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## NATIONAL NEWS

Additional Excise Duty on Tobacco from February 1



The Indian government has officially notified a major overhaul of the taxation structure for tobacco and pan masala, set to take effect on **February 1, 2026**. This move follows the passage of the *Central Excise (Amendment) Bill, 2025* and the *Health Security-cum-National Security Cess Bill, 2025* in December.

The primary objective is to replace the **GST Compensation Cess**—which was temporary and used to repay pandemic-era loans to states—with a more permanent and dedicated revenue stream.

### 1. The New Tax Structure

Under the new regime, the total tax on these "sin goods" will consist of three main components: GST, a revised Excise Duty, and a new Cess.

Product	Revised GST Rate	New Levies (Effective Feb 1)	Additional (Effective Feb 1)
Pan Masala	40%	Health & National Security Cess (Capacity-based)	
Cigarettes	40%	Additional Excise Duty (Specific, based on length)	
Chewing Tobacco / Gutkha	/ 40%	Additional Excise Duty (Up to 91% for Gutkha)	
Bidis (Biris)	18%	Subject to Additional Duty	Excise

premium longer sticks bearing the heaviest burden.

### 3. Policy and Revenue Objectives

The government is pivoting from a compensation-based model to a purpose-driven one:

- Predictable Funding:** The *Health and National Security Cess* is designed as a non-lapsable fund to support public health initiatives and national security preparedness.
- Curbing Evasion:** For pan masala and gutkha, the tax is now **capacity-based** (linked to machine speed and production capacity) rather than just declared sales. This is intended to plug massive tax leakage in the unorganized sector.
- Stricter Compliance:** Manufacturers must now install **CCTV surveillance** in packing areas and preserve footage for up to 48 months for inspection by excise authorities.

### 4. Public Health Alignment

While the tax increase is steep, analysts note that India's total tax incidence on tobacco (currently around 53% of retail price) still remains below the **World Health Organization (WHO)** recommendation of 75%. The new structure is a step toward making tobacco products less affordable as incomes rise.

### 2. Specific Impact on Cigarettes

The change significantly increases the specific excise duty on cigarettes, which had remained largely unchanged since 2017. The new duty is calculated per 1,000 sticks based on length and filter type:

- Short (Up to 65mm):** ~₹2.05 to ₹2.10 per stick.
- Medium (65–70mm):** ~₹3.60 to ₹4.00 per stick.
- Long/Premium (70–75mm):** ~₹5.40 per stick.
- Non-standard/Premium:** Up to ₹8.50 per stick.

**Result:** Retail prices for cigarettes are expected to rise by **20% to 30%** from February 1, with

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## NATIONAL NEWS

### MoSPI Unveils New Logo and Mascot to Promote Data-Driven Governance



On January 1, 2026, the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) unveiled its new branding to mark a shift toward modern, data-driven governance. The revamp, centered on the theme **"Data for Development,"** aims to make statistics more accessible and trustworthy for the average citizen.

#### 1. The New Logo: Symbolism and Meaning

The logo is a blend of traditional Indian heritage and modern data science. Each element serves a specific purpose in communicating MoSPI's mission:

- The Ashoka Chakra:** Placed prominently to represent truth (*Satya*), transparency, and the integrity of national data.
- The Rupee Symbol (₹):** Situated at the center, it highlights the ministry's role in fiscal policy, economic planning, and national growth.

- Upward Growth Bar:** A visual representation of a bar graph, symbolizing progress and the reliability of data in supporting sustainable economic development.
- Numerical Motifs:** The use of numbers and symbols within the design reflects modern statistical systems and data analytics.
- Color Palette:**
  - Saffron, White, & Green:** Reflect growth, truth, and sustainability.
  - Deep Blue:** Represents stability, knowledge, and trust.

#### 2. Meet the New Mascot: "Sankhyiki"

Alongside the logo, MoSPI introduced its official mascot, **Sankhyiki** (the Hindi word for "Statistics").

- Personality:** Designed as a friendly, intelligent, and citizen-centric character.
- Objective:** To simplify complex statistical concepts through visual storytelling and make data relatable to the general public.
- Usage:** Sankhyiki will become the public face of MoSPI, appearing in **National Sample Surveys (NSS)**, digital platforms, educational content, and awareness campaigns to encourage higher participation and trust in official data.

#### 3. Why the Change Matters

This institutional modernization is part of a broader strategy to:

- Enhance Public Outreach:** Moving away from dry, technical reports to a more engaging visual identity.

- Improve Data Accuracy:** By making the Ministry more approachable, the government hopes for better cooperation from citizens during door-to-door surveys and data collection.
- Reinforce Evidence-Based Policy:** Strengthening the link between accurate statistics and effective national development.

acknowledging their intrinsic right to exist and thrive.

### 1. Key Rights Granted

Under the new legal framework, these bees are entitled to:

- Right to Exist and Flourish:** Protection of their life cycles and populations.
- Right to a Healthy Habitat:** Guarantee of environments free from pollution, particularly from harmful pesticides and herbicides.
- Right to Climate Stability:** Recognition of the need for stable ecological conditions to survive.
- Right to Legal Representation:** Since bees cannot speak for themselves, human "guardians"—including Indigenous leaders and environmental experts—can file lawsuits on their behalf to stop activities like illegal logging or habitat destruction.

### 2. Ecological and Cultural Significance

These bees are often called "the soul of the Amazon" because of their indispensable role in the ecosystem:

- Ancient Pollinators:** They have existed for nearly 80 million years and are responsible for pollinating over 80% of Amazonian flora.
- Economic Impact:** They support the growth of essential crops like coffee, cocoa, avocados, and blueberries.
- Indigenous Connection:** For communities like the Asháninka and Kukama-Kukamiria,

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

### Amazon Stingless Bees Get Legal Rights



In a historic move for environmental jurisprudence, two municipalities in the Peruvian Amazon—Satipo and Nauta—have officially granted legal rights to **Amazonian stingless bees** (*tribe Meliponini*). This marks the first time in history that an insect species has been recognized as a rights-bearing entity.

The ordinances, passed in late 2025 (Satipo in October and Nauta in December), represent a "Rights of Nature" approach, shifting from viewing insects as mere resources to

these bees are considered "family" or "ancestors." Their honey, known as "pot-honey," is a sweet-sour medicinal liquid used to treat respiratory issues and cataracts.

### Centre Appoints New Chief Justices for Kerala, Patna and Meghalaya High Courts

In early January 2026, the Government of India notified several high-profile appointments and transfers of Chief Justices across various High Courts.



These decisions followed recommendations made by the Supreme Court Collegium on December 18, 2025, headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant.

The notifications ensure leadership stability in three major judicial jurisdictions:

#### 1. New Chief Justice Appointments

The following judges were elevated to the position of Chief Justice in their respective courts:

High Court	New Chief Justice	Previous Role	Effective Date
Patna	Justice Sangam Kumar Sahoo	Judge, Orissa High Court	Upon assuming charge

### 3. Species Facts at a Glance

Feature	Details
Global Population	~500 species worldwide
Amazonian Density	Nearly 50% of all species live in the Amazon
Peru's Diversity	Home to over 170 species
Defense Mechanism	They have vestigial stingers (harmless to humans). They defend hives by biting or secreting resins.

### 4. Why This Matters Now

The decision comes at a critical time as the Amazon faces record levels of deforestation and forest fires. By giving bees legal standing, conservationists in Peru now have a powerful tool to intervene against industrial activities that threaten the delicate balance of the rainforest. This "Satipo model" is already being looked at by other nations as a potential template for protecting vital pollinators worldwide.

## APPOINTMENTS

High Court	New Chief Justice	Previous Role	Effective Date
Meghalaya	Justice Revati Mohite Dere	Judge, Bombay High Court	Upon assuming charge
Jharkhand	Justice M.S. Sonak	Judge, Bombay High Court	January 8, 2026
Sikkim	Justice A. Muhammed Mustaque	Judge, Kerala High Court	January 3, 2026

India currently has two women serving as Chief Justices among the 25 High Courts (the other being Justice Sunita Agarwal of the Gujarat High Court).

- Appointment Process:** Initial appointments of Chief Justices are governed by Article 217, while transfers are governed by Article 222. These involve a coordinated process between the President, the CJI-led Collegium, and the Union Ministry of Law and Justice.
- Infrastructure Focus:** The appointments coincide with a major infrastructure push; for instance, CJI Surya Kant recently visited Patna to lay the foundation for new court buildings costing over ₹300 crore.

## 2. Key Judicial Transfer: Kerala High Court

Justice Soumen Sen, who was the Chief Justice of the Meghalaya High Court, has been transferred to serve as the Chief Justice of the Kerala High Court.

- Timeline:** He is directed to assume charge on January 9, 2026.
- Succession:** He replaces the incumbent Chief Justice, Nitin Madhukar Jamdar, who is set to retire on the same day.
- Constitutional Basis:** This transfer was issued by the President under Article 222 of the Constitution.

## SPORTS

Carlsen's Golden Comeback, Erigaisi's Bronze Brilliance at Blitz Worlds



The World Blitz Chess Championship 2025, held in Doha, Qatar, concluded on December 30, 2025, with a legendary performance by Magnus

## 3. Constitutional & Diversity Highlights

- Women in Judiciary:** With the appointment of Justice Revati Mohite Dere to Meghalaya,

Carlsen and a historic podium finish for India's Arjun Erigaisi.

## 1. The Open Championship: Carlsen's "Double Crown"

Magnus Carlsen cemented his legacy by winning his **9th World Blitz title** and his **20th World title** overall across all formats.

- The Comeback:** Carlsen's path was far from easy.<sup>4</sup> He suffered a bizarre "illegal move" loss in the Swiss rounds after accidentally knocking pieces off the board while low on time. However, he recovered to qualify for the knockout stage.
- The Final:** In a high-stakes final, Carlsen defeated Uzbekistan's **Nodirbek Abdusattorov** 2.5–1.5.
- The Rare Double:** Having won the World Rapid title just two days prior, Carlsen achieved the "Double Crown" (winning both Rapid and Blitz in the same year) for the fifth time in his career.

## 2. Arjun Erigaisi's Historic Bronze

At 22 years old, Arjun Erigaisi emerged as one of the standout performers of the tournament:

- Swiss Round Dominance:** Erigaisi finished the qualifying Swiss rounds at the very top of the leaderboard with 15/19 points, ahead of even Carlsen and Caruana.
- The Achievement:** By securing **Bronze**, he became only the second Indian male player, after the legendary **Viswanathan Anand**, to win a medal at the World Blitz Championship.

- Dual Medalist:** Erigaisi was the only player other than Carlsen to secure medals in both the Rapid and Blitz categories (winning Bronze in both) at the 2025 event.

## 3. Women's Championship: Assaubayeva's Hat-trick

The women's section saw a display of dominance from Kazakhstan's **Bibisara Assaubayeva**.

- The Victory:** The 21-year-old defeated two-time champion **Anna Muzychuk** 2.5–1.5 in the final.
- Record:** This was her **third World Blitz title** (adding to her 2021 and 2022 wins), making her the first Kazakh player to achieve this feat.
- Candidates Qualification:** With this win, she also secured a prestigious spot in the **2026 FIDE Women's Candidates Tournament**.

## 4. Tournament Summary & Podium

Category	Gold	Silver	Bronze
Open Blitz	Magnus Carlsen (NOR)	Nodirbek Abdusattorov (UZB)	Arjun Erigaisi (IND) / Fabiano Caruana (USA)
Women's Blitz	Bibisara Assaubayeva (KAZ)	Anna Muzychuk (UKR)	Zhu Jiner (CHN) / Eline

Category	Gold	Silver	Bronze
			Roeber s (NED)

Metric (as of late Dec 2025)	Growth Rate (YoY)	Details
Bank Credit Growth	~12.0%	Driven by MSMEs, services, and infrastructure.
Bank Deposit Growth	9.35%	Slowing down as savers pivot to equities and mutual funds.
Credit-Deposit Gap	263 bps	Increased from ~130 bps in the previous month.

## BANKING/ECONOMY

Credit Growth Nears 12% as Deposit Growth Slows



According to the latest data from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) as of **January 2026**, the Indian banking system is grappling with a persistent mismatch between credit demand and deposit mobilization. The **credit-deposit (CD) gap** has widened to **263 basis points (bps)**, placing significant pressure on system-wide liquidity.

### 1. The Statistical Divergence

The widening gap is driven by a steady double-digit demand for loans, even as household savings increasingly shift toward higher-yield investment avenues.

### 2. Why is Deposit Growth Slowing?

Several structural and behavioral factors are contributing to the "missing deposits" phenomenon:

- Financialization of Savings:** Indian households are moving away from traditional bank fixed deposits (FDs) toward **equity markets and mutual funds**, which saw a 153% and 95% jump in inflows respectively over the last year.
- Interest Rate Transmission Lag:** While banks have been quick to raise lending rates, deposit rate hikes have been more gradual, making them less attractive compared to inflation-linked or market-linked returns.
- Liquidity Coverage Ratio (LCR) Norms:** Stricter regulatory requirements for high-quality liquid assets have made it harder for banks to rely solely on wholesale deposits to fund long-term credit.

## 4. Impact on the Banking Sector

The CD mismatch has several "ripple effects" on the financial ecosystem:

- Tight Liquidity:** The banking system's liquidity has slipped into a deficit, forcing the RBI to intervene.
- Higher Cost of Funds:** To attract more deposits, banks are now being forced to offer higher interest rates on FDs, which is likely to compress their **Net Interest Margins (NIMs)** in the coming quarters.
- Aggressive Competition:** Lenders are launching "special tenure" deposit schemes and digital-only savings products to capture retail funds.

## STATE NEWS

### Tamil Nadu Pension Committee Report

Following the submission of the final report by the **Gagandeep Singh Bedi Committee**, the Tamil Nadu government has made a landmark decision to address the long-standing pension dispute. On **January 3, 2026**, Chief Minister M.K. Stalin officially announced the launch of the **Tamil Nadu Assured Pension Scheme (TAPS)**.



## 4. RBI's Intervention Strategy

To ease the liquidity crunch, the RBI has implemented a series of "durable liquidity" measures in early 2026:

- Repo Rate Cut:** The RBI recently lowered the repo rate by **25 bps to 5.25%** (December 2025 meeting) to support growth.
- Open Market Operations (OMOs):** The central bank announced bond purchases worth **₹1 trillion** to inject cash into the system.
- Forex Swaps:** A **\$5 billion buy-sell swap** was executed to boost rupee liquidity and stabilize the currency.

The new scheme is designed as a specialized hybrid model that effectively fulfills the government's 2021 election promise by providing benefits almost identical to the **Old Pension Scheme (OPS)** while maintaining fiscal stability.

### 1. Key Features of the Tamil Nadu Assured Pension Scheme (TAPS)

The committee, which included economist K. R. Shanmugam and IAS officer Pratik Tayal, recommended a structure that bridges the gap between the contributory nature of the **Unified Pension Scheme (UPS)** and the guaranteed benefits of the OPS.

Feature	Details under TAPS	Comparison to UPS / OPS
Assured Pension	50% of the last-drawn basic pay	Better than UPS (which uses 12-month average). Matches OPS.
Employee Contribution	10% of basic salary	Same as UPS. (OPS had 0% contribution).
Inflation Protection	Dearness Allowance (DA) revisions twice a year	Matches both OPS and UPS.
Family Pension	60% of the employee's pension	Matches OPS/UPS standards.
Gratuity (DCRG)	Up to ₹25 lakh	Higher than previous limits; inclusive of death benefits.
Minimum Pension	Guaranteed even for short service periods	More flexible than the 10-year requirement in UPS.

- **Investment Shift:** The state will now invest pension funds with the PFRDA (Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority) instead of LIC to seek higher market returns, a move previously suggested by the CAG.
- **Funding:** The state government will make an initial contribution of ₹13,000 crore to the pension fund and an annual contribution of ₹11,000 crore.
- **Liability Management:** By keeping a 10% employee contribution, the state ensures the pension liability remains stabilized at approximately 21-22% of State Own Tax Revenue (SOTR).

### 3. Resolution of Labor Unrest

The announcement led to the immediate withdrawal of the indefinite strike planned for **January 6, 2026**, by the JACTTO-GEO (Joint Action Council of Tamil Nadu Teachers' Organisations and Government Employees' Organisations). The unions have welcomed the "last-drawn pay" clause as a major victory, as it provides higher payouts than the central government's UPS model.

### 4. Who is Covered?

- **Current Employees:** Approximately 6.24 lakh employees and teachers currently under the Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS) will migrate to TAPS.
- **Retirees:** The scheme includes a special "compassionate pension" for those who retired under CPS without receiving adequate benefits.

## 2. Strategic and Fiscal Impact

The Bedi Committee's report highlighted that a total return to the OPS was fiscally unviable due to increasing life expectancy in Tamil Nadu (now ~74 years). TAPS solves this by:

### Detailed Analysis of Recent Current Affairs: Multiple Choice Format

**Q.1. Which state recently became the first in India to establish its 8th State Pay Commission?**

- A. Bihar
- B. Assam
- C. Odisha
- D. Jharkhand

1. B

Assam has become the first Indian state to form its 8th State Pay Commission before the 7th Pay Commission ends. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced the decision. Former Chief Secretary Subhash Das has been appointed head of the new pay commission. This move comes before the central government's 8th Central Pay Commission begins its work. The 8th Pay Commission will make changes to the salaries, allowances, and pensions of state government employees.

**Q.2. Which country recently became the 21st member of the Eurozone, bringing it closer to full European integration?**

- A. Romania
- B. Croatia
- C. Serbia
- D. Bulgaria

2. D

Bulgaria recently became the 21st member of the Eurozone, moving closer to pan-European integration. Bulgaria is located in southeastern Europe, on the eastern side of the Balkan

Peninsula. It borders Romania, Turkey, Greece, North Macedonia, and Serbia, and has a maritime border with the Black Sea. The capital of Bulgaria is Sofia.

**Q.3. Tarun Garg has recently been appointed Managing Director and CEO of:**

- A. Maruti Suzuki India
- B. Hyundai Motor India
- C. Tata Motors
- D. Mahindra & Mahindra

3. B

Tarun Garg has assumed the position of Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer (MD & CEO) of Hyundai Motor India Limited (HMIL). This is the first time in HMIL's history that an Indian national has been appointed head of the company. The company has been in existence for 29 years.

**Q.4. Recently, Kamya Karthikeyan became the youngest Indian woman to ski to the South Pole, at the age of:**

- A. 16
- B. 17
- C. 18
- D. 19

4. C

Kaamya Karthikeyan, the 18-year-old daughter of an Indian Navy officer and a promising mountaineer, has created history by skiing to the South Pole, braving freezing cold and strong winds. Kaamya Karthikeyan pulled a sled for about 115 kilometers from 89 degrees South



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and reached the South Pole. With this achievement, she became the youngest Indian and the second youngest woman in the world to ski to the South Pole. This achievement includes climbing the highest peaks of all seven continents and skiing to both poles.

**Q.5. Recently, Rakesh Agarwal has been given the additional charge of Director General of:**

- A. CBI
- B. NIA
- C. IB
- D. RAW
- 5. B

In a major administrative development related to internal security, the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has given senior IPS officer Rakesh Agarwal the additional charge of Director General of the National Investigation Agency (NIA). The move is aimed at maintaining institutional stability and continuity in the leadership of India's largest counter-terrorism agency.

**Q.6. Alok Raj has recently been appointed chairman of which commission in Bihar?**

- A. Bihar Public Service Commission
- B. Bihar Staff Selection Commission
- C. Bihar Police Subordinate Services Commission
- D. Bihar Electricity Regulatory Commission
- 6. B

Former Bihar Director General of Police (DGP) Alok Raj has been appointed Chairman of the

Bihar Staff Selection Commission (BSSC). He previously held additional charge, which has now been made permanent. Alok Raj was currently Director General and Managing Director of the Bihar Police Building Construction Corporation.

**Q.7. India will host the AI Impact Summit in:**

- A. January 2026
- B. February 2026
- C. March 2026
- D. April 2026
- 7. B

India is set to host an AI summit in February 2026, aimed at building global understanding and consensus on the governance of artificial intelligence. More than 100 countries are expected to participate, including prominent figures like Bill Gates, the CEOs of Anthropic and Adobe, and the President of France, making India a key player in global tech policy.

**Q.8. BSNL recently announced the launch of Voice over Wi-Fi (VoWiFi) calling in:**

- A. Selected cities
- B. Throughout the country
- C. Rural areas only
- D. Urban areas only
- 8. B

India's state-owned telecom company Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) has taken a major technological step on the occasion of New Year. BSNL has launched Voice over Wi-Fi (VoWiFi) or Wi-Fi calling service across the



country in all telecom circles of India. This service will provide reliable voice calling experience even in areas where mobile network is weak or non-existent. BSNL's main objective behind this new initiative is to improve the quality of voice service in rural and interior areas.

**Q.9. The Sirkir Malkoha, a rare bird species recently reported in the news, is commonly found in the plains of which state?**

- A. Uttarakhand
- B. Arunachal Pradesh
- C. Himachal Pradesh
- D. Sikkim

9. A

The rare Sirkeer Malkoha has been sighted for the first time in Uttarakhand's Uttarkashi district. It is generally found in the plains of Uttarakhand, making this sighting special. The Sirkeer Malkoha, also known as the Sirkeer Koel, is a distinctive cuckoo bird. It is found in the sub-Himalayan Indian subcontinent, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and parts of Pakistan and Rajasthan. It lives in scrub, thin forests and hilly areas. The International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List lists it as Least Concern.

**Q.10. Which currency has Bulgaria recently adopted as its official currency?**

- A. Lev
- B. Euro
- C. Zloty
- D. Forint

10. B

Bulgaria adopted the euro as its official currency, becoming the 21st member of the euro zone. To ensure a smooth transition, Bulgaria's currency, the lev, will remain pegged to the euro until January, and from February 1, the euro will become the country's sole legal tender.

**Q.11. India's first Vande Bharat sleeper train will recently run between which two cities?**

- A. Delhi and Mumbai
- B. Guwahati and Kolkata
- C. Chennai and Bengaluru
- D. Ahmedabad and Delhi

11. B

The first Vande Bharat Sleeper train will run between Guwahati and Kolkata. Third AC fares have been set at ₹2,300. Second AC fares will be ₹3,000. First AC fares are proposed to be around ₹3,600. Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav said at a press conference in New Delhi that trials, testing, and certification of the Vande Bharat Sleeper train have been completed. The sleeper train is designed for long-distance travel of over 1,000 kilometers.

**Q.12. What is the name of the newly declared third district of Goa?**

- A. Mandovi
- B. Zuari
- C. Kushavati
- D. Chandrapur

12. C

Goa will create its third district, Kushavati, named after the ancient Kushavati River that flows through South Goa. The river reflects Goa's ancient geography, culture, livelihood, and ecological identity from historical times such as the Chalukya dynasty. The district comprises the Sanguem, Dharbandora, Quepem, and Canacona talukas, with its headquarters in Quepem. The Usgalimal petroglyphs on laterite rocks along the riverbank represent early human settlements dating back thousands of years. To improve governance and development, the district will have a new Zila Panchayat (District Council).

D. Brazil

14. A

Amazon stingless bees have become the first insects in the world to be granted legal rights. This decision was made through a landmark law passed by local municipalities in Peru. The law recognizes their right to exist, survive, and thrive. This move recognizes their vital role as pollinators in the Amazon rainforest ecosystem. It also recognizes their importance to biodiversity, agriculture, and indigenous communities. This step sets a global precedent for the legal protection of insects and nature.

Q.13. Zohran Mamdani was recently sworn in as mayor of:

- A. London
- B. New York City
- C. Toronto
- D. Sydney

13. B

Q.15. A new project to conserve critically endangered bird species has recently been approved in:

- A. Mumbai
- B. Kolkata
- C. New Delhi
- D. Bengaluru

15. C

The government has approved a new project to protect the breeding grounds of sand dune-nesting birds, including the Indian Skimmer, to save endangered bird species in the Gangetic plains. The project was approved at the 68th meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) in New Delhi.

New York City's newly elected Mayor Zohran Mamdani will be the first mayor to be sworn in on the Quran. He is also the first Muslim mayor of New York City. He has emerged as a leader who cultivates a "secular identity" among American voters.

Q.14. Amazon stingless bees recently became the first insects in the world to be granted legal rights by which country?

- A. Peru
- B. Colombia
- C. Ecuador

## FACTS ABOUT BHARAT

Sikkim's journey from a remote Himalayan kingdom to India's 22nd state is a fascinating chapter of modern Indian history, blending ancient linguistic roots with significant geopolitical shifts.

### 1. Etymology: The "New Palace"

As you noted, the most widely accepted theory for the name "Sikkim" comes from the **Limbu language**, one of the oldest indigenous groups in the region:

- **Su:** Meaning "New"
- **Khyim:** Meaning "Palace" or "House"

**The Legend:** It is said that the name was coined when the first Chogyal (King) of Sikkim, Phuntsog Namgyal, built a new palace at **Yuksom** in the 17th century. His Limbu queen reportedly exclaimed "Sukhim!" upon seeing the new residence, and the name eventually evolved into "Sikkim."

**Other Names:** Before it was Sikkim, Tibetans called the land **Denzong** ("Valley of Rice"), while the indigenous Lepchas called it **Nye-mae-el** ("Paradise").

### 2. The Path to Statehood: 1950–1975

Sikkim's integration into India was a gradual process that moved through three distinct legal phases:

#### A. The Protectorate (1950)

In December 1950, India and Sikkim signed the **India-Sikkim Peace Treaty**.

- Sikkim became a **Protectorate** of India.
- India managed Sikkim's **Defense, External Affairs, and Communications**.
- The Chogyal (Monarch) retained full autonomy in internal administration.

#### B. The Associate State (1974)

Following internal political unrest and a desire for democratic representation, the Sikkim Assembly requested a closer association with India.

- **The 35th Constitutional Amendment (1974):** This created a unique status for Sikkim as an "**Associate State**" of the Indian Union.
- Sikkim was given representation in both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha for the first time.

#### C. The 22nd State (1975)

In April 1975, a historic referendum was held in which over **97% of the voters** chose to abolish the monarchy and join India.

- **The 36th Constitutional Amendment:** The Indian Parliament ratified the results, making Sikkim a **full-fledged state** with retrospective effect from **April 26, 1975**.
- On **May 16, 1975**, the President gave assent, and this day is now celebrated annually as **Sikkim Statehood Day**.

#### 3. Fast Facts: Modern Sikkim

- **Article 371F:** A special provision in the Constitution that protects the old laws and distinct identity of Sikkim.



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- Kanchenjunga:** The state is home to the world's third-highest peak, which is also a UNESCO World Heritage site (Khangchendzonga National Park).
- Organic Leader:** In 2016, Sikkim became India's first 100% organic state.

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