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## Devika Sihag Wins Maiden Super 300 Title at Thailand Masters

- Young Indian shuttler **Devika Sihag** won the **biggest title of her career**, clinching her **maiden BWF Super 300 crown** at the **Thailand Masters**.
- The **20-year-old from Haryana** claimed the **women's singles title**, marking a **major breakthrough** on the international badminton circuit.
- Devika secured the championship after her **opponent was forced to retire during the final**.
- Devika sealed the title after Malaysia's Goh Jin Wei retired midway through the women's singles final of the USD 250,000 tournament.
- The Indian shuttler was firmly in control of the match, leading 21-8, 6-3 when the world No. 68 Goh, a two-time world junior champion, withdrew due to a hamstring injury.
- The result handed Devika her first Super 300 title on the BWF World Tour.
- Currently ranked world No. 63, Devika's Thailand Masters triumph represents her most significant achievement to date.
- The title adds crucial ranking points and underlines her growing consistency against higher-ranked opponents.



## **Adampur Airport Renamed Sri Guru Ravidas Maharaj Ji Airport**

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi renamed Jalandhar's Adampur airport as Sri Guru Ravidas Maharaj Ji Airport
- The renaming honours **Guru Ravidas**, a renowned **Bhakti movement saint and social reformer**.
- The decision fulfilled a long-pending demand raised by multiple political parties and social groups in Punjab.
- **A resolution seeking this renaming was passed by the Punjab Vidhan Sabha in 2020**, and the demand was reiterated by the current state government.
- The move carries strong social and cultural significance, particularly for communities that deeply revere Guru Ravidas.
- Alongside the renaming, PM Modi virtually inaugurated the newly constructed civil terminal at Halwara airport in Ludhiana district.
- Built at a cost of ₹54 crore, the terminal has been developed by expanding the Halwara Air Force base.
- It has the capacity to handle 300 passengers at a time, significantly improving civil aviation facilities in the industrial hub of Ludhiana.

### **Punjab:**

- Chief Minister: Bhagwant Mann
- Governor: Gulab Chand Kataria

## **Army and ITBP Join Forces in Arunachal For Exercise Agni Pariksha**

- Exercise Agni Pariksha is a joint training exercise of the Indian Army and the Indo-Tibetan Border Police.
- It is designed to enhance coordination between military and paramilitary forces during combat situations.
- The exercise is considered first-of-its-kind as it actively involved non-artillery personnel in artillery firing drills.
- By sharing operational practices and combat techniques, the exercise aims to build mutual understanding and seamless cooperation during real-world deployments, especially in high-altitude and border areas.
- The exercise was conducted in Arunachal Pradesh, a strategically important border state.
- Personnel from the Spear Corps, artillery regiments, infantry battalions and ITBP units participated.
- Spearhead Gunners played a key role by guiding and supervising the training.
- The choice of terrain helped troops adapt to realistic combat conditions similar to those faced along the Line of Actual Control and other sensitive frontier regions.
- The main aim of Exercise Agni Pariksha was to familiarise infantry and ITBP personnel with artillery procedures.
- Participants were trained in coordination mechanisms, fire mission execution and communication during combat.



## **Indian Railways has received its highest-ever financial support in the Union Budget 2026-27**

- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced a massive boost for rail infrastructure.
- With record capital expenditure and ambitious plans for high-speed rail corridors, the government has signalled that railways will remain central to India's growth strategy.
- For the financial year 2026-27, the Ministry of Railways has been provided ₹2,93,030 crore as capital expenditure (capex).
- This funding is meant for long-term asset creation such as new railway lines, doubling of tracks, rolling stock, and station redevelopment.
- The total outlay, which includes both capital and revenue expenditure, stands at ₹2,78,030 crore.
- This unprecedented allocation highlights the government's continued priority on rail-led infrastructure growth and logistics efficiency.
- A major highlight of Railway Budget 2026 is the proposal to develop seven high-speed rail corridors across India.
- These corridors aim to significantly reduce travel time between major cities and promote regional economic integration.
- The proposed routes are Mumbai-Pune, Pune-Hyderabad, Hyderabad-Bangalore, Hyderabad-Chennai, Chennai-Bangalore, Delhi-Varanasi, and Varanasi-Siliguri.
- These corridors will complement existing rail infrastructure and support India's long-term vision for faster and cleaner transport.



## World Wetlands Day 2026

- World Wetlands Day is celebrated annually on 2 February to mark the signing of the Ramsar Convention in 1971 at Ramsar in Iran.
- The day aims to raise awareness about wetlands such as lakes, marshes, mangroves, floodplains, and lagoons.
- These ecosystems provide clean water, reduce floods, store carbon, and support rich biodiversity.
- Despite their importance, wetlands are often ignored in development planning.
- World Wetlands Day serves as a reminder that protecting wetlands is directly linked to human survival and sustainable development.
- The 2026 theme, “Wetlands and Traditional Knowledge: Celebrating Cultural Heritage,” focuses on the role of indigenous peoples and local communities in wetland conservation.
- India hosts 98 Ramsar sites, the highest number in South Asia, covering about 1.35 million hectares.
- Indian wetlands are deeply connected to culture, religion, and livelihoods.

**World  
Wetlands Day**  
2 February 2026



**Wetlands and traditional  
knowledge: Celebrating  
cultural heritage**

## **Sarvesh Ranjan Promoted to Chief General Manager at Union Bank of India**

- Sarvesh Ranjan has been promoted to Chief General Manager of Union Bank of India effective February 1, 2026.
- Union Bank informed that Shri Bhaskara Rao Kare, who served as Chief General Manager, retired from the bank's services on January 31, 2026.
- During his tenure, he played an important role in strengthening operations, guiding leadership initiatives, and supporting strategic projects across the bank.
- After the retirement of Shri Bhaskara Rao Kare, Union Bank promoted Shri Sarvesh Ranjan.
- Who was earlier serving as General Manager, to the post of Chief General Manager.
- Shri Sarvesh Ranjan is an engineering graduate and a highly experienced banker with nearly 30 years of experience in the banking sector.
- Before his promotion, he was working as General Manager – Central Reconciliation, Transaction Monitoring & Anti-Money Laundering (AML) at Union Bank.

### **Union Bank of India:**

- Headquarters: Mumbai
- Established: 1919
- Nationalised: 1969
- MD & CEO: Asheesh Pandey



## Global Soft Power Index 2026

- Soft Power is the ability of a nation to influence others through culture, diplomacy, values, and innovation, rather than military strength or economic pressure.
- A strong Soft Power helps countries attract tourists, investors, skilled talent, and strengthens global relationships.
- The Global Soft Power Index measures Soft Power using a combination of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and nation brand attributes.

### Key Performance Indicators:

- **Familiarity** – How well the world knows the country.
- **Reputation** – How positively the country is viewed.
- **Influence** – How much the country impacts other nations.

### Soft Power Pillars:

- The index also considers 8 pillars with 35 nation brand attributes:
- Business & Trade
- International Relations
- Education & Science
- Culture & Heritage
- Governance
- Media & Communication
- Sustainable Future
- People & Values



➤ These pillars collectively reflect a country's global appeal and credibility.

### **Difference Between Hard Power and Soft Power**

➤ **Hard Power:** Uses military strength or economic pressure to influence others.

➤ **Soft Power:** Uses culture, values, and diplomacy to influence and attract others voluntarily.

### **Top 10 Countries in Global Soft Power Index 2026:**

- 1st – United States: 74.9
- 2nd – China: 73.5
- 3rd – Japan: 70.6
- 4th – United Kingdom: 69.2
- 5th – Germany: 67.7
- 6th – France: 65.8
- 7th – Switzerland: 63.2
- 8th – Canada: 63.2
- 9th – Italy: 61.6
- 10th – United Arab Emirates: 59.4

### **India's Rank**

➤ India ranks 32nd globally with a score of 48.0. Compared to last year, India dropped two positions and declined 1.8 points in score.

➤ While India has made progress in cultural outreach and international relations, there is still room to strengthen its global image, governance, and sustainable development initiatives.

## Indian-Origin Scientist Veerabhadran Ramanathan Wins Crafoord Prize 2026



- Indian-origin scientist Veerabhadran Ramanathan received the Crafoord Prize, widely known as the “Nobel of Geosciences.”
- His decades-long research fundamentally changed how the world understands climate change.
- From discovering the warming impact of industrial gases to shaping global environmental policies, his work has influenced both science and society.
- The award recognizes a lifetime dedicated to protecting the planet through evidence-based climate science.
- Over a career spanning five decades, he worked at leading global institutions and **quietly reshaped scientific thinking on global warming.**
- His research proved that climate change is not driven by carbon dioxide alone but by multiple heat-trapping gases acting together.

- In the 1970s, while working at NASA Langley Research Center, Ramanathan discovered that chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) trap enormous amounts of heat.
  - His 1975 paper in Science showed that a single CFC molecule could warm the planet thousands of times more than carbon dioxide.
  - This was the first clear proof that gases other than CO<sub>2</sub> could drive global warming, changing the direction of climate research worldwide.
  - Ramanathan's later work revealed the powerful role of trace gases like methane and nitrous oxide.
  - In 1985, he co-authored research warning that these gases could accelerate global warming far faster than previously expected.
  - This scientific evidence played a key role in shaping the Montreal Protocol (1987), which phased out CFCs.
- The treaty is considered one of the most successful environmental agreements and prevented significant additional global warming.

# Slice Launches India's First Fully UPI-Integrated Digital Banking Platform

- Slice Small Finance Bank (Slice SFB) introduced three financial products: Digital Savings Account linked to the Repo rate, UPI-integrated credit card, and digital Fixed Deposits (FDs).

## ➤ Key Highlights:

### **Digital Savings Bank Account**

- Slice launched India's first savings account linked to 100% of the Repo rate of RBI.
- Interest is calculated and credited daily, allowing money to grow in real time.
- The account offers transparent returns, no minimum balance requirements, instant liquidity, and full digital access, including UPI for everyday payments.

### **UPI Credit Card**

- Enables customers to scan and pay at any UPI-enabled merchant using an approved credit limit instead of traditional card rails.
- Offers up to 3% cashback, "Slice in 3" no-cost EMI conversion on purchases above 2,000, and weekly rewards through Slice Sparks.
- Has no joining, renewal, or annual fees and provides fully digital onboarding.

### **Digital Fixed Deposits (FDs)**

- Can be opened and managed entirely through the app.
- Offers interest rates up to 25% per annum and is insured up to Rs.5 lakh by DICGC, Ministry of Finance (MoF).



## **Union Minister of State Dr Jitendra Singh Inaugurates ₹32 Crore CSIR–NIO Shore-Based Regional Centre at Visakhapatnam**

- Jitendra Singh, Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Ministry of Science & Technology (MoS&T) and Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES), inaugurated the Shore-Based Laboratory of CSIR–National Institute of Oceanography (CSIR–NIO) Regional Centre at Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh.
- The CSIR–NIO Regional Centre has been established at Yendada Village, Rushikonda, Visakhapatnam, and was constructed by the Central Public Works Department (CPWD).
- The facility was built at a cost of ₹32 crore with a built-up area of 4,550 square metres .
- The centre focuses on marine geological and geophysical surveys of the Eastern Continental Margin of India (ECMI).
- Key research areas include bathymetry mapping, tectonic studies, deep-sea exploration, and monsoon research in the Bay of Bengal.
- The laboratory strengthens national energy security by supporting offshore oil, gas, hydrocarbon, and seabed mineral exploration.
- The centre contributes to the Blue Economy, supporting fisheries, coastal resilience, skill development, seaweed cultivation, and harmful algal bloom forecasting

