

International

Bulgaria becomes 21st member of Eurozone.

Bulgaria has officially adopted the euro, joining the Eurozone as its 21st member. To ensure a smooth transition, the Bulgarian lev will circulate alongside the euro during January, after which the euro will become the sole legal tender from February 1.

Joining the eurozone has been a long-standing goal for Bulgaria since it became part of the European Union in 2007.

The eurozone was launched in 1999, while six EU members are yet to adopt the common currency.

India-UAE 'Desert Cyclone II' strengthens defence cooperation.

The second edition of the joint military exercise Desert Cyclone II between the Indian Army and the UAE Land Forces concluded at Al-Hamra Training City in Abu Dhabi.

The exercise focused on urban warfare, counter-terrorism and UN-mandated operations.

Indian troops from the Mechanised Infantry Regiment trained alongside the UAE's 53 Mechanised Infantry Battalion, enhancing interoperability, tactical coordination and joint operational readiness, while reinforcing the growing defence partnership between India and the UAE.

ECTA ushers in duty-free entry for Indian Exports to Australia.

All Indian exports have begun receiving duty-free access to the Australian market with the implementation of the India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA).

The pact grants zero-duty access on 100 per cent of Indian tariff lines, benefiting sectors such as gems and jewellery, textiles, leather, engineering goods, food products, medical devices and automobiles.

In return, India will provide preferential access to over 70 per cent of tariff lines to Australia, mainly for raw materials.

India, Pakistan conduct annual exchange of nuclear installations list.

India and Pakistan exchanged lists of nuclear installations and facilities under the bilateral Agreement on the Prohibition of Attack against Nuclear Installations and Facilities.

The exchange was carried out simultaneously through diplomatic channels in New Delhi and Islamabad.

In a statement, the Ministry of External Affairs said the agreement mandates both countries to share such information on January 1 each year.

Signed on December 31, 1988, and in force since January 27, 1991, this marks the 35th consecutive annual exchange.

National

Parliament clears repealing and amending Act 2025 to streamline laws.

The Parliament of India has passed the Repealing and Amending Act, 2025, with the objective of simplifying India's legal framework.

The Act repeals 71 obsolete laws enacted between 1886 and 2023 that have lost relevance.

It also introduces targeted amendments to key statutes such as the Code of Civil Procedure, General Clauses Act, Succession Act and Disaster Management Act to improve clarity and consistency.

A savings provision safeguards existing rights and liabilities, supporting ease of governance and a modern legal system.

Digital e-Bill System rolled out to streamline fertiliser subsidies.

Union Chemicals and Fertilizers Minister JP Nadda inaugurated the e-Bill System to digitally process fertiliser subsidies worth nearly ₹2 lakh crore.

The platform will strengthen transparency, efficiency and technology-driven governance.

The integrated system replaces manual, paper-based processes with a fully digital workflow, featuring built-in payment validation, complete audit trails and fraud-risk reduction.

The move marks a major step towards robust financial governance and faster, more accountable subsidy disbursement by the government.

KYV requirement dropped for new car FASTags from February 2026.

The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has announced that Know Your Vehicle (KYV) cards will be discontinued for cars on all new FASTag issuances from February 1, 2026.

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways said the move aims to improve public convenience and end post-activation inconvenience faced by highway users. KYV will now be required only in specific complaint-based cases, while existing car FASTags will not need KYV unless issues arise.

The decision ensures vehicle verification is completed upfront, eliminating repeated follow-ups after FASTag activation.

Business and Economy

New excise and health cess on tobacco, pan masala from February 1.

The Ministry of Finance has announced additional central excise duty on tobacco products and a Health and National Security Cess on pan masala, effective February 1.

These levies, approved by the Parliament, will apply over and above the existing Goods and Services Tax—40 per cent for most products and 18 per cent for bidis—replacing the earlier compensation cess regime.

The government has also introduced a capacity-based duty system under the new

2026 rules, where excise liability will be calculated based on packing machine capacity and retail sale price, rather than actual production output.

Devyani-Sapphire merger to form Unified Yum! India Franchise.

The boards of Devyani International Ltd and Sapphire Foods India Ltd have approved a merger that will create a single, unified Yum! Brands franchisee for KFC and Pizza Hut in India.

Under the proposed share-swap, Devyani will issue 177 shares for every 100 Sapphire shares, subject to regulatory approvals.

The deal includes Devyani acquiring 19 KFC outlets in Hyderabad and aims to accelerate growth, streamline supply chains, and strengthen Yum!'s India operations as the market enters a new expansion phase.

GST 2.0 sees modest revenue growth in December collections.

Net revenues from the Goods and Services Tax rose 2.2 per cent year-on-year to ₹1.45 trillion in December 2025, marking the second full month under the revamped GST 2.0 regime and the lowest monthly collection since December 2024.

Sequentially, collections declined 4.3 per cent from November.

Gross GST revenues increased 6.1 per cent to nearly ₹1.75 trillion, driven largely by a sharp rise in import-related taxes.

Domestic GST collections remained subdued, while compensation cess receipts fell sharply. The Ministry of Finance continues to report cess separately as a transitional measure.

Industrial lending picks up pace as RBI data signals credit shift.

Bank credit to industry gathered momentum, rising 9.6 per cent year-on-year till November, compared to 8.3 per

cent a year earlier, according to data from the Reserve Bank of India.

Credit to micro, small and medium industries continued to post double-digit growth, while sectors such as infrastructure, engineering, textiles and petroleum recorded strong expansion. Retail credit growth moderated to 12.8 per cent, led by a sharp slowdown in credit card and housing loans.

In contrast, vehicle loans and loans against gold jewellery showed robust growth, indicating a shift in retail borrowing patterns.

Banks set to play bigger role in NPS as PFRDA clears reforms.

The Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority has approved, in principle, a new framework allowing Scheduled Commercial Banks to independently sponsor pension funds for managing National Pension System assets. The move aims to strengthen the pension ecosystem by easing earlier regulatory constraints while ensuring subscriber protection.

Eligibility norms aligned with Reserve Bank of India standards will apply.

To boost governance, PFRDA has appointed new trustees to the NPS Trust, including former State Bank of India chairman Dinesh Kumar Khara as chairperson.

RBI flags risks of crypto assets, backs CBDCs for monetary stability.

The Reserve Bank of India has reiterated a cautious approach towards crypto assets, including stablecoins, stressing that central bank money must remain the core settlement asset and anchor of trust in the monetary system.

The RBI urged countries to prioritise central bank digital currencies (CBDCs) over stablecoins to safeguard financial stability.

It noted that CBDCs can deliver efficiency, programmability and instant settlement—

benefits often claimed by stablecoins—while retaining the safety and credibility of sovereign money.

The central bank added that despite rapid growth, stablecoins remain relatively small compared to the broader crypto asset market.

MCA relaxes Director KYC norms, introduces three-year filing cycle.

The Ministry of Corporate Affairs has eased compliance norms by allowing directors of private companies to complete the Know Your Customer (KYC) filing once every three years instead of annually.

As per a notification, directors must submit KYC details in Form DIR-3 KYC Web by June 30 of every third consecutive financial year.

Any change in personal details, such as mobile number, email, or residential address, must be reported within 30 days. The move is part of the Centre's ongoing efforts to simplify business regulations and reduce compliance burden.

Sports

Usman Khawaja to retire after final Ashes Test at SCG.

Veteran Australian batter Usman Khawaja has announced his retirement from international cricket following the fifth Ashes Test at the Sydney Cricket Ground. The 39-year-old, Pakistan-born cricketer, who was Australia's first Muslim Test player, said the decision would allow him to finish on his own terms.

Khawaja reflected on a late-career resurgence that included multiple Ashes centuries at the SCG, while also speaking out against racial stereotyping he faced during his career.

He will end his Test journey with over 6,200 runs, 16 centuries, and widespread recognition for both on-field excellence and off-field contributions.