

Current Affairs

22 & 23 Nov. 2025

Sarayu Velpula Becomes India's 26th Woman Grandmaster



1. Sarayu Velpula Becomes India's 26th Woman Grandmaster

- **WGM Title Requirements:** To become a WGM, a player must achieve a performance rating of at least 2400 against opponents with an average rating of 2180 or higher.
- **India's Chess Growth:** With this achievement, India now has 23 Woman Grandmasters, showcasing the country's growing presence in international chess.
- **FIDE Regulations:** The WGM title is awarded by FIDE (Fédération Internationale des Échecs or World Chess Federation) based on performance norms and ratings.
- **Sarayu's Achievement:** Sarayu Velpula joins an elite group of Indian women chess players who have achieved this prestigious title.
- **India's Chess Rankings:** India has over 30,000 FIDE-rated players and is home to 91 Grandmasters and 123 International Masters.



2. India and Israel Sign ToR to Initiate Free Trade Agreement Talks

- **Comprehensive FTA:** The proposed FTA aims to enhance bilateral trade, remove tariff barriers, and expand cooperation in technology and innovation.
- **Key Areas of Focus:** The agreement will cover areas such as market access, investment facilitation, technology collaboration, and smoother rules for trade in services.



- **Mutual Benefits:** India and Israel expect the FTA to boost trade, create new opportunities, and strengthen their strategic partnership.
- **Sensitive Sectors:** Israel has assured India that it will not seek market access in sensitive sectors like dairy, rice, wheat, and sugar.
- **Trade Potential:** The FTA is expected to increase bilateral trade, with Israel's Economy Minister Nir Barkat estimating a potential tenfold increase in trade.

3. UAE Becomes World's Third-Largest Humanitarian Donor in 2025

- **Ranking and Contribution:** The UAE ranks third globally, after the United States and the European Union, with its contribution representing 7.2% of the total global aid recorded by the United Nations, which amounts to \$20.28 billion.
- **Humanitarian Focus:** The UAE's aid focuses on both immediate relief, such as food, medicine, and shelter, and long-term development, including healthcare, education, and infrastructure projects.
- **Key Recipient Countries:** The UAE's humanitarian aid reaches countries like Palestine, Sudan, Syria, Ukraine, and Afghanistan, with Palestine being the largest recipient, accounting for 14.9% of the UAE's aid.
- **Leadership and Values:** The UAE's humanitarian efforts are driven by its leadership's commitment to solidarity, global cooperation, and sustainable development, reflecting the country's values and legacy.
- **Global Impact:** The UAE's aid has reached over 200 countries and territories, demonstrating its significant contribution to global humanitarian efforts.



4. Roger Federer Elected to International Tennis Hall of Fame

- **First Year of Eligibility:** Federer was elected to the Hall of Fame in his first year of eligibility, a rare feat that highlights his dominance in the sport.
- **20 Grand Slam Titles:** He was the first man to win 20 Grand Slam singles titles, cementing his place as one of the greatest tennis players of all time.
- **Record-Breaking Weeks at No. 1:** Federer held the world No. 1 ranking for a record 237 consecutive weeks and 310 total weeks, showcasing his remarkable consistency and skill.
- **103 Career Titles:** He won 103 career titles, second only to Jimmy Connors in the Open era, demonstrating his impressive winning record.



- **Induction Ceremony:** Federer will be inducted into the Hall of Fame on August 27-29, 2026, in Newport, Rhode Island, alongside Mary Carillo, who was elected in the contributor category.

5. IAS Officer Sunil Paliwal appointed as Chairman of Inland Waterways Authority of India

- **New Appointment:** Sunil Paliwal, a 1993-batch IAS officer from Tamil Nadu, has been appointed as the Chairman of IWAI, succeeding Vijay Kumar.
- **Previous Role:** Paliwal was previously serving as the Chairperson of Chennai Port Trust.
- **IWAI's Mission:** The Inland Waterways Authority of India aims to develop and regulate inland waterways for navigation and transportation, promoting economic growth and sustainable development.
- **Recent Developments:** IWAI has signed MoUs worth ₹3,000 crore to boost inland water transport and industrial logistics in Northeast India, focusing on cargo, tourism, and trade.
- **Government Initiatives:** The government is working to operationalize 47 new national waterways by 2027, with a focus on eco-friendly and sustainable transportation.



6. Parthasarathy Bhaskar Devarakonda appointed as Deputy Secretary in the Cabinet Secretariat

- **Appointment Details:** Parthasarathy Bhaskar Devarakonda, an IRS officer (C&IT 2012), has been appointed as Deputy Secretary in the Cabinet Secretariat on a 'lateral shift' basis for a tenure up to June 22, 2026.
- **Previous Role:** Devarakonda was previously serving as Deputy Secretary in the Department of Administrative Reforms & Public Grievances.
- **Cabinet Secretariat's Role:** The Cabinet Secretariat is the nerve center of administrative coordination, supporting the Prime Minister's Office and key ministries.
- **Responsibilities:** As Deputy Secretary, Devarakonda will likely be involved in policy formulation, inter-ministerial coordination, and crisis management.
- **Appointment Process:** The appointment was approved by the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC), headed by the Prime Minister.



7. Amit Agrawal appointed as New Telecom Secretary

- **Background:** Agrawal is a 1993-batch IAS officer from the Chhattisgarh cadre and an IIT Kanpur graduate, with expertise in finance, technology, and public administration.
- **Previous Role:** He was serving as Secretary, Department of Pharmaceuticals, Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilisers, since December 2024.
- **Key Responsibilities:** As Telecom Secretary, Agrawal will oversee India's telecom policy, spectrum management, 5G/6G expansion, and digital infrastructure strengthening.
- **Experience:** He has held key positions, including CEO of UIDAI, Additional Secretary at MeitY, and senior roles in the Ministry of Finance.
- **Challenges Ahead:** Agrawal will focus on finalizing spectrum allocation policies, addressing regulatory complexities, fostering innovation, and furthering the Digital India vision.



8. Samsung & UN GCNI Launched DigiArivu to Strengthen Digital & STEM Education

- **Objective:** DigiArivu aims to empower students through technology, focusing on digital and STEM education in government schools.
- **Scope:** The program will benefit over 3,000 students across 10 government schools in Kancheepuram and Ranipet districts.
- **Key Components:** The initiative includes upgrading school infrastructure, introducing activity-based STEM learning, training teachers, and providing libraries, sports kits, and career guidance.
- **Partnership:** The program is a collaboration between Samsung and UN GCNI, aligning with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- **Impact:** DigiArivu seeks to create a digitally-enabled learning environment, enhancing students' future-ready skills and contributing to India's digital economy.



9. Govt appoints Sandhip Pradhan as Whole Time Member of SEBI

- **Appointment Details:** Sandhip Pradhan, a 1990-batch IRS officer, has been appointed as a Whole Time Member (WTM) of SEBI for a period of three years, replacing Ashwani Bhatia.
- **Previous Role:** Pradhan was serving as Director General of Income Tax (Investigation), Pune, and has also held key positions in the Sports Authority of India and Income Tax Department.



- **SEBI's Role:** SEBI regulates India's securities market, protecting investor interests and promoting fair practices.
- **Responsibilities:** As WTM, Pradhan will oversee regulatory, supervisory, and policy-making functions, strengthening SEBI's enforcement and surveillance.
- **Experience:** Pradhan brings over three decades of experience in taxation, regulation, and administration, bolstering SEBI's leadership structure.

10. THDC India Limited conferred the prestigious 'The GEEF Global Sustainability Award 2025'

- **Award Category:** THDC India Limited won the award in the "CSR with a Human Heart – Company of the Year 2025" category, recognizing its commitment to inclusive growth and sustainable development.
- **CSR Initiatives:** The company's flagship CSR initiative, "THDC Sahridaya – Corporate with a Human Heart", embodies its core values of compassion, responsibility, and service to society, promoting community well-being in healthcare, education, and environmental sustainability.
- **Community Development:** THDCIL has contributed to rural infrastructure, irrigation, afforestation, and water conservation, while fostering art, culture, and sports, including water sports at Tehri Lake and supporting budding athletes.
- **Recognition:** The award was received by Shri Harsh Kumar Jindal, General Manager (S&E Department), and Smt. Mehak Sharma, Deputy Manager (S&E Department), on behalf of THDCIL, acknowledging the company's unwavering commitment to inclusive growth and sustainable community development.



- **Global Recognition:** The GEEF Global Sustainability Award 2025 is a prestigious international recognition, highlighting THDCIL's efforts towards sustainable development and community welfare.

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