

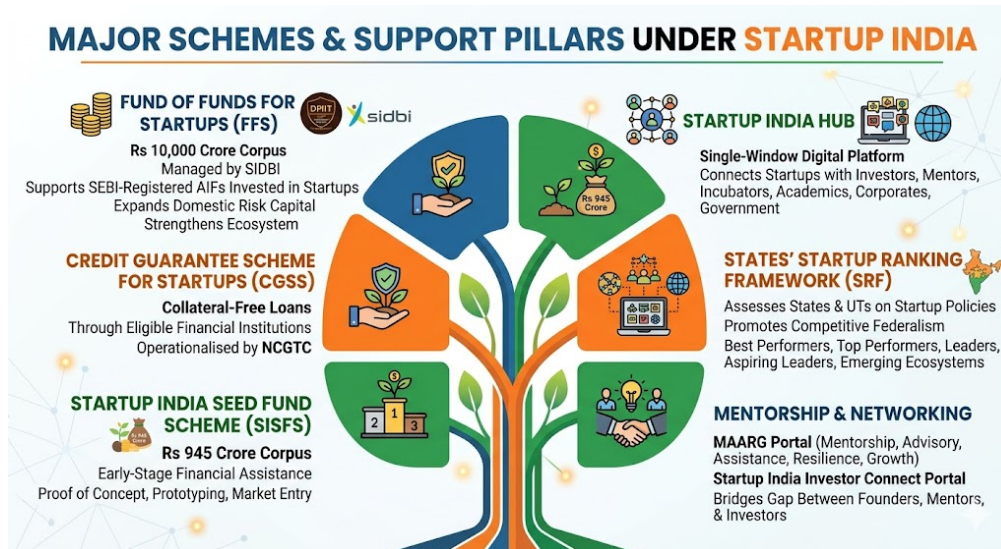
18/04/2026 Daily Current News

1. Startup India initiative:

Context: The Government has recognized more than 55,200 startups during Financial Year 2025-26, marking the highest number of startups recognized in a single year since the launch of the Startup India initiative.

About Startup India initiative:

- ❖ Launch Startup India Initiative was launched on 16 January 2016 to boost entrepreneurship in India
- ❖ Definition of Startup A startup is a new or young company aiming to introduce innovative products, disrupt markets, or create new ones
- ❖ Implementation Implemented by a dedicated team under the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade
- ❖ Core Aim To transform India from a job-seeking to a job-creating economy
- ❖ Nurture Innovation Focuses on creating a supportive environment for innovation and scaling of ideas
- ❖ Promote Entrepreneurship Simplifies regulations and provides support to entrepreneurs at all stages
- ❖ Enable Investment Facilitates funding and access to capital for startups
- ❖ Economic Growth Aims to generate employment and ensure sustainable economic development



2. World Border Security Congress 2026:

Context: India showcased its leadership in maritime security and reinforced its commitment to international cooperation during its participation in the World Border Security Congress 2026 held in Vienna, Austria from April 14-16, 2026.

About World Border Security Congress 2026:

- ❖ Established in 2012, the World Border Security Congress is a premier international platform that brings together senior government officials, security experts, and industry leaders to deliberate on emerging challenges, technological innovations, and best practices in border management, while fostering international cooperation.
- ❖ The World Border Security Congress is a high level 3 day event that will discuss and debate current and future policies, implementation issues and challenges as well as new and developing technologies that contribute towards safe and secure border and migration management.

3. **PM Vishwakarma Scheme:**

Context: MSME Ministry Organizes Transformative Workshop on Packaging for Toy and Doll Artisans under PM Vishwakarma Scheme in Varanasi; focuses on strengthening the 'Dolls and Toys' sector.

About PM Vishwakarma Scheme:



PM Vishwakarma

Central Sector Scheme to support traditional artisans
& crafts people of rural and urban India



Highlights of the Programme:

- Financial outlay of **Rs. 13,000 crore**
- **18 Traditional trades** to be covered in 1st instance
- **Artisans and Craftspeople** to be provided recognition with PM Vishwakarma certificate and ID Card
- Credit support upto **Rs. 1 lakh** (1st tranche) and **Rs. 2 lakh** (2nd tranche) with concessional interest rate of 5%
- Will provide **Skill Upgradation, Toolkit Incentive and Incentive for Digital Transactions** and Marketing support

18 Traditional trades to be covered in 1st Instance

1. Carpenter (Suthar)
2. Boat Maker
3. Armourer
4. Blacksmith (Lohar)
5. Hammer and Toolkit Maker
6. Locksmith
7. Goldsmith (Sonar)
8. Potter (Kumhaar)
9. Sculptor (Moortikar, stone carver), Stone breaker
10. Cobbler (Charmkar)/Shoesmith/Footwear artisan
11. Mason (Rajmistri)
12. Basket/Mat/Broom Maker/Coir Weaver
13. Doll & Toy Maker (Traditional)
14. Barber (Naai)
15. Garland maker (Malakar)
16. Washerman (Dhobi)
17. Tailor (Darzi)
18. Fishing Net Maker



Cabinet Decision
16 August, 2023

- ❖ It was launched on September 17, 2023 by the Ministry of MSME.
- ❖ It aims to strengthen the Guru-Shishya Parampara or family-based practice of traditional skills by artisans and craftspeople working with their hands and tools.

- ❖ The scheme also aims at improving the quality as well as the reach of products and services of artisans and craftspeople.

4. *Phytoremediation:*

Context: Ahmedabad based Kankaria Becomes India's First Water Neutral Coaching railway Depot. At the heart of this transformation is a modern wastewater treatment system based on phytoremediation.

What is Water neutrality?

- ❖ Water neutrality means that a development, business, or project does not increase the rate of water consumption in a specific area above existing levels.
- ❖ It ensures that total water use after development equals or is less than the water used before, achieved by minimizing usage, recycling water, and offsetting any remaining demand.

About phytoremediation:

- ❖ Phytoremediation is a bioremediation process that uses plants, microalgae, and seaweeds to remove toxic substances from soil
- ❖ It is a sustainable and eco-friendly method for detoxifying contaminated soils
- ❖ It works by absorbing and accumulating pollutants in plant tissues
- ❖ Hyperaccumulator plants are used for faster and more efficient removal of contaminants
- ❖ These plants can absorb hundreds to thousands of times more toxic substances than normal plants
- ❖ It can remove heavy metals like silver, cadmium, cobalt, chromium, copper, mercury, manganese, molybdenum, nickel, lead, and zinc
- ❖ It is also effective in removing metalloids such as arsenic and selenium
- ❖ It can eliminate some radionuclides and non-metallic elements like boron

5. *The State of India's Bats (2024–25) report:*

Context: India's first bat assessment highlights threats and major data gaps. The report is prepared by the Nature Conservation Foundation, Bat Conservation International, etc.

Key Findings:

- ❖ Species Diversity: ~135 bat species recorded, of which 16 are endemic.
- ❖ Seven species are listed under the threatened category by IUCN.
- ❖ Threats: Urbanisation, deforestation, climate change, and stigma post COVID-19.

About bats:

- ❖ Bats are mammals that give birth to live young, have fur-covered bodies, and are warm-blooded
- ❖ They are the only mammals capable of true powered flight
- ❖ Most bats use echolocation, emitting high-frequency sound waves to navigate and hunt in darkness
- ❖ They play an important ecological role through pollination, pest control, and seed dispersal

6. *Borrowers' Platform:*

Context: Developing nations recently launched the first-ever Borrowers' Platform at the IMF-World Bank Spring Meetings 2026.

About Borrowers' Platform:

- ❖ The Borrowers' Platform is a dedicated forum for peer learning, debt management capacity-building, and strengthening borrower voices in sovereign debt negotiations
- ❖ It is not a debt restructuring forum
- ❖ It has 30 founding members including India, with Egypt as Chair
- ❖ Its secretariat is hosted by UN Trade and Development
- ❖ It provides a formal coordination mechanism for countries with external debt of about \$11.7 trillion (2024)
- ❖ It aims to balance a system historically dominated by creditor-led mechanisms like the Paris Club

7. *Pax Silica initiative:*

Context: Philippines Joins Pax Silica Chip Supply Initiative. India joined in February 2026.

About Pax Silica initiative:

- ❖ Pax Silica is a US-led coalition focused on building a secure, resilient, and innovation-driven silicon and AI supply chain ecosystem with trusted global partners
- ❖ Pax Silica is envisioned as a strategic coalition of trusted nations committed to securing the "silicon stack", from critical minerals and semiconductor fabrication to advanced AI systems and deployment infrastructure
- ❖ The inaugural Pax Silica Summit was held in Washington, D.C. in December 2025
- ❖ It aims to reduce coercive dependencies on a single country, safeguard AI-critical materials, and enable aligned nations to scale transformative technologies
- ❖ The initiative responds to China's dominance in critical mineral refining (over 60% of lithium, cobalt, and rare earths) and recent rare earth export restrictions
- ❖ Participating countries include Japan, Republic of Korea, Singapore, the Netherlands, United Kingdom, Israel, United Arab Emirates, and Australia
- ❖ Partner nations host key firms such as Samsung, SK Hynix, Sony, Fujitsu, ASML, Rio Tinto, DeepMind, and Temasek, which power the global AI supply chain
- ❖ Core commitments include joint projects on critical minerals, semiconductor design and fabrication, compute infrastructure, energy grids, and protection of sensitive technologies from countries of concern.

8. *Taiwan Strait:*

Context: Japanese destroyer JS Ikazuchi transited the Taiwan Strait, and the Chinese military forces monitored the vessel throughout the process.

About Taiwan Strait:



- ❖ The Taiwan Strait separates continental Asia and the island of Taiwan
- ❖ It connects the South China Sea in the southwest with the East China Sea in the northeast
- ❖ It lies between Fujian Province of China and Taiwan
- ❖ It has an average width of about 180 km and narrows to around 130 km at its narrowest point
- ❖ It lies on Asia's continental shelf and is relatively shallow
- ❖ Average depth is about 490 ft, with a minimum depth of 82 ft
- ❖ Major ports include Amoy (Xiamen) in China and Kaohsiung in Taiwan
- ❖ Rivers like Jiulong and Min from Fujian drain into the strait
- ❖ Important islands include Kinmen and Matsu near China's coast, and Penghu (Pescadores), Xiamen, and Pingtan
- ❖ Penghu is the largest and most populous island in the strait
- ❖ Xiamen and Pingtan are administered by China, while Penghu, Kinmen, and Matsu are administered by Taiwan
- ❖ It is a major international navigation route with heavy cargo movement
- ❖ It is also an important fishing ground with rich marine biodiversity

Quick Bites:

- The AI Governance and Economic Group (AIGEG) is a newly formed, 10-member inter-ministerial body established by MeitY to lead India's national AI strategy. Chaired by the Minister of Electronics & IT, the group aims to formalize a "whole-of-government" approach by aligning AI deployment with India's specific economic needs and social stability. By including key figures like the Chief Economic Advisor and the CEO of NITI Aayog, the AIGEG serves as the central authority for coordinating AI policy, ensuring that technological advancement remains consistent with the country's labor market realities.

- ☐ Lebanon, with its capital at Beirut, is a country located in the Levant region of West Asia, bordered by Syria to the north and east and Israel to the south, with a maritime boundary with Cyprus and a coastline along the Mediterranean Sea; geographically, it features the highest peak Qurnet Al Sawda, the fertile Bekaa (Al-Biqa) Valley, major rivers such as the Litani, Orontes, and Kabir, and prominent mountain ranges including the Lebanon Mountains (Jabal Lubnan) and the Hermon ranges, making it strategically and physically diverse in the region.
- ☐ Meghalaya announced the indigenous Khasi and Garo languages as official languages of state, in addition to English. Both are not currently part of the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution.
- ☐ A new bent-toed gecko species, *Cyrtodactylus jayadityai*, has been discovered in Tripura, named after researcher's mentor, herpetologist Jayaditya Purkayastha.
- ☐ The All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) has launched the third edition of its flagship AICTE-VAANI scheme to strengthen the use of Indian languages in technical education. The initiative aims to create a more inclusive academic ecosystem by enabling students to access technical knowledge in their native languages.

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