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Current Affairs - 11 December 2025

DEEPAVALI ADDED TO UNESCO'S INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE LIST



Deepavali, the Festival of Lights, has been inscribed on UNESCO's List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity during the 20th Intergovernmental Committee session held at New Delhi's Red Fort.

It is now the **16th Indian cultural element** on the prestigious list. The inscription recognises Deepavali as a living tradition continuously recreated by communities, fostering social cohesion and contributing to cultural continuity and development.

Understanding UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage List

- UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage List recognises living traditions and skills — unlike monuments or archaeological sites.
- It includes oral traditions, performing arts, festivals, social practices, traditional craftsmanship, and knowledge of nature.
- These practices, such as India's Garba and Kumbh Mela or France's baguette-making, are passed across generations, strengthen cultural identity, and preserve humanity's shared heritage.
- For a cultural practice to be inscribed, UNESCO requires it to be **inclusive, representative, and rooted in the community**.
- The aim is to recognise living traditions that embody shared identity and social habits — such as France's baguette-making, which UNESCO says reflects everyday rituals and conviviality.

India's Cultural Heritages Recognised by UNESCO

- Apart from Deepavali added in 2025, India has several cultural traditions inscribed on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list.
- These include:
 - **Festivals & Rituals:** Durga Puja in Kolkata (2021), Kumbh Mela (2017), Nowruz (2016), Ramman festival of Garhwal (2009).



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- **Performing Arts & Theatre:** Sankirtana of Manipur (2013); Chhau dance, Kalbelia dance of Rajasthan, Mudi yettu of Kerala (2010); Kutiyattam Sanskrit theatre and Ramlila (2008).
- **Oral & Spiritual Traditions:** Buddhist chanting of Ladakh (2012); Vedic chanting (2008).
- **Traditional Craftsmanship:** Brass and copper utensil-making of the Thatheras of Jandiala Guru, Punjab (2014).
- **What UNESCO Recognition Means for Deepavali?**
 - Deepavali's inscription enhances the festival's global stature, strengthens efforts to preserve its traditions, and supports India's cultural diplomacy, including among the diaspora.
 - The recognition also boosts tourism, fosters cultural exchange, and helps sustain the artisans and communities who keep Deepavali's living traditions vibrant.

About Deepavali:

- Deepavali, also **known as Diwali**, is the festival of lights celebrated across India. 'Deepa' means lamp or light and 'Vali' means string or row, and **Deepavali means rows of lights**. It is **celebrated on Kartik Amaavasya**, which typically falls in Oct. or Nov.
- The fundamental philosophy of Deepavali encompasses the celebration of prosperity, renewal, and abundance for all individuals.
- **Celebration of Deepavali:**
 - It begins **with Dhanteras**, a day of auspicious beginnings when families buy new metalware or essentials that symbolise prosperity.
 - The **second day** marks **Naraka Chaturdashi**, observed with rituals and lighting lamps to dispel negativity and welcome positive energy.
 - The **third day** is the highlight of Deepavali- the sacred **Lakshmi-Ganesha Puja**.
 - The celebrations **conclude with Bhai Dooj**, a heartfelt tribute to the bond between **brothers and sisters**, observed with prayers, blessings, and meaningful rituals.



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WHAT IS THE SWASTHYA PORTAL?



- It is a **one-stop solution** presenting the health and nutrition status of the tribal population of India.
- It was developed under the central sector scheme “Tribal Research Information Education Communication and Events (TRI ECE)” of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs.
- The portal is hosted on the **National Informatics Centre (NIC) Server** and is maintained by the Centre of Excellence for Knowledge Management for Health and Nutrition, established by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs.
- It provides **information and data** as well as **curates innovative practices, research briefs, case studies, and best practices** collected from different parts of India to facilitate the **exchange of evidence, expertise, and experiences**.
- It has a **dashboard, knowledge repository, partner segment, Sickle Cell Diseases (SCD) support corner**.
 - The **dashboard** presents **data curated from multiple sources** for the **high-priority tribal districts**.
- Information available on Swasthya will provide insights to all stakeholders working with the tribal population of India in the areas of health and nutrition.

Key Facts about Tribal Research Information Education Communication and Events (TRI ECE):

- It is a **Central Sector Scheme** of the **Ministry of Tribal Affairs**.
 - Under the scheme, **financial support is provided to the research organizations**, reputed organizations, research institutes, and universities where expertise exists and which have **already made a mark by carrying out pioneering research** in their respective field.
 - The purpose of the scheme is to **create replicable models** in areas of education, health, livelihood, digital governance, etc.
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AUSTRALIA ENFORCES UNDER-16 SOCIAL MEDIA BAN

- Australia has become the first country to legally enforce a minimum age of 16 for social media use.
- Platforms like Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat and others must now block over a million underage accounts, marking a major shift in global online safety regulation.
- **What the New Australian Law Mandates?**
 - Under the Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act, platforms must:
 - Take “reasonable steps” to identify under-16 users and deactivate their accounts.
 - Block new account creation by anyone below 16.
 - Prevent workarounds, such as fake birthdays or identity misrepresentation.
 - Have a grievance mechanism to fix errors where someone is wrongly blocked or allowed.
 - This shift places direct responsibility on tech platforms to verify user ages and enforce compliance — something never before mandated at this scale.
- **Key Exemptions in the Law**
 - The Australian government has excluded several online services from the age-ban: Dating apps Gaming platforms AI chatbots
 - This has raised questions, especially as some AI tools have recently been found allowing inappropriate or “sensual” conversations with minors.

Why Australia Introduced the Under-16 Social Media Ban?

- The Australian government says the ban aims to shield young users from the “**pressures and risks**” created by social media platforms.
- These include:
 - Addictive design features that encourage excessive screen time
 - Harmful or unsafe content affecting mental health and well-being



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- High levels of cyberbullying — over half of young Australians report experiencing it
- The government argues that stronger safeguards are required because existing platform policies have failed to protect minors.

Concerns Over Rights and Feasibility

- The Australian Human Rights Commission has criticised the blanket ban, arguing that:
 - It may restrict a child's right to free expression
 - It risks pushing children to unsafe, unregulated online spaces
 - Enforcement challenges could weaken the effectiveness of the law
 - Debate continues over whether this strict ban is the right solution or if more balanced, protective alternatives exist.
 - **The Risk of State Overreach**
 - Digital rights advocates warn that child-safety regulations can expand into tools of state control. Examples include:
 - Turkey, where child-safety powers were used to remove political posts.
 - Brazil, where similar laws restricted election content.
 - India, where online speech is already heavily regulated.
 - Safety rules can become a gateway to censorship.
 - **Why Bans Often Fail in Practice?**
 - Teenagers repeatedly bypass restrictions using VPNs, fake ages, and loopholes.
 - The internet's decentralised design — originally meant for resilience — makes enforcing bans extremely difficult.
 - **Reactions: Tech Pushback, Parental Support**
 - Tech companies warn the new rules may be impractical and intrusive.
 - Parents and safety advocates widely support the move, citing rising online harms, bullying, and mental-health concerns among teenagers.
 - The law is now being closely watched by other governments as a possible model for future regulation.
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INDIA'S 8.2% GDP GROWTH - MOMENTUM AND CHALLENGES

- India's economic output for the quarter reached **48.63 lakh crore**, significantly higher than the previous year. The broad-based expansion shows that the current momentum goes beyond a mere post-pandemic rebound.
- **Manufacturing grew 9.1%**, indicating stronger industrial demand and higher capacity utilisation.
- **Services expanded 9.2%**, now forming 60% of GDP, with financial services at 10.2%, signalling buoyant credit growth and high transaction volumes.
- **Agriculture**, supported by improved reservoir levels and horticulture output, rose 3.5%, showing a slight improvement in rural incomes.
- Real GVA rose from Rs. 82.88 lakh crore to Rs. 89.41 lakh crore, confirming real value creation rather than price effects.
- Crucially, **nominal GDP grew only 8.8%**, showing that inflation, previously a major concern, remained under control through 2024-25.
- Household consumption grew 7.9%, reflecting resilient domestic demand.

Macroeconomic Stability Indicators

- Several macro indicators underline India's economic resilience:
 - Inflation eased, dipping even below target toward the end of 2024-25.
 - Bank credit growth remained strong, with well-capitalised banks holding buffers above regulatory norms.
 - Fiscal consolidation continued, supported by buoyant GST and direct tax revenues.
 - The current account deficit remained modest, helped by strong services exports and diversified forex reserves.
- These signals collectively suggest that India continues to grow even as global economic activity weakens.



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WHAT IS THE SAMPANN PORTAL?



• System for Accounting and Management of Pension (SAMPANN), is a Comprehensive Pension Management System (CPMS).

- It is an initiative undertaken by the Controller General of Communication Accounts (CGCA), Department of Telecommunications, Ministry of Communications.
- It is an **online pension processing and payment system for Department of Telecommunications pensioners**. It brings the pension processing, sanctioning, authorisation, and payment units under a common platform.
- It provides **direct credit of pension into the bank accounts of pensioners**.
- The system has helped the Department in **faster settlement of pension cases, improved reconciliation/auditing, and ease of accounting**.
- **Features:**
 - **Direct disbursement of pension** on a timely basis **without intermediaries**.
 - **Single window system** for complete pension process.
 - **Online grievance management** for the pensioners, reducing paperwork.
 - **Tracking of pension status from home** encourages transparency and accountability.
 - **Faster processing of arrears and revision** of pension.

WHAT IS THE 'YOUR MONEY, YOUR RIGHT' MOVEMENT?



- It was launched by the central government in 2025.
- It is an initiative aimed at **enabling people to reclaim their unclaimed deposits, insurance proceeds, dividends, and other financial assets**.
- The effort **brings together government agencies, regulators, banks, and financial institutions** to identify and return long-forgotten funds.



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- The **deposits in accounts** which are **not operated for a period of 10 years** are classified as **unclaimed deposits**.
- Under the initiative, **individuals need to verify** if their close family members or relatives have unclaimed deposits, insurance proceeds, mutual-fund payouts, or dividends.
- To facilitate this, the government has created dedicated portals as follows:
 - **Reserve Bank of India (RBI): UDGAM Portal** for unclaimed bank deposits & balances.
 - **Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI): Bima Bharosa Portal** for unclaimed insurance policy proceeds.
 - **Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI): MITRA Portal** for unclaimed amounts in mutual funds.
 - **Ministry of Corporate Affairs: IEPFA Portal** for unpaid dividends and unclaimed shares.
- **Facilitation camps** are being **organised in districts** across both rural and urban regions of the country.
- **On the national level**, the campaign is **coordinated by the Department of Financial Services (DFS), Ministry of Finance**.

WHAT IS NEWSPACE INDIA LIMITED (NSIL)?



- NSIL is a wholly owned Government of India company, under the administrative control of Department of Space (DOS).
- It is the commercial arm of **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)**.
- **Primary Responsibility:**
 - Enabling Indian industries to take up **high technology** space related activities.
 - Promotion and **commercial exploitation** of the products and services emanating from the Indian space programme.
- The **major business areas** of NSIL include:



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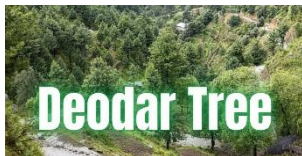


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- Production of Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) and Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV) through industry.
- Production and **marketing of space-based services**, including launch services and space-based applications like transponder leasing, remote sensing and mission support services.
- **Building of Satellites** (both Communication and Earth Observation) as per user requirements.
- **Transfer of technology developed by ISRO centres/units** and constituent institutions of the Dept. of Space.
- **Marketing spinoff** technologies and products/services emanating out of ISRO activities.
- **Consultancy services.**

DEODAR TREE



- It is also known as the **Himalayan Cedar**.
- The name Deodar is derived from the **Sanskrit word Devadāru**, meaning “wood of the gods,” highlighting the tree’s cultural and spiritual importance.
- **Characteristics of Deodar Tree:**
 - It is **native to high-altitude forests**, this majestic conifer plays a critical ecological and cultural role.
 - **Soil and Climate:** It thrives in **well-drained soils and moist temperate climates**.
 - It is a large evergreen tree and has **needle-like bluish-green leaves**.
- **Distribution:** It is mainly found in the **western Himalayan region**.
- **Applications:** Traditionally, its wood has been used in temple construction, religious ceremonies, and Ayurvedic medicine.
- **Threats:** It faced threats from logging, habitat loss, and climate change.