

Prez Subianto to be Republic Day chief guest

Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto has formally accepted New Delhi's invitation to be the chief guest for the 2025 Republic Day parade. The choice of Subianto as the first guest of third term of Prime Minister Modi signals the importance India attaches to the bilateral relationship with Indonesia and its Act East policy.



- ❖ The visit is expected to see both sides stepping up their strategic cooperation and defence ties.
- ❖ India's first Republic Day guest was from Indonesia, President Sukarno, a key ally of country's Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru during the golden years of the non-aligned movement. India and Indonesia have shared over two thousand years of strong cultural and commercial connections, with Hindu, Buddhist, and Muslim traditions spreading from India to Indonesia.
- ❖ Indonesia's folk art and theater are deeply influenced by stories from the Ramayana and Mahabharata.

About Indonesia

- ❖ Capital – Jakarta
- ❖ Currency – Rupiah
- ❖ Official language – Indonesian
- ❖ President – Prabowo Subianto



BHEL Commission Punatsangchhu-II Hydel project in Bhutan

The government of India-owned Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) has successfully commissioned two units of the 6x170 MW Punatsangchhu-II Hydroelectric Project in Bhutan.



- ❖ The 1020 MW Punatsangchhu-II Hydroelectric Project is being developed by the Punatsangchhu II Hydroelectric Project Authority, under an Agreement between the Royal Government of Bhutan and the Government of India.
- ❖ BHEL is the supplier of turbines and other electro-mechanical equipment necessary for the operation of hydroelectric plants.
- ❖ In Bhutan, the BHEL has executed major projects like 4x84 MW Chukha, 4x15 MW Kurichhu, 6x170 MW Tala, and 4x180 MW Mangdechhu hydel projects.
- ❖ With the commissioning of these two units of the Punatsangchhu-II project, BHEL's contribution to the total installed capacity in Bhutan now stands at nearly 89%.
- ❖ BHEL is also supplying turbines for the 6x200 MW Punatsangchhu-I hydel project in Bhutan.

Punatsangchhu Hydroelectric Project

- ❖ The Punatsangchhu Hydroelectric Project in Bhutan is being developed under the provisions of the India-Bhutan Agreement on Cooperation in the Field of Hydroelectric Power signed in July 2006.

- ❖ The Punatsangchhu Hydroelectric Project is being developed in two Phases- 1200 MW Phase -I and 1020 MW Phase II project.
- ❖ The project is being developed on Punatsangchhu River which is also known as the Sankosh River. The river originates in Bhutan and flows into River Brahmaputra in Assam.
- ❖ The 1020 MW Punatsangchhu-II Hydro-electric Project is being constructed in the Wangdue Phodrang district in Western Bhutan.
- ❖ It is a run-of-the-river project.

Bhutan-India Hydropower Relations

India and Bhutan enjoy close relations and India is a major aid giver to Bhutan. Bhutan is a water surplus country and has large hydro electric potential. India has been assisting Bhutan in the development of its hydroelectric projects and it is the major buyer of electricity produced. The contribution of the sale of the hydroelectric is highest in Bhutan's gross domestic product (GDP). The sale of hydropower is the most important export item of the country.

- ❖ The first hydropower agreement between the two governments was the Jaldhaka Hydropower in 1961
- ❖ The Jaldhaka project is situated in West Bengal and the major part of the power produced is exported to Bhutan.
- ❖ Bhutan's first major hydropower project 336 MW Chukha Hydropower Project was commissioned in 1987 and was built with Indian assistance. The project has been built over Wangchu River/Basin in Bhutan
- ❖ The 1,020 MW Tala Hydroelectric Project built on Wangchu River/Basin in Bhutan was also fully funded by the government of India.
- ❖ 720 MW Mangdechhu hydroelectric project on the Mangdechhu River was commissioned in 2019.

Govt sees India's GDP growth hitting a 4-year low of 6.4% in FY25

India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is projected to grow at 6.4% in the fiscal year 2024-25, marking a four-year low and a sharp decline from the 8.2% growth recorded in FY24, according to first advance estimates released by the government. The projection is lower than the recent Reserve Bank estimate of 6.6 percent for the current fiscal year ending March 2025.

Mahama sworn in as Ghana's president



John Mahama has been sworn in for a second term as Ghana's president at a ceremony in the capital Accra. Mahama won 56 percent of the vote in the nation's presidential election on December 9, defeating ruling party candidate and Vice President Mahamudu Bawumia, who secured 41 percent. Mahama takes over from outgoing President Nana Akufo-Addo, who served two terms in power.

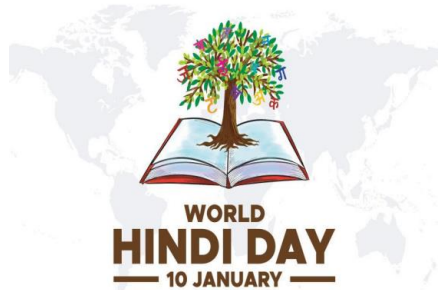
Newly Appointed Prime Minister & President

- ❖ President of Moldova – Ms Maia Sandu
- ❖ PM of Tonga – Aisake Valu Eke
- ❖ PM of France – Francois Bayrou
- ❖ President of Georgia – Mikheil Kavelashvili
- ❖ Interim Prime Minister of Syria – Mohammad al-Bashir



10 January – World Hindi Day

The World Hindi Day, popularly called the 'Vishwa Hindi Diwas', is celebrated on January 10 every year to promote Hindi as one of the most widely spoken languages around the world, along with English and Mandarin.



- ❖ **Theme 2025 – A Global Voice of Unity and Cultural Pride.**
- ❖ On September 14, 1949, the Constituent Assembly of India adopted Hindi written in the Devanagari script as the official language of the Republic of India. While Hindi became one of India's official languages, the Indian Constitution does not recognize any language as the national language.
- ❖ Hindi, along with 21 other languages, holds official status. The decision reflected the necessity to respect India's multilingual heritage.

Ball in govt's court on SC/ST creamy layer, Government to take call on SC/ST creamy layer, says Supreme Court

Supreme Court judge, Justice B.R. Gavai, on Thursday (January 9, 2025) said the ball was in the courts of the legislature and the government to take a call on whether the 'creamy layer' of Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) beneficiaries of reservation in education and public service must be excluded from quota benefits.

- ❖ "We have given our view that taking into consideration the past 75 years, such persons who have already availed benefits and are in a position to compete with others, should be excluded from reservation. But it is a call to be taken by the executive and the legislature," Justice Gavai observed orally.
- ❖ The top court refused to entertain a plea seeking the exclusion of children of Indian Administrative Service (IAS) and Indian Police Service (IPS) officers from Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) reservation benefits in Madhya Pradesh. The petitioner, Santosh Malviya, approached the Supreme Court after the Madhya Pradesh high court refused to entertain his plea, according to reports.
- ❖ Advocate Siddharth Gupta, appearing for the petitioner, told a bench of Justices B R Gavai and Augustine George Masih that all govt departments/PSUs must be directed to stop reservation benefits being extended to the creamy layer within SCs/STs, according to a report by Times of India.
- ❖ The SC bench, however, said it had passed the order but it was now for legislature and executive to take a decision.



Creamy layer among SCs, STs must be excluded from quota benefits

- ❖ The Supreme Court on Thursday said that states must identify the 'creamy layer' within the Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) and take them out of reservation. The apex court made the observation while ruling on the further subclassification within the SCs and STs.

- ❖ A seven-judge constitution bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud held by a 6:1 majority that the sub-classification of SCs and STs by states can be permitted to ensure the grant of quota to more backward castes inside these groups.
- ❖ The Supreme Court has ruled that the 'creamy layer' principle, previously applied only to Other Backward Classes (OBCs) (as highlighted in Indra Sawhney Case), should now also be applied to SCs and STs.
- ❖ 'Creamy layer' refers to a class of persons within reserved categories who are socially and economically advanced. At present, the concept of 'creamy layer' is applicable only to the reservation for Other Backward Classes. For OBCs, the creamy layer comprises households with annual income in excess of ₹8 lakh a year.
- ❖ The Union Cabinet on Friday asserted that there was no provision for a creamy layer in the reservation for SCs and STs in the Constitution given by B R Ambedkar. The Union Cabinet, at a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, held a detailed discussion on the Supreme Court judgement on the sub-categorisation of reservation for SCs and STs as granted in the Constitution.

Henley Passport Index 2025: India drops to 85th rank from 80th

According to the recently released Henley Passport Index 2025, India has slipped to 85th rank from 80th last year, in the world's most powerful passports list. Singapore retained its status as the most powerful passport in the world. The United States passport rank declined from 7th in 2024 to 9th in 2025. Afghanistan retained its status as the worst passport in the world.

About Henley Passport Index

- ❖ The United Kingdom-based Henley and Partners firm releases the Henley Passport Index
- ❖ The Henley Passport Index is based on the data provided by the International Air Transport Association (IATA)
- ❖ A country's passport strength is ranked based on the number of countries that permit visafree travel to its citizens.
- ❖ That country's passport is considered the strongest whose citizens can visit a maximum of countries visa-free.
- ❖ The citizens of a country who can visit visa-free the fewest countries will be ranked at the bottom.
- ❖ The index includes 199 country's passports and 227 travel destinations worldwide.
- ❖ The index is updated every month.

Indian rank declines to 85

- ❖ In 2024 the Indian passport was ranked 82nd in the world, declining to 85th in 2025
- ❖ Indian passport holders can travel to 57 countries without the requirement of a visa.
- ❖ India shares the 85th rank with the African countries of Equatorial Guinea and Niger.

Pakistan retains the World's fourth-worst Passport status

- ❖ Pakistan's Passport has been ranked the fourth worst passport in the world for the fifth consecutive year. It is ranked 103rd in the index along with war-torn Yemen and a Pakistani citizen can visit 33 countries visa-free.
- ❖ Afghanistan's passport is ranked at the bottom at 106th position.
- ❖ War-torn Syria has been ranked 105th and Iraq 104th.

Top Ten Ranked Countries

Following is the list of the top ten ranked countries on the 2025 Henley Passport Index.

Rank	Country name	Citizens can travel Visa- free to countries
1	Singapore	195
2	Japan	193
3	France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Finland, South Korea	192
4	Austria, Denmark, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Sweden, Norway	191
5	Belgium, New Zealand, Portugal, Switzerland, United Kingdom	190
6	Greece, Australia	189
7	Canada, Poland, Malta	188
8	Hungary, Czechia	187
9	Estonia, United States	186
10	Lithuania, Latvia, Slovenia, United Arab Emirate	185

Lebanon elects a new President after more than two years vacancy

Lebanese Armed Forces Chief General Joseph Aoun was elected as the President of Lebanon by the Lebanese Parliament on 9 January 2025. The office of the President has been vacant in Lebanon for over 2 years since President Michel Aoun's (no relation to General Aoun) tenure ended in October 2022. Lebanon's members of Parliament had failed in 12 previous rounds of voting to reach a consensus on electing a President. General Aoun faces the difficult task of rebuilding a country that has been ravaged by 14 months of conflict between Israel and the Iranian-backed Lebanese militant Shia group Hezbollah.



Presidential Election in Lebanon

The President is elected by the 128-member Lebanese Parliament. The winning candidate needs to secure two-thirds or at least 78 votes to be elected.

- ❖ The Lebanese Army Chief General Joseph Aoun was able to secure the necessary two-thirds votes of the members of Parliament in the second round of voting.

- ❖ The term of the President is six years.

Constitutional system of Lebanon

- ❖ Lebanon has a multiparty, parliamentary system of government. The Parliament of Lebanon is unicameral named the National Assembly.
- ❖ The 128 members of the National Assembly are elected by the people for a term of four years.
- ❖ The President is elected by the members of the National Assembly and needs to secure a two-thirds majority in the Parliament to be elected.
- ❖ The term of the President is six years.
- ❖ A Maronite Christian is by convention elected the President of Lebanon.

About Lebanon

Lebanon is a small country situated in West Asia along the Mediterranean Sea. It has one of the oldest human settlements in the world. After the First World War, Lebanon was administered by France and it declared its independence in 1946.

- ❖ Capital: Beirut
- ❖ Currency: Lebanese Pound
- ❖ President: Joseph Aoun



UN report: Indian economy to grow 6.6% in 2025, 6.7% in 2026

The United Nations flagship report “World Economic Situation and Prospects 2025” has predicted that the Indian economy is likely to grow by 6.6% in 2025 and 6.7 % in 2026.

- ❖ The report which was released by the United Nations on 9 January 2025, expects the world economy to grow by 2.8 % in 2025.
- ❖ The United Nations follows calendar years (January-December) while the Indian government follows a fiscal year April - March national accounting method.
- ❖ The National Statistical Office (NSO) in its first advance estimates of gross domestic product (GDP) for the fiscal year 2024-25 has estimated a GDP growth of 6.4%. In 2022-23 the growth rate of the Indian GDP was 7% and in 2023-24 it was 8.2%.

Highlights of the United Nations Report

- ❖ Economic growth in the South Asian region is expected to remain strong in 2025 due to the strong performance of the Indian economy. The region is expected to grow by 5.7 percent in 2025 and 6 percent in 2026.
- ❖ The Indian economy is expected to grow by 6.6% in 2025 and by 6.7% in 2026.
- ❖ The world economy is expected to grow by 2.8 percent in 2025.

Reason for strong growth in the Indian economy

Increased focus of the government on capital expenditure on infrastructure development will have strong multiplier effects on growth in the coming years.

- ❖ Strong growth in the manufacturing and services sectors
- ❖ Strong export growth in services especially in pharmaceutical and electronics.
- ❖ Good monsoon in 2024 is expected to boost the agricultural output in 2025.

Danger for the Indian Economy

- ❖ Possible escalation of geopolitical tensions in West Asia or Ukraine,
- ❖ Slowdown in the world economy which can adversely affect India's exports,
- ❖ Extreme climate events like drought or floods.
- ❖ Social unrest within the country.

Projected India's GDP Growth Rate in 2024-25/2025-26

Following are the forecasts of various global and Indian financial agencies regarding the growth of the Indian economy (as of 10 January 2025).

Agency / Organisation	GDP forecast for 2024-25	GDP Forecast for 2025-26
Reserve Bank of India	6.6%	-
World Bank	7.0%	6.7%
International Monetary Fund	7 %	6.5%
Asian Development Bank	7%	7.2%
Moody Rating	7.2 (2024)	6.6 %(2025)
Morgan Stanley	6.3%	6.5%
S&P Global	6.8%	6. 7%
United Nations	6.6 %(January to December2025)	6.7% (2026)
OECD	6.8 %	6.8%

Agency / Organisation	GDP forecast for 2024-25	GDP Forecast for 2025-26
Fitch Rating	6.4%	6.5 %
CRISIL	6.8%	-
Citi Bank	6.8%	
Standard Chartered Bank	7.0%	
India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra)	6.4 %	6.6%
Bank of Baroda	6.8 %	
SBI	6.3 %	

