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Gujarat regained its 'Tiger State' status after the NTCA confirmed the presence of tigers in the state

- Gujarat's long-lost 'Tiger State' status has been restored after 33 years, following confirmation by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) of the permanent presence of a tiger in Ratanmahal Wildlife Sanctuary in Dahod district.
- The confirmation has marked a historic ecological turnaround, as Gujarat has now become the only Indian state where lions, leopards and tigers coexist naturally in the wild.
- The breakthrough has been reported from Ratanmahal Wildlife Sanctuary, where a male tiger has not merely passed through but settled as a resident animal.
- Forest officials stated that the tiger entered Gujarat from neighbouring Madhya Pradesh in February and continued to remain in the sanctuary for nearly ten months.
- Based on continuous camera-trap evidence, repeated sightings and consistent movement patterns, the NTCA concluded that the tiger was a resident and not a transient visitor.
- Gujarat Forest and Environment Minister Arjunbhai Modhwadia said that a preliminary NTCA report has confirmed the tiger's presence and included Gujarat in the national tiger census, calling it a moment of pride for the state.
- The Minister recalled that Gujarat lost its Tiger State status after the 1992 census, as only pugmarks and no cubs were found during earlier assessments, with revival attempts remaining unsuccessful for decades.



The Parvati-Arga Bird Sanctuary in Uttar Pradesh declared an eco-sensitive zone

- The Parvati–Arga Bird Sanctuary of Uttar Pradesh has been declared as an Eco-Sensitive Zone by the Government of India.
- Through this initiative, the government is working to develop it as a responsible ecotourism destination and strengthen its biodiversity.
- The sanctuary is spread across an area of 1,084 hectares and attracts migratory birds from Central Asia and Tibet.
- Notified in 1997, the sanctuary is located about 40 kilometres away from Gonda district of Uttar Pradesh.
- The sanctuary consists of two wetlands, namely Parvati and Arga, covering nearly 11 square kilometres.
- Every winter, more than 40,000 migratory waterfowl visit the sanctuary, while resident birds like Purple Moorhen and Swamp Hen nest here.
- Over 23 species of waterfowl, the state bird Sarus Crane, and animals such as jackal and nilgai are found in the sanctuary.



An MoU signed between the National Test House and DRDO's DMSRDE for collaboration in research



- An MoU has been signed between the National Test House and Defence Materials and Stores Research & Development Establishment (DMSRDE) to enhance cooperation in research and testing.
- DMSRDE is a laboratory of the Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO), Ministry of Defence, Government of India.
- The agreement has been executed to strengthen collaboration in research, testing and training activities of national importance.
- Institutional cooperation is expected to be promoted through shared use of laboratory and instrumentation facilities.
- Capacity building of scientific and technical personnel has been emphasised under the MoU framework.
- The National Test House functions under the Department of Consumer Affairs, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution.
- The MoU provides for collaborative research, exchange of technical expertise and organisation of seminars and workshops.

- Mutual support in specialised testing and evaluation services will be extended when in-house facilities are unavailable.
- Established in 1912, NTH is an NABL-accredited and BIS-recognised institution offering testing and quality assurance services.
- DMSRDE, Kanpur, with origins dating back to 1929, undertakes research on polymers, composites, textiles, fuels and defence materials.
- The collaboration reflects a shared commitment towards self-reliance, skill development and strengthening national research capabilities.

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PV Sindhu elected as the chairperson of the BWF Athletes' Commission

- PV Sindhu has been elected as the Chair of the BWF Athletes' Commission for the 2026–2029 term.
- In this role, Sindhu will also serve as a member of the Badminton World Federation (BWF) Council, giving players a direct voice in the organization's global governance.
- PV Sindhu acknowledged the contribution of former Chair Greysia Polii for her work during the previous term.
- Greysia Polii, an Olympic gold medallist from Indonesia, served on the commission from 2021 to 2025.
- Sindhu has been associated with the BWF Athletes' Commission since 2017 and has served as an Integrity Ambassador since 2020.
- She is India's most successful badminton player, having won silver at Rio 2016 and bronze at Tokyo 2020 Olympics.
- Debora Jille of the Netherlands has been elected as the Deputy Chair of the commission.
- Indian para-badminton player Abu Hubaida and Hong Kong China's Chan Ho Yuen Daniel are also members of the commission.



**Sindhu elected chair of
BWF Athletes'
Commission, to serve as
BWF Council Member**

B. Sairam appointed as the Chief Executive Officer of Coal India Limited

- B. Sairam has been appointed as the Chief Executive Officer of Coal India Limited by the company's board.
- The appointment has been made to strengthen leadership at India's largest coal-producing public sector enterprise.
- The appointment took effect from December 15, 2025.
- His tenure will continue until his superannuation or until further orders, whichever occurs earlier.
- Coal India Limited plays a crucial role in meeting India's energy requirements, particularly for the power sector.
- B. Sairam is a graduate mining engineer from NIT Raipur and holds an MBA in Energy Management.
- Prior to this role, he served as Chairman-cum-Managing Director of Northern Coalfields Limited.
- He has earlier worked as Director (Technical) at Central Coalfields Limited, contributing to logistics and mining projects.



Cultivation of industrial hemp has started in Himachal Pradesh



- The 'Green to Gold' initiative has been initiated by Himachal Pradesh CM Sukhvinder Sukhu to achieve the vision of a self-reliant Himachal Pradesh by 2027.
- The aim of initiative is to change the state from illicit trade to global leadership in bio-economy through legalising and regulation of the cultivation of industrial hemp.
- With this, cannabis will be known for its medicinal properties for pain management and inflammation.
- Cannabis will also be known for its uses in the textile and apparel industry, paper and packaging industry, cosmetics and personal care industry, biofuel and energy industry, etc.
- Cannabis has long grown naturally in Kullu, Mandi, and Chamba districts and was linked mainly to illegal drug trade.

- The new initiative will change its public perception.
- All permitted hemp cultivation in Himachal Pradesh must have tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) content below 0.3 per cent.
- This threshold makes the plant non-intoxicating and entirely unsuitable for misuse as a drug.
- The industrial hemp is a climate-resilient crop. It requires 50 per cent less water than traditional fibre crops like cotton.
- It can thrive even in soils where other crops struggle.
- Research institutions like CSK HPKV Palampur and Dr Y.S. Parmar University in Nauni is also leading pilot studies to support the transition.
- Scientists are developing high-yield seed varieties while maintaining low THC levels.
- The aim of the Hemp-hub vision is to develop Himachal Pradesh as a manufacturing centre for ‘Hempcrete’.
- Hempcrete is an innovative, carbon-negative construction material.

VoxelGrids has developed India's first indigenously built MRI scanner

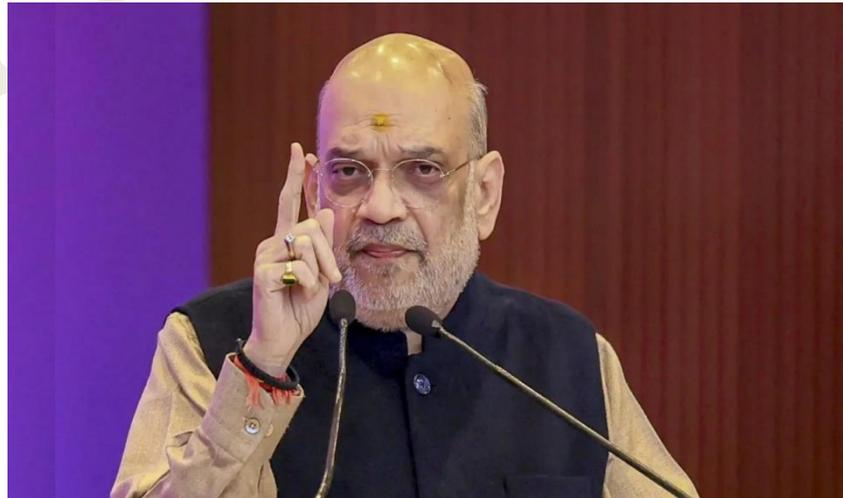
- VoxelGrids is a medical technology startup backed by Zoho.
- This is an important step for the Made-in-India medtech sector.
- India currently relies largely on imported MRI systems.
- The MRI scanner is installed at Chandrapur Cancer Care Foundation near Nagpur.
- The project was led by founder Arjun Arunachalam and took nearly 12 years to complete.
- Magnetic field strength of the MRI scanner is 1.5 tesla.
- VoxelGrids' scanner does not use liquid helium. This lowers production costs.
- Manufacturing costs are lower by around 40%.
- It has a standard bore size and its design improves overall power efficiency.
- The company is currently offering a pay-per-use model to hospitals.
- VoxelGrids has not yet announced a full commercial launch. It manufactures scanners in Bengaluru.
- VoxelGrids is expected to announce a commercial launch by the end of the current fiscal year.



'Big Made-in-India win': **Zoho-backed VoxelGrids** builds India's first indigenous MRI scanner

AI-powered database to curb organised crime and terror has been launched by Union Home Minister Amit Shah

- India has launched its first-ever national-level 'Organised Crime Network Database' (OCND).
- This is an initiative aimed at criminal syndicates, repeatedly compromising internal security.
- Shah inaugurated the database in the Anti-Terror Conference-2025.
- It was a two-day long annual event organised by National Investigation Agency (NIA).
- The database is AI-powered. It is designed to function as an intelligent analytical tool.
- This will enable investigating officers to retrieve comprehensive information on organised criminals immediately.
- First Information Reports (FIRs), charge sheets, dossiers, and other critical inputs related to organised criminals from across all states have been integrated through this database.
- The OCND has been developed by the NIA in close collaboration with state police forces and the National Intelligence Grid (NATGRID).
- The database carries fingerprint data and voice matching facilities of organised criminals.



Surya Charishma Tamiri has secured Women's singles title at 87th Senior National Badminton Championships held in Vijayawada

- She defeated Tanvi Patri to claim the title. Although she lost the opening game, she made a comeback to win the final 17 - 21, 21-12, 21-14.
- Rithvik Sanjeevi S won over Bharat Raghav in the Men's Singles in straight games, 21-16, 22-20, to secure the title.
- In Men's doubles, A. Hariharan and Ruban Kumar were champions after winning over Mithilesh Krishnan and Prejan 24-22, 21-17 in the final.
- Shikha Gautam and Ashwini Bhat K won over Priya Devi Konjengban and Shruti Mishra in the women's doubles final.
- In the mixed doubles final, Sathwik Reddy K and Radhika Sharma overcame Ashith Surya and Amrutha .



International Day of Epidemic Preparedness: 27 December

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Canara Bank launches 'Canara ai1Pe'

- **Canara ai1Pe** is a new **UPI-based digital payment app** launched by **Canara Bank**
- It is a **unified UPI app** for safe and easy digital payments
- **Works with bank accounts of any bank**, not only Canara Bank

Can be used by:

- New UPI users
- Existing UPI users
- Canara Bank customers & non-customers
- **Already registered UPI users** can use it **without full re-registration**
- Users can **link multiple bank accounts** and **choose the account while paying**
 - Supports all major **UPI services**, such as:
 - Person-to-Person (P2P) money transfer
 - QR code merchant payments
 - Utility bill payments (electricity, gas, water, etc.)
 - Mobile recharges
 - Designed to handle **daily digital payments on one platform**

About Canara Bank:

- **Established:** 1906
- **Headquarters:** Bengaluru
- **MD & CEO:** Brajesh Kumar Singh

Telegram: [Click here](#)



Toll Free: 1800-270-9975, Ph: 9533200400

RBI Postpones Phase-II of Cheque Truncation System (CTS)

- Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has postponed Phase-II of Continuous Clearing and Settlement on Realisation (CCSR) under the Cheque Truncation System (CTS)
- Phase-II was earlier scheduled to start on **3 January 2026**
- The implementation has been **deferred until further notice**

Current Status (Revised Timeline):

- **Phase-I**, which started on **4 October 2025**, will continue

Under Phase-I:

- Banks can **process and confirm cheques digitally**
- Clearing happens **continuously during working hours**

Revised CTS Working Hours by RBI:

Cheque presentation session:

- **9:00 AM to 3:00 PM**
- (Earlier: 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM)

Cheque confirmation / rejection by banks:

- **9:00 AM to 7:00 PM**
- (Earlier: 10:00 AM to 7:00 PM)

About Phase-II (when implemented):

- Cheque **item expiry time** expected to be:
 - **3 hours** or **T+3** (Transaction date + 3 hours)
- This will **significantly reduce settlement time**
- Faster than the existing **T+1** or **T+2** settlement system



ATM Numbers Dip in FY25 as Digital Payments Rise

- **RBI report:** Trend and Progress of Banking in India – FY25
- **Total ATMs declined to 2,51,057 (March 31, 2025)**
- **Earlier: 2,53,417**
- **Main reason: Rise in digital payments, reducing ATM usage**

ATM Network Details:

➤ **Private sector bank ATMs:**

- Declined to **77,117** from **79,884**

Public sector bank (PSB) ATMs:

- Declined to **1,33,544** from **1,34,694**
- Decline mainly due to **closure of off-site ATMs**

White Label ATMs (WLAs):

- Increased to **36,216** from **34,602**

ATM Distribution:

- **PSB ATMs:** Evenly spread across rural, semi-urban, urban & metro areas
- **Private & foreign banks:** Concentrated mainly in **urban & metro areas**

Bank Branches:

- Total branches: **1.64 lakh** (increased by **2.8%**)
- **PSBs opened more branches** in FY25



Share of private banks in new branches:

- **51.8% in FY25**
- Down from **67.3% last year**
- **Over 2/3rd of PSB new branches opened in rural & semi-urban areas**

Basic Savings Bank Deposit Accounts (BSBDA):

- Accounts increased to **72.4 crore** (increased by **2.6%**)
- Total balance: **₹3.3 lakh crore** (increased by **9.5%**)
- Mostly operated through **Business Correspondents (BC model)**

Deposit Insurance:

- Accounts covered by insurance: **97.6%**
- Insured deposits coverage:
- **41.5% (FY25)**
- Down from **43.1% (FY24)**
- Policymakers considering **increase in insurance limit (currently ₹5 lakh)**