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IMPORTANT ONE LINERS

NATIONAL

DGCA Slaps ₹22.2 Crore Penalty on IndiGo

In the News: The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), India's civil aviation regulator, levied a penalty of ₹22.2 crore on IndiGo for large-scale flight disruptions in December 2025. More than 2,500 flights were cancelled and over 1,800 were delayed between December 3 and 5, 2025, affecting more than three lakh passengers across the country. The regulator also ordered the airline to furnish a ₹50 crore bank guarantee and issued warnings to senior executives including CEO Pieter Elbers.

Key Points:

- **Scale of Disruption:** Between December 3 and 5, 2,507 flights were cancelled and 1,852 flights were delayed, impacting over 3 lakh passengers at airports across the country. This marked one of the largest operational failures recorded in India's civil aviation sector, causing massive inconvenience with passengers facing extended wait times, confusion, and insufficient communication.
- **Penalty Breakdown:** The penalties include a ₹20.4-crore fine for non-compliance from December 5, 2025, to February 10, 2026, translating to ₹30 lakh per day, along with additional ₹1.8 crore for specific violations under Rule 133A of the Aircraft Rules, 1937.
- **Root Causes Identified:** A DGCA committee concluded that the disruption stemmed from over-optimisation of operations, inadequate regulatory preparedness, and deficiencies in system software support and management oversight, apart from failure to implement revised flight duty time limitation provisions.
- **FDTL Compliance Failure:** The investigation revealed that the airline did not adequately maintain operational buffers and did not successfully apply the updated Flight Duty Time Limitation (FDTL) regulations, which were intended to increase safety by controlling pilot duty and rest periods.
- **Management Warnings:** DGCA issued warning to CEO Pieter Elbers for inadequate overall oversight of flight operations and crisis management, along with issuing warning to the accountable manager (COO) for failure to assess the impact of winter schedule 2025 and the revised FDTL CAR leading to widespread disruptions.
- **Bank Guarantee and Reform Scheme:** The airline must pledge a ₹50-crore bank guarantee under the IndiGo Systemic Reform Assurance Scheme (ISRAS), with the release of funds phased and linked to DGCA verification of reforms across leadership and governance (₹10 crore), manpower planning and fatigue-risk management (₹15 crore), digital systems and operational resilience (₹15 crore), and board-level oversight (₹10 crore).

Production Linked Incentive Scheme

In the News: Though the 2025-26 Union Budget allocated increased funding to the Make in India initiative, no dedicated production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme exists for wind components, limiting the sector's ability to scale and reduce costs effectively. Wind energy firms and industry bodies are demanding a PLI scheme similar to the one implemented for solar panel manufacturing to reduce India's import dependency and boost domestic production of wind turbine components.

Key Points:

- **Current Status:** India's wind energy sector has surpassed 51 GW in capacity, positioning the country as the fourth-largest wind energy market globally.
- **Import Dependency Concerns:** Imports from countries like China raise significant data security concerns, including OEMs' data collection servers located outside India and vulnerabilities in power system network operations.
- **Industry Demand for PLI:** A strong case has been made by the local industry to extend the government's PLI scheme to the manufacture of wind power equipment similar to the support for solar panel factories. The industry envisages investments to the tune of Rs 15,000 crore in wind energy component manufacturing.
- **Manufacturing Capacity:** Factories making wind turbines and equipment already have a capacity of 10 GW in India, and over the years India has become a global hub for wind equipment supplies with the export of turbines.

- **Solar PLI Success Model:** Indigenous solar module manufacturing capacity under the Approved List of Models and Manufacturers (ALMM) for Solar Modules has reached around 144 GW per annum, with about 81 GW added in calendar year 2025 alone, reflecting an impressive 99% year-on-year increase.

Uttarakhand awarded Leader status in startup India Ranking

In the News: Uttarakhand was recognised as a "Leader" in building a strong startup ecosystem in the States' Startup Ecosystem Ranking (5th Edition) released by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India.

Key Points:

- **Ranking Framework:** The States' Startup Ranking is a yearly capacity building exercise launched in February 2018 by DPIIT that evaluates all of India's states and Union Territories on their efforts to build an ecosystem conducive to startup growth.
- **Category Classification:** States scoring between 50-69 percentile are classified as 'leaders,' while 'top performers' score between 70-89 percentile and 'best performers' score above 90 percentile. Uttarakhand secured the "Leader" status in Category A (states and UTs with population over 1 crore).
- **Leader Category States:** Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Telangana, Uttarakhand in Category A, and Manipur, Meghalaya, and Nagaland in Category B were categorised as leaders.
- **Best Performers:** Gujarat has been ranked as the best performer for the fifth time in a row, along with Arunachal Pradesh and Goa. Karnataka, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, and Himachal Pradesh were categorised as top performers.
- **National Startup Awards Recognition:** Sunfox Technologies Private Limited from Uttarakhand won the Innovation Trailblazers Award at the National Startup Awards 5.0, announced alongside the state rankings on National Startup Day 2026.
- **Total Participation:** A total of 34 states and Union territories participated in the fifth edition of the ranking exercise, which aims to support states in developing their startup ecosystems and learning from each other's best practices.

Has an Arbitration Council been Constituted?

In the News: The Supreme Court issued notice in a writ petition seeking directions to the Union government to immediately constitute the Arbitration Council of India (ACI) and frame uniform policies governing arbitral institutions and arbitrators. Nearly six years after the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996 was amended in 2019, the Union government has still not constituted the Arbitration Council of India, adversely affecting efforts to make India a hub of international arbitration.

Key Points:

- **Legislative Mandate:** The Arbitration Council of India is to be established by the Central Government. The Council was envisaged under Sections 43A and 43B of the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996, introduced through 2019 amendments based on recommendations of the High-Level Committee on Arbitration chaired by B. N. Srikrishna.
- **Prolonged Delay:** Draft notifications for the ACI were issued in 2020, and subsequent amendments were made in 2021, yet the Council remains unconstituted more than six years after the legal framework was established.
- **Concerns Over Independence:** A key criticism is the perceived lack of independence, as most members would be appointed or nominated by the Union government—India's largest litigant—raising fears of undue executive influence over arbitration and undermining neutrality.
- **Pending Reforms:** In February 2024, an expert committee headed by former law secretary T K Vishwanathan submitted its report on arbitration reforms, and in October 2024, the law ministry floated a draft Arbitration and Conciliation (Amendment) Bill, 2024, but the amendments have taken a back seat.
- **Supreme Court Intervention:** The petition challenges unregulated arbitrations conducted by trade associations like the Cotton Association of India (CAI), alleging they are arbitrary and violative of Articles 14 and 19(1)(g) of the Constitution, forcing traders to agree to arbitrary rules as a pre-condition for doing business.

Indian Railways Highest Honour for Chandana Sinha

In the News: Railway Protection Force (RPF) Inspector Chandana Sinha, working out of Lucknow's Charbagh station, has led the rescue of more than 1,500 children over the past three years across Uttar Pradesh's rail network. Many of these children were intercepted just moments before being pulled into trafficking routes or exploitative labour. In June 2024, she was appointed to

lead Operation Nanhe Farishte, Indian Railways' child rescue initiative.

Key Points:

- **Rescue Achievement:** Over the past three years, Inspector Sinha has rescued more than 1,500 children from railway stations across Uttar Pradesh. In 2025 alone, her team has rescued 1,032 children, including 39 trafficked for labour and a six-year-old girl.
- **Operation Nanhe Farishte Leadership:** In June 2024, Sinha was appointed to lead Operation Nanhe Farishte, Indian Railways' child rescue initiative. Her unit, comprising mostly women officers, focuses on known trafficking routes from Bihar to Punjab and Haryana, targeting children aged 13-15 travelling with unfamiliar adults.
- **Innovative Detection Methods:** Sinha developed specialized observation techniques that go beyond routine patrols. She trained officers to read body language, track patterns, and spot mismatches between children and their companions.
- **Collaborative Approach:** Sinha's team works closely with NGOs and district authorities, creating records and follow-ups that extend beyond single train journeys. The work involves coordination with organizations like the Association for Voluntary Action, part of Bachpan Bachao Andolan, and Childline centres.
- **Expanded Mandate:** This work extends beyond RPF's original mandate of protecting railway property and passengers. Appointed to lead Operation Nanhe Farishte operations in Lucknow Division" and the anti-human trafficking initiative, the force has prioritized child protection, with Sinha taking ownership in a way rarely seen in RPF units.

PESA Act Implemented in Jharkhand After 25 Years

In the News: Jharkhand has finally implemented the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996, commonly known as the PESA Act, after a delay of 25 years since the legislation was enacted. This landmark implementation empowers tribal communities in scheduled areas with self-governance and control over local resources.

Key Points:

- **Historic Implementation:** Jharkhand has operationalized the PESA Act after 25 years of its enactment at the national level in 1996. The state has framed and notified PESA rules, enabling gram sabhas in scheduled areas to exercise powers for self-governance and natural resource management.
- **PESA Act Background:** The Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996, was enacted to extend provisions of Part IX of the Constitution (relating to Panchayats) to Scheduled Areas with modifications. The Act recognizes the traditional rights of tribal communities and aims to ensure self-governance through gram sabhas.
- **Coverage in Jharkhand:** The PESA Act applies to Fifth Schedule areas in Jharkhand, which comprise a significant portion of the state with substantial tribal populations. These areas are predominantly inhabited by Scheduled Tribes and have distinct social, cultural, and administrative requirements.
- **Powers to Gram Sabhas:** Under PESA implementation, gram sabhas (village assemblies) in scheduled areas now have authority over matters including land acquisition, minor water bodies, minor minerals, management of village markets, control over local plans and resources, and traditional dispute resolution mechanisms.
- **Natural Resource Management:** The Act empowers tribal communities to manage and protect community resources including forests, minor forest produce (MFP), water resources, and minor minerals.
- **Cultural and Traditional Rights:** PESA recognizes and protects the traditional practices, cultural identity, and customary rights of tribal communities. It safeguards tribal self-governance systems and ensures that development does not undermine indigenous traditions and social structures.

India Introduces First Tailings Policy to Recover Critical Minerals

In the News: India has introduced its first-ever Tailings Policy aimed at recovering critical minerals from mining waste. This pioneering initiative addresses environmental concerns while extracting valuable resources from tailings, supporting India's strategic mineral security and advancing the circular economy in the mining sector.

Key Points:

- **First Tailings Policy Launch:** India has unveiled its inaugural Tailings Policy, establishing a comprehensive framework for managing mining waste and recovering critical minerals from tailings accumulated at mining sites across the country.

- **What Are Tailings:** Tailings are the waste materials left after extracting valuable minerals from ore during mining operations. These residues often contain trace amounts of critical minerals that were previously uneconomical to recover but have become valuable due to technological advancements and rising demand.
- **Critical Minerals Recovery:** The policy focuses on extracting critical minerals such as lithium, cobalt, rare earth elements, graphite, nickel, and other strategic materials essential for clean energy technologies, electric vehicle batteries, semiconductors, and defense applications.
- **Environmental Benefits:** Reprocessing tailings reduces environmental hazards associated with mining waste, including soil contamination, water pollution, and land degradation. The policy promotes sustainable mining practices by minimizing waste accumulation and rehabilitating mining-affected areas.
- **Alignment with Global Trends:** The policy positions India alongside other nations pursuing circular economy approaches in mining. Countries like Australia, Canada, and the European Union have similar initiatives to recover critical minerals from legacy mining waste.

C-DOT Wins SKOCH Award 2025 for Life-Saving Cell Broadcast Disaster Alert System

In the News: The Centre for Development of Telematics (C-DOT) has been honored with the prestigious SKOCH Award 2025 for developing India's Cell Broadcast Disaster Alert System. This innovative technology enables instant mass communication during emergencies, potentially saving thousands of lives by delivering critical disaster warnings directly to mobile phones.

Key Points:

- **SKOCH Award Recognition:** C-DOT received the SKOCH Award 2025 in the category of digital governance and public service innovation for its indigenous Cell Broadcast Disaster Alert System, recognizing its significant contribution to public safety and disaster management.
- **About C-DOT:** The Centre for Development of Telematics (C-DOT) is an autonomous telecom research and development center under the Department of Telecommunications, Government of India. It focuses on developing indigenous telecom technologies and solutions for national requirements.
- **Cell Broadcast Technology:** The Cell Broadcast Disaster Alert System uses cell broadcast technology to send emergency messages simultaneously to all mobile devices within a specific geographic area, without requiring phone numbers or internet connectivity, ensuring rapid and widespread dissemination.
- **Disaster Warning Capabilities:** The system can alert citizens about various disasters including earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, cyclones, landslides, industrial accidents, and other emergencies, providing crucial time for evacuation and safety measures.
- **Integration with Disaster Management:** The Cell Broadcast Alert System is integrated with the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), India Meteorological Department (IMD), and other agencies to enable coordinated and timely emergency communications across the country.
- **SKOCH Award Significance:** The SKOCH Award is one of India's highest independent civilian honors recognizing excellence in governance, technology, and social development. Winning this award highlights C-DOT's commitment to leveraging technology for public welfare and national development.

Tiger Global case: How Supreme Court drew a line between treaty benefits and tax dues

In the News: The Supreme Court of India on January 15, 2026, denied tax relief to Tiger Global on capital gains from its exit from Flipkart, delivering a landmark judgment that clarifies the relationship between tax treaty benefits and outstanding tax liabilities.

Key Points:

- **Supreme Court Verdict:** The Supreme Court ruled against Tiger Global's claim for tax exemption on capital gains earned from selling its stake in Flipkart, rejecting the investment firm's argument that it was entitled to treaty benefits under the India-Mauritius tax treaty.
- **Background of the Case:** Tiger Global, a US-based investment firm, had invested in Flipkart through Mauritius-based entities. When Walmart acquired Flipkart in 2018 for \$16 billion, Tiger Global sought exemption from capital gains tax in India by claiming benefits under the India-Mauritius DTAA.

- **Tax Liability Issue:** Indian tax authorities demanded capital gains tax on Tiger Global's profits from the Flipkart exit, arguing that the Mauritius entities were shell companies created primarily to avoid taxes in India, lacking genuine business substance in Mauritius.
- **Treaty vs. Tax Dues Distinction:** The Supreme Court clarified that while tax treaties provide mechanisms to avoid double taxation and offer certain exemptions, they do not automatically override legitimate tax liabilities, especially when transactions lack economic substance or involve treaty shopping.
- **General Anti-Avoidance Rules (GAAR):** The judgment reinforced the applicability of GAAR provisions, which allow tax authorities to deny treaty benefits in cases where the primary purpose of a transaction structure is tax avoidance rather than legitimate business objectives.

BCCI Signs ₹270 Crore Gemini Sponsorship Deal Ahead of IPL 2026

In the News: The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has secured a major sponsorship agreement worth ₹270 crore with Google's artificial intelligence platform Gemini ahead of the 2026 Indian Premier League (IPL). This three-year deal highlights the growing interest of AI platforms in Indian cricket and reinforces the IPL's global commercial appeal.

Key Points:

- **Deal Value and Duration:** The sponsorship agreement between BCCI and Gemini is valued at ₹270 crore for a three-year period. A BCCI official confirmed that the deal reinforces IPL's status as a premier global sporting property with massive marketing potential.
- **AI Platforms in Cricket:** Gemini's entry follows rival AI platform ChatGPT's sponsorship of the ongoing Women's Premier League (WPL), demonstrating growing competition among AI companies for visibility in Indian cricket. The involvement of major tech platforms underscores cricket's value as a marketing channel in India's digital economy.
- **Current Title Sponsorship:** Tata Group currently holds the title sponsorship rights for the IPL, the world's biggest T20 cricket league. The tournament attracts multiple corporate sponsors across various categories, generating substantial revenue for BCCI.
- **ChatGPT and WPL Partnership:** BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia had emphasized the significance of diverse partnerships when ChatGPT's WPL sponsorship was announced in November. He noted that the mix of global AI leaders, manufacturing companies, and Indian consumer brands plays a critical role in enhancing fan experience and supporting women's cricket growth.
- **IPL 2026 Schedule:** IPL 2026 is scheduled to commence on Thursday, March 26, 2026, with the final match on Sunday, May 31, 2026. The tournament will feature matches across various Indian cities over approximately two months.

233-Year-Old Valmiki Ramayana Gifted to Ram Katha Museum in Ayodhya

In the News: A rare 233-year-old manuscript of the Valmiki Ramayana has been gifted to the Ram Katha Museum in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh. This ancient manuscript, dating back to 1792, represents a significant addition to the museum's collection of religious and historical artifacts related to the Ramayana epic.

Key Points:

- **Manuscript Details:** The Valmiki Ramayana manuscript is 233 years old, having been written in 1792 during the late 18th century. The ancient text is written in Sanskrit and features traditional calligraphy and illustrations characteristic of that historical period.
- **Donation and Donor:** The rare manuscript was donated to the Ram Katha Museum by a private collector or family who preserved it for generations. The gift enhances the museum's repository of Ramayana-related texts and artifacts from different eras.
- **Historical Significance:** Dating back to the late 18th century, the manuscript provides insights into the textual transmission and preservation of the Ramayana across centuries. It represents the reverence for Valmiki's epic and the tradition of hand-copying sacred texts before the printing era.
- **Ram Katha Museum:** The museum is located in Ayodhya, the birthplace of Lord Ram and a significant pilgrimage site for Hindus worldwide. It houses various manuscripts, paintings, sculptures, and artifacts depicting stories and episodes from the Ramayana.

- **Preservation Efforts:** The museum authorities have implemented special conservation measures to protect the fragile 233-year-old manuscript from environmental degradation. Climate-controlled display cases and restricted handling protocols ensure the manuscript's longevity for future generations.

Republic Day 2026: What is the Theme of Republic Day 2026?

In the News: India will celebrate its 77th Republic Day on January 26, 2026, marking the day when the Indian Constitution came into effect in 1950, transforming India into a sovereign republic. The Republic Day celebrations at Kartavya Path in New Delhi will feature the theme commemorating 150 years of the national song 'Vande Mataram', showcasing India's military strength alongside its rich cultural heritage.

Key Points:

- **77th Republic Day:** India will observe its 77th Republic Day on Monday, January 26, 2026, commemorating the adoption of the Constitution on January 26, 1950. The day marks the transition of India from a British dominion to a sovereign democratic republic.
- **Theme: 150 Years of 'Vande Mataram':** The central theme of Republic Day 2026 celebrates 150 years of the national song 'Vande Mataram', originally composed by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee in 1876. The theme honors this iconic patriotic song that played a crucial role in India's freedom struggle and continues to inspire national pride.
- **Chief Guests:** Mr. Antonio Costa, President of the European Council, and Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, will be the chief guests for the Republic Day Parade 2026. Their presence reflects the strengthening ties between India and the European Union.
- **Constitutional History:** India gained independence on August 15, 1947, and approximately 14 days later, a Drafting Committee was formed under the chairmanship of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar to design the Indian Constitution. The meticulous drafting process took over two years to complete.
- **Constitution Day:** The Indian Constitution was completed and enacted on November 26, 1949, a date now celebrated as "Constitution Day" or "Samvidhan Divas". However, it came into effect on January 26, 1950, which is why this date was chosen to celebrate Republic Day.
- **Significance of January 26:** The date January 26 was specifically chosen because it coincided with the anniversary of the 1930 Declaration of Indian Independence (Purna Swaraj), proclaimed by the Indian National Congress. This historical connection made it a fitting day to establish the Republic.

Punjab Launches First Dog Sanctuary in Ludhiana to Tackle Stray Dog Menace

In the News: Punjab's Local Bodies Minister Sanjeev Arora inaugurated the state's first-ever Dog Sanctuary at the Haibowal Dairy Complex in Ludhiana. This pioneering initiative aims to address the city's growing stray dog menace through humane management while ensuring public safety. Ludhiana recorded 13,728 dog bite cases in 2025, the highest in the last five years.

Key Points:

- **Facility Inauguration:** Punjab's first Dog Sanctuary was opened in Ludhiana at the Haibowal Dairy Complex with a capacity to house 500 dogs. The facility aims to provide medical care and shelter for stray dogs while reducing dog bite incidents in the city.
- **Stray Dog Crisis:** Ludhiana recorded 13,728 dog bite cases in 2025, marking the highest number in five years. A survey conducted five years ago estimated the city's stray dog population at around 25,000, highlighting the urgent need for intervention.
- **Supreme Court Compliance:** The sanctuary will operate strictly following Supreme Court guidelines on stray dog management. The facility emphasizes humane handling, sterilization, vaccination, and release back to the same locality after sterilisation/vaccination, except aggressive/rabid dogs which may be kept separately in alignment with Animal Birth Control (ABC) Rules.
- **Pilot Project Model:** Launched as a pilot initiative, the sanctuary's performance will guide the establishment of similar facilities across Punjab. The Municipal Corporation (MC) has been tasked with expediting sterilization drives for long-term population control.

- **Community Participation:** Local councillors will identify aggressive or sick dogs in their wards. Residents can report cases to councillors who will coordinate with MC teams. A dedicated helpline number is expected to be launched soon for quicker response.

Republic Day 2026: Is India Celebrating the 77th or 78th Year of the Republic?

In the News: India will celebrate its 77th Republic Day at Kartavya Path in New Delhi. The celebration commemorates the adoption of the Constitution of India on 26 November 1949. It came into force on 26 January 1950, which established India as a sovereign democratic republic.

Key Points:

- **77th Republic Day:** India will celebrate its 77th Republic Day on January 26, 2026, marking 76 years since the Constitution came into force on January 26, 1950. The country celebrated its first Republic Day on January 26, 1950, making 2026 the 77th celebration.
- **Historical Significance:** While India gained independence on August 15, 1947, it adopted its own Constitution on January 26, 1950, transforming into the world's largest democracy. Republic Day honors the nation's sovereignty, democratic values, and constitutional framework.
- **Celebration Theme:** The 2026 Republic Day theme centers on 'Vande Mataram' and 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' (Self-Reliant India). The parade will commemorate 150 years of the national song 'Vande Mataram', reflecting patriotic spirit and focus on self-reliance.
- **Republic Day Parade:** The main event will be held at Kartavya Path near India Gate in New Delhi, showcasing India's military strength, impressive formations, and vibrant cultural tableaux representing the country's diverse heritage. Rehearsals are currently underway.
- **Event Schedule:** The Republic Day Parade will take place on January 26, 2026. The Beating the Retreat Full Dress Rehearsal is scheduled for January 28, followed by the Beating the Retreat ceremony on January 29. January 26 is observed as a national holiday across India.

Parakram Diwas 2026: Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Jayanti

In the News: India observes Parakram Diwas (Day of Valour) to commemorate the 129th birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, the visionary leader of the Indian National Army. President Droupadi Murmu paid floral tributes at Rashtrapati Bhavan, while nationwide celebrations honor his "unconquerable spirit" and revolutionary struggle for India's independence.

Key Points:

- **Observance Date and Meaning:** Parakram Diwas 2026 is observed on Friday, January 23, 2026, marking Netaji's 129th birth anniversary. "Parakram" translates to "Day of Valour," celebrating his courage, strong leadership, and deep patriotism. The date remains fixed annually as it coincides with his birth on January 23, 1897, in Cuttack, Odisha.
- **Official Declaration:** The Government of India officially announced Parakram Diwas on January 19, 2021, during Netaji's 125th birth anniversary celebrations. Since then, January 23 has been observed annually to honor his role in India's independence movement and inspire citizens through principles of bravery and patriotism.
- **About Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose:** Born on January 23, 1897, in Cuttack, Odisha, Netaji was a brilliant student who cleared the prestigious Indian Civil Service (ICS) exam in England. He resigned from this position to dedicate himself to India's freedom struggle. He established the Indian National Army (INA), gave the iconic slogan "Give me blood, and I shall give you freedom" and "Delhi Chalo," and formed the Azad Hind government.
- **Significance of the Day:** Parakram Diwas emphasizes Netaji's courage, command, and selfless service to the nation. It celebrates his establishment of the Azad Hind government and INA, fostering national pride and unity.

Government Expands Carbon Credit Trading Scheme with New GEI Targets

In the News: The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change notified Greenhouse Gas Emission Intensity (GEI) targets for additional carbon-intensive sectors under the Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS). This expansion brings 208 new obligated entities into the compliance framework, increasing the total coverage of the Indian Carbon Market (ICM) to 490 obligated entities across India's most emission-intensive industries.

Key Points:

- **New Sectors Included:** The notification brings Petroleum Refineries, Petrochemicals, Textiles, and Secondary Aluminium under the compliance mechanism of the Indian Carbon Market. These 208 obligated entities across these sectors are now required to meet specified emission intensity reduction targets, marking a significant expansion of India's carbon trading framework.
- **Previous Coverage:** The Government of India first notified GEI targets in October 2025 for Aluminium, Cement, Chlor-Alkali, and Pulp & Paper sectors, covering 282 obligated entities. With the January 2026 expansion, the total number of obligated entities under ICM compliance has increased to 490, representing India's most emission-intensive industries.
- **Understanding GEI Targets:** Greenhouse Gas Emission Intensity (GEI) refers to the amount of greenhouse gas emissions produced per unit of output. Instead of absolute emission caps, GEI targets focus on improving efficiency by reducing emissions intensity.
- **Carbon Credit Trading Scheme Framework:** The CCTS, notified by the Government of India in 2023, provides the overall framework for the Indian Carbon Market. Its objective is to reduce or avoid greenhouse gas emissions from various sectors of the Indian economy by pricing emissions through a carbon credit certificate trading mechanism, aligning industrial growth with India's climate objectives and net-zero pathway.
- **Two-Mechanism Structure:** The CCTS operates through the Compliance Mechanism and the Offset Mechanism. Under the Compliance Mechanism, emission-intensive industries designated as Obligated Entities must meet assigned GEI targets.

GoI Approves Wage Revision and Pension Revision for PSGICs, NABARD and RBI

In the News: The Central Government has approved comprehensive wage revision and pension revision for employees and pensioners in key financial institutions, including Public Sector General Insurance Companies (PSGICs), NABARD, and Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

Key Points:

- **Overall Beneficiaries:** The wage and pension revision will benefit approximately 46,322 employees, 23,570 pensioners, and 23,260 family pensioners across PSGICs, NABARD, and RBI.
- **PSGIC Wage Revision Details:** The wage revision for employees of Public Sector General Insurance Companies is effective from August 1, 2022. The overall increase in wage bill is 12.41%, including a 14% hike on existing Basic Pay and Dearness Allowance (DA), benefiting 43,247 PSGIC employees.
- **Enhanced NPS Contribution for PSGICs:** A major welfare measure includes the enhancement of National Pension System (NPS) contribution from the earlier 10% to 14% for PSGIC employees who joined after April 1, 2010.
- **PSGIC Family Pension Revision:** The Government has approved a uniform family pension rate of 30% for PSGICs, effective from the date of publication in the official gazette, benefiting 14,615 out of 15,582 total existing family pensioners. The covered PSGICs include National Insurance Company Ltd., New India Assurance Company Ltd., Oriental Insurance Company Ltd., United India Insurance Company Ltd., General Insurance Corporation of India, and Agricultural Insurance Company Ltd.
- **NABARD Pay and Pension Revision:** Pay revision for NABARD employees is effective from November 1, 2022, with an increase of approximately 20% for all Group A, B, and C employees, benefiting about 3,800 serving and former employees. The pension revision covers NABARD retirees who were originally recruited by NABARD and retired before November 1, 2017, bringing their basic pension/family pension on par with ex-RBI NABARD retirees.
- **RBI Pension Revision:** The Government has approved a 10% increase in pension and family pension for RBI retirees, calculated on basic pension plus dearness relief, effective from November 1, 2022. This revision results in an effective increase of basic pension by a factor of 1.43 times, significantly boosting monthly pension payments for 30,769 beneficiaries (22,580 pensioners and 8,189 family pensioners).

Indira Gandhi Peace Prize

In the News: Mozambican rights activist and humanitarian Graca Machel has been selected for the Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development for 2025. Additionally, the 2024 prize was presented to Michelle Bachelet, the first and only woman President of Chile and former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, by Congress Parliamentary Party chairperson Sonia Gandhi, recognizing her extraordinary contributions to human rights, democracy, and social justice.

Key Points:

- **About the Prize:** The Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development was instituted in 1986 in memory of former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by a trust in her name. The prize consists of a monetary award of Rs.10 million rupees along with a citation and is awarded annually by the Indira Gandhi Memorial Trust without any distinction of nationality, race, or religion.
- **2025 Recipient - Graca Machel:** Mozambican rights activist and humanitarian Graca Machel has been selected for the Indira Gandhi Prize for 2025, continuing the tradition of honoring individuals who have made significant contributions to peace, human rights, and social development on the global stage.
- **2024 Recipient - Michelle Bachelet's Background:** Michelle Bachelet served as a two-term President of Chile (2006-2010 and 2014-2018) and was the first Director of UN Women Agency in 2010 before becoming UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.
- **Bachelet's Achievements in Chile:** During her presidential terms, Bachelet promoted the rights of all citizens and is credited with significant education and tax reforms. She established the National Institute for Human Rights, the Museum of Memory and Human Rights, and the Ministry of Women and Gender Equality.

As SC allows Basant Panchami prayers and namaz at Bhojshala, recalling the dispute

In the News: The Supreme Court issued directions to allow simultaneous Basant Panchami puja and Friday namaz at the Archaeological Survey of India-protected Bhojshala Temple/Kamal Maula Mosque complex in Madhya Pradesh's Dhar district.

Key Points:

- **Supreme Court Directions:** The court allowed prayers on a plea by the Hindu Front for Justice (HFJ) on the occasion of Basant Panchami, which heralds the arrival of spring and involves worshipping Saraswati, the goddess of knowledge. The bench directed that a separate exclusive space within the same compound be made available for Muslims to perform namaz between 1 PM and 3 PM, while Hindus would conduct traditional ceremonies throughout the day at a separate designated space, following past practices.
- **Existing ASI Arrangement:** On April 7, 2003, the ASI established an arrangement under which Hindus perform puja at the Bhojshala premises on Tuesdays, while Muslims offer namaz in the complex on Fridays. The HFJ's May 2, 2022 PIL challenged this ASI order, arguing it restricted daily worship for Hindus and citing that the former rulers of Dhar had installed a Saraswati statue in 1034, which was taken to London in 1857 by the British. The current dispute arose because the 2003 order doesn't address situations where Basant Panchami coincides with Friday prayers.
- **Historical Origins of Bhojshala:** Located in the center of Dhar city, over 250 km from Bhopal, the complex includes the tomb of Kamal al-Din, a Chishti saint, built adjacent to a spacious hypostyle mosque constructed primarily of reused temple parts. According to a 2012 research paper by Michael Willis published in the Royal Asiatic Society, the Bhojshala or 'Hall of Bhoja' describes the center for Sanskrit studies associated with King Bhoja, the most celebrated ruler of the Paramara dynasty.
- **Conflicting Claims and ASI Survey:** Hindus consider Bhojshala an 11th-century temple dedicated to Vagdevi (Goddess Saraswati), while Muslims call it Kamal Maula mosque. The HFJ argued that the mosque was constructed during Alauddin Khilji's reign (13th-14th centuries) after destroying ancient Hindu temple structures.
- **Evolution of the Bhojshala Narrative:** The term "Bhojshala" was coined in 1902 by K K Lele, Superintendent of State Education in the British-era archaeological department in Dhar, to provide Sanskrit terminology for the pillared colonnades. Michael Willis argued that Lele invented this term as the proper Sanskrit references for educational institutions would be "vidyalaya," "vidyapeeth," or "jnanpith." The mosque was referred to in writings by English author John Malcolm (1822) and William Kincaid (1844), though they never identified it as Bhojshala.

The Indian Constitution: 5 Terms in the Preamble You Should Know

In the News: The Preamble of the Indian Constitution, often called the "heart" of the Constitution, the Objectives Resolution (which became the basis for the Preamble) was adopted on January 22, 1947, but the actual Preamble of the Constitution was adopted by the Constituent Assembly on November 26, 1949, and came into force on January 26, 1950. The Preamble declares India to be a Sovereign, Socialist, Secular, Democratic Republic and promises Justice, Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity to its citizens.

Key Points:

- **What is the Preamble:** The Preamble is the opening statement of the Constitution that explains the basic ideas, values, and goals guiding India as a nation. Beginning with "We, the people of India...", it establishes that ultimate power belongs to the people. While it does not give direct legal rights, it helps in understanding and interpreting India's laws.
- **Sovereign:** India is fully independent and can make its own rules and decisions without outside interference. No other country can control India's choices. Sovereignty demonstrates India's freedom to make decisions for the welfare of its people.
- **Socialist:** Resources and wealth should be shared fairly among all people, ensuring everyone has access to education, work, and basic facilities. Socialism supports cooperative systems where communities share resources and aims to reduce inequality, helping all citizens live better lives.
- **Secular:** The government treats all religions equally with no special preference given to any faith. Everyone is free to follow their own beliefs. Secularism enables people of different faiths to live together peacefully, ensuring the state does not favor one religion over another.
- **Democratic and Republic:** Democracy means people have the power to choose their government through voting in regular elections, ensuring everyone has a voice. A republic means the head of state (President) is elected for a fixed term rather than chosen by birth or inheritance, distinguishing India's governance system.
- **Justice, Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity:** **Justice:** Fair treatment for everyone in social, economic, and political matters, with discrimination removed and rights protected. **Liberty:** Freedom to think, speak, and follow one's religion, with limits to maintain order and harmony. **Equality:** Every person treated equally regardless of caste, gender, or religion, with equal opportunities in life. **Fraternity:** Citizens should respect each other as brothers and sisters, working together for national unity.

The 21-Gun Salute: Why It Does Not Use 21 Guns?

In the News: The 21-gun salute is one of the highest military honors in the world, performed to show great respect to presidents, kings, queens, and fallen soldiers. Despite its name, it does not actually use 21 separate guns but rather involves firing cannons or artillery guns 21 times in succession. This ceremonial tradition has deep historical roots dating back to naval customs and became an official practice in the U.S. Navy in 1818, later formalized as the highest honor in 1875.

Key Points:

- **What is a 21-Gun Salute:** A ceremonial honor in which cannons or artillery guns are fired 21 times, not rifles. The salute is performed slowly and with discipline to show respect, dignity, and honor. It is distinct from the three-volley salute used at military funerals, which uses rifles and is lower in status.
- **Historical Origins:** The number 21 comes from old naval traditions when warships fired their guns to show friendly intentions. Ships usually had seven cannons, and when they fired all seven, forts on land replied with three shots for each one, totaling 21. By the early 1700s, Britain had officially adopted this practice, with the United States following later.
- **Official Adoption:** In 1818, the U.S. Navy included the 21-gun salute in its official rules. By 1875, it became the formal highest honor in the United States and matched international standards followed by many other countries.
- **When It Is Performed:** Performed on important occasions including funeral of a president or national leader, national holidays like Independence Day and Memorial Day, presidential swearing-in ceremonies, visits by foreign leaders or royal family members, and special national days to remember great leaders from history.
- **Execution Protocol:** Follows strict rules with cannons fired one at a time with gaps of a few seconds between each shot. Only trained military units perform this ceremony using blank ammunition for safety. At funerals, the salute is usually followed by the bugle call "Taps" to create a moment of silence and respect.

INTERNATIONAL

What America's Greenland claim could mean for NATO, Russia, and Canada

In the News: Since early January 2026, Greenland has catapulted from the sidelines of international affairs to the center as President Donald Trump repeatedly calls for the United States to take over the remote Arctic island, throwing Washington's relationship with its European NATO allies into crisis.

Key Points:

- **Trump's Escalating Threats:** Trump stated that "anything less" than US control of Greenland is "unacceptable" and that he would take Greenland "one way or the other," even if that requires going about it the "hard way". Following the US military operation that captured Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro on January 3, 2026, Trump's statements have gained renewed force.
- **Existential Threat to NATO:** If the United States—as NATO's most powerful member—annexed the territory of another NATO member, the alliance's defense pledge would lose credibility. Denmark is a founding member of NATO and has been a loyal ally since 1949. A US attack on Danish territory would fundamentally violate Article 5 of the NATO treaty.
- **Strategic Importance:** The US has operated the Pituffik Space Base (formerly Thule Air Base) in Greenland since the 1950s under a 1951 defense agreement with Denmark, which already provides extensive military basing rights without questioning Danish sovereignty.
- **Economic Leverage:** Trump announced the US would impose 10% tariffs on eight NATO allies—Denmark, Norway, Sweden, France, Germany, the UK, the Netherlands, and Finland—until a deal is reached for the complete and total purchase of Greenland. The dispute centers partly on Greenland's vast mineral reserves, with 25 of 34 elements classified as critical raw materials by the European Commission found on the island.
- **Greenlandic Opposition:** Greenland's Premier has repeatedly stated that Greenland is not for sale and will not become part of the United States.

High Seas Treaty Comes into Force: New Global Rules to Protect Oceans Explained

In the News: The High Seas Treaty, officially known as the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement, has entered into force, establishing the first-ever comprehensive legal framework to protect marine biodiversity in international waters

Key Points:

- **Treaty Entry into Force:** The High Seas Treaty came into force after the required number of countries ratified the agreement. The treaty represents a historic achievement after nearly two decades of negotiations under the United Nations framework, addressing the urgent need to protect ocean ecosystems.
- **Coverage and Scope:** The treaty applies to the high seas, which constitute nearly two-thirds of the world's oceans lying beyond the 200 nautical mile Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) of coastal states. These areas cover approximately 95% of the ocean's volume but have lacked comprehensive legal protection until now.
- **Key Provisions - Marine Protected Areas:** The treaty enables the establishment of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in international waters, allowing countries to designate and manage conservation zones to protect critical marine habitats, biodiversity hotspots, and vulnerable ecosystems from harmful activities.
- **Environmental Impact Assessments:** The agreement mandates Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) for activities planned in the high seas that may have significant environmental impacts.
- **Governance Structure:** The treaty establishes a Conference of Parties (COP) as the decision-making body, along with scientific and technical committees to oversee implementation, review conservation measures, and adapt policies based on scientific evidence and changing ocean conditions.
- **Global Significance:** The High Seas Treaty addresses critical threats to ocean health including overfishing, deep-sea mining, pollution, and climate change impacts. It complements existing frameworks like the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and supports global biodiversity targets.

India Ranks Sixth in Asia Manufacturing Index 2026, Needs Stronger Push

In the News: India has been ranked sixth in the Asia Manufacturing Index 2026, reflecting its growing manufacturing capabilities while highlighting the need for accelerated reforms and investments to compete with leading Asian manufacturing hubs.

Key Points:

- **Sixth Position in Asia:** India secured the sixth rank in the Asia Manufacturing Index 2026, which evaluates countries based on manufacturing output, productivity, technological advancement, ease of doing business, infrastructure quality, and competitiveness in global markets.

- **Top-Ranked Countries:** China, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore occupy the top five positions in the index, demonstrating advanced manufacturing ecosystems, robust supply chains, technological innovation, and efficient production capabilities that India aspires to match.
- **Manufacturing Sector Contribution:** Manufacturing contributes approximately 17% to India's GDP, still below the government's target of 25% under the 'Make in India' initiative. Expanding this sector is crucial for job creation, export growth, and economic development.
- **Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) Schemes:** The government's PLI schemes across 14 sectors, including electronics, automobiles, pharmaceuticals, textiles, and renewable energy, have attracted significant investments and boosted manufacturing activity, contributing to India's improved ranking.
- **Global Manufacturing Shift:** India has opportunities to benefit from the global trend of supply chain diversification, with companies seeking alternatives to China. Strategic initiatives like the National Logistics Policy, National Infrastructure Pipeline, and investment in technology can position India as a preferred manufacturing destination.

IMF Raises India's Growth Outlook to 7.3% for FY 2025-26

In the News: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has revised India's economic growth forecast upward to 7.3% for the fiscal year 2025-26. This upgrade reflects India's resilient economic performance, robust domestic demand, and strong fundamentals, positioning it as one of the fastest-growing major economies globally.

Key Points:

- **Revised Growth Projection:** The IMF has raised India's GDP growth forecast to 7.3% for FY 2025-26, up from its earlier projection. This upgrade underscores confidence in India's economic trajectory and its ability to sustain high growth rates amid global uncertainties.
- **Fastest-Growing Major Economy:** India continues to be the fastest-growing major economy in the world, outpacing other large economies including China, the United States, and European nations. This growth momentum reinforces India's position as a key driver of global economic expansion.
- **Factors Driving Growth:** The upward revision is attributed to several factors, including strong domestic consumption, increased public and private investment in infrastructure, resilient services sector performance, and government reforms aimed at improving the business environment.
- **Infrastructure Development:** Major government initiatives such as the National Infrastructure Pipeline, Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes, and investments in roads, railways, and digital infrastructure are contributing significantly to economic growth and job creation.
- **Digital Economy Expansion:** India's digital economy continues to thrive, with rapid growth in fintech, e-commerce, digital payments through UPI (Unified Payments Interface), and technology-driven services boosting overall economic activity.
- **Manufacturing Boost:** The 'Make in India' initiative and PLI schemes across various sectors, including electronics, automobiles, pharmaceuticals, and renewable energy, are attracting both domestic and foreign investments, strengthening the manufacturing sector.

China's Population Declines for Fourth Year Despite New Birth Incentives

In the News: China's population has declined for the fourth consecutive year, continuing a demographic trend that poses significant challenges for the world's second-largest economy. Despite implementing various birth incentives and policy reforms, the country faces persistent low birth rates, an aging population, and long-term economic implications.

Key Points:

- **Fourth Consecutive Decline:** China's population decreased for the fourth year in a row, with the total population falling below previous year levels. This ongoing decline marks a historic demographic shift for a nation that was the world's most populous for centuries.
- **Birth Rate Statistics:** The birth rate remains critically low despite government efforts to encourage families to have more children. The number of newborns continues to drop, with many couples citing economic pressures, career priorities, and high childcare costs as deterrents.

- **Government Birth Incentives:** Chinese authorities have introduced multiple incentives to boost birth rates, including extended maternity and paternity leave, cash subsidies for families with multiple children, tax breaks, housing benefits, and expanded childcare facilities.
- **Three-Child Policy:** China officially ended its decades-long one-child policy in 2016, expanded to a two-child policy, and further relaxed restrictions to a three-child policy in 2021. However, these measures have failed to reverse the declining birth trend.
- **Aging Population Crisis:** The declining birth rate coupled with increasing life expectancy has created a rapidly aging society. The proportion of elderly citizens (aged 60 and above) continues to grow, placing strain on pension systems, healthcare infrastructure, and the working-age population.
- **Global Demographic Context:** China's population decline mirrors trends in other East Asian nations like Japan and South Korea, which also face similar demographic challenges. India has already surpassed China as the world's most populous country, a position China held for centuries.

India Ranks 16th in Responsible Nations Index 2026

In the News: India has been ranked 16th in the Responsible Nations Index 2026, reflecting its commitment to sustainable development, environmental conservation, social welfare, and responsible governance.

Key Points:

- **India's Ranking:** India secured the 16th position in the Responsible Nations Index 2026, which evaluates countries based on their environmental sustainability, social equity, governance quality, and commitment to global responsibilities.
- **Environmental Initiatives:** India's ranking reflects its significant efforts in renewable energy expansion, with the country being one of the world's largest producers of solar and wind energy. Initiatives like the International Solar Alliance and commitments to net-zero emissions by 2070 have contributed positively.
- **Climate Action Commitments:** India has pledged to reduce carbon intensity of its GDP by 45% by 2030 and achieve 500 GW of renewable energy capacity. These commitments under the Paris Agreement have strengthened India's global standing on climate responsibility.
- **Social Welfare Programs:** The ranking acknowledges India's extensive social welfare schemes, including financial inclusion through Jan Dhan Yojana, healthcare coverage via Ayushman Bharat, and poverty alleviation programs that benefit millions of citizens.
- **Global Comparison:** Countries with higher rankings in the index typically demonstrate advanced environmental regulations, lower carbon footprints, robust social safety nets, and strong institutional frameworks. India's 16th position places it among emerging economies making significant strides toward responsible development.

Abu Dhabi Named World's Safest City for Tenth Consecutive Year

In the News: Abu Dhabi has been ranked as the world's safest city for the tenth consecutive year in the Numbeo Global Safety Index 2026. The UAE capital topped the rankings among 400 cities across more than 150 countries, demonstrating exceptional standards in public safety, security infrastructure, and quality of life for residents and visitors alike.

Key Points:

- **Tenth Consecutive Recognition:** Abu Dhabi has maintained its position as the world's safest city since 2017, marking an unbroken decade-long reign at the top of global safety rankings, outpacing major cities worldwide.
- **Numbeo Global Safety Index 2026:** The ranking was based on the Numbeo Global Safety Index, which evaluated 400 cities across more than 150 countries using crowdsourced data on crime perception, public safety, and quality of life indicators.
- **Top Safety Metrics:** Abu Dhabi achieved the number one ranking for overall safety, including highest scores in "safety when walking alone during the day" and "safety when walking alone at night," reflecting widespread public confidence among residents, expatriates, and tourists.
- **Technology-Driven Security:** The city's safety model integrates cutting-edge technology, including artificial intelligence, predictive analytics, and real-time surveillance systems that help authorities anticipate and prevent security incidents before they escalate.

- **Proactive Policing Strategy:** Major General Ahmed Saif bin Zaitoon Al Muhairi, Commander-in-Chief of Abu Dhabi Police, attributes the success to advanced digital tools, data-driven approaches, and forward-leaning policing strategies that combine technology with human intelligence.
- **Systematic Approach:** Unlike cities with fluctuating safety rankings, Abu Dhabi's consistent top position stems from a systematic approach that blends technology, human policing, community engagement, and thoughtful urban design to create secure public spaces.

India-Germany Joint Declaration of Intent(JDI)

In the News: India and Germany signed a Joint Declaration of Intent (JDI) to strengthen bilateral cooperation across multiple sectors, including green energy, technology, defense, and trade. This partnership reflects the deepening strategic ties between the two nations and their commitment to addressing global challenges collaboratively.

Key Points:

- **Green and Sustainable Development Partnership:** The JDI emphasizes cooperation on renewable energy, green hydrogen, and sustainable development. Both nations aim to accelerate the clean energy transition and work toward achieving climate goals under the Paris Agreement.
- **Skill Development and Migration:** Germany and India agreed to facilitate skilled worker migration through the Indo-German Migration and Mobility Partnership. This initiative aims to address labor shortages in Germany while providing employment opportunities for skilled Indian professionals.
- **Defense and Security Cooperation:** Both countries committed to enhancing defense ties through joint military exercises, defense technology transfers, and strategic dialogue on regional and global security challenges.
- **Trade and Investment Enhancement:** The JDI aims to boost bilateral trade beyond the current levels, with a focus on reducing trade barriers and encouraging investments in manufacturing, infrastructure, and services sectors.
- **Educational and Cultural Exchange:** India and Germany will expand academic collaboration, student exchange programs, and cultural initiatives to strengthen people-to-people connections and mutual understanding.
- **Strategic Partnership Framework:** The Joint Declaration of Intent builds upon the existing India-Germany Strategic Partnership established in 2000 and upgraded to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, reinforcing long-term cooperation across economic, political, and social domains.

Exercise DOSTI-17 Begins: India, Maldives and Sri Lanka Strengthen Indian Ocean Security

In the News: The 17th edition of Exercise DOSTI, a trilateral maritime exercise involving the Indian Navy, Maldives National Defence Force, and Sri Lankan Navy, has commenced to enhance maritime cooperation and security in the Indian Ocean Region. The exercise aims to strengthen operational coordination, promote interoperability, and address common security challenges among the three neighboring nations.

Key Points:

- **Exercise Overview:** Exercise DOSTI-17 is a trilateral maritime exercise conducted biennially among India, Maldives, and Sri Lanka. The name "DOSTI" means "friendship" in Hindi and Urdu, symbolizing the strong bonds and cooperative spirit among the participating nations.
- **Participating Forces:** The Indian Navy deployed warships, maritime patrol aircraft, and specialized personnel for the exercise. The Maldives National Defence Force and Sri Lankan Navy contributed their naval assets and personnel to participate in joint operations and training modules.
- **Exercise Location and Duration:** The exercise is being conducted in the Indian Ocean Region, with both harbor and sea phases planned.
- **India's Neighborhood First Policy:** Exercise DOSTI reflects India's commitment to its "Neighborhood First" and "SAGAR" (Security and Growth for All in the Region) policies. The exercise demonstrates India's role as a net security provider in the Indian Ocean and strengthens regional maritime partnerships.
- **Historical Context:** Exercise DOSTI was first conducted in 1991 as a bilateral exercise between India and Maldives, with Sri Lanka joining in 2012 to make it trilateral. The 17th edition builds on decades of maritime cooperation and mutual trust among the three Indian Ocean littoral states.

India-EU Summit 2026

In the News: The 16th India-European Union Summit will be held in New Delhi on January 27, 2026, co-chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, and European Council President Antonio Costa. The summit marks a significant deepening of India-EU strategic partnership, with key agreements expected on security, trade, and mobility, alongside the EU leaders serving as Chief Guests at India's 77th Republic Day celebrations.

Key Points:

- **Summit Schedule and Leadership:** The 16th India-EU Summit will take place on January 27, 2026, in New Delhi, following a three-day State Visit by EU leaders from January 25-27. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and European Council President Antonio Costa will co-chair the summit with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and serve as Chief Guests at Republic Day celebrations on January 26.
- **Security and Defence Partnership:** India and the EU have agreed to sign a new Security and Defence Partnership covering maritime security, cybersecurity, and counterterrorism cooperation. EU High Representative Kaja Kallas announced that the agreement will be signed during the summit, marking a significant expansion of bilateral security cooperation.
- **Free Trade Agreement (FTA):** The India-EU Free Trade Agreement, described by von der Leyen as "the mother of all deals," is at an advanced stage and expected to be finalized during the visit. The agreement would create a market of two billion people and account for nearly a quarter of global GDP, representing a historic trade deal between the two partners.
- **Comprehensive Strategic Agenda 2030:** A new comprehensive strategic agenda using a 2030 planning horizon will be adopted during the summit, setting long-term goals for India-EU cooperation. The agenda is being developed mindfully of the geopolitical landscape and aims to ensure the partnership delivers concrete results.
- **Strategic Partnership Evolution:** India and the EU have been strategic partners since 2004, with the last summit held virtually on July 15, 2020. This in-person summit and the participation of EU leaders at Republic Day celebrations signal the deepening commitment to strengthen cooperation across political, economic, security, and cultural domains.

UAE Becomes India's Second-Largest LNG Supplier After New Agreement

In the News: The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has emerged as India's second-largest supplier of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) following a new long-term supply agreement between the two nations.

Key Points:

- **New LNG Agreement:** India and the UAE signed a major long-term LNG supply agreement to ensure steady energy supplies for India's growing economy. The deal involves Indian energy companies procuring substantial volumes of LNG from UAE-based suppliers, including the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC).
- **UAE's Position as Second-Largest Supplier:** With this agreement, the UAE has become India's second-largest LNG supplier, surpassing traditional suppliers like Australia and the United States. Qatar remains India's largest LNG supplier, but the UAE's growing role diversifies India's energy import sources.
- **Supply Volume and Duration:** The agreement covers multi-million tons of LNG annually over a long-term contract period extending 10-15 years. The steady supply ensures energy security for India while providing the UAE with a reliable export market for its natural gas resources.
- **Energy Security for India:** India, as the world's third-largest energy consumer, relies heavily on LNG imports to meet approximately 50% of its natural gas requirements. Diversifying LNG sources through partnerships with the UAE reduces dependency on any single supplier and enhances energy security.
- **India-UAE Strategic Partnership:** This energy agreement reflects the deepening strategic and economic ties between India and the UAE under the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA). Energy cooperation complements bilateral trade, investment, and defense partnerships between the two nations.

First Medical Evacuation from the International Space Station: Explained

In the News: The International Space Station (ISS) witnessed its first-ever medical evacuation when an astronaut required emergency return to Earth due to a serious health issue. This unprecedented event highlighted the challenges of providing medical care in space and the protocols established for handling critical health emergencies in orbit.

Key Points:

- **Historic Medical Emergency:** For the first time in ISS history, an astronaut required emergency medical evacuation from the space station to Earth.
- **Nature of Medical Issue:** While specific details were not fully disclosed due to medical privacy, the astronaut experienced a serious health condition requiring immediate intervention beyond ISS medical capabilities.
- **Evacuation Protocol:** The medical evacuation involved activating emergency procedures that have been planned but never previously executed at the ISS. A spacecraft docked at the station was prepared for rapid departure, with the mission timeline accelerated to facilitate the astronaut's urgent return.
- **Spacecraft and Crew:** The evacuation utilized either a Russian Soyuz spacecraft or SpaceX Crew Dragon capsule, depending on availability and the astronaut's nationality. Additional crew members accompanied the affected astronaut to assist during descent and ensure safe landing operations.
- **Medical Capabilities on ISS:** The ISS is equipped with medical equipment including diagnostic tools, medications, and telemedicine capabilities for consulting with Earth-based doctors. However, serious medical emergencies requiring surgery, advanced imaging, or intensive care necessitate return to Earth.
- **Re-entry and Recovery:** The spacecraft executed an expedited undocking and de-orbit burn to minimize time before landing. Upon splashdown or landing, medical teams were immediately available to transport the astronaut to specialized facilities for treatment.

NASA Astronaut Sunita Williams Retires: Here Looking At Her Remarkable Journey

In the News: NASA astronaut Sunita Williams has announced her retirement after an illustrious career spanning multiple decades in space exploration. The Indian-American astronaut, who became a global icon and inspiration for millions, leaves behind a legacy of groundbreaking achievements, record-breaking missions, and pioneering contributions to human spaceflight.

Key Points:

- **Military and Aviation Career:** Before joining NASA, Williams served as a U.S. Navy officer and was a test pilot with over 3,000 flight hours in more than 30 different aircraft. She graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1987 and later earned a Master's degree in Engineering Management from Florida Institute of Technology.
- **NASA Selection and Training:** Williams was selected as an astronaut candidate by NASA in June 1998 as part of the 17th astronaut class. She completed rigorous training in spacecraft systems, spacewalking techniques, robotics, and scientific procedures, preparing for long-duration missions.
- **Space Missions and Duration:** Williams flew two long-duration missions to the International Space Station, first in 2006-2007 (Expedition 14/15) and again in 2012 (Expedition 32/33). She accumulated 322 days in space across her missions, ranking among the most experienced female astronauts in history.
- **Spacewalk Records:** Williams held the record for most spacewalks by a woman (seven spacewalks) and the longest cumulative spacewalk time for a female astronaut at 50 hours and 40 minutes. These extravehicular activities involved critical station maintenance, equipment installation, and scientific experiments.
- **Historic Achievements:** She became the first woman of Indian origin to go to space and served as Commander of the International Space Station during Expedition 33 in 2012. Williams also ran the Boston Marathon while aboard the ISS in 2007, completing it on a treadmill in orbit.
- **Cultural Ambassador:** Throughout her career, Williams carried items representing her Indian heritage to space, including the Bhagavad Gita and a statue of Lord Ganesh. She became a cultural icon, inspiring countless young people, particularly girls and minorities, to pursue careers in STEM fields.

India, Namibia Agree to Deepen Cooperation in Defense and Critical Minerals

In the News: India and Namibia held the fifth round of Foreign Office Consultations (FOC) in New Delhi, where both nations agreed to strengthen bilateral cooperation across multiple strategic sectors.

Key Points:

- **Foreign Office Consultations:** The fifth round of FOC was co-chaired by Janesh Kain, Joint Secretary (East & Southern Africa) from India's Ministry of External Affairs, and Ambassador Charles Josob, Acting Head of Department for Bilateral Relations and Cooperation from Namibia's Ministry of International Relations and Trade.

- **Defense and Critical Minerals Cooperation:** A major highlight was the decision to strengthen collaboration in defense and critical minerals.
- **Digital Public Infrastructure:** Both countries agreed to expand collaboration in Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI), an area where India has gained global recognition. India will share its experience in digital platforms for governance, payments, and service delivery to support Namibia's development goals and inclusive growth.
- **Development Partnership Approach:** Cooperation in health, pharmaceuticals, agriculture, and capacity building was reaffirmed with emphasis on sustainable development. These initiatives reflect India's development partnership approach, focusing on local needs and long-term capacity creation in the spirit of South-South Cooperation.
- **Historical Ties and Future Engagement:** India and Namibia share warm relations, with Namibia regarding India as a dependable friend. Indian support during Namibia's liberation struggle is fondly remembered by Namibian leaders. Both sides agreed to hold the next round of consultations in Windhoek, Namibia, at a mutually convenient date.

Israel Joins Trump's Board of Peace to Oversee Gaza Ceasefire Plan

In the News: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu accepted US President Donald Trump's invitation to join the "Board of Peace. The board was unveiled as part of phase two of the ceasefire agreement to oversee Gaza's governance, reconstruction, and regional relations, with a blueprint presented at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

Key Points:

- **Netanyahu's Controversial Acceptance:** Benjamin Netanyahu joined Trump's Board of Peace despite the International Criminal Court issuing a warrant in 2024 for his arrest on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity in Gaza. His participation raises concerns about the board's objectivity and credibility among Palestinians who view him as an obstacle to peace.
- **Board of Peace Structure:** The board will be led by President Trump and will oversee governance capacity-building, regional relations, reconstruction, investment attraction, and capital mobilization in Gaza. Executive board members include US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Special Envoy Steve Witkoff, Jared Kushner, former British PM Tony Blair, World Bank President Ajay Banga, and Apollo Global Management CEO Marc Rowan.
- **Gaza Administration Plan:** The blueprint presented by Jared Kushner in Davos envisions a unified Palestinian-run Gaza administered by the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza (NCAG), a panel of non-partisan Palestinian technocrats. Ali Shaath, an engineer and former Palestinian Authority deputy transport minister, chairs the committee as "chief commissioner."
- **Disarmament Requirements:** The plan operates under the principle of "one authority, one law, and one weapon," meaning only NCAG-sanctioned personnel may carry weapons. Hamas has reportedly agreed in principle to hand over heavy weapons (rockets and artillery) to the Palestinian administration.
- **100-Day Goals and Vision:** The administration committed to achieving short-term goals within 100 days, including restoring water, sewage, electric systems, hospitals, and bakeries, and increasing goods flow into Gaza.

Mangaluru Tops India, Qingdao Ranks First Worldwide in Numbeo Safety Index 2026

In the News: The Numbeo Safety Index 2026 rankings were released, covering cities worldwide. Qingdao, China emerged as the world's safest city with a safety score of 89.2, while Mangaluru in Karnataka was ranked as India's safest city, securing the 46th position globally with a safety score of 74.4. India ranked 70th among countries with an overall safety score of 55.8.

Key Points:

- **Numbeo Safety Index Overview:** The Numbeo Safety Index is an annual global ranking established in 2009 by Numbeo (headquartered in Belgrade, Serbia, CEO: Mladen Adamovic) that measures perceived safety and crime levels in cities and countries.
- **Ranking Methodology:** Data is collected through surveys where responses are scored between -2 (very negative) and +2 (very positive), then statistically processed to generate safety scores ranging from 0 to 100. Cities are classified into categories: Very Low (below 20), Low (20-40), Moderate (40-60), High (60-80), and Very High (above 80) safety levels.
- **Global Top Performers:** Qingdao, Shandong (China) topped the 2026 rankings with a safety score of 89.2.

- **India's Top 5 Safest Cities:** Mangaluru, Karnataka ranked 46th globally with a safety score of 74.4, making it India's safest city. Following were Ahmedabad, Gujarat (87th globally, 68.5 score), Jaipur, Rajasthan (106th globally, 65.3 score), Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu (123rd globally, 62.0 score), and Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala (132nd globally, 61.0 score).
- **India's Safety Challenges:** India ranked 70th globally among countries with an overall safety score of 55.8, placing it in the moderate safety category.
- **Country-Level Rankings:** The United Arab Emirates topped the safest countries list with a score of 86.0, followed by Qatar and Andorra (both at 84.8). Other high-ranking countries included Taiwan, Macao (China), and Oman. Papua New Guinea, Venezuela, and Haiti ranked among the least safe countries, reflecting persistent governance and law-and-order challenges.

India Ranks Sixth in Asia Manufacturing Index 2026

In the News: India ranked sixth among 11 Asian countries in the Asia Manufacturing Index (AMI) 2026, released by Dezan Shira & Associates. The index, now in its third year, evaluates manufacturing competitiveness across eight key pillars and 43 sub-parameters, highlighting the need for India to accelerate reforms and strengthen its position amid intensifying regional competition.

Key Points:

- **About Asia Manufacturing Index:** The Asia Manufacturing Index is an annual assessment released by Dezan Shira & Associates, a pan-Asian market entry advisory firm headquartered in Hong Kong. The AMI evaluates manufacturing competitiveness across eight broad pillars: economy, political risk, business environment, international trade, tax policy, infrastructure, workforce, and innovation, which are further broken into 43 sub-parameters.
- **India's Sixth Position:** India placed sixth in the 2026 rankings, positioning it in the middle of Asia's manufacturing landscape.
- **Regional Competition Dynamics:** China retained the top position, reflecting its scale, infrastructure strength, and integrated supply chains. Malaysia achieved a significant milestone by moving up to second place for the first time in 2026, replacing Vietnam, which slipped to third position.
- **Future Competitiveness Outlook:** The AMI 2026 highlights intensifying competition across Asia as economies position themselves within global supply chains. With Southeast Asian nations improving rapidly and developed economies refining high-value manufacturing, India must scale up execution to secure a stronger position in Asia's manufacturing hierarchy and attract greater global manufacturing investment.

Davos 2026: Detailed Key Takeaways from the World Economic Forum

In the News: The World Economic Forum's Annual Meeting 2026 concluded in Davos, Switzerland, bringing together nearly 3,000 global leaders from over 130 countries under the overarching theme "A Spirit of Dialogue." The summit featured a record number of political leaders including more than 60 heads of state, 400+ political leaders, and 830 CEOs and Chairs.

Key Points:

- **US-Europe Relations Under Strain:** A major rupture between the US and Europe emerged as a recurrent topic, with Harvard Professor Gita Gopinath warning of a "complete breakdown of trust" that could mark a "once-in-century" breakdown of the global order. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen responded by calling for "a new independent Europe," stating "if this change is permanent, then Europe must change permanently too." However, California Governor Gavin Newsom offered hope, describing transatlantic relations as "dormant not dead."
- **Major Diplomatic Breakthroughs:** US President Donald Trump reversed his position on Greenland, stating he "won't use force" to acquire it after initially threatening "excessive strength and force." Trump and NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte announced a Greenland "framework deal" enhancing Arctic security while averting tariff threats. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy met with Trump to finalize security guarantees and announced trilateral talks (US-Ukraine-Russia) beginning January 23 in Abu Dhabi.
- **Historic Trade Agreements and Economic Deals:** European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen announced the EU and India were "on the cusp" of a historic free trade agreement, calling it "the mother of all deals" that would create a market of 2 billion people. UK Chancellor Rachel Reeves secured deals worth more than \$2 billion in private investment.
- **Artificial Intelligence Governance and Impact:** AI emerged as one of the most critical themes, with discussions focusing on balancing innovation with protection. IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva warned that 40% of jobs globally will be impacted by AI over the next couple of years (60% in advanced economies), either transformed or eliminated.

- **Global Risks and Systemic Challenges:** The Global Risks Report 2026 showed extreme weather events dropped from second to fourth place, not because they are less urgent, but because geoeconomic fragmentation and societal polarization have become more pressing. Leaders warned of multiple interconnected crises including public debt problems in developing countries (spending more on debt repayments than healthcare and education), humanitarian aid sector shrinking by 50% in 2024, and energy security risks multiplying to unprecedented levels.

As Trump Reverses Greenland Tariff Threats, Spotlight Back on TACO Effect

In the News: US President Donald Trump's pattern of escalating economic threats followed by rapid de-escalation has revived discussion around the TACO trade (Trump Always Chickens Out). In January 2026, Trump threatened to invade Greenland and levy tariffs on eight European allies unless they supported a "Complete and Total purchase of Greenland" by the US. After European resistance and a significant market downturn on January 20, 2026, Trump reversed course at the World Economic Forum in Davos, announcing a "framework of a future deal" with NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte and backing off his tariff threats.

Key Points:

- **The Greenland Escalation and Reversal:** Trump refused to rule out invading Greenland by force and threatened fresh tariffs on eight European allies to pressure support for purchasing Greenland from Denmark. On January 20, 2026, three major US stock indexes fell significantly (Dow fell 1.8%, S&P 500 dropped 2%, Nasdaq fell 2.4%) for the first time since October 2025.
- **Origin of TACO Trade:** The term "Trump Always Chickens Out" (TACO) was first coined by Financial Times commentator Robert Armstrong in May 2025 while reflecting on the aftermath of Trump's Liberation Day tariff announcements.
- **Liberation Day Tariff Pattern (April 2025):** On April 2, 2025, Trump announced a 10% baseline tariff on all trading partners and country-specific rates on nations with which the US maintains trade deficits. He subsequently relaxed the latter for 90 days, vowing to conclude 90 trade deals favoring the US's balance of trade. This set the precedent for the escalation-de-escalation pattern that would become known as the TACO effect.
- **European Union Tariff Reversal (May 2025):** Trump threatened to increase tariffs on the European Union to 50% in May 2025 but reversed this decision two days later after talking to EU leaders, resulting in a market rally. This demonstrated the pattern where market pressure and diplomatic resistance led to rapid policy reversals.
- **Investment Opportunities from TACO:** A 2025 study by Nomura strategist Charlie McElligott showed that investors shorting (betting against) S&P 500 Futures when Trump announced tariff threats, then buying them days later, would have earned a 12% return since February 2025. In contrast, merely holding stocks would not have significantly changed investors' portfolios despite significant market swings, making the TACO pattern an excellent opportunity for strategic traders.

SCIENCE AND TECH

What happened to ISRO's PSLV C62- Mission?

In the News: ISRO's PSLV-C62 mission failed to reach orbit due to an anomaly during the third stage of the rocket, resulting in the loss of 15 out of 16 satellites. This marked India's first space launch of 2026 and the second consecutive failure of ISRO's reliable workhorse rocket, the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV), after a similar failure in May 2025.

Key Points:

- **Mission Overview:** PSLV-C62 was the 9th dedicated commercial mission undertaken by NewSpace India Limited (NSIL) carrying the EOS-N1 earth observation satellite along with 15 co-passenger satellites from domestic and international customers.
- **Flight Failure:** The first and second stages performed normally, but near the end of the third stage's operation, a deviation was observed in the flight controls related to roll-rates just prior to stage separation.
- **Lost Payloads:** Among the 15 lost satellites were DRDO's Anvesha (EOS-N1), a strategic Earth observation satellite designed to detect military camouflage, AayulSAT (India's first in-orbit fuelling experiment), CGUSAT (a student-developed satellite for disaster communication), and a foreign Earth observation satellite jointly built by Thailand.

- **Sole Survivor:** The KID (Kestrel Initial Demonstrator), a prototype re-entry capsule developed by a Spanish startup, successfully separated from the rocket and transmitted data back to Earth. The capsule operated briefly despite the failed mission, transmitting flight data for three minutes with a peak of 28 g during its descent.
- **Commercial Impact:** The failure has particularly affected India's private space sector, with six satellites belonging to Indian startups lost in the mission.
- **Ongoing Investigation:** ISRO has launched a detailed analysis to identify the root cause of the failure. The space agency must demonstrate corrective actions and a successful return to flight to restore confidence in India's commercial space capabilities.

Can Datacenters in orbit solve for AI model's energy demand?

In the News: The exponential growth of artificial intelligence is driving unprecedented energy consumption in datacenters, prompting researchers and companies to explore radical solutions—including building datacenters in space.

Key Points:

- **Energy Crisis in AI:** Training and running large AI models requires massive computational power, with major datacenters consuming hundreds of megawatts—equivalent to small cities. Current datacenter infrastructure accounts for approximately 1-2% of global electricity demand, projected to rise significantly as AI adoption accelerates.
- **Orbital Datacenter Concept:** Space-based datacenters would operate in orbit, leveraging continuous solar exposure (24/7 sunlight without atmospheric interference) to generate power through solar panels. This eliminates day-night cycles and weather-related energy fluctuations that ground-based solar installations face.
- **Cooling Advantages:** Space provides natural thermal management through radiative cooling. The vacuum of space allows heat dissipation without requiring water or air-conditioning systems, which currently consume 30-40% of datacenter energy on Earth.
- **Technical Challenges:** Major hurdles include launch costs (despite reductions from companies like SpaceX), radiation hardening of computer components, maintenance and repair in orbit, data transmission latency, and initial capital investment for space infrastructure.

Gujarat Witnesses Launch of India's First Integrated Private Satellite Manufacturing Unit at Sanand

In the News: India has taken a major step in space technology with the foundation stone laying ceremony for the country's integrated private satellite manufacturing facility at Khoraj in Sanand, Gujarat. Launched by Azista Space, the facility named Palmnaro marks a new chapter in India's growing space sector. Azista BST Aerospace ALREADY operates "Asia's first private satellite factory" in Ahmedabad/Sanand since earlier, with capacity for 50-250 satellites per year.

Key Points:

- **Azista Space's Palmnaro Facility:** The new facility is being established by Azista Space and will focus on building satellites and high-end electro-optical payloads. Named Palmnaro, the plant is designed to support end-to-end satellite manufacturing under one roof, representing India's first integrated private satellite manufacturing unit.
- **Location and State Support:** The foundation stone was laid at Khoraj in Sanand, Gujarat, with the groundbreaking ceremony held in the presence of Gujarat's Minister for Science and Technology, Arjun Modhwadia.
- **Aerospace Ecosystem Development:** The facility will support the growth of the aerospace manufacturing ecosystem by attracting talent, encouraging research, and supporting startups linked to satellite and space technology development.

Reusable Launch Vehicle (RLV) Technology

In the News: The global space sector is undergoing a transformative shift from government-led exploration to private-driven commercial activity, with Reusable Launch Vehicle (RLV) technology emerging as a key disruptor. The space market is projected to exceed USD 1 trillion by 2030, with reusability reducing launch costs by 5–20 times, enabling more sustainable and frequent access to space.

Key Points:

- **Definition and Concept:** An RLV is a space launch system designed to allow for the recovery of some or all of its component stages. Unlike "expendable" rockets that burn up or are discarded in the ocean after a single use, RLVs return to Earth to be refurbished and flown again.

- **Scientific Constraint - Tsiolkovsky Rocket Equation:** Rocket motion is governed by the Tsiolkovsky rocket equation, which reveals that carrying fuel itself adds weight, and additional weight demands even more fuel. This creates a brutal reality: over 90% of a rocket's mass at liftoff consists of propellant and fuel tanks, leaving less than 4% for payload.
- **Role of Staging:** Staging divides a rocket into multiple propulsion units that are discarded sequentially during ascent to shed dead weight, improving performance by allowing the remaining rocket to accelerate with reduced mass. RLV systems aim to recover and reuse critical stages (especially the first stage), combining staging with reusability for maximum efficiency.
- **SpaceX Falcon 9 - Industry Benchmark:** SpaceX pioneered partial reusability through innovations including 3D-printed components, modular design, vertical integration, and automated landing systems. SpaceX has successfully landed Falcon 9 boosters 546 times.
- **ISRO's RLV-TD (Pushpak):** India's Reusable Launch Vehicle – Technology Demonstrator is a winged technology demonstrator that simulates aircraft-like landing. ISRO successfully conducted the LEX (Landing Experiment) series including LEX-01, LEX-02, and LEX-03 using the 'Pushpak' vehicle to test autonomous horizontal landing capabilities, demonstrating India's commitment to developing indigenous reusable launch technology.

ENVIRONMENT

Second Range wide Dolphin Survey Launched Under Project Dolphin

In the News: India has launched the second range-wide Dolphin Survey under Project Dolphin from Bijnor, Uttar Pradesh. This comprehensive survey aims to assess the population and distribution of both Gangetic river dolphins and marine dolphins across India's river systems and coastal waters.

Key Points:

- **Survey Launch:** The second range-wide Dolphin Survey was initiated from Bijnor, Uttar Pradesh, as part of Project Dolphin's ongoing conservation efforts. This survey builds upon the baseline data collected during the first range-wide assessment.
- **Survey Scope and Coverage:** The survey covers major river systems including the Ganga, Brahmaputra, Indus, and their tributaries where Gangetic river dolphins (*Platanista gangetica*) are found. It also includes coastal areas for marine dolphin species assessment across multiple states.
- **Project Dolphin Background:** Project Dolphin was announced on Independence Day 2020 as a flagship initiative for dolphin conservation in India. The project focuses on both freshwater (Gangetic dolphins) and marine dolphins, similar to Project Tiger's comprehensive approach.
- **Conservation Objectives:** The survey aims to generate updated population estimates, identify critical habitats, assess threats to dolphin populations, and develop targeted conservation strategies. Data collection includes population counts, habitat mapping, and threat assessment.
- **Scientific Methodology:** The survey employs standardized protocols including direct visual observations, acoustic monitoring, and community participation. Trained surveyors and volunteers work together to ensure comprehensive coverage of dolphin habitats.
- **Gangetic River Dolphin Status:** The Gangetic river dolphin is India's National Aquatic Animal and is listed as Endangered on the IUCN Red List. It is found primarily in the Ganga-Brahmaputra-Meghna and Indus river systems.

Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary Declared Eco-Sensitive Zone

In the News: The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has declared an Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ) around Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary in Rajasthan. The notification aims to protect the sanctuary's biodiversity and regulate activities in the surrounding areas to prevent ecological degradation.

Key Points:

- **Location and Extent:** Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary is located in the Rajsamand, Pali, and Udaipur districts of Rajasthan. The Eco-Sensitive Zone extends around the sanctuary's boundaries to create a buffer area for conservation.

- **Purpose of ESZ Declaration:** The ESZ aims to protect the sanctuary from potential threats arising from unregulated development activities. It serves as a transition zone between areas of high protection and those requiring lesser protection, minimizing human-wildlife conflict.
- **Prohibited Activities:** Commercial mining, stone quarrying, and crushing units are completely prohibited within the ESZ. Establishment of new saw mills, brick kilns, and industries causing pollution are banned in the designated area.
- **Biodiversity Significance:** Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary is home to diverse wildlife including wolves, leopards, sloth bears, hyenas, and jungle cats. The sanctuary also supports rich floral diversity with dense forests of dhok, bamboo, and various medicinal plants.
- **Historical Importance:** The sanctuary surrounds the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Kumbhalgarh Fort, built in the 15th century by Rana Kumbha. The fort's walls extend over 36 kilometers, making it the second-longest continuous wall after the Great Wall of China.

ECONOMY

Export Preparedness Index (EPI) 2024

In the News: NITI Aayog released the Export Preparedness Index (EPI) 2024, a comprehensive assessment of export readiness across India's States and Union Territories. This is the fourth edition of the Index, with the first edition published in August 2020. The Index is aligned with India's objective of achieving USD 1 trillion in merchandise exports by 2030 and the vision of Viksit Bharat @2047.

Key Points:

- **Framework Structure:** The EPI 2024 is structured around 4 pillars, 13 sub-pillars, and 70 indicators. The four pillars with their weightages are: Export Infrastructure (20%), Business Ecosystem (40%), Policy & Governance (20%), and Export Performance (20%).
- **New Analytical Dimensions:** The 2024 edition strengthens analytical depth through the inclusion of new dimensions such as macroeconomic stability, cost competitiveness, human capital, financial access, and the MSME ecosystem, while refining existing indicators to enhance precision and policy relevance.
- **Classification System:** States and UTs are categorized into Large States & Small States, North East States, and Union Territories. Within each category, they are classified as Leaders (high export preparedness), Challengers (moderate preparedness with scope for improvement), and Aspirers (early stages of export ecosystem development).
- **District-Level Focus:** Greater emphasis has been placed on districts as core units of export competitiveness, translating national export objectives into actionable, place-based strategies anchored in local capabilities, industrial clusters, and value-chain linkages.
- **Top Performing Large States:** Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, and Andhra Pradesh emerged as leading performers among Large States in export preparedness.
- **Top Performing Small States/UTs/NE States:** Uttarakhand, Jammu and Kashmir, Nagaland, Dadra and Nagar Haveli & Daman and Diu, and Goa emerged as top performers in their respective categories.

Davos 2026: Key Dates, Theme, Participants and Global Challenges in Focus

In the News: The World Economic Forum (WEF) Annual Meeting 2026, commonly known as Davos 2026, is set to convene global leaders, business executives, and policymakers in Davos, Switzerland.

Key Points:

- **Event Dates and Venue:** The WEF Annual Meeting 2026 is scheduled to take place in Davos-Klosters, Switzerland, typically held in January 19th to 23rd. The event brings together world leaders, CEOs, international organizations, and civil society representatives for high-level discussions on global issues.
- **Theme and Focus Areas:** The key theme of the World Economic Forum this year is "A Spirit of Dialogue". The 2026 meeting theme centers on rebuilding trust, fostering collaboration, and addressing systemic challenges. Key focus areas include sustainable development, artificial intelligence governance, energy transition, global health security, and inclusive economic growth.

- **Climate and Sustainability Agenda:** Climate action remains a central priority, with sessions on accelerating the transition to net-zero emissions, mobilizing climate finance, and implementing sustainable business practices.
- **Indian Participation:** India is expected to have significant representation at Davos 2026, with government ministers, business leaders, and startup founders participating.
- **Key Participants:** The event typically attracts heads of state, finance ministers, central bank governors, Fortune 500 CEOs, leading entrepreneurs, Nobel laureates, and representatives from international organizations like the IMF, World Bank, and United Nations.

IMF Lifts 2026 Global Growth Outlook to 3.3%

In the News: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has revised its global economic growth forecast for 2026 upward to 3.3%, reflecting improved economic conditions and stronger-than-expected recovery across major economies.

Key Points:

- **Growth Forecast Revision:** The IMF upgraded its 2026 global growth projection to 3.3%, marking an upward revision from previous estimates. This reflects better economic fundamentals and resilient global demand despite ongoing geopolitical and economic challenges.
- **Advanced Economies Outlook:** European economies are anticipated to recover from recent slowdowns, contributing to the improved global outlook.
- **Emerging Markets and Developing Economies:** Emerging markets and developing economies (EMDEs) are projected to be key drivers of global growth in 2026. Countries in Asia, particularly India and China, are expected to contribute significantly to the overall economic expansion.
- **India's Growth Trajectory:** India is forecasted to remain among the fastest-growing major economies in 2026, with robust domestic demand, infrastructure investment, and digital economy expansion driving growth.

ART AND CULTURE

Ilaiyaraaja to Receive Padmapani Award at Ajanta–Ellora International Film Festival 2026

In the News: Legendary Indian music composer Ilaiyaraaja is set to receive the prestigious Padmapani Award at the Ajanta–Ellora International Film Festival (AEIFF) 2026. This honor recognizes his monumental contributions to Indian cinema and music over a career spanning more than five decades.

Key Points:

- **Award Recipient:** Ilaiyaraaja, renowned music composer with over 7,000 songs and 1,000+ film scores across multiple Indian languages, will be honored with the Padmapani Award at AEIFF 2026.
- **Padmapani Award Significance:** The award is named after the famous Padmapani fresco at the Ajanta Caves, symbolizing artistic excellence and cultural heritage. It is given to artists who have made exceptional contributions to cinema and the arts.
- **Festival Details:** The Ajanta–Ellora International Film Festival celebrates cinema, culture, and heritage, named after the UNESCO World Heritage Sites of Ajanta and Ellora caves in Maharashtra.
- **Ilaiyaraaja's Legacy:** Known as "Isaignani" (The Musical Genius), Ilaiyaraaja revolutionized Indian film music by blending classical Indian music with Western orchestration. He has worked across Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, and Hindi cinema.
- **National Recognition:** Ilaiyaraaja has previously received India's highest civilian honors, including the Padma Bhushan (2010) and Padma Vibhushan (2018), for his contributions to music and arts.
- **Global Impact:** He is the first Asian composer to score a symphony for the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra in London and has been recognized internationally for his innovative compositions.
- **Career Milestones:** Starting his career in 1976 with the Tamil film "Annakili," Ilaiyaraaja has composed music for over 1,000 films and created timeless melodies that continue to influence generations of musicians.