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Economy

Govt allows Aadhaar face authentication in private apps to ease service access

The government on Thursday said it has allowed the integration of Aadhaar-enabled face authentication in mobile applications of private entities, a move aimed at easing access to services for customers through apps. The process will be facilitated as part of the standard operating procedure (SOP) for Aadhaar authentication laid down through a Aadhaar Good Governance portal launched by the Ministry of Electronics and IT (Meity), an official statement said. <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/policy/govt-allows-aadhaar-face-authentication-in-private-apps-to-ease-service-access/article69271944.ece>

Reducing Centre's fiscal deficit to around 3% difficult: Govt tells IMF

A fiscal deficit of around 3 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) for the central government, as advocated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), is difficult since a significant amount of capital expenditure previously undertaken by state-owned enterprises (SOEs) has been brought onto the central government budget. https://www.business-standard.com/economy/news/reducing-centre-s-fiscal-deficit-to-around-3-difficult-govt-tells-imf-125022701116_1.html

Centre to cut states' share of federal taxes from 41% to 40% from 2026

The Indian government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi is seeking to cut the federal tax revenues that states receive, three sources with the direct knowledge of the matter said. The suggestion will be made to the constitutionally-appointed Finance Commission of India, which makes recommendations on tax sharing along with other aspects of federal-state fiscal relations, and could lead to a flaring of tensions between the two tiers of government. https://www.business-standard.com/india-news/centre-to-cut-states-share-of-federal-taxes-from-41-to-40-from-2026-125022700417_1.html

India's private consumption almost doubles to \$2.1 trn in 2024: Report

India's private consumption has almost doubled to USD 2.1 trillion in 2024 from USD 1 trillion in 2013, growing at 7.2 per cent CAGR, faster than the US, China and Germany, according to a report. https://www.business-standard.com/india-news/india-s-private-consumption-almost-doubles-to-2-1-trn-in-2024-report-125022700698_1.html

60% of Indian employers keen to use AI for rewards, compensation: EY

Employers in India are keen to explore the potential of AI for employee rewards and compensation strategies, with 6 in 10 planning to do so over the next three years. According to the EY Future of Pay 2025 report, 60 per cent of employers are looking to leverage AI across critical areas such as salary benchmarking, real-time pay equity analysis, and customisable benefits for employees. https://www.business-standard.com/industry/news/60-of-indian-employers-keen-to-use-ai-for-rewards-compensation-ey-125022700445_1.html

Indian recruiters say finding mix of AI, human skills challenge

As many as 98 per cent of business leaders in India say that speeding up adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) is their priority in 2025 but finding talent is a challenge, according to a report by LinkedIn. Finding talent that has the right mix of AI and human skills is a challenge for three in five recruiters, said Microsoft's professional networking platform.

https://www.business-standard.com/industry/news/nearly-3-in-5-recruiters-in-india-struggle-to-balance-ai-human-skills-rpt-125022700342_1.html

Finance

India needs more global-scale banks, says DFS secretary M Nagaraju

India needs more global-scale banks with a robust financial, talent, and technological profile to fund large-scale projects, generate employment, and help realise the aim of Viksit Bharat by 2047, said M Nagaraju, secretary, Department of Financial Services.

https://www.business-standard.com/industry/banking/india-needs-more-global-scale-banks-says-dfs-secretary-m-nagaraju-125022701125_1.html

PSU banks to submit plans for raising capital by next month

State-run banks will present a strategic road map for capital-raising and expansion plans for FY 2025-26 to 2027-28 next month. The government plans to assess these projections to determine the timing and extent of its stake reductions in the banks, focusing on enhancing strategic capabilities like GenAI systems.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/banking/finance/banking/psu-banks-to-submit-plans-for-raising-capital-by-next-month/articleshow/118611219.cms>

SEBI sets 30-day deadline for NFO deployment

Capital market regulator SEBI has made it mandatory for mutual funds to deploy the proceeds from new fund offers within 30 days from the date of allotment of units. In an exceptional case, if the AMC is not able to deploy the funds in 30 business days, reasons in writing, including details of efforts taken to deploy the funds, should be placed before the Investment Committee of the AMC, said SEBI in a circular issued on Thursday. The circular will come into effect from April 1.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/markets/sebi-sets-30-day-deadline-for-nfo-deployment/article69271443.ece>

SEBI 'lens on' SMEs using IPO funds for working capital

SEBI is keeping a strict watch on usage of proceeds from initial public offerings (IPO) to detect possible fraud as many small and medium enterprises companies are flocking to the primary markets to ostensibly meet their working capital needs. Unlike funds raised for capital expenditure, the use of working capital can be mismanaged, and it is very difficult to trace the final benefit of its usage, experts say.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/sebi-watching-smes-using-ipo-proceeds-for-working-capital/article69270785.ece>

Non-bank brokers assess impact of SEBI, RBI nod for G-sec trading

Non-bank brokers are assessing the costs and benefits of SEBI and the RBI's move to grant them direct access to the Negotiated Dealing System-Order Matching (NDS-OM) platform for trading in government securities and have hailed the move as a game-changer for India's debt market.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/money-and-banking/non-bank-brokers-assess-impact-of-sebi-rbi-nod-for-g-sec-trading/article69271073.ece>

Large NBFCs expect lower cost of funds post rollback of higher risk weights

Non-banking finance companies (NBFCs), especially large sized ones, are expecting a fall in their cost of funds (CoF) after the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) move this week to rollback 25 per cent higher risk weight assigned on bank loans to NBFCs in late 2023, bankers say.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/incoming/rbis-rollback-of-higher-risk-weight-on-nbfc-loans-expected-to-lower-cof-enhance-liquidity-and-boost-financial-inclusion/article69270375.ece>

MFs can launch Specialized Investment Funds from April 1

SEBI has allowed mutual funds to launch Specialized Investment Funds (SIF) from April 1. Offer documents must detail redemption rules, derivative exposure, and liquidity risks, says SEBI.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/markets/mfs-can-launch-specialized-investment-funds-from-april-1/article69271615.ece>

Moderation in inflation creates policy space for RBI to cut rates: NCAER

Moderation in inflation to five-month low of 4.3 per cent in January has provided RBI more space to cut interest rate in policy meet, according to the monthly economic review by the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER). Earlier this month, RBI slashed policy repo rate by 25 basis points to 6.25 per cent. The next monetary policy committee meeting is to be held in April.

https://www.business-standard.com/finance/news/moderation-in-inflation-creates-policy-space-for-rbi-to-cut-rates-ncaer-125022701047_1.html

IMF keeps India's 'stabilised' exchange rate classification through 2024

The International Monetary Fund retained its classification of India's "de facto" exchange rate regime as "stabilised" for the period of December 2022 to November 2024 after its latest article IV review, it said in a statement on Thursday.

https://www.business-standard.com/finance/news/imf-keeps-india-s-stabilised-exchange-rate-classification-through-2024-125022701040_1.html

Industry

Domestic passenger vehicle sales expected to grow 4-7% in FY26: Icra

Passenger vehicle sales volume in India is expected to grow at a moderate pace of 4-7 per cent in FY26 with most demand drivers remaining neutral or favourable, according to ratings agency Icra. As for two-wheelers, Icra said it estimates the industry volumes to grow at a healthy pace of 6-9 per cent in FY26, following an estimated 11-14 per cent growth in FY25.

https://www.business-standard.com/industry/auto/domestic-passenger-vehicle-sales-expected-to-grow-4-7-in-fy26-icra-125022700576_1.html

India's E-commerce market to reach \$325 billion, consumer spending grows at 8.7%, reveals Deloitte report

India's consumer spending is growing rapidly, driven by rising incomes, urbanisation, and easier access to credit. With private consumption increasing at 7.3% in FY24 and per capita income crossing \$2,600, people are spending more on non-essential items like fashion, food, and wellness, as per Deloitte's 'India's changing Discretionary Spending' report. By 2030, discretionary spending is expected to grow at an annual rate of 8.7%, with rural areas seeing slightly faster growth than urban centers.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/business/brandwagon-indias-e-commerce-market-to-reach-325-billion-consumer-spending-grows-at-8-7-reveals-deloitte-report-3762353/>

India's rising demand for natural diamonds: A shift in global market dynamics

Natural diamonds, formed over billions of years and increasingly scarce, remain highly valued. With declining diamond recovery rates and no new deposits discovered, their rarity enhances demand. India now stands as the second-largest market for natural diamond jewellery, presenting significant growth opportunities in the sector.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/cons-products/fashion/-/cosmetics/-/jewellery/indias-rising-demand-for-natural-diamonds-a-shift-in-global-market-dynamics/articleshow/118600992.cms>

60 pc of Indian retailers see technology as key to competitiveness: PwC India Report

According to a PwC India report, 60% of traditional retailers believe that better technology access can boost their competitiveness against online shopping. While online shopping prevails in categories like apparel, in-store shopping

remains strong for items like fresh produce. The report suggests blending traditional and modern retail strategies, leveraging AI, and tailoring approaches to consumer preferences to stay competitive.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/services/retail/60-pc-of-indian-retailers-see-technology-as-key-to-competitiveness-pwc-india-report/articleshow/118603018.cms>

FMCG players bet on AI across the value chain

Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) players are using artificial intelligence across the value chain to offer consumers personalised tailor-made products.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/companies/fmcbg-players-bet-on-ai-across-the-value-chain/article69270847.ece>

India's cruise companies gear up for expansion to meet rising demand

India's cruise industry is expanding, driven by a post-pandemic surge and a rise in experiential travel. Cruises, once seen as luxury vacations reserved for the wealthy, have gained popularity among middle-income families and solo travellers, lifting revenue growth and prompting cruise companies to introduce additional offerings.

https://www.business-standard.com/industry/news/india-s-cruise-companies-gear-up-for-expansion-to-meet-rising-demand-125022700955_1.html

Agriculture

Maha Kumbh hit pepper demand in upcountry consuming centres

The pepper traders expect the demand for the spices variety to revive in North India post the Maha Kumbh Mela. Many consuming centres in the North India had witnessed subdued buying in the recent past. The domestic demand for pepper is estimated at 1,32,000 tonnes which is going up due to rising consumption from masala makers.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/todays-paper/tp-agri-biz-and-commodity/maha-kumbh-hit-pepper-demand-in-upcountry-consuming-centres/article69269896.ece>

Storage in 35% of India's key reservoirs falls below 50% of capacity

The water level in India's 155 major reservoirs declined to nearly half the capacity this week with the storage in 35 per cent of them less than 50 per cent, data from the Central Water Commission showed.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/storage-in-35-of-indias-key-reservoirs-falls-below-50-of-capacity/article69271181.ece>

Infrastructure

House price index rises 3.1% in third quarter of FY25, shows RBI data

All-India House Price Index (HPI) increased 3.1 per cent in the third quarter of 2024-25 as compared to 4.3 per cent growth in the preceding three months and 3.8 per cent growth in the year-ago period, according to data released by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

https://www.business-standard.com/economy/news/house-price-index-rises-3-1-in-third-quarter-of-fy25-shows-rbi-data-125022701022_1.html

Domestic air traffic rises 11% in January, IndiGo tops with 65.2% share

Domestic air traffic grew 11.28 per cent to 14.6 million in January compared to the year-ago period, according to official data. IndiGo saw its market share climb to 65.2 per cent while that of Air India Group declined to 25.7 per cent last month.

https://www.business-standard.com/india-news/domestic-air-traffic-rises-11-in-january-indigo-tops-with-65-2-share-125022701126_1.html

India forms consortium to develop ports overseas

India has set up a consortium to develop ports overseas and looks to improve competitiveness of its own harbours to grow trade and widen its maritime footprint. A MoU was signed between Indian Ports Global, Indian Ports Rail & Ropeway Corporation and Sagarmala Development Company to form the Bharat Ports Global Consortium.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/india-forms-consortium-to-develop-ports-overseas/article69271102.ece>

Energy

Exploring critical minerals in Zambia, Congo, Australia: Mines secy Rao

India is exploring mining of critical minerals in Zambia, Congo and Australia, Mines Secretary V.L. Kantha Rao said on Thursday, as the world's fastest-growing major economy aims to secure raw materials such as lithium. Companies like Coal India, NMDC and ONGC Videsh are exploring critical minerals in Australia, Rao said.

https://www.business-standard.com/india-news/exploring-critical-minerals-in-zambia-congo-australia-mines-secy-rao-125022700512_1.html

India's inter-State power transmission set for ₹1-lakh crore capex over next two years

India's inter-State transmission system (ISTS) is poised for a significant capital expenditure (capex) boost of nearly ₹1 lakh crore over FY26 and FY27, primarily to facilitate renewable energy evacuation. This marks a two-fold increase from the approximately ₹50,000 crore invested in the sector during FY24 and FY25, according to Crisil Ratings.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/indias-inter-state-power-transmission-set-for-1-lakh-crore-capex-over-next-two-years/article69270410.ece>

Solar projects in India face 17-month delays due to land, transmission challenges

Issues such as disruptions during land acquisition and the slow pace of transmission capacity expansion are impacting the commissioning of solar power projects, with delays averaging around 17 months. Ember's latest report on risks associated with renewable energy expansion (RE) in India said that various factors have delayed utility-scale RE projects in India. "Project-level data from the Central Electricity Authority (CEA) shows an average delay of 17 months (P50), with delays extending to 26 months in extreme cases (P90). In some instances, delays have reached up to 34 months, with some projects eventually being scrapped," it said.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/average-delay-in-commissioning-of-solar-project-is-17-months/article69270754.ece>

Telecom

Answering the call of Maha Kumbh: Event saw 20M mobile users per day

Nearly 20 million devotees participated daily in the Maha Kumbh, potentially boosting telecom companies' revenue. The Department of Telecommunications, along with service providers, monitored crowd movement and data traffic. Jio and Airtel added new sites and spectrum. The event increased data traffic by 55%, possibly raising revenue per user by 4%-6%.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/telecom/telecom-news/answering-the-call-of-maha-kumbh-event-saw-20m-mobile-users-per-day/articleshow/118611087.cms>

States

Coimbatore to host 2-day meet on improving quality of South Indian teas

Aimed at increasing consumer awareness on quality of South Indian teas, stakeholders in the sector are organising a convention on March 7 and 8 at Coimbatore. The theme of the 2-day convention is "Increasing Consumer Awareness on Quality of South Indian Teas" which will be held at Jenney's Residency, Coimbatore.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/coimbatore-to-host-2-day-meet-on-improving-quality-of-south-indian-teas/article69269691.ece>

Meghalaya ships 15 tonnes of ginger to Dubai

The Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare of the Meghalaya government has made its first sea shipment of 15 tonnes of Meghalaya ginger to Dubai's Lulu Group, in collaboration with Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA). This initiative was facilitated by the Eastern Ri-Bhoi Organic Farmer Producer Company (FPC).

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/meghalaya-ships-15-tonnes-of-ginger-to-dubai/article69269718.ece>

In a first, AP govt plans to float ₹2000-cr Viability Gap Fund to for PPP projects to spur growth

Public Private Partnership (PPP) projects in Andhra Pradesh will soon get a boost as the State government is working on earmarking a ₹2,000 crore for Viability Gap Funding (VGF) soon. The plan for creation of a separate fund for ensuring viability is also in line with the vision of the Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu who is envisaging a new participatory model for development christened as P-4. The State government will launch the 'P4 policy' (Public-Private-People Partnership) for economic development and poverty alleviation on ensuing Ugadi, the Telugu new year on March 30.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/andhra-pradesh-boosts-ppp-projects-with-rs-2000-crore-vgf-fund-aiming-for-economic-growth-and-poverty-alleviation/article69270269.ece>

ADB commits \$200-million loan to expand urban services in Kolkata

Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a \$200-million loan to enhance the development of climate-and disaster-resilient sewerage and drainage infrastructure in Kolkata, aiming to improve the city's livability. These interventions, which are part of the Kolkata Municipal Corporation Sustainability, Hygiene and Resilience (Sector) Project, will improve the living conditions and health outcomes, particularly for vulnerable groups, including women and children, ADB said in a statement.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/national/adb-commits-200-million-loan-to-expand-urban-services-in-kolkata/article69270203.ece>

Healthcare

DCGI streamlines drug export approvals, enhances regulatory oversight

In a move aimed at simplifying export procedures and enhancing regulatory efficiency, the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) announced a major overhaul in the process of granting No Objection Certificates (NOCs) for the export of unapproved drugs.

https://www.business-standard.com/health/dcgi-streamlines-drug-export-approvals-enhances-regulatory-oversight-125022700783_1.html

Indian pharma rises to global prominence led by export boom and better compliance rates, McKinsey report reveals

A new report has revealed that India's pharmaceutical sector that has risen in prominence as the largest supplier of generic medicines. According to McKinsey & Company's latest report, this growth is driven by pharma exports growing faster than the global average, is at a tipping point: emerging trends in Indian and global landscapes could disrupt the current environment but could also lead to the next horizon of opportunities for the industry.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/business/healthcare-indian-pharma-rises-to-global-prominence-led-by-export-boom-and-better-compliance-rates-mckinsey-report-reveals-3762058/>

Contract drug makers urge govt to ease rules, reduce reliance on China

India's contract drug makers have urged the government to remove regulatory hurdles and grant faster clearance to vital raw material imports at a time when many global pharmaceutical firms are counting on the nation to reduce their reliance on China. India's Contract Research Development and Manufacturing Organisation (CRDMO) sector is at an inflection point, with the potential to grow seven-fold to \$22 billion-\$25 billion by 2035, according to a report by Boston Consulting Group.

https://www.business-standard.com/industry/news/contract-drug-makers-urge-govt-to-ease-rules-reduce-reliance-on-china-125022700366_1.html

External

Govt considers tariff cuts on cars, chemicals as Trump duties loom

Indian officials are exploring ways to lower tariffs on a wide range of imports, including cars and chemicals, in a bid to evade US President Donald Trump's threatened reciprocal levies, according to people familiar with the matter. Officials in New Delhi are discussing reducing duties for automobiles, some agricultural products, chemicals, critical pharmaceuticals, as well as certain medical devices and electronics, the people said, asking not to be identified as the plans aren't finalized.

https://www.business-standard.com/economy/news/govt-considers-tariff-cuts-on-cars-chemicals-as-trump-duties-loom-125022700679_1.html

India to sign MoU with Israel and Saudi Arabia for critical minerals

India is set to sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Israel and Saudi Arabia to explore and process critical minerals. This initiative aims to strengthen India's domestic supply and reduce dependence on imports, according to Union Mines Minister G Kishan Reddy. The agreement with Israel involves a technology transfer that will enable the extraction of potassium from seawater, as well as the incorporation of artificial intelligence in mining processes.

https://www.business-standard.com/economy/news/india-to-sign-mou-with-israel-and-saudi-arabia-for-critical-minerals-125022700727_1.html

India-EU trade talks likely to focus on G7 diamond traceability, CBAM

Discussions on the G7 traceability requirements on diamonds from Russia and the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) are likely to figure high on the India-European Union trade talks when commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal meets his counterpart from the trade bloc, Maros Sefcovic.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/india-eu-trade-talks-likely-to-focus-on-g7-diamond-traceability-cbam/articleshow/118611097.cms>

BRICS vows 'won't stop' de-Dollarization efforts despite Donald Trump's 100 % tariff warning

Brazil's President Lula da Silva has said that BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) is committed to ending US Dollar dominance "no matter what". The Brazil President was heard saying, "US President Donald Trump's threats of tariffs won't stop the group's determination to seek alternative platforms for payments between member countries." Brazil's BRICS presidency will strengthen bloc's push for a multipolar world, said Lula da Silva. The Brazilian president told the same during a meeting of the bloc's sherpas.

<https://www.livemint.com/news/world/brics-vows-wont-stop-de-dollarization-efforts-despite-donald-trumps-100-tariff-warning-11740667493970.html>