

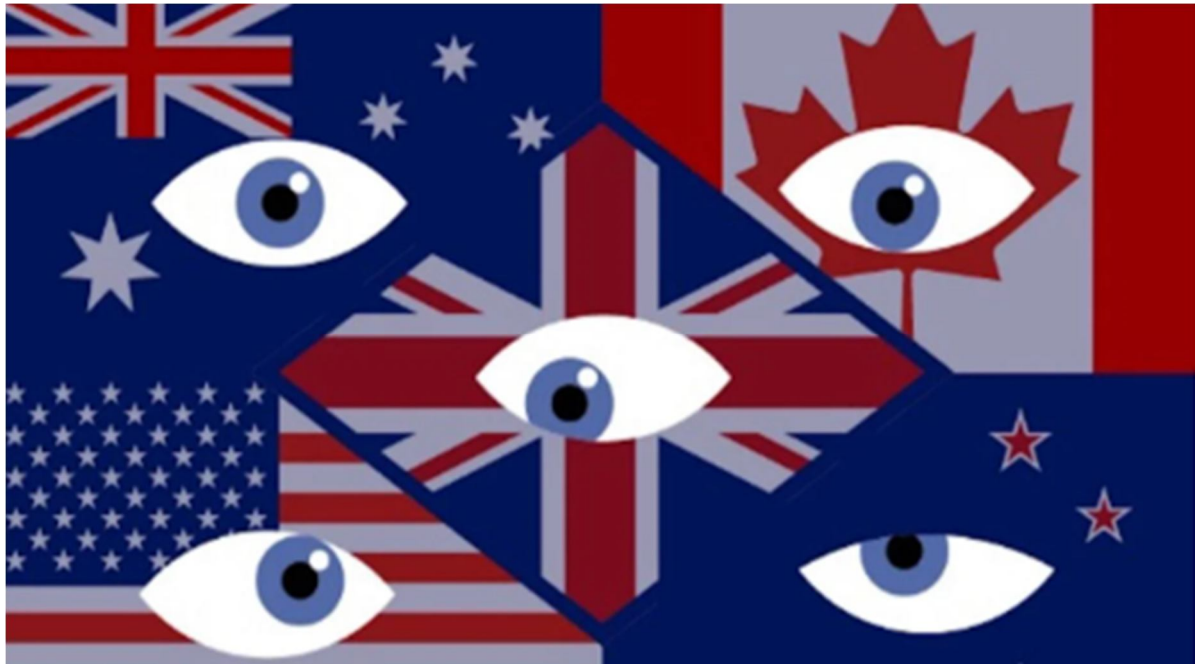
INTERNATIONAL

30th Session of the International Seabed Authority



The 30th Session of the International Seabed Authority (ISA) commenced on March 17, 2025, in Jamaica. Nearly 170 member states and the European Union convened to discuss deep-sea mining regulations. This meeting comes amid increasing pressure from mining industries eager to exploit seabed resources. The ISA's primary responsibilities include developing a mining code and protecting the marine environment from potential damage due to mining activities. The International Seabed Authority (ISA) is an independent organization formed in 1994.

Five Eyes Intelligence Alliance



The Five Eyes intelligence alliance is facing unprecedented challenges. Formed during World War II, it includes the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. Recent shifts in US foreign policy under Donald Trump have disrupted long-held assumptions about the alliance. This situation has raised concerns about the future of intelligence sharing and collaboration among these nations. The Five Eyes originated from wartime cooperation. In 1946, the US and UK established a bilateral agreement for intelligence sharing. This agreement expanded to include Canada in 1948 and Australia and New Zealand in 1956.

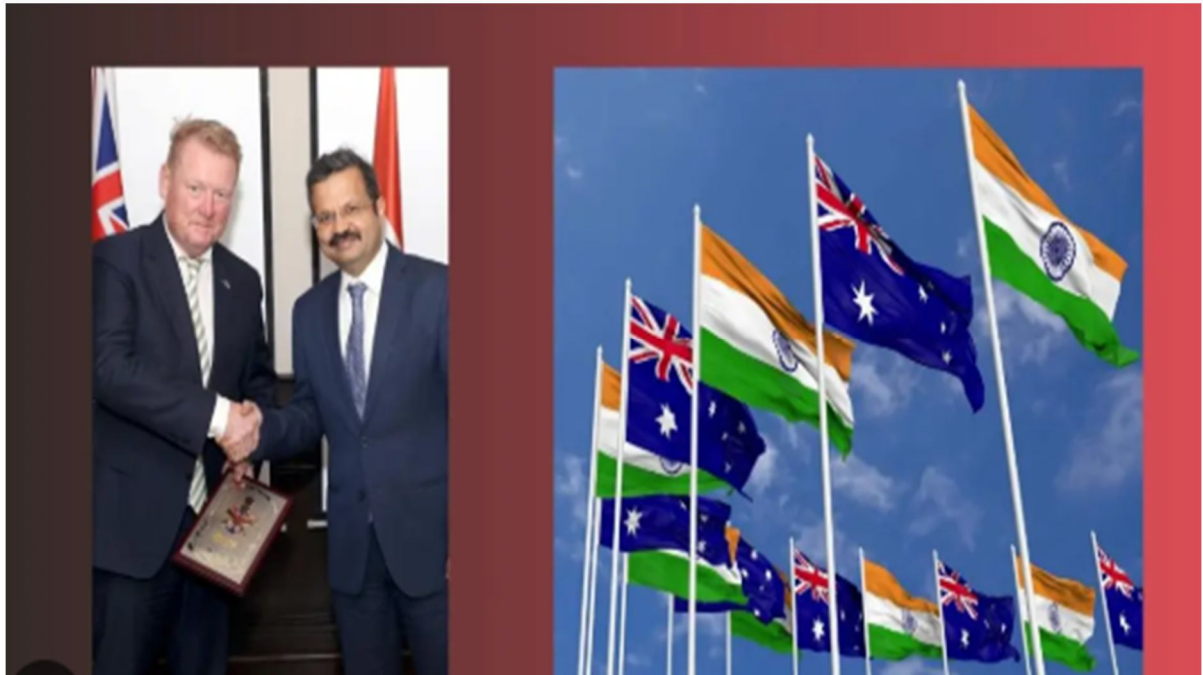
Global Status Report for Buildings and Construction 2024-2025



In 2024, the building and construction sector's emissions did not increase for the first time since 2020. This milestone was reported by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Global Alliance for Buildings and Construction. Despite this progress, the sector still accounts for over a third of global emissions. The Global Status Report for Buildings and Construction 2024-2025, released on March 17, 2025, indicates that decarbonisation efforts are beginning to yield results. The building sector's emissions stabilised in 2024. This marks a very important shift in a sector that has long been a substantial contributor to climate change.

INDIA & THE WORLD

India-Australia deepen Defence Interoperability Across Every Position



India and Australia have agreed to strengthen their defence cooperation and interoperability across the maritime, land, and air domains. The discussions took place during the 9th India-Australia Defence Policy Talks in New Delhi on March 17, 2025. Both nations emphasized enhancing maritime domain awareness, reciprocal information sharing, and science and technology collaboration. The meeting also reviewed past defence dialogues and set priorities for upcoming engagements, including the next 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue in Australia.

VARUNA 2025: Strengthening India-France Naval Cooperation



The 23rd edition of the bilateral naval exercise VARUNA, a symbol of the strong maritime partnership between India and France, is set to take place from March 19 to March 22, 2025. Established in 2001, this annual exercise has become a key platform for enhancing naval interoperability and operational synergy between the two nations. VARUNA 2025 will witness an impressive display of maritime capabilities across multiple domains, featuring aircraft carriers Vikrant and Charles de Gaulle, along with fighter aircraft, destroyers, frigates, and a Scorpene-class submarine. The exercise aims to improve coordination in air defence, anti-submarine warfare, and surface combat, reinforcing the shared commitment to a free, open, and secure maritime environment.

NATIONAL

Cabinet approves Revised Rashtriya Gokul Mission with ₹3,400 Crore Allocation



The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has approved the Revised Rashtriya Gokul Mission (RGM) to enhance livestock sector growth. The revised scheme, implemented as a Central Sector component of the Development Programmes scheme, has been allocated a total of ₹3,400 crore during the 15th Finance Commission cycle (2021-22 to 2025-26), with an additional ₹1,000 crore. The mission aims to boost milk production, genetic improvement, and farmer incomes while preserving India's indigenous bovine breeds through scientific interventions.

Jaitapur and Gorakhpur: Fuelling India's Energy Future



The Indian government is advancing its nuclear energy initiatives with two key projects: the Jaitapur Nuclear Power Plant in Maharashtra and the Gorakhpur (Fatehabad District) Nuclear Power Project in Haryana, the first nuclear facility in North India. The Jaitapur plant, once completed, will contribute 10% of India's 100 GW nuclear energy target by 2047, while the Gorakhpur project marks a strategic expansion into new regions. Addressing concerns regarding environmental impact, safety, and nuclear liability, Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh reaffirmed the government's commitment to clean and sustainable energy, while also introducing private sector participation to accelerate nuclear energy expansion.

Reducing Cooking Oil Usage Under PM-POSHAN



The Union government advised states to cut down cooking oil use by 10% in mid-day meals in government and aided schools. This is part of the Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman (PM-POSHAN) scheme to encourage healthier eating habits in students. The PM-POSHAN scheme is a government initiative designed to provide nutritious meals to students in government and aided schools. It primarily targets children enrolled in Bal-Vatika and classes 1 to 8.

STATE

Cabinet approves Namrup-IV Fertilizer Plant in Assam



The Union Cabinet, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has approved the establishment of a new Brownfield Ammonia-Urea Complex (Namrup-IV) at Brahmaputra Valley Fertilizer Corporation Limited (BVFCL), Namrup, Assam. The 12.7 Lakh Metric Tonnes (LMT) annual capacity plant will be developed as a Joint Venture (JV) under the New Investment Policy (NIP) 2012, with a total estimated project cost of ₹10,601.40 crore and a Debt-Equity ratio of 70:30. The project is expected to be commissioned in 48 months and will significantly boost domestic Urea production, improve fertilizer availability in Eastern India, and create new employment opportunities.

Telangana Government unveils ₹3.04 Lakh Crore Budget for 2025-26



The Telangana Government has presented its most ambitious budget to date, crossing the ₹3 lakh crore mark for the first time since the state's formation. The budget, which amounts to ₹3.04 lakh crore, reflects the government's commitment to welfare programs, economic growth, and infrastructure development. Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhattacha Vikramarka, who also holds the Finance portfolio, presented the budget in the state assembly, emphasizing inclusivity and equitable resource distribution. The financial plan outlines significant allocations for agriculture, education, backward classes, and flagship welfare schemes, all while balancing fiscal challenges.

Air Pollution Crisis in West Bengal Cities



West Bengal is facing a severe air pollution crisis. A recent report by IQAir marks that all cities, except Kolkata, experienced worsening air quality in 2024 compared to the previous year. Kolkata remains the second most polluted metro city in India, trailing only Delhi. The report is based on data from over 40,000 monitoring stations across 138 regions, focusing on PM2.5 levels, a dangerous pollutant linked to severe health issues.

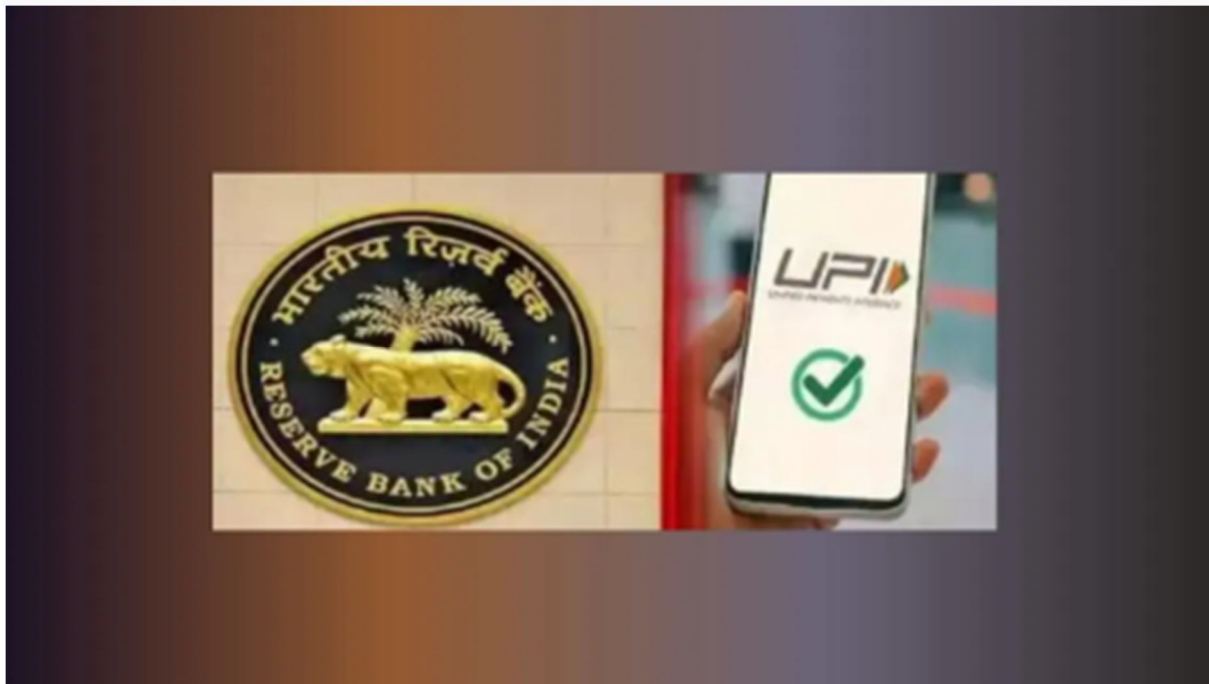
Potti Sriramulu's Statue in Amaravati



Recently, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu announced plans to install a 58-foot statue of Potti Sriramulu in Amaravati. This initiative commemorates Sriramulu's very important role in the formation of Andhra Pradesh as a separate linguistic state. His 58-day hunger strike in 1952 catalysed political change. This act of sacrifice is celebrated annually, reinforcing his status as a historical figure.

BUSINESS & ECONOMY

Cabinet Approves ₹1,500 Crore UPI Incentive Scheme for Banks



The Union Cabinet has approved an incentive scheme of ₹1,500 crore for banks to promote Unified Payments Interface (UPI) transactions below ₹2,000 in FY 2024–25. Banks will receive a 0.15% incentive on such transactions made by small merchants, with a portion of the payout contingent on maintaining a reliable UPI

infrastructure. The initiative aims to enhance digital payment adoption, particularly among small businesses, without imposing merchant fees.

SEBI reduces Minimum Investment in SSE to ₹1,000



The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has reduced the minimum investment amount for Zero Coupon Zero Principal (ZCZP) instruments on the Social Stock Exchange (SSE) from ₹10,000 to ₹1,000. This decision, based on recommendations from the Social Stock Exchange Advisory Committee, aims to enhance retail participation and increase funding for non-profit organizations (NPOs). The move is expected to channel more capital into sectors such as education and healthcare, strengthening India's social impact investment framework. The change modifies SEBI's previous directive from September 19, 2022, and comes into effect immediately.

MISCELLANEOUS

Ramnath Goenka Awards for Excellence in Journalism 2025



The Ramnath Goenka Excellence in Journalism Awards were presented by President Droupadi Murmu to honor outstanding contributions to Indian journalism. The awards recognize journalists who uphold the values of truth, integrity, and fearless reporting. In her speech, President Murmu highlighted the importance of journalism in sustaining democracy and acknowledged Ramnath Goenka's legacy in defending press freedom, particularly during the Emergency. She emphasized the need for ground reporting, research-based journalism, and the role of human values in combating challenges posed by AI and misinformation.

