

International

UK decides to boost military funding to reinforce its commitment to NATO.

United Kingdom Prime Minister Keir Starmer has announced plans to increase the defence spending to 2.5 percent of GDP by 2027, with an eventual goal of reaching 3 percent in the next parliamentary term, beginning in 2029. The boost in military funding will be partially financed by reducing the foreign aid budget from 0.5 percent to 0.3 percent of GDP.

Starmer emphasized that the move will reinforce the UK's commitment to NATO and European security.

US announces Gold Card Investor Visa Programme for wealthy immigrants.

The United States President Donald Trump has announced a new gold card investor visa programme for wealthy immigrants, replacing the existing EB-5 visa. Trump said the companies can buy immigration Gold Cards on payment of 5 million dollars for highly talented employees to deal with the uncertainties of work visas and green cards. He described the initiative as green card privileges plus an upgrade from the green card system.

Gold Card would replace the current programme known as EB-5 which gives immigration privileges to people who invest between 800 thousand dollars and 1.05 million dollars to create jobs depending on the areas they go to. The programme is expected to be launched in two weeks.

Denmark announces Green Transition Alliance India (GTAI) initiative.

Denmark has announced its Green Transition Alliance India (GTAI) initiative to strengthen collaboration with India on sustainable energy solutions and accelerate its shared commitment to global carbon neutrality.

The GTAI serves as an integrated platform for leading players in the global green transition, stemming from the success of the Green Fuels Alliance India (GFAI) and Wind Alliance India (WAI). The companies will comprise three Working Groups with a focus on Renewable Energy, Green Fuels and Energy Efficiency. (ANI)

National

India to host 12th Regional Circular Economy conference in Jaipur.

India will host the 12th regional 3R (reduce, reuse, recycle) and Circular Economy Conference in Asia and the Pacific in Jaipur from March 3-5, Union Urban Affairs Minister Manohar Lal Khattar announced in New Delhi. The event will centre on the theme of "Realizing Circular Societies Towards Achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and Carbon Neutrality in Asia-Pacific".

CAG signs MoUs with IIT Madras for improving audit skill sets, sustainable audit.

The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India has signed two Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with the Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT Madras) on areas ranging from data security and governance to Artificial Intelligence-driven capacity building and research in environment audit, and the environmental, social and governance (ESG) framework.

VP Dhankhar attends 1st joint mega Nyokum Yullo Celebration in Arunachal Pradesh

Vice President, Jagdeep Dhankhar visited Arunachal Pradesh and participated in the first-ever joint mega Nyokum Yullo celebration at Boasimla under Kamporijo circle in Kamle district as chief guest. Nyokum is a festival celebrated by the Nyishi tribe of the state. The festival is celebrated for better productivity, prosperity and happiness of all human beings on earth.

MoSPI to launch 'Innovate with GoIStats' hackathon on MyGov platform.

Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation is set to launch a data-visualization hackathon named "Innovate with GoIStats". The theme of this hackathon will be Data-Driven Insights for Viksit Bharat. The hackathon aims to inspire young minds like students and researchers to utilize the vast official statistics generated by the National Statistics Office (NSO) for creating innovative data-driven insights.

The Hackathon will take place on the MyGov platform till 31st March. Students pursuing

undergraduate, and postgraduate or doing research can participate.

Mahakumbh 2025 concludes in Prayagraj with grand Mahashivratri dip.

The Mahakumbh 2025 in Prayagraj successfully concluded last night with the final holy dip on the Mahashivratri. Over 66 crore 30 lakh devotees have taken the holy dip so far across the 45-day-long spiritual mega event. Over 1 crore 53 lakh devotees took the final holy dip on the auspicious occasion of Mahashivratri.

Biological E. to make Bavarian Nordic's Chikungunya vaccine.

Vaccine firms Biological E. and Bavarian Nordic have formed a strategic partnership to expand access to the latter's Chikungunya vaccine VIMKUNYA CHIKV VLP in low- and middle-income countries.

The agreement comprises a technology transfer of the current drug product manufacturing process for the chikungunya vaccine, with an option to transfer the drug substance process at a later stage.

CHIKV VLP is an adjuvanted VLP recombinant protein vaccine for active immunization to prevent disease caused by chikungunya virus (CHIKV) in individuals 12 years and older.

India's first hyperloop test track unveiled at IIT Madras

IIT Madras, with support from the Ministry of Railways, has now developed India's first hyperloop test track which is 422 meters long and allows a high-speed train to travel in a near-vacuum tube at speeds of more than 1,000 km/h. The hyperloop track showed that about 350 km can be covered in just 30 minutes. This means that if it is implemented in the real world, passengers can travel from Delhi to Jaipur, which is roughly 300 km, in less than half an hour.

Business and Economy

RBI lowers risk weight of banks' exposure to NBFCs.

In a major relief to non-banking finance companies (NBFCs), the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) reduced the risk weights of bank loans to

NBFCs by 25 percentage points depending on the ratings. This move is expected to significantly improve credit flow to NBFCs, which in turn will enhance credit availability in the retail segment.

By reducing the risk weights, the RBI aims to encourage banks to lend more to NBFCs, thereby boosting credit growth in the economy. Bank lending to NBFCs has slowed down dramatically, plummeting to a four-year low of 6.7 per cent in 2024.

Centre inks pact with Paytm for mentorship, market access, funding opportunities for startups.

The Union government has inked an agreement with Paytm (One97 Communications Ltd) under which the company would provide mentorship, infrastructure support, market access, and funding opportunities to startups.

The MoU was signed by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) with Paytm to foster innovation and accelerate the growth of manufacturing and fintech startups in India.

Tata Play, Airtel Digital TV near merger.

Tata Group and Bharti Group are close to merging their satellite TV businesses, creating a nearly \$1.6 billion entity with the aim of tiding over the sustained migration of subscribers to digital streaming.

The merged entity is expected to be run by Bharti Airtel, which will likely hold between 52%-55% with the remaining held by Tata Play shareholders, including Walt Disney.

PSBs drive infra bond boom, raising 90% of ₹89,588 cr.

Banks collectively raised ₹89,588 crore via infrastructure (infra) bond issuances in the first 11 months of the current financial year against ₹51,081 crore in the year ago period.

Public sector banks (PSBs) accounted for 90 per cent of the total infra bond issuances in the aforementioned period against 51 per cent in the year ago period. Private sector banks accounted for the rest.

Adani Group to invest ₹50,000 crore in Assam across various sectors.

The Adani Group has announced a significant investment of Rs 50,000 crore in Assam,

spanning key infrastructure sectors such as airports, aero cities, city gas distribution, transmission, cement, and road projects.

Addressing the inaugural function of the Advantage Assam summit in Guwahati, Adani Group chief Gautam Adani said the group is committed to investing more in the future for the development of Assam and northeastern region.

India's private sector companies made higher profits, reduced debt: RBI

India's private sector companies made more profit and reduced debt during 2023-24. The operating profit margin as well as net profit margin improved across major sectors while their debt burden declined during the year. According to the Reserve Bank of India, operating profits grew by 15.3 per cent up from 4.2 per cent the previous year. Manufacturing profits rose by 13.2 per cent. Post-tax profits went up by 16.3 per cent with the services sector growing faster at 38.1 per cent compared to 7.6 per cent in manufacturing.

Public companies' ability to cover interest payments has also improved, with the interest coverage ratio rising to 4.1. Companies mainly used internal funds, with reserves and surplus increasing. Their fixed assets grew by 10 per cent with strong growth in the chemicals, pharmaceuticals, electrical equipment, and vehicle sectors.

Sports

ICC Champions Trophy: Afghanistan defeats England.

In the ICC Men's Champions Trophy Cricket, Afghanistan defeated England by 8 runs at Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore. With this defeat, the England team was eliminated from the tournament. Chasing a victory target of 326 runs set by Afghanistan, England were all out for 317 in 49.5 overs. Earlier, electing to bat first, Afghanistan scored 325 for 7 in the stipulated 50 overs with opener Ibrahim Zadran recording the highest individual score of 177 off 146 balls in ICC Champions Trophy history.

Six-member committee to review financial assistance to National Sports Federations.

The Central government has constituted a six-member committee to revise the norms for providing financial assistance to National Sports Federations. According to the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, the committee will be headed by Joint Secretary (sports). The Ministry said after the Paris Olympics, a new Olympic Cycle has started which necessitated the need for review of the norms in view of the evolving circumstances. The Committee will submit its report within 15 days.