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## Current Affairs

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### India Crowned Champion of WSF Squash World Cup



#### 1. India Crowned Champion of WSF Squash World Cup for the First Time

- **Maiden Title and Clean Sweep:** India won the WSF Squash World Cup for the first time, achieving a decisive 3-0 clean sweep victory over the top-seeded team, Hong Kong, China, in the final. This victory upgraded India's previous best finish, a bronze medal in the 2023 edition.
- **First Asian Country to Win:** With this triumph, India became the first Asian country to win the prestigious Squash World Cup title, breaking the traditional dominance of squash powerhouses like Australia, England, and Egypt.
- **Boost for Indian Squash:** This landmark achievement significantly elevates India's profile on the global squash stage, especially as the sport is set to make its Olympic debut at the Los Angeles 2028 Games.
- **Unbeaten Run:** India showcased exceptional form throughout the tournament, remaining undefeated and not losing a single tie on their way to the championship, which included a decisive 3-0 victory over two-time champions Egypt in the semi-finals.



#### 2. India Ranks Third in Global AI Index after US and China

- **Massive Jump in Ranking:** India vaulted four spots, climbing from 7th place in 2023 to 3rd place in 2024. This notable rise places India ahead of major advanced economies like South Korea (4th) and the United Kingdom (5th), signifying its accelerating momentum in the global AI race.



- **Strength in AI Talent and Skill:** India ranks among the top globally for AI talent concentration and AI skill penetration. This is fueled by its large, young technology workforce and a booming startup ecosystem, which has resulted in India becoming the second-largest contributor to AI-related GitHub projects in 2024.
- **Policy and Investment Boost:** The government's renewed focus, particularly through the IndiaAI Mission (with a substantial budget commitment of approximately USD \$1.25 billion over five years), has been a key driver. This initiative aims to increase computational capacity and develop a framework for safe AI, directly improving India's standing in the policy and infrastructure pillars.
- **Leading among Emerging Economies:** India is the clear frontrunner among lower- and middle-income countries in the index, demonstrating that its AI growth is not solely dependent on high-value private investment but also on widespread digital adoption and government policy.
- **Focus on Societal Impact and Optimism:** The report notes that public opinion in India is highly optimistic towards AI, viewing it primarily as a developmental leapfrog tool to solve societal challenges in healthcare, education, and agriculture, driving a utility-based adoption curve.

### 3. HECI Bill renamed the Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhikshan Bill

- **Creation of a Single Regulator:** The Bill's central feature is the establishment of a single, overarching regulator for all non-medical and non-legal higher education institutions. This new body is set to replace the existing fragmented system governed by the University Grants Commission (UGC), the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), and the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE).
- **Alignment with NEP 2020:** The Bill directly implements a core vision of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which called for a "light but tight" regulatory structure. It seeks to separate the functions of regulation, accreditation, and funding to reduce regulatory overlap, bureaucracy, and micromanagement.
- **Focus on Quality and Outcomes:** The new framework shifts the focus from an "inspection-based" and "permission-driven" system to one based on academic quality, learning outcomes, and accreditation. Institutions will be given more operational autonomy but will be held strictly accountable for their educational performance and financial probity.



- **Exclusion of Key Streams and Funding:** Importantly, the Bill explicitly excludes Medical and Legal education from its purview, which will continue to be regulated by their respective professional councils (like the National Medical Commission and the Bar Council of India). Furthermore, the function of funding and grants will remain with the administrative ministry (Department of Higher Education), separating it from the new regulatory body.

#### 4. The Union Cabinet approved the Insurance Amendment Bill, 2025

- **100% Foreign Direct Investment (FDI):** The most significant provision is the raising of the FDI limit in Indian insurance companies from the current 74% to 100%. This enables full foreign ownership, which is expected to attract long-term global capital, facilitate technology transfer, and boost the government's vision of 'Insurance for All by 2047'.
- **Enhanced Powers for IRDAI:** The Bill grants the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) stronger enforcement capabilities, including disgorgement powers (similar to SEBI) to recover wrongful gains. It also introduces a formal Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for regulation-making to increase transparency and predictability.
- **Operational Autonomy for LIC:** The amendments to the LIC Act, 1956, are aimed at giving the Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) greater operational freedom. This includes empowering its Board to take faster decisions on matters like setting up new zonal offices and managing its overseas operations without prior government approval.
- **Focus on Policyholder Protection:** The Bill strengthens consumer safeguards by introducing clearer and more rational criteria for levying penalties, making enforcement more transparent. It also mandates that at least one key member of the top management (Chairman, MD, or CEO) must be an Indian citizen as a guardrail.



#### 5. Raj Kumar Goyal sworn in as new Chief Information Commissioner

- **Filling a Vacancy at the Helm:** Raj Kumar Goyal was sworn in to fill the post of the Chief Information Commissioner, which had been vacant since September 2025 following the retirement of the previous CIC, Heeralal Samariya. The CIC is the apex body for the implementation of the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005.



- **Senior Bureaucratic Experience:** Goyal is a 1990-batch (retired) IAS officer of the Arunachal Pradesh-Goa-Mizoram-Union Territories (AGMUT) cadre. He superannuated as the Secretary, Department of Justice under the Ministry of Law and Justice, bringing extensive legal and administrative experience to the transparency watchdog.
- **Appointment by High-Level Panel:** His name was recommended by the three-member selection committee mandated by the RTI Act. This committee is headed by the Prime Minister and includes the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha and a Union Cabinet Minister nominated by the Prime Minister.
- **CIC Attains Full Strength:** Alongside the appointment of the CIC, the selection panel also recommended the names of eight new Information Commissioners (ICs). With these new appointments, the Central Information Commission is set to operate at its full sanctioned strength of 11 members (one CIC and ten ICs) for the first time in over nine years, which is crucial for reducing the backlog of RTI appeals and complaints.

## 6. Meta India appoints Aman Jain as Head of Public Policy

- **Top Leadership Role:** Aman Jain has been appointed the new Head of Public Policy for Meta India, where he will be responsible for leading the company's policy strategy and engagements in the country. He will also be a member of the Meta India leadership team.
- **Extensive Industry Experience:** Jain brings over 20 years of public policy and business strategy experience from major technology companies and the government. His previous senior roles include Director of Public Policy at Amazon and Country Head for Government Affairs & Public Policy at Google India.
- **Reporting Structure:** He is slated to join Meta early next year and will report directly to Simon Milner, Vice President of Policy for the Asia Pacific (APAC), underscoring the strategic importance of the India market.
- **Strategic Focus on Key Areas:** His appointment comes at a crucial time when the Indian government is focused on regulating technology. His role will be central to navigating and shaping policy discussions around key areas like Artificial Intelligence (AI), emerging technologies, the creator economy, digital safety, data governance, and platform accountability.
- **Succession in a Strategic Market:** The appointment fills a key vacancy (the previous VP of Public Policy, Shivnath Thukral, stepped down earlier) and signals Meta's intent to strengthen its engagement with regulators and stakeholders in India, one of its largest and most strategic global markets.





## 7. Press Club of India Elects Sangeeta Barooah Pisharoty as Its First Woman President

- **First Woman President in PCI History:** Sangeeta Barooah Pisharoty made history by becoming the first woman to be elected as the President of the Press Club of India since its establishment. This is a landmark achievement for gender diversity in the leadership of the country's prominent media institutions.
- **Clean Sweep Victory:** She led a panel that achieved a massive victory, winning all 21 office-bearer and managing committee positions with an emphatic mandate, signaling widespread support for her leadership and vision within the PCI membership.
- **Experienced Journalist and Author:** Pisharoty is a highly regarded journalist and writer, currently serving as the National Affairs Editor at the digital news publication The Wire. She previously spent 14 years as a special correspondent with the national newspaper, The Hindu.
- **Awards and Published Works:** Her professional reputation is bolstered by several accolades, including the Ramnath Goenka Excellence in Journalism Award (2017) for her reportage. She is also the author of the critically acclaimed book, Assam: The Accord, The Discord (2019).
- **Focus on Journalistic Values:** In her post-election remarks, Pisharoty emphasized that the mandate reflected the members' faith in her panel's commitment to upholding the values of free, fair, and responsible journalism.



## 8. MSME Ministry Signs MoU with Amazon For Vishwakarma Artisans

- **Digital Market Access:** The core objective is to integrate traditional artisans into the e-commerce ecosystem. Amazon will onboard eligible PM Vishwakarma artisans onto its online marketplace, enabling them to sell their handmade products to a wider, national, and global customer base.
- **Leveraging 'Karigar' Initiative:** The partnership will specifically strengthen the visibility of traditional crafts through Amazon's 'Karigar' initiative. This program is dedicated to showcasing India's rich handicraft heritage and supporting the digitization of artisan communities.
- **MSME Ministry's Support Role:** The MSME Ministry will actively support the artisans by assisting them in obtaining necessary approvals, registrations, and clearances from relevant government departments. This aims to simplify the compliance process and reduce entry barriers to the digital economy.



- **Boosting PM Vishwakarma Scheme:** The collaboration complements the PM Vishwakarma Scheme's pillar on market linkages. The scheme provides comprehensive support—including skill training, toolkits, and credit access—and the Amazon partnership provides the crucial platform for market expansion and better value realization.
- **Alignment with National Vision:** This public-private partnership is viewed as a significant step towards achieving the national goals of 'Viksit Bharat' (Developed India) and 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' (Self-Reliant India) by empowering grassroots artisans and strengthening the MSME sector through technology adoption.

### 9. DMRC Wins Best Performing Unit Award at NECA 2025

- **Specific Awardee:** The award was won by the East Vinod Nagar Metro Station on the Delhi Metro's Pink Line, in the Metro Stations sector category. The award was presented by President Droupadi Murmu on National Energy Conservation Day (December 14th) at Vigyan Bhawan.
- **Focus on Energy Conservation:** The recognition is for the station's exemplary and sustained efforts in energy efficiency and performance over the last three financial years. It was selected by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) under the Ministry of Power, Government of India.
- **Major Renewable Energy Contribution:** A key factor was the installation and operation of a 150 kilowatt-peak (kWp) rooftop solar power plant. This solar plant meets a substantial portion of the station's energy needs, reducing dependence on grid electricity.
- **Triple Recognition for Sustainability:** The NECA award reaffirms the station's high environmental standards, which also holds a 'Platinum' rating from the Indian Green Building Council (IGBC), underscoring DMRC's commitment to environmentally responsible urban mobility.



### 10. Former Union Minister Shivraj Patil passed away

- **Former Lok Sabha Speaker:** Shivraj Patil served as the 10th Speaker of the Lok Sabha from 1991 to 1996 during the tenure of Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao. During this period, he was credited with introducing significant parliamentary reforms, including the establishment of 17 Departmentally Related Standing Committees in 1993 to enhance legislative scrutiny.



- **Union Home Minister:** He held the crucial post of Union Minister of Home Affairs from 2004 to 2008 in the UPA-I government led by Dr. Manmohan Singh. His tenure as Home Minister, however, concluded when he resigned in November 2008, taking moral responsibility for the security lapses that led to the devastating 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks.
- **Seven-Time Parliamentarian:** Patil was a political heavyweight in the Marathwada region of Maharashtra, winning the Latur Lok Sabha seat seven consecutive times from 1980 to 1999. He also served as a Member of the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly (MLA) for two terms and held the position of Speaker of the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly (1978–1979).
- **Key Ministerial Roles:** Throughout the 1980s under Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi, he held a wide range of significant portfolios as Minister of State, including Defence, Commerce, Science and Technology, and Atomic Energy, demonstrating his vast administrative experience.
- **Later Constitutional Role:** After resigning as Home Minister, he later served a full term as the Governor of Punjab and Administrator of the Union Territory of Chandigarh from 2010 to 2015, continuing his service in a constitutional role.

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