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data

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Australia Declares December 21 as “Day of Reflection”

- Australia has declared **December 21** as a “Day of Reflection” to honour the victims of the Sydney Bondi Beach terror attack.
- The terror attack occurred on **14 December**, in which **15 people were killed and 41 injured**.
- During the police operation, one attacker, **Sajid Akram**, was killed, while his son **Naveed Akram** was injured.
- The Day of Reflection coincides with the **final day of Chanukah**, symbolising light, faith, and resilience.
- **Flags on government buildings** will be flown at **half-mast** in honour of the victims.



India–Netherlands MoU on Trade and Investment Cooperation

- India and the Netherlands signed an MoU on **19 December** to strengthen bilateral trade, investment, and overall economic cooperation.
- The MoU establishes the **India–Netherlands Joint Trade and Investment Committee (JTIC)** as a formal institutional mechanism.
- The agreement was signed between **India’s Ministry of Commerce and Industry** and the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands**.
- The development was announced during the visit of **Dutch Foreign Minister David van Weel** to India.
- The announcement coincided with his bilateral meeting with **External Affairs Minister Dr S. Jaishankar**.
- The JTIC is mandated to review bilateral trade relations and promote **two-way investment flows**.
- Identifying and resolving **trade and investment barriers** is one of the core objectives of the committee.
- The JTIC will meet **annually**, with meetings held alternately in **India and the Netherlands**.



Modernisation of Doordarshan and Akashvani

- The government is undertaking comprehensive modernisation of **Doordarshan and Akashvani** to improve content quality, technology, and audience reach.
- The modernisation is being implemented under the **Broadcasting Infrastructure and Network Development (BIND) Scheme (2021–2026)**.
- The scheme has a total financial outlay of about **₹2,539.61 crore**.
- It focuses on **digitisation**, replacement of **legacy systems**, and **studio and transmitter upgrades**.
- Expansion of coverage and adoption of **new broadcasting technologies** are also key objectives.
- The **Simplified Content Sourcing Policy (2024)** allows wider participation in programme creation and faster acquisition of content.
- Between **2022 and 2025**, Akashvani and Doordarshan earned about **₹587.78 crore from non-government advertisements**, reflecting revenue diversification efforts.



India–Argentina Sign ICAR–INTA Work Plan (2025–27) to Boost Agricultural Cooperation

- India and Argentina have signed an ICAR–INTA Work Plan for 2025–2027 to strengthen bilateral agricultural cooperation.
- The Work Plan was formally exchanged by **Dr M. L. Jat**, Secretary (DARE) and Director General, ICAR, and **H.E. Mariano Augustin Caucino**, Ambassador of Argentina to India.
- The agreement strengthens collaboration in **agricultural research, capacity building, and technology exchange**.
- Cooperation is planned in **natural resource management, sustainable agronomy, zero tillage, mechanisation, micro-irrigation, and fertigation**.
- The Work Plan also covers **crop and animal biotechnology, livestock improvement**, and production technologies for **temperate and tropical crops**.
- Collaboration in **digital agriculture, biosafety, phytosanitary measures, and value-chain development** has been included.
- Implementation will be carried out through **joint research, germplasm exchange, expert interactions, and structured training and study visits**.
- Cooperation between the two countries is deepening in **oilseeds and pulses, agricultural mechanisation (including zero-tillage and drones), and horticulture value chains**.



Singapore's Changi Airport named World's Best Airport for 2025

- Singapore's **Changi Airport** has been named the **World's Best International Airport for 2025** at *Travel + Leisure India's Best Awards*.
- The recognition was based on **global reader votes**, reflecting excellence in overall travel experience, comfort, and facilities.
- Changi Airport ranked highest globally for providing a **smooth and enjoyable passenger journey**.
- The airport is renowned for its **sky-lit interiors, indoor gardens, and calming transit environment**.
- Unique attractions such as the **world's tallest indoor waterfall, butterfly garden, and art installations** enhance the passenger experience.
- Facilities like **transit hotels, sleeping pods, and rest zones** cater to long-haul and transit travellers.
- Changi Airport was praised for **setting global benchmarks by combining efficiency with comfort**, making it a destination in itself.



The National Conference for the Chairpersons of Public Service Commissions inaugurated by the President of India in Hyderabad



- On 19 December, the National Conference for the Chairpersons of Public Service Commissions was inaugurated by President Droupadi Murmu in Hyderabad, Telangana.
- The conference is being organised by the Telangana Public Service Commission and brought together leaders of Public Service Commissions from across the country.
- The President emphasized the constitutional importance of the Public Service Commission and said that a specific part of the Constitution is dedicated to it.
- The functioning of Public Service Commissions was linked to the constitutional ideals of justice, equality of opportunity and welfare of the people.
- Public Service Commissions were described as change agents that promote both equality of opportunity and equality of outcomes.

- The role of civil servants as part of the permanent executive was emphasised for ensuring continuity and stability in governance.
- The President stressed that honesty and integrity must be given the highest priority in recruitment processes.
- The President emphasized that sensitivity towards marginalized and vulnerable sections of society and women is essential for future civil servants.
- Public Service Commissions were urged to contribute towards building a future-ready administrative system aligned with the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

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A new logo launched for Regional Rural Banks (RRBs), reflecting a single and unified brand identity

- A common logo for Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) has been unveiled to establish a single and unified brand identity across the country.
- Based on the principle of "One State One RRB," the Department of Financial Services of the Ministry of Finance has merged 26 Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) in 11 states/union territories, effective from May 1, 2025.
- This reform is a decisive step towards creating stronger and more efficient regional rural banks.
- At present, 28 RRBs continue to operate through a network of over 22,000 branches across more than 700 districts.
- The new logo has been introduced as part of strengthening the identity and visibility of RRBs serving rural India.
- **Upward Arrow (Symbol of Progress):** Represents growth, development and advancement in rural economies.
- **Hands (Symbol of Nurturing):** Conveys care, support and a helping hand to rural communities.
- **Flame (Symbol of Enlightenment):** Signifies warmth, knowledge and empowering rural populations.
- The colors of the RRB logo have been chosen to reflect the objectives of the RRB.
- The **dark blue** color represents **finance and trust**, while the **green color** symbolizes **life and growth**, reflecting their mission to serve rural India.
- The branding exercise aims to create a modern, easily recognisable national identity for RRBs.



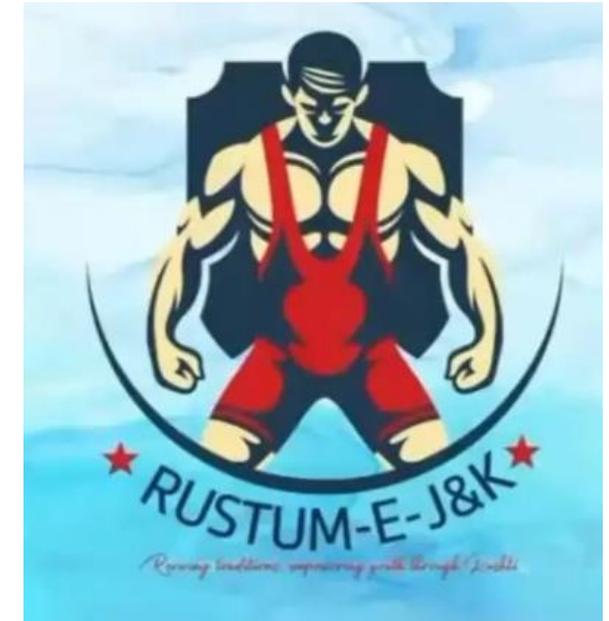
Air India has been named Best Domestic Airline at the Travel + Leisure Awards 2025

- Air India has been named Best Domestic Airline for second consecutive year.
- The Travel + Leisure Best Awards was decided through votes cast by readers.
- This result reflects positive feedback from passengers who have flown with Air India.
- Air India said the award highlights customer trust in the airline.
- Air India is investing heavily in fleet modernisation. It has ordered a total of 570 new aircraft.
- Additionally, it is implementing a USD 400 million retrofit programme for existing planes.
- The retrofit of A320 aircraft has already been completed.
- Two Boeing 787-8 aircraft are undergoing retrofit in the United States, expected to return to service in February 2026.



Jammu and Kashmir Hosts First International Indian-Style Wrestling Event | Rustam-e-Jammu Kashmir Title 2025

- Jammu and Kashmir is hosting its first international Indian style wrestling event and Rustam-e-Jammu Kashmir Title 2025 on 20 December at Maulana Azad Stadium in Jammu.
- Over 100 wrestlers are taking part in the competition, including national and international Dangal stars.
- Wrestlers have come from India, Iran, and other countries.
- This is one of the biggest wrestling events ever held in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.
- The event aims to revive the region's traditional Dangal wrestling heritage in addition to providing a global platform for local and visiting athletes.
- The Rustam-e-Jammu Kashmir title is open to wrestlers above 85 kilograms. The winner will receive a cash prize of Rs. 50,000.
- Traditional honours like the Gurj and Patta will also be awarded to the winners.
- The runner-up will receive Rs. 30,000. The third-place wrestler will earn Rs. 20,000.
- The competition is being organised by the Jammu and Kashmir Sports Council.



India's foreign exchange reserves increased by \$1.69 billion during the week ending

December 12, according to RBI data

- After an increase of \$1.69 billion, total forex reserves now stand at \$688.94 billion.
- This increase has come after an increase of about \$1.03 billion in the previous week.
- Gold reserves also recorded an increase of around \$758 million to about \$107.74 billion during the reporting period.
- Special Drawing Rights rose by nearly \$14 million to roughly \$18.74 billion during the week.
- In the earlier week ending December 5, gold reserves had risen sharply to over \$1.18 billion.
- SDRs had also grown by around \$93 million in that period.
- India has also reported strong growth in foreign direct investment this year.
- During the first half of FY 2025–26, inflows reached \$50.36 billion and marked a 16% rise compared to the same period last year.
- It is the highest FDI inflow ever recorded in the first half of the financial year.
- Inflows during April to September 2025 reached \$35.18 billion.



PM Modi visited West Bengal to inaugurate and lay the foundation stone for two National Highway projects

- The projects are worth around Rs. 3,200 crores.
- They are aimed at improving road connectivity. They will also support economic growth in West Bengal.
- PM inaugurated and laid the foundation stone of the highway projects at Ranaghat in Nadia district.
- He inaugurated the 66.7-kilometre-long four-laning of the Barajaguli–Krishnanagar section of National Highway-34 in Nadia.
- He will also lay the foundation stone for the four-laning of the Barasat–Barajaguli section of NH-34 in North 24 Parganas district.
- The projects will serve as a connectivity link between Kolkata and Siliguri.



Amazon Pay Launches UPI Biometric Authentication for Faster, PIN-Free Transactions

- **Amazon Pay** introduces **UPI Biometric Authentication**, allowing users to approve UPI transactions using fingerprint or face recognition without entering a PIN.
- The feature **covers transactions up to ₹5,000 across Amazon Pay UPI services**, including peer-to-peer transfers, merchant payments, in-store QR payments, and balance checks.
- Biometric authentication is linked to the user's device, ensuring added security as biometric data cannot be shared, while simplifying and speeding up payments.
- Early adoption shows strong acceptance, with over 90% of users opting for biometric verification, currently available for Android devices, aiming to make digital payments faster and more convenient.



Pulitzer Prize–Winning War Correspondent Peter Arnett Dies at 91

- **Pulitzer Prize**–winning journalist **Peter Arnett** passed away at the age of 91, renowned for his frontline war reporting from Vietnam to the Gulf War that brought eyewitness accounts to the world.
- He won the **1966 Pulitzer Prize for International Reporting** for his **Vietnam War** coverage with The Associated Press, where he worked as a correspondent from 1962 to 1975.
- Arnett died on December 17, 2025, in Newport Beach, after battling prostate cancer, surrounded by his family and friends.

