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7. Short News

1. India's Cultural Diplomacy Through Gifts

PM Modi gifted traditional Indian handicrafts, textiles, and regional artefacts to leaders of five nations (UAE, Sweden, Norway, Netherlands, and Italy) during a diplomatic tour.

1. **Italian PM (Giorgia Meloni) -** Received an Assamese Muga silk stole (rare "golden silk" produced naturally without artificial dyes) and an off-white Shirui Lily silk stole from Manipur (inspired by Shirui Kashong Peak).
2. **Queen of Netherlands (Máxima) -** Gifted traditional Meenakari and Kundan earrings from Rajasthan.
3. **Norwegian Leaders -** King Harald V received a Tarakasi silver sailboat (traditional silver filigree art from Cuttack, Odisha); Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre received a pressed orchid painting from Sikkim.
4. **Swedish PM (Ulf Kristersson) -** Received a Santiniketan messenger bag from West Bengal along with literary works of Rabindranath Tagore.
5. **UAE President -** Gifted a rare Rogan textile painting featuring the "Tree of Life" motif from Kutch, Gujarat, along with a box of Junagadh Kesar mangoes.
6. **Strategic Core -** These gifts act as tools for cultural diplomacy, boosting India's global soft power while promoting local artisans and Geographical Indication (GI)-linked products internationally.

2. Asian Productivity Organization (APO) & 68th Governing Body Meeting

India hosted the 68th APO governing body meeting at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, focusing on regional productivity cooperation.

1. **What it is -** An intergovernmental body established in 1961 dedicated to enhancing productivity across the Asia-Pacific region.
2. **Headquarters -** Located in Tokyo, Japan.
3. **Membership -** Comprises 21 member economies (including India, Japan, South Korea, and various Southeast Asian nations). Eligibility requires being a member of UN ESCAP.
4. **India's Position -** India is one of the founding members of the APO.
5. **Host Agency -** The meeting in New Delhi was organized by the National Productivity Council (NPC), an autonomous body set up in 1958 under the DPIIT, Ministry of Commerce & Industry.
6. **Key Event Outcome -** Leadership transitioned during the meeting as Indonesia assumed the APO Chair for 2026–27, succeeding India.

3. Smuggling & Ban on Electronic Cigarettes (Vapes)

The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) recently busted a large-scale e-cigarette smuggling racket across major ports and airports in Maharashtra, Gujarat, Delhi, and West Bengal.

1. **Mechanism -** Vapes electronically heat a solution of glycerine, nicotine, and artificial flavours to create an inhalable aerosol.
2. **The Cessation Myth -** They were initially promoted as tools to help people quit smoking because they lack lethal cigarette tar, but data shows users often end up using both.
3. **Health Hazards -** The appealing fruit and candy flavours inadvertently attract non-smokers and youth into nicotine addiction.

4. **Legal Status in India -** Completely prohibited under the *Prohibition of Electronic Cigarettes Act, 2019.*
5. **Scope of the Ban -** The ban covers production, manufacture, import, export, transport, sale, distribution, storage, and advertisement of all Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS).

4. Launch of Electronic Gold Receipts (EGRs)

The National Stock Exchange (NSE) has launched Electronic Gold Receipts (EGRs) to create a more transparent, secure, and organized market for trading gold.

1. **Definition -** EGRs are digital securities representing ownership of physical gold, held electronically in an investor's demit account (like stocks or ETFs).
2. **Physical Backing -** Every single digital EGR unit is fully backed by real, physical gold of guaranteed quality.
3. **Vault Security -** The actual physical gold is securely stored in specialized vaults managed by SEBI-registered Vault Managers.
4. **How it Functions -** Investor's deposit physical gold into accredited vaults to generate tradable EGR units on the stock exchange. These can be converted back into physical gold at any time.
5. **Economic Benefit -** They bridge the gap between physical commodities and financial markets, improving liquidity, price discovery, and trading confidence for retail investors and jewellers alike.

5. Sharp Rise in Government Bond Yields

Indian government bond yields have surged rapidly due to escalating geopolitical conflict in West Asia, rising domestic inflation worries, pressure on public finances, and expectations of RBI rate hikes.

1. **What is a Bond -** A debt instrument/loan raised by governments or corporations from investors for a fixed time period in exchange for regular interest (coupon) payments?
2. **What is Bond Yield -** The actual rate of return an investor earns by holding the bond, mathematically expressed as -

   Bond Yield = {Coupon Amount} \ {Bond Price}
3. **Inverse Relationship -** Bond prices and bond yields move in opposite directions.
4. **When Rates Rise -** If market interest rates go up, older bonds with lower coupon rates lose demand. Their market prices drop, which automatically pushes their yields up.
5. **When Rates Fall -** If market rates drop, older bonds with higher coupons become valuable. Their prices rise, causing their yields to decline.

6. SEBI Reforms for IPO and Relisting Price Discovery

Market regulator SEBI has proposed comprehensive structural reforms to fix artificial price distortion occurring during pre-open call auction sessions (9 AM to 10 AM) on listing days.

1. **The Issue -** Existing "dummy price bands" often reject genuine investor orders, causing artificial suppression of opening prices and massive price volatility once normal trading opens.
2. **Proposed "Flexing" Mechanism -** SEBI wants automatic widening (flexing) of dummy price bands by 10% whenever market demand pushes the price close to its lower or upper limits.
3. **Minimum Participation Filter -** To prevent price manipulation, a successful equilibrium price will now require orders from a minimum of 5 unique PAN-based buyers and 5 unique PAN-based sellers (currently, a single matching order can set the price).
4. **Extended Auctions for Relistings -** If price discovery fails on Day 1 for a re-listed stock (suspended for over 6 months), the call auction will continue on subsequent days until a fair price is discovered.
5. **Base Price Calculation -** For stocks re-listed after >6 months of suspension, the opening base price will rely purely on independent valuation certificates from chartered accountants or independent valuers.

7. Launch of the Arunachal Kiwi Mission

The union minister for Development of North Eastern Region launched a dedicated ₹167 crore mission titled "Arunachal Kiwi - The USP of Arunachal Pradesh."

1. **Mission Goal -** To comprehensively strengthen the entire kiwi value chain, upgrading everything from farm cultivation and post-harvest storage to branding, export channels, and agri-tourism.
2. **Arunachal's Dominance -** The state produces over 7,050 metric tonnes annually, accounting for **more than 50% of India's total kiwi production**.
3. **The Price Gap -** Despite high production, local farmers currently receive significantly lower market prices compared to imported kiwis.
4. **Agri-Tourism Focus -** The project links farming with experiential travel by promoting orchard tourism and farm-stays in scenic hubs like Ziro Valley and Darang.
5. **Kiwi Crop Profile -** Technically a woody deciduous vine native to Eastern Asia (often called Chinese gooseberry). It thrives in mid-hill regions (800–1,500 m altitude) and requires 700–800 chilling hours below 7°C during winters.

8. Discovery of Human-like Sound Rules in Sperm Whales

Scientists have discovered that sperm whales vary their vocal clicking sounds in ways that mirror how humans use vowels and organize sound patterns (phonology).

1. **Species Profile -** The Sperm Whale (*Physeter macrocephalus*) is the largest of all toothed whales, recognizable by its massive, square-shaped head containing a waxy, semi-liquid substance.
2. **Global Presence -** They are widely distributed across the world's oceans and the Mediterranean Sea.
3. **Conservation Status -** Categorized as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List and listed under Appendix I of CITES.
4. **Domestic Protection -** Protected under Schedule 2 of India's Wildlife Protection Act, making any trade or possession of the whale or its by-products strictly illegal.
5. **Ambergris Phenomenon -** A highly valuable, waxy waste substance originating in their digestive system, known as "floating gold." While illegal in India, CITES does not penalize international trade of Ambergris as it is viewed as a naturally excreted waste product.

9. India's Abstention on the UN Climate Resolution

India abstained from voting on a UN General Assembly resolution that endorsed the International Court of Justice (ICJ) advisory opinion concerning states' legal obligations to fight climate change.

1. **The Resolution -** Initially driven by the climate-vulnerable island nation of Vanuatu, it called for aggressive national climate plans, capping global warming at 1.5°C, and ending fossil fuel subsidies.
2. **Voting Result -** Passed comfortably in the UNGA with 141 votes in favour, 8 votes against, and 28 abstentions (including India).
3. **The ICJ Climate Opinion -** Marked the first time the ICJ evaluated state accountability for climate damage. It ruled that states have legal obligations to protect the climate and could face liability/reparations for violations, though the opinion remains non-binding.
4. **India's Objection (Finance) -** India abstained because the resolution failed to hold developed nations strictly accountable for providing mandatory climate finance and technology transfers to developing countries.
5. **Preserving UNFCCC Framework -** India expressed concerns that shifting the focus to courts could dilute or bypass the established, consensus-based negotiations under the UNFCCC and Paris Agreement.

10. Geography Profile - Vanuatu

As the lead architect of the UN Climate Resolution mentioned above, this Small Island Developing State (SIDS) has taken centre stage in global climate litigation.

1. **Geographic Location -** An archipelagic nation situated in the South Pacific Ocean, lying east of Australia.
2. **Capital City - Port Vila**, which is located on Efate Island.
3. **Terrain -** Formed by a chain of approximately 80 islands of volcanic origin.
4. **Extreme Vulnerability -** Ranked as one of the most climate-threatened countries on Earth, facing immediate risks from rising sea levels, severe marine heatwaves, cyclones, and coastal erosion.
5. **Diplomatic Strategy -** Lacking economic or military might, Vanuatu relies on legal diplomacy (using international bodies like the UN and ICJ) to force global powers to scale back emissions.