

International

Trump administration changes US H-1B visa process, replaces lottery with wage and skill based selection.

In the US, the Trump Administration has announced sweeping changes to the H-1B work visa selection process, replacing the long-standing random lottery with a weighted system that prioritises higher-skilled and higher-paid foreign workers. The move is aimed at better protecting the wages, working conditions, and job opportunities of American workers, while strengthening the integrity of the H-1B non-immigrant visa program.

Under the new regulation, H-1B visas will no longer be awarded through a purely random draw; instead, registrations will be ranked and selected through a weighted process that increases the probability that visas go to higher-skilled and higher-paid foreign nationals.

India to provide 450 million dollar reconstruction package to cyclone-hit Sri Lanka.

India will provide a 450 million dollar package to assist in the reconstruction of areas affected by Cyclone Ditwah in Sri Lanka. External Affairs Minister Dr S. Jaishankar has announced. The package comprises a 350 million concessionary line of credit and 100 million dollars in grants, aimed at supporting the rebuilding of cyclone-affected regions of the nation.

India re-elected to International Civil Aviation Organisation Council.

Civil Aviation Minister Ram Mohan Naidu has said that India has been re-elected to the International Civil Aviation Organisation – ICAO Council with one of the highest mandates. India has been re-elected to Part II of the Council of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) for the 2025–2028 term.

The 36-member ICAO Council, divided into three parts, is elected by the Member States during the ICAO Assembly and serves as the governing body for a three-year term.

Cambodian civilian death toll rises to 21 as border conflict with Thailand enters 17th day.

The civilian death toll in Cambodia has increased to 21, as the border conflict with Thailand has entered its 17th day. The Cambodia-Thailand border conflict has reignited since December 7, and both sides have accused the other of initiating the attack. The conflict has so far forced about 545,000 Cambodians to flee their homes for safe shelters.

National

National Commission for Women launches ‘SHAKTI Scholars’ young research fellowship.

The National Commission for Women, NCW, has launched SHAKTI Scholars: NCW’s Young Research Fellowship programme, inviting applications from young students and researchers to undertake policy-oriented research on issues affecting women in India. The fellowship aims to encourage multidisciplinary research on key areas such as women’s safety and dignity, gender-based violence, legal rights and access to justice, cyber safety, health and nutrition, economic empowerment and labour participation.

Selected candidates will be awarded a research grant of one lakh rupees to undertake a six-month research study.

Renowned Litterateur Vinod Kumar Shukla passes away.

Renowned litterateur and Jnanpith Award awardee Vinod Kumar Shukla passed away in Raipur. His notable works include the novel “Naukar Ki Kameez,” the poetry collection “Lagbhag Jai Hind,” and the short story collection “Pedon Par Kamra,” all of which earned him wide recognition. Many of Mr Shukla’s books have been translated into several languages.

He was honoured with the Sahitya Akademi Award for his novel “Deewar Mein Ek Khidki.”

INSV Kaundinya to undertake its maiden overseas voyage.

INSV Kaundinya, the Indian Navy's pioneering stitched sailing vessel that revives India's ancient shipbuilding and seafaring traditions, will undertake its maiden overseas voyage on the 29th of this month. The vessel will be flagged off from Porbandar, Gujarat, for Muscat, Oman, symbolically retracing the historic maritime routes that connected India with the wider Indian Ocean world for millennia.

INSV Kaundinya represents a rare convergence of history, craftsmanship and modern naval expertise.

President Droupadi Murmu confers Rashtriya Vigyan Puraskar 2025.

President Droupadi Murmu has conferred the Rashtriya Vigyan Puraskar 2025 at a function held at Rastrapati Bhavan in New Delhi. This is the nation's highest recognition for exceptional contributions in the fields of science, technology, and innovation. In the second edition of Rashtriya Vigyan Puraskar, the awards were given under four categories, including Vigyan Ratna, Vigyan Shree, Vigyan Yuva-Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar and Vigyan Team.

In the second edition of the award, Padma Vibhushan Prof. Jayant Vishnu Narlikar has been honoured with the Vigyan Ratna award posthumously.

Eight scientists, including Dr Yusuf Mohammad Seikh, Jayan N, Prof. Mahan Maharaj, were conferred with the Vigyan Shree award. Fourteen young scientists, including Ankur Garg of ISRO, Prof Amit Kumar Agarwal of IIT Kanpur, Prof. Arkaprava Basu of IISc Bengaluru, were awarded under the Vigyan Yuva-Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar category. While the Vigyan Team award was given to Team Aroma Mission CSIR.

Indian Coast Guard inducts First Pollution Control Vessel at Goa Shipyard Limited.

The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) has inducted the first Pollution Control Vessel, Samudra Pratap, at Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL). Samudra Pratap is the first indigenously designed and built Pollution Control Vessel of the Indian Coast Guard. The vessel is equipped with state-of-the-art technology, including a 30 millimetre CRN-91 gun, two 12.7 millimetre stabilised remote-controlled guns with integrated fire control systems, and indigenously developed systems. It also features a shaft generator, a Sea boat davit, a Pollution Response boat with davit, and a high-capacity external firefighting system.

It is the first Pollution Control Vessel in the ICG fleet to feature a retractable stern thruster, Dynamic Positioning System, and flush-type side sweeping arms.

National Farmers' Day 2025 on Dec.23.

National Farmers' Day is being observed across the nation on December 23. The day honours the contributions of farmers to the nation's growth and development. This day marks the birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Chaudhary Charan Singh, renowned for his deep understanding of rural issues and unwavering advocacy for farmers' welfare.

Business and Economy

RBI to infuse 3 trillion rupees liquidity in banking system through OMO and Forex Swap.

The Reserve Bank of India has announced a fresh set of measures to ease tight liquidity conditions in the banking system. RBI has unveiled a plan to inject nearly 3 trillion rupees over the coming weeks through a combination of open market operations (OMOs) and a foreign exchange swap. Under the proposed plan, it will purchase government securities worth 2 trillion rupees through OMOs.

These purchases will be conducted in four equal tranches of 50 thousand crore rupees each on December 29, January 5, January 12 and January 22.

In addition, RBI will undertake a three-year US Dollar/Rupee buy-sell swap of 10 billion dollars on January 13, a move expected to further release rupee liquidity into the banking system.

Paytm to set up overseas subsidiaries in Indonesia, Luxembourg.

One 97 Communications Ltd (Paytm) wholly owned subsidiary, Paytm Cloud Technologies (PCTL), has approved the incorporation of two overseas wholly owned subsidiaries in Indonesia and Luxembourg, as part of its international expansion plans. The proposed entities will operate in payments and financial services and will be step-down wholly owned subsidiaries of One 97 Communications.

PCTL plans to invest up to ₹25 crore in each of the two subsidiaries, in one or more tranches, at face value.

Income Tax Department launches data-driven NUDGE Campaign.

The Income Tax department has launched a data-driven NUDGE campaign for Assessment Year 2025-26, encouraging taxpayers to voluntarily review deduction and exemption claims identified as potentially ineligible through risk analytics. Identified taxpayers are being requested through SMS and email under the “Non-intrusive Usage of Data to Guide and Enable (NUDGE)” campaign to correct such errors, in view of the due date for filing revised ITRs by the 31st of December.

Unity Small Finance Bank wins 3-way auction for Aviom India Housing Finance.

Unity Small Finance Bank has emerged as the winning bidder for bankrupt Aviom India Housing Finance, offering ₹977.5 crore as an upfront payment. Six companies had shown interest in acquiring Aviom India Housing Finance under the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT)-monitored process, but eventually three of them participated in the challenge auction process that concluded last week.

Cyber Fraud losses worth 660 crore rupees prevented in 6 months with help of Financial Fraud Risk Indicator.

The Central government has prevented six hundred sixty Crore Cyber Fraud Losses in just 6 months with the help of the Financial Fraud Risk Indicator (FRI). The Ministry of Communication informed that more than 1000 banks, third-party application providers and Payment System Operators (PSOs) have onboarded the Digital Intelligence Platform (DIP) and started adopting FRI actively.

FRI is driven by the active support of the Reserve Bank of India and the National Payments Corporation of India.

CCI okays Blackstone's proposal to acquire 9.99 pc stake in Federal Bank.

Fair trade regulator, Competition Commission of India, CCI, has cleared US-based Blackstone's proposal to acquire a 9.99 per cent stake through warrants in private sector lender Federal Bank. Private equity firm Blackstone is acquiring stake through its arm Asia II Topco XIII Pte Ltd.

Federal Bank Ltd is a private sector commercial bank in the country and offers a wide range of products and services, such as deposits, loans, payment services, etc.

Canara Bank launches ‘Canara ai1Pe’, a unified UPI app for secure digital payments.

Canara Bank has launched ‘Canara ai1Pe’, a new unified payments interface (UPI) application aimed at offering customers a faster, safer and more convenient digital payments experience.

The app allows users to link bank accounts from any bank, enabling instant money transfers, merchant payments, bill settlements and other everyday digital services through a single platform. The bank said the app is designed to be simple and accessible for users across age groups and varying levels of digital familiarity.

HDFC Bank spends Rs 1,068 crore in CSR during FY25.

Private sector HDFC Bank has spent Rs 1,068.03 crore on its corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives in 2024-25, an increase of Rs 123 crore over the previous fiscal year. The last financial year also marked 10 years of Parivartan, under which HDFC Bank has touched 10.56 crore lives across 28 states and 8 Union Territories.

The bank provides CSR funding in six core focus areas, including rural development, healthcare & hygiene, financial literacy & inclusion and natural resource management.

Sports

R Praggnanandhaa and Anish Giri clinch the Global Chess League 2025 Title.

Indian Grandmasters R Praggnanandhaa and Anish Giri's Alpine SG Pipers won the Global Chess League 2025 Season 3 title, beating defending Champions Triveni Continental Kings in the finals in Mumbai. Alpine SG Pipers defeated Triveni Continental Kings 4-2 in match one, and 4.5-1.5 in the second match to claim their maiden GCL title.

Anish Giri emerged as the most valuable player in the finals, winning both his games with Black.

Football: Napoli wins Italian Super Cup.

Italian professional football club Napoli won the Italian Super Cup as David Neres scored twice to secure a 2-0 win for the reigning Serie A champion over Bologna in the final at the Al -Awwal Park in Jeddah. It is the third time Napoli has won the competition, after 1990 and 2014.

Kiran Ankush Jadhav wins gold in 10m Air Rifle.

Navy's Kiran Ankush Jadhav produced a consistent performance to claim the gold medal in the 10 metre Air Rifle Men final in the 68th National Shooting Championship in Bhopal. Jadhav finished with 252.1, holding off Olympian Arjun Babuta, who secured a silver medal with 251.4.

Tata Steel World 25K Kolkata: Cheptegei, Degitu crowned winners; Gulveer, Seema fastest Indians.

Uganda's 5,000m and 10,000m World Record holder Joshua Cheptegei and Ethiopia's Degitu Azimeraw recorded convincing wins to take the men's and women's crowns respectively. In his 'second home,' double Olympic champion Cheptegei clocked 1:11:49 to beat current World marathon champion Alphonse Simbu for a prize money of USD 15,000,

While Gulveer Singh and Seema, the best home runners, rewrote Indian event records in the 10th Tata Steel World 25K Kolkata.