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## NATIONAL POLITY

### 1. PM'S MUSEUM AND LIBRARY ENABLES REMOTE ACCESS TO RARE ARCHIVAL COLLECTION FOR RESEARCHERS



- The Prime Ministers' Museum and Library (PMML) in New Delhi has initiated a major digitization project of its rare archival collection, including personal papers, correspondence, speeches, diaries, and newspaper articles.
- PMML holds one of the world's largest collections of rare archival materials, with over 25 million documents from more than 1,300 individuals and organizations, regularly used by researchers of Modern and Contemporary Indian History.
- The digitization effort ensures long-term preservation of fragile documents and enables restricted remote access for genuine research scholars.
- A significant portion of frequently accessed material has already been digitized, uploaded, and made available through the new digital system.
- A dedicated IT platform has been developed to facilitate remote access; registered scholars can submit online requests to view specific documents without visiting PMML.
- Upon approval, the requested archival materials are securely made available on the scholar's desktop for viewing only.
- The launch of PMML's Digital Archives marks a major milestone in using technology to safeguard invaluable historical resources and expand global access for researchers and knowledge seekers.
- Director Ashwani Lohani stated that the initiative reflects PMML's strong commitment to promoting high-quality research and strengthening the study of Modern and Contemporary India by enhancing access to archival materials.

### 2. LEGISLATIVE AMENDMENTS TO PUSH PRIVATE INVESTMENTS IN NUCLEAR SPACE: SHRIPAD



**NAIK**

- The government is considering amendments to the Atomic Energy Act and the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act to enable private investment in the nuclear sector.
- India has set an ambitious target of achieving 100 GW of nuclear power capacity by 2047.
- MoS for Power Shripad Naik said significant steps are being taken to diversify India's energy portfolio through nuclear energy.
- A dedicated Nuclear Energy Mission with a budget of ₹20,000 crore has been launched to develop at least five indigenously designed Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) by 2033 and promote advanced nuclear technologies.
- Amendments to the Atomic Energy Act, 1962, and the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act, 2010, are being pursued to encourage private sector participation.
- The current Atomic Energy Act does not permit private or even state government involvement in nuclear projects.
- The Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act ensures no-fault liability and immediate compensation to victims in the event of a nuclear incident.
- A committee constituted by the Ministry of Power had earlier recommended legislative changes to address challenges in achieving the 100 GW nuclear target by 2047.
- The committee said such amendments would attract private investment and enable faster clearances for nuclear project development.

### 3. CENSUS 2027 TO BE CONDUCTED IN TWO PHASES: CENTRE

- Census 2027 will be conducted in two phases: the first between April–September 2026 and the second in February 2027, the Lok Sabha was informed.

- Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai, in response to a question by Rahul Gandhi, said Phase I will be House Listing and Housing Census, followed by Phase II Population Enumeration (PE).
- The first phase from April to September 2026 will be conducted over a period of 30 days, depending on the convenience of states/UTs.
- Population Enumeration will be conducted in February 2027 with reference date 00:00 hours of March 1, 2027.
- For Ladakh, snow-bound non-synchronous areas of Jammu & Kashmir, and the states of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, enumeration will be done in September 2026 with reference date 00:00 hours of October 1, 2026.
- The census questionnaire is finalised based on inputs and suggestions from ministries, departments, organisations, and various census data users before each exercise.
- The minister noted that the census has a history of more than 150 years, and learnings from previous exercises contribute to the design and implementation of the next census.
- In a separate reply, the minister confirmed that caste enumeration will also be carried out, as approved by the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs on April 30 this year.
- Census 2027 will be conducted through digital means, with data collection via mobile apps and an online facility for self-enumeration.

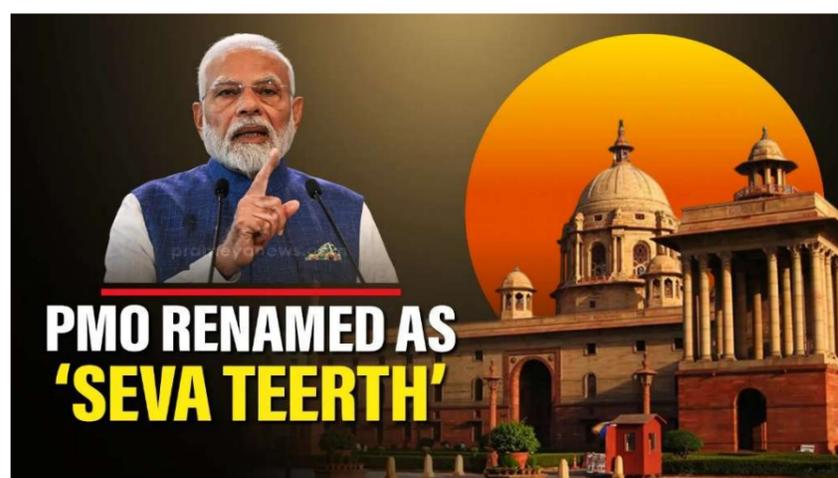
#### 4."SANCHAR SAATHI APP NOT MANDATORY", SAYS JYOTIRADITYA SCINDIA AMID PRIVACY ROW



- Union Communications Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia clarified that the **Sanchar Saathi mobile app is not mandatory** and users may delete it if they choose.
- The Union government stated that the app aims to protect citizens from purchasing non-genuine devices and curb telecom-related cyber fraud.
- As per guidelines issued on **November 28**, mobile manufacturers and importers must ensure the app is **pre-installed** and clearly visible during first use or device setup, without any restrictions on its functionalities.
- For devices already manufactured and currently in sales channels, companies must **push the app through software updates**.
- Manufacturers must complete implementation within **90 days** and submit a compliance report within **120 days**.

- The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) is implementing the Sanchar Saathi initiative to prevent misuse of telecom resources and strengthen telecom cybersecurity.
- All new smartphones sold in India are required to have the Sanchar Saathi app pre-installed as a safety measure to protect users from phone theft and fraudulent mobile connections.
- The app helps block stolen devices, verify SIM usage, and protect citizens from telecom fraud.
- **Key Features of the Sanchar Saathi App:**
  - ✓ Block lost or stolen phones across all telecom networks.
  - ✓ Verify the authenticity of a device's **IMEI number**.
  - ✓ View the total number of mobile connections issued in a user's name.
  - ✓ Identify and disconnect fraudulently obtained or suspicious SIM cards.
  - ✓ Report suspicious calls and potential telecom fraud.
  - ✓ Trace stolen phones using the **CEIR (Central Equipment Identity Register)** database.

#### 5. NEW NAME FOR PUBLIC MISSION: PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE (PMO) TO BE CALLED 'SEVA TEERTH'



- The Prime Minister's Office complex will soon be officially named "**Seva Teerth**", symbolising a sacred place of service aligned with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's citizen-first governance philosophy.
- Seva Teerth is envisioned as a powerful emblem of **selfless service**, where decisions are guided by the spirit of *seva* and the welfare of **1.4 billion Indians**.
- The new complex, nearing completion under the **Central Vista redevelopment project**, was previously referred to as the **Executive Enclave**.
- Seva Teerth will house:
  - the **Prime Minister's Office**,
  - the **Cabinet Secretariat**,
  - the **National Security Council Secretariat**, and
  - **India House**, a premier venue for high-level meetings and summits with global leaders.
- With this new identity, India's seat of governance stands as a tribute to **duty, devotion, and the bond between the government and its people**.

## 6. MODI LAYING STRESS ON NORTHEAST CONNECTIVITY, SAYS SONOWAL:

- The Northeast today represents a story of resurgence, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi described by Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal as the architect of this transformation.
- Connectivity has been prioritised as the backbone of development, leading to the completion of all major gauge conversion works and the integration of Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura, Manipur and Mizoram into the broad-gauge rail network, enabling goods and passenger trains to reach interior areas for the first time.
- Key rail milestones include the completion of the Bogibeel rail-cum-road bridge in 2018 and the commissioning of the Bhairabi–Sairang rail link in June 2025, enhancing access across Assam and Mizoram.
- Four capital connectivity rail projects linking Nagaland, Manipur, Sikkim and Meghalaya are currently underway, while the Agartala–Akhaura rail link between India and Bangladesh was jointly inaugurated by the Prime Ministers of both countries in November 2023.
- Road infrastructure has witnessed major expansion, with over 11,000 km of national and strategic highways upgraded in the last decade, including corridors such as Shillong–Nongstoin–Tura, the Nechipu–Hoj NH-13 project, and capital connectivity highways to Kohima, Itanagar and Gangtok, many nearing completion by 2025.
- Air connectivity has undergone a significant transformation, increasing from nine airports in 2014 to 19 operational airports today, supported by greenfield airports at Pakyong and Hollongi and upgraded terminals at Tezu, Rupsi and Agartala under the UDAN scheme.
- A network of heliports and water aerodromes has been developed to extend air connectivity to remote and inaccessible districts of the region.
- Development outcomes reflect the Northeast’s shift from the margins of policymaking to the mainstream of national priorities, underscoring a sustained focus on infrastructure, economic reform, cultural revival and peace-building.
- After decades of under-investment, the region is now recognised as the “Ashtalakshmi of India” and positioned as a new engine of national growth, covering sectors such as railways, highways, airports, power, digital infrastructure and inland waterways.
- Historic investments have been attracted, including the Numaligarh bio-refinery, India’s first bamboo-based ethanol plant, and the ₹22,594 crore expansion of the Numaligarh Refinery, transforming the region into a strategic energy hub.
- The semiconductor assembly and test facility at Jagiroad, with an investment of ₹27,000 crore, is projected to manufacture 15 billion chips annually and generate about 27,000 jobs, placing the Northeast on the global technology map.
- Improved stability has resulted from peace accords with Bodo, Karbi, Bru and other groups, alongside a 75 per cent reduction in AFSPA-affected areas since 2014.
- A cultural renaissance is underway, marked by national recognition of icons such as Bharat Ratna Dr Bhupen Hazarika, the commemoration of Lachit Barphukan, and the

inclusion of Assam’s Maidams in the UNESCO World Heritage List.

## 7. NO GST ON RESIDENTIAL PREMISES ON LEASE: SC



- The Supreme Court ruled that leasing out residential premises to an entity using them as a hostel for students and working professionals is exempt from Goods and Services Tax (GST).
- A bench comprising Justices JB Pardiwala and KV Viswanathan upheld the Karnataka High Court’s verdict granting GST exemption to such leasing arrangements.
- The Court held that the ultimate use of the property continues to be residential, even if it is leased to an intermediary entity operating it as a hostel.
- The bench observed that levying 18 per cent GST on such transactions would ultimately burden students and working professionals, defeating the legislative intent behind exempting residential use from GST.
- The ruling arose from a petition filed by a co-owner of a 42-room residential property in Bengaluru, leased to M/s D Twelve Spaces Private Limited.
- Under the lease agreement, the lessee operated the premises as a hostel offering long-term accommodation to students and working professionals, with stays ranging from three to twelve months.
- The petitioner had sought clarification on GST exemption by approaching the Authority for Advance Ruling (AAR), Karnataka.
- The AAR held that renting of a residential dwelling for use as residence in this case did not qualify for exemption and denied the benefit under the relevant notification.
- On appeal, the Appellate Authority for Advance Ruling also denied exemption, holding that the property functioned as a hostel and not as residential accommodation.
- The Karnataka High Court subsequently ruled that leasing residential premises for use as a hostel to students and working professionals is exempt under GST, a view now affirmed by the Supreme Court.

## 8. KASHMIRI SAFFRON SHINES IN PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI'S GIFT SET FOR VLADIMIR PUTIN



- Prime Minister Narendra Modi presented a thoughtfully curated set of gifts to Russian President Vladimir Putin during the latter's two-day visit to India for a bilateral summit.
- The gifts showcased India's rich heritage, cultural diversity, and traditional craftsmanship, symbolising the strong and enduring friendship between the two countries.
- The collection included Kashmiri saffron, handicrafts from Maharashtra, Assam tea, a handcrafted marble chess set, and a Russian-language edition of the *Bhagavad Gita*, among others.
- Kashmiri saffron, popularly known as *Zafran*, is cultivated in Jammu and Kashmir and is renowned worldwide for its distinctive colour, aroma, flavour, and health benefits.
- The gesture of gifting Kashmiri saffron filled residents of the Valley with pride.

## 9. PM MODI TO INAUGURATE LGBI AIRPORT'S STATE-OF-THE-ART BAMBOO ORCHIDS TERMINAL



- The **Bamboo Orchids Terminal (T2)** at **Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport (LGBIA)** in Guwahati is scheduled to be inaugurated by **Prime Minister Narendra Modi on December 20**, marking a transformative moment for the region's aviation sector.

- The new terminal will **directly link India's Northeast to Southeast Asia**, positioning Guwahati as a gateway for **commerce, culture, and connectivity**, and advancing India's **Act East policy**.
- **Capacity & Connectivity:**
  - T2 can handle **13.1 million passengers per annum (MPPA)**.
  - It will enhance **air links to Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia, Bangladesh**, and other key Asian destinations.
  - **Cargo connectivity** will be boosted with advanced processing facilities, supporting faster trade.
- The terminal, operated by **Guwahati International Airport Limited (GIAL)**, is expected to become the **Northeast's defining landmark**, blending culture, connectivity, and policy-driven development.
- The new air routes will allow the Northeast to **participate more actively in transnational economic flows**, supporting Assam's **export ecosystem**, including **tea, agri-produce, handloom, and floriculture**, while attracting **ASEAN tourism and investment**.
- **Strategic Significance:**
  - T2 serves as a **bridge between the Northeast and Southeast Asia**, enhancing trade and commerce.
  - It will provide smoother access to **eco-tourism circuits** across **Kaziranga, Majuli, Sualkuchi**, and neighboring states like **Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland**, and Bhutan.
- The terminal's **design philosophy** reflects Assam's natural and cultural heritage:
  - **Bamboo** symbolizes resilience and renewal.
  - **Kopou phool** (foxtail orchid) represents grace and celebration.
  - **Gamosa and jaapi** reflect Assamese warmth and identity.
- The design embodies "**design as diplomacy**", turning local heritage into a statement of **India's soft power** and inviting the world to experience the Northeast through both connectivity and culture.
- With T2 operational, Guwahati becomes **India's eastern gateway**, transforming the Northeast from a peripheral region into a **strategic pivot connecting India to ASEAN** via trade, tourism, and people-to-people engagement.

## 10. RIGHTS OF INDIVIDUAL ALWAYS SUBSERVIENT TO NATION'S INTEREST: SC

- The Supreme Court stated that individual rights are always subordinate to the nation's interest.
- It emphasised that Article 21 rights must be protected, but national security and integrity concerns cannot be ignored when considering bail.
- The observations were made by a bench of Justices Sanjay Karol and Nongmeikapam Kotiswar Singh.
- The case involved a CBI appeal against bail granted to accused persons in the 2010 Jnaneswari Express derailment case in West Midnapore, West Bengal.

- The Mumbai-bound Jnaneswari Express derailed near Jhargram and was hit by a goods train, resulting in 148 deaths.
- Authorities alleged the derailment was an act of sabotage by Maoists, occurring soon after a four-day bandh called by CPI (Maoist).
- The court noted that interfering with the liberty of the accused at this stage would not be justified, as no substantial new developments were presented by the CBI.
- It stated that while Article 21 rights stand on a high pedestal, they cannot be the sole consideration when national security is involved.
- The bench said such cases require a broader perspective beyond individual liberty.
- The Supreme Court directed the trial court to review the matter, record reasons for the prolonged pendency, and proceed expeditiously.
- It instructed that from now on, the trial be conducted on a day-to-day basis and adjournments be avoided except in exceptional circumstances.

## 11. NUPI LAN DAY OBSERVED



- President Droupadi Murmu led the people of Manipur in paying tribute to the brave women warriors of the Nupi Lan.
- Accompanied by Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla, the President laid wreaths at the Nupi Lan Memorial Complex in Imphal, honouring the departed freedom fighters of the movement.
- To mark the Nupi Lan anniversary, the Manipur Government observed Nupi Lan Numit, 2025, at the Central Hall of GP Women's College with solemnity and respect.
- The event honoured the historic contributions of Manipuri women who resisted colonial oppression during the Nupi Lan movements of 1904 and 1939.
- Speaking on the occasion, Chief Secretary Goel expressed gratitude to the President for paying homage to the brave Imas at the historic site.
- He recalled that the Nupi Lan, also known as the “Women’s War”, commemorates two major phases of resistance led by Manipuri women.
- The first Nupi Lan in 1904 arose against the reimposition of forced labour and other injustices, while the second in 1939 was a mass movement against wartime hoarding and the export of rice.
- The Chief Secretary highlighted the enduring resilience of the Ima Markets, Asia’s largest all-women-run markets, as a symbol of the strength and leadership of Manipuri women.

- He said Manipuri women continue to lead and inspire change across various fields, carrying forward the legacy of the Nupi Lan.
- He also commended Padma Shri awardee Thiyam Suryamukhi Devi for her lifelong dedication to classical Manipuri dance.

## 12. BILL TO SET UP SINGLE HIGHER EDUCATION REGULATOR GETS CABINET’S APPROVAL



- The Union Cabinet has approved a Bill to set up a single higher education regulator that will replace existing bodies such as the UGC and AICTE.
- The proposed legislation, earlier known as the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) Bill, has now been renamed the **Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhikshan Bill**.
- The new regulator, envisaged under the National Education Policy (NEP), will replace the University Grants Commission (UGC), the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) and the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE).
- An official said the Cabinet has cleared the Bill to establish the Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhikshan.
- Currently, the UGC regulates non-technical higher education, AICTE oversees technical education, and NCTE regulates teacher education.
- The proposed commission will function as a single higher education regulator, though medical and law colleges will remain outside its ambit.
- It is proposed to have three key roles: regulation, accreditation and the setting of professional standards.
- Funding, considered the fourth vertical, is not proposed to fall under the regulator, with financial autonomy remaining with the administrative ministry.
- The idea of HECI had earlier been floated through a draft Bill in 2018, which sought to repeal the UGC Act and invited public feedback and stakeholder consultations.
- Renewed efforts to establish HECI gained momentum after Dharmendra Pradhan took charge as Union Education Minister in July 2021.
- Highlighting the need for a single regulator, the NEP 2020 states that the existing regulatory system requires a complete overhaul to revitalise the higher education sector.

- The policy adds that regulation, accreditation, funding and academic standard-setting should be carried out by distinct, independent and empowered bodies.

### 13. LS NOD TO BILL TO OPEN UP NUCLEAR SECTOR FOR PRIVATE PLAYERS



- Tough provisions in India’s nuclear liability laws created a “silent phobia” among industry, prompting the government to bring a comprehensive Bill to address concerns and open the atomic energy sector for private participation, said Union Minister Jitendra Singh.
- Singh replied during a Lok Sabha discussion that passed the Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India (SHANTI) Bill by voice vote amid an Opposition walkout.
- The Opposition alleged the Bill would endanger citizens by letting suppliers of nuclear equipment escape liability in case of a nuclear accident.
- Singh clarified the government will deal only with the operator, and the operator must deal with the supplier.
- Operator liability has been rationalised through graded caps linked to reactor size to encourage newer technologies like small modular reactors.
- The Bill seeks to ensure full compensation to affected persons through a multi-layered mechanism.
- This includes operator liability, a proposed Nuclear Liability Fund backed by the government, and additional international compensation via India’s participation in the Convention on Supplementary Compensation.
- The CLND law defined “supplier” very broadly, preventing suppliers from participating in India’s civil nuclear sector; the Bill addresses this issue.
- The Bill seeks to modernise India’s nuclear framework in line with contemporary technological, economic, and energy realities, while strengthening existing safety, security, and regulatory safeguards under the Atomic Energy Act, 1962.
- Singh termed it a milestone legislation that will guide India’s developmental journey.
- He said India must align with global benchmarks for clean energy and reaffirmed the national target of 100 GW nuclear capacity by 2047.

- Opposition Congress raised concerns and urged referring the Bill to a parliamentary committee for closer examination.
- Congress MP Manish Tewari opposed the Bill, warning that removing supplier liability could harm India during a nuclear incident. He opposed repealing provisions of the Atomic Energy Act, 1962, and the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act, 2010.
- The minister argued SHANTI is not new legislation, but consists of modifications to the Atomic Energy Act, 1962, and the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act, 2010.

### 14. PARLIAMENTARY AWARDS FOR 8 MPS



- Eight parliamentarians, including debutant Iqra Choudhary of the Samajwadi Party and TR Baalu of the DMK, were honoured at the Lokmat Parliamentary Awards 2025.
- Iqra Choudhary, Lok Sabha member from Kairana, received the Best Debutant Woman Parliamentarian of the Year award.
- TR Baalu was conferred the Lifetime Achievement Award for the Year.
- The ceremony was attended by former CJI BR Gavai, former CEC SY Quraishi, spiritual leader Acharya Lokesh Muni, Lokmat Media Group Chairman Vijay Darda, and Editor-in-Chief Rajendra Darda.
- BJP leaders Sangita Kumari Singhdeo and Jagdambika Pal received the Best Woman Parliamentarian of the Year and Best Parliamentarian Award, respectively.
- In the Rajya Sabha category, nominated MP Sudha Murty received the Best Debutant Woman Parliamentarian of the Year.
- Congress leader Digvijaya Singh was honoured with the Lifetime Achievement Award.
- Trinamool Congress leader Dola Sen received the Best Woman Parliamentarian of the Year award.

### 15. JAL SHAKTI HACKATHON-2025 LAUNCHED TO DRIVE TECH-LED SOLUTIONS IN WATER SECTOR

- Union Jal Shakti Minister C. R. Patil launched the **Jal Shakti Hackathon-2025** and the **Bharat-WIN Portal** at Shram Shakti Bhawan, New Delhi.
- The initiative aligns with PM Narendra Modi’s ‘**Water Vision @2047**’, focused on strengthening scientific and technological solutions in India’s water sector.

- Patil said the Hackathon is a **national movement**, not just a competition, aimed at mobilising collective talent to build a secure, inclusive and technology-driven water future.
- The Hackathon seeks to promote innovation and make water solutions a **public good accessible to all stakeholders**.
- It adopts a **Whole-of-Government and Whole-of-Society (Jan Bhagidari) approach**, enabling broad participation by citizens, researchers, industries and innovators.
- The portal is hosted on the BHARAT-WIN platform and supports practical, scalable and field-ready solutions for grassroots water challenges.
- Focus areas include:
  - farm-level water conservation
  - rural water quality
  - smart monitoring systems
  - revival of traditional water practices
  - flood and drought management
- The initiative expands research in the water sector beyond limited institutions to include:
  - startups, MSMEs and industries
  - scientists and academia
  - labs, incubators and young innovators
  - rural and women youth
  - the private sector and global institutions
- Key feature: periodic hackathons and calls for proposals on national water priorities.

## 16.MERE PROOF OF VICTIM’S CASTE INSUFFICIENT FOR CONVICTION UNDER SC/ST ACT, SAYS SUPREME COURT



- The Supreme Court set aside the conviction of a man under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, in a gang rape and murder case due to failure to prove that the offence was committed with knowledge of the victim’s caste.
- A bench of Justices Ahsanuddin Amanullah and K. Vinod Chandran held that merely proving the victim belonged to a Scheduled Caste is insufficient for conviction under the SC/ST Act.
- The court stressed that knowledge of the victim’s caste is an essential ingredient for offences under the Act, which was not established in the present case.

- The judgment stated that the offence could not be said to have been committed with knowledge of the caste status of the victim.
- The Supreme Court questioned the Telangana High Court’s reliance on certain circumstances to sustain the conviction.
- It rejected reliance on a confession allegedly made before a witness summoned to the police station, noting that such a confession made while in police custody cannot be relied upon.
- The bench also dismissed the prosecution’s attempt to treat recoveries as admissible under Section 27 of the Evidence Act when the material objects were allegedly seized at the time of arrest.
- The court observed that when objects could be seized by a normal search during arrest, they cannot be converted into a Section 27 recovery.

## 17.LS PASSES G RAM G BILL AMID OPPOSITION PROTESTS

- The Lok Sabha passed a Bill to replace the 20-year-old MGNREGA with a new initiative guaranteeing 125 days of rural employment annually, despite protests from the Opposition.
- Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan argued that the change was needed to address shortcomings in the existing scheme.
- Chouhan said the GRAM G Bill followed extensive deliberations, as it was felt that ₹10–11 lakh crore should not be spent solely on wages but should also create permanent assets.
- The new initiative will prioritise water security by developing lakes, micro-irrigation channels, and core rural infrastructure, along with livelihood infrastructure and projects to mitigate extreme weather events.
- Congress MP K.C. Venugopal requested that the Bill be referred to a Parliamentary committee for detailed scrutiny.
- The Lok Sabha passed the Bill by voice vote amid Opposition uproar.
- After passage of the Bill, Speaker Om Birla adjourned the House for the day.

## 18.MODIFIED UDAN SCHEME TO CONNECT NORTH EAST BY HELIPADS, SMALLER AIRPORTS



- The Centre has proposed a modified **UDAN Scheme** to support helipads and smaller airports in hilly, aspirational and North Eastern districts.
- The plan aims to enhance regional connectivity to **120 new destinations** nationwide over the next ten years.
- The scheme is expected to cater to approximately **4 crore passengers** in that period.
- As per the Ministry of Civil Aviation, the modified scheme is currently at the **formulation stage**.
- Details of the modifications to the UDAN Scheme were submitted in the Rajya Sabha by **Minister of State for Civil Aviation Murlidhar Mohol**.
- The Minister highlighted that during the second round of bidding under RCS-UDAN and subsequent rounds, several helipads were identified and helicopter routes awarded for hilly and far-flung areas.
- So far, **80 RCS helicopter routes** have been operationalised.
- These routes connect **15 heliports** across eight priority states:
  - Arunachal Pradesh
  - Assam
  - Himachal Pradesh
  - Manipur
  - Meghalaya
  - Nagaland
  - Sikkim
  - Uttarakhand

## 19. 'DEMOW MODEL' GETS NATIONAL SPOTLIGHT IN ICMR SNAKEBITE STUDY



- The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has sanctioned a four-year multi-state research project worth **Rs 13.5 crore** to address the public health challenge of snakebite envenoming (SBE) in India.
- The project is titled **'Zero Snakebite Death Initiative: Community Empowerment & Engagement for Mitigation of Snakebite Envenoming.'**
- The goal is to develop a unified, replicable and effective national model for prevention and management of snakebites.
- The implementation research will cover seven states: **Assam, West Bengal, Odisha, Kerala, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra and Jharkhand.**

- Dr Jaideep Menon of Amrita Institute, Kerala, will lead the project as principal investigator.
- The **'Demow Model'** from Sivasagar district has been identified as a successful local model for scientific study and potential scaling.
- The project will integrate regional strategies such as:
  - community awareness, volunteer participation and referral networks under the **Demow Model**
  - distribution of protective equipment to high-risk communities under the **Maharashtra Model**
  - pre-hospital ASV administration during transport under the **Himachal Pradesh Model**
  - digital coordination and real-time surveillance under the **Kerala Model**
- The research will be implemented under the banner of **SARPA (Snakebite Awareness, Response, Prevention & Action)**.
- The initiative aims to connect vulnerable communities to the formal healthcare system and ensure snakebite victims receive timely treatment during the 'golden hour.'
- In Assam, the study will focus on **Demow and Gelekey blocks** of Sivasagar district.
- **Dr Surajit Giri** of Demow Hospital will serve as the investigator for Assam.
- Research and community-level study are scheduled to begin in **January 2026**.
- ICMR has allocated resources for implementation, including one research scientist and four technical staff members for each participating state.
- The multi-state effort seeks to generate strong evidence to reduce snakebite-related mortality and morbidity.
- India faces a disproportionately high burden of SBE, with an estimated **58,000 deaths per year**.
- Secondary objectives include tracking awareness improvement among stakeholders and developing a **real-time digital snakebite dashboard** for surveillance and data-based.

## 20. PM TO LAY FOUNDATION OF KAZIRANGA ELEVATED CORRIDOR IN JANUARY: CM



- PM Modi will lay the foundation stones for the 32-km elevated corridor through Kaziranga National Park and the new Kokrajhar–Gelephu railway link in January, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said.

- The CCEA earlier approved the elevated corridor project in the Kaliabor–Numaligarh section totalling 85.675 km at a cost of ₹6,957 crore; it is currently in the tendering stage.
- The proposed 69-km Kokrajhar–Gelephu railway line will be the first rail link between India and Bhutan.
- During the airport terminal inauguration, Sarma announced that an aero hub is coming up on a 60-acre land near Guwahati airport, which will house hotels, a convention centre, and pilot training simulation centres.
- The PM is likely to visit again in February to inaugurate the Guwahati–North Guwahati bridge and lay the foundation stone for the greenfield airport at Dolu in Cachar.
- Sarma said while the Civil Aviation Ministry has planned another terminal at Guwahati airport in 2032, the pace of Assam’s development may require a new terminal as early as 2028.

## 21.SUBANSIRI PROJECT UNIT 2 COMMISSIONED



- Union Minister of Power, Housing and Urban Affairs Manohar Lal inaugurated the commercial operation of Unit 2 of the 2,000 MW Subansiri Lower Hydroelectric Project through virtual mode from New Delhi.
- The commissioning was described as a testament to years of hard work, dedication and teamwork, symbolising India’s commitment to clean and sustainable energy, strengthening the national grid, supporting Northeast India’s growth and advancing the ‘Net Zero’ goals.
- With the commissioning of Unit 2, the project is progressing towards the commissioning of three units of 250 MW each shortly, followed by phased commissioning of the remaining four units during 2026–27.
- On full commissioning, the project will significantly add to India’s renewable energy capacity, enhance grid resilience and mark a new phase of large-scale clean energy generation.
- India’s largest hydropower project, the Subansiri Lower project comprises eight units of 250 MW each and is designed as a run-of-the-river scheme with small pondage.
- The project diverts water through eight head race tunnels to generate about 7,422 million units of renewable electricity annually.
- It features the largest dam in Northeast India, a 116-metre-high concrete gravity dam, strengthening regional infrastructure, grid resilience, flood moderation and water management in the Subansiri river basin.

- As the first cascaded dam on the Subansiri river, it provides flood moderation with a flood cushion of 442 million cubic metres.
- The gross reservoir storage is 1,365 million cubic metres at full reservoir level, with about one-third kept empty during floods to absorb excess water and protect downstream communities.
- NHPC has implemented extensive riverbank protection and erosion control measures along the Subansiri river, completing works up to 30 km downstream and extending them to 60 km at a cost of about Rs 522 crore.
- These measures have effectively stabilised riverbanks for over five years.
- NHPC is also supporting downstream community development through livelihood programmes in piggery, sericulture and handloom in collaboration with IRMA.
- These initiatives benefit around 5,000 women farmers and promote sustainable socio-economic development in the region.
- The project will supply electricity to 16 beneficiary States and provide free power allocations to Arunachal Pradesh and Assam.
- The northeastern region will receive 1,000 MW from the project, significantly strengthening regional energy availability.
- During construction, the project engaged around 7,000 local people daily and generated numerous direct and indirect employment opportunities through contractors, service providers and local markets.

## 22.RASHTRIYA PRERNA STHAL INAUGURATED ON VAJPAYEE’S BIRTH ANNIVERSARY



- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Rashtriya Prerna Sthal, a national memorial and complex dedicated to

the life and ideals of Bharat Ratna Atal Bihari Vajpayee at Lucknow.

- The inauguration coincided with the 101st birth anniversary of the former Prime Minister.
- Modi was accompanied by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Governor Anandiben Patel, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and other senior leaders.
- He received a warm welcome from people waving the tricolour and raising slogans in his honour.
- The expansive complex features 65-foot-high bronze statues of BJP ideologues Syama Prasad Mookerjee and Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya, alongside Atal Bihari Vajpayee.
- A state-of-the-art lotus-shaped museum spread across 98,000 square feet allows visitors to explore the contributions of these leaders to nation-building.
- According to official statements, the Rashtriya Prerna Sthal has been developed at an estimated cost of Rs 230 crore over 65 acres.
- The memorial is envisioned as a permanent national asset promoting leadership values, national service, cultural consciousness and public inspiration.
- Described as an inspirational complex of enduring national significance, it is expected to motivate present and future generations.
- The complex highlights the pivotal role played by Vajpayee, Mookerjee and Upadhyaya in shaping India's political thought and public life.
- Earlier, President Droupadi Murmu, Vice President C.P. Radhakrishnan and Prime Minister Modi attended a prayer ceremony at 'Sadaiv Atal' in New Delhi to pay tributes to Vajpayee.

- Atal Bihari Vajpayee was born in Gwalior on this day in 1924 and passed away in New Delhi on August 16, 2018.
- His birth anniversary is observed as Good Governance Day by the government.
- The BJP marked the occasion with nationwide events commemorating Vajpayee's legacy, involving Chief Ministers, Union Ministers, MPs and organisational leaders.
- Vajpayee served as India's 13th Prime Minister for three terms between 1996 and 2004.
- He is remembered for his significant contributions to India's economic growth.
- Operation Vijay, popularly known as the Kargil War, was fought and won during his tenure.
- Under his leadership, India emerged as a nuclear weapons power.



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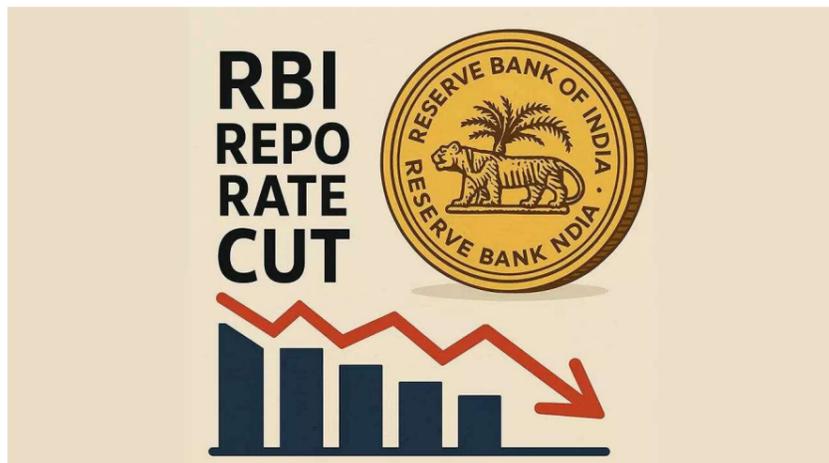
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## ECONOMICS

### 23. RBI CUTS REPO RATE TO SPUR GROWTH



- The Reserve Bank of India's Monetary Policy Committee unanimously decided to cut the repo rate by 25 basis points to 5.25 per cent from 5.5 per cent to support economic growth.
- RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra announced that the central bank will inject additional liquidity through open market operations, involving the purchase of government securities worth ₹1 lakh crore.
- The RBI will also introduce a dollar–rupee swap arrangement of \$5 billion to further enhance liquidity conditions.
- The Governor noted that economic growth accelerated to 8.2 per cent in the second quarter of the current financial year, while inflation sharply declined to 1.7 per cent.
- He described the prevailing macroeconomic environment as a “Goldilocks period” for the Indian economy.
- Benign inflation has provided adequate headroom for a repo rate cut aimed at boosting growth momentum.
- The RBI has revised its GDP growth projection upward to 7.3 per cent from the earlier estimate of 6.8 per cent.
- The Monetary Policy Committee has decided to maintain a neutral policy stance.
- A neutral stance implies neither aggressive liquidity infusion nor tightening, balancing inflation control with growth support.
- The RBI maintained this stance as earlier policy easing measures continue to play out and global trade-related implications are still unfolding.
- The Governor said India's foreign exchange reserves have risen to \$686 billion, sufficient to provide an import cover of around 11 months.
- Last week, the RBI Governor had indicated that favourable macroeconomic indicators had created room for a repo rate cut at the December 5 policy review.
- In the two previous policy reviews held in August and October, the MPC had kept the repo rate unchanged to ensure inflation remained under control.
- Prior to that pause, the RBI had reduced the repo rate by a cumulative 100 basis points from 6.5 per cent to 5.5 per cent in quick succession.

### 24. FM NIRMALA SITHARAMAN INTRODUCES INSURANCE LAWS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2025 IN LOK SABHA



- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman introduced the Insurance Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2025 titled "Sabka Bima Sabki Raksha" in the Lok Sabha.
- The Bill aims to strengthen policyholder protection, deepen insurance penetration and accelerate insurance sector growth.
- It seeks to amend the Insurance Act, 1938; the LIC Act, 1956; and the IRDAI Act, 1999.
- The amendments align with the goal of achieving "Insurance for All by 2047" and improving ease of doing business.
- A major proposal is raising the FDI limit in Indian insurance companies from 74% to 100% to attract long-term capital and technology transfer.
- The move aims to expand insurance penetration and social security coverage.
- A Policyholders' Education and Protection Fund is proposed for consumer protection and awareness.
- IRDAI will be empowered to disgorge wrongful gains to recover illegal or unfair gains by insurers and intermediaries.
- The Bill provides a legal framework for digital public infrastructure in insurance to protect policyholder data, ensure privacy and support innovation.
- One-time registration for insurance intermediaries is proposed to ease business operations and ensure continuous customer service.
- The threshold for IRDAI approval for transfer of shares in insurance companies will rise from 1% to 5% of paid-up capital.
- Net Owned Fund requirements for foreign reinsurers will be reduced from ₹5,000 crore to ₹1,000 crore to boost reinsurance capacity and attract global reinsurers.

## 25. G RAM G BILL GETS PRESIDENT'S ASSENT



- President Droupadi Murmu gave assent to the Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-GRAM-G) Bill, 2025.
- With assent, it becomes the VB-GRAM-G Act, 2025; notification published in the Gazette of India.
- Rural Development Ministry called it a decisive reform in India's rural employment and development framework.
- The scheme replaces the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), 2005 with a modern statutory framework aligned to Viksit Bharat @2047.
- The Act enhances statutory wage employment guarantee to 125 days per financial year for rural households.
- Objectives include empowerment, inclusive growth, convergence of development initiatives, saturation-based delivery and strengthening self-reliant Rural Bharat.
- The Bill was passed in Parliament last week.
- Anchored in empowerment, growth, convergence and saturation principles, the Act transforms rural employment from welfare to integrated development.
- Strengthens income security, modernises governance, improves accountability, and links wage employment to durable rural asset creation.
- Expands statutory employment to 125 days and embeds decentralised, participatory planning.
- Strengthens accountability, convergence, and saturation-based delivery; positions rural employment as strategic for inclusive growth.
- Mandates weekly payment of wages or within 15 days of work completion; delay compensation is payable for overdue payments.
- Wage employment aligned with creation of durable public assets in four priority domains:
  - core rural infrastructure
  - livelihood-related infrastructure
  - works to mitigate extreme weather events

- core rural infrastructure
- livelihood-related infrastructure
- works to mitigate extreme weather events
- All works originate from Viksit Gram Panchayat Plans (VGPPs), prepared participatorily at GP level and approved by Gram Sabha.
- Plans are digitally and spatially integrated with national platforms including PM Gati Shakti.
- Cost sharing pattern: 60:40 between Centre and states; 90:10 for Northeastern and Himalayan states; 100% central funding for UTs without legislatures.

## 26. PRESIDENT MURMU GRANTS ASSENT TO SHANTI BILL



- President Droupadi Murmu granted assent to the Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India (SHANTI) Bill.
- The Bill was passed by Parliament during the Winter Session.
- A government notification confirmed assent was granted on Saturday.
- The SHANTI Bill subsumes all existing laws governing the civil nuclear sector.
- It opens the civil nuclear sector to participation by private players.
- The Bill repeals the Atomic Energy Act, 1962 and the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act, 2010.
- These earlier laws were considered impediments to growth of India's civil nuclear sector.
- The SHANTI law allows private companies and joint ventures to build, own, operate and decommission nuclear power plants under government licence.
- Mining of uranium and thorium, enrichment, isotopic separation, spent fuel reprocessing, high-level radioactive waste management and heavy water production will remain exclusively with the Central government or government-owned entities.

## INTERNATIONAL

### 27.C-17 AIRLIFTS PARA FIELD HOSPITAL TO COLOMBO; ARMY DEPLOYS INTEGRATED TASK FORCE TO AID SRI LANKA



- A C-17 transport aircraft of the Indian Air Force airlifted a para field hospital unit from Agra to Colombo, while the Indian Army deployed an integrated task force under **Operation Sagar Bandhu** to provide critical relief and restore essential services in cyclone-hit Sri Lanka.
- The integrated task force is a high-readiness, self-contained composite HADR contingent aimed at supporting affected families.
- IAF Mi-17 helicopters continued humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations, airlifting over eight tonnes of relief supplies and evacuating 65 survivors, including foreign nationals, critically ill patients and a pregnant woman.
- The C-17 carried equipment and 73 medical professionals, landing in Colombo in the evening.
- India has been delivering aid to Sri Lanka through both sea and air routes using IAF transport aircraft and frontline naval platforms.
- INS Sukanya reached Trincomalee with additional relief material to support the ongoing operations.
- Immediately after the cyclone, India delivered **9.5 tonnes of emergency rations** via aircraft carrier **INS Vikrant** and frigate **INS Udaygiri**, which were already in Colombo for an international fleet review marking the Sri Lanka Navy's 75th anniversary.
- The two naval ships were rapidly tasked to provide immediate relief in coordination with Sri Lankan authorities.

### 28.AUSTRALIAN GOVT RELEASES NATIONAL AI PLAN

- The Australian government has released a National AI Plan to guide industry, researchers, governments, and the public on the safe and beneficial use of artificial intelligence.
- The plan prioritises supporting and reskilling workers affected by AI, increasing investment in data centres, and ensuring that productivity gains from AI are shared across the economy.

- From 2026, a government-funded **AI Safety Institute** will evaluate emerging AI capabilities and help address potential risks.
- The government emphasised that the goal is to ensure technology serves Australians, not the other way around.
- The plan states that Australia must encourage local AI development aligned with national priorities.
- Data centres are projected to consume 6% of Australia's total electricity demand by the late 2020s, up from 2% in 2024.
- Earlier proposals for 10 mandatory safeguards on "high-risk" AI — such as risk-management plans and options to challenge automated decisions — have been dropped, and no dedicated AI regulation legislation will be introduced.
- The Productivity Commission warned that strict AI regulation could cost the Australian economy 116 billion AUD (75.8 billion USD) over the next decade.

### 29.SEARCH TO RESUME FOR MH370 PLANE THAT VANISHED 11 YEARS AGO:



- Malaysia's Transport Ministry announced that the deep-sea search for **Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370** will resume on **December 30**, raising hopes of finally locating the aircraft more than a decade after its disappearance.
- Flight MH370, a Boeing 777, vanished on **March 8, 2014**, shortly after takeoff from Kuala Lumpur en route to Beijing, carrying **239 people**, most of them Chinese nationals.
- Satellite data later indicated that the aircraft deviated from its planned route and flew south toward the **far-southern Indian Ocean**, where it is believed to have crashed.
- The upcoming search will be conducted by US-based marine robotics company **Ocean Infinity**, which will operate intermittently from December 30 for a total of **55 days**, focusing on areas assessed to have the highest probability of locating the wreckage.
- Malaysia's government approved a "**no-find, no-fee**" contract with Ocean Infinity in March to resume the mission at a **new 15,000 sq km** underwater search zone.
- Ocean Infinity will be paid **\$70 million** only if the wreckage is found.
- The earlier attempt this year was halted in April due to bad weather.

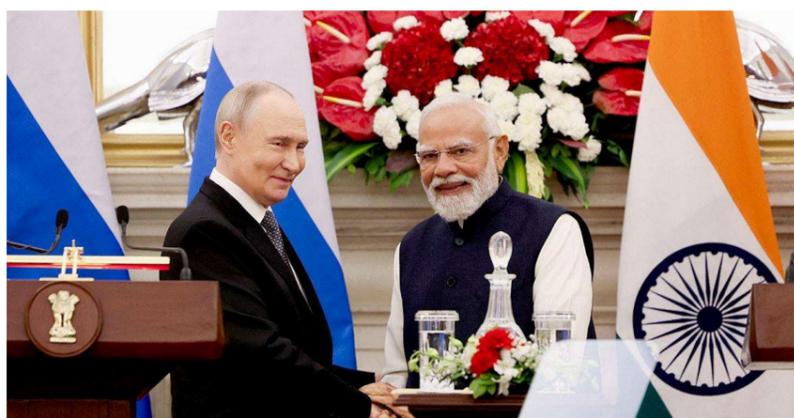
- Previous multinational search efforts, costing hundreds of millions of dollars, yielded no definitive clues, though debris believed to be from MH370 washed ashore on the **east African coast** and **Indian Ocean islands**.
- Ocean Infinity’s earlier private search in **2018** also did not locate the aircraft.

### 30.INDIA, CANADA DISCUSS ON FTA



- Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal held discussions with his Canadian counterpart Maninder Sidhu on the contours, objectives and modalities for launching negotiations on a proposed free trade agreement.
- Both sides have recently agreed to resume negotiations on the pact, officially termed the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), with a target of increasing bilateral trade to USD 50 billion by 2030.
- Negotiations for CEPA were paused by Canada in 2023 after bilateral relations deteriorated following allegations by then Prime Minister Justin Trudeau of a possible Indian link to the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar.
- CEPA is a form of free trade agreement under which both countries significantly reduce or eliminate customs duties on a wide range of goods, ease norms for the movement of skilled professionals, and promote investments.
- India’s exports to Canada increased by 9.8 per cent to USD 4.22 billion in 2024–25 from USD 3.84 billion in 2023–24.
- India’s imports from Canada declined by 2.33 per cent to USD 4.44 billion in 2024–25 compared to USD 4.55 billion in the previous fiscal.
- The renewed momentum in India–Canada relations followed talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney on the sidelines of the G7 summit at Kananaskis, Canada, in June.

### 31.MODI, PUTIN CALL FOR GLOBAL FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM



- India and Russia called for an “uncompromising” global fight against terrorism without hidden agendas and double standards, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi stating that terrorism is a direct assault on the values of humanity.
- During summit talks, Prime Minister Modi and Russian President Vladimir Putin condemned the terror attacks in Pahalgam in Jammu and Kashmir and at Moscow’s Crocus City Hall.
- Both leaders strongly advocated a zero-tolerance policy towards terrorism and reaffirmed their resolve to combat it in all forms.
- The two sides expressed strong commitment to prevent and counter terrorism, including cross-border movement of terrorists and terror financing.
- President Vladimir Putin arrived in New Delhi on Thursday evening to a ceremonial welcome, with Prime Minister Modi personally receiving him at the airport and later hosting a private dinner ahead of the 23rd India–Russia annual summit.
- A joint statement issued after the summit said the leaders unequivocally condemned all acts of terrorism as unjustifiable, irrespective of motivation.
- They called for concerted action against all UN-designated terrorist groups and entities, including Al Qaeda, ISIS/Daesh and their affiliates.
- The leaders stressed the need to eliminate terrorist safe havens, counter the spread of extremist ideology, disrupt terror financing networks, break links with transnational crime, and halt cross-border movement of terrorists.
- India and Russia reiterated the importance of an uncompromising fight against international terrorism and extremism in all its forms and manifestations.
- The statement highlighted the necessity of enhanced cooperation without hidden agendas or double standards, firmly grounded in international law and the UN Charter.
- Both countries emphasised strict implementation of relevant UN Security Council and UN General Assembly resolutions, along with balanced implementation of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.
- They underlined the primary responsibility of states and their competent authorities in combating terrorism.
- The leaders called for the expeditious finalisation and adoption of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism within the UN framework.
- They also urged effective implementation of UN General Assembly and Security Council resolutions addressing terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism.
- The two sides recalled the UN Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee special meeting held in India in October 2022 and the unanimous adoption of the Delhi Declaration.
- The Delhi Declaration was noted for addressing the use of new and emerging technologies for terrorist purposes.
- India and Russia highlighted concerns over terrorist misuse of information and communication technologies, payment systems, social media platforms, fundraising methods, and unmanned aerial vehicles (drones).
- The two countries also noted their close coordination on developments related to Afghanistan.

## 32.INDIA, RUSSIA HOLD TALKS TO EXPAND FISHERIES, DAIRY TRADE



- India and Russia held discussions on expanding bilateral trade in fisheries, meat and dairy products, while addressing market access issues.
- According to an official statement, Russia expressed willingness to import fishery and meat products from India and showed interest in veterinary vaccine development and animal health management.
- India’s Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying Minister Rajiv Ranjan Singh held a bilateral meeting with Oxana Lut, Minister of Agriculture of the Russian Federation, in New Delhi.
- Both sides discussed enhancing mutual trade in fisheries, animal and dairy products, resolving market access barriers, and fast-tracking the listing of establishments for exports.
- The talks also focused on cooperation in research, education and emerging aquaculture technologies, including deep-sea fishing vessels, modern aquaculture techniques and processing.
- Singh highlighted that India exported fish and fishery products worth USD 7.45 billion in 2024–25, including exports of USD 127 million to Russia.
- He underlined the scope for diversifying exports to Russia with products such as shrimp, prawns, mackerel, sardines, tuna, crab, squid and cuttlefish.
- The Russian side conveyed readiness to import fish and fishery products as well as meat and meat products from India, and expressed interest in developing the trout market through a joint technical project that could lead to joint ventures.
- Singh thanked Russia for recently listing 19 Indian fisheries establishments on the FSVPS platform, taking the total number of listed Indian establishments to 128.
- He urged Russia to expedite the listing of pending establishments, ensure regular updates of activity details, and revoke temporary restrictions.
- The minister requested early approvals for Indian entities in the dairy, buffalo meat and poultry sectors.
- For butter and dairy product exports, Singh noted that 12 Indian dairy manufacturing companies, including AMUL and the Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation (GCMMF), are awaiting registration with the FSVPS, and sought their approval.
- He emphasised cooperation in fisheries trade, technology transfer for deep-sea fishing vessels, and adoption of advanced aquaculture technologies such as Recirculating Aquaculture Systems (RAS) and Biofloc.

- The need for capacity building in deep-sea fishing, onboard processing and value addition, along with collaboration in emerging aquaculture technologies, was also stressed.
- Both sides agreed to work together on cold-water fisheries, including trout, and on genetic improvement in fisheries and aquaculture.
- India proposed the creation of a structured mechanism to advance cooperation in these areas through a Memorandum of Understanding and requested Russia to finalise and facilitate signing of the draft MoU already shared.

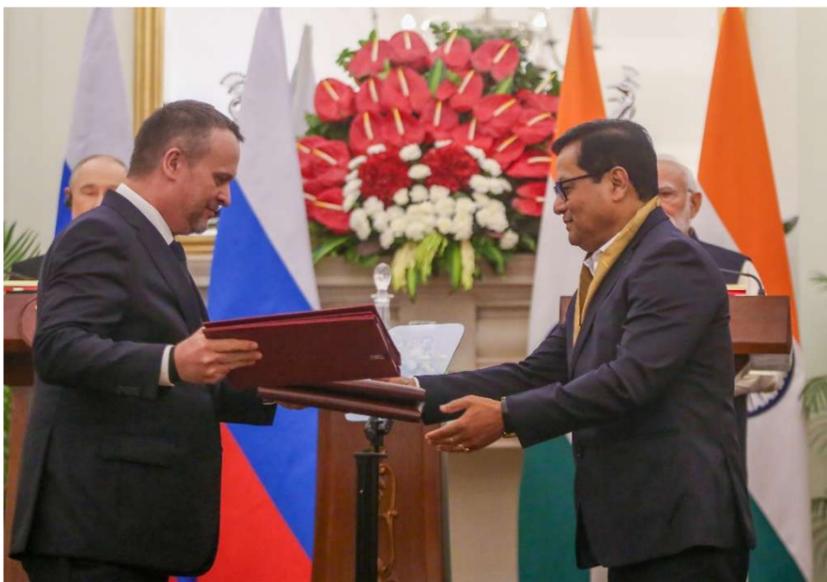
## 33.INDIA, RUSSIA SEAL KEY MARITIME MOUS TO BOOST CONNECTIVITY AND SHIPBUILDING COOPERATION



- India and Russia signed two landmark Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) to strengthen maritime cooperation, improve connectivity, enhance shipbuilding capacity, and promote long-term collaboration across key ocean routes.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi highlighted the strategic importance of maritime connectivity and confirmed accelerated work on the International North–South Transport Corridor (INSTC), the Northern Sea Route (NSR), and the Chennai–Vladivostok Eastern Maritime Corridor (EMC).
- Cooperation on training Indian seafarers for polar waters will open new dimensions of Arctic engagement and create employment opportunities for India’s youth.
- Deepening shipbuilding ties between the two countries has strong potential to boost the Make in India initiative, leading to job creation, skill development, and improved regional connectivity.
- One MoU focuses on developing training programs for Indian seafarers to operate in polar waters, aligned with the STCW Convention and the Polar Code.
- This agreement supports joint development of specialized training modules, exchange of best practices, and enhancement of capabilities for navigation and operations in extreme weather and ice-bound regions.
- The second MoU establishes a regular consultative framework between the Maritime Board of the Russian Federation and India’s Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways on maritime policy.
- This framework will enable coordination on maritime safety, security, and the peaceful use of seas and oceans in accordance with international law.

- Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal stated that the cooperation strengthens India’s maritime ambitions while delivering tangible socioeconomic benefits.
- By boosting shipbuilding under Make in India, advancing connectivity from the Indian Ocean to the Arctic, and equipping seafarers with advanced polar skills, the partnership aims to create faster and more resilient trade routes, generate future-ready jobs, and open new global opportunities through secure, modern, and mutually beneficial maritime collaboration.

**34.INDIA, RUSSIA SEAL MULTIPLE PACTS INCLUDING LABOUR MOBILITY, FREE 30-DAY E-TOURIST VISAS**



- India and Russia signed agreements to facilitate mobility of skilled workers for employment in each other’s countries and to enhance people-to-people exchanges.
- An agreement was concluded on temporary labour activity, allowing citizens of one country to work for a limited period in the territory of the other.
- Both sides also signed an agreement on cooperation to combat irregular migration.
- India and Russia agreed to grant a 30-day e-Tourist Visa on a gratis basis to each other’s nationals.
- These agreements are part of 16 pacts signed covering defence, trade, economy, healthcare, academics, culture, and media.
- A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between India’s Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways and Russia’s Ministry of Transport on training specialists for ships operating in polar waters.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi stated that this cooperation will strengthen engagement in the Arctic region and generate new employment opportunities for Indian youth.
- An MoU was also inked between India’s Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways and Russia’s Maritime Board to strengthen maritime cooperation and logistics.
- Indian companies signed an agreement with Russia’s URALCHEM to establish a urea manufacturing plant in Russia, marking a major advance in bilateral industrial cooperation.

- Additional MoUs were signed in areas such as food safety, ship training and operations, medical sciences, and consumer protection.
- These agreements involved institutions including India’s FSSAI, Russia’s consumer protection authority, and firms from the chemicals and fertilizer sectors.
- A protocol was signed between India’s Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs and Russia’s Federal Customs Service for cooperation on the exchange of pre-arrival information on goods and vehicles.
- A bilateral agreement was also concluded between India’s Department of Posts and JSC Russian Post to enhance postal cooperation.

**35.INDIA, RUSSIA REAFFIRM COMMITMENT TO FIGHT TERRORISM, TAKE ACTION AGAINST TERROR GROUPS**



- Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Russian President Vladimir Putin reaffirmed their shared commitment to preventing and countering terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.
- Both leaders jointly called for concerted action against all UN-listed terrorist groups and entities, including Al Qaeda, ISIS/Daesh, and their affiliates.
- In the joint statement released after the 23rd India–Russia Annual Summit, both sides emphasized strengthening bilateral and multilateral cooperation to combat terrorism, extremism, transnational organized crime, money laundering, terrorist financing, and illicit drug trafficking.
- The leaders reaffirmed their strong resolve to counter cross-border movement of terrorists, terrorist financing networks, and the existence of safe havens.
- They strongly condemned the terrorist attack in Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir, on April 22, 2025, and the attack at Crocus City Hall in Moscow on March 22, 2024.
- Both sides unequivocally condemned all acts of terrorism as criminal and unjustifiable, regardless of religion, ideology, or motivation, and irrespective of where, when, or by whom such acts are committed.
- PM Modi and President Putin stressed the need for firm implementation of relevant resolutions of the UN Security Council, UN General Assembly, and the balanced

implementation of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

- They called for coordinated efforts to dismantle terrorist safe havens, counter the spread of extremist ideology, shut down terrorist financing channels, break links with transnational crime, and halt the movement of foreign terrorist fighters.
- Both nations emphasized the importance of an uncompromising fight against international terrorism and extremism, based on international law, the UN Charter, and free from double standards or hidden agendas.
- The leaders highlighted the primary responsibility of states and their competent authorities in effectively combating terrorism.
- India and Russia reiterated their call for a zero-tolerance approach to terrorism.
- Both sides urged the expeditious finalization and adoption of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism within the UN framework, along with full implementation of UNGA and UNSC resolutions on countering terrorism and violent extremism.

### 36.INDIA, CHILE CONCLUDE TRADE TALKS

- India and Chile concluded the fourth round of negotiations for the proposed Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA).
- The five-day round of talks involved constructive and solution-oriented discussions, resulting in substantial progress across most chapters of the agreement.
- A majority of the chapters are nearing conclusion, with broad convergence on key textual elements and improved clarity on pending proposals.
- Steady progress was also made in areas requiring deeper technical engagement.
- The proposed CEPA is expected to help India gain access to critical minerals from Chile, which are essential inputs for the electronics, automobile, and solar energy sectors.
- India is seeking preferential treatment for the supply of critical minerals under the agreement.
- Important critical minerals involved include cobalt, copper, lithium, nickel, and rare earth elements.
- These minerals are crucial for clean energy technologies, including wind turbines, electric vehicles, and batteries for EVs.
- The government has successfully auctioned 14 critical mineral mines in India to strengthen domestic supply.
- India and Chile have had a Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) in place since 2006, and CEPA aims to expand its scope.
- The proposed CEPA will cover a broader range of sectors, including digital services, investment promotion and cooperation, micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), and critical minerals.
- Bilateral trade between India and Chile remains modest.
- In 2024–25, India’s exports to Chile declined by 2.46 per cent to USD 1.15 billion.

- During the same period, India’s imports from Chile increased by 72 per cent to USD 2.60 billion.
- Major Indian exports to Chile include automobiles and pharmaceuticals.
- India’s largest imports from Chile are minerals valued at around USD 1.58 billion, along with copper and chemicals.
- Chile is India’s fifth-largest trading partner in the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) region.
- India’s exports to Chile are diversified and include motor vehicles, drug formulations, chemicals, iron and steel products, man-made yarn and fabrics, cotton textiles, ready-made garments, auto components, electrical machinery and equipment, leather goods, rubber products, aluminium and its products, and ceramics.

### 37.INDIA, SOUTH KOREA EXPLORE COOPERATION, STRONGER TIES

- Indian Ambassador to South Korea, Gourangalal Das, and Korea Aerospace Administration (KASA) Administrator Yoon Youngbin discussed areas of space cooperation and ways to enhance business-to-business (B2B) engagement between the two countries.
- The meeting was held at the Indian Embassy in Seoul, where both sides held talks on strengthening space cooperation between India and South Korea.
- According to the Embassy, the discussions followed the recently concluded Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between KASA and the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).
- The two sides explored specific areas of collaboration in space activities and avenues to build B2B linkages between the emerging private space sectors of both countries.
- Ambassador Gourangalal Das congratulated KASA on the successful fourth launch of the NURI rocket.
- The MoU between KASA and ISRO aims to jointly undertake space projects, utilise science and technology infrastructure, and operate ground stations.
- KASA stated that the agreement is expected to further strengthen strategic partnerships, especially with countries of the Global South.

### 38.INDIA-NEPAL CULTURAL FEST SHOWCASES SHARED HERITAGE



- A festival showcasing the rich cultural heritage and traditions of Nepal and India, with special focus on Buddhism, was organised in Lumbini, the birthplace of Lord Buddha.
- The third edition of the India–Nepal Cultural Festival witnessed enthusiastic participation from civil society members, academics and Buddhist monks.
- The festival highlighted the shared cultural heritage and traditions of both countries, particularly their common Buddhist legacy.
- Several cultural performances by artists from India and Nepal were featured during the event.
- These included an Odissi dance recital with a Buddhist theme presented by a six-member Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) troupe.
- A traditional musical performance was also presented by the Nepali band ‘Ghugu Mugu’.
- As part of the festival, a seminar titled ‘Nepal–India Buddhist Heritage: A Common Legacy’ was organised at the Lumbini Buddhist University.
- The seminar brought together eminent Buddhist scholars from Nepal and India.
- Scholars shared insights on the importance of Buddhist heritage in strengthening cultural ties and fostering people-to-people connections between the two neighbouring countries.

### 39. NATIONAL DEFENCE AUTHORIZATION ACT (NDAA) NAMES INDIA KEY PARTNER IN US NUCLEAR, INDO-PACIFIC PLANS



- The latest US defence authorization bill assigns India an important role in Washington’s Indo-Pacific and nuclear strategies, calling for sustained consultations on India’s nuclear liability framework and placing New Delhi among a select group of partners shaping a new Indo-Pacific defence industrial architecture aimed at addressing the China challenge.
- Congressional leaders have released the compromise version of the fiscal 2026 National Defence Authorization Act (NDAA), a wide-ranging measure that integrates India across multiple strands of US strategic planning, including civil nuclear cooperation, defence co-production and regional maritime security.
- The NDAA, which has been enacted annually for over six decades, is expected to move through the House later this week.

- The bill mandates the US Secretary of State to submit an annual report to Congress for five years on the outcomes of a joint assessment with India, an unusually extended oversight requirement that reflects renewed political focus in Washington on the long-stalled civil nuclear cooperation pathway with New Delhi.
- India features prominently in the NDAA’s International Nuclear Energy Act of 2025, where it is classified as an “ally or partner nation,” on par with OECD members, for the purposes of global civil nuclear cooperation.
- The legislation also directs the US administration to frame a 10-year strategy to expand American nuclear exports, with an explicit requirement to analyse competition with the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China across the entire nuclear supply chain.
- Within the Indo-Pacific framework, India is included in a small group of priority partners—alongside Australia, Japan, South Korea, the Philippines and New Zealand—under a new Partnership for Indo-Pacific Industrial Resilience.
- This initiative aims to strengthen cooperation among the defence industrial bases of participating countries and to expand joint capability development, supply-chain resilience and defence innovation.
- Under the program, the US Secretary of Defence is authorised to enter into agreements, create working groups, provide technical assistance, and engage industry and academic institutions to advance co-development and co-production objectives.
- Annual reporting requirements for this initiative will continue through 2031, signalling the long-term strategic importance Washington attaches to building this Indo-Pacific industrial network.
- Beyond industrial collaboration, Congress outlines a wider regional strategy that calls for broadening US engagement with India, including through the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, to pursue the shared goal of a free and open Indo-Pacific.
- This broader engagement is to be advanced through military exercises, defence trade, humanitarian assistance and expanded cooperation on maritime security.
- The NDAA also reiterates Congress’s expectation that the Pentagon will continue to enhance its regional posture and deepen multilateral coordination to strengthen deterrence against China.

### 40. BHUTAN LAUNCHES FIRST INTERNATIONAL FLIGHT FROM GELEPHU; SIMANG DAIMARY REPRESENTS BTC CHIEF AT LAUNCH

- On **December 8**, Bhutan’s **Gelephu International Airport** saw its first international flight, officially opening the country’s southern gateway to regional aviation.
- The maiden flight was led by a **father-daughter duo**: **Captain Chenda Wangchuk** as the pilot and **Junior First Officer Choki Wangchuk** as the first flying officer. **Sangay Choden**, the younger sister, managed cabin service as Head Stewardess.

- The flight inaugurated the **Gelephu–Kolkata–Gelephu** service, operated by **Drukair**, marking Gelephu’s emergence as Bhutan’s newest international aviation hub.
- **Prime Minister of Bhutan Dasho Tshering Tobgay** inaugurated the launch in Gelephu, attended by Drukair officials and dignitaries. **Simang Daimary** of Kokrajhar, representing the Chief of BTC Hagrama Mohilary, was present at the ceremony.
- Daimary stated that this milestone would enhance Bhutan’s civil aviation, connectivity, and economic sustainability while strengthening ties with India. He emphasized that the people of Assam, particularly the BTC region, would benefit from this new air link.
- **Penjor** highlighted that the flight symbolized Bhutan-India friendship and extended benefits beyond Bhutan’s borders. The presence of his close friend, Simang Daimary, as a special guest of the **Bhutan India Friendship Association (BIFA)** underscored solidarity and shared prosperity.
- The opening of **Gelephu International Airport** is expected to be a vital gateway for Assam and Bodoland, promoting **trade, tourism, and cultural exchange** between India and Bhutan.
- The inaugural flight represents a **tangible step toward closer regional cooperation** and shared economic and cultural growth.

## 41. AUSTRALIA’S WORLD-FIRST SOCIAL MEDIA BAN FOR UNDER-16S COMES INTO FORCE



- **Australia’s world-first social media ban for under-16s** came into effect, requiring **10 major platforms** to prevent children under 16 from holding accounts.
- Platforms affected include **Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Threads, TikTok, Twitch, X, YouTube, Kick, and Reddit**. Authorities may update the list as needed.
- **Prime Minister Anthony Albanese**, in a video message to students, said the ban aims to support children growing up with algorithms, endless social media feeds, and the pressures they bring. He encouraged students to make the most of **school holidays** rather than spending all their time on phones.
- The ban is based on the **Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Bill 2024**, passed by the Australian federal Parliament in November 2024.

- Platforms must take **“reasonable steps”** to prevent under-16s from creating accounts, or face fines up to **49.5 million Australian dollars** (approx. \$32.8 million).
- There are **no penalties** for under-16s who access age-restricted platforms or for their parents or carers.

## 42. CABINET NOD TO INDIA-OMAN TRADE PACT; MAY BE SIGNED DURING PM’S OMAN VISIT

- The Union Cabinet approved a free trade agreement between India and Oman, which is expected to be signed during Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s visit to Oman on December 17–18, sources said.
- Negotiations for the pact, officially called the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), began in November 2023 and were concluded this year.
- Prime Minister Modi will undertake a four-day visit to Jordan, Ethiopia and Oman from December 15, with the Oman visit scheduled for December 17–18 at the invitation of Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.
- Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal is also expected to visit Oman for the signing of the agreement.
- Oman is India’s third-largest export destination among Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries.
- India already has a similar trade agreement with the UAE, which came into force in May 2022.
- Oman’s Shura Council (Majlis A’Shura) has concluded deliberations on the draft CEPA and approved the agreement.
- India–Oman bilateral trade stood at about USD 10.5 billion in 2024–25, with exports of USD 4 billion and imports of USD 6.54 billion.
- India’s key imports from Oman include petroleum products and urea, accounting for over 70 per cent of total imports, along with propylene and ethylene polymers, pet coke, gypsum, chemicals, iron and steel, and unwrought aluminium.
- Major Indian exports to Oman include mineral fuels, chemicals, precious metals, iron and steel, cereals, ships and boats, electrical machinery, boilers, tea, coffee, spices, apparel and food items.
- Meanwhile, India and New Zealand discussed ways to fast-track negotiations for a proposed free trade agreement between the two countries.
- New Zealand Trade Minister Todd McClay is in New Delhi to review progress with Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal.
- Formal negotiations for the FTA were launched on March 16, 2025, and four rounds of talks have been completed so far.
- India’s bilateral merchandise trade with New Zealand reached USD 1.3 billion in 2024–25, registering nearly 49 per cent growth over the previous year.
- The proposed FTA is expected to boost trade flows, promote investment linkages, strengthen supply chain resilience and create a predictable business framework.
- New Zealand’s average import tariff stands at 2.3 per cent.

- India and New Zealand had earlier begun negotiations for a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) in April 2010, but talks stalled in 2015 after nine rounds.
- India's key exports to New Zealand include textiles, medicines and medical supplies, refined petrol, agricultural machinery, automobiles, iron and steel, paper products, electronics, shrimps, diamonds and basmati rice.
- Major imports from New Zealand include agricultural goods, minerals, apples, kiwifruit, meat products such as lamb and mutton, milk albumin, lactose syrup, coking coal, logs and sawn timber, wool and scrap metals.

### 43. MIZORAM, ASSAM AGREE TO PROMOTE TOURISM SECTOR



- **Mizoram Tourism Minister Lalnghinglova Hmar** met his **Assam counterpart Ranjeet Kumar Dass** in Guwahati, with both sides agreeing to work jointly to promote tourism and to sign a formal cooperation agreement at the earliest convenient time.
- Hmar highlighted the recent rise in tourist footfall to Mizoram, noting that a majority of visitors come from **Assam**.
- Emphasising the need for closer coordination with the neighbouring state, he said deeper engagement with Assam would bring tangible benefits to tourism in Mizoram.
- Dass welcomed the proposal and discussed it immediately with officials concerned.
- Hmar said that although Mizoram is a small state with a limited population, efforts are under way to project it as a preferred tourist destination.
- He stressed the importance of strong partnerships, adding that collaboration with neighbouring states, rather than distant ones, would be more effective in advancing tourism.
- The Mizoram Tourism Minister requested that **images and video visuals promoting Mizoram** be showcased during major tourism events organised by Assam.
- Dass assured that the request would be accommodated.
- **Kumar Padmapani Bora**, Managing Director of the **Assam Tourism Development Corporation (ATDC)**, who was also present at the meeting, said workshops could be organised in Guwahati for Mizoram-based tour operators.
- He added that ATDC remains open to extending support to Mizoram for tourism promotion initiatives through **institutional collaboration**.

### 44. MODI FOR DOUBLING INDIA-JORDAN TRADE TO \$5 BN IN NEXT 5 YEARS

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi sought to double India-Jordan bilateral trade to USD 5 billion over the next five years.
- He invited Jordanian companies to benefit from India's high economic growth and strong returns.
- Modi arrived in Amman for a two-day visit on the invitation of King Abdullah II.
- Jordan is the first stop in his four-day, three-nation tour that will also include Ethiopia and Oman.
- Modi and King Abdullah II addressed the India-Jordan Business Forum, attended by Crown Prince Hussein and Jordan's Ministers of Trade, Industry and Investment.
- Both leaders emphasized strengthening business-to-business ties and converting potential opportunities into prosperity.
- King Abdullah II said Jordan's free trade agreements and India's economic strength could help create an economic corridor linking South Asia and West Asia.
- Modi highlighted India as the fastest-growing major economy, soon to become the third-largest globally.
- He invited Jordanian firms to partner with India and benefit from a large consumer market, robust manufacturing base, and predictable policy environment.
- Modi referred to India's over 8% growth being driven by productivity-oriented governance and innovation-led policies.
- India is Jordan's third-largest trading partner, and Modi stressed the importance of long-term, trusted partnerships beyond statistics.
- He said bilateral ties are rooted in civilizational linkages and contemporary cooperation.
- Modi proposed doubling bilateral trade to USD 5 billion within five years.
- He highlighted collaboration opportunities in digital public infrastructure, IT, fintech, health-tech and agri-tech, and encouraged startups from both nations to work together.

### 45. PM MODI'S ETHIOPIAN PARLIAMENT ADDRESS REINFORCES DEEPENING INDIA-ETHIOPIA PARTNERSHIP

- Prime Minister Modi received a warm and enthusiastic reception during his first bilateral visit to Ethiopia.
- Members of the Ethiopian Parliament welcomed him with greetings and a standing ovation before his address.
- Modi said the warm welcome made him feel "like home," reflecting deep-rooted ties between the peoples of both nations.
- In his address at the joint sitting of Parliament, he reiterated India's commitment to deepening cooperation with Ethiopia.

- Modi expressed appreciation to Ethiopia’s leadership and people for their hospitality.
- He said India and Ethiopia share values rooted in ancient civilisations that continue to shape their relations.
- Modi cited 'Vaccine Maitri' as an example of India's support during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- He articulated a vision of the Global South rising not against anyone, but for everyone, advocating inclusive progress.
- Modi described India’s role as a unifier supporting a united and developed Global South.
- The visit comes amid strong diplomatic momentum as India and Ethiopia elevate relations to a Strategic Partnership.
- The Strategic Partnership aims to expand cooperation in healthcare, trade, technology and sustainable development.

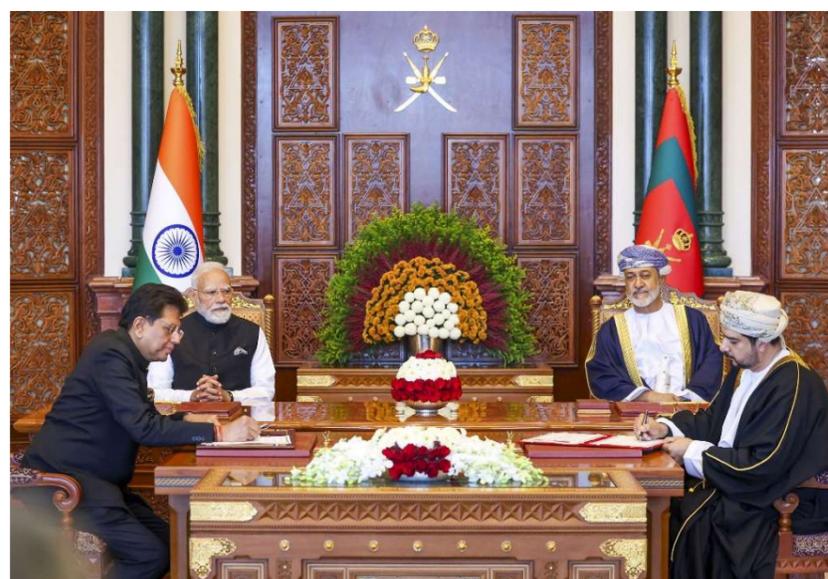
### 46.INDIA, ARGENTINA INK 2025-27 WORK PLAN IN AGRICULTURE



- India and Argentina signed a three-year work plan (2025–27) to strengthen cooperation in agricultural research, capacity building, and technology exchange.
- The plan was signed between ICAR (Indian Council of Agricultural Research) and INTA (Argentina’s National Institute of Agricultural Technology).
- ICAR Director General M.L. Jat and Argentina’s Ambassador Mariano Augustin Caucino exchanged the signed documents.
- The plan will be implemented through joint research, germplasm exchange, expert engagements, and structured training and study visits.
- Collaboration areas include natural resource management, sustainable agronomy including zero tillage, mechanisation, micro-irrigation and fertigation.
- Cooperation will extend to animal biotechnology, livestock improvement, production technologies for temperate and tropical crops, digital agriculture, biosafety and phytosanitary measures, and value chain development.
- Both nations are deepening cooperation in oilseeds and pulses value chains, farm mechanisation (including zero tillage, cotton harvesting machinery, drones), and horticulture value chain development, including infrastructure and planting material exchange.
- Germplasm exchange will cover soybean, sunflower, maize, blueberry, citrus, wild papaya species, guava, and selected vegetables.

- Study visits and training will include greenhouse vegetable production, floriculture, temperate fruits, post-harvest physiology, functional foods, veterinary diagnostics, precision livestock farming, waste-to-wealth technologies, microbial feed enhancement, digital agriculture, and sanitary and phytosanitary systems.
- In plant and animal health, the plan includes region-specific Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) elimination strategies and collaboration on locust surveillance and management.
- Both sides reaffirmed commitment to the bilateral scientific partnership and agreed to annual monitoring and review for effective implementation.

### 47.INDIA, OMAN INK FREE TRADE AGREEMENT AS MODI HOLDS TALKS WITH SULTAN HAITHAM



- India and Oman signed a free trade agreement (FTA) as PM Narendra Modi held talks with Sultan Haitham bin Tariq in Muscat to deepen strategic partnership.
- Modi arrived in Oman on the final leg of his three-nation tour and was welcomed at Al Baraka Palace before the bilateral meeting.
- Both leaders exchanged views on defence, security, trade, investment, energy, agriculture, technology, culture, and regional/global issues.
- They noted the completion of 70 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries.
- The two leaders welcomed the signing of the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), describing it as a milestone in bilateral ties.
- The CEPA was signed by Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal and Oman’s Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousef.
- The agreement is expected to enhance market access, promote investments, strengthen supply chain resilience, and diversify trade.
- This is Oman’s second FTA with an individual country and its first in about 20 years.
- PM Modi stated that the CEPA would boost confidence and energy in bilateral relations.
- Randhir Jaiswal said the agreement would increase bilateral trade, drive investment, catalyse economic diversification, create growth and generate jobs.

- India has recently signed several FTAs, including with the UK (2025), EFTA (2024), Australia (2022), UAE (2022), and Mauritius (2021).
- Modi’s visit marks the 70th anniversary of diplomatic ties and is his second visit to Oman.
- Oman is the third-largest export destination for India among GCC countries.
- Bilateral trade in 2024–25 was around USD 10.5 billion (exports USD 4 billion; imports USD 6.54 billion).
- India’s major imports from Oman include petroleum products and urea, accounting for over 70% of imports; other imports include polymers, petcoke, gypsum, chemicals, iron and steel, and aluminium.
- India’s key exports to Oman include mineral fuels, chemicals, precious metals, iron and steel, cereals, ships and boats, electrical machinery, boilers, tea, coffee, spices, apparel, and food items.

### 48.NEPAL AND INDIA UNITE TO BOOST CROSS-BORDER TOURISM AT POKHARA MEET

- Officials from Nepal, India and other stakeholders stressed the need for joint efforts to promote cross-border tourism during the Second India–Nepal Tourism Meet held in Pokhara.
- The event was jointly organised by the Embassy of India in Kathmandu, the Nepal Tourism Board and the Pokhara Tourism Council.
- The focus was on promoting tourism between Uttar Pradesh and Nepal, particularly in western Gandaki Province where Pokhara is located.
- Rakesh Pandey, Deputy Chief of Mission at the Embassy, highlighted connectivity improvements boosting cross-border tourism.
- He emphasised joint efforts to fully utilise the tourism potential of both countries, including development and promotion of religious and cultural circuits.
- India and Nepal have already agreed to jointly promote the **Ramayana** and **Buddhist** tourist circuits.
- Both governments have decided to establish the **Indo-Nepal Tourism Forum**, including representatives from government and private sectors.
- Gandaki Province Chief Minister Surendra Raj Pandey welcomed growing tourism cooperation with India, especially in Pokhara and Muktinath.
- Dinesh Kumar, Joint Director of Uttar Pradesh Tourism, presented tourism circuits in Uttar Pradesh with reference to the upcoming Magh Mela and shared best practices in tourism policy.
- Deepak Raj Joshi, CEO of the Nepal Tourism Board, noted that India is the largest source of foreign tourists visiting Nepal and highlighted initiatives to enhance India–Nepal tourism cooperation.
- The B2B event at the meet was attended by around **10 delegates from India** and **60 delegates from Nepal**.
- Tour operators discussed possible collaboration in Buddhist circuits, wildlife tourism and adventure tourism.

- Discussions also focused on promoting cross-border tourism via land routes and cooperation in spiritual tourism.
- As a continuation of the programme, the Nepal Tourism Board and Pokhara Tourism Council organised a familiarisation tour for a delegation from Uttar Pradesh from December 15 to 17.

### 49.INDIA SEALS FTA WITH NEW ZEALAND, THIRD PACT THIS YEAR

- India and New Zealand have concluded talks on a free trade agreement (FTA) that will give India tariff-free access to New Zealand markets, attract USD 20 billion in investment over 15 years, and help double bilateral trade in the next five years.
- This is India’s third free trade agreement in 2025, following similar pacts with the UK in July and Oman earlier this month.
- The agreement will provide India with more temporary employment visas and easier access for pharmaceuticals and medical devices in New Zealand.
- The FTA will eliminate or reduce tariffs on 95% of New Zealand’s exports to India, including wool, coal, wood, wine, avocados, and blueberries.
- To protect domestic farmers and industry, India has made no concessions on imports of dairy products, onions, sugar, spices, edible oils, and rubber.
- New Zealand has committed to investing USD 20 billion in India over the next 15 years across manufacturing, infrastructure, services, innovation, and job creation.
- New Zealand will receive quota-based tariff cuts for kiwifruit and apple exports to India.
- The agreement is expected to be signed in the first half of 2026 and aims to double bilateral trade to USD 5 billion within five years.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi and New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon announced the successful conclusion of the “historic, ambitious and mutually beneficial” India–New Zealand FTA following a telephone conversation.
- The pact will help Indian exporters diversify shipments in the Oceania region, building on India’s existing trade agreement with Australia.
- Under the agreement, New Zealand will get duty-free access to goods such as sheep meat, wool, coal, and over 95% of forestry and wood products.
- Duty concessions will also apply to items such as kiwifruit, wine, some seafood, cherries, avocados, persimmons, bulk infant formula, Manuka honey, and milk albumins.
- India has excluded politically sensitive sectors such as dairy products (milk, cream, whey, yoghurt, cheese) to protect domestic farmers and MSMEs.
- Other excluded products include onions, chana, peas, corn, almonds, sugar, artificial honey, animal and vegetable fats and oils, arms and ammunition, gems and jewellery, copper, aluminium, and related products.
- In the services sector, New Zealand will offer a temporary employment visa pathway for 5,000 Indian professionals annually, with stays of up to three years.
- The visa pathway covers professions such as AYUSH practitioners, yoga instructors, Indian chefs, music teachers,

- and high-demand sectors including IT, engineering, healthcare, education, and construction.
- Negotiations began during Prime Minister Luxon’s visit to India in March 2025, and the FTA was concluded in a record nine months.
- The agreement is expected to deepen economic engagement, enhance market access, promote investment flows, strengthen strategic cooperation, and create opportunities for innovators, entrepreneurs, farmers, MSMEs, students, and youth.
- New Zealand will set up a dedicated Agri-Technology Action Plan for kiwifruit, apples, and honey to help Indian farmers improve productivity and quality.
- Cooperation will include centres of excellence, improved planting material, capacity building, technical support for orchard management, post-harvest practices, supply chains, and food safety.
- New Zealand has committed to cooperation on Geographical Indications (GIs), including amending its laws to facilitate registration of Indian wines and spirits.
- Cooperation has also been agreed in AYUSH, culture, fisheries, audiovisual tourism, forestry, horticulture, and traditional knowledge systems.
- The pact includes provisions to address non-tariff barriers through regulatory cooperation, streamlined customs procedures, sanitary and phytosanitary measures, and technical barriers to trade disciplines.
- The pharma and medical devices sector will benefit from faster regulatory access in New Zealand through acceptance of GMP and GCP inspection reports from comparable regulators such as the US FDA, EU EMA, and UK MHRA.
- Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said this is the seventh trade agreement finalised by the NDA government, after pacts with the UAE, Australia, the UK, EFTA bloc, Oman, and Mauritius.
- He noted that this is the first FTA where all key Indian negotiators were women, with Joint Secretary Petal Dhillon serving as India’s chief negotiator.
- India has so far finalised FTAs with three members of the Five Eyes alliance—Australia, the UK, and New Zealand.
- Bilateral merchandise trade stood at USD 1.3 billion in 2024–25, while total trade in goods and services reached about USD 2.4 billion in 2024.
- Services trade alone reached USD 1.24 billion, led by travel, IT, and business services.
- Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal said that although only five formal negotiation rounds were held, both sides remained in continuous contact to successfully conclude the agreement.
- The India–New Zealand free trade agreement, the closure of negotiations for which was announced on Monday, is likely to be signed within three months and implemented next year.
- Zero-duty market access on 100% of India’s exports, with India offering tariff liberalisation on 70% of tariff lines covering 95% of India–New Zealand bilateral trade.
- The enhanced market access will improve the competitiveness of India’s labour-intensive sectors, including textiles, apparel, leather, footwear, marine products, gems and jewellery, handicrafts, engineering goods, and automobiles.
- A dedicated quota of temporary employment entry visas for 5,000 professionals, along with 1,000 work and holiday visas.

- New Zealand has committed to facilitating investments worth USD 20 billion into India over the next 15 years.
- Establishment of Agricultural Productivity Partnerships through Centres of Excellence by New Zealand for apples, kiwifruit, and honey to boost productivity.
- Duty-free inputs for India’s manufacturing sector, including wooden logs, coking coal, and waste and scrap of metals.
- Cooperation agreed in AYUSH, culture, fisheries, audiovisual tourism, forestry, horticulture, and traditional knowledge systems.
- In addition to tariff liberalisation, the FTA includes provisions to address non-tariff barriers through enhanced regulatory cooperation.
- Bilateral merchandise trade reached USD 1.3 billion in 2024–25, while total trade in goods and services stood at approximately USD 2.4 billion in 2024, with services trade alone reaching USD 1.24 billion.

## 50. TRUMP ANNOUNCES PLANS FOR NEW NAVY ‘BATTLESHIP’ AS PART OF A ‘GOLDEN FLEET’



- President Donald Trump announced a plan for the US Navy to build a new, large warship he described as a “battleship,” as part of a broader vision to create a “Golden Fleet.”
- Trump claimed the ships would be the fastest, biggest and “100 times more powerful than any battleship ever built,” during an announcement at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida.
- According to Trump, the first ship, to be named USS Defiant, will be longer and larger than World War II-era Iowa-class battleships.
- The proposed ship is expected to be armed with hypersonic missiles, nuclear cruise missiles, rail guns and high-powered lasers, technologies that are currently in different stages of development by the Navy.
- The announcement comes a month after the Navy scrapped plans for a new small warship due to delays and cost overruns, opting instead for a modified version of a Coast Guard cutter.
- The Navy has also struggled to deliver other newly designed vessels, including Ford-class aircraft carriers and Columbia-class submarines, on time and within budget.
- Several of the technologies Trump mentioned have faced challenges in development.

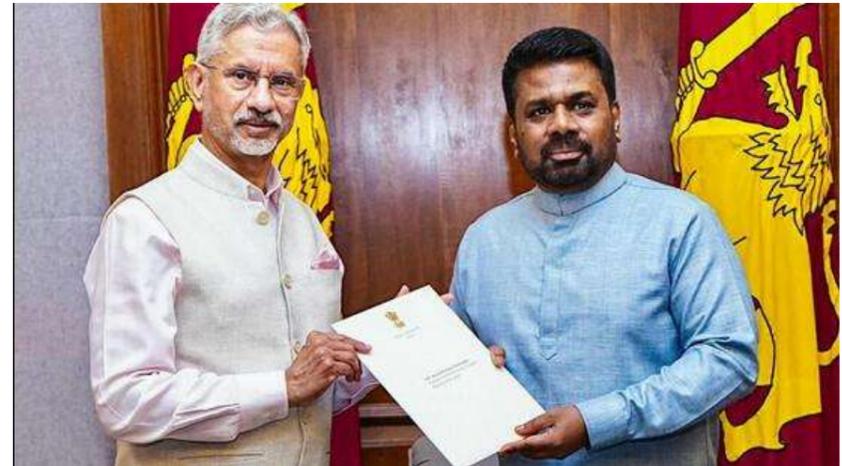
- The Navy spent hundreds of millions of dollars over more than 15 years trying to deploy a rail gun on ships before abandoning the effort in 2021.
- Laser weapons have seen limited success, with one system designed to disable drone sensors now deployed on eight destroyers after eight years of development.
- Developing or deploying nuclear cruise missiles on ships could potentially violate non-proliferation treaties signed by the United States and Russia.
- A US official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said design work for the new ship is underway, with construction planned to begin in the early 2030s.
- Trump and Navy Secretary John Phelan described the proposed Trump-class warship as a spiritual successor to 20th-century battleships.
- Historically, battleships were large, heavily armoured ships armed with massive guns designed to engage enemy ships or bombard land targets.
- According to the “Golden Fleet” website, the new “guided missile battleship” will be roughly the same size as Iowa-class battleships but weigh about half as much, around 35,000 tons.
- The ship is expected to operate with a much smaller crew of approximately 650 to 850 sailors.
- Its primary weapons will be missiles rather than large naval guns.

## 51. NZ TO AMEND LAWS FOR GI REGISTRATION OF INDIAN GOODS BESIDES WINES, SPIRITS

- New Zealand has taken a binding commitment under its Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with India to amend its laws within 18 months of the pact’s implementation to facilitate registration of Indian geographical indication (GI) goods other than wines and spirits.
- At present, New Zealand’s GI law allows registration only for Indian wines and spirits.
- A GI is a type of intellectual property right granted to agricultural, natural or manufactured products (including handicrafts and industrial goods) originating from a specific geographical area.
- GI tags signify quality and distinctiveness linked to the place of origin.
- Once a product receives a GI tag, no individual or company can sell similar products under the same name.
- Other benefits of GI status include legal protection, prevention of unauthorised use and promotion of exports.
- The commerce ministry said New Zealand has committed to taking all necessary steps, including legal amendments, to allow registration of India’s wines, spirits and other goods, a benefit earlier extended to the European Union.
- The timeline for implementing these changes is 18 months from the date the agreement enters into force.
- India and New Zealand announced the conclusion of FTA negotiations on Monday.
- The agreement is expected to be implemented after formal signing, a process likely to take around 7–8 months.

- Indian products with GI tags include Basmati rice, Darjeeling tea, Chanderi fabric, Mysore silk, Kullu shawl, Kangra tea, Thanjavur paintings, Allahabad surkha, Farrukhabad prints, Lucknow zardozi and Kashmir walnut wood carving.

## 52. INDIA UNVEILS \$450 MILLION RECONSTRUCTION PLAN FOR SRI LANKA AFTER CYCLONE DITWAH



- The Government of India has announced a reconstruction and recovery package worth USD 450 million for Sri Lanka in the aftermath of Cyclone Ditwah, highlighting India’s support and regional solidarity.
- The announcement was made by External Affairs Minister Dr S. Jaishankar during his visit to Sri Lanka, where he served as the special envoy of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- Dr Jaishankar met Sri Lankan President Anura Dissanayake and conveyed the Prime Minister’s warm wishes to the people of Sri Lanka, assuring continued Indian support in reconstruction efforts.
- The cyclone struck Sri Lanka in late November, affecting all 25 districts and causing widespread destruction.
- The reconstruction package comprises a USD 350 million concessionary loan and a USD 100 million grant.
- Assistance will focus on the rehabilitation and reconstruction of essential infrastructure, including roads, railways and bridges.
- The package also supports the construction of dwelling units that were fully or partially damaged by the cyclone.
- Special assistance has been earmarked for the health and education sectors, whose buildings suffered severe damage.
- A dedicated focus has been placed on the agricultural sector to mitigate potential food shortages.
- India has also pledged support to strengthen Sri Lanka’s disaster response and preparedness capabilities.
- As part of India’s first responder initiative under ‘Operation Sagar Bandhu’, Dr Jaishankar inaugurated a 120-foot two-way Bailey Bridge in Kilinochchi district of Sri Lanka’s Northern Province.
- The 110-ton Bailey Bridge was airlifted and installed to restore connectivity in one of the worst-affected areas.
- Dr Jaishankar also met Sri Lankan Prime Minister Dr Harini Amarasuriya and reaffirmed India’s commitment to Sri Lanka’s recovery.

- He stated that the reconstruction package reflects long-standing civilisational ties and India’s ‘Neighbourhood First’ policy, guided by the Vision MAHASAGAR initiative.
- Cyclone Ditwah caused damage estimated at USD 4.1 billion and affected nearly two million people through floods, landslides and destruction of homes, farmland, roads and schools.
- Sri Lankan leaders acknowledged that India’s assistance demonstrated the sincerity of neighbourhood friendship.

### 53. FIRST WOMEN-LED TEAM NEGOTIATED INDIA-NEW ZEALAND FTA: PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI



- Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the India–New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (FTA) is a historic milestone as it is India’s first women-led FTA, with almost the entire negotiating team comprising women.
- The Prime Minister shared an article by Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal, which explains that India’s FTAs today go beyond tariff reductions and are part of a broader mission to strengthen the economy and improve lives.
- The article highlights that the India–New Zealand FTA marks a defining moment in India’s trade diplomacy.
- The Agreement opens new avenues for comprehensive economic cooperation by improving market access for Indian goods.
- It expands opportunities in services and mobility and deepens collaboration in agriculture, investment and emerging sectors.
- The FTA eliminates duty on 100 per cent of Indian exports.
- It also includes a \$20 billion investment commitment over 15 years to strengthen long-term economic and strategic cooperation.
- New Zealand’s market access offer provides immediate elimination of duties (zero duty) on 100 per cent of tariff lines, covering 8,284 tariff lines from the date of Entry into Force (EIF).
- The benefits of the Agreement are expected to be broad-based, benefiting farmers, MSMEs, students and skilled professionals.
- The FTA reinforces India’s position as a trusted and forward-looking global partner.

- It also advances the vision of a globally integrated Viksit Bharat 2047, according to the government.

### 54. UN TURNS 80 IN 2025 AMID GLOBAL CRISES; INDIA SAYS READY FOR GREATER ROLE

- The United Nations marked its 80th anniversary in 2025 amid global conflicts, financial stress and criticism from US President Donald Trump, as India urged the organisation to focus on “leadership and hope” and expressed readiness to take on a greater role.
- Ongoing wars in Ukraine and Gaza, along with conflicts from Sudan to Myanmar, continued unabated, highlighting the inability of the UN and its polarised Security Council to effectively address global crises.
- With humanitarian emergencies, climate instability and economic inequality persisting, questions were raised about the relevance of the UN and its ability to respond to 21st-century challenges.
- Against this backdrop, India made a strong call for reformed multilateralism, stressing the urgent need to modernise the UN system.
- Addressing the UN General Assembly in September, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said an objective assessment would show the UN to be in a state of crisis.
- India said resistance to reform has been central to the erosion of the UN’s credibility and reiterated its willingness to assume greater responsibilities in an expanded Security Council.
- Jaishankar emphasised that both permanent and non-permanent membership of the Security Council must be expanded to make it truly representative of the world in 2025.
- He stated that the UN’s ninth decade must be one of leadership and hope, adding that India would do its fair share and more.
- In the fight against terrorism, India continued to take a leading role in countering the global menace.
- India exercised its right to defend its citizens through Operation Sindoor, targeting terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir after the Pahalgam terror attack in April by The Resistance Front.
- Despite Pakistan being a non-permanent member of the Security Council at the time, the UN strongly condemned the Pahalgam attack and called for accountability of the perpetrators, organisers, financiers and sponsors.
- The Resistance Front, a proxy of Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba, was mentioned for the first time in a UN Security Council report for its role in the attack.
- Calls for reform also came from within the UN, as Secretary-General António Guterres urged reforms to make the Security Council more representative, transparent and effective.



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## SCI-TECH

### 55. ISRO LINES UP 7 LAUNCHES BY MARCH 2026



- ISRO has lined up **seven launch missions** by **March next year**, including missions to demonstrate **indigenous electric propulsion systems, quantum key distribution technologies**, and the **first uncrewed mission** of the **Gaganyaan project**.
- The **first of the seven launches** is expected to take place **next week**.
- India's heaviest rocket, **LVM3**, will place the **Bluebird-6 communication satellite** of US-based **AST SpaceMobile** into orbit under a commercial agreement with ISRO's **New Space India Ltd (NSIL)**.
- The **human-rated LVM3** will undertake the **first uncrewed Gaganyaan mission** early next year, carrying the humanoid robot **Vyommitra** aboard the crew module.
- One more uncrewed Gaganyaan mission is planned later next year before ISRO sends **Indian astronauts into low Earth orbit in 2027**.
- The first uncrewed Gaganyaan mission will demonstrate **end-to-end mission capability**, including aerodynamics characterisation of the human-rated launch vehicle, orbital module operations, re-entry and recovery of the crew module.
- Next year will also witness the launch of **India's first industry-built PSLV**, which will place the **Oceansat satellite** into orbit.
- The same PSLV mission will also carry the **Indo-Mauritius Joint Satellite** and **LEAP-2 satellite** of **Dhruva Space** as co-passengers.
- To boost commercial satellite launches, **NSIL** has awarded a contract to a **HAL-L&T consortium** to manufacture **five PSLV rockets** under a technology transfer agreement signed in September this year.
- An **ISRO-built PSLV** will launch the **EOS-N1 earth observation satellite** for a strategic user, along with **18 smaller satellites** from Indian and international customers.
- The **GSLV Mk-II rocket** is expected to launch the **EOS-5 (GISAT-1A)** satellite, replacing **GISAT-1**, which failed to reach its intended orbit in 2021.

- The **PSLV63 mission** will place the **TDS-01 satellite** into orbit to demonstrate technologies such as **high-thrust electric propulsion, quantum key distribution**, and an **indigenous travelling wave tube amplifier (TWTA)**.
- The **high-thrust electric propulsion system** will enable ISRO to launch **all-electric satellites** in the future, making satellites lighter and reducing dependence on chemical fuels.
- Technologies validated through **TDS-01** will be used in future **navigation and communication missions**.
- A conventional **four-tonne communication satellite** carries over **two tonnes of liquid fuel**, whereas electric propulsion reduces fuel requirement to about **200 kg**.
- With reduced fuel mass, an electric propulsion-based satellite will weigh **less than two tonnes** while delivering performance comparable to a **four-tonne satellite**.
- The **indigenous travelling wave tube amplifier** will enhance **self-reliance in critical satellite transponder technologies**.
- The **Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV)** will also launch a **dedicated satellite** before **March 2026**.

### 56. DRDO, RASHTRIYA RAKSHA UNIVERSITY SIGN MOU TO BOOST DEFENCE AND INTERNAL SECURITY RESEARCH:



- The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and Rashtriya Raksha University (RRU) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen collaboration in research, education, training, and technology support for defence and internal security.
- The MoU was signed by DRDO Distinguished Scientist and Director General (Production Coordination & Services Interaction) Chandrika Kaushik and RRU Vice-Chancellor Prof. Bimal N. Patel, according to the Ministry of Defence.
- Under the agreement, both institutions will jointly work on studies related to emerging operational challenges, technology gap analysis, forecasting future security requirements, and life-cycle management of DRDO-developed systems inducted into the Central Armed Police Forces and other agencies under the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- The collaboration aims to enhance India's self-reliance in defence and internal security technologies, in line with the

Aatmanirbhar Bharat vision and the “whole-of-nation” approach during Amrit Kaal.

- The MoU reflects a shared commitment to integrating technology, academic expertise, and operational insights to strengthen national security preparedness and strategic autonomy.
- Rashtriya Raksha University, an institution of national importance under the Ministry of Home Affairs and a UGC-designated Nodal Centre for Defence Studies, contributes academic, training, and policy expertise in internal security.
- DRDO, as India’s premier defence research organisation, brings its experience in developing cutting-edge indigenous technologies for the Armed Forces and security agencies.
- As part of the partnership, DRDO and RRU will undertake joint research projects, PhD and fellowship programmes, and specialised training and capacity-building initiatives for security forces.
- These initiatives are expected to enhance skill development, innovation, and operational effectiveness across defence and internal security domains.
- The Ministry of Defence said the partnership is an important step towards building a robust ecosystem that integrates research, education, and practical application to meet India’s evolving security needs.

## 57.ISRO’S ‘BAHUBALI’ ROCKET PLACES 6,000 KG US SAT INTO ORBIT



- In a historic Christmas Eve mission, ISRO’s heaviest rocket, LVM3-M6, successfully placed a heavy US communication satellite into orbit, which the space agency chief described as a seasonal gift to the country.
- The 6,100 kg BlueBird Block-2 satellite is part of a global Low Earth Orbit (LEO) constellation aimed at providing direct-to-mobile connectivity through satellites.
- The mission will enable 4G and 5G voice and video calls, text messaging, streaming and data services for users everywhere at all times.
- ISRO said it was the heaviest satellite ever launched from Indian soil.
- The LVM3-M6 rocket, nicknamed ‘Bahubali’ for its heavy-lift capability, injected the satellite into its intended orbit in a textbook launch.
- The mission was carried out under a commercial agreement between NewSpace India Ltd (NSIL) and US-based AST SpaceMobile (AST & Science, LLC).
- NewSpace India Ltd is the commercial arm of ISRO.

- The 43.5-metre-tall rocket lifted off at 8.55 am from the second launch pad after a 24-hour countdown.
- After a flight of about 15 minutes, the spacecraft separated successfully from the launch vehicle, triggering cheers at the Mission Control Centre.
- The satellite was placed in a 518 km circular orbit, close to the planned altitude of 520 km.
- ISRO said the LVM3 rocket has demonstrated a 100 per cent success rate.
- Weighing 6,100 kg, the communication satellite is the heaviest payload placed into Low Earth Orbit in LVM3 launch history from Indian soil.

## 58.ISRO SUCCESSFULLY LAUNCHES BLUEBIRD BLOCK-2 SATELLITE FROM SRIHARIKOTA

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) successfully launched the BlueBird Block-2 communication satellite of



US-based AST SpaceMobile, with the mission declared a success after the satellite was placed into orbit.

- The launch took place from the Satish Dhawan Space Station, Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh, at 8:55 AM IST.
- The mission aims to deploy a next-generation communication satellite designed to provide high-speed cellular broadband directly to smartphones across the world.
- BlueBird Block-2 is the heaviest payload ever launched into Low Earth Orbit using the LVM3 rocket.
- ISRO stated that the LVM3-M6/BlueBird Block-2 Mission is a dedicated commercial mission conducted onboard the LVM3 launch vehicle.
- This mission marks the sixth operational flight of the LVM3 rocket.
- The satellite is the largest commercial communications satellite to be deployed in Low Earth Orbit and the heaviest payload launched by LVM3 from Indian soil.
- LVM3 is a three-stage launch vehicle developed by ISRO, consisting of two solid strap-on motors (S200), a liquid core stage (L110), and a cryogenic upper stage (C25).
- The rocket has a lift-off mass of 640 tonnes, a height of 43.5 metres, and a payload capacity of 4,200 kg to Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO).
- In earlier missions, LVM3 successfully launched Chandrayaan-2, Chandrayaan-3, and two OneWeb missions carrying a total of 72 satellites.

- The previous LVM3 launch was the LVM3-M5/CMS-03 mission, which was successfully completed on November 2 this year.
- AST SpaceMobile is developing the world's first space-based cellular broadband network that can be accessed directly by standard smartphones.
- The network is designed for both commercial and government use without requiring specialised hardware or modifications to mobile phones.
- According to AST SpaceMobile, BlueBird satellites enable video calls, web browsing, and 4G and 5G internet services from virtually anywhere on Earth.

## 59. ISRO AIMS TO COMMISSION THIRD LAUNCH PAD AT SHRIHARIKOTA

- ISRO is in the process of developing a third launch pad at the Sriharikota spaceport and is currently identifying suitable vendors for the project.
- The Sriharikota complex, spread over about 175 sq km and located nearly 135 km east of Chennai, serves as the primary launch site for ISRO's satellite missions using various launch vehicles.
- To support plans of placing larger satellites weighing over 12,000–14,000 kg into different orbits, ISRO requires bigger and more advanced launch vehicles, according to Padmakumar ES, Director and Distinguished Scientist of the Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC), Sriharikota.
- To meet this requirement, ISRO is planning a third launch pad, which will cater specifically to next-generation launch systems.
- Once operational, the third launch pad will be used for launching satellites weighing more than 14,000 kg using Next Generation Launch Vehicles (NGLV).
- On December 24, ISRO successfully launched the US-based BlueBird Block-2 satellite, weighing around 6,000 kg, onboard the LVM3-M6 rocket into Low Earth Orbit, marking the heaviest satellite launch from Indian soil to date.
- The third launch pad will support both crewed and uncrewed missions, while the existing first and second launch pads will continue to be used for PSLV and GSLV missions.
- Regarding the new ISRO launch complex under construction at Kulasekarapattinam in Tamil Nadu's Thoothukudi district, it will be dedicated to launching Small Satellite Launch Vehicles (SSLVs).
- SSLVs are designed to place satellites weighing up to about 500 kg into Low Earth Orbit, and such missions will be conducted from the Kulasekarapattinam facility.
- Currently, ISRO operates three launch vehicles: the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV), the Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV), and the Launch Vehicle Mark-3 (LVM3), earlier known as GSLV Mk-III.
- The Sriharikota spaceport was renamed the Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) on September 5, 2002, in memory of former ISRO Chairman Professor Satish Dhawan.
- The spaceport began operations in October 1971 with the launch of the Rohini-125 sounding rocket, and its facilities have since been progressively expanded to meet ISRO's growing mission requirements.

**DEFENCE**

**60. 'MANDATORY SIM-BINDING FOR USE OF MESSAGING APPS WILL BOLSTER NATIONAL SECURITY'**



- COAI welcomed the Telecom Department's directive mandating that messaging apps like WhatsApp operate only when linked to an active SIM card.
- The body said this move will strengthen national security, safeguard citizens, and ensure accountability and traceability in digital communication.
- COAI noted that continuous SIM linkage will close long-standing gaps that previously allowed anonymity and misuse.
- The directive requires apps such as WhatsApp, Signal, Telegram, Arattai, Snapchat, Sharechat, Jiochat and Josh to stay continuously linked to the user's active SIM.
- All app-based communication service providers must submit compliance reports to the DoT within 120 days from November 28.
- Non-compliance will attract action under the Telecommunications Act, 2023, the Telecom Cyber Security Rules, and other applicable laws.
- The new rule means messaging apps will work only if the SIM used for registration is present and active in the user's device.
- COAI has long advocated linking communication apps to SIMs to strengthen national security and prevent cyber fraud.
- Currently, most apps link to the SIM only during initial setup, allowing them to function even if the SIM is removed or deactivated — a loophole exploited for fraud, COAI said.
- The directive mandates continuous linkage between the app and the SIM/phone number, aiming to curb anonymous misuse and increase accountability.
- COAI said this mechanism will reduce spam and fraudulent communications and help mitigate financial fraud.
- It urged the DoT to ensure similar compliance measures across all app-based communication services to minimise risks for subscribers.

**61. RUSSIAN PARLIAMENT RATIFIES KEY MILITARY PACT WITH INDIA**



- Russia's State Duma has ratified a key military pact with India ahead of President Vladimir Putin's visit to New Delhi on December 4-5.
- The pact, called the Reciprocal Exchange of Logistic Support (RELOS), was signed on February 18 and was submitted to the Duma for ratification by Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin.
- RELOS establishes procedures for sending military formations, warships, and military aircraft between Russia and India, along with the organisation of mutual logistical support.
- The agreement covers dispatch of troops and equipment as well as logistics required for such movements.
- The procedures will apply during joint exercises, training, humanitarian aid, and disaster relief operations after natural or man-made disasters, as well as any other mutually agreed situations.
- A note on the Duma website stated that the ratification will ease mutual use of airspace and allow port calls by Russian and Indian warships.
- The pact is expected to further strengthen military cooperation between the two nations.

**62. INDIA TO PROCURE MORE HERON MK-II DRONES AFTER OPERATION SINDOOR**



- India has signed an agreement to procure additional satellite-linked Heron MK II drones under emergency provisions,

strengthening defence capabilities after their successful deployment in Operation Sindoor.

- The Heron MK II UAVs, already used by the Indian Army and Air Force, will now also be inducted into the Indian Navy, according to a source associated with Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI).
- In September, the Defence Ministry issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) for acquiring 87 MALE drones under an indigenous “Make in India” programme that permits foreign collaboration.
- Following Operation Sindoor, all three branches of the Indian Armed Forces chose the Heron MK II for emergency procurement, though the exact numbers remain undisclosed.
- The Heron MK II is a Medium Altitude Long Endurance (MALE) UAV capable of flying at 35,000 feet and sustaining 45 hours of continuous flight. It is used by the Israeli Air Force and over 20 global operators.
- IAI officials emphasised close cooperation with Indian partners to meet ‘Make in India’ goals, naming HAL and Elcom as key collaborators.
- IAI aims not only to supply the drones but also to manufacture advanced systems within India.
- Heron MK II UAVs have evolved from basic surveillance platforms to highly capable assets—referred to as the “Queen of the battlefield”—operating thousands of kilometres away, offering multi-sensor capabilities, and contributing significantly to counter-air defence operations.

### 63.INDIA’S 3RD INDIGENOUS N-SUBMARINE TO BE COMMISSIONED SOON: NAVY CHIEF



- India is strengthening the naval leg of its nuclear triad, with Navy Chief Admiral Dinesh K. Tripathi announcing that the third indigenous nuclear-powered submarine **INS Aridaman** will be commissioned soon.
- The Navy is also boosting its overall combat capabilities, and the acquisition process for six stealth submarines under **Project 75-India (P75-I)** is close to completion.
- The Indian Navy will receive the first four of the **26 Rafale-M fighter jets in 2028**, part of a ₹64,000-crore deal signed with France in April.
- Highlighting the Navy’s role during **Operation Sindoor**, the Admiral said aggressive naval posturing forced the Pakistan Navy to stay near their ports or the Makran coast.

- He noted that the Indian Navy maintained high operational readiness in the Western Arabian Sea over the last seven to eight months following hostilities with Pakistan.
- Operation Sindoor is still “in progress”, he said, adding that the operation has imposed financial pressure on Pakistan, as many merchant ships avoided travelling to the country and insurance costs for vessels headed there increased.
- On nuclear-powered submarines, he confirmed that **INS Aridaman** is in the final stages of trials and will be commissioned soon.
- India’s SSBN (nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine) programme remains highly confidential. **INS Arihant** was the first SSBN, followed by **INS Arighat**.
- The SSBN programme forms a crucial part of India’s nuclear deterrence strategy, complementing its proven air- and land-based nuclear capabilities.
- India is now placing special emphasis on enhancing its underwater nuclear strength.
- **INS Arihant**, India’s first indigenously built nuclear submarine, was launched in July 2009 and secretly commissioned in 2016.
- India is among the limited group of nations operating nuclear-powered submarines, alongside the US, Russia, the UK, France, and China.
- India continues to advocate for universal nuclear disarmament and the complete elimination of atomic weapons.

### 64.INDIA-MALDIVES JOINT MILITARY EXERCISE ‘EKUVERIN’ UNDERWAY IN KERALA



- The **14th edition of the joint military exercise ‘EKUVERIN’** between the Indian Army and the Maldives National Defence Force (MNDF) has commenced in **Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala**, focusing on counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism operations across jungle, semi-urban and coastal terrain.
- The exercise is being conducted from **December 2–15**.
- The Indian Army contingent includes **45 personnel** from a battalion of the **GARHWAL RIFLES**, participating alongside an **equal-strength MNDF contingent**.
- ‘Ekuverin’ means ‘**Friends**’ in Dhivehi, symbolising the deep-rooted friendship, trust and military cooperation between India and the Maldives.
- Since **2009**, the exercise has been conducted alternately in both countries, reflecting India’s **Neighbourhood First**

**Policy** and its commitment to strengthening defence partnerships.

- The two-week exercise aims to enhance **interoperability** and **operational synergy** in CI/CT operations across various terrains.
- Troops from both sides will share best practices, tactical drills, and joint planning to improve their ability to respond to common regional security challenges.
- The exercise highlights the **growing defence cooperation** between India and the Maldives and their joint commitment to **peace and stability in the Indian Ocean Region**.
- PM Narendra Modi's **two-day official visit to the Maldives in July** marked a turnaround in bilateral ties after a period of strain linked to President Mohamed Muizzu's "India Out" campaign.
- During the visit, PM Modi reaffirmed India's commitment to the **Neighbourhood First** policy.
- As the **Guest of Honour** at the Maldives' **60th Independence Day celebrations**, PM Modi underscored India's role as a trusted partner and "**First Responder**" in the Indian Ocean region.

## 65.INDIA-MALAYSIA MILITARY EXERCISE BEGINS IN RAJASTHAN

- A joint military exercise between India and Malaysia aimed at enhancing synergy in counter-terrorism operations began in Rajasthan, officials said.
- The fifth edition of the exercise, **Harimau Shakti**, is being conducted at the Mahajan Field Firing Range from December 5 to 18.
- The Indian Army contingent is primarily drawn from the Dogra Regiment, while the Malaysian side is represented by troops from the 25th Battalion of the Royal Malaysian Army.
- The exercise aims to jointly rehearse sub-conventional operations under Chapter VII of the United Nations mandate, with a focus on coordinated counter-terrorism responses.
- Troops from both countries will practise tactical actions such as cordon, search and destroy missions, and heliborne operations.
- The training curriculum also includes Army Martial Arts Routine (AMAR), combat reflex shooting and yoga.
- During the exercise, both contingents will rehearse procedures to secure helipads and conduct casualty evacuation during counter-terrorism operations.
- The collective effort seeks to enhance interoperability between the two forces and reduce risks to life and property while aligning operations with UN peacekeeping objectives.
- The exercise provides a platform for exchanging views and best practices across a broad range of combat skills, enabling mutual learning.
- Sharing of operational experiences is expected to further strengthen defence cooperation and bilateral relations between India and Malaysia.
- In a separate development, the Army conducted its annual innovation competition and seminar, **Inno-Yoddha 2025**, at the Manekshaw Centre in New Delhi.
- The event was held in the presence of Vice Chief of the Army Staff Lt Gen Pushendra Pal Singh.

- Inno-Yoddha is the Indian Army's flagship platform to identify, nurture and scale in-house innovations aimed at addressing capability gaps and improving operational, logistics and training effectiveness.
- The initiative empowers soldiers to develop practical, field-driven solutions based on professional experience, ingenuity and technical expertise.

## 66.INDIA-FRANCE SUCCESSFULLY CONCLUDES 8TH EDITION OF AIR EXERCISE GARUDA 2025



- The Indian Air Force contingent returned to India on December 2 following the successful completion of the 8th edition of **Exercise Garuda**, a bilateral Indo-French air exercise conducted with the French Air and Space Force.
- The exercise was held at **Air Base 118, Mont-de-Marsan, France**, and concluded on **November 27**, according to the Ministry of Defence.
- During the exercise, the IAF deployed **Su-30MKI fighter aircraft**, supported by **IL-78 air-to-air refuelling aircraft** and **C-17 Globemaster III transport aircraft**.
- Both air forces carried out a range of complex air operations in a realistic operational environment.
- Training activities included joint mission planning, coordinated execution of strike and escort missions, and familiarisation with each other's operational procedures, enhancing interoperability.
- The IAF maintenance teams ensured high aircraft serviceability throughout the exercise, enabling the smooth execution of all planned missions.
- Senior officials from both countries interacted with participants during the closing ceremony and commended the professionalism, discipline and commitment displayed by both forces.
- The Defence Ministry noted that **Exercise Garuda 25** was among the largest international air training engagements undertaken by the IAF this year.
- The exercise reaffirmed the strong strategic partnership between India and France and provided valuable operational insights to participating personnel.
- Lessons learnt during the exercise are expected to enhance the IAF's war-fighting capabilities and strengthen joint operations with friendly foreign air forces.

- India and France share a deep and enduring **Strategic Partnership**, launched on **January 26, 1998**, India's first-ever such partnership with any country.
- Defence and security, civil nuclear cooperation and space form the main pillars of India–France strategic cooperation, which has since expanded to include a strong Indo-Pacific dimension.

## 67.3D CONCRETE-PRINTING TECHNOLOGY INTRODUCED IN FORWARD AREAS



- The Indian Army's Trishakti Corps has operationalised on-site 3D concrete-printing technology in forward areas, marking a major step towards faster and more efficient infrastructure development along the borders.
- Defence spokesman Lt Col Mahendra Rawat said the Army, in collaboration with the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Hyderabad, has advanced defence infrastructure innovation under Project PRABAL (Portable Robotic Printer for Printing Bunkers and Accessories).
- Under this project, on-site 3D concrete-printing technology has been operationally deployed to support forward-area infrastructure requirements.
- The technology, earlier proven in other operational areas, has now been effectively employed by Trishakti Corps in Sikkim and adjoining forward locations.
- The indigenous robotic 3D concrete printer is equipped with a robotic arm, circular mixer, piston pump and generator, and is fully vehicle-portable.
- It is optimised for rapid movement in mountainous terrain and designed specifically for deployment in forward areas.
- The system enables quick construction of bunkers, sentry posts and other protective structures.
- The printed structures have been subjected to live ballistic trials, which validated their strength and protective performance.
- According to the Defence spokesman, 3D concrete printing offers major operational advantages such as customised designs, enhanced blast and ballistic resistance, higher compressive strength, better quality control, efficient use of local materials and rapid construction within tactically acceptable timelines.
- The technology also supports terrain-specific designs and advanced camouflage requirements.
- Continued adoption of on-site 3D printing represents a significant leap in the Army's engineering capability and operational readiness, enabling fast, sustainable and mission-

oriented infrastructure development in challenging environments.

- Meanwhile, a five-day Drone Technology Bootcamp concluded on Friday at the Drone Training Node in Chandel district of Manipur.
- The bootcamp was organised by Assam Rifles in collaboration with IIT (Indian School of Mines) Dhanbad under a specialised initiative of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY).
- The training programme was conducted from December 1 to December 5.
- The bootcamp aimed to enhance technical proficiency and operational awareness in unmanned aerial systems.
- A total of 165 participants from the Army, Assam Rifles, BSF, CRPF, Territorial Army and faculty members of IIT Dhanbad took part in the training.

## 68.INDIAN NAVY CHIEF DISCUSSES MARITIME COOPERATION WITH BRAZILIAN NAVY OFFICIAL

- **Indian Navy Chief Admiral Dinesh K. Tripathi** met **Commander of the Brazilian Navy Admiral Marcos Sampaio Olsen** to discuss enhancing maritime cooperation between India and Brazil.
- The discussions focused on:
  - **Operational engagements**
  - **Training exchanges**
  - **Hydrographic collaboration**
  - **Information sharing**
  - **Maritime domain awareness**
- Both sides also deliberated on expanding cooperation in:
  - **Defence industry**
  - **Technology development and innovation**
  - **Exchange of best practices**
  - **Capacity building**
- The engagement reaffirmed the mutual commitment to **strengthen strategic convergence** and deepen the **India-Brazil maritime partnership**, contributing to **stability in the Global South**.
- Admiral Tripathi is on an official visit to **Brazil from December 9–12**, aimed at consolidating the growing **maritime partnership** between the two navies, a key pillar of the broader **India-Brazil Strategic Partnership**.
- During the visit, the Navy Chief will hold discussions with **senior Brazilian leadership**, including **Defence Minister Jose Mucio** and **Admiral Renato Rodrigues de Aguiar Freire**, Chief of the Joint Staff of the Brazilian Armed Forces.
- The itinerary includes **engagements with operational commands**, visits to **naval bases and shipyards**, and discussions on **shared maritime priorities, naval interoperability, capacity building**, and collaboration in **multilateral frameworks**, including **South-South cooperation**.

- The visit underscores the Indian Navy's commitment to **enhancing cooperation with the Brazilian Navy** in maritime security, professional exchanges, and capacity building, contributing to **stability in the global maritime commons**.

## 69. INDIAN ARMY MOVES PROPOSAL FOR ACQUIRING 120-KM RANGE GUIDED PINAKA ROCKETS

- As part of efforts to further strengthen its long-range artillery capabilities after Operation Sindoor, the Indian Army is planning to induct Pinaka rockets with a strike range of 120 km under a proposal worth around ₹2,500 crore.
- The 120-km range rockets will be developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
- Initial trials of the advanced Pinaka rockets are expected to be conducted in the near future.
- Following successful trials, the system will be developed in collaboration with Development-cum-Production Partners selected through a bidding process.
- The Army's proposal for the project is expected to be taken up for approval by the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) shortly, sources said.
- The Defence Ministry, led by Rajnath Singh, has been strongly advocating the development of indigenous multi-barrel rocket launch systems.
- The Pinaka system has already been exported to friendly foreign countries in recent years, reinforcing India's growing defence manufacturing capabilities.



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## ASSAM & NORTH-EAST

### 70. GOVT LAUNCHES CITY ACTION PLANS



- Government of Assam, in partnership with Janaagraha, has launched eight City Action Plans (CAPs) under the ‘Doh Shaher Ek Rupayan’ programme.
- CAPs act as blueprints for sustainable city transformation and are part of the ‘10 cities development concept’ covering Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, North Lakhimpur, Sivasagar, Jorhat, Tezpur, Nagaon, Nalbari, Dhubri and Silchar.
- Minister Mallabaruah stated that the programme aims to guide each city towards planned and structured development.
- The State has prioritised the preservation of urban water bodies, identifying over 2,000 such water bodies so far.
- The Assam Urban Water Bodies Act has been introduced to protect and manage these assets and is being implemented across all ULBs.
- For the first time in India, a truly city-centric model of urban planning has been adopted.
- The planning process involved extensive citizen engagement, including consultations with SHG groups, ward-level meetings led by commissioners, and discussions with departmental stakeholders.

### 71. CYBERCRIME EMERGES AS ONE OF STATE’S FASTEST-GROWING SECURITY CHALLENGES



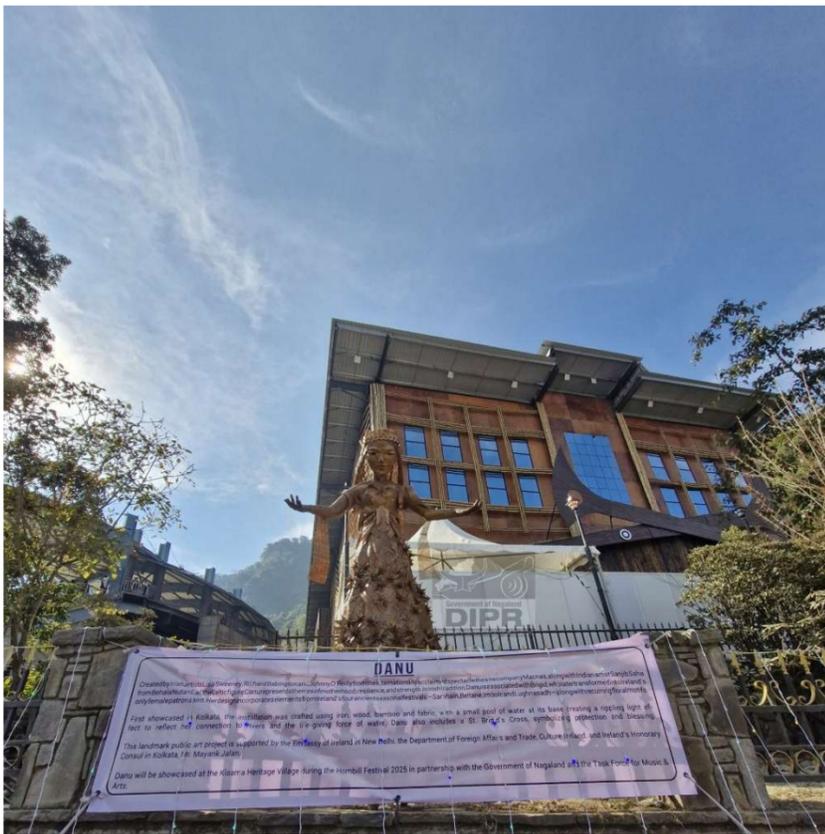
- Cybercrime has become one of Assam’s fastest-growing security challenges, with over 18,315 arrests since 2014 for various digital offences.
- Offences range from ATM fraud, KYC scams, identity theft, circulation of obscene images and child pornography to fake SIM cards, forged Aadhaar/PAN/voter IDs, and online financial frauds.
- Officials acknowledge that cyber offences are rising steadily and have become a major focus area for State law enforcement.
- Multiple interventions have been introduced, including the national cybercrime helpline 1930 for quick reporting of digital frauds.
- The National Cyber Security Policy has been implemented in Assam to strengthen detection, response, and prevention mechanisms.
- The National Cyber Crime Coordination Centre has improved cross-State investigations of online offences.
- CERT-In has been strengthened to handle cyber incidents at both organizational and citizen levels.
- Assam has launched extensive awareness campaigns targeting students, youth groups, and community organisations to promote safe online behaviour and data protection.
- Despite the rise in cybercrime, traditional crimes continue to challenge the State. Assam recorded 7,634 theft cases in 2024 and 5,251 till November 2025.
- Murder cases have declined from 1,451 in 2014 to 926 in 2024 and 732 till November 2025.
- Abduction cases, which peaked at 7,580 in 2021, fell to 3,381 in 2024 and 2,567 till November 2025.
- Dowry-related crimes dropped from 188 in 2014 to 94 in 2024; witch-hunting cases remained between 5 and 16 annually.
- Loot and dacoity showed fluctuating trends but have declined significantly in recent years.
- Between 2014 and November 19, 2025, a total of 7,765 people were arrested for child marriage-related offences.
- Officials emphasise that cyber offences represent a new frontier in policing, and efforts are underway to strengthen cybersecurity infrastructure through technological upgrades and public engagement.

### 72. INDIA POST LAUNCHES GLOBAL-FIRST SPECTACLES ACCESSIBILITY PILOT INITIATIVE IN STATE

- A pioneering global initiative to improve access to presbyopic spectacles was launched today at the Khetri Post Office in Kamrup (Metro).
- Named “Post Office Delivers the Gift of Clear Vision,” the project is a collaboration among India Post, WHO India, Sri Sankaradeva Nethralaya (SSDN), Guwahati, and Vision Spring.

- This first-of-its-kind global pilot aims to address a major public-health gap: globally, only one-third of people who need spectacles currently receive them.
- WHO and United Nations discussions have repeatedly stressed the urgent need to expand access to refractive care services.
- The initiative plans to make reading glasses and other spectacles easily accessible by distributing them through non-healthcare points like post offices.
- India Post, the lead implementing agency, has selected Assam as the pilot State, identifying five post offices for the initial rollout.
- Sri Sankaradeva Nethralaya is providing technical leadership for the project.
- WHO-India is offering global and national coordination support.
- Vision Spring is supplying the spectacles for the pilot phase.
- The partner organisations aim to develop a scalable model that can be expanded across India and potentially adopted globally.

### 73. IRISH ART INSTALLATION MAJOR DRAW AT HORNBILL FESTIVAL



- A striking Irish public art installation titled ‘Danu’ was displayed at Naga Heritage Village, Kisama, during the ongoing Hornbill Festival, offering visitors a unique blend of mythology, craftsmanship, and cultural symbolism.
- Created by Irish artists **Lisa Sweeney, Richard Babington, Johnny O’Reilly**, and Indian artist **Sanjib Saha**, the installation draws inspiration from the Celtic figure **Danu**, symbolising motherhood, resilience, and strength.
- The design incorporates motifs associated with Ireland’s ancient seasonal festivals and traditions linked to **Brigid**, one of Ireland’s female patron saints.
- First exhibited in Kolkata, the artwork is crafted from **iron, wood, bamboo, and fabric**, with a small pool of water at its

base to reflect Danu’s deep connection to rivers and the life-giving force of water.

- The installation also features **St Brigid’s Cross**, symbolising protection and blessing.
- Supported by the **Embassy of Ireland in New Delhi**, the installation represents a significant cultural collaboration.
- ‘Danu’ is being showcased at the Hornbill Festival in partnership with the **Nagaland Government** and the **State Task Force for Music and Arts**.

### 74. ARMY CLIMBERS CONQUER MOUNT KANGTO IN ARUNACHAL

- An Indian Army mountaineering team from the Eastern Command has successfully scaled Mount Kangto (7,042 metres), the highest peak in Arunachal Pradesh and a prominent feature of the Kameng Himalayas.
- The ascent was achieved via the extremely challenging southern route, marking the first recorded successful summit of Mount Kangto.
- The achievement was described as historic, as the peak had long resisted successful summits by the mountaineering community.
- The victorious team was formally flagged in by Lt General RC Tiwari, Army Commander, Eastern Command, who praised the mountaineers for their courage, discipline and perseverance under extreme conditions.
- The 18-member expedition team was flagged off on November 3 from a forward base by the General Officer Commanding of Gajraj Corps.
- The team navigated some of the most hostile terrain in the Eastern Himalayas, coping with rarefied air at extreme altitudes, sub-zero temperatures, treacherous ice ridges, deep crevasses and near-vertical ice walls.
- Despite the harsh environment, the climbers demonstrated exceptional grit, teamwork, professionalism and an indomitable spirit, leading to the successful summit.
- The ascent underscores the Indian Army’s commitment to operational excellence, exploration and adventure, while also highlighting the majestic and untamed beauty of the Eastern Himalayas.

### 75. ASSAM GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCES LITERARY AWARDS AND PENSIONS

- The Government of Assam has announced the names of 18 distinguished writers for the **Assam Literary Award** and ten eminent personalities for the **Assam Literary Pension** for the year 2025–26.
- The selections were made under the **Assam Literary Award & Pension Rules, 1974** (as amended), as per an official notification issued by the Higher Education Department.
- Each awardee will receive a **one-time award of ₹50,000**.
- The selected pensioners will receive a **monthly literary pension of ₹8,000**, effective from **December 7, 2025**.
- The 18 recipients of the Assam Literary Award are:

- Phanindra Kumar Dev Choudhury (Kamrup Metro)
- Dr Surjya Kanta Hazarika (Kamrup Metro)
- Kishori Mohan Das (Barpeta)
- Purna Kumar Sarmah (Biswanath)
- Arpana Konwar (Dibrugarh)
- Ashutosh Das (Hailakandi)
- Dr Purna Bhattacharya (Kamrup Metro)
- Sajal Paul (Kamrup Metro)
- Urmila Chakravarty (Kamrup Metro)
- Bhaben Chandra Koch (Karbi Anglong)
- Sarada Prasad Mashahary (Kokrajhar)
- Gurmailya Singh (Nagaon)
- Phani Koiri (Sivasagar)
- Dr Jatin Baruah (Sonitpur)
- Subhash Chandra Sinha (Sribhumi)
- Baruah Kanta Brahma (Tamulpur)
- Girish Handique (Tinsukia)
- Subarna Saikia (Golaghat)
- The ten recipients selected for the Assam Literary Pension are:
  - Gunjan Kumar Phukan (Biswanath)
  - Dileep Chandan Sarma (Kamrup Metro)
  - Santanu Kausik Baruah (Kamrup Metro)
  - Mihir Dewri (Kamrup Metro)
  - Ranjit Hazarika (Kamrup Metro)
  - Shashi Dhar Deori (Lakhimpur)
  - Kamal Kumar Jain (Nalbari)
  - Sonbar Baruah (Tamulpur)
  - Jatin Moran (Tinsukia)
  - Thaneswar Goyary (Karbi Anglong)
- The awards and pensions recognise long-standing contributions to Assamese literature and aim to honour and support eminent literary figures of the state.

## 76.32 STRATEGIC INFRA PROJECTS LAUNCHED IN ARUNACHAL



- Thirty-two strategically significant infrastructure projects of the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) in Arunachal Pradesh

were inaugurated virtually by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh.

- These 32 projects were part of a total of 125 infrastructure projects inaugurated by Singh during a programme held in Ladakh.
- A separate programme was organised at Aalo in West Siang district by the 44 Border Roads Task Force to mark the occasion.
- State Law and Justice Minister Kento Jini expressed hope that the projects would support troops deployed along the India–China border in Shi Yomi and Upper Siang districts.
- He said the projects would ensure uninterrupted connectivity for armed forces and local residents, enhance operational preparedness, and enable faster movement across the region.
- Projects implemented by Project Brahman include the 35-metre Shene Nallah bridge on the Tato–Mechukha Road in Shi Yomi district.
- In Upper Siang district, Project Brahman constructed the 15-metre Ritbung bridge, 40-metre Rabung bridge, 40-metre Seyo Nallah bridge, 20-metre Sirak Nallah bridge, and 10-metre Raboung Nallah bridge on the Ditte Dimme–Migging Road.
- The 45-metre Naglung Ri bridge on the Tuting–Bona Road in Upper Siang district was also completed under Project Brahman.
- The remaining projects in Arunachal Pradesh were executed by Project Vartak, Project Arunank, and Project Udayak, and include roads and a helipad project.
- Apart from Arunachal Pradesh, the 125 projects are spread across the Union Territories of Ladakh and Jammu & Kashmir, and the states of Sikkim, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, West Bengal, and Mizoram.
- The overall projects comprise 28 roads, 93 bridges, and four miscellaneous works, completed at a total cost of Rs 5,000 crore.
- Praising the BRO, the Defence Minister said that technological innovations and advanced engineering methods have significantly accelerated the completion of infrastructure projects.

## 77. ASSAM ARTISANS HONoured WITH NATIONAL HANDICRAFTS AWARDS



- Assam's traditional tribal textiles have gained national recognition, with two artisans receiving the National Handicrafts Awards. The awards for 2023 and 2024 were presented by President Droupadi Murmu in New Delhi on December 9, 2025.

- **Bapukan Payeng**, of Mirijim Textiles, Majuli, received the **National Handicrafts Award 2024**, adding to his earlier state award in 2019. He is a master artisan with over 30 years of experience in traditional Mirijim textiles.
- Trained through inherited knowledge, Bapukan has worked extensively to revive endangered weaving techniques. He mentors young learners and participates in regional exhibitions to preserve and promote his heritage.
- **Mirijim**, also known as Miri-jim, is a hand-woven blanket used in winter to keep the body warm. It represents the rich textile tradition of the Mishing community and holds pride of place among Assam’s textiles.
- **Sabina Teronpi**, of Karbi Tribal Textiles, Karbi Anglong, was honoured with the **National Handicrafts Award 2023** for her contribution to traditional Karbi weaving.
- She is an expert in **Saphee Lanphee** (hand embroidery) with more than 23 years of experience, has trained over 60 artisans, and actively participates in national exhibitions.
- **Karbi Tribal Textiles** include items like **Seleng Pekok**, a garment worn around the upper body. The upper ends separate on the right side and are tied on the right shoulder, extending to above the knee, and made from cotton yarn.

## 78.MEMORIAL HONOURING ASSAM AGITATION MARTYRS INAUGURATED



- The **Swahid Smarak Kshetra**, a memorial complex honoring the **860 martyrs of the Assam Agitation**, was inaugurated by **Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma** at Paschim Boragaon, coinciding with **Swahid Diwas**.
- Recalling the Assam Agitation, the Chief Minister highlighted the **Bhabanipur incident** as the tipping point of the six-year-long movement.
- He paid tribute to **Khargeswar Talukdar**, the first martyr of the movement, noting his sacrifice to protect the Motherland and inspire others for the cause of the State.
- Sarma issued a warning on **demographic issues**, stating that nearly **40% of the population** comprises people who migrated from Bangladesh, and stressed that Assamese are being marginalized in their own land.
- He urged citizens **not to sell land to foreigners** and announced plans for a law permitting land purchase **only by Assamese families with a three-generation lineage**.
- The **Swahid Smarak Kshetra**, spread over **150 bighas** and costing **Rs 170 crore**, features:
  - A **225-ft central memorial**
  - **860 statues**

- **Meditation hall**
- **Horticulture garden**
- **Laser show arena**
- **Auditorium**
- **Food court**
- **Cycle track**

• The foundation stone was laid by then Chief Minister **Sarbananda Sonowal** on **December 10, 2019**.

## 79.ASSAM GOVERNOR LAKSHMAN PRASAD ACHARYA RELEASES BOOK 'HUM BHARAT KE LOG'



- Assam Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya released the book *“Hum Bharat ke Log”*, authored by Prof. Harbansh Dixit, Advisor to the Governor’s Secretariat, at the Brahmaputra Wing of Lok Bhavan.
- The book is a compilation of Prof. Dixit’s articles focusing on law and various legal issues.
- While releasing the book, the Governor said it delves into the core of India’s justice system, constitutional values, and the evolving aspirations of a dynamic nation.
- He praised the author, noting that the book’s 51 essays highlight fundamental constitutional ideals, civic responsibilities, and the progressive trajectory of Indian society.
- The Governor emphasized that India’s dynamic Constitution continues to guide the country in addressing contemporary challenges such as environmental issues, digital transformation, and global competition.
- Referring to recent reforms under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, including the abrogation of Article 370, abolition of Triple Talaq, and revision of colonial-era laws, he said these measures strengthen justice, equality, and national unity in a manner unique to India.

## 80.GOVERNOR RELEASES SPECIAL PUBLICATION OF DD NEWS ASSAM

- Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya released *Good News Assam*, a special publication by Doordarshan News Assam, at a ceremony held at Lok Bhavan.
- The publication aims to highlight the public broadcaster’s commitment to positive storytelling and grassroots achievements.
- Addressing the gathering, the Governor praised the vision behind *Good News Assam*, saying it brings together powerful narratives of human spirit, innovation, social service and community leadership.
- He said the initiative beautifully captures everyday heroes whose often-unnoticed contributions strengthen the social fabric and reflect the State’s progress.
- Acharya commended the DD News Assam team for travelling across districts to identify inspiring personalities and presenting their journeys with sincerity and depth.
- Referring to the weekly *Good News Assam* programme, he said it has made a deep impact by showcasing stories of hope, determination and achievement.
- The Governor also mentioned the Prime Minister’s *Mann Ki Baat* programme for giving grassroots change-makers a national platform.
- The ceremony was attended by Priya Kumar, Director General of DD News; S.S. Meenakshi Sundaram, Commissioner and Secretary to the Governor; Ankur Lahoty, Joint Director and Head of DD News Assam; along with senior officials and other dignitaries.
- *Good News Assam* is a weekly programme which, over more than 50 episodes, has documented inspiring stories of service, innovation, entrepreneurship and community leadership.
- The publication features 55 of the most impactful stories, offering a vivid snapshot of Assam’s resilience, creativity and collective progress.

## 81. ASSAM UNIVERSITY, RTU JOIN HANDS FOR SONBEEL UTSAV 2.0

- Assam University, Silchar, is set to host **Sonbeel Utsav 2.0** on February 7, 2026, with an expanded vision to highlight the ecological, cultural, scientific and socio-economic importance of Sonbeel, Asia’s largest freshwater wetland.
- The university aims to make this edition more focused, community-oriented and impactful, strengthening ongoing efforts for conservation and sustainable development around the wetland.
- A major highlight of this year’s Utsav is the collaboration with Rabindranath Tagore University (RTU), Hojai, marking a significant step towards wider academic partnership and regional outreach.
- The two universities plan to jointly promote research, documentation, awareness campaigns and community engagement related to the Sonbeel ecosystem.
- This partnership is expected to expand participation from multiple districts and deepen academic cooperation across Assam.
- Designed as a one-day programme, the Utsav will feature cultural performances, awareness activities, interactive exhibitions and expert-led discussions on scientific and environmental aspects of wetland management.

- Special sessions will focus on climate resilience, biodiversity conservation, community-led protection initiatives and sustainable development models.
- University officials said Sonbeel Utsav 2.0 is not merely an academic event but a collective regional initiative to protect and celebrate one of the Barak Valley’s most valuable ecosystems.
- They stressed that Sonbeel’s biodiversity, cultural heritage and economic significance must be preserved through coordinated efforts involving universities, government agencies, environmental groups and local communities.

## 82. ‘FOCUS ON RURAL, TRIBAL AREAS UNDER PMUY 3.0 IN ASSAM’



- Rural and tribal-dominated areas with low LPG penetration will be the focus in Assam under the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) 3.0, which is being rolled out nationwide.
- With a section of people still relying on traditional cooking methods such as firewood, emphasis will be placed on creating awareness about the health hazards associated with such practices.
- The Assam government will play a key role in awareness generation and outreach under the scheme.
- The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas introduced PMUY as a flagship scheme in May 2016 to provide clean cooking fuel like LPG to rural and deprived households that were dependent on firewood, coal, cow dung cakes and other traditional fuels.
- According to official data shared by Bordoloi, Assam has 92.24 lakh domestic LPG connections, with a coverage of 115.8 per cent.
- Of these, around 52 lakh connections have been provided under the free LPG connection scheme.
- While most districts show high LPG penetration, some continue to record low coverage, including Sivasagar (65.7 per cent), Baksa (67.1 per cent), Dhemaji (73.2 per cent), South Salmara (84 per cent) and Tinsukia (85 per cent).
- Officials said there are multiple reasons for low penetration in certain districts.
- In districts like Sivasagar, the presence of extensive piped gas connections has contributed to comparatively lower LPG coverage figures.

### 83.FIFTH PHASE OF MAJULI PROTECTION WORK TO COVER 20 VULNERABLE STRETCHES

- Despite reclamation of over 27 sq km of land in Majuli, unstable soil in certain stretches is hindering bank protection works, leading the Brahmaputra Board to initiate fresh geotechnical and hydrological studies to prepare a resolution plan.
- This is taking place alongside the rollout of the fifth phase of protection works, targeting 20 vulnerable stretches of the island.
- The Phase-V project, titled “Protection of Majuli Island from Flood and Erosion of River Brahmaputra,” involves an estimated cost of Rs 56.34 crore and proposes bank protection using PSC porcupines at multiple vulnerable locations.
- A satellite-imagery-based study by the Central Water and Power Research Station (CWPRS), Pune, observed continuous erosion near the confluence of the Subansiri and Brahmaputra rivers during 1986–2023, particularly in the Major Chapori NC area from Katoni Goan Na Satra to Banpurai.
- Major deposition was observed between Ratanpur Miri Gaon and Kathal Khowa Pam, while the Kamalabari region initially eroded and later experienced deposition during 2018–2023.
- A significant deposition of about 27.47 sq km was recorded near Kamalabari during 2021–2022.
- Yearly analysis from 2018 to 2023 showed no major river migration except near Kamalabari, where substantial deposition occurred.
- The study assessed the effectiveness of riverbank protection measures from 2003 to 2023 and found evidence of deposition and bank stabilization near Kamalabari, Bengena Ati Purona Satra, and Manik Beel.
- Areas around Major Chapori NC, from Missamora to Kongbongchapor NC, were found to be eroding and require active intervention to stabilize banks and control erosion, which would help shift the river channel southwards.
- During Phase-IV works, stretches at Salmara, Bhakatchapor, and Kordoiguri, covering around 9 km, were identified as having unstable and non-cohesive soil, where repeated bank revetment attempts failed.
- Dredging of the river has further increased vulnerability in these stretches.
- CWPRS is conducting additional studies to develop a resolution plan, while porcupine works in 20 vulnerable stretches and spur repair works at three locations are proceeding under Phase-V.
- Since 2004, the Brahmaputra Board has implemented protection works worth over Rs 416 crore for Majuli island.
- The Water Resources Secretary, accompanied by the Brahmaputra Board chairman Ranbir Singh, visited Majuli to review and oversee the ongoing works.
- The review meeting aimed to provide a cohesive and strategic direction for basin-level development and water resource management, with participation from all basin states, northeastern state departments, the Brahmaputra Board, CWC, CGWB, NIH, Sikkim, and northern West Bengal.

### 84.ASEAN-INDIA TOURISM PROFESSIONALS EXCHANGE PROGRAMME 2025 BEGINS



- The ASEAN–India Tourism Professionals Exchange Programme 2025 commenced in Guwahati with two days of interactions among tourism professionals from India and the ten ASEAN member states.
- The programme is organised by the Assam Tourism Development Corporation Ltd. (ATDC) under the aegis of the Ministry of External Affairs.
- It is being held from December 12 to 17 across Guwahati, Kaziranga and New Delhi.
- The initiative aims to strengthen regional tourism linkages by integrating the North East into ASEAN travel circuits through business meetings, trade sessions and collaborative networks involving tour operators and policymakers.
- The programme builds on India’s participation at the MATTA Fair 2025 in Kuala Lumpur, where ATDC showcased Assam and the North East as emerging destinations under the ASEAN–India Year of Tourism.
- The current exchange seeks to convert that interest into concrete partnerships by enabling ASEAN stakeholders to experience Assam’s tourism products, infrastructure and community-led tourism models firsthand.
- A total of 41 delegates from ASEAN countries, including Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor Leste and Vietnam, are participating.
- During the first two days, participants took part in formal sessions, B2B interactions and site visits aimed at strengthening professional ties.

### 85.12,031 HA OF FOREST LAND IN NE DIVERTED FOR NON-FOREST USE; 761 HA IN ASSAM



- From April 1, 2021, to October 31, 2025, large areas of forest land in the Northeastern states, including Assam, have been

diverted for non-forest purposes. During this period, a total of **12,031 hectares (ha)** of forest land was diverted in the NE region under the **Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980** (earlier known as the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980).

- Among the Northeastern states, **Arunachal Pradesh** recorded the highest diversion, with nearly **6,708 hectares** of forest land diverted for non-forest use.
- **Assam** witnessed the diversion of **761.63 hectares** of forest land, based on **55 proposals** submitted for the use of such land in various development projects.
- According to the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, across the country a total of **91,650.10 hectares** of forest land was diverted for non-forest purposes during the same period under the Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980.
- Of the national total of **91,650.10 hectares**, the Northeastern states together accounted for **12,031 hectares** of forest land diverted for non-forest use.
- State-wise breakup in the eight Northeastern states shows:
  - **Arunachal Pradesh:** nearly **6,708 hectares** diverted against **129 proposals**
  - **Manipur:** **2,026.13 hectares** diverted against **56 proposals**
  - **Mizoram:** **931.18 hectares** diverted against **32 proposals**
  - **Sikkim:** **818.66 hectares** diverted against **91 proposals**
  - **Assam:** **761.63 hectares** diverted against **55 proposals**
  - **Tripura:** **748.79 hectares** diverted against **86 proposals**
  - **Meghalaya:** **33.88 hectares** diverted against **14 proposals**
  - **Nagaland:** **3.93 hectares** diverted against **1 proposal**
- Whenever forest land is proposed to be diverted for non-forest purposes, the concerned agency must submit the proposal to the **National Board for Wildlife (NBWL)**.
- The NBWL examines each proposal and either grants or withholds permission based on its merit and justification.
- When permission is granted by the NBWL, specific conditions are imposed on the concerned agency, which must be complied with during the execution of the approved project.

## 86.SIVASAGAR TO HOST BRAHMAPUTRA LITERATURE FESTIVAL IN FEBRUARY

- The **Adharxila Trust**, a non-profit organisation dedicated to preserving and promoting Assam and Northeast India's literary and cultural heritage, has announced the **Brahmaputra Literature Festival 2026**, to be held from **February 6 to 8, 2026**, in Sivasagar.
- The festival will be formally inaugurated on **February 5, 2026**.

- The event aims to foster **dialogue, creativity and community**, bridging local traditions with global perspectives.
- This year's theme, "**Rhythm, Word & Spirit – Celebrating the Voice of Humanity**", reflects the commitment to honour the region's artistic soul while building bridges across nations, languages and cultures.
- The festival is being organised under the direction of eminent author **Dr Rita Chowdhury**, chief trustee of Adharxila Trust and festival director.
- The **three-day festival** promises an immersive experience, bringing together **music, poetry, cinema and oral traditions** of art and culture.
- A **curtain-raiser at Gauripur** will celebrate the legacy of **Raja Prabhat Chandra Baruah, Pramathesh Baruah**, and the renowned women of **Rajbari** for their contributions to art, culture and tradition.
- The festival will feature special programmes to celebrate the **birth centenary of Dr Bhupen Hazarika**, the bard of the Brahmaputra, and will also pay tribute to **Zubeen Garg**.
- Speakers and performers from different parts of **India and abroad** will participate in the festival.
- This edition will spotlight **tribal heritage, multi-ethnic and multilingual identities**, cultural unity, and **indigenous storytelling traditions**.
- An **award ceremony** will be held, with **five awards** instituted to felicitate icons from diverse genres.
- Revenue generated from **Zubeen Garg's special uncut interview** on Dr Rita Chowdhury's podcast channel will be converted into **fixed deposits for 20 years** to support and fund budding artistes.
- The initiative honours **Zubeen Garg** for his significant efforts during his lifetime to promote emerging artistes.
- The festival is **open to all** and will be organised across **multiple locations in Sivasagar**.

## 87.AUTOMATED SMS-BASED ALERT SYSTEM LAUNCHED



- Department of School Education launched an automated SMS-based absenteeism alert system through the Shiksha Setu application.
- The initiative aims to curb absenteeism, reduce dropouts, strengthen attendance, and enable timely intervention by schools and parents.
- Education Minister Dr. Ranaj Pegu announced the initiative while addressing the media.

- UNICEF study shows absenteeism persists due to family issues and lack of parental awareness.
- The system enables continuous monitoring and prompt communication to address these challenges.
- Automated SMS alerts will be triggered when a student remains absent for five consecutive days.
- Alerts will be sent at intervals – on the 5th, 10th, 15th day and onward – until the student resumes attending school.
- Notifications will be sent to both class teachers and parents/guardians simultaneously.
- Teachers will receive messages with the student’s name, class and section for direct follow-up.
- Parents will receive concise reminders urging them to send their child back to school.
- SMS alerts will be delivered in Assamese, Bengali, Bodo, Hindi and English.
- In each district, messages will be sent in at least two relevant local languages based on linguistic and demographic needs.
- The initiative aims to strengthen school-parent engagement and improve educational continuity across the State.

## 88. ASSAM CM HAILS PM MODI ON RECEIVING ETHIOPIA’S HIGHEST CIVILIAN HONOUR



- Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma congratulated Prime Minister Narendra Modi for being awarded the ‘Great Honour Nishan of Ethiopia’, the highest civilian honour of Ethiopia.
- Sarma said the recognition is a matter of immense pride for every Indian and noted it as the 28th global recognition of Modi’s leadership and statesmanship.
- Modi received the honour during his historic bilateral visit to Ethiopia.
- Ethiopian Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed presented the award in recognition of Modi’s contribution to strengthening India–Ethiopia ties and his international statesmanship.
- The award ceremony was held at the Addis International Convention Centre.
- Modi called it a great honour and opportunity to receive the recognition from one of the world’s oldest civilisations.
- He thanked Dr. Abiy Ahmed and the people of Ethiopia, appreciating their initiatives toward unity, sustainability and development.
- Modi emphasised the importance of knowledge and education in nation building.

- During the banquet dinner hosted by Ethiopia’s PM, Ethiopian singers performed ‘Vande Mataram,’ symbolising cultural friendship between the nations.
- The performance held special significance as it marked 150 years of ‘Vande Mataram,’ linked to India’s freedom struggle and national pride.
- The conferment of the honour is seen as a milestone in India–Ethiopia relations and affirms cooperation between the countries.
- It reinforces India’s leadership role in advancing shared priorities of the Global South.

## 89. GUWAHATI'S FIRST HOTSPOT-BASED CLEAN AIR PLAN LAUNCHED

- Guwahati authorities and environmental experts sought to counter the city's worsening air quality, which had remained above national limits for several years.
- The plan was unveiled by iFOREST in collaboration with the Assam Pollution Control Board following detailed ward-level mapping to identify pollution-intensive zones and targeted solutions.
- The initiative responded to Guwahati's growing pollution burden, driven by rapid urban expansion, a surge in vehicles, sustained construction activity, waste burning and industrial emissions.
- Officials noted that the city's bowl-shaped geography, hemmed in by the Khasi hills and the Brahmaputra, restricted air movement and allowed pollutants to accumulate.
- iFOREST chief executive Chandra Bhushan said air pollution imposed a heavy economic and health cost, stressing that the new plan aimed to ensure compliance with existing air quality standards through practical and location-specific measures.
- Assam Pollution Control Board chairman Arup Kumar Misra said changing climatic patterns, prolonged dry spells, expanding infrastructure and rising vehicular traffic had transformed air pollution into a serious challenge, adding that public cooperation would be crucial.
- The study found that pollution hotspots shifted with the seasons.
- During summer, higher concentrations were recorded along silted riverbanks, floodplains, construction-heavy wards and major traffic corridors where dust resuspension was severe.
- In winter, poor dispersion conditions spread pollution across central and eastern Guwahati, amplified by emissions from heating, cooking, waste burning and congestion.
- Commercial hubs and transport nodes such as Fancy Bazar, Ganeshguri, Beltola, Zoo Road Tiniali, Paltan Bazar and Jalukbari consistently showed elevated pollution levels.
- Investigators identified open waste burning as a major contributor, with a large portion of the city's daily waste remaining unprocessed, leading to routine dumping and burning.
- Residential and commercial cooking using biomass and charcoal, despite high LPG coverage, added significantly to neighbourhood-level pollution, with winter heating further intensifying emissions.
- Transport pollution was linked to dominance of private vehicles, ageing fleets, weak enforcement, widespread diesel generator use and emissions from nearby industrial clusters.

- The Clean Air Action Plan recommended phased interventions focusing on eliminating open waste burning, accelerating cleaner fuel transitions, strengthening public transport and emissions enforcement, managing road and construction dust, upgrading industrial technologies and expanding monitoring systems.
- It also emphasized community participation, especially in waste segregation and awareness campaigns, to ensure sustained improvement in air quality.

## 90. NORTH GUWAHATI'S GREEN CLASSROOMS WIN NATIONAL HONOUR

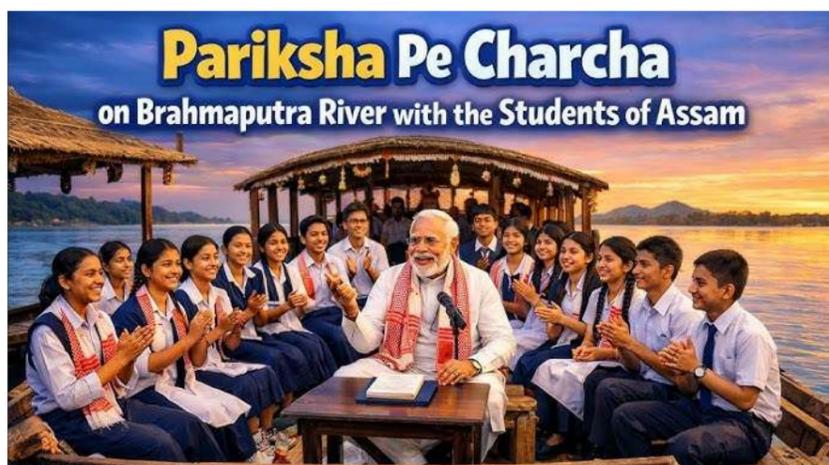
- North Guwahati schools won the prestigious Wipro Earthian National Award for student-led sustainability initiatives, bringing national recognition to Assam.
- At North Guwahati Girls' High School, teacher Dulumoni Rabha mentored a five-member student team to national success for the second consecutive year.
- The team comprised Arpita Das, Indrani Deka, Gargi Mazumdar, Karismita Das (all Class IX) and Manjita Hazarika (Class VII).
- The project was selected from over 2,000 entries nationwide, including 75 from Assam.
- Organized by Aranyak in collaboration with Samagra Shiksha Assam, the biodiversity-focused project involved hands-on activities such as wildlife surveys, microhabitat analysis, bird observation, biodiversity documentation, climate-livelihood linkages and community outreach.
- Awareness programmes were conducted on endangered species including the Gangetic river dolphin, vulture and greater adjutant stork, along with studies on wild edible plants and insect habitats.
- Auniati Kamaldev Higher Secondary School (AKHSS), a 158-year-old institution, also won the Wipro Earthian National Award.
- AKHSS's student team "Shrutaswinee" was recognized for a sustainability and water-focused project.
- Led by Dr. Akashi Baruah, the team studied water-related issues affecting the school and nearby locality, highlighting India's severe water-stress ranking.
- Students worked with inputs from the community, researchers and IIT Guwahati experts, and conducted awareness programmes on responsible water use.
- Team members included Mayur Das, Amal Sarmah, Lobo Kalita, Jeet Dutta, Kankan Kalita and Ankur Das.
- AKHSS has a long legacy of producing distinguished alumni and winning accolades in academics, sports, music and literature at national and international levels.

## 91. INDIA POST LAUNCHES 'GEN Z HANGOUT CAFÉ' AT GAUHATI UNIVERSITY, FIRST OF ITS KIND IN ASSAM



- The Indian Postal Department inaugurated the state's first 'Gen Z Hangout Café' at the Gauhati University Post Office premises as a step toward modernisation and youth engagement.
- The initiative aims to connect India Post with younger generations by blending traditional public services with contemporary ideas.
- The café, set up on the Gauhati University campus, is designed as a comfortable and creative space for students.
- This project is part of a broader effort by the postal department to adapt to changing times, enhance public interface and strengthen youth engagement.
- The main objective is to provide students with a peaceful place to sit, interact and discuss academic and social issues.
- The café is expected to become a common meeting point for students on campus.
- Authorities stated that free Wi-Fi will be introduced soon, and free tea is currently being offered as part of the launch.
- The inauguration featured cultural performances by university students:
  - Sattriya dance by Ankita Das
  - A song by Zubeen Garg performed by Kriti Kashyap
  - A dance by Deepshikha Bhuyan
  - A poem on life struggles recited by Jonak Phukan
- Postal officials described the café as a non-traditional but meaningful initiative bridging heritage and technology.
- The café reflects an attempt to combine India Post's traditional communication values with the creativity and aspirations of youth.
- Students visiting the café will also have easier access to various postal services.
- Officials believe it will help familiarise young people with postal services in a modern, engaging environment.
- The initiative is viewed as a continuation of India Post's evolution to meet the expectations of each generation.
- The walls of the café have been creatively painted by university students, making the space attractive and vibrant.
- Designed specially for young people, the café aims to encourage creativity, dialogue and fresh thinking while offering a welcoming campus environment.

## 92.PM MODI HOLDS 'PARIKSHA PE CHARCHA' SESSION WITH STUDENTS IN ASSAM



- On the second day of his Assam visit on December 21, PM Narendra Modi went on a cruise on the Brahmaputra and interacted with students under the 'Pariksha Pe Charcha' programme.
- Modi spent about 45 minutes on the three-deck vessel MV Charaidew 2, speaking with 25 students from various districts of Assam.
- The conversation focused on dealing with exam pressure, maintaining mental health, and balancing studies with other aspects of life.
- The interaction took place after the PM arrived at the recently inaugurated Guwahati Gateway Terminal of Inland Water Transport; he boarded the cruise via a floating bridge and addressed students from the upper deck.
- Security was intensified along the river, with teams from the river police, NDRF and SDRF deployed; ferry services on the Brahmaputra were suspended for two days.
- CM Himanta Biswa Sarma said the PM's cruise could boost interest in river-based tourism, similar to the rise seen after Modi's Kaziranga visit last year.
- 'Pariksha Pe Charcha', launched in 2018, is an annual initiative where the PM interacts with students nationwide to address exam-related stress and promote open discussions on education and well-being.

## 93.PM LAYS FOUNDATION FOR RS 10,600-CR UREA PLANT

- PM Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone for a ₹10,600-crore ammonia-urea complex at Namrup in Dibrugarh district.
- The brownfield project will be developed within the existing premises of Brahmaputra Valley Fertilizer Corporation Limited (BVFCL).
- The new facility will be implemented by joint venture Assam Valley Fertilizer and Chemical Company Ltd. (AVFCCL).
- It will produce over 12 lakh metric tonnes of urea annually to meet fertilizer demand in Assam and neighbouring states.
- Modi termed the day "historic" for Assam and the Northeast, stating the long-pending dream of Dibrugarh and Namrup people was being fulfilled.

- He said a new chapter of industrial development is beginning in the region and performed bhoomipujan for the project.
- Modi paid tributes to Assam's historical figures including Chaolung Siu-ka-pha, Lachit Borphukan, Swahid Kushal Konwar, Sarbananda Singha, Bhimbora Deori, Malati Mem, Birangana Sati Sadhani, Indira Miri, Moran King Bodousa and others.
- He noted that the new plant will ensure uninterrupted fertilizer supply to farmers, reduce logistics costs and boost regional employment.
- Modi highlighted the role of farmers in national development and reiterated government commitment to their welfare.
- Domestic urea production has increased from 225 lakh metric tonnes in 2014 to nearly 306 lakh metric tonnes currently.
- Modi outlined farmer-centric initiatives including PM-Kisan Samman Nidhi through which nearly ₹4 lakh crore has been directly transferred to farmers' bank accounts.
- He added crop insurance under Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana, expanded Kisan Credit Card coverage to fishermen and livestock farmers, and promotion of natural farming.
- He highlighted welfare initiatives for tea garden workers; more than 7.5 lakh workers brought under Jan Dhan banking system.
- Modi said Centre and Assam governments are committed to welfare of poor, tribals, youth and women.
- He noted sustained efforts to end decades of violence in Assam and protect the region's unique identity and culture.
- Initiatives celebrating Assamese pride include 125-foot statue of Lachit Borphukan, Bhupen Hazarika birth centenary celebrations, and global promotion of Assamese art, crafts and gamosa.
- Modi recalled gifting Assam's black tea to Russian President Vladimir Putin during his India visit.
- He highlighted Northeast's growing importance and said eastern India will become India's economic growth engine.
- Modi stated the Northeast will emerge as a major centre of self-reliant India and congratulated the people on the new fertilizer project.

## 94.SUNRISE FESTIVAL AT DONG VALLEY TO WELCOME NEW YEAR'S FIRST DAWN



- Arunachal Pradesh, which holds the unique distinction of witnessing India's first sunrise, is set to welcome the New Year with the Sunrise Festival at Dong Valley in Anjaw district.
- The festival is scheduled to be held from December 29 to January 2.

- Chief Minister Pema Khandu highlighted the significance of the event, stating that where the nation wakes to its first light, a new journey begins with hope and promise.
- Dong Valley, known as the easternmost inhabited region of the country, attracts visitors from across India for the rare experience of welcoming the New Year with the nation’s first dawn.
- The festival celebrates the cultural richness, natural heritage and serene beauty of the region.
- It reflects the spirit of hope, harmony and unity while showcasing Arunachal Pradesh’s rich cultural heritage and pristine natural beauty.
- The event will feature cultural programmes, indigenous folk music and dances, local cuisine, and active community participation, offering visitors an immersive experience of the traditional way of life.
- It also aims to promote sustainable tourism and highlight the harmonious coexistence of communities and respect for nature that define the state.
- Organised with the support of the state government and other stakeholders, the Sunrise Festival is expected to attract tourists, nature lovers and cultural enthusiasts from across the country and beyond, inviting them to begin the New Year with renewed hope and cultural pride from the land where the sun rises first in India.

## 95. ENVIRONMENTALIST HIGHLIGHTS MISNAMING OF SANGAI DEER



- Manipuri’s well-known environmentalist Dr Khangembam Shamungou Singh expressed serious concern over the misnaming of the state animal, Sangai (brow-antlered deer), as ‘Thamin’ in the Schedule I mammal species under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
- He said it would be encouraging if the ongoing Manipur Science Congress takes steps to address the issue.
- Dr Shamungou stated that Sangai is the state animal of Manipur and a critically endangered deer species (Rucervus eldii eldii) protected under Schedule I of India’s Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
- However, it has been named as ‘Thamin’ instead of Sangai under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 of the country.
- Nearly 300 delegates from different institutions, including participants from outside the state, took part in the Manipur Science Congress 2025.
- The three-day Science Congress was formally inaugurated on Saturday by Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla.

- The event is being organised by Manipur University in collaboration with the Manipur Science and Technology Council (MASTEC) and the Directorate of Environment and Climate Change (DoECC).
- The theme of the Science Congress is ‘Science, Innovation and Climate Change’.

## 96. STATE GOVT LAUNCHES ‘SWASTHYABAN SHRAMIK YOJANA’ FOR TEA POPULATION:

- With the aim of ensuring affordable and quality healthcare for the tea garden community, the State government today launched an ambitious universal health screening initiative, ‘Swasthyaban Shramik Yojana’, through the Health Department.
- The scheme was formally inaugurated at the state level at Jutlibari Tea Estate near Duliajan oil town by Health and Family Welfare Minister Ashok Singhal.
- Addressing the inaugural programme, the Health Minister highlighted the urgent need to improve healthcare access for tea garden workers, who constitute nearly 20% of Assam’s total population and have significantly contributed to the State’s socio-economic development.
- Referring to Dibrugarh as the hub of Assam’s tea industry, Singhal said the State’s sustained growth has been closely linked to the labour and livelihoods of tea garden communities, making their health and well-being a key responsibility of the government.
- To fulfil this commitment, the Swasthyaban Shramik Yojana was approved as a pilot project in the 2025–26 State Budget, focusing on comprehensive and systematic health screening of the tea garden population.
- During the pilot phase, the scheme will be implemented in 20 tea estates across different districts, including Jutlibari, Moran, Sessa and Ghagrajan tea gardens in Dibrugarh district, with effect from today.
- Citing findings from various studies, the Minister noted that tea garden workers in Assam are particularly vulnerable to health issues such as anaemia, malnutrition, hypertension, diabetes, and communicable diseases including tuberculosis and leprosy.
- He also referred to research indicating early initiation of alcohol and tobacco consumption, often before the age of 25, leading to an increasing burden of related illnesses within the community.
- To address these challenges, the Health Department has designed the programme to improve health outcomes by expanding access to quality healthcare services.
- Key components of the scheme include identification and management of malnutrition, including severe and moderate acute malnutrition; screening and treatment of non-communicable diseases such as hypertension and diabetes; anaemia screening across all age groups; and detection and management of tuberculosis and leprosy.
- Under the scheme, ASHA workers will conduct household visits to mobilise the tea garden population, complete Community-Based Assessment Checklists (CBAC), and ensure health check-ups at designated health facilities or through Mobile Medical Units (MMUs).

- The MMUs will carry out on-site screening for anaemia, hypertension, diabetes, tuberculosis, leprosy and malnutrition, followed by appropriate medical management.

## 97. ASSAMESE ARTIST'S MY INSURGENCY INSTALLATION BIG HIT IN KOCHI FEST



- Fragments of an **Assamese household**, covered in soot and partially burnt, form part of artist **Dhiraj Rabha's installation** at the **Kochi-Muziris Biennale**, evoking memories of Assam's insurgency in the 1990s.
- The immersive installation, titled *The Quiet Weight of Shadows*, explores the long and complex history of insurgency in Assam under the **Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act**.
- Rabha, born in **Borali Gaon in 1995**, was raised in a former **ULFA detention camp in Goalpara** after his father, an ex-militant, surrendered.
- His artistic practice spans **installation, photography, film and archival documentation**, focusing on displacement, surveillance and resilience in insurgency-affected communities.
- Through the work, Rabha reflects on his lived experiences and contrasts them with narratives presented "to the world outside those camps".
- He began working on the project in **2021**, primarily to listen to and document the stories of former ULFA members and their families.
- The aim was to record lives that differed significantly from **State and media narratives** of the time.
- The installation recreates a household illuminated in solemn light, incorporating **archival materials** such as newspapers, books, pamphlets and documents related to the ULFA movement and 1990s student protests.
- Photographs on display depict **everyday camp life**, including training sessions, weddings, soldiers and intimate domestic moments.
- At the centre of the installation is a **garden of carnivorous plants**, glowing under blue UV light and fitted with speakers.
- These speakers emit **broadcasts from the 1990s to 2010s** related to the ULFA movement in **Assamese, Hindi and English**.
- Rabha explained that the carnivorous plants symbolize **power and dominating news narratives**, reflecting how media consumes and controls stories.

## 98. ARTIFICIAL CANOPY BRIDGES REDUCE GOLDEN LANGUR FATALITIES ON STATE HIGHWAY 14 IN KOKRAJHAR

- Installation of **artificial canopy bridges (ACBs)** at critical golden langur (*Trachypitecus geei*) crossing points along **State Highway-14 (SH-14)** in **Kokrajhar** has significantly reduced road accident-related deaths of the endangered primate.
- The intervention followed a study in the **Chakrashila–Amguri–Buxamara–Nayekgaon forest complex**, which recorded **18 vehicle collisions** involving golden langurs on the Nayekgaon–Choibari stretch of SH-14.
- These incidents resulted in **seven fatalities, five major injuries and six minor injuries** among the langurs.
- To mitigate the risk, **15 artificial canopy bridges of four different designs** were installed along SH-14.
- During monitoring, **112 crossing events** by **eight groups of golden langurs** were recorded using roads and canopy bridges.
- Linear infrastructure such as **roads and power lines** fragments forest habitats used by golden langurs in Assam.
- Gaps in the forest canopy force these **arboreal primates** to descend to the ground, increasing the risk of road-kill and other anthropogenic mortality.
- All bridges were installed at a height of **nine to ten metres** above the ground.
- **Thirteen camera traps** were deployed alternately across all ACB sites and operated **simultaneously without interruption** during the survey period.
- The study identified **18 critical crossover points** used by golden langurs along a **5.2-km stretch** from Nayekgaon to Choibari.
- These crossing points were used by **eight langur groups**, including **seven mixed groups** and **one all-male group**.
- Prior to bridge installation, langurs crossed the road on the ground in **71% of instances**, while **29% of crossings** involved detours using existing natural canopy.
- The golden langur is an **obligate canopy-dwelling primate** endemic to the **Indo-Bhutan border region**.
- It is primarily found in **four districts of western Assam** and **six districts of south-central Bhutan**, making it one of the most **range-restricted primates in South Asia**.
- The species faces **habitat loss and population decline**, with **more than half of its natural habitat lost** in recent decades.
- The decline is particularly severe in **Kokrajhar and Bongaigaon districts**, where deforestation and land-use change have fragmented once-continuous forests.
- Such fragmentation threatens the **long-term viability** of golden langur populations.
- The report notes that artificial canopy bridges have **substantially improved safe crossings**, reduced vehicle collisions and enhanced habitat connectivity.

- It highlights ACBs as an increasingly effective **conservation and mitigation tool** to reduce mortality and support the survival of the species.

## 99.150 NE PRODUCTS IDENTIFIED FOR GI TAGGING IN 2 YEARS



- At least **150 distinctive products** from the Northeast have been identified for **Geographical Indication (GI) tagging** over the next two years.
- The **Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (MDoNER)** is leading the initiative to secure GI tags for unique **agri-horti, handloom and handicraft products** from the region.
- The objective is to **promote, protect and preserve the unique identity** of Northeast products and enhance their market value.
- The ministry has sanctioned the establishment of the **North East Science and Technology (NEST) Cluster** at **IIT Guwahati** with an outlay of **₹22.98 crore**.
- The NEST Cluster aims to promote **research, innovation and skill development** across the Northeast.
- It will support a **grassroots innovation hub, a technology hub for semiconductors and artificial intelligence**, and a **centre of excellence for bamboo-based technology** and other biodegradable, eco-friendly plastics.
- The cluster will also strengthen **entrepreneurship promotion, innovation and skill development** in the region.
- The Northeast contributes nearly **96% of India's agarwood production**.
- India's **annual agarwood export quota has been increased sixfold**.
- An integrated proposal to develop **agarwood clusters** in **Golaghat (Assam)** and **Kadamtala (Tripura)** is under active consideration.
- Efforts are underway to strengthen **traditional bamboo artisan clusters** by expanding market access and digital linkages.
- Projects aim to integrate **over 4,000 artisans into formal markets** and upgrade **15 Common Facility Centres (CFCs)**.
- The ministry has supported the setting up of **bamboo procurement units** in **Karbi Anglong (Assam)** and **Mokokchung (Nagaland)**.
- These units focus on producing **value-added bamboo engineered products**.

- The Northeast is expected to play a crucial role in achieving India's vision of **'Viksit Bharat' by 2047**.
- The **Rising North East Investors Summit**, held in **May in New Delhi**, saw participation from major corporate houses, foreign investors and public sector undertakings.
- The summit generated **investment interest worth ₹4.48 lakh crore** from private investors and PSUs.

## 100. 'ASMITA' CELEBRATES WOMEN'S VOICES IN LITERATURE AT SIVASAGAR



- Women writers and their powerful voices took centre stage at a literary programme titled **'Asmita'**, organised to honour and highlight women's contribution to literature.
- The event was held on **December 27** under the initiative of the **Sahitya Akademi**, in collaboration with **New Look Academy, Sivasagar**.
- The outreach programme brought together **renowned women writers and emerging literary voices**, creating a vibrant platform for creative expression.
- Eminent writers **Lipi Phukan, Chandralekha Rajkhowa, Kunja Devi Upadhyaya, and Ritamoni Borah** participated in the programme.
- They read out their **poetry and short stories** before the audience.
- The literary works explored diverse themes such as **identity, emotion, social realities, and inner strength**, and were warmly received by the gathering.
- The programme began with a **welcome address by Srimanta Borthakur**, Principal of New Look Academy.
- He expressed gratitude to the **Sahitya Akademi** for selecting New Look Academy as the venue for the event.
- He emphasized the importance of initiatives like **'Asmita'** in promoting and encouraging the works of women writers.
- Speakers and participants discussed the **growing role of women in literature**, highlighting how women are not merely preserving tradition but also questioning norms and rewriting narratives.
- The programme was described as a **safe and encouraging space** that enables women to share their stories confidently.
- Such initiatives were seen as vital in **inspiring future generations of women writers** and strengthening inclusive literary expression.



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## MISCELLANEOUS

### 101. 'RAGE BAIT' IS OXFORD WORD OF THE YEAR:

- 'Rage bait' was named the 2025 "word of the year" by Oxford University Press (OUP).
- It is defined as online content deliberately designed to provoke anger or outrage to increase traffic or engagement.
- Usage of the term has tripled in the past year, according to OUP's language monitoring data.
- The word combines 'rage' (violent anger) and 'bait' (an enticing lure), similar to 'clickbait' but specifically focused on triggering anger, discord, and polarisation.
- OUP noted that the rise of this term shows growing awareness of manipulation tactics used online.
- While 2024's word 'brain rot' reflected mental exhaustion from endless scrolling, the 2025 choice highlights content engineered to provoke outrage.
- The shift indicates how the internet has moved from sparking curiosity for clicks to influencing emotions and reactions.
- Together, 'brain rot' and 'rage bait' capture how online culture creates a cycle where outrage increases engagement, algorithms amplify it, and constant exposure leads to mental strain.
- The 2025 word of the year was chosen after three days of online voting with participation from over 30,000 people.
- Other shortlisted words included 'aura farming', meaning cultivating an attractive or charismatic public image by projecting confidence, coolness, or mystery.
- 'Biohack', meaning efforts to optimise one's physical or mental performance through diet, lifestyle changes, supplements, or technology, was also on the shortlist.

### 102. UNESCO DECLARES DEEPAVALI AMONG WORLD'S INTANGIBLE CULTURAL TREASURES



- Deepavali, India's iconic festival of lights, has been inscribed on the **UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity**, announced during a key meeting at the Red Fort.

- The festival represents centuries-old traditions including **lighting diyas, offering prayers, decorating homes, sharing sweets, and strengthening community bonds.**
- UNESCO's recognition highlights Deepavali's ability to **bring together families, communities, and generations** under shared values of **hope, renewal, and harmony.**
- Deepavali is the **sixteenth element from India** to be inscribed on the **UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.**
- **Fifteen other Indian elements** already on the list include:
  - **Kumbh Mela**
  - **Durga Puja** of Kolkata
  - **Garba dance** of Gujarat
  - **Yoga**
  - **Vedic chanting** tradition
  - **Ramlila**, the traditional performance of the epic *Ramayana*
- According to UNESCO, intangible cultural heritage encompasses **practices, rituals, and celebrations passed down through generations**, reflecting that living traditions continue to hold significance in modern society.
- For India, Deepavali's inclusion is a matter of **national pride**, joining other globally celebrated cultural traditions such as **Durga Puja, Kumbh Mela, Yoga, folk dances, and Vedic chants.**
- Deepavali's journey from **ancient homes to the global heritage list** underscores its timeless appeal, emphasizing that festivals are **living traditions carrying hope, unity, and light across generations.**

### 103. ON A SPECIAL VISIT TO VANTARA, ANANT AMBANI AND LIONEL MESSI EXPERIENCES UNFORGETTABLE ENCOUNTERS WITH SACRED INDIAN TRADITIONS AND WILDLIFE:

- Lionel Messi visited Vantara, a wildlife rescue, rehabilitation and conservation centre founded by Anant Ambani.
- The visit began with traditional blessings rooted in Sanatana Dharma, signifying reverence for nature and living beings.
- Messi participated in Hindu rituals, observed wildlife and interacted with caregivers and conservation teams.
- His engagements reflected humility, humanitarian values and his friendship with Anant Ambani.
- Messi was accompanied by Inter Miami teammates Luis Suárez and Rodrigo De Paul.
- They were welcomed with vibrant folk music, showering of flowers and ceremonial aarti.
- Messi participated in a Maha Aarti including Ambe Mata Puja, Ganesh Puja, Hanuman Puja and Shiv Abhishek, praying for world peace and unity.

- He took a guided tour of the expansive conservation ecosystem housing rescued big cats, elephants, herbivores, reptiles and foster animals from around the world.
- Messi visited the green energy complex and the world’s largest refinery complex, expressing amazement at the scale of operations.
- At the care centre for endangered species, he interacted with animals thriving in enriched, naturalistic environments.
- He visited the Herbivore Care Centre and Reptile Care Centre, observing specialised veterinary care, customised nutrition and world-class husbandry practices.
- Messi toured the multi-speciality wildlife hospital and witnessed real-time clinical and surgical procedures.
- He fed okapis, rhinos, giraffes and elephants, and appreciated India’s commitment to wildlife conservation under the Prime Minister’s leadership.
- At the Foster Care Centre, Messi learned about orphaned and vulnerable animals and their stories of resilience.
- Anant and Radhika Ambani named a lion cub “Lionel” in Messi’s honour, symbolising hope and continuity.
- The highlight of the tour was meeting Maniklal, a rescued elephant calf, and engaging in an impromptu football activity with him.
- The calf responded playfully, creating a memorable moment.
- Messi responded in Spanish thanking Vantara, praising its meaningful and impressive work for animals.
- He expressed feeling at ease, said the experience would stay with him and promised to visit again to support the mission.
- As the visit ended, Messi participated in Nariyal Utsarg and Matka Phod rituals symbolising goodwill and auspicious beginnings.
- The ceremony concluded with peace chants, reinforcing Vantara’s values aligned with Messi’s global humanitarian legacy.
- Messi expressed deep alignment between Vantara’s mission and the Leo Messi Foundation’s work for social causes, education, healthcare and children's welfare.

### 104.HOMEBOUND MAKES IT TO OSCAR SHORTLIST FOR BEST INT’L FEATURE



- Neeraj Ghaywan’s acclaimed film *Homebound* has been shortlisted among 15 films in the Best International Feature category at the Oscars, taking it closer to final nominations.
- The movie is inspired by a true pandemic-era story based on a news article.

- It debuted in the Un Certain Regard section at the Cannes Film Festival in May and has generated global buzz.
- Veteran filmmaker Martin Scorsese has joined as executive producer ahead of awards season.
- The film is produced by Karan Johar and Adar Poonawalla, starring Ishaan Khatter, Vishal Jethwa, and Janhvi Kapoor.
- *Homebound* is Ghaywan’s second film after *Masaan*.
- It will compete for an Oscar nomination against films from Argentina (*Belén*), Brazil (*The Secret Agent*), France (*It Was Just an Accident*), Germany (*Sound of Falling*), Iraq (*The President’s Cake*), Japan (*Kokuho*), Jordan (*All That’s Left of You*), Norway (*Sentimental Value*), Palestine (*Palestine 36*), South Korea (*No Other Choice*), Spain (*Sirat*), Switzerland (*Late Shift*), Taiwan (*Left Handed Girl*), and Tunisia (*The Voice of Hind Rajab*).
- The Academy announced the shortlist in a press release on Tuesday.
- India has never won the Best International Feature Oscar (formerly Best Foreign Film).
- Three Indian films have been nominated in this category: *Mother India*, *Salaam Bombay!* and *Lagaan*.
- Deepa Mehta’s *Water* was nominated but submitted by Canada.
- In 2023, Gujarati film *Chhello Show* was the last Indian film to be shortlisted.
- Bhanu Athaiya was the first Indian to win an Oscar in 1983 for costume design in *Gandhi*.
- Other Indians who have won Oscars include A. R. Rahman, Resul Pookutty, and M. M. Keeravani.

### 105.HISTORIC SURVEY DRIVE FOR ABADI DEH AREAS IN DELHI



- Delhi Government has launched a major initiative to resolve long-pending identification, ownership, and documentation issues of Abadi Deh land in rural Delhi.
- A comprehensive survey will be carried out, followed by preparation of records, verification, and computerization within a defined legal and administrative framework.
- The move aims to strengthen land management and provide villagers legal ownership proof and financial security.
- Chief Minister Rekha Gupta said the step will ensure property ownership rights and settle decades-old boundary disputes in Abadi Deh areas.
- For effective implementation of the SVAMITVA scheme (launched April 24, 2020), the government has drafted the

**Delhi Abadi Deh Survey and Record Management Rules, 2025.**

- The draft defines operational procedures, including drone-based aerial surveys, field verification, public objections, dispute resolution, creation of digital records, and issuance of property cards.
- The objective is transparent, time-bound, and fair settlement of land issues without infringing public rights.
- The Revenue Department will directly supervise the survey process.
- Survey teams and technical agencies will jointly conduct work in Abadi Deh, extended Abadi Deh, and other notified areas.
- Modern technology including drones and aerial photography will record exact plot boundaries, size, and location.
- Ground truthing and field verification will be mandatory to ensure accuracy between preliminary drone maps and actual conditions.

**106.DELHI’S AQI MOVES FROM ‘SEVERE’ TO ‘VERY POOR’ CATEGORY**



- Delhi’s air quality showed some improvement, with the Air Quality Index (AQI) moving to the ‘very poor’ category from ‘severe’ a day earlier, according to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).
- The national capital’s AQI stood at 336 in the morning, compared to 415 on Tuesday, CPCB data showed.
- Out of Delhi’s 40 air quality monitoring stations, 36 recorded AQI levels in the ‘very poor’ category.
- Nehru Nagar recorded the highest AQI reading at 392, according to the CPCB’s Sameer app.
- An AQI between 0–50 is considered ‘good’, 51–100 ‘satisfactory’, 101–200 ‘moderate’, 201–300 ‘poor’, 301–400 ‘very poor’, and 401–500 ‘severe’.
- Fog and smog reduced visibility in some parts of Delhi during the early morning hours.
- Delhi recorded a minimum temperature of 10.2 degrees Celsius, which was 2.7 degrees above normal.
- The maximum temperature is expected to be around 19 degrees Celsius, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD).
- The humidity level stood at 100 per cent.
- The IMD has forecast moderate fog during the day.

**107.PRESIDENT MURMU PRESENTS RASHTRIYA BAL PURASKAR**



- President Droupadi Murmu presented the Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar to 20 children from 18 States and Union Territories, recognising their exceptional achievements in art, culture, sports, and innovation.
- In her address, President Murmu extended her blessings to the awardees and congratulated their families.
- She highlighted the significance of Veer Bal Diwas, observed every year on December 26 to honour the courage and sacrifice of the Sahibzades, the sons of Sikhism’s tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh Ji.
- Recalling history, she noted that around 320 years ago, Guru Gobind Singh Ji and his four sons made supreme sacrifices for righteousness and faith.
- President Murmu emphasised that the Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar motivates young minds and inspires children across the nation to strive for excellence.
- She also praised the awardees’ abilities, stating that all children are equal in the eyes of the nation.
- The full list of Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar 2025 winners categorised by their fields:
  - **Bravery**
    - ✓ **Vyoma Priya (Posthumous), Tamil Nadu:** 9-year-old Vyoma lost her life while selflessly trying to save a six-year-old child during an electrical accident.
    - ✓ **Kamlesh Kumar (Posthumous), Bihar:** 11-year-old Kamlesh gave up his life attempting to rescue another child from drowning.
    - ✓ **Muhammed Sidan P, Kerala:** 11-year-old Muhammed Sidan acted without fear to save two friends from electrocution.
    - ✓ **Ajay Raj, Uttar Pradesh:** 9-year-old Ajay saved his father from a crocodile attack near their village river.
  - **Art and Culture**
    - ✓ **Esther Lalduhawmi Hnamte, Mizoram:** 9-year-old Esther inspired millions with her patriotic song renditions.
    - ✓ **Suman Sarkar, West Bengal:** 16-year-old Suman, a tabla prodigy, has gained global recognition for his talent.

## 108. 'INSV KAUNDINYA INSPIRED BY PAINTING FROM AJANTA CAVES'



- The traditionally built stitched ship **INSV Kaundinya** embarked on her maiden overseas voyage on Monday, sailing from **Gujarat to Oman**.
- The vessel is a **recreation of a fifth-century ship**, inspired by a **painting from the ancient Ajanta Caves**.
- It is named after the legendary mariner **Kaundinya**, believed to have sailed from India to Southeast Asia in ancient times.
- The ship symbolizes **India's historic maritime legacy** and its long-standing seafaring traditions.
- Its design and construction involved **unique technical challenges**, as noted by officials.
- The Indian Navy formally inducted and named the vessel as **Indian Naval Sailing Vessel (INSV) Kaundinya** at the **Karwar naval base on May 21**.

- The naming ceremony was held in the presence of **Union Minister of Culture Gajendra Singh Shekhawat**.
- The maiden overseas voyage began from **Porbandar in Gujarat** and is bound for **Oman**.
- The voyage retraces **ancient maritime routes** linking India's western coast with Oman, which once enabled trade, cultural exchange, and sustained civilisational interactions across the **Indian Ocean**.
- The stitched ship project was initiated through a **tripartite agreement** signed in **July 2023** between the **Ministry of Culture**, the **Indian Navy**, and **Hodi Innovations**, with funding from the Ministry of Culture.
- The vessel is a **5th-century CE ship recreation**, based on ancient artistic and historical references.
- After the **keel laying in September 2023**, construction was carried out using a **traditional stitching technique**.
- The ship was built by a team of **skilled artisans from Kerala**, led by master shipwright **Babu Sankaran**.



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**109.ROHIT BREAKS SHAHID AFRIDI'S RECORD FOR MOST ODI SIXES**



- India opener Rohit Sharma surpassed Pakistan’s Shahid Afridi to register the most sixes (352) by any batter in the history of One-Day International cricket, achieving the milestone during the first ODI against South Africa at Ranchi.

**110.MIZO FILMMAKER FETED ON BECOMING IFFI JURY MEMBER**

- Filmmaker **Napoleon RZ Thanga**, the first Mizo to be appointed as a jury member in the Indian Panorama (Feature Film) section of the International Film Festival of India (IFFI), was felicitated.
- The Mizo film industry has grown significantly over the past 2–3 years, contributing to the State’s economy and creating employment opportunities for youth.
- He emphasised the need to enhance film quality so that Mizoram can host more film festivals and make Mizo films marketable outside the State.
- Strengthening the industry further will help Mizo filmmakers reach wider audiences.
- Napoleon began filmmaking in 2006 and has since produced over 20 documentaries and four short films.
- He has created documentary films for Films Division, DDK-Aizawl, the North East Zonal Cultural Centre (Ministry of Culture), and various Mizoram Government departments including Art & Culture, Agriculture, and Sports.

- His films have been screened at major festivals such as the Mumbai International Film Festival, IFFI-Goa, Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival, festivals in Bangladesh, Guwahati International Documentary and Short Film Festival, Brahmaputra Valley Film Festival, SASF Kolkata, MIDSFF Madurai, Himalayan International Film Festival (Ladakh), and festivals in Itanagar, Imphal, and Delhi.
- He served as a selection committee member for MIFF in 2016.
- He represented Mizoram as part of the North East delegates at the Cannes Film Festival in 2023.

**111.DR. BISHNU RAM NUNISA HONoured WITH PRESTIGIOUS ‘BHARATIYA GAURAB AWARD – 2025’**



- Sports organiser **Dr. Bishnu Ram Nunisa** has been honoured with the **Bharatiya Gaurab Award – 2025** by the Mahatma Gandhi Global Peace India Foundation under the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Government of India.
- The award recognises his long-standing contribution to **sports development** and **community service**.
- Expressing gratitude, Dr. Nunisa called the honour both **proud and humbling**, noting that it reflects not just his personal dedication but also the collective support he has received throughout his journey.
- He stated that the recognition inspires him to continue contributing meaningfully to **sports** and **community welfare**.

**112.WINNERS OF KALYAN BAROOAH AWARDS NAMED**

- The North East Media Forum (NEMF) and My Home India announced the winners of the 3rd Kalyan Barooah Awards–2025.
- The awards honour journalists who have shown excellence in reporting on issues related to the Northeast.
- Monalisa Changkija of *Nagaland Page* was conferred the Lifetime Achievement Award.
- She was selected for her remarkable and sustained contribution to journalism in the Northeastern region.
- In the Print Category, Amal Goswami, Chief Staff Reporter of *Dainik Janambhumi*, was declared the winner.

- The Electronic Media Award was awarded to Kshetrimayum Premchand, Chief Reporter of SKTV News, Imphal, Manipur.
- In the Digital Media Category, the award was bagged by Mridul Kumar Handique of *Pratidin Digital*, Assam.
- The winners were selected after evaluation of nominations received across various categories by a five-member jury.
- No entries were received in the Still Photography and Videography categories, according to the forum.
- The awards will be presented on December 11 in New Delhi, marking the birth anniversary of late Kalyan Barooah.
- Late Kalyan Barooah was a journalist with *The Assam Tribune* for many years and passed away due to Covid-19 in 2021.
- The NEMF is a Delhi-based organisation of journalists from the Northeast or those reporting on the region while working in the Delhi-NCR area.
- My Home India is an NGO working towards emotional integration between people from different parts of the country and the Northeastern region.

### 113.SANCHITA SARMA WINS BRONZE MEDALS



- Dr Sanchita Sarma of Guwahati secured third place for India in the Under-69 kg Masters-2 category at the Asian Open and Masters Powerlifting Championship 2025 held in Istanbul, Türkiye, from December 2 to 10.
- She won four bronze medals in the Asian Masters Women’s Classic Powerlifting Championship in the 69 kg body-weight class, earning podium finishes in the squat, bench press, deadlift, and overall events.
- Dr Sarma, who is above 50 years of age, represented India in the Masters-2 classic category.

### 114.NAGAON DC VISITS BLIND CRICKET CHAMPION SIMU DAS, PROMISES NEW HOME AND LAND RELIEF:

- The Nagaon District Commissioner visited the home of Simu Das in recognition of her being part of India’s winning team at the 2025 Women’s Blind T20 Cricket World Cup held in Sri Lanka.
- Simu Das is a resident of Kothiatoli in Nagaon district.
- During the visit, Simu warmly welcomed the District Commissioner.

- The District Commissioner praised her dedication and courage.
- She was lauded for bringing pride and honour to Assam as well as to the nation.

### 115.GLOBAL HUMANE SOCIETY HONOURS ANANT AMBANI WITH PRESTIGIOUS ANIMAL WELFARE AWARD



- **Anant Ambani**, founder of the wildlife conservation center **Vantara**, has been awarded the **Global Humanitarian Award for Animal Welfare** by the **Global Humane Society**, the international branch of the American Humane Society.
- He is the **youngest ever** and the **first Asian** to receive this prestigious recognition.
- The award was presented at an **international event** that gathered leaders dedicated to wildlife protection and animal welfare.
- Recognized as one of the foremost global awards in animal welfare, it honors Ambani’s **leadership in evidence-based welfare programs, science-driven conservation initiatives, and sustained efforts to protect vulnerable species worldwide.**
- The award celebrates individuals whose **lifelong commitment has created transformative, global impact** for both animals and humans.
- Ambani was specifically recognized for his **visionary work in establishing Vantara**, a center redefining large-scale rescue, rehabilitation, and species preservation.

### 116.KALYAN BAROOAH AWARDS PRESENTED

- The 3rd Kalyan Barooah Memorial Awards were conferred on four journalists from the Northeast in New Delhi.
- Monalisa Changkija of *The Nagaland Page* received the Lifetime Achievement Award for her sustained contribution to journalism in the Northeast.
- In the Print Category, Amal Goswami, chief staff reporter of *Dainik Janambhumi*, received the award.
- In the Electronic Media Category, Kshetrimayum Premchand, chief reporter of SKTV News, Imphal, was awarded.
- In the Digital Media Category, Mridul Kumar Handique of *Pratidin Digital* received the award.
- The awards are named after late Kalyan Barooah, a journalist from *The Assam Tribune* who died of Covid-19 in 2021.

- They are jointly given by NEMF and My Home India.
- NEMF is a Delhi-based organisation for journalists in Delhi-NCR who hail from or report on the Northeast.
- My Home India is an NGO focused on fostering emotional integration between people from the Northeast and the rest of the country.

### 117.IRAN ARRESTS NOBEL PEACE PRIZE LAUREATE



- Iran has arrested Nobel Peace Prize laureate Narges Mohammadi, according to her supporters.
- A foundation named after her said she was detained while attending a memorial for a human rights lawyer who was recently found dead under disputed circumstances.

### 118.ASSAM ARCHERS SHINE

- Assam’s mixed team of Dipul Boro and Tutumoni Boro won the silver medal in the Indian Round at the Senior National Archery Championship held in Hyderabad, Telangana.
- The State’s women’s team comprising Tutumoni Boro, Sonia Boro, Namrata Brahma and Hosmika Boro also added to Assam’s medal tally by securing a bronze medal at the same championship.

### 119.DOYEN OF ASSAM NEWSPAPER INDUSTRY PG BARUAH NO MORE:

- Prafulla Govinda Baruah, a doyen of the newspaper industry in Assam and **Chairman Emeritus and Editor of The Assam Tribune**, passed away.
- He took over as **Managing Director of The Assam Tribune group of newspapers in 1966** and later became the **Editor of The Assam Tribune in 1997**.
- The Assam Tribune is the **oldest and highest circulated English daily in Northeast India**, and under his leadership it grew into a trusted voice of the region.
- For his **contribution to journalism in this backward part of the country**, he was honoured with the **Padma Shri**, along with several other recognitions from eminent personalities and organisations.
- During the **Platinum Jubilee celebrations of The Assam Tribune in 2014**, Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** described the newspaper as *“the voice of the people of the region”* and remarked that *“the people of the Northeast can live without their morning cup of tea but not without The Assam Tribune”*.

- To promote Assamese literature, Baruah began publishing **Goriyasi**, a monthly literary magazine, from his publishing house **Sahitya Prakash**.
- Through Goriyasi, Sahitya Prakash has contributed significantly to Assamese literature by publishing works of prominent literary personalities of the state.
- Apart from numerous citations for his work in journalism, he was honoured by the **late Kamala Saikia Trust**, formed in memory of journalist Kamala Saikia, who was shot dead by militants.
- The **Asam Sahitya Sabha** felicitated him for his contributions to **literature, art and culture**.
- The **Dr B Borooah Cancer Institute** presented him an appreciation citation for his role in creating **awareness on cancer control**.

### 120.AMBIKAGIRI MEMORIAL AWARD TO BE CONFERRED ON NILAM DUTTA:



- AASU, along with Assam Unnati Sabha and Assam Sena, announced the **Ambikagiri Rai Choudhury Memorial Award** for this year.
- The award will be conferred on model farmer and entrepreneur Nilam Dutta.
- It will be presented on December 18, marking the birth anniversary of Ambikagiri Rai Choudhury.
- The event will be held at 2 pm at the Sri Sri Madhavadeva International Auditorium, Srimanta Sankaradeva Kalakshetra, Guwahati.

### 121.MAJULI’S ‘NATMALLAR’ CONFERS 2025 AWARDS ON EMINENT CULTURAL PRACTITIONERS AND JOURNALISTS

- The Natmallar: Sattriya Culture Art Centre was established under the patronage of the historic Shri Shri Elengi Bahjengani Satra of Majuli.
- The centre celebrated its first anniversary with a grand cultural programme.
- The day-long event was held at the Elengi Bahjengani Satra premises.
- It included award presentations, an academic discussion, and vibrant Sattriya cultural performances.

- The programme highlighted Majuli’s rich Vaishnavite heritage.
- The centre introduced the *Natmallar Award* for the first time, honouring five distinguished personalities from Majuli for lifelong contributions to Sattriya culture, literature, education and social service.
- Two young journalists from Majuli were specially felicitated for promoting responsible journalism and Sattriya cultural awareness.
- Journalist Tirtha Bhuyan Borgayan of *Pratidin Time* received the *Natmallar Special Award 2025* for committed journalism and highlighting Sattriya culture.
- Young journalist Pranjal Khaund was also specially honoured for dedicated reporting and cultural documentation.
- Eminent cultural practitioner, Mayamara mridanga artist and singer Chandrakanta Das received the Late Nakul Mahanta Prabhu Memorial Award.
- Writer, social worker and founder editor of the Majuli district Satradhikar Women’s Pilgrimage Trust, Gayatri Hazarika, was honoured with the Aai Tilakanti Mahanta Memorial Award.
- Deepak Deuri received the Late Tanushyam Mahanta Prabhu Memorial Award for promoting Sattriya culture within the Deuri community.
- Naam-prayer singer and bayan Pona Rajkhowa Bayan was awarded the Late Dinbar Saikia Memorial Award.
- Teacher and cultural activist Sanjeev Pegu received the Late Mohan Chandra Mahanta Memorial Award for performing Bhaona and Borgeet in the Mising language.

**122. ASSAM'S SANGEETA BARUAH PISHAROTY ELECTED PRESS CLUB OF INDIA PRESIDENT**



- The Press Club of India (PCI) elected senior journalist Sangeeta Barooah Pisharoty of Assam as its president on December 13, making her the first woman to hold the post since the club’s establishment.
- Pisharoty’s panel swept the elections, winning all office-bearer and managing committee seats by a 21–0 margin.
- She secured 1,019 votes, defeating Atul Mishra (129 votes) and Arun Sharma (89 votes).
- Afzal Imam won the Secretary-General post with 948 votes, defeating Gyan Prakash, who received 290 votes.

- Jatin Gandhi won the vice-president’s post with 1,029 votes, beating Prahlad Singh Rajput by over 900 votes.
- Aditi Rajput and P.R. Sunil were elected unopposed as treasurer and joint secretary.
- Chief election commissioner M.M.C. Sharma formally announced the results in the presence of a large gathering of journalists.
- For the 16-member Managing Committee elections, Niraj Kumar topped the list with 932 votes.
- Pisharoty said the mandate reflected members’ faith in her panel’s vision and commitment to protecting free, fair and responsible journalism.
- Outgoing president Gautam Lahiri thanked members and expressed confidence that the new team would strengthen inclusivity and responsiveness.
- Secretary-General Neeraj Thakur described the first woman president’s election as a milestone reaffirming PCI’s commitment to equality, diversity and democratic values.

**123. OMAN SULTAN CONFERS NATIONAL AWARD ON PM MODI**



- Oman’s Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik conferred ‘The First Class of the Order of Oman’ on PM Narendra Modi.
- The award has previously been given to Queen Elizabeth, Queen Maxima, Emperor Akihito, Nelson Mandela, and King Abdullah of Jordan.
- This is the 29th global honour received by PM Modi.
- On Tuesday, PM Modi received Ethiopia’s highest award, the ‘Great Honor Nishan of Ethiopia’, from Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed.
- The Ethiopian award ceremony was held at the Addis International Convention Centre.
- Modi was honoured for his exceptional contributions to bilateral partnership and visionary leadership as a global statesman.
- PM Modi expressed gratitude to PM Abiy and the people of Ethiopia for the recognition.
- On Thursday, PM Modi met Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik in Muscat to discuss deepening the strategic partnership.
- Both leaders witnessed the exchange of key MoUs and agreements.

- They welcomed the signing of the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), calling it a “milestone” in bilateral ties.
- Leaders expressed confidence that CEPA will strengthen the strategic partnership.
- They also discussed regional and global issues of mutual interest.
- The meeting at Al Baraka Palace in Muscat was attended by EAM S. Jaishankar, Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal, NSA Ajit Doval, and other officials.

## 124.MY BHARAT NATIONAL NSS AWARDEES MEET GOVERNOR LAKSHMAN PRASAD ACHARYA AT LOK BHAVAN:



- My Bharat National NSS Awardees **Dr Bhuban Chandra Chutiya, Priyanuj Hazarika, and Doli Choudhury** paid a courtesy visit to Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya at Lok Bhavan in Guwahati.
- The awardees had earlier received the ‘My Bharat National NSS Award 2022–23’ from the President of India at Rashtrapati Bhavan on October 6, 2025.
- They were recognised for their exemplary contributions to community service through the National Service Scheme.
- During the interaction, the Governor congratulated them and lauded their dedication to social service.
- He stated that their work reflected service, discipline and social responsibility and would inspire youth toward nation-building.
- **Dr Ranjan Kumar Kakati**, Director of Students’ Welfare, accompanied the awardees during the visit.

## 125.FILM FRATERNITY MOURNS DEMISE OF ACTOR-DIRECTOR SREENIVASAN

- The demise of legendary actor-director Sreenivasan on Saturday sent shockwaves through the Malayalam film industry.
- Members of the film fraternity shared emotional tributes and condolences, recalling his life, contributions, and legacy.
- Sreenivasan, one of Malayalam cinema’s most influential figures as an actor, screenwriter, and director, passed away.

## 126.LIBERATION WAR’S DEPUTY CHIEF KHANDKER PASSES AWAY

- Air Vice Marshal (retd.) Abdul Karim Khandker, a top Mukti Bahini leader during the 1971 Liberation War, passed away.
- He was present at the surrender ceremony on December 16, 1971, in Dhaka, when Lt. Gen. AAK Niazi surrendered Pakistani troops to Indian Lt. Gen. Jagjit Singh Aurora representing India-Bangladesh joint forces.
- Khandker, awarded the Bir Uttam gallantry honour, was second-in-command of Mukti Bahini under General M.A.G. Osmany and later became Bangladesh’s first Air Force chief, pioneering the establishment of the country’s air power.
- In recognition of his war contributions, he received Bangladesh’s highest civilian award — the Independence Award — in 2011.
- He joined the Pakistan Air Force in 1952, serving as fighter pilot and instructor, and later joined the liberation struggle in 1971.
- Post-war, he served as Bangladesh High Commissioner to India and Ambassador to Australia.
- He later served twice as Planning Minister — during President Hussain Muhammad Ershad’s rule and again in 2009 after Awami League returned to power.
- Khandker was elected twice to Parliament from his home district Pabna on an Awami League ticket.
- In 2007, he played a key role in establishing the Sector Commanders Forum, mobilising Liberation War sector and sub-sector commanders to resist forces opposed to Bangladesh’s independence.

## 127.PRATIMA BARUA AWARD TO RATNESHWAR MORAN:



- The All Assam Students’ Union (AASU) announced that the Pratima Barua Pandey Memorial Award for 2025 will be conferred on noted folk culture exponent Ratneshwar Moran.
- Ratneshwar Moran hails from Bormesai Shimoluguri in the Kakopathar area of Tinsukia district.
- The award is instituted in memory of legendary Goalpariya folk singer Pratima Barua Pandey.
- It is presented annually to an individual who has made significant contributions to the preservation and promotion of Assam’s rich folk traditions.

- Ratneshwar Moran has been selected in recognition of his lifelong dedication to folk culture.
- He is also acknowledged for his role in preserving and keeping indigenous traditions of Assam alive.

## 128. ASSAM PUBLICATION BOARD AWARDS ANJAN BASKOTA FOR LITERARY EXCELLENCE

- Anjan Baskota, a young writer and journalist from Biswanath district, has been selected for the Young Writer Honour to be presented by the Assam Publication Board, Government of Assam.
- He was earlier awarded the Sahitya Akademi Yuva Puraskar in 2020.
- He has five books to his credit, along with three translation works.
- He has also edited dozens of research-based books, magazines, and souvenirs.
- Anjan Baskota is a multilingual writer with proficiency in Assamese, Nepali, Hindi, and English.

## 129. SINGING PRODIGY ESTHER HNAME GETS RASHTRIYA BAL PURASKAR



- Nine-year-old **Esther Lalduhawmi Hname**, a singing prodigy from Mizoram, received the **Rashtriya Bal Puraskar**, India's highest civilian award for children, on Friday in New Delhi.
- Esther was among **20 children selected from across India** for the honour this year.
- The award was presented on the occasion of **Veer Bal Diwas** by **President Droupadi Murmu**, recognising young achievers in various fields.

- Esther received the award for her **exceptional musical talent**, particularly her soulful rendition of **“Vande Mataram”** at **age four**, which received nationwide appreciation, including from **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** and composer **AR Rahman**.
- Born on **June 9, 2016**, Esther first gained attention in 2020 when her rendition of AR Rahman's **“Maa Tujhe Salaam”** became a social media sensation.
- She hails from **Lunglei, Mizoram**, and is the youngest of three children of **Lalrinenga Hname**, a taxi driver, and **R Lalawmpui**, a retired soprano of a local church choir.
- Known for her ability to **pick up tunes and lyrics quickly**, Esther began singing at a very young age.
- Over the years, she has received several accolades, including a **special appreciation award from the Governor of Mizoram**, recognition as **‘Amul Girl’**, and the **Young Achievers Award from Dalmia Cement Bharat Limited** in 2021, becoming its youngest recipient.
- She is also the **youngest member of the Mizo Zaimi Inzawmkhawm**.

## 130. ‘MANN KI BAAT’: MODI HAILS MANIPUR YOUTH'S SOLAR MISSION

- In his monthly radio programme *Mann Ki Baat*, Prime Minister Narendra Modi highlighted the story of Moirangthem Seth from Manipur and praised his efforts in bringing solar power to hundreds of homes across the state.
- Quoting the saying “Where there is a will, there is a way,” the Prime Minister said the example of Moirangthem Seth, who is under 40 years of age, demonstrates how determination can overcome challenges.
- The Prime Minister noted that the remote area of Manipur where Moirangthem lived faced severe electricity problems.
- To address this challenge, Moirangthem focused on local solutions and identified solar energy as a sustainable alternative.
- PM Modi pointed out that Manipur has favourable conditions for generating solar power, which encouraged Moirangthem to harness this potential.
- He said the initiative has gone beyond supplying electricity to households and has contributed to improving essential services and livelihoods.
- The Prime Minister also observed that the initiative has had a significant positive impact on women in the region.



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**131.PM MODI STRESSES URGENT NEED TO TRANSFORM PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF POLICE**



- Prime Minister Narendra Modi emphasized the urgent need to improve public perception of the police, especially among youth, by enhancing professionalism, sensitivity, and responsiveness.
- Addressing the 60th All India Conference of Directors General/Inspectors General of Police, he called for regular monitoring of banned outfits, holistic development of areas freed from Left-wing extremism, and adoption of innovative models to strengthen coastal security.
- Modi directed State and UT police forces to adopt new strategies for integrating uninhabited islands, effectively use databases integrated under NATGRID, and connect these systems with artificial intelligence to generate actionable intelligence.
- The conference was themed '*Viksit Bharat: Security Dimensions*'.
- He stressed the need to strengthen urban policing, rejuvenate tourist police, and raise public awareness about the new criminal laws — Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita, Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam, and Bharatiya Nagrik Suraksha Sanhita — which replace colonial-era laws.
- Modi encouraged universities and academic institutions to conduct case studies on the use of forensics in police investigations, noting that enhanced forensic application would further strengthen the criminal justice system.

**132.ARC METHOD BOOSTS POTATO PRODUCTION IN TRIPURA**

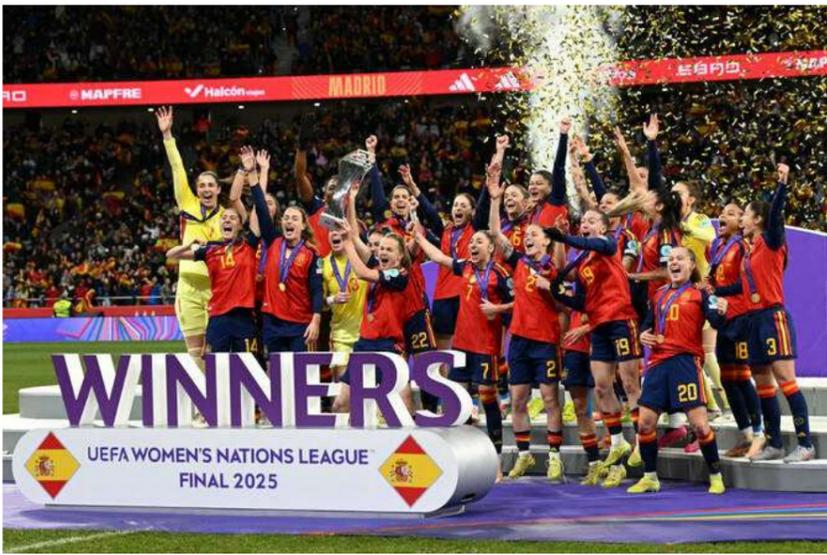


- Tripura farmers are seeing a four-fold increase in potato yield following the introduction of ARC (Automatic Ridge Cultivation) technology, Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Minister Ratan Lal Nath said.
- The success of ARC-based cultivation is expected to motivate more farmers across the state, from North to South Tripura, turning hopes of abundant harvests into reality.
- Around 23,700 farmers currently grow potatoes across 18,770 acres of land in the state.
- Traditionally, farmers produced 2,500–3,000 kg of potatoes per *kani* (0.396694 acre), but under the ARC method, yields have surged to 9,000–10,000 kg per *kani*.
- By the 2028–29 financial year, Tripura aims to become self-sufficient in seed potato production, and by 2029–30, it expects to achieve full self-reliance in potato production.
- In 1988–89, the Horticulture Department introduced a new variety, True Potato Seeds (TPS), to boost productivity.
- Potatoes remain one of India's most widely consumed vegetables and a staple in kitchens across the country; however, rising demand sometimes leads to price fluctuations that attract public and media attention.

**133.SIU-KA-PHA'S LEADERSHIP, ADMINISTRATIVE ACUMEN RECALLED, STATUE UNVEILED AT NAZIRA**

- The farsighted leadership and administrative skills of Swargadeo Chaolung Siu-Ka-Pha, founder of the Ahom kingdom, were remembered at an event celebrating Asom Divas.
- An 18-foot-tall statue of the first Ahom king was unveiled by State Water Resources and I&PR Minister Pijush Hazarika, in the presence of Ministers Bimal Borah and Jogen Mohan, along with other dignitaries at Nazira Chari Ali.
- A park adjacent to the statue was also inaugurated during the event.
- The statue, costing ₹1.9 crore, was created by renowned artist Biren Singha.
- The project was initiated by the Tai Ahom Development Council (TADC) and the Nazira regional committee of the All Tai Ahom Students' Union (ATASU).

## 134.SPAIN KEEP WOMEN'S NATIONS LEAGUE TITLE



- **Claudia Pina** scored twice as Spain defeated Germany 3-0 in the second leg of the final.
- With this win, Spain successfully **retained the Women's Nations League title**.

## 135. 'ROI ROI BINALE' SCRIPTS HISTORY; COLLECTS RS 33.30 CR IN ONE MONTH

- **Roi Roi Binale** has achieved a landmark milestone in Assamese cinema by collecting **Rs 33,30,82,825 (Rs 33.30 crore)** within just one month of its release.
- This marks one of the **highest-ever box-office collections** for any regional film from the Northeast.
- The film was released on **October 31** across Assam and several parts of India.
- Considered the **dream project of Assam's iconic artist Zubeen Garg**, the film has resonated deeply with audiences.
- Beyond its commercial success, *Roi Roi Binale* stands as a **heartfelt tribute to Zubeen Garg's vision, creativity, courage, and artistic sensitivity**.

## 136.PAKISTAN'S PUNJAB PROVINCE LIFTS BAN ON BASANT KITE FLYING AFTER 20 YEARS:



- Amid sustained pressure from artists and civil society groups, Pakistan's Punjab province has lifted the ban on kite flying during the Basant festival after nearly 20 years.

- The decision, taken by the Maryam Nawaz-led provincial government, has generated widespread excitement across cities and villages in the province.
- Basant, celebrated towards the end of winter to mark the arrival of spring, has traditionally been an occasion for large community celebrations across Punjab.
- Kite flying had been an integral part of Basant festivities for centuries before it was banned about two decades ago.
- Announcing the move, Punjab's Minister for Information and Culture Azma Bokhari stated that the lifting of the ban would be accompanied by strict rules and penalties for violations.
- The original ban was imposed in 2005 after several fatal accidents, particularly involving motorcyclists and children, caused by sharp glass-coated kite strings.
- Under the new regulations, children below the age of 18 will not be permitted to fly kites.
- Before the imposition of the ban in 2005, Basant celebrations, especially kite flying, were centred largely in Lahore but were observed across the province.

## 137.NEW LCS AT INDO-BHUTAN BORDER



- A new Land Customs Station (LCS) is being established along the Indo-Bhutan border at Samrang in Udalguri district of Assam.
- Assam Chief Secretary Ravi Kota and the Consul General of Bhutan in Guwahati, Jigme Thinlye Namgyal, held discussions regarding the setting up of the new LCS.
- Earlier this year, a committee comprising representatives from all stakeholder agencies was formed to conduct a joint site visit and identify viable measures to develop Samrang into a functional border point.
- The objective of the new LCS is to enhance import and export activities and strengthen cross-border trade between India and Bhutan.
- At present, there are two Land Customs Stations along the Assam-Bhutan border: Darranga in Baksa district and Hatisar in Chirang district.
- During the financial year 2023-24, trade through the Darranga LCS amounted to Rs 1,096 crore.
- Of this, exports accounted for Rs 736.42 crore, while imports were valued at Rs 359.61 crore.
- Trade volume through the Hatisar LCS during the same period stood at Rs 811 crore.

## 138.MARTYRS’ MEMORIAL PARK TO BE OPENED ON DEC 10:

- December 10 marks an important day for Assam, as the Martyrs’ Memorial Park of the Assam Movement will be inaugurated at Boragaon after 40 years of the signing of the Assam Accord.
- The memorial park has been developed to pay homage to the martyrs of the Assam Movement.
- The park is spread over 100 bighas of land.
- It will feature busts of 869 martyrs of the Assam Movement.
- In cases where photographs of some martyrs could not be traced, their busts have been created with only names and sketches.
- A prominent tall tower has been built as part of the memorial complex.
- The park also includes a meditation centre for visitors.
- A light and sound show depicting the Assam Movement will be held every evening.
- The memorial park includes dedicated cycling and jogging tracks.
- An auditorium has been constructed within the complex.
- Songs of Dr. Bhupen Hazarika, Jyotiprasad Agarwala and Zubeen Garg will be played throughout the day as a tribute to Assam’s cultural heritage.

## 139.NAGALAND SENDS FIRST ZANTHOXYLUM CONSIGNMENT TO DABUR INDIA UNIT:

- The Nagaland Bio-Resource Mission flagged off its first consignment of Zanthoxylum (locally known as michinga/tomar) seeds.
- The consignment was sent to Dabur India Limited’s North East unit located at Tezpur, Assam.
- The dispatch took place from the State Institute of Rural Development (SIRD) in Kohima.
- This marks a significant milestone in the commercialisation of Nagaland’s bio-resources.

## 140.RBI TO CONDUCT USD/INR SWAP



- The Reserve Bank announced that it will conduct a USD/INR buy–sell swap auction of USD 5 billion (around ₹45,000 crore) on December 16 to inject liquidity into the system.
- The USD/INR buy–sell swap auction will be for a tenor of 36 months, the central bank said.
- Under the swap auction, the minimum bid size will be USD 10 million and thereafter in multiples of USD 1 million.
- In this operation, a bank will sell US dollars to the Reserve Bank and simultaneously agree to buy back the same amount of US dollars at the end of the swap period.
- In addition, the RBI will conduct open market operation (OMO) purchase auctions of government securities for a total amount of ₹1,00,000 crore.
- These OMO purchases will take place in two tranches of ₹50,000 crore each on December 11 and December 18, 2025.
- The RBI stated that it will continue to closely monitor evolving liquidity and market conditions and take appropriate measures to ensure orderly liquidity conditions.
- The decision to undertake the USD/INR buy–sell swap and OMO purchases was taken after reviewing the liquidity situation and the outlook.
- The announcement on these two liquidity management measures was made by RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra last week while presenting the bi-monthly monetary policy.
- These measures are intended to ensure adequate and durable liquidity in the system and to further facilitate monetary transmission.



## 141. GUWAHATI GOALKEEPER HRITHIK TIWARI DEDICATES WIN TO ZUBEEN

- FC Goa were crowned champions of the AIFF Super Cup for a record third time after defeating East Bengal 6–5 in a penalty shootout at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in Fatorda, Goa.

## 142. INDIAN CRAFTSMEN SHOULD FOCUS ON GETTING GI TAGS: PRESIDENT MURMU



- President Droupadi Murmu said that Indian craftsmen, through their knowledge, dedication and hard work, have established a global identity and should now focus on obtaining unique GI (Geographical Indication) tags for their products.
- She noted that the GI tag has become an important tool to strengthen the identity and credibility of Indian craftsmen's products.
- The remarks were made while presenting the National Handicrafts Awards for 2023 and 2024.
- Schemes such as the One District One Product (ODOP) initiative are also strengthening the international identity of India's regional handicraft products.
- A GI tag is a name or sign that identifies a product as originating from a specific place and having unique qualities, reputation, or characteristics linked to that location.
- GI tags highlight India's rich cultural heritage and regional diversity.
- GI-tagged products are recognised for their unique qualities and traditional craftsmanship.
- Handicrafts are not only part of India's cultural identity but also an important source of livelihood, providing employment to over 3.2 million people in rural and remote areas.
- The sector promotes inclusive development by decentralising employment and income opportunities.
- The dedication and hard work of artisans keep traditional art forms alive and strengthen India's cultural identity through creative practices.
- Considering the importance of the handicrafts sector for empowerment and sustainable development, the government

has taken several significant steps over the last decade to boost this segment.

## 143. PRESIDENT MURMU BESTOWS HONOURS ON MASTER ARTISANS WITH NATIONAL HANDICRAFTS AWARDS

- President Droupadi Murmu presented the 2023–24 National Handicrafts Awards at a grand ceremony held at Vigyan Bhavan in New Delhi.
- The awards ceremony was organised by the Ministry of Textiles as part of Handicraft Awards 2025 and coincided with the start of National Handicrafts Week.
- A total of 31 outstanding artisans and 11 Shilp Gurus from 21 states were



honoured, celebrating India's rich and diverse craft traditions.

- The ceremony was attended by distinguished leaders, including Pabitra Margherita, Minister of State for Textiles and External Affairs, Giriraj Singh, Union Minister of Textiles, Neelam Shami Rao, Secretary (Textiles), and Amrit Raj, Development Commissioner (Handicrafts).
- The event reaffirmed the government's commitment to strengthening artisan livelihoods and promoting craft-based economies.
- Award recipients represented a wide range of traditional craft forms, including Odisha's Pattachitra paintings, Gujarat's tie-and-dye textiles, Rajasthan's Tarkashi woodwork, and Manipur's bamboo crafts.
- Artisans preserving endangered crafts, tribal art forms, and innovative modern interpretations also received recognition.
- Special honour was given to women artisans, young creators, and differently-abled craftspersons for their contribution to keeping India's handicraft traditions vibrant and thriving.

## 144. PATANJALI YOGPEETH, RUSSIAN GOVT SIGN PACT:

- A MoU was signed in Delhi between the Patanjali Group and the Government of Russia.
- The MoU was signed on behalf of Patanjali by Swami Ramdev ji, and on behalf of Russia by Sergey Cheremin, Chairman of the Indo-Russia Business Council and Minister of Commerce of Russia.
- Swami Ramdev ji stated that the MoU focuses on:
  - Promotion of health and wellness
  - Health tourism
  - Exchange of skilled human resources

• **Research-related initiatives**

- He highlighted that **yoga, Ayurveda, and naturopathy** are appreciated in Russia and expressed the goal of **taking India’s wellness science to nearly 200 countries**, with Russia as the entry point.
- **Key objectives of the MoU:**
  - **Expand Patanjali’s wellness services in Russia** and conduct in-depth research on **reversing ageing and enhancing longevity**.
  - **Share India’s spiritual knowledge, culture, yoga, Ayurveda, and heritage** with Russia.
  - **Provide Russia with skilled labour and trained yogis** from India, leveraging Patanjali’s training under the **Prime Minister’s Skill Development Scheme**, which has trained over **two lakh people**.
- Additionally, the MoU will promote **leading Indian brands in Russia** and **Russian brands in India**.
- **Sergey Cheremin** emphasized strengthening the partnership with Patanjali, adopting **yoga, Ayurveda, and naturopathy** to **transform lifestyles in Russia**, aiming for healthier and disease-free populations.

**145.‘HAR MAS - EK UPVAS’ MOVEMENT TO BE LAUNCHED TODAY:**

- The two-day ‘International Janmangal Convention’ will begin at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi.
- On the occasion, yoga and fasting expert Swami Ramdev and Jain monk Antarmana Acharya Prasanna Sagar will launch a mass movement titled ‘Har Mas - Ek Upvas’ (fasting once on every 7th day of the month).

**146.SARBANANDA SONOWAL FLAGS OFF INDIA’S FIRST HYDROGEN FUEL-CELL VESSEL IN VARANASI**

- Union Minister for Ports, Shipping and Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal flagged off India’s first indigenous hydrogen fuel-cell vessel in Varanasi.
- The launch at Namo Ghat marked the start of the vessel’s commercial operations and represents a major step toward clean and sustainable inland water transport.
- Sonowal stated that India has joined countries like China, Norway, the Netherlands, and Japan that operate hydrogen-based vessels.
- He said the achievement aligns with Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s vision of strengthening inland waterways as a key part of India’s development strategy.
- Uttar Pradesh Ministers Dayashankar Singh, Dayashankar Mishra, and Ravindra Jaiswal, along with senior officials and public representatives, attended the event.
- According to an official statement, the initiative is part of ongoing modernisation efforts in inland waterways focusing on clean transport, better connectivity, and improved public convenience.

**147.LIONEL MESSI INDIA TOUR: UNVEILS HIS 70-FOOT STATUE IN KOLKATA:**



- Football icon Lionel Messi virtually unveiled his 70-foot statue at the Sree Bhumi Sporting Club in Lake Town, Kolkata.
- Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan and Uruguayan footballer Luis Suárez attended the event, attracting a massive gathering of fans.
- The ceremony turned into a memorable moment for football lovers in the city, blending sport and entertainment as global icons shared the stage.
- The towering iron statue depicts Messi holding the FIFA World Cup trophy and has been installed at the Sree Bhumi Sporting Club in Lake Town, South Dum Dum, as a tribute to the Argentine legend.
- Messi began his GOAT India Tour with a sponsors’ meet-and-greet before proceeding to the Salt Lake Stadium.
- The tribute programme at the stadium featured music, dance and an exhibition match between Mohun Bagan ‘Messi’ All Stars and Diamond Harbour ‘Messi’ All Stars.

**148.UNION HOME MINISTER AMIT SHAH UNVEILS VEER SAVARKAR STATUE IN ANDAMAN**



- Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday unveiled the grand statue of Veer Savarkar and inaugurated the **Veer Savarkar Inspiration Park** in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
- He said that Veer Savarkar’s life inspires boundless love for the motherland and the spirit of sacrificing one’s life for the nation.
- Shah noted that the land of Andaman and Nicobar has borne witness to the sacrifices, dedication and courage of numerous freedom fighters, including Veer Savarkar.

### 149. CABINET CLEARS BILL TO RENAME MGNREGA AS ‘POOJYA BAPU GRAMEEN ROZGAR YOJNA’

- The Union Cabinet has approved a Bill to rename the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act and increase the number of guaranteed workdays, sources said.
- As per the proposal, the scheme will be renamed ‘**Poojya Bapu Grameen Rozgar Yojna**’.
- The number of workdays under the scheme will be increased from the current 100 days to 125 days.
- The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, popularly known as MGNREGA or NREGA, is a flagship government programme aimed at enhancing livelihood security in rural areas.
- The scheme provides guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to households whose adult members volunteer to undertake unskilled manual work.

### 150. CITY RESIDENTS, STUDENTS ALL PRAISE FOR SATI RADHIKA UDYAN:

- The newly opened Guwahati Riverfront Project at Uzan Bazar, popularly known as Sati Radhika Udyan, is attracting hundreds of visitors daily and is fast emerging as one of the city’s favourite hangout spots.
- Although all city parks have been opened free to the public since December 1, the riverfront continues to draw large crowds, including residents of Guwahati as well as visitors from nearby districts and other parts of the State.
- The riverfront stretches over 1.2 km, extending from the new DC Bungalow to Kacharighat, and has been developed at a cost of Rs 327 crore.

### 151. BARAK FESTIVAL BEGINS IN MANIPUR

- The fourth edition of the State-level Barak Festival was inaugurated at Zeilipou in Senapati district.
- During the inaugural function, Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla, accompanied by his wife, visited various ‘morungs’ set up at the venue showcasing the culture and traditions of different ethnic groups, reflecting the region’s rich diversity and vibrancy.

- The Governor unveiled the Barak Festival monolith and



witnessed traditional stone pulling, displays of local cuisine, and the customary blowing of the horn.

- He also watched dance performances highlighting the traditions of the diverse communities of the area.
- The Barak Festival is organised to conserve the State’s largest river and to highlight its cultural, ecological and economic significance.

### 152. TWO PAK UNIVERSITIES LAUNCH SANSKRIT COURSES CITING SHARED HERITAGE OF CLASSICAL LANGUAGE

- For the first time since Partition, two universities in Pakistan’s Punjab have introduced short courses in Sanskrit, citing shared heritage, with plans to teach the Gita and the Mahabharata in the future.
- The University of Punjab, Lahore (public), and the Lahore University of Management Sciences (private) have launched a three-month course in the classical language.
- The instructors are also relying on the significant archival collection of Sanskrit manuscripts available at Punjab University for future research.
- Preparations for the short-duration courses began last year, while 2025 witnessed admissions to the first batch.

### 153. US SENATE CALLS CHINA’S SRI LANKA PORT ROLE A GLOBAL WARNING

- China’s involvement in Sri Lanka’s port infrastructure was cited in a US Senate hearing this week as a cautionary example of Beijing’s overseas financing practices, with lawmakers warning that such projects can undermine sovereignty and strategic independence in the Indo-Pacific.
- During a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing, Chairman Jim Risch described China’s role in Sri Lanka as “a poster child around the world for why people shouldn’t do business with China,” referring to Beijing’s financing of major port projects.
- Eric Meyer, President Donald Trump’s nominee for US Ambassador to Sri Lanka, said Washington would support Colombo in asserting control over sensitive infrastructure and pursuing transparent partnerships.

- Meyer highlighted Sri Lanka’s strategic location astride some of the world’s busiest shipping lanes in the Indian Ocean, noting that nearly two-thirds of global seaborne crude oil transits through nearby waters.
- He also pointed to the Port of Colombo as a key economic asset, stating that it is expected to expand its capacity in the coming year.
- Sri Lanka’s 2022 economic crisis and the subsequent leasing of the Chinese-built Hambantota port have drawn sustained scrutiny from the US and regional powers, including India.
- For Washington, Sri Lanka’s experience is increasingly being framed as a broader warning about infrastructure financing risks and strategic dependence in the Indo-Pacific.

### 154. NAVY TO COMMISSION 2ND MH-60R HELICOPTER SQUADRON ON DEC 17

- The **Indian Navy** will commission its **second MH-60R helicopter squadron, INAS 335 (Ospreys)**, on **December 17**, significantly boosting its aviation capabilities.
- The advanced **weapons, sensors and avionics suite** of the MH-60R helicopter makes it a versatile and highly capable asset, enhancing the Navy’s ability to address both **conventional and asymmetric threats**.
- The commissioning ceremony of **INAS 335 (Ospreys)** will be held at **INS Hansa, Goa**, in the presence of **Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi**, according to a Navy spokesperson.
- The event is expected to mark a **pivotal moment** in the Indian Navy’s ongoing efforts toward **modernisation and capability enhancement**.
- The **MH-60R helicopter** has already been fully integrated into fleet operations and has demonstrated its effectiveness on several occasions.
- With the commissioning of the new squadron, the Navy will receive a **major boost in its integral aviation capabilities**, further strengthening maritime operational readiness.

### 155. AMBIKAGIRI MEMORIAL AWARD TO BE CONFERRED ON NILAM DUTTA:

- AASU, along with Assam Unnati Sabha and Assam Sena, announced the Ambikagiri Rai Choudhury Memorial Award for this year.
- The award will be conferred on model farmer and entrepreneur Nilam Dutta.
- It will be presented on December 18, marking the birth anniversary of Ambikagiri Rai Choudhury.
- The event will be held at 2 pm at the Sri Sri Madhavadeva International Auditorium, Srimanta Sankaradeva Kalakshetra, Guwahati.

### 156. GOVERNOR RELEASES BOOK TITLED HUM BHARAT KE LOG:

- Assam Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya released the book *Hum Bharat ke Log*.

- The book is authored by Prof Harbansh Dixit, Advisor to the Governor’s Secretariat.
- The release took place at the Brahmaputra Wing of Lok Bhavan.
- The book is a compilation of Prof Dixit’s articles on law and legal issues.

### 157. ARIMORA CHAPORI TURNING INTO NEW HUB OF MIGRATORY BIRDS:



- Arimora Chapori, Tezpur home to wildlife such as wild elephants, tigers, deer and wild buffalo, has become a favoured winter destination for migratory birds.
- This winter too, flocks of birds, including the Eurasian crane, have migrated to the area, drawing birdwatchers and locals.
- Eurasian cranes visit Assam as winter migrants from Eurasian breeding grounds across Europe and the Palearctic region up to Siberia.
- Major breeding populations of the species are found in Russia, Finland and Sweden.
- Arimora Chapori faces threats from illegal encroachment and poaching activities.
- Nature lovers and wildlife organisations, including Hati-Bandhu, have urged the Forest Department to ensure better protection of the area.
- The chapori plays a vital role in mitigating human-wild elephant conflict by providing a safe corridor for elephants moving from Sonai Rupai and Nameri National Park regions.
- Unabated poaching has been cited as a major threat to the wildlife of the area.
- The wetlands serve as breeding grounds for migratory birds such as the Bengal florican, black-necked stork and other species.
- Supported by the Brahmaputra River, Arimora Chapori offers a unique habitat crucial for sustaining migratory bird populations and providing a safe haven during migration.

### 158. NABARD’S GREEN FELLOWS TO OFFER HOME-BASED AGRI-HORTI SERVICES

- Seven Sisters Development Assistance (SeSTA), a civil society organisation, launched a digital application ‘Bagisa’.
- The app has been developed under a NABARD-sponsored Green Fellow Initiative.

- SeSTA is the implementing agency of the initiative, which seeks to build youth capacities in scientific and organic agriculture across Northeast India.
- The Green Fellow Initiative aims to empower unemployed rural youth from vulnerable communities.
- The programme equips youth with practical, market-oriented skills in agriculture, horticulture and entrepreneurship.
- Trained ‘Green Fellows’ will provide home-based agri-horti services.
- Services will include terrace gardening, landscaping, composting, nursery establishment and other green solutions.
- The services will be offered to urban and semi-urban households in Guwahati and Bongaigaon.

### 159.INDIA FOR WTO CONSULTATIONS WITH EU OVER SAFEGUARD MEASURES

- India has sought consultations with the European Union under the WTO safeguard agreement.
- The consultations are over the EU’s decision to impose import quotas on certain ferro alloy elements used in the iron and steel industry.
- A WTO communication stated that India has a major trade interest in exporting these elements.
- Imposing safeguard duties beyond the quota limit will negatively impact India’s exports of these items to the EU.
- The safeguard measures will remain in place for three years.

### 160.INTER-MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE SET UP TO MONITOR IMPORT, EXPORT TRENDS

- The government has constituted an inter-ministerial committee to monitor export–import trends and recommend corrective action when required.
- Parliament was informed of this development.
- The committee includes representatives from:
  - Department of Commerce
  - Department of Revenue
  - DPIIT (Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade)
  - Directorate General of Foreign Trade
  - Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics
- It regularly monitors exports and imports and takes corrective measures in consultation with stakeholders.
- India’s trade deficit with China increased from USD 58.09 billion (April–October 2024) to USD 63.97 billion (April–October 2025), a rise of 10.1%.
- The deficit is mainly driven by imports of raw materials, intermediate goods and capital goods such as:
  - auto components

- electronic parts and assemblies
- mobile phone parts
- machinery and machinery parts
- Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs)
- These goods are used to produce finished products, many of which are exported from India.

### 161.MADHABDEV UNIVERSITY SIGNS MOU WITH DIGITAL ASSAM INITIATIVE

- Madhabdev University at Narayanpur in Lakhimpur district has joined the Digitizing Assam Initiative (DAI) to preserve rare books and manuscripts.
- An MoU was signed on December 15 between the university and the DAI project led by the Nanda Talukdar Foundation.
- The collaboration will digitize rare books, literary works, journals and manuscripts available in and around the university.
- DAI is a long-term cultural preservation movement of the Nanda Talukdar Foundation through a community-led project.
- The initiative aims to preserve rare Assamese books, journals, manuscripts and sasipaats.
- It seeks to make these materials searchable and accessible online for future generations.

### 162.ASSAM’S FIRST MODERN FISH MARKET OPENS IN JORHAT

- A major milestone in urban market development was achieved with the inauguration of the first modern, state-of-the-art fish market in Jorhat.
- The market was built at a cost of Rs 3.5 crore.
- It has been designed to provide a clean, organised and hygienic space for fish trading.
- Speaking at the inauguration, Goswami called the project a landmark achievement for Assam’s retail infrastructure.
- He said the market would benefit all stakeholders in the fish trade – from wholesalers to small vendors.
- The new facility will also provide customers with an improved and more comfortable shopping experience.

### 163.AIIMS GUWAHATI BECOMES NE’S FIRST ATLS PROVIDER CENTRE

- AIIMS Guwahati achieved a major milestone by becoming the first institution in Northeast India to receive accreditation as an Advanced Trauma Life Support (ATLS) Provider Centre.
- The accreditation marks strengthening of trauma care and emergency medical capacity in the region.
- Under the leadership of Prof. (Col.) Ashok Puranik, Executive Director, the institute conducted its inaugural ATLS Provider Course.
- The first training programme was held from December 12 to 14, 2025.

## 164. SIKKIM OPENS DOKLAM AND CHO LA FOR TOURISTS

- Sikkim opened two sensitive and historically significant border areas — Doklam and Cho La — to tourists under regulated conditions.
- The move aims to promote battlefield tourism and boost development in border regions.
- The decision is part of the State’s initiative to connect citizens with India’s border history and improve livelihoods in remote villages.
- Tourists and bikers will have access to Doklam and Cho La for the first time under strict guidelines.
- CM Tamang said increased tourist movement will generate economic opportunities and support the development of nearby settlements.
- He appreciated Indian Army personnel for safeguarding borders and supporting development projects enabling such initiatives.
- Tamang highlighted ongoing infrastructure projects, including dedicated parking construction at Changu to solve vehicle space issues at the popular tourist site.

## 165. THURUK VILLAGE: A HIDDEN WINTER REFUGE

- Thuruk village in Dima Hasao district is emerging as an offbeat winter destination, attracting nature lovers and trekkers seeking peace away from crowded tourist spots.
- Located deep inside the Borail range, Thuruk transforms into a frosty landscape between December and January, with thick layers of frost resembling snowfall—an unusual sight in Assam.
- The winter scenery, mist-covered hills, and crisp mountain air create a picturesque setting.
- The village is mainly inhabited by the Biaste community, known for warm and simple hospitality.
- Visitors stay in family homes, sharing traditional meals and hearing local stories around the hearth.
- Reaching Thuruk involves adventure: about 90 km by road from Umrangso, and 13 km from Harangajao, a stretch often trekked on foot.
- The trekking route offers sweeping Borail mountain views, dense foliage, streams, and serene silence.
- Thuruk is now seen as a promising new destination on the tourism map of Dima Hasao.

## 166. DULUNG-SUBANSIRI NATURE FESTIVAL CONCLUDES AT LAKHIMPUR

- The third Dulung–Subansiri Nature Festival, organised by the Mising Autonomous Council (MAC), concluded at North Lakhimpur.
- The festival highlighted the biodiversity of the Dulung Reserve Forest and the Subansiri river in Lakhimpur district.

## 167. INAS 335 'OSPREYS', SECOND SQUADRON OF MH 60R HELICOPTERS COMMISSIONED AT INS HANSA, GOA



- INAS 335 ‘Ospreys’, the second Indian Naval Air Squadron to operate MH-60R helicopters, was commissioned at INS Hansa, Goa.
- This milestone follows the commissioning of the first MH-60R Naval Air Squadron in Kochi, Kerala in March 2024.
- The Commissioning Warrant for the unit was read out by Capt. Dhirender Bisht, Commanding Officer.
- The Commissioning Plaque was unveiled by the CNS in the presence of VAdm Krishna Swaminathan, Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Western Naval Command.
- The ceremony included the traditional water cannon salute to mark the historic occasion.

## 168. STATE CABINET APPROVES AMENDMENT TO CEILING OF LAND RULE

- The State Cabinet approved the amendment of the Assam Fixation of Ceiling of Land Holding Rule, 1957.
- Under the amendment, District Commissioners are empowered to take necessary steps to acquire ceiling surplus land and transfer it to deserving beneficiaries.
- The Cabinet also approved allocation of 607 bighas of land for setting up a Group Centre of the CRPF in Dhemaji.

## 169. INDIA ACCORDS PRIORITY TO GET PERMANENT UNSC SEAT: CENTRE

- The government told Parliament that securing permanent membership for India in an expanded UN Security Council (UNSC) is a “highest priority.”
- India remains engaged at both bilateral and multilateral levels toward this goal.
- The Centre noted that multilateral diplomacy poses challenges, as all 193 UN member states have diverse views on the nature and scope of UNSC reforms.

- India plays an active role in platforms and discussions advocating expansion of both permanent and non-permanent seats in the Council.
- The government continues to push India’s case for permanent membership in a reformed and expanded UNSC.
- India also actively participates in Intergovernmental Negotiations (IGN) on UNSC reforms, strongly advocating expansion of permanent membership.

## 170. PARLIAMENT PASSES NUCLEAR ENERGY BILL

- Parliament passed the nuclear energy Bill, with the Rajya Sabha approving legislation to open the civil nuclear sector for private participation.
- The Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India (SHANTI) Bill was passed in the Upper House by voice vote.
- Several Opposition amendments to send the Bill to a parliamentary committee were rejected.
- The Bill had earlier been passed in the Lok Sabha.
- Minister of State for the Department of Atomic Energy, Jitendra Singh, said the Bill aims to make India self-reliant in nuclear energy and reduce dependence on other energy sources.
- He asserted that nuclear energy provides a reliable, steady 24x7 power supply, unlike some renewable sources.
- Singh added that India’s future energy needs will rely significantly on nuclear power, especially with AI emerging in a big way.

## 171. SIVASAGAR DISTRICT LIBRARY RENAMED AS "GYANAKOSHA"



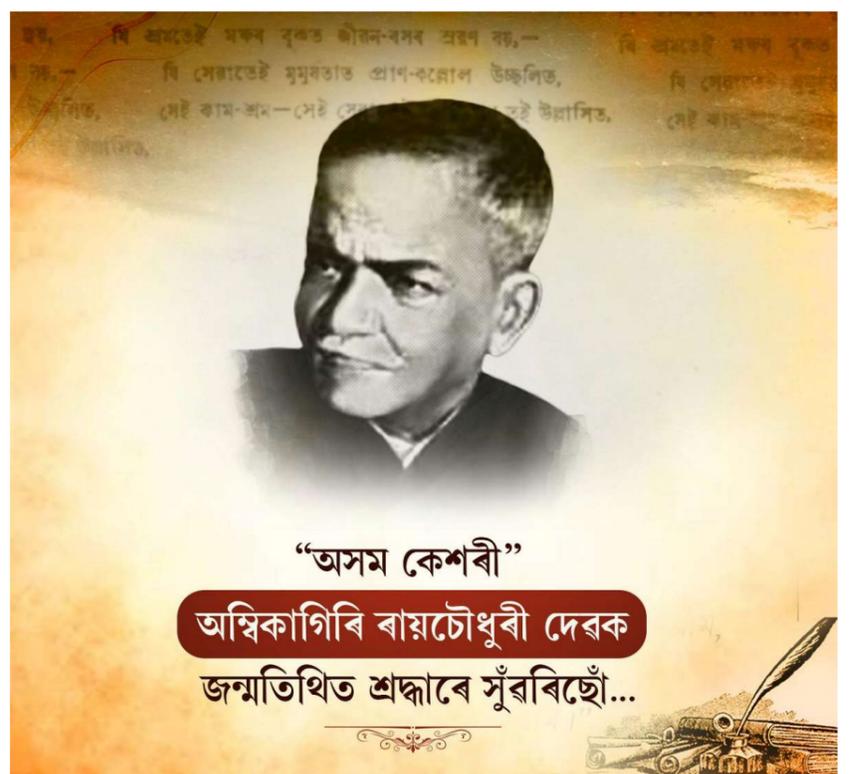
- The Sivasagar District Library has been renamed “Gyanakosha”, giving it a modern identity to strengthen reading culture and improve access to knowledge in the district.
- The renovated library was formally inaugurated on Friday by Sivasagar District Commissioner **Aayush Garg**.
- Renovation work was completed with financial support from **Numaligarh Refinery Limited (NRL)** and the **District Mineral Foundation (DMF)**.

- Around **150 school libraries** across Sivasagar district have been digitally connected with the district library within a short period.
- This digital linkage will help students and readers gain better access to books and learning resources.
- The upgraded library now has improved facilities to assist students preparing for competitive exams.
- The District Commissioner emphasised that modern infrastructure alone is not a major achievement; **proper utilisation** of facilities is crucial.

## 172. 24TH ‘VOICE IN VIOLIN’ VIDEO LAUNCHED TO MARK BHUPEN HAZARIKA BIRTH CENTENARY

- To commemorate the birth centenary of Bharat Ratna Dr Bhupen Hazarika, Dr Satyendra Kumar Choudhury on Friday launched “**Aami Oxomiya Nohou Dukhhiya**”, the 24th milestone in the acclaimed *Dr Bhupen Hazarika’s Voice in Violin* series.
- The production is by Dr Shobhita Choudhury, and the launch was held at the Gauhati Press Club.
- The video was inaugurated by Stuti Patel, sister of Dr Bhupen Hazarika.
- On the same occasion, the **fourth Centenary Mashup** from the ongoing Father–Daughter Duo series was also released.
- The violin–vocal mashup blends the creative legacy of Dr Bhupen Hazarika and Salil Chowdhury, both completing their 100th birth anniversaries in 2025.

## 173. 140TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF AMBIKAGIRI RAICHOUDHURY OBSERVED AS ‘CHETANA DIVAS’ IN NAGAON



- The 140th birth anniversary of Asom Kesari Ambikagiri Raichoudhury was celebrated as '**Chetana Divas**' by the Nagaon District Kabi Sanmilan under the auspices of Assam Kabi Sanmilan on December 19, 2025.
- A poetry session titled '**Shitat Kavitar Umal Gun Gunani**' was organised, featuring recitations by poets such as Narayan Kalita, Chandra Saikia, Anjana Goswami, and others.
- Ajay Mahato, Acting Secretary of Nagaon District Kabi Sanmilan, highlighted the purpose and significance of the event.