

# W.I.S.E

WiZdom for Intelligent Solutions in Education



## MONTHLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

Jan - 2026

BANK | SSC | DEFENCE | RAILWAY & OTHER COMPETITIVE EXAMS

### PM MODI

CONFERRED ETHIOPIA & OMAN'S HIGHEST CIVILIAN HONOUR

### RBI

SIGNALS PRO-GROWTH STANCE WITH 25 BASIS POINT REPO RATE CUT

### SANCHAR SAATHI

CONTROVERSY

TAMIL NADU GOVT. VS. GOVERNOR

LANDMARK SUPREME COURT CASE

### SIM BINDING RULE

NEW PILOT SAFETY RULES  
**INDIGO FLIGHT** DISRUPTIONS

SUPREME COURT PERMITS  
SC STATUS BASED ON MOTHER'S CASTE

BILLS/ACTS PASSED  
PARLIAMENT THIS MONTH

AUSTRALIA'S  
SOCIAL MEDIA BAN  
FOR UNDER-16

EMINENT POLITICIANS  
SHIVRAJ PATIL,  
SWARAJ KAUSHAL &  
SRIPRAKASH JAISWAL  
DIED

HAPPY  
NEW YEAR  
2026

MANGALORE | MANIPAL | UDUPI | PUTTUR | BAJPE | MYSORE | SHIMOGA | HASSAN | CHICKMAGALORE | DAVANGERE | DHARWAD | BELGAUM | BANGALORE (MSR) | BANGALORE (KENGERI) | JAIPUR | VARANASI | LUCKNOW | PRAYAGRAJ | GORAKHPUR | KATHMANDU | BIRTHAMODE | DUBAI



# PLANNING TO STUDY ABROAD?

## WiZdom Scholarships upto **5 Lakhs\***

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Post Study **Work Visa Guidance**

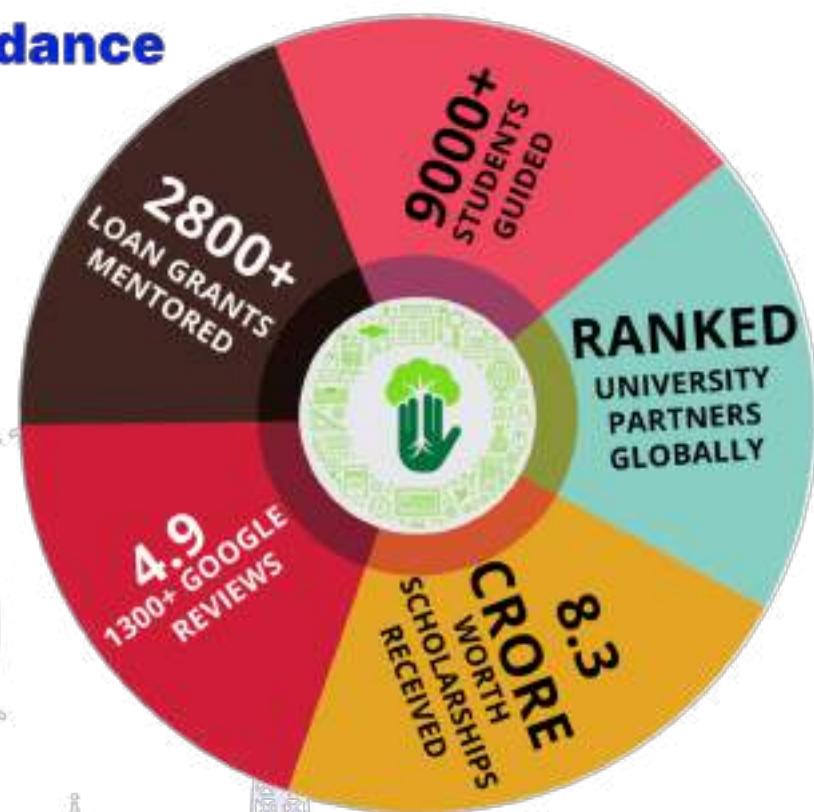
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**Dear Aspirants,**

*"Success is the result of daily discipline, not occasional motivation."*

In today's highly competitive examination landscape, current affairs are no longer an add-on—they are a decisive factor. Whether it is Banking, SSC, Railways, State-level examinations, or other general competitive exams, consistent and analytical reading of current events builds awareness, sharpens judgment, and strengthens conceptual clarity across subjects like Polity, Economy, Governance, and International Relations. Regular engagement with current affairs not only helps aspirants answer direct questions but also develops the mature perspective expected from future administrators, officers, and responsible citizens.

This monthly edition is curated with that discipline in mind. It explains Australia's new social media ban for under-16s and India's new SIM binding rule, helping readers understand how governments worldwide are responding to digital-age challenges. It decodes how newly introduced pilot safety norms triggered major IndiGo flight disruptions, while also unpacking the Sanchar Saathi controversy and its implications for telecom governance. Key constitutional and federal issues are covered through explainers on why the Supreme Court permits SC status based on the mother's caste and the landmark Tamil Nadu Government vs. Governor case, both crucial for Polity-focused exams.

The magazine also keeps aspirants updated on parliamentary developments by summarizing important Bills and Acts passed this month, major national and international recognitions such as Prime Minister Narendra Modi being conferred the highest civilian honours of Ethiopia and Oman, and notable national losses with the passing of eminent politicians Shivraj Patil, Swaraj Kaushal, and Sriprakash Jaiswal. Economic awareness is strengthened through clear coverage of the RBI's pro-growth signal via a 25 basis point repo rate cut—an essential topic for banking and economic sections.

This magazine is designed not just to inform, but to prepare. Read it with curiosity, revise it with purpose, and remember that every page brings you one step closer to your goal. The nation awaits well-informed, ethical, and confident individuals—prepare today to become one of its builders tomorrow.

*Stay consistent. Practice daily. Crack your government exam.*



## This Edition Includes

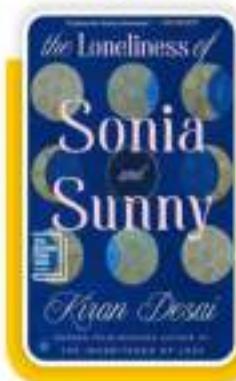
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Business News, Financial News, Economy News, Politics News, India News, Breaking News, Indian Economy, International News, Sports News, and many more topics covered.....

### NEWS CREDIT

BBC, Reuters, Aljazeera, PIB, PTI, Business Standard, The Hindu, Indian Express, Times of India, Economic Times, Business Line, India Today, Money control And all other leading Newspapers

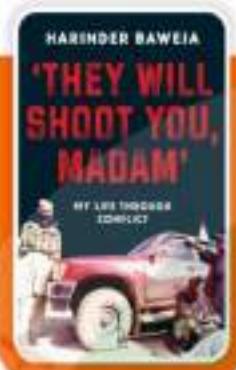
## Books &amp; Authors



**Book**  
The Loneliness of Sonia and Sunny

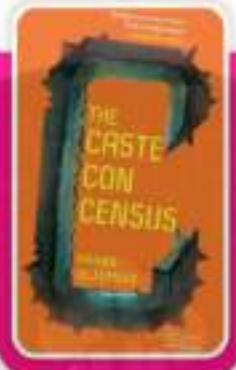
**Author**  
Kiran Desai

**About**  
This book tells a deep and engaging story that shows the emotional ups and downs of modern life across different places and generations.



**Book**  
They Will Shoot You, Madam: My Life Through Conflict

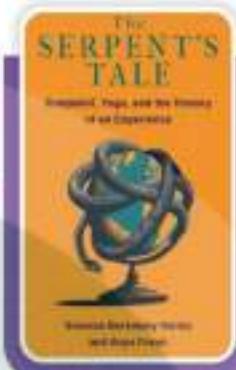
**About**  
Here the author shares stories from over 40 years of reporting in India and conflict zones abroad, offering a brief, honest look into the risks and moral challenges of war journalism.



**Book**  
The Caste Census

**Author**  
Anand Teltumbde

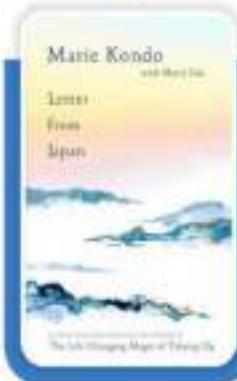
**About**  
This book examines the debate around caste-based data in India, explaining why caste census matters, the politics behind it, and its social and policy implications.



**Book**  
The Serpent's Tale: Kundalini, Yoga, and the History of an Experience

**Editor**  
Sravana Borkataky-Varma & Anya Foxen

**About**  
This book explores the idea of Kundalini, tracing its roots in yoga and spiritual traditions and how it has been understood over time.

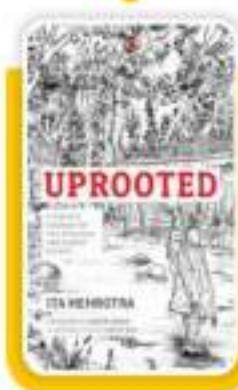


**Book**  
Letter from Japan

**Author**  
Marie Kondo with Marie Iida

**About**  
This book offers personal reflections on Japanese society and culture, capturing everyday life, values, and quiet observations through a reflective narrative.

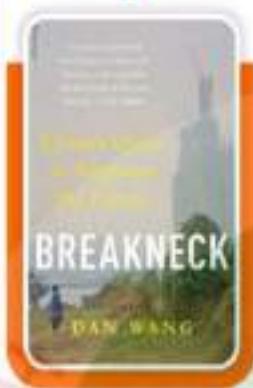
## Books &amp; Authors



**Book**  
Uprooted: A Graphic Account of the Struggle for Forest Rights

**Author**  
Ita Mehrotra

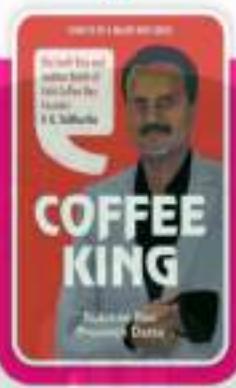
**About**  
This book tells the story of tribal and forest communities fighting for land, livelihood, and legal recognition of their rights.



**Book**  
Breakneck: China's Quest to Engineer the Future

**Author**  
Dan Wang

**About**  
This book examines how China is rapidly reshaping technology, infrastructure, and society to secure its global future.



**Book**  
Coffee King: The Swift Rise and Sudden Death of Cafe Coffee Day Founder V G Siddhartha

**Author**  
Rukmini Rao and Prosenjit Datta

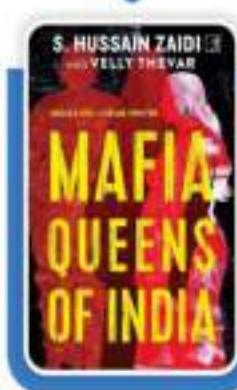
**About**  
This book traces the rapid rise of V G Siddhartha, founder of Café Coffee Day, and the pressures and challenges that led to his sudden



**Book**  
BARBIELAND: The Unauthorized History

**Author**  
Tarpley Hitt

**About**  
This book explores the cultural impact, controversies, and hidden history behind the Barbie brand and its global influence.



**Book**  
Mafia Queens of India

**Author**  
S Hussain Zaidi with Velly Thevar

**About**  
This book tells real-life stories of women who rose to power in India's criminal underworld, challenging traditional ideas of crime and gender.

# DREAMING OF BECOMING A PILOT?



## Commercial Pilot Training

Duration 6 months Ground Training Flight Training 8 to 12 months

Eligibility 10+2 (Science Stream)

## Cabin Crew Training

Duration 6 months Placement assistance in a top airlines\*

Eligibility 10+2 (Science/Commerce/Arts) NIOS also eligible

## Airport Ground Operations

Duration 6 months 6 month of paid internship\*

Eligibility 10+2 (Science/Commerce/Arts) NIOS also eligible

Our Students are Placed in



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### CAMPUS

Skylead Global, 2nd Floor, Takshila Building, MG Rd, near Janatha Delux Hotel, Ballalbagh, Mangaluru, Karnataka 575003

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## Quick Bytes

- India ranks 8th in debut World Skills Asia, earning 1 Silver, 2 Bronze and 3 Medallions for Excellence.
- Dr. Kenichi Iga honoured for pioneering development and practical application of Vertical-Cavity Surface-Emitting Laser (VCSEL).
- Hansa-3 NG Trainer Aircraft Unveiled & SARAS Mk-2 Aircraft Reviewed
- RITES Wins CEAi Award for USBRL Engineering Innovation
- Vice Adm. Sanjay Sadhu Assumes Charge as CWP&A
- SIM-Linking Now Mandatory for Messaging Apps: DoT Tightens Cybersecurity Norms
- India Re-Elected to IMO Council with Highest Votes
- India and ADB Seal \$800 Million Loan Deal to Power Various Projects
- Crisil Revises India's FY26 GDP Growth Forecast to 7%
- Paschal Donohoe Appointed MD and CKO of the World Bank Group
- Indian Navy Receives 'Taragiri': Fourth Nilgiri-Class (Project 17A) Stealth Frigate
- Vice Admiral Sanjay Sadhu Assumes Charge as Controller of Warship Production & Acquisition
- Andre Russell Retires from IPL, Joins KKR Support Staff
- Virat Kohli Surpasses Sachin Tendulkar With Record-Breaking 52nd ODI Century
- Oscar-Winning British Playwright Tom Stoppard Dies at 88
- Andhra Pradesh Renames Raj Bhavan as Lok Bhavan
- Aparna Garg Assumes Charge as Railway Board Member (Finance)
- India-Maldives Joint Exercise 'Ekuverin' Begins in Kerala
- India to Chair International IDEA for the First Time
- R. Chander Takes Over as LIC Managing Director
- Former England Cricketer Robin Smith Passes Away at 62
- Lok Sabha Passes Central Excise (Amendment) Bill 2025
- Government Withdraws Mandatory Pre-Installation of Sanchar Saathi App
- Bharat Taxi, a driver-owned cooperative ride-hailing platform, has launched pilot operations in Delhi and Gujarat under the Sahakar Se Samriddhi initiative.
- Haryana's Lado Lakshmi Yojana to Offer Financial Aid Quarterly from December 2025
- SEBI Launches SWAGAT-FI to Simplify Access for Low-Risk Foreign Investors in India
- India's Insolvency Regime Upgraded to Group B by S&P
- Brendan Nelson Appointed Chairman of HSBC, Succeeding Mark Tucker
- RBI Approves Vikram Sahu as CEO of Bank of America India for Three-Year Term
- Jeyandran Venugopal Appointed as President & CEO of Reliance Retail Ventures Ltd
- Armand Duplantis and Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone Named World Athletes of the Year 2025
- MEITY & MEA Enable Paperless Passport Verification via DigiLocker
- Australia's Victoria University to Open First India Campus in Gurugram by 2026
- Asim Munir Formally Appointed Pakistan's First Chief of Defence Forces
- Fitch Ups India's FY26 Growth Forecast to 7.4% Amid Strong Consumer Demand
- Sunil Narine Makes T20 History With 600-Wicket Milestone
- Swaraj Kaushal, Former Mizoram Governor Passes Away at 73
- Veteran Producer AVM Saravanan Passes Away
- Dr. Shardul S. Shroff Wins ACES 2025 Lifetime Honour
- Prateek Madhav Wins National Individual Excellence Award
- Netflix to Acquire Warner Bros Discovery Studios and Streaming Business for \$72 Billion
- RBI Raises India's FY26 GDP Growth Forecast to 7.3%
- Dr Renuka Iyer Appointed Chief Medical Officer of NCCN
- Roman Gofman Appointed as Next Mossad Chief

- Cristiano Ronaldo Joins Perplexity AI as Investor and Brand Ambassador
- Microsoft Store Awards 2025: ChatGPT, Perplexity, Notion Among Top App Winners
- Donald Trump Awarded First FIFA Peace Prize at 2026 World Cup Draw Ceremony
- India–Malaysia Launch 5th Edition of Exercise Harimau Shakti in Rajasthan
- Simone Tata: The Visionary Behind Lakmé and Westside Passes Away at 95
- India Opens World's Highest War Memorial at Galwan
- Rajasthan Becomes First to Fully Digitise Voter Rolls
- Mission Watershed PUNARUTTHAN Launched in Nagaland
- Tata Electronics and Intel Sign MoU to Explore Chip Manufacturing and Packaging in India
- Anant Ambani Becomes Youngest Recipient of Global Humane Society's Animal Welfare Award
- Tata–Lockheed Martin to Build New MRO Facility for C-130J Super Hercules in India
- Veteran Bengali Actor Kalyan Chatterjee Passes Away at 81
- Veteran Social Activist Baba Adhav Passes Away at 95
- Right to Disconnect Bill 2025 Introduced in Parliament: A Step Towards Work-Life Balance
- DHRUVA: India's Digital Hub for Reference and Unique Virtual Address Launched
- Rohit Sharma Became 4th Indian To Enter 20000 Runs Scored Club
- Lando Norris Wins 2025 Formula 1 World Championship in Dramatic Abu Dhabi Finale
- Frank Gehry, Iconic Architect Behind Guggenheim Bilbao, Dies at 96
- Dr. Renuka Iyer Appointed CMO of National Comprehensive Cancer Network
- Fino Becomes First Payments Bank to Get SFB Approval
- Deepavali Enters UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage List, Boosting India's Global Presence
- Lithuania Declares State of Emergency Over Balloon Incursions From Belarus
- Andrej Babis Sworn In as Czech Republic's New Prime Minister
- Indian-Origin Neal Mohan Named TIME's 2025 CEO of the Year
- A'ja Wilson Named TIME's 2025 Athlete of the Year
- Leonardo DiCaprio Named TIME's 2025 Entertainer of the Year
- Indian-Origin Arkin Gupta Named in Forbes Under-30 List for Financial Innovation
- Jasprit Bumrah made history on 9 December 2025 by becoming the first Indian bowler to claim 100 wickets in all three formats—Tests, ODIs, and T20Is—reaching the milestone during the 1st T20I vs South Africa in Cuttack.
- India to Host 1st Commonwealth Kho Kho Championship (2026)
- BMW Names Milan Nedeljković as New CEO
- Author Sophie Kinsella Passes Away at 55
- Kohli Climbs to No.2 in ODI Rankings, Rohit Sharma Retains Top Spot
- Cipla Launches Tirzepatide-Based Obesity & Diabetes Drug
- Sujalam Bharat App for Real-Time Rural Water Data
- IOA & Italy's Italian National Olympic Committee signed an MoU to enhance bilateral sports cooperation with emphasis on training, infrastructure access & sports science.
- Amul Extends Sponsorship with Argentina Football Team
- Veteran Socialist Leader Baba Adhav Passes Away at 95
- Plan for Conducting Census of India 2027 Approved By Union Cabinet
- Cabinet Nod to Atomic Energy Bill Unlocks Opportunities for Private Nuclear Projects
- Insurance Amendment Bill 2025: Cabinet Approves 100% FDI in Indian Insurance Firms
- PNB Housing Finance Appoints Ajai Kumar Shukla as New MD & CEO
- MSME Ministry Signs MoU with Amazon For Vishwakarma Artisans
- Department of Posts and BSE Sign MoU to Expand Mutual Fund Access Across India
- Sikkim Opens Cho La & Dok La for Border Tourism
- Maharashtra Launches a Project Mahadev for Football Talent
- Innoviti Wins Hurun Future Unicorn SaaS Award

- Raj Kumar Goyal Sworn in as Chief Information Commissioner
- C-DOT Wins IEEE SA Corporate Award 2025
- Former MP Ram Vilas Das Vedanti Passes Away
- India Wins Historic WSF Squash World Cup 2025
- National Makhana Board Launched with ₹476 Cr Development Scheme
- Google's Project Suncatcher to Build Solar AI Data Centres in Space
- Cabinet Clears Insurance Amendment Bill Allowing 100% FDI
- Ponduru Khadi Awarded Geographical Indication (GI) Tag
- Right-Wing Leader José Antonio Kast Becomes Chile's President
- Google Launches Its First-Ever Credit Card in India on RuPay
- Government Extends Tenure of SBI MD Ashwini Kumar Tewari by Two Years
- PM Modi Becomes First World Leader to Receive Ethiopia's Top Award
- India's Homebound Enters Oscar 2026 Shortlist for Best International Feature
- Italy Becomes First Country to Get UNESCO Recognition for Its National Cuisine
- Ravi Ranjan Takes Charge As SBI New Managing Director (MD)
- HDFC Bank Gets RBI Nod to Acquire Up to 9.5% Stake in IndusInd Bank
- Ex-Justice Secretary Raj Kumar Goyal Appointed Chief Information Commissioner
- B. Sairam Appointed Chairman-cum-Managing Director of Coal India
- Suresh Goyal Appointed as NCAER Director General
- Miyana Railway Station Receives National Energy Conservation Award 2025
- India and Brazil Sign Tripartite MoU on Maintenance of Scorpene Submarines
- Shafali Verma Wins ICC Women's Player of the Month for November
- Simon Harmer Named ICC Men's Player of the Month for November 2025
- India Launches Its First 1.0 GHz, 64-bit Dual-Core Indigenous Microprocessor DHRUV64\*
- India and Saudi Arabia Sign Visa Waiver Agreement to Facilitate Official Travel
- Air India Bags Best Domestic Airline Title at Travel + Leisure Awards 2025
- Singapore Changi Airport Wins World's Best Airport Title 2025
- José Antonio Kast Elected President of Chile
- Nvidia Tops Hurun Global 1000 as World's Most Valuable Company
- Viksit Bharat G RAM G Bill Passed in Lok Sabha
- Parliament Passes SHANTI Bill, AERB Gets Statutory Status
- India to Get Its First Forest University in Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh
- Jharkhand Clears Landmark Law for Gig Workers Welfare
- India & Oman CEPA Signed to Boost Trade and Investment
- Brazil Hands Over BRICS Presidency to India
- Shashwat Sharma Appointed As MD & CEO of Airtel India
- Exercise Desert Cyclone II Begins: India & U.A.E. Joint Military Exercise
- Deepinder Goyal Tops Hurun Rich List 2025 for India's Self-Made Entrepreneurs
- Jharkhand Clinched The Maiden Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy 2025
- India & UAE Joint Military Exercise Desert Cyclone
- India and Oman signed a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement in Muscat during PM Narendra Modi's visit to deepen trade, investment and services cooperation.
- Indian Navy Commissions INAS 335 MH-60R Squadron
- Veteran War Correspondent Peter Arnett Dies at 91
- Statue of Unity Sculptor Ram Vanji Sutar Dies at 100
- India and the Netherlands Set Up Joint Trade and Investment Committee (JTIC)
- Operation Hawkeye: US and Jordan Strike ISIS Sites in Syria
- RBI Slaps ₹62 Lakh Penalty on Kotak Mahindra Bank
- Scottish artist Nnena Kalu has become the first artist with a learning disability to win the prestigious Turner Prize, making history in British art.

- PGIMER Chandigarh Retains Top Spot as India's Best Health Technology Assessment Institute
- Michaela Benthaus to Make History as First Wheelchair User in Space
- RITES Ltd. Signs MoU with Botswana for Transport Modernisation
- PM Inaugurates First Global Aircraft Engine MRO Facility in Hyderabad
- World Bank Approves \$776 Million for Reforms in Punjab and Maharashtra
- MapmyIndia Partners with Zoho CRM to Power India's First Indigenous Location Intelligence
- PUMA Appoints Ramprasad Sridharan as New Managing Director for India
- CEC Gyanesh Kumar to Chair International IDEA in 2026
- Javokhir Sindarov Crowned 2025 FIDE World Cup Champion
- Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's Bust Unveiled at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris on Constitution Day
- Assam Passes Strict Anti Polygamy Bill, 2025 – Major Legal Shift in Marriage Laws
- Jakarta Becomes World's Most Populous City, Surpassing Tokyo: UN Report 2025
- Asian Paints Becomes Team India's Official Colour Partner in 3-Year BCCI Deal
- Camikara Becomes First Indian Rum to Win 'Global Brand of the Year'
- India's Economy to Grow at 6.6% in 2025-26, Says IMF
- CBDT Unveils 'NUUDGE' Campaign: A Push for Voluntary Tax Compliance
- Government Approves Tex-RAMPS to Boost Innovation & Data in India's Textile Sector
- 10-Year-Old Giovanna de Sequeira Wins Bronze for India at World Jiu-Jitsu Championship
- Indian Scientists Develop 'OncoMark' AI Framework for Personalised Cancer Therapy
- PM Modi Unveils 77 FT Statue Of Rama & Inaugurates Ramayana Theme Park in Goa
- Operation Sagar Bandhu — India's Aid Mission to Sri Lanka After Cyclone Ditwah
- India to Lead Emerging Market Growth with 7% GDP Rise in 2025: Moody's
- Sipan Garg Takes Additional Charge as CMD of THDC India Ltd
- Temasek Appoints Former DBS CEO Piyush Gupta as India Chairman
- Jay Shah Honoured with "Indian of the Year 2025"
- India Signs ₹7,900 Crore Deal with US for MH-60R Navy Helicopter Support

**IMPORTANCE**

To mark the birth anniversary of Chaudhary Charan Singh on 23 Dec 1902. Who was the 5th PM of India.

**Kisan Diwas**

INCEPTION: 2001  
EDITION: 24<sup>th</sup>

**MOTTO**

To improve the lives of the Indian farmers.

**FACT**

Chaudhary Charan Singh never visited the Lok Sabha.

**OTHER WORLD WIDE CELEBRATIONS**

Ghana: 1st Friday of Dec.  
Pakistan: 18 Dec  
USA: 12 Oct  
Zambia: 1st Monday of Aug

**23**  
DECEMBER



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## Recent Appointment

### IIFL Finance Appoints Former RBI Deputy Governor B. P. Kanungo as Chairman



IIFL Finance, a leading Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC) in India, has appointed Bibhu Prasad (B. P.) Kanungo, former Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), as the Chairman of its Board. The appointment aims to strengthen corporate governance, regulatory compliance and strategic decision-making within the company.

#### About B. P. Kanungo

- Served as Deputy Governor of RBI with responsibility for currency management, payment systems, financial regulation and supervision
- Member of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of RBI
- Held senior positions such as RBI Regional Director and Banking Ombudsman
- Represented India at international financial institutions like the Bank for International Settlements (BIS)

#### About IIFL Finance

- A prominent NBFC providing services such as home loans, gold loans, MSME loans, microfinance and digital lending
- Plays a key role in financial inclusion by extending credit to underserved sectors
- Regulated by the Reserve Bank of India

### José Antonio Kast Elected President of Chile



José Antonio Kast, leader of the Republican Party, has been elected President of Chile, winning the December 2025 presidential runoff with approximately 58% of the vote, defeating left-wing candidate Jeannette Jara. Kast's victory marks a major political shift in Chile, bringing a far-right leader to power for the first time since the return to democracy in 1990.

#### Background: Who Is José Antonio Kast

- Age and Profession: Kast is around 59 years old and a lawyer by training.
- Political Career: He served as a member of the Chilean Chamber of Deputies from 2002–2018 and was previously with the Independent Democratic Union (UDI) before founding the Republican Party in 2019.
- Presidential Bids: Kast ran for president in 2017 and 2021 before securing victory in 2025.
- He is known for ultra-conservative and far-right positions, emphasizing law-and-order and security policies.

#### Chile:

- Capital: Santiago
- President: Gabriel Boric
- Currency: Chilean peso

### Ravi Ranjan Appointed as Managing Director of State Bank of India



The State Bank of India (SBI), India's largest public sector bank, has appointed Ravi Ranjan as its Managing Director (MD). This appointment strengthens SBI's top management to continue its focus on retail banking, corporate banking, and digital transformation.

#### About State Bank of India (SBI)

- Founded: 1 July 1955 (as SBI; predecessor was the Bank of Calcutta, 1806).
- Headquarters: Mumbai, Maharashtra.
- Chairman: Appointed by the Government of India.
- Current chairman: C. Sreenivasulu Setty

- SBI is the largest public sector bank in India with a vast network of branches and ATMs.
- SBI plays a key role in government schemes, including Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY), Mudra Yojana, and Digital India initiatives.

#### SBI Governance Structure

- SBI is governed by a Chairman and Managing Directors, who are appointed by the Government of India.
- MDs typically handle specific portfolios such as retail banking, corporate banking, risk, operations, treasury, and digital transformation.
- The Board of Directors ensures compliance with RBI regulations and corporate governance standards.

#### Raj Kumar Goyal Assumes Charge as Chief Information Commissioner



Raj Kumar Goyal, a former Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer, has taken oath as the Chief Information Commissioner (CIC) of India. The oath of office and secrecy was administered by the President of India. His appointment fills a long-pending vacancy and restores the Central Information Commission to full functional capacity.

#### About the Central Information Commission (CIC)

The Central Information Commission is a statutory body established under the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005.

#### It consists of:

- One Chief Information Commissioner
- Up to 10 Information Commissioners
- Members are appointed by the President of India on the recommendation of a selection committee.
- Selection Committee for CIC
- Prime Minister (Chairperson)
- Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha
- One Union Cabinet Minister nominated by the Prime Minister

#### Functions and Powers of CIC

Hears second appeals and complaints under the RTI Act. Has powers similar to a civil court, including summoning witnesses and requiring documents. Can order public authorities to disclose information. Submits an annual report on RTI implementation to Parliament. Plays a crucial role in ensuring transparency and accountability in governance.

#### Additional Useful Facts for Exams

- The RTI Act, 2005 applies to Central Government, State Governments, local bodies, and public sector undertakings.
- Information denied on grounds of national security, sovereignty, or personal privacy falls under exemptions of the RTI Act.
- State Information Commissions function at the state level under the same Act.
- Transparency is considered a key pillar of good governance.
- The RTI Act empowers citizens as a tool against corruption and maladministration.

#### Sangeeta Barooah Pisharoty Elected First Woman President of Press Club of India



Senior journalist Sangeeta Barooah Pisharoty has been elected as the first woman President of the Press Club of India (PCI), marking a historic milestone in the country's media landscape. Her election reflects increasing gender representation and leadership in Indian journalism.

#### About the Press Club of India (PCI)

- The Press Club of India is an independent professional body of journalists.
- It serves as a forum for journalists to exchange ideas, discuss national and international issues, and uphold press freedom.
- The club is based in New Delhi and primarily represents journalists covering Parliament, government, and national institutions.
- PCI plays a key role in defending freedom of expression and journalistic rights.

**PNB Housing Finance Appoints Ajai Kumar Shukla as MD & CEO**



PNB Housing Finance Limited has appointed Ajai Kumar Shukla as its new Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, strengthening leadership continuity and corporate governance in one of India's major housing finance companies. PNB Housing Finance Limited is a housing finance company registered with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) as a Housing Finance Company (HFC). The RBI regulates HFCs under the RBI Act, 1934 (after the transfer of regulation from NHB to RBI in 2019).

**Punjab National Bank:**

- Founded: 19 May 1894

**Founder:**

- Dyal Singh Majithia
- Lala Harkishen Lal
- Headquarters: Dwarka, Delhi, India
- Non-Executive Chairman: K G Ananthakrishnan
- MD & CEO: Ashok Chandra

**Venkatesh Prasad elected as the new President of KSCA**



Former Indian fast bowler Venkatesh Prasad has been elected President of the Karnataka State Cricket Association (KSCA) on 7 December 2025. He defeated rival KN Shanth Kumar by 749 votes to 558 votes out of 1,307 total votes.

Under his leadership, the new KSCA panel, called "Team Game Changers," also filled key positions:

- Vice-President: Sujith Somasundar
- Secretary: Santosh Menon

- Treasurer: BN Madhukar

**Asim Munir Appointed as Pakistan's First Chief of Defence Forces (CDF)**



Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari has approved the appointment of General Asim Munir to the newly created post of Chief of Defence Forces (CDF). He will hold this position while continuing as the Chief of Army Staff (COAS). The newly created role grants him unified command over all three defence services for a tenure of five years. The post of CDF was established through the 27th Constitutional Amendment, reflecting a major restructuring of Pakistan's defence leadership framework. The move consolidates military authority at the top level, giving the CDF overarching strategic control over Pakistan's defence apparatus.

**About General Asim Munir**

Appointed Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff (COAS) in November 2022.

**Former roles:**

- Director-General of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI)
- Director-General of Military Intelligence (MI)
- First COAS to simultaneously hold the newly created CDF post.

**About the Chief of Defence Forces (CDF)**

Newly created senior-most military position in Pakistan.

- Scope: Overall command over
- Pakistan Army
- Pakistan Navy
- Pakistan Air Force
- Tenure: 5 years
- Created through 27th Constitutional Amendment.

**Civil-Military Context in Pakistan**

- Pakistan has a history of military influence over political institutions.
- Previously, the Army Chief was already considered the most powerful position.
- Creation of CDF further enhances structural authority of the military.

**Key Political Figures**

- President of Pakistan: Asif Ali Zardari
- Prime Minister: Shehbaz Sharif
- Pakistan's Defence Structure (Before and After CDF)
- Earlier: Each service chief operated independently; Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee had limited operational authority.
- Now: CDF centralizes operational command under a single office.
- Constitutional Amendments in Pakistan
- Require a two-thirds majority in both houses.
- 27th Amendment = Creation of the CDF post.

**Brendan Nelson Appointed Chairman of HSBC, Succeeding Mark Tucker**

HSBC appoints Brendan Nelson as chair after chaotic search.

- Background: Why the Appointment Was Needed
- HSBC had been searching for a permanent chair for several months following internal upheaval and a period of interim leadership.
- The search was described as chaotic — implying there were delays, possibly disagreements or challenges in finding a suitable candidate.

**Who is Brendan Nelson**

- Brendan Nelson is a former partner at KPMG.
- Prior to this appointment, Nelson had been serving as interim chair of HSBC since October.

**HSBC**

- Industry: Financial services
- Founder: Sir Thomas Sutherland
- Headquarters: London, England, United Kingdom
- Group Chief Executive: Georges Elhedery

**RBI Approves Vikram Sahu as CEO of Bank of America India for Three-Year Term**

India's central bank approves Vikram Sahu as CEO of Bank of America N. A. (India)

**Background: Appointment Process**

Vikram Sahu was initially named by Bank of America in March 2025 to lead its India operations, but his formal appointment as CEO required clearance from Reserve Bank of India (RBI). The approval came via an internal memo reviewed by a major news agency — making the appointment official.

**Change in Leadership**

Sahu replaces Kaku Nakhate, who had led Bank of America's India operations for 15 years. Following the change, Nakhate will move to the role of "Chair, India" at the firm's securities arm in India.

**Bank of America**

- Founded: 1998
- Headquarters: North Carolina, US
- Chairman and CEO: Brian Moynihan
- Vice chairman: Bruce Thompson

**Sipan Garg assumes additional charge as Chairman and Managing Director of THDC India**

Sipan Kumar Garg has taken on the role of Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) of THDC India, in addition to his current position as Director Finance, following the passing of R K Vishnoi. The CMD post became vacant after R K Vishnoi's demise on November 15, 2025. Garg has been assigned the additional charge for a period of three months, or until a full-time CMD is appointed, whichever is earlier. He officially assumed the charge on November 25, 2025.

**About THDC India**

A subsidiary of NTPC, Rishikesh-based THDC India is engaged in power generation through solar, hydro, thermal, and pumped storage projects.

## Guinea-Bissau general sworn in as transitional president after coup



General Horta Inta-A has been sworn in as the transitional president of Guinea-Bissau following a military coup that deposed President Umaro Sissoco Embalo.

### Background of the Coup

The military, referring to themselves as the "High Military Command for the Restoration of Order," announced they had seized power a day after two leading candidates in a tightly contested presidential election claimed victory.

### Role of Horta Inta-A

Previously serving as the Chief of Staff of the army, Inta-A was considered close to the deposed President Embalo. He stated that evidence justified the military's actions and stressed the need for urgent measures involving everyone's participation.

### Reaction and Situation on Ground

The African Union condemned the coup and called for the unconditional release of Embalo and other detained officials. The capital, Bissau, remained mostly quiet with soldiers on the streets, many residents staying indoors, and businesses and banks closed.

### Guinea-Bissau

- Capital: Bissau
- Currency: West African CFA franc
- Continent: Africa

## CEC Gyanesh Kumar to Become Chairperson of International IDEA



Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar will assume the post of Chairperson of the International

Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) for the year 2026.

International IDEA is a 35-member intergovernmental organisation founded in 1995, dedicated to strengthening electoral systems, democratic institutions, and governance globally. India is a founding member of the organisation.

Gyanesh Kumar's appointment reflects global recognition of the Election Commission of India (ECI) as one of the world's most credible, transparent, and innovative election management bodies. His role will involve guiding discussions, presiding over all council meetings in 2026, and promoting knowledge-sharing among global Election Management Bodies (EMBs).

### About International IDEA

- Full Name: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
- Established: 1995
- Headquarters: Stockholm, Sweden
- Members: 35 countries
- Observers: United States, Japan

## Ramprasad Sridharan Appointed New MD of PUMA India



Global sportswear brand PUMA has appointed Ramprasad Sridharan as the new Managing Director (MD) of PUMA India, effective December 2025. He will report directly to Matthias Bäumer, Chief Commercial Officer (CCO) of PUMA Global. Sridharan replaces Karthik Balagopalan, who served PUMA for nearly 20 years and has now stepped down to pursue other interests. Ramprasad Sridharan brings 25+ years of experience in brand building, retail leadership, digital growth, and commercial strategy across the Asia-Pacific region. He previously served as the CEO & MD of United Colors of Benetton India and has held senior roles at Clarks and Reebok India.

His appointment underscores PUMA's focus on strengthening the Indian market, which remains one of the company's fastest-growing global segments.



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## National News

**NCW Launches 'Shakti Scholars Fellowship' for Young Researchers**

The National Commission for Women (NCW) has launched the 'Shakti Scholars Fellowship', a new initiative aimed at encouraging young researchers to undertake research on women-centric issues. The fellowship seeks to promote evidence-based policymaking and strengthen academic research related to women's rights, gender equality and social justice in India.

**Objectives of the Shakti Scholars Fellowship**

- To promote high-quality research on women-related issues.
- To encourage youth participation in gender studies and public policy research.
- To provide research-based inputs for improving laws, schemes and institutional mechanisms related to women.
- To create a pool of gender-sensitive researchers and policy thinkers.

**About National Commission for Women (NCW)**

- The NCW is a statutory body established under the National Commission for Women Act, 1990.
- It was constituted in 1992.
- NCW works under the Ministry of Women and Child Development.

**Government to Introduce Bill Against Fake Fertilisers and Pesticides**

The Government of India will introduce a bill in Parliament to curb the sale of fake fertilisers, pesticides and unauthorised bio-stimulants, aiming to protect farmers' interests and ensure quality agricultural inputs, as announced by Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan.

**Key Facts:**

- Announced By: Union Minister for Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare – Shivraj Singh Chouhan
- Purpose of the Bill: To prevent production, sale and distribution of fake fertilisers, pesticides and bio-stimulants
- Target Issue: Fraudulent and substandard agricultural inputs harming farmers
- Parliamentary Action: Introduction of a new bill in the upcoming Parliament session

- Approach: Stringent laws and strict penalties against dishonest traders
- Beneficiaries: Farmers and the agricultural sector

**Objectives of the Proposed Bill**

- Protect farmers from financial losses caused by fake inputs
- Ensure availability of quality fertilisers and pesticides
- Improve crop productivity and agricultural sustainability
- Strengthen regulatory oversight in the agri-input market

**Additional Useful Facts**

- Fertilisers in India are currently regulated under the Fertiliser Control Order (FCO), 1985.
- Pesticides are governed by the Insecticides Act, 1968, which sets quality and safety standards.

**Government Launches Bharat Taxi – A Driver-Owned Ride-Hailing Initiative**

The Government of India has launched Bharat Taxi, a driver-owned, cooperative-based ride-hailing platform aimed at ensuring fair income, transparency, and welfare of drivers in the gig economy. The initiative provides an indigenous alternative to private ride-hailing aggregators by placing ownership and decision-making power directly in the hands of drivers.

**Institutional & Administrative Aspects**

- The initiative is supported by the Ministry of Cooperation.
- It is developed with technical support from the National e-Governance Division (NeGD).
- The cooperative is registered under the Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act.

**Cooperative Model**

- Drivers are members and owners, not just service providers.
- Profits are shared among driver-members, unlike commission-based models.
- Drivers participate in decision-making and governance.

**Operational Features**

- Promotes low or zero commission, improving driver earnings.
- Ensures transparent fares and minimal surge pricing.

- Services include cars, auto-rickshaws, and bike taxis.

#### Economic & Social Significance

- Strengthens the gig economy with social security and dignity of labour.
- Encourages cooperative entrepreneurship and self-reliance.
- Provides a domestic alternative to foreign-owned ride-hailing platforms.

#### Parliament Passes Viksit Bharat – G RAM G Bill, 2025

The Parliament of India has passed the Viksit Bharat – Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin): Viksit Bharat – G RAM G Bill, 2025, with approval from both Houses. The Rajya Sabha passed the Bill, following its earlier passage in the Lok Sabha. The legislation seeks to strengthen rural livelihoods in line with the national vision of Viksit Bharat @2047.

#### Key Provisions of the Bill

The Bill provides a statutory guarantee of 125 days of wage employment per financial year to every rural household whose adult members are willing to undertake unskilled manual work. This marks an increase in guaranteed employment days from 100 to 125, aimed at enhancing income security in rural areas. The fund-sharing pattern between the Centre and States will be:

- 60:40 for general states
- 90:10 for North-Eastern and Himalayan states
- State Governments will continue to bear responsibility for payment of unemployment allowance and compensation.

#### Government's Stand

Union Minister for Rural Development Shivraj Singh Chouhan stated that rural development is central to national development, emphasising the government's commitment to the "Nation First" approach and welfare of deprived sections. The Bill is positioned as a key step towards inclusive growth and village-centric development.

#### Debate and Opposition Views

Several opposition members raised concerns regarding:

- Insufficient consultation with States and stakeholders
- The financial burden on poorer states due to the 60:40 sharing formula
- Demands to refer the Bill to a Select Committee for detailed scrutiny

- Despite objections, supporters highlighted that nearly 70% of India's population resides in rural areas, and the Bill would strengthen livelihood security and contribute to building a Viksit Bharat.

#### Additional Key Facts:

- The Bill builds upon the legacy of MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005), which first introduced a legal guarantee for wage employment in rural India.
- MGNREGA originally guarantees 100 days of wage employment; the new Bill expands this to 125 days.
- Rural employment programmes play a critical role in:
  - Reducing rural poverty and distress migration
  - Enhancing asset creation and rural infrastructure
  - Promoting social security and inclusive growth
  - Employment guarantee schemes are part of Directive Principles of State Policy, especially Article 41, which urges the State to provide the right to work.
- Special funding support for North-Eastern and Himalayan states aligns with India's policy of regional equity and balanced development.

#### Lok Sabha Takes Up Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India Bill, 2025

The Lok Sabha has taken up the Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India Bill, 2025 (SHANTI Bill) for consideration and passing. The Bill seeks to modernise India's nuclear energy framework, promote clean and sustainable power generation, and establish a comprehensive regulatory mechanism for the safe use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

#### Key Features of the SHANTI Bill

- Aims to promote development, regulation and use of nuclear energy and ionising radiation for electricity generation and non-power applications.
- Provides a single, unified legal framework for India's civil nuclear sector by updating existing laws.
- Proposes strengthening of nuclear safety and regulatory oversight through statutory backing.
- Introduces provisions related to liability and compensation in case of nuclear incidents.

- Enables private sector and joint venture participation in nuclear power generation for the first time in India.

#### Objectives of the Bill

- To support India's transition towards clean and low-carbon energy.
- To ensure energy security through reliable baseload nuclear power.
- To attract investment, advanced technology and innovation in the nuclear sector.
- To improve safety, transparency and accountability in nuclear operations.

#### Additional Facts

##### 1. Nuclear Energy in India

India's nuclear programme began in 1948 with the establishment of the Atomic Energy Commission.

Dr. Homi Jehangir Bhabha is known as the father of India's nuclear programme.

##### 2. Regulatory Framework

The Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB) oversees nuclear safety in India.

The Bill aims to provide stronger statutory authority to nuclear regulators.

##### 3. Nuclear Power Advantages

Low greenhouse gas emissions

High energy density

Reliable base-load electricity

##### 4. India's Nuclear Fuel Strategy

India follows a three-stage nuclear power programme, focusing on optimal use of uranium and thorium reserves.

##### 5. Liability Framework

Nuclear liability laws ensure compensation to victims in case of accidents while balancing investment concerns.

#### Rajya Sabha Considers Repealing and Amending Bill, 2025

The Rajya Sabha has taken up the Repealing and Amending Bill, 2025 for consideration during the ongoing session of Parliament. The Bill aims to repeal outdated, obsolete and redundant laws and amend certain existing Acts to remove inconsistencies, update terminology and correct drafting errors. The legislation was earlier passed by the Lok Sabha.

#### Key Features of the Bill

- Proposes to repeal 71 obsolete Acts that are no longer relevant in the present legal and administrative framework.

- Seeks to amend 4 existing Acts to update language, remove outdated provisions and correct drafting mistakes.
- Certain colonial-era laws and sector-specific Acts that have outlived their utility are included for repeal.
- Amendments also focus on modernising legal terminology in line with current governance practices.
- A drafting error in the Disaster Management Act, 2005 is proposed to be corrected.

#### Objectives of the Bill

- To declutter the statute book by removing unnecessary laws.
- To enhance legal clarity and administrative efficiency.
- To improve ease of doing business and ease of living for citizens.
- To eliminate obsolete, redundant or discriminatory provisions.

#### Background and Governance Context

- Repealing and Amending Bills are introduced periodically to ensure that the legal framework remains relevant and updated.
- Since 2014, the Government has repealed more than 1,500 obsolete laws as part of legal reform initiatives.
- Removing outdated legislation helps reduce compliance burden and avoids confusion in interpretation of laws.

#### Lok Sabha Passes Bill to Raise FDI Limit to 100% in Insurance Sector

The Lok Sabha has passed the Sabka Bima Sabki Raksha (Amendment of Insurance Laws) Bill, 2025, which increases the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) limit in the Indian insurance sector from 74% to 100%. The reform aims to liberalise the insurance market, attract more foreign capital, enhance competition, and improve insurance penetration across India.

#### Background and Evolution of FDI in Insurance

- 2000: Private and foreign investment allowed, FDI cap at 26%.
- 2014: FDI cap raised to 49%.
- 2021: FDI limit increased to 74%.
- 2025: FDI limit further increased to 100%, enabling fully foreign-owned companies.

#### Significance for India's Economy

- Attracts Global Capital: Encourages international investment and expertise.

- Boosts Competition: Drives innovation, better services, and technology adoption.
- Improves Insurance Penetration: India's insurance penetration remains below the global average.
- Regulatory Strengthening: Supports IRDAI in safeguarding policyholders' interests.
- Employment and Market Expansion: Higher foreign participation stimulates employment and financial inclusion.

#### Additional Useful Facts

- FDI (Foreign Direct Investment): Investment by a foreign entity in a domestic company, often involving long-term interest and management control.
- IRDAI: The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India regulates and supervises the insurance sector.
- Insurance Penetration: Ratio of total insurance premium to GDP.
- Insurance Density: Per capita insurance spending.
- Liberalisation aligns with India's goal of becoming a global financial hub and improving ease of doing business.

#### Viksit Bharat Gramin Employment Bill, 2025 Introduced in Lok Sabha

The Viksit Bharat Gramin Employment Bill, 2025 was introduced in the Lok Sabha to strengthen rural employment generation and improve livelihood security in rural areas. The Bill was tabled amid opposition protests, highlighting political debate over rural employment policies.

#### Key Provisions:

- The Bill aims to enhance employment opportunities in rural India through structured public works and development-oriented activities.
- It seeks to align rural employment with the broader vision of Viksit Bharat (Developed India).
- Focus areas include skill-based work, asset creation, and sustainable rural infrastructure.
- The Bill proposes improved monitoring, transparency, and outcome-based implementation of rural employment programmes.

#### Significance:

- Addresses rural unemployment and underemployment, a key socio-economic challenge.
- Strengthens income security for rural households.
- Supports inclusive growth and balanced regional development.

- Reflects the government's emphasis on employment-led development.

#### Rural Employment in India

- Rural employment programmes play a crucial role in poverty alleviation and social security.
- Employment schemes help reduce distress migration from rural to urban areas.
- Asset-creating works improve long-term rural productivity.

#### Legislative Process

- A Bill must be passed by both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha and receive Presidential assent to become an Act.
- Money Bills can only be introduced in the Lok Sabha, while ordinary Bills can be introduced in either House.
- Parliamentary protests are part of legislative functioning but do not halt the formal introduction of a Bill.

#### Employment & Development Linkage

- Employment generation is closely linked with infrastructure creation, skill development, and rural demand.
- Rural employment schemes contribute to GDP growth through increased consumption.
- Focus on local employment supports sustainable development goals (SDGs) such as poverty reduction and decent work.

#### Nuclear Energy Bill Introduced in Lok Sabha

The Government of India has introduced the Nuclear Energy Bill in the Lok Sabha to create a modern and comprehensive legal framework for the development, regulation and safe use of nuclear energy in the country.

#### Key Objectives of the Bill:

- To promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy for power generation, healthcare, industry and research.
- To strengthen nuclear safety, security and regulatory oversight.
- To provide a clear framework for licensing, supervision and accountability in nuclear activities.
- To establish mechanisms for liability and compensation in case of nuclear incidents.

#### Institutional Provisions:

- The Bill provides statutory backing to the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB) to enhance its independence and authority.
- It proposes the creation of an Atomic Energy Redressal Advisory Council for dispute resolution and grievance redressal.

### Parliamentary Developments:

The introduction of the Bill witnessed opposition from some Members of Parliament, indicating concerns related to safety, federal issues and private participation.

### Nuclear Energy in India

Nuclear energy is considered a clean and reliable source of base-load power with low carbon emissions. India follows a three-stage nuclear power programme based on thorium utilisation. The Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) functions directly under the Prime Minister's Office. India is one of the few countries with significant thorium reserves.

### Policy and Strategic Importance

- Nuclear power supports India's energy security and reduces dependence on fossil fuels.
- It contributes to India's climate commitments and long-term clean energy transition.
- The Bill aims to attract investment, innovation and advanced technologies such as Small Modular Reactors (SMRs).

### Safety and Regulation

- Nuclear safety in India is governed by strict radiation protection and emergency preparedness norms.
- The Bill reinforces the principle of government responsibility in nuclear safety and liability management.

### Additional Facts:

- The Nuclear Energy Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha to modernise India's nuclear energy framework.
- The Bill aims to strengthen nuclear safety, regulation and accountability.
- The Atomic Energy Regulatory Board is the key nuclear safety regulator in India.
- Nuclear energy provides low-carbon base-load electricity.
- India's nuclear programme is based on a three-stage development strategy.
- The Department of Atomic Energy works under the Prime Minister's Office.
- Nuclear power contributes to energy security and climate goals.

### Nauradehi (Veerangana Durgavati) Tiger Reserve to Become Third Cheetah Habitat in Madhya Pradesh

The Madhya Pradesh Government has decided to develop the Veerangana Durgavati Tiger Reserve, earlier known as Nauradehi Wildlife Sanctuary, as the third cheetah habitat in the state. This step strengthens

India's ongoing cheetah reintroduction and conservation programme.

### Existing Cheetah Habitats in Madhya Pradesh

- Kuno National Park – India's first cheetah reintroduction site.
- Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary – second notified cheetah habitat.
- Veerangana Durgavati Tiger Reserve – proposed third habitat.

### About Veerangana Durgavati Tiger Reserve

- Formerly known as Nauradehi Wildlife Sanctuary.
- It is the largest wildlife sanctuary in Madhya Pradesh.
- Spread across multiple districts including Sagar, Damoh, Narsinghpur, and Raisen.
- Features grasslands and dry deciduous forests, suitable for cheetahs.
- Recently notified as a tiger reserve, strengthening protection status.

### Project Cheetah – Background

- Project Cheetah aims to reintroduce cheetahs into India after their extinction in the 1950s.
- Cheetahs are being translocated from African countries to establish a viable population.
- The project focuses on habitat restoration, prey base management, and community involvement.
- India is the only country attempting intercontinental reintroduction of cheetahs.

### Additional Facts:

- Cheetahs prefer open grasslands and savannah-type ecosystems.
- They are listed under Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
- Grasslands are among the most threatened ecosystems in India.
- Wildlife corridors are essential for gene flow and animal movement.
- India has several flagship conservation programmes such as Project Tiger, Project Elephant, and Project Cheetah.

### Nandini Krishak Samriddhi Yojana

The Nandini Krishak Samriddhi Yojana is a flagship dairy development scheme of the Uttar Pradesh Government, launched under the leadership of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. The scheme aims to increase farmers' income, promote indigenous cattle breeds, and strengthen the rural dairy economy.

### Key Features of the Scheme

- The scheme operates under the Nand Baba Mission, which focuses on cow conservation, welfare, and dairy-based livelihoods.
- Beneficiaries are selected through a transparent e-lottery system.
- The government provides 50% financial assistance (subsidy) for setting up modern dairy units.
- Financial support covers infrastructure, cattle purchase, and related dairy activities.
- The scheme encourages the rearing of indigenous cow breeds such as Gir, Sahiwal, Tharparkar, and Gangatiri.
- Advanced breeding support such as sex-sorted semen and artificial insemination is promoted to improve productivity.

### Union Cabinet Approves Amendment to Atomic Energy Law

The Union Cabinet has approved a proposal related to amendments in the Atomic Energy legal framework, aimed at strengthening India's nuclear energy sector and enabling greater efficiency, safety, and regulatory clarity. The approval reflects the government's intent to modernise atomic energy governance in line with India's growing clean energy and energy security needs. The move is expected to facilitate smoother implementation of nuclear projects, promote advanced nuclear technologies, and enhance India's ability to meet its climate commitments by increasing the share of low-carbon energy. Atomic energy remains a strategic sector under government control due to its implications for national security and international obligations.

#### Atomic Energy in India

- Atomic energy in India is governed by the Atomic Energy Act, 1962.
- The sector is under the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE), which functions directly under the Prime Minister's Office.
- Nuclear power is a key component of India's clean energy transition.

#### Why Atomic Energy is Important

- Nuclear power provides baseload electricity with very low carbon emissions.
- Helps reduce dependence on fossil fuels.
- Supports India's commitments under the Paris Agreement.

#### Nuclear Power in India

- India operates multiple nuclear power plants, mainly through the Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL).
- India follows a three-stage nuclear power programme based on thorium utilisation.
- India has one of the largest thorium reserves in the world.

### Government Approves 'Coalsetu' Policy for Coal Linkage Auctions

The Government of India has approved the Coalsetu Policy, a new framework aimed at improving the allocation and transportation of coal through a transparent coal linkage auction mechanism. The policy seeks to ensure efficient, reliable, and affordable coal supply to various sectors, especially power, steel, and other core industries. Under Coalsetu, coal linkage auctions will be aligned with logistics optimisation, enabling consumers to source coal from mines that are geographically closer, thereby reducing transportation costs, congestion, and carbon emissions. The policy integrates coal supply with railway infrastructure planning, promoting smoother movement of coal from mines to end users.

The initiative supports India's objective of enhancing energy security, improving coal utilisation efficiency, and strengthening domestic coal supply chains while reducing dependency on imports.

#### What is Coal Linkage?

- Coal linkage refers to the allocation of coal from mines to consumers such as power plants and industries.
- It ensures assured fuel supply for continuous industrial and electricity production.

#### Significance of Coalsetu Policy

- Promotes market-based allocation of coal through auctions.
- Encourages logistics efficiency by linking coal sourcing with transportation routes.
- Reduces cost of power generation and industrial production.
- Supports environmental sustainability by lowering emissions from long-distance coal transport.

#### Coal Sector in India

- India is among the largest coal producers and consumers globally.
- Coal remains a critical component of India's energy mix, especially for thermal power.
- Coal mining and distribution are overseen by the Ministry of Coal.

### Related Government Initiatives

Commercial coal mining to boost private participation. National Coal Index (NCI) for transparent coal pricing. Coal gasification mission to promote cleaner coal usage.

### Health Security & National Security Cess Bill, 2025

The Parliament has passed the Health Security and National Security Cess Bill, 2025. The Rajya Sabha approved the Bill and returned it to the Lok Sabha after discussion.

#### Key Provisions of the Bill

##### 1. Purpose of the Cess

A cess will be levied on:

- Pan masala
- Other demerit goods (to be notified by the Central Government)

##### Revenue generated will fund:

- Public health expenditure
- National security and defence preparedness

##### 2. Nature of Taxation

- Cess will not be levied on essential items.
- It targets sin goods that have public health impact.

##### 3. Defence Focus

FM Nirmala Sitharaman highlighted:

- Modern defence requires precision weapons, autonomous systems, space assets.
- These demand capital-intensive and continuous funding.

##### 4. Health Focus

High incidence of disease due to tobacco:

- 13.5 lakh deaths every year (tobacco-related diseases + cancer)

Cess will help:

- Fund preventive healthcare
- Reduce consumption of harmful items

##### 5. Federal Aspect

- Health is a State subject, therefore:
- States will receive a share of the cess revenue.

### GST-Related Facts (Very Important for Economy Section)

#### Under earlier GST regime:

Demerit goods attracted GST + Compensation Cess. Total tax incidence sometimes reached 88%, always above 40%

#### Under Next-Generation GST:

- Compensation Cess phased out
- GST alone now has a cap of 40%

#### About 'Cess'

- A cess is a tax imposed for a specific purpose.

- Proceeds do NOT go to the Consolidated Fund freely; they must be spent on the intended purpose.
- Popular examples: Health cess, Swachh Bharat cess, Infrastructure cess.

#### Constitutional Provisions

- Cesses are allowed under Article 270 (taxes levied and distributed) and Article 271 (cess for Union purposes).
- Health is a State list subject – List II of the 7th Schedule.
- Public Health Burden of Tobacco in India (Static Data)
- India is the 2nd largest consumer of tobacco globally.
- Economic burden from tobacco-related diseases is ~1.8% of India's GDP (as per health ministry).
- WHO estimates tobacco kills 8 million people annually worldwide.

#### Defence Expenditure:

India's defence budget FY 2024-25: ₹6.2 lakh crore approx.

India is among the top 3 defence spenders globally (after US & China).

#### Modernisation funds focus on:

- Drones
- AI-enabled systems
- Space surveillance
- Cyber-defence

### LS passes Excise Bill 2025 to raise excise duties and cess on tobacco products

The Lok Sabha passed the Central Excise (Amendment) Bill, 2025 to revise excise duties on tobacco products.

The amendment aligns the Central Excise Act, 1944 with post-cess requirements, giving the Centre fiscal space to raise duties once the GST compensation cess ends.

#### Key Provisions

Excise duties increased on cigarettes, cigars, hookah tobacco, zarda, chewing tobacco, scented tobacco and substitutes.

Existing duty on cigarettes (₹200-₹735 per 1,000 sticks) will rise significantly to ₹2,700-₹11,000 per 1,000 sticks.

Duty increases on major products:

- Chewing tobacco: 25% → 100%
- Hookah tobacco: 25% → 40%
- Smoking mixtures: 60% → 325%

#### Government's Explanation

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman clarified:

- This is not a new tax and not a cess; excise duty existed even before GST.
- Compensation cess rates remained unchanged from 2017 to 2024.
- Tobacco duties were increased annually before GST for health reasons.
- Total tax incidence on cigarettes is 53% of retail price.
- Post-cess, revenue will flow to the Centre and then be devolved to States (41% share).

#### Health Rationale

- Higher taxes aim to reduce tobacco consumption and prevent new users.
- Health expenditure rose from 1.13% to 1.84% of GDP (2014–15 to 2021–22).
- Under Ayushman Bharat, 55 crore beneficiaries receive financial protection.
- Over 9 crore hospital admissions worth ₹1.3 lakh crore recorded.
- Mission Indradhanush vaccinated 5.46 crore children and 1.32 crore pregnant women.
- Maternal Mortality Ratio declined from 130 to 80 (2014–2020).

#### Impact on Farmers

- Efforts underway to discourage tobacco cultivation.
- Under Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana, 1.12 lakh acres shifted away from tobacco (2018–2021–22).
- Crop diversification promoted in 10 major tobacco-growing states.

#### Objective

The amendment seeks to reduce tobacco consumption, safeguard public health, maintain price stability, and ensure States do not lose revenue after the cessation of compensation cess.

### Lok Sabha passes Manipur GST Bill 2025

#### Purpose of the Bill

The Manipur Goods and Services Tax (Second Amendment) Bill, 2025 was passed to align Manipur's GST rates with the Centre's revised GST slabs. Introduced by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, the Bill also seeks to replace a previous ordinance promulgated in October 2025.

#### Key Provisions

Implements decisions of the 56th GST Council, including rationalising GST rates on around 375 items.

Consolidates existing GST slabs into two main rates: 5% and 18%, replacing the earlier 5%, 12%, 18%, and 28% slabs.

#### Background

Earlier in August 2025, the Lok Sabha passed the Manipur GST (Amendment) Bill, 2025 to replace a prior ordinance. The amendments are part of a nationwide effort to simplify and rationalise GST across states.

#### Manipur

- Capital: Imphal (Executive Branch)
- Admission to union: 15 October 1949
- As state: 21 January 1972
- As union territory: 1 November 1956
- Districts: 16
- Governor: Ajay Kumar Bhalla
- Chief Minister: President's rule

### Assam Assembly passes six education bills amid opposition walkout

#### Bills Cleared Despite Walkout

The Assam Assembly passed six major education-related bills — four amendment bills and two university-related bills. Amendment bills focused on regulating private school fees, provincialisation of teachers and non-teaching staff, and reorganisation of educational institutions. The two university bills included the establishment of new universities and expansion of higher-education infrastructure in the state.

#### Opposition Walkout

Opposition parties walked out after alleging that their proposed amendments were ignored. Proposed amendments included relaxing cut-off years for institutional provincialisation, reducing minimum enrolment criteria, and including madrassas under relevant acts. The government rejected the amendments citing potential legal issues.

#### Government's Rationale

The bills aim to streamline teacher and staff management, improve service conditions, and regulate private-school fees. The new university bills are intended to enhance higher-education infrastructure and offerings across Assam.

#### Assam

- Capital: Dispur
- Bifurcation: 21 January 1972
- Formation: 26 January 1950
- Governor: Lakshman Acharya
- Chief Minister: Himanta Biswa Sarma (BJP)

### Tex-RAMPS Scheme approved by Govt

The Government of India has approved the Textiles-Focused Research, Assessment, Monitoring, Planning and Start-up Scheme (Tex-RAMPS) to strengthen India's textile innovation ecosystem.

- Announced by Union Textiles Minister: Giriraj Singh
- Type of Scheme: Central Sector Scheme
- Total Outlay: ₹305 crore
- Duration: FY 2025-26 to 2030-31 (aligned with the upcoming Finance Commission cycle)

#### About India's Textile Sector

- Contributes ~2.3% to India's GDP.
- Provides over 45 million direct jobs (second-largest employer after agriculture).
- India is the 2nd largest textile and clothing exporter globally.
- Major textile hubs: Surat, Tiruppur, Ludhiana, Panipat, Varanasi, Bhilwara.

#### Related Government Schemes

- PM MITRA Parks Scheme – 7 integrated mega textile parks.
- PLI Scheme for Textiles – Focus on MMF Apparel & Technical Textiles.
- National Technical Textiles Mission (NTTM) – Promotes innovation in technical textiles.
- SAMARTH Scheme – Skill development in the textile sector.

#### Finance Commission Cycle Importance

Tex-RAMPS aligned with FC cycle to ensure long-term, stable funding.

### Rare Earth Magnet Manufacturing Scheme and Key Infrastructure Approval

#### 1. Cabinet Approves Scheme for Sintered Rare Earth Permanent Magnet Manufacturing

The Union Cabinet has approved a ₹7,280 crore scheme to promote the manufacturing of Sintered Rare Earth Permanent Magnets (REPM) in India. This is India's first-ever integrated REPM manufacturing initiative, aimed at reducing import dependence and strengthening strategic sectors.

#### Key Features of the Scheme

- Target Capacity: 6,000 metric tonnes per annum.
- Project Duration: 7 years
- 2-year gestation period for setting up facilities.
- Beneficiaries: 5 companies selected through global competitive bidding.

#### Process Covered:

- Rare earth oxides → metals
- Metals → alloys
- Alloys → finished magnets
- Importance of Rare Earth Permanent Magnets
- Among the strongest permanent magnets.

#### Key sectors:

- Electric vehicles (EVs)
- Renewable energy (wind turbines)
- Aerospace and defence
- Consumer electronics

#### India's REPM consumption is expected to double by 2030.

Currently, India is heavily import-dependent, primarily on China.

#### Expected Outcomes

- Boost to Atmanirbhar Bharat in critical materials.
- Support India's Net Zero 2070 commitments.
- Major employment generation in advanced manufacturing.
- Strengthen India's global position in critical minerals and green transition technologies.

#### 2. Cabinet Approves Pune Metro Rail Project Phase-2

The government has cleared Line 4 (Kharadi-Hadapsar-Swargate-Khadakwasla) and Line 4A (Nal Stop-Warje-Manik Baug) under Pune Metro Phase-2.

#### Project Highlights

- Cost: ₹9,857 crore
- Completion Timeline: 5 years
- Expansion will take Pune Metro's network beyond 100 km, boosting sustainable urban mobility.

#### Benefits

- Reduced traffic congestion.
- Enhanced last-mile connectivity.
- Boost to economic activity and intra-city travel.

#### 3. CCEA Approves Two Key Railway Projects Worth ₹2,781 Crore

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) approved two major railway projects:

(A) Devbhumi Dwarka (Okha) – Kanalus Rail Line  
Cost: ₹1,457 crore

Will improve connectivity to Dwarkadish Temple, boosting religious tourism and regional development in Saurashtra.

(B) Badlapur – Karjat 3rd & 4th Line Project (Maharashtra)  
Cost: ₹1,324 crore

Part of Mumbai Suburban Corridor; will ease congestion and improve connectivity to Southern India.

#### Common Outcomes

- Total network addition: 224 km across Gujarat & Maharashtra.
- Improved passenger movement & freight efficiency.

#### About Rare Earth Elements (REEs)

- India has an estimated 6% of the world's rare earth reserves, mainly in Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Kerala, Tamil Nadu.
- IMC (Indian Rare Earths Ltd.) and KMML are major Indian players in rare earth processing.
- China controls ~85-90% of global REPM production.

#### Importance for EV Mission

- REPMs (especially NdFeB magnets) are used in EV motors; crucial for India's FAME-II and EV30@30 goals.

#### Metro Projects in India

- India now has over 20 operational metro systems.
- Pune Metro is implemented by MahaMetro (MAHA-METRO), a joint venture of GoI & GoM.

#### Railway Expansion

- India aims for 100% electrification, with ~70,000+ route km already electrified.
- Mumbai suburban network is one of the world's busiest commuter networks (~7 million daily riders).



### World AIDS Day

INCEPTION: 1987  
FIRST OBSERVED: 1988

**MOTTO**  
To raise awareness of the AIDS pandemic caused by the spread of HIV infection and mourning those who have died of the disease.

**NOTE**  
World AIDS Day was the first ever international day for global health.

**2025 THEME**  
Overcoming disruption, transforming the AIDS response.

**BY**  
James W. Bunn and Thomas Netter

01  
DECEMBER



**IMPORTANCE**  
This day is observed in the memory of those who have lost their lives in the Bhopal Gas tragedy on 2nd December, 1984.

### National Pollution Control Day

INCEPTION: 1984  
EDITION: 41<sup>st</sup>

**MOTTO**  
To control the Industrial disaster and to reduce the level of pollution.

**BHOPAL GAS TRAGEDY**  
A gas leak incident on the night of 2-3 December 1984 at the Union Carbide India Limited (UCIL) pesticide plant in Bhopal (M.P), India. Considered among the world's worst industrial disasters.

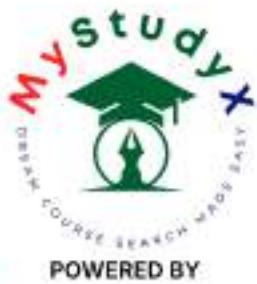
**DEATHS**  
Over 16,000 claimed

**NON-FATAL INJURIES**  
At least 558,125

**CAUSING AGENT**  
Methyl Isocyanate

02  
DECEMBER





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## International Events

### Bangladesh High Commission in New Delhi Suspends All Consular Services

The Bangladesh High Commission in New Delhi has temporarily suspended all consular services, affecting services such as visa issuance, passport renewal, attestation and immigration clearances. The suspension is due to specific administrative or operational reasons and has implications for travellers, students, workers and expatriates visiting or residing in India.

#### About Consular Services

Consular services are official functions performed by a country's diplomatic mission abroad to assist its citizens and facilitate travel, legal processes and documentation. Key consular services include:

- Visa issuance and renewal
- Passport issuance and renewal
- Attestation and authentication of civil and educational documents
- Consular assistance in emergencies
- Notarisation of agreements and affidavits
- Assistance to citizens in distress

#### Background: India–Bangladesh Relations

- India and Bangladesh share close historical, cultural, economic and geopolitical ties.
- India was one of the first countries to recognise Bangladesh in 1971 after its independence.
- The India–Bangladesh Friendship Treaty (1972) laid the foundation for bilateral cooperation.
- The two countries share a 4,096-kilometre border, including the India–Bangladesh border fences and fenced enclaves resolved in recent decades.
- Cooperation extends to trade, water sharing, connectivity, security, culture and people-to-people relations.

### Australian Government Announces National Gun Buyback Scheme After Bondi Beach Attack

The Australian government, led by Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, has announced a national gun buyback scheme following the Bondi Beach mass shooting in Sydney, which killed at least 15 people and injured several others during a Hanukkah celebration. The scheme aims to purchase and destroy surplus, newly banned, and illegal firearms to enhance public safety and prevent future gun violence. The programme

is considered the largest gun buyback effort in Australia since the 1996 Port Arthur massacre reforms and will be coordinated between the federal and state/territory governments. It forms part of broader efforts to tighten firearm laws, improve licensing, and strengthen national firearms regulation.

#### 1. Background of the Bondi Beach Attack

The attack occurred during a Hanukkah festival, resulting in multiple fatalities and injuries. It highlighted loopholes in existing gun laws, as one shooter legally possessed multiple firearms.

#### 2. Gun Buyback Scheme

A gun buyback scheme is a policy where the government offers compensation for voluntarily surrendered firearms. It aims to reduce the number of guns in civilian hands and remove illegal or banned weapons.

#### 3. Port Arthur Massacre and Reforms (1996)

The 1996 Port Arthur massacre led to nationwide gun control reforms in Australia. Reforms included a national firearms agreement, stricter licensing, a registry, and a major buyback of semi-automatic and automatic weapons.

#### 4. Australian Gun Laws

Australia already had strict firearm regulations, including background checks, safe storage, and limits on certain weapons. Loopholes and variations between states allowed some individuals to accumulate multiple firearms.

#### 5. National Firearms Register & Licensing

The government plans to establish a National Firearms Register to track all legally owned guns. Proposed reforms include limiting firearms per person, stricter licensing, and possibly requiring citizenship for gun ownership.

#### 6. Public Safety & Hate Crime

The government is also focusing on hate crime laws and anti-hate task forces in response to the attack. A national day of reflection has been declared to honour the victims.

#### 7. Public Debate

Supporters view buybacks as a means to reduce violence, while critics debate effectiveness and the need to address root causes such as extremism and mental health.

## IMF Approves Emergency Aid for Sri Lanka After Cyclone Ditwah

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has approved USD 206 million in emergency financial assistance to Sri Lanka following the severe impact of Cyclone Ditwah. The support is provided under the Rapid Financing Instrument (RFI) to help the country meet urgent balance-of-payments needs, humanitarian assistance, and reconstruction requirements caused by the natural disaster. The cyclone caused widespread flooding, landslides, infrastructure damage, agricultural losses, and displacement, putting additional pressure on Sri Lanka's already fragile economy.

### About IMF Emergency Instruments

Rapid Financing Instrument (RFI) provides quick financial support to IMF member countries facing urgent balance-of-payments needs due to shocks such as natural disasters.

RFI involves limited conditionality and focuses on immediate relief rather than long-term reforms.

### Extended Fund Facility (EFF) Context

Sri Lanka is under an IMF Extended Fund Facility (EFF) programme aimed at fiscal consolidation, debt sustainability, and structural reforms. IMF disaster assistance does not replace reform commitments under EFF but complements recovery efforts.

## India Excluded from US-Led 'Pax Silica' Critical Minerals and Technology Initiative

India has been excluded from the newly launched US-led 'Pax Silica' initiative, a strategic grouping aimed at securing global supply chains for critical minerals, silicon, semiconductors, artificial intelligence infrastructure and advanced manufacturing. The initiative brings together select countries with strong capabilities in high-technology production and mineral processing to reduce strategic dependence on concentrated supply sources, particularly China. Despite ongoing India-US trade and technology cooperation, India was not among the initial participants. Experts believe India's relatively limited critical mineral processing capacity and advanced semiconductor manufacturing ecosystem may have contributed to its exclusion. However, India could potentially be included at a later stage as it scales up domestic capabilities. The development highlights the growing importance of geoeconomics, supply-chain

security and technology alliances in global power politics.

### Additional Useful Key Facts

- Critical minerals are essential for clean energy, defence, electronics, semiconductors, EVs and AI technologies.
- China dominates global processing of rare earth elements and several critical minerals, prompting alternative alliances.
- The US and allies are creating "trusted supply chain blocs" to ensure technology and economic security.
- India has launched the National Critical Mineral Mission to boost exploration, processing and global partnerships.
- India is part of the Minerals Security Partnership (MSP) but remains outside some newer technology-centric blocs.
- Strengthening mineral refining and semiconductor fabrication is crucial for India's strategic autonomy.
- The issue is relevant to GS-II (International Relations) and GS-III (Economy, Science & Technology).

## US Approves \$686 Million F-16 Upgrade and Support Package for Pakistan

The United States has approved a \$686 million defence sale and upgrade package for Pakistan's F-16 fighter jet fleet. The US Defence Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) notified the US Congress, initiating a 30-day review period before final approval. The package includes advanced avionics, Link-16 tactical data links, secure communication devices, navigation systems, mission-planning software upgrades, training, spare parts, and long-term technical support. These upgrades are expected to extend the operational life of Pakistan's Block-52 and Mid-Life Upgrade F-16 jets up to 2040 and improve interoperability with US and allied forces.

## India Sends 700 Tonnes of Relief to Sri Lanka under Operation Sagar Bandhu

India has dispatched 700 tonnes of humanitarian relief material to Sri Lanka as part of Operation Sagar Bandhu, launched to support the country after Cyclone Ditwah caused severe flooding, landslides, and infrastructure destruction. With this shipment, India's total assistance to Sri Lanka under the operation has

reached over 1,000 tonnes. The relief consignment includes food supplies, tents, tarpaulins, medicines, hygiene kits, water-purification equipment, and other essential materials. India has also deployed NDRF teams, medical teams, engineering support units, and rescue personnel, along with Bailey bridge components, to help restore connectivity in disaster-affected districts. The assistance is part of India's commitment to act as a First Responder in the Indian Ocean Region and reflects its Neighbourhood First policy.

#### About Operation Sagar Bandhu

- Launched by India in November 2025 to assist Sri Lanka after Cyclone Ditwah.
- The operation includes relief, rescue, medical aid, evacuation, and infrastructure restoration.
- Conducted through coordinated efforts of the Indian Navy, Indian Air Force, NDRF, medical teams, and engineering units.

#### About Cyclone Ditwah

A severe tropical cyclone that caused:

- Widespread floods
- Landslides
- Destruction of roads and bridges
- Displacement of thousands
- Major affected areas include eastern and southern districts of Sri Lanka.

#### Why This Operation Is Important

- Strengthens India-Sri Lanka bilateral relationship.
- Enhances India's role as a regional humanitarian leader.
- Demonstrates India's ability to deliver multidimensional disaster response.
- Supports regional stability and cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

#### Relevant Government Schemes & Policies

- Neighbourhood First Policy: India's priority assistance to neighbouring countries.
- HADR (Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief): India's doctrine to respond to regional disasters.
- SAGAR Vision (Security and Growth for All in the Region): India's maritime cooperation framework.

#### IMF Approves USD 1.2 Billion for Pakistan as Economic Stabilisation Progresses

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has approved a USD 1.2 billion disbursement to Pakistan. This includes USD 1.0 billion under the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) and USD 0.2 billion under the

Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF). With this tranche, Pakistan's total IMF disbursement under the current programme rises to USD 3.3 billion. IMF noted that Pakistan has shown "strong programme implementation", helping stabilise its economy amid inflation, external financing gaps and flood-related economic damage.

#### Reforms supported by the IMF focus on:

- rebuilding foreign exchange reserves
- increasing tax revenue (broadening tax base)
- reforming State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs)
- improving energy-sector financial viability
- enhancing competitiveness
- ensuring climate-risk disclosure and adaptation measures (under RSF)

#### Why This Funding Matters

- Pakistan has faced severe macroeconomic stress due to high external debt, currency depreciation, energy price shocks and climate-related disasters.
- IMF funds will support economic stabilisation, flood recovery, and structural reforms.
- Pakistan achieved a primary fiscal surplus of 1.3% of GDP in FY25, meeting IMF expectations.

Foreign exchange reserves reportedly improved to USD 14.5 billion, compared to USD 9.4 billion a year earlier.

#### IMF Conditions / Expectations

- Continued tight monetary policy to control inflation.
- Fiscal consolidation to reduce deficits.
- Exchange rate flexibility and better foreign-exchange market development.
- Stronger financial-sector oversight.

#### Deep reforms in:

- Energy distribution and pricing
- Loss-making SOEs
- Business climate and investment environment
- Climate-resilient infrastructure planning

#### About the IMF Programme

- Pakistan is under a 37-month EFF programme supporting long-term structural reforms.
- RSF focuses on climate adaptation, green policies, and disaster resilience.
- Pakistan has historically relied heavily on IMF packages due to persistent balance-of-payments crises, making this assistance part of a recurring pattern.

#### India-Nepal Cultural Festival Begins in Lumbini

The 3rd India-Nepal Cultural Festival began in Lumbini, Nepal, jointly organised by:

- Embassy of India (Kathmandu)
- Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR)
- Lumbini Buddhist University

The festival highlights the shared Buddhist heritage between India and Nepal, reinforcing people-to-people connect and cultural diplomacy. Lumbini—the birthplace of Gautama Buddha—is a key symbol of the civilisational bond between both nations.

#### 1. Cultural Festival Significance

- This is the 3rd edition of the India-Nepal Cultural Festival.
- Venue: Lumbini, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- Purpose: Promote shared Buddhist heritage, academic exchange, and cultural ties.

#### 2. Key Organisers

- Embassy of India in Kathmandu
- ICCR (Indian Council for Cultural Relations) – under the Ministry of External Affairs
- Lumbini Buddhist University, Nepal

#### 3. Symposium Highlights

A special symposium focuses on:

- Buddhist values: Metta (loving-kindness), Shanti (peace), Karuna (compassion), Dharma (righteousness)
- Academic and cultural exchange
- Strengthening India-Nepal friendship through Buddhist diplomacy

#### 4. Broader Cultural Context

- India's Buddhist circuit includes:
- Bodh Gaya (Enlightenment)
- Sarnath (First Sermon)
- Kushinagar (Mahaparinirvana)
- Lumbini (Nepal) complements this as the birthplace of Buddha, reinforcing cross-border Buddhist tourism.

#### Major Buddhist sites outside India:

- Lumbini (Nepal)
- Anuradhapura (Sri Lanka)
- Bamiyan (Afghanistan)

#### ICCR – Static Facts

- Established: 1950
- Headquarters: New Delhi
- Works under: Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)
- Purpose: Cultural diplomacy, scholarships, cultural exchanges, festivals abroad.
- Lumbini Buddhist University
- Established: 2004
- Focus: Buddhist studies, monastic education, heritage research.

#### Trump slaps Mexico with 5 percent tariff over violations of water treaty

The US will impose a 5% tariff on Mexican goods after accusing Mexico of violating the long-standing 1944 United States-Mexico Water Treaty, which governs shared water resources from the Rio Grande, Colorado and Tijuana rivers. Trump claims Mexico owes over 800,000 acre-feet of water to the US for failing to meet its obligations over the past five years. He has demanded that Mexico immediately release at least 200,000 acre-feet by December 31, warning that tariffs will begin without delay if the demand is not met.

#### Key Details & Significance

Issue	Details
Treaty in question	1944 Water Treaty regulating US-Mexico water sharing through the Rio Grande, Colorado, and Tijuana rivers
Alleged shortfall	Mexico reportedly failed to deliver required water over the last five years; US claims a deficit of about 800,000 acre-feet
U.S. demand	Immediate delivery of 200,000 acre-feet by December 31, with the remaining water expected soon after
Tariff action	5% tariff imposed on Mexican imports, effective immediately unless water is delivered
Impact cited by U.S.	Water shortage has seriously harmed Texas crops and livestock, according to Donald Trump

#### Why It Matters

- The move risks escalation of a bilateral water-sharing conflict into a trade dispute, affecting Mexico's exports to the US.
- It adds pressure on Mexico to meet its treaty obligations despite drought and water scarcity concerns, raising tensions over climate-driven resource shortages.
- The action sets a precedent of using trade tools to force compliance on environmental and resource-sharing agreements, with implications for other transboundary disputes.

#### US drops South Africa from 2026 G20, invites Poland to join

The United States, which assumed the G20 presidency on December 1, has announced that South Africa will

not be invited to the 2026 G20 Leaders' Summit in Miami. Washington accused the ANC-led government of sabotage, hostility toward the US, and promoting agendas that undermine the forum's economic focus.

#### US Priorities for the 2026 Presidency

Secretary of State Marco Rubio outlined Washington's vision for the 2026 cycle, emphasizing a return to core economic themes:

- Economic growth as the central focus
- Innovation, entrepreneurship, perseverance
- Removing regulatory barriers
- Securing affordable and resilient energy supply chains
- Advancing new technologies
- These themes align with America's 250th anniversary year, which the US plans to highlight during its G20 leadership.

#### Schedule of G20 Events

- First Sherpa and Finance Track Meetings: December 15–16, 2026, in Washington
- Leaders' Summit: December 2026 in Miami

#### Poland to Be Invited

Rubio said the US will invite "friends, neighbors, and partners," specifically naming Poland, now considered among the world's 20 largest economies. He praised Poland's economic reforms and future-oriented growth trajectory.

#### Washington's Critique of South Africa

Rubio issued a detailed criticism of South Africa's ANC-led government, accusing it of:

- Abandoning reconciliation post-Mandela
- Adopting redistributionist policies discouraging investment
- Promoting racial quotas that hinder private sector performance
- Allowing corruption to weaken the state
- Losing its position among major industrialized economies
- He alleged targeting of minorities and the US, tolerance for violence against Afrikaners, and alignment with adversarial nations such as Iran and groups like Hamas.

#### Accusations Regarding South Africa's 2023 G20 Presidency

Rubio claimed South Africa:

- Damaged the G20's reputation
- Prioritized "radical agendas" on climate, diversity, and aid
- Ignored objections from the US and other countries
- Blocked Washington's input
- "Doxed" US officials engaged in negotiations

- As a result, he said the US "will not extend an invitation to the South African government," though it supports the people of South Africa.

#### Historical and Institutional Context

- The G20, created in 1999 and elevated to leaders' level in 2008, combines advanced and major emerging economies that shape global growth.
- The US last hosted the G20 in 2009 in Pittsburgh during the financial crisis response.

#### What is G20?

G20 (Group of Twenty) is an international forum of major advanced and emerging economies that together represent:

- Around 85% of global GDP
- Nearly 75% of global trade
- About two-thirds of the world's population

#### Canada concludes negotiations to join EU's Security Action for Europe

#### Agreement & Announcement

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney announced the successful conclusion of negotiations for Canada's participation in the EU's Security Action for Europe (SAFE). Canada and the European Union plan to swiftly ratify the bilateral agreement, aiming to officially launch Canada's participation.

#### Significance for Canada

- Canada will be the only non-European country with preferential access to the SAFE framework.
- Participation provides the Canadian defense industry with expanded access to the European market.
- Attracts reliable suppliers for the Canadian Armed Forces and encourages private investment in Canada.

#### About SAFE

Approved by the EU Council in May, SAFE provides €150 billion in financial support for member states. The fund allows procurement of security and defence equipment through long-term loans with preferential interest rates, strengthening Europe's defense capabilities.

#### Canada

- Capital: Ottawa
- Monarch: Charles III
- Currency: Canadian dollar (\$) (CAD)
- Governor General: Mary Simon
- Prime Minister: Mark Carney

## India invited for first time to chair International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance

### Historic Invitation for India

India has been invited for the first time to chair the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA).

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar will assume the Chairship in Stockholm, Sweden.

### Significance for India

CEC Gyanesh Kumar stated that India's track record of conducting free, fair and transparent elections is internationally recognised.

He termed the Chairship a moment of pride for citizens and election officials.

### About International IDEA

- Established: 1995
- Type: Inter-governmental organisation
- Membership: 37 countries
- Observers: United States and Japan
- UN Status: Observer at UN General Assembly since 2003

### India's Role in IDEA

- India is a founding member.
- Actively contributes to governance processes, electoral research, capacity building and training initiatives.

## India Re-elected to ICAO Council with Strong Mandate

India has been re-elected to the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Council for the 2025-2028 term with one of the highest mandates, reflecting strong international support and confidence in India's role in global civil aviation governance. The election took place during the 42nd ICAO Assembly Session in Montreal, Canada, and India secured more votes compared to the previous election, underlining its growing influence in civil aviation matters.

### What is ICAO and Its Council?

- International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) is a specialized UN agency, established in 1944 under the Chicago Convention to promote safe, secure, and sustainable international civil aviation.
- ICAO develops Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) to enhance aviation safety, security, and environmental protection.
- The ICAO Council is the permanent executive body responsible for adopting SARPs, formulating

international aviation policies, and guiding global civil aviation cooperation.

- The Council consists of 36 member states elected by the ICAO Assembly for a three-year term.

### India's Re-election Details

- India was re-elected under Part II of the ICAO Council, which includes states making the largest contribution to international civil air navigation.
- The election was held in September 2025 during the ICAO Assembly in Montreal.
- India secured more votes than in the 2022 election, showing stronger global confidence in its aviation leadership.
- India has been a founding member of ICAO since 1944 and has maintained an uninterrupted presence on the Council.

### Chicago Convention

- Formally known as the Convention on International Civil Aviation, signed in 1944 by 52 countries to promote safe and orderly international air transport.
- Established ICAO and set the framework for global civil aviation agreements.

### Role of ICAO Standards

- ICAO's SARPs harmonize aviation safety, security, and environmental protocols across member states.
- SARPs cover areas like airworthiness, flight operations, air traffic services, aerodromes, and environmental protection.

### India's Civil Aviation Context

- India is one of the largest and fastest-growing domestic aviation markets globally.
- Government initiatives like UDAN (Regional Connectivity Scheme) enhance connectivity to smaller cities and boost economic growth.
- India is promoting green aviation practices in line with ICAO frameworks.

"Don't let yesterday take up too much of today."

Will Rogers



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## Banking & Economy

### RBI imposes ₹61. 95 lakh penalty on Kotak Mahindra Bank for regulatory non-compliance

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has imposed a monetary penalty of ₹61. 95 lakh on Kotak Mahindra Bank for failing to comply with certain regulatory rules and RBI directions on banking services, business correspondent activities and credit information reporting.

#### Why it matters:

The penalty highlights the RBI's continued focus on ensuring strict regulatory compliance in the banking sector and reinforces standards for customer account practices, the role of business correspondents and accurate credit data reporting.

#### Key details:

- The penalty is based on findings from a statutory inspection (ISE 2024) reviewing the bank's operations up to March 31, 2024.
- RBI found the bank had opened multiple Basic Savings Bank Deposit (BSBD) accounts for customers already holding one, contrary to RBI guidelines.
- Kotak Mahindra Bank also entered into arrangements with business correspondents for activities beyond the permitted scope.
- The bank reported inaccurate information to Credit Information Companies (CICs), violating CIC Rules.

#### Regulatory context:

The RBI's action is part of its supervisory role to ensure banks adhere to defined standards of access to banking services, correct use of BC networks and accurate credit reporting, and does not affect the validity of customer transactions.

#### Kotak Mahindra Bank

- Industry: Financial services
- Founded: 1985
- Founders: Uday Kotak
- Headquarters: Mumbai, Maharashtra, India
- Non-executive director: Uday Kotak
- MD & CEO: Ashok Vaswani

### HDFC Bank Receives RBI Approval for Up to 95% Stake in IndusInd Bank

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has granted one-year approval to HDFC Bank to acquire up to 95% stake in IndusInd Bank. This approval is part of HDFC Bank's strategic expansion plan to consolidate its presence in the Indian banking sector and strengthen its retail and corporate banking portfolio.

#### About HDFC Bank

- Founded: August 1994
- Headquarters: Mumbai, Maharashtra
- Chairman: Atanu Chakraborty
- CEO: Sashidhar Jagdishan
- One of India's largest private sector banks by assets, market capitalization, and customer base.
- Core services include retail banking, wholesale banking, treasury, and digital banking solutions.

#### About IndusInd Bank

- Founded: 1994
- Headquarters: Mumbai, Maharashtra
- Managing Director & CEO: Rajiv Anand
- Provides retail, corporate, and commercial banking services.
- Known for innovative banking solutions, digital products, and diverse customer base.

#### RBI and Regulatory Approval

- RBI approval is mandatory for any acquisition of a significant stake (usually >10%) in banks.
- The approval ensures financial stability, governance standards, and regulatory compliance.
- RBI evaluates the acquirer's financial soundness, managerial competence, and risk management systems before granting approval.

#### Private Banking Sector Consolidation in India

- Consolidation allows banks to increase scale, improve risk management, reduce operational costs, and enhance competitiveness.
- Major recent mergers include HDFC Ltd and HDFC Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank expansions, and ICICI Bank growth strategies.
- Encourages stronger banks capable of supporting large-scale credit and digital banking initiatives.

### India Signs Loans Worth Over \$2. 2 Billion with Asian Development Bank

The Government of India and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) have signed loan agreements totaling over USD 2. 2 billion to fund five major development

projects in India. The projects span skills development, renewable energy, healthcare, metro rail infrastructure, and sustainable livelihoods.

#### Key Projects Covered:

- Pradhan Mantri Skilling and Employability Transformation Programme: Modernisation of Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) and skill development institutes.
- Affordable Rooftop Solar Systems Programme: Promotes clean energy adoption across India.
- Assam State Tertiary Health Care Augmentation Project: Strengthens healthcare infrastructure and services in Assam.
- Chennai Metro Rail Expansion (Tranche 2): Supports the growth of metro rail networks.
- Ecotourism and Sustainable Agri-based Livelihood Development in Meghalaya: Promotes sustainable livelihoods and tourism.

#### About the Asian Development Bank (ADB)

- Established in 1966, ADB is a regional development bank promoting economic and social development in Asia and the Pacific.
- It has 68 member countries and provides sovereign loans, non-sovereign loans, technical assistance, and grants.
- India is one of the largest borrowers of ADB funding for infrastructure, energy, healthcare, and education.

#### SEBI to Ban Use of Live Market Data for Investor Education

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) will soon amend its regulations to prohibit the use of live/current market data during investor education activities. Only past/historical market data will be permitted. This announcement was made by SEBI Chairman Tuhin Kanta Pandey at an event held at the National Stock Exchange (NSE), Mumbai.

#### Key Points

##### 1. Purpose of the New Rule

- To prevent misuse of live market data in investor education workshops, webinars, or training sessions.
- To ensure such platforms are not used for real-time trading tips, stock recommendations, or market manipulation.

##### 2. Clarification by SEBI Chief

- SEBI rules already prohibit giving stock tips or investment advice without registration.

- Misunderstanding exists due to perceived inconsistencies in older SEBI circulars.
- SEBI will now issue a clear, unified circular to remove ambiguity.

#### 3. Context of Recent Enforcement

Action was recently taken against financial influencer (Finfluencer) Avdhoot Sathe.

#### SEBI imposed:

- ₹546 crore in disgorgement and penalties
- For engaging in unregistered investment advisory and misleading activities.

#### 4. Regulatory Objective

Protect retail investors from:

- Mis-selling
- Stock manipulation
- Unregistered advisory services
- Strengthen market integrity and investor protection.

#### About SEBI

- Established: 1992 (SEBI Act, 1992).
- Headquarters: Mumbai.
- Objective: Regulate securities markets + protect investor interests.
- SEBI is a statutory body.

#### Fino becomes first payments bank to get RBI's nod to convert into SFB

Fino Payments Bank becomes the first payments bank in India to receive RBI's in-principle approval to convert into a Small Finance Bank (SFB).

#### What the Approval Means

Once converted into an SFB, Fino will be allowed to accept larger deposits, provide loans and other credit facilities to customers — services it could not offer as a payments bank. The approval expands Fino's permissible service scope — enabling it to evolve from just payments and remittance services to full banking operations.

#### Regulatory Background & Eligibility

Under RBI's "on-tap" licensing guidelines for private sector SFBs, existing payments banks controlled by Indian residents and with at least five years of operations are eligible to apply for conversion.

Fino began operations as a payments bank in 2017; meeting the five-year criterion made it eligible.

#### Next Steps & Timeline

The "in-principle" approval gives Fino time to meet RBI's conditions for final licensing and conversion.

Fino may begin its lending business within one year of getting the final license, subject to regulatory compliance and readiness preparations.

#### Significance of the Transition

- The conversion allows Fino to broaden its customer base — especially individuals and small businesses seeking banking and credit services.
- This step is viewed as a major milestone in India's banking sector — representing a shift for payments banks toward more inclusive banking services and credit access.

#### Fino Payments Bank

- Headquarters: Mumbai, Maharashtra
- Tagline: "Qadar Aapki, Kadam Hamare"
- MD & CEO: Rishi Gupta
- Established: 11 April 2017

#### RBI cuts repo rate by 25 basis points to 5. 25 per cent to spur growth

RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra announced a 25 bps repo rate cut, bringing the rate down from 5. 5% to 5. 25%. The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) decided unanimously on the reduction.

#### Liquidity Measures

RBI to inject liquidity by purchasing ₹1 lakh crore worth of government securities through Open Market Operations (OMOs). A \$5 billion dollar-rupee swap arrangement will also be activated to support forex liquidity.

#### Macroeconomic Conditions Enabling the Cut

- India recorded 8. 2% GDP growth in Q2 of the current financial year.
- Inflation fell sharply to 1. 7%, creating a rare "Goldilocks period" — strong growth + low inflation.
- These conditions gave the RBI "headroom" to ease rates without risking price instability.
- Note: A Goldilocks situation means the economy is neither overheating nor slowing down excessively. Low inflation + strong growth encourages monetary easing.

#### Revised Forecasts

RBI raised its full-year GDP growth projection to 7. 3%, up from 6. 8%.

#### Policy Stance

- RBI continues with a neutral stance.
- A neutral stance neither tightens nor loosens liquidity significantly; it aims for balance between growth support and inflation control.

- RBI maintained this stance as the impact of earlier rate cuts and global trade changes is still unfolding.

#### Forex Reserves Position

- India's foreign exchange reserves reached \$686 billion, offering 11 months of import cover.
- This strengthens the country's external stability.

#### Risks Flagged

Governor Malhotra warned that global geopolitical tensions and trade uncertainties remain downside risks to India's growth outlook.

#### Impact on Borrowers and Economy

Lower repo rate and additional liquidity typically lead to lower lending rates. Cheaper loans encourage consumer spending and business investment, boosting economic activity. Effectiveness depends on how quickly commercial banks pass on the rate cuts.

#### Policy Rates at a glance

- Policy Repo Rate: 5. 25%
- Standing Deposit Facility Rate: 5. 00%
- Marginal Standing Facility Rate: 5. 50%
- Bank Rate: 5. 50%
- Fixed Reverse Repo Rate: 3. 35%
- CRR: 3. 00%
- SLR: 18. 00%

#### BHIM Introduces 'UPI Circle – Full Delegation' Feature

The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), through NPCI BHIM Services Ltd (NBSL), has launched a new UPI feature called 'UPI Circle – Full Delegation' on the BHIM App. The feature allows a primary bank account holder to authorize a trusted secondary user (family member/staff/dependent) to make limited UPI payments directly from the primary account. This aims to improve digital payment accessibility for senior citizens, dependents, and digitally inexperienced users.

#### Delegation System

- Primary user authorizes a secondary user to make UPI payments directly from their bank account.
- No need for the secondary user to have a bank-linked UPI ID.
- Monthly spending limit: Up to ₹15,000.
- Validity period: 1 month to 5 years.
- Primary user can track all transactions for transparency.

#### About NPCI

- Full form: National Payments Corporation of India.
- Established: 2008.

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## MOU's Signed

**India's OPTEL Limited Signs Agreement with Safran to Manufacture Combat-Proven Systems in India**

India's OPTEL Limited, a defence public sector enterprise, has signed a strategic agreement with Safran, a leading global aerospace and defence company, to manufacture two combat-proven airborne systems in India. This collaboration supports the Government of India's goals of defence self-reliance (Atmanirbhar Bharat) and indigenisation of critical defence technologies.

**About OPTEL Limited**

- OPTEL Limited is a Government of India enterprise under the Ministry of Defence, specialising in electronics, optronics and avionics systems for defence applications.
- The company develops and manufactures products such as flight control systems, navigation equipment, targeting systems and sensor suites.
- OPTEL plays a key role in indigenisation of defence technologies, aligning with national priorities.

**About Safran**

- Safran is a major French aerospace, defence and security company, known for its high-technology products in aircraft engines, avionics, sensors and defence systems.
- Safran's systems are widely used globally in military aircraft, helicopters and drones.
- Collaboration with Safran brings global technology expertise to India's defence industry.

**India's Defence Industry Landscape**

- Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSUs): Entities like HAL, BEL, BDL, OPTEL, BEML play crucial roles in India's defence production.
- Defence Production Corridor: The government has promoted defence industrial corridors in Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu to boost private sector participation.
- Strategic Partnerships: India is increasingly engaging in joint ventures and technology collaborations with global defence companies to enhance capability and indigenisation.

**India and New Zealand Conclude Free Trade Agreement**

India and New Zealand have concluded a landmark Free Trade Agreement (FTA) to deepen bilateral trade, promote investment, and aim to double trade over the next five years.

**Key Facts**

- Aims: Increase trade, expand market access, promote investment, and strengthen economic cooperation
- Trade Target: Double bilateral trade within five years
- Investment Commitment: New Zealand to invest USD 20 billion in India over 15 years under the FTA
- Tariff Changes: Tariffs on about 95% of New Zealand exports to India to be reduced or eliminated
- Implementation: Deal to be signed and implemented after legal and parliamentary processes in both countries
- Historical Context: Negotiations began earlier in 2025 and concluded in record time, reflecting strong political will

**Additional Facts:**

- FTA Definition: A Free Trade Agreement reduces or eliminates customs duties, quotas, and other trade barriers to promote freer movement of goods and services.
- Strategic Importance: Supports India's strategy to diversify trade partners and integrate into global supply chains.

**Donald Trump signs defence law backing deeper India-US ties, Quad****What happened:**

US President Donald Trump has signed the National Defence Authorisation Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2026 into law, a key annual defence policy bill that emphasises strengthened engagement with India, including through the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad).

**Key features:**

The law underlines expanded cooperation with India and other Quad members to promote a free and open Indo-Pacific region.

It calls for broader defence engagement, including military exercises, defence trade, humanitarian

assistance and maritime security cooperation. The Act provides for a joint consultative mechanism between the US and India to assess nuclear liability rules and advance bilateral strategic cooperation.

#### Why it matters:

The legislation institutionalises deeper strategic and defence ties between the US and India, reinforcing partnerships not only in bilateral military cooperation but also within the Quad framework alongside Japan and Australia to address regional security challenges, particularly China's growing influence in the Indo-Pacific.

#### Strategic significance:

By codifying expanded engagement with India into US law, the NDAA signals a legislative commitment to strengthening defence alliances and partnerships in the Indo-Pacific, aligning long-term strategic interests of both countries amid evolving global security dynamics.

### India Sign Three MoUs During Prime Minister's Visit to Addis Ababa

During Prime Minister Narendra Modi's official visit to Addis Ababa, India and Ethiopia signed three Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) to strengthen bilateral cooperation in key strategic and developmental areas. The agreements were signed in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali, reflecting the growing partnership between the two countries.

#### Key MoUs Signed

Cooperation in United Nations Peacekeeping Training: Enhances joint training, capacity building and exchange of best practices for UN peacekeeping missions.

#### Mutual Administrative Assistance in Customs Matters:

Facilitates cooperation, information sharing and support to prevent smuggling and improve trade facilitation.

### India and Liberia Sign MoU on Pharmacopoeia to Enhance Shared Quality Standards

India and Liberia have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) aimed at establishing cooperation in pharmacopoeia, with the objective of promoting shared quality standards, harmonising drug regulations, and strengthening mutual collaboration in the pharmaceutical sector. The MoU was signed in the

presence of the Ambassador of India to Liberia, Manoj Bihari Verma, and Liberia's Health Minister, Dr. Louise M. Kpoto. According to India's Health Ministry, this agreement will help improve access to safe, effective, and affordable medicines in both countries and facilitate deeper regulatory coordination. The partnership is expected to promote standardisation of pharmaceuticals, enhance drug quality control, and boost pharma trade under globally accepted norms.

#### About Pharmacopoeia

A pharmacopoeia is an official publication containing drug quality standards, specifications, and testing methods.

#### India's official pharmacopoeia is the Indian Pharmacopoeia (IP), published by:

Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission (IPC), Ghaziabad.

- Pharmacopoeias help ensure safety, efficacy, and quality of medicines.
- India's Pharmaceutical Strength
- India is known as the "Pharmacy of the World."
- Majority of the world's generic medicines are supplied by India.

#### Major agencies:

- CDSCO – Central Drugs Standard Control Organization
- DCGI – Drugs Controller General of India

#### About Liberia

- Capital: Monrovia
- Currency: Liberian Dollar
- President: Joseph Boakai
- Region: West Africa

### India-Australia Strengthen Partnership in Skills & Mobility

India and Australia have renewed their commitment to enhance cooperation in skills development, workforce mobility, and emerging sectors during the 3rd Australia-India Education and Skills Council (AIESC) Meeting held in New Delhi.

The meeting was co-chaired by:

- Jayant Chaudhary, Minister for Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (India)
- Andrew Giles, Minister for Skills & Training (Australia)

#### I. Fast-Tracking Mutual Recognition of Qualifications (MRQs)

- Both countries agreed to accelerate the Mutual Recognition of Qualifications, enabling:
- Indian skilled workers' qualifications to be accepted in Australia

- Australian qualifications to be recognized in India
- This improves international employability of Indian professionals.

## 2. Joint Bridge Courses for Skilled Mobility

- India & Australia will co-design bridge courses.
- Aim: Support smooth mobility of professionals between the two countries, ensuring skill-matching and industry standards.

## 3. Collaboration Linked to Major Sporting Events

India's bid for the 2030 Commonwealth Games  
Australia's preparations for the 2032 Brisbane Olympics

→ These provide major opportunities in:

- Event management
- Hospitality & tourism
- Infrastructure & logistics
- Sports technology and training

## 4. Sports & Physical Wellness as Emerging Sector

Both nations identified sports, fitness, and physical wellness as high-growth sectors with significant employment potential.

Collaboration expected in:

- Sports coaching
- Sports science
- High-performance training
- Sports management

## Global Recognition Efforts

India is working with multiple countries (UK, Australia, UAE, Germany) on:

- Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs)
- Increasing student and worker mobility

## India–Russia Deepen Strategic Partnership Across Labour, Energy, Trade, Maritime and Institutional Cooperation

### Overview:

India and Russia have signed a wide-ranging set of agreements and MoUs covering labour mobility, visa facilitation, energy, health, maritime cooperation, industry, customs, postal services, and institutional business collaboration, marking a significant expansion of bilateral engagement.

### Labour Mobility & Migration

Labour Mobility and Migration Framework Agreement signed, enabling temporary legal employment of citizens in each other's territories. Separate pact to combat irregular migration, strengthening safe and regulated labour movement.

Provides legal protections and pathways for skilled and semi-skilled workers.

### Visa Facilitation

Introduction of 30-day e-Tourist Visas, issued free of cost (gratis) for citizens of both countries. Aimed at boosting tourism and people-to-people contacts.

### Energy Cooperation

Agreements to deepen collaboration in fuel and oil supply and broader energy-sector cooperation. Supports India's energy security and provides stable long-term markets for Russia.

### Health Sector Cooperation

Pact signed to enhance bilateral cooperation in healthcare and medical fields, paving the way for future joint initiatives.

### Maritime & Arctic Cooperation

- MoU between India's Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways and Russia's Ministry of Transport for training specialists for polar ship operations.
- Another MoU with Russia's Maritime Board to improve maritime logistics, operations and connectivity.

### Industrial & Scientific Cooperation

Indian firms signed an agreement with Russia's URALCHEM to establish a urea fertiliser plant in Russia.

### Additional MoUs in:

- Food safety (including FSSAI)
- Medical sciences
- Consumer protection
- Ship operations and maritime training

### Trade, Customs & Logistics

- Protocol between India's CBIC and Russia's Federal Customs Service to exchange pre-arrival information for goods and vehicles, improving trade efficiency.
- Postal Services Agreement between India Post and Russian Post to strengthen cross-border postal connectivity and e-commerce support.

### Defence, Economy, Education & Culture

Part of a broader package of 16 agreements spanning:

- Defence
- Trade and economy
- Education and research
- Culture and media
- Institutional Business Cooperation

### ASSOCHAM (India) and Roscongress Foundation (Russia) signed an MoU to:

- Promote joint ventures and innovation
- Facilitate investments and technology exchange
- Enhance dialogue among businesses, experts and policymakers

- Support cooperation via forums, exhibitions and business delegations.

#### Strategic Significance

- Reflects a diversification of India-Russia ties beyond defence and energy into labour, health, logistics and institutional collaboration.
- Labour mobility can boost employment opportunities and remittances.
- Energy and industrial pacts reinforce long-term economic and strategic trust amid evolving global geopolitics.

#### India Signs ₹7,900 Crore Deal with US for MH-60R Navy Helicopter Support

India's Defence Ministry has signed Letters of Offer and Acceptance (LOAs) with the United States to procure long-term sustainment support for the Indian Navy's MH-60R multi-role helicopters.

#### Deal Value and Framework

- The agreement is valued at over ₹7,900 crore.
- It was finalised in New Delhi under the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) programme.

#### MH-60R multi-role helicopters

##### General Overview

- Name: MH-60R Seahawk
- Type: Multi-role naval helicopter
- Manufacturer: Sikorsky Aircraft (Lockheed Martin)
- Role: Anti-submarine warfare (ASW), anti-surface warfare (ASuW), search and rescue (SAR), surveillance, logistics support

##### Weapons:

- Torpedoes (MK 46/54)
- Hellfire missiles (air-to-surface)
- Machine guns (door-mounted)

##### Roles and Capabilities

- Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW): Can detect, track, and engage submarines using sonar and torpedoes.
- Anti-Surface Warfare (ASuW): Capable of targeting ships with Hellfire missiles.
- Search and Rescue (SAR): Equipped for medical evacuation and emergency rescues.
- Maritime Patrol & Surveillance: Monitors sea lanes, tracks vessels, and provides reconnaissance.
- Logistics Support: Transport of supplies, personnel, and equipment between ships and shore.

#### India-UAE Agree to Enhance Visa & Legal Cooperation

- India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) agreed to strengthen cooperation in consular services, visa facilitation, and legal matters.
- The discussions took place during the 6th Meeting of the India-UAE Joint Committee on Consular Affairs in Abu Dhabi.
- The Indian delegation was led by Arun Kumar Chatterjee, Secretary (Consular, Passport, Visa & Overseas Indian Affairs), Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).
- Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to ensuring the safety, dignity, welfare, and rights of their citizens residing in each other's countries.
- India acknowledged the UAE's strong support for the 3.5+ million Indian diaspora, the largest expatriate community in the UAE.

#### About India-UAE Relations

- UAE is India's third-largest trading partner after the U.S. and China.
- India and UAE are partners in the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), signed in 2022, aimed at increasing bilateral trade to USD 100 billion.
- UAE is a member of the I2U2 Group (India, Israel, USA, UAE) focused on food security, energy, and technology.
- UAE joined the BRICS group in 2024.

#### Gavi & UNICEF Sign New Agreement to Expand Access to R21/Matrix-M Malaria Vaccine

Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, and UNICEF have jointly announced a new procurement agreement aimed at making the R21/Matrix-M malaria vaccine more affordable and accessible, especially for malaria-endemic countries. The initiative is expected to significantly strengthen global malaria prevention programmes.

#### About R21/Matrix-M & RTS,S/AS01 Vaccines

##### WHO Prequalification

WHO has prequalified two malaria vaccines:

- R21/Matrix-M – Developed by University of Oxford and Serum Institute of India (SII), using Novavax's Matrix-M adjuvant.
- RTS,S/AS01 – Developed by GSK, PATH, and partners.

**Efficacy (Phase 3 Trials)****Both vaccines:**

- Reduce malaria cases by over 50% in the first year.
- Offer ~75% protection when used seasonally in high-transmission areas.
- A fourth booster dose in second year prolongs protection.

**Role of Gavi & UNICEF****Gavi's Role**

- Supports procurement, logistics, and market shaping.
- Integrates malaria vaccines into national immunisation programmes.
- Over 40 million doses already supplied across 24 African countries, covering over 70% of global malaria burden.

**UNICEF's Role**

- World's largest vaccine buyer, delivering 3 billion+ doses annually.
- Engages with vaccine manufacturers to secure best pricing and ensure supply stability.

**Global Health Significance**

- Malaria kills nearly 500,000 children annually, mostly in Africa (WHO).
- Introduction of affordable malaria vaccines is a turning point in malaria elimination strategy.
- Supports progress toward UN Sustainable Development Goal 3: Good Health & Well-being.

**About R21 Malaria Vaccine**

- Manufactured at scale by Serum Institute of India, the world's largest vaccine producer.
- Achieves higher production capacity than earlier malaria vaccines, helping meet global demand.

<b>IMPORTANCE</b> To mark adoption of the declaration by UNGA for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others (Dated 2 December 1949).	<b>International Day for the Abolition of Slavery</b> INCEPTION: 2004 EDITION: 21 <sup>st</sup>
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**MOTTO**  
To highlight the importance of eradicating contemporary forms of slavery including trafficking in persons, sexual exploitation, child labour, forced marriage, etc.

**NOTE**  
According to the UN, an estimated 40.3 million people are in modern slavery, including 24.9 in forced labour and 15.4 million in forced marriage.

**ORGANISATION INVOLVED**  
ILO

**02**  
DECEMBER

<b>IMPORTANCE</b> To mark the proclamation by UNGA in 1992 to promote an understanding of disability issues and mobilize support for the dignity, rights and well-being of persons with disabilities.	<b>World Day of the Handicapped</b> INCEPTION: 1992
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**MOTTO**  
To increase awareness from the integration of persons with disabilities in every aspect of political, social, economic and cultural life.

**NOTE**  
It was originally called "International Day of Disabled Persons". Also known as the International Day of People with Disability (IDPWD).

**2025 THEME**  
Amplifying the leadership of persons with disabilities for an inclusive and sustainable future.

**03**  
DECEMBER



## Awards & Recognitions

### PM Modi Conferred with Order of Oman: Strengthening India–Oman Strategic Partnership

Prime Minister Narendra Modi was conferred with the 'Order of Oman', the highest civilian honour of Oman, by Sultan Haitham bin Tarik in recognition of his visionary leadership and outstanding contribution to strengthening India–Oman bilateral relations. The award was presented during the Prime Minister's official visit to Muscat, underscoring the deep-rooted friendship between the two nations. The visit assumed special significance as India and Oman are commemorating 70 years of establishment of diplomatic relations, reflecting a long-standing civilisational, cultural, and economic partnership. The Prime Minister dedicated the honour to the historic ties and people-to-people bonds between the two countries.

### India–Oman Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)

- A major outcome of the visit was the signing of the India–Oman Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), marking a milestone in bilateral economic cooperation.
- The agreement aims to enhance trade, investment, labour mobility, and supply chain integration.
- CEPA is Oman's second bilateral Free Trade Agreement (FTA) after a gap of nearly 20 years, highlighting India's strategic importance.
- It is expected to generate employment opportunities, improve market access, and promote predictable trade regulations.
- The agreement was signed by Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal and Oman's Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Qais Al Yousef, in the presence of both leaders.

#### Oman:

- Capital: Muscat
- Currency: Omani Rial
- Maritime Cooperation: Oman hosts Indian naval access at Duqm Port, enhancing India's maritime security outreach

### PM Narendra Modi Conferred Ethiopia's Highest Civilian Honour

Prime Minister Narendra Modi was conferred Ethiopia's highest civilian award, the "Great Honour Nishan of Ethiopia", during his first bilateral visit to Ethiopia. The honour was presented by Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali in Addis Ababa in recognition of PM Modi's contribution to strengthening India–Ethiopia bilateral relations and his global leadership.

#### India–Ethiopia Relations:

- India and Ethiopia share long-standing historical and civilisational ties.
- India is one of the largest sources of foreign investment in Ethiopia.
- Cooperation spans trade, agriculture, health, education, capacity building, and technology.
- India provides development assistance, Lines of Credit, and training programmes to Ethiopia.
- Addis Ababa is a major diplomatic hub in Africa.

#### Ethiopia:

- Capital: Addis Ababa
- President: Taye Atske Selassie
- Prime Minister: Abiy Ahmed
- Currency: Birr

### Anant Ambani Receives Global Humanitarian Award for Wildlife Conservation

Anant Ambani has been honoured with the Global Humanitarian Award for Animal Welfare by the Global Humane Society, becoming the youngest and the first Asian to receive this prestigious recognition. He received the award for his leadership in establishing Vantara, a large-scale wildlife rescue, rehabilitation and conservation initiative located in Jamnagar, Gujarat. Vantara has gained international attention for its scientific approach to animal welfare, ecosystem restoration, and endangered species care. The model integrates modern veterinary practices, habitat restoration techniques, and long-term rehabilitation frameworks, positioning India as a rising global leader in wildlife conservation. The award highlights the global relevance of India's conservation efforts and the increasing role of private-sector initiatives in supporting national biodiversity goals.

#### Additional Useful Key Facts

Global Humane Society is the international division of the American Humane Society, one of the world's

oldest animal-welfare bodies founded in 1877. Vantara spans approximately 3,500 acres and is one of the largest integrated wildlife rescue and conservation facilities globally. Vantara recently received the Global Humane Certified™ distinction for meeting international standards in animal care, habitat quality, veterinary practices, nutrition, enrichment, and welfare.

#### It functions on a dual conservation approach:

- Ex-situ care – rescue, treatment, rehabilitation, artificial habitats.
- In-situ conservation support – species protection, rewilding, ecosystem revival.
- Vantara's elephant welfare initiatives (through the Radhe Krishna Temple Elephant Welfare Trust) earlier received India's national Prani Mitra Award in the corporate category.
- The award marks a milestone for Indian conservation leadership, encouraging more scientific, large-scale biodiversity initiatives in line with global standards.

#### National Handicrafts Awards 2023 & 2024 Conferred by President Droupadi Murmu

President Droupadi Murmu conferred the National Handicrafts Awards 2023 & 2024 in New Delhi, recognising India's finest master craftspersons. The awards aim to promote, preserve, and rejuvenate India's traditional handicraft heritage while supporting artisans' livelihoods. The President emphasised that the handicraft sector is a key driver of rural employment, providing work to over 32 lakh people, with 68% being women, making the sector significant for women's empowerment. A total of 12 artisans received the Shilp Guru Awards and 36 artisans received the National Awards for the years 2023 and 2024. The government recently reduced GST on handicrafts from 18% to 5%, aiding affordability and boosting global competitiveness. The Ministry of Textiles has also set an export target of ₹1 lakh crore by 2031-32 for handicraft products.

#### Key Awardees

##### Shilp Guru Awards 2023

- Ajit Kumar Das (West Bengal) – Hand-painted textiles
- D. Sivamma (Andhra Pradesh) – Leather puppet craft

##### National Awards 2023

- Hirabai Jhareka Baghel (Chhattisgarh) – Metal craft
- Imtiyaz Ahmad (Uttar Pradesh) – Handmade carpet
- Roshan Chhipa (Rajasthan) – Artistic textiles

#### Shilp Guru Awards 2024

- Subhash Arora (Haryana) – Metal craft
- Mohammad Dilshad (Uttar Pradesh) – Wood carving

#### National Awards 2024

- T. Baskaran (Tamil Nadu) – Stone carving
- Rupban Chitrakar (West Bengal) – Painting
- Baldev Baghmare (Madhya Pradesh) – Tribal craft

Additionally, three master craftspersons from Manipur—Laishram Memicha, Yengkhom Ongbi Indira Devi, and A. Bimola Devi—are to be honoured by the Ministry of Textiles.

#### About the National Handicrafts Awards

- Instituted in 1965 by the Ministry of Textiles.
- Categories: Shilp Guru, National Awards, National Merit Awards.
- Objective: Preserve crafts, recognise master artisans, encourage next-gen craftsmanship.
- Organized by: Office of the Development Commissioner (Handicrafts).

#### Government Schemes for Handicrafts

- Ambedkar Hastshilp Vikas Yojana (AHVY) – Cluster-based development.
- PM Vishwakarma Scheme (2023) – Support for traditional artisans.
- Hastshilp Swayam Saksham Scheme – Skill upgradation.
- Mega Craft Villages under Tourism & Textiles collaboration.

#### Armand Duplantis, McLaughlin-Levrone named World Athletics' athletes of year

Armand Duplantis (Sweden) and Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone (USA) were honoured as the World Athletes of the Year at the 2025 World Athletics Awards.

#### Duplantis' Record-Breaking Season

- Broke the men's pole vault world record four times in 2025. Remained undefeated in all 16 competitions, winning both indoor and outdoor world titles.
- Became the first male pole vaulter in modern athletics to stay unbeaten in a single event for two straight years.
- Also named Men's Field Athlete of the Year.

#### McLaughlin-Levrone's Historic Achievement

- Won the women's 400m title in Tokyo with 47.78 seconds, breaking a 42-year-old World Championships record.
- Became the first athlete ever to win world titles in both the 400m flat and 400m hurdles.

- Awarded Women's Track Athlete of the Year.

#### Other Major Award Winners

##### Out-of-Stadium Athletes of the Year:

- Maria Perez (Spain) – Racewalking
- Sebastian Sawe (Kenya) – Long-distance running

##### Men's Track Athlete of the Year:

- Emmanuel Wanyonyi (Kenya) – 800m
- Women's Field Athlete of the Year:
- Nicola Olyslagers (Australia) – High jump

##### Rising Star Awards

- Edmund Serem (Kenya)
- Zhang Jiale (China)
- Both recognized for their world medal-winning performances.

### 56th IFFI Concludes in Goa; 'Skin of Youth' Wins Golden Peacock for Best Feature Film

The 56th International Film Festival of India (IFFI) ended with a grand closing ceremony at Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Indoor Stadium, Goa.

#### Tributes & Special Felicitations

- Tribute paid to Dharmendra for his legacy.
- Rajinikanth was honored for completing 50 years in Indian cinema.
- Ranveer Singh made a surprise, high-energy appearance.

#### Major Awards

- Golden & Silver Peacock Awards
- Golden Peacock (Best Feature Film): Skin of Youth (Dir: Ashleigh Mayfair)
- Silver Peacock (Best Director): Santosh Davakhar for Gondhal
- Special Jury Award: Akinola Davies Junior for My Father's Shadow

#### Acting Awards

- Best Actor (Male): Ubeimar Rios
- Best Actor (Female): Jara Sofija Ostoj for Little Trouble Girls

#### Debut Awards

- Silver Peacock for Best Debut Feature Film:
- My Daughter's Hair (Hesam Farahmand)
- Fränk (Tönis Pil)
- Best Debut Director – Indian Feature Film: Karan Singh Tyagi for Kesari 2

#### Special Recognitions

- ICFT-UNESCO Gandhi Medal: Safe House (Dir: Eirik Svensson)
- OTT Best Indian Panorama: Bandish Bandit 2

### President Droupadi Murmu Confers Rashtriya Vigyan Puraskar 2025

President Droupadi Murmu presented the Rashtriya Vigyan Puraskar 2025 to 24 eminent scientists and innovators at a ceremony in Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi. The awards recognise outstanding contributions to scientific research, technology, and innovation across multiple disciplines.

#### About the Rashtriya Vigyan Puraskar

- The Rashtriya Vigyan Puraskar (RVP) is a national science award instituted by the Government of India to honour excellence in science and technology.
- The awards aim to foster a culture of research, innovation, and scientific excellence in the country.
- It recognises contributions across diverse scientific fields and is a restructured framework replacing older standalone science awards.

#### Categories of Rashtriya Vigyan Puraskar 2025

##### Vigyan Ratna Puraskar:

- Highest honour for lifetime achievement in science and technology.
- In 2025, awarded posthumously to Prof. Jayant Vishnu Narlikar, renowned astrophysicist and science populariser.

##### Vigyan Shri Puraskar:

Recognises distinguished contributions in specific scientific disciplines such as agriculture, atomic energy, biological sciences, chemistry, engineering, environmental science, mathematics & computer science, space science, and technology.

##### Vigyan Yuva Puraskar:

Awarded to young scientists for exceptional research achievements across various scientific fields.

##### Vigyan Team Puraskar:

- Given to teams of scientists/innovators for collaborative contributions with significant impact.
- In 2025, awarded to the CSIR-Aroma Mission team, credited with advancing aromatic crop cultivation and related innovations.

#### Additional Useful Key Facts:

##### Prof. Jayant Vishnu Narlikar

- Eminent Indian astrophysicist known for his work in cosmology.
- Contributed to alternative theories of cosmology and science popularisation.

##### CSIR-Aroma Mission

- Focused on aromatic crop cultivation, especially lavender in Himalayan regions.

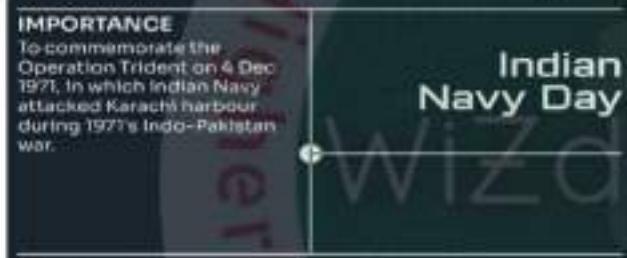
- Promotes agri-entrepreneurship and enhances rural livelihoods.
- Demonstrates how scientific research can drive socio-economic development.

#### Rashtriya Vigyan Puraskar 2025 – Awardees

- Vigyan Ratna (Highest honour for lifetime achievement)
- Prof. Jayant Vishnu Narlikar (Posthumously) – Physics

#### Vigyan Shri (Distinguished scientific contributions)

1. Dr. Gyanendra Pratap Singh – Agricultural Science
2. Dr. Yusuf Mohammad Seikh – Atomic Energy
3. Dr. K Thangaraj – Biological Sciences
4. Prof. Pradeep Thalappil – Chemistry
5. Prof. Aniruddha Bhalchandra Pandit – Engineering Sciences
6. Dr. S Venkata Mohan – Environmental Science
7. Prof. Mahan Mj – Mathematics & Computer Science
8. Shri Jayan N – Space Science & Technology



**MOTTO**  
To recognize the achievements and role of the Indian Navy to the country.

**INDIAN NAVY FACTS**

- President is the Commander-in-Chief of Indian Navy.
- Chhatrapati Shivaji Bhosle is considered as the "Father of the Indian Navy".
- Navy Day does not commemorate the day the Indian Navy was founded.
- Ezhimala Naval Academy in Kerala is the largest naval academy in Asia.
- INS Viraat was the navy's 1st aircraft as well as carrier and the oldest aircraft carrier in the world.



04  
DECEMBER

#### Vigyan Yuva – Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Category (Young scientists)

1. Prof. Amit Kumar Agarwal – Physics
2. Prof. Surhud Shrikant More – Physics
3. Dr. Jagdis Gupta Kapuganti – Agricultural Science
4. Dr. Satendra Kumar Mangrauthia – Agricultural Science
5. Dr. Deepa Agashe – Biological Sciences
6. Shri Debarka Sengupta – Biological Sciences
7. Dr. Dibyendu Das – Chemistry
8. Dr. Waliur Rahaman – Earth Science
9. Prof. Arkaprava Basu – Engineering Sciences
10. Prof. Sabyasachi Mukherjee – Mathematics & Computer Science
11. Prof. Shweta Prem Agrawal – Mathematics & Computer Science
12. Dr. Suresh Kumar – Medicine
13. Shri Ankur Garg – Space Science and Technology
14. Prof. Mohanasankar Sivaprakasam – Technology and Innovation

#### Vigyan Team Puraskar (Team award)

Team – Aroma Mission, CSIR – Agricultural Science



**MOTTO**  
To raise awareness of the importance of sustaining healthy ecosystems and human well-being.

**ORGANISATION INVOLVED**  
FAO & United Nations

**NOTE**  
The FAO unanimously endorsed World Soil Day in June 2013 and requested its official adoption. But in December 2013, UNQD responded by designating 5 December 2014 as the first official World Soil Day.

**2025 THEME**  
Healthy Soils for Healthy Cities



05  
DECEMBER

## Sports

**East Bengal FC Clinch SAFF Women's Club Championship Title**

East Bengal FC won the SAFF Women's Club Championship title after defeating their opponents 3–0 in the final, marking a significant achievement for Indian women's club football at the regional level.

**SAFF:**

SAFF stands for South Asian Football Federation, the regional body governing football in South Asia. SAFF tournaments aim to promote football development and competition among South Asian nations.

- Formation: 1997
- Headquarters: Dhaka, Bangladesh
- President: Kazi Salahuddin
- Vice President: Sundar Narshing Joshi
- General Secretary: Purushottam Kattel

**Pakistan Defeat India to Win U-19 Asia Cup Title**

Pakistan's Under-19 cricket team defeated India in the final to clinch the U-19 Asia Cup title, delivering a dominant performance in the championship match held in Dubai.

- Notable Performer: Sameer Minhas (Pakistan)

**Highlights**

- Sameer Minhas played a record-breaking innings of 172 runs.
- Indian team was bowled out for a low total while chasing.
- Pakistan secured its second U-19 Asia Cup title.

**Additional Facts :**

- The U-19 Asia Cup is organised by the Asian Cricket Council (ACC).
- The tournament serves as a talent pipeline for future international cricketers.
- Several senior international players began their careers through U-19 tournaments.
- India and Pakistan matches attract special attention due to historic sporting rivalry.
- Youth cricket tournaments play a crucial role in long-term national team development.

**National Shooting Championships: Indian Shooters Shine Across Events**

Indian shooters delivered strong performances at the 68th National Shooting Championships, reaffirming India's growing depth and competitiveness in shooting sports.

**Key Winners & Achievements**

- Anantjeet Singh Naruka & Darshna Rathore won Gold in the Senior Skeet Mixed Team event, underlining India's strength in shotgun disciplines.
- Manu Bhaker and Simranpreet Kaur Brar clinched Gold medals in their respective events, continuing their dominance on the national circuit.
- Raiza Dhillon secured Double Gold in shotgun shooting events, showcasing consistency and elite performance.

**National Rifle Association of India (NRAI)**

- Founded: 1951
- Headquarters: New Delhi
- President: Kalikesh Narayan Singh

**International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF)**

- Founded: 17 July 1907
- Headquarters: Munich, Germany
- President: Luciano Rossi
- India Wins First-Ever Bronze at 2025 FIH Junior Men's Hockey World Cup

**India won its first bronze medal at the 2025 FIH Junior Men's Hockey World Cup.**

India created history by winning their first-ever bronze medal at the 2025 FIH Junior Men's Hockey World Cup held in Chennai. In a thrilling match, India defeated Argentina 4–2, staging a remarkable comeback by scoring four goals within 11 minutes after trailing by two goals. Goal scorers for India included Ankit Pal, Manmeet Singh, Shardanand Tiwari, and Anmol Ekka, while Argentina initially led through goals by Nicolas Rodriguez and Santiago Fernandez. This marks a major milestone for India's junior hockey program and strengthens the country's standing in global age-group hockey competitions.

**About the FIH Junior Men's Hockey World Cup**

- Organized by International Hockey Federation (FIH).
- Age category: Under-21.
- India has earlier won gold medals in 2001 and 2016.
- The 2025 edition was hosted by India (Chennai).

- Previous edition winners (2021): Argentina.

#### About Indian Hockey

- India has 8 Olympic gold medals in men's hockey.
- Major national tournaments: Hockey India League, National Championships.
- Governing body: Hockey India.
- Current focus: Youth development, Khelo India program, grassroots training.

#### Sarwagya Singh Kushwaha Becomes World's Youngest Rated Chess Player

Sarwagya Singh Kushwaha, a 3-year-old boy from Madhya Pradesh, has become the youngest rated chess player in history, after receiving an official FIDE rating. He achieved this milestone by participating in multiple rated tournaments and securing the minimum performance required for a FIDE classical rating. This achievement places India once again in the global spotlight for producing extraordinary young chess talents. This recognition makes Sarwagya younger than the previous record holders and further strengthens India's reputation as a global chess powerhouse, following the rise of players such as R Praggnanandhaa, D Gukesh, and Nihal Sarin. His early success reflects increasing interest in chess in India after the COVID-era online chess boom, introduction of Chess Olympiad 2022 in Chennai, and government-supported initiatives like the "Khelo India" programme promoting mind sports.

#### About FIDE (International Chess Federation)

- Founded: 1924
- Headquarters: Lausanne, Switzerland
- India joined FIDE: 1947
- President: Arkady Dvorkovich

#### Arjun Erigaisi Wins Jerusalem Masters 2025, Defeats Viswanathan Anand in Final

Indian Grandmaster Arjun Erigaisi has won the Jerusalem Masters 2025 title, defeating former World Champion Viswanathan Anand in an all-Indian final. The championship concluded with a blitz tie-break, after both players drew their rapid games.

#### About Jerusalem Masters

- Annual elite invitational chess event
- Played in formats: Rapid + Blitz
- Hosted in Jerusalem to promote global chess culture
- Features top-ranked international players

#### Indian Women's Hockey Team chief coach Harendra Singh steps down

#### What Happened

Harendra Singh has stepped down from his role as head coach of the India women's hockey team, citing personal reasons. He expressed gratitude for the opportunity and pledged to continue supporting efforts to promote Indian hockey.

#### Context of Tenure

- Singh had taken charge of the women's team in April 2024.
- Under his guidance, the team won the Asian Champions Trophy in 2024 — a notable success.
- However, the 2024-25 season was disappointing: India finished last in the 2024-25 FIH Pro League and were relegated, with just 2 wins in 16 matches.

#### Sultan Azlan Shah Cup: Indian team settles for Silver medal

Belgium defeated India 1-0 in a tightly-contested final to win the Sultan Azlan Shah Cup 2025 in Malaysia. The match was decided by Thibault Stockbroekx's 34th-minute strike, earning Belgium their first-ever title in just their second appearance.

#### Sultan Azlan Shah Cup

- Sport: Field hockey
- Founded: 1983
- No. of teams: 6
- Most recent champion: Belgium (1st title) (2025)
- Most titles: Australia (10 titles)

#### Javokhir Sindarov Becomes Youngest-Ever FIDE World Cup Champion

Uzbek Grandmaster Javokhir Sindarov, aged 19, became the youngest-ever FIDE World Cup champion after defeating China's Wei Yi in the rapid tiebreaks of the 2025 FIDE World Cup held in Goa, India. After two draws in classical games, Sindarov showcased exceptional endgame skill in the tiebreaks, winning the final rapid game in 60 moves. Sindarov, who became a GM at just 12 years old, entered the event as the 16th seed and advanced through a turbulent knockout field, defeating compatriot Nodirbek Yakubboev in the semifinals — also via tiebreaks. Both Sindarov and Wei Yi have qualified for the 2026 Candidates Tournament, the final qualifying event for the World Chess Championship cycle.

## Science &amp; Technology

**US Approves Novo Nordisk's Oral Weight-Loss Pill**

The United States Food and Drug Administration (US FDA) has approved an oral weight-loss pill developed by Danish pharmaceutical company Novo Nordisk, marking a major breakthrough in obesity treatment. The pill contains semaglutide, a drug earlier available mainly in injectable form, and offers a tablet-based alternative for long-term weight management.

**Why This Approval Is Important**

- Improved accessibility: Oral tablets are easier to administer than injections, improving patient compliance
- Public health relevance: Obesity is a leading risk factor for non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and cardiovascular disorders
- Pharmaceutical innovation: Reflects progress in drug delivery systems and chronic disease management
- Global market impact: Strengthens Novo Nordisk's position in the rapidly expanding obesity-care market

**How the Drug Works**

- Semaglutide belongs to the GLP-1 receptor agonist class
- It suppresses appetite, increases feelings of fullness and slows digestion
- Originally developed for Type-2 diabetes management

**Obesity Definition:**

- Body Mass Index (BMI)  $\geq 30 \rightarrow$  Obesity
- BMI 25–29.9  $\rightarrow$  Overweight

**Regulatory Bodies:**

- US FDA: Approves drugs and medical products in the United States
- India's Drug Regulator: Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO)

**Indian Navy Receives Third Indigenous ASW Shallow Water Craft 'Anjadip'**

The Indian Navy has inducted 'Anjadip', the third Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft (ASW-SWC) in a series of eight vessels being built indigenously. The vessel has been constructed by Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE) Ltd, marking another milestone in India's efforts towards self-

reliance in defence manufacturing and strengthening coastal maritime security.

**Role and Features of ASW Shallow Water Craft**

- Designed for anti-submarine operations in shallow and coastal waters
- Equipped with advanced sonar systems, lightweight torpedoes and anti-submarine rockets
- Uses water-jet propulsion for high manoeuvrability
- Capable of low-intensity maritime operations, mine-laying and patrol missions
- Suitable for littoral warfare, where conventional large warships face limitations

**Strategic Importance**

- Enhances India's capability to detect and neutralise underwater threats near its coastline
- Strengthens security of ports, harbours and coastal infrastructure
- Contributes to India's maritime doctrine focused on the Indian Ocean Region
- Supports national initiatives such as Atmanirbhar Bharat and Make in India

**ISRO to Launch Communication Satellite BlueBird Block-2**

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) will launch the BlueBird Block-2 communication satellite into Low Earth Orbit using the LVM3 launch vehicle under a commercial agreement, aimed at providing direct satellite-to-smartphone broadband connectivity.

**Key Facts**

- Launching Agency: Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)
- Satellite Name: BlueBird Block-2
- Type of Satellite: Communication satellite
- Orbit: Low Earth Orbit (LEO)
- Launch Vehicle: Launch Vehicle Mark-III (LVM3)
- Launch Site: Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota
- Mission Nature: Commercial launch mission
- Commercial Partner: AST SpaceMobile (USA)
- Indian Commercial Arm: NewSpace India Limited (NSIL)

**Objective of the Mission**

- To enable direct satellite-to-mobile phone connectivity without specialised ground equipment.
- To support voice, data, and broadband services in remote and underserved regions.
- To strengthen India's position in the global commercial satellite launch market.

#### Significance of the Mission

- Demonstrates ISRO's capability in heavy-lift commercial launches
- Highlights growing international collaboration in space technology.
- Supports expansion of next-generation space-based cellular broadband networks.
- Contributes to bridging the digital divide worldwide.

#### Japan to Restart World's Largest Nuclear Plant, 15 Years After Fukushima Disaster

Japan is set to restart the world's largest nuclear power plant, the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa facility, nearly 15 years after the Fukushima disaster, to strengthen energy security and reduce dependence on fossil fuels.

#### Objectives of the Restart Decision

- Energy Security: Reduce Japan's reliance on imported fossil fuels
- Electricity Supply: Restarting one reactor can increase power supply to Tokyo region by about 2%
- Decarbonisation: Helps achieve climate goals by increasing clean energy share
- Economic Considerations: Stabilises electricity prices and lowers fuel import bills

#### Additional Facts

- Fukushima Disaster (2011): Triggered core meltdowns, mass evacuations, and shutdown of all reactors
- Nuclear Regulatory Framework: Japan's Nuclear Regulation Authority (NRA) now enforces stricter safety standards for reactor operations
- Clean Energy Target: Japan aims for nuclear power to contribute about 20% of its energy mix by 2040
- Public Opinion: Local communities remain concerned about safety and environmental risks
- Economic Impact: Nuclear restarts reduce reliance on costly imported fossil fuels, supporting energy affordability

#### US–Russia Joint Mission: Soyuz MS-28 Launch

A three-member US–Russian crew has successfully launched to the International Space Station (ISS) aboard the Soyuz MS-28 spacecraft.

- Launch Vehicle: Soyuz booster rocket
- Launch Site: Baikonur Cosmodrome, Kazakhstan

#### Crew Members:

- Chris Williams (NASA astronaut) – First spaceflight
- Sergei Mikayev (Roscosmos) – First spaceflight
- Sergei Kud-Sverchkov (Roscosmos) – Second spaceflight
- Mission Duration: ~8 months aboard the ISS

This mission highlights ongoing US–Russia cooperation in space exploration despite geopolitical tensions. The crew will support scientific research, maintenance tasks, and technology demonstrations on the ISS.

#### About Soyuz Spacecraft

- Operated by Roscosmos (Russia's space agency).
- Known for high reliability and used since 1960s.
- Can carry 3 astronauts.
- Launch site: Baikonur Cosmodrome, leased by Russia from Kazakhstan.

#### About the ISS

- A joint project of NASA (USA), Roscosmos (Russia), ESA (Europe), JAXA (Japan), and CSA (Canada).
- First module launched in 1998.
- Orbits Earth at about 400 km altitude.
- Completes ~16 orbits per day.

#### NASA–Roscosmos Cooperation

Despite tensions, the two agencies continue crew exchange agreements to maintain continuous human presence on ISS.

- Ensures redundancy: NASA astronauts can fly on Soyuz, and Russians can fly on SpaceX Crew Dragon.

#### Recent ISS-Related Facts

- India's first astronaut program: Gaganyaan, led by ISRO.
- NASA's Artemis program aims to return humans to the Moon by mid-2020s.
- ISS is expected to be operational until 2030, after which NASA plans a shift to commercial space stations.

#### PM inaugurates Skyroot's Infinity Campus and unveils India's private orbital rocket Vikram-I

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate Skyroot Aerospace's Infinity Campus, a major facility dedicated to private-sector space innovation. The PM will also unveil Vikram-I, Skyroot's first orbital-class launch vehicle, capable of deploying satellites into Low Earth Orbit (LEO).

### 1. About Skyroot's Infinity Campus

- Location: Hyderabad, Telangana
- Production Capacity: Ability to manufacture 1 orbital rocket per month — a first for India's private space industry.
- This facility marks a major step towards boosting India's private space manufacturing ecosystem.

### 2. About Vikram-I Orbital Rocket

- Type: First orbital launch vehicle by an Indian private company.
- Developed by: Skyroot Aerospace
- Capability: Designed to carry multiple small satellites into LEO.
- Significance: Enhances India's presence in the global small-satellite launch market.

### 3. About Skyroot Aerospace

- Founders: Pawan Chandana & Bharath Daka
- Founded: 2018

#### Notable Achievement:

- Launched Vikram-S (sub-orbital mission) in November 2022.
- Became the first Indian private company to launch a rocket into space.
- Represents the success of India's space-sector liberalisation reforms (2020 onwards).

### Indian Coast Guard Inducts First Pollution Control Vessel

The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) has inducted its first indigenously designed and built Pollution Control Vessel (PCV) at Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL). The induction marks a major step towards strengthening marine pollution response, environmental protection, and maritime security.

#### Key Features of the Pollution Control Vessel

- Specially designed to detect, control, and mitigate marine pollution such as oil spills
- Equipped with modern pollution response equipment and advanced navigation systems
- Capable of supporting search and rescue, disaster response, and maritime law enforcement operations

- Designed for operations in India's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)

#### Strategic Significance

- Enhances India's preparedness against marine pollution incidents
- Strengthens coastal security architecture
- Supports sustainable use and protection of marine ecosystems
- Acts as a force multiplier for the Indian Coast Guard

#### Indian Coast Guard

- Established in 1978
- Director General: Paramesh Sivamani
- Operates under the Ministry of Defence
- Responsible for maritime safety, security, environmental protection, and search and rescue

#### IMPORTANCE

To honor the martyrs and the men in uniform who valiantly fought on our borders to safeguard the country's honor.

### Armed Forces Flag Day

INCEPTION: 1949  
EDITION: 27<sup>th</sup>

#### MOTTO

To collect funds from people for the betterment of the Armed Forces staff just by selling Indian flags, batches, stickers, and other items.

#### ARMED FORCES FLAG DAY FUND

Funds for war victims, Kendriya Sahakar Board Fund, Ex-servicemen's welfare fund, and other units were united to make a single Armed Forces Flag Day fund in the year 1993 by the Defense Ministry of India.

#### MANAGED BY

Local arms of the Kendriya Sahakar Board in India

#### ESTABLISHED

Committee of Defense Minister

07  
DECEMBER



## Obituary

**Sreenivasan, sharp satirist who reshaped Malayalam cinema, passes away at 69**



Veteran Malayalam film personality Sreenivasan died at the age of 69 after a prolonged illness in Kochi, marking a significant loss for Indian cinema. Acted in over 200 films, becoming one of the most recognizable faces in Malayalam films. Wrote and directed many memorable movies that became cultural touchstones. Known for his ability to balance humour with serious commentary on society.

**Pulitzer Prize-Winning War Correspondent Peter Arnett Passes Away**



Veteran war journalist Peter Arnett, a Pulitzer Prize winner and one of the most influential foreign correspondents of the 20th century, has passed away at the age of 91 in California, USA. Born in Riverton, New Zealand (1934), Arnett later became a naturalised American citizen and had a journalism career spanning over five decades, covering some of the world's most significant conflicts. Arnett won the Pulitzer Prize for International Reporting in 1966 for his courageous and ground-level reporting of the Vietnam War while working with the Associated Press (AP). He reported from Vietnam between 1962 and 1975, often accompanying soldiers on active combat missions, providing first-hand accounts of warfare. In 1981, Arnett joined CNN, where he rose to global prominence during the First Gulf War (1990-91). He

became a household name for reporting live from Baghdad, making him one of the few Western journalists to remain in Iraq during intense US-led air strikes. His broadcasts, sometimes interrupted by missile explosions and air-raid sirens, marked a turning point in 24-hour live war reporting. Arnett conducted high-profile interviews with key global figures, including Iraqi President Saddam Hussein during the Gulf War and Osama bin Laden in 1997 in Afghanistan, making him the first Western journalist to interview the al-Qaeda leader years before the 9/11 attacks. Later in his career, Arnett worked with NBC, but was dismissed after giving an interview to Iraqi state television during the Iraq War, where his comments were perceived as critical of US military strategy. He maintained that his duty was to report facts objectively from the ground. He passed away while receiving hospice care for prostate cancer, surrounded by family.

**War Journalism Significance:**

Peter Arnett is regarded as a pioneer of embedded and live battlefield reporting, shaping modern conflict journalism.

**Renowned Sculptor Ram Vanji Sutar Passes Away at 100**



Eminent Indian sculptor Ram Vanji Sutar, one of the most celebrated figures in modern Indian art and architecture, passed away at the age of 100 at his residence in Noida, Uttar Pradesh. He was widely acclaimed for designing the Statue of Unity in Gujarat, the world's tallest statue, dedicated to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. Born in 1925 in Dhule district (now in Maharashtra), Ram Vanji Sutar was a gold medallist from the Sir JJ School of Art, Mumbai, one of India's premier institutions for fine arts. His artistic legacy is closely associated with monumental public sculptures that blend realism with national symbolism.

**Major Contributions and Achievements**

**Statue of Unity**

- Height: 182 metres
- Location: Kevadia, Gujarat, on the Narmada River
- Dedicated to: Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel
- Inaugurated: 2018
- Recognised as the world's tallest statue

**Parliament Complex Sculptures**

- Statue of Mahatma Gandhi in a seated, meditative posture
- Equestrian statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj

**Awards and Honours**

- Padma Shri – 1999
- Padma Bhushan – 2016
- Maharashtra Bhushan Puraskar – State's highest civilian award

**Former Union Home Minister Shivraj Patil Passes Away at 91**

Former Union Home Minister and veteran Congress leader Shivraj Patil passed away at the age of 91 in Latur, Maharashtra, after prolonged illness.

Shivraj Patil had a distinguished political career spanning several decades. He served in multiple high-level positions including:

- Union Home Minister (2004–2008)
- Speaker of the Lok Sabha (1991–1996)

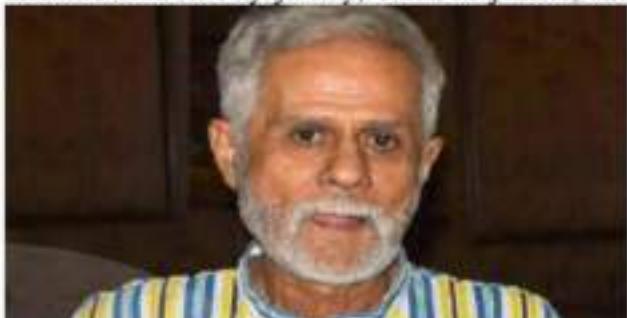
**Member of Lok Sabha from Latur—won seven times**

Held several important portfolios in the Union Cabinet. He played a significant role in parliamentary functioning and national security matters during his tenure.

**Veteran actor Kalyan Chattopadhyay passes away at 82**

Veteran Bengali film and theatre actor Kalyan Chattopadhyay, known for his versatile performances, has passed away at the age of 82. Born in 1942 in Berhampore, Murshidabad (West Bengal), he was an alumnus of the Film and Television Institute of India

(FTII), Pune. He made his film debut in 1968 with Tapan Sinha's "Apanjan", a landmark film that won the National Film Award for Best Feature Film in Bengali (1969). Chattopadhyay worked with renowned directors such as Satyajit Ray, Tarun Majumdar, and



Tapan Sinha, with memorable roles in films like:

- Pratidwandi (Satyajit Ray)
- Sagina Mahato (Tapan Sinha)
- Dhanni Meye (Tarun Majumdar)
- Safed Haathi (Children's film)
- Paar (National Award-winning film)
- Kahani (2012 Hindi film)

Throughout his career, he appeared in over 400 films, multiple TV serials, and OTT projects. His demise has been widely mourned by the Indian film industry.

**Renowned Architect Frank Gehry Passes Away**

Renowned Architect Frank Gehry died at 96 at his Santa Monica home after a brief respiratory illness.

**Legacy and Iconic Works**

- Guggenheim Museum Bilbao – Famous for its sculptural, curving forms and global acclaim.
- Walt Disney Concert Hall, Los Angeles – Celebrated for its innovative design and acoustics.
- DZ Bank Building, Berlin – Noted for its distinctive architectural style.
- Silicon Valley Influence – Designed Facebook headquarters expansion at Mark Zuckerberg's request.

**Former Mizoram Governor Swaraj Kaushal Passes Away at 73**



Former Mizoram Governor, senior advocate, and noted constitutional expert Swaraj Kaushal passed away at the age of 73. He was the husband of former Union Minister Sushma Swaraj and father of BJP MP Bansuri Swaraj. Born on 12 July 1952 in Solan, Himachal Pradesh, Kaushal served as Governor of Mizoram from 1990 to 1993 and was a Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha) from Haryana (1998–2004). A distinguished lawyer and expert on Northeast affairs, he played a crucial role in the 1986 Mizoram Peace Accord, which brought an end to insurgency in the state. He later became the first Advocate General of Mizoram in 1987.

#### About Mizoram Peace Accord (1986)

- Signed between: Government of India & Mizo National Front (MNF).
- Key signatories: Laldenga (MNF), Rajiv Gandhi government.
- Ended two decades of insurgency in Mizoram.
- Led to formation of Mizoram as a full-fledged state in 1987.
- Swaraj Kaushal was a major negotiator in the peace process.

#### Key Offices Held

- Governor of Mizoram: 1990–1993
- Rajya Sabha MP (Haryana): 1998–2004
- First Advocate General of Mizoram: 1987
- Additional Solicitor General of India: 1987–1990

#### Former Union minister Sripakash Jaiswal passes away at 81



Senior Congress leader and former Union minister Sripakash Jaiswal passed away at the age of 81.

#### Political Journey and Legacy

Jaiswal served as a three-time Member of Parliament from Kanpur (1999–2014).

In the central government during the UPA era, he held key portfolios, including Minister of State in the Home Affairs Ministry and later Minister of Coal / Steel. Earlier in his career, he had served as the President of the Uttar Pradesh Congress Committee (2000–2002).

#### Political History:

- Member of Parliament, Lok Sabha: 1999–2014
- Minister of Coal Government of India: 19 January 2011 – 26 May 2014
- Minister of State in Ministry of Home Affairs Government of India: 23 May 2004 – 22 May 2009
- President of Uttar Pradesh Congress Committee: 4 December 2000 – 3 July 2002

#### Renowned Litterateur Vinod Kumar Shukla Passes Away



Eminent Hindi writer and litterateur Vinod Kumar Shukla passed away in Raipur, Chhattisgarh. He was one of the most distinctive voices in modern Hindi literature and made significant contributions through poetry, novels, and short stories.

#### Major Literary Works

- Naukar Ki Kameez – acclaimed novel later adapted into a film
- Deewar Mein Ek Khidki Rehti Thi – award-winning novel
- Lagbhag Jai Hind – first poetry collection
- Khilega To Dekhenge and Ek Chuppi Jagah – notable works

#### Awards and Honours

- Jnanpith Award – India's highest literary honour: First writer from Chhattisgarh to receive this award
- Sahitya Akademi Award: Awarded for Deewar Mein Ek Khidki Rehti Thi
- Recipient of international literary recognition for his contribution to world literature

## Miscellaneous Events

### India Tops Global Doping List

India has emerged as the world's leading country in doping violations for the third consecutive year, as per data released by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA). In 2024, 260 Indian athletes tested positive for banned performance-enhancing substances, making India the only country with more than 200 positive cases globally. This raises serious concerns about the integrity of Indian sports and could adversely affect India's international sporting reputation, including its ambition to host the 2036 Olympic Games.

Global Doping List 2025

### Top 5 Countries (Highest Doping Violations in 2024)

Rank	Country	Adverse / Positive Doping Cases
1	India	260 positive cases (highest)
2	France	~91 positive cases
3	Italy	~85 positive cases
4	Russia	~76 positive cases
5	United States	~76 positive cases

### Bottom 5 Countries (Lowest Doping Violations among Major Testing Nations)

Rank	Country	Doping Status / Positivity Trend
1	Japan	Very low positivity; single-digit positives despite thousands of tests
2	China	Low number of positive cases relative to high testing volume
3	United Kingdom	Modest number of positives compared with tests conducted
4	Australia	Very low doping positivity rate reported
5	Canada	Minimal positive findings relative to overall testing rates

### Reasons Behind High Doping Cases

- Pressure to perform: Government jobs, incentives, medals and social mobility linked to sports success

- Lack of awareness: Inadequate education about banned substances, supplements and long-term health effects
- Coaching and support gaps: Poor guidance at grassroots and junior levels
- Early exposure: Doping cases increasingly reported in junior, university and state-level competitions

### Implications for India

Threat to Olympic ambitions: Poor anti-doping record may weaken India's credibility in the eyes of the International Olympic Committee

- Reputational damage: Repeated violations harm India's image as a fair sporting nation
- Athlete consequences: Doping leads to suspensions, bans, loss of medals and mental distress

### Steps Taken to Address the Issue

- National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) has intensified testing and education programmes
- Focus on athlete awareness campaigns, especially at grassroots level
- Early 2025 data indicates a reduction in positivity rate to around 1.5%, showing initial improvement

### World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA):

- Established in 1999
- Oversees global anti-doping efforts and issues the World Anti-Doping Code
- Headquarters: Montreal, Quebec, Canada
- President: Witold Bańka

### National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA):

- India's apex body to enforce anti-doping rules
- Conducts testing, awareness and disciplinary actions
- Director General: Ashish Bhargava

### India Becomes the World's Third-Largest Domestic Aviation Market

India has emerged as the third-largest domestic civil aviation market globally, after the United States and China. The country's aviation sector has witnessed rapid expansion over the last decade, driven by rising passenger demand, fleet expansion, and supportive government policies. Domestic air travel has recorded strong growth, reflecting improved affordability, regional connectivity, and infrastructure development.

**Aviation Governance & Regulation**

- Ministry of Civil Aviation is the nodal ministry for policy formulation.
- DGCA (Directorate General of Civil Aviation) is responsible for aviation safety, licensing, and regulation.
- AAI (Airports Authority of India) manages and develops civil aviation infrastructure.

**Government Schemes & Initiatives**

- UDAN (Ude Desh ka Aam Naagrik) scheme aims to enhance regional air connectivity by making flying affordable.
- National Civil Aviation Policy (NCAP), 2016 focuses on affordability, connectivity, and sustainability.
- India aims to develop hundreds of operational airports by 2047 under long-term aviation planning.

**AAI:**

- Founded: 1 April 1995
- Headquarters: New Delhi, India
- Chairman: Vipin Kumar
- DGCA: Vikram Dev Dutt

**Ministry of Civil Aviation (India):**

- Union Cabinet Minister: Kinjarapu Ram Mohan Naidu
- Minister of State: Murli Dhar Kisan Mohol

**Singapore's Changi Airport Declared World's Best Airport 2025**

Singapore's Changi Airport has been named the World's Best Airport for the year 2025, reaffirming its global leadership in aviation infrastructure, passenger services and overall travel experience. The recognition is based on international passenger surveys evaluating airports across multiple performance parameters.

**About Singapore Changi Airport**

- Changi Airport is the primary international airport of Singapore.
- It serves as a major global aviation hub, connecting Asia with Europe, Africa, the Americas and Oceania.
- The airport is famous for its indoor gardens, entertainment zones, transit hotels, shopping complexes and dining options.
- It is considered one of the most awarded airports in aviation history.

**Here's the Top 5 list of the World's Best Airports 2025 (Skytrax World Airport Awards):**

Rank	Airport Name	Country
1	Singapore Changi Airport	Singapore
2	Hamad International Airport	Qatar
3	Tokyo Haneda Airport	Japan
4	Incheon International Airport	South Korea
5	Narita International Airport	Japan

**How World's Best Airports Are Ranked**

Rankings are based on global passenger feedback collected from travelers of different nationalities.

**Parameters include:**

- Check-in and immigration efficiency
- Cleanliness and safety
- Passenger comfort and amenities
- Retail and food services
- Accessibility and transit experience

**Bulgarian Prime Minister Rosen Zhelyazkov Resigns After Weeks of Mass Protests**

Bulgaria's Prime Minister Rosen Zhelyazkov and his government resigned following weeks of widespread protests across the country. The protests were triggered by public anger over economic mismanagement, proposed tax hikes in the 2026 budget, rising social security contributions, perceived corruption, and lack of accountability. The resignation came just before parliament was scheduled to vote on a no-confidence motion against his government.

**About Bulgaria**

- Capital: Sofia
- Currency (before Euro adoption): Bulgarian Lev
- President: Rumen Radev

**India is now the world's fourth-largest tea exporter****Government Support for Tea Industry**

A ₹1,000-crore package and initiatives like the Chai Sahyog app have been launched for labour welfare. The government aims to strengthen testing facilities to make tea a key contributor to Viksit Bharat 2047.

**Top Tea Exporting Countries (2024–25)**

Rank	Country	Approx. Export Value (US\$) / Status
1	China	~ US\$ 1.42 billion
2	Sri Lanka	~ US\$ 1.41 billion
3	Kenya	~ US\$ 1.41 billion
4	India	~ US\$ 817 million
5	Poland	~ US\$ 265 million

**Reporters Without Borders (RSF) Report: Israel Again Registers Highest Journalist Death Toll Worldwide in 2025**

According to RSF's 2025 report, Israel killed more journalists than any other country this year. Worldwide, 67 journalists were killed over the past 12 months — one more than in 2024. Israeli forces, mainly in Gaza, were responsible for the deaths of 29 Palestinian reporters, accounting for 43% of global journalist fatalities. RSF described Israel as "the worst enemy of journalists," emphasizing that these deaths were deliberate — not accidental or collateral.

**Key Details & Broader Trends**

The deadliest single incident this year was a "double-tap" strike on a hospital in south Gaza on 25 August, which killed five journalists — including correspondents working for major international agencies. Apart from Israel, other dangerous countries for journalists in 2025 included Mexico (9 killed), Ukraine (3 killed) and Sudan (4 killed). RSF also reported that as of December 1, 2025, around 503 journalists are detained globally for their work, while 135 are missing and 20 are held hostage in 37 countries.

**RSF's Warning & Global Concern**

RSF warned that the pattern of killings reflects a breakdown in protection for journalists worldwide — especially in conflict zones. They asserted that many governments and international institutions have failed to safeguard press freedom, allowing the targeting of media workers with impunity.

Rank	Country / Region	Journalists Killed (2025)	Key Remark
1	Israel (including Gaza / war zones)	29	Accounted for 43% of all confirmed journalist killings globally
2	Mexico	9	Second-highest number of journalist killings in 2025
3	Sudan	4	Among the most dangerous

Rank	Country / Region	Journalists Killed (2025)	Key Remark
			countries for media workers
4	Ukraine	3	Placed among top high-risk countries for journalists
5	—	—	No consistent fifth position; top four accounted for highest confirmed deaths in 2025

**IMPORTANCE**  
To mark the 50th anniversary of the signing the Convention on International Civil Aviation in 1944.

**ABOUT ICAO**  
**ESTABLISHED**  
7th December 1944

**International Civil Aviation Day**

**INCEPTION:** 1944  
**OFFICIAL STATUS BY UN:** 1990

**NEED**  
Securing international cooperation and consistency in civil aviation matters.

ICAO is a UN body that operates in association with other UN members including the WMO, ITU, UPU, WHO and IMO.

**NOTE**  
International Services Transit Agreement and the International Air Transport Agreement were also signed in 1944.

**HISTORY BEHIND**  
In 1944, member countries signed the "Chicago Convention" giving permission to global civil aviation system to develop peacefully and in a manner benefitting all peoples and nations of the world.

**NOTE:** Currently, the Chicago Convention has 191 state parties including all member states of the UN except Dominica, Liechtenstein and Tuvalu.



**07**  
**DECEMBER**

## Defence Exercise of the Month

### Harimau Shakti 2025

India and Malaysia have conducted the joint military exercise 'Harimau Shakti 2025' in Rajasthan, reaffirming their commitment to strengthening bilateral defence cooperation. The exercise aims to enhance interoperability, tactical coordination, and operational preparedness between the armies of the two countries. The joint drill focuses on counter-insurgency operations, jungle and semi-desert warfare, humanitarian assistance, and disaster relief operations. Troops from both nations participated in joint training modules, field exercises, and tactical discussions, enabling them to share best practices and operational experiences. The exercise reflects the growing strategic partnership between India and Malaysia and supports India's broader Act East Policy, which seeks deeper defence and security engagement with Southeast Asian nations.

### EKUVERIN

The 14th edition of the annual India-Maldives bilateral exercise EKUVERIN held in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala. Conducted between the Indian Army and the Maldives National Defence Forces, the exercise strengthens military cooperation and mutual understanding.

#### Objectives

- Enhance interoperability in counterinsurgency and counter-terrorism operations across semi-urban, jungle, and coastal terrains.
- Integrate niche technologies to improve coordination and efficiency.
- Share best practices, reflecting India and Maldives' commitment to regional peace and security.

#### Significance

- "Ekuverin" means 'Friends', symbolizing the close ties between the two nations.
- It is a bilateral annual exercise, conducted alternately in India and Maldives.

Ekuverin is one of three major joint exercises between India and Maldives, alongside:

1. Ekatha (bilateral)
2. Dosti (trilateral with Sri Lanka)

### SURYAKIRAN XIX – 2025

The 19th edition of the annual India-Nepal Joint Military Exercise Suryakiran XIX – 2025 held at Pithoragarh, Uttarakhand. The exercise is a key component of the defence cooperation framework between the two neighbouring nations.

#### Objectives of the Exercise

Rehearsal of Sub-Conventional Operations under Chapter VII of the UN Mandate, relating to international peace and security.

#### Strengthen battalion-level interoperability in:

- Jungle warfare
- Counter-terrorism in mountainous terrain
- HADR (Humanitarian Assistance & Disaster Relief)
- Medical response
- Environmental conservation
- Integrated ground-aviation operations

#### Special Technological Focus (2025 Edition)

This year's exercise places a major emphasis on niche and emerging defence technologies, including:

- UAS (Unmanned Aerial Systems)
- Drone-based ISR (Intelligence, Surveillance & Reconnaissance)
- AI-enabled decision support systems
- Unmanned logistic vehicles
- Armoured protection platforms

#### About Exercise Suryakiran

- Annual bilateral exercise conducted alternately in India and Nepal.
- One of India's largest military exercises with any SAARC country.

First edition was conducted in 2011 after combining two previous exercises:

- Surya Kiran (by India)
- Pratikar (by Nepal)

#### India-Nepal Defence Relations

- Gurkha soldiers have served in the Indian Army for over 200 years.
- Nepal is a major contributor to UN peacekeeping missions.
- India provides training, equipment and disaster relief support to Nepalese forces.

#### UN Chapter VII

- Deals with Actions with Respect to Threats to Peace, Breaches of Peace, and Acts of Aggression.
- Authorises use of force for maintaining or restoring international peace and security.

## Important Days of the Month

Date	Observed As	Importance/Motto
January 1	Global Family Day	To promote the idea that the Earth is one Global family and we should live in peace
January 4	World Braille Day	To mark the birth anniversary of Louis Braille.
January 9	NRI Day	To mark the contribution of the overseas Indian community towards the development of India.
January 10	World Hindi Day	To mark the birth anniversary of first World Hindi Conference which was held in 1975.
January 12	National Youth Day	To mark the birth anniversary of the Swami Vivekananda.
January 15	Army day	Field Marshal K. M. Cariappa became the first Indian Army Chief of Independent India on 15 January 1949.
January 24	National Girl Child Day	To increase awareness among the people and ensure every girl gets equal importance as their counterparts.
January 25	National Voters day	To mark the foundation day of the Election Commission of India (ECI)
January 26	India's Republic Day	To mark the Declaration of Indian Independence that was proclaimed by the Indian National Congress.
January 27	International Holocaust Remembrance Day	To commemorate the tragedy of the Holocaust that occurred during the Second World War.
January 30	Martyrs' Day	To mark the assassination of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi Ji.

## Trending Topics of the Month

## How New Pilot Safety Rules and Other Factors Led to Major IndiGo Flight Disruptions in India: Explained

In December 2025, India's busiest airline, IndiGo, faced one of the worst operational crises in its history, with hundreds — and even thousands — of flights cancelled, delayed, and disrupted nationwide. This shook the aviation sector, stranded passengers at airports, and raised questions about airline safety rules, staffing planning, and how changes in pilot regulations were handled.



To understand what happened, we need to break it down into three core parts:

1. What the new pilot safety rules actually are,
2. Why IndiGo in particular was hit so hard,
3. Other contributing factors besides the rules, Responses, temporary fixes, and what lies ahead.

### 1. What Are the New Pilot Safety Rules?

India's aviation regulator — the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) — updated rules on how long pilots can fly, how much rest they need, and what counts as night flying. These rules are collectively known as Flight Duty Time Limitations (FDTL).

**Here's what changed and why:**

#### Key Safety Changes

**Weekly Rest Increase:** Pilots must now get at least 48 continuous hours of rest each week (up from 36). This gives pilots more time to recover from fatigue.

**Night Flying Definition Expanded:** Night time is now counted from midnight to 6 a.m., instead of midnight to 5 a.m. This captures more flights under fatigue-sensitive hours.

**Night Landings Reduced:** Pilots are now allowed only two landings per roster period between midnight and early morning (down from six). This is important because night landings are more tiring.

**Duty Time Caps:** Pilots can't fly for more than 10 hours on flights stretching into the night.

**Rest Rules Tied to Leave:** Pilots can no longer count personal leave as part of the required rest under the weekly rest rule.

**Fatigue Reports:** Airlines must submit regular reports to DGCA about pilot fatigue management actions.

#### Purpose of the Rules

The main goal of FDTL rules is to reduce pilot fatigue — tired pilots can be dangerous because fatigue affects judgement and reaction time. The DGCA studied global safety standards and fatigue data before tightening rules.

#### How the Rules Were Rolled Out

The FDTL changes were not sudden. They were first proposed in early 2024, and DGCA spread implementation in two phases:

1. Phase 1 started on July 1, 2025 — longer weekly rest was introduced.
2. Phase 2 took effect on November 1, 2025 — stricter night limits and other parts of the rules.

This phased approach was meant to give airlines time to adjust.

### 2. Why IndiGo Was Affected So Badly

All Indian airlines are required to follow the same pilot safety rules. But IndiGo — being the biggest airline — was disproportionately affected. Here's why:

**Huge Operations and Few Buffer Resources:** IndiGo operates over 2,200 flights daily, far more than any other Indian airline. Because its network is huge, even small problems affect many flights.

**Lean Crew Planning:** Instead of hiring extra pilots as a cushion, IndiGo reportedly ran with a very tight staffing model. This meant there was little slack in crew availability once the new rules took effect — pilots couldn't be scheduled as flexibly as before.

**Pilot Shortages When Needed Most:** With the weekly rest requirement increasing and night landings capped, many pilots became unavailable for additional flying (even if they wanted to). IndiGo did not recruit or schedule additional pilots fast enough to meet these new requirements. Industry experts say airlines had more than a year's notice to prepare, but IndiGo's planning didn't match the scale of these changes.

### 3. Other Contributing Factors Beyond Safety Rules

While pilot safety rules were a big trigger, they were not the only cause of cancellations and delays.

**Winter Weather and Fog:** Northern India often experiences fog in winter. This reduces visibility at airports like Delhi, slowing down flight operations and creating congestion.

**Technical Glitches:** IndiGo also faced computer system issues at some airports, which slowed departures and added delays that rippled across the network.

**Heavy Airport Traffic:** During the peak holiday travel season, airports are busier than usual. This means even small delays or cancellations can quickly cascade, causing large-scale disruption.

**Aggressive Schedule Growth:** IndiGo expanded its winter season flying schedule — meaning slower recovery from delays and less ability to adjust crew rosters on the fly.

### 4. What Happened Once Chaos Hit?

**Mass Flight Cancellations:** In early December alone, thousands of flights were cancelled nationwide as crews hit legal duty limits and no replacement crews were available. Most major airports, such as Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Chennai, were affected. At times, on-time performance dropped to extremely low levels — in some airports under 10% of flights were on schedule.

**Passengers Stranded:** Millions of passengers faced long lines, delays, and uncertainty as flights were abruptly cancelled or rescheduled. Some travelers had to make alternative plans, pay high fares on other carriers, or face overnight waits.

**Criticism from Pilots and Flyers:** Pilot groups criticised IndiGo for failing to hire enough staff and said the airline's lean manpower strategy was to blame. Some argued the disruption should not be used to weaken safety norms, while others blamed DGCA for poor oversight in planning.

### Government and DGCA Response

The DGCA temporarily eased some rules for IndiGo until February 10, 2026. This included relaxing the strict night landing limits and allowing personal leave to count toward rest periods again — but only temporarily.

The DGCA also sent inspectors into IndiGo's offices to monitor operations and crew planning daily as the airline works to stabilise operations.

Regulators required IndiGo to cut its winter schedule by about 5% and submit a revised flight plan to make scheduling more manageable.

The Ministry of Civil Aviation ordered a high-level inquiry into what went wrong.

### 5. What Happens Next?

**Stabilising Operations:** IndiGo says it plans to restore stable operations by February 10, 2026, when full compliance with the FDTL norms is expected to resume.

**Hiring More Pilots:** The airline is expected to speed up pilot hiring and adjust crew rosters to meet the safety rules and avoid future disruptions.

**Stronger Planning Ahead:** Many aviation experts now argue that improved planning, more buffer staffing, and flexible crew scheduling will be required across the industry — not just at IndiGo — especially during peak travel seasons.

### Way Forward:

**Hire More Pilots and Create Buffers:** Airlines must build a larger standby pilot pool so new rules or disruptions don't collapse the schedule.

**Use Smarter Rostering Systems:** Advanced digital tools should predict fatigue, balance duty hours, and avoid last-minute crew shortages.

**Better DGCA-Airline Coordination:** Future rule changes should involve joint planning, impact assessment, and phased trials to prevent sudden chaos.

**Clear Passenger Contingency Plans:** Automatic rebooking, early SMS alerts, and on-ground support should be standard during disruptions.

**Improve Airport and Air-Traffic Capacity:** Better fog-handling systems, more night runway capacity, and tighter slot management will reduce cascading delays.

**Strengthen Safety Culture:** Prioritise pilot rest and fatigue reporting instead of pushing tight rosters to maximise flights.

## Australia's New Social Media Ban for Under-16s: What It Means and Why It Matters

Australia has made history by becoming the first country in the world to ban most children under the age of 16 from using major social media platforms. This new law — known as the Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act 2024 — took effect on December 10, 2025 after the Australian Parliament passed it in 2024.



### What the Law Says

Children under 16 are not allowed to create or keep accounts on many popular social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, X (formerly Twitter), YouTube, Reddit, Twitch, Threads, Kick and others. Platforms must take "reasonable steps" to stop under-16s from having accounts or face fines up to A\$49.5 million (about \$33 million). The ban is enforced on companies, not children or families — kids and their parents will not be fined if they break the rule. This means that if a child under 16 tries to use social media with a profile, the platform must block or deactivate it.

### Why Australia Did This

The main reason behind the ban is child safety. The government says social media can be harmful to young people's mental health and emotional development. Specific concerns include:

- Cyberbullying and online harassment,
- Addictive design and screen time,
- Exposure to inappropriate or harmful content,
- Grooming and online exploitation.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and online safety officials have spoken about this as a cultural shift, encouraging young people to spend more time offline with real-world activities like hobbies, reading, sports, and face-to-face interaction.

### How It Works in Practice

Platforms must identify and block under-16 users. Some companies have already started this:

Meta (the company that owns Facebook and Instagram) began removing accounts of users it believes are under 16 ahead of the December 10 start date.

TikTok and Snapchat plan to use age-verification tools like automated "age assurance" systems to estimate age and prevent access.

Children will still be able to view public content on some platforms (like watching videos) without an account if the site allows it, but they will not be able to post, comment, or engage as a logged-in user.

### Support and Criticism

The ban has both supporters and critics:

#### Supporters say:

- It protects children from harmful effects of social media,
- It aligns with other age limits like alcohol and driving restrictions,
- It gives parents and schools an easier boundary to enforce.

#### Critics say:

- Some young people could feel isolated if they lose social connections online.
- The law may be difficult to enforce perfectly, as children might find loopholes like using VPNs or adult accounts.
- There are privacy concerns with age verification methods.



### Global Interest

Australia's decision is now being closely watched around the world. Countries like Denmark and Malaysia are considering similar age-based social media rules, and many other governments are debating how best to protect children online.

## India's New SIM Binding Rule: What It Means for WhatsApp, Telegram & Other Apps

The Indian government has introduced a new rule that will change how messaging apps like WhatsApp, Telegram, Signal and others work on your phone. This rule — called SIM binding — is part of broader efforts to reduce cyber fraud and misuse of messaging services in India.



### What Is SIM Binding?

SIM binding means that a messaging app must continuously check that the same SIM card used to register your account is still present in your phone. Under the new rule:

If the SIM card used for registration is removed, replaced, or inactive, the app may stop working.

This applies not only to the phone app but also to services like WhatsApp Web — the web or desktop version.

Right now, when you register on WhatsApp or Telegram, the app checks your phone number only once using an OTP (one-time password). After that, you can use the app even if the SIM isn't present in the device. The new rule changes that.

### Which Apps Are Affected?

This rule applies to a wide range of messaging platforms that use mobile numbers for identification, including: WhatsApp, Signal, Telegram, Snapchat, ShareChat, JioChat, Arattai, Josh, among others.

All these apps must implement SIM binding within 90 days from the government's directive — likely by early 2026.

### What Will Change for Users?

#### 1. App Will Stop Without SIM

After this rule comes into effect, your messaging app may stop working if your SIM card is not in the phone

— even if you are using Wi-Fi. So you won't be able to use WhatsApp or Telegram without the SIM card that was used to register your number.

#### 2. WhatsApp Web Logging Out

For WhatsApp Web and similar web versions of messaging apps, there's a big change:

You will be automatically logged out at least every six hours. To log back in, you will have to scan the QR code again using your phone. This is because the app must make sure your SIM card is still present and active.

### Why Is the Government Doing This?

The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) says the rule is meant to:

- Reduce cyber fraud and scams.
- Prevent criminals from using messaging apps with deactivated numbers or without SIM cards, making it harder to trace them.
- Improve security and traceability of digital communication.

The DoT believes that by tying your messaging account to your SIM card, it becomes harder for fraudsters — often operating from outside the country — to misuse accounts without being traced.

Telecom companies like Airtel, Reliance Jio and Vodafone-Idea have supported the rule, saying it strengthens security without harming privacy. They also compare this to other secure systems where regular verification is common.

### Concerns and Criticism

- Not everyone agrees with the rule. Some critics and privacy advocates argue that:
- It may be inconvenient for users who use messaging apps on devices without SIM cards, like tablets or laptops.
- It could make it harder for people who switch devices often or travel abroad.
- There are concerns about user privacy and flexibility, especially for multi-device usage.

## Sanchar Saathi Explained: What It Is, What It Does, and Why It Became Controversial



Web portal available at : [www.sancharsaathi.gov.in](http://www.sancharsaathi.gov.in)

India has launched a government-led initiative called Sanchar Saathi to help mobile phone users protect themselves from fraud, theft, scams and misuse of their telecom connections. The name literally means communication friend, and the idea is to give every user a single place where they can check and manage their mobile identity securely. Recently, Sanchar Saathi became the centre of a big debate in India because of a government directive that would have made its mobile app automatically installed on all new smartphones sold in the country. This sparked a major discussion about privacy, security, user choice and how far the government can go in mandating digital tools.

### What Is Sanchar Saathi?

Sanchar Saathi started as a web portal run by India's Department of Telecommunications (DoT) in May 2023. It was built to help ordinary mobile users protect themselves against common problems like phone loss, fraud, SIM misuse, and identity theft. Later, in January 2025, the government also launched the Sanchar Saathi mobile app for Android and iOS, making these services easier to access from a smartphone.

So, there are two ways users can benefit from Sanchar Saathi:

1. Through the web portal — accessible on any browser,

2. Through the mobile app — downloadable on phones.

### What Are the Main Features of Sanchar Saathi?

The Sanchar Saathi platform offers several useful tools all in one place:

- 1. Check All Mobile Numbers in Your Name:** You can see all SIM cards registered using your identity. This helps you detect if someone has taken a phone number or SIM in your name without consent.
- 2. Block Lost or Stolen Phones:** If your phone is lost or stolen, Sanchar Saathi lets you block that device's IMEI number (a unique 15-digit identifier). Once blocked, the device won't work on any network in India.
- 3. Report Fraudulent Calls and Messages:** The app has a feature called Chakshu, which lets users report suspicious calls, SMS, WhatsApp messages, phishing links and other telecom scams. This helps authorities spot patterns of fraud.
- 4. Verify Mobile Authenticity:** Before buying a second-hand phone, users can use Sanchar Saathi to check whether that device is genuine or has been lost/stolen.
- 5. Report Spam and Malicious Links:** Users can report spam calls, unwanted commercial calls, and malicious web links that appear in messages. These tools make Sanchar Saathi a one-stop security platform for mobile users, especially in an era when phone scams and frauds are increasing rapidly.

## Why Did the Government Want to Pre-Install the App on Every Phone?

In late November 2025, the Telecom Ministry issued a directive asking all smartphone manufacturers — such as Apple, Samsung, Xiaomi and others — to pre-install the Sanchar Saathi app on all new phones sold in India. The plan also said the app should not be removable by users.

### The idea behind this was simple:

With so many mobile scams happening, the government argued that every user should have protective tools built into their device from day one. According to official data, the Sanchar Saathi platform had already helped:

- Block millions of lost/stolen phones,
- Terminate tens of millions of fraudulent SIM connections,
- Help many users report suspicious activities through the portal.

So the government said pre-installing the app would make mobile security stronger across India — especially in a country with more than 1.2 billion mobile users.

### Why Did This Move Cause Controversy?



Despite the security goals, the proposal to force-install the app on new phones and make it undeletable triggered a major public debate and backlash from different groups:

**1. Privacy Concerns:** Critics, digital rights activists and privacy advocates argued that forcing a government app on every device could violate people's privacy and give too much power to the state.

They said users should always have the choice to decide what is on their phones.

**2. Opposition from Phone Makers:** Some smartphone companies — especially Apple — stated that their company policies do not allow outside apps to be installed by default in ways that users cannot remove. This conflict between global tech rules and Indian regulations became a sticking point.

**3. Public Uproar:** Many users also criticised the idea online, saying that mandatory installation felt like government surveillance, even if that was not the stated intention. Critics compared it to controversial software policies in other countries.

### What Happened Next? The Government Backed Down

- Due to the strong backlash, the government rolled back the mandatory pre-installation order in early December 2025. Officials clarified that:
- The Sanchar Saathi app would not be compulsory on new devices,
- Users could delete or uninstall it if they wanted to,
- And companies did not have to make it undeletable.
- Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia personally stated that the app was intended for cybersecurity and not for surveillance or spying.

### Final Thoughts: Safety vs Choice

- Sanchar Saathi itself remains a useful tool to protect mobile users from fraud, theft, and scams, offering several important security features at no cost.
- However, the controversy highlights a key tension in digital India — how to balance national cybersecurity goals with individual privacy and user freedom. The government says the app is meant to keep citizens safe, while critics worry about consent and control over personal devices.
- In the end, the decision to make the Sanchar Saathi app optional rather than compulsory may help preserve both user choice and mobile security awareness going forward.

## A Step Toward Equality: Supreme Court Permits SC Status Based on Mother's Caste

In a significant development on December 8, 2025, the Supreme Court of India allowed a minor girl from Puducherry to obtain a Scheduled Caste (SC) certificate based on her mother's caste, even though her father did not belong to an SC community. This move may impact how caste certificates are issued in future, especially for children born in inter-caste marriages.

### What Happened in the Case?

A bench led by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi confirmed that the girl could get her SC certificate using her mother's Adi Dravida identity, instead of relying only on the father's caste. The Supreme Court did not reverse the law entirely, but it refused to interfere with the High Court's decision that had granted the certificate to the girl.

### During the hearing, the CJI asked a simple yet powerful question:

"With changing times, why should caste not follow the mother?"

This signalled a possible shift from traditional assumptions about caste inheritance.

### What Does the Law Currently Say?

India's Constitution allows affirmative action (like reservation of seats in education and jobs) for SC/ST communities under Articles 15 and 16. But who qualifies as SC or ST is defined through Presidential Orders under Articles 341 and 342, and these lists are specific for each state.

### Historically, governments and courts have used a simple rule:

A child generally inherits the caste of the father. This was partly based on tradition and old legal opinions, including a 2003 Supreme Court judgment (Punit Rai) that said, in the absence of any statutory law, caste would normally follow the father. However, the Court also said that this is only a presumption, not a hard and fast rule. That means it can be challenged if evidence shows different social realities.

### Why Is This Important?

In past cases like *Rameshbhai vs State of Gujarat*, courts ruled that caste benefits should not be treated

like inherited property but should address social disadvantage and lived experience — whether a person endured the same disadvantages faced by members of the SC community.

Under those principles, if a child is brought up within the SC community, experiences its social challenges, and is accepted as part of that community, then they may be eligible for reservation benefits — even if the father is from another caste.

### How Will This Be Implemented?

- ✓ The Supreme Court's order in this particular case allows the certificate for the girl while the larger constitutional question remains unsettled. That means:
- ✓ Courts and authorities will still presume children take their father's caste unless strong evidence suggests otherwise.
- ✓ But in exceptional circumstances, children can obtain SC certificates based on their mother's caste, especially when the evidence shows they were raised in that community's environment.
- ✓ Local authorities — like Tehsildars and certificate validity committees — will now likely assess evidence such as:
- ✓ Proof of upbringing in the mother's community,
- ✓ Social and educational disadvantages faced,
- ✓ Community acceptance and real lived experiences.

### Aftermath and Wider Impact

The Court's decision does not immediately change all caste laws, but it opens the door for more cases where maternal caste could be considered. This is especially relevant for children from inter-caste marriages and for single mothers who struggle to secure caste certificates for their children under the old rule.

Legal experts say this case signals a move toward equity and gender equality in caste determination. However, the ultimate legal test will depend on how lower courts and certificate authorities interpret the decision in future applications.

### In short:

- ✓ Father's caste is still the default rule,
- ✓ But the rule is a presumption, not absolute,
- ✓ And under special conditions, a child may now get an SC certificate through the mother's caste.

## Tamil Nadu Govt. vs. Governor: A Landmark Supreme Court Case Explained

The Tamil Nadu government recently moved the Supreme Court of India to challenge the actions of the Governor of Tamil Nadu, R N Ravi, saying he acted against the democratic and constitutional rights of the people and the elected government. This dispute is part of a long-running conflict between the state executive and the Governor over the approval and clearance of bills passed by the state legislature.



### What Sparked the Conflict?

In 2023 and onwards, the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly passed several important bills relating to governance, university administration, and other key areas. Instead of giving them assent (approval), the Governor withheld assent to 10 of these bills and sent some bills to the President of India for consideration. Under the Indian Constitution, once a state legislature passes a bill, the Governor usually has a few choices: Give his assent to make it law,

Withhold assent and return it for reconsideration, or Reserve it for the President's consideration in specific situations.

But in this case, the Governor withheld assent for a long time — in some cases for years — without proper reasons and then reserved them for the President without first returning the bills to the assembly, as required by the Constitution.

The Tamil Nadu government argued that this deliberate delay and reservation to the President was unconstitutional and hampered the democratic

process. So, it filed a writ petition in the Supreme Court under Article 32 of the Constitution, asking the court to intervene and protect the state's legislative rights.

### What the Supreme Court Decided

In April 2025, a two-judge bench of the Supreme Court delivered a landmark judgment on this case. The court held that the Governor's actions were "illegal and erroneous" and violated constitutional norms.

### The Supreme Court emphasized these key points:

- ✓ A Governor cannot sit indefinitely on a bill or unduly delay his decision simply to block it.
- ✓ If there are issues with a bill, the Governor must either give assent, withhold it and return it for reconsideration, or reserve it for the President's consideration directly under clear constitutional grounds.
- ✓ The Court held that in this case, the Governor's refusal to act on the bills — even after they were passed again by the assembly — was against the Constitution.
- ✓ Invoking its extraordinary powers under Article 142, the Supreme Court declared that the 10 bills shall be deemed to have received the Governor's assent from the date they were re-presented to him. This effectively made them laws without the Governor's signature.

### Why This Case Matters

This case is more than just about Tamil Nadu. It raises important constitutional questions about federalism and state autonomy in India. The Tamil Nadu government argued that when the Governor — an unelected official — blocks bills passed by the elected legislature, it undermines the people's mandate and disrupts democratic governance.

## What Is the Health Security se National Security Cess Bill, 2025?



The Health Security se National Security Cess Bill, 2025 is a new law passed by the Indian Parliament that allows the government to impose a special cess (a type of tax) on the manufacture of certain products, mainly pan masala — a widely sold chewing tobacco product — with the money raised used for public health and national security needs.

This Bill came at a time when India is reorganising its tax structure on products like tobacco and pan masala because the compensation cess — a temporary tax earlier imposed under the GST system — is due to end. The government wanted to make sure there was no sudden loss of revenue, especially for important sectors like health and defence.

### Why Was This Bill Needed?

When India introduced the Goods and Services Tax (GST) in 2017, a compensation cess was also added on "sin goods" — products harmful to health such as tobacco, pan masala, aerated drinks and luxury items — to make up for revenue shortfalls to states.

This tax was temporary and extended several times. It is set to expire by March 31, 2026, which meant revenue from these products could fall. To avoid this, the government introduced two new measures:

A fresh excise duty on tobacco products under a different law,

The Health Security se National Security Cess on pan masala and potential future goods.

The new Bill ensures that the tax burden on these harmful goods stays high, discouraging consumption while also creating a steady stream of funds for health initiatives and national security.

### Key Components of the Bill

**1. Goods Covered:** The Bill initially applies to pan masala, but the government has the power to include other similar goods through notification later.

**2. How the Cess Is Calculated:** Unlike normal taxes that are based on how much a product is sold, this cess is based on the production capacity of the machines or processes used by manufacturers — that means a company with higher capacity will pay more.

**3. Taxable Persons:** Anyone who owns, operates or controls machines or processes manufacturing the specified goods is responsible for paying the cess.

#### 4. Revenue Use

- Money collected from the cess goes into India's Consolidated Fund and will be used for:
- Public health programmes, and
- National security requirements — such as defence expenditure.
- Portions of the revenue will also be shared with state governments to support health-related schemes.

#### 5. Enforcement and Compliance

The Bill sets up a system for:

- Registration and self-declaration by manufacturers,

- Monitoring and audits,
- Penalties and prosecution for evasion or false records,
- A multi-tier appeals process so that disputes can be legally challenged.

### Implementation and Timeline

- The Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha in early December 2025 and promptly passed.
- It was then passed by the Rajya Sabha and returned to the Lok Sabha, which indicates Parliament's approval.
- Once final procedures are completed, the cess will start to apply, especially as the GST compensation cess phases out by March 2026.

### Aftermath and Impact

1. **Revenue Stability:** The government expects a steady stream of funds to support health programmes and defence. The sharing of revenue with states also aims to strengthen cooperative federalism.

**2. Health and Behaviour:** By keeping prices of pan masala higher through taxation, the government also hopes to reduce consumption of products linked to health problems.

**3. Political and Public Response:** While many lawmakers supported the Bill as a responsible fiscal measure, some opposition voices raised concerns about its title and federal impact, calling for deeper scrutiny.

### In Summary

The Health Security se National Security Cess Bill, 2025 is a new tax law aimed at maintaining high levies on harmful products like pan masala, ensuring stable revenue for public health and national security, and replacing revenue lost due to the phasing out of the GST compensation cess. It introduces a production-based levy, includes a structured compliance system, and allows revenue sharing with states while aiming to deter consumption of demerit goods.

## HEALTH SECURITY SE NATIONAL SECURITY CESS BILL, 2025

Introduced in Lok Sabha as a Money Bill - Aim: Support India's Health & National Security





## 2026

## CALENDAR

## JANUARY

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