

The Taklamakan Desert, known as the "Sea of Death," has been completely encircled with a sand-blocking green belt stretching 3,046 kilometres. The project, started in 1978, also called 'the great green wall', is the world's longest such ecological barrier. China's total forest coverage is now above 25%, up from around 10% in 1949 at the time of the Communist takeover.

The Amerigo Vespucci, a 93-year-old Italian ship, docked at Mumbai's Indira Dock. The ship, often considered the most beautiful in the world, set sail from La Spezia in July 2023, on 28-country tour. In Mumbai, as part of the visit, the Villaggio Italia hosted events like Exploring La Dolce Vita: Italy's offer to India's travel thrill and Crafting Elegance: the World of Luxury between Italy and India.

India, smarting after a 3-0 whitewash by New Zealand, beat Australia by 295 runs in the 1st Test at Perth after a remarkable fightback. Bowled out for 150, India dismissed the Aussies for 104, and then declared at 487/6 (Jaiswal 161, Kohli, 100*). Australia chasing 534, were dismissed for 238. Stand-in captain Jaspreet Bumrah was Player-of-the-Match for his haul of 8 wickets for 72 runs.

Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, 52, was elected to the Lok Sabha in a by-poll from Wayanad, Kerala. She beat her nearest competitor by 4.1 lakh votes. Her older brother, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi had vacated this seat, which he won in the 2024 general election. The siblings have a father, grandmother and great-grandfather who have all served as Prime Minister of India.

Moana 2 (also known as Vaiana 2 or Oceania 2) released to packed houses. The Disney film, sequel to a successful 2016 film, continues the story of Moana (voiced by Auli'i Cravalho) who is assisted by the shape-shifting demi-God, Maui (voiced by Dwayne Johnson).

Cyclone Fengal made landfall close to Pondicherry along the Coromandel coast. Named by Saudi Arabia, one of the 13 countries that contribute names for storms in the northern Indian Ocean, as per a protocol followed by World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) panel.

Australia became the first major country to approve a Bill that restricts social media for children under the age of 16. The Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Bill 2024 puts the onus on social media companies to prevent children from accessing their platforms. Companies can be fined up to \$32 million if they fail to do so.

36-year-old Jay Shah became the 5th Indian and the youngest ever chairman of the International Cricket Council (ICC). Son of Home Minister Amit Shah, he follows Jagmohan Dalmia, Sharad Pawar, Shashank Manohar and N. Srinivasan who all headed the ICC. His priorities include leveraging cricket's inclusion in the 2028 Summer Olympics at Los Angeles.



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