

THE HEADLINES:-

1. President Droupadi Murmu says AI emerging as growth driver for India economy
2. Centre notifies draft rules for four new Labour Codes, seeks public feedback
3. Prime Minister Narendra Modi to flag off Vande Bharat Sleeper train between Kolkata and Guwahati soon
4. Government to levy additional excise duty on tobacco products from February 1

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President Droupadi Murmu today said that India is rapidly progressing towards becoming the world's third-largest economy, and Artificial Intelligence is emerging as a growth driver for the Indian economy. Addressing a special programme under Skilling for AI Readiness, in Rashtrapati Bhawan, she said that AI is not just a technology but an opportunity for positive change in India. She emphasized that AI will play a significant role in the country's GDP, employment, and overall productivity in the coming decade.

The President said, the importance of AI is rapidly growing across various sectors and it has become essential for everyone to learn the technology. During the event, Ms Murmu conferred AI certificates upon learners, including students and Members of Parliament, and launched the national awareness campaign named Skill The Nation Challenge, aimed at fostering economic self-reliance. The President expressed hope that the initiative would empower learners, enhancing their skills, and preparing a future-ready workforce in the country.

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The Centre has notified draft rules for the four new Labour Codes. These Labour Codes are - The Code on Wages, 2019, the Industrial Relations Code, 2020, the Code on Social Security, 2020 and the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020. The rules define workers, wages, types of employment, gratuity, bonus and social security of workers, including gig workers. These draft rules are open for public consultation, and stakeholders have been invited to submit objections and suggestions within 45 days. The Labour Ministry had announced the implementation of these four new codes on 21st November last year to simplify and streamline the decades-old labour laws in the country. According to the Ministry, the new labour codes will ensure better wages, safety, social security and welfare for the country's workforce.

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Railways Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw has announced that the country's first Vande Bharat sleeper train will operate between Guwahati and Kolkata soon. Addressing a press conference in New Delhi today, he said Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate this train within the next 15 to 20 days.

Mr Vaishnaw said, Indian Railways has successfully completed the final high-speed trial of the indigenously designed and manufactured Vande Bharat Sleeper Train. the 16-coach sleeper train is equipped with state-of-the-art passenger amenities, including sleeper berths, automatic doors and modern toilets.

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Government has notified February 1 as the date from which additional excise duty will be levied on tobacco products and a new cess on pan masala. The new levies will be over and above the GST rate, and will replace the compensation cess which is currently being levied on such sin goods. From February 1, pan masala, cigarettes, tobacco and similar products will attract a GST rate of 40 per cent, while biris will attract 18 per cent GST. On top of this, a Health and National Security Cess will be

levied on pan masala, while tobacco and related products will attract additional excise duty. The move follows the Parliament approval of two Bills in December.

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The year 2025 stands as a defining chapter in India's development journey. It saw policies translate into progress and intent into impact. Today, in this Special Series, 'Year of Reforms', we bring to you how the year 2025 was a Watershed Year for Indian Sports. A report:

(V/C- The year 2025 emerged as a landmark year for Indian sports, a period defined not just by an unprecedented haul of international medals, but by the tangible success of a systemic overhaul in the nation's approach to athletics. In the financial year 2025-26, government made a record allocation of over three thousand seven hundred crore rupees to the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports reflecting its commitment to position sports as a cornerstone of youth empowerment and national aspiration. In 2025, Union Cabinet approved the National Sports Policy 2025 which laid out a bold roadmap to transform India into a global sporting powerhouse. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said, today opportunities in sports are unlimited. He said, under the government an ecosystem has been created in which even a child from the poorest of poor families can now reach the pinnacle at a young age in sports with their talent.

The year 2025 witnessed record-breaking achievements in sports across various fields and disciplines as athletes delivered significant performances. The nations' growing organizational and infrastructural capabilities also reflect in it securing the hosting rights for the 2030 Commonwealth Games, with Ahmedabad as the host city. The year 2025 saw several ground-breaking initiatives for the athletes, reflecting the nation's commitment to fostering sporting excellence and inspiring future generations.)

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi has extended his greetings to the nation on the occasion. Wishing the citizens a wonderful 2026, Mr Modi expressed hope that the year would bring good health and prosperity, with success and fulfilment in everyone's efforts. He prayed for peace and happiness in the society.

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Chief Executive Officer of Prasar Bharati Gaurav Dwivedi today launched two versions of the national song Vande Mataram at Akashvani Bhawan in New Delhi. These are the first two renditions from the proposed set of 25 musical versions to be presented by Akashvani, as part of the 150th anniversary commemoration of the national song. Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Dwivedi said that Vande Mataram is not just a song of the freedom movement but a lasting symbol of national unity and integrity. He highlighted that the different musical renditions of the song will strengthen cultural diversity of the nation. One version of the song is in Carnatic flavour, while the other is rendered in the Hindustani style.

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Akashvani Kohima invites applications for engagement of Part Time Correspondents for Chumoukedima, Longleng, Meluri, Mon, Noklak, Peren, Phek, Shamator, Tuensang, Tsemintu and Zunheboto districts. Necessary details and application proforma can be accessed from www.newsoneair.gov.in under the 'vacancies' section. The last date for submission of application is tomorrow.

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And, in weather, The India Meteorological Department has predicted below-normal rainfall across most of the country, including the Northeast region, during the upcoming winter season from January to March 2026. Meanwhile, temperatures in the Northeast states are likely to remain normal to above-normal during this month.