NATIONAL NEWS

Regional Artificial Intelligence (AI) Impact Conference 2025

The Regional Artificial Intelligence Impact Conference 2025 was held at the State Convention Centre, Shillong, Meghalaya as part of a series of regional events leading up to the India–AI Impact Summit 2026 scheduled for February 2026.

The conference focused on the themes of People, Planet and Progress, aligning with the government's goal to make AI accessible and impactful across India, including remote regions.

The Union Minister (responsible for AI) addressed the event virtually and highlighted the government's commitment to democratizing AI under the IndiaAI Mission.

Under the IndiaAI Mission, over ₹10,300 crore has been allocated to build AI capabilities, infrastructure, and research across India.

As part of scaling AI infrastructure, 38,000 GPUs have been onboarded to support research institutions, startups, and educational bodies at affordable cost.

The government plans to establish hundreds of AI and data labs nationwide, some of which are already functional in the Northeast region.

In Meghalaya, an AI Lab at NIELIT Shillong is already operational. Additional labs are planned at ITI Shillong, Shillong Polytechnic, and ITI Tura, expanding access to AI ecosystems beyond metropolitan areas.

A major mission objective is AI skill development, with a target to train around 1 million people to enhance employability and foster innovation.

MEITY and MEA Launch Paperless Passport Verification through DigiLocker

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MEITY) and the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) have launched a paperless, contactless passport verification process through DigiLocker.

Citizens can now access and share their Passport Verification Records (PVRs) directly from the Issued Documents section of their DigiLocker accounts, streamlining the passport application and verification process.

PVRs can be viewed and stored digitally, eliminating the need for physical documents or printing.

DigiLocker ensures data integrity and authenticity, reducing the risk of forgery or tampering.

Digital PVRs can be shared with authorized agencies like passport offices for processing applications or background checks without submitting paper copies.

PVRs now join other government-issued documents in DigiLocker, enabling centralized digital access to vital identity records.

This initiative reinforces the government's Digital India mission, promoting efficient, transparent, and citizen-friendly services.

Once generated, a citizen's PVR is automatically pushed to their DigiLocker account, where it can be accessed, downloaded, shared, or digitally verified, and authorized government departments can process applications faster.

RailTel Signs Agreement with Nokia

RailTel Corporation of India Limited, a Navratna Central Public Sector Enterprise under the Ministry of Railways, signed an agreement with Nokia Corporation to upgrade its National Long-Distance (NLD) and metro optical transport networks across India.

The upgrade will use Nokia's advanced Internet Protocol (IP) routing and optical technologies to enhance high-speed connectivity, resilience, and network capacity for enterprise and broadband customers.

The collaboration focuses on modernizing RailTel's infrastructure using a vendor-neutral, open-network model to ensure future scalability and adaptability.

Technologies deployed include Nokia's 7750 Service Router (SR), Broadband Network Gateway (BNG), and Carrier-Grade NAT (CG-NAT) to support growing data consumption and large-scale traffic management.

Nokia announced the successful upgrade of RailTel's Dense Wavelength Division Multiplexing (DWDM) NLD network along with deployment of CG-NAT and metro optical transport infrastructure, improving service delivery and network reliability.

The upgrade leverages Nokia's 1830 Photonic Service Switch (PSS) and advanced transponders, increasing network transport capacity while reducing cost per bit through reuse of existing infrastructure and unused channel spectrum.

The deployment enables high-capacity Lambda transmission and express traffic lanes between cities, significantly improving overall network performance.

The unified network infrastructure improves intercity traffic resilience, reduces operational costs, and enhances broadband and enterprise-grade service capabilities.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Canada Announces Delisting of Syria and HTS from Terror-Related Sanctions

Canada has announced policy changes by removing Syria from its list of states supporting terrorism and revoking the terror designation of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS).

The decision reflects a broader shift in Western engagement with the new political leadership in Damascus following last year's transition of power.

The announcement follows HTS ousting Bashar al-Assad and taking control of the Syrian government.

Canada stated that the action aligns with similar steps taken by the United Kingdom and the United States.

Syria was initially added to Canada's terrorism-support list in 2012 during the civil conflict triggered by a crackdown on pro-democracy protests.

HTS, previously sanctioned for its association with Al-Qaeda, had been considered a major extremist threat

The move supports Syria's transitional authorities as they attempt to distance themselves from prior militant activities and build a more inclusive political structure.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Nokia Partners with Bharti Airtel to Open Airtel's Network Capabilities to Developers in India

Nokia Corporation, a telecom firm from Finland, has entered into a strategic partnership with Bharti Airtel Limited to make Airtel's network capabilities accessible to developers and enterprises across India.

The collaboration will enable Airtel's pan-India network capabilities to be opened for third-party innovation through Nokia's Network as Code platform supported by a developer portal.

After successful trials, Airtel will roll out its network Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) on a subscription basis via Nokia's Network as Code platform.

The partnership will give developers, system integrators, and enterprises access to tools needed to build next-generation digital solutions, including 5G, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and advanced computing.

Network APIs will allow telecom operators to virtualise parts of their network, enabling them to securely share select features and data with developers.

This API-enabled model will support the creation of customised, high-performance, and advanced digital applications tailored to industry needs.

BANKING

SEBI Grants In-Principle Nod to NHAI's Raajmarg Infra Investment Trust as an InvIT

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has granted in-principle approval for registering Raajmarg Infra Investment Trust (RIIT) as an Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvIT) under SEBI InvIT Regulations, 2014.

The approval strengthens NHAI's asset monetization program by enabling monetization of National Highway assets.

RIIT aims to create a high-quality, long-term investment instrument targeted at retail and domestic investors.

For final registration, RIIT must fulfill conditions within six months, including appointment of directors, submission of financial statements, and compliance with regulatory requirements.

Raajmarg Infra Investment Managers Pvt. Ltd. (RIIMPL) was incorporated in Nov 2025 as the Investment Manager for RIIT.

RIIMPL is a collaborative venture with equity participation from major financial institutions such as SBI, PNB, NaBFID, Axis Bank, Bajaj Finserv Ventures, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, IDBI Bank, IndusInd Bank, and Yes Bank.

NHAI has earlier monetized assets worth ₹48,995 crore via the Toll-Operate-Transfer (TOT) model.

NHAI has also raised ₹43,638 crore through four rounds of Private InvITs, attracting both domestic and global investors.

The Public InvIT framework ensures transparency, investor protection, strong reporting, and strict compliance standards.

The initiative will boost public participation in developing world-class National Highway infrastructure.

NPCI's Global Arm NIPL Signs Pact with ACLEDA Bank

NPCI International Payments Limited (NIPL), the global arm of NPCI, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with ACLEDA Bank Plc., the first publicly listed commercial bank in Cambodia, to enable QR-based cross-border transactions between India and Cambodia.

The partnership advances regional payment interoperability, supporting the ASEAN vision of inclusive digital economies and promoting innovation in digital payments.

In March 2023, the National Bank of Cambodia (NBC) signed an MoU with NIPL to enable cross-border payments between the two countries.

In May 2023, NBC selected ACLEDA Bank as the sponsoring bank to collaborate with NIPL in developing QR payment systems.

NIPL has expanded the global footprint of UPI through partnerships with BENEFIT (Bahrain), PayPal (Global), Razorpay Curlec (Malaysia), NTT (Japan), and Magnati (UAE).

The Service Agreement establishes the technical and operational framework to integrate NPCI's UPI network with ACLEDA Bank's KHQR ecosystem.

Under the MoU, ACLEDA Bank will operate Cambodia's national QR network—Bakong (KHQR)—on behalf of the National Bank of Cambodia.

The collaboration aims to enable UPI acceptance in Cambodia and KHQR acceptance in India, enhancing bilateral digital payment connectivity.

QR-based cross-border payments between India and Cambodia are expected to launch in Semester 2 of 2026.

The MoU will ensure seamless QR-code-based transactions for Indian and Cambodian travellers across tourist attractions, restaurants, retail stores, and other establishments.

For example, Indian tourists in Cambodia will be able to use UPI-enabled apps to make payments at over 4.5 million KHQR merchant touchpoints.

The collaboration ensures secure, interoperable payments through UPI and KHQR apps, benefiting businesses and improving consumer convenience in both countries.

Vrutti Collaborates with HSBC India

Vrutti, part of the Catalyst Platform, in partnership with HSBC India, has launched 'FPO Shakti', a blended, stage-based financing model aimed at enabling Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) to access capital.

The FPO Shakti initiative aims to bridge the financing gap that prevents FPOs from growing beyond the early incubation stage.

The new facility is supported by HSBC India and Friends of Women's World Banking (FWWB) India, which acts as the Facility Manager.

In its initial cohort, the initiative will support 15 early-growth FPOs, with plans to scale to over 100 organisations in future phases.

The model integrates stage-appropriate financial instruments, including revolving funds, guarantees, and revenue-linked finance, combined with technical assistance delivered by Business Support Organisations (BSOs).

The initiative incorporates digital record-keeping systems, enhancing transparency, lender confidence, and supporting a readiness framework for governance, business planning, and market linkages.

Each FPO will undergo a 24-month (2-year) structured journey, focusing on governance, market systems, financial discipline, and digital enablement.

India has over 44,000 registered FPOs, making it one of the world's largest networks of farmer-owned collectives.

APPOINTMENTS & RESIGNATIONS

Chief Executive Officer of Bank of America India

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has approved the appointment of Vikram Sahu as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Bank of America N.A. (BANA) in India for a three-year term.

Vikram Sahu succeeds Kaku Nakhate, who has now become the Chair of Bank of America in India while continuing as the India Country Executive (a role held since 2025).

Vikram Sahu has nearly three decades of global financial experience, having held leadership roles in India, Hong Kong, Singapore, the USA, and Europe.

He previously worked at Goldman Sachs for over 14 years, serving as the Head of Research for South Asia.

Before becoming CEO, he held the position of Global Head of Equity Research at Bank of America.

His appointment as CEO is in addition to his role as India Country Executive, and he continues to report to Jin Su, President for Asia-Pacific.

As CEO, he chairs BANA India's Local Management Team (LMT) and remains a member of Bank of America's Asia-Pacific Executive Committee.

He also chairs the India Country Leadership Team (CLT) and oversees strategic growth, governance, and regulatory compliance for Bank of America in India.

Chairman of ONGC

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC), chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved a one-year extension of Arun Kumar Singh's tenure as Chairman of Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC).

The extension is effective from 7 December 2025 to 6 December 2026.

Arun Kumar Singh has a career spanning four decades across various segments of the petroleum industry.

He previously served as Director (Marketing) of Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) from 2018 to 2021.

Arun Kumar Singh assumed charge as Chairman of ONGC on 7 December 2022.

IMPORTANT DAYS

International Civil Aviation Day

International Civil Aviation Day is observed annually on 7th December to raise global awareness about the significance of international civil aviation for social and economic development.

The day was established by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), a specialized agency of the United Nations, to highlight the impact of civil aviation worldwide.

Civil aviation has transformed tourism, business, and cultural connectivity, enabling faster travel and fostering international relations.

The first International Civil Aviation Day was celebrated in 1994, marking ICAO's 50th anniversary.

In 1996, the United Nations General Assembly officially recognized 7th December as International Civil Aviation Day, emphasizing its global importance.

Armed Forces Flag Day

Armed Forces Flag Day is observed annually on 7th December to honor the martyrs and the personnel of the Indian Armed Forces who protect the nation's borders.

The day was first proposed in 1949 by the then Defence Minister, who set up a committee to observe it annually and collect funds through the distribution of flags.

The primary objective is to collect funds from citizens to support welfare programs for serving personnel, ex-servicemen, and their families.

It is also known as the Flag Day of India and serves as a platform for citizens to express gratitude and pay homage to military personnel, including those who sacrificed their lives in service.

Funds collected are used for rehabilitation, education, healthcare, and welfare schemes for the armed forces community, reinforcing national respect and support for defense personnel.