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Economics
Union Budget 2026–27

Introduction

- A Yuva Shaktidriven Budget anchored in the vision of Viksit Bharat and guided by Action over Ambivalence, Reform over Rhetoric, and People over Populism
- Seeks to accelerate economic growth, build people's capacities, and ensure inclusive development through targeted policy measures and strategic investments

Why in news?

- Presented in Parliament by the Union Minister of Finance and Corporate Affairs
- First Union Budget prepared in the newly inaugurated Kartavya Bhawan

Background

- Three Kartavyas (duties) guiding the Budget:
- Sustain Economic Growth: Enhance productivity, competitiveness, and resilience to global volatility
- Fulfil Aspirations: Build capacity of youth and citizens as partners in national prosperity
- Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas: Ensure lastmile access to resources and opportunities for all families, communities, regions, and sectors

Significance

- First Kartavya: Accelerate & Sustain Economic Growth
- Manufacturing & Industry (Strategic Sectors)
- Biopharma SHAKTI: Rs 10,000 crore over five years to develop a global biopharma manufacturing centre; focus on biologics and biosimilars; 3 new NIPERs; upgradation of 7 institutes; CDSCO strengthened to global standards
- India Semiconductor Mission 2.0: Advances technological sovereignty; focus on equipment and materials manufacturing, resilient supply chains, industryled R&D, and training centres to create a skilled workforce
- Electronics Components Manufacturing: Scheme outlay raised from Rs 22,919 crore to Rs 40,000 crore to deepen domestic value chains
- Rare Earth Corridors & Chemical Parks: Corridors in Odisha, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu for REPM; three clusterbased, plugandplay Chemical Parks to reduce import dependence
- Capital Goods & Container Manufacturing: HiTech Tool Rooms by CPSEs; Construction and Infrastructure Equipment (CIE) Scheme; Rs 10,000 crore Container Manufacturing Scheme
- Textile Sector Push: Integrated Textile Programme (National Fibre Scheme, Samarth 2.0, TexEco Initiative, cluster modernisation) and Mega Textile Parks for technical textiles and value addition
- Gram Swaraj & Sports Goods: Mahatma Gandhi Gram Swaraj for khadi, handloom, and handicrafts; sports goods manufacturing initiative to make India a global hub for affordable, highquality equipment
- Rejuvenating Legacy Industrial Sectors: Scheme to revive 200 legacy industrial clusters through infrastructure and technology upgradation
- Champion MSMEs: Rs 10,000 crore SME Growth Fund to build globally competitive "Champion MSMEs"; SelfReliant India Fund gets an additional Rs 2,000 crore; 'Corporate Mitras' to mentor and integrate micro enterprises into value chains
- Infrastructure as "Growth Connectors"
- HighSpeed Rail: Seven corridors—MumbaiPune, PuneHyderabad, HyderabadBengaluru, HyderabadChennai, ChennaiBengaluru, DelhiVaranasi, VaranasiSiliguri
- Sustainable Movement of Cargo: New Dedicated Freight Corridors (Dankuni to Surat); operationalisation of 20 National Waterways in five years; Coastal Cargo Promotion Scheme to raise waterways and coastal shipping share from 6% to 12% by 2047
- Seaplane VGF Scheme: Supports indigenised seaplane manufacturing and operations to improve lastmile connectivity and tourism
- Infrastructure Risk Guarantee Fund: Provides prudently calibrated partial credit guarantees during development and construction phases
- City Economic Regions (CER): Mapping cities by growth drivers; Rs 5,000 crore per CER over five years via challenge mode
- Carbon Capture (CCUS): Scheme to decarbonise hardtoabate sectors such as Steel and Cement
- Second Kartavya: Fulfil Aspirations & Build Capacity
- AVGC Content Creator Labs: Support for Indian Institute of Creative Technologies, Mumbai, to set up labs in 15,000 secondary schools and 500 colleges
- National Institute of Hospitality: Upgradation of the National Council for Hotel Management and Catering Technology
- Khelo India Mission: Integrated talent development, coach capacity building, sports science, competitive leagues, and expanded infrastructure
- Medical Value Tourism: Five Regional Medical Hubs with private sector partnerships; integrated AYUSH, diagnostics, postcare, and rehabilitation
- Women in STEM: One girls' hostel in every district via VGF or capital support
- Third Kartavya: Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas
- BharatVISTAAR: Multilingual AI tool integrating AgriStack and ICAR data for customised farmer advisory
- SHE Marts: Communityowned retail outlets within cluster federations, building on Lakhpati Didis
- Mental Health Infrastructure: Establishment of "NIMHANS2"; institutes in Ranchi and Tezpur to be upgraded as "Regional Apex Institutions"
- Purvodaya & NorthEast: Scheme for "Buddhist Circuits" in Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Assam, Manipur, Mizoram, and Tripura; East Coast Industrial Corridor with a connected node at Durgapur (West Bengal); five tourism destinations across five Purvodaya States
- Divyangjan Support: Targeted empowerment through schemes

like “Divyang Sahara Yojana” (welfare focus)
- Tax Reforms
- New Income Tax Act, 2025: Replaces the 1961 Act, effective 1 April 2026
- Tax Rates: No change to slabs for FY 2026–27
- TCS Rationalisation: Uniform 2% on overseas tour packages and remittances for education/medical purposes under LRS, without threshold
- TDS Rationalisation: 1% for Individuals/HUF and 2% for others on manpower services; nonproduction of books and failure to pay TDS (when paid in kind) decriminalised
- Customs Duty Rationalisation: Tariff on personaluse imports cut from 20% to 10%; full exemptions on 17 cancer drugs and medicines/foods for 7 rare diseases
- Securities Transaction Tax: Marginal increase from 0.1% to 0.15% in certain segments
- Minimum Alternate Tax: Exemption for all nonresidents paying tax on a presumptive basis
- Tax Administration: Joint Committee (MCA and CBDT) to incorporate ICDS into IndAS; separate ICDSbased accounting ends from tax year 2027–28; rationalised accountant definition under Safe Harbour Rules
- Immunity from Prosecution: Nondisclosure of foreign assets under Rs 20 lakh granted immunity with retrospective effect from 1 October 2024
- Buyback Tax Shift: Taxed as Capital Gains in the hands of shareholders, shifting burden from company to recipient
- Strategic Incentives for Investment & Industry
- Data Centers Tax Holiday: For foreign companies providing global cloud services via Indian data centres until 2047
- IFSC (GIFT City): Tax holiday for Offshore Banking Units extended from 10 to 20 years
- Critical Minerals: Customs duty exemptions for capital goods used in processing critical minerals and manufacturing Lithiumion cells
- IT Sector Safe Harbour: Threshold raised to Rs 2,000 crore with unified category for software development and KPO services
- Customs Modernisation & Export Promotion
- Sectoral Relief: Higher dutyfree import limits for inputs in Marine, Leather, and Textile sectors
- Aviation & Defence: Duty exemptions on parts/components for aircraft manufacture and MRO
- Ease of Doing Business: Single digital window for cargo clearance; instant customs clearance for noncompliant goods; rollout of Customs Integrated System (CIS); expanded AIbased container scanning; EEZ or High Seas fish catch made dutyfree; revised dutyfree baggage allowances; dispute settlement with reduced penalty for honest taxpayers
- Macroeconomic Fundamentals
- Fiscal Deficit: 4.3% of GDP in BE 2026–27, improving from 4.4% in RE 2025–26; on track to fall below 4.5%
- DebttoGDP Ratio: 55.6% in BE 2026–27 (from 56.1% in RE 2025–26); aim to reach 50% by 2030–31
- Capital Expenditure: Rs 12.2 lakh crore in FY 2026–27 (approx. 3.1% of GDP), up from Rs 11.2 lakh crore; Effective Capital Expenditure Rs 17.1 lakh crore (approx. 4.4% of GDP) including grantsinaid to states
- GDP Growth: Nominal 10.5% and Real around 7% for FY 2026–27
- Revised Estimates 2025–26: Nondebt receipts Rs 34 lakh crore; total expenditure Rs 49.6 lakh crore; capex about Rs 11 lakh crore
- Budget Estimates 2026–27: Nondebt receipts Rs 36.5 lakh crore; net tax receipts Rs 28.7 lakh crore; total expenditure Rs 53.5 lakh crore; net market borrowings Rs 11.7 lakh crore; gross borrowings Rs 17.2 lakh crore; remainder from small savings and other sources
- Concerns Regarding the Union Budget 2026–27
- Global Headwinds: Nominal GDP assumptions may face risks from global slowdown, geopolitical conflicts, and trade disruptions
- Revenue Buoyancy: Shortfalls in income tax and GST reduce fiscal space, prompting expenditure cuts including capex and social sectors; reliance on supplyside push amid subdued private consumption, especially rural
- Implementation Lag: Advanced schemes (BharatVISTAAR, Biopharma SHAKTI) and infrastructure face capacity, bureaucratic, and land acquisition challenges
- Job Creation Gap: Capexheavy focus on semiconductors and biopharma risks limited labour absorption and skill mismatch
- Green Transition & Resource Constraints: Higher demand for water, energy, and critical minerals raises import dependence and greenflation risks for MSMEs and manufacturing
- Uncertain Capital Flows: Persistent FPI outflows and unclear FDI outlook affect external financing stability and confidence
- External Aid Prioritisation: Grantsinaid prioritise Bhutan; no funds for Chabahar Port raise concerns over regional connectivity and strategic outreach
- Measures to Strengthen the Economy Beyond Budget 2026–27
- Revive Demand: Accelerate SHE Marts and BharatVISTAAR to lift rural incomes and consumption
- Secure Critical Resources: Combine Rare Earth Corridors with overseas mineral security partnerships; raise R&D spending to support semiconductor and biopharma ecosystems
- Skilling for New Sectors: Align AVGC and semiconductor push with aggressive skill development (Skill India 2.0)
- Improve Quality of Expenditure: Shift from outlays to outcomes with audits for tangible asset creation and income generation (e.g., Mahatma Gandhi Gram Swaraj)
- Correct Inverted Duty Structures: Sectorwise duty corrections in textiles and electronics to ensure domestic products are taxcompetitive against imports

Important Government Schemes (Union Budget Based)

Introduction

- A consolidated set of government initiatives across agriculture, rural and urban development, transport, infrastructure, industry, energy, social welfare, and education/innovation.
- Oriented towards productivity, resilience, connectivity, manufacturing capacity, clean energy advancement, social protection, and innovation in schools.

Why in news?

- Identified as Union Budgetbased schemes.
- BHAVYA Scheme (Industrial Parks) carries a recent 2026 push.

Background

- A crosssector approach combining investment, skilling, technology, and infrastructure to strengthen growth hubs and reduce underemployment.
- Emphasises agricultural diversification, urban redevelopment with essential services, regional air connectivity, maritime capacity, manufacturing under "Make in India", clean energy innovation, social security for gig workers, and innovation in education.
- Includes targeted funding lines and measurable expansions to catalyse implementation.

Significance

- Enhances agricultural productivity and diversification with irrigation, storage, and credit support in lowperforming districts.
- Reduces import dependence through increased domestic pulse production.
- Strengthens rural livelihoods by boosting the rural economy and addressing underemployment with investment, skilling, and technology.
- Scales urban growth by funding redevelopment and water/sanitation, positioning cities as growth hubs.
- Widens regional accessibility via expanded air connectivity, supporting small airports and helipads.
- Builds maritime strength through a dedicated fund for ports, shipping, and the broader sector.
- Accelerates manufacturing under "Make in India", aiding MSMEs and large industries, with plugandplay industrial parks and a focused toy manufacturing push.
- Advances clean energy through Small Modular Reactors and related innovation.
- Improves social protection by extending identity and welfare inclusion to gig workers.
- Fosters an innovation mindset in schools by expanding Atal Tinkering Labs.

Facts/General knowledge

- PM DhanDhaanya Krishi Yojana (Agriculture): Targets 100 lowperforming districts; focuses on crop diversification, irrigation, storage, and credit support for 1.7 crore farmers.
- Rural Prosperity & Resilience Programme (Rural Development): Aims to boost the rural economy through investment, skilling, and technology; reduces underemployment among the rural population.
- Aatmanirbharta in Pulses Programme (Agriculture): Promotes domestic pulse production to reduce imports.
- Urban Challenge Fund (Urban Development): 1 lakh crore fund for "Cities as Growth Hubs", redevelopment, and water/sanitation projects.
- Modified UDAN Scheme (Transport/Aviation): Expands regional air connectivity to 120 destinations; supports small airports and helipads.
- Maritime Development Fund (Infrastructure): ₹25,000 crore fund to boost ports, shipping, and the maritime sector.
- National Manufacturing Mission (Industry): Strengthens "Make in India"; supports MSMEs and large industries.
- Toy Manufacturing Scheme (Industry): Aims to make India a global hub for toy production ("Made in India").
- Nuclear Energy Mission (Energy industry): Develops Small Modular Reactors; promotes clean energy innovation.
- Gig Workers Social Security (eShram) (Social Welfare): Provides identity cards and inclusion in welfare schemes such as health insurance.
- Atal Tinkering Labs Expansion (Education/Innovation): Expands to 50,000 labs to promote innovation and scientific thinking in schools.
- BHAVYA Scheme (Industrial Parks) (Industry): 33,660 crore plan for plugandplay industrial parks to boost manufacturing and jobs.

16th Finance Commission and Centre–State Fiscal Relations

Introduction

- India's fiscal federal structure rests on Article 270 (distribution of net tax proceeds) and Article 280 (constitution of a Finance Commission every five years to recommend this distribution).
- The divisible pool excludes cess and surcharge levied by the Centre, a distinction central to debates on fiscal equity and States' resource adequacy.

Why in news?

- The 16th Finance Commission has issued recommendations on Centre–State tax devolution, retained the States' share at 41%, introduced a new criterion on States' contribution to GDP for horizontal devolution, and set out broader fiscal guidance.

Background

- Vertical devolution (States' aggregate share of the divisible pool):
- Till the 13th Finance Commission (2010–15): 32%, alongside conditional transfers under Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS).
- 14th Finance Commission (2015–20): Raised to 42% with rationalisation of tied CSS transfers.
- 15th Finance Commission (2020–26): Reduced to 41% after the reorganisation of Jammu and Kashmir into two Union Territories, marking a structural shift toward greater untied fiscal autonomy for States.

- Horizontal devolution (distribution among individual States):
- Since the 13th Finance Commission, criteria have emphasised equity (income distance), population and area (needsbased), and efficiency (forest cover, demographic performance, tax effort), fuelling debates between advanced and lessdeveloped States.
- States' demands before the 16th Finance Commission:
- Vertical: 18 States sought 50%; others asked for 45–48%; many sought inclusion of cess and surcharge in the divisible pool and a cap on their imposition.
- Horizontal: Retain dominance of equity parameters, reduce the weight of income distance, and include States' contribution to GDP (demanded by industrialised States such as Maharashtra, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Telangana).

Significance

- Vertical devolution unchanged at 41%:
- The Commission cited substantial existing transfers to States (including CSS routing) and the Union's higher resource needs for defence and infrastructure.
- Calibrated shift in horizontal devolution:
- A new efficiencyoriented criterion (States' contribution to GDP) recognises growth contributions while ensuring changes remain gradual to preserve redistributive balance.
- Sustained focus on fiscal sustainability and cooperative federalism:
- Progressive reduction in reliance on cess and surcharge by the Centre.
- More efficient, targeted subsidies by States.
- Active pursuit of power sector reforms.
- Tighter control of fiscal deficits and debt by States.
- Public sector enterprise reforms by both tiers.

Facts/General knowledge

- Taxes shared between the Centre and States: Corporation Tax, Personal Income Tax, Central Goods and Services Tax (CGST), and the Centre's share of Integrated GST (IGST).
- Cess and surcharge are excluded from the divisible pool; after their exclusion, the divisible pool forms about 81% of the Centre's gross tax revenue for 2025–26.
- Definitions:
  Vertical devolution: Share of States in the divisible pool of central taxes.
- Horizontal devolution: Allocation of the States' aggregate share among individual States.
- 16th Finance Commission decisions:
- Rejected capping or including cess and surcharge in the divisible pool as neither permissible nor desirable under the current constitutional scheme.
- Introduced "States' contribution to GDP" as a horizontal criterion with a weight that ensures gradual change.
- Outcome: Marginal increases in shares for southern and western States; marginal decreases for large northern and central States.

UPI Expansion in Sri Lanka

Introduction

- NPCI International Payments Limited (NIPL), the global arm of the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), has expanded the acceptance of India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI) across merchant establishments in Sri Lanka.

Why in news?

- In March 2026, NIPL expanded UPI merchant acceptance in Sri Lanka.

Background

- Enables Indian tourists to make realtime accounttoaccount payments by scanning Lanka Quick Response (QR) codes through their preferred UPIenabled mobile applications (apps).

Significance

- Improves crossborder payment experiences for Indian tourists.
- Further strengthens the longstanding economic and cultural ties between India and Sri Lanka.
- Helps merchants expand reach to a large, digitally savvy customer base.
- Enhances cash management, reduces reliance on physical cash, and improves operational efficiency.

Facts/General knowledge

- UPI processes more than 20 billion monthly financial transactions.
- There are over 700 million UPI QR touch points across India.
- UPI is operational in more than eight countries, including the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Singapore, Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, France, Mauritius, and Qatar.

Rank reports and awards

Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) 2025

Introduction

- Transparency International released the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) 2025 evaluating 182 countries on perceived public sector corruption using a 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean) scale.
- The report presents global trends, underlying drivers, societal impacts, and actionable recommendations on corruption.

Why in news?

- The 2025 edition of the CPI has been published, offering a comprehensive assessment of corruption worldwide and policy guidance for governments and international actors.

Background

- CPI scores reflect perceptions of corruption in the public sector across countries, enabling crosscountry comparison and tracking over time.

Significance

- Demonstrates a global setback in anticorruption progress, with widespread and serious corruption problems.

- Shows democracies perform better than authoritarian regimes, indicating institutional strength is central to controlling corruption.
- Identifies core causes of corruption:
- Weak justice and rule of law due to politicisation, interference, underresourcing, and lack of independence, fostering impunity.
- Undue influence on political decisionmaking through opaque financing, unregulated lobbying, conflicts of interest, and capture by wealthy donors or cronies.
- Shrinking civic space and media freedom driven by restrictive laws, surveillance, censorship, smear campaigns, and violence against journalists.
- Failures in public financial management, including weak oversight in budgeting, procurement, and debt, enabling bribery and patronage.
- Details major consequences:
- Erosion of justice and human rights, denying remedies and deepening cycles of corruption, especially for marginalised groups.
- Democratic decline and state capture, weakening elections, parliaments, and oversight, and entrenching authoritarian tendencies.
- Suppression of civic space and media, reducing transparency and accountability, and deterring investigative journalism.
- Deterioration of public services and rising inequality, with diverted funds harming health, education, infrastructure, and essential services, and triggering social unrest such as GenZled protests that toppled governments in Nepal and Madagascar in 2025.
- Broader societal and economic harms, including instability, reduced investment, heightened climate vulnerability, and, in extreme cases, state fragility and conflict.
- Recommends strengthening independent judiciaries, enhancing political transparency, protecting civic space, and intensifying international cooperation against illicit financial flows.

Facts/General knowledge

- Global average dropped to 42, with 122 of 182 countries scoring below 50.
- High performers have contracted from 12 a decade ago to 5: Denmark, Finland, Singapore, New Zealand, and Norway.
- Top and bottom performers:
- Denmark scored 89 and ranked highest for the 8th consecutive time.
- Somalia and South Sudan scored 9, at the bottom; Venezuela scored 10; other conflictaffected or repressive regimes occupy the lowest tiers.
- India:
  Scored 39 and ranked 91 in 2025, improving from rank 96 in 2024.
- Outperforms most South Asian neighbours but lags behind Bhutan (71, 18) and China (43, 76).
- Tied with the Maldives (39, 91); others ranked lower: Sri Lanka (35, 107), Nepal (34, 109), Pakistan (28, 136), Bangladesh (24, 150), Afghanistan and Myanmar (16, 169).
- Regimetype averages: full democracies 71; flawed democracies 47; authoritarian regimes 32.

Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Index 2025/26

Introduction

- The 2025/26 Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Index presents a sobering picture of women's wellbeing worldwide, with many countries experiencing stagnation or reversal of gains made over three decades.
- It provides critical insight into global gender realities for government exam aspirants and concerned readers.

Why in news?

- The 2025/26 edition reports that 676 million women faced conflict exposure in the past year, a 74% rise since 2010.
- Global progress has stagnated or declined, and even highincome nations show slow or uneven advancement.
- Some conflictaffected countries show improvement, indicating resilience and policy reform despite crisis.

Background

- Developed by the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security and the Peace Research Institute Oslo.
- Assesses 181 countries across three dimensions:
- Inclusion: economic participation and education
- Justice: legal protection and equality
- Security: safety at home and in society
- Scores range between 0 and 1, with 1 representing the highest level of gender wellbeing.

Significance

- Offers critical insight into the status of women globally.
- Highlights stagnation or reversal in progress, even in highincome contexts.
- Underscores resilience and policy reform potential in conflictaffected settings.

Facts/General knowledge

- Top 10 best performing countries and scores:
- Denmark: 0.939 (top for the third consecutive time)
- Iceland: 0.932
- Norway: 0.924
- Sweden: 0.924
- Finland: 0.921
- Luxembourg: 0.918
- Belgium: 0.912
- Netherlands: 0.905
- Austria: 0.898
- Australia: 0.898
- Bottom 10 performing countries and scores:
- Afghanistan (181): 0.279
- Yemen (180): 0.323
- Central African Republic (179): 0.362

- Syria (178): 0.364
- Sudan (177): 0.397
- Haiti (176): 0.399
- DR Congo (175): 0.405
- Burundi (174): 0.407
- South Sudan (173): 0.411
- Myanmar (172): 0.442
- India: 131st

68th Grammy Awards (2026) – Highlights and Winners

Introduction

- The 68th Grammy Awards (2026) celebrated both legendary and emerging artists across genres.
- The ceremony reflected diversity in music styles, global participation and evolving listener tastes.

Why in news?

- Highlights and the full list of winners for the 2026 Grammys were announced, showcasing established superstars alongside new and boundarypushing performers.

Background

- For nearly seven decades, the Grammys have honoured musical excellence.
- Previous icons recognised include Beyoncé, Eminem and Stevie Wonder.

Significance

- The event reinforced the Grammys' role as a mirror of the international music landscape.
- It underscored the breadth of contemporary music through diverse styles and global participation aligned with evolving listener preferences.

Facts/General knowledge

- General/Major Categories:
- Song of the Year: Billie Eilish – Wildflower
- Best New Artist: Olivia Dean
- Producer of the Year: Cirkut
- Songwriter of the Year: Amy Allen
- Pop:
- Best Pop Solo Performance: Lola Young – Messy
- Best Pop Vocal Album: Lady Gaga – Mayhem
- Best Pop Duo/Group Performance: Cynthia Erivo & Ariana Grande – Defying Gravity
- Best DancePop Recording: Lady Gaga – Abracadabra
- Country:
- Best Contemporary Country Album: Jelly Roll – Beautifully Broken
- Best Country Solo Performance: Chris Stapleton – Bad As I Used to Be
- Best Traditional Country Album: Zach Top – Ain't In It for My Health
- Best Country Song: Tyler Childers – Bitin' List
- Rap/HipHop:
- Best Rap Album: Kendrick Lamar – GNX
- Best Rap Performance: Clipse – Chains & Whips (ft. Kendrick Lamar & Pharrell Williams)
- Best Rap Song: Kendrick Lamar ft Lefty Gunplay – TV Off
- Best Melodic Rap Performance: Kendrick Lamar with SZA – Luther
- R&B/Soul:
- Best R&B Album: Leon Thomas – Mutt
- Best R&B Performance: Kehlani – Folded
- Best Traditional R&B Performance: Leon Thomas – Vibes Don't Lie
- Best R&B Song: Kehlani – Folded
- Rock/Metal/Alternative:
- Best Rock Album: Turnstile – Never Enough
- Best Rock Performance: Yungblud – Changes (Live from Villa Park, Back to the Beginning)
- Best Rock Song: Nine Inch Nails – As Alive as You Need Me to Be
- Best Metal Performance: Turnstile – Birds
- Best Alternative Music Album: The Cure – Songs of a Lost World
- Best Alternative Music Performance: The Cure – Alone
- Dance/Electronic:
- Best Dance/Electronic Album: FKA twigs – Eusexua
- Best Dance/Electronic Recording: Tame Impala – End of Summer
- Latin/Global:
- Best Música Urbana Album: Bad Bunny – Debí Tirar Más Fotos
- Best Global Music Performance: Tyla – PUSH 2 START
- Folk/Jazz/Classical:
- Best Folk Album: I'm With Her – Wild and Clear and Blue
- Best Jazz Performance: Chick Corea, Christian McBride & Brian Blade – Windows (live)
- Best Orchestral Performance: Andris Nelsons, conductor (Boston Symphony Orchestra) – Messiaen: TurangalîlaSymphonie
- Visual Media/Soundtracks:
- Best Compilation Soundtrack for Visual Media: Sinners
- Best Song Written for Visual Media: Huntr/x – Golden (from KPop: Demon Hunters)
- Best Music Video: Doechii – Anxiety

BAFTA Film Awards 2026 Highlights

Introduction

- The 79th British Academy Film Awards (BAFTA 2026) recognised achievements in British and international cinema across major, technical, and short film categories.

Why in news?

- Held on 22 February 2026 at London's Royal Festival Hall.

- Hosted by Alan Cumming.

Background

- 79th edition of the British Academy Film Awards (BAFTA 2026).

Significance

- One Battle After Another: six awards — Best Film; Director – Paul Thomas Anderson; Adapted Screenplay – Paul Thomas Anderson; Supporting Actor – Sean Penn; Cinematography – Michael Bauman; Editing – Andy Jurgensen. This included Paul Thomas Anderson's first Best Director BAFTA.
- Sinners: three awards — Original Screenplay – Ryan Coogler; Supporting Actress – Wunmi Mosaku; Original Score – Ludwig Göransson.
- Hamnet: two awards — Outstanding British Film; Leading Actress – Jessie Buckley.
- Robert Aramayo: Leading Actor (I Swear) and EE Rising Star Award.
- Children's & Family Film: Boong (historic win for India).
- Other category winners: Outstanding Debut by a British Writer, Director or Producer – My Father's Shadow; Film Not in the English Language – Sentimental Value; Documentary – Mr. Nobody Against Putin; Animated Film – Zootropolis 2 (Zootopia 2); Casting – I Swear (Lauren Evans); Costume Design – Frankenstein (Kate Hawley); Make Up & Hair – Frankenstein; Production Design – Frankenstein; Sound – F1; Special Visual Effects – Avatar: Fire And Ash; British Short Animation – Two Black Boys In Paradise; British Short Film – This Is Endometriosis; Special Honours – BAFTA Fellowship: Donna Langley; Outstanding British Contribution to Cinema: Clare Binns.

Facts/General knowledge

- The British Academy Film Awards is an annual ceremony honouring excellence in British and international films.
- Presented by the British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA).
- First held on 29 May 1949 in the United Kingdom.
- Officially known as the EE British Academy Film Awards since 2013.
- Broadcast by the BBC since 1956.

Network Readiness Index 2025 – India's Performance

Introduction

- The Network Readiness Index (NRI) 2025 was released by the Portulans Institute, a nonprofit research institute based in Washington, DC.

Why in news?

- India improved its digital readiness by four ranks to 45th position in the NRI 2025.
- India's overall score increased from 53.63 in 2024 to 54.43 in 2025.

Background

- The index maps the networkbased readiness of 127 economies.
- It uses 53 indicators grouped under four pillars: Technology, People, Governance, and Impact.

Significance

- India ranked 1st globally on annual investment in telecommunication services, AI scientific publications, ICT services exports, and ecommerce legislation.
- India secured 2nd rank on FibreToTheHome/building internet subscriptions, mobile broadband internet traffic, and international internet bandwidth.
- India ranked 3rd on indicators related to domestic market scale and income inequality.
- Among lowermiddleincome countries, India is ranked 2nd after Vietnam, performing better than expected in network readiness relative to its income level.

India's 2025 LEEDCertified Green Realty Standing

Introduction

- India has emerged as a global leader in sustainable real estate, ranking second outside the United States in LEEDcertified building space in 2025.
- This reflects a growing commitment to environmentally responsible construction and building operations amid rapid urban and industrial expansion.

Why in news?

- The US Green Building Council (USGBC) announced India's position in the 2025 global LEED rankings.
- The rankings were jointly released by USGBC and Green Business Certification Inc. (GBCI) as part of their annual assessment of regions outside the United States.

Background

- The United States continued to dominate global LEED adoption.
- Outside the US, China topped the list, followed by India in 2025.
- Vietnam entered the global top ten for the first time, highlighting the widening adoption of green building standards across emerging economies.

Significance

- India recorded higher growth in LEED Operations and Maintenance (O+M) certifications than in new construction and interior projects, indicating a strategic shift towards improving the performance of existing buildings.
- The emphasis is on reducing operational costs, improving energy efficiency, and lowering longterm environmental impact rather than only adding new green structures.
- Globally, interest in certifying existing buildings increased significantly, driven by building owners seeking energy savings and resilience against rising operating costs.

Facts/General knowledge

- In 2025, the United States had more than 50 million gross square metres (GSM) of LEEDcertified space.
- Outside the US in 2025: China had 26 million GSM; India had 16 million GSM of LEEDcertified building area.

- More than 7,500 commercial projects were LEEDcertified globally in 2025, covering over 147 million GSM.

NITI Aayog Trade Watch Quarterly: Q2 FY26

Introduction

- The publication provides a detailed assessment of global and domestic trade trends.
- This edition carries a thematic focus on India's electronics trade.

Why in news?

- NITI Aayog launched the sixth edition for Quarter 2 of FY 2025–26 (July–September 2025).
- The report was released in New Delhi by ViceChairman Suman Bery in the presence of Member Arvind Virmani.

Background

- "Trade Watch Quarterly" is a flagship publication of NITI Aayog.

Significance

- Export growth outpaced imports in Q2 FY26, sustaining trade expansion.
- Global trade growth moderated but stayed positive, with services continuing to outperform goods.
- Trade among developing economies has expanded nearly fourfold since 2005, aligning with India's growing integration with the Global South.
- Electronics has emerged as the secondlargest item in India's export basket.

Facts/General knowledge

- India's exports (services + merchandise) grew by approximately 8.5% in Q2 FY26.
- Services continued to outperform goods globally in the period under review.
- India's share in global electronics demand grew at a CAGR of 17.2% during 2015–2024, compared to global growth of 4.4%.
- India's electronics exports increased nearly fivefold between 2016 and 2024, reaching USD 42.1 billion.
- Global electronics trade stands at USD 4.6 trillion.

Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) 2025

Introduction

- Released by Transparency International, the CPI 2025 evaluates perceived public sector corruption across 182 countries.
- Uses a scale from zero (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean) to compare public sector integrity.

Why in news?

- The latest CPI 2025 has been published by Transparency International.
- The report offers a comprehensive assessment of global corruption trends, underlying drivers, societal impacts, and actionable recommendations.

Background

- Transparency International (TI) is a premier global civil society organisation founded in 1993 and headquartered in Berlin, Germany.
- TI's core mission is to promote transparency, accountability, and integrity across government, business, and civil society, envisioning a world free from corruption defined as "the abuse of entrusted power for private gain."
- TI's flagship publication is the annual Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), and it also produces the Global Corruption Barometer.

Significance

- Demonstrates that strong democratic institutions help control corruption, with democracies outperforming authoritarian regimes.
- Highlights systemic causes of corruption:
  Weak justice and rule of law: politicisation of judicial appointments, prosecutorial interference, underresourcing, and lack of independence creating impunity.
- Undue influence on political decisionmaking: opaque financing, unregulated lobbying, conflicts of interest, and influence of wealthy donors or cronies leading to grand corruption and state capture.
- Shrinking civic space and media freedom: restrictive NGO laws, smear campaigns, surveillance, censorship, and violence against journalists silencing watchdogs.
- Failures in public financial management: weak oversight of budgeting, procurement, and debt management enabling diversion of public funds and favouritism.
- Outlines consequences of corruption:
  Erosion of justice and human rights, denying remedies to victims and entrenching impunity.
- Democratic decline and state capture, weakening elections, parliaments, and oversight institutions, reducing public trust, and fuelling polarisation.
- Suppression of civic space and media, fostering selfcensorship and hiding highlevel graft.
- Deterioration of public services and rising inequality, with unofficial payments burdening the poor and triggering social unrest (e.g., GenZled protests that toppled governments in Nepal and Madagascar in 2025).
- Broader societal and economic impacts, including investment deterrence, climate vulnerability, and risks of state fragility and conflict.
- Provides clear recommendations to curb corruption:
- Build independent, transparent justice institutions, shield appointments from political interference, resource systems adequately, and enable remedies for victims, including community representation.
- Tackle undue influence through transparent, capped political financing, lobbying disclosure, and conflictofinterest management.
- Ensure easy access to justice with direct or representative legal

pathways and tailored support for marginalised groups.
- Foster civic space and anticorruption reporting by protecting freedoms of expression, association, and information, safeguarding journalists and whistleblowers, and removing barriers to civil society funding.
- Enhance transparency and oversight in financial management via strong parliamentary scrutiny, independent audits, regulatory oversight, and inclusive participation.
- Prevent, detect, and punish corruption through robust national and international enforcement, asset recovery, tighter controls on crossborder money laundering, and multilateral cooperation.

Facts/General knowledge

- For the first time in more than a decade, the global average CPI has declined to 42/100, with 122 of 182 countries scoring below 50.
- The number of countries scoring above 80 has fallen from 12 a decade ago to 5: Denmark, Finland, Singapore, New Zealand, and Norway.
- Top and bottom performers:
  Denmark ranks highest for the 8th consecutive time (score 89).
- Somalia and South Sudan are at the bottom (score 9), with Venezuela at 10; conflictaffected or repressive regimes dominate the lowest tiers.
- Regime and regional averages:
  Full democracies average 71.
- Flawed democracies average 47.
- Authoritarian regimes average 32.
- India's position:
  Score 39/100, rank 91 in 2025 (improved from rank 96 in 2024).
- Outperforms most South Asian neighbours but lags behind Bhutan (71, 18) and China (43, 76).
- Tied with the Maldives (39, 91); others lower: Sri Lanka (35, 107), Nepal (34, 109), Pakistan (28, 136), Bangladesh (24, 150), Afghanistan and Myanmar (16, 169).
- Since 2012, 829 journalists have been killed globally, many while investigating corruption.

Schemes and initiatives

PM SETU (Pradhan Mantri Skilling and Employability through Upgraded ITIs)

Introduction

- A vocational education and training upgradation scheme to strengthen skill development by upgrading Industrial Training Institutes and improving employability outcomes.
- Designed to align skill training with modern industry needs.

Why in news?

- The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship has constituted a National Steering Committee as the apex body to guide the scheme.
- Anchor Industry Partners have been invited through an Expression of Interest to collaborate in upgrading training institutes.

Background

- Marks a shift from governmentdriven training to industryled skilling, with companies shaping curricula, training methods, and infrastructure.
- Upgradation follows a hubandspoke model in which central institutes mentor nearby institutes by sharing modern equipment, digital resources, and specialised training facilities.
- Governance is through industry–government Special Purpose Vehicles for each upgraded institute.
- The scheme strengthens select National Skill Training Institutes, developing them into global Centres of Excellence.
- SPVs can propose curriculum redesign, improved training delivery models, infrastructure upgrades, and industry exposure for trainees.
- Training focuses on sectors such as advanced manufacturing, electronics, mobility, and logistics.

Significance

- Improves employability outcomes through industryled design and delivery.
- Enhances quality and access via mentoring and shared resources.
- Establishes globally benchmarked training capacity through Centres of Excellence.

Facts/General knowledge

- Full name: Pradhan Mantri Skilling and Employability through Upgraded ITIs (PM SETU).
- Approved by the Union Cabinet in 2025 with a budget of Rs 60,000 crore.
- Hubandspoke specifics: 200 Hub ITIs, each mentoring about four Spoke ITIs.
- National Skill Training Institutes to be strengthened are located in Bhubaneswar, Chennai, Hyderabad, Kanpur, and Ludhiana.
- Each upgraded ITI is managed via an SPV with 51% industry ownership and 49% government ownership.
- Industry partners can receive up to 83% government funding for infrastructure and training improvements.
- The Directorate General of Training has introduced 31 newage courses under the Craftsmen Training Scheme.

Insurance for All by 2047

Introduction

- A longterm national vision to ensure universal access to insurance coverage for every citizen of India by 2047, marking 100 years of independence.
- Seeks comprehensive life, health, and property insurance across all sections of society to strengthen financial security and resilience.
- Recognises insurance as a fundamental pillar of the financial system, complementing banking and capital markets by managing risk, mobilising longterm savings, and protecting households and businesses.

Why in news?

- Articulated and promoted by the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India as part of India's longterm financial sector development strategy, aligning with national goals of inclusive growth, social security, and economic resilience.

Background

- A policydriven objective under which every individual, enterprise, and asset in India would have access to appropriate and affordable insurance solutions.
- Extends beyond policy ownership to ensure adequate, affordable, and timely insurance protection.
- Focus areas:
  Universal life and health insurance coverage
- Protection of property, crops, and livelihoods
- Affordable and needbased insurance products
- Efficient and timely claims settlement
- Integrated into the broader framework of inclusive finance, complementing existing government programmes and encouraging private sector participation and innovation.

Significance

- Aims to achieve nearuniversal insurance penetration and density across India.
- Reduces financial vulnerability of households and expands coverage in rural and informal sectors.
- Enhances trust and awareness about insurance and strengthens its role in risk mitigation.
- Supports longterm savings and investment, positioning insurance as a critical enabler of economic stability.

PM RAHAT Scheme

Introduction

- The Pradhan Mantri Rahat Road Accident Victim Hospitalisation and Assured Treatment (PM Rahat) Scheme is a national cashless treatment scheme for road accident victims to ensure immediate medical care during the Golden Hour.

Why in news?

- The Government launched the scheme in 2026.
- The nodal ministry is the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways.

Background

- Aim: To prevent deaths due to delayed medical treatment after road accidents and ensure financial protection for victims and hospitals.
- Implementation approach: Integration of the Ministry's Electronic Detailed Accident Report (eDAR) platform with the National Health Authority's Transaction Management System (TMS 2.0) for endtoend digital processing.

Significance

- Ensures lifesaving treatment during the Golden Hour.
- Nearly 50% of road accident deaths can be averted if victims are admitted within the first hour.
- Reduces preventable road accident deaths.
- Strengthens India's emergency healthcare and road safety ecosystem.
- Promotes citizencentric governance and financial protection.

Facts/General knowledge

- Components: Emergency response via integration with the 112 helpline for hospital and ambulance coordination; digital accident reporting, police authentication, and claim processing through eDAR and TMS 2.0.
- Funding: Reimbursement through the Motor Vehicle Accident Fund; payments by general insurance companies for insured vehicle cases; government budgetary support for uninsured and hitandrun cases.
- Coverage: All categories of road accident victims within 7 days of the accident, subject to police authentication.
- Benefit: Cashless treatment up to ₹1.5 lakh per victim for 7 days.
- Stabilisation treatment: Up to 24 hours for nonlifethreatening cases; up to 48 hours for lifethreatening cases.
- Claim settlement: Approved claims are paid within 10 days to ensure uninterrupted hospital treatment.
- Grievance redressal: Complaints handled by a Grievance Redressal Officer nominated by the District Road Safety Committee, chaired by the District Collector/District Magistrate/Deputy Commissioner.

PRAHAAR – India's National CounterTerrorism Policy

- Introduction
- PRAHAAR is India's National CounterTerrorism Policy and Strategy establishing a comprehensive framework.
- It organises prevention, response, capacitybuilding, rights safeguards, community engagement, international cooperation, and resilience.

Why in news?

- The Ministry of Home Affairs has unveiled PRAHAAR, described as India's first antiterror policy.

Significance

- Creates coordinated mechanisms for prevention, response, investigation, and prosecution to strengthen deterrence.
- Promotes uniform, modernised antiterror structures and specialised training across states to aggregate capacities.
- Embeds human rights protections with multiple levels of legal redressal within counterterrorism processes.
- Counters radicalisation through graded police responses and engagement with community leaders, NGOs, and moderate preachers.
- Aligns national efforts with international instruments to deny safe havens and restrict terror funding.
- Ensures rapid postincident recovery via a wholeofsociety approach and public–private partnerships.

Facts/General knowledge

- Policy principle: zero tolerance against terrorism.

- Prevention: Proactive, intelligenceguided approach via the Multi Agency Centre (MAC) and the Joint Task Force on Intelligence (JTFI) for realtime sharing.
- Response: Local police as first responders, supported by state and central antiterror forces and the National Security Guard (NSG) under the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- Investigation and prosecution: The National Investigation Agency (NIA) and state agencies ensure rigorous investigations and high prosecution rates.
- Aggregating capacities: Modernisation of law enforcement and standardisation of uniform antiterrorism structures across states; specialised training by the Bureau of Police Research & Development (BPR&D).
- Human rights and rule of law: All antiterrorism laws to protect fundamental human rights with multiple levels of legal redressal from district courts up to the Supreme Court.
- Attenuating conducive conditions: Graded police response for vulnerable youth; engagement with community leaders, NGOs, and moderate preachers against radicalisation.
- International alignment: Strengthened multilateral cooperation through Mutual Legal Assistance Treaties (MLATs) and Extradition Treaties to deny safe havens and restrict terror funding globally.
- Recovery and resilience: Wholeofsociety approach with public–private partnerships for rapid recovery postincident.

Mukhyamantri Gramotthan Yojana (Gujarat)

Introduction

- State scheme to strengthen rural governance and infrastructure.

Why in news?

- Launched by Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel.
- Foundation stones laid at Bhadran village, Anand district.

Background

- Initial development targets 114 villages functioning as taluka headquarters without municipal status.
- Seeks to provide functional Gram Panchayat infrastructure at the village level.

Significance

- Enhances rural governance capacity.
- Improves service delivery.
- Creates infrastructure parity with urban areas and reduces the rural–urban divide.

Facts/General knowledge

- Coverage: 2,666 villages to receive Gram Panchayat buildingscumTalati residences for strengthening local governance.
- Funding: ₹663 crore sanctioned to provide functional panchayat infrastructure at the village level.
- Urbanlike facilities under the scheme: roads, water, sanitation, solar street lights, eGram digital services, and community halls.
- Future expansion: to cover other large Gram Panchayats with population over 10,000 across Gujarat.

Delhi's 'RahVeer' Good Samaritan Scheme

Introduction

- The Delhi government will implement the Centre's 'RahVeer' scheme to encourage citizens to assist seriously injured road accident victims.
- The scheme's aim is to ensure that victims receive timely medical care within the 'golden hour', considered crucial after an accident.

Why in news?

- Delhi has decided to roll out the 'RahVeer' scheme in the national capital.
- Chief Minister Rekha Gupta announced the decision and the rewards for helpers.

Background

- The scheme originates from the Centre and is being adopted by Delhi to boost public participation in emergency response.
- Many people hesitate to help due to fear of police questioning or legal complications; the scheme is designed to address these concerns.

Significance

- Quick public response can reduce road accident deaths in a busy city with heavy traffic.
- Financial rewards and safeguards are intended to motivate more citizens to assist, ensuring prompt treatment for the seriously injured.

Facts/General knowledge

- ₹25,000 cash reward for helping a seriously injured victim reach hospital within the golden hour.
- Maximum reward is ₹25,000 per accident, even if multiple victims are assisted.
- Certificate of appreciation for helpers.
- Ten outstanding RahVeers to receive a national award of ₹1 lakh annually.
- Legal protection for Good Samaritans under the Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act, 2019.

Military and defence

Exercise KHANJAR (India–Kyrgyzstan Joint Special Forces)

Introduction

- Exercise KHANJAR is the India–Kyrgyzstan Joint Special Forces exercise.
- Participating units include the Indian Army's Parachute Regiment (Special Forces) and Kyrgyzstan's ILBRIS Special Forces Brigade.
- Focus areas include exchanging best practices in counterterrorism and Special Forces operations, with training in urban and mountainous terrain, including sniping, building

intervention, and highaltitude/mountain warfare.

Why in news?

- The 13th edition has commenced in Missamari, Assam.

Background

- Initiated in 2011.
- Conducted annually, alternately in India and Kyrgyzstan.
- Designed to enhance interoperability between Special Forces.

Significance

- Enhances defence ties between India and Kyrgyzstan.
- Addresses international terrorism and extremism.
- Reinforces commitment to peace, stability, and regional security.

Facts/General knowledge

- Kyrgyzstan is a landlocked Central Asian country bordering Kazakhstan, China, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, with Bishkek as its capital.
- It shares the strategically important Fergana Valley with Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, a region highly sensitive for regional stability.
- The Fergana Valley is rich in hydrocarbon resources, enhancing its importance for India's longterm energy security and broader strategic interests in Central Asia.

Exercise Vayu Shakti26

Introduction

- Conducted by the Indian Air Force at the Pokhran airtoground range near Jaisalmer, Rajasthan.
- Showcased the operational preparedness, tactical capabilities, and combat efficiency of the IAF.

Why in news?

- For the first time, the exercise was executed along a defined operational storyline, transforming it into a simulated live combat theatre.

Background

- The event was last held in February 2024.

Significance

- Guided by the core values of "Achook, Abhedya aur Sateek," aimed to reassure the nation by reaffirming the IAF's role as a key component of India's national security architecture.
- Demonstrated the capability to execute complex, integrated air operations within a dynamic and realistic battlefield environment.
- Seamlessly integrated offensive air strikes, air defence operations, special forces missions, and humanitarian assistance.

Facts/General knowledge

- Over 130 aircraft participated in the dayandnight exercise.
- Participating platforms included Rafale, Su30 MKI, Mirage2000, MiG29, Jaguar, Hawk, Mi17, C130J, C295, C17, the indigenous ALH Dhruv and LCH Prachand.
- Advanced weapon systems featured: Short Range Loitering Munitions (SRLM), Akash, SpyDer, and Counter Unmanned Aerial Systems (CUAS).

Exercise MILAN 2026

Introduction

- MILAN is a biennial (once every two years) multilateral naval exercise hosted by the Indian Navy.

Why in news?

- The Indian Navy has established a dedicated MILAN village in Visakhapatnam to facilitate cultural and social exchanges among delegates of the 13th Exercise MILAN 2026.
- The 13th edition will be conducted from 15 to 25 February 2026.
- It features participation from over 70 countries, including firsttime participants: Germany, the Philippines, and the UAE.

Background

- Launched in 1995 under the Andaman and Nicobar Command.
- Began with participation from four foreign navies: Indonesia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, and Thailand.
- Has since grown into one of the largest maritime engagements in the IndoPacific region.

Significance

- Aims to foster mutual understanding, trust, and professional interaction among maritime partners to promote a free, open, inclusive, and rulesbased maritime order.
- Serves as a key platform for India's Act East Policy 2014.
- Aligns with the MAHASAGAR vision and India's role as a preferred security partner in the IndoPacific.

Facts/General knowledge

- Structural phases:
- Harbour Phase: seminars, subjectmatter expert exchanges, etc.
- Sea Phase: focuses on interoperability, HADR, antisubmarine warfare, and tactical manoeuvres.

Exercise 'Dharma Guardian' – 7th Edition

Introduction

- The 7th edition of the annual Joint Military Exercise 'Dharma Guardian' between the Indian Army and the Japan Ground SelfDefense Force (JGSDF) has commenced in Chaubattia, Uttarakhand.
- Aim: To strengthen military collaboration and enhance combined capabilities to undertake joint operations in a semiurban environment.

Why in news?

- The latest edition has begun at Chaubattia, Uttarakhand, marking the continuation of this annual India–Japan military engagement.

Background

- 'Dharma Guardian' is an annual joint exercise conducted between the Indian Army and the JGSDF.
- It is held alternately in India and Japan, reflecting sustained bilateral defence cooperation.

Significance

- Serves as a key pillar of India–Japan defence cooperation, focusing on interoperability and contemporary operational

aspects.
- Anchored in the employment of modern technology to refine joint planning, coordination, and execution.

Facts/General knowledge

- Participating units: Indian Army contingent from the Ladakh Scouts; JGSDF contingent from the 32nd Infantry Regiment.
- Key tactical activities: Establishing a Temporary Operating Base; developing an Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) grid; setting up Mobile Vehicle Check Posts; conducting Cordon and Search Operations; executing Heliborne Operations and House Intervention Drills.
- Other India–Japan military exercises: JIMEX (maritime), Veer Guardian (air), Shinyuu Maitri (air), Sahyog Kaijin (coast guard), Malabar (with India, Japan, Australia, and the United States).

Kalari Leap – Strengthening Maritime Readiness in Lakshadweep

Introduction

- The Southern Air Command of the Indian Air Force conducted Kalari Leap, a hightempo joint maritime exercise in the Lakshadweep and Minicoy archipelago.
- The exercise validated rapid force projection, joint operational planning and precision strikes in complex maritime conditions.
- Participation from the Armed Forces Special Operations Division and the Indian Coast Guard showcased integrated defence readiness in island territories and strategic sea lanes.

Why in news?

- The Southern Air Command successfully executed Kalari Leap, underscoring India's coastal defence strength.
- It reinforced the Indian Air Force's ability to respond swiftly to emerging maritime threats in the Arabian Sea.

Background

- Conducted in the strategically important Lakshadweep and Minicoy islands to test operational preparedness in a challenging maritime environment.
- Ensured all participating agencies operated under a unified command structure for seamless air–maritime coordination.
- Designed to prove precision execution of air operations alongside integrated planning among defence forces.

Significance

- Demonstrated operational dominance in island domains and across maritime zones.
- Validated surveillance and strike readiness for contingencies involving seabased threats.
- Strengthened operational coordination in island territories near major international shipping routes in the Arabian Sea.

Facts/General knowledge

- Name: Kalari Leap (joint maritime exercise).
- Lead: Southern Air Command, Indian Air Force.
- Location: Lakshadweep and Minicoy archipelago (Lakshadweep region).
- Participants: Armed Forces Special Operations Division; Indian Coast Guard.
- Core validations: rapid force projection; precision air operations; integrated planning; operational coordination; surveillance and strike capability.

Chandrayaan4 South Pole Landing Site Selection

Introduction

- ISRO's Space Applications Centre has identified a promising landing site near Mons Mouton in the Moon's south polar region for Chandrayaan4, India's first lunar sample return mission.
- A onesquarekilometre patch has been marked as the safest touchdown option based on highresolution terrain assessment by the Chandrayaan2 Orbiter.

Why in news?

- A detailed analysis has narrowed earlier broad candidate zones to specific regions around Mons Mouton, with site MM4 emerging as the leading option for a safe landing and sample return.

Background

- Earlier assessments focused on latitudes between 84° and 90° south.
- The Orbiter High Resolution Camera (OHRC) on Chandrayaan2 provided stereo images at 32centimetre resolution, enabling digital elevation models at a 0.32metre grid scale.
- Scientists evaluated surface slopes, crater density, boulder distribution and illumination conditions.
- Five regions near Mons Mouton were studied; one was excluded due to permanent shadow that would impede power generation and communication.

Significance

- Chandrayaan4 is ISRO's most complex lunar mission, comprising propulsion, descender, ascender, transfer and reentry modules.
- The descender and ascender must softland, collect samples and launch them back to orbit, making precise site selection crucial in rugged south polar terrain.
- Engineering constraints—landing slopes below 10°, boulders smaller than 0.32 metres, 11–12 days of sunlight and uninterrupted radio visibility—necessitate a site with low hazards and sufficient safe landing grids.

Facts/General knowledge

- Shortlisted sites: MM1, MM3, MM4 and MM5; evaluated by average slope, elevation variation and number of safe 24×24 metre landing grids.
- Elevations across candidates ranged from 4,800 to over 6,100 metres.
- MM4 (latitude −84.289°, longitude 32.808°):
- Lowest hazard level: 9.89%.

- Average slope: 5°.
- Safe landing grids: 568 (highest among candidates).
- Other sites recorded hazard levels above 12% or had significantly fewer safe grids.

India–France Defence Cooperation: HAMMER Missiles and Key Outcomes

Introduction

- The French President's visit to India led to 21 important outcomes across defence, technology and innovation, critical minerals and energy, trade, and other areas.

Why in news?

- The visit announced and launched initiatives spanning defence production, technology partnerships, critical minerals collaboration, energy projects, and economic agreements.

Background

- H125 is a light utility singleengine helicopter from Airbus.
- HAMMER (Highly Agile Modular Munition Extended Range) is a smart precisionguided airtoground weapon system adaptable for Rafale and LCA Tejas aircraft.

Significance

- Defence and security:
  H125 Helicopter Final Assembly Line inaugurated at Vemagal, Karnataka.
- Joint venture between Bharat Electronics and Safran launched to produce HAMMER missiles in India.
- Technology and innovation:
  India–France Year of Innovation 2026 and the India–France Innovation Network launched.
- Joint Advanced Technology Development Group and IndoFrench Centre for Digital Sciences and Technology constituted.
- IndoFrench Centre for AI in Health launched at AIIMS, New Delhi.
- Critical minerals and energy:
  Joint Declaration on cooperation in critical minerals to ensure diversified and resilient supply chains.
- Plan to deepen cooperation in large nuclear power projects (including Jaitapur), Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) and Advanced Modular Reactors (AMRs).
- Trade and economic:
  Decision to amend the Double Tax Avoidance Agreement between India and France.
- Other areas:
  Cooperation on startups, health, renewable energy, student mobility and skilling.

Facts/General knowledge

- H125 is the only helicopter to land on the Mt Everest summit.

Sports current

India's record sixth ICC U19 World Cup title (2026)

Introduction

- India's Under19 cricket team lifted the ICC Men's Under19 Cricket World Cup 2026 trophy after defeating England U19 in the final.

Why in news?

- India clinched a recordextending sixth U19 World Cup title, the most by any team in the tournament's history.

Background

- Final venue: Harare Sports Club, Zimbabwe.
- India: 411/9; England: 311 all out.
- Winning margin: 100 runs.
- Runnerup: England U19.

Significance

- Cemented India's dominance at the U19 level.
- Highlighted a strong pipeline of talent and collective consistency under pressure.
- Signalled a bright future for Indian cricket.

Facts/General knowledge

- Indian captain: Ayush Mhatre.
- Man of the Match (final): Vaibhav Sooryavanshi for a 175run innings.
- Man of the Tournament: Vaibhav Sooryavanshi — 439 runs in seven matches.
- Standout performer: 14yearold Vaibhav Sooryavanshi played one of the most remarkable innings in U19 cricket history.

BBC Indian Sportswoman of the Year 2025

Introduction

- Indian women's cricketer Smriti Mandhana has been named the BBC Indian Sportswoman of the Year for 2025 at a prestigious award ceremony in New Delhi.
- The accolade recognises her outstanding achievements in sport during the year.

Why in news?

- Honoured for consistently brilliant performances.
- Acknowledged for her pivotal role in India's historic 2025 Women's World Cup triumph.
- Recognised for success in domestic leagues.

Background

- The awards celebrate and spotlight excellence and impact of Indian women athletes.
- Winners were chosen by a distinguished jury comprising sports figures such as Leander Paes, Deepa Malik, and Anju Bobby George.
- Chess prodigy Divya Deshmukh was named Emerging Player of the Year for her historic win at the FIDE Women's World Cup.
- Preethi Pal received the ParaSportswoman of the Year title for

her two bronze medals at the 2024 Paris Paralympics.
- Veteran shooter Anjali Bhagwat was honoured with the Lifetime Achievement Award for her trailblazing career, including being the first Indian woman shooter to reach an Olympic final.

Significance

- Highlights the excellence and impact of Indian women athletes across domestic and international platforms.
- Showcases contributions in international events and inspires future generations.
- Underscores inclusive recognition across mainstream sport, parasport, and emerging talent.

Facts/General knowledge

- BBC Indian Sportswoman of the Year 2025: Smriti Mandhana.
- Emerging Player of the Year: Divya Deshmukh (historic FIDE Women's World Cup win).
- ParaSportswoman of the Year: Preethi Pal (two bronze medals, 2024 Paris Paralympics).
- Lifetime Achievement Award: Anjali Bhagwat (first Indian woman shooter to reach an Olympic final).
- Jury: Leander Paes, Deepa Malik, Anju Bobby George.
- Venue: New Delhi.
- Purpose: To celebrate and spotlight excellence and impact of Indian women athletes.

WPL 2026 Final — RCB's Record Chase

Introduction

- The Women's Premier League 2026 final produced a classic as Royal Challengers Bengaluru defeated Delhi Capitals by six wickets in Vadodara.
- Chasing 204, RCB surged ahead through a breathtaking Smriti Mandhana–Georgia Voll stand and sealed victory in the final over.

Why in news?

- RCB completed the highest successful chase ever in the WPL, and the highest in a WPL or IPL final.
- Smriti Mandhana and Georgia Voll added 165 in 92 balls, the highest partnership for any wicket in WPL history.
- Delhi Capitals' 203 for 4 was the secondhighest firstinnings score in any women's T20 final.

Background

- RCB clinched their second WPL title.
- Delhi Capitals' painful run of final defeats continued.
- Across four seasons, only Mumbai Indians and Royal Challengers Bengaluru have lifted the trophy.

Significance

- The final highlighted a growing rivalry at the top of the league.
- Smriti Mandhana earned Player of the Match for 87 off 41 balls (12 fours, three sixes), pacing the 204run pursuit and dismantling DC's bowling under pressure.

Facts/General knowledge

- DC batting highlights: Jemimah Rodrigues struck 57; Laura Wolvaardt contributed 44.
- RCB were 9 for 1 before the Mandhana–Voll acceleration.
- Late drama: after Georgia Voll's 79, quick wickets of Richa Ghosh and Mandhana tightened the equation in the closing overs.
- Team awards: Winner — Royal Challengers Bengaluru (₹6 Crore); Runnerup — Delhi Capitals (₹3 Crore).
- Individual awards (₹5 Lakh each): Orange Cap — Smriti Mandhana; Purple Cap — Sophie Devine; Most Valuable Player — Sophie Devine; Emerging Player — Nandini Sharma.

Australian Open 2026 Champions

Introduction

- The 2026 Australian Open concluded in Melbourne with Carlos Alcaraz and Elena Rybakina crowned as the men's and women's singles champions.

Why in news?

- Carlos Alcaraz (Spain) defeated Novak Djokovic (Serbia) in the men's singles final.
- Elena Rybakina (Kazakhstan) beat Aryna Sabalenka (Belarus) in the women's singles final.

Background

- The Australian Open is the first Grand Slam tennis tournament of the year.
- It was held in Melbourne, Australia, on the hard courts of Melbourne Park.
- The event attracted top tennis talent from around the world.

Significance

- Carlos Alcaraz secured his first Australian Open title and his seventh major singles title overall.
- Elena Rybakina claimed her first Australian Open crown and her second Grand Slam singles title, defeating the world No. 1.

Facts/General knowledge

- Men's Singles: Carlos Alcaraz (winner) def. Novak Djokovic (runnerup).
- Women's Singles: Elena Rybakina (winner) def. Aryna Sabalenka (runnerup).
- Nationalities: Alcaraz (Spain), Djokovic (Serbia), Rybakina (Kazakhstan), Sabalenka (Belarus).

Milano Cortina 2026 Winter Olympics

Introduction

- The 25th edition of the Winter Olympic Games will officially begin on 6 February 2026.
- Host cities are Milan and Cortina, jointly staging the event.

Why in news?

- The Opening Ceremony will be held on 6 February 2026 at the San Siro Stadium in Milan.
- The Closing Ceremony is scheduled for 22 February 2026 at the Verona Arena.

Background

- The Winter Olympic Games began in 1924.
- India made its Winter Olympics debut in 1964.
- Including Milano Cortina 2026, India has participated in 12 Winter Olympic editions, with 17 different athletes over the years.

Significance

- This will be the first time two cities jointly host the Winter Olympics.
- It marks the fourth time Italy will stage the Winter Games.
- India continues its presence in global winter sports with a small but significant contingent.
- One athlete's participation was confirmed following a selection process that involved a Delhi High Court decision regarding the national quota.

Facts/General knowledge

- Mascots: Tina and Milo, two stoats whose names are inspired by Cortina and Milano.
- Theme: Armonia (Harmony), produced by Balich Wonder Studio.
- Performers: Mariah Carey, Andrea Bocelli, and Laura Pausini.
- India's athletes: Arif Mohammad Khan (Alpine Skiing) and Stanzin Lundup (CrossCountry Skiing).

International Relation & meeting

India–Brazil State Visit and Bilateral Outcomes

Introduction

- The State Visit of the President of the Federative Republic of Brazil to India concluded.
- Both nations emphasised enhanced cooperation across space, renewable energy, and agriculture.

Why in news?

- Bilateral trade goal revised from USD 20 billion to USD 30 billion by 2030.
- Adoption of a Joint Declaration/Action Plan on a Digital Partnership for the Future.
- Extension of multipleentry tourist and business visa validity from five to ten years, on a reciprocal basis.
- Ten MoUs signed, including on Rare Earth and Critical Minerals, the postal sector, MSME entrepreneurship, and pharmaceutical regulations.

Background

- Diplomatic relations established in 1948; upgraded to a Strategic Partnership in 2006.
- Engagement under the India–MERCOSUR Preferential Trade Agreement.
- In 2025, bilateral trade grew by over 25% to reach USD 15.21 billion.

Significance

- Higher trade ambition set for 2030 signals intent to expand economic ties.
- Sectoral focus on space, renewable energy, and agriculture highlights shared priorities.
- Structured cooperation enabled through a digital partnership framework and multiple sectoral agreements.
- Longerduration visas facilitate sustained business and tourism exchanges.

Facts/General knowledge

- Close coordination at plurilateral fora: BRICS, BASIC, G20, G4, and IBSA, and at multilateral bodies: the UN, WTO, UNESCO, and WIPO.
- Brazil is a cofounder member of the Global Biofuel Alliance.
- Brazil ratified the International Solar Alliance Agreement in 2022.

AI Impact Summit 2026 — India Hosts FirstEver Global South AI Summit

Introduction

- India is hosting the firstever Global South AI Impact Summit 2026
- The summit brings together world leaders, policymakers, industry experts and international organisations to shape the future of Artificial Intelligence governance and cooperation

Why in news?

- The AI Impact Summit 2026 has officially begun today, 16 February 2026
- It is being held at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi
- The launch marks a historic moment for India and the Global South

Background

- This is the first global AI summit hosted in the Global South
- India is positioning itself as a bridge between developed and developing nations in shaping responsible Artificial Intelligence policies

Significance

- The summit strengthens India's leadership role in global digital governance discussions
- Its global importance is underscored by highlevel international participation

Facts/General knowledge

- Duration: Five days
- Scale: Over 100 countries invited; ministerial delegations from more than 45 nations attending
- Participation: Leaders from over 20 countries present
- Key attendees: Emmanuel Macron (France – President); Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (Brazil – President); Pedro Sánchez PérezCastejón (Spain – President); Guy Parmelin (Switzerland

– President); Dick Schoof (Netherlands – Prime Minister); Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan (United Arab Emirates – Crown Prince); Navinchandra Ramgoolam (Mauritius – Prime Minister); Anura Kumara Dissanayake (Sri Lanka – President); Sebastien Pillay (Seychelles – Vice President); Tshering Tobgay (Bhutan – Prime Minister)
- Also participating: Leaders from Bolivia, Croatia, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Guyana, Kazakhstan, Liechtenstein, Serbia and Slovakia
- International organisations: The UN SecretaryGeneral and senior officials from international organisations are attending

India–Malaysia: Prime Minister's Official Visit and Joint Statement

Introduction

- A joint statement issued during the Prime Minister of India's Official Visit to Malaysia outlines cooperation across strategic, economic, technological, and regional domains.

Why in news?

- The Official Visit and joint statement highlight shared commitment to regional stability, economic integration, and technological synergy.

Background

- India–Malaysia diplomatic relations were elevated to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP) in August 2024.

Significance

- Strategic and defence:
  New mechanisms to deepen air force cooperation on maintenance and technical expertise, aimed at reducing supplychain vulnerabilities.
- Continued joint exercises and a clear stance of zero tolerance of terrorism with calls for concerted international efforts.
- Energy, climate, and technology:
- Expanded Malaysian investment in India's solar energy and green hydrogen aligned with a shared netzero commitment.
- Semiconductor collaboration prioritising skills development, resilient supply chains, and institutional partnerships.
- Trade and investment:
  Emphasis on balanced, diversified trade, with focus on advanced sectors and facilitation through local currency settlement.
- Broader cooperation across trade, resilient supply chains, investment, and advanced manufacturing.
- Food security, agriculture, and resilience:
  Assurance of reliable palm oil supplies and joint work across the oil palm value chain and valueadded products.
- Support for strengthening disasterresilient infrastructure.
- Regional and multilateral coordination:
- Convergence on UN reforms, including India's permanent membership in a reformed Security Council.
- Support for ASEAN Centrality and IndoPacific frameworks, with affirmation of UNCLOS 1982 and freedom of navigation.

Facts/General knowledge

- Strategic Affairs Working Group (SAWG) established.
- Su30 Forum enabling air force cooperation on maintenance and technical expertise.
- Harimau Shakti joint military exercise (5th edition).
- Malaysian companies expanding investments in India's solar energy and green hydrogen; shared commitment to netzero emissions.
- Semiconductor cooperation in workforce development, supply chain resilience, and institutional tieups.
- Trade priorities include semiconductors and the digital economy.
- Local currency settlement (INR–MYR) encouraged via RBI–Bank Negara Malaysia cooperation.
- Cooperation across trade, resilient supply chains, investment, and advanced manufacturing.
- Malaysia reaffirmed commitment as a reliable palm oil supplier; cooperation in oil palm value chain and downstream, valueadded products.
- Support for the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI).
- Reiterated commitment for UN reforms and India's permanent membership in a reformed UNSC.
- Support for ASEAN Centrality and IndoPacific vision to implement AOIP for Peace and India's IPOI.
- Reaffirmation of UNCLOS 1982 and freedom of navigation.

India–Seychelles 50th Anniversary Visit and Strategic Outcomes

Introduction

- The President of Seychelles visited India, and both countries announced a joint vision for Sustainability, Economic Growth, and Security through Enhanced Linkages.

Why in news?

- A Special Economic Package of USD 175 million was announced for development projects, capacity building, and maritime security.
- Seychelles will become a full member of the Colombo Security Conclave (CSC).
- Seychelles agreed to join the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI).
- Seychelles will recognise the Indian Pharmacopoeia to procure affordable, quality medicines.
- India will undertake comprehensive efforts to build Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) in Seychelles.
- A Hydrographic Unit will be set up in Seychelles with Indian assistance.

Background

- The visit coincided with the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between India and Seychelles.

Significance

- Seychelles is a central pillar in India's vision of SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region).
- Seychelles is a central pillar in India's Vision MAHASAGAR (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions).
- The outcomes align with the announced joint vision across sustainability, economic growth, and security.

Facts/General knowledge

- Colombo Security Conclave (CSC) is a regional security grouping comprising India, Sri Lanka, Mauritius, Maldives and Bangladesh.
- CSC aims to promote regional security by addressing transnational threats and challenges of common concern to the Member States.
- Indian Pharmacopoeia is a book of standards for the drugs.
- CDRI stands for Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure.
- DPI stands for Digital Public Infrastructure.
- SAGAR expands to Security and Growth for All in the Region.
- Vision MAHASAGAR expands to Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions.

Japan Election 2026 – Sanae Takaichi's Landslide

Introduction

- On 8 February 2026, Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi led the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) to a historic electoral victory.
- The result signalled a clear shift in Japanese politics and provided a strong mandate just months after she took office.
- The win strengthens her position to pursue reforms in the economy, defence, and national security.

Why in news?

- The Japan Election 2026 is in the news after Sanae Takaichi, leader of the LDP, secured a twothirds supermajority in the powerful lower house of parliament.

Background

- Sanae Takaichi became Japan's first female prime minister in October 2025.
- She called an early election three months after assuming office to seek a fresh mandate.
- The move followed funding and religious scandals that had affected the ruling party in recent years.
- With high popularity, she aimed to stabilise governance and reset public trust as the opposition remained fragmented and failed to present a unified challenge against the LDPled alliance.

Significance

- The decisive victory has cemented Takaichi's political authority.
- It provides a robust mandate to drive major reforms and reshape Japan's political direction in the coming years.
- Celebrations at party headquarters reflected broad public support and Takaichi's personal popularity across age groups, especially among younger voters.

Facts/General knowledge

- NHK projections: the LDP won 316 seats in the 465member House of Representatives.
- Majority mark: 261 seats.
- This is the LDP's best performance since its formation in 1955.
- The seat count surpassed the previous record of 300 set in 1986 under former prime minister Yasuhiro Nakasone.

India Hosts First BRICS Sherpa Meeting 2026

Introduction

- India hosted the first BRICS Sherpa and SousSherpa Meeting in New Delhi.

Why in news?

- The event forms part of India's 2026 chairmanship of the BRICS grouping.
- Priorities were presented under the theme "Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability," reflecting India's peoplecentric approach to its BRICS leadership.

Background

- The meeting was chaired by Sudhakar Dalela, India's BRICS Sherpa and Secretary (Economic Relations), along with Shambhu L. Hakki, India's BRICS SousSherpa.

Significance

- It laid the foundation for India's 2026 BRICS agenda ahead of the upcoming BRICS Summit.

Facts/General knowledge

- Participants included senior officials and sherpas from Brazil, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and the UAE.
- Focus areas spanned health, agriculture, labour, disaster risk reduction, climate change, energy, innovation, ICT, security, and economic and financial domains.

Spain's Under16 Social Media Ban

Introduction

- Spain has announced a nationwide prohibition on social media access for children under 16.
- Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez revealed the decision at the World Government Summit in Dubai.
- The ban is expected to come into force within a week, addressing concerns over child safety, mental health, and digital regulation.

Why in news?

- Spain is the first European country and the second globally, after Australia, to enforce such a ban.
- The Prime Minister characterised the current online environment as a "digital wild west," highlighting the urgency of stronger rules for minors.

Background

- Social media use among children and teenagers has risen sharply, offering learning and communication opportunities.
- Concerns have grown about online addiction, cyberbullying, exposure to harmful content, and data privacy.
- Governments worldwide are debating protections for children online; Spain's move follows these discussions and Australia's December 2025 ban.

Significance

- Introduces a legal, agebased restriction on social media use for those under 16 across Spain.
- Aims to protect minors by requiring stronger platform safeguards, including strict age verification and compliance by social media companies.
- Reflects growing global concern over child safety and digital regulation in the age of social media.

Facts/General knowledge

- Policy details in Spain:
  Children below 16 years will not be allowed to access social media platforms.
- The ban will be implemented nationwide.
- Social media companies will be expected to ensure strict age verification and compliance.
- Global context:
  Australia implemented a similar under16 social media ban in December 2025.
- Following Australia's decision, Meta reported removing more than 5.5 lakh underage accounts and argued that industryled safety standards would be more effective than blanket bans.

AI Impact Summit 2026 – Delhi

Introduction

- The AI Impact Summit 2026, also called the India AI Impact Summit, is a major international conference in New Delhi at Bharat Mandapam.
- Organised by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) under the IndiaAI Mission.
- Showcases how AI can enhance governance, healthcare, and agriculture, with a strong focus on the Global South.

Why in news?

- Announcement on 19 February: launch of New Delhi Frontier AI as the first AI centre to develop advanced technologies.
- Two pledges to accelerate ethical AI:
- Opensource safety standards for advanced AI models via an international partnership of 100 countries, targeting bias reduction, transparency for large language models, and AGI risk assessment processes by 2030.
- IndiaAI Compute Access Initiative: $1 billion for national AI infrastructure, providing free GPU access to 10,000 startups and researchers through a NVIDIA–Reliance collaboration, aiming for 1 petaflop processing capacity by 2027.
- Prime Minister's address underscored commitment to "AI for Sarvajana Hitaya" (welfare for all).
- Additional outcomes:
  Agreement between two countries to exchange AI professionals and share data resources.
- National AI Centre of Excellence opened its Delhi office to connect with IITs and IISc.
- IndiaAI Fund to invest $500 million in deeptech for healthcare, agriculture, and climate.
- Anticipated impact: supports Digital India and targets creation of 2 million AI positions by 2028, with India emerging as an AI authority for the Global South.

Background

- Builds on global AI gatherings: Bletchley Park (2023, UK), Seoul (2024, South Korea), and Paris (2025, France).
- Emphasises ethical AI, global collaboration, and India's role as an AI hub.
- Focus areas: ethical AI deployment, existing governance frameworks, and realworld applications in healthcare diagnostics and precision farming.

Significance

- Establishes India as an international centre for artificial intelligence research through bold initiatives.
- Strengthens leadership on safe, inclusive technology policies tailored to the needs of the Global South.
- Summit initiatives support Digital India objectives by delivering measurable results and advancing womenled and youth innovation.

Facts/General knowledge

- Dates: 16–20 February 2026 (main summit: 19–20; expo: 16–20).
- Venues: Bharat Mandapam (Convention Centre, Expo Halls), Pragati Maidan, New Delhi; Sushma Swaraj Bhawan; Ambedkar Bhawan.
- Scale: 50,000+ attendees; 20+ heads of state; 100+ CEOs.
- Key themes and sessions: ethical AI and governance for safe, inclusive policies; demonstrations in healthcare diagnostics and precision farming; realworld tests of the IndiaAI Mission.
- Programmes and challenges:
- AI for ALL: startup accelerator programme for scalable publicservice AI solutions.
- AI by HER: womenled innovation challenge advancing gender equality.
- YUVAi: hackathon enabling young innovators to build nextgeneration AI technologies.

State current

Sthree Suraksha Scheme, Kerala

Introduction

- The Government of Kerala has launched the Sthree Suraksha Scheme to provide monthly financial assistance to unemployed women and transgender women in the state.

- It is designed to support economically vulnerable individuals through the state's social security framework.

Why in news?

- The scheme has been launched, initiating direct monthly financial support to eligible beneficiaries.

Background

- Funded by the Government of Kerala as part of its social security and gender welfare initiatives.
- Inclusion of transgender women reflects a commitment to social justice and inclusive welfare policies.

Significance

- Strengthens Kerala's social protection framework.
- Promotes women's economic security.
- Contributes to genderinclusive development.

Facts/General knowledge

- Benefit: ₹1,000 per month, credited to bank accounts via the state's social security pension system.
- Target group: Homemakers and unemployed women not covered under existing social welfare pension schemes.
- Eligibility: Permanent residents of Kerala; aged 35–60; unemployed; holders of Antyodaya Anna Yojana (Yellow Card) or Priority Household (Pink Card) ration cards; not beneficiaries of other welfare pensions.
- Application and verification: Apply through Local SelfGovernment Institutions (Panchayats, Municipalities, Corporations); beneficiary lists are verified at the local body level to prevent duplication and ensure eligibility.
- Transfer mechanism: Direct Benefit Transfer to ensure transparency and timely disbursement.

Renaming Kerala to Keralam

Introduction

- The Union Cabinet has approved changing the State's name from Kerala to "Keralam."
- A Kerala (Alteration of Name) Bill, 2026 will be processed under Article 3 of the Constitution.
- The move follows a 2024 resolution by the Kerala Legislative Assembly requesting the change.

Why in news?

- Cabinet approval initiates the formal legislative process for renaming the State.
- The forthcoming Bill advances the State's demand for the native Malayalam name.

Background

- Constitutional procedure:
- Article 3 of the Constitution vests Parliament with the power to alter the name, area, or boundaries of a State by law.
- The process begins with a State Assembly resolution sent to the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).
- The MHA examines the request and seeks No Objection Certificates from the Ministry of Railways, the Intelligence Bureau, the Department of Posts, Survey of India, and the Registrar General of India.
- The Department of Legal Affairs and the Legislative Department, Ministry of Law and Justice, have concurred with altering 'Kerala' to 'Keralam.'
- After MHA clearance, the Bill can be introduced in Parliament only with the President's prior recommendation.
- If the Bill affects a State's name or boundaries, the President refers the draft to the State Legislature for its views within a specified period.
- Parliament may accept or reject the State Legislature's views.
- The Bill requires only a simple majority and is not a constitutional amendment under Article 368.
- After passage, the Bill is sent to the President for assent; upon assent, the name change becomes law and the First Schedule is amended.
- Origins and historical context:
  The earliest epigraphic reference appears in Ashoka's Rock Edict II (257 BCE) as "Keralaputra," often linked to the Chera dynasty.
- Herman Gundert traces "Keralam" to "Cheram" or "Cheralam," with "cher" meaning "to join" and "alam" meaning "land or region," denoting the integrated land between Gokarnam and Kanyakumari.
- The Aikya Kerala Movement in the 1920s demanded a unified State of Malayalamspeaking regions of Malabar, Kochi, and Travancore.
- Following the State Reorganisation Commission's recommendation, the modern State was formed on 1 November 1956 by integrating the Malabar district and Kasargod taluk while excluding certain southern taluks of Travancore.
- The Constitution recorded the anglicised "Kerala" instead of the native Malayalam "Keralam."

Significance

- Ensures total linguistic consistency across all official languages recognised in the Eighth Schedule, as requested by the Kerala Assembly.
- Aligns the State's official name with native Malayalam usage and historical references such as "Keralaputra."
- Reflects established practice of State name changes, including Uttaranchal to Uttarakhand (2007) and Orissa to Odisha (2011).

Facts/General knowledge

- The First Schedule of the Constitution lists the names and territorial boundaries of all States and Union Territories, forming the legal basis of India's political map.
- If a Bill affects a State's name or boundaries, the President must refer it to the State Legislature for timebound views; Parliament is not bound by those views.
- Notable precedents of name changes include Uttaranchal to Uttarakhand (2007) and Orissa to Odisha (2011).
- Kerala Piravi Day is celebrated annually on 1 November, marking the State's formation in 1956.

Amaravati Quantum Valley

(AQV) Project

Introduction

- The Andhra Pradesh government is set to launch the Amaravati Quantum Valley (AQV) project, marking a major step in India's quantum technology journey.
- The project aims to position Andhra Pradesh as a global hub for quantum research, innovation, talent development, and industry collaboration.

Why in news?

- The launch is scheduled for 7 February 2026.
- Construction will officially begin with a foundation stone laying ceremony at Amaravati.

Background

- The project is designed to build a comprehensive quantum ecosystem that brings together research institutions, industry players, startups, and skilled talent.
- Focus areas include quantum computing, quantum communication, and quantumsafe technologies.
- Dedicated infrastructure and public–private partnerships are intended to accelerate innovation and translate research into realworld applications.
- The initiative aligns with India's broader push towards emerging technologies and digital leadership.

Significance

- Supports nextgeneration technologies viewed as critical for national and economic security.
- Demonstrates strong Centre–State coordination in advancing highend technology initiatives through joint participation.
- Industry and academic collaborations are expected to bring global expertise, advanced infrastructure, and industryready solutions to Amaravati.

Facts/General knowledge

- Key attendees at the foundation stone ceremony: N. Chandrababu Naidu; Jitendra Singh, Union Minister of State for Science and Technology and Earth Sciences; Nara Lokesh, the state's IT and Electronics Minister.
- Multiple agreements with companies and academic institutions will be signed to build a robust quantum ecosystem.
- The event will feature the launch of the AQV logo.
- Quantum initiatives by IBM and Tata Consultancy Services will be announced.

Statehood of Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh (20 February 1987)

Introduction

- Statehood Day is observed for Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh on 20 February, commemorating their full statehood in 1987.
- These states transitioned from Union Territories to become the 23rd (Mizoram) and 24th (Arunachal Pradesh) states of the Indian Union.

Why in news?

- On 20 February, the Prime Minister extended greetings to the people of Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram on their Statehood Day.

Background

- Constitutional framework
- The 53rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1986 granted statehood to Mizoram.
- The 55th Constitutional Amendment Act, 1986 conferred statehood to Arunachal Pradesh.
- Mizoram
  Became the 23rd state on 20 February 1987 after the Mizoram Peace Accord (1986) signed between the Government of India and the Mizo National Front.
- The accord ended a period of insurgency and enabled the shift from Union Territory status (1972) to full statehood.
- Formerly the Lushai Hills district of Assam, renamed Mizo Hills in 1954.
- Recognised as a tribal area under the Sixth Schedule (Article 244(2)) of the Constitution, ensuring protection of tribal rights and regional autonomy.
- Arunachal Pradesh
  Attained statehood as the 24th state on 20 February 1987.
- Known as the NorthEast Frontier Agency (NEFA) until 1972, when it was renamed and designated a Union Territory.
- Modern history linked to British control following the Treaty of Yandaboo (1826) after the First AngloBurmese War (1824–1826).
- The 1914 Shimla Treaty demarcated the boundary between Tibet and NEFA (McMahon Line).
- Remained under Assam's constitutional jurisdiction until 1962, after which it became a separately administered Union Territory due to strategic importance.

Significance

- Mizoram
  The peace accord facilitated the end of insurgency and enabled a stable transition to statehood.
- Sixth Schedule recognition safeguards tribal rights and supports regional autonomy.
- Arunachal Pradesh
- Statehood reflects its strategic importance and the administrative evolution from NEFA to a Union Territory and then to a state.
- Historical treaties and boundary demarcation shaped its modern administrative identity.

Facts/General knowledge

- Date of statehood for both: 20 February 1987.
- Serial order: Mizoram is the 23rd state; Arunachal Pradesh is the 24th state.
- Constitutional amendments: 53rd (Mizoram) and 55th (Arunachal Pradesh) Constitutional Amendment Acts, 1986.
- Former designations:
  Mizoram: Lushai Hills district of Assam; renamed Mizo Hills in

1954; Union Territory from 1972.
- Arunachal Pradesh: NEFA until 1972; Union Territory from 1972; under Assam's constitutional jurisdiction until 1962.
- Key agreements and boundaries (Arunachal Pradesh): Treaty of Yandaboo (1826); First AngloBurmese War (1824–1826); 1914 Shimla Treaty establishing the McMahon Line.

Lakhpati Bitiya Yojana (Delhi)

Introduction

- A new social welfare scheme by the Delhi Government to strengthen girls' education.
- Provides structured financial support from birth through higher education to promote girls' educational advancement.

Why in news?

- Announced by Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta.
- Will take effect from 1 April 2026.

Background

- Replaces and upgrades the Ladli Scheme launched in 2008, which faced implementation challenges.
- Existing Ladli Scheme beneficiaries will continue to receive entitlements; new beneficiaries will be enrolled under the Lakhpati Bitiya Yojana.

Significance

- Aims to prevent girls from dropping out of school and to promote educational continuity.
- Seeks to advance financial security and empowerment for girls from economically weaker households.

Facts/General knowledge

- Financial structure:
  Assistance deposited in phased instalments linked to major educational milestones from birth through graduation or diploma courses.
- Cumulative deposits earn interest and are designed to grow to over ₹1 lakh at maturity in the beneficiary's bank account.
- Eligibility:
  Girl child must be born in Delhi.
- Family must have resided in Delhi for at least three years.
- Annual family income must not exceed ₹1.20 lakh.
- Up to two girl children per family are eligible.
- Delivery mechanism:
  Direct transfers to the beneficiary's Aadhaarlinked bank account.
- Fully digital application and disbursement process to ensure transparency and ease of access.

Padhai with AI in Himachal Pradesh

Introduction

- Himachal Pradesh has launched 'Padhai with AI', an artificial intelligencebased learning initiative.
- Designed mainly for competitive and government exam aspirants at the district level.
- Seeks to modernise learning through technology.

Why in news?

- The programme was formally launched on 9 February 2026 at Barthin in Bilaspur district by Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu.
- It marks a fresh step in digital education by the hill state.

Background

- The Padhai with AI platform is a districtlevel digital education programme developed for students of Bilaspur district.
- It uses artificial intelligence tools to deliver structured learning content, examoriented study material, and personalised support.
- The focus is on aspirants who often lack access to quality coaching, especially beyond urban centres.
- By using AIbased solutions, the programme attempts to bridge learning gaps and make highquality education accessible.

Significance

- Reflects the state government's vision to strengthen public education through innovation, technology and inclusivity, with education seen as shaping society and future generations.
- Advances equal access by ensuring students from all backgrounds receive equal opportunities to succeed academically and bringing quality learning to the district level.
- Enhances learning through a fully digital ecosystem that enables study anytime, anywhere, with continuous academic counselling to improve understanding and preparation strategies, while reducing dependence on expensive private coaching institutes.
- Demonstrates how artificial intelligence supports personalised learning, datadriven insights and adaptive content delivery, offering structured preparation, performance tracking and targeted guidance for outcomeoriented, inclusive education.

Facts/General knowledge

- Implemented by the Bilaspur district administration with institutional support from NTPC.
- Deputy Commissioner Rahul Kumar stated the initiative brings modern, technologydriven education facilities directly to students.
- The presence of Rajesh Dharmani and senior officials at the launch highlighted collaboration between district authorities, the state government and public sector organisations.

Sunetra Pawar becomes Maharashtra's first woman Deputy Chief Minister

Introduction

- Sunetra Pawar was sworn in as the Deputy Chief Minister of Maharashtra on 31 January 2026.
- After taking oath, she was entrusted with three key ministerial departments: State Excise Duty; Sports and Youth; Minorities Development.

Why in news?

- Her appointment marks the first time a woman has held the post

of Deputy Chief Minister in Maharashtra.

Background

- She is a senior leader of the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP).
- She previously served as a Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha) representing Maharashtra.
- Her appointment came three days after the death of her husband, Ajit Pawar, who served as Deputy Chief Minister until his sudden demise in a plane crash.

Significance

- The appointment breaks the glass ceiling in a state known for its progressive political history.

Facts/General knowledge

- Articles 163 and 164: The Governor appoints the Chief Minister and, on their advice, other ministers.
- The post of Deputy Chief Minister is not explicitly mentioned in the Constitution, though it carries the rank of a Cabinet Minister.

Formation of New Manipur Government under Yumnam Khemchand Singh

Introduction

- Yumnam Khemchand Singh, a senior BJP leader, has assumed office as the Chief Minister of Manipur.
- His appointment ends nearly a year of President's Rule in the violenceaffected state.

Why in news?

- A new government has been formed with key appointments to the top executive.
- President's Rule was revoked under Article 356(2), as notified by President Droupadi Murm.

Background

- Manipur had been under President's Rule for nearly a year due to prolonged violence.
- Yumnam Khemchand Singh, a former Speaker and RSS veteran, is perceived as a "liberal Meitei" capable of bridging ethnic divides.
- The political landscape had been fractured by two years of ethnic conflict.

Significance

- Marks a return to democratic governance and signals political normalcy.
- Introduces inclusive governance with the state's first woman and first KukiZo Deputy Chief Minister.
- Establishes tripartite ethnic representation at the top executive level (Meitei, KukiZo, Naga), aiming to rebuild trust and balance among communities.

Facts/General knowledge

- Chief Minister: Yumnam Khemchand Singh (Singjamei MLA); former Speaker; RSS veteran; perceived as a "liberal Meitei".
- Deputy Chief Minister (KukiZo): Nemcha Kipgen (Kangpokpi MLA); first woman and first KukiZo Deputy Chief Minister of the state.
- Deputy Chief Minister (Naga): Losii Dikho of the Naga People's Front (NPF).
- Constitutional restoration: Revocation of President's Rule under Article 356(2) notified by President Droupadi Murm.

Meri Rasoi Yojna – Punjab

Introduction

- The Punjab government has launched the Meri Rasoi Yojna to provide free quarterly food kits to around 40 lakh families across the state starting April 2026, aiming to enhance food and nutrition security.

Why in news?

- Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann announced the scheme to provide free food kits every quarter to supplement existing food supplies, reduce hunger, and improve nutrition, especially for children and lowincome households.

Background

- Eligibility: Families covered under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) or those holding blue ration cards.
- Food kits: Each quarterly kit will include 2 kg chana dal, 2 kg sugar, 1 kg iodised salt, 200 g turmeric powder, and 1 litre mustard oil, in addition to subsidised wheat provided under NFSA.
- Implementation: Kits will be assembled by MARKFED and distributed by the Department of Food and Civil Supplies, with regular quality checks to maintain standards.
- Monitoring: A digital system will track distribution to ensure transparency and prevent duplication or leakages in the supply chain.
- Vulnerable groups: Special provisions will ensure delivery to families with differentlyabled members, senior citizens, and singleparent households.
- Governance and funding: The initiative has an estimated outlay of ₹950 crore.

Significance

- Strengthens household food security across eligible families.
- Promotes better nutrition through provision of essential items.
- Ensures access to key food essentials for economically weaker sections beyond existing ration provisions.

Facts/General knowledge

- MARKFED stands for Punjab State Cooperative Supply & Marketing Federation Ltd.; it is a statelevel cooperative agency responsible for procurement, storage, and distribution of essential commodities.
- NFSA refers to the National Food Security Act.

Rajasthan Leads India's Wool Production (FY 2023–24)

Introduction

- Rajasthan has emerged as India's largest woolproducing state in FY 2023–24.

- The state's dominance is linked to its strong sheeprearing ecosystem and traditional pastoral practices.

Why in news?

- Rajasthan produced approximately 16 million kg of wool in FY 2023–24.
- This accounts for around 47% of India's total wool production, making it the top woolproducing state.
- India's total wool output in FY 2023–24 was about 33.69 million kg.

Background

- India has one of the largest sheep populations globally, supporting a substantial wool industry.
- Rajasthan's arid and semiarid climate, extensive grazing lands, and traditional pastoralism enable largescale sheep rearing.
- Indigenous breeds such as Marwari and Chokla are prominent in the state and are mainly known for coarse wool suitable for carpets and blankets.

Significance

- The wool sector supports rural livelihoods, particularly among pastoral communities.
- It contributes significantly to the carpet, handloom, and textile industries.

Facts/General knowledge

- The FY 2023–24 wool production data were released by the Department of Animal Husbandry & Dairying (DAHD) under the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Government of India.
- Around 85% of India's wool is carpetgrade, with a smaller proportion being apparelgrade and fine wool.
- Other leading woolproducing states after Rajasthan include Jammu & Kashmir, Karnataka, Telangana, Gujarat, and Maharashtra.

Mud Volcano Eruption in North Andaman

Introduction

- A mud volcano erupted at Shyamnagar in North Andaman, releasing thick mud and gas.

Why in news?

- The eruption occurred unexpectedly after more than two decades of dormancy.
- The site is near Jal Tikrey in Diglipur, North Andaman.

Background

- North Andaman's Diglipur hosts a chain of mud volcanoes set amid green forest landscapes.

Significance

- Geologists are likely to monitor the site closely to understand underground processes and fluid dynamics beneath the islands.
- The event can provide insights into the region's geology.
- Local authorities have restricted public access to ensure safety, and no major injuries or structural damage have been reported.

Facts/General knowledge

- Mud volcanoes are geological formations that expel mud, gas, and water due to underground pressures and fluid movements.
- They are distinct from conventional lavaspewing volcanoes.
- Such eruptions are generally linked to tectonic activity and underground pressure rather than external climate factors.

Miscellaneous

Seva Teerth – Integrated Administrative Complex

Introduction

- Seva Teerth is an integrated administrative complex housing the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS), and Cabinet Secretariat.

Why in news?

- The Prime Minister inaugurated Seva Teerth.
- The first decision taken at Seva Teerth launched the PM RAHAT Scheme to provide assured hospitalisation and treatment for road accident victims, ensuring no life is lost due to lack of immediate medical care.

Background

- This shift ends nearly eight decades of the PMO functioning from South Block, now part of the Yuge Yugeen Bharat National Museum.
- The move coincided with the 95th anniversary of New Delhi's formal inauguration (13 February 1931) as India's modern capital.

Significance

- The name reflects a guiding ethos: "Seva" means service or selfless dedication, and "Teerth (Tirtha)" signifies a sacred place or crossing point enabling liberation from obstacles.
- The complex bears the inscription "Nagrik Devo Bhava" (citizen is akin to God).
- It consolidates key governance functions and forms a key component of the Central Vista redevelopment project.

Facts/General knowledge

- Designed by Dr Bimal Patel.
- Entrance portal features stone screenwork inspired by Chalukyan temples (11th–13th centuries); floral stone motifs derive from squarebased geometric temple patterns.
- Metalclad domes, inspired by Buddha stupas, act as contemporary accent elements.
- Clad in white and red sandstone.
- Includes modern open workspaces and the hightech "India House" for international summits.
- Built to 4star green building standards.

India expands Ramsar network to 98 sites

Introduction

- India has expanded its Ramsar network ahead of World Wetlands Day 2026, taking the national total to 98 sites.

Why in news?

- The Prime Minister welcomed the addition of Patna Bird Sanctuary (Uttar Pradesh) and ChhariDhand (Gujarat) as Ramsar sites.
- These additions raise India's Ramsar site count to 98.

Background

- World Wetlands Day is observed every year on 2nd February to highlight the ecological importance of wetlands.
- It commemorates the signing of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands in 1971 at Ramsar, Iran.

Significance

- Strengthens protection of critical habitats along major migratory routes: the western migratory flyway and the Central Asian Flyway.
- Encompasses contrasting wetland types, from a seasonal saline system in arid Kutch to a small freshwater marsh–woodland–grassland mosaic within an agricultural landscape.
- Recognises Gujarat's only Conservation Reserve and one of Uttar Pradesh's smallest wildlife sanctuaries.

Facts/General knowledge

- ChhariDhand (Gujarat)
- Seasonal saline wetland between the Banni grasslands and Kutch salt flats; expands to nearly 80 sq km during the monsoon in the arid Kutch region.
- Gujarat's only Conservation Reserve; a key stopover on the western migratory flyway and an important wintering ground for waterfowl.
- Supports about 30,000 Common Cranes annually; large populations of Greater and Lesser Flamingos; and threatened species including the critically endangered Sociable Lapwing and the vulnerable Common Pochard.
- Seasonal waters provide essential feeding and roosting habitats; surrounding drylands support chinkara, caracal, and desert fox.
- Known for the "Chir Batti" phenomenon seen after sunset.
- Patna Bird Sanctuary (Uttar Pradesh)
- Located in the Jalesar subdivision of Etah district; spans just over 1 sq km, making it among Uttar Pradesh's smallest wildlife sanctuaries.
- Contains freshwater marshes, woodlands, and grasslands within an agricultural landscape.
- In winter, hosts tens of thousands of migratory birds such as the Rosy Pelican, Eurasian Spoonbill, and Northern Pintail; lies on the Central Asian Flyway.
- Records 178 bird species and 252 plant species; sustains key waterbird populations; designated an Important Bird and Biodiversity Area by BirdLife International.

Paradip Port Authority wins Swachhata Pakhwada Awards 2025 First Prize

Introduction

- Paradip Port Authority (PPA) has been conferred the First Prize at the Swachhata Pakhwada Awards 2025.

Why in news?

- PPA received the First Prize for exemplary performance in cleanliness, sustainability and community participation during Swachhata Pakhwada 2025 and Swachhata Hi Sewa 2025.

Background

- The Swachhata Pakhwada Awards are instituted by the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW).

Significance

- The award reflects the port's strong commitment to Swachh Bharat Abhiyan goals, environmental stewardship, sustainable growth and inclusive development.

Facts/General knowledge

- Award presentation: The award was presented by Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal.
- Recipient: P. L. Haranadh, IRTS, Chairman of Paradip Port Authority, received the honour on behalf of the port team.
- Cleanliness initiatives:
  Jan Bhagidari: Largescale public participation through cleanliness drives across schools, heritage sites, temples, beaches, ponds and port premises.
- Plantation drive: Under Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam 2.0, 40,000 saplings were planted at Paradip Sea Beach, emphasising environmental protection.
- Safai Mitra welfare: The Safai Mitra Suraksha pillar focused on the welfare, safety and dignity of sanitation workers, including medical checkups and felicitation initiatives.
- Antiplastic and awareness campaigns: Awareness against singleuse plastics using street theatre, rallies and cotton bag drives under the theme End Plastic Pollution.

New Appointment

Nidhi Chhibber takes additional charge as NITI Aayog CEO

Introduction

- Nidhi Chhibber has assumed additional charge as Chief Executive Officer of NITI Aayog, marking a leadership transition at India's premier public policy institution.

Why in news?

- The Department of Personnel and Training issued a notification assigning the CEO's additional charge to Nidhi Chhibber.

Background

- Nidhi Chhibber is a 1994batch IAS officer of the Chhattisgarh cadre.
- She was serving as Director General of the Development Monitoring and Evaluation Office in NITI Aayog at the time of this assignment.
- Her predecessor, BVR Subrahmanyam, completed an extended threeyear tenure as NITI Aayog CEO in February 2026.
- NITI Aayog, established in 2015, replaced the Planning Commission to promote cooperative federalism, sustainable

development, and longterm strategic planning.

Significance

- Ensures continuity in leadership at an institution central to policy deliberation and effective governance.
- Influences key sectors including economic reforms, health, technology, and public service delivery.
- Reflects increasing representation of women in senior government leadership roles.

Facts/General knowledge

- The CEO oversees policy planning, facilitates cooperative federalism, coordinates with ministries and states, and drives implementation of national development initiatives.
- The office plays a key role in monitoring flagship programmes such as PM GatiShakti, National Nutrition Mission, NIPUN Bharat, and AI/technologydriven projects.

Thanya Nathan: Kerala's First Blind Woman Judge

Introduction

- Thanya Nathan is set to make history as Kerala's first visually challenged (completely blind) woman judge.
- She completed her legal education using accessible learning tools and digital support systems.

Why in news?

- She will be the first fully blind woman appointed as a judge in Kerala's judiciary.

Background

- She secured the top rank among persons with benchmark disabilities in the competitive Civil Judges (Junior Division) exam for entry into the Kerala Judicial Service.
- Her achievement follows a 2025 Supreme Court ruling affirming that visually impaired candidates cannot be excluded from eligibility for judicial service.

Significance

- Demonstrates judicial inclusivity and equal opportunity in public employment.
- Inspires persons with disabilities and advances efforts to make India's legal profession more accessible and inclusive.

Facts/General knowledge

- Status: Completely blind (visually challenged).
- Category: Persons with benchmark disabilities.
- Examination: Civil Judges (Junior Division) for the Kerala Judicial Service.
- Constitutional basis: Articles 14, 16, and 21 of the Indian Constitution uphold equality and nondiscrimination, ensuring equal opportunity in public employment.

Tarique Rahman poised to become Bangladesh's next Prime Minister

- Introduction
- Tarique Rahman, leader of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), is set to assume the office of Prime Minister following the party's landslide victory in the February 2026 general elections.

Why in news?

- The elections have produced a decisive outcome, marking a significant political shift after a period of uncertainty and transitions in leadership.

Background

- Tarique Rahman has emerged as the BNP's top leader and has been a central figure in the party despite prolonged political challenges.
- He is the son of former President and BNP founder Ziaur Rahman and former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia.
- After spending almost two decades abroad, he returned to Bangladesh in late 2025 when political changes enabled his reentry into domestic politics.
- The BNP's campaign focused on economic revival, political reform, and national unity, themes that resonated with voters nationwide.

Significance

- With a clear parliamentary majority, the BNP is positioned to form the next government and steer policy priorities in line with its campaign agenda.
- For India, Bangladesh's key neighbourly relationship under a BNPled government may shape cooperation on trade, connectivity projects, border management, counterterrorism coordination, and engagement within BIMSTEC and SAARC.

Facts/General knowledge

- Election held: February 2026.
- Outcome: BNP secured a clear parliamentary majority.
- Leadership: Tarique Rahman to become Prime Minister.
- Lineage: Son of Ziaur Rahman and Khaleda Zia.
- Exile and return: Nearly two decades abroad; returned in late 2025.
- India–Bangladesh context: Long shared land boundary and deep economic, cultural, and strategic ties; collaboration channels include trade, connectivity, border security, counterterrorism, BIMSTEC, and SAARC.

Book & Author

Launch of Biswabhusan Harichandan's New Books in Odisha

Introduction

- Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi unveiled two new books authored by veteran politician and former Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan at a ceremony in Bhubaneswar.
- The event celebrated Odisha's political and cultural legacy and recognised Harichandan's long public life.

Why in news?

- The unveiling of Harichandan's two new books by the Chief

Minister marked a significant literary and political occasion in the state.
- The Chief Minister described the launch as a proud moment for Odisha and stressed that the author's life and values are as important as the books themselves.

Background
- Biswabhusan Harichandan has been a pivotal figure in Odisha politics, serving as the founding president of the Bharatiya Janata Party's Odisha unit and holding the post four times.
- He was elected as a Member of the Legislative Assembly five times between 1977 and 2009.
- He served as a cabinet minister on four occasions.
- Before entering active politics, he practised law at the Odisha High Court from 1972.
- During the Emergency (1975–77), he led prodemocracy movements and faced imprisonment, demonstrating his commitment to constitutional values.

Significance
- The launch highlights the confluence of literature, politics and culture in Odisha.
- It acknowledges Harichandan's extensive public life and contributions to the state's political landscape.
- The Chief Minister's tribute underscores broad recognition of Harichandan's values and service.

Facts/General knowledge
- Location: Bhubaneswar, Odisha.
- Occasion: Unveiling of two new books.
- Author: Biswabhusan Harichandan, veteran politician and former Governor.
- Launched by: Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi.
- Attendees: Dignitaries, scholars and political leaders.
- Key timeline markers: Law practice from 1972; Emergency activism and imprisonment in 1975–77; fivetime MLA between 1977 and 2009; fourtime cabinet minister; fourtime state BJP president.

Important days

World Wetlands Day 2026

Introduction
- A global observance dedicated to conserving and wisely managing wetlands.
- Highlights that safeguarding wetlands is essential for sustainable development.

Why in news?
- Observed on 2 February 2026 with a renewed focus on culture and community wisdom.
- Global theme: "Wetlands and Traditional Knowledge: Celebrating Cultural Heritage."
- Draws attention to rapid wetland loss from development and climate stress, urging policymakers to combine science with tradition.

Background
- Commemorates the 1971 signing of the Ramsar Convention at Ramsar, Iran.
- Established to raise awareness about wetlands across diverse landscapes and their conservation needs.

Significance
- Wetlands underpin biodiversity, water security, and millions of livelihoods worldwide.
- The 2026 theme recognises indigenous and local stewardship through sustainable harvesting, seasonal use, and cultural restrictions that maintained ecological balance without modern technology.
- Positions traditional knowledge as highly relevant in the climate crisis and frames conservation as peoplecentred rather than purely administrative.
- Reminds policymakers that integrating scientific approaches with community knowledge is vital.
- Addresses neglect in development planning by linking wetland protection to human survival and sustainable development.

Facts/General knowledge
- Wetlands include lakes, marshes, mangroves, floodplains, and lagoons.
- They provide clean water, reduce floods, store carbon, and support rich biodiversity.
- The Ramsar Convention is a global treaty for the conservation and wise use of wetlands, with more than 170 contracting parties.
- It encourages countries to protect wetlands while allowing sustainable livelihoods, with the "wise use" principle aligning closely with traditional practices.

National Deworming Day 2026

Introduction
- National Deworming Day is a nationwide public health initiative to protect children from harmful intestinal worm infections that affect growth, nutrition and learning ability.
- In India, many children remain at risk of Soil Transmitted Helminths (STH) due to sanitation and hygiene challenges.

Why in news?
- National Deworming Day 2026 will be observed on 10 February 2026 and on 10 August 2026.
- The theme for 2026 has not yet been officially announced by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

Background
- Launched in 2015 by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
- Addresses the hidden burden of intestinal worms that live in the intestines and consume essential nutrients required for physical and mental development.

Significance
- Ensures preventive healthcare reaches even asymptomatic children through free and safe deworming tablets.
- Reflects the Krimi Mukt Bharat vision to eliminate intestinal worm burden and protect children's nutrition, immunity and

cognitive development nationwide.
- Follows World Health Organization recommendations on regular mass deworming in highrisk regions.
- By February 2019, over 22 crore children were covered in a single round, making it one of the world's largest preventive public health campaigns focused on child nutrition and disease prevention.
- Encourages community participation by engaging parents, teachers and frontline workers to maximise coverage on fixed days.

Facts/General knowledge

- Target group: all children aged 1 to 19 years, enrolled or non enrolled.
- Medicine: Albendazole tablets.
- Delivery channels: schools, Anganwadi centres and outreach by ASHAs.
- Approach: biannual fixedday deworming across India.

World Pulses Day 2026

Introduction

- Pulses are dried seeds of leguminous plants.
- The day recognises their vital role in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Why in news?

- Celebrated globally on 10 February 2026.
- Theme: "Pulses of the world: from modesty to excellence".
- Selected by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to reframe pulses from humble, traditional foods to being recognised for nutritional richness, culinary diversity, and value in sustainable diets.

Background

- Designated by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in 2019.
- Builds on the success of the International Year of Pulses (2016).

Significance

- Nutritional value: rich in plantbased proteins, fibre, and essential minerals (iron, potassium, magnesium).
- Public health: critical for combating malnutrition in developing nations.
- Soil health: legumes fix nitrogen, improving soil fertility and reducing dependency on synthetic fertilisers, thereby lowering agriculture's carbon footprint.
- Climate resilience: low water footprint and adaptability to droughtprone environments; essential for ClimateSmart Agriculture.

Facts/General knowledge

- India (2025–26): the world's largest producer, consumer, and importer of pulses.
- Production target under the National Food Security Mission (NFSM): 28–29 million tonnes for 2025–26 to achieve Atmanirbharata (selfreliance).

World Day of Social Justice 2026

Introduction

- Serves as the United Nations' global platform to promote poverty eradication, decent work, gender equality, and social inclusion
- Theme for 2026: "Renewed Commitment to Social Development and Social Justice," underscoring the urgency of advancing these goals

Why in news?

- The Department of Social Justice & Empowerment observed a special programme on 20th February 2026 to mark World Day of Social Justice
- The observance reaffirmed the nation's constitutional commitment to social, economic, and political justice, along with liberty, equality, and fraternity

Background

- Rooted in the 1995 Copenhagen Declaration
- Proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in 2007
- First observed in 2009
- Observed annually on 20th February

Significance

- Pillars of Social Justice:
- International Labour Organization (ILO): Decent work agenda
- United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA): Policy integration
- Civil society organisations: Advocate integrating social justice into economic, labour, climate, and digital strategies
- SDG alignment: Directly supports SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 8 (Decent Work), and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities)

Facts/General knowledge

- The ILO unanimously adopted the Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization on 10th June 2008

National Protein Day 2026 (India)

Introduction

- National Protein Day is annually observed across India on 27 February.
- It educates people about the crucial role of protein in maintaining health, supporting growth and development, and promoting diverse proteinrich dietary options.

Why in news?

- 27 February 2026 marks the 7th observance of National Protein Day in India.

Background

- Established in 2020 with the launch of the "Right to Protein" (RTP) campaign, a nationallevel public health initiative to raise awareness about the importance of adequate protein consumption.
- First observed on 27 February 2020.
- The RTP campaign, led by the United States Soybean Export

Council (USSEC), promotes plantbased proteins, better nutrition, and public health awareness.

Significance

- Reinforces awareness of adequate protein consumption through a nationallevel public health initiative.
- Promotes plantbased proteins, better nutrition, and public health awareness under the RTP campaign.

Important Days

- Date Important Day
- 1 January Global Family Day
- 2 January World Introvert Day
- 3 January International MindBody Wellness Day
- 4 January World Braille Day
- 5 January National Bird Day
- 6 January World Day of War Orphans
- 6 January Guru Gobind Singh Jayanti
- 7 January Mahayana New Year
- 8 January African National Congress Foundation Day
- 8 January Earth's Rotation Day
- 9 January NRI Day / Pravasi Bharatiya Divas
- 10 January World Hindi Day
- 11 January Death Anniversary of Lal Bahadur Shastri
- 11 January National Human Trafficking Awareness Day
- 12 January National Youth Day
- 13 January Lohri
- 14 January Makar Sankranti
- 15 January Pongal
- 15 January Indian Army Day
- 16 January National Startup Day
- 17 January Benjamin Franklin Day
- 19 January Kokborok Day
- 20 January Penguin Awareness Day
- 20 January Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- 21 January
- Tripura, Manipur & Meghalaya Foundation Day
- 22 January Weedless Wednesday
- 23 January Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Jayanti
- 24 January National Girl Child Day
- 24 January International Day of Education
- 25 January National Voters' Day
- 25 January National Tourism Day
- 25 Jan – 2 Feb Kala Ghoda Festival
- 26 January Republic Day
- 26 January International Customs Day
- 27 January National Geographic Day
- 28 January Birth Anniversary of Lala Lajpat Rai
- 28 January K. M. Cariappa Jayanti
- 29 January Indian Newspaper Day
- 30 January Martyrs' Day / Shaheed Diwas
- 30 January World Leprosy Day
- 31 January International Zebra Day