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Weekly Current Affairs

English

National

Punjab National Bank Unveils PNB Soldierathon 2026 Before 132nd Foundation Day Celebrations

Punjab National Bank (PNB) has launched PNB Soldierathon 2026 ahead of its 132nd Foundation Day celebrations, marking the second edition of its flagship half-marathon. The event, themed Run with Soldiers, Run for Soldiers, honours Indian Armed Forces and promotes fitness, discipline, and national pride. Held on April 5 in Delhi, it brings together soldiers, veterans, citizens, youth, and fitness enthusiasts. The launch featured unveiling of the theme, T-shirt, and medal, reinforcing PNB's commitment to nation-building and community engagement.



Kerala Introduces Stthree Suraksha Scheme Covering Over Ten Lakh Women Beneficiaries

The Kerala government has launched the Stthree Suraksha Scheme, a welfare initiative providing monthly financial assistance of 1,000 rupees to economically disadvantaged women and trans women aged 35 to 60 years who are not covered by other social security programmes. Within hours of launch, more than ten lakh beneficiaries received the first instalment directly into their bank accounts, underscoring swift implementation. The scheme forms part of broader efforts to empower women socially and economically and enhance their financial security across the state.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi Launches Seva Teerth, Emphasises Governance Rooted In Public Service

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the newly built Seva Teerth complex in New Delhi, officially relocating the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) along with the National Security Council Secretariat and Cabinet Secretariat to a modern, citizen-centred administrative hub. The move from the century-old South Block is part of the broader Central Vista redevelopment and aims to consolidate key offices, enhance operational efficiency, and reinforce governance focused on public service and accessibility. The event also included inauguration of Kartavya Bhavan 1 and 2 for key ministries.

RBI Tightens Lending Framework For REITs And InvITs

The Reserve Bank of India has proposed a stricter lending framework for banks extending credit to Real Estate Investment Trusts and Infrastructure Investment Trusts. Draft guidelines require that banks lend only to listed REITs and InvITs with at least three years of operation, positive cash flows, and clean regulatory records. Exposure limits, asset value caps and rigorous monitoring of end use of funds are part of the norms. The draft is open for public feedback before final issuance, aimed at promoting prudent financing and reducing systemic risk.



RBI Raises Bank Mergers And Acquisitions Financing Cap To 20 Percent Of Tier-1 Capital

The Reserve Bank of India has finalised new acquisition financing norms that allow banks to fund mergers and acquisitions up to 20 percent of their the initially

of Tier-1 capital. Under the rules effective April 1, 2026, banks can finance both listed and unlisted company acquisitions and refinance target debt, provided borrowers meet strict criteria including net worth and profitability requirements. The framework also preserves risk safeguards while broadening banks' involvement in deal financing opportunities.

Rajasthan Unveils Budget 2026–27 With Emphasis On Fiscal Prudence And Growth

The Rajasthan government presented its ₹6.11 lakh crore budget for 2026–27 focusing on growth, infrastructure, renewable energy, water security, healthcare and job creation. It aims to expand capital spending, strengthen connectivity and improve social services while keeping financial discipline intact. Key sectors like education, clean water access and entrepreneurship receive higher funding. Rural development, farmer support and solar park development are emphasised. The plan balances expanded investment with fiscal governance to sustain long-term development and strengthen overall economic prospects of the state.



Uttar Pradesh Presents First Economic Survey, Targets One Trillion Dollar Economy

Uttar Pradesh has released its first-ever Economic Survey ahead of the Budget session, outlining recent growth, investment trends and future targets as the state aims to become a one trillion dollar economy. The survey shows UP's gross state domestic product more than doubled over eight years with strong compound annual growth and rising per capita income. It also highlights expanded infrastructure

projects, rising investor confidence and efforts to improve social services, with projected continued expansion to strengthen economic performance and competitiveness.



Reserve Bank of India Raises Bank Merger and Acquisition Funding Cap to 20 Percent of Tier One Capital

The Reserve Bank of India has finalised new rules allowing banks to finance corporate mergers and acquisitions by increasing the exposure cap to 20 percent of Tier One capital from the earlier proposed 10 percent, set to take effect from April 1, 2026. This change permits lenders to support both listed and unlisted company acquisitions and refinance existing debts, enhancing credit growth avenues. Banks can lend up to 75 percent of the acquisition value, with stricter criteria to ensure financial prudence.



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V.O. Chidambaranar Port Authority Earns IGBC Platinum and Shunya Ratings for Green Infrastructure

The V.O. Chidambaranar Port Authority in Thoothukudi has become the first major Indian port to receive the Indian Green Building Council Platinum rating and Bureau of Energy Efficiency Shunya certifications for its sustainable infrastructure. The port's administration building features rooftop solar power, IoT-enabled water management, rainwater harvesting and on-site wastewater reuse, cutting potable water use by 37 per cent. Several buildings are net zero or net positive energy certified, and the campus prioritises health, accessibility and over 70 per cent green cover.

Reliance Industries Receives United States Approval to Import Crude Oil from Venezuela

India's largest private refiner, Reliance Industries Limited (RIL), has been granted a general licence by the United States government, enabling it to directly purchase crude oil from Venezuela without breaching US sanctions. This approval marks a shift in sanctions policy after recent geopolitical developments, and allows Reliance to diversify its crude supply sources, including Venezuelan heavy crude that suits its Jamnagar refinery. The move may reduce reliance on other sources and optimise refining margins as global oil markets adjust.

Rajasthan Emerges as India's Leading Wool Producer in 2026 with 47.5 Percent Contribution

In the fiscal year 2024–25, Rajasthan emerged as India's top wool producing state, contributing about 47.5 percent of the nation's total wool output of roughly 33.7 million kilograms. The state's arid climate, extensive grazing lands, and predominant wool-oriented sheep breeds underpin this dominance, which far exceeds contributions from other states like Jammu and Kashmir and Karnataka. The wool industry continues to support rural livelihoods and is crucial for carpet and textile sectors across the country.



Oil India Limited Honoured with FIPI Award 2025

Oil India Limited has been honoured with the FIPI Award 2025 for Oil and Gas Production Company of the Year in the category of companies producing more than one million tonnes of oil equivalent per year. The Federation of Indian Petroleum Industry presented this award during India Energy Week in Goa, attended by senior officials from the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas. The recognition reflects Oil India's strong performance, expanded exploration, improved recovery from mature fields, adoption of advanced technologies, and contribution to strengthening India's energy security.

Uday Kotak Takes Charge as Chairman of GIFT City

Veteran Indian banker Uday Suresh Kotak has been appointed as the new Chairman of Gujarat International Finance Tec-City Company Limited (GIFT City) by the Gujarat government, with immediate effect. He succeeds Dr Hasmukh Adhia, who stepped down from the role. Kotak is the founder of Kotak Mahindra Bank and brings decades of experience in financial services and corporate governance to the position. GIFT City, India's first operational smart city and International Financial Services Centre, aims to enhance India's standing as a global financial hub.

Delhi Government Launches Initiative to Connect Artisans with International Markets

The Delhi government approved the Chief Minister Skill Development Scheme to empower traditional artisans engaged in khadi, handloom, cottage industries and the unorganised sector by providing structured training, stipends and toolkits. Training includes entrepreneurship

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components and focuses on skill upgrading. A key feature is digital onboarding to platforms such as the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) with e-catalogues to showcase products across domestic and international markets, aimed at boosting livelihoods and linking craftspersons to global demand.

India's wholesale price inflation rises to 1.81 percent in January, highest in ten months

India's wholesale price inflation climbed to 1.81 percent in January 2026, marking the highest rate in ten months as factory gate prices increased across sectors. The rise was mainly driven by costlier vegetables, basic metals, textiles and other manufactured products, while fuel and power prices continued to decline year-on-year. Food inflation also rebounded after being flat in December. This sustained upward trend could shape future inflation expectations and monetary policy decisions.

North and South Block buildings to be converted into Yuge Yugeen Bharat national museum

The Union Cabinet has approved a plan to transform the historic North and South Block buildings in New Delhi into part of the 'Yuge Yugeen Bharat National Museum' under the Central Vista redevelopment project. Government offices currently housed in these century-old British-era buildings are being relocated to new facilities such as Seva Teerth and Kartavya Bhavans. The transition reflects a shift from administrative use to cultural preservation and public access.

Union Cabinet approves Startup India Fund of Funds 2.0 worth 10000 crore rupees

The Union Cabinet has approved the Startup India Fund of Funds 2.0 (FoF 2.0) with a corpus of Rs 10,000 crore aimed at mobilising domestic long-term capital for India's startup ecosystem. The initiative builds on the original fund and focuses on providing patient capital to deep-tech ventures, early-stage enterprises, and technology-driven manufacturing startups. It is expected to bridge funding gaps, strengthen the venture capital environment, and support innovation-led entrepreneurship across regions beyond major metropolitan centres to fuel growth.

Assam inaugurates Kumar Bhaskar Varma Setu with emergency landing facility

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Kumar Bhaskar Varma Setu over the Brahmaputra River in Assam, a major bridge connecting Guwahati with North Guwahati and cutting travel time significantly. Alongside the bridge, the Northeast's first Emergency Landing Facility (ELF) was opened on a national highway, enhancing strategic and civilian connectivity. These infrastructure projects are part of a broader development push in the region that also includes digital and transport initiatives aimed at improving mobility and economic growth.



Sadhguru Introduces Bhavya Bharat Bhushan Honour During Mahashivaratri Event

At the Mahashivaratri celebrations, spiritual leader Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev unveiled the new national honour called the Bhavya Bharat Bhushan Award to recognise individuals with outstanding contributions across fields such as national security, arts, literature, science, sports, and social welfare. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh felicitated awardees for their exemplary service to society and nation building. The initiative aims to celebrate excellence, inspire public spirit, and highlight diverse achievements that strengthen India's cultural, intellectual, and developmental fabric during the festival gathering.



Droupadi Murmu Launches Centenary Celebrations Of Ol Chiki Script In Delhi

President Droupadi Murmu inaugurated the centenary celebrations of the Ol Chiki script in New Delhi, marking 100 years since its creation for the Santali language by Pandit Raghunath Murmu in 1925. Organised by the Ministry of Culture, the event highlighted the script's importance for preserving linguistic heritage and strengthening cultural identity among the Santal community. Murmu urged wider promotion of Santali education in Ol Chiki, encouraged literature translation, and released a commemorative coin and postage stamp to honour the occasion.

Sugar Shipments Surpass Two Lakh Tonnes In 2025 To 26 Marketing Season

India's sugar exports crossed two lakh tonnes by February in the 2025–26 marketing year, with shipments reaching about 2,01,547 tonnes according to the All India Sugar Trade Association (AISTA). The United Arab Emirates was the largest destination, followed by Afghanistan, Djibouti, and Bhutan. The central government has authorised a total of two million tonnes of sugar exports for the season, including an extra 500,000 tonnes allocation. White sugar made up the majority of shipments.

Arunachal Pradesh's major hydel project has been extended and will now continue operations until 2037

The 1,750 MW Demwe Lower Hydroelectric Project in Arunachal Pradesh has received an environmental clearance extension till 2037, approved by the Environment Ministry's expert panel, citing litigation delays. The move revived debate because an earlier

had set aside its wildlife clearance. The project, involving large forest diversion in the Lohit basin, raises biodiversity concerns, especially for the White-Bellied Heron habitat. Critics question legal compliance, ecological reassessment, and use of the new "zero period" litigation rule.

Indian Overseas Bank introduces a new online portal for death claim settlement

Indian Overseas Bank has introduced an Online Death Claim Settlement Portal to make claim processing simpler, faster, and more transparent for families. The platform enables online submission, document upload, and real-time tracking, reducing branch visits. For claims up to Rs. 15 lakh, the bank offers simplified procedures with minimal documentation and a 15-day processing timeline. Alongside this, IOB launched a new digital-first corporate website, highlighting its commitment to compassionate, efficient, and technology-driven customer service and improved financial accessibility.

National Green Tribunal approves the Rs. 81,000-crore Great Nicobar project with strict environmental conditions

National Green Tribunal approved the Rs. 81,000 crore Great Nicobar Island infrastructure project, upholding its environmental clearance while imposing strict safeguards. The tribunal emphasised balancing strategic national interests with ecological protection, mandating measures to protect coral reefs, beaches, wildlife, and tribal communities. The project includes a transshipment terminal, airport, township, and power plant aimed at strengthening maritime strategy and economic growth. Despite approval, concerns remain over biodiversity, seismic risks, and impacts on indigenous groups and forests.

NHAI launches India's first Bee Corridors initiative to support pollinator conservation

The National Highways Authority of India has launched a Bee Corridor initiative along national highways to promote pollinator conservation and sustainable infrastructure. The project will replace ornamental plantations with native, nectar-rich species to create continuous flowering habitats for bees and other pollinators. Planned for 2026–27, it includes planting

By supporting biodiversity, improving pollination, and restoring ecological balance, the initiative aligns highway expansion with long-term environmental sustainability.

PM Modi launched the India AI Impact Summit 2026 and introduced the M.A.N.A.V. vision for advancing artificial intelligence in India

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the India AI Impact Summit 2026 at Bharat Mandapam, calling AI a defining force in human progress. Addressing global leaders, he unveiled the M.A.N.A.V framework promoting ethical, accountable, sovereign, inclusive, and legitimate AI governance. Emphasizing democratization, he urged global collaboration to prevent monopolies and ensure AI benefits the Global South. Highlighting risks like deepfakes, he proposed transparency measures. The summit reinforces India's ambition to lead responsible, human-centric artificial intelligence worldwide.

Gujarat introduces a landmark bill aimed at expanding women's participation in the workforce

The Gujarat Assembly unanimously passed the Gujarat Shops and Establishments (Amendment) Bill, 2026, permitting women to work night shifts with consent and mandatory safety measures. The law increases daily working hours from nine to ten while retaining the 48-hour weekly cap and mandatory breaks. Overtime limits rise to 144 hours per quarter with double wages ensured. Replacing a prior ordinance, the amendment aims to enhance flexibility for businesses while safeguarding employee welfare and rights.

India enters into a five-year agreement with the World Food Programme

India has signed a five-year pact with the United Nations World Food Programme to supply up to 200,000 metric tonnes of rice for global hunger relief. The agreement, signed between the Food Corporation of India and WFP, ensures stable pricing and timely delivery for crisis-affected regions. As the world's largest rice exporter, India strengthens its humanitarian role, supporting food security efforts amid conflicts and climate shocks while reinforcing leadership across the Global South.

Kerala designates tidal flooding as a state-specific disaster, marking a significant policy decision

Kerala has declared tidal flooding a State-specific disaster, enabling relief under the SDRF. Recurrent sea ingress from the Arabian Sea affects low-lying coastal areas, especially during spring tides. Regions like Kuttanad and Kochi are highly vulnerable. Invoking provisions of the Disaster Management Act, the State recognised that repeated high-tide flooding causes significant loss to life and livelihoods, ensuring compensation and formal disaster response support.



International

Indian Doctors Honoured With Chang-Crandall Humanitarian Award 2026 In Washington DC

Two senior ophthalmologists from the Aravind Eye Care System, Dr Haripriya Aravind and Dr R. Venkatesh, have been selected for the prestigious Chang-Crandall Humanitarian Award 2026 for their extraordinary work in combating cataract blindness and expanding access to affordable eye care. The award will be presented at the American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery Foundation conference in Washington DC in April 2026. The recognition celebrates their compassionate service and remarkable contributions to eye health for underserved communities worldwide.

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Barbados PM Mia Mottley Wins Third Consecutive Term In Office

Prime Minister Mia Amor Mottley of Barbados has secured a third consecutive term after her Barbados Labour Party achieved a complete victory in the recent general election, winning all 30 seats in the House of Assembly. The clean sweep highlights strong domestic support for her leadership and policy vision. In her victory speech she emphasised reducing poverty and advancing public services. The opposition leader conceded defeat. International leaders have extended congratulations, and Mottley's government plans to continue work on national priorities.



Vast Space Partners With NASA For Private International Space Station Mission

NASA has selected California-based space company Vast to conduct its first private astronaut mission to the International Space Station, marking the sixth private human spaceflight mission overall and a significant collaboration between a private firm and the space agency. The launch, scheduled no earlier than summer 2027 from Florida, will use SpaceX's Crew Dragon spacecraft and focus on scientific research and technology demonstrations in microgravity. The mission aims to help Vast develop capabilities needed for future commercial space station projects and advance private space exploration efforts.

Veteran Singer Joe Simon Dies Following Cardiac Arrest During KFCC Gathering

Veteran Kannada filmmaker and singer Joe Simon died at age 80 after suffering a sudden cardiac arrest while attending an executive meeting at the Karnataka Film

Chamber of Commerce (KFCC) in Bengaluru on February 13, 2026. He collapsed shortly after participating in discussions and was rushed to hospital, where he was pronounced dead. Simon had a prolific career spanning more than five decades in the Kannada film industry, contributing to over 100 films as a director, actor and writer, and earning widespread respect from colleagues and fans.

David J. Farber passes away, remembered for shaping global digital systems

David J. Farber, the pioneering American computer scientist widely known as the "grandfather of the internet," died at the age of 91 on February 7, 2026, in Tokyo, Japan, from heart failure. His foundational work helped merge computing and telecommunications, laying groundwork for modern networking. Farber played a key role in early research networks and mentored future architects of core internet technologies such as the Internet Protocol and Domain Name System. He was a distinguished professor at Keio University until shortly before his death.

Tarique Rahman Sworn In As Prime Minister Of Bangladesh, Leads Bangladesh Nationalist Party Government

Tarique Rahman was sworn in as the Prime Minister of Bangladesh on February 17, 2026, following his party's decisive victory in recent parliamentary elections. The ceremony at the South Plaza of the Jatiya Sangsad in Dhaka, administered by the President, marked the Bangladesh Nationalist Party's return to power after nearly two decades. Rahman, returning from long exile, leads a new government with a fresh cabinet of ministers. The elections reflect a significant political shift and renewal of democratic governance.



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Iran briefly closed the Strait of Hormuz during talks with the United States

Iran temporarily closed the Strait of Hormuz during live-fire military drills as indirect nuclear talks with the United States continued in Geneva. The move highlighted rising regional tensions and the strategic importance of the route that carries nearly one-fifth of global oil supplies. While leaders signalled both warning and diplomacy, markets reacted cautiously as negotiations showed limited progress. The episode underscored ongoing risks to energy security, maritime stability, and the fragile balance between confrontation and diplomatic engagement.

Mumbai will host Prince William's Earthshot Prize 2026 alongside Climate Week events

Mumbai will host the The Earthshot Prize 2026, founded by Prince William, marking a major boost to India's climate leadership. The award grants £1 million each to five global innovators advancing environmental solutions. Announced during Mumbai Climate Week, attended by leaders including Hillary Clinton, the event highlights India's commitment to sustainability, green innovation, and its growing influence in global climate action.

Ranks/Reports/Indices

NITI Aayog Publishes Sixth Edition Of Trade Watch Quarterly Report

NITI Aayog released the sixth edition of its Trade Watch Quarterly publication, analysing India's trade performance, trends and sectoral dynamics. The report highlights that merchandise exports grew in the second quarter of the fiscal year while trade deficits with free trade agreement partners continued, pointing to uneven export performances across regions. It underscores the need for structural interventions to boost trade competitiveness, increase value addition in sectors like electronics, and strengthen e-commerce export potential. The quarterly insights aim to support evidence-based policymaking and export strategy formulation.

RBI Digital Payments Index Climbs to 516.76 Reflecting Rapid Expansion of Cashless Transactions

The Reserve Bank of India's Digital Payments Index (DPI) rose to 516.76 as of September 2025, up from 493.22 in March 2025, reflecting rapid expansion of India's digital payment ecosystem. Growth was driven by improvements in payment infrastructure, performance, and adoption across the country. The index, which uses March 2018 as the base year, measures the depth and penetration of digital transactions, indicating strong nationwide uptake of cashless payment methods.

India's passport jumps ten ranks in 2026 global ranking despite reduced visa free access

India's passport has climbed ten positions in the latest global passport rankings, moving to the 75th spot in the 2026 Henley Passport Index even as the number of destinations Indians can enter without a prior visa slightly declined. Indian citizens can now travel to 56 countries visa-free or with visa-on-arrival, but changes in visa policies by some nations reduced access from last year's count. The rise reflects India's relatively better performance versus other countries' mobility changes.

State Bank of India Study Highlights All Time High Currency Circulation Despite Digital Expansion

A recent State Bank of India (SBI) Research report revealed that currency in circulation in India reached a record high of approximately forty lakh crore rupees by January 2026 end, despite rapid growth in digital payments. The currency-to-GDP ratio has declined, indicating that digital transactions now fund a larger share of economic activity even as absolute cash levels rise. The trend shows that both physical cash and digital payments are expanding simultaneously in the economy.



Summits/MoUs/Conferences/Agreement

Bharat Bodhan AI Conclave 2026 Begins At Bharat Mandapam In New Delhi

The Bharat Bodhan AI Conclave 2026 has commenced at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi as a national platform to promote collaboration in adopting artificial intelligence across India's education ecosystem. Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan inaugurated the event, which includes discussions on scalable and responsible AI solutions for schools, higher education, and skilling. The conclave also saw the launch of the Bodhan AI Centre of Excellence and the showcasing of innovations and institutional partnerships aimed at transforming the learning and research landscape.

Agneevasthraa Enters Agreement With Indian Army To Develop Advanced Carbon Material Solutions

Tamil Nadu-based company Agneevasthraa Private Limited has signed a strategic agreement with the Indian Army to design and supply advanced carbon fabrics and high-performance composite materials for critical defence applications. The partnership aims to reduce reliance on foreign imports by building indigenous manufacturing capabilities for specialised materials used in missiles, rockets, and other defence systems. This development supports the broader national objective of boosting domestic defence production, lowering costs, conserving foreign exchange, and strengthening self-reliance in strategic sectors.

India Conducts First BRICS Sherpas Meeting Of 2026, Focuses On Key Priorities During Chairship

India hosted the first BRICS Sherpas and Sous Sherpas Meeting of its 2026 Chairship in New Delhi from February 9–10, bringing together representatives from member and partner nations. Chaired by India's BRICS Sherpa Sudhakar Dalela, discussions outlined priorities for India's chairship, including resilience, innovation, cooperation, and sustainability across sectors such as health, agriculture, environment, security, and culture. The meeting also highlighted people-centric engagement through sports, youth, and civil society initiatives, laying groundwork for the year's collaborative agenda.

J. P. Nadda To Introduce SAHI And BODH Initiatives At India AI Summit

Union Health Minister J. P. Nadda unveiled two national AI initiatives at the India AI Impact Summit in New Delhi. The Strategy for Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare for India (SAHI) is a national framework to govern safe, ethical, inclusive and evidence-based use of artificial intelligence in healthcare. The Benchmarking Open Data Platform for Health AI (BODH) is a privacy-preserving evaluation platform developed with IIT Kanpur to rigorously test AI models before deployment, strengthening trust, transparency and quality assurance in health AI.



BioAsia 2026 Summit kicks off in Hyderabad

A. Revanth Reddy will inaugurate BioAsia 2026 at the Hyderabad International Convention Centre, highlighting Telangana's rise as a global life-sciences and TechBio hub. The summit theme focuses on AI, automation, and digital transformation in biotechnology, drug discovery, and healthcare. Bringing together global experts, industry leaders, and policymakers, the event promotes collaboration, innovation, and investment in biotech and pharmaceuticals. Under the vision of "Telangana Rising 2047," the conference aims to strengthen Hyderabad's position as a world-class centre for advanced life-sciences research.

Science and tech/Space/Defence

Reserve Bank Of India Expands Kisan Credit Card Guidelines To Include Agri-Tech And Enhanced Loan Limits

The Reserve Bank of India has released draft revisions to the Kisan Credit Card (KCC) scheme, proposing broader eligibility and updated operational norms that reflect

modern agricultural needs. Under the draft, expenses on agri-technology such as soil testing, weather forecasting, and organic certification qualify as eligible components. Crop seasons and tenures are standardised to align loan repayment with farming cycles. Drawing limits will match actual cultivation costs, and collateral waiver provisions support small and marginal farmers. Public feedback is invited by March 6, 2026.

Indian Navy Takes Charge Of Combined Task Force 154 For Maritime Security Operations

The Indian Navy has assumed command of Combined Task Force 154 (CTF 154), a multinational training task force under the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF), marking the first time India leads this unit. The change of command ceremony took place on February 11 at CMF headquarters in Manama, Bahrain, with Commodore Milind M. Mokashi taking over from his Italian Navy counterpart. CTF 154 focuses on enhancing maritime security and capacity building through training initiatives across member nations, reflecting India's rising role in collaborative maritime operations.

India plans strategic underground railway through Siliguri Corridor region

India is planning to build an underground railway line along the Siliguri Corridor, a narrow land strip connecting the northeastern states with the rest of the country. The corridor, also known as the "Chicken's Neck," spans about 20–40 kilometres and is widely seen as a strategic vulnerability due to its proximity to international borders. The project aims to enhance connectivity, strengthen security logistics, and reduce risks from external threats while supporting disaster response and uninterrupted movement of goods and passengers.

Government clears under river road and rail tunnel infrastructure project

The Union Cabinet approved a Rs 18,662-crore underwater road-and-rail tunnel project under the Brahmaputra River in Assam to connect Gohpur and Numaligarh via a four-lane access-controlled corridor. The project includes a 15.79 km twin-tube tunnel, cutting travel distance from 240 km to about 34 km and

It is expected to boost multimodal connectivity, enhance freight efficiency, generate substantial employment, and support strategic logistics for the Northeast region once completed.



MILAN Village Established In Visakhapatnam As Indian Navy Begins Exercise Milan 2026

The Indian Navy inaugurated the MILAN Village in Visakhapatnam ahead of Exercise MILAN 2026 to create a social and cultural exchange hub for delegates and naval personnel from over seventy friendly countries participating in the multinational maritime exercise. The village features cultural performances, artisan stalls, traditional cuisine, and displays of regional crafts to showcase India's rich heritage. Part of a broader sequence of engagements including the International Fleet Review and Indian Ocean Naval Symposium, the initiative fosters camaraderie beyond professional naval cooperation.



Narendra Modi Presents India AI Impact Expo 2026 Signalling Major Technology Push

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the India AI Impact Summit and Expo 2026 in New Delhi, marking a major push in artificial intelligence and technology engagement. The event at Bharat Mandapam hosts global leaders, innovators, startups, and policymakers to explore AI's role in health, economy, governance and inclusive development. Modi emphasised AI's potential for public good, outlined investments in skilling and innovation, and highlighted India's ambition to democratise technology and strengthen its ecosystem with sustainable, ethical and large-scale AI solutions.

India and France jointly launched the H125 helicopter project under the leadership of their top leaders

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and French President Emmanuel Macron inaugurated India's first private helicopter manufacturing facility in Karnataka for H125 helicopters, developed through an Airbus-Tata partnership. The plant will support domestic and export markets, boosting Aatmanirbhar Bharat in aerospace. Alongside C295 aircraft production, the project deepens India-France defence cooperation, promotes co-manufacturing, creates skilled jobs, and strengthens India's role in global aerospace supply chains, emergency services, and high-altitude aviation technology through indigenous production and strategic collaboration.

Google unveils a 15 billion USD America-India Connect

At the India AI Impact Summit 2026, Google unveiled a 15 billion USD, five-year America-India Connect initiative to boost digital and AI links between India and the US. The plan includes a new subsea gateway in Vizag, multiple international cable routes, and fibre networks to expand bandwidth and reliability. The investment strengthens cloud computing, AI development, and digital trade. Google also announced an AI healthcare collaboration with AIIMS, highlighting India's growing role in global artificial intelligence innovation.

Sports

India Dominates Asian Rifle And Pistol Championship 2026 With 94 Medals

India finished at the top of the medal table at the Asian Rifle and Pistol Championship 2026 in New Delhi, securing a commanding total of ninety-four medals, including fifty-one gold, twenty-three silver, and twenty bronze. The host nation showcased dominance across multiple events, with shooters sweeping podiums in several finals and achieving strong team results. The championship concluded at the Dr. Karni Singh Shooting Range, highlighting the depth and competitive strength of the Indian shooting contingent in both individual and team categories.



Indian Army To Organise First International Military Adventure Challenge Cup 2026

The Indian Army will host the inaugural International Military Adventure Challenge Cup (IMACC) 2026 from February 18 to 23 in the Eastern Himalayas, bringing together military teams from seven friendly nations including Bhutan, Brazil, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Saudi Arabia. The week-long event will test physical endurance, mental resilience, teamwork and decision-making in challenging mountain terrain through adventure and field skill tasks. Indian participants include the Indian Army, Air Force, Coast Guard, and Indo-Tibetan Border Police, highlighting defence cooperation and military diplomacy.

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Lucas Pinheiro Braathen wins Brazil's first Winter Olympics medal

Brazilian alpine skier Lucas Pinheiro Braathen made history at the 2026 Winter Olympics by winning the men's giant slalom gold, securing Brazil's first ever medal at a Winter Games and marking a historic first for any South American nation. He finished with a combined time of 2 minutes 25 seconds, edging out Swiss competitors. Born in Norway and representing Brazil, Braathen's victory reflects his determination and diverse sporting journey, inspiring fans and athletes globally in winter sports.

Magnus Carlsen clinches 2026 FIDE Freestyle World Championship title

Magnus Carlsen of Norway has won the 2026 FIDE Freestyle Chess World Championship, defeating American Fabiano Caruana 2.5–1.5 in the final held in Weissenhaus, Germany. Carlsen secured the title by turning a difficult position into a win in the third game and drawing the fourth, marking his 21st world title across formats and the first official Freestyle Chess World Championship recognised by FIDE. Both finalists qualified for the next year's championship, while Nodirbek Abdusattorov finished third.

Paras Dogra From Jammu and Kashmir Achieves Rare Cricketing Distinction

Paras Dogra, captain of the Jammu and Kashmir cricket team, became only the second player in the Ranji Trophy's 92-year history to score 10,000 runs in the competition. He achieved this rare feat during Jammu and Kashmir's semi-final match, joining former India opener Wasim Jaffer as the only players to accomplish this in India's premier domestic first-class tournament. Dogra reached the mark in his 147th Ranji appearance, underscoring a prolific domestic career marked by consistency and leadership.

Smriti Mandhana Named BBC Indian Sportswoman Of The Year 2025

Cricket star Smriti Mandhana was named the BBC Indian Sportswoman of the Year for 2025 in recognition of her outstanding performances, including a key role in India's triumph at the 2025 Women's Cricket World Cup and leading her franchise to a second Women's Premier League title. The award was decided by a

presented at a ceremony where Mandhana's mother accepted on her behalf as she continues touring with the national team in Australia.



Tejaswin Shankar wins gold in the men's heptathlon for India

Tejaswin Shankar won India's only gold medal at the Asian Indoor Athletics Championships 2026 in Tianjin by claiming the men's heptathlon title with a national indoor record of 5,993 points. His performance surpassed his previous best and highlighted India's progress in multi-event athletics. India finished sixth overall with five medals, including silvers by Pooja and Tajinderpal Singh Toor, and a bronze by Ancy Sojan. Host nation China topped the medal table.

J&K cricket reaches the Ranji Trophy final for the first time in 66 years

Jammu & Kashmir reached their maiden Ranji Trophy final after a dramatic six-wicket semifinal win over Bengal at Kalyani, ending a 66-year wait. Chasing a modest target, they recovered from 71-4 through Abdul Samad's brisk 30, adding to his vital first-innings 82, and a composed finish by Vanshaj Sharma. Despite early strikes from Mohammed Shami, J&K held nerve. Their consistent recent performances against strong teams underline a remarkable rise in India's domestic cricket landscape.



Miscellaneous

India Emerges As World's Second Largest Smartphone Market With Record User Base

India has become the world's second-largest smartphone market, trailing only China in terms of active installed base of devices, according to industry data for 2025. The country now has over 740 million active smartphones in use, supported by rising consumer demand, longer device retention, and robust market dynamics that include strong uptake of advanced models and enhanced digital connectivity. This reflects India's deepening digital ecosystem and growing role in global technology consumption and manufacturing.



World Health Organization Approves New NOPV2 Vaccine For Global Polio Fight

The World Health Organization has prequalified a new novel oral polio vaccine type 2 (nOPV2), confirming it meets global safety and quality standards, enabling United Nations agencies like UNICEF to procure and distribute it worldwide. The vaccine is engineered to be more genetically stable than earlier oral vaccines, reducing the risk of vaccine-derived outbreaks while effectively halting virus transmission. This approval strengthens the global arsenal against polio, supporting immunisation campaigns to protect children and accelerate eradication efforts in regions still facing transmission risks.

Naga Community Prohibits Pangolin Hunting in Nagaland to Strengthen Wildlife Protection

The United Sangtam Likhum Pumji, the apex tribal body of the Sangtam Naga community in Nagaland, has passed a resolution banning the hunting of pangolins within its territory, reinforcing indigenous conservation efforts. The move aims to curb illegal wildlife trade and protect endangered pangolin species that are heavily trafficked for their scales and meat, particularly near the India-Myanmar border. Community members and conservationists view this as a significant step towards grassroots biodiversity protection led by tribal governance.

Devendra Fadnavis inaugurates Mumbai's first-ever Climate Week with a grand launch

Mumbai launched its first climate week at the Jio World Convention Centre, inaugurated by Devendra Fadnavis, focusing on practical climate action and solutions for the Global South. Organised by Project Mumbai with support from the Maharashtra government and Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation, the event promotes urban resilience and renewable energy. Prahlad Joshi announced 1 lakh additional solar pumps under PM Kusum. Leaders emphasised climate-responsible growth, renewable expansion, and inclusive community participation across the city.



Kuno National Park reports a rise in its cheetah population, reaching 38

Kuno National Park recorded three new cheetah cub births, raising India's total cheetah population to 38 under Project Cheetah. Announced by Bhupender Yadav, the cubs were born to Gamini, a South African cheetah, marking her second successful litter. The achievement highlights improving adaptation and breeding success since reintroduction began in 2022. With nine successful litters and 27 surviving Indian-born cubs, the programme signals progress toward ecological restoration, grassland revival, and long-term cheetah conservation in India.

India achieves a Guinness World Record for the highest number of AI pledges made within 24 hours

India set a Guinness World Record at the India AI Impact Summit 2026 by gathering 2,50,946 pledges for responsible AI use within 24 hours. Announced by Ashwini Vaishnaw, the campaign—under the IndiaAI Mission with Intel India—encouraged citizens, especially students, to commit to ethical, transparent, and accountable AI practices. Verified at Bharat Mandapam, the achievement reflects growing public awareness and reinforces India's commitment to trustworthy and inclusive artificial intelligence governance.

Shivaji Maharaj Jayanti 2026

Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Jayanti 2026 will be celebrated on 19 February across India, especially in Maharashtra, to honour the founder of the Maratha Empire. The day commemorates his military brilliance,

historic sites like Raigad Fort host cultural events and tributes. The celebration highlights his leadership, religious harmony, and enduring inspiration for courage, justice, and self-governance.

A new species of pistol shrimp has been identified in the Kochi backwaters

Researchers from Cochin University of Science and Technology discovered a new pistol shrimp species, *Alpheus madhusoodanai*, in Kochi's backwaters — the first alpheid shrimp recorded from this estuary. Named after Prof. B. Madhusoodana Kurup, it was identified using morphological and molecular techniques. Found in mangrove-linked habitats, the species aids sediment health through burrowing activity. Though not commercially valuable, it holds ecological and scientific importance, highlighting India's coastal biodiversity and the need for deeper research on Alpheidae species.

