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NATIONAL NEWS

India Records Over 5.5 Lakh Trademark Registrations in 2024-25



In a historic feat for India's business landscape, the country recorded more than **5.5 lakh trademark registrations** in the financial year 2024-25. This milestone, announced by Union Minister Piyush Goyal, represents the highest-ever volume of registrations in a single year and signals a massive shift toward a brand-conscious, innovation-led economy.

Key Statistics of 2024-25

The surge is not just a number; it represents the formalization of thousands of Indian businesses and startups.

Metric	Detail
Total Registrations	Over 5.5 lakh (552,190 domestic filings)
YoY Growth in IP Filings	Approximately 20% increase across all IP categories



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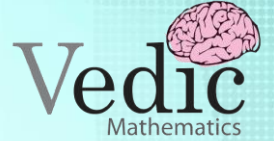
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Metric	Detail
Leading Sectors	Pharmaceuticals, Veterinary, and Sanitary preparations
Global Standing	India now ranks 4th globally in trademark filings

- Attracting Investment:** Startups with protected IP are often viewed as more credible and valuable by venture capitalists.
- Encouraging Global Footprint:** Domestic filings are the first step for Indian brands seeking international protection under the Madrid Protocol.

Note: Under the Trade Marks Act 1999, these registrations are valid for **10 years** and can be renewed indefinitely in 10-year blocks, ensuring long-term protection for Indian creators.

What is Driving the Surge?

According to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, three primary pillars supported this growth:

- Institutional Strength:** Expansion of the IP workforce, including a 74% increase in sanctioned posts for trademarks and GI departments in 2025.
- Ease of Registration:** A massive digital overhaul where 74 forms were consolidated into just **8 simplified forms**. Today, over 95% of applications are filed online.
- Innovation Confidence:** Government initiatives like the *National Intellectual Property Awareness Mission (NIPAM)* and the *IP Saarthi* chatbot have demystified IP for small businesses and startups.

Economic Impact

This milestone aligns with the vision of "**Make in India**" and "**Vocal for Local**." By securing trademarks, Indian entrepreneurs are:

- Protecting Brand Equity:** Preventing "passing off" and counterfeiting in a competitive global market.

NATIONAL NEWS

Finance Ministry Notifies 100% FDI Rules For Insurance Sector



In a landmark shift for the Indian financial landscape, the Government of India formally notified the **Indian Insurance Companies (Foreign Investment) Amendment Rules, 2025**, on December 30, 2025. This move effectively allows **100% Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)** in



the insurance sector, fulfilling a major proposal from the Union Budget 2025 and the "Sabka Bima Sabki Raksha" initiative.

Breaking Down the 100% FDI Framework

The reform moves beyond just a numerical cap; it fundamentally restructures the governance and operational requirements for foreign insurers.

Feature	Previous Rule (74% FDI)	New Rule (100% FDI)
Board Composition	Majority of Directors must be Resident Indians.	No majority requirement for Indian directors.
Key Leadership	Majority of KMPs must be Resident Indians.	Only one person (Chairperson, MD, or CEO) must be a Resident Indian.
Independent Directors	At least 50% (if Chair is not independent).	Relaxed to a minimum of 3 independent directors.
Profit Retention	50% of net profit must be kept in reserves if solvency is < 1.2x.	Requirement deleted to allow better capital flexibility.

Strategic Objectives of the Reform

The notification aims to transition India from a capital-starved market to a global insurance hub by 2047.

- Insurance for All by 2047:** With penetration currently below 4%, the government aims to use 100% FDI to bring in niche global players who can cover rural and underserved segments.
- Capital Augmentation:** The sector has already attracted over ₹82,000 crore in FDI; the 100% limit is expected to trigger a fresh wave of inflows, especially for health and general insurance.
- Ease of Doing Business:** By removing the "majority Indian" mandate for boards, global insurers can now implement their own proven management frameworks and risk-assessment technologies more effectively.

Key Guardrails Maintained

While the rules have been liberalized, certain "India-first" conditions remain:

- Reinvestment:** The enhanced 100% limit is primarily available to companies that **invest the entire premium collected in India** back into the domestic economy.
- Leadership Anchor:** At least one of the top three leadership roles (Chairperson, MD, or CEO) must remain a Resident Indian citizen to ensure local accountability.
- IRDAI Oversight:** The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) retains enhanced powers, including the ability to disgorge wrongful gains made by insurers.



INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Israel Announces Peace Prize for Donald Trump In 2026



In a historic break from tradition, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced on **December 29, 2025**, that **Donald Trump** will be awarded the **Israel Prize** in 2026. This announcement followed a high-profile bilateral meeting between the two leaders at Trump's Mar-a-Lago residence in Florida.

The decision is widely viewed as a significant diplomatic gesture, reinforcing the close ties between the Trump administration and the current Israeli government.

Why This Award is Historic

The Israel Prize is the country's highest civilian honor, traditionally reserved for Israeli citizens who have made exceptional contributions to science, culture, or the arts.

- **First Foreign Leader:** While the prize has occasionally been awarded to non-citizens (such as Indian conductor Zubin Mehta in

1991), this is the **first time a foreign head of state** has been selected.

- **The "Peace" Category:** Netanyahu noted that the government decided to "break convention" by formally awarding the prize in the **Peace category** for the first time, or specifically for "special contribution to the Jewish people."
- **Rule Amendment:** To facilitate this, Israel amended the prize regulations in July 2025 to officially allow foreign nationals to be eligible under exceptional circumstances.

Context: The "Consolation" Narrative

The timing of the award has drawn significant international attention. Many observers link it to Trump being overlooked for the **Nobel Peace Prize** in October 2025—an honor he has openly coveted.

Feature	Israel Prize (2026)	FIFA Peace Prize (2025)
Status	Israel's highest civilian honor	Inaugural sports-diplomacy award
Presented by	PM Benjamin Netanyahu	FIFA President Gianni Infantino
Significance	Recognizes "extraordinary impact" on Israel	Awarded during the 2026 World Cup draw





Key Diplomatic Takeaways

Beyond the ceremony, the Florida talks focused on critical regional security issues:

1. **Gaza Phase II:** Discussions on moving to the second phase of the Gaza ceasefire plan and the disarmament of Hamas.
2. **West Bank:** Both leaders acknowledged they do not agree "100%" on the West Bank but committed to a shared conclusion.
3. **Iran:** Trump issued a stern warning against Iran rebuilding its ballistic missile capabilities.

APPOINTMENT

Rakesh Aggarwal Gets Additional Charge as NIA Chief



In a significant administrative move to maintain institutional continuity, the **Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** has assigned the additional charge of **Director General (DG) of the National Investigation Agency (NIA)** to senior IPS officer **Rakesh Aggarwal**.

The appointment, effective from **January 1, 2026**, follows the premature repatriation of the previous DG, **Sadanand Vasant Date**, to his parent cadre in Maharashtra.

Profile of Rakesh Aggarwal

Rakesh Aggarwal is a seasoned law enforcement official with extensive experience in internal security and complex counter-terrorism investigations.

- **Batch & Cadre:** A 1994-batch IPS officer of the **Himachal Pradesh cadre**.
- **Current Primary Role:** He is currently serving as the **Special Director General** of the NIA, a post to which he was appointed in September 2025.
- **Experience:** Before his elevation at the NIA, he served in various capacities within the **Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF)** and other central security agencies. He is widely recognized for his work on terror financing networks and cross-border radicalization cases.

Context of the Transition

The change in leadership comes at a time when the NIA is handling several high-profile national security investigations.

Event	Detail
Predecessor	Sadanand Vasant Date (1990-batch, Maharashtra cadre).
Reason for Shift	Date has been repatriated to Maharashtra to likely take over



Event	Detail
	as the State DGP following the retirement of Rashmi Shukla.
Nature of Charge	Interim/Additional charge until a regular incumbent is appointed by the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC).
Current Focus	Probes into the 2025 Pahalgam and Delhi incidents, and the crackdown on organized crime syndicates.



The milestone was achieved during a dominant performance against Sri Lanka in the fourth T20I at the **Greenfield International Stadium, Thiruvananthapuram**, where Mandhana smashed 80 off 48 balls.

The Elite "10K" Club

Mandhana joins a legendary group of women who have defined the sport across generations. Notably, she is the **fastest woman ever** to reach the mark, doing so in just **280 innings**, comfortably beating Mithali Raj's record of 291.

Player	Country	Total International Runs
Mithali Raj	India	10,868
Suzie Bates	New Zealand	10,652+
Charlotte Edwards	England	10,273
Smriti Mandhana	India	10,053+

Impact on Internal Security

By appointing an insider like the Special DG to the top post, the MHA has ensured that there is no "leadership vacuum" during sensitive ongoing operations. This stability is crucial as the NIA continues to implement new tools like the **National Integrated Database on Arrested Affirmative Networks (NIDAAN)** and the recently updated **Crime Manual** launched by the Home Minister in late 2025.

SPORTS

Smriti Mandhana Becomes Second Indian to Reach 10,000 International Runs

On **December 28, 2025**, Indian vice-captain **Smriti Mandhana** scripted a new chapter in cricket history by becoming the **second Indian woman** and only the **fourth player globally** to surpass **10,000 runs** in international cricket.

Record-Breaking 2025

This milestone capped off what many analysts call the "Golden Year" for Mandhana. Her 2025 season was marked by unprecedented consistency:

- **Fastest Indian Centurion:** She broke Virat Kohli's long-standing record for the fastest ODI century by an Indian, reaching 100 in just **50 balls** against Australia.
- **Format Versatility:** She became the **first Indian woman** to score a century in all three formats (Test, ODI, and T20I).
- **ODI Dominance:** She finished 2025 as the world's highest run-scorer in ODIs, amassing **1,362 runs** with 5 centuries.
- **World Cup Glory:** She was instrumental in India winning their **maiden ICC Women's ODI World Cup** earlier in the year.

"In cricket, you have to start from zero again. The scoreboard is always zero for zero. It's never what you've done in the last match or previous series." — **Smriti Mandhana** on reaching the landmark.

Match Impact

In the same match she crossed the 10k mark, Mandhana and **Shafali Verma** (79) stitched together a 162-run opening stand—India's highest-ever partnership in women's T20Is. This propelled India to a record total of **221/2**, leading to a series-clinching victory.

BANKING/ECONOMY

RBL Bank Revamps Top Management with New ED and Interim CFO



In a significant move to strengthen its leadership for the 2026 fiscal year, RBL Bank announced a series of high-level management appointments on **December 30, 2025**. These changes focus on internal elevations to ensure a smooth transition as the bank continues its digital and retail transformation.

Key Leadership Appointments

The bank has strategically filled two critical "C-suite" roles by promoting long-term internal leaders.

Role	Appointee	Effective Date	Background
Executive Director (ED)	Jaideep Iyer	Feb 21, 2026	Currently Head of Strategy; formerly Interim CEO (2021-22).

Role	Appointee	Effective Date	Background
Interim Chief Financial Officer (CFO)	Deepak Ruiya	Dec 30, 2025	Currently Deputy CFO; has been with RBL Bank for over 10 years.

Banking Unit, who departed on December 29, 2025. In a strategic shift, the bank has now integrated the digital banking portfolio directly under the **Technology Function**, aiming for tighter synergy between digital products and technical infrastructure.

STATE NEWS

Vijayanagara-era Gold Coins



In a significant archaeological find, **86 punch-marked gold coins** dating back to the **Vijayanagara Empire** (14th–16th century) were unearthed on December 22, 2025, in **Sundarampalli village** near Jolarpet, Tirupattur district, Tamil Nadu.

The discovery occurred while a farmer, R. Athavan, was using a JCB machine to level his land. The coins were found stashed inside a small, weathered **iron pot** buried just beneath the surface.

Numismatic and Historical Significance

These coins offer a window into the economic and religious life of the medieval South Indian empire:

Understanding the Transition

The management rejig follows the scheduled retirement of a key figure who helped build the modern RBL Bank.

- Retirement of Rajeev Ahuja:** The current Executive Director, Rajeev Ahuja (62), will retire on February 21, 2026, upon the completion of his RBI-approved term. He is credited with leading the bank's rebranding from *Ratnakar Bank* and driving its 2016 IPO.
- The New ED's Mandate:** Jaideep Iyer, an IIM Ahmedabad alumnus, has been appointed for a **three-year term**. Having steered the bank through a leadership crisis in 2021 as interim CEO, his appointment is seen as a "stability first" move by the Board.
- Financial Oversight:** Deepak Ruiya takes over as Interim CFO following the recent stepping down of Buvanish Tharashankar. Ruiya will lead the finance function until a permanent successor is identified.

Additional Changes

The bank also confirmed the resignation of **Pushpendra Sharma**, Head of the Digital

- **The Royal Emblem:** The coins prominently feature the **Varaha (Boar)** emblem, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. This was the dynastic symbol of the Vijayanagara rulers, signifying divine protection and authority.
- **The "Varaha" Currency:** Because of this emblem, the gold coins of the empire became widely known as "*Varahas*" (or *Pagodas* by European traders).
- **Physical Traits:** Unlike the square coins common in the earlier Sangam age, these Vijayanagara coins are **circular** and relatively small, averaging about **5 mm in diameter**.
- **Composition:** The use of gold (alongside silver and copper) reflects the immense prosperity of the empire during the reign of kings like **Krishnadevaraya**, who frequently donated such coins to temples as offerings.

Key Aspect	Details
	Revenue Department and police recovered the coins.
Next Steps	Experts from the Tamil Nadu State Archaeology Department (TNSAD) are currently assessing the heritage value of the coins before they are permanently moved to the district treasury or a museum.

Context: This is the second such major find in the region recently; in November 2025, 103 similar gold coins were discovered during the restoration of a Chola-era Shiva temple in the nearby Jawadhu Hills of Tiruvannamalai.

Legal Custody and the Treasure Trove Act

The discovery triggered the protocols of the **Indian Treasure Trove Act, 1878**, which governs all high-value items found buried in the soil.

Key Aspect	Details
Custodian	The District Collector (K. Siva Soundaravalli) is the legal custodian of the treasury under the Act.
Legal Procedure	Any find worth more than ₹10 must be reported. Initially, the find was not reported, but following local alerts, officials from the



Detailed Analysis of Recent Current Affairs: Multiple Choice Format

Q.1. Which Indian startup developed India's first indigenous MRI scanner?

- A. Tata Medical Systems
- B. VoxelGrids
- C. Trivitron Healthcare
- D. Agnikul Cosmos

1. B

Indian startup Voxelgrids, backed by Zoho, has developed India's first indigenous MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) scanner. This breakthrough will reduce India's dependence on imported diagnostic equipment and strengthen the country's healthcare infrastructure.

Q.2. Bihar's first supercomputer, 'Param Rudra', was installed at which institute?

- A. IIT Bhubaneswar
- B. NIT Patna
- C. IIT Patna
- D. AIIMS Patna

2. C

Bihar's first Param Rudra supercomputer has been installed at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Patna. Launched by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology under the National Supercomputing Mission (NSM), it is the state's first supercomputer, providing advanced computing facilities to students, faculty, and researchers.

Q.3. For which product did BIS notify India's first standard?

- A. Firecrackers
- B. Toys
- C. Agarbattis
- D. Electrical Wires

3. C

The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) has notified India's first standard for incense sticks, IS 19412:2025. Its purpose is to ensure consumer safety, quality assurance, and ban harmful chemicals, especially insecticides like allethrin and permethrin.

Q.4. Who created the world-record-setting Santa Claus sand sculpture in Puri, Odisha?

- A. Raghurajpur Artists
- B. Sudarsan Pattnaik
- C. Anil Chopra
- D. Sabyasachi Panda

4. B

Renowned sand artist and Padma Shri awardee Sudarshan Pattnaik has created a giant sand and apple sculpture of Santa Claus at Niladri Beach in Puri, Odisha, breaking a world record. The artwork captures the spirit of Christmas and conveys a message of peace and brotherhood.

Q.5. In which tribal language did the President of India release the Constitution?

- A. Gondi
- B. Bodo
- C. Santhali





D.Ho

5. C

The President of India, Smt. Draupadi Murmu, released the Constitution of India in the Santhali language at a ceremony held at Rashtrapati Bhavan. The Vice President of India, Shri C.P. Radhakrishnan, and the Union Minister of State for Law and Justice (Independent Charge), Shri Arjun Ram Meghwal, were present on the occasion.

Q.6. Which state government launched the 'Green to Gold' initiative to promote the cultivation of industrial hemp?

A.Himachal Pradesh

B.Bihar

C.Punjab

D.Haryana

6. A

Himachal Pradesh has revised its policy to allow industrial hemp cultivation to transform its rural economy and promote sustainable development. This is a major step that reflects a shift from illegal activities to regulated economic use. Chief Minister Sukhwinder Singh Sukhu has launched the "Green to Gold" initiative, which sees hemp as a key component in making Himachal Pradesh self-reliant by 2027 and positioning the state as a leader in the bioeconomy.

Q.7. Who has become the Chairperson of BWF Athletes Commission (2026-29)?

A. Saina Nehwal

B.Ashwini Ponnappa

C.P.V.Sindhu

D. Carolina Marin

7. C

Renowned Indian badminton player and two-time Olympic medalist P. V. Sindhu has been appointed Chair of the Badminton World Federation (BWF) Athletes Commission for a term from 2026 to 2029. This not only marks a new milestone in her career but also strengthens the players' direct involvement in global badminton governance.

Q.8. Which company delivered WhAP 8x8 vehicles to Morocco?

A.DRDO

B. Tata Advanced Systems Ltd.

C.L&T Defense

D.Bharat Forge

8. B

India's first chlorinated polyethylene (CPE) manufacturing plant is set to come up in Rajpura, Punjab, and Dahej could be another potential site, although recent focus has been on Odisha for a silicon carbide (SiC) plant and Uttar Pradesh for biopolymers, pointing to a push for differentiated manufacturing, with HFCL also setting up a CPE in Delhi-NCR.

Q.9. Where will India's first CPE manufacturing plant be set up?

A.Dahej

B.Panipat

C.Rajpura (Punjab)

D.Paradeep





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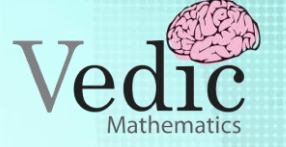
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9. B

Tata Advanced Systems Limited (TASL) has delivered the first batch of WhAP 8x8 armoured vehicles to the Royal Moroccan Army. This delivery is the initial supply under an arrangement to locally manufacture the vehicles in Morocco.

Q.10. Who was approved as the next head of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)?

A. Antonio Guterres

B. Barham Salih

C. Filippo Grandi

D. Volker Türk

10. B

The United Nations General Assembly has confirmed former Iraqi President Barham Saleh as the next head of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); his five-year term will begin in January 2026, replacing Filippo Grandi of Italy.

Q.11. In which state was a new species of fungus named *Parasinmelisia khasiana* recently discovered?

A. Meghalaya

B. Sikkim

C. Assam

D. Arunachal Pradesh

11. A

A new fungal species, *Paracinemalesia khasiana*, has been discovered in bamboo forests near Mawsynram, Meghalaya. It was found on dead

stems of the thorny bamboo *Chimonocalamus griffithianus*. The species is named after the Khasi Hills region. Lab studies revealed that it is not related to any known fungal genus. Researchers created a new genus, *Paracinemalesia*, with *khasiana* as their first species.

Q.12. Which country has become the first in the world to offer ITVISMA, a one-time gene therapy for spinal muscular atrophy?

A. Australia

B. Germany

C. United Arab Emirates

D. France

12. C

Sheikh Khalifa Medical City in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (UAE), has become the first hospital in the world to offer ITVISMA gene therapy. ITVISMA is a once-a-day gene therapy for spinal muscular atrophy (SMA). It replaces the defective survival motor neuron 1 (SMN1) gene. It targets the underlying genetic cause and promotes the production of the survival motor neuron protein. It is approved for patients two years of age and older, including the elderly.

Q.13. In which village has a 2000-year-old Buddhist site (remains of a stupa and monastery) from the Kushan period been discovered?

A. Harwan, Jammu and Kashmir

B. Joharanpur, Jammu and Kashmir

C. Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir

D. Leh, Ladakh





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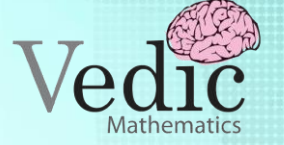
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13. B

Buddhist sites (remains of stupas and monasteries) dating back to the Kushan period have been discovered in Zehanpora village in the Baramulla district of Jammu and Kashmir, believed to be around 2,000 years old. This sheds light on Kashmir's rich Buddhist history and has been called an important discovery for India's cultural heritage.

Q.14. In which city did the Indian Coast Guard conduct the Regional Level Pollution Response Exercise (RPREX-2025)?

A. Chennai

B. Mumbai

C. Visakhapatnam

D. Kochi

14. B

To strengthen marine environmental protection and disaster management, the Indian Coast Guard conducted a Regional Level Pollution Response Exercise (RPREX-2025) in Mumbai. The primary objective of the exercise was to enhance India's preparedness to respond quickly and effectively to incidents of oil pollution at sea, a serious concern due to the increasing maritime traffic along India's west coast.

Q.15. In which Union Territory has the Central Government's Green Panel approved the Dulhasti Stage-II Hydroelectric Project?

A. Ladakh

B. Jammu and Kashmir

C. Puducherry

D. Delhi

15. B

The central government's environmental clearance system has given the green light to the Dulhasti Stage-II hydroelectric project on the Chenab River in Kishtwar district of Jammu and Kashmir. The approval marks a major step towards increasing hydropower capacity in the Indus Basin and paves the way for tendering for the project's construction. The move comes as India accelerates infrastructure development in the strategic river basin following the suspension of the Indus Water Treaty.

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Best Wishes

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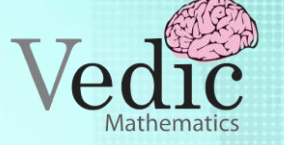
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