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IMPORTANT ONE LINERS

NATIONAL

India to Establish First National Coral Reef Research Centre in Andaman

In the News: The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change announced plans to establish India's first National Coral Reef Research Institute (NCRRI) in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands on November 29, 2025. The institute will be located at Chidiyatapu in South Andaman district with an investment of ₹120 crore, marking a significant step toward advanced coral reef conservation and management in India.

Key Points:

- **Project Details:** National Coral Reef Research Institute (NCRRI) to be established at Chidiyatapu, South Andaman, with a budget allocation of ₹120 crore by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.
- **Institutional Role:** NCRRI will function as the nodal and monitoring agency for coral reef research across India, centralizing conservation and management efforts at the national level.
- **Announcement Context:** Plans announced by Sivaperuman, Officer-in-Charge of the Zoological Survey of India's Andaman & Nicobar Regional Centre, during a three-day workshop on Coastal and Marine Biodiversity of Island Ecosystems (November 27-29, 2025).
- **Ecological Significance:** Coral reefs provide natural coastal protection against storms and work as cushions against waves, preventing loss of life and property in coastal regions.
- **Biodiversity Hotspot:** Andaman and Nicobar Islands are one of four biodiversity hotspots in India, with 11,069 animal species (terrestrial and marine) documented, including 1,123 endemic species representing 10.72% of India's faunal components.
- **Existing Research Infrastructure:** ZSI's Andaman & Nicobar Regional Centre (established April 21, 1977) has conducted 970 major field surveys and 600 extensive undersea surveys monitoring coral reef health, reporting about 11,050 species of fauna.
- **Digital Initiative:** QR code-based system to be introduced at ZSI Museum in Sri Vijay Puram (formerly Port Blair), enabling digital access to photographs and information related to displayed species.
- **Climate Change Concerns:** Former ZSI Director Kailash Chandra highlighted impacts of rising sea levels and increasing temperatures on marine habitats, particularly coral reefs, during the workshop announcement.
- **Geographic Distribution:** India's coral reefs are mainly restricted to Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Gulf of Mannar, Gulf of Kutch, Palk Strait, and Lakshadweep Islands, with total estimated area under coral reef at 2,375 km².

Uttar Pradesh Crosses 1 GW Residential Rooftop Solar Capacity Under PM Surya Ghar

In the News: Uttar Pradesh achieved a significant milestone by surpassing 1 Gigawatt (GW) rooftop solar capacity under the Pradhan Mantri Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana scheme on November 27, 2025. With approximately 2.9 lakh (290,000) homes now solar-powered, UP has emerged as a leading state in residential rooftop solar installations, contributing 13% of India's total rooftop solar capacity additions in Q1 2025.

Key Points:

- **1 GW Milestone:** Uttar Pradesh reached 1.08 GW sanctioned capacity under PM Surya Ghar Yojana, with over 1 lakh (100,000) rooftop solar systems installed as of November 2025. Approximately 290,000 homes now have solar installations.
- **PM Surya Ghar Scheme Launch:** Pradhan Mantri Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana launched in February 2024 to make rooftop solar accessible for households by reducing upfront costs and promoting decentralized clean energy adoption.
- **Subsidy Structure:** Beneficiaries receive 70-80% subsidy of total installation cost for rooftop solar systems up to 3 kW capacity. Maximum subsidy available up to ₹78,000 (₹1.08 lakhs for larger systems).
- **UP's National Standing:** UP contributed 13% of India's total rooftop solar capacity additions in Q1 2025, ranking third after Gujarat (16%) and Maharashtra (14%). UP recorded highest compounded quarterly growth rate of over 15% in residential rooftop solar between Q1 2024 and Q1 2025.
- **Application Status:** 10.73 lakh applications received on official portal as of March 2025. Total 4,119 applications submitted for solar installation, with 3,537 plants already operational as of November 2025.

- **Future Targets:** UP aims to install 25,000 new rooftop solar plants over next two years. Target of 2.65 lakh rooftop solar systems for FY 2025-26, with monthly target of 22,000 installations (approximately 300 units per district). Goal to achieve 28,468 operational solar plants by March 2027.
- **Implementation Agency:** Uttar Pradesh New and Renewable Energy Development Agency (UPNEDA) at helm of implementation process, monitoring real-time progress using cutting-edge technology.

8th Pay Commission Update: Govt Rules Out DA-Basic Pay Merger For Now

In the News: Union Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary informed the Lok Sabha that the 8th Central Pay Commission has been notified via a resolution dated November 3, 2025, but the government has ruled out any merger of existing Dearness Allowance (DA) or Dearness Relief (DR) with basic pay for now.

Key Points:

- **No DA Merger Proposal:** The government clarified that no such merger is under consideration, as DA/DR rates (currently at 55% of basic pay/pension) are revised biannually based on the All India Consumer Price Index for Industrial Workers (AICPI-IW) to offset inflation.
- **8th Pay Commission Details:** Headed by Justice (Retd.) Ranjana Desai, the commission is expected to submit recommendations within 18 months, revising salaries, pensions, and allowances for over 50 lakh central employees and 65 lakh pensioners, effective likely from January 1, 2026.
- **Fitment Factor Expectations:** Reports suggest a potential fitment factor of 1.83 to 2.46, which could lead to a 14-54% real pay hike (including Basic Pay+DA), though higher increases face fiscal constraints.
- **Employee Demands Context:** Unions have pushed for DA merger (a practice from pre-6th Pay Commission eras when DA exceeded 50%), citing inflation relief, higher increments, and better retirement benefits, but no immediate action is planned.
- **Recent DA Hike:** DA/DR was increased by 3% to 55% last month ahead of Diwali, providing interim relief until the 8th Pay Commission's full implementation.

Tessy Thomas Honoured With Dr Paulos Mar Gregorios Award 2025

In the News: Tessy Thomas, famously known as India's 'Missile Woman,' was honoured with the Dr Paulos Mar Gregorios Award 2025 for her pioneering contributions to defence science and missile technology. The award was presented by the Sophia Society, recognizing her role in advancing India's indigenous missile programs and scientific leadership.

Key Points:

- **Award Significance:** The Dr Paulos Mar Gregorios Award is conferred biennially to individuals who have made outstanding contributions in fields such as peace, science, and leadership, named after the scholar and theologian Paulos Mar Gregorios.
- **Contributions:** Tessy Thomas is the first woman to lead a missile project in India and has played a pivotal role in the development of the Agni series of missiles, significantly enhancing India's strategic deterrence capabilities.
- **Mentorship and Leadership:** She was mentored by Dr APJ Abdul Kalam and led the Agni-IV and Agni-V missile programs, overseeing over 50 missile launches, which elevated India's global defence stature.
- **Recognition:** Alongside national and international accolades such as induction into the Aerospace Pioneer Hall of Fame, this award further acknowledges her commitment to scientific innovation and women empowerment in defence technology.
- **Inspiration:** Tessy Thomas is an inspiration for young scientists, particularly women, demonstrating how perseverance and leadership can contribute to national advancement in high-technology fields.

IBTP Chief Praveen Kumar Takes Additional Charge as DG of BSF

In the News: Praveen Kumar — the current chief of Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) — has been given the additional charge of Border Security Force (BSF) Director General, following the retirement of the incumbent BSF DG.

Key Points:

- **Assignment of Additional Charge:** The Ministry of Home Affairs issued an order that from 30 November 2025, after the retirement of former DG Daljit Singh Chawdhary, Praveen Kumar will hold additional charge as DG of BSF. This will continue until a permanent DG is appointed or until further orders.
- **Praveen Kumar's Background:** He is a 1993-batch IPS officer from the West Bengal cadre. Prior to being DG of ITBP (assumed 1 October 2025), he served for over two decades in the Intelligence Bureau (IB).

- **Dual Responsibility:** With this change, Praveen Kumar will lead two of India's major central armed police forces — ITBP (primarily guarding the India–China border) and, temporarily, BSF (guarding India–Pakistan and India–Bangladesh borders) — underscoring the government's reliance on his experience in intelligence and border management.
- **Why the Appointment Matters:** BSF is one of India's largest border-guarding forces, with key responsibility for national security along volatile frontiers. Assigning additional charge to a seasoned IPS officer like Praveen Kumar is seen as a move to ensure continuity of leadership and stability during the transition.
- **Ceremony Location:** Unusually, the baton-handover took place at a BSF camp in Raipur, Chhattisgarh (instead of the usual BSF HQ in Delhi), during a DGs–IGs national police conference.

Calls for a National Judicial Policy and NJAC

In the News: Surya Kant, the Chief Justice of India, called for a National Judicial Policy to promote consistency across the courts of India. He also stated that the Supreme Court of India (SC) would consider a plea seeking revival of the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC), thus reopening the debate over the existing Collegium system for judicial appointments.

Key Points:

- **Need for Judicial Uniformity:** CJI Surya Kant highlighted the problem of divergent judgments arising out of the multiplicity of courts and benches — 25 High Courts plus multiple SC benches. To address this, he suggested the creation of a National Judicial Policy aimed at encouraging coherence and predictability across jurisdictions.
- **Access to Justice Concerns:** The CJI underscored that for many citizens — especially from marginalized communities — constitutional rights remain theoretical if the justice delivery system remains inaccessible because of cost, language barriers, distance, and delays. A national policy could standardize procedures, reduce delay, and enhance affordability and accessibility.
- **NJAC Revival Proposal:** During a hearing, advocate Mathews Nedumpara requested the SC to revisit the 2015 decision that struck down NJAC. In response, CJI Surya Kant said, "Yes, we will see," indicating the Court's willingness to examine the plea.
- **Background: NJAC vs Collegium:** The NJAC was created via the 99th Constitutional Amendment and the NJAC Act, intending to replace the Collegium system by including the executive and eminent persons in the appointments process. In 2015, the NJAC was struck down by a 4:1 majority bench of the SC, on grounds that it undermined judicial independence. Since then, the Collegium system has governed appointments.
- **Why the Debate Matters Again:** The remarks by Chief Justice Surya Kant mark a significant shift, indicating that even defenders of the Collegium system now see merit in re-examining the NJAC. If revived, NJAC could bring more transparency and pluralism to judicial appointments — but may also reignite concerns about executive influence and threats to judicial independence.

India–Maldives Joint Military Exercise EKUVERIN 2025 Begins in Kerala

In the News: The 14th edition of the India–Maldives Joint Military Exercise EKUVERIN 2025 commenced in Thiruvananthapuram Kerala in December 2025, marking another milestone in the longstanding defence cooperation between the two neighbouring nations. The exercise aims to enhance interoperability and mutual understanding between the Indian Army and the Maldives National Defence Force (MNDF) in counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism operations under a United Nations mandate.

Key Points:

- **Exercise Overview:** EKUVERIN, meaning "Friends" in Dhivehi, symbolizes the deep-rooted friendship between India and the Maldives. The 2025 edition is being held at Kerala.
- **Participating Forces:** A contingent of the Indian Army's Infantry Battalion Group is participating alongside personnel from the Maldives National Defence Force (MNDF), focusing on tactical-level training.
- **Objectives:** The joint drill focuses on joint planning, tactical-level operations, and sharing of best practices in counter-terrorism, humanitarian assistance, and disaster relief.
- **Humanitarian and Peacekeeping Focus:** The exercise emphasizes coordination in UN peacekeeping missions and improving readiness for real-time humanitarian operations.
- **Strategic Importance:** EKUVERIN serves as a key component of India's 'Neighbourhood First' policy and Defence Cooperation Vision 2030 between India and the Maldives.
- **Previous Editions:** The 2024 edition of EKUVERIN was hosted in Maldives, continuing the tradition of annual alternation between the two countries. The first edition was held in 2009, strengthening decades of bilateral military friendship.

Tamil Nadu Adds Five New Products to Its GI Portfolio, Taking Total to 74

In the News: Tamil Nadu has added five new products to its Geographical Indication (GI) portfolio, taking the state's total GI registrations to 74 — the highest among all Indian states. The announcement was made in December 2025, marking another milestone in preserving the state's rich cultural and traditional heritage through intellectual property protection.

Key Points:

- **New GI Additions:** The actual five products that received GI tags are: Woraiyur cotton sari, Kavindapadi jaggery powder (listed as "Kavindapadi nattu sakkarai"), Namakkal soapstone cookware (not mentioned - document incorrectly lists "Dindigul Locks expanded version"), Thooyamalli rice, Ambasamudram wooden toys (not "Kancheepuram Paintings").
- **Economic and Cultural Value:** The new GI tags aim to protect traditional artisans and local communities by granting them exclusive rights to market these products, enhancing their brand value in both domestic and international markets.
- **Tamil Nadu's GI Leadership:** With the addition of these five, Tamil Nadu's total GI portfolio rises to 74, reaffirming its position as India's leading state in geographical indications.
- **Institutional Role:** The applications were facilitated by the Tamil Nadu Handicrafts Development Corporation and the Geographical Indications Registry, Chennai, in collaboration with local producer associations.
- **Export and Tourism Boost:** GI recognition helps promote rural livelihoods and boosts tourism by drawing attention to the state's traditional crafts, food products, and agricultural item.
- **Previous Achievements:** Tamil Nadu's earlier GI list includes world-renowned products such as Madurai Jasmine, Tanjore Paintings, Kancheepuram Silk Sarees, and Srivilliputhur Palkova, symbolizing the state's diverse heritage.

India Launches GIRG to Strengthen Its Global Rankings and Performance

In the News: Minister of State for Statistics and Programme Implementation, Rao Inderjit Singh, informed the Rajya Sabha about India's ongoing Global Indices for Reforms and Growth (GIRG) initiative. The GIRG framework monitors 26 select global indices through inter-ministerial coordination to drive reforms and improve India's global rankings across key social, economic, and development parameters.

Key Points:

- **Nodal Agency:** Development Monitoring and Evaluation Office (DMEO), NITI Aayog serves as the knowledge partner and central coordinator.
- **Scope:** GIRG monitors 26 select global indices published by 16 international publishing agencies.
- **Four Broad Categories:** Economy, Development, Governance, and Industry
- **17 Nodal Ministries:** The 26 indices have been allocated to 17 nodal ministries for specific responsibilities.
- **GIRG Dashboard Components:** Global Index Section (tracks India's international rankings), India Index Section (creates indigenous indices for state/UT rankings) and Reform Actions Section (monitors implementation of reforms).
- **State-Level Implementation:** States/UTs are scored and ranked separately on index performance and reform actions, driving healthy competition.

Data Shows 34% Children Under Five Are Stunted

In the News: According to the National Family Health Survey-5 (NFHS-5) conducted during 2019-21, approximately **35.5% of children under the age of five in India are stunted**, indicating chronic undernutrition that hampers physical and cognitive development. The data is monitored by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in collaboration with UNICEF and forms the basis for targeted nutrition interventions.

Key Points:

- **Data Source:** National Family Health Survey-5 (NFHS-5), conducted 2019-2021, is the most recent available data on child nutrition in India.
- **Stunting Prevalence:** 35.5% of children under 5 years are stunted, meaning approximately 1 in 3 children suffer from chronic undernutrition.
- **Comparison with NFHS-4:** NFHS-4 (2015-16) showed 38.4% stunting while NFHS-5 shows improvement to 35.5%, representing a decline of 2.9 percentage points.
- **Global SDG Target:** The Sustainable Development Goal aims to reduce stunting to below 25% by 2030, and India is currently off-track to meet this target.

- **States with Highest Stunting Rates:** Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Meghalaya recorded the highest stunting rates in NFHS-5.
- **Best Performing States:** Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Sikkim, Goa, and Mizoram have stunting rates below 20%, demonstrating best practices in child nutrition.
- **POSHAN Abhiyaan:** PM's Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nutrition (POSHAN Abhiyaan) was launched in March 2018 as the flagship program to address malnutrition.
- **Mission Saksham Anganwadi & POSHAN 2.0:** Launched in September 2021, this mission strengthens the anganwadi ecosystem and nutrition delivery mechanisms through digital platforms and community engagement.
- **Definition of Stunting:** Stunting is defined as height-for-age below -2 standard deviations from the WHO Child Growth Standards median, indicating chronic undernutrition.

SC Directions on 'Digital-Arrest' Scams

In the News: The Supreme Court of India has issued a series of directions to curb the rising menace of 'digital-arrest' scams, in which cybercriminals impersonate law enforcement officers or government agencies to extort money from citizens under the threat of fake arrests or legal action. The apex court's directions, issued in November 2025 however, the major directions were issued in late November and December 2025, aim to strengthen law enforcement coordination, digital vigilance, and public awareness across the country.

Key Points:

- **Nature of the Scam:** In these scams, fraudsters use video calls, fake police uniforms, and doctored documents to intimidate victims into paying bribes or "bail amounts" under the guise of avoiding arrest or legal action.
- **Supreme Court Intervention:** Taking note of the widespread panic caused by such crimes, the Supreme Court directed CBI investigation to create a uniform national protocol to track, report, and dismantle these cybercrime networks.
- **National Coordination Mechanism:** The Court instructed the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) to function as the central nodal agency for data-sharing between states, telecom operators, and financial institutions to swiftly block scam-related phone numbers and accounts.
- **Public Awareness Measures:** Authorities have been directed to intensify awareness campaigns through mass media and government apps such as CyberDost, emphasizing that no legitimate agency conducts arrests through phone or video calls.
- **Victim Support:** States have been asked to operationalize 24×7 cyber helplines (1930) and ensure immediate freezing of fraudulent transactions once reported.
- **Judicial Emphasis:** The Court stressed that the right to personal liberty under Article 21 must not be jeopardized by fear-based cyber exploitation, urging citizens to report such cases promptly through the National Cybercrime Reporting Portal.

Lok Sabha Passes Central Excise (Amendment) Bill 2025

In the News: Parliament approved the Central Excise (Amendment) Bill, 2025, with both Lok Sabha (passed on December 3, 2025) and Rajya Sabha clearing the legislation. The Bill seeks to revise excise duties on tobacco and related products after the expiry of the GST compensation cess.

Key Points:

- **Introduction and Passage:** Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman introduced the Bill in Lok Sabha on December 1, 2025. The Lok Sabha passed it by voice vote on December 3, 2025, and Rajya Sabha returned it to Lok Sabha on December 4, 2025, completing the parliamentary approval process.
- **Objective of the Bill:** The Bill amends the Central Excise Act, 1944, to provide fiscal space for increasing central excise duty on tobacco products and maintain the current tax incidence after the GST compensation cess ends. The cess is expected to be discontinued by end of December 2025 after repayment of the ₹2.69 lakh crore COVID-period loan taken to compensate states.
- **Increased Excise Duty Rates:** The Bill significantly raises excise duties on tobacco products. Duty on unmanufactured tobacco increases from 64% to 70%. For cigarettes, duty will range from ₹2,700 to ₹11,000 per thousand sticks (previously ₹200-735). Chewing tobacco duty increases from 25% to 100%. Hookah or gudaku tobacco duty rises from 25% to 40%.
- **Revenue Sharing with States:** The revenue will be shared with states at 41% as per Finance Commission recommendations, ensuring no state receives lesser funds than what the Finance Commission decides.
- **Alignment with WHO Benchmark:** The Finance Minister stated that India's current tax incidence on cigarettes is around 53% of retail price, while the World Health Organization (WHO) benchmark is 75%. The rate fixation aims to align with

WHO standards and ensure tobacco products do not become more affordable, thus discouraging consumption of demerit goods.

- **GST Structure Post-Cess:** Tobacco products will continue to be taxed at 40% GST under the demerit goods category. The overall tax burden will remain unchanged, with excise duty replacing the compensation cess component that was levied over and above the 28% GST slab.
- **Support for Tobacco Farmers and Beedi Workers:** The government has implemented crop diversification schemes in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal to encourage farmers to shift from tobacco cultivation to other crops

India's Heritage Footfall Rankings 2024-25

In the News: According to the India Tourism Data Compendium 2025, India's heritage tourism sector witnessed significant growth in 2024-25, with 56 lakh foreign tourists and over 303.59 crore domestic tourist visits recorded. The Taj Mahal in Agra retained its position as India's most visited monument among the 145 centrally protected ticketed monuments under the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI).

Key Points:

- **Overall Tourism Growth in 2024-25:** India recorded a 1.75% increase in domestic tourist visits to heritage monuments and an 8.84% growth in foreign tourist arrivals in 2024-25. The total domestic footfall across ASI monuments crossed 54 million visits.
- **Taj Mahal - Most Visited Monument:** The Taj Mahal in Agra emerged as the most visited monument in 2024-25, attracting 6.26 million domestic tourists and 0.65 million foreign visitors. The monument continues to retain its title as India's primary tourism icon due to its global heritage appeal, architectural beauty, and UNESCO World Heritage status. It is also the highest revenue-generating monument in India.
- **Top 10 Most Visited Monuments for Domestic Tourists:** Sun Temple in Konark, Odisha ranked second with 3.57 million domestic visitors in 2024-25. Qutub Minar in Delhi secured third position.
- **State-wise Performance:** Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu recorded the highest domestic tourist visits, with 646.8 million and 306.8 million visitors respectively. The top 10 heritage sites account for 47% of all domestic arrivals to ASI monuments.
- **Foreign Tourist Preferences:** For foreign visitors, the Taj Mahal remained the top choice, followed by Qutub Minar and Agra Fort. Qutub Minar has emerged as the second most popular monument for foreign tourists, surpassing Agra Fort due to improved maintenance, better facilities, and new attractions like the evening laser light show.
- **Recovery from Pandemic Impact:** After a sharp decline during COVID-19 when foreign tourist arrivals fell nearly 75% to just 2.7 million in 2020, the heritage tourism sector has steadily recovered.
- **ASI's Role and Coverage:** The Archaeological Survey of India manages 145 centrally protected ticketed monuments across the country. India has 44 UNESCO World Heritage Sites, showcasing diverse historical heritage from ancient caves and medieval forts to grand temples and Mughal architecture
- **Economic Contribution:** The broader tourism sector remains a significant economic contributor nationally, with its total share (direct and indirect) estimated at 5% of GDP.

Indian Maritime Doctrine 2025

In the News: Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Dinesh K. Tripathi unveiled the updated Indian Maritime Doctrine 2025 at the annual press conference in New Delhi, ahead of Navy Day 2025. The doctrine reflects India's vision of harnessing the oceans for Viksit Bharat 2047 amidst evolving maritime security challenges.

Key Points:

- **Release and Context:** The Indian Maritime Doctrine 2025 was released on December 2, 2025, by Navy Chief Admiral Dinesh K. Tripathi ahead of Navy Day celebrations on December 4, 2025. The doctrine is the apex guidance document of the Indian Navy.
- **Historical Evolution:** The Indian Maritime Doctrine was initially published in 2004 and revised in 2009, with minor amendments inserted in 2015. The 2025 edition reflects major transformations in India's maritime environment and strategic outlook over the last decade, making it the fourth version of this foundational document.
- **Alignment with Viksit Bharat 2047:** The doctrine incorporates India's broader vision of harnessing the oceans as a key pillar of Viksit Bharat 2047. It is reinforced through major Government of India initiatives such as Sagarmala, PM Gati Shakti, Maritime India Vision 2030, Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047, and MAHASAGAR.

- **No-War-No-Peace Spectrum:** The 2025 edition formally recognizes and formalizes 'No-War-No-Peace' as a distinct category between peace and conflict, establishing it as an important facet of the conflict spectrum.
- **Multi-Domain and Grey-Zone Threats:** The doctrine recognizes and addresses new multi-domain threats and grey-zone challenges facing India's maritime security.
- **Tri-Services Jointness and Integration:** The doctrine prioritizes joint manship by aligning with tri-service joint doctrines to ensure interoperability across the Armed Forces.

Putin Receives Grand Ceremonial Welcome at Rashtrapati Bhavan During India Visit

In the News: Russian President Vladimir Putin received a grand ceremonial welcome at Rashtrapati Bhavan during his two-day state visit to India. The visit marked the 23rd India-Russia Annual Summit and Putin's first visit to India since the Ukraine war began in February 2022, highlighting the enduring strategic partnership between the two nations.

Key Points:

- **Ceremonial Welcome:** Russian President Vladimir Putin was accorded a ceremonial welcome at the forecourt of Rashtrapati Bhavan on December 5, 2025, where he received a tri-services guard of honour. President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi welcomed Putin, with both national anthems played during the ceremony.
- **23rd India-Russia Annual Summit:** The annual summit was held at Hyderabad House on December 5, 2025, where both leaders held extensive discussions on defence cooperation, energy partnerships, trade expansion, and regional security issues. The summit focused on strengthening the 'Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership' between India and Russia.
- **Economic Cooperation Vision 2030:** India and Russia adopted the "Programme for the Development of Strategic Areas of India-Russia Economic Cooperation till 2030," aimed at boosting bilateral trade to USD 100 billion by 2030 from the current USD 68 billion. Both countries agreed to continue using national currencies for bilateral settlements, which already account for 96% of commercial transactions.
- **Energy and Defence Commitments:** India is also expecting upgrades to its Russian-made Su-30MKI fighter jets and accelerated deliveries of S-400 surface-to-air missile systems.
- **State Banquet and Media Engagement:** Putin participated in the India-Russia Business Forum to enhance commercial ties and launched the RT channel in India, expanding Russia's media outreach.

India Announces Free 30-Day E-Visa for Russian Citizens

In the News: Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that India will introduce a free 30-day e-tourist visa for Russian citizens during the 23rd India-Russia Annual Summit in New Delhi. The announcement was made at a joint press conference with Russian President Vladimir Putin, marking a significant step to boost tourism and strengthen people-to-people ties between the two nations.

Key Points:

- **Visa Announcement:** Prime Minister Modi announced that India will soon introduce a free 30-day e-tourist visa and a free 30-day group tourist visa for Russian citizens. The announcement was made during the joint press conference with President Putin at the conclusion of the 23rd India-Russia Annual Summit at Hyderabad House in New Delhi.
- **Tourism Boost Objective:** The free e-visa facility is expected to significantly boost tourist inflow from Russia to India by removing financial barriers and simplifying the visa application process.
- **Implementation Timeline:** The visa facility will be launched "very soon" with applications to be processed within 30 days at no cost to Russian citizens. The e-visa will allow Russian tourists to stay in India for up to 30 days, making short-term visits more accessible. Both individual e-tourist visas and group tourist visas will be available under this scheme, providing flexibility for different types of travelers.
- **Additional People-to-People Initiatives:** PM Modi announced that both countries will work together on vocational education, skilling, and training programs, creating new opportunities for citizens of both nations. The leaders committed to expanding exchanges between students, scholars, and sports persons from both countries. India has already taken steps to enhance cultural engagement, including opening two new Indian consulates in Russia and transporting holy Buddhist relics for public display at the International Buddhist Forum in Kalmykia in October.

All about Karnataka's new Hate Speech Bill, how the issue is regulated across India

In the News: Karnataka State Cabinet approved the Karnataka Hate Speech and Hate Crimes (Prevention and Control) Bill, 2025, aimed at curbing hate speech and related offences in the state. The controversial legislation is set to be introduced during the winter session of the state legislature beginning December 8, 2025, at Suvarna Vidhana Soudha in Belagavi.

Key Points:

- **Bill Overview and Objectives:** The Karnataka Hate Speech and Hate Crimes (Prevention and Control) Bill, 2025, seeks to prevent and control hate speech and hate crimes, reducing their impact on individuals, groups, and the wider community. The bill was proposed by the Congress-led government after a series of communal revenge killings in the Mangaluru district of coastal Karnataka drew national attention.
- **Definitions and Scope:** Under the bill, "hate speech" is defined as any expression made, published, or circulated in words, written or spoken, by signs, visible representations, or through electronic communications in public view with intention to cause injury, disharmony, or feelings of enmity, hatred, or ill-will against any person (dead or alive), class or group of persons, or community. "Hate crime" includes communication, publishing, or circulation of hate speech, or any act of promoting, propagating, inciting, abetting, or attempting such hate speech to cause disharmony or feelings of enmity. The bill covers both online and offline communications, including social media platforms and electronic media.
- **Penalties and Enforcement:** Punishments under the draft bill range from one to seven years of imprisonment with fines starting at ₹50,000 for first-time offenders. Executive Magistrates or senior police officers are empowered to act against potential offences, and designated state officials can direct service providers, intermediaries, or entities to block or remove hate content from electronic platforms. The bill is non-cognizable, meaning police cannot arrest without a warrant.
- **Existing Legal Framework in India:** India currently does not have a specific statute defining hate speech, but various provisions address it indirectly. Section 153A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) prohibits promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, race, place of birth, residence, language, etc., with imprisonment up to three years. Section 295A punishes deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings with imprisonment up to three years. Section 505(2) punishes statements creating or promoting enmity, hatred, or ill-will between classes with imprisonment up to three years. The Representation of People Act, 1951 (Sections 123(3A) and 125) bars promotion of animosity on grounds of race, religion, community, caste, or language in reference to elections.
- **Constitutional Balance and Judicial Interpretation:** Article 19(1)(a) of the Indian Constitution guarantees freedom of speech and expression, while Article 19(2) allows reasonable restrictions in the interests of public order, decency, morality, and other specified grounds. The Supreme Court has established that hate speech must have three elements: content, intent, and harm or impact. In landmark cases like *Ramji Lal Modi v. State of Uttar Pradesh* (1957) and *Amish Devgan v. Union of India* (2020), courts have refined the framework, requiring prosecution to demonstrate deliberate provocation and proximate nexus between speech and actual or imminent public disorder, rather than mere hurt sentiments.

India-Malaysia Launch 5th Edition of Exercise Harimau Shakti in Rajasthan

In the News: India and Malaysia commenced the fifth edition of their bilateral joint military exercise 'Exercise Harimau Shakti – 2025' at the Mahajan Field Firing Range in Rajasthan. The exercise, scheduled to run from December 5 to December 18, 2025, aims to strengthen defence cooperation and enhance interoperability between the Indian Army and the Royal Malaysian Army.

Key Points:

- **Participating Forces and Location:** The Indian contingent is represented mainly by troops from the DOGRA Regiment, while the Malaysian side comprises personnel from the 25th Battalion of the Royal Malaysian Army. The exercise is being conducted at the Mahajan Field Firing Range in Rajasthan, which provides an ideal setting for rehearsing operations in extreme climatic and terrain conditions typical of desert environments. This marks the fifth edition of the Harimau Shakti series, which is conducted alternately in both countries as an integral part of India-Malaysia defence cooperation.
- **Exercise Objectives and UN Mandate:** The primary aim of Exercise Harimau Shakti 2025 is to jointly rehearse the conduct of Sub-Conventional Operations under Chapter VII of the United Nations Mandate.
- **Comprehensive Training Curriculum:** In addition to combat operations, the exercise curriculum incorporates Army Martial Arts Routine (AMAR), combat reflex shooting, and Yoga for physical conditioning and mental preparedness.
- **Strategic Significance and Bilateral Relations:** Exercise Harimau Shakti has steadily emerged as a pivotal pillar in India-Malaysia defence relations, launched over a decade ago as part of this cooperation framework. The exercise underscores New Delhi's Act East Policy and Kuala Lumpur's commitment to strengthening regional security frameworks in the Indo-Pacific, where both nations are key stakeholders.

DHRUVA Addressing System Proposed Under Post Office Act Amendment

In the News: The Department of Posts has published a draft amendment to the Post Office Act, 2023, to introduce DHRUVA (Digital Hub for Reference and Unique Virtual Address), a digital, standardized addressing framework designed to transform India's addressing system. The initiative aims to make address sharing interoperable, user-centric, and suited to India's expanding digital ecosystem by replacing traditional textual addresses with virtual labels similar to email or UPI handles.

Key Points:

- **DHRUVA Framework and Concept:** DHRUVA proposes replacing traditional textual addresses with virtual labels structured as "name@entity" that would act as proxies for physical locations, similar to email or UPI handles. The framework is envisioned as part of India's Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) and is based on the concept of Address-as-a-Service (AaaS), which supports efficient, secure, and user-controlled management of address data. DHRUVA seeks to create a standardized, geo-coded, and interoperable digital address system that supports secure, consent-based, and seamless sharing of address information across public and private sectors.
- **DIGIPIN Technology Foundation:** DIGIPIN (Digital Postal Index Number), a 10-character alphanumeric code representing latitude and longitude, underpins the DHRUVA ecosystem. Developed by the Department of Posts in collaboration with IIT Hyderabad and the National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC), ISRO, DIGIPIN divides India into square grids of 4-meter length and breadth, with each grid assigned a unique code. The system can generate around 228 billion unique identifiers across India and provides highly precise location data crucial for rural and poorly mapped regions, with each code corresponding to a 14-square-meter area.
- **Post Office Act Amendment Details:** The draft amendment introduces a new chapter on address identifiers to encapsulate the specific nature of clauses pertaining to the DHRUVA ecosystem and allied infrastructure within the broader scope of the Post Office Act, 2023. The amendment gives Digital Address Identifiers (DAIs) legal status, making digital addresses valid for banking, telecom, welfare, and legal purposes.
- **User Control and Privacy Safeguards:** Under the Digital Personal Data Protection Act (DPDP), 2023, consent-based mechanisms will govern the generation, exchange, validation, access, and use of address information. The amendment defines permissible uses of address data, establishes a tiered grievance structure to protect users from errors and misuse, and penalizes unauthorized access, wrongful validation, and security breaches to maintain trust.

Lok Sabha Passes the Health Security and National Security Cess Bill, 2025

In the News: The Lok Sabha passed the Health Security and National Security Cess Bill, 2025, aimed at raising additional funds from demerit or sin goods such as pan masala for health security and national security. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman moved the bill for consideration and passing, emphasizing the need to augment resources for meeting expenditure on national security and public health.

Key Points:

- **Bill Introduction and Objectives:** The Health Security and National Security Cess Bill, 2025 was introduced in Lok Sabha on December 1, 2025, during the Winter Session of Parliament. The bill proposes to levy a cess on production of goods such as pan masala and any other goods that may be notified by the central government.
- **Cess Rates and Structure:** For machine-based production, cess rates range from ₹1.01 crore to ₹25.47 crore per machine per month, calculated based on the maximum rated speed of each machine and the weight of the product packed in each pouch or container.
- **Rationale and Justification:** Finance Minister Sitharaman explained that a cess is being imposed because the GST system taxes consumption, and pan masala is currently taxed under GST at 28% plus compensation cess. Since the GST compensation cess is set to end, that portion will shift into a 40% cess as a production-based tax.
- **Revenue Sharing and Allocation:** The Finance Minister clarified that Section 7 of the Bill lays out the framework for allocation, and the revenue from the cess will be shared with states for specific health schemes. Sitharaman assured that the cess will apply only to demerit goods posing significant health risks and not to essential commodities, and proceeds will go to the Consolidated Fund of India, supporting national security and public health expenditures without burdening ordinary citizens.
- **Offences, Penalties, and Enforcement:** Penalties include ₹10,000 or an amount equivalent to the cess payable or evaded, whichever is higher, while aiding or abetting contraventions is punishable with penalties up to ₹1 lakh. For offences involving fraud, wilful misstatement, or suppression and evasion exceeding ₹1 crore, criminal prosecution with imprisonment between one to five years, a fine, or both is prescribed. A three-tier appeal mechanism is provided against orders passed by

authorized officers, and officers of Joint Commissioner rank or above may inspect, search, and seize goods or records where evasion is suspected.

Masala Bonds

In the News: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) issued show-cause notices worth ₹466.91 crore to Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, former Finance Minister Thomas Isaac, and KIIFB CEO K.M. Abraham for allegedly violating the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) and Reserve Bank of India (RBI) directions in connection with the Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board's (KIIFB) 2019 Masala Bond issuance. The ED alleges that funds raised through the ₹2,150 crore masala bond listed on the London Stock Exchange were used for land purchases, which is prohibited under RBI's External Commercial Borrowing guidelines.

Key Points:

- **Definition and Origin:** Masala Bonds are rupee-denominated bonds issued outside India by Indian entities to raise funds from foreign investors, where the currency exchange risk is borne by the investor rather than the issuer. The term "Masala" was coined by the International Finance Corporation (IFC) in 2014 to evoke India's culture and cuisine, similar to how "Samurai Bonds" refer to Japanese bonds and "Dim Sum Bonds" to Chinese bonds. The first Masala Bond was issued by the IFC in November 2014, raising ₹1,000 crore for infrastructure projects in India.
- **KIIFB's Masala Bond Issuance:** The Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board (KIIFB) became the first sub-sovereign entity in India to issue Masala Bonds when it raised ₹2,150 crore (USD 312 million equivalent) in March 2019, listing them on the London Stock Exchange's International Securities Market in May 2019. The bonds carried a five-year tenure with a fixed coupon rate of 9.723 percent and were intended to fund infrastructure development in Kerala as part of a broader ₹50,000 crore mobilization plan. KIIFB is a statutory body constituted under the Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Act, 1999, serving as the state's flagship infrastructure financing arm.
- **ED Investigation and Allegations:** The Enforcement Directorate initiated its probe into the KIIFB Masala Bond issue in 2021 following concerns raised by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) about fund deployment and financial management. The show-cause notices were issued on November 28, 2025, to Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan (as KIIFB Chairman), former Finance Minister Thomas Isaac (Vice Chairman, KIIFB), and K.M. Abraham (CEO, KIIFB), following completion of a three-year investigation.
- **RBI Guidelines and Prohibited Uses:** The Reserve Bank of India's External Commercial Borrowing framework for Masala Bonds prescribes specific restrictions on end-use of funds raised through these instruments. Prohibited uses include real estate activities (except development of integrated townships and affordable housing projects), investment in capital markets or domestic equity, purchase of land, activities prohibited under FDI guidelines, and on-lending to other entities for any prohibited purposes.
- **KIIFB's Defense and Political Context:** KIIFB CEO K.M. Abraham strongly refuted the ED allegations, stating that only ₹66 crore from the masala bond proceeds was used for land acquisition (not purchase) for legitimate public infrastructure projects, which is permissible under RBI rules that distinguish between land acquisition for public infrastructure and commercial land purchase.
- **Regulatory Framework and Features:** Masala Bonds are regulated by RBI under the External Commercial Borrowing framework with specific parameters including minimum maturity periods of 3 years for bonds up to USD 50 million equivalent and 5 years for amounts exceeding this threshold. The all-in-cost ceiling is set at 300 basis points over the prevailing yield of Government of India securities of corresponding maturity. Eligible issuers include Indian corporates, body corporates, banks, Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs), Infrastructure Investment Trusts (InvITs), and state-level entities, while eligible investors include foreign investors from Financial Action Task Force (FATF) compliant jurisdictions whose securities market regulators are members of the International Organisation of Securities Commission (IOSCO).

INTERNATIONAL

Pakistan and Egypt Renew Cooperation After Years of Stagnation

In the News: Egyptian Foreign Minister Dr. Badr Ahmed Mohamed Abdelatty visited Pakistan on November 29-30, 2025, marking the first high-level bilateral engagement after over a decade of stagnation. Pakistan and Egypt last held bilateral political consultations and Joint Ministerial Commission (JMC) meetings in 2010, making this a significant diplomatic restart between the two Major Non-NATO allies.

Key Points:

- **High-Level Meetings:** Dr. Badr Abdelatty met with Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, President Asif Ali Zardari, and Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir during the November 29-30, 2025 visit to Islamabad.
- **Business Council and Forum:** Pakistan-Egypt Business Council to be established to institutionalize private sector cooperation. Pakistan-Egypt Business Forum to be co-chaired by both foreign ministers, with first meeting scheduled in Cairo in Q2 2026 alongside the reactivated Joint Ministerial Commission.
- **Visa Facilitation for Business:** 250 Pakistani business houses to be identified in Phase 1 (coordinated with FPCCI and chambers of commerce) for visa facilitation and whitelisting. Number to be increased to 500 in Phase 2 after six months. Egypt to follow parallel process for Egyptian businesses.
- **Current Trade Volume:** Bilateral trade currently stands at approximately \$300 million, which both nations acknowledge is significantly below potential given their historic ties.
- **Political Consultations:** Senior official-level bilateral political consultations to resume in Q1 2026, after last being held in 2010. Joint Ministerial Commission to be reactivated after 15 years of dormancy.
- **Educational Cooperation:** Egypt announced doubling of Al-Azhar University scholarships for Pakistani students in 2025. This strengthens the existing educational exchange framework between the two countries.
- **Regional Cooperation Agenda:** Both nations agreed to collaborate on Gaza ceasefire implementation, reconstruction efforts in Gaza, and support for the two-state solution for Palestine in accordance with UN resolutions.
- **Defense Cooperation Areas:** Military exchanges, training collaborations, defense production cooperation, and joint counterterrorism efforts identified as priority areas. Egypt condemned recent terrorist attacks in Islamabad and Peshawar.
- **Historical Context:** Both countries are members of Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and D8 (Developing-8). Diplomatic relations established in 1951. Pakistan provided military aid to Egypt during 1967 and 1973 Arab-Israel wars.

Sri Lanka Declares Emergency Amid Cyclone Ditwah Devastation

In the News: Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake declared a state of emergency on November 29, 2025, following catastrophic flooding and landslides caused by Cyclone Ditwah. The cyclone, which made landfall on November 28, 2025, has become Sri Lanka's deadliest natural disaster since 2017, with casualties exceeding 400 and nearly one million people affected across all 25 districts.

Key Points:

- **State of Emergency:** President Anura Kumara Dissanayake declared state of emergency throughout Sri Lanka via official gazette dated November 29, 2025 (released November 30), following demands from opposition leaders and doctors' trade union at an all-party meeting on November 28.
- **Death Toll and Missing Persons:** As of December 1, 2025, 334 confirmed deaths and nearly 400 people missing according to Disaster Management Centre (DMC). UN OCHA reported 212 deaths and 218 missing with 998,918 people affected across all 25 districts.
- **Cyclone Details:** Cyclonic Storm Ditwah (named by Yemen, after Detwah Lagoon on Socotra Island) made landfall on November 28, 2025, with wind speeds of 65 km/h (40 mph). Developed as 14th tropical depression and 4th cyclonic storm of 2025 North Indian Ocean cyclone season.
- **Displacement and Shelters:** Over 180,000 people from 51,000+ families sheltering in 1,094 government-run safety centers. Nearly 78,000 people displaced initially, with 43,991 individuals from 12,313 families moved to state-run welfare centers.
- **Property Damage:** Nearly 15,000 homes destroyed across the country. Approximately 968,304 individuals from 266,114 families affected by widespread flooding.
- **Hardest-Hit Areas:** Gampaha, Colombo, Puttalam, Mannar, Trincomalee, and Batticaloa districts most severely affected. Central mountainous tea-growing regions of Badulla, Nuwara Eliya, and Kandy District severely impacted by landslides (51 deaths and 67 missing in Kandy alone).
- **Rainfall:** Torrential rainfall exceeding 300mm (11.8 inches) between November 27-28, 2025. Red-level flood warning issued for Kelani River valley, which burst its banks on November 29 evening.
- **Airport Disruptions:** 15 flights diverted from Bandaranaike International Airport (BIA) Colombo to Mattala Rajapaksa International Airport, Trivandrum, and Kochi between November 27-28. Nearly 300 people stranded at BIA for three days. 83 flights cancelled at Chennai International Airport.

- **Financial Allocation:** President allocated Rs. 1.2 billion for immediate disaster relief and Rs. 30 billion under 2025 Budget for emergency response. Parliament budget debates postponed for two days.
- **India's Assistance (Operation Sagar Bandhu):** India deployed two aircraft (Ilyushin Il-76MD and Lockheed Martin C-130J Super Hercules) with 80+ NDRF personnel, relief supplies, and rescue equipment. Il-76 arrived in Colombo at 12:18 PM on November 29. India deployed INS Vikrant, INS Udaygiri, and INS Sukanya for search and rescue operations. Two helicopters (Aérospatiale Alouette III and Mil Mi-17) deployed.

India Re-Elected to IMO Council with Highest Votes

In the News: India was re-elected to the International Maritime Organization (IMO) Council for the 2026–27 biennium, securing the highest number of votes (154 out of 169 valid ballots) in Category B during the 34th session of the IMO Assembly in London.

Key Points:

- **Election Details:** India topped the poll in Category B, reserved for 10 nations with the largest interest in international seaborne trade, alongside countries like Australia, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, and the UAE.
- **IMO Council Role:** The 40-member Council acts as IMO's executive body between Assembly sessions, shaping policies on global shipping safety, security, environmental protection, and technical standards for the maritime sector underpinning world trade.
- **Strategic Significance:** The overwhelming mandate reflects international trust in India's leadership under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, aligning with reforms like Maritime India Vision 2030 and recent events such as India Maritime Week 2025.
- **Diplomatic Engagements:** India's delegation held discussions with member states, organizations, and IMO officials on mutual priorities, reinforcing commitments to a safe, secure, and green maritime domain.

India Re-Elected to UNESCO Executive Board for 2025–29 Term

In the News: India was re-elected to the UNESCO Executive Board for the 2025–29 term, signaling strong international confidence in its commitment to multilateralism and UNESCO's core mandates in education, culture, science, communication, and information.

Key Points:

- **Election Significance:** The re-election underscores global support for India's vision of inclusive, human-centric development and enhanced international cooperation through UNESCO's platforms.
- **UNESCO Executive Board Role:** As one of UNESCO's three constitutional organs (alongside the General Conference and Secretariat), the 58-member Board shapes policies, approves programs, and oversees the budget for global initiatives in education, sciences, and culture.
- **India's Commitment:** India reaffirmed its dedication to constructive contributions, building on prior terms like 2021–25, where it actively promoted multilateral cultural and educational efforts.
- **Diplomatic Milestone:** The Permanent Delegation of India to UNESCO highlighted partner countries' trust, positioning India to influence key agendas amid global challenges in heritage preservation and knowledge access.

What Oxford Dictionary's Word of the Year, 'rage bait', says about today's internet

In the News: Oxford University Press named "rage bait" as its Word of the Year for 2025 on November 30, reflecting the surge in online content designed to provoke anger for engagement amid social unrest and digital wellbeing debates. Usage of the term tripled in the past year, outpacing contenders like "aura farming" and "biohack" in public voting and data analysis.

Key Points:

- **Definition and Purpose:** Rage bait refers to online content deliberately crafted to elicit anger or outrage by being frustrating, provocative, or offensive, primarily to boost traffic, clicks, or interactions on social media or webpages.
- **Origins and Evolution:** First noted in a 2002 Usenet post describing driver agitation, it evolved with social media algorithms favoring divisive content, differing from "clickbait" by specifically targeting emotional discord and polarization.
- **Cultural Impact:** The choice highlights a cycle with 2024's "brain rot," where outrage drives engagement, algorithms amplify it, leading to mental exhaustion and concerns over performative politics and content regulation.
- **Usage Surge:** Data shows a threefold increase, making it a mainstream term in newsrooms and creator discourse, signaling awareness of manipulative online tactics reshaping behavior.

- **Broader Context:** It captures 2025's internet zeitgeist, where provocation trumps positivity, influencing debates on platform responsibility and user mental health

UNFPA India Honors IUSSP for 2025 UN Population Award in Institutional Category

In the News : During the 46th Annual Conference of Indian Association for the Study of Population (IASP) held in Kolkata, UNFPA India felicitated IUSSP for receiving the 2025 UN Population Award in the Institutional Category.

Key Points :

- **Award Recognition:** IUSSP was awarded the 2025 United Nations Population Award (Institutional Category) for its decades-long leadership in global population science and evidence-based policymaking.
- **UNFPA India Felicitations:** The felicitation was carried out by UNFPA India at the opening ceremony of the 46th IASP conference (27–29 November 2025), under the conference theme “People, Planet, Prosperity: Demographic Drivers of India’s Inclusive Growth.”
- **IUSSP’s Contribution:** Founded in 1928, IUSSP has played a pivotal role in advancing the scientific study of population. Over the years, it has promoted international collaboration among demographers, supported capacity building for early-career researchers, and produced more than 250 publications informing global and national demographic and population-health policy.
- **Focus on Global Challenges:** IUSSP’s work spans key global population issues including fertility transitions, migration, ageing populations, urbanisation, family planning, the effects of climate change on demographic trends, and strengthening civil registration and vital statistics.
- **Significance for India:** During the felicitation, the UNFPA India Representative highlighted that India — home to the world’s largest youth population — stands at a critical demographic junction. The recognition of IUSSP underscores the importance of robust population data and research to guide policies on youth, reproductive health, sustainable development, and inclusive growth.

India to Chair International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA)

In the News: Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar formally assumed the Chairmanship of the Council of Member States of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) for the year 2026 at a ceremony held in Stockholm, Sweden. India took over the annual Chairmanship from Switzerland, which served as the Chair for 2025.

Key Points:

- **Assumption of Chairmanship:** Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar formally accepted the Chairmanship of International IDEA on December 3, 2025, at Stockholm, Sweden. The Chairmanship was transferred from Switzerland, which served as Chair for 2025, with Mauritius and Mexico appointed as Vice Chairs for 2026.
- **About International IDEA:** The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance is an intergovernmental organization established on February 27, 1995, by 14 founding member states including India. The organization is headquartered in Stockholm, Sweden, and currently has 35 member states from all regions of the world. The United States and Japan have official observer status. International IDEA has held observer status in the United Nations General Assembly since 2003.
- **India’s Membership History:** India is a founding member of International IDEA since its establishment in 1995. The organization works with over 20 offices worldwide in the Global South and North.
- **Rotational Chairmanship System:** The Council of Member States elects a Chair and two Vice Chairs each December for a one-year term. As Chair, CEC Gyanesh Kumar will preside over all council meetings during 2026.
- **India’s Democratic Legacy:** CEC Kumar emphasized that India has conducted 18 general elections to Parliament and more than 400 general elections to State Legislatures since independence in 1947.
- **International IDEA’s Mandate:** It works in key areas including electoral processes, constitution-building, political participation and representation, gender equality, and conflict and security issues. The organization produces comparative data, provides capacity development, facilitates dialogues on democratic reform, and protects democracy against undemocratic and authoritarian forces.

Women, Peace and Security Index 2025/26: Top 10 Best and Worst Countries

In the News: The Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security (GIWPS) and the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) released the 2025/26 Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Index on October 27, 2025, in New York, ranking 181 countries on 13

indicators across inclusion, justice, and security. Denmark retained the top position while Afghanistan ranked at the bottom, with the index revealing that global progress on women's status has largely stagnated since tracking began in 2017.

Key Points:

- **Index Overview and Methodology:** The Women, Peace and Security Index is a biennial global index that measures women's wellbeing using 13 robust and globally recognized indicators spanning three dimensions: inclusion, justice, and security. Countries are scored from 0 (worst) to 1 (best) based on indicators including women's parliamentary representation, education levels, employment rates, financial inclusion, organized violence, intimate partner violence, community safety perceptions, and proximity to armed conflict.
- **Publishing Organizations and Support:** The WPS Index is produced through collaboration between the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security (housed within the Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University) and the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) Centre on Gender, Peace and Security, with support from the Government of Norway. International IDEA holds observer status in the United Nations General Assembly since 2003.
- **Top Performing Countries:** Denmark continues to lead the rankings for the third consecutive time, scoring more than three times higher than Afghanistan at the bottom. Iceland secured second position, followed by Norway and Sweden tied for third place. Other top performers include Finland (5th), along with Switzerland, Netherlands, New Zealand, Austria, Germany, and Estonia.
- **Bottom Performing Countries:** Afghanistan ranks 181st (last) with the lowest score, followed by Syria, Yemen, Haiti, Sudan, and Central African Republic among the bottom performers. Nine of the bottom ten countries are conflict-affected or fragile states from regions including Sub-Saharan Africa, Middle East, and South Asia.
- **India's Performance:** India ranks 131st out of 181 countries with a score of 0.607 in the 2025/26 index. While India shows steady progress over time, improvement remains uneven with persistent challenges in areas including women's safety, political leadership representation, labour force participation rates, and legal outcomes.
- **United States Performance:** The United States climbed six positions from 37th in the 2023/24 edition to 31st in the 2025/26 index, showing improvement based on data available through 2024.
- **Historical Context and Persistence of Challenges:** Since the first WPS Index in 2017, Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen have remained among the bottom dozen ranked nations, highlighting the entrenched nature of challenges in conflict-affected and fragile states.

Putin's N-power hard sell: SMRs, new-gen large nuke reactors, serial production in India

In the News: During Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit to India on December 4-5, 2025, for the 23rd India-Russia Annual Summit, Russia's state nuclear corporation Rosatom, led by CEO Alexei Likhachev, presented an extensive portfolio of nuclear cooperation proposals to India. These include small modular reactors (SMRs), next-generation large reactors, and serial production localization, aimed at deepening the long-standing civil nuclear partnership between the two nations built upon the successful Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant project in Tamil Nadu.

Key Points:

- **High-Level Visit and MoU Framework:** Russian President Vladimir Putin arrived in India on December 4, 2025, for a two-day state visit and the annual India-Russia Summit. The Russian Cabinet cleared the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with India to deepen bilateral cooperation in civil nuclear energy ahead of the visit.
- **Rosatom's Nuclear Portfolio Presentation:** Rosatom CEO Alexei Likhachev accompanied Putin with a nuclear industry contingent carrying a comprehensive portfolio of proposals for India. According to Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov, the proposals include cooperation in building small modular reactors (SMRs), large next-generation VVER-1200 reactors, and floating nuclear power plants.
- **Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) Technology:** SMRs are compact nuclear reactors with generating capacity ranging from 50 to 300 megawatts (MWe), approximately one-third the size of traditional large reactors that produce around 1,000 MWe. These reactors are factory-built, transportable by truck, and can be assembled on-site, offering flexible and scalable energy solutions. Russia is preparing to transition to mass production of small nuclear power plants for both domestic and international deployment.
- **Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant Foundation:** The India-Russia nuclear cooperation is built upon the successful Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant (NPP) project in Tamil Nadu, which serves as a showcase of bilateral collaboration. The first reactor (Unit 1) was connected to India's power grid in 2013, followed by the second reactor (Unit 2) in 2016. The Kudankulam plant is designed to house six VVER-1000 reactors with a combined installed capacity of 6,000 MW, with

construction continuing on Units 3-6. Russia delivered the first consignment of nuclear fuel for the third reactor during Putin's visit, with seven cargo flights scheduled to supply the entire reactor core.

- **Advanced Reactor Proposals and Serial Construction:** Russia's Rosatom and India's Department of Atomic Energy are working on technical specifications for large VVER-1200 reactors, which represent next-generation technology with enhanced safety features and efficiency.
- **Nuclear Fuel Cycle Cooperation:** Beyond reactor construction, both countries are exploring broader cooperation across the entire nuclear fuel cycle, including closed fuel cycle technologies linked to Russia's advanced "Proryv" (Breakthrough) programme. A contract signed in 2024 ensures fuel delivery for both the third and fourth VVER-1000 reactors at Kudankulam throughout their service lives, with initial loading already underway.
- **India's Indigenous SMR Programme:** India's Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL) is simultaneously developing its own indigenous SMR design based on the country's extensive experience with Pressurized Heavy Water Reactors (PHWRs).

Weak La Niña Likely to Influence Global Weather in Winter 2025-26: WMO Predicts

In the News: The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) issued its latest El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) Update in early December 2025, predicting a 55% chance of weak La Niña conditions developing during the December 2025 to February 2026 period. The forecast indicates that this weak La Niña will influence global weather patterns, although many regions are still expected to experience above-normal temperatures despite the cooling effect typically associated with La Niña events.

Key Points:

- **WMO Forecast and Probability:** As of mid-November 2025, oceanic and atmospheric indicators revealed borderline La Niña conditions across the equatorial Pacific. According to forecasts from the WMO Global Producing Centres for Seasonal Prediction, there is a 55% probability that existing cooler-than-normal sea surface temperatures in the central-eastern equatorial Pacific will be consistent with La Niña thresholds during December 2025 to February 2026.
- **Understanding La Niña Phenomenon:** La Niña refers to the periodic large-scale cooling of ocean surface temperatures in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean, coupled with changes in the tropical atmospheric circulation including winds, pressure, and rainfall patterns. It represents the cold phase of the El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO), which is the strongest year-to-year climate fluctuation affecting global weather patterns. During La Niña, extra-strong easterly trade winds blow warm ocean surface water westward across the Pacific, allowing deeper, colder, nutrient-rich water to rise along the coast of the Americas.
- **Global Temperature Expectations:** Despite La Niña typically bringing a temporary cooling effect on global average temperatures, the WMO's latest Global Seasonal Climate Update indicates that for December 2025 to February 2026, temperatures are expected to be above normal in much of the Northern Hemisphere and large parts of the Southern Hemisphere.
- **Regional Weather Impacts - Northern Hemisphere:** La Niña conditions typically shift the jet stream northward, causing warm and dry winters across the southern United States, from California to Florida, while bringing wetter and cooler conditions to the Pacific Northwest and Alaska. The northern tier of North America, including the Great Lakes, northern Plains, and Pacific Northwest, is expected to experience cooler and wetter weather along with increased snowfall.
- **Regional Weather Impacts - Global Patterns:** La Niña typically brings warmer and wetter weather to Asia and Australia, with increased rainfall in Southeast Asia, Indonesia, and Australia, raising risks of flooding in these regions. Rainfall associated with the summer monsoon in Southeast Asia, especially in northwest India and Bangladesh, tends to be greater than normal. La Niña events can persist for one to three years, unlike El Niño which usually lasts no more than a year.
- **Importance for Climate-Sensitive Sectors:** WMO Secretary-General Celeste Saulo stated that seasonal forecasts for El Niño and La Niña are essential planning tools for climate-sensitive sectors like agriculture, energy, health, and transport, serving as a key component of WMO's contribution to support humanitarian operations.

Meet the World's Youngest Self-Made Woman Billionaire Luana Lopes Lara

In the News: Luana Lopes Lara, a 29-year-old Brazilian entrepreneur, became the world's youngest self-made female billionaire after her prediction market platform Kalshi raised \$1 billion at an \$11 billion valuation. This achievement surpasses previous titleholders Lucy Guo of Scale AI and pop icon Taylor Swift, marking a significant milestone in the fintech and tech entrepreneurship world.

Key Points:

- **Founding of Kalshi:** Lopes Lara met her future co-founder Tarek Mansour at MIT, the two conceived the idea for Kalshi during evening walks back to their intern apartments. They observed how traders bet on future events without direct markets and envisioned creating a regulated prediction market platform. Following a successful pitch to Y Combinator's startup accelerator in 2019, they founded Kalshi, which became the first federally regulated prediction market platform after receiving Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC) approval in November 2020.
- **Kalshi's Business Model and Growth:** Kalshi is a prediction market platform that allows users to trade on the outcomes of real-world events such as election results, interest rate changes, sports matches, celebrity divorces, and pop culture happenings through regulated, event-based contracts. The company has formed integrations with major platforms including Robinhood, Webull, NHL, StockX, and Solana, significantly expanding its reach and user base.
- **Meteoric Valuation Growth:** The recent funding was led by crypto-focused venture capital firm Paradigm, with participation from prestigious investors including Sequoia Capital, Andreessen Horowitz, and Y Combinator. Both Lopes Lara and Mansour, who are both 29 years old, each own approximately 12% of the company, bringing their individual net worth to \$1.3 billion and propelling them into the billionaire club before turning 30.
- **Billionaire Status and Recognition:** At 29 years old, Lopes Lara overtook Lucy Guo, the 31-year-old co-founder of Scale AI, as the youngest self-made female billionaire. She also surpassed Taylor Swift, 35, who briefly held the distinction earlier in 2024. However, her male co-founder Tarek Mansour and rival platform founder Shayne Coplan of Polymarket (27 years old) are younger billionaires overall.

Russia Joins India-Led International Big Cat Alliance

In the News: Russia agreed to adopt the framework agreement to join the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) during Russian President Vladimir Putin's state visit to India on December 4-5, 2025. The announcement was made during the 23rd India-Russia Annual Summit, making Russia part of the India-led global initiative dedicated to big cat conservation.

Key Points:

- **Russia's Membership Announcement:** Russia confirmed its decision to adopt the framework agreement to join the International Big Cat Alliance during President Putin's visit to New Delhi for the 23rd India-Russia Annual Summit. Russia becomes one of the newest members to formally agree to join the alliance, which currently has over 90 member countries expressing consent.
- **About International Big Cat Alliance:** The International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) is a multi-country, multi-agency coalition launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on April 9, 2023, during the event commemorating 50 years of Project Tiger. The alliance aims at conservation of seven principal big cat species: Tiger, Lion, Leopard, Snow Leopard, Cheetah, Jaguar, and Puma. The Union Cabinet approved the establishment of IBCA on February 29, 2024, with headquarters in India and a one-time budgetary support of ₹150 crore for a period of five years from 2023-24 to 2027-28. The alliance officially came into force as a full-fledged treaty-based inter-governmental international organization on January 23, 2025.
- **Current Membership Status:** As of December 2025, 27 countries including India have consented to join IBCA, while five countries have formally ratified the Framework Agreement to become official members: Republic of India, Republic of Nicaragua, Kingdom of Eswatini, Federal Republic of Somalia, and Republic of Liberia. According to updated information from August 2025, 13 countries have become IBCA members including Armenia, Bhutan, Cambodia, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Guinea, India, Nepal, Liberia, Nicaragua, Russia, Somalia, Suriname, and Angola. The alliance is open to all 97 range countries of big cats, as well as non-range countries interested in supporting big cat conservation.
- **Governance Structure:** IBCA's governance structure is modeled on the pattern of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) and consists of an Assembly of Members at ministerial level, a Standing Committee with a minimum of seven but maximum of fifteen member nations chosen for a five-year term, and a Secretariat with its headquarters in New Delhi, India. The inaugural General Assembly of IBCA was held in New Delhi on June 16, 2025, where India's Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav was unanimously elected as the first President of the Alliance.
- **Big Cats in India and Conservation Significance:** India is home to five of the seven big cat species: Tiger, Lion, Leopard, Snow Leopard, and Cheetah (recently reintroduced through Project Cheetah), while Puma and Jaguar are not found in India. Big cats are apex predators vital for biodiversity and ecosystem conservation, but they face grave threats due to habitat loss from deforestation, urbanization, and land use changes, leading to increased human-wildlife conflicts.

India To Hosts 20th UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage Session at Red Fort

In the News: India is hosting the 20th Session of UNESCO's Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage from December 8-13, 2025, at the historic Red Fort (Lal Qila) in New Delhi. The announcement was made by Union Minister for Culture and Tourism Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat in a written reply to the Rajya Sabha on December 4, 2025. This is the first time India is hosting this prestigious UNESCO session, which will bring together policy leaders, cultural practitioners and experts from across the world.

Key Points:

- **About the Intergovernmental Committee:** The Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage is a 24-member UNESCO. The Convention was adopted in 2003 and entered into force in 2006. The Committee is responsible for promoting, supervising and operationalizing the safeguarding of intangible heritage globally, with seats allocated by equitable geographical representation across six UNESCO regional groups. Each elected State Party remains on the Committee for a fixed four-year period to ensure continuity in safeguarding work. The 24 member states currently serving include France, Germany, Spain, Slovakia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Barbados, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Paraguay, Bangladesh, China, India, Malaysia, Vietnam, Angola, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Uganda, Zambia, Algeria, Mauritania and the United Arab Emirates.
- **Session Agenda and Objectives:** The six-day event aims at examining new nominations submitted by States Parties for inscription on the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage Lists, reviewing the status of existing elements already on the list, and providing international assistance for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage. The session will be chaired by H.E. Mr Vishal V. Sharma, Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of India to UNESCO.
- **Venue and Event Organization:** The session will take place at the Red Fort (Lal Qila), a UNESCO World Heritage Site and centrally protected monument built by Mughal emperor Shah Jahan in the 17th century as the palace fort of his capital Shahjahanabad. The Archaeological Survey of India announced that the Red Fort complex will be closed from December 5-14, 2025, in view of the international event. Registration desks for the event opened at the Red Fort from December 6, 2025, from 10:00 AM (IST). The Ministry of Culture and Sangeet Natak Akademi are the nodal agencies coordinating all matters related to the event
- **India's Intangible Cultural Heritage:** India currently has 15 elements inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, making it among the leading countries in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage. The 15 elements include Tradition of Vedic chanting, Ramlila, Kutiyattam, Ramman, Mudi yettu, Kalbelia folk songs and dances of Rajasthan, Chhau dance, Buddhist chanting of Ladakh, Sankirtana, Traditional brass and copper craft of utensil making among the Thatheras of Jandiala Guru, Punjab, Yoga, Nawrouz, Kumbh Mela, Durga Puja in Kolkata, and Garba of Gujarat (added in 2023 as the most recent inclusion).
- **India's Forthcoming Nominations:** India has nominated Deepavali (Diwali) for inscription on UNESCO's Representative List during the 2025 cycle being evaluated at this 20th session. Additionally, India has initiated a multinational nomination of Chhath Mahaparva for the 2026-27 cycle in consultation with international partners including the United Arab Emirates, Suriname, Netherlands, Mauritius, Fiji and Nepal. Chhath Mahaparva, dedicated to the Sun God and Goddess Chhathi Maiya, is one of India's oldest festivals celebrated widely in Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and across diaspora communities worldwide.
- **Strategic Significance for India:** Hosting the 20th Intangible Cultural Heritage Committee session offers several strategic and diplomatic advantages for India, strengthening its collaboration with UNESCO and global cultural governance. This event comes approximately one-and-a-half years after India successfully hosted the 46th session of the World Heritage Committee at Bharat Mandapam from July 21-31, 2024, which was also chaired by Vishal V. Sharma.

SCIENCE & TECH

The Indian Navy received Taragiri

In the News: The Indian Navy received Taragiri (Yard 12653), the fourth Nilgiri-class (Project 17A) frigate, which is the third P17A ship built by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd (MDL). This delivery marked a significant advancement in India's naval capabilities with a state-of-the-art stealth frigate embodying advanced technology and weaponry.

Key Points:

- **Ship Details:** Taragiri is a guided-missile, multi-mission stealth frigate with a displacement of approximately 6,670 tonnes. It measures 149 meters in length and 17.8 meters in width, with a draft of 5.22 meters.

- **Advanced Features:** The frigate boasts a range of modern systems, including an integrated platform management system, sophisticated power distribution, and world-class modular living spaces for the crew.
- **Armament:** Equipped with eight BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles, 32 Barak-8 surface-to-air missiles, a 76mm main gun, two 30mm AK-630M anti-aircraft artillery systems, and torpedo tubes. The ship also has advanced sensors including the MF-STAR radar for superior situational awareness.
- **Performance:** Powered by a combined diesel and gas (CODAG) propulsion system with two MAN Diesel engines and two GE LM2500 marine gas turbines, providing speeds over 28 knots and a range exceeding 5,500 nautical miles at cruising speeds.
- **Crew and Automation:** The ship operates with a crew of around 226 sailors, facilitated by high levels of automation to reduce manpower requirements and operational costs.

ISRO Chief Inaugurates Ananth Centre of Excellence for Navigation, India's First Private Navigation Centre

In the News: Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) Chairman V. Narayanan inaugurated the Ananth Centre of Excellence for Navigation (ACEN) — India's first private-sector navigation centre, established by Ananth Technologies.

Key Points:

- **Launch of ACEN:** The Ananth Centre of Excellence for Navigation (ACEN), set up by Hyderabad-based Ananth Technologies at Kinfra Park, Thiruvananthapuram, marks the first time a private firm has opened a dedicated navigation-technology hub in India.
- **Strategic Significance:** The centre aims to develop indigenous navigation, positioning, and timing (PNT) technologies — critical for space missions, defence, missiles, aircraft, and other strategic systems.
- **Reduced Import Dependency:** According to the ISRO chief, India's reliance on imported navigation systems for space and defence will be significantly reduced once domestic capabilities through ACEN mature.
- **Support to National Vision:** The move aligns with the government's long-term goal of a self-reliant, developed India by 2047 (Viksit Bharat 2047), ensuring critical technologies like navigation are indigenously developed.
- **Centre's Background:** Ananth Technologies, founded in 1992, has worked closely with ISRO, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), and BrahMos Aerospace on precision sensors, system integration for satellites and launch vehicles. Their venture into navigation systems via ACEN reflects a major shift.

Sanchar Saathi Mandatory in All Phones

In the News: The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) issued directives requiring that Sanchar Saathi be pre-installed on all new mobile handsets manufactured or imported for use in India.

Key Points :

- **Pre-installation Mandate:** All new smartphones sold in India must now come with Sanchar Saathi pre-installed. Manufacturers/importers have been given 90 days to comply.
- **Availability on Existing Phones:** Phones already manufactured or in supply-chain must also get the app via software updates.
- **Purpose of the App:** The app — originally launched as a web portal — aims to help users verify device authenticity (via IMEI checks), report suspicious or fraudulent calls/SMS, block stolen or lost phones, and identify bogus or illegally obtained SIM/mobile connections.
- **Government's Rationale:** The DoT frames this move as a step to strengthen cyber security, combat telecom fraud, and safeguard citizens from phone theft and scam calls.
- **Controversy & Pushback:** Critics — including digital-rights advocates and opposition parties — argue that mandatory pre-installation may violate privacy and user autonomy, calling it a step toward state overreach.
- **Government's Clarification:** After backlash, the government (via the Communications Minister) clarified that Sanchar Saathi is optional for users — one can uninstall it like any other app.

How DRDO's new rocket-sled ejection test strengthens India's fighter aircraft safety framework

In the News: The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) successfully conducted a high-speed rocket-sled test of an indigenous fighter aircraft escape system at the Rail Track Rocket Sled (RTRS) facility of Terminal Ballistics Research Laboratory (TBRL) in Chandigarh. The test, conducted at a precisely controlled velocity of 800 km/h, validated canopy severance, ejection sequencing, and complete aircrew recovery, marking a significant milestone for India's indigenous defence capability.

Key Points:

- **Test Execution and Facility:** The high-speed rocket-sled test was conducted at the Rail Track Rocket Sled (RTRS) facility of DRDO's Terminal Ballistics Research Laboratory (TBRL) in Chandigarh, achieving a controlled velocity of 800 km/h. The complex dynamic test was executed in collaboration with the Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) and Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL). A sophisticated dual-sled system carrying the forebody section of the Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) was propelled using phased firing of multiple solid-propellant rocket motors to achieve the exact velocity profile required for realistic simulation.
- **Critical Elements Validated:** The test validated critical elements of the aircrew escape system including canopy severance, ejection sequencing, and complete aircrew recovery at precisely controlled velocity. The entire sequence was captured through onboard and ground-based imaging systems, providing comprehensive data for analysis and future design improvements.
- **Enhanced Pilot Safety Framework:** The Rail Track Rocket Sled facility at TBRL has been used to undertake several critical tests in the strategic domain involving missiles, warheads, ballistics, as well as for the space sector, making it a versatile asset for defence research. The data collected from this test will be instrumental in refining and certifying escape systems for current and future Indian fighter aircraft, including the Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) program.
- **Collaborative Success and Future Implications:** The successful collaboration between DRDO, Indian Air Force, Aeronautical Development Agency, Hindustan Aeronautics Limited, and industry partners showcases the integrated approach toward developing critical defense technologies.

Cristiano Ronaldo Joins Perplexity AI as Investor and Brand Ambassador

In the News: Portuguese football legend Cristiano Ronaldo announced his investment in Perplexity AI and his role as the company's global brand ambassador. The five-time Ballon d'Or winner made the announcement on social media platform X (formerly Twitter), stating "Curiosity is a requirement for greatness" and expressing pride in joining Perplexity AI.

Key Points:

- **About Perplexity AI:** Perplexity AI is an artificial intelligence-powered search and answer engine founded in August 2022 by Indian-origin CEO Aravind Srinivas along with co-founders Denis Yarats, Johnny Ho, and Andy Konwinski, all engineers with backgrounds in AI and machine learning. The company has achieved explosive growth, with its valuation surging from \$1 billion in April 2024 to \$14 billion in June 2025 (following a \$500 million funding round), and by late 2025, Perplexity's valuation had risen further, with reports placing it around \$20 billion. Perplexity markets itself as an AI-driven search engine that retrieves information from verified sources and produces concise summaries for users, positioning itself as an "answer engine" rather than a traditional search engine.
- **Investment and Partnership Details:** Cristiano Ronaldo has taken an undisclosed stake in Perplexity AI as both an investor and global brand ambassador; though the exact financial terms, stake percentage, and investment amount were not publicly disclosed. The partnership was announced through a joint statement on December 4, 2025, with Ronaldo sharing a video clip promoting the collaboration on his social media accounts, which collectively reach over 650 million followers across platforms including Instagram (over 600 million followers alone). Perplexity CEO Aravind Srinivas expressed honor in partnering with Ronaldo, stating that "Ronaldo's relentless drive and habit of constantly studying new recovery and performance techniques reflect why he's the GOAT."
- **CR7 Digital Hub Launch:** As part of the collaboration, Perplexity launched the "Perplexity x CR7" Digital Hub (accessible at Perplexity.ai/ronaldo), an interactive fan experience that brings together more than two decades of Ronaldo's football journey into one immersive digital space. Ronaldo stated "Winners never stop learning. Never stop asking. I use @perplexity to get ahead" when promoting the digital hub on Instagram.
- **Ronaldo's AI Usage and Advocacy:** Ronaldo revealed that he has been an active user of Perplexity AI and "relies on Perplexity in high-stakes moments, including award speeches and major announcements." In his announcement statement, Ronaldo emphasized that "Perplexity is powering the world's curiosity, and together we will inspire everyone to ask more ambitious questions," aligning his personal philosophy of continuous improvement and learning with Perplexity's mission.
- **Strategic Significance for Perplexity:** This partnership represents a strategic move by Perplexity to increase brand awareness and mainstream adoption through celebrity endorsement, particularly as the company competes against tech giants like Google, OpenAI's ChatGPT, and Microsoft. The company has positioned the collaboration as part of a broader user acquisition strategy, following recent partnerships with Indian telecom giant Bharti Airtel (offering free one-year Pro subscriptions to 360 million customers) and pre-installation deals with Motorola Razr phones.

- **Ronaldo's Business Portfolio Context:** Ronaldo is currently in one of the strongest financial positions of his career, having renewed his contract with Saudi Arabian club Al-Nassr in June 2025 for a reported \$400 million-plus deal that also grants him a 15% stake in the club. His tax-free salary in Saudi Arabia, combined with an estimated \$18 million annually from his decade-long Nike partnership and earnings exceeding \$550 million between 2002-2023, positions him among the wealthiest athletes globally. The Perplexity partnership follows previous technology investments including a controversial collaboration with cryptocurrency exchange Binance in 2022, which resulted in a class-action lawsuit over NFT promotions.

DRDO Transfers Seven Indigenous Technologies to Armed Forces

In the News: The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) handed over seven indigenous technologies developed under the Technology Development Fund (TDF) scheme to the Indian Army, Navy and Air Force during a meeting of the Empowered Committee held at DRDO Bhawan, New Delhi. The meeting was chaired by Secretary, Department of Defence R&D and Chairman of DRDO, Dr. Samir V. Kamat, and attended by senior representatives from the armed forces, Department of Defence Production and DRDO. These technologies span key domains of electronic warfare, naval infrastructure, underwater surveillance, propulsion systems and energy storage, reinforcing India's push towards self-reliance under the 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' vision.

Key Points:

- **Seven Technologies Transferred:** The technologies handed over include an Indigenous High-Voltage Power Supply for Airborne Self-Protection Jammers (designed to support airborne electronic warfare systems and enhance aircraft operational capability against incoming threats), a Tide-Efficient Gangway for Naval Jetties (facilitating safe boarding and debarking of personnel and equipment under varying tidal conditions), Advanced Very Low Frequency-High Frequency (VLF-HF) Switching Matrix Systems (enabling secure and reliable communication across very-low and high-frequency bands for command-and-control operations), and VLF Loop Aerials for Underwater Platforms (enabling long-range underwater communication essential for submarines and submerged vessels operating at depth).
- **Technology Development Fund (TDF) Scheme:** The TDF scheme is a flagship programme of the Ministry of Defence executed by DRDO under the 'Make in India' initiative, officially established during the Union Budget 2014-15. The scheme provides grants-in-aid to eligible Indian industries, particularly MSMEs and startups, as well as academic and scientific institutions for developing defence and dual-use technologies currently not available with the Indian defence industry. The funding limit was enhanced from Rs 10 crore to Rs 50 crore per project to give further boost to 'Aatmanirbharta in defence.'
- **Development and Testing Process:** Each of the seven technologies has been designed, developed and extensively tested by Indian industry with close collaboration and guidance of DRDO's domain experts and the tri-services (Army, Navy and Air Force). This collaborative approach reinforces the TDF scheme's focus on import substitution and critical technology development while ensuring that indigenous designs are matured into deployable products meeting operational requirements.
- **Approval of 12 New Projects:** During the same Empowered Committee meeting on December 2, 2025, the committee undertook detailed discussions on a wide spectrum of project proposals and approved 12 new projects spanning across strategic, aerospace, naval and electronic warfare technologies.
- **TDF Scheme Achievements and Progress:** As of 2025, a total of 78 projects at a cost of approximately Rs 333.21 crore have been sanctioned under the TDF scheme to various industries, academic institutions and startups. So far, 27 technologies under 10 projects have been successfully developed and realized under the scheme, demonstrating significant progress towards minimizing reliance on imports and building indigenous defence manufacturing capabilities.

SPORTS

Rohit Sharma Writes History with Most Sixes in ODI Cricket

In the News: Rohit Sharma etched his name in history by smashing his 352nd ODI six during the first ODI against South Africa at the JSCA International Stadium Complex in Ranchi, surpassing Shahid Afridi's long-standing record of 351 sixes.

Key Points:

- **Record-Breaking Feat:** Rohit achieved the milestone in his 269th ODI innings, hitting three sixes in the match—including a pull off Marco Jansen—to become the batter with the most sixes in ODI cricket history.
- **Efficiency Edge:** Rohit reached 352 sixes in 100 fewer innings than Afridi (369 innings), with a balls-per-six ratio of about 35, showcasing calculated power-hitting.

- **Format Dominance:** He now holds records for most sixes across formats (642 in internationals), most in T20Is (205), most ODI sixes in India (182), and most in ODI World Cups (54).
- **Captaincy Surge:** As ODI captain, Rohit hit 126 sixes in 55 innings (one every 17.76 balls), with 140 of his ODI sixes via pull/hook shots, mainly against pace.
- **Match Context:** Despite Rohit's early dismissal, India won the series opener, powered by Virat Kohli's century and KL Rahul's 60, highlighting team depth

Virat Kohli Surpasses Sachin Tendulkar With Record-Breaking 52nd ODI Century

In the News: Indian cricket legend Virat Kohli scored his 52nd ODI century during the first ODI against South Africa in Ranchi, surpassing Sachin Tendulkar's record for the most centuries by a batter in a single format.

Key Pointers:

- Kohli's innings of 135 runs off 120 balls included 11 fours and 7 sixes, with an impressive strike rate of 112.50.
- Alongside Rohit Sharma, he built a 136-run partnership for the second wicket, delighting fans with an electrifying display.
- With this century, Kohli has now scored the most centuries (52) in a single format, overtaking Sachin Tendulkar's 51 Test centuries. This knock marked his 83rd international century across all formats.
- Kohli also set two new records:
 - Sixth ODI century against South Africa, surpassing Sachin Tendulkar and David Warner.
 - Most fifty-plus scores in ODIs at home (59), breaking Tendulkar's record of 58 At JSCA Stadium, Ranchi, Kohli has now accumulated 519 runs in six innings, averaging 173, with three centuries and one fifty at a strike rate of 110.19.
 - In 2025, Kohli has scored 484 runs in 11 ODI innings at an average of 53.77 and a strike rate of 89.79, including two centuries and three fifties.

Sunil Narine Makes T20 History With 600-Wicket Milestone

In the News: West Indies mystery spinner Sunil Narine etched his name in T20 cricket history by becoming the third bowler to claim 600 wickets in competitive T20 cricket. The 37-year-old Trinidadian achieved this monumental milestone during an International League T20 (ILT20) clash while representing Abu Dhabi Knight Riders against Sharjah Warriorz in Sharjah, securing the landmark wicket by dismissing Tom Abell.

Key Points:

- **Historic Milestone Achievement:** Sunil Narine became only the third bowler in T20 cricket history to claim 600 wickets, joining Afghanistan's Rashid Khan (681 wickets) and West Indies legend Dwayne Bravo (631 wickets) in this elite club. The milestone came during the ILT20 match on December 3, 2024, when Narine, who was leading Abu Dhabi Knight Riders in Jason Holder's absence, dismissed Tom Abell in his first over.
- **Career Statistics and Performance:** Across his 568 T20 matches, Narine has maintained an exceptional bowling average of 22.09 and a highly restrictive economy rate of 6.16, which is the best among 117 bowlers with a minimum of 200 wickets in the format. His best bowling performance remains 5/19, complemented by 12 four-wicket hauls and one five-wicket haul throughout his decorated career. Narine has taken most number of matches (568) to reach the 600-wicket landmark among the three bowlers in this elite club.
- **Global Knight Riders Legacy:** Narine has been an indispensable figure across various Knight Riders franchises worldwide, establishing himself as the franchise group's most decorated bowling figure. He has represented Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) in the IPL for 189 matches (joint-most by an overseas player alongside Kieron Pollard), Trinbago Knight Riders in the Caribbean Premier League, Abu Dhabi Knight Riders in the ILT20, and Los Angeles Knight Riders in Major League Cricket. For Kolkata Knight Riders specifically,.
- **Special Recognition and Tribute:** Following the match, Abu Dhabi Knight Riders honored Narine's achievement by presenting him with a specially designed jersey emblazoned with the number 600 to commemorate his unprecedented feat.
- **Notable Career Achievements:** Narine is one of only five bowlers in T20 history to take 100 or more wickets for two teams, alongside Dwayne Bravo, Lasith Malinga, Shaheen Shah Afridi, and Shadab Khan. He is the leading wicket-taker in the Caribbean Premier League with 133 wickets, ahead of Imran Tahir (130), with 102 of those wickets coming for Trinbago Knight Riders. Narine has dismissed Rohit Sharma ten times in T20 cricket, the joint-most dismissals of a batter by a bowler alongside Dwayne Bravo. He also holds the record for most wickets at Eden Gardens in Kolkata with 72 wickets in T20s.
- **Mystery Spinner Reputation and International Career:** Narine is renowned for his exceptional control and unique mystery spin, with subtle variations and an unorthodox release that have made him one of the greatest T20 bowlers the

game has ever seen. His longevity and sustained wicket-taking ability have earned him recognition as among the most impactful and reliable bowlers in T20 cricket history.

IMPORTANT DAYS

Antarctica Day and 25 Years of NCPOR

In the News: On December 1, 2025, India marked Antarctica Day alongside the silver jubilee celebrations of the National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR) in Goa. The occasion commemorated both the 66th anniversary of the Antarctic Treaty (1959) and 25 years of India's leadership in polar and ocean research under the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES).

Key Points:

- **Event Celebration:** The dual commemoration celebrated 25 years of NCPOR's pioneering role in advancing India's polar research and environmental monitoring efforts across Antarctica and the Arctic.
- **Institutional Legacy:** Established in 1998, NCPOR has been instrumental in managing India's polar stations — Maitri and Bharati — and overseeing expeditions that contribute to global climate and oceanographic studies.
- **Scientific Achievements:** Over the past two and a half decades, NCPOR has spearheaded multidisciplinary studies on glaciology, sea ice, marine ecosystems, and atmospheric sciences, significantly enhancing India's presence in the Southern Ocean.
- **Antarctica Day Significance:** Celebrated globally since 2010, Antarctica Day highlights the signing of the Antarctic Treaty on December 1, 1959, which designates the continent for peaceful scientific cooperation and bans military activity.
- **Future Outlook:** During the ceremony, MoES officials reaffirmed India's commitment to sustainable research practices and announced future plans including the completion of *Maitri-II*, India's upcoming fourth Antarctic research station.
- **Global Collaboration:** NCPOR continues to collaborate with international research bodies under the Antarctic Treaty System, reinforcing India's scientific diplomacy in addressing global climate challenges.

Navy Day 2025: Story of Operation Trident, the 1971 Bangladesh War operation commemorated today

In the News: India celebrated Navy Day on December 4, 2025, to commemorate the 54th anniversary of Operation Trident, a decisive and audacious naval assault carried out on the night of December 4-5, 1971, against Pakistan's Karachi harbour during the Indo-Pakistani War. The day honors the valor, strategic brilliance, and professionalism of the Indian Navy, with President Droupadi Murmu attending the main celebrations held at Shangumugham Beach in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, marking the first time Navy Day was celebrated outside Mumbai or Visakhapatnam.

Key Points:

- **Historical Background and Context:** Operation Trident was launched on the night of December 4-5, 1971, marking the first major offensive naval operation undertaken by the Indian Navy after India's independence in 1947. Hostilities between India and Pakistan had broken out on December 3, 1971, as the Indian armed forces pushed deeper into East Pakistan (later Bangladesh) during the Bangladesh Liberation War.
- **Strategic Planning and Task Force Composition:** The task force assembled for Operation Trident consisted of three Vidyut-class missile boats from the 25th "Killer" Missile Boat Squadron: INS Nipat, INS Nirghat, and INS Veer. These were Soviet-built Osa-class vessels, each armed with four SS-N-2B Styx surface-to-surface anti-ship missiles with a range of approximately 40 nautical miles (about 75 kilometers).
- **Attack on Karachi Infrastructure:** Following the destruction of Pakistani naval vessels, INS Nipat and INS Veer were ordered to advance closer to Karachi harbour. INS Veer attacked two harbour targets, while INS Nipat launched a missile at the Karachi oil storage tanks and refineries at midnight. One missile struck the fuel storage facilities, causing a massive explosion visible for miles that completely destroyed the tanks.
- **Zero Indian Casualties and Safe Return:** Operation Trident achieved its objectives with zero casualties or damage to any Indian naval vessel, making it an unqualified tactical and strategic success that significantly boosted morale across the Indian armed forces.
- **Follow-up Operation Python:** The enormous success of Operation Trident prompted another successful attack on Karachi on December 8-9, 1971, known as Operation Python. This second strike further reinforced India's naval dominance in the Arabian Sea.

- **Awards and Recognition:** Several Indian Navy personnel were honored with gallantry awards for their exceptional performance during Operation Trident. Commander Babru Bhan Yadav, who commanded INS Nirghat, was awarded the Maha Vir Chakra, India's second-highest military decoration for acts of conspicuous gallantry, for his gallant action and leadership during the operation.
- **Establishment of Navy Day:** In recognition of the operational success and strategic impact of Operation Trident, the Indian Navy designated December 4 as Navy Day, to be observed annually.
- **2025 Theme and Contemporary Relevance:** The theme for Navy Day 2025, "Combat Ready, Cohesive, Credible, and Aatmanirbhar Force," reflects the Navy's evolution from a coastal defense force to a confident blue-water navy with expanding reach across the Indo-Pacific region. The celebrations highlighted the Navy's commitment toward indigenization through platforms like INS Vikrant (India's first indigenous aircraft carrier) and Project 17A frigates.

Mahaparinirvan Diwas 2025: Remembering Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's Legacy of Justice, Equality and Reform

In the News: India observed Mahaparinirvan Diwas to commemorate the 69th death anniversary of Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, the principal architect of the Indian Constitution and champion of social justice. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, along with Vice President CP Radhakrishnan and senior ministers, offered floral tributes at Ambedkar's statue at the Prerna Sthal in Parliament House premises. Millions of followers and devotees gathered at Chaitya Bhoomi in Dadar, Mumbai, where Dr. Ambedkar was cremated on December 6, 1956, to pay homage to his legacy of fighting caste discrimination, promoting equality, and uplifting marginalized communities.

Key Points:

- **Meaning of Mahaparinirvan:** The term "Mahaparinirvan" is derived from Buddhist philosophy and signifies the ultimate state of liberation from the cycle of birth and death (samsara), representing complete spiritual freedom from worldly desires, suffering and rebirth. In Buddhism, "Mahaparinirvan" describes the final nirvana achieved after death, similar to Lord Buddha's passing. Dr. Ambedkar passed away on December 6, 1956, in Delhi, just weeks after converting to Buddhism on October 14, 1956, in Nagpur along with approximately 5,00,000 followers. Devotees believe that Dr. Ambedkar, like Lord Buddha, led a life of virtue, knowledge, and social reform, ultimately achieving spiritual freedom, which is why his death anniversary is observed as Mahaparinirvan Diwas.
- **Chaitya Bhoomi - The Sacred Memorial:** Chaitya Bhoomi is a Buddhist memorial stupa located beside Dadar Chowpatty in Mumbai, marking the cremation site of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar following his death on December 6, 1956. The structure is square-shaped with a small dome divided into ground and mezzanine floors, featuring a circular wall about 1.5 meters in height with two entrances and marble flooring. Within the circular area are placed a bust of Dr. Ambedkar and a statue of Gautam Buddha, while the mezzanine floor houses a stupa and resting place for Buddhist monks (Bhikkhus). The main entrance gate is a replica of the Gate of the Stupa of Sanchi, and inside stands a replica of the Ashoka Pillar. The Chaitya Bhoomi was inaugurated by Meerabai Yashvant Ambedkar, Dr. Ambedkar's daughter-in-law, on December 5, 1971, and enshrines the relics of Dr. Ambedkar. Every year on December 6, lakhs (millions) of followers from across India and abroad converge at Chaitya Bhoomi to pay homage, making it one of the largest annual gatherings in the country.
- **Major Contributions and Social Reforms:** Dr. Ambedkar led key social movements including the Mahad Satyagraha (1927) which fought for Dalit access to public water sources, and the Kalaram Temple entry struggle for temple access rights. As Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Constituent Assembly, he played the central role in creating the Indian Constitution, which remains the foundation of India's democracy and emphasizes equality before law, protection of fundamental rights, and institutions to safeguard social and economic justice. He served as India's first Law Minister and played a major role in the Poona Pact (1932), securing reserved seats for Dalits in legislatures. His research helped shape the Finance Commission and guided the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934.
- **Literary and Scholarly Legacy:** "Annihilation of Caste" (1936), originally written as a speech he could not deliver, is his most famous work offering a fearless critique of the caste system and its religious foundations, arguing that social reform alone cannot achieve equality unless caste hierarchies are completely abolished. "The Buddha and His Dhamma" (1957), completed just days before his death, interprets the life and teachings of Buddha as a path to social equality, rational thinking, and moral living. "The Problem of the Rupee: Its Origin and Its Solution" (1923) was his major economic work focusing on India's monetary system during British rule, analyzing causes of economic problems and proposing currency reform solutions that later influenced the establishment of financial institutions like the Reserve Bank of India.
- **2025 Observances and Ongoing Legacy:** On Mahaparinirvan Diwas 2025, Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis announced at Chaitya Bhoomi that all efforts will be taken to ensure completion of the grand memorial of Dr. Ambedkar at

Indu Mills in Mumbai's Dadar area by December 6, 2026. The under-construction 450-foot memorial near Chaitya Bhoomi includes a steel and bronze statue standing 350 feet tall being prepared by renowned sculptor Ram Sutar's firm. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has termed five locations associated with Dr. Ambedkar as "Panchteerth" - Janam Bhoomi (Mhow), his residence in London, Deeksha Bhoomi (Nagpur), Mahaparinirvan Sthal (Delhi), and Chaitya Bhoomi (Mumbai).

ECONOMY

India's Finance Minister Inaugurates 18th Plenary Meeting of the Global Forum on Tax Information Exchange

In the News: India's Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman inaugurated the 18th Plenary Meeting of the Global Forum on Transparency and Exchange of Information for Tax Purposes in New Delhi in December 2025, reaffirming India's commitment to global tax transparency and international cooperation in combating tax evasion and illicit financial flows. The event marked the first time India hosted the Global Forum's plenary since joining it in 2009.

Key Points:

- **Event Overview:** The 18th Plenary Meeting was organized by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in collaboration with the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT), bringing together representatives from over 170 member jurisdictions.
- **Theme & Focus:** The discussions centered on "Strengthening International Cooperation for a Transparent Tax Environment", emphasizing the exchange of financial account information and beneficial ownership transparency.
- **India's Role:** Finance Minister Sitharaman highlighted India's progress in implementing the Automatic Exchange of Information (AEOI) standard and Exchange of Information on Request (EOIR) framework, ensuring data security and compliance with global norms.
- **Achievements & Impact:** India has exchanged tax information with 108 jurisdictions, helping identify offshore tax evasion, enhance compliance, and recover substantial revenue from undisclosed foreign assets.
- **Capacity Building:** The event underscored India's support for capacity-building programs for developing nations through the India-OECD South-South Program on tax transparency.
- **Global Participation:** The plenary featured addresses by OECD Secretary-General Mathias Cormann and Global Forum Chair María José Garde, who praised India's leadership in promoting global tax fairness.

Reserve Bank – Integrated Ombudsman Scheme (RB-IOS) 2024-25

In the News: The Reserve Bank of India operates the Integrated Ombudsman Scheme (RB-IOS) as a unified grievance redressal mechanism for customers of regulated entities. The scheme consolidates three previous ombudsman schemes and provides a streamlined, cost-free process for resolving complaints against banks, NBFCs, and other financial service providers. The RB-IOS aims to enhance customer protection and ensure accessible justice in financial services.

Key Points:

- **Scheme Overview and Consolidation:** The RB-IOS merged three separate schemes - the Banking Ombudsman Scheme 2006, the Ombudsman Scheme for NBFCs 2018, and the Ombudsman Scheme for Digital Transactions 2019 - into a single unified framework.
- **Complaint Filing and Eligibility:** The complaint must be filed within one year from the date of receiving the reply from the regulated entity, or within one year and 30 days if no reply was received.
- **Scope of Complaints Covered:** Complaints regarding non-adherence to fair practices code, levy of charges without proper notification, and non-compliance with RBI guidelines are also covered.
- **Organizational Structure and Jurisdiction:** The RBI has established 22 offices of the Ombudsman across major cities in India including Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai, Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, and others. Each ombudsman office has territorial jurisdiction over specific states or union territories, ensuring geographical coverage across the entire country.
- **Complaint Resolution Process:** The ombudsman has the power to pass an award up to Rs. 30 lakh including compensation for loss of time, expenses incurred, and mental agony suffered by the complainant. The entire process is designed to be completed within a reasonable timeframe, typically not exceeding three to four months.
- **Cost-Free and Accessible Process:** The entire complaint resolution process under RB-IOS is completely free of cost for complainants, ensuring that financial constraints do not prevent customers from seeking redressal.

- **Impact on Customer Protection:** The RB-IOs strengthens the customer protection framework in India's financial sector by providing an independent, impartial, and efficient mechanism for grievance redressal. The scheme acts as a deterrent against unfair practices by regulated entities and promotes accountability in the financial services industry. Science and Tech.

DRDO Successfully Tests High-Speed Indigenous Fighter Jet Escape System

In the News: The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has successfully conducted flight tests of an indigenously developed high-speed fighter jet escape system, marking a major advancement in India's aviation safety technology. The trials were conducted in December 2025 at the Rail Track Rocket Sled (RTRS) facility of Terminal Ballistics Research Laboratory (TBRL), demonstrating India's capability to design and validate advanced pilot ejection mechanisms for next-generation combat aircraft.

Key Points:

- **Test Overview:** The high-speed ejection system was tested using a rocket-propelled test vehicle, simulating emergency escape conditions for fighter aircraft pilots at supersonic speeds. The test validated safe ejection sequencing, parachute deployment, and recovery mechanisms.
- **Indigenous Development:** The system has been designed and developed by DRDO's Defence Bioengineering and Electromedical Laboratory (DEBEL) in collaboration with the Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) and Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiative.
- **Technical Capabilities:** The escape system is capable of functioning effectively in both subsonic and supersonic flight regimes, ensuring pilot survival even under extreme acceleration and altitude conditions.
- **Safety Features:** Key innovations include automatic seat separation sequencing, multi-stage parachute deployment, and biometric sensors that assess pilot vitals during ejection, ensuring maximum survivability.
- **Integration with Tejas Mk1A and AMCA:** The tested ejection system will be integrated into India's Tejas Mk1A Light Combat Aircraft and the upcoming Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA), replacing imported systems.
- **Future Outlook:** DRDO plans further refinements and human-rated trials before large-scale induction into the Indian Air Force, ensuring enhanced pilot safety and operational readiness.

Indian Army Carries Out Successful BrahMos Missile Test

In the News: The Indian Army has successfully carried out a test of the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands in December 2025, further validating the precision strike capabilities and reliability of the indigenous missile system. The test marks another milestone in India's efforts to enhance its long-range conventional deterrence and operational readiness.

Key Points:

- **Test Overview:** The BrahMos missile was test-fired by a ground-based mobile launcher as part of routine operational validation. The missile achieved all mission objectives, including accurate trajectory, high-speed maneuvering, and pinpoint target destruction.
- **System Specifications:** Jointly developed by DRDO and Russia's NPOM, the BrahMos is the world's fastest supersonic cruise missile, capable of reaching speeds of Mach 2.8 to 3.0 with a strike range of 450–500 km.
- **Operational Role:** The test reaffirmed the system's readiness for precision strikes on land and maritime targets, strengthening India's capability for rapid and accurate deep-strike missions.
- **Enhanced Variants:** The Army is now inducting the extended-range BrahMos Block-III variant, featuring upgraded guidance, improved stealth, and enhanced target discrimination capabilities.
- **Strategic Significance:** The test underscores India's growing deterrence posture amid evolving regional security dynamics, ensuring dominance in both mountain and coastal warfare environments.
- **Make in India Initiative:** The BrahMos missile program exemplifies Indo-Russian defence collaboration under Aatmanirbhar Bharat, with increasing indigenous components, including propulsion, seeker, and control systems.
- **Future Developments:** The successful test paves the way for integration with the BrahMos-NG (Next Generation) variant for fighter jets like Rafale and Tejas Mk1A, expanding its deployment across India's tri-services.

SEBI Launches SWAGAT-FI to Simplify Access for Low-Risk Foreign Investors in India

In the News: The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) introduced the SWAGAT-FI (Single Window Automatic & Generalised Access for Trusted Foreign Investors) framework through the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Foreign Portfolio Investors) (Second Amendment) Regulations, 2025, notified in December 2025.

Key Points:

- **Framework Introduction and Consultation Process:** SEBI released a consultation paper on August 8, 2025, proposing the SWAGAT-FI framework and invited public comments until August 29, 2025. Following stakeholder consultations, SEBI notified the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Foreign Portfolio Investors) (Second Amendment) Regulations, 2025, which came into force 180 days after publication in the Official Gazette, with certain clauses becoming effective immediately upon publication.
- **Full Form and Objective:** SWAGAT-FI stands for "Single Window Automatic & Generalised Access for Trusted Foreign Investors." The primary objective is to replace the historical labyrinth of overlapping and sometimes contradictory compliance requirements with a single, clear regulatory path.
- **Unified Registration and Dual Investment Routes:** The SWAGAT-FI framework offers a single-window, unified registration process that eliminates the need for separate compliance procedures for different investment routes. Eligible investors can register simultaneously as both Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) and Foreign Venture Capital Investors (FVCIs) without additional paperwork, enabling them to invest in both listed securities and unlisted sectors including startups.
- **Extended Compliance and Registration Cycle:** To reduce the administrative burden on long-term investors, SEBI has extended the periodicity for registration renewals, fee submission, and KYC documentation reviews to 10 years, a significant increase from the current three-year or five-year cycles that apply to regular FPIs. SWAGAT-FI entities will pay registration fees upfront once every 10 years at \$2,500 per 10-year block, instead of the previous three-year renewal cycle.
- **Single Demat Account Option:** The framework permits SWAGAT-FIs to optionally use a single dematerialized (demat) account for all their holdings across different investment routes, whether through FPI, FVCI, or other foreign investment instruments.
- **Removal of NRI/OCI/RI Contribution Caps:** Under the current FPI regulations, the combined contribution from Non-Resident Indians (NRIs), Overseas Citizens of India (OCIs), and Resident Indians (RIs) in an FPI is capped at 50 percent of the total corpus. The SWAGAT-FI framework proposes removing this aggregate contribution restriction for eligible funds, particularly benefiting mutual funds with diversified retail investor bases.
- **Alignment with Global Standards and Market Reforms:** The lighter regulatory touch approach for low-risk entities aligns with international best practices and standards prevalent in major global financial centers. The platform complements SEBI's ongoing reforms under the International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA) and supports India's aspiration to position GIFT City (Gujarat International Finance Tec-City) as a premier global investment hub.

RBI's ₹1 Trillion OMO Purchase: What It Means and Why It Matters

In the News: Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced it will conduct Open Market Operation (OMO) purchase auctions of government securities worth ₹1 trillion (₹1 lakh crore) during December 2025, alongside a three-year USD/INR buy/sell swap auction of \$5 billion. The announcement came during the RBI's December 2024 monetary policy review when Governor Sanjay Malhotra also announced a 25 basis points repo rate cut to 5.25%.

Key Points:

- **OMO Purchase Announcement:** The RBI announced OMO purchases of government securities amounting to ₹1 trillion (₹1 lakh crore) to be conducted in December 2025 through two tranches of ₹50,000 crore each on December 11 and December 18, 2024. The announcement was made alongside a \$5 billion three-year USD/INR buy/sell swap auction scheduled for December 16, 2024. Governor Malhotra emphasized that the RBI continuously assesses durable liquidity requirements of the banking system due to changes in currency in circulation, forex operations, and reserve maintenance.
- **Understanding Open Market Operations:** Open Market Operations (OMO) are a key monetary policy instrument through which the RBI buys or sells government securities to regulate liquidity in the banking system. OMO purchases inject liquidity into the system, as the RBI pays banks for the securities they sell, while OMO sales absorb liquidity as banks pay the RBI. The primary purpose of OMO is to provide sufficient liquidity and manage durable liquidity conditions, not to directly influence government securities yields.

- **Objectives and Expected Impact:** Governor Malhotra stated that the OMO purchases and forex swap measures will ensure adequate durable liquidity in the system. The liquidity injection is intended to strengthen monetary transmission and support market stability in the banking system.
- **Market Response and Demand:** Previous OMO auctions in 2024-25 witnessed overwhelming demand from banks and financial institutions, reflecting the acute liquidity needs in the banking system. Eligible participants submit bids electronically through the RBI's E-Kuber platform, with auction results declared on the same day and settlement typically occurring the next business day.
- **Broader Monetary Policy Context:** The OMO announcement was part of the RBI's December 2024 monetary policy review where the six-member Monetary Policy Committee unanimously decided to cut the repo rate by 25 basis points to 5.25% while keeping the monetary policy stance unchanged at neutral.

AWARDS

Donald Trump Awarded First FIFA Peace

In the News: United States President Donald Trump was presented with the inaugural "FIFA Peace Prize – Football Unites the World" by FIFA President Gianni Infantino during the Final Draw for the FIFA World Cup 2026 at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC. The ceremony, which was heavily focused on Trump, featured the presentation of the newly created peace prize before the World Cup draw took place. Trump, who has openly campaigned for a Nobel Peace Prize but was unsuccessful in 2025, called receiving the FIFA award "truly one of the great honors of my life."

Key Points:

- **FIFA Peace Prize Creation and Announcement:** FIFA announced the creation of the peace prize in November 2025, describing it as an annual accolade given to individuals who have taken "exceptional and extraordinary actions for peace and by doing so have united people across the world." The award was introduced after Trump failed to win the 2025 Nobel Peace Prize, which was ultimately awarded to Venezuelan opposition leader María Corina Machado.
- **Award Ceremony and Presentation:** The award presentation took place at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC, where Trump serves as Board Chair after an overhaul of the previous leadership group. FIFA President Infantino presented Trump with a gold-plated trophy depicting hands holding up the world with Trump's name on it, a commemorative medal (which Trump promptly placed around his neck), and a certificate recognizing his actions to "promote peace and unity around the world."
- **Trump-Infantino Relationship and 2026 World Cup Context:** FIFA President Gianni Infantino has developed a close relationship with Trump ahead of the 2026 FIFA World Cup, which will be jointly hosted by the United States, Canada and Mexico.
- **Controversy and Criticism:** The award generated significant controversy and criticism from human rights groups, political opponents, and former UN officials who questioned FIFA's political neutrality and the legitimacy of the prize. Craig Mokhiber, a former United Nations official, called the award "truly shameful" and stated "Not satisfied with two years of FIFA complicity in genocide in Palestine, Infantino and his cronies have now invented a new 'peace prize' in order to curry favour with Donald Trump."