DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 19-12-2025

NATIONAL NEWS

India to Establish Maitri II Antarctic Research Station by 2032

India is set to expand its polar research presence with Maitri II, a next-generation research station in East Antarctica, expected to be completed by 2032.

Maitri II will replace the existing Maitri I, operational since 1989 in the Schirmacher Oasis, and will provide modern, all-weather facilities to support year-round scientific research.

The station will upgrade India's research infrastructure in Antarctica, including state-of-the-art laboratories, ice-core storage systems, and facilities for biological and microbial research.

India's Antarctic programme began in 1981 with Dakshin Gangotri, which ceased operations around 1989. Since then, Maitri and Bharati stations have supported research in meteorology, glaciology, geology, atmospheric sciences, biology, zoology, and seismology.

The total estimated cost of Maitri II is ₹2,000 crore, with ₹29.20 crore approved by the Ministry of Earth Sciences for pre-investment activities including architectural design, site planning, and DPR preparation.

Advanced logistics and infrastructure will ensure uninterrupted operations during both Antarctic summer and harsh winter months.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Nepal Lifts Decade-Long Ban on ₹200 and ₹500 Indian Currency Notes

Nepal has lifted its decade-long ban on carrying high-denomination Indian currency, including ₹200 and ₹500 notes.

Individuals can now carry Indian currency up to ₹25,000 per person, applicable to both Nepali and Indian citizens.

The decision was taken in a Nepal Cabinet meeting on December 15, 2025, following amendments by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to the Foreign Exchange Management (Export and Import of

Currency) Regulations, 2015.

Under the revised rules, Indian, Nepali, and Bhutanese nationals can carry higher-denomination Indian notes while travelling to and from India.

The Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) will issue a formal circular after notification in the Nepal Gazette, legalising these transactions.

The move is expected to boost Nepal's tourism and hospitality sectors, particularly in border towns that rely heavily on Indian visitors.

This decision strengthens India-Nepal economic ties and facilitates cross-border trade and travel.

Trump Administration Launches $1 Million "Gold Card" Visa for Expedited U.S. Residency

The Trump administration officially launched the "Trump Gold Card" visa programme, offering a fast-track pathway for non-U.S. citizens to live and work in the United States.

Applicants are required to pay an initial USD 15,000 processing fee to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) through the official website Trumpcard.gov.

After payment, applicants must undergo background vetting and security clearance.

Upon successful clearance, applicants must make a USD 1 million contribution (gift) to obtain the Trump Gold Card visa.

The Trump Gold Card functions similarly to a U.S. Green Card, but provides expedited residency benefits.

President Donald Trump described the Gold Card visa as a "stronger and more powerful" residency pathway compared to the traditional Green Card.

A corporate version of the Trump Gold Card has also been introduced.

Under the corporate Gold Card, companies can secure expedited visas for employees by paying USD 2 million per employee.

The programme is aimed at attracting high-net-worth individuals and corporate investments into the United States.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

India Launches DHRUV64

India achieved a major milestone in technological self-reliance with the launch of DHRUV64, the country's first fully indigenous 1.0 GHz, 64-bit dual-core microprocessor.

The processor has been designed and developed by the Centre for Development of Advanced

Computing (C-DAC) under the Microprocessor Development Programme (MDP), with support from the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY).

DHRUV64 strengthens India's domestic semiconductor design ecosystem and enhances indigenous capability in advanced computing hardware.

DHRUV64 is a high-performance, homegrown microprocessor operating at 1.0 GHz with a 64-bit dual-core architecture, enabling improved multitasking, higher efficiency, and better reliability.

Its 64-bit architecture allows handling of large data sets and complex computing tasks, making it suitable for next-generation digital systems.

The processor supports seamless integration with external hardware, offering flexibility for diverse real-world applications.

The processor is designed for both strategic and commercial applications, including 5G infrastructure, automotive systems, industrial automation, consumer electronics, and the Internet of Things (IoT).

Its secure and stable performance makes it valuable for applications requiring long-term reliability and mission-critical operation.

The launch of DHRUV64 aligns with national initiatives such as the India Semiconductor Mission, reinforcing India's vision of becoming a technology creator rather than just an assembly hub.

BANKING

SEBI Grants In-Principle Approval to National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange Limited

The National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange Limited (NCDEX) received in-principle approval from the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) to launch a Mutual Fund (MF) transaction platform.

The SEBI approval permits NCDEX to establish a platform enabling investors to buy and sell Mutual Fund units after fulfilling regulatory requirements.

The proposed MF transaction platform will facilitate easy access and seamless MF transactions for investors.

National Commodity Clearing Limited (NCCL), a wholly owned subsidiary of NCDEX, will manage the Clearing and Settlement operations of the platform.

Clearing will involve validation of trade details, while Settlement will ensure fund transfer from investors to Mutual Funds and allocation of MF units.

The MF transaction platform will function independently from NCDEX's commodity trading infrastructure.

The platform will also remain separate from future equity trading systems, allowing faster rollout and operational flexibility.

The initiative marks NCDEX's diversification into the Mutual Fund distribution ecosystem under SEBI regulation.

ADB Sanctions USD 846 Million Loan to Strengthen Skill Development and Employability in India

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) approved a USD 846 million loan (about ₹7,000 crore) to India to boost skills and employability.

The funding supports the programme "Supporting Pradhan Mantri Skilling and Employability Transformation through Upgraded ITIs (PM-SETU)".

The PM-SETU programme aims to create a future-ready workforce for manufacturing and emerging technology sectors.

The initiative aligns with national priorities such as Skill India and Make in India.

Under the programme, 650 Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) will be modernised across 12 states.

The ITI modernisation will follow a hub-and-spoke cluster model.

The programme focuses on upgrading infrastructure, training equipment, and digital systems to deliver industry-aligned, demand-driven courses.

The project proposes to upgrade 5 National Skill Training Institutes (NSTIs) into Centres of Excellence.

The upgraded NSTIs will strengthen advanced trainer development and improve the quality of instructors

The programme introduces governance reforms through Public–Private Partnerships (PPPs).

PPPs will provide greater institutional autonomy to ITIs and enhance industry participation in curriculum design, assessment, and placements.

Training will be expanded in high-growth sectors such as renewable energy, electric mobility, advanced manufacturing, and the green and digital economy.

Kerala Grameena Bank Partners With Fyno

Fyno, an intelligent communications hub for banks and financial institutions, has partnered with Kerala Grameena Bank (KGB) to streamline and govern all customer communication workflows.

The unified platform enables centralised management of customer communications, ensuring timely and accurate message delivery with improved visibility, control, and regulatory compliance.

The partnership aligns with the RBI's focus on customer service quality, grievance redressal, and mandatory multilingual accessibility, increasing operational efficiency of banks.

DEFENCE

India–UAE Joint Military Exercise DESERT CYCLONE 2025

The Indian Army contingent has departed for the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to participate in the 2nd edition of the India–UAE Joint Military Exercise DESERT CYCLONE-II.

Exercise DESERT CYCLONE-II will be held at Abu Dhabi, UAE, from 18 to 30 December 2025.

The Indian contingent consists of 45 personnel, primarily from The Mechanised Infantry Regiment.

The UAE Land Forces will be represented by the 53 Mechanised Infantry Battalion with a comparable strength.

The exercise aims to enhance interoperability and strengthen bilateral defence cooperation between the Indian Army and UAE Land Forces.

Training focuses on urban operations and sub-conventional warfare under a United Nations mandate.

The exercise prepares both forces for peacekeeping, counter-terrorism, and stability operations.

Joint training includes fighting in built-up areas (FIBUA), heliborne operations, and detailed mission planning.

Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) and counter-UAS techniques will be integrated for operations in urban environments.

The exercise builds on recent high-level visits by the Commander, UAE Land Forces (Oct 2025) and the Commander, UAE Presidential Guard (Dec 2025).

DESERT CYCLONE-II highlights the deepening India–UAE strategic partnership and growing military diplomacy.

The exercise reinforces a commitment to regional peace, security, and stability.

It promotes a mutual understanding of tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) and develops interoperable military capabilities.

India and Brazil Sign Tripartite MoU on Scorpene-Class Submarine Maintenance

India and Brazil signed a tripartite Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen cooperation in the maintenance of Scorpene-class submarines.

The MoU was signed between the Indian Navy, Brazilian Navy, and Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL).

The agreement was concluded during the official visit of Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Dinesh K

Tripathi to Brazil from 9–12 December 2025.

The MoU focuses on exchange of information related to maintenance, life-cycle support, and sustainment of Scorpene-class submarines operated by both navies.

It aims to share technical expertise, improve submarine upkeep, and enhance long-term operational readiness.

Scorpene-class submarines are advanced diesel-electric attack submarines designed for anti-surface warfare, anti-submarine warfare, intelligence gathering, and surveillance.

India operates these submarines under Project-75, with construction carried out by MDL under technology transfer.

Brazil also operates Scorpene submarines as part of its naval modernisation programme, making cooperation mutually beneficial.

The agreement will enhance cooperation in logistics support, training of personnel, experience sharing, and defence research and development.

It is a significant step in strengthening Navy-to-Navy as well as industry-to-industry collaboration, and reinforces the growing India–Brazil strategic partnership as major maritime nations and key voices of the Global South.

AWARDS & PRIZES

Miyana Railway Station Wins National Energy Conservation Award 2025

Miyana Railway Station in Guna district, Madhya Pradesh, has been awarded the National Energy Conservation Award (NECA) 2025 for outstanding energy efficiency and sustainable operations.

The award was presented by President Smt. Droupadi Murmu on National Energy Conservation Day (14 December 2025), recognising the station’s exemplary contribution to energy conservation.

The National Energy Conservation Award is conferred annually by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) under the Ministry of Power to institutions and establishments demonstrating excellence in reducing energy consumption across sectors like industry, transport, buildings, and public utilities.

Miyana Railway Station was selected as the Best Performing Unit in the Transport Category (Railway Station) for its systematic efforts in reducing electricity consumption. The award was received by Smt. Shobhana Bandopadhyaya, General Manager, West Central Railway.

Energy-saving measures implemented at the station include:

Replacement of conventional lighting with LED lights, which consume significantly less power and have longer operational life.

Installation of BLDC (Brushless Direct Current) fans, reducing electricity consumption by 50–60%

compared to conventional fans.

Adoption of smart lighting circuits operating in the 30–70% range, automatically regulating lighting based on usage and time.

BOOKS & AUTHORS

Shikhar Dhawan Releases Autobiography “The One: Cricket, My Life and More”

Former Indian cricketer Shikhar Dhawan launched his autobiography titled “The One: Cricket, My Life and More” in New Delhi.

The book is published by HarperCollins India and spans 288 pages, offering a candid account of Dhawan’s cricketing journey and personal life.

The autobiography provides an honest reflection on Dhawan’s early life in Delhi, his passion for cricket, career milestones, personal struggles, controversies, and moments of self-doubt.

He began as a wicketkeeper in Delhi before becoming a prominent opening batsman.

He made ODI debut in 2010, T20I debut in 2011, and Test debut in 2013.

He is highlighted as the highest run-scorer in ICC Champions Trophy 2013, contributing significantly to India’s title win.

Among the fastest Indians to score 5,000 ODI runs, showcasing consistency at the top level.

IMPORTANT DAYS

Minorities Rights Day

Minorities Rights Day in India 2025 is observed on 18th December.

The day is observed in India every year to safeguard the constitutionally guaranteed rights of religious minorities in the country.

Minorities Rights Day was first observed on December 18th, 1992 by the United Nations.

The UN adopted the statement on the individual Rights belonging to religious or Linguistic National or Ethnic Minorities.

In India, it is the responsibility of the National Commission for Minorities (NCM) to carry out the events on this day.

The NCM was established by the Union Government under the National Commission for Minorities Act, in 1992.

International Migrants Day

International Migrants Day 2025 is observed on 18th December.

This year's theme, “My Great Story: Cultures and Development,”

Migration involves more than just starting anew.

Migrants move around in quest of safety and chances that will let them reimagine who they are.

Others are evading prejudice and discrimination.

Although the day was established in 2000, it has been observed since 1997 that several Asian migrant organizations designated December 18 as the day to advocate for the respect, rights, and protection of migrants.

On account of the ever-increasing number of migrants around the world, on December 4, 2000, the United Nations General Assembly declared December 18 as the day for International Migrants

Goals connected to migration are included in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of the United Nations.

Among them is education access, which will result in improved prospects and a higher standard of living.

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