



Daily Current Affairs

17th Jan 2026



BANKING, FINANCE & BUSINESS

Department of Financial Services Launches Composite Salary Account Package for Central Government Employees with Public Sector Banks

- The **Department of Financial Services (DFS), Ministry of Finance**, has advised **Public Sector Banks** to introduce a **Composite Salary Account Package** to enhance the financial well-being and social security of **Central Government employees**.
- The **Salary Account Package** was formally launched by **DFS Secretary M. Nagaraju**, attended by **Chairman SBI, MD & CEOs of all Nationalized Banks, CEO NPCI**, and senior **DFS officers**.
- The initiative aligns with the Government's vision of **Viksit Bharat 2047** and the national commitment towards **Insurance for All by 2047**.
- The package is designed for employees across all **cadres (Group A, B, and C)** to provide a comprehensive suite of banking, insurance, and card benefits under a **single account structure**.

Department of Financial Services launches Composite Salary Account Package for Central Government Employees in association with Public Sector Banks

Unified salary account framework provides a one-stop financial solution with integrated banking and insurance benefits for Central Government employees

DFS Secretary, 14 JAN 2025 7:28PM by PIB Delhi

The Department of Financial Services (DFS), Ministry of Finance, has taken a significant step towards enhancing the financial well-being and social security of Central Government employees by advising Public Sector Banks to introduce a composite "Salary Account Package for Central Government Employees".



Key Highlights :

- The **Composite Salary Account Package** has three core segments – **Banking, Insurance, and Cards**, making it a one-stop financial solution for Central Government employees.
- **Banking facilities** include a **zero-balance salary account**, free **RTGS/NEFT/UPI/cheque** facilities, **concessional interest rates** on loans, reduced **loan processing charges**, **locker rental waivers**, and **family banking benefits**.
- **Insurance coverage** includes **Personal Accident Insurance** up to **₹1.5 crore**, **Air Accident Insurance** up to **₹2 crore**, **Permanent Total & Partial Disability Cover** up to **₹1.5 crore**, **Term Life Insurance** up to **₹20 lakh** with top-up options, and comprehensive **Health Insurance** for self and family with an additional top-up facility.
- **Digital and card features** include enhanced **debit and credit card** benefits, **airport lounge access**, rewards, cashback offers, **unlimited transactions**, and **nil maintenance charges**.
- The initiative provides **ease of access**, **financial security**, and peace of mind to Central Government employees, strengthening the **employee-bank relationship**.
- **DFS** has directed **Public Sector Banks** to publicize the scheme, organize **awareness camps** in government departments, proactively reach out to employees, and facilitate **migration of existing salary accounts** to the new package with **employee consent**.
- All **Central Government employees** are encouraged to avail the benefits of this comprehensive **Composite Salary Account Package** through their salary accounts with **Public Sector Banks**.
- Complete details of the package are available on the **DFS website** – <https://financialservices.gov.in>.

World Bank Estimates India's Economic Growth at 7.2% for FY26 and 6.5% for FY27

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- The **World Bank Group (WBG)** released its flagship report titled “**Global Economic Prospects (GEP): January 2026**”, which projected **India’s GDP growth at 7.2% in FY26**, revised upward from the **6.3%** forecast in June 2025.
- India’s **FY26 growth** is mainly driven by **robust domestic demand**, including strong **private consumption**, supported by **tax reforms** and rising **rural household incomes**.
- The report projected that **India’s GDP growth** will moderate to **6.5% in FY27**, lower than the earlier estimate of **7.2%**, assuming **50% import tariffs** imposed by the **USA** remain throughout the forecast period.
- India’s **GDP growth** is expected to edge up to **6.6% in FY28**, aided by robust **services sector activity**, recovery in **exports**, and a **pickup in investment**.
- The impact of **higher US tariffs** on Indian exports is expected to be offset by **stronger-than-expected domestic demand** momentum.
- **India’s inflation** is projected to converge to **RBI’s target of 4%**, assuming stable seasonal conditions that help contain **food price inflation**.
- The **global growth rate** is projected to slow marginally by **10 basis points (bps)** from **2.7% in CY25** to **2.6% in CY26**.
- The **South Asia** region’s growth is projected to rise to **7.1% in CY25**, supported by strong economic activity in **India**, which offsets rising **trade tensions** and **policy uncertainty**.
- The **South Asia** growth rate is expected to ease to **6.2% in CY26** due to the impact of **higher US tariffs** on India’s exports.
- The **World Bank** excludes **Pakistan** and **Afghanistan** from the **South Asia** region, placing them under the **Middle East and North Africa (MENA)** division.

World Bank projects India’s growth rate at 7.2% in FY26, 6.5% in FY27

Our Bureau
New Delhi

The World Bank on Tuesday projected India’s FY26 growth rate at 7.2 per cent, which is lower than the government’s projection of 7.4 per cent.

For the next fiscal, the growth rate could be 6.5 per cent.

“Growth in India is projected to slow to 6.5 per cent in FY27, assuming that the 50 per cent import tariffs by the US remain in place throughout the forecast horizon,” said the bank in its latest Global Economic Prospects report.

According to the report, global growth is projected to remain broadly steady over the next two years, easing to 2.6 per cent in 2026 before rising to 2.7 per cent in 2027, an upward revision from the June forecast.

“The global economy is proving more resilient than anticipated despite persistent trade tensions and policy uncertainty,” it said.

In 2025, growth was supported by a surge in trade ahead of policy changes and swift readjustments in global supply chains. This boost is expected to fade in 2026 as trade and domestic demand soften.

However, the easing global financial conditions and fiscal expansion in several large economies should help cushion the slowdown, according to the World Bank report.

MISSION
SUPER FINE ARTS

About World Bank :

- **Established: 1944.**
- **Headquarters: Washington, DC, USA**
- **President: Ajay Banga**

Department of Financial Services Launches Paripoorna Mediciam Ayush Bima for CGHS Beneficiaries

- The **Government of India** has launched **Paripoorna Mediciam Ayush Bima** as an **optional retail health insurance product** for **Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS)** beneficiaries.
- The scheme is designed to **complement existing CGHS benefits** and provide additional financial protection with wider access to quality healthcare across India.
- The policy offers **indemnity-based in-patient hospitalisation** coverage within India with **sum insured options** of **₹10 lakh** and **₹20 lakh**.

Department of Financial Services launches Paripoorna Mediciam Ayush Bima for CGHS beneficiaries

The Optional health insurance plan complements existing CGHS facilities by expanding medical coverage for government employees

Posted On: 14 JAN 2025 7:20PM by PIB Delhi

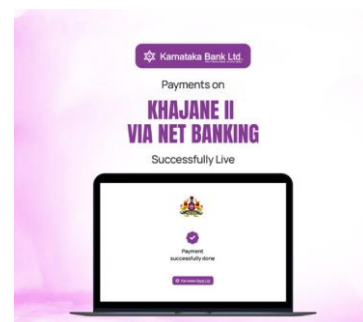
The Paripoorna Mediciam Ayush Bima has been launched by the Department of Financial Services (DFS), Ministry of Finance today for CGHS beneficiaries. It offers cashless facilities, modern treatments and access to a wide network of hospitals.



- The product includes a **co-payment feature**, allowing beneficiaries to choose between **70:30** or **50:50** cost-sharing between the insurer and subscriber.
- The scheme is offered at a **discount of 28%** for 70:30 and **42% for 50:50** co-payment options, compared to regular retail policies.
- The policy provides **cashless facilities**, access to a wide network of hospitals, **modern treatments**, and **AYUSH coverage**, enhancing financial security for **CGHS beneficiaries**.
- **Eligibility**: Available exclusively to **CGHS beneficiaries** with a maximum of **six members** per policy.
- **Key Features**:
- **Room rent** capped at **1%** of sum insured per day for **Normal Room** and **2%** for **ICU**.
- **Pre-hospitalization** coverage for **30 days** and **post-hospitalization** coverage for **60 days**.
- **AYUSH treatments** covered up to **100%** of sum insured for in-patient hospitalization.
- **Modern treatment** covered up to **25%** of sum insured, with an **optional rider** for **100% coverage**.
- **Cumulative bonus** of **10%** for every claim-free year, up to **100%** of sum insured.
- The policy has **no GST** to ensure maximum affordability.
- The scheme provides greater flexibility, **seamless coverage**, expanded access to quality healthcare, and enhanced **financial security** for CGHS beneficiaries.

Karnataka Bank Launches Net Banking Facility for Khajane-2 e-Receipts

- **Karnataka Bank Limited** has enabled its **net banking platform** to support payment and receipt of **electronic receipts (e-receipts)** for **Government of Karnataka** transactions through the **Khajane-2 system**.
- The initiative highlights the bank's commitment to providing easy, secure, and value-added **digital banking services** to meet evolving customer needs.
- **Regulatory approvals** for the initiative have been obtained from the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** and the **Department of Treasuries, Government of Karnataka**.
- The bank is **authorised** to collect **State Government revenue receipts** through the **Khajane-2 Integrated Financial Management System (IFMS)**.
- Following successful technical integration with **RBI's e-Kuber system** and the **Khajane-2 platform**, customers can make **seamless tax and fee payments** via net banking.
- The facility enables payments to various **State Government departments** in a **digital and paperless manner**.
- By **minimising manual processes** and streamlining **receipt handling**, the initiative enhances **citizen convenience**.
- The move also strengthens **Karnataka's digital payments infrastructure** and promotes **efficient government revenue collection**.



About Karnataka Bank:

- **Founded:** 1924
- **Headquarters:** Mangaluru, Karnataka, India
- **Managing Director & CEO:** Raghavendra Srinivas Bhat
- **Tagline:** "Your Family Bank, Across India"

Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority Forms 15-Member Panel Under M. S. Sahoo for National Pension System Payout Framework

- The **Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA)**, a **statutory body** under the **Ministry of Finance (MoF)**, has constituted a **15-member high-level expert committee** to formulate a regulatory framework for **assured payouts** under the **National Pension System (NPS)**.

PFRDA sets up expert panel on assured NPS payouts



Key Highlights :

- The committee is chaired by **M. S. Sahoo**, former Chairperson of the **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI)**.
- The initiative aims to strengthen the **security of retirement income** for **NPS subscribers**.
- The high-level committee comprises a **multidisciplinary panel** of 15 experts from **law, actuarial science, finance, insurance, capital markets, and academia**.
- The committee is authorised to invite **external experts or intermediaries** as special invitees for **consultation and feedback**.
- The committee is constituted as a **standing advisory body** on **structured pension payouts** under NPS to frame **assured payout regulations** and enable a smooth **accumulation-to-decumulation transition**.
- The framework deliberation includes **novation and settlement** to enable **legally enforceable, market-based assurances**, and defines operational standards including **lock-in periods, fee structures, withdrawal limits, and tax treatment** in the NPS payout phase.
- The committee is tasked with establishing **risk management, capital adequacy, solvency, and legal safeguards** for institutions offering assured payouts.
- It is also responsible for **standardising disclosures, preventing mis-selling**, clarifying '**assured**' versus **market-linked returns**, and addressing shortcomings of the current **annuity-based model**.

About PFRDA :

- The **PFRDA** was established in **2003** and accorded **statutory status** under the **PFRDA Act, 2013**, operating under the **Ministry of Finance (MoF)**.
- The authority aims to develop and regulate the **National Pension System (NPS)** and the **Atal Pension Yojana (APY)** to ensure **old-age income security** for Indian citizens.
- **Headquarters:** New Delhi, Delhi.
- **Chairperson:** Sivasubramanian Ramann

NATIONAL AND STATE NEWS

9th International Spice Conference 2026 to be Held in Kochi

- The **9th International Spice Conference (ISC 2026)** will be held in **Kochi, Kerala**, from **23 to 26 February 2026**.
- The conference is being organised by the **All-India Spices Exporters Forum (AISEF)**.
- The **International Spice Conference** is a flagship global event of AISEF and serves as a major platform for collaboration across the **entire spice value chain**.
- ISC 2026 will be a **four-day global conference** with participation from **policymakers, exporters, scientists, startups, innovators, and global industry leaders**.
- Discussions will focus on the **future of the global spice industry**, addressing challenges such as **market volatility, climate change, global trade disruptions, and evolving consumer preferences**.
- The conference will also explore **innovation-led growth opportunities** for the spice sector.
- The theme of ISC 2026 is **“Spice 360 – Getting Future Ready”**.
- The conference will be inaugurated by **Amitabh Kant**, former **G20 Sherpa**, who will deliver the keynote address on **“Transforming Agro-Industry: Innovation, Inclusion & Global Leadership.”**
- The **Guest of Honour** will be **Martin Sonntag**, CEO of Oterra, who will speak on **“Shaping the Next Decade of Food & Nutrition.”**
- Hosting ISC 2026 in **Kerala** holds strong **historical and economic significance**, as the state has been a **global hub of the spice trade for centuries**.
- According to AISEF, Kerala’s selection symbolises a continuity between traditional spice trade heritage and future-ready strategies.
- ISC 2026 gains importance amid **recent global trade disruptions**, which have forced Indian exporters to **diversify markets, strengthen ASEAN linkages, and focus on value-added spice products**.
- The conference will address **cost optimisation, domestic market linkages, risk mitigation strategies, and exporter competitiveness**.
- Overall, ISC 2026 aims to help the Indian spice sector **adapt to changing global trade dynamics and strengthen its global leadership position**.



About Kerala:

- Chief Minister: Pinarayi Vijayan
- Governor: Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar
- Capital: Thiruvananthapuram
- National Parks: Eravikulam National Park, Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary, Silent Valley National Park, Parambikulam Tiger Reserve
- Wildlife Sanctuaries: Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary, Idukki Wildlife Sanctuary, Chilika Lake Wildlife Sanctuary

Rajasthan's First Fully Organic Village Body: Bamanwas Kankar Panchayat

- **Bamanwas Kankar Panchayat** in Rajasthan has been declared the state's first **fully organic village body**, covering **seven hamlets**.

- All agricultural activities in the panchayat now follow **organic farming practices**, marking a major step in **sustainable and chemical-free agriculture**.
- Farmers have completely stopped using chemical fertilizers, synthetic pesticides, and genetically modified inputs.
- Instead, they rely on natural manure, compost, crop rotation, and biological pest control methods.
- The transition required **strong community participation, farmer training, and continuous monitoring**.
- This achievement is significant for **Rajasthan's arid and semi-arid agro-climatic conditions**, demonstrating that **sustainable farming is viable even in challenging environments**.
- **Organic farming** is a sustainable agricultural system that depends on **natural on-farm inputs** to maintain soil fertility and manage pests.
- It avoids synthetic chemicals, promotes **ecological balance**, and enhances **soil organic matter and biodiversity** for long-term productivity.
- Organic farming contributes to **climate change mitigation** by reducing greenhouse gas emissions associated with chemical fertilizer use.
- For farmers, it ensures **safer food production** and reduces dependence on **costly external inputs**.
- Advantages of organic farming include **reduced soil, water, and air pollution**, leading to cleaner ecosystems.
- It lowers **chemical residues in food**, minimizing health risks for humans and animals.
- Organic practices improve **soil structure, aeration, and water-holding capacity**, reducing erosion and crop failure risks.
- Farmers benefit from **lower input costs and more resilient farming systems**, ensuring sustainability for future generations.
- The Government of India supports organic farming through schemes such as **Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana**, which promotes **cluster-based organic farming**.
- The **Mission Organic Value Chain Development for North Eastern Region** focuses on strengthening organic value chains for export.
- The **National Centre of Organic Farming**, under the **Ministry of Agriculture**, acts as the nodal body for training, certification, and awareness.
- India is among the **leading countries in organic farming** in terms of number of farmers.
- Organic agriculture is promoted under the **Integrated Nutrient Management framework**.
- Certification systems like **Participatory Guarantee System-India** and **National Programme for Organic Production** ensure credibility of organic produce.
- States such as **Sikkim, India's first fully organic state**, serve as successful models, and **Rajasthan's initiative adds momentum to India's sustainable agriculture journey**.



taking a pledge against chemical-based agriculture at Bamanwas Kankar on January 2. | Photo Credit: Special

By taking decisive steps to secure a sustainable future, Bamanwas Kankar panchayat in Rajasthan has become the first village body in the State to be certified as fully organic.

About Rajasthan:

- Capital: Jaipur
- Governor: Haribhau Bagade
- Chief Minister: Bajan Lal Sharma
- National Parks: Ranthambhore National Park, Sariska Tiger Reserve, Keoladeo National Park (Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary), Desert National Park
- Wildlife Sanctuaries: Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary, Darrah Wildlife Sanctuary, Ranthambore Wildlife Sanctuary, Bassi Wildlife Sanctuary

RECENT NEWS

- The Rajasthan Regional AI Impact Conference was held on Tuesday, 06 January 2026, marking a major milestone in India's journey towards inclusive, ethical, and responsible Artificial Intelligence (AI).

Kerala Leads India in Personal Four-Wheeler Electric Vehicle Adoption (2025)

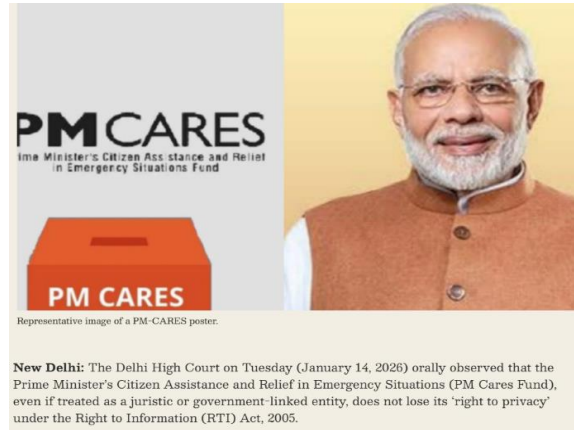
- **Kerala recorded the highest share of personal four-wheeler electric vehicle adoption in 2025** among the top electric vehicle-selling states in India.
Kerala has emerged as one of the leading Indian states in personal electric vehicle (EV) adoption in 2025, recording among the highest EV penetration rates and the largest share of private electric four-wheelers compared with other major states. The state's EV penetration stood close to that of Delhi, driven by strong sales of both two-wheelers and four-wheelers, a widespread charging network and rising consumer awareness. Major EV brands such as Ather Energy, Bajaj Auto, TVS Motor and Tata Passenger Electric Mobility have led the increase in sales. Experts say higher income levels, policy support and broad charging infrastructure have helped Kerala's EV growth.
- The achievement is driven by **strong household-level uptake**, rather than fleet or commercial adoption, setting Kerala apart from larger and more industrialized states.
- **Middle-class households in Kerala installed record numbers of private home charging boxes in 2025**, making electric car ownership more convenient and cost-effective.
- This **household-driven charging infrastructure expansion** played a crucial role in enabling higher personal four-wheeler electric vehicle penetration.
- Unlike other states where growth is fleet-led, **Kerala's electric vehicle growth reflects rising individual consumer confidence**, long-term fuel cost savings, and reliability of electric mobility.
- Kerala was **among the first Indian states to announce an Electric Vehicle Policy in 2019**, providing an early and strong foundation for adoption.
- **Continuous policy support reduced adoption barriers**, encouraged home charging solutions, and helped Kerala emerge as a **mature electric vehicle market** ahead of many larger states.
- Beyond four-wheelers, **Kerala ranks joint highest in overall personal electric vehicle adoption (two-wheelers and four-wheelers) along with Karnataka**.
- The **electric vehicle-to-internal combustion engine vehicle penetration** in Kerala is among the highest in India.
- In **2025, Kerala ranked second only to Delhi** in electric vehicle-to-internal combustion engine vehicle penetration, indicating a **structural shift in consumer transport choices**.
- This **consumer-led electric vehicle transition clearly distinguishes Kerala** from states where adoption is largely driven by commercial or fleet vehicles.

RECENT NEWS

- The Kerala government has taken a major step towards biodiversity conservation by giving Aralam a new identity. The Aralam Wildlife Sanctuary in Kannur has now been officially renamed as the Aralam Butterfly Sanctuary.

Delhi High Court on PM CARES Fund and Right to Privacy under RTI Act

- The **Delhi High Court** held that the **PM CARES Fund** enjoys the right to privacy under the **Right to Information Act, 2005**, even if it is considered a public authority.
- The judgment was delivered by a **Division Bench** led by **Chief Justice Devendra Kumar Upadhyaya** and **Justice Tejas Karia**.
- The Court clarified that **performing public functions or being treated as "State" does not automatically extinguish the right to privacy** of an entity.
- It observed that the **PM CARES Fund is a juristic personality**, and therefore cannot be denied privacy protection merely due to government control or supervision.
- The ruling is based on **Section 8(1)(j) of the RTI Act**, which exempts disclosure of **personal or third-party information** unless a **larger public interest** is clearly established.
- The Court emphasised that the **right to privacy under RTI is statutory in nature**, and not derived from **Article 21 of the Constitution**.
- It applies **equally to all third parties**, irrespective of whether they are **public or private entities**.
- The Bench clarified that **RTI law does not differentiate between public and private third parties**; trusts, societies, cooperatives, or individuals all enjoy privacy protection.
- The Court explained that **public character alone does not nullify privacy rights**, and **mandatory third-party notice and due process** must be followed before disclosure.
- The case originated from an **RTI application by Girish Mittal**, seeking disclosure of documents submitted by PM CARES Fund for **income tax exemption**.
- While the **Central Information Commission (CIC)** had ordered disclosure, a **single judge of the Delhi High Court set aside the CIC order**, leading to the present appeal before the Division Bench.
- The judgment reinforces the **balance between transparency and privacy** envisaged under the RTI Act, particularly through **Section 8 exemptions**.



INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Union Minister Jaishankar Launches BRICS India 2026 Chairship Logo, Theme, and Website

- **Union Minister Dr. Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)**, unveiled the **logo, theme, and official website** of India's **BRICS Chairship 2026** at a launch ceremony in **New Delhi on January 13, 2026**.
- **Union Ministers of State (MoS) Pabitra Margherita and Kirti Vardhan Singh**, MEA, were also present at the event.

Launch of BRICS India 2026 Logo, Theme and Website by the External Affairs Minister

January 13, 2026

External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar unveiled the logo, theme and website of India's BRICS Chairship 2026 on 13 January 2026 in New Delhi.

1. The BRICS India 2026 logo symbolises inclusivity, dialogue and shared growth. The logo blends tradition with modernity, with petals reflecting the vibrant colours of all BRICS members and symbolising collective strength and unity. At the centre, the 'Namaste' gesture conveys warmth, respect, and harmonious collaboration.

2. The theme for India's BRICS Chairship this year is 'Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability'. It draws inspiration from Prime Minister's 'Humans First and People-centric' vision for BRICS.

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

Key Highlights :

- India will hold the **BRICS Chairship** from **1 January to 31 December 2026**, marking its **fourth tenure** and coinciding with the **20th anniversary of BRICS**.
- The **theme of BRICS India Chairship 2026** is “**Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability**”, inspired by **PM Narendra Modi’s “Humanity First and People-centric”** vision.
- The theme focuses on strengthening capacities, promoting **innovation**, and ensuring **sustainable and inclusive development**.
- The **BRICS India 2026 logo** is inspired by the **lotus flower**, blending tradition with modernity to reflect **inclusivity, dialogue, and shared growth**.
- The **lotus petals** depict vibrant colours of **BRICS members** symbolising unity, while the central “**Namaste**” **gesture** conveys warmth, respect, and **harmonious collaboration**.
- The **logo** was selected through an **open contest** organized by **MEA** on the **citizen engagement platform** and designed by **Sudeep Subhash Gandhi**.
- The **official website brics2026.gov.in** was launched as a central platform for **information dissemination** during India’s Chairship.
- The website provides updates on **meetings, initiatives, outcomes**, and enhances **transparency, engagement, and timely communication** throughout 2026.
- India’s **priorities for BRICS 2026** are **Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation, and Sustainability** to strengthen collective capacities and promote inclusive global development.
- India’s Chairship initiatives will align across **Political and Security Cooperation, Economic and Financial Partnership, and Cultural and People-to-People Exchanges**.

About BRICS :

- **BRICS** was formalised in **2006** at the **UNGA** as **BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, China)** and held its **first summit in 2009, Yekaterinburg, Russia**.
- **South Africa** joined in **September 2010**, changing the acronym from **BRIC to BRICS**.
- **Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, and UAE** joined in **2024**, followed by **Indonesia in 2025**.
- **BRICS** has **10 partner countries**, including **Belarus, Bolivia, Cuba, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Nigeria, Thailand, Uganda, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam**.

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz’s India Visit Highlights: 12–13 January 2026

- **Federal Chancellor of Germany, Friedrich Merz**, visited India on a two-day official visit from **12 to 13 January 2026** at the invitation of **PM Narendra Modi**, marking his **first official visit to India and the Asian region**.
- On **12 January 2026**, he arrived in **Ahmedabad, Gujarat**, and was formally welcomed by **PM Narendra Modi**.

Key Highlights :

- **Friedrich Merz** and **PM Modi** visited **Sabarmati Ashram** in Ahmedabad and paid floral tributes to **Mahatma Gandhi**.
- Both leaders inaugurated the **International Kite Festival 2026** at **Sabarmati Riverfront**, Ahmedabad, as part of **Uttarayan/Makar Sankranti** celebrations.



- They held a high-level bilateral meeting in **Gandhinagar, Gujarat** to review the **India–Germany Strategic Partnership**, which recently completed **25 years**.
- Discussions focused on strengthening strategic ties across **trade, investment, technology, defence, security cooperation, education, climate action, and sustainable development**.
- The **India–Germany CEO Forum** held in Ahmedabad brought together leaders to boost economic ties and collaboration in **Renewable Energy (RE)**.
- The **India–Germany Centre of Excellence (CoE)** was launched to promote shared knowledge and innovation.
- On **13 January 2026**, **Friedrich Merz** arrived in **Bengaluru** and was received by **M B Patil**, Minister for Large and Medium Industries, Karnataka.
- He visited the **Centre for Nano Science and Engineering (CeNSE)** at **IISc, Bengaluru**, and the **Bosch campus** at **Adugodi**, where he was briefed on **hydrogen-powered solutions** and sustainable mobility.
- During the visit, **19 MoUs** and **Joint Declarations of Intent (JDol)** were signed.
- A **JDol on defence industrial cooperation** was signed to strengthen bilateral defence and security ties.
- Three **JDols** were signed regarding the **Semiconductor Ecosystem partnership, critical minerals, and telecommunications**.
- An **MoU** between **NIELIT** and **Infineon Technologies AG** focused on **semiconductor manufacturing and design**.
- An **MoU** between **AIIA (AYUSH)** and **Charite University, Germany** was signed for **traditional medicine** collaboration.
- An **Offtake agreement on Green Ammonia** was signed between **AM Green (India)** and **Uniper Global Commodities (Germany)**.
- An **Indo-German Roadmap on Higher Education** was signed to enhance education cooperation.
- **JDol on Global Skill Partnerships** and a **National CoE for Skilling in Renewable Energy** at **NSTI Hyderabad** were established.
- **Germany** announced **visa-free transit** for **Indian passport holders**, significantly strengthening people-to-people connections.
- India and Germany established a **Track 1.5 Foreign Policy and Security Dialogue** and a bilateral dialogue mechanism on the **Indo-Pacific**.
- **Germany** committed **1.24 billion Euros** under the **Green and Sustainable Development Partnership (GSDP)** for projects like **PM e-Bus SEWA** and green hydrogen.
- **Triangular Development Cooperation (TrC)** projects will be scaled up in **Ghana, Cameroon, and Malawi**.
- **Germany** opened an **Honorary Consulate** in **Ahmedabad** to enhance regional engagement.

About Germany:

- **President** : Frank-Walter Steinmeier
- **Chancellor** : Friedrich Merz
- **Capital** : Berlin
- **Currency** : Euro (EUR).

India and Israel Sign Joint Declaration to Boost Cooperation in Fisheries and Aquaculture

- A high-level Indian delegation led by **Union Minister Rajiv Ranjan Singh** (Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying) visited **Israel** from **13–15 January 2026** to participate in the **Second Global Summit on “Blue Food Security: Sea the Future 2026”** held in **Eilat**.
- The visit marked a significant step in strengthening **India–Israel bilateral cooperation** in the fisheries and aquaculture sector, recognising their shared commitment to **sustainable development** and **food security**.

Key Highlights :

- On **14 January 2026**, India and Israel signed a **Joint Ministerial Declaration of Intent** to enhance collaboration in **fisheries and aquaculture**.
- The Declaration envisages setting up **Indo–Israel Centres of Excellence for Fisheries and Aquaculture** to strengthen the **Blue Economy**, promote innovation, trade, **climate resilience**, and economic growth in both countries.
- Key areas of cooperation include **joint R&D** in advanced aquaculture technologies such as **Recirculating Aquaculture Systems (RAS)**, **biofloc**, **cage culture**, **aquaponics**, and **aquarium/oceanarium systems**.
- Collaboration also covers **breeding high-yield species**, **pathogen-free seed improvement**, **broodstock development**, genetic improvement programs, **mariculture** (including seaweed cultivation), and water management using **Israeli water-saving technologies**.
- The Declaration emphasizes support for **start-ups** in fisheries and aquaculture and aims to strengthen cooperation in advancing the **Blue Economy**.
- Both countries will promote **sustainable and responsible fishing practices** to conserve marine resources, reduce environmental impacts, and ensure long-term resilience of fisheries.
- Cooperation includes **technology-based fisheries monitoring**, **data collection systems**, evidence-based management, **traceability**, and addressing the **socio-economic needs** of fishing communities.
- **Capacity building** initiatives will focus on **deep-sea fishing**, **vessel design and development**, **coastal aquaculture**, and marine resource conservation through technology and innovation.
- The Declaration allows **exchange programs** for fishers, aqua farmers, scientists, and policymakers, along with training in **modern fish processing**, marketing, and **infrastructure development** including fishing harbours and fish landing centers.
- The agreement promotes **bilateral trade** by addressing **tariff and non-tariff barriers** and supporting **technology-driven traceability systems** in fisheries and aquaculture.
- The initiative aims to establish new **Indo–Israel Centres of Excellence** in fisheries and aquaculture, similar to the existing **43 agricultural Centres of Excellence** under Indo–Israel collaboration.
- The landmark agreement is expected to boost **innovation**, **sustainability**, and **economic growth** in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors, reinforcing both countries' commitment to **food security** and **climate-resilient development**.

India and Israel signed a Joint Ministerial Declaration of Intent to strengthen collaboration in the fisheries and aquaculture

Posted On: 15 JAN 2026 8:24PM by PIB Delhi

A high-level Indian delegation led by the Hon'ble Union Minister of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, & Panchayati Raj Shri Rajiv Ranjan Singh, concluded a successful visit to Israel during 13–15 January 2026 to participate in the Second Global Summit on “Blue Food Security: Sea the Future 2026”, held in Eilat, Israel. The visit marked a significant step in further strengthening bilateral cooperation between India and Israel in the fisheries and aquaculture sector.



Acknowledging the long-standing and strategic partnership between India and Israel, shared vision for sustainable development, recognizing the critical role of fisheries and aquaculture for food security, livelihoods, and economic growth in both the nations, and highlighting Israel's advanced technologies and innovations in aquaculture and fisheries, water management and India's vast aquatic resources, both the sides signed on 14th January, 2026 a **Joint Ministerial Declaration of Intent to strengthen the cooperation in the field of Fisheries and Aquaculture**.

This Joint Declaration sets out a comprehensive framework for cooperation across multiple areas of mutual interest. The key areas of collaboration include joint research and development in advanced aquaculture technologies such as Recirculating Aquaculture Systems (RAS), biofloc, cage culture, aquaponics, and aquarium systems.

About Israel :

- Capital : Jerusalem
- Currency : Israeli New Shekel.

European Council President Costa and European Commission President von der Leyen to Attend 77th Republic Day as Chief Guests

- **European Council President António Costa and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen** will visit India from **25–27 January 2026** as **Chief Guests** for the **77th Republic Day** celebrations, at the invitation of **Prime Minister Narendra Modi**.
- The leaders will co-chair the **16th India-EU Summit** on **27 January 2026**, according to the **Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)**.
- An **India-EU Business Forum** will be held on the sidelines of the summit to strengthen **economic cooperation**.
- India and the **European Union (EU)** have been **strategic partners since 2004**, with cooperation expanding across political, economic, and strategic areas.
- The **15th India-EU Summit** was held virtually on **15 July 2020**, while ties gained momentum after the **EU College of Commissioners'** historic visit to India in **February 2025**.
- The **European Commission** is the **executive body** of the European Union, consisting of **27 members**, also known as the **College of Commissioners**.
- During the visit, **President Costa** and **President von der Leyen** will meet **President Droupadi Murmu** and hold restricted and **delegation-level talks** with **Prime Minister Narendra Modi**.
- The participation of EU leaders as **Chief Guests** and their co-chairing of the **16th India-EU Summit** will deepen the **India-EU Strategic Partnership** and advance collaboration in **priority areas** of mutual interest.

EU's Costa, von der Leyen to grace R-Day celebrations; FTA likely on January 27



AWARDS AND HONOURS

Pawan Kalyan Becomes First Indian Inducted into Samurai Kenjutsu Tradition

- **Andhra Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan** has become the **first Indian to be formally inducted into Kenjutsu**, an ancient **Japanese samurai swordsmanship tradition**.
- This honour is **extremely rare for non-Japanese practitioners** and is usually conferred **only in exceptional cases outside Japan**, highlighting its global significance.
- The induction places Pawan Kalyan among a **select group of international practitioners**, reflecting India's growing presence in global cultural and martial traditions.
- **Kenjutsu** is a classical Japanese martial art rooted in **samurai warfare techniques and philosophy**.



- It emphasises **discipline, precision, mental balance, ethical conduct and respect for tradition**.
- Traditionally, Kenjutsu training and recognition are **restricted to Japan**, making foreign induction highly uncommon.
- Pawan Kalyan's induction signifies **technical mastery as well as acceptance into a centuries-old cultural lineage** of samurai heritage.
- With this recognition, Pawan Kalyan joins a **very small group of Indians** inducted into samurai martial traditions **outside Japan**.
- Earlier, Pawan Kalyan was also inducted into the **Takeda Shingen Clan**, a historically significant samurai lineage.
- This honour was conferred under the guidance of **Soke Muramatsu Sensei**, making him the **first Telugu-speaking individual** to receive such recognition.
- Such honours are **rarely extended to non-Japanese practitioners**, underlining the exceptional nature of his martial arts journey.
- His training in **Kendo and Budo philosophy** was guided by **Hanshi Professor Dr. Siddiq Mahmoodi**.
- The recognition carries **cultural and diplomatic significance**, symbolising **cross-cultural respect and exchange between India and Japan**.
- **Samurai martial arts** such as **Kenjutsu, Kendo and Budo** originated in feudal Japan and emphasise **honour, discipline and mastery of mind and body**.

Karnataka Bank Wins IBA Banking Technology Award 2026

- **Karnataka Bank** emerged as the **winner in the 'Best Fintech & Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) Adoption' category** at the **Indian Banks' Association (IBA) Banking Technology Awards 2026**.
- The recognition highlights the bank's strong focus on **fintech innovation, digital banking solutions, and adoption of Digital Public Infrastructure** in India's evolving banking ecosystem.
- The award reflects Karnataka Bank's effective integration of **digital payments, online banking platforms, and backend technology systems**, aligned with **regulatory standards and customer-centric requirements**.
- In addition to the main award, **Karnataka Bank was adjudged runner-up in the 'Best Tech Talent' category**, underscoring its emphasis on building **skilled digital and information technology teams**.
- The bank also received **Special Mention** in multiple categories, including **Best Technology Bank, Best Digital Financial Inclusion, and Best Digital Sales**, indicating balanced performance across innovation, inclusion, and customer outreach.
- **Digital Public Infrastructure**, such as **Unified Payments Interface, Aadhaar, and digital Know Your Customer systems**, forms the backbone of India's financial ecosystem, enabling efficiency, inclusion, and cost reduction.
- Karnataka Bank's recognition demonstrates how **traditional banks can successfully leverage fintech and DPI** to remain **agile, inclusive, and technologically advanced**.



Karnataka Bank emerged as winner in the 'Best Fintech & DPI Adoption' category at the Indian Banks' Association (IBA) Banking Technology Awards.

- The **IBA Banking Technology Awards** are organised annually by the **Indian Banks' Association** to recognise excellence in **digital transformation, innovation, cybersecurity, and technology adoption** in the banking sector, making them relevant from a **competitive examinations perspective**.

Biologist Toby Kiers Wins Tyler Prize for Environmental Achievement

- **American evolutionary biologist Toby Kiers** has won the **Tyler Prize for Environmental Achievement** for her **groundbreaking research on underground mycorrhizal fungal networks** and their role in **climate regulation and ecosystem stability**.
- Her work has transformed the scientific understanding of **fungi**, shifting their image from **passive organisms** to **active drivers of planetary health**.
- **Mycorrhizal fungal networks** are vast underground systems that **connect plant roots** across **forests, grasslands, and farmlands**.
- In this **symbiotic relationship**, plants provide fungi with **carbon-rich sugars and fats** produced through **photosynthesis**.
- In return, fungi supply plants with **essential nutrients** such as **phosphorus and nitrogen** from the soil.
- These networks function at a **massive ecosystem scale**, linking plants into shared systems that enhance **growth, resilience, and survival**.
- Kiers' research revealed that mycorrhizal fungi play a **major role in regulating Earth's climate**.
- Collectively, these fungi **draw down more than 13 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide every year**, storing carbon in **soils and plant systems**.
- In a landmark **2011 study**, Kiers demonstrated that fungi operate within a **biological marketplace**.
- Experiments showed that fungi **allocate nutrients strategically**, moving them from areas of abundance to areas of scarcity.
- They also **demand higher carbon rewards** from plants that need nutrients the most.
- Notably, this complex negotiation occurs **without a brain or nervous system**, challenging traditional ideas about **intelligence and information processing** in living systems.
- The **Tyler Prize for Environmental Achievement** is one of the world's most prestigious environmental awards, often referred to as the **"Nobel Prize for the Environment."**



APPOINTMENTS & RESIGNATIONS

Rakesh Aggarwal Appointed as National Investigation Agency's Director General Until 31 August 2028

- **Rakesh Aggarwal**, a 1994-batch IPS officer of the Himachal Pradesh cadre, has been appointed as **Director General (DG)** of the **National Investigation Agency (NIA)** until **31 August 2028**, the date of his **superannuation**, or until further orders.
- The **Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC)**, chaired by **Prime Minister Narendra Modi**, approved his appointment following the premature **repatriation** of former NIA DG **Sadanand Vasant Date** to his parent cadre, **Maharashtra**.
- **Rakesh Aggarwal** previously served as **Special DG** of NIA from **September 2025**, after being temporarily upgraded from **Additional Director General (ADG)** for two years.
- He was also appointed as **Interim Chief** of **NIA** in **December 2025**, before assuming the full **DG** charge.
- **Shatrujeet Singh Kapoor**, a 1990-batch IPS officer of the Haryana cadre, has been appointed as the **Director General** of the **Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP)**.
- **Praveen Kumar**, a 1993-batch IPS officer of the West Bengal cadre, has been appointed as the **Director General** of the **Border Security Force (BSF)** until **30 September 2030**.
- These appointments are part of a major **leadership reshuffle** across key internal security agencies of India.
- The **National Investigation Agency (NIA)** is the principal **counter-terrorism** law enforcement agency in India, founded on **31 December 2008**.
- The **Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP)** is a **central armed police force** under the **Ministry of Home Affairs**, responsible for guarding India's border with **Tibet Autonomous Region of China**, formed after the **Sino-Indian War of 1962**.
- The **Border Security Force (BSF)** is a **central armed police force** under the **Ministry of Home Affairs**, responsible for guarding India's borders with **Pakistan and Bangladesh**, formed after the **Indo-Pak War of 1965** to ensure border security and related matters.

NIA, BSF and ITBP get new chiefs in top security reshuffle

Counter-terrorism expert Rakesh Aggarwal appointed NIA chief

NARESH BISWANI
NEW DELHI: Counter-terrorism specialist Rakesh Aggarwal was on Wednesday appointed director general of the National Investigation Agency (NIA), while senior IPS officer Shatrujeet Singh Kapoor was named the new chief of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) and Praveen Kumar was appointed director general of the Border Security Force (BSF), in a major reshuffle of leadership across key security agencies. Aggarwal, a 1994-batch Indian Police Service (IPS) officer of the Himachal Pradesh cadre, is currently serving as special director general in the NIA. He had been holding additional charge as DG after the premature repatriation of Sadanand Vasant Date to Maharashtra last month. Date took over as Maharashtra's police chief on January 3, following which Aggarwal was named interim head of the anti-terror agency. The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has approved Aggarwal's appointment as DG NIA for a tenure up to August 31, 2028, the date of his superannuation, according to an order issued by the Personnel Ministry.

Continued on P4

APPS & PORTALS

Karnataka rolls out Gruha Lakshmi Digital Marketing Portal to empower women entrepreneurs

- The **Department of Women and Child Development (DWCD)**, **Government of Karnataka** launched the '**Gruha Lakshmi Digital Marketing**' portal at **Karmani Utsav-2026** in **Bengaluru** to promote **women entrepreneurship**, economic independence, and **digital inclusion**.
- The purpose of the portal is to enable **women entrepreneurs** to sell **handicrafts**, food items, **jewellery**, clothing, and traditional products **globally** while showcasing **Karnataka's culture**.
- Registration is available **online** at **gruhalakshmidigital.org**, through **District In-charge Officers**, or at the **Department Head Office**.



- The initiative offers a **state-backed**, user-friendly **e-commerce platform** along with **vocational training** and **financial support** to strengthen business skills and **digital marketing capabilities**.
- **Verified women entrepreneurs** are enrolled on the platform to ensure **product authenticity** and credibility.
- The portal is an extension of the flagship **Gruha Lakshmi Scheme**, under which **women heads of eligible households** in Karnataka receive **₹2,000 per month**.
- The initiative is guided by **Chief Minister Siddaramaiah** and **Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar**, spearheaded by **Lakshmi Hebbalkar** (Minister, Women and Child Development, Karnataka).
- The programme is implemented through the **Karnataka State Women's Development Corporation**, under the chairpersonship of **G. Padmavathi**.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Principal Scientific Adviser, and Netflix Fund Launch 'Inspiring Innovators – Naye Bharat Ki Nayi Pehchaan' Skilling Initiative

- The **Ministry of Information & Broadcasting (MIB)**, in partnership with the **Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser (PSA)**, **Government of India (GoI)**, and the **Netflix Fund for Creative Equity**, launched the '**Inspiring Innovators – Naye Bharat Ki Nayi Pehchaan**' skilling initiative.
- The initiative was implemented in collaboration with **Graphiti Studios** to connect India's **innovation and creative ecosystems** and promote **socially relevant innovation** through storytelling and practical skilling.
- The initiative features **eight short animated films** created by students from **eight universities** across India, highlighting the work of **eight Indian start-ups** identified by the **PSA** for their contributions to **social-impact innovation**.
- A cohort of **26 students** from diverse regions participated, with **women representing 50%** of participants, gaining hands-on experience and mentorship from industry experts.
- Student voiceovers for the animated films were produced through **Voicebox**, a Netflix-led skilling initiative in collaboration with the **National Film Development Corporation (NFDC)**.

Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India Marks Culmination of 'Inspiring Innovators' Skilling Initiative in Collaboration with Netflix Fund for Creative Equity

Posted On: 12 JAN 2026 5:00PM by PIB Delhi

The Principal Scientific Adviser (PSA) to the Government of India, Prof. Ajay Kumar Sood joined Dr. L. Murugan, Hon'ble Minister of State, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting (MIB) and Parliamentary Affairs, Shri Sanjay Jain, Secretary MIB, Netflix & Graphiti Studios team, innovators and students to mark the culmination of 'Inspiring Innovation – Naye Bharat Ki Nayi Pehchaan', a skilling initiative developed in collaboration with the 'Netflix Fund for Creative Equity' on 10th January 2026 in New Delhi.



Implemented in partnership with Graphiti Studios, the initiative brings together India's innovation and creative ecosystems to promote socially relevant innovation through storytelling and

University of New South Wales to Launch Bengaluru Campus by August 2026, Providing Global Education

- The **University of New South Wales (UNSW)**, a leading Australian university, announced plans to establish a new campus at **Manyata Tech Park, Bengaluru, Karnataka** by **August 2026**.
- The announcement followed the signing of a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** between **Prof. Attila Brungs (UNSW)** and **Dr. S. Selvakumar**, Principal Secretary, Department of Industries, **Government of Karnataka** at **Vidhana Soudha, Bengaluru**.
- In the initial phase, **UNSW** will offer **Under-Graduate (UG) programmes** in **commerce, media, computer science, and data science**, along with a **Post-Graduate (PG) programme** in **cybersecurity**.
- **UNSW** plans to set up a campus at the upcoming **Knowledge, Wellbeing, and Innovation (KWIN) City** near Bengaluru in the future phase.
- The initiative is aligned with the **India–Australia Education and Research Cooperation Programme (2025–2030)**.
- Apart from **UNSW**, the **University of Liverpool (England)** and the **University of Lancaster (England)** have also announced plans to open campuses in **Bengaluru**.



Wikipedia Partners with Microsoft, Meta, Amazon, and AI Startups to Monetise Content

- **Wikipedia (Wikimedia Foundation)** has entered partnerships with **Big Tech** firms such as **Microsoft, Meta, Amazon**, along with **AI startups** like **Perplexity** and France's **Mistral AI** to **monetise corporate use** of its content.
- The new partners include **Microsoft, Meta, Amazon, Perplexity**, and **Mistral AI**, adding to an earlier deal with **Google** signed in **2022**.
- These agreements allow **AI firms** to pay for **structured, high-volume access** to Wikipedia's content instead of **scraping** it freely for training **large language models (LLMs)**.
- **Bernadette Meehan**, former **US Ambassador to Chile**, has been named Wikipedia's new **Chief Executive**, effective **20th January 2026**.
- **Wikipedia** was founded by **Jimmy Wales** and **Larry Sanger** in **2001**, launching as a **free, collaborative online encyclopedia**.

MOUS AND AGREEMENT

Tamil Nadu Signs MoU with Sarvam AI to Establish Sovereign AI Park

- The **Tamil Nadu government** signed a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** with **Sarvam AI** to set up a **full-stack Sovereign AI Park**.
- The project involves an **initial investment of ₹10,000 crore** and is expected to generate around **1,000 high-skilled jobs** in **advanced computing and artificial intelligence research**.

The Tamil Nadu government signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Sarvam AI on January 13 to set up a full-stack Sovereign AI Park, according to a report by The New Indian Express (TNIE).

The project will reportedly involve an initial investment of Rs 10,000 crore and generate around 1,000 highly skilled jobs in advanced computing and AI research.

The southern Indian state government says the Sovereign AI Park will function as a purpose-built AI district, integrating model-development labs and innovation clusters, secure data frameworks, high-end compute infrastructure, and a dedicated Institute for AI in Governance.

- The **Sovereign AI Park** will function as a **purpose-built AI district**, integrating **model development labs, innovation clusters, secure data frameworks, high-end compute infrastructure**, and a **dedicated Institute for AI in Governance**.
- Sarvam AI co-founder **Pratyush Kumar** stated that the project aims to move **AI from experimentation to real-world national-scale impact** in India.
- The investment will be **primarily focused on compute infrastructure and graphics processing units (GPUs)**.
- The platform will support **large-scale AI applications** across **education, healthcare, agriculture, and citizen services**, with **academia playing a key role**.
- A **large data centre** will be established near the **IIT Madras campus in Chennai**, with **public data digitised** for **evidence-based policymaking, outcome evaluation, and private sector usage**.
- A **plot of land near IIT Madras Research Park** has already been identified for the project.
- **IIT Madras Director V Kamakoti** stated that **artificial intelligence will define the next generation of jobs**, similar to how **manufacturing and IT shaped earlier generations**.
- These efforts aim to make future AI systems in Tamil Nadu **locally rooted, inclusive, and accurate**.
- The project's **₹10,000 crore investment** is nearly equivalent to the **Central Government's ₹10,371 crore outlay under the IndiaAI Mission**.
- The **Central Government** has already selected **Sarvam AI** to build **India's sovereign Large Language Model (LLM)** under the **IndiaAI initiative**, making it the **first company to receive funds from a pool of 67 applicants**.
- In **April 2025**, **Pratyush Kumar** revealed that a **central government body would take an equity stake in Sarvam AI** in exchange for **compute resources**.
- With both the **Central Government and Tamil Nadu government** partnering with **Sarvam AI**, coordinated efforts are underway to strengthen **India's AI development ecosystem**.

RANKING AND INDEX

Maharashtra Tops NITI Aayog's Export Preparedness Index 2024

- **NITI Aayog** released the **Export Preparedness Index (EPI) 2024**, which assesses the **export readiness and performance of Indian States and Union Territories**.
- **Maharashtra** secured the **1st rank among Large States**, followed by **Tamil Nadu** and **Gujarat**.
- The index evaluates performance during **FY 2021–22 to FY 2023–24** and highlights **regional strengths, gaps and opportunities** as India expands global trade through **Free Trade Agreements (FTAs)** and **Economic Partnership Agreements**.



Subrahmanyam said that as India expanded its network of free trade and economic partnership agreements, the importance of strong domestic foundations was growing | Photo Credit: Getty Images

Maharashtra has topped the Niti Aayog's Export Preparedness Index (2024) in the large States category followed by Tamil Nadu and Gujarat in the second and third places respectively.

- The **EPI 2024 framework** is based on **4 pillars, 13 sub-pillars and 70 indicators**, using a **data-driven and weighted methodology** with inputs from **Central and State government sources**.
- The **four pillars of EPI 2024** include:
 - **Export Infrastructure (20%)**, covering **trade and logistics infrastructure, connectivity, utilities and industrial infrastructure**.
 - **Business Ecosystem (40%)**, including **macroeconomic stability, cost competitiveness, human capital, access to finance, MSME ecosystem, and industrial and innovation environment**.
 - **Policy and Governance (20%)**, assessing **state export policy, institutional capacity, regulatory environment, compliance and trade facilitation**.
 - **Export Performance (20%)**, focusing on **export outcomes, diversification, global integration and export promotion mechanisms**.
- For comparative assessment and peer learning, States and UTs are grouped into **Large States, Small States, North Eastern States and Union Territories**.
- Each group is further classified into **Leaders, Challengers and Aspirers**, based on export preparedness levels.
- Among **Large States (Leaders category)**, the top performers were **Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh**, reflecting strong outcomes across infrastructure, governance, business ecosystem and export performance.
- In the combined category of **Small States, North Eastern States and Union Territories**, the **Leaders** were **Uttarakhand, Jammu and Kashmir, Nagaland, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, and Goa**, despite structural and geographic constraints.
- **Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Kerala and West Bengal** were placed in the **Challengers category** among Large States, indicating moderate preparedness with scope for improvement.
- **Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Bihar and Jharkhand** were classified as **Aspirers**, highlighting the need for targeted policy interventions.
- Among Union Territories, **Delhi** ranked **12th** and was placed in the **Challenger category**, along with **Meghalaya, Ladakh and Himachal Pradesh**.
- A key feature of **EPI 2024** is its **increased focus on districts** as the core units for export strategy implementation, emphasising **local capabilities, industrial clusters and value-chain linkages**.

Daily CA One- Liner: January 17

- The **9th International Spice Conference (ISC 2026)** will be held in **Kochi, Kerala**, from **23 to 26 February 2026**
- **Bamanwas Kankar Panchayat** in **Rajasthan** has been declared the state's first fully organic village body, covering **seven hamlets**
- **Kerala** recorded the highest share of personal four-wheeler electric vehicle adoption in **2025** among the top electric vehicle-selling states in India.
- The **Delhi High Court** held that the **PM CARES Fund** enjoys the right to privacy under the **Right to Information Act, 2005**, even if it is considered a public authority
- **Andhra Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan** has become the first Indian to be formally inducted into **Kenjutsu**, an ancient **Japanese samurai swordsmanship tradition**

- **Karnataka Bank** emerged as the **winner in the ‘Best Fintech & Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) Adoption’ category** at the **Indian Banks’ Association (IBA) Banking Technology Awards 2026**
- **American evolutionary biologist Toby Kiers** has won the **Tyler Prize for Environmental Achievement** for her **groundbreaking research on underground mycorrhizal fungal networks** and their role in **climate regulation and ecosystem stability**
- The **Tamil Nadu government** signed a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** with **Sarvam AI** to set up a **full-stack Sovereign AI Park**
- **NITI Aayog** released the **Export Preparedness Index (EPI) 2024**, which assesses the **export readiness and performance of Indian States and Union Territories**
- The **Department of Financial Services (DFS), Ministry of Finance**, has advised **Public Sector Banks** to introduce a **Composite Salary Account Package** to enhance the financial well-being and social security of **Central Government employees**.
- The **World Bank Group (WBG)** released its flagship report titled “**Global Economic Prospects (GEP): January 2026**”, which projected **India’s GDP growth at 7.2% in FY26**, revised upward from the **6.3% forecast in June 2025**.
- The **Government of India** has launched **Paripoorna Mediclaim Ayush Bima** as an **optional retail health insurance** product for **Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS) beneficiaries**.
- **Karnataka Bank Limited** has enabled its **net banking platform** to support payment and receipt of **electronic receipts (e-receipts)** for **Government of Karnataka** transactions through the **Khajane-2 system**.
- The **Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA)**, a **statutory body** under the **Ministry of Finance (MoF)**, has constituted a **15-member high-level expert committee** to formulate a regulatory framework for **assured payouts** under the **National Pension System (NPS)**.
- **Union Minister Dr. Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)**, unveiled the **logo, theme, and official website** of **India’s BRICS Chairship 2026** at a launch ceremony in **New Delhi on January 13, 2026**.
- **Federal Chancellor of Germany, Friedrich Merz**, visited India on a two-day official visit from **12 to 13 January 2026** at the invitation of **PM Narendra Modi**, marking his **first official visit** to India and the **Asian region**.
- A high-level Indian delegation led by **Union Minister Rajiv Ranjan Singh** (Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying) visited **Israel** from **13–15 January 2026** to participate in the **Second Global Summit on “Blue Food Security: Sea the Future 2026”** held in **Eilat**.
- **European Council President António Costa** and **European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen** will visit India from **25–27 January 2026** as **Chief Guests** for the **77th Republic Day** celebrations, at the invitation of **Prime Minister Narendra Modi**.
- **Rakesh Aggarwal**, a **1994-batch IPS officer** of the **Himachal Pradesh cadre**, has been appointed as **Director General (DG)** of the **National Investigation Agency (NIA)** until **31 August 2028**, the date of his **superannuation**, or until further orders.
- The **Department of Women and Child Development (DWCD), Government of Karnataka** launched the ‘**Gruha Lakshmi Digital Marketing**’ portal at **Karmani**

Utsav–2026 in **Bengaluru** to promote **women entrepreneurship**, economic independence, and **digital inclusion**.

- **CSIR-National Institute of Science Communication and Policy Research (CSIR-NIScPR)** celebrated its **5th Foundation Day** highlighting its growing role in **science communication**, **policy research**, and **Artificial Intelligence (AI)**.
- The **Ministry of Information & Broadcasting (MIB)**, in partnership with the **Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser (PSA)**, **Government of India (GoI)**, and the **Netflix Fund for Creative Equity**, launched the '**Inspiring Innovators – Naye Bharat Ki Nayi Pehchaan**' skilling initiative.
- The **University of New South Wales (UNSW)**, a leading Australian university, announced plans to establish a new campus at **Manyata Tech Park, Bengaluru, Karnataka** by **August 2026**.
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