

International

Israel approves plan to restart formal land registration in occupied West Bank.

Israel's cabinet has approved a plan to restart formal land registration in the occupied West Bank, marking the first such measure since Israel captured the territory in 1967. The plan targets Area C of the West Bank, approximately 60% of the territory where Israel maintains full military and civilian control. The government allocated about \$79 million for the 2026-2030 period.

India, Japan, Indonesia conduct trilateral naval exercise.

The Indian Navy, along with Japan and Indonesia, have conducted a trilateral exercise in the Andaman Sea on February 13, 2026. The exercise is aimed to enhance joint operational readiness, improve interoperability, and strengthen maritime cooperation for a safe and stable region. The Indian Navy has assumed the command of Combined Task Force (CTF) 154, a key multinational training task force under the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF).

Barbadian PM Mia Mottley wins third term.

Barbadian Prime Minister Mia Mottley has won a historic third election victory, with her Barbados Labour Party sweeping all seats of the island nation's House of Assembly. Mottley's BLP won all 30 seats available in the lower house of Parliament. Barbados is the Caribbean's easternmost country and is home to about 283,000 people.

Om Birla to represent India during swearing-in of new govt in Bangladesh.

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, including other Foreign dignitaries, will attend the swearing-in ceremony of the new government in Bangladesh, led by Tarique Rahman following his party's landslide victory in the 13th Jatiya Sangsad elections. India's Ministry of External Affairs said Birla will represent the Government of India at the ceremony.

National

NGT clears Great Nicobar Island mega-infrastructure project.

The National Green Tribunal has cleared the decks for the Rs 81,000-crore Great Nicobar mega infrastructure project, refusing to interfere with its environmental clearance. The special bench, headed by NGT chairperson Justice Prakash Shrivastava, said it did not find any good ground to interfere with the environmental clearance granted in 2022.

The mega project, spread over 166 sq km, entails diversion of 130 sq km of forest land and felling of almost a million trees to facilitate the construction of a transshipment port, an integrated township, a civil and military airport and a 450-MVA gas and solar power-based plant. The Centre has pushed ahead with the project amid concerns expressed by the Nicobarese community over dispossession of their ancestral land as well as concerns over ecological damage.

Union Agriculture Minister launches AI-based farmer platform 'Bharat-VISTAAR' in Jaipur

Union Minister for Agriculture & Farmers Welfare and Rural Development, Shivraj Singh Chouhan, has launched a new digital companion, "Bharat-VISTAAR," for farmers across the country in Jaipur. VISTAAR stands for Virtually Integrated System to Access Agricultural Resources. Designed to make farmers technologically empowered, this AI-based platform will provide information related to weather updates, mandi prices, pest and disease management, soil health, crop advisory, and government schemes – all at one place.

Farmers will be able to access the services through phone calls, a chatbot, and, in the next phase, via a mobile application. In Phase 1, the platform will be launched in Hindi and English and will reach lakhs of farmers across several states, including Maharashtra, Bihar, and Gujarat.

Cabinet approves Rs 10,000 crore Startup India Fund of Funds 2.0.

The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has approved the establishment of the Startup India Fund of Funds 2.0 (FoF 2.0) with a corpus of ₹10,000 crore to mobilise venture capital for the country's rapidly expanding startup ecosystem.

The new fund aims to accelerate the next phase of India's startup journey by mobilising long-term domestic capital, strengthening the venture capital landscape and supporting innovation-led entrepreneurship across sectors. Startup India FoF 2.0 adopts a targeted and segmented funding approach. It will prioritise deep tech and technology-driven innovative manufacturing ventures that require patient, long-term capital.

India-U.K. free trade pact likely to be implemented in April 2026.

The India-U.K. free trade agreement, signed in July last year, is likely to be implemented in April 2026. The pact needs approval from the U.K. Parliament before it is implemented.

India and the U.K., on July 24, 2025, signed the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) under which 99% of Indian exports will enter the British market at zero duty, while tariffs on British products such as cars and whisky will be reduced in India.

Union Cabinet clears 'Urban Challenge Fund' for cities.

The Union Cabinet has approved the launch of the 'Urban Challenge Fund' (UCF), a new Centrally sponsored scheme of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, with a total Central assistance of ₹1 lakh crore.

It aims to support transformative and bankable urban projects through competitive "challenge-mode" as urban infrastructure cannot be funded by public finance alone. Central assistance will cover 25% of project costs, subject to raising a minimum of 50% of the project cost from the market, including municipal bonds, bank loans, and public-private partnerships leading to an expected total investment of ₹4 lakh crore in the urban sector in the next five years.

Business and Economy

NPCI extends 'UPI One World' wallet service to visitors from 40 countries to AI Summit.

National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) has announced the extension of the UPI One World wallet services for international visitors from over 40 countries attending the India AI Impact Summit 2026 from 16–20 February in New Delhi.

Through this pilot initiative, inbound foreign travellers will be able to make seamless, secure, and real-time Person-to-Merchant (P2M) UPI payments during their visit to India.

Alibaba unveils new Qwen3.5 model for 'agentic AI era'.

Alibaba has unveiled a new artificial intelligence model Qwen 3.5 designed to execute complex tasks independently, with big improvements in performance. The model is built on a hybrid architecture that allows only 17bn parameters to activate per forward pass, while comprising a total of 397bn parameters. According to the company, Qwen3.5 is 60pc cheaper to use and eight times better at processing large workloads than its immediate predecessor.

The release comes as Alibaba looks to attract more users to its Qwen chatbot app in China, a landscape currently dominated by rival tech giant ByteDance's Doubao and DeepSeek, which became the first Chinese AI firm to break through globally last year.

Magnum Icecream to acquire 26% stake in Kquality Walls.

Magnum Ice-cream Holdings, the Netherlands-based ice-cream seller is set to acquire 26% stake in Kquality Walls Ltd. The total consideration of the acquisition was ₹1,303.03 crore, where Unilever Plc decided to sell a total of 61,08,93,729 equity shares.

India's January trade deficit widens.

India's merchandise trade deficit widened to a three-month high of \$34.68 billion in January, marking the final month impacted by around 50% U.S. tariff on Indian exports, which government officials said will be pared to 18% this week.

The wider-than-expected goods trade deficit was driven by a sharp rise in gold and silver imports, which pushed up total imports by 12% month-on-month to \$71.24 billion, while exports fell 5% to \$36.56 billion.

Unemployment in India rises slightly to 5% in January.

According to a Central government survey released on February 16, 2026, the rate of unemployment in the country among persons aged 15 years and above rose slightly to 5% in January this year from 4.8% in December 2025. The UR (unemployment rate) or joblessness recorded a marginal increase in January in both rural and urban areas. The data also showed a lower labour force participation rate (LFPR) as well as workers population ratio (WPR) across the rural and urban areas.

Wholesale price inflation rises to 1.81% in Jan.

Wholesale price inflation extended upward momentum for the third straight month, at 1.81% in January, driven by an uptick in prices of food, non-food articles, and manufactured items on a month-on-month basis.

Wholesale Price Index (WPI)-based inflation was 2.51% in January last year, while in the previous month (December 2025), it was 0.83%.

ICAI names Prasanna Kumar D as 74th president.

The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) has announced the election of its new President and Vice-President for the 2026–27 term. CA Prasanna Kumar D has been elected

as the President and CA Mangesh Pandurang Kinare as the Vice-President, with effect from February 12, 2026.

CA Prasanna Kumar D has been elected as the 74th President of ICAI. He takes over from CA Charanjot Singh Nanda, who headed the institute in the previous term. ICAI is the statutory body regulating the chartered accountancy profession in the country.

Sports

Magnus Carlsen wins first FIDE Freestyle World Championship.

Norway's Magnus Carlsen is the 2026 FIDE Freestyle Chess World Champion. A draw in the fourth and final game against Fabiano Caruana (USA) was enough to seal a 2.5–1.5 match victory in Weissenhaus, Germany. Carlsen has now won 21 world titles in various formats.

The World Championship marked a breakthrough collaboration between FIDE and the private organiser Freestyle Chess, staging the first officially recognised title in this format.

T20 World Cup: Rashid Khan becomes first cricketer to take 700 wickets in T20s.

Afghanistan spinner Rashid Khan became the first player to achieve 700 T20 wickets during Afghanistan's group-stage match against the United Arab Emirates (UAE), being played at the Arun Jaitley Stadium in Delhi. He achieved the feat during the 16th over in the first innings when he dismissed Muhammad Arfan by a hit-wicket.