

February 17, 2026 – Tuesday

Economy

India wholesale inflation at 9-month high of 1.81% in January; up from 0.83% in December

India's wholesale price inflation (WPI) ticked up to a nine-month high of 1.81% in January from 0.83% in December, government data showed on Monday. The positive inflation rate in January 2026 was primarily driven by higher prices in the manufacture of basic metals, other manufactured products, non-food articles, food articles, and textiles. Food inflation picked up to 1.41% in January after remaining flat at 0.00% in December.
https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/indicators/india-wholesale-inflation-at-9-month-high-of-1-81-in-january-up-from-0-83-in-december/articleshow/128409153.cms

India's unemployment rate rises marginally to 5% in January

India's unemployment rate among persons aged 15 years and above climbed to 5% in January, up from 4.8% in December, according to government data released on Monday. The unemployment rate or joblessness recorded a marginal increase in January in both rural and urban areas, as per the latest Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS). Rural unemployment rate edged up from 3.9 per cent to 4.2 per cent, while the urban unemployment rate increased from 6.7 per cent to 7.0 per cent during December 2025 to January 2026. Labour force participation (LFPR) and worker population ratios (WPR) declined. Decline in LFPR and WPR, and rise in unemployment rate in January was primarily rural-driven, with seasonal factors, post-harvest slack, and discouragement effects playing a key role, the National Statistics Office (NSO) under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, said in a statement. Many activities like construction, agriculture allied work, transport, small trade, etc. slowdown in winter. Urban areas remained stable," the government statement explained.
https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/indicators/india-unemployment-january-5-percent-jobless-rate-labour-market/articleshow/128419516.cm=i8

Currency in circulation jumps even as UPI transactions surge: SBI Research

Currency in circulation has (CiC) jumped even as UPI transactions have surged in the backdrop of higher withdrawals from ATMs in states such as Karnataka due to GST notices to small merchants and its ripple impact in West Bengal and Kerala; increasing propensity to hold cash, particularly in rural areas; and rise in precious metals prices prompting households to recycle gold/silver.
https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/money-and-banking/currency-in-circulation-jumps-even-as-upi-transactions-surge-sbi-research/article70637465.ece

Govt plans 'Champion CPSEs' for Viksit Bharat by 2047, NITI Aayog roadmap soon

The government is finalising a road map to create "champion" central public sector enterprises (CPSEs) that would help India realise its goal to emerge as a developed nation by 2047 through sustained economic growth and technological advancements, senior officials said. The road map, prepared by the Niti Aayog in close coordination with the finance ministry, would outline steps to bolster their financial muscle, technological prowess, corporate

governance, talent pool and overall operational efficiency, the officials told ET. The details would be released soon, they said.
https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/govt-plans-champion-cpses-for-viksit-bharat-by-2047-niti-aayog-roadmap-soon/articleshow/128434749.cms

Finance

RBI initiates talks to ease overseas investment norms

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is picking the minds of bankers to smarten the overseas investment (OI) regime. Senior regulatory officials held a meeting with half a dozen top private and MNC banks a fortnight ago, sparking hopes that the government and the central bank would finally clear the fog on some of the rules and lower the compliance hurdles that dog the framework for overseas direct investments (ODI), persons familiar with the discussion told ET.
https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/rbi-initiates-talks-to-ease-overseas-investment-norms/articleshow/128393887.cms

RBI issues liberalised ECB guidelines

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has issued liberalised external commercial borrowing (ECB) guidelines, whereby India Inc can benefit from higher borrowing limit at prevailing market related conditions, change currency of an ECB, and convert the ECB into a non-debt instrument, among others.
https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/money-and-banking/rbi-issues-liberalised-ecb-guidelines/article70640001.ece

RBI governor Malhotra urges MSMEs to formalize, digitize, and maintain credit discipline for resilience

The Reserve Bank of India Governor Sanjay Malhotra on Monday told small business units classified as micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to pursue formalisation, maintain credit discipline and adopt digital payments to build long-term resilience and competitiveness. He emphasised that improving access to timely and adequate formal credit for MSMEs remains a key policy priority of the central bank, the RBI said in a press statement issued after the meeting.
https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/finance/rbi-governor-malhotra-urges-msmes-to-formalize-digitize-and-maintain-credit-discipline-for-resilience/articleshow/128427391.cms

Industry

PV, two-wheeler dispatches ride on GST wave to log best January figures

Dispatches of passenger vehicles (PVs) and two-wheelers in January posted double-digit growth, their highest ever sales in the month, indicating that the momentum generated after rationalisation in goods and services tax (GST) has not tapered off. Sales of PVs year-on-year (Y-o-Y) grew 12.6 per cent to 449,616 units while those of two-wheelers rose 26.2 per cent to 1,925,603. Two-wheeler dispatches were led by scooters, which saw a 37 per cent rise, compared to 20 per cent for motorcycles. Motorcycles, however, have larger volumes, accounting for more than 58 per cent of two-wheeler sales.
https://www.business-standard.com/industry/auto/passenger-vehicle-two-wheeler-dispatches-record-highest-ever-january-sales-126021300957_1.html

India AI Impact Summit: Govt outlines AI-led growth, jobs, skilling push

Ahead of the **India AI Impact Summit 2026,** scheduled from February 16 to 20 in New Delhi, the government has outlined the role of artificial intelligence as a key engine of India's economic growth, productivity and employment creation. This earmarks the government's objective to ensure that AI adoption enhances productivity and employment while keeping humans central to decision-making. The Summit is expected to position India as a contributor to global AI development, governance and cooperation, rather than only a large-scale adopter. A report by **Competition Commission of India** (CCI) states that India's AI market expanded from $2.97 billion in 2020 to $7.63 billion in 2024 and is projected to reach $131.31 billion by 2032, growing at a compound annual rate of 42.2 per cent. During the same period, the global AI market grew from $103.6 billion to $288.8 billion.

https://www.business-standard.com/technology/tech-news/india-ai-impact-summit-govt-outlines-ai-growth-jobs-skilling-push-126021200907_1.html

Govt extends bid deadline for small oil blocks

The government Monday extended the bid submission deadline for discovered small fields (DSF) round by a month to March 18, marking yet another extension in a bidding process that began last April. This is the fourth DSF auction round, offering a total of 55 discoveries across nine contract areas. The Directorate General of Hydrocarbons (DGH), which conducts oilfield auctions, announced the revised deadline without citing any reason for the extension.
https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/oil-gas/govt-extends-bid-deadline-for-small-oil-blocks/articleshow/128435488.cms

Coconut industry gets a policy boost

The coconut sector is entering the new financial year with renewed confidence. Signals from Budget 2026-27 suggest that the industry is finally getting sustained policy attention. Coconut has been identified as a priority high-value agricultural crop. The objective is direct: (a) improve productivity; (b) raise farmer incomes; and (c) build a sustainable and competitive value chain.
https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/opinion/coconut-industry-gets-a-policy-boost/article70639999.ece

Agriculture

Sale of non-subsidised fertilisers banned in UP, industry cries foul

Fertiliser industry players said yields of sugarcane, paddy and critical vegetables such as bananas might get impacted in Uttar Pradesh due to the ban imposed by the state government on the sale of non-subsidised fertilisers from January 1, 2026. The ban has been imposed on 13 major fertiliser companies, prohibiting them from selling any non-subsidised fertilisers that include bio-stimulants, liquid speciality fertilisers, water-soluble fertilisers and other products. The ban has been imposed to prevent tagging of subsidised fertilisers with non-subsidised ones and also to check the proliferation of fake and spurious fertilisers. However, trade and industry players said that instead of cracking down on the sale of spurious and unverified fertilisers, the UP ban will deprive farmers of access to high-quality crop nutrients that are critical for boosting yields.
https://www.business-standard.com/industry/agriculture/industry-warns-up-s-ban-on-non-subsidised-fertilisers-may-hit-crop-output-126021601287_1.html

Infrastructure

Texmaco Rail & Engineering gets order worth Rs 27.67 cr from Southwestern Railway

Texmaco Rail & Engineering Ltd on Monday said it has secured an order worth Rs 27.67 crore from South Western Railway for annual maintenance and breakdown restoration of overhead equipment and power supply installations in Mysore division. The two-year contract covers 1,046 track kilometres of electrification infrastructure and associated electrical assets, the company said in a regulatory filing. Under the mandate, Texmaco will carry out routine, emergency and preventive maintenance to ensure reliable and uninterrupted operation of traction power systems across the division.
https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/transportation/railways/texmaco-rail-engineering-gets-order-worth-rs-27-67-cr-from-south-western-railway/articleshow/128414343.cms

Policy to boost local manufacturing of genext railway tech and parts in offing

India plans to unveil a new 'rail tech' policy in the coming weeks, aiming to give a major thrust to local manufacturing of next-generation railway technology and equipment. The policy is likely to see the Railway Board provide partial funding, technical support, and access to testing facilities as the Centre continues its rail modernisation drive and cut reliance on imports including from leading supplier China.
https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/transportation/railways/policy-to-boost-local-manufacturing-of-genext-railway-tech-and-parts-in-offing/articleshow/128393924.cms

Energy

India records lowest-ever price for green hydrogen in tender

India has recorded the country's lowest-ever bid for the supply of green hydrogen, according to Renewable Energy Minister Pralhad Joshi. The bid of Rs 279 ($3.08) per kilogram was to supply 10,000 tons of green hydrogen a year to Numaligarh Refinery Ltd., majority owned by state-run Oil India Ltd., in the northeastern state of Assam. Nine bidders participated in the tender, Bhaskar Jyoti Phukan, Numaligarh's managing director, said in a phone interview, declining to say who the winning bidder was.
https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/oil-gas/india-records-lowest-ever-price-for-green-hydrogen-in-tender/articleshow/128417739.cms

India Energy Stack will be a game changer for distributed RE

The India Energy Stack (IES), which is a set of open protocols offering uniform interoperability for the Power sector, coupled with AI, will be a game changer for promoting distributed renewable energy (DRE), particularly initiatives such as PM Surya Ghar and PM-KUSUM.
https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/india-energy-stack-will-be-a-game-changer-for-distributed-re/article70639922.ece

Telecom

Telcos want net neutrality rules updated for 5G era

Telecom operators want the government to relook at the 2016 net neutrality norms and update them for the 5G era to provide explicit support of network slicing, which would allow them to charge premiums for higher speeds or guaranteed quality of service as a means to monetise their 5G networks.
https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/telecom/telecom-news/telcos-want-net-neutrality-rules-updated-for-5g-era/articleshow/128435121.cms

States

Rajasthan govt plans to promote beekeeping to boost farmers' income

The Rajasthan government is set to promote beekeeping to double farmers' incomes and make the state a hub for honey production, state agricultural minister Dr. Kirori Lal Meena said. He said that their government is committed to the economic development and empowerment of the state's farmers, including livestock. He stated that, according to the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) beekeeping increased crop yields by 20 to 25 percent in areas with wide range of flora and fauna, both wild and cultivated.
https://www.business-standard.com/industry/news/rajasthan-govt-plans-to-promote-beekeeping-to-boost-farmers-income-126021600696_1.html

Maharashtra $1-trillion push needed for India's $5-trillion economy quest

Maharashtra must accelerate growth significantly to achieve its target to become India's first trillion-dollar sub-national economy by the end of the decade, state industry secretary P Anbalagan said at the summit, adding infrastructure expansion is central to its strategy. The state's economy is currently estimated at around $600 billion. Placing the state's target alongside India's broader goal of becoming a $5-trillion economy by 2030 and a developed nation by 2047, Anbalagan said Maharashtra's trajectory broadly mirrors national trends but will require a sharper push.
https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/et-now-gbs-2026-maharashtra-1-trillion-push-needed-for-indias-5-trillion-economy-quest/articleshow/128358436.cms

MEA, EU hold state engagement program with Assam government on migration

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), in partnership with the European Union and the Government of Assam, organised a State Engagement Programme titled "Linking India-EU Migration Opportunities and the Northeast Corridor" in Guwahati under the framework of the India-EU Cooperation and Dialogue on Migration and Mobility (CDMM), the MEA said in an official statement. The CDMM project is being implemented by the Indian Council of

World Affairs (ICWA), the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO).
https://www.business-standard.com/india-news/mea-eu-hold-state-engagement-program-with-assam-government-on-migration-126021600840_1.html

Healthcare

India becoming backbone of global clinical research

India is a "critically important backbone" for global clinical trials despite rising geopolitical tensions and regulatory uncertainty, according to Peyton Howell, chief executive of Parexel, a top clinical research organization (CRO). The country's role is expanding as the industry navigates supply chain disruptions and "India is growing and really thriving in terms of clinical research," Howell said at the summit. "Our hub centres out of India have supported global clinical trial business continuity, and we expect that to continue."
https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/healthcare/biotech/healthcare/india-becoming-backbone-of-global-clinical-research/articleshow/128357041.cms

Indian pharma may take AI pill to cut time and costs in drug R&D

Leading Indian drugmakers such as Sun Pharma and Glenmark are exploring the use of AI as a necessary tool to cut the time taken and costs for new drug development. The two drugmakers, in particular, are seeing a growing contribution from their new discovery research programmes in their global revenues as Indian companies see a shifting trend to innovative drugs from generics. Use of AI in pharmaceutical research is already picking up pace across the world. According to Precedence Research, last year global drugmakers invested $6.93 billion in AI for drug discovery, which is expected to swell to $16.5 billion by 2034.
https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/healthcare/biotech/pharmaceuticals/indian-pharma-may-take-ai-pill-to'-cut-time-and-costs-in-drug-rd/articleshow/128435573.cms

FM Nirmala Sitharaman to push biopharma, semiconductor missions in Norway

Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman will huddle with Norwegian industry captains to explore long-term capital investments and interact with senior representatives of cutting-edge startups there to promote India's bio-pharma and semiconductor initiatives. Sitharaman, who reached Oslo on an official trip on Monday, will meet Norway's Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store and finance minister Jens Stoltenberg to deepen bilateral relations, according to the finance ministry. During her visit to Oslo Science Park for interactions with startup leaders, the minister will highlight her recent budget announcement on Biopharma SHAKTI, a ₹10,000-crore plan spanning five years to develop India as a global biopharma manufacturing hub. She will also discuss the semiconductor missions 2.0 to fortify such supply chains.
https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/finance-minister-nirmala-sitharaman-to-push-biopharma-semiconductor-missions-in-norway/articleshow/128434876.cms

External

Gold, silver import surge pushes India's January trade deficit to 3-month high of $34.68 billion

India's goods trade deficit in January widened to a three-month high of $34.68 billion from $23.43 billion a year ago. Imports, driven by gold and silver, rose 19% to $71.24 billion while exports rose a meagre 0.6% to $36.56 billion. The previous high for imports was $76.1 billion in October 2025. India's January exports to the US fell 21.7% to $6.59 billion from last year, hit by 50% tariffs levied at the time. They have been reduced to 18%. The trade deficit was $25 billion in December. Imports, driven by gold and silver, rose 19% to $71.24 billion while exports rose a meagre 0.6% to $36.56 billion. The previous high for imports was $76.1 billion in October 2025. India's January exports to the US fell 21.7% to $6.59 billion from last year, hit by 50% tariffs levied at the time. They have been reduced to 18%. The trade deficit was $25 billion in December.
https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/gold-silver-import-surge-pushes-indias-january-trade-deficit-to-3-month-high-of-34-68-billion/articleshow/128435582.cms

India-UK free trade pact likely to be implemented in April: Official

The India-UK free trade agreement, signed in July last year, is likely to be implemented in April 2026, according to an official. India and the UK, on July 24, 2025, signed the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) under which 99 per cent of Indian exports will enter the British market at zero duty, while tariffs on British products such as cars and whisky will be reduced in India. The two countries have also signed the Double Contributions Convention (DCC) pact to ensure temporary workers would not have to duplicate social levies in either country.
https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/india-uk-free-trade-pact-likely-to-be-implemented-in-april-official/articleshow/128382436.cms

Argentina-India trade boost: Argentine envoy eyes deeper cooperation and economic growth

Argentina and India are destined to deepen their cooperation in an ever-increasing number of areas and poised to increase volume of trade, Argentine Ambassador to India Mariano Caucino said on Saturday. Speaking at the CS India's Borderless Bharat Conclave at the IIMT Group of Colleges Campus in Noida, Caucino stated that “Argentina and India are destined to deepen their cooperation in an ever-increasing number of areas. Our countries maintain a growing economic interaction stemming from the objective complementarity between our economies”.
https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/argentina-india-trade-boost-argentine-envoy-eyes-deeper-cooperation-and-economic-growth/articleshow/128352810.cms

India's sugar exports reach 2.01 lakh tonnes till February in 2026 MY: AISTA

India has exported 2,01,547 tonnes of sugar through February in the current 2025-26 marketing year, with the United Arab Emirates the top destination, the All-India Sugar Trade Association (AISTA) said on Monday. Sugar exports remain under government control through quotas distributed proportionally among mills. The central government has approved total exports of 2 million tonnes for the 2025-26 marketing year (October-September), including an additional 500,000 tonnes permitted recently. White sugar accounted for 163,000 tonnes of total shipments, with refined sugar making up 37,638 tonnes, AISTA said in a statement.
https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/indias-sugar-exports-reach-2-01-lakh-tonnes-till-february-in-2026-my-aista/articleshow/128409324.cms

PM Modi to meet French President Macron in Mumbai on Feb 17, review ties

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will meet French President Emmanuel Macron in Mumbai on Tuesday, and during their meeting, the two leaders will review the progress made in the India-France strategic partnership. Modi and Macron's discussions will focus on cementing the strategic ties and further diversifying them into new and emerging areas. PM Modi and President Macron will also exchange views on issues of regional and global importance. "Prime Minister Narendra Modi will travel to Mumbai on February 17 where he will meet the President of France Emmanuel Macron," an official statement said. During these engagements, both leaders will review the progress made in the India-France strategic partnership, the statement said.
https://www.business-standard.com/india-news/pm-modi-to-meet-french-president-macron-in-mumbai-on-feb-17-review-ties-126021600138_1.html

FTA tariff concessions could cost India Rs 1 trillion in FY26

India’s custom duty forgone on account of preferential tariff reductions under free-trade agreements (FTAs) signed so far may cross ₹1 trillion in 2025-26 (FY26), according to the Budget documents. The country’s customs revenue forgone for the FTAs was ₹98,569 crore in FY25, higher than the budget estimate of ₹94,172 crore for the same year.
https://www.business-standard.com/economy/news/behind-the-handshake-tariff-cuts-in-ftas-may-cost-india-1-trn-in-fy27-126021500580_1.html

Digital trade chapter not in India-US interim trade pact; to be taken up in BTA, says official

India and the US have not negotiated a chapter on digital trade in the interim trade pact, and it will be taken up as part of the bilateral trade agreement (BTA), an official said on Monday. On February 7, the two countries issued a joint statement finalising a framework for the first phase of the bilateral trade agreement.
https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/digital-trade-chapter-not-in-india-us-interim-trade-pact-to-be-taken-up-in-bta-says-official/articleshow/128427054.cms

China's Russian oil imports to hit new record in February as India cuts back

China's Russian oil imports are set to climb for a third straight month to a new record high in February as independent refiners snapped up deeply discounted cargoes after India slashed purchases, according to traders and ship-tracking data. Russian crude shipments are estimated to amount to 2.07 million barrels per day for February deliveries into China, surpassing January's estimated rate of 1.7 million bpd, an early assessment by Vortexa Analytics shows.
https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/chinas-russian-oil-imports-to-hit-new-record-in-february-as-india-cuts-back/articleshow/128417386.cms