

JANUARY 2025

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55TH GST COUNCIL MEETING



UP DECLARES MAHA KUMBH AREA A NEW DISTRICT FOR 2025 MELA

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- 2. Banking and Finance
- 3. Appointments and Resignations
- 4. Important Dates

- 5. Defence
- 6. Sports/Rankings/Awards
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NATIONAL

UP Declares Maha Kumbh Area a New District for 2025 Mela -

- In a significant move, the Uttar Pradesh government has declared the Maha Kumbh area in Prayagraj as a new district, named the Maha Kumbh Mela district, ahead of the grand religious event scheduled for January 2025.
- This decision marks a crucial step to streamline the administrative and logistical efforts for the smooth organization of the Kumbh Mela, which attracts millions of pilgrims from across the world.
- The creation of the new district aims to enhance coordination, law enforcement, and resource management for the event.



INDIA PLANS ANTI-DRONE UNIT FOR BORDER SECURITY -

- Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation Amit Shah announced that India will establish a comprehensive anti-drone unit to protect the nation against drone-related threats. Speaking at the 60th Raising Day Parade of the Border Security Force (BSF) in Jodhpur, Rajasthan, Shah highlighted the growing drone challenge, particularly along the borders.
- The government, in collaboration with various security forces and research departments, has developed a laser-equipped anti-drone gun mount system that has significantly improved drone interception rates.
- He also detailed the Comprehensive Integrated Border Management System (CIBMS) for border monitoring and



stressed the welfare initiatives undertaken for security personnel.

INDIA ACHIEVES TOTAL FERTILITY RATE OF 2.0 -

- India has reached a Total Fertility Rate (TFR) of 2.0, which aligns with the goals of the National Population Policy 2000 and the National Health Policy 2017 and the TFR target was set at 2.1. The Union Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare, Anupriya Patel, announced this in the Rajya Sabha.
- The government has launched various initiatives under the Family Planning Programme, which aim to provide effective contraceptive methods. They include condoms, oral contraceptive pills, emergency contraceptives, intrauterine devices (IUCDs), and sterilisation options.
- Recent introductions to contraceptive options include the Antara injectable contraceptive and the Chhaya Centchroman pill. These new methods enhance choices for family planning.



ABATHSAHAYESHWARAR TEMPLE WINS UNESCO AWARD FOR HERITAGE RESTORATION -

- The Abathsayeshwarar Temple in Thukkatchi, a 1,300-year-old Chola dynasty structure in Tamil Nadu's Thanjavur district, has gained international recognition by UNESCO's 2023 Award of Distinction for its exceptional conservation efforts.
- The temple was constructed by Kings Vikrama Chola and Kulothunga Chola and featured five prakarams



or enclosures. The village was known as Vikrama Chozheeswaram and Kulothunga Chola Nallur. Kulothunga Chola established the idol for Aadhi Sarabeshwarar.

- The temple houses many deities, including Soundaryanayaki Ambal and Ashtabhuj Durga Parameshwari.

KISAN KAVACH – BHARAT’S INDIGENOUS ANTI-PESTICIDE BODYSUIT -

- Dr. Jitendra Singh, Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science and Technology, unveiled Kisan Kavach, India’s first indigenous anti-pesticide bodysuit.
- Developed by BRIC-inStem, Bangalore, in collaboration with Sepio Health Pvt. Ltd., the suit aims to safeguard farmers from pesticide-induced health risks. The launch aligns with Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s vision of leveraging science and technology to empower India’s agricultural community.



GOOGLE PARTNERS WITH NCERT TO LAUNCH YOUTUBE CHANNELS IN 29 INDIAN LANGUAGES -

- Google has expanded its educational initiatives in India through a strategic partnership with the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT).
- This collaboration aims to make quality education more



accessible by launching YouTube channels in 29 Indian languages, including Indian Sign Language, for students in grades 1-12.

- In addition, Google has partnered with NPTEL to offer credentialed courses on YouTube, providing certification opportunities for learners. This move builds on Google’s long-standing commitment to promoting accessible education through digital tools, AI, and partnerships with Indian organizations.

GOVT UNVEILS ‘JALVAHAK ’SCHEME TO BOOST INLAND WATERWAYS CARGO MOVEMENT -

- The Indian government has launched the Jalvahak incentive scheme to encourage long-haul cargo transportation via national waterways. Aimed at decongesting road and rail networks and promoting sustainable transport, the scheme offers direct incentives for transporting goods over 300 km on waterways.
- The Jalvahak scheme, unveiled by Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal, covers National Waterways 1 (Ganga), 2 (Brahmaputra), and 16 (Barak). It incentivizes cargo owners by providing up to 35% reimbursement on operating costs, making waterway transportation an economical and eco-friendly alternative.
- This initiative is part of India’s broader effort to unlock the potential of its 20,236 km inland waterways network, which has been underutilized compared to global leaders like the US and China.



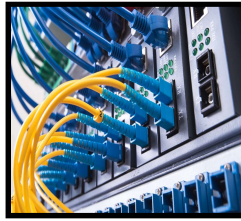
BHARAT MOBILITY GLOBAL EXPO 2025: INDIA’S AUTOMOTIVE MILESTONE -

- The Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2025 will take place from January 17-22 across Delhi NCR, marking India’s growing role as a global hub for mobility. With over 1,500 exhibitors and an expected 500,000 visitors, the event is set to become the world’s second-largest auto show.

- Key automotive giants such as Maruti Suzuki, Tata Motors, and BYD will showcase new models, with a focus on electric vehicles (EVs), hybrid technologies, and alternative fuels. In its second edition, the expo promises to build on the success of the inaugural 2024 event, reinforcing India's commitment to sustainable mobility and engineering excellence.

INDIA'S DATA CENTRE INDUSTRY SET TO SURPASS \$100 BILLION BY 2027 -

- India's data centre market is undergoing a significant transformation, with investments expected to exceed \$100 billion by 2027, marking a massive leap from the \$60 billion invested between 2019 and 2024.
- Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu have emerged as the primary hubs for data centre development, with Mumbai, Chennai, Delhi-NCR, and Bengaluru dominating the industry.
- This surge in demand is driven by sectors like BFSI, technology, fintech, media, and the booming generative AI industry, positioning India as a global leader in digital infrastructure.



CENTRE ENDS NO DETENTION RULES IN SCHOOLS -

- The government of India abolished the 'No-detention policy' for students in class 5 and 8 who fail their year end exams.
- This significant amendment to the Right of children to free and compulsory education rules, 2010 is aimed at improving learning outcomes among students.
- The revised policy mandates that students who failed their annual exams will be required to retake within two months, failing which they will have to repeat the academic year.



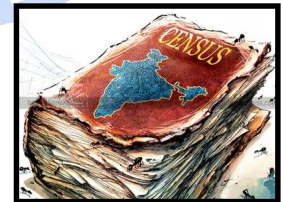
KARTARPUR SAHIB CORRIDOR CELEBRATES 5 YEARS OF RELIGIOUS CONNECTIVITY -

- The Kartarpur Sahib Corridor, connecting India and Pakistan, marks its fifth anniversary today. The corridor leads to the Gurdwara Sri Kartarpur Sahib in Pakistan, where Guru Nanak Dev Ji spent the last 18 years of his life.
- The corridor was inaugurated by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on November 9, 2019, during the 550th Prakash Purb of Guru Nanak Dev Ji.
- Over the past five years, more than 3.4 lakh devotees have visited the site. The corridor is a significant step in religious diplomacy, allowing pilgrims from India to visit this sacred site without a visa. As of today, 417 pilgrims have traveled, the highest this year.



CENTRE TO BEGIN CENSUS FROM 2025 -

- The Central government is set to commence the long-awaited census exercise in 2025, aiming for completion by 2026. This census was originally scheduled for 2021 but faced delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Following its completion, the BJP-led government plans to initiate a delimitation exercise for Lok Sabha seats, which is expected to be finalized by 2028.
- **Census Start and End:** The census will begin in 2025 and is projected to conclude in 2026, marking a significant delay of four years.
- **Delimitation Process:** The delimitation of Lok Sabha seats will commence post-census completion, with a target completion date of 2028.
- **Future Census Cycles:** The traditional decadal census cycle will be adjusted, with the next census scheduled for 2035.



JUSTICE SANJIV KHANNA APPOINTED AS 51ST CHIEF JUSTICE OF INDIA -

• In a major judiciary update, Justice Sanjiv Khanna has been appointed as the 51st Chief Justice of India (CJI), with his oath-taking ceremony set for November 11, 2024.



- His appointment follows CJI DY Chandrachud's recommendation and was confirmed by President Droupadi Murmu. Justice Khanna will serve as CJI until his retirement on May 13, 2025, holding a tenure of approximately 183 days.
- Justice Khanna began his legal practice in 1983, focusing on taxation, constitutional, and commercial law. He held key roles such as Senior Standing Counsel for the Income Tax Department and Standing Counsel (Civil) for Delhi.

RSS MARKS 100 YEARS ON VIJAYADASHAMI -

- The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the world's largest voluntary organization, is entering its 100th year on the auspicious occasion of Vijayadashami. Founded on this very day in 1925, also known as Dussehra, the RSS has grown exponentially over the past nine decades, expanding its reach across India and abroad.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi praised the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) on its centenary, acknowledging its significant contribution to nation-building.
- In a post on X, Modi urged his followers to listen to RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat's annual Vijayadashami address, describing it as a "must-listen" speech.
- Modi extended heartfelt congratulations to all RSS volunteers, emphasizing the historic milestone and uninterrupted journey of the organization dedicated to "Maa Bharti."



- The PM stated that the RSS's dedication to the nation would inspire generations and energize the pursuit of a "Viksit Bharat" (Developed India).

HAL BECOMES 14TH MAHARATNA COMPANY -

• Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) has been upgraded to the status of Maharatna, making it the 14th Central Public Sector Enterprise (CPSE) to receive this prestigious classification from the Government of India.



- This announcement, made on October 12, enhances HAL's operational autonomy and financial capabilities, allowing it to invest up to 15% of its net worth in projects and up to ₹5,000 crore in foreign ventures without government approval. The stock price responded positively, trading at ₹4,510, reflecting a 1.42% increase.
- HAL joins the ranks of other Maharatna PSUs such as NTPC, ONGC, BHEL, and Indian Oil Corporation, which have shown substantial operational success.
- To qualify for Maharatna status, CPSEs must first hold Navratna status and meet stringent financial criteria, including:
 - Average Annual Turnover: Exceeding ₹25,000 crore.
 - Average Annual Net Worth: More than ₹15,000 crore.
 - Average Annual Net Profit: Over ₹5,000 crore for the past three years

INDIA'S TEXTILES SECTOR TARGETS \$350 BILLION BY 2030 -

- India's textiles sector is set for significant expansion, with an 11% year-on-year growth in Ready-Made Garments (RMG) of all Textiles exports, as per India's trade data of August 2024, signaling a bright future.
- The Textiles sector in the country is expected to grow to USD 350 billion by 2030, driven by India's inherent

strengths and a strong policy framework that encourages investment and exports.

- A number of schemes and policy initiatives as part of the government's roadmap aim to leverage and catalyze these inherent strengths to help the textile sector achieve the USD 350 billion goal by 2030.



Key factors contributing to the sector's expansion

- 11% Growth in (RMG) Exports
- India's trade data for August 2024 reports an 11% year-on-year growth in RMG (Ready-Made Garments) exports, a positive indicator of the sector's robust future.

YOGI ADITYANATH MARKS MAHA-KUMBH-2025 WITH LOGO REVEAL -

- Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath unveiled the new multi-colored logo for Mahakumbh 2025 at an event. Kumbh Mela, recognised by the UNESCO as an 'Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity,' is regarded as the world's largest peaceful gathering of pilgrims.



Features

- Design Elements
- Features a temple, a seer, an urn, the Akshayvat tree, and Lord Hanuman.
- Embodies the confluence of nature and humanity in the Sanatan civilization.

Spiritual Significance

- The event is recognized by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.
- **With Motto:** "Sarvasiddhipradah Kumbhah" (Kumbh bestows all types of spiritual powers).

- The Maha Kumbh is a significant social and religious festival that brings together devotees from around the world.
- This inclusion highlights the spiritual and geographical importance of Prayagraj in the Maha Kumbh's rich tradition.

CLASSICAL LANGUAGE STATUS GRANTED TO MARATHI, BENGALI, PALI, PRAKRIT, AND ASSAMESE -

- In a significant move, the Union Cabinet approved the conferral of classical language status to Marathi, Bengali, Assamese, Pali, and Prakrit on October 3, 2024.
- This decision, following long-pending demands, highlights India's rich linguistic heritage and aims to preserve and promote these ancient languages.
- **The concept of "Classical Languages" was established in 2004 with Tamil being the first to receive this status.** The criteria for classical status include high antiquity of texts dating back over 1500-2000 years, a rich body of ancient literature, and a distinct literary tradition. Revised in 2005, these guidelines have since been applied to Sanskrit, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, and Odia.
- The latest additions were approved after recommendations by the Linguistic Experts Committee (LEC) under Sahitya Akademi in 2024, which confirmed that Marathi, Pali, Prakrit, Assamese, and Bengali meet these standards.



SUPREME COURT'S JUSTICE STATUE REMOVES BLINDFOLD -

- **The traditional Lady of Justice, often depicted blindfolded with scales and a sword, has undergone a symbolic transformation in the Supreme Court of India.** Under the guidance of Chief Justice DY Chandrachud, the newly commissioned statue sheds the blindfold and replaces the sword with the Constitution.

- This change represents a modern understanding of justice in India, one that is neither blind nor punitive, but instead rooted in constitutional values and equality.
- The new statue now stands prominently at the judges' library in the Supreme Court, marking a departure from colonial-era symbolism.
- Traditionally, Lady Justice was portrayed with a blindfold, symbolizing impartiality and equality before the law.
- The new statue, however, has its eyes open, symbolizing that justice is not blind in India, but instead aware, conscious, and empathetic.
- The sword, a traditional symbol of authority and punishment, has been replaced by the Indian Constitution.



UNION CABINET APPROVED THE NATIONAL MARITIME HERITAGE COMPLEX AT LOTHAL, GUJARAT -

- In a significant move to preserve and showcase India's rich maritime heritage, the Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has approved the development of the National Maritime Heritage Complex (NMHC) at Lothal, Gujarat.
- The project will unfold in two phases, and it aligns with the government's broader vision to highlight the country's ancient maritime prowess, which dates back over 4,500 years. The National Maritime Heritage Complex is set to be a world-class museum that will boost tourism, create jobs, and promote India's cultural and maritime legacy.



- The National Maritime Heritage Complex is designed to be a state-of-the-art museum that will reflect India's rich maritime history, from ancient to modern times. Lothal, an ancient Harappan site known for its dockyards and maritime trade routes, serves as the perfect location for such a project. The complex aims to preserve India's 4,500-year-old maritime heritage and bring it to a global audience.

The project has been divided into two major phases:

- **Phase 1A:** Currently under construction with more than 60% physical progress.
- **Phase 1B and Phase 2:** Recently approved by the Union Cabinet after mobilization of funds.

SIMULTANEOUS ELECTIONS IN INDIA -

- As per the government official, the concept of simultaneous elections for Lok Sabha and State Assemblies, referred to as "One Nation, One Election" will be implemented within the current term of the present government.
- The concept of "One Nation One Election" proposes the synchronization of elections for all states and the Lok Sabha within a five-year span. This entails restructuring the electoral cycle in India so that elections at both the state and central levels align.
- This would mean voters casting their ballots for members of both the Lok Sabha and state assemblies on a single day, concurrently or in phases if necessary.
- Recent developments have seen Prime Minister Narendra Modi advocating for "One Nation One Election," underscoring its significance during the 80th All India Presiding Officers Conference.
- Historically, simultaneous elections have occurred in India in the years 1952, 1957, 1962, and 1967. However, this practice was discontinued following the dissolution of certain Legislative Assemblies in the late 1960s, leading to separate elections for the Centre and states.



Merits of 'one-nation, one- election'-

- Cost Reduction
- Enhanced Voter Turnout
- Better Use of Security Forces
- Focus on Governance

Demerits of 'one-nation, one- election'-

- Constitutional and Anti-Federal Concerns
- Accountability
- Difficulty in Synchronization
- Tampering with Democracy

CABINET CLEARS CHANDRAYAAN-4 AND VENUS ORBITER MISSION FOR SPACE EXPLORATION -

- **The Union Cabinet has approved the Chandrayaan-4 mission**, which aims to develop technologies for returning to Earth after landing on the moon and collecting lunar samples for analysis.
- **The total cost of the mission is Rs 2104.06 crore, covering spacecraft development, two LVM3 launches, deep space network support, and special tests for validation.** The mission will be completed within 36 months, involving significant participation from industry and academia.

- **The Cabinet also approved the Venus Orbiter Mission, with a budget of Rs 1,236 crore, of which Rs 824 crore will be spent on the spacecraft.**



- VOM, scheduled for launch in March 2028, aims to explore Venus' surface, subsurface, and atmosphere to understand the planet's evolution. ISRO will develop and launch the spacecraft, and the mission will provide valuable insights into the evolution of Venus and Earth.

INTERNATIONAL

NEPAL AND CHINA SIGN FRAMEWORK FOR BRI COOPERATION -

- During Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli's official visit to China, both countries signed the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) Cooperation Framework. This agreement aims to accelerate the implementation of BRI projects, marking a pivotal moment in Nepal-China relations. While Nepal joined the BRI in 2017, no projects were executed until now.
- The recent framework, signed by Nepal's acting Foreign Secretary Amrit Bahadur Rai and Liu Sushe of China's National Development and Reform Commission, includes terms like "aid and technical assistance," replacing "grant" with "investment" following deliberations.



INDIA TO CHAIR 68TH SESSION OF UN COMMISSION ON NARCOTIC DRUGS -

- India has achieved a significant milestone by being named to chair the 68th Session of the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND), marking the first time the country has been chosen for this prestigious role.
- Ambassador Shambhu S Kumaran, India's Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Vienna, officially assumed the chairmanship of this crucial forum.
- The CND, a key policy-making body of the UN, focuses on addressing global drug-related issues and promoting international collaboration on drug control measures.



ELON MUSK REACHES HISTORIC \$400 BILLION NET WORTH -

- Elon Musk is the first person to achieve a net worth of \$400 billion, a milestone driven by financial moves and political developments. Musk sold shares of SpaceX, which greatly increased his wealth, and the recent U.S. election results also played an important role in this financial surge.
- Musk's sale of SpaceX shares added approximately \$50 billion to his net worth. This brought his total to \$439.2 billion. The Bloomberg Billionaires Index marks this remarkable increase. His net worth had previously declined by over \$200 billion in late 2022.



INDIA AND FRANCE COLLABORATE TO ESTABLISH WORLD'S LARGEST MUSEUM

- The Ministry of Culture, in partnership with France Museums Développement (FMD), has launched an ambitious project to develop the Yuga Yugeen Bharat National Museum as a global cultural landmark.
- Spanning approximately 1,55,000 square meters across the North and South Blocks in New Delhi, the museum will celebrate India's civilizational history and serve as a cornerstone of the Central Vista Redevelopment Project.
- Announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the International Museum Expo in May 2023 and emphasized further during the inauguration of Bharat Mandapam in July, the initiative reflects a commitment to cultural heritage preservation and international collaboration.



RUSSIA OFFERS VISA-FREE TRAVEL FOR INDIANS IN 2025 -

- Indians may soon enjoy visa-free travel to Russia as part of a new initiative expected to begin in the spring of 2025. This move follows bilateral discussions between India and Russia in June 2024, aimed at easing visa restrictions and encouraging group tourist exchanges.
- Currently, Indian nationals require visas to visit Russia, but the upcoming agreement could significantly streamline travel processes, boosting tourism and strengthening bilateral ties.

**NEPAL BEGINS ELECTRICITY EXPORT TO BANGLADESH -**

- Nepal has recently initiated the export of electricity to Bangladesh via India's electricity grid and development took place on November 15, 2024.
- The ceremony was attended by key officials from Nepal, Bangladesh, and India. The power flow is anticipated to enhance sub-regional connectivity in the power sector.
- The tripartite power sales agreement was signed on October 3, 2024. This agreement involved NTPC Vidyut Vyapar Nigam, Nepal Electricity Authority, and Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB).
- The agreement aims to facilitate electricity trade among the three nations.

**COP29: THE CRUCIAL CLIMATE SUMMIT IN BAKU, AZERBAIJAN -**

- The 29th UN Climate Summit, COP29, kicked off in Baku, Azerbaijan, on November 11, 2024, with discussions set to focus on vital climate finance mechanisms,



particularly the new "New Collective Quantified Goal" (NCQG).

- The summit, running until November 22, aims to address urgent global climate issues and secure financial commitments to assist developing nations in combating the devastating effects of climate change, caused largely by greenhouse gas emissions.
- COP29 has been dubbed the "Finance COP" due to its central focus on financial strategies, including a push for greater funding commitments and the role of the private sector in driving climate action.

G20 RIO SUMMIT 2024: A FOCUS ON GLOBAL CHALLENGES AND TURBULENCE

- The 19th G20 Summit in Rio de Janeiro concluded with the adoption of the Rio Declaration, addressing critical global issues such as climate change, the Ukraine war, conflicts in West Asia, and economic inequality.
- The declaration outlined pathways to sustainable growth, multilateralism, and humanitarian intervention while exposing deep divisions among member nations.
- The declaration reaffirmed the G20's commitment to the Paris Agreement and progress under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).
- However, no consensus was reached on boosting climate funding for developing nations, with leaders stating that funding should come "from all sources."
- The declaration unequivocally condemned terrorism in all its forms and stressed the importance of protecting civilians, particularly in conflict zones like Gaza and Lebanon.
- It emphasized diplomacy and dialogue to resolve ongoing wars and crises, urging comprehensive ceasefires in Gaza and Lebanon to mitigate humanitarian suffering.
- Leaders called for an enlarged Security Council, advocating better representation for underrepresented regions and groups.



INDIA AND ITALY STRENGTHENED STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN 2025-29 -

- Prime Minister Modi and Italian PM Giorgia Meloni met on the sidelines of the G20 Summit in Brazil to enhance the India-Italy Joint Strategic Action Plan for 2025-29.
- Focus was on the India-Middle East Economic Corridor, Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative, migration, Industry 4.0, and scientific cooperation through a new Executive Programme for 2025-27.

**SAUDI ARABIA BEGINS CONSTRUCTION OF WORLD'S LARGEST BUILDING -**

- Saudi Arabia has commenced construction on the Mukaab, aiming to become the largest building globally. This monumental project is located in Riyadh and represents a \$50 billion investment. It is part of a broader vision to modernize the city and enhance its skyline.
- The Mukaab will soar to 1,300 feet in height and span 1,200 feet in width. It will have enough space to house 20 Empire State Buildings. The total floor area will reach 2 million square feet, dedicated to various functions, including fine dining, retail, offices, and residential units.
- The building will comprise 104,000 residential units and 9,000 hotel rooms, creating a vibrant downtown atmosphere. The design prioritizes human interaction, ensuring that green spaces are accessible within a 15-minute walk from any location inside the Mukaab.

**INDIA-PAKISTAN EXTEND KARTARPUR CORRIDOR AGREEMENT FOR FIVE YEARS**

- In a significant diplomatic development, India and Pakistan have agreed to renew their pact on the Kartarpur Sahib Corridor for an additional five years, just days after External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar's visit to Islamabad, where he met with

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Deputy Prime Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar.

- The original agreement, which facilitates the visit of Indian pilgrims to Gurdwara Darbar Sahib in Pakistan, was set to expire on October 24. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) confirmed the extension, stating it will ensure uninterrupted operation of the corridor for pilgrims.
- The 4 km-long Kartarpur Corridor provides visa-free access for Indian Sikh pilgrims to visit Gurdwara Darbar Sahib, the final resting place of Sikhism's founder, Guru Nanak Dev. India has urged Pakistan to waive the US\$ 20 service charge imposed on each pilgrim, reflecting ongoing concerns regarding pilgrimage costs.

**LAHORE DECLARED THE MOST POLLUTED CITY IN THE WORLD AGAIN -**

- Lahore has once again claimed the title of the most polluted city globally, with the Air Quality Index (AQI) soaring to alarming levels. Recently recorded at a staggering 708, the PM2.5 levels reached an unprecedented 431 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, significantly exceeding the World Health Organization's recommended annual limit by 86 times.
- This crisis, attributed to unchecked vehicular emissions, outdated industrial practices, and ineffective environmental policies, creates a hazardous smog that engulfs the city year-round, posing severe health risks to its residents.

**GLOBAL PUBLIC DEBT SET TO EXCEED \$100 TRILLION, WARNS IMF -**

- According to a report released by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the world's total public debt is poised to surpass \$100 trillion this year for the first time.



- The IMF warns that this figure may rise even more rapidly than previously anticipated, driven by political sentiment favoring increased spending and the growing borrowing needs associated with slow economic growth.
- The world's total public debt is projected to exceed \$100 trillion for the first time in 2024.
- This figure is expected to reach 93% of global GDP by the end of 2024 and approach 100% by 2030, surpassing the 99% peak seen during the COVID-19 pandemic.

INDIA-CHINA SIGN BORDER DEAL AFTER FOUR-YEAR NEGOTIATIONS -

- India and China signed a border deal after four years of negotiations. This agreement focuses on disengagement along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh.
- **The deal aims to enhance patrolling rights in the Depsang Plains and Demchok areas.**
- Tensions between India and China escalated in 2020 following the Galwan clash, which resulted in the deaths of 20 Indian soldiers and an undisclosed number of Chinese soldiers.
- **The clash stemmed from disputes over the poorly defined 3,440 km border, leading to military confrontations.** Since then insisted that relations with China would only improve once the border situation normalized.



PM MODI AND SPANISH PM PEDRO SANCHEZ JOINTLY INAUGURATE TATA AIRCRAFT COMPLEX IN VADODARA, GUJARAT -

- In a landmark event, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Prime Minister of Spain, **Mr. Pedro Sanchez,**

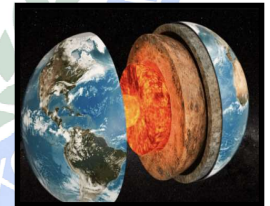
jointly inaugurated the Tata Aircraft Complex for manufacturing C-295 military transport aircraft at the Tata Advanced Systems Limited (TASL) campus in Vadodara, Gujarat.



- This project, a first-of-its-kind private sector Final Assembly Line (FAL) for military aircraft in India, marks a significant step forward in India's journey towards indigenous defense production under the "Make in India, Make for the World" mission.

SCIENTISTS DISCOVER SIXTH OCEAN HIDDEN IN EARTH'S MANTLE -

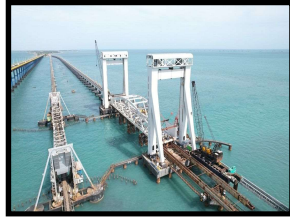
- **Scientists have discovered a vast water reservoir approximately 700 kilometers beneath the Earth's surface,** potentially three times larger than all the planet's surface oceans combined.
- This groundbreaking finding challenges previous beliefs about the origins of Earth's water and reveals new complexities in the planet's geological processes.
- Researchers from Northwestern University identified this massive underground ocean within Earth's mantle using advanced seismic analysis.
- **By examining data from over 2,000 seismographs and analyzing more than 500 earthquakes,** they detected a significant slowdown in seismic wave velocity at depth, indicating the presence of water.



SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

INDIA'S FIRST VERTICAL LIFT RAIL BRIDGE: THE NEW PAMBAN BRIDGE -

- The New Pamban Bridge, India's first vertical lift railway sea bridge, is replacing the 105-year-old Pamban Bridge to enhance connectivity between the Indian mainland and Rameswaram in Tamil Nadu.
- This state-of-the-art bridge is a leap in railway infrastructure, designed for speed, safety, and modern train compatibility.
- **The 2.05 km long bridge, built at a cost of Rs 535 crore by RVNL, features a fully automated vertical lift span that provides 22 meters of air clearance for ships. It's designed to handle double tracks and supports high-speed trains.**
- The original Pamban Bridge, constructed in 1914, was decommissioned in December 2022 due to corrosion, and the new bridge is set to replace it after several years of development. Construction began in February 2020, and the project faced delays due to the pandemic, with completion expected by June 30, 2024.



MAHA KUMBH 2025 TO FEATURE WORLD'S LARGEST AI-POWERED HEADCOUNT -

- **The Maha Kumbh Mela in 2025 will be a monumental occasion at Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, and is expected to draw between 40 and 45 crore devotees.**
- Attendees will gather at the sacred 'Triveni Sangam', where the Ganga, Yamuna, and Saraswati rivers converge. The Uttar Pradesh government aims to implement the world's largest AI-powered headcount for this event.



INDIA TO TRIPLE ATOMIC POWER CAPACITY BY 2031 -

- **India's atomic power capacity has seen remarkable growth, nearly doubling from 4,780 MW in 2014 to 8,081 MW in 2024. Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh, in a statement to the Lok Sabha, highlighted that this progress was achieved in just a decade, a milestone that traditionally took over 60 years.**
- The government's push for political leadership and technical expertise has enabled these strides. By 2031-32, India's atomic power capacity is projected to triple to 22,480 MW, further solidifying the nation's leadership in nuclear energy.



ADITYA L1 AND PROBA-3 TO UNITE FOR SOLAR RESEARCH IN 2025 -

- India's Aditya L1 and the European Space Agency's (ESA) Proba-3 missions are set to revolutionize solar research with joint observations starting in 2025. Aditya L1, operational since January 2024 from the Lagrange point (L1) 1.5 million km from Earth, launched in September 2023.



- Meanwhile, Proba-3, launched on December 5, 2024, is the first mission involving two satellites flying in formation to simulate a solar eclipse, facilitating detailed studies of the Sun's corona.

CHINA SETS NEW SPACEWALK RECORD -

- China has achieved a major milestone in space exploration with two astronauts aboard the Tiangong space station completing a nine-hour spacewalk, setting a new global record.



- Chinese astronauts Cai Xuzhe and Song Lingdong set a new global record with a 9-hour extravehicular activity (EVA) outside the Tiangong space station. The spacewalk was confirmed by the China Manned Space Agency (CMSA) as a “full success.”

ISRO SUCCESSFULLY TESTS CE20 CRYOGENIC ENGINE -

- On December 12, 2024, ISRO successfully completed a critical milestone with the sea-level hot test of its CE20 cryogenic engine at the ISRO Propulsion Complex in Mahendragiri, Tamil Nadu.



- This test, conducted on November 29, 2024, was a crucial step for upcoming space missions and demonstrated the engine's restart-enabling systems under ambient conditions.
- The CE20 cryogenic engine, developed indigenously by ISRO, plays a vital role in enhancing India's space exploration capabilities.

SPADEX MISSION: ISRO'S LEAP TOWARDS SPACE DOCKING TECHNOLOGY -

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is set to launch the Space Docking Experiment (SpaDeX)

mission in December 2024, aiming to make India the fourth country to achieve space docking technology.

- The mission, aboard PSLV-C60, involves two 220-kg spacecraft—SDX01 (Chaser) and SDX02 (Target)—that will demonstrate autonomous in-space docking. This breakthrough will enable ISRO to advance its space ambitions, including lunar missions, the Bharatiya Antariksha Station (BAS), and satellite servicing.

ISRO, ESA JOIN HANDS FOR HUMAN SPACEFLIGHT ADVANCEMENTS -

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and the European Space Agency (ESA) have signed a landmark agreement to enhance collaboration in human space exploration.



- This partnership aims to foster astronaut training, mission implementation, and joint research experiments. Signed by ISRO Chairman S. Somanath and ESA Director General Dr. Josef Aschbacher, the agreement establishes a robust framework for cooperation, strengthening the relationship between the two premier space agencies.

PROBA-3: ISRO TO LAUNCH ESA'S PRECISION FORMATION FLYING SOLAR MISSION -

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is set to launch the European Space Agency's (ESA) Proba-3 mission on December 4, 2024, using its PSLV-XL rocket from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota.
- This pioneering mission will study the Sun's corona, the outermost and hottest layer of the Sun's atmosphere, through an artificial solar eclipse created by two satellites flying in precise formation.
- Proba-3 represents a significant technological breakthrough and an example of international collaboration in space exploration.

ISRO AND ASA JOIN HANDS FOR GAGANYAAN MISSION -

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has entered into a significant collaboration with the Australian Space Agency (ASA) to support India's first crewed spaceflight program, Gaganyaan.
- On November 20, 2024, the two space agencies signed an Implementation Agreement (IA) to enhance cooperation on crew and crew module recovery, which is crucial for the success of the Gaganyaan mission.
- This agreement will provide India with the necessary assistance to ensure the safe recovery of astronauts in the event of a contingency during the mission.

**RECENTLY, ELON MUSK'S SPACEX USED A PAIR OF GIANT ROBOTIC ARMS NAMED MECHAZILLA TO GRAB STARSHIP'S BOOSTER SUPER HEAVY, MID-AIR AFTER SEPARATION FROM THE STARSHIP ROCKET -**

- This approach improves the booster's reusability by avoiding ocean landings and reducing costs and turnaround time.
- **Mechazilla (Mid-Air Booster Recovery)**- It refers to SpaceX's towering structure equipped with a pair of giant robotic arms designed to catch and recover the parts of launch vehicles during its descent.
- **Once the launch vehicle separates from the booster, the booster returns to the launch site, using grid fins to control its descent and orientation.** As it nears the launch tower, the robotic arms, which are controlled by precision motors and actuators, align vertically along the tower.
- Falcon 9 booster lands on specially-built platforms using landing legs strapped to its side, rather than being caught in mid-air.

ROYAL ENFIELD LAUNCHES EV BRAND "FLYING FLEA" -

- Royal Enfield has recently unveiled its highly anticipated electric vehicle (EV) brand, "Flying Flea", an homage to one of the brand's most iconic models. The original Flying Flea was a compact, lightweight motorcycle designed in the 1940s for military use during World War II.
- Engineered to be air-dropped behind enemy lines, the bike was valued for its nimble handling and ability to navigate rugged terrains. Its unique design and military legacy eventually paved the way for a civilian model that remains popular among enthusiasts today.
- **Now, nearly 75 years later, Royal Enfield is reviving the Flying Flea name, this time for its born-electric series of motorcycles,** emphasizing urban mobility, nostalgia, and cutting-edge EV technology.

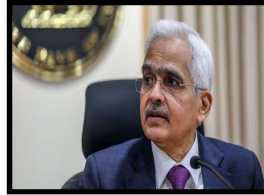
**ISRO'S FIRST ANALOG SPACE MISSION LAUNCHED IN LEH, LADAKH -**

- **ISRO launched India's first analog space mission from Leh, led by the Human Space Flight Centre in collaboration with AAKA Space Studio, University of Ladakh, IIT Bombay, and Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council.**
- **The mission aims to simulate an interplanetary habitat, utilizing Ladakh's Mars-like conditions to study challenges of space habitation, benefiting the future exploration.**

ECONOMY & FINANCE

RBI MONETARY POLICY MEETING DEC 2024: RBI CUTS CRR BY 50 BPS TO 4%, KEEPS REPO RATE UNCHANGED -

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) conducted its latest bi-monthly Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting in December 2024. Governor Shaktikanta Das announced several crucial measures and projections to address current economic challenges while maintaining stability. Here's a detailed breakdown:



- To tackle liquidity concerns, the Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR) was reduced by 50 basis points to 4%. This move aligns with the RBI's neutral policy stance, aimed at ensuring economic stability without disruptive interventions.**
- The MPC decided by a 4-2 majority to maintain the repo rate at 6.5%. The Standing Deposit Facility (SDF) rate and the Marginal Standing Facility (MSF) rate were also retained at 6.25% and 6.75%, respectively. This cautious approach reflects the central bank's focus on balancing inflation and growth.

PUBLIC SECTOR BANKS RECORD NET PROFIT OF RS 85,520 CRORE IN FIRST HALF FY2024-25 -

- In the first half of FY 2024-25, Public Sector Banks (PSBs), including the State Bank of India (SBI), reported a net profit of ₹85,520 crore, marking an impressive 26% growth compared to ₹67,850 crore during the same period in the previous year.**
- This significant achievement underscores the operational efficiency and financial resilience of PSBs, driven by improved asset quality, robust credit monitoring, and enhanced operational efficiency.



CENTRE EARNS ₹8,625 CRORE VIA DISINVESTMENT IN 2024-25 -

- The Indian government has so far collected ₹8,625 crore through various minority stake sale disinvestment transactions during the current financial year 2024-25, according to MoS Finance Pankaj Chaudhary in a written reply to the Lok Sabha.**
- While no specific disinvestment target has been set for FY25, the government continues its policy of strategic disinvestment and privatization, aiming to enhance efficiency and economic potential in sectors where competitive markets have matured.



55TH GST COUNCIL MEETING: KEY HIGHLIGHTS AND PROPOSALS -

- The 55th GST Council meeting, chaired by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, convened ministers from 28 states, two Union Territories, and key stakeholders.** The discussions centered on vital tax reforms impacting consumers and businesses across sectors, focusing on luxury items, essential services, and rationalizing the tax structure.



Key Highlights

- Proposal to increase GST rates on high-end products,
- Wristwatches priced above ₹25,000 and shoes costing over ₹15,000 per pair may attract a 28% GST (up from 18%).
- Premium garments above ₹10,000 might also face a steep 28% tax, while,
- Garments below ₹1,500 remain at 5%.
- Garments between ₹1,500 and ₹10,000 may see a jump to 18%.

- GST rate for platforms like Swiggy and Zomato may be reduced.
- From 18% with Input Tax Credit (ITC) to a simplified 5% without ITC.

SBI, HDFC BANK, ICICI BANK: RBI'S 2024 LIST OF DOMESTIC SYSTEMICALLY IMPORTANT BANKS (D-SIBS) -

- Recently, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has reaffirmed the status of State Bank of India (SBI), HDFC Bank, and ICICI Bank as Domestic Systemically Important Banks (D-SIBs).
- This classification remains unchanged from the previous year. The RBI continues to monitor these banks closely due to their important role in the financial system.
- **The D-SIB framework was introduced to ensure financial stability. It requires banks to maintain higher capital buffers. These buffers are determined by a bank's Systemic Importance Score (SIS). SBI, HDFC Bank, and ICICI Bank are categorized into different buckets based on their SIS. Each bucket has specific capital requirements.**



INDIA'S FOREIGN RESERVES SEE SHARPEST WEEKLY FALL IN RECORD, HIT 4-MONTH LOW -

- India's foreign exchange reserves suffered their largest weekly drop on record, falling by \$17.76 billion to a four-month low of \$657.8 billion for the week ending November 15, 2024.
- **This marks the sharpest decline since records began in 1998, surpassing the previous high of \$15.5 billion during the global financial crisis of October 2008.**



- The primary causes for the fall include the strengthening of the US dollar, the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) intervention to protect the rupee, and declining gold prices.

UK AND INDIA TO RELAUNCH FTA TALKS IN EARLY 2025: STRENGTHENING BILATERAL TIES -

- UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer announced the resumption of Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations with India, set to restart in early 2025.
- **This decision follows a meeting with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, where both leaders emphasized strengthening their strategic partnership, which covers key sectors such as security, defense, technology, climate, health, and education.**
- The bilateral trade between the two countries stands at GBP 42 billion annually.



INDIA BECOMES SECOND LARGEST SMARTPHONE MARKET BY UNIT VOLUME IN Q3 2024 -

- **India's smartphone market has become the second largest globally by unit volume and third by value in Q3 2024, according to Counterpoint Research.** In this period, India accounted for 15.5% of global smartphone shipments, trailing China's 22% but surpassing the US, which held a 12% share.
- **By value, India's market share slightly rose to 12.3%, from 12.1% a year earlier.**
- While China led the value segment with 31% and the US followed with 19%, the Indian market is poised for more growth, with 690 million active smartphone users in a population of 1.4 billion.
- **Growth was driven by early festive sales, a 3% year-on-year rise in shipments, and a notable 12% increase**



in market value. The trend toward premium devices saw the average selling price (ASP) climb by 8% to US\$ 294.

INDIA AIMS FOR \$30 TRILLION ECONOMY BY 2047 -

- India aims to become a USD 30 trillion economy by 2047, the 100th anniversary of its independence. According to a plan by NITI Aayog, called 'Vision for Viksit Bharat @ 2047', the goal is to raise the average income per person to USD 18,000 per year.
- This plan is designed to help India avoid getting stuck at a middle-income level.
- To reach this goal, India needs to grow its economy from the current USD 3.36 trillion to USD 30 trillion, which means it has to grow nine times bigger in the next couple of decades. The average income per person also needs to increase from USD 2,392 to USD 18,000.
- The report says moving from a middle-income to a high-income country requires a steady annual growth rate of 7-10% for 20-30 years. Only a few countries have managed to maintain such high growth rates consistently.



CHINA SURPASSES US AS INDIA'S LARGEST TRADING PARTNER -

- According to data released by the Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI), China has emerged as India's largest trading partner in the fiscal year 2023-24, with two-way commerce totaling USD 118.4 billion.
- This marks a narrow overtaking of the United States, whose two-way trade with India amounted to \$118.3 billion during the same period. The shift reflects a

dynamic in bilateral trade relationships, with China reclaiming its position as India's top trading partner after the US held the position in the preceding two fiscal years.



- Imports from China increased by 3.24% to \$101.7 billion, while exports rose by 8.7% to \$16.67 billion compared to FY23. From FY19 to FY24, India's exports to China experienced a slight decline of 0.6%, reaching \$16.66 billion.
- Conversely, imports from China surged by 44.7% during the same period, reaching \$101.75 billion.
- India primarily imports electrical and electronic equipment, engineering goods, chemicals, plastics, and textiles from China. India's major exports to China include engineering goods, agricultural products, ores and minerals, chemicals, and petroleum products.
- The trade balance heavily favors China, with the trade deficit expanding from \$53.57 billion in FY19 to \$85.09 billion in FY24.
- India relies on Chinese imports to meet domestic demand and preferences, contributing to the widening trade deficit. India's exports mainly consist of primary commodities, while Chinese exports are dominated by machinery, chemicals, and technology.
- India's pharmaceutical industry heavily depends on China for active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs), further exacerbating the trade deficit. India's reliance on critical products from China, such as telecom components and lithium-ion batteries for EVs, contributes to the trade deficit.

IMPORTANT DATES AND EVENTS

BSF'S 60TH RAISING DAY PARADE CELEBRATED WITH POMP -

- Amit Shah honored BSF's valor and announced an anti-drone unit to combat weapon and drug smuggling across borders.
- Border Security Force:
- **Formed:** 1 December 1965.
- Constituting instrument: Border Security Force Act, 1968.
- **Headquarters:** New Delhi.
- **Motto:** जीवन पर्यन्त कर्तव्य (Duty Unto Death).
- **Director General:** Daljit Singh Chaudhary.
- First Director General: K F Rustamji.



ISRAEL EXPANDS SETTLEMENTS IN GOLAN HEIGHTS AMID REGIONAL SHIFTS -

- Israel recently approved a settlement expansion plan in the Golan Heights, allocating over \$11.13 million to boost population and infrastructure in the region.
- **This decision comes amidst rising regional tensions following political changes in Syria, particularly the fall of the Assad regime. Israel aims to double the population in this strategically significant territory.**
- The Golan Heights, captured by Israel during the 1967 Six-Day War and annexed in 1981, remains unrecognized as Israeli territory by most of the international community.
- **The plateau holds strategic value for defense and water resources. Currently, the region houses about 50,000 residents, including 20,000 Israeli settlers and an equal number of local Druze Arabs and Alawites.**



VIJAY DIWAS 2024: CELEBRATING INDIA'S 1971 VICTORY -

- Vijay Diwas, observed annually on December 16, commemorates India's decisive victory over Pakistan in the 1971 Indo-Pak War. This 13-day war, triggered by the humanitarian crisis in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), ended with the surrender of 93,000 Pakistani soldiers and the liberation of Bangladesh as an independent nation.
- **On this day in 1971, Lieutenant General A.A.K. Niazi of Pakistan signed the Instrument of Surrender in Dhaka, marking a historic moment led by Indian leaders like Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw, and Lt. General Jagjit Singh Aurora.**
- This victory reshaped South Asia's geopolitics, showcasing India's commitment to justice, humanity, and democratic values.



GOOD GOVERNANCE WEEK TO BEGIN ON DECEMBER 19, 2024 -

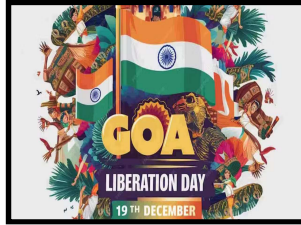
- **Good Governance Week 2024 is scheduled to take place from December 19 to December 24, 2024. As part of this national initiative, the Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore campaign will be held across more than 700 districts, states, and union territories of India.**
- The campaign focuses on the redressal of public grievances and enhancing service delivery to rural areas.
- The campaign is a significant element of the Good Governance Week, which highlights the government's



commitment to improving governance and reaching out to citizens, especially in rural areas.

GOA LIBERATION DAY 2024 -

- Goa Liberation Day is celebrated on December 19 every year to mark the freedom of Goa from Portuguese rule in 1961. This event symbolizes the end of 451 years of colonial rule and commemorates the bravery and sacrifices of the freedom fighters.
- Marks the end of 451 years of Portuguese colonial rule in Goa, Daman, and Diu. The day celebrates the relentless struggle of the people of Goa and the Indian army's role in ending Portuguese rule.**



NATIONAL MATHEMATICS DAY 2024: CELEBRATING SRINIVASA RAMANUJAN -

- Every year on December 22, India celebrates National Mathematics Day. This date marks the birth anniversary of Srinivasa Ramanujan, one of the greatest mathematicians in history.
- National Mathematics Day was first announced in 2012 by India's former Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh, to honour Srinivasa Ramanujan's contributions to mathematics.**
- Srinivasa Ramanujan was born on December 22, 1887, in Erode, Tamil Nadu. Despite having no formal training in mathematics, he made groundbreaking discoveries in fields like infinite series, number theory, and continued fractions.

INDIAN NAVY DAY OBSERVED ON DECEMBER 4 -

- Indian Navy Day is celebrated on December 4 each year, which honors the Indian Navy's dedication to protecting the nation's maritime borders. The day commemorates Operation Trident from the 1971 India-Pakistan war, which showcased India's naval strength with attack on Karachi.**

- Each year, the Indian Navy selects a theme. Recently, the theme is "Strength and Power through Innovation and Indigenisation." This reflects the Navy's commitment to modernisation and self-reliance.

NATIONAL FARMERS DAY 2024 -

- National Farmers' Day, celebrated annually on December 23, is a tribute to the backbone of India's agrarian economy—its farmers.**
- Known as Kisan Diwas, this day also commemorates the birth anniversary of Chaudhary Charan Singh, India's fifth Prime Minister, who was a staunch advocate for farmers' welfare and rural development.
- The day highlights the importance of empowering farmers and addressing their concerns to ensure a prosperous and sustainable future for the nation.



NATIONAL CONSUMER DAY OBSERVED ON DECEMBER 24 -

- National Consumer Day is observed annually on December 24, and commemorates the enactment of the Consumer Protection Act of 1986.
- The act was established to safeguard consumers against exploitation and unfair trade practices.
- This theme for National Consumer Day 2024 is "Virtual Hearings & Digital Access to Consumer Justice."

AVIATION SAFETY AWARENESS WEEK 2024: NOVEMBER 25 TO 29 -

- The Airports Authority of India (AAI) observes Aviation Safety Awareness Week every year during the last week of November (November 25 to 29) to reiterate its dedication to safety in all aspects of aviation.**
- Under the leadership of AAI Chairman Vipin Kumar, this initiative fosters a robust culture of safety across airports and Air Navigation Services (ANS) in India, aligning with global aviation safety standards.**

AWARDS, RECOGNITIONS AND APPOINTMENTS

TRUMP NAMED TIME'S PERSON OF THE YEAR -

- Time magazine has named Donald Trump as its Person of the Year for 2024, marking the second time he has received this prestigious recognition.
- **The decision highlights Trump's substantial political influence, his historic comeback following his victory in the November 5 election over Vice President Kamala Harris, and his role in reshaping the American presidency. Time's recognition of Trump underscores the significant impact he has had on American politics and the world stage.**



PRESIDENT MURMU CONFERS HONORARY GENERAL RANK TO NEPAL ARMY CHIEF -

- President Droupadi Murmu, honored Nepal's Army Chief, General Ashok Raj Sigdel, with the prestigious honorary rank of 'General of the Indian Army.'
- **This event, held at the Rashtrapati Bhavan, reflects the enduring tradition of mutual respect and deep military ties between India and Nepal, which dates back to 1950.**
- This ceremony also emphasizes the shared commitment of both nations to further strengthen their defense collaboration and friendly relations.



PM MODI HONOURED WITH KUWAIT'S TOP CIVILIAN AWARD -

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi was awarded Kuwait's highest civilian honour, the Order of Mubarak Al Kabeer, by Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al Sabah.

- This prestigious accolade marks the 20th international honour received by PM Modi, symbolizing his contributions to fostering global partnerships and India's growing influence on the world stage.
- The Order of Mubarak Al Kabeer is Kuwait's highest knighthood order.
- **It is conferred upon Heads of State, foreign sovereigns, and members of royal families as a gesture of friendship and goodwill. Previous recipients include global leaders such as Bill Clinton, Prince Charles, and George Bush.**



3 INDIANS IN FORBES '2024 POWER WOMEN LIST -

- Forbes has unveiled its 21st annual list of the World's 100 Most Powerful Women, a prestigious ranking that celebrates influential figures across business, entertainment, politics, philanthropy, and policymaking.
- This year, three Indian women have made their mark on the global stage with remarkable achievements in their respective fields.
- **They include Nirmala Sitharaman, Roshni Nadar Malhotra, and Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, whose contributions to their industries have earned them prominent spots on the list.**



INDIAN ARMY CHIEF NAMED HONORARY GENERAL OF NEPALI ARMY -

- **General Upendra Dwivedi, the Chief of Army Staff (COAS) of the Indian Army, was recently conferred with the title of Honorary General of the Nepal Army by the President of Nepal, Ramchandra Paudel.**
- This honor reflects the deep-rooted historical, cultural, and military ties between India and Nepal. **The tradition**

of honorary generalship between the two nations highlights the strong, enduring friendship and strategic cooperation shared by their armies.

- General Upendra Dwivedi, COAS of India, received the Honorary General title from the Nepali Army during a ceremony at President House, Sheetal Niwas.



- The title was bestowed by **President Ramchandra Paudel of Nepal**.
- The exchange of honorary generalships between India and Nepal is a long-standing tradition that dates back to the 1950s.
- Every three years, the Chief of Indian Army and the Chief of Nepali Army exchange the title of Honorary General.

PM MODI RECEIVES HIGHEST HONORS FROM GUYANA AND DOMINICA -

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been conferred prestigious awards by Guyana and Dominica in recognition of his significant contributions during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as his efforts in strengthening international ties, especially between India and these Caribbean nations.
- **These awards highlight the deepening diplomatic relations and the global recognition of Modi's leadership in global health, climate resilience, and development cooperation.**
- **PM Modi was awarded 'The Order of Excellence,' Guyana's highest honor, by President Irfaan Ali.** The award acknowledges his exceptional contributions during the COVID-19 pandemic and his global leadership.
- **Modi was also conferred the 'Dominica Award of Honour' by President Sylvanie Burton of Dominica.** The award recognizes Modi's leadership and India's support during the COVID-19 pandemic, including the provision of 70,000 AstraZeneca vaccines to Dominica.



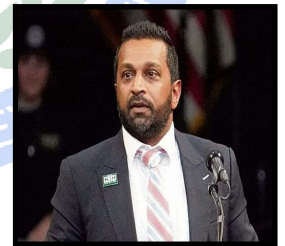
JAY SHAH BECAME A YOUNGEST ICC CHAIRMAN IN HISTORY -

- Jay Shah, an experienced cricket administrator and Secretary of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), has officially commenced his tenure as the Chairman of the International Cricket Council (ICC).
- At 36, Shah becomes the youngest to ever hold the prestigious position. His leadership comes at a critical juncture for global cricket, with significant opportunities and challenges in expanding the sport's reach and inclusivity.



INDIAN-ORIGIN KASH PATEL ANNOUNCED NEXT DIRECTOR OF FBI -

- US President-elect Donald Trump has announced Kash Patel as the next Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), succeeding Christopher Wray.
- Patel, a long-time Trump loyalist known for his confrontational stance against the "deep state" and criticism of federal agencies, brings a history of staunch support for Trump's policies.



PADMA BHUSHAN USTAD ZAKIR HUSSAIN PASSES AWAY AT 73 -

- **Born:** 1951, Mumbai, India
- **Father:** Ustad Allah Rakha (Tabla Maestro)
- **Famous Collaborations:** Pandit Ravi Shankar, John McLaughlin, George Harrison, Mickey Hart
- **Key Projects:** Shakti, Planet Drum
- **Awards:** Padma Bhushan, Padma Visbhushan, Padma Shri, Grammy Award
- **Legacy:** Revolutionized the tabla and took Indian music global.



SYRIAN FIGHTERS NAME MOHAMMED AL-BASHIR AS INTERIM PRIME MINISTER

- The Syrian conflict has marked a new phase with the appointment of Mohammed al-Bashir as the caretaker prime minister of Syria. Al-Bashir, previously the head of the Syrian Salvation Government (SSG) in Idlib province, has been tasked with leading the transitional government following the fall of President Bashar al-Assad.
- His role is crucial as Syria navigates the aftermath of the 12-day lightning offensive that toppled the Assad regime, ending more than five decades of Assad family rule.

**SALMAN KHAN NAMED BRAND AMBASSADOR FOR KHO KHO WORLD CUP**

- The Kho Kho Federation of India (KKFI) has officially appointed Bollywood superstar Salman Khan as the brand ambassador for the inaugural Kho Kho World Cup, which will be held in New Delhi from January 13 to 19, 2025.
- This event will see the participation of teams from 24 countries and is set to boost the global profile of Kho Kho. The tournament aims to showcase the sport's widespread appeal, with an exciting lineup of men's and women's teams competing for the first time on the world stage.

**FORMER HARYANA CM OM PRAKASH CHAUTALA PASSES AWAY AT 89 -**

- Om Prakash Chautala, the veteran politician and former Chief Minister of Haryana, passed away at the age of 89 on December 20, 2024, in



Gurugram after suffering a cardiac arrest.

- A stalwart of the Indian National Lok Dal (INLD) and a key figure in Haryana's political history, his death marks the end of an era. Chautala was known for his leadership, serving as Haryana's CM for four terms, with his first tenure beginning in 1989 and his final term running from 1999 to 2005.

V. RAMASUBRAMANIAN APPOINTED NHRC CHAIRPERSON -

- The post of Chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) remained vacant since Justice (ret'd) Arun Kumar Mishra completed his tenure on June 1, 2024.
- The appointment of former Supreme Court judge, V. Ramasubramanian, was confirmed by President Droupadi Murmu on December 23. Ramasubramanian's appointment marks a new chapter in the NHRC, following Mishra's tenure from June 2021 to June 2024.

**GOVERNMENT APPOINTS K SANJAY MURTHY AS NEXT CAG -**

- The government has announced the appointment of K Sanjay Murthy as the next Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India. A 1989-batch IAS officer of the Himachal Pradesh cadre, Murthy will succeed Girish Chandra Murmu.
- Currently serving as the Secretary of the Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Murthy is set to take over one of India's most significant constitutional roles, responsible for ensuring financial accountability and transparency in public expenditure.
- K Sanjay Murthy will be the next Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India. Appointed under Article 148(1) of the Constitution of India.

PROGRAMMES, SCHEMES AND INITIATIVES

CENTRE TO INCUBATE 8 NEW SMART CITIES UNDER NEW CITIES SCHEME -

- The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) has launched a new scheme extending the Smart City Mission, with an allocation of Rs 8,000 crore as a performance-based challenge fund for incubating 8 new cities.
- This initiative aims to manage the rapid urbanization pressures following the success of the Smart Cities Mission. Under this scheme, each state can have only one new city through the allocated fund.
- **The selection process included the formation of an Expert Committee to finalize bid parameters and eligibility conditions. A total of 28 proposals from 23 states were received, despite the initial lack of proposals from the North-Eastern States.**
- The proposed cities include notable ones like Kopparthay (Andhra Pradesh), Gumin Nagar (Arunachal Pradesh), New MOPA Ayush City (Goa), Aerocity (Kerala), and Thirumazhisai (Tamil Nadu), among others.



GOVT LAUNCHES 'UDAAN YATRI CAFE' INITIATIVE -

- **The Ministry of Civil Aviation has launched the "Udaan Yatri Cafe" at Kolkata airport, which aims to provide affordable food and beverages to air travellers.**
- The cafe will serve essential items such as water, tea, coffee, and snacks. If successful, the initiative will expand to other airports across India.

'BAL VIVAH MukT BHARAT' CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED BY UNION MINISTER -

- **The Union Minister for Women and Child Development, Smt. Annapurna Devi, launched the**

national campaign "Bal Vivah MukT Bharat" in New Delhi.

- Aimed at eradicating child marriage and empowering young girls, the campaign aligns with the vision of a developed India (Viksit Bharat) by 2047.
- It includes the launch of the Child Marriage Free Bharat Portal, an innovative tool for citizen engagement and enforcement of the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006.



GOVERNMENT APPROVES PM-VIDYA-LAXMI SCHEME FOR FUNDING -

- **The government of India approved the PM-Vidyalaxmi scheme and an important equity infusion into the Food Corporation of India (FCI).** These decisions aim to enhance access to quality higher education and strengthen food security in India.
- **The PM-Vidyalaxmi scheme is a new initiative with a budget of Rs 3,600 crore over five years, starting from the fiscal year 2024-25.** It targets meritorious students in both private and public Quality Higher Education Institutions (QHEIs). The scheme is rooted in the National Education Policy 2020.



NAMO DRONE DIDI SCHEME: EMPOWERING WOMEN SHGS WITH DRONES-

- **It provides 14,500 Women SHGs with drones from 2024-26 for agricultural rental services like applying fertilizers, pesticides.**



- Central Empowered Committee with cross-department oversight. **Financial Aid: 80% assistance, up to ₹8 lakh; remaining via AIF loan.**
- Training: 15-day for SHG members. Monitoring: IT-based MIS (Drone Portal) for tracking and fund management.

DR. MANSUKH MANDAVIYA LAUNCHES 'ESHRAM – ONE STOP SOLUTION' FOR UNORGANISED WORKERS' WELFARE -

- **Union Labour Minister Mansukh Mandaviya launched the upgraded 'e-Shram: One Stop Solution' portal, aimed at enhancing access to social security schemes for over 300 million unorganised workers in India.**



- The initiative consolidates data from various central ministries into a single repository, simplifying the registration process and ensuring that potential beneficiaries are identified state and district-wise.
- **This upgrade reflects the government's commitment to welfare, following the earlier launch of the eShram portal in August 2021, which has already seen over 300 million registrations.**
- **The One Stop Solution integrates ten central schemes, including the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana and Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), enabling seamless access for workers.**

Mandaviya noted that 60,000 to 90,000 workers join the platform daily, indicating growing trust in the initiative. He urged unorganised workers to register to take advantage of various government welfare schemes.

WHAT IS UNIQUE LAND PARCEL IDENTIFICATION NUMBER (ULPIN)? -

- **Approximately 30% of rural land parcels in India have received a Unique Land Parcel Identification Number (ULPIN).** This initiative aims to assign a 14-digit alpha-numeric identity to each land parcel. The data

is sourced from the Ministry of Rural Development's portal.

- **ULPIN stands for Unique Land Parcel Identification Number. It is part of the Digital India Land Records Modernisation Programme (DILRMP).** Each ULPIN is a unique identifier for land parcels, streamlining land record management across India.
- The initiative was launched in 2021. It is a continuation of the earlier National Land Record Modernisation Programme, which began in 2008. The program was revamped and implemented as a central sector scheme on April 1, 2016.

PM-YASASVI SCHEME -

- **The PM Young Achievers Scholarship Award Scheme for Vibrant India (PM-YASASVI) was launched by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.** This scheme aims to uplift students from Other Backward Classes (OBC), Economically Backward Classes (EBC), and Denotified Tribes (DNT).
- It provides access to quality education, addresses financial barriers, and supports academic growth.
- **PM-YASASVI consolidates previous scholarship initiatives. It includes the Dr. Ambedkar Post-Matric Scholarship for EBCs and the Pre-Matric and Post-Matric Scholarship for DNTs.** These initiatives were merged into PM-YASASVI in 2021-22 to streamline support for disadvantaged students.
- The main goal of PM-YASASVI is to promote educational empowerment. It seeks to help vulnerable groups complete their education. This initiative encourages individual growth and contributes to a more inclusive society.



AYUSHMAN BHARAT: FREE HEALTH COVERAGE FOR SENIORS 70+ -

- **In a significant expansion of Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY), Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the**

Ayushman Vaya Vandana Card on October 29, 2024, providing free healthcare coverage to all senior citizens aged 70 and above, irrespective of income.

- This extension, rolled out on Ayurveda Day at the All India Institute of Ayurveda (AIIA) in New Delhi, enables seniors to avail free treatment worth up to ₹5 lakh annually at AB PMJAY empaneled hospitals.
- The initiative, however, excludes seniors in Delhi and West Bengal due to non-implementation by these state governments.

INDIA INTENSIFIES EFFORTS TO REDUCE SNAKEBITE DEATHS BY 2030 -

- India, which accounts for nearly 50% of global snakebite deaths, has declared snakebite a notifiable disease at the national level.
- **This initiative aims to reduce the high mortality and morbidity rates associated with snakebites, particularly in rural and tribal areas, and aligns with the World Health Organization's (WHO) target of halving global snakebite deaths and injuries by 2030.**
- By mandating reporting of all snakebite cases and deaths, the move enables better surveillance, treatment, and prevention strategies, offering hope to marginalized communities disproportionately affected by this neglected public health issue.



PMSGMBY: 10 LAKH SOLAR INSTALLATIONS BY 2025, 1 CRORE BY 2027 -

- The Pradhan Mantri Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana (PMSGMBY), the world's largest domestic rooftop solar scheme, is rapidly transforming India's solar energy landscape.
- **Launched in February 2024, the scheme has already achieved impressive milestones, with 6.3 lakh installations in just 9 months—averaging 70,000 per**



month, a sharp increase from the 7,000 per month prior to its launch.

- By March 2025, installations are projected to exceed 10 lakh, and the scheme aims for one crore installations by March 2027.

RATAPANI DECLARED INDIA'S 57TH TIGER RESERVE -

- India has expanded its tiger conservation footprint with the declaration of Madhya Pradesh's Ratapani Wildlife Sanctuary as its 57th tiger reserve. **The creation of these reserves highlights India's commitment to protecting its tiger population, which constitutes over 70% of the global wild tiger population.**
- Tiger reserves are specially designated areas established under the Project Tiger initiative of 1973 to conserve tigers and their habitats. Each reserve comprises:
 - Core Areas: Legally designated as national parks or sanctuaries, where human activity is minimal.
 - Buffer Zones: A mix of forest and non-forest land maintained as a transition zone for both wildlife and human activities.



UNESCO ALERTS: RISING OCEAN TEMPERATURES THREATEN MARINE LIFE -

- A recent UNESCO report marks the risks faced by fish species in tropical and subtropical regions.
- **If greenhouse gas emissions continue at current levels, temperatures may rise by 4.4°C by the century's end, termed SSP 8.5, which could push many fish species beyond their heat tolerance limits.**



MOLDOVA JOINS INTERNATIONAL SOLAR ALLIANCE -

• Moldova has officially joined the International Solar Alliance (ISA), signalling its commitment to renewable energy and sustainability.

• **The ISA Framework Agreement was signed in New Delhi by India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and Moldovan Deputy Prime Minister Mihai Popșoi. Moldova's inclusion comes after Armenia became the 104th full member last month, marking the continued global expansion of the ISA.**

• Headquartered in India, ISA unites countries to overcome challenges in solar energy financing, technology, and scalability, aiming to mobilize over USD 1,000 billion in investments by 2030.

**ARMENIA BECOMES 104TH FULL MEMBER OF INTERNATIONAL SOLAR ALLIANCE -**

• Armenia has become the 104th full member of the International Solar Alliance (ISA), marking a significant milestone for global solar energy collaboration.

• The ISA, established in 2015, aims to scale up solar energy adoption, reduce costs, and facilitate innovation. Under India's leadership, the ISA has launched impactful projects worldwide.

• Armenia's membership highlights its commitment to sustainable energy solutions, contributing to the ISA's goal of mobilizing USD 1000 billion by 2030 for solar energy deployment.

COP29 CLIMATE TALKS END WITH \$300 BILLION PLEDGE -

• The United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP29) in Baku concluded with a controversial

agreement to triple climate finance for developing nations to \$300 billion annually by 2035.

- This falls drastically short of the \$1.3 trillion annually requested by developing countries until 2030.
- The deal was met with strong opposition from India and other developing nations, who criticized both the process and the outcome, describing the financial pledge as insufficient and unfairly distributed.

GURU GHASIDAS-TAMOR PINGLA TIGER RESERVE: INDIA'S 56TH TIGER RESERVE

• **Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Shri Bhupender Yadav,** recently announced the notification of the Guru Ghasidas-Tamor Pingla Tiger Reserve in Chhattisgarh as the 56th Tiger Reserve in India.

• This monumental step in wildlife conservation marks a significant milestone for the country's efforts to preserve its tiger population and biodiversity.

• Guru Ghasidas-Tamor Pingla Tiger Reserve is located in Chhattisgarh, covering a sprawling area of 2,829.38 sq. km, making it the third-largest tiger reserve in India after:

- Nagarjunasagar-Srisailem Tiger Reserve in Andhra Pradesh.
- Manas Tiger Reserve in Assam.

MEA CONFIRMS INDIA AS HEADQUARTERS FOR BIOFUEL ALLIANCE -

• **In a significant development for the renewable energy sector, India has officially signed the Host Country Agreement (HCA) with the Global Biofuels Alliance (GBA),** paving the way for the establishment of the Alliance's Secretariat in India.

• **The agreement was signed by Dammu Ravi, Secretary (Economic Relations) from the Ministry of External Affairs, and Pankaj Jain, Secretary of the Ministry of**



Petroleum and Natural Gas, who is also the Interim Director General of the GBA.

- The agreement enables the GBA to set up its Secretariat in India, staffed by a mix of Indian and international personnel.
- This establishment will facilitate the GBA in achieving its goals related to biofuel promotion and development.

INDIA SECURES ISA PRESIDENCY AGAIN, ASHISH KHANNA NEW DIRECTOR GENERAL -

- **India and France have been re-elected as the president and co-president of the International Solar Alliance (ISA),** respectively, at the seventh ISA assembly held in New Delhi. During the inaugural day of the assembly, Union Minister for New and Renewable Energy Pralhad Joshi announced that India would continue to hold the presidency until 2026.
- **India and France have been re-elected as president and co-president of the International Solar Alliance (ISA).** India will hold the presidency until 2026.
- Emphasized the transformation of solar energy from vision to reality, highlighting its role in promoting a cleaner and sustainable future.

INDIA'S BIRD POPULATION DECLINES SIGNIFICANTLY, VULTURES HIT HARDEST -

- **India has seen a worrying decline in its bird population over recent decades, especially between 1992 and 2002,** when some species, like vultures, faced severe reductions.
- The Living Planet Report 2024 draws attention to this issue, making India the only country to have a specific section on its bird crisis in the report.
- **Vultures in India have experienced an alarming drop in numbers:**The White-rumped Vulture population fell by 98%.



- The Indian Vulture and Slender-billed Vulture populations decreased by 93%. These vultures, which play an important role in the ecosystem as scavengers, have been declining rapidly due to several threats.

BLUE REVOLUTION: 4 YEARS OF PRADHAN MANTRI MATSYA SAMPADA YOJANA -

- **The Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY), launched in 2020,** is a comprehensive initiative aimed at transforming India's fisheries sector and enhancing the welfare of fishermen.
- **This scheme, under the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, addresses critical issues in fish production, productivity, quality, technology, and infrastructure while strengthening the fisheries value chain.**
- With an investment of Rs. 20,050 crore over five years (2020-21 to 2024-25), PMMSY targets inland fisheries and aquaculture, ensuring robust food security and supporting fisheries micro and small enterprises through its Central Sector Sub-scheme, Pradhan Mantri Matsya Kisan Samridhi Sah-Yojana (PM-MKSSY), which has a budget of over Rs. 6,000 crore.
- On its 4th anniversary in September 2024, the Union Minister of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying, Shri Rajeev Ranjan Singh, introduced several initiatives.

NANJARAYAN AND KAZHUVELI BIRD SANCTUARY & TAWA RESERVOIR AS NEW RAMSAR SITES -

- Recently, the centre declared the Nanjarayan Bird Sanctuary and Kazhuveli Bird Sanctuary in Tamil Nadu and Tawa Reservoir in Madhya Pradesh as three new wetlands as Ramsar Sites.
- With these inclusions, **India has increased its tally of Ramsar sites to 85.**
- Now, Tamil Nadu harbours a maximum number of Ramsar Sites (18 sites) followed by Uttar Pradesh (10 sites).

What are the Key Facts About Three New Ramsar Sites-

- **Nanjarayan Bird Sanctuary-** It is a large shallow wetland in northeastern Uthukuli Taluk, Tiruppur District, Tamil Nadu. Centuries ago, it was restored by a local King Nanjarayan. Spanning 125.865 hectares, the lake relies on rainfall from Nallar drainage and also supports agriculture and groundwater recharge.
- **Kazhuveli Bird Sanctuary-** It spans over 5151.6 hectares on the Coromandel Coast in Villupuram district, north of Pondicherry. This large brackish lake, connected to the Bay of Bengal via the Uppukalli creek and Edayanthittu Estuary, is a vital wetland with diverse water features like estuarine, creek-fed brackish, and freshwater basins.
- **The Tawa Reservoir-** It is situated at the confluence of the Tawa and Denwa rivers near Itarsi town, was originally built for irrigation and now also supports power generation and aquaculture. The reservoir lies within the Satpura Tiger Reserve, bordering the Satpura National Park and Bori Wildlife Sanctuary.

INDIA'S ETHANOL PRODUCTION SHIFT FROM SUGAR TO MAIZE -

- **Cereal Grains** have overtaken sugarcane as the primary feedstock for the production of ethanol used in blending with petrol.
- In the current supply year 2023- 2024, sugar mills and distilleries supplied 401 crore liters of ethanol to oil marketing companies.
- **Of that, 211 crore liters or 52.7% was ethanol produced using maize and damaged foodgrains (mainly broken/ old rice not fit for human consumption),** while sugarcane-based feedstocks (molasses and whole juice/ syrup) accounted for the remaining 190 crore liters.
- **This is the first time that the contribution of grains to India's ethanol production has surpassed 50%.**
- **Ethanol is 99.9% pure alcohol that can be blended with petrol.** Alcohol production involves fermentation of sugar using yeast. In cane juice or molasses, sugar is present in the form of sucrose that is broken down into glucose and fructose. The '**National Policy on Biofuels**' notified by the government in 2018 envisaged an indicative target of **20% ethanol blending in petrol by 2030.** In 2014 only 1.5 per cent ethanol was blended in petrol in India.
- Given the encouraging performance and various interventions made by the government since 2014, the 20% target was advanced to 2025-26.
- **Till 2017-18, ethanol was being produced only from molasses, the dense dark brown liquid byproduct containing sucrose that mills cannot economically recover and crystallize into sugar.** However Sugarcane is a water-guzzling crop. A NITI Aayog report says that just one liter of ethanol produced from sugarcane consumes at least 2,860 liters of water.
- **India will require 1320 million tons of sugarcane, 19 million hectares of additional land and 348 billion cubic meters of extra water to produce enough ethanol to meet the 20% ethanol blending target of 2025.**

REPORTS & INDICES

LIST OF 43 UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITES IN INDIA 2024 (UPDATED) -

- As of December 2024, there are 43 UNESCO World Heritage Sites in India with the recent inclusion of “Moidams – the Mound-Burial System of the Ahom Dynasty from Assam. “The Sacred Ensembles of the Hoysala, the famed Hoysala temples of Belur, Halebid, and Somanthpura in Karnataka have been added to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage list.
- This inclusion marks the 42nd UNESCO World Heritage Site in India and comes just a day after Rabindranath Tagore’s Santiniketan also received this distinguished recognition. The decision to include Santiniketan in the prestigious list was made during the 45th session of the World Heritage Committee, held in Saudi Arabia, reaffirming its importance on the global stage.

INDIA SKILLS REPORT 2025 -

- The India Skills Report 2025, published by Wheebox and other notable organisations, reveals that Kerala has a 71% employability rate, placing it fifth among states of India
- The report surveyed 6.50 lakh youths across India and found that 54.81% of respondents possess the necessary skills for employment. Kerala’s figures stand out, especially among younger job seekers.

OVER 77% OF EARTH’S LAND BECOMES DRIER IN LAST 30 YEARS, WARNS UN REPORT -

- A recent report by the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) reveals a troubling shift in the global climate: over 77% of Earth’s land has experienced drier conditions over the past 30 years compared to the previous three decades.



- This has led to a dramatic expansion of global drylands by about 4.3 million square kilometers, covering more than 40% of Earth’s surface.
- If greenhouse gas emissions are not curbed, the situation could worsen, with another 3% of humid areas transforming into drylands by the century’s end.
- The human impact is severe, with the number of people living in these drylands doubling to 2.3 billion and projections indicating 5 billion by 2100 under worst-case scenarios.

INDIA RANKS 39TH IN TRAVEL AND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT INDEX 2024 -



- India has significantly improved its position in the World Economic Forum’s (WEF) Travel and Tourism Development Index (TTDI) 2024, ranking 39th among 119 countries.
- This marks a sharp rise from its 54th place in the previous 2021 index, which was later adjusted to 38th after a revision in WEF’s methodology.
- The boost in India’s ranking reflects a strong recovery in global tourism, following the pandemic, and the country’s growing role as a hub for medical and cultural tourism.

INDIA'S POPULATION TO PEAK AT 1.7 BILLION BY 2060S BEFORE DECLINING: UN REPORT -

- India's population is projected to peak at 1.7 billion in the early 2060s before declining by 12%, as predicted by the United Nations' World Population Prospects 2024 report. Despite the decline, India will remain the world's most populous country throughout the 21st century.
- India's population, currently estimated at 1.45 billion, is expected to increase to 1.69 billion by 2054, peaking at about 1.7 billion in the early 2060s. A decline of 12% is projected, bringing the population to around 1.5 billion by 2100.
- India surpassed China as the world's most populous nation last year and will retain this status throughout the century. By the end of the century, India's population will still significantly exceed that of any other country.
- China's population, currently at 1.41 billion, is projected to decline to 1.21 billion by 2054 and further to 633 million by 2100 due to a low fertility rate of around one birth per woman

**21.71% OF COUNTRY'S AREA UNDER FOREST COVER: MOS KIRTI VARDHAN SINGH -**

- Forest Survey of India (FSI), Dehradun, an organization under the Ministry carries out the assessment of forest cover biennially. As per the latest India State of Forest Report (ISFR) published in 2021, the total forest cover of the country is 7,13,789 square kilometer which is 21.71% of the geographical area of the country. The State/UTs wise details of forest cover as per ISFR, since 2019 are given in Annexure.
- The tree cover increased by 721 square kilometer during 2019 to 2021. There is no loss of tree cover during 2019 and 2021. Therefore, the question of increase in emission of carbon dioxide due to loss of tree cover does not arise.
- The contradictions between India State of Forest Report 2021 and Global Forest Watch data may be

because of the differences in the definition of forest cover and tree cover adopted in these two reports. At present there is no plan to amend the Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhnyam, 1980.

LANCET STUDY ON DECLINING FERTILITY RATE IN INDIA -

- Recently, A Study Published in the Lancet which flagged India's total fertility rate (TFR) (representing the average number of children born to each woman will fall to 1.29 in 2050, significantly below the replacement threshold of 2.1.
- **TFR Evolution:** Between 1950 and 2021, the global total fertility rate (TFR) decreased by more than half, dropping from approximately 5 children per woman in 1950 to 2.2 children in 2021.
- **Future Projection:** A continued global decline, with an estimated global total fertility rate (TFR) of 1.83 by 2050 (about 76% of the countries will have TFR below replacement threshold) and 1.59 by 2100 (about 97% of the countries will have TFR below replacement threshold).
- In 1950, one-third of global live births were in Southeast Asia, East Asia, and Oceania. Since 2011, the majority has shifted to sub-Saharan Africa, rising from 8% in 1950 to nearly 30% by 2021.
- China's working-age population surpassed 50% in 1987, coinciding with a period of significant economic growth. However, China's total fertility rate (TFR) has declined to a record low, leading to a contraction in the working-age population.
- In India, the total fertility rate (TFR) stood at 6.18 in 1950, dropped to 4.60 in 1980, and subsequently decreased to 1.91 by 2021.
- By 2050, one in five people in India will be above the age of 60 in 2050, signaling a transition towards an aging population akin to the demographic challenges currently faced by China.
- Earlier, the UN Population Fund's (UNPF) 'India Ageing Report' also projected the number of elderly in India will more than double from 149 million in 2022 to 347 million by mid-century.

DEFENCE

HARIMAU SHAKTI 2024: INDIA-MALAYSIA MILITARY DRILL -

- The 4th edition of the India-Malaysia Joint Military Exercise, **HARIMAU SHAKTI**, commenced on **December 2, 2024**, at Bentong Camp, Pahang district, Malaysia.
- This exercise, scheduled to run until December 15, 2024, is an annual event designed to enhance the military cooperation between the two nations.
- The exercise will focus on improving the ability of both forces to undertake joint counterinsurgency operations in jungle terrain, aligned with the United Nations Chapter VII Mandate.

ADANI DEFENCE DELIVERS 2ND DRISHTI-10 DRONE TO INDIAN NAVY FOR MARITIME SECURITY -

- Adani Defence has delivered the second Drishti-10 Starliner surveillance drone to the Indian Navy, enhancing the nation's maritime capabilities. This marks a significant leap in India's indigenous defence technology, underscoring the country's focus on self-reliance.
- The **Drishti-10 drone is a highly advanced intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) platform designed to monitor vast maritime territories, mitigate piracy, and provide over-the-horizon surveillance with unmatched endurance.**
- The Drishti-10 Starliner drone, manufactured at Adani Defence's Hyderabad facility, offers a 36-hour endurance and a 450 kg payload capacity. It is the only all-weather military UAV certified with NATO's STANAG 4671 for airworthiness, allowing it to operate in both segregated and unsegregated airspace. The platform supports persistent multi-payload, fully autonomous capabilities and satellite communication-based operations, crucial for monitoring maritime threats.



INS NIRDESHAK: INDIAN NAVY'S NEW SURVEY SHIP COMMISSIONED -

- The Indian Navy is set to commission INS Nirdeshak, a new survey ship, on December 18, 2024, at the Naval Dockyard in Visakhapatnam. This event, with Hon'ble Raksha Rajya Mantri Shri Sanjay Seth as the Chief Guest, signifies a major leap in India's naval capabilities.
- The vessel, constructed by **Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE) in Kolkata**, is the second ship under the Survey Vessel (Large) Project. INS Nirdeshak will enhance India's maritime presence, especially in the Indian Ocean Region, and will continue the legacy of the original Nirdeshak, which served the Navy for 32 years before being decommissioned in 2014.



INDIA-RUSSIA DEFENSE PARTNERSHIP SET TO SIGN \$4B RADAR SYSTEM -

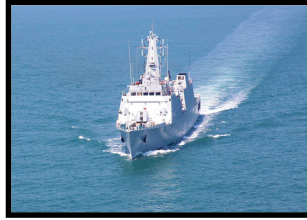
- India is on the verge of finalizing a significant USD 4 billion defence agreement with Russia to acquire an advanced long-range early warning radar system.
- This cutting-edge system, part of Russia's Voronezh radar series, promises to transform India's missile detection and air defence capabilities, enhancing national security and fostering defence manufacturing under the "Make in India" initiative.



SLINEX 2024: STRENGTHENING SRI LANKA-INDIA NAVAL TIES -

- The Sri Lanka-India Naval Exercise (SLINEX) is a significant annual event that fosters maritime cooperation

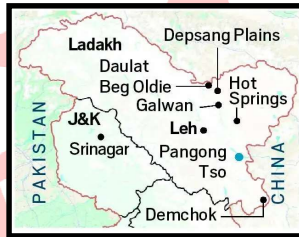
between the two nations. Initiated in 2005, SLINEX has grown in scope and importance over the years, strengthening the bilateral relationship between India and Sri Lanka.



- The 2024 edition of SLINEX will be held from December 17 to December 20, 2024, at Visakhapatnam under the auspices of the Eastern Naval Command. The exercise will be conducted in two phases: the Harbour Phase and the Sea Phase, focusing on enhancing interoperability, strengthening mutual understanding, and promoting regional maritime security.

INDIA-CHINA LAC AGREEMENT -

- India recently announced a pivotal agreement regarding patrolling along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China. This development is seen as a potential stepping stone toward normalizing relations between the two nations following tensions that escalated in 2020.
- The pact entails a structured approach to disengagement and resolution of the long-standing border disputes, specifically in areas like the Depsang Plains and Demchok.
- The agreement allows both nations to restore mutual patrolling rights in the Depsang Plains and the Demchok region, areas where disputes existed even before the 2020 border incursions. Indian troops will now be permitted to patrol up to Patrolling Points (PP) 10 to 13 in the Depsang Plains and the Charding Nullah in Demchok.
- Notably, areas where previous disengagements occurred—such as Galwan Valley, Pangong Tso, and Gogra-Hot Springs—are explicitly excluded from renegotiation.



INDIA ROLLS OUT ITS FIRST MADE-IN-INDIA C295 AIRCRAFT BY SEPTEMBER 2026 -

- India is set to mark a significant milestone in its aerospace industry with the rollout of the first locally assembled C295 military transport aircraft from the Vadodara facility in September 2026.



- This initiative, part of the “Make in India” campaign, represents a robust collaboration between Airbus and Tata Advanced Systems. The facility was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, highlighting the deepening defense ties between India and Spain.
- The Vadodara final assembly line (FAL) will produce over 85% of the C295 aircraft components domestically, excluding the engines. The project is expected to create approximately 10,000 jobs across the country, with 18,000 components being manufactured indigenously.
- PM Modi emphasized that the factory symbolizes the new work culture in India, showcasing the rapid progress in the country’s manufacturing capabilities. “Just two years ago, the construction of the factory had started, and now it is ready for aircraft production,” he stated.

INDIA COMMISSIONS SECOND NUCLEAR SUBMARINE, INS ARIGHAAT -

- India recently commissioned its second nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine (SSBN) called INS Arighaat. This event took place in Visakhapatnam and was a significant step in strengthening India’s defense capabilities.
- Defence Minister Rajnath Singh mentioned that this move is crucial for boosting India’s nuclear triad, which is a three-part system that includes land-based missiles, aircraft, and submarines capable of launching nuclear weapons. This makes India more secure against potential threats.

- The SSBN programme is an important part of India's defense strategy. SSBNs are submarines that can carry and launch ballistic missiles. **INS Arighaat is the second submarine in this program, following INS Arihant, which was commissioned in 2016.**
- The goal of this program is to give India a reliable second-strike capability. This means that even if an enemy attacks first, India can still respond with a powerful counterattack using these submarines.

CENTRE FORMS COMMITTEE TO MONITOR BANGLADESH BORDER SITUATION -

- In response to the volatile situation in Bangladesh, the Indian government has established a committee to monitor the Indo-Bangladesh border and ensure the safety of Indian nationals and minority communities in the neighboring country.
- The committee will maintain communication with Bangladeshi authorities and oversee security measures at the border.



Committee Details

- Chair: ADG, Border Security Force (BSF), Eastern Command
- Members
- IG, Frontier HQ, South Bengal, BSF
- IG, BSF Frontier HQ, Tripura

- Member (Planning & Development), Land Ports Authority of India (LPAI)
- Secretary, LPAI

INDIA UNVEILS INDIGENOUS LIGHT TANK 'ZORAWAR' -

- **India has unveiled the 'Zorawar' light tank, developed jointly by DRDO and Larsen & Toubro, aimed at bolstering military capabilities in high-altitude environments. Designed within a record two-year timeframe, the tank features advanced weaponry and protection systems, including a 105mm rifled cannon and composite modular armor. Named after General Zorawar Singh, the tank is slated for extensive trials before potential deployment in Ladakh, Sikkim, or Kashmir.**
- **The 'Zorawar' tank, powered initially by a 750 HP Cummins engine with plans for a domestic replacement, boasts a sophisticated turret from John Cockerill with electro-optical cameras and anti-tank guided missiles. It integrates advanced systems like a Remote-Controlled Weapon system (RCWS) and is designed for amphibious operations, enhancing maneuverability across varied terrains.**



SPORTS

KHELO INDIA WINTER GAMES 2025 LEH AND GULMARG ANNOUNCED AS HOSTS

- The Khelo India Winter Games (KIWG) have emerged as a premier event in India's sporting calendar, promoting winter sports and identifying talent for international competitions.
- **The 2025 edition promises to continue this tradition with thrilling ice and snow events hosted in the Union Territories of Ladakh and Jammu & Kashmir. With a strong emphasis on fostering young talent and promoting winter sports culture, the KIWG serves as a vital platform for aspiring athletes, especially from remote Himalayan regions.**
- **Ladakh (Ice Events):** January 23 to 27, 2025.
- **Jammu & Kashmir (Snow Events):** February 22 to 25, 2025.

FIFA WORLD CUP HOSTS UNVEILED FOR 2030, 2034 -

- FIFA has officially announced the hosts for the 2030 and 2034 Men's Football World Cups. Spain, Portugal, and Morocco will jointly host the 2030 tournament, with additional matches in Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay to commemorate the centenary of the competition.
- **Saudi Arabia has been chosen to host the 2034 tournament. These decisions were confirmed during an Extraordinary FIFA Congress meeting, with votes cast by FIFA's 211 member associations. The process has sparked mixed reactions, including support, abstentions, and criticisms of the bidding process.**

GUKESH SHATTERS RECORDS TO BECOME YOUNGEST WORLD CHAMPION -

- Dommaraju Gukesh's rise to becoming the youngest chess world champion is a story of relentless ambition, focus, and resilience. At the age of 18, Gukesh defeated reigning champion Ding Liren in a grueling three-week-

long contest in Singapore, surpassing Garry Kasparov's record as the youngest chess world champion in history.

- His journey from a young boy declaring his ambition to this historic feat showcases extraordinary dedication and talent.
- **Champion:** D Gukesh of India, youngest world champion at age 18.
- **Defending Champion:** Ding Liren of China, who won the title in 2023.
- **Venue:** Singapore.
- **Format:** 14-round "classical" chess event with a prize fund of \$2.5 million.
- **Final Score:** Gukesh – 7.5, Ding – 6.5.
- **Decisive Game:** Gukesh, playing with black pieces, won the 14th game after Ding's critical blunder.



INDIA MEN'S HOCKEY TEAM MOVES TO 5TH IN LATEST FIH RANKINGS FOR 2025 -

- The Indian men's hockey team has clinched the fifth spot in the latest FIH world rankings, following a stellar performance at the 2024 Paris Olympics, where they secured back-to-back Olympic medals for the first time since 1972. This marks a significant achievement in Indian hockey, which has a rich history of success in the sport.
- The Netherlands retains the top position with 3,267 points, continuing their dominance after winning the gold medal at the Paris 2024 Olympics, the FIH Hockey Pro League, and EuroHockey Championship in 2023.
- **England (3139) and Belgium (3124) follow in second and third, respectively, while India (2955) and Australia (2814) occupy the fourth and fifth spots.**



DELHI TO HOST 2025 PARA ATHLETICS WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS -

- India is set to host the 2025 Para Athletics World Championships, marking a historic moment for the country as it becomes the first time this prestigious event will be held in India.
- **The competition is scheduled to take place between September 26 and October 5, 2025, at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in New Delhi. This event will be the 12th edition of the Para Athletics World Championships and the fourth time it is being held in Asia.**
- More than 1,000 athletes from over 100 nations are expected to participate in this landmark event, which will also serve as a critical qualifier for the 2028 Los Angeles Paralympic Games.

INDIA TO HOST ISSF JUNIOR WORLD CUP 2025 -

- India has been announced as the host of the International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) Junior World Cup Rifle/Pistol/Shotgun 2025.
- This prestigious event highlights India's growing reputation as a global hub for shooting sports.
- **It marks the ninth top-level shooting championship hosted by the country over the past decade and adds another accolade to the National Rifle Association of India's (NRAI) commendable track record.**

**INDIA CLINCHES WOMEN'S U19 T20 ASIA CUP TITLE -**

- **India clinched the inaugural U19 Women's Asia cup T20 title by defeating Bangladesh by 41 runs in the final held at the Bayuemas Oval, Kuala Lumpur on December 22, 2024.**
- The victory was powered by a stellar half century from Gongadi Trisha and an impressive bowling performance, highlighting India's dominance in the tournament.

BIHAR TO HOST KHELO INDIA YOUTH GAMES AND PARA GAMES IN 2025 -

- **In a landmark development, Bihar will host the prestigious Khelo India Youth Games (KIYG) and the Khelo India Para Games (KIPG) in April 2025, showcasing the state's growing capabilities in hosting major sporting events.**
- This follows the successful organization of the Women's Asian Champions Trophy in Rajgir, further cementing Bihar's reputation in the sports arena.
- The announcement was made by Union Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports, Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya, who emphasized the importance of sports in achieving the vision of a 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047.

INDIA'S SPORTS INDUSTRY IS EXPECTED TO GROW TO \$130 BILLION BY 2030 -

- **A recent report predicts that India's sports sector could grow to \$130 billion by 2030 at an annual rate of 14 percent, which is almost double the growth of India's GDP, driven by increased government investments.**
- A shift towards a multi-sport culture is also evident. Furthermore, the rise of digital platforms is reshaping how fans engage with sports.
- **The sports sector has the potential to create 10.5 million jobs by 2030. It could also generate \$21 billion in indirect tax revenue.** This economic boost will benefit various industries linked to sports.
- The growing interest in sports will stimulate demand for sports goods and services. As a result, a thriving ecosystem will emerge, enhancing overall economic growth.

**NADA SUSPENDS BAJRANG PUNIA FOR FOUR YEARS OVER DOPING VIOLATION -**

- **In a significant development, the National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) has imposed a four-year suspension on Olympic bronze medallist Bajrang Punia for violating the anti-doping code.**

- The suspension follows his refusal to provide a urine sample for a dope test during selection trials for the national wrestling team on March 10, 2024.
- **This decision, which extends beyond NADA's initial provisional suspension in April 2024, has barred him from competitive wrestling and coaching opportunities abroad.**

INDIA SUBMITS FORMAL BID FOR 2036 OLYMPICS -

- **India has officially submitted a Letter of Intent to the International Olympic Committee (IOC) for the 2036 Olympic and Paralympic Games, marking a significant step in realizing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of hosting the prestigious event.**
- **The bid was submitted by the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) on October 1, 2023, as part of the ongoing effort to elevate India's global sporting profile.** This would be the first time India hosts the Olympics, fulfilling a dream long cherished by its citizens.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been vocal about India's aspirations, reiterating the country's determination to bring the games to Indian soil. **At the 141st IOC session in Mumbai, Modi emphasized, "We will leave no stone unturned in organizing the Olympics in India in 2036."**
- With the country's growing sports infrastructure and participation in global sporting events, this bid is seen as a transformative opportunity for India's sports sector.



38TH NATIONAL GAMES TO BE HELD IN UTTARAKHAND -

- **The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) has chosen Uttarakhand as the host for the 38th Summer National Games, scheduled to take place from 28th January to 14th February 2025.**



- This announcement marks a significant achievement for the state, as it will be hosting the prestigious event for the first time, followed by the upcoming Winter Games, which will be held outside Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh for the first time.
- The 37th National Games, held in Goa from 25th September to 9th November 2023, paved the way for Uttarakhand's momentous turn to showcase its capabilities on the national sporting stage.

CRICKET AT THE LA28 OLYMPICS: THE RETURN OF THE SPORT IN T20 FORMAT -

- **Cricket, one of the most popular sports globally, is set to make a comeback at the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games (LA28), pending approval by the International Olympic Committee (IOC).**
- **This inclusion marks the sport's second appearance at the Olympic Games, following its debut in Paris 1900.** However, unlike its traditional two-innings format, cricket at LA28 will be played in the Twenty20 (T20) format, which is a shorter and faster-paced version of the game.
- Let's dive deep into the rules, format, and significance of T20 cricket and its reintroduction at the Olympics.

IMPORTANT MCQ FOR COMPETITIVE EXAMS

- Q1. Where is the headquarters of IRDAI ?
- a) Mumbai b) Hyderabad
c) Chennai d) Kolkata
- Q2. Which among these is the National Heritage Animal of India ?
- a) Elephant b) Tiger
c) Giraffe d) Cow
- Q3. What is the capital of Kyrgyzstan ?
- a) Vilnius b) Tripoli
c) Beirut d) Bishkek
- Q4. Which of the following Indian state known as 'Land of Festivals' ?
- a) Arunachal Pradesh
b) West Bengal
c) Nagaland
d) Mizoram
- Q5. Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman (PM POSHAN) Scheme is an initiative of which ministry?
- a) Ministry of Women and Child Development
b) Ministry of Education
c) Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
d) Ministry of Agriculture
- Q6. Which word has been selected as Oxford Word of the Year 2024 ?
- a) Brain Rot b) Dumpster
c) Heat dome d) Neuro spicy
- Q7. Which countries will jointly host the 2030 FIFA World Cup ?
- a) Spain, Portugal, and Morocco
b) Saudi Arabia, Morocco, and Argentina
c) Spain, France, and Italy
d) Portugal, Argentina, and Brazil
- Q8. Read the statements below carefully and choose the correct option:
Statements:
(a) Sanjay Malhotra has been appointed as the 26th Governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and will assume office on 11 December 2024.
- (b) The tenure of an RBI Governor or Deputy Governor is fixed at five years without the possibility of reappointment.
(c) The Central Government appoints the RBI Governor and Deputy Governors under the provisions of the RBI Act of 1934.
- a) Only statement (a) is correct.
b) Only statements (a) and (c) are correct.
c) Only statements (b) and (c) are correct.
d) All statements (a), (b), and (c) are correct.
- Q9. World Human Rights Day is observed annually on December 10. What is the theme for World Human Rights Day 2024 ?
- a) Dignity for All
b) Equality and Justice for Future Generations
c) Human Rights in Action
d) Our Rights, Our Future
- Q10. Whose death anniversary is commemorated on Mahaparinirvan Diwas ?
- a) Mahatma Gandhi
b) Jawaharlal Nehru
c) Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar
d) Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel
- Q11. Francois Bayrou has been appointed as the new prime minister of which country ?
- a) France
b) Ireland
c) Cyprus
d) Denmark
- Q12. What is the name of the chatbot launched by the Prime Minister to assist devotees during Mahakumbh Mela 2025 ?
- a) Prayagraj Bot
b) Kumbh Sahayak
c) MelaBot
d) Sangam
- Q13. Which state government has launched the Indira Gandhi Sukh Shiksha Yojana ?
- a) Himachal Pradesh b) Gujarat
c) Punjab d) Odisha

- Q14. Which Indian temple was selected by UNESCO for the 2023 Award of Distinction for its conservation ?
a) Abathsahayeswarar Temple
b) Mahabodhi Temple
c) Vrindavan Chandrodaya Temple
d) Kamakhya Temple
- Q15. What is Elon Musk's current net worth according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index 2024 ?
a) \$400 billion
b) \$447 billion
c) \$500 billion
d) \$357 billion
- Q16. Consider the following points about Legendary tabla maestro Zakir Hussain. How many of the given point(s) is/are CORRECT ?
1. Ustaad Zakir Hussain was born in Mumbai on March 9, 1951.
2. In a career spanning six decades, Hussain won five Grammy Awards.
3. His most recent film 'Monkey Man 'was released in 2024.
4. Hussain received the Padma Shri in 1988, Padma Bhushan in 2002, and the Padma Vibhushan in 2023
a) only one
b) only two
c) only three
d) all are correct
- Q17. In case of any clash between the central and state government regarding the laws made on the subjects in the concurrent list :
a) The central law prevails
b) The state law prevails
c) Both the laws prevails within their respective jurisdictions
d) The supreme court has to decide
- Q18. Which among the following is a feature of unorganised sector ?
a) Fixed number of work hours
b) Paid holidays
c) Employment is insecure
d) Registered with the government
- Q19. The ocean resources till 200 nautical miles is classified under which zone ?
a) Exclusive Economic Zone
b) Export-processing Zone
c) Special Economic Zone
d) None of these
- Q20. Which of the following activities employees people in the manufacturing of primary materials into finished goods ?
a) Secondary activities
b) Primary activities
c) Tertiary activities
d) None of these
- Q21. The largest component of GDP is
a) income
b) wages
c) consumption
d) imports
- Q22. Most electric, gas, and water companies are examples of
a) restricted-input monopolies
b) sunk-cost monopolies
c) natural monopolies
d) unregulated monopolies
- Q23. Fiscal policy is connected with
a) Public revenue & expenditure
b) Exports and imports
c) Issue of currency
d) Taxes
- Q24. Mutual Funds are regulated in India by
a) SEBI
b) RBI
c) RBI & SEBI both
d) Stock Exchanges
- Q25. Flamingo Festival 2025 is celebrated in which state ?
a) Odisha
b) Tamil Nadu
c) Kerala
d) Andhra Pradesh
- Q26. Kalpeni Island, which was seen in news, is located in which state/UT ?
a) Lakshadweep
b) Andaman and Nicobar
c) Tamil Nadu
d) Puducherry
- Q27. NRI or Pravasi Bharatiya Divas is celebrated every year on 9th January to mark the contribution of overseas Indian community to the development of India. Where was the 18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas convention held in 2025 ?
a) New Delhi
b) Varanasi
c) Ahmedabad
d) Bhubaneswar
- Q28. Who has been invited as the chief guest for India's 2025 Republic Day parade ?
a) Joko Widodo
b) Prabowo Subianto
c) Lee Hsien Loong
d) Rodrigo Duterte

- Q29. What is the projected GDP growth rate for India in the fiscal year 2024-25 as per the first advance estimates ?
 a) 7.0% b) 6.4%
 c) 6.6% d) 5.8%
- Q30. Who has been appointed as the Secretary, Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance ?
 a) Arunish Chawla
 b) Tuhin Kanta Pandey
 c) Rajesh Kumar
 d) Parul Tyagi
- Q31. Who has been appointed as the new space secretary and chairman of the Indian Space Research Organisation ?
 a) Prahlad Chandra Agrawal
 b) Anil Bhardwaj
 c) V Narayanan
 d) Shiv Prasad
- Q32. Which country has officially joined the BRICS as a full member in January 2025 ?
 a) Singapore b) Mauritius
 c) Indonesia d) Malaysia
- Q33. What is the rank of India in terms of the largest metro network in the world ?
 a) First b) Second
 c) Third d) Fourth
- Q34. Which city is the host of the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas convention 2025 ?
 a) Chennai b) Bhopal
 c) Bhubaneswar d) Hyderabad
- Q35. Which institute has recently developed bacteria to combat soil pollution and boost agriculture ?
 a) IIT Kanpur
 b) IIT Madras
 c) IIT Bombay
 d) IIT Guwahati
- Q36. What is "INS Surat" that was recently seen in news ?
 a) Fleet tanker
 b) Kamorta-class corvettes
 c) Nuclear powered aircraft carrier
 d) Stealth Destroyer
- Q37. The construction of the Tsangpo Dam poses significant concerns for India due to its potential impact on water security, ecology, and regional stability.
Reason: As the lower riparian state, India depends on the steady flow of water from the Tsangpo River for its agriculture, drinking water, and ecological balance.
 Choose the correct option:
 a) Both assertion and reason are correct, and the reason is the correct explanation of the assertion.
 b) Both assertion and reason are correct, but the reason is not the correct explanation of the assertion.
 c) The assertion is correct, but the reason is incorrect.
 d) The assertion is incorrect, but the reason is correct.
- Q38. Assertion (A): India has condemned Pakistan's recent airstrikes on Afghanistan.
 Reason (R): Pakistan's airstrikes were aimed to eliminate anti Pakistan insurgent groups operating from Afghan soil.
 Which of the following is the most appropriate explanation for the relationship between the Assertion and Reason ?
 a) Both Assertion and Reason are correct, and the Reason is the correct explanation for the Assertion.
 b) Both Assertion and Reason are correct, but the Reason does not explain the Assertion.
 c) The Assertion is correct, but the Reason is incorrect.
 d) The Assertion is incorrect, but the Reason is correct.
- Q39. Consider the following statements regarding India's first vertical lift rail bridge, Pamban 2.0:
 • The Pamban 2.0 bridge is located in Rameswaram and will replace the 110-year-old cantilever bridge.
 • The bridge has been designed to allow ships to pass through by lifting vertically, inspired by rail bridges in Germany and Spain.
 • It is being built at a cost of Rs 500 crore and will allow trains to travel at a speed of 60 km per hour.
 Which of the statements given above is/are correct ?
 a) 1 and 2 only
 b) 2 and 3 only
 c) 1 and 3 only
 d) 1, 2, and 3

- Q40. The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has classified packaged drinking water as a 'High Risk Food Category'. Which of the following is/are true regarding this classification ?
1. Packaged drinking water can support the growth of harmful bacteria if not handled properly.
 2. Manufacturers of high-risk foods, including packaged drinking water, are required to undergo annual audits by FSSAI-recognized agencies.
 3. Packaged drinking water is now included under the category of ready-to-eat foods like dairy products and meat.
- Select the correct answer using the code below :
- a) 1 and 2 only b) 2 and 3 only
c) 1 and 3 only d) 1, 2, and 3
- Q41. Consider the following statements related to the Asian Development Bank (ADB) :
1. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) was established in 1976 to promote social and economic development in Asia.
 2. ADB's core mission is to reduce poverty across the Asia-Pacific region through projects that improve access to healthcare, education, and infrastructure.
 3. The headquarters of the ADB is located in Tokyo, Japan.
- How many of the above statements are correct ?
- a) Only 1 b) Only 2
c) All three d) None
- Q42. Consider the following statements related to the Bal Vivah Mukta Bharat (Child Marriage Free India) campaign:
1. The Bal Vivah Mukta Bharat campaign was launched on 27th November 2024 by Union Minister for Women and Child Development, Smt. Annapurna Devi.
 2. The main goal of the campaign is to reduce the child marriage rate to below 10% by 2029.
 3. The campaign focuses on seven states with high child marriage rates and will also target 300 districts where the rates exceed the national average.
 4. The campaign introduces the Child Marriage Free Bharat Portal to help report child marriage cases and provide information on the Child Marriage Prohibition Act.
- How many of the above statements are correct ?
- a) Only 1 b) Only 2
c) Only 3 d) All four
- Q43. Consider the following statements regarding India's K4 missile test:
1. The K4 missile was successfully tested from the nuclear-powered submarine INS Arighaat.
 2. The K4 missile has a range of about 5,000 km and is solid-fueled.
 3. INS Arighaat India's second indigenously built nuclear-powered ballistic submarine
- Which of the above statements is/are correct ?
- a) 1, 2, only
b) 1, 3 only
c) Only 3
d) All of the above
- Q44. Consider the following statements regarding Cyclone Fengal:
1. Cyclone Fengal is the second cyclone of the post-monsoon season, following Cyclone Dana.
 2. The name Fengal was proposed by India.
 3. Tropical cyclones can form between the Tropics of Capricorn and Cancer, with winds exceeding 34 knots (63 km/h) as per the World Meteorological Organization.
- How many of the above statements are correct ?
- a) Only 1 b) Only 2
c) All three d) None
- Q45. Consider the following statements with reference to UNESCO:
1. UNESCO is primarily focused on the preservation of cultural heritage, natural sites, and the promotion of education and science worldwide.
 2. UNESCO recognizes and promotes cultural heritage through the "World Heritage Sites" program, which includes both natural and cultural landmarks of outstanding importance.
 3. UNESCO's headquarters are located in Geneva, Switzerland.
 4. UNESCO is an agency of the United Nations responsible for promoting peace and security through international cooperation in education, the sciences, and culture.
- How many of the above statements are correct ?
- a) Only 1 b) Only 2
c) Only 3 d) All four

- Q46. Consider the following statements about Milk, Meat, and Egg Production in India in 2023-24:
1. Milk production in India increased by 3.78% in 2023-24, reaching 239.30 million tonnes.
 2. Uttar Pradesh is the leading state in milk production, contributing 16.21% of the total.
 3. India is the largest egg producer in the world, with a total egg production of 142.77 billion eggs in 2023-24.
 4. West Bengal is the largest meat producer in India, with 12.62% of the total meat production.
 5. Rajasthan is the largest contributor to wool production in India, accounting for 47.53% of the total.
- How many of the above statements are correct ?
- a) Only 2
 - b) Only 3
 - c) Only 4
 - d) All five
- Q47. Consider the following statements about the Chandrayaan-3 mission:
4. With this mission India became the first country to make a soft landing on the Moon South Pole.
 5. The primary objective of Chandrayaan-3 was to demonstrate India's capabilities in soft-landing on the lunar surface and deploying a rover.
 6. Chandrayaan-3 was launched in July 2024, using the GSLV Mk III rocket.
- How many of the above statements are correct ?
- a) Only 1
 - b) Only 2
 - c) All three
 - d) None
- Q48. With reference to "windfall tax", Consider the following statements:
1. It is a tax levied by governments against certain industries when economic conditions allow those industries to experience above-average profits.
 2. The primary aim of the windfall tax is to redistribute excess profits for the greater social good and fund social welfare schemes.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct ?
- a) 1 only
 - b) 2 only
 - c) 1 & 2
 - d) Neither 1 nor 2
- Q49. What is the allocated budget for the IndiaAI mission approved by the Indian Cabinet ?
- a) Rs 10,371.92 million
 - b) Rs 1,037.92 crore
 - c) Rs 10,371.92 crore
 - d) Rs 10,371.92 lakh
- Q50. Mana, which has been re-termed as the first Indian village, is located in which state/UT ?
- a) Sikkim
 - b) Arunachal Pradesh
 - c) Uttarakhand
 - d) Jammu and Kashmir
- Q51. Which of the following pairs is/are correctly matched?
- Black hydrogen : Produced by use of fossil fuel
Grey hydrogen : Produced through electrolysis, but using energy from nuclear power sources.
Pink hydrogen : Produced through Natural Gas
- How many of the above statements is/are correct ?
- a) Only one
 - b) Only two
 - c) All three
 - d) None
- Q52. Puli Kali and Margam Kali is a traditional dance form of which state ?
- a) Assam
 - b) West Bengal
 - c) Kerala
 - d) Jharkhand
- Q53. For how many years, India inked a contract with Iran to develop and run the port of Chabahar, bolstering relations with a strategic Middle Eastern nation.
- a) 3years
 - b) 5years
 - c) 4years
 - d) 10years
- Q54. Consider the following pairs:
- | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Overseas territories / Islands | Administrative Nation |
| 1. New Caledonia | Australia |
| 2. Gibraltar | France |
| 3. Tristan da Cunha | USA |
- How many of the above pairs are correctly matched ?
- a) Only one
 - b) Only two
 - c) All three
 - d) None
- Q55. When was the India Meteorological Department (IMD) established ?
- a) 1974
 - b) 2000
 - c) 1875
 - d) 2024

Q56. The Rafah border, recently seen in the news. It connects:

- a) Gaza Strip and Israel
- b) Gaza Strip and the Mediterranean Sea
- c) Israel and Egypt
- d) Gaza Strip and Egypt

Q57. Open market operations (OMOs) are related to.....

- a) Fiscal policy
- b) Monetary policy
- c) Labour policy
- d) Agricultural policy

Q58. The National Youth Day is celebrated on 12th January every year in commemoration of which Indian leader?

- a) Bhagat Singh
- b) Chandra Shekhar Azad
- c) APJ Abdul Kalam
- d) Swami Vivekananda

Q59. According to a United Nations report, by what percentage is the Indian economy expected to expand in 2025 ?

- a) 5.6%
- b) 6.6%
- c) 7.2%
- d) 5.0%

Q60. What is the name of the new food delivery app launched by Swiggy, It is a 15-minute food delivery app offering quick snacks and meals, similar to Zepto's Zepto Cafe ?

- a) Swiggy Express
- b) Snacc by Swiggy
- c) Swiggy Snack
- d) Swiggy Dash

ANSWERS

1- b	2-a	3-d	4-c	5-b	6-a	7-a	8-b	9-d	10-c
11-a	12-b	13-a	14-a	15-a	16-b	17-a	18-c	19-a	20-a
21-c	22-c	23-a	24-a	25-d	26-a	27-d	28-b	29-b	30-b
31-c	32-c	33-c	34-c	35-c	36-d	37-a	38-b	39-a	40-d
41-a	42-c	43-b	44-b	45-c	46-c	47-a	48-c	49-c	50-c
51-a	52-c	53-d	54-d	55-c	56-d	57-b	58-d	59-b	60-b

