

## Polity

### 1. PM hints at sops for poor & middle class ahead of Union Budget 2025

#### Context / Background

- PM Modi addressed media on the first day of the **Budget Session 2025**, emphasizing inclusive growth.
- This aligns with the government's broader narrative of **Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas**.

#### Union Budget

- Annual financial statement presented by the Finance Minister in Parliament.
- Usually presented on February 1st every year.

### 2. Supreme Court quashes SC/ST Atrocity case—incident not in public view

#### Context / Background -

- The Supreme Court clarified that **public view is essential** for invoking Sections 3(1)(r) and 3(1)(s) of the SC/ST Act.
- The alleged insult/abuse occurred **inside a private chamber**, not in a public setting.

#### SC/ST (PoA) Act, 1989

- Enacted to prevent atrocities against Scheduled Castes and Tribes.
- Provides for **special courts, witness protection, and stringent punishment**.
- Sections 3(1)(r) and 3(1)(s) deal with **verbal abuse and humiliation** in public.

### 3. Frontier Nagaland Territory (FNT) – Demand for Autonomy

#### Context / Background

- Eastern Nagaland People's Organisation (ENPO)** has reiterated its demand for a separate administrative arrangement called **Frontier Nagaland Territory (FNT)**.
- The issue again became prominent in **January 2025**.

#### Key Facts

- FNT is proposed for **6 eastern districts** of Nagaland:

1. **Kiphire**
2. **Longleng**
3. **Mon**
4. **Noklak**
5. **Shamator**
6. **Tuensang**

- ENPO argues that these districts are **administratively neglected and underdeveloped**.
- The demand is **not for a separate state**, but for a **special autonomous administrative region**.

### 4. India Celebrates 76th Republic Day – 26 January 2025

#### Key Highlights

- India celebrated its **76th Republic Day** on **26 January 2025**.
- Theme focused on: **"Viksit Bharat, Samridh aur Surakshit Bharat"** (Developed, Prosperous and Secure India)

#### Chief Guest

- President of Indonesia – Prabowo Subianto**
- He is the **4th Indonesian leader** to be invited as Chief Guest at India's Republic Day.

#### Parade & Tableau Highlights

- Tri-services participation**
- Emphasis on:
  - **Indigenous defence**
  - **Women empowerment**
  - **Digital governance**

#### Republic Day 2025 Awards & Recognitions (Important for Prelims)

##### Best Marching Contingents

- Army (Overall Best Marching Contingent)**
- Delhi Police** (Best Auxiliary / Supporting Contingent)

##### Best Tableaux (State / UT Category)

- Uttar Pradesh** – Theme: *"Virasat aur Vikas"*
- Gujarat** – Also awarded in state category

##### Best Tableaux (Central Ministries)

- Ministry of Tribal Affairs**
  - Theme related to **Tribal Pride / Janjatiya Gaurav**

##### Best Marching Contingent – Paramilitary

- CRPF**

##### Online People's Choice Award

- Tableau of Sikkim**

## 5. Domicile-Based Reservation in Medical Admissions – Supreme Court Ruling

### Issue

- Challenge to **domicile-based reservation** in **PG medical admissions (NEET-PG)**.

### Supreme Court Observations -

- Domicile-based reservation is **constitutionally valid**.
- It is **not a violation of Article 14 (Right to Equality)**.
- States can reserve **up to 50% seats** for:
  - Residents of that state (domicile)
- Remaining **50% seats** fall under **All India Quota (AIQ)**.

### Key Constitutional Logic

- Medical education is linked to:
  - Public health needs of states
  - Availability of doctors in rural & backward areas
- Merit through **NEET** remains mandatory.

### Important Clarifications

- This ruling **does not affect admissions already completed**.
- India has **single domicile (Indian domicile)** under Article 5, but **state-specific domicile for limited purposes is allowed**.

### Static Linkage -

- Article 14** – Right to Equality
- Article 5** – Single Indian domicile
- Concept: **Reasonable Classification**
- Sector linkage: **Public Health & Medical Education**
- Examination authority: **National Testing Agency (NTA)**

## 6. The privileges and immunities of Members of Parliament (Parliamentary Privileges)

A debate intensified in India regarding the **privileges and immunities of Members of Parliament (Parliamentary Privileges)** after controversial remarks and actions by MPs inside and outside Parliament.

### Static Linkage -

- Article 105** – Powers, privileges, and immunities of Parliament
- Article 122** – Courts not to inquire into parliamentary proceedings
- Article 194** – Powers, privileges of State Legislatures

- Article 212** – Courts not to inquire into State Legislature proceedings
- Concept: **Separation of Powers**
- Institution linkage: **Parliament of India**

### Maharashtra Angle -

- Maharashtra Legislative Assembly** enjoys similar privileges under **Article 194**
- Courts cannot inquire into proceedings of the **Maharashtra Legislature** under **Article 212**

## 7. Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023 and obscenity and sexually explicit content

In **January 2025**, provisions related to **obscenity and sexually explicit content** gained attention due to the **implementation and interpretation of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023**, replacing IPC provisions.

### Core Facts (Most Important Section)

- New law: **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023**
- Replaced law: **Indian Penal Code (IPC), 1860**
- Obscenity provision: **Section 296, BNS**
- Corresponding IPC section: **Section 292, IPC**
- Punishment (first offence):
  - Imprisonment: **Up to 2 years**
  - Fine: **Up to ₹5,000**
- Punishment (subsequent offence):
  - Imprisonment: **Up to 5 years**
  - Fine: **Up to ₹10,000**
- Electronic transmission of obscene material:
  - Covered under **IT Act, 2000 – Section 67**
- Child-related sexual content:
  - Covered under **POCSO Act, 2012**

### Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023 – Section 296 (Obscenity)

#### Core Facts (Most Important Section)

- Law: **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023**
- Section: **296**
- Subject: **Obscenity**
- Replaces: **Section 292 of IPC, 1860**
- Nature of offence: **Sale, distribution, public exhibition, circulation of obscene material**
- First conviction:**
  - Imprisonment: **Up to 2 years**
  - Fine: **Up to ₹5,000**
- Subsequent conviction:**
  - Imprisonment: **Up to 5 years**
  - Fine: **Up to ₹10,000**
- Mode covered: **Physical and general circulation**
- Online obscenity: **Covered under IT Act, 2000 (Section 67)**

## Information Technology Act, 2000 – Section 67 (Obscenity in Electronic Form)

### Core Facts -

- Act: **Information Technology Act, 2000**
- Section: **67**
- Subject: **Publishing or transmitting obscene material in electronic form**
- Mode covered: **Digital / online / electronic platforms**
- Nature of offence:
  - Publishing
  - Transmitting
  - Causing to be published or transmitted
- First conviction:
  - Imprisonment: **Up to 3 years**
  - Fine: **Up to ₹5 lakh**
- Subsequent conviction:
  - Imprisonment: **Up to 5 years**
  - Fine: **Up to ₹10 lakh**
- Applies to: **Websites, social media, messaging apps, digital platforms**
- Authority: **Central Government (MeitY)**

(Brief explanation: Section 67 specifically targets obscenity in digital space, unlike BNS which covers general circulation.)

## Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012

### Core Facts -

- Act: **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act**
- Year of enactment: **2012**
- Ministry: **Ministry of Women and Child Development**
- Objective: **Protection of children from sexual offences**
- Child defined as: **Any person below 18 years**
- Nature of law: **Gender-neutral**
- Coverage: **Pan-India**
- Type of offences covered:
  - Penetrative sexual assault
  - Aggravated penetrative sexual assault
  - Sexual assault
  - Sexual harassment
  - **Child pornography / sexual content**
- Trial mechanism: **Special POCSO Courts**
- Burden of proof: **Shifted partially on accused (presumption clauses)**

## Hicklin Test & Community Standards Test of Obscenity

### Hicklin Test -

- Origin: **England**
- Status in India: **Rejected**

### Community Standards Test (CST) -

- Origin: **United States**
- Adopted in India by: **Supreme Court**
- Basis:
  - Whether content is obscene as per **contemporary community standards**
- Focus:
  - **Average person**
  - **Present-day social values**
- Status in India: **Accepted and followed**

## **8. Panchayat Devolution Index 2024**

In February–March 2025, the Union Ministry of Panchayati Raj released the **Panchayat Devolution Index 2024 (Status of Devolution to Panchayats in States)** assessing how states have devolved powers and resources to Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs).

### Core Facts -

- Report title: **Panchayat Devolution Index 2024**
- Released by: **Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India**
- Prepared by: **Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA)**
- Objective: **Evaluate devolution of powers, functions and resources to Panchayats**
- Measurement scale: **0–100** score for each state/UT
- Six dimensions assessed:
  - **Framework**
  - **Functions**
  - **Finances**
  - **Functionaries**
  - **Capacity Building**
  - **Accountability**
- Base period comparison: **2013-14 to 2021-22**  
overall avg increased from **39.92 to 43.89**

### Top state scores (approx) -

- **Karnataka – 72.23**
- **Kerala – 70.59**
- **Tamil Nadu – 68.38**
- **Maharashtra – 61.44**
- **Uttar Pradesh – 60.07**
- Total panchayats in India (2024): **~2.62 lakh**

### Bottom Performers (Low Scores) -

- **Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu:** ~13.62
- **Puducherry:** ~16.16
- **Ladakh:** ~16.18
- (These UTs ranked lowest in overall devolution.)

### Panchayat Devolution — Sector-Wise (Top States in Sub-Indices) -

| Dimension                                              | Top Performing State |
|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Framework</b> (legal/institutional)                 | Kerala               |
| <b>Functions</b> (devolved powers)                     | Tamil Nadu           |
| <b>Finances</b> (funds & fiscal autonomy)              | Karnataka            |
| <b>Functionaries</b> (trained personnel)               | Gujarat              |
| <b>Capacity Building</b> (training, skill development) | Telangana            |
| <b>Accountability</b> (transparency, Gram Sabha)       | Karnataka            |

### Maharashtra Angle -

- **Maharashtra ranks 4th** in the Panchayat Devolution Index 2024 with strong overall performance

## **9. President's Rule in Manipur (Article 356)**

In **February 2025**, **President's Rule** was imposed in **Manipur** after the resignation of the Chief Minister and failure to form an alternative government.

### Core Facts -

- Provision: **President's Rule**
- Constitutional Article: **Article 356**
- State affected: **Manipur**
- Date of imposition: **13 February 2025**
- Trigger:
  - Resignation of **Chief Minister N. Biren Singh**
  - No party/group able to prove majority
- Nature of governance: - State administration taken over by **President of India**
- Duration (initial): **6 months**
- Maximum duration: - **3 years** (with parliamentary approval & conditions)
- Status of State Assembly: - **Kept under suspended animation** (not dissolved)

### President's Rule (Article 356)

- **President's Rule** means the **temporary takeover of a State's governance by the Union Government** when the **constitutional machinery of the State fails**.
- It is **not an emergency like war**, but a **constitutional corrective mechanism**.

### Constitutional Basis -

- **Article 356** – Imposition of President's Rule
- **Article 355** – Duty of the Union to protect States
- Both articles work **together**.
- **Note** – Article 355 is the **duty**, Article 356 is the **tool**.

### Grounds for Imposition -

- **No party is able to form government** after elections
- **Loss of majority** of the ruling government
- **Resignation of CM** with no alternative government
- **Failure to pass budget / confidence motion**
- **Breakdown of law and order** (extreme cases)
- **Non-compliance with constitutional directions of Union**
- **Note for students: - Law & order alone is NOT sufficient**, unless it leads to **constitutional breakdown**.
  - Can be **dissolved later**.
  - **Note - Assembly is not automatically dissolved**
- **Parliament:**
  - Makes laws for the State
  - Budget passed by **Parliament**
- **Duration: -**
  - Initially **6 months**
  - Extendable every **6 months**

### Judicial Safeguards -

#### S.R. Bommai Case (1994) – MOST IMPORTANT

Supreme Court held:

- President's Rule is **justiciable** (courts can review)
- **Majority must be tested on the floor of the House**
- Arbitrary dismissal of governments is unconstitutional
- Federalism is a **basic feature** of the Constitution

**Note** – After S R Bommai Case : - Misuse of Article 356 reduced significantly

### Maharashtra Angle -

- President's Rule imposed multiple times:
  - **1980**
  - **2014**
  - **2019** (brief period)

## 10. Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Victory in Delhi Legislative Assembly Elections

In **February 2025**, the **Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)** won the **Delhi Legislative Assembly elections**, ending a long gap and returning to power after **27 years**.

### Core Facts -

- Election: **Delhi Legislative Assembly Election**
- Result declared: **February 2025**
- Winning party: **Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)**
- Gap since last BJP government in Delhi: **27 years**
- Total Assembly seats: **70**
- Seats won by BJP: **48**
- Vote share:
  - **BJP: 45.56%**
  - **AAP: 43.57%**
- NOTA vote share: **0.57%**
- Outcome: **Clear majority government**

### Static Linkage -

- **Article 239AA** – Special status of National Capital Territory of Delhi
- **Representation of the People Act, 1951** – Conduct of elections
- **Election Commission of India** – Election authority
- Concept: **Federalism & Union Territories with Legislature**

## 11. Misuse of State Emblem of India

The **Central Government** issued an advisory to **States/UTs** regarding the **unauthorised and improper use of the State Emblem of India**, reminding strict compliance with existing rules and laws.

### Core Facts -

- Subject: **State Emblem of India**
- Governing law:
  - **State Emblem of India (Regulation of Use) Rules, 2007**
- Relevant rule:
  - **Rule 4(2)** – Restricts use of State Emblem only to **authorised purposes**
- Prohibitory law:
  - **State Emblem of India (Prohibition of Improper Use) Act, 2005**
- Nature of misuse covered:
  - Use by **unauthorised persons**
  - Use for **commercial purposes**
  - Use on **private letterheads, vehicles, buildings**

- Authority issuing advisory: **Union Government**
- Objective: **Preserve dignity and sanctity of national symbols**

### Static Linkage -

- **Article 51A(a)** – Respect for national symbols
- **Emblems and Names (Prevention of Improper Use) Act, 1950**
- **State Emblem of India (Prohibition of Improper Use) Act, 2005**

## 12. Tripura Announces Its Official State Emblem

In **January 2025**, the **Tripura Government** officially **announced and notified its State Emblem**, giving the state a formally recognised emblem for official use.

**Tripura is legally allowed to use its own State Emblem, and this does NOT violate the State Emblem of India (Regulation of Use) Rules, 2007.**

### Static Linkage -

- **Article 162** – Executive power of the State
- **Article 51A(a)** – Respect for national symbols
- **State Emblem of India (Prohibition of Improper Use) Act, 2005**
- **State Emblem of India (Regulation of Use) Rules, 2007**

## 13. Odisha Government Pension for Emergency Period Prisoners

The **Odisha Government** announced a monthly pension of **₹20,000** for individuals who were imprisoned during the **National Emergency period (1975–77)**.

### Core Facts -

- State: **Odisha**
- Scheme type: **State pension scheme**
- Beneficiaries:
  - Persons **imprisoned during the Emergency (1975–1977)**
- Pension amount: **₹20,000 per month**
- Nature of benefit: **Honorary / recognition-based pension**
- Implementing authority: **Odisha State Government**
- Coverage: **State-specific**
- Objective:
  - **Recognition of sacrifice**
  - **Welfare support**

## Prelims-Relevant Data / Figures

- Emergency imposed: **25 June 1975**
- Emergency revoked: **21 March 1977**
- Duration: **21 months**
- Pension amount: **₹20,000 per month**
- Nature of Emergency: **Internal Emergency (Article 352)**
- **Article 352** – National Emergency
- **1975–77 Emergency period** (Internal Emergency)
- **Fundamental Rights (Articles 19 & 21)** – Suspension during Emergency

## 14. Justice Vinod Kumar Krishnan Appointed as Supreme Court Judge

In **January 2025**, Justice Vinod Kumar Krishnan took oath as a **Judge of the Supreme Court of India**, strengthening the apex court's judicial strength.

- Oath administered by: **Chief Justice of India**
- Appointment made by: **President of India**
- Basis of appointment: - **Collegium system**
- Source cadre: - **High Court judge (prior to elevation)**
- Nature of post: - **Constitutional office**
- Tenure: - **Till 65 years of age**
- Retirement age:
  - **Supreme Court judge: 65 years**
  - **High Court judge: 62 years**
- Strength of Supreme Court (max): **34 judges (including CJI)**
- Appointment authority: - **President of India.**

## 15. Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in Uttarakhand

**Uttarakhand became the first Indian state to implement the Uniform Civil Code (UCC)** after the Governor gave assent to the UCC law passed by the State Legislature.

- **Core Facts (Most Important Section)**
- State: **Uttarakhand**
- Subject: **Uniform Civil Code (UCC)**
- Status: **Implemented**
- Year of implementation: **2025**
- Committee name: **Ranjana Prakash Desai Committee**
- Applicable to:
  - **Marriage**
  - **Divorce**

- **Inheritance**
- **Succession**
- **Live-in relationships**
- Exempted group: - **Scheduled Tribes**
- Nature of law: - **State legislation**
- Coverage: - **Residents of Uttarakhand**
- Registration made mandatory for:
  - **Marriages**
  - **Live-in relationships**

## 16. Gujarat Government and Uniform Civil Code (UCC)

the **Gujarat Government** announced its intention to study and explore the implementation of the Uniform Civil Code (UCC), following **Uttarakhand's** implementation of UCC.

### Core Facts -

- State: **Gujarat**
- Subject: **Uniform Civil Code (UCC)**
- Current status:
  - **Under consideration / study stage**

## 17. Resignation of N. Biren Singh as Chief Minister of Manipur

### Core Facts -

- State: **Manipur**
- Chief Minister resigned: **N. Biren Singh**
- Follow-up action:
  - **President's Rule imposed**
- Constitutional provision triggered: - **Article 356**

## 18. Lok Sabha Daily Business Documents in Six Additional Languages

the **Lok Sabha Secretariat** announced that **daily business-related documents of the Lok Sabha will be made available in six additional Indian languages**, apart from Hindi and English.

- Nature of documents:
- **Other day-to-day parliamentary documents**
- Existing languages:
  - **Hindi**
  - **English**
- Additional languages to be included: -
  - **Six Indian languages** (from Eighth Schedule)
    1. **Bodo**
    2. **Dogri**
    3. **Maithili**
    4. **Manipuri (Meitei)**
    5. **Sanskrit**
    6. **Urdu**

## 19. Renaming of Foy Sagar Lake in Rajasthan

In **January 2025**, the **Rajasthan Government** announced the renaming of Foy Sagar Lake as “**Varun Sagar Lake**” in Ajmer district.

### Core Facts -

- Old name: **Foy Sagar Lake**
- New name: **Varun Sagar Lake**
- State: **Rajasthan**
- District: **Ajmer**
- Type: **Artificial lake**
- Built by: **British administration**
- Year of construction: **1892**
- Named after (earlier):
  - **Sir Alfred Foy** (British engineer)
- Purpose:
  - **Water supply**
  - **Flood control**
- Authority announcing renaming:
  - **Rajasthan State Government**
- Nature of decision:
  - **Administrative / executive decision**
- Do not confuse **Foy Sagar Lake** with **Ana Sagar Lake** (also in Ajmer)

## Economy

### 1. Economic Survey forecasts 6.3–6.8% growth for FY 2025–26—calls for land and labour reforms

#### About –

- India's growth is **moderating**, with FY26 forecast at **6.3–6.8%**, **below the 8%+ target** needed for Viksit Bharat by 2047.
- The Survey stresses **land and labour reforms** to unlock higher growth.
- **Capex, exports, and FDI** show resilience, while **inflation trends** are stabilizing.
- **Rural demand, agriculture rebound, and macro stability** are cited as growth drivers.
- The Survey sets the tone for **Union Budget 2025**, focusing on **investment-led recovery**.
- Covers GDP, inflation, trade, employment, and policy recommendations.
- Historical Evolution of the Economic Survey

### Viksit Bharat 2047

- Government's vision to make India a **developed economy** by 2047 (centenary of independence).
- Requires sustained **8%+ growth**, infrastructure push, and inclusive reforms.

### Insights from Past Surveys –

| Year    | Highlight                                                     | Brief                                                          |
|---------|---------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2016–17 | Introduced the concept of <b>Universal Basic Income (UBI)</b> | First official discussion of UBI in India's policy space.      |
| 2017–18 | Used <b>Pink Covers</b> to highlight gender issues            | Focused on gender equality and women's empowerment.            |
| 2018–19 | Introduced <b>Behavioral Economics</b> in governance          | Suggested “nudge” policies for better compliance and welfare.  |
| 2019–20 | Advocated <b>Ethical Wealth Creation</b>                      | Shifted narrative from redistribution to entrepreneurship.     |
| 2020–21 | Used <b>COVID-19 data analytics</b>                           | Highlighted India's pandemic response and economic resilience. |
| 2021–22 | Focused on <b>Agile Policy Framework</b>                      | Emphasized real-time data and adaptive governance.             |
| 2022–23 | Highlighted <b>Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)</b>        | Showcased UPI, Aadhaar, and India Stack as global models.      |

### 2. 8th Pay Commission Approved: Central Government Begins Salary & Pension Revision

#### Why in News?

As of **January 2026**, the Government of India has officially approved the **8th Central Pay Commission (CPC)**.

Core Static Backbone

- **Authority:** Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) under the Ministry of Finance.

- **Constitutional Basis:** Pay Commissions are periodically constituted (traditionally every 10 years) to recommend changes to the salary structure, allowances, and retirement benefits of central government staff.
- **Composition:** The 8th CPC comprises a **Chairperson**, one **Part-time Member**, and a **Member-Secretary**.
- **Timeline:** The Commission has been given **18 months** to submit its final report.
- **Historical Context:** The 7th Pay Commission was implemented in 2016 and concluded its 10-year cycle on **December 31, 2025**.

### Exam-Relevant Data ONLY

- **Effective Date (Assumed):** While the report is pending, **January 1, 2026**, is the logical reference date for implementation. This means even if the actual rollout happens in 2027, employees will likely receive **arrears** backdated to Jan 2026.
- **Fitment Factor:** The most discussed element.
  - **7th CPC:** 2.57
  - **8th CPC (Expected):** Between **2.28** and **2.86**.
- **Minimum Basic Pay:**
  - **Current:** ₹18,000.
  - **Expected:** Could rise to approximately **₹41,000 – ₹51,000** depending on the final fitment factor.
- **DA Merger:** There is a strong proposal to merge **50% of the Dearness Allowance (DA)** into the basic pay before applying the new fitment factor.

### Static Link Expansion

- **Article 309:** Revise this article which empowers the President and Governors to regulate the recruitment and conditions of service of persons appointed to public services.

## 3. Global Investment Trends Monitor: UNCTAD Reports a Fragile Rebound

### Why in News?

The **United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)** released its **Global Investment Trends Monitor**.

### Core Static Backbone

- **Organization:** **UNCTAD**, established in **1964**, is the leading UN body dealing with trade, investment, and development issues.
- **Headquarters:** **Geneva, Switzerland**.
- **Key Publication:** The "Global Investment Trends Monitor" is a periodic update, while the "**World Investment Report**" (**WIR**) is the major annual publication.
- **FDI Definition:** An investment made by a firm or individual in one country into business interests located in another country, typically involving a long-term relationship and a significant degree of influence (usually 10% or more of voting power).

## 4. One Nation, One Time: India Mandates IST as Sole Legal Time

- **The Initiative:** The Government of India has introduced the "**One Nation, One Time**" framework to establish **Indian Standard Time (IST)** as the only legal time reference for all sectors.
- **Legal Framework:** The **Legal Metrology (Indian Standard Time) Rules, 2025** were notified in **June 2025** to institutionalize this change.
- **Implementing Agencies:** A collaboration between the **Department of Consumer Affairs**, **CSIR-National Physical Laboratory (NPL)**, and **ISRO**.
- **Objective:** To eliminate dependency on foreign time sources like **GPS** (owned by the US), which are vulnerable to cyber-attacks and "spoofing."
- **Accuracy:** Using advanced **atomic clocks**, IST will be disseminated with millisecond to microsecond accuracy via Network Time Protocol (NTP) and Precision Time Protocol (PTP).
- **Regional Hubs: 5 Regional Reference Standard Laboratories (RRSLs)** have been established to ensure nationwide synchronization:
  1. **Ahmedabad**
  2. **Bengaluru**
  3. **Bhubaneswar**
  4. **Faridabad**
  5. **Guwahati**

## 5. Fiscal Health Index 2025: Mapping State-Level Economic Resilience

### Why in News?

The **16th Finance Commission Chairman, Dr. Arvind Panagariya**, launched the inaugural **Fiscal Health Index (FHI) 2025** report in New Delhi. Developed by **NITI Aayog**, this is a first-of-its-kind tool designed to provide a comprehensive assessment of the financial well-being of **18 major Indian states** based on data from the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG).

### Core Static Backbone

- **Published By:** NITI Aayog (National Institution for Transforming India).
- **Launch Date:** January 24, 2025.
- **Scope:** Analyzes **18 major states** that drive the Indian economy.
- **Data Source:** Based on CAG data for the financial year **2022-23**.
- **Five Key Sub-Indices:**
  1. **Quality of Expenditure:** Balance between development (long-term growth) and non-development spending.
  2. **Revenue Mobilization:** Ability to generate own tax and non-tax revenue.
  3. **Fiscal Prudence:** Adherence to fiscal deficit and revenue deficit targets.
  4. **Debt Index:** Overall debt burden and interest payment liabilities.
  5. **Debt Sustainability:** The gap between GSDP growth and interest payment growth.

### Exam-Relevant Data:

The report categorizes states based on their composite scores:

| Rank | State                   | Category     | Key Highlight                                            |
|------|-------------------------|--------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| 1st  | Odisha<br>(Score: 67.8) | Achiever     | Topped Debt Index (99.0) and Debt Sustainability (64.0). |
| 2nd  | Chhattisgarh            | Achiever     | High non-tax revenue from coal block auctions.           |
| 3rd  | Goa                     | Achiever     | Strong revenue mobilization.                             |
| 4th  | Jharkhand               | Achiever     | Notable improvement in fiscal prudence.                  |
| 5th  | Gujarat                 | Achiever     | Balanced fiscal management.                              |
| 6th  | Maharashtra             | Front-Runner | Dropped from 4th (2022) to 6th (2023);                   |

| Rank | State | Category | Key Highlight                          |
|------|-------|----------|----------------------------------------|
|      |       |          | high revenue but low health/edu spend. |

- **Aspirational States (Poor Performers):** Haryana, Kerala, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, and **Punjab** (at the bottom).
- **Maharashtra Specifics:** Total expenditure (13.4% of GSDP) is below the major states' average (15.8%). Health spending (4.3%) is lower than the 5.7% average.

## 6. National Critical Minerals Mission (NCMM): India's Shield for Resource Security

### Why in News?

**In February, 2025**, the Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, officially approved the launch of the **National Critical Mineral Mission (NCMM)**.

Core Static Backbone:

- **Mission Duration:** Seven years (**FY 2024-25 to 2030-31**).
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Mines, Government of India.
- **Total Outlay: ₹34,300 Crore.**
  - **Government Expenditure:** ₹16,300 Crore.
  - **PSU/Private Investment:** ₹18,000 Crore.
- **List of Critical Minerals:** India has officially identified **30 critical minerals** (including Lithium, Cobalt, Nickel, Graphite, Silicon, and REEs) based on their economic importance and supply risk.
- **Legal Pillar:** Supported by the **Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2023**, which allows the Central Government to auction 24 strategic and critical minerals.

### Key Mission Components

1. **Domestic Production:** Intensifying exploration through the Geological Survey of India (GSI). **1,200 exploration projects** are planned through 2031.
2. **Foreign Asset Acquisition:** Empowering PSUs like **KABIL** (Khanij Bidesh India Ltd) to acquire mineral blocks in resource-rich nations like Australia, Argentina, and Chile.
3. **Recycling:** A dedicated **₹1,500 Crore incentive scheme** (launched Oct 2025) to recover minerals from e-waste, end-of-life batteries, and vehicles.

4. **Stockpiling:** Allocation of **₹500 Crore** to create a National Strategic Reserve of critical minerals to mitigate sudden global supply shocks.
5. **Mineral Processing Parks:** Setting up specialized hubs to refine raw ores into usable high-tech materials within India.

## 7. The "Vital 30": Bharat's Roadmap for Critical Mineral Security

### The "Vital 30" List

The Ministry of Mines has identified **30 minerals** as critical for India. These are selected based on two parameters: **Economic Importance** and **Supply Risk**.

### The Full List:

- **Energy & EV Metals:** Lithium, Cobalt, Nickel, Graphite, Copper.
- **Electronics & Tech:** Gallium, Germanium, Indium, Silicon, Tin, Cadmium, Selenium, Tellurium.
- **Defense & Strategic:** Titanium, Tungsten, Vanadium, Beryllium, Niobium, Tantalum, Hafnium, Zirconium, Antimony, Bismuth, Molybdenum, Rhenium, Strontium.
- **Advanced Materials:** Rare Earth Elements (REEs), Platinum Group Elements (PGE).
- **Fertilizers:** Phosphorous, Potash.

### Top 5 "High-Impact" Minerals for Bharat

While all 30 are essential, these five are the most critical for immediate national security and the **2070 Net Zero** target:

| Mineral | Why It's Critical                                           | Major Sector           |
|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Lithium | Heart of Li-ion batteries; 5.9 MT inferred in J&K.          | EVs & Energy Storage   |
| REEs    | Used in permanent magnets for wind turbines & radars.       | Green Energy & Defense |
| Cobalt  | Essential for battery stability and superalloys.            | Aerospace & EVs        |
| Nickel  | Crucial for stainless steel and high-energy batteries.      | Infrastructure & Tech  |
| Copper  | The "Metal of Electrification"; vital for everything 5G/EV. | Digital & Power Grid   |

### Exam-Relevant :

- **Import Dependency:** India currently imports over **90%** of its Lithium, Cobalt, and REEs.
- **The 24/30 Rule:** Under the **MMDR Act Amendment 2023**, the Central Government now has the exclusive power to auction **24 out of these 30** minerals.

- **Customs Duty Reform:** Budget 2025-26 has made import of these 30 minerals **duty-free** to encourage domestic refining and manufacturing.
- **KABIL's Global Reach:** India's JV (KABIL) recently secured **15,000 hectares** in Argentina for Lithium and is scouting for Copper in Australia.

## 8. MCGS-MSME: A Multi-Billion Boost for Manufacturing Entrepreneurs

### Why in News?

On **January, 2025**, the Government of India officially approved the **Mutual Credit Guarantee Scheme for MSMEs (MCGS-MSME)**.

### Core Static Backbone

- **Implementing Agency:** **National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company Limited (NCGTC)**, a wholly-owned company under the Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Finance.
- **Launch Date:** January 29, 2025.
- **Duration:** Valid for **4 years** or until a cumulative guarantee of **₹7 lakh crore** is issued, whichever is earlier.
- **Goal:** To increase the manufacturing sector's share in GDP from 17% to **25%** under the "Make in India" vision.

### Key Features of MCGS-MSME

Unlike existing schemes that focus on small working capital, MCGS-MSME is built for **capital-intensive growth**:

1. **Guarantee Coverage:** Offers **60% guarantee coverage** to Member Lending Institutions (MLIs) like Banks and NBFCs.
2. **High Loan Limit:** Guarantees loans up to **₹100 crore** (previously unthinkable for standard collateral-free schemes).
3. **Asset Focus:** At least **75% of the project cost** must be used for purchasing **Plant and Machinery / Equipment**.
4. **Repayment & Moratorium:**
  - **Up to ₹50 crore:** Repayment up to **8 years** with a **2-year moratorium**.
  - **Above ₹50 crore:** Longer repayment schedules can be negotiated.
5. **Fee Structure:**
  - **Upfront Contribution:** 5% of the loan amount.
  - **Annual Fee:** **Nil** in the first year; 1.5% for the next three years; 1% thereafter.

## Eligibility Criteria

- Must be an MSME with a valid **Udyam Registration Number**.
- Must **not** be a Non-Performing Asset (NPA) with any existing lender.
- The loan must be intended for a project involving machinery/equipment (75% rule).

## MCGS vs. CGTMSE: The Major Difference

Students often confuse this with the older CGTMSE scheme. Here is a quick comparison:

| Feature      | CGTMSE (Credit Guarantee Fund Trust)   | MCGS-MSME (Mutual Credit Guarantee)   |
|--------------|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Max Loan     | Up to ₹10 crore (Revised 2025)         | Up to ₹100 crore                      |
| Coverage     | High (up to 85% for micro/women)       | Standardized at 60%                   |
| Primary Use  | Working Capital / Micro business setup | Machinery & Equipment (Manufacturing) |
| Target Group | Micro & Small Enterprises              | Medium Enterprises aiming to scale    |

## 9. The Organization: National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company Ltd (NCGTC)

### Summary

- **The Organization: National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company Ltd (NCGTC)** is a wholly-owned company of the Government of India, established in **2014** under the Ministry of Finance.
- **New Milestone (2025):** On **January 27, 2025**, the government launched the **Mutual Credit Guarantee Scheme (MCGS-MSME)** under NCGTC's management.
- **Objective:** To provide 100% (or partial) collateral-free credit guarantees to lenders (Banks/NBFCs), encouraging them to provide loans to high-risk but vital sectors like MSMEs, Exporters, and Startups.
- **Latest Scheme Details (MCGS):** \* **Loan Limit:** Up to **₹100 Crore** per borrower.
  - **Purpose:** Exclusively for purchasing **equipment and machinery** (must constitute 75% of the project cost).
  - **Guarantee Cover:** NCGTC provides a **60% guarantee** on the amount in default.

## MPSC Prelims "Need-to-Know" Facts:

| Detail           | Fact                                                                                       |
|------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Established      | March 28, 2014 (Incorporated under Companies Act).                                         |
| Headquarters     | <b>BKC, Mumbai</b> (Parinee Crescenzo).                                                    |
| Parent Ministry  | Department of Financial Services, <b>Ministry of Finance</b> .                             |
| Key Schemes      | ECLGS (Covid support), CGSS (Startups), CGFEL (Education Loans).                           |
| Recent Extension | <b>Credit Guarantee Scheme for Exporters (CGSE)</b> extended until <b>March 31, 2026</b> . |

## 10. SIDE Report 2024: India Ranks 3rd Globally in Digitalization

- **Published by:** Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (**ICRIER**) and **Prosus**.
- **Global Ranking:** India is the **3rd largest digitalized economy** in the world (aggregate level), trailing only the USA and China.
- **The CHIPS Framework:** The report uses a unique **CHIPS** framework to measure digitalization:
  - **C** – Connect (Access and Quality)
  - **H** – Harness (Adoption and Use)
  - **I** – Innovate (Emerging Tech and AI)
  - **P** – Protect (Safety and Risk)
  - **S** – Sustain (Sustainability and Green Tech)
- **Economic Contribution:**
  - In 2022-23, the digital economy contributed **11.74%** to India's GDP.
  - It is projected to reach **20% of GDP by 2029-30**, outpacing the growth of agriculture and manufacturing.
- **State-Level Rankings:**
  1. **Karnataka** (Ranked 1st)
  2. **Maharashtra** (Ranked 2nd)
  3. **Telangana**
  4. **Gujarat**
  5. **Haryana**

## MPSC Prelims "Need-to-Know" Facts:

| Detail          | Fact                                                                                             |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| User-Level Rank | <b>12th</b> among G20 nations (indicating a gap between aggregate scale and average user depth). |

| Detail              | Fact                                                                                                    |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Growth Rate</b>  | The digital economy (17.3%) is growing nearly <b>1.5 times faster</b> than the overall economy (11.8%). |
| <b>Employment</b>   | Employs approx. <b>14.67 million</b> workers (2.55% of the total workforce).                            |
| <b>Productivity</b> | The digital sector is <b>5 times more productive</b> than the rest of the economy.                      |
| <b>Key Driver</b>   | India hosts <b>55% of the world's Global Capability Centers (GCCs)</b> .                                |

## 11. Rubber Board 2025-26

### Initiatives: Modernizing Bharat's Rubber Sector

#### Why in News?

The **Rubber Board of India** has implemented a series of high-tech and sustainability-focused initiatives. These measures aim to bridge the gap between India's high consumption and domestic production (targeted at **9.75 lakh tonnes by 2026**) while ensuring compliance with new global environmental regulations like the **EUDR** (European Union Deforestation Regulation).

#### Strategic Digital Platforms (Launch 2025)

The board launched two flagship digital portals in January 2025 to modernize the supply chain and enhance productivity.

- **BSNR (Bharat Sustainable Natural Rubber) Portal:**
  - Developed with tech firm TRST01, this is a **traceability system** designed to meet EUDR requirements.
  - It uses **satellite mapping (Geofencing)** to provide "farm polygons," proving that the rubber was not grown on recently deforested land.
  - **Stakeholder Inclusivity:** Provides unique BSNR IDs to farmers, dealers, and exporters for a transparent digital ledger.
- **INR Konnect Platform:**
  - A web-based platform targeting the **20-25% of untapped plantations** owned by "absentee landlords."
  - It connects these owners with "adopters" or skilled tappers to bring abandoned land back into production.

## Financial Boost: SIDNRS Scheme (2024-2026)

The Central Government increased the outlay for the **Sustainable and Inclusive Development of Natural Rubber Sector (SIDNRS)** by 23%, totaling **₹708.69 Crore** for the 2024-26 period.

- **Increased Subsidy for Replanting:**
  - **Old Rate:** ₹25,000 per hectare.
  - **New Rate (2025): ₹40,000 per hectare** in traditional areas (Kerala/Tamil Nadu) and **₹50,000 per hectare** in non-traditional/NE regions.
- **Target:** Planting rubber in **12,000 hectares** in traditional areas and **3,752 hectares** in non-traditional regions.
- **Modernization of GPCs:** Assistance to 77 **Group Processing Centres (GPCs)** to install advanced Tunnel Smoke Houses and Solar Dripping facilities.

## Expansion Projects: Project INROAD

Project **INROAD** (Indian Natural Rubber Operations for Assisted Development) is a world-first initiative where the **Tyre Industry (ATMA)** directly funds rubber plantations.

- **Status 2025:** Successfully completed **1.25 lakh hectares** of plantations across 94 districts in the North-East and West Bengal.
- **Goal:** To develop a total of **2 lakh hectares** in the region by the end of the 5-year project.
- **Impact:** Expected to increase the North-East's share in India's rubber production from **16% to 32%**.

## 12. China Imposes 5-Year Anti-Dumping Duty on Indian Cypermethrin

- **The News** - China's Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM) announced the final determination to impose anti-dumping duties on **Cypermethrin** imports originating from India.
- **Duration:** The duties are effective for a period of **five years** (until May 2030).
- **Reasoning:** China claimed that Indian exporters were "dumping" the pesticide at unfairly low prices, causing material injury to China's domestic chemical industry.
- **Global Context:** India is the world's largest producer of Cypermethrin, accounting for nearly **80% of global production**.

## MPSC Prelims "Need-to-Know" Facts:

| Detail         | Fact                                                      |
|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Product</b> | <b>Cypermethrin</b> (A synthetic pyrethroid insecticide). |

| Detail               | Fact                                                                        |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Primary Use          | Controlling pests in cotton, fruit trees, vegetables, and corn.             |
| Investigation Period | Started May 7, 2024; Preliminary ruling in January 2025.                    |
| Trade Context        | Followed India's 12% tariff on certain Chinese steel imports in early 2025. |
| Authority            | Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM), China.                                       |

## Anti-Dumping Duty: Safeguarding India's Industry from Unfair Trade

- **Definition:** A protectionist tariff imposed by a domestic government on foreign imports that it believes are priced **below fair market value** (a practice called "dumping").
- **The Goal:** To neutralize the price advantage of dumped goods and ensure a "level playing field" for domestic manufacturers.
- **Key Authorities in India:**
  - **Investigation:** The **Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR)**, under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, conducts the probe.
  - **Imposition:** The **Ministry of Finance** officially imposes the duty based on DGTR's recommendations.

## Concept Comparison: ADD vs. CVD

| Feature | Anti-Dumping Duty (ADD)              | Countervailing Duty (CVD)                   |
|---------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Target  | Unfair Pricing by private companies. | Unfair Subsidies by foreign governments.    |
| Basis   | Price difference (Dumping Margin).   | Amount of subsidy provided to the exporter. |
| Focus   | Company-specific behavior.           | Country-specific government policy.         |

## 13. MeitY Unveils 'Entity Locker' to Revolutionize Business Document Management

- **The Launch:** The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) officially unveiled the **Entity Locker**.
- **Developed by:** The **National eGovernance Division (NeGD)** as part of the Digital India Programme.
- **The Concept:** A secure, cloud-based platform designed specifically for **non-individuals** (Corporations, MSMEs, Startups, Trusts, and Societies) to store, share, and verify official documents digitally.

- **Storage Capacity:** Every registered entity is provided with **10 GB of encrypted cloud storage**.
- **Key Features:**
  - \* **Real-Time Verification:** Direct integration with government databases (MCA, GSTN, DGFT) for instant document authentication.
  - **Consent-Based Sharing:** Securely share sensitive files with stakeholders (banks, regulators) only with the owner's explicit consent.
  - **Enterprise Vault:** Allows representatives to upload additional documents like board resolutions, audit reports, and minutes of meetings.
  - **eSign Integration:** Features legally valid digital signature authentication for all stored and shared documents.

## 14. JNPA Becomes India's 1st Port to Join Top 20 Global Efficiency Rankings

- **The Achievement:** In September 2025, the **Jawaharlal Nehru Port Authority (JNPA)** achieved the **23rd global rank** in the World Bank's **Container Port Performance Index (CPPI) 2024**.
- **Global improver:** It was recognized as one of the **top 20 most-improved ports** globally between 2020 and 2024.
- **Capacity Milestone:** On June 28, 2025, JNPA became the **first Indian port** to cross a container handling capacity of **10 million TEUs** (Twenty-foot Equivalent Units).

## MPSC Prelims "Need-to-Know" Facts:

| Detail             | Fact                                                                               |
|--------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Global Rank (CPPI) | 23rd globally (No. 1 in India).                                                    |
| Capacity Milestone | First Indian port with <b>10.4 million TEUs</b> capacity.                          |
| Operational Model  | India's <b>First 100% Landlord Major Port</b> (Private players run all terminals). |
| Green Initiative   | First Indian port to deploy a fleet of <b>EV trucks</b> with battery swapping.     |
| Current Goal       | Poised to handle <b>10 million TEUs of actual throughput</b> by 2027.              |

## 15. NISE Upgrades India's Solar Potential to 3,343 GW

- **The Report:** The "Solar PV Potential Assessment of India (Ground-Mounted)" report was released by the National Institute of Solar Energy (NISE) in September 2025.
- **The Massive Leap:** India's estimated solar potential has been revised upward to **3,343 GW**, a nearly 4.5-fold increase from the 2014 estimate of 749 GW.
- **Basis of Assessment:** This new figure is based on utilizing only **6.69% of the total identified feasible wasteland** in the country (up from the 3% used in the 2014 study).
- **Targets:**
  - **2030 Goal:** 500 GW of non-fossil capacity (with ~280 GW from solar).
  - **2047 Vision:** 1,800 GW of renewable capacity under 'Viksit Bharat@2047'.

### MPSC Prelims "Need-to-Know" Facts:

| Detail                  | Fact                                                                                     |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| National Potential      | 3,343 GW (NISE 2025 Assessment).                                                         |
| Top 3 States (Capacity) | 1. Rajasthan (23 GW+), 2. Gujarat, 3. Karnataka.                                         |
| Maharashtra Status      | 5th Rank in India (~5 GW); home to the first solar village <b>Manyachiwadi</b> (Satara). |
| World Ranking           | India is the <b>3rd largest</b> solar power producer globally (surpassed Japan in 2023). |
| Global Headquarter      | <b>International Solar Alliance (ISA)</b> is based in <b>Gurugram</b> , Haryana.         |

- **Why it Matters:**
  - \* **Export Immunity:** Previously, GI rice fell under general non-Basmati codes. When the government banned non-Basmati white rice exports (to control domestic prices), premium GI varieties like **Kalanamak, Gobindobhog, and Chak-Hao** were also blocked.
    - **Uninterrupted Trade:** With these new dedicated codes, GI-tagged rice can now be exported **uninterrupted**, even if a general ban is placed on regular white or broken rice.
    - **Policy Precision:** It allows for focused policy interventions and accurate tracking of premium rice exports in global markets.

### MPSC Prelims "Need-to-Know" Facts:

| Detail                     | Fact                                                                                  |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| New HS Code (White GI)     | 1006 30 91                                                                            |
| New HS Code (Parboiled GI) | 1006 30 11                                                                            |
| Old General Code           | 1006 30 90 (Now for "Other" non-GI/non-Basmati rice).                                 |
| Basmati HS Code            | 1006 30 20 (Remains separate).                                                        |
| Global First               | India is the <b>first country</b> to create specific HS codes for GI-recognized rice. |
| Nodal Body                 | <b>APEDA</b> (Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority). |

## 16. India Introduces Dedicated HS Codes for GI-Tagged Rice (2025-26)

- **The News:** As part of the **Union Budget 2025-26** and subsequent amendments to the **Customs Tariff Act, 1975**, the Indian government has introduced specific Harmonized System (HS) codes for Geographical Indication (GI) recognized rice.
- **Effective Date:** These codes became operational on **May 1, 2025**.
- **The New Codes:**
  - **1006 30 11:** Specifically for **GI-recognized Parboiled Rice** (Sela rice).
  - **1006 30 91:** Specifically for **GI-recognized White Rice** (Other than Basmati).

## 17. India Energy Week 2025: India's Blueprint for Global Energy Leadership

- **Dates:** February 11 – 14, 2025.
- **Venue:** **Yashobhoomi** (India International Convention and Expo Centre), Dwarka, **New Delhi**.
- **Theme:** "*Reimagining the Future of Energy in India, for the World.*"
- **Inauguration:** Virtually by **PM Narendra Modi**, who outlined India's energy ambitions based on **Five Pillars**:
  1. Harnessing domestic resources.
  2. Encouraging innovation.
  3. Economic and political stability.
  4. Strategic geographical location for trade.
  5. Commitment to global sustainability.

## Key Highlights & Strategic Agreements

- **Major Milestone:** PM Modi announced that India's solar energy capacity has increased **32 times** in the last 10 years, making it the **3rd largest** solar producer globally.
- **Ethanol Blending:** The target for **20% ethanol blending (E20)** has been moved up to **October 2025**.

## MPSC Prelims "Need-to-Know" Facts:

| Detail           | Fact                                                                                             |
|------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Nodal Ministry   | Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas.                                                           |
| Global Status    | Now the <b>2nd largest</b> energy event in the world (by participation).                         |
| Clean Cooking    | Hosted the <b>Clean Cooking Ministerial</b> to promote the <i>Ujjwala Yojana</i> model globally. |
| Gas Goal         | Reaffirmed the target to increase Natural Gas in the energy mix from <b>6% to 15%</b> by 2030.   |
| Upcoming Edition | <b>IEW 2026</b> is scheduled to be held in <b>Goa</b> (January 27-30, 2026).                     |

## 18. President Murmu Inaugurates International Conference on Unani Medicine 2025

- **The Event:** A two-day international conference organized by the **Central Council for Research in Unani Medicine (CCRUM)**, under the Ministry of Ayush.
- **Date:** February 11-12, 2025.
- **Venue:** Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi.
- **Theme:** "Innovations in Unani Medicine for Integrative Health Solutions – A Way Forward."
- **Occasion:** Celebrated as part of **World Unani Day**, which commemorates the birth anniversary of **Hakim Ajmal Khan** (a freedom fighter and legendary Unani physician).
- **Inauguration:** Inaugurated by President Droupadi Murmu.

## MPSC Prelims "Need-to-Know" Facts:

| Detail           | Fact                                                                                                          |
|------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| World Unani Day  | <b>February 11</b> (Birth Anniversary of Hakim Ajmal Khan).                                                   |
| Hakim Ajmal Khan | One of the founders of <b>Jamia Millia Islamia</b> and the <b>Ayurvedic and Unani Tibbia College</b> (Delhi). |
| Nodal Body       | <b>CCRUM</b> (Central Council for Research in Unani Medicine).                                                |

| Detail                      | Fact                                                                                |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| National Health Policy 2017 | Reaffirms the "Mainstreaming of Ayush" (Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha, Homeopathy). |
| Mizaj (Temperament)         | The core concept of Unani medicine (Blood, Phlegm, Yellow Bile, Black Bile).        |

## 19. Indian Railways Unveils World's Most Powerful Hydrogen Train Engine

- **The Achievement:** Indian Railways has developed a **1,200 Horsepower (HP)** hydrogen-powered engine, making it the **most powerful in its class globally**.
- **World Comparison:** While only a handful of countries (like Germany, China, and Sweden) operate hydrogen trains, their engines typically range between 500-800 HP. India's **1,200 HP** (per power car) significantly exceeds these global standards.
- **Total Output:** The train-set features **two Driving Power Cars (DPCs)**, totaling a combined output of **2,400 kW (approx. 3,200 HP)**.
- **Operational Milestone:** As of **January 2026**, final refilling and track trials are underway, with the official launch on the **Jind-Sonipat route (Haryana)** expected by the end of this month.

## MPSC Prelims "Need-to-Know" Facts:

| Detail          | Fact                                                                                 |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| National Status | <b>1st Hydrogen Train of India.</b>                                                  |
| Global Status   | <b>World's most powerful</b> (1,200 HP per engine) on a broad-gauge platform.        |
| Route           | <b>Jind – Gohana – Sonipat</b> (89 km section, Northern Railway).                    |
| Initiative Name | <b>"Hydrogen for Heritage"</b> (Plan to run 35 such trains on heritage/hill routes). |
| Speed Limit     | Designed for an operational speed of <b>110 km/h</b> .                               |

## 20. PRABHAAV Factbook & Bharat Startup Challenge Launched on National Startup Day 2025

- **Launch Date:** January 16, 2025 (9th Foundation Day of Startup India).
- **Inaugurated by:** Union Minister **Piyush Goyal**, Ministry of Commerce & Industry.
- **PRABHAAV Factbook:** \* **Acronym:** Powering a Resilient and Agile Bharat for the Advancement of Visionary Startups (**PRABHAAV**).
  - **Scope:** A comprehensive guide documenting the growth of the Indian startup ecosystem from **2016 to 2024**.
  - **Key Achievement Highlighted:** India has grown from 500 startups in 2016 to over **1,59,000** in early 2025, becoming the **3rd largest** startup ecosystem in the world.
- **Bharat Startup Grand Challenge:**
  - **Structure:** A series of **75 sectoral challenges** designed to solve critical business and social problems.
  - **Sectors:** Includes Renewable Energy, Blockchain, Agritech, Semiconductors, Fintech, and Social Commerce.
  - **Rewards:** Offers cash prizes, **mentorship**, procurement opportunities from industry leaders, and potential funding of up to **₹10 Crore** for winners.

- **Target:** To nurture **1.25 lakh entrepreneurs** and **50,000 startups** in 5 years.
- **Chief Minister's MahaFund:** A **₹500 Crore** corpus to support grassroots innovators.
- **Innovation City:** Plans to develop a **300-acre Maharashtra Innovation City** as a world-class R&D hub.

## 22. National Broadband Mission (NBM) 2.0: 2025–2030

- **Launch:** Officially launched on **January , 2025**, building on the foundation of NBM 1.0 (launched in 2019).
- **Vision:** "High-speed broadband and meaningful connectivity for all."

### Key Targets (by 2030):

- **Village Connectivity:** Expand operational fiber connectivity to **2.70 lakh villages** (up from 50,000 in 2025).
- **Internet Speed:** Ensure a minimum fixed broadband download speed of **100 Mbps** nationwide.
- **Anchor Institutions:** Connect **90%** of schools, PHCs, Anganwadi centers, and Panchayat offices via fiber.
- **Sustainability:** Power **30% of mobile towers** with green/sustainable energy.
- **Rural Penetration:** Increase rural internet subscribers to **60 per 100 population** (currently ~47).
- **Legal Support:** Aligned with the **Telecommunications Act 2023** and the new **Right of Way (RoW) Rules 2024** (effective Jan 1, 2025), which mandate a 45-day approval timeline for infrastructure.

### MPSC Prelims "Need-to-Know" Facts:

| Detail                      | Fact                                                                                                              |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Nodal Department</b>     | <b>DPIIT</b> (Dept. for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade).                                                |
| <b>Funding Milestone</b>    | The <b>Fund of Funds for Startups (FFS)</b> , run by <b>SIDBI</b> , has mobilized <b>₹13 trillion</b> in funding. |
| <b>Regional Rank</b>        | <b>Maharashtra</b> remains the #1 state in India, accounting for nearly <b>18%</b> of total registered startups.  |
| <b>2025 Winner</b>          | <b>Plastics for Change</b> won the Bharat Startup Grand Challenge 2025 (Sustainability sector).                   |
| <b>National Startup Day</b> | <b>January 16</b> (Established in 2022).                                                                          |

## 21. Maharashtra Special Update: Startup & Innovation Policy 2025

Maharashtra unveiled its own **Startup & Innovation Policy 2025** in August 2025:

## 23. Sanchar Saathi App: Citizen Empowerment & Security

- **New Status (2025-26):** The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) mandated in late 2025 that the Sanchar Saathi app must be **pre-installed on all new smartphones** sold in India from **March 2026**.

### MPSC Prelims "Need-to-Know" Facts:

| Feature           | NBM 2.0 Detail                     | Sanchar Saathi Detail          |
|-------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>Start Date</b> | April 1, 2025 (Operational Phase). | January 17, 2025 (App Launch). |

| Feature    | NBM 2.0 Detail                              | Sanchar Saathi Detail                        |
|------------|---------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| Nodal Body | Department of Telecommunications (DoT).     | C-DOT (Developer).                           |
| New Term   | Digital Bharat Nidhi (DBN) (Replaces USOF). | Chakshu (Fraud reporting tool).              |
| Goal       | 100 Mbps speed by 2030.                     | Reducing <b>Cyber Fraud</b> and Phone Theft. |

## 24. Global Economy Prospects Shows 'Tenuous Resilience' Amid Trade Volatility

- **The Report:** the World Bank's flagship report highlights that while the global economy has avoided a major crash, growth remains sluggish compared to historical averages.
- **Global Growth Forecast:**
  - **2025 (Estimated):** 2.7%
  - **2026 (Projected):** 2.6% (A slight easing as the "front-loading" of trade ahead of tariffs fades).
  - **2027 (Projected):** 2.7%
- **The "Weakest Decade" Warning:** The World Bank warned that the 2020s are on track to be the **weakest decade for global growth since the 1960s**.
- **Key Drivers:**
  - **AI Splurge:** Rapid investment in Artificial Intelligence has cushioned the slowdown in advanced economies.
  - **Trade Agility:** Private sector adaptability to new tariff regimes prevented the "barking dog" (extreme trade war) from becoming a "biting dog."
  - **Debt Risk:** Global public and private debt levels remain at **record highs**, threatening long-term stability.

### India Special: The Fastest-Growing Major Economy

The World Bank significantly **upgraded India's forecast** in this edition, marking it as the global bright spot.

| Indicator        | Forecast (FY 2025-26)     | Forecast (FY 2026-27) |
|------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| India GDP Growth | 7.2% (Upgraded from 6.3%) | 6.5%                  |

| Indicator       | Forecast (FY 2025-26)                                                | Forecast (FY 2026-27) |
|-----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Primary Drivers | Strong private consumption, rural income recovery, and tax reforms.  |                       |
| Global Context  | India remains the <b>fastest-growing major economy</b> in the world. |                       |

### MPSC Prelims "Need-to-Know" Facts:

| Detail          | Fact                                                                                                                  |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Frequency       | Published <b>twice a year</b> (January and June).                                                                     |
| Chief Economist | <b>Indermit Gill</b> (World Bank Group).                                                                              |
| Key Term        | " <b>Front-loading</b> " of trade (Ordering goods early to avoid anticipated tariffs).                                |
| Job Crisis      | 1.2 billion young people in developing nations will reach working age by 2035, requiring 4% growth just to keep pace. |

## 25. IMF Upgrades India's FY25 Growth to 3.3%: Global Economy Steady

- **The Report:** The **January 2026 World Economic Outlook Update**, titled "*Global Economy: Steady amid Divergent Forces*," was released on **January 19, 2026**.
- **Global Growth Forecast:** \* **2025 (Estimated):** 3.3%
  - **2026 (Projected):** 3.3% (An upward revision of 0.2% since October 2025).
  - **2027 (Projected):** 3.2%
- **The "Divergent Forces":** The IMF noted that "headwinds" from shifting trade policies and tariffs are being balanced by "tailwinds" from **surging AI and technology investment**, particularly in North America and Asia.
- **Inflation:** Global headline inflation is expected to decline from **4.1% in 2025** to **3.8% in 2026**.

### India Special: The Star Performer

The IMF significantly **upgraded India's forecast** for the current financial year, citing stronger-than-expected domestic performance.

| Indicator          | IMF Forecast (FY 2025-26)   | IMF Forecast (FY 2026-27) |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| India GDP Growth   | 7.3% (Up from 6.6%)         | 6.4%                      |
| Reason for Upgrade | Strong Q3 & Q4 momentum and | Anticipated moderation as |

| Indicator  | IMF Forecast (FY 2025-26)                                        | IMF Forecast (FY 2026-27)                                 |
|------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
|            | resilient private consumption.                                   | temporary cyclical factors wane.                          |
| Comparison | India remains the <b>fastest-growing major economy</b> globally. | Slightly below the Govt's Economic Survey 2025-26 (7.4%). |

### MPSC Prelims "Need-to-Know" Facts:

| Detail                  | Fact                                                                                        |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Frequency               | Published <b>twice a year</b> (April and October), with <b>updates</b> in January and July. |
| Economic Counsellor     | <b>Pierre-Olivier Gourinchas</b> (Director of Research).                                    |
| Top 2026 Growth (Major) | <b>India (7.3%)</b> followed by <b>China (4.5%)</b> .                                       |
| Advanced Economies      | US (2.4%), Euro Area (1.3%), Japan (1.1%).                                                  |
| Downside Risks          | Re-evaluation of <b>AI productivity</b> , trade tensions, and high public debt.             |

## 26. RBI Eases Norms for Foreign Banks to Open and Manage INR Accounts

To reduce the global demand for US Dollars and promote the Rupee as a settlement currency, the RBI has implemented the following changes:

### Removal of Prior Approval for SRVAs (August 2025)

- **The Change:** Authorised Dealer (AD) Category-I banks in India can now open **Special Rupee Vostro Accounts (SRVAs)** for foreign correspondent banks **without prior approval** from the RBI.
- **Previous Rule:** Earlier, every single SRVA request required a case-by-case approval from the RBI's Central Office.
- **Significance:** This removes a major "bottleneck," allowing faster onboarding of foreign banks for Rupee-based trade settlement.

### Overseas INR Accounts for Non-Residents (January 2025)

- **The Change:** The RBI now allows **overseas branches** of Indian AD banks to open INR accounts for persons resident outside India.

- **Usage:** These accounts can be used to settle both **current account** (trade) and **capital account** (investment) transactions.
- **Investment Link:** Balances in these repatriable INR accounts (like SRVAs or SNRAs) can now be used for **Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)** in non-debt instruments.

### MPSC Prelims "Need-to-Know" Facts:

| Detail                 | Fact                                                                                   |
|------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Vostro Account</b>  | An account held by a <b>foreign bank</b> in an <b>Indian bank</b> in INR.              |
| <b>Nostro Account</b>  | An account held by an <b>Indian bank</b> in a <b>foreign bank</b> in foreign currency. |
| <b>Primary Goal</b>    | <b>Internationalisation of the Rupee</b> (reducing exchange rate risks).               |
| <b>Legal Framework</b> | Amendments to <b>FEMA (Deposit) Regulations, 2025</b> .                                |
| <b>Scope</b>           | Enabled trade settlement with <b>22+ countries</b> (e.g., Russia, UAE, Sri Lanka).     |

## 27. Historic 7 GI Tags Granted Simultaneously to Andaman & Nicobar Islands

- **The Event:** In **December 2024**, the Geographical Indications (GI) Registry in Chennai granted certification to seven indigenous products from the islands.
- **The Announcement:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi highlighted these products in his **118th episode of Mann Ki Baat** (January 2025), focusing on tribal empowerment.
- **Facilitator:** The process was led by **NABARD** and coordinated by Padma Shri **Rajani Kant** (known as the "GI Man of India").
- **Target Communities:** Primarily benefits the **Nicobarese** and the **Karen** (settler) tribes.

### List of the 7 New GI Tagged Products

| Product Name                          | Category   | Significance for MPSC                                                                       |
|---------------------------------------|------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Nicobari Hodi</b>                  | Handicraft | A traditional <b>outrigger canoe</b> ; used for island transport and the famous Hodi races. |
| <b>Nicobari Mat (Chatrai-hileuoi)</b> | Handicraft | Intricately woven mats made from <b>Screw Pine</b> leaves; used for ceremonies.             |

| Product Name                                     | Category     | Significance for MPSC                                                                                |
|--------------------------------------------------|--------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Nicobari Hut</b><br>(Chanvi Pati – Nyi hupul) | Handicraft   | Traditional <b>dome-shaped</b> architecture designed to withstand cyclones and earthquakes.          |
| <b>Padauk Wood Craft</b>                         | Handicraft   | Furniture and artifacts made from <b>Andaman Padauk</b> , a rare, durable red-colored hardwood.      |
| <b>Andaman Karen Musley Rice</b>                 | Agricultural | Aromatic rice variety cultivated by the <b>Karen community</b> ; known for salinity resilience.      |
| <b>Nicobari Tavi-i-Ngaich</b>                    | Agricultural | <b>Virgin Coconut Oil</b> extracted via traditional cold-pressing methods (unrefined and pure).      |
| <b>Nicobar Coconut</b>                           | Agricultural | Known for its <b>large size</b> , high oil content, and thick kernel; a staple of the local economy. |

## 28. RBI & TRAI Mandate '1600' Series for All Banking & Financial Service Calls

- **The Initiative:** The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) and TRAI have introduced the **1600 (or 160xxxx)** numbering series exclusively for **transactional and service-related voice calls**.
- **The Goal:** To help citizens distinguish between legitimate calls from financial institutions and fraudulent calls from 10-digit mobile numbers.

## 29. Mandatory Implementation Timeline (2026)

TRAI has set a phased, time-bound deadline for different financial sectors to complete this migration.

| Category of Entity                               | Mandatory Adoption Deadline |
|--------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Commercial Banks</b> (PSBs, Private, Foreign) | <b>January 1, 2026</b>      |
| <b>Large NBFCs</b> (>₹5,000 Cr), Payments & SFBs | <b>February 1, 2026</b>     |
| <b>Insurance (IRDAI)</b> , Mutual Funds & AMCs   | <b>February 15, 2026</b>    |

| Category of Entity                        | Mandatory Adoption Deadline |
|-------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Qualified Stockbrokers (QSBs)</b>      | <b>March 15, 2026</b>       |
| <b>Remaining NBFCs, RRBs, Co-op Banks</b> | <b>March 1, 2026</b>        |

## 30. India Officially Becomes the 7th Largest Coffee Producer Globally

- **The Milestone:** As of February **2025**, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry confirmed that India has ascended to the position of the **7th largest coffee producer** in the world.
- **Production Share:** India contributes approximately **3.5% to 4%** of the total global coffee production.
- **Export Performance (FY 2024-25):** \* India's coffee exports reached a record high of **\$1.81 billion** in the fiscal year 2024-25, showing a massive **40.2% growth** from the previous year.
  - This marks the fourth consecutive year where exports have exceeded the \$1 billion mark.
- **Key Drivers:** Rising global prices and a significant surge in demand for **Instant (Soluble) Coffee**, which now accounts for nearly **38%** of India's total coffee exports.

### MPSC Prelims "Need-to-Know" Facts:

| Detail                          | Fact                                                                               |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Global Rank (Production)</b> | <b>7th</b> (Behind Brazil, Vietnam, Colombia, Indonesia, Ethiopia, and Uganda).    |
| <b>Global Rank (Exports)</b>    | <b>5th</b> (In terms of value realization).                                        |
| <b>Leading State</b>            | <b>Karnataka</b> (Accounts for ~70-71% of total production).                       |
| <b>Varieties Grown</b>          | <b>Robusta</b> (~72-74% share) and <b>Arabica</b> (~26-28% share).                 |
| <b>Top Export Markets</b>       | <b>Italy</b> (1st), Germany, Belgium, Russia, and UAE.                             |
| <b>Historical Origin</b>        | Introduced in the 1600s by <b>Baba Budan</b> (Mocha seeds planted in Chikmagalur). |

## 31. India Ranks 14th Globally in Public Pension Assets (2025-26)

- **The News:** According to the **Global SWF (Sovereign Wealth Fund) 2025 and 2026 reports**, India has been ranked as the **14th largest** holder of public pension wealth in the world.
- **Asset Value:** India's total public pension assets (primarily comprising the **EPFO** and **NPS**) are valued at approximately **\$305 Billion to \$340 Billion**.
- **Global Comparison:**
  1. **USA:** ~\$11.76 Trillion (1st)
  2. **Japan:** ~\$2.06 Trillion (2nd)
  3. **Canada:** ~\$1.80 Trillion (3rd)
    - **India:** ~\$305 Billion (**14th**)
- **EPFO Achievement:** In the **Thinking Ahead Institute's** Top 300 Pension Funds report, India's **Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO)** is ranked as the **19th largest single pension fund** in the world.

### MPSC Prelims "Need-to-Know" Facts:

| Detail                        | Fact                                                                                              |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Global Rank (Wealth)</b>   | <b>14th</b> (Global SWF 2025/26).                                                                 |
| <b>Asset-to-GDP Ratio</b>     | ~ <b>21%</b> (NPS + EPFO); OECD average is over 80%.                                              |
| <b>Mercer Global Index</b>    | India ranked <b>lowest (Grade D)</b> among 52 countries in 2025 for <b>Adequacy</b> .             |
| <b>PFRDA Milestone</b>        | NPS assets crossed the <b>₹15 Lakh Crore</b> mark as of late 2025.                                |
| <b>Unified Pension Scheme</b> | Effective <b>April 1, 2025</b> , aimed at providing <b>assured pensions</b> (50% of last salary). |

## 32. Sarla Aviation Unveils 'Shunya' – India's First 6-Seater Electric Air Taxi

- **The Unveiling:** Developed by the Bengaluru-based startup **Sarla Aviation**, the prototype named '**Shunya**' (meaning 'Zero'—representing zero emissions) was first showcased at the **Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2025** in Delhi.
- **The Vision:** Aimed at solving urban congestion in "hyper-commute" cities like **Bengaluru, Mumbai, and Delhi**.
- **Founder Insight:** The company was co-founded by **Adrian Schmidt** and **Rakesh Gaonkar**

(alumni of the German eVTOL pioneer *Lilium*), with the goal of creating the world's most economical flying taxi.

### MPSC Prelims "Need-to-Know" Facts:

| Feature               | Technical Specification                                                 |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Capacity</b>       | <b>6 Passengers + 1 Pilot</b> (Highest in its class).                   |
| <b>Top Speed</b>      | <b>250 km/h.</b>                                                        |
| <b>Range</b>          | <b>160 km</b> on a single charge (Optimized for 20-30 km trips).        |
| <b>Payload</b>        | <b>680 kg</b> (Capable of carrying passengers and significant luggage). |
| <b>Charging Time</b>  | <b>20 minutes</b> turnaround time between back-to-back trips.           |
| <b>Planned Launch</b> | Commercial operations targeted for <b>2028</b> .                        |

## 33. India's First 'Mega Innovation Complex' (CSIR) Inaugurated in Mumbai

- **The News:** Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh inaugurated the state-of-the-art **CSIR Innovation Complex (C-ICM)** in Mumbai.
- **The Vision:** Described as the "shaping of a decadal dream," the complex is designed to bridge the gap between **lab-scale research** and **industrial commercialization**.
- **Physical Infrastructure:**
  - **Scale:** A vertical facility spread over **9 floors**.
  - **Incubation:** Houses **24 "ready-to-move" incubation labs** (approx. 500 sq. ft. each).
  - **Facilities:** Includes furnished office spaces, networking zones, 6 conference rooms, and lounges for startups.
- **Key Focus Sectors:** \* Healthcare (Pharma, Biopharma, Medtech)
  - Chemicals and Materials
  - Energy and Sustainability

### MPSC Prelims "Need-to-Know" Facts:

| Detail          | Fact                                            |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Location</b> | <b>CSIR-NIO Regional Centre Campus, Mumbai.</b> |

| Detail       | Fact                                                                                           |
|--------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Model        | <b>Hub-and-Spoke Model</b> (Mumbai serves as the central hub for other CSIR incubators).       |
| Milestone    | Facilitated <b>50 technology transfers</b> on its inaugural day.                               |
| Partnerships | MoUs signed with <b>IIT Bombay (SINE)</b> , iCreate, NRDC, and Indian Pharma Alliance (IPA).   |
| Nodal Leader | <b>Dr. Ram Vishwakarma</b> (Distinguished Scientist) was the driving force behind the project. |

### 34. Vrindavan's Banke Bihari Temple Granted FCRA License (2025)

- **The News:** On February, **2025**, the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) granted a license under the **Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA), 2010** to the world-famous Banke Bihari Temple in Vrindavan, Uttar Pradesh.
- **The Significance:** This allows the temple to legally receive, manage, and utilize donations from foreign devotees and NRIs. Previously, it could only accept domestic contributions.
- **Management Shift:** The license was applied for by a **court-appointed management committee** (overseeing the temple since its transition from private management by a family of priests).

#### MPSC Prelims "Need-to-Know" Facts:

| Detail              | Fact                                                                                                            |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Official Name       | <b>Thakur Shri Bankey Bihari Ji Maharaj</b> (as registered for FCRA).                                           |
| Category of License | <b>Religious (Hindu)</b> activity.                                                                              |
| Validity            | <b>5 Years</b> (standard for all FCRA registrations).                                                           |
| Mandatory Account   | All foreign funds must be received in the designated <b>SBI, New Delhi Main Branch</b> (as per 2020 Amendment). |
| Fund Corpus         | The temple reportedly holds approx. <b>₹480 Crore</b> in domestic funds, along with gold and other valuables.   |

### 35. Union Minister Amit Shah Inaugurates NUCFDC Corporate Office in Mumbai

- **The Event:** Union Home and Cooperation Minister **Amit Shah** inaugurated the new Corporate Office of the **National Urban Co-operative Finance and Development Corporation (NUCFDC)** on **January 24, 2025**.
- **Venue:** The inauguration took place in **Mumbai**, Maharashtra, on the sidelines of the launch event for the **International Year of Cooperatives 2025**.
- **Nature of Launch:** The inauguration was held in a **hybrid mode** (virtual/physical) during the larger cooperative summit.
- **The Vision:** To establish a dedicated "**Umbrella Organization**" (**UO**) for India's **1,500+ Urban Cooperative Banks (UCBs)**, aiming to modernize their technology and strengthen their financial stability.

#### MPSC Prelims "Need-to-Know" Facts:

| Detail               | Fact                                                                                 |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Nodal Body           | <b>Ministry of Cooperation</b> , Government of India.                                |
| RBI Status           | Registered as a <b>Non-Banking Finance Company (NBFC)</b> in Feb 2024.               |
| Self-Regulatory Role | Designed to act as a <b>Self-Regulatory Organization (SRO)</b> for the UCB sector.   |
| Capital Target       | Required to raise a paid-up capital of <b>₹300 Crore</b> by February 2025.           |
| Core Functions       | Providing specialized IT infrastructure, liquidity support, and capacity building.   |
| "Safety Net"         | Often referred to as a ' <b>Suraksha Kavach</b> ' for small urban cooperative banks. |

### 36. CheQ Wisor: India's First AI Credit Card Expert

- **Launch Date:** Officially unveiled on February **2025**, by the Bengaluru-based fintech startup CheQ.
- **Founder:** The company was founded by **Aditya Soni**, a former executive at Flipkart.
- **Core Innovation:** Wisor is an AI-powered tool designed to act as a "**Credit Card Co-pilot**,"

providing real-time, personalized financial advice.

- **Key Features:** It offers a conversational interface for **spend analysis**, reward optimization across multiple cards, and tracking of milestone benefits.

### 37. SEBI "Dharohar": A Digital Repository of Market History

- **Launch Date:** Unveiled by SEBI on **January 26, 2025**, to commemorate India's 76th Republic Day.
- **Objective:** To document and showcase the **150-year-old heritage** and evolution of the Indian securities market.
- **Content:** A vast digital knowledge repository featuring over **3,000 assets**, including historic share certificates, 3D galleries, and interviews with market legends.
- **Interactive Features:** It includes a high-tech **interactive timeline** allowing users to explore significant milestones from the 19th century to the modern T+0 settlement era.
- **Target Audience:** Designed as a resource for students, researchers, and investors to foster financial literacy and historical awareness.

### 38. iSPOT: SEBI's New Shield Against Technical Glitches

- **Full Name:** **Integrated SEBI Portal for Technical Glitches (iSPOT)**, launched officially on **January 28, 2025**.
- **Operational Date:** The portal became mandatory for all reporting from **February 3, 2025**.
- **Purpose:** It replaces the old email-based system with a centralized web-based platform for reporting technical issues in the stock market.
- **Mandatory Users:** Market Infrastructure Institutions (**MIIs**) including Stock Exchanges, Clearing Corporations, and Depositories.
- **Key Function:** MIIs must submit preliminary reports and final **Root Cause Analysis (RCA)** of glitches through this portal.
- **Objective:** To improve data quality, enable historical traceability of glitches, and automate compliance reminders for a more resilient market.

### 39. Tata Steel: India's First Hydrogen Transportation Pipes

- **Achievement:** **Tata Steel** has become the first Indian company to develop and test specialized steel pipes for the transportation of **100% pure gaseous hydrogen**.
- **Technical Grade:** The pipes are of **API X65 grade**, specifically designed to resist "Hydrogen Embrittlement" (a process where hydrogen weakens traditional steel).
- **High-Pressure Capacity:** These pipes are capable of transporting hydrogen under high pressure of up to **100 bar**.
- **Manufacturing Hubs:** The steel was produced at Tata's **Kalinganagar (Odisha)** plant and processed into pipes at the **Khopoli (Maharashtra)** plant.
- **Testing:** The technology was successfully validated by the leading international agency **RINA-CSM S.p.A, Italy**.

### 40. SwaRail (RailOne): India's New Railway Super-App

- **Introduction:** The Ministry of Railways introduced the **"SwaRail" Super-App** on **January 31, 2025**, to unify various railway services.
- **Developer:** It was developed by the **Centre for Railway Information Systems (CRIS)** as a one-stop solution for passengers.
- **Rebranding:** In July 2025, the stable version was officially renamed and launched as **"RailOne"** to replace the fragmented experience of multiple apps.
- **Unified Services:** It integrates previously separate apps like **IRCTC RailConnect** (reserved), **UTS** (unreserved/platform tickets), **Rail Madad** (complaints), and food ordering.
- **Security Features:** The app introduces **Single Sign-On (SSO)**, biometric login (Face ID/Fingerprint), and an integrated **R-Wallet** for payments.

### 41. Sri Lankan Rupee: Worst Devaluation in 65 Years

- **Record Devaluation:** In **March 2022**, the Sri Lankan Rupee (LKR) witnessed its sharpest devaluation in over 65 years, plunging nearly **45%** against the US Dollar in just a few weeks.
- **Historical Context:** From a fixed rate of roughly **Rs. 200/USD**, the currency was floated, causing it

to crash to over **Rs. 360/USD** by May 2022, making it the world's worst-performing currency that year.

- **Primary Causes:** The crash was triggered by a total depletion of **foreign exchange reserves**, a sovereign debt default (\$51 billion), and the impact of the 2019 Easter bombings and COVID-19 on tourism.
- **Comparison:** While the **1977 devaluation** (Rs. 5.95 to Rs. 16) was significant, the 2022 crisis was more severe due to triple-digit inflation in essential goods and a complete "hard default."
- **Recovery Status:** As of **January 2026**, the currency has stabilized around **Rs. 309/USD** following an IMF bailout and strict monetary reforms by the Central Bank of Sri Lanka.

### 43. RBI's ".bank.in" and ".fin.in": Securing the Digital Identity

- **Introduction:** In February 2025, the RBI announced the creation of two exclusive internet domains—.bank.in (for banks) and .fin.in (for non-bank financial entities).
- **Objective:** To combat digital fraud and phishing by ensuring that customers can easily identify authentic websites of regulated financial institutions.
- **Mandatory Migration:** All Indian banks (Commercial, Cooperative, and RRBs) must transition their websites and emails to the .bank.in domain by **October 31, 2025**.
- **Registrar:** The **Institute for Development and Research in Banking Technology (IDRBT)** serves as the exclusive registrar for these domains.
- **Security Standards:** Unlike generic domains, these require strict verification and compliance with high-level cybersecurity protocols before registration.

### 44. 75 Years of NSS: Celebrating India's Statistical Backbone

- **Milestone:** The **National Sample Survey (NSS)** completed **75 years** of establishment in 2025, with celebrations concluding in **November 2025** in Udaipur, Rajasthan.
- **History:** Founded in **1950** based on the vision of **Prof. P.C. Mahalanobis** (the Father of Indian Statistics), it remains the largest organization in India for conducting regular socio-economic surveys.

- **Theme 2025:** "Quality Statistics and Data for Everyone" (celebrated alongside World Statistics Day on **October 20**).
- **Major Releases:** To mark the anniversary, the government launched the **"DI Lab Portal"** (Data Innovation Lab) and an updated **National Industrial Classification (NIC) 2025**.
- **Institutional Context:** Originally the NSSO, it was merged with the CSO in **2019** to form the **National Statistical Office (NSO)** under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (**MoSPI**).

### 45. MITRA: SEBI's Gateway to Forgotten Mutual Fund Assets

- **Full Form:** **Mutual Fund Investment Tracing and Retrieval Assistant (MITRA)**, launched by SEBI on **February 12, 2025**.
- **Developed By:** The platform was jointly developed by the two Qualified Registrar and Transfer Agents (**QRTAs**)—**CAMS** and **KFintech**.
- **Definition of Inactive:** A folio is classified as "inactive" if it has had **no investor-initiated transactions for 10 years**, yet still holds a unit balance.
- **Core Function:** It provides a centralized searchable database allowing investors or legal heirs to trace forgotten, overlooked, or unclaimed mutual fund holdings across the industry.
- **Key Objective:** Beyond retrieval, it aims to reduce fraud risks in dormant accounts and encourages investors to update their **KYC** details (PAN, Nominee, etc.).
- **Access Points:** The portal is accessible via **MF Central**, **AMFI**, and the official websites of various **AMCs** and **SEBI**.

### 46. Mukesh Ambani: Asia's Richest Person in 2025

- **Rankings:** In 2025, **Mukesh Ambani**, Chairman of Reliance Industries, reclaimed and maintained his title as the **richest person in Asia** across major indices like **Forbes** and **Bloomberg**.
- **Net Worth:** His wealth fluctuated throughout the year, peaking at an estimated **\$117.2 billion**.

(July 2025) and stabilizing around **\$112.8 billion** by December 2025.

- **Global Standing:** He consistently ranked between **15th and 18th** on the world's billionaire list, remaining the only Indian in the global top 20 for most of the year.
- **Key Growth Drivers:** Wealth surged due to the strategic expansion of **Jio Financial Services**, the merger of Reliance's media assets with **Disney+ Hotstar** (rebranded to JioHotstar), and new investments in Green Energy.
- **Comparison:** He successfully stayed ahead of fellow Indian tycoon **Gautam Adani** and China's "Bottled Water King" **Zhong Shanshan** throughout the 2025 fiscal cycle.

## Overall Theme of Global Risks Report

### 2025

#### **"Fragmentation in a volatile world"**

- The report highlights that the world is entering an era marked by:
  - **Geopolitical rivalry**
  - **Climate instability**
  - **Technological disruption**
  - **Erosion of trust in institutions**
- Risks are no longer isolated — they are **interconnected, cascading, and systemic**.

### Top Global Risks (Short-Term: 2025–2027)

#### Top 5 Immediate Risks

- **Misinformation and Disinformation**
- **Extreme Weather Events**
- **State-based Armed Conflict**
- **Societal Polarisation**
- **Cyber Insecurity**
- **Key Insight:** - For the **second consecutive year**, **misinformation/disinformation** is ranked as the **No.1 short-term global risk**, especially due to **AI-generated content**, deepfakes, and election interference.

#### **Top Global Risks (Long-Term: 10-Year Horizon)**

#### Top 5 Long-Term Risks

- **Failure to Mitigate Climate Change**
- **Failure of Climate Adaptation**
- **Biodiversity Loss & Ecosystem Collapse**
- **Natural Resource Shortages**
- **Adverse Outcomes of AI Technologies**
- **Important Concept for Answers:-** Climate risks **dominate the long-term risk landscape**, indicating policy failure rather than lack of knowledge.

## International

### **1. Global Risks Report 2025**

#### About -

- The **World Economic Forum (WEF)** released the **Global Risks Report 2025**, warning that the **world is entering a decade of compounding risks** driven by **climate stress, misinformation, geopolitical conflicts, and AI-related disruptions**.
- It is based on inputs from **1,400+ experts** including policymakers, economists, scientists, and business leaders, and identifies **key global risks over short-term (2 years) and long-term (10 years) horizons**.

### Composite India Risk Profile (Summary Table)

| Risk Category  | India-Specific Impact       |
|----------------|-----------------------------|
| Disinformation | Elections, social harmony   |
| Climate change | Agriculture, cities, health |
| Cyber risks    | Digital economy, governance |
| Polarisation   | Institutional trust         |
| Geopolitics    | Trade, strategic autonomy   |
| AI disruption  | Jobs, inequality            |

## 2. INTERPOL – Silver Notice

### About -

- INTERPOL introduced the Silver Notice to help countries **trace, identify, and recover criminal assets**, especially in cases of **economic offences, corruption, and money laundering**.
- The Silver Notice is a **new category of notice introduced by INTERPOL to trace, identify, and recover illicit assets** linked to serious crimes.

### Core Facts (Most Important Section)

- Issuing body: **INTERPOL**
- Type: **Silver Notice**
- Introduced: **2024** (rolled out operationally in 2024–25)
- Purpose: - **Tracing and recovery of criminal assets**
- Nature: - **Asset-tracking notice**
- Legal power: - **Not an arrest warrant**
- Issued at request of: - **Member countries**
- Coverage: - **Cross-border / international assets**

### What Exactly Does a Silver Notice Do?

A Silver Notice helps member countries to:

- **Trace illicit assets** (bank accounts, real estate, luxury items)
- **Identify location of assets** across borders
- **Share financial intelligence**
- Support **legal proceedings for seizure, freezing, or confiscation**
- **Important:**  
It **does NOT** authorise arrest — unlike Red Notice.

### Types of Assets Covered

Silver Notice can be issued for:

- Bank accounts
- Cryptocurrencies
- Real estate
- Vehicles, yachts, aircraft
- Shell companies
- High-value goods (art, gold, diamonds)

### How is it Different from Other INTERPOL Notices?

| Notice Type  | Purpose                                       |
|--------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Red Notice   | Locate & provisionally arrest a wanted person |
| Blue Notice  | Collect information about a person            |
| Green Notice | Warning about potential criminals             |

| Notice Type   | Purpose                        |
|---------------|--------------------------------|
| Yellow Notice | Missing persons                |
| Purple Notice | Modus operandi of criminals    |
| Silver Notice | Trace & recover illicit assets |

### INTERPOL

- Full name: **International Criminal Police Organization**
- Common name: **INTERPOL**
- Year established: **1923**
- Headquarters: **Lyon, France**
- Total member countries: **195**
- Nature: - **Inter-governmental organisation**
- Main function: - **Facilitates police cooperation across countries**
- Legal authority: - **No power to arrest**
- Operational mechanism: - **Notices and diffusions**
- Governing bodies:
  - **General Assembly** (supreme body)
  - **Executive Committee**
  - **General Secretariat**

## 4. Renaming of the Gulf of Mexico and Denali (2025)

U.S. President Donald Trump signed an executive order which directed changes to the official names of two prominent geographical features within the United States:

- The **Gulf of Mexico** was to be renamed the **"Gulf of America"**.
- **Denali**, North America's tallest mountain, was to revert to its earlier federal name, **"Mount McKinley"**.

### Why Were the Names Changed? (Government Rationale)

- **Gulf of America:**  
The executive order described the body of water as a **central economic and strategic asset** to the United States — key to offshore energy production, commerce, fisheries, tourism, and maritime activities. The renaming was intended to reflect this perceived role in U.S. national identity.
- **Mount McKinley:**  
The order restored the earlier name *Mount*  
**Contact-7378743031 / 7767073031**

*McKinley* — originally used in federal nomenclature from 1917 until 2015 — to honour former U.S. President **William McKinley** for his leadership around the turn of the 20th century.

## 5. Indus Waters Treaty (IWT)

In **2024–2025**, the **Indus Waters Treaty (IWT)** was in news due to **India–Pakistan tensions**, disputes over **hydropower projects** in Jammu & Kashmir, and discussions on **review/renegotiation mechanisms** under the treaty.

### Core Facts (Most Important Section)

- Treaty name: **Indus Waters Treaty**
- Signed in: **1960**
- Signatories:
  - **India**
  - **Pakistan**
- Mediating institution: **World Bank**
- River system covered: **Indus River System**
- Total rivers: **6**
- Allocation:
  - **Eastern Rivers (India):** Ravi, Beas, Sutlej
  - **Western Rivers (Pakistan):** Indus, Jhelum, Chenab
- India's rights over Western Rivers:
  - **Non-consumptive uses**
  - **Run-of-the-river hydropower**
  - **Limited irrigation**
- Dispute resolution mechanism:
  - **Permanent Indus Commission**
  - **Neutral Expert**
  - **Court of Arbitration**
- Nature of treaty:
  - **Bilateral**
  - **Indefinite duration**

### Why Is the Treaty Considered Exceptional?

- Survived **wars of 1965, 1971, Kargil conflict**
- Often cited as one of the **most durable water treaties globally**
- Example of **hydro-diplomacy amid hostility**

### Major Disputes Under the Treaty ←

- **India's Projects Objected by Pakistan**
  - Baglihar Hydroelectric Project (Chenab)
  - Kishanganga Project (Jhelum tributary)
  - Ratle Project
- **Pakistan's argument:** India violates treaty design norms  
**India's argument:** Projects are treaty-compliant run-of-the-river schemes

## 6. Kailash–Mansarovar Yatra Restarted in 2025

In **2025**, India and China agreed to **restart the Kailash–Mansarovar Yatra** after a **gap of nearly five years**. The pilgrimage had remained **suspended since 2020** due to:

- COVID-19 pandemic
- India–China border tensions following the Galwan clash

The resumption is being seen as a **confidence-building humanitarian step** in India–China relations.

### What is the Kailash–Mansarovar Yatra?

- The Kailash–Mansarovar Yatra is a **sacred pilgrimage** undertaken by Indian pilgrims to:
  - **Mount Kailash**
  - **Lake Mansarovar**

Both are located in the **Tibet Autonomous Region**.

### Routes of the Yatra

#### A. Lipulekh Pass Route

- Via **Uttarakhand**
- Shorter but physically demanding

#### B. Nathu La Pass Route

- Via **Sikkim**
- Motorable, relatively less strenuous
- Symbolically important for India–China engagement

**Prelims trap:** - Yatra is **not entirely within Indian territory**.

## 7. Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger Exit from ECOWAS

Three Sahelian countries — **Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger** - **formally announced their withdrawal** from the **Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)**. The withdrawal became **effective in 2025** after the mandatory one-year notice period.

### Immediate Background

- All three countries experienced **military coups**:
  - Mali (2020, 2021)
  - Burkina Faso (2022)
  - Niger (2023)
- Following the coups, **ECOWAS imposed sanctions**, including:
  - Diplomatic isolation
  - Economic sanctions

- Threat of military intervention (especially in Niger)
- These actions triggered a **collective backlash** by the military regimes.

### Recent coups in:

- Mali
- Burkina Faso
- Niger

### What is ECOWAS? (Basic Definition)

- **ECOWAS** is a **regional intergovernmental organisation** of **West African countries**, established to promote:
  - Economic integration
  - Free movement of people and goods
  - Peace, security, and democratic governance
 It is one of Africa's **most active regional**

organisations.

- **Founded:** 1975
- **Treaty:** Treaty of Lagos
- **Headquarters:** Abuja, Nigeria
- **Members:** 15 West African states (before recent exits)

### Core Objectives

#### A. Economic Integration

- Common market vision
- Customs union
- Monetary cooperation (proposed single currency: **Eco**)

#### B. Free Movement

- ECOWAS passport
- Visa-free travel among member states

#### C. Peace & Security

- Conflict prevention
- Peacekeeping missions
- Anti-terrorism coordination

### Sahel Region

The **Sahel** is a **semi-arid ecological and geopolitical belt** stretching **east-west across Africa**, lying **between the Sahara Desert (north) and the Sudanian savanna (south)**.

### Countries of the Sahel

**Core Sahel countries include:**

- Mali
- Burkina Faso
- Niger
- Chad
- Mauritania

**Often extended to parts of:**

- Senegal
- Nigeria
- Sudan

⚠ **Exam trap:** The Sahel is **not a political organisation**, but a **geographical-ecological region**.

## 6. Beggar-Thy-Neighbour Policy

The economic policies pursued by the USA under **Donald Trump** are widely cited as **modern examples of beggar-thy-neighbour policies**, where **domestic economic recovery and strategic advantage** were prioritised at the cost of global trade stability.

### What Was Trump's Economic Philosophy?

#### "America First" Doctrine

- Reduce US trade deficits
- Protect domestic manufacturing
- Bring jobs back to the US
- Use tariffs as leverage

Core assumption: - US **gains** (zero-sum thinking)

Have turned the Sahel into a **"coup belt"**.

### Major Beggar-Thy-Neighbour Policies by the USA

#### Trade Protectionism

##### Tariff War

- High tariffs on:
  - Steel and aluminium (Section 232)
  - Chinese goods (Section 301)
- Affected:
  - China
  - EU
  - Canada
  - Mexico
- **Impact**
  - Short-term protection to US industries
  - Retaliatory tariffs by other countries
  - Global trade slowdown
- **Classic beggar-thy-neighbour trait:** Exporting unemployment and slowdown to trading partners.

### What is Beggar-Thy-Neighbour Policy?

- A **Beggar-Thy-Neighbour policy** refers to **economic measures adopted by one country to improve its own economic position at the expense of other countries**.
- In simple words: - **"I recover by making my neighbour worse off."**
- These policies may temporarily help one country but **harm global trade, cooperation, and long-term growth**.

## 7. USAID

### About -

**USAID** is the **primary civilian foreign aid and development agency of the United States**, responsible for delivering **humanitarian assistance, development support, and disaster relief** worldwide.

### Establishment & Headquarters

- **Established:** 1961
- **Founder:** President John F. Kennedy
- **Headquarters:** Washington, D.C.
- **Works under:** U.S. Department of State (policy alignment), but operates as a **distinct development agency**

### Core Objectives of USAID

**USAID works to:**

1. Reduce poverty
2. Promote global health
3. Support democracy & governance
4. Enhance food security
5. Respond to humanitarian crises
6. Build resilience against climate shocks

### USAID & India (Relevance)

- Active in India since the 1950s (now reduced)
- Focus areas:
  - Health
  - Nutrition
  - Climate resilience
- India today prefers **partnership-based cooperation** rather than aid dependence

## 8. Paris AI Action Summit 2025: A Global Shift from Safety to Sovereignty

### Why in News?

- On **February 10-11, 2025**, France hosted the **AI Action Summit** at the Grand Palais in Paris.
- It was the third major global gathering on AI, following the **Bletchley Park Summit (UK, 2023)** and the **Seoul Summit (South Korea, 2024)**.
- Notably, the summit was **co-chaired by India** (represented by PM Modi) and France (represented by President Macron).

### Core Static Backbone

- **What is an AI Summit?** An intergovernmental forum to discuss the ethical, economic, and security implications of Artificial Intelligence.

- **Evolution of AI Governance:**
  - **Bletchley Park (2023):** Focused on "Catastrophic Risks" and safety of frontier models.
  - **Seoul (2024):** Focused on "Safety, Innovation, and Inclusivity."
  - **Paris (2025):** Shifted the focus to "Action," emphasizing innovation, sovereignty, and the Global South.
- **Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI):** An international initiative to support responsible and human-centric development of AI. India was the chair of GPAI in 2024.

## 9. 2nd India-France AI Policy Roundtable: Pioneering Sovereign AI and Global Norms

### Why in News?

- On **February 10, 2025**, the **2nd India-France AI Policy Roundtable** was held at the **Sciences Po University in Paris**.
- It was an official side event of the **AI Action Summit 2025** (co-chaired by PM Modi and President Macron).
- The meeting focused on accelerating bilateral cooperation in **Sovereign AI** and digital public infrastructure.

### Core Static Backbone

- **Organizing Bodies:** Office of the **Principal Scientific Adviser (PSA)** to the Govt of India, **IISc Bengaluru**, **IndiaAI Mission**, and **Sciences Po Paris**.
- **Objective:** To build a shared "Techno-Legal" framework for AI governance that reflects democratic values.
- **Key Concept: Sovereign AI:** The ability of a nation to develop, control, and govern its own AI infrastructure and models (like LLMs) without over-dependence on foreign private players.
- **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI):** India's "India Stack" model (like UPI/Aadhaar) being applied to AI to ensure open access to data and compute power.

## 10. WEF Davos 2025: Navigating the 'Intelligent Age' through Global Collaboration

### Why in News?

- The **55th Annual Meeting** of the **World Economic Forum (WEF)** was held in **Davos, Switzerland**, from **January 20-24, 2025**.
- The summit concluded with a focus on how "Intelligent Age" technologies like AI can be

leveraged for inclusive growth, climate action, and rebuilding global trust amid geopolitical shifts.

### Core Static Backbone

- **What is WEF?** An international non-governmental organization founded in **1971** by **Klaus Schwab**.
- **Headquarters:** Cologny, Switzerland.
- **Annual Meeting Venue:** Traditionally held in **Davos**, a high-altitude town in the Swiss Alps.
- **Key Reports Released Annually:**
  - **Global Risks Report:** Tracks top threats (Environmental, Geopolitical, etc.).
  - **Future of Jobs Report:** Analyzes how technology impacts the labor market.
  - **Chief Economists Outlook:** Provides global economic projections.
- **Governance Model:** Promotes "**Stakeholder Capitalism**," a concept where companies serve the interests of all stakeholders (customers, employees, society) rather than just shareholders.

### Exam-Relevant Data ONLY

- **Theme 2025:** "*Collaboration for the Intelligent Age*".
- **India's Representation:** The delegation was spearheaded by **Ashwini Vaishnaw** (Minister of IT & Railways). Six Indian states participated: **Maharashtra**, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, and Kerala.
- **India's Narrative:** "One Nation, One Voice." India highlighted its milestone of surpassing **\$1 Trillion in FDI inflows** (since 2000) and its role as the world's **3rd largest startup ecosystem**.
- **Global Economic Outlook:** IMF projected global growth to remain steady at **3.3%** for 2025 and 2026.
- **Five Main Workstreams:** 1. Reimagining Growth 2. Investing in People 3. Rebuilding Trust 4. Industries in the Intelligent Age 5. Safeguarding the Planet

## 11. Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) 2024: India's Rank Declines to 96th

### Why in News?

Transparency International released the **Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) 2024** in February 2025. India's performance showed a marginal decline, reflecting ongoing challenges in public sector integrity and institutional accountability.

### Core Static Backbone

- **Organization:** Published annually by **Transparency International**, a Berlin-based non-governmental organization founded in 1993.
- **Definition of Corruption:** The index specifically measures "**public sector corruption**" (misuse of entrusted power for private gain). It does not measure private sector corruption or tax fraud.
- **Methodology:**
  - It is a **composite index** that aggregates data from 13 different surveys and assessments by experts and business executives.
  - **Scale:** 0 (Highly Corrupt) to 100 (Very Clean).
  - Countries must be evaluated by at least **three** different sources to be included in the ranking.
- **Scope:** Ranks 180 countries and territories.

### Exam-Relevant Data ONLY

- **India's Rank (2024):** **96th** (out of 180 countries).
- **India's Score (2024):** **38** (a decline from 39 in 2023 and 40 in 2022).
- **Top Performers (Least Corrupt):** 1. Denmark (90) 2. Finland (88) 3. Singapore (84)
- **Bottom Performers (Most Corrupt):** Somalia (9), South Sudan (8), and Venezuela (10).
- **Neighbors' Rankings:** China (76), Sri Lanka (121), Pakistan (135), and Bangladesh (149).
- **Global Average Score:** Remains stagnant at **43**.

## 12. PM Modi's Landmark 2025 USA Visit: Forging the 'MEGA' Partnership

### Why in News?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi undertook a high-profile official working visit to the United States from **February 12-15, 2025**. This was his first meeting with President **Donald Trump** following the latter's inauguration for a second term, aimed at stabilizing and expanding the India-US Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership.

### Core Static Backbone

The India-US relationship is structured around several foundational frameworks that students should revise alongside this news:

- **Major Defense Partner (MDP):** A unique status granted to India by the US in 2016, allowing for closer defense ties and technology sharing similar to NATO allies.
- **iCET (Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology):** Launched in 2022 to expand partnership in AI, space, semiconductors, and defense.

- **Consular Access:** Regulated by the **Vienna Convention on Consular Relations**, allowing for the establishment of consulates (like the new ones announced in Boston and Los Angeles).
- **2+2 Dialogue:** A format involving the Foreign and Defense Ministers of both nations to discuss strategic and security issues.

### Exam-Relevant Data ONLY

- **Key Initiative:** Launched the **U.S.-India COMPACT** (Catalyzing Opportunities for Military Partnership, Accelerated Commerce & Technology).
- **Trade Goal:** Announced "**Mission 500**" to increase bilateral trade to **\$500 billion by 2030**.
- **Defense Deals:** Agreed on co-production of **Javelin** Anti-Tank missiles and **Stryker** Infantry Combat Vehicles; US announced a review for releasing **5th Gen Fighters (F-35)** and undersea systems to India.
- **Technology:** Launched the **TRUST Initiative** (Transforming Relationship Utilizing Strategic Technology) for semiconductors and critical minerals.
- **People-to-People:** New Indian consulates to be opened in **Boston** and **Los Angeles**.

## 13. US Withdrawal from UNHRC 2025: Geopolitical Shift in Global Human Rights Governance

### Why in News?

On **February 5, 2025**, the United States, under the Trump administration, officially announced its withdrawal from the **United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)**. This marks the second time the U.S. has exited the body, citing concerns over "anti-Israel bias" and the presence of human rights violators among the council's members.

### Core Static Backbone

- **Establishment:** The UNHRC was created by the UN General Assembly in **2006** (replacing the UN Commission on Human Rights).
- **Headquarters:** **Geneva, Switzerland**.
- **Composition:** Consists of **47 United Nations Member States** elected by the UN General Assembly (UNGA) via secret ballot.
- **Membership Terms:** Members serve for **three years** and are not eligible for immediate re-election after two consecutive terms.
- **Seat Allocation:** Based on equitable geographical distribution:
  - Africa: 13 seats
  - Asia-Pacific: 13 seats
  - Latin America & Caribbean: 8 seats
  - Western Europe & Others: 7 seats
  - Eastern Europe: 6 seats

- **Universal Periodic Review (UPR):** A unique mechanism where the human rights records of all 193 UN member states are reviewed every 4.5 years.

### Exam-Relevant Data ONLY

- **Effective Date:** The withdrawal notice was issued in February 2025, with immediate cessation of participation in active sessions.
- **Historical Context:** The U.S. previously withdrew in **2018** (Trump administration) and rejoined in **2021** (Biden administration).
- **U.S. Grievance:** Specifically pointed to "**Agenda Item 7**", a permanent standing item on the council's agenda that focuses exclusively on Israel and the Palestinian territories.
- **Funding Impact:** The U.S. is typically the largest contributor to the UN budget; withdrawal often leads to a "funding gap" for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

## 14. US Funding Ban on UNRWA: A Major Blow to Palestinian Relief

### Why in News?

In **February 2025**, the United States officially extended its funding ban on the **United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA)** through a Presidential Executive Order. This followed a 2024 legislative pause and culminated in a wider withdrawal from 66 international organizations—including UNRWA.

### Core Static Backbone

- **Establishment:** UNRWA was established by the UN General Assembly in **1949** following the 1948 Arab-Israeli War (Nakba).
- **Mandate:** Unlike the **UNHCR** (which handles all other refugees globally), UNRWA has a specific mandate to provide education, healthcare, and social services to **Palestinian refugees** in five areas: Gaza, West Bank (including East Jerusalem), Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria.
- **Funding Model:** UNRWA is almost entirely funded by **voluntary contributions** from UN Member States, with a very small portion coming from the UN regular budget.
- **Refugee Definition:** UNRWA's definition includes the descendants of original refugees (over **5.9 million** people today), a point of significant geopolitical debate.
- **Differentiator:** While UNHCR focuses on **resettlement** in new countries, UNRWA's existence is tied to the **Right of Return** for Palestinians under UN Resolution 194.

## 16. Colombia 2025: Deteriorating Humanitarian Crisis & The Collapse of 'Total Peace'

### Why in News?

The year 2025 has been described by the **International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)** as the worst year in a decade for Colombia in humanitarian terms. Despite President Gustavo Petro's "Total Peace" (*Paz Total*) policy, the country faced a massive escalation in internal conflict, particularly the **2025 Catatumbo Clashes**, which triggered a national emergency.

### Core Static Backbone

- **Internal Armed Conflict:** A multi-decadal conflict involving the state, leftist guerrillas, and right-wing paramilitaries.
- **Key Actors:**
  - **ELN (National Liberation Army):** Founded in 1964; the largest remaining active Marxist guerrilla group.
  - **FARC Dissidents (EMC & Second Marquetalia):** Factions that refused to lay down arms after the 2016 Peace Agreement.
  - **Clan del Golfo (AGC):** A powerful drug-trafficking neo-paramilitary organization.
- **Total Peace Policy:** A strategy by the Petro administration (2022–2026) to negotiate simultaneously with all illegal armed groups rather than focusing solely on military defeat.
- **IHL (International Humanitarian Law):** Global rules (Geneva Conventions) designed to protect civilians during armed conflict, which were frequently violated in 2025.

- **Political Structure:** A **Unitary Presidential Republic**. The President serves a 4-year term and is constitutionally barred from re-election (Art. 197).
- **Capital: Bogotá** — the third-highest capital in the world (2,640 meters), located on a high plateau in the Andes.
- **Major Regions:**
  - **Andean Highlands:** The economic heart and most populated area.
  - **The Llanos:** Vast eastern grasslands shared with Venezuela.
  - **Amazon Rainforest:** Covers the southern third of the country.
- **Biodiversity:** Ranked **second in the world** (after Brazil). It holds 10% of Earth's species and is number one globally in bird and orchid diversity.

### Exam-Relevant Data ONLY

- **Borders:** Shares land boundaries with **5 countries:** Panama (NW), Venezuela (E), Brazil (SE), Peru (S), and Ecuador (SW).
- **Highest Point: Pico Cristóbal Colón** (5,730 m) in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta (not the main Andes).
- **Major Rivers: Magdalena** (most important for transport), Cauca, Orinoco, and Amazon tributaries.
- **Economy:** Fourth-largest in Latin America.
  - **Main Export:** Petroleum (over 45% of total exports).
  - **Key Commodities:** Coal, Coffee (Arabica), Gold, and Emeralds (world's largest producer).
  - **Global Status:** Joined the **OECD** in 2020; joined China's **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)** in 2025.

## 17. Colombia: The Gateway to South America & Biodiversity Powerhouse

### Why in News?

As of **January 2026**, Colombia is entering a high-stakes election year (Presidential elections set for May 31, 2026). The country is currently navigating a "polycrisis" involving a 117% increase in mass displacement, a surge in global coca production (67% of the global share), and a strained diplomatic relationship with the U.S. following its decertification in counternarcotics efforts.

### Core Static Backbone

- **Geographical Position:** The only South American country with coastlines on both the **Pacific Ocean** and the **Caribbean Sea**. It connects South America to Central/North America via Panama.

## 18. India-Mauritius 18th Joint Hydrographic Survey: Mapping the Blue Economy

### Why in News?

- On **October 26, 2025**, the Indian Navy ship **INS Sutlej** successfully completed the **18th Joint Hydrographic Survey** in Mauritius.
- This mission was a follow-up to the landmark survey conducted earlier in the year by **INS Sarvekshak** (January 2025), reflecting an intensified maritime partnership between the two nations.

### Core Static Backbone

- **What is Hydrography?** The branch of applied sciences dealing with the measurement and

description of physical features of oceans, seas, and coastal areas.

- **Primary Objective:** To ensure the **Safety of Navigation** and support marine activities including economic development, security, and environmental protection.
- **Bilateral Framework:** The surveys are conducted under a long-standing **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Hydrography** signed in 2005.
- **Institutional Link:** The **National Hydrographic Office (NHO)** in Dehradun, India, acts as the nodal agency for preparing nautical charts for Mauritius.

## 19. Mission 300 Africa Energy Summit: Electrifying 300 Million Lives by 2030

### Why in News?

The **Mission 300 Africa Energy Summit** was held in **Dar es Salaam, Tanzania**, on **January 27–28, 2025**. This landmark summit served as the first major gathering to operationalize "Mission 300"—an ambitious joint initiative launched by the World Bank Group and the African Development Bank (AfDB) to bring electricity to 300 million people in Africa by 2030.

### Core Static Backbone

- **Mission 300 Initiative:** A collaborative project launched in April 2024. The World Bank aims to connect **250 million** people, and the AfDB aims to connect **50 million** people.
- **The Global Gap:** Nearly **600 million** Africans (about 50% of the population) currently lack access to electricity, representing 83% of the global energy deficit.
- **Key Pillars of Mission 300:**
  - **Grid Expansion:** Strengthening national and regional grids.
  - **Distributed Renewable Energy (DRE):** Scaling up mini-grids and standalone solar systems for remote areas.
  - **Clean Cooking:** Reducing dependence on biomass (firewood/charcoal) which causes 600,000 premature deaths annually in Africa.
- **Institutional Support:** Co-hosted by the **African Union (AU)** and the **Government of Tanzania**, with support from the Rockefeller Foundation and GEAPP.

## 20. 1st BIMSTEC Youth Summit 2025: Fostering Regional Bridges

### Why in News?

The inaugural **BIMSTEC Youth Summit 2025** was held in **Gandhinagar, Gujarat**, from **February 7–11, 2025**. This summit was a significant step in India's regional diplomacy, aimed at channeling the energy of the region's youth towards collective growth and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

### Core Static Backbone

- **What is BIMSTEC?** The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation.
- **Establishment:** Founded in **1997** through the **Bangkok Declaration**.
- **Headquarters:** **Dhaka**, Bangladesh.
- **Member Nations (7):** Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand.
- **Regional Significance:** Bridges South Asia and Southeast Asia, representing over 22% of the global population and a combined GDP of over \$4.5 Trillion.
- **Structure:** Operates through a Secretariat and ministerial meetings; the Chairmanship rotates alphabetically among member states.

### Exam-Relevant Data ONLY

- **Theme:** "Youth as a Bridge for Intra-BIMSTEC Exchange".
- **Organizers:** Jointly organized by the **Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports** and the **Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)**, with **CII Young Indians (Yi)** as the knowledge partner.
- **Key Initiative Highlighted:** **Mera Yuva Bharat (MY Bharat)** — India's technology-powered platform for youth development was showcased as a model for the region.
- **Cultural Visits:** Delegates visited **Dandi Kutir** (Gandhi Museum), **Sabarmati Ashram**, and **GIFT City** (India's first operational smart city).
- **Demographic Context:** Over **60%** of BIMSTEC's 1.8 billion population consists of youth, making them the primary drivers of the region's future.

## 21. Scrapping of the Bharat-Myanmar Free Movement Regime (FMR)

### Why in News?

The Union Government has moved forward with its decision to **entirely scrap** the Free Movement Regime

(FMR) along the 1,643 km Bharat-Myanmar border. The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has initiated the construction of **smart fencing** and stricter border protocols to safeguard internal security and maintain the demographic structure of the North Eastern states.

### Core Static Backbone

- **What is FMR?** A bilateral agreement that allowed tribes living within 16 km on either side of the border to travel into the other country without a visa.
- **Legal Framework:** Implemented in its modern form in **2018** as part of India's **Act East Policy**, though informal movement has existed since the 1970s.
- **Travel Rules (Before Scrapping):** Residents could stay for up to **two weeks** per visit using a one-year border pass.
- **The "Act East" Context:** It was designed to promote local trade, education, and healthcare access for trans-border ethnic communities (Zo people, Nagas, etc.) who were divided by the colonial **1826 boundary** (Treaty of Yandabo).

### Exam-Relevant Data ONLY

- **Border Length:** 1,643 km across four states: **Arunachal Pradesh (520 km), Mizoram (510 km), Manipur (398 km), and Nagaland (215 km).**
- **Smart Fencing Project:** The Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) approved a **₹31,000 crore** project to fence the entire border. As of late 2025, approximately 30 km in Manipur and pilot projects in Arunachal Pradesh have been completed.
- **New 2025 Protocol:** Even where fencing is not yet complete, movement has been restricted to a **10 km range** (reduced from 16 km) through **43 designated entry/exit points** managed by the **Assam Rifles**.
- **Biometric Enrolment:** States like Mizoram have completed over **80% biometric enrolment** of Myanmar refugees (as of Jan 2026) to distinguish between residents and illegal migrants.

## 22. US Lifts Decades-Old Sanctions on 3 Major Indian Nuclear Entities

### Why in News?

The United States Department of Commerce's Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS) officially removed three prominent Indian nuclear and research entities from its restrictive **Entity List**. This move, finalized just days before the 2025 U.S. Presidential inauguration, aims to

fulfill the long-pending vision of the 2008 Civil Nuclear Deal.

### Core Static Backbone

- **The Entity List:** A trade blacklist managed by the **U.S. Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS)**. Organizations on this list face stringent license requirements for importing specified U.S. technologies or goods.
- **Origin of Sanctions:** Most of these entities were added following India's **Pokhran-II nuclear tests in May 1998**.
- **India-US Civil Nuclear Deal (123 Agreement):** Signed in **2008**, it allowed India to access civilian nuclear technology despite not being a signatory to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).
- **iCET (Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology):** A 2022 framework that has accelerated the removal of these "legacy" hurdles to allow deeper cooperation in AI, Space, and Nuclear sectors.

### Exam-Relevant Data ONLY

The three entities removed from the sanctioned list are:

1. **BARC (Bhabha Atomic Research Centre):** India's premier nuclear research facility headquartered in Trombay, Mumbai.
  2. **IGCAR (Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research):** Located in Kalpakkam, focused on fast breeder reactor technology.
  3. **IREL (Indian Rare Earths Limited):** A PSU under the Dept. of Atomic Energy, critical for the supply of rare earth minerals.
- **Objective:** To enable the co-development of **Small Modular Reactors (SMRs)** and secure supply chains for **Critical Minerals**.

## 23. Bharat-Spain Dual Year 2026: A Triple Focus on Culture, Tourism, and AI

### Why in News?

During the official visit of Spanish Prime Minister **Pedro Sánchez** to India in October 2024, both nations agreed to designate **2026** as the **"India-Spain Dual Year of Culture, Tourism, and Artificial Intelligence."** This year is particularly significant as it marks the **70th anniversary** of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries (1956–2026).

### Core Static Backbone

- **Diplomatic History:** India and Spain established diplomatic ties in **1956**. Spain opened its resident embassy in New Delhi in 1958.
- **Economic Pillars:** Current bilateral trade stands at approximately **\$8-10 billion**. Key sectors of cooperation include railways, renewable energy, defense, and space.

- **Strategic Partnership:** The relationship was upgraded to a "Strategic Partnership" during PM Modi's visit to Spain in 2017.
- **Institutional Framework:** Organizations like ICCR (Indian Council for Cultural Relations), Instituto Cervantes, and the Spain-India Council Foundation drive the "people-to-people" connect.

### Exam-Relevant Data ONLY

- **Logo Launch:** In January 2026, EAM S. Jaishankar and Spanish Foreign Minister José Manuel Albares jointly launched the **official Dual Year logo** in New Delhi, selected via a public competition on MyGov.
- **Culture:** Spain will be the "Guest Country" at the **International Film Festival of India (IFFI)** in Goa.
- **AI Collaboration:** The initiative focuses on the "positive use of AI" and its implementation in the productive economy. India's upcoming **AI Impact Summit** will serve as a key platform for this exchange.
- **Defense Milestone:** The year 2026 coincides with the expected rollout of the first 'Made in India' **C295 aircraft** from the Tata-Airbus plant in Vadodara, Gujarat.
- **Diplomatic Expansion:** Spain is set to establish a new **Consulate in Bengaluru**, while India will operationalize its **Consulate in Barcelona**.

## 24. Tianshan Shengli Tunnel: China Opens the World's Longest Expressway Tunnel

### Why in News?

China has officially operationalized the **Tianshan Shengli Tunnel** (Tianshan Victory Tunnel), which now stands as the **longest expressway tunnel in the world**. The tunnel officially opened to traffic on **December 26, 2025**, marking a monumental achievement in China's "Infrastructure Superpower" narrative.

### Core Static Backbone

- **Location:** Located in the **Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region**, traversing the central Tianshan Mountains.
- **Expressway Link:** It is a crucial segment of the **G0711 Ürümqi-Yuli Expressway**, connecting northern Xinjiang (Ürümqi) with southern Xinjiang (Yuli/Korla).
- **Design:** Consists of two parallel tubes for traffic and a central service tunnel.
- **Elevation:** Built at an average altitude of over **3,000 meters**, making it one of the highest ultra-long tunnels globally.

- **Engineering Method:** Utilized the "three tunnels and four vertical shafts" method, involving massive **Tunnel Boring Machines (TBMs)** specifically designed for hard rock excavation in seismic zones.

### Exam-Relevant Data ONLY

- **Total Length:** **22.13 kilometers** (approx. 13.75 miles).
- **Travel Time Impact:** Reduces the journey across the Tianshan Mountains from **7 hours to 3.5 hours**. The specific mountain crossing that took several hours now takes only **20 minutes**.
- **Depth:** The deepest point is **1,112 meters** beneath the mountain ridge.
- **Vertical Shafts:** Includes a shaft deeper than **700 meters**, setting a world record for the deepest highway ventilation shaft.
- **Investment:** Part of a larger expressway project totaling approximately **¥46.7 billion** (\$6.6 billion).

## 25. Sanjiv Ranjan Assumes Office as IORA Secretary-General

### Why in News?

Senior Indian diplomat **Sanjiv Ranjan** officially assumed the role of **Secretary-General** of the **Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)** on **January 1, 2025**.

### Core Static Backbone

- **What is IORA?** An intergovernmental organization established in **1997** to promote regional economic cooperation and sustainable development.
- **Headquarters:** **Ebène, Mauritius**.
- **Membership:** Comprises **23 Member States** (including India, Australia, Indonesia, South Africa, and UAE) and **12 Dialogue Partners** (including the US, China, Japan, and the EU).
- **The Secretariat:** Led by a Secretary-General (SG) appointed for a **three-year term**, renewable once. The SG is responsible for the administration of the Association and implementing the decisions of the Council of Ministers.

### Exam-Relevant Data ONLY

- **Profile:** Sanjiv Ranjan is a **1993-batch Indian Foreign Service (IFS)** officer with over 30 years of experience.
- **Tenure:** 3 years (January 1, 2025, to December 31, 2027).

- **Previous Indian SG:** He is the second Indian to hold this post; the first was **K.V. Bhagirath** (2012–2018).
- **Recent Activity:** On **January 14, 2026**, EAM S. Jaishankar met Secretary-General Ranjan in New Delhi to review IORA's priority areas, specifically focusing on maritime domain awareness and infrastructure.
- **Current Chairmanship:** **India** currently holds the Chair of IORA (2025–2027), having taken over from Sri Lanka.

*'Net Security Provider' and 'Primary Growth Engine' of the Indian Ocean Rim."*

- **Most Trusted Institution:** Globally, **Business** (62%) remains the only institution in the "Trust" category. **"My Employer"** (75%) is the most trusted entity of all.
- **Least Trusted Institution:** **Media** and **Government** (52%) remain in the "Neutral/Distrust" border globally. **Japan** (37%) and **the UK** (43%) are among the least trusting nations.
- **Hostile Activism:** 4 in 10 respondents globally now see "hostile activism" (e.g., online attacks, property damage) as a legitimate tool for societal change.

## 26. Edelman Trust Barometer 2025: Economic Fears Metastasize into Grievance

### Why in News?

The **25th Anniversary Edition** of the **Edelman Trust Barometer** was released (ahead of the World Economic Forum). The report, titled *"Trust and the Crisis of Grievance,"* highlights a global shift where economic anxiety has evolved into deep-seated resentment toward institutions and the wealthy.

### Core Static Backbone

- **Organization:** Published by **Edelman**, a global communications firm, since 2001.
- **The Trust Index:** An average of the percent trust in four key institutions: **Business, Government, Media, and NGOs**.
- **Methodology:** An online survey of over 33,000 respondents across 28 countries.
- **Scale:**
  - **0–49:** Distrust
  - **50–59:** Neutral
  - **60–100:** Trust
- **Key Concept: The Grievance Crisis:** Defined by a belief that the system is rigged, that government/business serve narrow interests, and that the wealthy benefit unfairly while regular people struggle.

### Exam-Relevant Data ONLY

- **Top 3 Most Trusting Nations:** 1. **China** (77%), 2. **Indonesia** (76%), 3. **India** (75%).
- **India's Rank:** India slipped to **3rd place** (from 2nd in 2024). While India's score remained stable at 75, Indonesia overtook it due to an improved score.
- **Trust Gap:** India shows a 15-point "Trust Inequality" gap—**80%** trust among the high-income group vs. **65%** among the low-income group.

## 27. Usha Vance: America's First Indian-American and Hindu Second Lady

### Why in News?

Usha Vance officially assumed the role of **Second Lady of the United States (SLOTUS)**, following the inauguration of her husband, **JD Vance**, as the 50th Vice President.

### Core Static Backbone

- **Identity & Heritage:** Born **Usha Bala Chilukuri** in San Diego, California, to Telugu Indian immigrant parents from **Andhra Pradesh** (Vadluru and Pamarru villages).
- **Religion:** A practicing **Hindu**. Her marriage to JD Vance (who converted to Catholicism in 2019) is an **interfaith partnership**. They married in 2014 in an interfaith ceremony featuring both a Bible reading and a Hindu priest's blessing.
- **Educational Excellence:** \* Bachelor's in History from **Yale University**.
  - Master of Philosophy from **Clare College, Cambridge** (Gates Cambridge Scholar).
  - Juris Doctor (JD) from **Yale Law School**.
- **Legal Career:** Served as a law clerk for high-profile federal judges, including **Chief Justice John Roberts** and **Justice Brett Kavanaugh**. She was a corporate litigator at the firm *Munger, Tolles & Olson* until July 2024.

### Exam-Relevant Data ONLY

- **Historical Firsts:** \* First **Indian-American** Second Lady.
  - First **Hindu** Second Lady.
  - First **Asian-American** Second Lady.
- **Recent News (Jan 2026):** In January 2026, it was announced that Usha and JD Vance are **expecting their fourth child**. This makes her the first incumbent Second Lady to be pregnant while in office since **1870** (Ellen Maria Colfax).

- **Family:** She has three children—**Ewan, Vivek, and Mirabel**—whom the couple is raising in the Christian faith, while maintaining strong ties to their Hindu heritage.
- **Official Role:** Appointed by President Trump in February 2025 to the **Board of Trustees of the John F. Kennedy Center** for the Performing Arts.

## 28. Thailand's Marriage Equality Act: A Historic First for Southeast Asia

### Why in News?

Thailand made history in **February 2025**, as the **Marriage Equality Act** officially came into effect. This landmark legislation allows same-sex couples to legally register their marriages, making Thailand the **first country in Southeast Asia** and the third in Asia (after Taiwan and Nepal) to recognize marriage equality.

### Exam-Relevant Data ONLY

- **Effective Date:** January 23, 2025.
- **Global Standing:** Thailand became the **38th country globally** to legalize same-sex marriage.
- **Minimum Age:** The law also raised the minimum age for marriage from 17 to **18 years**, aligning with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- **International Alignment:** Aligns with **Article 23 of the ICCPR** (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights), which Thailand ratified in 1996.

## 29. Micheál Martin Returns as Taoiseach of Ireland

### Why in News?

**Micheál Martin**, the leader of the **Fianna Fáil** party, was elected as the **Taoiseach** (Prime Minister) of Ireland for the second time. He succeeded Simon Harris of the Fine Gael party following the November 2024 general election and subsequent coalition negotiations.

### Core Static Backbone

- **The Office:** The **Taoiseach** is the head of government or Prime Minister of Ireland, appointed by the President upon nomination by the **Dáil Éireann** (the lower house of Parliament).
- **The Coalition Model:** Ireland currently operates under a historic power-sharing agreement between two traditional rivals—**Fianna Fáil** and **Fine Gael**—along with support from independent lawmakers.

- **Rotation Policy:** Under the 2024 coalition agreement, the role of Taoiseach rotates. **Micheál Martin** will serve as Prime Minister until **late 2027**, at which point the leadership will rotate back to the Fine Gael leader (currently **Simon Harris**).
- **Bicameral Legislature (Oireachtas):**
  - **Dáil Éireann:** The lower house (174 members).
  - **Seanad Éireann:** The upper house (Senate).

## 30. 1st International Pashmina Festival: Elevating Nepal's 'Soft Gold' Globally

### Why in News?

The inaugural **International Pashmina Festival cum Exhibition** was held in **Kathmandu, Nepal**. Organized by the **Nepal Pashmina Industries Association (NPIA)** and the **Confederation of Nepalese Industries (CNI)**, this first-ever event aimed to showcase the authenticity of Nepali Pashmina and boost its global market presence.

### Core Static Backbone

- **What is Pashmina?** A fine variant of spun cashmere, derived from the **Chyangra** (Himalayan mountain goat) found at altitudes above 4,000 meters.
- **Chyangra Pashmina Label:** This is the **Geographical Indication (GI)** and government-certified trademark for authentic Nepali Pashmina, registered in over 40 countries (including the US, EU, and Japan).
- **Physical Properties:**
  - **Micron Count:** 12–16 microns (human hair is ~70 microns).
  - **Warmth:** Eight times warmer than regular sheep wool.
  - **Weight:** Known as "Soft Gold" due to its extreme lightness and softness.
- **Traditional Process:** 1. **Hand-Combing:** Collected during the natural shedding season. 2. **Spinning & Weaving:** Historically done using hand-operated spinning wheels (*charkha*) and traditional pit looms. 3. **Dyeing:** Uses eco-friendly natural dyes.

### Exam-Relevant Data ONLY

- **Organizers:** Nepal Pashmina Industries Association (NPIA) & Confederation of Nepalese Industries (CNI).
- **Event Scale:** Over **150 domestic stalls**, with **40+ stalls** exclusively dedicated to "Pure Chyangra Pashmina."

- **Export Target:** The **National Pashmina Sector Export Strategy (2022–2026)** aims to achieve **\$75 million** in sustainable exports by the end of 2026.
- **Employment:** The sector provides livelihoods to over **300,000 people** in Nepal, with a significant participation of women in spinning and weaving.
- **Global Share:** While India (Ladakh/Kashmir) is a major producer, Nepal accounts for a significant portion of the high-end luxury market in Europe and the USA.

## 31. Alexander Lukashenko Wins Seventh Term: Continuing 30 Years of Rule

### Why in News?

Alexander Lukashenko was re-elected as the President of Belarus for a **seventh consecutive term**. According to the Central Election Commission (CEC), Lukashenko secured a landslide victory, though the election was widely condemned by Western nations and the Belarusian opposition as a "sham."

## 32. Bharat Joins Eurodrone Program as Observer: Strengthening Indo-European Aero-Defense

### Why in News?

Bharat officially became the second Asia-Pacific nation (after Japan) to join the **Eurodrone programme** as an **Observer State**. The Letter of Approval was delivered by the Director of **OCCAR** (Organisation for Joint Armament Cooperation) to the Indian Ambassador in Berlin, marking a new chapter in strategic defense ties with Europe.

### Core Static Backbone

- **The Programme:** Formally known as the **European MALE RPAS** (Medium Altitude Long Endurance Remotely Piloted Aircraft System).
- **Participating Nations:** A four-nation collaboration between **Germany, France, Italy, and Spain**.
- **Management:** Managed by **OCCAR** with **Airbus Defence and Space** (Germany) as the prime contractor, alongside Leonardo (Italy) and Dassault Aviation (France).
- **Purpose:** To provide Europe with an indigenous, high-performing drone system, reducing reliance on non-European platforms like the US *MQ-9 Reaper* or Israeli *Heron*.

- **Key Design Feature:** It is the first MALE drone specifically designed to fly in **non-segregated civil airspace** (meaning it can fly alongside commercial planes safely).

### Exam-Relevant Data ONLY

- **Role of Observer:** Bharat gains access to **technical data** and the option to place future orders. However, it does **not** have a say in design decisions or workshare allocation.
- **Technical Specs:**
  - **Endurance:** Up to 40 hours of continuous flight.
  - **Payload:** 2.3 tonnes (can carry sensors, cameras, or precision weapons).
  - **Engines:** Twin-turboprop (Catalyst engines) for high reliability.
- **Timeline:**
  - **First Flight:** Expected by 2027.
  - **Operational Status:** Expected to enter service by **2030**.
- **Strategic Link:** This follows the **India-Germany Defense Agreement** (October 2024) focused on co-development and technology sharing.

## 33. World Government Summit (WGS) 2025: Shaping the Future of Governance

### Why in News?

The **12th edition** of the **World Government Summit (WGS)** was held in **Dubai, UAE**, from **February 11 to 13, 2025**. The summit brought together over 30 heads of state, 400 ministers, and 6,000 participants to identify innovative solutions for global challenges.

### Core Static Backbone

- **Established:** **2013** under the leadership of HH Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum (VP and PM of the UAE).
- **Headquarters:** **Dubai, UAE**.
- **Theme 2025:** *"Shaping Future Governments"*.
- **Nature:** A global knowledge exchange platform that functions as a "think tank" for future governance, innovation, and technology.
- **Six Core Themes (2025):**
  1. Effective Governance and Accountability.
  2. Financing the Future and the Global Economy.
  3. Climate, Crisis Mitigation, and Resilient Cities.
  4. Human-centric Futures and Capacity Building.
  5. Global Health Transformations.
  6. Emerging Frontiers and the Future.

## Exam-Relevant Data ONLY

- **India's Participation:** India was represented by **Bhupender Yadav** (Union Minister for Environment, Forest, and Climate Change).
- **India's Focus: \* Mission LiFE:** Promoting "Lifestyle for Environment" as a global individual-led movement.
  - **Green Growth:** Emphasized India's target of **500 GW renewable energy by 2030** (200 GW achieved by 2025).
  - **Global South:** Urged developed nations to provide "real investments" and tech-sharing for climate justice.
- **Key Discussions:**
  - **Future of Mobility:** High-level roundtable on EVs and sustainable urban transport.
  - **Digital Justice:** China and other nations discussed the role of AI and digital platforms in legal administration.
  - **Energy Balance:** OPEC Secretary-General Haitham Al Ghais highlighted the need for **\$17.4 trillion** in oil sector investment by 2050.

## 34. Global Cybersecurity Outlook 2025: Navigating the Era of Cyber Complexity

### Why in News?

The **World Economic Forum (WEF)** released its **Global Cybersecurity Outlook 2025** report in January 2025 (in collaboration with Accenture). The report warns that the world is entering an era of "unprecedented cyber complexity," where geopolitical tensions and rapid AI adoption are outpacing traditional defense mechanisms.

### Core Static Backbone

- **Published By:** **World Economic Forum (WEF)** annually.
- **Core Objective:** To provide a strategic roadmap for business and government leaders to understand the evolving cyber threat landscape and build systemic resilience.
- **Primary Drivers of Complexity (2025):**
  1. **Geopolitical Instability:** State-sponsored attacks on critical infrastructure.
  2. **AI Proliferation:** The "dual-use" nature of AI for both offense and defense.
  3. **Supply Chain Fragility:** Increased reliance on third-party digital ecosystems.
  4. **Skills Crisis:** A widening global talent gap.

## 35. SAMVAD IV Thailand: PM Modi's Vision for a Human-Centric Asian Century

### Why in News?

On **February 14, 2025**, Prime Minister Narendra Modi virtually addressed the **fourth edition (SAMVAD IV)** of the "Global Hindu-Buddhist Initiative for Conflict Avoidance and Environmental Consciousness" held in **Thailand**.

### Core Static Backbone

- **What is SAMVAD?** An interfaith dialogue initiative launched in **2015**.
- **Founder Vision:** Conceived by **PM Narendra Modi** and late Japanese PM **Shinzo Abe** during their 2015 meetings.
- **Purpose:** To move from "conflict resolution" (reacting to violence) to "**conflict avoidance**" (addressing the root causes of friction through dialogue).
- **Host Cities 2025:** The conference took place in **Bangkok** and **Ayutthaya** (a UNESCO site in Thailand whose name is derived from India's *Ayodhya*).

### Exam-Relevant Data ONLY

- **2025 Theme:** "*The Asian Century of Dharma—Dhamma*".
- **Asian Century Definition:** PM Modi emphasized that the "Asian Century" should not just be measured by **economic growth**, but by **social and spiritual values**.
- **Key Philosophy:**
  - **Conflict Avoidance:** Cited the Rig Veda (*Ekam Sat Vipraha Bahudha Vadanti*) to explain that truth is one but seen through multiple lenses.
  - **The Middle Path:** Highlighted Lord Buddha's *Madhyamaka* (Middle Path) as the solution to extreme ideologies and environmental exploitation.
- **Policy Link:** Emphasized the synergy between India's '**Act East**' policy and Thailand's '**Act West**' policy.
- **Environmental Trusteeship:** Cited Mahatma Gandhi's concept of **trusteeship**—using natural resources for "growth, not greed."

## 36. Elon Musk's Historic 'Space Relic' Gift to PM Modi: The Starship Heatshield Tile

### Why in News?

On **February 13, 2025**, during his visit to the United States, Prime Minister Narendra Modi met with Tesla and SpaceX CEO **Elon Musk** at the **Blair House** in Washington, D.C. The highlight of this high-profile meeting was a unique gift from Musk—a **hexagonal ceramic heatshield tile** that had actually flown in space during the historic **Starship Flight Test 5** in October 2024.

### Core Static Backbone

- **The Component:** The heatshield tile is a vital part of the **Starship** spacecraft, the world's most powerful launch vehicle.
- **Material:** It is made of **silica-based ceramic**, similar to the ones used on the Space Shuttle but significantly more durable and heat-resistant.
- **Design:** Unlike the square tiles of the past, these are **hexagonal**. This shape is strategic because it eliminates straight-line gaps where hot plasma could penetrate during atmospheric re-entry.
- **Purpose:** It protects the stainless-steel hull of the spacecraft from extreme temperatures exceeding **1,370°C (2,500°F)** during re-entry into Earth's atmosphere.

## 37. Operation Devil Hunt: Bangladesh's Nationwide Crackdown on 'Fascist Terrorists'

### Why in News?

Bangladesh is in the peak of **Operation Devil Hunt Phase-2**, a massive security operation launched by the interim government. Originally started in February 2025, the second phase was triggered on **December 13, 2025**, following a gun attack on **Sharif Osman Hadi**, a prominent activist and potential candidate for the upcoming February 2026 elections.

### Core Static Backbone

- **Initiator:** **Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Md. Jahangir Alam Chowdhury**, the Home Affairs Adviser of the Muhammad Yunus-led interim government.
- **Target:** Alleged "fascist terrorists," specifically loyalists, henchmen, and former officials of the **Awami League** party and ousted PM **Sheikh Hasina**.

- **Primary Objective:** 1. To dismantle organized crime and "mob terrorism." 2. To recover illegal and looted firearms. 3. To ensure a stable environment for the **13th Parliamentary Elections** scheduled for February 2026.
- **Agencies Involved:** A joint force of the **Bangladesh Army, Police, Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB)**, and the **Rapid Action Battalion (RAB)**.

### Exam-Relevant Data ONLY

- **Phase-1 (Feb-Mar 2025):** Triggered by attacks on students in **Gazipur**. Over **11,300 people** were arrested in the first three weeks.
- **Phase-2 (Dec 2025-Present):**
  - **Arrests:** As of **January 25, 2026**, a total of **22,464 suspects** have been arrested in Phase-2 alone.
  - **Arms Recovery:** Law enforcement has seized **483 firearms, 4,660 rounds of bullets**, and over **1,000 indigenous weapons**, including grenades and mortar shells.
  - **Drugs:** Massive consignments of Yaba tablets and marijuana have been intercepted as part of the crackdown on "terror-funding" networks.
- **Cash Reward:** The government announced a reward of **Tk 50 lakh** for information leading to the arrest of the attackers of **Osman Hadi**.
- **Election Connectivity:** The government has issued a policy to allow legitimate election candidates to apply for/retrieve **firearm licenses** for self-defense during the operation.

## 38. Panama's 'BRI-xit': First Latin American Nation to Exit China's Belt and Road

### Why in News?

On **February 6, 2025**, Panama made history by becoming the **first Latin American country** to officially withdraw from China's **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**. President **José Raúl Mulino** announced the decision after a high-profile meeting with U.S. Secretary of State **Marco Rubio**, signaling a major geopolitical pivot toward Washington and away from Beijing's infrastructure diplomacy.

### Core Static Backbone

- **Joining the BRI:** Panama was the first Latin American nation to join the BRI in **November 2017**, shortly after switching diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to the People's Republic of China.
- **The Panama Canal Factor:** As the manager of one of the world's most critical maritime

chokepoints (handling 5–6% of global trade), Panama's alignment is a matter of intense strategic competition between the U.S. and China.

- **Mechanism of Withdrawal:** The 2017 Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) allowed for termination by either party with a **90-day written notice**. Panama officially submitted this notice in early February 2025.
- **Neutrality Treaty (1977):** Under the Torrijos-Carter Treaties, the U.S. maintains the right to use military force to defend the "neutrality" of the canal if it is threatened by a foreign power—a legal lever the U.S. leveraged during negotiations.

## 39. Argentina's Withdrawal from WHO: Aligning with the 'Trump-Milei' Doctrine

### Why in News?

On **February 5, 2025**, Argentina officially announced its decision to withdraw from the **World Health Organization (WHO)**. President **Javier Milei** echoed the move made by U.S. President Donald Trump just weeks earlier, citing "deep differences" regarding the organization's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic and its perceived "politicization."

### Core Static Backbone

- **Institutional Background:** Argentina was a long-standing member of the WHO (founded in 1948) and its regional arm, the **Pan American Health Organization (PAHO)**.
- **Presidential Stance:** Javier Milei, a self-described "anarcho-capitalist," has consistently criticized "supranational" organizations for infringing upon national sovereignty.
- **The "Crime Against Humanity" Allegation:** Milei's administration described the WHO's pandemic guidance—specifically lockdowns and quarantines—as a "social control experiment" that caused economic catastrophe.
- **Legal Mechanism:** Argentina invoked the **1969 Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties (VCLT)** for its withdrawal. Under international law, such a withdrawal typically requires a one-year notice period.

### Exam-Relevant Data ONLY

- **Official Notification:** The formal letter was received by the UN Secretary-General on **March 17, 2025**.
- **Effective Date:** The withdrawal is set to become official on **March 17, 2026**.
- **Financial Impact:** While the U.S. was the largest donor (\$1 Billion), Argentina's contribution was

relatively small, at approximately **\$8.2 million** annually.

- **The Alternative Path:** In May 2025, Argentina and the U.S. issued a joint statement to build a "**modern global health cooperation model**" outside the WHO framework, focusing on transparency and "gold-standard science."
- **Domestic Reform:** The withdrawal coincides with Milei's "**Make Argentina Healthy Again**" initiative, which mirrors RFK Jr.'s proposals in the U.S., focusing on food safety and reviewing immunization protocols.

## 40. UK Leads Global Crackdown on AI-Generated Child Sexual Abuse Material

### Why in News?

On **February 2, 2025**, the United Kingdom officially became the **first country in the world** to announce comprehensive new laws targeting the technology behind AI-generated child sexual abuse material (CSAM). Home Secretary **Yvette Cooper** revealed that these measures would be introduced as part of the **Crime and Policing Bill** to close legal loopholes exploited by predators.

### Core Static Backbone

- **Institutional Context:** This move follows sustained campaigning by the **Internet Watch Foundation (IWF)**, which reported that AI-generated CSAM cases nearly quadrupled in a single year.
- **The Legal Gap:** Previously, while possessing specific illegal images was a crime, possessing the **tools or software** designed to generate them was often a legal gray area.
- **Online Safety Act (2023):** This landmark act laid the foundation by requiring tech platforms to remove illegal content. The 2025 amendments go a step further by targeting the **source of production** (AI models).

### Exam-Relevant Data ONLY

The new laws introduce four world-first criminal offences:

1. **AI Tool Possession:** It is now illegal to possess, create, or distribute **AI models/image generators** specifically optimized or designed to generate CSAM. (Punishable by up to **5 years** in prison).
2. **Paedophile Manuals:** Criminalizes the possession of **AI "manuals" or guides** that teach users how to manipulate AI tools to create abusive imagery. (Punishable by up to **3 years** in prison).
3. **Platform Moderation:** Creates a specific offence for administrators or moderators of websites

that facilitate the sharing of AI abuse content or advice on grooming. (Punishable by up to **10 years** in prison).

4. **Border Force Powers:** Grants officers the power to compel individuals suspected of posing a sexual risk to **unlock their digital devices** at the UK border for inspection. (Punishable by up to **3 years** for refusal).

## 41. UAE Declares 2025 the 'Year of Community': Fostering Unity & Shared Progress

### Why in News?

On **January 27, 2025**, UAE President **His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan** officially declared 2025 as the "**Year of Community**". This national initiative follows the extended "Year of Sustainability" (2023–2024) and aims to shift the national focus toward social cohesion, family values, and collective responsibility.

### Core Static Backbone

- **The Tradition:** Since **2015**, the UAE has dedicated each year to a specific theme to guide policy, national priorities, and public engagement.
- **The Slogan:** "**Hand in Hand**" (*Yadan bi Yad*).
- **Leadership:** The initiative is overseen by **H.H. Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan** (Vice President) and **H.H. Sheikha Mariam bint Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan**.
- **Governance Link:** The year focuses on social development goals aligned with the "**We the UAE 2031**" vision, which seeks to make the UAE the most prosperous and socially stable society in the world.

### Exam-Relevant Data ONLY

- **Primary Objective:** Strengthening family and community bonds, preserving cultural heritage, and nurturing intergenerational ties.
- **Key Mechanisms:**
  - **Volunteering:** Scaling up national volunteering platforms (e.g., *Volunteers.ae*).
  - **Inclusion:** Creating "inclusive spaces" for the UAE's diverse population (over 200 nationalities).
  - **Skill-Building:** Empowering individuals and families in emerging sectors like **Artificial Intelligence** and entrepreneurship.
- **Significant Initiatives (2025):**
  - **Community-Managed Virtual Authority:** A digital governance tool

launched to streamline community service.

- **"Who's the 'Ba' (→) in Your Life?":** A cultural campaign using the Arabic letter *Ba* (representing unity) to honor unsung community heroes.
- **7 Volunteering Opportunities in 7 Emirates:** A specialized program led by the *Emirates Foundation*.

## Maharashtra

### 1. Maharashtra Language Mandate: Marathi Becomes Compulsory in All Government Offices

#### Why in News?

On **February 3, 2025**, the Maharashtra government, under the leadership of CM Devendra Fadnavis, issued a high-impact **Government Resolution (GR)**. This directive makes the use of Marathi mandatory for all official communication, public interface, and internal documentation across all government and semi-government offices in the state.

#### Core Static Backbone

- **Historical Context:** Marathi was designated the official language of the state in **1960**.
- **Primary Legislation:** The **Maharashtra Official Languages Act, 1964** (recently amended in 2021 and 2024) and the **Maharashtra Local Authorities (Official Languages) Act, 2022**.
- **Classical Language Status:** In **October 2024**, the Central Government officially granted **Classical Language status** to Marathi, fulfilling a decades-old demand and providing a legislative push for its administrative enforcement.
- **Jurisdiction:** Applies to:
  - All State Government departments.
  - Semi-government offices and State Corporations.
  - Local Self-Government bodies (Municipal Corporations, Zilla Parishads).
  - Government-aided institutions.

#### Exam-Relevant Data ONLY

- **Scope of Mandatory Use:**
  - **Internal:** Original proposals, correspondence, noting, drafting, and orders must be in Marathi.
  - **Digital:** All office websites, presentations, and electronic communications must be in Marathi.

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- **Infrastructure:** Computer keypads and printers must mandatorily feature **Marathi Devanagari** script alongside Roman alphabets.
- **Public Interface:**
  - Officers must communicate with visitors in Marathi (Exceptions: Foreigners and non-Marathi speakers from outside the state).
  - Display boards reinforcing Marathi as the medium of communication must be placed at office entrances.
- **Enforcement & Penalty:**
  - **Disciplinary Action:** Errant officials who fail to comply with the language policy will face disciplinary proceedings for "official indiscipline."
  - **Redressal:** Citizens can file complaints with the Head of Department. Appeals can be made to the **Marathi Language Committee** of the Maharashtra Legislature.
- **New Naming Policy:** New institutions must register names in Marathi only (no English translations), only Roman transcription is permitted.

## 2. Maharashtra Marathi Language Policy 2024: Elevating the State Tongue

### Why in News?

The Maharashtra Cabinet approved the **Comprehensive Marathi Language Policy 2024** in early 2024, followed by a series of strict enforcement directives throughout **2025**. This policy is a long-term strategic roadmap (2024–2047) aimed at making Marathi a language of "knowledge, employment, and global prestige," especially after it received the **Classical Language status** in October 2024.

### Core Static Backbone

- **Lead Ministry:** Marathi Language Department, Government of Maharashtra.
- **Objective:** To ensure Marathi is used in all "Lokvyavahar" (public affairs) including education, law, administration, and industry over the next 25 years.
- **Drafting Committee:** Based on recommendations from various scholarly committees, including the one led by **Dr. Sadanand More**.
- **Constitutional Link:** Aligned with **Article 345** (Official language of a State) and **Article 350A** (Facilities for instruction in mother-tongue).

## 3. Justice Alok Aradhe: From Bombay HC Chief Justice to Supreme Court Judge

### Why in News?

Justice **Alok Aradhe**, who served as the **48th Chief Justice of the Bombay High Court**, was elevated as a **Judge of the Supreme Court of India** on **August 29, 2025**. His elevation filled the Supreme Court to its full sanctioned strength of **34 judges** at that time. He was succeeded at the Bombay High Court by **Justice Shree Chandrashekhar** on September 5, 2025.

### Core Static Backbone

- **Appointment (High Court):** Sworn in as Chief Justice of Bombay High Court on **January 21, 2025**, after being transferred from the Telangana High Court.
- **Appointment (Supreme Court):** Recommended by the SC Collegium on August 25, 2025, and sworn in on **August 29, 2025**.
- **Parent High Court:** **Madhya Pradesh High Court** (Enrolled as an advocate in 1988).
- **Judicial Journey:**
  - **Additional Judge:** Madhya Pradesh HC (2009).
  - **Permanent Judge:** Madhya Pradesh HC (2011).
  - **Acting Chief Justice:** Served at Jammu & Kashmir HC (2018) and Karnataka HC (2022).
  - **Chief Justice:** Telangana HC (2023–2025) and Bombay HC (Jan–Aug 2025).
- **Literary Contribution:** Revised the prestigious legal text *Principles of Administrative Law* by M.P. Jain and S.N. Jain.

## 4. Universal AI University: India's First AI-Focused University in Karjat

### Why in News?

As of **January 2026**, **Universal AI University (UAU)** in Karjat, Maharashtra, is fully operational and recognized as **India's first university dedicated to Artificial Intelligence**. While it originated as the Universal Business School (UBS) in 2009, it was officially re-established as a full-fledged specialized AI university in **2023** following the passage of the *Universal AI University, Karjat Act, 2022* by the Maharashtra Government.

## Core Static Backbone

- **Location:** Sprawling 40-acre residential campus in **Karjat**, Raigad district (near Mumbai), Maharashtra.
- **Founder & Chancellor:** **Prof. Tarundeep Singh Anand** (former Managing Director at Thomson Reuters).
- **Recognition:** Approved by the **UGC** (University Grants Commission) and **AICTE**. It holds a unique "By Industry, For Industry" status, endorsed by over 60 global CEOs.
- **Academic Core:** Unlike traditional universities that treat AI as a sub-department, UAU integrates AI as the **foundational pillar** across all its schools—including Business, Design, Law, and Liberal Arts.

## Exam-Relevant Data ONLY

- **Key Schools:** \* School of AI & Future Technologies (B.Tech in AI & ML, Data Science).
  - School of Management (MBA with AI specializations).
  - School of Design, Music, and Social Sciences (all with AI-embedded curricula).
- **Infrastructure:** Features high-tech labs including **Quantum Computing, AR/VR/MR/IoT Labs**, and a **Thomson Reuters Global Trading Room**.
- **Green Campus:** Known as India's first "Green B-School," it utilizes solar power for 50% of its energy and is a zero-waste campus.
- **Placement (2025):** Recorded a highest international package of **₹1 Crore** and a domestic average of **~₹11.74 LPA**.
- **Leadership:** Appointed award-winning American professor **Dr. Simon Mak** as its Vice Chancellor in 2024 to bring Silicon Valley expertise to the campus.

## 5. CET-ATAL: Maharashtra's Digital Gateway for Entrance Success

### Why in News?

On **January 15, 2025**, the Maharashtra State Common Entrance Test (CET) Cell launched the **ATAL (Assessment, Tests, and Learning)** initiative. As of **January 2026**, the portal has become a primary resource for students preparing for professional courses (Engineering, MBA, Pharmacy, etc.), recording over **1 lakh registrations** within its first few months of operation.

## Core Static Backbone

- **Acronym:** **ATAL** stands for **Assessment, Tests, and Learning**.
- **Objective:** To provide a standardized platform for **Mock Tests** and **Psychometric Assessments** to reduce exam stress and help students identify their career strengths.
- **Inaugurated By:** **Shri Chandrakant Patil**, Minister of Higher and Technical Education, Maharashtra.
- **Portal Link:** [mocktest.mahacet.org](https://mocktest.mahacet.org)

## Key Features of the Initiative

1. **Mock Tests:** \* Simulates the **actual exam environment** for various CETs (MHT-CET, MBA-CET, LLB-CET, etc.).
  - Helps students with **time management** and familiarity with the digital interface.
2. **Psychometric Tests:**
  - A 90-minute assessment covering **aptitude, personality, and interests**.
  - Provides scientifically backed guidance for over **560 career options**.
3. **No Age Bar:** The platform is open to anyone intending for self-improvement; there is no upper age limit for appearing in these practice tests.
4. **Accessibility:** Specifically designed to benefit students in **remote and rural areas** who may not have access to expensive private coaching and mock test series.

## Exam-Relevant Data ONLY (Fee Structure)

**Note:** While the initiative is by a government body, it operates on a fee-based model to maintain the high-tech portal.

- **Psychometric Test:** Approx. **₹1,000 + 18% GST**.
- **Mock Test Series:** Approx. **₹500 + 18% GST** for a bundle of 5 tests.
- **Evaluation:** Scores and correct answers are displayed immediately after completion of the mock test for self-assessment.

## 6. Maharashtra Guardian Ministers List 2026: Historic Appointment of 'Saha Palak Mantris'

### Why in News?

The Maharashtra government under Chief Minister **Devendra Fadnavis** has fully operationalized the district-wise administration with a fresh list of **Palak Mantris (Guardian Ministers)**. A significant administrative first in this term is the creation of the **Saha Palak Mantri (Co-Guardian Minister)** post for high-priority or large

districts like Gadchiroli, Mumbai Suburban, and Kolhapur to ensure more granular development oversight.

### Core Static Backbone

- **Appointment Authority:** The **Governor of Maharashtra** on the advice of the **Chief Minister**.
- **Primary Role:** A Guardian Minister acts as the head of the **District Planning and Development Council (DPDC)**.
- **Responsibilities:**
  - Overseeing the execution of state schemes in the district.
  - Approving and reviewing the district's annual draft budget.
  - Facilitating land acquisition for major infrastructure projects (airports, highways).
  - Acting as a bridge between the local district administration and the state cabinet.

### District-Wise Guardian Minister List (Key Appointments)

The government distributed the 36 districts among senior cabinet members:

| District                   | Guardian Minister (Palak Mantri) | Saha Palak Mantri (Co-Guardian) |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Gadchiroli                 | Devendra Fadnavis (CM)           | Ashish Jaiswal                  |
| Mumbai City                | Eknath Shinde (Dy CM)            | —                               |
| Thane                      | Eknath Shinde (Dy CM)            | —                               |
| Pune                       | Ajit Pawar (Dy CM)               | —                               |
| Beed                       | Ajit Pawar (Dy CM)               | —                               |
| Mumbai Suburban            | Ashish Shelar                    | Mangal Prabhat Lodha            |
| Nagpur                     | Chandrashekhar Bawankule         | —                               |
| Nashik                     | Girish Mahajan                   | —                               |
| Ahilya Nagar               | Radhakrishna Vikhe Patil         | —                               |
| Kolhapur                   | Prakash Abitkar                  | Madhuri Misal                   |
| Jalna                      | Pankaja Munde                    | —                               |
| Ratnagiri                  | Uday Samant                      | —                               |
| Raigad                     | Aditi Tatkare                    | —                               |
| Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar | Sanjay Shirsat                   | —                               |

## 7. Dinesh Waghmare Appointed as 7th State Election Commissioner

### Summary

- **Appointment:** Shri **Dinesh T. Waghmare** (IAS 1994 batch) assumed charge as the **7th State Election Commissioner (SEC)** of Maharashtra on **January 28, 2025**.
- **Constitutional Basis:** The appointment was made by the Governor of Maharashtra under **Article 243-K** (Panchayats) and **Article 243-ZA** (Municipalities) of the Indian Constitution.
- **Term & Tenure:** He will serve a non-renewable term of **five years** (or until the age of 65).
- **Background:** Prior to this, he served as the Additional Chief Secretary (ACS) in the Medical Education and Drugs Department.
- **Current Significance (2026):** He is currently overseeing the massive 2026 local body elections across **29 Municipal Corporations** (including the BMC) and various Zilla Parishads in Maharashtra.

### MPSC Prelims "Need-to-Know" Facts:

| Detail                 | Fact                                                                                         |
|------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Position Number        | 7th State Election Commissioner of Maharashtra.                                              |
| Constitutional Article | <b>Article 243-K</b> (Crucial for MPSC Polity).                                              |
| Appointing Authority   | The <b>Governor</b> of Maharashtra.                                                          |
| Status of Body         | The SEC is an <b>independent Constitutional Body</b> , not a branch of the State Government. |

## 8. Prithviraj Mohol Crowns Himself 67th Maharashtra Kesari

### Summary

- **The Achievement:** Wrestler **Prithviraj Mohol** won the prestigious **67th Maharashtra Kesari** title (2025-26) by defeating **Suhas Ghodke** in the final match.
- **The Bout:** Mohol won by a convincing margin (10-0), showcasing technical dominance in the "Open Category" (Soil/Maati and Mat divisions).
- **Representing:** He represented the **Pune district** in this tournament.
- **The Venue:** The 67th edition was hosted in **Satara, Maharashtra**.

## MPSC Prelims "Need-to-Know" Facts:

| Detail             | Fact                                                            |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Winner             | Prithviraj Mohol (Pune).                                        |
| Runner-up          | Suhas Ghodke.                                                   |
| Edition            | 67th (Held in Jan 2026).                                        |
| Host District      | Satara.                                                         |
| Historical Context | The first Maharashtra Kesari (1961) was <b>Dinmanth Singh</b> . |

## 9. Raosaheb Borade Honored with Vinda Karandikar Lifetime Achievement Award 2024

### Why in News?

On **February 7, 2025**, the Maharashtra State Government's Marathi Language Department announced that the prestigious **Vinda Karandikar Jeevan Gaurav Puraskar (Lifetime Achievement Award) for 2024** has been conferred upon the veteran Marathi writer **Raosaheb Rangrao Borade** (famously known as **Ra. Ran. Borade**). Tragically, just days after the announcement, the literary world mourned his passing as he died on **February 11, 2025**, at the age of 84 in Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar.

### Core Static Backbone

- **Awarding Body:** Department of Marathi Language, Government of Maharashtra.
- **Prize:** A citation, a memento, and a cash prize of **₹10 lakh** (increased from ₹5 lakh in previous years).
- **Significance:** It is the highest literary honor given by the state to a writer for their lifelong and valuable contribution to Marathi literature.
- **Namesake:** Named after the legendary Jnanpith award-winning Marathi poet **Govind Vinayak Karandikar** (Vinda Karandikar).

### About the Awardee: Raosaheb Borade

- **Background:** Born on December 25, 1940, in Katgaon, Latur. He spent his life depicting the struggles and nuances of **rural (Gramin) Maharashtra**.
- **Literary Style:** He is considered a pioneer of rural literature, capturing the socio-cultural shifts in Marathwada.
- **Notable Works:**
  - **Pachola (1971):** His debut novel that brought him nationwide fame; it has been translated into English and Hindi.
  - **Amdaar Saubhagyavati:** A political satire.
  - **Chara-Paani:** A novel reflecting on agrarian distress.

- **Short Stories:** Collections like *Perani*, *Malani*, and *Natigoti*.
- **Positions Held:** Served as the President of the **Maharashtra Rajya Sahitya ani Sanskriti Mandal** (2000–2004).

## Other State Awards 2024

The government simultaneously announced several other major awards:

- **Shri. Pu. Bhagwat Award:** **Jyotsna Prakashan**, Pune (Best Publisher).
- **Dr. Ashok Kelkar Bhasha Abhyasak Puraskar:** **Dr. Ramesh Sitaram Suryawanshi** (Linguistics).
- **Mangesh Padgaonkar Bhasha Sanvardhan Puraskar:** **Smt. Bhimabai Jondhale** (Language Preservation).

*"Raosaheb Borade's 'Pachola' didn't just tell a story; it gave a **permanent voice** to the Marathwada soil, and this award is the state's final salute to the 'Shivar' (farmland) he loved."*

## 10. India Sweeps Inaugural Kho Kho World Cup 2025

- **Event:** The 1st edition of the **Kho Kho World Cup**.
- **Host City:** **New Delhi**, India (Venue: Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium).
- **Champions:** **India** won both the Men's and Women's titles by defeating **Nepal** in both finals.
  - **Men's Final Score:** India 54–36 Nepal.
  - **Women's Final Score:** India 78–40 Nepal.
- **Participation:** Featured 23 countries across 6 continents (20 men's teams and 19 women's teams).
- **Organizers:** International Kho Kho Federation (IKKF) and Kho Kho Federation of India (KKFI).

## MPSC Prelims "Need-to-Know" Facts:

| Detail               | Fact                                                                      |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Tournament Motto     | "The World Goes Kho"                                                      |
| Men's Captain        | <b>Pratik Waikar</b> (Maharashtra connection: Played for Telugu Yoddhas). |
| Women's Captain      | <b>Priyanka Ingle</b> (Maharashtra connection: From Pune).                |
| Player of Tournament | <b>Akshay Bhosale</b> (Men) and <b>Nasreen Shaikh</b> (Women).            |

| Detail          | Fact                                                                                               |
|-----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Historical Note | Kho Kho originated in <b>Maharashtra</b> and was demonstrated at the <b>1936 Berlin Olympics</b> . |

## 11. National Startup Day 2025: 'Empowering Innovation, Elevating Maharashtra'

### Summary

- **Event:** National Startup Day (January 16, 2025).
- **Location:** **Jio World Centre, BKC (Bandra-Kurla Complex), Mumbai**. (Note: This is the major hub adjacent to Kurla).
- **Organized by:** Maharashtra State Innovation Society (MSInS) and Ratan Tata Maharashtra State Skills University.
- **Theme 2025:** "Let's shape the future together—one innovative idea at a time."
- **Inaugurated by:** Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and Skill Development Minister Mangal Prabhat Lodha.
- **Major Announcement:** A **₹200 Crore** fund boost by SIDBI to support innovation and entrepreneurship across Maharashtra's regional divisions.

### MPSC Prelims "Need-to-Know" Facts:

| Detail             | Fact                                                                                                   |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| National Day Start | First declared on <b>January 16, 2022</b> by PM Narendra Modi.                                         |
| Maharashtra Status | Maharashtra leads India with over <b>26,000 startups</b> and the highest number of women-led ventures. |
| New Infrastructure | Inauguration of a <b>Digital Media Centre of Excellence</b> at ITI, Govandi (near Kurla).              |
| Award Scheme       | Winners of the <b>Punyashlok Ahilyadevi Holkar Women Startup Scheme</b> were felicitated.              |

## 13. Maharashtra's First Govt Homeopathic College to be Built in Pimpalgaon Khurd

### Summary

- **The Context:** The proposed **Government Homeopathic Medical College and Hospital**, which was initially planned for Sangavi (Kagal), is now being relocated to **Pimpalgaon Khurd** in Kagal Taluka, Kolhapur.

- **Approval Status:** On December 23, 2025, Maharashtra Medical Education Minister **Hasan Mushrif** gave the final "green light" after inspecting the site.

### MPSC Prelims "Need-to-Know" Facts:

| Detail           | Fact                                                 |
|------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| Location         | Pimpalgaon Khurd (Kagal Taluka, Kolhapur District).  |
| Nodal Ministry   | Ministry of Medical Education & Drugs, Maharashtra.  |
| Key Authority    | <b>Hasan Mushrif</b> (Medical Education Minister).   |
| Land Designation | "Gayran" (G Grazing) land under <b>Gat No. 487</b> . |

## 14. Maharashtra Bhakti Utsav 2025: Wardha Hosts Regional Cultural Mega-Event

### Summary

- **Event:** The **Maharashtra Bhakti Utsav 2025** was organized to promote the rich "Warkari" and "Bhakti" traditions of the state.
- **Location:** **Wardha**, Maharashtra (Vidarbha region).
- **Objective:** To showcase the literary and spiritual contributions of saints like **Sant Tukaram, Sant Dnyaneshwar, and Sant Gadge Baba**.
- **Key Highlight:** The festival featured a massive '**Bhajan Sandhya**' and a specialized exhibition on the "Sant Parampara" (Saint Traditions) of Vidarbha.
- **Special Guest:** State cultural ministers and prominent spiritual leaders from the Warkari Sampraday attended to emphasize the preservation of Marathi folk arts (Kirtan, Bharud, and Abhang).

### MPSC Prelims "Need-to-Know" Facts:

| Detail                | Fact                                                                                                                                |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Primary Host          | Wardha District (Known as the land of Gandhi and Vinoba Bhave).                                                                     |
| Focal Point           | Promoting <b>Sant Sahitya</b> (Saint Literature) to the youth.                                                                      |
| Cultural Link         | Connection between the <b>Warkari tradition</b> and the social reforms of <b>Sant Tukaram</b> and <b>Sant Gadge Baba</b> .          |
| Regional Significance | Part of the state government's initiative to decentralize major cultural festivals from Mumbai/Pune to other districts like Wardha. |

## 15. MSRTC Launches 2nd Phase of 'Balasaheb Thackeray Swachh Bus Sthanak' Abhiyan

### Summary

- **The Campaign:** The **Hindu Hriday Samrat Balasaheb Thackeray Clean and Beautiful Bus Station Campaign** was officially re-launched for its second year on **January 23, 2025** (Balasaheb Thackeray's birth anniversary).
- **The Prizes:** A total of **₹3 Crore** in prize money has been allocated.
  - **Grade A (Urban):** 1st Prize — **₹1 Crore**.
  - **Grade B (Semi-Urban):** 1st Prize — **₹50 Lakh**.
  - **Grade C (Rural):** 1st Prize — **₹25 Lakh**.
- **Evaluation Cycle:** Bus stands are evaluated every three months (quarterly) by a state-level committee.
- **Latest Rankings (2025-26):** In the recent quarterly evaluations (Oct 2025 – Jan 2026):
  - **Baramati Bus Stand** ranked **1st in Pune Region** (Grade A) with 96 points.
  - **Ichalkaranji** and **Karad** ranked 2nd and 3rd respectively in the Grade A category.
  - **Medha (Satara)** ranked 1st in the Grade C (Rural) category.

### MPSC Prelims "Need-to-Know" Facts:

| Detail                 | Fact                                                          |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| Previous Winner (2024) | Chopda Bus Stand (Jalgaon) won the 1st prize in Grade A.      |
| Motto                  | "Aapla Gaon, Aapla Bus Sthanak" (Our Village, Our Bus Stand). |
| Launch Venue (2025)    | Kurla Nehru Nagar Bus Station, Mumbai.                        |
| Key Authority          | Pratap Sarnaik (Maharashtra Transport Minister).              |

## 16. 3rd Vishwa Marathi Sammelan 2025 Held at Fergusson College, Pune

### Summary

- **Event:** The **3rd Vishwa Marathi Sammelan** (World Marathi Conference) took place from **January 31 to February 2, 2025**.
- **Venue:** Fergusson College Grounds, Pune.
- **Organized by:** Marathi Language Department, Government of Maharashtra.

- **Special Context:** This was the first World Marathi Conference held after the Marathi language was officially accorded "**Classical Language**" status by the Central Government.
- **Key Award:** Senior writer and author **Madhu Mangesh Karnik** was honored with the prestigious '**Sahitya Bhushan**' award during the inauguration.
- **Unique Initiative:** A massive **Book Exchange** program allowed readers to exchange old books for new ones for just **₹10**, facilitating the exchange of over 35,000 books.

### MPSC Prelims "Need-to-Know" Facts:

| Detail            | Fact                                                                                      |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Theme             | "Classical Marathi" (Abhijat Marathi)                                                     |
| Inaugurated by    | CM Devendra Fadnavis.                                                                     |
| Host City History | 1st: Mumbai (2023), 2nd: Navi Mumbai/Vashi (2024), 3rd: Pune (2025).                      |
| Procession        | A grand 'Granth Dindi' started from Bal Gandharva Rang Mandir to Fergusson College.       |
| Major Figures     | Dr. Sadanand More (President, State Literature & Culture Board) and Minister Uday Samant. |

## 17. Maharashtra Observes 'Marathi Bhasha Sanvardhan Pandharwada' 2026

- **The Event:** The **Marathi Language Conservation Fortnight** (Marathi Bhasha Sanvardhan Pandharwada) is being observed across the state from **January 14 to January 28, 2026**.
- **Objective:** To promote the use of the Marathi language in all government, semi-government, and private sector offices, as well as to encourage its preservation in daily public life.

### MPSC Prelims "Need-to-Know" Facts:

| Detail           | Fact                                                               |
|------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Duration         | January 14 to January 28 (Every Year).                             |
| Nodal Department | Marathi Bhasha Vibhag, Government of Maharashtra.                  |
| Important Date   | February 27 is Marathi Bhasha Gaurav Din (Kusumagraj's Birthday).  |
| Current Context  | The 2026 theme focuses on the <b>Digital Promotion</b> of Marathi. |

## 18. Union Home Minister Amit Shah Launches NUCFDC Corporate Office at NESCO, Goregaon

- **The Event:** A high-level national seminar titled "Challenges and the Way Forward for Cooperative Banks and Credit Societies" held on **January 24, 2025**.
- **Location:** NESCO Exhibition Centre, Goregaon, Mumbai.
- **Major Launch:** Union Minister Amit Shah inaugurated the corporate office of the **National Urban Cooperative Finance and Development Corporation (NUCFDC)**, located in nearby Andheri.
- **The "Umbrella" Concept:** The NUCFDC is designed as an "Umbrella Organization" for India's 1,500+ Urban Cooperative Banks (UCBs). It will provide specialized IT infrastructure, liquidity support, and shared services to help small cooperative banks compete with commercial banks.
- **Strategic Action Plan:** The event marked the release of the **Annual Action Plan for the International Year of Cooperatives (IYC) 2025**, outlining year-long activities to strengthen the sector.

### MPSC Prelims "Need-to-Know" Facts:

| Detail                  | Fact                                                                                              |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>NUCFDC Role</b>      | Non-Banking Finance Company (NBFC) acting as an umbrella for UCBs.                                |
| <b>Financial Goal</b>   | Aiming for a paid-up capital of <b>₹300 Crore</b> to function as a Self-Regulatory Org.           |
| <b>Maharashtra Data</b> | Maharashtra leads with <b>427 Urban Cooperative Banks</b> , holding business over ₹2.27 Trillion. |
| <b>Key Attendees</b>    | Union MoS Murlidhar Mohol, CM Eknath Shinde, and DCMs Devendra Fadnavis & Ajit Pawar.             |
| <b>Training Launch</b>  | Inauguration of a training program for <b>10,000 new Multipurpose PACS</b> members.               |

## 19. Maharashtra Becomes 1st State in India to Launch Mobile Forensic Vans

- **Launch Date:** January 27, 2025 (Inaugurated by CM Devendra Fadnavis at Sahyadri Guest House, Mumbai).

- **The Milestone:** Maharashtra is the **first state in India** to implement a statewide network of fully equipped mobile forensic units for on-site crime detection.
- **Deployment Plan:** \* A total of **259 vans** are planned across the state.
  - **21 fully equipped vans** were launched in the first phase.
  - As of late 2025, the number reached **59 operational labs** across major cities like Mumbai, Pune, Nagpur, and Thane.
- **Key Mandate:** These vans are specifically tasked with visiting crime scenes for offenses punishable by **7 years or more**, as mandated by the new **Bharatiya Nagrik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023**.
- **Capabilities:** Equipped to collect DNA, blood samples, semen, and evidence for cybercrimes and explosives. They use **Blockchain technology** to secure evidence through barcodes, preventing tampering.

### MPSC Prelims "Need-to-Know" Facts:

| Detail                 | Fact                                                                                         |
|------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>National Status</b> | <b>1st State</b> in India to start this facility.                                            |
| <b>Legal Trigger</b>   | <b>Bhartiya Nagrik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023</b> (mandatory forensic evidence).          |
| <b>Staffing</b>        | Each van has a 4-person team: Senior Chemical Analyser, Cyber Expert, Assistant, and Driver. |
| <b>Security Tech</b>   | <b>Blockchain</b> and <b>Crime Scene Application</b> for real-time evidence logging.         |
| <b>Vehicle Make</b>    | Force Motors (Force Mobile Forensic Vans).                                                   |

## 20. MAITRI 2.0 Portal Launched to Boost Ease of Doing Business

- **Inauguration:** Officially launched by Chief Minister **Devendra Fadnavis** on **February 4, 2025**.
- **Full Form:** Maharashtra Industry, Trade, and Investment Facilitation (MAITRI).
- **The Concept:** A next-generation **Single-Window System** that acts as a "one-stop-shop" for investors and entrepreneurs.
- **Key Upgrade:** Consolidates **119 services** from **15 different departments** (such as Industry, Environment, Labor, and Revenue) into a single digital platform.
- **Advanced Features:**

- **AI Chatbot:** For instant query resolution regarding policies and incentives.
- **Incentive Calculator:** Allows businesses to instantly calculate eligible subsidies under state policies.
- **Real-time Tracking:** Investors can track their application progress down to the specific "desk level."
- **Centralized Repository:** Users can store documents once and reuse them for multiple applications.

### MPSC Prelims "Need-to-Know" Facts:

| Detail               | Fact                                                                    |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Launch Date          | February 4, 2025.                                                       |
| Nodal Body           | MAITRI Cell, Industry Department, Government of Maharashtra.            |
| Status of MAITRI 1.0 | Now non-functional; all new registrations must use <b>MAITRI 2.0</b> .  |
| Grievance Redressal  | Boasts a resolution rate of over <b>98%</b> .                           |
| National Link        | Fully integrated with the <b>National Single Window System (NSWS)</b> . |

## 21. 'Samvad Chimuklyanshi': A Direct Outreach Program for Tribal Students

- **The Concept:** An initiative launched by the **Tribal Development Department** of Maharashtra to bridge the communication gap between the administration and students living in government-run facilities.
- **Objective:** To personally understand and resolve the grievances of students regarding food quality, safety, and basic amenities in **Ashram Schools** and **Government Hostels**.
- **Key Mechanism:** \* Government officers and staff are required to **stay overnight** at these schools and hostels to experience the living conditions firsthand.
  - They conduct direct "Samvad" (dialogues) with the children to identify issues like water scarcity, lack of hygiene, or security concerns.
- **Special Provision for Girls:** Only **female officers** are appointed to visit and stay at girls' ashram schools and hostels to ensure a safe and comfortable environment for communication.
- **Focus Areas:** Quality of "Tetra Pack" milk, food grains, cleanliness of toilets, functionality of CCTV cameras, and the availability of sanitary napkin vending machines.

### MPSC Prelims "Need-to-Know" Facts:

| Detail                 | Fact                                                                         |
|------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Nodal Department       | Tribal Development Department, Maharashtra.                                  |
| Target Group           | Students in <b>Government Ashram Schools</b> and <b>Hostels</b> .            |
| Unique Feature         | Mandatory <b>Overnight Stay</b> for inspecting officers.                     |
| Technology Integration | Checking for "Panic Buttons" and "Hazard Warning Systems" in girls' hostels. |

## 22. HSRP Deadline Expires: Strict Enforcement Across Maharashtra from Jan 2026

- **Final Deadline:** The grace period for installing High-Security Registration Plates (HSRP) on vehicles registered **before April 1, 2019**, officially ended on **December 31, 2025**.
- **The Mandate:** As of **January 1, 2026**, the Maharashtra Transport Department has begun a statewide enforcement drive. Over **27 lakh vehicles** are reportedly still non-compliant.
- **Penalty:** Driving without a valid HSRP now attracts fines ranging from **₹1,000 to ₹5,000** (under Rule 50 of CMVR and Section 177 of the Motor Vehicles Act).
- **Key Features of HSRP:**
  - **Material:** Made of high-grade **Aluminium**.
  - **Hologram:** A hot-stamped **Chromium-based hologram** of the Ashoka Chakra.
  - **Laser Code:** A unique **10-digit laser-etched permanent identification number**.
  - **Security:** Affixed using non-removable, non-reusable **snap locks**.
  - **Third License Plate:** A self-destructive color-coded sticker for the windshield (indicates fuel type: Blue for Petrol/CNG, Orange for Diesel).

### MPSC Prelims "Need-to-Know" Facts:

| Detail         | Fact                                                                |
|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Cut-off Date   | Mandatory for all vehicles registered <b>before April 1, 2019</b> . |
| Legal Basis    | Rule 50 of the <b>Central Motor Vehicles Rules (CMVR), 1989</b> .   |
| Implementation | Managed through the <b>VAHAN</b> central database.                  |

| Detail         | Fact                                                                                          |
|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| First-in-India | New vehicles sold after April 2019 come with factory-fitted HSRPs.                            |
| RTO Services   | RTOs will <b>deny services</b> like vehicle transfer or address change for non-HSRP vehicles. |

## 23. Maharashtra's Literary Landmarks – Books & Poems Villages

In a major push to preserve the state's linguistic and cultural heritage, the Maharashtra government has expanded its successful "**Pustakanche Gaon**" (Village of Books) concept to include "**Kavitanche Gaon**" (Village of Poems). These initiatives transform rural hamlets into literary hubs, specifically honoring the birthplaces of legendary Marathi poets.

### Litetary Landmarks Villages

Following the success of Bhilar, the government is developing specialized "Poetry Villages" at the birthplaces of iconic Marathi litterateurs to celebrate their legacy.

#### Shirwade-Vani (Nashik) – Birthplace of Kusumagraj

- **Announcement:** On **February 27, 2025** (Marathi Language Day), **Shirwade-Vani** was officially declared a "**Poetry Village**".
- **Significance:** It is the ancestral village of **Vishnu Vaman Shirwadkar**, famously known as **Kusumagraj** (Jnanpith Awardee).
- **Development:** The village now features 15 dedicated "Poetry Halls" (Dalan). The first phase includes a gallery showcasing Kusumagraj's literary works, including *Vishakha* and *Natsamrat*, alongside works by local poets.

#### Ubhadanda (Vengurla) – Birthplace of Mangesh Padgaonkar

- **Status:** This was the **first** Poetry Village established in Maharashtra.
- **Legacy:** It honors **Mangesh Padgaonkar**, one of the most beloved modern Marathi poets. The village is designed to host poetry reading events and houses a vast library of poetry books in multiple languages.

#### Malgund (Ratnagiri) – Birthplace of Keshavsut

- **The Legend:** **Malgund** is the birthplace of **Krishnaji Keshav Damle**, known as **Keshavsut**, the "Father of Modern Marathi Poetry."
- **Current Infrastructure:** While not officially titled under the new "Kavitanche Gaon" scheme yet, it houses the **Kavi Keshavsut Smarak**.
- **Highlights:** The memorial features his poems engraved on granite slabs and a library with

sketches and poems of other modern Marathi poets like Vinda Karandikar and Vasant Bapat.

#### Bhilar (Satara) – India's First Books Village

- **Location:** Tucked between Panchgani and Mahabaleshwar.
- **Concept:** 25-30 homes in the village have been converted into "Mini-Libraries" where tourists can read for free. Each home is themed (Poetry, History, Biographies, etc.) and decorated with relevant folk art like **Warli**.

#### Ambajogai (Beed) – The Newest Addition

- **Latest Update (2025):** The government announced **Ambajogai** as a new "Village of Books."
- **Significance:** This town is associated with **Mukundraj**, the author of *Viveksindhu* (considered one of the earliest Marathi literary works). The project integrates local colleges and the Mukundraj Samadhi into a literary circuit.

### Quick Reference Table: Birthplaces & Titles

| Poet / Writer      | Birthplace    | District   | Status / Title                   |
|--------------------|---------------|------------|----------------------------------|
| Kusumagraj         | Shirwade-Vani | Nashik     | Kavitanche Gaon (Feb 2025)       |
| Keshavsut          | Malgund       | Ratnagiri  | Keshavsut Memorial (Pioneer)     |
| Mangesh Padgaonkar | Ubhadanda     | Sindhudurg | Kavitanche Gaon (First)          |
| Mukundraj          | Ambajogai     | Beed       | Pustakanche Gaon (Proposed 2025) |
| General Initiative | Bhilar        | Satara     | Pustakanche Gaon (India's First) |

*"By turning birthplaces into 'Villages of Art,' Maharashtra is ensuring that the ink of our ancestors doesn't just stay in books but becomes the **geographical identity** of our land."*

## 24. Eknath Shinde Conferred with Mahadji Shinde National Honour 2025

### Why in News?

On **February 11, 2025**, Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister **Eknath Shinde** was honored with the prestigious **Mahadji Shinde Rashtriya Gaurav Award** (National Honour

Award) in New Delhi. The ceremony took place at the **New Maharashtra Sadan** during the 98th Akhil Bhartiya Marathi Sahitya Sammelan (All India Marathi Literary Conference).

### Core Static Backbone

- **Organizing Body:** The award is presented by the Pune-based **Sarhad Institute** (an NGO known for its work in conflict zones and social welfare).
- **Historical Significance:** The award is named after **Mahadji Shinde** (1730-1794), the legendary Maratha statesman and general who played a pivotal role in restoring Maratha power in North India after the Battle of Panipat (1761).
- **The Award Components:**
  - A cash prize of **₹5 Lakh** (which Shinde notably announced he would donate back to the Sarhad Institute).
  - A certificate of honor and a memento.
  - The traditional **Shindeshahi Turban** (*Pagadi*).

## 25. Maharashtra Establishes Dharmaveer Anand Dighe Auto & Taxi Drivers Welfare Board

- **Establishment:** The official formation of the **Dharmaveer Anand Dighe Maharashtra Autorickshaw and Metered Taxi Drivers Welfare Board** was announced on **January 27, 2025** (coinciding with the birth anniversary of the late leader Anand Dighe).
- **Objective:** To provide social security, health benefits, and financial stability to the unorganized sector of rickshaw and taxi drivers across the state.
- **Initial Funding:** The Maharashtra government sanctioned an initial seed fund of **₹50 Crore** to kick-start the board's operations.
- **Membership Details:**
  - **Registration Fee:** ₹500 (one-time).
  - **Annual Subscription:** ₹300.
  - **Eligibility:** Must hold a valid state-registered license and driver's badge.

### MPSC Prelims "Need-to-Know" Facts:

| Detail                    | Fact                                                                                  |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Retirement Benefit</b> | Drivers over <b>65 years</b> of age are eligible for a <b>₹10,000</b> honorarium.     |
| <b>Insurance Coverage</b> | Includes Life Insurance and Disability Insurance for injuries sustained on duty.      |
| <b>Family Welfare</b>     | Provision for <b>educational scholarships</b> for the children of registered members. |

| Detail               | Fact                                                                               |
|----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Nodal Officer</b> | The <b>State Transport Commissioner</b> is designated as the disbursement officer. |
| <b>Award Scheme</b>  | Annual awards for "Best Driver," "Best Association," and "Best Auto Stand."        |

## 26. 'University of Journalism' Rambhau Joshi Passes Away at 101

- **The News:** Senior journalist **Ramchandra Annaji (alias Rambhau) Joshi** passed away on **January 23, 2025**, in Pune due to old-age-related ailments.
- **The Milestone:** He had recently celebrated his **101st birthday**. He was considered a living encyclopedia of Maharashtra's political and cultural history for over eight decades.
- **Career Highlights:** \* He began his career with the **Kesari** newspaper.
  - He served as the President of the **Pune Shramik Patrakar Sangh** and the **Maharashtra Rajya Shramik Patrakar Sangh** (for four consecutive years).
  - He was a member of the National Council of the **Indian Federation of Working Journalists (IFWJ)**.
- **Cultural Contribution:** He was a trustee of the **Arya Sangeet Prasarak Mandal** for over 50 years and played a pivotal role in organizing the world-renowned **Sawai Gandharva Bhimsen Mahotsav**.
- **Famous Associations:** He was a close confidant of Maharashtra's first CM **Yashwantrao Chavan** and observed the political rise of leaders like **Sharad Pawar** from close quarters.

### MPSC Prelims "Need-to-Know" Facts:

| Detail                    | Fact                                                                                     |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Known As</b>           | "A Walking University of Journalism."                                                    |
| <b>Major Award</b>        | <b>Vatsalabai Joshi Award</b> (2021) for his contribution to music and journalism.       |
| <b>Key Organizations</b>  | Kesari, Pune Shramik Patrakar Sangh, Arya Sangeet Prasarak Mandal.                       |
| <b>Historical Witness</b> | Active during the <b>Freedom Struggle</b> and the <b>Samyukta Maharashtra Movement</b> . |

## Events in India

**1. Aero India 2025, Asia's largest aerospace and defence exhibition, will be held from 10-14 February 2025 at the Air Force Station, Yelahanka, Bengaluru.**

### Core Facts (MOST IMPORTANT FOR PRELIMS)

- **Event:** Aero India
- **Edition:** 15th edition
- **Year:** 2025
- **Dates:** 10-14 February 2025
- **Venue:** Yelahanka Air Force Station, Bengaluru (Karnataka)
- **Organised by:** Ministry of Defence, Government of India
- **Theme:** "The Runway to a Billion Opportunities"
- **Nature of event:**
  - Biennial (held once every two years)
  - Aerospace, defence manufacturing & aviation exhibition
- **Participants:**
  - Indian Armed Forces
  - Foreign defence companies
  - Defence PSUs and private firms

### **2. 14th Asian Fisheries & Aquaculture Forum (14th AFAF) – MPSC Prelims Capsule**

The **14th Asian Fisheries and Aquaculture Forum (14th AFAF)** was held in **February 2025** in **India**, bringing together Asian countries to discuss fisheries and aquaculture development.

### Core Facts

- **Event:** Asian Fisheries and Aquaculture Forum (AFAF)
- **Edition:** 14th
- **Year:** 2025
- **Host Country:** India
- **Host City:** Kochi (Kerala)
- **Organised by:** Asian Fisheries Society
- **Held once every three years (triennial)**
- **Theme:** "Greening the Blue Growth in Asia-Pacific".
- It is **NOT** only about marine fisheries → includes aquaculture.

### **3. MPC Repo Rate Decision – 7 February 2025**

The **Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)** of the **Reserve Bank of India** decided to **cut the policy repo rate** in its **February 2025 policy review**, announced on **7 February 2025**.

### Core Facts (Prelims Essentials)

- **Event:** RBI Monetary Policy Committee meeting
- **Policy Action:** Repo rate reduced by 25 basis points (bps)
- **New Repo Rate:** 6.25 percent
- **Previous Repo Rate:** 6.50 percent
- **Change:** -0.25 percent
- **Policy Stance:** Neutral
- **Reason:** To support economic growth amid easing inflation pressures.

### Static Linkage (High Yield)

- **RBI MPC is a statutory body** responsible for setting the benchmark **policy repo rate** in India.
- **Repo Rate** is the interest rate at which **RBI lends to commercial banks**; it influences credit cost and inflation.
- The repo rate cut in February 2025 was the **first reduction in nearly five years**.
- **Frequency:** MPC meets **bi-monthly / at least quarterly**

### **4. WAVES 2025 (World Audio Visual & Entertainment Summit)**

**WAVES 2025 (World Audio Visual & Entertainment Summit)** was organised in **February 2025** in **India** to position India as a **global hub for the media, entertainment, and content creation industry**.

### Core Facts

- **Event Name:** World Audio Visual & Entertainment Summit (**WAVES**)
- **Edition:** **First edition**
- **Host Country:** **India**
- **Host City:** **Mumbai, Maharashtra**
- **Organised by:** - **Ministry of Information and Broadcasting**
- **Nature of Event:** -
  - International summit
  - Media, entertainment, animation, gaming & digital content focus

### Theme / Focus Areas (Prelims Favourite)

- Promotion of **Indian media & entertainment industry**
- **Focus sectors:**

- Films & OTT
- Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming & Comics (**AVGC-XR**)
- Digital media & content creation
- Strengthening **India's soft power**
- WAVES is **NOT** related to oceanography

## Creative Economy / Orange Economy

### Creative Economy

- An economy based on **creativity, knowledge, culture, and intellectual property** that generates **income, employment, and exports**.

### Orange Economy

- Another name for **the Creative Economy**, popularised in **Latin America**.
- "Orange" symbolises **culture, creativity, and identity**.

### Why in News?

- Discussed in context of:
  - **WAVES 2025**
  - AVGC sector growth
  - India's soft power and cultural exports

### Core Sectors Included (VERY IMPORTANT FOR MCQs)

- Films & Cinema
- Music & Performing Arts
- Publishing & Media
- Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming & Comics (**AVGC**)
- Design (fashion, industrial, graphic)
- Advertising
- Architecture
- Digital content & OTT platforms
- Handicrafts & cultural industries

## Social

### **1. UNICEF's "Prospects for Children 2025"**

UNICEF's "Prospects for Children 2025: Building Resilient Systems for Children's Futures" report highlights a world facing an intensifying era of interconnected crises. The report serves as a warning that global conflicts, economic instability, and environmental shifts are creating a "new era of crisis" that threatens decades of progress for children. Below are the key themes and findings from the report.

## Summary Table of Indicators

| Indicator                       | Status/Finding                                                       |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Multidimensional Poverty</b> | 900 million children lack at least one basic need.                   |
| <b>Severe Deprivation</b>       | 417 million children are deprived of two or more essential services. |
| <b>Conflict Exposure</b>        | 19% of children live in conflict areas (Double the 1990s rate).      |
| <b>Climate Disease Burden</b>   | Children <5 bear 88% of climate-linked disease.                      |
| <b>Debt Burden</b>              | 45 countries spend more on debt interest than health.                |

### **2. QS World Future Skills Index 2025: India Claims 2nd Spot in Future of Work**

#### Why in News?

The London-based higher education firm **Quacquarelli Symonds (QS)** released its inaugural **QS World Future Skills Index 2025** in January 2025. The report highlights India as a global powerhouse in terms of **job market preparedness**, specifically in the fields of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Green Skills.

#### Core Static Backbone

- **Released By:** Quacquarelli Symonds (QS).
- **Scope:** Covers over 190 countries, analyzing 280 million job postings and 17.5 million research papers.
- **The Four Indicators:**
  1. **Skills Fit:** Alignment of graduates' skills with employer demands.
  2. **Academic Readiness:** Capacity of higher education to deliver future-focused skills.
  3. **Future of Work:** Readiness of the job market to recruit for AI, Digital, and Green roles.
  4. **Economic Transformation:** Ability of the economy to leverage skill-led industrial growth.
- **Country Classifications:** Countries are divided into four groups: **Pioneers** (e.g., USA, UK), **Practitioners**, **Contenders** (India's category), and **Aspirants**.

#### Exam-Relevant Data ONLY (India's Performance)

- **Overall Rank:** India ranks **25th globally** with a total score of 76.6/100.

- **"Future of Work" Hero:** India secured **2nd place globally** in this category (Score: 99.1), trailing only the **United States**.
- **Strengths:** Strong digital infrastructure, massive youth population, and a dynamic startup ecosystem.
- **Critical Gaps:**
  - **Skills Fit:** India ranks **37th**, the lowest among the top 30 nations, indicating a severe mismatch between graduation skills and industry needs.
  - **Innovation in Sustainability:** India scored a poor **15.6/100** in future-oriented green innovation.
- **R&D Investment:** India spends only **0.6% of GDP** on R&D, compared to the global average of **2.7%**.

### 3. Headline: Oxfam Report – Takers Not Makers: Unveiling Billionaire Colonialism

#### Why in News?

During the **World Economic Forum (WEF)** in Davos, Oxfam International released its annual inequality report titled **"Takers Not Makers: The Unjust Poverty and Unearned Wealth of Colonialism."** The report serves as a stark critique of the global economic system, linking modern billionaire wealth to historical colonial exploitation.

#### Core Static Backbone

- **Released By:** Oxfam International.
- **Core Philosophy:** Shatters the "meritocracy myth," arguing that extreme wealth is not a reward for talent but a result of a rigged system.
- **Key Terms:**
  - **"Takers Not Makers":** Refers to the ultra-rich who "take" wealth through inheritance or monopoly rather than "making" it through innovation.
  - **"Billionaire Colonialism":** A modern phenomenon where Global North countries and their billionaires continue to extract wealth from the Global South.
- **Wealth Drain Link:** Mentions the research of **Utsa Patnaik** regarding the **\$45 trillion** (or \$64.82 trillion in adjusted 2025 prices) drained from India by the UK.

*the pockets of the Global South to fund the trillionaires of the North."*

### 4. WESO Trends 2025: Low Unemployment Masks Deepening Inequalities

#### Why in News?

The **International Labour Organization (ILO)** released its flagship report, **"World Employment and Social Outlook (WESO): Trends 2025."** While the report celebrates a historically low global unemployment rate, it warns of a "stalled" structural transformation and a growing divide between high-income and low-income nations.

#### Core Static Backbone

- **Released By:** International Labour Organization (ILO).
- **Headquarters:** Geneva, Switzerland.
- **Director-General:** Gilbert F. Hounqbo.
- **Frequency:** Annual flagship publication.
- **Central Theme 2025:** The "resilience" of the labor market is being tested by geopolitical frictions, the high cost of climate change, and unresolved sovereign debt.

### 5. Decline in Total Fertility Rate (TFR) in India over Decades

#### Why in News?

- In **2024–2025**, discussions on **population trends, ageing society, and demographic dividend** highlighted the **sharp decline in India's Total Fertility Rate (TFR)** over the last seven decades, as reflected in **NFHS and SRS data**.

#### Core Facts (Most Important Section)

- **Indicator:** **Total Fertility Rate (TFR)**
- **Definition:**
  - **Average number of children a woman is expected to have during her reproductive life**
- **Replacement-level fertility:**
  - **2.1**
- **India's TFR trend:**
  - **1950s: ~6.0**
  - **1971: ~5.2**
  - **1991: ~3.4**
  - **2001: ~3.1**
  - **2011: ~2.4**
  - **2019–21 (NFHS-5): 2.0**
- **Current status:**
  - **Below replacement level at national level**
- **Rural-urban difference:**
  - **Urban TFR < Rural TFR**
- **Data sources:**
  - **NFHS**

- **Sample Registration System (SRS)**

(Brief explanation: India has transitioned from high fertility to low fertility within one generation.)

## 6. ASER 2024: The Road to Learning Recovery and Digital Readiness]

### Why in News?

The **Pratham Education Foundation** released its flagship **Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2024**. This edition is a milestone as it marks the **20th year** of the survey and provides the most comprehensive data yet on the post-pandemic recovery of foundational learning and, for the first time, a detailed look at the **digital readiness** of rural youth.

### Core Static Backbone

- **Organization:** NGO Pratham (ASER Centre).
- **Survey Type:** A citizen-led, household-based survey (not school-based), making it unique in capturing out-of-school children.
- **Scope 2024:** Reached over **6.5 lakh children** across **605 rural districts** in India.
- **Primary Metrics:** Tracks enrollment (ages 3–16) and basic reading/arithmetic skills (ages 5–16).
- **Nodal Goal:** Acts as a primary tracker for **NIPUN Bharat Mission** targets (Foundational Literacy and Numeracy - FLN).

### Exam-Relevant Data ONLY (2024-25 Key Findings)

- **Enrollment:** \* Remained above **98%** for the 6–14 age group, a consistent trend for nearly two decades.
  - **Pre-school enrollment** (ages 3–5) saw a record jump, reaching **80%** nationally.
- **The "Learning Recovery":** \* **Std III:** Reading levels in government schools hit their **highest ever** at **23.4%** (up from 16.3% in 2022).
  - **Arithmetic:** Significant gains in subtraction skills for Std III, rising to **33.7%** (exceeding pre-pandemic 2018 levels of 28.2%).
- **Digital Literacy (New Category - Ages 14–16):**
  - **Access:** 89% of rural teens have a smartphone at home; **82%** know how to use one.
  - **Usage:** Only **57%** use it for education, while **76%** use it for social media.
  - **Gender Gap:** 36% of boys own a personal phone compared to only **27%** of girls.
- **School Infrastructure:** Small government schools (fewer than 60 students) increased to **52%**, highlighting a shift in rural demographics.

## 7. National Health Mission (NHM) – 2025 Report

### Why in News?

- In **2025**, the **National Health Mission (NHM)** released its **latest performance and progress report**, reviewing **India's public health outcomes, service delivery, and funding trends** under NHM.

### Core Facts (Most Important Section)

- Programme: **National Health Mission (NHM)**
- Launched: **2013**
- Merged missions:
  - **National Rural Health Mission (NRHM)** – 2005
  - **National Urban Health Mission (NUHM)** – 2013
- Ministry: **Ministry of Health & Family Welfare**
- Coverage: **Pan-India**
- Focus groups:
  - **Women**
  - **Children**
  - **Urban poor**
  - **Rural population**
- Funding pattern:
  - **Centre-State shared**
- Major components:
  - **RMNCH+A**
  - **Health system strengthening**
  - **Communicable & non-communicable diseases**
- Report nature:
  - **Administrative & outcome-based review**

## 8. Jal Jeevan Mission Extended to 2028: Shifting Focus from Taps to Trust

### Why in News?

During the **Union Budget 2025-26** (presented on February 1, 2025), Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman officially announced the extension of the **Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM)** until **December 2028**. As of **January 2026**, the mission has entered its "Sustainability Phase," with the Union Cabinet finalizing stricter guidelines to ensure that the water actually flows through the pipes already laid.

### Core Static Backbone

- **Launched:** August 15, 2019, by PM Narendra Modi.

- **Nodal Ministry:** Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation, **Ministry of Jal Shakti**.
- **Original Target:** Functional Household Tap Connection (FHTC) to every rural home by **2024**.
- **Revised Target:** 100% saturation and sustainable service delivery by **2028**.
- **Mandate:** Providing **55 litres per capita per day (lpcd)** of safe and adequate drinking water.
- **Funding Pattern:** \* 90:10 for Himalayan and NE States.
  - 100:0 for Union Territories.
  - 50:50 for the rest of the States.

### Exam-Relevant Data ONLY (2025-26

#### Updates)

- **Coverage Status:** As of January 24, 2026, over **15.79 Crore (81.56%)** rural households have tap water supply, up from 17% in 2019.
- **Budget Outlay:** The Budget 2025-26 allocated **₹67,000 Crore** for the mission.
- **The "15-Day Rule":** In a major policy shift on January 27, 2026, the Centre announced that future fund releases will be linked to a **15-day continuous water supply demonstration** per scheme.
- **Accountability:** Action has been taken against more than **4,000 individuals** (including officials and contractors) due to irregularities in quality and financial discipline reported in late 2025.
- **Focus Shift:** Move from "infrastructure creation" to **Operation & Maintenance (O&M)** and "**Jan Bhagidari**" (people's participation).

## 9. SWAVALAMBINI Programme (by MSDE)

### Why in News?

- In **2024-2025**, the **Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE)** expanded and promoted the **SWAVALAMBINI Programme** to strengthen **women entrepreneurship and self-employment**, especially in higher education institutions.

### Core Facts (Most Important Section)

- Programme name: **SWAVALAMBINI**
- Launched by: **Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE)**
- Implemented through: **National Institute for Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development (NIESBUD)** / allied agencies
- Target group:
  - **Women students**
  - **Aspiring women entrepreneurs**

## 10. Skill India Digital (SID) 2.0: Reshaping Bharat's Workforce for 2030

### Why in News?

During the **Union Budget 2025-26** (February 2025) and subsequent policy updates in **January 2026**, the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) announced a major reshaping of the **Skill India Programme**. The focus has shifted from "generic training" to "**Skill India Digital (SID) 2.0**", emphasizing AI-driven personalization and industrial-demand-led apprenticeships.

### Core Static Backbone

- **Launched:** July 15, 2015 (National Skill Development Mission).
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE).
- **Key Entities:** National Skill Development Corporation (**NSDC**), Sector Skill Councils (**SSCs**).
- **Flagship Scheme:** Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (**PMKVY**).
- **New Vision:** Aligned with **NEP 2020** to integrate vocational education with mainstream schooling.

### Key "Reshaped" Initiatives (2025-26)

1. **Skill India Digital (SID) 2.0:**
  - A unified platform that uses **AI-based skill gap analysis** to recommend courses to youth based on local industry data.
  - Integrated with **Aadhaar, DigiLocker, and Udyam** for paperless certification.
2. **The New Apprenticeship Push:**
  - In a major shift (January 2026), the government incentivized **direct-to-industry apprenticeships** where the government pays **50% of the stipend** directly to the candidate via DBT.
3. **Future Skills Centres (FSC):**
  - Establishment of 500 specialized centers focusing on "New-Age Skills": **Generative AI, Green Hydrogen, Quantum Computing, and Semi-conductor manufacturing**.
4. **International Mobility:**
  - Setting up **Skill India International Centres (SIICs)** to train youth for global standards (specifically for Japan, Germany, and UAE markets).

### Exam-Relevant Data ONLY (Budget 2025-26)

- **Budget Outlay:** Allocated **₹3,100 Crore** for the reshaping phase.

- **Target:** Skilling/up-skilling **2 crore youth** annually by 2027.
- **PM-Surya Ghar Integration:** A new sub-scheme to train **1 lakh workers** specifically for solar rooftop installation.
- **Women in Tech:** Targeted scholarships for women in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) courses under PMKVY 4.0.

## 11. NITI Aayog Releases First-of-its-Kind Report on State Public Universities (SPUs)

- **The Report:** Launched on **February 10, 2025**, titled *"Expanding Quality Higher Education through States and State Public Universities."*
- **The Goal:** To provide a roadmap for SPUs to transition from focusing on mere "access" to delivering "world-class quality" education.
- **Key Stats on SPUs:** \* There are **495 SPUs** in India.
  - They account for **81% of total student enrollment** (over 3.25 crore students).
  - They include over **46,000 affiliated colleges**.
- **Projected Growth:** Under NEP 2020, enrollment is expected to double to **9 crore by 2035**, with nearly 7 crore of those students likely to be in SPUs.

### MPSC Prelims "Need-to-Know" Facts:

| Detail                     | Fact                                                                                    |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| National Average Density   | <b>0.8</b> (Universities per 1 lakh eligible population).                               |
| Highest University Density | <b>Sikkim (10.3)</b> , followed by Arunachal Pradesh and Ladakh.                        |
| Lowest University Density  | <b>Bihar (0.2)</b> , UP (0.3), and Maharashtra (0.6).                                   |
| Highest Funding (Budget)   | <b>Maharashtra</b> (₹11,421 Cr), followed by Bihar and Tamil Nadu.                      |
| Highest Spending (% GSDP)  | <b>Bihar (1.56%)</b> , followed by J&K and Manipur.                                     |
| Female Enrollment Success  | <b>Kerala, Chhattisgarh, and Himachal Pradesh</b> (Higher female than male enrollment). |

| Detail               | Fact                                                                 |
|----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| College Density Lead | <b>Karnataka (66)</b> , more than double the national average of 30. |

## 12. Kokborok: The Script Controversy and 75th Anniversary

- **Observation of Day:** The **48th Kokborok Day** (Tripuri Language Day) was observed across Tripura on **January 19, 2026**, commemorating its 1979 recognition as an official state language.
- **Linguistic Roots:** It belongs to the **Tibeto-Burman** language family (Sino-Tibetan) and is the mother tongue of the Borok/Tripuri people.
- **Script Dispute:** A major controversy erupted in late 2025 regarding the choice of script; while indigenous groups demand the **Roman (Latin) script**, the state has seen proposals for **Devanagari** or the continued use of **Bengali**.
- **UNESCO Status:** The language is currently classified as **"Vulnerable"** by the UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger.
- **Constitutional Demand:** There is an ongoing, intensified movement in 2025-26 for the inclusion of Kokborok in the **Eighth Schedule** of the Indian Constitution to grant it national recognition.
- **Historical Fact:** The first grammar of the language, *Kokborokma*, was published by Radhamohan Thakur in **1900**.

## 13. Nicobarese Tribe: The "Holchu" of the Emerald Islands

- **Geographic Identity:** The Nicobarese are the largest indigenous group in the **Andaman and Nicobar Islands**, primarily residing on **Car Nicobar** and the central/southern islands of the archipelago.
- **Linguistic Roots:** Unlike the Andamanese tribes, the Nicobarese speak a language belonging to the **Austroasiatic family** (Mon-Khmer branch), showing ancient links to Southeast Asia.
- **Social Status:** They are categorized as a **Scheduled Tribe (ST)**; notably, they are the most modernized and populous among the island tribes, distinguishing them from the "Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups" (PVTGs) like the Shompen.
- **Livelihood & Culture:** Traditionally a horticultural society, they excel in coconut and areca nut cultivation and pig rearing; their

society follows a **matrilineal-leaning** joint family system called the *Tuhet*.

- **Current News (2025-26):** The tribe has been in focus due to discussions surrounding the **Great Nicobar Holistic Development Project**, raising concerns about the balance between infrastructure and tribal land rights.

## 14. Karnataka: First State to Implement "Right to Die with Dignity"

- **Historic Order:** On **January 30, 2025**, the Karnataka Health Department issued a landmark circular to implement the Supreme Court's directive on the **Right to Die with Dignity**.
- **Constitutional Basis:** The order is based on the **Common Cause v. Union of India** (2018/2023) rulings, which held that the "Right to Life" under **Article 21** includes the right to a dignified death.
- **Passive Euthanasia:** It allows for the **Withdrawal of Life-Sustaining Therapy (WLST)** for terminally ill patients or those in a **Persistent Vegetative State (PVS)** with no hope of recovery.
- **Advance Medical Directive (AMD):** The state has formalized the use of a "**Living Will**," where an adult of sound mind can specify in advance that they do not wish to be kept on artificial life support.
- **Three-Tier Safeguard:** The process requires approval from a **Primary Medical Board**, a **Secondary Medical Board** (including a government-nominated doctor), and final oversight by a **Judicial Magistrate**.

## 15. MP: Strict Ban on Begging and Almsgiving (2025-26)

- **Context:** In early 2025, **Bhopal** followed **Indore's** lead by implementing a district-wide ban on begging and the act of giving alms in public places.
- **Legal Basis:** The ban is enforced under **Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023** (which replaced Section 144 of the CrPC).
- **Penalties:** Violators—both those begging and those giving money/goods—face legal action under **Section 223 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS)**, including potential fines or imprisonment.
- **National Milestone:** In **May 2025**, Indore was officially declared **India's first "Beggar-Free City"** under the Central Government's **SMILE**

(Support for Marginalized Individuals for Livelihood and Enterprise) initiative.

- **Rehabilitation Focus:** The move is part of the "Bhiksha Vriti Mukta Bharat" campaign, shifting focus from mere criminalization to providing healthcare, education, and skill training for beggars.

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## 17. SMILE: Umbrella Scheme for Marginalized Welfare

- **Full Form: Support for Marginalized Individuals for Livelihood and Enterprise**, launched by the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment on **February 12, 2022**.
- **Target Groups:** Specifically designed for the comprehensive rehabilitation of two groups: **Transgender Persons** and **Persons engaged in the act of Begging**.
- **Sub-Schemes:** It consists of two central sector sub-schemes—one for Transgender welfare (including **Garima Greh** shelters) and another for the rehabilitation of beggars.
- **Key Components:** Focuses on a transition from "criminalization" to "rehabilitation" through health insurance (PM-JAY), skill development (**PM-DAKSH**), and education scholarships.
- **SMILE-75 Initiative:** A special sub-component launched to mark 75 years of Independence,

identifying **75 Municipal Corporations** (including Mumbai and Nagpur) for "Beggar-Free" city status.

- **Funding & Timeline:** The Ministry has allocated **₹365 crore** for the scheme's implementation for the period **2021-22 to 2025-26**.

## 18. Nari Adalat: Women-Led Community Justice Forum

- **Institutional Framework:** Launched in 2023-24, the **Nari Adalat** (Women's Court) is a key component of the "**Sambal**" sub-scheme under **Mission Shakti** (Ministry of Women and Child Development).
- **Composition:** Each village-level unit consists of **7 to 11 members** called **Nyaya Sakhis** (Legal Friends), with half being elected Gram Panchayat members and the rest nominated socially respected women (teachers, doctors).
- **Leadership:** The forum is headed by a **Mukhya Nyaya Sakhi (MNS)**, who is selected by the members for a typical tenure of **six months**.
- **Current Status (2025-26):** Initially piloted in 50 Gram Panchayats each in **Assam and Jammu & Kashmir**, it has been expanded in 2025-26 to **Bihar, Karnataka, Sikkim, and Andaman & Nicobar Islands**.
- **Core Function:** It provides an **Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)** platform for "petty" cases like domestic harassment and property rights through mediation and negotiation, bypassing formal courts.
- **Legal Standing:** It holds **no formal legal status**; its decisions are based on mutual consent and voluntary participation, acting primarily as a social "pressure group."

## 19. Sri Sri Radha Madanmohanji Temple: Asia's 2nd Largest ISKCON Temple

- **Inauguration:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the temple on **January 15, 2025**, during his visit to Navi Mumbai on the occasion of Makar Sankranti.
- **Location & Scale:** Located in **Kharghar, Navi Mumbai**, the project is spread over **9 acres** and was built at a cost of **₹170 crore** over a period of 12 years.
- **Special Designation:** It is recognized as **Asia's second-largest ISKCON temple** and is a part of the "Glory of Maharashtra" spiritual initiative.
- **Key Facilities:** The complex features a Vedic education college, an **Ayurvedic healing center**,

a senior citizens' ashram, a cow shelter (Gaushala), and an organic farm.

- **Visionary Tribute:** The PM laid the foundation for a **Vedic Museum** and Cultural Centre, fulfilling the vision of the late former ISKCON chairman **Gopal Krishna Goswami Maharaj**.

## 20. Kanuma Panduga: The Festival of Cattle and Gratitude

- **Date & Context:** Celebrated on **January 16, 2026**, Kanuma is the third day of the four-day **Sankranti** festival in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.
- **Core Significance:** It is a "Thanksgiving" day for **cattle** (cows and bulls), acknowledging their vital role in achieving a successful harvest.
- **Mythological Link:** It commemorates **Lord Krishna** lifting the **Govardhan Hill** to protect the people and livestock of Gokulam from the torrential rains sent by Lord Indra.
- **Key Rituals:** Farmers bathe their cattle, paint their horns in vibrant colors, adorn them with garlands/bells, and perform "**Go Puja**" (cow worship).
- **Festive Customs:** The day is marked by "**Gangireddu**" (decorated bull) processions, community feasts, and traditional rural sports like bullock cart races and cockfights.

## 21. "One Plate, One Bag" Campaign: A Plastic-Free Maha Kumbh

- **Launched By:** The **Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)**, inaugurated by Sah-Sarkaryavah **Krishna Gopal** on January 15, 2025, in Prayagraj.
- **Objective:** To make the **Maha Kumbh 2025** a "Green and Plastic-Free" event by replacing single-use plastic and thermocol with sustainable alternatives.
- **Scale of Distribution:** Over **2 million steel plates/glasses** and **1.3 million cloth bags** were collected from households across India and distributed to *langars* (community kitchens).
- **Impact:** The initiative reportedly reduced disposable waste by **80-85%**, saving an estimated **₹3.5 crore per day** in waste management and procurement costs.
- **Environmental Vision:** It promoted the concept of "**Utensil Banks**" for large-scale social events and discouraged the traditional use of *dona-pattal* (leaf plates) to prevent massive garbage buildup.

## 22. World's Largest Mahamrityunjay Yantra: Prayagraj 2025

- **Inauguration:** Installed on **January 14, 2025** (Makar Sankranti) at the **Tapovan Ashram** (Jhansi) specifically for the **Maha Kumbh 2025**.
- **Unique Dimensions:** It is the world's first **3D Mahamrityunjay Yantra**, measuring exactly **52 feet** in length, width, and height—symbolizing the **52 letters** of the Mahamrityunjay Mantra.
- **Consecration:** The structure was energized by **151 Acharyas** who chanted the mantra over 52 days to consecrate **11,11,111 Panchmukhi Rudrakshas** kept within it for free distribution.
- **Scientific Design:** The Yantra is designed to mimic the **human spinal column**, aimed at radiating positive energy to counter stress and depression in the vicinity.
- **Founder:** Established by **Swami Sahajanand Saraswati** (Hisar, Haryana), who spent 34 years of research and penance to realize this "Victory over Death" spiritual tool.
- **Future Plan:** After the Kumbh, the temporary structure in Prayagraj was planned for immersion or relocation, while a permanent version is being established at the **12 Jyotirlingas** and in **Hisar**.

## 23. Vadnagar Archaeological Museum: India's First Experiential Museum

- **Inauguration:** Officially inaugurated on **January 16, 2025**, by Union Home Minister **Amit Shah** in Vadnagar, Gujarat (the birthplace of PM Narendra Modi).
- **Unique Feature:** It is India's first "**Experiential**" museum, meaning it is integrated with a live **4,000 sq. m. excavation site** where visitors can see stratified remains at depths of 16–18 meters.
- **Cultural Continuity:** The museum showcases an unbroken history of **2,500 years of human habitation** (from 800 BCE to the present), a rarity in global archaeology.
- **Seven Cultural Periods:** The exhibits are divided into 7 distinct phases, including the **Mauryan, Indo-Greek, Kshatrapa, Solanki, and Mughal-British** eras.
- **Key Findings:** Displays over **5,000 artifacts**, including Buddhist monastery remains, ancient coins, shell manufacturing tools, and even organic materials like ancient food grains and DNA samples.

- **Buddhist Connection:** Highlights Vadnagar as a major Buddhist center, as recorded by Chinese traveler **Hiuen Tsang** (Xuanzang) in the 7th century CE.

## 24. SVAMITVA Milestone: 65 Lakh Cards in a Single Day

- **Record Distribution:** On **January 18, 2025**, Prime Minister Narendra Modi presided over the largest-ever distribution of **65 lakh property cards** under the SVAMITVA scheme in a single day.
- **Geographic Reach:** The event covered over **50,000 villages** across 237 districts in 10 states (including Maharashtra) and 2 Union Territories (J&K and Ladakh).
- **Total Milestone:** This massive distribution brought the cumulative total of property cards issued under the scheme to **2.25 crore**, covering nearly 1.53 lakh villages.
- **Economic Potential:** The PM highlighted that this formalization of land rights is expected to unlock economic activities worth over **₹100 lakh crore** by allowing villagers to use property as collateral for loans.
- **Technology Partner:** The mapping is conducted using high-resolution drones by the **Survey of India**, ensuring a precise "Record of Rights" for previously unmapped "Abadi" (inhabited) areas.

## 25. Deendayal Upadhyay Bhoomiheen Krishi Majdoor Kalyan Yojana

- **Launch Date:** Officially launched by Chhattisgarh Chief Minister **Vishnu Deo Sai** on **January 20, 2025**, fulfilling a major "Modi ki Guarantee" poll promise.
- **Financial Assistance:** The scheme provides an annual financial grant of **₹10,000** to eligible landless families, an increase from the previous ₹7,000 under the older Rajiv Gandhi scheme.
- **Beneficiaries:** It targets **5.62 lakh landless agricultural laborers**, including forest produce collectors, shepherds, carpenters, blacksmiths, cobblers, and barbers.
- **Special Inclusion:** The scheme also covers families of **Pujaris, Baigas, Gunias, and Manjhis** who perform worship services at tribal shrines in the state's scheduled areas.
- **Mode of Payment:** The assistance is disbursed in a single annual installment via **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)** directly into the bank accounts of the beneficiaries.

- **Objective:** To provide social security and enhance the net income of rural landless families, helping them meet expenses for health, education, and festivals.

## Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP)

- Located in **Borivali, Mumbai**; **one of the world's largest urban national parks**.
- Home to leopards, deer, and over 250 bird species.
- Known for **Kanheri Caves**, eco-tourism, and biodiversity corridors.
- **Gandhi Tekdi:** Memorial dedicated to Mahatma Gandhi.
- **Dahisar River:** Flows through SGNP and is a key freshwater source for the park's ecosystem.
- **Poinsar Lake:** Located within the park boundaries.

## 2. FAO Launches Global Report on Sustainable Nitrogen Management (Jan 2025)

- **The Report:** Titled "**Sustainable Nitrogen Management in Agrifood Systems**," at FAO Headquarters in Rome.
- **The Context:** It is the first comprehensive global assessment specifically linking nitrogen use efficiency to the "Triple Planetary Crisis" (Climate Change, Biodiversity Loss, and Pollution).
- **Key Global Finding:** Human-driven reactive nitrogen flows have increased **tenfold** in the last 150 years. Currently, **200 million tonnes** (80% of all reactive nitrogen) are lost to the environment annually.

## Environment

### 1. Leopard Safari to begin at Sanjay Gandhi National Park, Mumbai—announced by State Minister Ashish Shelar

#### About –

- Maharashtra announced a **Leopard Safari project** at SGNP to boost eco-tourism and wildlife awareness.
- The ₹5 crore initiative spans **30 hectares**, aiming to attract more visitors and promote conservation.
- Minister Ashish Shelar adopted two leopards, symbolizing **public-private partnership in wildlife care**.
- SGNP already hosts lion and leopard safaris; cubs from across Maharashtra are reared here.
- Insurance cover for 400 workers reflects a **governance focus on forest staff welfare**.

#### MPSC Prelims "Need-to-Know" Facts:

| Detail                  | Fact                                                                                                |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Nitrogen Potency</b> | \$N_2O\$ is <b>273 times</b> more potent as a GHG than \$CO_2\$.                                    |
| <b>Ozone Layer</b>      | \$N_2O\$ is currently the <b>top ozone-depleting substance</b> being emitted.                       |
| <b>Livestock Share</b>  | Livestock account for about <b>one-third</b> of total human-induced nitrogen emissions.             |
| <b>Paris Agreement</b>  | Reducing \$N_2O\$ is essential to keep the <b>1.5°C</b> warming target within reach.                |
| <b>Health Impact</b>    | Nitrogen pollution contributes to respiratory/heart diseases and creates ocean <b>"dead zones."</b> |

### 3. Indore and Udaipur Become India's First 'Wetland Accredited Cities'

- **The Announcement:** On **January 25, 2025**, the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands officially accredited **Indore** (Madhya Pradesh) and

**Udaipur** (Rajasthan) as the first Indian cities in the global list of Wetland Cities.

- **The Global List:** India joined a select group of 17 countries; with these two, the total number of accredited wetland cities globally reached **74**.
- **Nomination Context:** India had originally nominated three cities—**Indore, Udaipur, and Bhopal**. However, Bhopal missed out due to ecological concerns raised by citizen groups regarding a proposed road project near the Bhoj Wetland.
- **Accreditation Authority:** The **Independent Advisory Committee (IAC)** of the Ramsar Convention.

### Key Highlights of the Accredited Cities

| City                       | Key Wetlands / Ramsar Sites                                                    | Special Recognition                                                                                               |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Indore</b> (M.P.)       | <b>Sirpur Lake</b> (Ramsar Site) and <b>Yashwant Sagar</b> .                   | Known as India's cleanest city; recognized for its "wise use" of urban wetlands for water bird conservation.      |
| <b>Udaipur</b> (Rajasthan) | <b>Lake Pichola, Fateh Sagar, Rang Sagar, Swaroop Sagar, and Doodh Talai</b> . | Known as the "City of Lakes"; its intricate lake system helps maintain the city's microclimate and flood control. |

## 4. India's Ramsar Network Hits 96: A Year of Conservation Milestones

### Why in News?

India has officially expanded its tally of Ramsar sites to **96**, marking a significant leap in wetland conservation. The most recent additions in late 2025—**Siliserh Lake** (Rajasthan) and **Kopra Reservoir** (Chhattisgarh)—have solidified India's position as the country with the largest Ramsar network in Asia and the **3rd largest globally** (after the UK and Mexico).

### Core Static Backbone

- **Convention:** The Ramsar Convention (1971) is an international treaty for the conservation and "wise use" of wetlands.
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC).
- **India's Journey:** India joined the convention on **February 1, 1982**.
- **Key Stats:**
  - **Total Sites:** 96 (as of Jan 2026).
  - **Total Area:** ~1.36 million hectares.

- **First Sites:** Chilika Lake (Odisha) and Keoladeo National Park (Rajasthan) in 1981.

### Latest Additions & Highlights (2025-26)

In 2025, a total of **11 new sites** were added, bringing the count from 85 to 96.

| Site Name                  | State        | Key Features                                                                          |
|----------------------------|--------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Siliserh Lake</b>       | Rajasthan    | Human-made (1845); critical water source for Alwar; near Sariska Tiger Reserve.       |
| <b>Kopra Reservoir</b>     | Chhattisgarh | Man-made reservoir in the Mahanadi basin; vital for migratory birds like River Terns. |
| <b>Gogabil Lake</b>        | Bihar        | Oxbow lake; Bihar's first Community Reserve; vital for local fisheries.               |
| <b>Nanjarayan Lake</b>     | Tamil Nadu   | Human-made irrigation tank; located in the Noyyal River basin.                        |
| <b>Kazhuveli Sanctuary</b> | Tamil Nadu   | Brackish coastal wetland; part of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway.                 |

### Exam-Relevant Data ONLY (State Rankings)

- **Tamil Nadu:** Leads with the highest number of sites (**20**).
- **Uttar Pradesh:** Holds the second position (**10**).
- **Bihar:** Recently surged to **6 sites**, becoming a major hub in the Indo-Gangetic plain.
- **Wetland Cities:** In January 2025, **Indore** and **Udaipur** became India's first **Ramsar-accredited Wetland Cities**, recognizing their integration of wetlands into urban planning.

## 5. International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA)

### Why in News?

- In **2024-2025**, the **International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA)** gained prominence as **more countries joined the alliance**, following its launch by **India** to strengthen **global conservation of big cats**.

### Core Facts (Most Important Section)

- Name: **International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA)**
- Launched by: **India**
- Year of launch: **2023**
- Ministry involved:

- Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)
- Nature:
  - Voluntary international alliance
- Objective:
  - Conservation of big cats and their habitats
- Big cats covered:
  - Tiger
  - Lion
  - Leopard
  - Snow Leopard
  - Cheetah
  - Jaguar
  - Puma
- Headquarters / Secretariat:
  - India
- Membership:
  - Open to all big cat range countries
- Funding:
  - Voluntary contributions

## 6. Cyantraniliprole: A Rising Threat to Honey Bees

- **Nature of the Chemical:** Cyantraniliprole is a systemic **anthranilic diamide** insecticide (IRAC Group 28) used to control chewing and sucking pests by paralyzing their muscles via ryanodine receptor modulation.
- **Toxicity Levels:** It is classified as **highly toxic to honey bees** (*Apis mellifera*) and Indian honey bees (*Apis cerana indica*) through both contact and ingestion (acute oral exposure).
- **Recent Study Findings (2025):** Research published in *Science* and other journals indicates that while it is marketed as a "safer" alternative to neonicotinoids, it causes significant mortality; for example, a dose of **600 ng/bee** can cause **48% mortality** within just 8 hours.
- **Impact on Larvae:** Studies from late 2025 show that **chronic exposure** to cyantraniliprole significantly increases **larval mortality**, though it may not cause the physical wing deformations seen with other insecticides like sulfoxaflor.
- **Sub-lethal Effects:** Beyond direct death, the chemical causes **lethargy and paralysis**, which impairs the bees' ability to forage, navigate back to the hive, or perform essential pollination duties.
- **Wild Bee Risk:** Newer assessments highlight that **soil-nesting wild bees** are at even greater risk because cyantraniliprole residues persist in the soil where these bees live and reproduce.

## 7. Gaddi Dog: 4th Indigenous Breed Recognized by ICAR-NBAGR

- **Official Recognition:** In January 2025, the **ICAR-National Bureau of Animal Genetic Resources (NBAGR)** officially registered the **Gaddi dog** as an indigenous breed of India.
- **Geographic Origin:** Named after the semi-nomadic **Gaddi shepherds** of Himachal Pradesh; it is found across the Himalayas, including Jammu & Kashmir and Uttarakhand.
- **Accession Number:** It was assigned the unique identification number **INDIA\_DOG\_0600\_GADDI\_19004**.
- **Key Characteristics:** Known as the "**Indian Panther Hound**" or "**Leopard Hound**" for its ability to fight off snow leopards; it features a massive arched neck, a black coat, and a "lion-like" tufted mane.
- **Indigenous Ranking:** It is the **fourth** Indian dog breed to be recognized by NBAGR, following the Rajapalayam, Chippiparai (Tamil Nadu), and the Mudhol Hound (Karnataka).
- **Conservation Status:** The population is estimated to be **under 1,000**, and this recognition aims to prevent extinction due to gene pool dilution and a lack of dedicated breeding programs.

## 8. Mount Ibu: Continuous Eruptions in early 2026

- **Ongoing Activity:** Mount Ibu, one of Indonesia's most active volcanoes, has shown intense activity throughout **January 2026**.
- **Recent Explosions:** Between **January 27 and 29, 2026**, the volcano recorded nearly **100 seismically detected explosions daily**, sending ash and gas plumes up to **800–2,100 meters (FL070)** into the atmosphere.
- **Alert Status:** The Indonesian Volcanology Agency (PVMBG) currently maintains a "**Level 2 - Alert**" status (on a 4-level scale).
- **Geographic Location:** It is a **stratovolcano** (composite volcano) situated on the northwest coast of **Halmahera Island** in North Maluku, Indonesia.
- **Aviation Impact:** The **Darwin Volcanic Ash Advisory Centre (VAAC)** has issued multiple advisories in late January 2026, warning aircraft of ash clouds moving in a northeast direction.
- **Tectonic Context:** Part of the **Pacific Ring of Fire**, it is located where the Australian Plate subducts beneath the Eurasian Plate.

## 9. Bhitarkanika Census 2026: Crocodile and Bird Milestones

- **Crocodile Census (January 2026):** The population of saltwater crocodiles (*Crocodylus porosus*) in Bhitarkanika National Park reached **1,858**, an increase of 32 from the 2025 figure of 1,826.
- **Demographic Breakdown:**
  - **Hatchlings:** 531
  - **Yearlings:** 442
  - **Juveniles:** 365
  - **Sub-adults:** 167
  - **Adults:** 353 (including several measuring over 20 feet).
- **Migratory Bird Census (January 2026):** A total of **1,52,762 migratory birds** from **106 species** were recorded, a slight increase in headcount but a decrease in species diversity (down from 118 species in 2025).
- **Monsoon Bird Census (September 2025):** Recorded **1,30,796 nesting birds** across 27,646 nests, with the **Asian Open-billed Stork** remaining the dominant nesting species.
- **Unique Feature:** The park is home to nearly **75% of India's saltwater crocodile population** and is the only place in India where rare **leucistic (white) crocodiles** are found in the wild.

## 10. CSIR-IICT success in Bio-Hydrogen

- **CSIR-Indian Institute of Chemical Technology (CSIR-IICT)** achieved a breakthrough in **bio-hydrogen production** using **biological processes**.
- **Technology:** Uses **microbial/biocatalytic methods** to generate hydrogen from **renewable bio-resources**.
- **Significance:** **Clean, green fuel**; zero carbon emissions at point of use.
- **Why in news:** Supports India's **Green Hydrogen Mission** and clean energy transition.
- **Prelims trap:** Bio-hydrogen ≠ green hydrogen via electrolysis; it is **biologically produced**.

## 11. Taranaki Maunga: The Third Mountain with "Legal Personhood"

- **Historic Milestone:** On **January 30, 2025**, the New Zealand Parliament unanimously passed a landmark law granting **legal personhood** to **Taranaki Maunga** (formerly Mount Egmont).

- **The Concept:** This status means the mountain is recognized as a **legal person** with its own rights, duties, and liabilities. It can now be represented in court as a plaintiff to protect itself from environmental harm or exploitation.
- **Official Name Change:** As part of the **Treaty of Waitangi** settlement, the colonial name "Mount Egmont" was officially abolished. The mountain is now solely **Taranaki Maunga**, and the national park is renamed **Te Papa-Kura-o-Taranaki**.
- **New Legal Identity:** The mountain and its surrounding peaks are collectively named **Te Kāhui Tupua**, recognized as a "living, indivisible, whole entity."
- **Joint Governance:** A body named **Te Tōpuni Kōkōrangī**, consisting of four representatives from local **Māori iwi** and four government appointees, acts as the "human face and voice" of the mountain.
- **Precedents in New Zealand:** Taranaki Maunga is the **third** natural entity in the country to receive this status, following:
  1. **Te Urewera** (Forest/Former National Park) in 2014.
  2. **Whanganui River** in 2017.

## 12. Eurasian Otter found in Kashmir

- **Eurasian Otter (*Lutra lutra*)** was recently sighted in **Kashmir**, indicating healthy freshwater ecosystems.
- **Habitat:** Rivers, lakes, wetlands; prefers clean, well-oxygenated water.
- **Distribution:** Europe, North Africa, West & Central Asia, parts of South Asia.
- **IUCN Status:** **Near Threatened**.
- **Legal Protection (India):** **Schedule II** of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
- **Why in news:** Rare and declining species; sighting highlights biodiversity value of Himalayan river systems.
- **Prelims trap:** Eurasian otter is a **freshwater species**, not a marine otter.

## 13. Kuno Milestone: First Second-Generation Cheetah Cubs Born

- **The Historic Event:** In late November 2025, an India-born female cheetah named **Mukhi** gave birth to **five healthy cubs** at Kuno National Park (KNP).
- **Significance:** This is a "watershed moment" for **Project Cheetah** as these are the first **second-generation** cubs. Mukhi herself was born in

Kuno in March 2023 (to the Namibian cheetah 'Jwala'), making this the first successful reproduction by a cheetah born on Indian soil.

- **2025 Summary:** The year 2025 was highly productive for the project, with a total of **12 cubs** born to three different females.
- **Current Population (January 2026):** India's total cheetah count stands at **30**. This includes 11 original founder animals from Africa and **19 cubs** born in India.
- **Habitat Expansion:** Of the 30 cheetahs, **27** are housed at Kuno National Park, while **3** have been successfully relocated to the **Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary** (Mandsaur district) to reduce density.
- **What's Next (February 2026):** A fresh batch of **8 cheetahs** (2 adults and 6 cubs) is expected to arrive from **Botswana** in February 2026 to further diversify the genetic pool.

## 14. Arctic increase in temperature

- **Arctic region** is warming **3–4 times faster** than the global average — phenomenon called **Arctic Amplification**.
- **Reason:** Melting sea ice reduces **albedo**, causing more heat absorption.
- **Impacts:** Rapid **sea ice loss**, thawing **permafrost**, rising sea levels, and altered jet stream patterns.
- **Global effect:** Increased frequency of **extreme weather events** in mid-latitudes, including India.
- **Why in news:** Recent scientific assessments reported record-high Arctic temperatures.
- **Prelims trap:** Arctic warming affects **global climate systems**, not only polar regions.

## 15. Discovery of Indo-Burmese Pangolin

- **Indo-Burmese Pangolin (Manis indoburmanica)** identified as a **distinct species** through recent taxonomic studies.
- **Region:** Indo-Burma biodiversity hotspot — **North-East India and Myanmar**.
- **Key feature:** Previously confused with **Chinese Pangolin (Manis pentadactyla)**.
- **Threat:** Illegal wildlife trade (scales and meat).
- **IUCN status:** Yet to be separately assessed (earlier grouped data).
- **Why in news:** Highlights hidden biodiversity and need for species-specific conservation.
- **Prelims trap:** Pangolins are **mammals with keratin scales**, not reptiles.

## 16. Threat to Yala Glacier in Nepal

- **Yala Glacier**, a benchmark glacier in **Nepal**, is rapidly retreating due to **climate change**.
- **Location:** Langtang region, central Himalayas.
- **Major threats:** Rising temperatures, reduced snowfall, formation of glacial lakes.
- **Impact:** Risk of **Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs)** and long-term water insecurity.
- **Why in news:** Scientists warned that Yala Glacier may **disappear in coming decades** if warming continues.
- **Prelims trap:** Himalayan glacier retreat affects **South Asian river systems**, not only Nepal.

## 17. Digital Tree Aadhaar: Protecting Kashmir's Chinar Heritage

- **Initiative:** Launched in **January 2025** by the **J&K Forest Research Institute (JKFRI)**, this project assigns a unique, geo-tagged digital identity to every Chinar tree in Jammu and Kashmir.
- **Objective:** To monitor and conserve the iconic **Chinar (*Platanus orientalis*)**, which is under threat from illegal felling, urbanization, and climate change.
- **Technology Used:** Each tree is fitted with a **scannable QR code** and a metal barcode plate. It utilizes **Geographic Information System (GIS)** technology for real-time tracking.
- **Comprehensive Database:** Scanning the QR code provides instant access to **25-35 parameters**, including the tree's geographical coordinates, height, girth (age), health status, and any pest infestations.
- **Milestone (2025-26):** Over **28,500 Chinar trees** have been geo-tagged so far. The goal is to document approximately 32,500 to 40,000 trees across the Kashmir Valley and Chenab region.
- **Chinar Atlas:** The collected data is being compiled into a first-of-its-kind "**Chinar Atlas**," serving as a central repository for the state tree's conservation.

## 18. 7 Countries added in GPAP

- **Seven new countries** joined the **Global Plastic Action Partnership (GPAP)** recently.
- **GPAP** is an initiative of the **World Economic Forum**.
- **Objective:** Reduce **plastic pollution** through national action plans, public-private partnerships, and circular economy models.
- **India** is a **member country** of GPAP.

- **Focus areas:** Plastic waste management, recycling, innovation, policy support.
- **Why in news:** Expansion of GPAP membership to strengthen **global action against plastic pollution**.
- **Prelims trap:** GPAP is **not a UN treaty** and **not legally binding**.

## 19. India's First White Tiger Breeding Centre: Govindgarh, Rewa

- **Final Approval:** In **January 2025**, the **Central Zoo Authority (CZA)** gave final approval for India's first dedicated **White Tiger Breeding Centre** in the Rewa district of Madhya Pradesh.
- **Satellite Facility:** The centre is designed as a specialized "satellite facility" under the revised master plan of the existing **Maharaja Martand Singh Judeo White Tiger Safari and Zoo** (Mukundpur, Satna).
- **Specific Location:** It will be established in **Govindgarh**, approximately 10 km away from the Mukundpur Safari. This site is historically significant as the place where the last wild white tiger was housed.
- **Historical Legacy:** Rewa is known as the "Land of the White Tiger." In **1951**, Maharaja Martand Singh Judeo captured the first wild white tiger cub, named **Mohan**, in the Govindgarh jungle. Mohan became the ancestor of almost all captive white tigers in the world today.
- **Scientific Objective:** The centre aims to conduct scientific studies on **leucism** (the genetic mutation causing the white coat) and carry out planned breeding to maintain a healthy population of white tigers in captivity.

## 20. Guneri Gaon: Gujarat's First Biodiversity Heritage Site

- **Official Declaration:** In late **January 2025**, the Gujarat government officially designated a 32.78-hectare area in **Guneri village** (Lakhpur taluka, Kutch district) as the state's **first-ever Biodiversity Heritage Site (BHS)**.
- **The "Inland Mangrove" Phenomenon:** The site is unique because it features **inland mangroves** that thrive without any tidal water inflow. Located 45 km from the Arabian Sea, it is a rare ecological anomaly where mangroves grow on flat, dry terrain rather than swampy coastal mud.
- **Global Rarity:** Guneri is home to one of only **eight such inland mangrove sites** reported

globally and is considered the last remaining remnant of its kind in India.

- **Scientific Origin:** Experts believe these mangroves (*Avicennia marina*) originated during the **Miocene period** or along the banks of the ancient **Saraswati River**. They survive today due to subterranean **limestone deposits** that provide a steady supply of groundwater.
- **Biodiversity Hub:** The site supports over **45 bird species** (both resident and migratory) and various wildlife including Chinkara, blue bulls, and desert foxes.
- **Legal Framework:** Notified under **Section 37 of the Biological Diversity Act, 2002**, the site will be managed by a local **Biodiversity Management Committee (BMC)** to ensure conservation while respecting local community rights.

## 21. AIIMS Delhi – First Biomedical Dirt (Waste) Management

- **All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi (AIIMS Delhi)** became the **first institute in India** to implement **on-site biomedical waste "dirt" (soiled waste) management**.
- **What it involves:** Scientific segregation, treatment, and disposal of **soiled biomedical waste** within hospital premises.
- **Objective:** Reduce environmental pollution and dependence on external waste handlers.
- **Significance:** Improves **infection control**, hygiene, and compliance with biomedical waste rules.
- **Why in news:** Sets a **national benchmark** for sustainable hospital waste management.
- **Prelims trap:** Biomedical waste management is governed by **Biomedical Waste Management Rules, 2016** (MoEFCC), not Health Ministry rules.

## 22. Haryana's New Rules: Culling of Male Nilgais (Blue Bulls)

- **Notification:** In **February 2025**, the Haryana government approved the new **Wildlife (Protection) Rules**, which permit the controlled culling of **male Nilgais** to mitigate agricultural losses.
- **Reason for Action:** The decision responds to years of pressure from farmers, particularly in districts like Sirsa, Hisar, and Fatehabad, where Nilgais cause extensive damage to wheat and sugarcane crops.
- **Key Restriction:** The permission is specifically limited to **male Nilgais** (identifiable by their bluish-grey coat and small horns). Females

(tawny/orange) remain protected to ensure the population's survival.

- **Religious Sensitivity:** Since the term "Nilgai" (Blue Cow) has religious connotations in Hinduism, the government has previously considered renaming the animal "**Rojad**" (Forest Antelope) to reduce public opposition to culling.
- **Major Opposition:** The **Bishnoi community**, known for their deep-rooted wildlife conservation values, has held major protests in Hisar and Fatehabad, demanding a revocation of the order and suggesting non-lethal methods like translocation.
- **Legal Status:** Under the **Wildlife Protection Act (1972)**, Nilgais are listed under **Schedule III**. While they are not "vermin" at the national level, the state has used its powers to allow limited shooting under specific distress conditions.

## Space and Defence

### 1. Mission SCOT by Digantara – News in Brief (MPSC Prelims)

- **Mission SCOT (Space Camera for Object Tracking)** launched by **Digantara**.
- **Objective:** Track **space debris and objects** in Earth's orbit using **optical sensors**.
- **Significance:** Enhances **Space Situational Awareness (SSA)** and satellite safety.
- **Why in news:** Strengthens India's **private space sector** capabilities in orbital monitoring.
- **Prelims trap:** SCOT is for **space debris tracking**, not communication or Earth observation satellites.

### 2. India's Gateway to Deep Space: Cabinet Approves Third Launch Pad (TLP)

#### Why in News?

On **January 28, 2026**, the Union Cabinet chaired by PM Narendra Modi officially approved the construction of the **Third Launch Pad (TLP)** at the **Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC-SHAR)**, Sriharikota. This decision comes as India prepares for the high-frequency launches required for the **Gaganyaan** missions and the commercial demands of **NewSpace India Limited (NSIL)**.

#### Core Static Backbone

- **Location:** Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC), Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh.
- **Nodal Agency:** Indian Space Research Organisation (**ISRO**).
- **Existing Infrastructure:** \* **First Launch Pad (FLP):** Operational since 1971 (used for PSLV).
  - **Second Launch Pad (SLP):** Operational since 2005 (used for GSLV/LVM3).
- **Kulasekharapatnam Connection:** While TLP is being built at Sriharikota for heavy-lift rockets, a separate **Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV)** spaceport is also coming up in Kulasekharapatnam, Tamil Nadu.

#### Key Features of the Third Launch Pad

1. **Heavy-Lift Optimized:** Specifically designed to handle the **Next Generation Launch Vehicle (NGLV)**, also known as "**Soorya**", which is a 3-stage partially reusable heavy-lift rocket.
2. **Increased Frequency:** The TLP will allow ISRO to conduct up to **24-30 launches per year**, doubling its current capacity.

3. **Human-Rated Standards:** Built with advanced safety and crew-access systems specifically for **Gaganyaan-2** and future missions to the **Bharatiya Antariksha Station (BAS)**.
4. **Off-site Integration:** Features a "Mobile Service Tower" (MST) that allows for vertical integration of the rocket away from the pad, reducing the "turnaround time" between launches.

### 3. DRDO Milestone 2026: 12-Minute Long-Duration Scramjet Success

#### Why in News?

On **January 9, 2026**, the **Defence Research & Development Laboratory (DRDL)**, Hyderabad, achieved a historic breakthrough by successfully conducting an extensive **12-minute (720 seconds)** long-duration ground test of its **Actively Cooled Scramjet Full Scale Combustor**. This achievement building on tests from 2025, positions India as a global leader in hypersonic propulsion.

#### Core Static Backbone

- **Engine Type: Scramjet** (Supersonic Combustion Ramjet).
- **Working Principle:** Unlike conventional jet engines, it has no moving parts. It uses the vehicle's high speed to compress incoming air, and combustion happens at **supersonic speeds** inside the engine.
- **Fuel:** Uses indigenously developed **endothermic fuel** which also acts as a coolant for the engine (active cooling).
- **Hypersonic Speed:** Defined as speeds exceeding **Mach 5** (approx. 6,125 km/h).

### 4. CROPS Module by ISRO

- **CROPS (Compact Research Module for Orbital Plant Studies)** developed by **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)**.
- **Purpose:** Study **plant growth and response in microgravity** conditions.
- **Application:** Supports future **long-duration human space missions** and space-based life-support research.
- **Why in news:** Part of India's preparation for **Gaganyaan and space habitation experiments**.
- **Prelims trap:** CROPS is for **space biology research**, not Earth-based agriculture or satellite imaging.

### 5. Dwarf Planet 2024 YR4

- **2024 YR4** is a **newly identified trans-Neptunian object** classified as a **dwarf planet candidate**.

- **Location:** Beyond **Neptune**, in the **Kuiper Belt region**.
- **Discovery:** Detected through advanced astronomical surveys in **2024**.
- **Key feature:** Satisfies criteria like **orbiting the Sun** and having sufficient mass for a **nearly round shape** (hydrostatic equilibrium).
- **Why in news:** Adds to the list of potential dwarf planets, improving understanding of the **outer Solar System**.
- **Prelims trap:**
  - Dwarf planets are **not planets** (they have not cleared their orbital neighbourhood).
  - Kuiper Belt ≠ Oort Cloud.

### 6. Century at Sriharikota: GSLV-F15 Marks 100th Mission from SDSC-SHAR]

#### Why in News?

On **January 29, 2025**, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) achieved a monumental milestone by successfully conducting its **100th launch mission from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC-SHAR)** in Sriharikota. The mission involved the **GSLV-F15** rocket carrying the **NVS-02** navigation satellite.

#### Core Static Backbone

- **Spaceport:** Satish Dhawan Space Centre (formerly SHAR), Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh.
- **The "Century" Count:** This refers specifically to **missions lifting off from Sriharikota soil**, starting from the first experimental SLV-3 flight in 1979.
- **Mission Vehicle:** **GSLV-F15** (Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle).
- **Satellite:** **NVS-02** (Second-generation NavIC navigation satellite).
- **Launch Pad:** Second Launch Pad (SLP).

#### Exam-Relevant Data ONLY (The 100th Mission)

- **Historical Context:** The first launch from Sriharikota was the **SLV-3 E1** on August 10, 1979 (Experimental).
- **Vehicle Specs:** **GSLV-F15** is a three-stage rocket (Solid-Liquid-Cryogenic) featuring an **indigenous cryogenic upper stage**.
- **Payload:** **NVS-02** weighs **2,250 kg** and is equipped with an indigenous **Rubidium atomic clock** for precise timing in the NavIC constellation.
- **Launch Tally (as of Jan 2026):**

- **Total Orbital Launches:** ~105.
- **Success Rate:** High performance across PSLV (Workhorse) and LVM3 (Heavy Lifter).

## 7. Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla – Indian Astronaut

- **Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla** is an **Indian Air Force test pilot** and **astronaut-designate** selected under India's human spaceflight programme.
- He is slated to become the **first Indian to visit the International Space Station (ISS)** through a commercial astronaut mission.
- Associated with **Indian Space Research Organisation's** human spaceflight efforts and international collaboration.
- **Why in news:** Announcement of his assignment to an **ISS mission**, marking a new milestone in India's human spaceflight outreach.
- **Prelims trap:**
  - **Rakesh Sharma** was the **first Indian in space** (1984, Soyuz) — **not** the ISS.
  - Shubhanshu Shukla is **first Indian to the ISS**, not first Indian in space.

## 8. VSHORAD Missile Testing

- **VSHORAD (Very Short Range Air Defence)** missile was successfully tested by **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)**.
- **Purpose:** Neutralise **low-altitude aerial threats** like drones, helicopters, and fighter aircraft.
- **Range:** Short range (man-portable air defence system category).
- **Key feature:** **Indigenous infrared seeker** with high accuracy.
- **Users:** Indian Army / Indian Armed Forces.
- **Why in news:** Part of India's push for **indigenous air defence systems**.
- **Prelims trap:**
  - VSHORAD ≠ Akash missile (Akash is medium-range).
  - VSHORAD is **man-portable**, not long-range SAM.

## 9. Axiom Mission 4 (Ax-4)

- **Axiom Mission 4 (Ax-4)** is a **commercial human spaceflight mission** to the **International Space Station (ISS)**.
- Conducted by **Axiom Space** in collaboration with **NASA** and **SpaceX**.

- **Launch vehicle:** SpaceX **Falcon 9**; spacecraft **Crew Dragon**.
- **Significance for India:** **Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla** selected to fly, making him the **first Indian to visit the ISS**.
- **Why in news:** Strengthens India's human spaceflight exposure ahead of **Gaganyaan**.
- **Prelims trap:** Ax-4 is a **commercial mission**, not a NASA-led government mission.

## 10. TROPEX-25

- **TROPEX-25 (Theatre Level Operational Readiness Exercise)** conducted by the **Indian Navy**.
- **Nature:** Large-scale **tri-service operational exercise** involving Navy, Army, Air Force and Coast Guard.
- **Objective:** Test **combat readiness**, joint operations, and integrated theatre-level response.
- **Area:** Indian Ocean Region, including **Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal**.
- **Why in news:** Annual flagship exercise to validate India's **maritime security preparedness**.
- **Prelims trap:**
  - TROPEX is a **combat readiness exercise**, not a humanitarian drill.
  - It is **theatre-level**, not fleet-specific only.

## 11. Renaming of Fort William as Vijay Durg

- **Fort William** has been **renamed as "Vijay Durg"**.
- **Location:** Kolkata; headquarters of the **Indian Army – Eastern Command**.
- **Reason:** Part of India's effort to **remove colonial-era symbols** and adopt **Indian historical-cultural names**.
- **Name significance:** *Vijay Durg* refers to a famous sea fort in **Maharashtra**, associated with **Maratha naval power**.
- **Why in news:** Official renaming decision by the Indian Army.
- **Prelims trap:**
  - Fort William → **Eastern Command**, not Southern or Northern Command.
  - Renaming is **symbolic**, not administrative reorganisation.

## 12. Exercise CYCLONE (India-Egypt)

- **Exercise CYCLONE** is a **joint military exercise** between **India** and **Egypt**.
- **Type:** **Special Forces exercise** (Army).
- **Objective:** Enhance **interoperability**, counter-terrorism skills, and joint operational tactics.
- **Venue:** Conducted alternately in **India** and **Egypt**.
- **Why in news:** Strengthening **India-Egypt defence cooperation**.
- **Prelims trap:**
  - CYCLONE is **not a naval or air exercise**.
  - It is **bilateral**, not multilateral.

## 13. Exercise Desert Cyclone (India-UAE)

- **Exercise Desert Cyclone** is a **bilateral military exercise** between **India** and **United Arab Emirates**.
- **Type:** **Army exercise** (joint field training).
- **Objective:** Enhance **interoperability**, joint combat skills, and coordination in **desert warfare conditions**.
- **Venue:** Conducted in **desert terrain** of the UAE / India (as per hosting).
- **Why in news:** Reflects growing **India-UAE strategic and defence partnership**.
- **Prelims trap:**
  - Desert Cyclone ≠ Exercise CYCLONE (India-Egypt).
  - It is **not a naval or air force exercise**.

## 14. Exercise Devil Strike

- **Exercise Devil Strike** is a **large-scale integrated combat exercise** of the **Indian Army**.
- **Conducted by:** **RAPID** (Reorganised Army Plains Infantry Division) formations.
- **Objective:** Test **offensive operations**, rapid mobilisation, and **jointness with Air Force assets**.
- **Nature:** High-intensity, **conventional warfare preparedness** exercise.
- **Why in news:** Demonstrated Army's readiness for **swift, deep-strike operations**.
- **Prelims trap:**
  - Devil Strike is **not a counter-terror drill**.
  - It is an **Army exercise**, not tri-service.

## 15. INS Mumbai in Exercise La Pérouse 25

- **INS Mumbai** participated in **Exercise La Pérouse 25**.
- **Exercise La Pérouse** is a **multinational naval exercise** led by **France**.
- **Participants:** Navies of **India, France, Australia, Japan, UK, USA** (varies by edition).
- **Objective:** Enhance **maritime interoperability**, sea-lane security, and coordinated naval operations.
- **Area:** **Indian Ocean Region**.
- **Why in news:** Showcases India's role in **multilateral maritime cooperation**.
- **Prelims trap:**
  - La Pérouse is a **naval** (not tri-service) exercise.
  - It is **France-led**, not India-led.

## 16. Pakistan's PRSC-E01 Satellite

- **PRSC-E01** is an **Earth Observation satellite** launched by Pakistan.
- **Purpose:** High-resolution **remote sensing**, mapping, agriculture monitoring, urban planning, and disaster management.
- **Developed by:** **Pakistan Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO)**.
- **Orbit:** **Low Earth Orbit (LEO)**.
- **Why in news:** Strengthens Pakistan's **indigenous space and remote-sensing capability**.
- **Prelims trap:**
  - PRSC-E01 is **not a communication satellite**.
  - Earth-observation satellites mainly operate in **LEO**, not GEO.

## 17. Bhargavastra – India's First Micro-Missile System

- **Bhargavastra** is India's **first indigenous micro-missile-based counter-drone air defence system**.
- **Purpose:** Neutralise **small drones, UAV swarms, and low-altitude aerial threats**.
- **Key feature:** Uses **micro-missiles** for **hard-kill interception**; designed for **short-range, point defence**.
- **Nature:** **Indigenous** development; tested to demonstrate effectiveness against **drone threats**.

- **Why in news:** Successful testing showcased India's capability in **counter-UAS (C-UAS)** technologies.
- **Prelims trap:**
  - Bhargavastra is **not a long-range SAM**.
  - It is meant for **counter-drone/low-altitude threats**, not ballistic missiles.

- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Home Affairs (Disaster Management Division).
- **Prize Money:** \* **Institutional:** ₹51 Lakh and a certificate.
  - **Individual:** ₹5 Lakh and a certificate.
- **INCOIS Profile:** Established in **1999** in Hyderabad as an autonomous body under the **Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES)**.

## 2. 76th Republic Day Gallantry Awards: Honoring the Guardians of Bharat

### Why in News?

On the eve of the **76th Republic Day (January 26, 2025)**, President Droupadi Murmu approved **93 Gallantry Awards** for Armed Forces and Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) personnel. These awards recognize conspicuous acts of bravery, including counter-terrorism operations and daring rescue missions, with **11 awards being conferred posthumously**.

### Core Static Backbone

- **Announced By:** President of India (Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces).
- **Frequency:** Twice a year (Republic Day and Independence Day).
- **Peacetime Hierarchy:**
  1. **Ashoka Chakra** (Highest)
  2. **Kirti Chakra** (Second highest)
  3. **Shaurya Chakra** (Third highest)
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Defence (for Armed Forces) and Ministry of Home Affairs (for CAPF/Police).

## Books and Awards

### 1. INCOIS Bags Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar 2025

#### Why in News?

On **January 23, 2025** (Parakram Diwas), the Government of India selected the **Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS)**, Hyderabad, for the prestigious **Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar 2025** in the **Institutional Category**. This award recognizes INCOIS's decades of selfless service in ocean-related disaster management.

#### Core Static Backbone

- **Award Name:** Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar (instituted in 2019).
- **Announcement Date:** Every year on **January 23** (Birth anniversary of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose).

### Exam-Relevant Data ONLY (2025 Winners)

The 2025 list featured a mix of Army, Air Force, and CAPF heroes.

| Award             | Count | Key Recipients                                                                                                              |
|-------------------|-------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Kirti Chakra      | 02    | Major Manjit (Punjab Regt/22 RR) and Naik Dilwar Khan (Posthumous - Arty/28 RR).                                            |
| Shaurya Chakra    | 14    | Major Ashish Dahiya, Captain Deepak Singh (Posthumous), Flt Lt Aman Singh Hans, and Deputy Commandant Vikrant Kumar (CRPF). |
| Bar to Sena Medal | 01    | Lt Col KH Shem, SM (20 JAT).                                                                                                |
| Sena Medal (G)    | 66    | Includes 7 posthumous honors for exceptional valor in J&K.                                                                  |

- **Total Decorations:** In addition to gallantry, the President approved **305 Defence Decorations**,

including 30 Param Vishisht Seva Medals (PVSM) and 57 Ati Vishisht Seva Medals (AVSM).

### 3. Padma Awards 2025: Celebrating Excellence Across Bharat

#### Why in News?

On the eve of the **76th Republic Day (January 25, 2025)**, the Government of India announced the list of **139 Padma Awardees**. This year is exceptional as it exceeds the usual limit of 120 awards. The list recognizes distinguished service across fields like Art, Social Work, Science, and Medicine, with a strong emphasis on **"People's Padma"** (unsung heroes).

#### Core Static Backbone

- **Total Awards: 139** (including 1 duo case).
  - **Padma Vibhushan:** 07
  - **Padma Bhushan:** 19
  - **Padma Shri:** 113
- **Categories:** 23 women, 13 posthumous awardees, and 10 Foreigners/NRI/PIO/OCI.
- **Selection:** Recommendations are made by the **Padma Awards Committee**, headed by the **Cabinet Secretary**.

#### Exam-Relevant Data ONLY (Key Winners)

**Padma Vibhushan (Top 7):** | Name | Field | State/Country | | :--- | :--- | :--- | | **Justice Jagdish Singh Khehar** | Public Affairs | Chandigarh | | **Dr. Duvvur Nageshwar Reddy** | Medicine | Telangana | | **Smt. Kumudini Lakhia** | Art | Gujarat | | **Shri L. Subramaniam** | Art | Karnataka | | **Shri M. T. Vasudevan Nair** | Literature (Posth.) | Kerala | | **Shri Osamu Suzuki** | Trade (Posth.) | Japan | | **Smt. Sharda Sinha** | Art (Posth.) | Bihar |

#### Padma Bhushan (Notable):

- **Shri Manohar Joshi** (Posth. - Public Affairs, Maharashtra)
- **Shri Pankaj Uddhas** (Posth. - Art, Maharashtra)
- **Shri P. R. Sreejesh** (Sports - Hockey, Kerala)
- **Shri Nandamuri Balakrishna** (Art, Andhra Pradesh)

#### Padma Shri from Maharashtra (Specific to MPSC):

- **Shri Ashok Saraf** (Art - Cinema)
- **Shri Achyut Palav** (Art - Calligraphy)
- **Smt. Arundhati Bhattacharya** (Trade & Industry)
- **Shri Chaitram Pawar** (Social Work)
- **Shri Maruti Chitampalli** (Literature & Education)
- honor.

### 4. Bharat Ratna 2024-2026: Recognizing the Icons of Modern India

#### Why in News?

As of **January 2026**, the **Bharat Ratna**—India's highest civilian award—remains a major topic of discussion following the historic decision in **2024** to confer the award on **five eminent personalities** in a single year, breaking the traditional limit of three. This move recognized monumental contributions to social justice, politics, agriculture, and economic reform.

#### The Historic 2024 Recipients

In 2024, the President of India conferred the Bharat Ratna on five individuals whose legacies have shaped the nation's trajectory:

| Recipient                                     | Known As                          | Key Contribution                                                                                 |
|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Karpoori Thakur</b><br>(Posthumous)        | <i>Jan Nayak</i>                  | Former Bihar CM; pioneer of OBC reservations and social justice.                                 |
| <b>Lal Krishna Advani</b>                     | <i>Iron Man of BJP</i>            | Former Deputy PM; central figure in Indian politics and the Ram Janmabhoomi movement.            |
| <b>P. V. Narasimha Rao</b><br>(Posthumous)    | <i>Father of Economic Reforms</i> | 9th PM; architect of the <b>1991 LPG reforms</b> (Liberalization, Privatization, Globalization). |
| <b>Chaudhary Charan Singh</b><br>(Posthumous) | <i>Champion of Peasants</i>       | 5th PM; dedicated his life to agrarian reforms and farmers' rights.                              |
| <b>M. S. Swaminathan</b><br>(Posthumous)      | <i>Father of Green Revolution</i> | Scientist who transformed India from a food-deficient to a food-surplus nation.                  |

#### Core Static Backbone

- **Institution:** Instituted on **January 2, 1954**.
- **Order of Precedence:** It is the **highest civilian award**; recipients are ranked **7th** in the Indian Order of Precedence.
- **The Medal:** Shaped like a **Pipal leaf**, made of toned bronze, with a platinum sun and the words "Bharat Ratna" in Devanagari.
- **Recommendations:** Made by the **Prime Minister** to the **President**.

- **Limit:** Usually limited to **three** in a year, though this was broken in 1999 (4 awards) and 2024 (5 awards).
- **Non-Indians:** Can be awarded to non-citizens (e.g., **Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan** and **Nelson Mandela**).

### Exam-Relevant Data ONLY (Stats & Facts)

- **Total Recipients (1954-2026):** 53 individuals.
- **Posthumous Policy:** Not originally allowed; changed in **1966**. **Lal Bahadur Shastri** was the first posthumous recipient.
- **Youngest Recipient:** **Sachin Tendulkar** (at age 40 in 2014).
- **Oldest Recipient:** **Dhondo Keshav Karve** (on his 100th birthday in 1958).
- **Women Recipients:** Only **5** women have received it (Indira Gandhi, Mother Teresa, Aruna Asaf Ali, M.S. Subbulakshmi, and Lata Mangeshkar).

## 5. Tarun Das gets Honorary Singapore Citizenship Award

- **Tarun Das**, noted **Indian public intellectual and policy influencer**, was conferred the **Honorary Citizen Award** by **Singapore**.
- **Reason:** Contribution to **India-Singapore relations**, economic cooperation, and strategic dialogue.
- **Award nature:** One of Singapore's **highest civilian honours for foreigners**.
- **Why in news:** Recognition of long-term efforts in strengthening **bilateral ties**.
- **Prelims trap:**
  - Honorary Citizenship ≠ Permanent Residency.
  - Award is given to **foreign nationals only**.

## 6. Pankaj Mishra – The World After Gaza: A Guide to Challenging Times

- **The World After Gaza: A Guide to Challenging Times** is a recent book by **Pankaj Mishra**.
- **Theme:** Impact of the **Gaza conflict** on global politics, morality, international order, and post-colonial worldviews.
- **Nature:** **Non-fiction / political commentary**.
- **Why in news:** Widely discussed for its critique of **Western narratives**, global power asymmetry, and moral crisis in international relations.
- **Prelims trap:**
  - This is **not a novel**.

- Author is **Pankaj Mishra (Indian writer)**, not a West Asian scholar.

## 7. Professor Urbasi Sinha – Gates Cambridge Impact Prize 2025

- **Urbasi Sinha**, Indian physicist, received the **Gates Cambridge Impact Prize 2025**.
- **Field:** **Quantum optics and quantum information science**.
- **Affiliation:** Professor at **Raman Research Institute**, Bengaluru.
- **Awarded by:** **Gates Cambridge Trust**.
- **Reason:** Impactful research and contribution to **science capacity-building and mentoring**.
- **Why in news:** Recognition of Indian excellence in **advanced physics research**.
- **Prelims trap:**
  - Gates Cambridge ≠ Nobel or Booker.
  - Award focuses on **impact**, not only academic citations.

## 8. How India Scaled Mt G20: The Inside Story of the G20 Presidency

- **Author:** **Amitabh Kant**, who served as India's G20 Sherpa and is the former CEO of NITI Aayog.
- **Publication Date:** Officially published in **January 2025** by **Rupa Publications India**.
- **Key Theme:** Provides a rare, "behind-the-scenes" account of the intense negotiations, backroom diplomacy, and strategic maneuvering that led to the successful **New Delhi Leaders' Declaration (NDLD)** during India's 2023 G20 Presidency.
- **The "Mount G20" Challenge:** The title refers to the monumental task of achieving a 100% consensus among member nations amidst deep global fractures caused by the Russia-Ukraine conflict and post-pandemic economic crises.

## 9. WEF Crystal Awards 2025: Celebrating Cultural Leaders

The **31st Annual Crystal Awards** were presented at the opening of the **World Economic Forum (WEF) Annual Meeting 2025** in Davos, Switzerland (January 20, 2025). The awards recognize exceptional cultural leaders who are driving social and environmental change.

## 2025 Crystal Award Recipients

| Awardee               | Field                 | Primary Contribution                                                                                                                               |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| David Beckham         | Sports / Philanthropy | <b>UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador</b> ; honored for 20 years of advocating for children's rights, health (malaria prevention), and education globally. |
| Diane von Fürstenberg | Fashion / Activism    | Recognized for <b>empowering women</b> through the DVF Awards and her leadership in gender equality and female mentorship.                         |
| Riken Yamamoto        | Architecture          | <b>2024 Pritzker Prize Laureate</b> ; honored for his commitment to <b>sustainable architecture</b> and community-centric urban design.            |

### Some Factual -

- **Theme of WEF 2025:** "Collaboration for the Intelligent Age."
- **Selection Criteria:** Awardees are chosen for their ability to bridge divides and inspire collective action on global challenges.
- **Architectural Legacy:** Riken Yamamoto is particularly noted for his "Local Area Republic" philosophy, which focuses on architecture that heals and connects communities after disasters (like the 2011 Japan earthquake).
- **Philanthropic Reach:** David Beckham's "Malaria Must Die" campaign was highlighted for reaching over **1 billion people**, urging global leaders to take bold action.
- **The Presenter:** The awards are presented annually by **Hilde Schwab**, Chairwoman and Co-Founder of the World Arts Forum.
- **Indian Participation:** While there were no Indian winners this year, high-level delegations from **Maharashtra**, Telangana, and Uttar Pradesh were present at Davos 2025 to discuss investments.
- **Pritzker Link:** Note for students that Riken Yamamoto's Pritzker Prize (the "Nobel of Architecture") in 2024 served as a major precursor to this cultural recognition.

## 10. Maharaja Hari Singh Award to Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha

- **Maharaja Hari Singh Award** was conferred on **Manoj Sinha**, Lieutenant Governor of **Jammu & Kashmir**.

- **Reason:** Contribution to **public administration, governance reforms, and development initiatives** in J&K.
- **Award named after:** **Maharaja Hari Singh**, the last ruling Maharaja of Jammu & Kashmir.
- **Nature of award:** Recognition for **public service and leadership**.
- **Why in news:** Official conferment highlighting governance achievements in the Union Territory.
- **Prelims trap:**
  - Manoj Sinha is **Lieutenant Governor**, not Chief Minister.
  - Maharaja Hari Singh was associated with **pre-independence J&K**, not post-1950 India.

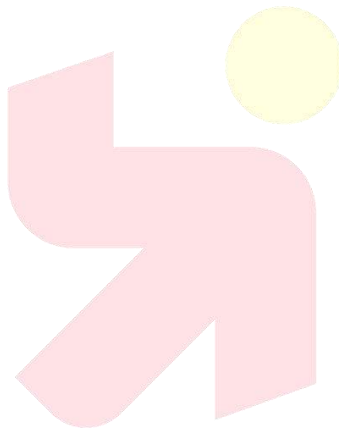
## 11. NETPAC Award to *Bad Girl* of Varsha Bharath

- **Bad Girl**, directed by **Varsha Bharath**, won the **NETPAC Award**.
- **NETPAC** stands for **Network for the Promotion of Asian Cinema**.
- **Award focus:** Promotes **Asian cinema** with strong artistic and social themes.
- **Why in news:** International recognition for an **Indian independent film**.
- **Prelims trap:**
  - NETPAC ≠ Cannes/Golden Globe.
  - It is a **film-network award**, not a national Indian film award.

## 12. ₹100 Commemorative Coin: Birth Centenary of Mohammed Rafi

- **Inauguration:** The coin was officially released on **March 24, 2025**, during a musical event titled "*Tum Mujhe Yun Bhula Na Paoge*" in Mumbai.
- **Released By:** Shri **Ashish Shelar**, the Minister of Cultural Affairs and Information Technology (Maharashtra), at the Sri Shanmukhananda Auditorium.
- **Occasion:** To commemorate the **Birth Centenary (1924–2024)** of the legendary playback singer Mohammed Rafi, a tribute supported by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- **Physical Specifications:**
  - **Denomination:** ₹100
  - **Weight:** 35 grams
  - **Diameter:** 44 mm with 200 serrations.
  - **Composition:** Quaternary Alloy (**50% Silver**, 40% Copper, 5% Nickel, and 5% Zinc).
- **Design Features:**

- **Obverse:** Features the **Lion Capital of Ashoka Pillar** with "*Satyamev Jayate*" and the denomination "100".
- **Reverse:** Bears a **portrait of Mohammed Rafi** in the center with the inscription "*Birth Centenary of Mohammed Rafi*" in both Hindi and English, and the years **1924-2024**.
- **Mint:** The coin was minted by the **India Government Mint, Kolkata**.



PRAYAAS