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Polity

SHANTI Bill 2025

Introduction

- The Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India (SHANTI) Bill, 2025 seeks to overhaul India's civil nuclear energy framework and open the sector to private and foreign participation in building and operating nuclear power plants.
- It marks a shift in nuclear governance by permitting non-state entities to own and run nuclear power plants in India.

Why in news?

- The Union Government has introduced the SHANTI Bill, 2025 in the Lok Sabha to overhaul nuclear energy laws and enable private sector participation.

Background

- India aims to expand nuclear capacity to 22 GW by 2032 and 100 GW by 2047, but Nuclear Power Corporation of India Ltd (NPCIL) alone lacks the capital, manpower, and execution capacity to meet these targets.
- A financing gap exists, with about Rs 15 lakh crore needed for 100 GW against Rs 20,000 crore provided in Budget 2025–26, necessitating private investment.
- Chronic project delays, including Kudankulam Units 3–6, highlight the need for improved project management and EPC efficiency.
- Accelerated adoption of Small Modular Reactors (SMRs), advanced reactors, and global best practices is required to meet technology and innovation needs.
- Weak uranium supply chains, with limited domestic production and reliance on G2G imports, necessitate private involvement in mining, processing, and imports for fuel security.
- Enhanced focus on nuclear power supports grid stability and net-zero 2070 goals by complementing renewables with low-carbon baseload power.
- The Bill consolidates the civil nuclear framework by repealing the Atomic Energy Act, 1962 and the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage (CLND) Act, 2010.

Significance

- Retains government control over sensitive areas such as nuclear fuel production, heavy water manufacturing, and radioactive waste management to safeguard national security and non-proliferation commitments.
- Grants statutory status to the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB) and makes it accountable to Parliament, strengthening regulatory independence, transparency, and safety oversight.
- Revises nuclear liability by removing supplier liability and placing compensation responsibility solely on operators; caps operator liability based on installed capacity with graded limits to reduce financial uncertainty and encourage investment.
- Proposes a dedicated atomic disputes tribunal to improve regulatory certainty and investor confidence.
- Facilitates deployment of advanced nuclear technologies, including SMRs and indigenous reactor designs, contributing to clean energy transition and long-term energy security.
- Core concerns include weaker accountability due to removal of supplier liability and capped operator penalties; liability linked to plant size rather than actual damage potentially undermines the "polluter pays" principle; private firms may benefit while accident costs and long-term risks are borne by the State and citizens; given the Bhopal Gas Tragedy (1984), such changes may erode public confidence.
- Measures required to strengthen governance include bolstering AERB's operational independence through transparent appointments and financial autonomy; periodically reviewing and indexing liability caps to inflation and risk; ensuring transparency via mandatory disclosure of safety audits, accident reporting, and emergency preparedness; establishing clear Centre–State coordination protocols for nuclear emergencies; and setting enforceable norms for long-term waste disposal and decommissioning before large-scale private expansion.

Facts/General knowledge

- As of 2025, India's nuclear power capacity stands at 8.18 GW.
- India operates more than 20 nuclear reactors, all managed by NPCIL, with over a dozen new projects planned.
- The Nuclear Energy Mission was launched in the Union Budget 2025–26, focused on research and development of SMRs.
- India aims to develop at least five indigenously designed and operational SMRs by 2033.
- Key emerging technologies include Bharat Small Reactors (BSRs), Small Modular Reactors (SMRs), Molten Salt Reactors, and High-Temperature Gas-Cooled Reactors.
- Geography and environment

GI Tags in Arunachal Pradesh: Arunachal Yak Churpi, Khaw Tai and Tangsa Textile

Introduction

- A geographical indication (GI) tag is a name or sign used on products that correspond to a specific geographical location or origin.

- The featured products are Arunachal Yak Churpi, Khaw Tai (Khamti rice), and Tangsa textile.

Why in news?

- Arunachal Pradesh has recently received GI tags for Arunachal Yak Churpi, Khaw Tai (Khamti rice), and Tangsa textile.

Background

- Arunachal Yak Churpi:
- Derived from the milk of the Arunachali yak, a rare breed found primarily in the West Kameng and Tawang districts of Arunachal Pradesh.
- Obtained from yaks reared by Brokpas, a tribal community known for expertise in yak husbandry.
- Pastoralists practise seasonal migration, taking yaks to higher altitudes during summers and descending to mid-altitude mountainous regions in winters, as yaks cannot survive at lower altitudes during summer.
- Khaw Tai (Khamti rice):
- A chewy sticky rice variety from the Namsai region.
- Cultivated by traditional Khampti tribal farmers.
- Tangsa textile:
- Crafted by the Tangsa tribe of Changlang district.
- Renowned for exotic designs and vibrant colours.

Significance

- Arunachal Yak Churpi:
- Rich in proteins and a vital source of nutrition in the vegetation-scarce, cold, hilly mountainous regions of Arunachal Pradesh.
- Tangsa textile:
- Reflects the cultural richness of the region.

Facts/General knowledge

- Examples of GIs include Darjeeling Tea and Kanchipuram Silk.
- Geographical indications are recognised as part of intellectual property rights under Articles 1(2) and 10 of the Paris Convention and under Articles 22 to 24 of the Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement.
- India, as a World Trade Organisation (WTO) member, implemented the Geographical Indications of Goods Act, 1999, effective on 15 September 2003, to protect such indications.
- A registered GI is valid for 10 years and can be renewed for further periods of 10 years each.

Kopra Reservoir – Chhattisgarh's First Ramsar Site

Introduction

- Chhattisgarh has entered India's wetland conservation map with the declaration of Kopra Reservoir as its first Ramsar site.
- Ramsar recognition is given only to wetlands of international importance, highlighting the growing role of central Indian wetlands in biodiversity protection and climate resilience.

Why in news?

- Kopra Reservoir has been declared Chhattisgarh's first Ramsar site.

Background

- Kopra Reservoir is located in the Baloda Bazar-Bhatapara district of Chhattisgarh, a region dominated by agriculture and seasonal rivers.
- The reservoir was originally constructed for irrigation and water storage, but over time developed the characteristics of a natural wetland.

Significance

- Recognition brings better protection, scientific management, and sustainable livelihood opportunities for local communities dependent on the reservoir.
- Wetlands like Kopra act as natural buffers against climate-related disasters such as floods and droughts.
- Functions include:
- Absorbing excess rainwater during monsoon and reducing flooding.
- Recharging groundwater used for drinking and farming.
- Regulating local temperature and humidity.
- Improving water quality by trapping sediments and pollutants.
- Storing carbon and helping reduce the impact of climate change.

Facts/General knowledge

- Location notes:
- Kopra Reservoir: Baloda Bazar-Bhatapara district, Chhattisgarh.
- Kopra Wetland (Jalashay): Bilaspur district, Chhattisgarh.
- Ecological profile:
- Freshwater wetland with rich bird diversity due to food availability, nesting sites, and safe resting areas.
- Documented presence of 161 bird species.
- 103 resident species that depend on the wetland throughout the year.
- 58 migratory species that use it as a seasonal stopover site.
- Conservation-relevant species:
- Endangered: Egyptian Vulture (Neophron percnopterus).
- Vulnerable: Common Pochard, Woolly-necked Stork, Lesser Adjutant Stork.
- Near Threatened: Painted Stork, Black-headed Ibis,

Black-tailed Godwit.
- Vegetation support:
- Aquatic plants: Ipomea carnea, Otellia alismoides, Cyperaceae species.
- Surrounding trees: Acacia nilotica (Babool) and Ficus religiosa (Peepal) provide nesting and roosting sites.
- Economics

Copra MSP Hike, 2024 Season

Introduction

- Update on the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for copra and related procurement support in India for 2024.

Why in news?

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) recently announced a significant increase in MSP for the 2024 season.
- The National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd. (NAFED) and National Cooperative Consumers' Federation (NCCF) will continue as Central Nodal Agencies for procurement under the Price Support Scheme (PSS), ensuring sustained support for copra and de-husked coconut procurement.

Background

- MSP, set by the government, ensures farmers receive a guaranteed amount for their produce.
- The Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP), operating under the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare since 1965, recommends MSP.
- Recommendations are based on production costs, market trends, and demand–supply dynamics.
- Subtopic: Significance
- The adjustment aims to ensure substantial margins: 51.84% for milling copra and 63.26% for ball copra.
- Major producing states such as Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka are expected to benefit.
- Subtopic: Facts/General knowledge
- MSP for 2024: ₹11,160 per quintal for milling copra; ₹12,000 per quintal for ball copra.

RBI Repo Rate Cut and India's Goldilocks Phase

Introduction

- The Reserve Bank of India's Monetary Policy Committee has reduced the repo rate by 25 bps to 5.25% to sustain a "Goldilocks phase" marked by low inflation and strong GDP growth.
- This move contributes to a cumulative reduction of 125 bps in 2025.

Why in news?

- The rate cut and the RBI's characterisation of the prevailing macroeconomic environment as a "Goldilocks phase" have brought the policy stance into focus.
- The decision signals the central bank's intent to extend favourable conditions without risking economic overheating.

Background

- A Goldilocks phase is when economic growth is strong and sustainable without overheating, while inflation remains low and stable without drifting into weak demand or deflation risk.
- In December 2025, the RBI Governor described India's economy as a "rare Goldilocks phase," with growth at 8.2% in Q2 (July–September) of 2025–26, inflation averaging 1.7% in Q2, and dipping to 0.3% in October 2025.
- It is a temporary ideal window that policymakers seek to protect and prolong.

Significance

- Sustained disinflation created policy space for easing, with headline inflation falling below the 2% lower tolerance band for the first time under the Flexible Inflation Targeting regime.
- India's Goldilocks moment, with inflation staying low at 2.2%, provided ideal conditions for the RBI to cut rates to reinforce momentum and support domestic demand.
- The move aims to counterbalance external headwinds such as weak global trade, market volatility, and geopolitical risks by cushioning the economy through stronger domestic demand.
- It seeks to support growth momentum by bolstering festive-season demand, the effects of GST rationalisation, and overall domestic consumption.
- Likely implications include a boost to growth via lower borrowing costs that lift lending, consumption, and investment.
- Increased liquidity may stoke demand-pull inflation if supply is tight; the RBI's action reflects confidence that inflation will remain within the 2–6% target band.
- External sector dynamics may shift as reduced interest rate appeal could weaken the rupee, improving export competitiveness but raising import costs and potentially widening the trade deficit.
- Lower rates can reduce returns on fixed deposits and small savings, which may discourage household savings.

Facts/General knowledge

- Repo rate: The interest rate at which commercial banks borrow from the central bank; it addresses short-term liquidity needs via collateralised borrowing repurchased later at a higher price including interest.

- Influence of repo rate: Higher rates raise loan costs and slow borrowing; lower rates reduce borrowing costs.
- Monetary policy role: The repo rate is a key lever to manage money supply, inflation, and economic growth.
- Flexible Inflation Targeting (FIT): A framework that targets medium-term inflation while allowing flexibility to consider short-term output and employment stabilisation.
- Primary mandate under FIT: In India, CPI inflation is targeted at 4% within a band of ±2% (2% to 6%).
- Trade-off management: FIT recognises short-term trade-offs between controlling inflation and supporting growth, with inflation as the nominal anchor.
- Science and technology

LVM3-M6 Commercial Mission: BlueBird Block-2 Launch

Introduction

- A significant ISRO commercial mission will deploy a next-generation satellite providing space-based cellular broadband and direct-to-smartphone connectivity.
- The mission showcases the alignment of India's heavy-lift launch capability with global telecom demands.

Why in news?

- ISRO will launch AST SpaceMobile's advanced BlueBird Block-2 under a commercial agreement, reflecting a high-profile upcoming deployment.

Background

- India's space programme has evolved from being purely state-driven to a commercially competitive global launch service provider.
- With the creation of NewSpace India Limited (NSIL), India has positioned itself as a reliable partner for international satellite operators.
- Rising global demand for space-based broadband and direct-to-smartphone connectivity, aimed at bridging digital divides, underpins this mission.
- The LVM3-M6 mission reflects the convergence of India's heavy-lift capability with next-generation global telecom satellites.

Significance

- For India / ISRO:
- Strengthens ISRO's credentials as a global commercial launch provider.
- Demonstrates the operational maturity of LVM3 for international commercial missions.
- Enhances NSIL's role in integrating India into the global space economy.
- For India–US Space Cooperation:
- Reflects deepening Indo–US collaboration in advanced space technologies.
- Expands cooperation beyond government missions to commercial satellite ecosystems.

Facts/General knowledge

- LVM3-M6 Mission:
- Launch Vehicle: LVM3 (India's heavy-lift launch vehicle)
- Mission Designation: LVM3-M6
- Launch Date: 24 December 2025
- Launch Site: Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota
- Commercial Facilitator: NewSpace India Limited (NSIL)
- BlueBird Block-2 Satellite:
- Developer: AST SpaceMobile (USA)
- Purpose: High-capacity space-based cellular broadband
- Capability: Direct smartphone connectivity without reliance on ground-based cell towers
- Orbit: Low Earth Orbit (LEO)
- Key Technological Features:
- Massive phased-array communications system of about 2,400 square feet
- Among the largest commercial communications arrays deployed in LEO
- Supports higher data throughput and continuous wide-area coverage

NASA's MAVEN Mars Orbiter Communication Loss

Introduction

- NASA has lost contact with its long-serving Mars orbiter MAVEN, which went silent in early December, raising concern within the global scientific community.
- NASA is attempting to re-establish communication with the spacecraft.

Why in news?

- On 4 December, MAVEN transmitted its last full set of routine health data.
- Two days later, it passed behind Mars from Earth's viewpoint, a normal blackout period.
- When reconnection was expected, NASA's Deep Space Network did not detect MAVEN's signal.
- NASA publicly confirmed the issue on 9 December.
- A small fragment of tracking data recovered later suggested unexpected rotation and a possible change in orbit.
- The exact cause of the problem is still unknown.

Background

- MAVEN's mission is to study how Mars lost most of its atmosphere over billions of years.
- Its main tasks are to:
- Study Mars' upper atmosphere and ionosphere.

- Observe how sunlight and solar wind interact with the planet.
- Help scientists understand how Mars changed from a water-rich planet to a cold, dry world.

Significance

- Acts as a communication relay for Mars rovers.
- Relays data from Curiosity and Perseverance rovers back to Earth.
- Collects long-term atmospheric data across different seasons and solar conditions.
- With MAVEN silent, NASA has shifted relay duties to other orbiters:
- Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter.
- Mars Odyssey.
- European Mars orbiters, when needed.
- Subtopic: Facts/General knowledge
- MAVEN stands for Mars Atmosphere and Volatile Evolution.
- The mission was launched in November 2013.
- It has been orbiting Mars since 2014.
- It is operated by the US space agency NASA.

Hansa-3 NG Trainer Aircraft

Introduction

- Two-seater, next-generation trainer aircraft designed for pilot training.

Why in news?

- Launched by the Union Minister for Science & Technology at CSIR-NAL, Bengaluru.
- India's first indigenous production-version pilot trainer aircraft and the first fully indigenous trainer ready for serial production in the civil aviation ecosystem.

Background

- Designed and developed by CSIR–National Aerospace Laboratories (NAL).
- Intended for Private Pilot Licence (PPL) and Commercial Pilot Licence (CPL) training.

Significance

- Critical to meeting India's requirement of 30,000 pilots over the next 15–20 years.
- Reduces dependence on foreign trainer aircraft and saves foreign exchange.
- Enables Atmanirbhar Bharat in aviation manufacturing and boosts MSME participation.
- Subtopic: Facts/General knowledge
- Aircraft design and performance:
- Lightweight composite airframe for durability, fuel efficiency, and ease of maintenance.
- Bubble canopy and wide cockpit for excellent visibility and comfortable seating.
- Stable low-speed handling for safer take-offs, landings, and training manoeuvres.
- Avionics:
- Modern glass cockpit with digital flight information for better situational awareness.
- Integrated navigation, communication, and safety systems: GPS, ILS-ready, transponder, radio.
- Equipped with an Emergency Locator Transmitter (ELT) for safety compliance.
- Powerplant:
- Fuel-efficient Rotax engine, widely used worldwide for flight-training aircraft.
- Easy-to-maintain setup with quick-access panels to reduce servicing time and cost.
- Safety and durability:
- Airframe treated with lightning protection for safe all-weather flying.
- Strong landing gear designed to handle frequent training landings on different types of runways.

ACEN – India's First Private Navigation Innovation Hub

Introduction

- India has marked a significant step in indigenous navigation technology with the inauguration of the Ananth Centre of Excellence for Navigation (ACEN) in Thiruvananthapuram.
- Launched by ISRO Chairman V. Narayanan, it is the country's first private-sector navigation innovation hub.
- The centre strengthens national capability in high-precision navigation systems crucial for defence, space, and civilian sectors.

Why in news?

- The inauguration of ACEN establishes India's first private navigation innovation hub.
- It highlights a major advancement in building high-precision indigenous navigation solutions.
- Subtopic: Background
- Navigation systems underpin missiles, aircraft, satellites, and advanced vehicles, and excessive dependence on foreign GPS-based systems poses strategic risks.
- Past challenges showed delays in access or repair affecting preparedness.
- Many navigation systems are still repaired abroad by foreign manufacturers, leading to delays, higher costs, and limited control.
- Ananth Technologies, established in 1992, with roles in multiple ISRO and DRDO missions and expertise in

precision sensors, satellite integration, and airworthiness certifications, is well-positioned to lead this centre.

Significance

- Reduces foreign dependence by creating domestic maintenance, repair, and overhaul (MRO) capability for sophisticated navigation units.
- Core focus areas include navigation sensors, AI-enabled navigation fusion, improved utilisation of NavIC, and full-scale MRO support within India.
- Delivers enhanced accuracy and reliability, lower costs, strengthened readiness, and long-term technological independence.
- Supports India's roadmap for self-reliance in navigation by 2035 through collaboration among industry, research institutions, universities, and defence agencies.
- Aligns with Atmanirbhar Bharat by boosting indigenous manufacturing and aiming for global leadership in trusted navigation technologies, strengthening national security and economic growth.

Facts/General knowledge

- India's regional navigation satellite system is known as NavIC, operational since 2018.
- DRDO was founded in 1958 and is headquartered in New Delhi.
- The first Indian satellite, Aryabhata, was launched in 1975.
-

DoLR National Symposium on NAKSHA and LandStack

Introduction

- The Department of Land Resources, Ministry of Rural Development, will host a National Symposium on NAKSHA and LandStack.
- The event aims to accelerate the adoption of modern geospatial technology to improve urban land records and strengthen citizen services.
- It will convene government officials, technical experts, and industry leaders to discuss building a transparent and future-ready digital land system for India.

Why in news?

- DoLR will organise a major symposium to drive modern, technology-enabled reforms in urban land governance.
- The gathering seeks to fast-track geospatial solutions through collaboration among government, industry, and experts.

Background

- NAKSHA pilot:
- Mapping over 157 cities using advanced aerial mapping and feature extraction.
- Addressing challenges in collecting accurate data in crowded urban areas, aligning aerial imagery with ground information, and updating legacy land maps through modern digital surveys.
- LandStack digital ecosystem:
- A unified system to consolidate all land-related information.
- Integration of cadastral maps, administrative records, and geospatial layers.
- Emphasis on common national standards and a federated model to enable smooth data sharing among States and departments.

Significance

- Citizen-centric services:
- Demonstrations of a modern WebGIS Platform and Cloud Services, with AI/ML-based analytics, 3D mapping, and cloud geospatial solutions.
- Expected gains in accuracy, transparency, accountability, and speed, making urban land services more citizen-friendly.
- Property rights reform:
- The proposed UrPro Card as a secure, trusted digital property document for registration, mutation, building permissions, and property tax.
- Aims to provide reliable and easily transferable property rights, requiring legal changes and administrative coordination across States and Union Territories.
- National vision:
- Advances reflect a Whole-of-Government approach to replace old land systems with transparent, digital, citizen-focused solutions.
- Contributes to building a modern, well-governed, and developed India under the vision of Viksit Bharat.

Facts/General knowledge

- Host: Department of Land Resources (DoLR), Ministry of Rural Development.
- Event: National Symposium on NAKSHA and LandStack.
- Date and venue: 3 December 2025, Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi.
- Platform: Part of GeoSmart India 2025.
- Participants: Government officials, technical experts, and industry leaders.
- Focus areas: Review of the NAKSHA pilot; development of the LandStack ecosystem; the proposed UrPro Card; demonstrations of WebGIS and Cloud Services; interoperability via common national standards and a federated model; integration of cadastral maps, administrative records, and geospatial layers.

DHRUV64 – India's First Fully Indigenous 64-bit Microprocessor

Introduction

- DHRUV64 is a fully indigenously designed 64-bit microprocessor, developed by the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC) under the Microprocessor Development Programme (MDP).
- It signifies a move from software-centric strengths to full-stack capability, spanning hardware design, processor architecture, and system integration.

Why in news?

- India has unveiled DHRUV64, marking a milestone in the nation's drive towards technological self-reliance in semiconductors and advanced computing.

Background

- Semiconductors and microprocessors underpin modern digital economies, powering smartphones, data centres, defence systems, and 5G networks.
- Dependence on imported processors created vulnerabilities to supply chain disruptions, export controls, and geopolitical risks.
- Government initiatives—Digital India, Make in India, Atmanirbhar Bharat, and the India Semiconductor Mission—were launched to address these challenges.
- The Microprocessor Development Programme was conceptualised to design indigenous processor architectures for strategic, industrial, and commercial needs.
- DHRUV64 emerges as the most advanced outcome of this sustained effort.

Significance

- Strengthens sovereign control over critical computing technologies by reducing dependence on foreign IP cores.
- Advances India's capability from software to comprehensive hardware–software integration.
- Addresses strategic, industrial, and commercial requirements with suitability for diverse electronic systems.
- Enables efficient handling of multitasking and moderate-to-high computing workloads.
- Subtopic: Facts/General knowledge
- Developer and programme: C-DAC under the Microprocessor Development Programme.
- Processor architecture: 64-bit dual-core; 1.0 GHz clock speed.
- Execution capabilities: Superscalar execution and out-of-order execution.
- Packaging and integration: Integrated communication and control functions; advanced FCBGA (Flip-Chip Ball Grid Array) package; compact design suitable for embedding.
- Indigenous design stack: Built using domestic design expertise to reduce reliance on foreign IP.

Military exercise and defence

QUAD First Field Training Exercise (FTX) 2025 under the Indo-Pacific Logistics Network (IPLN)

Introduction

- Quad countries — Australia, India, Japan, and the United States — conducted their first Field Training Exercise (FTX) under the IPLN.
- The exercise took place at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam.
- It was held on the sidelines of Operation Christmas Drop.

Why in news?

- This was the inaugural FTX conducted by Quad nations under the IPLN framework.
- It marked a coordinated effort aligned with an ongoing activity at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam.

Background

- The Indo-Pacific Logistics Network (IPLN) is a joint Quad initiative.
- It is designed to strengthen shared logistics capabilities.
- It seeks to enhance coordinated disaster response among Quad partners.
- The IPLN aims to enable quicker and more effective responses during large-scale natural disasters in the Indo-Pacific region.

Significance

- The FTX advances the IPLN's objectives through practical, on-ground coordination.
- It supports faster, more effective disaster response among Quad countries.
- It builds interoperable logistics capabilities for large-scale natural disaster scenarios in the Indo-Pacific.
- Subtopic: Facts/General knowledge
- Participants: Australia, India, Japan, and the United States (Quad).
- Exercise type: Field Training Exercise (FTX).
- Framework: Indo-Pacific Logistics Network (IPLN).
- Location: Andersen Air Force Base, Guam.
- Context: Conducted on the sidelines of Operation Christmas Drop.

SAGAR and Indian Ocean Security

Introduction

- SAGAR: Security and Growth for All in the Region frames India's approach to the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).
- The IOR is central to India's economic security, strategic

autonomy, and role as a net security provider.
- The Colombo Security Conclave (CSC) has evolved into a cooperative platform addressing maritime security, counter-terrorism, trafficking, and cybersecurity, reflecting regional appetite for collaboration but remaining fluid due to differing national priorities and domestic uncertainties.

Why in news?

- In November 2025, India hosted the 7th NSA-level Colombo Security Conclave where Seychelles joined as a full member, solidifying a six-nation security bloc to counter Chinese naval entrenchment.
- The 2025 summit underscores India's renewed push to shape the emerging security architecture of the IOR.

Background

- What began as a stalled trilateral in 2011 has expanded into a broader CSC platform.
- Anchoring the "Neighbourhood First" policy, India is institutionalising security architectures that bind littoral states, shifting from a passive observer to an active norm-builder for regional stability.

Significance

- Geopolitical leadership and regional cohesion:
- Countering extra-regional influence by consolidating cooperative security among littoral states.
- The 7th CSC marked India's anchoring role as a convener and norm-setter in the IOR.
- Role as a net security provider and first responder:
- Humanitarian diplomacy builds strategic trust.
- Operation Sagar Bandhu deployed INS Vikrant, INS Udaygiri and air assets to flood-hit Sri Lanka, outpacing rivals' deliberations.
- Strategic connectivity and Central Asian access:
- The ocean provides a viable corridor bypassing hostile land borders to reach Central Asia and Afghanistan.
- India secured a US sanction waiver (November 2025) for Chabahar Port after a 10-year operation pact (May 2024), ensuring trade flows despite geopolitical friction.
- Blue economy and deep-sea resource rights:
- Access to polymetallic nodules and sulphides supports clean-energy transitions and reduces dependency on Chinese mineral monopolies.
- A 15-year contract (September 2025) with the International Seabed Authority for mining rights in the Carlsberg Ridge unlocks copper and zinc potential.
- Technological frontier and scientific prestige:
- Deep-ocean mastery enhances technological prowess linked to submarine warfare and underwater surveillance.
- The Samudrayaan Mission progressed with Matsya-6000 prototypes completing 500 m depth qualification trials, backed by a ₹4,077 crore budget to achieve manned deep-sea capability by 2026.
- Energy security and protection of SLOCs:
- The Strait of Hormuz is vital, with more than two-thirds of crude oil imports and nearly 50% of LNG imports transiting this route.
- Operation Sankalp protects Indian merchant vessels in the Strait of Hormuz and other high-risk Persian Gulf zones.

Facts/General knowledge

- Key challenges in the IOR:
- Grey-zone warfare and scientific espionage:
- China uses "civilian" research vessels to map seabeds for submarine operations under the guise of science; legal frameworks like UNCLOS inadequately restrict this.
- A swarm of four Chinese vessels entered the IOR as India issued a NOTAM for a missile test (later postponed), gathering acoustic signatures of strategic assets.
- Pendulum politics of littoral states:
- Smaller island nations leverage the "China card", oscillating between "India First" and "India Out".
- The Maldives pivoted back to India after a pro-China drift; India extended $400 million support and a ₹3,000 crore bilateral currency swap, neutralising an earlier defence pact with Beijing.
- Subsurface nuclear rivalry and second-strike stability:
- With China's advanced SSBN deployments (including quieter Type 096), India accelerated INS Aridhaman sea trials to commission its third SSBN for continuous deterrence.
- Weaponisation of dual-use infrastructure:
- BRI ports are becoming de facto PLA Navy logistics bases.
- Expanded "logistics facilities" at Kyaukphyu (Myanmar) and Gwadar (Pakistan), capable of docking aircraft carriers, flank India's Andaman & Nicobar Command from east and west.
- Illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing and resource plunder:
- Satellite data (2025) showed over 600 Chinese trawlers annually in the Western IOR, often "going dark" (AIS off); India has enhanced IFC-IOR monitoring.
- India also faces an intensifying fisheries dispute with Sri Lanka in the Palk Bay.
- Infrastructure vulnerability to climate change:
- The Maldives has the lowest terrain globally, with more than 80% of islands less than 1 m above mean sea level, posing climate-security risks.

- In India, installations in the Andaman & Nicobar Islands and naval airfields such as INS Baaz (Campbell Bay) are highly vulnerable to coastal erosion and storm surges, endangering readiness and surveillance capabilities.

Exercise EKUVERIN

Introduction

- A bilateral joint military exercise between the Indian Army and the Maldives National Defence Force (MNDF).

Why in news?

- The 14th edition has commenced in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala.

Background

- The name EKUVERIN means "friends" in Dhivehi.
- Conducted alternately in India and the Maldives since 2009.

Significance

- Aligns with India's Neighbourhood First policy and strengthens regional partnerships.
- Reinforces both countries' commitment to security and stability in the Indian Ocean Region.
- Enhances interoperability in Counter-Insurgency and Counter-Terrorism operations across jungle, semi-urban and coastal areas.

Facts/General knowledge

- India–Maldives defence relations feature bilateral exercises like "Ekuverin" and "Ekatha," and the trilateral "Dosti" with Sri Lanka to enhance operational synergy and interoperability.
- India is the Maldives' key defence partner and first responder in crises, as seen in Operation Cactus (1988) and post-2004 tsunami assistance.
- Cooperation is guided by India's Neighbourhood First and SAGAR vision.
- The Annual Defence Cooperation Dialogue (DCD), launched in 2016 at the Defence Secretary level, is the main platform for reviewing and guiding India–Maldives defence cooperation.

Exercise Garuda Shakti

Introduction

- Exercise Garuda Shakti is a bilateral Special Forces exercise between India and Indonesia
- It is conducted annually to enhance defence cooperation and strengthen operational synergy

Why in news?

- The 10th edition has begun at the Special Forces Training School, Bakloh, Himachal Pradesh

Background

- Participating contingents:
  - India: Troops from The Parachute Regiment (Special Forces)
  - Indonesia: Special Forces personnel from the Indonesian Army

Significance

- Strengthens mutual understanding between the participating Special Forces
- Enhances interoperability and coordination in Special Forces operations
- Facilitates exchange of expertise on weapons, equipment and operational practices
- Enables joint validation through simulated real-world operational scenarios
- Tests endurance, coordination and combat preparedness

Facts/General knowledge

- Focus areas include:
- Troop-level tactics, techniques and procedures
- Unarmed combat techniques
- Combat shooting and sniping
- Heliborne operations
- Planning and execution of drone, counter-UAS and loiter-munition strikes
- Training is conducted in semi-mountainous terrain
- The exercise covers an extensive range of counter-terrorism and Special Forces operations

Exercise Harimau Shakti 2025

Introduction

- Bilateral military exercise between the Indian Army and the Malaysian Army.
- Focuses on jungle warfare and counter-insurgency operations.
- Reinforces India's Act East Policy and commitment to global peacekeeping frameworks.

Why in news?

- The 5th edition commenced in Rajasthan.
- Aims to enhance interoperability in counter-terrorism and peacekeeping scenarios.
- Participants in 2025: Indian Dogra Regiment and Malaysia's 25th Battalion Royal Malaysian Army.

Background

- Started in 2012 as a recurring bilateral engagement.
- Structured to strengthen regional cooperation and align with global peacekeeping efforts.

Significance

- Conducts joint rehearsal of sub-conventional operations under the UN Chapter VII mandate.
- Emphasises counter-terrorist drills, including cordon and search, heliborne operations, and casualty evacuation.

- Includes Army Martial Arts Routine (AMAR), combat reflex shooting, and Yoga as part of the exercise curriculum.

Facts/General knowledge

- UN Chapter VII authorises military and non-military actions—such as sanctions, blockades, and troop deployment—for international peace enforcement.
- Other India–Malaysia military exercises: Samudra Laksamana (bilateral maritime exercise) and Udara Shakti (bilateral air force exercise).

Project Suncatcher: Space-Based Solar Data Centres

Introduction

- Google has launched a long-term research initiative to develop solar-powered data centres in space.
- The project plans to use satellite constellations equipped with AI chips and laser-based communication to process data directly in orbit.
- It aims to reduce the energy burden associated with Earth-based data centres.

Why in news?

- Google announced Project Suncatcher with experimental launches planned for 2027.
- Two prototype satellites are slated for early 2027 as part of a learning mission in partnership with Planet Labs.

Background

- Concept and deployment:
- Tests solar-powered data centres by placing small computing racks on satellites.
- Partners with Planet Labs, an Earth imaging company, for initial prototypes.
- Core technologies:
- AI hardware: Google's Tensor Processing Units (TPUs), custom chips for high-volume, low-precision AI processing.
- Inter-satellite connectivity: Laser-based optical links to form a constellation capable of data centre–level computation.
- Functioning in orbit:
- Solar energy generation: Continuous solar radiation powers onboard systems.
- Onboard AI computing: Data is processed directly in space rather than relayed in full to Earth.
- Constellation architecture: Multiple satellites share workloads across distributed nodes.
- High-speed links: Inter-satellite laser communication enables high-speed, low-latency data transfer.
- Edge processing: In-orbit processing of satellite data (e.g., Earth observation) reduces bandwidth needs and response time.
- Space resilience: Radiation-hardened systems withstand radiation, vacuum, and temperature extremes.
- Selective downlink: Only processed outputs are transmitted to ground stations, minimising data load and latency challenges.

Significance

- Eases pressure on terrestrial data centres by lowering demand for electricity and water amid the AI boom.
- Addresses surging power needs, with Goldman Sachs estimating a 165% rise in data centre electricity demand by 2030.
- Enables clean, solar-powered computing, supporting climate mitigation efforts.
- Offers potential solutions to data sovereignty constraints, as outer space is not subject to national jurisdiction under the Outer Space Treaty, 1967.
- Enhances resilience of digital infrastructure against natural disasters, cable cuts, and power outages.
- Signals a shift towards next-generation space-based digital infrastructure with implications for global AI, cloud computing, and governance.

Facts/General knowledge

- Data centres:
- Specialised facilities that store, process, and manage large volumes of digital data using servers, storage, networking, and supporting systems for power, cooling, and security.
- Provide reliable and scalable infrastructure for cloud computing, AI, and other digital services.
- Global advancements towards data centres in space:
- OpenAI (Sam Altman): Proposed a Dyson sphere–like network of AI data centres powered by solar energy.
- Nvidia: Launched the Starcloud satellite carrying the H100 GPU, optimised for AI workloads.
- Lonestar Data Holdings: Sent a 1 kg mini data centre with 8 TB SSD storage to the Moon.
- Rank report and awards

World Inequality Report 2026

Introduction

- The 3rd World Inequality Report 2026 (WIR 2026) highlights unprecedented global inequality across income, wealth, gender, climate responsibility, and territorial divides.
- It calls for urgent policy interventions to address these disparities.

Why in news?

- The latest edition, WIR 2026, has been released.
- It proposes progressive taxation, gender-equal policies,

and global financial reform to promote equitable societies.

Background

- The World Inequality Report is a major global publication providing comprehensive data and analysis on the distribution of income and wealth across countries and over time.
- It is produced by the World Inequality Lab, a research centre based at the Paris School of Economics.
- Key features include a deeper assessment beyond GDP, using a multidimensional lens that covers gender inequality, climate impact, and access to public services.

Significance

- Inequalities are multidimensional and mutually reinforcing, compounding disadvantages across society.
- Those who emit the least are most exposed to climate shocks, while high emitters possess greater resources to adapt.
- Severe inequality within countries is underscored by stark gaps between the top 10% and the bottom 50% in income.

Facts/General knowledge

- Extreme wealth concentration:
- The top 10% own three-quarters of global wealth, while the bottom half holds only 2%.
- The wealthiest 0.001% (around 60,000 multi-millionaires) control three times more wealth than half of humanity; their share rose from 4% in 1995 to over 6% in 2025.
- Human capital inequality:
- Average education spending per child: Sub-Saharan Africa Euros 220 (PPP); Europe Euros 7,430; North America & Oceania Euros 9,020 — over 40 times lower in Sub-Saharan Africa.
- Climate inequality:
- The wealthiest 10% account for 77% of global emissions associated with private capital ownership; the poorest half accounts for 3%.
- Populations in low-income countries, who emit the least, face the greatest exposure to climate shocks; high emitters have more resources to adapt.
- Gender inequality:
- Women work 53 hours per week on average versus 43 for men (including domestic and care work).
- Excluding unpaid work, women earn 61% of men's hourly income; including unpaid labour, this falls to 32%.
- Regional income inequality:
- Average daily income: North America & Oceania Euros 125 versus Sub-Saharan Africa Euros 10 — a 13-fold difference.
- The Top 10%/Bottom 50% income ratio reveals severe inequality within countries.

Alia Bhatt's Golden Globe Horizon Award at the Red Sea International Film Festival

Introduction

- Bollywood actress Alia Bhatt was honoured with the Golden Globe Horizon Award at the Red Sea International Film Festival in Saudi Arabia, recognising her journey in Indian cinema.
- The festival highlighted her achievement on its official Instagram page.

Why in news?

- The festival announced it was proud to honour Alia Bhatt with the Golden Globe Horizon Award on the sidelines of the 5th Red Sea International Film Festival.
- The post celebrated her alongside actor Hend Sabry and noted the award celebrates the brightest creative talents in the Middle East and North Africa.

Background

- A special tribute traced Alia's rise from newcomer to one of India's top actresses, featuring clips from Highway, Dear Zindagi, Gangubai Kathiawadi, Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani, and Brahmastra.
- The showcase highlighted her emotional range and versatility across romance, drama, biographical stories, and large-scale commercial films.
- At the festival, Alia shared exclusive visuals from her upcoming film Alpha and discussed its action-packed style.
- She explained Alpha is the first female-led action film from the YRF universe and acknowledged the risk, noting female-led action films have not historically performed the same as male-led films.
- Alpha stars Sharvari in a lead role, includes a special cameo by Hrithik Roshan, and is part of the YRF Spy Universe, which features Ek Tha Tiger, Tiger Zinda Hai, War, Pathaan, Tiger 3, and the upcoming War 2.
- Yash Raj Films moved Alpha's release from Christmas 2025 to 17 April 2026 to allow more time for VFX and ensure the best visual experience.

Significance

- The honour marks a major milestone in Alia Bhatt's career and reflects her growing international fame.
- Her versatility, hard work, and diverse roles have made her a global ambassador of Indian cinema.
- Alpha positions her at the forefront of a female-led action film within a major franchise, with the schedule shift aimed at elevating visual quality.

Facts/General knowledge

- Event: Red Sea International Film Festival in Saudi Arabia;

5th edition referenced in the announcement.
- Award: Golden Globe Horizon Award, described as celebrating the brightest creative talents in the Middle East and North Africa.
- YRF Spy Universe titles mentioned: Ek Tha Tiger, Tiger Zinda Hai, War, Pathaan, Tiger 3, War 2 (upcoming).
- Alpha details: first female-led action film from the YRF universe; lead role by Sharvari; special cameo by Hrithik Roshan; new release date 17 April 2026; delay for VFX.

56th International Film Festival of India (IFFI) 2025

Introduction

- The 56th edition of the International Film Festival of India will be held in Goa from 20 to 28 November 2025.
- It continues as South Asia's only FIAPF-accredited competitive film festival since 1952, promising a grand confluence of cultures, storytelling, innovation, and cinematic excellence.

Why in news?

- The edition deepens international collaboration with Japan as the Country of Focus (showcasing six contemporary Japanese films), Spain as the Partner Country, and Australia as the Spotlight Country.
- The Opening Film is The Blue Trail by Brazilian director Gabriel Mascaro.
- The Gala Premieres segment will host 18 exclusive red-carpet screenings with global filmmakers and stars.

Background

- Established in 1952, IFFI began in Mumbai and has evolved into a vibrant global platform, now hosted annually in Goa.
- Recognised as the oldest and most prestigious film festival in Asia.
- The first edition (24 January–1 February 1952) featured around 40 feature films and 100 short films, organised by the Films Division of the Government of India.
- It echoed ideals of justice, liberty, equality, non-violence, and unity in diversity, symbolising Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam ("The world is one family").
- The festival subsequently toured Madras (Chennai), Delhi, and Calcutta (Kolkata), integrating India into the global film circuit.
- Key milestones:
- 1965: Became a competitive festival from the 3rd edition.
- 1975: Introduction of Filmotsav, a non-competitive festival in alternate years.
- 2004: Found a permanent home in Goa, jointly organised by NFDC, the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, and the Entertainment Society of Goa (ESG).

Significance

- Enhances cinema diplomacy through curated film packages, cultural programmes, and institutional tie-ups arising from global partnerships.
- Showcases world cinema alongside Indian talent, reinforcing inclusivity and support for new voices through debut works and women-led films.
- Honours cinematic legacies and milestones, underscoring IFFI's role in celebrating excellence across generations.

Facts/General knowledge

- Scale and premieres:
- Total films: 240+
- Participating countries: 81
- World premieres: 13
- International premieres: 5
- Asian premieres: 44
- Competitions and curated segments:
- Three international competitions will screen 32 selected films from five continents, alongside entries from Cannes, TIFF, Berlinale, and Venice.
- Fifteen curated and competitive segments include: Docu-Montage; From the Festivals; Macabre Dreams; UNICEF Cinema; Restored Classics; Experimental Films; Best Debut Feature; ICFT-UNESCO Gandhi Medal; and more.
- Tributes and honours:
- Centenary tributes: Guru Dutt; Raj Khosla; Ritwik Ghatak; P. Bhanumathi; Bhupen Hazarika; Salil Chowdhury.
- Rajinikanth's Golden Jubilee: Honoured at the Closing Ceremony for 50 years of cinematic excellence.
- Indian Panorama and new voices:
- Indian Panorama 2025: 25 feature films; 20 non-feature films; 5 debut features.
- Opening Feature: Amaran (Tamil); Opening Non-Feature: Kakori.
- Over 50 debut works and women-led films will be showcased.
- Awards: ₹5 lakh for Best Debut Indian Director; ₹10 lakh for Best Web Series.
- CMOT and creative showcases:
- Creative Minds of Tomorrow (CMOT): 124 young professionals selected from 799 entries for workshops and competitions across 13 film-related crafts.
- The 48-hour ShortsTV filmmaking challenge returns as a marquee event.

ICFT–UNESCO Gandhi Medal at IFFI 2025

Introduction

- The ICFT–UNESCO Gandhi Medal is an IFFI honour

recognising cinema aligned with Mahatma Gandhi's values.
- It highlights peace, non-violence, and inter-cultural dialogue through the medium of film.

Why in news?

- At the 56th International Film Festival of India (IFFI), 2025, the ICFT–UNESCO Gandhi Medal continues to honour cinematic works that embody Mahatma Gandhi's values of peace, non-violence, and inter-cultural dialogue.

Background

- Instituted at the 46th edition of IFFI (2015) in collaboration with the International Council for Film, Television and Audiovisual Communication (ICFT), Paris, under UNESCO.
- Recognises films of high artistic and cinematic standards that encourage ethical reflection on society's most pressing issues.
- Created to foster a deeper understanding of humanity's shared values through the transformative power of cinema.

Significance

- Cultural diplomacy tool: Aligns with India's soft power strategy by promoting non-violence, tolerance, and peace through cinema.
- Global recognition: Awarded to a film that best reflects Gandhian ideals, selected by an international jury of experts in cinema and communication from UNESCO-affiliated institutions.
- UNESCO partnership: Enhances India's role in global cultural governance, working alongside UN bodies on promoting ethical storytelling.
- Subtopic: Facts/General knowledge
- ICFT was established at the General Conference of UNESCO held in New Delhi in 1956 to encourage intercultural dialogue and peace through film, television, and digital media.
- IFFI is Asia's oldest and most significant film festival, established in 1952.
- Since 2004, IFFI has been permanently hosted in Goa, jointly organised by the National Film Development Corporation (NFDC), the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, and the Entertainment Society of Goa (ESG), Government of Goa.

World Athletics Awards 2025 – Athletes of the Year

Introduction

- World Athletics honoured Armand Duplantis (Sweden) and Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone (United States) as World Athletes of the Year for 2025.
- The recognition followed undefeated seasons and groundbreaking performances at the World Championships in Tokyo.
- The award is among the sport's most prestigious, celebrating competitive excellence and elevating the global profile of track and field.

Why in news?

- Duplantis and McLaughlin-Levrone received top honours after dominant, unbeaten campaigns.
- Their standout moments came at the Tokyo World Championships, where they set championship-defining marks.

Background

- The World Athletics Awards are presented annually by World Athletics to recognise athletes who achieve excellence and enhance the sport's global reach.
- Both recipients, aged 26, excelled across major competitions throughout 2025.

Significance

- Duplantis' record-breaking season and first-ever 6.30-metre clearance reinforced his status as a central figure in modern athletics and highlighted the rising prominence of field events.
- McLaughlin-Levrone's shift from the 400m hurdles to flat sprinting revitalised the women's 400m and demonstrated exceptional versatility and resilience.
- The broader set of awardees showcased the depth of global talent, spanning technical field events, middle-distance track, race walking, and marathon running.

Facts/General knowledge

- Armand Duplantis:
- Broke his own world record four times in 2025.
- First athlete to clear 6.30 metres, achieved at the World Championships in Tokyo.
- Unbeaten in all 16 competitions entered in 2025.
- Won indoor and outdoor world titles.
- Secured a fifth straight Diamond League championship.
- Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone:
- Undefeated in both the 400m and 400m hurdles throughout 2025.
- Clocked 47.78 seconds to win the 400m at the Tokyo World Championships—the second fastest time ever and a new championship record, breaking a 42-year-old mark.
- Her focus on open sprints cemented her status among sprinting greats.
- Other award winners:
- Nicola Olyslagers (Australia): Women's Field Athlete of the Year; world titles in both indoor and outdoor high jump.

- Emmanuel Wanyonyi (Kenya): Men's Track Athlete of the Year; 800m world title.
- Maria Perez (Spain): Double gold in the 20km and 35km race walk.
- Sabastian Sawe (Kenya): Recognised for victories in the London and Berlin Marathons.
-
- Scheme and initiatives

Atal Pension Yojana enrolment milestone

Introduction

- India's flagship pension scheme for workers in the unorganised and low-income sectors
- Aims to ensure universal social security for all citizens, especially those with limited income stability

Why in news?

- Recorded 8.34 crore enrolments as of 31 October 2025, reflecting growing awareness about pension security and improved financial inclusion efforts nationwide
- Women constitute 48% of total subscribers, with over 4.04 crore women enrolled

Background

- Launched on 9 May 2015
- Open to Indian citizens aged 18–40 with a bank or post office savings account
- Subscribers receive a monthly pension after turning 60, with pension payouts beginning from 2035 onwards for early enrollees
- Subtopic: Significance
- Demonstrates strengthened last-mile access and simplified registration
- Highlights rising female participation in long-term social security schemes and a gender-balanced outreach
- Indicates effective Government and PFRDA-led outreach across rural and remote areas

Facts/General knowledge

- Awareness creation supported through:
- Advertisements across print, digital and broadcast platforms
- Informational brochures in 13 regional languages
- Virtual training programmes for banking correspondents, field staff and Self Help Group members
- Partnerships with ministries and agencies like NABARD, NCFE, NRLM and SRLM
- Digital channels such as e-APY, net banking, mobile apps and bank portals for seamless onboarding
- Pension saturation campaigns and APY awareness drives across India
- Delivered through a wide institutional network: public and private banks, regional rural banks, cooperative banks, payments banks, small finance banks, and the Department of Posts
- These institutions are registered as Points of Presence – APY, responsible for subscriber enrolment and servicing, ensuring easy access for citizens

Uttarakhand's Yuva App, Prayag Portal, and Self-Employment Centres

Introduction

- The Uttarakhand government unveiled digital and institutional measures to empower youth with employment and self-employment opportunities.

Why in news?

- Launch of the Yuva Uttarakhand mobile application for unemployed youth.
- Inauguration of the Prayag portal to provide job information to job-seeking youth.
- Distribution of appointment letters to 17 individuals selected through employment fairs.
- The Chief Minister toured exhibitions organised by various government departments.

Background

- Yuva Uttarakhand mobile application aims to share information on self-employment with the state's unemployed youth.
- Prayag portal serves as a comprehensive resource for job information in the state.
- Self-employment centres are to be established in all districts to act as hubs for information and applications related to various self-employment schemes.
- The government signed a Memorandum of Understanding with IIT Roorkee and Microsoft to enhance the skill set of the state's youth.

Significance

- Expands access to self-employment opportunities and related schemes for unemployed youth.
- Streamlines job-related information for users seeking employment.
- Provides district-level support through dedicated centres for guidance and applications.
- Strengthens skill development through formal collaborations with an academic institution and a technology company.

Facts/General knowledge

- 17 appointment letters were distributed at the event.
- The Chief Minister inspected exhibitions by government departments.
- The Prayag portal's primary focus is outsourcing

employment opportunities in various government departments.
- The portal was designed by the state's IT development agency.
- It brings all employment-related information onto one platform to ensure user convenience.
- Two self-employment centres were inaugurated in the first phase: Dehradun and Udham Singh Nagar.

Atal Canteen Scheme, Delhi

Introduction
- A scheme in Delhi that provides clean and nutritious meals at affordable prices.

Why in news?
- Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena and Chief Minister Rekha Gupta inaugurated 25 new Atal Canteens.
- With this addition, a total of 71 Atal Canteens are now operational in the city.

Background
- The scheme was launched on 25 December 2025 by Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta.
- Subtopic: Significance
- Supports labourers, street vendors, construction workers and rickshaw pullers.
- Ensures food security, dignity and social inclusion.

Facts/General knowledge
- The government plans to expand the number of Atal Canteens to 100 soon.

Sujalam Bharat App

Introduction
- A key digital initiative for efficient management of rural drinking water supply systems.
- Subtopic: Why in news?
- The Ministry of Jal Shakti has launched the Sujalam Bharat App.

Background
- Undertaken under the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM).
- Developed with the support of the Bhaskaracharya National Institute for Space Applications and Geo-informatics (BISAG-N).

Significance
- Shifts governance by placing comprehensive information with citizens and Gram Panchayats, promoting community ownership and accountability of water service providers.
- Envisioned as the "Aadhaar for rural water systems," forming the backbone of a transparent, accountable, and citizen-centric water delivery ecosystem.

Facts/General knowledge
- Creates a unified digital identity, the Sujal Gaon ID, for every rural water scheme.
- Enables real-time monitoring and management of water infrastructure from source to household.
- Integrates with PM Gati Shakti GIS for precise geospatial mapping of water networks and asset inventory.
- Incorporates water quality data and community feedback.

Tex-RAMPS Scheme

Introduction
- Textiles Focused Research, Assessment, Monitoring, Planning and Start-Up (Tex-RAMPS) scheme of the Ministry of Textiles
- Aims to improve the coverage, quality, timeliness, and credibility of textile-related statistical products and research, strengthening textile data systems across States and Union Territories to support better planning and decision-making

Why in news?
- Ministry of Textiles signed MoUs with 15 States for Tex-RAMPS during the National Textile Ministers' Conference in Guwahati
- The conference was held on the theme "India's Textiles: Weaving Growth, Heritage & Innovation"

Background
- Implemented as a Central Sector Scheme, fully funded by the Ministry of Textiles
- Operational period: FY 2025–26 to FY 2030–31, aligned with the 16th Finance Commission cycle
- Supports integrated planning across handlooms, handicrafts, apparel, and technical textiles

Significance
- Strengthens cooperative federalism by improving textile data systems and bridging critical data gaps
- Enables evidence-based planning to support India's roadmap towards a USD 350 billion textile industry

Facts/General knowledge
- Financial assistance: Rs 12 lakh per year as an annual grant to each State or Union Territory
- Financial assistance: Rs 1 lakh per year per district, linked to the development and implementation of district action plans
- Key components: Research & Innovation; Data, Analytics & Diagnostics; Integrated Textiles Statistical System (ITSS); Capacity Development; Start-up & Innovation Support

PM SVANidhi Scheme Extension to 2030

Introduction
- The Prime Minister Street Vendor's AtmaNirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi) Scheme supports street vendors with

working capital loans, financial inclusion, and digital transactions.
- It offers interest subsidy on timely loan repayment, cashback for digital transactions, and eligibility for an enhanced next tranche of loans.
- The 'SVANidhi se Samriddhi' component provides social security benefits to street vendors.

Why in news?

- The Union Cabinet has approved the restructuring and extension of PM SVANidhi until 31 March 2030, targeting 1.15 crore street vendors, including 50 lakh new beneficiaries.

Background

- Launched in 2020 by the Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs (MoHUA) to support vendors affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Designed to help restart businesses through working capital loans while promoting digital transactions and financial inclusion.
- Integrates social security through 'SVANidhi se Samriddhi'.

Significance

- Expanded beneficiary coverage to 1.15 crore, with 50 lakh new beneficiaries.
- Enhanced loan amounts across first and second tranches, providing greater working capital.
- Quick access to credit via a UPI-linked RuPay Credit Card for vendors who have repaid the second loan.
- Coverage broadened beyond statutory towns to census towns and peri-urban areas in a graded manner.
- 'SVANidhi se Samriddhi' strengthened through monthly Lok Kalyan Melas to ensure access to multiple government schemes.
- Focus on capacity building in entrepreneurship, digital skills, and food safety in partnership with the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India.

Facts/General knowledge

- As of July 2025, over 96 lakh loans worth Rs 13,797 crore were disbursed to 68 lakh street vendors.
- PM SVANidhi won the Prime Minister's Award for Excellence in Public Administration (2023) for innovation and the Silver Award for Government Process Re-engineering (2022) for digital transformation.
- Under PM SVANidhi 2.0, implementation is a joint responsibility of MoHUA and the Department of Financial Services.
- Sports current

Sultan Azlan Shah Cup 2025 Final — Belgium defeat India

Introduction

- The Indian men's hockey team finished with a silver medal at the Sultan Azlan Shah Cup 2025 in Ipoh, Malaysia.
- Belgium lifted the trophy, concluding a closely fought tournament in which India delivered strong performances and remained one of the top teams.

Why in news?

- Belgium, ranked world No. 3, clinched their maiden Sultan Azlan Shah Cup title with a 1-0 win over India.
- Thibeau Stockbroekx scored the decisive goal in the 34th minute.
- This was only Belgium's second appearance in the tournament; they previously finished sixth in 2008.
- Subtopic: Background
- India, ranked world No. 7, returned to the tournament after a six-year break.
- It marked India's second consecutive runners-up finish, following the 2019 final loss to South Korea.
- India are five-time champions and the second-most successful team in the competition, behind Australia's ten titles.
- India last won the Sultan Azlan Shah Cup in 2010.

Significance

- The title represents a historic first for Belgium at the Sultan Azlan Shah Cup.
- India's silver on return, coupled with consistent performances, underlines their standing as one of the top teams.
- Pawan's outstanding goalkeeping kept India in contention until the final whistle.

Facts/General knowledge

- Venue and timing: Final played in Ipoh, Malaysia, on Sunday.
- Match flow: Belgium dominated early phases, creating more opportunities and repeatedly testing the Indian defence.
- Key moments:
- Crucial saves by Indian goalkeepers Shashikumar Mohith Honnenahalli and Pawan.
- Stockbroekx's goal shortly after half-time from a well-coordinated team move.
- India missed a penalty corner while chasing the equaliser.
- Belgium nearly doubled the lead on a counterattack; Tom Boon had a goal disallowed for dangerous play.
- India pushed for an equaliser late on, but the score remained 1-0.
- Bronze medal match: New Zealand defeated hosts

Malaysia 6-1 to secure third place.

Qatar F1 Grand Prix 2025

Introduction

- Held at the Lusail International Circuit from 28–30 November 2025
- A critical race within a highly competitive 2025 championship battle

Why in news?

- Max Verstappen (Red Bull) won from third on the grid, keeping his championship hopes alive
- Oscar Piastri (McLaren) finished second; Carlos Sainz Jr. (Williams) secured third
- Lando Norris (McLaren) finished fourth in the Grand Prix after taking second in the Sprint
- Safety Car periods reshaped strategies and briefly put Piastri in the lead

Background

- Following a dramatic Las Vegas GP where both McLarens were disqualified, the standings tightened
- Lando Norris led the title race heading into Qatar, closely followed by Oscar Piastri and Max Verstappen
- McLaren had already secured the Constructors' Championship prior to this race

Significance

- The result preserved Verstappen's title bid and pushed the championship decision to the final race in Abu Dhabi
- Showcased Red Bull finding performance in Qatar despite season-long handling struggles
- Delivered a rare podium for Williams through Carlos Sainz Jr.
- The event was defined by a three-way fight among Norris, Piastri, and Verstappen
- Subtopic: Facts/General knowledge
- Round: 23 (penultimate race of the 2025 season)
- Support series: FIA Formula 2 Championship and Porsche Carrera Cup Middle

U-19 Asia Cup 2025 Schedule

Introduction

- The U-19 Asia Cup 2025 begins on 12 December in Dubai.
- Matches will be played at the ICC Academy Ground and the Sevens Stadium, with eight Asian teams competing to be the next youth champions.
- Subtopic: Why in news?
- The U-19 Asia Cup Schedule 2025 has been released, confirming dates, venues, and fixtures.
- Subtopic: Background
- Group A: India U19, UAE U19, Malaysia U19, Pakistan U19.
- Group B: Bangladesh U19 (defending champions), Afghanistan U19, Nepal U19, Sri Lanka U19.
- India opens its campaign against UAE U19.
- Bangladesh U19 face a challenging group with Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, and Nepal.
- All fixtures are scheduled for 10:30 AM IST across the ICC Academy Ground/ICC Academy Stadium and the Sevens Stadium.

Significance

- Features a marquee India U19 vs Pakistan U19 clash on 14 December.
- Brings together eight Asian youth sides in Dubai to contend for the next youth champions title.
- Defending champions Bangladesh U19 navigate a tough group featuring Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, and Nepal.

Facts/General knowledge

- Host city and venues: Dubai; ICC Academy Ground, ICC Academy Stadium, and Sevens Stadium (as listed).
- Full match list (date – fixture – time – venue):
- 12 December: India U19 vs UAE U19 – 10:30 AM IST – ICC Academy Ground
- 12 December: Pakistan U19 vs Malaysia U19 – 10:30 AM IST – Sevens Stadium
- 13 December: Afghanistan U19 vs Bangladesh U19 – 10:30 AM IST – ICC Academy Ground
- 13 December: Sri Lanka U19 vs Nepal U19 – 10:30 AM IST – Sevens Stadium
- 14 December: India U19 vs Pakistan U19 – 10:30 AM IST – ICC Academy Ground
- 14 December: UAE U19 vs Malaysia U19 – 10:30 AM IST – Sevens Stadium
- 15 December: Bangladesh U19 vs Nepal U19 – 10:30 AM IST – Sevens Stadium
- 15 December: Afghanistan U19 vs Sri Lanka U19 – 10:30 AM IST – ICC Academy Stadium
- 16 December: Pakistan U19 vs UAE U19 – 10:30 AM IST – ICC Academy Stadium
- 16 December: India U19 vs Malaysia U19 – 10:30 AM IST – Sevens Stadium
- 17 December: Bangladesh U19 vs Sri Lanka U19 – 10:30 AM IST – ICC Academy Ground
- 17 December: Afghanistan U19 vs Nepal U19 – 10:30 AM IST – Sevens Stadium
- 19 December (Semifinals): Semifinal 1 – A1 vs B2 – 10:30 AM IST – ICC Academy Stadium
- 19 December (Semifinals): Semifinal 2 – A2 vs B1 – 10:30

AM IST – Sevens Stadium
- 21 December (Final): Winner SF1 vs Winner SF2 – 10:30 AM IST – ICC Academy Ground

Sunil Narine's 600 T20 Wickets Milestone

Introduction
- Sunil Narine has reached 600 wickets in competitive T20 cricket, a landmark moment for the sport.
- The feat was achieved on 4 December 2025 during a World ILT20 match between Abu Dhabi Knight Riders and Sharjah Warriorz.
- The veteran West Indian spinner's achievement sets a high bar in the format.

Why in news?
- The milestone was sealed with the dismissal of Abell.
- Abu Dhabi Knight Riders marked the occasion by presenting Narine with a special jersey bearing the number "600," recognising his longevity and impact.
- This sets a benchmark that could take years to surpass.

Background
- Narine's T20 journey spans more than 15 years across global leagues: IPL, CPL, ILT20, and Major League Cricket.
- He has been a consistent force for Kolkata Knight Riders (IPL), Trinbago Knight Riders (CPL), Abu Dhabi Knight Riders (ILT20), and Los Angeles Knight Riders (MLC).
- Renowned for unmatched control, clever pace changes, and an unorthodox bowling action.
- Effective across all phases—from powerplays to death overs—delivering numerous match-winning spells and defying conditions and expectations.
- His performances have earned him legendary status across all formats of T20 cricket.

Significance
- Reflects unmatched consistency across teams, formats, and global conditions.
- Underscores longevity in a high-intensity format where many bowlers struggle to sustain performance.
- Demonstrates mastery over modern batters trained to counter spin.
- Highlights adaptability through constant reinvention amid evolving batting tactics.
- Achieved through variation, guile, and tactical precision rather than reliance on pace or bounce.

Facts/General knowledge
- Veteran West Indian spinner.
- Age at the milestone: 37.
- Match: Abu Dhabi Knight Riders vs Sharjah Warriorz, World ILT20.
- Wicket that sealed the milestone: Abell.
- Date: 4 December 2025.

Belgium defeat India to win maiden Sultan Azlan Shah Cup 2025

Introduction
- Belgium beat India 1-0 in the final in Ipoh, Malaysia, to clinch their first Sultan Azlan Shah Cup title.
- India finished with the silver medal after a strong tournament showing.

Why in news?
- Belgium, ranked world No. 3, lifted the Sultan Azlan Shah Cup for the first time by defeating India.
- The 2025 podium was completed earlier the same day as New Zealand beat host Malaysia 6-1 for bronze.

Background
- Belgium secured the title in only their second appearance at the tournament; they previously finished sixth in 2008.
- India returned to the event after a six-year break and recorded a second consecutive runners-up finish, having lost the 2019 final to South Korea.
- As five-time champions, India are the second-most successful team in the tournament, behind Australia with ten titles; India last won in 2010.
- Subtopic: Significance
- Belgium claimed their maiden Sultan Azlan Shah Cup, marking a breakthrough achievement.
- India reaffirmed their status as one of the top teams with consistent performances across the tournament despite the narrow defeat.

Facts/General knowledge
- Final score: Belgium 1-0 India; goal by Thibeau Stockbroekx in the 34th minute.
- Venue and timing: final played in Ipoh, Malaysia, on Sunday.
- World rankings: Belgium No. 3; India No. 7.
- Match flow: Belgium dominated early phases, creating more chances and pressing India's defence.
- Indian goalkeepers Shashikumar Mohith Honnenahalli and Pawan made crucial saves to keep the contest close.
- Key moments: India missed a penalty corner; Belgium nearly doubled the lead on a counterattack; Tom Boon had a goal disallowed for dangerous play.
- India pushed hard for an equaliser late on; Pawan's outstanding goalkeeping prevented a wider margin.
- Bronze medal match: New Zealand defeated Malaysia 6-1.

ISSF World Cup Final 2025 – Doha, Qatar

Introduction

- The ISSF World Cup Final 2025 concluded at the Lusail Shooting Complex, Doha, Qatar.
- Dates: 4–9 December 2025.
- It was the final stage of the 2025 ISSF shooting season.

Why in news?

- China topped the medal table, followed by India and the United States of America (USA), at the season-ending Final in Doha.
- Subtopic: Background
- The ISSF World Cup, introduced by the ISSF in 1986, is an annual international shooting competition in Olympic rifle, pistol, and shotgun events.
- The 2025 season ran from 1 April to 9 December across multiple countries.
- Stages in 2025 were hosted in Buenos Aires (Argentina), Lima (Peru), Nicosia (Cyprus), Munich (Germany), Lonato (Italy), Ningbo (China), and Doha (Qatar – Final).
- The World Cup Final is the last stage featuring only the top 10 shooters per category.

Significance

- The Final concluded the 2025 ISSF season and determined the overall medal standings.
- Participation was limited to the top 10 shooters per category, reflecting the culmination of the season's performances.

Facts/General knowledge

- Medal table:
- China: 4 Gold, 2 Silver, 3 Bronze (Total 9) – Rank 1.
- India: 2 Gold, 3 Silver, 1 Bronze (Total 6) – Rank 2.
- United States of America (USA): 2 Gold, 2 Silver, 2 Bronze (Total 6) – Rank 3.
- Indian medallists at the Final:
- Simranpreet Kaur – Women's 25m Pistol: Gold.
- Suruchi Singh – Women's 10m Air Pistol: Gold.
- Sainyam – Women's 10m Air Pistol: Silver.
- Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar – Men's 50m Rifle 3 Positions: Silver.
- Anish Bhanwala – Men's 25m Rapid Fire Pistol: Silver.
- Samrat Rana – Men's 10m Air Pistol: Bronze.

India at the 2025 ISSF World Cup (Lima)

Introduction

- India posted a standout showing at the 2025 ISSF World Cup in Lima, Peru.

Why in news?

- India finished third on the medal table.
- The squad secured seven medals: two gold, four silver, and one bronze.

Background

- Host and dates: Lima, Peru; 13–22 April 2025.
- Scale of competition: Over 400 shooters from 43 nations.
- India's contingent: 42 shooters, the second-largest squad after China.
- Overall leaders: China and the United States placed ahead of India.

Significance

- Gold medallists qualified for the 2025 ISSF World Cup Final in Doha, Qatar (4–9 December).
- Performances by Suruchi Singh and Saurabh Chaudhary helped India qualify for the World Cup Final.
- Simranpreet Kaur Brar achieved her first World Cup medal.

Facts/General knowledge

- Gold medallists:
- Suruchi Singh – Women's 10m Air Pistol (also gold in Buenos Aires).
- Suruchi Singh & Saurabh Chaudhary – 10m Air Pistol Mixed Team.
- Silver medallists:
- Manu Bhaker – Women's 10m Air Pistol.
- Arjun Babuta – Men's 10m Air Rifle.
- Simranpreet Kaur Brar – Women's 25m Pistol.
- Rudrannksh Patil & Arya Borse – 10m Air Rifle Mixed Team.
-

Arton Capital Passport Index 2025 – Global Mobility Rankings

Introduction

- A global ranking that assesses national passports based on global mobility access.
- Published by Arton Capital, a Canada-based global financial advisory firm.
- Subtopic: Why in news?
- The Passport Index 2025 was released in December 2025.

Background

- Methodology: Mobility Score (MS) equals the number of destinations offering visa-free access and visa-on-arrival.
- Tie-breaker: If Mobility Scores are equal, rankings are decided using the UNDP Human Development Index (HDI).

Significance

- European countries dominate the top 20 rankings due to regional agreements (Schengen Area), high HDI scores, and stable diplomatic relations.
- The UAE's standing reflects strong diplomatic outreach and bilateral agreements.
- Joint Rank 2 for Singapore and Spain demonstrates Asia–

Europe leadership in travel freedom.
- There is increasing use of Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) systems as an intermediate travel facilitation tool.

Facts/General knowledge

- Rank 1: United Arab Emirates (UAE) — Position: 1st for the 7th consecutive year; Mobility Score: 179; Visa-free: 126 destinations; Visa-on-Arrival: 45 countries; ETA: 8 countries.
- Joint Rank 2: Singapore and Spain — Mobility Score: 175.
- Rank 3 (shared by 18 countries) — Mobility Score: 174; includes Belgium, France, Sweden, Germany, Netherlands, Finland, Luxembourg, Denmark, Portugal, Switzerland, Greece, Austria, Italy, Malaysia.
- India's position: Global Rank 67; Mobility Score: 74; Visa-free access: 74 countries; covers about 37% of the world's destinations; ranked alongside Norway, Ireland, South Korea, and Japan (cluster positioning).
- Individual ranking system (Top 3): UAE; Singapore; Spain.
- Bottom five: Afghanistan — Rank 94 (lowest), Mobility Score 38; Syria — Rank 93; Iraq — Rank 92; Pakistan — Rank 91; Somalia — Rank 91.
-
- International Relation meeting & submits

Pakistan's First Chief of Defence Forces (CDF)

Introduction

- Field Marshal Asim Munir has been appointed as Pakistan's first Chief of Defence Forces (CDF), marking a landmark shift in the military command structure.
- He continues to serve concurrently as Chief of the Army Staff (COAS).

Why in news?

- The appointment was ratified by President Asif Ali Zardari on 5 December 2025.

Background

- The 27th Constitutional Amendment (November 2025) amended Article 243 to recognise the CDF post and consolidate top military leadership under a central figure.
- This realignment coincided with Munir's earlier elevation to the rank of Field Marshal, making him only the second five-star officer after General Ayub Khan.

Significance

- Establishes a unified command structure by entrusting overall military authority to a single leader.
- Abolishes the post of Chief of Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCSC), with the CDF assuming full operational and strategic authority.
- CDF powers include:
- Centralised command over the Army, Navy, and Air Force
- Direct oversight of strategic assets and nuclear command
- Authority over operational planning, inter-service coordination, and defence policy implementation
- Lead role in responding to national security threats and crises
- Expected to streamline decision-making, reduce inter-service friction, and enhance strategic readiness.
- Power dynamics and regional implications:
- Reinforces the military's dominance within Pakistan's power structure
- Raises concerns about erosion of civilian oversight and increased military encroachment into policymaking and governance
- Draws close scrutiny from India's defence analysts for its potential impact on posture, crisis response, and strategic decision-making in South Asia

Facts/General knowledge

- Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif initially delayed formal notification, sparking debates about civil–military balance and democratic oversight; the government proceeded under pressure, leading to the president's approval.
- Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmad Babar Sidhu received a two-year service extension, effective from March 2026.

Chile Presidential Election 2025

Introduction

- Chile has elected ultra-conservative leader José Antonio Kast as the next president.
- The result reflects public concern over crime, migration, and security.
- It signals a shift away from the current left-leaning government.
- Subtopic: Why in news?
- José Antonio Kast won the presidential election, defeating leftist candidate Jeannette Jara.
- Vote shares: Kast 58.16%; Jara 41.84%.
- He will assume office on 11 March 2026.

Background

- Chile returned to democracy in 1990 after the Pinochet-era military rule.
- Political power has alternated between left and right since then.
- Kast previously lost the 2021 election to outgoing President Gabriel Boric.
- Rising crime rates and increased migration from Venezuela shaped the 2025 election outcome.

Significance

- Marks a rightward political shift in Chile.

- Reflects voter priority on security and stability.
- Adds Chile to the growing list of right-leaning governments in South America.
- May influence Chile's foreign and economic policies.
- Mandate dynamics: won the presidency without a clear majority in Parliament.
- Stated priorities of the president-elect:
- Controlling illegal immigration.
- Reducing crime and organised violence.
- Strengthening border security.
- Cutting government spending to stabilise the economy.
- Profile of support and campaign themes:
- Strong law-and-order focus.
- Hardline stand on undocumented migrants.
- Support from conservative voters.

Facts/General knowledge

- Capital: Santiago.
- President-elect: José Antonio Kast.
- Outgoing President: Gabriel Boric.
- Region: South America.
- Form of Government: Presidential system.

India–Jordan Relations: PM's 2025 Visit

Introduction

- India's Prime Minister undertook a landmark bilateral visit to Jordan in December 2025, his first full-fledged visit after a brief stopover in February 2018 en route to Palestine.
- The visit marked 75 years of India–Jordan diplomatic ties and aimed to elevate a stable relationship into a future-oriented strategic alliance.
- Discussions with King Abdullah II focused on trade expansion, digital integration, and regional stability.

Why in news?

- Five outcomes were formalised:
- MoU on Technical Cooperation in the Field of New and Renewable Energy.
- MoU on Cooperation in the field of Water resources Management & Development.
- Twinning Agreement between Petra (ancient city in Jordan) and Ellora.
- Renewal of the Cultural Exchange Programme for the years 2025-2029.
- Letter of Intent on Cooperation in the field of sharing successful digital solutions implemented at population scale for digital transformation.
- Ambitious trade target set to enhance bilateral trade to USD 5 billion over the next five years; India is Jordan's 3rd largest trading partner.
- Leaders reiterated strong condemnation of terrorism and shared perspectives on ensuring regional peace and stability.

Background

- Diplomatic engagement:
- Relations established in 1950 and sustained through regular high-level exchanges (e.g., UNGA).
- Mutual counter-terrorism support, as seen after the Pahalgam attack (2025).
- Trade and economic integration:
- Bilateral trade stood at USD 2.875 billion in FY 2023-24.
- Jordan India Fertiliser Company (JIFCO) underpins India's agricultural security via phosphate and potash supplies.
- Over 15 NRI-owned garment units (investment ~USD 500 million) leverage access to Western markets.
- Defence and security cooperation:
- MoU on Defence Cooperation signed in 2018.
- Science and technology partnership:
- India–Jordan Center of Excellence in IT at Al-Hussein Technical University hosts supercomputer PARAM Shavak, targeting training of 3,000 Jordanian IT professionals, with Indian master trainers upskilling in Cyber Security, AI, and Big Data Analytics.
- People-to-people ties:
- Around 17,500 Indians work in healthcare, IT, and education.
- Cultural affinity includes interest in Bollywood and events like the Jerash Festival.
- Personal diplomacy:
- The Jordanian Crown Prince Al Hussein bin Abdullah II personally escorted the Indian PM to the Jordan Museum.

Significance

- Strategic value in West Asia:
- Jordan, a pro-Western, modernising Arab constitutional monarchy with a peace treaty with Israel, enables India to balance ties with Israel, Arab states, and Iran.
- Its large refugee-hosting role (primarily Syrians) reinforces regional stabilisation efforts aligned with India's interests.
- Security convergence:
- Engagement through the Aqaba Process (2015), the 2018 defence MoU, and participation in SOFEX highlights deepening military and counter-terrorism cooperation.
- Multilateral and diplomatic leverage:
- Jordan's influence in the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) supports India's multilateral interests and helps counter narratives on Kashmir.
- Custodianship of Jerusalem positions Jordan centrally in de-escalation, aligning with India's diaspora and trade

route protection.
- Connectivity and corridors:
- Jordan is a linchpin in the India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), offering enhanced trade connectivity and supporting energy transition goals.
- Potential gateway for reconstruction and logistics in post-conflict Iraq and the Levant.
- During the Red Sea crisis, overland cargo routes from Gulf ports via Saudi Arabia and Jordan into Israel emerged to bypass maritime chokepoints, underscoring resilient logistics.
- Outcomes aligned with future-oriented goals:
- USD 5 billion trade target and digital payment integration ambitions aim to diversify and modernise bilateral engagement.
- Constraints and pathways:
- Challenges include a narrow commodity-centric trade basket, Jordan's economic pressures (unemployment around 21%, public debt ~90% of GDP in 2024), geopolitical sensitivities linked to the Palestinian issue, and limited connectivity (single Amman–Mumbai flight).
- Pathways to strengthen ties:
- Diversify economic engagement via a Ministerial Strategic Economic & Technology Dialogue, focusing on investment, MSMEs, startups, and supply chains.
- Share India's Digital Public Infrastructure expertise for payment interoperability and scalable digital solutions in health and e-governance.
- Build a green and water-secure partnership in solar, green hydrogen, water recycling, desalination, smart irrigation, and climate-resilient agriculture.
- Use Jordan as a base for regional stabilisation: reconstruction supply chains, humanitarian aid, skilling, health missions, and multilateral development initiatives.
- Amplify cultural links through joint content, film festivals, and archaeological collaborations (e.g., Petra–Ellora twinning).
- Enhance connectivity with incentivised direct flights (Amman–Delhi/Chennai) and a dedicated digital platform for e-commerce, tech startups, and academia.
- Overall trajectory:
- The visit consolidates a 75-year partnership into an ambitious strategic alliance, targeting trade diversification, digital integration, and deeper security cooperation for concrete, future-oriented outcomes.

Facts/General knowledge

- Location and borders:
- Jordan is in the Middle East, bordering Syria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Israel, and the West Bank.
- Physical geography:
- Over 80% desert; includes the fertile Jordan River Valley and rocky highlands.
- Demography:
- Predominantly Arab, with a significant Palestinian refugee population (about one-third); majority Muslim with a Christian minority; highly urbanised (75% in cities).
- Maritime access:
- The port of Aqaba provides access to the Red Sea.
- Modern formation and conflicts:
- Established as Transjordan under British mandate 1920); independence in 1946 under King Abdullah I of the Hashemite dynasty.
- Fought wars against Israel in 1948 and 1967, losing the West Bank and eastern Jerusalem, leading to large Palestinian refugee inflows.
- Renounced claims to the West Bank in 1988 and signed the Wadi Araba Treaty (1994) with Israel, underpinning peace and stability.

India–Ethiopia Relations

Introduction

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi's three-nation visit to Jordan, Ethiopia and Oman aimed to consolidate India's strategic footprint in the Middle East and the Horn of Africa.
- During the Ethiopia leg, India–Ethiopia ties were elevated to a Strategic Partnership, opening a new phase of cooperation in trade, investment, energy and multilateral forums.

Why in news?

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi was conferred Ethiopia's highest civilian honour — The Great Honor Nishan of Ethiopia.
- Eight MoUs and agreements were concluded, including:
- Establishing a Data Centre at Ethiopia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- Debt restructuring for Ethiopia under the G20 Common Framework.
- Institutional mechanisms were reinforced, notably Foreign Office Consultations and the Joint Trade Committee.
- Indian companies have invested over USD 5 billion in Ethiopia, particularly in manufacturing and pharmaceuticals, creating more than 75,000 local jobs.
- Ethiopia's solidarity following the Pahalgam terror attack and its support for the global fight against terrorism were acknowledged.
- The Prime Minister addressed a Joint Session of the Ethiopian Parliament, advancing parliamentary and

people-to-people engagement.
- Both sides emphasised education, capacity building and cooperation through the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA), Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), Global Biofuel Alliance (GBA) and International Solar Alliance (ISA).

Background

- Early links trace to the Axumite Empire (1st century AD), with Indian traders exchanging silk and spices for gold and ivory via Adulis.
- In the 16th century, Indians from Goa supported the Ethiopian king alongside the Portuguese.
- Indian soldiers later formed part of British forces that ended Italy's occupation of Ethiopia (1936–41).
- Diplomatic relations were established in 1950 and have since expanded into a broad partnership.
- Economic ties:
- India is the 2nd largest trading partner for Ethiopia.
- In FY 2024–25, bilateral trade reached USD 550.19 million (Indian exports USD 476.81 million; imports USD 73.38 million).
- Ethiopia benefits from India's Duty-Free Tariff Preference (DFTP) scheme for least developed countries.
- Education and human capital linkages:
- ICCR scholarships and the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme.
- India as a major destination for African students.
- Ethiopia was a pilot country for the Pan-African e-Network, enabling tele-education and tele-medicine with institutions such as IIT Delhi.
- Indian community:
- Presence dates to the late 19th century, with early settlers from Gujarat.
- About 2,500 people today contributing to education and industry.

Significance

- Ethiopia serves as a strategic partner and gateway to Africa due to its central location in the Horn of Africa.
- As a BRICS member and host of the African Union and UNECA, Ethiopia amplifies India's Global South engagement at the UN, G20 and BRICS.
- Economic prospects include a large market, a growing manufacturing base and strong demand for Indian exports.
- Energy and sustainability priorities align through Ethiopia's hydropower and renewable energy potential.
- Opportunities enabled by the upgraded partnership:
- Expansion into defence, digital governance and development financing.
- Manufacturing and industrial cooperation, leveraging industrial parks and a young workforce aligned with Indian strengths in textiles, pharmaceuticals and MSMEs.
- Collaboration on clean energy, grid development and climate-resilient infrastructure.
- Multilateral coordination at the AU, UN, G20 and BRICS to advance Global South priorities.
- Key challenges:
- Logistics constraints stemming from Ethiopia's landlocked geography and reliance on transit routes.
- Political and security instability, including regional tensions in the Horn of Africa, affecting long-term stability and investor confidence.
- Regulatory gaps amid economic transition, such as procedural delays, unclear privatisation rules, restricted private sector access and regulatory instability.

Facts/General knowledge

- Ethiopia is a landlocked country in the Horn of Africa with Addis Ababa as its capital.
- It is bordered by Eritrea (north), Djibouti (northeast), Somalia (east), Kenya (south), South Sudan (west) and Sudan (northwest).
- Key physical features include the Ethiopian Highlands (highest peak Mount Ras Dejen), the Great Rift Valley, major rivers such as the Blue Nile (Abay), Tekeze and Baro, and the Danakil Depression.
- The Hayli Gubbi volcano is located in Ethiopia's Afar Region.

India's BRICS Presidency 2026: Logo and Website Launch

Introduction

- India has commenced preparations for its BRICS Presidency in 2026.
- The approach is people-centric and inclusive amid global uncertainty.
- The intent is to deepen co-operation among emerging economies and advance shared development goals.

Why in news?

- India launched the official logo and website for BRICS Presidency 2026.
- The announcement by S. Jaishankar marked the formal start of preparations to assume the chairship.

Background

- India will hold the BRICS presidency in 2026, coinciding with the grouping's 20th anniversary.
- BRICS has evolved into a major platform for co-operation among emerging markets and developing economies.
- India's approach emphasises dialogue and practical co-

operation, adapting to changing global realities and an expanding membership.

Significance

- Chairship theme: "Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability," capturing an inclusive, balanced response to shared challenges.
- Guiding philosophy: inspired by Narendra Modi, based on a humanity-first outlook prioritising development for all, capacity strengthening, innovation and long-term sustainability.
- Logo: symbolises unity in diversity; blends tradition with modernity; petals carry the colours of all BRICS members to convey equality, shared purpose and mutual respect; depicts strength from collective contributions alongside distinct identities; underlines inclusive development and co-operation.
- Website: serves as the central digital platform for meetings, initiatives and outcomes; enables transparent, timely dissemination of official updates and documents; improves coordination, communication and public engagement throughout India's presidency.

Facts/General knowledge

- The world is facing complex, interconnected challenges: geopolitical tensions, economic uncertainty, climate risks, rapid technological change and persistent development gaps.
- BRICS remains an important forum for dialogue and co-operation in this context.
- It enables countries at different stages of development to work together while respecting national priorities.
- India's presidency aims to strengthen BRICS as a platform for practical solutions to shared global problems.

Oman's First Polymer One-Rial Banknote

Introduction

- Oman has launched its first polymer one-rial banknote, marking a historic shift from traditional paper-based currency.
- Issued by the Central Bank of Oman, it will enter circulation on 11 January 2026.
- The release represents a major step towards modernising the national currency system.

Why in news?

- The move introduces polymer material into Omani currency for the first time in any denomination.
- It reflects alignment with global best practices in banknote technology and design.

Background

- Omani banknotes were previously printed on cotton-based paper.
- With this release, Oman joins a growing list of countries adopting polymer banknotes known for longer lifespan, resistance to wear and tear, and enhanced security features.
- The shift underscores the Sultanate's transition from paper to polymer substrates.
- Subtopic: Significance
- Improved durability reduces replacement costs, delivering long-term efficiency.
- Enhanced security counters counterfeiting through advanced features.
- Currency modernisation strengthens public confidence and operational resilience.
- Design elements showcase national identity, culture, and economic progress, balancing tradition with development.

Facts/General knowledge

- Dimensions: 145 mm by 76 mm.
- Front: Oman Botanic Garden, symbolising environmental conservation and natural heritage.
- Reverse: Sayyid Tariq bin Taimur Cultural Complex, alongside Duqm Port and Refinery, reflecting cultural depth and economic transformation.
- Security features include:
- A large transparent window inspired by the arched windows of the Oman Botanic Garden.
- Colour-shifting foil featuring the frankincense tree.
- Iridescent, colour-changing ink for the Central Bank's logo.

India's Reconstruction Aid to Sri Lanka after Cyclone Ditwah

Introduction

- After Cyclone Ditwah, India is acting as a first responder and trusted partner to Sri Lanka in the Indian Ocean region.

Why in news?

- India announced a USD 450 million reconstruction package to support Sri Lanka's recovery after Cyclone Ditwah.

Background

- Sri Lanka was showing tentative fiscal stability under International Monetary Fund (IMF) support when the cyclone struck.
- The IMF-led programme, imposed after Sri Lanka's 2022 debt default, introduced austerity measures such as tax hikes, subsidy cuts, and high interest rates, which disproportionately hurt the poor.
- Earlier, under Operation Sagar Bandhu, India delivered

humanitarian aid, relief supplies, and medical assistance, including an Indian Army field hospital near Kandy that treated over 8,000 people, reaffirming India's strong support.
- The IMF recently approved about USD 206 million in emergency financial assistance under its Rapid Financing Instrument (RFI).
- The World Bank estimates USD 4.1 billion in losses (~4% of Sri Lanka's GDP) from direct physical damage, with recovery seen as more challenging than the 2004 tsunami.

Significance

- The reconstruction package builds on India's USD 4 billion assistance in 2022 (lines of credit, currency swaps, petroleum support) to Sri Lanka.
- India has consistently acted as a first responder, extending support during the MV XPress Pearl ship-fire disaster in 2021 and Cyclone Roanu in 2016.
- This strengthens Neighbourhood First and SAGAR approaches, enhancing India's regional leadership amid climate shocks.
- Subtopic: Facts/General knowledge
- Rapid Financing Instrument (RFI): provides prompt financial assistance to any IMF member country facing an urgent balance of payments need.

US Operation Hawkeye Strike in Syria

Introduction

- The United States launched Operation Hawkeye Strike in Syria.
- The operation targeted Islamic State infrastructure and weapons sites.

Why in news?

- Initiated as a direct response to the attack on US forces in Palmyra, Syria.

Background

- Islamic State (IS), also known as ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria), is a Sunni extremist terrorist organisation.
- It emerged from al-Qaeda in Iraq and self-declared a pan-Islamic Caliphate.
- Its historic base of operations lies in northern Iraq and Syria.
- IS has committed widespread crimes against humanity, including genocide, mass executions, sexual slavery, and terrorism.

Significance

- Demonstrates a strong counter-terror response by the United States.
- Seeks to disrupt IS operational capacity inside Syria.

Facts/General knowledge

- In India, the Islamic State and all its manifestations are banned under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967.
- Syria lies in West Asia, bordered by Turkey (north), Iraq (east), Jordan (south), and Israel and Lebanon (west), with a Mediterranean Sea coastline.
- Key geographic features include the Syrian Desert, the Euphrates River valley, and the Anti-Lebanon Mountains; Mount Hermon is the highest point.
- Conflict-affected areas include Aleppo, Homs, Idlib, and the Golan Heights, which remains disputed with Israel.

20th Session of UNESCO ICH Committee, New Delhi 2025

Introduction

- Intangible cultural heritage includes the practices, knowledge, expressions, objects, and spaces that communities see as part of their cultural identity.
- Passed down over generations, this heritage evolves, strengthening cultural identity and appreciation of diversity.

Why in news?

- India is hosting the 20th session of the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2025 at the Red Fort complex, New Delhi.
- This will be the first time that India hosts the ICH Committee session.
- The Ministry of Culture and Sangeet Natak Akademi (SNA) are the nodal agencies for hosting the session.

Background

- For the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage, UNESCO adopted the 2003 Convention during its 32nd General Conference in Paris.
- India ratified the Convention in 2005.

Significance

- Preserves cultural identity and continuity by anchoring communities to their roots and strengthening belonging across generations.
- Promotes social cohesion and harmony through shared cultural practices that create collective memory and mutual respect.
- Supports livelihoods by sustaining rural economies, promoting cultural tourism, and creating employment opportunities.
- Preserves traditional knowledge systems, including indigenous ecological knowledge, healing practices, agricultural wisdom, and craftsmanship, offering sustainable solutions relevant for contemporary challenges such as climate change and biodiversity loss.

- Enables intergenerational learning by carrying values, ethics, local histories, and skills that enrich curricula, build cultural literacy, and strengthen intergenerational bonding.
- Boosts cultural diplomacy and soft power, as yoga, classical arts, festivals, and traditional crafts enhance India's global cultural presence, build goodwill, and strengthen international relationships.

Facts/General knowledge

- The Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage advances the objectives of the 2003 Convention and ensures their effective implementation across Member States.
- It prepares and submits to the General Assembly the draft plan for the use of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund.
- It examines periodic reports submitted by States Parties and compiles summaries for the General Assembly.
- It evaluates requests from States Parties and makes decisions regarding inscription of elements on UNESCO's ICH Lists (as per Articles 16, 17 and 18).
- To date, 15 Indian elements have been inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List.
- India has served on the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for three terms.
- Schemes and initiatives

Deepavali inscribed on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage List (2025)

Introduction

- Deepavali, the Festival of Lights, has been inscribed on UNESCO's List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity during the 20th Intergovernmental Committee session held at New Delhi's Red Fort.
- It is the 16th Indian cultural element on the list.
- The inscription recognises Deepavali as a living tradition continuously recreated by communities, fostering social cohesion and contributing to cultural continuity and development.

Why in news?

- Deepavali has been added to UNESCO's Representative List in 2025, alongside 19 other global traditions.
- India nominated the 'Deepavali' Festival for the 2024–25 cycle.

Background

- UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage List recognises living traditions and skills, distinct from monuments or archaeological sites.
- It includes oral traditions, performing arts, festivals, social practices, traditional craftsmanship, and knowledge of nature.
- Such practices are transmitted across generations, strengthen cultural identity, and preserve humanity's shared heritage.
- Inscription criteria require elements to be inclusive, representative, and rooted in the community, reflecting shared identity and social habits.
- States submit a nomination dossier for evaluation, and each country can nominate one element every two years.
- As globalisation and conflict threaten cultural diversity, UNESCO emphasises safeguarding; in 2022, elements marked for urgent safeguarding included Vietnam's Chăm pottery-making, Chile's Santa Cruz de Cuca pottery, Albania's Xhubleta garment craft, and Türkiye's traditional Ahlat stonework.

Significance

- The recognition enhances Deepavali's global stature and visibility.
- It strengthens efforts to preserve its living traditions and sustain the artisans and communities who keep them vibrant.
- It supports India's cultural diplomacy, including among the diaspora.
- It boosts tourism and fosters cultural exchange.
- Safeguarding measures, best practices, and funding support are promoted through the Intergovernmental Committee guiding the 2003 Convention.

Facts/General knowledge

- Indian elements on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list (apart from Deepavali added in 2025) include:
- Festivals & Rituals: Durga Puja in Kolkata (2021), Kumbh Mela (2017), Nowruz (2016), Ramman festival of Garhwal (2009).
- Performing Arts & Theatre: Sankirtana of Manipur (2013); Chhau dance, Kalbelia dance of Rajasthan, Mudiyettu of Kerala (2010); Kutiyattam Sanskrit theatre and Ramlila (2008).
- Oral & Spiritual Traditions: Buddhist chanting of Ladakh (2012); Vedic chanting (2008).
- Traditional Craftsmanship: Brass and copper utensil-making of the Thatheras of Jandiala Guru, Punjab (2014).
- UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List 2025: key additions:
- Performing Arts & Music: Amateur theatre of Czechia; Cuarteto music of Argentina; Cuban Son; Joropo of Venezuela; Mvet Oyeng musical art of Central Africa.
- Festivals & Rituals: Deepavali (India); Gifaataa New Year festival (Ethiopia); Festivity of the Virgen of Guadalupe (Bolivia); Christmas Bram and Sambai (Belize).
- Crafts & Traditional Skills: Brussels' rod marionettes;

Behzad's miniature art (Afghanistan); Bisht weaving and practices across West Asia; Tangail saree weaving (Bangladesh); zaffa wedding tradition in parts of the Arab world.

- Culinary Heritage: Commandaria wine (Cyprus); Koshary dish traditions (Egypt).
- Community Practices: Guruna pastoral retreats (Chad–Cameroon); family circus tradition (Chile); Confraternity of flowers and palms (El Salvador); bagpipe craftsmanship in Bulgaria.
- Meeting and submits

World Summit on Disaster Management (WSDM) 2025 – Uttarakhand Weather Radar Expansion

Introduction

- The World Summit on Disaster Management (WSDM) 2025 serves as a global platform bringing together scientists, policymakers, practitioners, and industry leaders.
- It bridges research, policy, and field-level applications in disaster management.

Why in news?

- At the WSDM in Dehradun (28–30 November 2025), Union Science & Technology Minister Dr Jitendra Singh announced the strengthening of Uttarakhand's real-time weather forecasting capacity.
- Three new radars will be installed at Haridwar, Pantnagar, and Auli, complementing existing installations at Surkanda Devi, Mukteshwar, and Lansdowne.

Background

- The summit aims to strengthen international cooperation and promote multi-stakeholder engagement.
- It focuses on developing innovative and scalable solutions to address global disaster risks and build resilient communities.
- Deliberations include knowledge-sharing, resilient community-building, cross-border collaboration, disaster risk reduction, and climate change adaptation.
- It provides a forum for thought leaders and community representatives to share insights.

Significance

- Expanding the radar network enhances Uttarakhand's real-time weather forecasting capability by complementing current installations.
- The summit advances resilient community-building through shared insights and collaboration.
- Its objectives align with global climate action efforts and international commitments toward safer, sustainable development.

Facts/General knowledge

- Full name: World Summit on Disaster Management (WSDM) 2025.
- Overarching theme: "Strengthening International Cooperation for Building Resilient Communities."
- Organising bodies: Government of Uttarakhand; Uttarakhand Council for Science & Technology (UCOST); Himalayan Academy of Science & Technology (HAST).

World Urbanisation Prospects 2025

Introduction

- Provides population estimates and projections using the Degree of Urbanisation.
- Prepared by the Population Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA).

Why in news?

- Recently released by UN DESA as the World Urbanisation Prospects 2025 report.

Background

- The number of megacities increased from 8 in 1975 to 33 in 2025, with 19 located in Asia.
- Countries where rural areas are the most common settlement type declined from 116 in 1975 to 62 today, and are projected to reduce further to 44 by 2050.

Significance

- Shows how populations are distributed across cities, towns and rural areas worldwide.
- Records the expansion of megacities, with a concentration in Asia.
- Underscores the predominance of small and medium urban centres globally.
- Indicates a continuing reduction in countries dominated by rural settlements.
- Highlights India's importance in town populations, shrinking cities, and future growth of city dwellers alongside specified countries.

Facts/General knowledge

- In 2025, cities house 45 per cent of the world's population, towns 36 per cent and rural areas 19 per cent.
- Jakarta (Indonesia) is the most populous city, followed by Dhaka (Bangladesh), Tokyo (Japan) and New Delhi (India).
- Around 96 per cent of the world's 12,000 cities have fewer than one million inhabitants, and 81 per cent have fewer than 2.5 lakh people.
- India has 44 per cent of its population living in towns.
- India and China together account for over 1.2 billion town dwellers, more than 40 per cent of the world's total town

population.
- Over one-third of shrinking cities are in China and 17 per cent in India.
- India is among seven countries—along with Nigeria, Pakistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Bangladesh and Ethiopia—that will contribute over half of the projected 986 million increase in global city dwellers by 2050.

India Tourism Data Compendium 2025 – Key Highlights

Introduction

- The 66th edition of the India Tourism Data Compendium 2025, published by the Ministry of Tourism.
- Reports a strong post-pandemic recovery in 2024.

Why in news?

- International visitor arrivals registered an 8.89% increase from 2023.
- Foreign exchange earnings reached USD 35.02 billion.
- Domestic tourism surged to 2,948 million visits.

Background

- International arrivals totalled 20.57 million, comprising 9.95 million Foreign Tourist Arrivals and 10.62 million Non-Resident Indians.
- Top source markets: USA, Bangladesh, UK, Australia, and Canada.
- Leading destinations for foreign tourists: Maharashtra (3.71 million), West Bengal (3.12 million), and Uttar Pradesh/Gujarat (2.27 million).
- Top states for domestic tourists: Uttar Pradesh (647 million) and Tamil Nadu (307 million).

Significance

- Tourism contributed 5.22% to India's GDP.
- The sector supported 84.6 million jobs.
- The average stay of foreign tourists was 18.12 days.

Facts/General knowledge

- Outbound travel: 3.27 million Indians travelled abroad in 2025; top destinations were the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Thailand.
- Global ranking: India ranked 39th in the World Economic Forum's Travel and Tourism Development Index 2024.

EARTH Summit 2025 and Sahakar Sarathi

Introduction

- The EARTH Summit series aims to build a national policy framework for rural development by integrating learnings from its editions.
- It places strong emphasis on reviving Gandhian Gram Swaraj, ensuring villages remain central to India's development strategy.

Why in news?

- The Union Home & Cooperation Minister inaugurated EARTH Summit 2025 in Gandhinagar.
- Over 13 digital services were launched under Sahakar Sarathi, including Digi Kisan Credit Card (KCC), a Cooperative Governance Index, and the World's Largest Grain Storage Application.

Background

- The EARTH Summit's three editions were first held in Hyderabad, then in Gandhinagar, and later in Delhi.
- The summit is jointly organised by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) and the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI).
- It reaffirmed that strengthening cooperatives is essential for accelerating growth in agriculture, dairy, animal husbandry, and fisheries, driving inclusive development.

Significance

- Sahakar Sarathi is a Ministry of Cooperation digital initiative developed by NABARD to modernise and strengthen India's cooperative banking and rural financial ecosystem.
- It aims to unite district, central, state, agricultural, and urban cooperative banks on a single technology platform, reducing costs and improving efficiency for smaller cooperatives.
- It helps rural banks access modern banking technology without the burden of building their own infrastructure.
- It ensures farmers with e-KCC receive digital facilities comparable to international credit cards.

Facts/General knowledge

- Location: Gandhinagar hosted EARTH Summit 2025.
- Organisers: NABARD and IAMAI.
- Core rural sectors highlighted: agriculture, dairy, animal husbandry, and fisheries.
- Key services launched under Sahakar Sarathi: Digi Kisan Credit Card (KCC), Cooperative Governance Index, World's Largest Grain Storage Application.
- Miscellaneous

Rashtriya Vigyan Puraskar – Second Edition

Introduction

- India's highest national science awards, honouring excellence, innovation, and high-impact contributions in science and technology.
- Instituted by the Ministry of Science and Technology and modelled on the Padma Awards.
- Covers 13 key scientific domains, including Space

Science, Atomic Energy, Engineering, and Medicine.
- Subtopic: Why in news?
- The President of India presented the 2nd edition of the Rashtriya Vigyan Puraskar, honouring 24 scientists across diverse scientific disciplines.
- The Vigyan Ratna was awarded posthumously to Prof. Jayant Vishnu Narlikar, a renowned Indian astrophysicist.

Background

- The Rashtriya Vigyan Puraskar is conferred under four categories:
- Vigyan Ratna (VR): Highest science award of India, given for lifetime achievements and exceptional contributions.
- Vigyan Shri (VS): Awarded for distinguished and sustained contributions in a specific field.
- Vigyan Yuva–Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar (VY–SSB): For scientists below 45 years, recognising young scientific talent.
- Vigyan Team (VT): Conferred for exceptional collaborative research and teamwork.

Significance

- Strengthens India's scientific ecosystem by promoting innovation and excellence.
- Recognises collaborative research, reflecting modern scientific practices.
- Subtopic: Facts/General knowledge
- Vigyan Ratna (VR):
- Prof. Jayant Vishnu Narlikar (posthumous), globally known for co-developing the Hoyle–Narlikar Theory of Gravity, an alternative to Einstein's General Theory of Relativity that supports the Steady State Model of the Universe, offering a non–Big Bang cosmological perspective.
- Vigyan Shri (VS) – Distinguished Contributions:
- Gyanendra Pratap Singh – Agricultural Science
- Yusuf Mohammad Shaikh – Atomic Energy
- K. Thangaraj – Biological Sciences
- Pradeep Thalappil – Chemistry
- Aniruddha Bhalchandra Pandit – Engineering Sciences
- S. Venkata Mohan – Environmental Science
- Mahan Mj – Mathematics and Computer Science
- Jayan N. – Space Science and Technology
- Vigyan Yuva–Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar (VY–SSB) – Young Scientist Award:
- Jagadis Gupta Kapuganti – Agricultural Science
- Satendra Kumar Mangrauthia – Agricultural Science
- Debarka Sengupta – Biological Sciences
- Deepa Agashe – Biological Sciences
- Dibyendu Das – Chemistry
- Waliur Rahaman – Earth Science
- Arkaprava Basu – Engineering Sciences
- Sabyasachi Mukherjee – Mathematics and Computer Science
- Shweta Prem Agrawal – Mathematics and Computer Science
- Suresh Kumar – Medicine
- Amit Kumar Agrawal – Physics
- Surhud Shrikant More – Physics
- Ankur Garg – Space Science and Technology
- Mohanasankar Sivaprakasam – Technology and Innovation
- Vigyan Team (VT):
- CSIR Aroma Mission – Agricultural Science
- Schemes and initiatives

Census of India 2027 – Cabinet Approval and Key Features

Introduction

- Census 2027 is a nationwide exercise to generate comprehensive data for administrative, social, and economic planning.

Why in news?

- The Union Cabinet approved conducting the 2027 Census of India on 12 December 2025, with an allocation of ₹11,718.24 crore.
- The Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs decided on 30 April to include a caste census in the upcoming exercise.
- Unlike in 2019, the government statement does not mention a separate budgetary allocation for updating the National Population Register (NPR).

Background

- Legal framework: Census Act, 1948, and Census Rules, 1990.
- The 2021 Census could not be conducted due to COVID-19.
- NPR context: First collected in 2010 and updated in 2015; it holds a database of 1.19 billion residents.
- Data privacy: The Census Act, 1948, prohibits sharing census data, while NPR data can be shared with state governments and government agencies.
- Subtopic: Significance
- Positioned as the world's largest administrative and statistical exercise.
- Inclusion of caste-based data aims to reflect the country's vast social and demographic diversity and address associated challenges through informed policymaking.
- Digital adoption, including real-time management and self-enumeration, is expected to make the exercise more

inclusive, transparent, and policy-oriented, improving the effectiveness of governance and development plans.
- Census-as-a-Service (CAAS) will deliver clean, machine-readable data with improved visualisation tools, enabling quick availability of information needed for policymaking.

Facts/General knowledge

- Census year: 2027; this will be the 16th Census of India and the 8th after Independence.
- Approved cost: ₹11,718.24 crore.
- Phased programme:
- First phase (April–September 2026): Houselisting and Housing Census conducted over 30 days as per the convenience of States/UTs.
- Second phase (February 2027): Population Enumeration (PE), with caste-based data to be collected electronically during PE.
- Non-synchronous areas: Snow-affected areas of Ladakh, Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttarakhand to be covered in September 2026.
- Digital methodology:
- Data collection via Android and iOS mobile applications.
- Census Management and Monitoring System (CMMS) for real-time management and monitoring.
- Houselisting Block (HLB) Creator web map application for officers-in-charge.
- Self-enumeration option for the public.
- Data products and dissemination:
- Launch of Census-as-a-Service (CAAS) to provide clean, machine-readable, and usable data to various ministries.
- Enhanced visualisation tools to ensure quick availability of information for policymaking.
- Employment and capacity:
- Approximately 3 million field staff (including enumerators and supervisors) to be deployed for data collection, monitoring, and supervision.
- Around 18,600 technical staff to be hired locally for 550 days, generating approximately 10.2 million man-days of employment.
- Enumerators are government officials, most of whom are school teachers, performing these duties in addition to their regular work and receiving a reasonable honorarium.

PESA Mahotsav 2025

Introduction

- The two-day PESA Mahotsav 2025 was observed at Visakhapatnam on 23–24 December 2025.
- It commemorates the enactment of the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (PESA).

Why in news?

- Participation from tribal communities across all ten PESA States.
- Showcasing of tribal sports, crafts, food, art, dance and traditions.
- Sports events included Kabaddi, Archery, the PESA Run and tribal demonstration games.
- The PESA Mahotsav Baton was ceremonially handed over to Chhattisgarh, the next host State.
- Jharkhand approved its draft PESA Rules, becoming the ninth of the ten PESA States to move towards formal notification.

Background

- PESA empowers tribal communities in Fifth Schedule Areas by placing the Gram Sabha at the centre of governance.

Significance

- Created a national platform for indigenous heritage through large-scale cultural showcasing.
- Encouraged youth participation and leadership via diverse sports events.
- Subtopic: Facts/General knowledge
- PESA Day is celebrated annually on 24 December.
- The ten PESA States are: Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan and Telangana.
- State current

Bihar's Centres of Excellence under Saat Nischay-3

Introduction

- Bihar government will develop selected colleges and institutions as Centres of Excellence under the 'Saat Nischay-3' programme.
- The plan aims to improve academic standards and create subject-specific expert centres across the state.
- The initiative will upgrade institutions with better academic infrastructure and specialised departments.
- Subtopic: Why in news?
- 54 colleges and institutions across Bihar have been shortlisted to be developed as Centres of Excellence under 'Saat Nischay-3'.
- Subtopic: Background
- The programme has been launched by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar.
- According to the Bihar Higher Education Department, the initiative will help students access quality education within the state and reduce migration to other states.
- As part of the education initiative, selected institutions will receive improvements in academic infrastructure and

specialised departments.

Significance

- Better access to quality education within Bihar.
- Reduction of student migration to other states.
- Upgrading reputed institutions to become centres of excellence in specific disciplines, as stated by Higher Education Director N.K. Agrawal.
- Strengthening faculty expertise and subject specialisation, alongside improved research facilities.

Facts/General knowledge

- Total institutions selected: 54 across Bihar.
- Each selected college will become an expert centre for a specific subject.
- First phase (2026–27) key institutions:
- Patna University
- Patna Women's College
- Patna Science College
- Patna College
- Magadh Mahila College
- College of Arts and Crafts, Patna
- Universities included:
- Pataliputra University
- Magadh University
- Lalit Narayan Mithila University
- Veer Kunwar Singh University
- Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar Bihar University
- Tilka Manjhi Bhagalpur University
- Locations covered include districts such as Gaya, Darbhanga, Muzaffarpur, Bhagalpur, Purnea and West Champaran.

Goa Liberation Day

Introduction

- Goa Liberation Day is observed on 19 December each year.
- It commemorates Goa's liberation from Portuguese rule in 1961.

Why in news?

- The 64th anniversary of Goa Liberation Day is being marked.

Background

- The Indian government waited 14 years after independence to move troops to Goa due to the sensitivity of the issue and to avoid risking a war with Portugal.
- In 1961, the Indian government launched Operation Vijay and annexed Daman and Diu and Goa with the Indian mainland.
- As a result, Goa, Daman, and Diu became Union Territories of India.
- Goa remained a Union Territory until 1987, when it was granted statehood as the 25th state of India.

Significance

- Marks the end of Portuguese rule in Goa and the region's integration with India.
- Highlights the transition of Goa from a Union Territory to full statehood within the Indian Union.
- Subtopic: Facts/General knowledge
- Statehood Day of Goa is celebrated on 30 May.
- Wildlife Sanctuaries and National Parks of Goa:
- Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary
- Netravali Wildlife Sanctuary
- Cotigao Wildlife Sanctuary
- Bhagwan Mahaveer Sanctuary
- Mollem National Park

Haryana's Deen Dayal Lado Lakshmi Yojana – Quarterly Disbursement Update

Introduction

- The Lado Lakshmi Yojana is a Haryana government welfare scheme providing direct financial assistance to women from economically weaker sections.
- It aims to bolster social security and financial stability for women through a digital, direct benefit transfer approach.
- Married and unmarried women aged 23 to 60 years are covered; those above 60 shift to the Old Age Samman Allowance Scheme.

Why in news?

- The Government of Haryana has shifted disbursements from monthly to quarterly, effective December 2025.
- Beneficiaries will receive ₹6,300 every three months instead of ₹2,100 monthly.
- Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini announced this while releasing the scheme's second instalment.
- The change is intended to streamline welfare distribution, enhance planning flexibility for recipients, and reduce administrative load, without altering the overall assistance amount.

Background

- Launched on 25 September 2025, aligning with the birth anniversary of Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay, reflecting the Antyodaya principle of uplifting the last person.
- The original benefit provided ₹2,100 per month via Direct Benefit Transfer to eligible women aged 23–60.
- The first payment under the scheme was made on 1 November 2025.

Significance

- Strengthens women's economic empowerment in Haryana.

- Supports consistent financial security for beneficiaries.
- Optimises administrative processes while preserving the scheme's core welfare objectives.
- Subtopic: Facts/General knowledge
- Eligibility:
- Age: 23–60 years
- Annual income: Up to ₹1 lakh
- Residency: Permanent resident of Haryana for 15+ years
- Status: Both married and unmarried women eligible
- Exclusions: Recipients of other pensions and duplicate applications are disqualified
- Application and verification:
- Online registration via the official mobile app
- Aadhaar-based e-KYC and a mandatory live photo upload
- SMS notifications on verification status
- Benefits credited within 24–48 hours after approval
- Compliance:
- Over 25,000 ineligible applications were rejected during initial verification, including non-residents and document misuse
- Performance (as of 30 November 2025):
- Beneficiaries: Over 7 lakh women
- Total disbursed: Approximately ₹148 crore
- Pending KYC: 1.43 lakh women (benefits to follow post-completion)
- Daily new registrations: 3,000–4,000

Project Mahadeva — Maharashtra's U- 13 Football Development Programme

Introduction

- A statewide football development programme unveiled by the Maharashtra government under the leadership of the state's Chief Minister.
- A comprehensive, inclusive talent hunt for young aspirants across every corner of the state.
- Provides a holistic environment blending sport, education, and well- being.

Why in news?

- As part of the launch, the selected youngsters will train with Lionel Messi at the "GOAT Football Clinic" in Mumbai.
- This international- level exposure is presented as a potential turning point, infusing ambition, discipline, and a global outlook, and raising the bar for grassroots sport.

Background

- Talent identification follows multiple rounds: district- level trials, regional rounds, and a final state- level selection camp.
- Scholars are chosen through this elaborate, inclusive, multi- phase process.
- Scholarships are structured to run over several years, integrating training with schooling and comprehensive support.

Significance

- Moves beyond one- time camps to a sustained, structured pathway for young footballers.
- Mirrors youth academy standards with systematic training and regular competitive matches.
- Aims to foster ambition, discipline, and a global perspective in emerging players.
- Subtopic: Facts/General knowledge
- Programme: Project Mahadeva — Maharashtra's youth football talent hunt and development scheme.
- Age group: Under- 13 (boys and girls).
- Selection pathway: district → regional → state- level.
- Selected cohort: 60 athletes (30 boys and 30 girls).
- Scholarship duration: five years.
- Support provided: professional coaching under qualified trainers; continued academic education; proper equipment; nutrition; fitness and mental conditioning; training infrastructure; exposure to regular competitive matches and systematic training.

Hornbill Festival and Nagaland

Introduction

- Nagaland is known as the land of festivals, and the Hornbill Festival is referred to as the festival of festivals.
- Initiated in 2000, the Hornbill Festival is Nagaland's premier cultural event, showcasing the heritage of its 17 Naga tribes.
- Named after the hornbill bird, a symbol of fidelity, beauty, and grace in Naga folklore.

Why in news?

- The Prime Minister of India has congratulated the people of Nagaland on the completion of 25 years of the Hornbill Festival.

Background

- The festival is held annually from 1 December to 10 December.
- It coincides with Nagaland Statehood Day on 1 December.

Significance

- Serves as a platform for Naga tribes to display their rich traditions through performances, dances, and exhibitions.
- Warriors in full ceremonial attire perform traditional dances and war cries that narrate stories of victories, harvests, love, and tribal legends.
- Attire features hornbill feathers, boar tusks, and colourful woven sashes, creating a striking display of Naga heritage and pride.

- It is the state's largest tourist event, attracting over 1.5 lakh visitors in 2023, including international tourists.

Facts/General knowledge

- Hornbill (bird):
- The Great Indian Hornbill (Buceros bicornis), also known as the Concave-Casqued Hornbill, is a large bird found in the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia.
- It primarily inhabits evergreen and moist deciduous forests and thrives in the canopy of tall trees in the Western Ghats, north-eastern states, and the Himalayas.
- It is the state bird of Arunachal Pradesh and Kerala.
- India hosts nine hornbill species, with the north-east having the highest diversity.
- Nagaland:
- Statehood: Nagaland became the 16th state of India on 1 December 1963.
- Borders: Assam (west and north-west), Myanmar (east), Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur (south).
- State symbols: Blyth's tragopan (State Bird) and Mithun (State Animal of Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh).
- The mithun (Bos frontalis), a bovine species native to North-East India, is recognised by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) as a 'food animal', enabling its commercial farming and meat processing.
- GI products: Naga tree tomato, Naga cucumber, and Naga Mircha (chilli).
- Protected areas: Intanki National Park, Fakim Wildlife Sanctuary, Singphan Wildlife Sanctuary, and Pulie Badze Wildlife Sanctuary.
- Tribes and culture: Home to 17 major tribes and numerous sub-tribes, each with distinct customs, languages, and attire.

Rajasthan's 100% Digitisation of Voter Rolls under SIR

Introduction

- Rajasthan has become the first state in India to complete 100% digitisation of its electoral rolls under the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) programme.
- Announced by Chief Electoral Officer Navin Mahajan on 6 December 2025.
- Represents a major step towards greater electoral transparency, efficiency, and voter convenience through digital governance.

Why in news?

- Achieved full digitisation of voter rolls with 97% voter mapping, the highest in India.
- Only 3% of voters will need to submit documents during the claims and objections phase.
- An average of 30 voters per booth will require verification.
- Accurate mapping aligns each voter with the correct polling booth and ward, streamlining processes.
- Performance exceeds the national average and sets a benchmark for other states.

Background

- The SIR initiative by the Election Commission of India is a periodic exercise to update, correct, and enhance the accuracy of voter lists.
- Activities include voter identity verification, address mapping, deletion of duplicate or outdated entries, addition of new voters, and correction of errors in voter details.
- Digitisation ensures entries are electronically maintained, mapped, and verified, improving accuracy and reducing manual intervention.
- Implementation in Rajasthan was enabled by Booth Level Officers, panchayat-level staff, assistant officers, and supervisors, with teamwork central to the outcome.

Significance

- Verification is simpler due to automated systems reducing paperwork.
- Processes are more transparent through real-time updates and error checks.
- Efficiency improves with fewer repeated submissions or corrections.
- Accessibility increases as voters can verify data easily online.
- Expected to cut down electoral fraud, boost voter participation, and ensure inclusive, accurate representation in future elections.

Facts/General knowledge

- Draft Electoral Roll publication: 16 December 2025.
- Claims and Objections window: 16 December 2025 to 15 January 2026.
- Hearings and verification: 16 December 2025 to 7 February 2026.
- Final Electoral Roll release: 14 February 2026.

India's First Forest University, Gorakhpur

Introduction

- The Uttar Pradesh government has announced the establishment of India's first dedicated forest university in Gorakhpur to promote forestry, wildlife and environmental education and research.
- Subtopic: Why in news?
- The state government has approved the Detailed Project Report for the university.
- The project entails an estimated expenditure of ₹500

crore.

Background

- Location: To be developed on about 125 acres in Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh, near the Jatayu Conservation and Breeding Centre.
- Academic focus: Specialised degree and diploma courses in forestry, agroforestry, social forestry, horticulture, wildlife studies, ecology and environmental sciences.
- Curriculum and training: Integration of classroom instruction with field-based practical research, providing hands-on exposure to forests and conservation sites.
- Infrastructure plan: Separate student hostels, classrooms, laboratories, an administrative block, an auditorium and residential facilities for faculty.
- Subtopic: Significance
- Once operational, it will function as a national centre for forest education, conservation research and training.
- The institution is expected to enhance India's environmental protection and sustainability capacity.

Facts/General knowledge

- Uttar Pradesh recorded the second-highest increase in green cover (forest plus tree cover) in India in the ISFR 2023, adding 559.19 sq km.
- The state's total green cover reached 9.96% of its geographical area.

Shyok Tunnel – Eastern Ladakh

Introduction

- The Shyok Tunnel is a strategically crucial infrastructure project in eastern Ladakh.

Why in news?

- India's Defence Minister inaugurated 125 Border Roads Organisation (BRO) infrastructure projects, including the Shyok Tunnel.

Background

- The Darbuk–Shyok–Daulat Beg Oldie (DS-DBO) Road provides the only surface link to Daulat Beg Oldie (DBO), India's northernmost military outpost.
- DBO is critical for surveillance and for securing paths to the Siachen Glacier.

Significance

- Provides all-weather connectivity to forward areas by bypassing a stretch prone to heavy snowfall, avalanches, and landslides.
- Drastically reduces winter disruptions, ensuring a stable supply chain for troops deployed in the eastern Ladakh sector.
- Its importance has surged following the 2020 Galwan Valley clashes and the subsequent military standoff with China.
- Subtopic: Facts/General knowledge
- Cut-and-cover tunnel.
- Length: 920 metres.
- Altitude: over 12,000 feet.
- Located in eastern Ladakh, near the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China.

Indian Army's First Ascent of Mount Kangto

Introduction

- An expedition team from the Eastern Command of the Indian Army successfully scaled Mount Kangto, marking a historic milestone for India and the mountaineering fraternity.
- The achievement showcases national excellence in both mountaineering and military capability in a remote Himalayan setting.

Why in news?

- The peak has been scaled for the first time on record by the Indian Army.
- The team was flagged off on 3 November from a forward base and reached the summit after weeks of sustained effort.

Background

- The expedition comprised 18 members operating under the Gajraj Corps.
- The summit was reached via a highly technical southern route through the challenging Kameng Himalayas.
- Climbers faced sub-zero temperatures, steep ice walls, deep crevasses and extremely low oxygen levels.

Significance

- Establishes a landmark achievement in Indian mountaineering and military performance.
- Enhances operational familiarity with extreme terrain in the eastern border belt.
- Strengthens India's presence in one of its most inaccessible regions, aligned with the cultural and ecological importance of the Eastern Himalayas.

Facts/General knowledge

- Elevation: 7,042 metres.
- Highest peak in Arunachal Pradesh.
- Revered as a geographical and environmental sentinel for the state.
- Part of the remote Eastern Himalayan chain near the India–China border; its slopes mark the upper reaches of the Kameng region.
- The mountain had remained unclimbed for decades despite multiple attempts.

- The team was formally honoured at a flag-in ceremony by Lt General R. C. Tiwari, Army Commander, Eastern Command.
- New appointments

Appointment of R Doraiswamy as LIC MD and CEO

Introduction

- R Doraiswamy has been appointed Managing Director (MD) and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC).
- LIC is India's largest insurance company and plays a key role in the financial sector.

Why in news?

- The appointment is effective from 15 July 2025 and will continue until 28 August 2028, when he reaches the retirement age of 62.

Background

- The Financial Services Institutions Bureau (FSIB) recommended his name on 11 June 2025.
- The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC), led by the Prime Minister, approved the appointment.
- He replaces Sat Pal Bhanoo, who served as interim MD and CEO from 8 June to 7 September 2025, following the end of Siddhartha Mohanty's term on 7 June.
- LIC, a listed company under the Ministry of Finance, has one CEO and MD supported by four Managing Directors.

Significance

- The appointment of a new full-time CEO is expected to bring more stability and direction to the organisation's long-term goals.
- As one of the largest financial institutions in India, leadership at LIC has broader implications for the financial sector.

Facts/General knowledge

- R Doraiswamy has over 38 years of experience at LIC across operations, marketing, technology, pensions, and insurance education.
- He has served as Executive Director (IT/Software Development), Regional Manager (Marketing and Pensions), and Senior Divisional Manager in Chennai, Kottayam, and Pune.
- He has worked with the National Insurance Academy in Pune on research projects in micro insurance, product development, and insurance education.
- He holds a Mathematics degree from Madurai Kamaraj University and is a Fellow of the Insurance Institute of India.

Extension of Arun Kumar Singh as ONGC Chairman

Introduction

- Arun Kumar Singh has received a one-year extension as chairman of Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC).
- He will remain in office until 6 December 2026.

Why in news?

- The one-year extension is a rare decision for the head of a major public sector enterprise.
- It was approved by the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet.

Background

- Singh was appointed in 2022 just before turning 60.
- He became one of the oldest executives to head a major public sector enterprise.

Significance

- The extension signals the government's intent to retain continuity in leadership as ONGC witnesses a turnaround in crude oil and gas production.

Facts/General knowledge

- The extension takes him to age 64.
- The order provides for his re-employment until a regular chairman is selected or further instructions are issued.
- ONGC stands for Oil and Natural Gas Corporation.

Re-appointment of Ashwini Kumar Tewari as SBI Managing Director

Introduction

- The Central Government has re-appointed Ashwini Kumar Tewari as Managing Director of the State Bank of India (SBI), the country's largest public sector lender.
- The decision extends his leadership as SBI operates in a dynamic economic environment.

Why in news?

- A notification by the Department of Financial Services under the Ministry of Finance confirms his re-appointment.
- The move ensures continuity at the top management level.

Background

- Tewari's re-appointment takes effect from the date he assumes charge.
- His existing term was set to end on 27 January 2026.

Significance

- Ensures continuity as SBI navigates balance sheet consolidation, digital expansion, and credit growth.
- Reflects the government's confidence in his leadership and administrative experience.
- Subtopic: Facts/General knowledge
- His tenure will now continue beyond 27 January 2026, up to his superannuation on 31 December 2027, or until

further orders, whichever is earlier.
- SBI is the country's largest public sector lender.

PNB appoints Harmanpreet Kaur as first-ever female brand ambassador

Introduction

- Punjab National Bank appointed Harmanpreet Kaur, captain of the Indian women's cricket team, as its first female brand ambassador.
- The partnership underscores the bank's focus on women empowerment, brand modernisation, and customer engagement.

Why in news?

- The announcement was made at PNB's corporate office in New Delhi during a ceremony themed "Banking On Champions."
- Harmanpreet Kaur was presented with a framed PNB jersey bearing her name and number, marking her induction into the bank's identity.
- Subtopic: Background
- Harmanpreet Kaur shared that she has banked with PNB since the age of 18, opening her first account at the PNB Moga branch.
- She described the moment as "surreal" and expressed enthusiasm about inspiring future champions in collaboration with PNB.

Significance

- The association signals institutional commitment to empowering women and youth while strengthening PNB's contemporary brand image.
- Senior leadership and government representation at the event highlighted the strategic importance of the partnership.
- Launches unveiled at the ceremony reinforce PNB's push towards innovation, digital-first solutions, and premium customer experiences.
- Onboarding to the IIBX portal enables participation in online gold bullion trading, expanding service offerings.
- Harmanpreet becoming the first customer of the Luxura Metal Credit Card adds credibility and visibility to the product.

Facts/General knowledge

- New offerings unveiled:
- PNB RuPay Metal Credit Card Luxura (first-ever metal credit card for elite customers)
- PNB One 2.0 (upgraded digital banking platform)
- Digi Surya Ghar (service supporting solar-based solutions)
- PNB's onboarding on the IIBX portal (enabling gold bullion online trading)
- Leadership present:
- Ashok Chandra, MD & CEO
- Executive Directors: M. Paramasivam, Bibhu Prasad Mahapatra, D. Surendran, Amit Kumar Srivastava
- Chief Vigilance Officer: Raghavendra Kumar
- Financial Services Secretary: M. Nagaraju
- Event details:
- Venue: PNB corporate office, New Delhi
- Theme: "Banking On Champions"
- Symbolic gesture: Framed PNB jersey with Harmanpreet's name and number
- Harmanpreet Kaur's emphasis:
- PNB's legacy in supporting financial aspirations
- Commitment to empowering women and youth
- Excitement to collaborate in inspiring future champions
- Important Days

World AIDS Day 2025 and India's National AIDS Control Programme (NACP)

Introduction

- World AIDS Day and India's National AIDS Control Programme (NACP) focus on preventing, controlling, and managing HIV/AIDS.
- NACP is implemented by the National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO) under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

Why in news?

- The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare organised the World AIDS Day 2025 observance under the theme "Overcoming disruption, transforming the AIDS response".
- The observance highlighted national progress on AIDS control.

Background

- In 1998, WHO marked the first World AIDS Day on 1st December to recognise the crucial role of civil society in driving a global response to HIV/AIDS.
- NACP was launched in 1992 as India's initiative for the prevention, control, and management of HIV/AIDS.

Significance

- The 2025 theme underscores strengthening and transforming the AIDS response despite disruptions.
- India's phased NACP approach accelerates reversal of the epidemic and integrates care, aligning with the goal to end AIDS as a public health threat by 2030.

Facts/General knowledge

- HIV/AIDS basics:
- HIV is a virus that attacks the immune system, primarily damaging CD4 cells (white blood cells), weakening the body and increasing vulnerability to infections and

cancers.

- Transmission occurs via direct contact with infected bodily fluids (blood, semen, breast milk, vaginal fluids) through unprotected sex, shared needles, or unsterilised tattooing; it is not spread through casual contact.
- Early symptoms include fever and rash; later stages may involve swollen lymph nodes, weight loss, and diarrhoea. Severe HIV can lead to opportunistic illnesses such as tuberculosis, meningitis, and cancers like lymphoma.
- There is no cure; lifelong daily Antiretroviral Therapy (ART) effectively controls the virus.
- Global response: UN Sustainable Development Goal 3.3 aims to end the HIV epidemic as a public health threat by 2030.
- NACP evolution:
- NACP I (1992–1999): Launched India's first comprehensive programme to slow the spread of HIV.
- NACP II (1999–2006): Focused on reducing transmission and strengthening national capacity.
- NACP III (2007–2012): Aimed to halt and reverse the epidemic by scaling up prevention and integrating services; established District AIDS Prevention and Control Units (DAPCUs).
- NACP IV (2012–2017 & extended to 2021): Accelerated reversal and integrated care; aimed for a 50% reduction in new infections compared to a 2007 baseline. Key initiatives included:
- The HIV/AIDS (Prevention and Control) Act, 2017, prohibiting discrimination.
- Mission Sampark to re-engage People Living with HIV (PLHIV) lost to follow-up.
- 'Test and Treat' policy and universal viral load monitoring.
- NACP V (2021–2026): A Central Sector Scheme with an outlay of over Rs 15,000 crore, aligning with SDG 3.3 to end AIDS as a public health threat by 2030.
- Definition:
- AIDS stands for Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome, the advanced, final stage of infection caused by the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV).

Navy Day 2025 Operational Demonstration

Introduction

- A large-scale Operational Demonstration will be held at Shangumugham Beach, Thiruvananthapuram, on 3rd–4th December 2025.
- The President of India and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces will attend as the Chief Guest.
- The event will be hosted by Admiral Dinesh Kumar Tripathi, Chief of the Naval Staff.

Why in news?

- Continues the Indian Navy's initiative to organise Navy Day events beyond major naval bases, following earlier editions in Puri and Sindhudurg.
- Features the Operational Demonstration 2025 as the centrepiece of the celebrations.

Background

- In Operation Trident during the 1971 India–Pakistan War, Indian Navy missile boats struck Pakistani ships, oil facilities and shore defences at Karachi.
- Multiple Pakistani vessels carrying vital war supplies were destroyed, weakening Pakistan's operational capability.
- Fighter aircraft from INS Vikrant attacked enemy harbours and airfields at Chittagong and Khulna, contributing to the defeat of Pakistani forces in East Pakistan.

Significance

- Showcases India's maritime strength through coordinated actions by warships, naval aircraft and submarines.
- Reinforces the Navy's theme of being "Combat Ready, Cohesive and Self-Reliant," demonstrating commitment to protecting India's maritime interests.
- Highlights indigenously built naval platforms, aligning with the national vision of Self-Reliant India and the Make in India initiative.
- Subtopic: Facts/General knowledge
- Navy Day is celebrated on 4th December to honour India's decisive naval victory during Operation Trident.

International Cheetah Day and Project Cheetah in India

Introduction

- International Cheetah Day is observed on 4 December to highlight global efforts to prevent the species' extinction and strengthen conservation.
- The Day was designated by American zoologist Dr Laurie Marker, founder of the Cheetah Conservation Fund, in memory of a cheetah named Khayam that she raised.
- India launched Project Cheetah in 2022 to reintroduce cheetahs after more than 70 years of extinction in the country.

Why in news?

- The Prime Minister of India marked International Cheetah Day by noting India's progress under Project Cheetah.

Background

- Project Cheetah operates under Project Tiger and follows the Cheetah Action Plan.
- It is the world's first intercontinental translocation of a large wild carnivore.

- Implementation is led by the National Tiger Conservation Authority with the Madhya Pradesh Forest Department and the Wildlife Institute of India, overseen by the Cheetah Project Steering Committee set up in 2023.
- Under the project, 8 cheetahs from Namibia and 12 from South Africa were relocated to Kuno National Park.

Significance

- Establishes breeding populations of cheetahs in suitable habitats.
- Uses cheetahs as a flagship species to restore open forests and savannas.
- Promotes eco-development and ecotourism through community awareness.
- Demonstrates a landmark conservation effort through intercontinental translocation.
- Subtopic: Facts/General knowledge
- As of December 2025, India is home to 32 cheetahs, including 21 born in the country.
- Kuno National Park is the site for the translocated cheetahs under Project Cheetah.

World Soil Day 2025 — Healthy Soils for Healthy Cities

Introduction

- World Soil Day is observed on 5th December, established by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations to highlight soil as a life- sustaining resource.
- The 2025 theme is Healthy Soils for Healthy Cities.

Why in news?

- The 2025 World Soil Day calls for restoring soil through composting, green infrastructure, responsible soil management, and promoting urban agriculture to build healthier, more resilient cities.

Background

- The idea of an international day for soil was first proposed by the International Union of Soil Sciences in 2002.
- FAO promoted its formal recognition, leading to the FAO Conference endorsing World Soil Day in 2013.
- The UN General Assembly officially designated 5th December 2014 as the first World Soil Day.

Significance

- Healthy urban soils are vital for tackling heat islands, pollution, flooding, and food insecurity.
- They act as natural filters, carbon sinks, and water sponges that enhance climate resilience and support biodiversity.

Facts/General knowledge

- Nearly a third of the world's soils are degraded; urban soils are heavily degraded due to contamination, compaction, and sealing by concrete.
- India's soil conservation initiatives:
- Soil Health Card Scheme for nutrient- based soil management.
- Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana and Watershed Programmes to reduce erosion and improve moisture retention.
- MGNREGA land works supporting soil restoration and water conservation.
- Smart Cities Mission promoting green infrastructure, open spaces, sustainable landscaping, anuy2d soil- friendly urban design.
- Important Days
- Date Event
- December 1, 2025 World Aids Day
- December 2, 2025 National Pollution Control Day
- International Day for the Abolition of Slavery
- December 3, 2025 International Day of Persons with Disabilities
- December 4, 2025 International Day of Banks
- International Day Against Unilateral Coercive Measures
- December 5, 2025 World Soil Day
- International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development
- December 6, 2025 Mahaparinirvan Diwas
- National Microwave Oven Day
- December 7, 2025 Armed Forces Flag Day
- International Civil Aviation Day
- December 8, 2025 Bodhi Day
- December 9, 2025 International Anti-Corruption Day
- International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and of the Prevention of this Crime
- December 10, 2025 Human Rights Day
- December 11, 2025 International Mountain Day
- UNICEF Day
- December 12, 2025 International Day of Neutrality
- International Universal Health Coverage Day
- December 13, 2025 National Horse Day
- December 14, 2025 National Energy Conservation Day
- December 16, 2025 Vijay Diwas
- December 18, 2025 Minorities Rights Day in India
- International Migrants Day
- Arabic Language Day
- December 19, 2025 Goa Liberation Day
- December 20, 2025 International Human Solidarity Day
- December 21, 2025 World Saree Day

- Winter Solstice
- World Basketball Day
- World Meditation Day
- December 22, 2025 National Mathematics Day
- December 23, 2025 Kisan Diwas
- December 24, 2025 National Consumer Rights Day
- December 25, 2025 Christmas
- Good Governance Day
- December 26, 2025 Veer Bal Diwas
- Boxing Day
- December 27, 2025 International Day of Epidemic Preparedness
- December 31, 2025 New Year's Eve
-