

04 December 2024

India signs \$98 million loan agreement with ADB to boost horticulture productivity

Key Points:

India and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) have signed a \$98 million loan agreement to enhance horticulture crop productivity in the country. The funding will support the establishment of disease-free planting material systems, boosting crop yields, quality, and resilience to climate change. The loan amount will be used to target crops like almonds, apples, avocados, berries, citrus, grapes, guava, litchi, mango, pomegranate, and walnuts.

- ❖ The government will establish dedicated clean plant centres to maintain disease-free foundation materials that accredited nurseries will later propagate.
- ❖ The government will provide licences to private and public nurseries to whom the dedicated clean plant centres will supply the disease-free foundation materials.
- ❖ These nurseries will further propagate these disease-free plants and distribute them to the horticulture farmers.

29 International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

Every year since 1977, the United Nations calls for the observance of November 29 as the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

- ❖ The General Assembly passed a resolution to that effect in 1977, selecting this particular day as this was when, in 1947, the Assembly adopted a resolution partitioning the Palestinian territory into an Arab State and a Jewish one.

29 INTERNATIONAL DAY OF
NOV SOLIDARITY
WITH THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

Day of Remembrance for all Victims of Chemical Warfare



DAY OF
REMEMBRANCE
FOR ALL VICTIMS OF
CHEMICAL WARFARE

The Day of Remembrance for All Victims of Chemical Warfare is observed annually on November 30. Established during the 20th Session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, this memorial day honors the memory of victims and strengthens the commitment of the international community to the complete eradication of chemical weapons.

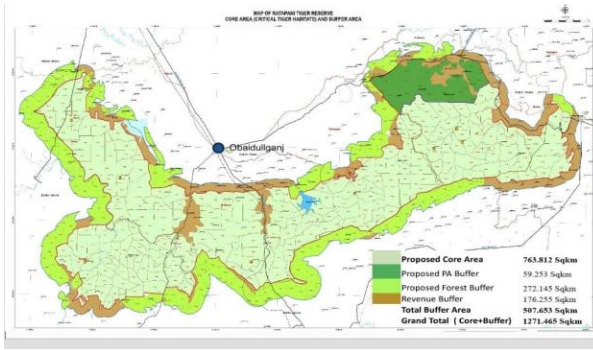
- ❖ This observance not only pays tribute to the victims but also reinforces the principles of peace, security, and multilateral cooperation.

Ratapani Tiger Reserve Notified as 57th Tiger Reserve of India

We continue to make great strides in conserving our tigers. India has added 57th tiger reserve to its tally. The latest to join the list is Ratapani Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh.

- ❖ As a country of nature lovers and worshippers, India offers the best habitat for the big cat.





According to the 2022 Tiger Census, Ratapani is home to 56 tigers, with more than 70 estimates based on indirect evidence like pugmarks.

- ❖ Uniquely located near the state capital, Ratapani is also the closest tiger reserve to an international airport, making it highly accessible.
- ❖ The area includes the Bhimbetla World Heritage Site, Amla Ghat on the Narmada River, and Salkanpur Temple.
- ❖ The government of India has scrapped the special additional excise duty, also popularly known as the windfall tax, on domestically produced crude petroleum oil and on the export of petrol, diesel, and Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF).
- ❖ The government has also scrapped the Road and Infrastructure Cess levied on the export of petrol and diesel.
- ❖ The Union Ministry of Finance announced the scrapping of these taxes on 2 November 2024. The government of India imposed the windfall tax on 1 July 2022 to target the abnormal profits earned by oil companies due to the sudden increase in the prices of crude petroleum oil and its products caused by the Russia-Ukraine war.
- ❖ The decision to scrap the tax was taken after review by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), the Revenue Department, and the Union Petroleum Ministry.

Windfall Tax or Special Additional Excise Duty

It is a special tax imposed on companies that earn abnormal profits due to a sudden increase in the price of the goods they sell. In India, domestic crude oil prices are linked to international prices.

- ❖ As the international price increases, the domestic price increases automatically, resulting in abnormal profit for crude oil-producing companies like ONGC, Oil India Limited, and Vedanta Limited and petroleum product exporting companies like Reliance Industries Limited.

Why was the windfall tax imposed?

According to the government, Indian oil refiners imported crude oil from abroad, refined it in India and sold the petrol, diesel, and aviation turbine fuel in the international market as the prices were very high.

- ❖ This resulted in a shortage of petroleum products in various parts of the country. The Indian government imposed a special additional excise duty or windfall tax to discourage oil companies from exporting petroleum products and crude oil from India. This was expected to increase the supply of these petroleum products within the country and also bring down prices.
- ❖ The money collected through the tax was to be used by the government to fund various welfare programmes. The government also reviews these special taxes every 15 days and increases or decreases them depending on the oil price in the international market.

Why has the government scrapped the Tax?

There are several reasons behind the government's decision to scrap the windfall tax on petroleum products.

- ❖ The price of crude oil in the international market has stabilised, and the government does not expect a sudden increase in the price.
- ❖ The revenue collected from the windfall tax also shows a declining trend. The revenue collection through this tax was around Rs 25,000 crore in 202-23 to about `Rs 6,000 crore in 2024-25.

- ❖ The domestic producers of crude oil opposed the windfall tax as it negatively impacted their profitability and disincentivised domestic production.
- ❖ It also introduced uncertainty amongst foreign and Indian investors in the petroleum sector.

Why Trump Joked About Making Canada '51st US State' During Trudeau Meet

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau held a dinner meeting with US President-elect Donald Trump in Florida last Friday, after the latter threatened to impose 25% tariffs on imports from the North American country over failure to curb the flow of illegal immigrants and drugs into the United States.

- ❖ The nearly three-hour unannounced meeting at Mar-a-Lago saw many laughs and Trump conveyed his message that he expects change on the issue addressed by January 20 next year, the date when he takes charge at the Oval Office again, Fox News reported.

Trump Jokes On Inclusion Of Canada In US

During the dinner, Trudeau reportedly told Trump that the new tariffs would "kill the Canadian economy". On this, Trump responded by saying that maybe Canada should become the 51st state of the USA, Fox News reported citing sources. According to the American news channel, the main focus of the discussions between the two leaders was on tariffs, border security, and trade deficits.

As the discussion progressed, Trump accused Trudeau of failing to secure the US-Canada border and that he allowed drugs and people, including illegal migrants from over 70 countries to cross into the US. The US President-elect grew more animated while speaking of the US trade deficit with Canada, which he claimed surpassed \$100 billion. Trump made it clear to Trudeau in no uncertain terms that if Canada cannot fix the border issues and trade deficit, he will levy a 25% tariff on all Canadian products on the first day of his office. Trudeau, in response, said that Trump cannot levy the tariff as it would kill the Canadian economy.

PM Modi dedicate three new Criminal Laws to the Nation in Chandigarh

Prime Minister Narendra Modi dedicated to the nation the successful implementation of the three new criminal laws: Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita 2023, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita 2023, and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam 2023 at a function held in Chandigarh on 3 December 2024.

- ❖ The function was organised in Chandigarh as Chandigarh is India's first state/Union Territory to have fully implemented the three new criminal laws.
- ❖ Union Minister Amit Shah said the three new criminal laws will be implemented in the country within three years.
- ❖ The three new criminal laws, Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita 2023, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita 2023, and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam 2023, were implemented on 1st July 2024.

Who attended the Function?

The function's theme was "Secure Society, Developed India—From Punishment to Justice." The Union Home Minister and Minister for Cooperation Amit Shah, the Administrator of Chandigarh, the Governor of Punjab Gulab Chand Kataria, and Chandigarh Director General of Police Surendra Singh Yadav attended.

- ❖ During the function, Prime Minister Modi observed a live crime scene investigation demo by the Chandigarh Police at Punjab Engineering College, showcasing evidence collection under the new laws.
- ❖ According to Amit Shah, the new criminal laws aim to secure a conviction within three years of filing an FIR.

End of Colonial mindset

Speaking on the occasion, the Prime Minister said that countries need to come out of the colonial mindset.

- ❖ He said that the Indian Penal Code (IPC) was enacted by the British in 1860 after the first freedom struggle of 1857.

- ❖ The criminal code enacted by the British was to punish Indians and enslave them. India, which has set a target to become a developed country or Viksikt Bharat by 2047, needed a new law made by Indians for Indians.

About the Three Criminal Laws

The three new criminal laws replace the British-era criminal laws and seek to make the country's legal justice system more transparent, efficient, and modern.

- ❖ The three new laws replace the following laws:
- ❖ Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, which replaced the Indian Penal Code 1860,
- ❖ Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023, which replaced the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973, and
- ❖ Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, 2023, will replace the Indian Evidence Act of 1872

Four apps to ensure the implementation of three criminal laws

The Union Home Ministry has also launched four apps—e-Sakshya, Nyaya Setu, Nyaya Shruti, and e-Summon—to ensure the country's smooth implementation of the three new criminal laws. The functions of these apps are:

- ❖ e-Sakshya, all testimonies, videography and photography will be saved on the evidence server. It will be available to all the courts on a real-time basis.
- ❖ e-Summon app, the courts will electronically send summons to police stations and the concerned person to whom the summons is to be sent.
- ❖ Nyaya Setu Dashboard will link the Police, Medical, Forensic, Prosecution, and Prison authorities. It will provide the police with all the information related to the investigation on a real-time basis.
- ❖ Nyaya Shruti app will enable the court to hear witnesses via videoconferencing.

20th Asian Women's Handball Championship 2024 Starts in New Delhi



The 20th Asian Women's Handball Championships 2024 commenced in New Delhi on 3rd December 2024.

- ❖ This is the first time that India is hosting the Asian Women's Handball Championships. The 19th Asian Women's Handball Championships 2022 was held in the South Korean cities of Incheon and Seoul from 24 November to 4 December 2022, which South Korea won.
- ❖ The 20th edition of the Championships was to be held in Almaty, Kazakhstan, but was later shifted to India.

Organiser of the 20th Asian Women's Handball Championship 2024

The Asian Women's Handball Championship is a flagship event of the Asian Handball Federation, the sport's governing body in Asia.

- ❖ The Asian Handball Federation organises the Championships, and a member federation hosts the event. This year, the Handball Federation of India is hosting it.
- ❖ The 20th Asian Women's Handball Championships will be held at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium, New Delhi, from 3-10 December 2024.

Qualifying Event for Women's Handball World Championship 2025

The 20th Asian Women's Handball Championships is also a qualification event for the International Handball Federation's Women's Handball World Championship 2025, which will be co-hosted by Germany and the Netherlands from 27 November 2024 to 14 December 2025.

- ❖ The top four teams of the 20th Asian Women's Handball Championship 2024 will qualify for the 2025 Women's Handball World Championship.

Teams at the 20th Asian Women's Handball Championships

The top eight Asian teams participate in the Asian Women's Handball Championships.

- ❖ The eight teams have been divided into two groups, and the top two teams in each group will qualify for the semi-finals and the 2025 World Championships.
- ❖ Group A: China, South Korea, Singapore, Kazakhstan
- ❖ Group B: India, Iran, Japan, Hong Kong

Asian Women's Handball Championship

The Asian Women's Handball Championship is organised every two years by the Asian Handball Federation.

- ❖ Initially, teams from Asia participated in the Championships, but from 2018 onwards, teams from Oceania also participate in the Championships.
- ❖ South Korea won the first Asian Women's Handball Championship, held in Amman, Jordan, in 1987.
- ❖ South Korea is the most successful team in the Championship, having won it 16 times. Kazakhstan has won it two times.
- ❖ India has participated in eight Championships, including the 2024 edition. Its best performance was the sixth position in the 2000 and 2022 editions.

Asian Handball Federation

The Asian Handball Federation is the governing body of the sport in Asia. It was formed on 26 August 1974 in Tehran, Iran. Members: 40 Countries Headquarters: South Surrah, Kuwait President: Yoshihide Watanabe (Acting)

Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan or Accessible India Campaign Complete 9 years

The Government of India's flagship programme for Persons with Disabilities, Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan, or the Accessible India Campaign, completed 9 years on 3rd December 2024.

- ❖ The Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan, or the Accessible India Campaign, was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 3rd December 2015, on the occasion of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.
- ❖ The Campaign aims to raise public awareness about the challenges faced by persons with disabilities or Divyangjans in accessing public buildings, public transport, etc.
- ❖ It aims to solve these problems by creating an accessible environment. India is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and has committed to creating an accessible environment for people with disabilities.

Aim of the Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan/ Accessible India Campaign

The Campaign aims to achieve universal accessibility for Divyangjans across India. The key focus of the campaign is as follows:

- ❖ Improving Built Environment Accessibility in public spaces,
- ❖ Enhancing Transportation Accessibility for independent mobility,
- ❖ Creating accessible Information and Communication ecosystem, and

- ❖ Expanding Sign Language Access through interpreter training and better media support. Simply, it means building ramps in public buildings and public transport areas like bus stands, airports, railway stations, etc.
- ❖ It also includes building accessible toilets, helpdesks and lifts with Braille and auditory systems on these premises
- ❖ The Government had set a target to achieve these targets by March 2024, but the campaign objectives have been absorbed into the Creation of a Barrier-Free Environment Scheme under the broader umbrella of the Scheme for Implementation of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (SIPDA).

International Day of Persons with Disabilities

- ❖ In 1992, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution to observe 3rd December every year as the "International Day of Persons with Disabilities."
- ❖ Since then, every year, the 3rd of December is observed across the countries in the world as the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.
- ❖ The Day aims to raise awareness about the situation of persons with disabilities in society and promote their rights and well-being in all spheres of society.

Theme of the 2024 International Day of Persons with Disabilities

The theme of the 2024 International Day of Persons with Disabilities is "Amplifying the leadership of persons with disabilities for an inclusive and sustainable future".

National Awards for Empowering Persons with Disabilities

On the occasion of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities 2024, President Droupadi Murmu will confer the National Awards for Empowering Persons with Disabilities in New Delhi on 3rd December 2024.

- ❖ The award is sponsored by the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Union Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment. It is given to 33 individuals and institutions for their contribution to empowering persons with disabilities.

Chennai to Host World Maritime Conference 2024

The World Maritime Technology Conference (WMTC) is a premier global event held every three years under the auspices of the World Maritime Technology Congress. This prestigious gathering brings together industry leaders, professionals, experts in maritime technology and allied sectors.

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- ❖ This prestigious gathering brings together industry leaders, professionals, and experts in maritime technology and allied sectors from across the globe.
- ❖ The 2024 edition of WMTC will be hosted in Chennai, India, from December 4-6, by the Institute of Marine Engineers (India) Chennai Branch.

Oxford Picks "Brain Rot" as 2024's Top Word

Oxford University Press (OUP) has announced 'brain rot' as the Oxford Word of the Year 2024, reflecting a defining cultural and societal theme of the year.

- ❖ The term gained prominence due to concerns over the detrimental effects of consuming excessive amounts of low-quality online content.
- ❖ Oxford University Press (OUP) has announced 'brain rot' as the Oxford Word of the Year 2024, reflecting a defining cultural and societal theme of the year.

- ❖ The term gained prominence due to concerns over the detrimental effects of consuming excessive amounts of low-quality online content, especially via social media.
- ❖ Selected through a global public vote involving over 37,000 participants and expert analysis of language trends, 'brain rot' captures the zeitgeist of 2024, where digital consumption and its consequences have been central topics of discussion.
- ❖ First recorded in 1854 by Henry David Thoreau in *Walden*, the phrase has evolved to gain renewed relevance in the digital age.
- ❖ Initially popularized by Gen Z and Gen Alpha communities on platforms like TikTok, the term is now being used more broadly, including in mainstream journalism, to articulate concerns about the societal and individual impacts of online habits.

Historical and Cultural Significance

First Use: 'Brain rot' was first coined in the mid-19th century by Thoreau, where it likely referred metaphorically to mental stagnation or decay.

UNESCO Declares West Bengal a Top Heritage Tourism Destination

UNESCO has recognized West Bengal as a leading destination for heritage tourism, highlighting the state's progress in developing religious, heritage, and tea tourism. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee noted that this growth has generated significant employment for local youth. West Bengal's tourism sector has received international recognition with UNESCO declaring it a top destination for heritage tourism.

Heritage and Religious Tourism: Major Growth Areas

West Bengal's emphasis on heritage tourism has yielded notable results. The state's concerted efforts to develop religious sites like the Dakshineswar and Kalighat temples are transforming it into a hub for pilgrims and heritage tourists. Additionally, the under-construction Jagannath temple at Digha is expected to attract even more devotees upon completion.

Tourism Infrastructure: A Boost to Employment and Local Economy

With the opening of over 2,400 homestays, particularly in North Bengal, the state has significantly expanded its tourism infrastructure.

- ❖ The Chief Minister also pointed to the development of tourist-friendly amenities in areas like the Sunderbans, forests, and mountains.
- ❖ These developments have led to the establishment of thousands of hotels and other facilities, providing crucial employment opportunities to local youth.

Gangasagar Mela: Elevating Pilgrimage Tourism

The Gangasagar Mela, an important religious gathering, has gained attention as one of the largest pilgrimages in India, second only to the Kumbh Mela.

- ❖ With infrastructure improvements, including a new bridge over the Muriganga river, the state aims to enhance the experience for visitors and increase the prominence of this religious fair.

Kolkata International Film Festival announces France as focus country

The 30th edition of the Kolkata International Film Festival (KIFF), slated to kick off on December 4, announced its lineup of 175 films from 29 countries, and revealed France as the focus country of this year's film festival.

- ❖ The lineup includes 42 feature-length films, and 30 shorts and documentaries in competitive categories, and 103 films in non-competitive categories. Screenings will take place in 20 venues in different parts of the city between December 5 and 11.



Chairperson of the 30th KIFF Goutam Ghose highlighted that the festival this year will also screen certain films with projections from their original celluloid, like Chokh and Debsishu by reputed director from the 1980s,

- ❖ Utpalendu Chakraborty. Like other years, the 30th edition of the KIFF has unveiled 'Unheard India', a noncompetitive category that boasts of screenings of multiple films made in Indian languages like Garhwali, Konkani and Tulu.

Jay Shah assumes charge as ICC chairperson

Jay Shah has taken over as the chairperson of the International Cricket Council (ICC), the sport's global governing body. The former BCCI secretary succeeds Greg Barclay, who has held the position since November 2020.

- ❖ The ICC chairman's term now is three years. The post being an independent one, Shah will also step away from the Asian Cricket Council presidency.
- ❖ Shah's elevation to the top post makes him the third Indian among the last four ICC chairmen. However, unlike the last two Indians – N Srinivasan (2014-15) and Shashank Manohar (2015- 20) – Shah enjoys complete support within the all-powerful BCCI, which counts a lot when it comes to decision making in the ICC boardroom.

About International Cricket Council (ICC)

- ❖ The International Cricket Council is the global governing body of cricket.
- ❖ Formation – 15 June 1909
- ❖ Headquarters – Dubai, UAE
- ❖ Chairman – Jay Shah (replace Greg Barclay)
- ❖ Deputy Chairman – Imran Khwaja (Singapore)
- ❖ CEO – Geoff Allardice (Australia)
- ❖ General Manager – Wasim Khan
- ❖ Membership – 108 members

Max Verstappen wins Qatar Grand Prix

Max Verstappen claimed his ninth win of the season and 63rd of his career with a stunning victory for Red Bull at the crash-hit and controversial Qatar Grand Prix.

- ❖ That result meant McLaren, even with Oscar Piastri finishing third, were unable to clinch a first constructors title since 1998 and have to try again in the final race in Abu Dhabi next weekend.
- ❖ In a race shaped by a litany of stewards' decisions and penalties, including a harsh late 10- second 'stop-go' for Lando Norris of McLaren, the newly-crowned four-time world champion was flawless as he came home six seconds ahead of Ferrari's Charles Leclerc.



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