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NATIONAL NEWS

AMRUT Mitra Mahotsav 2026 Celebrates Women SHGs' Role in Urban Water Services

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) organised the AMRUT Mitra Mahotsav 2026 at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi to recognise the contributions of women Self-Help Groups (SHGs) working as AMRUT Mitras under Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation 2.0 (AMRUT 2.0).

The national-level event witnessed participation of over 1,000 women and 300 officials from 30 States and Union Territories.

AMRUT Mitras from states including Arunachal Pradesh, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Chhattisgarh, and Karnataka shared their experiences of improving urban water services and livelihoods through community participation.

Women SHG members are actively involved in water quality testing, billing and collection for water supply services, community mobilisation and awareness campaigns, operation and maintenance of water infrastructure, and Faecal Sludge Management operations.

These initiatives have strengthened transparency, accountability, and citizen engagement in urban water governance.

He emphasised that women play a crucial role in managing household and community water resources and their participation improves efficiency and sustainability of water services.

The government is also expanding opportunities for SHG women in emerging urban water management sectors, including reuse and recycling of treated wastewater, digital water management systems, smart metering, and data-driven monitoring.

Under AMRUT 2.0, reuse of treated wastewater is being promoted to support a circular and sustainable water economy, with AMRUT Mitras helping communities monitor water systems and promote responsible water usage.

The government plans to expand the AMRUT Mitra model to 5,000 cities, which will create additional livelihood opportunities for women, strengthen community participation in water security, and enhance women's leadership in urban governance.

Government Launches Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) 2.0

The Ministry of Jal Shakti is implementing Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) 2.0 to ensure safe drinking water supply to every rural household in India.

The Union Government has extended the mission till December 2028 with an increased financial outlay and structural reforms focusing on digital transformation, quality infrastructure, community participation, and sustainability.

A key meeting on JJM 2.0 implementation was chaired by C. R. Paatil, Union Minister for Jal Shakti, with participation from State and Union Territory Ministers of Public Health Engineering Department (PHED), Rural Water Supply (RWS), and Panchayati Raj Departments.

V. Somanna, Minister of State for Jal Shakti, also participated in the meeting to discuss the implementation roadmap after Cabinet approval for the extension of the mission.

During the meeting, C. R. Paatil launched the “Sujal Gaon ID”, a unique digital identifier for every rural drinking water scheme in India.

The Sujal Gaon ID system digitally maps rural water infrastructure and service areas on a unified national platform to ensure real-time monitoring and transparency.

Under the initiative, 1.64 lakh Sujal Gaon IDs have been created across 31 States and Union Territories, and these are linked with about 67,000 Sujalam Bharat IDs.

The digital platform integrates scheme infrastructure identification and service area mapping, enabling data-based decision-making and improved monitoring of water supply systems.

The initiative supports the government’s vision of building a technologically empowered “Viksit Bharat @2047”.

JJM 2.0 promotes Jan Bhagidari (people’s participation) through programmes such as Jal Arpan and Jal Utsav.

These initiatives aim to reduce the drudgery of women, improve public health, create rural employment, and ensure universal tap water coverage by 2028.

Gujarat Successfully Launches First Sounding Rocket Near Dholera

Gujarat created history after its first sounding rocket was successfully launched, marking the state’s entry into India’s private space technology ecosystem.

The rocket was developed by Ahmedabad-based startup Omspace Rocket and Exploration Private Limited.

The single-stage sub-orbital sounding rocket successfully reached an altitude of around 3 kilometres, completing its primary technical objectives.

The mission aimed to test advanced rocket technologies and demonstrate the capability of private companies in India’s space sector.

During the launch, several critical aerospace systems were tested, including advanced propulsion technology, avionics and onboard control systems, and an autonomous recovery mechanism.

The rocket carried a mini-satellite payload designed to collect weather-related atmospheric data during the mission.

The payload demonstrated how sounding rockets can support atmospheric research, weather monitoring, and environmental data collection at different altitudes.

The launch received regulatory approvals and coordination from Airports Authority of India, Directorate General of Civil Aviation, and Indian Coast Guard.

The mission was conducted under authorization from Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACe), which regulates private sector participation in India's space activities.

The launch aligns with the Gujarat Spacetech Policy 2025–2030, which aims to encourage startups and innovation in the space technology sector.

The initiative supports the development of indigenous space technologies and strengthens India's technological self-reliance.

The launch near Dholera, an emerging industrial and technology hub, reflects Gujarat's ambition to become a key centre for India's private space industry.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Technology Hub Partners with Japan External Trade Organisation

Technology Hub (T-Hub), India's largest startup incubator based in Hyderabad, Telangana, has entered into a strategic partnership with the Japan External Trade Organisation (JETRO) to enhance collaboration between Indian and Japanese deep-tech startups.

The partnership aims to create high-impact innovation networks across deep-tech and manufacturing sectors.

Japanese startups, corporates, and investors will gain access to India's innovation ecosystem, while Indian startups will receive structured pathways to expand into Japan.

The collaboration targets sectors like pharma and medical equipment, space and aerospace, defence, mobility, smart infrastructure, deep-tech, Artificial Intelligence (AI), emerging technologies, Industry 4.0, Internet of Things (IoT), and cloud computing.

The partnership includes curated startup exchange programs, corporate open-innovation engagements, market access support, regulatory guidance, and investor connect platforms.

This initiative aligns with the India-Japan bilateral agenda on technology cooperation, startup ecosystem integration, and innovation-driven economic growth.

The collaboration builds on T-Hub's previous engagements with Japanese corporations like NEC, Suzuki, and Toyota.

BANKING

PayU Partners with CoRover.ai to Launch Multilingual Voice-Enabled Payments

PayU has entered into a strategic partnership with ai, the creator of BharatGPT, to enable AI-driven agentic payments in India.

Under the collaboration, PayU's secure payment infrastructure will be integrated with CoRover's BharatGPT-powered conversational AI platform, enabling voice-first and multilingual payment experiences.

The system will support over 100 Indian languages and dialects, allowing users to make payments through natural voice conversations with AI agents.

The partnership is one of the first collaborations between a sovereign large language model (LLM) provider and a payment aggregator for AI-based payment execution.

The collaboration will explore integrating National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) innovations such as UPI Circle and UPI Reserve Pay for AI-initiated transactions.

Early use cases include voice-based UPI payments on Afterlife, the first-ever digital succession planning platform, powered by CoRover's Voice AI.

The partnership aims to create a trusted AI-led payment experience that is scalable, voice-first, multilingual, and designed for the diverse Indian market.

Future expansion plans include agentic payment solutions across sectors such as e-commerce, travel, OTT platforms, and BFSI.

NSE of India Launches Gold 10 Grams Futures Contract in Commodity Derivatives Segment

The National Stock Exchange of India (NSE) has launched a Gold 10 Grams Futures Contract in its Commodity Derivatives Segment, effective March 16, 2026, after receiving SEBI approval.

The trading unit and delivery unit of the contract are fixed at 10 grams, and it will be traded under the symbol "GOLD10G."

The contract price will be quoted per 10 grams of gold, with a minimum tick size of ₹1 per 10 grams.

NSE has set a daily base price limit of 6%, which can be extended to 9% after a 15-minute cooling-off period if the limit is breached.

The contracts will be monthly futures, with the last trading day being the final calendar day of the

expiry month, or the previous working day if it falls on a holiday.

The delivery will be compulsory, with 10 grams of 999 purity gold, serially numbered and supplied by LBMA-approved suppliers or other NSE-approved suppliers, along with a quality certificate.

Delivery will be facilitated through designated clearing house facilities in Ahmedabad.

DEFENCE

Indian Navy Joins United States-Led Multinational Exercise Sea Dragon 2026

The Indian Navy is participating in Exercise Sea Dragon 2026, a United States Navy-led multinational anti-submarine warfare (ASW) exercise held in Guam throughout March 2026.

The exercise is hosted at Andersen Air Force Base and aims to enhance maritime cooperation and ASW capabilities in the Indo-Pacific region.

Participating forces include the United States Navy, Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF), Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force, Royal New Zealand Air Force, and the Indian Navy.

Exercise Sea Dragon is part of broader Indo-Pacific defence cooperation initiatives to strengthen maritime security and counter evolving submarine threats.

The exercise involves complex training scenarios over two weeks to test crews' ability to detect, track, and respond to simulated and live submarine targets.

The training focuses on speed, precision, and coordinated mission execution, enhancing interoperability between allied navies and air forces.

The exercise also provides an opportunity for the RAAF to improve operational readiness and build stronger partnerships with regional allies.

The P-8A Poseidon fleet of the RAAF plays a key role, performing long-range strike, intelligence-gathering, surveillance, and reconnaissance operations.

Poseidon aircraft are equipped with advanced sensors and communication systems to detect and track submarines and surface vessels over vast maritime areas.

The exercise strengthens coordination and operational compatibility among international counterparts during multinational maritime operations.

Anti-submarine warfare training is increasingly significant as submarine operations play a crucial role in modern naval strategy.

APPOINTMENTS & RESIGNATIONS

Whole-Time Member of Securities and Exchange Board of India

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC), chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved the appointment of Kompella Venkata (K.V.) Ramana Murty as Whole-Time Member (WTM) of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI).

K. V. Ramana Murty has been appointed for a term of three years from the date of assuming charge or until further orders.

With this appointment, the total number of Whole-Time Members (WTMs) on the SEBI board has increased to four.

V. Ramana Murty is a 1991-batch officer of the Indian Defence Accounts Service (IDAS).

Before joining SEBI, he served as Additional Controller General of Defence Accounts (CGDA) in the Ministry of Defence (MoD).

He had earlier served as a part-time member of the SEBI Board as a representative of the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MoCA).

The SEBI Board consists of a Chairperson, 4 Whole-Time Members, and 4 Part-Time Members, including representatives from the Ministry of Finance (MoF), Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MoCA), and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

Other Whole-Time Members of SEBI include Kamlesh Chandra Varshney, Sandip Pradhan, and Amarjeet Singh.

Whole-Time Members are responsible for day-to-day regulatory functions and policy implementation within SEBI.

They oversee key areas such as Market Intermediaries, Corporate Finance, Market Regulation, Investigation, Enforcement, Surveillance, Information Technology, and Investor Protection.

The position became vacant after the completion of tenure of WTM Ananth Narayan G on October 9, 2025.

Member of the National Commission for Scheduled Castes

Dr. Partha Biswas holds a Ph.D. in Defence & Strategic Studies and has pursued higher education in Defence Studies, Human Resources, and Human Rights.

He completed his studies at reputed institutions including the University of Calcutta, Jadavpur University, and Kanpur University.

Dr. Biswas was awarded a Post-Doctoral Fellowship under the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi.

He has made significant contributions to academic research through publications, journal articles,

and books.

His research areas include defence policy, strategic affairs, human rights, and international relations.

His work reflects strong engagement with governance, public policy, and social inclusion.

The Commission works towards protection of constitutional safeguards and the promotion of welfare and socio-economic development of Scheduled Castes (SCs) in India.

38th President of Chile

Jose Antonio Kast Rist, founder and leader of the Republican Party of Chile, was sworn in as the 38th President of Chile for a four-year term, following his victory in the 2025 Chilean presidential election.

Kast received the Piocha de O'Higgins, a traditional symbol of the Chilean presidency, from outgoing President Gabriel Boric Font, marking the formal transfer of power.

Union Minister of State Kirti Vardhan Singh (MEA) represented the Government of India at the inauguration.

Kast, 60 years old, defeated Jeannette Jara, a communist candidate from Boric's coalition, in December 2025 run-off elections, winning on his third attempt.

He succeeds left-wing President Gabriel Boric, signifying Chile's most pronounced shift to the right since 1990.

Born in Santiago, Kast has been in politics for 30 years and founded the Republican Party in 2019 after breaking from Chile's mainstream conservative party in 2016.

Kast resigned from his party before taking office, a symbolic gesture to show independence from party politics.

SPORTS

India Tops Medal Table at World Para Athletics Grand Prix 2026 with 208 Medals

India delivered an outstanding performance at the World Para Athletics Grand Prix 2026 held at Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, New Delhi.

The three-day international event featured 257 athletes from eight countries competing in various track and field events.

India finished at the top of the medal table with a total of 208 medals, comprising 75 gold, 69 silver and 64 bronze medals.

The host nation dominated the competition, recording the highest number of podium finishes among all participating countries.

Russia finished second in the medal standings with 35 medals, while Bosnia and Herzegovina secured the third position with three medals.

Several Indian para-athletes delivered remarkable performances, contributing significantly to the country's dominance in the tournament.

Preeti Pal, a double Paralympic bronze medallist, won her second gold medal of the event in the women's 200m T35–37 race.

India's dominance was further highlighted by multiple podium sweeps, where Indian athletes secured all three medal positions in certain events.

In the men's shot put F57 category, Shubham Juyal won the gold medal with a throw of 14.45 metres.

In the men's 200 metres T37–T44 race, Rakeshbhai Bhatt won the gold medal with a timing of 25.20 seconds, leading an all-Indian podium finish.

In the men's 800 metres T53–T54 event, Manojkumar Sabapathi secured the gold medal, further strengthening India's position at the top of the medal standings.

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