

An aerial photograph of a winding asphalt road that curves through a dense, lush green forest. Several cars are visible on the road, including a white car, a blue car, and a white van. The road has white dashed lines for lane markings. The overall scene is captured from a high angle, looking down on the road and the surrounding trees.

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DAILY NEWS DECODE

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RAFAEL NADAL



- Rafael Nadal won a five-set duel with Daniil Medvedev and claimed a record 21st Grand Slam men's title in the Australian Open final.
- Nadal moved ahead of era rivals Novak Djokovic and Roger Federer on the all-time list of men's Major winners.
- Djokovic missed his chance to improve on his nine Australian Open wins when he was deported over vaccination issues on the eve of the tournament, while Federer is injured.
- Nadal also became only the fourth man to win each of the four Grand Slams twice and the third oldest man in the Open Era (since 1970) to win a Grand Slam title, behind Ken Rosewall and Federer.

INDIA-OMAN DEFENCE RELATIONS



- India is laying out the red carpet for Oman's top defence official Mohammed Nasser Al Zaabi, who will be in India from January 30 to February 4 on an official visit.
- Zaabi will be in Delhi to co-chair the Joint Military Cooperation Committee (JMCC) with Defence Secretary Ajay Kumar.
- The JMCC is the highest forum of engagement between India and Oman in the field of defence that evaluates and provides guidance to the overall framework of defence exchanges between the two sides
- The JMCC is expected to meet annually, but could not be organised since 2018 when the meeting of the 9th JMCC was held in Oman.
- Why is Oman important from a defence and strategic point of view?

- **Oman is India's closest defence partner in the Gulf region and an important anchor for India's defence and strategic interests.**
- **Defence cooperation has emerged as a key pillar for the robust India-Oman strategic partnership. Defence exchanges are guided by a Framework MOU which was recently renewed in 2021.**
- **Oman is the only country in the Gulf region with which all three services of the Indian armed forces conduct regular bilateral exercises and staff talks, enabling close cooperation and trust at the professional level. Oman also provides critical operational support to Indian naval deployments in the Arabian sea for anti-piracy missions.**
- **Bilateral training cooperation between the two sides is also robust with Omani forces regularly subscribing to training courses in India both at professional as well as higher command level.**
- **Indian armed forces also subscribe to the Staff and Command courses conducted at NDC, Oman. Oman also actively participates in the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS).**

SUPARI



- **Union Minister VK Singh called The New York Times “supari media” over its report that India was among the countries that bought Israel’s company NSO Group’s spying software ‘Pegasus’.**
- **Supari or the areca nut is more popularly known as the betel nut as it is used with betel leaves to make pan.**
- **However, over a period of times it has been used by the underworld to indicate a contract given to a person to kill someone else in exchange for money.**
- **Over the past few years, it has not been restricted to giving a contract to kill someone but also to damage the reputation of another person.**
- **One of the major supari killings was that of music baron Gulshan Kumar who had been shot dead on August 12, 1997 outside a temple in Andheri.**

- **As per police, the plot to bump him off was hatched in Dubai by Dawood's brother Anees Ibrahim and Rs 25 lakh had been paid to the killers.**

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UKRAINE CONFLICT



- India this week gave its first official statement amid the ongoing tension between Russia and the West — led by the US — over Ukraine. It's been a tense one-and-a-half months, with the possibility of war looming large.
- India calls for a peaceful resolution of the situation through sustained diplomatic efforts for long term peace and stability in the region and beyond.
- Ukraine has become a bone of contention in Moscow's relations with the West, with Russian troops massed near its border and NATO's forces on standby in case Russia attacks its neighbour.
- Ukrainian forces have been patrolling the border in the east and the north, including in Chernobyl in Ukraine, which falls on the shortest route between Russia and Kyiv, Ukraine's capital.

- **After Russia, Ukraine is the second largest country in Europe too. It has major ports on the Black Sea and shares borders with four NATO countries.**
- **Europe depends on Russia for about one third of its natural gas – providing enormous leverage for Putin in any dispute with the West – and one of the main pipelines passes through Ukraine.**
- **Controlling this Ukrainian territory would enhance Russia's pipeline security.**

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CHANDRAPUR SUPER THERMAL POWER STATION



- The Ministry of Coal today said Western Coal Fields Ltd is making "all efforts on SOS basis" to boost the supplies and build up the stock at Chandrapur Super Thermal Power Station (CSTPS).
- Chandrapur Super Thermal Power Station (often abbreviated as CSTPS) is a thermal power plant located in Chandrapur district in Maharashtra.
- The power plant is one of the coal based power plants of MAHAGENCO.
- The coal for the power plant is sourced from Durgapur and Padmapur Collieries of Western Coalfields Limited.
- The plant was officially inaugurated by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi on 8 October 1984.
- With the total capacity of 3340MW, the plant is the largest power plant in the Maharashtra.

India tie-up with Israel to convert 150 villages into 'Villages of Excellence'



- The Government of India has joined hands with the Government of Israel to create 150 'Villages of Excellence' in 12 States of the country, to help farmers to adopt the latest technology in the farm sector.
- Israel would provide Technical assistance and other expertise to make agriculture a more profitable business.
- The 150 villages that are located around CoEs will be converted into 'Villages of Excellence.'
- Out of which, 75 villages are being taken up in the first year to commemorate the 75th year of India's independence. Already, the Israeli government has established 29 Centres of Excellence (CoEs) in 12 states.

Maharashtra has highest number of SC entrepreneurs



- Maharashtra has topped India's list in the number of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) owned by entrepreneurs from the Scheduled Castes with as many as 96,805 enterprises.
- Tamil Nadu with 42,997 enterprises and Rajasthan with 38,517 units occupy the second and third slots, according to the data furnished by the Office of the Development Commissioner in the Union Ministry of MSME.
- The fourth, fifth and sixth slots belong to Uttar Pradesh (36,913 units), Karnataka (28,803 enterprises) and Punjab (24,503 units) respectively. Generally, the proportion of enterprises owned by Scheduled Caste entrepreneurs in the overall national tally of MSMEs is 6%.

Tokyo's population drops for the first time in 26 years



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- Japan's capital Tokyo's population dropped by about 48,600 people to under 1.4 crore at the start of 2022 in the first decline in Tokyo's population in 26 years, Bloomberg reported citing Tokyo Metropolitan Government data.
- It comes as more companies turned to remote work amid COVID-19.
- A government survey showed 55% of companies in Tokyo have tried remote working practices.

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German researchers develop artificial muscles made of natural protein



- German researchers developed artificial muscles made from elastin, a natural fibrous protein.
- The team combined two such proteins, one reacted to temperature and other to pH.
- The researchers further induced rhythmic contractions in the new material through an external stimulus, sodium sulphite.
- The study explained that material's contractions could be switched on and off by temperature changes.

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India became 4th largest forex reserves holder in world in FY22: Economic Survey



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- The Economic Survey 2021-22 said that India became the fourth-largest foreign exchange reserves holder in the world after China, Japan, and Switzerland as of end November 2021.
- "Despite all the disruptions caused by the global pandemic, India's balance of payments remained in surplus throughout the last two years," it added.
- This allowed RBI to keep accumulating forex reserves, it said.

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Why has the Economic Survey projected GDP growth at 8-8.5% in FY23?



- The Economic Survey, which pegged India's GDP growth for FY23 at 8-8.5%, expects growth to be supported by vaccine coverage, easing of regulations and scope for fiscal space.
- The projection is based on assumption that there'll be no further debilitating COVID-19-led economic disruptions, oil prices will range from \$70-75/bbl, global supply chain disruptions will ease and monsoon will be normal.