CONTENTS

IMPORTANT ONE LINERS

NATIONAL

Fertility: Ending Child Ceilings (Telangana Ends 2-Child Ceiling for Local Body Elections)

In the News: The Telangana Legislative Assembly passed the Telangana Panchayat Raj (Amendment) Bill, 2026, abolishing the two-child norm that disqualifies individuals with more than two children from contesting local body elections. The historic decision, announced by Panchayat Raj Minister Danasari Anasuya Seethakka, comes as Telangana's fertility rate has dropped to 1.7—well below the replacement level of 2.1—raising concerns about long-term demographic sustainability, aging population, and potential loss of political representation after delimitation freeze ends in 2026.

Key Points:

- **Bill Passed:** The Telangana Legislative Assembly passed the Telangana Panchayat Raj (Amendment) Bill, 2026 on Saturday, January 4, 2026, formally abolishing the two-child norm. The bill was moved by Panchayat Raj Minister Danasari Anasuya Seethakka (also referred to as Danasari Anasuya Seet hakka) and received approval from the House. The Cabinet had initially decided to scrap the norm in October 2024, and the legislative approval in January 2026 completes the legal process for removing this three-decade-old restriction.

- **Original Introduction (1994):** The two-child norm was introduced in 1994—over 30 years ago—as a population control measure to address challenges associated with the population explosion experienced during the 1980s and 1990s. The policy aimed to overcome problems of food security, unemployment, and poverty by limiting family size among elected representatives who were expected to serve as "role models" for their constituents.

- **Disqualification Scope:** Under the existing rule, individuals with more than two children were barred from contesting elections to critical local body positions including Mandal Parishad Territorial Constituency (MPTC) members, Zilla Parishad Territorial Constituency (ZPTC) members, ward members in municipalities, and sarpanches (village heads). This disqualification affected a substantial number of potential candidates, particularly from marginalized communities, effectively restricting democratic participation at the grassroots level where local governance decisions directly impact rural communities' daily lives.

- **Projected Further Decline:** According to the 'Population Projections for India and States 2011-35' report by Census of India, Telangana's Total Fertility Rate (TFR) is projected to drop even further to 1.5 by 2031-2035. This represents one of the sharpest fertility declines in India. The state's population growth rate is expected to decline from 7.1 (2011-15) to just 0.3 (2031-35)—essentially nearing zero population growth. The Crude Birth Rate is projected to fall from 15.7 (2011-15) to 10.2 (2031-35), positioning Telangana among the bottom three states in India with the lowest birth rates alongside Andhra Pradesh.

- **Aging Population Concerns:** Life expectancy in Telangana is increasing—for men from 67 years (2011-15) to projected 71.4 years by 2031, and for women from 71 years to 75.6 years by 2031-35. Combined with declining births, this creates a rapidly aging population. The share of people above age 60 is growing while the working-age population shrinks. The Infant Mortality Rate is also declining from 39 (2011-15) to projected 27 (2031-35), contributing to increased longevity.

Third Round of Privatisation of Airports

In the News: The Union Government announced plans to privatize 11 airports under the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model by the end of the financial year 2025-26. Minister of State for Civil Aviation Murlidhar Mohol confirmed in a written reply to the Rajya Sabha on March 17, 2025, that this third round of airport privatization will bundle profitable airports with underperforming ones to attract private investors. This initiative is part of the National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP) aimed at modernizing aviation infrastructure and generating revenue through asset monetization.

Key Points:

- **Third Phase of Privatization**: This marks the third round of airport privatization in India under the PPP model. The first phase privatized Delhi and Mumbai airports in 2006, while the second phase saw the privatization of 6 airports (Lucknow, Ahmedabad, Mangaluru, Jaipur, Guwahati, and Thiruvananthapuram) awarded to Adani Enterprises.

- **Specific Airport Pairings**: Varanasi airport will be bundled with Kushinagar and Gaya airports; Bhubaneswar and Amritsar will be paired with Hubli and Kangra; Raipur and Trichy will be linked with Aurangabad (Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar) and Tirupati. Some reports also mention Jabalpur as one of the smaller paired airports.

- **National Monetisation Pipeline**: This privatization is part of the National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP-II), under which 25 Airports Authority of India (AAI)-operated airports are proposed to be leased between 2022 and 2025. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman outlined NMP-II in the Union Budget 2025-26, aiming to mobilize resources through structured asset-leasing mechanisms.
- **Per-Passenger Fee Model**: Unlike the earlier revenue-sharing model used for Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Hyderabad airports, this round will adopt a per-passenger fee model where the airport operator pays fixed charges per passenger on a monthly basis to AAI.
- **Expected Bidders**: Major airport operators expected to participate in the bidding process include Adani Airport Holdings Ltd (India's largest private airport operator currently managing six airports) and GMR Airports Ltd (which operates New Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport).
- **Current PPP Status**: At present, 14 airports in India operate under PPP arrangements, including major metropolitan airports and greenfield airports, which have demonstrated impressive growth and improved service quality standards.

Indian Army Declares 2026 as 'Year of Networking & Data Centricity'
In the News: The Indian Army declared 2026 as the 'Year of Networking & Data Centricity', marking a significant step in the military's digital transformation. Army Chief General Upendra Dwivedi announced this initiative in his New Year's message, emphasizing the force's commitment to enhancing connectivity, real-time decision-making, and combat effectiveness through advanced networking and data-driven operations.
Key Points:
- **Declaration and Announcement:** Army Chief General Upendra Dwivedi announced the designation of 2026 as the 'Year of Networking & Data Centricity' on January 1, 2026. The declaration is part of the Army's broader modernization roadmap and reflects the growing emphasis on digital integration in military operations.
- **Previous Year's Focus:** The Army had declared 2024-25 as the 'Year of Technology Absorption,' focusing on integrating new technologies into military operations. The 2026 designation represents the next logical step—moving from technology absorption to building networked, data-centric warfare capabilities that can leverage those technologies effectively.
- **Data-Centric Warfare Concept:** Data-centric warfare puts data and its use at the heart of battlespace planning and operations. Unlike platform-centric armies that focus primarily on individual weapons systems, data-centric forces emphasize seamless information sharing across all units. This enables better coordination, reduces friendly fire incidents, improves artillery effectiveness, facilitates deep strikes, and enhances air support coordination.
- **Real-Time Information Sharing:** The initiative aims to eliminate traditional information silos where different military functions (artillery, intelligence, surveillance, logistics) operated on separate networks. The goal is automated, integrated data management where information from drones, sensors, satellites, and ground units is collected, analyzed, and disseminated in near real-time to commanders at all levels.

Indian Army Launches Community Radio Station 'Radio Sangam' in Rajouri, J&K
In the News: Deputy Commissioner of Rajouri, Abhishek Sharma, inaugurated 'Radio Sangam,' the first community radio station along the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir. Established by the Indian Army in collaboration with the civil administration and local community at Keri village in Doongi block, Rajouri district, the station aims to strengthen communication and information outreach in border areas.
Key Points:
- **Strategic Location**: Radio Sangam is located in Keri village, nearly one kilometer from the Line of Control in the Doongi block of Rajouri district. Due to its strategic position, the station's broadcasts can be heard in areas across the LoC as well.
- **First Community Radio on LoC**: This is the first community radio station established along the Line of Control, marking a historic initiative in border area communication and community engagement.
- **Collaborative Establishment**: The radio station has been established by the Indian Army in partnership with the civil administration and local communities, demonstrating a joint effort towards community development.
- **Countering Misinformation**: A key objective of Radio Sangam is to counter misinformation and propaganda from across the border while providing a credible platform for sharing authentic information and addressing local issues.
- **Multiple Functions**: The station serves as a source of entertainment and information for local populations, disseminating content on social welfare schemes, education, health, and providing a platform for local voices and culture in border areas.

- **Administrative Communication**: Deputy Commissioner Abhishek Sharma highlighted that the community radio station will act as an important support system for the district administration, especially during natural disasters and other challenging situations, ensuring timely and effective communication between villages and the district administration.
- **Community Development**: Residents welcomed the initiative as a positive step towards community development, enhanced connectivity, and strengthening social cohesion in the border belt of Rajouri district.

India Emerges as World's Top Rice Producer

In the News: Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan announced that India has surpassed China to become the world's largest rice producer, achieving a historic milestone with rice production reaching 150.18 million tonnes in 2025, compared to China's 145.28 million tonnes.

Key Points:

- **Historic Achievement Announced:** Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan declared India the world's largest rice producer on January 5, 2026, at an event in New Delhi. India's rice production reached 150.18 million tonnes in 2025, surpassing China's output of 145.28 million tonnes.
- **Global Production Share:** India now accounts for more than 28% of total global rice production, establishing itself as the undisputed "rice king" of the world. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) acknowledged India's achievement in its December 2025 report, confirming India's rice production at 152 million metric tonnes, while China's output stands at 146 million metric tonnes.
- **Release of New Crop Varieties:** During the same event, Minister Chouhan released 184 high-yielding and climate-resilient seed varieties for 25 crops, developed by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) in collaboration with universities and seed companies. The varieties include 122 cereals, 24 cotton, 13 oilseeds, 11 fodder crops, 6 sugarcane, 6 pulses, and 1 each of jute and tobacco, aimed at enhancing crop productivity and increasing farmers' incomes.
- **Modern High-Yielding Varieties:** Short-duration, high-yielding rice varieties have driven India's recent production increases. Varieties like PB126 (matures in 123 days), PR131, and PB121 are gaining popularity in Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh. These varieties are disease-resistant, require less water than traditional varieties, and have boosted yields while reducing water demand. PB126, for example, is particularly attractive to farmers as it completes its lifecycle faster while maintaining high productivity.

Integrated Security Hub Launched in Andaman and Nicobar Islands

In the News: Union Home Minister Amit Shah inaugurated an Integrated Command and Control Centre worth ₹229 crore in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands during his two-day visit to Sri Vijaya Puram (formerly Port Blair). The high-tech security facility, comparable to similar installations in developed Indian cities, strengthens the islands' security management, emergency response capabilities, and maritime surveillance infrastructure.

Key Points:

- **Inauguration Event:** Union Home Minister Amit Shah inaugurated nine development projects and laid foundation stones for two additional projects totaling ₹373 crore on January 3, 2026, at Sri Vijaya Puram. The event was attended by Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai, Lieutenant Governor Admiral D.K. Joshi (Retd.), Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan, and other senior officials.
- **Key Features and Capabilities:** The Command and Control Centre is designed to integrate surveillance systems, communication networks, and coordination mechanisms among multiple security agencies under one unified platform. It enables real-time monitoring of maritime activities, emergency response coordination, disaster management operations, and comprehensive security management across the strategically important island territory.
- **Road Infrastructure Development:** The projects include improvements under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) to enhance road connectivity across the islands. Better road construction aims to improve accessibility for residents, boost the local economy, and facilitate tourism while connecting remote areas to administrative centers.
- **Great Nicobar Project:** Shah highlighted the upcoming Great Nicobar development project, stating it will position the Andaman and Nicobar Islands as a major global trade hub, strategic security center, and world-class tourist destination within a decade. The ₹72,000 crore mega infrastructure project includes an International Container Trans-shipment Terminal (ICTT) and greenfield international airport.
- **Blue Economy and Tourism Focus:** The islands offer immense potential for the blue economy, fisheries, agriculture, MSMEs, clean energy, and tourism development. Shah said the government is promoting sustainable tourism while

preserving heritage, protecting the environment, and strengthening security. The islands have been upgraded to ISO standards for scuba diving to establish them as a global destination for adventure water sports.

ICAR Releases 184 Improved Crop Varieties in New Delhi

In the News: Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan released 184 improved varieties of 25 field crops at an event in New Delhi. The varieties were developed by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) in collaboration with state and central agricultural universities and private seed companies.

Key Points:

- **Release Event Details:** Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan unveiled 184 improved crop varieties on January 5, 2026, at a function in New Delhi. The event coincided with the announcement of India surpassing China to become the world's largest rice producer.
- **Comprehensive Crop Coverage:** The 184 varieties span 25 different field crops, providing farmers with improved options across multiple agricultural categories. The breakdown includes: 122 cereals (including rice, wheat, maize, sorghum, and millets), 24 cotton varieties, 13 oilseed varieties, 11 fodder crop varieties, 6 sugarcane varieties, 6 pulse varieties, and 1 each of jute and tobacco. This diverse coverage ensures that farmers across different agro-climatic zones have access to improved germplasm suited to their specific conditions.
- **ICAR's Collaborative Development:** The varieties were developed through ICAR's All India Coordinated Research Projects (AICRP) in collaboration with state agricultural universities, central agricultural universities, and private seed companies.
- **High-Yielding Characteristics:** All released varieties are characterized as high-yielding, meaning they produce significantly more output per hectare compared to traditional varieties when provided with appropriate inputs and management practices. These varieties incorporate advanced breeding techniques to maximize genetic potential for productivity, helping farmers increase production from the same land area and contributing to national food security and agricultural growth.
- **Climate Resilience Focus:** A key feature of the new varieties is their climate resilience—the ability to maintain productivity under changing and adverse climatic conditions. The varieties are designed to withstand various climate-related stresses including droughts, floods, heat stress, cold tolerance, and resistance to emerging pest and disease pressures.

Suryastra Rocket Launcher

In the News: The Indian Army signed a ₹292.69 crore emergency procurement contract with Pune-based NIBE Limited for the indigenous Suryastra long-range rocket launcher system. This marks a significant advancement in India's artillery modernization, representing the country's first Made-in-India universal multi-calibre rocket launcher capable of precision strikes at ranges up to 150 km and 300 km.

Key Points:

- **Emergency Procurement Contract:** The Indian Army signed the ₹292.69 crore (approximately $35 million) contract with NIBE Limited on January 3, 2026, under Emergency Procurement (EP) Powers. The contract covers the supply of launcher systems, ground equipment, accessories, Enhanced System Projectiles (ESP), and ammunition for the Universal Rocket Launcher System. Delivery is scheduled in phased tranches over a 12-month period from contract signing.
- **Emergency Procurement Framework:** Emergency Procurement Powers allow India's armed forces to fast-track acquisitions up to ₹300 crore without undergoing lengthy approval procedures when operational preparedness requires immediate augmentation. In December 2025, the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) extended the validity of these powers for the armed forces until January 15, 2026.
- **First Indigenous Universal Multi-Calibre Launcher:** Suryastra is India's first Made-in-India universal multi-calibre long-range rocket launcher system. Unlike conventional rocket artillery that requires different launchers for different rocket types, Suryastra can fire multiple types of rockets and guided munitions from a single platform, offering exceptional operational flexibility. This multi-calibre capability reduces the logistical footprint while increasing battlefield responsiveness.
- **Technology Collaboration with Israel:** Suryastra is developed by NIBE Limited in collaboration with Israel's Elbit Systems. In July 2025, NIBE signed a Technology Collaboration Agreement with Elbit Systems for manufacturing the Advanced Universal Rocket Launcher in India. The system is based on Elbit's proven Precise and Universal Launching System (PULS) architecture, adapted and customized to Indian operational requirements and manufactured domestically.
- **BEML Platform Integration:** The launcher is mounted on a BEML (Bharat Earth Movers Limited) High Mobility Vehicle (HMV) 6×6 truck chassis. The BEML platform provides superior off-road performance and payload capacity suited to

dispersed rocket artillery operations, allowing the system to operate across diverse terrains—from high-altitude mountainous regions to desert and plains—while maintaining quick repositioning capability.

In denying bail to Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam, how the SC expanded definition of 'terrorist act'

In the News: The Supreme Court denied bail to student activists Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam in the 2020 Delhi riots larger conspiracy case, while granting bail to five other co-accused. In a significant legal development, the Court expanded the interpretation of "terrorist act" under Section 15 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), holding that terrorist acts are not confined to conventional physical violence but encompass broader actions that disrupt essential services or threaten economic stability.

Key Points:

- **Split Verdict on Bail:** The Supreme Court bench comprising Justice Aravind Kumar and Justice NV Anjaria delivered a split verdict, denying bail to Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam while granting conditional bail to five other accused—Gulfisha Fatima, Meeran Haider, Shifa-ur-Rehman, Mohammad Saleem Khan, and Shadab Ahmed. The judgment was reserved on December 10, 2025, and delivered on January 5, 2026, after the Court's winter break.
- **"By Any Other Means" Clause:** The Court emphasized Parliament's use of the phrase "by any other means of whatever nature" in Section 15 of UAPA, stating this reflects a "deliberate legislative calibration to adopt a process-based conception of terrorism." This interpretation means that acts causing economic disruption, supply chain interference, or service disruptions can qualify as terrorist acts, even without physical violence or property destruction.
- **Case Background - Delhi Riots:** The case relates to communal violence that erupted in northeast Delhi in February 2020 during protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) and the proposed National Register of Citizens (NRC). The riots left 53 people dead (38 of them Muslims) and over 700 injured. The violence occurred during the visit of then-US President Donald Trump to India.
- **Section 43D(5) of UAPA - Statutory Bar on Bail:** The Court held that Section 43D(5) of UAPA, which creates a stringent bar on granting bail, was attracted in the case of Khalid and Imam. This provision prevents courts from granting bail if there are reasonable grounds to believe that the accusations are prima facie true. The Court stated, "The statutory threshold stands attracted qua these appellants. This stage of proceedings does not justify their enlargement on bail."
- **Rejecting Automatic Bail on Delay:** While acknowledging the principle established in Union of India v. K.A. Najeeb that constitutional courts may grant bail under UAPA when there's no likelihood of speedy trial (to protect Article 21 rights to life and liberty), the Court clarified that "Najeeb is not a mechanical rule
- **Article 21 Constitutional Balance:** The Court attempted to balance the fundamental right to liberty under Article 21 with statutory restrictions imposed by UAPA. The judgment stated, "The constitutional inquiry into delay is not an inquiry into guilt. It is an inquiry into whether continued detention remains constitutionally permissible in the circumstances of the case." The Court held that "Article 21 requires the state to justify prolonged pre-trial custody."

Delhi Government Brings Finances Under RBI Framework with Historic MoU

In the News: The Government of NCT of Delhi signed a landmark Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Reserve Bank of India, bringing Delhi's finances under the RBI's full banking, cash management, and debt framework for the first time.

Key Points:

- **Historic MoU Signed**: The Delhi Government signed the MoU with RBI at the Delhi Secretariat on January 6, 2026. The meeting was chaired by Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, who also holds the Finance portfolio, with senior officials including Additional Chief Secretary (Finance) Bipul Pathak and Chief Secretary Rajiv Verma in attendance.
- **RBI's Role as Financial Agent**: Under the agreement, the Reserve Bank of India will function as the banker, debt manager, and financial agent of the Government of NCT of Delhi. This enables market borrowings through State Development Loans, automatic investment of surplus cash, professional cash management, and access to low-cost liquidity facilities, all within the framework prescribed by the Government of India and the RBI Act.
- **Reduced Borrowing Costs**: For the first time, Delhi will raise funds from the open market at competitive interest rates of approximately 7 percent through State Development Loans, replacing earlier high-cost borrowing at interest rates of 12 to 13 percent from alternative sources.
- **Automatic Investment of Surplus Funds**: Any excess cash balance with the Delhi government will now be invested daily through RBI mechanisms, ensuring interest income and preventing idle public funds. In the past, large sums remained unutilized, leading to revenue losses for the government.

- **Access to Liquidity Facilities**: The MoU provides Delhi access to Ways and Means Advances and Special Drawing Facilities to manage temporary cash flow mismatches without resorting to emergency borrowing or financial strain.

Somnath Swabhiman Parv

In the News: India is observing the Somnath Swabhiman Parv in 2026 to commemorate 1,000 years since the first attack on the Somnath Temple by Mahmud of Ghazni in January 1026. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will participate in special programmes at Somnath Temple on January 11, 2026, marking the beginning of year-long celebrations that honor the temple's enduring spirit and India's civilizational resilience. The central theme of the observance is "Unbroken Faith."

Key Points:

- **Historical Significance**: The year 2026 marks 1,000 years since January 6, 1026, when Mahmud of Ghazni attacked the Somnath Temple in a violent invasion aimed at destroying a great symbol of faith and civilization. Despite repeated attacks over centuries, the temple stands glorious today as a testament to India's indomitable spirit.
- **Somnath Temple's Religious Importance**: The Somnath Temple is located at Prabhas Patan on Gujarat's western coast and is revered as the first among the 12 Jyotirlingas of Lord Shiva. The Dwadasha Jyotirling Stotram begins with "Saurashtre Somanatham Cha," symbolizing Somnath's civilizational and spiritual importance. Ancient texts including the Shiva Purana, Skandpuran, Shreemad Bhagavat, and Rig-Veda contain references to this sacred shrine.
- **Four-Day Main Event**: The Somnath Swabhiman Parv will be observed from January 8 to January 11, 2026, during which a range of programmes highlighting India's spiritual heritage, cultural pride, and social values will be held.
- **Central Theme - "Unbroken Faith"**: The observance emphasizes "Unbroken Faith" as its central theme, symbolizing India's enduring cultural resilience.
- **Post-Independence Reconstruction**: Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel played a decisive and historic role in reconstructing the temple on November 13, 1947, shortly after India's independence. K.M. Munshi stood firmly with Patel in this endeavor. The restored temple was inaugurated on May 11, 1951, by India's first President, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, marking 75 years of the temple's restoration in 2026.
- **Historical Context of the 1026 Attack**: According to K.M. Munshi's book "Somanatha: The Shrine Eternal," Mahmud of Ghazni began his march towards Somnath on October 18, 1025, and approximately 80 days later, on January 6, 1026, attacked the fortified temple town.

FSS Becomes First Payments Company to Receive ISO/IEC 42001 Certification

In the News: Financial Software and Systems (FSS), a global leader in payments technology and transaction processing headquartered in Chennai, India, became the first payments company in India, Middle East, APAC (Asia-Pacific), and South Africa to achieve ISO/IEC 42001 Certification Lead status.

Key Points:

- **Historic Achievement:** FSS became the first payments company across India, Middle East, APAC and South Africa regions to be certified as ISO/IEC 42001 Certification Lead. The "Certification Lead" status reflects a higher level of maturity, recognizing FSS's ability to not only adopt the standard but also lead its implementation at an enterprise scale.
- **About ISO/IEC 42001 Standard:** ISO/IEC 42001:2023 is a joint publication by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) titled "Information Technology, Artificial Intelligence, Management System."
- **About Financial Software and Systems (FSS):** FSS is a global leader in payments technology and transaction processing, offering a comprehensive suite of products and solutions that redefine the payment experience. Headquartered in Chennai, India, with over 20 years of experience in the payments domain.
- **Shift to Enterprise-Wide AI Governance:** By achieving ISO/IEC 42001 Certification, FSS signals a strategic shift from ad-hoc, fragmented AI usage to a structured, enterprise-wide AI governance model.
- **TÜV SÜD Independent Assessment:** FSS's AI governance framework has been independently assessed and certified by TÜV SÜD, a globally recognized certification and assurance body with expertise in technology standards compliance. TÜV SÜD's validation of the "Certification Lead" status demonstrates FSS's advanced maturity level in AI governance implementation.

Siddaramaiah Becomes Karnataka's Longest-Serving Chief Minister

In the News: Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah created history by becoming the longest-serving Chief Minister in the state's history, surpassing the four-decade-old record held by late Congress leader Devaraj Urs. The 77-year-old leader completed 2,792 days in office across two non-consecutive terms, marking a significant milestone in Karnataka's political landscape .

Key Points:

- **Historic Milestone Achieved:** On January 6, 2026, Siddaramaiah equaled Devaraj Urs's record of 2,792 days as Chief Minister, and surpassed it on January 7, 2026. During his first tenure from May 13, 2013, to May 15, 2018, he served for 1,829 days (five full years). Since assuming office again on May 20, 2023, he has completed 963 days, taking his total tenure to this record-breaking figure.
- **Only Second CM to Complete Full Five-Year Term:** Siddaramaiah became only the second Chief Minister in Karnataka's history to complete a full five-year term, after Devaraj Urs. His first term (2013-2018) was the first such instance in 40 years, making him the first Chief Minister to serve a complete term since the late 1970s.
- **'Ahinda' Coalition Politics:** Siddaramaiah fashioned his politics around the 'Ahinda' coalition (an acronym for Alpasankhyataru-minorities, Hindulidavaru-backward classes, and Dalitaru-Dalits), focusing on social justice and welfare schemes for marginalized communities.
- **Five Guarantees Scheme:** After the 2023 election victory, Siddaramaiah's government implemented the Congress party's "Five Guarantees" promised in the election manifesto: Gruha Jyoti (200 units of free electricity for households), Gruha Lakshmi (₹2,000 monthly assistance to women heads of households), Anna Bhagya (additional 5 kg free rice per person per month), Yuva Nidhi (₹3,000 monthly allowance for unemployed graduate youth and ₹1,500 for diploma holders), and Shakti (free bus travel for women in state transport buses).

India's AYUSH System Gains Global Boost Through Deals With Oman and New Zealan

In the News: India's traditional medicine system AYUSH (comprising Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy) received formal recognition in bilateral trade agreements with Oman and New Zealand, as part of the India–Oman Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) and the India–New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (FTA) finalized in December 2025. This marks a significant global boost for India's AYUSH sector.

Key Points:

- **Formal Recognition in Trade Deals:** India's AYUSH system has been formally included and recognised in the recent bilateral trade pacts with Oman and New Zealand. Both agreements feature dedicated annexures focusing on health-related services and traditional medicine, which is a first for such treaties.
- **Trade Agreements Involved:** The recognition comes through the India–Oman CEPA and the India–New Zealand FTA, both finalised in December 2025. These agreements now formally acknowledge traditional Indian healthcare systems and create frameworks for cooperation in related services and exports.
- **Export Growth:** Exports of AYUSH products have shown positive momentum, with an increase of about 6.11%, growing from USD 649.2 million in 2023–24 to USD 688.89 million in 2024–25. This reflects rising global demand for herbal and traditional wellness products.
- **Improved Market Access:** The inclusion of AYUSH provisions in these trade deals is expected to provide greater market access, clearer regulatory frameworks, and smoother trade conditions for Indian traditional medicine products in Oman, New Zealand, and potentially other markets.
- **Boost to Global Acceptance:** The move enhances the global credibility and acceptance of India's traditional healthcare systems, positioning AYUSH as an important component of global health and wellness trade, and strengthening India's soft power and health diplomacy.

Government of India Approves Nutrient-Based Subsidy (NBS) Rates for Rabi 2025–26

In the News: The Government of India approved the Nutrient-Based Subsidy (NBS) rates for the Rabi 2025–26 cropping season, ensuring affordable and balanced availability of key fertilizers to farmers from 1 October 2025 to 31 March 2026.

Key Points:

- **Policy Approval:** The Union Cabinet, led by the Prime Minister, approved revised Nutrient-Based Subsidy (NBS) rates for Phosphatic and Potassic (P&K) fertilizers for the Rabi 2025–26 season, aimed at making fertilizers available to farmers at subsidized, reasonable prices.

- **Scheme Objective:** The NBS scheme promotes *balanced fertilization by* linking subsidy to nutrient content (Nitrogen-N, Phosphorus-P, Potassium-K, Sulphur-S) rather than product type, discouraging over-use of nitrogen and improving soil health and productivity.
- **Effective Period:** The approved NBS rates are effective from 1 October 2025 to 31 March 2026, covering critical fertilizer needs during the winter cropping cycle.
- **Budgetary Allocation:** The tentative budgetary requirement for the Rabi 2025–26 fertilizer subsidy is approximately ₹37,952.29 crore, about ₹736 crore higher than the allocation for the Kharif 2025 season.
- **Expanded Coverage:** Ammonium Sulphate has been included under NBS for the first time in Rabi 2025–26 to boost sulphur availability and support crop nutrition.

Uttarakhand Police Ranks First in ICJS 2.0 National Rankings

In the News: Uttarakhand Police secured the top position in the India Criminal Justice System (ICJS) 2.0 National Rankings, recognizing the state's excellence in criminal justice administration, technological integration, and efficient case management. This achievement highlights Uttarakhand's commitment to modernizing its police force and improving the delivery of justice to citizens.

Key Points:

- **Top Ranking**: Uttarakhand Police achieved the first rank in the ICJS 2.0 (India Criminal Justice System 2.0) National Rankings, establishing itself as the best-performing state police force in the country for criminal justice delivery.
- **About ICJS 2.0**: The India Criminal Justice System 2.0 is a comprehensive platform designed to integrate and streamline various aspects of the criminal justice system, including police, prosecution, courts, and prisons, through digital connectivity and data sharing.
- **Technological Integration**: Uttarakhand Police's success is attributed to effective implementation of digital platforms, online FIR registration systems, real-time crime tracking, and seamless data sharing with courts and prosecution departments.
- **Efficient Case Management**: The state has demonstrated excellence in timely investigation, charge-sheet filing, case monitoring, and coordination with judicial authorities, leading to improved conviction rates and faster justice delivery.
- **Citizen-Centric Services**: Uttarakhand Police has prioritized public-friendly initiatives including online complaint registration, grievance redressal mechanisms, transparency in police operations, and accessible citizen services.

CJI Surya Kant Inaugurates India's First Fully Paperless District Court in Kalpetta, Kerala

In the News: Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant inaugurated India's first fully paperless district court in Kalpetta, Wayanad district, Kerala. This landmark initiative represents a significant milestone in judicial reform and digital transformation, aiming to enhance efficiency, transparency, and accessibility in the Indian justice delivery system while promoting environmental sustainability.

Key Points:

- **Historic Inauguration**: Chief Justice of India Surya Kant formally inaugurated India's first completely paperless district court at Kalpetta in Wayanad district, Kerala, marking a transformative step in the digitalization of the Indian judiciary.
- **Location**: Kalpetta is the district headquarters of Wayanad, a hilly district in Kerala known for its scenic beauty and biodiversity. The district court now serves as a model for judicial digitalization across the country.
- **Digital Infrastructure**: The court is equipped with advanced digital infrastructure including e-filing systems, electronic case management software, digital display boards, video conferencing facilities, and secure cloud-based storage for all judicial records.
- **Key Features**: The paperless court system includes online case filing, digital hearing processes, electronic service of summons and notices, virtual court proceedings, digital signatures for orders and judgments, and automated case tracking for litigants.
- **E-Courts Mission Mode Project**: This achievement is part of the broader e-Courts Mission Mode Project, a pan-India initiative by the Supreme Court's e-Committee to digitalize the Indian judiciary and improve justice delivery through information and communication technology.

India Becomes First Country to Commercially Produce Bio-Bitumen

In the News: India achieved a global milestone by becoming the first country to commercially produce bio-bitumen, a sustainable alternative to petroleum-based bitumen used in road construction. This breakthrough innovation marks a significant advancement in green technology and positions India as a leader in sustainable infrastructure development while reducing dependence on imported crude oil.

Key Points:

- **Global First**: India has become the world's first country to achieve commercial-scale production of bio-bitumen, setting a precedent for sustainable road construction materials and green infrastructure development globally.
- **What is Bio-Bitumen**: Bio-bitumen is an eco-friendly, sustainable alternative to conventional petroleum-based bitumen, produced from organic and renewable sources such as agricultural waste, lignin, vegetable oils, and biomass instead of crude oil derivatives.
- **Environmental Benefits**: Bio-bitumen production significantly reduces carbon emissions, decreases dependency on fossil fuels, utilizes agricultural and industrial waste, and contributes to circular economy principles while maintaining comparable performance to traditional bitumen.
- **Production Technology**: The bio-bitumen is manufactured using indigenous technology developed by Indian research institutions and companies, involving advanced processes to convert renewable biomass into high-quality binding material suitable for road construction.
- **Raw Materials**: The production utilizes various organic sources including agricultural residues like rice husk and sugarcane bagasse, forestry waste, industrial lignin byproducts, and other plant-based materials abundantly available in India.
- **Performance Characteristics**: Bio-bitumen demonstrates performance properties comparable to or better than conventional bitumen, including adequate binding strength, durability, weather resistance, and suitability for various climatic conditions across India.

DRDO Celebrates 68th Foundation Day 2026: Aatmanirbhar Bharat, Cyber, Space & AI Leadership

In the News: The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) celebrated its 68th Foundation Day, commemorating nearly seven decades of pioneering contributions to India's defence capabilities. The celebrations highlighted DRDO's achievements in advancing self-reliance (Aatmanirbhar Bharat) in defence technology, with special emphasis on emerging domains including cybersecurity, space technology, and artificial intelligence leadership.

Key Points:

- **Foundation Day**: DRDO marked its 68th Foundation Day on January 1, 2026, celebrating its establishment in 1958 through the merger of the Technical Development Establishment and the Directorate of Technical Development and Production.
- **About DRDO**: The Defence Research and Development Organisation functions under the Ministry of Defence and is responsible for developing cutting-edge defence technologies across various domains including aeronautics, armaments, electronics, combat vehicles, missiles, and naval systems.
- **Cybersecurity Advancements**: DRDO highlighted significant progress in developing indigenous cyber defence systems, encryption technologies, cyber threat detection platforms, and secure communication networks to protect critical military and national infrastructure.
- **Artificial Intelligence Integration**: DRDO emphasized its leadership in AI-driven defence solutions including autonomous systems, intelligent surveillance, predictive analytics for threat assessment, AI-powered drones, and machine learning applications for strategic decision-making.
- **Major Achievements**: Recent accomplishments include successful missile tests, development of advanced radar systems, indigenous aircraft and unmanned aerial vehicles, naval platforms, battlefield management systems, and next-generation weapons technology.
- **Network of Laboratories**: DRDO operates through a network of over 50 specialized laboratories and establishments across India, employing thousands of scientists and engineers working on diverse defence research projects.

Bengaluru Tops 2025 Ranking as Best Indian City for Women

In the News: Bengaluru was ranked as the best Indian city for women, according to a comprehensive assessment evaluating safety, economic opportunities, healthcare access, education, and social infrastructure. This recognition highlights the Karnataka capital's progressive policies, inclusive work culture, and commitment to gender equality, positioning it as a benchmark for women's empowerment in urban India.

Key Points:

- **Top Ranking**: Bengaluru secured the first position in the 2025 ranking of best Indian cities for women, outperforming other major metropolitan areas in providing a conducive environment for women's safety, professional growth, and overall quality of life.
- **Evaluation Parameters**: The ranking assessed cities across multiple criteria including women's safety and security, economic opportunities and workforce participation, healthcare facilities, educational access, public infrastructure, gender-responsive policies, and social support systems.
- **Safety Measures**: Bengaluru demonstrated strong performance in women's safety through well-lit streets, effective CCTV surveillance networks, women-only transport services, active police patrolling, functional women's helplines, and swift response mechanisms for emergency situations.
- **Government Initiatives**: The Karnataka government and Bengaluru municipal authorities have implemented various schemes focused on women's safety, entrepreneurship support, skill development programs, and gender-responsive urban planning.
- **Social Environment**: The city's cosmopolitan culture, progressive social attitudes, active women's organizations, community support networks, and inclusive public spaces contribute to creating an empowering environment for women.

BHASHINI's Shrutlekh Multilingual Translation Tool

In the News: The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has launched Shrutlekh, an advanced multilingual translation tool developed under the BHASHINI (BHASHa INterface for India) initiative. This AI-powered platform enables real-time speech-to-text transcription and translation across multiple Indian languages, promoting linguistic inclusivity and bridging communication barriers in India's diverse linguistic landscape as part of the Digital India mission.

Key Points:

- **Tool Launch:** Shrutlekh is a cutting-edge multilingual translation tool launched under the BHASHINI initiative by MeitY. The platform leverages artificial intelligence and natural language processing to provide accurate speech-to-text transcription and translation services across Indian languages.
- **Language Coverage:** The tool supports multiple Indian languages which supports 22+ Indian languages; specific published lists vary by release and demonstration context like Hindi, English, Tamil, Telugu, Marathi, Gujarati, Bengali, Kannada, Malayalam, Odia, Punjabi, and Assamese. This comprehensive coverage ensures accessibility for speakers of scheduled Indian languages, promoting digital inclusivity.
- **Core Functionality:** Shrutlekh offers real-time speech recognition, converting spoken words into written text with high accuracy. It provides instant translation between supported languages, enabling seamless cross-linguistic communication for government services, education, business, and personal use.
- **BHASHINI Initiative:** BHASHINI (BHASHa INterface for India) is a national language technology mission launched by MeitY to develop digital infrastructure for Indian language processing. The initiative aims to create open-source language datasets, models, and APIs to democratize language technology access.
- **Open Access Platform:** As part of the BHASHINI ecosystem, Shrutlekh is available as an open-source platform, allowing developers, startups, and organizations to integrate multilingual capabilities into their applications.

Akasa Air Enters IATA, Becomes India's Fifth Member of Global Airline Body

In the News: Akasa Air, India's youngest airline, announced its membership in the International Air Transport Association (IATA), the prestigious global trade association representing over 360 airlines worldwide that account for more than 80% of global air traffic. This milestone, achieved just over three years after commencing operations in August 2022, makes Akasa Air the fifth Indian carrier to join IATA's ranks, following Air India, Air India Express, IndiGo, and SpiceJet.

Key Points:

- **About IATA**: The International Air Transport Association (IATA) is the global trade association for the world's airlines, representing over 360 carriers that collectively account for more than 80% of total global air traffic. IATA supports aviation with global standards for airline safety, security, efficiency, and sustainability.
- **Fifth Indian Member**: With this achievement, Akasa Air becomes the fifth Indian airline to join IATA's prestigious ranks. The other Indian members are Air India, Air India Express (both owned by the Tata Group), IndiGo (India's largest carrier by market share), and SpiceJet.

- **Mandatory IOSA Completion**: The membership followed Akasa Air's successful completion of the IATA Operational Safety Audit (IOSA) in December 2025, which is a mandatory prerequisite for IATA membership. IOSA is one of the most rigorous global safety assessments for airline operations, ensuring adherence to internationally benchmarked safety and operational standards.
- **Akasa Air's Background**: Akasa Air was founded in 2020 by aviation veteran Vinay Dube, with late billionaire investor Rakesh Jhunjhunwala having invested $35 million for nearly a 40% stake in the airline.
- **Current Fleet and Network**: As of January 2026, Akasa Air operates a modern fleet of 31 Boeing 737 MAX aircraft, one of the youngest and most fuel-efficient fleets in Indian aviation. The airline currently connects 26 domestic cities across India, including key hubs in the Middle East and Southeast Asia.

PIB Approved Kamala Hydroelectric Project in Arunachal Pradesh

In the News: The Public Investment Board (PIB) approved an expenditure of Rs 26,069.50 crore for the proposed 1,720 MW Kamala Hydroelectric Project in Arunachal Pradesh. This landmark approval marks a significant milestone for the state's clean energy ambitions and India's renewable energy transition, as the project will generate 6,869.92 million units (MU) of green energy annually while providing crucial flood moderation benefits to the Brahmaputra valley.

Key Points:

- **Project Approval and Investment**: The Public Investment Board approved the Kamala Hydroelectric Project on January 8, 2026, with a total expenditure of Rs 26,069.50 crore. The completion cost includes Interest During Construction (IDC) and financing charges of Rs 4,815.64 crore. The project is scheduled to be completed within 8 years from commencement.
- **Project Capacity and Energy Generation**: The Kamala Hydroelectric Project will have an installed capacity of 1,720 MW and will generate 6,869.92 million units of green energy annually. The project will contribute significantly to India's energy transition initiatives and the country's Net Zero target by 2070.
- **Location and River Basin**: The project is a storage-based scheme with a flood moderation component, proposed on the Kamala River, which is a major tributary of the Subansiri River. It will be located across Kamle, Kra Daadi, and Kurung Kumey districts of Arunachal Pradesh in the Lower Subansiri region. The location leverages the hydropower potential of Arunachal Pradesh's river systems.
- **Implementation Model and Ownership**: The project will be implemented on a Build-Own-Operate-Transfer (BOOT) basis through a joint venture company. NHPC (National Hydroelectric Power Corporation) will hold 74% equity, while the Government of Arunachal Pradesh will own the remaining 26% stake
- **Benefits to Arunachal Pradesh - Free Power**: Under the project framework, the Arunachal Pradesh government will receive 12% free power from the total generation.
- **Local Area Development Fund**: The project will contribute Rs 40 crore annually to the Local Area Development Fund (LADF). These funds will be utilized for infrastructure development, public services, and community welfare programs in the project-affected areas and surrounding regions.

Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act 1967

In the News: The Supreme Court of India delivered a landmark judgment in the 2020 Delhi riots conspiracy case, denying bail to student activists Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam while granting bail to five other accused persons. The Court relied on an expansive interpretation of the definition of a "terrorist act" under Section 15 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, holding that it extends beyond conventional violence to include conduct that disrupts civic life or essential services, even in the absence of immediate physical violence.

Key Points:

- **About UAPA**: The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 is a special statute enacted by the Parliament of India to provide effective prevention of unlawful activities associations, deal with terrorist activities, and address matters connected with national security.
- **Supreme Court Judgment - January 5, 2026**: A Division Bench comprising Justice Aravind Kumar and Justice N.V. Anjaria delivered a judgment in the bail pleas of seven individuals accused under UAPA in connection with the 2020 North East Delhi communal riots. The Court granted bail to five accused - Gulfisha Fatima, Shifa ur Rehman, Meeran Haider, Saleem Khan, and Shadab Ahmad - but denied bail to Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam, categorizing them as "architects" of the alleged conspiracy.

- **Expanded Definition of "Terrorist Act" Under Section 15**: The Supreme Court interpreted Section 15 of UAPA broadly, holding that a "terrorist act" is not confined to conventional violence but extends to acts intended to threaten national unity or security through the deliberate disruption of essential services and civic life.
- **What Constitutes a Terrorist Act (Section 15)**: Section 15 of UAPA defines a terrorist act as any act committed with intent to threaten the unity, integrity, security, economic security, or sovereignty of India, or to strike terror among the people. The Court held that culpability under the Act is not limited to the final execution of a violent act but extends to preparatory conduct, facilitation, abetment, and the conspiracy itself.
- **Bail Provisions Under Section 43D(5)**: Section 43D(5) of UAPA imposes stringent restrictions on the grant of bail. Under Section 43D(5) of UAPA, bail is barred if accusations appear prima facie true.
- **Case Background - 2020 Delhi Riots:** The case relates to FIR 59/2020 filed under UAPA concerning the alleged larger conspiracy behind the 2020 North East Delhi communal riots. The prosecution alleged that Umar Khalid progressed from being a propagator of protest slogans to assuming a central role in the formulation and execution of a conspiracy alleged to constitute a terrorist act under Section 15 of UAPA.

From Kolkata to Goa: How Rs 2,742 Cr Coal Scam Funds Allegedly Fueled I-PAC's Election Machine

In the News: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) conducted coordinated raids at multiple locations in West Bengal and Delhi linked to the Indian Political Action Committee (I-PAC), the prominent political consultancy firm.

Key Points:

- **ED Raids on I-PAC**: On January 8, 2026, the Enforcement Directorate conducted searches at approximately 10 locations, including six in West Bengal and four in Delhi. Key locations raided included I-PAC's Salt Lake office in Kolkata, the residence of I-PAC co-founder and director Pratik Jain on Loudon Street in Kolkata, and premises of a trader in Burrabazar's Posta area.
- **Scale of the Coal Scam**: The case involves an alleged massive coal pilferage racket operating in West Bengal's Eastern Coalfields Limited (ECL) leasehold areas, particularly in Kunustoria and Kajora areas around Asansol. According to ED findings, the syndicate illegally excavated approximately 25.51 lakh metric tonnes of coal valued at over Rs 1,114 crore between December 2017 and October 2020.
- **The Mastermind - Anup Majee (Lala)**: At the center of the coal syndicate is Anup Majee, also known as "Lala," whom investigators identify as the mastermind. Majee has a criminal history spanning decades, with at least 16 FIRs registered against him between 2000 and 2015. The CBI registered a fresh case against him in November 2020, focusing on illegal mining and theft from ECL's leasehold areas.
- **Money Trail from Kolkata to Goa**: The ED alleges that Rs 20 crore from the coal scam proceeds was transferred from Kolkata to Goa through a complex hawala network specifically to support I-PAC's election-related activities during the 2021–2022 Goa Assembly elections.
- **Pratik Jain's Alleged Involvement**: The ED claims in its court filing that Pratik Jain, co-founder and director of I-PAC (an IIT-Bombay alumnus), personally handled I-PAC's operations in Goa where the laundered funds were allegedly utilized for election-related activities. The agency has cited specific evidence against Jain related to hawala transactions and cash deals.
- **CBI Investigation Background**: The ED's money laundering case stems from a November 2020 FIR filed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), which alleged the multi-crore rupee coal pilferage scam. The CBI chargesheet has named at least 41 people in connection with the case.
- **I-PAC's Political Consultancy Work**: I-PAC (Indian Political Action Committee) is a prominent political consultancy firm that has provided services to multiple political parties, including the All India Trinamool Congress (TMC) since 2019, the DMK in Tamil Nadu, and other regional parties. The firm specializes in election strategy, digital campaigns, and event management.

INTERNATIONAL

Delcy Rodriguez appointed Venezuela Interim President day after Maduro's capture

In the News: The United States military conducted Operation Absolute Resolve, capturing Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and First Lady Cilia Flores during a pre-dawn raid in Caracas. Following the unprecedented operation, Executive Vice President Delcy Rodríguez was sworn in as interim president of Venezuela under constitutional provisions governing presidential absence.

However, Rodríguez immediately denounced the US action as an illegal kidnapping and demanded Maduro's release, contradicting President Trump's claims that she would cooperate with Washington.

Key Points:

- **Operation Absolute Resolve Execution:** At approximately 2:00 a.m. Venezuelan time on January 3, 2026, the US launched a massive military operation involving more than 150 aircraft including F-18, F-22, and F-35 fighter jets, B-1 bombers, drones, and helicopters. The operation lasted less than 30 minutes with at least seven major explosions heard across Caracas. US helicopters reached Maduro's compound within the Ft. Tiuna military installation at 1:01 a.m. EST and were back over water by 3:29 a.m. EST.

- **Maduro's Capture and Detention:** US special forces captured President Nicolás Maduro, 63, and his wife Cilia Flores from their heavily fortified home within the Ft. Tiuna military complex. According to Trump, Maduro attempted to reach a safe room but failed. The couple was flown by helicopter to the USS Iwo Jima aircraft carrier and then transported to New York, arriving at Stewart Air National Guard Base Saturday evening. They were taken to DEA headquarters in Manhattan and detained in New York for charges..

- **Constitutional Succession:** Under Articles 233 and 234 of Venezuela's constitution, which outline scenarios for presidential absence whether temporary or absolute, the executive vice president automatically assumes presidential duties. Delcy Rodríguez, who has served as Vice President since June 2018 and also holds positions as Minister of Finance and Minister of Petroleum, stepped into the role of interim/acting president on Saturday afternoon. Venezuela's Supreme Tribunal of Justice formally ordered Rodríguez to become acting president for 90 days, a ruling endorsed by Defense Minister Vladimir Padrino López on behalf of the military.

- **Oil Infrastructure Focus:** Trump repeatedly mentioned Venezuela's vast oil reserves during his press conference, confirming long-standing suspicions that US actions are economically motivated. This admission suggests control of Venezuela's oil resources—among the world's largest proven reserves—is a primary US objective beyond stated counternarcotics or democracy promotion goals.

What Is the Monroe Doctrine and Why Did Trump Invoke It?

In the News: President Donald Trump invoked the Monroe Doctrine following a U.S. military operation that resulted in the capture of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro. Trump coined the term "Donroe Doctrine" and declared that "American dominance in the Western Hemisphere will never be questioned again," marking a significant reassertion of U.S. influence in Latin America based on a 200-year-old foreign policy framework.

Key Points:

- **Trump's Invocation of the Monroe Doctrine**: On January 3, 2026, following the capture of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro through a U.S. military strike, President Trump held a press conference at his Mar-a-Lago club in Florida, where he cited the Monroe Doctrine to justify the operation.

- **The "Donroe Doctrine" Coined**: Trump announced that the Monroe Doctrine has been "superseded by a lot, by a real lot" and declared, "They now call it the 'Donroe Doctrine.'" The term is a portmanteau combining "Donald" and "Monroe," and Trump emphasized that "American dominance in the Western Hemisphere will never be questioned again."

- **Venezuela Operation Context**: Trump justified the military action by claiming that Venezuela, under Maduro's rule, had been "increasingly hosting foreign adversaries in our region and acquiring menacing offensive weapons that could threaten U.S. interests." Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores, were captured and transported to New York to face U.S. charges of participating in narco-terrorism.

- **Origin of the Term**: The phrase "Donroe Doctrine" first appeared in a New York Post front-page headline in January 2025, and gradually worked its way into geopolitical conversations. It was mentioned on Fox News' "Fox & Friends" on January 2, 2026, one day before the Venezuela strike, describing it as "exerting America's dominance over, in this case, our western hemisphere."

Original Monroe Doctrine (1823): President James Monroe first articulated the doctrine on December 2, 1823, during his seventh annual State of the Union address to Congress. The doctrine warned European powers not to interfere in the affairs of the Western Hemisphere, stating that "the American continents, by the free and independent condition which they have assumed and maintain, are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European powers."

U.S. Withdraws from 66 International Organizations Under Trump Order

In the News: President Donald Trump signed an executive order withdrawing the United States from 66 international organizations, marking a significant escalation in America's retreat from multilateral global cooperation. This comprehensive recalibration primarily targets UN-affiliated bodies focused on climate action, labor standards, and social development, representing a fundamental shift toward unilateral and selectively multilateral approaches to international engagement.

Key Points:

- **Executive Order Details:** Signed on January 7, 2026, the order suspends U.S. support for 66 organizations, agencies, and commissions, most affiliated with the United Nations. The withdrawals followed extensive review of U.S. participation metrics, funding contributions, and alignment with administration priorities.
- **Primary Targets:** UN-affiliated bodies focusing on climate change, labor standards, and social development were central targets. The administration characterized these institutions as redundant, inefficient, or misaligned with U.S. national interests and sovereignty.
- **UNFCCC Withdrawal:** The U.S. exited the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), adopted in 1992. This foundational treaty underpins the Paris Agreement and represents the primary international legal framework for global climate mitigation and adaptation efforts.
- **International Solar Alliance Exit:** The U.S. withdrew from the India-France led International Solar Alliance, launched in 2015 to promote renewable solar energy development, technology transfer, and climate action. This marks a significant retreat from renewable energy cooperation.
- **Historical Context:** The U.S. is among the world's largest historical greenhouse gas emitters. Previous withdrawals under the Trump administration included the WHO, UN Human Rights Council, and UNESCO, establishing a pattern of disengagement from multilateral institutions.

UN Declares 2026 International Year for Rangelands and Pastoralists

In the News: The United Nations has declared 2026 as the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists to raise global awareness about the critical importance of rangelands and the communities that depend on them. This designation aims to highlight sustainable rangeland management, pastoral livelihoods, and their vital role in biodiversity conservation, climate action, and food security.

Key Points:

- **UN Declaration**: The United Nations General Assembly officially proclaimed 2026 as the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists, recognizing the ecological, economic, and cultural significance of rangelands and pastoral communities worldwide.
- **What are Rangelands**: Rangelands are vast landscapes including grasslands, shrublands, savannas, and tundra that cover approximately 54% of the world's land surface. They support diverse ecosystems and provide grazing lands for livestock and wildlife.
- **Global Significance**: Rangelands are home to over 1 billion people globally, including pastoralists, agro-pastoralists, and Indigenous communities. They store significant amounts of carbon, support biodiversity, and provide essential ecosystem services.
- **Pastoralist Communities**: Pastoralists are communities whose livelihoods depend on raising and herding livestock on rangelands. They practice sustainable, mobile grazing systems that have been developed over centuries and are adapted to variable environmental conditions.
- **Food Security Contribution**: Rangelands produce meat, milk, and other animal products that contribute significantly to global food security, particularly in arid and semi-arid regions where crop agriculture is not viable.
- **India's Relevance**: India has extensive rangelands across states like Rajasthan, Gujarat, and the Himalayan regions, supporting millions of pastoralists and agro-pastoralists. Communities such as Rabaris, Gujjars, Bhotiyas, and Gaddi shepherds depend on these ecosystems.
- **Sustainable Development Goals**: The International Year aligns with multiple UN Sustainable Development Goals, including those related to poverty reduction, food security, climate action, and life on land (SDGs 1, 2, 13, and 15).

India Launches Raisina Science Diplomacy Initiative 2026 to Bridge Science and Global Policy

In the News: India has launched the Raisina Science Diplomacy Initiative 2026, a strategic platform designed to bridge scientific innovation with global policy-making and international cooperation. Unveiled during the Raisina Dialogue 2026, this initiative positions India as a leading voice in leveraging science and technology for addressing transnational challenges including climate change, public health, digital governance, and sustainable development through collaborative diplomatic frameworks.

Key Points:

- **Initiative Launch:** The Raisina Science Diplomacy Initiative 2026 was launched during the Raisina Dialogue 2026, India's flagship geopolitical conference held annually in New Delhi. The initiative establishes a structured platform for integrating scientific expertise into diplomatic engagements and international policy formulation.
- **Focus Areas:** Key thematic pillars include climate science and green technologies for sustainable development, pandemic preparedness and global health security, artificial intelligence and digital governance frameworks, space cooperation and satellite technology applications, biotechnology and agricultural innovation, and quantum computing and emerging technologies.
- **Raisina Dialogue Connection:** The Raisina Dialogue, organized by the Observer Research Foundation (ORF) in partnership with the Ministry of External Affairs, is India's premier conference on geopolitics and global governance. Integrating science diplomacy into this platform elevates scientific cooperation as a critical component of international relations.
- **International Collaboration Framework:** The initiative establishes mechanisms for bilateral and multilateral partnerships, facilitating joint research projects, technology transfer agreements, and scientific exchange programs with countries across the Global South, developed nations, and international organizations including the United Nations and WHO.
- **Policy-Science Interface:** The initiative creates institutional linkages between India's scientific community (CSIR, ISRO, ICMR, DBT) and diplomatic establishments, ensuring evidence-based policy formulation. Expert panels and science advisory councils will inform India's positions on international treaties, climate negotiations, and technology governance standards.

NVIDIA CEO Jensen Huang Conferred 2026 IEEE Medal of Honour

In the News: Jensen Huang, CEO and co-founder of NVIDIA Corporation, was awarded the prestigious 2026 IEEE Medal of Honor, the highest recognition bestowed by the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE). The award honors Huang's pioneering contributions to graphics processing units (GPUs) and accelerated computing, which have revolutionized artificial intelligence, scientific research, and computational technology. The medal includes a USD 2 million cash prize.

Key Points:

- **Award Announcement:** Jensen Huang received the 2026 IEEE Medal of Honor on January 6, 2026, becoming one of the most distinguished recipients of IEEE's highest accolade. The medal recognizes exceptional contributions to the advancement of electrical and electronics engineering, information technology, and related sciences.
- **IEEE Medal of Honor Significance:** Established in 1917, the IEEE Medal of Honor is the organization's most prestigious award, recognizing individuals whose exceptional contributions have profoundly impacted technological progress and society. Past recipients include pioneers like Alexander Graham Bell, Thomas Edison, and Tim Berners-Lee.
- **Prize Amount:** The award includes a USD 2 million cash prize, reflecting the extraordinary significance of Huang's contributions to computing technology and their transformative impact on global technological advancement and economic development.
- **NVIDIA's GPU Innovation:** Under Huang's leadership since co-founding NVIDIA in 1993, the company pioneered GPU technology originally designed for graphics rendering, then revolutionized the field by adapting GPUs for parallel processing tasks. This innovation became foundational for AI training, machine learning, autonomous vehicles, and scientific simulations.

Oscars 2025: Indian Films Enter Best Picture Eligibility List

In the News: Two Indian films, Kantara: A Legend – Chapter 1 directed by Rishab Shetty and Tanvi The Great helmed by Anupam Kher, have entered the eligibility list for the Best Picture category at the 98th Academy Awards. This marks a significant milestone for Indian cinema on the global stage, with both films among 201 feature films qualifying for consideration in Hollywood's most prestigious film awards ceremony.

Key Points:

- **Films Eligible:** Kantara: A Legend – Chapter 1 directed by Rishab Shetty and *Tanvi The Great* directed by Anupam Kher have qualified for Best Picture consideration at the 98th Academy Awards. The eligibility list was first reported by Variety, highlighting Indian cinema's growing international recognition.
- **Total Contenders:** A total of 201 feature films have qualified for consideration in the Best Picture category for the 98th Academy Awards. This competitive field includes major Hollywood productions, independent films, and international cinema, making Indian films' inclusion particularly noteworthy.
- **Qualifying Theatrical Run:** To qualify for Best Picture, films must complete a qualifying theatrical run in at least 10 of the top 50 US markets within 45 days of their initial 2025 release. This requirement ensures significant theatrical exposure and accessibility to Academy voters across major American cities.
- **RAISE Form Requirement:** All qualifying films must submit a confidential Academy Representation and Inclusion Standards Entry (RAISE) form to the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS). This documentation demonstrates the production's commitment to diversity and inclusion standards.
- **Inclusion Standards:** Films must meet at least two of the four inclusion standards defined by AMPAS, covering on-screen representation, creative leadership and project team, industry access and opportunities, and audience development. These standards promote diversity across gender, racial/ethnic groups, LGBTQ+ communities, and people with disabilities.

Oscars 2026: Five Indian Films Eligible for Best Picture at 98th Academy Awards

In the News: The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS) released its "Reminder List of Productions Eligible for the 98th Academy Awards," featuring five Indian films among the 201 feature films eligible to compete for the prestigious Best Picture category.

Key Points:

- **Five Indian Films Eligible**: The Indian films that have made it to the Best Picture eligibility list are: (1) Kantara: A Legend – Chapter 1 (Kannada), (2) Tanvi The Great (Hindi), (3) Mahavatar Narsimha (multilingual animated film), (4) Tourist Family (Tamil), and (5) Sister Midnight (Hindi-language UK-India co-production starring Radhika Apte). These films are among 201 titles that meet the additional eligibility requirements for Best Picture consideration.
- **Kantara: A Legend – Chapter 1**: Directed by and starring Rishabh Shetty, this Kannada-language period action-thriller serves as a prequel to the 2022 blockbuster hit Kantara.
- **Tanvi The Great**: Directed by veteran actor Anupam Kher in his directorial venture, this Hindi film was released on May 1, 2025. The film showcases Kher's directorial vision and represents mainstream Hindi cinema's entry into the Oscar race for Best Picture consideration.
- **Mahavatar Narsimha**: This multilingual animated mythological epic, directed by Ashwin Kumar and presented by Hombale Films (the same studio behind Kantara), depicts Lord Vishnu's fourth avatar.
- **Tourist Family**: This Tamil-language film marks the directorial debut of Abishan Jeevinth and stars M. Sasikumar as Dharmadas and Simran as Vasanthi.
- **Sister Midnight**: A UK-India co-production in Hindi language, this film stars Radhika Apte and represents international collaborative cinema involving Indian talent and themes.
- **Total Eligible Films**: In total, 317 feature films are eligible for the 98th Academy Awards across all categories. Of these, only 201 films meet the strict additional eligibility requirements for the Best Picture category, demonstrating the selective nature of this prestigious recognition.
- **Oscars 2026 Timeline**: Nomination voting will take place from January 12 to 16, 2026. Official nominations for all 24 categories will be announced on January 22, 2026. The 98th Academy Awards ceremony is scheduled for March 15, 2026, at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles, California.

India, Australia Invited to G7 Talks on Critical Minerals

In the News: US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent announced that India and Australia have been invited to join a special G7 finance ministers meeting in Washington on January 13, 2026, focused on critical minerals. The meeting aims to address global supply chain challenges and reduce dependence on China's dominance in critical minerals refining.

Key Points:

- **Meeting Details**: US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent is hosting the G7 finance ministers meeting in Washington on Monday, January 13, 2026, dedicated to discussing critical minerals. Bessent had been advocating for a focused meeting on this topic since the G7 leaders' summit last summer, and finance ministers previously held a virtual meeting in December 2025.

- **Invitations to India and Australia**: India and Australia were invited to participate in the meeting alongside several other countries. Bessent mentioned uncertainty about India's acceptance of the invitation at the time of his announcement. The complete list of invited countries beyond G7 members was not immediately disclosed.
- **G7 Membership**: The G7 comprises the United States, Britain, Japan, France, Germany, Italy, and Canada, along with the European Union, and most members rely heavily on China for rare earth supplies.
- **Western Response to China's Market Control**: Western countries have been working to reduce their dependence on China's critical minerals in recent years, particularly following China's implementation of strict export controls on rare earths. In June 2025, the G7 agreed on an action plan to secure their supply chains and strengthen their economies.
- **Australia-US Strategic Partnership**: Australia signed an agreement with the United States in October 2025 aimed at countering China's dominance in critical minerals, which included an $8.5 billion project pipeline. The agreement leverages Australia's proposed strategic reserve to supply metals such as rare earths and lithium that are vulnerable to supply disruptions. Subsequently, Australia has received interest from Europe, Japan, South Korea, and Singapore.
- **Current US-China Trade Relations**: Bessent stated that China continues to fulfill its commitments to purchase US soybeans and ship critical minerals to US firms.

SCIENCE AND TECH

SpaceX Launches Italy's COSMO-SkyMed Second Generation Satellite
In the News: SpaceX launched Italy's COSMO-SkyMed Second Generation Flight Model 3 (CSG-FM3) satellite on January 2, 2026, marking the first orbital mission of 2026 globally. The Falcon 9 rocket lifted off from Vandenberg Space Force Base in California at 9:09 p.m. EST (6:09 p.m. local time), carrying approximately 2,205-2,240 kg Earth observation satellite with dual civilian and military applications for the Italian Space Agency (ASI) and the Italian Ministry of Defence.
Key Points:
- **Launch Details:** Liftoff occurred on schedule at 9:09 p.m. EST on January 2, 2026 (0209 GMT on January 3) from Space Launch Complex 4 East at Vandenberg Space Force Base in California. The launch had been delayed multiple times from the originally scheduled December 27, 2025 date due to a hydraulic issue with the launch pad's hold-down clamps.
- **First Mission of 2026:** The CSG-FM3 launch was not just SpaceX's first mission of 2026, but the first orbital launch of the year globally. This continues SpaceX's pattern of leading the global launch industry, having completed a record-breaking 165 orbital missions in 2025—far more than any other commercial or governmental entity. The company is expected to aim for even higher launch cadence in 2026, with multiple missions already booked from both East and West Coast facilities.
- **Booster Performance and Landing:** SpaceX used Falcon 9 booster tail number B1081 for this mission, marking its 21st flight after previously launching NASA missions including Crew-7, PACE (Plankton, Aerosol, Cloud, ocean Ecosystem), and TRACERS. Approximately 8.5 minutes after liftoff, B1081 completed a successful touchdown at Landing Zone 4 at Vandenberg—the 31st landing at that specific site and the 554th Falcon booster landing to date.
- **Satellite Deployment:** The Falcon 9's second stage deployed the CSG-FM3 satellite into low Earth orbit approximately 13 minutes after leaving the launch pad (deployment at 2:22 UTC). About 59 minutes after separation from the launcher, Telespazio's Fucino Space Center in Abruzzo, Italy successfully acquired the satellite's signal and established control. The nominal Launch and Early Orbit Phase (LEOP) will last approximately 9 days, during which engineers conduct critical system checks and begin maneuvering the satellite to its operational orbit.
- **COSMO-SkyMed Program Overview:** COSMO-SkyMed (Constellation of Small Satellites for the Mediterranean basin Observation) is Italy's flagship Earth observation program, jointly funded by the Italian Ministry of Research, Italian Ministry of Defence, and conducted by the Italian Space Agency (ASI). It represents the largest Italian investment in space systems for Earth observation and is the world's first satellite constellation explicitly designed for dual-use purposes—serving both military intelligence/surveillance needs and civilian scientific/commercial applications simultaneously under appropriate resource-sharing regulations.
- **Current Constellation Status:** With CSG-FM3's successful launch, the COSMO-SkyMed system now comprises five operational satellites: two first-generation spacecraft (CSK-1 and CSK-2 from the original quartet) and three second-generation satellites (CSG-1 launched December 18, 2019; CSG-2 launched January 31, 2022; CSG-3 launched January 2, 2026). The complete second-generation constellation will eventually include four satellites (CSG-1, CSG-2, CSG-3, and CSG-4), progressively replacing the aging first-generation system while maintaining continuous operational capability.

Indian Army Creates Modern Warfare Force 'Bhairav' with Over 1 Lakh Drone Operatives

In the News: The Indian Army unveiled one of its most significant transformations in recent decades by creating a modern warfare force comprising over one lakh (100,000) trained drone operatives across all formations, alongside raising new technology-driven 'Bhairav' Special Forces battalions.

Key Points:

- **Massive Drone Operative Force:** The Indian Army has created a vast pool of over one lakh (100,000) trained drone operatives across its formations, marking one of the largest single military transformations undertaken by the force. Every soldier in the Bhairav battalions is trained to operate, deploy, and integrate drones in real combat scenarios, including targeting enemy bases and formations deep inside hostile territory.

- **Bhairav Special Forces Battalions:** The Bhairav battalions are new specialized units raised by Army Headquarters to meet the demands of contemporary and future warfare. Approximately 15 Bhairav battalions have already been raised and deployed across key formations on both the northern (China) and western (Pakistan) borders, with plans to expand to around 25 battalions in total in the near future.

- **Bridging Capability Gap:** The Bhairav battalions are specifically designed to bridge the operational gap between elite Para (Special Forces) and regular Infantry battalions, offering field commanders flexible, technology-enabled strike options.

- **Symbolism and Naming:** The name "Bhairav" itself carries cultural and spiritual significance. Bhairav is a fierce manifestation of Lord Shiva in Hindu mythology, associated with destruction of evil and protection.

Haryana to Launch India's First Hydrogen-Powered Train

In the News: India is poised to launch its first hydrogen-powered train on the Jind-Sonipat route in Haryana, with trial operations expected to begin on January 26, 2026 (Republic Day). Prime Minister Narendra Modi is anticipated to inaugurate this landmark green mobility project. The Northern Railway's ambitious initiative marks a historic milestone in India's journey toward sustainable transportation and represents a significant step in reducing Indian Railways' dependence on diesel traction while advancing the nation's zero-carbon emission goals.

Key Points:

- **Trial Launch Date:** The first trial run of India's hydrogen-powered train is expected to commence on January 26, 2026, coinciding with India's 78th Republic Day celebrations. Final preparations are underway by Indian Railways, the Research Designs and Standards Organisation (RDSO), and Spanish partner Green H. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to inaugurate the service, which will mark a watershed moment in India's green transportation revolution.

- **Route Details:** The hydrogen train will operate on a 90-kilometer (89-km according to some sources) stretch between Jind and Sonipat in Haryana, with six stations along the alignment. The journey takes approximately one hour.

- **World's Longest Hydrogen Train:** The trainset is described as the world's longest hydrogen-powered train, comprising 10 coaches total: two driving power cars (DPC) and eight passenger coaches. Each driving power car is rated at 1,200 kW (1,200 horsepower), delivering a combined output of 2,400 kW.

- **Maximum Speed Capability:** The hydrogen-powered train is designed to travel at speeds ranging from 110 to 150 kilometers per hour (kmph), ensuring fast and efficient travel between Jind and Sonipat.

- **Manufacturing and Design:** The train has been fully designed and developed within India under the Atmanirbhar Bharat (Self-Reliant India) initiative, as confirmed by Union Railways Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw. The coaches were manufactured at the prestigious Integral Coach Factory (ICF) in Chennai, showcasing indigenous technological capabilities. The trains were then shipped to Shakur Basti station in North Delhi for phased induction and system installations before final deployment to Jind.

- **Green Hydrogen Production:** The hydrogen is produced using electrochemical technology through water electrolysis, making it "green hydrogen" when powered by renewable energy. The facility requires approximately 40,000 liters of water per hour for hydrogen production.

Hubble Discovers Starless Dark Matter Cloud Near Messier 94

In the News: The Hubble Space Telescope has discovered an unusual starless dark matter cloud in the vicinity of the spiral galaxy Messier 94 (M94). This groundbreaking discovery challenges conventional understanding of galaxy formation and dark matter distribution, as the cloud exists in isolation without any visible stars, making it a rare example of dark matter detected independently of luminous matter.

Key Points:

- **Discovery Location:** The starless dark matter cloud was detected near Messier 94 (M94), a spiral galaxy located approximately 16 million light-years from Earth in the constellation Canes Venatici. Hubble's advanced observational capabilities enabled detection of gravitational effects from this invisible matter.
- **Dark Matter Composition:** Dark matter constitutes approximately 85% of the universe's total matter but does not emit, absorb, or reflect light, making it invisible to traditional telescopes. It can only be detected through its gravitational influence on visible matter and light.
- **Unique Characteristics:** The cloud is remarkably unusual because it contains dark matter without any associated stars or visible galaxies, contradicting typical patterns where dark matter halos surround luminous galaxies. This isolated configuration provides rare insights into dark matter's independent existence.
- **Detection Method:** Hubble identified the cloud through gravitational lensing effects, where the dark matter's gravitational field bends and distorts light from background objects. This technique allows astronomers to map dark matter distribution even when no visible matter is present.
- **Messier 94 Galaxy:** M94 is a grand design spiral galaxy with a prominent ring structure, classified as a Seyfert galaxy with an active galactic nucleus. The proximity of the starless cloud to M94 raises questions about potential gravitational interactions or shared formation history.

ENVIRONMENT

India's Largest Inland Rainbow Trout Farm Launched in Telangana
In the News: Union Minister of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying Rajiv Ranjan Singh (also known as Lalan Singh) inaugurated India's largest integrated inland rainbow trout farm and research institute in Kandukur Mandal, Ranga Reddy District, Telangana. Established by SmartGreen Aquaculture (SGA), a Hyderabad-based startup, this state-of-the-art facility marks a watershed moment in Indian aquaculture by successfully demonstrating that high-value cold-water species like rainbow trout can be farmed year-round in tropical climates using advanced Recirculating Aquaculture System (RAS) technology.
Key Points:
- **Official Inauguration:** Union Minister Rajiv Ranjan Singh inaugurated the SmartGreen Aquaculture Farm and Research Institute on January 5, 2026, following a general body meeting in Hyderabad..
- **Breaking Geographical Barriers:** The facility represents India's first commercial-scale tropical RAS-based rainbow trout farm, conclusively demonstrating that premium cold-water species can thrive even in warmer regions like the Deccan Plateau.
- **Facility Location and Scale:** Located at Kandukur Mandal in Ranga Reddy District, Telangana, the integrated facility comprises a hatchery spread across 5 acres and a grow-out facility covering 2 acres.
- **Recirculating Aquaculture System (RAS) Technology:** The facility is fully based on sustainable RAS technology, which enables year-round trout production in a controlled, biosecure indoor environment. Unlike traditional open-water farming, RAS operates as an inland freshwater system that continuously recycles and treats water through advanced filtration.
- **About Rainbow Trout:** Rainbow trout (Oncorhynchus mykiss) is a high-value cold-water fish species that normally thrives in cool, well-oxygenated waters with temperatures between 10-15°C. In India, rainbow trout farming has traditionally been concentrated in Himalayan and hill states including Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Arunachal Pradesh, and Sikkim, where cold, well-oxygenated water from snow-fed streams and rivers provides natural habitat.

10 Years of Paris Agreement
In the News: The world marked the 10th anniversary of the Paris Agreement, a landmark global climate accord adopted by 195 countries at COP21 in Paris on December 12, 2015. The decade since has witnessed both significant progress in clean energy transitions and sobering realities about the pace of climate action, with global temperatures projected to exceed the Agreement's 1.5°C target within the next decade despite unprecedented growth in renewable energy.
Key Points:
- **Historic Adoption:** The Paris Agreement was adopted on December 12, 2015, at the 21st Conference of the Parties (COP21) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Paris, France. It was negotiated by 196 parties and entered into force on November 4, 2016. As of 2025, 195 UNFCCC member states are parties to the agreement, making it nearly universal in scope.

- **Global Stocktake Mechanism:** Article 14 establishes a Global Stocktake every five years to assess collective progress toward the Agreement's goals. The first Global Stocktake concluded at COP28 in Dubai (2023), calling on governments to accelerate the transition away from fossil fuels to renewable energy in their next round of climate commitments.
- **Sobering Temperature Projections:** On the 10th anniversary, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Emissions Gap Report (November 2025) projects that global temperatures will likely exceed 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels within the next decade (early 2030s). Current century projections show temperature rise between 2.3°C and 2.5°C, while projections based on current policies indicate 2.8°C warming by 2100.
- **Net Zero Pledges Progress:** When the Paris Agreement was adopted in 2015, no countries had pledged to cut emissions to net zero. By 2025, approximately 70% of global greenhouse gas emissions are covered by net-zero pledges. Countries have moved from a patchwork of targets to economy-wide, absolute emission-reduction goals, representing significant policy evolution.
- **COP30 Outcomes (November 2025):** The UN Climate Change Conference held in Belém, Brazil, avoided total failure but produced what experts called an "unambitious last-ditch deal" that "backpedaled on climate action." A proposal to start work on a roadmap to transition away from fossil fuels failed due to opposition from nations heavily reliant on fossil fuel production. The Trump administration sent no formal delegation.

Keyi Panyor to Become India's First Bio-Happy District

In the News: The newly formed Keyi Panyor district in Arunachal Pradesh is set to become India's first Bio-Happy District, marking a pioneering experiment in integrating biodiversity conservation with human well-being. This initiative, led by the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation in collaboration with the district administration, revives the concept of "Biohappiness" coined by legendary agricultural scientist M.S. Swaminathan, aiming to build a sustainable development model rooted in ecology, livelihoods, and public health.

Key Points:

- **Historic Achievement:** Keyi Panyor district in Arunachal Pradesh has been designated as India's first Bio-Happy District, setting a precedent for ecological and sustainable development models that harmonize biodiversity conservation with community well-being across the country.
- **Location and Significance:** Keyi Panyor officially became the 26th district of Arunachal Pradesh on March 1, 2024, and is located in the eastern part of India. The district is known for its rich biodiversity, pristine forests, and indigenous communities, making it an ideal setting for testing this bottom-up development approach.
- **Biohappiness Concept:** The initiative revives the concept of "Biohappiness" coined by M.S. Swaminathan, which refers to a state of well-being achieved when biodiversity is conserved and sustainably used to improve nutrition, health, and income, fostering harmony between people and nature.
- **Implementing Agency:** The project is being implemented by the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation in collaboration with the Keyi Panyor district administration. Soumya Swaminathan, Chairperson of the Foundation, is leading the initiative to assess livelihoods, agro-biodiversity, and ecological systems within the district.
- **Focus Areas:** The Bio-Happy District project will study local farming systems, traditional knowledge, and biodiversity-rich landscapes of the region. The findings are expected to guide policies on sustainable rural development, particularly in ecologically sensitive regions.

APPOINTMENTS

Justice A Muhamed Mustaque Appointed Chief Justice of Sikkim High Court

In the News: The Central Government notified the appointment of Justice A. Muhamed Mustaque, a judge of the Kerala High Court, as the Chief Justice of the Sikkim High Court. Justice Mustaque was sworn in on January 5, 2026, becoming the 24th Chief Justice of the Sikkim High Court. The appointment follows a recommendation by the Supreme Court Collegium headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant.

Key Points:

- **Official Appointment Notification**: On January 3, 2026, Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Law and Justice Arjun Ram Meghwal announced that the President of India, in exercise of powers conferred by Article 217(1) of the

Constitution and in consultation with the Chief Justice of India, appointed Justice Muhamed Mustaque Ayumantakath as the Chief Justice of the Sikkim High Court with effect from the date he assumes charge of his office.

- **Supreme Court Collegium Recommendation**: The appointment was approved following a recommendation made on December 18, 2025, by the Supreme Court Collegium headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant. The collegium proposed the elevation of Justice A. Muhamed Mustaque from the Kerala High Court to serve as Chief Justice of the Sikkim High Court.
- **Oath-Taking Ceremony**: Justice A. Muhamed Mustaque was sworn in as the Chief Justice of Sikkim High Court on January 5, 2026 (Sunday). Sikkim Governor Om Prakash Mathur administered the oath of office at a function held at the Lok Bhawan in Gangtok
- **Becomes 24th Chief Justice**: Justice Mustaque became the 24th Chief Justice of the Sikkim High Court, succeeding Justice Biswanath Somadder, who retired recently. Justice Meenakshi Madan Rai was serving as the Acting Chief Justice of the Sikkim High Court before Justice Mustaque's appointment.
- **Acting Chief Justice of Kerala**: Justice Mustaque held the position of Acting Chief Justice of the Kerala High Court from July 5 to September 21, 2024, bringing valuable experience in leading a High Court to his new role.

A.K. Balasubrahmanian Appointed AERB Chairman 2026   (Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB))

In the News: The Government of India appointed A.K. Balasubrahmanian as the new Chairman of the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB). This appointment marks a significant leadership transition in India's nuclear regulatory framework, with Balasubrahmanian bringing extensive experience in nuclear safety and regulatory oversight to the position.

Key Points:

- **New Appointment**: A.K. Balasubrahmanian has been designated as the Chairman of the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB), the apex regulatory body for nuclear and radiation safety in India.
- **About AERB**: The Atomic Energy Regulatory Board was constituted in 1983 by the Government of India under the Atomic Energy Act, 1962. It functions as an independent regulatory authority responsible for ensuring the safe use of ionizing radiation and nuclear energy in the country.
- **AERB's Mandate**: The board regulates nuclear facilities, radiation facilities, and radioactive sources to protect public health, worker safety, and the environment. It issues licenses, conducts safety reviews, and enforces compliance with nuclear safety standards.
- **Regulatory Framework**: AERB operates under the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) administratively but maintains functional independence in regulatory decisions. It formulates safety codes, guides, and standards for various nuclear and radiation facilities.
- **Headquarters**: AERB is headquartered in Mumbai, Maharashtra, with regional offices supporting regulatory activities across India's nuclear installations.

IMPORTANT DAYS

9th Siddha Day 2026: Celebrating India's Ancient Medical Heritage

In the News: Vice President of India Shri C.P. Radhakrishnan inaugurated the 9th Siddha Day celebrations at Kalaivanar Arangam, Chennai, organized by the Ministry of AYUSH in association with the National Institute of Siddha (NIS), Central Council for Research in Siddha (CCRS), and the Directorate of Indian Medicine and Homoeopathy, Government of Tamil Nadu.

Key Points:

- **Event Details:** The 9th Siddha Day celebrations were held on January 3, 2026, at Kalaivanar Arangam in Chennai, Tamil Nadu. While the actual celebration event took place on January 3, National Siddha Day is officially observed annually on January 6 to mark the birth anniversary of Sage Agathiyar.
- **Theme: "Siddha for Global Health":** The 2026 celebration's theme emphasized the relevance and potential of the ancient Siddha system in addressing contemporary global health challenges. The theme highlights Siddha medicine's role in preventive health, holistic wellness, and sustainable healthcare solutions, positioning this traditional Indian medical system as a valuable contributor to worldwide health frameworks alongside modern medicine.
- **Siddha Day Official Recognition:** In 2017, the Ministry of AYUSH approved the annual observance of Agathiyar's birthday (January 6) as National Siddha Day. The first-ever National Siddha Day was observed on January 4, 2018. marking the 9th edition of these national celebrations honoring this ancient medical tradition.

- **Holistic Philosophy:** The Vice President highlighted Siddha medicine's strong philosophical foundations and scientific depth, emphasizing its holistic integration of body, mind, and nature. He noted that this holistic approach to harmony among physical, mental, and environmental dimensions is particularly essential in today's world characterized by lifestyle diseases, stress-related disorders, environmental challenges, and the fast-paced modern lifestyle that often disrupts natural balance.

World Hindi Day 2026: Date, History, Significance, Theme & Quotes (Vishwa Hindi Diwas)

In the News: World Hindi Day (Vishwa Hindi Diwas) is observed annually on January 10 to promote the Hindi language globally. In 2026, this day continues to celebrate Hindi's rich literary heritage, cultural significance, and its role in uniting millions of speakers worldwide.

Key Points:

- **Date of Observance**: World Hindi Day is celebrated on January 10 every year. The day marks the anniversary of the first World Hindi Conference held in Nagpur, Maharashtra, in 1975.
- **Historical Background**: The first World Hindi Conference was inaugurated by then-Prime Minister Indira Gandhi on January 10, 1975. The event brought together Hindi scholars, writers, and enthusiasts from around 122 countries to discuss the promotion and development of the Hindi language globally.
- **Official Recognition**: World Hindi Day was first officially celebrated on January 10, 2006, following a decision by former Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh's government to commemorate the language's global significance.
- **Distinction from National Hindi Day**: World Hindi Day (January 10) differs from National Hindi Day (September 14). National Hindi Day commemorates the adoption of Hindi in the Devanagari script as one of India's official languages by the Constituent Assembly on September 14, 1949.
- **Language Statistics**: Hindi is spoken by approximately 600 million people worldwide, making it one of the most widely spoken languages globally. It is the official language of India and is recognized in countries like Fiji, Mauritius, and Trinidad and Tobago.

STATIC

Why Oxford University Press had to apologise over a two decade-old book on Chhatrapati Shivaji Mahar

In the News: Oxford University Press (OUP) issued an apology and withdrew a book about Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj following widespread criticism over alleged derogatory references to the revered 17th-century Maratha warrior king. The book, originally published over two decades ago, sparked outrage among political leaders, historians, and citizens who deemed certain passages as disrespectful to the iconic historical figure.

Key Points:

- **The Controversy**: The book in question contained passages that were perceived as derogatory and disrespectful towards Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, one of India's most celebrated historical figures and the founder of the Maratha Empire in the 17th century.
- **Public Outcry**: The controversy erupted after social media users and political leaders highlighted objectionable content in the book. Maharashtra-based politicians, activists, and citizens expressed strong disapproval, demanding action against the publisher.
- **Oxford University Press Response**: OUP India issued a formal apology acknowledging that certain content in the book was inappropriate and hurt sentiments. The publisher announced the immediate withdrawal of the book from circulation and digital platforms.
- **Historical Significance of Shivaji Maharaj**: Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj (1630-1680) is revered across India, particularly in Maharashtra, as a symbol of valor, strategic genius, and progressive governance. He is celebrated for establishing Hindavi Swarajya (self-rule) and his resistance against Mughal and Adilshahi forces.