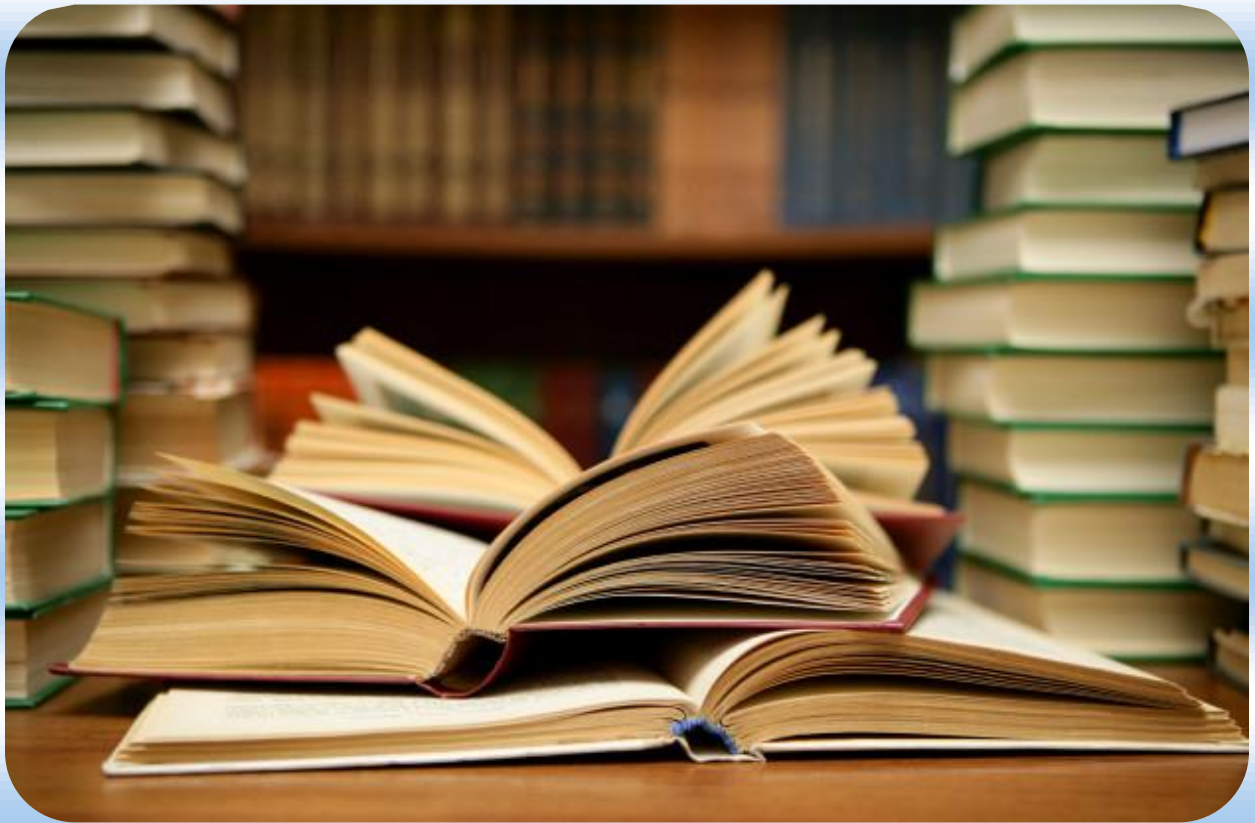


## LIBRARY & RESOURCE CENTER, NOIDA

## GENERAL KNOWLEDGE MONTHLY



# FEBRUARY-2025

# NATIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS

## *Gender Budgeting in 2025-26: A Step Toward Inclusive Growth*

The Union Budget 2025-26 emphasises the government's commitment to inclusive development, balanced growth and prioritising the well-being of four key population groups: the poor, youth, farmers, and women. In a welcome announcement, the Finance Minister set forth a holistic vision for Viksit Bharat (or Developed India) with 'zero poverty'.

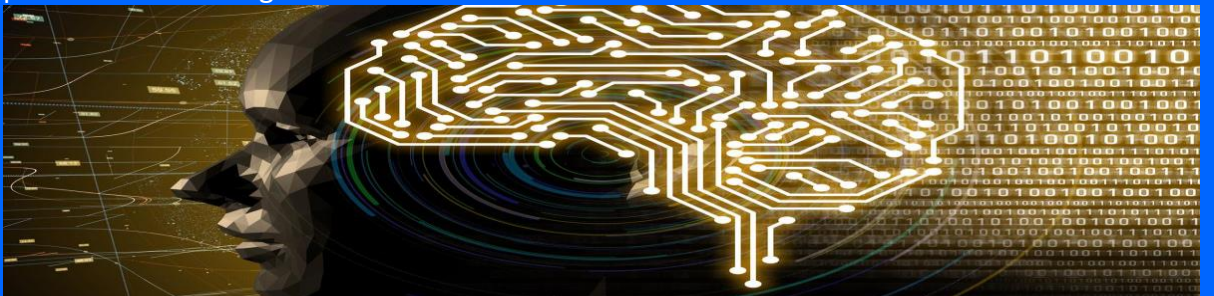


## *FDI Limit for Insurance Raised from 74% to 100%*

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman Saturday announced a significant hike in foreign direct investment (FDI) in the insurance sector — from 74% to 100% — paving the way for the entry of global insurance giants, substantial foreign investments and tough competition in the Indian market. The government will hopes this major reform boosts insurance penetration in the country, which, as per an IRDAI report, was at 3.7% in 2023-24. The global insurance penetration at the same time was 7%.

## *AI in Focus: Key Allocations in Union Budget 2025*

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented the Union Budget for 2025, unveiling the eighteenth Cabinet's plans for funding the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in various fields. Allocations for all schemes related to AI have seen significant increases since the previous Union Budget.



### ***India's First White Tiger Breeding Centre Approved in MP***

BHOPAL: Central Zoo Authority (CZA) has given its green signal to India's first white tiger breeding centre in Madhya Pradesh's Rewa district, believed to be home to the last white tiger in the wild. Centre had given in-principle approval for this project in 2011. The breeding centre will now come up in Govindgarh. The state's lone white tiger safari is barely 10km away, in Mukundpur.

### ***WhatsApp-Based 'Mana Mitra' to Offer 161 Govt Services in Andhra***

For the first time in the country, the Andhra Pradesh government has launched WhatsApp Governance titled 'Mana Mitra'. The services were formally launched by Minister for IT Electronics & Communication and Real Time Governance (RTG) Nara Lokesh at his residence in Undavalli, Amaravati, on Thursday. The State government has allotted an official WhatsApp number 9552300009 for availing the services.

### ***India's First AI University to Open in Maharashtra***

Maharashtra is set to establish the first Artificial Intelligence (AI) university in the country and a task force has been formed for the planning and implementation of the project, state Information Technology Minister Ashish Shelar has said.



### ***Ujjivan Small Finance Bank Seeks Universal Banking Licence***

Ujjivan Small Finance Bank (SFB) on Tuesday said it has submitted an application to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) seeking a universal banking licence to strengthen its offerings and its position in the sector. The Bengaluru-based lender is the second SFB after AU SFB to apply for a universal banking licence under the voluntary transition route. "The Bank has consistently demonstrated strong financial performance and a commitment to financial inclusion, serving a diverse customer base across the country.

### ***L&T Finance Unveils AI-Powered Home Loan Advisor 'KAI'***

Mumbai (Maharashtra) [India], February 1: L & T Finance Limited (LTF), a leading Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC), is transforming the home loan experience with the launch of Knowledgeable AI (KAI), an AI-powered virtual advisor, on its newly redesigned corporate website ([www.ltfinance.com/home-loan](http://www.ltfinance.com/home-loan)). KAI, initially unveiled during LTF's RAISE' 24 event, represents a significant leap in leveraging AI to streamline and personalize the home loan journey.

### ***South Indian Bank Unveils Startup Current Accounts for Entrepreneurs***

New Delhi, Feb 4 (UNI) Private sector lender South Indian Bank (SIB) has launched two specialized startup current account products -SIB Business Startup Current Account and SIB Corporate Startup Current Account. The bank said that the SIB Business Startup Current Account caters to sole proprietorships and partnerships, providing them with essential banking support to establish a strong foundation during their initial years.

### ***End of an Era: Wriddhiman Saha Retires from Cricket***

India wicketkeeper-batter Wriddhiman Saha retired from all forms of cricket on Saturday, bringing down the curtains on an illustrious career after playing his final Ranji Trophy group-stage match for Bengal against Punjab at the iconic Eden Gardens here.



### ***RBI MPC Meeting 2025: Repo Rate Cut By 25 bps to 6.25%***

The Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) has decided to revise the repo rate for the first time in two years, reducing it by 25 basis points to 6.25 per cent from 6.5 per cent, Governor Sanjay Malhotra announced on Friday. During the meeting, which took place between February 5 and 7, MPC members unanimously voted to cut the repo rate. The standing deposit facility (SDF) rate has also been adjusted to 6 per cent from 6.25 per cent, while the marginal standing facility (MSF) rate and the bank rate has been adjusted to 6.5 per cent from 6.75 per cent, the governor said.

### ***Zomato Board Approves Name Change To Eternal Ltd, Unveils New Logo***

Food aggregator Zomato said on Thursday its board of directors had approved a resolution to officially change the name of the parent company to Eternal Ltd. The change of name is subject to the approval of shareholders, the corporate affairs ministry, and other statutory authorities. "We would like to inform that the board of directors of the company, vide resolution dated February 6, 2025, has approved the change in the name of the company from Zomato Limited to Eternal Limited," the company said in an exchange filing.

### ***Zepto Becomes World's Second Most Downloaded Food & Drink App***

Indian quick commerce startup, Zepto, became the world's second most downloaded mobile app in the foods and drinks category in 2024, data released by the Sensor Tower said. McDonald's, the US fast food chain, was the most downloaded mobile app, the report said.



### ***RBI Clears Tata Communications' Payment Arm Sale to Findi***

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has approved Tata Communications' plan to sell its entire stake in Tata Communications Payment Solutions (TCPSL) to Transaction Solutions International (TSI), the Indian arm of Australian fintech company Findi. The deal, first announced in November 2024, is valued at Rs 330 crore, with an additional Rs 75 crore based on interchange rate adjustments. This acquisition will help Findi grow in India's financial services sector, especially in underbanked areas.

### ***Rohit Sharma Becomes Second-Highest Six-Hitter in ODI History***

India skipper Rohit Sharma became the second most prolific six-hitter in the history of One-Day International cricket during the second ODI against England in Cuttack on Sunday. He was level on 331 sixes with Chris Gayle ahead of the match, and overtook the West Indies opener when he flicked Gus Atkinson for a six over midwicket in the second over of India's chase.



### ***India Sets New HS Codes for GI-Tagged Rice Exports***

NEW DELHI: Government is is keen to give new 'harmonised system (HS)' codes, a numerical classification mandatory for internationally-traded products, to boost exports of GI-tagged rice varieties such as Gobindohog (West Bengal), Kala Namak (Uttar Pradesh), and Jeeraphool (Chhattisgarh) and Johra (Assam). Govt is discussing this with stakeholders, sources said. The move will ensure exports of such rice varieties in case of any ban or restriction on exports of broken or white rice.

### ***Lok Sabha Expands Translation Services to 6 More Languages***

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Tuesday announced extension of translation services to six new languages in the Parliament including Bodo, Dogri, Maithili, Manipuri, Urdu and Sanskrit. Addressing the House, Birla said that previously, the translation services were available in 10 languages including Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Odia, Punjabi, Tamil, and Telugu, in addition to Hindi and English.

### ***SEBI Unveils MITRA to Track Inactive Mutual Fund Folios***

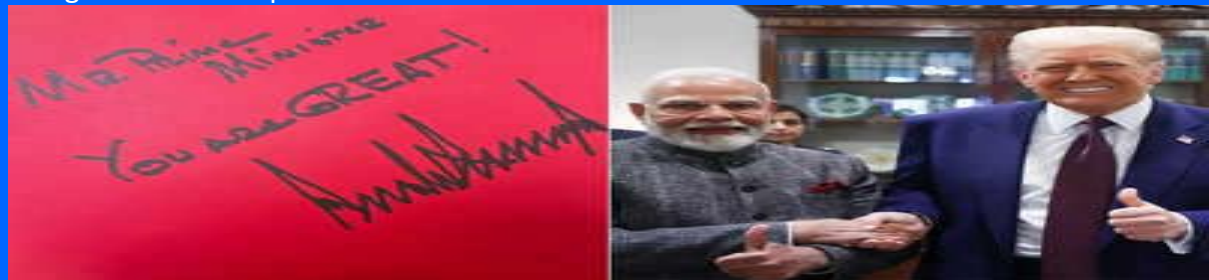
Mumbai: Tata Trusts is set to launch India's first state-of-the-art Small Animal Hospital in The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) has introduced a digital platform that assists investors in tracking inactive and unclaimed mutual fund folios. Mutual Fund Investment Tracing and Retrieval Assistant (MITRA) will help with investments that may have been overlooked, lost, or left unclaimed due to outdated know your customer (KYC) details or the demise of the original investor, according to Sebi a circular dated February 12.

### ***Tata Elxsi & Garuda Aerospace to Boost India's UAV Sector***

Mumbai: Design and technology service provider Tata Elxsi has partnered with drone maker Garuda Aerospace for setting up a design, engineering, and certification centre to develop indigenous drone technologies. The technology to be developed at the proposed centre for which the two companies have signed a memorandum of understanding at the ongoing defence and aerospace show, Aero India 2025, in Bengaluru will specifically have Indian defence applications, along with agriculture, and smart cities, supporting the 'Make in India' initiative, Tata Elxsi said on Wednesday.

### ***MIGA + MAGA = MEGA Partnership: Key Takeaways from PM Modi's US Visit***

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday concluded his two-day visit to the US where he held bilateral talks with President Donald Trump. The two leaders discussed key issues including trades, tariffs, extradition of 26/11 accused, Russia-Ukraine war, purchase of F-35 fighter jets and India's border dispute with China. Setting the tone of the "MEGA partnership", PM Modi highlighted India and US's shared commitment to economic growth and global leadership.



### ***TCS Joins UPM for IT Overhaul in Nordic Region***

Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) signed an agreement to drive end-to-end IT transformation of UPM, a global company that provides renewable and responsible solutions, to boost adoption of an AI-first operating model. The partnership further solidifies TCS' leadership in Finland, where it has been operational for over 25 years.



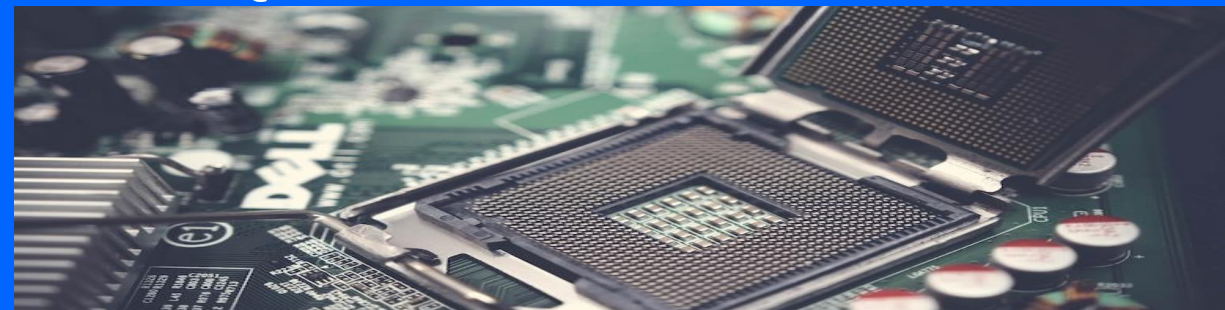
### ***Mukesh Ambani Tops Asia's Wealthiest Families List***

Indians are increasingly making their mark on the global stage, not just for their expertise but also for their remarkable business strategies. A testament to this rising prominence is the inclusion of an Indian family at the top of Bloomberg's list of Asia's richest families, with several others securing spots in the top 20.



### ***Lam Research to Invest ₹10,000 Crore in Karnataka's Semiconductor Industry***

Chipmaker Lam Research on Tuesday announced a major investment of Rs 10,000 crore in India at the Invest Karnataka-2025. Minister for Railways, Information & Broadcasting and Electronics & IT, Ashwini Vaishnaw posted on X, "One more milestone in our semiconductor journey: Lam Research announces major investment of over Rs 10,000 cr in India. Big vote of confidence in PM @narendramodi Ji's semiconductor vision."



### ***Wholesale Price Index (WPI) for January 2025: Inflation Rate and Key Highlights***

India's wholesale price index (WPI)-based inflation declined to 2.31% (provisional) in January, 2025, primarily due to increase in prices of manufacture of food products, food articles, other manufacturing, non-food articles and manufacture of textiles etc, data released by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry showed on Friday. This is marginally lower than the previous month's WPI rate of 2.37 per cent. The month over month change in WPI for the month of January, 2025 stood at (-)0.45 per cent as compared to December, 2024.

### ***Pankaj Tripathi Joins Velvet as Co-Founder***

Actor Pankaj Tripathi, renowned for his performances in films like Stree 2, Gangs of Wasseypur, and Bareilly Ki Barfi, has come on board as co-founder of Velvet, a cinematic audio stories platform. Alongside Tripathi, Velvet was co-founded by actor and dialogue coach Vikas Kumar, Akshat Saxena, Varad Bhatnagar, and Sharib Khan. The platform's goal is to create a unique space for listeners to experience engaging, imaginative, and cinematic audio content, predominantly in Hindi. Velvet plans to expand its offerings to include English and regional Indian languages in the near future.

### ***Campa Cola Replaces Thums Up as IPL 2025 Co-Presenter***

Reliance Consumer Products-owned beverage brand, Campa Cola has secured the co-presenting rights for the upcoming season of the Indian Premier League (IPL), considered the second most visible sponsorship deal, according to a report by The Economic Times. The deal is fixed for Rs 200 crore, bringing competition in India's beverage market, which is dominated by global players like Coca-Cola.

### ***Meta's 50,000 km Cable to Boost India-US Digital Connectivity***

Social media giant Meta on Friday announced it will build a 50,000 km subsea cable network connecting the United States, India, Brazil, South Africa, and other key regions. "Meta is investing in India – one of its largest markets – bringing the world's longest, highest-capacity, and most technologically advanced subsea cable project to connect India, the US, and other locations," a spokesperson for the company said.





## ***MSME Sector Gets Boost with Mutual Credit Guarantee Scheme & Other Initiatives***

Financial Inclusion for MSMEs: The Mutual Credit Guarantee Scheme (MCGS) for MSMEs announced in the July budget last year was launched by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday. The scheme aims to enable up to Rs 100 crore collateral-free loans for MSMEs to purchase machinery or equipment. The MCGS scheme adds to the government's initiatives, specifically around providing affordable access to credit for MSMEs.

## ***Tata Group Chairman N. Chandrasekaran Honored with UK Knighthood***

The Most Excellent Order of the British Empire award to Tata Group Chairman Natarajan Chandrasekaran "for [his] services to UK/India business relations" has brought the British tradition of honouring individuals under the spotlight. Honours and awards have long been integral to British conventions, dating back to the Middle Ages when monarchs granted titles and distinctions for service.



## ***RSS Inaugurates New Headquarters 'Keshav Kunj' in New Delhi***

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) has inaugurated its new office complex, Keshav Kunj, in New Delhi on a 5 lakh square feet space featuring towers, auditoriums, a library, a hospital, and a Hanuman temple. Built with a focus on sustainability, the state-of-the-art facility was fully funded through public donations totalling ₹150 crore.



### ***Rekha Gupta Sworn in as Delhi's New Chief Minister***

A member of India's ruling Hindu-nationalist party has been sworn in as chief minister of Delhi, handing the party control of the capital for the first time in decades after landslide elections. Rekha Gupta, 50, of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was sworn in as the top official of the Indian capital on Thursday, becoming the fourth woman to hold the post of the sprawling megacity of more than 30 million people.



### ***Microsoft Unveils Magma: The AI Model That Can See, Read, and Take Action in the Real World***

**Hyderabad:** Microsoft has presented Magma, a foundational model that can understand both pictures and language in the digital world and physical world, to complete tasks like using an app or moving a robot, respectively. Made by researchers from Microsoft Research, the University of Maryland, the University of Wisconsin-Madison KAIST, and the University of Washington for multimodal AI agents, Magma is the first foundation model capable of interpreting and grounding multimodal inputs within its environment.

### ***RBI Raises Small Loan Limit for UCBs to ₹3 Crore***

To provide greater flexibility to urban cooperative banks (UCBs) without compromising on regulatory objectives, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Monday raised the ceiling these banks have on small-value loans per borrower and increased the limit for a UCB's aggregate exposure to the real estate sector. According to RBI norms, UCBs are required to have at least 50 per cent of their aggregate loans and advances consisting of small value loans by March 31, 2026.

### ***Govt Plans 1-Year Free-Look Period for Insurance***

The government has asked private insurers to increase the free-look period for policyholders from one month to a year, Department of Financial Services (DFS) Secretary M Nagaraju said on Monday. The free-look period is the length of time during which a customer can cancel an insurance policy without paying surrender charges. Last year, the insurance regulator increased the period to 30 days from 15 days.

### ***Paytm Solar Soundbox: A Game-Changer for Small Merchants in India***

**Hyderabad:** Paytm parent One 97 Communications has launched Paytm Solar Soundbox in India for small shop owners and merchants. The new soundbox supports solar charging in addition to electricity. The Paytm Solar Soundbox features a dual battery system that comes with a solar panel at the top. The first battery draws charge from solar energy, whereas the second one charges with electricity. The latter is offered as a backup when the first battery doesn't get ample charge from sunlight.

### ***Muthoot Finance Gets RBI Nod to Open 115 New Branches***

Muthoot Finance added 1.95% to Rs 2226.55 after the company announced the receipt of permission from the Reserve Bank of India to open 115 new branches. The announcement was made on Wednesday, 26 February 2025. Muthoot Finance is the flagship company of the Kerala-based business house, The Muthoot Group, which has diversified operations in financial services, healthcare, education and hospitality. It is India's largest gold loan focused NBFC.

### ***Corporate Profits Jump 15.3% in FY24 Despite Slow Sales: RBI***

MUMBAI: Corporate profits grew 15.3% in FY24, despite sluggish sales growth of around 5.5%, on the back of cost rationalisation, an RBI report said. The services sector outperformed manufacturing in both sales and profit growth, reversing the trend from FY23 when sales grew faster than profits. Despite sluggish sales, operating expenses rose 3.4% in FY24, mainly due to slower growth in manufacturing costs.

### ***Flipkart-Backed super.money Acquires BharatX for Growth***

Flipkart-backed fintech firm Super.money on Tuesday acquired checkout financing platform BharatX in an all-cash deal as the company continues to launch new payment and credit offerings since its launch last year. The deal amount has not been disclosed. The company plans to introduce checkout financing for direct-to-consumer (D2C) and e-commerce brands, including Flipkart, beginning with consumer durables products through a credit line on Unified Payments Interface (UPI).



# INTERNATIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS

## ***Indian Embassy Urges Evacuation of Bukavu Amid DRC Conflict***

The advisory warned Indian nationals against traveling to Bukavu and immediately depart to safer locations. It also stated that the reports of M23 being around 20-25 km away from the Kinshasa city. This comes amid raging conflict in DRC. The authorities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) have reported that at least 773 people have been killed in Goma, the largest city in the country's east.

## ***U.S. Tariffs on Mexico, Canada, and China***

ADDRESSING AN EMERGENCY SITUATION: The extraordinary threat posed by illegal aliens and drugs, including deadly fentanyl, constitutes a national emergency under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA). Until the crisis is alleviated, President Donald J. Trump is implementing a 25% additional tariff on imports from Canada and Mexico and a 10% additional tariff on imports from China. Energy resources from Canada will have a lower 10% tariff.

## ***Russian Lawmaker Vyacheslav Volodin's Official Visit to India***

The Chairman of the Russian parliament's lower house, Vyacheslav Volodin, arrived in India on Monday for an official visit. His discussions with Indian leaders will focus on improving cooperation in economic, cultural, educational, and technological fields, alongside strengthening inter-parliamentary dialogue between the two nations. Sharing the pictures of his arrival on X, the Russian Embassy in India wrote, "Chairman of the State Duma Vyacheslav Volodin arrived on an official visit to #India.

## ***Sri Lanka Sees Record Deflation in 65 Years***

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's consumer prices fell by 4.0 percent in January, the highest deflation rate since July 1960, official data showed Friday, as the South Asian nation emerges from its worst economic meltdown. January was the fifth consecutive month of deflation, according to the Colombo Consumer Price Index. Inflation hit a record 69.8 percent in September 2022 at the height of the country's economic crisis, which saw months of widespread consumer goods shortages. Officials said sharp reductions in electricity and fuel costs contributed to the sharp fall in prices in January, but the central bank forecasts annual inflation in 2025 to be around 5.0 percent.

### ***UK Becomes First Country to Criminalize AI-Generated Child Abuse Content***

The United Kingdom is set to become the first country to introduce laws against artificial intelligence tools used to generate sexualised images of children, in an attempt to curb a phenomenon that Home Secretary Yvette Cooper said was increasing.



### ***Bart De Wever Sworn in as Belgium's New Prime Minister***

Conservative Bart De Wever has been sworn in as Belgium's new prime minister, after striking a hard-fought coalition deal that moves the country to the right. The agreement, struck late on Friday after seven months of negotiations, makes De Wever the first nationalist from Dutch-speaking Flanders to be named Belgian premier. The 54-year-old, who in recent years has backed off on calls for Flanders to become an independent country.

### ***Trump Pulls US from UN Human Rights Council, Cuts UNRWA Funding***

United States President Donald Trump is planning to cut off US engagement with the United Nations Human Rights Council and extend a funding ban on the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, an unnamed White House official told US media outlets. US news media, including Politico and NPR, reported on Monday that Trump was expected to sign an executive order withdrawing from the two UN bodies on Tuesday, the same day the White House is expected to host Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, a longtime critic of the UN, and UNRWA in particular.

### ***Trump Signs Executive Order Banning Trans Women from Women's Sports***

US President Donald Trump has signed an executive order that prevents transgender women from competing in female categories of sports. The order provides guidance, regulations and legal interpretations, and it will enlist the Department of Education to investigate high schools thought to be non-compliant. Republicans say it restores fairness to sports but LGBT advocacy and human rights organisations have described the move as discriminatory.

### ***Panama Withdraws from China's Belt and Road Initiative***

China has slammed Washington's "Cold War mentality" in Latin America after Panama quit its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). A spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China on Friday hit out at the United States for sabotaging the global infrastructure programme. Beijing "firmly opposes the United States using pressure and coercion to smear and undermine Belt and Road cooperation," said Lin Jian in a statement. "The US side's attacks ... once again expose its hegemonic nature."

### ***Who is Tulsi Gabbard, First Hindu to Lead US Intelligence***

Hours after being confirmed as the head of National Intelligence in the US, Tulsi Gabbard called upon visiting Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Washington DC, who has landed in America at the invitation of President Donald Trump. Sharing a glimpse of the meeting with Gabbard, PM Modi said he discussed India-US friendship with her, and congratulated her for becoming Trump's Director of National Intelligence.



### ***PM Modi Receives Starship Heatshield Tile from Musk***

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's meeting with Tesla and SpaceX CEO Elon Musk in Washington was more than just a diplomatic exchange—it underscored India's growing role in global technological collaboration. The two leaders, who previously met in 2015, discussed advancements in space exploration, electric mobility and governance efficiency.



### ***China to Build First Deepwater 'Space Station' in South China Sea***

China has officially greenlit the creation of a new deep-sea research facility in the South China Sea, an important step for both scientific exploration and geopolitical strategy. Positioned 2,000 metres below the ocean's surface, the research station will serve as a hub for studying the deep sea. It is expected to become operational by 2030. The deep-sea station will concentrate on cold seep ecosystems, methane hydrates, and other marine research areas. It will focus on these topics:



### ***Cristiano Ronaldo Tops 2025's Highest-Paid Athletes List***

Cristiano Ronaldo again topped the list of the world's highest paid athletes with a total income of \$260m in 2024, according to sports industry news site Sportico, but there were no women in the top 100. The leading 100, dominated by players from football, the NBA, NFL, golf and boxing, earned an estimated \$6.2bn in total income last year. The figure includes \$4.8bn in salary and prize money plus \$1.4bn in endorsements.



### ***Elon Musk Unveils Grok 3 AI: The Smartest AI on Earth***

Elon Musk's OpenAI-competitor AI company xAI has made its latest Grok LLM model, Grok 3, free for anybody and everybody who wants a taste of the "smartest AI on earth." What's impressive is that free access to Grok 3 is rolling out barely a few hours after its global unveiling. Another impressive feat is that Grok 3 has DeepSearch and reasoning abilities, right out of the gate.

### ***Trump Appoints Dan Bongino as FBI Deputy Director***

US President Donald Trump has appointed podcaster and commentator Dan Bongino as deputy director of the FBI. Trump posted on social media that Bongino was "a man of incredible love and passion for our Country" and would serve under newly confirmed FBI Director Kash Patel.



### ***UAE Introduces Blue Visa: 10-Year Residency for Foreigners***

Have you done your bit for the environment? If so, the United Arab Emirates has introduced the first phase of the Blue Visa system, a 10-year residence visa for individuals contributing to environmental sustainability.

