

International

Lebanon's Parliament chooses army commander as President.

Lebanon's Parliament has voted to elect the country's army commander, Joseph Aoun, as head of state, filling a more than two-year-long presidential vacuum. The session was the legislature's 13th attempt to elect a successor to former President Michel Aoun whose term ended in October 2022.

A first round of voting showed Lebanese army commander Joseph Aoun as the frontrunner, receiving 71 out of 128 votes but falling short of the two-thirds majority needed to win outright.

India's ranking drops to 85th in Henley Passport Index.

India's ranking has dropped by five points to 85 this year in a global passport index, topped by Singapore for the second consecutive year. The Indian passport offers visa-free or visa-on-arrival access to 57 destinations.

Japan follows closely in second place, offering access to 193 destinations.

The index ranks countries based on the number of destinations their citizens can access without a prior visa

National

ISRO again postpones docking experiment of 2 SpaDex satellites.

Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has postponed the docking experiment of its two satellites rotating in low Earth orbit under the SpaDex mission. The decision to postpone docking was taken due to the detection of excess drift between the two satellites. The drift was observed when ISRO undertook a manoeuvre to reduce the distance between the satellites to 225 meters.

The ISRO rocket PSLV C60 had successfully placed the satellites in its intended orbit on December 30th. Both the satellites weighing 220 kg are orbiting at an altitude of 475 km from Earth.

Centre approves memorial for former President Pranab Mukherjee.

The Central Government has approved the establishment of a memorial dedicated to

former President Pranab Mukherjee in the Rashtriya Smriti complex, situated in the Rajghat area of New Delhi. Pranab Mukherjee, served as the 13th President of India from 2012 to 2017. With a political career spanning over five decades, he held several key portfolios, including Finance, External Affairs, and Defence, under multiple Prime Ministers.

Dallewal's health deteriorates after over 40 days of hunger strike.

The health of 86-year-old farmer leader Jagjeet Dallewal, who has been on a 40-day hunger strike, has become a growing concern for the protesting farmers at the Khanauri border. Dallewal's indefinite fast calls for the Union government to meet farmers' demands, including a legal Minimum Support Price (MSP) guarantee.

Dallewal has been on an indefinite hunger strike at the Khanauri border point between Punjab and Haryana since November 26 last year.

Supreme Court Collegium recommends Patna High Court Chief Justice to the top court

The Supreme Court Collegium has recommended Patna High Court Chief Justice K. Vinod Chandran for appointment as a judge of the Supreme Court. The Collegium has also recommended the transfer of Bombay High Court Chief Justice Devendra Kumar Upadhyaya to Delhi and the Telangana High Court Chief Justice Alok Aradhe to the Bombay High Court.

Over 1.80 lakh deaths occurred due to road accidents in 2024: Nitin Gadkari

Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari said that around 1.80 lakh deaths occurred due to road accidents in 2024. Addressing a press conference on road safety meeting with Transport Ministers of all States and Union Territories in New Delhi, Mr Gadkari mentioned that nearly 30 thousand people died because of not wearing a helmet. He underscored that 66 per cent of deaths have occurred in the age group of 18 to 34.

Nitin Gadkari announces nationwide cashless treatment scheme for road accident victims.

The Central government will come up with a modified scheme by March to provide cashless treatment for road accident victims nationwide, under which they will be entitled to a maximum amount of ₹1.5 lakh per accident per person, Union Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari said. Following the pilot programme initiated by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways in Chandigarh on March 14, 2024, the scheme will now be applicable to road accident victims nationwide.

The scheme will cover treatment costs for seven days, up to ₹1.5 lakh, starting once the police report is filed within 24 hours of the accident

Business and Economy

Centre to soon launch new credit guarantee scheme for MSME sector up to ₹100 crore.

The Central government will soon launch a new credit guarantee scheme for the MSME sector covering loans up to ₹100 crore, Department of Financial Services DFS Secretary M Nagaraju said.

Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her July budget speech had stated that to facilitate term loans to MSMEs for purchase of machinery and equipment without collateral or third-party guarantee, a credit guarantee scheme will be introduced.

China becomes world's second-largest holder of lithium reserves.

China's lithium reserves have risen from 6% to 16.5% of the global total, making it the world's second-largest holder of lithium reserves. China now controls 16.5 percent of global lithium reserves, surpassing Australia, Argentina, and Bolivia, and trails behind just one country - Chile.

The world's top consumer of battery metal relies heavily on lithium imports, and Beijing has pushed for more domestic exploration in recent years.

EXIM Bank raises \$1 billion through overseas bonds.

EXIM Bank has raised \$1 billion (about ₹8,570 crore) through an overseas bond issuance at very competitive rates. The bank will be using

the money to fund its ongoing and new initiatives across the world. The bank capitalised on a strong demand momentum to achieve a final pricing of US treasury plus 1 per cent with a negative new issue concession of 0.05 per cent

China inflation hits nine-month low in December.

The Chinese National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) stated that the Consumer Price Index (CPI), a key measure of inflation, eased to 0.1 per cent last month, down from 0.2 per cent in November, marking its lowest level since March. China narrowly escaped slipping into deflation last year in December, with inflation rising at its slowest pace in nine months.

Indian Overseas Bank to sell ₹11,500-cr NPAs to ARCs.

Indian Overseas Bank is selling non-performing assets of ₹11,500 crore to asset reconstruction companies. It is selling 46 loan accounts and invited expressions of interest from the ARCs. The sale will be conducted through an e-auction under the open auction method on a portfolio basis, adding that the portfolio comprises accounts financed under a consortium arrangement, with some admitted under NCLT.

Kandla port to get ship building facility, cargo terminal at an outlay of ₹57,000 cr.

The Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways announced two major investments at the Kandla port – a mega ship building and repair project at an investment of ₹30,000 crore and a new cargo terminal outside Kandla Creek for ₹27,000 crore, which will add 135 mtpa to the port's capacity.

The proposed ₹30,000 crore new Mega Shipbuilding Facility at the Kandla Port will develop technical capability in the country to manufacture big Very Large Crude Carrier (VLCC) or similar class of vessels with capacity up to 3,20,000 tonnes DWT. The facility will have capacity to produce 32 new ships and repair 50 old ships every year.

Sports

Malaysia open: Chirag Shetty & S Rankireddy enter Men's doubles quarterfinals.

In Malaysia Open Badminton, the Indian pair of Chirag Shetty and S Rankireddy entered the Men's doubles quarterfinals. Chirag and Rankireddy defeated Malaysia's Tan Wee Kiong and Nur Mohd Azriyn Ayub in the round of 16 fixture in Kuala Lumpur.

In Women's Singles, Malvika Bansod lost to China's Han Yue 18-21, 11-21 in a round of 16 matches. HS Prannoy also lost to China's Li Shifeng 8-21, 21-15, 21-23 in Men's Singles pre-quarterfinals.

Tennis: Yuki Bhambri, Albano Olivetti reach ASB Classic men's doubles semifinals.

India's Yuki Bhambri and his French partner Albano Olivetti defeated the third-seeded British duo of Lloyd Glasspool and Julian Cash to reach the Men's Doubles semifinals of the ASB Classic at Auckland in New Zealand. The Indo-French pair staged a come-from-behind victory in a closely contested three-set match, winning with scores of 3-6, 6-4, and 12-10 after losing the opening set in the tournament's quarterfinal

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