

Untreated sewage floods Wellington waters:

- Recently, a sewage leak has caused major issues in Wellington, the capital of New Zealand. The issue occurred as a result of the lower floors of the Mōa Point wastewater treatment plant flooding as a result of the heavy rains which caused sewage to back up into an outfall pipe that normally discharges treated wastewater into Cook Strait — the sea link that connects the north and south islands of New Zealand. Local authorities have described the situation as an ‘environmental disaster’. Furthermore, authorities have advised the residents of Wellington not to enter the waters or collect any seafood under any circumstances. Such an incident is of paramount importance due to the fact that Raw sewage and wastewater poses an immediate and severe threat to a wide range of ecological functions, species and public health.

Emergency kits in half of Dutch households:

- Currently, half of Dutch households have emergency kits at their homes, as reported by the broadcaster RTL. The reason as to why lies in the fact that at the end of last year the Dutch government launched a campaign to raise awareness of the need to have emergency supplies at home (e.g. cash, radio, canned food, medicine). It has been reported that occurrences like the heavy snowfall, global conflicts, such as the ones in the Middle East and Ukraine, have made people more considerate of the importance of being prepared for a crisis. The 33-page leaflet sent out by the government in order to boost the awareness campaign is available in multiple languages and sets out practical steps for the first 72 hours of emergency situations.

The adoption of the new law-and-order decree in Italy sparks controversy:

- Italy has recently adopted a [new law-and-order decree] (<https://www.nytimes.com/2026/02/05/world/europe/italy-olympics-security-law-protests.html#:~:text=Outside San Siro Stadium in,as a restriction on freedom.>) aimed at tightening restrictions on protests, increasing police powers and curbing urban crime, particularly in light of the 2026 Milano-Cortina Winter Olympics. According to the Italian government this decree is a response to recent violent clashes with police in Turin, where confrontations during protests left more than 100 officers injured and dozens of people arrested. The enactment of the decree has been met with mixed opinions. Government supporters argue it is necessary to protect public order and ensure safety during major international events, while critics and civil liberties groups argue it risks curbing the constitutional right to protest, protected under Article 17 of the Italian Constitution of 1948.

Rubaya mines collapse in (rebel-controlled region in the) Democratic Republic of the Congo:

- On January 28th, near the city of Goma in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the Rubaya mines collapsed, causing more than 200 deaths. The heavy rains in the region are one of the main reasons behind the formation of landslides. The Rubaya mine produces around 15% of the world’s coltan, which after being processed turns into tantalum — a heat-resistant metal used by technology manufacturers. As of last year, Rubaya has been under the control of the antigovernment Alliance Fleuve Congo (AFC) and M23 rebel coalition. According to Congolese

government spokesperson Patrick Muyaya, the Rubaya mining area is classified as 'red status', meaning that all mining activities and mineral commercialisation are prohibited, and that any digging activities that continue there are infringements of the law and non-compliant with work safety standards.

Did India manage to overtake Japan in economic size?:

- In the dawn of the new year, amid continued economic growth, reports indicate that India may have surpassed Japan by nominal gross domestic product (GDP), making it the fourth-largest economy by nominal gross domestic product in the world. According to the calculations of the Indian government's end-of-year economic review, the Indian economy grew by 8.2%, while the unemployment rate declined to 4.7% from 5.2%. According to the review, India reached a GDP of \$4.8 trillion for 2025, and is projected to reach \$7.3 trillion by 2030. In light of the current economic trends, experts expect India to overtake Germany and become the world's third-largest economy within the next three years. Nevertheless, definitive confirmation awaits the release of the final annual GDP data in 2026. Projections from the International Monetary Fund similarly suggest that India is likely to move ahead of Japan in the near term.

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