

7. Short News

1. World Braille Day

The National Federation of the Blind (NFB) marked World Braille Day in New Delhi, launching the “More Braille, More Empowerment” campaign to promote equality and dignity for the visually impaired.

World Braille Day

World Braille Day is observed annually on 4 January to raise awareness about the importance of Braille in ensuring dignity, equality, and full participation of blind and partially sighted persons.

Origin- The day was established by the UN General Assembly in 2018 to commemorate the birth anniversary of Louis Braille (1809), a French educator who invented the Braille system in 1824.

2025 Theme- “Accessibility and Inclusion for the Visually Impaired – Reaching Blind and Visually Impaired Persons.”

Braille – Braille is a tactile reading and writing system that uses six raised dots to represent letters, numbers, and symbols. It enables independence in daily activities from reading textbooks to navigating public spaces. It is vital for education, freedom of expression, access to justice, and social inclusion. It is recognised under Article 2 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). It addresses systemic exclusion faced by persons with disabilities, who are more vulnerable to poverty, violence, and marginalisation.

About National Federation of the Blind (NFB)

NFB is India’s largest self-help, non-profit organisation working for the equality, dignity, and full social integration of blind persons.

Establishment- NFB was established in 1970 as a voluntary organisation guided by the philosophy “Let the Blind Lead the Blind.”

Headquarters- New Delhi

Objectives- It advocates equal opportunities in education, employment, and social life.

Role- It works against discrimination, supports skill development and rehabilitation, assists in job placements, and collaborates with government agencies to safeguard the rights of the visually impaired.

2. Somnath Swabhiman Parv (1026-2026)

Recently, the Prime Minister marked 1000 years since the first attack on Somnath (1026 AD) as Somnath Swabhiman Parv.

About Somnath Swabhiman Parv

Somnath Swabhiman Parv commemorates a millennium since the first invasion of Somnath, celebrating India’s unbroken faith, cultural resilience, and civilisational pride.

Cultural Significance- Somnath symbolises the enduring spirit of Bharat, where repeated destruction failed to erase religious faith. It represents resistance, cultural continuity, and national self-respect rooted in shared heritage.

About Somnath Temple

Somnath Temple is one of Hinduism’s most sacred shrines and a major pilgrimage site located at Prabhas Patan near Veraval, on Gujarat’s western coast.

Diety- Lord Shiva.

It houses the first of the 12 Jyotirlingas, regarded as self-manifested forms of Shiva.

Sacred Geography– Triveni Sangam of Kapila, Hiran, and Saraswati rivers, enhancing its ancient spiritual significance.

Origin– Somnath's first temple is said to have existed 2000 years ago.

Attacks and Destruction– Somnath faced repeated destruction from Mahmud Ghazni (1026 AD) to Delhi Sultanate invasions and Aurangzeb (1706) making it a symbol of resilience. Before that Arab governor of Sindh, Al-Junayd ibn Abd al-Rahman al-Murri, attacked and destroyed the second Somnath Temple in Gujarat around 725 CE.

Reconstruction– In 649 AD, King Maitre of Vallabhini built a second temple in place of the temple and renovated it. In 815 AD, Pratishtha King Nag Bhatt II constructed the temple for the third time using a red stone (sandstone). During 1026–1042 AD, Solanki Raja Bhimdev built the fourth temple of Bhoj and Anhilwad Patan, Parmar King of Malwa. In 1782, Maratha queen Ahalyabai Holkar built a small temple at the site. After India's independence, those ruins were demolished and the present Somnath temple was reconstructed in the Māru Gurjara style of Hindu temple architecture in 1951.

Māru–Gurjara style is marked by a curvilinear shikhara, ornate mandapas, high plinths, and intricate carvings.

3. Design Linked Incentive (DLI) Scheme

In January 2026, MeitY highlighted the Design Linked Incentive Scheme's role in strengthening India's fabless semiconductor ecosystem under the Semicon India Programme.

Design Linked Incentive (DLI) Scheme – The Design Linked Incentive (DLI) Scheme is a flagship initiative of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) to promote indigenous semiconductor chip design in India.

Objective– To build a self-reliant, globally competitive fabless semiconductor ecosystem by supporting startups, MSMEs, and domestic companies in chip design, deployment, and commercialization.

Key Features

1. Covers Integrated Circuits (ICs), chipsets, Systems-on-Chip (SoCs), complete electronic systems, and Intellectual Property (IP) cores across the entire semiconductor design lifecycle.
2. Provides Product Design Linked Incentives, offering reimbursement of up to 50% of eligible expenditure, capped at ₹15 crore per application.
3. Offers Deployment Linked Incentives of 4–6% of net sales turnover for five years, capped at ₹30 crore per application.

Eligibility Criteria

1. Startups (as per DPIIT norms).
2. MSMEs (as per MSME notification, 2020).
3. Domestic companies owned by resident Indian citizens under FDI norms.

Institutional Support

1. Implemented under the Semicon India Programme and the India Semiconductor Mission (ISM).
2. The Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC) acts as the nodal implementing agency.
3. The ChipIN Centre provides access to Electronic Design Automation (EDA) tools, Intellectual Property (IP) cores, Multi-Project Wafer (MPW) prototyping, and post-silicon validation and testing support.

Significance – DLI strengthens India's ownership of semiconductor design and intellectual property, reduces import dependence, builds skilled manpower, and positions India as a credible global chip design hub.

4. Samudra Pratap

Recently, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh commissioned the Indian Coast Guard's first indigenous pollution control vessel, Samudra Pratap, in Goa.

About Samudra Pratap

Samudra Pratap is a specialised Pollution Control Vessel (PCV) built by Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL) for the Indian Coast Guard, marking a major step in indigenous maritime capability.

Key Features

1. The vessel is 114.5 metres long, 16.5 metres wide, with a displacement of about 4,170 tonnes, and is manned by 14 officers and 115 sailors.
2. It is equipped with flush-type side-sweeping arms, advanced radar systems for oil spill detection, and onboard facilities to recover, treat, and store spilled oil.
3. It features Dynamic Positioning System, retractable stern thruster, pollution response boats, and external firefighting systems, along with modern weaponry for maritime security.
4. Indigenous Content- The vessel has over 60% indigenous content, aligning with Atmanirbhar Bharat and Make in India initiatives.

Significance

1. Enhances the Indian Coast Guard's oil spill response and pollution control capability along India's coastline, EEZ, and high seas.
2. Strengthens enforcement of marine environmental protection laws, alongside roles in search and rescue and maritime law enforcement.
3. Demonstrates India's growing self-reliance in specialised shipbuilding for environmental security and coastal resilience.

5. Battery Pack Aadhaar Number (Bpan)

Recently, an Aadhaar-like identification system for EV batteries BPAN, was proposed to ensure traceability and efficient recycling.

About Battery Pack Aadhaar Number (BPAN)

BPAN is a proposed 21-character unique identification number for battery packs, especially electric vehicle batteries, to enable full lifecycle tracking.

Proposed by- The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) through draft Guidelines for Implementation of the Battery Pack Aadhaar System.

1. To be institutionalised via the Automotive Industry Standard (AIS) route under the Automotive Industry Standards Committee (AISC).

Key Features

1. Mandatory Unique ID- Every battery producer or importer must assign a BPAN to batteries sold or used internally, with visible and durable marking.
2. Lifecycle Data Capture- BPAN records information from raw material sourcing and manufacturing to usage, recycling, repurposing, and final disposal.
3. Digital Integration- Battery details must be uploaded and dynamically updated on an official BPAN portal; significant changes require issuance of a new BPAN.

Significance

1. Efficient Recycling and Second-Life Use- Enables systematic recycling, repurposing, and safer disposal of lithium-ion batteries.
2. Environmental Protection- Reduces risks from improper battery disposal and supports sustainable battery management.

3. **Regulatory Compliance-** Strengthens enforcement of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) and enhances transparency and accountability in India's EV ecosystem. Electric vehicle batteries, which account for 80–90% of India's lithium-ion demand, will receive priority under the proposed framework.

6. Microlensing

Microlensing observations revealed a free-floating planet about Saturn's mass located nearly 9,800 light-years from the Milky Way's centre.

Microlensing – Microlensing is a gravitational phenomenon in which a foreground object bends and magnifies the light of a distant background star as it passes across the observer's line of sight.

Scientific Basis- It arises from gravitational lensing, predicted by Einstein's General Theory of Relativity. The intervening object acts as a natural lens, temporarily amplifying the star's brightness.

Key Features

1. The foreground object need not emit any light, allowing detection of dark or faint objects.
2. Events are transient and unpredictable, lasting from days to months or even years.
3. Sudden and sharp changes in brightness help estimate the mass and distance of the lensing object.

Applications

1. Enables detection of rogue planets, brown dwarfs, neutron stars, and isolated black holes.
2. Particularly useful for finding Jupiter-like and Earth-mass exoplanets far from their host stars.
3. Complements other exoplanet methods that are biased toward close-in or very large planets.

Microlensing thus provides a powerful window into otherwise invisible objects in the universe.