

# IACE

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## 'Ancient Buddhist Site, Sarnath' submitted as India's nomination to UNESCO for 2025- 26 cycle

- ✓ Union Culture Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat said this in a written response to a query in Lok Sabha.
- ✓ He was asked the details of the number of new heritage sites being proposed for inclusion in the UNESCO World Heritage List
- ✓ Sarnath, Varanasi is known for two things: Buddha gave his first sermon and for the Ashoka Pillar.
- ✓ In ancient times, this place was known by many names - Rishipatana, Mrigadava and Mrigadaya.
- ✓ The ashes of the Buddha were buried in stupas built at locations associated with important events in the Buddha's life including:
- ✓ Lumbini (where he was born), Bodh Gaya (where he achieved Enlightenment), Deer Park at Sarnath (where he preached his first sermon sharing the Four Noble Truths (also called the dharma or the law), and Kushinagara (where he died).
- ✓ Ashoka built many beautiful stupas and monasteries in Sarnath.
- ✓ Sir Alexander Cunningham (First Director-General of Archaeological Survey of India), excavated the Dhamekh, Dharmarajika, and Chaukhandi stupas along with a monastery and temple between 1834 and 1836.



## Sikkim State Becomes First State to Launch Sabbatical Leave Scheme for Government Employees

- ✓ Sikkim has become the first state in India to introduce a Sabbatical Leave Scheme for government employees, offering them a unique opportunity for personal and professional development while retaining job security.
- ✓ scheme applies to regular state government employees who have served at least five years continuously. Under the policy, employees can avail of sabbatical leave ranging from 365 days to a maximum of 1,080 days.
- ✓ Employees will receive 50% of their basic pay during the leave period.
- ✓ Group A & B Employees: Approval authority lies with the Secretary of the Personnel Department.
- ✓ Group C & D Employees (including temporary staff): Leave approval is now under the purview of the Heads of Departments.



# India Electric Mobility Index (IEMI) 2024

- ✓ Launched by NITI Aayog
- ✓ first-of-its-kind national tool to track and rank the performance of States/UTs in the electric vehicle (EV) transition.
- ✓ The India Electric Mobility Index (IEMI) is a national benchmarking framework that scores all States and Union Territories out of 100 based on their progress in e-mobility adoption, infrastructure readiness, and innovation efforts.
- ✓ Delhi, Maharashtra, and Chandigarh emerged as the top three states/UTs overall in electric mobility readiness and innovation.

## Key National Trends:

- ✓ EV Share in Total Vehicle Sales: Rose from 5% in 2018 to 7.7% in 2024, marking exponential adoption.
- ✓ Total EVs on Road: Surpassed 5 million by June 2025, with 12 lakh EVs registered in 2024 alone.
- ✓ EV Charging Infrastructure: Over 25,000 public charging stations were installed by October 2024.
- ✓ Karnataka has the highest number of installations.

## IEMI 2024:

- ✓ Frontrunners (Score: 65-99): Delhi, Maharashtra, Chandigarh.



- ✓ Performers (Score: 50-64): Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Haryana.
- ✓ Aspirants (Score: 0-49): States and UTs like Odisha, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Ladakh, Andhra Pradesh, and others are lagging in their e-mobility initiatives and require targeted interventions.
- ✓ India's EV share was one-fifth of global levels in 2020, now at over two-fifths in 2024.
- ✓ India must now increase EV share by 22% in just 5 years to meet its 2030 goal (30% EV penetration by 2030 under the EV30@30 campaign)
- ✓ According to the NITI Aayog report "Unlocking a 200 Billion Dollar Opportunity: Electric Vehicles in India", EV penetration rate in India increased from 0.23% in 2016 to 7.6% in 2024

## Global Artificial Intelligence (AI) City Index 2025

- ✓ Bengaluru has secured the 26th rank in the Global Artificial Intelligence (AI) City Index 2025, emerging as India's top AI R&D and data centre hub.
- ✓ A global benchmarking report that evaluates cities on their capacity, investment, and innovation in artificial intelligence.
- ✓ Published by: Market research firm Counterpoint Research.
- ✓ Tracks fastest-growing AI cities globally (e.g., Bengaluru, Riyadh, Hangzhou)
- ✓ Highlights AI-led urban innovation in traffic, safety, healthcare, and education.

### India's Performance in AI City Index 2025:

- ✓ Bengaluru ranked 26th globally; India's top AI city with a vibrant startup and data ecosystem.
- ✓ Mumbai and Delhi leverage AI in traffic and public security, with growth potential.
- ✓ Other Indian cities in top national ranks include Chennai and Kolkata.

### Top Global Rankings Global AI City Index:

- ✓ • Singapore      • Seoul      • Beijing      • Dubai      • San Francisco



## Indo-Burma Ramsar Regional Initiative (IBRRI)

- ✓ Recently, the Ramsar COP15 concluded with a side event of Indo-Burma Ramsar Regional Initiative (IBRRI) for wetland conservation and restoration.
- ✓ It was jointly developed by the Ramsar National Focal Points (NFPs) Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR), Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam, and IUCN's Asia Regional Office.
- ✓ It is supported by IUCN's BRIDGE (Building River Dialogue and Governance) project.
- ✓ It aims to support the coordinated implementation of the objectives of the Strategic Plan of the Ramsar Convention.
- ✓ **Strategic Plan 2025-2030**
- ✓ The Strategic Plan 2025-2030 sets a clear roadmap for regional cooperation.
- ✓ Aim: To halt and reverse the loss of wetlands in Indo-Burma.
- ✓ Secretariat: Hosted by the IUCN Asia Regional Office in Bangkok, Thailand.



## World Athletics Introduces New Eligibility Regulations for Female Category

- ✓ The World Athletics Council has announced a significant change in its eligibility rules for the female category in world ranking competitions.
- ✓ Starting 1 September 2025, all athletes wishing to participate in the female category will be required to undergo a once-in-a-lifetime SRY gene test
- ✓ This landmark decision will first be implemented at the World Athletics Championships Tokyo 25, beginning 13 September 2025.
- ✓ The SRY gene (Sex-determining Region Y) test will be conducted through a cheek swab or blood test, whichever is more convenient for the athlete.
- ✓ The new regulations are rooted in the protection and integrity of women's sport.
- ✓ “For you to compete in the female category, you have to be biologically female.



## India Becomes World's Fifth Largest Aviation Market in 2024: IATA

- ✓ India has emerged as the fifth largest aviation market globally in 2024, handling 241 million passengers, according to the World Air Transport Statistics (WATS) 2024 released by the International Air Transport Association (IATA).
- ✓ The Mumbai-Delhi route was also recognized among the world's busiest airport pairs.(7 th)

- ✓ Key Highlights:

### **India's Passenger Growth:**

- ✓ India handled 211 million air passengers in 2024, registering a growth of 11.1% over 2023. This pushed India ahead of Japan, which saw 205 million passengers.

### **Top Global Aviation Markets:**

1st -United States: 876 million passengers (5.2% year-on-year growth), supported by its large domestic market.

2nd - China: 741 million passengers (18.7% growth).

3rd - United Kingdom: 261 million passengers.

4th - Spain: 241 million passengers.

5th - India: 241 million passengers.



### **Busiest Airport Pairs:**

- ✓ Mumbai-Delhi ranked 7th globally, with 5.9 million passengers in 2024.
- ✓ Jeju-Seoul (CJU-GMP) in South Korea was the world's busiest route with 13.2 million passengers.
- ✓ 9 out of top 10 busiest airport pairs were from the Asia-Pacific region.
- ✓ The only non-Asia Pacific pair in the top 10 was Jeddah–Riyadh (JED–RUH).

### **Most Utilized Aircraft Types:**

- ✓ Boeing 737 topped with 10 million flights and 2.4 trillion Available Seat Kilometres (ASKs).
- ✓ Airbus A320 followed with 7.9 million flights and 1.7 trillion ASKs.
- ✓ Airbus A321 recorded 3.4 million flights and 1.1 trillion ASKs.

### **About IATA**

**Headquarters:** Montreal, Canada

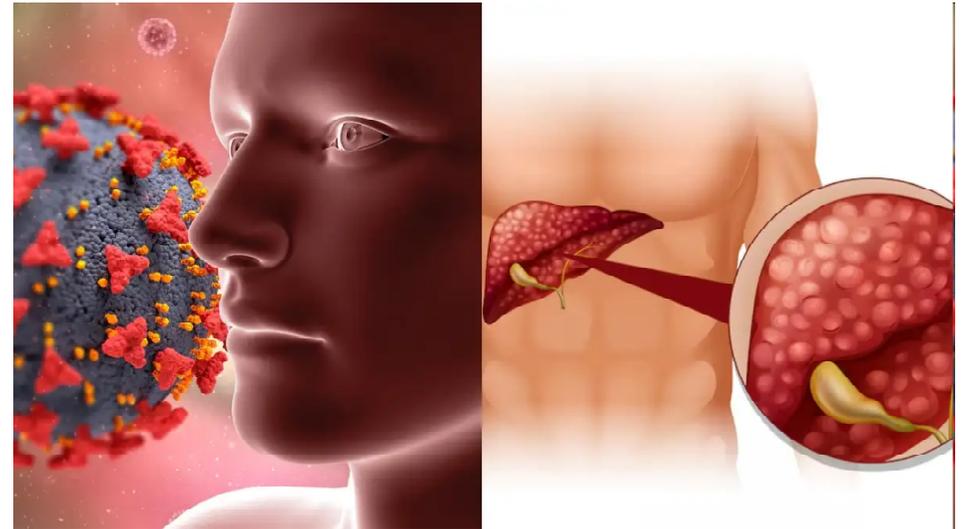
**Founded:** 19 April 1945, Havana, Cuba

**Director general:** Willie Walsh

**Membership:** 349

## WHO Declares Hepatitis D as Carcinogenic

- ✓ The World Health Organisation (WHO) has recently announced the reclassification of hepatitis D as a carcinogen, highlighting the urgent need to prevent viral hepatitis, a growing public health crisis.
- ✓ This lesser-known virus can silently increase the risk of liver cancer.
- ✓ “Every 30 seconds, one person dies from hepatitis-related severe liver disease or liver cancer,” said Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, MD, WHO Director-General.
- ✓ Hepatitis D is a disabled virus that requires the hepatitis B virus (HBV) to replicate.
- ✓ This means that hepatitis D affects only people who already have hepatitis B, either simultaneously or sequentially.
- ✓ The virus is transmitted through infected blood, unprotected sex, unprotected injections, or sometimes from mother to child during birth.
- ✓ There is no separate vaccine for hepatitis D. The only way to prevent it is to get the hepatitis B vaccine, which protects against both viruses.
- ✓ Viral hepatitis (types A, B, C, D, and E) are major causes of acute liver infection.



- ✓ However, only hepatitis B, C, and D can lead to chronic infections with a higher risk of liver cirrhosis, failure or cancer.
- ✓ India: National Viral Hepatitis Control Program (2018) aims to eliminate Hepatitis C by
- ✓ 2030 and reduce deaths from other types, in line with SDG 3.3.

## RBI grants in-principle approval to AU Small Finance Bank for transition into universal bank

- ✓ The Reserve Bank of India granted 'in-principle' approval to AU Small Finance
- ✓ Bank for transitioning from a Small Finance Bank to a Universal Bank.
- ✓ On September 3, 2024, AU Small Finance Bank has applied to the RBI for voluntary transition from a Small Finance Bank to a Universal Bank.
- ✓ Voluntary transition of Small Finance Banks to Universal Banks
- ✓ The eligibility criteria for an SFB to transition into a Universal bank will now be as follows:
- ✓ Scheduled status with a satisfactory track record of performance for a minimum period of five years
- ✓ shares of the bank should have been listed on a recognised stock exchange
- ✓ having a minimum net worth of Rs.1,000 crore as at the end of the previous quarter (audited)



- ✓ meeting the prescribed CRAR requirements for SFBs
- ✓ having a net profit in the last two financial years
- ✓ having GNPA and NNPA of less than or equal to 3 percent and 1 percent respectively in the last two financial years.

## NABARD and RBI Promote Rural Financial Literacy through various initiatives

- ✓ National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) and Reserve Bank of India (RBI) have undertaken various interventions to promote financial literacy and awareness of rural population, including microfinance borrowers.
- ✓ NABARD has been providing financial support for conduct of Financial and Digital Literacy Camps through rural bank branches and Financial Literacy Centres (FLCs) in areas with limited awareness.
- ✓ Centre for Financial Literacy (CFL) Project has been initiated by RBI since 2017 with an objective to adopt community-led innovative and participatory approaches to financial literacy.
- ✓ A total of 2,421 CFLs have been set up across the country as on March 31, 2025 with one CFL covering three blocks on an average
- ✓ NABARD also sponsors Village Level Programmes (VLPs) which are conducted with the support of banks and State Rural Livelihoods Missions (SRLMs) for a better interface between bankers and Self-Help Groups (SHGs) to facilitate opening of SHG accounts, their credit linkage and regular loan repayments, thereby facilitating financial inclusion at the village level.



- ✓ The definition of microfinance loan has been simplified and various quantitative restrictions on loans given by NBFC-MFIs have been removed, including limits on loan amount in a particular cycle and minimum tenure for loans over a particular threshold. Presently, all collateral-free loans given to a household having annual household income up to 1 3,00,000 are considered as microfinance loans.
- ✓ Erstwhile requirement of providing minimum 50% loans for income generation purposes has been dispensed with, considering the need of credit for medical, educational and income smoothening purposes.