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Labour Ministry–Microsoft MoU: Expanding Jobs and AI Skills for India's Workforce

- ✓ An MoU between Labour Ministry and Microsoft signed to boost jobs, AI training, and Global Workforce Mobility.
- ✓ On 10 December, an MoU was signed between the Ministry of Labour & Employment and Microsoft to expand job access, AI-based skilling, and global mobility for Indian workers.
- ✓ The agreement was formalised in New Delhi in the presence of Union Minister Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya and Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella.
- ✓ Under the MoU, Microsoft will encourage over 15,000 employers and global partners to join the Ministry's National Career Service (NCS) platform.
- ✓ This step is expected to strengthen high-growth sectors and open more overseas opportunities for Indian youth and professionals.
- ✓ The DigiSaksham programme will be scaled up to train millions in AI, cloud computing, cybersecurity, and productivity tools.
- ✓ Mandaviya said the partnership supports India's goal of building a globally competitive and digitally skilled workforce.



- ✓ Microsoft expressed interest in supporting India's Employment Digital Public Infrastructure to develop interoperable labour solutions.
- ✓ Microsoft's Azure and AI capabilities will help modernise employment services, strengthen analytics, and improve job-matching systems.
- ✓ Nadella also announced Microsoft's largest-ever Asian investment of \$17.5 billion in India to advance AI infrastructure and skills.

TIME's Athlete of the Year 2025 awarded to A'ja Wilson

- ✓ A'ja Wilson was named TIME's Athlete of the Year for 2025 for setting historic milestones in women's basketball.
- ✓ She became the first athlete in either the WNBA or NBA to win a championship, Finals MVP, League MVP, and Defensive Player of the Year in one season.
- ✓ She also won the scoring title and became the fastest player in the history of the North American Women's Elite League to reach 5,000 career points.
- ✓ She joined Bill Russell, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, and LeBron James as one of only four players to win four MVP titles before turning 30.
- ✓ Her season included leading the Las Vegas Aces through a turnaround that ended in a 16-game winning streak and a 4-0 Finals sweep.
- ✓ She captured her third WNBA championship title with this victory.
- ✓ Wilson was also named MVP of the women's basketball tournament at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games.
- ✓ She was honoured by The Associated Press as Female Athlete of the Year, marking the second consecutive win for a basketball player.



Amazon to Invest Over \$35 Billion in India by 2030

- ✓ Amazon announced investments of more than \$35 billion in India by 2030.
- ✓ On 10 December, Amazon announced that more than \$35 billion across all its businesses in India through 2030.
- ✓ The company said the investment will be spread across AI-driven digitisation, export expansion, and job creation.
- ✓ Amazon stated that these investments are aligned with national priorities and will support small businesses and logistics infrastructure.
- ✓ Senior VP Amit Agarwal said Amazon's 15-year journey in India matches the country's vision of an Atmanirbhar and Viksit Bharat.
- ✓ Amazon had already invested heavily in building digital and physical infrastructure for MSMEs and job creation.
- ✓ Amazon plans to quadruple cumulative e-commerce exports to \$80 billion by 2030.
- ✓ The company also intends to provide AI education and career exploration for 4 million government school students.
- ✓ Amazon launched the "Accelerate Exports" programme to connect digital entrepreneurs with manufacturers.
- ✓ Last year, Amazon had similarly announced its export target of \$80 billion by 2030 during the Smbhav summit.



Leonardo DiCaprio Named TIME's 2025 Entertainer of the Year

- ✓ Leonardo DiCaprio has been named TIME's 2025 Entertainer of the Year on December 8.
- ✓ The title of TIME's 2025 Entertainer of the Year recognizes his enduring legacy in the film industry.
- ✓ TIME praised him for building a career designed to last.
- ✓ His new movie "One Battle After Another" is the catalyst for this honor.
- ✓ Paul Thomas Anderson directed the movie. It premiered in September 2025.
- ✓ The movie is an adaptation of Thomas Pynchon's novel "Vineland".
- ✓ He has received seven Oscar nominations and won once.
- ✓ His career includes roles in films like "Titanic", "The Wolf of Wall Street", and "Once Upon a Time...in Hollywood".
- ✓ DiCaprio is now 51 years old. In his first film, 1993's This Boy's Life, he played young Toby. Th film adapted from Tobias Wolff's memoir.



Italy's National Cuisine Added to UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage List

- ✓ Italy's national cuisine has been officially recognised as an “intangible cultural heritage” by UNESCO.
- ✓ The designation recognises a culinary tradition passed down through generations.
- ✓ Italy launched the nomination process in 2023, with government describing its food culture as a social practice that connects families and communities.
- ✓ UNESCO announced the decision during the 20th Intangible Cultural Heritage session.
- ✓ The 20th Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) session meeting took place at Delhi's historic Red Fort.
- ✓ The meeting also approved the inclusion of Diwali and Iceland's swimming-pool social culture to its list.
- ✓ Italy showcased the variety of its regional dishes to support its case.



- ✓ These included Lombardy's ossobuco and Puglia's orecchiette con cime di rapa (ear-shaped pasta with turnip greens).
- ✓ Italian cuisine joins other food traditions already on the UNESCO intangible cultural heritage list.
- ✓ These include France's festive haute cuisine, Mexico's ritual-linked culinary practices, Korea's kimchi fermentation method and Japan's Washoku cuisine.
- ✓ Intangible cultural heritage means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces associated with them that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as a part of their cultural heritage.

There are three lists under the Intangible Cultural Heritage:

- ✓ List of intangible cultural heritage in need of urgent safeguarding
- ✓ Representative List of the intangible cultural heritage of humanity
- ✓ Register of good safeguarding practices

India's Banking Sector Achieves Highest Stability in 20 Years

- ✓ India's banking sector has reached most stable phase in two decades, with sharp fall in NPAs and record levels reached in profitability.
- ✓ Gross non-performing assets (NPAs) declined to 2.31% by March 2025. This is the lowest level in 20 years.
- ✓ Net NPAs decreased to 0.52%. GNPA of public sector banks declined from 9.11% in 2021 to 2.58% in 2025.
- ✓ Domestic deposits nearly tripled between 2015 and 2025. They grew from Rs. 88.35 lakh crore to Rs. 231.90 lakh crore.
- ✓ Credit also almost tripled during same period. It increased from Rs. 66.91 lakh crore to Rs. 181.34 lakh crore.
- ✓ Capital to Risk-Weighted Assets Ratio (CRAR) increased from 12.94% in 2015 to 17.36% in 2025.
- ✓ The CET-1 ratio reached 14.81%. Profitability grew for a sixth straight year.
- ✓ Public sector banks raised profits from Rs. 1.05 lakh crore in FY23 to Rs. 1.78 lakh crore in FY25.
- ✓ Bank returns improved as Return on Assets (RoA) reached 1.37%. Return on Equity (RoE) rose to 14.1%.



India Wins Its First-Ever Bronze at the 2025 Junior Men's Hockey World Cup

- ✓ Indian hockey team won their first bronze medal at the 2025 Junior Men's Hockey World Cup.
- ✓ The tournament was held at the Mayor Radhakrishnan Stadium in Chennai.
- ✓ India defeated Argentina 4-2 in the third-place match. The win came after a strong comeback.
- ✓ This is the first time that India has won the bronze medal.
- ✓ Previously, India won two gold medals (2001, 2016) and a silver (1997). India missed the bronze medal in 2005, losing to Spain.

2025 Junior Men's Hockey World Cup:

- ✓ It is the 14th edition of the Men's FIH Hockey Junior World Cup.
- ✓ It was held at the Mayor Radhakrishnan Hockey Stadium in Chennai and Madurai International Hockey Stadium in Madurai in Tamil Nadu, India.
- ✓ It was held from 28 November to 10 December and featured 24 teams for the first time.
- ✓ Junior Men's Hockey World Cup is biennial championship organized by the International Hockey Federation.



The 26th **edition of Hornbill Festival** Concluded in Nagaland

- ✓ The 26th edition of Hornbill Festival of Nagaland ended on 10 December at Unity Plaza, Naga Heritage Village, Kisama
- ✓ The festival is called the “Festival of Festivals.”
- ✓ This year’s festival showed ten days of vibrant cultural performances and international participation.
- ✓ Arunachal Pradesh Minister Pasang Dorjee Sona, Malta’s High Commissioner Reuben Gauci, and Ireland’s Deputy Ambassador Raymond Mullen were the special guests at closing ceremony.
- ✓ The traditional lighting of the bonfire marked formal end of this year’s celebrations.
- ✓ Over the past nine days, visitors experienced Naga tribal traditions, which included traditional sports and indigenous games to ethnic cuisines and handcrafted art.
- ✓ Nagaland and Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla inaugurated the festival as Chief Host.
- ✓ Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio served as the Host on December 1st.



- ✓ This year, Austria, France, Ireland, Malta, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom were the partner countries. Arunachal Pradesh was the State Partner.
- ✓ The Hornbill Festival is celebrated annually from December 1st to 10th.
- ✓ It is a major event promoting Nagaland's tribal culture and global cultural engagement.

Germany won a record-extending 8th Men's Junior World Cup title

- ✓ On 10 December, defending champions Germany was crowned champions of the FIH Men's Junior World Cup after defeating Spain 3-2 in a shoot-out in Chennai.
- ✓ The match ended 1-1 in regulation time before the game was decided through shootout attempts.
- ✓ Germany, playing their 10th final, secured their eighth title in the tournament's history.
- ✓ The 13-day event began on November 28 and was held across Chennai and Madurai.
- ✓ In the shoot-out, Germany recovered from two early misses to convert the next three attempts under pressure.
- ✓ Spain scored once through Pablo Roman but missed crucial later attempts through Aleix Bozal and Andrés Medina.
- ✓ Goalkeeper Jasper Ditzer delivered match-winning saves that sealed Germany's title victory.
- ✓ Earlier, India beat Argentina 4-2 to win the bronze medal for the first time, adding to their tally of two golds and one silver.



India's UPI Tops the World: Handles 49% of Global Real-Time Payments

- ✓ India's UPI Becomes World's Largest Real-Time Payment System, Handling 49% of Global Transactions
- ✓ The **Unified Payments Interface (UPI)** has been recognised by the IMF as the largest real-time payment system globally, accounting for 49% of total global real-time retail payment volumes with 129.3 billion transactions.
- ✓ India's rapid digital payment adoption is supported by government initiatives, RBI, and NPCI, including the ₹ incentive scheme for low-value BHIM-UPI transactions and the Payments Infrastructure Development Fund (PIDF).
- ✓ Widespread merchant integration and QR code deployment-56.86 crore QR codes across ~ 6.5 crore merchants-have strengthened UPI's reach in urban and rural sectors, including transport, e-commerce, and public services.
- ✓ Global comparisons show **Brazil (14%), Thailand (8%), China (6%), and South Korea (3%)** lagging behind India, highlighting the success of coordinated digital payment initiatives and broad merchant adoption in driving UPI's dominance.



Madhya Pradesh Approves Veerangana Durgavati Tiger Reserve as State's Third Cheetah Habitat

- ✓ **The Mohan Yadav** cabinet has approved the **development of Veerangana Durgavati Tiger Reserve (Nauradehi) in Sagar district as Madhya Pradesh's third cheetah habitat**, after Kuno National Park and Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary.
- ✓ Madhya Pradesh currently has 31 cheetahs, with 28 in Kuno and 3 in Gandhi Sagar, all originally translocated from Kuno; the third habitat is needed due to the upcoming translocation of 8 cheetahs from Botswana by January 2026.
- ✓ The 8 Botswana cheetahs have already been identified and are kept in quarantine enclosures in a reserve forest in Botswana, awaiting their transfer to India.
- ✓ The cabinet also approved several infrastructure projects, including the long-awaited Bhopal Metro, which is expected to be inaugurated on December 21, despite some stations still nearing completion.

