

## International

### Indian, US Ambassadors Hold Talks at Mar-a-Lago to Strengthen Trade Ties

India's Ambassador to the United States, Vinay Mohan Kwatra, held discussions with US Ambassador to India, Sergio Gor, in Florida to advance the shared objective of strengthening bilateral trade ties. The meeting took place at Mar-a-Lago, the Florida residence of US President Donald Trump. Mr Kwatra noted that Ambassador Gor outlined his plans and priorities for the India-US partnership as he prepares to assume charge in New Delhi. Ambassador Gor also described it as the first visit by an Indian Ambassador to Mar-a-Lago.

### UN Security Council Urges Restraint as US-Venezuela Tensions Escalate

At an emergency session of the United Nations Security Council, several countries called on the United States and Venezuela to pursue dialogue amid rising tensions following US interdictions of oil tankers.

Washington said it does not recognise Nicolás Maduro's government and vowed strict enforcement of sanctions. Venezuela rejected allegations and accused the US of piracy.

Russia and China backed Venezuela's sovereignty, while European members urged adherence to international law. The UN said mediation offers are welcome.

## Important Days

### Good Governance Day: 25<sup>th</sup> December

Good Governance Day 2025 is observed on December 25 to commemorate the 101<sup>st</sup> birth anniversary of Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Instituted in 2014, the day underscores India's commitment to transparent, accountable, and citizen-centric governance.

It celebrates Vajpayee's visionary leadership and democratic values, while reinforcing the idea that good governance is fundamental to democracy, development, and public trust.

## National

### Venkaiah Naidu Takes Charge as President of Atal Smriti Nyas

Former Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu has been elected President of the Atal Smriti Nyas in New Delhi.

His name was proposed by founding member Ram Bahadur Rai after consultations with members, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

He succeeds Vijay Kumar Malhotra, who passed away recently, and will now constitute the governing body and executive committee to oversee the Nyas' activities.

### Abhyuday MP Summit Showcases Major Investment Push in Gwalior

The state-level Abhyuday Madhya Pradesh Growth Summit – Investment to Employment began at the Mela Ground in Gwalior, marking a major boost to the state's development agenda. In the presence of Union Home and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah and Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, land is being allocated for investment proposals worth over ₹2 lakh crore, alongside the inauguration of projects exceeding ₹10,000 crore.

Held on the birth anniversary of Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the summit highlights investment-driven employment and recent industrial achievements.

### India Records Sharp Decline in Malaria, TB and Maternal Mortality: JP Nadda

Union Health and Family Welfare Minister JP Nadda said India has achieved more than 80 per cent reduction in malaria cases and a 78 per cent fall in related deaths, marking a major public health transition. Speaking at the Advancing Public Health Outcomes Forum 2025 in New Delhi, he noted progress in tuberculosis control with a 21 per cent decline in incidence. Maternal Mortality Ratio has dropped to 88 from 130 in 2014, while Infant Mortality Rate fell to 27. He added that the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana has significantly reduced out-of-pocket health expenditure.

## **OCI Unveils Trust-Based Quality Reforms**

The Quality Council of India (QCI) has announced a new set of next-generation quality reforms on the eve of Sushasan Divas 2025, aligned with the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

Guided by Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal, the reforms introduce the QR-enabled Q Mark – Desh ka Haq to ensure transparency and curb fake certifications.

QCI will also reduce inspections, simplify procedures, expand its assessor pool, and launch Quality Setu for time-bound grievance redressal.

## **Shivraj Chouhan Leads Nationwide Dialogue on Rural Employment Reforms**

Union Rural Development Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan chaired a national virtual interaction with Self Help Group members on the Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission (Gramin) Act, 2025. The programme saw participation from over 35 lakh people across more than 2.55 lakh villages.

The Minister described the Act as transformative for the rural economy, aimed at generating sustainable livelihoods and resilient villages.

He announced that one-third of beneficiaries will be women, with special Rozgar Guarantee Cards for single women, while ensuring flexibility during peak agricultural seasons and prioritising water security and rural infrastructure development.

## **Cabinet Clears Major Delhi Metro Expansion Under Phase V(A)**

The Union Cabinet has approved three new corridors under Delhi Metro Phase V(A) at a cost of ₹12,015 crore, taking the network beyond 400 km.

The corridors—R.K. Ashram Marg–Indraprastha, Aerocity–Airport Terminal-1, and Tughlakabad–Kalindi Kunj—will add 13 new stations and improve connectivity to Central Vista and the airport.

Ashwini Vaishnaw said the project will ease congestion and boost the economy. Narendra

Modi noted the expansion will enhance “Ease of Living” in the national capital.

## **Centre Orders Complete Ban on New Mining Leases in Aravalli Range**

The Centre has directed States to impose a complete ban on granting new mining leases across the Aravalli Range, stretching from Delhi to Gujarat, to curb illegal mining and protect the fragile ecosystem.

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change said the prohibition applies uniformly across the entire Aravalli landscape. The Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education has been tasked with identifying additional no-mining zones.

Existing mines must strictly comply with environmental safeguards and the Supreme Court of India directives, reinforcing long-term conservation of the Aravalli ecosystem.

## **Business and Economy**

### **IRFC to Refinance World Bank's ₹10,000 Crore Loan for Freight Corridor**

The Indian Railway Finance Corporation (IRFC) and Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India Ltd (DFCCIL) have signed an agreement to refinance ₹10,000 crore of foreign-currency loans taken from the World Bank.

The loans were used for the ₹51,000-crore, 1,337-km Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor, stretching from Punjab to Bihar. This refinancing, coordinated with the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Railways, is expected to save about ₹2,700 crore for the Government of India and supports the vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat.

### **SEBI Raises Threshold for Simplified Duplicate Securities Process to ₹10 Lakh**

Capital markets regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India has doubled the monetary limit for simplified issuance of duplicate securities from ₹5 lakh to ₹10 lakh to ease investor compliance.

Investors within this limit will now submit fewer documents.

SEBI also relaxed Basic Services Demat Account (BSDA) framework norms by excluding Zero Coupon Zero Principal bonds and delisted securities from valuation, reducing compliance burden and simplifying investments.

### **Brookfield Signs Built-to-Suit Office Deal with JPMorgan Chase in Powai**

Brookfield Properties has signed a long-term built-to-suit lease with JPMorgan Chase to develop the bank's Global Capability Centre (GCC) in Powai, Mumbai.

The 20-year lease will house Asia's largest GCC of JPMorgan Chase, with the bank as the sole occupier.

The six-acre campus, acquired by a Brookfield Asset Management private real-estate fund, will see an investment of about \$1 billion.

The project will be developed under an agreement with the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority, through a Brookfield-led venture with partner BS Sharma.

### **Indian Economy Likely to Grow at 7% in FY27 Despite Trade Headwinds: CareEdge Ratings**

India's economy is projected to grow at 7% in FY27, even amid global trade uncertainties, according to CareEdge Ratings.

Factors supporting growth include the possibility of a US-India trade deal, low inflation aiding consumption, softer interest rates, and a reduced tax burden. Strong capital expenditure, reflected in healthy order books of capital goods firms, is expected to sustain investment momentum.

CareEdge estimates 7.5% growth in FY26, though GDP growth may ease to about 7% in

the second half as export front-loading wanes and post-festival consumption moderates.

Rural consumer confidence has turned optimistic, urban sentiment is improving, and retail inflation is expected to stay benign at around 2.1% in FY26, supported by good monsoons and food deflation.

### **Sports**

### **Kohli, Rohit Shine as Record Scores Mark Thrilling Vijay Hazare Day**

In domestic cricket action at the Vijay Hazare Trophy, Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma starred with commanding centuries.

Kohli struck 131 off 101 balls to guide Delhi to a four-wicket win over Andhra Pradesh while chasing 299.

Rohit blasted 155 from just 94 deliveries as Mumbai defeated Sikkim by eight wickets.

The day also saw history as Bihar posted a record 574/6 against Arunachal Pradesh, winning by 397 runs. Karnataka completed another highlight with a successful 413-run chase against Jharkhand.

### **Vaibhav Suryavanshi Breaks AB de Villiers' Record With the Fastest 150 in Men's List A Cricket**

Bihar opener Vaibhav Suryavanshi etched his name into the record books by smashing the fastest 150 in men's List A cricket, reaching the landmark in just 59 balls and surpassing AB de Villiers' 64-ball feat from 2015.

The 14-year-old dazzled with a 36-ball century against Arunachal Pradesh in the Vijay Hazare Trophy, becoming the youngest centurion in List A history.

His hundred is the second-fastest by an Indian, behind Anmolpreet Singh's 35-ball ton in 2024.