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History, Art and Culture

Yoga Sangam 2025: A Nationwide Celebration

Ministry of Ayush's Yoga Sangam 2025 will transform the 11th International Day of Yoga into a massive, synchronized health festival.

• **Unprecedented Scale -** Over one lakh locations across India, from schools to remote villages, will participate simultaneously, engaging millions.

• **"Unity through Breath" -** The theme emphasizes synchronized breathing for collective consciousness and national unity.

• **Inclusive Reach -** State governments, educational institutions, armed forces, and NGOs are collaborating to ensure participation across all demographics, including tribal and border regions.

• **Digital Integration -** A central digital dashboard, live broadcasts, and social media will coordinate and unify the nationwide event.

• **Global Inspiration –** Building on India's 2015 UN initiative, Yoga Sangam 2025 aims to inspire similar global collective yoga events.

Goa's Ghumot a Heritage Instrument's Revival

The Ghumot, Goa's traditional mud-based percussion instrument, made from clay and historically animal skin, is central to the state's folk music and cultural identity.

• **Declared the** - State Heritage Instrument in 2019.

• **Traditional Craftsmanship** - Ghumots are crafted from refined clay, sun-dried, and kiln-fired. Traditionally, monitor lizard skin was used, but due to legal prohibitions, goat, buffalo, or synthetic materials are now used for the membrane.

• **Unique Features** - Handmade from a pumpkin-shaped clay pot and a tuned skin membrane, the Ghumot produces sharp, earthy beats. Skilled tapping is required for perfect resonance.

• **Legal Shift** - Since 2019, the use of monitor lizard skin is prohibited under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, leading artisans to adopt legal alternatives.

• **Cultural Significance** -The Ghumot is a cultural symbol of Goa, played in festivals like Sao Joao, Ganesh Chaturthi, and Shigmo, and in Catholic pre-wedding rituals, bridging communities.

• **Revival Efforts** - Artisans and cultural curators are actively promoting Ghumot through new designs and international showcases, aiming to support local artisans and preserve Goa's intangible heritage.

Polity & Governance

UPSC's Pratibha Setu: Bridging Talent Gaps

UPSC has recently launched Pratibha Setu on June 20, 2025, enabling verified employers to recruit qualified, non-recommended candidates.

• **Background -** Previously, the Public Disclosure Scheme offered limited, static disclosure of candidates who cleared UPSC exams.

• **Pratibha Setu -** An upgraded, rebranded digital platform that connects deserving, non-recommended UPSC candidates with hiring organizations via a secure portal.

• **Key Features -** Covers candidates who cleared all UPSC stages but weren't recommended; participation is voluntary, accessible to verified government and private employers.

• **Objective -** Enhance employability for UPSC aspirants, build a talent pipeline for organizations, and foster public-private synergy.

• **Significance -** A win-win, it offers job opportunities to candidates and top talent to companies, preventing post-exam disillusionment.

India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) Bags Digital Payments Award 2024-25

India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) received the Digital Payments Award 2024-25 from the Ministry of Finance for its significant contributions to digital payments and financial inclusion.

• **About the Award** - Instituted by the Department of Financial Services (DFS), this award recognizes excellence in promoting India's digital payment ecosystem, open to various financial service providers.

• **Key Features** - The award acknowledges inclusive digital banking, financial literacy, accessibility, secure payments, and benchmarks innovation and outreach.

• **IPPB** - Established on September 1, 2018, IPPB is a government-owned payments bank under the Ministry of Communications.

• **Core Objectives** - IPPB aims to drive financial inclusion, provide affordable and accessible banking services, and bridge the urban-rural banking gap.

• **Key Functions** - It offers paperless, cashless banking through a doorstep model via postmen, provides multilingual interfaces, and facilitates various digital financial services.

International Relations and Issues

UN Declares 2026: International Year of the Woman Farmer

The UN General Assembly declared 2026 as the International Year of the Woman Farmer, aiming to spotlight women's agricultural contributions and challenges, particularly in countries like India, where women form 80% of active agriculture workers but own only 8.3% of farmland.

• **Key Challenges -** Women farmers face a double burden, limited land ownership, the digital divide, climate vulnerability, and insufficient financing.

• **Government Initiatives -** Include Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana, Sub-Mission on Agricultural Mechanisation (50-80% subsidy), and the National Food Security Mission.

• **ENACT Project (Assam)** - A World Food Programme and Assam Government collaboration, funded by Norway, uses mobile advisories to empower women in climate-resilient agriculture.

• **Policy Recommendations -** The UN advocates **gender-sensitive policies**, improved access to resources, support for women-led value chains, capacity building, and breaking gender biases.

• **Significance -** This declaration will promote inclusive growth, climate-resilient food systems, address structural inequalities, and enhance global food security.

Iran-US Tensions Escalate

The recent conflict between the United States, Israel, and Iran intensifies over Iran’s Fordow nuclear facility, known for its advanced uranium enrichment capabilities.

• **Facility Details** - Constructed in 2007 and operational by 2009, Fordow houses 2,000 centrifuges enriching uranium to 60%, a significant step towards weapons-grade. Its deep burial makes it resilient to conventional attacks.

• **US Military Options** - The US possesses the GBU-57 A/B Massive Ordnance Penetrator, a 30,000-pound bunker buster, deliverable by the B-2 Spirit stealth bomber, capable of reaching Iran within 15 hours.

• **Recent Escalations** - Despite recent Israeli airstrikes on other Iranian nuclear sites like Natanz and Isfahan, Fordow remains operational. The IAEA reports increased uranium production, raising concerns.

• **International Response** - The IAEA is concerned about potential JCPOA violations. The US and allies are closely monitoring, amidst increasing military engagements between Israel and Iran.

• **Escalation Risks** -The ongoing conflict risks broader military confrontation. US intervention could destabilize the region, with Iran warning of severe retaliatory consequences.

Israel's Samson Option

Israel's Samson Option is an undeclared nuclear deterrence doctrine, signaling massive retaliation if the nation faces an existential threat, ensuring mutual destruction of the aggressor.

• **Key Features** - It involves strategic ambiguity regarding Israel's nuclear arsenal, a massive retaliation policy for existential threats only, and multi-platform delivery capabilities.

• **Psychological Warfare** - More than an operational plan, it's a psychological deterrent, named after Samson, symbolizing Israel's readiness for ultimate retaliation.

• **Significance** - The Samson Option reinforces Israel's strategic depth in a volatile region, where it remains the sole nuclear-armed state.

• **Regional Impact** - It introduces uncertainty into conflicts like the Iran-Israel standoff, Hezbollah's mobilization, and Red Sea tensions, shaping regional military planning.

• **Current Focus** - The doctrine is back in focus amid escalating strikes on Iran's nuclear facilities during "Operation Rising Lion."

Economy

RBI: India's House Price Index (Q4 FY25)

The All-India House Price Index (HPI) saw a 3.1% year-on-year growth in Q4 FY25, maintaining the previous quarter's rate, as reported by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

• **Source -** The RBI's HPI is derived from transaction data across ten major Indian cities, offering a reliable assessment of urban housing trends.

• **National Uptick -** Quarter-on-quarter, national average house prices rose 0.9%, indicating resilient demand, particularly in cities like Bengaluru, Jaipur, Kolkata, and Chennai.

• **Regional Divergences -** Kolkata led with an 8.8% annual price rise, while Kochi saw a 2.3% contraction, highlighting significant regional variations.

• **Market Implications -** The stable 3.1% growth points to a balanced recovery, driven by sustained consumer sentiment, improved affordability, and growing home ownership demand.

• **Sector Outlook -** This trend suggests a favorable environment for real estate developers and a stable asset class for housing finance lenders.

CCI's New Rules to Combat Predatory Pricing

The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has enacted new regulations using Average Total Cost (ATC) to curb predatory pricing, where dominant firms sell below cost to eliminate rivals.

• Predatory Pricing - This strategy involves setting artificially low prices to gain monopoly power, offering short-term consumer benefits but leading to higher prices and limited choices long-term.

• New Reforms - Notified on May 6, 2025, these reforms replace outdated rules, introducing clear ATC benchmarks, expert involvement, and enhanced transparency in enforcement.

• Key Significance - The new rules uphold competitive integrity, protect MSMEs, align with OECD best practices, and address digital monopoly risks.

• Market Impact - These progressive reforms foster transparent markets and protect consumer welfare, equipping the CCI to promote healthy competition and market dynamism.

Miscellaneous

Neeraj Chopra Triumphs at Paris Diamond League 2025

Recently, Neeraj Chopra clinched his first Diamond League victory since June 2023 at the Paris Diamond League 2025, throwing 88.16m.

• **Background -** The Tokyo 2020 Olympic Gold Medallist, Chopra's last Diamond League win was in Lausanne (June 2023). This victory is a remarkable turnaround from his eighth-place finish in Paris in 2017.

• **Final Standings -** Chopra secured first place (88.16m), followed by Julian Weber (Germany) at 87.88m, and Luiz Mauricio Da Silva (Brazil) at 86.62m.

• **Javelin Throwing -** Is a track and field event where athletes hurl a spear-like object, the javelin, as far as possible.

• **Objective -** The goal is to achieve the greatest horizontal distance from a designated throwing area.

• **Technique -** Competitors typically use a run-up to build momentum before releasing the javelin, aiming for optimal trajectory and power.

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