

## International

### Zoran Milanovic re-elected President of Croatia.

Croatia's incumbent president, Zoran Milanovic, was re-elected to the post by a wide margin. Milanovic defeated Dragan Primorac, the candidate of Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic's HDZ party, by a margin of 74.7% to 25.3%, with 99% of polls reporting.

Milanovic is a staunch critic of Western aid for Ukraine as well as the country's future accession into the military alliance.

### Sao Tome and Principe's new PM resigns.

Prime Minister Ilza Amado Vaz of São Tomé and Príncipe has resigned after her proposed cabinet list was made public before being presented to President Carlos Vila Nova. According to a Presidential decree, this breach prompted her dismissal from office. Amado Vaz, a former Justice Minister, was appointed as Prime Minister on January 9, following the President's dissolution of Patrice Trovoada's government on January 6.

### 100 feared dead in South Africa's abandoned gold mine.

At least 100 people mining illegally in an abandoned gold mine in South Africa are feared to have died after being trapped deep underground for months while police tried to rescue them. At least 100 men are believed to have died in the North West Province mine, where police began an operation in November to remove miners. The deaths are suspected to be due to starvation or dehydration.

### Australia launches first National Autism Strategy with \$42.3 million.

The Australian government has launched the first national strategy to improve the lives of people with autism. The 42.3 million Australian dollar plan includes 22 commitments on four key reform areas to address the barriers autistic people face in areas like education, employment and diagnosis.

### India and Saudi sign Haj agreement to secure quota for Indian pilgrims.

India's Minister of Minority Affairs, Kiran Rijju, has signed the Haj Agreement 2025 with Saudi Arabia's Minister for Hajj and Umrah, Dr Tawfiq Bin Fawzan Al-Rabiah, in Jeddah. The agreement secures a quota of 175,025 pilgrims from India for the upcoming Haj season.

## National

### Union Minister for Commerce and Industry Shri Piyush Goyal launches National Turmeric Board.

Union Minister of Commerce and Industry, Piyush has inaugurated the National Turmeric Board in New Delhi. He also announced Shri Palle Ganga Reddy as its first Chairperson. The headquarters of the Board has been set up at Nizamabad. The newly formed Board will pay special attention to the welfare of the turmeric farmers spread across 20 states, including Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Madhya Pradesh, Meghalaya and others. Turmeric is also known as 'Golden Spice'.

The new Board will promote research and development of new turmeric products, and will look into the value addition of turmeric related products for marketing abroad.

India is the largest producer, consumer and exporter of turmeric in the world. India has more than 62% share of world trade. During 2023-24, 1.62 lakh tonnes of turmeric and turmeric products valued at 226.5 million USD was exported.

### Sonamarg tunnel in J&K inaugurated

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has inaugurated and dedicated the prestigious Sonamarg Tunnel to the nation, in Central Kashmir's Ganderbal district. The Sonamarg Tunnel with 6.4-km passage will significantly reduce the travel time to just 20-25 minutes between Gagangeer and Sonamarg in Ganderbal district. Earlier, it was called the Z-Morh tunnel due to its shape.

The tunnel will boost domestic and international tourism in Sonamarg while providing all-weather connectivity between Sonamarg and Gagangeer that leads to the approach road towards under construction Zojila tunnel.

## **Over 1.5 cr devotees take dip on first day of Mahakumbh.**

Over one crore fifty lakh devotees and pilgrims have taken the holy dip as the world's largest spiritual and cultural gathering Mahakumbh began on January 14 in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh. Devotees, pilgrims and visitors took a holy dip in various ghats of Triveni Sangam on Paus Purnima Day. The grand event will continue till Mahashivaratri on 26th February. A rare celestial alignment that occurs only once in 144 years adds to the speciality of Maha Kumbh this year.

## **Business & Economy**

### **Retail inflation eased to 5.22 percent in December**

According to data released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), India's retail inflation eased to four month low of 5.22 percent in December, down from 5.48 percent in the previous month of the current fiscal year, as the rate of increase in food prices slowed. Inflation in rural areas stood at 5.76 percent compared to 4.58 percent in urban regions.

### **Future Minerals Forum opens in Riyadh.**

The Future Minerals Forum (FMF) 2025 commenced in Riyadh, bringing together representatives from the mining industry from over 85 countries to address critical challenges in the mineral sector. Union Minister of Coal and Mines, G Kishan Reddy, joined ministers and officials from more than 50 nations at the prestigious event being held at the King Abdulaziz International Conference Centre.

The three-day forum, organised under the patronage of King Salman by Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Industry and Mineral Resources, opened with the Ministerial Roundtable. This government-led initiative aims to boost investment in mineral supply and enhance capacity across Africa, Western and Central Asia.

## **US tightens its grip on AI chip flows.**

The outgoing Biden administration has imposed new restrictions on exporting US-developed AI chips, aiming to curb China's military and industrial rise and blocking access to powerful AI chips and closed AI models. The decision, made just a week before Biden leaves office, is expected to heighten tensions with Beijing. The new global export framework creates three tiers for advanced AI chip exports. No new restrictions are placed on US allies like Australia, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan.

## **IBBI mandates eBKray auction platform to sell assets under liquidation.**

The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) has mandated the exclusive use of the eBKray auction platform to sell assets under the liquidation process from April 1. The eBKray (now known as Bank Asset Auction Network) is a property listing and e-auction platform designed for banks and lending institutions, addressing recovery of non-performing asset (NPA) loans through efficient property auctions. IBBI directed the IPs (insolvency professionals) to list unsold assets from ongoing liquidation cases for auction on the eBKray platform by March 31.

## **Sports**

### **Bumrah named ICC Men's Player of Month for December 2024.**

India pace bowler Jasprit Bumrah was named ICC Men's Player of the Month for December 2024 after his sensational performance during the recent tour of Australia for the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. Bumrah relentlessly kept Australian batsmen under intense pressure, claiming 22 wickets in three Tests in December last year at an outstanding average of 14.22.