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NATIONAL NEWS

Gujarat Witnesses Launch of India's First Integrated Private Satellite Manufacturing Unit at Sanand

Gujarat marked a major milestone in India's space sector with the laying of the foundation stone for India's first integrated private satellite manufacturing unit at Khoraj in Sanand, Gujarat.

The project represents a significant step in boosting indigenous satellite production and strengthening India's private participation in space technology.

The advanced satellite manufacturing facility is being set up by Azista Space.

The plant, named Palmnaro, is designed to enable end-to-end satellite manufacturing under one roof.

The facility will focus on the production of satellites and high-end electro-optical payloads.

The project aims to reduce India's dependence on satellite and payload imports and promote local innovation in space technologies.

The foundation stone laying ceremony was held in the presence of Gujarat's Minister for Science and Technology, Arjun Modhwadia, reflecting strong state government support for advanced manufacturing and space research.

Once operational, the Palmnaro plant is expected to generate a large number of high-skilled technical jobs in Gujarat.

The facility will help attract advanced investments, encourage research and development, and support startups linked to satellite and space technology.

The project is expected to give a strong boost to high-tech aerospace manufacturing in the state.

With this development, Gujarat is emerging as a key hub for space and aerospace industries in India.

Punjab Launches Mukhya Mantri Sehat Yojana for Free Cashless Healthcare

The Punjab government has introduced the Mukhya Mantri Sehat Yojana to provide free and cashless medical treatment up to ₹10 lakh per family per year.

The scheme aims to ensure affordable, accessible, and quality healthcare for all residents of Punjab, without any income-based restrictions.

The scheme was officially launched in Mohali by Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, along with AAP National Convener Arvind Kejriwal.

The initiative is expected to bring a major transformation in Punjab's healthcare system, benefiting people across all income groups.

The scheme will cover all 65 lakh families of Punjab, benefiting nearly three crore people.

Any resident of Punjab possessing either an Aadhaar card or a Voter ID card is eligible.

There is no income limit, making it distinct from earlier health insurance schemes.

Each family is entitled to cashless treatment up to ₹10 lakh annually.

Treatment can be availed at government hospitals as well as empanelled private hospitals.

Beneficiaries are not required to pay any money upfront for approved treatments.

Goa Government Signs MoU with Starlink

The Goa government has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Starlink Satellite Communications, led by Elon Musk, to strengthen digital connectivity, expand internet access in remote areas, enhance disaster resilience, and improve emergency response and smart governance across the state.

The MoU was signed between the Department of Information Technology, Electronics & Communications (DITE&C), Goa, and Starlink.

The partnership aims to provide faster, reliable and wider digital access to citizens, public services, and key infrastructure in Goa.

The partnership will improve public services through better and uninterrupted connectivity.

It aims to bridge the digital divide by ensuring internet access in remote and underserved areas.

Improved connectivity is expected to promote tourism, investment, and talent growth, making Goa more digitally competitive.

Under the MoU, both parties will collaborate to provide digital connectivity in areas with weak or no terrestrial networks, including schools, healthcare centres, and disaster management locations.

The agreement focuses on strengthening disaster preparedness by ensuring reliable communication systems during emergencies.

It will support smart governance by enabling technology-driven public services and improved infrastructure development.

The MoU includes training and capacity building programmes for government staff and local communities to enhance effective use of digital tools.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

US President Launches Board of Peace Initiative at Davos to Promote Global Stability

Donald Trump, President of the United States, officially launched the Board of Peace initiative at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, aimed at promoting global geopolitical stability.

The Board of Peace will work in coordination with the United Nations and other international partners to resolve global conflicts.

The initiative is linked to Trump's second-phase peace plan for Gaza, where the board is expected to oversee reconstruction and stability efforts.

Trump proposed that participating countries contribute at least $1 billion each towards Gaza's reconstruction, raising questions about funding and governance.

Around 35 countries, including Saudi Arabia, UAE, Egypt, Turkey, and Belarus, have agreed to join the initiative.

France declined, the UK is not joining at present, China has not clarified its position, and Russia is studying the proposal.

India has opted for a cautious "wait and watch" approach, choosing to stay away from the Board of Peace despite an invitation to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The Board of Peace is chaired by Donald Trump and includes prominent figures such as Jared Kushner, former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair, and US Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

United States Formally Exits World Health Organization

The United States (US) has officially finalised its withdrawal from the World Health Organization (WHO), one year after President Donald Trump announced the decision, ending America's 78-year membership since WHO's founding in 1948.

Despite the announcement, the withdrawal remains financially incomplete as the US owes over USD 130 million, with WHO officials stating unpaid 2024 and 2025 dues totalling about USD 278 million.

As per WHO bylaws, a country must give one-year advance notice and clear all outstanding dues before withdrawal becomes fully effective.

The Trump administration cited WHO's mishandling of the COVID-19 pandemic, failure to implement urgent reforms, and alleged political bias and lack of independence, particularly regarding China's role, as key reasons for exiting.

The United States previously contributed nearly 20% of WHO's operational budget, making it the largest single contributor to the organisation.

The US State Department clarified that no further payments would be made before withdrawal, arguing that the cost to US taxpayers and economy outweighed benefits due to WHO's pandemic response.

Donald Trump had earlier attempted to withdraw from WHO during his first presidential term, but the move was reversed by President Joe Biden on his first day in office in 2020.

The United States is the only country to have withdrawn from WHO since its establishment, highlighting the exceptional nature of the decision

BANKING

Receivables Exchange of India Limited Becomes First TReDS Platform in India to Return Capital to Shareholders

Receivables Exchange of India Limited (RXIL), a Trade Receivables Discounting System (TReDS) platform, has declared and paid an interim dividend of 21.6% on the face value of its shares.

RXIL has become the first TReDS platform in India to return capital to stakeholders, marking a historic milestone in the Indian TReDS ecosystem.

RXIL received Reserve Bank of India (RBI) approval in December 2016 and carried out its first TReDS transaction on 9 January 2017.

RXIL is a joint venture of Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) and the National Stock Exchange (NSE), with partner banks State Bank of India (SBI), ICICI Bank, and Yes Bank.

RXIL operates as a digital platform for trade receivables financing, supporting Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).

RXIL is the only TReDS platform in India that permits state government participation, with Goa and Tamil Nadu (TN) governments actively involved.

RANKS, INDICES & REPORTS

India Ranked 6th in Asia Manufacturing Index 2026

India has been placed 6th among 11 Asian countries in the Asia Manufacturing Index 2026, showing moderate progress but also revealing gaps in manufacturing competitiveness.

India ranked sixth in the Asia Manufacturing Index 2026, highlighting intensifying competition in Asia and the need for faster and deeper manufacturing reforms.

The Asia Manufacturing Index (AMI) is an annual assessment released by Dezan Shira & Associates,

a pan-Asian advisory firm headquartered in Hong Kong.

The index evaluates manufacturing competitiveness using eight key pillars: economy, political risk, business environment, international trade, tax policy, infrastructure, workforce, and innovation.

These pillars are further divided into 43 sub-parameters, providing a data-driven comparison of manufacturing readiness and long-term potential across Asia.

India's 6th position places it in the mid-tier of Asian manufacturing economies.

India's strengths include a large domestic market, improving infrastructure, and a growing workforce.

However, India lags behind leading economies in execution speed, policy stability, and depth of innovation.

The index emphasizes the need for continued focus on ease of doing business, logistics efficiency, skill development, and technology adoption to improve future rankings.

China retained the top position in the Asia Manufacturing Index 2026 due to its scale, strong infrastructure, and integrated supply chains.

Malaysia ranked second for the first time, overtaking Vietnam, which slipped to third place.

Among developed economies, Singapore climbed to fourth position, surpassing South Korea, which fell to fifth.

These ranking shifts underline growing competition in Asia, with countries actively reforming policies and upgrading infrastructure to attract global manufacturing investment.

DEFENCE

Uttarakhand Government Signs MoU with ITBP

The Uttarakhand government signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) under a new initiative named 'Swasth Seema Abhiyan' to improve healthcare facilities in remote border villages of the state.

The MoU was signed in the presence of Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami at his residence. Health Minister Dr Dhan Singh Rawat and Cabinet Minister Saurabh Bahuguna were also present, along with senior officials from the state government and ITBP.

Under this initiative, integrated primary healthcare services will be provided to 108 border villages located in Pithoragarh, Chamoli and Uttarkashi districts, which are difficult and hard-to-reach areas.

The programme will be implemented in phases, starting with the most remote villages.

As per the agreement, ITBP Headquarters (Northern Frontier), Dehradun will act as the first party, while the Medical Health and Family Welfare Department, Uttarakhand will be the second party.

ITBP will deploy trained doctors and paramedical staff in the border villages and provide medical services through existing MI rooms and telemedicine facilities.

Regular medical visits will be conducted in selected villages, health cards will be issued to beneficiaries, and medical records will be maintained.

ITBP will be responsible for management of medical equipment, medicines and consumables.

The state government will initially provide essential medical equipment and ensure the continuous supply of medicines every six months.

Since November 2024, ITBP has been purchasing local produce on a trial basis, with full-scale procurement starting from March 2025.

So far, local purchases worth ₹11.94 crore have been made.

Overall, Swasth Seema Abhiyan reflects the state government's focus on strengthening healthcare, boosting the rural economy, and ensuring long-term development of border villages through close coordination with the ITBP.

AWARDS & PRIZES

Mozambique's Graca Machel Awarded Indira Gandhi Peace Prize 2025

Graca Machel, a renowned human rights activist from Mozambique, has been awarded the Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development 2025.

The award was announced by the Indira Gandhi Memorial Trust in recognition of her lifelong contributions to education, child welfare, women's empowerment, humanitarian work, peace, and social justice, particularly in conflict-affected regions.

The Indira Gandhi Prize is one of India's most prestigious international honours, awarded to individuals or organisations for outstanding contributions to peace, development, and social justice.

The award carries a cash prize of ₹1 crore, along with a trophy and a citation.

Graca Machel was selected by an international jury chaired by former National Security Adviser Shivshankar Menon.

In 1973, Graca Machel returned to Mozambique and joined FRELIMO (Mozambican Liberation Front) as a freedom fighter and teacher.

The United Nations appointed her to lead a landmark study on children affected by armed conflict.

Her 1996 report, "The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children," reshaped international policies and strengthened protection mechanisms for children in war zones.

For her global humanitarian efforts, she received the UN Nansen Refugee Award and was appointed

Honorary Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire (DBE) in 1997.

Graca Machel is a founding member of The Elders, a group of global leaders working for peace, justice, and human rights.

She also co-founded Girls Not Brides, an international NGO working to end child marriage worldwide.

She is currently a member of the UN Secretary-General's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Advocacy Group.

In 2010, she established the Graca Machel Trust, focusing on women's economic empowerment, food security, leadership, and good governance in Africa.

Graca Machel was married to Samora Machel, the first President of Mozambique, who died in 1986.

By conferring the Indira Gandhi Peace Prize 2025 on Graca Machel, India has honoured a global icon whose life's work represents peace, human dignity, and inclusive development, continuing to inspire generations worldwide.

APPOINTMENTS & RESIGNATIONS

Chairman of IndusInd Bank

Arijit Basu has been appointed as part-time Chairman of IndusInd Bank, effective January 31, 2026, succeeding Sunil Mehta after the completion of his tenure.

Arijit Basu has over 42 years of banking experience, including 37 years with State Bank of India (SBI), and retired as Managing Director of SBI in 2020.

He previously served as MD & CEO of SBI Life Insurance, Chief General Manager at SBI, and CEO of SBI's Japan operations in Tokyo.

Prior to this appointment, Basu was Chairman of HDB Financial Services but stepped down due to conflict-of-interest norms, as IndusInd Bank is promoted by HDFC entities.

IndusInd Bank underwent a leadership transition following accounting discrepancies, leading to the resignation of senior executives and the appointment of Rajiv Anand as MD and CEO in August 2025.

Sunil Mehta, chairman since January 2023, informed the board of his desire to step down at the end of his term.

The chairman's exit follows the bank's largest-ever quarterly loss in FY25 due to a $230-million scandal involving former CEO Sumant Kathpalia and deputy Arun Khurana, who have since left the company.

Post-scandal, IndusInd Bank appointed a new Chief Financial Officer (CFO), Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO), and several other senior executives, marking a significant senior leadership restructuring.

IMPORTANT DAYS

International Customs Day

International Customs Day 2026 is observed on 26th January every year.

The day was first initiated in 1983 by the World Customs Organization (WCO).

It is observed to honour customs officials and customs organisations who work continuously to ensure efficient management of global trade and cross-border commerce.

Customs officials play a crucial role in facilitating smooth cross-border trade transactions, ensuring security, compliance, and trade efficiency.

The observance also highlights the need to place people at the core of customs transformation processes, focusing on modernisation and service delivery.

The origins of the global customs framework date back to 1948, when the European Customs Union Study Group (ECUSG) was established by the Committee for European Economic Cooperation.

The ECUSG was formed to examine the feasibility of creating one or more inter-European customs unions.

To improve the effectiveness of customs administrations worldwide, the Customs Cooperation Council (CCC) was established in 1952.

The first session of the CCC was held on 26 January 1953, with 17 founding member countries participating.

In 1983, the CCC officially instituted International Customs Day to commemorate its first session.

With expansion beyond Europe and growing global membership, the Customs Cooperation Council was renamed the World Customs Organization (WCO) in 1994.

The headquarters of the World Customs Organization is located in Brussels, Belgium.