



Daily Current Affairs

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BANKING, FINANCE & BUSINESS

Central Board of Indirect Taxes & Customs Secretary Surjit Bhujabal Launches ICEGATE–LPMS Integration at Agartala ICP, Enhancing Customs Digitisation

- **Surjit Bhujabal, Special Secretary & Member (Customs), Central Board of Indirect Taxes & Customs (CBIC),** under the **Ministry of Finance (MoF)**, inaugurated the Indian Customs Electronic Gateway – Land Port Management System (**ICEGATE – LPMS**) integration at the **Integrated Check Post (ICP), Agartala, Tripura**.
- The **ICEGATE–LPMS** integration enables **real-time, two-way digital data exchange** between the **ICEGATE** and the **LPMS**.
- The system covers key **customs processes** and documents, including **Bill of Entry, Shipping Bill, Out of Charge (OOC), Let Export Order (LEO),** and **cargo movement updates** such as **slot booking, gate-in,** and **gate-out**.
- The integration supports **coordinated and data-driven border management**, helping to **reduce transaction costs, improve compliance,** and ensure **targeted risk-based checks**.
- By minimizing disruption to legitimate cross-border trade, the initiative enhances **efficiency and transparency** at land ports.
- The project reflects strong collaboration between **CBIC** and the **Land Ports Authority of India (LPAI)**.
- The **ICEGATE–LPMS** integration is a key step towards making India's trade and border infrastructure **future-ready, digitally streamlined,** and **technology-driven**.



Tripura Gramin Bank Becomes India's First Regional Rural Bank to Launch Fully Solar-Powered Mobile ATM Van 'TGB on Wheels'

- **Tripura Gramin Bank (TGB)** created a national milestone by becoming the **1st Regional Rural Bank (RRB)** in India to introduce India's first **fully solar-powered mobile Automatic Teller Machine (ATM) van**, named **'TGB on Wheels'**.
- The initiative represents a significant step towards **sustainable, eco-friendly, and inclusive banking services**, particularly benefiting rural and remote areas of the country.
- The pioneering **ATM Van initiative** of TGB was formally inaugurated in **July 2023** by Union Finance Minister **Nirmala Sitharaman** under the **Ministry of Finance (MoF)** during her visit to Tripura.
- **TGB on Wheels** provides **uninterrupted mobile ATM and banking services**, ensuring access even in regions with limited or **unreliable electricity supply**.



- The project was launched with the support of the **National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD)**, highlighting **institutional backing** for rural financial inclusion.
- At present, **Tripura Gramin Bank** operates **3 solar-powered ATM vans** across Tripura, strengthening **last-mile banking connectivity**.
- For this innovative and sustainable banking initiative, **TGB** was honoured with the prestigious **SKOCH Silver Award**, recognizing excellence in **governance and innovation**.

National Statistics Office Reports Retail Inflation Rises to Three-Month High of 1.33% in December 2025

- The **National Statistics Office (NSO)** under the **Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI)** released the **Consumer Price Index (CPI)** for rural, urban, and combined segments for **December 2025**.
- India's **retail inflation (CPI)** rose to a **three-month high of 1.33%** in December 2025, up from 0.71% in November 2025, while remaining **below the RBI's lower tolerance threshold of 2%** for the fourth consecutive month.
- **Food inflation**, measured by the **All India Consumer Food Price Index (CFPI)**, showed **negative growth** for the **7th consecutive month**, declining by **120 basis points** from -3.91% in November to **-2.71%** in December 2025.
- **Rural food inflation** stood at **-3.08%**, while **urban food inflation** was **-2.09%** in December 2025.
- **Core inflation**, which **excludes volatile items like food and energy**, increased to a **27-month high of 4.45%** in December 2025, up from 4.23% in November 2025.
- Among major states, **Kerala** recorded the **highest YoY inflation at 9.49%**, followed by Karnataka (2.99%), Andhra Pradesh (2.71%), Tamil Nadu (2.67%), and Jammu & Kashmir (2.26%).
- The data highlights **controlled retail inflation** at the national level, **persistent negative food inflation**, and **rising core inflation** pressures across India.



State Bank of India to Facilitate India-Israel Bilateral Trade Settlements in INR

- **State Bank of India (SBI)**, the only Indian bank with a branch in **Israel**, plans to facilitate bilateral trade between India and Israel in **Indian Rupees (INR)**.
- Trade settlements will be done through the **Special Rupee Vostro Account (SRVA)** mechanism, as permitted by the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)**, allowing exporters and importers to settle trade in **INR**.
- **SBI's Tel Aviv branch**, opened in **2007**, has remained fully operational despite the pandemic and ongoing regional conflicts, demonstrating strong resilience.



- The bank will assist Indian workers in Israel by enabling **remittances** to India through **NRI accounts** and **fintech partnerships**.
- The initiative aligns with deepening economic ties, including progress towards an **India–Israel Free Trade Agreement (FTA)** and the recently signed **Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT)**.
- SBI’s plan supports **rupee-denominated trade settlements**, allowing Israeli exporters and importers to receive and make payments in **INR** through **SRVA accounts** linked to invoices.
- The **Tel Aviv branch** has secured all necessary **regulatory approvals** and actively engages with stakeholders, including the **Israel-India Chamber of Commerce**, to promote awareness of **INR trade settlements**.
- SBI is expanding services for the growing **Indian workforce** in Israel, particularly in **construction and agriculture**, facilitating **NRI accounts** and exploring partnerships with **fintech firms** and **local banks**.
- The rupee trade initiative coincides with intensified **diplomatic engagement** between India and Israel, including high-level visits and discussions between **Narendra Modi** and **Benjamin Netanyahu**.
- SBI’s expanded role positions it as a key **financial bridge**, supporting the next phase of **India–Israel economic cooperation** and promoting closer **financial integration**.

India Registers 49 Cryptocurrency Exchanges with FIU-IND in FY 2024–25, Majority Domestic

- **49 cryptocurrency exchanges** were registered with India’s **Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU-IND)** during **FY 2024–25**, most of them domestic.
- All crypto exchanges in India were brought under the **Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA)** framework in **2023**, making them **reporting entities** for **anti-money-laundering (AML)** and **counter-terror financing (CTF)**.
- Crypto exchanges are legally classified as **Virtual Digital Assets (VDAs)**, and the trading platforms are designated as **VDA Service Providers (VDA SPs)**.
- **VDA SPs** are required to report **suspicious transactions (STRs)**, disclose **beneficial ownership**, and monitor wallet activities, including **initial coin offerings (ICOs)** and transfers between **hosted and unhosted wallets**.
- **FIU** is the **single authority** responsible for **registering and monitoring** all crypto exchanges in India for **AML compliance**.
- As of **March 2025**, **45 onshore exchanges** and **4 offshore exchanges** were registered with **FIU**, enabling them to operate under India’s compliance framework.
- During **FY25**, the **FIU** imposed penalties of **₹28 crore** on certain non-compliant crypto exchanges.

Total 49 crypto currency exchanges registered with FIU

These exchanges were brought under India's anti-money laundering regime (Prevention of Money Laundering Act - PMLA) reporting framework in 2023.



Clear Look

- They must also report suspicious transactions.
- It helps prevent misuse of the financial system.
- India has designated the FIU as the single authority responsible for registering and monitoring VDA SPs.
- During FY25, the FIU imposed penalties totaling ₹28 crore on certain non-compliant crypto exchanges.

Key Points:

- **49** crypto currency exchanges registered with FIU.
- **45** onshore exchanges and **4** offshore exchanges.
- **₹28 crore** in penalties imposed during FY25.

- The regulatory framework aims to curb misuse of cryptocurrencies for **scams, fraud, hawala, terror financing**, illegal gambling, and child exploitation.

Reserve Bank of India Grants Innoviti Approval to Operate as Online and Offline Payment Aggregator

- **Innoviti Technologies Private Limited**, a payments-centric retail **Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) platform**, received a **Certificate of Authorization** from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to operate as a **Payment Aggregator (PA)** under the **Payments and Settlement Systems (PSS) Act, 2007** across India.
- The **RBI authorisation** allows **Innoviti** to manage both **online and offline (in-store) payment transactions**, expanding its **operational scope nationwide**.
- **Innoviti** was initially authorised in **March 2024** as an **online Payment Aggregator**, and the **new licence** now covers **physical retail payments** as well.
- The **expanded PA licence** enables **seamless, secure and compliant payment processing** for **enterprises** and **Small & Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs)**.
- **Innoviti** operates India's largest **offline payments platform**, branded **Innoviti UniPay**, serving leading **enterprise clients** across the country.



India's Insurance Penetration Stagnates at 3.7% in FY25, Half of Global Average

- **India's insurance penetration** remained stagnant at **3.7% in FY25**, which is almost half of the **global average of 7.3%** in 2024, indicating low insurance coverage in India.
- **Life insurance penetration** declined slightly from **2.8% in FY24** to **2.7% in FY25**, while **non-life insurance penetration** remained unchanged at **1%**, according to **IRDAI** data.
- **Global life insurance penetration** was **3%** and **non-life** was **4.3%** in 2024, showing wider coverage internationally.
- **Insurance density** (per capita premium) in India rose marginally to **\$97 in FY25** from \$95 in FY24 — **life insurance density** increased from \$70 to **\$72**, while **non-life** stayed at **\$25**.
- **Global insurance density** was **\$943 in 2024**, with **\$388** for life insurance and **\$555** for non-life, highlighting India's lag in insurance spending.
- **Insurance penetration** measures insurance premiums as a **percentage of GDP**, while **insurance density** measures **premium per person**; both indicate insurance sector development.
- **Swiss Re** projects life insurance premiums in India to grow slowly at **3.5% in 2025** due to tax rules, costs, and surrender norms, before improving to **5.7% in 2026**.



- Despite challenges, India's **life insurance industry** recorded strong performance in **FY25**, with total **premium income of ₹8.86 lakh crore**, showing **6.73% growth** during the year.

Amazon Pay Launches Fixed Deposit Services in Partnership with 7 Banks and NBFCs

- **Amazon Pay** has launched **fixed deposit (FD)** services on its fintech app as part of its expansion into **fixed-income assets**.
- The platform has partnered with **two NBFCs** – **Shriram Finance** and **Bajaj Finance** – and **five banks**, including **Shivalik Small Finance Bank, Suryoday Small Finance Bank, South Indian Bank, Slice, and Utkarsh Small Finance Bank**.
- Users can start investing in FDs with a **minimum amount of ₹1,000** and access multiple institutions **without opening separate bank accounts**.
- Deposits made through the app are **insured up to ₹5 lakh** per depositor per bank under **DICGC** (Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation) rules.
- The move reflects a trend where **fintech platforms** act as **distribution partners** for banks and NBFCs, enabling **deposit mobilisation** and earning **commission-based income**.
- Amazon Pay's FD initiative allows users to invest in **fixed income assets** through partner banks and NBFCs, offering a convenient and **insured investment option**.
- Fintechs like **Stable Money, Super.money, MobiKwik**, and others have similarly partnered with **regulated entities** to extend FD offerings in India.
- **Take rates** on fixed deposits for fintechs are modest and depend on **deposit size** and **tenure** as per arrangements with partner banks.
- This initiative strengthens **Amazon Pay's position** in financial services **beyond digital payments**, supporting **retail investment penetration** in India.



NATIONAL AND STATE NEWS

Karnataka Cabinet Approves Statewide Rollout of 'Akka Pade' Scheme and Clears Multiple Development Projects

- The **Karnataka Cabinet** has approved the **statewide implementation of the 'Akka Pade' scheme** across all **31 districts and five police commissionerates**, in coordination with the **Home Department**.
- The decision aims to **strengthen prevention of atrocities against minor girls and women**, including **curbing child marriages**, by extending the scheme beyond its pilot phase.

The Karnataka Cabinet has approved the statewide implementation of the 'Akka Pade' scheme across all 31 districts and five police commissionerates, in collaboration with the Home Department. The decision is aimed at strengthening efforts to prevent atrocities against minor girls and women, including child marriages, by extending the initiative beyond its pilot phase.

'Akka Pade' Scheme to Be Implemented Across Karnataka
Speaking to reporters after the Cabinet meeting, Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister HK Patil said the 'Akka Pade' scheme was initially launched on a trial basis in select districts to curb child marriages and protect minor girls and women from abuse and exploitation. Owing to its success in achieving these objectives, the government has now decided to roll out the scheme across the state, he said.

- **Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister H K Patil** stated that the **‘Akka Pade’ scheme** was initially launched on a **trial basis in select districts**.
- The scheme focuses on **preventing child marriages** and **protecting minor girls and women from abuse and exploitation**.
- Following its **successful outcomes**, the Cabinet approved its **statewide rollout across Karnataka**.
- The Cabinet approved **27 development projects** across various sectors.
- Approval was given for the **construction of a silk market in Mysuru** at a cost of **₹20 crore**, with **loan assistance from the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development**.
- The Cabinet cleared the establishment of a **mega dairy in Kalaburagi** at an estimated cost of **₹50 crore**.
- A **multi-village drinking water supply scheme** worth **₹66 crore** was approved.
- The drinking water project will benefit **291 villages in Gundlupete taluk of Chamarajanagar district** and **95 residential areas in Bantwal taluk of Dakshina Kannada district**.
- Administrative approval was granted for the **purchase of a soap-making machine for Karnataka Soaps and Detergents Limited, Bengaluru**, at a cost of **₹17.70 crore**.
- The proposal to set up a **50 Tonnes Per Day Bio-Compressed Natural Gas plant under the Public–Private Partnership model** at the **Kolar Agricultural Produce Market Committee**, costing **₹24.96 crore**, was **dropped**.
- Instead, **green waste generated at the Kolar market** will be supplied to the **150 Tonnes Per Day Compressed Bio-Gas plant** being set up by **Gas Authority of India Limited in Kolar**.
- The Cabinet accorded **post-facto approval** to a government order issued in **December 2025** for the **construction of rural health and wellness centres** under the **Prime Minister–Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission scheme**.
- The project period is **2024–2026**, with an estimated cost of **₹127.40 crore**.
- Approval was granted for the **purchase of machinery and furniture** for the **new hospital and district hospital of Nandi Medical College and Research Institute, Chikkaballapur**, at a cost of **₹40 crore**.
- The Cabinet cleared the **construction of a taluk panchayat office building in Holenarasipur town** at a cost of **₹12 crore**.
- It sanctioned **7.5 guntas of land in Kallu Kote village, Sira taluk, Tumakuru district**, and **10 guntas of land in Sirwar, Raichur district**, to the **Congress Bhavan Trust, Bengaluru**, for construction of **Congress Bhavans**.
- The Cabinet approved the **establishment of a Government Tool Room and Training Centre multi-skill development centre at Gulbarga University**, at a cost of **₹66.75 crore**, by the **Kalyana Karnataka Region Development Board**.
- An amount of **₹10.60 crore** was sanctioned for providing an **underground drainage system in Haliyal town**.
- Approval was given for the **construction of an administrative building at the University of Agricultural Sciences, Mandya**.

- The Cabinet cleared the **allotment of land for Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation in Balepuni village, Dakshina Kannada district**, for operating **electric buses**.
- Land was also allotted in **Mada village, Sampaje hobli**, for establishing a **cultural and sports centre for the Arebhashe Gowda community**.

About Karnataka:

- Capital: Bengaluru
- Chief Minister: Siddaramaiah
- Governor: Thawarchand Gehlot
- National Parks: Bandipur National Park, Nagarhole National Park, Kudremukh National Park, Anshi (Kali) National Park, Bannerghatta National Park
- Wildlife Sanctuaries: Dandeli Wildlife Sanctuary, Bhadra Wildlife Sanctuary, Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary, Brahmagiri Wildlife Sanctuary, Pushpagiri Wildlife Sanctuary, Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary

Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia Launches Speed Post 24 and Speed Post 48 Services

- **Union Minister for Communications Jyotiraditya Scindia** announced the launch of two new India Post services: **Speed Post 24** and **Speed Post 48**.
- These services ensure **time-bound delivery within 24 hours and 48 hours**, respectively.
- The announcement was made during a programme held at **Pichhor in Shivpuri district of Madhya Pradesh**.
- The initiative is being seen as a **major step towards modernisation of postal services** in India.
- According to the Minister, **Speed Post 24 and Speed Post 48** will set a new benchmark for **punctual, reliable and fast delivery** across the country.
- During the event, **Jyotiraditya Scindia inaugurated the renovated Pichhor sub-post office**, developed at a cost of **₹2 lakh**.
- He also **laid the foundation stone and conducted the ground-breaking ceremony** for a **new sub-post office building** at an estimated cost of **₹1 crore 11 lakh**.
- These initiatives aim to strengthen **postal infrastructure** and improve **service delivery at the grassroots level**.

Union Minister for Communications Jyotiraditya Scindia has announced two new India Post services, Speed Post 24 and Speed Post 48, which will ensure delivery within 24 and 48 hours. This announcement, made through a programme at Pichhor in Shivpuri district of Madhya Pradesh, is being considered an important step towards the modernisation of postal services. Speaking on the occasion, Scindia said that Speed Post 24 and Speed Post 48 will set a new standard of punctual, reliable and fast delivery.

In fact, the Central Minister inaugurated the renovated Pichhor sub-office at a cost of 2 lakh rupees and laid the foundation stone and conducted ground-breaking ceremonies for the proposed new sub-office building at a cost of 1 crore 11 lakh rupees. On December 28, 2025, Mr Scindia said that the Department of Telecommunications (DoT), through the National Centre for Communication Security (NCCS), has rolled out a set of transformative reforms to bolster indigenous manufacturing and testing capabilities.

Andhra Pradesh Approves Dagadarthi Greenfield Airport in Nellore District

- The **Andhra Pradesh Cabinet** has approved the **Dagadarthi Greenfield Airport project** in **Nellore district**.
- With this approval, **Dagadarthi will become the 8th airport in Andhra Pradesh**, strengthening the state's aviation network.

- The project aims to improve **regional connectivity**, boost **logistics and industrial growth**, and integrate **air transport with ports and highways**.
- The **Dagadarthi airport** is strategically located with strong connectivity to **national highways, industrial clusters, and major ports**.
- It is close to **Krishnapatnam Port** and **Ramayapatnam Port**, enhancing **port-led development and exports**.
- Proximity to industrial hubs such as **KRIS City** and **Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Limited Special Economic Zones** positions the airport as a key driver of **manufacturing, agri-logistics and services-led growth** in southern Andhra Pradesh.
- The project has received **in-principle clearance from the Ministry of Civil Aviation**.
- The state government has issued a **Request for Proposal** to invite **private players** for development, operation and maintenance.
- The airport will be developed under a **long-term concession framework**, following a **public–private partnership model**.
- The airport will be developed in **multiple phases** over an area of **1,332.80 acres**.
- In **Phase 1**, the airport will have a capacity of **1.4 million passengers per annum**.
- In the long term, the airport is scalable up to **15 million passengers per year**.
- The **master plan includes a future cargo facility**, aligned with growing **industrial production and port-based trade activity**.
- The Dagadarthi Greenfield Airport is expected to act as a **catalyst for regional economic transformation**.
- The project will strengthen **Andhra Pradesh’s position as an investment-ready and export-oriented state**, improving **domestic and global connectivity**.
- **Key facts at a glance** include approval by the **Andhra Pradesh Cabinet**, location in **Nellore district**, classification as a **Greenfield airport**, status as the **8th airport in the state**, **Phase 1 capacity of 1.4 million passengers per year**, and **long-term capacity of up to 15 million passengers annually**.



About Andhra Pradesh:

- Chief Minister: N. Chandrababu Naidu
- Governor: S. Abdul Nazeer
- Capital: Amaravati
- National Parks: Sri Venkateswara National Park, Papikonda National Park
- Wildlife Sanctuaries: Coringa Wildlife Sanctuary, Pulicat Lake Bird Sanctuary, Kambalakonda Wildlife Sanctuary, Rollapadu Wildlife Sanctuary, Krishna Wildlife Sanctuary

India to Host 28th Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth (CSPOC) in New Delhi

- **India** will host the **28th Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth (CSPOC)** in **New Delhi**.
- The **three-day conference** will begin on **15 January 2026** and conclude on **16 January 2026**.
- The event will bring together **Speakers and Presiding Officers from over 60 Commonwealth countries and semi-autonomous legislatures**.
- Hosting CSPOC highlights **India's growing stature in parliamentary democracy, democratic values and institutional governance**.
- The **Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth (CSPOC)** is an important **international parliamentary forum**.
- Its primary objective is to promote **knowledge-sharing, mutual learning and cooperation** among Commonwealth legislatures.
- CSPOC aims to **strengthen parliamentary institutions** and deepen understanding of **parliamentary democracy in its diverse forms**.
- For the **28th CSPOC**, **Om Birla, Speaker of the Lok Sabha**, will serve as the **Chairperson of the Conference**, underlining India's leadership role.
- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** will formally **inaugurate the Conference on 15 January 2026**.
- The inauguration will take place at **Samvidhan Sadan (formerly Parliament House)**, adding strong **constitutional and symbolic significance**.
- The venue reflects **India's democratic traditions and constitutional legacy**.
- The Prime Minister will also **interact informally with Speakers and Presiding Officers**, promoting **parliamentary diplomacy and goodwill**.
- The Conference will feature **high-level sessions** addressing **contemporary challenges in parliamentary functioning**.
- A major theme will be the **use of Artificial Intelligence in Parliament**, focusing on improving **legislative efficiency, transparency and research support**.
- Other key topics include:
 - Impact of social media on parliamentarians
 - Sharing best practices and innovative ideas
 - Enhancing public understanding of Parliament
 - Ensuring security, health and well-being of Members of Parliament
- These discussions reflect the **evolving needs of democratic institutions in the digital age**.
- On the **first day**, a meeting of the **CSPOC Standing Committee** will be held.
- **Om Birla**, as Chairperson of the **28th CSPOC**, will **preside over the Standing Committee meeting**.
- The Standing Committee plays a key role in ensuring **agenda-setting, continuity and institutional memory** of the CSPOC process.

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi will inaugurate the 28th Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth (CSPOC) on 15th January 2026 at 10:30 AM at the Central Hall of Samvidhan Sadan, Parliament House Complex, New Delhi. Prime Minister will also address the gathering on the occasion.

The Conference will be chaired by the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Shri Om Birla and will be attended by 41 Speakers and Presiding Officers of 42 Commonwealth countries and 4 semi-autonomous parliaments from different parts of the world.

The Conference will deliberate on a wide range of contemporary parliamentary issues, including the role of Speakers and Presiding Officers in maintaining strong democratic institutions, the use of artificial intelligence in parliamentary functioning, the impact of social media on Members of Parliament, innovative strategies to enhance public understanding of Parliament and citizen participation beyond voting, among others.

- Hosting the **28th CSPOC** reinforces India's position as the **world's largest democracy** and a strong proponent of **parliamentary values, inclusivity and dialogue**.
- It strengthens India's engagement with the **Commonwealth**, a grouping of diverse political systems united by **democratic principles**.
- For the Commonwealth, CSPOC provides a crucial platform to address **shared governance challenges**, adapt to **technological change**, and enhance **democratic resilience**.
- After the conclusion of the Conference, **Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla** will formally **hand over the Chair of CSPOC** to **Lindsay Hoyle, Speaker of the United Kingdom House of Commons**.
- This handover reflects the **rotational, cooperative and inclusive nature** of the CSPOC framework.

India Launches Logo and Website for BRICS Presidency 2026

- **India** has officially begun preparations for its **BRICS Presidency 2026** by launching the **official logo and dedicated website**.
- The announcement was made by **External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar**, marking the **formal start of India's chairship preparations**.
- The move reflects India's vision for a **people-centric, inclusive and development-oriented presidency** amid rising **global uncertainty**.
- India's **BRICS Presidency 2026** aims to harness the **collective potential of BRICS nations for global welfare and shared development**.
- According to **S. Jaishankar**, India will assume the chairship at a significant milestone, as **BRICS completes 20 years in 2026**.
- Over time, BRICS has evolved into a **major cooperation platform for emerging markets and developing economies**.
- India's approach will focus on **people-centric development, dialogue and practical cooperation**, while adapting to **changing global realities and expanded BRICS membership**.
- The theme of India's BRICS Presidency 2026 is **"Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability."**
- The theme highlights India's belief that **collective cooperation** can address **shared global challenges** in an **inclusive and balanced manner**.
- Jaishankar stated that India's approach is inspired by the guidance of **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** and follows a **humanity-first philosophy**.
- Key focus areas include **development for all, capacity building, promotion of innovation and long-term sustainability** across member countries.
- The **BRICS 2026 logo** symbolises **unity in diversity** and blends **tradition with modernity**.

External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar unveiled the logo, theme and website of India's BRICS Chairship 2026 on 12 January 2026 in New Delhi.

1. The BRICS India 2026 logo symbolises inclusivity, dialogue and shared growth. The logo blends tradition with modernity, with golden colours of BRICS members and symbolising collective strength and unity. At its centre, the "Vennosa" gesture conveys warmth, respect and harmonious collaboration.

2. The theme for India's BRICS Chairship 2026 is "Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability". It draws inspiration from Prime Minister Narendra Modi and people-centric vision for BRICS.

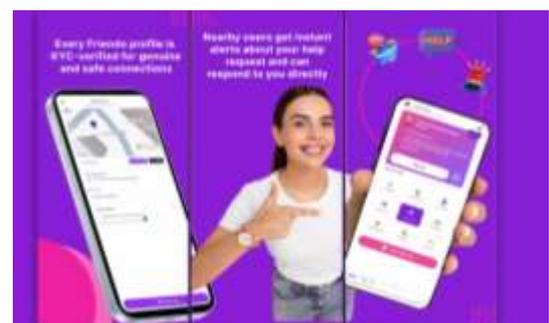
3. The BRICS India website brics2026.gov.in was inaugurated by External Affairs Minister. It will serve as a platform for disseminating information regarding India's BRICS Chairship.

4. Representatives of BRICS Member and Partner countries, International Organizations, Senior Officials of the Government of India, Resident Commissioners of States, Trade Unions, Media organisations, along with other participants participated in the launch programme.

- The **petals of the logo incorporate the colours of all BRICS member countries**, representing **equality, shared purpose and mutual respect**.
- According to Jaishankar, the logo reflects how BRICS derives strength from the **collective contributions of its members while respecting distinct identities**.
- It visually reinforces the idea of **inclusive development and cooperation**.
- The newly launched **BRICS India website** will serve as a **central digital platform** during India's chairship.
- It will provide information on **meetings, initiatives and outcomes**, ensuring **transparency and wider engagement**.
- The website will support **timely dissemination of official updates and documents** related to BRICS activities.
- By offering a single access point, the platform is expected to enhance **coordination, communication and public awareness** throughout India's presidency.
- Jaishankar highlighted that the world is facing **interconnected challenges**, including **geopolitical tensions, economic uncertainty, climate risks, rapid technological change and persistent development gaps**.
- In this context, **BRICS remains a vital forum for dialogue and cooperation** among countries at different stages of development.
- India's presidency aims to **strengthen BRICS as a platform for practical solutions** while respecting **national priorities** of member states.
- **BRICS** is a grouping of **major emerging economies**, formed in **2006**.
- It serves as a platform for cooperation on **economic, political and development issues**.
- BRICS represents the interests of the **Global South** in **global governance and international decision-making**.

Punjabi Singer Kaka Launches 'Friendo' Women's Safety Mobile Application

- **Punjabi singer Kaka** has launched a women's safety mobile application named **Friendo**, marking his initiative beyond the music industry.
- The launch reflects increasing concern over **crimes against women in India** and highlights the role of **technology and social responsibility** in creating safer communities.
- **Friendo** is currently in the **testing phase** and is available **only for Android users**.
- The application focuses on providing **quick emergency assistance** and **digital support tools** for **women and girls**.
- **Friendo** is a **mobile safety application** designed to help women during **emergency situations**.
- It provides **instant access to protective tools** that can be activated quickly when a user feels unsafe.
- Kaka described the app as a **social responsibility project**, aimed at **women empowerment** rather than commercial profit.



- The app seeks to **bridge the gap between victims and immediate help** by integrating **technology, connectivity and community support**.
- It is **free to download** and designed for **easy use even in high-stress situations**.
- A dedicated **SOS button** allows users to send **instant alerts to trusted contacts**.
- The app supports **live location sharing**, enabling contacts or nearby users to **track the user's real-time location**.
- **Alternative triggers** such as **shake detection** and **voice commands** are provided for situations where manual phone usage is difficult.
- These features ensure that **help can be requested even when direct phone operation is not possible**.
- **Friendo** includes **advanced and discreet safety tools** for enhanced protection.
- A **stealth mode** allows the app to function **without drawing attention**.
- The app can **automatically record audio or video**, helping in **evidence collection** during emergencies.
- These recordings may assist **law enforcement agencies** during post-incident investigation.
- By combining **emergency alerts with evidence collection**, the app strengthens both **immediate response** and **post-incident action** while maintaining **user privacy**.
- Beyond emergency response, **Friendo** offers a **resource library** with **self-defence tutorials** and information on **women's legal rights**.
- At present, **Friendo** is available **only on Android platforms** and remains in the **testing phase**.
- The application is **free to download**, encouraging **wider adoption**.
- Developers have announced that an **iOS version** is expected in the **near future**.

APPOINTMENTS & RESIGNATIONS

Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg Appoints Dina Powell McCormick as President and Vice Chairman to Boost AI Strategy

- **Mark Zuckerberg**, Founder and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of **Meta Platforms Inc.**, announced the appointment of **Dina Powell McCormick** as **President and Vice Chairman** of Meta to strengthen its **Artificial Intelligence (AI) strategy**.
- **Dina Powell McCormick** has over **25 years** of experience in **global finance, national security, and economic development**.
- She worked for **16 years** at **Goldman Sachs** as a partner, management committee member, and head of **Global Sovereign Investment Banking**.
- She served in public service as **Deputy National Security Advisor (NSA)** under **President Donald Trump** and held senior roles in the **White House** and **State Department** under **President George W. Bush**.
- Dina Powell McCormick has held **board positions** at major corporations, including **Meta** and **Exxon Mobil**.



- Her recent role was as **Vice Chair, President, and Head of Global Client Services** at **BDT & MSD Partners**.

Abhishek Dev Gets One-Year Extension as APEDA Chairman, Approved by ACC on Commerce Department Proposal

- **Abhishek Dev** has received a **one-year extension** as **Chairman of Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA)**, approved by the **Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC)** on the proposal of the **Department of Commerce**.
- As per the **DoPT order** dated **January 5, 2025**, his deputation is extended beyond **February 8, 2026**, or until further orders, whichever is earlier.
- **Abhishek Dev** was initially appointed **Chairman of APEDA** in **July 2023** and has been leading the organisation since then.
- **Abhishek Dev** is a **2007-batch Indian Administrative Service (IAS)** officer of the **AGMUT cadre** and previously served as **Director of Census Operations** at the **Andaman and Nicobar Islands** in 2021.



ACQUISITIONS & MERGERS

ONGC to Acquire 50% Stake in Two JVs with Japan's Mitsui OSK Lines for Ethane Transport to India's Petrochemical Sector

- **ONGC** has decided to take a **50% stake** in two joint ventures — **Bharat Ethane One IFSC Private Limited** and **Bharat Ethane Two IFSC Private Limited** — formed with Japan's **Mitsui OSK Lines (MOL)** to transport **ethane** for India's petrochemical sector.
- Each joint venture will own one **Very Large Ethane Carrier (VLEC)**, while **MOL** will operate the ships under the **Indian flag**, and both partners will hold equal **50% ownership**.
- The vessels will be used to ship ethane from the **United States** to **ONGC Petro Additions Limited (OPaL)** at its **Dahej petrochemical complex, Gujarat**.
- **ONGC** will subscribe to **2 lakh equity shares** of **₹100 each** in each JV, giving it full participation in the specialised shipping business.
- The two **ethane carriers** will be built in **South Korean shipyards** at a combined cost of around **\$370 million**.
- **ONGC** plans to start **importing ethane** from **mid-2028** to support **OPaL's dual-feed crackers**, which use **ethane and propane** to make petrochemicals.
- **ONGC (Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Limited)** is an Indian central public sector undertaking and the **largest government-owned oil and gas explorer**. **Arun Kumar Singh** is the **Chairman & CEO**.



SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

APEDA Hosts BHARATI Startup Challenge at IndusFood 2026, Selected Startups to Gain Global Exposure in Gulfood Dubai and BIOFACH Germany

- **APEDA (Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority)** launched a new initiative named **BHARATI** to support **agri-food and agritech startups**.
- **BHARATI** stands for **Bharat's Hub for Agritech, Resilience, Advancement and Incubation for Export Enablement**, aimed at promoting **innovation, entrepreneurship, and export opportunities** in India's agricultural and food processing sectors.
- During **IndusFood 2026**, APEDA organised the **BHARATI Startup Challenge** to support **export-ready startups** by providing mentorship, market access, and policy facilitation.
- Selected startups will receive international exposure through participation in **Gulfood (Dubai)** and **BIOFACH (Germany)**, helping them explore global markets and strengthen India's **agri-export ecosystem**.
- The **BHARATI Startup Zone** showcased over **100 innovative agri-startups** working in areas such as **value addition, agri-technology, processing, packaging, logistics, traceability, and sustainable export solutions**.
- The initiative highlights how **entrepreneurship and technology-led solutions** are strengthening India's **agricultural value chains**, supporting **MSMEs**, empowering farmers, and **enhancing** India's global market presence.
- The **APEDA Pavilion** displayed **quality assurance systems, traceability initiatives, GI-tagged products**, and **sustainability-driven practices**, connecting exporters, **FPOs**, startups, and global buyers.
- The event was inaugurated by **Union Minister of Food Processing Industries, Shri Chirag Paswan**, along with senior government officials and industry leaders.
- APEDA's participation at **IndusFood 2026** emphasized the Government of India's focus on **ease of doing business, MSME empowerment, startup enablement, and sustainable agricultural exports**.
- **APEDA** is a **statutory body** established under the **APEDA Act, 1985**, functioning under the **Ministry of Commerce & Industry**.

APEDA organises BHARATI Startup Challenge at IndusFood 2026, top startups to participate in Gulfood in Dubai and BIOFACH in Germany

BHARATI Startup Zone Showcases Role of Agri-Startups in Strengthening Export Value Chains

APEDA Act, 1985

The Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA), under the Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Government of India, participated in IndusFood 2026, during which it organised the BHARATI Startup Challenge to encourage innovation and entrepreneurship in the agricultural and processed food export sector. The initiative aims to support export-ready startups by providing mentorship, market access and policy facilitation. Selected startups emerging from the challenge will be provided international exposure through participation in Gulfood in Dubai, and BIOFACH in Germany, enabling them to explore global market opportunities and strengthen India's agri-export ecosystem.

Another key highlight of APEDA's participation was the BHARATI Startup Zone with over 100 startups, which showcased innovative agri-tech startups working across critical areas such as value addition, agri-technology, processing, packaging, logistics, traceability and sustainable solutions for exports. The zone reflected APEDA's focused approach towards nurturing agriculture and enabling startups to become integral contributors to India's agri-export growth story.

The BHARATI Startup Zone demonstrated how entrepreneurship and technology-led solutions are strengthening India's agricultural value chains, supporting MSMEs, empowering farmers and ensuring India's presence in global markets.

The APEDA Pavilion served as a vibrant platform highlighting export-ready agri and processed food products, quality assurance systems, traceability initiatives, GI-tagged products and sustainability-driven practices. The pavilion brought together exporters, Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs), startups and global buyers, facilitating meaningful connections and business opportunities across the agri-export value chain.

MOUS AND AGREEMENT

India–Germany Sign 19 Strategic Agreements to Deepen Bilateral Partnership

- **India and Germany** have signed **19 agreements and joint declarations** to strengthen their **strategic partnership**.
- The agreements were finalised after talks between **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** and **German Chancellor Friedrich Merz**.

- The cooperation focuses on **defence manufacturing, advanced technology, critical minerals and trade**, reflecting growing **mutual trust** and shared global interests.
- The agreements cover **defence, trade, critical minerals, semiconductors and emerging technologies**.
- Both countries agreed to enhance **co-development and co-production in defence manufacturing**.
- Cooperation will also extend to **digitalisation, telecommunications, health and bio-economy**, supporting **long-term industrial and research partnerships**.
- India and Germany agreed to deepen their **defence and security partnership** through **joint production, training and military exercises**.
- **Naval cooperation** will be expanded with **regular port calls and exchanges**.
- A new **Track 1.5 Foreign Policy and Security Dialogue** will be established to improve **strategic coordination on regional and global security issues**.
- A major outcome is the **India–Germany Semiconductor Ecosystem Partnership**.
- Both sides will collaborate across the **entire semiconductor value chain**, from **research and design to manufacturing**.
- In **critical minerals**, cooperation will focus on **exploration, processing, recycling and supply chain security**, which are vital for **clean energy and high-technology industries**.
- **Bilateral trade between India and Germany has crossed USD 50 billion**, underlining strong economic ties.
- A key people-centric initiative is **visa-free airport transit through Germany for Indian passport holders**, easing travel and mobility.
- The presence of **over 2,000 German companies operating in India** reflects strong **economic confidence and long-term engagement**.
- Overall, the agreements aim to promote **economic growth, innovation, resilient global supply chains and strategic collaboration**, strengthening the **India–Germany partnership** in a rapidly changing global environment.



RANKING AND INDEX

Responsible Nations Index to be Launched in New Delhi

- A new global assessment framework named the **Responsible Nations Index** will be launched on **January 19**.
- The index will be released by the **World Intellectual Foundation**.
- The launch event will take place in **New Delhi** in the presence of **former President of India Ram Nath Kovind**.
- The initiative comes at a time when countries face shared challenges related to



sustainability, governance and global stability.

- The **Responsible Nations Index** is a **global index** designed to evaluate how responsibly countries function in an **interconnected world**.
- It covers **154 countries**, making it one of the **broadest international indices** in terms of scope.
- The index is built using **transparent and globally sourced data**, ensuring **credibility and cross-country comparability**.
- Its objective is to encourage nations to focus not only on **economic growth** but also on **social justice, environmental protection and global cooperation**.
- By identifying **strengths and gaps**, the index aims to promote **responsible governance worldwide**.
- The index is structured around **three core dimensions**.
- **Internal responsibility** focuses on **dignity, justice and overall well-being of citizens**.
- The launch of the index is supported by leading Indian institutions such as **Jawaharlal Nehru University, Indian Institute of Management Mumbai**, and the **Dr Ambedkar International Centre**.
- These collaborations add **academic depth and policy relevance** to the initiative.

Henley Passport Index 2026: India Ranks 80th with Improved Global Mobility

- The **Henley Passport Index 2026** has ranked **India at 80th position globally**, reflecting a **modest improvement** in international travel access.
- Indian passport holders now have **visa-free, visa-on-arrival or e-visa access to 55 destinations**, improving from **85th rank last year**.
- Despite this progress, **significant visa restrictions remain** for major destinations such as **Europe and North America**, continuing to shape Indian travel planning.
- The **Henley Passport Index** is published by **Henley & Partners** and is considered the **global benchmark for passport strength**.
- It ranks passports based on the **number of destinations accessible without a prior visa or with visa-on-arrival**.
- The index uses **exclusive data from the International Air Transport Association (IATA)**, making it one of the **most credible measures of global mobility**.
- The **2026 edition** evaluates **277 countries and territories**, including **sovereign states, regions and special administrative zones**.
- This wide coverage allows for a **comprehensive and comparative assessment** of international travel freedom.
- **India's 80th rank** places it alongside **Nigeria and Algeria**.
- Regional neighbours **Bangladesh and Pakistan** rank **lower than India**, highlighting a **mobility gap within South Asia**.
- The rankings underline the **contrast between India and advanced economies** with stronger passport power.



In a significant boost to India's global mobility, the Indian passport has climbed five positions in the latest Henley Passport Index for 2026. Now ranked 80th, up from 85th in

- **Singapore** holds the **world's most powerful passport**, with access to **192 destinations**.
- **Japan and South Korea** jointly rank **second**, allowing access to **188 destinations**, reflecting strong diplomacy and global trust.
- **European countries dominate the top ranks**, with several European Union nations offering access to **over 185 destinations**, showcasing the strength of European integration.
- **Afghanistan ranks 101st**, holding the **weakest passport in the world**, with access to only **24 destinations**.
- It is followed by **Syria and Iraq**, demonstrating how **conflict, political instability and security issues** restrict global mobility.
- The gap between the **most powerful passport (Singapore)** and the **weakest (Afghanistan)** stands at **168 destinations**.
- **Top 10 most powerful passports in 2026** include:
 - **Rank 1:** Singapore – **192 destinations**
 - **Rank 2:** Japan, South Korea – **188 destinations**
 - **Rank 3:** Denmark, Luxembourg, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland – **186 destinations**
 - **Rank 4:** Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway – **185 destinations**
 - **Rank 5:** Hungary, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, United Arab Emirates – **184 destinations**
 - **Rank 6:** Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, Malta, New Zealand, Poland – **183 destinations**
 - **Rank 7:** Australia, Latvia, United Kingdom, Liechtenstein – **182 destinations**
 - **Rank 8:** Canada, Iceland, Lithuania – **181 destinations**
 - **Rank 9:** Malaysia – **180 destinations**
 - **Rank 10:** United States – **179 destinations**
- **Bottom five weakest passports** are:
 - **Rank 101:** Afghanistan – **24 destinations**
 - **Rank 100:** Syria – **26 destinations**
 - **Rank 99:** Iraq – **29 destinations**
 - **Rank 98:** Pakistan, Yemen – **31 destinations**
 - **Rank 97:** Somalia – **33 destinations**
- In **2026**, Indian passport holders can travel more easily to selected regions such as:
 - **Asia:** Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Maldives
 - **Middle East:** United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Oman
 - **Africa:** Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda
 - **Islands and Caribbean:** Mauritius, Seychelles, Barbados
- These destinations offer the **most practical options for spontaneous or short-notice travel** for Indian citizens.

SPORTS NEWS

National Sports Governance (National Sports Bodies) Rules, 2026 Notified

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- The **Union Government** has notified the **National Sports Governance (National Sports Bodies) Rules, 2026**.
- These Rules operationalise the provisions of the **National Sports Governance Act, 2025**.
- The objective is to promote **transparency, accountability, athlete-centric governance and gender representation** in sports administration, aligning India's sports governance with **global best practices**.
- The Rules lay down a **comprehensive framework** for the governance of **National Sports Bodies and Regional Sports Federations**.
- They clearly define the **composition of General Bodies and Executive Committees, election procedures, and eligibility conditions**.
- The aim is to create a **transparent, accountable and athlete-driven sports ecosystem** while ensuring a **smooth transition to a statutory governance framework**.
- A major reform is the **mandatory inclusion of at least four Sportspersons of Outstanding Merit (SOMs)** in the **General Body** of every National Sports Body.
- To ensure **gender equity, 50% of these SOMs must be women**.
- Eligibility conditions include a **minimum age of 25 years, retirement from active sports, and a one-year cooling-off period** after active competition.
- To enhance women's role in decision-making, the Rules mandate the inclusion of **at least four women in the Executive Committee** of each National Sports Body.
- Sports bodies are permitted to **reserve specific posts for women through their bye-laws**, ensuring **meaningful and sustained gender representation** in governance structures.
- The Rules introduce a **10-tier classification system** for identifying **Sportspersons of Outstanding Merit**.
- This classification ranges from **medal winners at the Olympic and Paralympic Games** to those securing medals at the **National Games or National Championships**.
- The approach ensures **inclusive and flexible athlete representation** across **international and domestic sports disciplines**.
- The Rules prescribe a **clear, step-by-step and time-bound election process**, covering **applications by SOMs, preparation of electoral rolls and nomination procedures**.
- **Strict disqualification norms** are included. Individuals **convicted by a court and sentenced to imprisonment** are barred from contesting elections or holding positions in **General Bodies, Executive Committees or Athletes Committees**.
- The Rules provide for the establishment of a **National Sports Election Panel** comprising **at least 20 qualified members**.
- The **fee of electoral officers is capped at ₹5 lakh**.
- All **National Sports Bodies must amend their bye-laws within six months** to align with the Act and Rules.

New Delhi [India], January 13 (ANI): The Union Government has notified the National Sports Governance (National Sports Bodies) Rules, 2026, under the National Sports Governance Act, 2025.

The rules provide the framework for the inclusion of sportspersons of outstanding merit, composition of the general body and executive committee, election procedures, and disqualification criteria for members of National Sports Bodies and Regional Sports Federations, as per an official release from the Union Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports.

The rules also outline provisions for the National Sports Election Panel and further specify procedures for registration and periodic updating of affiliate units with the National Sports Board.

- The **Central Government** may relax provisions for up to **12 months in special cases**, with reasons recorded in writing.

Alyssa Healy Announces Retirement from International Women's Cricket

- **Australia women's cricket captain Alyssa Healy** has announced her **retirement from all formats of international cricket**.
- Her retirement will take effect **after the India Women's tour of Australia (February–March 2026)**.
- The announcement marks the **end of an era in Australian women's cricket** and signals a **major transition ahead of the 2026 ICC Women's T20 World Cup**.
- Alyssa Healy confirmed that the **multi-format home series against India** will be her **final international assignment**.
- She will **not participate in the T20 International matches**, citing **Australia's preparation for the 2026 ICC Women's T20 World Cup**.
- Healy will **captain Australia in the One Day International series** and the **one-off day-night Test match in Perth**.
- She stated that while she still loves representing Australia, the **competitive edge** that defined her career has **gradually faded**, making this the **right time to step away**.
- Alyssa Healy made her **international debut in 2010** at the age of **19** against **New Zealand**.
- She is set to retire with **162 Women's T20 International caps**, **126 Women's One Day International caps** and **11 Women's Test caps**.
- As a wicketkeeper, she holds the **record for most dismissals in Women's T20 Internationals (126 dismissals)**.
- Known for her **aggressive batting at the top of the order**, Healy **redefined the role of a wicketkeeper-batter** and became one of the **most destructive openers in women's cricket**.
- **Career statistics of Alyssa Healy** include:
 - **Women's Tests:** 10 matches, 16 innings, 489 runs, highest score **99**.
 - **Women's One Day Internationals:** 123 matches, 111 innings, 3,563 runs, highest score **170**.
 - **Women's T20 Internationals:** 162 matches, 143 innings, 3,054 runs, highest score **148**.
- **Alyssa Healy's major trophies and titles** include:
 - **ICC Women's Cricket World Cup (50-over) – 2-time winner**.
 - **ICC Women's T20 World Cup – 6-time winner**.
 - **Commonwealth Games – 1 Gold Medal**.
- Healy became **Australia's full-time women's team captain in 2023**, following the retirement of **Meg Lanning**.

Alyssa Healy announces retirement, series against India her farewell tour: Australian captain makes shocking announcement months before T20 World Cup



- Her most notable leadership achievement was guiding Australia to a **16–0 multi-format Ashes whitewash against England**.
- Under her captaincy, Australia reached the **semi-finals of the 2024 ICC Women's T20 World Cup** and the **2025 ICC Women's One Day International World Cup**.
- Her leadership style combined **tactical sharpness with aggressive cricket**, helping maintain **Australia's dominance in women's international cricket**.
- Alyssa Healy was part of **eight ICC World Cup-winning campaigns**, including **six Women's T20 World Cups** and **two Women's One Day International World Cups**.
- She holds the **record for the highest individual score in a Women's World Cup final**.
- Her individual honours include the **Belinda Clark Award (2019)** and **ICC Women's T20 International Cricketer of the Year awards in 2018 and 2019**.
- She also won a **gold medal at the 2022 Commonwealth Games**.
- In domestic cricket, Healy represented the **Sydney Sixers** in the **Women's Big Bash League**, scoring **over 3,000 runs across 11 seasons** and winning **two WBBL titles**.
- She also played in the **Women's Premier League**, featuring for **two seasons** and captaining the **UP Warriorz**.

OBITUARIES

Swiss Olympic Bronze Medallist Snowboarder Ueli Kestenholz Passed away at 50 in Alps Avalanche

- **Ueli Kestenholz**, the Swiss snowboarder and **Olympic bronze medallist**, passed away at age **50** after being caught in an **avalanche** in the **Swiss Alps**.
- The incident occurred in **canton Valais**, on the eastern flank of **Hockuchriz peak** in the **Lötschental region** at around **2,400 metres (7,900 feet)**.
- Kestenholz was riding **off-piste** with a companion, who escaped unhurt, while he was buried under snow and later airlifted for emergency treatment to hospitals in **Visp** and **Sion**.
- The **Valais police** stated that the trigger of the avalanche is unknown, and the case is under investigation by the **public prosecutor's office**.
- He won **bronze in giant slalom** at the **1998 Nagano Winter Olympics**, the first Olympics to include **snowboarding**, marking his podium finish as part of the sport's **Olympic debut**.
- Kestenholz also competed in the **2002** and **2006 Winter Olympics** and achieved major success at the **Winter X Games**, winning **gold in snowboard cross** in **2003** and **2004**.
- After retiring from World Cup and Olympic circuits in **2006**, he focused on **freeride snowboarding**, **speedriding**, and outdoor activities such as **paragliding** and **surfing**.



Kerala Congress (M) Veteran and Ex-Member of Parliament Thomas Kuthiravattam Passed away at 80 in Alappuzha

- Veteran **Kerala Congress (M)** leader and former **Member of Parliament (MP)**, **Thomas Kuthiravattam**, passed away at the age of **80** in **Alappuzha, Kerala**.
- He was born on **June 1, 1945**, in **Kallissery, Chengannur, Kerala**.
- **Thomas Kuthiravattam** was a senior political leader associated with **Kerala Congress (M)**, known for his long-standing involvement in state and national politics.
- He held key positions in **Kerala Congress (M)**, including **State General Secretary** and **Vice Chairman**.
- He served as a **Rajya Sabha MP** representing Kerala from **1985 to 1991**.
- During his political career, he was a member of several parliamentary committees, including the **Joint Parliamentary Committee** that investigated the **Bofors deal**.
- After retiring from active politics, he contributed to charitable work as a member of the **Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church Managing Committee** for **25 years**.



IMPORTANT DAYS

Indian Army Day 2026 is observed on 15th January

- **Indian Army Day 2026** is observed on **15th January 2026**.
- The day marks the **75th birth anniversary of Indian Army Day**.
- Indian Army Day is celebrated to commemorate the historic moment when **Field Marshal K M Cariappa** took over as the **first Indian Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army** from the **British Commander-in-Chief**.
- The formal and final transfer of command took place on **15 January 1949**, which is observed annually as **Indian Army Day**.
- During **World War I**, around **one million Indians** volunteered to serve in the **British Army**, and nearly **90,000 Indian soldiers lost their lives** in the war.
- In **World War II**, approximately **50 percent of the officers** involved in military engagements were **Indians**, highlighting their significant role.
- As the **Indian independence movement intensified in 1946**, loyalty within the British-led Indian armed forces weakened.
- A majority of the **army and navy divisions either rebelled or resigned** during this period.
- Although the British military structure continued to be **Indianised even after independence**, the **complete transfer of command** was achieved on **15 January 1949**, which is commemorated through **Indian Army Day celebrations**.



Daily CA One- Liner: January 15 & 16

- The **Karnataka Cabinet** has approved the **statewide implementation of the 'Akka Pade' scheme** across all **31 districts and five police commissionerates**, in coordination with the **Home Department**
- **Union Minister for Communications Jyotiraditya Scindia** announced the launch of two new India Post services: **Speed Post 24** and **Speed Post 48**
- The **Andhra Pradesh Cabinet** has approved the **Dagadarthi Greenfield Airport project** in **Nellore district**
- **India** will host the **28th Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth (CSPOC)** in **New Delhi**
- **India** has officially begun preparations for its **BRICS Presidency 2026** by launching the **official logo and dedicated website**
- **Punjabi singer Kaka** has launched a women's safety mobile application named **Friendo**, marking his initiative beyond the music industry
- **India and Germany** have signed **19 agreements and joint declarations** to strengthen their **strategic partnership**
- A new global assessment framework named the **Responsible Nations Index** will be launched on **January 19**
- The **Henley Passport Index 2026** has ranked **India at 80th position globally**, reflecting a **modest improvement** in international travel access
- The **Union Government** has notified the **National Sports Governance (National Sports Bodies) Rules, 2026**
- **Australia women's cricket captain Alyssa Healy** has announced her **retirement from all formats of international cricket**.
- **Surjit Bhujabal, Special Secretary & Member (Customs), Central Board of Indirect Taxes & Customs (CBIC)**, under the **Ministry of Finance (MoF)**, inaugurated the Indian Customs Electronic Gateway – Land Port Management System (**ICEGATE – LPMS**) integration at the **Integrated Check Post (ICP)**, **Agartala, Tripura**.
- **Tripura Gramin Bank (TGB)** created a national milestone by becoming the **1st Regional Rural Bank (RRB)** in India to introduce India's first **fully solar-powered mobile Automatic Teller Machine (ATM) van**, named '**TGB on Wheels**'.
- The **National Statistics Office (NSO)** under the **Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI)** released the **Consumer Price Index (CPI)** for rural, urban, and combined segments for **December 2025**.
- **State Bank of India (SBI)**, the only Indian bank with a branch in **Israel**, plans to facilitate bilateral trade between India and Israel in **Indian Rupees (INR)**.
- **49 cryptocurrency exchanges** were registered with India's **Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU-IND)** during **FY 2024–25**, most of them domestic.
- **Innoviti Technologies Private Limited**, a payments-centric retail **Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) platform**, received a **Certificate of Authorization** from the Reserve Bank of India (**RBI**) to operate as a **Payment Aggregator (PA)** under the **Payments and Settlement Systems (PSS) Act, 2007** across India.

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- **India's insurance penetration** remained stagnant at **3.7% in FY25**, which is almost half of the **global average of 7.3%** in 2024, indicating low insurance coverage in India.
- **Amazon Pay** has launched **fixed deposit (FD)** services on its fintech app as part of its expansion into **fixed-income assets**.
- **Mark Zuckerberg**, Founder and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of **Meta Platforms Inc.**, announced the appointment of **Dina Powell McCormick** as **President and Vice Chairman** of Meta to strengthen its **Artificial Intelligence (AI) strategy**.
- **Abhishek Dev** has received a **one-year extension** as **Chairman of Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA)**, approved by the **Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC)** on the proposal of the **Department of Commerce**.
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