

CurrentTap

February 2026 – 1st to 7th

Comprehensive **Current Affairs Magazine** Covering

GA

ESI

FINANCE



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1. GA IN NEWS

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

S.No	Initiative	Key Facts
1.	Kavach 4.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indian Railways commissioned 472.3 route kilometres of Kavach 4.0 in a single day, marking the highest-ever Kavach rollout. Commissioned on Vadodara–Virar (344 km), Tuglakabad Junction Cabin–Palwal (35 km), and Manpur–Sarmatanr (93.3 km) sections. With this addition, Kavach 4.0 now spans 1,306.3 route kilometres across five Indian Railways zones. The commissioning set a new monthly and single-day record, surpassing the earlier 324 Rkm Kota–Mathura section. <p>About Kavach 4.0</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Latest and most advanced iteration of India’s indigenous Automatic Train Protection system.

DEFENCE EXERCISES/ INITIATIVES/ TECHNOLOGY

S.No	Exercise/Technology	Key Facts
1.	Exercise TATRAKSHA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A major multi-agency capability exercise conducted in the Kutch region of Gujarat to strengthen India’s coastal and creek security architecture. Led by the Indian Army’s Bald Eagle Brigade.

AWARDS

S.No	Award/Milestone	Key Facts
1.	Swachhata Pakhwada Awards 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paradip Port Authority (PPA) won the first Prize in recognition of its outstanding performance in cleanliness, sustainability, and community participation. Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, Paradip Port Authority successfully implemented the three core pillars of Swachhata Pakhwada 2025: Jan Bhagidari, Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam, and Safai Mitra Suraksha. <p>About the Award</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An annual initiative of Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, evaluating ports and maritime institutions across the country on cleanliness drives, waste management, green initiatives, and public participation.

DAYS IN NEWS

S.No	Day in News	Key Facts
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1.	50th Raising Day of Indian Coast Guard (ICG) (February 1)	--
2.	71st Foundation Day of National Small Industries Corporation (NSIC) (February 4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NSIC was setup in 1955, functions under the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME).

OTHER NEWS

FIRST IN NEWS

S.No	News	Key Facts
1.	Bharat Taxi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> World's first and largest cooperative-based ride-hailing platform. World's largest driver-owned mobility platform. It was initially launched in Delhi-NCR and Gujarat. Backed by eight major cooperative organisations. Drivers, known as Sarathis, receive social security benefits. Registered under the Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act, 2002.
2.	Australian Open (Tennis)	<p>Men's Singles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carlos Alcaraz (Spain) won his first Australian Open title by defeating Novak Djokovic (Serbia) in the final. At 22 years and 272 days, Alcaraz became the youngest player to complete a career Grand Slam. He broke the earlier record held by Don Budge (22 years, 363 days) set in 1938. Alcaraz became the ninth male player to complete a career Grand Slam in tennis history. With this victory, Alcaraz now has seven Grand Slam titles across all four majors- 1 Australian Open, 2 Wimbledon, 2 French Open, and 2 US Open titles. <p>Women's Singles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elena Rybakina won the 2026 Australian Open Women's Singles title by defeating Aryna Sabalenka (Belarus). Rybakina became the first Kazakh player to win an Australian Open singles title. Rybakina's second career grand slam title. <p>Other Milestones</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 38-year-old Novak Djokovic became the oldest man in the Open Era to reach the singles final, surpassing Ken Rosewall's long-standing record from 1972. Novak Djokovic also surpassed Roger Federer for the most career match wins at the Australian Open, reaching 104 victories. <p>Additional Information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A career slam is when a tennis players has won all 4 major Grand Slams (Australian Open, US Open, French Open and Wimbledon) in his/her career.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Margaret Court and Novak Djokovic hold the all-time records for the most singles titles at the Australian Open. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Margaret Court leads all players with 11 singles titles ○ Novak Djokovic holds the men’s record with 10 singles titles ○ Serena Williams has the most women’s singles titles in the Open Era with 7 trophies.
3.	68th Annual Grammy Awards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bad Bunny won Album of the Year for “Debi Tirar Más Fotos, the first primarily Spanish-language album to win the top prize. • The Dalai Lama won his first Grammy for Audio Book, Narration and Storytelling Recording for “Meditations: The Reflections of His Holiness the Dalai Lama”. • Olivia Dean won Best New Artist, earning her first Grammy award. • “Golden” from “KPop Demon Hunters” won song written for visual media at the Premiere Ceremony, marking the first time a K-pop act to win a Grammy. • Steven Spielberg won his first Grammy for “Music for John Williams”, completing his EGOT status. • Kendrick Lamar and SZA won Record of the Year for “Luther”. • Kendrick Lamar also won Best Rap Album for “GNX”. • With a total of 27 Grammys, Kendrick Lamar became the most-awarded rapper, surpassing Jay-Z. <p>Additional Information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pandit Ravi Shankar was the first Indian to win a Grammy Award, securing the honor in 1968 for Best Chamber Music Performance for his album West Meets East (a collaboration with Yehudi Menuhin).
4.	First person in history to surpass a net worth of \$800 billion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name: Elon Musk. • The milestone was driven by a landmark merger between his aerospace company, SpaceX, and his artificial intelligence firm, xAI. • He is now \$578 billion richer than Google co-founder Larry Page, the world's second-wealthiest person.
5.	First Woman Deputy Chief Minister of Maharashtra	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name: Sunetra Pawar. • She stepped into the role following the demise of Ajit Pawar.
6.	India's first designated dark sky reserve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name: Hanle Dark Sky Reserve (HDSR), Ladakh. • Recently gained significant attention for the rare observation of blood-red auroras, typically seen only near the poles, caused by an intense G4-level geomagnetic storm and an X-class solar flare, the strongest since 2003.
7.	First woman to serve on the Board of the Airports Authority of India (AAI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name: Nivedita Dubey • She assumed charge as Member (Human Resources), the second-highest position in the Airports Authority of India (AAI).
8.	India’s first-ever LNG-Diesel dual-fuel Diesel Electric Multiple Unit (DEMU) train	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deployed by Indian Railways at Sabarmati in Ahmedabad, Gujarat.
9.	India's first	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be set up at Rangeilunda Airport in Ganjam district in Odisha. • Initiative of Government of Odisha, involves a strategic partnership with the local deep-tech startup BonV Aero.

	<u>National Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) Test and Innovation Corridor</u>	
10.	<u>First traditional retailer to surpass a \$1 trillion market capitalization</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Milestone achieved by Walmart.
11.	<u>First initiative where non-artillery personnel—including infantry soldiers and ITBP troops were trained in artillery procedures and live firing missions</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name: Agni Pariksha Conducted by the Indian Army and the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP). Venue: Sigar in the East Siang district (Phase 1) & Tezu (Phase 2 in Arunachal Pradesh).
12.	<u>India's first voice-based billing and accounting AI</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name: Pilloo AI. Developed by Pilloo AI Private Limited in Andhra Pradesh.
13.	<u>The first Regional Rural Bank (RRB) in India to launch a co-branded RuPay credit card</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name: Tripura Gramin Bank (TGB). Launched in collaboration with TGB's sponsor bank, Punjab National Bank (PNB), and its subsidiary, PNB Cards & Services Ltd. Launch coincided with the bank's Golden Jubilee year (50th anniversary) celebrations. It is also the first Regional Rural Bank (RRB) among the eight PNB-sponsored RRBs to launch such initiative.
14.	<u>First West Indies player to take a hat-trick in a T20 World Cup match</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name: Romario Shepherd Milestone achieved during the opening-day match of the 2026 ICC Men's T20 World Cup against Scotland at Eden Gardens, Kolkata. The first-ever T20 World Cup hat-trick by a Caribbean bowler and the 10th in the tournament's history overall. Australia's Pat Cummins is the only player to have two hat-tricks to his name in T20 World Cup history.
15.	<u>Women's Premier League (WPL) 2026 (Cricket)</u> Finals Venue: Kotambi Stadium, Vadodara	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) won the Women's Premier League 2026 title for second time by defeating Delhi Capitals. RCB became the first franchise to hold both IPL and WPL titles simultaneously. RCB successfully chased 203 runs, the highest run chase in any IPL or WPL final. It was the first time a target above 175 was chased in any Women's T20 final, league or international. The chase was the most successful run chase in WPL history. RCB broke their own previous record of 202-run chase in WPL 2025 against Gujarat Giants. Player of the Series & Purple Cap Winner for most wickets: Sophie Devine (Gujarat Giants). Orange Cap (leading run scorer): Smriti Mandhana (RCB). She is the first Indian player to win orange cap in WPL history.
16.	<u>First district in India to achieve 100% insurance coverage</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Milestone achieved by Alwar (Rajasthan). Nine villages were formally declared fully covered

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Part of the "Insurance for All by 2047" initiative, a joint effort by the Government of India and the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI).
17.	First port in India to initiate the installation of an advanced Anti-Drone Security System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name: V.O. Chidambaranar Port Authority (VOC Port), Thoothukudi, Tamil Nadu.
18.	First custodian in India to issue a fully digital Foreign Portfolio Investor (FPI) licence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name: Kotak Mahindra Bank First time an FPI licence was issued along with the execution of all account-opening documentation using Electronic Signatures (e-signatures), completely eliminating the need for physical "wet" signatures and paper-heavy processes.
19.	First state in India to unveil a dedicated 'Elderly Budget'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name: Kerala.
20.	First company in India's natural stone industry to simultaneously hold both ISO 9001:2015 and 5S Gold Grade certifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Milestone achieved by HMG Stones. ISO 9001:2015 certification for its Quality Management System and 5S Gold Grade certification for workplace organisation and operational discipline.

BANKING AND FINANCE

S.No	Program/Initiative	Key Facts
1.	Unicorn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Juspay became the first Indian unicorn of 2026 after raising \$50 million in a Series D follow-on funding round led by WestBridge Capital. Juspay is a Bengaluru-based payments infrastructure company that provides high-scale technology for global merchants and banks <p>About Unicorn</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Unicorn is a privately held startup company with a current valuation of \$1 billion or more. The term was coined in 2013 by venture capitalist Aileen Lee to highlight how rare it was for a startup to achieve such a high valuation. <p>Additional Information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decacorn: A startup valued at over \$10 billion. Hectocorn: A rare company valued at over \$100 billion. Soonicorn: A "soon-to-be" unicorn—a startup nearing the \$1 billion mark.
2.	CHAKRA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiative of the State Bank of India. A dedicated Centre of Excellence (CoE) established by the State Bank of India (SBI). A specialized platform to finance and support India's high-growth sunrise sectors.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

S.No	Technology in News	Key Facts
1.	<u>Project Genie</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launched by Google DeepMind. An AI-powered research prototype that allows users to create playable, interactive virtual worlds from simple text or image prompts.
2.	<u>Codex app</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A dedicated desktop application launched by OpenAI.
3.	<u>New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New Start)</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Last major nuclear arms control agreement between the United States and Russia. Signed in 2010; Came into effect from 2011. Aim was to reduce and limit the number of strategic nuclear weapons held by both countries. The treaty got expired recently ending all legal limits on US and Russian nuclear arsenals.

DEFENCE EXERCISES/ INITIATIVES/ TECHNOLOGY

S.No	Exercise/Technology	Key Facts
1.	<u>Exercise KHANJAR- 13th edition</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joint annual military exercise between India & Kyrgyzstan. Venue: Misamari in Sonitpur district of Assam. Conducted since 2011. 12th edition was conducted in March 2025 in Kyrgyzstan.
2.	<u>Khabarovsk</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Russia's newest special-purpose nuclear submarine. The primary carrier for the Poseidon "doomsday" underwater nuclear drone of Russia.

ENVIRONMENT

S.No	News	Key Facts
1.	<u>Bird Atlas of Goa</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The comprehensive Bird Atlas of Goa was officially released, making Goa the second state in India (after Kerala) to have a complete, state-level bird atlas.

SPORTS

S.No	Sport Event and Venue	Key Facts
1.	<u>ICC Under-19 World Cup 2026</u> Finals Venue: Harare Sports Club, Zimbabwe Hosts: Zimbabwe and Namibia.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> India won the title, defeating England. India's record-extending sixth U-19 World Cup title. Vaibhav Sooryavanshi's 175 is the highest individual score in a U-19 World Cup final. India posted 411/9, the highest team total in a U-19 World Cup final.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vaibhav Sooryavanshi's 175 is the highest individual score in any ICC tournament final (youth or senior level). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ He also recorded the fastest 150 in U-19 cricket (71 balls). ○ The 14-year-old became the youngest centurion in U-19 World Cup history. ○ He set a new record for most sixes in a Youth ODI innings. ○ Won Player of the Tournament.
		<p>Additional Information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The record for the fastest U-19 World Cup century is held by Will Malajczuk (51 balls).
2.	Pro Wrestling League 2026 Venue: Noida Indoor Stadium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Winner: Haryana Thunders. • Runner-up: Delhi Dangal Warriors. • Player of the Tournament: Turan Bayramov (Delhi Dangal Warriors).

AWARDS

S.No	Award/Milestone	Key Facts
1.	2026 Crafoord Prize in Geosciences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awarded to Veerabhadran Ramanathan, Indian-origin atmospheric scientist. • The award recognises his decades-long research on super-pollutants and atmospheric brown clouds. <p>About the Award</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awarded by the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences. • Often referred to as the “Nobel of Geosciences”. • Reward: cash award of 8 million Swedish kronor and a gold medal.
2.	22nd Upendra Nath Brahma ‘Soldier of Humanity’ Award, 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awarded to Gyalum Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck, the Queen Mother of Bhutan. • Honoured for her lifelong contributions to humanitarian service, social development, and inclusive growth. • Awarded by Upendra Nath Brahma Trust (UNBT).

APPOINTMENT

S.No	Person in News	Key Facts
1.	Y Khemchand Singh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sworn in as the Chief Minister of Manipur, ending months of President’s Rule. • President’s Rule was imposed after the resignation of former CM N Biren Singh.
2.	Vinay Muralidhar Tonse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The RBI has approved his appointment as the next Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of Yes Bank for a three-year term. • He will succeed the current MD and CEO, Prashant Kumar.

PERSONS IN NEWS

S.No	Person in News	Key Facts
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1.	Nirmala Sitharaman	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presented her 9th consecutive Union Budget, becoming the longest-serving Finance Minister in terms of uninterrupted budgets. Holds the record for maximum budgets presented consecutively under one Prime Minister. With 9th Consecutive Budget, she became the longest serving finance minister. <p>Additional Information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> India's first Union Budget was presented in 1860, by James Wilson, the finance member of the Indian Council. The first Union Budget of independent India was presented on November 26, 1947, by R K Shanmukham Chetty. The shortest Budget speech was delivered in 1977 by H M Patel, comprising only 800 words. Nirmala Sitharaman delivered the longest Budget speech in February 2020, lasting 2 hours and 40 minutes. Former Prime Minister Morarji Desai holds the overall record with 10 budgets, though not consecutively. P Chidambaram presented nine budgets across different governments, while Pranab Mukherjee presented eight budgets. Nirmala Sitharaman is India's first full time woman finance minister.
2.	Kabak Yano	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A mountaineer from Arunachal Pradesh. Successfully summitted Mount Aconcagua in Argentina, the highest peak in South America. Mount Aconcagua (22,831 feet) is the highest peak in the Western Hemisphere.

OBITUARIES

S.No	Person in News	Key Facts
1.	Andre Beteille	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Noted sociologist and writer. Awarded the Padma Bhushan in 2005 for his contribution in literature and education.

BOOKS AND AUTHORS

S.No	Book Title	Key Facts
1.	Four Stars of Destiny	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An unpublished memoir by former Army Chief General M.M. Naravane.

PLACES IN NEWS

S.No	Place in News	Key Facts
1.	Smithsonian's National Museum of Asian Art	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Located at Washington, United States. The museum announced the return of the legal title for three ancient bronze sculptures- Nataraja, Somaskanda, and Saint Sundarar with Paravai — to the Government of India.

2.	Adampur Airport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Officially renamed as Sri Guru Ravidass Maharaj Ji Airport. Location: Jalandhar, Punjab.
3.	Chabahar Port	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Iran's only oceanic port and India's first overseas port venture. Located on the Makran coast in the Sistan-Baluchestan province. A central node of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), <p>Additional Information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> INSTC is a 7,200-km-long multi-mode transport project for moving freight among India, Iran, Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia, Central Asia and Europe.

DAYS IN NEWS

S.No	Day in News	Key Facts
1.	World Cancer Day 2026 (February 4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Theme: 'United by Unique'.
2.	International Day of Human Fraternity (February 4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Theme: Dialogue Over Division

MISCELLANEOUS

S.No	News	Key Facts
1.	Operation Shastra	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launched by Delhi Police. Objective: To target those individuals who were sharing pictures of themselves with weapons on online social media platforms and using abusive language.
2.	Centre of Excellence (CoE) for aerospace studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set up by Airbus at Gati Shakti Vishwavidyalaya (GSV) in Vadodara, Gujarat. To serve as a hub for innovation, with a specific focus on sustainable aviation solutions.

2. GA + ESI

PIB IN NEWS

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

2.1 [World Wetlands Day 2026](#)

Why in News

- **World Wetlands Day 2026** was celebrated across the country on **February 2, 2026**.

Key Highlights

- **Theme:** The theme for World Wetlands Day 2026 was "**Wetlands and Traditional Knowledge: Celebrating Cultural Heritage**".
- **Objective:** The celebration highlighted the deep connection between wetlands, local communities, and traditional practices, emphasizing that conservation must become a "people's movement."
- **New Releases during the event.**
 - A document titled "**Cultural Wonders of Ramsar Sites**" was released, showcasing the intangible cultural heritage linked to these wetlands.
 - A video teaser on the **Parvati Arga Bird Sanctuary** (a Ramsar site in Gonda, UP) was launched to highlight its ecological and cultural value.

Note: Kindly refer to [CurrentTap 1st to 31st January 2026 \(Article 2.36\)](#) for more information on [Ramsar Convention](#).

EMPLOYMENT GENERATION IN INDIA

2.2 [e-SHRAM CARDS](#)

Why in News

- The **Minister of State for Labour and Employment** provided a written update in the Lok Sabha regarding the status and expansion of the **e-Shram portal**.

[e-Shram portal](#)

- **Launched:** August 2021
- **Ministry:** Ministry of Labour and Employment
- **Objective:** Serves as comprehensive **National Database of Unorganised Workers (NDUW)**.
- Registered workers are issued an **e-Shram card** with a **12-digit Universal Account Number (UAN)**.
- **Eligibility Age Group:** 16 to 59 years.
- **Exclusions:** Members of EPFO/ESIC or an income taxpayer.

- **Cost:** free registration
- **Key Features & Benefits**
 - **Accident Insurance:** ₹2 lakh for accidental death or total disability and ₹1 lakh for partial disability under PMSBY.
 - **Occupational Classification:** Uses the **National Classification of Occupations (NCO)** to categorize workers based on their specific trade and skill set
- **Strategic Linkages:** The portal is now linked with:
 - **National Career Service (NCS)** for job opportunities.
 - **Skill India Digital Hub (SIDH)** for skill development.
 - **UMANG Platform** for mobile governance
- In line with the **Budget 2024-25** vision, the e-Shram portal was upgraded to a "**One-Stop-Solution**". This allows unorganized workers to access various social security and welfare schemes through a single window.
- **14 schemes** from different Central Ministries have been integrated with e-Shram. These include:
 - **Insurance & Pension:** Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY), Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY), and Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan-dhan (PM-SYM).
 - **Health & Food:** Ayushman Bharat (AB-PMJAY), One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC), and Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY).
 - **Housing & Employment:** MGNREGS, PMAY-G (Gramin), and PMAY-U (Urban).
 - **Others:** PM-KISAN, PMSVANidhi (Street Vendors), and PMMSY (Fisheries).

2.3 [Rapid Survey on Functional Cooperatives \(RSFC\)](#)

Why in News

- MoSPI has released the **Draft Schedule** for the **Rapid Survey on Functional Cooperatives (RSFC)** for public consultation.

Key Highlights

- **Need for Survey:** Despite cooperatives' importance in **agriculture, housing, and poverty reduction**, their exact contribution to GDP and employment remains unclear; the survey aims to bridge this data gap.
- **Significance:** The results will support **evidence-based policymaking** to strengthen cooperatives in line with "**Sahakar Se Samridhi**."



DID YOU KNOW

India is home to about **25%** of the world's cooperatives.

Rapid Survey on Functional Cooperatives

- It is a survey conducted by **MoSPI** on the request of the **Ministry of Cooperation** to fill missing data about the cooperative sector.
- **Objective:** The primary goal is to estimate the
 - **Gross Value Added (GVA),**
 - **Gross Value of Output (GVO),** and
 - **Employment Generation.**
- **Coverage:** The survey encompasses both **primary cooperatives** and their federations across the country (Rural and Urban).
- **Scope:** It covers **30 sectors** of cooperatives, broadly grouped into:
 - Credit Cooperatives
 - Housing Cooperatives
 - Producer Cooperatives
 - Marketing Cooperatives
 - Social Sector Cooperatives
 - Multipurpose Cooperatives
- **Reference Years:** To assess growth and impact (especially post-pandemic), the survey will capture comparative data for two financial years:
 - **FY 2020-21**
 - **FY 2023-24**
- **Sampling Frame:** The survey will utilize the list of Functional Cooperatives (FCs) from **National Cooperative Database (NCD).**

2.4 Skill India Digital Hub

Why in News

- An update was provided on the progress of the **Skill India Digital Hub (SIDH)** in a written reply to the Lok Sabha.

Key Highlights

- SIDH has been successfully integrated with key national digital systems to ensure seamless experience:
 - **DigiLocker** (for verifiable credentials).
 - **e-Shram** (to reach unorganized/gig workers).
 - **National Career Service (NCS)** (for job matching).
 - **UIDAI** (for Aadhaar-based verification).

- **PFMS** (for transparent fund transfers).
- **Chatra Parliamentary Constituency** (Latehar district), Jharkhand) was highlighted for specific progress in noting the enrollment and training completion.
- **Gig Workers:** Although there is **no** separate category **for gig workers**, linking them with the **e-Shram** portal helps them access **skill and upskilling** courses based on National Skills Qualifications Framework.

Skill India Digital Hub (SIDH)

SIDH is India's **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)** for the skilling, education, employment, and entrepreneurship ecosystem.

- Launched in **2023**
- **Objective:** It serves as a unified digital interface to:
 - To **integrate** training, assessment, certification and other skill development related services on a single digital platform.
 - To provide **end-to-end digital services** to candidates, training providers and assessment agencies.
 - To enable discovery of skilling courses, digital enrolment, assessment, and certification.
 - To ensure digitally verifiable and portable credentials.
- **Nodal Ministry: Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE)**
- **Core Philosophy:** It is built on a **mobile-first** approach to ensure accessibility for India's diverse population and supports multiple Indian languages.
- **Technology:** The platform uses **facial recognition** and **Aadhaar-based eKYC** for secure authentication and eliminates the need for physical paperwork.

2.5 MY BHARAT Platform

Why in News

- The **Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports** provided a written reply in the Lok Sabha, detailing the status and functions of the **MY Bharat** portal.

Key Highlights

- **Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue (VBLYD) 2026** is major initiative was hosted on the portal, engaging lakhs of youth in activities like quizzes, essay writing, "Hack for Social Cause," and "Design for Bharat."
- **Clarification on Employment:** The recent update emphasized that while it builds skills through experiential learning, direct job placement is **not** a stated objective, distinguishing it from portals like NCS.

MY (Mera Yuva) Bharat Platform

- **Launch Year:** Originally launched on 31st October 2023 (National Unity Day)
- **Ministry:** Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports
- **Developed by:** Digital India Corporation under Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology

- **Objective:** To serve as a "**Phygital**" (Physical + Digital) ecosystem that connects youth with government initiatives and community development activities.
- **Core Function:** The platform facilitates:
 - **Experiential Learning Programmes.**
 - **Volunteering opportunities.**
 - Participation in events hosted by partner Ministries (e.g., National Youth Festival).
- **Target Group:** Youth in the age group of **15–29 years** (in line with the National Youth Policy).
- The platform connects youth with programs and learning opportunities in **Businesses, Government Departments and Non-Profit Organisations.**
- The **first version** focused on volunteerism, civic participation, and skill development.
- **Technology Enhancements:**
 - The platform is being made accessible in **22 Indian languages.**
 - **AI Integration:** An AI-based **chatbot** is being introduced for user support, along with speech-to-text functionality via **BHASHINI.**
 - **Integrations:** It is now linked with other government platforms like **CSC, Har Ghar Tiranga,** and **Mission LiFE.**

2.6 [NCS Platform](#)

Why in News

- The **Minister of State for Labour and Employment** provided a detailed update on the **National Career Service (NCS)** platform in a written reply to the Rajya Sabha.

Key Highlights

- **Expansion of Model Career Centres (MCCs):** The government has approved the setting up of **407 MCCs** across the country to provide physical access to employment services.
- **Hiring Data Policy:** The Ministry clarified that notifying final hiring figures is **not mandatory** for employers on the NCS portal.

National Career Service (NCS)

- **Launched in July 2015** as a **5-Year Mission Mode Project** by the **Ministry of Labour and Employment.**
- **Objective:** To provide a platform that **connects job seekers with employers.**
- **Core Services:**
 - Job search and matching (for both private and government sectors).
 - Career counselling and vocational guidance.
 - Information on skill development courses.
 - Organizing online and offline **Job Fairs.**

- **Key Feature:** All services on the portal are provided **free of cost** to all stakeholders.
- The NCS portal is now fully integrated with the **Skill India Digital Hub (SIDH)** allowing:
 - **Skilled jobseekers** on SIDH to seamlessly access NCS job opportunities.
 - **NCS users** to access skilling and upskilling programs offered on SIDH.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

2.7 [ADI VANI APP](#)

Why in News

Why in News

- **Minister of State for Tribal Affairs** informed Lok Sabha about the **Adi Vaani (ADI VANI) mobile app** and its status, including aspects related to **tribal welfare in Kerala**.

Adi Vaani (ADI VANI) mobile app

- **Launch (Beta):** Launched in **September 2025**; currently on **Android**.
- **Ministry:** Ministry of Tribal Affairs.
- **Aim/Objective:** Real-time text & speech translation between **Hindi, English, and multiple tribal languages** (two-way) and interactive language learning tools; also digital preservation of indigenous knowledge/folklore/cultural heritage.
- **Features:**
 - Text-to-Text, Text-to-Speech, Speech-to-Text, Speech-to-Speech translation
 - OCR for digitizing/translating tribal manuscripts
 - Repository: bilingual tribal dictionaries, primers; subtitle integration for dignitaries' speeches
 - Health/cultural awareness content in native languages (incl. sickle cell disease information)
- **Developed By:**
 - **Lead Institution:** IIT Delhi
 - **Collaborators:** BITS Pilani, IIIT Hyderabad, IIIT Naya Raipur
 - **Supported By:** Tribal Research Institutes (TRIs) in **Jharkhand, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Meghalaya**
- The app includes **tribal language primers**, some developed by **NCERT and the Central Institute of Indian Languages**, helping foundational learning in tribal languages like **Santali, Warli, Pawri**.

EXPORT- IMPORT POLICY

2.8 Administrative Arrangement on Advanced Electronic Signatures and Seals

Why in News

- MeitY and the Directorate-General for Communication Networks, Content and Technology (DG CONNECT) of the European Commission signed an **Administrative Arrangement on Advanced Electronic Signatures and Seals** to enhance digital cooperation and interoperability between India and the EU.

About Administrative Arrangement on Advanced Electronic Signatures and Seals

- Objective:** Establish cooperation on **interoperability of advanced electronic signatures and seals**, including **Public Key Infrastructure systems**, in line with **Indian and EU legal frameworks**.
- Implementation authority (India):** **Controller of Certifying Authorities (CCA)** under MeitY, as per the **Information Technology Act, 2000**.
- Core provisions:**
 - Framework for **linking trusted lists** of recognised service providers in India and the EU for **cross-border** validation of electronic signatures and seals.
 - Foundation for **deeper future digital cooperation** between India and the EU.
- Expected outcome:**
 - Indian exporters and EU buyers will be able to **digitally sign contracts, invoices, and compliance documents**, reducing **transaction time, cost, and verification effort** for cross-border trade, especially benefiting **MSMEs**.

KEY TERMS

Advanced Electronic Signature

A type of digital signature that is uniquely linked to the signatory and capable of identifying them reliably in electronic transactions.

Electronic Seal

A digital equivalent of a company seal used to authenticate data or documents issued by legal entities.

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENTS IN INDIA

2.9 PAIMANA Portal

Why in News

- An update was shared in Parliament on **implementation of PAIMANA portal** by the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation MoSPI.
- What it does:** The portal serves as a centralized data repository for national infrastructure development and facilitates one-click, web-generated analytical reports, contributing to data accuracy and operational efficiency.

PAIMANA portal.

Full form: Project Assessment, Infrastructure Monitoring & Analytics for Nation-building Assistance. (PAIMANA)

- **Launched in September 2025.**
- **Objective:** A web-based portal for the monitoring of all Central Sector Infrastructure Projects costing ₹150 crore and above.
- **Purpose:** It replaces the old, outdated monitoring system (OCMS) with a modern, high-tech dashboard.
- **Core Principle:** "One Data, One Entry".
- **Sectors Covered:** It monitors projects in 17 key areas, including **Roads, Railways, Power, Coal, and Civil Aviation**. Recently, **Sports and Labour** ministries were also added.
 - About **60%** of projects (pertaining to Ministries of Road Transport, Petroleum, and Coal) are updated automatically on PAIMANA.
- **Working:** It generates "Flash Reports" (quick summaries) that show which projects are delayed or over budget, helping the government take immediate action.

2.10 Miniratna Status

Why in News

- The **Raksha Mantri** has approved the grant of '**Miniratna**' Category-I status to **Yantra India Limited (YIL)**.

Key Highlights

- YIL is one of the **seven new Defence PSUs (DPSUs)** formed in **October 2021** following the corporatization of the erstwhile **Ordnance Factory Board (OFB)**.
- **Significance of Status:** It empowers the Board of YIL to incur **capital expenditure** on new projects, modernization, and equipment purchases up to **₹500 crore** without seeking Government approval.
- **Product Portfolio:** YIL specializes in critical defense components, including:
 - **Carbon Fibre Composites** and Glass Composites.
 - Assembly products for **Artillery Guns, Main Battle Tanks (MBTs)**, and Armoured Vehicles.
 - Aluminum Alloys and components for Medium/Large Calibre Ammunition.



DID YOU KNOW

Now 4 out of 7 DPSUs are Miniratna Category-I Companies, including **Munitions India Limited, Armoured Vehicles Nigam Limited, and India Optel Limited.**

KEY TERMS

Central Public Sector Enterprise

Companies in which the direct holding of the Central Government or other CPSEs is **51%** or more.

Miniratna Status

Miniratna is a status given by the **Government of India** to financially sound and efficiently run **CPSEs**, allowing them greater operational and financial autonomy.

- **Categories:**

- **Category-I:** Profits in the **last 3** consecutive years, at least **₹30 crore pre-tax profit** in any one of those years, and positive net worth.
- **Category-II:** Profits in the **last 3 consecutive years** with **positive** net worth.

- **Benefits (Category-I):**

- Can invest up to **₹500 crore** or net worth (whichever is lower) in new projects **without** government approval.
- Allowed to form Joint Ventures, subsidiaries, and overseas offices (with conditions).

- **Administrative Control:** Remain under their parent ministry (e.g., Department of Defence Production for YIL) while enjoying financial autonomy in daily operations.

OTHER NEWS

SOCIAL SECTOR IN INDIA- EDUCATION

2.11 [India Skill Accelerator](#)

Why in News

- The **Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE)** has signed a MoU with the **World Economic Forum (WEF)** to launch the "**India Skills Accelerator**".

About India Skills Accelerator

- **Aim:** To bridge critical skill gaps, enhance the global employability of Indian youth, and ensure the talent pool is ready for emerging domains like **Artificial Intelligence (AI)**, **Green Energy**, **Robotics**, and **Advanced Manufacturing**.
- **Accelerator focuses on three Strategic Pillars:**
 - **Innovative Financing:** for developing new models to fund skilling initiatives.
 - **Industry Alignment:** for ensuring curricula match the evolving demands of the global economy.
 - **Social Inclusion:** for focusing on equitable skilling opportunities for all demographics.
- **Governance structure: Co-Chairs** from both the government and private sector.
 - **Mr. Sanjiv Bajaj** (CMD, Bajaj Finserv Ltd.) and **Ms. Shobana Kamineni** (Executive Chairperson, Apollo Health Co) have been identified as a Co-Chair for the initiative.
 - **Govt Representation: Shri Jayant Chaudhary** (Minister of State for Skill Development).
- **Functioning Mechanisms:**



DID YOU KNOW

Skill accelerator tie-ups are currently active with six countries—Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Brazil, Indonesia, Nigeria, and Qatar.

- **Hackathons:** To identify innovative solutions for skilling challenges.
- **Action Plans:** Rolling out structured plans to scale successful skilling models.
- **Discovery:** Identifying global supply and demand trends to facilitate the international mobility of the Indian workforce.
- **Strategic Framework of accelerator:**
 - It involves coordination with the **Ministry of External Affairs** and the **Ministry of Education** to align local training with global mobility needs.
 - It supports **New Education Policy (NEP) 2020** by integrating **vocational** and **higher education** and enabling **mutual recognition of qualifications**.
- **Corporate Commitments**
 - Mr. Sanjiv Bajaj highlighted the **₹5,000 crore Bajaj Beyond CSR Programme** as a strong example of private sector commitment for skilling.
- **Global Context:** The India Skills Accelerator is part of the WEF's global "**Reskilling Revolution**" initiative, which aims to provide better education, skills, and economic opportunities to **1 billion people** by 2030.
 - With this launch, **India** joins a global network of **45 national accelerators** that work to prepare workforces for the future economy.
 - **AI Focus:** The launch aligns with global commitments made at Davos 2026, where over 25 tech companies pledged to support **120 million workers** with AI skills and job pathways.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

2.12 [Aspirational Blocks Programme](#)

Why in News

- **NITI Aayog** has entered a strategic partnership with the **NIIT Foundation** to achieve **100% digital literacy financial inclusion and employability** across selected Aspirational Blocks through targeted interventions.
- The initiative aims to bridge the digital divide in the country's most underdeveloped sub-districts, ensuring that the benefits of digital India reach the last mile.

Key Highlights

- **Specific Targets:**
 - Beneficiaries: It aims to reach approximately **1.2 lakh beneficiaries** across the targeted blocks.
 - Mandate to ensure at least **40% participation by women**.
- **Mechanism:** NIIT Foundation will lead on-ground implementation through trained mobilisers and trainers, while also building the capacity of community facilitators, self-help group (SHG) leaders and peer educators.

Note: Kindly refer to [CurrentTap 1st to 31st January 2026 \(Article 2.23\)](#) for more information on [Aspirational Blocks Programme](#)

GENDER ISSUES

2.13 Menstrual health and hygiene

Why in News

- The **Supreme Court of India**, in a landmark judgment declared that the **right to menstrual health and hygiene** is an integral part of the **Right to Life** under **Article 21** of the Constitution.

Key Highlights

- **Constitutional Basis:**
 - **Article 21 (Right to Life):** The right to live with dignity means having basic facilities. When girls lack menstrual hygiene facilities, it affects their health, personal freedom, and self-respect.
 - **Article 21A (Right to Education):** Without proper toilets and hygiene facilities, many girls miss school or drop out, which harms their right to free and compulsory education.
 - **Article 14 (Right to Equality):** Equality does not mean treating everyone the same. Ignoring girls' natural needs like menstruation puts them at a disadvantage and is unfair.

About the Judgement:

- **Mandatory Provision of Pads:** All schools (government, aided, and private) must provide **free oxo-biodegradable sanitary napkins** to girl students from **Classes 6 to 12**.
- **MHM Corners:** Every school must establish a **Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) corner** equipped with essentials like **spare innerwear, uniforms, and disposable bags** to handle emergencies.

GLOBALISATION

2.14 Second India-Arab Foreign Ministers' Meeting

Why in News

- The **Second India-Arab Foreign Ministers' Meeting** was held in **New Delhi** and concluded with the adoption of the "**Delhi Declaration**"

Key Declarations and Conclusions

- Both sides agreed to implement the **Executive Program for 2026–2028** to strengthen cooperation in sectors like energy, trade, healthcare, and digital technologies.
- **Counter-Terrorism:** The Declaration adopted a **zero-tolerance approach**, condemning cross-border terrorism, misuse of drones, and the **Pahalgam terrorist attack** on civilians.



DID YOU KNOW

STREAM is a **regional initiative** to boost economic integration and develop ports, maritime, and logistics infrastructure in Red Sea–bordering Arab and African countries.

League of Arab States (Arab League)

- Founded in **1945**, following adoption of **Alexandria Protocol** in **1944**.
- **Headquarters:** Cairo, Egypt

- Objective: To strengthen ties and coordinate policies among Arab nations.
- Regional organization of **22 Arab countries (Founding members—Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Transjordan, and Yemen)**

India–Arab League Relations:

- India is an **Observer** to the Arab League (since **2007**)
- India imports **over 47% of crude oil** from Arab League countries, and **50% of fertilisers and related products**

2.15 US officially leaves World Health Organization

Why in News

- The **United States** has officially completed its withdrawal from the **World Health Organization (WHO)**.

Note: Kindly refer to **CurrentTap 1st to 31st January 2026 (Article 2.90)** for more information on **USA’S exist plan**.



DID YOU KNOW

The United States, under President Donald Trump, has announced its decision to withdraw from **66 international organizations, treaties, and agencies**.

World Health Organisation

- A UN specialized agency for global public health.
- **Established: 7 April 1948**; headquartered in **Geneva**, Switzerland.
 - 🇺🇦 7th April is Celebrated as **World Health Day**
- **Mandate:** Promotes global health, sets health standards, responds to emergencies, and monitors disease outbreaks.
- **Membership:** Comprises 194 Member States, including all UN members except **Liechtenstein**
- **Funding:** Through member state contributions and voluntary donations; the **U.S.** was historically the **largest** donor.
- **Organizational Structure:**
 - **World Health Assembly (WHA):** Supreme decision-making body.
 - **Executive Board:** Implements WHA decisions.
 - **Secretariat:** Headed by the Director-General.
- **India and WHO:** India is a **founding** member.
 - WHO has a strong presence in India through WHO Country Office–India.

MEASUREMENT OF GROWTH

2.16 GDP Forecast

Why in News

- **Goldman Sachs**, the leading global investment bank, **upgraded India's 2026 GDP growth forecast**.

Key Highlights

- Goldman Sachs raised its **Calendar Year (CY) 2026 real GDP growth forecast** from **6.7% to 6.9%** after the **United States lowered reciprocal tariffs on Indian goods to ~18%** from 25%.
- The tariff reduction is estimated to provide an **incremental GDP boost of ~0.2 percentage points** if fully implemented, reflecting improved trade prospects.
- Goldman Sachs expects the **Current Account Deficit (CAD)** to **narrow to ~0.8% of GDP** in 2026, down by about **0.25% of GDP** due to better external balance conditions after tariff cuts.
- **Complementary Outlook:** Moody's projects that India's **real GDP growth of 6.4% in FY 2026-27 will be the fastest among all G-20 nations**.



DID YOU KNOW

Moody's 6.4% forecast is **below the Finance Ministry's Economic Survey projection of 6.8–7.2% for FY27**.

2.17 Model Context Protocol (MCP) Server

Why in News

- **MoSPI** launched the **beta version** of the **Model Context Protocol (MCP) server** to enable direct access to **official government statistical data** through **AI tools and applications**.

About Model Context Protocol (MCP) Server

- **Implementing Agency:** **National Statistics Office (NSO)** under the **Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation (MoSPI)**.
- **Objective:** To make **official statistical data AI-ready** by enabling **direct, real-time access** to government datasets through **AI tools and applications** via a standardized protocol interface.
- **Core Functionality:**
 - Connects AI clients directly with **eSankhyiki** portal datasets using MCP server protocols.
 - Eliminates the need for **manual downloads and data preprocessing** by enabling AI query integration.
 - Users can integrate data into analytics tools, generate reports, and perform analysis **in real time**.
- **Initial Data Products Available:**
 - Periodic Labour Force Survey
 - Consumer Price Index
 - Annual Survey of Industries

KEY TERM

Model Context Protocol (MCP)

It is a **protocol standard** widely adopted in the AI ecosystem, enabling contextual interactions between AI systems and external data sources.

- Index of Industrial Production
- National Account Statistics
- Wholesale Price Index
- Environmental Statistics
- **Significance:**
 - Enhances **transparency** and **accessibility** of official statistics.
 - Supports **data-driven decision making**, research, and policy planning.

eSankhyiki Portal

- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (**MoSPI**).
- **Launched On:** June 29, 2024 (celebrated as **National Statistics Day**).
- **Purpose:** To establish a centralized, comprehensive data management and sharing system for the seamless dissemination of official statistics in India.
- **Vision:** To provide real-time, reliable data inputs to planners, policymakers, researchers, and the public, fostering **evidence-based decision-making**.
- **Key Modules**

Module	Description	Key Datasets Included
Data Catalogue	A detailed inventory of the Ministry's major data assets. It allows users to search within datasets and tables.	PLFS, CPI, IIP, ASI, National Accounts, Household Consumption (HCES), Multiple Indicator Survey (MIS).
Macro Indicators	Offers time-series data of key indicators with filtering and visualization tools. Covers the last 10 years .	National Accounts Statistics (NAS), CPI, IIP, and Annual Survey of Industries (ASI)

- **Key Features**
 - Provides **time-series data** across multiple sectors.
 - User-friendly interface with search, filter, and download options.
 - Enables data download in machine-readable formats.

INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC ISSUES

2.18 Country Partnership Framework (CPF)

Why in News

- The **World Bank Group** and the **Government of India** have launched a new **Country Partnership Framework (CPF)** for the period **FY 2026–2031**.

About Country Partnership Framework (CPF)

- The CPF is a plan that shows how the World Bank will help a country **grow and develop**, by deciding its **goals** and the **kind of money and expertise** it will provide over the next 4–5 years.
 - It is based on **Systematic Country Diagnostic (SCD) tool**, which identifies the key challenges and opportunities for **ending poverty** and boosting shared prosperity in that country.
- **Approach:** It integrates the capabilities of all World Bank Group institutions:
 - **IBRD** (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development) for public sector loans.
 - **IFC** (International Finance Corporation) for private sector investment.
 - **MIGA** (Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency) for investment guarantees.



DID YOU KNOW

India is the World Bank Group's **largest single-country client**, with existing commitments significantly across 79 IBRD projects and 174 IFC projects.

India and CPF

- Under this framework, the World Bank has committed to providing **\$8–10 billion in annual financing** to India over the next five years.
- **Core Objective:** The partnership is designed to accelerate India's growth and align with the vision of "**Viksit Bharat**" (Developed India) by 2047.
- **Strategic Pillars:**
 - **Rural Prosperity:** Diversifying incomes beyond agriculture and strengthening value chains.
 - **Urban Transformation:** Supporting livable cities and infrastructure for a population projected to double in urban areas by 2050.
 - **Human Capital:** Investing in early childhood health, education, and skills.
 - **Green Transition:** Strengthening energy security and climate resilience.
- **Focus on Jobs:** A central priority is **private sector-led job creation** to absorb the approximately **12 million young people** entering India's workforce annually.
- **Key Sectors:** The framework targets job-rich sectors such as **infrastructure, agribusiness, healthcare, tourism, and value-added manufacturing**.

2.19 [India's FTA](#)

Why in News

- Union **Minister of Commerce and Industry** announced that India has finalized **eight Free Trade Agreements (FTAs)** covering **37 developed countries** in the last few years.

Key Highlights

- The Minister specified that these agreements cover major global economies, while he referred to "8 FTAs," the count of 37 nations typically includes:
 - **European Union (EU):** 27 nations.



DID YOU KNOW

India has set a target of boosting exports to **\$2 trillion by 2030** and integrate India into global supply chains as a "China Plus One" alternative.

- **EFTA Bloc:** 4 nations (Switzerland, Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein).
- **Individual Nations:** United Kingdom, Australia, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Oman, Mauritius, and New Zealand.
- **Future Negotiations:**
 - **Latin America:** Talks with **Chile** and **Peru** are nearing conclusion, with a specific focus on securing **critical minerals** (like lithium and copper).
 - The Minister mentioned that India is poised to "quickly start" negotiations with **Canada**.
 - India is also in talks to **expand** the Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) with the **Mercosur** bloc (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay) and launch fresh FTA talks with the **Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)**.

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA

2.20 FASTags

Why in News

- **Union Minister for Road, Transport and Highways** informed Parliament that **around 5.9 crore FASTags are active** in India out of **11.86 crore issued so far**.

Key Highlights

- **Regional usage distribution:** **Chandigarh** accounts for **14%** of all Annual Pass transactions nationwide, followed by **Tamil Nadu (12.3%)** and **Delhi (11.5%)**.
- **High-usage toll plazas:** **Bijwasan Fee Plaza (Delhi NCR)** has the highest share (~57%) of annual pass car crossings, with **Mundaka (Delhi NCR)** and **Jhinjholi (Sonipat)** fee plazas also recording about **53%** of non-commercial vehicle crossings via the Annual Pass.
- **Annual pass facility:** Launched in **August 2025**, around **42 lakh annual passes** have been activated, facilitating **over 19 crore transactions** with **one-time fee of ₹3,000** (valid for **one year or 200 crossings**).
- **Non-commercial usage:** Approximately **25% of non-commercial vehicles** are using FASTag transactions via the annual pass.
- **Operational efficiency:** Impact assessment of the **National Electronic Toll Collection (NETC) Programme** in **2024-25** showed that the **average time to cross a toll plaza** under ETC is **40 seconds**, compared with **12.23 minutes** under manual tolling.



DID YOU KNOW

FASTag is an **RFID-based electronic toll collection tag** affixed on a vehicle's windscreen that **automatically deducts toll payments** from a linked prepaid/savings/current account.

3. GA + FINANCE

PIB IN NEWS

RECENT DEVELOPMENT IN FINANCIAL SECTOR

3.1 PSB Alliance Annual Strategy Meet

Why in News

- The **PSB Alliance Annual Strategy Meet 2026** was held in New Delhi.
- **Department of Financial Services (DFS)** launched **BAANKNET (Bank Assets Auction Network)** mobile app and **Digital Balance Confirmation Platform (DBCP)**.

Key Highlights

- The Alliance's role in positively impacting the **Net Interest Margin (NIM)** and reducing the **Cost-to-Income Ratio** of member banks was emphasized.
- The Alliance has evolved from being just a "**service provider**" to a "**Strategic Partner**" for the banking sector.
- **Strategic Directives were announced:**
 - **Common Lending Solutions:** The Alliance was advised to develop **common digital lending platforms** for smaller PSBs.
 - ✓ This would save them the cost of building proprietary tech stacks and help them compete with larger private banks.
 - Expanding the shared service ecosystem to entities **beyond** just Public Sector Banks.
 - A focus on **creating credit strategies** specifically for the unbanked population to support the "Viksit Bharat" vision.

Launches:

- **BAANKNET Mobile App:** An extension of the existing web portal for **bank asset auctions**.
 - It aims to make the purchase of mortgaged properties (NPAs) accessible to common citizens nationwide, ensuring transparency and faster recovery for banks.
- **Digital Balance Confirmation Platform (DBCP):** A digital tool to streamline the audit process.
 - It eliminates the need for manual balance confirmation certificates, making statutory audits more efficient and tamper-proof.

PSB Alliance

- The entity was formerly known as **CORDEX** (Customer Operational Repository and Data Exchange), is a **Joint Venture (JV)** company formed by all **12 Public Sector Banks** in India.
- It was incorporated in **September 2019**, as a private limited company under the **Companies Act, 2013**.

- **Mandate:** It acts as an "umbrella organization" to create common IT infrastructure and operational services for all PSBs.
- **Core Philosophy:** To pool resources and aggregate demand, thereby reducing costs and improving service delivery (e.g., Doorstep Banking) through a "Shared Services" model.
- **Flagship Service:** It is best known for managing the **Doorstep Banking (DSB)** initiative, where a single agent can serve customers of any PSB.

OTHER NEWS

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY MARKET

3.2 Order-to-Trade Ratio (OTR) framework for algorithmic trading

Why in News

- SEBI has eased the **Order-to-Trade Ratio (OTR) framework for algorithmic trading**, widening exemptions and excluding certain **market-making activities** from penalties to support liquidity and practical compliance.

About Algorithmic Trading

- Algorithmic trading refers to **automated trading using computer algorithms**, often characterised by high order volumes and rapid execution (associated with **high-frequency trading**).
- The **Order-to-Trade Ratio (OTR)** framework governs algorithmic orders in both **cash and derivatives segments**, ensuring that high ratios of orders placed vs. trades executed are penalized as a market integrity safeguard.
- **Market-making activities:** These are actions by **designated market makers** to provide **liquidity and tighter spreads** in markets; their algorithmic orders are now excluded from OTR penalty calculations.

Key Highlights

- **Revised OTR exemption band:** Algorithmic orders in **equity options** placed within **±40% of the last traded price (LTP) of the premium or ±₹20**, whichever is higher, will be **exempt** from high **OTR penalties**.
- **Market-making orders excluded:** Algorithmic orders from **designated market makers** for market-making activities will **not be counted** towards OTR penalty computation.
- **Purpose of changes:** The amendments aim to **support liquidity provision**, ensure penalties target only excessive/non-economic orders, and balance market efficiency with deterring disruptive behaviour.

3.3 'Fit and Proper' Norms for Market Intermediaries

Why in News

- SEBI has proposed to **ease 'fit and proper' norms** for **market intermediaries** to reduce automatic disqualifications and regulatory burdens under its intermediary's framework.

About 'Fit and Proper' Norms for Market Intermediaries

- The **'fit and proper' criteria** are regulatory standards intended to ensure that only persons/entities of **integrity, fairness, and sound character** can **operate as market intermediaries** in the securities market.
- SEBI proposes to revise the criteria to avoid **rule-based automatic disqualifications** based on preliminary legal actions and instead provide **procedural fairness** (opportunity to be heard) and **case-based assessment** of suitability.

Key Proposals

- **No automatic ban for complaints:** Just filing an FIR, charge sheet, or complaint in an economic offence case will not automatically disqualify someone. A person is innocent until proven guilty.
- **Mandatory disclosure:** Intermediaries must inform SEBI about any event that could potentially disqualify them.
- **Fair hearing:** No one will be declared "not fit and proper" without giving them a proper chance to explain their side.
- **Insolvency cases:** Starting insolvency proceedings will not automatically disqualify someone unless a final winding-up order is passed.
- **Shorter penalty gap:** The waiting period to apply again after a show-cause notice reduced **from 1 year to 6 months**, and the **automatic 5-year ban** removed in some cases.

RECENT DEVELOPMENT IN FINANCIAL SECTOR

3.4 [Reinsurance Advisory Committee \(RAC\)](#)

Why in News

- The **Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI)** has reconstituted the **Reinsurance Advisory Committee (RAC)** for a term of **three years**.

About Reinsurance Advisory Committee (RAC)

- **Primary goal:** To suggest mechanisms to **maximize the retention** of insurance premiums within the country, rather than ceding them to foreign reinsurers.
- **Objective:** The committee will provide strategic inputs to the regulator on **emerging risks, market trends, and structural reforms** needed in the reinsurance space.
- **Mandate:** Guiding the regulator on:
 - Framing and **refining regulations** to align with global standards.
 - Promoting a robust, resilient, and globally **competitive** reinsurance market within India.
 - Addressing increasing catastrophe **risks** and ensuring **capacity building** within the domestic ecosystem.
 - Supporting IRDAI's objective of positioning India as a global reinsurance hub.
- **Composition:**
 - **Chairperson:** The committee is chaired by **Mr. A.V. Girija Kumar**



DID YOU KNOW

- The government has lowered the **Net Owned Funds (NOF)** requirement for foreign reinsurers from **₹5,000 crore** to **₹1,000 crore**.
- **Bajaj Group** recently completed the acquisition of **Allianz's 23%** stake in their joint ventures.

- **Mr. Praveen Vashishta**
- **Mr. Roopam Asthana.**
- **Ms. T.L. Alamelu**
- The **Deputy General Manager** (Reinsurance) at IRDAI will function as the Secretary to the committee.

3.5 [First Unicorn of 2026](#)

Why in News

- **Juspay**, a Bengaluru-based payments infrastructure company, has officially become the **first unicorn of 2026**.

Key Highlights

- The company raised **\$50 million** (approximately ₹415 crore) in a funding round led by **WestBridge Capital**, valuing it at **\$1.2 billion**.
- **Revival in the Indian startup**: This marks a potential revival in the Indian startup ecosystem after a funding dry spell, with WestBridge Capital leading the bet on infrastructure-focused fintech.
- **Key Innovations by Juspay**:
 - **HyperUPI**: Powers the UPI stack for major apps like **BHIM, Cred, and Google Pay**.
 - **Juspay Safe**: A browser that improves transaction success rates by automating OTP reading.
 - **Namma Yatri**: Juspay developed the open-source tech behind the **ONDC-backed** mobility app "Namma Yatri," which challenges aggregators like Ola and Uber by offering zero-commission rides.



DID YOU KNOW

A Unicorn is a startup company valued at over **\$1 billion**.

3.6 [Impact of the amalgamation of Regional Rural Banks \(RRBs\)](#)

Why in News

- The **Ministry of Finance** has directed the **National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD)** to conduct a study on the impact of the amalgamation of **Regional Rural Banks (RRBs)**.

Key Highlights

- **Objective of Study**: Assess the outcomes of successive rounds of consolidation, focusing on:
 - **Operational efficiency** and **financial performance**.
 - **Governance standards**.
 - Role of RRBs in advancing **financial inclusion**, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas.
- **Viability Plan 2.0**: A new "Viability Plan Framework 2.0" is under consideration by the Standing Consultative Committee (SCC).
 - It aims to ensure long-term sustainability by addressing **capital adequacy, business diversification, and technology adoption**.

- **IPO Readiness:** Three RRBs—**Haryana Gramin Bank, Kerala Gramin Bank, and Tamil Nadu Grama Bank**—have been identified as eligible to initiate Initial Public Offering (IPO) preparations.
 - These banks were chosen based on strict eligibility norms:
 - ✓ a net worth of at least **₹300 crore** and a
 - ✓ capital adequacy ratio (CRAR) above **9%** in the last three years.
- **MSME Focus:** To enhance credit flow, **916 branches** of 27 RRBs have been mapped to **460 MSME clusters** identified by SIDBI and the Ministry of MSME.

Regional Rural Banks (RRB)

- **Structure:** RRBs are jointly owned by the **Central Government (50%), Sponsor Bank (35%), and State Government (15%)**.
- The government has been consolidating RRBs in phases to improve their financial health and operational scale.
 - **Phase 1 (2006–2010):** Reduced RRBs from 196 to 82.
 - **Phase 2 (2013–2015):** Reduced to 56.
 - **Phase 3 (2019–2021):** Reduced to 43.
 - **Phase 4 (Current):** Reduced to **28** under the "**One State-One RRB**" policy (effective May 1, 2025).

3.7 Income Tax Act, 2025

News 1

- **Union Finance Minister** while presenting the Union Budget announced that a comprehensive new tax law, titled the **Income Tax Act, 2025**, replacing **Income Tax Act, 1961** will come into effect from **April 1, 2026**.

About Income Tax Act 2025

- The new code is designed to be more relevant to modern economic realities, removing obsolete provisions and redundant sections that existed in the 1961 Act.
- **Structural & Administrative Reforms:**
 - **800 sections** were condensed to just **536 sections**, reducing the text volume by **nearly 50%**.
 - **"Tax Year" Concept:** The confusing terminology of 'Assessment Year' (AY) and 'Previous Year' (PY) has been abolished.
 - ✓ Replaced by a single "**Tax Year**" framework, meaning taxpayers will file returns for the same year in which income is earned.
 - The Act legally codifies **Faceless Assessment** and automated processing, minimizing human interaction and reducing corruption.
- **Personal Taxation:**
 - **Tax Rates (New Regime):**

Annual Income Slab	Tax Rate
Up to ₹4 Lakh	Nil (0%)
₹4 Lakh – ₹8 Lakh	5%
₹8 Lakh – ₹12 Lakh	10%
₹12 Lakh – ₹16 Lakh	15%
₹16 Lakh – ₹20 Lakh	20%
₹20 Lakh – ₹24 Lakh	25%
Above ₹24 Lakh	30%

- **Standard Deduction:** The standard deduction for salaried employees is **₹75,000**.
- **Effective Tax-Free Limit:** The standard deduction for individuals earning up to approx. **₹12.75 Lakh** can effectively pay **zero tax**.
- **Capital Gains:**
 - **Uniform Rate:** A single **Long Term Capital Gains (LTCG)** tax rate of **12.5%** now applies across all asset classes - real estate, gold, and equity.
 - ✓ This replaces the tiered system of 1961 act where different assets had rates of **10% or 20%**.
 - **Indexation Removed:** The benefit of indexation (adjusting purchase price for inflation) has been **removed** for property and other assets.
 - The annual exemption limit for capital gains has been raised from **₹1 Lakh** to **₹1.25 Lakh**.
- **TDS & TCS Compliance Reforms:**
 - The Tax Collected at Source (TCS) threshold for foreign remittances has been rationalized to **₹10 Lakh**.
 - A new section mandates a **10% TDS** on payments (salary, bonus, commission) made by a firm to its partners if the amount exceeds ₹20,000.
- **Corporate & Business Taxation**
 - **Foreign Companies:** To attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and support the "China Plus One" strategy, the tax rate for foreign companies has been reduced from **40% to 35%**.
 - **Buyback Tax Shift:** Now, shareholders **pay tax on share buybacks** like **dividends**, instead of the company paying a separate tax.

- The **Minimum Alternate Tax (MAT)** rate has been reduced to **14% (earlier 15%)**, and provisions have been made to eventually phase it out as exemptions are removed.
 - ✓ For companies staying in the **Old Tax Regime**, MAT becomes a final tax—**no New MAT credit** will arise after 1 April 2026.
 - ✓ **Validity of Existing MAT Credit:** MAT credits earned earlier **remain valid for their original 15-year period** (e.g., credit earned this year is valid for 15 years; credit earned 10 years ago is valid for 5 more years)
 - ✓ **Usage Cap in New Regime:** Limited to **25%** of the annual tax liability.
- **STT Hike:** The Budget 2026-27 proposed an increase in **Securities Transaction Tax (STT)** to discourage aggressive retail speculation in futures and options trading.
 - **Futures:** Increased to **0.05%** (from 0.02%).
 - **Options:** Options premium raised to **0.15%** (from 0.1%)
 - The government expects to collect **₹73,700 crore in STT in FY27**, about **16% more** than the revised FY26 estimate of **₹63,670 crore**
- **Other Changes**
 - **Decriminalization:** Several minor technical defaults (like delayed TDS filing) have been decriminalized to reduce the fear of prosecution for genuine errors.
 - **Black Money Act (foreign assets disclosure thresholds):**

KEY TERMS

Securities Transaction Tax (STT)

A tax levied on the value of securities (excluding commodities and currency) transacted through a recognized stock exchange.

Category	Disclosure Limit	Cost to "Come Clean"
Undisclosed Income & Assets	Up to ₹1 Crore	60% (30% tax + 30% additional levy)
Tax Paid, but Asset Not Reported	Up to ₹5 Crore	₹1 Lakh flat fee
Very Small Assets (General)	Up to ₹20 Lakh	No Penalty (Excludes Immovable Property)

News 2

EPFO welcomed the **Union Budget's rationalisation** of the income-tax regime for provident funds.

Key rationalisation

- **Recognition:** Recognition under the **Income Tax Act, 2025** will be available **only** to provident funds that have obtained **exemption under Section 17** of the EPF Act, 1952.
- Investment norms will be regulated under the **EPF framework and subordinate legislation**, the statutory ceiling restricting investment in **Government securities to 50%** has been removed.
- Employer contribution **ceiling is ₹7.5 lakh**, amounts beyond this are taxed as **perquisites (perks)**.

3.8 Joint Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP)

Why in News

- The **Supreme Court of India** allowed a **joint Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP)** petition to be filed against **multiple linked real estate companies** under the **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC)**.

About Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process



- It is a **legal procedure** under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code for resolution of corporate debtors in distress, aimed at maximizing asset value and protecting stakeholder interests.
- A financial creditor can file an application to initiate a **Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process** when default has occurred under section 7 of IBC.
- When corporate entities are **intrinsically linked** in execution and marketing of a project — sharing operations, management, and obligations — they can be treated as a **single integrated unit** for Joint CIRP purposes.

3.9 [India's benchmark bond yield](#)

Why in News

- **India's benchmark bond yields** rose to **over a one-year high** after the **government unveiled a record gross borrowing plan of ₹17.2 trillion** in the **Union Budget 2026**, prompting traders to brace for potential **bond losses**.



DID YOU KNOW

The **10-year Government of India bond yield** is a key indicator of borrowing costs and a benchmark for other interest rates in the economy.

About Bond Yields

- **Definition:** Bond yield is the **return an investor earns** on a bond, typically expressed as an annual percentage rate.
- A **higher government borrowing programme** increases the **supply of bonds**, which can push prices **down** and **yields** up, if demand doesn't keep pace — as seen after the record borrowing announcement.

Key Highlights

- The **10-year Government of India bond yield** climbed up to **6.78%**, the **highest since January 2025**, and may reach near **7% in the coming weeks** according to market analysts.
- **Record borrowing plan:** The Centre plans to borrow **₹17.2 trillion** in **FY 2027 (from April 1)** about **18% higher** than the current fiscal year's plan and above market expectations.
- **Shorter-term yields** also rose alongside the benchmark 10-year yield.
- The **higher supply** of government securities amid **heavy issuance by states** and **weak demand** from **pension and insurance funds** has contributed to rising yields.
- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** intervened by **purchasing debt** to support liquidity and provide **yield guidance** following the market's sell-off.
- **Net borrowing** is expected to increase slightly compared to the current year after accounting for redemptions.

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