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History, Art and Culture

Ponduru Khadi receives GI Tag

Ponduru Khadi of Andhra Pradesh has been granted the Geographical Indication (GI) tag, with the registration.

• Ponduru Khadi is a *traditional hand-woven cotton fabric* produced in Ponduru village of Srikakulam district in Andhra Pradesh, locally known as *Patnulu.*

• It is known for its exceptionally *high yarn count of around 100–120*, reflecting its superior fineness and quality.

• The fabric is made using *Hill cotton, Punasa cotton, and Red cotton* grown in the same region.

• The entire process of cleaning, spinning, and weaving is carried out manually, preserving centuries-old artisanal skills.

• **Distinctive features –** Use of the *jawbone of the Valuga fish for cleaning cotton*, a practice not found anywhere else in the world.

Polity & Governance

Electronic Personnel Licence (EPL) services for Airline Transport Pilot Licence (ATPL)

• It is a secure digital licence incorporating ICAO-aligned security features.

• **Launched By –** Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA).

• **Accessed through –** eGCA mobile application.

• **Objective –** To ensure authenticity, prevent tampering, and enable real-time verification.

6th ASEAN-India Digital Ministers' (ADGMIN) Meeting

• **ADGMIN –** It is an annual forum of Telecom and Digital Ministers.

• **Participants –** *11 ASEAN member states* such as Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor Leste and Viet Nam along with ASEAN's Dialogue Partners.

• **Acknowledgement –** The adoption of the ASEAN–India Joint Statement on Advancing Digital Transformation at the 21st ASEAN-India Summit.

• **Objective –** To strengthen regional digital cooperation, with a focus on digital inclusion and integration.

Economy

National Conference on Strategic Trade Controls (NCSTC) 2026

• **Organized by –** Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT).

• **Collaboration with –** Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), the Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO), and other Government partners and industry stakeholders.

• **Objective –** To facilitate legitimate *high-technology trade and address proliferation risks* among stakeholders.

Agriculture

Rice - A Water-Intensive Crop

• **Reasons –**
- The rice plant needs CO_2 inside the leaf for photosynthesis.
- CO_2 enters primarily through *open stomata*, but the same open pores also allow water vapour to leave.
- Rice is a *C3 plant, and C3 photosynthesis* is less water-efficient in hot or dry conditions than C4 (e.g. maize).
- In C3 plants, the main *CO_2-fixing enzyme sometimes reacts with oxygen instead of CO_2.*
- To keep photosynthesis going, C3 leaves often need to keep stomata open enough to sustain internal CO_2 levels, which *increases transpiration.*
- Rice survives in oxygen-poor flooded soils by *develops air-filled channels* that transport oxygen from shoots to roots.

Science

Virtual Reality (VR) Theatre

• A Virtual Reality Theatre is a specialized room equipped with an immersive display system.
- The experiences are typically computer-generated in real time.

• **Inaugurated by –** National Science Centre, in New Delhi.
• **Aim –** To engage viewers visually and sometimes audibly in virtual experiences.

Madhya Pradesh Regional AI Impact Conference 2026

• **Organised by –** IndiaAI Mission, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) and Government of Madhya Pradesh.
• **Part of –** 8 Regional AI Impact Conferences being organised across the country as precursors to the *India AI Impact Summit 2026.*
• **Focused on –** "Technology-Led Governance for All", "Al for Economic Growth & Social Good", and "Resilience, Innovation & Efficiency".
• **Significance –** It aligns state-level initiatives with the *IndiaAI Mission's national ambitions.*

Unauthorized Sale of Walkie-Talkies

Over 16,970 non-compliant walkie-talkie listings were identified across platforms, and notices were issued to 13 e-commerce entities.

• **Issued by –** Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA).
• **Wrongly advertised as –** "license-free" or "100% legal," even though their use requires government approval.
• **Sale, import and use of walkie-talkies in India are regulated under –**
- The Indian Telegraph Act, 1885
- The Indian Wireless Telegraphy Act, 1933
- The Use of Low Power and Very Low Power Short Range Radio Frequency Devices (Exemption from Licensing Requirement) Rules, 2018.
- **Exception –** only walkie-talkies operating strictly within the *446.0–446.2 MHz* frequency band are exempted from licensing.

• **Misleading advertisement, unfair trade practice and deficiency in service under –**
- Consumer Protection Act, 2019, and violates the Consumer Protection (E-Commerce) Rules, 2020.

Miscellaneous

National Startup Day

Prime Minister participated in a programme marking a decade of the Startup India initiative.

• **Observed on –** 16th January
• **Commemoration to –** The 10th anniversary of the launch of *StartUp India.*
• **Aim –** To recognize the innovative spirit and entrepreneurial drive of youth shaping India's startup success.

Startup India

• It is a transformative national programme aimed at nurturing innovation, promoting entrepreneurship and enabling investment-driven growth.
• **Launched on –** 16th January 2016, by *Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT).*
• **Objective –** To make India a nation of job creators rather than job seekers.

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