

## International

### Death Toll in Quake-Hit Myanmar Rises to 2886

In Myanmar, the death toll from last week's devastating earthquake has crossed 2,886, with a further 4,639 injured and 373 missing. According to the UN, around 3 million people in Myanmar have been displaced from their homes, and 20 million were in need of aid even before the earthquake struck due to years of violence between the junta and rebel militias.

### French Court Imposes Jail Sentence on Marine Le Pen

A French court has imposed a jail sentence on far-right leader Marine Le Pen and barred her from seeking public office after finding her guilty of embezzling European Union funds. The Paris court ruled that Ms Le Pen used more than 3.3 million dollars of European Parliament funds to pay members of her National Rally (RN) party. Le Pen will not be allowed to run for office for five years, effective immediately. The ruling threatens to push Ms Le Pen out of the 2027 presidential race, in which, according to opinion polls, she is currently the front-runner.

### SpaceX Fram2 Mission Lifts Off, First Private Flight Over Earth's Poles

SpaceX's Fram2 mission has lifted off from NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida. A Falcon 9 rocket carried Resilience, the Crew Dragon capsule, into orbit. This marks the first private astronaut mission to fly over Earth's poles. The crew consists of four members. The mission involves conducting 22 scientific experiments. These include growing mushrooms in space for the first time. X-ray imaging of the human body in microgravity will also be performed. Data collected is expected to support future space exploration, including Mars missions.

## National

### Kumbakonam Betel Leaf, Thovalai Maanikka Maalai Get GI Tags

The famous Kumbakonam vetrilai (Kumbakonam betel leaf) and Thovalai maanikka maalai have been given the Geographical Indication (GI) tags,

thereby taking the number of GI products of Tamil Nadu to 62. The Kumbakonam betel leaf has a unique taste and pleasant aroma, while the 'Thovalai flower garland' is prepared in the Thovalai flower market in Kanyakumari.

### CCI Chief Ravneet Kaur Given Additional Charge of NFRA Chairperson

The Central Government has entrusted Ravneet Kaur, chairperson of the Competition Commission of India (CCI), with additional charge as the chairperson of the National Financial Regulatory Authority (NFRA) for three months, starting April 1. Kaur will serve as NFRA chairperson till the appointment of a regular incumbent or until further orders, whichever is earliest. The post of NFRA chairperson fell vacant after the three-year term of its previous chief, Ajay Bhushan Pandey, came to an end on March 31.

### 13,000 Sq Km of Forest Area Encroached in 25 States, UTs Data

Over 13,000 square kilometres of forest area is under encroachment in 25 states and Union Territories that have so far submitted data to the Union Environment Ministry. Ten states are yet to submit data on forest encroachment.

As of March 2024, a total of 13,05,668.1 hectares (or 13,056 square kilometres) of forest area was under encroachment in 25 states and Union Territories that had provided data. Madhya Pradesh had the highest forest encroachment, with 5,460.9 square kilometres affected. Assam has 3,620.9 square kilometres of forest area under encroachment.

### PM Modi Announces "Yoga For One Earth, One Health" As 2025 Yoga Day Theme

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has announced "Yoga for one Earth, one health" as the theme of this year's International Day of Yoga. The United Nations proclaimed June 21 as the International Day of Yoga, with an aim to raise awareness worldwide of the many benefits of practising yoga. It was first celebrated in 2015.

### MGNREGA Wage Revised to ₹370 Per Day from April 1

The daily wage for workers under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) has been revised from ₹349

to ₹370 a person, with effect from April 1. Both men and women receive equal wages under the MGNREGA

### **Centre Launches ZooWIN Portal to Monitor Anti-Rabies, Anti-Snake Venom Stocks**

The Union Government has introduced a digital platform, ZooWIN, designed to track and manage the real-time availability of anti-rabies vaccines (ARV) and anti-snake venom (ASV) across the country. Similar to the Co-WIN and U-WIN platforms, ZooWIN will centralise data and improve collaboration among healthcare providers, municipal authorities, and veterinary services. India records an estimated three to four million snake bites annually, resulting in approximately 50,000 deaths.

The portal has been developed by the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) with technical support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

### **Business and Economy**

### **Sivasubramanian Ramann Appointed as PFRDA Chairman**

The Central Government has appointed Sivasubramanian Ramann as the new Chairperson of the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA). The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has approved his appointment for a tenure of five years. Ramann currently serves as the Deputy Comptroller & Auditor General (CAG) and Chief Technology Officer at the CAG of India.

PFRDA is the statutory body regulating and developing India's pension sector.

### **Paradip Port Becomes Numero Uno Among Indian Major Ports in Cargo Throughput in FY 2023-24**

Paradip Port Authority (PPA's) has reached new heights with the recent record-breaking achievement of clocking incredible 145.38 MMT cargo throughput in FY 2023-24 and thus nudged past Deendayal Port, Kandla, to emerge as the highest cargo handling major port of the country. For the first time in the 56 years history of operation, PPA has surpassed previous records, set by Deendayal Port. Paradip Port has

also recorded growth of 10.02 million metric tonnes (7.4%) of traffic on YoY basis.

### **India's External Debt Rises to \$717.9 bn at December-end**

India's external debt rose by 10.7% to USD 717.9 billion in December 2024 from USD 648.7 billion in December 2023, with a slight 0.7% quarter-on-quarter increase. The external debt to GDP ratio was 19.1%. The US dollar-denominated debt remained the largest component of India's external debt, with a share of 54.8 per cent in end-December 2024, followed by Indian Rupee (30.6 per cent), Japanese Yen (6.1 per cent), SDR (4.7 per cent) and Euro (3 per cent)

Loans were the largest component of external debt, with a share of 33.6 per cent, followed by currency and deposits (23.1 per cent), trade credit and advances (18.8 per cent) and debt securities (16.8 per cent).

### **Droupadi Murmu Releases Special Postage Stamp Celebrating 90th Anniversary of the RBI**

President of India, Droupadi Murmu, released a special postage stamp to commemorate the 90th anniversary of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) at the National Centre for the Performing Arts (NCPA), Mumbai.

The Reserve Bank of India was established on April 1, 1935, at its iconic building in Kolkata. The RBI continues to play a pivotal role in fostering stability, trust, and growth in the financial system. Beyond its core responsibilities of monetary policy, currency management, government debt management, and financial regulation, the RBI also focuses on financial inclusion, consumer awareness, and the promotion of financial literacy.

### **NABARD and SBI Forge Strategic Partnership for Sustainable Growth of Rural Assam**

The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) and the State Bank of India (SBI) have signed an MoU to boost rural growth in Assam. The partnership aims to finance Rs. 500 crores in FY 2025-26, with a target of Rs. 1,000 crores annually thereafter. The focus is on enhancing rural livelihoods and improving the credit ecosystem.

## **Japan to Give Crypto Assets Legal Status as Financial Products**

Japan's Financial Services Agency (FSA) plans to revise the Financial Instruments and Exchange Act to give crypto assets a legal status as financial products. As part of the move, crypto assets will be put under insider trading restrictions that prohibit buying and selling based on undisclosed internal information.

## **Google-Backed AI Drug Discovery Startup Raises \$600 Million**

Isomorphic Labs, which uses artificial intelligence technologies for drug discovery, has raised \$600 million in its first ever external funding round led by Thrive Capital.

Google Ventures and Alphabet, an existing investor, also participated in the round.

## **Axis Bank Becomes First to Go Live with a Pioneering B2B Collections Solution for a Fortune 500 Company**

Axis Bank has partnered with a Fortune 500 company in India to provide B2B collections utilising NBBL's Bharat Connect (erstwhile BBPS). With this, Axis Bank becomes the first Bank to go live in implementing this pioneering

solution, leveraging its best-in-class, robust API stack.

The solution can integrate multiple ordering applications across sectors: FMCG, Pharma, Automotives, and Healthcare, facilitating collections for the company's wholesale distributors and stockists. Retailers can initiate invoice payments directly from the application.

## **Sports**

### **Boxing WC: 3 Indian Boxers Enter Semifinals, Ensuring 3 More Medals**

In the Boxing World Cup, Manish Rathore, Hitesh and Abhinash Jamwal have entered the semifinals of their respective weight categories, ensuring three more medals for India in the championship. While Jamwal defeated Germany's Dennis Brill in the 65 kg category by a unanimous decision, Hitesh defeated Italy's Gabriele Guidi Rontani in the 70 kg weight category. Manish defeated Australia's Yusuf Chotia in the 55 kg weight category.