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Content

Puri to be Odisha's Sixth Municipal Corporation

Why in News?

The **Odisha State Government** has officially notified **Puri as the sixth Municipal Corporation of the State.**

Key Points

- 💡 **Official Notification:** Issued by the Housing and Urban Development Department, taking effect on **January 1, 2026.**
- 💡 **Urban Status:** With this **Puri becomes the sixth Municipal Corporation in Odisha,** joining Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Berhampur, Sambalpur, and Rourkela.
- 💡 **Civic Development:** The move aims to **boost civic amenities,** enhance **infrastructure development,** and improve public services for **residents, pilgrims, and visitors.**
- 💡 **Wider Urban Reforms:** Alongside Puri's upgrade, the government **declared four towns as Notified Area Councils (NACs)**—Loisingha (Balangir), Chandikhole (Jajpur), Jashipur (Mayurbhanj) and Basta (Balasore).
  - ✦ It also expanded the limits of **Berhampur Municipal Corporation.**
- 💡 **Famous Site:** Shri Jagannath Temple (Char Dham pilgrimage site).
  - ✦ **Annual Jagannath Rath Yatra** held in Puri.

25th All India Major Port Cultural Meet in Odisha

Why in News?

The **25th All India Major Port Cultural Meet 2025–26** was officially inaugurated at **Jayadev Sadan, Paradip Port** in **Odisha.**

Key Points

- 💡 **Organising Authority:** The event is organised by the **Paradip Port Authority** under the **Major Ports Sports Control Board.**
- 💡 **Objective:** The event aims to promote **cultural exchange, participation, camaraderie, and talent display** among port employees, strengthening **social bonds in the maritime sector.**
- 💡 **Role:** Fostering **unity and harmony.**
- 💡 **Participants:** Over 200 participants from 9 major ports
- 💡 **Ports Involved:** Chennai, Cochin, Deendayal, JNPA, Kolkata, Mumbai, Visakhapatnam, V.O. Chidambaranar, and the host **Paradip Port,** are taking part in the cultural events.

Odisha Governor Launched Biography on Life of President Murmu

Why in News?

Odisha Governor **Kambhampati Hari Babu** launched a **biography of President Droupadi Murmu** titled *Agni Sarasulo Vikasita Kamalam Droupadi Murmu* in **Visakhapatnam.**

Key Points

- 💡 **Author of the Book:** The book is written by **Acharya Yarlagadda Lakshmi Prasad.**
- 💡 **Life Journey:** The book traces **Droupadi Murmu's journey from a tribal village in Odisha to the President of India,** reflecting perseverance and leadership.
- 💡 **Focus on Education:** Emphasises the role of **education and determination** in achieving social mobility and leadership.
- 💡 **Women Empowerment:** President Murmu's life is presented as a **symbol of women empowerment and tribal representation** in India's democracy.
- 💡 **Constitutional Values:** Her life reflects how **India's democratic and constitutional framework** provides **equitable opportunities** to individuals from **marginalized communities.**

Odisha Launches 'Aame Padhiba Aama Bhasare' Scheme for Early Childhood

Why in News?

The **Odisha government** has launched a scheme called **'Aame Padhiba Aama Bhasare'**, aimed at providing **early childhood education in mother tongue.**

Key Points

- **Scheme:** 'Aame Padhiba Aama Bhasare' (meaning *"We will study in our own language"*) is a **five-year educational initiative** to impart **early childhood education in children's mother tongue.**
- **Launch:** The scheme was **inaugurated by Deputy Chief Minister Pravati Parida**, who also serves as the **Women and Child Development Minister.**
  - ✦ Emphasising **women's empowerment and child welfare** as a priority.
  - ✦ **Target Group:** It will benefit **children aged 3–6 years**.
- **Pilot Implementation:** In the **first phase**, the programme will be rolled out in **Keonjhar, Kandhamal, Gajapati, Rayagada, Nabarangpur and Malkangiri districts** using tribal languages such as **Munda, Kui, Saura, Kuvi, Gondi and Koya**.
- **Anganwadi Capacity Building:** Anganwadi workers will receive **language-specific training, educational materials and audio-visual content**.
- **Child Marriage Prevention:** The government has also launched a **100-day campaign** to **prevent child marriage**.
  - ✦ The campaign will be driven by **youth leadership, ASHA and Anganwadi workers.**
  - ✦ Focusing on **awareness, safety and community participation** through rallies, conferences and early warning systems.
- **NEP Alignment:** The initiative aligns with the **National Education Policy 2020**, emphasising **mother tongue-based learning** in early years to strengthen learning outcomes and preserve linguistic identity.

Constitutional Provisions:

- 💡 **Article 350A:** Directs the State to provide **adequate facilities for instruction in the mother tongue** at the **primary stage of education** to children belonging to **linguistic minority groups**.

Odisha to Become First State to Plan Chronic Kidney Disease Registry

Why in News?

Odisha is set to become the **first state in India** to plan a **Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) registry** for systematic **data collection and analysis**.

Key Points

- **Timeline:** Rolled out by **March 31, 2026.**
- **Objective:** The registry will collect and analyse data **on prevalence, causes, and progression** of Chronic Kidney Disease.
- **State Task Force:** A **12-member task force** headed by the **Chief Secretary.**
  - ✦ A **17-member** technical team including experts from AIIMS, ICMR, pollution control, geology, drinking water, and Panchayati Raj has also been formed for this project.
- **Public health focus:** CKD is a **major non-communicable disease**, and the registry will support **early diagnosis and policy-based intervention**.
- **Data-driven healthcare planning:** Registry data will aid in **resource allocation, treatment planning, and preventive strategies**.
  - ✦ **Identification of hotspots:** The state plans **block-level surveys** to locate **CKD-affected regions** for targeted healthcare action.
  - ✦ **Patient monitoring:** The registry will track **demographics, comorbidities, and treatment outcomes** of CKD patients.
  - ✦ **Trend analysis:** Data will help identify **high-risk populations and progression patterns** for effective intervention.

- 💡 **Infrastructure planning:** Insights from the registry will guide the **establishment of dialysis centers and kidney care facilities**.
- 💡 **Awareness campaigns:** Block-level data will enable **targeted awareness and preventive programs** in high-prevalence areas.

CKD (Chronic Kidney Disease):

- 💡 **Definition:** CKD is a progressive loss of kidney function over time, impairing the organ's ability to filter waste, balance fluids, and maintain electrolytes.
- 💡 **Causes:** Common causes include **diabetes, high blood pressure, glomerulonephritis, and prolonged kidney infections**.
- 💡 **Symptoms:** Early CKD often has **no symptoms**; later stages may cause **fatigue, swelling, nausea, and decreased urine output**.

National Health Authority Hosts Chintan Shivir in Odisha

Why in News?

The **National Health Authority (NHA)** organised **Chintan Shivir** in **Bhubaneswar, Odisha**, to enhance the implementation of **Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY)** and the **Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM)**.

Key Points

- 💡 **Inauguration:** The event was inaugurated by **Mukesh Mahaling**, Minister of Health & Family Welfare and IT, Odisha.
- 💡 **Objective:** To **strengthen service delivery**, promote **digital integration in healthcare**, exchange **best practices**, and address implementation challenges of **AB-PMJAY and ABDM** across states.
  - ✦ **Focus:** Strengthening **AB-PMJAY IT systems**, **auto-claim settlement**, **digital health records**, **pharmacist registry onboarding**, and **use of AI** to improve healthcare delivery.
- 💡 **MoUs for Innovation:** NHA signed **three MoUs** with **Bhashini, Indian Institute of Science (IISc) Bengaluru, and NABH-QCI.**

- ✦ **NABH–QCI: National Accreditation Board for Hospitals & Healthcare Providers**, which functions under the **Quality Council of India (QCI)**.
- ✦ To enhance **multilingual digital access, AI innovations in health, and quality standards**.
- 💡 **Goal of Shivir:** To foster **knowledge exchange** and build a **unified, inclusive, digital healthcare ecosystem** in line with the vision of **Viksit Bharat, Atmanirbhar Bharat, Swasth Bharat and Sashakt Bharat**.

Odisha Imposes Complete Ban on Gutka and Tobacco

Why in News?

The **Odisha government** has imposed a **complete statewide ban** on gutkha and all food products containing **tobacco or nicotine,** covering their **manufacture, storage, sale, transport and distribution.**

Key Points

- 💡 **Issuing Authority:** Odisha Government through **Food Safety and Health Department.**
- 💡 **Legal Basis:** The ban is enforced under **Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006**.
  - ✦ Implemented by **Food Safety Officials, Police and Tobacco Control Authorities.**
- 💡 **Exempted Products: Cigarettes and bidis excluded**, as they are **not classified as food products under the FSS Act**.
- 💡 **Earlier Ban Reference:** Odisha first banned gutka in **2013.**
- 💡 **Public Health Objective:** To reduce **oral cancer, tobacco addiction and smokeless tobacco consumption**, especially among **youth and vulnerable groups.**
- 💡 **Penalty Provisions:** Violations include **seizure of products, fines and cancellation of licences** under applicable laws.
- 💡 **Significance:** The move marks a **comprehensive state-level action against smokeless tobacco**, reinforcing preventive healthcare policy beyond central tobacco regulation frameworks.

India's First FRP Aluminium Manufacturing Unit in Odisha

Why in News?

The **Chief Minister of Odisha** inaugurated **India's first Flat Rolled Products (FRP) aluminium manufacturing unit** at the **Aditya Aluminium complex** in Sambalpur district**.**

Key Points

- 💡 **Industry**: The project is part of the **flat-rolled aluminium (FRP) and battery foil segment**, critical inputs for sectors like **automotive, energy storage and electronics**.

- 💡 **Investments Announced**: The company underscored an **investment of around ₹50,000 crore** towards expanding aluminium manufacturing and related capacities in Odisha.

- 💡 **Domestic Manufacturing Boost**: This initiative is expected to **reduce dependence on imports of specialised aluminium products**, enhancing **India's self-reliance** in advanced aluminium processing.
  - ✖ New facilities are projected to **generate direct and indirect employment opportunities**, strengthening regional industrial growth.

- 💡 **Policy Alignment**: Make in India and Atmanirbhar Bharat initiatives

- 💡 **Strategic Value Chain Development:** Strengthens downstream aluminium value chain, crucial for **electric vehicles and renewable energy storage.**

National Current Affairs

Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft 'Anjadip'

Why in News?

The **Indian Navy has received 'Anjadip'**, the **third indigenously built Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft (ASW SWC)** from Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE).

Key Points

- **Delivery:** It was delivered to the Indian Navy at **Chennai (INS Adyar)**.
- **Builder:** The vessel is indigenously designed and constructed by **GRSE, Kolkata**, with collaboration from **L&T Shipyard, Kattupalli**.
- **Technical Features:** Equipped with lightweight torpedoes, indigenous anti-submarine rockets, and shallow water **SONAR systems.**
  - Designed for shallow water operations and detection of underwater threats.
- **Propulsion:** At approximately 77 meters in length, it is one of the largest Indian naval warships propelled by a waterjet system.
- **Strategic Importance:** Enhances coastal surveillance and maritime security.
  - Strengthens India's anti-submarine warfare capabilities in the littoral zone.
- **Indigenous Content:** The project reflects India's **Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiative** and the growing capability of **domestic defence manufacturing**.

First 3D Flex Aqueous Angiography in India

Why in News?

India's first 3D Flex Aqueous Angiography with iStent has been successfully performed by the **Army Hospital, Delhi Cantt**, representing a major advancement in **glaucoma** diagnosis and treatment.

Key Points

- **Technology Used:** The procedure was performed using a **stand-mounted Spectralis system** and a **3D operating microscope**, enabling **precise imaging and minimally invasive glaucoma surgery**.
- **iStent Device:** **Micro-device** implanted to facilitate **aqueous outflow**, reducing **intraocular eye pressure** in glaucoma patients.
- **Significance for Healthcare:** Enhances **precision, safety, and outcomes** in ophthalmic surgery.
- **Glaucoma:** A group of eye diseases characterized by **optic nerve damage** due to **high intraocular pressure**.

25 Years of Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY)

Why in News?

The **Government of India** is celebrating the **25th anniversary** of the **Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY)** in **2025**, marking a major milestone in **rural connectivity** and **infrastructure development**.

Key Points

- **Launched:** Launched on **25 December 2000.**
- **Budgetary Support:** An allocation of around **₹19,000 crore** has been made in 2025–26, to sustain rural connectivity efforts.
- **Objective:** Provide **all-weather road connectivity** to previously unconnected rural habitations.
- **Funding:** Currently operates on a **cost-sharing ratio of 60:40** between the Center and States, with 90:10 for North-Eastern and Himalayan States.
- **PMGSY-IV Plan:** Under **Phase IV (2024–29)**, **62,500 km** of roads will be constructed to connect **25,000 habitations**, with an estimated outlay of **₹70,125 crore**.
- **Scale and Progress:** Since its launch in 2000, approximately 8,25,114 km of rural roads have been sanctioned, with **nearly 7,87,520 km (95-96%) completed** as of December 2025.

- **Advanced Monitoring Systems:** Implementation is strengthened with **real-time monitoring** using **OMMAS** (Online Management, Monitoring and Accounting System), **e-MARG** (electronic Maintenance of Rural Roads under PMGSY), **GPS tracking**, and a **three-tier quality system** to ensure accountability and durability.

India to get 3 new airlines

Why in News?

The Government of India has granted **No Objection Certificates (NOCs)** to **three new airlines — Shankh Air, Al Hind Air and FlyExpress —** to enter the Indian aviation sector.

Key Points

- **Regulatory Approval:** The **Ministry of Civil Aviation** has granted **NOCs** to **three new airlines.**
- **Clearance Stage:** After receiving **NOCs**, the airlines are in the process of securing the **Air Operator Certificate (AOC)** from the **Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA)** to commence commercial operations.
- **Operational Timeline:** Commercial flight operations are expected to begin in **2026**.
- **Nature of Airlines:** These are proposed as **low-cost and regional airlines**.
- **Breaking the Duopoly:** The government is moving to reduce the **extreme market concentration** where **IndiGo (~65%)** and **Air India (~27%)** control over 90% of traffic.
- **Regional Connectivity:** The move aligns with the government's objective of improving **air connectivity to Tier-II and Tier-III cities**, in line with the broader goals of the **UDAN regional connectivity framework.**

NTPC–GCRI MoA for Cancer Care Infrastructure

Why in News?

NTPC Western Region signed a **Memorandum of Agreement (MoA)** with the **Gujarat Cancer & Research**

Institute (GCRI) for the **upgradation of radiotherapy services** under a **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative**.

Key Points

- **Objective:** To **enhance radiotherapy services** by procuring and installing a **high-energy Linear Accelerator (LINAC)** at the Siddhpur Satellite Centre in **Ahmedabad**.
- **Funding:** **₹23.16 crore** has been sanctioned by NTPC under its **CSR initiative** for capacity upgrade.
- **Technology Upgrade:** The support will help procure and install sophisticated radiotherapy equipment, improving **advanced cancer treatment capabilities**.
- **CSR Focus:** This initiative reflects NTPC's commitment to **inclusive development** and contributes to **Sustainable Development Goal 3** (Good Health and Well-being) by strengthening **critical healthcare infrastructure** through meaningful CSR interventions.
- **Regional Healthcare Hub:** Strengthening GCRI will reduce the **out-of-pocket expenditure (OOPE)** for patients.

Kalai-II Hydropower Project

Why in News?

A **Union Environment Ministry expert panel** has recommended **environmental clearance (EC)** for the **1,200 MW Kalai-II hydroelectric project** in **Arunachal Pradesh**.

Key Points

- **Project Details:** The **1,200 MW Kalai-II hydropower project** is proposed on the **Lohit River** to be implemented by **THDC India Ltd** at **Hawai village in Anjaw district**.
  - It is a **run-of-river project** with pondage to generate clean electricity while using the river's natural flow.
  - **Lohit River:** A tributary of the **Brahmaputra River.**
- **EIA Controversy:** Environmentalists and local residents criticized the **EIA report** for failing to mention the presence of the **critically endangered white-bellied heron (Ardea insignis)**.

- **White-Bellied Heron:**
  - ✦ The **white-bellied heron** prefers **free-flowing riverine habitats with low disturbance** and feeds mainly on fish in rapids.
  - ✦ Its presence has been recorded in the **Lohit River basin**, including **Kamlang and Namdapha Tiger Reserves**.
  - ✦ **IUCN Status:** The white-bellied heron is listed as **Critically Endangered** on the **IUCN Red List**.
  - ✦ **WPA Status:** Placed under **Schedule-I** of the **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**.
- **Environmental Concerns:** Critics argue that **hydroelectric dams** and other infrastructure can **degrade critical riverine ecosystems**, threatening species like the white-bellied heron through **habitat loss, disturbance, and reduced fish populations**.

IIT Madras Launches Global Research Foundation

Why in News?

External Affairs Minister **Dr. S. Jaishankar** launched **IITM Global Research Foundation** at the **Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT Madras)**.

Key Points

- **Objective:** The foundation aims to position **IIT Madras** as the **world's first multinational university**, expanding its global research, education, innovation and collaboration footprint.
- **Focus Areas:** Key areas include **data science, artificial intelligence, quantum technologies, cybersecurity, mobility, energy and water systems, health technologies and green technologies.**
- **Strategic Outreach:** Initial global presence will be set up in **multiple countries** including the **United States, United Kingdom, Germany, Dubai, Malaysia.**
- **Significance:** It helps Indian **innovations reach global markets** and accelerates commercialisation

via **technology partnerships** and foreign engagement.

- **Festival Integration:** Dr. Jaishankar inaugurated the **IITM Festival Fortnight**, featuring **Shaastra (technical)** and **Saarang (cultural)** festivals, along with **Open House access.**

Delhi Government Signs MoU with RBI

Why in News?

The **Delhi Government** signed a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** with the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** to enhance **financial governance and fiscal management** for the National Capital Territory of Delhi.

Key Points

- **RBI Role:** The agreement enables the **RBI** to act as the **official banker, debt manager, and financial agent** for the Delhi Government.
- **Functions Under MoU:** RBI will manage **market borrowings through State Development Loans (SDLs)**, **automatic investment of surplus cash**, **professional cash management**, and **access to low-cost liquidity facilities**.
- **Capital Expenditure:** Funds raised through market borrowings will be used **exclusively for capital expenditure,** with **priority areas including Yamuna rejuvenation, water supply, transport, and health infrastructure.**
- **Historic Reform:** Chief Minister **Rekha Gupta** described the MoU as a **historic correction** in Delhi's financial governance that will end years of **ad-hoc and costly financial practices**.
- **Benefit:** By integrating the RBI's systems, the Delhi Government can now raise funds at **competitive market rates** and use surplus funds efficiently.
- **Fiscal Discipline:** The move is expected to **strengthen fiscal discipline, transparency, and long-term financial sustainability** of the Delhi Government's finances.

Vice-President Launched Book "Sing, Dance and Lead

Why in News?

The **Vice-President of India**, **C. P. Radhakrishnan**, launched the book **"Sing, Dance and Lead: Leadership Lessons from the Life of Srila Prabhupada"** at an event held in **New Delhi**.

Key Points

- **Author:** The book is authored by **Hindol Sengupta**.
- **Focus:** Value-based leadership.
- **Philosophy:** Emphasises **ethical leadership**, **moral clarity**, **service orientation**, and **inner discipline**.
- **Inspirational Figure:** Draws leadership lessons from the life of **A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada**, founder of **ISKCON**.
- **Key Message:** Leadership should be **inclusive, joyful, and rooted in humility**, rather than authority.

Sacred Piprahwa Relics Exposition Inaugurated

Why in News?

India inaugurated the **Grand International Exposition of Sacred Piprahwa Relics of Bhagwan Buddha** in **New Delhi**, showcasing the country's **Buddhist heritage and spiritual legacy**.

Key Points

- **Title:** Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** inaugurated the exposition titled **"The Light & the Lotus: Relics of the Awakened One"**.
- **Significance of Relics:** The sacred relics, repatriated from the **United Kingdom** after **125 years.**
- **Venue:** Organized at the **historic Rai Pithora Cultural Complex, New Delhi**.
- **Discovery:** The Piprahwa relics were **excavated in 1898** from a Buddhist stupa in **Piprahwa village, Uttar Pradesh**.

- **Buddhist Linkages:** India's efforts to **preserve Buddhist heritage globally** strengthen cultural ties with countries like **Thailand, Vietnam, Mongolia, and Russia**, attracting international devotees.
- **Classical Language:** Buddha's teachings were originally in **Pali**, and India is promoting Pali globally, recognizing it as a **classical language in 2024**.
- **Significance:** The exposition reinforces India's position as a **custodian of Buddhist heritage**, promoting **peace, harmony, and global cultural unity**.

India to Host IICDEM-2026

Why in News?

The **Election Commission of India (ECI)** will host the **India International Conference on Democracy and Election Management (IICDEM)-2026** in **New Delhi**.

Key Points

- **Organiser:** The conference is being organised by the **India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management (IIIDEM)** under the **aegis of the Election Commission of India (ECI)**.
- **Purpose:** A platform for **sharing knowledge, best practices, and innovations in election management and democratic governance**
- **Theme:** The conference will carry forward the agenda of **"Democracy for an inclusive, peaceful, resilient and sustainable world".**
  - ✦ It reflects India's role as Chair of the Council of Member States of **International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) for 2026**.
- **Sessions:** The conference will feature the **Election Management Body (EMB) Leaders' Plenary**, **working group meetings**, **launch of ECINet**, and **thematic discussions on global electoral standards and innovations**.
- **Leadership:** The conference will be led by **Chief Election Commissioner Shri Gyanesh Kumar**.

Dharmendra Pradhan Inaugurates New Delhi World Book Fair

Why in News?

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan inaugurated the **New Delhi World Book Fair (NDWBF) 2026** at **Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi**.

Key Points

- 💡 **Organisers:** The fair is organised by the **National Book Trust (NBT), India**, under the **Ministry of Education**.
- 💡 **Theme:** The theme for NDWBF 2026 is **"Indian Military History: Valour and Wisdom @75"**, reflecting on the role and legacy of India's armed forces.
- 💡 **Book Release:** During the inauguration, Dharmendra Pradhan released the book **"The Saga of Kudopali: The Unsung Story of 1857"** in multiple Indian languages and Spanish, honouring **Veer Surendra Sai and the martyrs of Sambalpur**.
- 💡 **International Participation:** Countries like **Qatar** and **Spain** participated in the fair.
  - 📌 **Focus Country: Qatar** (main highlight for exhibitions and literary exchange)
  - 📌 **Partner Country: Spain** (cultural and literary participation)
- 💡 **Promoting Reading Culture:** The fair underscores the importance of **reading, knowledge dissemination, multilingualism**, and **global literary dialogue** among students, scholars, and the general public.

Gujarat CM Launches 'Asha Van' Mobile Unit for Cancer Detection

Why in News?

Gujarat Chief Minister **Bhupendra Patel** inaugurated a mobile **'Asha Van'** in **Gandhinagar** to provide **early detection of cancer**.

Key Points

- 💡 **Facility:** The Asha Van is a mobile diagnostic unit equipped with
  - 📌 **Enhanced Visual Assessment (EVA)-Pro diagnostics,** a mammography machine, **and**
  - 📌 **Tele-consultation services** for expert guidance.
- 💡 **Types of Cancers Screened:** It enables **on-site screening** for multiple cancers including **lung, oral, blood, cervical, pancreatic, liver, breast, and prostate cancers** using ultra-modern equipment.
- 💡 **Support to Public Health Goal:** The initiative supports the **Prime Minister's vision of "Health and Wellness for All"** by improving early diagnosis and treatment outcomes.
- 💡 **Handing Over to Red Cross:** The Asha Van was handed over to the **Bhavnagar branch of the Indian Red Cross Society**.
- 💡 **Focus on Rural Reach:** The initiative brings **advanced cancer screening** to villages and remote areas, reducing barriers of **distance and limited healthcare access**.

Supercomputer Param Shakti launched at IIT Madras

Why in News?

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) inaugurated the **PARAM SHAKTI** supercomputer at **IIT Madras**.

Key Points:

- 💡 **Capacity:** A **3.1 Petaflop** system, capable of performing over 3.1 quadrillion calculations per second.
- 💡 **Indigenous Tech:** Built under the **National Supercomputing Mission (NSM)** using C-DAC's **RUDRA** server series and an indigenous software stack (based on AlmaLinux).
- 💡 **Applications:** Targeted at research in climate modeling, aerospace engineering, drug discovery, and advanced manufacturing.
- 💡 **NSM Milestone:** This marks the **37th supercomputer** installed across Indian academic institutions.

- **Efficiency:** Features a Power Usage Effectiveness (PUE) of 1.2 to 1.4, making it highly energy-efficient.
- **Top Peer:** While PARAM SHAKTI is powerful, India's fastest remains **AIRAWAT-PSAI** (13.17 PF) at C-DAC Pune.

Akasa Air Joins IATA as Fifth Indian Member

Why in News?

Recently, **Akasa Air** officially became a member of the **International Air Transport Association (IATA)**.

Key Points:

- **Prerequisite:** The airline successfully passed the mandatory **IATA Operational Safety Audit (IOSA)** in December 2025, a strict, internationally recognized safety and operational benchmark for airlines.
- **Peer Group:** Akasa joins Air India, Air India Express, IndiGo, and SpiceJet as the only Indian IATA members.
- **Benefits:** Membership enables global credibility, participation in digital transformation, and future interline/codeshare arrangements.
- **Scale:** Since its 2022 launch, Akasa has served over **23 million passengers** with a fleet of **31 Boeing 737 MAX aircraft**.
- **IATA Reach:** Represents ~360 airlines accounting for **80% of global air traffic**.
- **Economic Impact:** Aviation in India supports 7.7 million jobs and contributes ~$53.6 billion to the GDP.

1720 MW Kamala Hydroelectric Project in Arunachal Pradesh

Why in News?

The **1720 MW Kamala Project** on the Kamala River (a tributary of the Subansiri) is a significant step toward making **Arunachal Pradesh** India's "Power House."

Key Points:

- **Capacity:** 1720 MW, aimed at providing clean, renewable energy to the national grid.
- **Project Nature:** A storage-cum-run-of-the-river project designed to harness the high hydroelectric potential of the **Brahmaputra basin.**
- **Strategic Goal:** Part of the Union Government's vision to achieve 500 GW of non-fossil energy capacity by 2030.
- **River Basin:** The project is located in the **Kamle district**.
- **Northeast Grid:** This project, alongside the **Subansiri Lower Project**, is crucial for regional infrastructure and meeting North India's peak power demands.
- **Environmental Clearance:** Like all major Himalayan projects, it is subject to strict monitoring for seismic safety and local ecological impact.

Kerala Renames Aralam Wildlife Sanctuary as Butterfly Sanctuary

Why in News?

The **Kerala government** has officially renamed the **Aralam Wildlife Sanctuary** in Kannur district as the **Aralam Butterfly Sanctuary**.

Key Points

- **Notification:** The renaming was officially notified under the **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**.
- **Reason:** Due to the presence of **rich abundance and diversity of butterfly species** in the region and the need to **protect and propagate their natural habitat.**
  - **Butterfly Diversity:** Aralam hosts about **266 butterfly species**, representing **over 80% of Kerala's total butterfly diversity**.
  - **Endemic Species:** 27 species in Aralam are **endemic to the Western Ghats**.
- **WP Act Protection:** Six butterfly species recorded at Aralam are listed in **Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**

- 💡 **Historical Status:** The Aralam area was originally declared as a wildlife sanctuary in **1984**.
- 💡 **Global Significance:** The sanctuary holds **global ecological importance**, as part of the **Western Ghats**, which is recognised as a **World Natural Heritage site by UNESCO**.
- 💡 **Social and Environmental Impact:** The renamed sanctuary is expected to strengthen **biodiversity conservation**, promote **environmental education**, **ecotourism**, and generate **community engagement** in protecting butterfly populations.

PFRDA NPS Outreach for MSMEs at Vibrant Gujarat Regional Conference 2026

Why in News?

Recently, the **Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA)** conducted a specialized NPS outreach session for the MSME sector during the **Vibrant Gujarat Regional Conference** held in Rajkot, Gujarat.

Key Points:

- 💡 **Objective:** To expand the social security net by encouraging MSME owners and their employees to adopt the **National Pension System (NPS)**.
- 💡 **Focus on Corporate Model:** PFRDA highlighted the **"NPS Corporate Sector Model,"** which allows MSMEs to provide a structured retirement benefit to employees with minimal administrative overhead.
- 💡 **Financial Literacy:** The session aimed to **bridge the gap in pension coverage** for the unorganized and semi-organized segments of the workforce in Gujarat's industrial hubs.
- 💡 **Dignified Aging:** MSMEs are a critical part of India's economy, and encouraging retirement savings culture among business owners and workers can help reduce future financial insecurity and ensure dignified aging.
- 💡 **MSME Contribution:** The MSME sector contributes nearly **30% to India's GDP** and is a critical target for achieving "Pensioned India" goals.

- 💡 **PFRDA:** A statutory regulatory body established under the **PFRDA Act, 2013**, to promote and regulate the pension sector in India.
- 💡 **NPS Structure:** It is a voluntary, defined contribution retirement savings scheme. It is regulated on the basis of **PRAN (Permanent Retirement Account Number)**.

Justice Revati Mohite Dere Appointed as Second Female CJ of Meghalaya HC

Why in News?

Recently, Justice **Revati Mohite Dere** was sworn in as the newest **Chief Justice of the Meghalaya High Court**, becoming the second woman to hold this position in the state's history.

Key Points:

- 💡 **Appointment:** The appointment was made by the **President of India** under **Article 217** of the Constitution, following the recommendation of the Supreme Court Collegium.
- 💡 **Meghalaya High Court:** Established on 23rd **March, 2013**, after an amendment to the North-Eastern Areas (Reorganisation) Act, 1971.
  - ✈ **First Chief Justice: Justice T. Meena Kumari** was the first female Chief Justice of the Meghalaya High Court, sworn on 23rd March, 2013, following the court's establishment.
- 💡 **Appointment Process:** The Chief Justice of a High Court is appointed by the President after consultation with the **Chief Justice of India (CJI)** and the **Governor** of the state.
- 💡 **Significance:** Meghalaya is known for its **matrilineal social structure**, making the appointment of a female Chief Justice particularly symbolic for the state's judicial leadership.
- 💡 **Gender Parity:** In 2026, India continues to push for higher representation of women in the higher judiciary, where women currently constitute less than 15% of the total judge strength.

VP Shri C. P. Radhakrishnan Inaugurates 'Drug-Free Campus' Campaign

Why in News?

Vice-President **Shri C. P. Radhakrishnan** inaugurated the **"Drug-Free Campus Campaign"** at the **University of Delhi (DU)** on January 11, 2026.

Key Points:

- **Vision:** The campaign is part of the broader **Nasha Mukt Bharat Abhiyaan (NMBA)**, targeting educational institutions to prevent substance abuse among the youth.
- **Strategy:** It involves the creation of student-led **"Anti-Drug Clubs"** and the integration of counseling services within the university health system.
- **The VP's Address:** He emphasized that a *Viksit Bharat @2047* is only possible if the youth are healthy, disciplined, and free from addiction.
- **Platforms Launched:** A dedicated **e-pledge platform** and mobile application under the campaign to encourage students across the country to take a pledge for drug-free campuses.
- **Nasha Mukt Bharat Abhiyaan:** Launched by the **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment**, it focuses on the 272 most vulnerable districts in India.
- **Article 47:** The Constitution of India (Directive Principles of State Policy) directs the State to endeavor to bring about prohibition of the consumption of intoxicating drinks and drugs.
- **NCB Role:** The **Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB)** provides technical support to these campus campaigns to track and dismantle local supply chains near educational zones.

MoEFCC Launches 'NIRANTAR' Platform for Institutional Coordination

Why in News?

The Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) chaired a high-level meeting in January 2026 to operationalize the **NIRANTAR Platform**.

Key Points:

- **NIRANTAR Dashboard:** It is a digital unified dashboard designed to strengthen coordination among MoEFCC institutions like the **Pollution Control Boards (CPCB/SPCBs)**, **Forest Survey of India (FSI)**, and **Zoological Survey of India (ZSI)**.
- **Real-time Monitoring:** The platform enables the real-time tracking of environmental clearances, forest fire alerts, and wildlife trafficking data.
- **Data Integration:** It aims to eliminate "silo-based" functioning, ensuring that climate data from various research bodies is accessible for policy-making under one window.
- **MoEFCC:** The nodal agency in the Central Government for overseeing environmental and forestry policies.
- **Digital India in Environment:** NIRANTAR follows earlier initiatives like **PARIVESH** (for environment clearances), but offers a broader scope for inter-agency collaboration.
- **Sustainable Development:** The platform is a tool to meet **SDG 13 (Climate Action)** and **SDG 15 (Life on Land)** by ensuring data-driven conservation.

Indian Lighthouse Festival Inaugurated in Visakhapatnam

Why in News?

The **3rd Indian Lighthouse Festival** was inaugurated in **Visakhapatnam** on **January 9, 2026**, by Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal.

Key Points:

- **Tourism Push:** The festival aims to transform historical lighthouses into vibrant **tourist hubs** to boost local economies.
- **New Projects:** Plans were unveiled for Andhra Pradesh's **first Lighthouse Museum** in **Vizag** and four new lighthouses in the riverine areas of Assam.
- **MGM Park:** The event featured cultural showcases, highlighting the maritime heritage of the "City of Destiny".
- **Maritime India Vision 2030:** The festival aligns with Maritime India Vision 2030 and the

government's strategy for tourism-led coastal development.

💡 **Sagarmala Programme:** The transformation of lighthouses is a sub-component of port-led development and coastal community empowerment.

💡 **Significance:** It reinforces the concept of **lighthouse tourism as a unique niche**, enhancing local livelihoods, cultural exchange, and **sustainable tourism** around India's extensive shoreline.

Aquatic Biodiversity Initiatives Launched under Namami Gange

Why in News?

On 14 January 2026, Union Jal Shakti Minister **Shri C. R. Paatil** inaugurated a suite of **aquatic biodiversity conservation projects** under **Namami Gange** at the **Wildlife Institute of India (WII) in Dehradun.**

Key Points:

💡 **New Center:** A dedicated national hub, **Aqua Life Conservation Monitoring Centre for Ganga and Other Rivers,** established to support scientific monitoring, research, and policy guidance for freshwater biodiversity.

✦ **New Facilities:** The centre houses labs for ecotoxicology, aquatic ecology, spatial ecology, and microplastics analysis.

💡 **Dolphin Rescue Ambulance:** A specially equipped Dolphin Rescue Ambulance (operated by TSAFI) was launched to provide rapid, scientific emergency response for distressed Ganga dolphins.

💡 **Indian Skimmer Conservation Project:** Formally launched in collaboration with the **Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS)** to provide a structured conservation plan for this rare bird species along the Ganga basin.

💡 **Species Protection:** New conservation plans were launched for the **Gangetic Dolphin** and the **Hilsa fish**, focusing on habitat restoration.

✦ **Biodiversity:** The Ganga basin is home to over 2,500 species of flora and fauna.

💡 **Namami Gange Phase II:** Shifts focus from just "Aviral" (continuous flow) and "Nirmal" (unpolluted flow) to include **Gyan Ganga** (research) and **Arth Ganga** (economic sustainability).

💡 **Significance:** It will serve as a scientific hub for long-term monitoring of aquatic species, research on freshwater ecology and policy support and evidence-based decision-making.

Gujarat to House India's First State-Funded BSL-4 Lab for High-Risk Pathogens

Why in News?

The foundation stone was laid for **India's first state-funded Biosafety Level 4 (BSL-4) laboratory** in **Gujarat**. This facility marks a significant leap in **India's decentralized high-containment research**, previously limited to **central government institutions**.

Key Points:

💡 **Integrated Complex:** The lab is designed as a multi-tier facility featuring **BSL-4, BSL-3, and BSL-2** modules.

💡 **Animal Research:** Crucially, it includes **ABSL-3 and ABSL-4** (Animal Biosafety Level) modules, allowing scientists to study how deadly viruses interact with living organisms—a vital step in vaccine development.

💡 **Funding Model:** Unlike India's existing BSL-4 labs (such as the NIV in Pune), which are centrally funded by the ICMR, this is the **first project of its kind to be financed and managed by a State Government**.

💡 **Timeline:** Planning for the high-containment hub began in mid-2022 following the lessons learned during the **COVID-19 pandemic** regarding local diagnostic self-reliance.

💡 **Pandemic Preparedness:** The facility will allow Gujarat to identify and research "Disease X" or new viral outbreaks without having to send all samples

to the **National Institute of Virology (NIV), Pune**, thereby saving critical response time.

- 💡 **One Health Approach:** By integrating **Animal Biosafety** (ABSL) modules, the lab supports the **"One Health" framework**, recognizing the link between human, animal, and environmental health in **preventing zoonotic spillover.**

Biosafety Levels (BSL)

- 💡 **BSL-1 & BSL-2:** Handle moderate-risk agents (like E. coli or common flu) that cause mild disease in humans.
- 💡 **BSL-3:** Deals with indigenous or exotic agents that may cause serious or potentially lethal disease through inhalation (e.g., Tuberculosis, SARS-CoV-2).
- 💡 **BSL-4 (High Containment)**: Reserved for the most dangerous and exotic agents that pose a high risk of life-threatening disease, have no known vaccine or treatment, and can be transmitted via aerosols.
  - ✦ Examples include Ebola, Marburg, and Nipah viruses.

World Economic Forum Released Global Risks Report 2026

Why in News?

The **World Economic Forum (WEF)** released the **Global Risks Report 2026**, the 21st edition of its annual assessment of global risk perceptions and anticipated threats.

Key Points:

- 💡 **Age of Competition:** The report underscores "uncertainty" as the defining characteristic of the global risk landscape in 2026 and highlights a transition into an **"age of competition"** where **geopolitical and economic confrontations** are overtaking cooperation, and traditional multilateral systems are under strain.
- 💡 **Top Short-Term Threat:** In the immediate outlook (to 2028), economic and geopolitical tensions have overtaken environmental concerns in urgency

- ✦ **Geoeconomic Confrontation:** Rising to the top spot (up from #3 in 2025), this includes the "weaponization" of trade through tariffs, sanctions, and investment restrictions.
- ✦ **Misinformation and Disinformation:** Driven by AI-generated deepfakes, particularly during election cycles, threatening social stability.
- ✦ **Societal Polarization:** Intensifying pressures on democratic systems and public trust.
- ✦ **Extreme Weather Events:** Dropped from 2nd to 4th place in short-term salience, though they remain the top long-term threat.
- 💡 **Long-Term Risks (10-Year Horizon):** Environmental threats continue to dominate the decade-long outlook, with **Extreme Weather Events** and **Biodiversity Loss** ranked as the most severe.
  - ✦ Notably, **Adverse Outcomes of AI Technologies** saw the largest rise in severity, jumping from 30th in the short term to **5th place** in the 10-year horizon.
- 💡 **Key Findings for India:** The report identifies specific "hot spot" risks most likely to impact India over the next two years are
  - ✦ **Cyber insecurity:** Ranked as the top risk due to India's rapid shift toward digital payments and infrastructure.
  - ✦ **Wealth and Income Inequality:** A primary driver of internal social instability.
  - ✦ **Critical Infrastructure & Resource Security:** Highlights "water security" as a major flashpoint, specifically regarding the Indus River Basin.
  - ✦ **Economic External Shocks:** Susceptibility to global supply chain disruptions and international tariffs.

Gujarat launched 'Poshan Udaan 2026

Why in News?

Gujarat has launched **'Poshan Udaan 2026'** during the **Makar Sankranti festival** to spread **nutrition and health awareness** across the state by leveraging **traditional festivities and community engagement.**

Key Points

- **Initiative: Poshan Udaan 2026** uses the popularity of the kite festival with **kites carrying nutrition and health messages** to symbolically raise public awareness across the state.
  - ✦ To highlight the importance of balanced diets and health for children, adolescent girls and mothers.
- **Integration:** Conducted under **ICDS (Integrated Child Development Services)** at **Anganwadi centres.**
- **Implemented by:** A statewide **nutrition awareness campaign** organised by the **Department of Women and Child Development, Gujarat**.
- **Focus:** The initiative emphasises **dietary diversity**, **reduced junk food consumption**, **safe drinking water**, and **sanitation** practices to improve nutrition outcomes.
- **Target groups involved:** Outreach includes **schoolchildren, adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women, and local community leaders**.
- **Health interventions:** Activities such as **haemoglobin testing, IFA(Iron and Folic Acid) tablet distribution, BMI (Body Mass Index) check-ups and personalised nutrition counselling** were conducted for mothers and children.

Tamil Nadu to Establish India's First 'Sovereign AI Park'

Why in News?

On 13th January, 2026, the Government of **Tamil Nadu** signed a landmark Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with **Sarvam AI** to establish **India's first Sovereign AI Park in Chennai.**

Key Points

- **Full-Stack Infrastructure:** The park will host the entire AI lifecycle, including specialized **Graphics Processing Unit** (GPU)-based **data centers**, indigenous **Large Language Models (LLMs)**, and application-layer tools.

- **Indic-Centric AI:** A primary focus of the facility is the development of **Indic LLMs** (specifically **Tamil-language models**) to bridge the digital divide for non-English speaking populations.
- **Data Sovereignty:** By hosting data and compute power within the state, the project ensures that sensitive citizen and government information remains under local jurisdiction, protected from foreign surveillance or cross-border legal complexities.
- **Strategic Collaboration:** The park will be managed in coordination with the **Tamil Nadu e-Governance Agency (TNeGA)** to integrate AI into public service delivery.
- '**Sovereign AI':Sovereign AI** refers to a nation's or state's capability to build AI using its own **infrastructure, data, and human capital**.
  - ✦ **Strategic Autonomy:** It is considered essential for national security and economic resilience, preventing "Digital Colonialism."
- **Significance:** This initiative marks a strategic step toward achieving **Digital Autonomy** and making Tamil Nadu a global hub for high-end Artificial Intelligence.
  - ✦ The project aligns with the Central Government's **IndiaAI Mission** to democratize AI compute access.

India Post Delivers First-Ever ONDC Order as Logistics Provider

Why in News?

The **Department of Posts (India Post)** achieved a major milestone by successfully delivering its first-ever online order as a **logistics service provider** for the **Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC).**

Key Points:

- **Transaction:** The inaugural order featured a shipment of **Walnuts** sourced from a local seller in **Srinagar, Jammu & Kashmir**, delivered to a consumer in **New Delhi.**

- **Role of India Post:** Moving beyond traditional mail, India Post acted as the core **Logistics Service Provider**, managing the entire value chain—from first-mile pickup in a remote location to last-mile delivery in a metro city.
- **Integration:** The delivery was made possible through the seamless integration of India Post's **internal logistics software** with the ONDC open protocol, allowing real-time tracking and automated dispatch.
- **Logistics Empowerment:** By onboarding India Post, ONDC gains access to over **1.6 lakh Post Offices**, ensuring that even the most remote rural sellers can reach a national market.
- **Level Playing Field:** Small-scale artisans and **MSMEs** can now access high-quality logistics at competitive rates, previously a major barrier to entering the digital economy.
- **Vocal for Local:** This integration provides a massive boost to the **One District One Product (ODOP)** initiative by providing a reliable supply chain for regional specialties.
- **Financial Inclusion:** It encourages rural entrepreneurs to adopt digital payments and formalize their businesses, contributing to the goal of a **Viksit Bharat @2047**.

IOA launches National Olympic Education and Development Programme

Why in News?

The **Indian Olympic Association (IOA)** formally launched the **National Olympic Education and Development Programme (NOEDP)** to strengthen India's entire Olympic ecosystem from the grassroots to the elite levels

Key Points:

- **Integrated Framework:** The NOEDP is designed as a comprehensive national framework to deliver structured education initiatives across the entire sports ecosystem, in collaboration with **National Sports Federations (NSFs)** and **State Olympic Associations (SOAs)**.
- **Reactivation of the National Olympic Academy (NOA):** A cornerstone of this program is the formal reactivation of the **National Olympic Academy (NOA)** in Ahmedabad. The NOA will serve as the central hub for Olympic education, learning, research, and dialogue in India.
- **Leadership:** IOA President and sprint legend **P.T. Usha** was ratified as the President of the NOA, while Olympic medallist and IOA Vice President **Gagan Narang** was appointed as its Director.
- **International Alignment:** The NOA will collaborate with the **International Olympic Academy** in Olympia to ensure India's programs meet global standards and adhere to the Olympic Charter.
- **Significance:** The initiatives reflect a renewed focus on placing athletes at the heart of the Olympic movement, providing them with leadership skills and educational support throughout their careers.

Kerala Leads Personal Electric Vehicle Adoption in 2025

Why in News?

Kerala has emerged as a **leading state in India** for **personal electric vehicle (EV) adoption in 2025.**

Key Points

- **Kerala's EV leadership:** Kerala recorded **one of the highest personal EV adoption rates** in India in 2025.
- **Personal EVs lead adoption:** Around **93.4%** of EVs in Kerala were **personal vehicles** (two- and four-wheelers), indicating strong consumer demand.
  - **Vehicle Registration Surge:** Kerala saw a **12.8 % increase in total vehicle registrations in 2025.**

- **EV Sales Numbers:** Around **80,261 EVs were sold in Kerala in 2025.**
- 💡 **Charging infrastructure:** Kerala has **widespread EV charging infrastructure**, including public and private stations.
- 💡 **Policy timeline:** Kerala's **EV policy (2019)** laid the foundation for **early adoption, charging network, and incentives.**
  - **Government support:** State subsidies, tax benefits, and reduced registration fees encouraged consumers to adopt EVs.

Andhra Pradesh to Develop Satellite Launch Facility on Hope Island

Why in News?

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister **N. Chandrababu Naidu** has announced plans to develop a **satellite launching facility on Hope Island.**

Key Points

- 💡 **Location:** The proposed **satellite launching facility** will be built on **Hope Island** in **Kakinada Bay, Andhra Pradesh.**
  - **Strategic distance:** Hope Island lies about **600 km from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre at Sriharikota**, India's principal spaceport.
  - **Coastal advantage:** Hope Island's **coastal location** provides a strategic advantage for **launch trajectories over the Bay of Bengal** and **minimal population risk.**
- 💡 **Project name:** Part of the **Space City project**, intended to create a **space and aerospace hub.**
  - This highlights Andhra Pradesh's growing focus on **technology, innovation and industrial development** in high-tech sectors.
- 💡 **Collaboration with:** Greenko Group.
- 💡 **Space ecosystem vision:** The facility aligns with Andhra Pradesh's vision to position itself as a **hub for aerospace and commercial space activities.**

National Capacity Building Programme for Tribal Healers in Hyderabad

Why in News?

The **Ministry of Tribal Affairs** has launched a **National Capacity Building Programme for Tribal Healers** in **Hyderabad, Telangana.**

Key Points

- 💡 **Launch venue:** The **Programme for Tribal Healers** was held in **January 2026** at **Kanha Shanti Vanam, Hyderabad**, to enhance tribal health services.
- 💡 **Addressed by:** The event was addressed by **Jual Oram, Union Minister of Tribal Affairs.**
- 💡 **Objective:** The programme aims to
  - **Recognise and engage tribal healers** as collaborative partners in **public health outreach and tribal health transformation.**
  - Strengthen **last-mile health service delivery** in geographically and culturally isolated tribal regions.
  - **Eliminate communicable diseases** such as malaria, tuberculosis and leprosy in tribal areas.
- 💡 **National Tribal Health Observatory:** A **MoU with ICMR-Regional Medical Research Centre, Bhubaneswar** was signed to establish India's first **Bharat Tribal Health Observatory (B-THO)** under **Project DRISTI** for tribe-disaggregated health data and research.
- 💡 **Project DRISTI:** A **national initiative** by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs in collaboration with ICMR to create a **tribe-disaggregated health information system.**
  - Aimed at improving **healthcare planning, disease monitoring, and policy decisions** for tribal populations.
- 💡 **Bharat Tribal Health Observatory (B-THO):** A **first-of-its-kind national health observatory** established under Project DRISTI.
  - To **collect, analyse, and share health data of tribal communities**, integrate **tribal healers into the health system**, and support **disease prevention and research** in tribal areas.

MSME Ministry Approves Technology Centres in Himachal Pradesh

Why in News?

In January 2026, the **Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MoMSME)** approved the establishment of two new **MSME Technology Centres** in Himachal Pradesh.

Key Points:

- **Locations**: The centres will be located at the **Pandoga** industrial area in Una district and the **Parwanoo** industrial area in Solan district.
- **Funding**: Each centre is estimated to be developed at a cost of approximately ₹**10 crore** (₹100 million).
- **Nationwide Context**: These two sites are part of a larger plan to establish **13 new Technology Centres/Extension Centres** across India.
- **Infrastructure**: The Pandoga facility is planned to be housed within the existing **Community Centre building** of the Haroli Assembly segment to expedite operations.
- **Objectives:** The centres will provide **advanced technical inputs**, innovation support, and modern machinery to both existing and new industrial units.
- **Skill Development**: A primary focus is strengthening **youth skill training** in high-end fields like artificial intelligence and robotics, with some programs offered in **virtual mode** for remote accessibility.
- **Industrial Boost**: The initiative aims to enhance competitiveness in sectors such as **engineering, plastics, and automation**, ultimately encouraging fresh industrial investment and job creation in the state.
- **Significance:** These new facilities will complement the existing **MSME Technology Centre in Baddi**, which already provides advanced training and production support in the region.

48th Kokborok Day Celebrations in Tripura

Why in News?

Tripura observed the **48th Kokborok Day** (also known as Tripuri Language Day) with state-wide cultural fervor and renewed linguistic demands. The day commemorates the historic recognition of Kokborok as an official state language on **January 19, 1979**, under the then-state government.

Key Points:

- **Official Ceremonies:** Chief Minister Dr. Manik Saha led celebrations at Tripura Bhavan in New Delhi, emphasizing Kokborok as a vital link to the state's cultural identity and reaffirming the government's commitment to its promotion.
- **Cultural Rallies:** Major rallies were held across the state, including a grand procession in Agartala involving approximately 3,000 participants.
- **Government Initiatives:** Introduction of **Kokborok courses at college and university levels** to promote linguistic heritage.
  - Efforts to integrate **tribal and non-tribal communities** to strengthen **social harmony**.
- **Commemoration:** The day marks January 19, 1979, when Kokborok was first recognized as an official state language alongside Bengali and English.
- **The Language:** Kokborok belongs to the Tibeto-Burman language family and is the native tongue of the Borok (Tripuri) people.
  - Despite recognition in 1979, it is **not yet included in the 8th Schedule**, limiting its national-level protection.
- **Region:** Kokborok is spoken by **indigenous Tripuri communities** and in **neighboring Bangladesh**.

CoE for Power Sector Regulation at IIT Delhi

Why in News?

The **Union Minister for Power,** inaugurated a **Centre of Excellence (CoE) for Regulatory Affairs in the Power Sector** at **IIT Delhi.**

Key Points

- **Collaborating Institutions:** The **CoE** is jointly established by **IIT Delhi**, the **Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC)** and **Grid Controller of India Ltd. (Grid India)**.
- **Purpose:** It will serve as a **national hub for regulatory research, advisory support, capacity building and knowledge dissemination** in power sector regulation.
  - **Focus areas:** The **CoE** will undertake **multidisciplinary research** on power sector **regulations, market design, grid operations, energy transition, decarbonisation pathways, digitalisation, energy storage and emerging technologies** like green hydrogen.
  - **Capacity building:** It will support **strengthening institutional capabilities** and provide structured training programmes for **regulators, policymakers, and other professionals**.
- **Role in energy transition:** By focusing on analytical tools and evidence-based research, the Centre will aid India's transition toward **clean energy, competitive markets and consumer-centric reforms**.
- **Institutional model:** The partnership integrates **regulatory leadership (CERC)**, **system operation (Grid India)** and **academic excellence (IIT Delhi)** to inform future-ready regulatory frameworks.

Discovery Of A Rare Caecilian From Northern Western Ghats Of Maharashtra

Why in News?

Scientists announced the discovery of a new species of blind caecilian, named **Gegeneophis valmiki**, from the northern Western Ghats of Maharashtra. This discovery is the first for its genus in over a decade.

Key Points:

- **Location:** The species was first collected in **2017** on the **Valmiki Plateau** in the Satara district of Maharashtra.

- **Etymology:** It is named after the historic **Maharshi Valmiki Mandir** located near the discovery site reflecting the tradition of linking species nomenclature with geographic or cultural landmarks.
- **Research Team:** Led by the **Zoological Survey of India (ZSI)**, the discovery involved researchers from Savitribai Phule Pune University, Balasaheb Desai College, and the Mhadei Research Centre.
- **Appearance:** Like other caecilians, *Gegeneophis valmiki* is a limbless, worm-like amphibian.
- **Fossorial Nature:** It is a **subterranean (underground)** dweller with eyes hidden beneath bone, earning it the common name "blind caecilian".
- **Ecological Role:** These animals are beneficial to agricultural ecosystems as their burrowing aerates the soil and enhances its structure while they feed on soil invertebrates.
- **Significance:** The Western Ghats, recognised as a global biodiversity hotspot, harbour many endemic amphibian species.
  - Globally, about 41% of amphibian species are threatened with extinction, making new species identification critical for conservation action.

C-DOT Receives SKOCH Award 2025 for Cell Broadcast Solution

Why in News?

The **Centre for Development of Telematics (C-DOT)** has been conferred the **SKOCH Award 2025** at the **104th SKOCH Summit** for its **Cell Broadcast Solution**, recognising its contribution to **public safety, disaster communication, and digital governance**.

Key Points:

- **SKOCH Award 2025:** It was presented on **January 19, 2026**, during the **104th SKOCH Summit** in New Delhi.
- **Theme:** The summit followed the theme **"Resourcing Viksit Bharat"** and recognized excellence in governance, technology, and public service.

- 💡 **Cell Broadcast Solution:** C-DOT's CBS is a unified, national disaster and emergency alerting platform with several advanced capabilities:
  - ✦ **Geo-Targeted Alerts:** Delivers life-saving information to mobile phones within specific, high-risk geographical areas.
  - ✦ **Real-Time Multilingual Support:** Disseminates alerts in **21 Indian languages**, ensuring inclusive reach across diverse demographics.
  - ✦ **Network Resilience:** Unlike standard SMS, cell broadcast messages reach all devices in a targeted location instantly, even during **network congestion**.
- 💡 **Strategic Significance:** The solution aligns with international standards, including the **United Nations' "Early Warnings for All"** initiative and the **ITU's Common Alerting Protocol (CAP)**.
  - ✦ It is compatible with **2G, 3G, 4G, and 5G** technologies, ensuring broad coverage across different mobile network generations in India.
- 💡 **Align with Atmanirbhar Bharat:** It supports **national security**, **public safety**, and **citizen-centric governance**, aligning with **Digital India** and **Atmanirbhar Bharat** initiatives.

Khelo India Winter Games 2026 in Ladakh

Why in News?

The **sixth edition of the Khelo India Winter Games (KIWG) 2026** was declared open in **Leh, Union Territory of Ladakh**.

Key Points

- 💡 **Inauguration:** The event was inaugurated at **Nawang Dorjan Stobdan (NDS) Stadium** by the **Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh, Kavinder Gupta**.
- 💡 **Organising Authorities:** The event is being organised by the **Youth Services and Sports Department of Ladakh UT**, under the supervision of the **Sports Authority of India (SAI)**.
- 💡 **Sports Disciplines:** The Games include **ice sports** such as **ice hockey and ice skating**.

- ✦ **Figure skating** has been added to the programme for the **first time**.
- 💡 **Format:** The 2026 edition is designed as a **two-leg competition-**
  - ✦ Ice sports in Leh
  - ✦ Snow events in Gulmarg (Jammu & Kashmir).
- 💡 **Sports Policy in Ladakh:** The UT's **first Sports Policy** aims at **talent identification, inclusive sports, support for women and Divyang athletes, scholarships, job reservations, and world-class sports infrastructure**.
- 💡 **Significance:** The Games aim to build **competitive exposure** for athletes, align domestic competition with **international standards**, and develop winter sports infrastructure in the **Himalayan region**.

2ⁿᵈ Global Buddhist Summit in New Delhi

Why in News?

The **2ⁿᵈ Global Buddhist Summit** is being organised in **New Delhi** in **January 2026** to promote **Buddhist philosophy**.

Key Points

- 💡 **Summit Venue: Bharat Mandapam,** New Delhi.
- 💡 **Organiser:** Summit organised by the **International Buddhist Confederation (IBC)** in collaboration with the **Ministry of Culture, Government of India**.
- 💡 **Theme: "Collective Wisdom, United Voice, Mutual Coexistence".**
- 💡 **Objective:** To highlight **timeless Buddhist values** such as **compassion, wisdom, harmony** and explore their relevance to **social peace, ethical leadership, environment** and **well-being**.
  - ✦ **Focus:** Deliberations to cover **social harmony, entrepreneurship & right livelihood, healthcare & sustainable living, Buddhist education**, and **Sangha practices**.
- 💡 **Exhibitions: Sacred Relics & Cultural Engagement** and **Virasat se Vishwa** detailing **India's Buddha Dhamma outreach**.

- **AI Initiative:** Introduction of **NORBU**, an **AI-based Buddhist language model** adopted as **"Kalyan Mitra"** to assist in promotion and learning of Buddhist knowledge.
- **Significance:** Reinforces India's role in **international Buddhist dialogue**, cultural diplomacy, and promotion of **peaceful coexistence** rooted in ancient **Indian philosophy.**

Striped Tiger Declared State Butterfly of Chandigarh

Why in News?

The **State Board of Wildlife (SBWL)** of **Chandigarh** has officially declared the **Striped Tiger Butterfly** as the **State Butterfly** of the Union Territory, marking a significant step in biodiversity recognition and wildlife conservation awareness.

Key Points:

- **Selection Process and Criteria:** The selection was a year-long initiative by the Department of Forest and Wildlife to choose an emblem for the city's natural heritage.
- **Public Participation:** The Striped Tiger was chosen through an online public voting process, where it secured about **54% of the total votes**.
  - **Final Contenders:** It outcompeted three other shortlisted species: the **Blue Tiger**, the **Plain Tiger**, and the **Jezebel**.
- **Reason for Selection:** Chosen for its striking appearance and resilience, it is found abundantly across the Union Territory, including the **Sukhna Wildlife Sanctuary** and **Sector 26 Butterfly Park**.
- **Key Facts Striped Tiger Butterfly:** The butterfly features brilliant **tawny-orange wings** with bold black stripes, resembling a tiger.
  - **Defense Mechanism:** It is known to be **unpalatable (distasteful)** to predators, a characteristic similar to the American Monarch butterfly.
  - **Status:** It is listed under **Schedule I** of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.

- **Conservation Awareness:** The declaration aims to promote **biodiversity conservation** and environmental awareness among residents and students.
- **New Wildlife Learning Centre:** Along with the declaration, the Administrator directed the establishment of a new **Wildlife Learning Centre** (such as a Biological Park or enclosure) to boost local wildlife protection efforts.

Union Environment Minister Chairs 88th Meeting of NBWL Standing Committee

Why in News?

On **January 19, 2026**, Union Environment Minister **Bhupender Yadav** chaired the **88th Meeting** of the Standing Committee of the **National Board for Wild Life (SC-NBWL)** in New Delhi.

Key Points:

- **Proposals Cleared:** The committee addressed **70 proposals** concerning areas in and around Protected Areas, Tiger Reserves, and Eco-Sensitive Zones.
- **Strategic Infrastructure: 17 defence-related proposals** were approved, primarily in **Ladakh** and **Sikkim**, for strategic roads and infrastructure vital for national security.
- **Public Utilities:** Projects discussed included those for drinking water under the **Jal Jeevan Mission**, health centres, and improved connectivity via **4G towers**, road upgrades, and transmission lines.
- **Water Security:** A medium irrigation project in **Madhya Pradesh** was considered, intended to benefit the Bundelkhand region by providing water for drinking and irrigation while also improving water conditions for wildlife, including **gharials**.
- **Administrative & Process Reforms:** The committee reviewed actions taken on past decisions, aiming to enhance transparency through the **PARIVESH portal**.

- 💡 **Mitigation Measures:** Clearances included requirements for strict adherence to wildlife mitigation strategies and environmental safeguards.
- 💡 **Ongoing Monitoring:** Future meetings will include discussions on compliance and monitoring to ensure effective wildlife conservation.

What is the SC-NBWL?

- 💡 **Legal Basis:** It is established under the **Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972**.
- 💡 **Leadership:** While the full **National Board for Wild Life (NBWL)** is chaired by the **Prime Minister**, its **Standing Committee** is led by the **Union Environment Minister**.
- 💡 **Function:** It serves as an advisory body to the central government on conservation matters and reviews development projects in or near protected areas.

Tamil Nadu Establishes 'Semmozhi Illakiya Virudhu' Award

Why in News?

The **Tamil Nadu government** has announced the establishment of the **'Semmozhi Illakiya Virudhu'**, amid an ongoing dispute with the **Sahitya Akademi** over issues related to **representation, recognition of Tamil literature, and institutional autonomy**.

Key Points:

- 💡 **Award:**The award aims to honour **outstanding literary contributions**, particularly those aligned with the idea of **'Semmozhi' (classical language)**.
  - ✦ It seeks to promote **Tamil language, literature, and classical heritage** at the national level.
  - ✦ The initiative reinforces Tamil Nadu's long-standing emphasis on **linguistic pride and cultural preservation**.
  - ✦ **Frequency:** It is intended to be an annual recognition conferred by the Tamil Nadu government.

- 💡 **Classical Language Status:** Tamil was the first language in India to be accorded **'Classical Language'** status (Semmozhi) in 2004.
  - ✦ This award reinforces the state's efforts to promote the language globally.
- 💡 **Context of the Dispute:**The announcement comes against the backdrop of disagreements between the state government and the **Sahitya Akademi**, India's apex literary institution, regarding:
  - ✦ **Perceived neglect of Tamil literary voice**
  - ✦ Concerns over **centralisation and fairness in awards and recognition**
- 💡 **Federalism and Cultural Identity:** The incident highlights the growing trend of states asserting their **cultural and linguistic identity** as a subset of **cooperative (or competitive) federalism**.

DGCA Launches Electronic Personnel Licence Services for ATPL

Why in News?

The **Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA)** has launched **Electronic Personnel Licence (EPL) services** for the **Airline Transport Pilot Licence (ATPL)** in **January 2026**.

Key Points

- 💡 **Digital Licence:** The **Electronic Personnel Licence (EPL)** is a **secure digital licence** that incorporates **International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)**-aligned security features.
  - ✦ To ensure **authenticity**, **tamper**-proofing, and **real-time online verification** for pilot licences.
- 💡 **Access Platform:** Pilots and stakeholders can access and manage the licence through the **Electronic DGCA (eGCA) mobile application**, enhancing convenience and transparency.
- 💡 **Previous Roll-out:** DGCA had earlier rolled out **EPL services for Commercial Pilot Licence (CPL)** and **Flight Radio Telephone Operator's (Restricted) Licence (FRTOL)** in **February 2025**.

- **Regulatory Impact:** The initiative is a major step in strengthening India's civil aviation regulatory framework through **secure, modern, and future-ready digital systems**.
- **Relevance:** The EPL initiative aligns with **Digital India** and **Ease of Doing Business** goals by reducing reliance on physical documents and improving service delivery in the aviation sector.

Amelia Valverde Appointed Head Coach of Indian Women's Football Team

Why in News?

The **All India Football Federation (AIFF)** has officially appointed **Amelia Valverde** as the head coach of the **Indian Senior Women's National Team**.

Key Points:

- **Profile of Amelia Valverde:** A highly experienced Costa Rican coach, Valverde is best known for her long tenure with the **Costa Rica Women's National Team**, where she served as head coach from 2015 to 2023.
- **Historical Achievements:** She successfully led Costa Rica to the **FIFA Women's World Cup** in 2015 and 2023.
- **Vision 2047 Alignment:** The appointment aligns with AIFF's **'Vision 2047'** roadmap, which seeks to make India a major footballing power in Asia and eventually qualify for the FIFA World Cup.
- **Focus on Infrastructure:** Beyond coaching, Valverde is expected to contribute to the structural development of the women's game, including the **Indian Women's League (IWL)**.
- **Global Recognition:** Bringing in a coach with World Cup experience signals India's intent to become a competitive force in the AFC (Asian Football Confederation) region.
- **Sports Governance in India:** The role of national federations (AIFF) in leveraging foreign expertise to build indigenous talent pools and sustainable sporting ecosystems.

India's First Tailings Policy for Critical Minerals

Why in News?

The **Government of India** has announced the country's **first-ever Tailings Policy**, aimed at enabling the **recovery of critical and strategic minerals from mine waste** such as **tailings, mine dumps, slags, and overburden**.

Key Points:

- **Definition of Tailings:** Tailings are the residual waste materials (crushed rock, water, and chemicals) left over after valuable minerals have been extracted from ore.
- **Secondary Source Recovery:** The policy shifts the focus toward extracting "companion minerals" from existing mine dumps, slag, fly ash, and tailings ponds.
- **Inter-Ministerial Coordination:** Since critical minerals are often found in materials handled by different sectors, the policy mandates a coordinated approach involving the ministries of **Coal, Mines, Petroleum, and Atomic Energy**.
- **Technical Implementation:** Agencies such as the **Geological Survey of India (GSI)**, **Indian Bureau of Mines (IBM)**, and **Atomic Minerals Directorate (AMD)** will lead the identification, sampling, and economic evaluation of these secondary resources.
- **Circular Economy:** By reprocessing waste, the policy promotes a **circular mining economy**, reducing the need for new mines and minimizing environmental hazards like land degradation and water contamination.
- **Reducing Import Dependence:** India relies heavily on imports for minerals like **Lithium, Cobalt, and Rare Earth Elements (REEs)**. Reprocessing tailings will strengthen domestic supply chains for electric vehicles (EVs) and clean energy.
- **Economic Value:** Recovering companion metals (e.g., Selenium and Cobalt from copper tailings, or Indium from zinc waste) can unlock billions of dollars in "hidden" mineral value.
- **Alignment with National Goals:** It supports the **National Critical Mineral Mission** and **Atmanirbhar Bharat** by ensuring long-term resource security.

NHAI and Konkan Railway Sign MoU for Integrated Infrastructure Development

Why in News?

The **National Highways Authority of India (NHAI)** and **Konkan Railway Corporation Limited (KRCL)** have signed a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** in January 2026 to strengthen **integrated planning and development** of road and rail infrastructure across the country.

Key Points

- **Organising Ministries:**
  - **NHAI** – under Ministry of Road Transport & Highways
  - **KRCL** – under Ministry of Railways
- **Implementation:** A **Joint Working Group (JWG)** will monitor projects, conduct feasibility studies, and guide execution.
  - MoU valid for **5 years**.
- **Purpose:** Facilitate **joint planning, coordination, and resource optimisation** for infrastructure development where highways and railways intersect.
- **Areas of Cooperation:**
  - **Integrated development** of roads and railways, including tunnels, bridges, and logistics hubs.
  - **Technical collaboration**: project management, engineering design, construction methods, and environmental management.
  - **Safety and training**: audits and skill development for NHAI personnel at KRCL facilities.
- **Strategic Benefits:**
  - Leverages KRCL's experience in **difficult terrains** and NHAI's highway expertise.
  - Enhances **first-mile and last-mile connectivity**, freight and passenger logistics.
- **Significance:** Demonstrates **integrated infrastructure planning**, supports **economic growth**, and strengthens **multi-modal connectivity**.

UAE to Partner with Telangana to Develop Bharat Future City

Why in News?

The **United Arab Emirates (UAE)** has agreed to partner with the **Government of Telangana** to develop **Bharat Future City** as a **global urban and economic hub**.

Key Points

- **Partnership:** The collaboration was agreed during the **World Economic Forum (WEF) 2026**, focusing on joint development and investment in Bharat Future City.
- **Bharat Future City Vision:** It is planned as a **next-generation, net-zero and sustainable city**, aimed at becoming a **global hub for innovation, industry and services**.
- **Location:** The proposed city will be developed near **Hyderabad**, **Telangana**.
- **Sectoral Focus:** The city will have dedicated zones for **artificial intelligence, education, healthcare, manufacturing, residential infrastructure and entertainment**.
  - **Goal:** The project emphasizes **green infrastructure, clean energy, smart mobility and low-carbon urban planning**, aligning with global climate commitments.
- **Implementation Mechanism:** A **joint task force** involving officials from the UAE and Telangana is expected to be formed to **fast-track planning and execution**.

Tata Group Tops India's Most Valuable Brands; Apple Leads Globally

Why in News?

According to the **Brand Finance Global 500 2025 report**, the **Tata Group** has emerged as **India's most valuable brand** and **Apple** as the world's most valuable brand.

Key Points:

- 💡 **Historic Achievement:** Tata Group has become the **first Indian brand** to surpass the **$30 billion** threshold in brand value.

- 💡 **Brand Value:** The conglomerate's value rose **10%** year-on-year to reach **$31.6 billion**.

- 💡 **Global Standing:** It remains the only Indian brand ranked within the **Global Top 100**, holding the **60th spot**.

- 💡 **Sustainability Leadership:** The group also leads India in **Sustainability Perceptions Value (SPV)**, valued at **$4.3 billion**.

- 💡 **Other Key Indian Brands:**
  - ✦ **Infosys:** Ranked 2nd in India (Value: $16.3 billion) and 132nd globally.
  - ✦ **HDFC Group:** Ranked 3rd in India (Value: $14.2 billion).
  - ✦ **LIC:** Noted as India's **fastest-growing brand**, with a 36% jump in value to $13.3 billion.
  - ✦ **Taj Hotels:** Retained the title of India's **strongest brand** for the fourth consecutive year with an AAA+ rating.

- 💡 **World's Number One: Apple** retained its position as the world's most valuable brand for 2025 with a valuation of **$574.5 billion**.
  - ✦ The top global brands list saw technology giants like **Microsoft**, **Google**, **Amazon**, and **NVIDIA** maintain leading positions.

- 💡 **Significance:**The Brand Finance rankings offer insights into **corporate competitiveness, consumer perception, and economic resilience** of business entities globally and domestically.

Amit Shah Lauds Gita Press and 'Kalyan' Magazine

Why in News?

The **Union Home Minister, Shri Amit Shah**, lauded **Gita Press, Gorakhpur**, and its flagship publication **'Kalyan' magazine** for their enduring role in **preserving, promoting, and disseminating Sanatan (Hindu) traditions and values**.

Key Points:

- 💡 **Venue:** The event was held at **Gita Bhawan in Rishikesh**, Uttarakhand, in the presence of Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami.

- 💡 **Gita Press:**Established in **1923** at **Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh**, Gita Press is one of the **world's largest publishers of Hindu religious literature**.
  - ✦ It has published millions of copies of **Bhagavad Gita, Ramcharitmanas, Puranas, and Upanishads** in multiple Indian languages.
  - ✦ The institution is known for its **non-commercial, value-based dissemination of spiritual knowledge**.
  - ✦ **Gandhi Peace Prize:** Gita Press was awarded the **Gandhi Peace Prize** in 2021 for its contribution to social transformation through non-violent methods

- 💡 **'Kalyan' Magazine:**Launched in **1927**, *Kalyan* is a **monthly spiritual and cultural magazine**.
  - ✦ It has played a key role in **popularising ethical living, Indian philosophy, and religious discourse** among the masses.

- 💡 **National Mission:** Its work supports the goal of **'Viksit Bharat'** by 2047 through spiritual and cultural awakening.

- 💡 **Governance:** State patronage and recognition of cultural institutions as a tool helps in developing "Soft Power" and national identity building.

BCCI bags Rs 270 crore AI sponsorship deal for IPL

Why in News?

The **Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI)** has signed a landmark **₹270 crore sponsorship agreement** with **Google's artificial intelligence platform, Gemini**, ahead of the **Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026 season**.

Key Points:

- 💡 **Role:** Gemini, developed by **Google**, will feature prominently across IPL branding, digital platforms, and broadcast promotions.

💡 **Duration:** The three-year deal, beginning from IPL 2026, marks a notable shift in the commercial landscape of Indian cricket with **AI platforms entering mainstream sports sponsorship**.

✦ This engagement reflects **increasing interest from global AI companies** in associating with high-viewership sports properties in India.

💡 **Regulatory Shifting:** The deal comes after regulatory shifts in India's sports marketing space, including a **ban on real-money gaming and fantasy platforms** from major sponsorship roles, which opened the field for **technology-driven brands** to fill the investment gap.

💡 **Financial Impact:** This agreement further solidifies the IPL as one of the most commercially robust sporting leagues globally, demonstrating strong market confidence in the tournament's brand value.

💡 **Significance:** Reinforces the **IPL's global commercial appeal** and attractiveness to **technology majors**.

✦ Signals a broader trend of **AI brands leveraging sports for brand visibility and user engagement**.

✦ Highlights the evolution of cricket marketing beyond traditional consumer sectors into **digital innovation ecosystems**.

● **Future of Sports Engagement:** The partnership signals a major shift toward data-driven insights and personalized fan experiences in sports entertainment.

India's First Private Satellite Manufacturing Facility in Gujarat

Why in News?

India has marked a **historic milestone in space manufacturing** with the foundation of the country's **first private satellite and electro-optical payload manufacturing plant** at **Sanand, Gujarat.**

Key Points

💡 **Facility Name**: *Palmnaro Electro-Optical Payload Facility*, India's first integrated private satellite and payload manufacturing plant by **Azista Space Systems**.

✦ **Location**: The manufacturing facility is located at **Khoraj Industrial Estate, Sanand**, **Gujarat.**

💡 **MoUs**: The project involves **MoUs worth over ₹500 crore** with the **Government of Gujarat**, reflecting strong **public-private partnership**.

💡 **Strategic Sector Entry**: Marks the **private sector's entry** into **advanced satellite manufacturing**, a domain earlier led by **ISRO and PSUs**.

💡 **Global Competitiveness**: The facility will enable India to **compete in the global commercial satellite market**, including **Earth observation and defence applications.**

✦ The facility will produce advanced payloads also useful for civil sectors (like agriculture, environment, disaster management).

💡 **Objective**: The plant aims to **indigenise electro-optical payloads**, reduce **import dependence**, and strengthen **domestic space supply chains**.

✦ Boosts **private sector participation in space manufacturing** and supports **Atmanirbhar Bharat vision**.

ICAR and BISA Launch ACASA-India and Review 15 Years of NICRA

Why in News?

The **Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)** and the **Borlaug Institute for South Asia (BISA)** jointly organized a high-level review workshop for the **National Innovations in Climate Resilient Agriculture (NICRA)** and the formal launch of the **Atlas of Climate Adaptation in Indian Agriculture (ACASA–India)**.

Key Points:

💡 **Launch of ACASA–India (Digital Climate Atlas):** A web-enabled digital platform designed to provide location-specific, data-driven adaptation planning.

✦ **Developer:** Developed by the ICAR-led **National Agricultural Research and Extension System (NARES)** in collaboration with **BISA–CIMMYT**.

✦ **Functionality:** It maps climate risks and identifies adaptation options for **15 crops and six livestock species** at high resolution.

💡 **15-Year Review of NICRA:**Launched in **2011**, NICRA is India's flagship program to enhance agricultural resilience to climate change through technology demonstration and research.

✦ **Implementation:** Currently active in over **200 locations across 151 climate-vulnerable districts**.

💡 **Achievements:** So far, **11 climate-resilient crop varieties** have been developed, and carbon footprints of various crops have been assessed to support future carbon credit systems.

💡 **Strategic Shift:** Officials noted that NICRA has reached a "critical juncture" and requires a roadmap aligned with **Viksit Bharat 2047**, shifting from individual farms to broader landscape-level interventions.

💡 **Significance:**The workshop underscores the importance of science-led responses to **climate challenges in agriculture**, promotes **resilience building**, and aligns with **India's food security and sustainability goals**.

✦ It also highlights the role of digital tools in strengthening **farmer adaptation strategies** in a changing climate.

India Energy Week 2026 to Bring Global Energy Leadership Together in Goa

Why in News?

The **4th edition of India Energy Week (IEW) 2026**, scheduled from **27–30 January 2026**, will bring together **global energy leaders, policymakers, industry stakeholders and investors** in **Goa** to deliberate on energy security, sustainability and investment opportunities.

Key Points:

💡 **Largest Energy Platform:** Organised under the patronage of the **Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas**, the event is expected to emerge as one of the **world's largest energy platforms**.

💡 **Theme:** "Energizing Growth, Securing Economies, and Enriching Lives."

💡 **Primary Objectives:** The platform focuses on three critical pillars: **Energy Security**, **Catalysing Investment**, and **Practical Decarbonisation Pathways**.

💡 **Unique Position:** Unlike many global forums, IEW 2026 deliberates on the entire energy spectrum, including fossil fuels, biofuels, hydrogen, and nuclear energy.

💡 **Exhibition:**The exhibition features 11 zones, with new additions focusing on **Nuclear Energy** and **Sustainable Aviation Fuel**.

💡 **Innovation Zones:**Initiatives like **Avinya 2026** and the **Hackathon Challenge 2026** encourage startup participation and innovation, while a **Make in India** pavilion promotes indigenization.

💡 **Significance:**Encourages **foreign direct investment** and **technology deployment** in energy sectors.

✦ Supports India's broader goals of **energy security, clean energy transition and economic growth**.

Humanoid Robot 'ASC ARJUN' Deployed at Visakhapatnam Railway Station

Why in News?

Indian Railways has deployed a **humanoid robot named 'ASC ARJUN'** at **Visakhapatnam Railway Station, Andhra Pradesh.**

Key Points

💡 **First-of-Its-Kind Initiative**: This marks the **first deployment of a humanoid robot** on the **Indian Railways network** as part of **innovation-led passenger service enhancement.**

💡 **Indigenous Technology**: ASC ARJUN has been developed by **Railway Protection Force (RPF), Visakhapatnam**, using indigenous technology.

💡 **Role and Function**: Assists **RPF personnel** in station operations, especially during **peak passenger hours**.

- ✦ **Security and Surveillance Features**: It is equipped with a **Face Recognition System (FRS)** for intrusion detection, **AI-based crowd monitoring**, and connects in **real time to RPF control rooms**.
  - ✦ **Passenger Assistance**: The robot can make **automated public announcements** in **English, Hindi and Telugu**.
- ● **Autonomous Patrols**: ASC ARJUN has **semi-autonomous navigation** with obstacle avoidance capabilities.
  - ✦ Enabling **24×7 platform patrolling** and optimized manpower use.
  - ✦ **Emergency Response Systems**: It includes **fire and smoke detection systems** to aid timely response in case of emergencies.
- ● **Interactive Design**: The robot interacts with passengers using **friendly gestures**, such as "Namaste," and provides real-time information and assistance.
- ● **Significance**: It signifies Indian Railways' focus on **technology adoption for safer, secure, and more passenger-friendly stations**.

Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar 2026

Why in News?

The Government of India has selected the **Sikkim State Disaster Management Authority (SSDMA)** in the Institutional Category and **Lt Col. Seeta Ashok Shelke** in the Individual Category for the **Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar 2026**.

Key Points:

- 💡 **Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar:** To honor Indian nationals and institutions that have demonstrated exceptional courage and dedication in disaster management (Prevention, Mitigation, Preparation, Rescue, and Rehabilitation).
- 💡 **Announcement:** Every year on **January 23** (Parakram Diwas).
- 💡 **Prize Money:**
  - ✦ **Institutional:** A certificate and **₹51 Lakh** (the money must be used by the institution for disaster management activities).

- ✦ **Individual:** A certificate and **₹5 Lakh**.
- 💡 **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).
- 💡 **Institutional Category:** Sikkim State Disaster Management Authority (SSDMA) has been recognized for its pioneering work in the **Himalayan ecosystem**, focusing on community-centered disaster resilience.
- 💡 **Key Achievement (Aapda Mitra):** The authority has successfully trained and deployed **1,185 Aapda Mitras** (community volunteers) across all Gram Panchayats.
  - ✦ These volunteers act as first responders during landslides and floods, common in the high-altitude terrain.
- 💡 **Operational Success:** The SSDMA was instrumental in managing the **2023 Teesta Flash Floods** and the **2016 Mantam Landslide**, using real-time coordination to rescue over **2,500 people** and minimize loss of life in difficult geographical conditions.
- 💡 **Individual Category:** Lieutenant Colonel Seeta Ashok Shelke gained national acclaim for her leadership during the **2024 Wayanad (Kerala) Landslides**.
  - ✦ Under her command, the Army's engineering wing constructed a **190-foot-long Bailey Bridge** at Chooralmala in record time under heavy rain and unstable terrain.
- 💡 **Significance:** The dual recognition at the national level highlights the importance of **institutional preparedness** and **individual heroism** in effective disaster management.

WEF to Setup Fourth Industrial Revolution Centre in Andhra Pradesh

Why in News?

The **World Economic Forum (WEF)** has announced the establishment of a new **Centre for the Fourth Industrial Revolution (C4IR)** in **Andhra Pradesh.**

Key Points

- 💡 **Global Expansion:** WEF will establish **five new Centres for the Fourth Industrial Revolution** in

France, the United Kingdom, the United Arab Emirates, and India.

- 💡 **Indian Centre:** The new centre will be set up in **Andhra Pradesh**.
  - ✦ The Indian centre, referred to as a **Centre for Energy and Cyber Resilience**, will promote **innovation-led approaches to energy systems and cybersecurity strategies**.
- 💡 **Focus Areas:** The centres will focus on **artificial intelligence (AI), frontier technologies, energy transition, and cyber resilience**.
- 💡 **Partnership Model:** Each hub will **collaborate with governments, industries, and experts** to develop **scalable policy frameworks, pilot projects, and region-specific solutions**.
- 💡 **WEF 4IR Network:** The new centres will expand the **WEF 4IR Network**, aligning emerging technologies with **governance and societal needs.**
- 💡 **Strategic Significance:** Enhances regional capacity for **technology governance, sustainable innovation, and workforce development** in the digital and energy sectors.

Matabari Tourism Circuit Project in Tripura

Why in News?

Union Minister **Jyotiraditya Scindia** laid the **foundation stone of the ₹450 crore Matabari Tourism Circuit** at **Dumbur Lake** in Tripura.

Key Points

- 💡 **Objective:** **Matabari Tourism Circuit** aims to develop an integrated **spiritual–eco tourism corridor** in **Tripura** linking major **heritage and natural sites.**
- 💡 **Cost:** **₹450 crore** project reflects large-scale central investment in **Northeast tourism infrastructure.**
  - ✦ The Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) is providing **₹276 crore**.
- 💡 **Key Locations Covered:** Tripura Sundari Temple, Chabimura rock carvings and Dumbur Lake.

- ✦ **Major facilities:** Floating jetties, eco-friendly resorts, tourist amenities.
- 💡 **Additional Project:** ₹750 crore worth projects announced covering multiple development sectors.
  - ✦ **Agarwood Initiative:** **₹80 crore agarwood value-chain project** to enhance **farmers' income and agro-forestry.**
  - ✦ **Green Economy Push:** Approval of **22 engineered bamboo projects** under the **Green Gold initiative.**
- 💡 **Strategic Importance:** Supports **Act East Policy** and vision of a **Developed Northeast**, positioning **Tripura** as a **regional tourism hub.**

Scotland Replaces Bangladesh in ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026

Why in News?

The **International Cricket Council (ICC)** has officially confirmed that **Scotland** will **replace Bangladesh** in the upcoming **ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026**, co-hosted by **India and Sri Lanka**.

Key Points:

- 💡 **Dispute:** The crisis originated from the BCB's refusal to send its national team to India, citing security and safety concerns.
- 💡 **Security Assessment:** The ICC conducted independent security assessments from both internal and external experts, which concluded there was **"no credible or verifiable security threat"** to the Bangladesh contingent in India.
- 💡 **Replacement:** After several rounds of dialogue and a **24-hour deadline** for Bangladesh to confirm participation, **no affirmative response** was received, prompting the ICC to replace them.
- 💡 **Scotland's Inclusion:** Scotland, ranked **14th in T20 International rankings**, was the **highest-ranked team** that originally missed qualification.
  - ✦ The ICC has slotted Scotland into **Group C**, where they will compete alongside **England, West Indies, Italy, and Nepal**.

💡 **Significance:** The decision ensures the **20-team structure** of the tournament remains intact without logistical disruptions.

✦ It underscores the ICC's emphasis on **ensuring tournament integrity and adherence to published schedules**.

Sarbananda Sonowal Inaugurates Vizhinjam Seaport Capacity Augmentation Works

Why in News?

Union Minister for **Ports, Shipping and Waterways, Sarbananda Sonowal**, inaugurated the **capacity augmentation works** of the **Vizhinjam International Seaport** at **Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala.**

Key Points:

💡 **Vizhinjam International Seaport:** Located near **Thiruvananthapuram**, Vizhinjam is India's first **deep-water transshipment port**, strategically positioned close to international shipping routes.

💡 **Fast-Tracked Timeline:** Originally scheduled for completion by 2045, the development of subsequent phases was advanced by nearly **17 years** through a supplementary agreement signed in 2024. The entire project is now targeted for completion by **December 2028**.

💡 **Massive Investment:** The expansion involves an additional investment of approximately **₹16,000 crore**, bringing the total project cost to nearly ₹30,000 crore.

💡 **Infrastructure Scaling:**

✦ **Berth Extension:** The existing container berth will be extended to a continuous **2-kilometre length**, making it the longest in India.

✦ **Throughput Capacity:** Total operational capacity will increase five-fold, from 1 million TEUs to **5.7 million TEUs per annum**.

✦ **Handling Capabilities:** The port will be equipped to handle up to **five mother vessels simultaneously** and next-generation container ships of up to **28,000 TEUs**.

💡 **Operational Success:** Phase I, which commenced commercial operations on December 3, 2024, already demonstrated over **130% capacity utilisation**, handling more than 1.43 million TEUs in a few weeks.

💡 **Strategic Significance:** The expansion aligns with **Maritime Vision 2030** and **Amrit Kaal Vision 2047** priorities to develop world-class maritime infrastructure.

✦ It aims to **reduce India's dependence on foreign transshipment hubs** such as Colombo.

CSIR-CRRI and JSW Steel Partner to Build Steel Slag Roads in Tamil Nadu

Why in News?

In a landmark initiative to **turn industrial waste into valuable infrastructure**, the **Central Road Research Institute (CSIR-CRRI)** has partnered with **JSW Steel Limited, Salem Works**, to construct **roads using steel slag** (By-product of steel manufacturing) in **Tamil Nadu**.

Key Points:

💡 **Objective:** To convert industrial by-products (waste) from steel manufacturing into high-quality aggregates for road construction.

✦ This is expected to result in **durable, eco-friendly roads** while significantly reducing the environmental footprint.

💡 **Technological Focus:** The project utilizes the patented **Steel Slag Road technology**, developed by CSIR-CRRI, which has previously been successfully implemented in states like Gujarat, Jharkhand, and Arunachal Pradesh.

💡 **Valorisation Process:** The collaboration focuses on the techno-economic conversion of **Electric Optimization Furnace (EOF)** and **Ladle Refining Furnace (LRF)** steel slag into processed aggregates for bituminous roads.

- **Demonstration Project:** As part of the agreement, a **demonstration road stretch** will be constructed near Salem to validate field performance and durability.
- **Institutional Leadership:** The MoA was signed in the presence of **Dr. N. Kalaiselvi**, Director General of CSIR and Secretary, DSIR, along with senior leadership from both organisations.
- **Promotes Circular Economy:** Utilises **industrial waste** as a construction resource, advancing India's **resource efficiency** and sustainable development goals.
  - ✦ **Environmental Benefits:** Helps **reduce carbon footprint** and dependence on natural aggregates, thereby conserving natural resources and mitigating environmental degradation.
- **Regional Impact:** This marks the **first use of steel slag road technology in Tamil Nadu**, potentially setting a precedent for wider adoption across Indian states.

President Droupadi Murmu Conferred Padma Awards on 131 Individuals in 2026

Why in News?

On the eve of India's **77th Republic Day (2026)**, the President approved a total of **131 Padma Awards**, including 5 Padma Vibhushan, 13 Padma Bhushan, and 113 Padma Shri.

Key Points:

- **Padma Vibhushan 2026:** The **Padma Vibhushan** is awarded for exceptional and distinguished service. The 2026 recipients include:
  - ✦ **Dharmendra Singh Deol (posthumous)** — Iconic film actor
  - ✦ **Justice (Retd) K.T. Thomas** — Public Affairs
  - ✦ **N. Rajam** — Classical Musician
  - ✦ **P. Narayanan** — Literature and Education
  - ✦ **V.S. Achuthanandhan (posthumous)** — Public Affairs

- **Padma Bhushan:** Thirteen individuals received the Padma Bhushan for distinguished service of a high order:
  - ✦ **Arts:** Ms. **Alka Yagnik**, Shri **Mammootty**, Shri **Shatavadhani R. Ganesh**, and Shri **Piyush Pandey** (Posthumous).
  - ✦ **Public Affairs:** Shri **Shibu Soren** (Posthumous), Shri **Bhagat Singh Koshyari**, Shri **Vellappally Natesan**, and Shri **V.K. Malhotra** (Posthumous).
  - ✦ **Industry:** Shri **Uday Kotak** (Trade & Industry).
  - ✦ **Sports:** Shri **Vijay Amritraj** (Sports).
  - ✦ **Medicine:** Shri **Kallipatti Ramasamy Palaniswamy** and Dr. **Nori Dattatreyudu**.
- **Padma Shri:** Out of 113 recipients, several prominent achievers and "unsung heroes" were honoured:
  - ✦ **Sports: Rohit Sharma** (Cricket), **Harmanpreet Kaur** (Cricket), and **Savita Punia** (Hockey).
  - ✦ **Education & Science:** Former UGC chief **Mamidala Jagadesh Kumar** and IIT Madras director **V. Kamakoti**.
  - ✦ **Unsung Heroes: Anke Gowda** (who built a library with 2 million books) and **Armida Fernandez** (founder of Asia's first human milk bank).
- **Diversity:** The 2026 Padma list features:
  - ✦ **19 women awardees**
  - ✦ **16 posthumous honours**
  - ✦ **6 foreign/NRI/PIO/OCI recipients**
- **Significance:** The awards underscore India's recognition of contributions from **both eminent figures and grassroots "unsung heroes"** who have made significant impacts in society, culture, science, sports, and public life.

Operation Sahyadri Checkmate launched by DRI

Why in News?

The **Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI)** conducted a major operation under the codename **"Operation Sahyadri Checkmate"** in the **Sahyadri ranges.**

Key Points

- 💡 **Operation:** The DRI launched Operation to **disrupt clandestine drug production networks** in the remote **Sahyadri forest** region.
- 💡 **Location:** Hidden **mobile methamphetamine (mephedrone) lab** in Sahyadri ranges, disguised as a poultry farm.
- 💡 **Seizure: 21.912 kg of mephedrone** and **71.5 kg of raw materials** capable of producing ~15 kg of drugs.
  - ✦ **Market Value:** Estimated illicit value of ₹55 **crore**.
- 💡 **Strategy:** Combination of **intelligence**-led **surveillance** and **late-night interception**.
- 💡 **National Security:** Prevents **organised drug trafficking**, protects **public health**, and disrupts **criminal networks**.
  - ✦ The operation demonstrates the **critical role of DRI** in safeguarding national security.

Wings India 2026

Why in News?

The **Ministry of Civil Aviation** announced that **Wings India 2026**, Asia's largest civil aviation event, will be held in **January 2026** at **Begumpet Airport, Hyderabad.**

Key Points

- 💡 **Theme:** The theme is **"Indian Aviation: Paving the Future – From Design to Deployment, Manufacturing to Maintenance, Inclusivity to Innovation and Safety to Sustainability."**
- 💡 **Nature of Event:** Wings India 2026 is a **global civil aviation exhibition and conference** covering the entire **aviation value chain** including airports, airlines, manufacturing, MRO and logistics.
- 💡 **India's Aviation Growth:** India has emerged as one of the **fastest-growing civil aviation markets** with **a significant increase** in passenger traffic, aircraft induction and airport infrastructure.
  - ✦ Wings India 2026 promotes **regional air connectivity**, which is the core objective of the **UDAN (Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik) scheme**.

- 💡 **Focus:** The event highlights India's push towards **aircraft manufacturing, Maintenance Repair and Overhaul (MRO)** and aerospace component production.
  - ✦ The sessions also focus on airports and infrastructure, aircraft leasing, air cargo, drones, advanced air mobility, training, and women in aviation.
- 💡 **Sustainability Initiatives:** Emphasis is placed on **Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF)**, **green airports** and adoption of **digital and eco-friendly aviation technologies.**

Telangana Police Introduces Doorstep FIR Registration

Why in News?

The **Telangana Police** has launched a **first-of-its-kind citizen-centric initiative** allowing victims to register **First Information Reports (FIRs)** at their **residence or chosen location.**

Key Points

- 💡 **Objective:** To **reduce procedural delay**, protect the **dignity and safety of victims**, and remove barriers for those unable to visit police stations.
- 💡 **Applicable Cases:** Initially applicable to **specified categories of cognisable offences**, including those under laws such as the **POCSO Act**, **SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act**, **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act**, and **Telangana Prohibition of Ragging Act**.
- 💡 **Procedure:** Police officers will visit the **victim's residence, hospital or place of offence**, record the **initial statement**, secure the crime scene, and later **formally register the FIR** at the police station.
  - ✦ After registration, a **copy of the FIR** is provided at the same location via **email, WhatsApp, or hard copy** if required.
- 💡 **Standard Operating Procedure (SOP):** SOPs have been issued to ensure **uniform implementation**.
- 💡 **Policy Alignment:** Aligns with **victim-centric policing, criminal justice reforms**, and **Article 21's guarantee of access to justice**.

Ashok Chakra 2026 Awarded to Shubhanshu Shukla

Why in News?

President **Droupadi Murmu** conferred the **Ashok Chakra to Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla** of the **Indian Air Force (IAF)** during the **77th Republic Day 2026**.

Key Points

- **Ashok Chakra:** India's **highest peacetime gallantry award** for acts of **conspicuous bravery, self-sacrifice or valor**.
  - **Award Criteria:** The Ashok Chakra is conferred for **most conspicuous bravery or self-sacrifice in peacetime**, equivalent in prestige to the **Param Vir Chakra**, which is awarded in wartime.
- **Awardee: Shubhanshu Shukla** recognized for leadership, courage and exemplary conduct during the **Axiom-4 space mission**.
  - He became the **first Indian astronaut to visit the International Space Station**.
  - His recognition highlights India's growing capabilities in **human space missions** and places **space service on par with traditional acts of gallantry**.
- **National Importance:** Reinforces India's focus on **aerospace achievements, defense valor and scientific contribution**, inspiring youth and recognizing pioneering efforts.

First Aadhaar-Integrated PATHIK System Launched by Ahmedabad Crime Branch

Why in News?

The **Ahmedabad Crime Branch** of the Gujarat Police has become the first law enforcement agency in the country to officially integrate **Aadhaar-based verification** with its **PATHIK software.**

Key Points

- **First-of-its-kind integration**: The Ahmedabad Crime Branch has signed a pact with **UIDAI** to integrate **Aadhaar verification into PATHIK software**.
  - Making it the first law enforcement body to be recognised as an **Offline Verification Seeking Entity (OVSE)** for Aadhaar in India.
- **PATHIK software**: PATHIK stands for **Programme for Analysis of Traveller and Hotel Informatics**.
  - It is an application used by Gujarat Police to track travellers, guests and residents in hotels, PGs and homestays for security purposes.
- **Objective**: The integration aims to enable **instant, paperless and consent-based verification** of individuals by simply scanning their **Aadhaar QR code**.
  - **Privacy and data security**: The system **does not store Aadhaar numbers** but uses **digitally signed demographic details and photos** for verification.
- **Wide implementation**: Over **9,000 hotels across Gujarat** are already connected to the **PATHIK system**, helping police to trace **more than 50 missing persons** and identify individuals for law enforcement purposes.
- **Government recognition**: The PATHIK project is one of **11 projects** selected at the **national level** by the **Government of India** for its technological utility.

Novak Djokovic Secures 400th Grand Slam Match Win

Why in News?

Serbian tennis legend Novak Djokovic became the **first player in tennis history** to secure **400 match wins** in **Grand Slam singles**, a landmark reached at the **Australian Open 2026**.

Key Points:

- **Unique Record**: He is the only male player in tennis history to reach this landmark, surpassing other notable players like **Roger Federer** (369 wins) and **Rafael Nadal** (314 wins).
- **Record at Australian Open:** He achieved this feat by defeating **Botic van de Zandschulp** in straight sets

in the third round, marking another chapter in his storied career.

- 💡 **Equalling Federer's Australian Wins:** With this win, Djokovic also **tied Roger Federer's record of 102 match wins at the Australian Open**, underscoring his longevity at the event.
- 💡 **Grand Slam Legacy:** Already a **24-time major champion**, Djokovic continues to extend his records in the **Open Era**, showcasing exceptional consistency and dominance.
- 💡 **Significance in Tennis:** The 400-win milestone reflects **sustained excellence across all four majors**, reinforcing Djokovic's place among the **greatest players of all time**.
- 💡 **Surface Versatility**: With this victory, he became the first man to register **100 or more match wins** on all three Grand Slam surfaces: hard courts (Australian Open, US Open), grass courts (Wimbledon), and clay courts (French Open).

Microsoft Rolls Out Maia 200 AI Chips

Why in News?

Microsoft has launched its **second-generation AI chip**, the **Maia 200**, marking a significant step in the company's strategy to develop custom AI silicon for large-scale AI workloads.

Key Points:

- 💡 **Fabrication:** Manufactured using **TSMC's 3nm** process technology, featuring over **140 billion transistors**.
- 💡 **Performance:** Delivers **10+ petaFLOPS** in 4-bit precision (FP4) and **~5 petaFLOPS** in 8-bit precision (FP8).
- 💡 **Memory Architecture:** Equipped with **216GB of HBM3e** (High Bandwidth Memory) with **7 TB/s** bandwidth and **272MB of on-die SRAM** to eliminate data movement bottlenecks.
- 💡 **Networking:** Uses a two-tier scale-up design based on **standard Ethernet** instead of proprietary fabrics, supporting clusters of up to **6,144 accelerators**.

- 💡 **Vertical Integration:** Microsoft joins **Google (TPU)** and **Amazon (Trainium)** in designing custom hardware to reduce dependence on **Nvidia** and lower operational costs.
- 💡 **Economic Efficiency:** The chip offers a **30% improvement in performance-per-dollar** compared to current systems.
- 💡 **Software Ecosystem (The "Triton" Advantage):** Microsoft released the **Triton compiler** (developed with **OpenAI**) as an open-source alternative to Nvidia's proprietary **CUDA** software, aiming to lower the barrier for developer adoption.
- 💡 **Strategic Significance:** Represents Microsoft's push to **reduce reliance on third-party silicon providers** and manage **AI operating costs**.

National Model Youth Gram Sabha Awards 2025-26

Why in News?

Union Minister of State for Panchayati Raj, **S. P. Singh Baghel,** conferred the **National Model Youth Gram Sabha (MYGS) Awards** at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, to nurture future leaders by connecting students with grassroots democratic processes.

Key Points:

- 💡 **Objective:** To provide students with experiential learning of the **three-tier Panchayati Raj system** as envisaged under the **73rd Constitutional Amendment**.
- 💡 **Collaborating Ministries:** The ceremony was a joint effort by the **Ministry of Panchayati Raj**, the **Ministry of Education**, and the **Ministry of Tribal Affairs**.
- 💡 **Participation:** Over **28,000 students** from **619 Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas (JNVs)** and **200 Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS)** participated in simulated Gram Sabha proceedings.
- 💡 **Major Awardees:** The awards were divided into two main categories: JNVs and EMRSs.
  - 📌 **JNV Una, Himachal Pradesh:** Won the top prize in the JNV category, receiving a cheque for ₹1 crore for development activities.

- ✦ **EMRS Kosambuda, Chhattisgarh:** Won the top prize in the EMRS category, also receiving **₹1 crore**.
- ✦ **Runners-up:** Schools ranked second and third were awarded **₹75 lakhs** and **₹50 lakhs** respectively.
- 💡 **Documentation:** A comprehensive **compendium** was released, documenting the journey and impact of the MYGS initiative.
- 💡 **Significance:** The initiative aligns with efforts under the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** to integrate **experiential learning with democratic values**.
  - ✦ **Grassroots Democracy:** Strengthening the foundation of local self-governance through youth engagement.
- 💡 **Civic Education:** Integrating democratic values into the formal school curriculum through **"Loktantra Ki Pathshala" (School of Democracy).**

PM SVANidhi Credit Card Launch in Kerala

Why in News?

Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** launched the **PM SVANidhi Credit Card** for street vendors during an event in **Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala.**

Key Points

- 💡 **PM SVANidhi Scheme**: **Pradhan Mantri Street Vendor's AtmaNirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi) scheme** is a micro-credit programme launched in **June 2020** to support street vendors with **collateral-free loans** and promote digital financial inclusion.
- 💡 **Objective**: The credit card is designed to provide **instant access to affordable working capital** for street vendors.
  - ✦ This helps them to meet **business expenses**, reduce dependence on informal lenders and build a **formal credit track record**.
- 💡 **Financial Features**: The **PM SVANidhi Credit Card** is expected to be **UPI-linked** and can offer a **revolving credit facility**.

- ✦ They are often interest-free or at subsidized terms, enabling **easy access to working capital** up to predetermined limits.
- 💡 **Target Beneficiaries**: The scheme targets **street vendors, hawkers, roadside sellers, cart vendors and other informal urban workers**, helping integrate them into the formal banking system.
- 💡 **Digital Inclusion**: Besides credit access, the initiative promotes **digital payments and financial literacy**, strengthening the participation of small vendors in the formal economy.
- 💡 **Wider Outreach**: Around **1 lakh street vendors** were reported to have received **PM SVANidhi loans or credit cards** in Kerala during the launch, and similar implementation is underway nationwide.

Google DeepMind's AlphaGenome AI Tool

Why in News?

Google DeepMind has launched **AlphaGenome**, an **artificial intelligence tool** designed to predict how genetic mutations influence gene regulation and contribute to human diseases.

Key Points

- 💡 **Objective:** The AI tool developed by **Google DeepMind** is used to analyse **long DNA sequences** and predict the biological impact of **genetic variations**.
  - ✦ Primarily targets **non-coding (regulatory) DNA regions**, which constitute about **98% of the human genome** and play a key role in gene regulation.
- 💡 **DNA Analysis Capacity:** Capable of analysing **up to one million DNA base pairs simultaneously**, allowing assessment of long-range genetic regulatory effects.
  - ✦ Predicts effects of mutations on **gene expression, RNA splicing, chromatin accessibility, and regulatory activity**.
  - ✦ Helps to identify **genetic drivers of complex diseases** such as cancer, cardiovascular disorders, autoimmune diseases, and neurological conditions.

- **Training Data:** Trained on large-scale **public genomic datasets** from humans and mice to identify patterns linking DNA sequences with biological outcomes.
  - ✦ Acts as a **virtual laboratory**, enabling scientists to test genetic hypotheses before conducting costly and time-consuming biological experiments.
- **Availability:** Released for **non-commercial research use** through an **Application Programming Interface (API)** to support global scientific collaboration.
- **Limitations:** Not approved for **clinical diagnosis or personalised medical treatment**; predictions depend on quality and diversity of training data.

Maharashtra's Tableau Wins First at Republic Day Parade 2026

Why in News?

Maharashtra's **state tableau** won **first place** among states and union territories at the **Republic Day Parade 2026.**

Key Points

- **Maharashtra Tableau Theme:** "Ganeshotsav: A Symbol of Aatmanirbharta" emphasised **cultural heritage, community participation, social unity and self-reliance**.
  - ✦ The tableau showcased **Ganeshotsav festivities**, celebrating traditions and community strength, with participation from a **Nagpur dhol-tasha group** enhancing cultural appeal.
- **Other Winners:**
  - ✦ **Second Place:** Jammu & Kashmir for a display on **handicrafts and folk dances**.
  - ✦ **Third Place:** Kerala for a tableau on **Water Metro and 100% Digital Literacy**.
- **Marching Contingents:** The **Indian Navy** was named **Best Marching Contingent** among the three armed services.
  - ✦ The **Delhi Police** won among **Central Armed Police Forces**.

- **Ministry Category:** The **Ministry of Culture** won the best tableau among central ministries for its presentation **"Vande Mataram – The Soul Cry of a Nation."**
- **Significance:** The awards reflect excellence in **cultural representation, thematic creativity** and promote **national pride** by showcasing India's **diversity, heritage and developmental narratives**.

PFRDA Constitutes Expert Committee on SAARG for NPS

Why in News?

The **Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA)** has set up an **Expert Committee on Strategic Asset Allocation and Risk Governance (SAARG)** to review and modernise the **investment framework of the National Pension System (NPS)**.

Key Points:

- **Aim:** To align NPS fund management with **global best practices** and strengthen long-term retirement outcomes for subscribers.
- **Objective:** Strengthening the long-term investment architecture of NPS by improving diversification, enhancing risk management practices and expanding investment choices available to subscribers.
- **Composition of the Committee:** The **SAARG Committee** is chaired by **Narayan Ramachandran**, former Country Head of **Morgan Stanley India**.
  - ✦ **Experts:** It includes experts from **asset management, capital markets, regulation, and investment advisory**, along with senior PFRDA representation.
- **Mandate of the Committee:** SAARG has been tasked with undertaking a comprehensive review of existing NPS investment guidelines for both government and non-government sectors.
  - ✦ The review will include benchmarking India's pension investment framework with leading global pension systems as well as the evolving domestic investment ecosystem.

- **Significance:** This initiative is crucial for improving **portfolio resilience, return optimisation, and risk mitigation** in pension funds.
  - ✦ It reflects India's efforts to deepen **long-term domestic capital pools** and ensure **financial security for an ageing population**.

Kerala Becomes First Indian State to Declare an Official 'State Microbe'

Why in News?

The **Government of Kerala** has officially declared *Bacillus subtilis* as its **State Microbe**, becoming the **first Indian state** to recognise a microorganism in its roster of state symbols.

Key Points:

- **About Bacillus subtilis:** *Bacillus subtilis*, commonly known as the **'Hay Bacillus'**, is a Gram-positive, rod-shaped bacterium found primarily in soil and the gastrointestinal tract of humans and ruminants.
  - ✦ *Bacillus subtilis* is a **non-pathogenic, probiotic bacterium** widely found in **soil, fermented foods** and the **human gut**.
- **Resilience:** It is famous for its ability to form tough, protective **endospores**, allowing it to survive extreme environmental conditions like heat and drought.
- **Safety:** It is categorized as **GRAS (Generally Regarded As Safe)** by global food authorities and is a key ingredient in traditional fermented foods like the Japanese *Natto*.
- **Promotion of 'One Health':** The move underscores the interconnectedness of human, animal, and environmental health, as *B. subtilis* plays a role in all three.
- **Combatting AMR:** By highlighting "good bacteria," the state aims to educate the public on the microbiome, potentially curbing the irrational use of antibiotics that leads to **Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR)**.
- **Biotechnology Hub:** Kerala aims to position itself as a leader in **Microbial Biotechnology**.