

13 August 2024

Government approves 8 New Railway Line Projects



Key Points:

- ❖ The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved eight projects of the ministry of railways with a total estimated cost of around Rs.24,657 crore.
- ❖ The projects will cover 14 districts in seven states, including Odisha, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Bihar, Telangana, and West Bengal.
- ❖ The eight major new railway line route projects approved by the union cabinet include Gunupur-Therubali (New Line), Junagarh-Nabarangpur, Badampahar-Kandujhargarh, Bangriposi-Gorumahisani, Malkangiri-Pandurangapuram (via Bhadrachalam), Buramara-Chakulia, Jalna-Jalgaon, and Bikramshila-Katareah.
- ❖ With these projects, 64 new stations will be constructed, providing enhanced connectivity to six aspirational districts—East Singhbhum, Bhadadri Kothagudem,

Malkangiri, Kalahandi, Nabarangpur, and Rayagada—approximately 510 villages and about four million population.

India's defence exports soar by 78 percent in first quarter of 2024-25



Key Points:

- ❖ India's defence exports soared by 78 percent in the first quarter of 2024-25 as compared to the same period last fiscal year.
- ❖ According to the Defence Ministry, defence exports increased to rupees 6,915 crores in the first quarter of 2024-25, compared to ₹3,865 crore in the same quarter of the previous year.

Roshni Nadar Malhotra is India's most influential woman leader



Key Points:

- ❖ Roshni Nadar Malhotra, chairperson of HCL Technologies is India's most influential woman leading a family-owned business, according to the 2024 Barclays Private Clients Hurun India Most Valuable Family Businesses report.
- ❖ As the chairperson, she has been instrumental in the company's growth and success. The Nadar family's business is valued at a staggering Rs 430,600 crore.
- ❖ Other notable women leaders include Manju D. Gupta of Lupin, Sushila Devi Singhanian of JK Cement, Meher Pudumjee of Thermax, Amita Birla of Birlasoft, Leena Gandhi Tewari of USV, Mahima Datla of Biological E, Bina Modi of Godfrey Phillips India, and Jyothy Ramachandran of Jyothy Laboratories.

Mann dedicates Punjab Help Centre for NRIs at IGI Airport



Key Points:

- ❖ Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann unveiled a pioneering initiative for the Punjabi diaspora with the inauguration of the 'Punjab Help

Centre' at Terminal 3 of Indira Gandhi International Airport, New Delhi.

- ❖ This makes Punjab the first state in India to establish such a dedicated NRI Facilitation Centre, showcasing a robust commitment to supporting its overseas community.
- ❖ 'Punjab Help Centre will operate 24X7, offering a range of services to assist NRIs and other passengers.
- ❖ The centre will provide help with arrival and connecting flights, taxi services, lost luggage, and other airport-related needs. It is equipped with two Innova cars for local transportation to Punjab Bhawan and nearby locations.
- ❖ For emergency situations, rooms at Punjab Bhawan will be available based on availability.
- ❖ A dedicated helpline, 011-61232182, has also been set up for immediate assistance.

Why Should India Spend Public Money on Sports?



Key Points:

- ❖ A medal tally of 6 -no gold - is a disappointing Olympic performance for India.
- ❖ There were as many as 6 fourth-place finishes that could have gone our way, but for a nation of 1.4bn, even that's not really good enough.
- ❖ Though there is no doubt India has improved considerably at Games since Beijing 2008, we have stayed in the 2-7 medal range in the last five editions.
- ❖ In what is a striking and sobering contrast, China bagged second place in total medals tally at Paris, even as it matched the US in number of golds.
- ❖ For India, rethink of strategy and implementation is required to move to the next level.

Contingent still small:

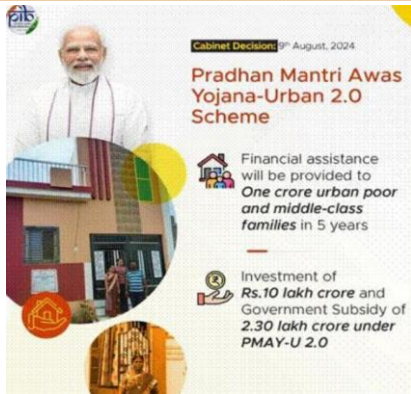
- ❖ One reason we haven't enough to show is that we aren't sending enough athletes to Olympics. Our 117 athletes at Paris made for a representation of just .08 per mn population. Compare that with 37.8 for New Zealand. Or, Japan, with less than one-tenth of our population, sending more than 400 athletes.
- ❖ A larger pool at the Games is the first step to go up the medal tally. Increasing the number of sports we compete in is one way this can be

done. At Paris, we were in the reckoning in just 16 of the 32 sports.

- ❖ Our neighbour China competed in 30. The problem is too few athletes qualify for Olympic selections. The United States, with 640 athletes, has the maximum number of athletes competing in the Paris Olympics, followed by host France, which has 608 athletes.
- ❖ Our top-level infra has improved immensely in recent years. But, barring sporting states like Haryana and Punjab, it is largely urban talent that is benefiting from such infra. This will not change without a grassroots-based approach. We need to create a sporting culture and build infra at our schools and universities. Such infra is what is behind US's sporting success.
- ❖ Why Should India Spend Public Money on Sports?
- ❖ Beyond public health and national glory, there is the utilitarian argument. Sports can be a source of economic activity, growth and development.
- ❖ Around the world, many cities have invested in massive sports facilities and Formula One circuits to attract visitors who spend on hotels, shopping and tourist attractions.
- ❖ Odisha's investments in sports facilities have the potential of becoming a growth vector to the state.

- ❖ The success of premier league cricket, football and kabaddi point to the economic potential of sports.

PMAY- U 2.0 approved by Union Cabinet with 10 lakh crore investment



Key Points:

- ❖ The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has approved the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Urban (PMAY-U) 2.0, which envisages an investment of Rs 10 lakh crores.
- ❖ The PMAY-U 2.0 will replace the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Urban (PMAY-U), which was launched on 25 June 2015 and ended on 31 December 2024.
- ❖ The duration of the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Urban (PMAY-U) 2.0 is five years (2028- 29). It aims to facilitate the construction of one crore houses in urban areas for the urban poor and middle-class families.

- ❖ The Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs will be the nodal body for implementing the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Urban (PMAY-U) 2.0 scheme.
- ❖ The total investment required under the PMAY-U 2.0 scheme to build one core house is Rs 10 lakh crore over five years.
- ❖ The central government/state government/Union Territories will provide Rs 2.30 lakh crore assistance under the scheme.
- ❖ The government will provide Rs 2.50 lakh of assistance per house constructed in the BLC and AHP component of the scheme.

Finance Secretary T V Somanathan named Cabinet Secretary for 2 years



Key Points:

- ❖ Union Finance Secretary T V Somanathan has been appointed Cabinet Secretary for

two years starting August 30. He will be taking over from Rajiv Gauba.

- ❖ A 1987-batch Tamil Nadu cadre Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer, Somanathan was designated Finance Secretary in April 2021.
- ❖ He was appointed Secretary, the Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance, back in December 2019.
- ❖ Somanathan, who served as a joint secretary in the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MoCA) from 2015 to 2017, was also involved in overseeing the implementation of economic policies in the Prime Minister's Office during that period.

Other Important Secretaries

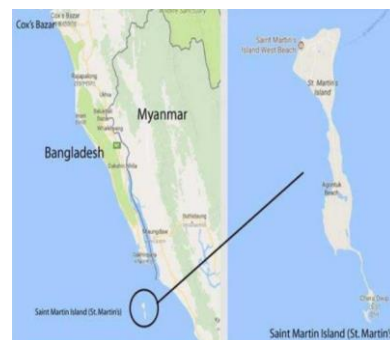
- ❖ Foreign Secretary - Vikram Misri
- ❖ Revenue Secretary - Sanjay Malhotra
- ❖ Defence Secretary - Giridhar Aramane
- ❖ Economic Affairs Secretary - Ajay Seth
- ❖ Expenditure Secretary - T. V. Somanathan
- ❖ Home Secretary - Ajay Kumar Bhalla
- ❖ MoSPI Secretary - G. P. Samanta

How is the Saint-Martin Island important for the United States



Key Points:

- ❖ Former Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina has alleged that the USA aimed to oust her from power due to her refusal to cede control of Saint Martin Island, which would have allowed the USA to exert influence over the Bay of Bengal.
- ❖ Hasina, in a message conveyed through her close associates and made available to ET, claimed that by surrendering the sovereignty of Saint Martin Island, she could have stayed in power.
- ❖ How is the Saint-Martin Island important for the United States?



- ❖ Saint Martin's island is Bangladesh's sole coral reef island, popularly also called as "Narikel Zinzira" , which in Bengali translates to 'Coconut Island'.
- ❖ It lies in the northeastern part of the Bay of Bengal, approximately 9 kms south of the tip of the Cox's Bazar-Teknaf peninsula and 8 kms west of the northwest coast of Myanmar.
- ❖ Saint Martin's Island is a cherished destination for tourists and a vital resource for the local community.
- ❖ The island's economy primarily relies on fishing, rice and coconut cultivation, and tourism, providing livelihoods for its approximately 5,500 residents.
- ❖ The island has been at the heart of a long-standing sovereignty dispute between Bangladesh and Myanmar, mainly due to disagreements over maritime boundaries and fishing rights in the surrounding waters, as per media reports.
- ❖ This dispute was partially resolved in 2012 when the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) ruled that the island falls within the territorial sea, continental

shelf, and exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of Bangladesh.

- ❖ The biggest advantage for a country with a military base at St. Martin's would be a strategic oversight in and around the Strait of Malacca.
- ❖ The Chinese use this maritime region mainly for their transportation. Notably, the Chinese are building a port at Bangladesh's Cox Bazaar.
- ❖ For any country other than China with a post at St. Martin's, this would mean keeping an eye over Chinese investments in the Bay of Bengal, a former Indian ambassador with a deep understanding of the affairs of the Indian subcontinent told WION



10th bilateral Mitra Shakti Military Exercise Commences in Sri Lanka



Key Points:

- ❖ The annual bilateral Mitra Shakti military exercise between the Indian Army and the Sri Lankan Army commenced in the Sri Lankan Army Training School, Maduru Oya, on 12 August 2024.
- ❖ The week-long exercise, which runs from 12 to 25 August, is an annual Combined Training Exercise of the two countries' Forces.
- ❖ The joint exercise is a part of Indian diplomacy to strengthen military-to-military ties with the Sri Lankan Armed forces and strengthen bilateral relations between the two friendly nations.

10th Edition of Mitra Shakti Exercise

- ❖ The annual Mitra Shakti exercise started in 2012 and is held alternately in India and Sri Lanka. The 2024 exercise is the 10th edition, and the 9th exercise was held in Pune, India, in 2023.
- ❖ The Mitra Shakti exercise is focused on infantry, and generally, two mixed infantry divisions of the Indian and Sri Lankan Army participate in it.
- ❖ This year the 106 personnel of the Rajputana Rifles are participating in the exercise. The Sri Lanka Gajaba Regiment is representing Sri Lanka.
- ❖ During the exercise, each side will deploy one Infantry Battalion, three

Armoured Tanks, four BMP tanks, five to ten Artillery observers, fifty Engineers personnel, etc.

All India Institute of Ayurveda signed MoU with Amity University to promote Ayurveda Research and Education



Key Points:

- ❖ All India Institute of Ayurveda (AIIA) New Delhi has signed an MoU with Amity University Noida to collaborate on education, research, and technology.
- ❖ This MoU extends the ongoing five-year agreement with Amity University. The MoU was signed under the leadership of Amity University Chancellor, Dr. Atul Chauhan, and under the aegis of the Ministry of Ayush, Government of India. The objective of the MoU is to promote collaborative education programs, publications, capacity-building, and joint capacity-building projects.
- ❖ First-time country has won a Gold Medal in the Summer Olympics
- ❖ Botswana: Letsile Tebogo in 200 meters

- ❖ *Dominica: Thea LaFond in women's triple jump*
- ❖ *Guatemala: Adriana Ruano Oliva in shooting*

IAF Su-30 MKI return after participating in Exercise Udara Shakti 2024



Key Points:

- ❖ *The Indian Air Force (IAF) contingent returned to India after successfully participating in Exercise Udara Shakti 2024 in Malaysia's Kuantan. The joint air exercise was conducted in collaboration with the Royal Malaysian Air Force from the 5th to the 9th of August.*
- ❖ *During the exercise, the Indian Air Force's Su-30MKI fighter jets engaged in air combat missions alongside the Royal Malaysian Air Force's Su-30MKM fighters. The primary focus of the exercise was to bolster operational efficiency and enhance the technical expertise of both air forces.*

MEA, NSIL sign MoU to assist launch of Nepalese Munal satellite



Key Points:

- ❖ *The Ministry of External Affairs and ISRO's commercial arm NewSpace India Limited (NSIL) signed an agreement to grant assistance for launching the Nepal-built Munal satellite.*
- ❖ *Munal is an indigenous satellite developed in Nepal under the aegis of the Nepal Academy of Science and Technology (NAST).*
- ❖ *Antarikhya Pratishan Nepal (APN), a Nepalese space startup, has assisted Nepalese students in the design and fabrication of this satellite.*

Veteran actor Vijay Kadam passes away in Mumbai



Key Points:

- ❖ *Veteran actor Vijay Kadam passed away at the age of 67. Kadam acted in several Marathi plays, TV serials, and films.*

- ❖ He made his theater debut with the children's play Raja Bhikari Majhi Topi Chorli. Kadam's performances in notable plays such as Rathachakra, Gharte Amuche Chant, Vasudev Banthi, and Turtoor were highly appreciated.
- ❖ He also acted in several Marathi serials, including Gotaya, Damini, Partner, Songadaya Bajya, Indradhanushya, and Ghadlayam Bhadlayam, among others.

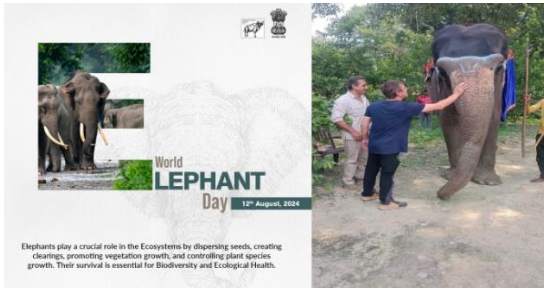
International Youth Day 2024



Key Points:

- ❖ Every year since 2010, the 12th of August has been observed as International Youth Day. This day celebrates the potential of youth worldwide, highlights the issues confronting youth, and calls upon the international community to use youth in solving the problems of the Earth.
- ❖ In India National Youth Day has been celebrated on 12 January since 1985. National Youth Day is observed in India on the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda.
- ❖ Background to the International Youth Day
- ❖ In 1991, at the first session of the World Youth Forum of the United Nations System, held in the Austrian capital city of Vienna, it was proposed that the world celebrate International Youth Day to focus attention on the problems of youth and use their potential in solving the world's problems.
- ❖ Later at the first session of the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youths hosted by the Portugal government in association with the United Nations in 1998, adopted 12 August as International Youth Day.
- ❖ Following this, the United Nations Security Council passed a resolution on 17 December 2009 to observe 12 August as International Youth Day. Thus, on 12 August 2010, the first International Youth Day was observed.
- ❖ Theme of the 2024 International Youth Day The United Nations has chosen "From Clicks to Progress: Youth Digital Pathways for Sustainable Development" as the theme of the 2024 International Youth Day

WORLD ELEPHANT DAY



Key Points:

- ❖ Two Canadian filmmakers, Patricia Sims and Michael Clark, and the Elephant Reintroduction Foundation based in Thailand observed the first

World Elephant Day on 12 August 2012.

- ❖ "Personifying prehistoric beauty, theological relevance, and environmental importance" has been chosen as the theme of World Elephant Day 2024.
- ❖ As per the 2017 census, there were 27,312 elephants in India, the highest in Asia.
- ❖ At present, there are 33 elephant reserves in 14 major elephant states of India.
- ❖ 33rd Elephant Reserve: Terai Elephant Reserve in Uttar Pradesh (notified in 2022).
- ❖ First Elephant Reserve: Singhbhum Elephant Reserve of Jharkhand (notified on 26 September 2001).
- ❖ States having maximum Elephant Reserves: Odisha and Tamil Nadu 5 each.



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