

January 16, 2026 – Friday

Economy

Unemployment rate inches up in Dec to 4.8%, still the second-lowest in FY26

India's unemployment rate (UR) inched up to 4.8 per cent in December — still the second-lowest in nine months — as labour force and workforce participation rose to their highest levels so far in 2025-26 (FY26), indicating increased labour market entry alongside continued job absorption, according to the latest Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) monthly bulletin released by the National Statistics Office (NSO) on Thursday.
https://www.business-standard.com/economy/news/unemployment-rate-inches-up-in-dec-to-4-8-still-the-second-lowest-in-fy26-126011501100_1.html

Houses with Metro access show better financial discipline: EAC-PM paper

Households that have access to Metro rail systems in their vicinity tend to show stronger household financial discipline with lower mortgage delinquency and higher loan prepayment rates, a working paper by the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM) has shown. "When mobility costs decline, households experience improvements in cash-flow liquidity, potentially enabling better debt servicing and lower default risk," said the paper authored by Soumya Kanti Ghosh, Pulak Ghosh, both part-time members at EAC-PM, and Falguni Sinha, an economist at State Bank of India (SBI). Building on previous research based in Delhi, which showed similar outcomes, the working paper has analysed the trend of household financial discipline across Hyderabad and Bengaluru, two cities where Metro systems are largely evolving unlike Delhi, which has a relatively robust Metro system.
https://www.business-standard.com/economy/news/metro-connectivity-improves-household-loan-repayments-pm-eac-paper-126011501259_1.html

India's exports rise 1.8% to $38.51 bn in Dec; trade deficit widens

India's merchandise exports rose 1.8 per cent year-on-year to $38.51 billion in December amid global economic uncertainties, according to data released by the commerce department. Inbound shipments grew 8.8 per cent to $63.55 billion. The trade deficit widened to $25 billion, compared with $20.63 billion in December 2024 and $24.53 billion in November. Exports to the US contracted 1.8 per cent to $6.89 billion in December. However, on a cumulative basis, outbound shipments to the US stood at $65.87 billion during April–December, marking 9.7 per cent growth over the same period last year.
https://www.business-standard.com/economy/news/india-s-exports-rise-1-8-to-38-51-bn-in-dec-trade-deficit-widens-126011500549_1.html

Centre to soon frame rules to integrate MGNREGA workers into VB-G RAM G

The central government will soon frame rules for seamless transition of existing MGNREGA workers into the newly enacted VB-G RAM G (Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission Gramin) scheme. The rules could include accepting current e-KYC-enabled MGNREGA job cards in the new regime, and same job sites for work, senior officials said on Thursday. The new scheme, which will soon be notified by the Centre, will give states six months'

transition time. The rules for normative allocation of funds to the states will also be notified soon, one of the officials explained.
https://www.business-standard.com/industry/agriculture/centre-to-soon-frame-rules-to-integrate-mgnrega-workers-into-vb-g-ram-g-126011501158_1.html

Budget Expectations

Budget 2026-27: Miners for removal of export duty on low-grade bauxite

India's mining industry is pressing the government for removing export duties on low-grade bauxite and maintain the current duty regime on iron ore, various tax concessions, and a government-backed insurance mechanism to protect overseas mining investments from geopolitical risks in the upcoming Union Budget. A senior executive at the Federation of Indian Mineral Industries (Fimi) told Business Standard that the industry body has submitted a proposal to remove the 15 per cent export duty on low-grade bauxite.
https://www.business-standard.com/industry/news/mining-sector-pushes-for-bauxite-duty-cut-insurance-for-overseas-projects-126011201193_1.html

Budget 2026: Oil industry seeks abolition or review of OID cess on pre-NELP and nomination blocks

As the Union Budget 2026 approaches, the oil and gas sector is calling on the government to reconsider the OID cess imposed on domestically produced crude oil. Stakeholders in the industry argue that the existing 20% ad-valorem tax is stifling production potential and should be revised. Furthermore, they suggest doing away with other taxes like NCCD and Basic Excise Duty.
https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/oil-gas/budget-2026-oil-industry-seeks-abolition-or-review-of-oid-cess-on-pre-nelp-and-nomination-blocks/articleshow/126545404.cms

Ahead of FY27 Budget, agri leaders seek tech push to drive growth

Ahead of the FY27 Budget, agriculture industry leaders and experts are making a strong pitch for increased investments in digital infrastructure, climate-resilient farming practices, and technology adoption to transform a sector that employs nearly half the country's workforce but contributes less than a fifth to national output. With agriculture and allied sectors supporting about 45 per cent of India's workforce while contributing only around 18 per cent to the gross value added, industry voices say Budget 2026-27 presents a critical opportunity to reposition the sector as an engine of economic growth rather than just a welfare concern.
https://www.business-standard.com/industry/agriculture/ahead-of-fy27-budget-agri-leaders-seek-tech-push-to-drive-growth-126011500418_1.html

Nasscom bats for tax clarity in upcoming budget

India's technology industry body Nasscom has urged the government to prioritise tax certainty for the digital economy in the Union Budget, flagging concerns around cloud infrastructure, cross-border digital taxation and employee compensation that it says are beginning to weigh on investment decisions. At the top of its wishlist is clarity on the tax treatment of foreign cloud companies that use Indian data centres. Nasscom has warned that the current approach risks treating routine infrastructure usage as creating an additional tax exposure for overseas cloud service providers, even though Indian operators already pay tax on their margins.
https://www.financialexpress.com/business/news/nasscom-bats-for-tax-clarity-in-upcoming-budgetnbsp/4108805/

India Inc flags Budget levers to unlock private capex

India Inc is seeking targeted policy support in the Union Budget to revive private capital expenditure, with industry leaders calling for demand-boosting measures, fiscal incentives and regulatory clarity to translate investment intent into on-ground spending. Executives said the focus should be on sustaining growth amid tariff uncertainty and geopolitical risks, even as urban demand shows early signs of recovery and rural consumption remains resilient.
https://www.financialexpress.com/business/news/india-inc-flags-budget-levers-to-unlock-private-capex/4108432/

Finance

Indian banks set for 131% higher dividend

The 31 combined state-run and private banks may soon be able to hand over 131% higher dividends to shareholders, driven by the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) newly proposed framework on dividend distribution for commercial banks. An assessment of FY2024-25 financials for these listed banks shows that while they collectively paid about Rs 64,300 crore in dividends last year, the draft norms would allow payouts of nearly Rs 1,48,600 crore, thanks to a more formula-based, capital-sensitive approach to determining limits.
https://www.financialexpress.com/business/banking-finance/indian-banks-set-for-131-higher-dividend/4108309/

PSBs to standardise digital process for MSME credit

Government is pushing state-owned banks to use the JanSamarth portal for loans up to one crore rupees. This digital process aims to speed up credit for micro and small businesses. Banks can automatically access borrower data for faster loan approvals. This initiative is set to improve credit access for MSMEs.
https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/banking/finance/banking/psbs-to-standardise-digital-process-for-msme-credit/articleshow/126552583.cms

SEBI weighs oversight of unlisted share market as focus shifts to disclosure gaps

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), is examining whether it should step in to regulate the fast-growing unlisted share market, which currently operates largely outside its direct oversight, Chairman Tuhin Kanta Pandey said on Thursday. Speaking on the sidelines of the Association of Investment Bankers of India's (AIBI) annual convention, Pandey said SEBI is discussing the issue with the Ministry of Corporate Affairs to assess whether the regulator has the legal authority to oversee companies that are not listed on stock exchanges, and if so, how far such regulation can extend.
https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/markets/sebi-weighs-oversight-of-unlisted-share-market-as-focus-shifts-to-disclosure-gaps/article70512649.ece

NSE nears listing as market regulator agrees to settle, SEBI chair says

India's markets regulator has agreed in principle with National Stock Exchange's settlement application on unfair market access case, Chairman Tuhin Kanta Pandey said on Thursday. The Indian government has approved the 2.5% stake dilution and a notification is expected to be issued soon, Pandey said.
https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/markets/nse-nears-listing-as-market-regulator-agrees-to-settle-sebi-chair-says/article70512405.ece

Industry

Indian travelers on the lookout for new international destinations in 2026

Indian travellers are discovering and exploring new destinations in 2026, especially in a year sprinkled with long weekends. According to travel platform Booking.com, destinations such as Mui Ne in Vietnam, Bilbao in Spain, Barranquilla in Colombia, and Guangzhou in China are set to be among the must-visit vacation spots this year. "Our research highlights that the year ahead is all about highly individual journeys that reflect travellers' true interests. This trend is perfectly reflected in our list of top global destinations. The emergence of Kochi, alongside hotspots like Bilbao and Manaus, highlights a growing demand for places that blend rich culture, history and authentic natural beauty," said Santosh Kumar, regional manager, South Asia, at the platform.
https://www.business-standard.com/industry/news/indian-travelers-on-the-lookout-for-new-international-destinations-in-2026-126011500936_1.html

Indian CEOs lead global peers in AI optimism but workforce readiness lags: BCG report

Indian business leaders are among the most bullish globally on artificial intelligence delivering positive returns, with 88% expressing confidence in AI's ability to generate business value, above the 82% global average, according to Boston Consulting Group's AI Radar 2026 report, released on Wednesday. However, this optimism contrasts sharply with ground realities: only 36% of India's workforce is currently skilled in AI compared to 44% globally, highlighting an urgent capability gap that could constrain the country's AI ambitions, the report added.
https://www.financialexpress.com/business/news/indian-ceos-lead-global-peers-in-ai-optimism-but-workforce-readiness-lags-bcg-report/4108408/

Hotel industry sees more room for deals, investments this year

Indian hotel deals reached $397 million in 2025, a rise from the previous year. This growth signals strong demand for travel. Projections show further increases in transaction volumes for 2026. India is poised to attract substantial hospitality sector investments by 2028. Strategic acquisitions and new capital are entering the market.
https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/services/hotels-/-restaurants/hotel-industry-sees-more-room-for-deals-investments-this-year/articleshow/126551939.cms

India's green building market to hit $85 bn by 2032; reusing furniture can cut carbon 40%

India's green building market is set for significant growth. Reusing existing furniture offers a substantial 30-40% reduction in embodied carbon. Interior fit-outs contribute heavily to emissions, but quick wins are possible. Organizations can achieve 30-50% reductions through smart material choices and reuse. Embodied carbon is the next frontier for sustainability in construction.
https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/services/property-/-cstruction/indias-green-building-market-to-hit-85-bn-by-2032-reusing-furniture-can-cut-carbon-40/articleshow/126548067.cms

Infrastructure

Proptech firms see sustained investor interest amid deeper adoption

Indian proptech firms are entering a new phase of growth, marked by rising demand, capital infusion, and deeper adoption across real estate assets. The sector is witnessing sustained investor interest even as companies recalibrate growth strategies towards profitability, recurring revenues, and institutional appeal. As per Anarock, India's proptech landscape is growing at a strong 15 per cent compound annual growth rate (CAGR). It is poised to grow to $16 billion by 2030 from $6 billion in 2023. From digital broking and construction management to rental payments, post-sale engagement and data-led advisory, proptech is increasingly turning into a core function.
https://www.business-standard.com/industry/news/proptech-firms-see-sustained-investor-interest-amid-deeper-adoption-126011500946_1.html

Energy

India's Russian oil imports likely to dip again, stranding cargoes at sea

India's buying of Russian crude is likely to stabilize or even decline this month, leaving more cargoes from the OPEC+ producer stranded and pushing the world's third-largest oil importer to look to pricier alternatives. Ship-tracking data and people familiar with the matter point to a dip that would come after imports fell in December to a three-year low. That was a third below their peak in June.
https://www.business-standard.com/economy/news/india-s-russian-oil-imports-likely-to-dip-again-stranding-cargoes-at-sea-126011500434_1.html

NPCIL to revise existing tender for nuclear reactors under SHANTI regime

State-owned Nuclear Power Corporation of India (NPCIL) is revising its Bharat Small Reactors (BSRs) tender to align with the newly enacted SHANTI Act, a landmark legislation that opens India's nuclear sector to private participation. The company had floated a request for proposal (RFP) in December 2024 inviting proposals from state-owned and private companies to set up 220 Megawatt (Mw) BSRs, outlining a business model for industry participation. It has now extended the timeline for submission of proposals to March 2026.
https://www.business-standard.com/industry/news/npcil-to-revise-existing-tender-for-nuclear-reactors-under-shanti-regime-126011500932_1.html

Power sector can fetch $450 billion investment by 2032

India's power sector is set for massive growth. An investment of $450 billion is projected by 2032. The nation has moved beyond power shortages to a surplus regime. This transition will boost electricity generation, transmission, distribution, and energy storage. The focus is on long-term growth, grid resilience, and clean energy integration. This marks a significant shift for India's energy future.

https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/power/power-sector-can-fetch-450-billion-investment-by-2032/articleshow/126550878.cms

States

Maharashtra tops DPIIT-recognised startups; nearly 100,000 led by women

As India celebrates National Startup Day today (January 16), the country also completes a decade of the Startup India initiative, which was launched in 2016. The data from the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) shows that more than 2.07 lakh startups have been officially recognised to date. While Maharashtra leads the tally with 35,991 recognised startups, the number of startups with at least one woman director has risen to nearly one lakh (99,640).
https://www.business-standard.com/industry/news/maharashtra-tops-dpiit-recognised-startups-nearly-100-000-led-by-women-126011501020_1.html

UP Excise Department drafting new excise policy; distillery units set to get boost

The Uttar Pradesh government is drafting a new Excise Policy 2026-27 to accelerate industrial investment in the state and strengthen revenue resources, officials said on Thursday. Under the new policy, the establishment of distillery plants in the state will be encouraged, along with serious consideration of various facilities to promote exports.
https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/cons-products/liquor/up-excise-department-drafting-new-excise-policy-distillery-units-set-to-get-boost/articleshow/126548902.cms

External

India, EU likely to conclude much awaited FTA talks on January 27

India and the European Union (EU) are likely to announce the conclusion of talks for the much awaited free-trade agreement (FTA) on January 27 during the visit of the bloc's leadership. "We are expected to conclude the negotiations and have the deal ready. Signing, I think, is unlikely, but definitely we can have the deal ready. There can be some kind of announcement at that point, but that will depend upon how the progress is in the next five days," commerce secretary Rajesh Agrawal told reporters on Thursday.
https://www.business-standard.com/economy/news/india-eu-likely-to-announce-conclusion-of-fta-talks-on-january-27-126011501023_1.html

India, Canada working to finalise scope for bilateral trade pact: Commerce Secretary

India and Canada are engaged in finalising the terms of reference (ToR) to formally start negotiations for a free trade agreement (FTA), Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal said on Thursday. The two countries were earlier negotiating a trade pact but it was paused by Canada in 2023. Now they have decided to resume talks from the beginning as lot has changed on the global trade front during these two years.
https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/india-canada-working-to-finalise-scope-for-bilateral-trade-pact-commerce-secretary/articleshow/126547597.cms

India, Israel see eye to eye on true vision for sustainable food security: Minister

Israel and India have signed a Letter of Intent to deepen cooperation in agriculture, fisheries, and the blue economy, aiming for sustainable food security. This expands their existing partnership to water agriculture, focusing on smart water management and innovation. The agreement underscores a shared vision and strengthens bilateral ties in these vital sectors.
https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/india-israel-see-eye-to-eye-on-true-vision-for-sustainable-food-security-minister/articleshow/126543715.cms

Hong Kong emerges key market for India's high-value exports

India's exports to Hong Kong are surging. Shipments of silver jewellery, electronics, and processed stones have seen substantial growth. Cut and polished diamonds are leading this increase. This trend highlights Hong Kong's growing

importance as a trading hub for India. Diversification of exports is a key factor. Electronics and silver jewellery exports have more than doubled.
https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/hong-kong-emerges-key-market-for-indias-high-value-exports/articleshow/126533219.cms