

6. SHORT NEWS –

1. India-Ireland Meet

Recently, India and Ireland held a high-level bilateral meeting in New Delhi to deepen cooperation in telecom, digital infrastructure and emerging technologies.

Key Highlights of the Meeting

India's Expanding Digital Ecosystem – India highlighted its scale with over 1.23 billion telecom subscribers, near-universal 5G district coverage, affordable data tariffs, and robust Digital Public Infrastructure such as UPI and DBT.

Regulatory and Institutional Collaboration – Both sides emphasised cooperation between India's Department of Technology and Ireland's Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg), supported by academia and industry linkages.

Cooperation in ITU Framework – India sought Ireland's support for its candidature and re-election at the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), including hosting the 2030 Plenipotentiary Conference.

About India-Ireland Relation

Diplomatic Establishment – Formal diplomatic relations were established on **January 10, 1949**, with Ireland being one of the first to recognize India's independence.

Education & Diaspora – Over 10,000 Indian students study in Ireland, while approximately 80,000 persons of Indian origin reside there.

Bilateral Trade

1. **Growth** – Two-way trade in goods and services has grown rapidly, exceeding €16 billion (USD 17 billion)annually by 2023.
2. **Top Exports/Imports** – India exports textiles, machinery, and software services, while importing pharmaceutical products and advanced medical equipment.

About Ireland

Location – Ireland is a Western European country occupying most of the island of Ireland.

Neighbouring Country – Its only land border is with Northern Ireland (United Kingdom) to the north.

1. It is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean and Irish Sea.

Climate – Ireland has a temperate maritime climate strongly influenced by the North Atlantic Drift, resulting in mild temperatures and high rainfall throughout the year.

Relief and Mountains – The landscape includes the Central Lowlands, rugged western coasts, Northern Uplands, and mountain ranges such as the Wicklow Mountains, Mourne Mountains, and Carrauntoohil (highest peak).

Water Bodies – Major rivers include the River Shannon and River Liffey

2. It also has large loughs like Lough Corrib.
3. Lough is a lake, or a partially landlocked, tidal sea inlet

2. LOGGERHEAD TURTLES

A 17-year study in Cabo Verde reveals that climate change is severely impacting the population of loggerhead turtles due to warming oceans and declining marine productivity. Cabo Verde is an island country off the coast of West Africa.

About the Loggerhead Turtles

Loggerhead sea turtles (*Caretta caretta*) are one of the most widespread sea turtle species, recognized for their massive heads and strong jaws.

Physical Characteristics – Named for their exceptionally large head and powerful jaws, which allow them to crush hard-shelled prey.

Appearance – Reddish-brown, heart-shaped carapace (top shell); pale yellowish plastron (bottom shell); large head; flippers for swimming.

Diet – Primarily feeds on hard-shelled invertebrates like conchs, whelks, crabs, clams, sea urchins; also jellyfish and other prey. They also occasionally consume plant material making them omnivorous.

Habitat & Distribution – Found worldwide in temperate and subtropical oceans (Atlantic, Pacific, Indian, Mediterranean); highly migratory, often traveling thousands of miles.

Reproduction – Females return to natal beaches to nest (using Earth's magnetic field for navigation); lay multiple clutches (average 4) every 2–3 years.

Keystone Species – They are a keystone species in some ecosystems, as their feeding recycles calcium and supports other marine life.

Conservation Status – Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List, with a decreasing population trend in many areas.

1. Protected under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.
2. It is listed in Appendix I of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS).

Threats – Bycatch in fishing gear, habitat loss (beach development/erosion), pollution, boat strikes, and climate change.

Impact of Climate Change on Loggerhead Turtles

Earlier Nesting Timing – Warmer Ocean temperatures are causing loggerhead turtles to begin nesting earlier in the year, extending the nesting season.

Reduced Breeding Frequency – Females now breed once every four years, compared to the earlier two-year cycle, indicating declining reproductive capacity.

Decline in Egg Production – Fewer nests per female and smaller clutch sizes (fewer eggs per nest)

Shrinking Body Size – Adult female turtles are becoming smaller. Since body size correlates with egg production, smaller females produce fewer eggs.

3. VOICERA

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology launched VoicERA at the India AI Impact Summit 2026 in New Delhi.

About VoicERA

VoicERA is an open-source, end-to-end Voice AI execution stack deployed on the BHASHINI National Language Infrastructure.

1. **BHASHINI** is an AI powered language translation platform, bridging literacy, language, and digital divides.

Launch – Launched by the Digital India BHASHINI Division under the Digital India Corporation, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology in collaboration with EkStep Foundation, COSS, IIIT Bengaluru, and AI4Bharat.

Features

Open-Source & Interoperable Framework – Built as a digital public good with open standards and modular design, reducing duplication of effort and preventing vendor lock-in across platforms.

Multilingual Real-Time Voice AI – Enables speech recognition, conversational AI, and multilingual telephony across multiple Indian languages for inclusive citizen engagement.

Pluggable & Scalable Architecture – Uses a modular, API-based structure that integrates easily with existing government systems and supports population-scale deployment.

Flexible & Secure Deployment – Cloud and on-premise ready with a secure execution layer to ensure safe processing of voice data and reliable service delivery.

Significance

VoicERA expands BHASHINI's capabilities from translation tools to real-time multilingual voice systems, promoting inclusive, accessible, and citizen-centric digital governance at scale.

4. BEAT THE HEAT

During Mumbai Climate Week 2026, the Maharashtra government announced that 30 cities joined the global “Beat the Heat” initiative to strengthen heat resilience. With this, Maharashtra accounts for 30 of the 44 Indian cities that have signed up for the international initiative, which now includes over 230 cities worldwide.

Heat Risk in Maharashtra

1. 15 districts face acute or severe heat stress.
2. 10 districts face extreme heat stress.
3. Heat is described as a “silent killer”, causing more deaths than floods, storms, or earthquakes.
4. UNEP warns – If warming reaches 2.6–2.8°C above pre-industrial levels, parts of India could face 150+ days annually above 35°C.

About Beat the Heat Initiative

Beat the Heat is a global climate action initiative aimed at accelerating urban heat resilience through sustainable cooling, climate-adaptive planning, and low-carbon technologies at the city level.

Launch – The programme was announced under the COP30 Brazil Presidency and is supported by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) through its Cool Coalition platform to translate the Global Cooling Pledge into practical implementation.

Objective – The initiative seeks to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from cooling systems, promote energy-efficient and climate-friendly technologies, and protect vulnerable populations from extreme heat through integrated urban planning.

Key Components

Heat Risk Assessment and Urban Planning – The initiative supports cities in mapping heat vulnerability, identifying hotspots, and integrating heat resilience into urban planning, building codes, and infrastructure design.

Nature-Based and Passive Cooling Solutions – It promotes urban greening, expansion of tree cover, shaded public spaces, cool roofs, reflective surfaces, and climate-sensitive building designs to reduce urban heat island effects.

Energy-Efficient and Climate-Friendly Cooling – The programme advances low-energy cooling technologies, encourages the use of refrigerants with low global-warming potential, and facilitates access to climate finance for sustainable cooling transitions.

Significance

The initiative addresses extreme heat, a major climate risk causing higher mortality than floods or storms, while targeting urban heat island effects that intensify warming in cities

Note –

WHO “Beat the Heat” – It is an initiative, focusing on protecting workers and sports event participants from extreme heat.

5. AI RESPONSIBILITY PLEDGES

India set a Guinness World Record by securing most AI responsibility pledges within 24 hours at the India AI Impact Summit 2026.

Key Highlights of the Record

World Record – India earned the Guinness World Records title for the “Most pledges received for an AI responsibility campaign in 24 hours,” recording 250,946 valid pledges between February 16–17 at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi.

Massive Youth Participation – The campaign witnessed participation from over 2.5 lakh students, far exceeding the initial target of 5,000 pledges, with contributors receiving digital badges and AI learning resources.

About AI Responsibility Pledges

Introduction – The AI Responsibility Pledge is a nationwide citizen-led initiative promoting ethical, inclusive, and accountable use of Artificial Intelligence across sectors.

Launch – It was launched on February 16, 2026, under the IndiaAI Mission in collaboration with Intel India during the India AI Impact Summit 2026.

Objective – To encourage responsible AI adoption by raising awareness about data privacy, transparency, accountability, and combating misinformation through public participation.

Significance

Promoting Ethical AI Adoption – The initiative reinforces India’s commitment to responsible AI practices, focusing on data privacy, transparency, accountability, and combating misinformation.

Citizen-Led Digital Responsibility – The campaign highlights growing public awareness and positions India as a global advocate for inclusive, ethical, and socially beneficial AI development.