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General Dhiraj Seth: Conferred Honorary Rank of General of Nepali Army

- Indian Army Chief General Dhiraj Seth has been conferred the honorary rank of General of the Nepali Army by Nepalese President Ramchandra Paudel at an investiture ceremony held at Sheetal Niwas, Kathmandu. The honour highlights the longstanding military-to-military relationship between India and Nepal.

Honorary Rank of General:

- The honorary rank is part of a longstanding reciprocal tradition between the Indian Army and Nepal Army, under which the Army Chiefs of the two countries are conferred the honorary rank of General of the other country. The tradition dates back to 1950, when Indian Army Chief General K. M. Cariappa became the first Indian Army Chief to receive the honour in Nepal.

About General Dhiraj Seth:

- General Dhiraj Seth became the 31st Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) on 30 June 2026, succeeding General Upendra Dwivedi.
- He is an alumnus of the National Defence Academy (NDA), Khadakwasla, and was commissioned into the Armoured Corps in December 1986.
- During his career, he commanded an Armoured Regiment, an Armoured Brigade, a Counter-Insurgency Force in Jammu & Kashmir and the Sudarshan Chakra Corps, a major strike formation of the Indian Army.

Q. Who has been conferred the honorary rank of General of the Nepali Army in 2026? **General Dhiraj Seth, Chief of the Army Staff of India.**



First-Ever Guide to Grasslands and Other Open Natural Ecosystems of India

- India has launched its first-ever Guide to Grasslands and Other Open Natural Ecosystems (ONES) of India at the 17th Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP17) to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. The guide highlights the diversity, ecological significance and socio-economic importance of India's grasslands, savannas, deserts and other open ecosystems.

Open Natural Ecosystems (ONES):

- ONES are naturally or predominantly open landscapes with limited tree cover. They include grasslands, savannas, scrublands, deserts, rocky plateaus, ravines and coastal ecosystems. The guide classifies 24 types of open natural ecosystems found across India.

Significance of the Guide:

- The guide seeks to promote science-based conservation, restoration and sustainable management of ecosystems that have often been overlooked because of their low tree cover. These ecosystems support unique biodiversity, pastoral communities and livelihoods, while contributing to carbon storage, soil and water conservation and climate resilience.

UNCCD COP17:

- COP17 of the UNCCD is being held in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, from 17–28 August 2026 under the theme “Restoring Land. Restoring Hope.” The conference focuses on desertification, land degradation, drought, rangeland restoration and sustainable land management.

Q. Where was India's first-ever Guide to Grasslands and Other Open Natural Ecosystems launched? **UNCCD COP17 in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.**



Hakainde Hichilema: Re-elected as President of Zambia for Second Term

- Zambia's President Hakainde Hichilema has been re-elected for a second five-year term in the 2026 presidential election. The Electoral Commission of Zambia declared him the winner after he secured enough votes to win outright, avoiding a run-off. Recent official results reported by international media put his share at around 60%, while the Akashvani report states that he secured more than 51% of the votes.

About Hakainde Hichilema:

- Hichilema belongs to the United Party for National Development (UPND) and first became President in 2021, defeating incumbent President Edgar Lungu. Before entering politics, he was a businessman and economist. His first term focused heavily on economic reforms, debt restructuring and improving relations with international financial institutions.

Economic Significance:

- Zambia is one of Africa's major copper-producing countries and possesses important reserves of copper and cobalt. Hichilema's government has sought to attract investment in the mining sector and increase copper production. Zambia's economic recovery has also involved restructuring more than \$12 billion of debt following its debt crisis.

Q. Who has been re-elected as President of Zambia for a second five-year term? **Hakainde Hichilema.**



Exercise MAITREE: India–Thailand Joint Military Exercise for Counter-Terrorism

- India and Thailand are conducting the 15th edition of the India–Thailand Joint Military Exercise MAITREE-XV, aimed at strengthening military cooperation, interoperability and joint capabilities, particularly for counter-terrorism operations. The exercise is being held in Thailand in 2026.

The exercise focuses on:

- Joint planning and tactical drills
- Counter-terrorism operations in urban and jungle environments
- Cordon-and-search operations
- Room intervention and hostage-rescue drills
- Special arms and firing skills
- Intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance
- Small-team insertion and extraction
- Drone and counter-drone operations
- Physical fitness and combat conditioning

Other India–Thailand Joint Military/Defence Exercises:

India–Thailand Bilateral Maritime Exercise:

- The maiden bilateral maritime exercise between the Indian Navy and Royal Thai Navy was conducted in December 2023. It involved surface and anti-air exercises, weapon firing, seamanship evolutions and tactical manoeuvres.

Q. MAITREE is a joint military exercise between India and which country? **Thailand.**



Shabnam Sinha: To Succeed Sunil Bharti Mittal as Airtel Payments Bank Chairperson

- Shabnam Sinha has been appointed as the next Chairperson of Airtel Payments Bank, succeeding Sunil Bharti Mittal. She will assume office for a three-year term from 1 October 2026, following approval by the bank's Board and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

About Shabnam Sinha:

- Shabnam Sinha is currently an Independent Director on the Airtel Payments Bank Board. She chairs the bank's Special Committee for Monitoring Frauds and is also a member of its Risk Management and IT Committees. She has more than three decades of experience in development finance, financial services, public policy, governance and institutional transformation, including significant experience with the World Bank.

About Sunil Bharti Mittal:

- Sunil Bharti Mittal, Founder and Chairman of Bharti Enterprises, has served as the Non-Executive Chairman of Airtel Payments Bank since April 2016. He will conclude his tenure and step down from the bank's Board on 30 September 2026. Under his leadership, the bank expanded its digital banking and financial inclusion network significantly.

Q. Who will succeed Sunil Bharti Mittal as Chairperson of Airtel Payments Bank? **Shabnam Sinha.**





Surakshit Shakti Drive: Gujarat Police Initiative for Women's Safety and Digital Security

- The Gujarat Police has launched a 28-day statewide “Surakshit Shakti” drive to strengthen the safety and security of women and girls.
- The initiative combines preventive policing, digital-safety awareness, victim support, community participation and performance-based monitoring.

Key Features:

- The campaign focuses on four broad areas—prevention and protection, awareness and empowerment, support and enforcement, and sustainability.
- Police units have been directed to identify vulnerable locations, strengthen patrolling and undertake preventive measures against crimes and harassment targeting women. The use of body-worn cameras and technology-enabled policing will also be encouraged to improve accountability and evidence collection.

Digital Safety Focus:

- A major component is awareness about emerging cyber threats faced by women and girls, including:
- Cyberbullying
- Online grooming
- Sextortion
- Deepfakes
- OTP fraud
- QR-code scams

Q. Which state recently launched the Surakshit Shakti Initiative? **Gujarat.**



India–US Defence Cooperation: MQ-9B Drone Lease Contract

- The United States has welcomed India's defence contract for leasing MQ-9B remotely piloted aircraft systems (RPAS) and described it as an important step in strengthening the India–US defence partnership.
- The development highlights growing cooperation between the two countries in unmanned aerial systems, maritime surveillance and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities.

MQ-9B:

- The MQ-9B is a long-endurance, remotely piloted aircraft developed by General Atomics Aeronautical Systems of the United States. It is designed for persistent Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) missions and can operate for extended periods.
- The MQ-9B family includes variants such as SkyGuardian and SeaGuardian, with the latter particularly suited to maritime surveillance.

India's MQ-9B Acquisition:

- India has been strengthening its unmanned surveillance capabilities through cooperation with the US. In October 2024, India and the US concluded a major agreement for the procurement of 31 MQ-9B HALE (High Altitude Long Endurance) armed drones—15 SeaGuardians for the Indian Navy and 8 each for the Indian Army and Indian Air Force.

Q. Which unmanned aircraft system is at the centre of the latest India–US defence cooperation? **MQ-9B.**





India Inaugurates Three High-Impact Development Projects in Bhutan

- India and Bhutan have further strengthened their development partnership with the inauguration of three high-impact development projects (HICDPs) in Bhutan. The projects reflect India's continued support for Bhutan's socio-economic development under the framework of India–Bhutan development cooperation.

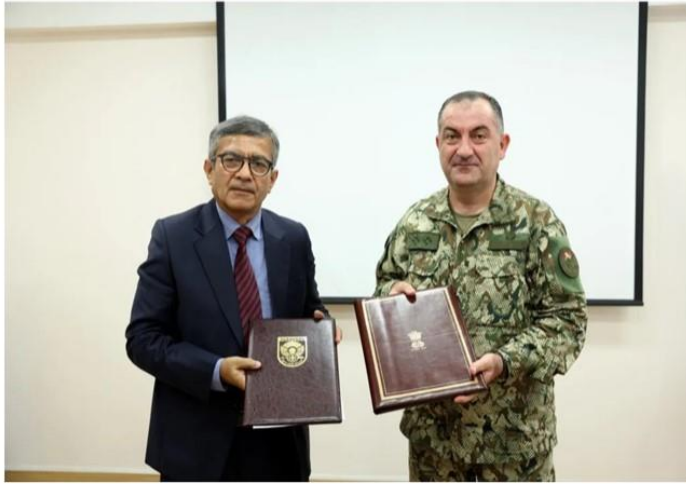
Key Highlights:

- The three projects are located in different parts of Bhutan and focus on community infrastructure, education and socio-economic development. They were inaugurated as part of India's ongoing assistance to Bhutan through the High Impact Community Development Projects (HICDPs) mechanism.
- HICDPs are small-scale, community-oriented projects identified and implemented in consultation with local communities and the Royal Government of Bhutan. They address immediate developmental needs at the grassroots level.

India–Bhutan Development Partnership:

- India is one of Bhutan's major development partners and has supported projects in areas such as education, healthcare, agriculture, infrastructure, digital connectivity, energy and skill development.
- India's development assistance is guided by Bhutan's own priorities and aims to promote sustainable and inclusive development.

Q. What type of projects did India inaugurate in Bhutan in August 2026? **Three High Impact Community Development Projects (HICDPs).**



India–Armenia Sign MoU on Defence Innovation and Shared Production

- India and Armenia have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen cooperation in innovation, technology and shared production in the defence industry.
- The agreement is aimed at promoting collaboration between defence industries of the two countries and expanding opportunities for joint development and manufacturing of defence equipment.

Key Highlights:

The MoU seeks to establish a framework for cooperation in:

- Defence innovation and emerging technologies
- Joint development and production of defence systems
- Technology and knowledge sharing
- Cooperation between defence industries and institutions
- Identification of opportunities for co-production and industrial partnerships
- The agreement reflects India's growing emphasis on defence indigenisation and export-oriented defence manufacturing.

India–Armenia Defence Relations:

- Defence cooperation has emerged as an important pillar of India–Armenia bilateral relations. India has supplied several defence platforms and systems to Armenia, strengthening its role as an emerging defence partner.

Q. India recently signed an MoU with which country for innovation and shared production in the defence industry? **Armenia.**



RBI Imposes Penalties on IndusInd Bank and Three NBFCs for Regulatory Lapses

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has imposed monetary penalties totalling ₹71.20 lakh on IndusInd Bank Ltd. and three Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) for non-compliance with regulatory directions.
- The action followed RBI's supervisory inspections and highlights the importance of regulatory compliance and internal controls in the financial sector.

Entities Penalised:

- IndusInd Bank: ₹59.20 lakh — the highest penalty.
- Northern Arc Capital Ltd.
- Muthoot Mcred Ltd.
- Fusion Finance Ltd.
- The inspections of IndusInd Bank, Northern Arc Capital and Fusion Finance were conducted with reference to their financial positions as of 31 March 2025.

Regulatory Compliance:

- RBI imposes penalties when regulated entities fail to comply with applicable laws, regulations or supervisory directions. Such penalties are intended to promote sound governance, customer protection, risk management and financial stability.

Q. Which institution imposed a total penalty of ₹71.20 lakh on IndusInd Bank and three NBFCs? **Reserve Bank of India (RBI).**

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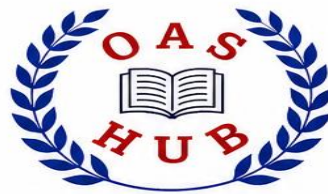
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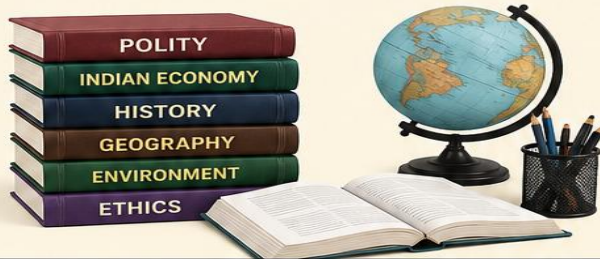
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