

International

Canada's Deputy PM Chrystia Freeland resigns

Canada's Finance Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, Chrystia Freeland had resigned abruptly. In a letter to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Freeland said, they were at odds about the best path forward for the country. She announced her resignation hours before she was scheduled to present the 2024 Fall Economic Statement.

UNEP's 2024 Champions of the Earth recognizes six environmental leaders

The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) has announced recipients of the 2024 Champions of the Earth, honoured for their outstanding leadership, brave actions and sustainable solutions to tackle land degradation, drought and desertification. The recipients are Sonia Guajajara, Brazil's Minister of Indigenous Peoples, Amy Bowers Cordalis, attorney, and member of the Yurok Tribe, Gabriel Paun, a Romanian environmental defender, Lu Qi, a Chinese scientist, Madhav Gadgil, an Indian ecologist, and SEKEM, a sustainable agriculture initiative in Egypt honoured in the Entrepreneurial Vision category.

India, France, UAE strengthen defence ties with Desert Knight air combat exercise

India, France, and the UAE have begun a major air combat exercise, "Desert Knight," over the Arabian Sea. The operation aims to enhance trilateral defence cooperation and foster better interoperability among their air forces during complex combat scenarios.

The Indian Air Force (IAF) participated with aircraft such as Sukhoi-30MKIs and Jaguars, along with IL-78 mid-air refuellers and AEW&C (airborne early-warning and control) systems, operating from Jamnagar on India's west coast.

Gadhimai Mahotsav continues to be the world's biggest animal slaughter event

Gadhimai Mahotsav is a Hindu Festival held once every five years in Gadhimai Temple of Bariyarpur in Bara district of Madhesh Province of Nepal near the Indo-Nepal border. This year, the festival started from December 2 and continued till Shukla Purnima on Sunday.

The festival witnesses the world's largest animal sacrifice that takes place on Saptami, Ashtami and Navami of the Lunar Calendar. Devotees sacrifice Water buffalo, goats, cocks and ducks and fly off doves in the Gadhimai premise when their wishes are accomplished by divine intervention.

OPEC Fund approves nearly 1 billion dollars in development financing for final quarter 2024

The OPEC Fund for International Development has approved nearly 1 billion dollars in new development financing during the final quarter of 2024. The approvals were made at its 190th Governing Board meeting held in Vienna. The financing package will support development initiatives across Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America, focusing on infrastructure development, food security, renewable energy projects, and economic resilience.

Twenty-two nations will benefit from this funding, including Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Türkiye in Asia; Burkina Faso, Chad, and Kenya in Africa; Montenegro in Europe; and El Salvador, Honduras, and the Dominican Republic in Latin America.

Israel approves \$11.13 million settlement expansion in Golan Heights

The Israeli government has unanimously approved a comprehensive plan to expand settlements in the occupied Golan Heights, allocating more than \$11.13 million to the initiative. The decision comes amid heightened regional tensions following recent political upheaval in Syria. The expansion initiative includes funding for education, renewable energy projects, a student village, and organizational development support for the Golan Regional Council to accommodate an influx of new residents.

National

India's First Integrated Waste Management City To Be Set Up In Uttar Pradesh's Gorakhpur By September 2025

India's first Integrated Waste Management City-cum-Learning Centre is set to come up in Uttar Pradesh's Gorakhpur by September 2025.

The initiative aims to make the city garbage-free and foster sustainable waste management through a circular economy model.

Spread across 40 acres in Suthni village, Sahjanwa, this project will process various types of waste while producing charcoal and Bio-CNG.

Centre Launches Credit Guarantee Scheme to Ease Loan Access for Farmers via e-NWR

The Union Government has launched the 'Credit Guarantee Scheme for e-NWR-Based Pledge Financing.' Under this scheme, farmers will now be able to get a loan through their produce. After submitting their produce to warehouses registered with the Warehousing Development and Regulatory Authority (WDRA), they will be issued an electronic negotiable warehouse receipt (e-NWR). This receipt can be used as a guarantee against default to obtain low-interest loans from banks and other lending institutes. Farmers, farmers' producer organisations, farm cooperatives, and MSMEs will be eligible under this scheme.

Gati Shakti Vishwavidyalaya Signs MoU with Indian Navy to Boost Logistics Education & Research

Gati Shakti Vishwavidyalaya (GSV) Vadodara has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Indian Navy to enhance logistics-related education, research, and training in New Delhi. This collaboration will strengthen the Indian Navy's logistical framework by focusing on supply chain management, multimodal transportation, and sustainability in logistics. It also said that the MoU facilitates a specified number of Indian Navy officers to pursue academic degrees at GSV, alongside management development programs designed exclusively for them.

Environmentalist Tulsi Gowda, 'Encyclopedia of Forest', passes away

Environmentalist and Padma Shri awardee Tulsi Gowda, who passed away at the age of 86 at her native place in Karnataka a day ago. Tulsi Gowda worked for the cause of environment for more than 60 years and planted over 30,000 saplings. In 2021, the Government of India honoured Tulsi Gowda with the Padma Shri, the country's fourth-highest civilian award.

Business and Economy

ADB, NaBFID partner for India's infrastructure

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and India's National Bank for Financing Infrastructure Development (NaBFID) have signed a letter of intent (LOI) to strengthen their partnership in funding India's infrastructure projects.

ADB and NaBFID signed the LOI in Manila to promote climate resilience and improve urban and rural infrastructure, environmental sustainability, and public and private investment.

Bitcoin surges above \$106,000 on strategic reserve hopes

Crypto currency Bitcoin has surged to a record high above \$106,000 in early Asian trade on December 16, 2024, boosted by comments from President-elect Donald Trump that suggested he plans to create a U.S. bitcoin strategic reserve similar to its strategic oil reserve.

Sports

FIFA names Saudi Arabia as World Cup 2034 host; Morocco to co-stage 2030

The world footballing body, FIFA, has officially named Saudi Arabia as the host nation of the FIFA World Cup 2034. The Extraordinary FIFA Congress meeting has also confirmed Morocco, Spain and Portugal as co-hosts of the 2030 World Cup.

The decision was announced by FIFA President Gianni Infantino. The 2030 and 2034 World Cups each had only a single bid and both were confirmed by acclamation.

India to host maiden World Athletics Continental Tour event in August 2025

India will host its maiden World Athletics Continental Tour event -- a bronze level global meet in Bhubaneswar on August 10 next year. The Continental Tour is an annual series of track and field competitions held under the aegis of World Athletics and it forms the second tier of international one-day meetings after the prestigious Diamond League.