

25 January 2025

Nirmala Sitharaman Marks Final Preparations With Halwa Ceremony

Key Points:

- ❖ The traditional 'halwa' ceremony, marking the final phase of preparation for the Union Budget 2025-26, took place at North Block on Friday. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary, and senior officials were present for the event.
- ❖ The halwa ceremony serves as a kind of 'send-off' for the finance ministry team, as they enter a 'lock-in' period.
- ❖ During this time, they remain secluded in the basement of North Block, cut off from external contact to preserve the confidentiality of the final budget document.



What is the Halwa Ceremony?

- ❖ The Halwa ceremony is a traditional event held at North Block, where a sweet dish is prepared in a large wok (kadhai). The Union Minister leads the cooking process, stirring the kadhai ceremoniously before serving the dish to everyone involved in preparing the Union Budget. This ritual typically occurs five days before the budget is presented in Parliament for the upcoming financial year.
- ❖ During the lock-in period, finance ministry staff are isolated within North Block, cut off from the outside world.
- ❖ They are not allowed to use mobile phones or other communication devices. Several measures are taken to prevent any leaks of budget information, with communication to the outside world heavily restricted.

- ❖ This lock-in period lasts until the budget documents receive final approval from the Prime Minister and are ready for printing.
- ❖ The printing is carried out in a high security area in the basement of North Block, with the core team overseeing the process. To further safeguard the process, the Intelligence Bureau conducts surprise inspections of the printing press.

Sindhu & Lakshya to lead India in Badminton Asia Mixed Team Championship

Key Points:

- ❖ The Badminton Association of India (BAI) has announced a 14-member India squad for the 4th Badminton Asia Mixed Team Championships to be played in Qingdao, China from 11-19 February 2025.
- ❖ The Indian team is led by 2024 Paris Olympics semifinalist Lakshya Sen and two-time Olympic medal winner P V Sindhu. The India team won a bronze medal at the 3rd edition of the Badminton Asia Mixed Team Championships held in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates in 2023.



Format of the Asian Badminton Mixed Team Championships

- ❖ In the Asian Badminton Mixed Team Championships the teams participating countries are divided into groups and the top two teams of each group qualify for the quarter-finals stage.
- ❖ A match played by one team against the other team is called a tie.

- ❖ Each tie in the Championships will consist of five matches - one men's singles, one women's singles, one mixed doubles, one women's doubles, and one men's doubles.

Indian Squad for the 2025 Championships

- ❖ P V Sindhu and Lakshya Sen will play the first women's and men's singles respectively.
- ❖ HS Prannoy and Malvika Bansod will play the second men's and women's singles respectively.
- ❖ Former world No.1 men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty will feature in the men's doubles.
- ❖ In the women's doubles Gayatri Gopichand, Treasa Jolly Ashwini Ponnappa, and Tanisha Crasto will vie for the doubles spot.
- ❖ Similarly, the mixed doubles team will be made of Tanisha along with Dhruv Kapila.
- ❖ Sathish Kumar K and Adya Variyath are the second combinations for the mixed doubles.

About the Asian Badminton Mixed Team Championships

- ❖ The Asian Badminton Mixed Team Championships is a biennial tournament organised by Badminton Asia and hosted by a member country of Badminton Asia.
- ❖ The first Asian Badminton Mixed Team Championships was held in 2017 in Ho Min Chi City, Vietnam. The inaugural edition was won by Japan.
- ❖ The second Championship was held in Hong Kong in 2019 and was won by China.
- ❖ The third edition of the Asian Badminton Mixed Team Championships was held in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates in 2023. It was won by China.
- ❖ China is the most successful team in the Championship with two gold medals and one bronze medal.

- ❖ India has won only one medal -bronze at the 2023 edition.

Kerala CM Vijayan launches disaster risk warning system KaWaCHaM

Key Points:

- ❖ Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan inaugurated India's first fully integrated disaster warning system KaWaCHaM (Kerala Warnings, a Crisis and Hazard Management System) on 21 January 2025.
- ❖ The KaWaCHaM system has been developed under the National Cyclone Risk Mitigation Project.
- ❖ The KaWaCHaM system is considered one of the fastest weather alert systems in the world which will enhance rescue and rehabilitation efforts during extreme weather events driven by climate change.



Who developed the KaWaCHaM system?

- ❖ The KaWaCHaM system has been developed by the Kerala State Disaster Management Authority (KSDMA) with funding support from the National Disaster Management Authority, the government of India, and the World Bank. It is a part of the National Cyclone Risk Mitigation Project.

Feature of the KaWaCHaM system

- ❖ The KaWaCHaM system is operated by the KSDMA.
- ❖ The early warning system will operate at the taluk level and cover all disaster-prone areas of the state.
- ❖ It has unified Kerala's entire early warning mechanism into a single framework that disseminates disaster-related knowledge, and warnings, monitors developing crises, and ensures swift responses.

- ❖ The warnings will cover disasters emanating from the sea, heavy rainfall, strong winds, and extreme heat.
- ❖ It is an advanced disaster warning system that integrates alerts, sirens, and global weather models to improve early disaster preparedness and public safety.
- ❖ 126 sirens and strobe lights will be installed on tall towers, government buildings, and schools.
- ❖ Maximum sirens are in Thiruvananthapuram and Ernakulam with 13 each.
- ❖ The system includes pre-recorded voice messages and audio alerts regarding cyclone-related warnings.

National Cyclone Risk Mitigation Project

- ❖ The National Cyclone Risk Mitigation Project is a centrally sponsored scheme that is being funded by the World Bank. The project is being implemented by the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), the government of India.

Aim of the Project

- ❖ The project seeks to install an early warning system, and cyclone mitigation infrastructure and assist the 8 coastal states in project management and monitoring.

Implementation

- ❖ The project is being implemented in two phases in 8 coastal states of India. Phase I - Andhra Pradesh & Odisha Phase II - Goa, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, and West Bengal.

INCOIS gets Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar 2025

Key Points:

- ❖ The Hyderabad-based Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) has been selected for the 2025 Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda

Prabandhan Puraskar in the Institutional category. No individual has been chosen for the award this year.

- ❖ Since 2021, the government of India has celebrated 23rd January as the Parakram Diwas every year.
- ❖ The Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar is announced by the government of India on the occasion of the birth anniversary of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose on 23 January every year.



Theme of the 2025 Parakram Diwas

- ❖ The theme of the 2025 Parakram Diwas was "**Netaji: Courage, Determination and Patriotism**". This year the Parakram Diwas celebration was held at Barabati Fort in Cuttack which was presided over by the Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi. The celebration was also addressed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi through a video message.

About the Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar

- ❖ The Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar was instituted by the government of India in 2019. The award is administered by the Disaster Management Division of the Union Ministry of Home Affairs.
- ❖ The awards are given in the Individual and Institutional categories to an Indian citizen or institution. The award is given for excellence in the areas of Disaster Management; like Prevention, Mitigation, Preparedness, Rescue, Response, Rehabilitation, Relief, Research/Innovations, or Early Warning.

- ❖ For the Institutional winners, the cash prize is Rs. 51 lakh and a certificate and in the case of an individual, the cash prize is Rs 5 lakh and a certificate. The cash prize will be used by the winner in the institutional category for disaster management-related activities only.

About the INCOIS (Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services)

- ❖ The Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) is an autonomous body under the Union Ministry of Earth Sciences. It was established in 1999 in Hyderabad, Telangana.

Functions of INCOIS

- ❖ To provide ocean data, information, and advisory services to stakeholders like the scientific community, government, industry, etc through systematic and focused research in information management and ocean modeling.

Role in Disaster Management

- ❖ INCOIS has established and manages the Indian Tsunami Early Warning Centre (ITEWC) which provides tsunami alerts within 10 minutes to India and 28 Indian Ocean countries.
- ❖ Recognised by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) as a top Tsunami Service Provider.
- ❖ Provides cyclone, high-wave, and storm surge-related forecasts.
- ❖ Its Search and Rescue Aided Tool (SARAT) helps the Indian Coast Guard, Navy, and the Coastal Security Police, in locating individuals or objects lost at sea.
- ❖ Operates the SynOPS visualization platform which integrates real-time data to strengthen response coordination during extreme events.

Government set a target of 10,000 GI Tag by 2030

Key Points:

- ❖ The Government of India has set a target of 10,000 Geographical Indication (GI) tags for the Indian products by 2030.
- ❖ According to the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) 605 Indian products have been issued GI tags till date.
- ❖ Darjeeling tea was the first product to be given a GI in 2003. The minister also announced that the central government will set up a committee to achieve this target.
- ❖ The new target for the GI tag was announced by the Union Minister of Commerce and Industry, Piyush Goyal at the GI Samagam held in New Delhi on 22 January 2025.

Who Organised the GI Samagam?

- ❖ The GI Samagam was organised by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce and Industry in collaboration with the India Today Group. The theme of the GI Samagam was "Preserving Heritage, Fostering Innovation", we aim to connect culture, commerce, and innovation."

About the Geographical Indication (GI) Tag and its Features

- ❖ A Geographical Indication tag is given to a product having distinct characteristics associated with a definite territory. The GI tag provides legal protection for the product and It prevents the unauthorised use of a Registered Geographical Indication by others for commercial use.

Legal framework

- ❖ The legal framework for the GI Tag is laid down by the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act 1999 passed by the parliament.

- ❖ The registrar of the GI tag is the Controller General of Patents, Designs, and TradeMarks, under the DIPT. ➤ Geographical Indications Registry - Chennai, Tamil Nadu.

Products on which GI tag is given

- ❖ In India the GI tag is given to the producer of three categories of goods;
- ❖ Agricultural Goods - It includes the production, processing, trading, or dealing with such goods.
- ❖ Natural Goods-It includes exploiting, trading, or dealing in such goods.
- ❖ Handicrafts or Industrial goods -It includes making, manufacturing, trading, or dealing in such types of goods.

Benefits of GI Tag

- ❖ Prevents unauthorised use of a Registered Geographical Indication.
- ❖ Boost the export of the products.
- ❖ It promotes the economic prosperity of producers of the GI tag goods

Validity of the GI Tag

- ❖ The geographical indication registration is valid for 10 years.
- ❖ It can be renewed from time to time for 10 years each.

Dr S.Jaishankar attends Quad Foreign Minister Meeting in Washington

Key Points:

- ❖ Indian External Affairs Minister Dr S.Jaishankar attended the Quad foreign ministers meeting in Washington D.C, the United States of America on the 21st of January 2025.
- ❖ The foreign ministers of the Quad group consisting of India, Japan, Australia, and the United States of America were in the United States of America to attend the swearing-in ceremony of Donald Trump as the 47th President of the United States of America on 20 January 2025.

- ❖ Donald Trump is the oldest person to become the President of the United States of America.



Marco Rubio Host the Quad Foreign Ministers Meeting

- ❖ The US Secretary of State Marco Rubio hosted the ninth foreign ministers level meeting of the Quad group.
- ❖ The meeting was attended by the Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, Japan's Foreign Minister Takeshi Iwaya, and Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong.
- ❖ The 8th Foreign Ministers Meeting of Quad was held in Japan on 29 July 2024.
- ❖ India will host the 7th Quad Leader Summit meeting in 2025.

Marco Rubio first Cabinet Minister of the Trump Administration

- ❖ Marco Rubio was the first member of the Donald Trump administration to be confirmed by the Senate of the United States Congress. He was confirmed as the Secretary of State and head of the State Department of the United States of America.
- ❖ The Secretary of State is the foreign minister of the United States government.
- ❖ The Parliament of the United States is called Congress which is a bicameral body.
- ❖ The upper house is called the Senate and the Lower house is called the House of Representatives.

- ❖ In the United States, the President nominates the member of his cabinet but it has to be approved by the Senate by a majority. If the Senate refuses then that person cannot be appointed as the cabinet member of the Presidential administration.

Dr. Jaishankar first Foreign Minister to meet Marco Rubio

- ❖ Dr. Jaishankar was the first foreign country's foreign minister to meet Marco Rubio after his swearing-in as the Secretary of State of the United States. It reflects the importance of the relationship between India and the United States of America.

About Quad and its Summit Meeting

- ❖ Former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is given credit for the establishment of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue or Quad to facilitate maritime cooperation after the devastating 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami.
- ❖ The Quad formally came into existence in 2007 consisting of India, Japan, Australia, and the United States of America.
- ❖ The Group is now seen as an anti-China alliance and China has denounced the group. There have been regular meetings of the leaders of the Quad and so far six summit meetings, including two virtual meetings have taken place.

Following is the list of the Summit meetings of the Quad leaders

- ❖ First Summit Meeting- a virtual meeting hosted by the United States of America in March 2021.
- ❖ Second meeting - an in-person meeting held in Washington, D.C, United States of America, on 21 September 2021.
- ❖ Third meeting- a virtual meeting held in March 2022
- ❖ Fourth meeting - hosted by Japan in Tokyo in May 2022

- ❖ Fifth meeting-hosted by Australia in May 2023
- ❖ Sixth meeting - hosted by the United States of America in Delaware, on 21 September 2024.

DPIIT partners with Apna to boost startup talent and create job opportunities for youth

Key Points:

- ❖ The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) and Apna, the country's jobs and professional networking platform, have entered into an alliance for a talent hunt to equip DPIIT-registered startups with highly skilled manpower thus creating new job opportunities for the unemployed youth.
- ❖ The partnership formalised through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), brings a monetary value of Rs 2000 per entity registered on the Bharat Startup Registry (Bhaskar) platform in hiring credits on Apna's platform for each of the 7,00,000 entities. This is currently going to be valued at Rs 140 crore.
- ❖ In the country, currently, there are over 1.59 lakh startups recognised by the DPIIT as of January 15, 2025, India has firmly established itself as the third-largest startup ecosystem in the world.
- ❖ As per government data, this vibrant ecosystem, driven by over 100 unicorns, continues to redefine innovation and entrepreneurship on the global stage.

Accenture, TCS, Infosys, HCL Tech top 2025 Brand Finance IT Services ranking

Key Points:

- ❖ India has secured the second position, contributing 36 per cent of the total brand value, a significant achievement fuelled by a 14 per cent increase in brand value, according to Brand Finance 2025 ranking.

- ❖ India follows the US, which maintains its dominant position in IT services brand value, holding 40 per cent of the total brand value.
- ❖ The collective brand value of the top 25 IT Services brands stands at \$163 billion in 2025. 15 out of the top 25 brands have seen an increase in their brand values, underscoring the continued importance of IT services in the ever-evolving digital landscape.



- ❖ While Accenture leads the list, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) retains its position as the world's second most valuable IT services brand for the fourth consecutive year. Its brand value rose 11 per cent to \$21.3 billion. Accenture's brand value soared 2 per cent to \$41.5 billion, as it led as the world's most valuable IT services brand for the seventh year running.
- ❖ Infosys' brand value rose an impressive 15 per cent to \$16.3 billion, making it among the world's top three most valuable IT Services brands for the fourth consecutive year. Infosys has also achieved the fastest compound annual growth rate (CAGR) in brand value (18 per cent) over the last five years. HCLTech (brand value up 17 per cent to \$8.9 billion) has emerged as the world's fastest growing IT Services brand in 2025.

Maharashtra secures 54 MoUs worth ₹15.70 lakh crore at WEF Davos 2025

Key Points:

- ❖ The Maharashtra government has signed 54 MoUs worth 15.70 lakh crore rupees during the World Economic Forum (WEF) Annual Meeting 2025 in Davos. These agreements are expected to generate approximately 16 lakh jobs across various sectors. One of the key agreements involves MSN Holdings Ltd, which plans to establish an advanced lithium battery and cell manufacturing project under the state's 'Ultra Mega Project' initiative.



- ❖ The project, requiring an investment of 14,652 crore rupees, aims to create 8,760 direct and indirect jobs, with a focus on development in the Vidarbha region.
- ❖ The largest MoU signed is with Reliance Group, which has committed 3.05 lakh crore rupees for investments across petrochemicals, polyester, renewable energy, bioenergy, green hydrogen, retail, telecommunications, data centres, hospitality, and real estate.
- ❖ The WEF Annual Meeting 2025, being held from January 20-24 in Davos, Switzerland, is themed "Collaboration for the Intelligent Age."

18th edition of Jaipur Literature Festival to begin from January 30

Key Points:

- ❖ The 18th edition of the Jaipur Literature Festival, the world's largest literary event, will be held from 30 January to 3 February 2025. One of the key highlights of the festival is the prestigious Kanhaiya Lal Sethia Award for Poetry, which will honor eminent Hindi poet Badri Narayan.

- ❖ He was awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award in 2022 for his collection Tumdi ke Shabd. The 2025 edition will also explore the theme “Fractured World,” with sessions addressing current geopolitics, war and conflict, alongside topics like theatre, dance, music, cinema, sports, food, and climate change.

SSB chief Amrit Mohan to hold additional charge as BCAS DG

Key Points:

- ❖ The Central government has entrusted Amrit Mohan Prasad, the Director General of Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB), with the additional charge of Director General, Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS).
- ❖ The charge was given to Prasad months after BCAS DG Zulfiqar Hasan retired on October 31 last year. Reorganised into an independent department on April 1, 1987, under the Ministry of Civil Aviation, BCAS is the regulatory authority for civil aviation security in India.
- ❖ Prasad, a 1989-batch IPS officer of the Odisha cadre, has been given the additional charge for six months with effect from November 1, 2024, or till the joining of the regular incumbent or until further orders, whichever is the earliest.

