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NATIONAL NEWS

India Unveils Roadmap to Become Top-3 Quantum Economy by 2047

NITI Aayog's Frontier Tech Hub, in collaboration with International Business Machines (IBM), launched a national Quantum Technology Roadmap aiming to position India among the top three quantum economies by 2047.

The roadmap focuses on developing indigenous quantum hardware and software capabilities, reducing dependence on imports and fostering the growth of globally competitive quantum companies and startups (at least 10 startups are expected to emerge from this initiative).

The initiative supports India in capturing a strong share of the global quantum software and services market and deploying quantum technologies across key sectors such as defence, energy, healthcare, logistics, finance, and cybersecurity to boost national security and technological leadership.

The roadmap aligns with the National Quantum Mission (NQM) approved by the Union Cabinet in April 2023, with a sanctioned budget of ₹6,003.65 crore for 2023–24 to 2030–31, aimed at advancing research and industrial growth in quantum computing, communication, sensing, materials, and devices.

Under the NQM, the government will establish Thematic Research Hubs (T-Hubs), support start-ups, strengthen academia–industry collaboration, and build infrastructure for quantum innovation.

The new roadmap builds on this mission with a focus on commercialisation and global competitiveness.

The initiative is also expected to offer strategic advantages in national security, cybersecurity, and defence communication systems, and enable breakthroughs in areas like drug discovery, diagnostics, material science, energy optimisation, and smart logistics.

The roadmap strengthens India's long-term vision under Digital India and Atmanirbhar Bharat, positioning the country as a future leader in emerging deep-tech sectors and global quantum markets.

India to Host 20th Session of UNESCO Inter-Governmental Committee

India will host the 20th session of the Inter-governmental Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) from 8th to 13th December 2025 at the Red Fort, New Delhi.

The event will bring together global representatives to review and evaluate nominations for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Intangible Cultural Heritage Lists.

India has officially nominated Diwali for inclusion in the UNESCO ICH list, highlighting its cultural, spiritual, and social significance as a festival celebrating the victory of light over darkness and good over evil.

Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) includes community-based living traditions such as oral expressions, performing arts, rituals, festivals, and traditional craftsmanship, as defined under the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

The Red Fort, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, will serve as the venue, symbolically connecting India's tangible and intangible heritage.

The six-day session will focus on: Evaluation of new nominations by member nations, Review of already listed intangible cultural elements and Policy discussions and international cooperation for safeguarding living heritage

Diwali's nomination has undergone evaluation by UNESCO assessment bodies and will be placed for final consideration during this session, with India expressing strong confidence in approval.

India already has several cultural traditions inscribed under UNESCO ICH, including Yoga (2016), Kumbh Mela (2017), Ramlila (2008), Chhau Dance (2010), and Nowruz (2016 — multinational nomination).

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Department of Biotechnology and BIRAC Renew Partnership with CEPI

The Department of Biotechnology (DBT) under the Ministry of Science and Technology (MoS&T), along with Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC), has renewed its 'Engagement Strategy' with the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) for cooperation in vaccine and allied technology R&D.

The renewal agreement was formally signed on 18 September 2025, continuing the partnership established in October 2019 for an initial period of 5 years.

Since 2019, DBT-BIRAC and CEPI have collaborated to promote vaccines for epidemic-prone diseases such as Chikungunya, Coronavirus, and Monkeypox (M-pox).

Two Indian facilities—the DBT-BIRAC-THSTI Biosafety Laboratory and Experimental Animal Facility—have been recognised by CEPI and supported vaccine development from pre-clinical to Phase-3 trials.

Multiple training programmes on vaccine development have been conducted, enhancing India's expertise and capacity in vaccine R&D.

The expanded engagement strategy now covers pathogens listed on the WHO Blueprint Priority Diseases and includes monoclonal antibodies (mAbs), lab-made proteins that mimic the immune system to target specific cells and antigens.

BANKING

Fino Payments Bank to Convert into a Small Finance Bank

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has granted in-principle approval to Fino Payments Bank Limited (FPBL) to convert into a Small Finance Bank (SFB), making it the 1st Payment Bank in India to receive such approval.

The approval was given after assessing its application under the 'On-Tap' Licensing Guidelines for Small Finance Banks, aimed at enhancing financial inclusion.

As per RBI norms, only payments banks controlled by residents and operating for at least 5 years are eligible for SFB conversion, a criterion that Fino Payments Bank (operational since 2017) now meets.

The conversion will allow Fino to accept larger deposits, offer credit facilities, and expand its customer base, including individuals and small enterprises.

This approval follows the RBI's decision to allow AU SFB to convert into a Universal Bank, while applications from Jana SFB and Ujjivan SFB remain pending or returned.

With Fino's conversion, only large payments banks such as Airtel Payments Bank, Jio Payments Bank, and India Post Payments Bank remain active, while Paytm Payments Bank is barred from new deposits and activities due to regulatory violations.

After conversion, Fino will join 11 existing SFBs: AU, Equitas, Suryoday, Utkarsh, Jana, Unity, Capital, ESAF, Ujjivan, Shivalik, and Slice SFB.

Fino received board-level approval in July 2023 to pursue this shift and applied formally for an SFB licence in December 2023.

Life Insurance Corporation of India Partnered with Yes Bank

The Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), India's largest life insurance company, has entered into a strategic bancassurance partnership with Yes Bank Limited, a leading private sector bank.

The partnership was formally announced in the presence of Doraiswamy, MD and CEO of LIC, and Prashant Kumar, MD and CEO of Yes Bank, along with senior officials from both organisations.

The objective of this bancassurance partnership is to increase the accessibility of life insurance across India and support the national vision of 'Insurance for All by 2047'.

As part of the collaboration, Yes Bank customers will gain access to LIC's comprehensive life insurance products through the bank's extensive branch network and digital platforms.

The partnership strengthens LIC's distribution network and enhances Yes Bank's product offerings, promoting wider financial inclusion.

Reserve Bank of India Issues Revised Gold Metal Loan Directions, Effective 1 April 2026

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) issued revised Gold Metal Loan (GML) Directions as part of updates to the regulatory framework for gold-related lending, effective 1 April 2026.

The revised rules amend the Master Direction on Import of Goods and Services and the Gold Monetisation Scheme (GMS).

Under the new framework, nominated banks importing gold can extend import-linked GML to entities engaged in jewellery manufacturing or sales for domestic or export markets.

Non-manufacturer jewellers are also eligible to borrow if they outsource jewellery production to registered artisans, goldsmiths, or manufacturing units.

Gold Metal Loans (GML) refer to loans provided by eligible banks to specified borrowers in the form of physical gold metal.

The GML scheme was originally launched in 1998 under the Export-Import Policy 1997–2002 to support the working capital needs of the jewellery sector.

Banks are permitted to set interest rates on GML based on the cost of procuring or holding gold, with repayment tenors aligned to FTP rules for exporters and up to 270 days for non-export borrowers.

GML repayment will be in INR, but for GMS-linked GML, borrowers may optionally repay the principal in physical gold under specified conditions.

Banks must submit quarterly GML reports to the RBI, with all revised provisions becoming effective from April 1, 2026.

Punjab National Bank Debuts Premium RuPay Metal Credit Card 'Luxura'

Punjab National Bank (PNB), India's 2nd largest Public Sector Bank (PSB), has launched a premium RuPay credit card 'Luxura' in New Delhi to boost its presence in the high-value credit card segment.

During the launch, PNB appointed Harmanpreet Kaur, Captain of the Indian Women's Cricket Team, as its first female brand ambassador.

The Luxura credit card is available for individuals in the age group of 21–70 years.

The income eligibility requires salaried applicants to earn ₹2.5 lakh per month, while non-salaried applicants must have a minimum annual income of ₹30 lakh.

PNB has fixed the credit limit for the Luxura card between ₹1 lakh and ₹5 lakh.

Applicants must pay a joining fee of ₹9,000 (including GST) and an annual fee of ₹7,500 (including GST) to avail the Luxura card benefits.

PNB also launched updates to its PNB One 2.0 mobile banking platform to improve digital banking services.

The bank introduced a digital rooftop solar financing facility under Digi Surya Ghar to support renewable energy adoption.

PNB joined the India International Bullion Exchange (IIBX) to enable online gold bullion transactions.

AWARDS & PRIZES

FIFA Peace Prize at 2026 FIFA World Cup

Donald Trump received the first-ever FIFA Peace Prize during the 2026 Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) World Cup official draw the Kennedy Center, Washington, D.C.

The award was presented by FIFA President Gianni Infantino to recognise what FIFA described as Trump's "extraordinary actions to promote peace and unity around the world."

The FIFA Peace Prize is a newly launched honour aimed at recognising individuals contributing to peace and unity through sports and diplomacy. It includes a trophy, medal, and certificate.

The prize selection is reportedly overseen by a new FIFA Social Responsibility Committee, whose membership has drawn scrutiny due to involvement of controversial figures.

During his acceptance speech, Trump credited himself for attempting to resolve or de-escalate global tensions, including: India–Pakistan standoff, Conflicts in Gaza, Congo, Israel–Iran, Armenia–Azerbaijan disputes and Thailand–Cambodia border tension

Trump referred to the award as "one of the greatest honours of my life."

The decision has also raised concerns over the politicisation of international sports, especially after reports of strengthening ties between FIFA and Trump's network, including Ivanka Trump's association with a USD 100 million FIFA-linked education initiative.

Supporters of Trump praised the award, while peace activists, diplomats, and international observers criticised the move, reviving debates around Trump's long-standing pursuit of the Nobel Peace Prize.

SPORTS

Cristiano Ronaldo Partners with Perplexity Artificial

Intelligence

The football legend Cristiano Ronaldo announced his partnership with Perplexity Artificial Intelligence, joining the company as both an investor and brand ambassador.

As part of the collaboration, Ronaldo launched a personalized Artificial Intelligence feature called the “Ronaldo Hub”, designed for fans to explore his football journey through curated content and interactive tools.

The Ronaldo Hub allows users to:

View exclusive, private photos from Ronaldo’s archive

Ask Artificial Intelligence-generated questions about his personal and professional journey

Relive iconic moments, including famous goals

Access detailed timelines of his achievements and milestones

This marks one of the first major integrations of celebrity-driven personalised Artificial Intelligence, setting an example for athlete–technology partnerships.

Perplexity is an Artificial Intelligence-powered search and assistant platform offering multimodal responses, voice interaction, and real-time verified results. It positions itself as a competitor to ChatGPT and Google Gemini.

With Ronaldo’s global reach of over 650 million social media followers, the partnership is expected to help Perplexity expand in regions such as Latin America, Asia, and the Middle East, where Ronaldo has a massive fan base and Artificial Intelligence usage is rapidly evolving.

IMPORTANT DAYS

International Anti-Corruption Day 2025

International Anti-Corruption Day 2025 is observed annually on 9 December to promote awareness about the negative impacts of corruption on governance, society, and national development.

The observance highlights how corruption affects key sectors such as health, education, justice, democracy, and economic development, leading to inequality, weakened institutions, and reduced public trust.

Corruption has existed since ancient times, and some of the earliest recorded references to anti-corruption practices appear in:

The Code of Hammurabi (Babylonia)

The Great Edict of Horemheb (Egypt)

Arthashastra (India)

The modern concept of public welfare and public interest began emerging strongly in the 19th century, leading policymakers and reformers worldwide to view corruption not just as unethical behaviour but as a serious barrier to societal progress.

Bribery and corrupt practices led to officials compromising quality of work, ethics, accountability, and service delivery, gradually affecting all levels of society and contributing to institutional decay and public distrust.