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DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 12-01-2026

NATIONAL NEWS

India to Host Inaugural India International Conference on Democracy and Election Management (IICDEM) 2026

The Election Commission of India (ECI) will host the first India International Conference on Democracy and Election Management (IICDEM) 2026 from January 21-23, 2026 at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi.

It was organized by the India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management (IIIDEM) under the aegis of ECI.

Theme: "Democracy for an inclusive, peaceful, resilient and sustainable world".

India holds the Chairship of the Council of Member States of International IDEA for 2026.

Academic Contribution: 36 thematic groups from IITs, IIMs, NLUs, and IIMCs to deliberate on electoral technology, governance, legal frameworks, and media.

Conference Structure: Inaugural session, EMB leaders' plenary, working group meetings, thematic sessions, launch of ECINet, and showcasing India's electoral innovations.

Objective is to strengthen democratic resilience, promote inclusive governance, ensure peace and stability, and link democracy with sustainable development.

IICDEM 2026 is positioned as the largest international electoral conference hosted by India, promoting India as a global hub for democratic governance and election management.

IIIDEM Dwarka campus to demonstrate India's capacity in training electoral professionals and sharing best practices internationally.

India's First Fully Paperless District Court Inaugurated in Kalpetta, Kerala

Chief Justice of India Surya Kant virtually inaugurated India's first fully paperless district court in Kalpetta, Wayanad, Kerala.

The initiative marks the complete digital transformation of district judiciary operations, covering case filing to final judgment.

Developed in-house by Kerala High Court, the system integrates Artificial Intelligence (AI) to assist judicial processes and improve efficiency.

AI-powered case summaries, interactive Q&A for case analysis, digital annotations, voice-to-text for depositions, automated transcripts, and secure digital signatures.

Significant reduction in clerical delays, minimized court visits, lower litigation costs, no physical file storage, instant order communication, and faster case processing.

Online case filing, digital document uploads, AI-assisted analysis, digital hearing notices, electronic proceedings, AI-generated summaries, and secure digital judgment delivery.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

UN General Assembly Proclaims 2026 as International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) declared 2026 as the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP 2026) during its 76th session held in New York, USA.

IYRP 2026 aims to raise global awareness about the importance of rangelands and pastoralist communities and promote sustainable management practices and secure livelihoods.

The UNGA resolution for IYRP was adopted on 28 February 2022, initiated by Mongolia and supported by 60 UN Member States.

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has been designated as the lead implementing agency, working in collaboration with international and national stakeholders.

Key objectives of IYRP 2026 include sharing traditional pastoralist knowledge, encouraging innovation, building partnerships, and supporting policy frameworks for sustainable rangelands.

Rangelands cover nearly 50% of Earth’s land surface and support over 2 billion people and more than 50% of the world’s livestock.

These ecosystems are crucial for biodiversity conservation, ecosystem regulation, and enhancing climate resilience, making them vital for global environmental sustainability.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

IIT Madras Unveils Indigenous 3.1 Petaflop Supercomputer ‘Param Shakti’

Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT Madras) has launched Param Shakti, an indigenously developed supercomputing system with a computing capacity of 3.1 petaflops.

Param Shakti can perform over 3.1 quadrillion calculations per second, placing it among India’s

most powerful supercomputers.

The supercomputer will significantly enhance advanced research in areas such as aerospace, materials science, climate modelling, drug discovery, and advanced manufacturing by drastically reducing computation time.

Param Shakti has been built entirely in India by the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC) using the RUDRA server series and operates on open-source software.

The system functions as part of the Param Rudra supercomputing cluster, supported by integrated power, cooling, and data-centre infrastructure.

The project is funded under the National Supercomputing Mission (NSM), jointly implemented by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) and the Department of Science and Technology (DST).

BANKING

RBI Proposes Mandatory 3-Year Cooling-Off Period for Co-operative Bank Directors After 10 Years

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has proposed amendments to the Governance Directions, 2025 for Urban Co-operative Banks (UCBs) and State/Central Co-operative Banks, introducing a mandatory cooling-off period for directors.

The proposal aims to prevent circumvention of tenure limits, as RBI observed instances where directors resigned briefly and re-entered boards through re-election or co-option, defeating the intent of the Banking Regulation Act.

The existing framework prescribes a maximum continuous tenure of 10 years for directors, effective from June 2020 for UCBs and April 2021 for State and Central Co-operative Banks, which was enhanced from 8 years to 10 years in August 2025.

As per the proposed amendment, a director completing 10 years on a bank's board can be reappointed only after a cooling-off period of three years, irrespective of the mode of appointment.

During the three-year cooling-off period, the individual cannot be associated with the same bank in any capacity, except as a member or customer, though they may serve on the board of another bank.

For the purpose of calculating "continuous tenure," any interruption of less than three years will still be counted as continuous service, preventing artificial breaks to reset tenure limits.

Axis Finance Launches Collateral-Free Vyapar Business Loan for MSMEs

Axis Finance Limited, a Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC), has launched Axis Finance Vyapar Business Loan, a collateral-free credit product aimed at supporting Micro and Small Businesses

(MSMEs).

The Vyapar Business Loan specifically targets semi-urban and rural markets, enhancing access to formal credit for small entrepreneurs traditionally underserved by banks.

Under this scheme, loans up to ₹10 lakh are offered with flexible repayment tenures and zero collateral requirement, reducing financial entry barriers for MSMEs.

The loan is designed to empower businesses operating in the retail, service, and trading segments, helping them meet working capital and growth needs.

DEFENCE

Indian Navy's First Training Squadron Undertakes Long-Range Training Deployment to Southeast Asia

The First Training Squadron (1TS) of the Indian Navy (IN) began its Long-Range Training Deployment (LRTD) to Southeast Asia as part of the 110th Integrated Officers' Training Course (IOTC), providing real operational sea experience to naval cadets.

Long-Range Training Deployment (LRTD) is a specialised naval training mission in which ships with cadets and trainees sail for extended durations across long distances, often entering foreign waters.

The deployment comprises vessels from the Indian Navy (IN) and Indian Coast Guard (ICG), including INS Tir, INS Shardul, INS Sujata, and ICGS Sarathi.

During the LRTD, trainees gain hands-on exposure in seamanship, navigation, and professional naval operations across diverse maritime environments.

The squadron is scheduled to undertake port calls in Singapore, Indonesia, and Thailand, enabling training engagements and maritime interactions.

The deployment strengthens India's Act East Policy, reinforces ties with Southeast Asia, and supports the vision of a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific.

Indian Navy Sets Up New Naval Detachment at Haldia, West Bengal

The Indian Navy (IN) has initiated a new naval base at Haldia, West Bengal (WB) to strengthen operational presence, maritime surveillance, and rapid response capabilities in the Bay of Bengal (BOB).

The Haldia detachment aims to enhance maritime security, coastal defence, rapid response, and protection of sea lanes amid rising extra-regional naval activity.

The base is located on the Hooghly River near the Haldi River, approximately 130 km from the Sandheads, leveraging the Haldia Dock Complex with a jetty, admin-logistics facilities, and accommodation for around 100 personnel.

The naval detachment will conduct coastal security, anti-piracy patrols, maritime domain awareness, humanitarian aid, disaster relief, and non-combatant evacuation operations (NEOs).

The facility will primarily support small, high-speed warships, including Fast Interceptor Crafts (FICs) and New Water Jet Fast Attack Crafts (NWJFACs), in line with Defence Acquisition Council (DAC)-approved procurement for coastal security enhancement.

India's existing naval commands include the Western Naval Command (WNC) in Mumbai, Maharashtra, the Eastern Naval Command (ENC) in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, and the Southern Naval Command (SNC) for training in Kochi, Kerala.

IMPORTANT DAYS

World Hindi Day 2026

World Hindi Day 2026 is observed on 10th January to promote the Hindi language globally.

Also known as Vishwa Hindi Divas, the day honors the Hindi language and its contributors.

The first World Hindi Conference (Vishva Hindi Sammelan) was held in 1975 in Nagpur, Maharashtra, marking the inception of World Hindi Day.

The Hindi Conference is conducted every three years to spread awareness about the language and its literary contributors.

Celebrations are held by public and private organizations in India, while Hindi-speaking communities abroad also observe the day with cultural and literary events.

The day emphasizes the promotion of Hindi literature, language awareness, and global recognition of Hindi as a medium of communication and culture.

OBITUARY

Renowned Ecologist and Conservationist Madhav D. Gadgil

Renowned ecologist, scholar, and conservationist Madhav Dhananjaya Gadgil passed away at the age of 83 in Pune, Maharashtra.

Madhav Gadgil, widely recognized as the father of modern Indian ecology, was a distinguished Indian ecologist, academic, author, and environmental conservationist.

He began his career as a scientist and ecological researcher in the 1960s and joined the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru.

He became a founding faculty member of the Centre for Ecological Sciences (CES) at IISc, where he

played a key role in designing ecology curricula, establishing long-term ecological field studies, and training students in scientific methods.

From 1981 to 2005, he served as Professor of Ecology at IISc, conducting research on forest ecosystems and biodiversity and contributing to environmental education and sustainable development.

In 2010, he was appointed Chairman of the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel (WGEEP), popularly known as the Gadgil Commission.

He served as a member of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) and the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT).

He played a pivotal role in establishing India's first Biosphere Reserve, the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve, and in framing the Biological Diversity Act, 2002.

He authored more than 250 scholarly papers on ecology and conservation, many of which were translated into multiple Indian languages.

He was awarded the Padma Shri in 1981 in the field of Civil Service and the Padma Bhushan in 2006 in the field of Science and Engineering.

In 2024, he was honoured with the United Nations (UN) Champion of the Earth Award.

His other major awards include the Tyler Prize for Environmental Achievement (2015), Harvard Centennial Medal (2002), and the Vikram Sarabhai Award (1990).

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