



Daily Current Affairs

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BANKING, FINANCE & BUSINESS
World Bank Approves USD 286 Million for West Bengal Health System Reform Program to Enhance Healthcare Access and Life Expectancy

- The **World Bank (WB)** approved **USD 286 million** financing for the **West Bengal Health System Reform Program (WBHSRP)** to improve quality of life and life expectancy for over **90 million people** through equitable access to quality healthcare services.
- The program aims to support **personalized healthcare services** across West Bengal for people **over 30 years**.


Key Highlights :

- **WBHSRP** provides **digital tracking** of **non-communicable diseases (NCDs)** such as **hypertension and diabetes**.
- The **International Bank of Reconstruction and Development (IBRD)** approved a loan with a **maturity of 16.5 years**, including a **grace period of 3 years**.
- **Health indicators in West Bengal:**
- **Infant Mortality Rate (IMR)** declined from **32 deaths per 1000 births (2012–2018)** to **19 deaths per 1000 births (2018–2020)**.
- **Total Fertility Rate (TFR)** stood at **1.64 births per woman (2019)**, among the lowest in India.
- **Life expectancy** in the state reached **72 years**, above the national average.
- **Challenges:** West Bengal has the **second-highest rate of adolescent pregnancies** in India (**16%**), contributing to a **Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR)** of **103 deaths per 1,00,000 live births (2018)**.
- **WBHSRP** will support strengthening **gender-based violence (GBV)** services, including targeted interventions for **boys, married adolescents, and healthcare providers**.
- The program will focus on **five districts: Purulia, Birbhum, Murshidabad, Maldah, and Uttar Dinajpur**, aiming to enhance access to quality healthcare and reduce inequities in maternal and adolescent health.

About World Bank :

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

State Bank of India Signs Memorandum of Understanding with Tamil Nadu Government to Offer Enhanced Corporate Salary Package Benefits to PSU Employees

- The **State Bank of India (SBI)** signed a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** with the **Government of Tamil Nadu (TN)** to provide enhanced benefits under the **Corporate Salary Package (CSP)** for **State Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs)** employees.
- The MoU was signed by **C.R. Balaji**, Additional Director and ex-officio Joint


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Secretary, Finance Department, TN, and **Smitha S. Nair**, Deputy General Manager, **SBI**.

- The **Corporate Salary Package (CSP)** offers **zero-balance salary accounts**, **concessional interest rates** on home, car, and personal loans, and **waiver of processing fees** across select banking and loan services, ensuring cost savings for employees.
- Employees under the **CSP** receive **premium banking support**, including **dedicated relationship managers**, **wealth management solutions**, and **secure, customized digital banking platforms** for seamless transactions.

IGGFIL Approves First Overseas Green Energy Loan for Solar Power Project in Zambia

- **IREDA Global Green Energy Finance IFSC Limited (IGGFIL)**, a wholly-owned subsidiary of **Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency Limited (IREDA)**, has sanctioned its **first international green energy loan**.
- The loan amount sanctioned is **USD 22.5 million** to **Swarna Solar Limited (SSL)**.
- The loan is for the development of a **100 Megawatt (MW) Photovoltaic (PV) Solar Power Project**.
- The solar project will be set up in **Serenje District, Central Province of Zambia**.
- This sanction marks **IGGFIL's first overseas loan** since its incorporation at **Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT City), Gandhinagar, Gujarat**.
- Operating from **GIFT City** enables access to **foreign-currency loans**, which helps in **reducing hedging costs** and **improving global competitiveness**.
- The loan approval aims to leverage **competitive international capital** for global renewable energy development.
- The initiative positions **IREDA** as a **global catalyst for clean energy financing**.
- The move is aligned with the **Government of India's (GoI)** vision of promoting **cross-border investments** in renewable energy.



SBI Life Introduces 'Smart Platina Advantage' Life Insurance Savings Plan with Guaranteed Benefits

- **SBI Life Insurance** launched '**SBI Life – Smart Platina Advantage**', an individual, **non-linked, non-participating** life insurance savings plan offering long-term **guaranteed benefits** and life insurance protection to support financial goals across life stages, such as children's education, retirement, and wealth creation.
- The plan is **savings-oriented**, providing **guaranteed benefits** and financial protection throughout the **policy term**.
- **Life cover** is provided to ensure family security in case of the **life assured's death**.
- The plan features **limited premium payment terms**, assured **guaranteed additions** every policy year, and **flexible maturity payout options** (lump sum or installments) for post-maturity liquidity.
- Minimum **annual premium** starts from **₹50,000**, with **tax benefits** under **Income Tax Act** provisions (typically Section 80C and 10(10D)).



SBI Life -
Smart Platina
Supreme
UIN: 11IN171V01

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- **Policy term** options include limited premium payment of **7 or 10 years** with coverage for **15, 20, or 30 years**.
- **Guaranteed additions** accrue annually to boost **maturity value**, with higher additions for **larger premiums** and **longer terms**.
- **Maturity proceeds** can be received in **installments up to 7 years** for post-maturity liquidity.
- The plan ensures **predictable outcomes** with **guaranteed additions** and protection irrespective of **market fluctuations**.

NATIONAL AND STATE NEWS

India's Electronics Exports Cross \$47 Billion in 2025

- India's **electronics exports** crossed **\$47 billion** for the first time in **2025**, with **smartphone exports** under the **Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme** contributing nearly **two-thirds** of the total value.
- According to the **Department of Commerce**, electronics exports reached **\$47 billion (₹4.15 trillion)** in 2025, registering a **37% growth** compared to **\$34.93 billion in 2024**.
- Exports crossed the **\$4 billion mark in seven out of twelve months**, indicating **sustained export momentum** throughout the year.
- **December 2025** alone recorded electronics exports of **\$4.17 billion**, reflecting a **16.8% year-on-year increase**.
- Nearly **\$30 billion**, or about **two-thirds of total electronics exports**, came from **PLI-driven smartphone exports**.
- A significant share of growth was led by **iPhone manufacturing in India**, carried out by **Apple-linked suppliers**, highlighting India's deeper integration into **global electronics supply chains**.
- The smartphone segment reached an **all-time high**, becoming **India's largest electronics export category**, supported by **large-scale assembly, improved component sourcing, and export-oriented production**.
- Other major electronics export items included **photovoltaic cells, routers and networking equipment, charger adapters, electronic components, sub-assemblies, and printed circuit board assemblies (PCBAs)**.
- The diversified export basket signals a gradual shift from **basic assembly to higher-value electronics manufacturing**, including **renewable energy equipment and networking hardware**.
- Despite the milestone, achieving the next export target of **\$55 billion** will depend on **policy stability, global tariff conditions, and geopolitical supply chain risks**.

India achieved a record \$47 billion (₹4.15 lakh crore) in electronics exports in 2025, powered largely by the Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for smartphones, Union Minister for Electronics and IT Ashwini Vaishnaw said on Monday.

According to the minister, nearly \$30 billion of total exports came from PLI-driven smartphone manufacturing, underlining the central role of government incentives in transforming India into a global electronics hub.

Maharashtra Cabinet Approves Bembla River Irrigation Project and MAHIMA Agency

- The **Maharashtra Cabinet** approved the **₹4,775 crore Bembla River Irrigation Project** in **Yavatmal district** and cleared the establishment of a new overseas employment facilitation agency named **MAHIMA**.
- The **Bembla River Irrigation Project** will be implemented in **Yavatmal district, Maharashtra**, to strengthen agricultural infrastructure.

- The project will bring **52,423 hectares** of land under **assured irrigation** across **five talukas**, reducing dependence on monsoon rainfall.
- With a total cost of **₹4,775 crore**, the project aims to **improve crop productivity, enhance farmer incomes, and reduce agrarian distress**, particularly in **drought-prone Vidarbha region**.
- Improved irrigation is expected to support **crop diversification**, enable a shift from **low-value rain-fed crops to higher-value crops**, and ensure **long-term water security**.
- The project will also generate **employment opportunities** during construction and allied activities and strengthen **regional food security**.
- Alongside irrigation reforms, the Cabinet approved the creation of the **Maharashtra Agency for Holistic International Mobility and Advancements (MAHIMA)**.
- **MAHIMA** will focus on providing **overseas employment opportunities for trained and skilled youth** from Maharashtra.
- The agency will work on **coordination, skill mapping, and implementation mechanisms** to connect the state's workforce with **global labour markets**.
- The initiative aims to **reduce unemployment, increase remittance inflows**, and provide **international exposure** to Maharashtra's youth.



About Maharashtra:

- Chief Minister: Devendra Fadnavis
- Governor: Acharya Devvrat
- Capital: Mumbai
- National Parks: Tadoba National Park, Sanjay Gandhi National Park, Chandoli National Park, Gugamal National Park, Navegaon National Park
- Wildlife Sanctuaries: Bhimashankar Wildlife Sanctuary, Koyna Wildlife Sanctuary, Karnala Bird Sanctuary, Melghat Wildlife Sanctuary, Radhanagari Wildlife Sanctuary

India Notifies First Tailings Policy to Recover Critical Minerals

- **India** has notified its **first-ever Tailings Policy** to enable recovery of **critical and strategic minerals** from mining waste such as **tailings, mine dumps and overburden**.
- The policy follows a **Union Budget announcement** on mineral recovery from secondary sources to reduce import dependence and strengthen domestic supply chains.
- **Tailings** are waste materials left after extraction of valuable minerals from crushed ore, usually stored in ponds or dumps.
- Earlier treated as waste, tailings are now recognised as **valuable secondary resources** as they often contain **critical and companion minerals** not economically viable to extract earlier.
- The policy provides a **structured framework** for identification, analysis and economic evaluation of **tailings, mine dumps, slags, anode slimes and red mud**.
- It calls for **inter-ministerial coordination**, mapping of tailing ponds, assessment of mineral content and evaluation of recoverability.

The central government on Monday announced the country's first tailings policy, setting guidelines for exploration of critical minerals from primary as well as the secondary sources like mine dumps and tailings of existing mines.

Tailings refer to the leftover waste material after valuable minerals are extracted from crushed ore.

The government had, in its last Union Budget, announced to launch a policy for "recovery of critical minerals from tailings".

The policy was required because the occurrence of critical and strategic elements is not just restricted to the solid mineral resources under the administrative control of the Ministry of Mines but may also be available in other commodities which are being dealt with by various other ministries.

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- The policy highlights the role of **companion minerals** such as selenium, tellurium, cobalt, rhenium, gold and silver in copper tailings, and germanium, indium and cadmium in zinc ores.
- Recovering minerals from mine waste improves **resource efficiency**, reduces environmental impact and avoids opening new mines.
- Agencies such as the **Indian Bureau of Mines, CMPDI and Atomic Minerals Directorate** will conduct sampling and analysis.
- The initiative supports **critical mineral security** for **electric vehicles, renewable energy and advanced electronics**.
- By utilising tailings, India aims to **cut imports, support clean energy goals and advance Atmanirbhar Bharat**.

India Launches First Open-Sea Marine Fish Farming Project

- **India** has launched its **first-ever open-sea marine fish farming pilot project** in the **Andaman Sea**, marking a shift from coastal aquaculture to **open-ocean farming**.
- The initiative supports **sustainable fisheries, livelihood generation**, and India's expanding focus on the **Blue Economy**.
- The project was launched by **Jitendra Singh**, Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for **Science and Technology**, during a field visit to **North Bay, Andaman Sea**.
- It is described as a landmark effort to unlock the **economic potential of India's oceans**, which remained underutilised for decades.
- The project reflects increased policy attention on **maritime resources since 2014**.
- The pilot focuses on **marine finfish and seaweed cultivation in open-sea conditions**, away from the coastline.
- **Special open-sea cages**, developed by the **National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT)**, are used to withstand strong currents and waves.
- **Deep-water seaweed farming techniques** are being promoted to ensure sustainability and higher productivity.
- The project is implemented through collaboration between the **Ministry of Earth Sciences, NIOT**, and the **Andaman and Nicobar Islands administration**.
- During the launch, **seaweed seeds** were distributed to local fishing communities, and **finfish seeds** were provided for cage-based farming.
- The initiative aims to **diversify income sources** for fishing communities while ensuring **ecologically responsible marine use**.
- The government-led pilot may later be expanded through **public-private partnerships**, depending on outcomes, to accelerate growth in the **Blue Economy sector**.
- **Blue Economy** refers to the **sustainable use of ocean resources** for economic growth, livelihoods, and job creation while preserving marine ecosystems.
- It aims to balance **economic development with environmental sustainability**, supporting fisheries, food security, renewable energy, tourism, and climate resilience.

Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science & Technology, Earth Sciences, and Metallurgical, Processed, Public Grievances, Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, Dr. Jitendra Singh today launched India's first-ever open-sea Marine Fish Farming project from the Andaman Sea.

The Minister described this as one of the first major steps in the direction of realising the Blue Economy through India's vast ocean resources, as envisaged and repeatedly emphasised by PM Shri Narendra Modi. The project was launched on-site at North Bay, the Vijaya Prasad, during the Minister's field visit to the open waters of the Andaman Sea.

Addressing the occasion, Dr. Jitendra Singh said that this initiative represents one of the earliest and most significant steps taken to unlock the economic potential of India's oceans. He noted that India's oceans, much like its Himalayas and mountain ranges, possess immense and diverse resources potential that had not received due attention for decades.

The Minister noted that the nearly seventy years after Independence, India's ocean resources remained largely underexplored. He underscored that since 2014, there has been a fundamental shift in national thinking, recognising that India's vast marine domain holds equal wealth and opportunity for economic growth. He further highlighted the exclusive and heterogeneous nature of India's oceans, noting that the waters, bottom, and waters outside each have distinct characteristics and unique contributions to make to the country's development.

The project is being implemented through collaboration between the Ministry of Earth Sciences, Government of India, its technical arm the National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT), and the UT Administration of Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The pilot initiative focuses on open sea cultivation of marine finfish and seaweed in natural ocean conditions, integrating scientific innovation with livelihood generation.

During the field visit, two major livelihood-oriented interventions were initiated. Under the marine fish component, several seeds were handed over by the Minister to local fishing communities to promote deep-sea oriented cultivation in the open sea. Under the marine farm component, finfish seeds were provided for cage-based cultivation, supported by NIOT developed open-sea cages designed to function in natural ocean environments.

Dr. Jitendra Singh said that while the current projects are being undertaken through government-led collaborations, the experience gained and facility assessments could enable scaling up of such initiatives through public-private participation models in the future. This approach, he noted, would help accelerate employment, expand livelihoods, and complete India's Blue Economy ecosystem.

Later, as part of his visit to the Andaman Islands, Dr. Jitendra Singh also visited the Mahatma Gandhi Marine National Park (MGMPN) near Wundwin, one of the first marine parks of its kind in the country, established in 1983. Spread across 13 islands and surrounded by the Wundwin Trench, the park is renowned for its protected islands such as Jolly Bore and Red Skin. The Minister observed the park's rich and well-maintained marine ecosystem, including diverse coral reefs, mangroves, and diverse marine life such as turtles and a wide variety of fish species.

AWARDS AND HONOURS

Railway Protection Force Officer Chandana Sinha Receives Indian Railways' Highest Award for Child Trafficking Prevention

- **Railway Protection Force (RPF) officer Chandana Sinha** has been conferred **Indian Railways' highest award** for her **exceptional contribution to preventing child trafficking and rescuing vulnerable children** at railway stations and trains.
- **Chandana Sinha** is a **senior RPF officer** known for her **ground-level, child-centric approach** to safety across railway premises.
- She focused not only on enforcement but on **identification, rescue, and rehabilitation** of trafficked and runaway children.
- Her work involved close **coordination with Non-Governmental Organisations, Child Welfare Committees, and State authorities**, strengthening institutional response to trafficking.
- **Railway stations and trains** are frequently used by traffickers due to **high passenger volume and anonymity**, making the Railways a critical intervention point.
- The **Railway Protection Force** plays a frontline role in detecting suspicious movement of minors, and officers like Chandana Sinha enhanced **surveillance, staff training, and early intervention mechanisms**.
- She emphasized **early identification of children travelling alone or under suspicious supervision**, preventing exploitation before it occurred.
- She helped institutionalise **child-friendly protocols within the RPF**, ensuring rescued children were treated as **victims rather than offenders**.
- Her initiatives improved **inter-agency coordination**, enabling faster rescues and safe handover to welfare institutions, leading to a **reduction in trafficking cases on high-risk routes**.
- The **Indian Railways' highest award** is given for **exceptional service and outstanding contribution**, recognising both **operational excellence and humanitarian impact**.
- By honouring an RPF officer for child protection work, **Indian Railways highlighted social responsibility** as a core institutional value alongside safety and efficiency.
- Chandana Sinha's work has strengthened the role of **Indian Railways as a key stakeholder in child protection** and is expected to motivate wider adoption of similar practices.



MEERUT: Children go missing from railway stations every week – lost, led away by traffickers, coaxed onto trains with promises of work, or running from something they can't name.

Over the past three years, **Railway Protection Force** Inspector Chandana Sinha has led the rescue of more than 1,500 of them across UP's rail network. In 2024 alone, her team intercepted 494 children – including 41 trafficked for labour. Of these, 152 children were

rescued by her personally.

For that work, Indian Railways awarded her its highest service honour – the Ati Vishisht Rail Sewa Puruskar – at a ceremony in Delhi on January 9. Hours later, she returned to Lucknow. A report had come in – a child had been seen alone on Platform 3.

About Railway Protection Force (RPF):

- Functions under the **Ministry of Railways**
- Responsible for **protection of railway property and passengers**
- Works with **NGOs and Child Welfare Committees** to rescue trafficked and runaway children
- Supports India's commitments under **child protection and anti-trafficking laws**

APPOINTMENTS & RESIGNATIONS

Shri Praveen Vashista Named Vigilance Commissioner of Central Vigilance Commission

- The Hon'ble **President of India** appointed **Shri Praveen Vashista** as **Vigilance Commissioner** in the **Central Vigilance Commission (CVC)** through a warrant dated **12 December 2025** under **Section 4(1)** of the **CVC Act, 2003**.
- Shri Praveen Vashista took the **oath of office** on **16 January 2026** before the **Central Vigilance Commissioner**, authorised by the President under **Section 5(3)** of the **CVC Act, 2003**.

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- Shri Praveen Vashista is an **Indian Police Service (IPS)** officer of the **Bihar Cadre, 1991 batch**, with over **three decades** of experience in law enforcement, crisis response, and security management.
- He served as **Inspector General (IG)** of the **Economic Offences Wing** and **Criminal Investigation Department** of Bihar, and as **Superintendent of Police (SP)** in sensitive districts such as **Ranchi, Dumka, and Garhwa**.
- He also served in the **Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)** as **SP and Deputy Inspector General (DIG)**, handling complex investigations.
- On central deputation, he held key positions in the **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)**, including **Joint Secretary, Additional Secretary, Officer on Special Duty (OSD)**, and **Special Secretary (Internal Security)**.
- The **Vigilance Commissioner** supervises **vigilance administration** and advises on **corruption-related matters** in Central Government organisations.
- The **tenure** of a Vigilance Commissioner is **four years** or until attaining the age of **65 years**, whichever is earlier.

Shri Praveen Vashista appointed as vigilance Commissioner in the Central Vigilance Commission

Press Note: 18 JAN 2025 10PM by PIB Delhi

The Vice President of India vide warrant dated December 12, 2024 and by virtue of the power vested under Section 4 (1) of the Central Vigilance Commission Act, 2003 has appointed Shri Praveen Vashista as Vigilance Commissioner in the Central Vigilance Commission.

Shri Praveen Vashista holds rank and substantive date of 10th January 2026 as Vigilance Commissioner in the Central Vigilance Commission, who was authorized by the President of India in pursuance of the power conferred in Section 5(3) of the CVC Act 2003.

Shri Praveen Vashista is an Indian Police Service officer of the Bihar Cadre of 1991 batch. He has a distinguished career spanning over three decades, serving in diverse and significant roles such as law enforcement, crisis response, security management.

Shri Praveen Vashista has worked as SO of the Economic Offences Wing and Criminal Investigation Department of Bihar, As Superintendent of Police, he supervised law and order in critical districts like Ranchi, Dumka and Garhwa. He has also served as SP and DPO in CBI.

The central deputation Shri Praveen Vashista has held central positions in Ministry of Home Affairs as Joint Secretary, Additional Secretary, OSD and Special Secretary (Internal Security).

The investigation authority was entrusted by senior officers of the Department of Personnel and Training (DPT), Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), Enforcement Directorate (ED) and the Central Vigilance Commission.

The Central Vigilance Commission Act, 2003, provides for the appointment of a Central Vigilance Commissioner and two Vigilance Commissioners. The tenure of the Vigilance Commissioner is of four years or till the incumbent attains the age of 65 years.



About Central Vigilance Commission :

- The **Central Vigilance Commission (CVC)** is the **apex statutory body** mandated to combat corruption and ensure integrity in the Central Government of India.
- The **CVC** was established in **1964** based on the **Santhanam Committee** recommendations (1962–64) and was granted **statutory status in 1998**, formalised under the **CVC Act, 2003**.
- The CVC consists of a **Central Vigilance Commissioner** and up to **two Vigilance Commissioners**, appointed by the President based on a committee recommendation headed by the **Prime Minister**, with the **Union Home Minister** and **Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha** as members.

ICICI Bank Extends Sandeep Bakshi's Tenure as Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer Until 2028

- **ICICI Bank Limited** has re-appointed **Sandeep Bakshi** as **Managing Director (MD)** and **Chief Executive Officer (CEO)** for a further **two-year term**.
- The new tenure of **Sandeep Bakshi** will be from **04 October 2026 to 03 October 2028**.
- The re-appointment is subject to approvals from the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)**, **stakeholders**, and other statutory authorities, as required.
- **Sandeep Bakshi** was first appointed as **MD & CEO** in **October 2018**, and his previous term was extended till **October 2026**.
- Before becoming **MD & CEO**, he served as **Whole-Time Director (WTD)** and **Chief Operating Officer (COO)** of ICICI Bank.
- **Sandeep Bakshi** has been associated with the **ICICI Group** since **1986** (originally joined ICICI Limited), marking nearly **four decades** of leadership experience.
- During his career, he has held senior positions across various **ICICI Group entities**, including **ICICI Limited, ICICI Lombard General Insurance, ICICI Bank, and ICICI Prudential Life Insurance**.
- Along with Bakshi's re-appointment, the **Board of Directors (BoDs)** of ICICI Bank has also re-appointed **Ajay Kumar Gupta** as **Executive Director (ED)**.



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- **Ajay Kumar Gupta's** tenure as **Executive Director** will be from **27 November 2026** to **26 November 2028**, for a **two-year period**.

Shaea Muhssin Mohammed Al-Zindani Appointed as Yemen's New Prime Minister by Presidential Leadership Council

- Yemen's **Presidential Leadership Council (PLC)** appointed **Shaea Muhssin Mohammed Al-Zindani** as the new **Prime Minister of Yemen** on **15 January 2026**.
- **Shaea Muhssin Mohammed Al-Zindani** was serving as **Foreign Minister of Yemen** (Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates) before his elevation as Prime Minister.
- He succeeded **Salem bin Braik** (Salem Saleh bin Braik), who formally submitted his resignation during a meeting with **PLC Chairman Rashad Al-Alimi** in **Riyadh, Saudi Arabia**.
- **Shaea Muhssin Mohammed Al-Zindani** is a senior Yemeni diplomat and politician, known for his extensive diplomatic experience and role in representing Yemen during a critical political transition.
- In his early career, he served as **Deputy Foreign Minister of Yemen** in the early 1990s (**1990–1991**).
- He was appointed **Yemen's Ambassador to the United Kingdom (UK)** from **1991 to 1994**.
- He later served as **Yemen's Ambassador to Italy** from **2005 to 2010**, with concurrent non-resident accreditation to **Greece, Serbia, Albania, and San Marino**.
- From **2010 onwards**, he served as **Yemen's Ambassador to Jordan** (until 2015) and later as **Ambassador to Saudi Arabia** (2017–2024).
- He also represented Yemen as **Ambassador to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)** of the **United Nations (UN)** from **2008 to 2010**.
- Prior to becoming Prime Minister, he served as **Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates** from **March 2024**.



About Yemen :

- **Capital:** Sanaa
- **Currency:** Yemeni Rial (YER).

DEFENCE NEWS

India, Sri Lanka & Maldives Hold 17th Trilateral Coast Guard Exercise 'DOSTI 17' in Maldives

- The **17th edition** of the biennial trilateral Coast Guard exercise '**DOSTI 17**' commenced in **Male, Maldives**, involving the **Indian Coast Guard (ICG)**, **Sri Lanka Coast Guard (SLCG)**, and **Maldives National Defence Force (MNDF)** Coast Guard from **17–19 January 2026**.
- India's delegation is led by **Director General Paramesh Sivamani**, while Sri Lanka is represented by **Admiral Rohan Joseph**, DG of SLCG.
- The **harbour phase** of the exercise was held from **17–19 January 2026**, followed by an **operational sea phase**.
- During the **harbour phase**, the exercise focused on **MARPOL-based marine pollution response drills**, promoting reciprocal learning and strengthening operational capabilities among participants.



The 17th edition of the DOSTI trilateral maritime drill involving the Indian Coast Guard, Sri Lankan Coast Guard and Maldives National Defence Force has commenced in Maldives.

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- The exercise conducted joint **Visit, Board, Search, and Seizure (VBSS)** drills and developed cross-boarding **Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)** to enhance coordination.
- Activities included live demonstrations of **pollution response equipment** and **tabletop exercises**.
- In the **sea phase**, **ICG ships** (including **ICGS Vajra** and **ICGS Atulya**) and **aircraft** (ICG Dornier) participated alongside the Sri Lankan ship **SLNS Suranimila** to test operational coordination in open-sea conditions.
- The phase focused on **search and rescue (SAR) missions** and **tactical maritime security drills** to address non-traditional security challenges.
- The exercise supports India's **SAGAR (Security And Growth for All in the Region)** vision and **Neighbourhood First policy**, fostering regional maritime cooperation in the **Indian Ocean Region**.

Note :

- **Exercise DOSTI** was initiated in **1991** as a **bilateral exercise** between **ICG and MNDF Coast Guard**, and expanded into a **trilateral exercise** including **Sri Lanka in 2012**.
- The **previous edition** of DOSTI (**DOSTI 16**) was conducted in **February 2024** in the **Maldives**.

About Indian Coast Guard (ICG):

- Established: 1977
- Headquarters: New Delhi
- Director General: Paramesh Sivamani
- Motto: Vayam Rakshamah (We Protect)

Indian Coast Guard and Japan Coast Guard Hold Joint HNS Response Exercise on ICGS Samudra Prahari in Mumbai

- The **Indian Coast Guard (ICG)** and the **Japan Coast Guard (JCG)** conducted a joint **Hazardous and Noxious Substances (HNS)** response drill in **Mumbai**, strengthening maritime partnership and commitment to a **free and open Indo-Pacific**.
- **Japan Coast Guard Commandant Admiral Yoshio Seguchi** led a high-level delegation and visited the **ICG Regional Headquarters (West)**.
- A courtesy meeting was held between **Admiral Seguchi** and **Inspector General Bhisham Sharma**, emphasizing enhanced cooperation and **interoperability** in **maritime safety** and **environmental protection**.
- The joint training exercise was conducted onboard **ICGS Samudra Prahari**, the ICG's **pollution response vessel**, involving the **ICG Pollution Response Strike Team** and the **JCG National Strike Team (NST)**.
- Planning sessions, rehearsals, and classroom interactions were held in **Mumbai** prior to the sea exercise, focusing on **response protocols** for **hazardous chemical spills** at sea.
- A joint demonstration of **HNS response procedures** was reviewed by the **JCG Commandant** and the **ICG Regional Commander**, showcasing coordinated operational mechanisms and shared **best practices**.
- The Japanese delegation also visited **Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL)** to understand India's **shipbuilding capabilities**.

Indian Coast Guard, Japan Coast Guard Conduct Joint HNS Response Drill Onboard ICGS Samudra Prahari In Mumbai



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- The exercise reinforced **operational synergy, disaster response readiness**, and growing **bilateral maritime cooperation** between India and Japan.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited Partners with Viasat to Enhance Indian Navy's Satellite Communication Upgrade

- **BSNL (Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited)** has partnered with **Viasat, Inc. (USA)** to support the next phase of the **Indian Navy's Satellite Communications (SATCOM)** upgrade programme.
- The partnership focuses on integrating **Viasat's Ka-band** satellite systems with **BSNL's L-band** network, enabling **multi-band SATCOM connectivity** for the **Indian Navy (IN)**.
- The collaboration aims to enhance **coverage, reliability, and secure communication** for critical naval operations.
- **Viasat** will manage the programme through its **International Government team** under the **Communication Services** segment.
- **BSNL** will provide **gateway infrastructure, system integration, and strategic support** for the naval SATCOM network.
- **Viasat's satellite communication equipment** has already reached India, with installation scheduled to begin in **late January 2026**.
- The initiative strengthens India's **maritime communication capabilities** and supports the **modernisation of naval communication infrastructure**.



Milma Partners with National Dairy Development Board to Set Up Food-Testing Laboratory in Kochi

- **Kerala Co-operative Milk Marketing Federation (Milma)** has partnered with the **National Dairy Development Board (NDDB)** to operationalise a **food-testing laboratory in Kochi**.
- The laboratory, named **NDDB CALF (Centre for Analysis and Learning in Livestock and Food)** Laboratory, will function as a branch of **NDDB CALF Limited**.
- The laboratory will be inaugurated by **Union Minister of State George Kurian**, highlighting government support for **dairy and food safety initiatives**.
- In its **initial phase**, the laboratory will cater to **quality and safety testing** of **milk and milk products**, serving **Kerala** and neighbouring states.
- The laboratory is **NABL-accredited** by the **National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories**, ensuring adherence to stringent **national quality standards**.
- Facilities have been established for **comprehensive testing** of milk and milk products, with plans to expand services to include **food and agricultural commodities** such as **spices, fruits, vegetables, bakery products, ready-to-eat foods, and fish and allied products**.
- The laboratory's **state-of-the-art instrumentation** and **modern infrastructure** will support state government departments and **food safety authorities** in mitigating food safety risks through advanced testing services.



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- **NDDB CALF Limited** is a **wholly-owned subsidiary** of **NDDB**, headquartered in **Anand, Gujarat**, with over **17 years** of experience providing analytical testing and research services to the **dairy, food, and agricultural sectors**, as well as regulatory authorities.
- This partnership strengthens **Kerala's food safety ecosystem** and enhances **regional capacity** for **scientific quality assurance** in the dairy and food sectors.

Cochin Shipyard Hands Over First HS EcoFreighter Multipurpose Vessel to Germany

- **Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL)** has delivered **MS Heinz**, the first vessel of the **HS EcoFreighter series** of **Multi-Purpose Vessels (MPVs)**.
- The vessel was delivered to **HS Schiffahrts UG & Co, Germany**, marking CSL's expansion in the **international commercial shipbuilding** market.
- **MS Heinz** was designed by **Groot Ship Design, Netherlands**, and constructed in compliance with **Det Norske Veritas (DNV) Classification Rules**.
- The delivery and acceptance were formalized through a **virtual ceremony**, signed by CSL **Director (Operations) S Harikrishnan** and HS Schiffahrts **Director Heinz Josef Schepers**.
- The **7,000 DWT** (Deadweight Tonnage) HS EcoFreighter is an **ice-class vessel**, capable of carrying **project cargo, heavy cargo, steel coils, containers, timber, paper, dry bulk cargoes, and dangerous goods** worldwide.
- The vessel features a **raked stem with Groot Cross-Bow design** for enhanced **speed performance and fuel efficiency**, along with a **transom stern**.
- It has a **single large cargo hold with six movable panels**, allowing flexible cargo configurations, including **grain bulkheads** and a **tween deck arrangement**.
- **Propulsion** is provided by a **medium-speed four-stroke diesel engine** driving a **controllable pitch propeller (CPP)** through a reduction gearbox.
- The **HS EcoFreighter order** consists of **eight vessels**, each valued at approximately **₹110 crore**.



E-commerce Platforms Penalised by Central Consumer Protection Authority for Selling Unauthorised Walkie-Talkies

- The **Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA)** took **suo motu** action against **e-commerce platforms** for selling **unauthorised walkie-talkies**, violating the **Consumer Protection Act, 2019** and **telecom laws**.
- **Notices** were issued to **13 platforms** after identifying over **16,970 non-compliant listings**, including **Amazon, Flipkart, Meesho, JioMart, Meta Platforms Inc. (Facebook Marketplace), Chimiya, Talk Pro**, among others.
- **Final orders** were issued against **8 entities**, imposing **penalties** totaling **₹44 lakh** for **misleading advertisements, unfair trade practices, and violation of consumer rights**.
- The violations involved the sale of **Personal Mobile Radios (PMRs)** operating outside the **licence-exempt 446.0–446.2 MHz band**, without **Equipment Type Approval (ETA)** or proper disclosure of licensing requirements.



- Penalties of ₹10 lakh each were imposed on **Meesho, Meta Platforms (Facebook Marketplace), Flipkart, and Amazon**, while ₹1 lakh each was levied on **Chimiya, JioMart, Talk Pro, and MaskMan Toys**.
- **CCPA guidelines** mandate that platforms must exercise **due diligence**, conduct **regular self-audits**, publish **compliance certificates**, and ensure that no **regulated wireless equipment** is sold without full compliance with the law.
- Proceedings involving **Antriksh Technologies, IndiaMart, TradeIndia.com, Vardaanmart, and Krishna Mart** are at various stages of **investigation or hearing**.

About Central Consumer Protection Authority :

- The **Central Consumer Protection Authority** is a regulatory authority set up under **Section 10** of the **Consumer Protection Act, 2019**, addressing matters affecting **consumer rights**.
- **Chairman (Chief Commissioner) : Nidhi Khare**.

National Centre for Biological Sciences, Bengaluru Develops Deep-Learning Tool 'Disobind' to Predict Binding of Intrinsically Disordered Proteins

- **National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS)**, under the **Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR)**, Bengaluru, has developed a **deep-learning tool** named **Disobind** to predict how **intrinsically disordered proteins (IDPs)** bind to their partners.
- **Intrinsically Disordered Proteins (IDPs)** lack a **fixed three-dimensional structure**, unlike most proteins, and are central to cellular processes such as **signalling networks, gene expression regulation, protein folding, quality control, and formation of cellular condensates**.
- The **flexibility** of IDPs makes them difficult to analyse with **conventional structural biology techniques**, creating a challenge in **molecular biology and disease research**.
- **Disobind** uses **protein language models**, a form of **artificial intelligence (AI)** trained on millions of **protein sequences**, to predict which regions of a disordered protein interact with a **binding partner**.
- The tool does **not** require **prior structural information** or **sequence alignments** and explicitly accounts for the **binding partner**, which is critical for **IDP interactions**.
- Research led by **Kartik Majila** benchmarked **Disobind** against **AlphaFold-Multimer** and **AlphaFold3**, showing **higher accuracy**, especially on previously **unseen protein pairs**.
- When combined with **AlphaFold-Multimer** predictions, **Disobind enhances performance**, highlighting its **complementary value** to structure-based approaches.
- **Disobind** has been released as **open-source software**, making it **freely accessible** to researchers worldwide.



RANKING AND INDEX

India Ranked 6th in Asia Manufacturing Index 2026

- **India** has been ranked **6th among 11 Asian countries** in the **Asia Manufacturing Index (AMI) 2026**, reflecting steady progress but highlighting gaps in competitiveness.
- The ranking underlines the need for **faster reforms and stronger execution** to keep pace with leading Asian manufacturing economies.

- The **Asia Manufacturing Index** is released annually by **Dezan Shira & Associates**, a pan-Asian advisory firm headquartered in **Hong Kong**.
- It assesses manufacturing competitiveness using **8 key pillars: economy, political risk, business environment, international trade, tax policy, infrastructure, workforce, and innovation**.
- These pillars are evaluated through **43 sub-parameters**, providing a detailed comparison of manufacturing readiness and long-term potential across Asia.
- India's **6th position** places it in the **mid-tier** of the Asian manufacturing landscape.
- Strengths highlighted include a **large domestic market, improving infrastructure, and a growing workforce**.
- However, India continues to lag behind top performers in **execution speed, policy stability, and innovation depth**.
- The index indicates that India must further strengthen its manufacturing push through **ease of doing business reforms, better logistics efficiency, skill development, and technology adoption** to improve future rankings.
- **China** retained the **top position** in AMI 2026 due to its scale, strong infrastructure, and integrated supply chains.
- **Malaysia** ranked **second** for the first time, overtaking **Vietnam**, which slipped to **third**.
- Among developed economies, **Singapore** climbed to **fourth**, surpassing **South Korea**, which fell to **fifth**.
- Overall, the rankings highlight **intensifying competition in Asia**, with countries actively upgrading policies, infrastructure, and investment frameworks to attract global manufacturing.



SPORTS NEWS

Vijender Singh Appointed Member of Asian Boxing Council

- Indian boxing icon **Vijender Singh** has been appointed as a **member of the Asian Boxing Council (ABCO)**, strengthening **India's representation in Asian boxing governance**.
- Vijender Singh is **India's first Olympic medallist in boxing**, having won a **bronze medal at the Beijing Olympics 2008**.
- He has represented India for nearly **two decades** in major international events including the **Asian Games, Commonwealth Games, and World Championships**.
- His long competitive career provided exposure to **international training systems, competition structures, and governance models**, aiding his transition from athlete to administrator.
- His appointment reflects **India's growing influence in international sports administration** and recognition of his contribution to boxing.



Photo Credit: PTI

Indian boxing icon Vijender Singh has been appointed as a member of the Asian Boxing Council, marking another significant milestone in his journey from an elite athlete to global sports administrator.

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- The **Asian Boxing Council (ABCO)** plays a key role in **policy formulation, technical standards, and development strategies** for boxing across Asia.
- ABCO works to promote balanced growth between **established and emerging boxing nations** in the region.
- Vijender's inclusion is expected to strengthen **athlete-centric decision-making**, improve **competition structures**, and support **talent development** in Asian boxing.

About Asian Boxing Council (ABCO):

- Type: **Professional boxing organisation**
- Function: **Sanctions title fights in the Greater Asian region**
- Affiliation: **Regional confederation of the World Boxing Council (WBC)**
- Founded: **1985**, at the **WBC Annual Convention in Bangkok, Thailand**
- Founders: **Sahasombhop Srisomvongse** and representatives from several Asian countries
- Leadership: After Sahasombhop's death in 2000, **Pol. Gen. Kovid Bhakdibhumi** became President
- **Purpose of ABCO:**
 - Promote **boxing activities across Asia**
 - Organise **top-rated championship bouts** for Asian fighters
 - Supervise **safe and regulated competition** in the region
- **Members:** Around **20 national members**, including **India, Thailand, China, Japan, Philippines, Kazakhstan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, Qatar, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Indonesia, Kuwait, Iraq, Brunei, Hong Kong, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Singapore, Vietnam, Mexico, Canada**, among others.

India's Aaryan Varshney Becomes 92nd Chess Grandmaster

- Indian chess player **Aaryan Varshney** became **India's 92nd Grandmaster** after securing his final GM norm at the **Andranik Margaryan Memorial Tournament** in **Armenia**.
- **Aaryan Varshney**, a **21-year-old Delhi-based player**, won the **Andranik Margaryan Memorial Tournament** with **one round to spare**.
- He achieved his **third and final GM norm** after holding a crucial **draw against FM Tyhran Ambartsumian** in the **eighth round** of the tournament.
- Securing the GM norm before the final round highlighted his **consistency, composure, and strong performance** at the international level.
- With this achievement, he joined the **elite group of Indian Grandmasters**, reflecting **India's growing dominance in world chess**.
- Aaryan Varshney became the **eighth Grandmaster from Delhi**, underlining the capital's **improving chess ecosystem**, including access to **coaching, tournaments, and competitive exposure**.
- India has now produced **92 Grandmasters**, making it one of the **fastest-growing chess nations** globally.
- The rise of young players like Varshney demonstrates the success of **grassroots development, chess academies, and international exposure programs** in India.



the eighth Grandmaster from the capital of India. | Photo Credit: Aaryan Varshney@Instagram

Aaryan Varshney became the 92nd Indian to earn the title of chess Grandmaster on Thursday.

- The **Grandmaster (GM) title** is awarded by the **International Chess Federation (FIDE)** and requires achieving **three GM norms** along with crossing a prescribed **minimum Elo rating**, making it one of the **toughest titles in competitive sports**.

Vidarbha Wins Maiden Vijay Hazare Trophy

- **Vidarbha** won their **first-ever Vijay Hazare Trophy title**, defeating **Saurashtra by 38 runs** in the final held at the **BCCI Centre of Excellence, Bengaluru**.
- This victory marked a **historic milestone** for Vidarbha in India's premier domestic **List A (50-over) tournament**.
- Vidarbha put up a strong batting performance, posting **317 runs**, driven by a **match-winning century by opener Atharva Taide**, who scored **128 runs**.
- It was Taide's finest List A knock and provided a solid foundation in a high-pressure final.
- In reply, **Saurashtra were bowled out for 279 in 48.5 overs** while chasing 318.
- **Prerak Mankad (88)** and **Chirag Jani (64)** offered resistance with a key partnership, but the required run rate increased after their dismissals.
- Vidarbha's disciplined bowling sealed the title, with **Yash Thakur picking up four wickets**, supported effectively by **Nachiket Bhute and Darshan Nalkande**.
- The **Vijay Hazare Trophy** is named after **Vijay Hazare** and is India's premier domestic one-day competition.
- While Vidarbha have earlier won the **Ranji Trophy**, this was their **first Vijay Hazare Trophy title**, highlighting their growing strength in limited-overs cricket.



Atharva Taide

Atharva Taide's century of rare brilliance in alliance with a disciplined bowling effort powered **Vidarbha** to a facile 38-run win over Saurashtra, and to their maiden Vijay Hazare Trophy title here on Sunday.

Daily CA One- Liner: January 21st

- India's **electronics exports** crossed **\$47 billion** for the first time in **2025**, with **smartphone exports** under the **Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme** contributing nearly **two-thirds** of the total value.
- The **Maharashtra Cabinet** approved the **₹4,775 crore Bembla River Irrigation Project** in **Yavatmal district** and cleared the establishment of a new overseas employment facilitation agency named **MAHIMA**
- **India** has notified its **first-ever Tailings Policy** to enable recovery of **critical and strategic minerals** from mining waste such as **tailings, mine dumps and overburden**
- **India** has launched its **first-ever open-sea marine fish farming pilot project** in the **Andaman Sea**, marking a shift from coastal aquaculture to **open-ocean farming**
- **Railway Protection Force (RPF) officer Chandana Sinha** has been conferred **Indian Railways' highest award** for her **exceptional contribution to preventing child trafficking and rescuing vulnerable children** at railway stations and trains
- **India** has been ranked **6th among 11 Asian countries** in the **Asia Manufacturing Index (AMI) 2026**, reflecting steady progress but highlighting gaps in competitiveness
- Indian boxing icon **Vijender Singh** has been appointed as a **member of the Asian Boxing Council (ABCO)**, strengthening **India's representation in Asian boxing governance**

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- **Vidarbha** won their **first-ever Vijay Hazare Trophy** title, defeating **Saurashtra** by **38 runs** in the final held at the **BCCI Centre of Excellence, Bengaluru**.
- The **World Bank (WB)** approved **USD 286 million** financing for the **West Bengal Health System Reform Program (WBHSRP)** to improve quality of life and life expectancy for over **90 million people** through equitable access to quality healthcare services.
- The **State Bank of India (SBI)** signed a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** with the **Government of Tamil Nadu (TN)** to provide enhanced benefits under the **Corporate Salary Package (CSP)** for **State Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs)** employees.
- **IREDA Global Green Energy Finance IFSC Limited (IGGEFIL)**, a wholly-owned subsidiary of **Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency Limited (IREDA)**, has sanctioned its **first international green energy loan**.
- **SBI Life Insurance** launched '**SBI Life – Smart Platina Advantage**', an individual, **non-linked, non-participating** life insurance savings plan offering long-term **guaranteed benefits** and life insurance protection to support financial goals across life stages, such as children's education, retirement, and wealth creation.
- The Hon'ble **President of India** appointed **Shri Praveen Vashista** as **Vigilance Commissioner** in the **Central Vigilance Commission (CVC)** through a warrant dated **12 December 2025** under **Section 4(1)** of the **CVC Act, 2003**.
- **ICICI Bank Limited** has re-appointed **Sandeep Bakshi** as **Managing Director (MD)** and **Chief Executive Officer (CEO)** for a further **two-year term**.
- Yemen's **Presidential Leadership Council (PLC)** appointed **Shaea Muhssin Mohammed Al-Zindani** as the new **Prime Minister of Yemen** on **15 January 2026**.
- The **17th edition** of the biennial trilateral Coast Guard exercise '**DOSTI 17**' commenced in **Male, Maldives**, involving the **Indian Coast Guard (ICG)**, **Sri Lanka Coast Guard (SLCG)**, and **Maldives National Defence Force (MNDF)** Coast Guard from **17–19 January 2026**.
- The **Indian Coast Guard (ICG)** and the **Japan Coast Guard (JCG)** conducted a joint **Hazardous and Noxious Substances (HNS)** response drill in **Mumbai**, strengthening maritime partnership and commitment to a **free and open Indo-Pacific**.
- **BSNL (Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited)** has partnered with **Viasat, Inc. (USA)** to support the next phase of the **Indian Navy's Satellite Communications (SATCOM)** upgrade programme.
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