

International

France begins withdrawal of military forces from Chad.

France has commenced the withdrawal of its military forces from Chad, following the Central African nation's decision to end its defence cooperation agreement with France.

French troops and aircraft have been stationed in Chad since its independence in 1960, supporting the training of Chadian forces. However, the recent disagreement between the two countries prompted France to begin its pullout.

Former Supreme Court Judge Madan Lokur appointed as United Nations IJC Chairperson.

Former Supreme Court judge Madan B Lokur has been appointed as the Chairperson of the United Nations Internal Justice Council (IJC). Lokur has been appointed for a 4-year-tenure, ending on 12th November 2028.

The General Assembly of the UN established the IJC as part of the new internal justice system to help ensure independence, professionalism and accountability in the administration of the UN's justice system.

Justice Madan Lokur retired as a judge of the Supreme Court on 31 December, 2018, after a tenure of more than 6 years.

Television Executive Mark Burnett named special envoy to UK

US President-elect Donald Trump has named television executive Mark Burnett as the special envoy to the United Kingdom.

The Emmy Award-winning Burnett, who was born in London, is the creator of "Survivor" the reality competition series that became a US television juggernaut after its premiere in 2000. He also produced other hit shows including "The Apprentice," "Shark Tank" and "The Voice." He also served as the Chairman of MGM Worldwide Television Group from 2018 to 2022.

Important Days

World Meditation Day: 21st December.

First-ever World Meditation Day is being observed on 21st December, marking a global

initiative to promote well-being, peace and mindfulness across nations.

The day highlights the practice's universal potential to address contemporary global challenges, including stress, violence, and societal discord.

National

India's forest cover increases by 1,445 square kilometres, says India State of Forest Report 2023.

Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Bhupender Yadav released the 'India State of Forest Report 2023' (ISFR 2023) at the Forest Research Institute in Dehradun.

According to the latest assessment, the total forest and tree cover in India stands at 8 lakh 27 thousand 357 square kilometers, representing 25.17 percent of the country's total geographical area. Of this, 7 lakh 15 thousand 343 square kilometers is classified as forest cover, while 1 lakh 12 thousand 14 square kilometers is tree cover.

This includes an increase of 156 square kilometers in forest cover and 1,289 square kilometers in tree cover. He also emphasized the advanced technology used by the Forest Survey of India (FSI) for real-time fire alerts and forest fire services, which help in better forest management.

This report, published biennially by the Forest Survey of India, offers a comprehensive assessment of India's forest and tree resources, based on satellite data and field-based surveys.

India's First Bio-Bitumen National Highway inaugurated.

The Union Transport Minister inaugurated India's First National Highway constructed using Bio-Bitumen material in Nagpur-Mansar Bypass project of National Highway 44 in Nagpur District.

This eco-friendly road construction will reduce the cost of road construction, generate employment and curb pollution due to stubble burning.

This is the first national highway in the country built using bitumen made from crop residues - lignin. This road made from bio-bitumen is 40

percent stronger than a traditional asphalt road, and by mixing 15 percent bio-bitumen in the asphalt, a 1-kilometre-long stretch has been constructed in the Nagpur-Mansar National Highway project.

Business and Economy

Foreign investors pump in over Rs 26,000 crore into Indian capital markets in December.

Foreign investors pumped in over 26,000 crore rupees into the Indian capital markets so far in December.

As per the depositories data, the foreign portfolio investors or FPIs, pumped in 21,789 crore rupees into the Indian equities markets and 4,646 crore rupees into the debt market, taking the total net investment into the Indian capital markets to 26,435 crore rupees.

GST Council announces rate cut on fortified rice kernels to 5%.

GST Council 55th meeting was chaired by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

The GST Council has decided rate cut on fortified rice kernels to 5 per cent and recommends amendment to definition of pre-packaged and labelled items.

Also, GST will not be levied on the penal charges, late payment fees of banks and NBFCs.

Sports

Vijay Hazare Trophy: Anmolpreet Singh smashes fastest List A hundred by an Indian.

In domestic cricket, Anmolpreet Singh smashed the fastest List A hundred by an Indian, to

guide Punjab to a nine-wicket win over Arunachal Pradesh in a Group C Vijay Hazare match in Ahmedabad.

Anmolpreet, scored a 35-ball hundred. He broke the record of former India all-rounder Yusuf Pathan, who had scored a hundred off 40 balls for Baroda against Maharashtra in 2009-10.

India awarded hosting rights for ISSF Junior World Cup 2025.

India has been awarded the hosting rights for next year's ISSF Junior World Cup including competitions in rifle, pistol and shotgun disciplines. The National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) said, hosting rights of international events has strengthened India's stature as one of the sport's top destinations in the world. The dates of the tournament are yet to be finalized.

This will be the country's third top International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) event in recent times, after the senior World Cup in Bhopal in 2023 and the season-ending World Cup Final in October this year.

Koyel, Nilam win silver medals in Asian Youth & Junior Weightlifting Championships.

India's Koyel Bar and L. Nilam Devi won silver medals in the 55kg Youth and Junior categories to take the country's tally to six in the Asian Youth and Junior Weightlifting Championships in Doha, Qatar.

Koyel heaved 79kg in snatch and 103kg in clean and jerk for an aggregate lift of 182kg for her silver, while Nilam lifted 86 in snatch and 104kg in clean & jerk for an overall 190kg, which won her a silver in the junior category.