

MARCH 2025 SNIPPETS

FOR KAS 2024

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KARNATAKA ISSUES

- Scientists at the Indian Institute of Horticulture (IIHR) have developed a new micropropagation technique for yelakki bananas using Embryogenic Cell Suspension (ECS) derived from male banana flowers, showcased at the National Horticulture Fair; this method allows for faster and larger-scale multiplication compared to traditional methods, potentially reducing production costs by 15-20% while ensuring disease-free and uniform plants.
- The Bengaluru-based machine vision startup Zentron Labs has collaborated with ICAR-Indian Institute of Horticultural Research (IIHR) to develop India's first mobile auto defect detector for mangoes, aiming to help farmers export high-quality mangoes and reduce losses. Sponsored under the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana, the agreement ensures that the Karnataka State Mango Development and Marketing Corporation Limited (KSMDMCL) will receive the X-ray machine, which was showcased at the National Horticulture Fair 2025 in Hesaraghatta. The machine scans mangoes using X-ray technology to detect internal defects like seed weevil damage and spongy tissue, issues not visible externally. Integrated with Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML), it compares images with ideal quality standards and can process up to 10 tonnes of mangoes per day, featuring a 15-inch touchscreen display for real-time monitoring. While not yet commercially available, it is expected in two years and can be leased for Rs 30 per dozen for quality testing. This innovation benefits farmers, traders, and consumers by ensuring premium-quality Alphonso mangoes reach the market, boosting India's mango exports and branding. Additionally, Zentron Labs has developed lane-based and compact optical graders that segregate fruits by size, color, weight, and visible defects. These graders, priced at Rs 25 lakh per unit with a capacity of grading one tonne per hour, will be delivered alongside the defect detector and can also be used for grading other round fruits like apples, dragon fruits, pomegranates, and tomatoes.
- The Navu Manujaru programme, launched by the Karnataka government in June 2024, has significantly contributed to students' ethical, intellectual, and social development, as highlighted in a DSERT report. Implemented across all government, aided, and unaided primary and high schools, the programme aimed to promote social harmony, scientific temper, and healthy habits, with dedicated sessions for two hours per week, including value education. Schools documented their activities through videos and photographs on the DSERT e-portal, which were later analyzed by DSERT to assess its impact. The initiative introduced students to the works of philosophers and social reformers like Buddha, Basavanna, Gandhi, and B.R. Ambedkar, reinforcing values of knowledge, tolerance, peace, and brotherhood through patriotic dramas, national festival celebrations, essay writing, and discussions. It tackled social issues like untouchability through dialogues and discussions. The programme also emphasized constitutional and environmental awareness, organizing lectures on constitutional values, tree planting, and environmental education. The 'Rahasya Bayalu' segment focused on combating superstitions, encouraging science book reading, critical thinking, and responsible social media use. Community harmony was fostered through interfaith festival celebrations, community lunches (sahabhojana), traditional sports, and group activities. Additionally, the programme encouraged a healthy lifestyle, promoting nutritional awareness and advising schools to educate students about moderate consumption of maida, sugar, and salt.
- The BBMP has launched a door-to-door survey to identify and register out-of-school children in Bengaluru, using the 'Karnataka H2H Children Survey App'. This initiative, mandated by the Karnataka Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Rules, 2012, aims to ensure all children aged 6 to 18 have access to education. The BBMP is collaborating with NGOs and local organizations to enhance the survey's reach and encourage enrollment and attendance.
- Marsur gram panchayat in Karnataka has achieved the distinction of becoming the state's first fully insured gram panchayat, thanks to a social outreach initiative by Christ University's "Suvarna Karnataka Abhiyaan." Marasur Gram Panchayat is a Rural Local Body in Anekal Panchayat Samiti part of Bengaluru Urban Zila Parishad. The award will be presented recognizing the efforts of the university team and the panchayat members. This achievement is part of a larger nationwide initiative by Christ University to insure six lakh villages across India by 2033, with the project expanding to Jharkhand next.

- Researchers at ICAR-Indian Institute of Horticultural Research identified 11 elite jackfruit varieties in southern Karnataka with desirable traits for commercial cultivation. These varieties exhibit ideal balance of fruit size, crunchiness, color, and nutrient content, and are rich in vitamins and antioxidants. The study used a participatory breeding approach, involving local farmers in selecting and preserving the best jackfruit trees, to maintain genetic diversity and promote farmer recognition. The popular orange-red jackfruit had the highest representation from Gubbi taluk in Tumakuru district. This geographic concentration suggests that Gubbi may provide optimal conditions for cultivating jackfruits with superior flake colour, making it a key area for sourcing and conserving high-value varieties.
- The draft Greater Bengaluru Governance Bill was recently tabled in the Assembly, proposing to split Bengaluru into up to seven city corporations to improve urban governance and administration. The mayor and deputy mayor's tenure is set at 30 months, while the earlier proposal suggested 10 city corporations with a five-year mayoral term. The bill aims to enhance coordination among civic agencies and address challenges arising from rapid population growth. It proposes the formation of the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA), consisting of key members like the Chief Minister and heads of major agencies such as BDA, BWSSB, BMRCL, BMTC, Bescom, and the Bengaluru City Police Commissioner. The bill sets criteria for creating new city corporations, including a minimum population of 10 lakh, a density of 5,000 people per sq km, annual revenue of ₹300 crore, and at least 50% employment in non-agricultural sectors. The restructuring of BBMP is justified due to Bengaluru's population surge from 70-75 lakh in 2008 to 1.5 crore in 2025, alongside administrative inefficiencies caused by a single mayor with a short tenure and one commissioner managing a vast 786 sq km area. The new structure will decentralize governance by forming multiple city corporations, each having a mayor, commissioner, joint commissioner, standing committees, and ward committees, with names prefixed by "Bengaluru," such as Bengaluru South City Corporation and Bengaluru East City Corporation.
- In the absence of a universal vaccination programme for human papillomavirus (HPV) in the country, the State Health Department has undertaken a project to vaccinate over 11,300 14-year-old girls residing in government hostels under the Social Welfare Department (SWD).
- The Government of Karnataka accorded in-principle approval to the investment proposal of Krisoda India Private Limited to establish a manufacturing unit for steel products at Sira Industrial Area, in Tumakuru district. The unit, which will manufacture thermo-mechanically treated (TMT) bars, rods, and allied products, has an investment amount of Rs 138 crore. It aims to generate employment to about 160 persons. The Karnataka Industrial Areas Development Board (KIADB) will allot 12 acres of land in the district for this purpose.
- The Karnataka government, in collaboration with Carl Zeiss India, has launched the 'Vidya Drishti' initiative to provide free eye screening and prescription glasses for over 11 lakh people in Kalaburagi. As part of Carl Zeiss's CSR initiative, this program, already operational in 25 states, aims to enhance eye-care accessibility, especially in rural Karnataka. It will cover 5.32 lakh school children (aged 5-16 years) and 6 lakh underprivileged individuals (above 39 years). The initiative will be implemented within three months and completed over two years. A mobile eye screening unit, 'Zeiss Aloka Van,' will be stationed in Kalaburagi, with optometrists conducting screenings. Additionally, skill development for eye-care professionals is included. Carl Zeiss is also establishing a lens manufacturing plant in Devanahalli, Bengaluru, which is 50-60% complete, with production expected to begin by year-end.
- In a first-of-its-kind initiative, the Karnataka Maritime Board (KMB) has identified seven islands in Uttara Kannada district for eco-tourism development, aiming to promote nature-friendly tourism. The selected islands—Hog Island, Kirikonda Island, Ankani Cheggudu Island, Kurumgad Island, Modhyalingad Island, Oyster Island, and Mongeraguda Island—were chosen based on accessibility, ecological sensitivity, and tourism potential. Under a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model, the development plan includes wellness and dive centers, adventure camps, and tree huts to attract visitors while maintaining environmental integrity. Locals support the initiative due to its potential to generate employment, but environmental concerns persist as the islands lie within the Coastal Regulatory Zone (CRZ) and serve as breeding grounds for marine life. Karnataka, with its 343-km coastline and 106 islands, holds vast eco-tourism potential, and future expansion may include islands in Udupi and Dakshina Kannada districts. To

ensure regulatory compliance, permanent structures like resorts will not be permitted, focusing instead on low-impact tourism. A total of 59.26 acres of land has been identified, with an expected investment of ₹131.51 crore, pending approval from district administration authorities.

- The BBMP Officers' and Employees' Welfare Association celebrated women's accomplishments at the Ditta Mahile Awards on Monday, recognizing a diverse group of achievers across various fields. The event honored notable film actors such as Bharathi Vishnuvardhan, Jayamala Ramachandra, Saritha, Ambika, and Geetha, alongside producers Lakshmi Govindaraju and Poornima Ramkumar, as well as BBMP women officers and employees. Additionally, the awards saluted individuals like Aarti HS from Prasar Bharati, police inspector Prasheela, Bengaluru Urban District Chess Association president Soumya M Upadhyaya, lawyer Shruti, news anchors Madhu Nagaraj, Kavyashree Raghavasurya, Pragati, former RJ 'Rapid' Rashmi, and Dr. Purvi Jayaaraaj from Samruddhi Healing Center, highlighting their significant contributions to society.
- KSRTC said it had won three National Public Bus Transport Excellence Awards presented by the Association of State Road Transport Undertaking. The KSRTC won awards for best innovative branding and image building practices for Ashwamedha buses, personnel welfare and productivity, and digitalisation initiatives.
- Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) in India has launched a groundbreaking sensory room at Terminal 2, designed specifically for neurodivergent passengers and individuals with sensory sensitivities. Located near the 080 International Lounge, the sensory room provides a calm and controlled environment, helping to alleviate the overwhelming experiences often faced in airports due to bright lights, loud announcements, and crowded spaces. This initiative aligns with the airport's commitment to inclusivity and enhancing the travel experience for all passengers, particularly those with Autism Spectrum Disorder, Sensory Processing Disorder, and anxiety. Supported by behavioral science and occupational therapy research, the sensory room aims to improve well-being and ease travel stress by offering a therapeutic space for individuals to recharge before their journeys, with even short stays reportedly making a significant difference in their travel experience.
- The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has partnered with the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) to create a Centre for Advanced Research in Aging as part of the Longevity India Initiative, announced at the 'Longevity India Conference 2025 – Rise for Healthy Aging.' This center aims to address the challenges of aging and age-related diseases by investigating India-specific biomarkers, developing organ-specific aging models, and examining the gut-brain connection, utilizing biology, data science, and clinical research. Health and Family Welfare Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao emphasized the importance of not only living longer but living healthier and being active, while IISc Dean Navakanta Bhat highlighted the need for a holistic understanding of aging at molecular, genetic, and environmental levels. The conference, with a focus on biological foundations and mechanisms of aging, featured sessions on aging research, biological mechanisms, lifestyle medicine, and holistic health approaches.
- In the financial year 2023-24, rural Karnataka's consumption growth significantly outpaced that of urban areas, with rural expenditure increasing by 11.3%, more than double the 5.3% growth seen in urban Karnataka. According to data presented in Parliament, rural per capita consumption rose from ₹4,397 in 2022-23 to ₹4,903 in 2023-24, while urban consumption increased from ₹7,666 to ₹8,076. Despite rural areas experiencing faster growth, urban spending remains considerably higher. On a national level, rural consumption grew by 9.2% (₹3,773 to ₹4,122), while urban consumption grew by 8.3% (₹6,459 to ₹6,996), showing that Karnataka had a more pronounced rural-urban gap than the national average. The slower urban consumption growth in Karnataka suggests possible economic stress due to inflation, wage stagnation, and lower demand. The National Statistics Office (NSO) conducted a Household Consumption Survey from August 2023 to July 2024, covering 405 items, including food (cereals, milk, fruits, vegetables, beverages) and non-food categories (education, medical, transport, entertainment, rent, taxes, clothing, durable goods). Similar rural-led growth trends were observed in Haryana, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Delhi, Kerala, Telangana, and Uttar Pradesh. However, Maharashtra was an exception, where rural consumption grew only by 3.4%, while urban Maharashtra saw a 10.6% increase, reversing the usual trend.

- The Karnataka government has appointed Additional Chief Secretary Gaurav Gupta to investigate the alleged misuse and protocol violations in the Ranya Rao gold smuggling case. Gupta will specifically probe the role of Ranya's stepfather, Director General of Police (DGP) K Ramachandra Rao, who is currently serving as the Managing Director of the Karnataka State Police Housing and Infrastructure Development Corporation
- Sullia hobli records highest maximum temperature of 41.4° Celsius in Karnataka
- The Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) is conducting a survey to identify out-of-school children as per the Karnataka High Court's directive. So far, 7,795 children have been identified within BBMP limits, and the number is expected to rise as the survey continues for two more months. The survey began on February 24, 2024, and as of March 12, 2024, 1,27,736 children have been surveyed across eight BBMP zones. The highest number of out-of-school children is in Bommanahalli (3,744), while the lowest is in Yelahanka (271). The survey is implemented through Zonal Joint Commissioners, ward-wise staff, and the Karnataka H2H Children Survey App, with ten enumerators per ward conducting a door-to-door survey. Article 21A of the Indian Constitution guarantees free and compulsory education for children aged 6-14 years, and the Karnataka Right to Education Rules (2012) mandate local bodies to maintain records of out-of-school children and ensure their enrollment. Once the survey is completed in 1-2 months, an action plan will be developed in collaboration with the Department of School Education & Literacy, Social Welfare Department, Labour Department, and other stakeholders to reintegrate children into schools. The Child Rights Trust has raised concerns about the high number of out-of-school children, emphasizing India's international obligation under Article 28 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which guarantees every child's right to education. Despite legal provisions, many children remain out of school in BBMP limits, highlighting the need for stronger enforcement and support measures.
- The Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) has become the first water board in India to receive BIS (Bureau of Indian Standards) certification for its piped drinking water supply management system. The certification covers the entire water supply process, including water intake from the source, treatment, storage, distribution, maintenance, and quality assurance. Before granting certification, BIS conducted a thorough evaluation, including water sample testing, compliance verification with national standards, and operational audits. BWSSB, established in 1964, manages water supply and sewage disposal for Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) over 800 sq. km. It has implemented major projects like the Cauvery Water Supply Scheme (CWSS) and sewerage system improvements, with key mandates ensuring adequate water supply and proper sewage disposal. Bengaluru, India's third-largest city, depends on the Cauvery River for water, with an installed capacity of 1440 MLD covering 575 sq. km. However, 110 villages (225 sq. km) still lack proper supply. To address rising demand, the Karnataka government has allocated an additional 10 TMC of Cauvery water under CWSS Stage V, planned in two phases with financial aid from JICA.
- In a first-of-its-kind initiative, Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) is all set to launch a "web-based mobile adaptive application" to rein in the water tanker mafia and soften the impact of water scarcity in the sweltering summer on Bangaloreans with no piped water supply.
- The Kempegowda International Airport, Bengaluru, (KIAB) has been awarded the prestigious ACI ASQ Award for Best Airport at Arrivals Globally in 2024 — for the third consecutive year — as voted by passengers. The globally recognised Airport Service Quality (ASQ) programme by ACI World grants the ACI ASQ Award based on direct passenger feedback. The programme evaluates airports worldwide on various parameters, including comfort, cleanliness, service quality, and convenience.
- The BBMP has introduced a One-Time Settlement (OTS) scheme for government buildings and public sector undertakings under its limits. This scheme will be effective till March 31, and aims to facilitate the clearance of property tax dues.
- The Karnataka government is reviving the Chalukya Utsava, a cultural festival that last took place in 2015, aiming to transform it into a national-level event showcasing music, dance, and art forms in Badami, Pattadakal, and Aihole.
- Karnataka ranks 11th in the number of candidates trained under Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), with 5.74 lakh youth trained since its inception in 2015, accounting for 3.58% of the total 1.6

crore trained candidates in India. In short-term training placements (FY16-FY22), Karnataka ranked 13th, placing 74,225 candidates (3.04% of total placements). The latest PMKVY 4.0 (launched in FY23) focuses on future technologies like AI, Robotics, IoT, and Drone Technology, with 10,449 candidates trained in these fields. Karnataka received only 27 futuristic job roles out of 540 approved by NCVET, including Drone Manufacturing and AI - Machine Learning Engineer. The PMKVY scheme has evolved through multiple phases: PMKVY 1.0 (2015-16) trained 19.85 lakh candidates, PMKVY 2.0 (2016-20) trained 1.2 crore youth with a ₹12,000 crore budget, and PMKVY 3.0 (2021-22) introduced district-level skill gap identification under Atmanirbhar Bharat.

- The Karnataka government has launched the Digital Detox Initiative (DDI) – Beyond Screens to combat digital dependency and promote balanced technology use. Developed in collaboration with the All India Gaming Federation (AIGF) and powered by Kahamind Healthcare, the initiative focuses on short-term, medium-term, and long-term goals. Short-term efforts provide immediate support for individuals facing digital addiction, while medium-term actions involve awareness campaigns and structured interventions. The long-term vision aims to integrate digital detox programs into mainstream healthcare. Key features include education on excessive digital use, support for individuals to develop healthier habits, and community-based strategies. The initiative is expected to raise awareness about digital addiction, provide structured support, encourage responsible gaming, and set industry benchmarks for responsible digital engagement.
- Karnataka is set to host 'Udyama Manthana,' a two-day event in late April, aiming to transform the state into a global manufacturing hub. The event will bring together industrialists and investors from India and abroad to discuss technology adoption, investment attraction, policy-making, and reforms to enhance industrial infrastructure. Key topics will include land availability, collaboration with private players, and setting up facilities to support industries. The event's outcome will inform strategies for attracting investments over the next six months, with the goal of positioning Karnataka as a leading manufacturing hub.
- Starting from the academic year 2025-26, all government and aided schools in the State will implement an Artificial Intelligence (AI) enabled facial recognition system to monitor student attendance. This initiative aims to provide accurate daily attendance records, identify absentees, and enhance transparency in student-focused programs. A dedicated mobile application and the integration of student information into the Students Achievement Tracking System (SATS) have been developed to support this effort. Addressing concerns over absenteeism, which can lead to learning gaps and impact exam results, officials noted discrepancies between registered and actual student attendance that need resolution. The facial recognition system will also track students benefiting from various government schemes. Following a successful pilot project in Uttara Kannada, the Department of School Education and Literacy has decided to expand the system statewide while ensuring student data privacy, as the software recognizes facial features without storing individual photos.
- A private hospital in the city announced that it performed Asia's first AI-designed intraocular lens implantation. Nethradhama Super Speciality Eye Hospital said in a release that it was performed under the leadership of Sri Ganesh, chairman and MD of the hospital and founder trustee of Shraddha Eye Care Trust.
- The Karnataka state's longest cable-stayed bridge across the backwaters of River Sharavathi, connecting Ambaragodlu and Tumari in Sagar taluk of the district, is all set for inauguration in the next couple of months.
- Karnataka is directing 13 departments to set climate action goals under the KSAPCC, with monitoring at both state and departmental levels. The State Action Plan on Climate Change (SAPCC) was prepared in 2021, identifying 20 vulnerable districts, including 9 highly vulnerable ones due to socio-economic factors. Though the plan addresses vulnerabilities in agriculture, industry, and energy, it received official approval only in April 2024 after delays in the Centre's approval. The 2025-26 state budget earmarked its implementation, with a Chief Secretary-led committee establishing departmental targets. The plan has no central funding, requiring departments to function within existing allocations, with an estimated annual cost of ₹53,000 crore. 13 departments submitted 21 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), guiding climate

actions. Targets include expanding millet and climate-smart crops from 33.20 hectares to 34.61 hectares in five years (Agriculture Dept.) and increasing mangrove forests from 1,300 to 1,800 hectares (Forest Dept.). Progress will be tracked via the Green Index programme, with a two-tier monitoring system led by the Karnataka Evaluation Authority at the departmental level and a State-level Steering Committee overseeing inter-departmental actions and updating KSAPCC as needed.

- The Bengaluru Traffic Police (BTP) has won the Golden Peacock Innovative Product/Service Award 2025 for its Actionable Intelligence for Sustainable Transformation Management (ASTraM) application. Designed as a comprehensive traffic management super-app, ASTraM serves as a single platform for real-time traffic updates, eliminating the need for multiple apps and social media platforms. It allows users to report accidents and traffic incidents, enhancing public participation. Unlike its earlier version, which was limited to police use, the new public-oriented ASTraM version is accessible to everyone. Key features include real-time traffic congestion alerts within a 5-kilometer radius, traffic violation reporting with image uploads while ensuring user anonymity, and the integration of multiple services, including features from Public Eye. Additionally, ASTraM facilitates traffic fine management, allowing users to view and pay fines directly through the app, streamlining the process.
- Starting in June 2025, an AI-powered facial recognition technology will be introduced to mark attendance in government and aided schools, as announced by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah in the recent 2025-26 budget under the initiative 'Nirantara.' The School Education and Literacy department is currently developing a mobile application designed for this purpose, which will enable teachers to capture the attendance of up to 50 students in just seconds by scanning facial features like eyes and noses rather than the entire face. Once the app is ready for deployment, it will be easily installed on teachers' smartphones, eliminating the need for additional devices, and the department will issue instructions for its implementation to ensure a smooth transition.
- The Karnataka health department has launched an adult TB vaccination programme in 16 districts, coinciding with World TB Day, aiming to reduce TB-related mortality and work towards a TB-free Karnataka. This initiative focuses on administering the BCG (Bacille Calmette-Guérin) vaccine, which is traditionally given to infants, to high-risk adult groups, including senior citizens (aged 60+), underweight individuals (BMI <18.5), diabetics, smokers, immunocompromised individuals, primary contacts of TB patients, and those with a history of TB. The programme underscores the need to strengthen TB control efforts by targeting vulnerable populations. Key TB statistics from 2024 reveal that over 20 lakh sputum tests were conducted, leading to the identification of 77,987 TB cases, with 28,122 cases from the private sector and 49,865 from government hospitals. Notably, 4.5% of cases were drug-resistant TB, complicating treatment. Citizens are urged to avail of the free vaccine, avoid misinformation, and trust scientific evidence to enhance immunity and TB prevention. The BCG vaccine, first introduced in 1921, is derived from *Mycobacterium bovis* and remains a crucial component in global TB control, featuring on the World Health Organization's List of Essential Medicines.
- A team of researchers from NIMHANS, Bengaluru, has developed Pre-CURB, a digital learning resource aimed at preventing cannabis use and promoting responsible behavior among young people. Released in February 2024 at a workshop by the Departments of Nursing and Mental Health Education, the initiative addresses the growing concern of rising cannabis use among youth worldwide, as highlighted in a WHO report. In India, where cannabis has cultural significance but remains illegal, studies indicate 6.8% to 36% usage among college students, leading to consequences such as poor academic performance, increased dropout rates, and cognitive impairment. A 2024 NIMHANS study found that college students in Bengaluru had a low perception of cannabis-related risks, emphasizing the need for awareness. Pre-CURB educates users on the adverse effects of cannabis, including memory loss, impaired decision-making, driving hazards, and legal issues. It also busts common myths, such as the misconception that cannabis is safer than tobacco or does not cause addiction. The program further provides strategies to resist cannabis use, focusing on managing triggers, fostering social support, and developing healthy lifestyle habits. The workshop incorporated interactive sessions on stress management, fitness, and wellness to offer a holistic approach to youth well-being. Available on the

NIMHANS website, Pre-CURB aims to equip young individuals with the knowledge and tools necessary for making informed choices about cannabis use.

- A delegation from the Dutch Ministry of Health visited Bengaluru's Centre for Cellular and Molecular Platforms (C-CAMP) to discuss potential collaborations in AI-powered health technology and pharmaceutical innovation. They met with Karnataka Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao to align the Netherlands' public health system with state initiatives, focusing on establishing an Innovation Bridge with C-CAMP as part of a bilateral partnership
- The Bengaluru Traffic Police will discontinue monitoring the PublicEye app for traffic incidents and violations, shifting their focus to the BTP ASTraM app for reporting purposes. PublicEye, created in partnership with iChangeMyCity, is being phased out. Authorities encourage the public to download the BTP ASTraM app, which offers features such as reporting violations, accessing real-time traffic updates, and making fine payments. PublicEye previously allowed users to anonymously report traffic violations by submitting photographs, which were then verified and recorded.
- The tiger population in Karnataka's five reserves has declined for the third consecutive year, reaching 393 in 2024, down from 417 in 2022 and 408 in 2023. The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) mandates population assessments every four years, with annual monitoring using Phase 4 surveys. Karnataka has been conducting these since 2015, with the latest surveys taking place from November 2023 to February 2024. These involved deploying camera traps at 2,160 locations, resulting in 61 lakh images that were analyzed using AI to identify individual tigers. The report noted tiger dispersal into surrounding habitats, contributing to fluctuations in population estimates within reserves; however, the overall state-wide population has shown an increase during the quadrennial assessments.
- The annual report on the "Status of Tigers, Prey, and Other Mammals in Tiger Reserves of Karnataka for 2024" has provided key insights into the tiger population across the state. The survey was conducted between November 2023 and February 2024 in five major tiger reserves: Nagarahole, Bandipur, Bhadra, Biligiri Ranganathaswamy Temple (BRT), and Kali (Dandeli-Anshi). The study employed camera trap surveys to estimate the population of tigers and co-predators and line transect surveys to estimate the prey population. The findings indicate that the estimated tiger population in these reserves is 393, reflecting a decline from 417 in 2022 and 408 in 2023 due to dispersal into adjoining habitats. Despite these fluctuations, the statewide tiger population has shown steady growth, with a more comprehensive assessment expected in the All India Tiger Estimation (AITE) – 2026. The survey used 2,160 camera trap locations, generating 61 lakh images, which were analyzed using AI-based software to identify individual tigers based on their unique stripe patterns.
- B N Garudachar, former state police chief and Bengaluru top cop, passed away
- The Karnataka Coffee Board has launched premium GI-tagged single-serve coffee drip bags to enhance domestic coffee consumption, allowing easy brewing with just hot water and a mug, featuring five Arabica varieties. These products will be marketed under the India Coffee brand and made available on various e-commerce platforms. Additionally, the Board introduced specialty coffees like Monsooned Malabar Arabica. To promote coffee culture, initiatives such as training programs for farmers and entrepreneurs are underway, alongside participation in exhibitions. Currently, India's coffee consumption is estimated at 95,000 tonnes, reflecting ongoing efforts to boost awareness and accessibility of pure coffee in the country.

POLITY

- The Supreme Court has affirmed the right of nursing mothers to breastfeed in public places and workplaces, emphasizing that it is the state's duty to facilitate this practice by ensuring adequate facilities and a supportive environment. The court stressed that breastfeeding is integral to a child's health and a woman's reproductive process, and called upon citizens to uphold the dignity of women by not

stigmatizing public breastfeeding. This ruling reinforces a 2024 Central government advisory, which the court directed to be reiterated to all states and Union Territories for compliance.

- Recently, the central government launched Aadhaar Good Governance portal to streamline approval process for Aadhaar authentication requests.
- The Chhattisgarh government has approved a new rehabilitation policy for surrendered Naxalites, offering financial aid, education, employment, and security to help them reintegrate into society. This move aims to address the longstanding issue of Naxalism in the state. Additionally, the government has ordered a probe into corruption allegations related to the Bharatmala road project.
- Union Home Minister has announced the relocation of Assam Rifles battalions to Mizoram, highlighting the force's important role in counterinsurgency operations throughout northeastern India. As one of the six Central Armed Police Forces under the MHA and operationally controlled by the Indian Army, Assam Rifles was established in 1835 as a militia for protecting British interests and has evolved significantly over the years, participating in major conflicts such as the Sino-India War and peacekeeping missions, now comprising 46 battalions with its headquarters in Shillong.
- ROSHNI ACT - J&K State Land (Vesting of Ownership to the Occupants) Act, 2001
- The Lok Sabha has passed the Boilers Bill, 2024, replacing the century-old Boilers Act of 1923 to decriminalise seven offences and enhance ease of doing business. The original Act, aimed at regulating the manufacturing, installation, operation, alteration, and repair of steam boilers for safety, was last amended in 2007; however, further reforms were necessary. The new Bill aligns with the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Act, 2023, focusing on decriminalisation and modernising regulations. Key features of the Boilers Bill include the repeal of outdated provisions to align with contemporary safety standards, the decriminalisation of three out of seven offences to reduce legal hurdles, a clear categorisation of offences with severe penalties for major risks while converting minor offences to fiscal penalties, and improved drafting practices for clarity and accessibility. Additionally, it enhances safety measures, mandates qualified personnel for boiler repairs, clearly defines the roles of Central and State governments, and reflects the significant presence of approximately 40 lakh steam boilers in the Indian industry, which encompasses sectors like power, manufacturing, and chemicals.
- The National e-Vidhan Application (NeVA) is a digital initiative aimed at modernizing legislative processes across state and union territory assemblies. It is an online platform designed to digitize legislative operations, making them more accessible and efficient. Recently, Delhi became the 28th legislature to adopt NeVA. The application is device-neutral and member-centric, providing legislators with smart tools to handle House business effectively. Members can access legislative details such as rules of procedure, business lists, bills, committee reports, and more. For government departments, NeVA streamlines parliamentary operations, creating an inclusive digital ecosystem. The Chair of the House benefits from tools that assist in conducting smooth proceedings. NeVA is hosted on Meghraj National Cloud, ensuring a secure and disaster-proof system. Key stakeholders using NeVA include legislators, ministers, assembly secretariat staff, government officials, media, and citizens. The platform provides services like business lists, bills, committee reports, Q&A sessions, digital libraries, and parliamentary notices, making legislative processes transparent and easily accessible.

SOCIAL ISSUES

- In a move to monitor and analyse news across print, electronic, and digital platforms, the Maharashtra government has approved the establishment of a state-of-the-art media monitoring centre with a budget of ₹10 crore.
- Chhattisgarh's Finance Minister OP Choudhary made a remarkable gesture by presenting a 100-page handwritten budget in Hindi, showcasing his personal dedication and commitment to the budget preparation process. In an era where AI-powered chatbots are increasingly used, even for drafting court rulings, Choudhary's handwritten budget stands out as a rare act of ownership and dedication to the state's financial planning and goals.

- Union Minister of State for Agriculture Ram Nath Thakur informed the Lok Sabha that horticulture and dairy farming are not covered under the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) crop insurance scheme. Currently, there's no insurance scheme for flower farming in Chikkaballapur district, as per information provided by the state government. Since its launch in 2016-17, the PMFBY has settled claims worth Rs 1.73 lakh crore for 19.68 crore farmers across various states, including Karnataka, for crop loss
- Scientific coal mining in Meghalaya commenced recently, marking a significant development more than a decade after the National Green Tribunal (NGT) prohibited unregulated mining due to its detrimental effects on ecology, public health, and rivers. Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma inaugurated the initiative at Byndihat in the East Jaintia Hills district, highlighting the hardships faced by citizens connected to the coal industry during the NGT's ban. Since taking office in 2018, Sangma has been advocating for scientific mining to revive livelihoods while mitigating environmental impacts. The permissions granted for mining operations, which are aimed at addressing these concerns, cover over 100 acres and are expected to generate Rs 500-800 crore annually for the state. The state government faced criticism in 2018 when at least 13 miners died in an illegal "rat-hole" mine, underscoring the prevalence of unlawful activities despite the ban, driven by the economic pressures faced by local communities reliant on coal mining. The situation was complicated by Meghalaya's protection under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, which grants communities rights over their land and minerals, resulting in limited government control and the persistence of illegal mining activities.
- On the occasion of Tata AIA's 24th foundation day, the Tata AIA Agency team in Bengaluru launched "Pledge to Protect" initiative. The initiative is part of the company's goal to secure one lakh lives in Q4 FY25.
- The Union Ministry of Education has issued an advisory recommending a 10% reduction in cooking oil usage in midday meals under the Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman (PM-POSHAN) scheme to promote healthier eating habits among schoolchildren. Awareness campaigns will be conducted among teachers, parents, and students, and school cooks will receive training to adopt healthier cooking methods such as grilling, steaming, and baking instead of deep-frying. The PM-POSHAN scheme, launched in September 2021, replaced the Midday Meal Scheme and aims to provide nutritious meals to students in government and aided schools. The scheme covers children from Bal-Vatika to Class 8 and, in Karnataka, extends to Classes 9 and 10, benefiting 54 lakh students. Midday meals include fortified rice, wheat, pulses, green leafy vegetables, and fortified edible oil, with measured oil quantities of 5g per meal for primary students and 7.5g for upper primary students.
- Delhi Police has launched district-wise Shishtachar Squads to combat eve-teasing and enhance women's safety in public spaces. Inspired by Uttar Pradesh's Anti-Romeo Squads, these teams focus on prevention, intervention, and victim assistance. Each district will have at least two squads under the supervision of the ACP (Crime Against Women) of the district. The squad comprises one inspector, one sub-inspector, five male officers, four female officers, and technical support from the Anti-Auto Theft Squad. District DCPs identify high-risk areas for patrolling, and the squads conduct drives at least twice a day in vulnerable locations. Additionally, plain-clothed officers carry out surprise checks in public transport and interact with DTC staff to promote reporting of harassment cases. The initiative aims to strengthen women's security, ensure swift action against harassment, and create a safer environment for women.
- In a fresh bid to eradicate Naxalism, the Chhattisgarh government has announced a series of substantial incentives for village panchayats that declare themselves 'Naxal-free' which includes mobile phone network connectivity, electricity, and Rs 1 crore for development works.
- The Supreme Court of India has taken a significant step towards addressing the growing concern of student suicides in higher educational institutions. The court stated that these suicides serve as a stark reminder of the inadequacy of the current legal and institutional framework in tackling this issue. To combat this, the court has formed a National Task Force, headed by former Supreme Court judge Justice S Ravindra Bhat, with the primary objective of addressing students' mental health concerns and preventing suicides
- Union Health Minister J P Nadda announced the expansion of the intensified tuberculosis elimination programme to every district in India, following the success of the 100-day campaign in 347 districts, which identified over 7 lakh additional TB patients and screened over 12.97 crore people. The campaign, part of

the TB Mukht Bharat Abhiyaan, achieved notable results, including a 17.7% decline in TB incidence and a 21.4% reduction in TB-related deaths over the past decade. Despite progress, India's TB incidence and mortality goals remain higher than desired, prompting the expansion of the programme to over 750 districts, leveraging technology and ensuring timely treatment initiation

- SAHYOG portal - aims to create a unified framework to combat cybercrime
- Shreya Singhal v. Union of India is a judgement by a two-judge bench of the Supreme Court of India in 2015, on the issue of online speech and intermediary liability in India. The Supreme Court struck down Section 66A of the Information Technology Act, 2000, relating to restrictions on online speech, as unconstitutional on grounds of violating the freedom of speech guaranteed under Article 19(1)(a)

SCHEMES

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (Isro) is organising a programme for schoolchildren — 'Young Scientist Programme' or 'Yuva Vigyani Karyakram' (YUVIKA) — to impart basic knowledge in space technology, space science, and space applications.
- The All-India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) organised an awareness workshop on the Sarswati scholarship scheme and other AICTE-funded schemes on March 8. The event celebrated International Women's Day at BMS College of Engineering in Bengaluru. Sarswati scholarship scheme is for meritorious students pursuing BBA/BMS/BCA courses. Over 1,400 students participated.
- The Indian Railways is set to participate in the Union government's Mission Amrit Sarovar initiative, which addresses water scarcity by constructing or rejuvenating ponds across the country. Launched in April 2022, the mission aims to create or rejuvenate 75 ponds in each district, with over 68,000 ponds completed as of October 2024, improving water availability and promoting sustainability. The second phase will emphasize community involvement and climate resilience while enhancing ecological balance. The Railways will assist by excavating and desilting water bodies near railway worksites, using the excavated material for railway construction when suitable. The government has communicated with state Chief Secretaries to facilitate this collaboration, aiming for substantial completion by August 15.
- The Indian government has approved the development of 116 new tourist destinations nationwide, partnering with state governments for a total cost of ₹4,088 crores. This includes 34 destinations under the Swadesh Darshan 2.0 scheme, 42 under the Challenge Based Destination Development (CBDD) sub-scheme, and 40 under the Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment (SASCI) program. Swadesh Darshan 2.0 aims to create sustainable, theme-based tourism destinations while providing financial support for infrastructure development. The revamped CBDD focuses on the holistic enhancement of destinations to improve the overall tourist experience.
- The Union Cabinet has revised the Rashtriya Gokul Mission (RGM) with a total outlay of ₹3,400 crore to enhance bovine productivity and conserve indigenous cattle breeds. Implemented by the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying since December 2014, the mission aims to boost milk production and improve dairy farming using advanced technologies. Key objectives include promoting high genetic merit bulls for breeding, expanding Artificial Insemination (AI) coverage, and supporting scientific conservation of indigenous breeds. The funding pattern consists mainly of a 100% government grant, except for certain components: the Accelerated Breed Improvement Programme offers a ₹5,000 subsidy per IVF pregnancy, Promotion of Sex-Sorted Semen provides a 50% subsidy, and Breed Multiplication Farms receive a 50% subsidy on capital costs (up to ₹2 crore per project).
- The Cabinet has approved a ₹1,500 crore incentive scheme to promote low-value UPI transactions (up to ₹2,000) for person-to-merchant (P2M) payments, particularly benefiting small merchants. The scheme provides 0.15% incentive per transaction value and will continue through FY 2024-25 and FY 2025-26. The government also enforces a zero Merchant Discount Rate (MDR) policy for RuPay Debit Cards and BHIM-UPI transactions, as per RBI and NPCI guidelines. MDR remains zero for RuPay debit cards and UPI transactions since January 2020 through amendments to the Payments and Settlement Systems Act, 2007,

and the Income-tax Act, 1961. The "Incentive Scheme for Promotion of RuPay Debit Cards and Low-Value BHIM-UPI Transactions" has been providing financial incentives, including ₹3,631 crore in FY 2023-24, ₹2,210 crore in FY 2022-23, and ₹1,389 crore in FY 2021-22. The government pays these incentives to acquiring banks (merchant's banks), which distribute the amount among issuer banks (customer's banks), payment service providers, and UPI app providers like Google Pay, PhonePe, and Paytm.

- The Swadesh Darshan Scheme was launched in 2015 by the Ministry of Tourism to develop theme-based tourism circuits and promote sustainable and responsible tourism. It is a 100% centrally funded scheme, with State Governments, UT Administrations, and Central Agencies receiving financial assistance, while the responsibility for operation and maintenance (O&M) lies with the respective State/UT governments. The scheme focuses on infrastructure improvement, including roads, signage, parking, and public amenities, alongside eco-tourism and heritage conservation. Between 2014-15 and 2018-19, 76 projects were sanctioned across 31 States/UTs, with a total fund allocation of ₹5,292.57 crore. However, an audit review by the CAG highlighted major issues such as lack of feasibility studies, financial mismanagement, project delays, and incomplete work, citing examples like the Kanwaria Route in Bihar, Tribal Circuit in Telangana, and Sree Narayana Guru Ashram in Kerala. The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) criticized the Union Tourism Ministry for misleading claims regarding project completion, as 75 out of 76 projects were allegedly completed, which the committee members strongly refuted. The PAC ordered the Ministry to conduct physical inspections of all projects and submit a detailed report within three weeks, covering the actual project status, maintenance challenges, employment impact, and tourist footfall. The Public Accounts Committee (PAC), established in 1921, is responsible for examining CAG audit reports, investigating financial irregularities, and ensuring efficient government spending. It consists of 22 members (15 from Lok Sabha and 7 from Rajya Sabha), with the Chairperson traditionally from the Opposition, while ministers are not allowed to be members.
- The Samarth Incubation Programme was launched by the Centre for Development of Telematics (C-DoT), an autonomous Telecom R&D centre under the Department of Telecommunication (DoT), Government of India. The programme aims to support startups working in telecom software, cybersecurity, 5G & 6G technologies, AI, IoT applications, and quantum technologies, encouraging sustainable and scalable business models by providing access to cutting-edge resources. It helps startups transition from ideation to commercialization. The programme is implemented in partnership with Software Technology Parks of India (STPI) and operates in a hybrid mode (both online and offline). It follows a cohort-based structure, with a maximum of 18 startups per cohort, running two cohorts per year, each lasting six months, supporting a total of 36 startups per year. The programme is open to DPIIT-recognized startups, offering benefits such as a grant of up to ₹5 lakh per startup, six months of office space at the C-DoT campus, access to lab facilities, and mentorship from technical leaders and industry experts. Startups demonstrating significant progress will have future collaboration opportunities under the C-DoT Collaborative Research Program.
- The Union Cabinet has approved an incentive scheme worth ₹1,500 crore to promote low-value UPI transactions, particularly person-to-merchant (P2M) payments up to ₹2,000 for small merchants. Under this scheme, incentives of 0.15% per transaction value will be provided, ensuring continued government support in FY 2024-25 and FY 2025-26. The government has also implemented a zero MDR (Merchant Discount Rate) policy for certain UPI and RuPay transactions to promote digital payments. As per RBI guidelines, MDR up to 0.90% applies to debit card transactions, while NPCI has set MDR up to 0.30% for UPI P2M transactions. Since January 2020, MDR has been made zero for RuPay Debit Cards and BHIM-UPI transactions through amendments to the Payments and Settlement Systems Act, 2007 and the Income-tax Act, 1961. The Incentive Scheme for Promotion of RuPay Debit Cards and Low-Value BHIM-UPI Transactions has been implemented with financial allocations of ₹3,631 crore in FY 2023-24, ₹2,210 crore in FY 2022-23, and ₹1,389 crore in FY 2021-22. The incentive is paid by the government to the acquiring bank (merchant's bank), which then distributes it among stakeholders, including the issuer bank (customer's bank), payment service provider bank (which facilitates UPI onboarding), and app providers (Google Pay, PhonePe, Paytm, etc.)

- The Self-Reliant India (SRI) Fund was launched under the Atmanirbhar Bharat package in 2020, with an allocation of Rs. 50,000 crore to support Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) through equity infusion. It follows a mother-fund and daughter-fund model, with the National Small Industries Corporation (NSIC) Venture Capital Fund Limited (NVCFL) designated as the Mother Fund and registered as a Category-II Alternative Investment Fund (AIF) with SEBI. The fund aims to strengthen MSMEs by providing equity support, promoting economic growth, fostering innovation, and encouraging technology and research & development (R&D). The government contributes Rs. 10,000 crore, while Rs. 40,000 crore is mobilized from Private Equity (PE) and Venture Capital (VC) funds. Despite its ambitious goals, the fund's reach remains limited across most states, benefiting only 577 MSMEs as of February 28, 2025. Karnataka leads with 151 investee MSMEs, followed by Maharashtra with 144, while most other states have yet to reach double-digit participation. The slow implementation of the fund remains a challenge despite its potential to boost the MSME sector and drive economic self-reliance in India.
- The Government of India has discontinued Medium-Term and Long-Term Government Deposits (MLTGD) under the Gold Monetisation Scheme (GMS) as of March 26, 2025. Launched in November 2015 as an enhanced version of the Gold Deposit Scheme (GDS) and the Gold Metal Loan (GML) Scheme, the GMS allows individuals, institutions, and government entities to deposit idle gold in banks, earning interest while promoting the formal economy and reducing gold imports to help decrease the Current Account Deficit (CAD). The GMS includes Short-Term Gold Deposits (1-3 years), Medium-Term Gold Deposits (5-7 years), and Long-Term Gold Deposits (7-12 years), each with specific purposes related to domestic needs, gold reserves, and monetary policy, with redemptions varying in cash or gold. Additionally, other gold-related initiatives such as the Sovereign Gold Bond (SGB) Scheme and the Indian Gold Coin Initiative, launched in tandem with the GMS, aim to further reduce demand for physical gold; however, the SGB scheme has also been recently discontinued.
- The Union Education Ministry has launched the Baalpan ki Kavita initiative to revive and promote traditional Indian rhymes and poems for young children. The initiative aims to restore and compile nursery rhymes in all Indian languages and English, making foundational education more engaging and culturally relevant. It is a collaborative effort between the Ministry of Education and MyGov, encouraging public participation through submissions of existing, folklore-based, or newly composed rhymes and poems. The initiative categorizes entries based on age groups: Pre-primary (3-6 years), Grade 1 (6-7 years), and Grade 2 (7-8 years). Additionally, submitted works should reflect regional traditions, culture, and folklore to help children connect with their roots.

ECONOMY

- India, despite being the third largest economy globally, ranks 28th in the world in terms of its 'user' economy, indicating a disparity between the country's aggregate digitalization and individual digital adoption. According to a report by ICRIR's Prosus Centre for Internet and Digital Economy (CIDE), India's digital economy is growing at twice the rate of its overall economy and is expected to become one-fifth of the economy by 2029, highlighting significant potential for investments in digital penetration.
- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) recently announced its plan to inject Rs 1.9 lakh crore into the banking system through open market purchases of government securities and USD/INR swaps. Open Market Operations (OMO) is a monetary policy tool employed by central banks to regulate the money supply in the economy by buying or selling government securities in the open market. When the RBI aims to reduce inflation and curtail money supply, it sells securities, which decreases liquidity, raises interest rates, and makes loans more expensive, ultimately slowing down economic activity. Conversely, when liquidity is needed, the RBI buys securities, adding money to the system, lowering interest rates, and facilitating loans, thus stimulating economic growth. Additionally, selling securities can lead to increased bond yields as demand for higher returns rises when more government securities are released into the market during excess liquidity conditions.

- India has emerged as the top source country for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into Dubai, accounting for 21.5% of total FDI in 2024, followed by the US, France, and the UK. Dubai has retained its position as the world's No.1 destination for Greenfield FDI projects for the fourth consecutive year.
- The State Bank of India is setting up a specialized unit to provide project financing solutions for new-age industries like artificial intelligence, e-commerce, and fintech. This unit, dubbed the "Center of Excellence for Project Financing," aims to diversify the bank's project finance portfolio, which has seen a surge in lending to new-age industries and renewable energy sectors
- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said it appointed Indranil Bhattacharyya as executive director (ED)
- The Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR), established on May 17, 2018, under the Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, serves as India's anti-dumping watchdog, dedicated to maintaining fair trade practices for domestic industries by addressing issues like unfair dumping, subsidization, and import surges. Recently, the DGTR has recommended a 12% duty on steel imports due to concerns over 'trade diversion,' particularly as global trade restrictions have intensified; for instance, the US plans to impose a 25% additional tariff on steel imports starting March 12, 2025, while the EU, Canada, and the UK have enacted 129 trade remedy measures, resulting in excess steel being redirected to the Indian market and threatening local producers. Furthermore, countries like Japan, South Korea, and China are producing steel far beyond their domestic needs, increasing the risk of oversaturation in export markets that could severely impact Indian steel prices. The DGTR's role encompasses conducting investigations, managing litigation, advising on anti-subsidy measures, and engaging with the World Trade Organization to bolster trade fairness for Indian industries.
- Govt. moots abolishing digital tax on online advertisements from April 1
- The Sixth Round of India's Remittances Survey 2023-24 by the RBI reveals that the US, UK, Singapore, Canada, and Australia together accounted for over 50% of India's remittances, with the US leading at 27.7%. India remains the top global recipient of remittances, doubling from \$55.6 billion in 2010-11 to \$118.7 billion in 2023-24. The UAE retained its position as the second-largest source, with its share rising from 18% in 2020-21 to 19.2% in 2023-24. Inward remittances from advanced economies like the US and UK have surpassed those from Gulf nations, contributing nearly 40% of total remittances in FY24, while GCC countries (UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, Bahrain) collectively contributed 38%. Among Indian states, Maharashtra led with 20.5% of remittance inflows, followed by Kerala (second), Tamil Nadu (10.4%), Telangana (8.1%), and Karnataka (7.7%).
- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has issued revised guidelines on Priority Sector Lending (PSL) to expand coverage and increase loan limits across multiple sectors, effective April 1. Key changes include enhanced loan limits in categories like housing, an expanded scope of renewable energy loans, and a broadened list of eligible borrowers under the 'weaker sections' category. The PSL target for urban cooperative banks has been raised to 60% of Adjusted Net Bank Credit (ANBC) or Credit Equivalent of Off-Balance Sheet Exposure (CEOBSE) to strengthen credit flow to critical sectors. Additionally, the RBI has removed the loan cap for individual women beneficiaries under urban cooperative banks. PSL mandates banks to allocate a specific percentage of loans to crucial economic sectors such as agriculture, MSMEs, export credit, education, housing, social infrastructure, and renewable energy. Different banks have distinct PSL targets, with domestic SCBs and foreign banks (20+ branches) required to allocate 40% of ANBC/CEOBSE, while RRBs and Small Finance Banks must allocate 75%. Banks failing to meet PSL targets must deposit shortfalls into funds like the Rural Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF), SIDBI, Mudra, or National Housing Bank. Priority Sector Lending Certificates (PSLCs) enable banks to buy tradable certificates from banks with surplus PSL lending to meet targets instead of directly lending to priority sectors, helping balance the lending load while ensuring compliance.
- Union Finance Minister announced there would be no import duties on 35 capital goods used to make EV batteries and 28 items used to make mobile phone batteries to boost domestic manufacturing.
- India will host the FATF Private Sector Collaborative Forum 2025 in Mumbai, addressing global priorities such as payment transparency, financial inclusion, and digital financial system transformation.
- The National Payments Corporation of India's (NPCI) subsidiary, NPCI BHIM Services Ltd. (NBSL), has launched Bharat Interface for Money (BHIM) 3.0, introducing new features for users, businesses, and

banks. The phased rollout is expected to be fully available by April 2025. BHIM 3.0 enhances user convenience with a Bill Splitting Feature for shared expenses and a Shared Expenses Tracking system for better financial planning. Security improvements include strong encryption for secure transactions and increased accessibility for diverse users across India. BHIM, a UPI-based mobile application launched by NPCI on December 30, 2016, facilitates real-time money transfers between bank accounts. It is user-friendly, available in multiple languages, and operates 24/7, even on holidays. BHIM ensures fast and secure transactions through encryption and PIN-based access, along with additional functionalities like QR code integration and utility bill payments.

ENVIRONMENT

- Researchers from the western Maharashtra region recently discovered a new endemic species of frog named 'Minervarya ghatiborealis'.
- At least four people died after Cyclone Garance struck the French overseas territory of La Réunion recently. Réunion Island, a French island in the Western Indian Ocean, lies about 680 km east of Madagascar and 180 km southwest of Mauritius, covering 2,511 sq. km. Along with Mauritius and Rodrigues, it forms the Mascarene Archipelago. The island is entirely volcanic, originating from the ocean floor at a depth of 4,000 meters, with rugged mountains dissected by torrential rivers. It is home to the highest peak in the Indian Ocean, Piton des Neiges, and one of the most active volcanoes, Piton de la Fournaise. The capital, Saint-Denis, is on the northern coast. Settled by French colonists in the 17th century, Réunion saw the arrival of African slaves and later indentured labourers from Malaysia, China, and India. Today, most of the population is of mixed descent (African, European, and South Asian). The economy relies mainly on sugar exports, alongside meat, milk, rum, molasses, tobacco, geranium essence, and vanilla.
- The High Court recently issued notices to South Western Railway and the Directorate of Survey and Land Records (DSLRL) over a PIL challenging land acquisition proceedings at Bhagwan Mahavir (Mollem) Wildlife Sanctuary, which is nestled in the Western Ghats on Goa's eastern border near Mollem village. Originally called Mollem Game Sanctuary, it was declared a wildlife sanctuary in 1969 and later renamed, also encompassing Mollem National Park within its 240 sq. km area. The sanctuary is home to the Dudhsagar waterfall, Devil's Canyon, Tambdi Surla temple, and other historic sites. It features West Coast tropical evergreen, semi-evergreen, and moist deciduous forests with teak, bamboo, cashew, and eucalyptus trees, while its rich fauna includes Gaur, Sambar, Leopards, Spotted Deer, Jungle Cats, Malayan Giant Squirrels, Pythons, and Cobras.
- World Wildlife Day, observed on March 3, highlights flora and fauna conservation, with the 2025 theme being "Wildlife Conservation Finance: Investing in People and Planet." Established by the UNGA in 2013, it commemorates the signing of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) on March 3, 1973. CITES, administered by UNEP in Geneva, has 185 member parties and aims to regulate wildlife trade to prevent species extinction. It classifies species into three appendices: Appendix I (threatened with extinction, trade highly restricted, e.g., gorillas, Asiatic lions), Appendix II (not endangered but require controlled trade, e.g., hippopotamuses, certain fox species), and Appendix III (protected in specific countries needing international trade regulation support, e.g., Bengal fox, Golden Jackal).
- India has 6,327 river dolphins, as revealed by the first-ever national estimation. Nearly 90% of them inhabit the Ganga River and its tributaries. The survey, released by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, highlights their distribution across major river systems. The Ganga River System has the highest number, with 3,275 dolphins in the main Ganga River and 2,414 in its tributaries. The Brahmaputra River System recorded 584 dolphins in the main river and 51 in its tributaries. The Indus River System reported only three dolphins in the Beas River. Among states, Uttar Pradesh (2,397), Bihar (2,220), and West Bengal (815) have the highest dolphin populations. The survey, part of Project Dolphin, covered 8,500 km across 28 rivers in 8 states using boat-based surveys. It emphasizes the critical conservation concerns, as studies indicate a 50-65%

decline in dolphin populations since the 19th century. As an umbrella species, river dolphin conservation is essential for maintaining overall river ecosystem health.

- A rare civet cat, typically inhabiting the Seshachalam forests near Tirumala, was recently sighted near Tadepalli in Guntur district, Andhra Pradesh. Civets, part of the Viverridae family, are long-bodied, short-legged carnivores found in Africa, southern Europe, and Asia. India hosts eight civet species, including the widespread Common Palm and Small Indian civets. The rarest, the Malabar large-spotted civet, endemic to the Western Ghats, is critically endangered. Civets have catlike features—thickly furred tails, small ears, and pointed snouts—with varied buff or grayish coats marked by black spots or stripes. They measure 40-85 cm long (plus a 13-66 cm tail) and weigh 1.5-11 kg. Solitary and nocturnal, they live in tree hollows or rocky areas, feeding on fruits, insects, and small animals.
- A new study highlights the threat of *Ruellia elegans*, a Brazilian native plant, to India's biodiversity. Known as Brazilian petunia or elegant Ruellia, this invasive species thrives in wet tropics and was introduced in the Andaman Islands, later spreading to Odisha. Alongside other invasive Acanthoideae species, it outcompetes native plants for resources, disrupting ecosystems, threatening wildlife habitats, and risking native species decline, with potential economic and environmental harm.
- Ahead of the cotton sowing season, Punjab farmers are increasingly demanding Bollgard-3, a pest-resistant GM cotton variety developed by Monsanto over a decade ago. Featuring three Bt proteins (Cry1Ac, Cry2Ab, Vip3A), it effectively combats lepidopteran pests like pink bollworm by disrupting their gut function, boosting crop health and yield. Unlike Bollgard-1 (2002) and Bollgard-2 (2006), which are less effective against whitefly and pink bollworm (emerged in Punjab in 2015-16 and 2018-19), Bollgard-3 offers superior pest resistance, driving its growing popularity.
- Madhya Pradesh, home to India's largest wolf population, is studying their ecology at Nauradehi Wildlife Sanctuary. Established in 1975, this 1,197 sq.km sanctuary—the state's largest—spans Sagar, Damoh, and Narsinghpur districts. Located on a plateau in the upper Vindhyan range, it connects Panna, Satpura, and Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserves. It lies in the Deccan peninsula region, split between the Ganga (Yamuna/Ken River) and Narmada basins, with rivers like Kopra and Bamner flowing through. The dry mixed-deciduous forest features teak, sal, and mahua trees, and supports wildlife like wolves, Nilgai, Chital, Sambhar, Black Buck, and various birds.
- Vantara, a wildlife rescue and rehabilitation centre, was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Jamnagar. Established by Reliance Industries and the Reliance Foundation, it spans 3,500 acres and houses over 2,000 species. The centre has received the 'Prani Mitra' National Award for its contributions to animal welfare. Vantara focuses on ecological sustainability, wildlife rehabilitation, and conservation, providing a safe haven for animals rescued from captivity and neglect. It is home to the world's largest cheetah conservation project and works towards breeding and restoring endangered species such as caracals, clouded leopards, Asiatic lions, and white lions. The centre features a state-of-the-art wildlife hospital, including an MRI room and operation theatre, to treat injured and rescued animals. Additionally, it houses the world's largest elephant hospital, dedicated to elephant care and rehabilitation. Vantara actively engages in public awareness programmes, educating people about wildlife conservation and biodiversity. The facility aims to expand its conservation efforts, conduct further research on endangered species, and enhance educational outreach, striving to become a global leader in wildlife conservation.
- The Livestock Health and Disease Control Scheme (LHDCS) was launched in 2022 by the Government of India to enhance animal health, control livestock diseases, and improve veterinary services. The Union Cabinet has approved the revision of this scheme with a total outlay of ₹3,880 crore for 2024-25 and 2025-26. A new component, "Pashu Aushadhi", has been introduced with a ₹75 crore allocation to improve the availability of affordable veterinary medicines. The scheme focuses on disease control and vaccination for major livestock diseases like Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD), Brucellosis, Peste des Petits Ruminants (PPR), Classical Swine Fever (CSF), and Lumpy Skin Disease (LSD). It includes mass vaccination programs, strengthening veterinary healthcare infrastructure, and improving disease surveillance. The Critical Animal Disease Control Programme (CADCP) aims at the eradication of high-risk diseases, while the Establishment & Strengthening of Veterinary Hospitals and Dispensaries (ESVHD-MVU) ensures better access to veterinary care in rural areas. The Assistance to States for Control of Animal Diseases (ASCAD) provides

financial aid for disease prevention. The scheme is expected to reduce livestock mortality, increase milk, meat, and wool production, and support rural economic growth. Funding is shared between the Central and State Governments, with 100% central funding for CADCP and Union Territories, 60:40 Centre-State funding for other components, and 90:10 for North Eastern and Himalayan states.

- India has officially added its 58th tiger reserve, Madhav National Park in Madhya Pradesh, emphasizing the nation's commitment to providing expansive habitats for its big cats. Covering over 82,836 sq km across 18 tiger range states, these reserves utilize a core/buffer method to enhance tiger conservation by safeguarding their habitats. With Madhav becoming the ninth tiger reserve in Madhya Pradesh, the state holds the highest number of such reserves in the country. The establishment of a tiger reserve involves a four-step process: the state submits a proposal to the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), which grants in-principle approval and requests detailed proposals; the NTCA assesses the proposal; finally, the State Government officially notifies the area as a tiger reserve.
- A bar-headed goose, a rare migratory bird, was sighted for the first time in Morshing village, West Kameng district, Arunachal Pradesh, recently.
- A rare sighting of a Clouded Leopard (*Neofelis nebulosa*), classified as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List, has been captured by a camera trap in Dehing Patkai National Park. This park, located in the Dibrugarh and Tinsukia districts of Assam, is part of the dipterocarp-dominated lowland rainforest known as the Dehing Patkai Landscape. Covering 231.65 sq km, it features the largest stretch of tropical lowland rainforests in India and is often called the "Amazon of the East." Declared a wildlife sanctuary in 2004 and upgraded to a national park in 2020, Dehing Patkai sits at the foothills of the Patkai Hill Ranges along the River Dehing. The park supports rich biodiversity, housing various flora such as Hollong and various orchids, and fauna, including slow lorises, Indian leopards, Asian elephants, and the elusive Clouded Leopard. Additionally, it is home to diverse ethnic groups, including indigenous Assamese communities. The region experiences a tropical climate with over 4,000 mm of annual rainfall.
- D. camanchaca: It is a newly discovered amphipod, a shrimp-like marine creature, marking the first known predatory amphipod in the hadal zone—depths exceeding 6,000 meters below the ocean surface.
- In a setback for global climate justice, the United States has withdrawn from the Loss and Damage Fund (LDF), which aims to compensate developing countries for climate change-related damages. The LDF, established at the 2022 UNFCCC Conference (COP27) in Egypt, provides financial support to regions facing significant economic and non-economic losses due to climate change impacts like sea-level rise and extreme weather. Developing nations, especially small island states disproportionately affected by climate change, have long sought financial assistance from wealthier countries responsible for the emissions. Although approximately \$750 million has been pledged to the fund, with the US contributing \$17.5 million, its withdrawal poses a challenge to ongoing climate support efforts. The LDF is managed by a Governing Board, with the World Bank acting as the interim trustee for four years.
- Scientists in Australia have discovered the world's oldest known meteorite impact crater in northwestern Australia, estimated to be 3.47 billion years old.
- Volcan de Fuego, which translates to "Volcano of Fire" in Spanish, is one of three large stratovolcanoes overlooking Guatemala's former capital, Antigua. Guatemala lies on the Pacific "Ring of Fire" and experiences frequent seismic and volcanic activity. Fuego is one of Central America's most active volcanoes.
- A recent global air pollution ranking revealed that 13 of the world's 20 most polluted cities are in India. Byrnihat (Assam-Meghalaya border) has been identified as the most polluted city globally, while Delhi remains the world's most polluted capital. India ranks fifth in overall PM2.5 pollution levels, behind Chad, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Congo. The 13 worst air-polluted cities in India include Byrnihat (Assam), Delhi & New Delhi, Mullanpur (Punjab), Faridabad & Gurugram (Haryana), Ganganagar, Bhiwadi, Hanumangarh (Rajasthan), and Greater Noida, Noida, Loni, Muzaffarnagar (Uttar Pradesh). Byrnihat was declared India's most polluted urban center in 2023 due to industrial emissions from factories, distilleries, and iron & steel plants. Out of the top 50 most polluted cities worldwide, 44 are in India and Pakistan, with extreme pollution levels in northern states like Delhi, Punjab, Haryana, and Himachal Pradesh. PM2.5 pollution is a severe health hazard, causing 1.5 million deaths annually in India. Delhi's PM2.5 concentration increased

from 102.4 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ (2023) to 108.3 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ (2024). Major pollution contributors include stubble burning in Punjab and Haryana (accounting for 60% of peak pollution) and meteorological conditions trapping pollutants in the Indo-Gangetic Plain. Severe smog forces school closures and restrictions on outdoor activities in cities like Delhi and Lahore. While India saw a 7% decline in PM2.5 levels, improving its global ranking from third to fifth, six of the world's 10 most polluted cities remain in India, with 35% of Indian cities reporting PM2.5 levels over 10 times the WHO guideline.

- The drying up of Tamulidoba Beel, a key wetland within Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary in Assam, highlights the urgent need for effective habitat management. Established in 1998 and encompassing 48.81 square kilometers, Pobitora is renowned for its high density of the great Indian one-horned rhinoceros and serves as a vital sanctuary for numerous other species, including leopards, wild boars, and over 2,000 migratory birds. The sanctuary has significant wet savannah flora, though it grapples with invasive water hyacinth affecting local wildlife. Historically, Pobitora has evolved from a reserved wooded area in 1971 to a prominent wildlife sanctuary, integrated into India's rhino conservation efforts. Tamulidoba Beel, located near Morigaon, has been particularly important for birdwatching and serves as an essential habitat for rhinos and buffaloes, making its preservation critical for biodiversity in the region.
- Researchers have named the new shrub species, which is endemic to southwest India, *Uniyala keralensis* (family Asteraceae) after the State of Kerala.
- The Phansad Wildlife Sanctuary in Maharashtra's Raigad district has witnessed a successful honey harvest, marking a significant conservation achievement. The sanctuary, spread over 17,250 acres, is home to diverse flora and fauna, including leopards, hyenas, and various bird species. This honey harvest is a testament to the conservation efforts of experts, naturalists, and local tribal communities.
- In Manipur's Naga-dominated Senapati district, hunting was once a popular sport, leading to rampant wildlife killings and trafficking to Myanmar. To counter this, youth have turned to football with a conservation message, launching the first-ever Pangolin Cup (March 17-22) to raise awareness about protecting critically endangered Chinese pangolins, the world's most trafficked species. Organized under the "Countering Pangolin Trafficking" project by Wildlife Trust of India (WTI), with support from the Pangolin Crisis Fund, the initiative engages local communities, civil society organizations, and 900 high school students. Informative banners, pamphlets, and awareness programs highlight the importance of conservation, as Senapati remains a key transit route for illegal pangolin trade. Officials emphasize the crucial role of collective action in shifting perspectives and stopping hunting as a sport.
- A recent study published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences reveals that the ancestors of Fijian iguanas traversed nearly 8,000 km across the Pacific Ocean on rafts of floating vegetation from the Americas. Iguanas are large, stout lizards predominantly found in tropical regions of the Americas, characterized by their scaly skin adorned with warts, spines along their backs, and a distinctive flap of flesh known as a dewlap under their necks. They exhibit various color morphs, including green, blue, and grey, and are primarily herbivorous, having adapted to various environments ranging from deserts to rainforests. Their native habitat spans Central and South America, with established populations in regions like Florida, Hawaii, and various Caribbean islands; they represent the largest lizard species in the USA. As primarily arboreal creatures, they inhabit canopy layers, emerging mainly for nesting, and their preferred environments include forests, rainforests, rivers, lakes, coastal waters, wetlands, and urban agricultural areas, showcasing their adaptability to diverse habitats.
- The Sagreshwar Wildlife Sanctuary, located in the Sangli district of Maharashtra, is renowned for its impressive deer population, hosting 536 sambars and 295 cheetals (spotted deer), making it one of the highest among manmade wildlife sanctuaries in India. Established as India's first manmade wildlife sanctuary, it encompasses an area of 10.87 square kilometers and features an artificially cultivated forest devoid of a perennial water supply, with most wildlife species introduced artificially. Named after the ancient Sagareshwar temple, which houses several shrines dedicated to Lord Shiva, the sanctuary is characterized by its southern dry mixed deciduous and southern thorn forest vegetation. The flora predominantly includes Tamarind, Neem, Eucalyptus, Acacia, Agave, and Khair trees. In addition to its diverse plant life, the sanctuary is home to a variety of fauna, including large animals like Sambar Deer,

Blackbucks, Muntjac, Chital, wild boar, and peacocks, as well as small carnivores such as hyenas, foxes, and porcupines.

- On June 5, 2024, coinciding with World Environment Day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi set a target for India to plant over 140 crore saplings by March 2025, part of the #Plant4Mother campaign that encouraged individuals to plant trees in honor of their mothers or children. In response, the Karnataka Forest Department directed officials to tag all saplings planted under various schemes to this initiative, yet the state had only managed to plant 42 lakh of the targeted four crore by the end of December. The initiative aims to combat land degradation and promote tree planting, but has received criticism for its execution and lack of additional funding from the central government, with concerns over potential duplication in sapling counts. Currently, Karnataka has tagged 1.56 crore saplings on the official website merilife.nic.in, but faces challenges in meeting the ambitious goals due to limited nursery output and insufficient prior communication. Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre emphasized that the state has been proactive in planting saplings without central assistance, underscoring the need for the Union government to allocate support for such environmental initiatives.
- India has reached a significant milestone in its floriculture sector by successfully exporting Anthurium flowers from Mizoram to Singapore for the first time. Anthurium, a tropical flowering plant prized for its ornamental appeal and air-purifying qualities, thrives indoors and effectively removes toxins such as formaldehyde, ammonia, toluene, xylene, and allergens from the air. Notably, it was included in NASA's list of air-purifying plants due to its capacity to enhance indoor air quality. This achievement is facilitated by the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA), a statutory body under the Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Government of India, which is dedicated to promoting and developing exports of agricultural and processed food products and facilitating market linkages for Indian agricultural products globally.
- In a recent discovery, researchers recently identified a new species of freshwater algae named 'Sheathia rosemalayensis', in Rosemala, located in Kollam district, Kerala.
- Scientists have recently discovered dozens of new species on the newly exposed seafloor after the A-84 iceberg broke away from the George VI Ice Shelf on January 13, 2025. Ice shelves are floating masses of glacial ice that extend over the sea and are fed by tributary glaciers. The key ice sheets in Antarctica and Greenland hold two-thirds of Earth's freshwater, with the West Antarctic Ice Sheet being one of the largest. These ice sheets play a significant role in global sea-level changes—when they gain mass, sea levels fall, and when they lose mass, sea levels rise. The discovery under the George VI Ice Shelf was made as part of Challenger 150, a UNESCO-endorsed global deep-sea research initiative. Using the ROV SuBastian, scientists explored the seabed 1,300 meters deep, uncovering a diverse ecosystem that includes icfish, giant sea spiders, corals, sponges, and octopi. Among the key findings were previously unknown marine species and the giant phantom jelly, which can grow up to one meter wide. Despite being cut off from surface nutrients for centuries, life thrives beneath the ice, possibly due to ocean currents or glacial meltwater transporting essential nutrients. The George VI Ice Shelf, covering 24,000 sq. km, is the second-largest in the region and lies between Alexander Island and the Antarctic Peninsula. Unlike most ice shelves, it is laterally constrained between landmasses rather than freely flowing into the ocean. The region experiences a mean annual air temperature of -9°C, which is a critical threshold beyond which ice shelves become prone to collapse.
- Farakka Barrage, commissioned in 1975 and marking its 50th anniversary in 2025, is located on the Ganga River in Murshidabad, West Bengal, near the Bangladesh border. Built at a cost of ₹130 crores over 12 years, it diverts 40,000 cusecs of water into the Farakka Feeder Canal to flush silt from the Bhagirathi-Hooghly River, ensuring smooth navigation for Kolkata Port. India and Bangladesh have signed multiple agreements over Ganga water sharing, including the 1977 Farakka Agreement and the 1996 Ganga Water Treaty. The Hooghly River, a 260 km-long distributary of the Ganges, is formed when the Ganga splits in Murshidabad, with one branch becoming the Padma River in Bangladesh and the other flowing through West Bengal as the Hooghly. The river, heavily silted above Kolkata, receives water from the Farakka Feeder Canal and tributaries like Haldi, Ajay, Damodar, and Rupnarayan. Key cities along its course include

Jiaganj, Murshidabad, Kolkata, and Howrah, with iconic bridges such as Howrah Bridge and Bally Bridge facilitating connectivity.

- The number of big cats in the Nagarjuna Sagar-Srisailem Tiger Reserve (NSTR) in the Nallamala forest area has increased from 74 in 2023 to 76 in 2024, as per the Annual Report on Status of Tigers, Prey and Other Mammals-2024.
- A strong 6.7 magnitude earthquake recently struck off New Zealand's South Island, the larger and southernmost of the country's two principal islands located in the southwestern Pacific Ocean. Separated from the North Island by Cook Strait and from Stewart Island by Foveaux Strait, South Island is characterized by its mountainous terrain, with nearly three-quarters of the island occupied by the Southern Alps, a central mountain chain that runs southwest to northeast and culminates at Mount Cook (3,754 meters). These Alps create a distinct division between the narrow coastal strip of the Westland Plain to the west and the broad Canterbury Plains to the east. The southwest region is home to Fiordland National Park, known for its numerous coastal fjords and high lakes, which is part of the UNESCO World Heritage site designated in 1990 as Te Wāhipounamu (South West New Zealand). Notable lakes in the area include Lake Tekapo, Lake Wakatipu, and Lake Pukaki, while major urban centers such as Christchurch, Dunedin, and Invercargill contribute to the island's demographic landscape.
- Debrigarh Wildlife Sanctuary in Odisha held the inaugural 'Indian Bison Fest' to promote awareness about conservation and the ecological importance of the sanctuary. Established in 1985 and located near the Hirakud dam, the sanctuary is significant for its association with freedom fighter Veer Surendra Sai. It features dry deciduous mixed forests and is home to various wildlife, including the Indian Bison (Gaur), which is one of the largest wild cattle species. With around 85% of the global population of 13,000 to 30,000 bisons in India, they predominantly inhabit forested hills and grasslands across the country. The Indian Bison is classified as 'Vulnerable' by the IUCN and is protected under various laws, including the Wild Life Protection Act.
- A new species of snakehead, named *Channa nachi*, was recently discovered in Meghalaya.
- The Tamil Nadu government has recently designated the Kasampatty Sacred Grove, also known as Veera Kovil Sacred Grove, as a Biodiversity Heritage Site under the Biological Diversity Act of 2002. Located in Kasampatty village of Dindigul District, this revered ecological and cultural site spans 4.97 hectares near the Alagarmalai Reserve Forest and is surrounded by lush mango plantations, enhancing its natural beauty and fertility. The grove is home to an impressive variety of species, including 48 plant species, 22 shrubs, 21 lianas (woody vines), and 29 herbs, as well as over 12 bird species, along with small mammals, reptiles, and numerous insects, highlighting its genetic richness. Biodiversity Heritage Sites (BHS) are unique ecosystems characterized by rich biodiversity, including wild and domesticated species, high endemism, and the presence of rare and threatened species, designated by state governments in consultation with local bodies. The primary aim of declaring BHS is to conserve these important sites while enhancing the quality of life for local communities without imposing restrictions on their practices, as seen in Kasampatty Grove, which becomes the state's second BHS after the Nallur Tamarind Grove in Karnataka, designated as India's first BHS in 2007.
- The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has recently issued a warning regarding the risk of extinction faced by Frankincense-producing trees, specifically the *Boswellia* species, with five species native to Socotra Island (Yemen) moving from Vulnerable to Endangered status, one species now classified as Critically Endangered, and three others assessed as Critically Endangered for the first time. Frankincense, an aromatic resin derived from the *Boswellia* genus, has historically been valued for its use in incense, perfumes, and traditional medicine, and holds cultural significance as one of the three gifts (Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh) presented to Jesus by the Magi, as mentioned in the Bible.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

- India's first space-based solar mission, Aditya-L1, has made a groundbreaking observation by capturing the first-ever image of a solar flare 'kernel', marking a major step in understanding the Sun's activity. The Solar Ultraviolet Imaging Telescope (SUIT) payload observed this phenomenon in the photosphere and chromosphere, shedding light on how solar energy spreads across different atmospheric layers. On February 22, 2025, SUIT detected an X6.3-class solar flare in the Near Ultraviolet (NUV) range (200-400 nm), an unprecedented achievement. The findings confirm that flare energy deposition in the lower solar atmosphere directly influences temperature changes in the corona, supporting existing theories and refining solar physics models. These insights help scientists understand how solar flares impact space weather and Earth's magnetosphere. Aditya-L1, launched on September 2, 2023, was placed in a halo orbit around the Earth-Sun Lagrange Point (L1) on January 6, 2024, allowing it to continuously monitor solar activity.
- On March 2, 2025, Firefly Aerospace's Blue Ghost spacecraft made history as the second private mission—and the first to land upright—on the Moon near Mons Latreille in Mare Crisium, after a 2.8 million-mile journey launched January 15 on a SpaceX Falcon 9. Part of NASA's Artemis program, it carries 10 instruments, including a soil analyzer, to capture eclipse imagery on March 14, showcasing private space tech advancements. Named "Ghost Riders in the Sky," the mission is part of a Nasa-industry partnership aimed at reducing costs and supporting Artemis.
- A high-powered committee tasked with enhancing the Indian Air Force's (IAF) capabilities has delivered its report to Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, outlining key focus areas for modernization. These include urgently addressing the IAF's fighter jet shortage, with a goal of inducting 35-40 new jets annually, and promoting self-reliance in aerospace through increased indigenization and private sector collaboration. The report also emphasizes the development of future fighter jets like the LCA-Mk2 and AMCA. The Defence Minister has directed for the timely implementation of these recommendations, with HAL committing to producing 24 Tejas Mk-1A jets next year. The committee was chaired by Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh.
- NASA's SPHEREx mission, launching on March 4th aboard a SpaceX Falcon 9, aims to explore the universe's origins and search for water reservoirs in the Milky Way. This megaphone-shaped observatory will create a 3D map of over 450 million galaxies and 100 million stars in 102 colors, providing insights into cosmic inflation and the distribution of water, a key ingredient for life. The mission will also gather data on the light emitted from the space between galaxies, furthering our understanding of the universe's evolution. Additionally, the launch will include satellites for the PUNCH mission, focused on observing the sun's corona and solar wind to enhance space weather predictions.
- The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) announced the successful high-altitude trial of an indigenous integrated life support system (ILSS) for the light combat aircraft (LCA) Tejas. The On-Board Oxygen Generating System-based ILSS is designed to manage breathable oxygen for aircrew during flight, eliminating the need for traditional liquid oxygen cylinder-based systems, it stated. The trial was carried out by the Defence Bio-Engineering & Electro Medical Laboratory, a lab under the DRDO.
- A recent study suggests Mars' red color may come from ferrihydrite, an iron-rich nanomineral. Composed of 20% FeO₄ and 80% FeO₆, it forms through rapid oxidation and hydrolysis, acting as an early corrosion product of iron before turning into stable minerals like goethite and hematite. Found in soils, weathered rocks, springs, and acid mine runoff, it's produced by iron-metabolizing bacteria (e.g., Gallionella ferruginea) and traps water while protecting organic molecules. It's common in cool, moist soils and pre-terrestrial meteorite weathering.
- Neurobiologists at the National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS-TIFR), led by Professor Raghu Padinjat, have identified a critical protein called Extended synaptotagmin (Esys), whose dysfunction could potentially trigger neurodegenerative diseases. Utilizing a Drosophila model, the study published in the Journal of Cell Biology reveals that Esys is located near the cell membrane at the membrane contact site (MCS), where the plasma membrane (PM) meets the endoplasmic reticulum (ER). The PM serves as the cell's outer boundary, regulating material entry and communication, while the ER forms a network of internal membranes. This MCS allows for vital intracellular signaling and the transport of essential molecules like lipids and calcium. Although over 20 proteins have been identified at these sites, the specific

roles and significance of these proteins remain under-explored. The research emphasizes the critical role of calcium in photoreceptors, where it encodes information about light intensity, influencing lipid transfer activities at the MCS. Importantly, the newly identified protein Esyt contains a C2 domain that binds to calcium; without this capability, the cell cannot properly adjust its MCS functions in response to light, signaling a potential link to cellular health and neurodegenerative conditions.

- ISRO recently conducted a successful hot test on the semi-cryogenic engine (SE2000), marking significant progress toward finalizing the essential cryogenic stage for future heavy-lift launch vehicles. The semi-cryogenic engine, which employs liquid oxygen (LOX) as the oxidizer and refined kerosene (RP-1) as fuel, is designed to deliver a thrust of 2000 kN. This engine offers numerous advantages over traditional cryogenic engines, including a higher density impulse that enhances performance, cost-effectiveness due to the simpler handling of kerosene compared to liquid hydrogen, and operational efficiency since kerosene can be stored at ambient temperatures. The development of the SE2000 is expected to increase the payload capacity of existing ISRO launch vehicles, such as the LVM3, and be utilized in future projects like the Next Generation Launch Vehicle (NGLV). Unlike cryogenic engines that rely on liquid hydrogen, semi-cryogenic engines innovatively utilize refined kerosene, which can be more efficiently managed and stored.
- India has signed a contract worth over Rs 2,100 crore (approximately \$248 million) with Russia's Rosoboronexport for the supply of 1,000 horsepower engines for T-72 tanks, aiming to enhance the performance of these aging military assets used by the Indian Army. The deal, which involves the procurement of engines in fully formed, completely knocked down, and semi-knocked down conditions, also includes technology transfer to Armoured Vehicles Nigam Limited in Avadi for integration and licensed production of the engines, supporting the "Make in India" initiative. Currently, the Indian Army's T-72 fleet is equipped with a 780 HP engine, and the new 1,000 HP engines will significantly improve their battlefield mobility and offensive capabilities. This contract follows a recent approval from the Defence Ministry for overhauling both T-72 and T-90 tanks, with plans to export upgraded T-72s to markets in Asia and Africa. India operates over 2,400 T-72 tanks and 1,200 T-90 tanks, in addition to a small number of indigenous Arjun main battle tanks.
- India's latest beyond-visual-range (BVR) air-to-air missile, Astra MK-III, has been officially renamed 'Gandiva', inspired by Arjuna's legendary bow from the Mahabharata. Developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), Gandiva is designed to enhance India's aerial combat capabilities. It will be deployed on Sukhoi Su-30MKI and LCA Tejas fighter jets, placing India among the few nations with long-range BVR missile technology. The missile has an impressive range of 340 km (at 20 km altitude) and 190 km (at 8 km altitude) with a dual-fuel ducted ramjet engine, ensuring greater speed and fuel efficiency. It can engage highly maneuverable targets at speeds of Mach 2.0 to 3.6 and with an attack angle of up to 20 degrees. Capable of neutralizing fighter jets, bombers, AWACS, and refueling aircraft, Gandiva strengthens India's Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiative and significantly boosts the Indian Air Force's combat superiority.
- India's indigenous Tejas Light Combat Aircraft Mk-1 has successfully test-fired the Astra beyond visual range missile, destroying a flying target. The test, conducted from Chandipur in Odisha, showcased the missile's ability to directly hit targets from a distance of up to 100 km. Developed by DRDO, the Astra missile boasts advanced guidance and navigation capabilities, ensuring accurate target destruction. This milestone marks a significant step towards the induction of the LCA AF Mk-1A variant, with all subsystems performing flawlessly during the test.
- Scientists in Spain have discovered fossilized facial bones estimated to be between 1.1 and 1.4 million years old at the Sima del Elefante cave site, potentially representing a new species in the human evolutionary lineage. The fossils, which constitute about 80 percent of the left side of an adult's midface, are among the oldest human fossils found in Europe. Nicknamed "Pink," the fossils exhibit a more primitive facial anatomy compared to Homo antecessor, a species that lived around 850,000 years ago. Pink's features include a more projected midface and some similarities to Homo erectus, the earliest known human species to migrate out of Africa. While the fossils are not complete enough to definitively identify Pink as a new species, researchers have provisionally named it Homo affinis erectus.

- POLG disease is a rare genetic mitochondrial disorder that severely impairs the body's ability to produce energy, leading to multiple organ dysfunction, especially affecting the brain, nerves, muscles, and liver. It can cause a range of symptoms from mild to severe, including muscle weakness, vision problems, epilepsy, and liver failure, often rendering individuals bedridden. The disease arises from mutations in the POLG and POLG2 genes, which are essential for mitochondrial DNA replication. Currently, there is no cure, and treatment focuses on managing symptoms and improving the quality of life for affected individuals. Recently, the disease claimed the life of 22-year-old Prince Frederik of Luxembourg.
- The Pratibimb Module, a Geographic Information System (GIS)-based software, has significantly contributed to cybercrime investigations, as recently reported in the Lok Sabha. It has led to the arrest of 6,046 accused, identified 17,185 linkages, and facilitated 36,296 cyber investigation assistance requests. Developed by the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) under the Union Home Ministry, its primary objective is to assist law enforcement agencies (LEAs) in real-time mapping of cybercriminals and dismantling cybercrime networks. The module projects mobile numbers involved in cybercrimes onto a GIS map, enabling real-time tracking and improving coordination between state and central authorities. The Samanvaya Platform, launched by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), further enhances cybercrime control by providing data-sharing, analytics, and tracking criminals across different States/UTs. The I4C, headquartered in New Delhi, is dedicated to cybercrime prevention and strengthening cooperation among LEAs across India.
- Scientists have confirmed the existence of Plastic Ice VII, an exotic phase of ice that forms under extreme conditions. This discovery, led by Livia Bove from Sorbonne University, enhances our understanding of water in extreme planetary environments. Unlike ordinary ice, Plastic Ice VII allows water molecules to rotate freely within a rigid crystalline structure. First predicted in 2008, its existence was confirmed through advanced neutron-scattering experiments at the Institut Laue-Langevin in France. This phase forms at pressures exceeding three gigapascals (GPa) (30,000 times Earth's atmospheric pressure) and temperatures above 450 Kelvin (177°C). Researchers used quasi-elastic neutron scattering (QENS) and diamond-anvil cells to study high-pressure samples, revealing that the molecules within Plastic Ice VII rotate in specific, preferred directions while maintaining a crystalline structure. The discovery has significant implications for planetary science, particularly in understanding how water behaves in extreme conditions on celestial bodies like the icy moons of Jupiter and Saturn (Callisto, Ganymede, and Titan). This research could also help explore the potential for life in extreme environments, understand planetary formation, and develop new materials based on extreme pressure conditions.
- China has recently deployed a powerful Large Phased Array Radar (LPR) in Yunnan province, near the China-Myanmar border. This radar has a surveillance range exceeding 5,000 km, enabling China to monitor extensive areas of the Indian Ocean and deep into Indian territory. It can detect and track ballistic missile launches in real-time using electronically controlled antennas instead of mechanical rotation, allowing for instant scanning and high-precision tracking of multiple targets. LPR plays a crucial role in early warning systems and air defense networks. Globally, only China, the US, and Russia possess LPR technology. China's LPR is often compared to the US PAVE PAWS (Precision Acquisition Vehicle Entry Phased Array Warning System), a Cold War-era radar with a detection range of 5,600 km, capable of tracking multiple projectiles, including submarine-launched ballistic missiles. India has strategic concerns about this development, as the Yunnan-based LPR can monitor Indian missile tests from Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam Island, where critical weapons like the Agni-V intercontinental ballistic missile and K-4 submarine-launched missile are tested. By capturing crucial missile trajectory data, China can analyze and develop countermeasures, gaining a strategic advantage over India.
- Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw announced plans to create a billion-dollar fund for the creators' economy as part of the World Audio-Visual and Entertainment Summit (WAVES) 2025. The summit, scheduled for May 1-4 in Mumbai, aims to provide a platform for creators to produce high-value content. Additionally, the government has allocated Rs 391 crore for the Indian Institute of Creative Technology, which will focus on nurturing creative talent in India. The 'Create in India Challenge' received over 25 lakh submissions, with 1,000 participants selected to feature in the finals during the WAVES summit.

- The Indian government has operationalized “hubs” in four leading institutions to advance quantum technology, as revealed in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday. Uttar Pradesh leads funding with ₹28.7 crore allocated for 2024-25 by the Department of Science and Technology (DST), followed by Karnataka at ₹3.7 crore, Maharashtra at ₹3.34 crore, Delhi at ₹2.4 crore, and Tamil Nadu at ₹1.7 crore. The National Quantum Mission (NQM), approved by the Union Cabinet in April 2023 with a budget of ₹6,003.65 crore over eight years, has established four Thematic Hubs (T-Hubs) focusing on quantum computing, communication, sensing, and materials. These hubs involve 14 technical groups across 17 States and two Union Territories, aiming to foster technology development, human resource training, entrepreneurship, and international collaborations, according to Union Minister Jitendra Singh. The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) in Kanpur will serve as the management coordinating center, while the hubs will be located at the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru, IIT-Bombay, IIT-Delhi, and IIT-Madras, with an expected allocation of about ₹1,500 crore in the coming financial year.
- ISRO successfully undocked the SpaDeX satellites on March 14, 2024, at 9:20 a.m. in a 460 km circular orbit with a 45-degree inclination. Before undocking, the docked satellites' in-orbit performance was analyzed, and ground stations in Bengaluru, Lucknow, and Mauritius monitored the operations. The undocking followed extensive ground simulations and analysis. This mission marked a significant technological achievement, as ISRO successfully demonstrated rendezvous, docking, and undocking, making India the fourth country after the U.S., Russia, and China to achieve docking technology. The SpaDeX mission, launched aboard PSLV C60 on December 30, 2023, consists of two satellites, SDX01 (Chaser) and SDX02 (Target), which successfully docked on January 16, 2024. The mission aims to develop and demonstrate spacecraft rendezvous, docking, and undocking technologies crucial for future Indian space missions, such as manned lunar missions, sample return missions, and the development of an Indian Space Station. Additionally, the mission showcases electric power transfer between docked spacecraft for applications in in-space robotics, composite spacecraft control, and payload operations post-undocking.
- Astronauts Butch Wilmore and Sunita Williams, stranded on the International Space Station for over nine months, are closer to returning home after a replacement crew docked with the orbital outpost in a SpaceX Crew Dragon. The duo, stuck since June due to propulsion issues with the Boeing Starliner spacecraft, welcomed the new crew with hugs in zero gravity, marking a "wonderful day" according to Williams.
- The Union Minister of Science and Technology recently inaugurated the permanent campus of the North East Center for Technology Application and Reach (NECTAR) in Mawdiangdiang, Shillong. Established in 2012 by merging the National Mission for Bamboo Application and the Mission for Geospatial Applications, NECTAR operates as an autonomous society under the Department of Science & Technology, Government of India. Its mission is to leverage frontier technologies to address development needs in the northeastern region, focusing on areas such as biodiversity, watershed management, telemedicine, and infrastructure planning. NECTAR will serve as a partnership institution that provides technology assistance to state governments, with an emphasis on application development and skill enhancement using local resources. Currently, NECTAR operates from the Survey of India Campus in Shillong, with branch offices in Delhi and Agartala.
- Researchers have achieved a groundbreaking advancement by successfully transforming light into a "supersolid," a unique state of matter characterized by its combination of crystalline structure and liquid-like movement without viscosity. Supersolids, which typically require extremely low temperatures near absolute zero to form, exhibit a distinct behavior where particles condense into an organized lattice while still being able to change direction and density based on their interactions. This transformation occurs as the particles reach their lowest energy state, allowing quantum mechanics to become the primary influence on the material's behavior, rather than thermal effects.
- A SpaceX Crew Dragon spacecraft, Freedom, carrying astronauts Butch Wilmore, Sunita Williams, Nick Hague, and Aleksandr Gorbunov, safely splashed down in the Gulf of Mexico off Florida's coast. The capsule deployed parachutes at 5:57 p.m. (0327 IST) for a smooth water landing, prompting cheers from ground teams as fast boats performed safety checks before a recovery vessel transported the crew to Houston for a 45-day rehabilitation program. Originally assigned to Boeing's Starliner for a short test flight

in June 2023, Wilmore and Williams were forced to extend their stay aboard the International Space Station (ISS) for 286 days due to propulsion issues, later transitioning to NASA's SpaceX Crew-9 mission. Their return followed the arrival of Crew-10, which relieved them at the ISS. Despite the extended duration, their mission ranks only sixth among U.S. single-mission records, with Frank Rubio holding the longest U.S. stay (371 days) and Valeri Polyakov retaining the world record at 437 days. The astronauts' prolonged stay gained political and public attention, highlighting the challenges and achievements of NASA-SpaceX collaboration in advancing safe space travel.

- Eli Lilly and Co has begun selling its blockbuster weight-loss and diabetes drug Mounjaro in India, pipping rivals in a country that has the world's third-largest number of obese people. The American drugmaker will roll out tirzepatide, sold under the brand name Mounjaro, in single-dose vials after receiving the marketing approval from the India's Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation
- Bengaluru-based space mobility company Bellatrix Aerospace and Astroscale Japan have signed a memorandum of understanding. The collaboration aims to drive active debris removal, satellite servicing, and sustainable in-orbit mobility, contributing to a cleaner and safer space environment. Since its first successful launch in March 2021, Astroscale has showcased advanced proximity and docking operations technologies through its ELSA-d and ADRAS-J missions. Its spacecraft have been selected for groundbreaking projects with major space agencies and organisations, including JAXA, the U.S. Space Force, the European Space Agency, the U.K. Space Agency, and Eutelsat OneWeb.
- A "spoofing attack" is a cyberattack where fake data is presented as coming from a trusted source to deceive systems or users. Types of spoofing include GPS spoofing, IP spoofing (often used in Distributed Denial of Service attacks), SMS spoofing, and caller ID spoofing, which make messages or calls appear as if they are from a different number. GPS spoofing specifically involves sending counterfeit radio signals to mislead GPS devices about their true location, which can lead to incorrect navigation and potentially dangerous situations. This attack exploits the vulnerabilities of the GPS system, as the weak signals from satellites can be easily overshadowed by stronger, fake signals, tricking receivers into accepting the counterfeit data as legitimate and resulting in inaccurate location information.
- The Serbian government has come under fire for allegedly deploying a banned 'sonic weapon' to disperse protesters in Belgrade, raising concerns about the use of such controversial technology. Sonic weapons, also known as acoustic weapons, are designed to emit loud or painful sounds over long distances, utilizing either audible or inaudible sound waves to disrupt, disorient, or incapacitate individuals. These devices, which first gained traction for military and crowd control purposes and were notably employed by the U.S. military in Iraq in 2004, can incorporate hundreds of transducers to concentrate and amplify sound directed at specific targets. They allow authorities to manipulate frequency, volume, and duration, resulting in extreme discomfort and disorientation for those affected. Notable types of sonic weapons include the Long-Range Acoustic Device (LRAD), capable of projecting sound over 8,900 meters at 160 decibels, leading to various adverse effects like ear pain and nausea, and the Mosquito Device, which targets younger individuals with high-pitched sounds to deter loitering. Additionally, infrasonic weapons emit low-frequency sounds that can physically harm and confuse, although they remain under research due to their potential to induce severe physiological effects.
- Bengaluru's Indian Institute of Science (IISc) is developing an AI-powered model to predict heat-stress levels in Karnataka. This system, created by AI & Robotics Technology Park (ARTPARK), IISc, provides taluk-level forecasts with improved accuracy for high-temperature events. The AI model can generate heat-stress predictions up to 10 days in advance, offering insights into maximum temperature distribution, temperature anomalies, daily variations, thermal comfort, and heat risk index. Compared to traditional forecasting systems, it delivers faster forecasts using fewer computational resources, provides higher spatial accuracy (sub-district vs. district level), and extends the prediction window from 3-5 days to 10-14 days. Currently in the testing phase, researchers are collaborating with Karnataka State Natural Disaster Monitoring Centre (KSNDMC), the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD), and the State Health and Family Welfare Department to refine the model. The impact of this system on public health and climate action is significant, as heat stress can cause fatigue, dehydration, dizziness, chest pain, and muscle cramps, and many climate action plans lack heat-stress mitigation strategies. AI-powered predictions can

assist authorities in managing medical resources, improving healthcare facilities in vulnerable areas, and issuing advisories for high-risk groups such as migrant workers, tourists, and the elderly.

- 'Tavasya,' the final of four Krivak-class stealth frigates, was launched at Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL) on March 22, 2025. It is the second ship built at GSL under a technology transfer agreement with Russia. The Krivak-class stealth frigates were part of an Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA) signed between India and Russia in October 2016 for four additional ships. Under this agreement, two frigates were directly imported from Russia, while two were built in India at GSL. The frigates are 124.8 meters long, 15.2 meters wide, have a draught of 4.5 meters, and a displacement of 3,600 tonnes, with a maximum speed of 28 knots. They are powered by Zorya-Mashproekt engines from Ukraine. The first Indian-made ship under this agreement, Triput, was launched in July 2024 and is expected to be delivered in 2026. The first Russian-made ship, Tushil, was commissioned on December 9, 2024, and is now based in Karwar. The second Russian-manufactured frigate, Tamal, is undergoing final trials and is expected to be commissioned in June 2025. With Tavasya expected to be the last warship built under a foreign license, India is now shifting toward indigenous warship construction.
- A groundbreaking national trial, ICRA-2, has been launched by the Indian Council of Medical Research's Centre for Advanced Research to test a low-cost, multi-pronged intervention for preventing cardiovascular diseases such as coronary heart disease and strokes. Led by Dr. Denis Xavier, the three-year trial will be conducted at 40 sites across India, evaluating the efficacy of a fixed-dose combination drug, mobile health technology, and a non-physician health worker-led strategy, with the goal of developing a low-cost model for cardiovascular disease treatment and prevention in India and other low- and middle-income countries.
- Isar Aerospace, a private European aerospace company, is set to launch its orbital launch vehicle, Spectrum, from Norway, marking the rocket's first test flight, with the goal of collecting data and experience, and considering a 30-second flight a success, ahead of plans to build up to 40 launch vehicles per year.
- The European Space Agency's Euclid mission has released its first batch of survey data, showcasing a preview of its deep fields. Named after the ancient Greek mathematician known for his contributions to geometry, Euclid is part of ESA's Cosmic Vision Programme, designed to explore the universe's origins, components, and fundamental laws. Launched aboard a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket, the telescope has a minimum operational lifespan of six years and operates from 5 million kilometers above Earth at the stable Lagrange Point 2 (L2), measuring 7 meters in height and 3.7 meters in diameter, with image quality four times sharper than ground-based telescopes. Its scientific objectives include investigating the accelerating expansion of the universe attributed to dark energy, studying dark matter distributions through galaxy evolution, and mapping the large-scale structure of the universe in 3D to comprehend the effects of gravity and cosmic expansion. Equipped with a Visible-Wavelength Camera (VIS) to capture high-resolution images and detect distortions from gravitational lensing, and a Near-Infrared Spectrometer and Photometer (NISIP) to measure galaxy movements, Euclid aims to survey 5 billion galaxies over its mission, with a significant focus on the Deep Field South region containing 26 million galaxies, some over 5 billion light-years away. The first cosmology data release is anticipated in October 2026.
- The Vertically-Launched Short-Range Surface-to-Air Missile (VLSRSAM) is a ship-borne missile system developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) for the Indian Navy to counter multiple aerial threats at short ranges. It is capable of neutralizing aircraft, helicopters, drones, and incoming missiles. Weighing approximately 170 kg, the missile uses solid propellant propulsion and can reach speeds of up to Mach 4.5, with an altitude coverage of up to 16 km. The missile employs a fibre-optic gyroscope-based inertial guidance system for stability during the mid-course phase and switches to active radar homing in the terminal phase for precise target engagement, even at low altitudes. Strategically, VLSRSAM enhances naval defence by offering high reliability and accuracy against fast-moving aerial threats. As a force multiplier, it strengthens the Indian Navy's air defence capabilities, particularly in safeguarding high-value maritime assets.
- Indian scientists have created a new smartphone-based diagnostic technique to quickly determine whether a snakebite victim has been bitten by a venomous or non-venomous snake, with results available within four hours. The method, developed by researchers from Tezpur University and the Institute of

Advanced Study in Science and Technology, focuses on the five most dangerous snakes in India: the Indian cobra, Common krait, Russell's viper, Saw-scaled viper, and Indian monocled cobra. Current assessments in rural clinics rely heavily on the experience of medical staff, as there are no commercial testing kits available. The new technique utilizes a minor blood test that identifies venomous bites and estimates venom levels for appropriate anti-venom dosing, taking only 10-15 minutes for results. This tool is particularly crucial, given that around 46,900 deaths occur annually from snakebites in India. The method involves a colorimetric assay that changes color based on the presence of venom, and researchers are working on developing a user-friendly smartphone application for broader accessibility. A patent for this innovative technique has already been filed.

- The Indian Institute of Science's I3D Lab, led by Prof. Pradipta Biswas, showcased innovative technologies at Rhapsody 3.0, notably an AI-powered mixed-reality rover-drone system for applications like surveillance and disaster response, featuring voice-command control and AI-powered object detection. This system is part of ongoing research into Naturalistic Human-Robot Interaction, managing multiple robotic agents and leading to several accepted research papers in notable conferences. Additionally, the lab revealed a VR spacecraft simulator, designed in collaboration with Isro's astronaut-designate, that enhances emergency manual deorbiting training by offering a comprehensive bottom-view perspective. The simulator also functions as a modular testing platform for human-machine interfaces and is set to expand its capabilities for spacecraft docking, flight simulation, and Virtual Pilot Assistance system
- GE Aerospace has begun delivering F404-IN20 jet engines to Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) for the Tejas LCA Mk1A fighter jets after a delay. The Tejas LCA Mk1A is an upgraded variant of India's indigenous Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas, developed by HAL. This variant features over 40 enhancements to improve combat effectiveness, survivability, and operational efficiency. Some key upgrades include advanced avionics with AESA radars (Israeli EL/M-2052 and India's Uttam AESA Radar), an Enhanced Electronic Warfare Suite (UEWS) with an Advanced Self-Protection Jammer Pod, an upgraded Digital Fly-by-Wire System, and enhanced weapons capability with nine hardpoints capable of carrying BVR missiles, Air-to-Air, and Air-to-Ground missiles. The F404-IN20 jet engine, manufactured by GE Aerospace, is a high-thrust variant selected for Tejas in 2004, featuring higher-flow fans, single-crystal turbine blades for durability, and specialized components for the Indian Air Force (IAF). This engine helped Tejas achieve Mach 1.1 during its first test flight in 2008.

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INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

- The World Health Organization celebrated the 20th anniversary of its Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC), the first international treaty aimed at curbing the global tobacco epidemic. Enacted in 2005 with 181 current parties, including India since 2004, it provides a comprehensive framework for tobacco control measures at all levels. This includes protecting public health policies from tobacco industry influence, implementing tax measures to reduce demand, safeguarding people from secondhand smoke, and regulating tobacco product contents, disclosures, packaging, and labeling.
- India has launched the Cities Coalition for Circularity (C-3), a multi-nation alliance aimed at city-to-city collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and private sector partnerships for sustainable urban development. The initiative focuses on waste management and resource efficiency in the Asia-Pacific region. A key aspect of the initiative is promoting a circular economy through the 3R principles – Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, along with the Pro-Planet People (P3) approach. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision for C-3 emphasizes global cooperation and the formation of a working group to finalize coalition structure and operations. At the Jaipur launch event, the CITIIS 2.0 MoU was signed, and ₹1,800 crore was allocated to benefit 18 cities across 14 states, with the goal of creating lighthouse projects for urban sustainability. The initiative aligns with global efforts like the Regional 3R & Circular Economy Forum (established in 2009) and the Hanoi 3R Declaration (2013-2023), which set 33 voluntary goals for a resource-efficient circular economy to combat rapid economic growth, resource depletion, and rising waste generation.

- Sweden has taken a key step in strengthening its air force's long-range strike capabilities by selecting the Taurus KEPD-350 air-launched cruise missile for integration with its Gripen fighter jets.
- Mission 300 is a newly launched initiative led by the World Bank and the African Development Bank (AfDB), in collaboration with key global partners such as the Rockefeller Foundation, Global Energy Alliance for People and Planet (GEAPP), Sustainable Energy for All (SE4ALL), and the Energy Sector Management Assistance Program (ESMAP). The initiative aims to provide electricity access to 300 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa by 2030 by accelerating electrification while ensuring a transition to cleaner and diversified energy sources that support economic growth and job creation. The key components of Mission 300 include expanding the electricity grid in underserved areas, deploying mini-grids and standalone solar systems to power remote communities, and actively involving local communities in project design and implementation to ensure sustainability and long-term impact. The initiative is expected to deliver reliable, sustainable, and affordable electricity that will benefit businesses, schools, hospitals, and overall economic development across the continent.
- Pakistan has discovered vast gold reserves worth approximately Rs 80,000 crore in the Indus River bed, potentially boosting the country's struggling economy
- Union Women and Child Development Minister Annpurna Devi will lead India's delegation at the 69th session of the Commission on the Status of Women at the United Nations headquarters in New York. The session will focus on global progress in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women, coinciding with the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.
- Lithuania has recently withdrawn from the Convention on Cluster Munitions, which bans cluster bombs, citing security concerns related to neighboring Russia, a decision criticized by human rights groups. The Convention, adopted in 2008 and effective since 2010, includes over 100 member states and aims to prohibit the use, production, transfer, and stockpiling of cluster munitions due to their harmful impact on civilians. Currently, it has 112 members and 12 signatories pending ratification, while countries like India, the U.S., Russia, China, Ukraine, and Israel have not signed it due to military concerns. The Convention seeks to mitigate the humanitarian consequences of such munitions and supports international peace, security, human rights, and humanitarian law.
- On March 6, US President Donald Trump signed an executive order to establish a strategic Bitcoin reserve, marking a significant shift in US financial policy. Bitcoin, often viewed as a hedge against inflation due to its fixed supply, is compared to gold as a store of value outside the traditional financial system. While central banks stockpile gold and US dollars, only El Salvador has officially created a strategic cryptocurrency reserve. Under Trump's plan, the US will retain 200,000 Bitcoin, mostly seized from criminal and civil cases, and will not sell it, treating it as a digital Fort Knox. A full audit of the government's Bitcoin holdings has been ordered, as previous holdings were not fully accounted for. Trump also authorized the Treasury and Commerce Departments to explore budget-neutral ways to acquire more Bitcoin. The reserve will also include Ethereum (ETH), XRP, Solana (SOL), and Cardano (ADA). The concept of a strategic reserve is not new, as governments stockpile resources like oil, gold, food, and vaccines to ensure stability. Supporters argue that a Bitcoin reserve diversifies US financial holdings, legitimizes cryptocurrencies, and provides an inflation hedge, while critics warn of high volatility, potential losses, and market manipulation risks. Trump's initiative also faces legal and political challenges, as it lacks congressional approval, and some view it as favoritism toward crypto investors.
- Mark Carney elected as Prime Minister of Canada
- The Alawites are a religious sect with roots in Shia Islam, tracing their origins to the 9th and 10th centuries through the teachings of Mohammad ibn Nusayr in Iraq. The name "Alawite" means "follower of Ali," referring to Ali, the cousin and son-in-law of Prophet Mohammad. Their beliefs incorporate elements of Islam, Christianity, and ancient Iranian traditions, including the use of wine in rituals and a belief in reincarnation, with Alawite women generally not wearing headscarves. Historically, the Alawites have faced persecution from various groups, including the Christian Crusaders and the Ottoman Empire. In Syria, Alawites make up about 12% of the population, primarily residing in coastal regions. Their political influence expanded in the 20th century, especially during the French colonial rule, and later solidified when Hafez al-Assad, an Alawite, took power in the 1960s, followed by his son Bashar al-Assad in 2000.

However, despite being in power, the Assad regime also suppressed dissent within its own community. The Arab Spring of the 2010s saw uprisings against the Assad government, which responded with repression, aided by Russian and Iranian support. By 2024, amid conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza that distracted its allies, militant anti-government groups overthrew Assad's rule, forcing him to flee. Although the new government, led by the Sunni militant outfit Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), initially assured the safety of minorities, reports of targeted violence against Alawites have emerged. Over 1,000 people have died in Syria within two days due to clashes between the new government and supporters of the old regime, raising concerns about the Alawite community's future.

- The 12th edition of the India-Kyrgyzstan Joint Special Forces Exercise Khanjar-XII is set to take place in Kyrgyzstan.
- Amid the migration of students from Kerala and the absence of a mechanism to address the challenges being faced by them abroad, the Kerala government has decided to launch an exclusive interactive student migration portal for their safe and secure migration to foreign countries. The interactive student platform to be set up by NoRKA-Roots, a field agency under the Department of Non-Resident Keralites Affairs (NoRKA), with hands-on information on educational institutions in various countries will go live from the next financial year.
- The fourth conference of global intelligence and security chiefs, hosted by India's National Security Adviser Ajit Doval, addressed a range of critical issues including global challenges, intelligence-sharing mechanisms, immigration, and extradition, with 28 participants from around 20 countries, including the U.S., Canada, Australia, and Russia. This meeting precedes the annual Raisina Dialogue, scheduled from March 17 to 19, amid global uncertainties fueled by U.S. policies under President Trump. Key agenda items focused on counterterrorism, Indo-Pacific cooperation, and transnational crimes such as narcotics and terror funding, with a particular emphasis on intelligence-sharing for counterterrorism. Notably, U.S. Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard attended the conference and engaged in discussions with Doval, while Canadian spy chief Daniel Rogers's presence highlighted India's efforts to repair ties with Ottawa following tensions over the Nijjar murder case. Organized by India's Research and Analysis Wing and the National Security Council Secretariat, this conference marks a continuation of collaborative efforts in addressing security concerns in a complex global landscape.
- The Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) was launched by India in November 2019 at the ASEAN-led East Asia Summit (EAS) in Bangkok to promote peace, stability, and security in the Indo-Pacific region. It builds upon the "Security and Growth for All in the Region" (SAGAR) initiative announced by the Prime Minister in 2015 and aims to foster cooperation for a free and open Indo-Pacific while upholding a rules-based regional order. IPOI is a non-treaty-based, voluntary framework that enhances cohesion and integration through shared interests, without creating a new institutional structure, relying instead on the EAS mechanism, which includes ASEAN members and eight dialogue partners. The initiative is structured around seven pillars, each led by different nations: Maritime Security (India & UK), Maritime Ecology (Australia & Thailand), Maritime Resources (France & Indonesia), Capacity Building & Resource Sharing (Germany), Disaster Risk Reduction & Management (India & Bangladesh), Science, Technology & Academic Cooperation (Italy & Singapore), and Trade, Connectivity & Maritime Transport (Japan & US). Recently, New Zealand joined the initiative, reinforcing its commitment to regional maritime governance and cooperation.
- Southern Africa's desert nation of Namibia swore in its first woman President after Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah won elections that extended the ruling party's 35-year grip on power
- The Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) was launched by India in November 2019 during the ASEAN-led East Asia Summit (EAS) in Bangkok. The initiative aims to enhance peace, stability, and security in the Indo-Pacific region, promoting cooperation for a free and open Indo-Pacific while upholding a rules-based regional order. IPOI builds upon the "Security and Growth for All in the Region" (SAGAR) initiative announced by the Indian Prime Minister in 2015. It is a non-treaty-based, voluntary arrangement that fosters regional cohesion through shared interests. IPOI functions without a new institutional framework, instead relying on the existing East Asia Summit (EAS) mechanism, which includes ASEAN member states and eight dialogue partners. The initiative seeks to strengthen maritime safety, stability, and

development, with seven key pillars led by different nations: Maritime Security (India & UK), Maritime Ecology (Australia & Thailand), Maritime Resources (France & Indonesia), Capacity Building and Resource Sharing (Germany), Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (India & Bangladesh), Science, Technology, and Academic Cooperation (Italy & Singapore), and Trade, Connectivity, and Maritime Transport (Japan & US). Recently, India's Prime Minister welcomed New Zealand's participation in IPOI, further expanding international collaboration in the Indo-Pacific region.

- Kaman Aman Setu, also known as the Bridge of Peace, is located in the Uri sector and holds symbolic importance as a rare connection between India and Pakistan in Kashmir.
- India has imposed anti-dumping duty on five Chinese goods to protect domestic players from cheap imports from the neighbouring country. These duties were imposed as these products — soft ferrite cores, a certain thickness of vacuum insulated flask, aluminium foil, trichloro isocyanuric acid, and poly vinyl chloride paste resin — were exported to India from China at below normal prices.
- Africa-India maritime drill - named Aikeyme to take place at Dar-es-Salaam on April 13-18
- 'Operation Brahma' to assist Myanmar

MISCELLENEOUS

- Renowned artist and sculptor Himmat Shah died at Jaipur's Shalby Hospital after a heart attack. Born in Gujarat's Lothal in 1933, Mr. Shah was inadvertently introduced to terracotta art and other objects from the Indus Valley Civilisation.
- Rithvik Bollipalli and Nicolas Barrientos of Colombia won doubles final ATP tennis tournament on clay in Santiago, Chile
- Krishna Jayasankar set a new Indian women's indoor shot put record with a 16.03m throw at the Mountain West Indoor Championship in the USA. The 22-year-old surpassed Poornarao Rane's 2023 record (15.54m) and secured third place. She will compete in the NCAA Indoor Championships on March 14-15.
- The Geological Survey of India (GSI), one of the country's oldest scientific organizations, is set to celebrate its 175th year of geoscientific legacy. Established in 1851 by Sir Thomas Oldham to locate coal deposits for the Railways, GSI has evolved into a crucial repository of geoscience information, supporting policy-making, commercial, and socio-economic needs. It systematically documents geological processes across India and its offshore areas through geological, geophysical, and geochemical surveys using advanced techniques. GSI's key functions include creating and updating national geoscientific data, mineral resource assessment, geological mapping, mineral exploration, disaster studies, and geoscientific research, significantly contributing to India's industrial and economic growth. Headquartered in Kolkata, it operates six regional offices in Lucknow, Jaipur, Nagpur, Hyderabad, Shillong, and Kolkata, with state units across India, and functions as an attached office under the Ministry of Mines.
- Vidarbha clinched their third Ranji Trophy title on March 2, 2025, defeating Kerala on a first-innings lead in Nagpur. The season was marked by standout performances, particularly from Harsh Dubey, who registered 69 wickets and 476 runs, achieving a rare all-round double. The Ranji Trophy, India's premier domestic first-class cricket tournament, was introduced by the BCCI in 1934-35 and named after Ranjitsinhji, India's first Test cricketer. The tournament features 32 regional and government teams, with 135 matches played in the 2022-23 season. It has gained prominence similar to England's county cricket and blends state boards with institutional teams. The trophy was donated by Maharaja Bhupinder Singh of Patiala, and Madhya Pradesh were the 2021-22 champions. Other key domestic tournaments in India include the Duleep Trophy (first-class zonal competition since 1961-62), Vijay Hazare Trophy (50-over state competition), Deodhar Trophy (List-A zonal event since 1973-74), Irani Cup (Ranji champions vs. Rest of India since 1960), and Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy (T20 championship introduced in 2008-09).
- Legendary left-arm spinner Padmakar Shivalkar, one of the most unfortunate cricketers to have missed out on international cricket, passed away

- Indian GM Pa Iniyan, who remained undefeated with six wins and three draws, won the Cannes International Open with 7.5 points, half-a-point more than compatriot IM Aradhya Garg, who finished second.
- LeBron James became the first player to score 50,000 combined points in the regular NBA season and post-season on Tuesday night, surpassing the mark with a 3-pointer early in the first quarter of Los Angeles Lakers' 136-115 win over New Orleans.
- Rajnath Singh becomes first defence minister to visit Institute of Aerospace Medicine. The Institute of Aerospace Medicine established the Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) during March 2011. The IQAC has since been an integral part of the Institute which works towards realizing the goals of quality enhancement by developing a system for conscious, consistent and catalytic improvement in different aspects of functioning of the Institute
- INDIA WIN CHAMPIONS TROPHY 2025 HELD IN DUBAI
- Rio Takeda won the LPGA's Blue Bay tournament in Sanya, China, with a stunning 8-under 64, securing her second LPGA title by six shots over Minjee Lee.
- Young sprinter Chiranth P led Karnataka to success at the 20th National Youth Athletics Championship in Patna, winning the boys' under-18 100m race with a time of 10.89 seconds. He finished ahead of Tamil Nadu's F Fredrick Russell (11.04s) and Bihar's Divyansh Kumar Raj (11.08s). In the boys' 400m event, Sayed Sabeer secured a silver for Karnataka, clocking 48.06 seconds, behind gold medalist Saket Minj from Jharkhand (47.63s) and bronze medalist Kadhira Khan from Uttar Pradesh (48.54s).
- Ukraine has overtaken India as the world's largest arms importer, according to the latest report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). India's arms imports declined by 9.3% due to increased indigenous production and a shift towards self-reliance in defense. From 2020 to 2024, Ukraine accounted for 8.8% of global arms imports, followed by India (8.3%), Qatar (6.8%), Saudi Arabia (6.8%), and Pakistan (4.6%). Meanwhile, Russia's arms exports fell by 64% compared to the previous period, mainly due to reduced orders from India and China. India is increasingly sourcing weapons from Western suppliers like France (33%) and Israel (13%), reducing its dependence on Russia.
- India won the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 by defeating New Zealand by 4 wickets in the final at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium, marking their third title and ending a 12-year wait; the tournament, originally called the ICC Knockout in 1998, features the top eight teams in ODI cricket and follows a set format since 2006, but in 2025, qualification was based on the 2023 ICC Men's Cricket World Cup results rather than ODI rankings, with Pakistan securing a spot as the host nation, while the ICC, cricket's global governing body, continues to oversee and organize major international tournaments.
- Kerala's Abhinav Sreeram broke the boys' heptathlon record in the 20th National youth athletics championships at the Patliputra Sports Complex in Patna. Abhinav, with a total of 4731 points, bettered the one-year-old record of Tamil Nadu's P. Royshan (4664 points). Meanwhile Haryana's Nishchay, who won the discus throw gold on Monday, made it a fine double by taking the shot put title.
- India's Deepti Sharma surpassed New Zealand's Amelia Kerr to climb one spot and break into the top five of the latest ICC women's all-rounders' rankings. The 27-year-old Indian now occupies the fifth spot with 344 points, in a list headed by Australia's Ashleigh Gardner.
- Former India all-rounder Syed Abid Ali passed away
- Uttarakhand's Suraj Singh broke the under-18 boys' 1000m National record on his way to gold in the 20th National youth athletics championships which concluded at the Patliputra Sports Complex in Patna
- Thousands of women gathered at the Attukal Bhagavathy Temple in Thiruvananthapuram for the pongala festival, offering traditional sweet dishes to the deity. The event showcased communal harmony, with women from diverse backgrounds participating, and mosques and churches providing support.
- Odia poet Ramakanta Rath dies
- A new book on Chennai Super Kings, Leo — The Untold Story, authored by senior advocate and former TNCA vice-president P.S. Raman, was officially launched in the presence of former CSK skipper M.S. Dhoni
- Newcastle United ended their 56-year trophy drought by defeating Liverpool 2-1 in the League Cup final. Dan Burn and Alexander Isak scored for Newcastle, while Federico Chiesa netted a late consolation goal

for Liverpool. This historic win marks Newcastle's first major domestic prize in 70 years and their first major silverware since the 1969 Inter-Cities Fairs Cup.

- New Zealand's Sam Ruthe became the youngest athlete to run a sub four-minute mile
- The Indian and French Navies are gearing up for the 23rd edition of their bilateral naval exercise, VARUNA 2025.
- India ranked 24th in the Free Speech Survey conducted by the Future of Free Speech, a U.S.-based think tank, as part of the report "Who in the World Supports Free Speech?" The survey, conducted in October 2024 across 33 countries, revealed a global decline in commitment to controversial speech. Norway (87.9) and Denmark (87.0) led the index, while India scored 62.6, placing it between South Africa (66.9) and Lebanon (61.8). Despite high public support for free speech, 37% of Indians believe the government should prevent criticism of its policies—the highest among surveyed nations. This contrasts with just 5% in the U.K. and 3% in Denmark. The report highlights a disconnect between public sentiment and actual free speech protections, with India, Hungary, and Venezuela showing significant gaps due to democratic backsliding. While Indians and South Africans perceive an improvement in free speech, global observers argue India's situation has worsened, raising concerns about declining political liberties and increasing government censorship.
- Zimbabwean Kirsty Coventry became the first woman and African to be elected president of the International Olympic Committee
- Karnataka has 165.04 police officers/personnel for every one lakh population, which is lower than the national average of 196.88
- The India-Bangladesh naval exercise 'Bongosagar 2025' and a 'Coordinated Patrol (CORPAT)' took place in the Bay of Bengal recently.
- The World Happiness Report 2025 has been released, highlighting India's 118th rank, an improvement from 126th in 2024. India still ranks below Nepal, Pakistan, Ukraine, and Palestine. The report, which emphasizes the impact of caring and sharing on happiness, finds that sharing meals enhances well-being. Finland remains the happiest country for the eighth consecutive year, followed by Denmark, Iceland, and Sweden. Major nations ranked include the UK (23rd), US (24th), China (68th), Palestine (108th), and Ukraine (111th). The report is published by the Wellbeing Research Centre (University of Oxford), Gallup, and the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN). It evaluates self-assessed happiness based on social support, income, health, freedom, generosity, and corruption levels. India ranks 57th in donating, 10th in volunteering, 74th in helping a stranger, but much lower in returning lost wallets. Among neighboring countries, Afghanistan remains the unhappiest (147th), Nepal ranks 92nd, Pakistan 109th, Sri Lanka 133rd, and Bangladesh 134th. The report originated from Bhutan's UN resolution in 2011, advocating happiness as a development measure, leading to the first publication in 2012. The report is released annually on March 20, coinciding with the International Day of Happiness, though Bhutan itself is not ranked in the 2025 report.
- R K Shriramkumar, one of the best-known violinists from a family hailing from Rudrapatnam in Hassan district of Karnataka, was named for the Sangita Kalanidhi award by the Music Academy, Madras.
- Award-winning Indian-origin writer and playwright Kamaladevi Aravindan was among six women who were inducted into the Singapore Women's Hall of Fame recently.
- Commonwealth Games medallist race walker Priyanka Goswami set a national record in women's 35km event during the Dudinska 50 competition in Dudince, Slovakia.
- The Meghalaya government is innovatively pushing for a tuberculosis-free State by reskilling TB survivors and bringing them into TB-control programmes as "TB champions", advocating for early detection and treatment adherence among patients.
- Exercise Varuna 2025, the 23rd edition of the India-France bilateral naval exercise, took place in the Arabian Sea from March 19–22, 2025
- The United Nations World Water Development Report (WWDR) 2025, published by UNESCO on behalf of UN-Water, highlights the critical impacts of climate change on mountain glaciers and freshwater resources. The report, released annually on World Water Day (March 22), provides a comprehensive assessment of global freshwater resources, their use, and management. The 2025 theme, "Mountains and

Glaciers – Water Towers," underscores the warming of all mountain ranges since the early 20th century. Rising temperatures are causing rainfall instead of snowfall, leading to earlier snowmelt and short-term river flow increases in glacier-fed basins. However, beyond a "peak water" threshold, river flows will decline drastically, with evidence suggesting this has already occurred in regions like the Tropical Andes, Western Canada, and Swiss Alps. The disappearance of glaciers is alarming—Colombia has lost 90% of its glacial area since the mid-19th century, and projections indicate a 26-41% glacier mass loss by 2100 if temperatures rise between 1.5°C and 4°C. The report warns of severe long-term consequences, including reduced water supply for drinking and agriculture, ecological disruptions, and increased risks of Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs). Additionally, global food security is at stake, as two-thirds of irrigated agriculture worldwide is likely to be affected due to shrinking glaciers, declining snowfall, and climate-driven water shortages.

- Ajay Seth is the new Finance Secretary
- The Rashtriya Raksha University (RRU), an institute of national importance under the Ministry of Home Affairs, has launched a one-year flagship hybrid programme, Master's in Financial and Economic Crimes. Rashtriya Raksha University is an Indian central university and an Institute of National Importance located in Gandhinagar, Gujarat. RRU specializes in national and internal security and police.
- The All India Tennis Association (AITA) has congratulated the Indian players on winning two silver and two bronze medals in the recent ITF Masters World Championships in Manavgat (Turkey). The Sood twins, Chandril and Lakshit, were the heroes as they won the doubles silver apart from the team silver in the over-30 section.
- B. Sumeeth Reddy, a member of the 2022 Commonwealth Games mixed team silver medal-winning squad, announced his retirement as an active badminton player to focus entirely on coaching.
- The Indian Navy is set to participate in a large-scale multilateral maritime engagement exercise with African nations, titled 'Africa-India Key Maritime Engagement' (AIKEYME).
- The Abel Prize, established by the Norwegian Parliament in 2002, is one of the most prestigious awards in mathematics, often considered equivalent to the Nobel Prize, which does not include a mathematics category. It was first proposed in 1899 by Norwegian mathematician Sophus Lie and was first awarded in 2003 under the administration of the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters. The recipients are chosen by an expert committee, advised by the International Mathematical Union (IMU) and the European Mathematical Society (EMS). The prize includes 7.5 million Norwegian kroner (approximately \$720,000) along with a glass plaque designed by Henrik Haugan. The award honors Niels Henrik Abel (1802–1829), who made groundbreaking contributions to mathematics, including proving the impossibility of solving the general quintic equation using radicals and developing Abelian functions. Abel, despite his genius, lived in poverty and died at the young age of 26 from tuberculosis. His influence was so profound that French mathematician Charles Hermite remarked that "Abel has left mathematicians enough to keep them busy for five hundred years." The 2025 Abel Prize was awarded to Masaki Kashiwara for his pioneering work in algebraic analysis and representation theory.
- The Army conducted a tri-service integrated multi-domain warfare exercise, 'Prachand Prahaar', in the high-altitude terrain of Arunachal Pradesh from March 25 to 27
- Aston Villa defender Tyrone Mings was named on the board of directors for the European Championship in Britain and Ireland in 2028.
- Rudrapatna Krishnamurthy Shriramkumar, an eminent violinist and composer, has been honored with the prestigious Sangita Kalanidhi Award by the Music Academy, Chennai for 2025. Recognized as an expert on 19th-century composer Subbarama Dikshitar, Shriramkumar has played a significant role in preserving and enriching Carnatic music.
- The 'Status of Policing in India Report 2025' evaluates the extent to which police forces across India adhere to legal procedures, particularly in arrest norms. Conducted by Common Cause with support from Lokniti, CSDS, and the Lal Family Foundation, the report sheds light on compliance with legal mandates and police attitudes toward alternative punishments and mob violence. Kerala emerged as the best performer, with 94% of its police officers reporting that they "always" follow proper arrest procedures. In contrast, Karnataka performed poorly, with 70% admitting to rarely or never following arrest norms. Similarly, Bihar

and Jharkhand also showed high levels of non-compliance at 51% and 43%, respectively. The report also highlights police preference for alternative punishments—states like Jharkhand (55%), Andhra Pradesh (51%), and Karnataka (51%) showed significant support for minor punishments instead of legal trials for small offenses. However, Odisha (82%), Rajasthan (77%), and Kerala (72%) showed strong commitment to due process. Another critical finding was the justification of mob violence, with Gujarat police (57%) being the most likely to support it, while Karnataka (27%) also ranked high. On the other hand, Kerala had the lowest support for mob justice, with zero officers justifying it. The report highlights major disparities in policing attitudes and adherence to the rule of law across different states.

- Founded in 1985 by Hayao Miyazaki, Isao Takahata, and Toshio Suzuki, Studio Ghibli is renowned for its hand-drawn animation, minimal CGI use, and deep storytelling with fantasy and emotional themes. The name "Ghibli" comes from an Italian word meaning "hot wind" and was inspired by Miyazaki's love for aviation. The studio's films often explore feminism, environmentalism, anti-war messages, and themes of family and friendship, with strong female leads like Chihiro (Spirited Away) and Nausicaä (Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind). Ghibli's films have won multiple awards, including two Academy Awards: Spirited Away (2001) was the first anime to win an Oscar, and The Boy and The Heron (2023) won Best Animated Feature. Miyazaki, often called "Japan's Walt Disney", started his career in 1963 and was awarded an honorary Academy Award in 2014 for his contributions to animation. He strongly opposes AI-generated art, criticizing it as an "insult to life" and believing that human emotion is essential to animation.

