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NATIONAL NEWS

India's First Sleeper Vande Bharat Train Launched Between Howrah and Guwahati

Prime Minister Narendra Modi flagged off India's first sleeper Vande Bharat train, connecting Kolkata (Howrah) with Guwahati (Kamakhya).

The train was launched from Malda, West Bengal, marking a new phase in long-distance modern rail travel.

The Vande Bharat Sleeper Train is an upgraded version of the Vande Bharat Express, specifically designed for long-distance overnight journeys. Unlike chair-car Vande Bharat trains, it features sleeping berths comparable to Rajdhani-class comfort, combined with modern interiors and faster travel.

The train is fully Made in India and reflects Indian Railways' focus on self-reliance, modernisation, and enhanced passenger comfort.

The sleeper Vande Bharat will operate between Howrah and Kamakhya six days a week in both directions.

The train is equipped with modern coaches, improved safety systems, and upgraded interiors, offering faster and more reliable overnight travel between West Bengal and Assam.

Along with the sleeper Vande Bharat, the Prime Minister also launched four Amrit Bharat Express trains from West Bengal, connecting New Jalpaiguri–Nagercoil, New Jalpaiguri–Tiruchirappalli, Alipurduar–Bengaluru (SMVT), and Alipurduar–Mumbai (Panvel), improving affordable long-distance connectivity to southern and western India.

Vande Bharat trains are semi-high-speed trains introduced in 2019 and manufactured in India under Make in India.

At present, around 150 Vande Bharat trains operate across the country, with the sleeper variant designed specifically for long-distance overnight routes.

Two MSME Technology Centres Approved in Himachal Pradesh

The Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) has approved the establishment of two MSME Technology Centres in Himachal Pradesh at Pandoga (Una district) and Parwanoo (Solan

district) as part of a nationwide expansion initiative.

The MSME Ministry plays a crucial role in promoting small businesses, entrepreneurship, and industrial growth through policy support, financial assistance, infrastructure development, and skill training.

Approval of these centres reflects the ministry's focus on regional industrial development, particularly in hill and less-industrialised states.

The Technology Centres will be set up at Pandoga in Una district and Parwanoo in Solan district. Parwanoo is a well-known industrial hub located near Chandigarh, while Pandoga is expected to emerge as a new growth centre, helping achieve balanced regional development within the state.

Each centre will be developed at an estimated cost of ₹10 crore.

The two centres are among 13 new MSME Technology Centre Extension Centres approved across India, aimed at strengthening technical infrastructure and improving MSME productivity.

The centres will provide modern technical support to local industries, including advanced manufacturing techniques, design assistance, and quality improvement, which is expected to attract new industrial investment in manufacturing and allied sectors.

A key objective is employment generation and skill development.

The centres will offer technical training, hands-on skill programmes, and entrepreneurship support, improving employability, promoting self-employment and startups, and helping reduce migration by strengthening the local economy.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

GalaxEye to Launch First Satellite 'Mission Drishti' in Q1 2026

GalaxEye, an Indian space start-up, is set to launch its first satellite 'Mission Drishti' in the first quarter of 2026, marking a major milestone for India's private space sector.

Mission Drishti is a multi-sensory Earth observation satellite that combines optical imaging and radar sensing on a single platform, a global first in satellite technology.

The satellite is India's largest privately developed satellite, highlighting the growing capabilities of private space enterprises in the country.

It uses GalaxEye's patented SyncFused OptoSAR technology, which fuses optical data and Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) to provide all-weather Earth observation, including imaging through cloud cover.

This advanced technology enables high-reliability, continuous imaging, overcoming limitations of conventional optical-only satellites.

GalaxEye plans to deploy a constellation of 10 satellites by 2030, enabling near real-time data delivery at scale for global applications.

The mission aligns with India’s push for indigenous space innovation and enhanced Earth observation capabilities under the New Space ecosystem.

ECONOMY

International Monetary Fund Upgrades India’s FY26 Growth Projection to 7.3%

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) released the World Economic Outlook (WEO) titled “Global Economy: Steady amid Divergent Forces”, revising India’s GDP growth for FY26 to 7.3%, up from 6% (October 2025 estimate).

The upward revision is driven by strong corporate earnings in Q3 and robust economic momentum in Q4, with the IMF's estimate only slightly below the Government of India’s projection of 7.4%.

For the medium term, the IMF projects India’s growth to moderate to 6.4% in FY27 and FY28, citing easing cyclical and temporary growth factors.

India’s inflation is expected to move closer to the RBI’s target band of 2%–6%, supported by a sharp decline in 2025, mainly due to easing food prices.

Among emerging and developing Asian economies, India remains the fastest-growing, contributing significantly to Asia’s projected 5.0% growth in 2026.

The global economy is projected to grow by 3.3% in CY25, 3.2% in CY26, and 3.2% in CY27, supported by easing trade tensions, accommodative financial conditions, and technology-driven investments.

Global inflation is forecast to decline from 1% (CY25) to 3.8% (CY26) and further to 3.4% (CY27).

Global trade volume growth is projected to slow from 4.1% in CY25 to 2.6% in CY26, before rebounding to 3.1% in CY27, reflecting policy adjustments and front-loading effects.

The IMF highlighted that steady global growth is shaped by a balance between uncertain trade policies and gains from AI and technology investments, particularly in North America and Asia.

RANKS, INDICES & REPORTS

Abu Dhabi Ranked World’s Safest City for 10th Consecutive

Year

Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates, has been ranked the world's safest city for the 10th consecutive year in an international safety ranking released by Numbeo, reaffirming its global reputation for security and high quality of life.

The global safety ranking is released by Numbeo, a well-known international database that compares cities based on crime rates, public safety perception, law enforcement efficiency, and overall quality of life.

The index is based on user-contributed data, surveys, and crime statistics.

Abu Dhabi has topped this ranking continuously since 2017, reflecting long-term consistency in governance and public safety policies.

Abu Dhabi is considered the safest city due to its low crime rates, strict enforcement of laws, and proactive policing.

The city makes extensive use of advanced surveillance systems, smart city technologies, and rapid emergency response mechanisms, which significantly enhance public safety.

Political stability, strong social cohesion, and high public trust in institutions further contribute to a secure living environment.

Responsible Nations Index Launched by Ram Nath Kovind in New Delhi

Former President Ram Nath Kovind officially launched the Responsible Nations Index (RNI) in New Delhi, introducing a new global framework to assess countries based on responsibility rather than power or wealth.

The Responsible Nations Index (RNI) is a global evaluative framework designed to measure how responsibly countries behave towards their citizens, the environment, and the global intellectual community.

Unlike traditional indices focused on GDP, military strength, or influence, the RNI emphasises ethical governance, human-centric policies, inclusive development, and sustainable progress.

The index aims to encourage nations to adopt moral responsibility in policymaking, ensuring that development benefits society as a whole.

By redefining benchmarks of national success, RNI promotes a balanced, humane, and sustainable model of global development.

The RNI has been developed by the World Intellectual Foundation in academic collaboration with Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU).

This partnership combines policy research and academic expertise, strengthening the credibility, analytical depth, and evidence-based assessment of the index.

AWARDS & PRIZES

C-DOT Wins SKOCH Award 2025 for Cell Broadcast Solution

The Centre for Development of Telematics (C-DOT) has received the SKOCH Award 2025 at the 104th SKOCH Summit for its Cell Broadcast Solution (CBS), a national disaster and emergency alerting platform.

The Cell Broadcast Solution developed by C-DOT is an advanced system designed to deliver real-time, life-saving disaster alerts directly to mobile phones in geo-targeted areas through cellular networks.

Unlike SMS, cell broadcast messages reach all devices instantly, even during network congestion, making it highly effective during emergencies.

The platform integrates multiple disaster alert generation agencies on a single unified system, including the India Meteorological Department (weather alerts), Central Water Commission (floods), Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (tsunamis), Directorate General of Resettlement Engineering (landslides), and Forest Survey of India (forest fires).

Alerts are approved by the State Disaster Management Authorities and the National Disaster Management Authority, and then broadcast by all mobile operators.

The Cell Broadcast Solution is fully indigenous, automated, and cost-effective. It supports multi-hazard alerts and delivers messages in 21 Indian languages, ensuring wide inclusivity.

The system provides near real-time warnings, helping citizens take timely action and reducing loss of life and property, thereby strengthening disaster risk reduction and management across India.

C-DOT's solution aligns with the United Nations' "Early Warnings for All" (EW4All) initiative and follows the International Telecommunication Union's Common Alerting Protocol (CAP).

It also contributes to the Sustainable Development Goals by enhancing disaster resilience and places India among a select group of global technology providers offering advanced cell broadcast systems, supporting the vision of Aatmanirbhar Bharat.

The SKOCH Award recognises outstanding contributions by government and private institutions in governance and development, honouring impactful work in areas such as technology, finance, health, education, and innovation.

Ilaiyaraaja to Receive Padmapani Award

Renowned music maestro Ilaiyaraaja has been selected for the Padmapani Award, which will be conferred at the 11th Ajanta–Ellora International Film Festival in early 2026.

The Padmapani Award is one of the most prestigious honours of the Ajanta–Ellora International Film Festival and is presented to individuals who have made extraordinary contributions to cinema and the arts.

The award includes a Padmapani memento, a citation certificate, and a cash prize of ₹2 lakh, symbolising artistic excellence and cultural impact.

Ilaiyaraaja is regarded as one of the greatest composers in Indian cinema. With a career spanning over four decades, he has composed music for more than 1,000 films across multiple Indian languages.

His innovative fusion of Western classical techniques with Indian folk and classical music transformed Indian film music and influenced generations of musicians and composers.

The Ajanta–Ellora International Film Festival is a prominent cultural event celebrating world cinema and Indian artistic excellence.

The 11th edition will be held from 28 January to 1 February 2026 at Mahatma Gandhi Mission, Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, and serves as a platform for filmmakers, artists, and scholars to exchange ideas and showcase meaningful cinema.

The festival is organised with the support of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and the Department of Cultural Affairs, Maharashtra, and is co-presented by the National Film Development Corporation and the Maharashtra Film, Stage and Cultural Development Corporation, highlighting its national cultural significance.

APPOINTMENTS & RESIGNATIONS

President of Uganda

Uganda’s Electoral Commission declared 81-year-old President Yoweri Museveni of the National Resistance Movement (NRM) as the winner of the 2026 presidential election, securing 71.65% of the votes and a seventh term (2026–2031).

Opposition leader Bobi Wine, a 43-year-old singer-turned-politician from the National Unity Platform (NUP), secured 24.72% of the vote, reflecting strong support among Uganda’s youth population.

Yoweri Museveni has been Uganda’s leader since 1986, making him one of the world’s longest-serving heads of government.

He led a rebellion against dictator Idi Amin in 1979, playing a key role in Uganda’s modern political history.

He became President through Uganda’s first direct presidential election in 1996.

In 2023, he was conferred the Order of Katonga (Nishani ya Katonga), Uganda’s highest military honour, for extraordinary heroism.

He received the Global Peace Award (2018) for contributions to peace in the Great Lakes region and Africa.

The AfrikaVerein Award (2016) was awarded to him in Berlin for leadership excellence, making him the first African president to receive it.

He has been awarded Honorary Doctorates by institutions such as the Humphrey School of Public Affairs (USA) and the Latin University of Theology (USA).