

# Weekly One Liners 16th to 22nd of December 2024

## Jalvahak Scheme

India's inland waterways sector received a significant boost with the unveiling of the 'Jalvahak' scheme by the Union Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways (MoPSW), Shri Sarbananda Sonowal. Designed to promote long-haul cargo movement across National Waterways 1 (Ganga), 2 (Brahmaputra), and 16 (Barak), this initiative aims to transform waterways into a sustainable, efficient, and economical mode of transportation. Alongside the launch of this scheme, fixed scheduled cargo services were inaugurated, marking a step toward enhancing logistics and decongesting road and rail networks.

Launch of 'Jalvahak' Policy

- Incentivizes long-haul cargo transportation on National Waterways 1, 2, and 16.
- Provides a reimbursement of up to 35% of the operating expenditure incurred by cargo owners.
- Targets distances exceeding 300 km, focusing on bulk and containerized cargo.
- Encourages partnerships with private operators by allowing cargo owners to hire vessels outside government entities like IWAI or ICSL.
- **Validity:** Initially launched for a three-year period.

### Inauguration of Fixed Scheduled Sailing Service

#### Cargo Ships Launched

- MV AAI
- MV Homi Bhaba
- MV Trishul with Dumb Barges Ajay & Dikhu.

#### Routes and Transit Times

- NW 1 (Ganga): Fixed timelines for Kolkata-Patna-Varanasi routes.
- Kolkata to Patna: 7 days.
- Patna to Varanasi: 5 days.
- Kolkata to Varanasi: 14 days.
- NW 2 (Brahmaputra) via IBPR:
- Kolkata to Pandu (Guwahati): 18 days.
- Pandu to Kolkata: 15 days.

#### Economic & Ecological Advantages

- Promotes a sustainable mode of transportation with lower carbon emissions compared to road and rail.
- Reduces logistics costs and boosts trade efficiency.
- Decongests overburdened railways and roadways.

## Current Cargo Movements Under Jalvahak

- **MV Trishul** – Carried 1500 tonnes of cement from Kolkata to Guwahati via IBPR.
- **MV Aai** – Transported 1000 tonnes of gypsum to Patna.
- **MV Homi Bhaba** – Delivered 200 tonnes of coal to Varanasi.

## Performance Goals

- **Target for 2030:** 200 million MT of cargo movement.
- **Long-term vision for 2047:** 500 million MT, contributing significantly to India's Blue Economy.
- **Modal shift objective:** 800 million tonne-kilometers with an investment of ₹95.4 crore by 2027.

## India's Inland Waterways: Potential and Challenges

### Current Infrastructure

- **Total navigable length:** 20,236 km.
- **Rivers:** 17,980 km.
- **Canals:** 2,256 km.
- India's cargo movement via waterways remains underutilized compared to nations like the United States, China, and the EU.

### Recent Progress

- Growth in cargo volume: From 18.07 million MT (2013-14) to 132.89 million MT (2023-24), a 700% increase.

### Challenges

- Limited mechanized craft suitable for inland navigation.
- Need for greater private sector involvement.
- Awareness among cargo owners regarding the cost-effectiveness and efficiency of waterways.

### Significance of 'Jalvahak' and Fixed Services

- **Trade Enhancement:** Offers businesses a cost-effective and environmentally sustainable alternative.
- **Economic Growth:** Revives underutilized waterways in eastern India, including Bengal and the Northeast.
- **Community Impact:** Improves livelihoods and connectivity for communities along riverine routes.

### Leadership Perspectives

- **Union Minister Shri Sarbananda Sonowal:** Emphasized the vision of transformation through transportation and revitalizing inland waterways under PM Modi's leadership.
- **Union Minister of State Shantanu Thakur:** Highlighted the historic turnaround in logistics movement for Bengal.
- **Minister of State for Transportation Daya Shankar Singh:** Celebrated the initiative as a pathway to economic prosperity for riverine communities.

**Understanding La-Niña's Effect**

**La Niña, a phase of the El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO),** has significant effects on global weather patterns. This climatic phenomenon is characterized by cooler-than-usual sea surface temperatures in the central and eastern Pacific Ocean. **While La Niña typically leads to increased rainfall in India during the monsoon season,** it can also cause disruptions in other parts of the world, such as droughts in Africa and intensified hurricanes in the Atlantic. The emergence of La Niña is a critical factor in determining India's seasonal weather, including its monsoons and winters. However, the delay in La Niña's expected onset in 2024 has raised questions about its eventual impact.

**What is La Niña?**

- La Niña is part of the El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) and occurs when the **central and eastern Pacific Ocean experiences cooler-than-normal sea surface temperatures.**
- It often **brings opposite weather effects compared to El Niño,** which is marked by warmer sea surface temperatures.

**Impact on India's Climate**

- **Monsoons:** La Niña typically leads to normal or above-normal rainfall during the monsoon season in India.
- **Winter:** La Niña winters tend to be colder, but not always uniformly across the country.
- **Summer:** La Niña generally mitigates extreme heat during the summer, contrasting with the hotter, drier conditions associated with El Niño.

**Delayed La Niña in 2024**

- The La Niña phase **was expected to begin by July 2024, but it has not emerged as predicted.**
- Forecasts suggest that **La Niña may form by late 2024 or early 2025,** but its strength may be weaker than usual.
- Historically, La Niña has formed more commonly in the monsoon or pre-monsoon periods. It has formed only twice between October and December since 1950.

**Current Oceanic Niño Index (ONI) Values**

- The ONI compares three-month average sea surface temperatures in the tropical Pacific to a 30-year average.
- For La Niña, ONI values must be below  $-0.5^{\circ}\text{C}$ , and the current ONI value is around  $-0.3^{\circ}\text{C}$ , indicating a weak La Niña.

**La Niña Winter**

- **Southern India:** Cities like Bengaluru and Hyderabad have experienced colder winters, though this may not be directly linked to La Niña, given the weak ONI values.
- **Northern India:** There has been a delay in the onset of winter, with above-normal temperatures observed.
- **Air Quality:** La Niña winters tend to have higher wind speeds, which help in dispersing pollutants and improving air quality. However, lower planetary boundary layer heights can trap pollutants near the ground.

**Effects of La Niña on Air Pollution**

- Faster wind speeds during La Niña winters **help transport pollutants away,** improving air quality.
- A lower planetary boundary layer height could potentially trap pollutants, worsening air quality, especially if people burn biomass for heating.

**La Niña and Monsoon Outlook for 2025**

- If **La Niña persists into the summer of 2025,** it could offer relief from extreme heat, unlike the intense heatwaves observed in El Niño years.
- La Niña generally supports a robust monsoon, leading to normal or above-normal rainfall in India.
- **El Niño Impact:** El Niño years, on the other hand, typically result in below-average rainfall during the monsoon, as seen in 2023.

**Historical La Niña and El Niño Trends**

- **India has received less rainfall during intense El Niño events** (e.g., 1980s, 1990s), with more pronounced effects in north and south India.
- In contrast, **La Niña years (e.g., 2020, 2021, 2022) have generally provided normal or above-normal rainfall.**

**Potential Impact of La Niña in 2024-2025**

If La Niña forms as expected, it could lead to,

- A milder winter, with cooler temperatures in southern India.
- A more moderate summer with less intense heat.
- A stronger monsoon season, with higher rainfall across India, benefiting agriculture and water resources.

**Gadhimai Festival**

**The Gadhimai Festival, held every five years in southeastern Nepal,** is one of the **world's most controversial religious observances,** known for the **mass slaughter of animals.** This **quinquennial event,** rooted in centuries of tradition, draws hundreds of thousands of Hindus who believe the ritual **will appease the Hindu goddess Gadhimai,** bringing them prosperity. However, the festival's massive scale and the cruelty involved have sparked fierce debates between animal rights activists and devotees. Despite legal challenges and public outcry, the festival's bloodshed continues, raising important questions about the intersection of religion, tradition, and animal welfare.

**Key Points on the Gadhimai Festival**

**Origins and Beliefs**

- **Founder:** Bhagwan Chowdhary, founder of the Gadhimai temple in Bariyarpur, Bara District, Nepal.
- **Mythology:** According to the legend, Gadhimai, the goddess of power, promised prosperity to Chowdhary in exchange for a blood sacrifice.
- **Animal Sacrifice:** Initially, human blood was desired, but animal blood was substituted, which became the foundation of the tradition.

**Rituals and Scale of the Sacrifice**

- **Animal Sacrifice:** The festival includes the slaughter of a variety of animals, including rats, pigeons, goats, and water buffaloes.
- **Estimates:** In the 2019 festival, around 250,000 animals were sacrificed. In 2009, the figure was as high as 500,000 animals.
- **Involvement:** Animals are sometimes brought from India, and the Nepalese government has historically supported the event.

**Efforts to End the Sacrifices**

- **Petitions and Legal Challenges:** Animal welfare groups and individuals, including former actress Brigitte Bardot, have petitioned the courts in Nepal and India to stop the festival's animal sacrifices.

**Supreme Court Rulings**

- **India (2014):** The Supreme Court ordered that neighboring Indian states restrict the **transport of animals for the Gadhimai festival**.
- **Nepal (2016):** The Supreme Court ruled that the government should phase out and discourage animal sacrifices. However, this ruling has been largely ignored, and the sacrifices continue.

**Government Responses**

- The Nepalese government has stated that it would not use force to prevent the sacrifices, citing religious sentiments.
- In 2015, temple caretakers promised a blood-free festival in 2019, but the killings went ahead as planned.

**Ongoing Debate**

- **Supporters:** Devotees view the Gadhimai festival as an important, untouchable religious tradition essential for gaining blessings from the goddess.
- **Criticism:** Activists argue the festival exploits both animals and impoverished communities, calling the sacrifices cruel, violent, and inhumane.

**Current Status**

- **2024 Festival:** The animal sacrifices began on December 8, despite ongoing legal and ethical concerns.
- **Global Attention:** The Gadhimai Festival remains a flashpoint for discussions about animal rights, cultural practices, and the role of religion in modern society.

**India Promotes AYUSH Systems Globally**

The **Ministry of AYUSH** has launched a scheme for the promotion of international cooperation to enhance awareness and recognition of AYUSH systems worldwide. As part of this initiative, India has established **AYUSH Chairs at five foreign universities**—Bangladesh, Australia, Mauritius, Latvia, and Malaysia. This effort is aimed at advancing academic exchange, research, and public awareness of Ayurveda, Yoga, Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, Sowa-Rigpa, and Homoeopathy, contributing to their global acceptance.

**Key Objectives and Scope of the Scheme**

- The scheme's objectives are to promote international awareness of AYUSH, facilitate its development and recognition abroad, foster interaction among stakeholders, and support the market development of AYUSH products, services, education, and research globally. In addition, the Ministry supports the establishment of AYUSH academic chairs in foreign countries to boost academic collaboration and research.

**Strategic Partnerships and Initiatives**

- The Ministry has signed 24 MoUs with foreign countries for cooperation in traditional medicine, including 15 MoUs with international institutes for setting up AYUSH Chairs. This is part of a broader effort to strengthen the global presence of AYUSH. The Ministry also offers scholarships for foreign nationals to study AYUSH in India and has established **42 AYUSH Information Cells in 38 countries**.

**AYUSH Chairs' Role and Function**

- The AYUSH Chairs are part of India's ongoing efforts to integrate **AYUSH into global health systems**. These Chairs promote research and education on **AYUSH systems**, advancing their recognition in the host countries. Under this initiative,
- Indian experts are deployed at foreign institutions, and the Ministry provides financial support, including salaries and travel expenses, while the host university offers accommodation and local hospitality.

**FIFA THE BEST AWARDS 2024**

The **Best FIFA Football Awards 2024** were held in **Doha, Qatar, on December 17**, where several individuals were honored for their exceptional performances throughout the year. **The event recognized the best players, coaches, and goalkeepers in both men's and women's football, as well as other prestigious awards like the FIFA Puskás Award and FIFA Fan Award.** The awards were determined by a voting system that included national team coaches, captains, media members, and fans, all of whom contributed to crowning the winners.

**FIFA The Best Award 2024 Highlights**

**The Best FIFA Men's Player**

- **Winner:** Vinicius Jr (48 points)
- **Second:** Rodri (43 points)
- **Third:** Jude Bellingham (37 points)
- Vinicius Jr claimed his first Best Men's Player award, topping the voting with strong support from fans, coaches, and players.

**The Best FIFA Women's Player**

- **Winner:** Aitana Bonmati (52 points)
- **Second:** Barbra Banda (39 points)
- **Third:** Caroline Graham Hansen (37 points)
- Bonmati retained her title, earning overwhelming support across all categories.

**The Best FIFA Men's Goalkeeper**

- **Winner:** Emiliano Martinez (26 points)
- **Second:** Ederson (16 points)
- **Third:** Unai Simon (13 points)
- Martinez regained the title with strong backing from Argentine figures.

**The Best FIFA Women's Goalkeeper**

- **Winner:** Alyssa Naeher (26 points)
- **Second:** Cata Coll (22 points)
- **Third:** Mary Earps (11 points)
- Naeher's excellent performances were recognized with the highest voting support.

**The Best FIFA Men's Coach**

- **Winner:** Carlo Ancelotti (26 points)
- **Second:** Xabi Alonso (22 points)
- **Third:** Luis de la Fuente (11 points)
- Ancelotti earned his first Best Men's Coach award for his successful career, including Real Madrid's triumphs.

**The Best FIFA Women's Coach**

- **Winner:** Emma Hayes (23 points)
- **Second:** Jonatan Giraldez (20 points)
- **Third:** Arthur Elias (13 points)
- Hayes was honored for her leadership and achievements with Chelsea FC.

**The FIFA Puskás Award**

- **Winner:** Alejandro Garnacho (26 points)
- **Second:** Yassine Benzia (22 points)
- **Third:** Denis Omedi (16 points)
- Garnacho's stunning goal won him the prestigious award for the best goal of the year.

**The FIFA Marta Award**

- **Winner:** Marta (22 points)
- **Second:** Asisat Oshoala (20 points)
- **Third:** Sakina Karchaoui (16 points)
- The award celebrated the iconic Brazilian player's remarkable contribution to football.

**The FIFA Fan Award**

- **Winner:** Guilherme Gandra Moura

**The FIFA Fair Play Award**

- **Winner:** Thiago Maia

**The Best FIFA Men's 11**

- **Goalkeeper:** Emiliano Martinez
- **Defenders:** Ruben Dias, Dani Carvajal, Antonio Rudiger, William Saliba
- **Midfielders:** Jude Bellingham, Rodri, Toni Kroos
- **Forwards:** Erling Haaland, Lamine Yamal, Vinicius Junior

**The Best FIFA Women's 11**

- **Goalkeeper:** Alyssa Naeher
- **Defenders:** Irene Paredes, Ona Batlle, Lucy Bronze, Naomi Girma
- **Midfielders:** Aitana Bonmati, Lindsey Horan, Gabi Portilho, Patri Guijarro
- **Forwards:** Caroline Graham Hansen, Salma Paralluelo

**Sahitya Akademi Awards 2024**

Sahitya Akademi announced its annual **Sahitya Akademi Awards in 21 languages**. Eight books of poetry, three novels, two short story collections, three essays, three literary criticism works, one play, and one research work won the Sahitya Akademi Awards 2024. Awards in Bengali, Dogri, and Urdu will be declared at a later stage.

The Awards, recommended by distinguished Jury members in 21 Indian languages, were approved by the Executive Board of the Sahitya Akademi, which met today under the Chairmanship of Sri Madhav Kaushik, President, Sahitya Akademi.

**Sahitya Akademi Awards 2024**

Category	Awardees
Poetry	Sameer Tanti (Assamese), Dileep Jhaveri (Gujarati), Gagan Gill (Hindi), K. Jayakumar (Malayalam), Haobam Satyabati Devi (Manipuri), Paul Kaur (Punjabi), Mukut Maniraj (Rajasthani), Dipak Kumar Sharma (Sanskrit)
Novel	Aron Raja (Bodo), Easterine Kire (English), Sohan Koul (Kashmiri)
Short Stories	Yuva Baral (Nepali), Hundraj Balwani (Sindhi)
Essays	Mukesh Thali (Konkani), Mahendra Malangia (Maithili), Baishnab Charan Samal (Odia)
Literary Criticism	K.V. Narayana (Kannada), Sudhir Rasal (Marathi), Penugonda Lakshminarayana (Telugu)
Play	Maheswar Soren (Santali)
Research	A.R. Venkatachalapathy (Tamil)

- The books were selected on the basis of recommendations made by a Jury of three members in the concerned languages in accordance with the procedure laid down for the purpose. According to the procedure, the Executive Board declared the Awards on the basis of unanimous selections made by the Juries or on the basis of majority vote. The Awards relate to books first published during the five years immediately preceding the year of
- Award (i.e., between 1 January 2018 and 31 December 2022)
- The Award, in the form of a casket containing an engraved copper plaque, a shawl, and an amount of ₹1,00,000/- towards cash content, each will be presented to the awardees at the award presentation function, which will be held on 8 March 2025 at Kamani Auditorium, Copernicus Marg, New Delhi – 110 001.

**Sahitya Akademi Award 2024- Full List**

Language	Title and Genre	Name of the Author
Assamese	Pharingbore Bator Kathaa Jane (Poetry)	Sameer Tanti
Bodo	Swrni Thakhwi (Novel)	Aron Raja
English	Spirit Nights (Novel)	Easterine Kire
Gujarati	Bhagwan-ni Vato (Poetry)	Dileep Jhaveri
Hindi	Main Jab Tak Aai Bahar (Poetry)	Gagan Gill
Kannada	Nudigala Alivu (Literary Criticism)	K.V. Narayana
Kashmiri	Psychiatric Ward (Novel)	Sohan Koul
Konkani	Rangtarang (Essays)	Mukesh Thali
Maithili	Prabandh Sangrah (Essays)	Mahendra Malangia
Malayalam	Pingalakeshini (Poetry)	K. Jayakumar
Manipuri	Mainu Bora Nungshi Sheiroi (Poetry)	Haobam Satyabati Devi
Marathi	Vindanche Gadyarop (Criticism)	Sudhir Rasal
Nepali	Chichimira (Short Stories)	Yuva Baral
Odia	Bhuti Bhakti Bibhruti (Essays)	Baishnab Charan Samal
Punjabi	Sun Guvanta Sun Budhivanta: Itihaasnamaa Punjab (Poetry)	Paul Kaur
Rajasthani	Gaon Ar Amma (Poetry)	Mukut Maniraj
Sanskrit	Bhaskaracaritam (Poetry)	Dipak Kumar Sharma
Santali	Seched Sawnta Ren Andha Manm (Play)	Maheswar Soren
Sindhi	Purzo (Short Stories)	Hundraj Balwani
Tamil	Tirunelveli Ezuciyum Vaa. Vuu.ci. Yum 1908 (Research)	A.R. Venkatachalapathy
Telugu	Deepika (Criticism)	Penugonda Lakshminarayana

**55th GST Council Meeting Key Highlights and Proposals**

The 55th GST Council meeting, chaired by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, convened ministers from 28 states, two Union Territories, and key stakeholders. The discussions centered on vital tax reforms impacting consumers and businesses across sectors, focusing on luxury items, essential services, and rationalizing the tax structure.

**Key Highlights**

**Luxury Items Under Spotlight**

- Proposal to increase GST rates on high-end products,**
- Wristwatches priced above ₹25,000 and shoes costing over ₹15,000 per pair may attract a 28% GST (up from 18%).
- Premium garments above ₹10,000 might also face a steep 28% tax, while,**
- Garments below ₹1,500 remain at 5%.
- Garments between ₹1,500 and ₹10,000 may see a jump to 18%.
- Aim:** Align taxation with pricing structures of luxury goods.

**Reforms for Food Delivery Platforms**

- GST rate for platforms like Swiggy and Zomato** may be reduced.
- From 18% with Input Tax Credit (ITC) to a simplified 5% without ITC.

**Impact**

- Lower delivery charges, benefiting consumers.**
- Address disparity between dining out and food delivery taxation.

**GST on Insurance Products**

- Proposals to reform GST on insurance premiums** to make policies affordable:
- Health insurance plans with ₹5 lakh coverage and term life insurance may be exempted from GST.
- Current GST on health and life insurance premiums is 18%, while endowment and annuity plans have variable rates.
- Recommendations:** Exemptions for senior citizen-focused policies.
- Rationale:** Align with international practices where insurance products are largely tax-free.

**Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) in GST**

**Proposal to bring ATF under the GST regime**

- Airlines could claim input tax credit, reducing operational costs.
- Resistance likely from states due to revenue concerns.
- Rate Rationalization on 148 Items

**Proposed increase in GST for certain goods**

- Items like compact vehicles and pre-owned electric vehicles may move from the 12% to 18% bracket.

**Sin Goods**

- **Aerated beverages, cigarettes, and tobacco could see GST rates rise to 35% (from 28%), with additional cess.**

**Current GST Structure**

- **Four main GST slabs:** 5%, 12%, 18%, and 28%, alongside zero percent and special rates for precious metals.
- Law permits a maximum combined GST rate of 40% (20% CGST + 20% SGST).

**Challenges with Proposed Changes**

- High taxation on items like cigarettes may increase smuggling and tax evasion, causing greater revenue loss.
- Differentiated tax slabs based on price could lead to administrative complexity and evasion tactics.

**Concerns with Revenue and Compliance**

- Quality of revenue remains poor due to high social costs of raising additional tax revenue.
- Evasion persists despite increased GST collections, necessitating better analytics and enforcement.

**Broader Recommendations**

- Expanding the GST base by including petroleum products like ATF and natural gas.
- Reducing litigation and arrears to enhance efficiency.
- Ensuring minimal disruption to the current stability in GST compliance and collections.

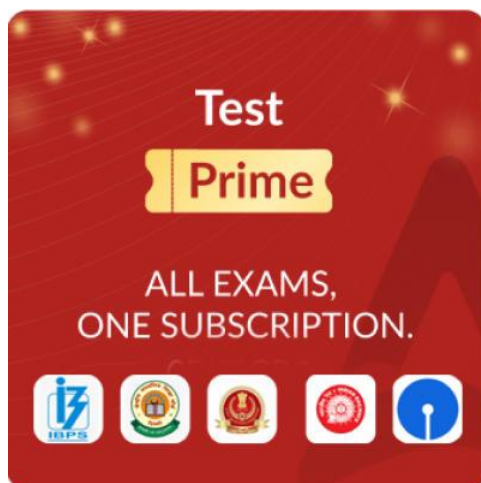
**National Affairs**

- The **Ministry of Textiles, Government of India** is hosting the **Viraasat Sari Festival 2024** from **15th to 28th December** at **Handloom Haat, Janpath, New Delhi**. Building on previous success with 20,000 visitors, the festival celebrates India's **handloom heritage** and sari weaving traditions. It aims to unite **weavers, designers, enthusiasts, and buyers**, showcasing the cultural and economic significance of the **handloom sector** and providing artisans a platform to display and sell their creations. ([Click here to read article](#))
- India's first **diabetes biobank** has been established in **Chennai** through a collaboration between the **ICMR** and the **Madras Diabetes Research Foundation (MDRF)**. The biobank will collect, process, store, and distribute **biological samples** to study **diabetes**, its causes, variations, and related disorders, advancing scientific research and contributing to global **health research**. ([Click here to read article](#))
- India has achieved a milestone in **decarbonizing the steel sector** with the release of its first-ever **Taxonomy of Green Steel** by **Shri H.D. Kumaraswamy**, Union Minister of **Steel & Heavy Industries**. This historic move positions India as a global leader in **green steel production**, supporting its commitment to achieving **net-zero emissions by 2070** and advancing the transition to a **low-carbon economy**. ([Click here to read article](#))

- India and Russia are set to introduce a **visa-free travel system** for Indian nationals, expected to begin in **spring 2025**. This move follows **bilateral talks** in June 2024, aiming to ease **visa restrictions** and promote **group tourist exchanges**, strengthening **tourism** and **bilateral relations**. ([Click here to read article](#))
- Vice President **Jagdeep Dhankhar** inaugurated the **GSI Geoscience Museum** in **Gwalior**, located in the historic **Victoria Market Building**. The museum highlights **Earth's geological wonders** and celebrates the **Geological Survey of India's (GSI)** contributions to exploring India's **geological resources**, blending **tradition** with **modern innovation**. ([Click here to read article](#))
- Dr. Jitendra Singh unveiled **Kisan Kavach**, India's first **indigenous anti-pesticide bodysuit**, developed by **BRIC-inStem** in collaboration with **Sepio Health Pvt. Ltd**. The suit aims to protect farmers from harmful pesticide exposure, preventing health issues like **breathing disorders, vision loss**, and fatalities. The launch supports **Prime Minister Modi's vision** of empowering India's agricultural community using **science and technology**. ([Click here to read article](#))
- The **Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS)** upgraded its **Search and Rescue Aid Tool (SARAT)** to **SARAT 2** for enhanced **sea rescue operations**. Launched in 2016, SARAT helps predict the drift of objects and individuals based on **wind, currents, and waves**. The upgraded version includes **advanced features** for more **accurate predictions**, optimizing **search efficiency**. ([Click here to read article](#))
- India has achieved a milestone in **wildlife conservation** with the **first-ever satellite tagging** of a **Ganges River Dolphin** (*Platanista gangetica*) in Assam. This initiative, part of **Project Dolphin**, was a collaboration between the **Wildlife Institute of India (WII)**, **Assam Forest Department**, and **Aaranyak**, funded by the **National CAMPA Authority**. The tagging aims to enhance understanding of the species' **migratory patterns** and **habitat use**. ([Click here to read article](#))
- The 10th **International Forest Fair** in **Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh**, runs from **December 17 to 23, 2024**. The fair focuses on **sustainable forest practices**, **empowering women** in the forestry sector, and promoting **minor forest produce**. The theme, "**Women Empowerment through Minor Forest Produce**," highlights that **50% of the workforce** in this sector is women. The event fosters collaboration among **government officials, traders, producers, scientists, and policymakers**. ([Click here to read article](#))
- The **Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2025** will be held from **January 17-22** in **Delhi NCR**, featuring **1,500 exhibitors** and expecting **500,000 visitors**. It will showcase leading automakers like **Maruti Suzuki, Tata Motors, and BYD**, focusing on **electric vehicles (EVs), hybrid technologies, and alternative fuels**. The expo aims to solidify India's role as a global hub for **sustainable mobility and engineering excellence**. ([Click here to read article](#))

**States in the News**

- **Uttarakhand**, known as "Devbhoomi," is set to become the first Indian state with a dedicated **Yoga Policy**, aiming to make it a global yoga destination. Building on **Rishikesh** as the "Yoga Capital of the World," the policy, led by **Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami**, integrates **yoga, Ayurveda, and wellness** to boost **tourism, health, and employment**, aligning with the success of the **AYUSH policy**. ([Click here to read article](#))
- **Manipur** commemorated **Nupi Lal Numit 2024**, honoring the courage of women in the **Nupi Lal uprisings of 1904 and 1939**. Led by **Chief Minister N. Biren Singh** at the **Nupi Lal Memorial Complex**, the event highlighted Manipuri women's pivotal role in history and their continued progress. The Chief Minister emphasized **women's empowerment** and called for **peace and unity** across the state. The uprisings were key moments in Manipuri history, with women protesting against **British colonial injustices**, leading to significant **political and social changes**. ([Click here to read article](#))
- Uber has launched the '**Moto Women**' pilot program in **Bengaluru**, offering an on-demand bike taxi service exclusively for **female riders and drivers**. The initiative focuses on **safety, empowerment, and privacy**, addressing concerns over bike taxi operations in **Karnataka**. Currently, around **300 women drivers** are employed, providing a secure and flexible transportation option. ([Click here to read article](#))
- Uttarakhand will be the first Indian state to implement the **Uniform Civil Code (UCC)** starting January 2025, fulfilling a promise by **Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami**. The UCC aims to standardize personal laws on **marriage, divorce, inheritance, and adoption** across religions and castes, excluding tribal communities. The **UCC Bill** was passed in February 2024 and received **presidential assent** in March 2024, marking a significant legal reform in India. ([Click here to read article](#))



**International Affairs**

- **Mikheil Kavelashvili**, a 53-year-old former footballer, was elected **President of Georgia** on **December 16, 2024**, signaling a shift in the country's politics. His win, supported by the **Georgian Dream party**, comes amid concerns over Georgia's growing **alignment with Russia** and constitutional changes replacing direct presidential elections with a **300-seat electoral college**. Critics fear this election could harm Georgia's **European Union** aspirations and reflect increasing **authoritarianism**. ([Click here to read article](#))
- **Mount Semeru** in **East Java, Indonesia**, erupted on **15th December**, releasing a thick column of **ash** up to **1,000 meters** high. The eruption triggered an **aviation warning** from Indonesia's **Center for Volcanology and Geological Hazard Mitigation**, issuing an **orange Volcano Observatory Notice**. **Flight restrictions** were enforced within a **5-kilometer radius** of the volcano. ([Click here to read article](#))
- On **December 15, 2024**, the **United Kingdom** became the first **European nation** to join the **Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP)**. This move is part of the UK's **post-Brexit strategy** to boost its economy through new **business opportunities** and trade benefits in the **Indo-Pacific region**. The **CPTPP**, originally formed by 11 countries, aims to reduce trade barriers and accounts for **15% of global GDP**, including fast-growing markets. ([Click here to read article](#))
- The **U.S. military** successfully tested its **Long-Range Hypersonic Weapon (LRHW)**, also known as "**Dark Eagle**," at **Cape Canaveral Space Force Station, Florida**. The missile reached speeds over **3,800 miles per hour (Mach 5)** and demonstrated its ability to strike **distant, well-defended targets**. This milestone in **hypersonic technology** brings the weapon closer to **operational deployment by 2025**. ([Click here to read article](#))
- **Cyclone Chido**, a **Category 4 storm**, caused widespread destruction in **Mayotte** before making landfall in **Mozambique's Cabo Delgado** province on **December 15, 2024**. The storm caused severe damage in Mayotte with **winds exceeding 220 km/h**. After crossing the **Mozambique Channel**, it intensified, impacting **northern Mozambique** with **winds over 200 km/h** and heavy rainfall, threatening lives and properties. ([Click here to read article](#))
- The **Gympie-Gympie (Dendrocnide moroides)** is the **most toxic plant** in the world, found in **Australia, Indonesia, and the Moluccas**. Despite its **heart-shaped leaves**, it is covered with **neurotoxin-laden trichomes** that cause **excruciating pain** upon contact, described as a combination of **burning with hot acid and electrocution**, with effects lasting weeks or months. ([Click here to read article](#))

- **Javier Milei**, Argentina's President, was granted **Italian citizenship** due to his **Italian ancestry**, sparking criticism in Argentina. The decision highlights Italy's **citizenship by descent** policy, which offers citizenship to **descendants of Italian emigrants**. Critics argue the policy is unfair to children of immigrants born in Italy. This move could also strengthen **Italy-Argentina** political and economic ties. ([Click here to read article](#))
- Israel has approved a settlement expansion plan in the **Golan Heights**, allocating **\$11.13 million** to enhance infrastructure and double the population in this **strategically significant** region. Captured during the **1967 Six-Day War** and annexed in **1981**, the Golan Heights holds value for **defense** and **water resources**. Currently, it houses **50,000 residents**, including **20,000 Israeli settlers** and local **Druze Arabs** and **Alawites**. ([Click here to read article](#))
- **Moldova** officially joined the **International Solar Alliance (ISA)**, reinforcing its commitment to **renewable energy** and **sustainability**. The agreement was signed by **S. Jaishankar** and **Mihai Popșoi** in New Delhi. The ISA, headquartered in India, aims to address challenges in **solar energy financing, technology, and scalability**, with a goal of mobilizing over **USD 1,000 billion** in investments by 2030. ([Click here to read article](#))
- **Japan** and **India** have teamed up to address the growing issue of **space debris**, focusing on **laser technology** and debris removal. **Orbital Lasers** (Japan) and **InspeCity** (India) signed a preliminary agreement to explore space debris removal using **laser-equipped satellites** to vaporize debris and facilitate spacecraft servicing. Testing is expected after **2027**. **InspeCity** has raised **\$1.5 million**, while **Orbital Lasers** has secured **\$5.8 million**. The collaboration also extends to **lunar exploration**, emphasizing joint efforts in space. ([Click here to read article](#))
- The **Ministry of Culture**, in partnership with **France Museums Développement (FMD)**, has launched the **Yuga Yugeen Bharat National Museum** project in **New Delhi**. Spanning **1,55,000 square meters** across the **North and South Blocks**, the museum will highlight India's **civilizational history** and serve as a key element of the **Central Vista Redevelopment Project**. Announced by **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** at the **International Museum Expo** in May 2023, the initiative emphasizes **cultural heritage preservation** and **international collaboration**. ([Click here to read article](#))

### Agreements/MoUs Signed

- **Gati Shakti Vishwavidyalaya (GSV)** and the **Indian Navy** signed an **MoU** to enhance **education, research, and training in logistics**. The partnership aims to strengthen the Navy's logistics capabilities, focusing on **supply chain management, multimodal transportation, and sustainability**. It aligns with national initiatives like the **PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan** and **National Logistics Policy 2022**. ([Click here to read article](#))

- India and the **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** have signed a **\$350 million loan** under the **Strengthening Multimodal and Integrated Logistics Ecosystem (SMILE)** program. The initiative aims to improve **logistics efficiency, infrastructure, and digital integration**, enhancing the **manufacturing sector, supply chain resilience, and promoting sustainable economic growth**. ([Click here to read article](#))
- On December 20, 2024, the **Ministry of Defence (MoD)** signed a **Rs 7,628.70 crore** contract with **Larsen & Toubro (L&T)** for **155 mm/52 calibre K9 VAJRA-T Self-Propelled Artillery Guns**. This move supports **Aatmanirbhar Bharat** and advances **India's defence modernization** and **indigenous manufacturing** under the **Make-in-India** initiative. ([Click here to read article](#))

### Books and Authors

- **HarperCollins India** will publish '**BRING IT ON: The Incredible Story of My Life**', a memoir by **Dr. Deepa Malik**, India's first female Paralympic medalist. The autobiography will highlight her remarkable journey, determination, and triumphs, including winning a **silver medal** at the **2016 Rio Paralympics**. Deepa has earned **23 international medals** and prestigious awards like the **Padma Shri, Khel Ratna Award, and Arjuna Award**. ([Click here to read article](#))

### Banking/Economy/Business News

- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has raised the limit for **collateral-free agricultural loans** from **₹1.6 lakh** to **₹2 lakh**, effective **January 1, 2025**. This move aims to support **small and marginal farmers** amid rising input costs and inflation. Banks are required to implement the new guidelines and run **awareness campaigns** to inform farmers about the revised loan provisions. ([Click here to read article](#))
- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has introduced measures to address the rising issue of **unclaimed deposits**, which include inactive **savings/current accounts** or **term deposits** for over **10 years**. Contributing factors include account inactivity, **unclaimed fixed deposits**, and funds left after the **death of account holders**. The **Depositor Education and Awareness (DEA) Fund** grew 26%, from **₹62,224.89 crore** in 2022-23 to **₹78,212.53 crore** in 2023-24, with **savings accounts** making up **73%** of unclaimed deposits. ([Click here to read article](#))
- The **Indian government** has raised **₹8,625 crore** through **minority stake sales** in **FY 2024-25**. While no specific **disinvestment target** has been set for **FY25**, the government continues its focus on **strategic disinvestment** and **privatization** to enhance sectoral efficiency and economic potential. Starting from **2023-24**, separate disinvestment targets have been discontinued. ([Click here to read article](#))



- India's **wholesale inflation** moderated to **1.9%** in **November**, down from **2.4%** in October, with food price inflation easing from **11.6%** to **8.9%**. Despite this, prices for **manufactured products** like **food products, furniture, pharmaceuticals, and electrical equipment** continued to rise. **Food price inflation** saw a significant drop in vegetable prices but **potato prices** surged by **82.8%**, and **edible oils** rose by **28%**. Inflation in **pulses, fruits, wheat, and paddy** persisted at a slower pace. ([Click here to read article](#))
- In the first half of **FY 2024-25**, **Public Sector Banks (PSBs)**, including **State Bank of India (SBI)**, reported a **net profit of ₹85,520 crore**, marking a **26% growth** from the previous year. This success reflects improved **asset quality, credit monitoring, and operational efficiency**, supported by **strengthened governance and a bolstered capital base**. ([Click here to read article](#))
- India's **data centre market** is expected to surpass **\$100 billion** by 2027, up from \$60 billion between 2019-2024. **Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu** are key hubs, with **Mumbai, Chennai, Delhi-NCR, and Bengaluru** leading the sector. The surge in demand is driven by industries like **BFSI, technology, fintech, and generative AI**, positioning India as a global leader in **digital infrastructure**. ([Click here to read article](#))
- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** lifted the supervisory restrictions on **ECL Finance Ltd** and **Edelweiss Asset Reconstruction Company Ltd (Edelweiss ARC)** after both entities took corrective actions. In May 2024, **ECL Finance** was restricted from conducting structured transactions, while **Edelweiss ARC** faced limitations on acquiring assets and reorganizing receipts. Following their adherence to regulatory norms, **RBI** has allowed both companies to resume normal operations. ([Click here to read article](#))
- India's **net direct tax collections** for **FY 2023-24** have risen by **16.45%** to **Rs 15.82 lakh crore** by December 17, driven by a **21% increase in advance tax payments**. This growth reflects improved tax collection mechanisms and efforts to reduce the fiscal deficit, with contributions from **corporate tax, personal income tax, securities transaction tax (STT)**, and other levies. ([Click here to read article](#))
- India has risen from **23rd** in global smartphone exports in 2019 to **3rd** in 2024, with **exports crossing ₹20,000 crore** in November 2024. This 92% growth compared to November 2023 underscores India's success in leveraging **government initiatives** and a strong **domestic production ecosystem**. ([Click here to read article](#))
- India's economy is projected to grow at **6.6%** in FY26, driven by **investments (7.2% growth) and consumption (6.9% growth)**, despite fiscal and external challenges. **Inflation** is expected to ease to **4.3%**, with gradual **monetary easing**. The government's fiscal target of reducing the deficit to **4.5%** by FY26 remains achievable, supported by projected **nominal growth of 10.2%** and **capex growth of 10%**. ([Click here to read article](#))
- **HSBC India** has partnered with **Indian Hotels Company (IHCL)** to launch the **HSBC Taj Credit Card**, a luxury card offering exclusive benefits for affluent Indians. In collaboration with **Visa**, the card provides **welcome offers** for stays at **Taj Palaces, exclusive access to Taj InnerCircle Platinum** and lounges, along with **discounts** on room rates, meals, and spa treatments. It targets the growing demand for **premium travel and luxury experiences** among India's elite. ([Click here to read article](#))
- The **Central government** and **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** have signed a **\$42 million loan** to strengthen **coastal and riverbank protection** in **Maharashtra**. The project will address **coastal erosion** using **hybrid approaches** like **offshore reefs and beach nourishment**, while enhancing the resilience of **tourism and fisheries** sectors. It also promotes **community inclusion**, focusing on **disaster preparedness** with the involvement of **women, youth, and vulnerable groups**. ([Click here to read article](#))
- **UltraTech Cement**, part of the **Aditya Birla Group**, received **CCI approval** for its **₹3,954-crore acquisition** of **India Cements Ltd (ICL)**. This strategic move strengthens UltraTech's presence in the **southern cement market**, particularly in **Tamil Nadu**, supporting its growth strategy to expand **installed capacity** and achieve **global leadership** in the cement industry. ([Click here to read article](#))
- The **RBI** imposed penalties on **IndusInd Bank** (₹27.3 lakh) and **Manappuram Finance** (₹20 lakh) for regulatory violations identified during inspections as of **March 31, 2023**. **IndusInd Bank** was fined for opening **savings deposit accounts** for ineligible entities, while **Manappuram Finance** failed to verify **customers' PAN** and assigned **multiple Identification Codes** instead of a **Unique Customer Identification Code (UCIC)**. ([Click here to read article](#))
- **ICICI Bank** and **Times Internet** launched the **Times Black ICICI Bank Credit Card**, a super-premium card designed for **high-net-worth individuals (HNIs)** in India. Powered by **Visa**, it offers exclusive **luxury services** and benefits, with a unique **metallic design** featuring historic printing plates from **The Times of India**, symbolizing tradition and innovation. ([Click here to read article](#))
- **Tata Power Renewable Energy** has partnered with **Canara Bank** to offer affordable financing for rooftop solar installations under the **PM Surya Ghar Scheme**. The initiative provides loans of up to **Rs 6 Lakh** for systems ranging from **3 kW to 10 kW** with low interest rates and no collateral. The aim is to promote clean energy adoption and support **India's renewable energy targets**. ([Click here to read article](#))
- **NTPC** plans to set up a **nuclear power project** in **Bihar** as part of its strategy to diversify its energy portfolio and expand non-fossil energy capacity. The company has approached the state government for **land allocation** to move forward with the project, which aims to meet future energy demands. ([Click here to read article](#))

### Appointments/Resignations

- **Google** has appointed **Preeti Lobana** as its new **Country Manager** and **Vice President** for **India**. With over three decades of experience, Lobana takes over from **Sanjay Gupta**, who moves to a larger role as **President of Asia Pacific**. This strategic move aims to strengthen Google's presence in **India's digital economy**. ([Click here to read article](#))
- **Rama Mohan Rao Amara** has been appointed as the new **Managing Director (MD)** of **State Bank of India (SBI)** for three years. His appointment, approved by the **Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC)**, follows a recommendation from the **Financial Services Institutions Bureau (FSIB)**. Amara succeeds **CS Setty**, who became **Chairman** of SBI in August. With extensive **SBI** experience, Amara is set to lead the bank through key growth phases. ([Click here to read article](#))
- **Nepal's President Ram Chandra Paudel** has reappointed **Dr. Shankar Prasad Sharma** as **Resident Ambassador to India** and appointed **Netra Prasad Timilsina** as **Resident Ambassador to Malaysia**. These diplomatic appointments, made under **Article 282 (1)** of Nepal's Constitution, follow recommendations from the **Council of Ministers**. ([Click here to read article](#))
- **Salman Khan** has been appointed as the **brand ambassador** for the inaugural **Kho Kho World Cup**, scheduled in **New Delhi** from **January 13-19, 2025**. The event will feature **24 countries** and showcase both **men's and women's teams**, aiming to boost the **global profile** of Kho Kho and highlight its widespread appeal. ([Click here to read article](#))

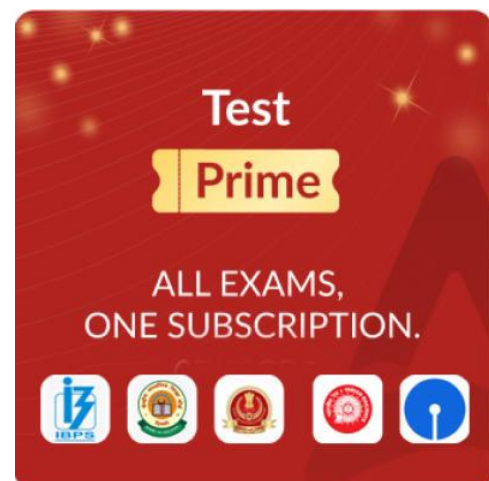
### Defence News

- **India, France, and the UAE** have launched the trilateral **air combat exercise "Desert Knight"** over the **Arabian Sea** to strengthen **defence cooperation**, enhance **interoperability**, and prepare for complex **combat scenarios**. The exercise, held in a strategically important region, highlights the growing trilateral ties amidst evolving **global security** challenges. Key goals include improving collaboration, enhancing air forces' synergy, and fostering realistic operations. ([Click here to read article](#))
- The **Indian Navy** will commission **INS Nirdeshak** on December 18, 2024, in **Visakhapatnam**. Built by **Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers**, it is the second ship under the **Survey Vessel (Large) Project**. The 110-meter vessel, weighing 3,800 tons, is powered by dual diesel engines and features advanced **hydrographic and oceanographic equipment**. Over **80% of its components** are locally sourced, reflecting India's **self-reliance in defense manufacturing**. The ship will enhance India's **maritime presence**, particularly in the **Indian Ocean Region**. ([Click here to read article](#))

- The **Sri Lanka-India Naval Exercise (SLINEX) 2024** will be held from **December 17 to 20** in **Visakhapatnam**, organized by the **Eastern Naval Command**. The exercise consists of two phases: the **Harbour Phase** (Dec 17-18) focusing on professional exchanges and mutual understanding, and the **Sea Phase** (Dec 19-20) involving joint operations like **Special Forces, gun firings, communication drills, and seamanship practices**. SLINEX, initiated in 2005, strengthens **maritime cooperation** and **regional security** between **India and Sri Lanka**. ([Click here to read article](#))
- The **Indian Army** launched the **Indian Army AI Incubation Centre (IAAIC)** in **Bengaluru**, led by **Chief of Army Staff General Upendra Dwivedi**. In collaboration with **Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL)**, the centre aims to develop **AI-driven solutions** to enhance **decision-making, operational efficiency**, and readiness for **AI-driven warfare**, supporting India's **Atmanirbhar Bharat** campaign. ([Click here to read article](#))

### Awards and Recognitions

- The **Ram temple project in Ayodhya** received the prestigious **'Sword of Honour'** from the **British Safety Council** for outstanding safety measures. The award, announced by **Nripendra Misra**, chairman of the **Construction Committee**, highlights the project's adherence to global safety standards. To earn the award, the temple's construction underwent a rigorous audit, achieving a **five-star assessment** and excelling in on-site safety practices, setting a global construction safety benchmark. ([Click here to read article](#))
- **Suryabala**, the Hindi writer, has been awarded the **34th Vyas Samman 2024** for her novel **Kaun Des Ko Vasi: Venu Ki Diary**, published in 2018. The novel explores **cultural conflicts** and **identity struggles** of Indian youth in **America**. Instituted by the **KK Birla Foundation**, the award includes a **₹4 lakh** prize, a citation, and a plaque. The selection committee was led by **Prof. Ramji Tiwari**. ([Click here to read article](#))



- **Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw**, Chairperson of **Biocon Group**, was honored with the **Jamsetji Tata Award** by the **Indian Society for Quality (ISQ)** for her outstanding contributions to the **biosciences** sector. This award recognizes her leadership in making **Biocon** a global leader in **biotechnology** since 1978, while maintaining a strong focus on **quality**. The award, instituted in 2004, celebrates business leaders who exemplify innovation, quality, and societal commitment, reflecting the legacy of **Jamsetji Tata**. ([Click here to read article](#))
- **Arun Kapur**, an Indian educationist, was honoured by **Bhutan's King Jigme Khesar Namgyel** during the **117th Bhutanese National Day** celebrations in **Thimphu**. He was conferred the prestigious **Red Scarf** and the rare '**Dasho**' title for his contributions to education in **India, Bhutan, and Oman**. The '**Dasho**' title is typically reserved for senior Bhutanese officials. ([Click here to read article](#))
- The **100th edition** of the **Tansen Sangeet Samaroh** concluded in **Gwalior** from **December 15-19, 2024**, celebrating India's rich classical music heritage. Organized by **Madhya Pradesh's Culture Department**, the festival honored **Pandit Swapan Chaudhuri**, a **Padma Shri** recipient and tabla virtuoso, with the **Rashtriya Tansen Samman 2023**. The award includes a **₹5 lakh cash prize** and a citation plaque. Chaudhuri, renowned for his mastery of the **Farukhabad gharana**, expressed gratitude, marking this recognition as a highlight in his career. The **Raja Mansingh Tomar Samman 2023** was also awarded to **Sanand Nyas Sanstha** from **Indore**. ([Click here to read article](#))
- **Tom Cruise** has received the **US Navy's Distinguished Public Service Award** for his contributions in promoting the military, particularly through his iconic roles in **Top Gun**. The award recognizes his efforts in increasing **public awareness** and appreciation of the **US Navy** and its personnel. ([Click here to read article](#))
- **Caitlin Sandra Neil**, a **19-year-old Indian-American** from **Chennai**, was crowned **Miss India USA 2024**. A second-year student at the **University of California, Davis**, Caitlin focuses on **women's empowerment** and **literacy**, aspiring to be a **web designer**, model, and actress. Other winners included **Mrs. India USA 2024 Sanskriti Sharma** and **Miss Teen India USA 2024 Arshita Kathpalia**. The runners-up were **Nirali Desia** (First) and **Manini Patel** (Second).([Click here to read article](#))

### Summits and Conferences News

- India participated in the **24th BIMSTEC Senior Officials Meeting (SOM)**, held virtually by **Thailand** on **December 20, 2024**. **Jaideep Mazumdar**, Secretary (East) from **MEA**, represented India. The meeting reviewed BIMSTEC's progress, discussed regional cooperation, finalized documents, and prepared for the **6th BIMSTEC Summit**. ([Click here to read article](#))

### Ranks and Reports

- India has risen to **39th** in the **WEF Travel and Tourism Development Index (TTDI) 2024**, up from **54th** in 2021. This improvement reflects India's recovery in **global tourism** post-pandemic and its growing prominence in **medical and cultural tourism**. ([Click here to read article](#))

### Sports News

- **Mumbai** defeated **Madhya Pradesh** by **five wickets** to win the **Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy (SMAT) 2024**. **Madhya Pradesh** posted **174/8**, with **Rajat Patidar** scoring an unbeaten **81**. Mumbai chased the target comfortably, reaching **180/5** in **17.5 overs**. This marks Mumbai's second SMAT title, following their first in **2022**. ([Click here to read article](#))
- The **Indian women's junior hockey team** successfully defended their **Women's Junior Asia Cup** title by defeating **China 3-2** in a penalty shoot-out after a 1-1 draw in regulation time. The final was held in **Muscat, Oman** from **December 7-15, 2024**. This victory secured India's qualification for the **2025 FIH Women's Junior Hockey World Cup** in **Chile**. ([Click here to read article](#))
- On **December 15, 2024**, at the **Mangaung Oval** in **Bloemfontein, England** made history in women's cricket. **Nat Sciver-Brunt** set the record for the **fastest Test century** by a woman, reaching 100 runs off just **96 balls**, surpassing the previous record of **Chamani Seneviratna**. **Maia Bouchier** also marked her **Test debut** with a century. Although both players were dismissed before converting their centuries into bigger scores, their performances gave England a strong position. ([Click here to read article](#))
- **Ravichandran Ashwin**, India's premier spinner, announced his retirement from international cricket after the third **Border-Gavaskar Trophy Test** in **Brisbane** on **December 18, 2024**. With a remarkable 14-year career, Ashwin became India's **second-highest Test wicket-taker** with **537 wickets** in **106 Test matches**. He also excelled in **ODIs** and **T20Is**, playing a total of **287 international matches**. His legacy includes **37 five-wicket hauls**, ranking second behind **Muttiah Muralidaran**. ([Click here to read article](#))
- **Jasprit Bumrah** became India's highest wicket-taker in **Test cricket** on **Australian soil** on **December 18, 2024**, surpassing **Kapil Dev's** record of **51 wickets**. Achieving **52 wickets** during the third Test at **The Gabba, Brisbane**, Bumrah solidified his position as a key figure in India's **pace attack**. ([Click here to read article](#))
- **Real Madrid** triumphed in the **2024 FIFA Intercontinental Cup**, defeating Mexico's **Pachuca 3-0** in a dominant performance at **Lusail Stadium, Qatar**. The Spanish giants were in control throughout the match, with **Kylian Mbappe, Rodrygo, and Vinicius Jr** all contributing to the scoreline. Despite some early threats from **Pachuca**, Real Madrid's offensive power and defensive stability ensured a comfortable victory. ([Click here to read article](#))

- Uttarakhand unveiled the **mascot, logo, jersey, anthem, and tagline** for the **38th National Games 2025** at **Maharana Pratap Sports College**, Dehradun. The Games, scheduled from **January 28 to February 14, 2025**, highlight the state's rich heritage and athleticism. The **mascot "Mauli"** is inspired by the **Monal**, the state bird, symbolizing ambition. The **logo** reflects Uttarakhand's beauty and biodiversity, while the **tagline, "Sankalp Se Shikhar Tak" (From Resolve to Zenith)**, represents determination. Traditional sports like **yoga and mallakhamb** will also be featured. ([Click here to read article](#))
- The **Indian men's hockey team** has achieved **fifth place** in the latest **FIH world rankings**, following back-to-back Olympic medals at the **2024 Paris Olympics**. **Netherlands** remains top, with **India** securing **2955 points** in fifth, behind **England** and **Belgium**. This milestone highlights India's growing success in **hockey**. ([Click here to read article](#))
- India's wicketkeeper-batter **Richa Ghosh** etched her name in history by smashing the **joint-fastest fifty** in women's T20Is. She achieved this feat during the third and final T20I of the series against **West Indies Women** at the **DY Patil Stadium**. ([Click here to read article](#))
- India will host the **2025 Para Athletics World Championships** from **September 26 to October 5, 2025**, at **Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium**, New Delhi. This historic event marks the first time India hosts the championships, which will feature over **1,000 athletes** from **100+ nations** and serve as a qualifier for the **2028 Los Angeles Paralympic Games**. ([Click here to read article](#))

### Schemes and Committees News

- **Northern Coalfields Limited (NCL)**, under the Ministry of Coal, launched the **CHARAK project** to provide **free treatment** for economically weaker sections in **Singrauli** and **Sonbhadra** districts. The initiative targets families with incomes below **Rs. 8 lakh**, covering diseases like **malignancy, TB, HIV, cardiovascular diseases**, and more. Treatment will be provided at **NCL's hospital** or empanelled hospitals nationwide, aligning with NCL's commitment to improving the region's **socio-economic condition**. ([Click here to read article](#))
- **Mamata Banerjee**, the **West Bengal Chief Minister**, launched the **"Banglar Bari"** housing scheme to provide **affordable housing** to the rural population of the state. The scheme is a response to alleged negligence by the **BJP-led Central government** regarding the **Prime Minister Awas Yojana (PMAY)**. At the launch, held at the **Nabanna Secretariat**, **Rs 60,000** was distributed to **42 beneficiaries** from **21 districts**. A survey identified over **28 lakh beneficiaries**, with an additional **16 lakh** expected to receive housing assistance before the **2026 Assembly elections**. ([Click here to read article](#))

### Science and Technology News

- On **December 12, 2024**, **ISRO** successfully conducted a **sea-level hot test** of its **CE20 cryogenic engine** at the **ISRO Propulsion Complex** in **Mahendragiri**, Tamil Nadu. This critical test demonstrated the engine's restart systems and showcased innovations like the **Nozzle Protection System** to mitigate challenges. The **CE20 engine**, with a thrust of **19 tonnes** (upgraded to **22 tonnes**), enhances **India's space exploration** capabilities, enabling heavier payload launches and contributing to missions like **Chandrayaan-3** and **Gaganyaan**. This positions India among the few countries with indigenous cryogenic engines. ([Click here to read article](#))
- **China** has set a new global record in space exploration, with astronauts **Cai Xuzhe** and **Song Lingdong** completing a **9-hour spacewalk** aboard the **Tiangong space station**. This achievement surpassed the previous record of **8 hours 56 minutes** set by U.S. astronauts in 2001, marking a significant milestone in **China's space ambitions**. ([Click here to read article](#))

### Important Days News

- **Vijay Diwas**, observed on **December 16**, commemorates India's decisive victory over **Pakistan** in the **1971 Indo-Pak War**, which led to the **liberation of Bangladesh**. The war, sparked by the **humanitarian crisis in East Pakistan**, culminated in the surrender of **93,000 Pakistani soldiers**. On this day in 1971, **Lieutenant General A.A.K. Niazi** of Pakistan signed the **Instrument of Surrender** in **Dhaka**. Key Indian leaders such as **Prime Minister Indira Gandhi**, **Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw**, and **Lt. General Jagjit Singh Aurora** played pivotal roles in this historic moment, which reshaped **South Asia's geopolitics** and showcased India's commitment to **justice, humanity, and democratic values**. ([Click here to read article](#))
- **Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel**, the "Iron Man of India," played a key role in India's **freedom struggle** and post-independence **integration** of princely states. He served as the first **Deputy Prime Minister** and **Home Minister**. Patel's contributions included the **Kheda** and **Bardoli Satyagrahas** and leadership in the **Quit India Movement**. He passed away on **December 15, 1950**, and was posthumously awarded the **Bharat Ratna** in 1991. **National Unity Day** was declared on his birthday, **October 31st**, to honor his legacy. **PM Modi** paid tribute, calling him an inspiration for **national unity** and integrity. ([Click here to read article](#))
- **Pensioners Day**, observed on **17th December** in India, honors **D.S. Nakara**, who fought for pensioners' rights. The day marks the **1982 Supreme Court** ruling that ensured equality and justice for retired officials. Nakara challenged the **discriminatory pension rules** that favored retirees post-1979, leading to a historic verdict promoting **pensioner dignity and equality**. ([Click here to read article](#))

- **International Migrants Day**, observed annually on **December 18**, honors the contributions of migrants worldwide and highlights their role in shaping societies. The **2024 theme** is “**Honouring the contributions of migrants and respecting their rights**,” focusing on the challenges migrants face, such as rights, integration, and exploitation, while advocating for fair and inclusive migration policies. ([Click here to read article](#))
- **Minorities Rights Day** is observed annually on **December 18** to commemorate the adoption of the **UN Statement on the Rights of Minorities** in 1992. On **December 18, 2024**, the **National Commission for Minorities (NCM)** in India marked this day to raise awareness about minority rights, promoting **freedom, equality, and inclusion**. The event highlighted the Indian government's efforts in empowering and ensuring the welfare of minority communities. ([Click here to read article](#))
- **Good Governance Week 2024** will be held from **December 19 to December 24**, with the **Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore** campaign taking place across **700+ districts** in India. The campaign aims to improve **governance and service delivery**, particularly in **rural areas**, by addressing **public grievances** and service challenges. It highlights the government's commitment to better governance and outreach to citizens. ([Click here to read article](#))
- The **Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB)** celebrated its **61st Raising Day** on **December 20, 2024**, in **Ranidanga, Siliguri**. The event will highlight the force's achievements in **border security** and feature cultural programs, sports demonstrations, and traditional performances. **Union Home Minister Amit Shah** is invited to attend. ([Click here to read article](#))
- **International Human Solidarity Day** is observed on **December 20th** to emphasize collective responsibility in creating a **just and equitable world**. Established by the **UN General Assembly** in 2005, the day highlights the importance of **solidarity** in addressing global issues like **poverty, inequality, and climate change**, encouraging cooperation for **peace, social justice, and sustainable development**. ([Click here to read article](#))
- **Goa Liberation Day** is celebrated on **December 19** to mark the end of **451 years** of Portuguese colonial rule in 1961. The day honors the **freedom struggle**, highlighting the sacrifices of **Goan freedom fighters** and the role of the **Indian Army** in Goa's integration into India. Despite colonial rule, Goa maintained its **distinct cultural identity** and played a significant role in India's **freedom movement**, especially in the **Satyagraha**. ([Click here to read article](#))
- **World Basketball Day** is celebrated annually on **December 21** to honor the sport's global development and significance. The day highlights basketball's role in promoting **athleticism, joy, companionship, and peace**, transcending

**boundaries and cultures**. It encourages collaboration, physical activity, and unity among players and fans worldwide. ([Click here to read article](#))

- **World Meditation Day** will be celebrated on **December 21, 2024**, marking its inaugural observance. Established by the **United Nations General Assembly** on **November 29, 2024**, the day highlights the **mental, physical, and social benefits** of meditation, promoting **peace and unity** globally. ([Click here to read article](#))

### Obituaries News

- **Padma Bhushan Ustad Zakir Hussain**, the legendary tabla virtuoso, passed away at 73 due to heart-related issues. Born in 1951 in Mumbai, India, and the son of Ustad Allah Rakha, he was known for his collaborations with icons like Pandit Ravi Shankar, John McLaughlin, and George Harrison. Hussain received prestigious awards, including Padma Bhushan (2002), Padma Shri (1988), Padma Vibhushan (2023), and a Grammy for *Planet Drum*. He revolutionized the tabla and globally promoted Indian music, leaving a lasting legacy. ([Click here to read article](#))
- **Tulsi Gowda**, known as the “**Tree Goddess**,” was an acclaimed environmentalist from **Karnataka**, recognized for her remarkable dedication to **afforestation and ecological preservation**. Born in 1944, she planted over **1 lakh trees** and received the **Padma Shri** in 2021 for her contributions. Her passing on **December 16, 2024**, marked the end of an era, leaving a lasting legacy of environmental conservation. ([Click here to read article](#))
- **Pandit Sanjay Ram Marathe**, a renowned classical singer and harmonium artist, passed away on **December 15, 2024**, at the age of **68** due to a **heart attack** in **Thane, Maharashtra**. He was the eldest son of legendary musician **Pandit Ram Marathe** and leaves behind a significant legacy in **Indian classical music and theatre**. ([Click here to read article](#))
- **Om Prakash Chautala**, former **Chief Minister of Haryana** and veteran politician, passed away at **89** on **December 20, 2024**, due to a **cardiac arrest**. A key figure in the **Indian National Lok Dal (INLD)**, he served as CM for **four terms** from **1989 to 2005**, marking the end of an era in Haryana's political landscape. ([Click here to read article](#))
- **Meena Ganesh**, a legendary **Malayalam cinema and theatre** actor, passed away on **December 19, 2024**, at **81**. Known for her versatile performances in over **100 films** and numerous stage productions, her legacy in the **Malayalam entertainment industry** continues despite her recent health-related absence from acting. ([Click here to read article](#))

**Static Takeaways**

Sr. No	Bank/Country/Org./State	Details
1.	ADB (Asian Development Bank)	President - Masatgasu Asakawa HQ - Manila, Philippines
2.	RBI	Governor - Sanjay Malhotra HQ- Mumbai
3.	ICICI Bank	MD - Sandeep Bakhshi HQ - Mumbai
4.	Canara Bank	MD - Shri. K. Satyanarayana Raju HQ - Bengaluru
5.	NTPC (National Thermal Power Corporation)	MD - Gurdeep Singh HQ - New Delhi
6.	FIFA	President - Giovanni Infantino Head Office - Zurich
7.	TATA Power	MD - Praveer Sinha Head Office - Mumbai
8.	Google	CEO - Sundar Pichai HQ - California
9.	BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral and Economic Cooperation)	HQ - Dhaka
10.	Russia	President - Vladimir Putin Capital -Moscow
11.	France	President - Emmanuel Macron Capital -France
12.	UAE	President - Sheikh Mhammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan Capital - Abu Dhabi
13.	Nepal	PM - K P Sharma Oli Capital - Kathmandu
14.	Sri Lanka	President - Anura Kumara Dissanayake Capital - Colombo
15.	USA	President - Biden (Trump from 20th January 25) Capital -Washington D.C.
16.	Georgia	President - Mikheil Kavelashvili Capital - Tbilisi
17.	Uttarakhand	Governor - Gurmit Singh CM - Pushkar Singh Dhami Capital - Dehradun
18.	Bihar	Governor - Rajendra Arlekar CM - Nitish Kumar Capital - Patna
19.	Delhi	L. Governor - Vinai Kumar Saxena CM - Atishi Capital - New Delhi
20.	Assam	Governor - Lakshman Prasad Acharya CM - Hemanta Biswa Sarma Capital - Dispur
21.	Madhya Pradesh	Governor - Mangubhai Patel CM - Mohan Yadav Capital - Bhopal