



GS Paper 3-Economy

Growth push: RBI cuts rate by 0.25%

First repo rate cut since May 2020 may translate into cheaper home and car loans; follows Budget initiatives to boost consumption with I-T breaks

Lalatendu Mishra
MUMBAI

Lowering India's interest rates for the first time in the last 57 months, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India on Friday unanimously cut the repo rate by 25 basis points (bps) to 6.25%, to support fading growth in the hope of inflation easing to 4.4% in this quarter and 4.2% through 2025-26.

A policy pivot

The chart shows the repo rate (in %) decided by the Reserve Bank of India's Monetary Policy Committee between October 2019 and February 2025



other banks, and one basis the MPC persisted with a



KEY POINTS

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has cut the repo rate by 25 basis points to 6.25% for the first time in 57 months to support growth, following a decline in inflation.
- This move comes after the Union Budget for 2025–26 aimed at boosting urban demand with tax breaks.





The RBI projects GDP growth of 6.7% for 2025–26, with inflation easing to 4.4% this quarter and 4.2% through 2025–26.





THE HINDU



GS Paper 1-Geography

Tourists flock to Munnar as hill station continues to experience cold weather

The Hindu Bureau
IDUKKI

While Kerala is reeling under the heat, Munnar hill station continued to witness the season's lowest temperature, with Chenduvurai recording zero degrees Celsius on Friday.

As per data from the United Planters Association of South India, Nallathanni Munnar town, Letchmi, Silent Valley, and Devikulam have recorded a temperature of 3 degrees Celsius. Seven Malai saw 4 degrees Celsius, while R&D Mattupetty witnessed 5 degrees Celsius on Friday morning.

According to climatologist Gopakumar Choleyil, the hill station might have



Icy mornings: A frost-covered grassland at Chenduvurai near Munnar in Idukki on Friday morning. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

if not for the cyclonic circulation and depression that occurred in January. "Better humidity levels, clear skies, and no hin-

diation are required to experience sub-zero temperature in the hill station."

Mr. Choleyil said the hill

winter with mercury dipping to sub-zero in February 2019. According to climate experts, there is a change in the pattern of winter in Munnar. Usually, normal winter in Munnar will begin from November, with the hill station experiencing extreme cold in the first week of January.

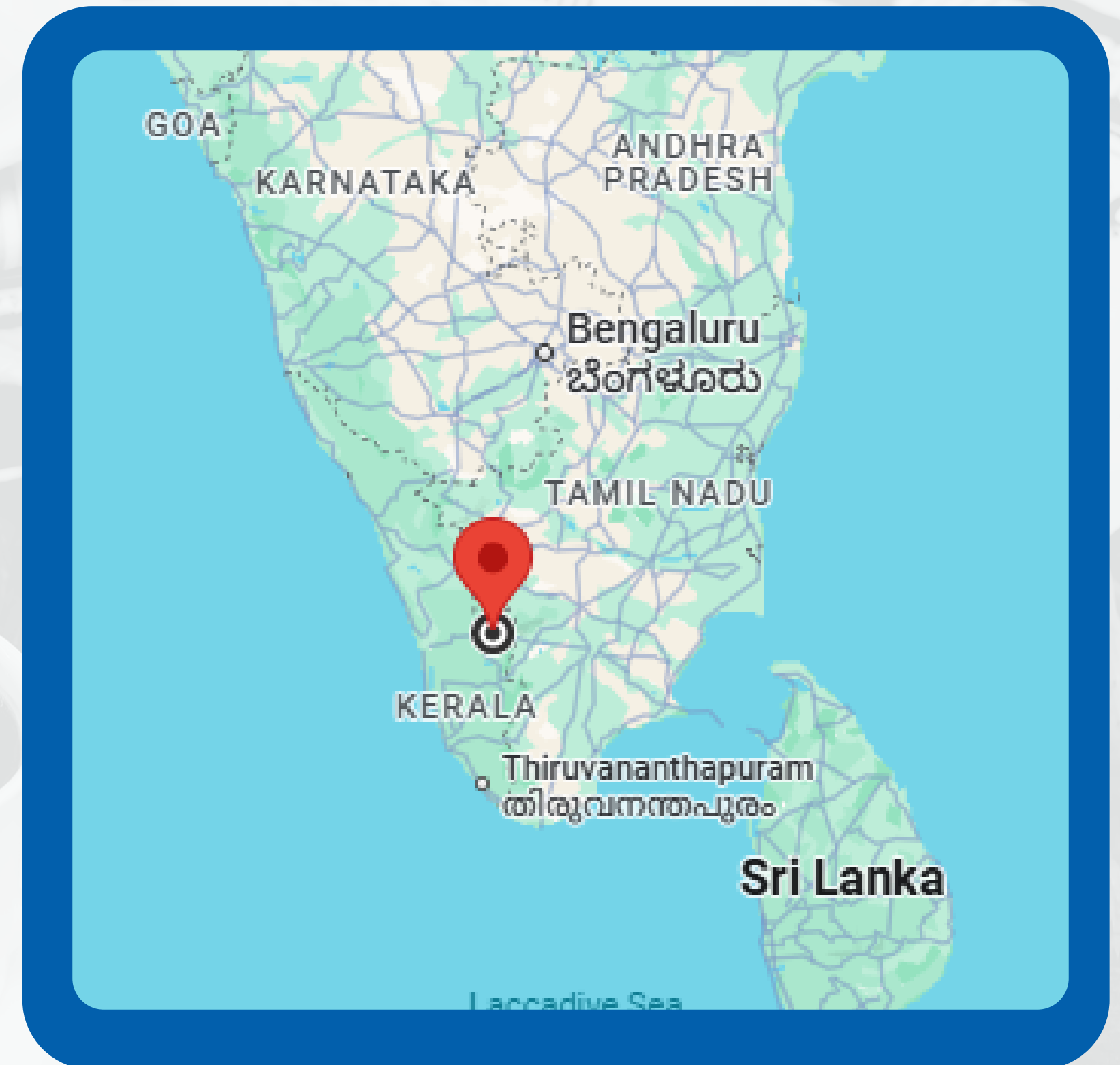
The chilly weather will come to an end around the second week of January. However, this year the winter has extended to February.

G. Sojan, coordinator of the My Munnar Movement, said there has been a continuous inflow of tourists to the hill station from December. "Many tourists are arriving at the hill station to enjoy the chilly



KEY POINTS

Munnar, a picturesque hill station in South India, is known for its natural beauty, colonial-era cottages, and stunning landscapes, including tea plantations, waterfalls, and valleys. Located 1600m above sea level, it is famous for the rare Neelakurinji flower that blooms once every twelve years, turning the hills blue during its season.





THE HINDU



GS Paper 3-Species



Fisherfolk and people from the Tamil Nadu Forest Department bury a dead Olive Ridley turtle that was washed ashore. S. JOTHRANILINGAM

A surge of dead sea turtles in the sand

sands for eggs.

Abhishaek, 24, a volunteer with SSTCN, and his peers patrol two stretches of the coast between the Cooum estuary and Neelankarai every night in the nesting season. As they walk, they search for tracks left by the turtles and follow them. When they come across a distinctive clearing, they use a 'probe', a long hollow rod, to check for nests. If they find eggs, they carefully collect them and measure the nest's dimensions to recreate the conditions in hatcheries, before continuing their walk. "Working with a common-



When trawl boats often encroach into restricted areas, it increases the risk of turtle entanglement and death.

SUPRAJA DHARINI
Founder, TREE Foundation

deaths emerged, the Tamil Nadu government formed a task force headed by the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Chief Wildlife Warden, Rakesh Kumar Dogra. On January 27, the task force decided to strengthen regulations on trawl fishing, enforce the use of Turtle Exclude Devices (TEDs), and restrict the horsepower of boat engines.

TEDs are metal grids designed to allow turtle to escape from trawl nets. But fisherfolk have expressed concerns that these devices could reduce their catch. A fisherman working on a mechanised boat in Kasimedu explains that with dwindling resources in the ocean, even a small fall in the catch can have a significant impact on his profits. "There have been no efforts from the Fisheries Department to introduce improved TED models or compensate fishermen for the months they are required to use them," he says.

Kumar refutes this. He says TEDs do not result in significant catch loss. He explains that large fish typically do not travel in schools and are not often caught in trawl nets.

The government has also increased joint patrols involving the Fisheries Department, Forest Department, Indian Coast Guard, and Marine Police. According to Dogra, long-term studies and monitoring, including telemetry research, will also begin soon. Plans have also been put in place to involve police authorities in monitoring and addressing trawler violations.

Meanwhile, the Southern Bench of the National Green Tribunal took suo motu notice of the issue on January 18 and criticised the Tamil Nadu government for failing to regulate trawlers and enforce the use of TEDs despite previous orders.

The surge in turtle deaths also coincided with an unusually rough monsoon season. Fishermen report that the seas have been particularly turbulent as the north-east monsoon of 2024 persists well beyond its usual last date of December 31, as per the India Meteorological Department.

Palayam argues that it's not fair to place the blame solely on fishermen. He has been tracking currents and wind patterns every day since 2011 and notes that this season has been unusual. "During the onset of the Tamil Thai month, the sea is typically calm. But that hasn't been the case this year. The *oṻi* (easterly) current could push objects back to the shore, which could ex-



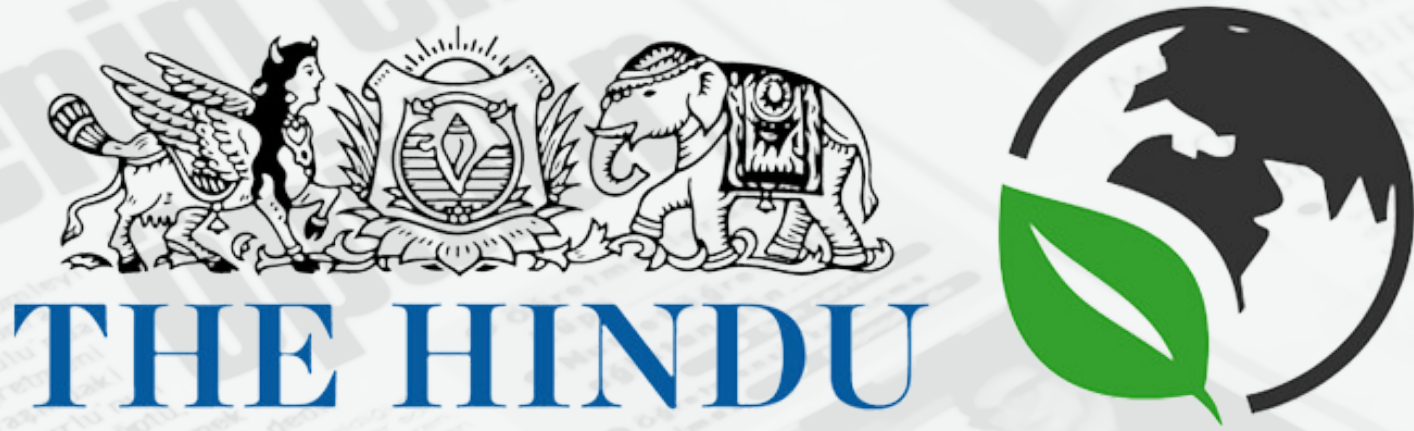
KEY POINTS

Since January, hundreds of Olive Ridley sea turtle carcasses have been found in Chennai and Chengalpattu districts. Olive Ridley turtles, known for their olive green shells, are among the smallest sea turtles. Found in tropical regions of the Pacific, Indian, and Atlantic oceans, they are famous for mass nesting (Arribada).



Odisha hosts the largest nesting site. They are protected under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, and listed as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List, with CITES Appendix I status.





GS Paper 3-Economy

Cabinet nod to rejig skilling initiatives with a combined scheme

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Union government has decided to restructure its skilling initiatives, combining three of them into the Skill India Programme, a Central Sector scheme, with the Cabinet on Friday approving an outlay of ₹8,800 crore for a three-

These steps aim at providing structured skill development, on-the-job training, and learning

that both urban and rural populations, including marginalised communities, have access to high-



KEY POINTS

- The Union government has restructured its skilling initiatives into the Skill India Programme with an ₹8,800 crore outlay for 2023–26. The program combines PMKVY 4.0, PM–NAPS, and JSS, focusing on skill development, on-the-job training, and community learning for urban and rural populations. Over 2.27 crore people have benefited so far.





THE HINDU



GS Paper 3-Defence

Nine submarines, 65 ships taking part in TROPEX exercise

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

Indian Navy's biennial capstone Theatre Level Operational Exercise (TROPEX) is under way in the Indian Ocean Region, in which the combined fleet, comprising approximately 65

This is conducted biennially with participation by all operational units of the Navy along with participation of Army, Air Force, and Coast Guard assets.

"TROPEX-25 is aimed at validating Indian Navy's core warfighting skills, and ensuring a synchronised.

KEY POINTS

The Indian Navy's biennial TROPEX exercise is underway in the Indian Ocean, involving 65 ships, 9 submarines, and 80 aircraft to validate warfighting skills and protect maritime security against various threats. It includes Army, Air Force, and Coast Guard participation.





THE HINDU



GS Paper 2-IR

Trump sanctions ICC for 'illegitimate probes' targeted against Israel, U.S.

Curbs include asset freezes and travel bans against ICC officials, employees and their family members, along with anyone deemed to have helped the court's probe; The Hague-based court vows to continue providing justice around the world

Agence France-Presse
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump imposed sanctions on the International Criminal Court for probes targeting America and its ally Israel, but the ICC on Friday vowed to continue providing "justice and hope" around the world.

Mr. Trump signed an executive order on Thursday saying the court in The Hague had "abused its power" by issuing an arrest warrant for visiting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who held talks with the U.S. President in



Behavioural pattern: Previous sanctions by the U.S. under President Donald Trump had targeted the court's prosecutor. AP

Washington on Tuesday.

He ordered asset freezes and travel bans against ICC officials, employees and their family members

along with anyone deemed to have helped the court's investigations.

The ICC on Friday condemned the move, which

it said sought to "harm its independent and impartial judicial work". "The Court stands firmly by its personnel and pledges to continue providing justice and hope to millions of innocent victims of atrocities across the world," it said in a statement.

The United Nations said it deeply regretted Mr. Trump's decision to slap sanctions on the ICC and urged him to reverse the move.

The names of the individuals affected by the sanctions were not immediately released, but previous U.S. sanctions under Mr. Trump had targeted the

court's prosecutor.

Mr. Trump's order said the tribunal had engaged in "illegitimate and baseless actions targeting America and our close ally Israel," referring to ICC probes into alleged war crimes by U.S. service members in Afghanistan and Israeli troops in Gaza.

Israel's Foreign Minister Gideon Saar applauded Mr. Trump on Friday over the sanctions, calling the court's actions against Israel illegitimate.

Neither the U.S. nor Israel are members of the court. The EU warned the move was a threat to its independence.



KEY POINTS

The International Criminal Court (ICC), based in The Hague, is a permanent court established to address serious crimes like genocide and war crimes. It operates independently of the UN and has jurisdiction over crimes committed after July 2002 by State Parties or their nationals. Its funding comes mainly from State Parties, with additional voluntary contributions.



GS Paper 2-Governance

National Commission for Safai Karamcharis gets 3-yr extension

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 7

THE UNION Cabinet on Friday approved the extension of the tenure of the National Commission for Safai Karamcharis (NCSK) for a period of three years up to March 2028. The financial implication for the extension would be around Rs 51 crore, a government note said.

The present tenure of the Commission was to end on March 31 and it has been extended up to March 31, 2028.

OTHER KEY APPROVALS

SKILL INDIA PROGRAMME: The Cabinet approved the continuation and restructuring of 'Skill India Programme' until 2026 with an overlay outlay of ₹8,800 cr. Giving details, I&B Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said PM Kaushal Vikas Yojana 4.0, the PM National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme, and the Jan Shikshan Sansthan Scheme

RENAMING OF WALTAIR RAIL DIVISION: The Cabinet gave its ex-post facto approval to the retaining of Waltair rail division in truncated form and renaming it as Vishakhapatnam division, a government press note said on Friday. "It would be renamed as Vishakhapatnam division because Waltair name is a colonial legacy that needs to be

KEY POINTS

The Union Cabinet approved the extension of the National Commission for Safai Karamcharis (NCSK) until March 2028, with a cost of Rs 51 crore. Established in 1994, the NCSK's mandate includes addressing inequities, evaluating rehabilitation programs, and investigating non-implementation of relevant laws for safai karamcharis.



The Indian **EXPRESS**

GS Paper 2-Governance

‘Not just a formality’: Failure to inform grounds of arrest will make it illegal, rules Supreme Court

"If the grounds of arrest are not informed as soon as may be after the arrest, it would amount to a violation of the fundamental right of the arrestee guaranteed under Article 22(1). It will also amount to depriving the arrestee of his liberty," the Court said.

KEY POINTS

- The Supreme Court ruled that failing to inform an arrested person of the grounds for their arrest under Article 22(1) makes the arrest illegal. The person must be informed promptly in a language they understand, and non-compliance requires immediate release. However, this does not affect the investigation or trial.

