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1. Severe Heatwave Disrupts Life Across Europe

Severe heatwave conditions currently affecting European countries have significantly disrupted normal life.

(i) In particular, France recorded unprecedented temperatures on Tuesday. The country's national average temperature reached 29.8°C. With daytime temperatures exceeding 40°C (104°F) in many regions, 18 people have died due to heat-related impacts since last weekend.

(ii) Besides France, temperatures have also reached extreme levels in the United Kingdom, Spain, and Italy. Meteorologists state that hot air masses moving from North Africa and the Sahara Desert have created a stagnant high-pressure weather pattern known as an "Omega Block," resulting in intense heat across Europe.

(iii) The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) has warned that Europe is warming at twice the global average rate due to climate change.

2. Right-Wing Candidate Wins Colombian Presidential Election

In the Presidential election held in the South American nation of Colombia, right-wing candidate Abelardo De La Espriella secured victory by a very narrow margin.

(i) De La Espriella received 49.66% of the vote, while left-wing candidate and Senator Iván Cepeda obtained 48.70%, trailing by approximately 250,000 votes.

(ii) Rising concerns among Colombians over increasing drug trafficking and violence in South America in recent years are considered a major factor behind De La Espriella's victory.

(iii) Blaming the country's current crises on President Petro, De La Espriella announced that he would end negotiations with armed groups. He also campaigned on policies including tax reductions, public-sector reforms, and increased oil and gas production.

(iv) De La Espriella, who had received direct support from U.S. President Donald Trump, also received congratulations from Trump following his election victory.

(v) However, with no prior political experience and no party holding an absolute majority in Parliament—while opposition parties control more seats—he is expected to face challenges in implementing his right-wing agenda.

3. Turkey Arrests 209 Ahead of NATO Summit

Ahead of the upcoming NATO Summit in Turkey next month, security forces conducted extensive operations and arrested 209 individuals, including 56 people linked to the ISIS terrorist organization.

(i) The summit is scheduled to be held on July 7 and 8 and is expected to be attended by leaders of 32 countries, including U.S. President Donald Trump. Consequently, security arrangements have been intensified to an unprecedented level.

4. NLC India and Indian Oil to Form Joint Venture for Green Energy Projects in Tamil Nadu

NLC India announced that it will establish a new joint venture with Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) to promote green energy projects in Tamil Nadu.

(i) NLC, a leading company in mining and power generation, has recently intensified its activities in the renewable and green energy sectors. As part of this effort, it has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to develop large-scale renewable energy projects in Tamil Nadu, including solar power, wind energy, hybrid power systems, battery storage, and pumped hydro energy storage projects.

(ii) The agreement also aims to explore and capitalize on other business opportunities in Tamil Nadu's renewable energy sector.

(iii) NLC Chairman Prasanna Kumar Motupalli stated that the partnership with Indian Oil marks an important milestone in expanding the operations of the Navratna company in the clean and sustainable energy sector.

5. Padma Awards Presented to Vijay Amritraj and Rohit Sharma

President Droupadi Murmu honored Indian tennis legend Vijay Amritraj with the Padma Bhushan and Indian cricket star Rohit Sharma with the Padma Shri.

(i) The Padma Awards ceremony was held at the Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi, where awards were presented to eight individuals from the field of sports.

(ii) Although awards had been announced for nine individuals, Indian women's cricket team captain Harmanpreet Kaur had already received her Padma Shri from the President in May. The remaining awardees were honored during this ceremony.

(iii) According to the list of awardees:

- Tennis legend Vijay Amritraj received the Padma Bhushan.
- Former hockey player Baldev Singh received the Padma Shri.
- Traditional martial arts coach Bhagwandas Raikwar received the Padma Shri.
- Silambam coach Palanivel received the Padma Shri.
- Para-athlete Praveen Kumar received the Padma Shri.
- Cricketer Rohit Sharma received the Padma Shri.
- Hockey player Savita Punia received the Padma Shri.

6. International-Standard Olympic Stadium to be Built at Thiruporur

Sports Minister Aadhav Arjuna announced that an international-standard Olympic stadium will be constructed on 120 acres in Thiruporur.

(i) Speaking at the International Olympic Day celebrations held at the Nehru Indoor Stadium, Chennai, where incentive awards worth ₹13 lakh were distributed to five athletes and new sports facilities worth ₹28 crore were inaugurated, the Minister said:

"Good health is essential for education. My goal is for Tamil Nadu to achieve significant growth in sports within the next two years. To develop world-class athletes, we will establish an international-standard Olympic stadium on 120 acres in Thiruporur. We also plan to set up an Olympic training center at Kalvarayan Hills in Kallakurichi for the benefit of tribal communities."

(ii) Olympic athletes Bhaskaran, Devarajan Rashmichakravarthi, Tarun Ayyasamy, and Kasthuri Rajamani

shared their sporting experiences during the event.

7. China Calls for Respecting Mutual Interests with India

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi stated that India and China must respect each other's core interests and take concrete steps to implement the important consensus reached by the leaders of both countries.

(i) The meeting of National Security Advisors of the BRICS countries commenced in New Delhi. On the sidelines of the event, Wang Yi met India's National Security Advisor Ajit Doval. The two leaders discussed progress made in normalizing bilateral relations and also deliberated on border-related issues in their capacity as Special Representatives for India-China boundary affairs.

8. Growing public frustration with Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) and the economic challenges banks face in maintaining them.

(i) Integration of ATMs into Daily Life

- ATMs, popularly referred to as "Anytime Money" machines, have become an indispensable part of daily life for the public.
- However, they are increasingly source of irritation and anger because many machines are frequently non-functional or lack cash.

(ii) Global and National ATM Trends

- The world's first ATM was established in London in 1967; it took 20 years for the technology to reach India, with the first center opening in Mumbai in 1987.
- India currently has 2.51 lakh ATM centers, which translates to 24 machines per 10,000 people.
- This is still significantly lower than the global average of 44 ATMs per 10,000 people, indicating a need for further expansion.

(iii) The Paradox of Cash Scarcity

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) reports that currency in circulation has reached a record ₹42.56 lakh crore, growing at an annual rate of 12%.
- Despite this abundance of cash in the economy, ATM centers frequently display "No Cash" or "Service Interrupted" notices.
- The problem is not a shortage of cash itself, but rather the high cost and logistical difficulty of transporting money to and maintaining the machines.

(iv) Maintenance and Operational Costs

- Operating an ATM center involves heavy expenses, including 24-hour security guards, continuous air conditioning, and the physical labor of replenishing cash.
- These operational costs have been rising steadily every year, placing a financial burden on banks.

(v) Evolution of Service Charges

- Service charges have evolved from bank-set rates prior to 2008 to RBI-regulated fees.
- By 2025, financial transaction fees were set at ₹17, while non-financial inquiries cost ₹6, with charges for exceeding free limits rising to ₹23.
- To run ATM services without losses, banks would likely need to collect at least ₹30 per transaction.

(vi) Declining Cash Replenishment Trends

- Due to the lack of profitability, banks are showing less interest in keeping ATMs filled.
- Statistics show a sharp decline in cash supply: while 80% of demand was met in November 2025, that figure dropped to 57% by May 2026.
- Against a national monthly demand of ₹8,94,000 crore, only about ₹54,000 crore is currently being supplied to ATM centers.

(vii) The Continued Necessity of ATMs

- It is a mistake for banks to view ATMs as obsolete due to the rise of UPI and digital transactions.
- The existence of elevators and escalators does not make stairs unnecessary.
- The suggested solution is to strategically reduce the number of redundant ATMs in close proximity while ensuring that remaining machines are reliable and functional, even if it requires a slight increase in service fees.

9. Analysis of the systemic hurdles to women's empowerment, particularly in the political sphere.

(i) The individual successes of women in fields like education, science, or the military do not represent a total systemic change.

- Obstacles for women are not a single layer like glass; they are a multi-layered structure built from ancient social traditions, mindsets, economic dependence, safety concerns, and closed-door power networks.
- True progress is achieved only when the environment allows ordinary women from villages to enter public life and assume leadership roles with self-confidence.

(ii) The Representation Gap in Politics

- Despite being the world's largest democracy, there is a significant gap in women's representation within Indian Legislatures and Parliament.
- While women are enthusiastic participants in the democratic process as voters—often outnumbering men in turnout—they are frequently denied a fair share of political power and decision-making roles.
- Political parties value women as a "vote bank" but show hesitation in accepting them as leaders or policy creators.

(iii) Systemic and Cultural Hurdles

- Women without a political family background or significant financial resources find it nearly impossible to enter the political world.
- Entrenched patriarchal cultures within political parties and the high cost of elections act as invisible barriers.
- Decision-making often happens in informal, male-dominated settings (such as late-night meetings or private networks) where women cannot easily participate due to social constraints or family responsibilities.

(iv) Necessity for Structural Reform

- Political participation for women should be treated as an immediate and fundamental right, not just a topic for long-term debate.
- Political parties should be legally mandated to reserve a specific percentage of seats for women and should focus on developing women leaders from the grassroots level.
- There is an urgent need to make decision-making processes transparent and inclusive to ensure women have an equal voice.

(v) The Role of Economic Independence and Safety

- Economic empowerment is inseparable from political power; without financial strength, women struggle to maintain independence in public life.
- Government policies such as low-interest loans, support for start-ups, and property rights are essential to strengthening a woman's self-reliance.
- Basic infrastructure like safe public transport, street lighting, and surveillance are prerequisites for women to attend public meetings and travel safely to assume leadership roles.

(vi) Conclusion: Empowerment as a Democratic Duty

- Empowerment should not be viewed as an act of political mercy or a mere welfare measure; it is an essential requirement for a complete and vibrant democracy.
- The future growth of India is only possible with the full and equal participation of women in every sector of society.