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DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 19-01-2026

NATIONAL NEWS

Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia Launches Speed Post 24 and Speed Post 48 Services

Union Minister for Communications Jyotiraditya Scindia announced the launch of two new India Post services: Speed Post 24 and Speed Post 48.

These services ensure time-bound delivery within 24 hours and 48 hours, respectively.

The announcement was made during a programme held at Pichhor in Shivpuri district of Madhya Pradesh.

The initiative is being seen as a major step towards modernisation of postal services in India.

According to the Minister, Speed Post 24 and Speed Post 48 will set a new benchmark for punctual, reliable and fast delivery across the country.

During the event, Jyotiraditya Scindia inaugurated the renovated Pichhor sub-post office, developed at a cost of ₹2 lakh.

He also laid the foundation stone and conducted the ground-breaking ceremony for a new sub-post office building at an estimated cost of ₹1 crore 11 lakh.

These initiatives aim to strengthen postal infrastructure and improve service delivery at the grassroots level.

Andhra Pradesh Approves Dagadarthi Greenfield Airport in Nellore District

The Andhra Pradesh Cabinet has approved the Dagadarthi Greenfield Airport project in Nellore district.

With this approval, Dagadarthi will become the 8th airport in Andhra Pradesh, strengthening the state's aviation network.

The project aims to improve regional connectivity, boost logistics and industrial growth, and integrate air transport with ports and highways.

The Dagadarthi airport is strategically located with strong connectivity to national highways, industrial clusters, and major ports.

It is close to Krishnapatnam Port and Ramayapatnam Port, enhancing port-led development and exports.

Proximity to industrial hubs such as KRIS City and Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Limited Special Economic Zones positions the airport as a key driver of manufacturing, agri-logistics and services-led growth in southern Andhra Pradesh.

The project has received in-principle clearance from the Ministry of Civil Aviation.

The state government has issued a Request for Proposal to invite private players for development, operation and maintenance.

The airport will be developed under a long-term concession framework, following a public–private partnership model.

The airport will be developed in multiple phases over an area of 1,332.80 acres.

Punjabi Singer Kaka Launches ‘Friendo’ Women’s Safety Mobile Application

Punjabi singer Kaka has launched a women’s safety mobile application named Friendo, marking his initiative beyond the music industry.

The launch reflects increasing concern over crimes against women in India and highlights the role of technology and social responsibility in creating safer communities.

Friendo is currently in the testing phase and is available only for Android users.

The application focuses on providing quick emergency assistance and digital support tools for women and girls.

Friendo is a mobile safety application designed to help women during emergency situations.

It provides instant access to protective tools that can be activated quickly when a user feels unsafe.

Kaka described the app as a social responsibility project, aimed at women empowerment rather than commercial profit.

The app seeks to bridge the gap between victims and immediate help by integrating technology, connectivity and community support.

It is free to download and designed for easy use even in high-stress situations.

A dedicated SOS button allows users to send instant alerts to trusted contacts.

The app supports live location sharing, enabling contacts or nearby users to track the user’s real-time location.

Alternative triggers such as shake detection and voice commands are provided for situations where manual phone usage is difficult.

These features ensure that help can be requested even when direct phone operation is not possible.

Friendo includes advanced and discreet safety tools for enhanced protection.

A stealth mode allows the app to function without drawing attention.

The app can automatically record audio or video, helping in evidence collection during emergencies.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

India Launches Logo and Website for BRICS Presidency 2026

India has officially begun preparations for its BRICS Presidency 2026 by launching the official logo and dedicated website.

The announcement was made by External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, marking the formal start of India’s chairship preparations.

The move reflects India’s vision for a people-centric, inclusive and development-oriented presidency amid rising global uncertainty.

India’s BRICS Presidency 2026 aims to harness the collective potential of BRICS nations for global welfare and shared development.

According to S. Jaishankar, India will assume the chairship at a significant milestone, as BRICS completes 20 years in 2026.

Over time, BRICS has evolved into a major cooperation platform for emerging markets and developing economies.

India’s approach will focus on people-centric development, dialogue and practical cooperation, while adapting to changing global realities and expanded BRICS membership.

The theme of India’s BRICS Presidency 2026 is “Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability.”

The theme highlights India’s belief that collective cooperation can address shared global challenges in an inclusive and balanced manner.

Jaishankar stated that India’s approach is inspired by the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and follows a humanity-first philosophy.

Key focus areas include development for all, capacity building, promotion of innovation and long-term sustainability across member countries.

The BRICS 2026 logo symbolises unity in diversity and blends tradition with modernity.

The petals of the logo incorporate the colours of all BRICS member countries, representing equality, shared purpose and mutual respect.

According to Jaishankar, the logo reflects how BRICS derives strength from the collective contributions of its members while respecting distinct identities.

BANKING

India’s First Regional Rural Bank to Launch Fully Solar-Powered Mobile ATM Van ‘TGB on Wheels’

Tripura Gramin Bank (TGB) created a national milestone by becoming the 1st Regional Rural Bank (RRB) in India to introduce India’s first fully solar-powered mobile Automatic Teller Machine (ATM) van, named ‘TGB on Wheels’.

The initiative represents a significant step towards sustainable, eco-friendly, and inclusive banking services, particularly benefiting rural and remote areas of the country.

The pioneering ATM Van initiative of TGB was formally inaugurated in July 2023 by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman under the Ministry of Finance (MoF) during her visit to Tripura.

TGB on Wheels provides uninterrupted mobile ATM and banking services, ensuring access even in regions with limited or unreliable electricity supply.

The project was launched with the support of the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), highlighting institutional backing for rural financial inclusion.

At present, Tripura Gramin Bank operates 3 solar-powered ATM vans across Tripura, strengthening last-mile banking connectivity.

For this innovative and sustainable banking initiative, TGB was honoured with the prestigious SKOCH Silver Award, recognizing excellence in governance and innovation.

SBI to Facilitate India–Israel Bilateral Trade Settlements in INR

State Bank of India (SBI), the only Indian bank with a branch in Israel, plans to facilitate bilateral trade between India and Israel in Indian Rupees (INR).

Trade settlements will be done through the Special Rupee Vostro Account (SRVA) mechanism, as permitted by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), allowing exporters and importers to settle trade in INR.

SBI’s Tel Aviv branch, opened in 2007, has remained fully operational despite the pandemic and ongoing regional conflicts, demonstrating strong resilience.

The bank will assist Indian workers in Israel by enabling remittances to India through NRI accounts and fintech partnerships.

The initiative aligns with deepening economic ties, including progress towards an India–Israel Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and the recently signed Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT).

SBI’s plan supports rupee-denominated trade settlements, allowing Israeli exporters and importers to receive and make payments in INR through SRVA accounts linked to invoices.

The Tel Aviv branch has secured all necessary regulatory approvals and actively engages with stakeholders, including the Israel-India Chamber of Commerce, to promote awareness of INR trade settlements.

SBI is expanding services for the growing Indian workforce in Israel, particularly in construction and agriculture, facilitating NRI accounts and exploring partnerships with fintech firms and local banks.

The rupee trade initiative coincides with intensified diplomatic engagement between India and Israel, including high-level visits and discussions between Narendra Modi and Benjamin Netanyahu.

SBI’s expanded role positions it as a key financial bridge, supporting the next phase of India–Israel economic cooperation and promoting closer financial integration.

RBI Grants Innoviti Approval to Operate as Online and Offline Payment Aggregator

Innoviti Technologies Private Limited,a payments-centric retail Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) platform, received a Certificate of Authorization from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to operate as a Payment Aggregator (PA) under the Payments and Settlement Systems (PSS) Act, 2007 across India.

The RBI authorisation allows Innoviti to manage both online and offline (in-store) payment transactions, expanding its operational scope nationwide.

Innoviti was initially authorised in March 2024 as an online Payment Aggregator, and the new licence now covers physical retail payments as well.

The expanded PA licence enables seamless, secure and compliant payment processing for enterprises and Small & Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs).

Innoviti operates India’s largest offline payments platform, branded Innoviti UniPay, serving leading enterprise clients across the country.

Amazon Pay Launches Fixed Deposit Services in Partnership with 7 Banks and NBFCs

Amazon Pay has launched fixed deposit (FD) services on its fintech app as part of its expansion into fixed-income assets.

The platform has partnered with two NBFCs – Shriram Finance and Bajaj Finance – and five banks, including Shivalik Small Finance Bank, Suryoday Small Finance Bank, South Indian Bank, Slice, and Utkarsh Small Finance Bank.

Users can start investing in FDs with a minimum amount of ₹1,000 and access multiple institutions without opening separate bank accounts.

Deposits made through the app are insured up to ₹5 lakh per depositor per bank under DICGC (Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation) rules.

The move reflects a trend where fintech platforms act as distribution partners for banks and NBFCs, enabling deposit mobilisation and earning commission-based income.

Amazon Pay's FD initiative allows users to invest in fixed income assets through partner banks and NBFCs, offering a convenient and insured investment option.

Fintechs like Stable Money, money, MobiKwik, and others have similarly partnered with regulated entities to extend FD offerings in India.

Take rates on fixed deposits for fintechs are modest and depend on deposit size and tenure as per arrangements with partner banks.

This initiative strengthens Amazon Pay's position in financial services beyond digital payments, supporting retail investment penetration in India.

RANKS, INDICES & REPORTS

Responsible Nations Index to be Launched in New Delhi

A new global assessment framework named the Responsible Nations Index will be launched on January 19.

The index will be released by the World Intellectual Foundation.

The launch event will take place in New Delhi in the presence of former President of India Ram Nath Kovind.

The initiative comes at a time when countries face shared challenges related to sustainability, governance and global stability.

The Responsible Nations Index is a global index designed to evaluate how responsibly countries function in an interconnected world.

It covers 154 countries, making it one of the broadest international indices in terms of scope.

The index is built using transparent and globally sourced data, ensuring credibility and cross-country comparability.

Its objective is to encourage nations to focus not only on economic growth but also on social justice, environmental protection and global cooperation.

By identifying strengths and gaps, the index aims to promote responsible governance worldwide.

The index is structured around three core dimensions.

Internal responsibility focuses on dignity, justice and overall well-being of citizens.

The launch of the index is supported by leading Indian institutions such as Jawaharlal Nehru University, Indian Institute of Management Mumbai, and the Dr Ambedkar International Centre.

These collaborations add academic depth and policy relevance to the initiative.

Henley Passport Index 2026

The Henley Passport Index 2026 has ranked India at 80th position globally, reflecting a modest improvement in international travel access.

Indian passport holders now have visa-free, visa-on-arrival or e-visa access to 55 destinations, improving from 85th rank last year.

Despite this progress, significant visa restrictions remain for major destinations such as Europe and North America, continuing to shape Indian travel planning.

The Henley Passport Index is published by Henley & Partners and is considered the global benchmark for passport strength.

It ranks passports based on the number of destinations accessible without a prior visa or with visa-on-arrival.

The index uses exclusive data from the International Air Transport Association (IATA), making it one of the most credible measures of global mobility.

The 2026 edition evaluates 277 countries and territories, including sovereign states, regions and special administrative zones.

This wide coverage allows for a comprehensive and comparative assessment of international travel freedom.

India’s 80th rank places it alongside Nigeria and Algeria.

Regional neighbours Bangladesh and Pakistan rank lower than India, highlighting a mobility gap within South Asia.

The rankings underline the contrast between India and advanced economies with stronger passport power.

Singapore holds the world’s most powerful passport, with access to 192 destinations.

Japan and South Korea jointly rank second, allowing access to 188 destinations, reflecting strong diplomacy and global trust.

European countries dominate the top ranks, with several European Union nations offering access to over 185 destinations, showcasing the strength of European integration.

Afghanistan ranks 101st, holding the weakest passport in the world, with access to only 24 destinations.

APPOINTMENTS & RESIGNATIONS

Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg Appoints Dina Powell McCormick as President and Vice Chairman

Mark Zuckerberg, Founder and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Meta Platforms Inc., announced the appointment of Dina Powell McCormick as President and Vice Chairman of Meta to strengthen its Artificial Intelligence (AI) strategy.

Dina Powell McCormick has over 25 years of experience in global finance, national security, and economic development.

She worked for 16 years at Goldman Sachs as a partner, management committee member, and head of Global Sovereign Investment Banking.

She served in public service as Deputy National Security Advisor (NSA) under President Donald Trump and held senior roles in the White House and State Department under President George W. Bush.

Dina Powell McCormick has held board positions at major corporations, including Meta and Exxon Mobil.

Her recent role was as Vice Chair, President, and Head of Global Client Services at BDT and MSD Partners.

Abhishek Dev Gets One-Year Extension as APEDA Chairman

Abhishek Dev has received a one-year extension as Chairman of Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA), approved by the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) on the proposal of the Department of Commerce.

As per the DoPT order dated January 5, 2025, his deputation is extended beyond February 8, 2026, or until further orders, whichever is earlier.

Abhishek Dev was initially appointed Chairman of APEDA in July 2023 and has been leading the organisation since then.

Abhishek Dev is a 2007-batch Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer of the AGMUT cadre and previously served as Director of Census Operations at the Andaman and Nicobar Islands in 2021.

IMPORTANT DAYS

Indian Army Day 2026

Indian Army Day 2026 is observed on 15th January 2026.

The day marks the 75th birth anniversary of Indian Army Day.

Indian Army Day is celebrated to commemorate the historic moment when Field Marshal K M Cariappa took over as the first Indian Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army from the British Commander-in-Chief.

The formal and final transfer of command took place on 15 January 1949, which is observed annually as Indian Army Day.

During World War I, around one million Indians volunteered to serve in the British Army, and nearly 90,000 Indian soldiers lost their lives in the war.

In World War II, approximately 50 percent of the officers involved in military engagements were Indians, highlighting their significant role.

As the Indian independence movement intensified in 1946, loyalty within the British-led Indian armed forces weakened.

A majority of the army and navy divisions either rebelled or resigned during this period.

Although the British military structure continued to be Indianised even after independence, the complete transfer of command was achieved on 15 January 1949, which is commemorated through Indian Army Day celebrations.

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