

Date : 2026-01-05

Weekly Current Affairs

English

## National

### India Launches First National Weapon Tracking Database

India has launched its first-ever national weapon database to strengthen internal security and counter terrorism. The NIA-led Lost, Looted and Recovered Firearm database enables real-time tracking of government-owned firearms that are stolen, lost, looted or recovered. Covering all states and sensitive regions, the system improves coordination among police and central forces. By tracing weapon origins and movement, the initiative aims to prevent illegal firearms from reaching terrorists, insurgents and organised criminal networks nationwide.



### PM To Chair Fifth Chief Secretaries Conference

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will chair the Fifth National Conference of Chief Secretaries in New Delhi on December 27–28, 2025. Held under the theme Human Capital for Viksit Bharat, the meet aims to strengthen Centre State coordination on education, skilling and future ready growth. Discussions will cover early childhood, school and higher education, sports, deregulation, technology in governance, AgriStack, tourism and Atmanirbhar Bharat, reinforcing cooperative federalism for long term national development across states and union territories nationwide collectively.

### Rashtra Prerna Sthal Inaugurated Honouring Atal Vajpayee

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Rashtra Prerna Sthal in Lucknow on 26 December 2025, marking Atal Bihari Vajpayee's 101st birth anniversary. Developed across 65 acres, the national memorial honours Vajpayee, Syama Prasad Mookerjee and Deendayal Upadhyaya with 65-foot bronze statues. A 98,000 square foot lotus-shaped museum uses immersive technology to present India's democratic journey and leadership ideals, preserving nationalist thought, governance values and public service for future generations, while inspiring citizens through history, culture, unity, service, nationhood.

### India To Introduce First National Anti-Terror Policy

India is set to unveil its first anti terror policy to strengthen national security. The framework aims to unify Centre and state responses against terrorism, focusing on prevention, investigation and rapid response. Key priorities include countering digital radicalisation, cross border threats and foreign funded networks. The policy emphasises intelligence sharing, cyber monitoring and coordinated action among agencies. Consultations led by NIA will refine operational aspects, marking a shift from reactive measures to proactive, intelligence driven counter terrorism strategy.

### Santhali Constitution Edition Launched In Ol Chiki

President Droupadi Murmu released the Constitution of India in the Santhali language at Rashtrapati Bhavan on December 25, 2025. Published in Ol Chiki script, the edition enables Santhali speakers to access constitutional rights and duties in their mother tongue. The initiative advances linguistic inclusion, tribal empowerment and constitutional literacy. It coincides with the Ol Chiki centenary and complements Santhali's Eighth Schedule status under the 92nd Constitutional Amendment Act, reinforcing Articles protecting linguistic minorities and cultural heritage nationwide today.



### Indian Railways Plans Capacity Expansion in 48 Cities by 2030

Indian Railways has unveiled a comprehensive plan to double the capacity of originating trains in 48 major cities by 2030 to meet rapidly rising travel demand and ease congestion at busy stations. This expansion will involve augmenting existing terminals with additional platforms and facilities, creating new terminals, and enhancing maintenance and sectional capacity. The initiative will be implemented through phased action plans over the next five years with immediate, short-term, and long-term measures to progressively increase capacity and improve operational efficiency across the network.



### Centre Notifies Wider No-Mining Buffer to Protect Aravalli Ecology

The Union Government has ordered a complete ban on granting new mining leases across the entire Aravalli range from Gujarat to the National Capital Region to protect the ecologically fragile mountain system. The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change directed states to enforce the ban and instructed the Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education to map additional prohibited zones based on ecological and geological criteria. A comprehensive Management Plan for Sustainable Mining will be developed before any fresh leases are considered.

### India Prepares 100 Coastal Villages for Tsunami Emergency Response

India is advancing its tsunami preparedness by targeting over 100 coastal villages for certification under the UNESCO-IOC Tsunami Ready Recognition Programme by early 2026. This community-based initiative, coordinated by the Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services, focuses on hazard awareness, evacuation planning, mock drills, 24-hour warning systems and risk mapping to bolster coastal resilience across states and union territories. Odisha, Gujarat, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands are among the regions participating in the effort to strengthen disaster response.

### New Digital Governance Platforms Rolled Out to Enhance Citizen Services

The Indian government and various states have rolled out or are preparing multiple digital governance platforms to enhance access, transparency and efficiency of citizen services. Initiatives include DARPAN 2.0, a real-time analytics dashboard for monitoring governance performance, and state-level unified citizen portals that provide single-window service access. These platforms use consolidated data, secure cloud infrastructure and interactive interfaces to streamline service delivery, improve decision-making and make government interactions more responsive and accountable for citizens across

### Indian Coast Guard Conducts RPRES 2025 to Strengthen Regional Pollution Response Preparedness

The Indian Coast Guard conducted RPRES-2025, a Regional Level Pollution Response Exercise off the Mumbai coast, to test and enhance preparedness for major marine oil spill incidents. The exercise simulated a tanker and fishing vessel collision causing crude oil spillage, validating operational readiness of pollution response team, equipment, and inter-agency coordination under the National Oil Spill Disaster Contingency Plan. Various agencies including port authorities and oil companies participated, deploying ships and containment gear. The drill reinforced readiness to protect fragile coastal ecosystems, livelihoods, and maritime safety.

### Government Launches REPM Scheme to Develop India's Integrated Manufacturing Framework

The Government approved a Scheme to Promote Manufacturing of Sintered Rare Earth Permanent Magnets with a financial outlay of 7280 crore, aiming to establish a 6000 metric tons per year integrated manufacturing ecosystem. The initiative seeks to build facilities that convert rare earth oxides into metals, alloys, and finished magnets, reducing import dependence and enhancing self-reliance. Capacity will be allotted to five beneficiaries through competitive bidding. The scheme is planned over seven years, including setup and incentive phases, and will fortify supply chains for key sectors like electronics and renewable energy.

### Himachal Pradesh Promotes Industrial Hemp Cultivation Under Green to Gold Programme

Himachal Pradesh has launched the Green to Gold initiative to legalise and promote regulated industrial hemp cultivation for economic growth and sustainable rural livelihoods. The policy permits cultivation of non-intoxicating hemp with THC content below scientific thresholds, enabling its use in textiles, paper, cosmetics, biofuel and medicinal products while shifting away from illicit associations. Research institutions are developing suitable seed varieties and processing frameworks. The programme aims to boost local incomes, attract investment in hemp value chains and foster a competitive bio-economy across hill regions.



### Ayushman Bharat Expanded as Digital Health Services Gain Momentum in 2025

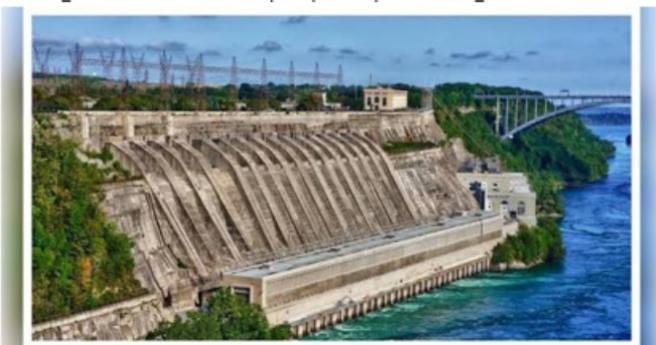
In 2025, Ayushman Bharat has broadened its reach by strengthening digital health services and expanding healthcare coverage nationwide. The Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission facilitated creation of over eighty four crore digital health accounts and linked tens of crores of health records, enabling seamless medical data exchange across hospitals. Telemedicine platforms delivered millions of consultations, improving access in remote areas, while more states joined the core insurance programme, extending benefits to senior citizens and vulnerable populations and enhancing universal health coverage.





### Central Green Panel Approves Dulhasti Stage Two Hydropower Development Project

The central government's environmental appraisal authority approved the 260-megawatt Dulhasti Stage-II hydropower project on the Chenab River in Jammu and Kashmir's Kishtwar district. The clearance clears the way for construction tenders and is part of India's larger strategy to enhance clean energy capacity in key river basins. The extension of the existing Dulhasti Stage-I facility will use a run-of-the-river design and diversify hydropower generation, contributing to regional power supply and national renewable energy goals.



### Sharadchandra Pawar Artificial Intelligence Centre of Excellence Launched in Baramati

The Sharadchandra Pawar Centre of Excellence in Artificial Intelligence was inaugurated in Baramati, Maharashtra, funded by a major private entity and established under Vidya Pratishthan, an educational trust run by the Pawar family. The event saw senior leaders of the family attend the launch. The centre aims to serve as a hub for AI research, innovation, and skill development. It is expected to strengthen technological capacity and foster collaboration between academia and industry for emerging technologies.

### President Droupadi Murmu Undertakes Historic Submarine Mission with Indian Navy

President Droupadi Murmu, as Supreme Commander of India's Armed Forces, undertook a rare submarine sortie onboard the indigenous Kalvari-class INS Vaghsheer from the Karwar Naval Base in Karnataka. The over two-hour dived mission showcased India's undersea warfare capabilities, operational demonstrations, and crew professionalism. Murmu became only the second President of India to undertake a submarine sortie, following Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, and interacted closely with naval personnel, highlighting the strategic importance of maritime security and naval preparedness.



### Public Private Partnership Medical Colleges Set to Begin Operations in Tribal Areas of Madhya Pradesh

The Government of Madhya Pradesh is set to launch first-of-its-kind Public-Private Partnership (PPP) medical colleges in tribal districts such as Dhar, Betul, Katni and Panna to improve healthcare and medical education access. These institutions will be linked with existing district hospitals to strengthen both service delivery and training. The initiative aims to expand medical seats, reduce regional health disparities, and enhance local public health infrastructure in underserved tribal regions through collaborative state and private sector efforts.



### Supreme Court Halts Aravalli Protection Directive, Orders New Expert Assessment

The Supreme Court of India on December 29 kept in abeyance its earlier November 20 order that defined the Aravalli hills for regulatory purposes, citing confusion and concern about environmental protection and mining implications. A vacation bench led by the Chief Justice directed that both the earlier committee report and court observations be paused. It has ordered formation of a fresh high-powered expert committee to thoroughly reassess the definition and its ecological impact before any action resumes.

### Centre Notifies Parvati Arga Bird Sanctuary As Eco Sensitive Area

The Government of India has officially notified the area surrounding Parvati Arga Bird Sanctuary in Uttar Pradesh as an Eco Sensitive Zone to protect its rich biodiversity and bird habitats. The

up to one kilometre from the sanctuary boundary, regulating activities that could harm ecological balance. This move aims to safeguard wetlands, migratory and resident birds, and vulnerable species by controlling construction and polluting industries, while balancing sustainable development with local livelihoods.



### RBI Undertakes Open Market Operations Worth Fifty Thousand Crore Rupees To Ease Liquidity

The Reserve Bank of India conducted an Open Market Operation purchase worth Rs 50,000 crore of government securities to support banking system liquidity as year-end funding pressures persist. Through this operation, the central bank bought various government bonds, releasing cash into the financial system to ease tight liquidity conditions after heavy tax and statutory outflows. The move is part of a broader effort involving multiple tranches of OMO purchases designed to ensure smoother credit flows and robust financial conditions.

### Right To Hold A Passport Falls Within Personal Liberty, Rules Supreme Court

The Supreme Court has ruled that the right to hold a passport forms an integral part of personal liberty under Article Twenty One of the Constitution. The court emphasised that any restriction on issuing or impounding a passport must follow due process and cannot be arbitrary. It reaffirmed that freedom of movement abroad is closely linked to individual

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dignity, autonomy, and professional opportunities, strengthening constitutional safeguards against excessive executive discretion in passport related matters.

### **Lav Aggarwal Appointed As DGFT While R.K. Agarwal Takes Charge Of FCI**

The Centre has undertaken a major bureaucratic reshuffle with the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet approving key leadership changes. Senior IAS officer Lav Aggarwal has been appointed Director General of the Directorate General of Foreign Trade, moving from his previous role as Additional Secretary, while Rabindra Kumar Agarwal has been named Chairman and Managing Director of the Food Corporation of India, replacing the previous incumbent. These changes form part of wider postings affecting multiple ministries to strengthen administrative functioning nationwide.

### **RBI Reports Drop In ATM Numbers During 2024–25 Amid Rising Digital Payment Adoption**

The Reserve Bank of India's latest Trend and Progress of Banking in India 2024-25 report shows the total number of automated teller machines in the country fell to 2,51,057 by March 31, 2025, down from 2,53,417 the previous year as customers increasingly use digital payment channels, reducing reliance on ATM cash withdrawals. Both public and private sector banks rationalised offsite ATMs. Meanwhile, independently operated white label ATMs increased modestly and bank branches expanded overall.



### **India Registers Over Five Point Five Lakh Trademarks During Financial Year 2024–25**

India recorded over 5.5 lakh domestic trademark registrations in the financial year 2024-25, marking the highest number of filings in a single year. The surge reflects growing awareness of intellectual property rights and stronger support for innovators, entrepreneurs, and creators through improved institutional frameworks and digital processes. The trend spans diverse sectors such as pharmaceuticals, veterinary and sanitary goods, highlighting expanding brand creation across industries. The rise in trademarks underscores expanding economic activity and confidence in protecting original ideas.

### **NITI Aayog Report Recognises Gujarat Biotechnology University As Global Higher Education Benchmark**

A NITI Aayog report on globalisation of higher education has recognised Gujarat Biotechnology University (GBU) at GIFT City as a benchmark for international higher education excellence. Established with collaboration from the University of Edinburgh, GBU offers advanced biotechnology programmes and research opportunities, aiming to stem student outflow abroad. The report highlights the university's world-class infrastructure, merit-based admissions, global partnerships, and research output as key factors in enhancing India's academic landscape and attracting top talent.

### **Delhi Government To Introduce Artificial Intelligence Driven Public Grievance Redressal Platform**

The Delhi government is launching an AI-driven public grievance redressal platform called the Intelligent Grievance Monitoring System (IGMS). Developed in partnership with the Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur, the system will integrate multiple complaint portals into a single unified dashboard. It will use artificial intelligence and machine learning features such as semantic search, automated routing, root-cause analysis, and spam filtering to improve transparency, reduce delays, and provide data-driven insights for faster resolution of public grievances across

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## India Emerges As Fourth Largest Global Economy, Overtakes Japan

India has officially overtaken Japan to become the fourth largest economy in the world with a nominal gross domestic product of about USD four point one eight trillion, according to the latest official reports. The country's growth has been driven by strong domestic demand, rising consumption, and structural reforms. India is also now considered the fastest-growing major economy, and projections suggest it may surpass Germany to become the third largest economy by around 2030, reinforcing its global economic influence.



International

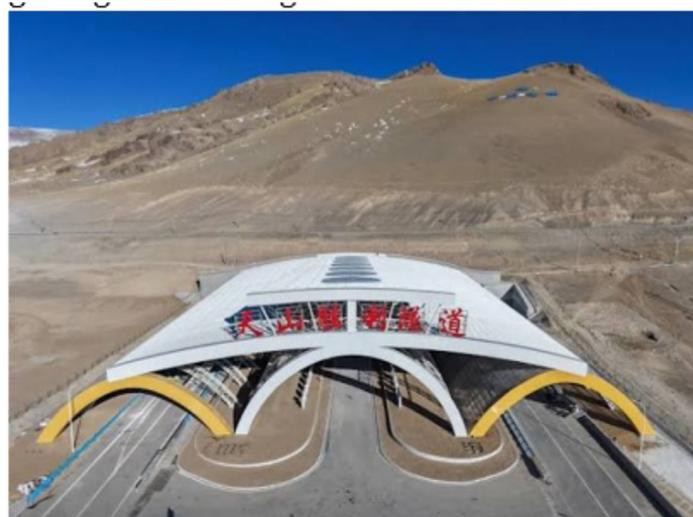
## Armenia Unveils Butterfly Logo For COP17

Armenia has unveiled the official logo for COP17 to the Convention on Biological Diversity, centred on the Erivan Anomalous Blue butterfly endemic to the Yerevan region. The emblem, carrying the slogan Taking action for nature, symbolises fragile ecosystems and collective responsibility. Featuring twenty three colours for global targets, the logo aligns with COP17 in October 2026, when nations will conduct the first global review of the Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework implementation to strengthen international biodiversity governance efforts.



## China Operationalises World's Longest Highway Tunnel in Xinjiang Region

China has opened the Tianshan Shengli Tunnel, a 22.13-kilometre expressway tunnel in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, making it the longest expressway tunnel in the world. The tunnel, part of the G0711 Urumqi-Yuli Expressway, slashes travel time across the Tianshan Mountains from hours to around 20 minutes and significantly shortens journeys between key regional cities. The project faced major geological challenges and enhanced connectivity between northern and southern Xinjiang, supporting regional integration and boosting economic and transport linkages.



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## Japan Approves Restart of World's Biggest Nuclear Facility After Fukushima Closure

Japan has approved the restart of the world's largest nuclear power plant, Kashiwazaki-Kariwa, more than 15 years after the Fukushima disaster triggered nationwide reactor shutdowns. Unit 6 is slated to resume operation early in 2026, marking the first reactor brought back online by its operator since 2011. The decision by local and prefectural authorities reflects efforts to strengthen energy security, reduce dependence on imported fossil fuels and expand nuclear's role in the energy mix despite ongoing public safety concerns and rigorous regulatory oversight.



## Israel Announces Plan To Institute Peace Award In Donald Trump's Name From 2026

Israel has announced it will honour U.S. President Donald Trump with the Israel Prize for Peace in 2026, marking the first time this prestigious civilian award will be given to a foreign head of state. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the recognition reflects Trump's actions supporting Israel and efforts toward peace, including facilitating ceasefire negotiations with Hamas. Trump welcomed the honour. The decision breaks tradition and highlights strong bilateral ties and shared strategic interests between the two nations.

## Ranks/Reports/Indices

### India to Chair Kimberley Process in 2026

India will assume the Chairpersonship of the Kimberley Process from January 1, 2026, marking its third leadership tenure in the global initiative against conflict diamonds. The decision, taken at the Kimberley Process Plenary, reflects India's rising role in ethical trade and responsible sourcing. India will first serve as Vice Chair from December 25, 2025, ensuring leadership continuity while prioritising governance reforms, digital certification, traceability, and transparency in the global rough diamond trade.

### New Income Tax Act 2025 Unveiled

The Income Tax Act, 2025 will replace the six-decade-old Income Tax Act, 1961, coming into force from April 1, 2026. Announced in Budget 2025, it introduces a simplified new tax regime with no income tax up to ₹12 lakh. Revised slabs aim to enhance disposable income and compliance. Alongside, GST reforms effective September 2025 rationalise rates, cut taxes on 375 items, and reduce litigation.

### IRFC Refinances DFCCIL Loan for Freight Corridor

Indian Railway Finance Corporation Limited refinanced ₹9,821 crore of a foreign currency loan availed by DFCCIL from the World Bank to support the Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor project. Executed through a rupee term loan, the refinancing reduces forex risk and strengthens financial sustainability. The move highlights IRFC's role as Indian Railways' financing arm and supports faster freight movement, improved logistics efficiency, and industrial growth across northern and eastern India.



### RBI 2025 Policy Shifts From Caution To Growth

In 2025, the Reserve Bank of India shifted from guarded monetary easing to confident growth support amid falling inflation. Under Governor Sanjay Malhotra, the RBI delivered four rate cuts totalling 125 basis points, adjusting stance frequently to evolving growth and price dynamics. Beginning cautiously in February, policy turned accommodative by April and frontloaded easing in June. Subsequent pauses reflected transmission focus, while December's surprise cut confirmed continued growth support despite global uncertainty and emerging core inflation concerns.

### India Holds Third Position In Global Rare Earth Reserves But Trails In Production Output

India ranks third globally in rare earth element reserves, yet remains a marginal producer due to limited mining capacity, inadequate processing infrastructure, and long regulatory delays. Despite strong geological potential, most rare earth extraction and refining continues to be dominated by a few countries. The government is now prioritising exploration, private sector participation, and technology partnerships to reduce import dependence, strengthen supply chains, and support clean energy, electronics, and defence manufacturing ambitions in the long term.

### Summits/MoUs/Conferences/Agreement

#### Anu Garg Appointed Odisha's First Woman Chief Secretary

Senior IAS officer Anu Garg will assume charge as Odisha's first woman Chief Secretary from January 1, 2026. A 1991 batch officer, she succeeds Manoj Ahuja and brings over three decades of administrative experience. Garg has served as Development Commissioner and handled key departments including planning, health and water resources. Her central postings include Joint Secretary roles in the PMO and ministries. The appointment marks a milestone for gender representation and strengthens Centre State coordination in Odisha governance.

#### National Test House And NHAI Enter Cooperation Pact To Strengthen Highway Quality And Safety Standards

The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) and the National Test House (NTH) have signed a memorandum of understanding to enhance quality assurance and safety standards in national highway projects nationwide. Under the pact, NTH will provide independent testing, certification, and technical support for construction materials and highway components to ensure compliance with national specifications and international benchmarks. The collaboration also includes training, expert evaluations, and best-practice sharing to improve transparency, durability, and road safety outcomes.

### Science and tech/Space/Defence

#### India's First Indigenous MRI Boosts Healthcare Self-Reliance

VoxelGrids, a Zoho backed Indian startup, has developed India's first indigenous MRI scanner, marking a major milestone for domestic medical technology. The 1.5 tesla machine, deployed near Nagpur, was built without liquid helium and costs significantly less than imported systems. The breakthrough reduces dependence on foreign

manufacturers, supports Make in India, and improves access to advanced diagnostic services, especially in tier two cities and underserved regions, while strengthening the healthcare innovation ecosystem and boosting affordable diagnostic infrastructure nationwide.



### **IIT Patna Launches Bihar's First Supercomputer**

IIT Patna has inaugurated Bihar's first Param Rudra supercomputer under the National Supercomputing Mission, significantly strengthening regional research infrastructure. The facility enables high speed computing for simulations, big data analysis and advanced modelling across multiple scientific domains. Built using indigenous technologies, Param Rudra supports artificial intelligence, quantum computing, materials science and fluid mechanics research. It will benefit faculty and students while reducing dependence on foreign systems and advancing India's self reliance in high performance computing capabilities nationally globally.

### **WhAP 8x8 Delivered to Royal Moroccan Army**

Tata Advanced Systems Limited delivered the first batch of WhAP 8x8 armoured vehicles to the Royal Moroccan Army, marking India's growing defence manufacturing footprint abroad. The handover follows establishment of a local production facility in Berrechid, Morocco, inaugurated in September 2025. Jointly

intended for multiple battlefield roles, with further deliveries planned to meet Moroccan operational requirements under long-term bilateral defence cooperation frameworks agreements signed

### **Indian Army Revises Social Media Usage Policy**

Indian Army has updated its social media policy allowing limited, regulated access to selected digital platforms. Announced on 25 December 2025, the move balances operational security with modern information needs. Personnel may use messaging apps only for unclassified communication with known contacts. Public social networks permit viewing and monitoring without posting or interaction. LinkedIn use is restricted to professional purposes. The revised framework replaces earlier blanket bans while prioritising security amid cyber, espionage and information warfare threats globally.

### **IIT Delhi Launches Autonomous AI Lab Assistant**

IIT Delhi has developed AILA, an Artificially Intelligent Lab Assistant, marking a major advance in AI driven experimental research. Built on an agentic AI framework, AILA can autonomously design, execute and analyse laboratory experiments with minimal human input. Using a chat based interface, it converts plain language instructions into machine executable code. Demonstrated through real time control of an Atomic Force Microscope, AILA enables faster research cycles, dynamic decision making, efficient equipment use and high throughput experimentation, positioning India at the frontier of autonomous scientific discovery.

### **India Grants Approval to Two New Airlines to Boost Aviation Sector Competition**

India's Civil Aviation Ministry has granted No Objection Certificates to two new airlines, AI Hind Air and FlyExpress, allowing them to begin the process of launching operations to enhance competition in the domestic aviation market. The move follows concerns about market concentration after recent mass flight cancellations highlighted over-reliance on a few

diversify operators and improve connectivity, alongside Shankh Air which is expected to begin services next year.

### Successful Test of K-4 Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missile from INS Arighat

India has successfully test fired the K-4 submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) from the nuclear-powered submarine INS Arighat in the Bay of Bengal, reinforcing its undersea strategic deterrent. The solid-fuel K-4 has an estimated range of approximately 3,500 kilometres, enabling strikes deep into potential adversary territories from secure sea positions. This test represents a key step in operationalising India's sea-based leg of its nuclear triad and enhances the survivability and credibility of its strategic deterrence posture.



### ISRO Proposes Establishment of a Third Launch Pad at Sriharikota Spaceport

The Indian Space Research Organisation is advancing plans to build a third launch pad at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota to significantly expand national launch capacity. Approved by the Union Cabinet, the facility will bolster infrastructure to support Next Generation Launch Vehicles and act as a standby for existing pads, enabling heavier and more frequent missions. The project is progressing with vendor selection and is expected to be completed in approximately four years, reinforcing readiness for future human spaceflight and advanced satellite launches.

### World's First ITVISMA Gene Therapy Successfully Administered In Abu Dhabi

Abu Dhabi has become the first city globally to administer ITVISMA, a one-time gene replacement therapy for spinal muscular atrophy, to eligible patients aged two years and older. Conducted under the supervision of the Department of Health at Sheikh Khalifa Medical City, this cutting-edge treatment targets the underlying genetic cause by replacing the defective SMN1 gene, improving motor function and reducing reliance on long-term care. The therapy's accelerated approval in late November reflects Abu Dhabi's focus on advanced genomic medicine and patient care.

### INSV Kaundinya Sets Sail On Its First Overseas Voyage To Oman

The Indian Navy's stitched sailing vessel INSV Kaundinya has embarked on its maiden overseas journey from Porbandar in Gujarat to Muscat, Oman, retracing ancient maritime routes that once linked India with West Asia. Built using traditional stitched-plank techniques inspired by 5th century designs, the engineless ship highlights India's rich seafaring heritage and craftsmanship. The voyage, flagged off by senior naval officials, includes a crew on board and aims to strengthen cultural and maritime ties with Oman through this historic expedition.

### Defence Acquisition Council Approves Military Procurements Valued At Seventy Nine Thousand Crore Rupees

The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC), chaired by the defence minister, approved military procurement proposals worth around seventy nine thousand crore rupees to bolster the capabilities of India's Army, Navy and Air Force. The approvals grant Acceptance of Necessity, enabling the armed forces to proceed with detailed acquisitions of systems like loiter munitions, advanced radars, long-range guided rocket ammunition and integrated drone detection equipment. These investments are aimed at enhancing precision strike, surveillance and defence readiness in response to evolving security challenges.

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## Indian Artificial Intelligence Research Institution To Come Up In GIFT City Gandhinagar

The Gujarat government has approved the establishment of the Indian Artificial Intelligence Research Organisation (IAIRO) in GIFT City near Gandhinagar, to become operational from January 1, 2026. Under a public-private partnership, the state government, central government and Indian Pharmaceutical Alliance will each contribute equally to an estimated three hundred crore funding package over five years. The non-profit institute will focus on advanced AI research, product development, capacity building, and collaborations among academia, industry and government, strengthening the national AI ecosystem.

## Defence Ministry Finalises 4,666 Crore Rupees Contracts For Carbines And Torpedo Systems

India's Ministry of Defence has signed contracts worth Rs 4,666 crore to procure more than 4.25 lakh Close Quarter Battle (CQB) carbines and 48 heavyweight torpedoes. Agreements for the carbines were signed with Bharat Forge and PLR Systems to equip the Army and Navy with modern, compact firearms designed for close combat. An Italian firm will supply the torpedoes for Kalvari-class submarines, enhancing underwater combat capability. The procurement supports self-reliance in defence manufacturing and modernisation of armed forces.

## Sports

### PV Sindhu Elected Chair of BWF Commission

Indian badminton star PV Sindhu has been elected Chair of the Badminton World Federation Athletes' Commission for the 2026–2029 term. The two-time Olympic medallist will also join the BWF Council, strengthening athletes' representation in global badminton governance. Associated with the commission since 2017, Sindhu has actively advocated integrity and athlete welfare. Her appointment, succeeding Greysia Polii, highlights India's growing

influence in international sports administration and reflects trust placed in her leadership by players worldwide across all levels globally.

### Praggnanandhaa, Giri Win Global Chess League

Alpine SG Pipers captured their maiden Global Chess League 2025 Season 3 title in Mumbai, led by R Praggnanandhaa and Anish Giri. The team defeated defending champions Triveni Continental Kings across a two match final, winning 4–2 and 4.5–1.5. Giri earned Finals MVP after winning both games with black pieces, while Praggnanandhaa's decisive victory over Vidit Gujrathi proved crucial. The triumph highlights India's rising strength in elite franchise based international chess competitions under high pressure modern formats globally.

### Rashtriya Raksha University to Organise Events for World Police and Fire Games 2029

Rashtriya Raksha University in Gujarat will host eight sporting disciplines as part of the World Police and Fire Games 2029, a global event for law enforcement and fire service personnel. Preparations include setting up organisational structures, training hundreds of volunteers, and upgrading sports and support infrastructure on campus. The university aims to position itself as an international hub for security and sports science while showcasing India's capacity to host large international multi-sport events and enhancing engagement in physical fitness, research, and organisational excellence.

### Smriti Mandhana Becomes Second Indian Cricketer To Cross Ten Thousand International Runs

India's women's cricket vice-captain Smriti Mandhana has become the second Indian woman and the fourth woman overall to score 10,000 runs in international cricket across formats during the fourth T20 International against Sri Lanka in Thiruvananthapuram. The left-handed batter reached the mark in just 281 innings, surpassing many greats and joining an elite group that includes only three other women globally. Her

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### Deepthi Sharma Becomes Highest Wicket Taker In Women's T20 International Cricket

Indian all-rounder Deepthi Sharma has become the highest wicket taker in Women's T20 International cricket, surpassing the previous record with her 152nd wicket during the fifth T20I against Sri Lanka in Thiruvananthapuram. Her achievement helped India complete a 5-0 series sweep and underscores her consistent excellence in the shortest format. Sharma now tops the all-time Women's T20I wicket list, reflecting her skill, longevity, and key contribution to India's bowling attack.



### Miscellaneous

### Sudarsan Pattnaik Creates Record Giant Santa Sculpture

Renowned sand artist Sudarsan Pattnaik created a world record by sculpting the world's largest Santa Claus using sand and 1.5 tonnes of apples at Niladri Beach, Puri. Unveiled on December 26, 2025, the 60-foot installation was officially recognised by the World Records Book of India. The festive artwork celebrated Christmas while spreading a global message of peace, harmony and unity, highlighting India's creative excellence, eco-friendly public art traditions, and growing cultural tourism appeal in Odisha during winter celebrations.



### Gujarat Regains Tiger State Status After 33

Gujarat has regained its status as a tiger bearing state after thirty three years, following confirmation of sustained tiger presence in Ratanmahal Sanctuary. The National Tiger Conservation Authority approved its inclusion in the All India Tiger Estimation 2026. Continuous camera trap and CCTV evidence proved long term habitation of a four year old tiger. The decision strengthens Project Tiger, enables radio tagging, and highlights technology based wildlife monitoring using stripe recognition software under India's expanding conservation framework nationwide.

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## World's Largest Open-Air Cultural Theatre Dhanu Yatra Commences in Odisha's Bargarh

The Dhanu Yatra festival, recognised as the world's largest open-air theatre, has begun in Bargarh, Odisha. This annual 11-day cultural performance transforms the entire town into a stage, with streets, riverbanks and public spaces hosting enactments of Lord Krishna's life and his conflict with King Kansa. Thousands of actors and community participants bring mythology and folk tradition to life, drawing spectators from across India. The event highlights Odisha's rich performing arts heritage and boosts tourism and cultural engagement.

