

March Edition

Monthly

CURRENT AFFAIRS

NEWS FROM FEBRUARY, 2025



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The BCCI announced a cash prize of Rs 5 crore for India's Under-19 women's team after their World Cup triumph on February 2, 2025; at Bayuemas Oval, Kuala Lumpur. India hammered South Africa by nine wickets in the final as they successfully defended their title by remaining unbeaten throughout the tournament, winning seven matches in a row. To honour the achievements of young girls, the Indian Cricket Board announced a cash reward for the entire team and the support staff. The board also praised the team for their remarkable performance as they dominated all their opponents to once again stamp their authority as 'world champions' in their age group. Coming back to the match, after opting to bat first, South Africa was rocked by the early dismissals of openers Simone Lourens and Jemma Botha. From there on, there was no comeback for the Proteas women as the Indian spin attack comprising Parunika Sisodia (2/6), Aayushi Shukla (2/9), Vaishnavi Sharma (2/23) and Gongadi Trisha (3/15) ran through their batting order.



The Maha Kumbh Mela 2025, one of the world's largest religious gatherings, concluded on February 26, 2025; after 45 days of celebration in Uttar Pradesh's Prayagraj. This year, the Maha Kumbh set a new record for almost 66 crore devotees took a dip in the Triveni Sangam, the confluence of Ganga, Yamuna and the mythical Saraswati. The world's largest religious festival which began on January 13, ended with the final holy dip on Mahashivratri. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath expressed gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his guidance in organising the Maha Kumbh Mela. He also acknowledged the collective efforts that ensured its success. Even after the festival's conclusion, devotees continued to flock to Prayagraj's Triveni Sangam for a holy dip at the sacred confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna, and Saraswati rivers. Maharashtra's Nashik is set to host the Kumbh in 2027. The Nashik Kumbh in 2027 is slated to take place from July 17 to August 17, 2027.



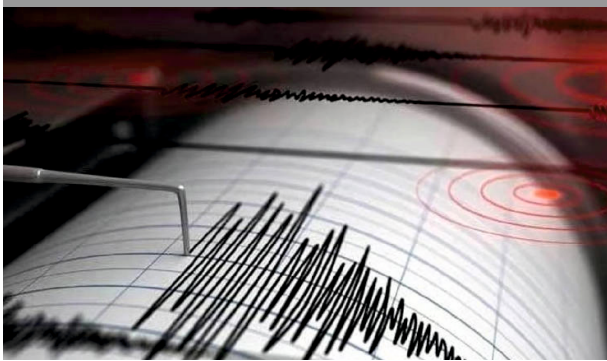
The Delhi Legislative Assembly elections were held in Delhi on February 5, 2025 to elect all 70 members of the Delhi Legislative Assembly. The counting of votes and declaration of results took place on February 8, 2025. The BJP won 48 out of 70 seats, thus returning to power in the union territory of Delhi after 27 years. On February 19, the BJP announced Rekha Gupta, MLA from Shalimar Bagh, as the new Chief Minister. The oath-taking ceremony took place in the presence of PM Modi, his Cabinet colleagues and chief ministers of National Democratic Alliance-governed states, among others. Along with Gupta, leaders including Parvesh Verma, Ashish Sood, Manjinder Singh Sirsa, Ravinder Indraj Singh, Kapil Mishra and Pankaj Kumar Singh also took oath as ministers. Delhi LG V K Saxena administered the oath of office to Rekha Gupta and her council of ministers. Senior IAS officer Madhu Rani Teotia was appointed as the Secretary of CM whereas, IAS Sandeep Kumar Singh and IAS Ravi Jha have been appointed as Special Secretary to CM.



The 2025 ICC Champions Trophy is being hosted by Pakistan from February 19 to March 9, 2025. It features 15 matches being played across 3 venues in Pakistan and 1 in the United Arab Emirates. The tournament is being contested by the top eight ranked men's national teams qualified from the 2023 Cricket World Cup, with Afghanistan making their debut appearance in the tournament. Pakistan were the defending champions and were knocked out from the tournament in the group stage. India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and New Zealand have been clubbed in Group A while Afghanistan, Australia, England and South Africa are placed in Group B. The National Stadium in Karachi, the Dubai International Cricket Stadium, the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore and the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium are the four venues. Due to political tensions, India refused to play matches in Pakistan and it was decided that the tournament would take place using a hybrid model with India's group matches and potential semi-final scheduled to be played in Dubai, with the final also to be moved to Dubai, if India qualifies.



The stampede at New Delhi Railway Station on February 15, 2025; claimed 18 lives. The tragedy, which occurred hours after signs of overcrowding at the station, worsened due to confusing announcements, inadequate personnel, and delays in several eastbound trains on a few platforms on the Ajmeri Gate side. These were the five red flags, if noticed and acted upon, could have saved precious lives. Hours before the stampede, there was a spike in the bookings of unreserved tickets, 2,600 more than usual tickets were booked at the New Delhi Railway Station. As a result of the surge in ticket sales, the number of passengers swelled on the Ajmeri Gate side platforms, where several eastbound trains, including those to Prayagraj, were scheduled. This led to severe overcrowding, leaving little to no space for people to even stand. As the station, its platforms, and overbridges became overcrowded, confusion over train announcements of trains having 'Prayagraj' in their names, triggered the stampede.



Early on February 17, 2025, an earthquake jolted the people of Delhi out of their beds and homes. The tremor was accompanied by a booming sound, adding to fear and panic. However, the earthquake registered only a magnitude of 4.3, surprising many who claimed they had never felt such a strong jolt before. The tremor, which hit at 5.36 AM with its epicentre in Dhaula Kuan in southwest Delhi, lasted only a few seconds but was felt sharply across the NCR due to its shallow depth of 5 km. Another earthquake of magnitude 2.8 hit Ghaziabad at 3.24 PM on February 23. According to the National Center for Seismology, the earthquake struck at a depth of 10 km. Delhi is considered to be a Seismic Zone IV in the seismic zoning map of India, making it the second highest range in the nation. Notably, the capital is located around 250 kilometres from the seismically active Himalayan collision zone and experiences shaking frequently from far and near-field earthquakes.



The Union Budget for 2025-26 was presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on February 1, 2025. This budget aims to drive economic growth through four primary engines – agriculture, micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), investments, and exports. The government has prioritised reforms across various sectors, focusing on inclusivity and sustainable development, with the ultimate goal of achieving a Viksit Bharat (Developed India) by 2047. The budget emphasises enhancing agricultural productivity and self-sufficiency. No tax on income up to ₹12 lakh. With a standard deduction, salaried individuals can remain tax-free up to ₹12.75 lakh. A rebate of ₹60,000 and changes in tax slabs could result in savings of up to ₹1.1 lakh. The limit for tax deduction on interest for senior citizens doubled from the present Rs 50,000 to Rs 1 lakh. Planning for 50,000 Atal Tinkering labs in government schools in next 5 years and Centre of excellence in Artificial Intelligence for education, with a total outlay of ₹ 500 crore.



The 67th Annual Grammy Awards held on February 2, 2025, at the Crypto.com Arena in Los Angeles marked a milestone in the music industry. With host Trevor Noah bringing charm and excitement to the event, the night became a celebration of musical talent across various genres. Beyoncé made history, while Kendrick Lamar dominated the evening with multiple awards, cementing his place as one of the most influential artists. Indian-American musician and business leader Chandrika Tandon won the Grammy for Best New Age, Ambient, or Chant Album for 'Triveni', a collaboration with Wouter Kellerman and Eru Matsumoto. Tandon, known for blending ancient mantras with modern musical styles, expressed gratitude for the recognition and highlighted the album's focus on peace and healing. Chappell Roan was crowned Best New Artist, bringing fresh energy and a powerful voice to the music scene.



Three Indian computer science students namely Sagar Teotia (Team Lead), Abhinav Mishra, and Anushka Singh from Maharaja Agrasen Institute of Technology, New Delhi, won the Bronze Award at the Global Best M-Gov Award 2025 during the World Government Summit (WGS) in Dubai on February 11, 2025. Their AI-powered app, AccessWay, was recognised for enhancing mobile government services and fostering social inclusion for individuals with disabilities. The award was presented by Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Vice President of the UAE, along with a cash prize of \$10,000. The organising committee praised the team for their creative and scalable solution promoting social inclusion. The M-Gov Award and GovTech Award, presented annually by the UAE government at WGS, received over 3,500 entries from 74 countries, with 60 finalists and six winners.



India has assumed the chairmanship of the Bay of Bengal Inter-Governmental Organisation at the 13th Governing Council Meeting in Male, Maldives. India assumed the chairmanship in the presence of senior government representatives from Sri Lanka, Maldives and Bangladesh, the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying said in a press release. The event was part of the high-level conference 'Policy Guidance for Mainstreaming Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM) in Small-Scale Fisheries', hosted by the Ministry of Fisheries & Ocean Resources of the Maldives government, in collaboration with the Bay of Bengal Programme Inter-Governmental Organisation (BOBP-IGO), that has been successfully convened from February 20 to 22, 2025, in Lankanfinolhu, Maldives. Its primary aim is to assist member countries in enhancing livelihood opportunities for small-scale fisherfolk in the Bay of Bengal region.



The President of the USA, Donald Trump hosted the Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi for an Official Working Visit in the Washington, DC on February 13, 2025.

President Trump and Prime Minister Modi launched a new initiative – the U.S.- India COMPACT (Catalys ing Opportunities for Military Partnership, Accelerated Commerce & Technology) for the 21st Century” - to drive transformative change across key pillars of cooperation. Under this initiative, they committed to a results-driven agenda with initial outcomes this year to demonstrate the level of trust for a mutually beneficial partnership. To advance defence ties further, the leaders announced plans to sign this year a new ten-year Framework for the U.S.-India Major Defense Partnership in the 21st Century. Both nations announced plans for new procurements and co-production of the Javelin anti-tank guided missile. This collaboration aims to enhance India’s defence capabilities.



India has been elected to the vice presidency of the International Organisation of Aids to Marine Navigation (IALA) in Singapore on February 19, 2025. The first General Assembly of IALA also marked its transition from a non-governmental organisation (NGO) to an inter-governmental organisation (IGO), where India was elected to its Vice Presidency. This election highlights India's growing influence in global maritime affairs. India's representation at the IALA General Assembly was led by T.K. Ramachandran, Secretary of the Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways, along with senior officials, including Joint Secretary Mukesh Mangal, Director General of Lighthouses and Lightships N. Muruganandam, and Deputy Director S. Saravanan. Their leadership and expertise played a key role in securing this crucial position for India. Looking ahead, India will host the IALA Council meeting in December 2025 and the IALA Conference & General Assembly in September 2027 in Mumbai.



The Ganga River in Uttar Pradesh's Prayagraj, a revered spiritual site, is facing significant contamination, with a government agency finding alarming levels of 'faecal coliform' bacteria amid the Maha Kumbh Mela during which over 50 crore people have taken dip in the Ganges there. The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) on February 18, 2025; informed the National Green Tribunal (NGT) that various locations in Prayagraj during the ongoing Maha Kumbh were not conforming to the primary water quality for bathing with respect to the level of faecal coliform. Faecal coliforms are often tested for in water quality assessments to determine whether water is safe for drinking, swimming, or other recreational activities. During the Maha Kumbh Mela, the CPCB report indicates that faecal coliform levels are far above the safe limit of 2,500 units per 100 millilitres, making the river particularly dangerous for those entering it. The situation is made worse by the discharge of untreated sewage from surrounding areas.



The Haryana government on February 13, 2025; approved new Wildlife (Protection) Rules permitting the shooting of male Nilgais, also known as blue bulls. This decision has ignited protests from environmentalists and local communities, particularly the Bishnoi community. Critics argue that this approach is neither ethical nor sustainable for addressing human-wildlife conflicts. Nilgais are an integral part of Haryana's wildlife and contribute to the region's biodiversity. Their population has been perceived as a threat to agriculture, leading to calls for management solutions. The government's decision has raised concerns about the ecological balance and the implications of legally permitting the killing of these animals. Environmental groups have strongly opposed the shooting rule. They argue that it fails to address the root causes of human-wildlife conflict.



The Ministry is implementing the Prime Minister's New 15 Point Programme for the welfare of Minority Communities from February 7, 2025. It is an overarching programme which covers various schemes/initiatives of the participating Ministries/Departments with an aim to ensure that the underprivileged and weaker sections of six centrally notified minority communities have equal opportunities for availing the various Government Welfare Schemes and contribute to the overall socio-economic development of the Country. The programme has the following broad objectives: (i) Enhancing opportunities for education; (ii) Ensuring an equitable share for minorities in economic activities and employment, through existing and new schemes, enhanced credit support for self-employment, and recruitment to State and Central Government jobs; (iii) Improving the conditions of living of minorities by ensuring an appropriate share for them in infrastructure development schemes; and (iv) Prevention and control of communal disharmony and violence.



The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), in collaboration with NITI Aayog launched Swavalambini - a Women Entrepreneurship Programme - in Assam, Meghalaya and Mizoram on February 7, 2025.

This initiative is aimed at empowering female students to select Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the northeast by equipping them with the essential entrepreneurial mindset, resources, and mentorship they need to succeed in their entrepreneurial journey. It is expected to strengthen entrepreneurial culture in HEIs, making business creation a viable career path for women. The virtual programme witnessed the inauguration of the initiative in 9 colleges and universities by Shri Jayant Chaudhary, Minister of State (I/C), Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) and Minister of State, Ministry of Education, Govt of India. Shri Atul Kumar Tiwari, Secretary, MSDE along with other senior officials of the Ministry were also present during the launch.



India and Egypt commenced joint military exercise named “Cyclone 2025” on February 10, 2025. This exercise took place at the Mahajan Field Firing Range in Rajasthan and lasted for 14 days. It involved the special forces of both nations, focusing on enhancing military cooperation and operational readiness in desert conditions. The primary aim of Cyclone 2025 was to strengthen defence cooperation between India and Egypt. This exercise seeks to improve the operational capabilities of special forces in counterterrorism, reconnaissance, and raids. It also addresses specialised military missions that include sniping, combat free fall, and target designation. The Indian Army was represented by the Parachute Regiment (Special Forces). The Egyptian contingent included the Egyptian Commando Squadron and the Egyptian Airborne Platoon.

Quick Reads...

On February 4, 2025, China announced new counter tariffs against the United States in response to recent tariff hikes imposed by the U.S. government. These tariffs include a 15% levy on coal and liquefied natural gas, and a 10% tariff on crude oil, agricultural machinery, and large-displacement cars. The Chinese government labelled the U.S. actions as a violation of World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules, asserting that they disrupt normal trade relations.

Aiming to generate a qualified manpower for cooperative societies, the Centre on February 3, 2025 introduced the Tribhuvan Sahkari University Bill in the Lok Sabha, which will also look at capacity-building of the existing employees in such bodies. The proposed legislation aims to establish the Institute of Rural Management Anand (IRMA) as a university to be known as “Tribhuvan” Sahkari University and to declare it as an institution of national importance for imparting technical and management education and training in the cooperative sector.

The Arunachal Pradesh government announced enhancements to the Dulari Kanya Scheme on February 18, 2025. This initiative aims to support the institutional births of girl children. The fixed deposit for these births has been increased from Rs 20,000 to Rs 30,000. Additionally, an extra Rs 20,000 will be provided for Class XI admissions through direct benefit transfer. The funds are accessible only when the child reaches 18 years of age.

Quick Reads...

U.S. President Donald Trump on February 6, 2025; signed an executive order imposing sanctions on the International Criminal Court over investigations of Israel, a close U.S. ally.

Neither the U.S. nor Israel is a member or recognises the court, which has issued an arrest warrant for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for alleged war crimes over his military response in Gaza after the Hamas attack against Israel in October 2023. Tens of thousands of Palestinians, including children, have been killed during the Israeli military's response.

The troops of the Indian Army on February 10, 2025; participated in a comprehensive training exercise christened Ex Winged Raider.

This exercise focused on special airborne operations, demonstrating a high level of operational readiness and inter-service synergy. Conducted in the Eastern Theatre. It involved rehearsing various airborne insertion techniques using both fixed-wing and rotary-wing aircraft. This training is crucial for ensuring troops can be rapidly deployed in diverse operational environments.

India ranked 96 out of 180 countries in the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) for 2024 as its overall score dropped a point to 38, according to a Transparency International report released on February 11, 2025.

The index, which ranks 180 countries and territories by their perceived levels of public sector corruption.

Quick Reads...

Union Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare Prof. S.P. Singh Baghel launched the first phase of the Bi-annual Nationwide Mass Drug Administration (MDA) campaign for Lymphatic Filariasis elimination on February 10, 2025.

The campaign aims to check disease transmission by providing free preventive medications to the residents in areas affected by the disease. The campaign will cover 92 districts across 11 states and will run for the next two weeks. Chhattisgarh Health Minister, Sh. Shyam Bihari Jaiswal was also present on the occasion.

India is setting up a dedicated platform, EFTA (European Free Trade Association) desk, to promote trade, investment, and business facilitation between the two regions, an official statement released on February 10, 2025.

This initiative follows the signing of the Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) in March 2024. The agreement aims to increase trade and investment between India and the EFTA member states – Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland. The EFTA desk will facilitate business operations and investment opportunities between these regions.

The third AI Summit, co-chaired by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, kicked off on February 10, 2025; in Paris.

It explored how to leverage the power of Artificial Intelligence (AI) while mitigating its risks, a major challenge confronting policymakers across countries worldwide.

Quick Reads...

Deepak Kumar Kedia, IG Headquarters, NSG, received the 'CA in Public Service' Award from ICAI at the World Forum of Accountants Meet on February 1, 2025. Recognized for his contributions to law enforcement and national security, Kedia, known as the 'CA in Uniform', has a distinguished career that bridges finance and policing, making significant impacts in counter-terrorism and national security.

The 2025 Sportstar Aces Awards celebrated India's finest sporting talents at the Taj Mahal Palace, Mumbai, on February 14, 2025. The event recognized top athletes for their remarkable performances, with hockey legend P.R. Sreejesh and shooter Manu Bhaker clinching the top honours. Notable achievements in chess, cricket, and football were also acknowledged.

The Nagaland Forest Management Project (NFMP) has been honoured with the SKOCH Award 2024. The award was presented during the 100th SKOCH Summit held at the India Habitat Centre in New Delhi on February 15, 2025. Anjo Konyak, Deputy Project Director of NFMP, and Wennyei Konyak, Resident Commissioner of Nagaland House in New Delhi, accepted the award on behalf of the DEFCC, Government of Nagaland. The project, supported by the Japan International Cooperation Agency, is focused on improving forest ecosystems, rehabilitating jhum (shifting cultivation) areas, and enhancing livelihoods through sustainable practices.