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DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 29-01-2026

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

NASA Rolls Out Space Launch System (SLS) Rocket

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has rolled out its Space Launch System (SLS) rocket to the launch pad at Kennedy Space Center, marking a major milestone in lunar exploration.

The 322-foot-tall SLS rocket will carry out the first crewed lunar fly-around mission in over 50 years, taking astronauts around the Moon and back on a 10-day journey.

The mission will include four astronauts: three from NASA – Reid Wiseman, Victor Glover, and Christina Koch – and one Canadian astronaut, Jeremy Hansen.

Christina Koch, holder of the record for the longest single spaceflight by a woman (328 days), will be the first female astronaut to embark on a lunar mission.

If launched successfully in the February 2026 window, this mission will mark humanity's first journey to the Moon since 1972, paving the way for long-term lunar exploration.

The mission represents a 10-day journey around the Moon and back, highlighting NASA's focus on crewed lunar missions for the first time in half a century.

Zoho Launches New ERP Platform to Serve India's Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)

Zoho Corporation has launched a new Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) platform, targeting India's small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

The new ERP platform is designed to be affordable, easy-to-deploy, and less consultant-dependent, addressing the underserved SME market.

Zoho's ERP aims to overcome traditional adoption challenges such as high costs, long implementation cycles, and heavy reliance on consultants.

The ERP systems remain critical for enterprise operations, but smaller firms in India have limited adoption.

The ERP platform will initially be rolled out in India, leveraging rapid formalisation and digitisation of businesses, before being introduced in global markets.

Zoho Corporation is an Indian multinational technology company specializing in cloud-based

business software, headquartered in Chennai, Tamil Nadu.

BANKING

Buyforex Gets In-Principle Payment Service Provider Nod at GIFT IFSC

EbixCash World Money, a flagship subsidiary of Eraaya Lifespaces Limited, announced that its wholly owned entity Buyforex received in-principle approval for Payment Service Provider (PSP)

The approval was granted by the International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA), enabling the company to operate as a regulated PSP from GIFT IFSC (Gujarat International Finance Tec-City).

Buyforex has become the first Authorised Dealer Category-II (AD-II) group entity to receive this specific authorization at the international financial hub.

Under this in-principle approval, Buyforex is authorized to undertake four key payment services: Account issuance, E-money issuance, Merchant acquisition, and Cross-border fund transfers.

The milestone significantly strengthens the EbixCash Group's regulated payments footprint and supports India's goal to position GIFT IFSC as a global hub for cross-border payments and financial services.

The authorization allows the group to deliver secure, compliant, and globally scalable payment solutions to international merchants, financial institutions, and enterprises while leveraging the IFSCA's globally aligned regulatory framework.

Eraaya Lifespaces Limited (formerly Justride Enterprises) completed its acquisition of Ebix Inc. and its global subsidiaries in August 2024, which included the EbixCash brand.

RBI Issues 2026 Amendment Directions on CRR and SLR for Commercial Banks

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) issued amendment directions for Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR) and Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR) applicable to commercial banks, updating the 2025 directions.

The amendments came into immediate effect and are based on recent changes in banking laws and regulations made in 2025.

RBI added a reference to “other development financial institutions” in the CRR–SLR rules, as defined under the RBI Act, 1934.

Reporting formats have been updated to clearly include institutions like National Housing Bank (NHB), SIDBI, and NaBFID, replacing older references such as IDBI.

The amendments are procedural and clarificatory only and do not change the existing CRR or SLR rates for banks.

World Bank Approves ₹5,700 Crore for Haryana's Jal Sanrakshit Project

The World Bank has approved ₹5,700 crore in technical and financial assistance for Haryana under the Jal Sanrakshit Haryana Project, aiming to make the state self-reliant in the water sector.

The funds will be disbursed in phases from 2026 to 2032 for canal restoration, micro-irrigation, groundwater recharge, and sustainable agriculture.

Out of 1,570 major canals, 892 canals have been restored over the past 20 years, and 678 canals are planned for restoration in the next five years.

Restoration of major canals includes 115 canals with World Bank assistance (₹2,325 crore), 284 canals through the state budget (₹2,230 crore), and 279 canals via NABARD (₹2,880 crore).

Out of 15,562 minor canals under the Micro Irrigation & Command Area Development Authority (MICADA), 4,487 minor canals have been restored, and 1,961 minor canals are planned for restoration.

Restoration of minor canals includes 400 canals with World Bank support (₹450 crore), 1,500 canals via state budget (₹1,250 crore), and 61 canals through NABARD (₹402 crore).

With World Bank support of ₹900 crore, micro-irrigation systems will be implemented over approximately 70,000 acres of agricultural land.

The Agriculture Department will develop tube-well-based drainage and surface drainage systems to address waterlogging over 2,00,000 acres.

Sustainable agriculture will be promoted through crop diversification, direct seeding of rice (DSR), and other water-conservation measures, supported by ₹886 crore from the World Bank.

About 80 water bodies will be constructed in southern Haryana to strengthen groundwater recharge.

Treated water from four major sewage treatment plants (STPs) in Jind, Kaithal, and Gurugram will be reused to irrigate 28,000 acres, supported by ₹600 crore from the World Bank.

On completion, Haryana's entire canal network will be fully lined and function efficiently for the next 25 years, eliminating the need for frequent canal restoration.

The project will expand irrigation facilities to 2 lakh additional acres and help farmers overcome waterlogging

Since irrigation currently consumes mostly freshwater, this project will save water for drinking purposes.

Farmers are encouraged to adopt micro-irrigation systems in paddy cultivation to achieve higher yields and address problems caused by open-field water usage.

RBI Flags PSL Compliance Gaps at HDFC Bank and ICICI

Bank

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) flagged deficiencies in Priority Sector Lending (PSL) compliance at HDFC Bank and ICICI Bank during its annual supervisory review, mainly due to misclassification of agricultural loans.

RBI directed ICICI Bank to make a one-time additional provision of ₹1,283 crore and HDFC Bank to provide ₹500 crore as a regulatory corrective measure, despite no immediate asset quality stress.

The regulator found parts of the agriculture loan portfolios exceeded the prescribed "scale of finance" limits, indicating loans used for non-farm purposes were still classified as agricultural PSL.

The RBI annual supervisory review assesses compliance with regulatory norms, including priority sector targets and reporting accuracy.

Under current rules, banks must lend 40% of adjusted net bank credit to priority sectors, with 18% of this target earmarked for agriculture.

Shortfalls in PSL targets lead to penalties or corrective actions, with penalties credited to the Rural Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF).

DEFENCE

Indian Army Partnered with Indian Institute of Science Bengaluru

The Indian Army (IA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru (Karnataka) to jointly develop a fully indigenous Artificial Intelligence (AI) system.

The objective of the MoU is to address emerging challenges in digital information and modern warfare through advanced AI-based solutions.

The AI system will be developed through collaborative research, innovation, and field-oriented testing, ensuring alignment with the operational requirements of the armed forces.

The project involves a tripartite collaboration integrating the operational experience of the Indian Army, academic expertise of IISc, and the innovation of the Indian industry, including the startup Indy Astra.

The initiative strengthens self-reliance in defence technology, reinforcing the vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat.

The MoU reaffirms the Indian Army's commitment towards building a self-reliant India through indigenous AI development.

The collaboration aims to enhance India's indigenous defence innovation ecosystem by combining institutional experience, research excellence, and industry participation.

AWARDS & PRIZES

Sikkim Police Conferred with President's Police Colour Award

Sikkim Police has been awarded the President's Police Colour (Nishaan) for its outstanding service, professionalism, and dedication to duty.

With this honour, Sikkim becomes the 15th state in India and the 3rd state from the North-East to receive this prestigious recognition since Independence.

The President's Police Colour Award, popularly known as the Nishaan, is a ceremonial honour granted to police forces for exceptional service, bravery, discipline, and professionalism.

The award is symbolised by a flag and insignia, which is worn on the left sleeve of the police uniform.

It recognises the collective performance, legacy, and sustained excellence of an entire police force rather than individual acts.

Receiving the President's Police Colour is a landmark achievement for the Sikkim Police.

Since Independence, only 14 states had received this honour earlier, underlining its rarity and prestige.

The recognition places Sikkim among an elite group of states known for high standards of integrity, efficiency, and public trust in policing.

It highlights the role of Sikkim Police in maintaining law and order in a sensitive border state with professionalism and restraint.

Sikkim is now the third North-Eastern state to receive the President's Police Colour Award.

It also reinforces the central government's emphasis on strengthening institutions, morale, and security in border and hill states.

Dr. Chandrakant Lahariya Wins Wiley Research Heroes Prize 2025

Dr. Chandrakant Lahariya, an Indian doctor and public health expert, has won the Wiley Research Heroes Prize 2025.

He became the first Indian to receive this global honour in the Impact Beyond Academia category.

The award recognises researchers whose work is inclusive, innovative, and impactful, ensuring research influences public policy and real-world outcomes beyond academic publications.

The 2025 edition of the prize received over 2,000 nominations globally, from which only five

researchers were selected.

Dr. Lahariya was selected for his sustained contribution to public health policy and implementation.

He is a former staff member of the World Health Organization and has worked at the intersection of research, governance, and public health policy.

His work has helped governments translate scientific evidence into practical health interventions.

He is a health policy researcher, academician, and medical practitioner.

SPORTS

Nat Sciver-Brunt Becomes First Centurion in Women's Premier League History

Nat Sciver-Brunt became the first batter to score a century in Women's Premier League history during WPL 2026.

She achieved the feat while playing for Mumbai Indians against Royal Challengers Bengaluru at Kotambi Stadium, Vadodara.

The historic knock came in Match 16 of WPL 2026, where she scored an unbeaten 100 off 57 balls.

She came in to bat early after Mumbai Indians lost their first wicket at just 16 runs and anchored the innings with composure.

Her innings included 16 fours and one six, blending consistency with controlled aggression.

The knock marked the first-ever three-digit individual score in WPL history after several near-misses in previous seasons.

A crucial highlight of the innings was the 131-run partnership for the second wicket with Hayley Matthews, who scored 56 off 39 balls.

The partnership stabilised the innings after the early setback and laid the foundation for a strong team total.

Their approach against both pace and spin reflected the growing tactical maturity and competitiveness of WPL 2026.

Prior to this match, no batter had scored a century in the Women's Premier League.

The previous highest individual scores were 99 not out by Georgi Voll and 99 by Sophie Devine.

Despite more than ten players crossing the 90-run mark in earlier seasons, the century had remained elusive.

Sciver-Brunt's innings finally ended the long wait and set a new benchmark for future editions of the

Women’s Premier League.

OBITUTARY

Veteran Journalist and Author Mark Tully

Veteran journalist, author, and broadcaster Mark Tully passed away in Delhi at the age of 90.

He was born in 1935 in Calcutta (Kolkata) during the British Raj and spent most of his life in India, earning the title “voice of India” by the BBC.

Tully joined the BBC in the 1960s and served as its New Delhi Bureau Chief for 22 years, covering South Asia

He reported major events in India including the 1971 Bangladesh War, Emergency (1975–77), Operation Blue Star, assassinations of Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi, Bhopal Gas Tragedy, and Babri Masjid demolition.

Tully authored famous books such as No Full Stops in India, India in Slow Motion, and The Heart of India, and was fluent in Hindi, earning the nickname “Tully Sahib”.

He was knighted by the UK in 2002 and received the Padma Shri (1992) and Padma Bhushan (2005) from the Government of India, making him a rare foreigner to receive both honours.

Tully also presented the BBC Radio 4 programme “Something Understood”, showcasing his contributions to broadcast journalism and literature.

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