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IMPORTANT ONE LINERS

NATIONAL

The Rajasthan Coaching Centres (Control and Regulation) Bill, 2025

- The Rajasthan Coaching Centres (Control and Regulation) Bill, 2025 was introduced in the Rajasthan Legislative Assembly on March 19, 2025 to regulate the coaching industry and ensure the well-being of students. All coaching centres with **more than 50 students are required to register** with the Higher Education Department, with a compliance deadline of three months from the date of enactment. **Each branch of a coaching centre is treated as a separate entity** and must be individually registered.
- Coaching centres are restricted to **a maximum of five teaching hours per day** to reduce student burnout and must provide one weekly holiday for students and tutors to promote mental health. False advertising, misleading guarantees of success, and other deceptive promotional tactics are banned under the Bill.
- Coaching centres are **prohibited from segregating students into batches** based on performance to foster an inclusive learning environment. Penalties for violations include a fine of ₹2 lakh for the first offense, ₹5 lakh for the second offense, and revocation of registration for subsequent offenses.

State of the Global Climate Report 2024

- The **World Meteorological Organization (WMO)** released the State of the Global Climate Report 2024, revealing alarming trends in global climate change and its widespread impacts.
- The **global average temperature in 2024** was **1.55°C** above the 1850–1900 pre-industrial baseline, making it the **warmest year in the 175-year observational record**, surpassing the previous high of **1.45°C in 2023**. Each year from **2015 to 2024** now ranks among the **ten warmest years ever recorded**, reflecting an intensifying trend of global warming.

Hindi Writer Vinod Kumar Shukla Becomes First from Chhattisgarh to Win 'Jnanpith Award'

- **Vinod Kumar Shukla**, a prominent Hindi writer, has been selected for the **59th Jnanpith Award**, becoming the **first author from Chhattisgarh** to receive this prestigious **national literary honor**.
- The Jnanpith Award is **India's highest literary accolade**, presented annually by the **Bharatiya Jnanpith** to recognize authors for their outstanding contributions to Indian literature. The award includes a cash prize of ₹11 lakh, a bronze statue of Saraswati, and a formal citation.
- Vinod Kumar Shukla was born on January 1, 1937, in Rajnandgaon, Chhattisgarh, and is celebrated for his poetry, short stories, and novels that reflect a unique and introspective literary voice.
- His notable literary works include "Naukar Ki Kameez" (The Servant's Shirt) and "Deewar Mein Ek Khirkee Rahati Thi" (A Window Lived in a Wall), the latter of which earned him the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1999.

BPCL Inaugurates Floating Solar Power Plant at Kochi Refinery

- Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) inaugurated a **floating solar power plant** at its **Kochi Refinery** on March 21, 2025, marking a major step towards enhancing sustainable energy practices.
- The floating solar power plant has an installed capacity of **3.2 MW AC** and is situated on the rainwater harvesting ponds within the Kochi Refinery premises.
- The solar panels span 8 acres of the total 19-acre waterbody designated for rainwater harvesting at the refinery.
- The installation is projected to reduce annual carbon dioxide emissions by nearly 5,672 metric tons of CO₂ equivalent, contributing to climate change mitigation.

Maharashtra Government's Initiative to Construct Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Memorial in Agra

- On March 21, 2025, the **Maharashtra government** announced its decision to construct a **grand memorial in Agra, Uttar Pradesh**, to honour **Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj** at the historical site where he was held under house arrest by Mughal emperor Aurangzeb.
- An expert committee has been constituted under the chairmanship of Maharashtra Minister of Tourism Shambhuraj Desai, comprising historians and subject matter experts to supervise the planning and execution of the memorial.
- The Maharashtra Tourism Department has been appointed as the nodal agency responsible for land acquisition, fund allocation, and coordination of all related activities, while the Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) will function as the implementing body.

- The proposed memorial will feature a museum, audio-visual programs, and documentaries with modern facilities, aimed at educating visitors about the life, leadership, and legacy of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj.

From Delhi to Oslo: Story of M.F. Husain's Painting Sold for a Record ₹118 Crore

- On March 20, 2025, **Maqbool Fida (M.F.) Husain's iconic painting "Voices" (1958)** was sold for **₹118.08 crore at Pundole's auction house in Mumbai**, setting a new record for modern Indian art.
- The painting, created in 1958, is known for its abstract figures and bold symbolism, and is regarded as a turning point in Husain's career, marking his shift from narrative themes to abstraction.
- The painting was **first exhibited in 1971 at Art Today gallery** in Delhi, and was later acquired by **Oslo-based gallerist Hilde Holtegaard**, becoming part of her private collection. The artwork was sold for ₹118.08 crore (approximately \$14.2 million), making it the most expensive Indian artwork ever sold at auction, surpassing the previous record held by S.H. Raza's "Gestation", which fetched ₹51.75 crore.

Exercise Sea Dragon 2025

- The Indian Navy is participating in the **multilateral Exercise Sea Dragon 2025**, an advanced maritime anti-submarine warfare (ASW) drill hosted by the **United States Navy in Guam** in March 2025.
- The exercise includes naval forces from India, United States, Japan, Canada, South Korea, and Australia, showcasing strong Indo-Pacific defence cooperation.
- India has deployed its **P-8I maritime patrol aircraft**, renowned for its state-of-the-art surveillance and anti-submarine warfare capabilities, to take part in the drill.

Gujarat Achieves 95% of NITI Aayog's TB-Free Target

- **Gujarat** has emerged as one of India's top-performing states by **achieving 95% of the tuberculosis (TB) elimination target** set under NITI Aayog's TB Mukta Bharat Abhiyan for the year 2023-24.
- The state achieved this milestone through a combination of door-to-door screenings, free diagnostic services, nutritional support, and early treatment interventions aimed at curbing TB transmission.
- **Gujarat's implementation of the Nikshay Poshan Yojana**, which provides nutritional support to TB patients, along with effective public-private partnership models, has significantly contributed to positive treatment outcomes.
- The **National Strategic Plan for TB Elimination (2017-25)** aims to eliminate tuberculosis in India by 2025, which is five years ahead of the global TB elimination target set by the World Health Organization (WHO).
- World TB Day is observed annually on March 24 to raise awareness about the global TB epidemic, commemorating the day in 1882 when Dr. Robert Koch discovered the tuberculosis-causing bacterium.

6th Edition of Jal Shakti Abhiyan: Catch the Rain - 2025 Launched

- On March 22, 2025, coinciding with **World Water Day**, the **Union Ministry of Jal Shakti**, in collaboration with the **Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change** and the **Government of Haryana**, launched the **6th edition of Jal Shakti Abhiyan: Catch the Rain - 2025** in Panchkula, Haryana.
- The theme for 2025 is **"जल संचय जन भागीदारी: जन जागरूकता की ओर"** (People's Action for Water Conservation - Towards Intensified Community Connect).
- The campaign focuses on 148 water-stressed districts across India, aiming to improve water conservation through community involvement and scientific interventions.
- Major initiatives launched include 'Jal-Jangal-Jan: Ek Prakritik Bandhan Abhiyan', which emphasizes restoring ecological linkages between forests, rivers, and springs, highlighting the intrinsic relationship among water, forests, and communities.
- The World Water Day 2025 global theme was "Glacier Preservation", emphasizing the urgent need to protect glacial ecosystems as essential freshwater reserves.

Kerala Becomes the First State in India to Establish a Senior Citizens Commission

- **Kerala** has become the **first state in India** to set up a **Senior Citizens Commission**, aimed at ensuring the rights, protection, and welfare of elderly citizens.
- The composition of the commission includes **one Chairperson and up to three members**, of whom at least one must be a woman and one must belong to **the Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes**.
- An Additional Secretary will serve as **the Secretary of the commission**, while a Joint Secretary from the law department will function as the Registrar.
- The members of the commission will hold office for a fixed tenure of three years.
- As per 2021 data, 16.5% of Kerala's population comprised individuals aged 60 and above, the highest proportion in India. This figure is expected to increase to 22.8% by 2036, underlining the urgency for elderly-focused governance mechanisms.

- The Kerala government currently provides a monthly pension of ₹1,600 under the Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme for individuals aged 60 and above whose annual income is ₹1,00,000 or less.

Bihar's Kosi-Mechi Intra-State Link Project

- On March 28, 2025, the **Union Cabinet** approved the inclusion of the **Kosi-Mechi Intra-State Link Project** under the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana–Accelerated Irrigation Benefits Programme (PMKSY-AIBP).
- The project aims to divert surplus water from the **Kosi River to the Mahananda basin** by remodelling the **Eastern Kosi Main Canal (EKMC)** up to 41.30 km and extending it to 117.50 km to connect with the Mechi River.
- The Kosi River originates from the Sun Kosi, Arun Kosi, and Tamur Kosi streams and enters India near Hanuman Nagar, merging with the Ganga at Kursela, Bihar.
- The Mechi River, originating in the Mahabharat Range (Nepal), forms part of the India–Nepal border and joins the Mahananda River in Kishanganj, Bihar.

AFSPA Extended in Parts of Manipur, Nagaland, and Arunachal Pradesh

- On March 30, 2025, the **Ministry of Home Affairs extended the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA)** for **six months** in specified areas of **Manipur, Nagaland, and Arunachal Pradesh**.
- In Manipur, AFSPA remains in force across the state, excluding 13 police station areas in Imphal West, Imphal East, Thoubal, Bishnupur, and Kakching districts. The extension follows continued ethnic violence between Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities, with over 260 fatalities since May 2023.
- In Nagaland, the Act applies to eight districts—Dimapur, Niuland, Chumoukedima, Mon, Kiphire, Noklak, Phek, and Peren, and select police stations in Kohima, Mokochung, Longleng, Wokha, and Zunheboto.
- In Arunachal Pradesh, it has been extended to Tirap, Changlang, and Longding districts, and Namsai, Mahadevpur, Chowkham police stations in Namsai district.

Operation Brahma

- **Operation Brahma** was launched by India on March 28, 2025, in response to the **7.7-magnitude earthquake in Myanmar**, which resulted in over 1,600 deaths and widespread destruction.
- The operation is led by the **Indian Army and coordinated by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)** in collaboration with all branches of the Indian Armed Forces.
- NDRF teams are conducting rescue operations, notably at U Hla Thein monastery, where 170 monks were stranded, using specialized search and rescue equipment.
- INS Satpura and INS Savitri of the Indian Navy delivered 40 tonnes of relief materials to Yangon, while an Indian Air Force C-130J aircraft delivered an additional 15 tonnes of aid.
- The operation reflects India's regional humanitarian leadership, similar to Operation **Maitri during the 2015 Nepal earthquake**, reaffirming its role as a first responder in South Asia.

Bodh Gaya Temple Controversy

- The Bodh Gaya temple controversy escalated in 2025 as Buddhist monks and followers across India launched protests **demanding complete control of the Mahabodhi Temple** by the Buddhist community.
- The **Mahabodhi Temple, a UNESCO World Heritage Site**, marks the place where Buddha attained enlightenment and is currently governed under the **Bodh Gaya Temple Act, 1949**.
- The Act establishes the Bodhgaya Temple Management Committee (BTMC) **with four Buddhists and four Hindus**, chaired by the **District Magistrate (DM)** as an **ex-officio member**.
- Protests began in February 2025, with hunger strikes and demonstrations, demanding repeal of the 1949 Act and voicing opposition to Hindu rituals at the site, which they argue contradict Buddhist teachings.
- Protesters claim that the presence of Brahminical practices and Hindu dominance in administration undermines Buddhist identity and attempts to “Brahminize” the site.
- The temple was originally built by Emperor Ashoka in 260 BCE and has undergone phases of neglect and Hindu reclamation, further complicating its religious control.
- A 2013 amendment allowed a non-Hindu DM to serve as chairperson, but Buddhists maintain that the core issue of representation remains unresolved.

T.N. Assembly Unanimously Adopts Resolution on Retrieval of Katchatheevu from Sri Lanka

- On April 2, 2025, the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution urging the Central Government to **retrieve Katchatheevu Island from Sri Lanka**, moved by Chief Minister M.K. Stalin.
- Katchatheevu is a 285-acre uninhabited **island in the Palk Strait**, ceded to Sri Lanka in 1974 through a bilateral agreement, historically **used by Tamil Nadu fishermen**.
- All political parties, including the AIADMK and BJP, supported the resolution despite questioning its timing, marking the fourth such resolution after previous ones in 1991, 2013, and 2014.
- The Assembly called on the Union Government to review the **1974 Indo-Sri Lankan agreement** and urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to address the issue during his April 4–6, 2025 visit to Sri Lanka, including efforts for the release of imprisoned fishermen and boats.

Pamban Rail Bridge

- The **original Pamban Rail Bridge**, inaugurated on **February 24, 1914**, was India's first sea bridge, connecting Rameswaram to the Indian mainland and serving for over a century.
- It featured 143 spans over a total length of 2,065 meters and included a manually operated double-leaf bascule section that allowed ships to pass, taking about 45 minutes per lift.
- The bridge endured several natural challenges, including major damage during the 1964 cyclone, after which it was successfully repaired.
- Due to corrosion and structural concerns, train services were suspended in December 2022, leading to the decommissioning of the original bridge.
- A new **Pamban Rail Bridge**, built at a cost of ₹535 crore, was inaugurated on April 6, 2025 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- The new structure features a vertical lift span capable of rising 17 meters, allowing smooth maritime navigation, and incorporates modern engineering innovations.

GI Tag to Warangal Chapata Chilli

- On March 28, 2025, the **Warangal Chapata Chilli**, also known as **"Tomato Chilli"**, received the Geographical Indication (GI) tag, becoming the 18th product from Telangana to gain this recognition.
- The chilli is cultivated across 6,700 acres in Warangal, Hanumakonda, Mulugu, and Jayashankar Bhupalpally districts, supporting around 20,000 farmers.
- It is distinguished by its bright red color, blocky tomato-like shape, mild pungency, and availability in Single Patti, Double Patti, and Odalu variants.
- Before the GI tag, the chilli sold at ₹300/kg; post-recognition, prices are expected to rise to ₹450–₹500/kg, improving farmer income.
- The chilli's natural red pigment has made it popular in export markets like the USA, China, UK, Germany, and other European countries, especially for use in the food and beverage industry.

Kannadippaya, a Traditional Tribal Handicraft from Kerala, Awarded GI Tag

- **Kannadippaya**, meaning **"mirror mat"**, is crafted from the inner layers of **reed bamboo (Teinostachyum wightii)** and provides natural insulation by offering warmth in winter and a cooling effect in summer.
- The craft is maintained by tribal communities such as the Oorali, Mannan, Muthuva, Malayan, Kadar, Ulladan, Malayarayan, and Hill Pulaya, mainly in Idukki, Thrissur, Ernakulam, and Palakkad districts.
- In India, GI registrations are governed by the **Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999**, under the **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Ministry of Commerce and Industry**.
- The first product in India to receive a GI tag was Darjeeling Tea in 2004-05.

Panchayat Advancement Index Ranks Rural Local Bodies

- The Ministry of Panchayati Raj released the **inaugural Panchayat Advancement Index (PAI) Baseline Report for 2022–23**, evaluating over 2.5 lakh Gram Panchayats across India.
- Panchayats are categorized into five tiers: Achiever (90+ points, none qualified), Front Runner (75–89 points, 699 Panchayats, 0.3%), Performer (60–74 points, 77,298 Panchayats, 35.8%), Aspirant (40–59 points, 1,32,392 Panchayats, 61.2%), and Beginner (below 40 points, 5,896 Panchayats, 2.7%).
- **Gujarat led with 346 Front Runner Panchayats**, followed by Telangana (270), while Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh recorded high numbers of Performer Panchayats.

- Bihar, Chhattisgarh, and Andhra Pradesh had a significant share of Aspirant Panchayats, highlighting areas needing targeted developmental interventions.

India's First-Ever Climate Change Station

- On April 8, 2025, Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh inaugurated **India's first High-Altitude Atmospheric and Climate Research Station** at **Mandlote village, Chenani**, in Udhampur district, Jammu and Kashmir.
- Located at an altitude of approximately 2,250 meters, the station was established by the Ministry of Earth Sciences to monitor environmental changes in the Himalayas.
- The facility will study rainfall patterns, cloudburst predictions, and atmospheric phenomena critical to the north-western Himalayan region.
- The inauguration also launched **the Indo-Swiss Joint Research Project – ICE-Crunch**, in collaboration with ETH Zurich, focusing on ice-nucleating particles and cloud condensation nuclei properties.

Naval Exercise INDRA-2025

- The 14th edition of the bilateral naval exercise **INDRA-2025 between India and Russia** was conducted from March 28 to April 2, 2025, off the coast of Chennai in the Bay of Bengal.
- The exercise comprised two phases: the **Harbour Phase** in Chennai (March 28–30) featuring professional exchanges, ship visits, and sports activities, and **the Sea Phase** (March 31–April 2) involving tactical manoeuvres, live weapon firings, anti-air operations, and helicopter cross-deck landings.
- Exercise INDRA, initiated in **2003**, remains a cornerstone of India-Russia defense relations, reflecting their long-term strategic partnership.

India Revokes Transshipment Facility for Bangladesh Exports

- On April 8, 2025, the Government of India revoked the **transshipment facility** that allowed Bangladeshi export cargo to pass through Indian land customs stations to reach third countries, as announced by the **Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC)**.
- The facility, established in **June 2020**, had facilitated Bangladesh's ready-made garment (RMG) exports by providing access to Indian ports and airports, notably the **Indira Gandhi International Airport in New Delhi**.
- Indian authorities cited airport congestion and logistical delays, particularly in **Delhi**, as primary reasons for the revocation, with concerns raised by the **Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEPC)** of India.
- Political factors also played a role, following controversial remarks by **Bangladesh's Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus**, who referred to India's northeastern states as "landlocked" and proposed Bangladesh as a gateway for Chinese goods, straining diplomatic ties.

Maharashtra-ROSATOM Partnership for Thorium Reactor

- On April 11, 2025, the **Maharashtra government** signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with **Russia's state-owned ROSATOM** to jointly develop a **Small Modular Reactor (SMR)** powered by thorium fuel.
- This is the first instance of an Indian state government venturing into nuclear energy development, traditionally overseen by the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE).
- Key stakeholders include Maharashtra State Power Generation Co. Ltd (MAHAGENCO), ROSATOM, Maharashtra Institution for Transformation (MITRA), and the Global Technology Alliance.

Relocation of Cheetahs from Kuno to Gandhi Sagar Approved

- The **Cheetah Project Steering Committee** under the **National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)** has approved the relocation of some cheetahs from **Kuno National Park to Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary in Madhya Pradesh**. Project Cheetah was initiated in **2022** with the translocation of 8 cheetahs from Namibia and 12 from South Africa to Kuno National Park.
- As of April 2025, Kuno National Park houses 26 cheetahs, including 17 in the wild and 9 in enclosures.
- The project has faced challenges with the deaths of 8 adult cheetahs and 5 cubs since its inception. Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary, located in northwestern Madhya Pradesh bordering Rajasthan, covers an area of 368 sq km and offers a habitat similar to the Maasai Mara in Kenya.

India Votes in Favour of First Global Carbon Tax on Shipping

- India joined 62 other nations in supporting the **world's first global carbon tax** on the shipping industry, adopted by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in April 2025.

- The carbon tax is scheduled to **be formally adopted in October 2025** and will come into force in 2028. Ships exceeding emission thresholds will pay charges ranging from \$100 to \$380 per tonne of CO₂, depending on their emission levels.
- The tax is expected to generate up to \$40 billion by 2030, with all revenues allocated exclusively for decarbonizing the maritime sector.
- Countries supporting the measure include India, China, Brazil, the European Union, Japan, South Africa, and Singapore.
- Nations opposing the tax include Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Russia, and Venezuela, while the United States abstained from the negotiations and vote.

Union Minister of Cooperation Announces Sahkar Taxi

- On the floor of Parliament, **Union Home and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah** announced the launch of '**Sahkar Taxi**', a cooperative-based ride-hailing service aligned with the vision of '**Sahkar se Samriddhi**'. The platform will support two-wheeler taxis, auto-rickshaws, and four-wheeler cabs across India.
- The initiative ensures **100% earnings go directly to drivers**, bypassing private aggregators and enhancing driver financial security.

PM Modi Announces "Yoga for One Earth, One Health" as 2025 Yoga Day Theme

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi **announced "Yoga for One Earth, One Health"** as the **theme for the 2025 International Day of Yoga (IDY)**, focusing on yoga's role in global health and environmental sustainability.
- With less than 100 days until June 21, PM Modi urged citizens to adopt daily yoga practices for improved physical and mental health. International Day of Yoga has been observed annually **since 2015**, following India's proposal to the United Nations, gaining widespread global recognition.

India Justice Report 2025

- The **India Justice Report (IJR) 2025**, led by **Tata Trusts**, assesses India's justice delivery across four pillars: Police, Judiciary, Prisons, and Legal Aid.
- Published by **Tata Trusts** in collaboration with **Centre for Social Justice, Common Cause**, and others. The 2025 edition marks the **fourth instalment** since its inception in **2019**.
- In 2024-25, eleven states allocated ₹1.97 lakh crore to the justice system, marking a 25% increase from 2022-23. The average per capita spending is ₹2,056, with Telangana leading at ₹3,047.
- Police received ₹1.56 lakh crore, making up 80% of the justice budget, but less than 2% was spent on training.
- Allocations for **judiciary** and **legal aid** amounted to **₹32,996 crore**, representing 17% of the total justice budget.
- **Karnataka** leads in overall justice delivery, followed by **Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu**.
- **Uttar Pradesh** ranks at the bottom in justice delivery, highlighting the need for reform.

Karnataka's Caste Survey Report Accepted by State Cabinet

- On April 11, 2025, the Karnataka Cabinet formally accepted **the Socio-Economic and Educational Survey report**, also known as the caste survey. The survey, commissioned in **2015 under Chief Minister Siddaramaiah**, aimed to collect comprehensive socio-economic data from various caste groups in the state.
- The report, submitted by the Karnataka State Commission for Backward Classes under **Chairman K. Jayaprakash Hegde**, was tabled in the Cabinet meeting and will be discussed in a special session on April 17, 2025.
- The survey involved over 1.6 lakh personnel and covered 94.17% of the state's population, surveying 5.98 crore individuals across 1.38 crore families.
- 54 parameters were assessed, focusing on social, educational, and economic status, with data validation done by the Indian Institute of Management-Bangalore.
- **The demographic distribution showed OBCs at 69.6%, Scheduled Castes (SCs) at 19.5%, and Scheduled Tribes (STs) at 7%. Muslims represent 16% of the population, while Lingayats and Vokkaligas are at 14% and 11%, respectively.**
- The survey recommends increasing OBC reservation from 32% to 51%, adjusting for the creamy layer, and raising the Muslim quota from 4% to 8% under Category IIB.
- The IIA category (including Kurubas) is recommended to rise from 15% to 22%, benefiting communities like the Kurubas to which CM Siddaramaiah belongs.

India Signs Agreement to Host International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) Headquarters

- On **April 17, 2025**, India signed an agreement to host the **International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA)** headquarters, emphasizing India's leadership in global wildlife conservation efforts, especially for big cat species.

- The IBCA was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on April 9, 2023, during the 50th anniversary celebrations of **Project Tiger** in **Mysuru**, with the aim to conserve seven major big cat species: **Tiger, Lion, Leopard, Snow Leopard, Cheetah, Jaguar, and Puma**.
- The Government of India has committed **₹150 crore** (approximately **USD 18 million**) over five years (2023–29) to support the IBCA's operations, including building infrastructure and covering recurring expenditures.
- As of January 23, 2025, the IBCA became a legal entity with **India, Nicaragua, Eswatini, Somalia, and Liberia** ratifying the framework agreement. The alliance now includes 95 countries committed to big cat conservation.

INTERNATIONAL

Günter Blöschl Wins Stockholm Water Prize 2025

- **Professor Günter Blöschl**, a renowned hydrologist, has been awarded the **Stockholm Water Prize 2025** for his pioneering contributions to flood risk reduction and water resource management. The Stockholm Water Prize is regarded as the world's most prestigious water award, presented annually by the **Stockholm Water Foundation** in collaboration with the **Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences**.
- He is recognized as the founder of regional process hydrology, which examines hydrological processes at regional scales for improved water hazard predictions.
- As a co-founder of sociohydrology, Professor Blöschl has advanced the study of human–water system interactions, enabling better incorporation of social factors into hydrological models.
- He created a 500-year flood database, offering critical insights into long-term flood trends and supporting climate adaptation strategies.

Journalist Jeffrey Goldberg Inadvertently Added to U.S. Government Group Chat Discussing Yemen Strikes

- **Jeffrey Goldberg, Editor-in-Chief of The Atlantic**, reported that he was mistakenly added to a **Signal group chat** where senior U.S. government officials were discussing classified military plans targeting Houthi positions in Yemen.
- On March 11, 2025, **National Security Advisor Michael Waltz** accidentally included Goldberg in the chat group titled **"Houthi PC small group"**, which was meant exclusively for high-level military discussions.
- The chat involved top officials of the Trump administration, including Vice President JD Vance, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Secretary of Defence Pete Hegseth, and other senior personnel.
- The messages contained specific operational details, including proposed targets, weapon systems, and the timing of planned strikes against the Houthi group in Yemen.

Abel Prize 2025

- The **Abel Prize 2025** has been awarded to **Masaki Kashiwara**, a renowned Japanese mathematician, for his fundamental contributions to **algebraic analysis** and **representation theory**, particularly the **theory of D-modules** and **crystal bases**.
- Established in **2002 by the Norwegian government**, the **Abel Prize** is awarded annually by the **Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters** and is regarded as the "Nobel Prize of Mathematics".
- Masaki Kashiwara was born on January 30, 1947, in Yūki, Ibaraki, Japan, completed his master's at the University of Tokyo (1971), and obtained his Ph.D. from Kyoto University (1974) under Mikio Sato.
- He has served as a professor at Kyoto University's RIMS and is currently at the Kyoto University Institute for Advanced Study (KUIAS).

Earthquake in Myanmar

- On March 28, 2025, a **7.7-magnitude earthquake** struck near Mandalay, the second-largest city in Myanmar, causing widespread devastation.
- Myanmar reported over 600 deaths and more than 1,600 injuries, with the toll expected to rise as rescue operations continue.
- In Thailand, approximately 10 people died and dozens were injured in Bangkok, following the collapse of a 30-story under-construction building.
- A 6.4-magnitude aftershock struck 11 minutes after the main quake, followed by multiple smaller tremors.
- The **Myanmar military junta declared a state of emergency** and issued an appeal for international aid to support ongoing relief and recovery efforts.

Israel's Netanyahu to Visit Hungary, Defying ICC Arrest Warrant

- Israeli Prime Minister **Benjamin Netanyahu** is scheduled to visit **Hungary** from April 2 to April 6, 2025, despite an ICC arrest warrant issued in November 2024.

- The International Criminal Court (ICC) issued warrants for Netanyahu and former Defence Minister Yoav Gallant for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity in Gaza, marking the first such action against leaders of a Western-aligned democracy.
- Hungarian **Prime Minister Viktor Orbán invited Netanyahu** and confirmed that Hungary would not enforce the ICC warrant, despite being a signatory to the Rome Statute.
- The visit reflects Hungary's defiance of EU norms, Orbán's support for Netanyahu, and strained relations with the European Union.
- The international response remains divided, with countries like the United States rejecting ICC jurisdiction, while others back the court's independent legal authority.

World's Largest 'Exporter' of Adopted Children: Revelations from South Korea's Fact-Finding Commission

- **South Korea** has sent approximately 200,000 children abroad for adoption since the **end of the Korean War**, becoming the **world's largest source of international adoptees**.
- A recent investigation by the **Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Korea** revealed systemic fraud and human rights violations in the country's foreign adoption program.
- Unwed mothers were systematically coerced by hospitals and agencies into giving up children, revealing a pattern of forced adoptions.
- The commission has called for an official apology from the government and recommended restoring the true identities of adoptees to aid family reunification.

Senator Cory Booker Delivers Historic 25-Hour and 5-Minute Senate Speech

- On March 31, 2025, **Senator Cory Booker** of **New Jersey** delivered a **25-hour and 5-minute speech** on the U.S. Senate floor, setting the **longest speech record** in Senate history.
- The speech surpassed the **1957 record of 24 hours and 18 minutes** held by **Senator Strom Thurmond**.
- Booker protested against the policies of President Donald Trump's administration, citing harm to democracy and marginalized communities.
- The act served as a symbolic reversal of Thurmond's filibuster against civil rights legislation, reinforcing Booker's civil rights advocacy.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi Awarded Sri Lanka Mitra Vibhushana

- **On April 5, 2025**, during an official visit to Sri Lanka, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was conferred with the **Sri Lanka Mitra Vibhushana**, the country's highest honor for foreign leaders, by **President Anura Kumara Dissanayake** at the Presidential Secretariat in Colombo.
- The Sri Lanka Mitra Vibhushana, instituted in **2008** by then-President **Mahinda Rajapaksa**, is awarded to foreign Heads of State or Government for exceptional friendship and solidarity with Sri Lanka.
- The award includes a **citation, and a silver medal** adorned with nine types of Sri Lankan gems (Navaratna), symbolizing a priceless friendship.
- The medal features symbolic elements: a Dharma Chakra representing shared Buddhist heritage, a Purna Kalasha symbolizing prosperity, and Sun and Moon denoting a timeless bond.

Bangladesh Assumes BIMSTEC Chairmanship for 2025-2027

- During the **6th BIMSTEC Summit held in Bangkok, Thailand**, **Bangladesh** officially assumed the chairmanship of BIMSTEC for a two-year term.
- The chairmanship was handed over from Thailand's Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra to Bangladesh's Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus.
- BIMSTEC comprises Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand, with the chairmanship rotating alphabetically every two years.
- The summit adopted the BIMSTEC Bangkok Vision 2030, aiming for sustainable development and deeper economic integration among member states.
- This is Bangladesh's third chairmanship, following earlier terms in **1997-1999 and 2005-2006**.

NATO Members Announce Intent to Withdraw from Ottawa Convention

- **Poland, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania** declared their intention to **withdraw from the 1997 Ottawa Convention**, which bans the use, stockpiling, production, and transfer of anti-personnel landmines.
- The withdrawals are driven by security concerns over escalating military threats from Russia, aiming to enhance border defences through landmine deployment.
- These countries seek military parity with non-signatories like Russia, the United States, China, India, and Israel.
- **Finnish Prime Minister Petteri Orpo** cited the **changing security environment** post-Ukraine conflict as necessitating more **versatile defence strategies**.

Breakthrough Prize 2025

- The **11th annual Breakthrough Prize ceremony** was held on **April 5, 2025**, at the **Barker Hangar** in **Santa Monica, California**, celebrating major scientific advancements.
- In **Life Sciences**, the awardees were Daniel J. Drucker, Joel Habener, Jens Juul Holst, Lotte Bjerre Knudsen, and Svetlana Mojsov for their discovery of the GLP-1 hormone, crucial for drugs like Ozempic and Wegovy.
- Stephen L. Hauser and Alberto Ascherio were honoured for research on multiple sclerosis, **identifying B cells as key contributors** and linking Epstein-Barr virus to MS risk.
- David R. Liu received recognition for pioneering base editing and prime editing technologies in gene editing.
- In **Fundamental Physics**, over 13,000 researchers from ATLAS, CMS, ALICE, and LHCb experiments at **CERN** were awarded for contributions to understanding fundamental particles and forces.
- In **Mathematics**, Dennis Gaitsgory was awarded for his work on the geometric Langlands program, connecting number theory and geometry. Each Breakthrough Prize carries a monetary award of \$3 million, making it one of the most prestigious and financially significant awards in the scientific community.

US Clears Firm to Build and Design Nuclear Reactors in India

- The **United States Department of Energy (DoE)** granted **Holtec International** regulatory approval to **transfer small modular reactor (SMR) technology** to India, advancing **India-US civil nuclear cooperation**.
- Holtec is authorized to share **SMR technology with Holtec Asia, Larsen & Toubro Ltd (L&T), and Tata Consulting Engineers Ltd (TCE)**.
- Conditions include prohibiting technology transfer to other entities or countries without US government consent, ensuring usage under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards, and requiring quarterly reporting to the DoE.
- The approval currently excludes collaboration with state-owned entities like NPCIL, NTPC, and AERB, pending non-proliferation assurances from the Indian government.
- The development revitalizes **the 2007 India-US Civil Nuclear Agreement**, delayed for years due to regulatory hurdles.

Bangladesh Joins Artemis Accords

- On **April 8, 2025**, **Bangladesh** became the **54th nation** to sign the **Artemis Accords** at a ceremony in **Dhaka**, represented by **Secretary of Defense Ashraf Uddin**, with participation from **U.S. Chargé d'Affaires Tracey Jacobson** and a message from **NASA Acting Administrator Janet Petro**.
- The Artemis Accords, established in **October 2020** by **NASA** and the **U.S. Department of State**, outline non-binding principles for peaceful, transparent, and sustainable civil space exploration.
- With Bangladesh's inclusion, the Artemis Accords now have **54 signatories**, forming a broad international framework for cooperation on missions to the Moon, Mars, and beyond.

Panama Deal Allows U.S. Troop Deployment Near Canal

- **Panama** and the **United States** have signed a **security agreement** permitting U.S. military personnel to deploy near the Panama Canal for training and joint exercises.
- The agreement grants access to **three facilities—two naval air bases and one airport**—previously operated by the U.S. during its control of the **Canal Zone**.
- It explicitly **prohibits the establishment of permanent military bases** but allows toll-free, priority passage for U.S. warships through the Panama Canal.
- The deal has sparked domestic controversy in Panama, with critics claiming it undermines sovereignty and violates the **1977 Torrijos-Carter Treaties** that guaranteed the canal's **neutrality** and **Panamanian control**.
- The **Panama Canal**, completed in **1914**, remained under **U.S. control** until its transfer to Panama was completed in **1999** under the **Torrijos-Carter Treaties**.

WMO Retires Hurricane Names

- The **World Meteorological Organization (WMO)** retired four hurricane names—**Beryl, Helene, Milton, and John**—due to the significant death tolls and widespread destruction caused during the 2024 hurricane season.
- **Hurricane Beryl** (Atlantic Basin) became the earliest Category 5 hurricane on July 2, 2024, reaching 165 mph, causing 68 fatalities and 65 tornadoes after making landfall in Southeast Texas.
- **Hurricane Helene** (Atlantic Basin) made landfall in Florida's Big Bend region on September 27, 2024 as a Category 4 storm, resulting in over 200 deaths and \$75 billion in damages.
- **Hurricane Milton** (Atlantic Basin) crossed central Florida in October 2024, leading to over 40 fatalities and causing damages worth at least \$34 billion.
- **Hurricane John** (Eastern Pacific Basin) caused severe flooding in the Mexican state of Guerrero, leading to its retirement.
- The WMO announced **replacement names** effective from the **2030 hurricane season**:
 - Beryl → **Brianna**

- Helene → **Holly**
- Milton → **Miguel**
- John → **Jake**
- The WMO maintains six rotating lists of hurricane names, and retirement occurs when a storm's impact makes future reuse insensitive or confusing, honoring the memory of the affected victims.

US-Iran Negotiators Hold 'Constructive' Nuclear Talks in First Round

- On **April 12, 2025**, the **United States** and **Iran** conducted a nuclear negotiation round in Muscat, Oman, marking their first direct engagement since the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA in 2018.
- The U.S. delegation was led by **Special Envoy Steve Witkoff**, while Iran's team was headed by **Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi**, with mediation by Omani Foreign Minister Badr al-Busaidi.
- Talks occurred amid renewed **U.S. "maximum pressure" campaigns** and Iran's economic and political challenges, with a looming July UN sanctions renewal deadline adding urgency.
- Despite deep differences, both sides described the discussions as **"constructive"**, and agreed to **reconvene on April 19, 2025**, in **Oman**, offering cautious optimism for future progress.

Mauritius Becomes First African Country to Sign ISA's Country Partnership Framework

- **Mauritius** became the **first African country** and the **fourth globally** after **Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Cuba** to sign the **Country Partnership Framework (CPF)** with the International Solar Alliance (ISA).
- The CPF was signed in **Port Louis** by **Barakat Ahmed**, ISA's Regional Programmes Head for Africa, and **Zeenat Guness-Goolbar**, Permanent Secretary of Mauritius's Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities.
- The **International Solar Alliance (ISA)**, launched in **2015** by **India** and **France**, aims to mobilize USD 1 trillion in solar investments by 2030 to improve energy access and combat climate change.

Katy Perry and All-Female Crew Go to Space: A Historic Blue Origin Flight

- **Katy Perry** joined an **all-female crew** on a suborbital spaceflight organized by **Blue Origin**, marking a historic milestone in private space exploration.
- The mission launched from **Blue Origin's Corn Ranch** facility in West Texas aboard the New Shepard (NS-31) rocket and lasted approximately 11 minutes, crossing the Kármán line.
- Crew Members included Katy Perry, Lauren Sánchez, Gayle King, Aisha Bowe, Amanda Nguyen, and Kerianne Flynn, making it the first all-female spaceflight since Valentina Tereshkova in 1963.
- During the microgravity experience, Katy Perry sang "What a Wonderful World", creating a symbolic fusion of music and space exploration.

UK Supreme Court Defines 'Woman' Based on Biological Sex

- On April 16, 2025, the **UK Supreme Court** ruled in **For Women Scotland Ltd v The Scottish Ministers**, determining that the terms **"woman"** and **"sex"** in the **Equality Act 2010** refer exclusively to biological sex, excluding transgender women with Gender Recognition Certificates (GRCs) from the legal definition of "woman".
- The case was brought by **For Women Scotland**, challenging the Scottish Government's inclusion of transgender women with GRCs in the definition of "woman" for public board appointments.

Global Trade Outlook and Statistics 2025

- The **World Trade Organization (WTO)** forecasts a **0.2% decline** in global **merchandise trade** for **2025**, down from the previously expected **3.0% growth**.
- **Services Trade**: Despite challenges in goods trade, services trade is projected to grow by 4.0%, a slowdown from 6.8% in 2024.
- The WTO predicts global GDP growth will slow to 2.2% in 2025 due to trade disruptions.
- U.S. tariffs, including a blanket 10% on imports and up to 145% on Chinese products, have intensified trade tensions and disrupted global supply chains.
- Bilateral trade between U.S. and China is expected to fall by 81%, potentially reaching 91% without exemptions for certain products like smartphones, risking global economic fragmentation.

Portrait of Palestinian Boy Wins 2025 World Press Photo of the Year

- The **World Press Photo Foundation** awarded the **2025 World Press Photo of the Year** to a portrait of **Mahmoud Ajjour**, a nine-year-old Palestinian boy who lost both arms in an Israeli airstrike in Gaza.
- The photograph, taken by **Samar Abu Elouf**, a **Palestinian photojournalist**, was published by **The New York Times** and showcases Mahmoud's quiet resilience amidst the trauma of conflict. Mahmoud was injured in March 2024 while fleeing with his family during an Israeli attack on Gaza City. An explosion severed one of his arms and mutilated the other as he turned back to urge his family to move faster.

- The photograph was selected from over 59,000 entries submitted by nearly 3,800 photographers across 141 countries and will be featured in the **World Press Photo Exhibition 2025**.

APPOINTMENTS

Ex-ED Chief Sanjay Mishra Appointed to EAC-PM, Rajiv Gauba as NITI Aayog Member

- The Government of India **has appointed Sanjay Kumar Mishra**, former Enforcement Directorate (ED) Director, as a full-time member of **the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM)**, and **Rajiv Gauba, former Cabinet Secretary, as a full-time member of NITI Aayog**.
- Sanjay Kumar Mishra is a 1984-batch IRS officer (Income Tax cadre) and served as ED Director until September 15, 2023, when his extended tenure was curtailed by the Supreme Court.
- The **EAC-PM is an independent advisory body to the Prime Minister**, currently chaired by Dr. Suman Bery, who also serves as Vice Chairperson of NITI Aayog.
- Rajiv Gauba is a 1982-batch IAS officer (Jharkhand cadre) who served as Cabinet Secretary from 2019 to August 2024, and held key posts including Union Home Secretary and Chief Secretary of Jharkhand.

Poonam Gupta Appointed as RBI Deputy Governor Ahead of MPC Meeting

- **Dr. Poonam Gupta** was appointed as **Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** for a **three-year term**, succeeding Michael Patra, who retired in January 2025.
- Dr. Gupta is the **first woman** to hold the position in over a decade and assumes office ahead of the **Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting** scheduled for April 7–9, 2025.
- She previously served as **Director General of NCAER** and has nearly two decades of experience with the World Bank and IMF in macroeconomic policy.
- Dr. Gupta has held academic roles at the Delhi School of Economics and ICRIER. She is a member of the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister and Convener of the Advisory Council to the 16th Finance Commission.

Justice B.R. Gavai Appointed as 52nd Chief Justice of India

- **Justice Bhushan Ramkrishna Gavai** is appointed as the **52nd Chief Justice of India (CJI)**, succeeding Justice Sanjiv Khanna after his retirement on May 13, 2025.
- Justice Gavai's tenure as CJI will begin on May 14, 2025, and end upon his retirement on November 23, 2025, adhering to the seniority convention in the Supreme Court.
- Born on November 24, 1960, in Amravati, Maharashtra, Justice Gavai's family was influenced by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's ideals. His father, R.S. Gavai, was a prominent Dalit leader and former Governor of Bihar and Kerala.
- Justice Gavai was elevated to the Supreme Court on May 24, 2019, where he has authored 696 judgments and participated in 422 benches. His judgments mainly focus on criminal law, service matters, and constitutional issues.
- He will be the second Dalit to serve as CJI, following Justice K.G. Balakrishnan (2007–2010).
- His tenure as CJI will span approximately six months, and upon his retirement, Justice Surya Kant is expected to succeed him as the 53rd Chief Justice of India.

SPORTS

Hitesh Gulia First Indian Boxer to Win Gold at the World Boxing Cup

- **Hitesh Gulia** became the **first Indian boxer to win a gold medal at the World Boxing Cup**, triumphing in the men's 70kg category at the inaugural tournament held in Foz do Iguaçu, Brazil, in April 2025.
- Gulia secured the gold after England's Odel Kamara withdrew from the final due to injury, resulting in a walkover victory.
- In the semi-finals, Gulia defeated French Olympian Makan Traore, demonstrating his high-level competitive readiness.
- Team India's medal tally included: Gold – Hitesh Gulia (70kg), Silver – Abhinash Jamwal (65kg), and Bronze – Jadumani Singh Mandengbam (50kg), Manish Rathore (55kg), Sachin (60kg), and Vishal (90kg).

Sir James Anderson Awarded Knighthood for Services to Cricket

- On April 11, 2025, **James Anderson was awarded a knighthood** in former Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's resignation honours list for his exceptional contributions to cricket.
- Anderson made his Test debut for England on May 22, 2003, against Zimbabwe at Lord's.

- He retired from international cricket in July 2024 after playing 188 Test matches, the **second-highest in Test history** after Sachin Tendulkar's 200.
- He claimed 704 Test wickets, making him the highest wicket-taking fast bowler in Test history and third overall after Muttiah Muralitharan (800) and Shane Warne (708).
- Previously, he was appointed **an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE)** in the 2015 Queen's Birthday Honours.
- Anderson now joins cricket legends **Sir Alastair Cook and Sir Andrew Strauss**, knighted in 2019, reflecting his place among England's most celebrated cricketers.

Number of Teams Confirmed for Cricket's Olympic Return

- On April 9, 2025, the **International Olympic Committee (IOC)** confirmed that cricket will feature in the **2028 Los Angeles Olympics**, with **six teams each for the men's and women's tournaments**.
- Both tournaments will use the Twenty20 (T20) format, known for its fast-paced and engaging style. Each team will consist of a 15-player squad, totaling 90 athletes per gender.
- The United States, as the host nation, is expected to receive an automatic berth in both events.
- The International Cricket Council (ICC) is considering using T20 World Cup results or team rankings to determine the remaining five qualification spots per tournament.

Khelo India Youth Games 2025: Logo, Mascot, and Torch Relay

- On April 14, 2025, Bihar unveiled the logo and mascot for **Khelo India Youth Games 2025**. This is the first time the state will host the event, which will take place from **May 4 to May 15, 2025** across **Patna, Gaya, Nalanda, Bhagalpur, and Begusarai**.
- The mascot **Gajasimha**, combining the strength of an elephant and the courage of a lion, is inspired by **Pala period** carvings from Nalanda and Bodhi Gaya.
- The logo uses orange and green to symbolize energy and nature, featuring **Mahabodhi Temple, Nalanda University, Peepal tree, Sparrow, and the Gangetic Dolphin**.
- The **Gaurav Yatra** torch relay, from April 15 to May 2, 2025, will cover 38 districts of Bihar, aiming to generate excitement and ensure **grassroots participation**.
- The official song "**Khel ke Rang, Bihar ke Sang**" celebrates the vibrant youth spirit of **Bihar**.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

DRDO Tests Vertically-Launched Short-Range Surface-to-Air Missile (VL-SRSAM)

- DRDO, in collaboration with the Indian Navy, conducted a successful flight test of the **indigenously developed VL-SRSAM** at the **Integrated Test Range (ITR)**, Chandipur, Odisha.
- The test validated the missile's ability to intercept high-speed aerial targets at low altitude and close range using a land-based vertical launcher. The system operated in full combat configuration, including an indigenous RF Seeker, Multi-Function Radar, and Weapon Control System.
- VL-SRSAM is designed for area and point defence roles, targeting aircraft, helicopters, drones, and missiles at short ranges.
- The missile is based on **the Astra Mark 1** and features cruciform wings, thrust vector control, and a smokeless exhaust. It has an operational range of up to **40 km, extendable to 80 km**.

European Space Agency (ESA) Shuts Down Gaia Space Telescope

- On March 27, 2025, the European Space Agency (ESA) officially ended operations of the **Gaia space telescope** and moved it into a **heliocentric retirement orbit**.
- Gaia was launched on December 19, 2013, with the aim of creating a **3D map of the Milky Way** by surveying nearly one billion stars.
- It measured positions, distances, motions, and characteristics of about 1.8 billion stars, aiding discoveries in stellar evolution, dark matter distribution, and exoplanet detection.
- The mission ended due to fuel depletion, with Gaia consuming approximately 12 grams of cold gas daily to maintain its spin.
- Despite its retirement, two final data releases are planned: one around 2026, and another by the end of the decade, offering further insights into the structure of the Milky Way.

Indian Astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla to Fly to International Space Station in May 2025

- **Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla** of the **Indian Air Force (IAF)** has been selected as **Mission Pilot** for **Axiom Mission 4 (Ax-4)** to the **International Space Station (ISS)**, scheduled for launch no earlier than May 2025.
- He has over 2,000 hours of flight experience on aircraft including Su-30 MKI, MiG-21, MiG-29, Jaguar, Hawk, Dornier 228, and An-32.
- **Ax-4** will launch aboard a **SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket** from **NASA's Kennedy Space Center**, carrying the **Crew Dragon spacecraft** to the ISS for a **14-day mission** involving **scientific experiments and activities**.
- The Ax-4 crew includes Commander Peggy Whitson (USA), Mission Specialist Sławosz Uznański-Wiśniewski (Poland), and Mission Specialist Tibor Kapu (Hungary).
- Shukla's selection makes him the second Indian national to fly to space after Rakesh Sharma's 1984 mission.
- He is also among the astronaut-designates for ISRO's Gaganyaan mission, targeted for 2026, marking India's push toward independent human spaceflight capability.

Chandrayaan's ChaSTE Scores a First After Taking Moon's Temperature

- **Chandrayaan-3's Chandra's Surface Thermophysical Experiment (ChaSTE)** conducted the **first-ever in-situ measurements** of the Moon's surface and subsurface temperatures near the lunar south pole.
- ChaSTE is designed to measure thermal properties such as temperature profiles and thermal conductivity using a probe with ten platinum resistance temperature detectors (RTDs) spaced **1 cm apart**, capable of penetrating up to **10 cm into the lunar regolith**.
- The surface temperature recorded was approximately 355 K (82°C), higher than earlier estimates of around 330 K (57°C), due to measurement on a sunward-facing slope with a 6° inclination.
- Subsurface temperature readings revealed significant spatial variability in thermal properties at high lunar latitudes, unlike the more uniform conditions observed at the equator.

De-Extinction of Dire Wolf

- In April 2025, **Colossal Biosciences**, a U.S.-based biotechnology company, announced the **birth of three genetically engineered wolf pups—Romulus, Remus, and Khaleesi**—marking the first claimed "de-extinction" of the dire wolf (*Aenocyon dirus*), extinct for about 10,000 years.
- Scientists analyzed ancient **DNA from a 13,000-year-old tooth from Ohio** and a **72,000-year-old ear bone from Idaho**, identifying 20 key genetic differences between dire wolves and modern gray wolves.
- Using CRISPR technology, researchers edited 14 specific genes in gray wolf endothelial progenitor cells to express larger body size, wider heads, and white fur characteristic of dire wolves.
- The edited nuclei were implanted into enucleated ova, developed into embryos, and implanted into domestic dog surrogates, resulting in the birth of the pups.
- The pups show physical traits like increased size and white coats, and are housed in a 2,000-acre ecological preserve in the United States for monitoring.

Biomass Mission

- The European Space Agency (ESA) will launch the **Biomass mission on April 29, 2025**, to improve understanding of Earth's forests and their role in the global carbon cycle.
- The mission aims to assess **global forest biomass and height**, providing estimates of carbon stored in forests and tracking deforestation and degradation over time.
- Biomass will contribute to refining climate change models by improving estimates of carbon fluxes between forests and the atmosphere.
- The satellite is equipped with the **first spaceborne P-band Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR)**, capable of penetrating dense forest canopies to measure tree structures and biomass.
- It features a **12-meter diameter deployable** antenna designed for high-resolution data collection across diverse forested regions.
- Biomass will operate in a sun-synchronous orbit at an altitude of approximately 666 km, ensuring consistent lighting conditions for observations.

BOOKS AND AUTHORS

The Great Conciliator: A Book on Lal Bahadur Shastri

- **The Great Conciliator** by Sanjeev Chopra highlights Lal Bahadur Shastri's leadership, focusing on his consensus-building and pragmatic approach.
- **Legacy:** Shastri, often overshadowed in history, played a key role in stabilizing India and strengthening its administrative framework.
- **Upbringing:** Born in Mughalsarai, Shastri's values of education, discipline, and service influenced his leadership.
- **Leadership:** Known for listening and accommodating differing views, Shastri resolved the South India language dispute and prioritized stability over confrontation.
- **Key Contributions:**
 - **BSF Formation:** Created to unify border security forces after the Rann of Kutch incident.
 - **Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan:** A slogan that highlighted the importance of farmers and soldiers, uniting the nation.
- **Underrated:** Shastri's preference for consensus over assertiveness led to his underappreciation.
- **Relevance:** His integrity, problem-solving skills, and pragmatic approach remain crucial for effective governance today.

CARELESS PEOPLE: A Cautionary Tale of Power, Greed, and Lost Idealism by Sarah Wynn Williams

- Sarah Wynn-Williams, former Facebook policy director and ex-New Zealand diplomat.
- The memoir exposes Facebook's internal dysfunction, toxic leadership, ethical failures, and unchecked corporate power.
- *Key Figures Criticized:*
 - **Mark Zuckerberg:** Centralized power, focused on public adoration, admired controversial figures, and operated as a "one-man autocracy."
 - **Sheryl Sandberg:** Initially admired for her feminism but later seen as manipulative, with eccentric and inappropriate behavior.
 - **Joel Kaplan:** Former manager with allegations of misconduct, who pressured Wynn-Williams during maternity leave
- Facebook's involvement in the 2016 U.S. election campaign helped Trump with micro-targeting and spreading disinformation.
- Facebook's inadequate moderation allowed hate speech against the Rohingya, contributing to violence.
- Project "Aldrin" aimed to enter China through censorship, with Zuckerberg misleading Congress.
- Wynn-Williams faced humiliation, health neglect, sexualized behavior, and pressure during maternity leave.

IMPORTANT DAYS

- **Shaheed Diwas** is observed on **March 23** every year to honour the sacrifices of **Bhagat Singh, Shivaram Rajguru, and Sukhdev Thapar**, who were executed by the British on this day in **1931**. They were sentenced to death for the assassination of **J.P. Saunders**, a British officer, in retaliation for the death of Lala Lajpat Rai.
- The three revolutionaries were hanged in Lahore Central Jail a day earlier than the scheduled execution, sparking mass protests and intensifying the Indian freedom struggle.

National Maritime Day 2025

- National Maritime Day is celebrated annually on **April 5** to honour India's maritime heritage and the significant role the maritime sector plays in trade and national security. The day commemorates the **maiden voyage** of the **Scindia Steam Navigation Company Ltd** from India to the **UK** in **1919**, marking a crucial step in ending British dominance over Indian sea routes.
- First observed in **1964**, National Maritime Day highlights the importance of the shipping industry in economic development, transportation, and defence.

World Health Day 2025:

- **World Health Day** is observed annually on **April 7** to commemorate the **founding of the World Health Organization (WHO)** in **1948**.
- The **2025 theme** is "**Healthy Beginnings, Hopeful Futures**", focusing on improving **maternal and newborn health**.
- This year marks the beginning of a WHO year-long campaign aimed at reducing preventable maternal and newborn deaths, improving health outcomes for mothers and infants, and promoting high-quality healthcare for pregnant women and newborns, particularly in developing regions
- Statistics show approximately 300,000 women die annually from pregnancy or childbirth complications, while 2 million babies die within the first month of life and another 2 million are stillborn.

BR Ambedkar Remembrance Day

- **Ambedkar Jayanti** is celebrated on **April 14** each year to honour **Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar**, a prominent social reformer, jurist, and the chief architect of the **Indian Constitution**. The first celebration of Ambedkar Jayanti took place in Pune on April 14, **1928**, initiated by social reformer **Janardan Sadashiv Ranapisay**, a follower of Dr. Ambedkar.
- In **1990**, Dr. Ambedkar was posthumously awarded the **Bharat Ratna**, India's highest civilian honour, recognizing his monumental contributions to the nation.
- The date, **April 14**, marks Dr. Ambedkar's **birth anniversary** in **1891** in **Mhow**, Madhya Pradesh, and serves as a day to reflect on his lifelong commitment to **justice, education, and equality**.

World Heritage Day 2025: Date, Theme, Significance, and Sites

- **World Heritage Day**, also known as the **International Day for Monuments and Sites**, is observed on **April 18** each year to raise awareness about the importance of preserving cultural and natural heritage globally.
- The day, organized by the **International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS)**, was first proposed in **1982** and recognized by **UNESCO** in **1983**.
- 2025 Theme: "**Heritage under Threat from Disasters and Conflicts: Preparedness and Learning from 60 Years of ICOMOS Actions**" focuses on the need to protect heritage sites from the growing threats of disasters and conflicts.

OBITUARIES

George Foreman, The Legendary Boxer and Business Icon Passes Away at 76

- **George Foreman**, the **American boxing legend**, passed away on **March 21, 2025**, at the age of **76**.
- Born on January 10, 1949, in Marshall, Texas, Foreman had a challenging early life, marked by poverty and crime, before finding his path through the Job Corps and training in boxing.
- He won the **heavyweight gold medal** at the **1968 Olympic Games** in **Mexico City** at the age of 19, marking the start of his remarkable boxing career.
- In **1973**, Foreman won the **heavyweight title** by defeating **Joe Frazier** via technical knockout, and he later faced **Muhammad Ali** in the iconic "**Rumble in the Jungle**" in **1974**, where he lost by knockout.

Veteran Actor Manoj Kumar Passes Away at 87

- **Manoj Kumar**, legendary Bollywood actor, passed away at the age of 87 at Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital in Mumbai on April 4, 2025, following complications from heart-related issues and decompensated liver cirrhosis. **Born Harikrishnan Giri Goswami in Pakistan before the Partition**, his family migrated to Delhi, where he developed an interest in cinema and began his acting career in the late 1950s.
- He gained recognition in Bollywood with early hits such as Hariyali Aur Raasta (1962), Woh Kaun Thi? (1964), Himalaya Ki God Mein (1965), and Do Badan (1966). Known for his patriotic roles, he earned the title 'Bharat Kumar' with iconic films like Shaheed (1965), Upkar (1967), Purab Aur Paschim (1970), and Kranti (1981), portraying self-sacrificing, nationalist characters.
- He received several prestigious awards including the **Padma Shri** in **1992**, the **Dadasaheb Phalke Award** in **2015**, and multiple Filmfare Awards.

Mario Vargas Llosa, Nobel Award Winner, Passes Away

- **Mario Vargas Llosa**, the renowned **Peruvian writer**, passed away on April 14, 2025, at the age of 89. He was awarded the **Nobel Prize in Literature** in **2010** for his profound exploration of the structures of power and the individual's struggle against it.
- Vargas Llosa authored over 30 novels and numerous essays, with works like The Time of the Hero (1963), The Green House (1965), The War of the End of the World (1981), The Feast of the Goat (2000), and Harsh Times (2019) contributing to his status as a towering figure in Latin American literature.
- Initially a Marxist, Vargas Llosa later evolved to support liberal democracy. He ran for the presidency of Peru in 1990 but was unsuccessful.

RANKINGS

Women Billionaires Global List 2025: Forbes Billionaire Rankings Unveiled

- According to the **Forbes Billionaire List 2024**, women now make up **13.3%** of the global billionaire population. The top 10 richest women in the world have collectively amassed over **\$500 billion in net worth**, reflecting their growing influence across various sectors.

World Happiness Report 2025

- The World Happiness Report 2025 was published by the **Wellbeing Research Centre at the University of Oxford**, in collaboration with **Gallup** and the **UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network**, providing a global analysis of **subjective well-being** and the impact of **caring and sharing behaviors** on happiness. **India** improved its global position, ranking **118th out of 147 countries**, up from **126th** in the previous year.
- Finland** retained its position as the world's happiest country for the eighth consecutive year, followed by Denmark, Iceland, and Sweden.
- The United States dropped to its lowest-ever position, ranking 24th, with the decline attributed to rising social isolation, including more instances of solo dining and a reduction in social support.
- Among neighbouring countries, Pakistan was ranked 109th, a drop from 108th, while Nepal ranked 92nd,

ECONOMY

India's Q3 FY25 GDP Growth Set at 6.4%- ICRA

- India's **GDP** is projected to grow at **6.4%** in **Q3 FY25**, an increase from **5.4%** in the previous quarter. This growth is driven by **higher government spending** and a **rebound in exports**. **Gross Value Added (GVA)** is expected to rise by **6.6%**, with **industry** growing at **6.2%**, **services** at **7.7%**, and **agriculture** at **4.0%**. A notable highlight is the **record \$36.9 billion** in

Centre to Own Nearly 49% of Vodafone Idea

- The **Indian government** will increase its stake in **Vodafone Idea (Vi)** to **48.99%** by converting **₹36,950 crore** of the telco's **spectrum auction dues** into equity.
- The **Ministry of Communications** has directed Vi to issue 3,695 crore equity shares at a face value of ₹10, raising the government's stake from 22.6% to 48.99%.
- Vi's net debt is expected to reduce by 18%, providing cash flow relief over the next three years, although it still faces annual AGR dues of ₹16,500 crore.
- Operational control will remain with Vodafone Group and Aditya Birla Group, whose stakes will reduce to 16.1% and 9.4%, respectively.

Remittances to India from Advanced Economies Surpass Gulf Inflows: RBI

- According to Reserve Bank of India (RBI) data, for **the first time**, remittances from **advanced economies** such as the U.S., UK, Singapore, Canada, and Australia **surpassed inflows** from **Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries in 2023-24**.
- India's remittances grew from \$55.6 billion in 2010-11 to \$118.7 billion in 2023-24.
- The U.S. emerged as the largest contributor with a 27.7% share in 2023-24, up from 23.4% in 2020-21; the UK's share increased from 6.8% to 10.8%.
- The GCC countries' contribution declined to 38% of India's total remittances in 2023-24.
- Skilled migration to advanced economies, employment in high-paying sectors, and educational pursuits have driven the shift in remittance patterns.
- Maharashtra** received the largest share at 20.5%, followed by **Kerala** (19.7%), **Tamil Nadu** (10.4%), Telangana (8.1%), and Karnataka (7.7%).
- Policies like the **Migration and Mobility Partnership** between India and the UK, signed in May 2021, have facilitated increased migration and higher remittance flows.

Cabinet Committee on Security Approves \$7 Billion Deal to Procure 26 Rafale Marine Jets from France

- In April 2025, the **Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS)**, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved the procurement of **26 Rafale Marine (Rafale-M) fighter jets from France**, valued at approximately ₹63,000 crore (over \$7 billion).
- The procurement includes **22 single-seat Rafale-M jets** and **4 twin-seat trainer variants**, intended for deployment on the INS Vikrant, India's indigenous aircraft carrier.
- Deliveries are expected to begin three years after contract signing, with all aircraft to be delivered by 2031.
- The acquisition will enhance Indian Navy's capabilities in the Indian Ocean Region and address regional security concerns.

- The Rafale-M jets are an interim solution until the indigenous Twin Engine Deck Based Fighter (TEDBF) becomes operational.
- The deal includes a comprehensive weapons package featuring long-range air-to-air missiles and precision strike weapons.
- Provisions for maintenance support, crew training, and logistical assistance are also part of the agreement to ensure sustained operational readiness.

RBI MPC Changes Stance: Implications of an 'Accommodative' Policy for the Indian Economy

- On April 9, 2025, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) shifted its monetary policy stance from '**neutral**' to '**accommodative**' after reducing the **repo rate by 25 basis points to 6.00%**.
- The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) is now inclined toward **either maintaining the current rates or reducing them further**, effectively ruling out immediate rate hikes.
- The accommodative stance aims to stimulate economic growth by making borrowing more affordable and encouraging consumption and investment.
- The shift comes amid global economic uncertainties, particularly new U.S. tariffs that could impact India's export sectors.
- Domestic indicators like subdued inflation, forecasted at 4% for FY2026, and a revised GDP growth projection of 6.5%, allowed the RBI to adopt a growth-oriented policy without an immediate inflation risk.

March 2025 Retail Inflation Falls to Lowest Since August 2019

- India's retail inflation rate fell to **3.34% in March 2025**, marking the **lowest level since August 2019**.
- **Consumer Price Index (CPI)** inflation dropped from 3.61% in February 2025 to 3.34% in March 2025, falling below the RBI's target of 4%.
- **Food inflation** eased to 2.69% in March from 3.75% in February, driven by a 7.04% year-on-year decline in vegetable prices and reductions in eggs and pulses prices.
- **Core inflation**, which excludes food and energy prices, edged slightly higher to 4.1% in March 2025, reflecting moderate underlying price pressures.
- In response to falling inflation, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) reduced the key policy repo rate by 25 basis points to 6.00% in April 2025, adopting an accommodative monetary policy stance.
- The RBI has revised the **GDP growth forecast for the fiscal year to 6.5%**, down from the previous estimate of **6.7%**, citing global uncertainties and domestic factors.

Tamil Nadu's Economic Growth in 2024-25

- **Tamil Nadu achieved a real economic growth rate of 9.69% in 2024-25**, the **highest among Indian states** and the state's best performance in a decade.
- The Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) increased from ₹15.71 lakh crore in 2023-24 to ₹17.23 lakh crore in 2024-25. The nominal growth rate for the same period was 14.02
- The tertiary (services) sector grew by 12.7%, driven by real estate and professional services (13.6%), communication and broadcasting (13%), and trade, hotels, and restaurants (11.7
- The secondary sector grew by 9%, led by construction (10.6%) and manufacturing (8%).
- The primary sector showed minimal growth at 0.15%, with crop production declining by 5.93% and livestock growing by 3.84%.
- Tamil Nadu's previous highest growth was 8.59% in 2017-18, and it maintained positive growth of 0.07% during 2020-21 amid the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Economists project that with a 0.5 percentage point improvement in all sectors, Tamil Nadu's growth could reach 10.7% in 2025-26 and support the goal of becoming a \$1 trillion economy by 2032-33.