

Science and Technology

Bluebird Satellite



ISRO plans to launch a US communications satellite "Bluebird" enabling direct smartphone calls from space, marking the first time an American company's large-scale satellite is launched from an Indian rocket.

Key point

- ❖ The launch is expected in February or March 2025
- ❖ The mission is a commercial initiative led by New Space India Limited (NSIL), with ISRO utilizing its Launch Vehicle Mark-3 (Bahuballi rocket).
- ❖ AST SpaceMobile, a Texas-based company, is reportedly the satellite operator, aiming to deliver affordable 5G broadband services to billions of users worldwide.
- ❖ The Bluebird satellite features a 64-square-meter antenna and weighs approximately 6000 kilograms, designed to operate in low Earth orbit for direct mobile connectivity.
- ❖ The technology claims to connect satellites directly to ordinary smartphones, providing broadband internet without specialized devices.

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Business Ready (B-READY)



The World Bank launched the Business Ready (B-READY) report, replacing the paused Ease of Doing Business report.

Key point

- ❖ The Ease of Doing Business report was suspended in 2020 due to data manipulation and ranking integrity concerns.



- ❖ B-READY serves as a benchmarking tool to evaluate the global business climate and promote inclusive private sector growth.
- ❖ It focuses on ten core topics: Business Entry, Location, Utility Services, Labor, Financial Services, International Trade, Taxation, Dispute Resolution, Market Competition, and Insolvency.

About World Bank

- ❖ The World Bank Group (WBG) is a vital international financial institution that plays a key role in global economic development.
- ❖ The World Bank Group was established in 1944 during the Bretton Woods Conference.
- ❖ The primary goal of the World Bank Group is to reduce poverty and promote sustainable development in developing countries.
- ❖ The World Bank Group consists of 189 member countries.
- ❖ **Institutions within the World Bank Group:**
 - International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD)
 - International Development Association (IDA)
 - International Finance Corporation (IFC)
 - Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA)
 - International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID):
 - India is a member of all of the above groups except ICSID where India is not a member.
 - Major Reports:
 - Ease of Doing Business (Stopped publishing).
 - Human Capital Index.
 - World Development Report.

Miscellaneous

Romania and Bulgaria become full members of Schengen area



Romania and Bulgaria have officially become full members of the European Union's (EU) Schengen area.

Key point

- ❖ Until now both countries had partial membership of the Schengen area.
- ❖ Now 25 out of the 27 member countries of the European Union are members of the Schengen area except Cyprus and Ireland.
- ❖ Schengen areas facilitate free travel for the nationals of the member countries to travel to another country for work, business, tourism, etc purposes without any checks and border restrictions.
- ❖ Romania and Bulgaria joined the European Union in 2007. They partially joined the Schengen area in March 2024 and their citizens were allowed to enter the Schengen area through air or sea freely.
- ❖ However, they were not allowed to enter the Schengen area through land borders freely and were subjected to the usual procedure of checking.

Person in News

Kattungal Subrahmanyam Manilal



Eminent botanist and Padma Shri awardee Kattungal Subrahmanyam Manilal, aged 86, passed away on January 1, 2025, in Thrissur

Key Point

- ❖ He was renowned for translating the 17th-century Latin botanical treatise "Hortus Malabaricus" into English and Malayalam, significantly contributing to the documentation of India's rich botanical heritage.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Manilal served as the head of the Department of Botany at the University of Calicut. ❖ In recognition of his contributions to science and engineering, Manilal was honored with the Padma Shri in 2020.
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Place in News

<p>Mahabharat Vatika</p>  	<p>Uttarakhand Forest Department developed "Mahabharat Vatika", an ethnobotanical garden in Haldwani, spanning one acre, featuring 37 plant species mentioned in the Mahabharata.</p> <p>Key point</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Plants include Peepal, Bargad, Dhak, Kovidar, Harsringar, Khair, and Baheda, with species from all 18 sections of the sacred text. ❖ The garden links religion, history, and environmental conservation, inspired by Bhishma Pitamah's teachings to Yudhishthira on the importance of plants and wildlife. ❖ Developed after extensive research, the Vatika highlights the significance of forests as described in the Van Parva/Aranya Parva of the Mahabharata. ❖ Follows the 2024 initiative of Ramayan Vatika, featuring plants from the Valmiki Ramayan, showcasing Uttarakhand's focus on religious and ecological preservation.
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Sports

<p>FIDE World Blitz Championships 2024</p>	<p>R. Vaishali of India secured the bronze medal in the women's section of the 2024 FIDE World Blitz Championships, following Koneru Humpy's gold in the 2024 World Rapid Championship.</p>
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Key point

- ❖ It was the first time that the World Blitz Championship had two champions in the Open section, where Magnus Carlsen got his seventh title and Ian Nepomniachtchi got his first one.
- ❖ China's Ju Wenjun was the winner of the women's championship.
- ❖ The 2024 FIDE World Blitz Championship games were conducted in New York City, USA on 30 and 31 of December 2024.
- ❖ The survey was administered directly following the 2024 FIDE World Rapid Championship at that same site.

Short News

- ❖ Delhi Government launched the 'Pujari Granthi Samman' scheme, offering a monthly grant of Rs 18,000 to priests in temples and Gurudwaras in Delhi.
- ❖ Blinkit launched an instant ambulance service, where residents of Gurgaon can book an ambulance through the Blinkit app and have it arrive within 10 minutes.
- ❖ T.M. Krishna was honored with the prestigious Sangita Kalanidhi 2024 title at the 98th Annual Conference and Concerts organized by The Music Academy in Chennai.
- ❖ According to the study published in an indexed medical journal 'Nature Aging', India ranked at 123rd position among 143 countries (accounting 95.4% of the world's population) worldwide in terms of its readiness to tackle the challenges posed by an aging population.
- ❖ French-Indian Sanskrit Scholar and Padma Shri Awardee Pierre-Sylvain Filliozat passed away at the age of 88 on 28 December in Paris, France.



Important Daily Current Affairs Question

1. Which of the following countries became full members of the EU's Schengen Area in 2024?

- A. Croatia and Slovenia
- B. Romania and Bulgaria
- C. Hungary and Poland
- D. Greece and Cyprus

Answer-B

2. Which of the following organizations launched the Business Ready (B-READY) report?

- A. International Monetary Fund
- B. World Bank
- C. United Nations Development Programme
- D. World Trade Organization

Answer-B

