

Date : 2026-01-11

Weekly Current Affairs

English

National

Assam Forms Eighth State Pay Commission, Becomes First In The Country

Assam has become the first state in the country to constitute its Eighth State Pay Commission, shortly after the central government's latest pay commission came into effect. The state cabinet approved the formation, which will be chaired by a former additional chief secretary to review employee salaries and service conditions. This proactive step aims to align with the central pay revisions and improve the welfare of Assam's public servants. The state last set up a pay commission in 2015.



Centre Announces Higher Excise Duty On Tobacco Products Effective February One

The central government has notified a significant revision in the excise duty structure for tobacco products, to come into force from February 1, 2026. Under the new regime, cigarettes and related tobacco items will attract additional excise duties on top of the existing GST, with levies varying by product length and type. This follows recent parliamentary approval to replace the previous temporary cess with a permanent excise levy, aimed at simplifying taxation and strengthening revenue collection from these products.



Gujarat Establishes Cyber Security Committees To Safeguard Power And Energy Assets

The Gujarat government has formed an 11-member core committee and a 19-member task force to fortify cybersecurity of the state's power and energy infrastructure amid rising digital threats. This initiative, driven by the Energy and Petrochemicals Department, aims to review current cyber systems, policies and preparedness and develop a comprehensive roadmap for strengthening defences. It will focus on training, awareness programmes, and partnerships with institutions to mitigate risks posed by smart grids and digitalisation.

Tamil Nadu To Launch Jallikattu 2026 Season With Opening Event At Thatchankurichi

The Tamil Nadu government has officially permitted the first Jallikattu event of the 2026 season to be held on January 3 at Thatchankurichi village in Pudukkottai district, marking the start of the traditional bull-taming season. The approval was issued via a government gazette under the state's animal welfare laws. Authorities have prescribed strict standard operating procedures to ensure safety, crowd management and animal welfare during the cultural event.

Vande Bharat Sleeper Train Approved For Operations, Initial Route Identified

India's first Vande Bharat Sleeper train has been approved for operations and is set to begin service in January 2026, marking a major expansion of the Vande Bharat network into overnight travel. The Railway Ministry confirmed that trials, testing, and certification are complete, and the inaugural route will connect Guwahati in Assam to Howrah in West Bengal, offering fully air-conditioned sleeper

Date : 2026-01-11

Weekly Current Affairs

English

coaches with modern amenities. The service aims to improve long-distance overnight connectivity and enhance passenger comfort across key eastern and northeastern corridors.

Delhi Introduces QR Enabled Road Signs to Enhance Public Access and Accountability

Delhi's Public Works Department has mandated QR codes on all new road signage to improve transparency and citizen access to information. Scanning these codes will show details about the manufacturer, materials used, warranty information, and allow users to link defects or complaints via the PWD Sewa app. The guidelines, issued at the start of January, require these codes be included in tenders for future signboards, aiming to boost uniformity, accountability, and public reporting of issues on city roads.

Government Launches Electronic Billing System to Streamline Fertiliser Subsidy Distribution

The Indian government has launched an integrated electronic billing system to digitise the processing and distribution of fertiliser subsidies worth nearly two lakh crore annually. The platform replaces manual, paper-based workflows with a fully digital end-to-end system, eliminating physical movement of bills and reducing delays. It integrates financial management systems to provide real-time tracking, centralised reporting, and stronger financial controls. Officials say the system will improve efficiency, transparency, accountability and speed of claims and payments across the subsidy framework.

Surat Advances Towards Becoming India's First Slum-Free Urban Centre

Surat, a major industrial and commercial hub in Gujarat, is progressing rapidly toward becoming India's first fully slum-free urban centre. Government data show the slum population has declined significantly over two decades through extensive housing schemes and urban planning reforms. The city has implemented large-scale redevelopment, affordable housing projects, and essential civic upgrades to ensure dignified homes for low-income families. Surat's comprehensive approach balances industrial growth with inclusive urban development, aiming

to eliminate slum settlements entirely while enhancing quality of life.



Export Promotion Mission Launches Two Credit-Linked Support Schemes

The government has launched two credit-linked support schemes under its Export Promotion Mission to make export credit more affordable and accessible for Indian exporters, especially micro, small and medium enterprises. The measures include an interest subvention on pre- and post-shipment export credit and a collateral support mechanism to ease bank financing. These interventions aim to lower borrowing costs, address trade finance challenges, and strengthen global competitiveness of Indian exports as part of broader efforts to boost trade growth.

Central Government Issues Notice to Social Media Platform X

The Central Government has issued a stern notice to social media platform X, flagging serious lapses in removing obscene, unlawful and sexually explicit content generated by X's AI tool Grok. Authorities criticised the platform's failure to comply with statutory due diligence obligations under the Information Technology Act and related rules and directed immediate removal or disabling of all unlawful material. X must submit an action taken report within the prescribed timeframe or face legal consequences under applicable digital laws.

Date : 2026-01-11

Weekly Current Affairs

English



Drinking Water Contamination Triggers Public Health Crisis in Indore

Indore, once celebrated for cleanliness, is facing a severe public health emergency after sewage leaked into the municipal drinking water supply in parts of the city, especially Bhagirathpura. Laboratory tests confirmed contamination linked to a pipeline leak near sewage sources, triggering diarrhoea, vomiting, and a fatal outbreak. At least ten people have died and hundreds hospitalised, with many still in intensive care. Residents now avoid tap water, highlighting significant failures in urban water infrastructure and public safety.

National Biodiversity Authority Disburses Funds to Red Sanders Farmers in Andhra Pradesh

The National Biodiversity Authority (NBA) has released 45 lakh rupees to red sanders farmers in Andhra Pradesh under its Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) framework. This payment, made through the Andhra Pradesh State Biodiversity Board, increases India's cumulative ABS disbursements to over 143.5 crore rupees, rewarding cultivators for conserving and sustainably using the endemic red sanders tree species. Farmers benefit from dual income through legal wood sales and ABS funds, supporting livelihoods and discouraging illegal trade while promoting biodiversity conservation.

MoSPI Unveils New Logo, Mascot to Modernise Identity

MoSPI has introduced a new logo and its first mascot, Sankhyiki, to refresh institutional identity and enhance public engagement. Anchored in the theme Data for Development, the initiative emphasises trustworthy, timely statistics for evidence-based governance. The redesigned

logo blends national symbols with statistical elements, while the mascot simplifies complex data concepts. Together, they aim to improve statistical literacy, strengthen confidence in official data, and support transparent, citizen-centric policymaking across development sectors nationwide and within government decision-making processes frameworks.



PMMVY Completes Nine Years Strengthening Maternal Health Nationwide

Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana completed nine years in 2026, reaffirming India's commitment to maternal health and women's welfare. Launched in 2017, the centrally sponsored scheme provides cash assistance to pregnant and lactating women for wage compensation and nutrition support. Integrated under Mission Shakti, PMMVY uses DBT for transparent transfers, follows a Centre-State funding pattern, and has benefited over four crore women nationwide. The programme also promotes institutional deliveries, immunisation compliance, digital monitoring, and inclusive development outcomes nationally.



3

Date : 2026-01-11

Weekly Current Affairs

English

EU Leaders Likely Republic Day 2026 Chief Guests

India's Republic Day 2026 may feature European Union leaders as chief guests, underscoring deepening India-EU strategic partnership. Expected attendees include Ursula von der Leyen and António Costa, symbolising the EU's collective identity. The visit may align with the India-EU Summit, giving momentum to revived Free Trade Agreement talks. The FTA is crucial for market access, supply chain diversification, green technology cooperation, and addressing carbon trade measures amid global geopolitical and economic realignments and evolving international governance priorities worldwide.

Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan to Launch 41 Publications on Classical Indian Languages

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan released 41 literary works developed by Centres of Excellence for Classical Kannada, Telugu, Malayalam and Odia under the Central Institute of Indian Languages in New Delhi. The event also saw the release of 13 additional books and a 45-episode Sign Language interpretation series of the Tirukkural, aimed at enhancing accessibility for the hearing-impaired. The initiative reflects the government's sustained effort to preserve and promote India's rich classical linguistic heritage and make classical knowledge accessible in modern formats.



Public Broadcaster Prasar Bharati Proposes Revival of Thadou Language Radio Services in Manipur

Public broadcaster Prasar Bharati has initiated steps to restore live radio broadcasts in the Thadou language

Thadou halted after ethnic clashes in Manipur in May 2023 forced Thadou language staff to leave the valley, leaving only recorded content. Prasar Bharati's move includes gathering inputs for staff recruitment to resume broadcasts. The proposal aims to support cultural identity preservation, strengthen community confidence and contribute to peacebuilding in the state.

Telangana Hosts the Country's Biggest Inland Rainbow Trout Aquaculture Facility

Telangana has inaugurated India's largest inland rainbow trout aquaculture facility at Kandukur Mandal in Ranga Reddy district, developed by Hyderabad-based startup SmartGreen Aquaculture. Using advanced Recirculating Aquaculture System technology, the controlled indoor farm enables year-round trout cultivation in a warm climate, previously limited to cold-water regions. With an initial investment of around 6 million dollars and capacity to produce about 1,200 metric tonnes annually, the integrated facility also features hatchery units, processing and cold-chain infrastructure.

Reserve Bank Conducts Inaugural Session of the Payments Regulatory Board

The Reserve Bank of India's newly formed Payments Regulatory Board (PRB) convened its first meeting in Mumbai, chaired by RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra, following amendments to the Payment and Settlement Systems Act. The board reviewed the functions of the Department of Payment and Settlement Systems, presented the draft Payments Vision 2028 and discussed strategic focus areas covering domestic and global payment systems. Members were also briefed on major findings from the RBI's recent Survey on Digital Payments, marking effective operationalisation of the new payments governance framework.



Indigenous Pollution Response Ship ICGS Samudra Pratap Inducted into Indian Coast Guard Fleet

The Indian Coast Guard has inducted ICGS Samudra Pratap, an indigenously built pollution response vessel, to strengthen marine environmental protection capabilities. Designed and constructed in India, the ship is equipped to combat oil spills, chemical pollution and maritime environmental hazards across coastal and offshore areas. The vessel enhances India's preparedness for marine pollution incidents while supporting search, rescue and disaster response operations. Its induction reflects growing emphasis on indigenous shipbuilding and safeguarding fragile marine ecosystems.

Rare Eastern Imperial Eagle Observed Within Mudumalai Tiger Reserve Ecosystem

The rare Eastern Imperial Eagle has been sighted inside the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve, marking an important ecological observation for southern India. Typically found in grasslands and open landscapes of northern regions, the species is classified as vulnerable globally. Forest officials and researchers view the sighting as an indicator of suitable habitat conditions and prey availability within the reserve. The observation also highlights the ecological richness of the Nilgiri biosphere and the importance of continued wildlife monitoring efforts.



Union Government Announces Nutrient-Based Subsidy Rates For Rabi Season 2025-26

The Union Cabinet has approved new Nutrient-Based Subsidy (NBS) rates for phosphatic and potassic fertilizers for the Rabi 2025-26 season, effective from October 1, 2025 to March 31, 2026, with an estimated budgetary requirement of about 37,952 crore. The decision aims to ensure the availability of key fertilizers such as DAP and NPK grades at affordable prices for farmers amid fluctuating international input costs. Subsidies on nutrients including nitrogen, phosphate, potash and sulphur have been set to support crop production and balanced soil nutrition.



Assam Governor Introduces Sanskaar Shaala Initiative To Promote Value-Oriented Learning

Assam Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya inaugurated the Sanskaar Shaala initiative in Guwahati, aimed at promoting value-oriented learning among children aged four to fourteen. The programme emphasizes moral and ethical education alongside formal schooling, focusing on cultural

values, social responsibility and personal conduct. The Governor highlighted that values form the foundational basis for virtues and societal harmony. The initiative seeks to nurture responsible future citizens by instilling principles such as truth, duty and respect from a young age.

Central Government Presents Public Private Partnership Project Pipeline Worth 17 Lakh Crore For Upcoming Three Years

The Central Government has unveiled a three-year Public Private Partnership project pipeline with an estimated combined investment of over seventeen lakh crore, covering 852 projects across central infrastructure ministries, states and Union Territories. Created by the Department of Economic Affairs under the Ministry of Finance following the Budget 2025-26 announcement, the pipeline provides early visibility for investors, developers and lenders to plan capital allocation and execution strategies. It aims to enhance private sector participation and accelerate infrastructure development across sectors such as transport, energy, water and sanitation.

Ramesh Kumar Juneja Assumes Role As Chairman Of The Council For Leather Exports

Ramesh Kumar Juneja has taken charge as the Chairman of the Council for Leather Exports, succeeding the outgoing chair at the body that promotes India's leather and footwear shipments abroad. Juneja previously served as the Council's vice-chairman and brings decades of industry experience. His long association with the organisation includes roles as regional chairman and board member. Under his leadership, the Council will pursue broader market engagement and strengthen export performance amid shifting global trade patterns in leather and allied products.

Rajasthan Organises Regional AI Impact Conference 2026 To Promote Inclusive And Responsible Artificial Intelligence

Rajasthan hosted the Regional AI Impact Conference 2026 in Jaipur on January 6, bringing policymakers, industry leaders, startups and academics together to explore how artificial intelligence can drive governance reform, economic growth, innovation and inclusive

Impact Summit in February. The event highlighted Centre-State collaboration and key initiatives for AI adoption, skilling and responsible use in governance, infrastructure and workforce development. Strategic sessions and partnerships aimed to strengthen AI ecosystems and prepare for broader national dialogue.

Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant Releases Second Edition Of Book 'History That India Ignored'

Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant launched the second edition of History That India Ignored, authored by veteran journalist Prem Prakash, highlighting overlooked aspects of the nation's freedom struggle. The book reexamines contributions of unsung freedom fighters, details Vinayak Damodar Savarkar's life and arrest, and revisits significant moments like the Indian National Army and Goa's liberation from Portuguese rule. The chief minister described the publication as an act of national responsibility that will help younger generations understand neglected historical narratives with evidence-based documentation.



Government Seeks Public Feedback On Draft Pesticides Management Bill 2025

The Indian government has released the Draft Pesticides Management Bill, 2025 to replace the outdated Insecticides Act of 1968, and is inviting public feedback through February 4, 2026. Designed to modernise pesticide regulation, the bill emphasises transparency, traceability and quality control. Key provisions include digital processes, mandatory accreditation of testing laboratories and

Date : 2026-01-11

Weekly Current Affairs

English

enhanced penalties to curb spurious products. It also proposes administrative reforms and decriminalisation of minor offences, aiming to balance farmers' ease of living with ease of doing business.

International

India And Pakistan Share Lists Of Civilian And Prisoner Detainees Under Consular Agreement

India and Pakistan have again exchanged the lists of civil prisoners and fishermen held in each other's custody under the bilateral Agreement on Consular Access of 2008. This routine diplomatic exercise was carried out simultaneously in New Delhi and Islamabad through official channels. India shared details of hundreds of Pakistani detainees in Indian jails, while Pakistan provided details of Indian detainees. Both sides urged early release and humane treatment of those detained.

Bulgaria Officially Switches to the Euro as Its Common Currency

On January 1, 2026, Bulgaria formally adopted the euro as its official currency, becoming the 21st member of the eurozone after nearly two decades within the union. The transition involved dual circulation of the lev and euro throughout January, with the euro becoming sole legal tender in February, and free lev-to-euro exchanges available until mid-year. This shift reflects Bulgaria's long-term integration into European monetary systems, aligning its economy with other eurozone members while initiating a technical transition period for consumers and businesses.

France Moves Toward Regulating Social Media Access for Children Below Fifteen

France is preparing legislation to ban social media access for children under the age of fifteen starting September 2026, following concerns over online harms such as cyberbullying, harmful content exposure and disrupted sleep. The draft bill, backed by the president, also proposes extending existing school mobile phone restrictions. Enforcement would be overseen by the digital regulator, requiring platforms to block under-fifteen access. The move builds on

earlier parental consent rules and aims to protect youth digital wellbeing and align with broader international age-restriction trends.

Turkmenistan Permits Cryptocurrency Mining and Digital Asset Trading

Turkmenistan has enacted a new law legalising cryptocurrency mining, trading and related digital asset activities effective January 1, 2026. The Law on Virtual Assets creates a regulated framework that allows licensed domestic and foreign miners and exchanges to operate under oversight by the central bank and state authorities. Cryptocurrencies will be treated as property under civil law but will not be accepted as legal tender or payment instruments. Authorities must enforce strict licensing, know-your-customer and anti-money-laundering rules.

Board of Trade Flags Export Slowdown Due to Fifty Percent United States Tariffs

Exporters and policymakers have raised concerns at a Board of Trade meeting about a rapid slowdown in Indian exports, largely attributed to punitive fifty percent tariffs imposed by the United States. These charges have significantly reduced Indian shipments to its largest overseas market, with several sectors struggling to remain internationally competitive. Delegates also highlighted costlier raw materials, limited testing facilities and logistical challenges. Discussions focused on strategies to strengthen export competitiveness amid global uncertainties and revive growth across key industries.

Venezuela Court Appoints Delcy Rodríguez Acting President

Supreme Court of Venezuela directed Vice President Delcy Rodríguez to assume charge as Acting President amid a deep political crisis. The decision followed the capture of President Nicolás Maduro by US forces, triggering sharp international reactions. Russia, China, Iran, Brazil, and Cuba condemned the action as violating sovereignty and international law, while European leaders urged restraint and dialogue. Venezuela declared a national emergency, mobilised forces, sought UN Security Council intervention, and demanded Maduro's release.

7

Date : 2026-01-11

Weekly Current Affairs

English

India Rolls Out Fresh Electronic Business Visa Framework for Chinese Citizens

India has introduced a fresh electronic business visa category, the e-Production Investment Business Visa (e-B-4), for Chinese citizens, effective January 1, 2026. This visa can be applied for fully online without visiting an embassy and will be processed in roughly 45 to 50 days, allowing a stay of up to six months for designated business activities such as equipment installation, production support, training, IT work, and senior management visits. The framework aims to facilitate bilateral commercial engagement and ease travel for business professionals.

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz Scheduled for Official Visit to India on January 12 and 13

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz will make his first official visit to India from January 12 to 13, at the invitation of India's Prime Minister. He will be received in Ahmedabad and is expected to visit Bengaluru during the two-day trip. Talks with Indian leadership will focus on strengthening bilateral cooperation across trade, investment, technology, education, skilling and mobility, as well as defence, innovation and sustainable development to bolster the evolving strategic partnership between the two nations.



Ancient Kushan-Era Coins Linked To King Vasudeva Discovered In Rawalpindi Region Of Pakistan

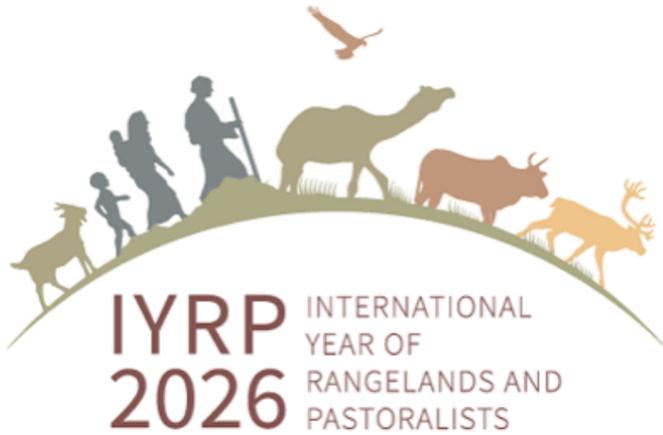
Archaeologists in Pakistan's Rawalpindi region have unearthed a collection of coins and other artifacts dating back around 2,000 years to the Kushan Empire, specifically from the reign of King Vasudeva, at the Bhir Mound archaeological site near Taxila. The discovery

ancient currency and decorative lapis lazuli fragments, shedding light on the region's historical trade ties, cultural diversity, and economic systems during the early centuries of the Common Era. These findings enhance understanding of Kushan rule and its wider historical reach.



United Nations Proclaims 2026 As International Year Of Rangelands And Pastoral Communities

The United Nations General Assembly has declared 2026 the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists to raise global awareness of the vital contributions of rangelands and pastoral communities to food security, ecosystem health, cultural heritage and resilient livelihoods. Rangelands cover a significant share of the Earth's land surface and support biodiversity, sustainable livestock systems and traditional knowledge. The observance aims to promote sustainable land management, strengthen pastoralist inclusion and encourage responsible investment to protect these ecosystems and the communities dependent on them.



United States Issues Presidential Order To Exit 66 International Organisations

The United States has signed a presidential memorandum directing the withdrawal of the country from 66 international organisations, including 31 United Nations-affiliated entities and 35 non-UN bodies. The administration stated these organisations are no longer aligned with American national interests, security and sovereignty, and will halt participation and funding where permitted by law. The list includes major climate, environmental, renewable energy and cooperation forums. Critics warn the move weakens global engagement, potentially ceding influence on climate and development issues to other nations.

Ranks/Reports/Indices

UPI Records 21.63 Billion Transactions In December 2025

India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI) continued its strong growth, closing December 2025 with a record 21.63 billion transactions, the highest monthly total on record. This represented a significant year-on-year increase in both volume and value of payments processed. The surge reflects expanding adoption of digital payments across the country, driven by consumer spending and increased usage beyond major cities. The data also showed growth over the previous month and indicates deepening integration of UPI into everyday financial activity.

GST Revenue Rises 6.1% In December 2025 To 1.75 Lakh Crore Rupees

India's GST collections in December 2025 rose by 6.1 percent year-on-year, reaching 1.75 lakh crore rupees, indicating sustained revenue growth amid steady economic activity and tax compliance. The increase reflects stronger import-linked GST receipts and moderate domestic tax flows, contributing to broader fiscal strength. Data from official releases showed that this growth marked continued buoyancy in indirect tax collections, supporting government finances as GST reforms and rate changes take effect.



India Witnesses Significant Increase in Reported Tiger Mortality During 2025

India recorded 166 tiger deaths in 2025, a rise of 40 fatalities compared with 2024, according to data released by the National Tiger Conservation Authority and state forest departments. The increase highlights pressures from habitat constraints, territorial conflicts, electrocution, road and rail accidents, poaching and natural causes. Madhya Pradesh reported the highest number of deaths at 55, followed by other states. Conservation officials emphasise the urgent need for enhanced protection, better habitat connectivity and mitigation of human-tiger conflicts.

India's Foreign Exchange Reserves Near Seven Hundred Billion Level

India's foreign exchange reserves have risen to approximately \$696.6 billion, nearing the seven hundred billion dollar mark, reflecting a weekly increase of around \$3.29 billion in foreign currency assets and gold holdings.

This growth in external buffers points to strengthening of external financial stability, boosting confidence in the country's ability to manage international payments and currency fluctuations. The reserves, managed by the central bank, provide critical coverage for imports and help in handling macroeconomic pressures.



India's Forex Reserves Rise Near \$700 Billion Mark

India's foreign exchange reserves rose to \$696.61 billion as of December 26, 2025, reflecting stronger external sector resilience. Data released by Reserve Bank of India showed a \$3.29 billion weekly increase, driven mainly by foreign currency assets. Reserves include FCAs, gold, SDRs, and the reserve tranche position with the International Monetary Fund. Exchange rate movements affect dollar valuation of non-US currency assets held. These buffers support import cover, investor confidence, and macroeconomic stability amid global volatility conditions worldwide.

Unsecured Retail Loan Slippages Rise Sharply: RBI FSR

Unsecured retail loan slippages rose to 53.1 percent of total retail slippages by September 2025, highlighting rising credit risk. Data from the Reserve Bank of India Financial Stability Report show higher stress in private, foreign and small finance banks, while public sector banks performed relatively better. Earlier rapid growth, diluted underwriting standards and multiple borrower exposures contributed to stress. RBI's higher risk weights aim to rebalance portfolios, with slippages expected to moderate gradually over coming quarters across system.



RBI Grants BRISKPE Final Cross Border PA Authorisation

Reserve Bank of India granted final authorisation to BRISKPE to operate as a Payment Aggregator Cross Border under the Payment and Settlement Systems Act 2007. The approval allows facilitation of inward and outward cross border payments within RBI's regulatory framework. Backed by Prosus, BRISKPE serves over 10,000 customers, mainly MSME exporters. The firm targets transaction volumes exceeding one billion dollars by end 2026, driven by deeper wallet share across the full trade cycle and growing export payment digitisation.

ICICI Bank Launches Capital Gains Account Scheme

ICICI Bank has launched the Capital Gains Account Scheme after authorisation from the Government of India. The scheme allows eligible taxpayers to deposit uninvested long-term capital gains or sale proceeds of specified assets to claim tax exemption. It enables interest earnings and reinvestment planning for up to three years. Effective from January 1, 2026, the facility is available to resident individuals and Hindu Undivided Families at ICICI Bank branches, excluding rural branches as per scheme rules.



Increasing Loan to Deposit Ratios Raise Liquidity Stress Concerns for Indian Banking Sector

India's banking sector loan-to-deposit ratio has climbed to record highs near 81 percent, signalling that banks are lending a larger share of deposits amid robust credit demand. This trend raises concerns about potential liquidity stress, as deposits are not growing at the same pace as credit, which could limit banks' ability to fund future lending and manage short-term obligations effectively. Financial experts warn sustained high ratios may prompt regulatory scrutiny and require strategic adjustments to maintain stability.

Siddaramaiah Emerges As Karnataka's Longest-Serving Chief Minister

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has become the state's longest-serving Chief Minister by surpassing the cumulative tenure of former leader D. Devaraj Urs, completing over 2,793 days in office across two terms. Siddaramaiah, a senior Congress leader, has served a full five-year term previously and is now midway through his current second term. He expressed confidence about serving the full term, though the final decision rests with the party high command. The Deputy Chief Minister extended best wishes.

Summits/MoUs/Conferences/Agreement

Prime Minister Unveils Sacred Piprahwa Relics at International Buddhist Exhibition

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Grand International Exposition of Sacred Piprahwa Relics in New Delhi, titled "The Light and the Lotus: Relics of the Awakened One." The display reunites Piprahwa relics associated with the Buddha after more than 120 years, including artefacts and gem reliquaries from historic excavations, alongside national museum collections. The exposition highlights India's civilisational and cultural link with early Buddhist heritage, offering public access to these spiritual treasures and deepening appreciation of ancient history and teachings.

India and Pakistan Reaffirm Non-Attack Understanding

India and Pakistan reaffirmed their mutual understanding to avoid initiating aggressive actions across their borders, reaffirming a non-attack commitment. Military leadership from both countries agreed not to fire shots or undertake hostile military operations across land, air, and sea frontiers. The commitment emphasises adherence to the ceasefire understanding and aims to reduce tensions along the borders. Both sides stressed de-escalation and maintaining stability while remaining prepared to defend sovereignty if necessary.



India Hosts IICDEM 2026 To Strengthen Global Cooperation In Democracy And Election Management

India will host the inaugural India International Conference on Democracy and Election Management (IICDEM) 2026 from January 21 to 23 at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi, convened by the Election Commission of India through the India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management. Nearly 100 delegates from around the world representing election management bodies will participate, facilitating dialogue on electoral practices, technology in elections and democratic resilience. The conference aims to foster international cooperation on election challenges and share best practices for inclusive democratic processes.



Science and tech/Space/Defence

Air Marshal S Shrinivas Assumes Charge As Head Of Indian Air Force Training Command

Air Marshal Seethepalli Shrinivas took over as the Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Training Command of the Indian Air Force on January 1, 2026. An alumnus of the National Defence Academy, he was commissioned in the fighter stream in 1987 and has logged over 4,200 flying hours across multiple aircraft types. Upon assuming command at Bengaluru, he paid tribute to fallen personnel at the Training Command War Memorial. He has held key instructional and command roles throughout his distinguished career.

Hyderabad Based Start-ups Develop Compact Satellite for Upcoming ISRO PSLV Mission

Hyderabad-based space startups TakeMe2Space and EON Space Labs have developed compact satellite systems slated for integration with an upcoming ISRO PSLV mission. The startups have tested and are shipping the mini-satellite and lightweight imaging payloads for launch from Sriharikota, showcasing India's growing private space tech ecosystem. These efforts reflect wider participation of nongovernmental players in satellite design and launch initiatives, aligning with national objectives to deepen private sector involvement in space innovation and expand indigenous capabilities.

Ministry of Electronics Approves 22 Projects Under Electronics Component Manufacturing Scheme

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology has approved 22 new projects under the Electronics Components Manufacturing Scheme, unlocking a projected investment of about 41,863 crore rupees. These projects span eleven target product segments including mobile phones, telecom equipment, consumer electronics, automotive components, strategic electronics and IT hardware. The approvals are expected to generate roughly 33,791 direct jobs and production worth over 2,58,000 crore rupees. The initiative strengthens domestic electronics manufacturing, boosts supply chain resilience and reduces import reliance.

Indian Army Declares 2026 Year of Data Networking

Indian Army declared 2026 as Year of Networking and Data Centricity to modernise operations. The initiative prioritises digital integration, seamless connectivity, and real time data sharing across commands, sensors, weapons, and logistics. It aims to improve situational awareness, accelerate decisions, and enhance combat effectiveness. Emphasising jointness and indigenisation, the Army will integrate legacy systems with indigenous secure networks. Building on 2024–25 technology absorption, the programme operationalises digital tools for future conflicts including cyber and information warfare domains globally.

Defence Research Body Designs Compact Water Purification System for Troops Deployed in Isolated Regions

India's Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has developed a compact portable water purification system, the Sea Water Desalination System (SWaDeS), to meet critical drinking water needs of troops deployed in remote, high-altitude and coastal regions. Designed by the Defence Laboratory in Jodhpur, it converts saline and brackish water into potable water. Available in manual and engine-operated variants, SWaDeS can support groups of soldiers in field operations where fresh water sources are scarce, enhancing self-sufficiency during extended deployments.



Axis Bank Introduces Safety Centre Platform To Strengthen Digital Banking Protection Systems

Axis Bank has launched a new digital security feature called Safety Centre on its mobile banking app to fortify customer protection against rising digital fraud. The platform empowers users with real-time controls to manage security settings such as blocking fund transfers, disabling internet banking, restricting UPI usage and preventing addition of new beneficiaries. It includes industry-first features like SMS Shield and granular toggles that allow customers to proactively tailor their digital banking safeguards, reducing dependency on call centres and improving fraud resilience.

Indian Army Establishes Bhairav Modern Warfare Unit With More Than One Lakh Trained Drone Operators

The Indian Army has established the Bhairav Modern Warfare Unit to address evolving battlefield demands, integrating over one lakh trained drone operators with specialised infantry battalions equipped for modern combat. These units are designed for rapid offensive and hybrid operations, including reconnaissance and targeting missions using unmanned aerial systems. Bhairav battalions bridge gaps between conventional infantry and elite Special Forces, enhancing multi-domain capabilities. About fifteen battalions have been raised, with plans to expand further to optimise responsiveness on sensitive borders.

New Reed Snake Species Named Calamaria Mizoramensis Identified In Mizoram

Scientists have identified a previously unknown reed snake species in Mizoram after resolving long-standing taxonomic confusion. The non-venomous snake, named *Calamaria mizoramensis* after the state where it was first found, was confirmed through detailed morphological study and DNA analysis showing significant genetic differences from known relatives. The discovery, published in a peer-reviewed scientific journal, enhances understanding of regional biodiversity and underscores the rich but underexplored reptile fauna of Northeast India and the need for continued ecological research there.

DRDO Marks 68th Foundation Day Highlighting Advances In Self Reliance Cyber Space And Artificial Intelligence

The Defence Research and Development Organisation celebrated its 68th Foundation Day by showcasing progress in indigenous defence technologies aligned with national self reliance goals. Emphasis was placed on advancements in missile systems, electronic warfare, cyber security, space technologies and artificial intelligence driven solutions. Senior officials highlighted DRDO's role in strengthening defence preparedness through innovation, indigenisation and industry collaboration. The organisation reaffirmed its commitment to supporting the armed forces with cutting edge systems while nurturing future capabilities in emerging technology domains critical to national security.

Sports

New Sports Legislation Set to Transform Administrative Framework of Indian Sports

The National Sports Governance Act, 2025 has begun its phased rollout from January 1, 2026, revamping the administrative structure of Indian sports. It establishes a statutory framework for national bodies like the National Olympic Committee, National Paralympic Committee, and National Sports Federations under a unified governance system. The Act provides for a National Sports Board to oversee affiliations and funding, and a National Sports Tribunal to resolve disputes, aiming to improve transparency, accountability and international connectivity.

Sjoerd Marijne Appointed Again as Head Coach of India Women's Hockey Side

Dutch coach Sjoerd Marijne has been reappointed as the chief coach of the Indian women's hockey team, returning after about four and a half years away from the role. Marijne previously led the team from 2017 to 2021, during which India achieved a historic fourth-place finish at the Tokyo Olympics and reached a top-ten world ranking. His return comes as the team prepares for key upcoming events, including the 2026 Women's World Cup Qualifiers and longer term development ahead of future international competitions.

Australia Breaks 134 Year Old Ashes Batting Record At Sydney Cricket Ground

On Day 3 of the fifth Ashes Test at the Sydney Cricket Ground, Australia produced a historic batting performance by creating seven partnerships of 50 or more runs, a record in the Ashes that had stood for 134 years. Travis Head scored 163 and Steve Smith remained unbeaten with 129 as Australia built a commanding first-innings lead of 134 runs over England. The effort showcased depth and consistency across the batting order and put Australia firmly in control of the match.



Miscellaneous

Stingless Bees Of The Amazon Recognised With Legal Protection Status

In a groundbreaking conservation development, stingless bees native to the Peruvian Amazon have been granted

formal legal rights by local authorities, representing a world first for insects. Municipal ordinances now recognise these pollinators as entities with rights to exist, thrive, maintain healthy populations, and live in habitats free from pollution and other harm. This legal protection aims to counter threats from deforestation, pesticides, habitat loss, and climate change, and supports both ecological balance and the wellbeing of Indigenous communities that depend on these species.

Study Reports Disappearance of 7 Galaxy Frog Species in Western Ghats Due to Tourism Pressure

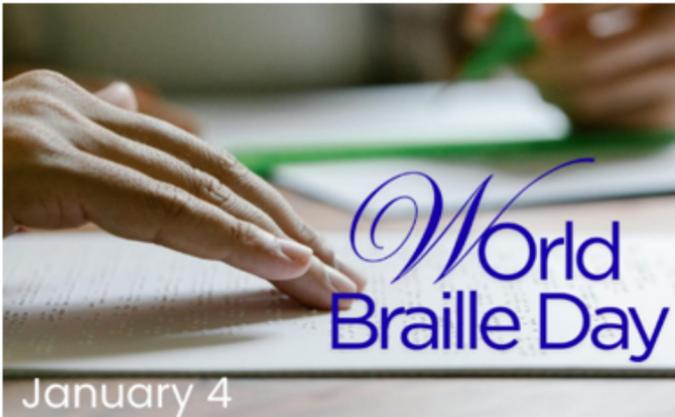
A recent study reports that seven rare galaxy frog individuals are presumed dead in the Western Ghats after repeated disturbances linked to photo tourism. Researchers monitoring the species found no trace of the frogs at a known habitat site, where photographers had overturned logs and trampled surrounding vegetation to capture images, seriously altering the microhabitat these tiny amphibians depend on. The galaxy frog, already vulnerable and endemic to Kerala's forests, faces heightened mortality and disrupted breeding due to human intrusion.



World Braille Day 2026 Promotes Inclusion Through Literacy

World Braille Day 2026, observed on January 4, highlights the role of Braille in ensuring education, dignity, and equality for persons with visual impairments. The day marks the birth anniversary of Louis Braille and was officially recognised by the United Nations in 2019. Braille remains essential despite digital advances, supporting literacy,

employment, safety, and independence. The observance urges governments and institutions to strengthen accessibility standards, inclusive education, and public awareness globally.



IDFC First Bank Introduces Zero Forex Diamond Reserve Credit Card For Global Transactions

IDFC FIRST Bank has launched the Zero-Forex Diamond Reserve Credit Card, a premium travel and lifestyle credit card designed for customers who frequently spend internationally, offering zero forex markup on foreign currency transactions. The card includes accelerated reward points on hotel and flight bookings, complimentary airport lounge access, golf benefits, travel insurance covers and other lifestyle rewards. It also features lifetime validity of reward points and digital application access through the bank's app, with fee waivers upon achieving qualifying annual spends.

General Insurance Council Appoints S Prakash As Chief Executive Officer To Strengthen Health Insurance Framework

The General Insurance Council has appointed S Prakash as Chief Executive Officer, Health Insurance Ecosystem and Strategic Partnerships, effective January 7, 2026, aiming to strengthen coordination across insurers, healthcare providers and regulators and support deeper digital integration in the health insurance sector. Prakash brings over three decades of medical and insurance leadership experience, tasked with improving transparency,

consistency in treatment protocols and claims processes and facilitating strategic partnerships. His mandate also includes streamlining customer journeys, addressing fraud and fostering ecosystem-level innovation through collaborative initiatives.



Federal Bank Introduces 'The Fortuna Wave' As Part Of Strategic Brand Modernisation Drive

Federal Bank has unveiled 'The Fortuna Wave' as a refreshed brand identity reflecting its transformation into a modern, technology-driven financial institution. The initiative represents agility, trust and customer centricity while aligning with evolving digital banking expectations. The redesign integrates contemporary visual elements with the bank's legacy values, aiming to strengthen emotional connect with customers. Through this strategic branding exercise, Federal Bank seeks to reinforce its future-ready outlook, enhance market recall and support its long-term growth strategy across digital and physical banking touchpoints.



Fortuna Wave



Fortuna Wave