

IAS PUJA UNDER SCRUTINY



KEY POINTS

- ❖ Puja Khedkar, a probationary IAS officer who is under scrutiny over alleged misuse of power and privileges, has been recalled to the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration in Mussoorie and her training put on hold.
- ❖ According to a letter issued by Additional Chief secretary of Maharashtra, Nitin Gadre, the LBS National Academy of Administration Mussoorie has decided to put Dr Puja Khedkar's district training program on hold and has immediately recalled her for further necessary action.
- ❖ Khedkar secured a rank of 821 in the 2022 UPSC Civil Services Examination, and was allotted the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) under the Other Backward Classes (OBC) and Physically Handicapped (PH) quotas. Questions have been raised about her appointment under these categories
- ❖ Khedkar faces accusations of using fraudulent means to clear her civil services exam, including allegedly misrepresenting herself under the physical disabilities and OBC categories. Pune trainee IAS officer Puja Khedkar.
- ❖ Puja Khedkar recently came under intense media glare after she kicked up a controversy after she allegedly requested special privileges from the Pune Collector's office that were not permitted for her designation.
- ❖ The 34-year-old trainee officer also used her private Audi car with a red-blue beacon light and VIP number plate. She had also installed a 'Maharashtra government' board on her private car.
- ❖ The Centre has constituted a single-member committee for re-examining documents submitted by Puja to secure her candidature in the civil services examination and then for IAS selection.
- ❖ Khedkar's actions as a civil servant are governed primarily by two rules: the All India Services (Conduct) Rules, 1968, and the Indian Administrative Service (Probation) Rules, 1954.

Rules on 'integrity' of services

- ❖ All IAS, Indian Police Service (IPS) and Indian Forest Service officers are governed by the AIS (Conduct) Rules from the time they are allotted their service, and begin training. AIS (Conduct) Rule 3(1) states: "Every member of the Service shall at all times maintain absolute integrity and devotion to duty and shall do nothing which is unbecoming of a member of the Service."
- ❖ Rule 4(1) is more specific about what is "unbecoming". It states that officers must not use their "position or influence" to "secure employment for any member of his family with any private undertaking or NGO". In 2014, the government added a few sub-rules. This included that officers should maintain "high ethical standards, integrity and honesty; political neutrality; accountability and transparency; responsiveness to the public, particularly to the weaker sections; courtesy and good behaviour with the public".
- ❖ According to Rule 11(1), officers may accept gifts from "near relatives" or "personal friends" with whom they have "no official dealings", on occasions such as "weddings, anniversaries, funerals and religious functions". However, they must report (to the government) any gift whose value exceeds Rs 25,000. This threshold was last updated in 2015.
- ❖ There is an additional set of rules that govern the conduct of officers during their probation period, which lasts for at least two years after selection to the services. This includes the period of the officers' training at the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA) in Mussoorie. At the end of two years, officers sit for an examination, after clearing which they are confirmed in their respective services.
- ❖ During the probation period, officers draw a fixed salary and travel allowance. But they are not entitled to, as a right, a number of benefits that confirmed IAS officers receive. These include, among other things, an official car with a VIP number plate, official accommodation, an official chamber with adequate staff, a constable, etc.
- ❖ Rule 12 gives the circumstances in which probationers can be discharged. These include, among other things, the central government finding the probationer "ineligible for recruitment" or "unsuitable to be a member of" the service; the probationer "wilfully" neglecting her probationary studies or duties; and the probationer lacking in "qualities of mind and character" needed for the service.

IIT Delhi and Prasar Bharati host Robot Competition 'DDRobocon' India 2024 in Delhi



KEY POINTS

- ❖ IIT Delhi and Prasar Bharati host the two-day Robot Competition 'DD-Robocon' India 2024 at Thyagaraj Stadium in Delhi.
- ❖ More than 750 students from over 45 colleges, institutions, and universities participated in the competition.
- ❖ The winning team from DD-Robocon will represent India at the international AsiaPacific Broadcasting Union Robocon 2024, which will take place in QuangNinh, Vietnam.
- ❖ DD-Robocon India aims to promote technical skill development, innovation, and teamwork among engineering students by providing visibility and recognition in the field of robotics. The competition is an esteemed platform for showcasing and advancing the students' engineering and robotics capabilities.

Eastern India's 1st University for students with disabilities to be opened in Ranchi



KEY POINTS

- ❖ The Jharkhand government is working on a plan to open eastern India's first university for physically challenged students in the state.
- ❖ The proposed university will offer education according to the needs of students with disabilities. There will be arrangements for special courses and educational equipment for students with disabilities. They will be provided education according to their needs.
- ❖ The department also proposed a 'Navothan Scholarship Scheme' , under which the government will reimburse the full course fee (up to a maximum of Rs 10 lakh per year) of meritorious orphan and physically challenged students of the state.
- ❖ Besides, these students will be given assistance of Rs 48,000 per year for lodging and food arrangements.

**Global Conference on Space Research
Kicked off in South Korea's Busan**



KEY POINTS

- ❖ A global conference on space research kicked off in South Korea's Busan city to foster international scientific research in space.
- ❖ According to the Korea Aero Space Administration (KASA), about 3,000 space scientists and industry officials from 60 nations attended the 45th Scientific Assembly of the Committee on Space Research. It marks the first time that South Korea is hosting the biennial global conference.

About South Korea

- ❖ **Capital** – Seoul
- ❖ **Currency** – South Korean Won
- ❖ **Prime Minister** – Han Duck-soo
- ❖ **President** – Yoon Seok-youl

Sri Lanka to host the ICC Annual Conference from July 19 to 22



KEYPOINTS

- ❖ Sri Lanka Cricket will host the Annual Conference of the International Cricket Council (ICC) in Sri Lanka from July 19th to 22nd, 2024.
- ❖ The mega cricket conference will bring together over 220 delegates from 108 ICC member countries from across the world, covering regions such as Africa, the Americas, Asia, East Asia Pacific, and Europe.
- ❖ This year's conference, themed 'Capitalizing on the Olympic Opportunity,' will discuss topics such as 'Diversity and Inclusion,' 'environmental sustainability and the sport,' and 'Cricket's triumphant return at LA28.'
- ❖ The annual conference will consist of a series of key meetings, workshops, and networking sessions, and key decisions will be taken for the benefit of the future of the game.

About International Cricket Council (ICC)

- ❖ The International Cricket Council is the global governing body of cricket.
- ❖ It was founded as the Imperial Cricket Conference in 1909 by representatives from Australia, England and South Africa.
- ❖ It was renamed as the International Cricket Conference in 1965, and took up its current name in 1987.

- Formation – 15 June 1909
- Headquarters – Dubai, UAE
- Chairman – Greg Barclay (New Zealand)
- Deputy Chairman – Imran Khwaja (Singapore)
- CEO – Geoff Allardice (Australia)
- General Manager – Wasim Khan
- Membership – 108 members

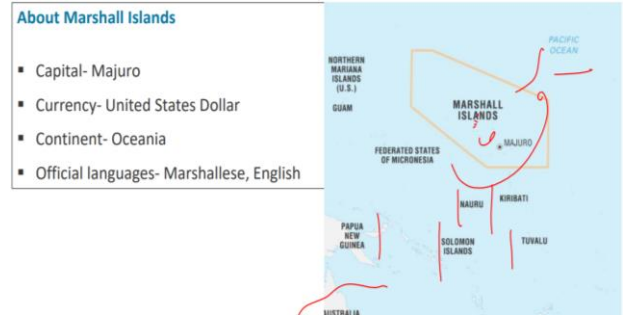
India and Marshall Islands sign MoU on development projects



KEYPOINTS

- ❖ India has signed an agreement with the Marshall Islands to provide an annual grant for four community development projects as part of New Delhi's outreach to Pacific Island states.
- ❖ The MoU was signed at the Indian embassy in Tokyo by India's ambassador to Japan, Sibi George, and foreign minister Kalani Kaneko of Marshall Islands.
- ❖ The embassy in Tokyo is also responsible for overseeing relations with Marshall Islands.

- ❖ The MoU will enable the implementation of a community sports centre in Ailuk Atoll, an airport terminal on Mejit Island, and community centres at Arno and Wotje Atolls



World Championship of Legends 2024: India Champions Clinch Title with over Pakistan Champions



KEYPOINTS

- ❖ In a pulsating finale of the World Championship of Legends 2024, India Champions emerged victorious by defeating arch-rivals Pakistan Champions by five wickets here at Edgbaston.
- ❖ Pakistan Champions, after winning the toss, elected to bat first. The Pakistani innings got off to a solid start with Kamran Akmal (24 off 19) and Maqsood (21 off 12) providing an early burst of runs. However, the Indian bowlers managed to keep the scoring in check with regular wickets.

Spain defeats England 2-1 to clinch record 4th European Soccer Championship Title



KEYPOINTS

- ❖ In Football, Spain won its record fourth European soccer championship after defeating England 2-1 in the finals of Euro 2024 in Berlin. Nico Williams provided the first goal for Spain, scoring less than two minutes into the second half after a scoreless opening.
- ❖ This is England's second consecutive runner-up finish, having lost to Italy in the final of Euro 2020. The country has never won a European championship and its last major international tournament win was the 1966 World Cup.

Thomas Muller Retires from International Football



KEYPOINTS

- ❖ Thomas Müller, the German football icon, has announced his retirement from international football following the conclusion of Euro 2024.
- ❖ The 34-year-old featured in his eighth and last tournament on July 5, in Germany's 2-1 quarter-final defeat by Spain, where he was brought on as a substitute in the 80th minute.
- ❖ Muller helped Germany win the 2014 World Cup and has the third most appearances for the national team with 131 caps and 45 goals.
- ❖ He also won the Golden Boot and Young Player Award during the 2010 World Cup, when Germany finished third.

India to host 2nd Asia Pacific Ministerial conference on civil aviation



KEYPOINTS

- ❖ India will host the second Asia Pacific Ministerial Conference on civil aviation on September 11 and 12, 2024. The first conference was organised in February 2018 in Beijing. As many as 39 Member States of U.N. aviation safety body International Civil Aviation Organisation fall in the Asia Pacific region and are expected to participate.

- ❖ This region recorded the 33.41% of the global departures, which is the highest among all the regions in the world and it is indeed opportune that the second ministerial conference to consolidate Asia Pacific regional collaboration and co-operation to craft a futuristic vision in the region including a culture of innovation and a culture of safety is being held here.

World Snake Day



KEYPOINTS

- ❖ World Snake Day is celebrated every year on 16 July.
- ❖ It is dedicated to raising awareness about the diverse and often misunderstood reptiles. The day aims to educate the public about the role snakes play in ecosystems, dispel myths, and promote conservation efforts.

- ❖ India is home to around 300 snake species, and World Snake Day is a great time to promote the importance of snake conservation and dispels misconceptions.

Most Poisonous Snakes In Worldwide

- ❖ Black Mamba, Boomslang, Fer-de-Lance, Russell's Viper, Eastern Tiger Snake, Sawscaled viper, Banded Krait, King Cobra, Coastal Taipan, Inland Taipan.

Most Poisonous Snakes In India

- ❖ King Cobra, Indian Krait, Russell's Viper, Saw-Scaled Viper, Indian Cobra (*Naja naja*), Malabar Pit Viper, Banded Krait, Bamboo Pit Viper, Hump-Nosed Pit Viper, Andaman Pit Viper.



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