issued a notification marking the adoption of the civil code at a ceremony in Dehradun, Uttarakhand.

- The UCC seeks to unify personal laws concerning marriage, divorce, succession, and inheritance, ensuring equality for all citizens, except for those from Scheduled Tribes (ST).

- The Uniform Civil Code (UCC) is a proposed framework designed to establish a unified set of personal laws applicable to all citizens, irrespective of their religious beliefs.

- Personal laws governing marriage, divorce, inheritance, adoption, and maintenance are currently based on the religious customs and scriptures of various communities.

Key Points:-

(i) On February 7, 2024, the Uttarakhand Legislative Assembly passed the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Bill, which received assent from President Droupadi Murmu on March 13, 2024. The bill establishes uniform personal laws on marriage, divorce, succession, and inheritance, applicable to all citizens of the state, regardless of religion.

(ii) The Uttarakhand government introduced the Uttarakhand Uniform Civil Code Act, 2024, providing a structured process for creating and canceling wills and codicils under inheritance laws.

(iii) The law applies across the state of Uttarakhand and is also effective for Uttarakhand residents living outside the state.

21. DGS Collaborates with C-DAC to Boost Maritime Innovation.

On January 25, 2025, the Directorate General of Shipping (DGS) under the Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways (MoPSW) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC), a scientific society under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY). The partnership aims to enhance innovation, technology, and excellence in India's maritime sector by adopting advanced technologies for maritime administration.

- The MoU was signed by Shyam Jagannathan, Director General of Shipping, and Magesh Ethirajan, Director General of C-DAC, in the presence of S. Krishnan, Secretary, MeitY.

- The event was attended by Abhishek Singh, Additional Secretary, MeitY; Sanket S. Bhondve, Joint Secretary, MeitY; Sunita Verma, Scientist G & Group Coordinator, MeitY; Savita Utreja, Scientist G, Group Coordinator (Cybersecurity), and other senior officers from MeitY, DGS, and C-DAC.

- The MoU focuses on integrating C-DAC's expertise in advanced computing, cybersecurity, Blockchain, and e-Governance to modernize and improve India's maritime sector.

Key Points:-

(i) The partnership will enable the usage of advanced digital tools and automated systems to streamline maritime operations, increase efficiency, and simplify processes.

(ii) Advanced data analytics will be applied to identify patterns and trends for better decision-making. Predictive modeling will help detect potential risks, enhance safety, and optimize operations within the maritime ecosystem.

(iii) This collaboration aims to create a secure and efficient maritime ecosystem by leveraging cutting-edge technologies, improving maritime administration, and driving innovation to boost India's position in the global maritime sector.

22. IIA Hosts International Conference in Bengaluru to Celebrate 125th Anniversary of KSO.

In January 2025, the Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA), an autonomous institute under the Department of Science and Technology (DST), Ministry of Science and Technology (MoS&T), organized an international conference on the theme, 'Sun, Space Weather, and Solar-Stellar Connections', to commemorate the 125th

anniversary of the Kodaikanal Solar Observatory (KSO). The event was held from January 20-25, 2025, in Bengaluru, Karnataka.

- The conference featured a scientifically rich program designed by 20 eminent solar astronomers and supported by the Solar Physics group of IIA.
- Key discussions focused on themes such as solar magnetism, energetic solar phenomena, and the heliosphere. The program also emphasized new advancements in solar astronomy, including the proposed National Large Solar Telescope in the Union Territory (UT) of Ladakh.

Key Points:-

- (i) The event brought together over 200 solar physicists from India and abroad to share knowledge and engage in discussions.
- (ii) The Kodaikanal Solar Observatory, established in 1899 and part of the IIA, has been a cornerstone in advancing solar research globally.

23. MoF Notifies Unified Pension Scheme for Central Government Employees, Effective from April 1, 2025.

In January 2025, the Ministry of Finance (MoF) notified the Unified Pension Scheme (UPS) as an option for central government employees already covered under the National Pension System (NPS). The scheme aims to provide retirees with assured pensions, ensuring financial security and dignity post-retirement.

- As per MoF, the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) will oversee UPS regulations and issue operational guidelines.
- The scheme will come into effect from April 1, 2025.

Key Points:-

- (i) It is voluntary for existing NPS employees and those opting for the Voluntary Retirement Scheme (VRS) under NPS to switch to UPS. However, once switched, it cannot be reversed.
- (ii) The scheme follows a contributory model, requiring central government employees to contribute 10% of their basic salary and Dearness Allowance (DA).
- (iii) The central government has increased its contribution from 14% (currently under NPS) to 18.5%.

24. India Celebrated its 76th Republic Day (R-Day) on 26 January 2025 with Great Patriotism.

The Republic Day parades and events took place at Kartavya Path (formerly known as Rajpath) in New Delhi, Delhi. Republic Day commemorates the adoption of the Constitution of India, which came into effect on 26 January 1950, making India a sovereign, democratic, and republic nation.

- President of India, Droupadi Murmu, unfurled the National Flag, followed by the National Anthem and a 21-gun salute using 105-millimeter (mm) Light Field Guns, an indigenously made weapon.
- The 76th Republic Day celebrations, themed 'Swarnim Bharat: Virasat aur Vikas' (Golden India: Heritage and Development), highlighted India's military strength, cultural heritage, and development.
- The President of Indonesia, Prabowo Subianto, was the Chief Guest for the 76th Republic Day celebrations, marking him as the fourth Indonesian leader to be invited for this honor.

Key Points:-

- (i) The ceremony began with a visit from Prime Minister (PM) of India, Narendra Modi. The parade was led by Lieutenant (Lt.) General Bhavnish Kumar, General Officer Commanding, Delhi Area.
- (ii) Group Captain Alok Ahlawat led the Mi-17 1V helicopters from the 129 Helicopter Unit, which showered flower petals in the Dhwaj Formation, while a 148-member all-women marching contingent from the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) was a key highlight of the parade.
- (iii) Indonesia's 160-member marching contingent and 190-member band contingent participated in the Republic Day parade, while 300 cultural artists performed the patriotic song 'Sare Jahan Se Achha' using traditional instruments like shehnai, sundari, nadaswaram, been, mashak been, and ransingha.

25. Union Ministers Ashwini Vaishnaw and Gajendra Singh Shekhawat Jointly Launch Various Initiatives Ahead of 1st WAVES in Delhi.

In January 2025, Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB), and Union Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Ministry of Tourism (MoT) and Ministry of Culture (MoC), jointly launched various initiatives, including: WAVES Bazaar; 3 Create in India Challenges; WAVES Awards, among others, at the National Media Centre in New Delhi, Delhi.

- These initiatives were launched ahead of the 1st World Audio Visual Entertainment Summit (WAVES), scheduled to be held from February 5 to February 9, 2025, at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi.

Key Points:-

- (i) During the event, Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw announced new challenges aimed at promoting films that explore India's rich tourism and cultural heritage. These challenges seek to enhance creativity, innovation, and international participation.
- (ii) WAVES Bazaar, an e-Marketplace, has been introduced to bring together creators, buyers, and collaborators from various industries such as film, television (TV), music, and creative content firms, all on a single platform.
- (iii) As per MIB, WAVES Awards will commence with nominations opening on February 15, 2025. The awards will feature categories such as: Game of the Year, Film of the Year, and Advertising Campaign of the Year.

26. Tripura Becomes the First Northeastern State to Sign MoU with Bhashini for Multi-Lingual Governance.

In January 2025, the Government of Tripura signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Digital India Bhashini Division (DIBD) of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) for multi-lingual governance.

- The MoU was signed during a state-level workshop titled "Bhashini Rajyam," held at Pragna Bhavan in Agartala, Tripura, under the guidance of Professor (Dr.) Manik Saha, Chief Minister (CM) of Tripura.

Key Points:-

- (i) With this agreement, Tripura becomes the first North-Eastern (NE) state, as well as the 8th Indian state to sign an MoU with the Bhasha Interface for India (Bhashini).
- (ii) This MoU is a significant milestone in the

state's efforts to promote digital inclusivity and leverage technology for enhanced citizen-centric governance.

27. ASER Report 2024 Shows Government Schools Outshine Private in Post-COVID Learning Recovery with Government Schools Enrolment Dropping to 66.8%.

In January 2025, the Pratham Education Foundation, a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO), released the "Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2024", a nationwide household survey that assesses children's enrolment and learning outcomes in rural India. The report indicated that the enrolment in both government and private schools has returned to pre-COVID levels.

- However, the report highlighted that government schools have outperformed private schools in Post-COVID learning recovery levels.
- The report revealed that enrolment in government schools, which saw a surge during the pandemic for children aged 6-14, has now returned to pre-pandemic levels, dropping from 72.9% (in 2022) to 66.8% (in 2024).
- This trend is consistent across every state, except for Uttarakhand and Jammu & Kashmir (J&K).

Key Points:-

- (i) The household-based survey ASER 2025 covered 649,491 children aged 3-16, in 17,997 villages across 605 districts of 29 States/Union Territories (UTs) of India.
- (ii) The drop-out rate for children aged 15-16 decreased significantly from 13.1% (in 2018) to

7.5% (in 2022), but remained stable at 7.9% (in 2024) at the national level.

(iii) For the first time, the survey included a digital literacy section to assess the digital literacy awareness among children aged 14-16. The report showed that nearly 90% of both girls and boys in the 14-16 age group have access to smartphones at home.

28. 100 Odisha Villages to Receive Direct Funding for Forest Protection under CFR Plans Approved by Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MOTA).

In January 2025, the Project Appraisal Committee (PAC) under the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MOTA) approved Community Forest Resource (CFR) plans for 100 villages in phase-I under the Forest Right (FRA) Act, 2006. This number is fewer than the Odisha government's proposal to implement it in 400 villages across the state.

- With this approval, 100 villages in Odisha will receive funds directly in the bank accounts of Gram Sabhas instead of Gram Panchayats for the first time, enabling them to carry out forest protection, management, and convergence works in their respective community lands.
- The state government will receive Rs 16 crore for the development and execution of CFR management plans for 100 villages, with priority given based on the availability of Minor Forest Produce (MFP), preparedness of the plans, community and gram sabha participation, and the establishment of Self-Help Groups (SHGs).
- Gram Sabhas of villages will be entrusted with the responsibility to carry out tree plantation and prepare need-based development plans.

Key Points:-

- (i) Each village will receive Rs 15 lakh per annum, which will be directly deposited into the bank account of the respective gram sabha. Additionally, technical agencies will receive Rs 1 lakh for developing management plans.
- (ii) CFR management plans have been proposed in various districts of the state: Mayurbhanj, Balasore, Keonjhar, Sambalpur, Nayagarh, Kandhamal, Koraput, Malkangiri, Dhenkanal, and Bargarh.
- (iii) As per MoTA, Maharashtra topped among states in recognizing Community Forest Resource Rights (CFRR), with 8,661 villages granted titles as of November 2024, followed by Chhattisgarh (with 4,328 titles), and Odisha (with 3,659 titles).

29. Department of Commerce Launches 'DIA Scheme' to Boost Global Competitiveness in Diamond Sector.

In January 2025, the Department of Commerce (DoC), Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoC&I), Introduced the Diamond Imprest Authorization (DIA) Scheme. The DIA Scheme aims to enhance the global competitiveness of India's diamond sector and will be implemented starting April 1, 2025.

- The scheme permits duty-free import of Natural Cut and Polished Diamonds weighing less than 14 carats (25 cents), encouraging value addition and boosting exports.
- The scheme permits duty-free import of Natural Cut and Polished Diamonds weighing less than 14 carats (25 cents), encouraging value addition and boosting exports.
- Exports under this scheme must have a minimum of 10% value addition.

- Diamond exporters with an annual export turnover of USD 15 million and Two Star Export House status or higher are eligible for benefits.

Key Points:-

- (i) The Diamond Imprest Licence (DIL) will have an import validity of 1 year and an export validity of 18 months. The DIL value will be set at 5% of the average export value from the past three years, with a maximum annual cap of USD 15 million per exporter.
- (ii) Diamonds under the scheme must meet the Actual User Condition, with imports and exports restricted to Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport, aiming to support MSME exporters and ensure fair competition.
- (iii) According to the Gems and Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC), India's gross gem and jewelry exports in December 2024 stood at USD 1,967.98 million (Rs. 16,719.46 crores), marking a 10.29% decline compared to the same period in 2023.

30. Union Minister Rajnath Singh Launches 'SANJAY - The Battlefield Surveillance System' in New Delhi.

On 24th January 2025, Union Minister Rajnath Singh, Ministry of Defence (MoD), flagged off 'SANJAY,' the Battlefield Surveillance System (BSS), from South Block, New Delhi, Delhi.

- The system has been indigenously and jointly developed by the Indian Army (IA) and Bengaluru (Karnataka)-based Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL), fostering a favorable environment for "Aatmanirbharta" as part of the IA's "Year of Technology Absorption."

- It was developed under the Buy (Indian) category at a cost of Rs 2,402 crore.

- Union Minister of State (MoS) Sanjay Seth, MoD; Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Anil Chauhan; Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) General Upendra Dwivedi; Rajesh Kumar Singh, Secretary of MoD; and other senior officials of MoD and BEL attended the flagging-off ceremony.

Key Points:-

(i) The programme provides trade and forex solutions, enabling women entrepreneurs to access international markets.

(ii) Equipped with advanced sensors and analytics, it acts as a force multiplier for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, ensuring border security, preventing invasions, and enabling effective operations in a network-centric environment.

(iii) The system will be implemented in three stages across all operational Brigades, Divisions, and Corps of the Indian Army between March 2025 and October 2025, aligning with the Ministry of Defence's (MoD) declaration of 2025 as the 'Year of Reforms.'

31. Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto Djojohadikusumo Visits India to Commemorate 75th Anniversary of Diplomatic Relations and Attends Republic Day as Chief Guest.

Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto Djojohadikusumo visited India from January 23 to 26, 2025, upon the invitation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. This visit marked his first bilateral trip to India, commemorating the 75th Anniversary of India-Indonesia Diplomatic Relations.

- On January 26, 2025, President Djojohadikusumo attended India's 76th Republic Day celebration as the Chief Guest at Kartavya Path, New Delhi.

- During his visit, President Djojohadikusumo held bilateral discussions with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Droupadi Murmu of India.

Key Points:-

(i) On January 25, 2025, the 3rd India-Indonesia Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) Forum took place in New Delhi, coinciding with the President's visit.

(ii) The visit led to the signing and renewal of five Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) in areas such as health, traditional medicine, and maritime security.

32. Union Cabinet Approves National Critical Mineral Mission and Revision of Ethanol Procurement Price for 2024-25.

On January 29, 2025, the Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi, approved the following proposals:

- The government has launched the 'National Critical Mineral Mission' (NCMM) to develop a robust value chain for critical mineral resources vital for green technologies. The mission will be implemented over seven years with a total allocation of Rs. 34,300 crore.

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has approved the revised ethanol procurement price for Public Sector Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) for the Ethanol Supply Year (ESY) 2024-25, which will be in effect from November 1, 2024, to October 31, 2025.

- As part of the Government of India's (GoI) Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) Programme, this revision sets the

administered ex-mill price of ethanol derived from C Heavy Molasses (CHM) at Rs. 57.97 per litre, an increase from the previous rate of Rs. 56.58 per litre.

Key Points:-

(i) The government has advanced its target for 20% ethanol blending in petrol from 2030 to Ethanol Supply Year (ESY) 2025-26. Public Sector Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) aim to achieve 18% ethanol blending in ESY 2024-25.

(ii) Investments are being made to expand ethanol distillery capacity to 1,713 crore litres per annum to meet the growing demand.

(iii) The Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) Programme was launched in 2003 by the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas (MoP&NG) to promote ethanol usage in fuel.

children—more than one in six worldwide—were living in areas affected by conflict in 2023. The percentage of children impacted by conflict has nearly doubled, rising from around 10% in the 1990s to nearly 19% today.

(ii) The report highlights that nearly 400 million children live in countries burdened by debt, which severely limits essential investments in education, healthcare, and social protection systems.

INTERNATIONAL

1. "UNICEF Report Highlights Climate Change, Conflict, and Digital Inequality Disrupting Children's Futures".

In January 2025, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), a humanitarian aid organization of the United Nations (UN), released a report titled 'Prospects for Children in 2025: Building Resilient Systems for Children's Futures.' According to the report, climate change, economic instability, conflict, and digital inequality are disrupting children's lives and restricting their opportunities for a better future.

- The report warns of a new and escalating period of crises for children globally in the coming year.

Key Points:-

(i) The report states that over 473 million

2. Tata Group Retains Top Position as Leading Indian Brand with \$31.6 Billion Value and Ranked 60th Globally".

In the latest Brand Finance report ranking the top 500 global brands, Tata Group has retained its position as the leading Indian brand with a brand value of \$31.6 billion, reflecting a 10% increase. While Apple continued to hold the top spot as the most valued global brand, Tata Group was ranked 60th, maintaining its place among the top 100 most valued brands. The group also preserved its AAA-brand strength rating.

- The 2025 Brand Finance report highlighted India's growing global market influence, with several Indian brands achieving significant growth.

- LIC emerged as the fastest-growing Indian brand, with a 36% increase in brand value to \$13.3 billion, maintaining its AAA brand strength rating.

- Reliance Group (up 17% to \$9.8 billion) earned an AA- rating, while Wipro Group (up 2% to \$6.7 billion) retained its AA+ rating.

Key Points:-

(i) Infosys has been ranked as the world's third most valuable IT services brand for the fourth

consecutive year, with a brand value of \$16.3 billion. It achieved the fastest compound annual growth rate (CAGR) in brand value among IT services brands over the last five years, driven by innovation, a focus on generative AI, and high-profile sponsorships and partnerships.

(ii) Larsen & Toubro (L&T) made a strong debut in the global rankings, while Bajaj Group increased its brand value by 23% to \$6 billion, and Mahindra Group saw a 9% growth to \$7.2 billion. Banking leaders HDFC (\$14.2 billion), SBI (\$9.6 billion), and ICICI (\$6.4 billion) marked significant entries into the global rankings, highlighting India's growing prominence in the financial sector.

(iii) In telecommunications, Airtel (\$7.7 billion) maintained its strong position, and Jio Group debuted with a brand value of \$6.5 billion, signaling its expanding global footprint. In the energy sector, Indian Oil grew its brand value by 9% to \$5.5 billion, reinforcing its status as a global energy leader.

(Mongolia), Noto Peninsula Heritage Sites (Japan), and the Ruins of Old Belchite (Spain), among others.

- Two Indian sites were featured on the list: the Bhuj Historic Water Systems (Gujarat) and the Musi River Historic Buildings (Telangana).

Key Points:-

(i) The World Monuments Watch List, launched in 1996 and released biennially, highlights sites facing threats from climate change, conflict, natural disasters, and more, with nominations coming from individuals and community-based organizations worldwide.

(ii) A division of the Paris-based International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) dedicated to aerospace heritage nominated the Moon for the WMF Watch List, highlighting concerns over increasing human activity in space and its potential risks to historical landmarks.

(iii) The organization cautioned that over 90 significant sites on the Moon are at risk of potential damage in the coming years.

3. WMF 2025 Watch List Highlights 25 Endangered Cultural Sites, Includes Moon and Two Indian Heritage Sites.

In January 2025, the New York-based World Monuments Fund (WMF), a non-profit organization, released its "2025 World Monuments Watch List," highlighting 25 endangered cultural heritage sites across 29 countries on 5 continents.

- Notably, the 2025 list went beyond traditional landmarks such as temples and cemeteries, including the Moon for the first time.

- Other significant endangered cultural sites on the list include the Erdene Zuu Buddhist Monastery

4. India and South Korea Sign Exchange of Notes for NCERT's Technical Cooperation Project.

In January 2025, India and South Korea conducted an exchange of notes for the technical cooperation project titled 'Strengthening Vocational Education and Training in Mechatronics in India' in New Delhi (Delhi).

- The Exchange of Notes was signed by Manisha Sinha, Additional Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs (DEA), Ministry of Finance (MoF), and H.E. Lee Seong-ho, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to India, representing the Republic of Korea.

- The project will be implemented in collaboration with the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) of the Government of the Republic of Korea.

Key Points:-

(i) In January 2025, India and South Korea signed an exchange of notes for the 'Strengthening Vocational Education and Training in Mechatronics in India' project. The two-year initiative, in collaboration with NCERT at RIE Bhopal, is the first project with KOICA's assistance in India.

(ii) South Korea will invest USD 2 million by 2027 to improve India's vocational education in mechatronics, marking the first-ever grant-based development cooperation project between the two countries.

(iii) The project will develop curriculum, textbooks, and teacher manuals, alongside providing necessary equipment, aiming to build a strong vocational education framework in mechatronics.

5. IISc Bengaluru Ranked Among the Top 100 Institutes in Computer Science in the World University Rankings 2025 by Subject.

In January 2025, Times Higher Education (THE) released the "World University Rankings by Subject 2025." The Indian Institute of Science (IISc) in Bengaluru, Karnataka, made a mark by becoming the only Indian institution in the top 100 for Computer Science (CS), securing the 99th position for the first time.

- Last year, IISc Bengaluru was ranked in the 251-300 range but still led Indian universities in this field.

Key Points:-

(i) The University of Oxford (United Kingdom) ranked first, followed by the University of Cambridge (UK) and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (USA).

(ii) The rankings evaluated over 11,000 universities across 11 subjects, including arts, business, computer science (CS), engineering, law, life sciences, medical and health, physical sciences, psychology, and social sciences.

6. According to UNCTAD Global Investment Trends Monitor 2024, FDI Increases by 11%, But Decreases by 8% When Excluding European Flows.

In January 2025, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) released its Global Investment Trends Monitor 2024. The report stated that global foreign direct investment (FDI) increased by 11%, reaching an estimated USD 1.4 trillion. However, FDI decreased by 8% when excluding the flows through European conduit economies (countries that channel investments).

- This decline in FDI could pose a risk to the progress of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which rely on international project financing.

- In India, FDI grew by 13%, with both the number and value of greenfield (new) projects increasing.

- The United States of America (USA) and India saw significant growth in manufacturing projects, setting new records. In India, semiconductor and basic metals projects were major contributors to this growth.

Key Points:-

(i) Large-scale projects announced with multiple investors, often involving substantial debt components. These projects mainly focus on

infrastructure sectors and are crucial for investments aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

(ii) Announcement-based data that represent investment intentions during the reporting year, offering insights into future Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) trends. These projects predominantly target industrial sectors.

(ii) Transactions involving acquisitions or mergers of companies across national borders, which have a direct impact on FDI flows.

7. Indore and Udaipur Become India's First Cities to Receive Wetland City Accreditation under Ramsar Convention.

In January 2025, during the 64th meeting of the independent Advisory Committee on Wetland City Accreditation (WCA) of the Ramsar Convention held in Gland, Switzerland, the list of 31 newly accredited Wetland Cities was announced. Among these, Indore (Madhya Pradesh, MP) and Udaipur (Rajasthan) became the first two Indian cities to receive the prestigious international accreditation as 'Wetland Cities' under the Ramsar Convention.

- With this, the total number of accredited Wetland Cities worldwide has now reached 74.
- The accreditation was granted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) under the Ramsar Convention.
- The accreditation is valid for 6 years and aims to promote the conservation and sustainable use of urban wetlands, ensuring ecological and socio-economic benefits for local populations.

Key Points:-

(i) In December 2024, the Ministry of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change (MoEF&CC), Government of India (GoI), nominated three Indian cities: Indore, Udaipur, and Bhopal (MP), for Wetland City Accreditation.

(ii) The Wetland City Accreditation (WCA) is a voluntary system established by the Ramsar Convention in 2015 to recognize cities that have taken significant actions to protect and sustainably manage their urban wetlands. To earn this accreditation, cities must meet six international criteria, including measures to protect wetland ecosystems and promote their sustainable use.

(iii) China leads the global list with 22 accredited cities, followed by France with 9 cities.

8. 55th Annual Meeting of World Economic Forum (WEF 2025) Held in Davos-Klosters, Switzerland, Focused on "Collaboration for the Intelligent Age."

The 55th Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF 2025) took place from January 20-24, 2025, in Davos-Klosters, Switzerland. The event was centered around the theme "Collaboration for the Intelligent Age" and structured into five key sub-themes: Reimagining Growth, Industries in the Intelligent Age, Investing in People, Safeguarding the Planet, and Rebuilding Trust.

- The Indian delegation to WEF 2025 was led by Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, who oversees the Ministry of Railways (MoR), Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB), and Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY).
- Under the vision "One Nation, One Voice," he led India's largest-ever delegation, comprising five Union

Ministers, three Chief Ministers (CMs), and several other state leaders.

- 13 new industrial clusters from Australia, Brazil, Colombia, India (5), the Netherlands, Saudi Arabia, Sweden, Thailand, and the UK have joined the WEF's Transitioning Industrial Clusters initiative, bringing the total to 33 across 16 countries and 5 continents.

Key Points:-

(i) India slipped to 3rd place in the 25th Edelman Trust Barometer launched during WEF 2025, which measures trust in government, businesses, media, and NGOs. China ranked 1st, followed by Indonesia at 2nd place.

(ii) The 31st Annual Crystal Award honored architect Riken Yamamoto, designer Diane von Furstenberg, and UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador David Beckham at WEF 2025 in Davos-Klosters.

9. WHO Designates Georgia as the 45th Malaria-Free Country.

In January 2025, the World Health Organization (WHO) officially declared Georgia as malaria-free, marking a significant milestone in the country's battle against malaria. Georgia became the 45th country and the first in the WHO European Region to achieve this status.

- Although Georgia was malaria-free for 25 years, the country faced a resurgence of the disease in 2002.
- In 2005, Georgia signed the Tashkent Declaration along with nine other countries in the WHO European Region, recommitting to eliminating malaria.
- In 2015, Georgia reported zero indigenous cases of malaria, successfully halting the transmission of the

three main malaria parasite species: *Plasmodium falciparum*, *Plasmodium malariae*, and *Plasmodium vivax*.

Key Points:-

(i) WHO grants malaria elimination certification to a country when it can provide clear evidence that indigenous transmission has been interrupted across the entire nation for a minimum of three consecutive years.

(ii) The final certification decision is made by the WHO Director-General (DG), based on recommendations from the independent Technical Advisory Group on Malaria Elimination and Certification (TAG-MEC) and validation from the Malaria Policy Advisory Group (MPAG).

10. India Becomes Observer State in Eurodrone Programme.

India officially joined the Medium Altitude Long Endurance Remotely Piloted Aircraft System (MALE RPAS), also known as the Eurodrone programme, as an Observer State in January 2025. This milestone makes India the second Asia-Pacific country after Japan to gain observer status in the programme.

- The Letter of Approval (LOA) was handed over by Joachim Sucker, Executive Administration Director of the Organisation for Joint Armament Cooperation (Organisation Conjointe de Coopération en matière d'Armement, OCCAR), to Ajit Gupte, India's Ambassador to Germany, in Berlin, Germany.
- India had formally requested participation in the Eurodrone programme in August 2024, with approval granted in January 2025.

Key Points:-

(i) As an Observer State, India gains access to technical data and the ability to place orders for Eurodrone aircraft. However, India will not be part of the decision-making processes concerning the platform's design, development, or workshare distribution among participating nations.

(ii) This collaboration is expected to bolster India's defence relationship with Europe, complementing other initiatives like the C-295 aircraft, which is being manufactured in India.

11. 55th Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF 2025) Held in Davos-Klosters, Switzerland.

The 55th Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF 2025) was held with the theme "Collaboration for the Intelligent Age" from January 20 to 24, 2025, in Davos-Klosters, Switzerland.

- The Centre for the Fourth Industrial Revolution (C4IR) India, the liaison office of WEF in India, launched its 6-year Impact Journey Report during the WEF Annual Meeting 2025.

- During the meeting, WEF, in collaboration with New York City-based McKinsey Health Institute (MHI), released a report titled "Blueprint to Close the Women's Health Gap: How to Improve Lives and Economies for All". The report highlights the global health condition of women and the need to close the health gap.

Key Points:-

(i) The Telangana government secured an investment of Rs 1,78,950 crore, which will create 49,550 jobs, on the sidelines of the WEF 2025 in Switzerland. The state government signed several

Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs), with a major focus on establishing data centres, followed by pumped storage facilities.

(ii) The Maharashtra government signed 61 MoUs, including 54 investment proposals and 7 strategic cooperation agreements, at WEF 2025, with an investment worth Rs 15.70 lakh crore. These agreements have the potential to provide 16 lakh jobs in the state.

BANKING & FINANCE

1. Shriram Housing Finance Renamed as Truhome Finance.

In January 2025, Shriram Housing Finance Limited (SHFL), a leading housing finance company in India, rebranded itself as Truhome Finance following its acquisition by Warburg Pincus and co-investors, including the Qatar Investment Authority (QIA), Qatar's sovereign wealth fund, from Shriram Finance.

- Shriram Finance Group secured an investment of ₹1,225 crore, raising the company's net worth to over ₹3,300 crore.

Key Points:-

In December 2024, Shriram Finance sold its entire 84.44% stake in SHFL, its affordable housing finance subsidiary, to Warburg Pincus for a sale consideration of ₹3,929 crore.

2. "GlobalData Report: JPMorgan Chase Tops List of Global Banks by Market Cap with USD 674.9 Billion in Q4 2024".

In January 2025, GlobalData Plc, a London-based data analytics and research company, released its

report on the Top 25 Global Banks by Market Capitalization for Q4 2024. The report revealed that JPMorgan Chase & Co, based in New York, USA, remains the largest bank globally by market capitalization, reaching USD 674.9 billion by the end of Q4 2024, reflecting a 37.2% increase from Q4 2023.

- Bank of America Corporation (BAC), USA-based, secured the 2nd position with a market cap of USD 337.2 billion, while China's Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC) ranked 3rd with USD 328.2 billion.

- Q4 2024 refers to the fourth quarter of the year 2024, which covers the period from October 1, 2024, to December 31, 2024. It is the last three-month segment (quarter) of the calendar year, commonly used in financial and business reporting.

Key Points:-

In the Q4 2024 report, India's HDFC Bank Limited fell from 7th to 13th position compared to Q4 2023, ICICI Bank Limited moved up one position from 20th to 19th, and State Bank of India (SBI) maintained its 24th position.

3. RBI Rolls Out Revised Guidelines for ARC-Borrower Settlements.

On January 20, 2025, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) introduced revised guidelines for the settlement of dues payable by borrowers to Asset Reconstruction Companies (ARCs) under the Master Direction- Reserve Bank of India (Asset Reconstruction Companies) Directions, 2024. These guidelines came into force with immediate effect.

- These revised guidelines were issued through a circular in exercise of powers given by Sections 9 and 12 of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security (SARFAESI) Act, 2002 (54 of 2002).

- These revised norms aimed to enhance transparency, accountability, and efficiency in settlement processes carried out by ARCs.

Key Points:-

(i) In this case, settlement of dues will be done only after the proposal is thoroughly examined by an Independent Advisory Committee (IAC), which shall comprise professionals with expertise in finance, law, or technical fields.

(ii) In this case, settlements can be approved by an official who was not part of the acquisition (as an individual or part of a committee).

4. Bajaj Finance and Bharti Airtel Join Forces to Launch Digital Financial Services Platform.

On January 20, 2025, Bharti Airtel, a telecom services provider, and Bajaj Finance, a private-sector Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC), have partnered to develop one of India's largest digital platforms for financial services to ensure faster last-mile delivery.

- The platform will offer Bajaj Finance's diversified suite of 27 product lines to Airtel's 375 million customers.

Key Points:-

(i) Airtel will initially offer Bajaj Finance's retail financial products on its Airtel Thanks Application (App) for a seamless and safe customer

experience, and later through its nationwide network of stores.

(ii) Two products of Bajaj Finance have been tested on the Airtel Thanks App, and four products will be available to customers by March 2025. These include Gold Loan, Business Loan, a co-branded Insta EMI (Equated Monthly Instalment) Card, and Personal Loan.

(iii) Airtel-Bajaj Finserv EMI card users will be provided with flexible EMI options and payment plans for purchasing various goods, which can also be used for e-commerce transactions on multiple platforms.

5. CCI Approves ATFL's Acquisition of DMFPL, Preferential Allotment to Bharti and DMPL India.

On January 21, 2025, the Competition Commission of India (CCI) approved the following proposals :

- Gurugram-based Agro Tech Foods Limited (ATFL) has acquired 100% shareholding of Gurugram (Haryana)-based Del Monte Foods Private Limited (DMFPL) in a deal worth ₹1,300 crore.
- Approval was granted for the merger of 9 entities with pharmaceutical firm Sequent Scientific Limited (SSL).
- Singapore-based Majesty II Pte. Limited acquired 100% shareholding of Cyprus-based investment holding company of Advent International Group, Al Lenarco Midco Ltd.

Key Points:-

(i) As per the proposed combination, Agro Tech Foods Limited (ATFL), the Acquirer, will purchase the entire shareholding of Del Monte Foods

Private Limited (DMFPL), the Target, from its existing shareholders: Bharti Enterprises Limited (BEL), a conglomerate primarily engaged in management consultancy services within the Bharti Group (including its subsidiaries), and DMPL India Limited (DMPL India).

(ii) ATFL will issue 20.95% and 14.39% of its equity shares to Bharti and DMPL India, respectively, through preferential allotment.

6. Skydo Obtains In-Principle Approval from RBI as a Payment Aggregator for Cross-Border Transactions.

On 21 January 2025, Skydo Technologies Private Limited, a cross-border fintech company based in Bengaluru, Karnataka, received in-principle approval from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to operate as a Payment Aggregator for Cross-Border (PA-CB) payments.

- Skydo also obtained approval as a Payment Service Provider (PSP) from Amazon, the American multinational technology company based in Washington, USA. This approval allows Skydo to process payments for exporters who are part of Amazon's Global Selling program.
- Founded in 2022, Skydo is one of the first companies in the cross-border payments industry to receive RBI's approval. It mainly helps small and medium-sized businesses, as well as freelancers, by offering virtual foreign accounts to receive international payments.

Key Points:-

(i) The company works with global banks to offer a complete solution for invoicing, payments, and reconciliation, processing over USD 250 million in annual export payments.

(ii) Currently, only five companies have received final approval from the RBI to operate as PA-CB, including Adyen India Technology Services Private, Amazon Pay India Private Limited, Cashfree Payments, Indialdeas.com, and Pay10 Services Private Limited.

7. PNB MetLife has partnered with Truhome Finance to provide Group Credit Life Insurance.

In January 2025, PNB MetLife India Insurance Company (based in Mumbai) partnered with Truhome Finance (based in Chennai, previously known as Shriram Housing Finance Limited) to offer Group Credit Life Insurance to home loan customers of Truhome Finance.

- **This partnership is a significant step for PNB MetLife in achieving its goal of "Milkar Life Aage Badhein" (Advancing Life Together), showing its commitment to expanding its reach and promoting financial inclusion.**

Key Points:-

(i) The Group Credit Life Insurance will provide financial security to homeowners and their families by covering any outstanding loan balance in case of an emergency. This service will be available at 165 Truhome Finance branches across 17 states in India.

(ii) This collaboration also supports the vision of "Insurance for All by 2047," making financial security more accessible to individuals and families.

8. Jio Financial Services and BlackRock are expanding into the stock broking sector.

In January 2025, Jio Financial Services Limited (JFSL), based in Mumbai, announced that its joint venture, Jio BlackRock Investment Advisers Private Limited, has set up a fully owned subsidiary called 'Jio BlackRock Broking Private Limited' to enter the stock broking business, pending regulatory approvals.

- **Jio BlackRock Investment Advisers Private Limited was created with the main goal of offering investment advisory services.**

Key Points:-

(i) In September 2024, JFSL and the US-based company BlackRock, Inc. each contributed Rs 3 crore to the joint venture.

(ii) In October 2024, Jio BlackRock Investment Advisers Private Limited received approval from the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) to begin its mutual fund business.

9. NTPC has partnered with Sri Lanka for a significant solar project.

In January 2025, NTPC Limited (based in New Delhi, formerly known as National Thermal Power Corporation) partnered with the Ceylon Electricity Board of Sri Lanka to develop a 50 Megawatt (MW) solar project in Sampoor, Trincomalee, Sri Lanka. This project can be expanded to 120 MW.

- **The solar facility in Sampoor will be set up by Trincomalee Power Company Limited (TPCL), a joint venture (JV) between NTPC Limited and the Ceylon Electricity Board.**

Key Points:-

(i) After discussions with various stakeholders in

Sri Lanka, the tariff for the project has been set at 5.97 US cents per unit.

(ii) This solar project will help diversify Sri Lanka's energy mix, increasing its clean energy capacity and reducing dependence on fossil fuels.

(iii) With this project, NTPC, India's top power generation company under the Ministry of Power (MoP), is taking a big step towards promoting sustainable energy and strengthening regional cooperation.

10. TATA AIG Unveils 'CyberEdge' to Provide Cyber Insurance for Indian Enterprises.

In January 2025, TATA AIG General Insurance Company Limited (TATA AIG), headquartered in Mumbai, Maharashtra, introduced 'CyberEdge,' an advanced cyber insurance solution designed to protect businesses of all sizes against various cyber threats.

- The solution provides extensive financial and operational assistance, covering expenses for forensic investigations, legal proceedings, data restoration, extortion payments, and business interruption losses.
- Tata AIG provides 24/7 access to a team of incident response experts, ensuring top-tier legal and IT forensic support within 2 hours of reporting a cyber incident, particularly addressing the critical first 24 hours.
- Covers costs for replacing damaged equipment and restoring operations if cyber incidents render systems inoperable, including BYOD (Bring Your Own Device), Operational Technology (OT), industrial control, and SCADA systems.

Key Points:-

(i) Offers flexibility to clients by allowing the choice between gross or net profit for loss assessment, along with coverage for third-party forensic accounting fees for precise calculations.

(ii) Provides up to 120 days of coverage for disruptions caused by incidents, including proactive mitigation costs and protection for system failures, voluntary or regulatory shutdowns, and multimedia activities.

(iii) The Indian cyber insurance market, valued at Rs. 850 crore in 2024, is projected to grow at a CAGR of 25% from 2025 to 2030, with India potentially facing up to 1 trillion cyberattacks annually by 2033, as per Prahar's report, The Invisible Hand.

11. JK Tyre has secured a USD 100 million sustainability-linked loan from the International Finance Corporation (IFC).

In January 2025, the International Finance Corporation (IFC), based in Washington, United States, approved a USD 100 million Sustainability-Linked Loan (SLL) for JK Tyre, a leading Indian tyre manufacturer with a global presence. JK Tyre is based in New Delhi and is part of the JK Organisation, a major global group.

- This loan includes USD 30 million for JK Tyre & Industries Limited and up to USD 70 million for Cavendish Industries Limited (CIL), a subsidiary of JK Tyre.
- The company plans to use the funds to expand its production of passenger car radial (PCR) tyres at its Banmore plant in Madhya Pradesh (MP).

- The loan will also help increase the capacity of CIL's Laksar factory in Uttarakhand to produce truck and bus radial (TBR) tyres.

Key Points:-

This initiative is aimed at strengthening local supply chains, promoting energy-efficient tyre production, and creating job opportunities.

12. CheQ Unveils 'CheQ Wisor', India's First AI-Driven Credit Card Expert.

In January 2025, CheQ Digital Private Limited, a Bengaluru-based fintech company, introduced 'CheQ Wisor', India's first Artificial Intelligence (AI)-powered credit card expert.

- CheQ Wisor leverages AI to provide instant, human-like responses to users' credit card inquiries via a simple chat interface, eliminating the need for users to search for information. It also helps analyze expenses by category.

Key Points:-

(i) The platform is designed to simplify credit card management, enabling millions of Indians to manage their cards, earn rewards, and receive personalized insights all through an easy-to-use interface.

(ii) A Smart Spend Analysis feature is included, allowing users to compare spending across all their credit cards and merchants in one view, helping them track spending trends and understand monthly changes.

(iii) CheQ, founded by Aditya Soni in 2021, has processed over USD 4 billion in credit card payments and served more than 3 million

customers.

13. Kotak Mahindra Bank Acquires StanChart's Personal Loan Portfolio for Rs 3,330 Crore.

In January 2025, Mumbai (Maharashtra)-based Kotak Mahindra Bank Limited (KMBL), a leading Indian private sector bank, announced the completion of its acquisition of the Rs 3,330 crore personal loan portfolio of Mumbai-based Standard Chartered Bank (SCB), India, following approval from the Competition Commission of India (CCI).

- In October 2024, KMBL had signed an agreement to acquire the personal loan book of Standard Chartered Bank, India, for Rs 4,100 crore, aiming to strengthen its position in the retail credit market.

Key Points:-

(i) This acquisition includes all personal loans classified as standard advances.

(ii) The personal loan portfolio, a part of unsecured retail loans (including retail microcredit), accounted for a 10.5% share in KMBL's net advances as of December 2024.

14. RBI Unveils Measures to Infuse Rs 1.50 Lakh Crore into the Banking System.

On January 27, 2025, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) unveiled a set of measures to inject approximately Rs 1.5 lakh crore into the banking system in phases. The primary aim of these actions is to alleviate the liquidity shortage resulting from the RBI's intervention in selling dollars to stabilize the Indian Rupee (INR).

- The RBI will buy Government Securities (G-secs) worth Rs 60,000 crore through Open Market Operations (OMO) in three tranches of Rs 20,000 crore each, with auctions scheduled for January 30, February 13, and February 20, 2025.
- The RBI has announced a 56-day Variable Rate Repo (VRR) auction for Rs 50,000 crore, scheduled for February 7, 2025, to meet the liquidity requirements of banks until March 31, 2025.
- RBI has announced a USD/INR Buy/Sell Swap auction of USD 5 billion for a 6-month tenor, scheduled for January 31, 2025, to manage liquidity conditions. Under this arrangement, RBI will borrow dollars in exchange for rupees, with the interest cost determined by the repurchase price of the dollars at the end of the tenure.

Key Points:-

- (i) VRR (Variable Rate Repo) and OMO (Open Market Operations) are tools used by RBI to manage liquidity. VRR helps banks borrow at market-determined rates, while OMO involves the buying and selling of government securities.
- (ii) As of January 24, 2025, the banking system faced a liquidity deficit of Rs 2.82 lakh crore, prompting RBI's intervention.
- (iii) The RBI recently conducted a VRR auction worth Rs 50,000 crore on January 16, 2025, and will conduct a USD/INR Buy/Sell Swap auction on January 31, 2025.

15. iSPIRT Introduces Priority Sector Lenders Association of India (PSLAI) to Enhance MSME Financing.

In January 2025, the Indian Software Product Industry Round Table (iSPIRT), a think tank dedicated to India's software industry, launched the Priority Sector Lenders Association of India (PSLAI), which was established under Section 8 of the Companies Act 1972.

- PSLAI will be led by Priyashmita Guha as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and will be supported by a skilled Board of Directors (BOD).
- The association's objective is to streamline and improve the accessibility of loans under Priority Sector Lending (PSL) norms, which are vital for banks and Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) in India.
- PSLAI is a non-profit organization aimed at promoting loans for sectors defined by the Reserve Bank of India's Priority Sector Lending (PSL) guidelines. Its founding members include lending institutions such as UGRO Capital, IIFL, and fintech companies like GetVantage and GetGrowth Capital. PSLAI's primary goal is to support sectors like agriculture, MSMEs, and affordable housing by ensuring they receive essential financial backing for growth.

Key Points:-

- (i) According to RBI guidelines, banks are required to allocate a minimum of 40% of their Adjusted Net Bank Credit (ANBC) to Priority Sector Lending (PSL), resulting in an annual disbursement of Rs 64 trillion to sectors like agriculture, MSMEs, and affordable housing.
- (ii) The MSME sector, contributing 29% to India's GDP and 45.73% of exports, is currently facing a credit gap of approximately Rs 103 trillion for the Financial Year 2024 (FY24).
- (iii) Despite a credit demand of Rs.138 trillion, only 25% of MSMEs' formal financing needs are met,

with the majority relying on informal credit sources. To address this, PSLAI was established to improve credit access for MSMEs using technology.

16. HSBC India Unveils 'HSBC TravelOne Credit Card' for Frequent Travelers.

In January 2025, HSBC India introduced the 'HSBC TravelOne Credit Card' to offer convenient and valuable benefits for frequent travelers.

- The card provides a wide range of benefits, including the ability to instantly redeem rewards across airline and hotel partners.
- The joining fee for the card is Rs. 4,999, and the annual fee is Rs. 4,999, which can be waived if annual spending exceeds Rs. 800,000.

Key Points:-

- (i) New users who spend Rs 10,000 within the first 30 days will receive a cashback of Rs 1,000, Rs 3,000 in PostCard vouchers, and a complimentary three-month EazyDiner Prime Membership.
- (ii) Users spending over Rs 12 lakh annually will receive an additional 10,000 bonus reward points and enjoy purchase protection of up to USD 20,000 annually.
- (iii) The card provides 6 local and 4 international airport lounge visits per year, along with discounts on holiday bookings, car rentals, and lifestyle experiences.

17. RBI Imposes Penalties on J&K Bank, Bank of India, and Canara Bank for Regulatory Non-Compliance.

In January 2025, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) imposed penalties on three major banks for regulatory non-compliance: Jammu and Kashmir Bank Limited (J&K Bank), Bank of India Limited (BOI), and Canara Bank Limited.

- J&K Bank, based in Srinagar, Jammu & Kashmir, was fined Rs 3.31 crore for violations related to financial inclusion, including issues with Basic Savings Bank Deposit Account (BSBDA) norms, Know Your Customer (KYC) compliance, and loan and advance restrictions.

Key Points:-

- (i) BOI, based in Mumbai, Maharashtra, was penalized Rs 1 crore for non-compliance with specific provisions of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.
- (ii) Canara Bank, based in Bengaluru, Karnataka, received a penalty of Rs 1.63 crore for deficiencies in priority sector lending, deposit interest rate regulations, and financial inclusion measures, particularly concerning BSBDA.

18. BIMTECH Introduces Blockchain-Backed Digital Currency "BIMCOIN".

In January 2025, Birla Institute of Management Technology (BIMTECH), located in Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh (UP), introduced 'BIMCOIN', a blockchain-based digital currency for its ecosystem.

- BIMTECH became the first business management institute in India to launch such a digital currency, following the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras.
- This initiative supports the Viksit Bharat 2047 vision by simplifying payments and transactions among

students, vendors, and administrators through a secure, transparent, and decentralized platform.

Key Points:-

- (i) BIMCOIN operates on blockchain technology, offering decentralization, transparency, and smart contract features.
- (ii) It enhances security, safeguards against fraud, and encourages ethical practices while providing students a hands-on learning experience with blockchain technology and digital currencies.

19. MobiKwik Becomes India's First Fintech Company to Launch CBDC in Collaboration with RBI and Yes Bank.

In January 2025, Gurugram-based One Mobikwik Systems Limited became the first fintech company in India to launch a full-scale Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) or e-rupee, in collaboration with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and Yes Bank Limited.

- Yes Bank Limited will act as the primary sponsor bank for the issuance of the CBDC, supporting third-party application providers. CBDC, issued and supported by RBI, is a digital legal tender equivalent to sovereign currency and can be exchanged one-to-one with physical currency.
- Mobikwik's e-rupee wallet is now accessible to all Android users, enabling seamless Peer-to-Peer (P2P) and Peer-to-Merchant (P2M) transactions.
- The wallet is fully compatible with UPI, allowing users to make payments by scanning any Unified Payments Interface (UPI) Quick Response (QR) code using e-rupee.

Key Points:-

- (i) Existing Mobikwik users who have completed their Know Your Customer (KYC) formalities can instantly open e-rupee wallets and make transactions directly from their bank accounts.
- (ii) The wallet allows transactions up to Rs 50,000 per day, with a per transaction limit of Rs 10,000. It supports denominations ranging from Rs 0.50 to Rs 500.
- (iii) Initially launched as a pilot project in December 2022 with 4 banks, the e-rupee was later expanded to include non-bank entities, and in January 2025, Bengaluru-based Cred launched its beta version of the e-wallet in collaboration with RBI and Yes Bank.

20. RBL Bank and Piramal Finance Forge Partnership to Launch Co-Lending Business.

In January 2025, RBL Bank Limited (formerly Ratnakar Bank Limited), based in Mumbai (Maharashtra), and Piramal Capital and Housing Finance Limited (Piramal Finance), a wholly owned subsidiary of Piramal Enterprises Limited (PEL), also based in Mumbai (Maharashtra), announced a strategic partnership to enhance financial inclusion.

- This marks Piramal Finance's third co-lending partnership, following collaborations with Axis Bank Limited and the Central Bank of India (CBI) Limited.
- The collaboration aims to provide loans to middle and low-income borrowers in rural and semi-urban areas, with a special focus on Tier 2 and Tier 3 markets.

Key Points:-

(i) The primary objective is to offer competitive interest rates and tailored credit solutions to Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and home loan borrowers.

(ii) This partnership leverages RBL Bank's financial expertise and branch network, combined with Piramal Finance's innovative 'High Tech + High Touch' approach, to deliver competitive interest rates and customized credit solutions to underserved communities.

21. PNB Launches First-Ever Real-Time NCRP Solution to Combat Cybercrime.

In January 2025, Punjab National Bank (PNB) Limited, based in New Delhi (Delhi), became the first Indian bank to unveil the real-time Clari5's National Cybercrime Reporting Portal (NCRP) Integration Solution.

- This solution was introduced in partnership with the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (14C), positioning PNB as a leader in both banking and cybersecurity.

- The solution is aimed at enhancing fraud prevention and automating complaint management.

Key Points:-

(i) The NCRP Integration Solution enhances fraud prevention through automation across various banking channels such as Internet Banking, Mobile Banking, Automated Teller Machines (ATMs), Debit Cards, and Unified Payments Interface (UPI).

(ii) Key features include Real-Time Lien, First In, First Out (FIFO) Logic for faster complaint resolution, Intelligent Debit Freeze, and

Whitelisting for account protection.

(iii) Bengaluru-based CustomerXPs Software Private Limited, founded in 2006, developed the Clari5 software for financial crime risk management.

22. Paytm Unveils 'Receive Money QR Widget' for Android Users to Simplify Transactions.

On January 28, 2025, Noida, Uttar Pradesh (UP)-based Paytm, a subsidiary of One97 Communications Limited (OCL), introduced the 'Receive Money Quick Response (QR) Widget' for Android users, allowing them to receive payments directly from their smartphone's home screen without opening the Paytm application (app).

- Paytm became the first company to launch this innovative feature, which was previously introduced for iPhone users.

- This new widget simplifies and speeds up the payment collection process, benefiting influencers, freelancers, shopkeepers, delivery partners, and small businesses by enabling quick and efficient transactions.

- In January 2025, Nakul Jain announced his resignation as the Managing Director (MD) & Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Paytm Payments Services Limited (PPSL), a subsidiary of One97 Communications Limited (OCL), to pursue his entrepreneurial journey. His resignation will be effective from March 31, 2025, or an earlier mutually agreed date.

Key Points:-

(i) Nakul Jain joined PPSL in 2022, overseeing the Online Payments business. With over 21 years of experience, he has expertise in retail banking,

product management, wealth management, international banking, and payments.

(ii) Before joining Paytm, he was part of the Management Team at Standard Chartered Bank and held leadership positions at ICICI Bank Limited and IndusInd Bank Limited.

(iii) On August 28, 2024, PPSL received approval from the Department of Financial Services (DFS), Ministry of Finance (MoF), for downstream investment from Paytm into PPSL. The company has applied for a Payment Aggregator (PA) license from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and is awaiting approval.

23. RBI Takes Control of AIHFPL Board Amid Governance Issues and Payment Defaults.

In January 2025, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) replaced the board of directors of New Delhi-based Aviom India Housing Finance Private Limited (AIHFPL) due to governance issues and payment defaults after audits revealed fraud and governance lapses.

- This action was taken under Section 45-IE(1) of the RBI Act, 1934, following the recommendation of the National Housing Bank (NHB).

Key Points:-

(i) The RBI appointed Ram Kumar, former Chief General Manager (CGM) of Punjab National Bank (PNB), as the administrator of AIHFPL under Section 45-IE(2) of the RBI Act, 1934.

(ii) RBI will initiate the resolution process of the company under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy (Insolvency and Liquidation Proceedings of Financial Service Providers and Application to

Adjudicating Authority) Rules, 2019 (FSP Rules, 2019).

24. RBI Approves Establishment of NUCFDC to Boost UCBs.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has approved the establishment of the National Urban Co-operative Finance and Development Corporation (NUCFDC) as an Umbrella Organisation (UO) to boost Urban Co-operative Banks (UCBs) across India. It has also been approved to function as a Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC).

- NUCFDC is required to provide capital support to UCBs as per regulations, guidelines, and terms and conditions. It will also offer secured credit lines on merits to UCBs to handle temporary liquidity mismatches and assist in refinancing UCBs against their loans. Additionally, NUCFDC will manage deposits and borrowings from UCBs and Financial Institutions (FIs).
- NUCFDC will provide non-fund based support to UCBs, focusing on investments and other necessary services to strengthen the functioning of UCBs.
- It will also offer training, consultancy, and Human Resource (HR) support to ensure UCBs are well-equipped to adapt to evolving regulatory and market demands.

Key Points:-

(i) In February 2024, NUCFDC obtained registration from RBI after raising a paid-up capital of Rs 117.95 crore.

(ii) NUCFDC requires RBI approval to act as a Self-Regulatory Organisation (SRO) for UCBs,

with functions prescribed by the RBI.

(iii) However, NUCFDC will receive this approval only if it attains a paid-up capital of Rs 300 crore within one year from the date of registration by RBI, i.e., by February 7, 2025.

25. HDFC Securities Collaborates with KFin Technologies to Expand NPS Accessibility.

In January 2025, Mumbai (Maharashtra)-based HDFC Securities Limited, a subsidiary of HDFC Bank Limited, formed a strategic partnership with Hyderabad (Telangana)-based KFin Technologies Limited to enhance the accessibility and adoption of the National Pension System (NPS).

- This collaboration aims to simplify NPS management by introducing features such as flexible transaction downloads and real-time Short Message Service (SMS) notifications.
- The partnership integrates HDFC Securities' network of over 3.5 lakh subscribers and 2,700 corporate clients with KFinTech's Central Recordkeeping Agency (CRA) platform.
- CRAs play a vital role in the NPS ecosystem by managing subscriber records, ensuring transparency, and facilitating seamless account operations.

Key Points:-

- (i) The CRA platform incorporates advanced security measures, including dual-factor authentication, passwords, and one-time passwords (OTPs).
- (ii) Subscribers can access dedicated portals, WhatsApp services, and a missed-call facility to monitor investments and make modifications

effortlessly.

(iii) In 2024, the Government of India (GoI) increased tax benefits under corporate NPS from 10% to 14% of basic income.

26. "IDFC FIRST Bank Launches 'FIRST EAN RuPay Credit Card'.

On January 20, 2025, IDFC FIRST Bank launched the 'FIRST EAN RuPay Credit Card' in collaboration with the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).

- The card is backed by a Fixed Deposit (FD), with eligibility requiring the customer to be an Indian citizen, over 18 years of age, and have an FD of at least Rs. 5,000 with the bank.
- The card is integrated with UPI, allowing users to make payments at over 60 million QR code locations and comes with instant online issuance for immediate use.

Key Points:-

- (i) New cardholders receive 100% cashback on their first UPI transaction (up to Rs. 500) within 15 days, refunding the first year's fees.
- (ii) Users can earn 1% cashback on UPI transactions via the IDFC FIRST Bank app and 0.5% on other UPI app transactions, insurance, utility payments, and e-commerce purchases. The card offers 7.25% annual interest on a 1-year FD with the bank.
- (iii) The card provides complimentary roadside assistance (Rs. 1,399 value), lost card liability coverage (up to Rs. 25,000), and personal accident coverage (up to Rs. 2,00,000).

27. Tata AIA Life Insurance has launched 'Shubh Muhurat' to make wedding savings easier.

In January 2025, Tata AIA Life Insurance, based in Mumbai, Maharashtra, launched 'Shubh Muhurat,' a life insurance plan designed to help families save for weddings. The plan aims to tackle the growing costs of weddings by combining regular savings, asset growth, and financial security.

- According to a report by Jefferies Group LLC, based in New York, the wedding industry in India is the second largest in the world. In 2024, over 80 lakh (8 million) weddings were held, with total expenses exceeding Rs 10.7 lakh crore. The average wedding cost was Rs 12.5 lakh, which is double the amount spent from preschool to graduation.

Key Points:-

- (i) 'Shubh Muhurat' is designed to ease the financial strain on parents aged 31-50 who have children between the ages of 1-20, by offering a life insurance policy that supports wedding savings.
- (ii) The funds invested in this policy are legally protected under the Married Women's Property Act (MWPA).
- (iii) The policy also includes a benefit protection rider that waives future premiums and ensures that the policyholder's nominees will still receive maturity benefits if the policyholder passes away. This helps prevent financial difficulties for the family during wedding preparations.

28. The RBI has revoked the registration of X10 Financial Services.

In January 2025, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) cancelled the registration of X10 Financial Services Limited (formerly Abhishek Securities Limited), a Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC) based in Mumbai, Maharashtra. This action was taken due to irregularities in the company's digital lending activities.

- As a result, the company is no longer permitted to operate as an NBFC.

Key Points:-

- (i) The company broke rules about outsourcing financial services by allowing outside service providers (SPs) to handle important tasks like credit assessment, setting interest rates, and verifying customers' identities (Know Your Customer, or KYC).
- (ii) The company was offering loans through multiple mobile apps, including Wecash Technology, XNP Technology, Yarlung Technology, Xinrui International, Omelette Technology, Mad-Elephant Network Technology, and Huidatech Technology.

29. DFS Allocates Rs 500 Crore Capital Infusion to IFCI through Preferential Issue (PREF).

In January 2025, the Department of Financial Services (DFS) under the Ministry of Finance (MoF) released a capital infusion of Rs 500 crore to IFCI Limited (Industrial Finance Corporation of India), a development finance institution (DFI) based in New Delhi.

- The infusion, made through the Preferential Issue (PREF) of shares for the Financial Year 2024-25 (FY25), is intended to strengthen IFCI's financial health in

anticipation of its upcoming restructuring and consolidation into a larger group.

- In December 2024, the capital infusion plan for IFCI was approved with the first Supplementary Demand for Grants for FY 25 in the Lok Sabha. Subsequently, in January 2025, the Department of Financial Services (DFS) received approval from the President of India, Droupadi Murmu, to release Rs. 500 crore to IFCI Ltd.

- With this capital infusion, the Government of India (GoI) is expected to raise its stake in IFCI beyond the current 71.72% as of September 2024.

Key Points:-

(i) A preferential issue occurs when a company issues shares or convertible securities to a specific group of investors, instead of offering them to the general public.

(ii) This method is typically used to raise capital and can involve offering shares to existing shareholders, venture capitalists, or strategic partners.

(iii) In November 2024, the Ministry of Finance (MoF) granted in-principle approval for the 'Consolidation of IFCI Group,' which involves the merger or amalgamation of IFCI Limited, StockHolding Corporation of India Limited, and other group companies.

30. YES Bank Launches Frictionless Finance Accelerator Program in Collaboration with RBIH and SPJIMR.

In January 2025, YES Bank, headquartered in Mumbai, Maharashtra, launched the Frictionless Finance Accelerator Programme in partnership with the Reserve Bank Innovation Hub (RBIH) and the

S.P. Jain Institute of Management and Research (SPJIMR).

- The initiative, unveiled on National Startup Day (January 16, 2025), aims to help fintech startups scale their innovations and promote financial inclusion in India.

Key Points:-

(i) Focus on innovations in digital lending, AI-powered risk management, blockchain-based payments, and financial inclusion.

(ii) Startups will receive support from YES Bank, RBIH, and SPJIMR through platforms like YES Connect, enabling them to navigate regulations, improve business models, and foster growth through industry partnerships.

(iii) The programme aligns with the global investment surge in venture capital, which reached USD 314 billion in 2024, and the projected USD 20 trillion global digital economy by 2030.

31. SEBI Unveils 'Dharohar' Digital Knowledge Repository During India's 76th Republic Day Celebrations.

On January 26, 2025, as part of India's 76th Republic Day celebrations, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), headquartered in Mumbai, Maharashtra, launched 'Dharohar - Milestones in the Indian Securities Market,' a digital knowledge repository.

- This initiative underscores SEBI's dedication to preserving the legacy of India's securities market, while fostering greater awareness and understanding among various stakeholders.

- The repository is tailored for a wide range of audiences, including students, investors, researchers, journalists, market participants, and the general public.
- Dharohar chronicles the 150-year journey and development of India's securities market, highlighting its diverse range of products, participants, and institutions.

Key Points:-

- (i) The platform features a website with an interactive timeline of key events and 3D galleries, offering a dynamic and engaging experience for visitors.
- (ii) With over 3,000 assets, Dharohar includes articles, regulatory history, interviews with key figures, historical newspaper clippings, share certificates, infographics, videos, committee reports, and more.
- (iii) The Dharohar repository will regularly update with new content to enhance its value, and users can explore it at <https://www.mism.org>.

32. BHIM Joins Hands with Fintech Yatra to Boost Financial Inclusion and Digital Literacy.

In January 2025, Bharat Interface for Money (BHIM), India's flagship digital payments application powered by Mumbai-based NPCI BHIM Services Limited (NBSL), a subsidiary of the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), partnered with Fintech Yatra 2025 as a Principal Partner.

- This strategic collaboration aims to accelerate the adoption of digital payments, enhance financial

inclusion, and promote digital literacy across the country.

Key Points:-

- (i) The Fintech Yatra is a 10,000-kilometer (km) long epic road journey aimed at identifying, understanding, and boosting players in financial services across India. It serves as a platform that connects startups, Financial Institutions (FIs), and investors while simultaneously promoting digital independence.
- (ii) As part of this collaboration, over 200 individuals from select Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) will be trained under a train-the-trainer model, empowering them to raise awareness about digital payments.

MOUs and Agreement**1. "CSE and NCDEX Sign MoU to Promote Commodities and Derivatives Trading".**

On January 20, 2025, the Colombo Stock Exchange (CSE) of Sri Lanka and the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange (NCDEX) of India signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to promote and enhance commodities and derivatives trading in Sri Lanka.

- The MoU emphasizes sharing technical expertise between NCDEX and CSE, focusing on product development, trading mechanisms, and regulatory frameworks to benefit traders and market participants in both countries.
- Assistance will be provided to the Colombo Stock Exchange in establishing advanced trading systems and operational infrastructure for efficient commodity and derivatives trading.

Key Points:-

(i) Joint training programs will be conducted to develop personnel skills in areas such as trading systems, technology, and regulations, fostering sustainable market development.

(ii) This collaboration is expected to strengthen the commodities and derivatives trading ecosystem in Sri Lanka while enhancing bilateral trade relations between the two nations.

2. "India and USA Sign MoU to Enhance Cooperation in Cybercrime Investigation."

In January 2025, the Government of India (GOI) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the United States of America (USA) to enhance collaboration in cybercrime investigations.

- The MoU was signed by Indian Ambassador Vinay Kwatra and Acting USA Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security, Kristie Canegallo in Washington DC, USA.

Key Points:-

(i) This agreement aims to strengthen India-USA security cooperation, addressing interlinked issues such as terrorism, drug trafficking, human trafficking, money laundering, and other security challenges tied to cybercrime.

(ii) The Indian Cybercrime Coordination Centre (I4C), under the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), will oversee the implementation of the agreement in India.

(iii) In the USA, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), along with its agencies like U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the Homeland Security Investigations Cyber Crimes

Center (C3), will manage the pact's execution.

3. FIEO and Credlix Forge Partnership to Support Indian Exporters with Financial and Logistical Aid.

In January 2025, the Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) and Singapore-based Credlix, a global leader in supply chain financing solutions, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to enhance the growth of Indian exporters and expand their international presence. This partnership is designed to streamline global trade by offering exporters innovative financial solutions, logistical support, and essential resources.

- The collaboration aims to address key challenges faced by exporters by combining FIEO's extensive network with Credlix's expertise in financial services.

- A range of initiatives, including workshops, training, financing advisory, and technological support, will be provided to help businesses enhance their operations effectively.

Key Points:-

(i) Under the MoU, Credlix will provide technological and logistical solutions such as warehousing and supply chain management to resolve operational hurdles faced by exporters.

(ii) FIEO will actively promote the initiative, encourage participation from exporters, and guide businesses in navigating complex international markets.

(iii) In the Financial Year 2023-24 (FY24), the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector contributed 45.73% to India's exports.

4. NITI Aayog and NASSCOM Foundation have joined forces to digitally empower one lakh individuals.

In January 2025, NITI Aayog (National Institution for Transforming India) and the NASSCOM Foundation (National Association of Software and Service Companies) have teamed up to help one lakh people gain digital skills, aiming to bridge the digital divide.

- This partnership is part of the Aspirational Blocks Programme (ABP) and is linked with the Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyaan (PMGDISHA) initiative.
- The project will primarily focus on marginalized groups, including women and tribal communities, to enhance their access to essential digital tools and e-governance services.

Key Points:-

- (i) In the first phase, the program will focus on 60 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) blocks, promoting digital literacy and awareness of government schemes. Later, it will expand to cover all 500 aspirational blocks to ensure wider digital inclusion.
- (ii) The program will train people aged 12-60 in basic computer skills, cybersecurity, and internet usage.
- (iii) Local community members will also be trained as digital ambassadors and trainers. They will conduct door-to-door campaigns and community outreach to raise awareness about the benefits of digital literacy and government schemes.

5. Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) and The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) Sign MoU to Set Up CoEET in Hyderabad.

On January 24, 2025, the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), Ministry of Power (MoP), and The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to establish a Centre of Excellence for Energy Transition (CoEET) at TERI's Institute of Energy Transition (IOET) in Hyderabad, Telangana.

- The total project cost is estimated at Rs. 25 crore, with BEE providing Rs. 5 crore annually for five years to assist in the Centre's establishment and operations. TERI will contribute its existing infrastructure at the Hyderabad campus and manage the Centre's operational activities.

Key Points:-

- (i) The MoU signing ceremony was attended by Union Minister Manohar Lal (MoP & MoHUA), Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy, along with senior officials from MoP, BEE, TERI, and the Telangana government.
- (ii) Additionally, the Government of India (GoI) has allocated Rs. 488 crore to Telangana for nine new schemes under the Power System Development Fund (PSDF).

6. AlonOS India Signs MoU with Indosat to Accelerate AI Growth in Indonesia.

In January 2025, New Delhi (Delhi)-based AlonOS India Private Limited signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Indosat Ooredoo Hutchison (Indosat or IOH), a leading Indonesian digital telecommunications company, to

revolutionize Indonesia's Artificial Intelligence (AI) ecosystem.

- This partnership marks the first large-scale AI-focused collaboration between India and Indonesia under a visionary Government-to-Government (G2G) initiative.
- The MoU aims to leverage AI's potential to drive innovation, boost economic growth, and foster socio-cultural transformation in Indonesia.
- AlonOS, founded in April 2024, is a joint venture between InterGlobe and Assago Group, dedicated to transforming businesses into AI-driven enterprises.

Key Points:-

- (i) The collaboration between Indosat and AlonOS focuses on reshaping Indonesia's digital economy through AI technology, with applications in tourism, knowledge economy, and sustainable agriculture. The goal is to drive innovation and strengthen Indonesia's global networks.
- (ii) The partnership aims to develop an AI-skilled workforce by collaborating with top educational institutions. It will also use AI to boost agricultural productivity and improve climate resilience, supporting local farmers and enhancing food security in Indonesia.
- (iii) Indosat and AlonOS will establish a Centre of Excellence in Jakarta, in collaboration with China-based DeepSeek, a company specializing in AI technology. DeepSeek's open-source AI model, DeepSeek-R1, launched in January 2025, aims to compete with major players like OpenAI, enhancing AI capabilities in areas such as mathematical reasoning and code generation.

SPORTS

1. "Viktor Axelsen and An Se-Young Win Men's and Women's Singles Titles at India Open 2025."

In the India Open 2025, held from 14th to 19th January at the KD Jadhav Indoor Hall in New Delhi, Viktor Axelsen of Denmark and An Se-Young of South Korea claimed the Men's and Women's Singles titles, respectively.

- Axelsen defeated Lee Cheuk Yiu of Hong Kong, while An Se-Young triumphed over Thailand's Pornpawee Chochuwong.
- The tournament, part of the Super 750 series, had a total prize pool of USD 950,000. In Men's Doubles, Malaysia's Goh Sze Fei and Nur Izzuddin emerged victorious, beating South Korea's Kim Won Ho and Seo Seung Jae.

Key Points:-

- (i) Japan's Arisa Igarashi and Ayako Sakuramoto won the Women's Doubles title by defeating South Korea's Kim Hye Jang and Kong Hee Young, while China's Jiang Zhenbang and Wei Yaxin claimed the Mixed Doubles crown after defeating France's Thom Gicquel and Delphine Delrue.
- (ii) The India Open, officially the Yonex Sunrise India Open, has been held annually since 2008, following its debut in 1973.

2. "India Claims Victory in Both Men's and Women's Titles at Inaugural Kho Kho World Cup 2025".

The Indian men's and women's teams emerged victorious in the inaugural edition of the Kho Kho World Cup 2025, held from January 13 to 19, 2025, at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium in New Delhi, Delhi. Both teams secured the championship titles

in their respective finals, showcasing exceptional performance and teamwork.

- **The Indian men's Kho Kho team defeated Nepal with a score of 54-36 in the final, while the women's team triumphed over Nepal with a commanding 78-40 victory.**

- **Pratik Waikar captained the Indian men's Kho Kho team, while Priyanka Ingle led the women's team to victory.**

- **Both Indian men's and women's Kho Kho teams remained unbeaten throughout the Kho Kho World Cup 2025. The men's team topped Group A, defeating Sri Lanka in the quarter-finals and South Africa in the semi-finals, while the women's team triumphed over Bangladesh and South Africa in their knockout matches.**

Key Points:-

(i) The inaugural Kho Kho World Cup 2025 featured 20 men's teams and 19 women's teams. Teams competed in a round-robin format, with the best advancing to knockout rounds and finals.

(ii) The tournament was organized by the Kho Kho Federation of India (KKFI) and the International Kho Kho Federation (IKKF), with support from the Indian Olympic Association (IOA).

(iii) The second edition of the Kho Kho World Cup is scheduled to be held in Birmingham, England, during 2026-27.

3. Vijay Hazare Trophy 2024-25: Karnataka Clinches Record 5th Title with Victory Over Vidarbha.

In January 2025, the Karnataka Cricket Team claimed their 5th Vijay Hazare Trophy (VHT) title by

defeating Vidarbha Cricket Team by 36 runs in the final of the 2024-25 edition. The match took place at the Kotambi Stadium in Vadodara, Gujarat. Karnataka was led by captain Mayank Anurag Agarwal, while Vidarbha was captained by Karun Kaladharan Nair.

- **The 23rd edition of the VHT was held from December 21, 2024, to January 18, 2025, with 38 teams competing in 135 matches. Karnataka's previous VHT titles were won in 2013-14, 2014-15, 2017-18, and 2019-20.**

- **In the final, Karnataka's Smaran Ravichandran scored his second List A century, helping Karnataka post a total of 348 for 6. He was named the Player of the Match for his brilliant knock of 101 runs off 92 balls.**

- **Karnataka performed consistently throughout the tournament, losing only one match in the group stage. They advanced by defeating Baroda and Haryana in the knockout rounds before facing Vidarbha in their first final in over five years.**

Key Points:-

(i) Vidarbha captain Karun Nair was named Player of the Tournament for scoring 779 runs. India and Punjab pacer Arshdeep Singh topped the bowling charts with 20 wickets in the tournament.

(ii) Karnataka received a prize of ₹1 crore for their victory, while the runner-up Vidarbha team was awarded ₹50 lakh.

(iii) The VHT, officially known as the IDFC First Bank VHT, is an annual domestic 50-over tournament organized by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI). Established in 2002-03 as the Ranji One Day Trophy, it was renamed the Vijay Hazare Trophy in 2007-08 to honor

legendary Indian batsman Vijay Samuel Hazare. The 2023-24 edition was won by the Haryana men's cricket team.

4. Berhane Tesfay and Joyce Chepkemai Tele Win Men's and Women's Elite Races at TATA Mumbai Marathon 2025.

In January 2025, the TATA Mumbai Marathon 2025, held in Mumbai, Maharashtra, witnessed Eritrea's Berhane Tesfay and Kenya's Joyce Chepkemai Tele emerging as the champions in the men's and women's elite races, respectively.

- The 2025 edition of the Mumbai Marathon, marking its 20th anniversary, is a World Athletics Gold Label Road Race event, organized by Procam International Private Limited. Additionally, it served as a qualifying event for the World Athletics Championships in Tokyo, Japan in September 2025.

- The top three finishers in both the men's and women's elite categories were awarded prize money of USD 50,000, USD 25,000, and USD 15,000 respectively.

- In the overall Elite Men's Category, Berhane Tesfay from Eritrea claimed first place, followed by Merhawi Kesete (Eritrea) in second and Tesfaye Demeke (Ethiopia) in third.

Key Points:-

(i) In the overall Elite Women's Category, Joyce Chepkemai Tele from Kenya secured first place, with Shitaye Eshete (Bahrain) in second and Medina Deme Armino (Ethiopia) in third.

(ii) In the Indian Elite Category, Anish Thapa emerged victorious in the Indian Men's race, while Nirmaben Thakor claimed the top spot in the

Indian Women's race.

(iii) Sir Mo Farah, the celebrated multiple Olympic and World Champion from Great Britain, was the International Event Ambassador for the 20th edition of the Mumbai Marathon.

5. Jannik Sinner and Madison Keys Clinch Men's and Women's Singles Titles at Australian Open 2025.

Jannik Sinner of Italy clinched the Men's Singles title, while Madison Keys of the United States of America (USA) won the Women's Singles title at the 2025 Australian Open held at Melbourne Park, Melbourne, Australia.

- This marked the 113th edition of the Australian Open, the 57th in the Open Era, and the first major tournament of 2025, held from January 12th to 26th.

- The total prize money for the tournament was USD 96.5 million.

- In the 2025 Australian Open, Prithvi Sekhar (India) won the men's singles title at the Deaf Championships, securing his second consecutive title. Jannik Sinner (Italy) claimed his second straight Australian Open title, defeating Alexander Zverev (Germany), while Madison Keys (USA) won her first Grand Slam by beating Aryna Sabalenka (Belarus).

Key Points:-

(i) In the doubles categories, Harri Heliovaara (Finland) and Henry Patten (Britain) won their second major title by defeating the Italian duo Simone Bolelli and Andrea Vavassori. Katerina Siniakova (Czech Republic) and Taylor Townsend (USA) emerged victorious in the women's doubles, winning their second Grand Slam title as a team after beating Jelena Ostapenko (Latvia)

and Hsieh Su-wei (Taiwan).

(ii) The Australian Open also witnessed an exciting mixed doubles final, where the Australian pair Olivia Gadecki and John Peers triumphed over John-Patrick Smith and Kimberly Birrell, with this being Gadecki's first mixed doubles title and Peers' second.

(iii) The Australian Open is an annual tennis tournament organized by Tennis Australia, held at Melbourne Park. It is the first of the four Grand Slam tennis events each year, preceding the French Open, Wimbledon, and the US Open. First held in 1905, the tournament is played on hard courts.

6. Indian GM Iniyam Panneerselvam Clinches 9th Johor International Chess Title.

In January 2025, 22-year-old Grandmaster (GM) Iniyam Panneerselvam from Erode, Tamil Nadu (TN), claimed the 9th Johor International Open Chess Tournament title. The event, organized by the Johor Chess Association, took place at Fairview International School in Johor Bahru, Malaysia.

- Iniyam triumphed in the final round by defeating Vietnamese GM Nguyen Van Huy.

- Indian International Master (IM) V.S. Raahul secured second place, while Chinese IM Li Bo claimed third.

Key Points:-

(i) Iniyam scored an impressive 8.5 points out of nine rounds in the tournament.

(ii) He finished 1.5 points ahead of his nearest rival, having defeated four IMs and one GM during

the tournament.

(iii) Earlier in January 2025, Iniyam also won the 15th Chennai Open International GM Chess Tournament 2024.

7. India's Bumrah, Smriti, and Arshdeep Singh Win ICC Men's Cricketer, Women's ODI, and Men's T20I Cricketer of the Year Awards at ICC Awards 2024.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) announced the winners of the ICC Awards 2024, recognizing the exceptional performances of Indian cricketers across multiple categories. The event was held from January 24 to 28, 2025, showcasing the top cricketing achievements of the year.

- Jasprit Bumrah (India) won the prestigious Sir Garfield Sobers Trophy for ICC Men's Cricketer of the Year 2024 and the ICC Men's Test Cricketer of the Year 2024.

- Smriti Mandhana (India) was named the ICC Women's One Day International (ODI) Cricketer of the Year 2024.

- Arshdeep Singh Aulakh (India) received the ICC Men's Twenty20 International (T20I) Cricketer of the Year 2024 award.

Key Points:-

(i) Amelia Kerr Charlotte (New Zealand) claimed the Rachael Heyhoe Flint Trophy for ICC Women's Cricketer of the Year 2024, in recognition of her exceptional performances throughout 2024.

(ii) Richard Keith Illingworth (England) was awarded the David Shepherd Trophy for ICC Umpire of the Year 2024.

8. Odisha Warriors clinch their first-ever title in the inaugural Women's Hockey India League 2025.

In January 2025, Odisha Warriors won the first-ever Women's Hockey India League title by defeating JSW (Jindal South West) Soorma Hockey Club of Punjab and Haryana.

- **Odisha Warriors won 2-1 in the final held at Marang Gomke Jaipal Singh Munda AstroTurf Hockey Stadium in Ranchi, Jharkhand.**

- **Rutuja Dadaso Pisal was the star player for Odisha Warriors, scoring both goals in the 20th and 56th minutes.**

- **She gave Odisha Warriors the lead in the 2nd quarter, but Penny Squibb (28') equalized for JSW Soorma Hockey Club.**

Key Points:-

(i) The Other Awards at the tournament included Savita Punia (JSW Soorma Hockey Club) winning the Best Goalkeeper award, while Jyoti Rumavat (JSW Soorma Hockey Club) was named the Player of the Tournament.

(ii) The Top Scorers of the Tournament were Yibbi Jansen (Odisha Warriors) and Charlotte Englebert (JSW Soorma Hockey Club).

9. CUB wins 7 awards at the IBA Technology Awards 2024, marking their second consecutive year of recognition.

In January 2025, the Indian Banks' Association (IBA) presented technology awards in seven categories to recognize top technology providers in the banking industry at the 20th Annual Banking

Technology Conference, Expo, & Citations 2024, held in Mumbai, Maharashtra.

- **The conference was organized by the Indian Banks' Association (IBA), and the awards were presented by RBI Deputy Governor T. Rabi Sankar.**

Key Points:-

(i) The awards were given in seven categories, with banks being recognized in three status levels: Winner, Runner-Up, and Special Mention.

(ii) City Union Bank Limited (CUB) and Bank of Maharashtra (BOM) won awards in all seven categories, while Karnataka Bank Limited (KBL) won in six categories.

10. Indian athlete Jyothi Yarraji sets a new national record in the 60m hurdles.

In January 2025, Jyothi Yarraji, an Indian track and field athlete from Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh (AP), won the Gold medal in the women's 60-meter hurdles at the Elite Indoor Meeting in Nantes, France.

- **Jyothi Yarraji broke her own National Record twice in one day. She clocked 8.07 seconds in the heats and 8.04 seconds in the final, setting a new National Record for India.**

Key Points:-

(i) Her previous record was 8.12 seconds, set at the 2024 Asian Indoor Championships in Tehran (Iran), where she also won the Gold medal in the 60m hurdles.

(ii) On January 17, 2025, she was honored with the 'Arjuna Award 2024' for her performance in the 100m hurdles in athletics at Rashtrapati Bhavan,

New Delhi.

(iii) In the men's 60m hurdles, Tejas Shirse won the Bronze medal with a time of 7.68 seconds and set a national record in Luxembourg with a time of 7.65 seconds.

AWARDS

1. Elon Musk has been named the richest person in the 2025 Forbes Billionaires list.

According to the Forbes World's Billionaires List 2025, Elon Musk has secured the top position with a net worth of USD 433.9 billion, mainly due to SpaceX's valuation of USD 350 billion.

● Amazon's founder, Jeff Bezos, holds the 2nd position with a net worth of USD 239.4 billion, while Meta's founder, Mark Zuckerberg, takes the 3rd spot, surpassing Oracle's founder Larry Ellison, whose net worth is USD 211.8 billion.

Key Points:-

(i) Elon Musk has become the first person in history to reach a net worth of over USD 400 billion, largely driven by SpaceX's value of USD 350 billion.

(ii) The USA leads the list with a record 813 billionaires, followed by China with 473, and India ranks 3rd with 200 billionaires, according to Forbes' World's Billionaires List 2025.

2. Indian Short Film 'Anuja' Receives Nomination for 97th Academy Awards 2025.

In January 2025, the Indian short film 'Anuja' received a nomination in the 'Best Live Action Short Film' category for the 97th Academy Awards 2025.

The film is produced by Hollywood star-writer Mindy Kaling, with Indian actress Priyanka Chopra backing it and Guneet Monga serving as the executive producer.

● This marks Guneet Monga's third Oscar nomination after her previous wins for 'The Elephant Whisperers' and 'Period: End of Sentence'.

● Written and directed by Adam J. Graves, 'Anuja' tells the story of a young girl working in a Delhi garment factory who faces a life-changing decision for her family's future.

Key Points:-

(i) The nomination places 'Anuja' among the five finalists selected from an initial pool of 180 qualifying films, competing with 'A Lien', 'I'm Not a Robot', 'The Last Ranger', and 'The Man Who Would Not Remain Silent'.

(ii) The film also won the top honor at the HollyShorts Film Festival in 2024.

(iii) The 97th Academy Awards 2025, hosted by Conan O'Brien, will take place at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles, USA, on March 2, 2025.

3. Padma Awards 2025: President Approves 139 Padma Awards Including 7 Padma Vibhushan, 19 Padma Bhushan and 113 Padma Shri.

On January 25, 2025, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) announced the Padma Awards for 2025, which includes a total of 7 Padma Vibhushan, 19 Padma Bhushan, and 113 Padma Shri awards.

● Justice (Retd.) Jagdish Singh Khehar, former Chief Justice of India (CJI), Dr. D. Nageshwar Reddy, founder and chairman of AIG Hospitals (Hyderabad,

Telangana), and Osamu Suzuki, the former President, Chairman, and CEO of Suzuki Motor Corporation (SMC) (Japan), were conferred the Padma Vibhushan. Osamu Suzuki was honored posthumously in the 'trade and industry' category.

- Other distinguished personalities awarded the Padma Vibhushan include renowned Kathak dancer Kumudini Rajnikant Lakhia from Gujarat, celebrated Malayalam writer and Jnanpith awardee MT Vasudevan Nair (posthumously) from Kerala, and famous folk singer Sharda Sinha (posthumously) from Bihar.

Key Points:-

(i) Renowned economist Bibek Debroy, who served as the Chairman of the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM), along with Sushil Kumar Modi, former Deputy Chief Minister (Dy CM) of Bihar, and Manohar Joshi, former Chief Minister of Maharashtra (1995-1999), were honored posthumously with the Padma Bhushan award.

(ii) Distinguished recipients of the Padma Bhushan award include famous Tamil actor S. Ajith Kumar, ghazal singer Pankaj Udhas (posthumous), renowned filmmaker Shekhar Kapur, and others.

4. India's First eVTOL Certification Secured by The ePlane Company from DGCA.

In January 2025, The ePlane Company, a Chennai-based urban air mobility (UAM) startup from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras, became the first private Indian firm to receive formal acceptance from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) for the Type Certification of its

electric Vertical Take-Off and Landing (eVTOL) aircraft, 'the e200X'.

- The company aims to launch its eVTOL services by 2026.

- With this certification, ePlane solidifies its position as a pioneer in Advanced Air Mobility (AAM) in India.

Key Points:-

(i) The e200X features a compact wingspan that reduces infrastructure requirements, making it ideal for deployment in various regions of India and similar global markets.

(ii) The ePlane Company was founded by Professor Satya Chakravarthy in 2019.

(iii) The DGCA has established safety criteria for certifying vertical take-off and landing capable aircraft (VCA) and set guidelines for the design of vertiports used by these aircraft.

5. Three Indian Women Featured in Forbes 50 Over 50 Global List 2025 and Quarraisha Abdool Karim Securing First Place.

In January 2025, Forbes, an American global media company, unveiled its first Forbes "50 Over 50" Women Global List 2025, celebrating the achievements of inspiring women from 32 countries and territories across Asia, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and South and Central America.

- Quarraisha Abdool Karim, an expert in infectious diseases epidemiology and a leading researcher on HIV/AIDS, secured the 1st rank, while Rafaela Aponte-Diamant, co-owner of the Mediterranean Shipping Company (MSC) based in Geneva, Switzerland, was ranked 2nd.

Key Points:-

Urmila Asher, popularly known as 'Gujju Ben' and founder of Guju Ben Na Nasta, secured the 3rd rank, while billionaire Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, founder of Biocon India Private Limited, was ranked 32nd, and renowned activist Sheela Patel claimed the 37th position on the Forbes "50 Over 50" Women Global List 2025.

6. "76th Republic Day Parade 2025: MOTA Wins Best Tableau, J&K Rifles Secures Best Marching Contingent, Guinness World Record Set for Largest Indian Folk Dance"

The winners for the 76th Republic Day Parade 2025 were announced in various categories. The Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MOTA) won the Best Tableau award in the Ministries/Departments category. Their tableau celebrated the "Janjatiya Gaurav Varsh" (Tribal Pride Year) and the 150th birth anniversary of Bhagwan Birsa Munda.

- The awards were decided in two ways: one by a panel of judges and the other through an online public vote on the MyGov platform.
- This year, 31 tableaux from 16 states and Union Territories (UTs), along with 10 ministries and departments of the Central Government (CG), participated in the Republic Day Parade 2025 at Karvyapath, New Delhi.

Key Points:-

- (i) The Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) Rifles Contingent won the Best Marching Contingent award in the Services category, as decided by the judges.
- (ii) Uttar Pradesh (UP) won the first prize in the Best Tableau category, according to the judges,

for showcasing Mahakumbh 2025 and Swarnim Bharat: Virasat aur Vikas (Golden India: Heritage and Development).

- (iii) The performance titled "Jayati Jai Mamah Bharatam" set a Guinness World Record for "The Largest Indian Folk Variety Dance" during the Republic Day 2025 celebrations. Organized by the Ministry of Culture in collaboration with the Sangeet Natak Akademi, this cultural showcase was a significant achievement, highlighting India's rich folk traditions.

7. Satya Nadella Tops HSBC Hurun Global Indians List 2024 with Microsoft.

According to the first edition of the 'HSBC Hurun Global Indians List,' published by HSBC (Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation) and Hurun India, Satya Nadella, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Microsoft, has secured the top spot with a company valued at USD 3,146 billion.

- Alphabet 's CEO Sundar Pichai (USD 2,107 billion) and YouTube CEO Neal Mohan (USD 455 billion) secured the 2nd and 3rd spots, respectively.

Key Points:-

- (i) The combined value of the top 10 individuals accounts for 73% of the total combined value of the list. Notably, 5 companies in the list belong to the software and services sector.
- (ii) The list includes 12 women, led by Reshma Kewalramani of Vertex Pharmaceuticals, followed by Jayshree Ullal of Arista Networks, and Leena Nair, the global CEO of Chanel, who are recognized as the most influential women of

Indian origin.

IMPORTANT DAYS

1. Parakram Diwas: Subhash Chandra Bose is honoured on 23 January.

Parakram Diwas, also known as the "Day of Valour," is celebrated annually across India on 23 January to honor the birth anniversary of the renowned Indian freedom fighter Subhash Chandra Bose, fondly referred to as Netaji.

- The 23 January 2025 marks the 128th birth anniversary of Subhash Chandra Bose.

Key Points:-

(i) The 1st-ever Parakram Diwas was observed on 23 January 2021, commemorating Netaji's 124th birth anniversary.

(ii) The Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS), located in Hyderabad, Telangana, has been selected for the prestigious Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar 2025 in the institutional category, recognizing its exceptional contributions to disaster management.

2. Shaheed Divas (Martyrs' Day) was observed on 30 January 2025.

Martyrs' Day, also called Sarvodaya Day or Shaheed Diwas, is observed every year on January 30 across India to honor those who sacrificed their lives for the nation. This day also marks the death anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, the 'Father of the Nation.'

- January 30, 2025, will mark the 77th death anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.

Key Points:-

(i) Martyrs' Day was officially declared in 1949, a year after Mahatma Gandhi's assassination on January 30, 1948, to remember his sacrifices and the sacrifices of other freedom fighters.

(ii) Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated by Nathuram Godse on January 30, 1948, at Birla House, New Delhi.

3. National Tourism Day Observed Annually on January 25 to Promote Tourism in India.

National Tourism Day is observed annually across India on January 25 to highlight the significance of tourism in the country's economy. The day emphasizes the importance of preserving cultural heritage and promoting various tourist destinations across India. The theme for National Tourism Day 2025 is "Tourism for Inclusive Growth," aligning with India's broader tourism vision.

- One of the key events linked to this vision is the Maha Kumbh Mela, held from January 13 to February 26, 2024, in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh (UP), which is one of the world's largest religious gatherings.

Key Points:-

(i) National Tourism Day was instituted by the Government of India (GOI) on January 25, 1949, marking the formation of the Ministry of Tourism (MoT).

(ii) The Tourist Traffic Committee, established in 1948, initiated the celebration of "National Tourism Day" to promote tourism in India.

4. UN Observes International Day of Clean Energy on 26th January to Promote Awareness and Action.

The United Nations (UN) observes the International Day of Clean Energy every year on 26th January to promote awareness and inspire action towards a fair and inclusive shift to clean energy, benefiting both individuals and the planet.

- The 2nd International Day of Clean Energy will be observed on 26th January 2025.

Key Points:-

- (i) On January 26, 2023, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) declared the International Day of Clean Energy through resolution A/77/327, recognizing the need to accelerate the global transition to clean and sustainable energy.
- (ii) The inaugural International Day of Clean Energy was celebrated on 26th January 2024.

5. International Day of Commemoration in Memory of Holocaust Victims Observed on January 27, 2025.

The United Nations' (UN) International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust, also known as International Holocaust Remembrance Day, is observed annually on 27 January across the globe to honor the memory of the victims of the Holocaust, also referred to as the Shoah.

- The theme for the 2025 International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust is "Holocaust Remembrance for Dignity and Human Rights," emphasizing the importance of

remembering past atrocities to uphold dignity and human rights.

Key Points:-

- (i) On November 1, 2005, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted Resolution A/RES/60/7, proclaiming January 27 as the annual International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust.
- (ii) The first-ever International Holocaust Remembrance Day was observed on January 27, 2006.

6. World Neglected Tropical Diseases Day was observed on 30 January 2025.

World Neglected Tropical Diseases Day (WNTDD) is observed every year on January 30 to raise awareness about the severe impact of Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) on the world's most vulnerable populations.

- The theme for World NTDs Day 2025 is "Unite. Act. Eliminate," which highlights the collective effort needed to eliminate these diseases.

- WNTDD was first announced by the Crown Prince Court of Abu Dhabi, UAE, at the 2019 Reaching the Last Mile Forum.

Key Points:-

- (i) The first observance took place on January 30, 2020.
- (ii) On May 31, 2021, the 74th World Health Assembly (WHA) officially designated January 30th as WNTDD through decision WHA74(18). This proposal was supported by countries like

UAE, Oman, Brazil, and others.

(iii) As of December 2024, 54 countries had successfully eliminated at least one NTD.

was presented with the ECI publication "Belief in the Ballot: Human stories shaping India's 2024 elections."

7. National Voters' Day (NVD) Observed Annually on January 25 to Promote Voter Awareness and Participation.

National Voters' Day (NVD) is celebrated annually on January 25, commemorating the establishment of the Election Commission of India (ECI) in 1950. The day focuses on raising awareness about the significance of voting and encouraging active voter participation, with special emphasis on registering youth voters.

- The theme for NVD 2025 is "Nothing Like Voting, I Vote For Sure," continuing from the 2024 theme, aiming to motivate citizens, especially the youth, to take part in the electoral process.
- 2025 marks the 15th National Voters' Day and celebrates 75 years of service by the ECI.
- The first-ever National Voters' Day was celebrated in 2011 to mark the foundation day of the ECI, and the celebration was approved by the Cabinet, under Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh.

Key Points:-

(i) On January 25, 2025, a national event was hosted by the Election Commission of India (ECI) in New Delhi. The event featured President Droupadi Murmu as the Chief Guest and Union Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal, Ministry of State (MoS), Ministry of Law and Justice (MoL&J) as the Guest of Honour.

(ii) During the event, President Droupadi Murmu

8. World Leprosy Day Observed on 26 January 2025.

World Leprosy Day (WLD) is observed annually on the last Sunday of January worldwide to raise awareness about leprosy, celebrate the resilience of those affected, and combat stigma and discrimination. The day also serves as a call to eradicate leprosy and improve the lives of those impacted.

- January 26, 2025, marks the 72nd observance of WLD.
- The theme for WLD 2025 is "Unite. Act. Eliminate." It emphasizes the need for governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and individuals to collaborate in eliminating the disease and its associated stigma.
- In 2024, WLD was observed on January 28, and in 2026, it will be observed on January 25.

Key Points:-

(i) In India, WLD is observed on January 30 every year, coinciding with the death anniversary (January 30, 1948) of Mahatma Gandhi, in recognition of his legacy, social justice efforts, and advocacy for people affected by leprosy.

(ii) WLD was established in 1954 by Raoul Follereau, a French philanthropist and writer, to raise global awareness about leprosy.

(iii) The first-ever WLD was observed on January 31, 1954 (last Sunday of January).

DEFENCE

1. Ministry of Defence Signs Rs 1,561 Crore Deal with Heavy Vehicles Factory for 47 T-72 Bridge Laying Tanks.

In January 2025, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) finalized a Rs 1,561-crore agreement with the Heavy Vehicles Factory (HVF) based in Chennai, Tamil Nadu (TN), a unit of Armoured Vehicle Nigam Limited (AVNL). The deal is for the acquisition of 47 T-72 Bridge Laying Tanks (BLTs) for the Indian Army (IA).

- The contract was signed by senior officials from the Ministry of Defence (MoD), Heavy Vehicles Factory (HVF), and Armoured Vehicle Nigam Limited (AVNL), with Rajesh Kumar Singh, Secretary of the MoD, in attendance.
- The T-72 Bridge Laying Tanks (BLTs) are produced by Heavy Vehicles Factory (HVF) under a license from Russia.

Key Points:-

- (i) The deal falls under the Buy IDDM (Indian-Indigenously Designed, Developed, and Manufactured) procurement category, as per India's Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP) 2016.
- (ii) The T-72 BLTs are crucial equipment used by the Mechanised Forces of the Indian Army (IA) to deploy bridges during both offensive and defensive operations.
- (iii) The T-72 BLT, also known as BLT T-72, is equipped with a scissors-type bridge that can be deployed in two configurations: a 20-meter span supporting vehicles up to 60 tons and a 22-meter span supporting vehicles up to 70 tons.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. ISRO Successfully Demonstrates Restart Capability of Vikas Liquid Engine.

In January 2025, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), based in Bengaluru, Karnataka, successfully demonstrated the restart capability of its Vikas liquid engine at the Propulsion Complex in Mahendragiri, Tamil Nadu. This achievement is a significant step towards developing stage recovery technologies for reusable launch vehicles.

- During the test, the Vikas engine was fired for 60 seconds, shut off for 120 seconds, and then restarted to fire again for 7 seconds. All engine parameters during the test were within normal limits, meeting performance expectations.
- The Vikas engine, a reliable workhorse for ISRO's liquid stages in launch vehicles, plays a crucial role in enhancing the versatility of ISRO's missions. Further tests are planned to optimize the engine's performance under restart conditions.
- In the same month, ISRO Chairman V. Narayanan flagged off the core liquid stage (L110) of the Launch Vehicle Mark 3 (LVM3) from the ISRO Propulsion Complex in Mahendragiri, Tamil Nadu, to the launch complex at Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh.

Key Points:-

- (i) The L110 stage, powered by twin Vikas engines with a propellant loading capacity of 110 tonnes, was designed and developed by the Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre (LPSC) in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala.
- (ii) The L110 stage is designated for the LVM3 mission under a commercial agreement between NewSpace India Limited (NSIL), based in

Bengaluru, Karnataka, and AST SpaceMobile & Science LLC, USA, to launch the BlueBird Block 2 satellite.

(iii) The L110 stage, which is the tenth liquid core stage integrated at the ISRO Propulsion Complex, reflects ISRO's continued advancements in liquid propulsion technology and its commitment to commercial space ventures.

rates into the 10 Gbps range.

(ii) The ELEVATION-1 satellite, developed by XDLINX and powered by Antaris' Cloud Platform, is a 6U cubesat designed to test the miniaturized space-grade E-band communication payload.

(iii) Data from the ELEVATION-1 satellite will be used to develop advanced propagation models for Almagest's global high-speed and Ultra-High Throughput Screening (UHTS) LEO constellation.

2. Digantara Launches SCOT, the World's First Commercial Satellite for Advanced Space Monitoring.

In January 2025, Bengaluru (Karnataka)-based aerospace company Digantara, supported by the Aditya Birla Group and the Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI), launched the Space Camera for Object Tracking (SCOT) satellite, marking the world's first commercial satellite for Space Situational Awareness (SSA).

- Additionally, Indian space-tech startup XDLINX Space Labs launched high-tech satellites to monitor Earth and space objects.
- These satellites were launched aboard SpaceX's Transporter-12 mission from the Vandenberg Space Force Base in California, USA.
- The Space Camera for Object Tracking (SCOT) enhances Space Situational Awareness (SSA) by providing accurate and reliable tracking capabilities, essential for preventing collisions and ensuring the safety of spacecraft in increasingly crowded Earth orbits.

Key Points:-

(i) XDLINX Space Labs launched the ELEVATION-1 satellite, featuring the world's first E-band communications payload to push data

3. DRDO Successfully Tests India's First Scramjet Combustor for Hypersonic Technology Advancement.

In January 2025, DRDO, under the Ministry of Defence (MoD), conducted a 120-second ground test of an active cooled scramjet combustor, marking India's entry into advanced hypersonic technology development.

- The combustor was designed and developed by the Defence Research & Development Laboratory (DRDL), a DRDO unit in Hyderabad, Telangana, as part of India's hypersonic program.
- A significant breakthrough was the development of a specialized endothermic scramjet fuel, enhancing cooling efficiency and enabling reliable ignition, completely designed in India.
- DRDL created a high-temperature-resistant ceramic Thermal Barrier Coating (TBC) to protect engine components, ensuring durability and performance under extreme heat, even beyond the melting point of steel.

Key Points:-

(i) The scramjet combustor demonstrated its ability to ignite and sustain stable combustion at

airspeeds exceeding 1.5 kilometers per second, overcoming one of the most challenging aspects of scramjet technology.

(ii) Advanced Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD) simulations were employed to refine the design and improve the performance of the scramjet engine.

(iii) Hypersonic missiles, powered by scramjet engines, achieve speeds over Mach 5 (5,400 km/hr), offering unparalleled speed, precision, and the ability to evade current air defense systems, making them critical for modern defense strategies.

4. Sarla Aviation Unveils India's First Air Taxi Prototype, 'Shunya,' Set for Launch by 2028.

In January 2025, Sarla Aviation Private Limited, a Bengaluru (Karnataka)-based aerospace startup, unveiled India's first electric vertical take-off and landing (eVTOL) air taxi prototype, 'Shunya,' at the Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2025, held at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi.

- Initially, the company plans to launch this electric air taxi in Bengaluru by 2028, making it the first to introduce urban air transport in India.
- Sarla Aviation plans to expand its electric air taxi services to major cities like Mumbai, Delhi, and Pune while also introducing a free air ambulance service to address urgent medical transportation needs in urban areas.
- Sarla Aviation plans to offer competitively priced air taxi services, aligning with premium taxi rates, while also providing free air ambulance services to address medical emergencies effectively.

Key Points:-

- (i) The Shunya air taxi, designed for short trips of 20-30 kilometers, can reach a top speed of 250 kmph, carry up to 6 passengers, and handle a maximum weight of 680 kg, making it the highest payload eVTOL vehicle in the market.
- (ii) Shunya will help reduce challenges like traffic congestion and pollution, which are common issues in many major Indian cities.
- (iii) Sarla Aviation Private Limited is a startup founded in October 2023 by Adrian Schmidt, Rakesh Gaonkar, and Shivam Chauhan. The company is named after Sarla Thakral, who was India's first female pilot. She earned her pilot's license at the age of 21 in 1936.

5. GalaxEye Space Solutions Deploys GLX-SQ Payload on ISRO's PSLV POEM Mission.

On January 23, 2025, Chennai (Tamil Nadu)-based startup GalaxEye Space Solutions Private Limited successfully deployed its GLX-SQ payload aboard the Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO) Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) Orbital Experimental Module-4 (POEM-4), which was launched on December 30, 2024.

- This mission achieved the world's first-ever integration of Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) and optical imagery in orbit.
- The innovative integration addresses critical needs across various sectors, including defence, agriculture, and disaster response. The mission highlights India's growing capabilities in advanced space technology and startups contributing to global solutions.

- The GLX-SQ payload processes Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) images in space within 10 minutes, reducing 400 MB of raw data to under 1.5 MB for efficient transmission and minimized communication challenges.

Key Points:-

(i) SAR technology enables the capture of detailed images through clouds and darkness, enhancing Earth observation by providing reliable and actionable data in challenging conditions where traditional optical imagery is limited.

(ii) The GLX-SQ payload was deployed as part of ISRO's POEM initiative, repurposing the 4th stage of the PSLV rocket to support experimental payloads, showcasing India's innovative approach to space technology.

(iii) 'Mission Drishti': GalaxEye is preparing for its flagship mission, 'Mission Drishti', a multi-sensor satellite aimed at delivering all-weather, high-resolution imaging, positioning the company as a pioneer in remote sensing and satellite technology.

6. ISRO Achieves Historic 100th Mission with Successful GSLV-F15 Launch from Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh.

On January 29, 2025, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) successfully launched the GSLV-F15/NVS-02 mission, carrying the NVS-02 satellite, from the Second Launch Pad (SLP) at Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) in Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh (AP). With this, ISRO completed its milestone 100th launch from the Sriharikota spaceport.

- This mission marks the 17th flight of India's Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV) and the 11th flight with an indigenous cryogenic stage. It is also the 8th operational flight of GSLV featuring an indigenous cryogenic upper stage.

- Since 1979, ISRO has conducted 99 launches, including 62 launches by the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV), followed by GSLV (16), Launch Vehicle Mark-3 (LVM3) (7), and Augmented Satellite Launch Vehicle (ASLV) (4), among others.

Key Points:-

(i) The GSLV-F15 rocket, equipped with an indigenous cryogenic upper stage, successfully placed the NVS-02 satellite into the intended Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO).

(ii) NVS-02, the second satellite in the five-satellite second-generation Navigational Satellite (NVS) series (NVS-01/02/03/04/05), is designed to enhance the Navigation with Indian Constellation (NavIC) system, ensuring improved and continuous services.

7. MeerKAT Telescope in South Africa Discovers New Galaxy 'Inkathazo'.

In January 2025, South African researchers and astrophysicists discovered a new giant radio galaxy (GRG) named 'Inkathazo' using the MeerKAT telescope (formerly known as the Karoo Array Telescope (KAT)) in the Northern Cape province of South Africa.

- The newly discovered galaxy spans 3.3 million light-years from end to end, making it 32 times the size of the Milky Way galaxy and located 1.44 billion light-years away from Earth.

- The discovery was published in the scientific journal **Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society (MNRAS)**.

Key Points:-

- (i) Inkathazo, meaning "trouble" in South Africa's isiXhosa and isiZulu languages, was named due to the complexities in understanding its physics.
- (ii) Giant Radio Galaxies (GRGs) are massive cosmic structures that emit jets of hot plasma, extending millions of light-years into space.
- (iii) These radio-bright jets are powered by supermassive black holes located at the centers of galaxies.

8. ISRO Sends Crew Module for Gaganyaan's First Uncrewed Mission.

In January 2025, the Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre (LPSC) of ISRO, based in Bengaluru, Karnataka, dispatched the Crew Module for Gaganyaan's first uncrewed mission (G1) to the Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) in Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh. The module's integration with the liquid propulsion system has been successfully completed.

- The CMPS is a bi-propellant Reaction Control System (RCS) designed for precise three-axis control—Pitch, Yaw, and Roll—of the crew module. This control is activated during the descent and re-entry phase after the separation of the Service Module, ensuring stability until the parachute-based deceleration system is deployed.
- The CMPS is equipped with 12 thrusters, each generating 100N (Newton) of thrust. These small rocket motors are integral to spacecraft propulsion

and are supported by a propellant feed mechanism and high-pressure gas bottles for efficient operation.

- The CMUS, designed by the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC), has also been incorporated into the Crew Module. It plays a crucial role in ensuring the module's orientation and stability during various phases of the mission.

Key Points:-

- (i) The Crew Module will undergo further integration activities at VSSC, including the assembly of the avionics package, electrical harnessing, and extensive testing. Following these operations, it will be transferred to the U R Rao Satellite Centre in Bengaluru for the final step of Orbital Module integration.
- (ii) Gaganyaan is ISRO's ambitious crewed spacecraft project, aiming to launch astronauts into space by 2026. Once successful, India will join the ranks of Russia, the United States, and China as the fourth nation to achieve human spaceflight capabilities.
- (iii) The Gaganyaan spacecraft comprises two key components: the Crew Module (CM), designed to house astronauts, and the Service Module (SM), which contains essential systems for propulsion and support. Together, they form the Orbital Module, vital for the mission's success. The Gaganyaan program highlights India's advancements in space technology, aiming to establish a strong foundation for future human space exploration while positioning India as a global leader in space endeavors.

BOOKS & AUTHORS

1. New Biography 'Soumitra Chatterjee and His World (Vintage)' Launched in West Bengal.

"Soumitra Chatterjee and His World", a comprehensive biography authored by journalist Sanghamitra Chakraborty, was launched at the Kolkata Literary Meet in West Bengal (WB). The book is published by Penguin India's Vintage Books.

- The biography highlights the multifaceted life of Soumitra Chatterjee, an iconic Indian and Bengali film actor renowned for his collaboration with legendary filmmaker Satyajit Ray and his remarkable contributions to Indian cinema and culture.
- It also delves into his diverse roles as an actor, poet, editor, and artist, providing a vivid portrayal of Bengal's rich cultural landscape.

Key Points:-

(i) Soumitra Chatterjee was born in 1935 in Kolkata, West Bengal, and passed away in 2020. He starred in 14 of Satyajit Ray's films, including iconic works such as Apur Sansar (The World of Apu), Sonar Kella (The Golden Fortress), Joy Baba Felunath (The Elephant God), Devi (The Goddess), Charulata (The Lonely Wife), and Ghare Baire (The Home and the World).

(ii) Soumitra's legendary characters, such as Apu and Feluda, have become household names among Bengalis and cinema enthusiasts worldwide.

(iii) He was the first Indian film personality to receive France's highest artistic honor, Commandeur of the Ordre des Arts et des Lettres (1999). His accolades include the Padma Bhushan (2004), two National Film Awards (2007

and 2017), and the prestigious Dadasaheb Phalke Award (2012), India's highest honor in cinema.

OBITUARY

1. Wing Commander Dr. K. Ramchand, Founder of CABS and DRDO Pioneer, Passes Away Recently at 82.

In January 2025, Wing Commander Dr. K. Ramchand (Retd), the founder and director of the Centre for Airborne Systems (CABS), under the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) lab in Bengaluru, Karnataka, passed away at the age of 82 in Bengaluru, Karnataka.

- **Leadership in AEW&C Development:** Dr. K. Ramchand led the DRDO team for the indigenous design and development of the Airborne Early Warning and Control (AEW&C) aircraft. The aircraft was inducted into the Indian Air Force (IAF) in 2017 and played a key role during the 2019 Balakot airstrike, providing air cover to Mirage 2000 jets.

- He authored the book "The Incredible Journey of the Indian Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS)", which was released at Aero India in 2019.

- During his over 20-year career in the IAF, he served in the IAF Communication Squadron (COM Squadron) and flew several Very Important Persons (VIPs) as a crew member.

Key Points:-

(i) As part of the crew, he transported senior Indian Army officers during the surrender marking the end of the Indo-Pakistan war on December 16, 1971.

(ii) Dr. K. Ramchand received the "Distinguished Alumni Award" from the Indian Institute of Science

(IISc) and was honored with the "Scientist of the Year Award" in 1985.

2. Former El Salvador President Carlos Mauricio Funes Cartagena Passes Away at 65.

In January 2025, Former El Salvador President Carlos Mauricio Funes Cartagena passed away at the age of 65 in Managua, Nicaragua. He was born on 18 October 1959 in San Salvador, El Salvador. He served as the President of El Salvador from 2009 to 2014.

- Mauricio Funes was a television journalist. He began his career as a Cable News Network (CNN) correspondent and war reporter.
- He was well-known for his in-depth interviews with politicians and for exposing corruption on his popular interview show.

Key Points:-

- (i) Carlos Mauricio Funes Cartagena ran in the 2009 presidential race for the leftist Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN). He won the presidential elections, defeating Rodrigo Ávila of the conservative National Republican Alliance (ARENA).
- (ii) He was plagued by charges of corruption. In 2016, he fled to Nicaragua, where he spent his last nine years under the protection of Daniel Ortega, the president of Nicaragua.

3. Renowned Cardiac Surgeon & Padma Shri Awardee Dr. K.M. Cherian, Who Performed India's First CABG Surgery, Passes Away at 82.

On January 25, 2025, renowned cardiac surgeon and Padma Shri awardee, Dr. Kotturathu Mammen Cherian, who performed India's first coronary artery bypass surgery, passed away at the age of 82 in Bengaluru, Karnataka.

- He was born on March 8, 1942, in the Kingdom of Travancore (now Travancore-Cochin), Kerala.
- He received numerous accolades, including the prestigious 'Padma Shri' award.
- Dr. K.M. Cherian, a pioneering cardiac surgeon, earned his MS from Kasturba Medical College in 1964 and performed his first open-heart surgery in Australia at the age of 26. In 1975, he conducted India's first successful coronary artery bypass graft (CABG) surgery and later introduced the Physician Assistant profession in India.

Key Points:-

- (i) Dr. K.M. Cherian performed India's second heart transplant in 1995 and the first heart-lung transplantation, pediatric cardiac surgery, and laser heart surgery (TMR). In 2004, he established Frontier Lifeline Hospital and the Dr. Cherian Heart Foundation in Chennai.
- (ii) In 2010, he became the first Indian President of the World Society of Cardio-Thoracic Surgeons (WSCTS) and, in 2016, was selected as a member of the Founder Circle of the American Association for Thoracic Surgery.
- (iii) For his contributions, he received the Padma Shri in 1991, the Lifetime Achievement Award from KMC Manipal in 2000, and the Harvard Medical Excellence Award in 2005.

4. Manchester United Legend and Ballon d'Or Winner Denis Law Passes Away at 84.

In January 2025, Manchester United legend and Ballon d'Or winner Denis Law passed away at the age of 84 in Aberdeen, Scotland. Born on 24 February 1940 in Aberdeen, he remains an iconic figure in football history.

- He is the only Scottish player to win both the Ballon d'Or and the European Player of the Year awards, achieving this milestone in 1964. Known affectionately as "The King," "The Lawman," and part of Manchester United's "Holy Trinity," he left an indelible mark on the game.

Key Points:-

- (i) Denis Law began his professional career in 1956 with Huddersfield Town and rose to fame during his tenure at Manchester United.
- (ii) During his 11-year stint with Manchester United, he won two league titles (1965 and 1967) and the European Cup in 1968.
- (iii) Scoring 237 goals in 404 appearances, he is the club's third-highest goalscorer, trailing only Wayne Rooney (253) and Sir Bobby Charlton (245).

marks the first instance of *Mugilogobius tigrinus* being recorded along India's eastern coastline.

- Both species belong to the "gobies" group of fish, which are commonly found in estuarine areas, particularly around mangroves.
- Gobies are small, carnivorous, bottom-dwelling fish found globally, with a higher prevalence in tropical regions.
- Gobies play a vital role in the ecosystem, acting as indicators of environmental health and occupying various levels within the food chain.

Key Points:-

- (i) Out of 135 goby species found along India's coasts, 95 are recorded in mangroves, with 53 species specifically documented in the Coringa Wildlife Sanctuary.
- (ii) This discovery underlines the rich biodiversity of mangrove ecosystems and their ecological significance.

ENVIRONMENT

1. Researchers Discover Two New Goby Fish Species in Andhra Pradesh.

In January 2025, researchers from the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) discovered two previously unrecorded goby fish species, 'Hemigobius hoevenii' and 'Mugilogobius tigrinus,' at the Coringa Wildlife Sanctuary in Andhra Pradesh (AP). This