

(1st February 2025)

International

Switzerland to end development aid to Bangladesh, Albania, Zambia

The Swiss government is ending its development aid programmes for Bangladesh, Albania and Zambia. This decision follows the Swiss parliament allocating less funding for foreign aid in December than the government had requested.

The Parliament cut 110 million Swiss Franc (\$121 million) from the 2025 international cooperation budget and 321 million Swiss Franc from the financial plan 2026-2028, reports say.

The Federal Council, Switzerland's executive body, was informed of the budget cuts. In response, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) will phase out its bilateral development programs in Albania, Bangladesh, and Zambia by the end of 2028.

Important Days

International Zebra Day: 31st January

International Zebra Day is celebrated every year on January 31. The purpose of the day is to raise awareness about the striped mammal and its endangered condition.

Zebras are mostly found on the African continent, in the semi-desert areas of Kenya and Ethiopia, and the hilly areas of Namibia, Angola, and South Africa.

Three types of zebra can be found in the wild: Grévy's zebra, the plains zebra, and the mountain zebra. The Grevy's zebra is considered endangered on the Red List of Threatened Species.

Indian Coast Guard Day: 1st February

The Indian Coast Guard Day will be celebrated on February 1, 2025, to mark the 49th Raising Day of India's maritime Armed Force, the Indian Coast Guard.

ICG was established by the Coast Guard Act, 1978 on February 1, 1977.

The Indian Coast Guard has grown into the world's fourth-biggest Coast Guard.

National

Shubhanshu Shukla set to become first Indian astronaut to Pilot Axiom-4 to ISS

Shubhanshu Shukla, an Indian Air Force pilot, is set to become the first Indian astronaut to

travel to the International Space Station (ISS) on a private mission in 2025.

He will board the SpaceX Dragon spacecraft from Kennedy Space Center in Florida, as part of the Axiom Mission 4 (Ax-4), a joint venture between NASA and ISRO.

The Axiom Mission 4 (Ax-4) will involve astronauts from India, Poland, and Hungary and is the first such collaboration in over 40 years.

This private spaceflight, in collaboration with NASA, will involve scientific research, cultural outreach and microgravity experiments.

Centre expands Aadhaar authentication to boost good governance, ease of living

The Centre notified the Aadhaar Authentication for Good Governance (Social Welfare, Innovation, Knowledge) Amendment Rules, 2025.

The Ministry of Electronics and IT said that Aadhaar Authentication has been expanded to government and private entities for providing various services in the public interest, boosting innovation, knowledge, and public service enhancement.

The amendments will enhance the scope for residents to avail themselves of many new services seamlessly, with regard to e-commerce, travel, tourism, hospitality, and health services. The amended rules will also promote the ease of living and livelihood.

India adds 4 new Ramsar sites

The Centre has announced the addition of four new Ramsar sites in India, taking the tally to 89.

The government announced that Sakkarakottai Bird Sanctuary and Therthangal Bird Sanctuary in Tamil Nadu, Khecheopalri Wetland in Sikkim, and Udhwa Lake in Jharkhand have been included in the list of Ramsar sites in the country.

India still stands as the country with the highest number of Ramsar sites in Asia and third in the world.

Tamil Nadu becomes the state with the maximum number of Ramsar sites, with a tally of 20.

Sikkim and Jharkhand have added their first Ramsar sites.

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Business and Economy

Economic Survey: 8% growth needed to reach 'Viksit Bharat' goal by 2047

The Economic Survey 2024-25 reported that India needs to achieve an average growth rate of around 8 per cent at constant prices for about a decade or two to realise its economic aspirations of becoming Viksit Bharat by 2047.

It further added that India will also need to create 7.85 million new non-farm jobs annually till 2030, achieve 100 per cent literacy, improve the quality of education institutions, and develop high-quality, future-ready infrastructure at scale and speed.

IRDAI Caps Senior Citizen Health Insurance Premium Hikes at 10% Annually

The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) has introduced a new regulation that caps annual premium increases for senior citizens' health insurance policies by a maximum of 10%.

Under the new regulations, Insurance companies must seek prior approval from IRDAI before increasing premiums beyond 10% per year for senior citizens and if an insurer wants to withdraw any health insurance product specifically designed for seniors, they must first obtain regulatory consent.

India's Forex Reserves Rise by \$5.57 Billion to \$629.55 Billion

According to the latest data released by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), India's foreign exchange reserves increased by 5.57 billion dollars to 629.55 billion dollars in the week ending January 24.

In the week ending January 17, the country's forex reserves had declined by 1.8 billion dollars and had settled at 623.98 billion dollars.

India's GDP Growth Projected at 6.4% for FY 2025

In the Economic Survey presented by the Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, India's real GDP is estimated to grow by 6.4 per cent in the financial year 2025, and the growth is likely to range between 6.3 and 6.8 per cent in the financial year 2026.

The survey highlights that the country's GDP at constant (2011-12) prices grew by 6.7 per cent in Quarter one and 5.4 per cent in Quarter two of the financial year of 2025. This implied a real GDP growth of 6 per cent in the first half of the current fiscal. Agriculture growth remained steady in the first half of financial year 2025, with quarter two recording a growth rate of 3.5 per cent.

Sports

India Storm Into U19 Women's T20 World Cup Final

In the ICC Under-19 Women's T20 Cricket World Cup, defending champions India thrashed England by 9 wickets in the second semifinal in Kuala Lumpur to seal a spot in the final. India will face South Africa in the title clash.

South Africa has qualified for their first-ever ICC Women's U19 T20 World Cup final after a five-wicket win over Australia in the first semifinal.

Srikanth, Subramanian bow out in quarterfinals of Thailand Masters

Kidambi Srikanth and Sankar Muthusamy Subramanian crashed out of the Thailand Masters Badminton tournament after losing their respective men's singles quarterfinal matches in Bangkok.

Srikanth lost to sixth seed Zheng Xing Wang of China 17-21, 16-21 while Subramanian gave a tough fight to Chinese shuttler Xuan Chen Zhu before losing 21-19, 18-21, 13-21.