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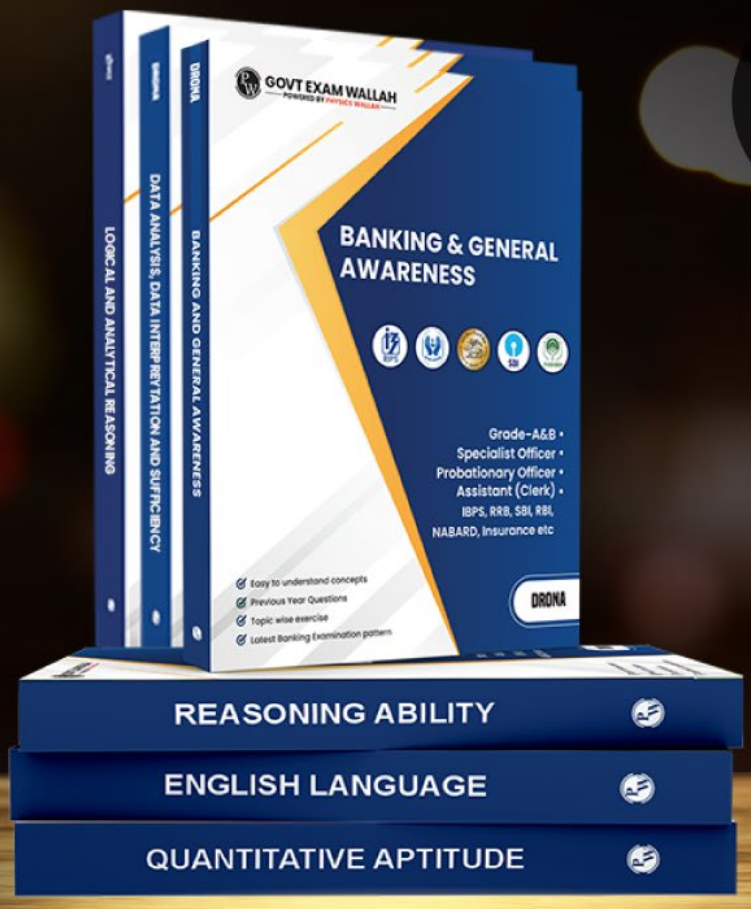
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Banking and Economy

Chapter 1

RBI imposes Rs 2 lakh penalty on TDCC Bank for sanctioning loan to its director

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has imposed a penalty of Rs 2 lakh on the Thane District Central Co-operative (TDCC) Bank for violating sections 20 and 56 of the Banking Regulation (BR) Act, 1949, by sanctioning a loan to one of its directors.

This regulatory action falls under the category of Regulatory Actions and Decisions.

- **Regulatory Body:** Reserve Bank of India (RBI)
- **Action:** Penalty of Rs 2 lakh
- **Affected Entity:** Thane District Central Co-operative (TDCC) Bank
- **Reason:** Violation of sections 20 and 56 of the Banking Regulation (BR) Act, 1949, by sanctioning a loan to one of its directors

Policymakers Open to Looking into AIF Circular Concerns

India's policymakers are open to looking at the industry's concerns relating to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) circular on December 19 that imposed restrictions on investments in Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs) by banks and non-banking finance companies (NBFCs).

The Indian Venture and Alternate Capital Association (IVCA) lobby group has approached the government, concerned that the measure will impact the flow of funds to the startup sector.

- **Regulatory Body:** Reserve Bank of India (RBI)
- **Action:** Circular restricting investments in AIFs by banks and NBFCs.
- **Affected Entity:** Indian startup ecosystem, AIFs, banks, and NBFCs.
- **Purpose:** The RBI aims to address concerns over ever-greening lending and mask bad loans in the financial system.
- **Initiative/Order:** RBI Circular on December 19, 2023, imposing restrictions on AIF investments by banks and NBFCs.

Bank of Baroda fined ₹5 Crore by RBI

Bank of Baroda was fined ₹5 crore by the RBI in December 2023, in light of a shortage in the soiled note remittances. The RBI also imposed an additional penalty of ₹2,750 on the bank after it detected "fake and mutilated" notes in the soiled note remittances.

The penalties imposed by the RBI are in line with its Clean Note Policy, which requires immediate penalty levying upon the detection of a shortage in soiled note remittances or chest balances, regardless of the number of pieces detected.

- **Regulatory Body:** Reserve Bank of India (RBI)
- **Initiative/Order:** Penalty imposed under RBI's Clean Note Policy.
- **Purpose:** To ensure proper handling and remittance of soiled notes and maintain the integrity of currency circulation.

MUFG Eyes India as China Falters

Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group (MUFG), Japan's largest bank, is planning to expand its operations in India, where it sees strong growth potential and less risks than in China.

The bank has already made some key investments in India, such as opening a branch, setting up a fund, and acquiring a fintech stake.

- **Regulatory Body:** Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group
- **Purpose:** To capitalize on India's economic growth, diversify its customer base, and reduce risks associated with its investments in China.
- **Indian Government Incentives:** Various initiatives to attract foreign investments, including tax breaks, simplified regulations, and infrastructure development.
- **RBI Regulations:** Regulatory framework for foreign banks operating in India, including capital adequacy requirements and licensing procedures.

Some small banks' returns on savings accounts top FD rates of bigger peers

Small banks with limited branch networks are offering higher returns on savings accounts, exceeding the fixed

deposit rates of larger banks. This trend, driven by the intensifying competition to attract funds, sees smaller banks offering 7-7.5% interest on savings, compared to larger banks' 7-7.2% on fixed deposits.

- **Regulatory Body:** Reserve Bank of India (RBI)
- **Purpose:** Small banks are offering higher savings account returns to attract funds and compete effectively with larger banks.
- **Growth Rate:** This trend is relatively new, driven by intense competition for deposits in a growing Indian economy where credit demand outpaces deposit accumulation.
- **RBI Regulations:** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) sets minimum interest rates for savings accounts, leaving banks free to offer higher rates to attract customers.
- **Impact on Savers:** This shift potentially benefits savers seeking higher returns on their easily accessible savings.

Yes Bank Cofounder Rana Kapoor Granted Bail in Money Laundering Case

Yes Bank co-founder Rana Kapoor was granted bail by a special court in a money laundering case linked to alleged financial irregularities at the bank. However, he won't be released from jail yet as he hasn't been granted bail in a related case by the Central Bureau of Investigation.

- **Purpose:** The bail grant is a legal process providing temporary release to Kapoor while ensuring his presence during the trial.
- **Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA):** Empowers the ED to investigate and prosecute cases of money laundering.
- **Bail Guidelines**: Supreme Court guidelines allow for bail in certain cases, especially if the trial is delayed or the accused has spent a significant amount of time in pre-trial detention.

Indian banking system is grappling with a widening liquidity deficit

As of December 20, 2023, the Indian banking system's liquidity deficit hit a near-8-year high of ₹2.27 trillion, raising concerns about potential credit constraints and economic slowdown.

The deficit has widened rapidly in recent months, with a jump of 57% from its previous high of ₹1.44 trillion on 1 April 2023.

Regulatory Actions and Decisions:

- **RBI Monitoring:** The RBI closely monitors liquidity conditions and is likely to take further measures as needed to maintain financial stability.
- **Banks' Capital Adequacy:** The RBI may enforce stricter capital adequacy requirements for banks to ensure they have sufficient buffers to withstand liquidity pressures.
- **Debt Management:** The government's debt management strategies will also play a role in managing liquidity in the system.

Public sector banks earns net profit Rs 68,500 crore in first six months of current financial year

Public sector banks in India have reportedly earned a net profit of around Rs 68,500 crore during the first six months of the current financial year. This significant profit is attributed to higher credit demand and lower non-performing assets.

- **Initiative/Order:** Review of financial performance and progress of implementation of government schemes.
- **Purpose:** To assess the progress made by banks in achieving targets for government schemes such as Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY), Kisan Credit Card (KCC), Stand-Up India, and Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY).

Indian Venture and Alternate Capital Association (IVCA) lobby group impact on startup sector funds

The Indian Venture and Alternate Capital Association (IVCA) has raised concerns with the government about a recent Reserve Bank of India (RBI) circular that imposed restrictions on investments in Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs) by banks and non-banking finance companies (NBFCs).

- **Initiative/Order:** Imposed restrictions on investments in Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs) by banks and non-banking finance companies (NBFCs)
- **Purpose:** To plug a loophole that existed and prevent ever-greening of loans
- **Regulatory Body:** Reserve Bank of India (RBI)
- **Action**: Imposed restrictions on investments in AIFs by banks and NBFCs
- **Affected Entity:** Banks and NBFCs

RBI Proposes Draft Framework for Self-Regulatory Organisations (SROs) in Banking and NBFCs"

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has proposed a draft framework for recognizing Self-Regulatory Organisations (SROs) for its Regulated Entities (REs).

- **Regulatory Body:** Reserve Bank of India (RBI)
- **Initiative/Order:** Draft Omnibus Framework for Recognising Self-Regulatory Organisations (SROs) for its Regulated Entities (REs)
- **Purpose:** To establish better industry standards for self-regulation and address challenges in regulating the rapidly growing sector effectively
- **Action:** Proposed a draft framework for recognising SROs
- **Affected Entity:** Regulated Entities (REs) of the Reserve Bank of India

RBI Facilitates Card-on-File Tokenisation Directly at Issuer Bank Level

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has introduced a Card-on-File (CoF) tokenisation facility at the issuer bank level. This move aims to enhance transaction security and convenience for cardholders, allowing them to create and link tokens to their accounts across various e-commerce applications.

- **Regulatory Body:** Reserve Bank of India (RBI)
- **Initiative/Order:** Card-on-File Tokenisation (CoFT) directly through card-issuing banks/institutions
- **Purpose:** To provide cardholders with an additional choice to tokenise their cards for multiple merchant sites through a single process
- **Action:** Introduced a Card-on-File (CoF) token facility at the level of banks and other institutions.

RBI Central Board holds 605th meeting to deliberate on Economic Landscape

The 605th meeting of the RBI Central Board, chaired by Governor Shaktikanta Das, reviewed the economic and financial scenario, both domestic and global. The board also discussed the activities of select central office departments and the draft report on the trend and progress of banking in India, 2022-23.

- **Regulatory Body:** Reserve Bank of India (RBI)
- **Initiative/Order:** 605th meeting of the Central Board of Directors
- **Purpose:** To review the current economic and financial situation, both domestically and globally.
- **Action:** Conducted the 605th meeting of the Central Board of Directors

IndusInd Bank Introduces 'Indus Solitaire Program' for the Diamond Industry

IndusInd Bank has launched the 'Indus Solitaire Program,' a first-of-its-kind community banking initiative for the diamond industry. The program offers tailored banking services, including 24*7 locker access, add-on family accounts, and customized diamond industry employee salary accounts.

- **Organisation Name:** IndusInd Bank
- **Achievement:** Launched the 'Indus Solitaire Program,' a community banking initiative meticulously crafted for the diamond industry
- **Purpose:** To offer tailored banking services for the Diamond Industry, enhancing customer experience and meeting diverse financial needs.
- **Comparison:** This is an industry-first community banking program for Diamond Cohorts
- **Key Stakeholders:** IndusInd Bank, Diamond Industry, Customers in the diamond industry

IDFC FIRST Bank, LIC Cards, and Mastercard Introduce Exclusive Co-Branded Credit Card

IDFC FIRST Bank, LIC Cards, and Mastercard have launched an exclusive co-branded credit card, available in two variants — LIC Classic and LIC Select. The card offers benefits like no joining & annual fees, low interest rates starting from 9% p.a., and reward points on every LIC insurance premium payment.

- **Company Name:** IDFC FIRST Bank, LIC Cards, and Mastercard12
- **Achievement:** Launched an exclusive co-branded credit card, available in two variants — LIC Classic and LIC Select
- **Reason:** The card aims to meet the dynamic financial needs of India, offering value to consumers of varied age groups across the country.

RBI Grants Authorization to Bandhan Bank for Pension Disbursement to Retired Railway Employees

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has authorized Bandhan Bank to disburse pensions to retired railway employees. The bank will integrate its system with the Railways Ministry to operationalize the pension disbursement process.

- **Regulatory Body**: Reserve Bank of India (RBI)

- **Action:** Authorized Bandhan Bank to disburse pensions to retired railway employees
- **Affected Entity**: Bandhan Bank
- **Reason:** This authorization enables Bandhan Bank to provide pensions to ex-Ministry of Railways employees and access about 50,000 Indian Railways retirees annually across various offices.

SBI to sign 70-million-euro LoC with KfW for solar projects

The State Bank of India (SBI) will sign a 70 million euro Line of Credit (LoC) with German Development Bank KfW to support solar photovoltaic projects in India.

- **Regulatory Body:** Reserve Bank of India (RBI)
- **Action:** Authorization of SBI to sign a 70 million euro LoC with KfW
- **Affected Entity:** State Bank of India (SBI), Solar Photovoltaics (PV) projects in India
- **Purpose:** The LoC aims to support Solar Photovoltaics (PV) projects in India, contributing to the country's commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and transition away from fossil fuels.
- **Achievement:** Signing a 70 million euro Line of Credit (LoC) with German Development Bank KfW for promoting solar projects in India.

Poonawalla Housing Finance becomes Grihum Housing Finance

Poonawalla Housing Finance has rebranded itself as Grihum Housing Finance after TPG Capital Asia acquired a 99.02% equity stake. The company aims to double its business in three years, focusing on the working class segment.

- **Latest data or figures:** Grihum Housing Finance has achieved a milestone of Rs 7,500 crores in Assets Under Management (AUM)
- **Growth Rate**: The company has registered a growth at a CAGR of ~28% over the last six years
- **Company Name:** Grihum Housing Finance
- **Achievement:** The company has rebranded itself from Poonawalla Housing Finance to Grihum Housing Finance

RBI raises UPI limit for Healthcare And Education to Rs 5 Lakh

The Reserve Bank of India raised UPI payment limits for hospitals and educational institutions to Rs 5 lakh from Rs 1 lakh per transaction. This will help the consumers to make UPI payments of higher amounts for education and healthcare purposes.

- **Latest data or figures:** UPI transactions reached a cumulative value of Rs 17.4 lakh crore in December 2023
- **Regulatory Body:** Reserve Bank of India (RBI)
- **Initiative/Order:** Raised the UPI transaction limit for payments to hospitals and educational institutions from Rs 1 lakh to Rs 5 lakh per transaction
- **Purpose:** To facilitate consumers in conducting UPI payments for education and healthcare purposes involving higher amounts
- **Action:** Raised the UPI transaction limit for payments to hospitals and educational institutions
- **Affected Entity:** Consumers making UPI payments for education and healthcare purposes

Bank of India launches Nari Shakti savings account for Women

Bank of India has launched the 'Nari Shakti Savings Account' for women with an independent source of income. The account offers personal accident insurance cover, concessional rate of interest on retail loans, and other benefits.

- **Latest data or figures**: Bank of India has launched the 'Nari Shakti Savings Account' for women with an independent source of income
- **Company Name**: Bank of India
- **Achievement:** Launched the 'Nari Shakti Savings Account' for women with an independent source of income
- **Background Information**: The 'Nari Shakti Savings Account' offers personal accident insurance cover, concessional rate of interest on retail loans, discounted health insurance and wellness products, and attractive rebates on locker facilities.

RBI cancels license of UP based Urban Co-operative Bank

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has cancelled the license of the Urban Co-operative Bank in Sitapur, Uttar Pradesh, due to severe financial irregularities and non-compliance with banking regulations. The bank's continued operation was deemed a significant risk to its depositors.

- **Latest data or figures:** The Urban Co-operative Bank, Sitapur, Uttar Pradesh, had 98.32 percent of depositors entitled to receive the full amount of their deposits from DICGC

- **Key Contributors**: Urban Co-operative Bank, Sitapur, Uttar Pradesh
- **Achievement**: The bank's license was cancelled by the RBI
- **Regulatory Body**: Reserve Bank of India (RBI)
- **Action:** Cancelled the license of Urban Co-operative Bank, Sitapur, Uttar Pradesh

RBI cancels license of Kolhapur based Shankarrao Pujari Nutan Nagari Sahakari Bank Limited

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has cancelled the license of Kolhapur-based Shankarrao Pujari Nutan Nagari Sahakari Bank Limited due to inadequate capital and earning prospects. The bank's operation was deemed prejudicial to its depositors' interests.

- **Latest data or figures:** As per the data submitted by the bank, 99.85% of the depositors are entitled to receive the full amount of their deposits from Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC)
- **Key Contributors:** Shankarrao Pujari Nutan Nagari Sahakari Bank Limited
- **Regulatory Body:** Reserve Bank of India (RBI)
- **Action:** Cancelled the license of Shankarrao Pujari Nutan Nagari Sahakari Bank Limited
- **Key Stakeholders:** Reserve Bank of India (RBI), Shankarrao Pujari Nutan Nagari Sahakari Bank Limited

Report and Index

Chapter 2

India tops Global Remittance Charts with $125 Billion in 2023

India has topped the global remittance charts in 2023, with a total of $125 billion sent by Indians living in different parts of the world to their families in India. This achievement is attributed to a tight labor market in the United States and robust employment growth in Europe.

- **Name of the Report:** World Bank's Migration and Development Brief.
- **Release Date:** December 18, 2023
- **Organizing/Releasing Body:** World Bank
- **Purpose of the Report:** The report aims to provide insights into the remittance flows to low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) and the evolving dynamics in this financial landscape.
- **Top Performers:** India ($125 billion), Mexico ($67 billion), China ($50 billion)

Bhupender Yadav unveils NITI Aayog's report on Global Green Growth

The Hon'ble Union Minister Bhupender Yadav unveiled NITI Aayog's report titled 'A Green and Sustainable Growth Agenda for the Global Economy'. The report, a significant effort of NITI Aayog in partnership with the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the Global Development Network (GDN), is based on the proceedings of the G20 international conference held in New Delhi.

- **Name of the Report:** 'A Green and Sustainable Growth Agenda for the Global Economy'
- **Release Date:** December 20, 2023
- **Organizing/Releasing Body:** NITI Aayog, in partnership with the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the Global Development Network (GDN)
- **Purpose of the Report:** The report aims to provide insights into the prospects and challenges of green and sustainable growth for the global economy.

Tamil Nadu retains 'Achiever' status in Logistics Infra Rankings of states

Tamil Nadu has retained its 'achiever' status in the Logistics Ease Across Different States (LEADS) 2023 rankings. The state has demonstrated exceptional performance, particularly in the logistics infrastructure.

- **Name of the Report:** Logistics Ease Across Different States (LEADS) 2023 rankings
- **Release Date:** December 19, 2023
- **Organizing/Releasing Body:** Ministry of Commerce and Industry
- **Purpose of the Report:** The LEADS initiative serves as a benchmarking tool to assess the performance of logistics in states and union territories.
- **Top Performers:** Tamil Nadu

Aster Medcity claims the No.1 spot as India's leading emerging hospital

Aster Medcity, located in Kochi, Kerala, has been ranked No.1 in the 'Best Multi-specialty Hospital Emerging' category by The Week-Hansa Research 2023. The hospital is known for delivering quality healthcare at an affordable cost through its Centres of Excellence.

- **Name of the Report:** The Week-Hansa Research 2023
- **Release Date:** December 15, 2023
- **Organizing/Releasing Body:** The Week-Hansa Research
- **Purpose of the Report:** The report ranks hospitals based on their performance and contribution to healthcare.
- **Top Performers:** Aster Medcity
- **Key Metrics/Parameters:** Quality of healthcare, affordability, and accessibility

Hurun India's 'Top 100 Under 30 List' for 2023

The founders of the Quick Commerce app Zepto, Kaivalya Vohra (21 years) and Aadit Palicha (22 years), have topped the Hurun India's 'Top 100 Under 30 List' for 2023.

The list showcases 100 Indian entrepreneurs aged 30 years and below who have demonstrated exceptional prowess in their respective fields.

- **Name of the Report:** Hurun India's 'Top 100 Under 30 List' 2023
- **Release Date:** December 15, 2023
- **Organizing/Releasing Body:** Hurun India
- **Purpose of the Report:** The list is a celebration of young entrepreneurs aged 30 and below who have showcased outstanding prowess in their respective fields.
- **Top Performers:** Kaivalya Vohra and Aadit Palicha, founders of Zepto

India's light vehicle market outpaces global top 10

India's light vehicle market has outpaced the global top 10, exceeding pre-pandemic levels.

In 2023, India's light vehicle market grew by 36% over 2019, making it the fastest-growing among the world's ten largest automobile markets.

- **Name of the Report:** S&P Global Mobility forecast
- **Release Date:** December 13, 2023
- **Purpose of the Report:** The report provides a forecast of the global light vehicle market.
- **Top Performers:** India
- **Methodology:** The rankings are based on the growth of the light vehicle market in each country compared to the pre-pandemic year of 2019.

Shahrukh Khan tops UK's list of the 'Top 50 Asian Celebrities in the World' for 2023

Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan has topped the UK's list of the 'Top 50 Asian Celebrities in the World' for 2023, following the historic success of his films 'Pathaan' and 'Jawan'.

- **Name of the Report:** 'Top 50 Asian Celebrities in the World' 2023
- **Release Date:** December 14, 2023
- **Organizing/Releasing Body:** UK's weekly Eastern Eye
- **Purpose of the Report:** The list celebrates South Asian stars who shone the brightest in 2023 based on their impactful work, breaking boundaries, and being generally inspiring over the course of the year.
- **Top Performers:** 1. Shah Rukh Khan, 2. Alia Bhatt, 3. Priyanka Chopra
- **Key Metrics/Parameters:** Impactful work, breaking boundaries, and being generally inspiring

Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI)

India has climbed to the 7th position in this year's Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI), up one spot from the previous year.

The country received a high ranking in the greenhouse gas Emissions and Energy Use categories, but a medium in Climate Policy and Renewable Energy.

- **Name of the Report:** Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI)
- **Release Date:** December 9, 2023
- **Purpose of the Report:** The CCPI monitors climate mitigation efforts of 63 countries plus the EU, covering more than 90% of the Global Greenhouse Gas Emissions.
- **Top Performers:** Denmark, Estonia, and Philippines
- **Key Metrics/Parameters:** Greenhouse gas Emissions, Energy Use, Climate Policy, and Renewable Energy.

LIC ranks 4th globally in S&P Global's 2022 Insurance Report

Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) is the world's fourth largest insurer based on life and accident & health reserves, as per a report released by S&P Global Market Intelligence. LIC has reserves of over $500 billion.

- **Name of the Report:** S&P Global's 2022 Insurance Report
- **Release Date:** December 5, 2023
- **Organizing/Releasing Body:** S&P Global Market Intelligence
- **Purpose of the Report:** The report ranks global insurance companies based on their life and accident & health reserves.
- **Top Performers:** Allianz SE, China Life Insurance, Nippon Life Insurance, and Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC)

Forbes' "World's 100 Most Powerful Women" of 2023

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, HCL Corporation Chairperson Roshni Nadar Malhotra, Steel Authority of India Chairperson Soma Mondal, and Biocon Executive Chairperson Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw are the four Indians who have made it to Forbes' annual list of 'The World's 100 Most Powerful Women' of 2023.

- **Name of the Report:** Forbes' "World's 100 Most Powerful Women"
- **Release Date:** December 6, 2023
- **Organizing/Releasing Body:** Forbes
- **Purpose of the Report:** The list recognizes the world's most influential women across various sectors, from politics to entertainment.
- **Top Performers (From India):** Nirmala Sitharaman (32nd), Roshni Nadar Malhotra (60th), Soma Mondal (70th), and Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw (76th)

MoU and Agreements

Chapter 3

RITES and NEEPCO partner to boost logistical infrastructure.

RITES Ltd. and North Eastern Electric Power Corporation Limited (NEEPCO) have signed an MoU to collaborate on consultancy works for strengthening logistical infrastructure at various hydropower stations in the region, including the Siang Basin.

- **Date:** The MoU was signed on December 22, 2023
- **Purpose/Objective:** The primary goal of the MoU is to strengthen logistical infrastructure at various hydropower stations in the region, including the Siang Basin.
- **Key Provisions:** As per the MoU, RITES will support NEEPCO as a Project Management Consultant for works related to rail infrastructure facilities, including signalling & telecommunications, overhead equipment, and conveyor systems.
- **Future Implications:** The company is looking forward to working in synergy with NEEPCO and support their endeavour of increasing access to clean energy.

JioMart partners with DAY-NRLM to enable SHGs sell products

The Union Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) signed an MoU with JioMart to enhance the outreach of products from self-help groups (SHGs) under the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM), thereby empowering rural artisans.

- **Date:** December 22, 2023
- **Purpose/Objective:** The primary goal of the MoU is to enable SHGs to be onboarded as sellers onto JioMart, thereby expanding their market presence and offering their curated products to a broader consumer base.
- **Key Provisions:** As part of the partnership, all SHG sellers associated with the DAY-NRLM will receive support and guidance to grow their online businesses.
- **Benefits/Outcomes:** The partnership is expected to enhance the income of SHG members on a sustainable basis, increase the visibility of their products, and strengthen the livelihoods of local artisans and small businesses.

IIM Kashipur and Zenith Academy launched rail management programme

IIM Kashipur and Zenith Railway Academy have launched an 11-month Executive Post Graduate Certificate in Rail Management programme.

- **Date:** The programme will commence from January 27, 2024.
- **Purpose:** The programme aims to equip professionals and executives with the expertise and managerial acumen required to excel in today's dynamic rail industry.
- **Key Provisions:** The course will also comprise of a complimentary rail industry orientation course worth Rs 25,000. The fee for this course is Rs 180,000, put of which Rs 60,000 should be paid immediately, followed by Rs 60,000 within one week of offer rollout, and the third payment of Rs 60,000 on February 20, 2024.

DB Schenker India and CONCOR ink MoU for EXIM

DB Schenker India and Container Corporation of India (CONCOR) have signed a MoU to collaborate for EXIM and domestic business with a strong emphasis on sustainability. The MoU underscores the commitment of both organizations to contribute to sustainable supply chain practices and domestic multimodal solutions in the logistics industry.

- **Date:** December 19, 2023
- **Purpose:** The MoU underscores the commitment of both organizations to contribute to sustainable supply chain practices and domestic multimodal solutions in the logistics industry.
- **Benefits/Outcomes:** The MoU will contribute to sustainable supply chain practices and domestic multimodal solutions in the logistics industry.

NSDC signs MoU with Saudi govt to protect rights of skilled labourers

The National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) has signed a MoU with the government of Saudi Arabia to protect the rights of skilled labourers from India. The MoU underscores the commitment of both organizations to contribute to sustainable supply chain practices and domestic multimodal solutions in the logistics industry.

- **Purpose:** The primary goal of this MoU is to safeguard the rights of skilled Indian laborers, encompassing various professions such as Air Conditioner (AC) mechanics and car painters, currently employed in Saudi Arabia.
- **Key Provisions**: By registering with NSDC, these skilled labours will get to know where they are going, for which work and with whom they will be working. The registration process will be free of cost, and skilled labourers from all categories can register themselves on NSDC.

GoI, ADB sign 37 bn Japanese Yen loan for Delhi-Meerut RRTS Corridor

The Government of India and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) signed an agreement for a 37 billion Japanese Yen ($250 million) loan on December 15, 2023, to continue financing the construction of the 82-kilometre Delhi-Meerut Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) corridor. The RRTS will have multi-modal hubs to ensure smooth interchange with other transport modes. The duration of the MoU is not mentioned in the sources.

- **Date:** The agreement was signed on December 15, 2023.
- **Purpose:** The primary goal of this MoU is to expand economic and employment opportunities in the region by cutting travel time from 3-4 hours to about 1 hour.
- **Benefits/Outcomes:** The MoU aims to expand economic and employment opportunities in the region by cutting travel time from 3-4 hours to about 1 hour.

NITI Aayog and IFPRI sign SoI for agricultural & rural development

The National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Aayog) and the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) signed a Statement of Intent (SoI), aiming to fortify policy and program frameworks contributing to India's developmental objectives. The five-year SoI grants IFPRI a broad mandate to support NITI's Agriculture Vertical in crucial areas.

- **Date:** The SoI was signed on December 13, 2023.
- **Purpose:** The primary goal of this MoU is to strengthen policy and program frameworks that contribute to India's developmental objectives.
- **Duration:** The duration of the MoU is five years.
- **Key Provisions:** The SoI activities include developing and tracking Rural Transformation Indicators, supporting the design and evaluation of flagship programs, providing policy analytical tools, and generating evidence on India's agri-food trade in regional and global contexts.
- **Benefits:** The SoI aims to fortify policy and program frameworks that contribute to India's developmental objectives.

Indian Navy and IIT Kanpur signed MoU for innovation and research

The Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur (IITK) and Indian Navy signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) at the Naval Headquarters, New Delhi, symbolising their commitment to promote technology development, innovative solutions and joint R&D. The MoU would serve as a broader framework and enable both sides to enhance capacity building, provide solutions to field level issues and enhance training effectiveness through exchange of faculty/ guest lectures.

- **Date**: The MoU was signed on December 15, 2023.
- **Purpose**: The primary goal of this MoU is to promote technology development, innovative solutions and joint R&D.
- **Key Provisions:** The MoU would serve as a broader framework and enable both sides to enhance capacity building, provide solutions to field level issues and enhance training effectiveness through exchange of faculty/ guest lectures.
- **Benefits/Outcomes:** The MoU aims to promote technology development, innovative solutions and joint R&D.

Reliance Industries joins hand with DBS Bank India

Reliance Industries has partnered with DBS Bank India to launch a financing program for compressed biogas (CBG) plants. The financing program is designed to make the CBG supply chain competitive and achieve enhanced commercial scale.

- **Date:** The MoU was signed on December 13, 2023.

- **Purpose:** The primary goal of this MoU is to facilitate the development of an ecosystem for vendor partners to aggregate agricultural residue as inputs for Reliance's CBG production plants across India.
- **Key Provisions:** The financing program is designed to make the CBG supply chain competitive and achieve enhanced commercial scale.

Tata Power, Indian Oil Corp to co-deploy over 500 EV charging points

Tata Power and Indian Oil Corp join forces to install 500+ fast and ultra-fast EV charging points across Indian Oil's retail outlets, boosting EV charging infrastructure and accelerating EV adoption.

- **Date:** October 30, 2023 (MoU signed)
- **Purpose:** To expand India's EV charging network by strategically placing chargers at existing fuel stations, addressing range anxiety and encouraging EV use.
- **Key Provisions:**
  - Tata Power to install and operate the chargers.
  - Focus on major cities and key highways.
  - Integration with both companies' EV charging apps for user convenience.
- **Benefits/Outcomes:**
  - Increased accessibility and reduced charging time for EV users.
  - Potential for higher EV sales and market share for both companies.
  - Contribution to India's electric mobility and sustainability goals.

AIIB and UNDP collaborated for Sustainable Infrastructure Development

The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen collaboration in promoting sustainable infrastructure development and address development challenges in Asia and beyond.

- **Date:** The MoU was signed on December 5, 2023.
- **Purpose**: The primary goal of this MoU is to strengthen collaboration in promoting sustainable infrastructure development and address development challenges in Asia and beyond.
- **Key Provisions:** Under the MoU, AIIB and UNDP plan to co-invest and leverage multilateral funding and private financing in developing countries, collaborate on measuring the impact of investments for climate goals and the SDGs and pursue joint technical assistance and exploration of innovative derisking instruments, knowledge sharing, joint advocacy and policy support work.

MoD, Telecommunication Consultant India Ltd inks MoU for digital infra

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) has signed a contract worth Rs 588.68 Cr with Telecommunications Consultants India Limited for the "Digital Coast Guard project."

- **Purpose:** The primary goal of this MoU is to enhance the Indian Coast Guard's digital infrastructure and communication capabilities.
- **Benefits/Outcomes:** The project aims to enhance the Indian Coast Guard's digital infrastructure and communication capabilities.

Union Bank of India, Accenture joined hands for technical development

Union Bank of India has signed an MoU with Accenture to design and develop a scalable and secure enterprise data lake platform with advanced analytics and reporting capabilities.

- **Purpose:** The primary goal of this MoU is to boost the bank's operational efficiency and enhance its ability to offer customer-centric banking services and manage risk.
- **Key Provisions:** The program will boost the bank's operational efficiency and enhance its ability to offer customer-centric banking services and manage risk.
- **Benefits/Outcomes:** The collaboration aims to democratize data-driven insights enabled by AI, generative AI and analytics to foster a culture of customer-centricity, agility, and innovation.

India announces $250 mn line of credit to Kenya in agri sector

India offers $250 million credit line to modernize Kenya's agriculture sector, strengthening bilateral ties and promoting food security in both countries.

- **Purpose/Objective:**
  - **For India:** Boost ties with Kenya, expand economic cooperation, and gain access to land for Indian farm companies.

- **For Kenya:** Access resources and expertise for modernizing agriculture, improving productivity, and enhancing food security.

- **Key Provisions:**
  - India provides $250 million credit line for Kenyan agricultural projects.
  - Potential land access for Indian companies in Kenya for cultivation, particularly millets.
  - Collaboration on technical expertise and knowledge sharing in agriculture.
- **Benefits/Outcomes:**
  - **For India:** Increased economic partnership with Kenya, potential market opportunities for Indian farm companies, and strengthened political ties.
  - **For Kenya:** Improved agricultural infrastructure and food security, access to advanced technology and practices, and potential job creation.

iDEX-DIO signed contract for Gallium Nitride Semiconductors production

The Indian Ministry of Defence's Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX) and Agnit Semiconductors Private Limited have signed a contract for the design and development of advanced Gallium Nitride (GaN) Semiconductors. The contract is worth Rs 588.68 crore.

Currently, almost all GaN components are imported being a sensitive and cutting-edge technology whose export is controlled and restricted by many countries.

- **Purpose:** The primary goal of this MoU is to design, develop and manufacture GaN components for defence in India using completely indigenous GaN technology.
- **Benefits/Outcomes:** The proposal aims to enhance the indigenous design & development capability, paving way for immense potential in the defence sector including exports.

National News

Chapter 4

Gwalior achieves guinness record with 'Largest Tabla Ensemble' at Tansen festival

Gwalior achieved a Guinness World Record for the "largest tabla ensemble" with 1,300 tabla players performing at the 99th International Tansen Samaroh in Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh.

- **Date:** The event took place on December 25, 2023
- **Purpose:** To set a new Guinness World Record for the "largest tabla ensemble".
- **Key Figures Involved:**
  - The event was organized by the Department of Culture, Government of Madhya Pradesh (India). Chief Minister Mohan Yadav received the Guinness World Records certificate on behalf of the participants.

Textiles Ministry unveils 'Paat-Mitro' app for Jute Farmers

The Ministry of Textiles recently launched the "Paat Mitro" mobile application, developed by The Jute Corporation of India Limited (JCI). The app is available in six languages and can be downloaded for free from Google Play Store.

- **Launch Date**: December 21, 2023 during the 'Jute Symposium'
- **Purpose:** To provide important information about MSP and agronomy to jute farmers.
- **Significance:**
  - The app is aimed at empowering jute farmers by providing crucial information about MSP and agronomy, thereby enhancing their productivity and income.
  - The app also provides the latest agronomic practices, Jute Gradation Parameters, Farmer-centric schemes like 'Jute-ICARE', weather forecasts, JCI's Purchase Centers' locations, Procurement Policies, and more.

Ministry of Mines unveils portal for innovative Geoscience exploration

The Ministry of Mines recently launched the National Geoscience Data Repository (NGDR) Portal, a comprehensive online platform for accessing, sharing, and analyzing geospatial information across India. It was graced by Union Minister of Coal, Mines and Parliamentary Affairs Shri Pralhad Joshi.

- **Date:** The NGDR Portal was launched on December 19, 2023
- **Purpose:** To democratize critical geoscience data, making it readily accessible to the public.
- **Key Points:**
  - NGDR is a comprehensive online platform for accessing, sharing, and analyzing geospatial information across India.
  - The NGDR initiative is spearheaded by the Geological Survey of India (GSI) and Bhaskarachaya Institute of Space Applications and Geoinformatics (BISAG-N).
  - The NGDR Portal provides a centralized repository of diverse geoscience datasets, including geological maps, mineral resources, seismic data, and environmental information.

NHAI launched ERS mobile app for Swift Emergency Response

The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) recently launched the Emergency Response Support System (ERS) mobile application to provide swift and effective responses to road accidents and other emergencies on national highways across India. The app connects road users directly to the NHAI's command and control center, enabling them to seek immediate assistance by alerting the authorities about the incident's precise location and nature.

- **Launch Date:** December 19, 2023.
- **Purpose:** To enhance emergency response mechanisms on national highways by providing a rapid and seamless response mechanism during critical situations, such as accidents or medical emergencies.

- **Key Points:**
  - The ERS app is a citizen-centric unified mobile application that aims to improve the highway user experience.
  - The app is designed to facilitate the smooth relay of dispatch-related information to on-road units, enhancing communication and coordination during emergency situations.

PM Modi unveils Varanasi's Swarved Mahamandir

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the 'Swarved Mahamandir', a seven-floor temple located in Varanasi's Umaraha area. The temple is spread over 3,00,000 square feet and features a 125-petal lotus dome and 3,137 verses from the Swarved engraved on its walls. It is the world's largest meditation center with a seating capacity of 20,000 people.

- **Date:** The inauguration took place on December 18, 2023.
- **Purpose:** To "illuminate humankind with its magnificent spiritual aura and engulf the world in a state of peaceful alertness".
- **Key Points:**
  - The temple is named after the Swarved, a spiritual text authored by Sadguru Shri Sadafal Deoji Maharaj, an eternal yogi and the founder of Vihangam Yoga.
  - The foundation of the Mahamandir was laid in 2004 by Sadguru Acharya Swantantra Dev and Sant Pravar Vigyan Dev.

PM Modi to inaugurate of Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the 402 km-long stretch of the new Deen Dayal Upadhyay Junction to New Bhaupur Junction of the Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor (DFC). The Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor is a testament to the government's commitment to modernizing infrastructure and fostering economic growth across the country.

- **Date:** The inauguration took place on December 19, 2023
- **Purpose:** To strengthen the logistics sector and foster economic growth across the country.
- **Key Points:**
  - The Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor is a 1,856 km-long freight corridor connecting Ludhiana in Punjab to Dankuni in West Bengal.
  - The corridor is divided into two parts: the Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor and the Western Dedicated Freight Corridor.

Surat Diamond Bourse inaugurated by PM Modi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Surat Diamond Bourse, the world's largest and modern center for international diamond and jewelry business.

- **Inauguration Date:** December 17, 2023
- **Purpose:** To showcase the abilities of Indian designs, designers, materials, and concepts, and symbolize New India's capabilities and resolutions.
- **Key Points:**
  - The Surat Diamond Bourse is the world's largest and modern center for international diamond and jewelry business.
  - The bourse comprises a state-of-the-art 'Customs Clearance House' for Import-Export, a jewelry mall for retail jewelry businesses, and a facility for international banking and safe vaults.

Defense Minister flags in 'Mission Antarctica' by Himalayan Mountaineering Team

The Himalayan Mountaineering Institute, Darjeeling, carried out 'Mission Antarctica' in 2023, which was flagged in by Minister of State for Defence Ajay Bhatt.

- **Date:** December 13, 2023.
- **Purpose:** To hoist the National Flag, measuring 7,500 sq ft and weighing 75 kilograms across the length and breadth of the country, including atop Mt Rhenock in Sikkim Himalayas at an altitude of 16,500 feet.
- **Key Points:**
  - The expedition was undertaken by a team of three trekkers, led by Group Captain Jai Kishan.
  - It was recorded as the biggest Indian National Flag hoisted atop a mountain in the Asia Book of Records and India Book of Records.
  - During the expedition, the team also displayed the Tri-colour over Mount Vinson Peak, the highest peak of South Pole.

10 lakh incidents of financial frauds registered on CFCFRMS portal

More than 10.10 lakh incidents of financial fraud have been registered on the Citizen Financial Cyber Frauds Reporting and Management System (CFCFRMS) from January 1, 2023, to November 30, 2023.

- **Date:** The incidents were registered between January 1, 2023, and November 30, 2023.
- **Purpose:** To provide an integrated platform where all stakeholders, including law enforcement agencies, major banks, financial intermediaries, payment wallets, crypto exchanges, and e-commerce companies.
- **Key Points:**
  - The CFCFRMS is a part of the "National Cybercrime Reporting Portal" and provides an integrated platform for all stakeholders to work in tandem to prevent the flow of money from victim's account to cyber fraudster's account.
  - The platform enables identification of the various financial channels being misused by the fraudsters for routing the fraud proceeds.

Army Hospital conducted India's 1st Bone Marrow Transplant

The Army Hospital in Delhi Cantt. has successfully conducted India's first life-saving Bone Marrow Transplant (BMT) for a child diagnosed with a rare primary immunodeficiency disorder.

- **Purpose:** To replace defective immune cells with healthy ones, offering a renewed chance at a healthy and vibrant life.
- **Key Points:**
  - The procedure was performed by doctors in the Department of Hematology & Stem Cell Transplantation, and involved harvesting healthy stem cells from an HLA compatible donor and infusing them into the patient's bloodstream, after his own defective cells were destroyed by a very high dose of chemotherapy.

Pune accomplished Guinness World Record of largest reading activity

Pune has accomplished a Guinness World Record for the largest reading activity. A total of 3,066 parents read stories to their children at SP College, Pune, on December 14, 2023, achieving the record.

- **Date:** The event took place on December 14, 2023.
- **Purpose:** To promote reading culture in the society through storytelling.
- **Key Points:**
  - The event was organized by the National Book Trust in collaboration with the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC).

Udaiti Foundation launched "Close the Gender Gap" initiative

The Udaiti Foundation launched the "Close the Gender Gap" initiative, a go-to hub on women's representation in the workplace in India that includes data, analytics, and resources.

- **Date:** The initiative was launched in 2023.
- **Purpose:** To drive commitments and action towards gender parity in the workforce.
- **Key Points:**
  - The initiative is expected to revolutionize the way gender parity is addressed in the Indian workforce, empowering stakeholders across industries and academia with unprecedented access to invaluable resources.

Amit Shah chairs Eastern Zonal Council meeting in Patna

Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation Shri Amit Shah chaired the 26th meeting of the Eastern Zonal Council in Patna, Bihar. The meeting discussed issues like minimum price for a number of minor millets, creation of infrastructure, water sharing, and more.

- **Date:** The meeting took place on December 10, 2023.
- **Purpose:** To discuss issues like minimum price for a number of minor millets, creation of infrastructure, water sharing, and more.
- **Key Points:**
  - The Chief Minister of Bihar Shri Nitish Kumar, and senior Ministers from Odisha, West Bengal, Bihar and Jharkhand attended the meeting.

Ministry of Textiles unveils 'One Bharat Sari Walkathon' in Mumbai

The Ministry of Textiles has organised the country's largest ever 'One Bharat Sari Walkathon' in India's financial capital, Mumbai.

- **Date:** The event took place on December 10, 2023.
- **Purpose:** To promote the handloom sari culture in India by inviting the participation of women across the country to showcase their ways of wearing saris and thus present India as a country of "Unity in Diversity".

Ministry of Panchayati Raj launches 'Gram Manchitra' GIS app

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj launched the Geographic Information System (GIS) application "Gram Manchitra". The application facilitates and supports Gram Panchayats to perform planning at Gram Panchayat level using geo-spatial technology.

- **Launch Date:** December 1, 2023.
- **Purpose:** To encourage spatial planning by the Gram Panchayat and provide a decision support system for Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP).
- **Key Points:**
  - The application provides a single/ unified Geo Spatial platform to better visualize the various developmental works to be taken up across the different sectors and provide a decision support system for Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP).

International News

Chapter 5

UK to introduce carbon import levy on certain products by 2027

The UK government has announced plans to implement a carbon border tax from 2027 on imports of iron, steel, aluminium, ceramics, and cement. This move is aimed at supporting domestic producers and reducing emissions.

- **Location:** The policy will be implemented in the United Kingdom.
- **Purpose:** To support domestic producers who are making efforts to reduce their carbon emissions and to prevent "carbon leakage", where domestic manufacturers are undercut by foreign competitors who do not face carbon levies.
- **Key Figures Involved:** The policy was announced by the UK government.
- **Background:** The move is part of the UK's efforts to combat climate change. It represents a shift in how countries approach the issue of carbon emissions in international trade. The policy could potentially encourage other countries to implement similar measures, leading to a global reduction in carbon emissions. However, there are concerns from industry groups that the proposed start date of 2027 is too late, as a similar mechanism will be put in place by the EU in 2026.

UNSC adopts resolution for Unimpeded Aid Delivery in Gaza Strip

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has adopted a resolution demanding immediate, safe, and unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance at scale directly to the Palestinian civilian population throughout the Gaza Strip.

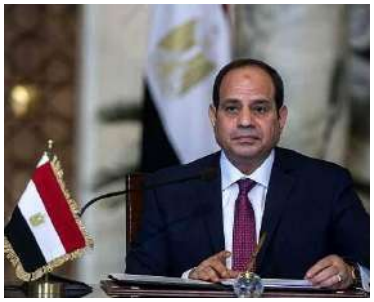
- **Date:** The resolution was adopted on 22nd December 2023.
- **Location:** The resolution was adopted at the United Nations Security Council, which is located in New York, USA.
- **Purpose:** To increase the flow of life-saving humanitarian aid to Palestinians in the Gaza Strip while protecting UN and humanitarian staff on the ground who deliver it. It also aims to contain the imminent threat of famine and deadly epidemics.
- **Key Figures Involved:** The resolution was put forward by the United Arab Emirates and was adopted with 13 votes in favor, and the US and Russia abstaining.

WHO officially acknowledges Noma as a Neglected Tropical Disease

The World Health Organization (WHO) has officially recognized Noma, a severe gangrenous disease of the mouth and face, as a Neglected Tropical Disease (NTD). This decision aims to amplify global awareness, catalyze research, stimulate funding, and boost efforts to control the disease.

- **Date:** 15th December 2023
- **Location:** The decision was made at the WHO headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland
- **Purpose:** To address one of the world's most underrecognized health challenges. It underscores WHO's commitment to expanding health services to the world's most vulnerable populations.
- **Key Figures:** The decision was recommended by the 17th meeting of the Strategic and Technical Advisory Group for Neglected Tropical Diseases (STAG-NTD).
- **Background:** Noma primarily affects malnourished young children in regions of extreme poverty. It starts as an inflammation of the gums, which, if not treated early, spreads quickly to destroy facial tissues and bones. It frequently leads to death, with survivors suffering severe disfigurement.

Abdel Fattah El Sisi won Egyptian Presidential Elections with 89% vote



Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El Sisi has secured a third term in office, winning the Presidential Elections with an overwhelming 89.6% of the vote.

- **Date:** The election results were announced on December 18, 2023.
- **Location:** Egypt
- **Purpose:** To elect the President of Egypt for a new term. El Sisi's victory ensures continuity of his policies for the next six years.

Myanmar surpassed Afghanistan as world's largest source of opium

Myanmar has become the world's largest producer of opium, surpassing Afghanistan, according to a report by the United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC). Myanmar produced 1,080 metric tonnes of opium this year, while Afghanistan's production slumped to around 330 tonnes.

- **Date:** The report was released on December 12, 2023.
- **Purpose:** The report aims to highlight the shift in global opium production and the growing illicit economy in the Mekong region.
- **Key Figures:** The report was released by the United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

China starts up world's first fourth-generation nuclear reactor

China has started commercial operations at the world's first fourth-generation nuclear reactor, the Shidaowan plant, located in China's northern Shandong province.

- **Date:** December 6, 2023.
- **Location:** The fourth-generation nuclear reactor is located in Shidaowan, in China's northern Shandong province.
- **Purpose:** The fourth-generation Shidaowan plant is designed to use fuel more efficiently and improve its economics, safety, and environmental footprint as China turns to nuclear power to try to meet carbon emissions goals.
- **Key Figures:** The 200 megawatt (MW) high-temperature, gas-cooled reactor (HTGCR) plant was developed jointly by state-run utility Huaneng, Tsinghua University, and China National Nuclear Corporation.
- **Background:** China has a goal to produce 10% of electricity from nuclear by 2035 and 18% by 2060. However, as of September 2023, it had not met its 2020 target to install 58 gigawatts of nuclear capacity.

"Rizz": Oxford Word of the Year 2023

- The term "Rizz" has been chosen as the Oxford Word of the Year for 2023.
- "Rizz" is defined as 'style, charm, or attractiveness; the ability to attract a romantic or sexual partner'. It is believed to be a shortened form of the word 'charisma'.

EU expresses disappointment as India rejects interim arbitration in WTO dispute

The European Union (EU) has expressed disappointment over India's rejection of interim arbitration to resolve the dispute over import duties on certain Information and Communications Technology (ICT) products, including smartphones and components.

- **Date:** December 19, 2023.
- **Purpose:** The EU had requested interim arbitration to settle the dispute, but India rejected this, arguing that such interim agreements undermine the right of countries to appeal to a permanent standing body.
- **Key Figures:** The EU and India are the key entities involved in this dispute.

Bhutan plans 1,000-sq. km. Green City on Assam Border

Bhutan's King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck announced plans for an "international city" on a 1,000+ sq. km. area bordering Assam, at the Changlimathang stadium in Thimpu. The Gelephu Smartcity Project is expected to follow environmental standards and sustainability as a goal, and will aim to attract "quality investment" from "specially screened" international companies.

- **Anounced Date:** The announcement was made on December 17, 2023.
- **Location:** The international city is planned to be built in Gelephu, on Bhutan's border with Assam.
- **Purpose:**
  - The purpose of the Gelephu Smartcity Project is to create an economic corridor connecting South Asia with Southeast Asia via India's northeastern states.
  - The project will focus on environmental standards, sustainability, zero-emission industries, a mindfulness city, and infrastructure development.

TIWB Launches Saint Lucia Program with India as Partner

The Tax Inspectors Without Borders (TIWB) program, a joint initiative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), has launched a crucial program in Saint Lucia in December 2023. India, recognized for its expertise in tax matters, has been chosen as the Partner Administration for this initiative.

- **Date:** December 14, 2023
- **Location:** Saint Lucia, Eastern Caribbean
- **Purpose:**
  - To enhance Saint Lucia's tax administration efficiency and effectiveness.
  - To transfer technical knowledge and expertise from India to Saint Lucia.
  - To promote international cooperation and knowledge sharing in tax administration.

China launches deepest lab on Earth

China has achieved a groundbreaking milestone in physics by operationalizing the world's deepest and largest underground laboratory, located more than 2,000 meters (1.24 miles) beneath the surface in the southwest Sichuan Province. Known as the Deep Underground and Ultra-low Radiation Background Facility (DURF), this marvel of scientific engineering boasts a total room capacity of 330,000 cubic meters and offers unique testing conditions unattainable elsewhere.

- **Date:** December 7, 2023
- **Location:** Jinping Mountain, Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province, China
- **Purpose:** To hunt for elusive dark matter, unlock neutrino secrets, and whisper to the Earth's core. A quest for fundamental knowledge, rewriting the story of the universe, one atom at a time.

Statue of Tamil icon 'Thiruvalluvar' unveiled in France



A statue of Thiruvalluvar, the revered poet and philosopher, was unveiled in the Parisian suburb of Cergy, marking a significant moment in cultural exchange and recognition. This grand gesture, gifted by the Tamil Cultural Association France, symbolizes the enduring bonds between India and France, and the universal appeal of Thiruvalluvar's wisdom.

- **Date:** 10 December 2023
- **Location:** Cergy, France
- **Purpose:** The statue serves as a beacon of Tamil identity, showcasing its rich cultural legacy on the international stage.

Indonesia's Marapi volcano eruption

Mount Marapi erupted violently on December 3, 2023, unleashing a deadly torrent of ash, gas, and lava that claimed multiple lives and disrupted surrounding communities.

- **Date:** December 3, 2023
- **Location:** West Sumatra, Indonesia
- **Additional Notes**:
  - Marapi is one of Indonesia's most active volcanoes, with over 50 eruptions recorded since 1800. Its last major eruption occurred in 1979, claiming 60 lives.
  - Indonesia lies within the Pacific Ring of Fire, a highly active volcanic zone, making it prone to earthquakes and volcanic eruptions.

Sri Lanka reaches agreement with India, Paris Club on debt treatment

Amidst its ongoing economic crisis, Sri Lanka has secured a significant breakthrough in debt restructuring. On December 21, 2023, it reached a preliminary agreement with India and the Paris Club of creditor nations on a framework to manage its sizable foreign debt.

- **Date:** December 21, 2023
- **Location:** Colombo, Sri Lanka
- **Purpose:** The primary goal of the agreement is to provide Sri Lanka with much-needed debt relief and a framework for restructuring its debt obligations.

Italy Withdraws from China's Belt and Road Project

Italy has formally withdrawn from China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a vast infrastructure project aimed at boosting trade and transport links across Asia.

Italy, the first and only G7 nation to join the BRI (Belt and Road initiative) in 2019, communicated its decision

to Beijing, marking a significant shift in its foreign policy. The move reflects Italy's disappointment with the lack of economic benefits from the initiative and a strategic rethinking of its relationship with China.

- **Date:** The decision was communicated to Beijing on December 6, 2023.
- **Purpose:** The withdrawal from the BRI reflects Italy's frustrations with the initiative's unmet promises and the country's strategic reassessment of China. Italy had hoped that joining the BRI would attract investment and expand Italian exports' access into China's huge market.

India provides $250 Million line of credit to Kenya for Agricultural Modernization

India has announced a $250 million Line of Credit to Kenya for the comprehensive modernization of its agricultural sector. The announcement was made during a visit by Kenyan President William Samoei Ruto to New Delhi. The Line of Credit will be used to advance projects that will be taken up subsequently.

Kenya has offered, in line with Kenyan laws, to provide land to Indian companies and institutions for the cultivation of crops, including millets, in Kenya.

- **Date:** December 5, 2023.
- **Location:** New Delhi, India
- **Purpose:** The Line of Credit is intended to modernize Kenya's agricultural sector. This includes equipment and technology for farming. The initiative is expected to increase bilateral trade and contribute to food security in Kenya.

State News

Chapter 6

Five state elections held in 2023

1. **Madhya Pradesh:** The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won the election with a significant majority, securing 163 out of 230 seats. Mohan Yadav was appointed the Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh.
2. **Rajasthan:** The BJP won the election with 115 seats out of 199. Bhajan Lal Sharma was appointed the Chief Minister of Rajasthan.
3. **Chhattisgarh:** The BJP won the election with 54 seats, while the Indian National Congress (INC) secured 35 seats. Vishnu Deo Sai was appointed the Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh.
4. **Telangana:** The INC won the election with 64 seats, while the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) secured 39 seats. Revanth Reddy was appointed the Chief Minister of Telangana.
5. **Meghalaya:** Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) won the legislative assembly elections with 27 out of 40 seats. Lalduhoma was appointed the Chief Minister of Meghalaya.

Odisha government has launched 'Ama Bank'.

The Odisha government, under the leadership of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, has launched an innovative scheme called 'Ama Bank'. The scheme is a significant step towards financial inclusion, empowering citizens with essential tools for financial stability and growth.

State/Union Territory Name: Odisha

Event/Development: Launch of 'Ama Bank' scheme

Purpose: The purpose of the 'Ama Bank' scheme is to bridge the gap in financial access by bringing the entirety of Odisha's panchayats within the ambit of the banking network. It aims to foster social and economic progress, essential for the empowerment of communities, especially those residing in remote and underserved areas.

Additional Note: The Odisha government has allocated Rs 500 crore for the scheme and targets to open Customer Service Point (CSP) Plus outlets in 4,373 panchayats by March, 2024.

Varanasi: On the path to becoming India's first begging-free City

Varanasi, the ancient holy city on the Ganges, embarks on a remarkable journey to become the first begging-free city in India. Driven by the "Beggars Corporation", a social enterprise, the initiative focuses on rehabilitation, skill development, and fostering self-reliance among the city's estimated 6,000 beggars.

State Name: Uttar Pradesh

Purpose:

- Eradicate begging in Varanasi.
- Empower and provide sustainable livelihoods for beggars.
- Change societal attitudes towards begging.
- Promote a more inclusive and humane society.

World's first portable hospital 'Aarogya Maitri Aid Cube' unveiled in Gurugram

Gurugram, India, unveiled the world's first portable hospital, the Arogya Maitri Cube. This revolutionary modular system, consisting of 72 interconnectable cubes, promises rapid medical aid in disaster zones and remote areas within an hour of arrival.

- **State Name:** Haryana
- **Event/Development:** Unveiling of the 'Arogya Maitri Cube' portable hospital
- **Date:** December 2nd, 2023
- **Purpose:**
  - Provide immediate medical care in disaster-stricken areas or remote locations.
  - Bridge the gap in healthcare access for underserved communities.
  - Enhance India's emergency response capabilities.

Firozabad Municipal Corporation has approved the proposal to rename it 'Chandnagar'

The Firozabad Municipal Corporation has approved a proposal to rename the city of Firozabad to 'Chandnagar'. This decision was passed during a

12-member executive committee meeting chaired by Mayor Kamini Rathore, with 11 members supporting the change.

- **State Name:** Uttar Pradesh
- **Event/Development**: Proposal to rename Firozabad to 'Chandnagar' approved
- **Date**: December 2, 2023
- **Purpose:** The renaming of Firozabad to 'Chandnagar' is part of a trend of changing the names of towns and cities bearing Muslim names. The city was known as Chandranagar since its inception and rule under King Chandrasen.

Bihar government's redevelopment plan for Sitamarhi

Bihar's Sitamarhi, believed to be the birthplace of Hindu deity Sita, is set for a makeover! The Bihar government recently unveiled a Rs 72-crore redevelopment plan for Punourdham, aimed at boosting tourism and cultural significance. The project promises a transformed landscape, buzzing with spiritual energy and attracting pilgrims and visitors alike.

- **State Name:** Bihar
- **Event/Development:** Unveiling of Punourdham Redevelopment Plan
- **Date:** December 13, 2023
- **Purpose:**
  - Enhance Sitamarhi's religious and cultural importance.
  - Attract pilgrims and tourists, boosting local economy and employment.
  - Develop Punourdham as a major spiritual and cultural center.
- **Additional Notes:** Sitamarhi is part of the Centre's list of 15 tourism-cum-religious places on the Ramayana Circuit, identified for development under the Swadesh Darshan scheme of the Union Ministry of Tourism.

Assam government unveils 'Ten Cities Development Concept'

The Assam government has recently initiated the 'Ten Cities Development Concept' (Doh Shaher, Ek Rupayan) for planned and rapid urban development. The concept focuses on comprehensive development across various domains, including infrastructure, water supply, waste management, and digital services.

- **State Name:** Assam
- **Date:** December 20, 2023
- **Purpose:** The concept aims to foster well-planned and rapid development of urban areas.
- **Additional Note:**
  - The cities identified for development are Silchar, Dibrugarh, Nagaon, Bangaigaon, Biswanath Chariali, Karimganj, Tinsukia, Golaghat, Jorhat, Tezpur, Sibsagar, and North Lakhimpur.
  - The concept emphasizes on proper urban planning, solid waste management, clean and regular water supply, public infrastructure, traffic management, and the implementation of green-blue elements such as open spaces, parks, and water bodies.

Manipur State Beverages Corporation Limited established

The Manipur Cabinet has approved the establishment of the Manipur State Beverages Corporation Limited (MSBCL), marking the end of a prohibition that lasted over 30 years. This decision legalizes the production, sale, and consumption of alcohol in specific regions of the state. The MSBCL will operate with a board of directors comprising key secretaries from sectors such as finance, home affairs, health, education, rural development, and municipal governance.

- **State Name:** Manipur
- **Date:** December 18, 2023
- **Purpose:** The MSBCL aims to ensure a well-rounded approach to alcohol regulation, considering various facets of public health and socio-economic welfare. It is set to monitor the entire production and distribution chain of beverages.

Signing of the agreement for the Uttarakhand Climate Resilient Power System Development Project

The Government of India and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) have signed an agreement for a $200 million loan for the Uttarakhand Climate Resilient Power System Development Project. It also involves upgrading the distribution system to minimize power outages, reduce technical losses, and seamlessly integrate and transmit renewable energy to load centers.

- **State Name:** Uttarakhand
- **Date:** December 13, 2023
- **Purpose:** The project aims to improve the quality, efficiency, and reliability of power supply in the

state of Uttarakhand. It will strengthen power system infrastructure, helping Uttarakhand achieve its goal of providing 24×7 power to residents.

Suchitwa Theeram' Project

The Kozhikode district administration has launched the 'Suchitwa Theeram' project, aimed at keeping the coastal areas of the district free of plastic and garbage. The project is being implemented under the 'Malinya Muktha Navakeralam' programme, overseen by the Department of Local Administration. A massive clean-up drive was carried out in 12 coastal local bodies in the district as part of the project.

- **State Name:** Kerala
- **Date:** December 7, 2023
- **Purpose:** The project aims to maintain the cleanliness of coastal areas in the Kozhikode district.

Uttarakhand Global Investors Summit 2023

The Uttarakhand Global Investors Summit 2023 was a significant event held at the Forest Research Institute, Dehradun. The summit, inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, was a platform for business delegations, corporate leaders, academia, innovators, and government leadership from across the globe to explore business opportunities and partnerships in the state of Uttarakhand.

- **State Name:** Uttarakhand
- **Date:** December 8th-9th, 2023
- **Purpose:** The summit aimed to showcase Uttarakhand's investor-friendly sectoral policies, good governance initiatives, enabling regulatory environment, and sustainable practices. It also hosted Business-to-Business (B2B) and Government-to-Business (G2B) meetings to support and aid in better decision-making for its investors.
- **Additional Note:** The summit witnessed participation from Union Ministers, Ambassadors of various countries, and leading industrialists. It also provided opportunities for exhibitors and private and public organizations to collaborate and showcase cutting-edge technologies, innovations, and future trends.

High-Powered committee set up to address concerns of Ladakh Region

Ladakh has been in the spotlight for its unique challenges and aspirations. The Indian government in January 2023 constituted a High-Powered Committee (HPC) to address the concerns of the people of Ladakh. This committee, chaired by Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai, comprises representatives from Ladakh (both Leh and Kargil districts), government officials, and experts.

- **State Name:** Ladakh
- **Purpose:**
  - Address the concerns and aspirations of the people of Ladakh.
  - Ensure the protection of Ladakh's unique culture, language, and environment.
  - Promote balanced and sustainable development in the region.
  - Foster inter-regional cooperation and understanding.

Govt plans to build India's first AI city in Lucknow

The Uttar Pradesh government has announced plans to build India's first AI city in Lucknow. The project, led by UP Electronics Corporation Ltd, aims to nurture and advance the AI ecosystem. The city will incorporate state-of-the-art technology, research facilities, and educational institutions.

- **State Name:** Uttar Pradesh
- **Date:** December 28, 2023
- **Purpose:** The AI city aims to be a hub where ideas flourish and the workforce of tomorrow is nurtured. It is part of the government's mission to achieve a $1 trillion economy within the next five years, with IT and ITeS identified as core sectors to propel the economy in this direction.

Science and Tech

Chapter 7

Indian Scientists Develop Lead-Free Perovskite Photodetector for Sustainable Solar Energy

Mission Detail: Develop an eco-friendly solar cell material that substitutes toxic lead with greener magnesium.

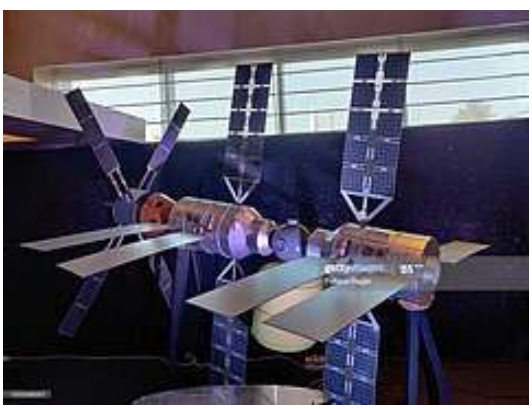
Participants: Indian researchers at Hyderabad's International Advanced Research Centre for Powder Metallurgy & New Materials, an autonomous institute under India's Department of Science and Technology.

Additional Facts:

- The new perovskite material swaps half the lead for abundant, non-toxic magnesium while retaining efficiency.
- The scientists also pioneered a simplified solar cell architecture using this new MAPb0.5Mg0.5Cl2I perovskite formula.

Background Information: Perovskite solar cells have shown tremendous efficiency promises at low costs. But mainstream versions use a formulation with toxic lead – hazardous for health and environment. The Indian researchers' work is a significant step towards affordable and sustainable photovoltaics.

India to build Bhartiya Space Station by 2035



Mission Detail: The Bharatiya Antariksha Station is a planned space station to be constructed by India and operated by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)

Participants: Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).

Additional Facts:

- The station is expected to weigh 20 tonnes and maintain an orbit of approximately 400 kilometers above the Earth, where astronauts could stay for 15-20 days.
- The first module is expected to be launched in 2028 on an LVM3 launch vehicle, with the remaining modules to be launched by 2035 on the Next Generation Launch Vehicle.
- The project was originally planned to be completed by 2030, but was later postponed to 2035 due to delays caused by technical issues related with the Gaganyaan crewed spaceflight mission and the COVID-19 pandemic in India.

Background Information: The Bharatiya Antariksha Station will be an extension of the manned space mission, Gaganyaan, which aims at sending Indian astronauts into space by 2024. The project requires advanced technology, expertise and funding to construct and operate

WHO prequalifies a second malaria vaccine, a significant milestone in prevention of the disease

Mission Detail: Develop a safe and effective malaria vaccine for children.

Participants: Serum Institute of India.

Additional Facts:

- The R21/Matrix-M malaria vaccine has been recommended for use in children by the WHO Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization (SAGE) and the Malaria Policy Advisory Group.
- The vaccine is shown to be safe and effective in clinical trials, for preventing malaria in children.
- The vaccine is expected to have a high public health impact and can help bolster malaria prevention and control efforts.

Background Information:

- Malaria is a mosquito-borne disease that places a particularly high burden on children in the African Region, where nearly half a million children die from the disease each year.
- The addition of R21 to the list of WHO-recommended malaria vaccines is expected to result in sufficient vaccine supply to benefit all children living in areas where malaria is a public health risk .

In A First, Scientists Find Fossil Of A Megatooth Shark On The Sea Bed

Mission Detail: Document the first in situ discovery of a fossilized megalodon tooth in the deep sea.

Participants: A small team of oceanographers affiliated with several institutions in the U.S., working with a zoologist from the SNSB-Bavarian State Collection of Zoology, in Germany.

Additional Facts:

- The megalodon tooth was found partially lodged in the seabed, about 3,000 meters (or 1.9 miles) beneath the ocean surface, situated in the expansive Pacific Ocean.
- The specimen was gathered from a solitary underwater mountain situated in a geologically intricate area between the Mid-Pacific Mountains and the Line Islands Ridge in the Central Pacific Ocean.
- The details regarding the team's study were published in Historical Biology: An International Journal of Paleobiology.

Background Information:

Megalodon is an extinct species of giant mackerel shark that lived from 3.6 to 23 million years ago. Members of its species are believed to have been among the largest and most powerful predators ever to have lived. Very little evidence of the shark has been found, however—most of it in the form of fossilized teeth.

ISRO receives Leif Erikson Lunar Prize for Chandrayaan-3 mission



Mission Detail: Achieve the first-ever soft landing near the Moon's South Pole.

Participants: Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).

Additional Facts:

- The Leif Erikson Lunar Prize is an annual accolade presented by the Exploration Museum in Husavik, Iceland.
- It reveres trailblazers in the realm of lunar exploration, commemorating their significant contributions to humanity's quest for celestial understanding.
- The award celebrates the first soft-landing of Vikram, the mission's lander, a spacecraft near the lunar south pole..
- Meanwhile, the Pragyan rover conducted vital in-situ experiments, further enriching our understanding of the Moon.

Background Information: The Chandrayaan-3 mission is a significant milestone in India's space exploration history. It demonstrated the country's technological prowess and resilience in the realm of space exploration.

NASA's 3D-printed Rotating Detonation Rocket Engine Test a Success

Mission Detail: Develop an innovative propulsion system called the Rotating Detonation Rocket Engine (RDRE).

Participants: NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Alabama.

Additional Facts:

- The RDRE is an innovative propulsion system that is created using 3D printing. It is designed to enhance deep space missions, offering improved propulsion efficiency crucial for lunar and Martian explorations.
- The primary goal of the latest test is to better understand how to scale the combustor to different thrust classes, supporting engine systems of all types and maximizing the variety of missions it could serve, from landers to upper stage engines to supersonic retropropulsion, a deceleration technique that could land larger payloads or even humans on the surface of Mars.

Background Information: The RDRE is a significant milestone in developing efficient propulsion systems for NASA's Moon to Mars vision. The technology is expected to enable lightweight propulsion systems that

will allow NASA to send more mass and payload further into deep space, a critical component to NASA's Moon to Mars vision.

An extremely rare and endangered bat species has been found in Corsica in France

Mission Detail: Discover a new species of bat in Corsica.

Participants: Scientists from various institutions who discovered the new species of bat in Corsica.

Additional Facts:

- The newfound species has been named 'nustrale' in the Corsican dialect, meaning "ours".The bat is medium-sized, measuring about an inch and a half long, and is grey in color with long ears and a hairy face.
- It is distinguished by a "conspicuous" dark spot on its lower lip, which is absent on other members of the genus. These bats hunt in the island's dense evergreen forests and roost in cliffs and rocky outcroppings.
- A colony of about 60 individuals was also found in an artificial tunnel. The researchers said that the new species is highly vulnerable to climate change and thus should be classified as endangered.

Background Information: The bat belongs to a previously unknown species in the genus Myptis, which has over 120 species throughout six continents. The researchers' work highlights the importance of preserving biodiversity and protecting endangered species from the impacts of climate change.

WHO officially recognizes noma as a neglected tropical disease

Detail: The World Health Organization (WHO) has officially recognized noma as a neglected tropical disease (NTD)

Participants: World Health Organization (WHO).

Additional Facts:

- Noma is a severe gangrenous disease of the mouth and face with a mortality rate of approximately 90%.
- It primarily affects malnourished young children (between the ages of 2 and 6 years) in regions of extreme poverty.
- The disease starts as an inflammation of the gums, which, if not treated early, spreads quickly to destroy facial tissues and bones. Accurate estimation of the number of noma cases is challenging due to the rapid progression of the disease and the associated stigma, which contributes to leaving many cases undiagnosed.
- Cases of noma are mostly found in sub-Saharan Africa, although cases have also been reported in the Americas and Asia. Evidence indicates that noma is caused by bacteria found in the mouth.

Background Information: The decision underscores WHO's commitment to expanding health services to the world's most vulnerable populations. The recognition of noma as an NTD aims to amplify global awareness, catalyze research, stimulate funding, and boost efforts to control the disease through multisectoral and multi-pronged approaches.

Global deepest, largest underground lab starts scientific operation in SW China

Detail: A 2,400-meter-deep physics laboratory in southwest China's Sichuan Province became operational on Thursday, making it the deepest and largest underground lab in the world.

Participants: Tsinghua University and Yalong River Hydropower Development Company, Ltd.

Additional Facts:

- The Deep Underground and Ultra-low Radiation Background Facility for Frontier Physics Experiments (DURF) is located beneath Jinping Mountain in Sichuan's Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture.
- The DURF is exposed to a tiny flux of cosmic rays which is only one hundred-millionth of that on the earth's surface.
- It boasts advantages including ultra-low cosmic ray flux, extremely low environmental radiation, extremely low radon concentration, and ultra-clean space, which will boost dark matter detection. The laboratory provides a "clean" space for scientists to pursue the invisible substance known as dark matter.

Background Information: The DURF will become a world-class interdisciplinary deep underground scientific research center integrating multiple disciplines including particle physics, nuclear astrophysics and life sciences, to facilitate the development of China's research in relevant frontier fields.

Google Unveils Gemini, Claiming It's More Powerful Than OpenAI's GPT-4



Detail: Google has unveiled its latest and most capable AI model, Gemini

Participants: Google.

Additional Facts:

- Gemini is optimized for different sizes: Ultra, Pro, and Nano, and is built from the ground up for multimodality, reasoning seamlessly across text, images, video, audio, and code.
- The model is designed to bring enormous benefits to people and society, while building in safeguards and working collaboratively with governments and experts to address risks as AI becomes more capable.
- Gemini is expected to unlock opportunities for people everywhere and represents one of the biggest science and engineering efforts undertaken by Google.

Background Information: Gemini is Google's latest and most capable AI model, offering advanced capabilities in the realm of GenAI. The model is designed to make AI helpful for everyone, everywhere in the world, and to bring new waves of innovation and economic progress. The development of Gemini underscores Google's commitment to expanding AI services to the world's most vulnerable populations.

Oldest known mosquito fossils show males, too, once sucked blood



Mission Detail: Paleontologists have discovered a new species of mosquito, Libanoculex intermedius, in 125-million-year-old amber from Lebanon

Participants: Paleontologists

Additional Facts:

- The discovered mosquitoes represent a new species, Libanoculex intermedius. They also belong to a new, now-extinct mosquito subfamily named Libanoculicinae.
- Phylogenetic analysis indicates that the newly discovered lineage of mosquitoes diverged earlier than the subfamily Burmaculicinae.
- The discovery narrows the "ghost-lineage gap" for mosquitoes, providing glimpses into Mesozoic culicid paleodiversity. The findings challenge previous assumptions about the feeding habits of male mosquitoes in the past.

Background Information: The discovery provides valuable insights into the evolution of mosquitoes and their feeding habits. The findings challenge previous assumptions about the feeding habits of male mosquitoes in the past and open up new avenues for research into the utility of hematophagy in Cretaceous male mosquitoes.

Display of Polar Stratospheric Clouds (PSCs) in the Arctic

Mission Detail: Polar Stratospheric Clouds (PSCs) are clouds that form in the winter polar stratosphere.

Additional Facts:

- PSCs are clouds that form in the winter polar stratosphere at altitudes of 15,000–25,000 m (49,000–82,000 ft). They are best observed during civil twilight, when the Sun is between 1 and 6 degrees below the horizon, as well as in winter and in more northerly latitudes.
- PSCs form at very low temperatures, below −78 °C (−108 °F), which can occur in the lower stratosphere in polar winter.
- These clouds will receive sunlight from below the horizon and reflect it to the ground, shining brightly well before dawn or after dusk.

Background Information: These clouds will receive sunlight from below the horizon and reflect it to the ground, shining brightly well before dawn or after dusk. PSCs are classified into two main types, each of which consists of several sub-types. One main type of PSC is made up mostly of supercooled droplets of water and nitric acid and is implicated in the formation of ozone holes. The other main type consists only of ice crystals

which are not harmful. This type of PSC is also referred to as nacreous, due to its iridescence.

India launches 1st winter expedition to Arctic, aims to unravel polar mysteries

Mission Detail: Conduct a month-long scientific expedition to the Arctic to study the radio frequency environment in the Svalbard region.

Participants: Raman Research Institute (RRI), National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR).

Additional Facts:

- India's engagement with the Arctic dates back to 1920 with the signing of the Svalbard Treaty in Paris. India is one of the very few countries to set up a permanent station in the Arctic for the purposes of scientific research.
- Indian studies are primarily focused on glaciology, hydrochemistry, microbiology, and atmospheric sciences.
- The Himadri research station, located in Ny Alesund, Svalbard in Norway, was started in July 2008. In 2014, India deployed IndArc, a multisensory observatory in Kongsfjorden. In 2016, India's northernmost atmospheric laboratory was established at Gruvebadet.

Background Information: The expedition aims to examine the characterization of the radio frequency environment in the Svalbard region of the Arctic for precision astronomy measurements. India's engagement with the Arctic dates back to 1920 with the signing of the Svalbard Treaty in Paris. India is one of the very few countries to set up a permanent station in the Arctic for the purposes of scientific research.

A simple and elegant pathway to attain a soft tunable 3D photonic crystal with complete photonic band gap

Mission Detail: Develop a simple and cost-effective methodology for creating soft tunable 3D photonic crystals that control light in all directions.

Participants: Researchers.

Additional Facts:

- Photonic crystals are optical nanostructures that manipulate light through refractive index contrasts along the direction of propagation.
- They can control light along a specific direction (incomplete photonic band gap) or in all directions (complete photonic band gap). The researchers have developed a groundbreaking method for developing soft tunable 3D photonic crystals that control light in all directions.
- The researchers have developed a simple and cost-effective methodology involving the incorporation of high refractive index nanoparticles into the blue phase liquid crystal to create soft tunable 3D photonic crystals that control light in all directions.

Background Information: The researchers strategically placed spherical-shaped selenium nanoparticles, with a high refractive index, within defect cores of the blue phase to effectively increase the refractive index contrast, enhancing the photonic bandgap width. Extensive Finite Element Method (FEM) simulations underscore that achieving a complete photonic bandgap system depends not only on refractive index contrast magnitude but also on the symmetry of the photonic crystal or blue phase.

Defence and Securities

Chapter 8

Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) Conclave of Chiefs (CoC) 2023



The 8th IONS Conclave of Chiefs (CoC) held in Bangkok, Thailand from December 19-22, 2023, brought together Chiefs of Navies and senior delegates from 27 member and observer countries bordering the Indian Ocean. The event focused on enhancing maritime cooperation, discussing regional challenges, and finalizing the IONS work plan for the next two years.

- **Date**: 19 to 22 December 2023
- **Event or Activity:** International maritime conference
- **Participating Nations:** 27 member and observer countries of the Indian Ocean region, including India, Thailand, France, Australia, South Africa, Bangladesh, Iran, and Sri Lanka.
- **Aims/Objectives:**
  - Enhance maritime cooperation among Indian Ocean littoral states.
  - Discuss regional maritime challenges like piracy, terrorism, illegal fishing, and natural disasters.
  - Foster common understanding and collaborative strategies for maritime security.
  - Finalize the IONS work plan for the next two years.

CISF roped in for Parliament's Security

The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) has been asked by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) to carry out a survey of the Parliament premises for regular deployment. This decision comes after a security breach in the Parliament on December 13. The CISF will work with the Parliament Security Services to control access to the new and old Parliament complex.

- **Date:** The decision was made on December 21, 2023.
- **Event or Activity:** Deployment of the CISF in the Parliament complex for security purposes. This includes a survey of the Parliament premises for regular deployment.
- **Aims:** The aim is to enhance the security of the Parliament complex following a recent security breach.

Rs 1,614 Crore contract for Next-Generation Offshore Patrol Vessels

The Ministry of Defence signed a contract with Mazagon Dockyard Shipbuilders Ltd (MDL), Mumbai, for the procurement of six Next Generation Offshore Patrol Vessels (NGOPVs) for the Indian Coast Guard (ICG). The contract, worth Rs 1,614.89 crore, was made under the Buy (Indian-IDDM) category. These vessels will replace four existing aging OPVs and augment the ICG fleet with two additional vessels.

- **Date:** The contract was signed on December 20, 2023.
- **Event:** The event is the procurement of six NGOPVs for the ICG.
- **Aims:** The acquisition of these major ICG platforms aims to boost the ICG's capability and reinforces the increased focus of the Government towards Maritime Security.

Advancing Stealth Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicle (UCAV) Technology

India has made significant strides in developing stealth Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicles (UCAVs). A successful flight trial of an "autonomous flying wing technology demonstrator" was conducted at the aeronautical test range in Chitradurga, Karnataka. This achievement represents a remarkable maturity in technology readiness levels, positioning India among the elite nations mastering flying-wing technology.

- **Date:** December 18, 2023.
- **Event or Activity:** The event was a successful flight trial of an "autonomous flying wing technology demonstrator" at the aeronautical test range in Chitradurga, Karnataka.
- **Aims:** The aim is to develop stealth UCAVs, enhancing India's capabilities in the realm of unmanned aerial systems.

Joint Military Exercise VINBAX-2023

The fourth edition of the Joint Military Exercise VINBAX-2023 took place in Hanoi, Vietnam. The Indian Armed Forces contingent, comprising 45 personnel, participated in the exercise alongside the Vietnam People's Army contingent. The exercise focused on the deployment and employment of an Engineer Company and a Medical Team.

- **Date:** The exercise was conducted from December 11th to 21st, 2023.
- **Location:** Hanoi, Vietnam

6th NSA-Level Meeting of the Colombo Security Conclave (CSC)



The 6th NSA-Level Meeting of the Colombo Security Conclave (CSC) was held in Mauritius. The meeting included member-states India, Mauritius, and Sri Lanka, and observer-states Seychelles and Bangladesh. The meeting reviewed the developments and progress made by the CSC in the last year and agreed upon a roadmap for the year 2024 to promote a safe, secure, and stable Indian Ocean.

- **Date:** December 8, 2023
- **Participating Nations:** The participating nations were India, Mauritius, Sri Lanka, Seychelles, and Bangladesh.
- **Aims:** To promote regional security and stability. The meeting emphasized the significance of ongoing engagements across various cooperation pillars to address common security challenges.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveiled a grand statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj at Sindhugarh



On Navy Day, December 4, 2023, Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid tribute to Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and unveiled a grand statue of the 17th-century Maratha king at Sindhugarh, Maharashtra's coastal fort. The Prime Minister acknowledged Shivaji's understanding of naval power and announced that naval officers' epaulettes would soon carry his emblem.

- **Date:** December 4, 2023.
- **Aims:** To pay tribute to Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, acknowledge his understanding of naval power, and announce that naval officers' epaulettes would soon carry his emblem.

First ship of Survey Vessel (Large) 'Sandhayak' delivered to Indian Navy



The Indian Navy received the first of four Survey Vessel (Large) ships, 'Sandhayak'. Built at Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE), Kolkata, Sandhayak is equipped with state-of-the-art hydrographic equipment and is capable of full-scale coastal and deep-water hydrographic surveys.

- **Date:** The ship was delivered to the Indian Navy on December 4, 2023.
- **Aims:** The primary role of Sandhayak is to conduct full-scale coastal and deep-water hydrographic

surveys of ports and harbours, and determine navigational channels and routes. It will also collect oceanographic and geophysical data for defence and civil applications.

- **Equipment and Technology:** Sandhayak is fitted with state-of-the-art hydrographic equipment such as Data Acquisition and Processing System, Autonomous Underwater Vehicle, Remotely Operated Vehicle, DGPS Long range positioning systems, and Digital side scan sonar.

CISC Lt Gen JP Mathew flags off JSW-NDA Car Rally at National War Memorial marking 75 glorious years of NDA



The Chief of Integrated Defence Staff to the Chairman Chiefs of Staff Committee (CISC) Lt Gen JP Mathew flagged off the Delhi to Gwalior leg of the JSW-NDA Car Rally from the National War Memorial in New Delhi. This rally, initiated as a heartfelt tribute to Operation 'Badli,' traces its roots to 1954 under the stewardship of Maj Gen Enayat Habibullah.

- **Date:** December 24, 2023.
- **Aims**: The rally stands as a testament to the valour, bravery, and sacrifices that define the NDA's legacy.

Raksha Mantri commissions stealth guided missile destroyer INS Imphal in Mumbai



The Indian Navy commissioned the stealth guided missile destroyer INS Imphal at the Naval Dockyard in Mumbai. This event marked the formal induction of the third of four indigenous 'Visakhapatnam' class destroyers. INS Imphal, designed by the Indian Navy's Warship Design Bureau and constructed by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL), Mumbai, is a symbol of India's growing maritime power.

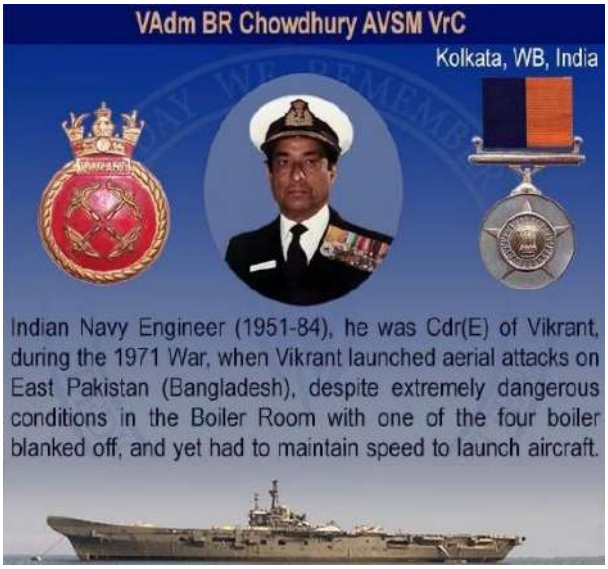
- **Date:** December 26, 2023
- **Aims**: The commissioning of INS Imphal is aimed at strengthening India's maritime power and safeguarding national interests.
- **Equipment and Technology:** INS Imphal is equipped with Brahmos missiles, torpedo tube launchers from Larsen & Toubro (L&T), a rapid gun mount installed by Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL), and medium-range missiles by Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL).

Indian Navy deployed missile destroyer in Gulf of Aden

The Indian Navy has deployed a second frontline ship, a guided missile destroyer, in the Gulf of Aden to augment its anti-piracy mission. The Navy swiftly responded after receiving a call for help from the hijacked vessel, MV Ruen. The Navy now has stealth guided-missile destroyers INS Kochi and INS Kolkata in the region.

- **Date:** December 21, 2023
- **Aims:** The deployment of the guided missile destroyer is aimed at augmenting the anti-piracy efforts in the Gulf of Aden region.

INS Shivaji receives the original 'Vir Chakra' of Late Vice Admiral Benoy Roy Chowdhury



INS Shivaji, the premier training establishment of the

Indian Navy, received the original 'Vir Chakra' awarded to Late Vice Admiral Benoy Roy Chowdhury at a solemn ceremony. The 'Vir Chakra' is an Indian wartime military bravery award presented for acts of gallantry on the battlefield. Vice Admiral Chowdhury is the only technical officer of the Indian Navy who has been decorated with this prestigious award.

- **Date**: December 18, 2023
- **Aims:** To honor the gallantry of Late Vice Admiral Benoy Roy Chowdhury by presenting his original 'Vir Chakra' to INS Shivaji.
- **Achievements**: The achievement was the recognition of Vice Admiral Chowdhury's gallantry during the 1971 Indo-Pak War. As the Engineer Officer onboard erstwhile INS Vikrant, he undertook several innovative repairs at sea away from the base port without seeking any possible assistance from the British OEMs. His contributions during the war were pivotal in every way, earning him the title of 'An Engineer Par Excellence'.

IAF testfired 'SAMAR' air defence missiles at Exercise Astrashakti

The Indian Air Force (IAF) successfully test-fired its SAMAR air defence missile system during Exercise AstraShakti-2023. The missile system, developed in-house using old Russian-origin air-to-air missile systems, participated in the exercise for the first time to test its surface-to-air weapon systems. The SAMAR system can engage aerial threats at a speed range of 2 to 2.5 Mach. It consists of a twin-turret launch platform and has been witnessed by top IAF officials.

- **Date:** December 17, 2023
- **Aims:** To test the SAMAR air defence missile system's surface-to-air weapon systems during Exercise AstraShakti-2023.

Indian Armed Forces officers awarded 'Golden Owl' at DSCSC Sri Lanka

All three Indian Armed Forces officers undergoing the Command and Staff Course at Defence Services Command and Staff College (DSCSC) in Sri Lanka have been awarded the 'Golden Owl' for their outstanding performance. The 'Golden Owl' award admires analytical skills, strategic thinking, and potential for future leadership.

- **Date:** December 15, 2023
- **Location:** The event took place in Sri Lanka
- **Aims:** The 'Golden Owl' award is designed to recognize and admire the analytical skills, strategic thinking, and potential for future leadership of the officers.

Indian Navy commissioned INS Tarmugli



The Indian Navy commissioned INS Tarmugli, a Fast Attack Craft, at an impressive ceremony held at Naval Dockyard Visakhapatnam under the aegis of the Eastern Naval Command. The ship is a Trinkat Class FAC which was gifted to the Maldivian Naval Defence Forces (MNDF) in 2006 by the Government of India. After extensive restoration work by the Naval Dockyard, Visakhapatnam, the FAC has been reincarnated in its present avatar.

- **Date:** December 14, 2023
- **Purpose:** To enhance the coastal surveillance and protection of our Offshore Development Areas (ODAs) in the KG Basin area along the East Coast of India.
- **Equipment and Technology:** The warship is fitted with MTU engines, the latest communication equipment, a 30 mm gun and an advanced Radar system and will be extensively used for coastal surveillance and protection of our ODAs in the KG Basin area along the East Coast of India.

Western Air Command Commanders' Conference – 2023



A two-day Commanders' Conference of Western Air Command (WAC) of the Indian Air Force was held at New Delhi. During the conference, the CAS interacted with commanders of the WAC Area of Responsibility (AoR) and discussed the impact of emerging technologies, the need for capability enhancement, and fully harnessing the potential of human resources.

- **Date:** The event took place on December 11 and 12, 2023
- **Event or Activity:** The event was a two-day Commanders' Conference of Western Air Command (WAC) of the Indian Air Force.
- **Aims:** The conference aimed to discuss the impact of emerging technologies, the need for capability enhancement, and fully harnessing the potential of human resources.

Indian Navy conducted bi-annual exercise 'Prasthan' off Mumbai coast

The Indian Navy, in collaboration with other defence, state, and civilian agencies, conducted a bi-annual coordinated exercise named 'Prasthan' in the Offshore Development Area off Mumbai.

- **Date:** The exercise was conducted on December 8, 2023.
- **Aims:** To validate measures and procedures to address various contingencies that may arise in oil production platforms.

Successful training launch of Short-Range Ballistic Missile 'Agni-1'

The Indian Armed Forces successfully conducted a training launch of the Short-Range Ballistic Missile 'Agni-1'. The launch took place from APJ Abdul Kalam Island, Odisha. Agni-1, known for its high precision, is a crucial component of India's nuclear delivery capabilities. The launch was carried out under the aegis of the Strategic Forces Command and successfully validated all operational and technical parameters.

- **Date:** December 7, 2023
- **Aims:** To validate all operational and technical parameters of the Agni-1 missile system.
- **Equipment and Technology:** The Agni-1 is a single-stage, solid-fueled missile with a range of around 700 to around 1200 kilometers and can carry a payload of 1,000 kg.

Schemes and Projects

Chapter 9

6 SAMARTH curated programs launched by Karmayogi Bharat and NITI Aayog on iGOT Platform



Karmayogi Bharat, in association with NITI Aayog, has launched 6 SAMARTH Curated Training Programs on the iGOT Karmayogi Platform for State Government officials. The programs are- 1) SAMARTH Blocks, 2) SAMARTH Zila, 3) SAMARTH Rajya, 4) SAMARTH Rajya Sachiva, 5) SAMARTH Policy, and 6) SAMARTH Procurement. The programs are designed to equip learners with the knowledge and tools required to address challenges and drive effective service delivery at the local, district, and state levels.

- **About iGOT Karmayogi:** iGOT Karmayogi is a comprehensive online learning platform to guide government officials in their capacity-building journey. More than 28 lakh learners from across the government spectrum are currently registered on this platform.
- **Date:** 27 December 2023
- **Aims:** These programs aim to elevate the skills and competencies of government officials, ensuring they are well-equipped to meet the evolving needs of governance.

Union minister Anurag Singh Thakur initiated 'MY Bharat' campaign



The 'MY Bharat' campaign, launched by Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting Anurag Singh Thakur, is a significant initiative aimed at fostering development across all sectors in India. The campaign encourages the youth to contribute towards the nation's development and has already seen more than 26 lakh registrations.

- **Campaign Name:** MY Bharat campaign
- **Launch Date:** December 22, 2023
- **Aim:** The MY Bharat campaign aims to inspire Indian youth to contribute towards the nation's development and make India a developed country by 2047.

Health Minister launched 'MedTech Mitra' to advance health Solution



The 'MedTech Mitra' is a strategic initiative launched by Union Health Minister Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya. It is

designed to empower MedTech innovators and advance healthcare solutions in India. It is expected to facilitate indigenous development of affordable, quality MedTech devices and diagnostics, leading to a considerable reduction in the import dependence of this sector.

- **Initiative Name:** MedTech Mitra
- **Launch Date:** December 25, 2023
- **Beneficiaries:** Young talents of the country, MedTech innovators
- **Aims:** MedTech Mitra aims to help young talents by shaping their research, knowledge, logic, and assisting them in getting regulatory approval.

Union Minister inaugurated 'Adi Vyakhyan' – a two-day tribal orientation programme



The 'Adi Vyakhyan' is a two-day tribal orientation programme inaugurated by Union Minister for Tribal Affairs and Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare, Shri Arjun Munda. The programme, organized by the National Tribal Research Institute (NTRI), aims to facilitate a deeper understanding of tribal traditions and culture, and to explore the challenges to their existence.

- **Programme Name:** Adi Vyakhyan
- **Launch Date:** December 21, 2023
- **Location:** New Delhi
- **Beneficiaries:** Representatives of Munda communities from 5 states - Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha and Assam
- **Aims:** The Adi Vyakhyan aims to familiarize the tribal communities with the statistical input of India and the Constitutional safeguards in order to unfold the nuances of the Panchayats (Extension of Scheduled Areas) (PESA) Act, 1996, the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006, Prevention of SC/STs Atrocities Act, 1989.

Allocation of funds to 131 cities under National Clean Air Programme to combat air pollution

The National Clean Air Programme (NCAP), launched by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), is a long-term strategy to prevent, control, and abate air pollution. The programme has allocated funds to 131 cities across India to implement city-specific clean air action plans.

- **Programme Name:** National Clean Air Programme (NCAP)
- **Beneficiaries:** The 131 cities that are part of the programme
- **Aims:** The NCAP aims to achieve a 20-30% reduction in particulate matter concentration by 2024 across the country.
- **Achievements:** As of FY 2021-22, Rs. 6897 crore have been released to 131 cities for the implementation of city action plans to improve air quality. For FY 2022-23, Rs. 2985.6 crore have been allocated to 131 cities.

Jute Corporation of India introduced 'Paat-Mitro' app for farmers

The 'Paat-Mitro' is a mobile application launched by the Jute Corporation of India Limited (JCI) during the 'Jute Symposium'. The app offers details about 'Jute-ICARE' schemes, weather forecasts, JCI's Purchase Centers' locations, and Procurement Policies.

- **App Name:** Paat-Mitro
- **Launch Date:** December 21, 2023
- **Location:** The app was launched during the 'Jute Symposium' in New Delhi
- **Beneficiaries:** Jute farmers
- **Aims:** The 'Paat-Mitro' app aims to provide jute farmers with the latest agronomic practices and Minimum Support Prices (MSP) for their crops.

"Bhagwant Mann Sarkar Tuhade Dwar" scheme launched by Punjab govt

The 'Bhagwant Mann Sarkar Tuhade Dwar' scheme, launched by Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, is a groundbreaking initiative towards efficient governance. The scheme promises to deliver 43 essential services to the people's doorsteps, reflecting the Aam Aadmi Party's (AAP) commitment to transparent, citizen-centric governance.

- **Scheme Name:** Bhagwant Mann Sarkar Tuhade Dwar
- **Launch Date:** December 10, 2023
- **Location:** The scheme was launched in Ludhiana, Punjab
- **Beneficiaries:** The people of Punjab
- **Aims:** The scheme aims to bring 43 citizen-centric services, ranging from certificates to bill payments, directly to people's doorsteps.

Indian Forest & Wood Certification Scheme launched by MoEFCC

The Indian Forest & Wood Certification Scheme (IFWCS) is a voluntary third-party certification system launched by the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC). It includes forest management certification, tree outside forest management certification, and chain of custody certification.

- **Scheme Name:** Indian Forest & Wood Certification Scheme (IFWCS)
- **Launch Date:** December 7, 2023
- **Beneficiaries:** State forest departments, individual farmers, Farmer Producer Organizations engaged in agroforestry and farm forestry, as well as other wood-based industries in the value chain.
- **Aims:** The IFWCS aims to provide market incentives to various entities that adhere to responsible forest management and agroforestry practices in their operations.

Ministry of Panchayati Raj launched Geographic Information System application "Gram Manchitra"

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj launched the Geographic Information System (GIS) application "Gram Manchitra" to encourage Spatial Planning by the Gram Panchayat. This application facilitates and supports Gram Panchayats to perform planning at Gram Panchayat level using geo-spatial technology.

- **Project Name:** Gram Manchitra
- **Launch Date:** December 5, 2023
- **Beneficiaries:** Gram Panchayats across India
- **Aims:** Gram Manchitra aims to provide a single/ unified Geo Spatial platform to better visualize the various developmental works to be taken up across the different sectors and provide a decision support system for Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP).

Summit and Conference

Chapter 10

PM to chair 3rd National Conference of Chief Secretaries in Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi chaired the third National Conference of Chief Secretaries in Delhi on 28th and 29th December 2023. The key focus of the conference was 'Ease of Living'.

- **Date:** 28th and 29th December 2023
- **Location:** Delhi
- **Participants:** The conference was attended by more than 200 people, including representatives of the Central Government, Chief Secretaries, and other senior officials of all States/Union Territories.
- **Aims/Objectives:** The conference aimed to encourage participative governance and partnership between the Centre and the State Governments.

Youth for Unnati and Vikas with AI (YUVAi) to feature in GPAI Summit 2023

The Youth for Unnati and Vikas with AI (YUVAi) program was prominently featured at the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI) Summit 2023. YUVAi, a collaborative initiative of the National e-Governance Division (NeGD), Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY), Government of India, and Intel India, is designed to equip the youth with essential AI skills.

- **Date:** The summit took place from December 12-14, 2023.
- **Location:** The summit was held in Delhi.
- **Aims/Objectives:** To foster a deeper understanding of AI, to enable school students from class 8 to 12 across the nation with AI skills and empower them to become human-centric designers and users of AI.

Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar inaugurates 2-day long Atal Health Fair in Lucknow

Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar inaugurated the two-day-long Atal Health Fair in memory of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee at the PNT Ground in Rajajipuram, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh.

- **Date:** December 17, 2023
- **Location:** The fair was held at the PNT Ground in Rajajipuram, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh.
- **Aims/Objectives:** The fair aimed to provide medical check-ups and consultations. It was organized in memory of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

India hosts 27th WAIPA World Investment Conference in New Delhi

India hosted the 27th World Association of Investment Promotion Agencies (WAIPA) World Investment Conference (WIC) from December 11-14, 2023. The conference was organized by Invest India, the National Investment Promotion and Facilitation Agency of the Government of India, and WAIPA.

- **Date:** December 11-14, 2023
- **Location:** The conference was held at the India International Convention & Expo Centre - Yashobhoomi, New Delhi
- **Themes:** The theme for the 2023 conference was 'Empowering Investors: IPAs Pioneering Future Growth'.
- **Aims/Objectives:** The conference aimed to bring together Investment Promotion Agencies (IPAs), international organizations, academia, and the private sector, including startups, to discuss investment policies and trends, providing a unique opportunity for collaboration, trade, investments, and knowledge sharing.

Uttarakhand Global Investors Summit 2023: Propelling Growth in the Foothills

The Global Investors Summit 2023 was a significant event held in Dehradun, Uttarakhand, India. The summit was inaugurated by the Prime Minister of India,

Shri Narendra Modi. The event provided a platform for business delegations, corporate leaders, academia, innovators, and government leadership from across the globe.

- **Event Name:** "Global Investors Summit 2023"
- **Date:** 8th and 9th of December, 2023
- **Location:** Forest Research Institute in Dehradun, Uttarakhand.
- **Themes:** The theme for the 2023 summit was "Peace to Prosperity".
- **Aims/Objectives:** The objective of the summit was to establish Uttarakhand as a new investment destination.

NMCG launches Global River Cities Alliance at the United Nations Climate Change Conference

The Global River Cities Alliance (GRCA) is a partnership of 275+ river-cities from 11 countries, led by the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) under the Ministry of Jal Shakti, Government of India. It was launched at COP28, the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Dubai, UAE.

- **Event Name:** Global River Cities Alliance (GRCA)
- **Date:** December 10, 2023
- **Location:** COP28, the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Dubai, United Arab Emirates
- **Participants:** The GRCA includes countries namely India, Egypt, Netherlands, Denmark, Ghana, Australia, Bhutan, Cambodia, Japan and river-cities of The Hague (Den Haag) from the Netherlands, Adelaide from Australia, and Szolnok of Hungary. It also involves international funding agencies such as the World Bank, Asian Development Bank (ADB), Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and knowledge management institution like KPMG.
- **Themes:** The theme for 2023 is "River Cities for Climate Resilience and Sustainable Development".

59th Fertiliser Association of India Annual Seminar 2023

The 59th Fertiliser Association of India Annual Seminar 2023 was held in New Delhi from 6-8 December 2023. The seminar was inaugurated by the Union Minister of Chemicals & Fertilisers and Health and Family Welfare, Dr Mansukh Mandaviya, who highlighted the various initiatives taken by the government to support the farmers and the fertilizer industry. The seminar also featured presentations, panel discussions, and exhibitions by experts, stakeholders, and representatives from various countries and organizations.

- **Event Name:** 59th Fertiliser Association of India Annual Seminar 2023
- **Date**: 6-8 December 2023
- **Location:** Hotel Pullman & Novotel, Aerocity, New Delhi, India
- **Theme:** "Innovations in Fertilizer and Agriculture Sectors"
- **Aims/Objectives:** The seminar aimed to showcase the achievements and challenges of the Indian fertilizer sector, as well as to explore the opportunities and solutions for sustainable and balanced use of fertilizers.

PM Modi to address the 2nd Edition of IFSCA's Flagship Event – Infinity Forum 2.0

Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the second edition of the flagship Financial Technology event - Infinity Forum 2.0 on December 9, 2023. The event was hosted by the International Financial Services Centers Authority (IFSCA) and GIFT City under the aegis of the Government of India. The event will bring together global leaders, experts, and stakeholders from the financial sector to discuss and develop solutions and opportunities for new age global financial services.

- **Event Name:** Infinity Forum 2.0
- **Date:** December 9, 2023
- **Location:** GIFT City, Gujarat, India
- **Themes:** GIFT-IFSC: Nerve Centre for New Age Global Financial Services
- **Aims/Objectives:** To provide a global thought leadership platform on financial services, where progressive ideas, pressing problems, innovative technologies from across the world get discovered, discussed, and developed into solutions and opportunities.

1st Indian Art, Architecture & Design Biennale (IAADB) 2023

The 1st Indian Art, Architecture and Design Biennale (IAADB) 2023 is a cultural event showcasing the diversity and creativity of India's art, architecture and design. The event was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the Red Fort on December 8, 2023.

- **Event Name**: Indian Art, Architecture & Design Biennale (IAADB) 2023
- **Date:** December 8-15, 2023
- **Location:** Red Fort, New Delhi
- **Aims/Objectives:**
  - To initiate a holistic conversation between different stakeholders of art, architecture and design
  - To strengthen the cultural dialogue and exchange between India and the world
  - To provide avenues and opportunities for collaboration and innovation in the field of art, architecture and design.

Environment and Ecology

Chapter 11

Wang's Garden Lizard Discovered in China

Researchers have identified a new iguana species, Wang's garden lizard (Calotes wangi), in southern China and northern Vietnam. This species was discovered through extensive surveys conducted from 2009 to 2022. Measuring less than 9 cm with an orange tongue, it inhabits subtropical and tropical forests, thriving in various landscapes including urban areas.

- **Date:** December 28, 2023
- **Location:** Southern China and Northern Vietnam
- **Species Family:** Calotes versicolor complex
- **Purpose:** To identify and describe a new species of iguana, which was previously mistaken for a closely related species, Calotes versicolor.

Astronomers detect seismic ripples in ancient galactic disk

Astronomers have detected seismic ripples in the ancient galactic disk of BRI 1335-0417, the oldest and furthest known spiral galaxy in our universe. The researchers were able to capture the motion of the gas around BRI 1335-0417 and reveal a seismic wave forming, a first in this type of early galaxy. The galaxy's disk moves in a way similar to ripples spreading on a pond after a stone is thrown in.

- **Date:** December 21, 2023
- **Purpose:** The study aimed to understand how gas was moving into and throughout the galaxy, as gas is a key ingredient for forming stars.
- **Impact:** The discovery provides crucial information on the most likely scenarios of how spiral structures form in the early universe.

The Spread of the 'Zombie Deer Disease'

The 'Zombie Deer Disease' has recently been detected in Yellowstone National Park, marking the first confirmed case of the disease in the country's most famous nature reserve. This has raised concerns among scientists and the public.

A deer carcass in Yellowstone National Park tested positive for CWD in mid-November. As of November 2023, CWD has been found in at least 31 states in the US and three provinces in Canada, as well as in Norway, Finland, Sweden, and South Korea.

About Zombie Deer Disease: The 'Zombie Deer Disease', scientifically known as Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD), primarily affects deer, elk, reindeer, sika deer, and moose. This disease progressively deteriorates the brains of these animals, leading to dementia-like symptoms and eventual death.

Major hidden Human-Driven bird extinctions

A recent study has found that humans have wiped out around 1,400 bird species, which is twice as many as previously thought. This has major implications for the ongoing biodiversity crisis.

- **Causes of Extinction:** The arrival of people to places like Hawaii, Tonga, and the Azores led to far-reaching impacts including deforestation, over-hunting, and the introduction of invasive species. Consequently, bird species were wiped out.
- **Methodology of the Study:** The study, led by the UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (UKCEH), used statistical modeling to estimate the undiscovered bird extinctions.

Century's largest flood strikes Far North Queensland in the wake of Storm Jasper

The largest flood in over a century has hit Far North Queensland (FNQ), Australia, triggered by the remnants of Tropical Cyclone Jasper. The cyclone, which made landfall on December 13, 2023, caused unprecedented rainfall and widespread major flooding along the FNQ coast.

- **Date:** December 13, 2023
- **Reason:** The flood was caused by the remnants of Tropical Cyclone Jasper. The cyclone stalled inland from the southeast Gulf of Carpentaria, creating a stationary convergence zone conducive to torrential rain.

- **Impact:** The flood led to widespread major flooding, with the Barron River at Myola experiencing its highest flood levels in over a century. The ongoing flooding has disrupted water treatment, leading to a critical level in the city's water supply.

Central Zoo authority successfully hosts the 2nd National Stakeholder Workshop on Wildlife Health and One Health Collaboration

The Central Zoo Authority successfully conducted the 2nd National Level Stakeholder Workshop in New Delhi. The workshop chaired by the Union Minister of State, Ministry of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change (MoEF&CC), Shri Ashwini Chaubey. The workshop aimed at advancing the development of the National Referral Centre for Wildlife (NRC-W) and fostering collaboration for One Health initiatives.

- **Date:** December 22, 2023
- **Location:** New Delhi
- **Purpose:** The workshop served as a platform for insightful discussions and a consultative approach towards the development of the National Referral Centre for Wildlife.
- **Reason:** The workshop was conducted to foster collaboration for One Health initiatives and to advance the development of the NRC-W.

Achievements of National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) during the year 2023

The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) achieved significant milestones during the year 2023. These achievements include the completion of 50 years of Project Tiger, the launch of the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA), and the successful reintroduction of the cheetah.

- **Purpose:** The purpose of these achievements was to ensure the conservation and growth of the tiger population in India.
- **Achievements:** The key achievements of the NTCA in 2023 include:
  - Completion of 50 years of Project Tiger.
  - Launch of the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) for conservation of seven big cats.
  - Successful reintroduction of cheetah.
  - As per the 5th cycle of the All India Tiger Estimation 2022 summary report, India has a minimum of 3167 tigers.
  - Six tiger reserves, namely Kali, Melghat, Navegaon – Nagzira, Pilibhit and Periyar have been awarded with CA|TS accreditation in 2023.

Indian Forest & Wood Certification Scheme launched to promote Sustainable Management of forests and agroforestry

The Indian Forest and Wood Certification Scheme (IFWCS) is a national forest certification scheme launched by the Ministry of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change. It offers voluntary third-party certification designed to promote sustainable forest management and agroforestry in the country.

- **Date:** December 11, 2023
- **Purpose:** To provide market incentives to various entities that adhere to responsible forest management and agroforestry practices in their operations.
- **Nodal Agency:** The scheme will be overseen by the Indian Forest and Wood Certification Council, which will act as a multi stakeholder advisory body. The Indian Institute of Forest Management, Bhopal will act as the scheme operating agency and will be responsible for overall management of the IFWCS.
- **Benefits:**
  - Promotes sustainable forest management practices, reducing deforestation, protecting biodiversity, and ensuring responsible use of forest resources.
  - Provides market access for certified timber and forest products, enhancing their value and competitiveness in the global market.
  - Addresses global deforestation and illegal timber trade concerns.
  - Enhances trust and transparency in processes related to forest management and wood-based products.
  - Opens doors to new markets for wood products, benefiting both producers and consumers who value sustainability.

National Circular Economy Roadmap to Reduce Plastic Waste

The National Circular Economy Roadmap for Reducing Plastic Waste in India is a scheme that aims to increase the repair, re-use, and recycling of India's plastic waste. The roadmap shows that by 2035, two-thirds of all plastics used could be recycled, and single-use plastics could be phased out.

- **Date:** December 7, 2023
- **Purpose:** To reduce plastic waste going to landfill or polluting the environment.
- **Benefits:**
  - Increases recycling rates by up to two-thirds.
  - Decreases greenhouse emissions by 20-50%.
  - Improves air quality.
  - Reduces microplastics in the food chain.
  - Diverts plastic waste into resources.

Sports News

Chapter 12

Ace wrestler Vinesh Phogat leaves her Arjuna and Khel Ratna Awards on Kartavya Path



Sport Type: Wrestling

Date: The event took place on Saturday, December 30, 2023

Athletes/Teams Involved: The event involved Indian wrestler Vinesh Phogat

Outcome/Result: Vinesh Phogat returned her Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna and Arjuna awards. This was in protest against the recent election of Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh-loyalist Sanjay Singh as the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) president.

Records/Achievements:

- World Championship medallist
- A three-time Commonwealth Games gold medalist
- awarded the Arjuna Award in 2016 and the Khel Ratna in 2020

Indian Wrestler Pooja Dhanda Suspended for One Year Due to Whereabouts Failures

Sport Type: Wrestling

Date: Announced on December 27, 2023. The one-year ban came into effect on June 15, 2023.

Athletes/Teams Involved: The event involved Indian wrestler Pooja Dhanda.

Outcome/Result: suspended for one year by the National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) due to three whereabouts failures in a year. These included two filing failures and one missed test.

Records/Achievements: won a bronze medal at the World Championships in 2018.

Sony Sports ropes in Kartik Aaryan as brand ambassador for football



Sport Type: Football

Date: The partnership was announced on December 21, 2023.

Athletes/Teams Involved: Bollywood actor Kartik Aaryan.

Outcome/Result: Kartik Aaryan was announced as the brand ambassador for football on Sony Sports Network.

Records/Achievements: This partnership marks a significant moment in the promotion of football in India.

South Africa's Dean Elgar announces retirement from international cricket

Sport Type: Cricket

Date: Dean Elgar announced his retirement on December 22, 2023.

Athletes/Teams Involved: South African cricketer Dean Elgar.

Outcome/Result: Dean Elgar announced his retirement from international cricket after the second

match of India's tour of South Africa.

Records/Achievements: Dean Elgar has represented South Africa in 84 Tests and eight One-Day Internationals during a career that has spanned 12 years.

He has scored over 5000 runs at an average of 37.28, including 13 centuries.

Manchester City and Chelsea capped off their 2023 with wins in the Premier League

Sport Type: Football

Event/Tournament: Premier League

Date: The matches took place in December 2023

Athletes/Teams Involved: Manchester City and Chelsea

Outcome/Result: Manchester City and Chelsea ended 2023 with wins in the Premier League. Manchester City beat Sheffield United, while Chelsea had to fight off a spirited Luton Town to clinch a thriller.

Records/Achievements: These victories marked a positive end to the year for both teams.

India's Women's Cricket Team Achieved the Historic First Test Win against Australia



Sport Type: Cricket (Test Match)

Event/Tournament: First-ever Test match between India and Australia (Women's)

Date: December 26, 2023

Athletes/Teams Involved: Indian Women's Cricket Team vs. Australian Women's Cricket Team

Outcome/Result: India wins by 75 runs, marking their first-ever Test victory against Australia.

Records/Achievements: Smriti Mandhana scores a stellar 127, the highest individual score by an Indian woman in Tests.

Hardik Pandya Takes Over As Captain of Mumbai Indians

Sport Type: Cricket (Indian Premier League)

Event/Tournament: IPL Auction 2024

Date: December 23, 2023

Athletes/Teams Involved: Mumbai Indians, Hardik Pandya

Outcome/Result: Hardik Pandya is named the new captain of Mumbai Indians for the upcoming IPL season.

Savita Punia & Hardik Singh Win Top FIH Hockey Star Awards

Sport Type: Hockey

Event/Tournament: International Hockey Federation (FIH) Hockey Star Awards 2023

Date: December 23, 2023

Athletes/Teams Involved: Savita Punia (India), Hardik Singh (India)

Outcome/Result: Savita Punia wins her third consecutive Best Goalkeeper award, Hardik Singh is named Men's Top Player.

Records/Achievements: Savita Punia becomes the first hockey player to win the Best Goalkeeper award three times in a row.

Maharashtra Wins Women's & AAI Bags Men's Title in National Khelo India Youth Games

Sport Type: Multi-sport event (Khelo India Youth Games)

Event/Tournament: National Khelo India Youth Games 2024

Date: December 21, 2023

Teams Involved: Maharashtra (Women's), Athletics Academy of India (AAI) (Men's)

Outcome/Result: Maharashtra and AAI emerge victorious in their respective categories.

Mitchell Starc Breaks Bank in IPL Auction

Sport Type: Cricket (Indian Premier League)

Event/Tournament: IPL Auction 2024

Date: December 19, 2023

Athletes/Teams Involved: Mitchell Starc (Australia), Kolkata Knight Riders

Outcome/Result: Mitchell Starc is sold for a record-breaking ₹24.75 crore to Kolkata Knight Riders.

Records/Achievements: Starc becomes the most expensive foreign player in IPL history.

Haryana Dominates Khelo India Para Games

Sport Type: Multi-sport event (Khelo India Para Games)

Event/Tournament: Inaugural Khelo India Para Games 2024

Date: December 19, 2023

Teams Involved: Haryana

Outcome/Result: Haryana finishes at the top of the medal table with 40 gold, 39 silver, and 26 bronze medals.

Harshal Patel Leads Haryana to Vijay Hazare Trophy Title

Sport Type: Cricket (Domestic One-Day Tournament)

Event/Tournament: Vijay Hazare Trophy 2024

Date: December 18, 2023

Teams Involved: Haryana, Rajasthan

Outcome/Result: Haryana defeats Rajasthan in the final to win the Vijay Hazare Trophy.

Hardik Pandya Takes Over As Captain of Team India



Sport Type: Cricket (International White-Ball Format)

Date: December 15, 2023

Athletes/Teams Involved: Hardik Pandya (India)

Outcome/Result: Hardik Pandya is named the new captain of the Indian cricket team for white-ball formats

Djokovic & Sabalenka Clinch ITF World Champion Titles

Sport Type: Tennis (Singles)

Event/Tournament: ITF Year-End World Champions

Date: December 29, 2023

Athletes/Teams Involved: Novak Djokovic (Men's), Aryna Sabalenka (Women's)

Outcome/Result: Djokovic and Sabalenka win their respective titles, claiming the top spot in the ITF rankings.

Records/Achievements: Djokovic achieves his seventh Year-End Championship title, Sabalenka wins her third consecutive.

Zinc Football Academy Achieves AIFF's Elite 3-Star Rating

Sport Type: Football

Event/Tournament: All India Football Federation (AIFF) Academy Accreditation

Date: December 2023

Teams Involved: Zinc Football Academy

Outcome/Result: Awarded "Elite 3-star" rating, placing them among the best youth development academies in India.

Records/Achievements: Achieved this prestigious recognition within 6 years of their inception, marking a significant milestone in their journey.

U-19 Asia Cup, Bangladesh Beat UAE To Lift Trophy

Sport Type: Cricket

Event/Tournament: U-19 Cricket World Cup Asia Qualifiers

Date: December 2023

Teams Involved: Bangladesh U-19, UAE U-19

Outcome/Result: Bangladesh U-19 defeated UAE U-19 in the final to win the tournament and qualify for the U-19 Cricket World Cup.

Records/Achievements: This is Bangladesh's first U-19 Asia Cup title.

BCCI Decides To Retire MS Dhoni's Iconic No.7 Jersey



Sport Type: Cricket

Athletes Involved: Mahendra Singh Dhoni

Outcome/Result: BCCI retires Dhoni's iconic jersey number 7 in international cricket, honoring his

exceptional contribution to the sport.

Records/Achievements: Dhoni is a World Cup-winning captain and widely considered one of the greatest finishers in cricket history. This retirement further cements his legend.

Italy Clinches Admiral's Cup 2023 At Indian Naval Academy

Sport Type: Sailing

Event/Tournament: Admiral's Cup 2023

Teams Involved: Italy, USA, India, etc.

Outcome/Result: Italy emerged victorious in the Admiral's Cup 2023, showcasing their sailing prowess in the competition held at the Indian Naval Academy.

IPL Brand Value Rises 28% To $10.7 Billion In 2023

Sport Type: Cricket

Event/Tournament: Indian Premier League (IPL)

Teams Involved: All IPL franchises

Outcome/Result: The IPL brand value has increased by 28% to a staggering $10.7 billion in 2023, highlighting its immense popularity and economic impact.

Records/Achievements: This marks a significant growth in the IPL's brand value, showcasing its expanding reach and influence.

Asad Shafiq Announces Retirement From All Forms Of Cricket

Sport Type: Cricket

Athletes Involved: Asad Shafiq

Outcome/Result: Veteran Pakistani batsman Asad Shafiq announces retirement from all forms of cricket, concluding a successful career spanning over a decade.

Records/Achievements: Shafiq played 76 Tests, 80 ODIs, and 20 T20Is for Pakistan, scoring over 12,000 international runs.

Travis Head Wins ICC Men's Player Of Month Award For November 2023



Sport Type: Cricket

Event/Tournament: ICC monthly award

Athletes Involved: Travis Head

Outcome/Result: Australian batsman Travis Head was awarded the ICC Men's Player of the Month for November 2023, recognizing his outstanding performances in Test cricket.

Records/Achievements: Head scored three centuries and a fifty in just two Tests during November, playing a pivotal role in Australia's victories over the West.

Awards and Honours

Chapter 13

Dr P. Indira Devi Conferred Prestigious ISAE Fellow 2023 Title

Dr P. Indira Devi, an eminent agricultural economist from Kerala, has been conferred the distinguished title of ISAE Fellow 2023 by the Indian Society of Agricultural Economics (ISAE). She is the first woman agricultural economist from Kerala to receive this honour in ISAE's 84 year journey.

- **Nature of Awards:** The ISAE Fellow recognition represents the pinnacle of professional achievement awarded by India's foremost agricultural economics society established in 1939.
- **Recipients:** Dr P. Indira Devi, Director of Kerala State Farmers' Welfare Board and ICAR Emeritus Professor at the Kerala Agricultural University.
- **Details about the Awards:** The ISAE Fellow title is conferred annually by the Indian Society of Agricultural Economics (ISAE) to a select group of eminent agricultural economists who have made outstanding contributions to the field of agricultural economics in India and abroad.

ISRO receives Leif Erikson Lunar Prize for Chandrayaan-3 mission success

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has been awarded the prestigious 2023 Leif Erikson Lunar Prize for its successful Chandrayaan-3 mission. The award, presented by the Exploration Museum in Husavik, Iceland, recognizes ISRO's significant contributions to lunar exploration and understanding celestial phenomena.

- **Name of the Awards:** Leif Erikson Lunar Prize
- **Nature of Awards:** The Leif Erikson Lunar Prize is an international recognition, awarded annually by the Exploration Museum in Husavik, Iceland.
- **Recipients:** The recipient of the 2023 Leif Erikson Lunar Prize is the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), for its groundbreaking Chandrayaan-3 mission.
- **Details about the Awards:** The Leif Erikson Lunar Prize is named after the legendary Norse explorer Leif Erikson. It has been presented annually by the Exploration Museum in Husavik, Iceland, since 2015.

Ketki Raut clinched the Miss Maharashtra 2023 title

Ketki Raut clinched the Miss Maharashtra 2023 title, a prestigious beauty pageant that celebrates talent, charm, and intellect of women in Maharashtra. She competed with 19 other finalists and impressed the jury panel with her confidence and grace.

- **Name of the Awards:** Miss Maharashtra 2023
- **Nature of Awards:** Miss Maharashtra is a state-level beauty pageant that is held annually to select the most deserving and talented women from Maharashtra. The winners of Miss Maharashtra go on to participate in the national and international pageants, such as Miss India and Miss World.
- **Recipients:** Ketki Raut, a 23-year-old model and dancer from Pune, won the Miss Maharashtra 2023 title. She was crowned by the actress Amruta Khanvilkar, who was also one of the jury members.
- **Details about the Awards:** Miss Maharashtra was founded in 2021 by Amisha Chaudhary, a former Miss India finalist and a successful model and entrepreneur.

L.P. Hemanth K Srinivasulu received 'Man of the Year 2023' Award

L.P. Hemanth K Srinivasulu, the Director of the Latin America and Caribbean Trade Council, received the 'Man of the Year 2023' Award from Home Minister Amit Shah for his contributions to trade diplomacy and global economic relations. He has a diverse professional background in multinational corporations and has influenced the direction of companies like Advanced Biotech, Datadensity, and Celeb Media.

- **Name of the Awards:** 'Man of the Year 2023' Award
- **Nature of Awards:** The 'Man of the Year 2023' Award is a prestigious award that recognizes the exceptional achievements and contributions of an individual in any field of endeavor. The award is given by the Home Minister of India, who selects the recipient based on their impact, influence, and excellence.

- **Recipients:** L.P. Hemanth K Srinivasulu, the Director of the Latin America and Caribbean Trade Council, is the recipient of the 'Man of the Year 2023' Award.
- **Aims:** The award aims to inspire and motivate others to pursue excellence and make a positive difference in the world.

Sukrita Paul Kumar won 6th Rabindranath Tagore literary prize.

The sixth edition of the Rabindranath Tagore Literary Prize was awarded to poet-critic Sukrita Paul Kumar for her book, 'Salt & Pepper: Selected Poems'. An amount of USD 5,000, a Tagore statue and a certificate for contribution to literature was given to Kumar at the award ceremony.

The Rabindranath Tagore Literary Prize for social achievement was awarded to Nobel laureate Abhijit Banerjee for his contributions to societal welfare.

- **Name of the Awards:** Rabindranath Tagore Literary Prize.
- **Nature of Awards:** The award is an international recognition for literary excellence and social achievement, founded in 2018 by US-based publisher Peter Bundalo.
- **Recipients:** The recipients of the 6th Rabindranath Tagore Literary Prize are Sukrita Paul Kumar, a poet and critic, and Abhijit Banerjee, a Nobel laureate in economics.

Savita Punia and Hardik Singh won Prestigious FIH Awards

Savita Punia and Hardik Singh, two Indian hockey players, have won the FIH Player of the Year and Goalkeeper of the Year awards, respectively, for the 2023 season. The awards were announced by the International Hockey Federation (FIH), following a voting process involving experts, national associations, fans, and media.

- **Date:** December 19, 2023
- **Name of the Awards:** FIH Player of the Year and FIH Goalkeeper of the Year
- **Nature of Awards:** The awards are international recognitions, given by the FIH, the world governing body of hockey, to the best male and female players and goalkeepers in the sport.
- **Recipients:**
  - Savita Punia is the captain and goalkeeper of the Indian women's hockey team, with 266 international caps. She has won the FIH Goalkeeper of the Year award for the third consecutive time.
  - Hardik Singh is a midfielder and vice-captain of the Indian men's hockey team, with 114 international caps. He has won the FIH Player of the Year award for the first time.
- **Details about the Awards:** The FIH Player of the Year award was instituted in 1998, and the FIH Goalkeeper of the Year award was introduced in 2014.

NTPC Kanti received FICCI Water Award 2023 for water use efficiency

NTPC Kanti, a subsidiary of NTPC, has been awarded the 11th Edition of FICCI Water Award 2023 under the category of Industrial Water Use Efficiency. The award recognizes the company's efforts in water conservation and resource management in its operations.

- **Date:** December 19, 2023.
- **Name of the Awards:** FICCI Water Award 2023
- **Nature of Awards:** The FICCI Water Awards are national awards given by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) to recognize exemplary efforts in water conservation and management by organizations across different sectors.
- **Recipients:** NTPC Kanti, a wholly-owned subsidiary of NTPC, which operates the Kanti Thermal Power Station in Muzaffarpur, Bihar.
- **Details about the Awards:** The FICCI Water Awards were instituted in 2012 by the FICCI Water Mission, which aims to create a platform for dialogue and action on water issues in India. The awards are given in four categories: Industrial Water Use Efficiency, Community Initiatives by Industry, Water and Sanitation Innovation, and Water Education and Awareness.

Sahitya Akademi Awards 2023

The Sahitya Akademi Awards 2023 are the annual literary prizes conferred by the Sahitya Akademi, India's National Academy of Letters, to writers in 24 Indian languages. The awards recognize outstanding works of poetry, fiction, drama, essays, and criticism published in the previous year. The awards were announced on December 20, 2023, and the winners will receive a copper plaque and a cash prize of Rs 50,000 each.

Date: December 20, 2023

Name of the Awards: Sahitya Akademi Awards 2023

Nature of Awards: The awards are the highest literary honor in India, given to writers who have made significant contributions to the enrichment of Indian literature and culture.

Details about the Awards: The Sahitya Akademi Awards were established in 1954, and are given every year to the most outstanding books of literary merit published in any of the 24 languages recognized by the Akademi.

List of the winners:

Sr. No.	Language	Genre	Title	Name of the Author
1.	Assamese	Short Stories	Dr. Pranavjyoti Deka Shrestha Galpa	Pranavjyoti Deka
2.	Bengali	Novel	Jaler Upar Pani	Swapnamay Chakrabarti
3.	Bodo	Short Stories	Jiu-Safarni Dakhwn	Nandeswar Daimari
4.	Dogri	Poetry-Ghazal	Daun Sadiyan Ek Seer	Vijay Verma
5.	English	Novel	Requiem in Raga Janki	Neelum Saran Gour
6.	Gujarati	Epic Novel	Sairandhree	Vinod Joshi
7.	Hindi	Novel	Mujhe Pahachano	Sanjeev
8.	Kannada	Poetry	Mahabharatha Anusandhanada Bharathayatre	Lakshmisha Tolpadi
9.	Kashmiri	Essays	Yeth Waweh Halay Tsong Kous Zalay	Manshoor Banihali
10.	Konkani	Short Stories	Varsal	Prakash S Parienkar
11.	Maithili	Essays	Bodha Sanketan	Basukinath Jha
12.	Malayalam	Literary Study	Malayala Novelinte Deshakalangal	E.V. Ramakrishnan
13.	Manipuri	Poetry	Yachangba Nang Hallo	Sorokkhaibam Gambhini
14.	Marathi	Novel	Ringan	Krushnat Khot
15.	Nepali	Essays	Nepali Lokshitya Ra Loksanskritiko Parichaya	Judhabir Rana
16.	Odia	Poetry	Aprastuta Mrutyu	Ashutosh Parida
17.	Punjabi	Poetry	Mann Di Chip	Swarnjit Savi
18.	Rajasthani	Poetry	Palakati Preet	Gaje Singh Rajpurohit
19.	Sanskrit	Poetry	Shunye Meghganam	Arun Ranjan Mishra
20.	Santali	Short Stories	Jaba Baha	Taraceen Baskey (Turia Chand Baskey)
21.	Sindhi	Ghazal	Hathu Pakidijain	Vinod Asudani
22.	Tamil	Poetry-Short-Stories	Neervazhi Paduvum	Rajasekaran (Devibharathi)
23.	Telugu	Short Stories	Rameshwaram Kaakulu Marikonni Kathalu	T. Patanjali Sastry
24.	Urdu	Novel	Rajdev Ki Amrai	Sadiqua Nawab Saher

Dr. Poonam Khetrapal bagged Bhutan's National Order of Merit Gold Medal

Dr. Poonam Khetrapal Singh, the Regional Director of WHO South-East Asia, was awarded the 'National Order of Merit Gold Medal' by the King of Bhutan on December 18, 2023.

The award recognizes her distinguished services to the country in the field of public health, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dr. Khetrapal Singh is the first woman and the first Indian to hold the position of Regional Director of WHO South-East Asia.

- **Name of the Award:** National Order of Merit Gold Medal
- **Nature of Award:** The National Order of Merit is a Bhutanese award conferred by the King of Bhutan to individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the nation in various fields. The award has four classes: gold, silver, bronze, and certificate.
- **Recipient:** Dr Poonam Khetrapal Singh
- **Details about the Award:** The National Order of Merit was instituted in 2008 by the Royal Decree of His Majesty the King of Bhutan.

IREDA's Pradip Kumar Das won the 'CMD of the Year' award

IREDA's CMD Pradip Kumar Das has won the 'CMD of the Year' award for the second consecutive year at the 13th PSE Excellence Awards, hosted by the Indian Chamber of Commerce.

- **Date:** 20th December 2023
- **Name of the Awards:** 13th PSE Excellence Awards
- **Nature of Awards:** The awards are organized by the Indian Chamber of Commerce to honour the outstanding achievements of public sector enterprises in India.
- **Details about the Awards:** The PSE Excellence Awards were instituted in 2011 by the Indian Chamber of Commerce, in association with the Department of Public Enterprises, Ministry of Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises, Government of India.

Israeli Film 'Children of Nobody' Wins Golden Bengal Tiger Award

The Israeli film "Children of Nobody" won the Golden Royal Bengal Tiger Award for Best Film at the 29th Kolkata International Film Festival (KIFF) in December 2023. The film, based on a true story, depicts the struggle of troubled boys who try to save a shelter for at-risk youth.

- **Date:** December 13, 2023
- **Name of the Awards:** Golden Royal Bengal Tiger Award for Best Film
- **Nature of Awards:** The Golden Royal Bengal Tiger Award for Best Film is an international award that recognizes the best film among the entries in the International Competition: Innovation in Moving Images section of the KIFF.
- **Details about the Awards:** The Golden Royal Bengal Tiger Award for Best Film was instituted in 2014 by the KIFF.

Rijul Maini wins Miss India USA 2023

Rijul Maini, a medical student from Michigan, was crowned Miss India USA 2023 at a pageant held in New Jersey. Saloni Rammohan and Sneha Nambiar won the titles of Miss Teen India USA and Mrs India USA, respectively.

- **Date:** December 11, 2023
- **Name of the Awards:** Miss India USA, Miss Teen India USA, and Mrs India USA
- **Nature of Awards**: The awards are beauty pageants that celebrate the beauty, grace, and intelligence of women of Indian origin living in the United States.
- **Details about the Awards:** The Miss India USA pageant was started in 1980 by Dharmatma and Neelam Saran, two Indian-Americans living in New York, under the banner of Worldwide Pageants.

Indira Gandhi Peace Prize Awarded to Daniel Barenboim and Ali Abu Awwad

The Indira Gandhi Peace Prize for 2023 was jointly awarded to Daniel Barenboim and Ali Abu Awwad for their efforts in bringing together the youth and peoples of Israel and the Arab World for a non-violent resolution of the Israel-Palestine conflict.

Barenboim is a renowned classical pianist and conductor, who co-founded the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra and the Barenboim-Said Akademie with Palestinian scholar Edward Said.

Awwad is a Palestinian peace activist, who co-founded Roots, a local initiative that promotes dialogue and understanding between Israelis and Palestinians.

- **Date:** December 14, 2023
- **Name of the Awards:** Indira Gandhi Peace Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development
- **Details about the Awards:** The award consists of

a citation, a trophy, and a cash prize of 2.5 million Indian rupees.

National Sports Awards for 2023

The Sports Ministry gave its approval to the list of athletes to be honored at the National Sports Awards in New Delhi. Top badminton men's doubles pair Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty has been honored with the prestigious Khel Ratna award, while India fast bowler Mohammed Shami was among the 26 recipients of the Arjuna Award.

Date: December 20, 2023

Nature of Awards: The Khel Ratna Award is the highest sporting honour in India, given for outstanding performance in sports and games. The Arjuna Award is the second-highest sporting honour in India, given for excellence in sports and games.

Details about the Awards: The Khel Ratna Award was instituted in 1991-92 in the memory of Major Dhyan Chand, a legendary hockey player who won three Olympic gold medals. The award carries a cash prize of Rs. 25 lakh, a medal, a citation, and a scroll. The Arjuna Award was instituted in 1961 to recognize the achievements of sportspersons at the national and international level. The award carries a cash prize of Rs. 15 lakh, a bronze statue of Arjuna, a citation, and a scroll.

Nominees for Sports Awards

Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award	Satwik Sairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty (badminton).
Arjuna Award	Mohammed Shami (cricket), Ajay Reddy (blind cricket) Ojas Pravin Deotale, Aditi Gopichand Swami (archery), Sheetal Devi (para archery), Parul Chaudhary and M Sreeshankar (athletics), Mohd Hussamuddin (boxing), R Vaishali (chess), Divyakriti Singh and Anush Agarwalla (equestrian), Diksha Dagar (golf), Krishan Bahadur Pathak and Sushila Chanu (hockey), Pinky (lawn ball), Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar (shooting), Antim Panghal (wrestling), Ayhika Mukherjee (table tennis).
Dhyan Chand Lifetime Award	Kavita (kabaddi), Manjusha Kanwar (badminton) Vineet Kumar Sharma (hockey)
Dronacharya Award	Ganesh Prabhakaran (mallakhamb), Mahavir Saini (para athletics), Lalit Kumar (wrestling), RB Ramesh (chess), Shivendra Singh (hockey).

33rd Vyas Samman 2023

Noted Hindi writer Pushpa Bharati has been selected for the 33rd Vyas Samman, 2023, for her memoir, 'Yaadein, Yaadein aur Yaadein'. Bharati's memoir is a collection of her personal experiences, reflections, and insights on various aspects of life, culture, and society. The award carries a cash prize of four lakh rupees, a citation, and a plaque.

Date: The award was announced on December 11, 2023

Name of the Award: Vyas Samman 2023

Nature of Award: The Vyas Samman is a prestigious literary award in India, instituted by the KK Birla Foundation in 1991. It is given annually to a Hindi writer for an outstanding work of prose or poetry published in the last 10 years.

Appointments and Resignation

Chapter 14

Mohan Yadav takes oath as Madhya Pradesh chief minister



Name of the Individual: Mohan Yadav
Position: Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh
Date of Appointment: December 13, 2023

Previous Roles/Achievements:

- Mohan Yadav has been a member of the Bharatiya Janata Party and has represented the Ujjain South constituency as a Member of the Legislative Assembly of Madhya Pradesh since 2013.
- He was a member of the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad.
- He served as the head of the development authority in Madhya Pradesh from 2004 to 2010.
- He was elected as the head of Bharat Scouts and Guides in 2008.
- From 2011 to 2013, he served as the Cabinet Minister of Madhya Pradesh.
- He was the Minister for Higher Education in the Government of Madhya Pradesh from July 2, 2020, to December 11, 2023.

Bhajanlal Sharma named new Rajasthan Chief Minister

Name of the Individual: Bhajan Lal Sharma
Position: Chief Minister of Rajasthan
Date of Appointment: December 15, 2023

Previous Roles/Achievements:

- Bhajan Lal Sharma has been a member of the Bharatiya Janata Party and has represented the Sanganer constituency as a Member of the Rajasthan Legislative Assembly since December 3, 2023.
- He served as the General Secretary of the Bharatiya Janata Party, Rajasthan for the fourth consecutive term.
- He started his political career with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh during his school days through its student wing, the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad.
- He later became a sarpanch of his native village at the age of 27.

Tribal veteran Vishnu Deo Sai chosen as the new Chhattisgarh Chief Minister (State's first Adivasi Chief Minister)



Name of the Individual: Vishnu Deo Sai
Position: Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh
Date of Appointment: December 13, 2023

Previous Roles/Achievements:

- Vishnu Deo Sai has been a member of the Bharatiya Janata Party and has represented the Kunkuri constituency as a Member of the Chhattisgarh Legislative Assembly since December 3, 2023.
- He served as the President of the Bharatiya Janata Party, Chhattisgarh, from June 2, 2020, to August 9, 2022.
- He was a four-time member of parliament who served as Union Minister of State for Mines, Steel, Labour, and Employment from 2014 to 2019.

Revanth Reddy sworn in as Chief Minister of Telangana (Youngest Chief Minister of Telangana)

Name of the Individual: Revanth Reddy

Position: Chief Minister of Telangana

Date of Appointment: December 7, 2023

Previous Roles/Achievements:

- Revanth Reddy has been a member of the Indian National Congress and has represented the Kodangal constituency as a Member of the Telangana Legislative Assembly since December 7, 2023.
- He served as the President of the Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee from July 7, 2021.
- He was a Member of Parliament, representing the Malkajgiri constituency from May 23, 2019, to December 6, 2023.
- He served as a Member of the Legislative Assembly, representing the Kodangal constituency from June 2, 2014, to December 11, 2018.

Lalduhoma took oath as the 6th Chief Minister of Mizoram (The 'People's Chief Minister')



Name of the Individual: Lalduhoma

Position: Chief Minister of Mizoram

Date of Appointment: December 8, 2023

Previous Roles/Achievements:

- Lalduhoma has been a member of the Zoram People's Movement and has represented the Serchhip constituency as a Member of the Mizoram Legislative Assembly since 2018.
- He served as the President of Zoram Nationalist Party.
- He was a Member of Parliament, representing Mizoram from 1984 to 1989.
- He was the first MP to be discharged upon anti-defection law in India.
- He was elected from Aizawl West I and Serchhip constituencies and has been chosen to represent Serchhip since 2018.

Wipro CFO Jatin Dalal resigns, joins Cognizant as CFO

Name of the Individual: Jatin Dalal Position:

Resigned as CFO of Wipro and joined Cognizant as CFO

Date of Appointment/Resignation: Resigned from Wipro on November 30, 2023.

Previous Roles/Achievements:

- Jatin Dalal has been with Wipro for over 21 years.
- He has been the company's CFO since 2015.
- Before joining Wipro, Jatin was part of the prestigious Financial Management Program (FMP) of General Electric (GE) where he was a 'Global Corporate Honors' awardee.

Aparna Iyer appointed new Wipro CFO

Name of the Individual: Aparna Iyer

Aparna Iyer Position: Appointed as CFO of Wipro

Date of Appointment/Resignation: Appointed on September 22, 2023

Previous Roles/Achievements:

- Aparna Iyer has been with Wipro since 2003.
- She has held several finance roles, including Internal Audit, Business Finance, Finance Planning and Analysis, Corporate Treasury, and Investor Relations (IR).
- Most recently, Aparna was Senior Vice President and CFO of Wipro FullStride Cloud.

Rahul Rasgotra appointed DG ITBP, Anish Dayal Singh heads CRPF, Neena Singh takes charge of CISF



Name of the Individual: Rahul Rasgotra

Position: Appointed as the Director General (DG) of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP)

Date of Appointment/Resignation: December 28, 2023.

Previous Roles/Achievements:

- Rahul Rasgotra is an IPS officer of the 1989 batch from the Maharashtra cadre.
- He has had a distinguished career in the IPS, spanning over three decades.
- He was the Special Director of IB before taking charge of the ITBP.
- He has also served as the Joint Director of IB, handling sensitive matters related to counter-terrorism, internal security, and foreign intelligence.
- He has been awarded the President's Police Medal for Distinguished Services for his exemplary performance

Justice Arun Bhansali to be new Chief Justice of Allahabad HC

Name of the Individual: Justice Arun Bhansali

Position: Appointed as the Chief Justice of Allahabad High Court

Date of Appointment/Resignation: December 27, 2023

Previous Roles/Achievements:

- Justice Arun Bhansali was appointed as a Judge of the Rajasthan High Court on January 8, 2013.
- He has been functioning there as a senior puisne Judge.
- Before his elevation as a Judge of the High Court, he practiced at the Jodhpur Bench in civil, company, Constitutional, and taxation cases.
- During his tenure of nearly eleven years as a Judge of the High Court, he has authored more than 1230 reported judgments.

C.S. Rajan takes over as Kotak Mahindra Bank Chairman



Name of the Individual: C.S. Rajan

Position: Appointed as the part-time Chairman of Kotak Mahindra Bank

Date of Appointment/Resignation: January 1, 2024.

Previous Roles/Achievements:

- C.S. Rajan is an IAS officer of the 1978 batch.
- He retired as the Chief Secretary of the Government of Rajasthan in 2016.
- He has served in leadership roles for 12 years in key Infrastructure sectors such as Energy, Highways, Water Resources, and Industry, including SSI/MSME.
- He served on inter-disciplinary teams for review of World Bank projects in other States and also as a Consultant to the World Bank in a Study on 'Farmer Participation in Agricultural Research and Extension System'.

Pramod Agarwal named BSE chief

Name of the Individual: Pramod Agarwal

Position: Appointed as the Chairman of the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE)

Date of Appointment/Resignation: January 17, 2024

Previous Roles/Achievements:

- Pramod Agarwal is an Indian Administrative Service Officer of the Madhya Pradesh Cadre 1991 batch.
- He took over as Chairman of Coal India Limited (CIL), the world's largest coal-producing company, on and from February 1, 2020.
- Prior to the assumption of the top post of the Maharatna coal mining behemoth, he was Principal Secretary Department of Technical Education, Skill Development & Employment and the Department of Labor, Government of Madhya Pradesh.

Sanjay Singh elected new Wrestling Federation of India President

Name of the Individual: Sanjay Singh

Position: Elected as the President of the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI)

Date of Appointment/Resignation: December 21, 2023

Previous Roles/Achievements:

- Sanjay Singh, also known as 'Bablu' in the wrestling community, was largely involved in local wrestling competitions along with his father Nand Lal Singh.
- He was serving as the Vice President of the Uttar Pradesh Wrestling Federation.

- Before coming to the presidency, he was serving as the Joint Secretary of the national federation.
- His connection with Brij Bhushan started when the UP wrestling association was formed in 2009, with Brij Bhushan as the state president and Sanjay Singh as its vice president

Abdel Fatah al-Sisi secures another term in office

Name of the Individual: Abdel Fatah al-Sisi

Position: Secured another term as the President of Egypt

Date of Appointment/Resignation: Abdel Fatah al-Sisi was re-elected for another term as the President of Egypt, which is set to be inaugurated by April 2024. He secured a third, six-year term on December 18, 2023.

Previous Roles/Achievements:

- Before retiring as a general in the Egyptian military in 2014, Sisi served as Egypt's deputy prime minister from 2013 to 2014, as its minister of defense from 2012 to 2013, and as its director of military intelligence from 2010 to 2012.
- He was promoted to the rank of Field Marshal in January 2014.

Arvind Panagariya appointed as 16th Finance Commission Chairman

Name of the Individual: Arvind Panagariya

Position: Appointed as the Head of the Sixteenth Finance Commission

Date of Appointment/Resignation: January 1, 2024

Previous Roles/Achievements:

- Arvind Panagariya is an Indian-American economist who is the Jagdish Bhagwati Professor of Indian Political Economy at Columbia University.
- He served as the first Vice Chairman of the government of India think-tank NITI Aayog between January 2015 and August 2017.
- He was a former Chief Economist of the Asian Development Bank.
- He was awarded the Padma Bhushan by the President of India in 2012 for his contributions in the field of economics and Public Policy.

Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar appointed as Ex-Officio Chancellor of Pondicherry University

Name of the Individual: Jagdeep Dhankhar

Position: Appointed as the Ex-Officio Chancellor of Pondicherry University

Date of Appointment/Resignation: December 5, 2023

Previous Roles/Achievements:

- Jagdeep Dhankhar is an Indian politician and lawyer who has been serving as the Vice President of India since August 11, 2022.
- He previously served as the Governor of West Bengal from 2019 to 2022.
- He also served as a Union Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs in the Chandra Shekhar ministry from 1990 to 1991.
- He was a member of Lok Sabha from 1989 to 1991 and later a Member of Rajasthan Legislative Assembly from 1993 to 1998.

Santosh Jha Assumes Role As India's New Envoy To Sri Lanka

Name of the Individual: Santosh Jha

Position: Assumed role as India's New Envoy To Sri Lanka

Date of Appointment/Resignation: December 22, 2023

Previous Roles/Achievements:

- Santosh Jha is an Indian Foreign Service officer from the 1993 batch.
- He was India's Ambassador to the European Union, Belgium & Luxembourg before taking up his assignment in Sri Lanka.
- He previously served as Ambassador of India to Uzbekistan from 2019 to 2020.
- He served as the Deputy Chief of Mission at the Indian Embassy in Washington DC from 2017-2019

Vita Dani Makes History As First Indian On ITTF Governing Board

Name of the Individual: Vita Dani

Position: Inducted as a Governing Board Member of the International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) Foundation

Date of Appointment/Resignation: December 21, 2023

Previous Roles/Achievements:

- Vita Dani is a sports philanthropist and entrepreneur.
- She has been the Chairperson of Ultimate Table Tennis, reshaping the landscape of the sport, ensuring accessibility across all segments of society, and orchestrating multiple tournaments spanning 25 states in India.
- She is the founder of the Dani Foundation, headquartered in Mumbai, which is dedicated to fostering a self-sufficient society by empowering individuals and involving communities through transformative societal actions

Senior IPS Officer Maheshwar Dayal Takes Over As Director General Of Prisons

Name of the Individual: Maheshwar Dayal

Position: Assumed role as the Director General of Prisons and Correctional Services

Date of Appointment/Resignation: December 18, 2023

Previous Roles/Achievements:

- Maheshwar Dayal is a senior officer in the Indian Police Service.
- He has held a variety of leadership responsibilities throughout different districts and specialized groups.
- He began his career in law enforcement when he was appointed as the Superintendent of Police (SP) in Virudhunagar.
- He served as the Deputy Commissioner of Police at Tirunelvi, Tiruchi, and Gurgaon, all of which are located in the state of Haryana.

Reuven Azar Appointed As Israel's New Ambassador To India

Name of the Individual: Reuven Azar

Position: Appointed as Israel's New Ambassador to India

Date of Appointment/Resignation: December 18, 2023

Previous Roles/Achievements:

- Reuven Azar is a seasoned diplomat who was serving as the Ambassador of Israel to Romania before his appointment.
- He has held various key positions within the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including Head of the Israel-US-China internal task force and Deputy National Security Advisor for Foreign Policy at the National Security Council.
- He was Deputy Chief of Mission for the Embassy of Israel, Washington, D.C., between 2014 and 2018.
- He has held positions such as Deputy Ambassador at the Embassy of Israel in Washington, DC, Head of Middle East Research in the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Deputy Head of Mission at the Embassy of Israel in Amman.

Parama Sen Appointed Part-Time Member Of PFRDA Board



Name of the Individual: Parama Sen

Position: Appointed as a part-time member of the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) Board

Date of Appointment/Resignation: November 21, 2023

Previous Roles/Achievements:

- Parama Sen is an Indian Audit and Accounts Services (IAAS) officer from the 1994 batch.
- She has been appointed as Additional Secretary in the Department of Expenditure at the Finance Ministry.
- Prior to this, she served as Joint Secretary in the Department of Investment & Public Asset Management.
- Her appointment completes the trio of part-time members on the PFRDA board.

Anand Kripalu Takes Charge as Chairperson and Independent Director at Swiggy

Name of the Individual: Anand Kripalu

Position: Assumed role as Chairperson and Independent Director at Swiggy

Date of Appointment/Resignation: December 6, 2023

Previous Roles/Achievements:

- Anand Kripalu is a seasoned business leader with

close to 40 years of experience in the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) industry.

- He is the Managing Director and Global CEO of EPL Ltd (formerly Essel Propack Limited), the world's largest specialty packaging company.
- Prior to that, he was the Managing Director and CEO of Diageo India, India's leading beverage alcohol company.
- He has also held leadership roles at Mondelez International (formerly Cadbury) and Unilever.

Max Life Insurance appoints Rajiv Anand as Chairman

Name of the Individual: Rajiv Anand

Position: Appointed as the Chairman of Max Life Insurance

Date of Appointment/Resignation: December 5, 2023

Previous Roles/Achievements:

- Rajiv Anand is a Commerce graduate and a Chartered Accountant by qualification.
- He joined Axis Bank on May 1, 2013, from its asset management arm, Axis Asset Management Co. Ltd., where he was the Managing Director & CEO.
- He was appointed as the President (Retail Banking) and was thereafter elevated as the Group Executive (Retail Banking) in 2014.

Indian-origin media executive Samir Shah to head BBC Board

Name of the Individual: Samir Shah

Position: Appointed as the Chairman of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Board Date of **Appointment/Resignation:** December 6, 2023

Previous Roles/Achievements:

- Samir Shah is a British television and radio executive with over 40 years of experience in journalism and TV production.
- He has worked for London Weekend Television, the BBC, and is the chief executive of Juniper TV, a British company.
- He was appointed as BBC's head of television current affairs in 1987, and from 1994 to 1998, he was head of the BBC's political journalism programs.
- He was appointed as one of the then three non-executive directors of the BBC in 2007.
- He was also the co-author of the UK government's Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities report in 2021.

Jithesh John takes charge as IBBI's Executive Director

Name of the Individual: Jithesh John

Position: Assumed role as the Executive Director of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI)

Date of Appointment/Resignation: December 1, 2023.

Previous Roles/Achievements:

- Jithesh John is an Indian Economic Service Officer of the 2001 batch.
- He has over 21 years of experience in various sectors, including finance, energy, infrastructure, and small and medium enterprises.
- He previously served as an Economic Advisor in the Ministry of Power.
- He has completed more than 21 years in the Government of India in various capacities.

Kanchan Devi Becomes First Woman Director General Of ICFRE

Name of the Individual: Kanchan Devi

Position: Assumed role as the Director General of the Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE)

Date of Appointment/Resignation: December 1, 2023

Previous Roles/Achievements:

- Kanchan Devi is an Indian Forest Service officer from the 1991 batch of the Madhya Pradesh cadre.
- She has over 30 years of experience in various areas of forestry including forest management, forest administration, education, human resource development, and research and extension in the State Government of Madhya Pradesh and Government of India.
- She has also served as a faculty member at the Indira Gandhi National Forest Academy (IGNFA), Dehradun.

Narayan Sheshadri appointed IDRCL chair, incumbent Diwakar Gupta, to head NARCL

Name of the Individual: Narayan Sheshadri

Position: Appointed as the Chairman of India Debt Resolution Co Ltd (IDRCL)

Date of Appointment: December 2, 2023

Previous Roles/Achievements:

- Narayan Sheshadri is a former KPMG managing partner.
- He is a financial sector veteran with experience in reviving distressed companies.
- He is currently an independent director in the company.
- He has also served as the Chairman of the Board at AstraZeneca India, Independent Director at Kalpataru Power Transmission, and Independent Director at Re Sustainability.

Air Marshal Ranade joins as DG, Inspection & Safety, AIR



Name of the Individual: Air Marshal Makarand Ranade

Position: Assumed role as the Director General (Inspection and Safety) at Air Headquarters (Air HQ)

Date of Appointment: December 1, 2023

Previous Roles/Achievements:

- Air Marshal Makarand Ranade is an alumnus of National Defence College, New Delhi, and College Interarmée de Defense in Paris, France.
- He was commissioned in the fighter stream of the Indian Air Force on December 6, 1986.
- In a career spanning over 36 years, he has held key field and staff appointments.
- These include command of a fighter squadron and two flying stations.
- He has been a directing staff at the Tactics and Air Combat Development Establishment as well as at Defence Services Staff College.
- He has served as Air Attaché at the Embassy of India in Kabul, Afghanistan.

Obituaries News

Chapter 15

Jacques Delors, founding father of EU's single currency project, dies at 98

Name of the Deceased: Jacques Lucien Jean Delors

Date of Passing: December 27, 2023

Age: 98

Cause of Death: Jacques Delors died in his sleep.

Profession/Notability:

- Jacques Delors was a French politician who served as the eighth president of the European Commission from 1985 to 1995.
- He was a member of the French Socialist Party.
- Before becoming president of the EC, he was France's finance minister from 1981 to 1984, and a member of the European Parliament from 1979 to 1981.

Lee Sun-Kyun, 'Parasite' Actor, Found Dead at 48



Name of the Deceased: Lee Sun-kyun

Date of Passing: December 27, 2023

Age: 48

Cause of Death: Lee Sun-kyun's cause of death was apparent suicide due to carbon monoxide poisoning.

Profession/Notability: Lee Sun-kyun was a South Korean actor. He was internationally known for his role in Bong Joon-ho's Academy Award–winning film Parasite.

Major Achievements:

- Lee Sun-kyun debuted as an actor in 2000 and performed in TV dramas and musical theatre.
- He achieved his breakthrough in 2007 with the romantic drama "Coffee Prince" and the critically acclaimed medical drama "White Tower".
- He received a Best Actor award from the Las Palmas de Gran Canaria International Film Festival for his role in Paju (2009).

German political heavyweight Wolfgang Schäuble dies aged 81

Name of the Deceased: Wolfgang Schäuble

Date of Passing: December 26, 2023

Age: 81

Profession/Notability: Wolfgang Schäuble was a German politician and lawyer.

He was a member of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and was the longest-serving member of any democratic German parliament.

He served as the 13th president of the Bundestag from 2017 to 2021.

Major Achievements:

- Schäuble played a pivotal role in two crucial events of the past four decades – the process that led to reunification in 1990 and the austerity measures imposed across much of Europe following the global financial crash of 2008.
- He achieved Germany's so-called schwarze Null or black zero budget deficit in 2014.
- He was widely viewed as the driving force behind the austerity policies adopted by the eurozone in response to the debt crisis that began in 2008.
- He was a key architect of the 1990 reunification.
- He was finance minister under Angela Merkel for eight years.
- He was a member of the Bundestag continuously since 1972

Mohini Giri, an icon of women's rights movement, dies at 86

Name of the Deceased: Mohini Giri

Date of Passing: December 19, 2023

Age: 86

Cause of Death: Mohini Giri passed away following a brief illness.

Profession/Notability: Mohini Giri was an Indian community service worker and activist. She was the Chairperson of the Guild of Service, a New Delhi-based social service organization. She also served as the Chairperson of the National Commission for Women (NCW) from 1995 to 1998.

Major Achievements:

- She was the Founder President of the War Widows Association which was formed in 1972 after the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971.
- In 2000, she became the Founder Trustee of the Women's Initiative for Peace in South Asia.
- She was also a board member of The Hunger Project, a New York-based international charity.
- In 2007, she was awarded the Padma Bhushan, India's third highest civilian honour, given by the Government of India.

Kuwait ruling emir Sheikh Nawaf Al Ahmad Al Sabah dies at age 86

Name of the Deceased: Sheikh Nawaf Al Ahmad Al Sabah

Date of Passing: December 16, 2023

Age: 86

Profession/Notability: Sheikh Nawaf Al Ahmad Al Sabah was the Emir of Kuwait. He served as the Minister of Interior (1978–1988, 2003–2006), Minister of Defense (1988–1991), and Deputy Prime Minister (2020–2023).

Major Achievements:

- Sheikh Nawaf was nominated as Crown Prince on February 7, 2006, during the reign of his half-brother Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.
- He became the Emir of Kuwait on September 29, 2020.
- During his three-year rule as Emir, he grappled with internal political disputes.
- He was the Minister of Interior from 1978 to 1988 and again from 2003 to 2006.
- He served as the Minister of Defense from 1988 to 1991.
- He was appointed as the Deputy Prime Minister in 2020.

Emmy-winning star Andre Braugher passes away at 61

Name of the Deceased: Andre Braugher

Date of Passing: December 11, 2023

Age: 61

Cause of Death: Andre Braugher's cause of death was lung cancer.

Profession/Notability: Andre Braugher was an American actor known for his roles as Detective Frank Pembleton in the NBC police drama series Homicide: Life on the Street and Captain Raymond Holt in the Fox/NBC police comedy series Brooklyn Nine-Nine.

Major Achievements:

- Andre Braugher started his acting career as part of The Public Theatre's Shakespeare in the Park.
- He transitioned his career into television, gaining roles in Kojak, The Court-Martial of Jackie Robinson, and The Tuskegee Airmen.
- He won two Primetime Emmy Awards and was nominated for two Golden Globe Awards.
- He received four Emmy nominations for his role in Brooklyn Nine-Nine.

Chinese Doctor and AIDS Activist Gao Yaojie Dies at 95



Name of the Deceased: Gao Yaojie

Date of Passing: December 10, 2023

Age: 95

Cause of Death: Gao Yaojie passed away due to natural causes.

Profession/Notability: Gao Yaojie was a Chinese

gynecologist, academic, and AIDS activist based in Zhengzhou, Henan, China. She was honored for her work by the United Nations and Western organizations while spending time under house arrest.

Major Achievements:

- Gao Yaojie started her career as a gynecologist at the Henan Chinese Medicine Hospital in 1974, was promoted to professor in 1986, and retired in 1990.
- She became well known in China and worldwide as an advocate for AIDS prevention during the HIV epidemic in the Henan province.
- She was a member of the Seventh Henan People's Congress.
- She also received numerous domestic and international awards.
- She left for the United States in 2009, where she settled in Manhattan, New York.

Legendary actress Leelavati passes away at 86

Name of the Deceased: Leelavati

Date of Passing: December 8, 20232

Age: 86

Cause of Death: Leelavati passed away due to age-related ailments.

Profession/Notability:

- Leelavati was an Indian actress, producer, writer, and philanthropist. She worked predominantly in Kannada and Tamil films, in addition to a few Telugu, Malayalam, and Tulu films.
- Major Achievements:
- Leelavati made her film debut in a small role in Nagakannika (1949).
- She is known for many memorable performances as a lead actress in films such as Rani Honnamma, Bhakta Kumbara, Valar Pirai, Mana Mecchida Madadi, and Santha Thukaram.
- In the early 1970s, she switched towards performing character roles and was notable in films such as Gejje Pooje, Upasane, Naagarahaavu, Vasantha Geetha, Shravana Banthu, and Eradu Nakshatragalu.
- She was the recipient of the Dr. Rajkumar Award in 1999 and Filmfare Awards.
- She was conferred with the honorary doctorate from the Tumkur University in 2000 for her contribution to southern cinema.

Former West Indies cricketer Joe Solomon dies at 93

Name of the Deceased: Joe Solomon

Date of Passing: December 8, 2023

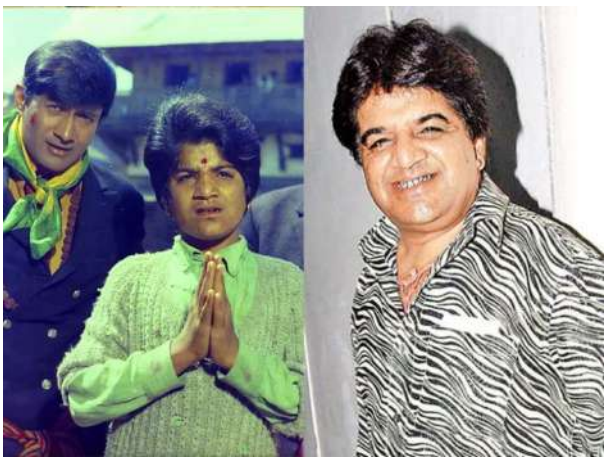
Age: 93

Profession/Notability: Joe Solomon was a Guyanese cricketer who played 27 Test matches for the West Indies from 1958 to 1965. He was best known as a brilliant fieldsman and for his role in the famous Tied Test match between the West Indies and Australia in 1960 at the Gabba, where he was involved in two direct hit runout dismissals.

Major Achievements:

- Joe Solomon is the only player in first-class cricket history to score hundreds in his first three innings, for British Guiana in 1956–57 and 1957–584.
- His highest first-class score was 201 not out for Berbice against the touring MCC in March 1960, when he added an unbroken partnership of 290 with Basil Butcher.
- After his retirement from playing, he served Guyanese cricket in various capacities, including the presidency of the Guyana Cricket Board and several years as a selector.
- He was awarded the Golden Arrow of Achievement by the Government of Guyana

Veteran actor Junior Mehmood dies due to stomach cancer



Name of the Deceased: Junior Mehmood

Date of Passing: December 8, 2023

Age: 67

Cause of Death: Junior Mehmood passed away due to stage four stomach cancer.

Profession/Notability: Junior Mehmood, whose real name is Naeem Sayyed, was an Indian actor, singer, Marathi film director, and producer.

Major Achievements:

- Junior Mehmood started his career as a child artist with the film 'Naunihal' (1967).
- He acted in over 250 films in his career that spanned over five decades.
- He is best remembered for his roles in blockbusters such as 'Brahmachari' (1968), 'Do Raaste' (1969), 'Aan Milo Sajna' (1970), 'Haathi Mere Saathi' (1971) and 'Caravan' (1971).
- He also produced and directed 6 Marathi movies.
- He was given the name Junior Mehmood by late comedy icon Mehmood Ali.

Retired U.S. Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, the first woman on the U.S. Supreme Court passes away at 93

Name of the Deceased: Sandra Day O'Connor

Date of Passing: December 1, 2023

Age: 93

Cause of Death: Sandra Day O'Connor passed away due to complications related to advanced dementia and a respiratory illness.

Profession/Notability: Sandra Day O'Connor was an American attorney, politician, and jurist. She served as an associate justice of the Supreme Court of the United States from 1981 to 2006.

O'Connor was the first woman to serve as a U.S. Supreme Court justice.

Major Achievements:

- She was considered a swing vote for the Rehnquist Court and the first four months of the Roberts Court.
- Before O'Connor's tenure on the Court, she was an Arizona state judge and earlier an elected legislator in Arizona, serving as the first female majority leader of a state senate as the Republican leader in the Arizona Senate.
- In 2000, she wrote in part the per curiam majority opinion in Bush v. Gore and in 1992 was one of three co-authors of the lead opinion in Planned Parenthood v. Casey that preserved legal access to abortion in the United States.

Veteran actor R Subbalakshmi dies at 87 in Kochi



Name of the Deceased: R Subbalakshmi

Date of Passing: November 30, 2023

Age: 87

Cause of Death: R Subbalakshmi passed away due to age-related illnesses.

Profession/Notability: R Subbalakshmi was an Indian actress and musician. She was known for her roles in Malayalam and Tamil films, often portraying grandmother roles. She also made history as the first woman composer at All India Radio in South India.

Major Achievements:

- R Subbalakshmi started her career as a music and dance instructor at Jawahar Balabhavan.
- She worked with All India Radio since 1951.
- She was the first woman composer of All India Radio from South India.
- She acted in about 75 films in Malayalam, Tamil, Telugu, and Hindi

Art and Culture

Chapter 16

Ministry of Tourism launched National Best Tourism Village and National Best Rural Homestays Competition 2024

The Ministry of Tourism launched two competitions to promote and develop rural tourism in India: National Best Tourism Village Competition 2024 and National Best Rural Homestay Competition 2024.

The competitions were launched on World Tourism Day (September 27) and the applications are open from November 15 to December 31, 2023.

- **Event Name:** National Best Tourism Village Competition 2024 and National Best Rural Homestay Competition 2024
- **Objectives:** To strengthen the promotion and development of rural tourism in the country.

Asian Hajj and Umrah Expo 2024

The Asian Arab Trade Chamber of Commerce (AATCOC) announced the launch of the first-ever Asian Hajj and Umrah Expo 2024, a platform to foster religious exchange and support pilgrimage businesses.

- **Event Name:** Asian Hajj and Umrah Expo 2024
- **Key Figures:** AATCOC, along with numerous partners including airlines, sponsors and travel companies.
- **Location:** Delhi
- **Objectives:** To provide a seamless, enriching pilgrimage experience for the Muslim community, to showcase innovative technology solutions, to offer comprehensive media coverage, and to promote tourism and cultural diversity.

34th International Konark Dance Festival

The 34th International Konark Dance Festival, held in December 2023, was a dazzling celebration of Indian classical and traditional dance forms. Renowned dancers from across India and abroad showcased their talents, representing diverse styles like Odissi, Bharatanatyam, Kathakali, and more.

- **Dates:** December 1-5, 2023
- **Location:** Konark Sun Temple, Puri, Odisha, India
- **Organizers:** Odisha Tourism and Odissi Research Centre
- **Aims:** The festival aimed not only to showcase the beauty of dance but also to foster cultural exchange, promote Odisha as a cultural destination, and inspire future generations of dancers.

'Garba of Gujarat' declared as intangible cultural heritage by UNESCO

Garba of Gujarat, a traditional dance form that fosters social and gender inclusivity, has been inscribed in the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO. The decision was taken during the 18th meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Protection of ICH.

Garba of Gujarat is the 15th ICH element from India to join this list. This inscription underscores Garba's pivotal role as a unifying force that fosters social and gender inclusivity.

- **Date:** From 5th -9th December, 2023.
- **Location:** Kasane, Botswana.
- **Objectives:** To enhance the visibility of intangible cultural heritage, foster awareness of its significance and promote dialogue that respects cultural diversity.
- **Key Figures:**
  - A troupe of 8 dancers from the Indian Council for Cultural Relations, who showcased Garba dance form at the meeting venue.
  - The Ministry of Culture, Government of India, who nominated Garba for the inscription.

Ministry of Tourism to organize musical festival Krishnaveni Sangeetha Neerajanam at Vijayawada

The Ministry of Tourism and Ministry of Culture, Government of India, in collaboration with the Government of Andhra Pradesh and Sangeet Natak Akademi, organized a musical and cultural festival called Krishnaveni Sangeetha Neerajanam in Vijayawada. The event celebrated the rich heritage of classical music and promoted the lesser-known tourist

attractions, handicrafts, handlooms, and cuisine of the region.

- **Event Name:** Krishnaveni Sangeetha Neerajanam
- **Date:** December 10 to 12, 2023
- **Location:** Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh, India
- **Aims/Objectives:**
  - To promote the tangible and intangible heritage and lesser-known tourist attractions through festivals.
  - To diversify the tourism offerings of the country through development and promotion of niche tourism, such as music, culture, and crafts.
  - To provide a platform for the artists and musicians to showcase their talent and skills, and to foster a dialogue and exchange among them.

International Gita Mahotsav in Kurukshetra, Haryana

The International Gita Mahotsav is a grand celebration dedicated to the birth of Srimad Bhagvad Gita, the holy book of Hindus. The festival is celebrated with immense religious fervor and dedication, attracting devotees and pilgrims from all over India.

- **Event Name:** International Gita Mahotsav.
- **Date:** 7 to 24 December 2023
- **Location:** The festival is celebrated mainly in Kurukshetra, Haryana.
- **Theme:** The theme of the seminar in 2023 was – "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam: Srimad Bhagavad Gita and Universal Unity".
- **Objectives:** To pay sacred homage to the immortal Geeta. The festival serves as a philosophical guide and spiritual teacher for Hindus, providing solutions for any problem of life.
- **Key Figures:** The event is organized by the Kurukshetra Development Board, Haryana Tourism, District Administration, North Zone Cultural Centre Patiala, and Information and Public Relations Department Haryana. The Vice President, Jagdeep Dhankhar, inaugurated the International Gita Seminar and Geeta Mahotsav.

Kashi Tamil Sangamam 2023

The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi inaugurated the Kashi Tamil Sangamam 2023 in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh. Shri Modi flagged off the Kanyakumari – Varanasi Tamil Sangamam train and launched multi language and braille translations of Thirukkural, Manimekalai and other classic Tamil literature on the occasion.

- **Event Name:** Kashi Tamil Sangamam 2023
- **Location:** Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh
- **Objectives**: Kashi Tamil Sangamam aims to celebrate, reaffirm and rediscover the age-old links between Tamil Nadu and Kashi – two of the country's most important and ancient seats of learning.

Important Days

Chapter 17

World AIDS Day 2023

Title/Day: World AIDS Day

Date Observed: December 1st

History of the Day: First observed in 1988 and 2023 marks its 35th anniversary.

Significance: World AIDS Day serves as a crucial platform for raising awareness about HIV/AIDS. It is a day for educating people about its transmission and prevention, combating stigma and discrimination associated with the virus, and showing solidarity and support for individuals living with HIV.

Theme: "Let Communities Lead".

National Pollution Control Day 2023

Title/Day: National Pollution Control Day

Date Observed: December 2

History of the Day: National Pollution Control Day commemorates the tragic Bhopal Gas Tragedy that occurred on the night of December 2 and 3, 1984.

Theme: The theme for National Pollution Control Day 2023 is "Sustainable Development for a Clean and Healthy Planet"2.

International Day of Persons with Disabilities 2023

Date Observed: December 3

History and Significance: The International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) is observed every year on December 3 to spotlight the rights and well-being of individuals with special needs. It was established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1992.

Theme: The theme for 2023 is "United in action to rescue and achieve the SDGs for, with, and by persons with disabilities".

Universal Health Coverage Day 2023

Date Observed: December 12

History and Significance: Universal Health Coverage Day is observed on December 12 every year to stress the need for a healthcare system that provides equitable and good health care along with financial protection to everyone who needs it.

Theme: The theme for Universal Health Coverage Day 2023 is "Health For All: Time for action".

International Migrants Day 2023

Date Observed: December 18

History and Significance: International Migrants Day, observed annually on December 18, recognizes the contributions and challenges faced by migrants worldwide.

Theme: The theme for International Migrants Day 2023 is "Promoting Safe Migration".

Boxing Day 2023

Date Observed: December 26

History and Significance: Boxing Day is a tradition where wealthier people give a so-called "Christmas Box" containing money and gifts to servants and tradesmen the day after Christmas.

Kwanzaa 2023

Date Observed: December 26 - January 1

History and Significance: Kwanzaa is an African American and Pan-African holiday that celebrates shared history, values, family, community, and culture. It was created in 1966 by Maulana Karenga, a professor of Africana studies.

Theme: The theme for Kwanzaa 2023 is "Kwanzaa, Freedom, Justice and Peace: Principles and Practices For A New World"

Human Rights Day 2023

Date Observed: 10 December

History and Significance: Human Rights Day is observed every year on December 10, commemorating the day in 1948 when the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Theme: The theme for Human Rights Day 2023 is "Stand Up for Human Rights".

International Mountain Day 2023

Date Observed: December 11

History and Significance: International Mountain Day is observed annually on December 11 to raise global awareness about the importance of mountains and the need to conserve and sustainably manage these vital ecosystems.

Theme: The theme for International Mountain Day 2023 is "Restoring mountain ecosystems".

Indian Navy Day 2023

Title/Day: Indian Navy Day

Date Observed: December 4, 2023

History of the Day: Indian Navy Day, celebrated annually on December 4th, commemorates the success of "Operation Trident" during the 1971 Indo-Pak War.

Theme: The focal theme for Indian Navy Day 2023 is "Operational Efficiency, Readiness, and Mission Accomplishment in the Maritime Domain".

Armed Forces Flag Day 2023

Title/Day: Armed Forces Flag Day

Date Observed: December 7

History of the Day: Armed Forces Flag Day is observed annually on December 7th to commemorate the contributions and sacrifices of the Indian Armed Forces.

Theme: Armed Forces Flag Day does not have any particular theme. It stands as a testament to the Indian nation's deep respect and admiration for its Armed Forces.

International Anti-Corruption Day 2023

Date Observed: December 9

History of the Day: The inception of International Anti-Corruption Day can be traced back to October 31, 2003, when the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) was adopted.

Theme: The theme for International Anti-Corruption Day 2023 is "UNCAC at 20: Uniting the World Against Corruption".

Goa Liberation Day 2023

Date Observed: December 19

History of the Day: Goa Liberation Day is celebrated annually on December 19th to commemorate the liberation of Goa from Portuguese rule in 1961.

Theme: The theme for Goa Liberation Day 2023 is "Freedom and Self-Determination".

Kisan Diwas (Farmer's Day) 2023

Date Observed: December 23

History of the Day: Kisan Diwas is observed every year in India on December 23 to mark the birth anniversary of the fifth prime minister, Chaudhary Charan Singh.

Significance: The main objective of the day is to honor all the farmers of the country whose hard work puts food on every man's plate.

Theme: The theme for Kisan Diwas 2023 is 'Delivering Smart Solutions for Sustainable Food Security and Resilience'.

Christmas Day 2023

Date Observed: December 25

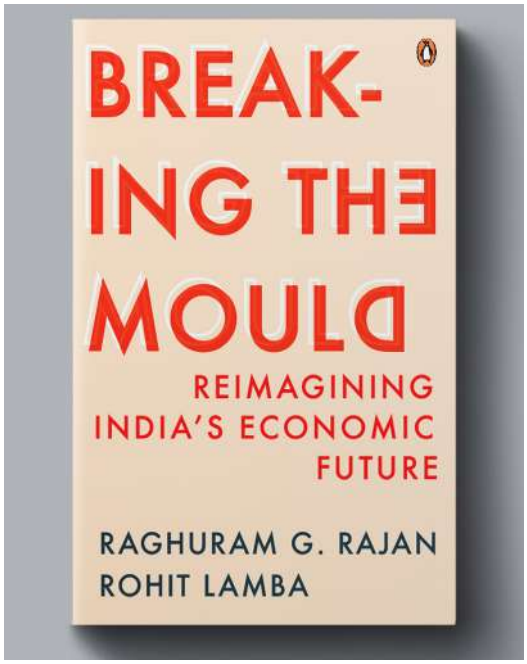
History of the Day: Christmas, derived from the words 'Mass of Christ', marks the birth of Jesus Christ. Jesus was born in Bethlehem to his parents, Joseph and Mary. He was conceived through the Holy Spirit and was born when Mother Mary was engaged to Joseph.

Significance: For Christians worldwide, Christmas holds profound religious significance as a time to celebrate the incarnation of Jesus, embodying God's love and salvation.

Books and authors

Chapter 18

"Breaking the Mould: Reimagining India's Economic Future" by Raghuram Rajan and Rohit Lamba:



Book Title: "Breaking the Mould: Reimagining India's Economic Future"

Author: The book is co-authored by Raghuram G. Rajan and Rohit Lamba.

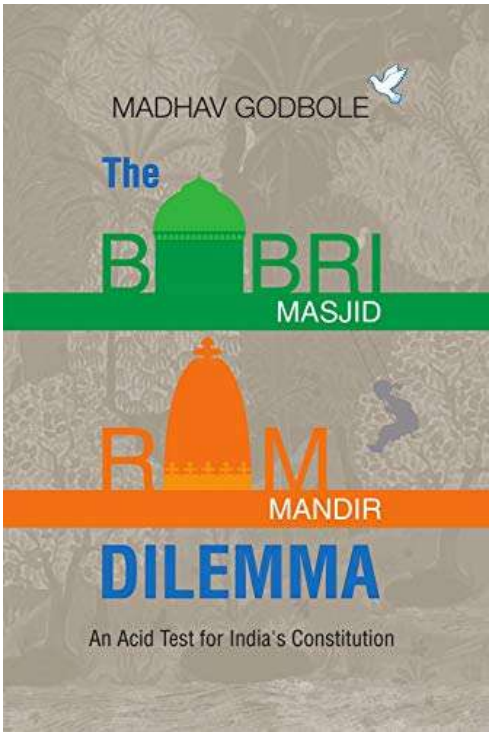
Genre: This book falls under the non-fiction genre, specifically focusing on economics and policy analysis.

Summary or Synopsis: The book presents a comprehensive view of India's economic future, suggesting a shift from traditional approaches to embracing a more innovative and democratic path for economic development. It emphasizes the importance of democracy in fostering economic growth and the need for India to chart its own path, distinct from other economic giants like China.

Publication Date: The exact publication date wasn't available, but it was referenced in various articles around December 2023.

Publisher: The book is published by Penguin.

"The Babri Masjid Ram Mandir Dilemma: An Acid Test for India's Constitution" by Madhav Godbole:



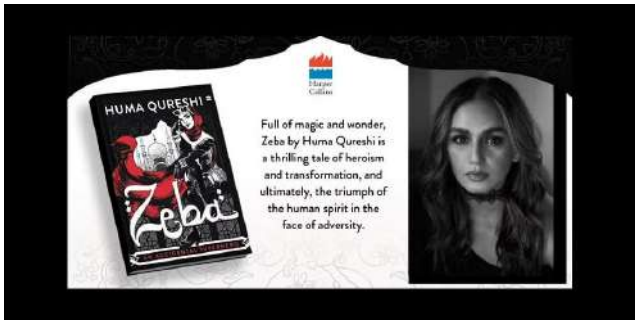
Book Title: "The Babri Masjid Ram Mandir Dilemma: An Acid Test for India's Constitution"

Author: The book is written by Madhav Godbole, who is a former Home Secretary of India.

Genre: This book is a non-fiction work, focusing on historical, socio-political, and legal aspects of a significant issue in Indian history.

Summary or Synopsis: Madhav Godbole's book delves into the contentious issue of the Babri Masjid-Ram Mandir dispute. It traces the roots of the conflict back to the 16th century and explores the socio-political and legal aspects surrounding the demolition of the Babri Masjid and the subsequent building of the Ram Mandir. The book provides a comprehensive analysis of the historical, socio-political, and legal factors contributing to the dispute and its impact on India's societal fabric

"Zeba: An Accidental Superhero" by Huma Qureshi:



Book Title: "Zeba: An Accidental Superhero"

Author: The book is authored by Huma S Qureshi, an actress known in Bollywood.

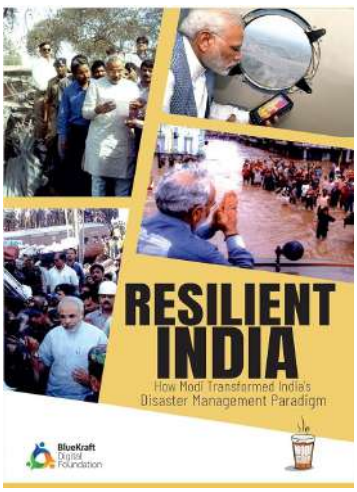
Genre: This novel falls under the fantasy genre with elements of young adult fiction.

Summary or Synopsis: The story unfolds between 1992 and 2019 and revolves around Zeba, a rich and spoiled protagonist from America. She discovers that she is an orphan with superpowers and the unexpected heir to the task of saving the kingdom of Khudir from her tyrant father, the Great Khan. The narrative explores Zeba's struggle with her identity and destiny, set against the backdrop of a kingdom once flourishing but now suffering.

Publication Date: The book is released on 02 December 2023.

Publisher: The novel is published by HarperCollins India.

"RESILIENT INDIA: How Modi Transformed India's Disaster Management Paradigm":



Book Title: "RESILIENT INDIA: How Modi Transformed India's Disaster Management Paradigm".

Author: Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami unveiled the book

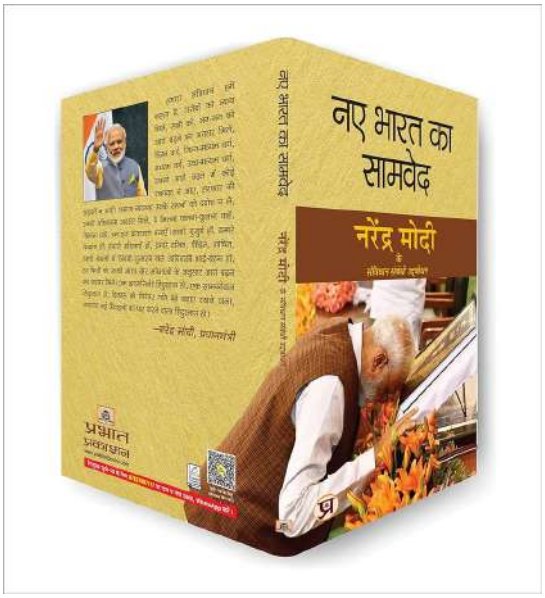
Genre: The book falls under the non-fiction genre, specifically focusing on political leadership and disaster management.

Summary or Synopsis: This book provides an in-depth look at Prime Minister Narendra Modi's significant contributions to transforming India's disaster management systems. It covers his experiences and actions from the 1979 Morbi floods and 2001 Gujarat earthquakes to his broader impact on India's disaster management strategies, showcasing a shift towards resilience, preparedness, capacity building, community participation, and disaster risk reduction.

Publication Date: The book was released in late 2023.

Publisher: Bluekraft Digital Foundation and Modi Story are credited as the publishers.

Ram Nath Kovind launched a book " Naye Bharat ka Samveda"



Book Title: The name of the book is "Naye Bharat Ka Samveda".

Author: The book is edited by Dr. Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank', the former Union Minister of Education.

Genre: The category or style of the book is non-fiction, as it is a compilation of speeches of Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the Indian Constitution.

Summary or Synopsis: A brief overview of the book's plot or main themes is as follows:

The book showcases the vision and thoughts of Prime

Minister Narendra Modi on the Indian Constitution and its values, such as democracy, secularism, justice, equality, and fraternity. The book also highlights the achievements and initiatives of the Modi government in various sectors, such as education, health, economy, defense, and foreign policy. The book aims to inspire and motivate the citizens of India to contribute to the development and progress of the nation.

Publication Date: The book was released on 7 December 2023.

Publisher: The company that published the book is Prabhat Prakashan, a leading publisher of Hindi books in the country.

Practice Questions

1. What violation led to the Reserve Bank of India imposing a penalty of Rs 2 lakh on the Thane District Central Co-operative (TDCC) Bank?
   (*a*) Non-compliance with KYC norms
   (*b*) Inadequate funds in reserve
   (*c*) Sanctioning a loan to one of its directors
   (*d*) Irregularities in foreign exchange transactions
   (*e*) None of these
2. The Indian Venture and Alternate Capital Association (IVCA) raised concerns with the government regarding which RBI circular?
   (*a*) Increased taxation on investments
   (*b*) Impact on the flow of funds to the startup sector
   (*c*) Restrictions on foreign investments
   (*d*) The complexity of compliance requirements
   (*e*) None of these
3. Why was Bank of Baroda fined ₹5 crore by the RBI in December 2023?
   (*a*) Inadequate cyber security measures
   (*b*) A shortage in soiled note remittances
   (*c*) Delay in reporting fraud cases
   (*d*) Non-compliance with minimum balance requirements
   (*e*) None of these
4. What is the primary reason for Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group's expansion in India?
   (*a*) To merge with Indian banks
   (*b*) To establish new headquarters
   (*c*) To offer new digital banking services
   (*d*) To capitalize on India's economic growth
   (*e*) None of these
5. Why are small banks in India offering higher returns on savings accounts than larger banks?
   (*a*) To comply with RBI regulations
   (*b*) To attract more foreign investments
   (*c*) To compete effectively with larger banks
   (*d*) To comply with government directives
   (*e*) None of these
6. Under which act was Yes Bank co-founder Rana Kapoor granted bail in a money laundering case?
   (*a*) The Banking Regulation Act
   (*b*) The Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA)
   (*c*) The Financial Institutions Act
   (*d*) The Companies Act
   (*e*) None of these
7. As of December 20, 2023, what major issue is the Indian banking system facing?
   (*a*) High interest rates
   (*b*) Widening liquidity deficit
   (*c*) Decrease in digital transactions
   (*d*) Increase in non-performing assets
   (*e*) None of these
8. What contributed to public sector banks in India earning a net profit of around Rs 68,500 crore in the first six months of the current financial year?
   (*a*) Higher credit demand and lower non-performing assets
   (*b*) Increased foreign investments
   (*c*) Government bailouts
   (*d*) Sale of assets
   (*e*) None of these
9. What is the purpose of the RBI's proposed draft framework for recognizing Self-Regulatory Organisations (SROs) in banking and NBFCs?
   (*a*) To increase foreign investments
   (*b*) To establish better industry standards for self-regulation
   (*c*) To reduce the number of banks and NBFCs

(*d*) To centralize banking operations

(*e*) None of these

10. What is the primary aim of the RBI's introduction of the Card-on-File (CoF) tokenization facility?

(*a*) To reduce physical card usage

(*b*) To increase banking revenues

(*c*) To promote digital currencies

(*d*) To enhance transaction security and convenience

(*e*) None of these

11. What was the main focus of the 605th meeting of the RBI Central Board chaired by Governor Shaktikanta Das?

(*a*) Implementing new monetary policies

(*b*) Reviewing the current economic and financial situation

(*c*) Discussing interest rate changes

(*d*) Planning for new currency issuance

(*e*) None of these

12. What is the purpose of IndusInd Bank's 'Indus Solitaire Program' for the diamond industry?

(*a*) Providing loans for diamond merchants

(*b*) Insuring diamond transactions

(*c*) Offering tailored banking services for the Diamond Industry

(*d*) Launching a diamond-based cryptocurrency

(*e*) None of these

13. What are the key features of the co-branded credit card launched by IDFC FIRST Bank, LIC Cards, and Mastercard?

(*a*) High credit limit and travel benefits

(*b*) No joining & annual fees, low-interest rates, and rewards on LIC premium payments

(*c*) Exclusive discounts on luxury brands

(*d*) Cashback on all international transactions

(*e*) None of these

14. Which bank has been authorized by the RBI to disburse pensions to retired railway employees?

(*a*) HDFC Bank (*b*) ICICI Bank

(*c*) Axis Bank (*d*) Bandhan Bank

(*e*) None of these

15. What is the purpose of the 70 million euro Line of Credit (LoC) signed between the State Bank of India (SBI) and German Development Bank KfW?

(*a*) To support infrastructure projects

(*b*) To fund educational programs

(*c*) To support solar photovoltaic projects

(*d*) To enhance trade between India and Germany

(*e*) None of these

16. What significant change has Poonawalla Housing Finance undergone recently?

(*a*) It has merged with another financial institution

(*b*) It has rebranded itself as Grihum Housing Finance

(*c*) It has shifted its focus to commercial real estate

(*d*) It has expanded its operations internationally

(*e*) None of these

17. What is the new UPI transaction limit for payments to hospitals and educational institutions as per RBI's recent update?

(*a*) Rs 1 lakh

(*b*) Rs 2 lakh

(*c*) Rs 3 lakh

(*d*) Rs 5 lakh

(*e*) None of these

18. What are the key benefits of the 'Nari Shakti Savings Account' launched by the Bank of India for women?

(*a*) High interest rates and exclusive investment options

(*b*) Personal accident insurance cover and concessional rate on retail loans

(*c*) Unlimited free ATM transactions

(*d*) Special discounts on online shopping

(*e*) None of these

19. Why did the RBI cancel the license of the Urban Co-operative Bank in Sitapur, Uttar Pradesh?

(*a*) Due to a large number of inactive accounts

(*b*) Because of severe financial irregularities and non-compliance

(*c*) For failing to implement digital banking services

(*d*) Due to a decrease in customer base

(*e*) None of these

20. Who was appointed as the Chairman of India Debt Resolution Co Ltd in December 2023?

(*a*) Narayan Sheshadri (*b*) S. Raman

(*c*) Rajnish Kumar (*d*) Usha Thorat

(*e*) None of these

21. Which country topped the global remittance charts in 2023 with a total of $125 billion?

(*a*) China (*b*) Mexico

(*c*) India (*d*) United States

(*e*) None of these

22. What was the focus of the report titled 'A Green and Sustainable Growth Agenda for the Global Economy' unveiled by Union Minister Bhupender Yadav?

(*a*) Digital economy

(*b*) Green and sustainable growth

(*c*) Global trade dynamics

(*d*) Space exploration advancements

(*e*) None of these

23. Which state retained its 'achiever' status in the Logistics Ease Across Different States (LEADS) 2023 rankings?

(*a*) Gujarat (*b*) Maharashtra

(*c*) Tamil Nadu (*d*) Karnataka

(*e*) None of these

24. Which hospital was ranked No.1 in the 'Best Multi-specialty Hospital Emerging' category by The Week-Hansa Research 2023?

(*a*) AIIMS, Delhi

(*b*) Fortis Hospital, Mumbai

(*c*) Apollo Hospital, Chennai

(*d*) Aster Medcity, Kochi

(*e*) None of these

25. As per the Logistics Performance Index (LPI) 2023, what is India's rank in terms of trade logistics performance?

(*a*) 28th

(*b*) 38th

(*c*) 48th

(*d*) 58th

(*e*) None of these

26. Who topped Hurun India's 'Top 100 Under 30 List' for 2023?

(*a*) Mukesh Ambani's children

(*b*) Kaivalya Vohra and Aadit Palicha, founders of Zepto

(*c*) Actors from the Bollywood industry

(*d*) Cricketers from the Indian cricket team

(*e*) None of these

27. How much did India's light vehicle market grow over 2019, as per the S&P Global Mobility forecast?

(*a*) 16% (*b*) 26%

(*c*) 36% (*d*) 46%

(*e*) None of these

28. Who topped the UK's list of the 'Top 50 Asian Celebrities in the World' for 2023?

(*a*) Shah Rukh Khan

(*b*) Alia Bhatt

(*c*) Priyanka Chopra

(*d*) Amitabh Bachchan

(*e*) None of these

29. What position did India secure in the Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI) for 2023?

(*a*) 5th (*b*) 6th

(*c*) 7th (*d*) 8th

(*e*) None of these

30. According to S&P Global's 2022 Insurance Report, what rank did the Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) hold globally?

(*a*) 1st

(*b*) 2nd

(*c*) 3rd

(*d*) 4th

(*e*) None of these

31. Who are the four Indians featured in Forbes' "World's 100 Most Powerful Women" of 2023?

(*a*) Nirmala Sitharaman, Roshni Nadar Malhotra, Soma Mondal, Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw

(*b*) Indra Nooyi, Chanda Kochhar, Nita Ambani, Priyanka Chopra

(*c*) Sudha Murthy, Mary Kom, Lata Mangeshkar, Smriti Irani

(*d*) Shikha Sharma, Anshula Kant, Vandana Luthra, Ekta Kapoor

(*e*) None of these

32. What is the primary objective of the MoU signed between RITES Ltd. and NEEPCO?

(*a*) To develop new hydropower projects

(*b*) To strengthen logistical infrastructure at hydropower stations

(*c*) To increase the energy production capacity

(*d*) To promote renewable energy education

(*e*) None of these

33. What is the purpose of the MoU signed between the Union Ministry of Rural Development and JioMart?

(*a*) To provide technological support to SHGs

(*b*) To enable SHGs to sell products on JioMart

(*c*) To fund new SHG initiatives

(*d*) To offer digital marketing training to SHGs

(*e*) None of these

34. What is the aim of the Executive Post Graduate Certificate in Rail Management program launched by IIM Kashipur and Zenith Railway Academy?

(*a*) To offer technical training in railway engineering

(*b*) To enhance customer service in railways

(*c*) To focus on railway infrastructure development

(*d*) To provide managerial skills in rail industry

(*e*) None of these

35. What is the focus of the MoU signed between DB Schenker India and CONCOR?

(*a*) To develop new railway routes

(*b*) To promote sustainable supply chain practices

(*c*) To increase export of goods

(*d*) To build new warehouses

(*e*) None of these

36. What is the goal of the MoU signed between NSDC and the government of Saudi Arabia?

(*a*) To safeguard the rights of skilled Indian laborers in Saudi Arabia

(*b*) To facilitate employment opportunities in Saudi Arabia

(*c*) To promote cultural exchange programs

(*d*) To enhance skill development in Saudi Arabia

(*e*) None of these

37. What is the purpose of the 37 billion Japanese Yen loan agreement between the Government of India and ADB for the Delhi-Meerut RRTS Corridor?

(*a*) To promote tourism between Delhi and Meerut

(*b*) To expand economic and employment opportunities by reducing travel time

(*c*) To develop new residential areas along the corridor

(*d*) To enhance road transportation between Delhi and Meerut

(*e*) None of these

38. What is the objective of the SoI signed between NITI Aayog and IFPRI?

(*a*) To improve healthcare facilities in rural areas

(*b*) To enhance digital connectivity in rural regions

(*c*) To promote education in rural areas

(*d*) To strengthen policy and program frameworks for agricultural and rural development

(*e*) None of these

39. What is the main focus of the MoU signed between IIT Kanpur and the Indian Navy?

(*a*) To offer naval engineering courses

(*b*) To Explore new energy sources

(*c*) To provide training for naval officers

(*d*) To build new naval ships

(*e*) None of these

40. What is the aim of the partnership between Reliance Industries and DBS Bank India?

(*a*) To launch a new digital banking platform

(*b*) To develop an ecosystem for CBG production plants

(*c*) To fund renewable energy projects

(*d*) To provide financial services to SMEs

(*e*) None of these

41. What is the purpose of the collaboration between Tata Power and Indian Oil Corp to deploy over 500 EV charging points?

(*a*) To promote the sale of electric vehicles

(*b*) To reduce air pollution

(*c*) To expand India's EV charging infrastructure

(*d*) To develop new electric vehicle models

(*e*) None of these

42. What is the primary goal of the MoU between AIIB and UNDP?

(*a*) To promote cultural exchange programs

(*b*) To invest in educational institutions

(*c*) To promote sustainable infrastructure

development

(*d*) To develop new financial products

(*e*) None of these

43. What is the focus of the MoU signed between the Ministry of Defence and Telecommunication Consultant India Ltd?

(*a*) To enhance military communication technology

(*b*) To develop a new digital coast guard project

(*c*) To build new defense infrastructure

(*d*) To provide telecommunication training to defense personnel

(*e*) None of these

44. What is the aim of the MoU between Union Bank of India and Accenture?

(*a*) To develop a new banking software

(*b*) To enhance the bank's operational efficiency and customer-centric services

(*c*) To launch a new digital wallet

(*d*) To provide digital literacy to bank employees

(*e*) None of these

45. What is the purpose of India's $250 million line of credit to Kenya in the agricultural sector?

(*a*) To modernize Kenya's agriculture sector

(*b*) To import agricultural products from Kenya

(*c*) To establish Indian agricultural universities in Kenya

(*d*) To promote organic farming in Kenya

(*e*) None of these

46. What is the goal of the contract signed by iDEX-DIO for Gallium Nitride Semiconductors production?

(*a*) To import semiconductor technology

(*b*) To design and develop advanced Gallium Nitride Semiconductors

(*c*) To establish semiconductor manufacturing units

(*d*) To provide training in semiconductor technology

(*e*) None of these

47. What record did Gwalior achieve at the 99th International Tansen Samaroh?

(*a*) Largest gathering of classical singers

(*b*) Largest tabla ensemble

(*c*) Most people playing the sitar simultaneously

(*d*) Longest continuous classical music performance

(*e*) None of these

48. What is the main purpose of the "Paat Mitro" app launched by the Ministry of Textiles?

(*a*) To promote Indian textile exports

(*b*) To provide jute farmers with important information about MSP and agronomy

(*c*) To sell traditional Indian textiles online

(*d*) To train new textile workers and designers

(*e*) None of these

49. What is the objective of the National Geoscience Data Repository (NGDR) Portal launched by the Ministry of Mines?

(*a*) To promote mining tourism in India

(*b*) To provide a platform for mining companies to bid on projects

(*c*) To democratize critical geoscience data

(*d*) To train students in geoscience fields

(*e*) None of these

50. What is the purpose of the Emergency Response Support System (ERS) mobile app launched by NHAI?

(*a*) To report traffic violations

(*b*) To provide swift and effective responses to emergencies on national highways

(*c*) To offer real-time traffic updates

(*d*) To book highway tolls in advance

(*e*) None of these

51. What is the Swarved Mahamandir inaugurated by PM Modi in Varanasi?

(*a*) A seven-floor temple and meditation center

(*b*) A new government building

(*c*) A modern art museum

(*d*) A university for spiritual studies

(*e*) None of these

52. What is the significance of the 402 km-long stretch of the Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor inaugurated by PM Modi?

(*a*) To serve as a new passenger train route

(*b*) To serve as a corridor for high-speed trains

(*c*) To promote tourism between the connected cities

(*d*) To strengthen the logistics sector and foster economic growth

(*e*) None of these

53. What is the Surat Diamond Bourse inaugurated by PM Modi?

(*a*) A new diamond mine

(*b*) The world's largest and modern center for international diamond and jewelry business

(*c*) A museum showcasing diamond artifacts

(*d*) An educational institute for gemology

(*e*) None of these

54. What was the purpose of 'Mission Antarctica' carried out by the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute, Darjeeling?

(*a*) To conduct scientific research in Antarctica

(*b*) To hoist the National Flag across various locations, including the South Pole

(*c*) To establish a new base camp for future expeditions

(*d*) To study the effects of climate change

(*e*) None of these

55. What does the registration of over 10 lakh incidents of financial fraud on the CFCFRMS portal indicate?

(*a*) The effectiveness of cyber security measures

(*b*) The growing concern of financial cyber frauds in India

(*c*) The increase in digital literacy among citizens

(*d*) The success of financial awareness campaigns

(*e*) None of these

56. What was the purpose of India's first Bone Marrow Transplant (BMT) for a child at the Army Hospital in Delhi Cantt.?

(*a*) To conduct medical research

(*b*) To test a new medical technology

(*c*) To replace defective immune cells with healthy ones

(*d*) To train new medical personnel

(*e*) None of these

57. What was the objective of the largest reading activity for which Pune achieved a Guinness World Record?

(*a*) To promote literacy among children

(*b*) To set a record for the largest book club

(*c*) To promote reading culture through storytelling

(*d*) To launch a new children's book series

(*e*) None of these

58. What is the goal of the "Close the Gender Gap" initiative launched by the Udaiti Foundation?

(*a*) To promote women's sports

(*b*) To drive commitments and action towards gender parity in the workforce

(*c*) To close the gender pay gap

(*d*) To increase women's participation in politics

(*e*) None of these

59. What was the main purpose of the 26th Eastern Zonal Council meeting chaired by Amit Shah in Patna?

(*a*) To discuss the implementation of new education policies

(*b*) To review the progress of infrastructure projects

(*c*) To discuss issues like minimum price for minor millets, infrastructure, and water sharing

(*d*) To plan for new environmental initiatives

(*e*) None of these

60. What is the purpose of the 'One Bharat Sari Walkathon' organized by the Ministry of Textiles in Mumbai?

(*a*) To promote the textile industry

(*b*) To set a record for the largest sari parade

(*c*) To promote handloom sari culture in India

(*d*) To showcase different sari styles from across India

(*e*) None of these

61. What is the main feature of the "Gram Manchitra" GIS app launched by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj?

(*a*) To provide a platform for rural e-commerce

(*b*) To facilitate spatial planning by Gram Panchayats using geo-spatial technology

(*c*) To offer agricultural advice to farmers

(*d*) To connect rural areas with urban markets

(*e*) None of these

62. What is the main purpose of the UK government's plan to implement a carbon border tax on imports by 2027?

(*a*) To increase import tariffs for revenue

(*b*) To support domestic producers and reduce emissions

(*c*) To ban certain foreign products

(*d*) To promote UK's products over foreign goods

(*e*) None of these

63. What does the UNSC's resolution for Gaza Strip aim to achieve?

(*a*) To impose economic sanctions

(*b*) To provide unimpeded humanitarian aid

(*c*) To monitor elections

(*d*) To deploy peacekeeping forces

(*e*) None of these

64. Why has WHO officially recognized Noma as a Neglected Tropical Disease?

(*a*) To increase global awareness and funding

(*b*) To reduce the incidence of Noma worldwide

(*c*) To introduce a vaccine for Noma

(*d*) To declare Noma as a pandemic

(*e*) None of these

65. How did Abdel Fattah El Sisi secure his third term as Egypt's President?

(*a*) By a military coup

(*b*) By amending the constitution

(*c*) By winning Presidential Elections with a high vote percentage

(*d*) By unanimous selection by the parliament

(*e*) None of these

66. What has caused Myanmar to surpass Afghanistan as the world's largest source of opium?

(*a*) Increased demand for opium

(*b*) Shift in global opium production

(*c*) Legalization of opium in Myanmar

(*d*) Decrease in Afghanistan's opium production

(*e*) None of these

67. What is the significance of China's fourth-generation nuclear reactor?

(*a*) To achieve carbon neutrality by 2060

(*b*) To increase China's nuclear weapon capabilities

(*c*) To compete with the United States in nuclear power

(*d*) To reduce reliance on fossil fuels

(*e*) None of these

68. What does the term "Rizz," chosen as the Oxford Word of the Year 2023, refer to?

(*a*) A new technology

(*b*) A political ideology

(*c*) Style, charm, or attractiveness

(*d*) An environmental phenomenon

(*e*) None of these

69. Why is the EU disappointed with India in the WTO dispute over ICT products?

(*a*) India's high tariffs on ICT products

(*b*) India's withdrawal from the WTO

(*c*) India's rejection of interim arbitration

(*d*) India's ban on European ICT products

(*e*) None of these

70. What is the main purpose of Bhutan's planned Green City on the Assam border?

(*a*) To attract tourists

(*b*) To create an economic corridor

(*c*) To preserve Bhutanese culture

(*d*) To serve as a military base

(*e*) None of these

71. What is the aim of the TIWB's Saint Lucia Program with India as a partner?

(*a*) To improve Saint Lucia's tourism industry

(*b*) To enhance Saint Lucia's tax administration efficiency

(*c*) To promote Indian investment in Saint Lucia

(*d*) To establish a trade agreement between India and Saint Lucia

(*e*) None of these

72. What is the purpose of China's Deep Underground and Ultra-low Radiation Background Facility (DURF)?

(*a*) To store nuclear waste

(*b*) To mine rare earth minerals

(*c*) To serve as a military bunker

(*d*) To conduct advanced physics research

(*e*) None of these

73. What does the unveiling of Thiruvalluvar's statue in France symbolize?

(*a*) France's adoption of Tamil as an official language

(*b*) A significant moment in cultural exchange between India and France

(*c*) The inauguration of a new Indian embassy in France

(*d*) A new trade agreement between India and France

(*e*) None of these

74. What is significant about Mount Marapi's eruption in Indonesia?

(*a*) It's the largest eruption in Indonesia's history

(*b*) It's a rare volcanic event

(*c*) It's part of Indonesia's active volcanic activity

(*d*) It led to the discovery of new geological features

(*e*) None of these

75. What is the outcome of Sri Lanka's agreement with India and the Paris Club?

(*a*) A military alliance

(*b*) Debt restructuring and relief

(*c*) New trade agreements

(*d*) Environmental conservation efforts

(*e*) None of these

76. Why did Italy withdraw from China's Belt and Road Initiative?

(*a*) Political disagreements with China

(*b*) Lack of economic benefits and strategic reassessment

(*c*) Pressure from other G7 countries

(*d*) To align with the EU's policies

(*e*) None of these

77. What is the purpose of India's $250 million Line of Credit to Kenya?

(*a*) To modernize Kenya's agricultural sector

(*b*) To strengthen military cooperation

(*c*) To promote Indian tourism in Kenya

(*d*) To build infrastructure in Kenya

(*e*) None of these

78. Who won the 2023 Madhya Pradesh state elections, and who was appointed as the Chief Minister?

(*a*) Indian National Congress; Kamal Nath

(*b*) Bharatiya Janata Party; Mohan Yadav

(*c*) Aam Aadmi Party; Arvind Kejriwal

(*d*) Samajwadi Party; Akhilesh Yadav

(*e*) None of these

79. What is the purpose of the 'Ama Bank' scheme launched by the Odisha government?

(*a*) To provide educational loans

(*b*) To provide free banking services to all residents

(*c*) To bring banking services to panchayats for financial inclusion

(*d*) To offer high-interest savings accounts

(*e*) None of these

80. What is Varanasi's initiative to become the first begging-free city in India focused on?

(*a*) Relocating beggars to different cities

(*b*) Rehabilitation and skill development for beggars

(*c*) Imposing fines on begging

(*d*) Providing direct financial aid to beggars

(*e*) None of these

81. What is the significance of the Arogya Maitri Cube unveiled in Gurugram?

(*a*) It's a new type of medical insurance scheme

(*b*) It's the world's first portable hospital

(*c*) It's a medical research facility

(*d*) It's an AI-driven health analysis system

(*e*) None of these

82. Why has Firozabad Municipal Corporation approved the renaming of the city to 'Chandnagar'?

(*a*) To reflect its historical significance

(*b*) For tourism promotion

(*c*) As part of a new urban development plan

(*d*) To attract foreign investment

(*e*) None of these

83. What is the aim of the Rs 72-crore redevelopment plan for Punourdham in Sitamarhi, Bihar?

(*a*) To develop a new industrial zone

(*b*) To transform it into a major spiritual and cultural center

(*c*) To build a new university

(*d*) To establish a tech park

(*e*) None of these

84. What is the 'Ten Cities Development Concept' initiated by the Assam government?

(*a*) A plan to develop ten new smart cities

(*b*) A sports development initiative

(*c*) A cultural exchange program

(*d*) A comprehensive urban development program

(*e*) None of these

85. What does the establishment of the Manipur State Beverages Corporation Limited signify?

(*a*) Legalization of alcohol production, sale, and consumption

(*b*) Promotion of traditional Manipuri beverages

(*c*) Launch of a state-owned beverage company

(*d*) Introduction of new beverage products

(*e*) None of these

86. What is the purpose of the Uttarakhand Climate Resilient Power System Development Project funded by the ADB?

(*a*) To develop renewable energy sources

(*b*) To improve the quality, efficiency, and reliability of power supply

(*c*) To promote nuclear power

(*d*) To establish electric vehicle charging stations

(*e*) None of these

87. What is the goal of the 'Suchitwa Theeram' project in Kerala's Kozhikode district?

(*a*) To promote tourism

(*b*) To keep coastal areas free of plastic and garbage

(*c*) To build new ports

(*d*) To develop marine research facilities

(*e*) None of these

88. What was the focus of the Uttarakhand Global Investors Summit 2023?

(*a*) To promote cultural heritage

(*b*) To discuss climate change initiatives

(*c*) To launch new educational programs

(*d*) To attract business investments and partnerships

(*e*) None of these

89. What is the purpose of the High-Powered Committee set up for Ladakh?

(*a*) To address concerns and aspirations of the people

(*b*) To promote tourism

(*c*) To establish new educational institutions

(*d*) To create new employment opportunities

(*e*) None of these

90. What is the goal of building India's first AI city in Lucknow?

(*a*) To establish a new capital city

(*b*) To create a hub for AI research and development

(*c*) To host international AI conferences

(*d*) To provide AI-based public services

(*e*) None of these

91. What was the key focus of the third National Conference of Chief Secretaries chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Delhi?

(*a*) National Security

(*b*) Economic Reforms

(*c*) 'Ease of Living'

(*d*) Digital India Initiatives

(*e*) None of these

92. What is the purpose of the Youth for Unnati and Vikas with AI (YUVAi) program featured at the GPAI Summit 2023?

(*a*) To encourage AI startups

(*b*) To equip youth with AI skills

(*c*) To promote AI in healthcare

(*d*) To discuss ethical AI practices

(*e*) None of these

93. What was the aim of the two-day-long Atal Health Fair inaugurated by Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar in Lucknow?

(*a*) To celebrate Atal Bihari Vajpayee's birthday

(*b*) To provide medical check-ups and consultations

(*c*) To promote medical tourism

(*d*) To launch a new health insurance scheme

(*e*) None of these

94. What was the theme of the 27th WAIPA World Investment Conference hosted by India in New Delhi?

(*a*) Global Trade Relations

(*b*) Digital Transformation

(*c*) Sustainable Development

(*d*) 'Empowering Investors: IPAs Pioneering Future Growth'

(*e*) None of these

95. What was the objective of the Global Investors Summit 2023 held in Dehradun, Uttarakhand?

(*a*) To promote tourism in Uttarakhand

(*b*) To establish Uttarakhand as a new investment destination

(*c*) To discuss environmental conservation

(*d*) To launch new educational initiatives

(*e*) None of these

96. What is the goal of the Global River Cities Alliance launched at COP28 by NMCG?

(*a*) To promote river transportation

(*b*) To address climate change impacts on river ecosystems

(*c*) To encourage river-based tourism

(*d*) To conduct research on river pollution

(*e*) None of these

97. What was the theme of the 59th Fertiliser Association of India Annual Seminar 2023?

(*a*) Organic Farming

(*b*) "Innovations in Fertilizer and Agriculture Sectors"

(*c*) Fertilizer Export and Import

(*d*) Green Agriculture

(*e*) None of these

98. What was the focus of the second edition of Infinity Forum 2.0 addressed by PM Modi?

(*a*) Financial Inclusion

(*b*) Cryptocurrency and Blockchain

(*c*) New age global financial services

(*d*) Startup Ecosystem

(*e*) None of these

99. What was the purpose of the 1st Indian Art, Architecture & Design Biennale (IAADB) 2023?

(*a*) To showcase traditional Indian art forms

(*b*) To promote contemporary Indian artists internationally

(*c*) To encourage dialogue in art, architecture, and design

(*d*) To inaugurate a new art museum

(*e*) None of these

100. What was the main objective of the third National Conference of Chief Secretaries chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Delhi?

(*a*) To discuss national security strategies

(*b*) To focus on 'Ease of Living' and participative governance

(*c*) To plan economic reforms post-pandemic

(*d*) To develop a new digital infrastructure plan

(*e*) None of these

101. What is the aim of the Youth for Unnati and Vikas with AI (YUVAi) program featured at the GPAI Summit 2023?

(*a*) To provide AI technology for businesses

(*b*) To equip youth with essential AI skills

(*c*) To promote AI in healthcare services

(*d*) To develop AI-based educational programs

(*e*) None of these

102. What was the purpose of the two-day-long Atal Health Fair inaugurated by Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar in Lucknow?

(*a*) To promote yoga and Ayurveda

(*b*) To provide medical check-ups and consultations

(*c*) To launch a new healthcare policy

(*d*) To commemorate Atal Bihari Vajpayee's contributions

(*e*) None of these

(*e*) None of these

103. What was the theme of the 27th WAIPA World Investment Conference hosted in New Delhi?

(*a*) 'Empowering Investors: IPAs Pioneering Future Growth'

(*b*) Global Economic Growth

(*c*) Sustainable Investment Strategies

(*d*) Digital Transformation in Investment

(*e*) None of these

104. What was the main objective of the Global Investors Summit 2023 held in Uttarakhand?

(*a*) To promote tourism in Uttarakhand

(*b*) To establish Uttarakhand as a prime investment destination

(*c*) To discuss climate change and sustainability

(*d*) To explore new educational collaborations

(*e*) None of these

105. What is the goal of the Global River Cities Alliance launched at COP28?

(*a*) To promote river transportation and commerce

(*b*) To conduct research on river pollution

(*c*) To develop new water sports and tourism activities

(*d*) To share best practices for integrated river management

(*e*) None of these

106. What was the theme of the 59th Fertiliser Association of India Annual Seminar 2023?

(*a*) Green Farming Techniques

(*b*) "Innovations in Fertilizer and Agriculture Sectors"

(*c*) Organic and Bio-Fertilizers

(*d*) Fertilizer Exports and Global Markets

(*e*) None of these

107. What was the focus of the second edition of Infinity Forum 2.0 addressed by PM Modi?

(*a*) Financial Inclusion and Digital Banking

(*b*) Cryptocurrency and Blockchain Technology

(*c*) New age global financial services

(*d*) Sustainable Finance and Green Bonds

(*e*) None of these

108. What was the purpose of the 1st Indian Art, Architecture & Design Biennale (IAADB) 2023?

(*a*) To showcase traditional Indian art forms

(*b*) To promote international art collaborations

(*c*) To foster dialogue in art, architecture, and design

(*d*) To launch a new national art museum

(*e*) None of these

109. What is the primary purpose of the National Circular Economy Roadmap for Reducing Plastic Waste in India?

(*a*) To completely ban plastic production

(*b*) To increase repair, re-use, and recycling of plastic waste

(*c*) To create new plastic alternatives

(*d*) To export plastic waste

(*e*) None of these

110. Why did wrestler Vinesh Phogat return her Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna and Arjuna awards?

(*a*) Protest against the recent election of WFI president

(*b*) Disagreement with the government's sports policies

(*c*) Dissatisfaction with the training facilities

(*d*) Retirement from professional wrestling

(*e*) None of these

111. What led to Indian wrestler Pooja Dhanda's one-year suspension?

(*a*) Doping violation

(*b*) Match-fixing allegations

(*c*) Unprofessional conduct

(*d*) Whereabouts failures

(*e*) None of these

112. Why was Kartik Aaryan roped in as a brand ambassador for football on Sony Sports Network?

(*a*) To promote a new football league

(*b*) To enhance the sport's popularity in India

(*c*) To launch a football-based reality show

(*d*) To announce his entry into sports management

(*e*) None of these

113. What was the reason for South African cricketer Dean Elgar's retirement from international cricket?

(*a*) Injury concerns

(*b*) Personal reasons

(*c*) To focus on coaching

(*d*) After a series with India

(*e*) None of these

114. How did Manchester City and Chelsea conclude their 2023 Premier League campaign?

(*a*) Both teams suffered defeats

(*b*) Both teams secured wins

(*c*) One team won, and the other lost

(*d*) Both matches ended in a draw

(*e*) None of these

115. What significant achievement did India's Women's Cricket Team accomplish against Australia in 2023?

(*a*) Won the T20 World Cup

(*b*) Secured their first-ever Test win against Australia

(*c*) Qualified for the ICC Championship finals

(*d*) Recorded the highest team score in women's cricket

(*e*) None of these

116. Who was named the new captain of Mumbai Indians for the upcoming IPL season?

(*a*) Rohit Sharma

(*b*) Virat Kohli

(*c*) Hardik Pandya

(*d*) MS Dhoni

(*e*) None of these

117. Which Indian hockey players won top FIH Hockey Star Awards in 2023?

(*a*) Rani Rampal & PR Sreejesh

(*b*) Savita Punia & Hardik Singh

(*c*) Gurjit Kaur & Manpreet Singh

(*d*) Navjot Kaur & Harmanpreet Singh

(*e*) None of these

118. Which states won the Women's & Men's titles, respectively, in the National Khelo India Youth Games 2024?

(*a*) Maharashtra (Women's) & Athletics Academy of India (AAI) (Men's)

(*b*) Karnataka (Women's) & Haryana (Men's)

(*c*) Punjab (Women's) & Kerala (Men's)

(*d*) West Bengal (Women's) & Tamil Nadu (Men's)

(*e*) None of these

119. What milestone did Mitchell Starc achieve in the IPL Auction 2024?

(*a*) Selected as the captain of an IPL team

(*b*) Became the most expensive foreign player in IPL history

(*c*) First player to be auctioned for two teams simultaneously

(*d*) Broke the record for the highest number of wickets in a single IPL season

(*e*) None of these

120. Which state dominated the inaugural Khelo India Para Games 2024?

(*a*) Kerala

(*b*) Tamil Nadu

(*c*) Haryana

(*d*) Gujarat

(*e*) None of these

Answer Key

1.	(C)	2.	(B)	3.	(B)	4.	(D)	5.	(C)	6.	(B)	7.	(B)	8.	(A)	9.	(B)	10.	(D)
11.	(B)	12.	(C)	13.	(B)	14.	(D)	15.	(C)	16.	(B)	17.	(D)	18.	(B)	19.	(B)	20.	(A)
21.	(C)	22.	(B)	23.	(C)	24.	(D)	25.	(B)	26.	(B)	27.	(C)	28.	(A)	29.	(C)	30.	(D)
31.	(A)	32.	(B)	33.	(B)	34.	(D)	35.	(B)	36.	(A)	37.	(B)	38.	(D)	39.	(B)	40.	(B)
41.	(C)	42.	(C)	43.	(B)	44.	(B)	45.	(A)	46.	(B)	47.	(B)	48.	(B)	49.	(C)	50.	(B)
51.	(A)	52.	(D)	53.	(B)	54.	(B)	55.	(B)	56.	(C)	57.	(C)	58.	(B)	59.	(C)	60.	(C)
61.	(B)	62.	(B)	63.	(B)	64.	(A)	65.	(C)	66.	(B)	67.	(A)	68.	(C)	69.	(C)	70.	(B)
71.	(B)	72.	(D)	73.	(B)	74.	(C)	75.	(B)	76.	(B)	77.	(A)	78.	(B)	79.	(C)	80.	(B)
81.	(B)	82.	(A)	83.	(B)	84.	(D)	85.	(A)	86.	(B)	87.	(B)	88.	(D)	89.	(A)	90.	(B)
91.	(C)	92.	(B)	93.	(B)	94.	(D)	95.	(B)	96.	(B)	97.	(B)	98.	(C)	99.	(C)	100.	(B)
101.	(B)	102.	(B)	103.	(A)	104.	(B)	105.	(D)	106.	(B)	107.	(C)	108.	(C)	109.	(B)	110.	(A)
111.	(D)	112.	(B)	113.	(D)	114.	(B)	115.	(B)	116.	(C)	117.	(B)	118.	(A)	119.	(B)	120.	(C)

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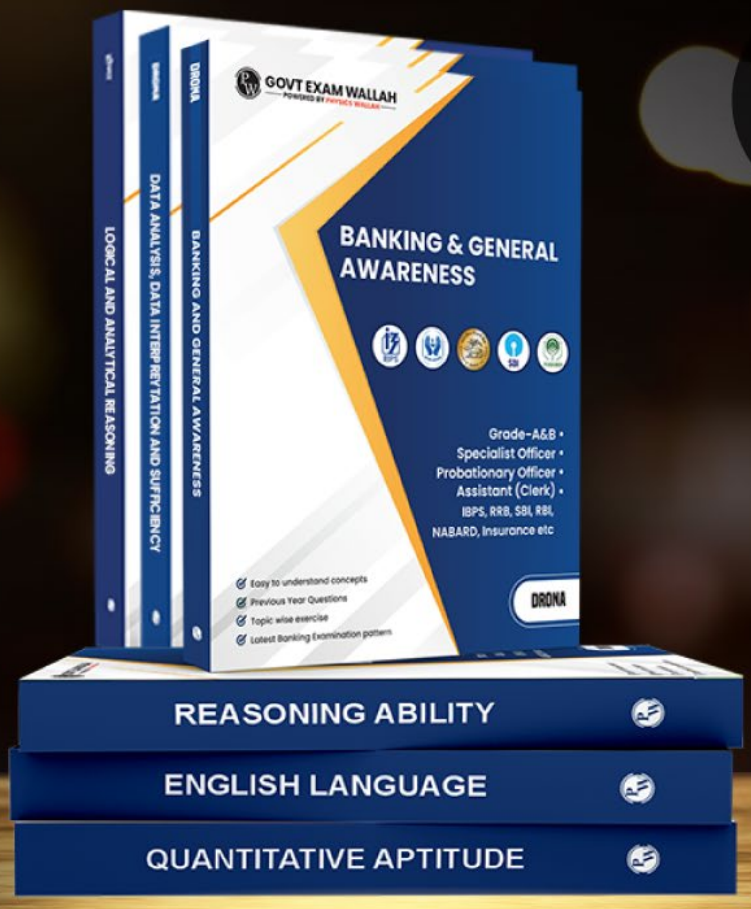
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Banking and Economy

Chapter 1

Yes Bank becomes first Indian bank to conduct export finance transaction

- Yes Bank became the first Indian bank to execute an export finance transaction on the **International Trade Financing Services Platform (ITFS) of RXIL Global IFSC Limited (RXIL).**
- This strategic partnership facilitates arranging credit for exporters and importers from both Indian and Global Institutions through **Factoring, Forfaiting,** and other trade financing services at competitive pricing with quick turnaround using a digital platform.
- This is the first transaction on the **ITFS platform** in collaboration with any bank in India.

ICICI Bank Canada launches 'Money2India (Canada)' mobile app

- **ICICI Bank Canada** announces the launch of its mobile banking app, **'Money2India (Canada)'**.
- The app enables customers of any bank in Canada to send money instantly and round the clock to any bank in India without opening an account with **ICICI Bank Canada**.
- Customers of any bank in Canada can send money through the app using their **Visa / Mastercard** debit cards.
- The launch of 'Money2India (Canada)' app marks ICICI Bank Canada's foray into Canada's remittance market.

DLabs at the ISB launched 'Build for Billions'

- **Hyderabad Based DLabs** at the **Indian School of Business (ISB)** launched **'Build for Billions'** in partnership with **Reserve Bank Innovation Hub (RBIH)** and **Union Bank of India**.
- It aims to address livelihood issues for gig workers, migrant workers, domestic workers, street vendors, carpenters, plumbers, electricians, and construction laborers who represent the informal economy.
- The initiative serves as a platform for innovative fintech startups to create solutions addressing issues like low and unpredictable income, irregular income streams, limited access to credit and savings, and a lack of social security nets.

Zomato gets RBI approval to operate as online payment aggregator

- Recently, Online food delivery platform Zomato announced that it has received authorisation by the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** as an **'Online Payment Aggregator'**.
- ZPPL has been granted a certificate of authorization dated January 24, 2024, from the RBI to operate as an **'Online Payment Aggregator'** in India with effect from January 24, 2024, as per the guidelines issued by the RBI.

AU Bank receives CCI approval for merger with Fincare Small Finance Bank

- **Competition Commission of India (CCI)** has approved the merger of **Fincare Small Finance Bank with AU Small Finance Bank,** as per an exchange filing.
- As per the terms of scheme of amalgamation, **Fincare Business Services**, promoter of **Fincare SFB**, shall infuse **Rs 700 crore into Fincare SFB** prior to the completion of the merger.

SBI introduced green term deposits denominated in Rupees

- **State Bank of India (SBI)** has launched **SBI Green Rupee Term Deposit (SGRTD)** in an effort to raise money for projects and activities that promote the environment and help India's green finance ecosystem flourish.
- Green term deposits are open to resident individuals, non-individuals and non-resident Indians as well, through a branch network.
- A green deposit is a fixed-term deposit for consumers who want to invest their surplus cash reserves in environmentally friendly projects.
- SBI's green offering has tenors of **111 days, 1,777 days and 2,222 days**.

AI startup Krutrim became India's first unicorn in 2024

- **Krutrim**, an AI startup founded by Bhavish Aggarwal, the **CEO of Ola,** has indeed become **India's first AI unicorn in 2024.**
- **Krutrim secured $50 million in funding.** Matrix Partners India and other notable investors led the investment**.**
- This funding round valued Krutrim at an impressive **$1 billion**, making it India's first AI unicorn.
- Krutrim launched its language model just a month ago.

LIC unveiled 'Jeevan Dhara II' deferred annuity plan

- **LIC** has launched a new plan named **"Jeevan Dhara II"**. It is a non-linked, non-participating, individual, savings, deferred annuity plan.
- The policyholder has the option to choose the mode of premium payment, deferment period, annuity option, and mode of annuity payment.
- Annuity rates are guaranteed at the inception of the policy and annuities are payable post Deferment Period in arrears throughout the **lifetime of Annuitant(s) as per the Annuity Option chosen.**

NSE retains position as the world's largest exchange in 2023

- The **National Stock Exchange of India (NSE)** retained its position as the **world's largest derivatives exchange for the fifth consecutive year in 2023.**
- NSE is **ranked 3rd in the world in the equity segment by the number of trades (electronic order book) in 2023**, as per the statistics maintained by the World Federation of Exchanges (WFE).
- The year 2023 witnessed many milestones such as the market capitalization of listed companies surpassing **USD 4 trillion,** SME listed companies surpassed the **Rs 1,00,000 crore** mark and the Nifty 50 index surpassed the **20,000 index levels for the first time.**
- NSE has witnessed year on year growth in the number of clients traded for the 10th consecutive year beginning **2014 to 2023 in its equity segment.**
- The year also saw record high turnover on a single day in the equity segment of **Rs 167,942.47 crores on November 30, 2023, and Rs 381,623.12 crores on December 2, 2023**, in the equity derivatives segment.

Centre constitutes 16th Finance Commission with Dr Arvind Panagariya



- The Centre government has constituted the **Sixteenth Finance Commission**.
- **Former NITI Aayog Vice Chairman, Dr Arvind Panagariya** who is a Professor at Columbia University, will be the Chairman of the 16th Finance Commission.
- **IAS officer Ritvik Ranjanam Pandey will be the secretary of the Commission.**
- The Commission will make recommendations in matters including the distribution between the Union and the States of the net proceeds of taxes and measures needed to augment the Consolidated Fund of a State to supplement the resources of the Panchayats and Municipalities in the State.
- The Finance Commission has been requested to make its report available by 31st of October, 2025 covering **five years** commencing on the 1st of April, 2026.

List of Finance Commissions in India:

Commission No.	Chairman	Period	Report Submitted	Key Features
1st	K. C. Neogy	1952-1957	1957	Established the framework for distribution of central taxes and grants-in-aid.
2nd	K. Santhanam	1957-1962	1962	Emphasized fiscal discipline and introduced performance-based grants.

Commission No.	Chairman	Period	Report Submitted	Key Features
3rd	Ashok Kumar Chanda	1962-1966	1965	Focused on reducing regional disparities and promoting balanced development.
4th	P. V. Rajamannar	1964-1969	1969	Introduced tax-sharing formula and recommended grants for backward states.
5th	Mahaveer Tyagi	1969-1974	1973	Increased devolution of central taxes and emphasized rural development.
6th	Brahmananda Reddy	1972-1978	1978	Emphasized distributive justice and introduced grants for border states.
7th	J. M. Shelat	1977-1983	1983	Focused on rationalization of grants-in-aid and introduced grants for specific purposes.
8th	Ramesh Chandra	1983-1988	1985	Emphasized tax reforms and fiscal autonomy for states.
9th	D. T. Lakadwala	1988-1993	1990	Introduced revised tax-sharing formula and recommended special grants for hill states.
10th	C. Rangarajan	1993-2004	2000	Introduced fiscal responsibility targets and emphasized decentralization.
11th	Vijay Kelkar	2004-2010	2007	Recommended increased devolution of central taxes and emphasized performance-based grants.
12th	C. K. Mishra	2010-2015	2014	Introduced revised formula for devolution and recommended tied grants for specific programs.
13th	Y. V. Reddy	2015-2020	2017	Increased devolution to 40% and introduced grants for aspirational districts.
14th	N. K. Singh	2017-2021	2020	Maintained devolution at 40% and focused on disaster relief and fiscal consolidation.
15th	N. K. Singh	2021-2026	2021	Maintained devolution at 41% and introduced performance-based grants for health and education.
16th	Dr Arvind Panagariya	-	-	-

Ola Electric becomes 1st EV company to get PLI approval

Ola Electric becomes the first Indian e-scooter company to be eligible for the government's production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme.

The PLI certification is expected to provide financial benefits of **INR 15,000 to 18,000 per unit**, potentially enhancing the affordability of electric vehicles.

The **Ministry of Heavy Industries** has approved Ola Electric's eligibility after a four-month-long process.

Ola Electric is set to file for its IPO, making it the **first Indian electric vehicle (EV)** company to do so. The IPO consists of a fresh issue component of **Rs 5,500 crore and an offer for sale (OFS) category of around Rs 1,750 crore.**



India's GDP growth seen at 6.2% in '24: UN report

- The **United Nations** has released a new report **World Economic Situation and Prospects 2024** which states that India's **gross domestic product (GDP**) growth for the 2024 calendar year will remain at **6.2 per cent, compared to 6.7 per cent earlier.**
- The reports project a lower global GDP growth rate of an estimated **2.4 percent in 2024, down from 2.7 percent in 2023.**
- This is attributed to lingering risks and uncertainties surrounding the **Russia-Ukraine war,** the conflict in Palestine, and the decisions of several developed economies to keep interest rates higher for longer.
- Growth is forecast to improve moderately to **2.7 percent in 2025** but will remain below the pre-pandemic trend growth rate of 3 percent.
- Gross domestic product in **South Asia grew by an estimated 5.3 percent in 2023** and is projected to increase by **5.2 percent in 2024**.
- Global levels of real gross fixed capital formation grew by about **1.9 percent in 2023**, down **from 3.3 percent in 2022 and below the 2011-2019 average of 4.0 percent.**

First advance estimates of National Income, 2023-24

- The **National Statistical Office (NSO), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation released the first advance estimate of this year's GDP growth.**
- As per the report, **India's gross domestic product (GDP)** is estimated to grow by **7.3 percent in 2023-24, up from 7.2 percent in 2022-23**
- The statistics ministry's first advance estimate of growth this year is even higher than the **Reserve Bank of India's (RBI)** recently revised forecast of 7. 0 percent.
- As per the statistics ministry's first advance estimate, **India's GDP in nominal terms may grow by only 8.9 percent this year.**

SEBI allows short-selling by all investors; F&O stocks also eligible

- **Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)** allows short-selling for all investor categories but prohibits naked short-selling
- All stocks in the futures and options segment are **eligible for short-selling**
- Institutional investors cannot engage **in day trading and all transactions will be grossed at the custodian level**
- **Securities Lending and Borrowing (SLB) scheme** will be implemented simultaneously with institutional investor short selling

PFC gains on RBI nod to set up firm in GIFT City

- **Power Finance Corporation (PFC)** has received approval from the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to set up a wholly-owned finance company in the GIFT City in Gujarat.**
- The new entity at the **International Financial Services Centre (IFSC)** is expected to offer new business opportunities for PFC and contribute to the growth of the country's power sector.
- PFC aims **to leverage the conducive environment for international lending activities and world-class infrastructure** provided by GIFT City to establish its global presence and expand its business opportunities.

DPIIT organises Startup India Innovation Week 2024



- The **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)** is organising the Startup India Innovation **Week 2024 from 10th to 18th January 2024**
- The aim of the event is **to bring together the country's startups, entrepreneurs, investors, policymakers, and other stakeholders.**
- The **Startup India initiative was launched by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 16th January 2016** to build a strong ecosystem for nurturing innovation, boosting startups, and encouraging investments in the startup ecosystem of the country.

- According to a statement by the Commerce and Industry Ministry, the number of recognised startups has increased to over one **lakh 17 lakh thousand from about four hundred startups in 2016.**

World Bank keeps India's FY25 GDP growth estimate unchanged at 6.4%

- The **World Bank's FY25 economic growth projection for India remains at 6.4%** due to strong domestic demand, increased public infrastructure spending, and robust private-sector credit growth.
- India is projected **to maintain the fastest growth rate among the world's largest economies,** with estimated **growth of 6.3% in FY24, gradually recovering to 6.5% in FY26.**
- The global economy is forecasted to expand **by 2.4% in 2024, down from 2.6% in 2023, and 3% in 2022,** with a significant **slowdown compared to the 6.2% growth in 2021,** reflecting the impact of high interest rates, persistent inflation, slumping trade, and a diminished China.
- The World Bank's forecast for India does not include the **National Statistical Office's (NSO's) first advance estimates, which projected 7.3% growth for India in FY24.**

Institutional investments in Indian real estate fell to 5-year low in 2023

- According to data released by workplace solutions firm **Vestian, Institutional investments in the Indian real estate sector fell to $4.3 billion in 2023, a 12% decrease from 2022 and the lowest since 2019.**
- **Foreign investments dropped by 30% to $2.7 billion**, with their share in total investment falling from 79% to 65%.
- Foreign investors focused mainly on commercial assets, **with 72% of their investment** allocated to this segment.
- Domestic investments **more than doubled to $1.5 billion,** with their **share increasing to 35% in 2023.**
- Domestic investors showed faith in the sector, **with 42% of their investments in commercial assets and 39% in residential projects.**

Paytm to invest Rs 100 cr in GIFT City to build global payments system

- **One97 Communications,** the parent company of Paytm, **plans to invest Rs 100 crore in Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT City)** to establish a development center for creating an international payments system.
- The development center aims **to build an artificial intelligence (AI)-driven cross-border remittance and payments technology system.**
- Paytm's goal is **to replicate its success in real-time payments in India** to reduce friction in cross-border remittances with faster and cost-effective solutions driven by AI.

Govt announces ₹45000 crore investment to develop river cruise tourism

- The **ministry of ports, shipping, and waterways** has announced a **₹45,000 crore investment** to develop river cruise tourism.
- This investment **includes ₹35,000 crore for cruise vessels and ₹10,000 crore for cruise terminal infrastructure by 2047.**
- The decision was taken at the inaugural Inland **Waterways Development Council (IWDC) meeting in Kolkata.**
- To enhance inland waterways for cargo trade, **a ₹15,200 crore investment was agreed upon at the Global Maritime India Summit (GMIS), held in Mumbai in October last year.**
- Sonowal launched the **'Harit Nauka' guidelines and 'River Cruise Tourism Roadmap, 2047' at the IWDC.**

Indian Bank launches a co-branded credit card



- **Indian Bank has partnered with FPL Technologies** to launch the Indian Bank One co-branded credit card.
- The card utilizes both **Visa and RuPay platforms**, issued by Indian Bank and managed by FPL Technologies.

- It features international validity with a **1% forex fee, catering to digitally savvy Indian consumers.**
- Shanti Lal Jain, MD & CEO of Indian Bank, highlighted that the collaboration aims **to offer customers the latest advancements in credit solutions.**

USIDFC, NIIF to set up $1 -billion fund to finance renewable energy projects

- The **United States International Development Finance Corporation (USIDFC) and India's National Infrastructure Investment Fund (NIIF)** are considering creating a fund to invest in renewable energy and green projects in India, with both entities **contributing $500 million** each and seeking additional investment from other sources.
- USIDFC committed **$500 million to First Solar's 3.5 GW solar module plant and $425 million to Tata Power's** upcoming solar module plant **in Tamil Nadu.**
- NIIF is an investment platform for international and Indian investors managed by the Government of India, **with over $44.9 billion of equity capital commitments across its four funds.**

South Korean Simmtech to set up ₹1,250 crore unit for semiconductor ecosystem

- South Korea-based Simmtech has signed an MoU with the **Gujarat Government to invest over Rs 1,250 crore in the state, aiming to support Micron's semiconductor plant.**
- The MoU was exchanged in the presence of **Union Minister of IT and Electronics Ashwini Vaishnaw and Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel**.
- Simmtech CEO Jeffery Chun announced the company's readiness to invest in India, with expectations **to create over 1,000 direct and indirect job opportunities in the state.**

ONGC Videsh Ltd & IOC launch Global Treasury Centres at GIFT City

- Public Sector Companies like **ONGC Videsh Ltd and Indian Oil Corporation** have launched their respective **Global Treasury Centres at GIFT City** to manage international assets and raise funds.
- The ONGC Videsh Ltd treasury centre will manage operations of over 25 subsidiaries and raise close to $4 billion, while the Indian Oil Corporation is expected to raise over $5 billion from the GIFT IFSC
- A conference for central and State public sector units and national cooperatives **will be held at IFSC on February 23 to explore using GIFT city as a platform for global businesses and cost-efficiencies in financing**

Digital Connexion launches MAA10 data centre in Chennai

- **Digital Connexion**, a joint venture involving Reliance Industries Ltd, Canada's Brookfield Asset Management, and Digital Realty, **has unveiled its first data centre campus in Chennai**.
- The data centre, **MAA10, offers 20 Mw of IT load** in its first phase and is designed for scalable growth, catering to various customer needs.
- The company has already begun work on the second phase of the **Chennai data centre and has also purchased land in Mumbai for a 40 Mw facility.**
- Digital Connexion expects **to benefit from Brookfield's renewable power expertise to make its data centers more sustainable.**

Shanghai's NDB to provide $500 million loan to Gujarat

- **Shanghai-headquartered New Development Bank (NDB)** signed an agreement for providing a **$500-million loan to the Gujarat government.**
- The funds will be utilized for the construction of approximately 1,200 kilometers of roads, enhancing connectivity and accessibility in Gujarat.
- The focus of the project is on sustainable development and inclusive growth in Gujarat, aiming **to set new benchmarks in infrastructure development while ensuring environmental sustainability.**

L&T bags Mumbai-Ahmedabad high-speed rail project



- **Larsen & Toubro's** railway strategic business group has won a significant contract valued between

₹10,000 crore to ₹15,000 crore for the Mumbai-Ahmedabad high-speed rail project.

- The contract, secured from a **Japanese agency, involves the construction of 508 Route Km of high-speed electrification system works (Package No: EW 1) for the Bullet Train Project.**
- Upon completion, the electrification system will enable trains to travel at speeds of up **to 320 KMPH, and the project is funded by Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)** and implemented by a Japanese agency on behalf of **National High Speed Rail Corporation Ltd (NHSRCL).**

Gujarat, Kerala, Karnataka best performing States in developing startup ecosystem

- The **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)** released the **States' startup ranking for 2022.**
- The ranking was announced by **Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal.**
- According to the ranking **Gujarat, Kerala and Karnataka have emerged as the best-performing States in developing startup ecosystems for budding entrepreneurs.**
- **Tamil Nadu, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, and Telangana are also** categorized as top performers.

GIFT City, IGX and GSPC collaborate for global hydrogen trading



- The **International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) at GIFT City** has announced a strategic collaboration with the **Indian Gas Exchange (IGX) and Gujarat State Petroleum Corporation (GSPC)** to establish a **global hydrogen trading mechanism.**
- This initiative, **set to be the second of its kind in the world, positions GIFT City** as a leader in the emerging green hydrogen economy.
- The collaboration aims **to create a global hydrogen price index** to enhance transparency, bolster investor confidence, and facilitate the global growth of the green hydrogen market.

Global Hydrogen Price Index:

- The **Global Hydrogen Price Index** is a benchmark facilitating price discovery and market information for the green hydrogen industry in India.
- Its goal is **to boost transparency and investor confidence in the emerging hydrogen market.**
- It aims to provide reliable price indexing and trading avenues to attract greater global capital inflows into India's green hydrogen sector.

Foxconn, HCL announce semiconductor JV in India with $37.2 mn investment



- **Foxconn Technology Group and HCL Group** plan to create a joint venture for a semiconductor **outsourced assembly and testing (OSAT)** unit in India, with **Foxconn investing $37.2 million** for a 40% equity stake in the venture.
- The move aims **to establish an OSAT facility** to contribute to India's semiconductor industry and enhance supply chain resilience.
- The partnership will leverage **Foxconn's BOL (build-operate-localise) model, emphasizing community support in establishing OSAT operations in India.**

SEBI Chairperson launches CDSL's Multi-Lingual initiatives for ease of doing business



- In celebration of its silver jubilee year, **Central Depository Services (India) Limited (CDSL),**

announced the launch of two unique multi-lingual initiatives to signify its commitment to inclusivity and accessibility in the capital market landscape.

- These initiatives were launched by **SEBI Chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch** at the silver jubilee function.
- The **"Apka CAS - Apki Zubaani"** initiative enables investors to receive their statements in their preferred language among 23 diverse Indian languages, providing a consolidated view of their securities held in a demat account.
- The **'CDSL Buddy Sahayta 24*7' Chatbot offers round-the-clock support in multiple languages to simplify investors**' journeys and promote self-sufficiency in navigating through the securities markets.

Tata to continue run as IPL Title sponsors for 5 more years



- **Tata Sons** retains **IPL title sponsorship rights from 2024 to 2028 by matching Aditya Birla Group's bid of Rs 2500 crores, i.e. Rs 500 crore per year**
- **Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI)** released the tender for title sponsorship rights for **IPL seasons 2024-2028 and set the base price at Rs 1,750 crore over five years, or Rs 350 crore per year for 74 matches.**
- BCCI recommends bidders apply for **84 and 94 matches at base prices of Rs 375 crore and Rs 400 crore, respectively**

Government reduced unexpected tax on crude petroleum

- Effective January 16, the government has reduced the **windfall tax on domestically-produced crude oil from ₹2,300 to ₹1,700 per tonne.**
- This adjustment is implemented through a **Special Additional Excise Duty (SAED),** reflecting a shift in the taxation policy related to the energy sector.
- The official notification emphasizes the retention of a nil **Special Additional Excise Duty (SAED) on the export of diesel, petrol, and jet fuel (ATF).**

TCS is the world's 2nd most valuable IT services brand

- According to the **Brand Finance 2024** research, **Accenture, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS)**, and Infosys have the highest brand values in the IT sector.
- With a **noteworthy 11% increase** in brand value, **reaching $19.2 billion,** TCS takes second place.
- Out of all worldwide IT giants, TCS has experienced the largest absolute gain in brand value, **increasing by about $2 billion over the previous year's $17.2 billion.**
- In the face of challenges from emerging technologies and a slow-growth environment, the leaders in the **IT sector are still Accenture, TCS, and Infosys.**

RBI imposes fine on Dhanlaxmi Bank, ESAF, Punjab and Sind Bank

- On 12 January 2024, The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** imposed monetary penalties against **ESAF Small Finance Bank, Dhanlaxmi Bank, and Punjab and Sind Bank** over various non-compliances.
- It has levied **Rs 1.2 crore on private sector Dhankaxmi Bank** for three violations.
- The central bank has imposed **Rs 1 crore on state-owned Punjab & Sind Bank** for violating lending rules.
- **ESAF Small Finance Bank** will have **to pay Rs 30 lakh** for deficiencies in customer service.

Major UPI Apps enabled to receive remittances from Singapore

- Indians can now receive remittances from Singapore directly into their bank accounts on a real-time basis through major UPI and bank apps, like **SBI, Axis Bank, and ICICI Bank, the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)**.
- This facility can be accessed by users of **BHIM, PhonePe, and Paytm apps**.
- The new functionality is set to enable Indians to

receive remittances from Singapore-based Indian diaspora directly into their bank accounts.

IndusInd Bank launched 'Samman RuPay Credit Card'

- On 9 January 2024, **IndusInd Bank** announced the launch of the **UPI-enabled 'IndusInd Bank Samman RuPay Credit Card'**, in collaboration with National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).
- This credit card is specially designed for government sector employees.
- It aims to provide exclusive benefits to government employees and enhance their overall banking experience.

Index and Reports

Chapter 2

Shri Bhupender Yadav released the Status Report of Snow Leopards in India

- **Union Minister of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change, Shri Bhupender** Yadav released the report on the **Status of Snow Leopards in India during the National Board for Wildlife** meeting held in New Delhi.
- The **Snow Leopard Population Assessment in India (SPAI) Program** is the first-ever scientific exercise that reports Snow leopard population of **718 individuals in India.**
- The SPAI systematically covered over **70% of the potential snow leopard** range in the country.
- During the SPAI exercise, total efforts included: **13,450 km of trails surveyed for recording Snow Leopard signs,** while camera traps were deployed at **1,971 locations for 180,000 trap nights.**
- Snow leopard occupancy was recorded in 93,392 km2, with an estimated presence in 100,841 km2.
- Based on data analysis, the estimated population in different states are as follows: **Ladakh (477), Uttarakhand (124), Himachal Pradesh (51), Arunachal Pradesh (36), Sikkim (21), and Jammu and Kashmir (9).**

Union Power and New Renewable Energy Minister released 3rd edition of Consumer Service Rating of DISCOMs



- The **third edition of the Consumer Service Ratings of DISCOMs**, covering performance for FY 2022-23, was released by the **Union Power and New Renewable Energy Minister.**
- As per the Ratings, four distribution companies (DISCOMs) out of 62 have achieved an **A+ (highest) ranking.** These are:

1. NPCL (Uttar Pradesh)
2. BRPL (Delhi)
3. BYPL (Delhi)
4. TPDDL (Delhi)

- These four DISCOMs serve a largely urban demographic, showcasing the divide in customer satisfaction between private and public DISCOMs.
- The report captures the current status of consumer services across various DISCOMs.
- It is expected to steer healthy competition amongst the DISCOMs and nudge them to improve upon the key services rendered to consumers.

EFTA: Trade deficit, Swiss blanket removal of import duties to



- **A large trade deficit with Switzerland** and its decision to remove import duties on almost all industrial goods for all countries starting January 1 would limit gains for India under the proposed trade agreement with the **EFTA bloc.**
- The report by economic think tank GTRI said the trade agreement in the current format will not help **Indian exports** and will result in higher imports and wider trade deficit.

- India and the **European Free Trade Association (EFTA)** are negotiating a free trade agreement, officially dubbed as **Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA)** with a view to boosting economic ties.
- FTA (free trade agreement) negotiations were initiated in January 2008.
- EFTA members are **Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland.**

Auto retail sales in India grew 21% in December, 11% in 2023



- Retail auto sales in **India jumped 21 per cent in December 2023 to 1,990,915 units, as compared to 1,643,514 units in December 2022,** according to the data released by the **Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (FADA).**
- The retail sales were up 11 per cent to 23,867,990 units IN 2023 against 21,492,324 units in 2022.
- However, the sales in December 2023 were 30.25 percent lower than 2,854,242 units in November.

Hyderabad second largest real estate hub in 2023



- According to the 'Real Insight Residential – Annual Round-up 2023 (January–December)' report released by PropTiger.com, **Ahmedabad emerged as the largest real estate hub in India with a 51%** year-on-year growth in housing sales.
- **Hyderabad occupied second spot with 49%** followed by **Bengaluru at 44%, Pune at 33%, Mumbai at 29%, Kolkata at 16%, Delhi NCR at 11%, and Chennai at 5%.**
- The country's overall growth in housing sales **stood at 33%.**
- The **Reserve Bank of India's** decision to pause rate hikes in April 2023 played a crucial role in boosting buyer confidence.

Henley Passport Index 2024



- **The Henley Passport Index 2024** was released highlighting the **"power" of passports of 199 countries.**
- The index is created by London-based global citizenship and residence advisory firm Henley & Partners, using exclusive data from the **International Air Transport Association (IATA).**
- The index was topped by **France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Singapore and Spain jointly.** Passports of all these countries have visa-free access to **194 destinations**
- **South Korea, Sweden and Finland** rose one spot to take joint second place, with access to **193 countries.**
- **Austria, Denmark, Ireland and the Netherlands shared third place,** allowing travel to 192 places.
- The **UK and US passports ranked fourth and seventh,** respectively, with access to 191 and 188 destinations.
- According to the latest ranking, **India stands at the 80th rank in the list** of most powerful passports. **India shares the rank with Uzbekistan.**
- The **least powerful passport** in the world is **Afghanistan.** It ranked at 104th spot with access to 28 countries. It is followed by **Syria (103), Iraq (102), Pakistan (101) and Yemen (100).**

Global Unemployment set to reach 5.2% in 2024

- **The International Labour Organization (ILO)** has released the **2024 'World Employment and Social Outlook'** report.
- As per the report, the global unemployment rate is expected to inch up to **5.2 percent** this year primarily because of a rise in joblessness in advanced economies.
- The report forecasts that the number of unemployed people will **rise by 2 million, lifting the global unemployment rate to 5.2 percent from 5.1 percent in 2023.**
- ILO said that after a short growth spurt as countries recovered from the pandemic, aggregate labour productivity growth had quickly returned to the low pace seen over the previous decade.
- The report also said, the situation is particularly concerning in high-income countries, where employment growth is expected to turn negative in 2024 and only modest improvements are anticipated in 2025.
- **ILO** is a **United Nations agency headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland.**

Global Firepower 2024



- **The United States** took the **first spot in Global Firepower's Military Strength Rankings 2024, followed by Russia and China.**
- **India clinched fourth sport,** above the United Kingdom and Japan.
- **Bhutan is at the bottom** of the list with a power index of 6.3704.

Top 10 countries with the most powerful militaries

Rank	Country	PwrIndx* score
1.	United States	0.0699
2.	Russia	0.0702
3.	China	0.0706
4.	India	0.1023
5.	South Korea	0.1416
6.	United Kingdom	0.1443
7.	Japan	0.1601
8.	Turkey	0.1697
9.	Pakistan	0.1711
10.	Italy	0.1863

About Global Firepower

- Since 2006 Global Firepower (GFP) has provided a unique analytical display of data concerning 145 modern military powers.
- The GFP ranking is based on each nation's potential war-making capability across land, sea, and air fought by conventional means.
- Global Firepower ranking utilizes over 60 individual factors to determine a given nation's PowerIndex ('PwrIndx') score with categories ranging from quantity of military units and financial standing to logistical capabilities and geography.

WEF releases Global Cooperation Barometer 2024



- **The World Economic Forum (WEF)** has released a report titled the **Global Cooperation Barometer 2024.**
- The report was developed in collaboration with management consultants **McKinsey & Company.**
- The report utilized 42 indicators to measure **five pillars** of global cooperation, including **trade and capital, innovation and technology, climate and natural capital, health and wellness, and peace and security.**
- Before 2020, health cooperation indicators such as health development assistance, trade in health goods, and health-related R&D and IP flows steadily increased, leading to improvements in health outcomes.
- **In 2021, life expectancy at birth declined to 71 from 72.8 in 2019, a**nd malaria cases and deaths increased significantly in 2020.
- The global maternal mortality ratio increased, with a majority of maternal deaths occurring in sub-Saharan Africa.

NITI Aayog released discussion paper 'Multidimensional Poverty in India since 2005-06'

- Policy think tank of India the **NITI Aayog** came out with a discussion paper on **'Multidimensional Poverty in India since 2005-06'.**
- As per the report, multidimensional poverty in **India was found to have declined from 29.17 per cent in 2013-14 to 11.28 per cent in 2022-23,** with about 24.82 crore people moving out of this bracket during this period.
- **Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Madhya Pradesh** recorded the largest decline in multidimensional poverty.



- National multidimensional poverty measures deprivations across health, education, and standard of living using **12 sustainable development goals-aligned indicators.**
- The research discovered that multidimensional poverty in India decreased at an **annual rate of 10.66% between 2015-16 and 2019-21, which is faster than the 7.69% rate observed between 2005 and 2015.**
- The analysis indicates significant enhancements in all **12 crucial MPI indicators** such as nutrition, access to clean drinking water, sanitation, housing, and others.
- Based on the current patterns, **India appears to be on track to achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goal of reducing multidimensional poverty by half well before 2030.**

MoU and Agreements

Chapter 3

Airbus and Tata to collaborate on helicopter manufacturing facility

- **Airbus Helicopters** will partner with the Tata Group to establish a final assembly line for helicopters in the country.
- This will be the second final assembly line that will be built by **Airbus in India after the 'Make in India' C295 military aircraft manufacturing facility in Gujarat.**
- The **Final Assembly Line (FAL)** will produce Airbus **H125 helicopters** from its civil range for India and for exporting to some of the neighbouring countries.
- The facility will also be the first instance where a private sector player will set up a helicopter manufacturing facility in India, providing a major boost to the Indian government's **'AatmaNirbhar Bharat' (self-reliant India) programme.**

Reliance Jio, OnePlus set up '5G Innovation Lab' to develop new technologies

- **Reliance Jio** has partnered with premium smartphone maker **OnePlus to establish a '5G Innovation Lab'** in India which will serve as a hub for testing and developing new technologies.
- This collaboration brings together the technological innovation and infrastructure of Jio and OnePlus to pioneer new experiences for users.
- The partnership between the two companies aims to provide OnePlus and Jio True 5G users with **"differentiated features and an unparalleled network experience".**

Cabinet approves signing of a MoU between India and Oman

- The Union Cabinet was apprised of a pact inked between **India and Oman** for cooperation in the field of IT.
- The MoU intends **to promote comprehensive cooperation** between the Parties through mutual support, sharing of technologies, information and investments in the field of Information Technology.
- The MoU shall come into effect from the date of signature of the Parties and shall remain in force for a **period of 3 years.**
- **Both G2G and B2B bilateral Cooperation** in the field of Information Technology will be enhanced.

CSIR-Human resource development centre signs MoUs with four Sector Skill Councils

- The **CSIR-Human Resource Development Centre (CSIR-HRDC), Ghaziabad (UP)** signed a collaborative MoU with **M/s Agriculture Skill Council of India (ASCI), Capital Goods & Strategic Skill Council (CGSSC), Hydrocarbon Sector Skill Council (HSSC) and Life Sciences Sector Skill Development Council (LSSSDC).**
- The MoU envisages to create an enabling environment for CSIR and Indian industry.
- CSIR launched a national-level unique Program **"CSIR Integrated Skill Initiative" in 2016** to equip young minds with the necessary technological skills through exposure to CSIR laboratories.
- CSIR has so far trained over **1.50 lakh individuals,** under this Initiative, through 4500+ skill-based training, including special programs for rural citizens and women.
- Under this programme, Biological, Chemical, Engineering, Information and Physical Sciences of broad scientific clusters of CSIR are covered.

India, Cuba sign MoU on digital public infrastructure

- The **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology** signed an MoU with the Ministry of Communications of the **Republic of Cuba** on Cooperation in the field of Sharing Successful Digital Solutions.
- The MoU intends **to promote digital transformation through capacity-building programs**, exchange of best practices, and other collaborative activities to mutually benefit the digital ecosystems of both countries.
- India will collaborate with Cuba by building upon development partnership on digital transformation

leading to a smooth adoption of **Digital Public Infrastructure in Cuba.**

India and France ink deal on Defence Space agreement

- **India and France** have inked a significant **Defence Space Agreement**, signaling a groundbreaking move that could involve the joint development and launch of military satellites with offensive and defensive capabilities.
- The deal was reportedly signed on January 26 by **French Defence Minister Sebastien Locornu and India's National Security Advisor Ajit Doval.**
- This agreement, known as the Letter of Intent (LoI) on the Defence Space Partnership, opens avenues for collaborative efforts in space defense.
- The pact aims to enhance global situational awareness, safeguard communication and surveillance satellites, and promote transparency in air, land, and sea operations.

Gurgaon-based ACME signs pact with Japan's IHI to supply green ammonia

- **Gurgaon-based ACME Group** signed an offtake term sheet for the supply of green ammonia from its project in Odisha to IHI Corporation, a Japanese integrated heavy industry company.
- The term sheet covers the supply of **0.4 million metric tons per annum (MMTPA)** of green ammonia from Phase-1 of ACME's Gopalpur on a long-term basis.

NPCI signs pact with Google Pay to take UPI global

- **Google India Digital Services (P) Ltd and NPCI International Payments Ltd (NIPL)**, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the **National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)** have signed a MoU to expand **Unified Payment Interface (UPI)** to countries beyond India.
- The MoU has three key objectives:
  - It seeks to broaden the use of UPI payments for travellers outside of India, enabling them to conveniently make transactions abroad.
  - The MoU intends to assist in establishing UPI-like digital payment systems in other countries, providing a model for seamless financial transactions.
  - It focuses on easing the process of remittances between countries by utilising the UPI infrastructure, thereby simplifying cross-border financial exchanges.

IndoSpace signs Rs 2000 Cr deal with Tamil Nadu govt

- **IndoSpace** has entered into a MoU with the government of **Tamil Nadu to invest over Rs 2,000 crore** in the state.
- The agreement is part of the company's commitment towards supporting industrial requirements.
- This investment by IndoSpace is expected to generate employment opportunities for **15,000 persons** in the state.
- It has led to the planning of an additional **five million sq. ft. of land in the state.** By providing world-class industrial logistics facilities, the company would also contribute to enhancing the state's industrial infrastructure.

Switzerland-India Free Trade Agreement 2024

- After 16 years of negotiations, **Switzerland and India** have reached a consensus on a **Free Trade Agreement (FTA).**
- The agreement was reached after **Swiss Economy Minister Guy Parmelin** traveled to India directly after the **World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland**, to meet with his Indian counterpart, Piyush Goyal.
- The agreement is part of the **Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) and a Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) between India, and four European countries who make up the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), outside the European Union (EU): Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.**

IREDA and Indian Overseas Bank join hands in co-lending for Renewable Energy Projects

- **IREDA has signed an MoU with Indian Overseas Bank (IOB)** for collaborative efforts in co-lending and loan syndication for Renewable Energy projects.
- The partnership aims **to streamline loan syndication and underwriting processes, management of Trust and Retention Account (TRA),** and work towards fixed interest rates over a 3–4-year period for IREDA borrowings.

- The collaboration aims to accelerate the growth of renewable energy in India and align with the goal of achieving a **500 GW Non-Fossil-based electricity generation capacity by 2030.**

IPPB enter into MoU with Hindustan Zinc to offer financial inclusion services in Rajasthan

- **India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) and Hindustan Zinc Limited (HZL)** have formed a transformative alliance to pioneer inclusive financial solutions in rural **Rajasthan, India.**
- The alliance aims **to provide financial inclusion services to HZL's beneficiaries**, facilitating doorstep banking service delivery to unserved and underserved populations.
- IPPB will support the **opening of bank accounts, access to pension products, long-term savings, and investment schemes**, and empower over 3.5 lakh beneficiaries, including SHG women, farmers, and youth, to become Individual Business Correspondents for IPPB services.

About IPPB:

- **India Post Payments Bank (IPPB)** has been established under the Department of Posts, **Ministry of Communication** with 100% equity owned by the Government of India.
- The IPPB was launched on **September 1, 2018.**
- The bank has been set up with the vision to build the most accessible, affordable and trusted bank for the common man in India.

National News

Chapter 4

Ayodhya and Ram Mandir at a Glance



Ram Mandir Pran Pratishtha Date: 22 January 2024

Location: Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh, India

Significance: Installation of idols in Ram Mandir, marking a historic milestone in its construction.

Chief Guest: Prime Minister Narendra Modi

Trustee: Shri Ram Janmbhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust

Status: Under construction (completed till ground floor level)

Estimated completion: December 2025

Cost: Over ₹17,843 crore (US$2.3 billion)

Architect: Chandrakant Sompura

Ram Mandir Structure:



Size and Design:

- The five-story temple will be:
  - 76 meters wide
  - 120 meters long
  - 49 meters high, making it one of the largest Hindu temples in India.
  - The Mandir is three-storied, with each floor being 20 feet tall. It has a total of 392 pillars and 44 doors.
  - The Ram Mandir has been design as per the Nagara-style architecture.

Five Mandaps (Hall) - Nritya Mandap, Rang Mandap, Sabha Mandap, Prarthna and Kirtan Mandaps.

Materials used in temple:

- White Rajasthan Makrana marble
- Charmouthi sandstone
- Pink sandstone from Rajasthan's Bansi Paharpur
- Brassware from Uttar Pradesh
- Polished teakwood from Maharashtra



Size of new Ram Lalla idol - 51 inch

Material used for Ram Lalla idol - Black stone

Designer of Ram Lalla idol - Arun Yogiraj

Key Fects:

- After the SC verdict, prime minister Narendra Modi performed the Bhumi Poojan ceremony on August 5, 2020, and laid the foundation stone of the temple.
- Spanning 54,700 sq ft, the temple area covers nearly 2.7 acre of land. The entire Ram Mandir Complex would be spread over nearly 70 acre and will be

equipped to host about a million devotees at any time.

- The Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust is supervising the temple's construction.
- Larsen & Toubro is responsible for building the main structure, Tata Consultancy Engineers Limited will develop the associated facilities.

New Projects and Sites:

- **Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Complex:** This expansive complex surrounding the Ram Temple is undergoing rapid development. Phase 1, inaugurated in August 2023, includes a museum, exhibition center, library, auditorium, and gardens. Further phases will see the construction of Dharamshalas, guest houses, and administrative buildings.
- **Saryu Riverfront Development Project:** This ambitious project aims to beautify and revitalize the banks of the Saryu River, a key spiritual and cultural symbol of Ayodhya. Phase 1 focuses on a 5 km stretch and includes ghats for rituals, walkways, parks, and amphitheaters.
- **Tulsi Smarak Bhavan:** This new memorial dedicated to the poet Tulsidas, author of the Ramayana, is being constructed on the banks of the Saryu River. It will house a museum, library, and research center showcasing his life and works.
- **Awadh Shilpgram:** This cultural village under development aims to showcase the traditional crafts and arts of Awadh region. It will feature workshops, demonstrations, and shops selling handicrafts, textiles, and other local products.
- **Smart City Initiatives:** Ayodhya is one of the 100 Indian cities chosen for the Smart City Mission. Several projects are underway to improve infrastructure, waste management, public transportation, and digital connectivity.
- **Lata Mangeshkar Chauraha:** This newly developed intersection is located on the Faizabad Road, close to the Karpatnath Temple and Chowk Bazaar. It gained its name in July 2023 as a tribute to the legendary singer Lata Mangeshkar. While details about its current appearance or surrounding amenities are still limited, it's likely to become a significant landmark in Ayodhya due to its central location and connection to a renowned cultural figure.
- **Chudamani Chauraha:** Chudamani Chauraha is a major intersection in Ayodhya located at a distance of about 1 kilometer from the Ram Janmabhoomi temple. This intersection (Chauraha) falls on the route leading to Ram Janmabhoomi temple and hence is an important tourist destination. The intersection is named after the Choodamani of Mother Sita. It is believed that Mother Sita's Choodamani had fallen at this place. A huge symbolic statue of Chudamani is installed in the middle of the square. This statue is 40 feet high and weighs 14 tons.
- **Dharma Path:** Dharma Path is one of the four beautifully designed approach roads leading to the Ram Janmabhoomi temple in Ayodhya. Dharma Path reflects the essence of its name, which means "the path of Dharma." It extends for 2 kilometers from Saket Petrol Pump to Lata Mangeshkar Chowk. Surya Stambh have been erected on this path, each of which is inscribed with "Shri Ram", symbolizing Lord Ram's connection with the Suryavanshi lineage.

Timeline of the significant events related to the Ram Mandir case

1853: The first recorded incident of religious violence took place, more than 230 years after the construction of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya.

1885: In January, Mahant Raghubir Das petitioned the Faizabad district court for permission to construct a canopy on the Ramchabutra outside the mosque. However, the request was denied.

1949: Gopal Singh Visharad files a petition before a Faizabad court to worship the deity of Ram Janambhoomi after idols of Ram Lalla were found inside Babri Masjid.

1961: Mohammad Hashim filed a lawsuit seeking the restoration of the property to Muslims.

1984: The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) spearheads a movement to 'liberate' the birthplace of Lord Ram and build a temple.

1986: Ayodhya District Judge orders the gates of the disputed mosque to be opened to allow Hindus to worship there.

1989: The VHP lays the foundations of a Ram temple on land adjacent to the disputed mosque.

December 6, 1992: The Babri Masjid is demolished by Hindu kar sevaks, triggering widespread communal violence across India.

1993: The Acquisition of Certain Area at Ayodhya Act is passed, acquiring the disputed land by the Central government.

2002: The Allahabad High Court begins hearing the title suits.

2010: The Allahabad High Court rules that the disputed land should be divided into three parts, to be awarded to the Hindus, Muslims, and Nirmohi Akhara. Both Hindus and Muslims appeal the decision to the Supreme Court.

2017-2018: The Supreme Court hears the appeals and appoints a mediation panel to try to reach a settlement.

November 2019: The Supreme Court delivers its verdict, awarding the disputed land to the Hindus for the construction of a Ram temple and granting the Sunni Waqf Board five acres of land in Ayodhya for the construction of a mosque.

2020: Prime Minister Narendra Modi officiated the laying of the foundation stone for the Ram Temple construction.

2024: Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the magnificent Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh.

Famous Places of Ayodhya

- **Hanuman Garhi:** This is a prominent temple dedicated to Lord Hanuman, the devoted disciple of Lord Rama. It is located atop a hill and is a popular pilgrimage site.
- **Kanak Bhawan:** This temple is dedicated to Lord Rama and his consort Sita. According to Hindu mythology, it is believed that the deity Sita miraculously transformed the palace into gold for her beloved husband Rama, hence the name "Kanak Bhawan."
- **Treta Ke Thakur:** Also known as Raja Mandir, this temple is said to be the birthplace of Lord Rama. It is one of the ancient temples in Ayodhya and is an important pilgrimage site for Hindus.
- **Swarg Dwar:** Translated as the "Gateway to Heaven," Swarg Dwar is believed to be the spot from where Lord Rama is said to have entered heaven. Devotees believe that passing through this gateway leads to liberation or moksha.
- **Bharat Kund:** This sacred pond is associated with Lord Rama's younger brother, Bharata. According to legend, Bharata performed a ritual bath here before returning to Ayodhya after Rama's exile.
- **Mani Parbat and Sugriv Parbat:** These twin hillocks are associated with the Ramayana. It is believed that Hanuman carried the entire mountain of herbs from the Himalayas to Lanka to heal the wounded Lakshmana during the battle with Ravana.
- **Nageshwarnath Temple:** This ancient temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva and is believed to have been established by Raja Kush, one of the sons of Lord Rama.
- **Ramkot:** Situated in the western part of Ayodhya, Ramkot is considered the fort of Lord Rama. The area around Ramkot is believed to be the location where Lord Rama's palace once stood.

Prime Minister to address NCC PM Rally at Cariappa Ground on 27th January

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** addressed the annual **NCC PM Rally** at the **Cariappa Parade Ground in Delhi** on 27th January, 2024.
- The event included a cultural programme on the **theme 'Amrit Kaal Ki NCC'** showcasing the contribution and empowerment of the Amrit Peedhi.
- More than 2,200 NCC cadets and young cadets from 24 foreign countries were a part of this year's rally.

About National Cadet Corps (NCC)

The National Cadet Corps (NCC) is the youth wing of the Indian Armed Forces with its **headquarters in New Delhi, India.**

It is open to school and college students on a voluntary basis as a **Tri-Services Organisation, comprising the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force.**

The NCC was formed in 1948 and can be traced back to the **'University Corps',** which was created under the **Indian Defence Act 1917.**

In 1949, the **Girls Division** was formed to provide equal opportunities to school and college-going girls.

The NCC was given an inter-service image **in 1950** when the Air Wing was added, followed by the **Naval Wing in 1952.**

The NCC aims at developing character, comradeship, discipline, a secular outlook, and the spirit of adventure among young people.

The first Prime Minister of India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru presided over the function of raising the first NCC Unit at Delhi on the last Sunday of **November 1948.** This day is traditionally celebrated as the 'NCC Day'.

PM Modi inaugurated the Diamond Jubilee celebration of the SC

- The **Prime Minister** inaugurated the **Diamond Jubilee** celebration of the **Supreme Court at the**

Supreme Court auditorium in New Delhi on 28th January, 2024.

- He launched citizen-centric information and technology initiatives that include **Digital Supreme Court Reports (Digi SCR), Digital Courts 2.0** and a new website of the Supreme Court.
- An Rs 800 crore budget has been approved for expansion of the Supreme Court's building during the Diamond Jubilee celebration.

Droupadi Murmu inaugurated Kaushal Bhavan

- **The President of India, Smt Droupadi Murmu**, inaugurated **Kaushal Bhavan** on January 24, 2024.
- Kaushal Bhavan is a new building of the **Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship in New Delhi.**
- The Kaushal Bhavan, whose foundation stone was laid in March 2019, will provide office space for the Ministry as well as its associated organisations – t**he Directorate General of Training, the National Council for Vocational Education and Training and the National Skill Development Corporation.**

The Government of India has launched the 'Anuvadini' app

- **Anuvadini** is a web-based platform that offers voice, document, and image **translation services in 22 regional Bharatiya and foreign languages.**
- It aims to help **students, researchers, and professionals communicate** across language barriers and unify Bharat and the world.
- The initiative aims to make study material for all school and higher education courses available in digital form**,** specifically in Indian languages listed in the 8th Schedule of the Indian Constitution.
- This step aligns with the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** recommendations, emphasizing the importance of studying in one's mother tongue.
- The tool has support for **22 regional Bharatiya & foreign languages** helping break language barriers & unifying Bharat and the World under the principles of **Ek Bharat Shrestha Bharat and One Earth, One Family, One Future.**

CII National Conclave on Road Safety took place in New Delhi

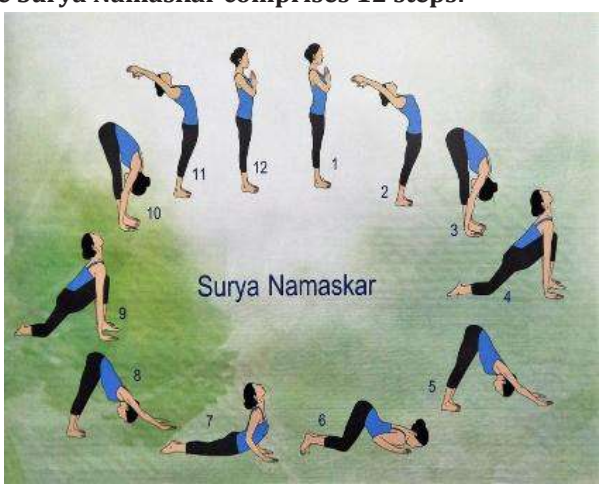
- The **Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)** hosted the **National Conclave on Road Safety in New Delhi on January 16, 2024.**
- The theme of the conclave was **"Indian Roads@2030 – Raising the Bar of Safety"**.
- Union Minister for **Road Transport and Highways, Shri Nitin Gadkari,** inaugurated the conclave.
- The Indian government plans to halve the number of accidental deaths by 2030.
- Shri Nitin Gadkari emphasized the importance of focusing on strengthening the **'4Es of Road Safety' - Engineering (Road & Vehicle Engineering), Enforcement, Education, and Emergency Medical Service.**

Guinness world record of performing mass Surya Namaskar created in Gujarat

- **Gujarat** has set a Guinness record for performing mass **Surya Namaskar** simultaneously at **108 places in the state on the first day of the new year.**
- The places include **51 historic sites** of the state.
- More than **2500 people performed Surya Namaskar** at the state-level function held at the iconic Modhera Sun Temple.
- The function also witnessed the felicitation of the winners of the state-level Mega Surya Namaskar Competition.

Surya Namaskar, also known as Sun Salutation, is a popular sequence of yoga poses that is often performed as a warm-up or a full-body exercise. The name "Surya Namaskar" is derived from the Sanskrit words "Surya," meaning sun, and "Namaskar," meaning salutation or greeting. The sequence is a way to express gratitude and reverence to the sun, which is considered a symbol of spiritual consciousness in many Indian traditions.

The Surya Namaskar comprises 12 steps:



1. Pranamasana (Prayer Pose)
2. Hasta Uttanasana (Raised Arms Pose)

3. Hasta Padasana (Hand to Foot Pose)
4. Ashwa Sanchalanasana (Equestrian Pose)
5. Dandasana (Stick Pose)
6. Ashtanga Namaskara (Salute with Eight Parts or Points)
7. Bhujangasana (Cobra Pose)
8. Parvatasana (Mountain Pose)
9. Ashwa Sanchalanasana (Equestrian Pose)
10. Hasta Padasana (Hand to Foot Pose)
11. Hasta Uttanasana (Raised Arms Pose)
12. Pranamasana (Prayer Pose)

Govt sets up 3-member panel to settle unforeseen disputes



- The **Ministry of New & Renewable Energy (MNRE)** has established a **three-member committee** to resolve unforeseen disputes between solar and wind power developers, EPC contractors, and **Renewable Energy Implementing Agencies (REIAs)** such as NTPC, SECI, SJVN, etc.
- This mechanism of dispute resolution applies to all RE schemes, programs, and projects being implemented through REIAs, as well as contractual agreements between REIAs and EPC contractors executing RE power projects owned by a REIA.

PM Modi inaugurates and lays foundation of Rs 20,000 Crore development projects in Tiruchirappalli

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** inaugurated and laid the foundation stone of multiple development projects worth over **20,000 crore rupees** in **Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu.**
- These projects belong to the aviation**, rail, road, oil and gas, shipping and higher education sectors**.
- He also inaugurated the **New Terminal Building of Tiruchirappalli International Airport**, built at a cost of over **1,100 crore rupees**.
- He will dedicate to the nation and lay the foundation stone of multiple development projects worth more than **1,150 crore rupees** related to sectors such as telecommunications, **drinking water, solar power and health,** among others.
- The Prime Minister will also dedicate to the nation the **Low Temperature Desalination Plant** at Kadamat Island, which has a capacity to produce **1.5 lakh litres of clean drinking water** every day.

Cabinet approves Ayodhya Airport as an International Airport



- The **Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi** has approved the proposal to declare **Ayodhya Airport as an International Airport.**
- The airport will be named **"Maharishi Valmiki International Airport, Ayodhyadham"** to honor the sage attributed to composing the epic Ramayana.
- Elevating Ayodhya Airport to international status is vital for realizing its economic potential and significance as a global pilgrimage site, opening doors to foreign pilgrims and tourists.

Lok Sabha speaker Om Birla inaugurated 'Panchayat Se Parliament Tak' programme

- The Parliament hosted a program called **'Panchayat Se Parliament Tak'** for over **500 women** representatives from Panchayats and urban local bodies.
- The program aimed to empower and support women grassroots leaders.
- It was organized by the **Institute of Constitutional Parliamentary Studies (ICPS)** in coordination with the **National Commission for Women**.
- Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla inaugurated the program in the **Central Hall of Samvidhan Sadan.**

India's first healthy & hygienic food street 'Prasadam' inaugurated in Ujjain

- **"PRASADAM will connect common citizens** in every corner of the country with pure and safe local and traditional food.
- This endeavour will align common people and tourists to safe and healthy eating habits."
- This was stated by **Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya, Union Minister for Health & Family Welfare** as he inaugurated the country's **1st Healthy & Hygienic Food Street, 'PRASADAM,' at Neelkanth Van, Mahakal Lok, in Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh**.

PM Narendra Modi inaugurated 27th National Youth Festival in Nashik



- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the **27th National Youth Festival in Nashik, Maharashtra.**
- The theme of the five-day festival is **"MYBharat-VixitBharat@2047- By the youth, for the youth".**
- This year, on this occasion, road safety awareness programs were organized in major cities and **750 district headquarters** of the country.
- During this, he inaugurated the **Atal Bihari Vajpayee Sewri-Nhava Sheva Atal Bridge in Mumbai.**
- Built at a cost of over **Rs 17,840 crore**, the **six-lane bridge** is the longest sea bridge in India.

PM inaugurates Bharat Ratnam mega CFC at SEEPZ SEZ, Mumbai

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the **Bharat Ratnam Mega CFC at the SEEPZ SEZ in Mumbai**.
- The Mega CFC will provide **infrastructure, equipment, and training** for the gems and jewellery manufacturing industry.
- It aims to create a supportive environment for entrepreneurs, MSMEs, and small businesses in the industry to grow and thrive.

Atal Setu, India's longest sea bridge, inaugurated



- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** inaugurated **Mumbai Trans Harbour Link (MTHL),** India's longest sea bridge.
- The MTHL spanning **21.8 km, with 16.5 km over** the sea is projected to support over 70,000 vehicles daily.
- Named the **Atal Bihari Vajpayee Sewri-Nhava Sheva Atal Setu**, a six-lane engineering marvel has been built at a cost of **Rs 17,840 crore** with the financial assistance from Japan.
- 80 percent of the cost of The MTHL project has been funded through a debt from Japan International Cooperation Agency.

Atal Bihari Vajpayee Sewri-Nhava Sheva Atal Setu

Bridge at a Glance:

- **Location:** Mumbai, Maharashtra, India
- **Connects:** Sewri in Mumbai to Nhava Sheva in Navi Mumbai
- **Type**: Sea bridge with cable-stayed sections
- **Length:** 21.8 kilometers (13.5 miles)
- **Width:** 6 lanes (expandable to 8)
- **Pylons**: 5, each 178 meters (584 ft) tall
- **Cost**: INR 17,843 crore (US$2.3 billion)
- **Named after:** Former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee

Key Features:

- Longest bridge in India and the longest sea bridge in India.
- Reduced travel time between Mumbai and Navi Mumbai by 70%.
- Boosted port efficiency and trade in Nhava Sheva.
- Created new job opportunities in construction and tourism.
- The bridge offers stunning views of the Mumbai skyline and the Arabian Sea.

Maharashtra Pench Tiger Reserve becomes India's first Dark Sky Park



- **Pench Tiger Reserve (PTR)** in **Maharashtra** is recognized as **India's first Dark Sky Park** and the **fifth in Asia,** aimed at preserving the night sky and preventing light pollution, appealing to astronomy enthusiasts.
- The **International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)** emphasizes the intrinsic value of the night sky as a natural, cultural, and historical resource.
- The **Dark and Quiet Skies for Science and Society Working Group**, led by the International Astronomical Union, recommends the creation of **'Dark Sky Oases'** by governments.

What is a Dark Sky Park?

- A dark-sky preserve is an area, usually surrounding a park or observatory, that restricts artificial light pollution. The purpose of the dark-sky movement is generally to promote astronomy.
- Indian Astronomical Observatory (IAO) in Hanle is India's first dark-sky preserve.
- It is situated in the Western Himalayas at an elevation of 4,500 meters (14,764 ft).
- It is one of the world's highest located sites for optical, infrared, and gamma-ray telescopes.

Amit Shah launched pilot project to strengthen inter-cooperation

- **Union Home and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah** launched a pilot project to **strengthen inter-cooperation** within the cooperative entities at **Diodar in Banaskantha district of Gujarat.**
- The project aims **to persuade cooperative entities** to have their bank account with the cooperative banks only.
- The pilot project was **first implemented by Gujarat State Cooperative Bank in Banaskantha and Panchmahal** district to achieve the vision of **Sahakar se Samruddhi**.

PM Modi inaugurated projects worth Rs 4,000 crore in Kochi

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** inaugurated three infrastructure projects worth more than **Rs 4,000 crore in Kerala's Kochi.**
- The projects include the **New Dry Dock (NDD)** and the **International Ship Repair Facility (ISRF)** at **Cochin Shipyard Ltd**, as well as the LPG Import Terminal of **Indian Oil Corporation Ltd at Puthuvypeen.**
- Modi emphasized the contribution of ports to India's prosperity and outlined his government's efforts to improve port cities like Kochi, citing the Sagarmala Project as a driver of increased investments in port infrastructure.

Union Minister launched project for Artificial Reefs in Vizhinjam



- **Union Minister of Fisheries Sri. Parshotham Rupala** launched a project to deposit artificial reefs in the seabed **in Vizhinjam, Thiruvananthapuram**.
- The project is a joint initiative of the Central and State governments, aimed at increasing the income of fishermen by enhancing the fish population in the region.
- It is being implemented under the **Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana** with a total outlay of **13.02 crore**.
- The Central Government is providing **7.812 crore** and the State government's share is **5.208 crore.**
- **Kerala State Coastal Area Development Corporation** is implementing the project with technical assistance from the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute.

- In the first phase, 6,300 artificial reefs will be laid in **42 fishing villages from Pozhiyur to Varkala in Thiruvananthapuram district**

India announced new alliance for Global Good, Gender Equity and Equality



- India announced a new alliance for Global Good, Gender Equity, and Equality at the **World Economic Forum (WEF)** annual meeting in **Davos, Switzerland.**
- The alliance aims **to bring together global best practices**, knowledge sharing, and investments in women's health, education, and enterprise.
- The alliance builds on the commitments of the G20 leaders and initiatives under the G20 framework, including the **Business 20, Women 20, and G20 EMPOWER**.

PM Modi launched Boeing's new ₹1,600 crore tech center in Bengaluru

- **Boeing** has opened its **India Engineering & Technology Center campus in Bengaluru** with a **$200 million investment,** inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- The campus will focus on **developing aerospace solutions for civil and defense markets** and has the largest number of Boeing employees outside the US, with over 6,000 staff as of December 2023.
- Boeing has collaborations with Indian start-ups and universities, including seven incubators.
- Boeing also launched the **Sukanya Program** to support the entry of more girls into India's aviation sector.

International News

Chapter 5

Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso quit ECOWAS

- **Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso** have announced their withdrawal from the **Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).**
- These junta-led countries had already been suspended from the bloc, which had been urging them to return to democratic rule.
- The three countries were also founding members of the bloc, **first established in 1975.**

Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

- The **Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)** is a vibrant 15-member union spanning over 5 million square kilometers and boasting a bustling population of more than 424 million.
- It missions to forge a single, powerful economic bloc, propelling its member states towards collective self-sufficiency.
- **The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was founded in 1975** with the aim of promoting regional economic integration.
- Current ECOWAS members are **Benin; Burkina Faso; Cabo Verde; Cote d'Ivoire; The Gambia; Ghana; Guinea; Guinea-Bissau; Liberia; Mali; Niger; Nigeria; Senegal; Sierra Leone; and Togo.**



Alabama first nitrogen gas execution

- **Alabama** has carried out the **first known execution using nitrogen gas** in the **United States**. The inmate, **Kenneth Smith,** was put to death by **nitrogen hypoxia**.
- This method is designed to replace oxygen in the body with a high concentration of nitrogen, causing death.
- Smith, 58, was sentenced to death for his role in a **1988 murder-for-hire**. He had previously survived a failed attempt to execute him by lethal injection in 2022.
- Alabama is one of only three states – **Oklahoma and Mississippi** being the others – to have approved the method. So far, Alabama is the only state to have carried it out or even outlined a protocol on how to do it.

Sri Lanka passed Online Safety Bill

- The **Sri Lankan Parliament** has indeed approved the **'Online Safety Bill'**.
- The Online Safety Bill was passed with an aim to **"make provisions to prohibit online communication of certain statements of fact in Sri Lanka"** and **"prevent the use of online accounts and inauthentic online accounts for prohibited purposes".**
- The bill allows the government **to set up a commission with a wide range of powers**, which includes ordering people and internet service providers to remove online posts deemed "prohibited statements." It can also legally pursue people who publish such posts.

Solar power stations at Egyptian World Heritage Sites

- **Solar power stations** have been set up at **five world heritage sites and museums in Egypt.**
- The solar power stations were inaugurated at the **Giza Plateau's Visitor Centre, Manial Palace in Cairo, Sharm El Sheikh Museum**, and two museums in **Alexandria (The National and the Royal Jewelry Museums).**

- Collectively, they have a **total capacity of 325kW of solar PV systems generating 520MWh/year.** This is estimated to reduce approximately 295 tons/year of carbon dioxide equivalent.

UNDP and EU allocate $420,000+ for Deforestation, Food Security, Climate Change to Papua New Guinea

- **The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the European Union (EU)** have allocated grants totaling over **US$420,000 (approximately 1.6 million PGK)** to support initiatives aimed at combating deforestation, improving food and nutrition security, and adapting to the impacts of climate change.
- These grants are set to benefit communities across **six districts in Enga Province, Papua New Guinea.**
- The official handover of these grants took place during a workshop held at the **Takeanda Museum in Wabag, Enga Province, on 17 January 2024.**

Security agreement signed between Ukraine and Britain

- A security agreement has been signed between **Ukraine and the United Kingdom**.
- The agreement was signed during **British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's visit to Kyiv.**
- The UK promises to provide **£2.5 billion for Ukraine's defense in 2024**.
- The agreement is valid for **ten years and will expire if Ukraine becomes a NATO member.**
- The agreement highlights that the **UK provided £2.3 bn of military aid for Ukraine in 2022,** another **£2.3 bn in 2023, and will allocate £2.5 bn in military aid during 2024.**

Maersk world's largest ship fueled by Methanol



- **Maersk** has unveiled the **world's largest methanol-powered container ship,** named **"Ane Maersk"**.
- The ship was named after **Ane Maersk Mc-Kinney Uggla, the Chair of the A.P. Moller Foundation and A.P. Moller Holding.**
- "Ane Maersk" is the first of Maersk's 18 large methanol-enabled vessels that will be delivered **between 2024 and 2025**.
- The ship is 350 meters long and was constructed at the shipyard of Korean shipbuilder **HD Hyundai Heavy Industries Co. in Ulsan city.** It will be operational by February.

North Korea demolishes monument symbolizing goal of reconciliation with South



- **North Korea** has demolished a major monument known informally as the **Arch of Reunification**, in its capital that symbolized the goal of reconciliation with **South Korea** on the orders of the leader **Kim Jong Un**.
- **Satellite imagery of Pyongyang** showed that the monument, an arch symbolizing hopes for Korean reunification which was completed after a **landmark inter-Korea summit in 2000**, was no longer there, according to a report by a news agency.
- The arch, formally known as the Monument to the **Three Charters for National Reunification**, stood 30 meters tall and was symbolic of the three charters.

North Korea	South Korea
	

Capital: Pyongyang **Government:** Totalitarian communist state **Economy:** Highly centralized, closed-off **Population:** 25.5 million (approx.) **Currency:** Won (KPW) **Map:**	**Capital:** Seoul **Government:** Democratic republic **Economy:** Export-oriented, technologically advanced **Population:** 51.3 million (approx.) **Currency:** Won (KRW) **Map:**
	
Leader: Supreme Leader Kim Jong-un **Religion:** Officially atheist, with limited freedom of religion. Buddhism and Chondoism (Korean indigenous religion) have some presence. Christianity is highly restricted. **Famous Places:** **Pyongyang:** Juche Idea Tower, Mansudae Grand Monument, Kumsusan Memorial Palace **Kaesong:** Koryo Dynasty royal tombs Myohyangsan **Mountain:** Scenic mountains with temples and natural wonders	**Leader:** President Yoon Suk-yeol **Religion:** Majority Buddhist (25%), followed by Christianity (23%). A significant portion of the population is also non-religious (50%). Other religions like Hinduism and Islam have a small presence. **Famous Places:** **Seoul:** Gyeongbokgung Palace, N Seoul Tower, Myeongdong shopping district **Jeju Island:** Volcanic island with beaches, hiking trails, and natural wonders **Busan:** Bustling port city with beaches, temples, and cultural attractions
	Seoraksan National Park: Mountains with stunning scenery, hiking trails, and waterfalls
	DMZ: Demilitarized Zone separating North and South Korea, offering tours and historical insights.
Similarities: **Shared history and culture:** Both descend from the same Korean peninsula with deep-rooted traditions. **Ethnic homogeneity:** Both countries have a predominantly Korean population. **Language:** Both speak Korean with regional variations.	

MoS V Muraleedharan attends 3rd South Summit at Kampala in Uganda



- **Minister of State for External Affairs V Muraleedharan** attended the inaugural session of the **Third South Summit at Kampala in Uganda**.
- The theme of the Summit, **"Leaving No One Behind"** resonates with India's ethos of **Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam- the World is One Family.**
- **Mr Muraleedharam met Botswana Foreign Minister Dr Lemogang Kwape** on the sidelines of the South Summit. In a social media post, the MoS said, it is reassuring to hear about the positive impact of **ITEC (Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme) and ICCR scholarships.**

Singapore to join Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit

- **Singapore** will participate as a partner country at the **Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit (VGGS)**.
- It announced an investment worth over **₹2,300 crore**.
- This will be through expanded investments in **Gujarat's green economy and sustainability sector.**

- According to the statement, Singapore will participate as a partner country at the VGGS, alongside 30 other countries.
- **Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit** is being organized in **Gandhi Nagar.**

UK minister Tariq Ahmad to launch sustainability projects in Tamil Nadu



- **Tariq Ahmad, UK's Minister of State for the Middle East, South Asia, and UN,** is in India to launch two UK-funded sustainability projects.
- He will launch a heat mitigation project in collaboration with Tamil Nadu's State Planning Commission in Chennai to address extreme heat-related deaths and vital ecosystem loss.
- Ahmad will also launch an electronic and battery waste management project with the **Tamil Nadu Department of Environment and Climate Change** to reduce battery waste.

Farsi to be one of India's nine classical languages

- The Government of India has decided to include **Farsi (Persian)** as one of the nine classical languages in India under the **New Education Policy**.
- **External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar** announced during his visit to Iran, highlighting the cultural, literary, and linguistic connections between Iran and India.



- **Tamil was the first language in India to be accorded classical language status in 2004**, and other classical languages in India include Sanskrit, Kannada, Malayalam, and Odia.
- **The National Education Policy 2020 states the importance of preserving Pali, Persian, and Prakrit languages** and their works of literature.

King Frederik X Ascends to the Throne as Queen Margrethe II Abdicates



- **Frederik X** became the **new king of Denmark** after his mother, **Queen Margrethe II**, abdicated.
- This marks the first voluntary relinquishment of the Danish throne in nearly 900 years.
- Margrethe signed her abdication at **Christiansborg Palace in Copenhagen**.
- **Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen** proclaimed Frederik as king before the cheering crowd.
- Frederik's new motto as king is **"United, committed, for the kingdom of Denmark."**

President of the 78th session of the UN General Assembly, Dennis Francis, arrives in New Delhi

- On 22 January 2024, the President of the **78th Session of the United Nations General Assembly Dennis Francis arrived in New Delhi** on a five-day visit to India.



- During the visit, **Mr. Francis will hold talks with External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar on key multilateral issues of mutual interest.**
- He will also deliver a public address at the **Indian Council of World Affairs on Multilateralism and Peace, Prosperity, Progress, and Sustainability.**
- On 26th January, on the occasion of Republic Day, Mr. Francis will participate as a State guest in the Republic Day Parade of Maharashtra.

EAM S Jaishankar to co-chair 6th India-Nigeria joint commission meeting

- **Dr. Jaishankar** arrived in **Lagos, Nigeria**, He chaired a meeting of Indian Ambassadors in West Africa. The Minister took stock of the relations in the region and discussed how to deepen the partnership.
- **He also addressed the Indian community in Lagos.** Dr. Jaishankar thanked them for their enthusiastic welcome.
- Dr. Jaishankar also met the representatives of **Overseas Friends of BJP (OFBJP) in Lagos.** He encouraged them to keep up the good work.

Bangladeshi Power Companies in trouble to repay Chinese loans amid forex crisis

- In **Bangladesh**, public sector power companies are facing trouble in loan repayment to their Chinese creditors amid the forex crisis.
- The state-run power-producer **B-R Powergen Ltd** is the latest in the list, asking the Bangladesh government for help to pay Chinese loan installments.
- The **B-R Powergen Ltd, owns 150 MW power plant in Gazipur**, which remained idle for around 80 percent of the time last year according to media reports, was constructed with a Chinese loan in the year 2022-23.
- The public sector power producer signed an agreement with the Industrial and **Commercial Bank of China (ICBC) and EXIM Bank of China** for buyer's credit in a $129 million syndicated loan.

State News

Chapter 6

JKAACL organizes historic Rashtree Dogri Kavi Sammelan in Jammu

- In **Jammu and Kashmir, the J&K Academy of Art, Culture and Languages (JKAACL)** organised **Rashtree Dogri Kavi Sammelan at Abhinav Theatre, Jammu.**
- This is for the first time in the history of J&K that Rashtree Dogri Kavi Sammelan is being organised by JKAACL under the directions of **Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha**.
- Popular Poets of J&K joined the event to celebrate 75th Republic Day which was inaugurated by Principal Secretary, Culture, Suresh Kumar Gupta, in the presence of **Padamshree Mohan Singh** and Secretary, JKAACL, Bharat Singh and other guests.

Punjab govt sets up 'Sadak Surakhya Force'

- In Punjab, the State government has set up the **'Sadak Surakhya Force' (SSF)**, the first of its kind in the country, to reduce road fatalities.
- The State **Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann** flagged off 144 hi-tech vehicles from Jalandhar.
- Anyone in the State can get help by dialing number 112, and the vehicle will reach the spot within ten minutes of receiving the call.
- With more than **1,200 police jawans, 144 hi-tech vehicles** have been flagged off and about 90 female drivers will also handle the steering of vehicles.
- The vehicles will cover **5,500 km of State and national highways,** each covering a distance of nearly 30 kilometres.

Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik inaugurated 4th National Chilika Birds Festival

- **Odisha chief minister Naveen Patnaik** inaugurated the **fourth National Chilika Birds Festival** at an event coordinated by the department of tourism, department of forest, and Chilika Development Authority.
- According to a government release, the festival commenced with a captivating 'Photo Exhibition' grand opening.
- During the event's launch, Patnaik commended the three departments' collective efforts, saying, "which promises to add another feather in Odisha's hat – a soaring birding hub" as mentioned in a government release.
- The three-day program which will continue up to January 29 witnessed the participation of 52 selected birders from different parts of India.

4th Organic Orange festival held in Nagaland

- Recently, the **4th edition of the two-day Organic Orange Festival** was held in **Rüsoma Village, Nagaland,** with the intention of encouraging rural farmers to promote organic products and the opportunity for income generation.
- The opening ceremony featured live music performances, culinary displays, art exhibitions and various activities centred around the orange theme.
- Rüsoma Village, also known as the 'Gardening village' is located in the **Capital of Nagaland, Kohima.**
- The villagers of Rüsoma have a total of 14,100 standing fruit-bearing orange trees and 28,700 saplings under plantation.

Visakhapatnam hosted 14th All India Police Commando contest

- The annual **14th All India Police Commando Competition (AIPCC)** commenced at the **Greyhounds Training Centre in Kapuluppada, Visakhapatnam**.
- Notable participants include the **Special Operations Group (SOG) from Odisha and Chhattisgarh, C-60 from Maharashtra**, and paramilitary forces such as BSF, CRPF, Assam Rifles, ITBP, RPF, SSB, and CISF.
- The competition is structured in five phases, each designed to challenge the participants' skill, endurance, and teamwork. With teams comprising 13-15 commandos, the event aims to push the limits of the commandos' capabilities.
- The competition spans a week, providing a comprehensive assessment of the participants' tactical acumen and physical prowess.

HP launches 'My School-My Pride' campaign to transform govt education system

- In a move aligned with the **National Education Policy (NEP)-2020**, **Himachal Pradesh** has unveiled the **'My School-My Pride'** campaign under the **'Apna Vidyalay' programme**.
- This initiative will encourage active participation from individuals and organisations to adopt schools and contribute to various aspects of students' growth.
- Under the programme, stakeholders will be urged to provide career counselling, offer remedial teaching, coach students for examinations, and engage in community support services.

World's tallest Ambedkar statue to be unveiled in Andhra Pradesh

- The **Andhra Pradesh** government will unveil the **world's tallest statue of BR Ambedkar,** known as the architect of the Indian Constitution, **in Vijayawada.**
- Standing 206 feet from the ground, the 'Statue of Social Justice' statue will be in the list of the top 50 tallest statues in the world, which Sardar Vallabhai Patel's 'Statue of Unity' tops.
- The second-tallest Ambedkar statue, which is 175 feet, is situated in neighbouring Telangana.

Nitish Kumar takes oath as Bihar CM along with 8 cabinet ministers

- **JD(U) leader Nitish Kumar** took oath of office and secrecy for the record **ninth time as Chief Minister of Bihar.**
- Eight other cabinet ministers also took oath at Rajbhavan with him.
- Besides this, one member from **Hindustani Awam Morcha (HAM)** and one Independent also took oath.
- From the BJP, party's state president Samrat Choudhary, former minister Vijay Kumar Sinha and Prem Kumar have been inducted in Nitish Kumar's cabinet.
- On the other hand, senior JD(U) leaders Vijay Kumar Choudhary, Bijendra Prasad Yadav and Shravan Kumar have got cabinet berths.
- Former Chief Minister Jitan Ram Manjhi's son and HAM President Santosh Kumar Suman and one Independent have also been inducted as ministers.

Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik inaugurates Jagannath temple corridor project

- **Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik** inaugurated the redeveloped **Samaleswari Temple in Sambalpur district**, one of the most revered shrines in the western region of the state.
- Under which a **75-metre heritage corridor** has been built around the perimeter of the 12th century Jagannath temple with facilities like circumambulation by the devotees, smoother pedestrian flow, building of cloakrooms, toilets and **1.5-km-long bridge** that would bring people close to the temple, bypassing the crowd in the holy town.
- The 16th-century Samaleswari Temple on the banks of the Mahanadi has undergone transformation over 39 acres of its peripheral area under a **Rs 200-crore project.**

Kerala launched operation AMRITH to combat AMR

- The **Kerala Drug Control Department** has taken a proactive step to combat the growing threat of **antimicrobial resistance (AMR)** through **Operation Amrith (Antimicrobial Resistance Intervention For Total Health).**
- This initiative aims to curb the overuse of antibiotics in the state by conducting surprise raids in pharmacies and detecting **over-the-counter (OTC)** sales of antibiotics without a doctor's prescription.
- AMR, or antimicrobial resistance, refers to the ability of bacteria and microbes to resist the drugs used to inhibit or kill them.
- Recognized as a "silent pandemic," AMR was associated with approximately 5 million deaths globally in 2019, with 1.3 million deaths directly attributed to it.

Science and Technology

Chapter 7

INSAT-3DS satellite flagged off to SDSC-SHAR

- **INSAT-3DS** is an exclusive meteorological satellite realized by ISRO with the primary objective **to provide continuity of services to the existing in-orbit INSAT-3D and 3DR satellites.**
- The Satellite had successfully completed **Satellite Assembly, Integration & Testing activities at U R Rao Satellite Centre, Bengaluru.**
- The satellite is a user-funded project with the **Ministry of Earth Science (MoES),** configured around ISRO's I-2k bus platform with a lift-off mass of 2,275 kg.

Japan becomes fifth country to land on the moon successfully

- The **Japanese Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA)** successfully landed their **SLIM (Smart Lander for Investigating Moon) lunar lander** on the moon. The landing took place on January 19, 2024.
- The SLIM spacecraft landed approximately **55 meters east of the original target landing site.**
- The landing was deemed successful as the spacecraft sent telemetry data, meaning most equipment on board was operating.
- **Two rovers on board** were successfully deployed just before landing and will conduct experiments on the moon.

ISRO launch of X-ray Polarimeter Satellite to study black holes and neutron stars



- **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** has successfully launched **X-ray Polarimeter Satellite (XPoSat)** aboard **Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle PSLV-C58.**
- The satellite was launched from **Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh**.
- This mission marks **India's first dedicated scientific endeavour** to study the polarisation of cosmic X-rays from celestial sources.
- The mission life of the primary payload **XPoSat is about five years**.
- XPoSat has been successfully edged into a **650 km Low Earth Orbit as intended**.

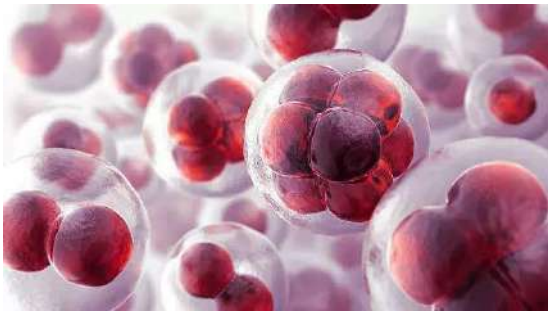
ISRO's commercial arm to launch GSAT-20 satellite on SpaceX's Falcon-9 in 2024



- The commercial arm of **ISRO, NewSpace India Limited (NSIL) will launch GSAT-20 (renamed as GSAT-N2), on-board SpaceX's Falcon-9 during the second quarter of 2024.**
- The **GSAT-20 is a high-throughput Ka-band Satellite** that will be fully owned, operated and funded by NSIL.
- GSAT-20 offers **Ka-Ka band HTS capacity with 32 beams having Pan-India coverage including Andaman and Nicobar and Lakshadweep islands.**
- **Falcon 9 is the world's first orbital class reusable rocket.**

IIT researchers engineer plant cells to produce drug for cancer

- Researchers at **IIT Madras and IIT Mandi** have used metabolic engineering to increase the production of the **anti-cancer drug camptothecin (CPT)** in plant cell



- CPT is currently extracted from the endangered plant Nathapodytes nimmoniana, **leading to a 20% decline in its population in the last decade.**
- The research aims **to provide a sustainable and high-yielding alternative source for CPT** to reduce the need to harvest endangered plants.
- The project was funded by the **Science and Engineering Board (SERB) and the Department of Science and Technology** and published in the journal Frontiers of Plant Science.

Govt's Vision '47 set to target 50,000km of expressways



- The **Bharatmala highway development programme** is set to be withdrawn in favor of the more ambitious **Vision 2047 plan.**
- Vision 2047 aims **to construct about 50,000km of access-controlled expressways across the country.**
- **Under Bharatmala phase I, contracts for 27,384km roads** have been awarded, with the balance to be aligned with the Vision 2047 plan.
- The length of high-speed corridors in the country has increased **from 353km in 2014 to 3,913km.**

NASA unveils X-59 supersonic jet 'son of Concorde'

- The **X-59 supersonic aircraft, or "son of Concorde,"** was rolled out by **NASA and Lockheed Martin.**
- It can travel at **925 miles per hour,** producing a less disruptive sonic boom.



- The **X-59 is part of NASA's Quesst mission** aimed at providing data to reconsider the ban on supersonic flights.
- It features a thin, tapered nose **to break up shock waves and a cockpit positioned halfway down the plane, requiring pilots to rely on camera monitors.**
- **The first flight and quiet supersonic flight of the X-59 are forthcoming.**

IIL launches 'first' indigenously developed Hepatitis A vaccine



- **Indian Immunologicals Ltd (IIL) launched India's first indigenously developed Hepatitis A vaccine, Havisure,** demonstrating a commitment to advancing healthcare solutions for the nation.
- **Priced at ₹2,150 per dose,** Havisure is a two-dose vaccine, recommended for routine immunization of children above 12 months, individuals at risk of exposure or travel to high-prevalence regions, occupational risk individuals, and those with chronic liver diseases.
- **Indian Immunologicals Ltd (IIL) is a wholly-owned subsidiary of National Dairy Development Board (NDDB).**

NISAR mission is designed to observe natural processes and changes in earth's complex ecosystems



- T**he NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar (NISAR)** mission, designed to observe natural processes and changes in **Earth's complex ecosystems,** is on track for an **"early 2024" launch, according to a senior official at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL).**
- Designed as a **low earth orbit (LEO) observatory, the NISAR mission** is unique in several respects, not least the enormous amount of reliable, high-resolution data expected from it over a three-year mission life.
- The volume of data will be enormous, and i**t helps us to have a reliable set of measurements over any spot on the earth** where we want to do science or monitoring applications, forest management, agriculture monitoring or even just looking at an approaching hurricane.

Ax-3 Mission: All-European astronaut crew successfully reaches ISS



- On January 20, **Axiom Mission 3 (Ax-3)** achieved a significant milestone by successfully docking at the **International Space Station (ISS)**.
- This feat follows the launch of a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket on January 18, carrying a cohort of European astronauts, **including Turkey's first space traveler and three representatives from the European Space Agency (ESA), from NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida.**
- The collaborative efforts of **NASA, Axiom Space, and SpaceX** are currently in full swing as integrated operations are underway. This phase initiates during the spacecraft's approach to the ISS.

Defence and Securities

Chapter 8

India, France, UAE conduct joint mega air exercise over Arabian Sea

- The **Indian Air Force, French Air and Space Force (FASF), and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)** Air Force conducted a joint air exercise over the Arabian Sea. The exercise, named 'Desert Knight', took place on **January 23, 2024.**
- The Indian Air Force operated from its west coast bases, while the French and UAE air forces operated from the Al Dhafra air base.
- The exercise aimed to enhance synergy and interoperability among the three air forces.

India and Egypt Armies Unite for exercise Cyclone's Special Operations

- The **Indian Army and the Egyptian Armed Forces** have united for the **2nd edition** of the joint **special forces exercise named 'Cyclone'.**
- The exercise is being conducted at **Anshas, Egypt from January 22nd to February 1st, 2024.** The **first edition of the exercise was conducted last year in India**.
- The aim of the exercise is to acquaint both sides with each other's operating procedures in the backdrop of Special Operations in desert/semi-desert terrain under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter.

Iran's Military received Advanced Homegrown Drones

- The **Iranian army** has received a substantial number of domestically developed reconnaissance and combat drones.
- These advanced **Karrar combat drones** are armed with air-to-air missiles, enhancing Iran's air defense capabilities.
- Dozens of Karrar drones with an operational range of up to **1,000 kilometers** will be deployed along the country's borders.

Indian Army launched large-scale counter-terror operation 'Operation Sarvashakti'

- The **Indian Army** has launched a large-scale counter-terror operation titled **'Operation Sarvashakti'** in the **Poonch-Rajouri region of Jammu and Kashmir.**
- The operation aims to flush out terrorists who have been involved in a series of ambushes on Indian troops.



- The operation involves security forces from both sides of the **Pir Panjal range**. Troops of the Srinagar-based 15 Corps and the **Nagrota-based 16 Corps** will be operating in tandem, along with other agencies and paramilitary forces. Additional troops from the reserve formations have been moved into the **Rajouri-Poonch area**.

Joint exercise 'Sahyog Kaijin' between Indian and Japanese Coast Guards

- The **Indian and Japanese Coast Guards** recently completed a successful cooperative exercise called **'Sahyog Kaijin' off the coast of Chennai.**
- This exercise is part of the two countries' continuous partnership under the Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC), **signed in 2006.**
- The combined exercise, which began on January 8, aimed **to improve interoperability and share best practices in maritime law enforcement, search and rescue operations, and pollution response at sea.**
- The exercise involved the **Indian Coast Guard Ship (ICGS)** Shaurya and the **Japan Coast Guard Ship (JCGS) Yashima**, along with other support vessels and aircraft.

NATO military exercise "Steadfast Defender 2024"



- The **North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)** has commenced its largest military exercise since the **Cold War, "Steadfast Defender 2024"**.
- The exercise involves approximately **90,000 troops from all 31 NATO Allies**, as well as partner Sweden.
- The exercise is designed to test and refine NATO's defence plans for reinforcing European defences against a near-peer adversary.
- **"Steadfast Defender 2024" i**s a multi-domain exercise, incorporating land, air, sea, cyber, and space operations. It involves deploying forces from North America and other parts of the Alliance to Europe.

Indian Navy launched LSAM 19, 5th Barge in ACTCM Project



- The **Indian Navy launched LSAM 19 (Yard 129), the 5th Barge of the 11 x ACTCM Barge Project.** The launch was undertaken on January 24, 2024, at M/s **Suryadipta Project Pvt Ltd.**
- These Barges are indigenously designed and built under relevant Naval Rules and Regulation of the Indian Register of Shipping.
- They are expected to provide impetus to the operational commitments of the Indian Navy by facilitating transportation, embarkation, and disembarkation of articles/ammunition to Indian Naval Ships both alongside jetties and at outer harbours.

Indian-Thai Navy first bilateral exercise "Ex-Ayutthaya" connects to Ayodhya

The **first-ever bilateral exercise, "Ex-Ayutthaya,"** between the **Indian Navy and the Royal Thai Navy** highlighted the historical and cultural connections between **Ayodhya, India, and Ayutthaya, Thailand.**

Ex-Ayutthaya, which translates to "The Invincible One" or "Undefeatable," is a bilateral exercise between Thailand and India that highlights the significance of **Ayutthaya in Thailand and Ayodhya in India.**

The drill was conducted for the **first time with the participation of the Indian Naval ships Kulish and IN LCU 56.**

'Bhishm' - A 25T Bollard Pull Tug successfully launched



- **25T Bollard Pull (BP) Tug, Bhishm** was launched **by Cmde S Sreekumar, Warship Production Superintendent (Kolkata)** on 14 January 2024 **at M/s Titagarh Rail Systems Ltd (M/s TRSL), Kolkata.**
- Contract for construction and delivery of **six 25T BP Tugs** was concluded with **M/s TRSL, Kolkata** in consonance with **"Aatmanirbhar Bharat"** initiative of the Government of India.
- The availability of Tugs will provide impetus to Operational commitments of IN by facilitating assistance to Naval ships and submarines during berthing and un-berthing, turning and manoeuvring in confined waters.

Indian Navy receives first UAV from Adani Defence and Aerospace

- The Indian Navy received the first indigenously made **Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) 'Drishti 10 Starliner' from the Adani Defence and Aerospace.**



- Adani Defence and Aerospace were contracted by the **Ministry of Defence about ten months ago to supply four Medium Altitude Long Endurance (MALE)** drones to the Indian Navy and Indian Army.
- As per a private defence company, **Drishti** is an advanced surveillance and reconnaissance platform with 36 hours of endurance and 450 kg payload capacity.
- It's the only all-weather military platform with **NATO's STANAG 4671 (standardized agreement 4671) certification for the UAV system's airworthiness**.

India, UAE set stage for joint military exercise 'Desert Cyclone' in Rajasthan

- The collaborative military exercise **'Desert Cyclone 2024'** involving India and the UAE is scheduled to take place in Rajasthan from January 2 to January 15.
- The joint man oeuvres during **'Desert Cyclone 2024' aim to boost interoperability through the exchange of knowledge and best practices in urban operations.**
- The **first-ever India-UAE Joint Air Forces exercise** took place in **September 2008 at the Al-Dhafra base in Abu Dhabi.**

Swan Energy takes full control of Reliance Naval

- **Swan Energy** has received management control of **Reliance Naval and Engineering** from the **NCLT-appointed Monitoring Committee.** The committee is dissolved with effect from 4 January 2024.
- Swan Energy has formed a board with key members including **Nikhil Merchant, Paresh Merchant, Bhavik Merchant, and Vivek Merchant.**
- The board has approved a proposal to raise up to **₹4,000 crore and made a ₹300 crore debt prepayment** for its Floating Storage and Regasification Unit project.

Paramilitary forces to switch to 'Sandes App' for official communication, document sharing



- Paramilitary forces will switch to **'Sandes App'** for all official communication and document sharing in the first week of January.
- The decision aims to **prioritize data safety and secure document sharing**.
- The app has been trialed with glitches rectified, and an updated version is ready for use.
- Forces including **CISF, CRPF, SSB, and ITBP** are suggested to switch to the new app.

10th phase of Sagar Parikrama begins from Chennai Port



- The **10th phase of Sagar Parikrama** began from **Chennai Port.**
- **Mission to travel through Nellore, Visakhapatnam, and Srikakulam**
- They will also deliberate on the schemes implemented by the Government for fishermen and also those in the related fields.
- **The first phase of Sagar Parikrama began at Kachchh in Gujarat** last year on the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi which passed through Maharashtra and other coastal states.

DRDO launches assault rifle 'Ugramm' for Indian Army

- The **Armament Research and Development Establishment (ARDE)** and a Hyderabad-based private firm launched an **indigenous assault rifle named 'ugram' (ferocious).**
- This is the first time that the **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** lab has collaborated with private industry to **manufacture a 7.62 x 51 mm calibre rifle.**
- The rifle, weighing less than four kg with a **500-meter firing range**, was unveiled at the hands of Shailendra Gade, the director general of the **Armament and Combat Engineering (ACE)** system of the DRDO.
- It was developed based on the **General Staff Qualitative Requirements (GSQRs)** issued by the Indian Army for assault rifles in the recent past.

INS Cheetah, Guldar and Kumbhir decommissioned after 40 Years of Glorious Service



- **Indian Navy Ships Cheetah, Guldar, and Kumbhir** were decommissioned in January **2024.**
- They were built at **Gdynia Shipyard, Poland as Polnocny class Landing Ships** and were commissioned into the **Indian Navy in 1984, 1985, and 1986 respectively.**
- The decommissioning ceremony took place at **Port Blair**, where the **National Flag, the Naval Ensign**, and the Decommissioning Pennants of the three ships were lowered for the last time at sunset.
- Throughout their service, the ships participated in numerous maritime security missions and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief operations, with notable roles in **Operation Aman, Operation Tasha, relief operations post-1997 cyclone off Sri Lanka, and the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami.**

Indian – Kyrgyzstan joint special forces exercise Khanjar Commences



- The **11th edition of India-Kyrgyzstan Joint Special Forces Exercise KHANJAR** has commenced at the **Special Forces Training School in Bakloh, Himachal Pradesh.**
- The exercise is scheduled to be conducted from 22nd January to 3rd February 2024.
- The Indian Army contingent of 20 personnel was represented by soldiers of the **Parachute Regiment (Special Forces)** and the **Kyrgyzstan contingent** of 20 personnel was represented by the **Scorpion Brigade**.
- Aim of the exercise is to exchange experiences and best practices in Counter Terrorism and Special Forces Operations in Built-up Area and Mountainous Terrain under Chapter VII of United Nations Charter.

Government Schemes and Programs

Chapter 9

Odisha govt launched LABHA: A 100 Percent State-Funded MSP scheme

- The **Odisha government** has launched **LABHA Yojana**, a 100% State-funded minimum support price (MSP) scheme for minor forest produce (MFP).
- It aims to benefit the state's large tribal population, **constituting 23% of the total population.**
- Under the scheme, the State government will annually determine the MSP for MFP.
- Primary collectors, mainly tribals, can sell MFP at MSP through procurement centers managed by Tribal Development Cooperative Corporation Limited of Odisha.

Assam govt unveils Mukhyamantri Mahila Udyamita Abhiyan

- Recently, the **Assam government** introduced the **Mukhyamantri Mahila Udyamita Abhiyaan (MMUA)**, a financial support scheme aimed at empowering rural women entrepreneurs.
- The MMUA scheme is designed to foster the development of rural women who are part of self-help groups, transforming them into "rural micro-entrepreneurs" with a target annual income of **Rs 1 lakh per member.**
- In the first phase, each applicant will be provided with a **grant of ₹10,000 for the first year** to start any business from a list of 145 business plans prepared by the government.
- The total amount earmarked by the scheme as part of the state annual **budget is ₹3,900 crore**, making it the biggest such scheme in the state.

Chhattisgarh govt launched Mahtari Vandana Yojana 2024

- The kingdom of Chhattisgarh, inspired by means of the successful implementation of the **'Aarthik Sarkari Ladli Bahna Yojana '**prepared by the **Madhya Pradesh government**, has recently released a new scheme called **Mahtari Vandana Yojana 2024**.
- Under this initiative, the authorities aim to offer economic help of **1000 rupees to ladies every month**, amounting to a complete annual monetary useful resource of **12,000 rupees**.
- The scheme no longer only pursuits to provide monetary help to women but additionally emphasizes fostering self-reliance and skill development through the utilization of those funds.

Ministry of youth affairs and sports to launch 'Fit India Champions'

- **Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports** is all set to launch the **'Fit India Champions'** podcast series.
- This series is a part of the Fit India Mission and is being launched in partnership with GOQii, a major stakeholder in the fitness sector.
- The podcast series will showcase the remarkable accomplishments and inspiring stories of India's sporting heroes.
- The series will start on January 27 and will feature athletes like Sheetal Devi, the sensational armless archer who won gold at the 2023 Asian Para Games, and Neeraj Chopra, the World and Olympic javelin champion.

PM chairs a meeting to launch "Pradhan Mantri Suryodaya Yojana"



- The **Pradhan Mantri Suryodaya Yojana** is a visionary initiative announced by **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** in January 2024.
- This scheme aims **to harness solar energy** and targets the installation of rooftop solar panels on one crore houses, predominantly benefiting poor and middle-class households.

- The scheme was launched to reduce the electricity bill of the poor and middle class, along with making India self-reliant in the energy sector.
- It provides electricity to low and middle-income individuals through solar rooftop installations, along with offering additional income for surplus electricity generation.
- **As of February 28, 2023, around 3,377 megawatts** of capacity has been allocated to various state implementing agencies for the residential sector.

Chhattisgarh Govt. launched the 'Mahtari Vandana Yojana 2024'

- In January 2024, the **Chhattisgarh Government launched** the **'Mahtari Vandana Yojana 2024'**. This scheme was announced by the **Bharatiya Janata Party** and is aimed at benefiting married women in the state.
- Under this scheme, the government will provide monthly financial assistance of **₹1000 to married women** in the state.
- The main objective of this scheme is **to provide financial support to economically weaker women and improve their livelihood.**
- This initiative is part of the Bharatiya Janata Party's electoral manifesto and is expected to significantly improve married women's lives in Chhattisgarh.

Govt extends tenure of PLI scheme for Automobile industry



- The government has extended the tenure of the Production **Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme** for Automobile and Auto Components by one year with partial amendments.
- Under the amended scheme, the incentive will be applicable for a total of five consecutive financial years, starting from the financial year 2023-24.
- As per amendments, if an approved company fails to meet the threshold for an increase in Determined Sales Value over the first year's threshold, it will not receive any incentive for that year.
- This provision aims to ensure a level playing field for all approved companies and safeguard those who preferred to front-load their investments.

37 Ore products brought under Simplified Certification Scheme



- The **Telecommunication Engineering Centre (TEC)** of Department of Telecommunications DoT has brought 37 more products under **Simplified Certification scheme (SCS).** It has come into effect from January 1st, 2024.
- This will reduce the time taken for certification from eight weeks to two weeks and promote ease of doing business.
- These products include media gateway, IP security equipment, IP terminals, optical fibre or cable, transmission Terminal Equipment, etc.
- The total products under SCS have now gone up to **forty-nine from twelve**.

Jammu and Kashmir becomes first UT to implement PM Vishwakarma Yojana



- **Jammu and Kashmir** has become the **first Union Territory** in the country to implement the **PM Vishwakarma Yojana** with the start of training for the **first batch of 30 trainees**.
- The initiative aims **to empower and enhance the skill of the craftsmen community** in the country.
- The training programme was virtually inaugurated for the **first batch of 30 trainees (Vishwakarma) in 'darzi craft' by Advisor to Lieutenant Governor, Rajeev Rai Bhatnagar,** and Secretary of the Union Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), Atul Kumar Tiwari, at ITI Shopian, the report added.
- The Pradhan Mantri Vishwakarma Yojana was launched by the Central government in September 2023 with an aim to recognise artisans and craftspeople through PM Vishwakarma certificates and ID cards.
- Under the scheme, the trainees are imparted a basic training of five to seven days, **advanced training of 15 or more days, a stipend of Rs 500 per day**, and a free modern toolkit worth Rs 15,000 for trained Vishwakarmas.

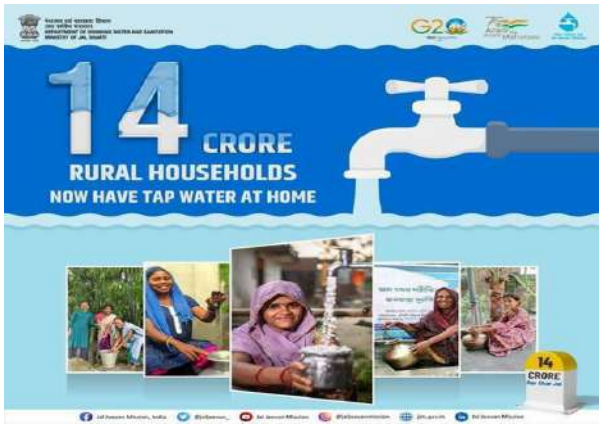
Cabinet approves overarching scheme "PRITHvi VIgyan (PRITHVI)"



- The Union Cabinet, chaired by **Prime Minister Narendra Modi**, has approved the implementation of the **"PRITHvi VIgyan (PRITHVI)"** scheme by the Ministry of Earth Sciences.
- The scheme will be implemented during the period from 2021-26 at a **total cost of Rs. 4,797 crore.**
- "PRITHVI" encompasses five ongoing sub-schemes, including:

1. "Atmosphere & Climate Research-Modelling Observing Systems & Services (ACROSS)",
2. "Ocean Services, Modelling Application, Resources and Technology (O-SMART)",
3. "Polar Science and Cryosphere Research (PACER)",
4. "Seismology and Geosciences (SAGE)", and
5. "Research, Education, Training and Outreach (REACHOUT)".

Jal Jeevan Mission crosses momentous milestone of providing tap water connections



- **Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM)** today crossed a momentous milestone of providing tap water **connections to 14 Crore (72.71%) rural households.**
- As of today, six states, namely **Goa, Telangana, Haryana, Gujarat, Punjab, and Himachal Pradesh** and three Union Territories of **Puducherry, D&D and D&NH, and A&N Islands** have achieved 100% coverage.
- Mizoram at 98.68%, Arunachal Pradesh at 98.48% and Bihar at 96.42% are on track to achieving saturation in the near future.
- In addition to household connections, the Mission has ensured tap water supply in 9.24 lakh (90.65%) schools and 9.57 lakh (86.63%) anganwadi centres nationwide.
- In the 112 aspirational districts, tap water access has surged from 21.41 lakh (7.86%) households at the time of launch to 1.96 Crore (72.08%) households.

Jal Jeevan Mission

- Jal Jeevan Mission was launched in 2019.
- It envisages supply of 55 litres of water per person per day to every rural household through Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTC) by 2024.
- It comes under Jal Shakti Ministry.
- The mission ensures functionality of existing water supply systems and water connections, water quality monitoring and testing as well as sustainable agriculture.

Govt ups financial support for residential rooftop solar projects



- The government has increased benchmark central financial assistance for residential rooftop solar projects.
- **Assistance for up to 3 kW capacity raised to Rs 18,000 per kW for general states, up 23.4% from earlier Rs 14,588 per kW. For over 3 kW and up to 10 kW capacity, the assistance raised to Rs 9,000 per kW for general states, up from Rs 7,294 per kW.**
- India has installed **11 GW of rooftop solar capacity, with only 2.7 GW** in the residential sector.
- The central government aims to achieve a 40-GW rooftop solar target by 2022, offering incentives through central financial assistance.

NHAI takes 'One Vehicle One FASTag' initiative



- **National Highways Authority of India (NHAI)** has implemented the **'One Vehicle, One FASTag'** initiative to discourage the use of a single FASTag for multiple vehicles or linking multiple FASTags to a particular vehicle.
- Users are encouraged to complete the **'Know Your Customer' (KYC)** process for their latest FASTag by updating the KYC as per RBI guidelines.
- Only the latest FASTag account will remain active as previous tags will be deactivated/blacklisted after 31st January 2024.
- The initiative aims **to enhance efficiency at toll plazas** and ensure seamless movement for National Highway users.

About FASTag:

- FASTag was first introduced in the country in 2014.
- The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) made it mandatory for every vehicle in December 2019.
- The FASTag employs Radio-frequency Identification (RFID) technology.

Govt launches Rs 515-cr solar scheme for electrification of houses in tribal areas



- The Central government has launched a new solar scheme for **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG)** habitations and villages.
- This scheme was launched under the **Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Abhiyan (PM-JANMAN) programme.**
- Scheme worth **Rs 515 crore** aimed at electrification under **Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Abhiyan (PM-JANMAN) programme.**
- The scheme will be implemented during the period **from 2023-24 to 2025-26**.
- **Launched in November 2023,** the PM-JANMAN scheme is aimed at improving the socio-economic status of PVTGs by bridging gaps in health, education, livelihoods, by improving basic infrastructure in Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) communities, habitations, and families.

About PM-JANMAN scheme

- PM-JANMAN scheme launched in November 2023 to uplift PVTGs' socio-economic status
- Aims to address health, education, livelihood gaps, and improve basic infrastructure in PVTG communities
- Rs 24,104 crore approved for 11 interventions through existing programmes of nine line ministries
- Rs 15,000 crore allocated for the next three years under the Development Action Plan for the Scheduled Tribes (DAPST).

e-SAKSHI Mobile application launched for the Revised Fund Flow Procedure



- **Minister of State (Independent Charge) of MoSPI, Rao Inderjit Singh**, launched the **MPLADS e-SAKSHI Mobile Application in New Delhi.**
- The objective of the MPLAD Scheme is to enable MPs to recommend developmental works and create durable community assets based on local needs.
- The revised guidelines aim to broaden the scope of the Scheme to meet changing community needs and improve implementation and monitoring.
- The e-SAKSHI mobile app for MPs under the MPLAD scheme will revolutionize project management by providing convenience, accessibility, and real-time information.

HP launches 'My School-My Pride' campaign to transform govt education system

- Himachal Pradesh has launched the **'My School-My Pride'** campaign under the **'Apna Vidyalay' program** to revolutionize the quality of education in government schools, following the **National Education Policy (NEP)-2020.**
- The initiative aims to encourage individuals and organizations to adopt schools and contribute to various aspects of students' growth, including career counseling, remedial teaching, examination coaching, and community support services.



- The **'systematic adolescent management and value addition dialogue' (SAMVAD)** component will educate school-going adolescents on moral values, drug awareness, nutrition, legal knowledge, and empowerment schemes.

PM Modi to release first installment of PMAY (Gramin) under PM-JANMAN scheme



- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will release the **first installment to one lakh beneficiaries of Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - Gramin** under the **Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM-JANMAN).**
- PM-JANMAN was launched for the **socio-economic welfare of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)** with a budget of around **24,000 crore rupees**.
- The initiative focuses on **11 critical interventions** through nine Ministries aimed at improving the socio-economic conditions of the PVTGs.
- The interventions include providing basic facilities such as safe housing, clean drinking water, improved access to education, health and nutrition, electricity, road and telecom connectivity, and sustainable livelihood opportunities.

30 crore Ayushman Cards created under Ayushman Bharat PM Jan Arogya Yojana



- **Ayushman Cards under Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana** have saved over ₹**1.25 lakh crore** in out-of-pocket expenditure for the poor and vulnerable population.
- **30 crore Ayushman Cards** have been created, aiming to provide health cover of ₹**5 lakh per family per year** for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization.
- The scheme has successfully catered to 6.2 crore hospital admissions, totaling over ₹79 thousand crore in value.
- With 4.83 crore Ayushman Cards, Uttar Pradesh topped the list of States with the highest number of Ayushman Cards holders.

Summit and Conferences

Chapter 10

First meeting of the Social Audit Advisory Body (SAAB) held



- The first meeting of the **Social Audit Advisory Body (SAAB)** was held on January 18, 2024, at the **Dr. Ambedkar International Centre in New Delhi.**
- The meeting was chaired by the Secretary of the Department of Social Justice & Empowerment.
- The meeting commenced with a welcome address by the Director of the National Institute of Social Defense (NISD).

Czech PM to be chief guest at Vibrant Gujarat summit



- **Czech Prime Minister Petr Fiala to be Guest of Honour at the 10th Vibrant Gujarat Global Investors Summit to be held from January 10-12 in Gandhinagar.**
- Other attendees include Timor-Leste's President José Ramos-Horta, President Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Mozambique's President Filipe Nyusi.
- **The Czech Republic is also a partner country in the 10th Summit.**
- **The UAE has reportedly initiated a $2 billion investment to build food parks in India, as part of the I2U2 agreement involving India, Israel, USA, and the UAE. Gujarat is expected to be the first to have food parks with UAE investment.**

About VGGS

- The Vibrant Gujarat Global Investors Summit is a critical platform for fostering collaborations, and partnerships, and exploring investment opportunities.
- The theme for the 10th edition of the VGGS is 'Gateway to the Future'.
- The VGGS creates an effective platform to attract investment with a focus on emerging sectors like semiconductors, green hydrogen, e-mobility, renewable energy, and FinTech among others.

15th edition of BiFFes to be held in Bengaluru



- **The 15th edition of the Bengaluru International Film Festival (BIFFes) will be held from February 29 to March 7.**
- "films promoting harmony, gender equality, awareness about the Constitution, and inclusiveness" will be screened at the festival.
- The opening ceremony of the annual event will be held in front of the Vidhana Soudha
- N. Vidyashankar, film critic, has been named the artistic director of the festival.

- An amount of ₹1.61 crore has been assigned by the government to organise the event. The BIFFes is an FIAPF-accredited event.

Three day-All India Conference of Directors General and Inspectors General of Police begins in Jaipur



- **All India Conference of Directors General and Inspectors General of Police 2023 starts today in Jaipur.**
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will participate in the conference on 6th and 7th January.
- Topics of discussion include cybercrime, technology in policing, counter-terrorism challenges, left-wing extremism, and prison reforms.
- The conference will also focus on implementing new criminal laws and addressing futuristic themes in policing and security, such as the challenges posed by new technologies like AI and Deepfake.
- **Union Home Minister Amit Shah, National Security Advisor, Minister of State for Home Affairs, and senior officials will attend the conference.**

PM Modi inaugurates Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit in Gandhinagar



- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the edition of the Vibrant Gujarat Summit 2024 in Gujarat's Gandhinagar.**
- **Vibrant Gujarat Summit 2024 is the 10th edition of the global summit**, which was envisioned under the leadership of Narendra Modi when he was the chief minister of the state. **The 2021 edition of the global summit was cancelled by the government due to the restrictions during the Covid-19 pandemic.**
- The global summit will be held from January 10 to January 12 and the theme for this year is 'Gateway to the Future'.
- Dignitaries including UAE President Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of Mozambique Filipe Nyusi, President of Timor Leste José Ramos-Horta, Union Minister Piyush Goyal, and Gujarat CM Bhupendra Patel in attendance.
- There are 34 Partner countries and 16 Partner organisations for this year's Summit.

India to chair & host UNESCO's World Heritage Committee for the 1st time in July 2024



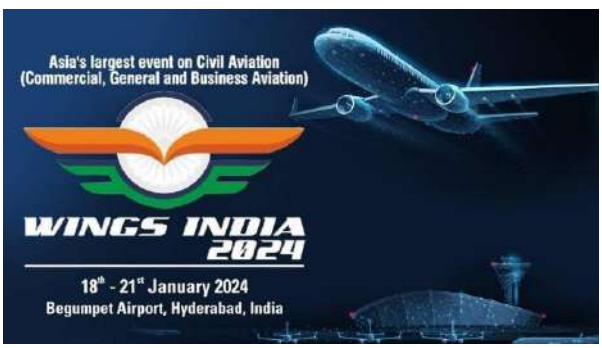
- **India is set to chair UNESCO's World Heritage Committee and host its 46th session in New Delhi from July 21 to 31, 2024, marking a historic milestone for our nation.**
- **It was decided at its 19th extraordinary session (UNESCO, 2023) that the 46th session of the World Heritage Committee will take place from July 21 to 31, 2024 in New Delhi, India.**
- The 45th session of the UNESCO's World Heritage Committee was chaired and hosted by Saudi Arabia in Riyadh.
- UNESCO is a specialized agency of the United Nations (UN) that aims to promote world peace and national security through international cooperation in education, arts, science and culture.
- **Headquarters of UNESCO: Paris, France**
- **Director General of UNESCO: Audrey Azoulay**

India-UAE CEPA Council launched at 'UAE-India Business Summit' in Ahmedabad



- **India and the UAE launched the UAE-India CEPA Council (UICC) to encourage close partnerships and tangible cooperation across all levels of the UAE and Indian business communities**
- **This was launched at the ongoing Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit 2024.**
- The CEPA council will emphasise on critical industries such as start-ups, women entrepreneurs, micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), and the services sectors.
- The launch was part of the UAE-India Business Summit, which coincided with the ongoing Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit 2024.
- The business summit involving the two nations was held under the theme of **'Two Nations, One Vision'.**

Asia's Largest Aviation Expo Wings India 2024 began at Begumpet airport in Hyderabad



- **Union Minister for Civil Aviation Shri Jyotiraditya M Scindia recently inaugurated Wings India 2024, Asia's largest aviation expo, at Begumpet Airport in Hyderabad.**
- This event signifies a major milestone in the Indian aviation sector, showcasing its growth and future potential.
- Additionally, Akasa Air revealed a substantial order for 200 aircraft to be fulfilled within 17 months.
- The central theme for Wings India 2024 revolves around **"Connecting India to the World in Amrit Kaal: Setting the Stage for India Civil Aviation @2047."**

9th edition of India International Science Festival inaugurated in Faridabad



- **Union Minister of Science and Technology Jitendra Singh inaugurated the ninth edition of the India International Science Festival (IISF) in Faridabad, Haryana.**
- The four-day-long festival is being held at the Translational Health Science and Technology Institute (THSTI)-Regional Centre for Biotechnology (RCB) joint campus in Faridabad.
- The festival will focus on celebrating the achievements of Indian scientific institutions around the theme **"science and technology public outreach in Amrit Kaal".**
- The primary goal of the India International Science Festival (IISF) is to offer an inspiring platform for people from various backgrounds, including students, educators, scientists, researchers, industry professionals, entrepreneurs, and science communicators, to engage and participate.

Two-day 19th NAM Summit began in Uganda's Kampala

- **The two-day 19th Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Summit was held in Uganda's Kampala.**
- External Affairs Minister (EAM), Dr. S. Jaishankar represented the Indian delegation.
- **Minister of State for External Affairs Dr. Rajkumar Ranjan Singh representing India at the NAM Foreign Ministers' meeting**



- Minister of State for External Affairs Shri V. Muraleedharan to represent India at the G-77 Third South Summit in Kampala on 21-22 January
- **The EAM will co-chair the 6th India-Nigeria Joint Commission Meeting (JCM) with his counterpart and meet with other leaders.**

ABOUT NAM

- NAM is one of the world's largest multilateral fora mobilizing support for the Global South.
- The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) is an international forum of 120 developing countries.
- NAM was established in 1961 in Belgrade, former Yugoslavia.
- The founding leaders of NAM were the Indian Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, President of Egypt Gamal Abdel Nasser, and President of Yugoslavia Josip Broz Tito.
- NAM countries believe in the idea of non-alignment with the major power blocs.

63rd Central Geological Programming Board (CGPB) Meeting held in Bhopal



- **The 63rd Central Geological Programming Board (CGPB) meeting was held in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh. The meeting was held under the Chairmanship of Shri V.L. Kantha Rao, Secretary, Ministry of Mines.**
- Shri Sanjay Lohiya, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Mines, Shri Janardan Prasad, Director General, GSI,senior functionaries of different Ministries, State Directorates of Mining & Geology, PSUs, representatives from private mining industry, Mining associations and other stakeholders attended the crucial meeting.
- **The proposed Annual Programme for the ensuing Field Season year 2024-25 was placed before the Board for discussion.**
- During the ensuing year 2024-25 GSI has formulated about 1055 scientific programs for the year 2024-25, which include 392 Mineral Development projects that have the potential to generate auctionable mineral blocks shortly.

Environment and Ecology

Chapter 11

Union Cabinet approved ₹8,500 Crore VGF for Coal Gasification

- The **Union Cabinet, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi,** has approved the Ministry of Coal's proposal to launch the coal and lignite gasification program.
- The program entails a **Viability Gap Funding (VGF) of ₹8,500 crore** to be extended to both public and private sectors.
- A provision of ₹4,050 crore will be exclusively available for government Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs).
- Up to three projects will receive support through a lump-sum grant of ₹1,350 crore each or 15% of the capital expenditure, whichever is lower.
- In coal gasification, coal is chemically transformed into syngas using steam and controlled oxygen. The syngas can then be converted into chemicals like ammonia, fertilizers, methanol, DME, and synthetic natural gas.

Rising acidity threatens Antarctic Shelf Ecosystems

- A new study has raised concerns about the rising acidity levels of the continental shelves in **Antarctic Marine Protected Areas (MPA)** under high levels of greenhouse gas emissions.
- Carbon emissions from human activities may be vertically mixed with ocean waters in coastal regions, resulting in severe acidification at all water levels, it suggested.
- Shallow, underwater areas extending from the edge of continents known as continental shelves are expected to see more severe acidification than the open ocean.
- The study, Severe 21st-century ocean acidification in Antarctic Marine Protected Areas, was published in journal Nature Communications on January 4, 2024.

Wild Life (Protection) Licensing (Additional Matters for Consideration) Rules, 2024

- The central government recently introduced Wild Life (Protection) Licensing (Additional Matters for Consideration) Rules, 2024, amending the wildlife trade rules, 1983 resulting in significant changes in the licensing process and exclusions of certain species.
- The amendments became operational on 16th January, 2024, marking the first revision since 1983.
- The new rules also specify the factors that the authorised officers must consider while granting licences, such as the capacity of the applicant, the source and manner of obtaining supplies, the number of existing licences in the area, and the implications on hunting or trade of the concerned wild animals.

The first-ever IUCN assessment of the Himalayan Wolf is out

- The **Himalayan Wolf (Canis lupus chanco)** has been assessed for the first time in the **International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)'s Red List.**
- The animal has been categorised as **'Vulnerable' on the IUCN Red List.** The assessment was done on June 27, 2023.
- The Himalayan Wolf Canis lupus ssp chanco is classified as Vulnerable under C2a(ii) based on population size estimate of 2,275-3,792 mature individuals based on best available data, the assessment on the Red List website read.
- It added that all individuals were in one subpopulation stretching across the Himalayan range of Nepal and India and across the Tibetan Plateau.

Towards Decarbonising Transport 2023

- Recently, NITI Aayog has released a report titled- Towards Decarbonising Transport 2023.
- **The report serves as a comprehensive resource for assessing the current status** and developments in the transport sector, with a focus on G20 nations and their climate commitments.
- Decarbonizing transport refers to the process of reducing or eliminating the carbon emissions associated with the transportation sector.
- The goal is **to make transportation more environmentally friendly and sustainable by reducing its carbon footprint.**

Marginal Rise in Saltwater Crocodile Population in Bhitarkanika

- The population of saltwater or estuarine crocodiles (Crocodylus porosus) in and around **Odisha's Bhitarkanika National Park** has marginally increased in 2024.
- **There are 1,811 crocodiles in the park located in Kendrapara district,** according to forest officials who conducted the annual census. Last year, the crocodiles numbered 1,793.
- Bhitarkanika is the second-largest mangrove forest in India after the **Sundarbans in West Bengal.** Both areas are among the three strongholds of saltwater crocodiles — the largest reptiles in the world — in India, the third being the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Jharkhand declares drought in 17 districts

- **The Jharkhand government has finally declared 158 blocks in 17 districts of the state as drought-affected,** where about 1.5 million farmers were impacted.
- Only four districts in Jharkhand recorded normal rainfall during the **monsoon season in 2023 and 19 districts had recorded less** than normal rainfall.
- This time, the state overall recorded 38 per cent less than average rainfall during the monsoon.
- Since its formation 23 years ago, the state has been declared drought hit 10 times.
- Droughts used to occur every three or four years, but this time the extreme weather events happened twice in a row. In 2022, 226 of 260 blocks in 22 districts of the state were declared drought-affected.

New butterfly species endemic to Western Ghats discovered in Karnataka

- A new species of **silverline butterfly has been identified in the biodiversity hotspots in India's Western Ghats** and described in a new research paper.
- This unique species, named Cigaritis conjuncta or the "conjoined silverline", was first spotted in 2008 but came under extensive research in 2021.
- The discovery was made by a team of scientists from the **National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS-TIFR) in Bengaluru,** in collaboration with researchers from the Indian Foundation for Butterflies Trust.
- The researchers found five male and four female specimens of the conjoined silverline butterfly in Honey valley, Kodagu district of Karnataka.

Denmark announces alliance on green fuels in India

- **Denmark** has announced its **Green Fuels Alliance India (GFAI)** initiative to boost collaborative efforts between the two countries in the sustainable energy solutions sector and advance their joint global goal towards carbon neutrality.
- Led by the Danish Embassy and the Consulate General of Denmark in India, the new alliance is a strategic initiative poised to play a pivotal role in advancing the green fuels sector, including green hydrogen.
- GFAI's primary objective is to promote sustainable energy growth in India by establishing an ecosystem that encourages collaboration among businesses, government entities, research institutions, and financial stakeholders from both the Indian and Danish sectors.

Sports News

Chapter 12

Australian Open 2024

- The Australian Open 2024 was a **Grand Slam level tennis tournament** held at **Melbourne Park, from 14–28 January 2024.**
- It was the **112th edition** of the Australian Open, the **56th in the Open Era,** and the first major of the year.

Here are the winners of the Australian Open 2024:

Event	Winner	Runner-Up
Men's Singles	Jannik Sinner (Italy)	Daniil Medvedev (Russia)
Women's Singles	Aryna Sabalenka (Belarus)	Zheng Qinwen (China)
Men's Doubles	Rohan Bopanna (India) & Matthew Ebden (Australia)	Simone Bolelli and Andrea Vavassori (Italy)
Women's Doubles	Hsieh Su-Wei (Taiwan) & Elise Mertens (Belgium)	Jelena Ostapenko (Latvia) and Lyudmyla Kichenok (Ukraine)
Mixed Doubles	Hsieh Su-wei (Taiwan) & Jan Zielinski (Poland)	Desirae Krawczyk (USA) & Neal Skupski (Britain)

Virat Kohli crowned ICC Men's ODI Cricketer of the year 2023

- **Virat Kohli** was indeed named the **ICC Men's ODI Cricketer of the Year 2023**. This marks the fourth time that Kohli has been honored with this award.



- In 2023, Kohli had an exceptional year in the 50-over format. **He scored 1377 runs**, took 1 wicket, and made **12 catches in 27 matches.** He was also the Player of the Tournament at the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023.
- **Kohli had a record-breaking year in 2023.** He scored the most runs in a single edition of the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup. He surpassed Sachin Tendulkar's record of ODI centuries.

Sreeja Akula won her maiden international title at the WTT Feeder Corpus Christi 2024



- **Indian table tennis player Sreeja Akula won her maiden international title at the WTT Feeder Corpus Christi 2024 in Texas, USA**. She secured the top podium in the women's singles event.
- In the final, she defeated **world No. 46 Lily Zhang of the USA,** a three-time Olympian, with a score of 3-0 (11-6, 18-16, 11-5).
- **Sreeja Akula, a two-time national champion, is ranked 94th in women's singles.**

India's Rohan Bopanna becomes oldest player to hold number one spot in men's doubles tennis

- Indian tennis sensation **Rohan Bopanna became the oldest player to hold the No. 1 men's doubles ranking.**
- **The 43-year-old Ace player, alongside Australia's Matthew Ebden, defeated the Argentine pair Máximo González and Andrés Molteni in straight sets 6-4, 7-6 in the 2024 Australian Open quarter-finals.**



- According to the International Tennis Federation, the previous oldest men's doubles No 1, Mike Bryan, was 41 years and 76 days old when his streak ended in 2019.

Rohan Bopanna: A Champion on the Doubles Court

Rohan Bopanna, **born March 4, 1980,** is a legendary Indian tennis player who reigns supreme in the world of doubles. He has played a crucial role in popularizing doubles tennis in India, inspiring countless young players to take up the sport and appreciate its complexities.

His iconic partnership with **Pakistani player Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi, known as the "Indo-Pak Express,"** transcended the boundaries of nations and fostered unity and friendship through their sporting bond.

Awards:

Arjuna Award (2007) – India's second-highest sporting honor.

Padma Shri (2012) – India's fourth-highest civilian award.

Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna (2018) – India's highest sporting honor.

Grand Slam Titles:

Mixed Doubles: French Open 2017 (partnering Gabriela Dabrowski)

Masters 100 Titles:

Indian Wells Masters 2023 (partnering Matthew Ebden)

ATP Tour Titles:

24 doubles titles, including four at ATP 500 level.

Davis Cup:

Part of the Indian Davis Cup team since 2002.

He showcased his skills on the world stage by participating in the Olympic Games in 2012 and 2016.

Man Singh bags Gold medal at Asian Marathon Championships 2024 in Hong Kong



- **India's Man Singh** claimed the gold medal at the **Asian Marathon Championships 2024** with a personal best timing of **two hours 14 minutes and 19 seconds in Hong Kong.**
- The 34-year-old Indian marathon runner comfortably beat runner-up **Huang Yongzheng of China** with a time difference of 65 seconds in the men's event. **Kyrgyzstan's Tiapkin Ilya came third in 2:18:18.**
- Man Singh's previous personal best was 2:16:58, clocked at Mumbai Marathon 2023.

India loses to Japan; Fails to qualify for Paris 2024 Olympics

- **Indian Women's hockey team failed to qualify for the Olympics for the first time since 2016** after falling to a 1-0 loss against Japan in the third-place playoff match at the **FIH Women's Hockey Olympic Qualifiers in Ranchi.**
- Unfortunately, the dream for the Indian women's team comes to an end as there will be no representation from India in the women's field hockey event at the **Paris 2024 Olympics**.

Rameshbabu Praggnanandhaa surpasses Viswanathan Anand to become India's number-one Chess player

- **India Chess Wizard Rameshbabu Praggnanandhaa defeated World Chess Champion Ding Liren in the Tata Steel Masters in Wijk aan Zee, in the Netherlands.**
- As a result of this victory, **Praggnanandhaa became only the second Indian after Vishwanathan Anand to defeat a reigning champion.**



- He also overtook Anand to become India's new number-one Chess player in terms of live ratings.

Dommaraju Gukesh secures spot at prestigious Candidates tournament



- In **Men's Chess, Dommaraju Gukes**h has secured his spot at the prestigious Candidates tournament, which will take place in **Toronto from April 2 to 25, 2024.**
- **Gukesh became the third Indian to make the Candidates tournament, joining R Praggnanandhaa and Vidit Gujrathi.**
- This is the first time in history that **three Indians are playing the Candidates.**
- The winner gets the chance to take on **China's Ding Liren in the next World Chess Championship.**
- In **Women's Candidates, Koneru Humpy and Rameshbabu Vaishali** will represent the country.

Australian batter David Warner announces retirement from One Day International cricket

- **Australian batter David Warner** has announced his **retirement from One Day Internationals (ODIs)**.
- The **2 time ODI World Cup Winner** had previously announced that he would be ending his Test career after Australia's upcoming Test against Pakistan in Sydney.



- **Warner is Australia's sixth-highest run scorer in the ODI** format and is only second to former captain Ricky Ponting's tally for most Centuries for Australia in ODIs.

Varun Tomar and Esha Singh win Olympic quota with Asian gold



- **Varun Tomar and Esha Singh won India's 14th and 15th quota spots for the Paris Olympics in the 10m air pistol event.**
- Tomar secured the spot by winning the **gold medal at the Asian Olympic Qualifier tournament in Jakarta, with a score of 586 in the qualification round.**
- Esha clinched the quota by winning the gold medal in the women's 10m air pistol with a score of 243.1 points.
- The **National Rifle Association of India (NRAI)** has an elaborate selection process involving multiple trials to finalize the Olympic team.

Rhythm Sangwan secures 16th Olympic Quota for India in Asia Qualifiers for Paris 2024



- **Rhythm Sangwan became the 16th Indian shooter** to secure a 2024 Paris quota place with a **bronze medal in 25m sports pistol at the Asia Olympic Qualifiers.**
- Her performance ensured India will send its largest-ever shooting contingent of **16 shooters to the 2024 Paris Olympics.**
- Rhythm's bronze medal also earned India an Olympic quota spot.

Yogesh Singh wins gold in men's 25m standard pistol event at Asian Shooting Championships, Jakarta



- **In Shooting, India's Yogesh Singh won a gold medal in the men's 25m standard pistol event at the Asian Shooting Championships 2024 in Jakarta, Indonesia.**
- The Indian shooter, however, finished ahead as he shot 17Xs as opposed to Enkhtaivan seven.
- **Kazakhstan's Nikita Chiryukin**, who beat **India's Vijayveer Sidhu to the men's 25m rapid-fire pistol gold medal yesterday, claimed the bronze with 568.**
- **India's Amit Kumar took the sixth position with 565 while Om Prakash was 12th with 553.**

Deepti Sharma, Pat Cummins Win ICC Player of the Month Awards for December 2023



- The **International Cricket Council (ICC)** has announced the winners of **Player of the Month for December 2023.**
- **India's Deepti Sharma clinched the award** in the **Women's category**, while **Australia captain Pat Cummins won in the Men's.**
- **She scored 165 runs at an average of 55 and took 11 wickets at an average of 10.81 during the two Test matches.**
- **Pat Cummins** secured the **ICC Men's Player of the Month** award for his standout performance in the Test series against Pakistan.

PM Modi to inaugurates 6th Khelo India Youth Games 2023 in Chennai

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** inaugurated the **6th Khelo India Youth Games in Chennai** to be held from January 19 to 31.
- The Games are being held at **Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in Chennai from January 19 to 31.**
- This is the **first time that the Khelo India Youth Games are being held in South India.**
- The Games will be played across four cities of **Tamil Nadu, namely Chennai, Madurai, Trichy and Coimbatore.**
- **The logo for the games incorporates the figure of poet Thiruvalluvar. On the other hand, 'Veera Mangai' is the mascot for the games.**

Chamari Athapaththu ICC Women's ODI Cricketer of the year



- **Sri Lankan cricketer Chamari Athapaththu** has been named the **ICC Women's ODI Cricketer of the Year for 2023.**
- She had an exceptional year with the bat in ODIs, scoring **415 runs in 8 matches.**
- Her significant contributions as a player and as a captain, notably leading the side to a first bilateral series win over New Zealand, were recognized.

Awards and Honors

Chapter 13

69th Hyundai Filmfare Awards 2024

- The 69th Hyundai Filmfare Awards 2024 with Gujarat Tourism was held in GIFT City, Gujarat.
- Hosted by Karan Johar, Ayushmann Khurrana and Maneish Paul, the star-studded night saw dazzling red-carpet appearances, breathtaking performances and inspiring winning moments.

Here's the full list of winners:

Sr. No.	Category	Winner
1	Best Film	12th Fail
2	Best Director	Vidhu Vinod Chopra (12th Fail)
3	Best Actor in a Leading Role (Male)	Ranbir Kapoor (Animal)
4	Best Actor in a Leading Role (Female)	Alia Bhatt (Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani)
5	Best Film (Critics')	Joram (Devashish Makhija)
6	Best Actor (Critics')	Vikrant Massey (12th Fail)
7	Best Actress (Critics')	Rani Mukerji (Mrs Chatterjee vs. Norway), Shefali Shah (Three of Us)
8	Best Actor in a Supporting Role (Male)	Vicky Kaushal (Dunki)
9	Best Actor in a Supporting Role (Female)	Shabana Azmi (Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani)
10	Best Lyrics	Amitabh Bhattacharya ("Tere Vaaste" – Zara Hatke Zara Bachke)
11	Best Music Album	Animal (Pritam, Vishal Mishra, Manan Bhardwaj, Shreyas Puranik, Jaani, Bhupinder Babbal, et al.)
12	Best Playback Singer (Male)	Bhupinder Babbal (Arjan Vailly – Animal)
13	Best Playback Singer (Female)	Shilpa Rao (Besharam Rang – Pathaan)
14	Best Story	Amit Rai (OMG 2), Devashish Makhija (Joram)
15	Best Screenplay	Vidhu Vinod Chopra (12th Fail)
16	Best Dialogue	Ishita Moitra (Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani)
17	Best Background Score	Harshavardhan Rameshwar (Animal)
18	Best Cinematography	Avinash Arun Dhaware (Three of Us)
19	Best Production Design	Subrata Chakraborty, Amit Ray (Sam Bahadur)
20	Best Costume Design	Sachin Lovelekar, Divvya Gambhir, Nidhhi Gambhir (Sam Bahadur)
21	Best Sound Design	Kunal Sharma (Mpse) (Sam Bahadur) Sync Cinema (Animal)
22	Best Editing	Jaskunwar Singh Kohli-Vidhu Vinod Chopra (12th Fail)
23	Best Action	Spiro Razatos, Anl Arasu, Craig Macrae, Yannick Ben, Kecha Khamphakdee, Sunil Rodrigues (Jawan)
24	Best VFX	Red Chillies VFX (Jawan)

25	Best Choreography	Ganesh Acharya ("What Jhumka?" – Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani)
26	Best Debut Director	Tarun Dudeja (Dhak Dhak)
27	Best Debut Male	Aditya Rawal (Faraaz)
28	Best Debut Female	Alizeh Agnihotri (Farrey)
29	Lifetime Achievement Award	David Dhawan

Swachh Survekshan Awards 2023



- The President of India conferred **Swachh Survekshan Awards 2023 at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi** hosted by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA).
- It is an annual survey of cleanliness, hygiene and sanitation in cities and towns across India, launched as part of the **Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (specifically under SBA-Urban).**
- **Surat in Gujarat and Indore in Madhya Pradesh** were jointly declared cleanest cities of the country at the annual clean city awards 2023 of the Union Urban Affairs Ministry.
- This was for the **seventh year in a row that Indore has been ranked** as the cleanest city in India.
- **President Droupadi Murmu** gave away the awards to the winners at an **event in New Delhi.**
- **The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD)** was placed **90th out of 446 cities, and the New Delhi Municipal Council** area secured the seventh spot.
- The survey, central to the **Swachh Bharat mission**, involved 3,000 assessors recording a city's performance on **46 parameters.**
- A total of **110 awards were bestowed**, celebrating excellence in cleanliness initiatives.
- The theme for the Cleanliness Survey 2024 is **"Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle."**

Top 5 Cleanest City of India

Rank	City	State
1.	Indore	Madhya Pradesh
1.	Surat	Gujarat
3.	Navi Mumbai	Maharashtra
4.	Visakhapatnam	Andhra Pradesh
5.	Bhopal	Madhya Pradesh

Bottom 3 Cleanest City of India

Rank	City	State
1.	Kolkata	West Bengal
2.	Asansol	West Bengal
3.	Haora	West Bengal

Top Performers in Other Categories

Sr. No.	Categories	Winner
1.	Cities with Population under 1 Lakh	1. Sasvad 2. Patan 3. Lonavala
2.	Cleanest Cantonment Board	Mhow Cantonment Board in Madhya Pradesh emerged as the top performer.
3.	Cleanest Ganga Towns	Varanasi and Prayagraj received recognition as the best and cleanest Ganga towns.
4.	Best Performing States	1. Maharashtra 2. Madhya Pradesh 3. Chhattisgarh
5.	Safaimitra Surakshit Sheher	Chandigarh received the award for the Best Safaimitra Surakshit Sheher.

Padma Awards 2024

For the year 2024, the President has approved conferment of **132 Padma Awards** including 2 duo cases (in a duo case, the Award is counted as one) as per list below.

The list comprises **5 Padma Vibhushan, 17 Padma Bhushan and 110 Padma Shri Awards**. 30 of the awardees are women and the list also includes 8 persons from the category of Foreigners / NRI / PIO / OCI and 9 Posthumous awardees.

These Awards are conferred by the President of India at ceremonial functions which are held at Rashtrapati Bhawan usually around March/April every year.

Padma Vibhushan (5)

SN	Name	Field	State/Region/ Country
1	Ms. Vyjayantimala Bali	Art	Tamil Nadu
2	Shri Konidela Chiranjeevi	Art	Andhra Pradesh
3	Shri M Venkaiah Naidu	Public Affairs	Andhra Pradesh
4	Shri Bindeshwar Pathak **(Posthumous)**	Social Work	Bihar
5	Ms. Padma Subrahmanyam	Art	Tamil Nadu

Padma Bhushan (17)

SN	Name	Field	State/Region/ Country
6	Ms. M Fathima Beevi **(Posthumous)**	Public Affairs	Kerala
7	Shri Hormusji N Cama	Literature & Education - Journalism	Maharashtra
8	Shri Mithun Chakraborty	Art	West Bengal
9	Shri Sitaram Jindal	Trade & Industry	Karnataka
10	Shri Young Liu	Trade & Industry	Taiwan
11	Shri Ashwin Balachand Mehta	Medicine	Maharashtra
12	Shri Satyabrata Mookherjee (Posthumous)	Public Affairs	West Bengal
13	Shri Ram Naik	Public Affairs	Maharashtra
14	Shri Tejas Madhusudan Patel	Medicine	Gujarat
15	Shri Olanchery Rajagopal	Public Affairs	Kerala
16	Shri Dattatray Ambadas Mayaloo alias Rajdutt	Art	Maharashtra
17	Shri Togdan Rinpoche **(Posthumous)**	Others - Spiritualism	Ladakh
18	Shri Pyarelal Sharma	Art	Maharashtra
19	Shri Chandreshwar Prasad Thakur	Medicine	Bihar
20	Ms. Usha Uthup	Art	West Bengal
21	Shri Vijaykanth (Posthumous)	Art	Tamil Nadu
22	Shri Kundan Vyas	Literature & Education - Journalism	Maharashtra

Padma Shri (110)

SN	Name	Field	State/Region/ Country
23	Shri Khalil Ahamad	Art	Uttar Pradesh
24	Shri Badrappan M	Art	Tamil Nadu
25	Shri Kaluram Bamaniya	Art	Madhya Pradesh
26	Ms. Rezwana Choudhury Bannya	Art	Bangladesh

SN	Name	Field	State/Region/ Country
27	Ms. Naseem Bano	Art	Uttar Pradesh
28	Shri Ramlal Bareth	Art	Chhattisgarh
29	Ms. Gita Roy Barman	Art	West Bengal
30	Ms. Parbati Baruah	Social Work	Assam
31	Shri Sarbeswar Basumatary	Others - Agriculture	Assam
32	Shri Som Datt Battu	Art	Himachal Pradesh
33	Ms. Takdira Begum	Art	West Bengal
34	Shri Sathyanarayana Beleri	Others - Agriculture	Kerala
35	Shri Drona Bhuyan	Art	Assam
36	Shri Ashok Kumar Biswas	Art	Bihar
37	Shri Rohan Machanda Bopanna	Sports	Karnataka
38	Ms. Smriti Rekha Chakma	Art	Tripura
39	Shri Narayan Chakraborty	Science & Engineering	West Bengal
40	Shri A Velu Ananda Chari	Art	Telangana
41	Shri Ram Chet Chaudhary	Science & Engineering	Uttar Pradesh
42	Ms. K Chellammal	Others - Agriculture	Andaman & Nicobar Islands
43	Ms. Joshna Chinappa	Sports	Tamil Nadu
44	Ms. Charlotte Chopin	Others - Yoga	France
45	Shri Raghuveer Choudhary	Literature & Education	Gujarat
46	Shri Joe D Cruz	Literature & Education	Tamil Nadu
47	Shri Ghulam Nabi Dar	Art	Jammu & Kashmir
48	Shri Chitta Ranjan Debbarma	Others - Spiritualism	Tripura
49	Shri Uday Vishwanath Deshpande	Sports	Maharashtra
50	Ms. Prema Dhanraj	Medicine	Karnataka
51	Shri Radha Krishan Dhiman	Medicine	Uttar Pradesh
52	Shri Manohar Krishana Dole	Medicine	Maharashtra
53	Shri Pierre Sylvain Filliozat	Literature & Education	France
54	Shri Mahabir Singh Guddu	Art	Haryana
55	Ms. Anupama Hoskere	Art	Karnataka
56	Shri Yazdi Maneksha Italia	Medicine	Gujarat
57	Shri Rajaram Jain	Literature & Education	Uttar Pradesh
58	Shri Jankilal	Art	Rajasthan
59	Shri Ratan Kahar	Art	West Bengal
60	Shri Yashwant Singh Kathoch	Literature & Education	Uttarakhand
61	Shri Zahir I Kazi	Literature & Education	Maharashtra
62	Shri Gaurav Khanna	Sports	Uttar Pradesh
63	Shri Surendra Kishore	Literature & Education - Journalism	Bihar
64	Shri Dasari Kondappa	Art	Telangana
65	Shri Sridhar Makam Krishnamurthy	Literature & Education	Karnataka
66	Ms. Yanung Jamoh Lego	Others - Agriculture	Arunachal Pradesh

SN	Name	Field	State/Region/ Country
67	Shri Jordan Lepcha	Art	Sikkim
68	Shri Satendra Singh Lohia	Sports	Madhya Pradesh
69	Shri Binod Maharana	Art	Odisha
70	Ms. Purnima Mahato	Sports	Jharkhand
71	Ms. Uma Maheshwari D	Art	Andhra Pradesh
72	Shri Dukhu Majhi	Social Work	West Bengal
73	Shri Ram Kumar Mallick	Art	Bihar
74	Shri Hemchand Manjhi	Medicine	Chhattisgarh
75	Shri Chandrashekhar Mahadeorao Meshram	Medicine	Maharashtra
76	Shri Surendra Mohan Mishra **(Posthumous)**	Art	Uttar Pradesh
77	Shri Ali Mohammed & Shri Ghani Mohammed* **(Duo)**	Art	Rajasthan
78	Ms. Kalpana Morparia	Trade & Industry	Maharashtra
79	Ms. Chami Murmu	Social Work	Jharkhand
80	Shri Sasindran Muthuvel	Public Affairs	Papua New Guinea
81	Ms. G Nachiyar	Medicine	Tamil Nadu
82	Ms. Kiran Nadar	Art	Delhi
83	Shri Pakaravur Chithran Namboodiripad **(Posthumous)**	Literature & Education	Kerala
84	Shri Narayanan E P	Art	Kerala
85	Shri Shailesh Nayak	Science & Engineering	Delhi

SN	Name	Field	State/Region/ Country
86	Shri Harish Nayak **(Posthumous)**	Literature & Education	Gujarat
87	Shri Fred Negrit	Literature & Education	France
88	Shri Hari Om	Science & Engineering	Haryana
89	Shri Bhagabat Padhan	Art	Odisha
90	Shri Sanatan Rudra Pal	Art	West Bengal
91	Shri Shankar Baba Pundlikrao Papalkar	Social Work	Maharashtra
92	Shri Radhe Shyam Pareek	Medicine	Uttar Pradesh
93	Shri Dayal Mavjibhai Parmar	Medicine	Gujarat
94	Shri Binod Kumar Pasayat	Art	Odisha
95	Ms. Silbi Passah	Art	Meghalaya
96	Ms. Shanti Devi Paswan & Shri Shivan Paswan* (Duo)	Art	Bihar
97	Shri Sanjay Anant Patil	Others - Agriculture	Goa
98	Shri Muni Narayana Prasad	Literature & Education	Kerala
99	Shri K S Rajanna	Social Work	Karnataka
100	Shri Chandrashekar Channapatna Rajannachar	Medicine	Karnataka
101	Shri Bhagwatilal Rajpurohit	Literature & Education	Madhya Pradesh
102	Shri Romalo Ram	Art	Jammu & Kashmir
103	Shri Navjivan Rastogi	Literature & Education	Uttar Pradesh
104	Ms. Nirmal Rishi	Art	Punjab

SN	Name	Field	State/Region/ Country
105	Shri Pran Sabharwal	Art	Punjab
106	Shri Gaddam Sammaiah	Art	Telangana
107	Shri Sangthankima	Social Work	Mizoram
108	Shri Machihan Sasa	Art	Manipur
109	Shri Omprakash Sharma	Art	Madhya Pradesh
110	Shri Eklabya Sharma	Science & Engineering	West Bengal
111	Shri Ram Chander Sihag	Science & Engineering	Haryana
112	Shri Harbinder Singh	Sports	Delhi
113	Shri Gurvinder Singh	Social Work	Haryana
114	Shri Godawari Singh	Art	Uttar Pradesh
115	Shri Ravi Prakash Singh	Science & Engineering	Mexico
116	Shri Seshampatti T Sivalingam	Art	Tamil Nadu
117	Shri Somanna	Social Work	Karnataka
118	Shri Kethavath Somlal	Literature & Education	Telangana
119	Ms. Shashi Soni	Trade & Industry	Karnataka
120	Ms. Urmila Srivastava	Art	Uttar Pradesh
121	Shri Nepal Chandra Sutradhar **(Posthumous)**	Art	West Bengal
122	Shri Gopinath Swain	Art	Odisha
123	Shri Laxman Bhatt Tailang	Art	Rajasthan
124	Ms. Maya Tandon	Social Work	Rajasthan
125	Ms. Aswathi Thirunal Gouri Lakshmi Bayi Thampuratty	Literature & Education	Kerala
126	Shri Jagdish Labhshanker Trivedi	Art	Gujarat
127	Ms. Sano Vamuzo	Social Work	Nagaland
128	Shri Balakrishnan Sadanam Puthiya Veetil	Art	Kerala
129	Shri Kurella Vittalacharya	Literature & Education	Telangana
130	Shri Kiran Vyas	Others - Yoga	France
131	Shri Jageshwar Yadav	Social Work	Chhattisgarh
132	Shri Babu Ram Yadav	Art	Uttar Pradesh

Adani Energy receives global sustainability leadership award 2023



- **Adani Energy Solutions Limited** was awarded the **'Global Sustainability Leadership Award 2023' in the 'Best Overall Sustainable Performance' category by the World Sustainability Congress in Mauritius.**
- The award recognized AESL's sustainable practices and its contributions as an innovator in the power sector.
- **Anil Sardana, Managing Director of AESL**, expressed honor in receiving the award and stated that it validates their efforts in driving sustainability.

'Nritya Kalanidhi' award conferred on Vasanthalakshmi



- **Vasanthalakshmi Narasimhachari** was awarded the **'Nritya Kalanidhi'** award at the **17th Dance Festival of the Music Academy in Chennai.**
- The award was presented by **Edgar Pang Tze Chiang, Consul General, Consulate General of the Republic of Singapore in Chennai**.
- **'Nritya Kalanidhi'** award is presented in the **field of dance** every year by the **Madras Music Academy.**

About Madras Music Academy

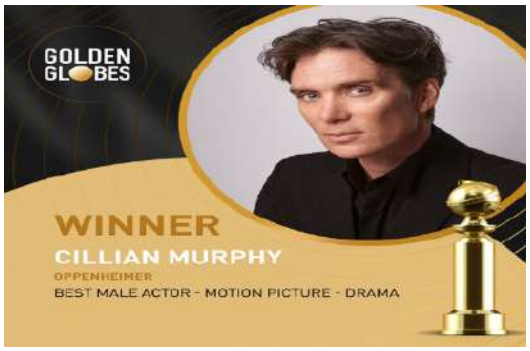
- It is a landmark institution in the history of the fine arts. It emerged as an offshoot of the All India Congress Session held in Madras in December 1927.
- It was conceived to be the institution that would set the standard for Carnatic music.
- It also confers the various awards such as the Sangita Kalanidhi, Nritya Kalanidhi, Sangita Kala Acharya, TTK, and Musicologist awards for the year.

Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports announced 'Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Puruskar' 2023



- The **Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports** has announced the **Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Puruskar 2023.**
- Odisha Mining Corporate Limited has received an award for **"Encouragement to Sports through Corporate Social Responsibility."**
- **Jain Deemed to be University, Bengaluru** has been awarded for **"identification and nurturing of budding and young talent."**
- **The Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Puruskar** is given to **corporate entities, Sports Control Boards, NGOs, and sports bodies** at both the State and National level for their role in sports promotion and development.

81st Golden Globe Award winners were announced



- **Christopher Nolan's** epic biographical thriller **Oppenheimer and Jesse Armstrong's satirical drama series Succession earned top honours at the 81st Golden Globes,** marking Hollywood's star-studded kickoff to its annual awards season.

Winner Highlights:

- **Best Motion Picture –** Drama: (Oppenheimer)
- **Best Motion Picture** – Musical or Comedy: (Poor Things)
- **Best Motion Picture** – Animated: (The Boy and the Heron)
- **Cinematic and Box Office Achievement:** (Barbie)
- **Best Motion Picture** – Non-English Language: (Anatomy of a Fall, France)
- **Best Performance by a Male Actor in a Motion Picture** – Drama: (Cillian Murphy, Oppenheimer)
- **Best Performance by a Female Actor in a Motion Picture** – Drama: (Lily Gladstone, Killers of the Flower Moon)
- **Best Performance by a Female Actor in a Motion Picture** – Musical or Comedy: (Emma Stone, Poor Things)
- **Best Performance by a Male Actor in a Motion Picture** – Musical or Comedy: (Paul Giamatti, The Holdovers)

- **Best Performance by a Female Actor in a Supporting Role in Any Motion Picture:** (Da'Vine Joy Randolph, The Holdovers)
- **Best Director** — Motion Picture: (Christopher Nolan, Oppenheimer)
- **Best Original Song** – Motion Picture: ("What Was I Made For?" Barbie, Music and lyrics by Billie Eilish, Finneas)
- **Best Television Series** – Drama: (Succession)

National Sports Awards

- **President Droupadi Murmu** conferred the prestigious **National Sports Awards** on India's top-performing athletes in a regal ceremony at the **Rashtrapati Bhawan.**



The Complete list of recipients of the 2023 awards

Sr. No.	Award	Winners
1.	**Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award**	Chirag Shetty and Satwik Sairaj Rankireddy (badminton)
2.	**Arjuna Awards**	Ojas Pravin Deotale (archery), Aditi Gopichand Swami (archery), Murali Sreeshankar (athletics), Parul Chaudhary (athletics), Mohammad Hussamuddin (boxing), R Vaishali (chess), Mohammed Shami (cricket), Anush Agarwalla (equestrian), Divyakriti Singh (equestrian dressage), Diksha Dagar (golf), Krishan Bahadur Pathak (hockey), Sushila Chanu (hockey), Pawan Kumar (kabaddi), Ritu Negi (kabaddi), Nasreen (kho-kho), Pinki (lawn bowls), Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar (shooting), Esha Singh (shooting), Harinder Pal Singh Sandhu (squash), Ayhika Mukherjee (table tennis), Sunil Kumar (wrestling), Antim Panghal (wrestling), Naorem Roshibina Devi (wushu), Sheetal Devi (para archery), Illuri Ajay Kumar Reddy (blind cricket), Prachi Yadav (para canoeing).
3.	**Dronacharya Award (regular category)**	Lalit Kumar (wrestling), RB Ramesh (chess), Mahaveer Prasad Saini (para athletics), Shivendra Singh (hockey), Ganesh Prabhakar Devrukhkar (mallakhamb).
4.	**Dronacharya Award (life-time category)**	Jaskirat Singh Grewal (golf), Bhaskaran E (kabaddi), Jayanta Kumar Pushilal (table tennis).
5.	**Dhyan Chand Award for lifetime achievement**	Manjusha Kanwar (badminton), Vineet Kumar Sharma (hockey), Kavitha Selvaraj (kabaddi).
6.	**Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (MAKA) Trophy 2023**	Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar (overall winner university); Lovely Professional University, Punjab (1st runner-up), Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra (2nd runner-up).

Emmy Awards 2024

- **The Emmy Awards, the highest honors in television, were handed out at a live ceremony in Los Angeles.**
- **"Succession" and "The Bear" won the best drama series and best comedy at the Emmy Awards respectively**
- Quinta Brunson made an emotional and historic win for **"Abbott Elementary"**
- Matthew Perry was honored in the In Memoriam segment along with other late stars
- Black women including Brunson, Edebiri, and Niecy Nash-Betts won major awards at the ceremony
- Christina Applegate, who has multiple sclerosis,

received a standing ovation for her appearance and became tearful while announcing winners



- **Katherine Heigl made a notable appearance reuniting with former "Grey's Anatomy" cast mates on a hospital room set.**
- **"Beef" won best-limited series**, with Steven Yeun and Ali Wong making history as the first Asian Americans to win in their categories

Niecy Nash-Betts won best supporting actress in a limited series for **"Dahmer – Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story"**

Full list of winners at the 75th Emmy Awards

1. Best Drama Series: "Succession"
2. Best Comedy Series: "The Bear"
3. Best Limited Or Anthology Series Or Movie: "Beef"
4. Best Comedy Actor: Jeremy Allen White, "The Bear"
5. Best Comedy Actress: Quinta Brunson, "Abbott Elementary"
6. Best Drama Actor: Kieran Culkin, "Succession"
7. Best Drama Actress: Sarah Snook, "Succession"
8. Best Actor, Best Limited Or Anthology Series Or Movie: Steven Yeun, "Beef"
9. Best Actress, Best Limited Or Anthology Series Or Movie: Ali Wong, "Beef"
10. Best Supporting Actor, Drama: Matthew Macfadyen, "Succession"
11. Best Supporting Actress, Drama: Jennifer Coolidge, "The White Lotus"
12. Best Supporting Actor, Comedy: Ebon Moss-Bachrach, "The Bear"
13. Best Supporting Actress, Comedy: Ayo Edebiri, "The Bear"
14. Best Supporting Actor, Limited Or Anthology Series Or Movie: Paul Walter Hauser, "Black Bird"
15. Best Supporting Actress, Limited Or Anthology Series Or Movie: Niecy Nash-Betts, "Dahmer - Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story"
16. Best Directing, Drama: Mark Mylod, "Succession"
17. Best Directing, Comedy: Christopher Storer, "The Bear"
18. Best Directing, Limited Or Anthology Series Or Movie: Lee Sung Jin, "Beef"
19. Best Writing, Drama Series: Jesse Armstrong, "Succession"
20. Best Writing, Comedy: Christopher Storer, "The Bear"
21. Best Writing, Limited Or Anthology Series Or Movie: Lee Sung Jin, "Beef"
22. Best Writing, Variety Series: "Last Week Tonight With John Oliver"
23. Best Talk Series: "The Daily Show With Trevor Noah"
24. Best Scripted Variety Series: "Last Week Tonight With John Oliver"
25. Best Variety Special (Live): "Elton John Live: Farewell From Dodger Stadium"
26. Best Reality Competition: "Rupaul's Drag Race".

FIFA Awards 2023: Lionel Messi and Aitana Bonmati win best player awards



- **Argentina superstar Lionel Messi won the Best Men's Player award for the second successive year after winning a tie-breaker with Erling Haaland.**
- **Messi won the Best FIFA Men's Player Award for the 3rd time in the last 4 years.**
- Spain's Aitana Bonmatí was named FIFA's Best Women's Player after a remarkable year leading Spain to World Cup glory and Barcelona to the Champions League title.
- Pep Guardiola and Sarina Wiegman were named the best men's and women's coaches, respectively.
- Messi's move to Inter Miami in the United States and his contribution to the team's Leagues Cup win helped sway the FIFA award voting in his favor.
- Manchester City stopper Ederson won the Best Men's Goalkeeper award while Mary Earps, the Manchester

United and England No. 1, won the Women's award in the ceremony in London.

- Haaland and Mbappé had strong cases for the award based on their impressive performances for their clubs and national teams.

THE BEST FIFA AWARDS 2023:

Sr. No.	Award	Winner
1.	**The Best FIFA Men's Player**	Winner: Lionel Messi (48 points) Second: Erling Haaland (48 points) Third: Kylian Mbappe (35 points)
2.	**The Best FIFA Women's Player**	Winner: Aitana Bonmati (52 points) Second: Linda Caicedo (40 points) Third: Jenni Hermoso (36 points)
3.	**The Best FIFA Men's Goalkeeper**	Winner: Ederson (23 points) Second: Thibaut Courtois (20 points) Third: Yassine Bounou (16 points)
4.	**The Best FIFA Women's Goalkeeper**	Winner: Mary Earps (28 points) Second: Catalina Coll (14 points) Third: Mackenzie Arnold (12 points)
5.	**The Best FIFA Men's Coach**	Winner: Pep Guardiola (28 points) Second: Luciano Spalletti (18 points) Third: Simone Inzaghi (11 points)
6.	**The Best FIFA Women's Coach**	Winner: Sarina Wiegman (28 points) Second: Emma Hayes (18 points) Third: Jonatan Giraldez (14 points)

Bangalore & Delhi Airports jointly bagged best airport award for the year at 4th edition of "Wings India Awards" in Civil Aviation Sector



- **Wings India Awards 2024 presented by Union Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya M Scindia**
- Bangalore and Delhi Airports jointly won the Best Airport award
- Vistara received the Best Airline of the Year award
- Air India recognized for International Connectivity
- Alliance Air acknowledged for Regional Connectivity
- Air India Express declared Sustainability Champion
- GMR Group honored as Best Aviation Service Provider
- Skyways Air Services recognized for cargo services
- Indian Oil Skytanking Pvt. Ltd awarded for Fuel Services
- GMR received recognition for Aero Academy
- Various other organizations recognized for excellence in different categories of civil aviation

Bengaluru's KIA bags 'best airport of the year' award



- **Bengaluru's Kempegowda International Airport wins 'Best Airport of the Year' award at Wings India Awards 2024.**

- **Karnataka's other Mangaluru International Airport wins the same within the under-five million passenger category.**
- The Bengaluru airport reportedly shared the title with its Delhi counterpart, as both airports were tied for the top position.
- The Kempegowda International Airport has been making headlines ever since the launch of its Terminal 2, which was built using a garden theme to signify Bengaluru's title as the garden city of India.
- **The airport has also bagged several awards of late, including the 'Special Prize for an Interior' award given away by UNESCO's Prix Versailles, a Paris-based architectural awards jury, which recognized the new terminal as one of the most beautiful airport terminals in the world.**

Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar-2024

- **For the year 2024, 60 Parachute Field Hospital, Uttar Pradesh, in the Institutional category, has been selected for the Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar-2024 for its excellent work in Disaster Management.**
- The Government of India, under the leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, has instituted an annual award known as Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar to recognize and honor the invaluable contribution and selfless service rendered by individuals and organizations in India in the field of disaster management.



- The award is announced every year on 23rd January, the birth anniversary of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose.
- **The award carries a cash prize of Rs. 51 lakh and a certificate in case of an institution and Rs. 5 lakh and a certificate in case of an individual.**
- Under the guidance of Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation Shri Amit Shah, the country has significantly improved the disaster management practices, preparedness, mitigation and response mechanisms resulting in significant reduction in casualties during natural calamities.

Appointment and Resignations

Chapter 14

Justice Prasanna B Varale takes oath as Supreme Court judge

- **Chief Justice DY Chandrachud** administered the oath of office to **Justice Prasanna B Varale** in a function on the Supreme Court premises in **New Delhi.**
- With Justice Varale's appointment, the top court has now attained its full strength of **34 judges, including the Chief Justice of India.**
- Justice Varale's legal career began when he enrolled as an advocate in August 1985, practicing under advocate SN Loya during his formative years.
- Additionally, he served as a lecturer at **Ambedkar Law College in Aurangabad until 1992.** His judicial journey commenced with his appointment as **a judge of the Bombay High Court on July 18, 2008.**

Puneet Chhatwal replaces Nakul Anand as head of FAITH tourism association



- The **Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism & Hospitality (FAITH)** has appointed **Puneet Chhatwal, managing director and CEO of Indian Hotels Company Limited**, as its new chairperson.
- He takes over from ITC executive director Nakul Anand, who retired this week.
- **Chhatwal will also continue as president of HAI, a position he was re-elected to in 2022.**

Kia India appoints Gwanggu Lee as new Managing Director and CEO

- **Gwangju Lee has been appointed as the new Managing Director and CEO of Kia India, succeeding Kook Hyun Shim and Tae Jin Park.**



- Tae Jin Park, the former MD & CEO, is retiring after a commendable 36-year tenure with Kia Corporation, including 4 years with Kia India.
- Gwangju Lee brings over 30 years of experience in the automotive industry and has held leadership roles in various global markets.

Justice Sanjiv Khanna Appointed as NALSA Executive Chairperson



- **President Droupadi Murmu** nominated **Justice Sanjiv Khanna,** the senior-most judge of the Supreme Court, as the **Executive Chairman of the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA).**
- The nomination was made under **Clause (b) of sub-section (2) of Section 3 of the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987.**
- Justice Sanjiv Khanna's appointment is effective from December 26, 2023, replacing Justice S. K. Kaul who retired on December 25.

Vice Admiral Dinesh K. Tripathi appointed as new Vice Chief of the Naval Staff

- **Vice-Admiral Dinesh K. Tripathi** took over as the **Vice-Chief of the Naval Staff (VCNS).**



- He is set to become the senior-most Naval officer after Admiral R. Hari Kumar steps down on April 30.
- An alumnus of Sainik School, Rewa, and National Defence Academy, Khadakwasla, Vice-Admiral Tripathi was commissioned into the Navy on July 1, 1985.
- Vice-Admiral Sanjay Jasjit Singh took over from him as the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief (FOCINC), Western Naval Command.
- Vice-Admiral V. Srinivas has become the 30th FOCINC of the Southern Naval Command, succeeding Vice-Admiral M. A. Hampiholi.
- **Vice-Admiral Tripathi and Vice-Admiral Singh both have significant previous naval appointments and have now assumed new roles in the Navy.**

Rashmi Shukla becomes Maharashtra's first woman Director General of Police



- **The Maharashtra government** appointed 1988 batch Indian Police Service (IPS) officer **Rashmi Shukla as the Director General of Police.**
- Ms. Shukla became the **first woman police officer to hold the top police post in the State**.
- She takes over from another **1988 IPS batch officer Rajnish Seth,** who retired last week to take charge as chairman of the **Maharashtra Public Service Commission (MPSC).**
- Before this role, she was on central deputation heading the **Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB)** and had also served as the **Additional Director-General** of the **Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF).**

Shashi Singh appointed as the new president of AIRIA



- **Shashi Singh has been elected as the president of the All India Rubber Industries Association (AIRIA), the apex body for rubber industries in India.**
- The elections took place during the **Annual General Meeting held on December 23, 2023**, in Mumbai.
- Mr. Zafar Ahmed, the Managing Director **of New India Rubber Works Pvt. Ltd.**, has been elected as the **Senior Vice-President of AIRIA for the year 2023-24.**

Canara Bank CGM P Santhosh appointed as MD of NARCL

- **P Santhosh,** chief general manager at Canara Bank, is appointed as **managing director and chief executive officer of National Asset Reconstruction of India Ltd (NARCL)** with effect from January 5, 2024.
- **Natarajan Sundar**, MD and CEO of NARCL resigned from the post.
- Natarajan Sundar is the second person among NARCL's top management to resign from the post before completing their tenure.
- Last August, Karnam Sekar, chairman of NARCL, resigned ahead of his term without specifying any reason.

Hasina gets 4th straight PM term as her party wins majority in B'desh polls



- **Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina** secured a record **fourth straight term** as her **Awami League party** won two-thirds of the seats in the general elections marred by sporadic violence and a boycott by the main opposition BNP and its allies.
- **Hasina won the Gopalganj-3** seat for the eighth time **since 1986. She bagged 249,965 votes** while her nearest rival **M Nizam Uddin Lashkar from the Bangladesh Supreme Party** secured just 469 votes.

Indra Mani Pandey assumes charge as BIMSTEC Secretary General



- **Indra Mani Pandey,** a seasoned Indian diplomat, has assumed charge as the **new secretary general of BIMSTEC.**
- **Pandey, a 1990-batch Indian Foreign Service (IFS) official,** previously served as India's permanent representative to the United Nations and other international organisations **in Geneva.**
- He succeeded **Bhutan's Tenzin Lekphell** and will have a three-year tenure at the post.
- Pandey assumed the charge as the fourth secretary general of BIMSTEC at its secretariat in Dhaka.

Gabriel Attal becomes France's youngest Prime Minister

- **Emmanuel Macron appointed 34-year-old Gabriel Attal as the new prime minister of France, signaling a desire for new momentum in his presidency ahead of European parliament elections.**



- Attal, a close ally of Macron and former government spokesman during the COVID pandemic, will replace outgoing Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne.
- Attal is recognized as a savvy minister and a popular figure in recent opinion polls, known for his ease in media appearances and parliament.
- **He will be the youngest prime minister in France's history and the first to be openly gay.**

Govt appoints Rajay Kumar Sinha as IRDAI's member for three years



- Rajay Kumar Sinha has been appointed as the **Whole-Time Member (Finance and Investment) of the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) for a three-year term.**
- **He is currently the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of SBI Capital Markets**, the investment banking arm of the State Bank of India, and also holds the position of Deputy Managing Director at SBI, Corporate Centre, Mumbai.
- Sinha has significant experience in various banking verticals, including Treasury, International Banking, and Retail Banking.

RBI Deputy Governor Michael Patra gets one-year extension



- **Reserve Bank of India Deputy Governor Michael D. Patra has been given a one-year extension ahead of the end of his tenure.**
- Mr. Patra is in charge of monetary policy and is a member of the monetary policy committee.
- Mr. Patra, along with RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das, played a vital role in dealing with the COVID-related impact on the economy.

RBI clears appointment of whole-time director by Bandhan Bank

- **Bandhan Bank** has received approval from the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** to appoint **Rajinder Kumar Babbar** as whole-time director.
- **Babbar will serve as the executive director of the bank for three years starting from his date of taking charge.**
- Babbar, currently the **Group Head – Transportation, Infrastructure, and Tractor Finance Group at HDFC Bank,** has 35 years of experience in the banking sector in various leadership roles.
- His previous roles include building and managing the Rural Banking Group for HDFC Bank, as well as positions at Centurion Bank, Bank of Punjab, and Central Bank of India.

PepsiCo India appoints marketing chief Jagrut Kotecha as new CEO



- **Jagrut Kotecha** has been appointed as the **next CEO of PepsiCo India, succeeding Ahmed El Sheikh.**
- **Kotecha** currently serves as the **Senior Vice President and Chief Commercial Officer for AMESA.**
- He joined **PepsiCo in 1994** and held various sales and marketing roles, including Regional Sales **Manager and Marketing Manager for Western Snack.**
- **Kotecha** also worked with Cadbury India from **1992 to 1994.**

Obituary News

Chapter 15

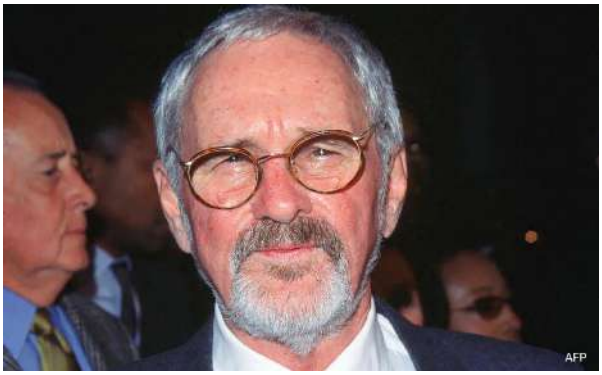
Rana Talwar, first Asian to head a global bank, passes away at 76

- **Rana Talwar, the first person from Asia to head a global bank (Standard Chartered)** passed away **on** Saturday at the age of 76 after being unwell for some time.
- Besides DLF, he served on the boards of various companies including Asahi India Glass Limited and Great Eastern Energy Corporation Limited.

Dr Nitya Anand, man who discovered India's first oral contraceptive pill 'Saheli', passes away

- **Dr Nitya Anand, who developed India's first oral contraceptive pill 'Saheli',** passed away at SGPGIMS Lucknow following a protracted illness.
- **From 1974 to 1984, Anand served as the Central Drug Research Institute's (CDRI) former director.**
- Since CDRI's founding in 1951, he has been its member. He oversaw 100 PhD students, published over 400 research papers, and received over 130 patents.

Norman Jewison, Director of 'In The Heat Of The Night', dies at 97



- **Norman Jewison**, the acclaimed Canadian director known for films like **"Moonstruck," "Fiddler on the Roof," and "In the Heat of the Night,"** has passed away at the age of 97.
- Jewison was a three-time Oscar nominee who received an **Academy Award for lifetime achievement in 1999.**
- His films often included socio-political content, and he was known for his visual flair, especially in the use of color, spot-on casting, and intelligent use of music.

Oscar-nominated screenwriter Herman Raucher passes away



- **Herman Raucher,** best-selling author and screenwriter, passed away at the age of 95 from natural causes.
- **His notable works include the Oscar-nominated "Summer of '42" and screenplays for films such as "Sweet November," "Can Heironymus Merkin Ever Forget Mercy Humppe and Find True Happiness?" and "Ode to Billy Joe."**
- **Raucher's book, which he wrote to publicize "Summer of '42," became a national best-seller before the film's release and was based on events from his own life.**
- He gained recognition for the racially charged film "Watermelon Man," directed by Melvin Van Peebles.
- Raucher's writing career began with one-hour dramas for television anthology series, and he grew up in Brooklyn and attended Erasmus High School and NYU.

'Mary Poppins' actress Glynis Johns passes away



- British actress, Glynis Johns passed away in Los Angeles at the age of 98.
- **Glynis Johns, best known for her role as Winifred Banks in Mary Poppins**
- Johns made her film debut in 1938 and gained prominence with her role in Miranda ten years later.
- She appeared in over 60 films and earned an Oscar nomination for While You Were Sleeping and The Sundowners.
- She was highly regarded for her wit, intelligence, and love for performance.
- **Her career spanned both English and American films, with her more recent appearance in the 1994 film The Ref.**
- Johns was married and divorced four times and is survived by her son, Gareth, by her first husband, Anthony Forwood.

German football legend Franz Beckenbauer (Der Kaiser) passes away



- German football legend Franz Beckenbauer has passed away at the age of 78
- He helped his country win the Football World Cup both as a player and as a coach.
- He captained West Germany to the World Cup title in 1974. He also coached the national side that won the 1990 World Cup final against Argentina.
- Nicknamed "Der Kaiser", he won numerous other honours, including a hat-trick of European Cups with Bayern Munich in the 1970s.

Music maestro Ustad Rashid Khan passes away



- The celebrated music maestro Ustad Rashid Khan passed away in a hospital in Kolkata.
- The famous vocalist was suffering from cancer and was admitted to a private health facility in Kolkata.
- **Born in Uttar Pradesh's Badayun Rashid Khan, who is also the nephew of Ustad Ghulam Mustafa Khan, received his initial training from his maternal grand-uncle Ustad Nissar Hussain Khan (1909–1993).**
- **Rashid Khan was an exponent of the Rampur-Sahaswan gayaki (style of singing) which is closely related to the Gwalior gharana.**
- **The vocalist won several awards including Padma Shri and the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 2006. In 2022, he was honoured with the Padma Bhushan, the third-highest civilian award of the country.** The West Bengal government also honoured Ustad Rashid Khan with Banga Bibhushan and Sangeet Mahasamman.

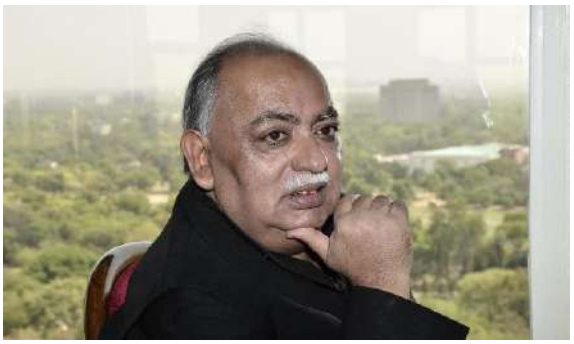
Mario Zagallo, Brazil's World Cup winning player and coach passes away

- Mario Zagallo, a legendary figure in Brazilian football, passed away at the age of 92 due to multiple-organ failure and comorbidities.



- **He was the first person to win the World Cup both as a player and a manager, an achievement that was later matched by Franz Beckenbauer and Didier Deschamps.**
- **Known for his superstitions, Zagallo considered the number 13 his lucky number, due to his birth year of 1931.**
- He played a key role in Brazil's first World Cup victory in 1958 and also contributed as a coach in subsequent tournaments.
- **As a coach, he led Brazil to victory in the 1970 World Cup and served as an assistant coach in the 1994 and 2006 World Cup wins.**
- Zagallo's influence and charisma left a lasting impact on Brazilian football, earning him praise from former players, coaches, and the FIFA president, Gianni Infantino.
- His death was mourned by the Brazilian Football Confederation, clubs where he played and coached, as well as former players who expressed their admiration and respect for him.

Urdu poet Munawwar Rana passes away



- Renowned Urdu poet Munawwar Rana passed away at a hospital in Lucknow.
- Born in 1952 in Rae Bareli, Mr. Munawwar Rana was awarded the Gyanpeeth Award in 2014.
- His use of simple words in the poems made his works popular among the common people.
- **Mr. Munawwar Rana's poem Maa, which is considered one of his most famous works, has a special place in the world of Urdu literature.**
- **In 2014, he was honoured with the Sahitya Akademi Award for his poem, 'Shahdaba'.**
- However, he had returned the award, alleging 'intolerance' in the country.
- **In 2012 he was awarded Maati Ratan Samman by Shaheed Shodha Sansthan for his services to Urdu literature.**
- He also received other awards, including the Ameer Khusro Award, the Mir Taqi Mir Award, the Ghalib Award, the Dr Zakir Hussain Award, and the Saraswati Samaj Award, throughout his career.
- The Urdu poet had been battling lung and throat infection since 2017 and was also receiving treatment regularly due to kidney problems for which he had to undergo dialysis.

Veteran classical singer Prabha Atre passes away due to heart attack



- **Three times Padma awardee and renowned classical singer Prabha Atre passed away due to a heart attack.**
- She was on her way to participate in a program in Mumbai when she suffered the heart attack.
- **Prabha Atre was born on September 13, 1932, and received several prestigious awards, including the Padma Shri (1990), Padma Bhushan (2002), and Padma Vibhushan (2022).**
- She began singing classical songs at a young age and also had a career in Marathi theatre before establishing herself as a global promoter of Indian classical vocal music across various genres.
- She is also known for her contribution to popularising Indian classical vocal music at a global level. She also owned an edge in different musical genres like Khyal, Thumri, Dadra, Ghazal, Geet, Natyasangeet, etc.

German Actor Christian Oliver dies in Plane Crash



- **German-born US actor Christian Oliver,** known for his roles in films alongside Tom Cruise and George Clooney, tragically died in a plane crash off the coast of a Caribbean island.
- The 51-year-old actor, whose real name was Christian Klepser, was accompanied by his two daughters, Madita, 10, and Annik, 12.
- The ill-fated flight was en route to St Lucia after departing from the nation of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG).
- The actor had also **featured in popular German series Alarm for Cobra 11.**
- He also left his mark on the streaming platform with a role in the Netflix series Sense8 and voice acting in various video games.

Padma Bhushan awardee Prof Ved Prakash Nanda passed away



- **Professor Ved Prakash Nanda, a distinguished Indian-American academic and Padma Bhushan awardee,** passed away on January 2, 2024.
- He was serving as a John Evans Distinguished University Professor at the University of Denver, Colorado in the US.
- He was also the Founding Director and Director Emeritus of the International Legal Studies Program, and Director of the Ved Nanda Center for International and Comparative Law, University of Denver Sturm College of Law.
- He was honored with the **Padma Bhushan award in 2018 in the field of Literature and Education.**

Art and Culture

Chapter 16

India to nominate Assam's Charaideo 'Moidams' for World Heritage Site recognition



- The **Charaideo Moidams in Assam** has been selected as **India's sole nomination for recognition as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.**
- These Moidams, also known as Maidams, are the mound-burial system of the **Ahom dynasty (13th century-19th century).**
- Out of the 386 Moidams explored so far, 90 royal burials at Charaideo are the best preserved, representative, and most complete examples of this tradition.
- The Moidams will be nominated in the category of cultural sites[1]. Currently, there are 40 World Heritage Sites in India -- 32 of them cultural sites, seven natural sites, and one mixed site[1]. Assam's Kaziranga National Park and Manas National Park are among the seven natural sites.
- The nomination was submitted by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, who announced that a team of the UNESCO National Heritage Committee would visit Assam in September to inspect the Moidams and take a decision in March next year.

Asian Buddhist Conference for Peace

- Recently, the **Asian Buddhist Conference for Peace (ABCP),** a voluntary mass movement of Buddhists in Asia convened its **12th General Assembly in New Delhi.**
- **Theme "ABCP - The Buddhist Voice of Global South"** reflects India's commitment, as demonstrated through its G20 presidency and the Voice of Global South Summit.
- Proactive role of India was highlighted in developing the Buddhist circuit and establishing the India International Centre for Buddhist Culture.

Important Days

Chapter 17

Indian Newspaper Day 2024

- Indian Newspaper Day is observed on **January 28th each year.**
- It marks the inception of newspapers in India, a historic moment when **James Augustus Hicky** introduced the first printed newspaper, **Hicky's Bengal Gazette, in 1780.**
- It is an occasion to reflect on the integral role newspapers have played in India's socio-political landscape, emphasizing their commitment to democratic principles, freedom of expression, and the dissemination of accurate information.

International Day of Clean Energy

- The International Day of Clean Energy is observed on **January 26**. This day was declared by the **United Nations General Assembly** to raise awareness and mobilize action for a just and inclusive transition to clean energy for the benefit of people and the planet.
- The day is also significant as it marks the founding date of the **International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA).**
- The International Day of Clean Energy emphasizes the importance of clean energy in reducing emissions and benefiting communities lacking access to reliable power sources.
- It also highlights the need to end our reliance on fossil fuels and invest in alternative sources of energy that are **clean, accessible, affordable, sustainable, and reliable**.

International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA)

The International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) is a leading global intergovernmental agency that supports countries in their transition to a sustainable energy future. It serves as the principal platform for international cooperation, providing state-of-the-art data and analyses on technology, innovation, policy, finance, and investment.

The agency was founded in 2009 and its headquarters are located in **Masdar City, Abu Dhabi.** IRENA also commemorates its founding date, **January 26,** as the International Day of Clean Energy.

IRENA promotes the widespread adoption and sustainable use of all forms of renewable energy, including bioenergy, geothermal, hydropower, ocean, solar, and wind energy.

IRENA's membership comprises 168 countries and the European Union.

National Tourism Day 2024

- National Tourism Day is celebrated every year on **January 25**. This day was declared by the Indian government in **1948** to bring Indian tourism into the spotlight.
- The day is observed each year to promote various popular tourist destinations across India, encourage people to explore these places, and preserve the nation's cultural heritage.
- The theme for National Tourism Day 2024 is **'Sustainable Journeys, Timeless Memories'**. This theme highlights the importance of responsible, sustainable, and mindful travel among tourists.

National Voters' Day 2024



The **14th National Voters' Day (NVD)** was celebrated on **January 25, 2024**. This day is observed annually to mark the foundation day of the **Election Commission of India, which is on January 25, 1950.**

The main purpose of the NVD celebration is to create electoral awareness amongst citizens and encourage them to participate in the electoral process.

The theme for NVD 2024 was **'Nothing Like Voting, I Vote For sure'.** This theme is a continuation from the previous year's theme and emphasizes the commitment to voting.

During the event, the **Hon'ble President of India, Smt. Droupadi Murmu,** presented the **Best Electoral Practices Awards for the year 2023.**

A short voter awareness film - **'My Vote My Duty'** produced by ECI in association with renowned **filmmaker Shri Raj Kumar Hirani** was also screened.

On January 25, 2024, the Election Commission of India celebrated its **75th year of service to the Nation**.

To mark this momentous occasion, and in light of the 2024 Parliamentary Elections – a commemorative postage stamp themed **"Inclusive Elections"** was released.

Election Commission of India (ECI)

- The Election Commission of India (ECI) is an autonomous constitutional authority responsible for administering election processes in India. The body administers elections to the Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, State Legislative Assemblies in India, and the offices of the President and Vice President in the country.
- The current commission consists of Shri Rajiv Kumar (Chief Election Commissioner), Shri Anup Chandra Pandey (Election Commissioner), and Shri Arun Goel (Election Commissioner).

History of ECI

- The Election Commission of India (ECI) is a constitutional body that was established on January 25, 1950. It was formed to administer elections in India according to the rules and regulations mentioned in the Constitution of India.
- The structure of the commission changed for the first time on October 16, 1989, on the eve of the 1989 General Election, when two additional Commissioners were appointed. However, their tenure was very short, ending on January 1, 1990.
- From January 2, 1990, to September 30, 1993, the commission again became a single-member body. It was restructured into a three-member body on October 1, 1993, and has remained so since then.

Indian Army Day 2024

- The **76th Indian Army Day** was celebrated on **January 15, 2024.** This day is dedicated to honoring the soldiers of the Indian Army and their sacrifices for the nation.
- The theme for Indian Army Day 2024 was **"In Service of the Nation"**. This theme highlights the core values of the Army, emphasizing the unwavering dedication, commitment, and professionalism of our soldiers. It echoes the Indian Army's motto, **"Service Before Self,"** underscoring the priority placed on the safety and security of the nation.
- **On this day in 1949, General K. M. Cariappa, later Field Marshal, became the first Indian Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army,** taking over from British Commander-in-Chief General Francis Butcher. This marked a historic moment as Cariappa became the first-ever Indian to lead the Army, ending the era of British-serving chiefs.

World Braille Day celebrated across globe today



- **World Braille Day** is celebrated across the world on **4 January** every year.
- This day holds special importance as it marks the birthday of **Louis Braille**, the visionary inventor of the Braille script, born in **France in 1809**.
- Recognizing the paramount role of Braille in education, communication, and social inclusion, the United Nations has designated 4 January every year as World Braille Day.
- Braille, a universal code rather than a language, serves as a tool to write and read in various languages, including **Sanskrit, Arabic, Chinese, Hebrew, Spanish**, and many others.
- On this occasion, National Institutes and Composite Regional Centres under the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities are organizing several programs in the country.

Earth's Rotation Day 2024



- **January 8** is observed every year as **Earth's Rotation Day**.
- The world celebrates the anniversary of **French physicist Leon Foucault's 1851** proof that the Earth rotates on its axis.
- Earth's rotation around its own axis causes day and night and influences the change of seasons.
- The rotation is a key factor in our sleep-wake cycle.
- Scientists throughout history have proposed various theories about the nature of the Earth's rotation.
- A hypothetical line (axis) goes vertically through the Earth, linking the north and south poles.
- The length of day and night is not determined by the rotation itself.
- In 470 BC, the Greeks claimed that the Earth rotated on its own back.
- **In 1851, French Physicist Leon Foucault demonstrated Earth's rotation using a pendulum.**
- The experiment by Foucault was showcased at the Pantheon in Greece and the Paris Observatory.
- Earth's Rotation Day is celebrated to mark Foucault's experiment, given importance over other experiments demonstrating Earth's rotation.

World Hindi Day 2024



- Every year, World Hindi Day is celebrated on **January 10.**
- It pays tribute to the cultural significance and global influence of the **Hindi language**
- Hindi is one of the most spoken languages in the northern part of the country and ranks as the third-most spoken language in the world.
- Hindi is the official language of the Indian Government and one of India's official languages alongside English
- The celebration promotes the language and encourages its inclusion in various forms of expression like speeches, performances, music, and theatrical arts
- **In 1949, Hindi was spoken for the first time in the United Nations General Assembly.**
- **In 2006, the first Vishwa Hindi Diwas** was observed by the then Prime Minister of the country – Dr. Manmohan Singh.

National Startup Day 2024



- In India, National Startup Day is celebrated on **16th January** every year.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced January 16 as the National Startup Day **on January 15, 2022.**
- The announcement was made on the foundation day of Startup India.
- National Startup Day aims to recognize the significant growth and contributions of the startup community to the Indian economy.
- **The Startup India initiative was launched in 2016.**
- The number of startups has increased from **around 340 in 2016 to over 1,15,000 in 2023**.

Parakram Divas 2024

- Parakram Diwas is celebrated every year on 23 January. The government in **2021 declared that the birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose**, a prominent Indian freedom fighter, is celebrated annually as **"Parakram Diwas".**



- The decision was taken to honor the contributions he made towards India's freedom struggle.
- The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi has extended greetings to the people of India on Parakram Diwas.
- 'Parakram Diwas', which marks the **Azad Hind Fauj founder (Subash Chandra Bose)** birth anniversary.

National Girl Child Day 2024

- The **Ministry of Women and Child Development**, Government of India, celebrated **National Girl Child Day on 24th January 2024** at the National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development (NIPCCD).
- Every year, on January 24th, National Girl Child Day is observed countrywide with the aim of engaging the nation in creating a positive environment that values the girl child.

Books and Authors

Chapter 18

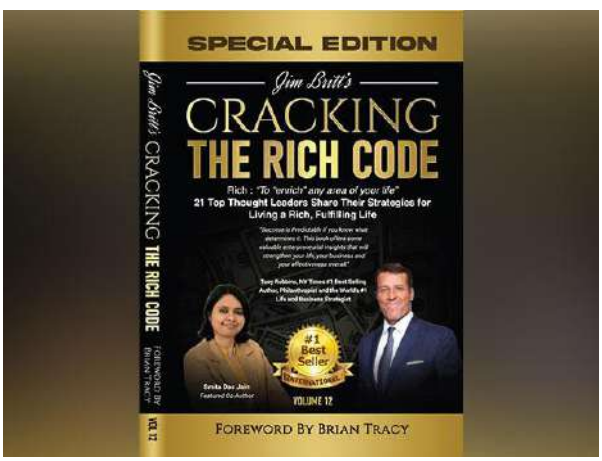
'Ek Samandar, Mere Andar' book written by Sanjeev Joshi.

- National Security Advisor Ajit Doval and Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan launched the book 'Ek Samandar, Mere Andar', written by BrahMos Aerospace Deputy CEO Sanjeev Joshi.
- 'Ek Samandar, Mere Andar' is a collection of 75 poems penned by BrahMos Aerospace Deputy CEO Sanjeev Joshi.
- This book reflects the confluence of creative expression and defence expertise.

Romesh Bhattacharji authored "KASHMIR: Travels in Paradise on Earth"

- HarperCollins announced the publication of the book "KASHMIR: Travels in Paradise on Earth", authored by Romesh Bhattacharji. The book is set to release on February 5, 2024.
- The book offers detailed insights into the topography and geography of Kashmir, capturing its pristine beauty before the onset of militancy.

Smita Das Jain co-authored a chapter in the international bestseller "Cracking the Rich Code: Vol 12"



- Executive Coach and Personal Empowerment Life Coach Smita Das Jain has contributed a transformative chapter to the international best-selling book series, "Cracking the Rich Code: Vol 12."
- The globally acclaimed book, curated by personal development luminary Jim Britt, boasts the endorsement of celebrated life and business strategist Tony Robbins and features a foreword by legendary motivational speaker Brian Tracy.

A book "Gandhi A Life in Three Campaigns" launched by M.J. Akbar

Renowned author M.J. Akbar, along with co-author K. Natwar Singh, launched a new book titled "Gandhi: A Life in Three Campaigns."

This book throws light on the life and struggles of Mahatma Gandhi, particularly focusing on three important mass campaigns (Non-Cooperation Movement (1920), Salt Satyagraha (1930), Quit India Movement (1942) led by him.

MJ Akbar is a distinguished author whose many books focus on the social divisions and religious tensions created by colonial policy.

He is also the author of books such as Gandhi's Hinduism the Struggle Against Jinnah's Islam, India: The Siege Within; Nehru: The Making of India; Kashmir: Behind the Vale; The Shade of Swords: Jihad and the Conflict between Islam and Christianity.

Conversations with Aurangzeb translated in English by Nandini Krishna.

- **"Conversations with Aurangzeb"** is a novel written by the **Tamil author Charu Nivedita** and translated into English by Nandini Krishnan. The book is a part historical novel and part satire.
- It begins with a writer who hopes to interview the spirit of Shah Jahan for his new book. However, the narrative takes an unexpected turn when Aurangzeb hijacks the novel.

- **The book touches upon a variety of topics, from marketing strategies for emperors to mutiny, from Marxism to Sunny Leone.**
- The book is published by HarperCollins India and was auto-delivered to Kindle on 20 October 2023.

'Fertilising the Future: Bharat's March Towards Fertilizer Self-Sufficiency' written by Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya



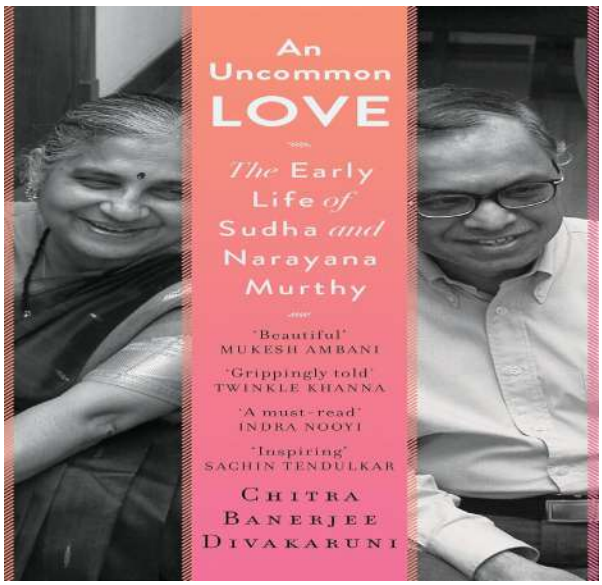
- **Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar** released the book **'Fertilising the Future: Bharat's March Towards Fertilizer Self-Sufficiency'** written by Chemicals and Fertilizers Minister **Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya.**
- The Hindi version of the book is **titled 'Urvarak-Atmanirbharta ki Raah.'**
- The book dileneates the journey of making India self reliant in the fertilizer sector under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the revolutionary changes that have taken place till date.

Union Minister Amit Shah launched a book "Assam's Braveheart Lachit Barphukan"



- The Book **'"Assam's Braveheart Lachit Barphukan"** written by **Arup Kumar Dutta** at the Srimanta Sankardeva International Auditorium in Guwahati in the presence of Chief Minister, Himanta Biswa Sarma launched.
- The book "Assam's Braveheart Lachit Barphukan" has been published by the State government in English language and translated into 24 Scheduled Indian languages.
- Shri. Amit Shah attended the **60th Raising Day of the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB)** at Salonibari in Sonitpur district and the passing out parade of 2551 Assam police commandos at **Sarusajai Stadium at Guwahati.**

An Uncommon Love: The Early Life of Sudha and Narayana Murthy" by Chitra Banerjee



"An Uncommon Love: The Early Life of Sudha and Narayana Murthy" is a book written by **Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni.**

It tells the story of Sudha Kulkarni and Narayana Murthy, from their courtship to the founding years of Infosys, and from their marriage to parenthood.

The book navigates the personal and professional lives of the two entrepreneur-philanthropists, giving us a glimpse of their everyday lives.

The book is about the sacrifices it takes to forge a powerful and lasting marriage, about the early story of Infosys

and Indian business before liberalization, and most of all about two icons before they became the legends that transformed the fields of business and philanthropy.

Himanta Biswa Sarma released first volume of 'Political History of Assam (1947-1971)'

- Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma released the first edition of 'Political History of Assam (1947-1971)'- Volume 1, marking a significant step in documenting the state's political journey.
- The book, envisioned to be completed in three volumes by 2025, covers the political events in Assam from 1947 to 2020.
- Authored by Dr. Rajen Saikia, an eminent historian and former President of the Indian History Congress, Modern India Section, this work aims to provide an in-depth understanding of the region's political landscape during a crucial period in its history.

Practice Questions

1. Who hosted the 2024 World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos, Switzerland?

(*a*) China (*b*) Germany
(*c*) India (*d*) United States
(*e*) Sri Lanka

2. The global airline consortium, G20, recently agreed to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by:

(*a*) 2030 (*b*) 2035
(*c*) 2040 (*d*) 2045
(*e*) 2050

3. Which country became the first to legalize recreational cannabis on the African continent?

(*a*) Lesotho (*b*) Malawi
(*c*) South Africa (*d*) Zimbabwe
(*e*) Brazil

4. The Indian government launched the 'Hamara Samvidhan Hamara Samman' campaign to celebrate which occasion?

(*a*) Republic Day (*b*) Independence Day
(*c*) Constitution Day (*d*) Gandhi Jayanti
(*e*) Swami Vivekananda Jayanti

5. Airbus signed a historic agreement with Tata Advanced Systems to manufacture what in India?

(*a*) Commercial airplanes
(*b*) Military aircraft
(*c*) Helicopter parts
(*d*) Satellite components
(*e*) None of the above

6. Who won the Women's Singles title at the Australian Open Tennis Championship 2024?

(*a*) Iga Swiatek (*b*) Elena Rybakina
(*c*) Ons Jabeur (*d*) Emma Raducanu
(*e*) None of the above

7. The world's first commercial fusion energy reactor, DEMO, is planned to be built in which European country?

(*a*) France (*b*) Germany
(*c*) Spain (*d*) United Kingdom
(*e*) Brazil

8. The 18th Asian Shooting Championship was held in which country in January 2024?

(*a*) China (*b*) India
(*c*) Kazakhstan (*d*) Thailand
(*e*) Singapore

9. Which Indian state held the 5th edition of the Meghalaya Games in January 2024?

(*a*) Assam (*b*) Meghalaya
(*c*) Nagaland (*d*) Tripura
(*e*) Sikkim

10. The newly inaugurated e-Mobility Simulation Lab at IIT Delhi focuses on research and development in the field of:

(*a*) Autonomous vehicles
(*b*) Electric vehicles
(*c*) Hyperloop technology
(*d*) Drone delivery
(*e*) Fighter Jet

11. Which technology giant announced plans to invest $10 billion in building a "metaverse city" in South Korea?

(*a*) Apple (*b*) Google
(*c*) Microsoft (*d*) Meta
(*e*) None of the above

12. The James Webb Space Telescope successfully completed its mirror alignment process, paving the way for its first scientific observations. What was the main challenge in aligning the telescope's mirror segments?

(*a*) Extreme cold temperatures in space
(*b*) Microscopic positioning of the segments
(*c*) Communication lag with Earth
(*d*) Avoiding collisions with space debris
(*e*) None of the above

13. A major volcanic eruption occurred on the island of Mauna Loa in Hawaii, prompting evacuations and disrupting air travel. Which type of eruption was it?

(*a*) Plinian eruption
(*b*) Fissure eruption
(*c*) Shield volcano eruption
(*d*) Caldera collapse
(*e*) None of the above

14. The World Health Organization declared the monkeypox outbreak a global health emergency. What is the primary mode of transmission for monkeypox?

(*a*) Airborne droplets
(*b*) Close contact with infected individuals
(*c*) Mosquito bites
(*d*) Contaminated food or water
(*e*) None of the above

15. The United Nations Human Rights Council adopted a resolution condemning the use of facial recognition technology for mass surveillance. Which country has been a leading critic of this technology?

(*a*) China (*b*) Russia
(*c*) United States (*d*) India
(*e*) Singapore

16. The popular video game platform, Steam, banned blockchain-based games due to concerns about cryptocurrency speculation and scams. What is blockchain technology?

(*a*) A type of artificial intelligence
(*b*) A decentralized digital ledger
(*c*) A cloud computing platform
(*d*) A virtual reality simulation
(*e*) None of the above

17. The world's first cloned Arctic wolf was born in China, raising ethical concerns about animal cloning. What is the primary purpose of animal cloning?

(*a*) Conservation of endangered species
(*b*) Medical research
(*c*) Food production
(*d*) Pet ownership
(*e*) None of the above

18. The European Union agreed to phase out the sale of new gasoline and diesel cars by 2035, promoting the transition to electric vehicles. Which country in the EU is a major producer of electric vehicles?

(*a*) France (*b*) Germany
(*c*) Italy (*d*) Spain
(*e*) India

19. The International Olympic Committee announced that breakdancing will be an official sport at the 2024 Paris Olympics. What was the original name for breakdancing?

(*a*) Street dancing (*b*) B-boying/B-girling
(*c*) Hip-hop dancing (*d*) Freestyle dancing
(*e*) None of the above

20. Which two countries participated in the joint military exercise SADA TANSEEQ in January 2024 in Rajasthan?

(*a*) India and China
(*b*) India and Pakistan
(*c*) India and Saudi Arabia
(*d*) India and Nepal
(*e*) India and Bangladesh

21. Which contingent won the award for the Best Marching Contingent among CAPF/other auxiliary forces?

(*a*) Sikh Regiment Contingent
(*b*) Delhi Police Women Marching Contingent
(*c*) Gujarat Border Security Force Contingent
(*d*) Tamil Nadu Naval Contingent
(*e*) Assam Rifles Contingent

22. What is the estimated total number of snow leopards in India according to the first-ever Snow Leopard Population Assessment in India (SPAI)?

(*a*) 500 (*b*) 718
(*c*) 1000 (*d*) 2000
(*e*) 2500

23. Which state has the highest number of snow leopards in India as per the Snow Leopard Population Assessment in India (SPAI)?

(*a*) Uttarakhand (*b*) Himachal Pradesh
(*c*) Ladakh (*d*) Sikkim
(*e*) Arunachal Pradesh

24. Who made a remarkable debut at the Cairo Shooting World Cup, securing the women's air rifle silver medal?

(*a*) Sonam Maskar (*b*) Manu Bhaker
(*c*) Apurvi Chandela (*d*) Anjum Moudgil
(*e*) Elavenil Valarivan

25. On which date is World Leprosy Day marked in 2024?

(*a*) January 24 (*b*) January 25
(*c*) January 26 (*d*) January 27
(*e*) January 28

26. From which country did the International Health Regulations National Focal Point (IHR NFP) alert the World Health Organization about a human case of Western Equine Encephalitis Virus (WEEV) infection?

(*a*) Brazil (*b*) Argentina
(*c*) Mexico (*d*) Peru
(*e*) Chile

27. GAIL, India's leading gas company, has strengthened its LNG portfolio through a 10-year partnership with which country's gas company?

(*a*) Qatar
(*b*) Saudi Arabia
(*c*) United Arab Emirates
(*d*) Iran
(*e*) Kuwait

28. Indian boxer Mandeep Jangra achieved a remarkable victory at which championship in the U.S.?

(*a*) WBA's intercontinental super featherweight championship
(*b*) WBC's intercontinental super featherweight championship
(*c*) IBF's intercontinental super featherweight championship
(*d*) WBO's intercontinental super featherweight championship
(*e*) NBA's intercontinental super featherweight championship

29. Which country has launched the world's first wooden satellite?

(*a*) Japan (*b*) USA
(*c*) China (*d*) Russia
(*e*) India

30. Who has been appointed as the new CEO of Twitter?

(*a*) Jack Dorsey (*b*) Sundar Pichai
(*c*) Parag Agrawal (*d*) Elon Musk
(*e*) Mark Zuckerberg

31. Which country has recently declared a state of emergency due to severe floods?

(*a*) Australia (*b*) India
(*c*) USA (*d*) Brazil
(*e*) China

32. Who won the Australian Open Men's Singles title in 2024?

(*a*) Rafael Nadal (*b*) Novak Djokovic
(*c*) Roger Federer (*d*) Andy Murray
(*e*) Dominic Thiem

33. Who has been sworn in as the new President of Honduras?

(*a*) Juan Orlando Hernandez
(*b*) Xiomara Castro
(*c*) Porfirio Lobo
(*d*) Manuel Zelaya
(*e*) Roberto Micheletti

34. Which country has recently tested a hypersonic missile?

(*a*) USA (*b*) Russia
(*c*) China (*d*) North Korea
(*e*) India

35. Who has been named as the Time's Person of the Year 2024?

(*a*) Elon Musk (*b*) Greta Thunberg
(*c*) Joe Biden (*d*) Kamala Harris
(*e*) Xi Jinping

36. Which country has recently legalized same-sex marriage?

(*a*) Chile (*b*) Peru
(*c*) Argentina (*d*) Brazil
(*e*) Colombia

37. Who has been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize 2024?

(*a*) Malala Yousafzai
(*b*) Kailash Satyarthi

(*c*) Greta Thunberg

(*d*) World Health Organization

(*e*) United Nations

38. Which country has recently joined the United Nations as its 194th member?

(*a*) Palestine (*b*) Kosovo

(*c*) Taiwan (*d*) Western Sahara

(*e*) South Sudan

39. Which sport did Naorem Roshibina Devi excel in to be crowned the IWUF Female Athlete of the Year?

(*a*) Wushu (*b*) Judo

(*c*). Taekwondo (*d*) Karate

(*e*) Tennis

40. Which Indian state has launched the 'LABHA' scheme, a 100% state-funded Minimum Support Price initiative for Minor Forest Produce (MFP)?

(*a*) Maharashtra (*b*) Rajasthan

(*c*). Karnataka (*d*) Odisha

(*e*) Kerala

41. Where was India's Largest Electrolyser End Fuel Cell-based Green Hydrogen Pilot Project inaugurated by THDC India Limited on the 75th Republic Day?

(*a*) Varanasi (*b*) Rishikesh

(*c*). Bhubaneswar (*d*) Haridwar

(*e*) Ayodhya

42. Which state hosted the Fourth National Chilika Birds Festival?

(*a*) Odisha (*b*) Bihar

(*c*). Kerala (*d*) Maharashtra

(*e*) Haryana

43. What is the name of the recently introduced silicon-proven Artificial Intelligence (AI) chip by the Digital University Kerala?

(*a*) Silicon Edge (*b*) Kerala AI Pro

(*c*). Kairali AI Chip (*d*) TechSmart AI

(*e*) None of the above

44. What is the new name of Bank of Baroda's card subsidiary, formerly known as 'BOB Financial Solutions Limited'?

(*a*) Baroda Cards

(*b*) Financial Reimagined Limited

(*c*). BOBCARD Limited

(*d*) Baroda Financial Solutions

(*e*) None of the above

45. With which country has Qatar finalized a 15-year LNG Sale and Purchase Agreement (SPA) to bolster energy ties?

(*a*) Bangladesh (*b*) India

(*c*). Pakistan (*d*) Sri Lanka

(*e*) Bhutan

46. Who has recently started his second term as the Prime Minister of Bhutan after the fourth free election?

(*a*) Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck

(*b*) Tenzin Gyatso

(*c*). Sangay Wangchuk

(*d*) Tshering Tobgay

(*e*) None of the above

47. On which date does India commemorate Martyrs' Day or Shaheed Diwas?

(*a*) January 15 (*b*) January 30

(*c*). January 14 (*d*) January 5

(*e*) January 10

48. Who secured a remarkable victory at the NBA's intercontinental super featherweight championship in the U.S.?

(*a*) Vikash Dahiya (*b*) Dharmender

(*c*). Mandeep Jangra (*d*) Akshay Chahal

(*e*) Rajat Bhatiya

49. With which country's gas company has GAIL, the Indian gas firm, secured a 10-year LNG deal?

(*a*) Qatar (*b*) Saudi Arabia

(*c*). Oman (*d*) UAE

(*e*) Yaman

50. Which automaker retained its position as the world's top-selling automaker in 2023?

(*a*) Toyota (*b*) Honda

(*c*). Ford (*d*) Volkswagen

(*e*) Force

51. From which country did the International Health Regulations National Focal Point (IHR NFP) alert the World Health Organization about a human case of Western Equine Encephalitis Virus (WEEV) infection?

(*a*) Brazil (*b*) Argentina
(*c*). Mexico (*d*) Chile
(*e*) UAE

52. On which date is World Leprosy Day marked in 2024?
(*a*) January 15 (*b*) January 22
(*c*). January 28 (*d*) February 5
(*e*) January 10

53. Who made a remarkable debut at the Cairo Shooting World Cup, securing the women's air rifle silver medal?
(*a*) Anna Janssen (*b*) Sonam Maskar
(*c*). Nancy Mandhotra (*d*) Maria Rodriguez
(*e*) None of the above

54. What venue used for the 10th Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit (VGGS)?
(*a*) Ahmedabad (*b*) Gandhi Nagar
(*c*). Surat (*d*) Porbandar
(*e*) Baroda

55. Who has been appointed as the new secretary general of BIMSTEC?
(*a*) M Shahidul Islam (*b*) Sumith Nakandala
(*c*). Indramani Pandey (*d*) Raj Iyer
(*e*) Dinesh Bhatiya

56. Which of the following countries will host the UNESCO's World Heritage Committee in 2024?
(*a*) India (*b*) Azerbaijan
(*c*). Dubai (*d*) China
(*e*) Japan

57. Mayurbhanj district, red weaver ants have been awarded the GI tag, this product received the GI tag for which of the following states?
(*a*) Odisha (*b*) Bihar
(*c*). Assam (*d*) Punjab
(*e*) West Bengal

58. Ustad Rashid Khan, who passed away recently, was a famous personality of:
(*a*) Classical Musician (*b*) Politician
(*c*) Actor (*d*) Sports
(*e*) Scientist

59. What is the theme of the World Hindi Day 2024 that is observed annually on January 10.
(*a*) To make Hindi a part of public opinion
(*b*) Hindi–Bridging Traditional Knowledge and Artificial Intelligence
(*c*) Hindi Vishwa Aur Bharatiy Sanskriti
(*d*) Hindi – Traditional Knowledge to Artificial Intelligence
(*e*) We need Hindi to strength unity in the world

60. Who introduced the Drishti 10 Starliner Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) for the Indian Navy?
(*a*) Mahindra Defence Systems Ltd.
(*b*) Adani Defence and Aerospace
(*c*) Paras Defence and Space Technologies Ltd.
(*d*) Alpha Design Technologies
(*e*) None of the above

61. In which city will the 27th National Youth Festival be organized?
(*a*) Patna (*b*) Varanasi
(*c*) Nashik (*d*) Kolkata
(*e*) Pune

62. In which country will the new campus of IIT Madras be opened?
(*a*) Sri Lanka (*b*) Nepal
(*c*) Bhutan (*d*) Bangladesh
(*e*) Japan

63. Footballer Franz Beckenbauer has passed away, he was a legendary footballer of which country?
(*a*) France (*b*) Portugal
(*c*) Italy (*d*) Germany
(*e*) Singapore

64. Red Ant Chutney, which has recently received a Geographical Indication (GI) tag, belongs to which state?
(*a*) Odisha (*b*) Bihar
(*c*) Goa (*d*) Jharkhand
(*e*) Madhya Pradesh

65. Which country hosted and chair of the 46th session of UNESCO's World Heritage Committee in 2024?
(*a*) UK (*b*) China
(*c*) India (*d*) Nepal
(*e*) Bhutan

66. As per prestigious awards by Skytrax in 2023, which airport was crowned the World's Best Airport for the year 2023?

(*a*) Singapore's Changi Airport

(*b*) Qatar's Hamad International Airport

(*c*) Incheon International Airport

(*d*) Indira Gandhi International Airport, New Delhi

(*e*) None of these

67. National Human Trafficking Awareness Day is observed every year on which of the following dates?

(*a*) 11 December (*b*) 11 February

(*c*) 11 January (*d*) 11 March

(*e*) 11 June

68. What is the theme of National Youth Day (Yuva Diwas) 2024?

(*a*) Sankalp Se Siddhi

(*b*) Arise, Awake, and Realise the Power You Hold

(*c*) Transforming Education

(*d*) Youth for Digital India

(*e*) Indian Youth for Development, Skill and Harmony

69. The book '"Sanskriti ke Ayaam" book has been written by:

(*a*) Anirudh Bharti (*b*) VK Aggarwal

(*c*) JK Rowling (*d*) Manorama Mishra

(*e*) Stephen Watson

70. Malkangiri airport is located in which state of India?

(*a*) Odisha (*b*) Bihar

(*c*) Punjab (*d*) Uttar Pradesh

(*e*) Madhya Pradesh

71. What is the theme of the 10th edition of 2024 Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit?

(*a*) Connecting India to the world

(*b*) Gateway to the future

(*c*) Shaping a new India

(*d*) Gujarat Going Global

(*e*) Boost India in the World

72. Margrethe II, who recently announced to abdicate the throne, is Queen of:

(*a*) Sweden (*b*) Norway

(*c*) Denmark (*d*) Netherlands

(*e*) None of these

73. Who is the new Chairman of the tourism industry grouping Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism & Hospitality (FAITH)?

(*a*) Nakul Anand (*b*) Ajay Singh

(*c*) Puneet Chhatwal (*d*) Vistara CEO

(*e*) None of these

74. Which amongst the following is the highest civilian award presented by the government of Assam?

(*a*) Vasundhara Award

(*b*) Shiv Chhatrapati Award

(*c*) Assam Bhushan

(*d*) Assam Baibhav award

(*e*) Arjun Award

75. 19th NAM (Non-Aligned Movement) Summit held in which country?

(*a*) Venezuela (*b*) Uganda

(*c*) Brazil (*d*) Colombia

(*e*) Ecuador

76. Which of the following state launched 'Sky Escapes', a heli-tourism project aimed at increasing domestic tourist footfalls?

(*a*) Kerala (*b*) Punjab

(*c*) Uttar Pradesh (*d*) Madhya Pradesh

77. Who has inaugurated a Cyber Security Operations Centre at the Assam Rifles Headquarters at Laitkor in Shillong?

(*a*) Amit Shah (*b*) Rajnath Singh

(*c*) Narendra Modi (*d*) Nitin Gadkari

(*e*) Dharmendra Pradhan

78. In January 2024, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated American aircraft manufacturer Boeing's new global engineering and technology centre campus in:

(*a*) Kochi (*b*) Hyderabad

(*c*) Bengaluru (*d*) Chennai

(*e*) New Delhi

79. In January 2024, Who was appointed as the new India chief of PepsiCo India?

(*a*) Jagrut Kotecha (*b*) James Quincey

(*c*) Ramon Laguarta (*d*) David Scott Taylor

(*e*) None of these

80. Asia's largest event on civil aviation, Wings India 2024 held in Hyderabad. What is the theme of Wings India 2024?

(*a*) Connecting India to the World in Amrit Kaal: Setting the Stage for India Civil Aviation @2047

(*b*) India@75: Flying for All

(*c*) India@75: India-Global Aviation Hub

(*d*) India@75: New Development for Aviation World

(*e*) India@75: Wings of Furtue

81. Which of the following state recently launched the Mahtari Vandana Yojana?

(*a*) Chhattisgarh (*b*) Madhya Pradesh

(*c*) Uttar Pradesh (*d*) Bihar

(*e*) Maharashtra

82. Which of the following organization developed the second-generation distress alert transmitter for fishermen?

(*a*) India Meteorological Department

(*b*) Ministry of Earth Sciences

(*c*) DRDO

(*d*) ISRO

(*e*) None of these

83. Who has been appointed as the first female neutral umpire by the ICC for a bilateral series?

(*a*) Sue Redfern (*b*) Nida Dar

(*c*) Shivani Mishra (*d*) Mary Waldron

(*e*) None of these

84. Telangana collaborated with which organization to establish Centre for the Fourth Industrial Revolution (C4IR)?

(*a*) World Bank

(*b*) World Trade Organization

(*c*) World Economic Forum

(*d*) International Monetary Fund

(*e*) World Health Organisation

85. Who among the following is the author of the book ' Assam's Braveheart Lachit Barphukan?

(*a*) Arup Kumar Dutta (*b*) Prabhleen Singh

(*c*) Khushwant Singh (*d*) Aravind Adiga

(*e*) Kiran Desai

86. How many children have been awarded the 'Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar 2023'?

(*a*) 10 (*b*) 11

(*c*) 19 (*d*) 33

(*e*) 40

87. Who won the bronze medal at the Henri Deglane Grand Prix wrestling tournament in Nice, France?

(*a*) Chetan Anand (*b*) Ravi Kumar Dahiya

(*c*) Kidambi Srikanth (*d*) Aditya Joshi

(*e*) H S Prannoy

88. Bharat Parv is a festival to celebrate the spirit of India and showcasing the rich and cultural diversity of the country. Which ministry organised Bharat Parv-2024?

(*a*) Ministry of Information and Broadcasting

(*b*) Ministry of Education

(*c*) Ministry of Tourism

(*d*) Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

(*e*) Ministry of Finance

89. Who has been appointed as the managing director and chief executive officer of DCB bank?

(*a*) Praveen Achuthan Kutty

(*b*) R G Gopalan

(*c*) Triveni Tripathi

(*d*) Mallikarjun Shashtri

(*e*) None of these

90. Who has been bestowed with the esteemed title of International Sports Personality of the Year at the Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Creative Sports Awards' 12th edition held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates?

(*a*) Nayef bin Falah Al-Hajraf

(*b*) Mohammed Bin Salman

(*c*) Abdullatif bin Rashid Al-Zayani

(*d*) Gianni Infantino

(*e*) Jamil Ibrahim Hejailan

91. Which two have jointly bagged the best airport award for the year at the 4th edition of "Wings India Awards" in the Civil Aviation Sector?

(*a*) Bangalore & Delhi Airports

(*b*) Patna & Kolkata Airports

(*c*) Mumbai & Jaipur Airports

(*d*) Chandigarh & Chennai Airports

(*e*) None of these

92. Which of the following Airport hosted the prestigious Wings India 2024 and Global Aviation Summit?

(*a*) Begumpet Airport, Hyderabad

(*b*) Indira Gandhi International Airport, New Delhi

(*c*) Kempegowda International Airport, Bengaluru

(*d*) Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose International Airport, Kolkata

(*e*) Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport, Ahmedabad

93. Which of the following Ministries of India launched the project of depositing artificial reefs in the seabed in Vizhinjam?

(*a*) Ministry of Culture

(*b*) Ministry of External Affairs

(*c*) Ministry of Fisheries

(*d*) Ministry of AYUSH

(*e*) Ministry of Communications

94. Which of the following city hosted the three days' national workshop on "Healthy Village towards Healthier Tomorrow"?

(*a*) Patna (*b*) Chandigarh

(*c*) Ranchi (*d*) Tirupat

(*e*) Pune

95. Which scheme was launched by the Karnataka Government for providing financial aid to unemployed graduates and diploma holders?

(*a*) Yuva Nidhi scheme

(*b*) State Programme for Youth Development

(*c*) Kaushal Vikas scheme

(*d*) Yuva Shakti Scheme

(*e*) None of these

96. How many commemorative postage stamps on Shri Ram Janmbhoomi Mandir were released by PM Modi?

(*a*) Four (*b*) Five

(*c*) Six (*d*) Seven

(*e*) Eight

97. Which of the following city hosted the 12th General Assembly of the Asian Buddhist Conference for Peace?

(*a*) New Delhi (*b*) Mumbai

(*c*) Chandigarh (*d*) Agra

(*e*) Gurugram

98. Who among the following assumed the charge as Director General of Naval Operations?

(*a*) Vinay Dube (*b*) Sunil Lamba

(*c*) Vikram Seth (*d*) AN Pramod

(*e*) Mohan S Ranganathan

99. Which city hosted the 9th Indian International Science Festival to commemorate the world of science?

(*a*) Faridabad (*b*) Gurugram

(*c*) Noida (*d*) Delhi

(*e*) Rohtak

100. In January 2024, Prime Minister Narendra Modi offered prayers at Kerala's famous Lord Krishna temple in:

(*a*) Guruvayur (*b*) Kollam

(*c*) Alappuzha (*d*) Idukki

(*e*) Palakkad

101. Who among the following won a 'mega order' to build 508 km of high-speed electrification system for the Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train project?

(*a*) Larsen & Toubro

(*b*) Reliance Infrastructure Ltd.

(*c*) Lodha Group.

(*d*) Afcons Infrastructure Ltd

(*e*) Adani Group

102. Pradhan Mantri Suryodaya Yojana, launched in January 2024, is a visionary initiative that was launched to reduce the electricity bills of the poor and middle class as well as make India self-reliant in the energy sector. This scheme was launched by which of the following?

(*a*) Narendra Modi

(*b*) Amit Shah

(*c*). Rajnath Singh

(*d*) Subrahmanyam Jaishankar

(*e*) Nitin Gadkari

103. In January 2024, the main objective of 'Mahatari Vandana Yojana 2024' launched by Bharatiya Janata Party is to provide financial assistance to economically weaker women and improve their livelihood. Under this scheme, the government will provide monthly financial assistance of ₹1000 to married women in the state. This scheme was launched in which of the following states?

(*a*) Madhya Pradesh (*b*) Chhattisgarh

(*c*). Rajasthan (*d*) Uttar Pradesh

(*e*) Maharashtra

104. Which of the following banks has achieved the milestone of being the first Indian bank to conduct an export finance transaction on RXIL Global International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA) Limited's International Trade Financing Services Platform (ITFS)?

(*a*) HDFC Bank (*b*) YES BANK

(*c*). ICICI Bank (*d*) Axis Bank

105. Which of the following banks, in partnership with National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), has introduced the UPI-enabled 'Samman RuPay Credit Card,' specifically designed for government sector employees. This initiative aligns with recent RBI permissions allowing RuPay credit cards to integrate with UPI payment applications?

(*a*) ICICI Bank (*b*) Canara Bank

(*c*). HDFC Bank (*d*) IndusInd Bank

(*e*) Indian Bank

106. Which of the following digital payment apps has been granted Payment Aggregator (PA) license by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Which places it among industry leaders like Razorpay, Cashfree and Google Pay, enabling it to efficiently handle ecommerce transactions within its subsidiaries.

(*a*) TATA Pay (*b*) Phonepe

(*c*). Samsung Pay (*d*) PayPal

(*e*) Apple Pay

107. In January 2024, Prime Minister of India (PM) Narendra Modi inaugurated the Diamond Jubilee (75th year) celebrations of the Supreme Court of India (SCI) in Delhi. During the event the PM announced that the Government of India has allocated Rs ..... for the expansion of the Supreme Court Building Complex.

(*a*) 600 crore (*b*) 300 crore

(*c*). 800 crore (*d*) 200 crore

(*e*) 500 crore

108. Which of the following Indian cricket players has won the ICC Men's One Day International (ODI) Cricketer of the Year 2023 award in January 2024 and along with this, Suryakumar Yadav has won the ICC Men's Twenty20 International (T20i) Cricketer of the Year award for the year 2023 consecutively?

(*a*) Virat Kohli (*b*) KL Rahul

(*c*). Rohit Sharma (*d*) Subhman Gill

(*e*) Hardik Pandya

109. Which of the following companies has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the National Investment and Infrastructure Fund Limited (NIIFL) to collaborate on a suite of funding solutions for Renewable Energy Projects as well as large-scale infrastructure projects in India?

(*a*) REC Limited

(*b*) Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL)

(*c*). Heavy Engineering Corporation Limited (HEC Limited)

(*d*) Reliance Industries Limited

(*e*) Power Grid Corporation of India Limited

110. Who launched a book titled, 'A Promised Nation Hon'ble Shri Narendra Modi- the Maker of New India', written on the life and works of PM Modi in Braille script in New Delhi, in January 2024?

(*a*) RajNath Singh (Union Minister of Defence)

(*b*) Virendra Kumar (Union Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment)

(*c*). Dharmendra Pradhan (Union Minister of Education and Skill Development and Entrepreneurship)

(*d*) Amit Shah (Union Minister of Home Affairs and Cooperation)

(*e*) Subrahmanyam Jaishankar (Union Minister of External Affairs)

111. Pradavini is a web-based platform that provides voice, document and image translation services in …….. regional Indian and foreign languages aimed at providing study material available in digital form for all school and higher education courses exclusively in the Indian languages listed in the 8th Schedule of the Indian Constitution.

(*a*) 20 (*b*) 21

(*c*). 22 (*d*) 23

(*e*) 24

112. In January 2024, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) issued the framework for an offer for sale (OFS) of shares to employees through stock exchange mechanisms such as BSE and NSE. As per the framework, what is the maximum bid amount fixed?

(*a*) 4 Lakh (*b*) 5 Lakh

(*c*). 1 Lakh (*d*) 2 Lakh

(*e*) 6 Lakh

113. Which of the following companies has received approval from the Petroleum and Natural Gas Ministry for the formation of a subsidiary company for green energy and gas business, in January 2024?

(*a*) ONGC

(*b*) NTPC Limited

(*c*). Hindustan Petroleum

(*d*) Indian Oil Corporation

(*e*) Bharat Petroleum

114. The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) hosted the National Conference on Road Safety with the theme "Indian Roads@2030 – Raising the Bar of Safety" on January 16, 2024 in New Delhi. This conference was inaugurated in which of the following?

(*a*) Narendra Modi (*b*) Amit shah

(*c*) Niti Gadkari (*d*) Rajnath Singh

(*e*) Dharmendra Pradhan

115. Which of the following Mistries has established a three-member committee to resolve unforeseen disputes between solar and wind power developers, EPC contractors, and Renewable Energy Implementing Agencies (REIAs) such as NTPC, SECI, SJVN, etc?

(*a*) Ministry of Finance

(*b*) Ministry of New & Renewable Energy

(*c*). Ministry of External Affairs

(*d*) Ministry of Mines

(*e*) Ministry of Agriculture

116. Which of the following Tiger Reserve has been recognized as India's first and fifth Dark Sky Park in Asia, which aims to preserve the night sky and prevent light pollution while attracting astronomy enthusiasts?

(*a*) Pench Tiger Reserve

(*b*) Nagarjunsagar Srisailam Tiger Reserve.

(*c*) Kamlang Tiger Reserve

(*d*) Namdapha Tiger Reserve

(*e*) Pakke Tiger Reserve

117. Who among the following launched a pilot project to strengthen inter-cooperation within cooperative societies in Deodar in Banaskantha district of Gujarat with the aim of persuading cooperative societies to have their bank accounts only in cooperative banks ?

(*a*) Amit Shah (*b*) Narendra Modi

(*c*). Rajnath Singh (*d*) Prahlad Singh

(*e*) Smriti Irani

118. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the European Union (EU) have allocated grants totaling over …….. to support initiatives aimed at combating deforestation, improving food and nutrition security, and adapting to the impacts of climate change.

(*a*) US$310,000 (*b*) US$360,000

(*c*). US$390,000 (*d*) US$420,000

119. Which of the following countries has demolished a major monument known informally as the Arch of Reunification, in its capital that symbolized the goal of reconciliation with South Korea on the orders of the leader Kim Jong Un?

(*a*) China (*b*) North Korea

(*c*). Singapore (*d*) Afghanistan

(*e*) Indonesia

120. In January 2024, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar highlighted cultural, literary and linguistic ties between Iran and India during his visit to Iran and Under the new education policy of India, it has been decided to include …….. as one of the nine classical languages of India.

(*a*) Urdu (*b*) Bengali

(*c*). Persian (*d*) Urdu

(*e*) None of the above

Answer Key

1.	(C)	2.	(C)	3.	(A)	4.	(C)	5.	(A)	6.	(A)	7.	(C)	8.	(D)	9.	(B)	10.	(B)
11.	(D)	12.	(B)	13.	(B)	14.	(B)	15.	(A)	16.	(B)	17.	(A)	18.	(B)	19.	(B)	20.	(C)
21.	(B)	22.	(B)	23.	(C)	24.	(A)	25.	(D)	26.	(B)	27.	(C)	28.	(E)	29.	(A)	30.	(C)
31.	(A)	32.	(B)	33.	(B)	34.	(C)	35.	(A)	36.	(A)	37.	(C)	38.	(B)	39.	(A)	40.	(D)
41.	(B)	42.	(A)	43.	(C)	44.	(C)	45.	(A)	46.	(D)	47.	(B)	48.	(C)	49.	(D)	50.	(A)
51.	(B)	52.	(C)	53.	(B)	54.	(A)	55.	(D)	56.	(A)	57.	(A)	58.	(A)	59.	(B)	60.	(B)
61.	(C)	62.	(A)	63.	(D)	64.	(A)	65.	(C)	66.	(A)	67.	(C)	68.	(B)	69.	(D)	70.	(A)
71.	(B)	72.	(C)	73.	(C)	74.	(D)	75.	(B)	76.	(A)	77.	(A)	78.	(C)	79.	(A)	80.	(A)
81.	(A)	82.	(D)	83.	(A)	84.	(C)	85.	(A)	86.	(C)	87.	(B)	88.	(C)	89.	(A)	90.	(D)
91.	(A)	92.	(A)	93.	(C)	94.	(D)	95.	(A)	96.	(C)	97.	(A)	98.	(D)	99.	(A)	100.	(A)
101.	(A)	102.	(A)	103.	(B)	104.	(B)	105.	(D)	106.	(A)	107.	(C)	108.	(A)	109.	(A)	110.	(D)
111.	(C)	112.	(B)	113.	(A)	114.	(C)	115.	(B)	116.	(A)	117.	(A)	118.	(D)	119.	(B)	120.	(C)

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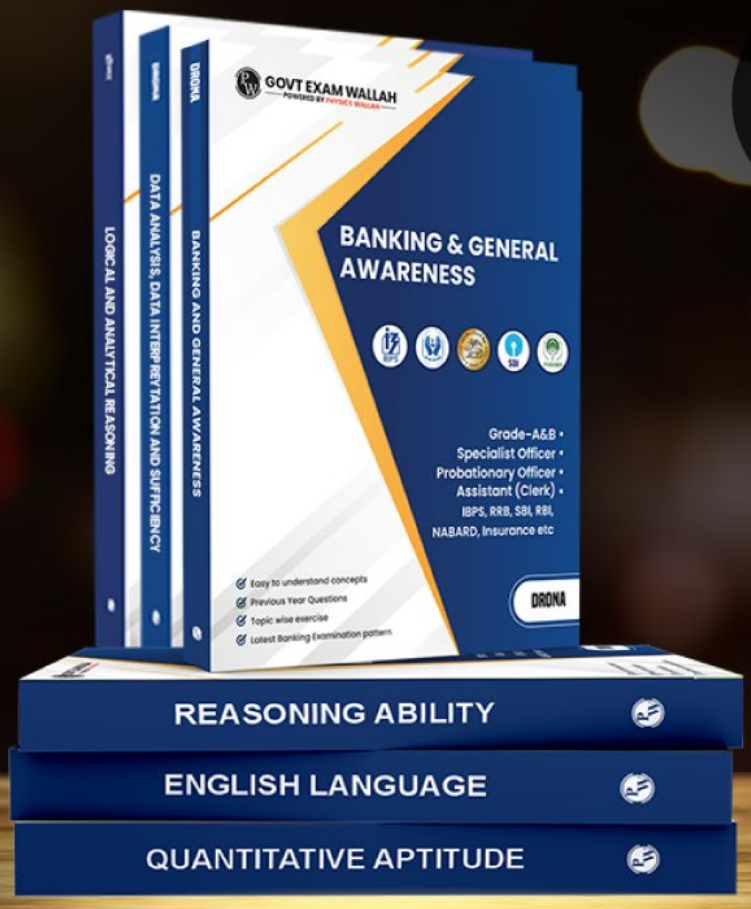
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Banking and Economy

Chapter 1

Japan loses its spot as the world's third-largest economy

- Recently, Japan's economy unexpectedly slipped into a recession and the country has lost its spot as the world's third-largest economy.
- This happened after its economy contracted by a worse-than-expected 0.4% in the last three months of 2023, compared to a year earlier.
- This contraction came after the economy shrank by 3.3% in the previous quarter.
- As a result of this recession, Japan has lost its position as the world's third-largest economy.
- Germany has now overtaken Japan to become the world's third-largest economy.
- The latest GDP data shows that Japan's economy was worth about $4.2tn in 2023, while Germany's was $4.4tn.

MoD signs contract worth Rs 1,752 Cr with AWEIL

- The Ministry of Defence (MoD) signed a contract on February 14, 2024, with Advanced Weapon Equipment India Ltd. (AWEIL), Kanpur.
- The contract is for the manufacturing and supply of a total of 463 indigenously manufactured 12.7 mm Stabilised Remote Control Guns (SRCG) for the Indian Navy & Indian Coast Guard.
- The total cost of the contract is Rs 1752.13 crores, with Indigenous Content (IC) of more than 85%.
- The SRCGs will enhance the capability of the Indian Navy and Indian Coast Guard to accurately engage small targets that pose a threat to ships in an asymmetric environment, both by day and night.

NCI Shows Decline of 4.75% in December 2023

- National Coal Index (NCI) showed a significant decline of 4.75% in December 2023.
- The index was at 155.44 points in December 2023, compared to 163.19 points in December 2022.
- This notable decrease indicates sufficient availability of coal in the market to meet the growing demands.

IRDAI issued draft regulations for Bima Sugam

- Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) has issued draft regulations for "Bima Sugam - Insurance Electronic Marketplace" on 13 February 2024.
- The key objectives of Bima Sugam are to empower and protect the interest of policyholders, increase the penetration of insurance in India, and enhance accessibility.
- It is envisioned as a one-stop solution for all insurance stakeholders including customers, insurers, intermediaries, and insurance agents.
- It aims to promote transparency, efficiency, collaboration across the entire insurance value chain, technological innovation in the insurance sector, and to achieve the vision of "Insurance for all by 2047".

Wipro acquires insurtech firm Aggne in $66 million deal

- Wipro, the Indian IT services firm, has acquired a 60% stake in the US-based insurtech company Aggne Global for $66 million.
- The deal is an all-cash transaction, with an option for Wipro to purchase the remaining stake over time.
- This acquisition will strengthen Wipro's competitive advantage in the insurance sector, particularly in the property and casualty (P&C) insurance space.
-

About Aggne Global

Aggne Global, founded in 2019, is incorporated in the US and India, with offices in Tampa, Florida, and Hyderabad, India. The company has 230 employees based in India and the United States. Aggne Global's revenues were $4.5 million for the calendar year 2021, $9.1 million for 2022, and $17.9 million for 2023.

India surpasses China, emerges as HSBC's third-largest profit hub in 2023

- India has become the unexpected star in HSBC's profit galaxy, surpassing China and securing its position as

the third-largest profitable region for the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corp Ltd (HSBC) in 2023.

- The financial giant revealed a 25 per cent surge in profit from its India operations, reaching an impressive $1.5 billion for the fiscal year ending December 2023.
- This shift marks a significant leap for India, considering it generated a profit of $1.2 billion in 2022.

PayPal registers with India's Financial Intelligence Unit

- Payment gateway platform PayPal has registered with the Finance Ministry's Financial Intelligence Unit- India (FIU- IND), according to a report by Inc42.
- The FIU-IND is a government organization that collects financial intelligence about offenses under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002.
- PayPal has also appointed a principal officer to communicate with the FIU, as required by PMLA.
- This registration means that PayPal would now have to report large or suspicious transactions carried out using its platform to FIU-IND.

RBI grants payment aggregator licence to Mswipe Technologies

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has granted the payment aggregator (PA) licence to digital payments platform Mswipe Technologies, which joins the likes of Zomato, Decentro, Zoho, Juspay and Razorpayto get the regulator's nod to offer the service.
- The licence comes almost two years after the company received an in-principle nod in the middle of 2022.
- The payment aggregator licence solidifies the company's objective to enhance its suite of offerings while delivering secure, efficient, and user-friendly payment technology to banking partners, enterprises, and merchants across categories.

RBI to introduce programmability and offline functionality in CBDC pilot

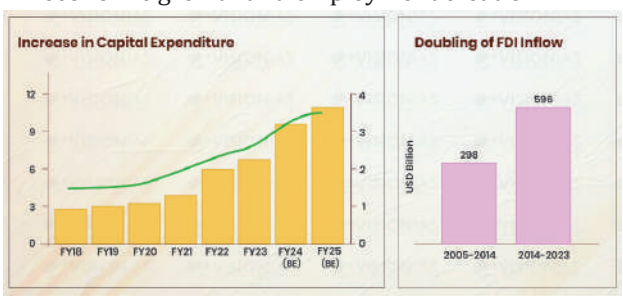
- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) plans to introduce additional additional functionalities of programmability in CBDC retail payments to facilitate transactions for specific/targeted purposes, and allow offline capability to enable these transactions in areas with poor or limited Internet connectivity.
- Currently, the CBDC Retail (CBDC-R) pilot also allows Person to Person (P2P) and Person to Merchant (P2M) transactions using Digital Rupee wallets provided by pilot banks.
- Programmability will permit users like, for instance, government agencies, to ensure that payments are made for defined benefits.

Union Budget 2024-2025

- The **Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman** presented the Interim Union Budget 2024-25 in Parliament on 1 February 2024.
- It envisions **'Viksit Bharat' by 2047,** with all-round, all-pervasive, and all-inclusive development.
- With the 'mantra' of **'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas and Sabka Vishwas'** and the whole country's vision of **'Sabka Prayas'**, the Union Finance Minister presented the Interim Union Budget 2024-25 in the Parliament.

Important Points

1. **GDP Growth:** India's Real GDP is projected to grow at 7.3% in FY 2023-24. This is also in line with the upward revision in growth projections for FY2023-24 by the RBI (in its December 2023 Monetary Policy Committee meeting) from 6.5% to 7%, prompted by strong growth in Q2 of FY2023-24.
2. **Capital Expenditure Outlay:** The capital expenditure outlay for the next year is being increased by 11.1% to Rs 11,11,111 crore, which would be 3.4% of the GDP. This is in the wake of building on the massive tripling of the capital expenditure outlay in the past 4 years resulting in a huge multiplier impact on economic growth and employment creation.

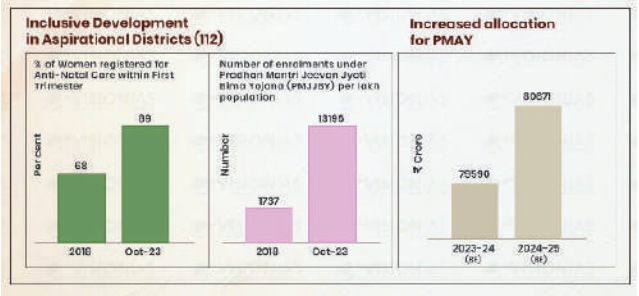


3. **Fiscal Deficit:** The fiscal deficit in 2024-25 is estimated to be 5.1% of GDP.
4. **FDI Inflow:** The FDI inflow during 2014-23 was USD 596 billion, which is twice the inflow during 2005-14. This reflects increasing global confidence in India's economic prowess at a time when global growth projection for 2023 remains unchanged at 3%.

5. **Government Priorities:** The upliftment of 'Garib' (Poor), 'Mahilayen' (Women), 'Yuva' (Youth) and 'Annadata' (Farmer) is the highest priority of the government.
6. **Interest-Free Loan for Youth:** A corpus of Rupees one lakh crore will be established with a fifty-year interest-free loan for youth.
7. **Interest-Free Loan for Capex to States:** The scheme of a 50-year interest-free loan for Capex to states will be continued this year with a total outlay of Rs 1.3 lakh crore.
8. **Development Approach:** The government is working with an approach to development that is all-round, all-pervasive, and all-inclusive.
9. **Tax Rates:** No change has been proposed in tax rates in the interim budget.
10. **Tax Payers:** About one crore tax payers are expected to benefit from the withdrawal of certain petty and disputed direct tax demands.
11. **Revenue and Expenditure Estimates (2024-25):**
    - **Total Receipts:** Estimated at Rs 30.80 lakh crore, excluding borrowings.
    - **Total Expenditure:** Projected at Rs 47.66 lakh crore.
    - **Tax Receipts:** Estimated at Rs 26.02 lakh crore.
12. **GST Collections:** Reached ₹1.65 lakh crore in December 2023, crossing the ₹1.6 lakh crore benchmark for the seventh time.

Performance of Key Schemes

- **PM Awas Yojana (Gramin):** The scheme has achieved the target of close to 3 crore houses and now is aiming for 2 crore more houses in the next five years.
- **Lakhpati Didi Scheme:** The promotion of SHGs has helped transform the rural socio-economic landscape, helping nearly one crore women to become 'Lakhpati Didi'. Buoyed by the success, the government has decided to enhance the target for 'Lakhpati Didi' from 2 crore to 3 crore.
- **Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana:** The Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana has enabled doubling seafood exports from 2013-14. This scheme will further be boosted to generate 55 lakh jobs and boost exports to Rs 1 lakh crore.
- **PM Kisan SAMPADA Yojana:** This agriculture value addition scheme has benefited 38 lakh farmers and assisted 2.4 lakh self-help groups (SHGs).



The key highlights of the Budget are as follows:

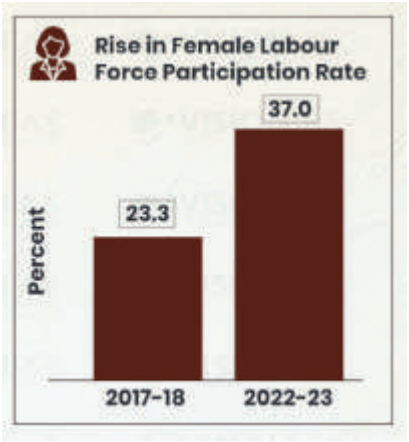
'Garib Kalyan, Desh ka Kalyan'

- Government assisted **25 crore people out of multi-dimensional poverty** in last 10 years.
- DBT of **Rs. 34 lakh crore using PM-Jan Dhan accounts** led to savings of Rs. 2.7 lakh crore for the Government.
- **PM-SVANidhi provided credit assistance to 78 lakh street vendors.** 2.3 lakh have received credit for the third time.
- **PM-JANMAN Yojana** to aid the development of particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTG).
- **PM-Vishwakarma Yojana** provides end-to-end support to artisans and crafts people engaged in 18 trades.

Welfare of 'Annadata'

- PM-KISAN SAMMAN Yojana provided financial assistance to **11.8 crore farmers**.
- Under PM Fasal BimaYojana, crop insurance is given **to 4 crore farmers.**
- **Electronic National Agriculture Market (e-NAM) integrated 1361 mandis**, providing services to 1.8 crore farmers with trading volume of Rs. 3 lakh crore.

Momentum for Nari Shakti



- **30 crore Mudra Yojana** loans given to women entrepreneurs.
- Female enrolment in higher education gone up **by 28%.**
- In STEM courses, girls and women constitute 43% of enrolment, one of the highest in the world.
- **Over 70% houses under PM Awas Yojana** given to women from rural areas.

PM Awas Yojana (Grameen)

- Despite COVID challenges, the target of three crore houses under PM Awas Yojana (Grameen) will be achieved soon.
- Two crore more houses to be taken up in the next five years.

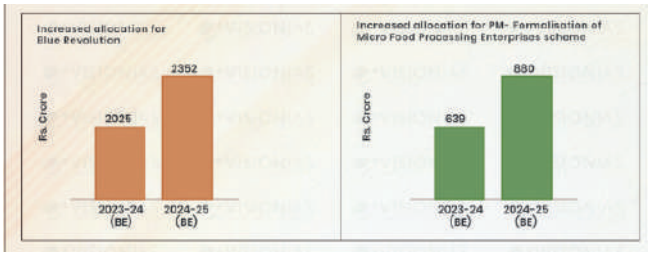
Rooftop solarization and muft bijli

- 1 crore households to obtain 300 units free electricity every month through rooftop solarization.
- Each household is expected to save Rs.15000 to Rs.18000 annually.

Ayushman Bharat

- Healthcare cover under Ayushman Bharat scheme to be extended to all ASHA workers, Anganwadi Workers and Helpers.

Agriculture and food processing



- Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana has benefitted 38 lakh farmers and generated 10 lakh employment.
- Pradhan Mantri Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises Yojana has assisted 2.4 lakh SHGs and 60000 individuals with credit linkages.

Research and Innovation for catalyzing growth, employment and development

- A corpus of Rs.1 lakh crore to be established with fifty-year interest free loan to provide long-term financing or refinancing with long tenors and low or nil interest rates.
- A new scheme to be launched for strengthening deep-tech technologies for defence purposes and expediting *'atmanirbharta'.*

Infrastructure

- Capital expenditure outlay for Infrastructure development and employment generation to be increased by 11.1 per cent to Rs.11,11,111 crore, that will be 3.4 per cent of the GDP.

Railways

- 3 major economic railway corridor programmes identified under the PM Gati Shakti to be implemented to improve logistics efficiency and reduce cost
  - Energy, mineral and cement corridors
  - Port connectivity corridors
  - High traffic density corridors
- Forty thousand normal rail bogies to be converted to Vande Bharat standards.

Aviation Sector

- Number of airports in the country doubled to 149.
- Five hundred and seventeen new routes are carrying 1.3 crore passengers.
- Indian carriers have placed orders for over 1000 new aircrafts.

Green Energy

- Coal gasification and liquefaction capacity of 100 MT to be set up by 2030.
- Phased mandatory blending of compressed biogas (CBG) in compressed natural gas (CNG) for transport and piped natural gas (PNG) for domestic purposes to be mandated.

Tourism sector

- States to be encouraged to take up comprehensive development of iconic tourist centres including their branding and marketing at global scale.
- Framework for rating of the tourist centres based on quality of facilities and services to be established.
- Long-term interest free loans to be provided to States for financing such development on matching basis.

Investments

- FDI inflow during 2014-23 of USD 596 billion was twice of the inflow during 2005-14.

Reforms in the States for 'Viksit Bharat'

- A provision of Rs. 75,000 crore rupees as fifty-year interest free loan is proposed to support milestone-linked reforms by the State Governments.

Revised Estimates (RE) 2023-24

- RE of the total receipts other than borrowings is Rs.27.56 lakh crore, of which the tax receipts are Rs.23.24 lakh crore.

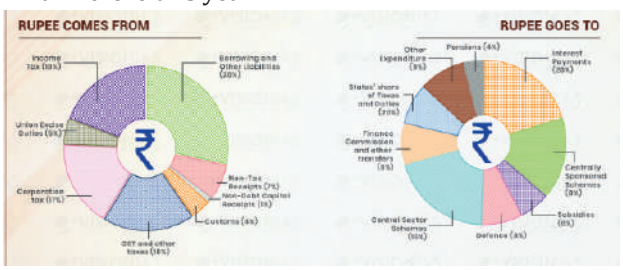
- RE of the total expenditure is Rs.44.90 lakh crore.
- Revenue receipts at Rs.30.03 lakh crore are expected to be higher than the Budget Estimate, reflecting strong growth momentum and formalization in the economy.
- RE of the fiscal deficit is 5.8 per cent of GDP for 2023-24.

Budget Estimates 2024-25

- Total receipts other than borrowings and the total expenditure are estimated at Rs.30.80 and Rs.47.66 lakh crore respectively.
- Tax receipts are estimated at Rs.26.02 lakh crore.
- Scheme of fifty-year interest free loan for capital expenditure to states to be continued this year with total outlay of Rs.1.3 lakh crore.
- Fiscal deficit in 2024-25 is estimated to be 5.1 per cent of GDP
- Gross and net market borrowings through dated securities during 2024-25 are estimated at Rs.14.13 and Rs.11.75 lakh crore respectively.

Taxation Proposals

- **No Changes in Taxation:** Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman proposed no changes to income tax slabs. She proposed maintaining the existing tax rates for both direct and indirect taxes, which include import duties.
- **Tax Receipts:** In 2024-25, the tax receipts are expected to be at ₹26.02 lakh crore.
- **Withdrawal of Petty or Disputed Tax Demands**: A proposal to withdraw a large number of petty or disputed tax demands up to ₹25,000 pertaining to years up to 2009-10 and ₹10,000 from 2010 to 2015. This will help 1 crore taxpayers.
- **Extension of Tax Benefits:** Certain direct tax benefits to following entities have been extended until March 2025: (i) startups, (ii) sovereign wealth funds and pension funds, and (iii) some IFSC units. These benefits would have expired in March 2024.
- **GST Tax Base Doubled:** The tax base of GST has doubled. The Finance Minister said that the average GST monthly collection has almost doubled to ₹1.66 lakh crore this year.



What is the Union Budget?

- The Union Budget is the annual financial statement of the Union Government of India that is presented every year on the 1st of February by the Finance Minister of India in the Lok Sabha.
- The Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance, is the nodal body responsible for preparing the Budget document.
- The Union Budget is classified into the Revenue Budget and the Capital Budget.

Constitutional Provision for Union Budget

Articles	Provisions
Article 112	• Under Article 112 of the constitution, the President shall cause to lay an **annual financial statement of estimated receipts and expenditure** before both Houses of Parliament.
Article 113	• Without **prior approval of the President**, no demand for grants can be presented in the Lok Sabha.
Article 114	• No money shall be withdrawn from the Consolidated Fund of India **except authorisation** by the Parliament.
Article 266	• All revenue receipts generated by the Government of India shall be credited to the **Consolidated Fund of India.** • Revenue raised through provident fund, Postal insurance, etc, shall be credited to the **Public Account of India.**
Article 267	• A **Contingency Fund of India** has to be set up by the Parliament to meet unexpected or unforeseen expenditures.

Timeline of Union Budget of India:

Year	Description
1860	The Budget was first introduced in India on April 7, 1860, by Scottish economist and politician James Wilson from the East India Company.

1947	Independent India's first budget was presented on November 26, 1947, by the then Finance Minister R.K. Shanmukham Chetty.
1955	Until 1955, the Union Budget was presented in English. However, the Congress-led government later decided to print the Budget papers in both Hindi and English.
1999	Until 1999, the Union Budget was presented at 5 pm on the last working day of February as per British-era practice. Former Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha in 1999 changed the budget presentation timing to 11 am.
2017	Arun Jaitley started presenting the Union Budget on February 1 in 2017, departing from the colonial-era tradition of using the last working day of that month.
2021	Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Budget for 2021-22 was paperless - a first in Independent India.
2024	The 2024 Union Budget of India provided comprehensive information regarding the projected revenue and government spending for the fiscal year 2024–25.

Indian govt approved 100% FDI in space sector

- The Indian government has recently approved an amendment to the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) policy for the space sector.
- The new policy allows up to 100% FDI under the automatic route for the manufacturing of components, systems, and sub-systems for satellites, ground segments, and user segments.
- Up to 74% investment will be allowed under the automatic route for manufacturing and operating an entire satellite. Anything beyond this limit will require government approval.
- For launch vehicles and their systems and subsystems or the creation of a spaceport, up to 49% FDI will be allowed under the automatic route.
- These changes to the FDI policy are in line with the Indian Space Policy of 2023.

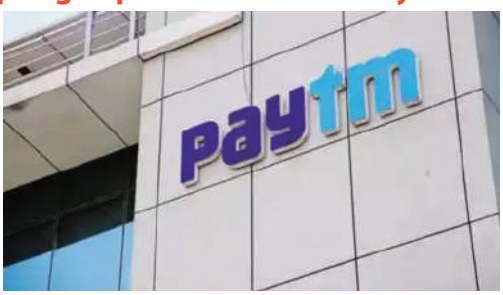
Amul's golden jubilee

- Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation (GCMMF), which owns the 'Amul' brand, celebrated its Golden Jubilee on February 22, 2024.
- The event was held at Narendra Modi Stadium in Motera, Ahmedabad.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi attended the celebration and inaugurated five projects worth Rs 1,200 crore.
- More than 1.25 lakh dairy farmers, with representatives from around 18,600 villages in Gujarat, attended the programme.

Japan to invest Rs 12,800 crore for 9 projects in various sectors in India

- Japanese government has committed a loan of 232.209 billion yen (about Rs 12,800 crore) for nine projects related to various sectors in India.
- The projects included North East Road Network Connectivity, Project for Promoting Start-up and Innovation in Telangana, Project for the Construction of Chennai Peripheral Ring Road, Project for Promoting Sustainable Horticulture in Haryana and Project for Climate Change Response and ecosystem Services Enhancement in Rajasthan.
- The road network connectivity projects aim to improve infrastructure development in India's north-east region, while the Chennai peripheral ring road project aims to alleviate traffic congestion and strengthen connections to the southern part of the state.

RBI bars Paytm Payments Bank from accepting deposits from February 29.



- In March 2022, the RBI directed Paytm Payments Bank Ltd to cease onboarding new customers immediately.
- The Reserve Bank of India prohibited the bank from accepting deposits or facilitating credit transactions, including top-ups, in customer accounts or associated prepaid instruments like wallets and FASTags after February 29.
- However, customers are still allowed to use funds from their accounts, including savings and current balances, without any restrictions up to their available limits.

- Additionally, the central bank has terminated the nodal accounts of Paytm's parent company, One97 Communications Ltd., and Paytm Payments Bank Ltd.

IOB joins Rs 1-lakh-crore MCap league as fifth PSU bank.



- The State Bank of India holds the top position in market capitalization, standing at approximately Rs 5.8 lakh crore, followed by Bank of Baroda and Punjab National Bank, both with a market capitalization of Rs 1.33 lakh crore.
- Union Bank of India's market capitalization is recorded at Rs 1.1 lakh crore.
- Indian Overseas Bank has become the fifth public sector lender to achieve a market capitalization exceeding Rs 1 lakh crore, with its shares surging over 22 percent.
- This places IOB alongside peers such as State Bank of India, Bank of Baroda, Punjab National Bank, and Union Bank of India.
- IOB's stock reached a fresh 14-year high of Rs 55.6 per share and saw a 5 percent intraday gain, resulting in its market valuation reaching Rs 1.03 lakh crore on February 2,2024. This marks the fourth consecutive session in which the stock has traded positively.

NTPC Green Energy inks Rs 80,000 Cr MoU with Maharashtra Govt for Green Hydrogen



- NGEL has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Government of Maharashtra to collaborate on the development of green hydrogen and its derivatives, such as green ammonia and green methanol, with a capacity of up to 1 million tonnes per annum.
- Additionally, the agreement includes the implementation of pump hydro projects totaling 2 gigawatts (GW) and the development of renewable energy (RE) projects, with or without storage, amounting to 5 GW in the state.
- This MoU is a component of the state government's Green Investment Plan for the upcoming five years. It anticipates a substantial investment of approximately Rs 80,000 crore.

ICICI Prudential Life Insurance launched 'ICICI Pru Gold Pension Savings' plan

- ICICI Prudential Life Insurance launched a new pension product called ICICI Pru Gold Pension Savings.
- The product aims to assist individuals in building a significant retirement corpus through systematic contributions.
- One feature allows customers to withdraw up to 25% of their contributions after three years, providing flexibility for addressing liquidity needs.
- The product offers Annual bonuses, which can enhance the retirement corpus and subsequent annuity.

SEBI proposes ways for deregistered offshore funds to dispose of securities

- SEBI proposes methods for offshore funds with expired India licences to dispose of securities they hold through a discussion paper.
- Discussion papers are the initial step SEBI takes before making rule changes for market entities.
- Previously, no mechanism existed for offshore funds to liquidate holdings after licence expiry.
- 55 offshore funds with expired India licences hold securities worth 3.3 billion Indian rupees ($39.77 million), according to SEBI.
- SEBI also proposes extending the reporting period for material changes in offshore funds' structure, ownership, or control from seven working days to 30 days.

RBI to introduce offline e-rupee transactions soon

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announces the introduction of offline capability on the Central Bank

Digital Currency (CBDC) pilot project, Digital Rupee.

- This offline capability will enable digital rupee users to execute transactions in areas with limited internet connectivity.
- Reserve Bank of India Governor Shaktikanta Das states that programmability-based additional use cases will be introduced in the pilot project.
- The RBI launched a pilot of the retail CBDC in December 2022 and achieved the target of having 10 lakh transactions a day in December 2023.

ADB and GoI sign $200 million loan for Brahmaputra River Project

- The Government of India and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) have signed a $200 million loan to enhance flood and riverbank erosion management along the Brahmaputra River in Assam.
- The project aims to stabilize the river in flood-prone areas and improve the state's disaster resilience.

LIC increases Stake in SBI Cards & Payments Services Limited



- Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) increased its shareholding in SBI Cards and Payments Services to over 5% by acquiring more than three lakh shares at an average cost of ₹716 per share.
- SBI Cards and Payment Services is a non-deposit accepting systemically important NBFC registered with the RBI, primarily engaged in issuing credit cards to consumers in India.
- Despite LIC shares closing 5.42% lower at ₹1,022.30 each on the BSE, SBI Cards saw a modest decrease, ending less than 1% lower at ₹712.50 apiece.

PayU partners with NPCI to introduce Credit Lines on UPI

- PayU has partnered with NPCI to enable merchants to accept digital payments via credit lines, anticipating significant growth in credit-based digital transactions.
- This collaboration aims to empower businesses and consumers by providing access to pre-sanctioned credit lines through UPI, thereby supporting India's financial inclusion agenda.
- PayU aims to offer valuable insights to merchants regarding consumer credit types, facilitating tailored growth strategies and enhanced customer experiences. This initiative reflects PayU's commitment to innovation and enhancing financial flexibility for customers.

LIC has rolled out a new insurance product named 'Amritbaal

- The Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) has announced the launch of a new non-participating product called 'Amritbaal', specifically designed for children. This product became available starting February 17, 2024.
- 'Amritbaal' is a Non-Linked, Non-Participating, Individual, Savings, Life Insurance Plan. It aims to cater to the financial needs of children, particularly for their higher education and other requirements.
- One of the key features of this plan is the accumulation of a corpus through guaranteed additions. These guaranteed additions are provided at the rate of Rs 80 per thousand basic sum assured at the end of each policy year from the inception until the end of the policy term, provided that the policy remains in force.
- Overall, 'Amritbaal' aims to provide parents with a structured financial instrument to plan for their children's future needs, ensuring financial security and stability for their education and other essential expenses.

SBI launched Digital Enrolment for PMJJBY and PMSBY Schemes

- The State Bank of India, the largest public sector bank in India, has announced that individuals can now use the self-subscribing route to enroll in the Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY) and Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY) schemes.
- PMJJBY provides a death coverage of Rs 2,00,000 to the beneficiary of the policy in the event of the insured person's sudden demise. It's important to note that PMJJBY is a pure-term insurance plan, meaning it does not offer any maturity or surrender benefits.

- On the other hand, Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY) is an accident insurance scheme that offers coverage for accidental death and disability resulting from an accident. It provides one-year cover, which can be renewed from year to year. These schemes are part of the government's initiatives to provide affordable insurance coverage to citizens, particularly those in the economically vulnerable segments of society.

SIDBI released impact study 'Prabhaav' on fund of funds for startups



- The Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) recently revealed the impact assessment report of the Fund of Funds for Startups (FFS), a significant element of India's startup ecosystem.
- This assessment was conducted by CRISIL, a leading analytics company in India known for its expertise in Alternative Investment Fund (AIF) benchmarking.
- The report, named Prabhaav, was unveiled by SIDBI. The Fund of Funds for Startups (FFS) is a vital component of the Startup India Action Plan initiated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2016.
- It has since become a flagship program of the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Government of India.
- The FFS has been recognized as a transformative intervention by the Indian government in nurturing the country's startup ecosystem.

APEDA facilitates export of bananas from India to Russia via sea

- APEDA facilitated the export of bananas from India to Russia via sea, with a consignment of 1,540 boxes flagged off from Maharashtra. APEDA Chairman Abhishek Dev, along with CISH, oversaw the initiative.
- A sea protocol developed by CISH ensured the fruit's quality during transit. APEDA encourages exporters to use innovative shipping methods to new destinations, offering support and facilitation.
- They also emphasized financial assistance schemes, with a focus on aiding women entrepreneurs. Russia's interest in importing tropical fruits from India, particularly bananas, has increased, with Ecuador currently being the primary supplier.

IEPFA and DBS Bank collaborate to enhance Investor Awareness.



- A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Investor Education and Protection Fund Authority (IEPFA) and DBS Bank in New Delhi.
- The MoU formalizes collaboration between the two entities and was signed by Lt. Col. Tushar Anand, General Manager of IEPF Authority, and Shri Rajiv Bagga, Executive Director and India Head of Government Business at DBS Bank.
- The ceremony was attended by various officials from both organizations.

Index and Reports

Chapter 2

India Ranks 80th in Cybercrime Report

- India placed 80th globally in terms of local threat targeting in 2023.
- Local threats affected approximately 34% of users, resulting in the blocking of 74,385,324 incidents by Kaspersky products.
- The country's cybersecurity market reached USD 6.06 billion in 2023, yet the surge in sophisticated external cyber threats poses a significant challenge for enterprises, according to IDC.
- Includes malicious programs directly on users' devices and removable media, as well as those initially hidden within complex installers or encrypted files.

IFFCO ranked 1st among 300 cooperatives in world

- The Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Limited (IFFCO) has been ranked again as the No. 1 cooperative among the top 300 cooperatives in the world, sustaining its position from last year. The ranking is based on the ratio of turnover over gross domestic product (GDP) per capita.
- The ranking affirms that IFFCO is contributing significantly to the GDP and economic growth of the nation.
- It relates the turnover of the enterprise to the wealth of the country, according to the 2023 edition of the 12th Annual World Cooperative Monitor (WCM) report published by the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA).
- IFFCO has also stepped up to the 72nd position in the overall turnover ranking from the 97th position in the last financial year.

EIU 2023 democracy report

- According to the 2023 Democracy Index 7.8% of the world's population in 24 countries live in a "full democracy", 37.6% in 50 countries in a "flawed democracy", 15.2% in 34 countries in a "hybrid regime", and 39.4% in 59 countries in an "authoritarian regime".
- The global average score in 2023 fell from 5.29 to 5.23 compared to 2022, marking the lowest score since the index was started in 2006, and confirming "a general trend of regression and stagnation in recent years" according to the Economist's researchers.
- Greece was one of only four countries globally which registered an upgrade of classification, stepping up from "flawed" to "full democracy" after continuous efforts by Greek authorities to facilitate diaspora voting.
- With Chile on the other hand dropping down to "flawed democracy", the total number of countries classified as "full democracies" remained the same.
- Papua New Guinea and Paraguay moved up from "hybrid regimes" to "flawed democracies" and Angola from "authoritarian" to "hybrid regime".

India has world's second largest road network

- India has the second largest road network in the world, with about 63.32 lakh km of roads as of March 2019.
- This is a remarkable increase from about 54.02 lakh km in March 2014. The Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways, Nitin Gadkari, shared this information in a written reply to the Lok Sabha, recently.
- Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has received a significant boost in its budgetary allocation, from about Rs 31,130 crore in 2013-14 to Rs 2,76,351 crore in 2023-24.
- The capital expenditure on National Highways (NHs) has also increased manifold, from about Rs 51,000 crore in 2013-14 to more than Rs 2,40,000 crore in 2022-23.

Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) of India

- The Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) of India has seen a significant reduction, as per the UN Maternal Mortality Estimation Inter-Agency Group (MMEIG) 2020 report.
- The MMR of India has declined from 384 in 2000 to 103 in 2020. This is a substantial reduction and a major achievement for India's healthcare system.
- In comparison, the Global MMR has declined from 339 in 2000 to 223 in 2020. The average annual rate of reduction (ARR) in global MMR during the 2000-2020 period was 2.07%.

- India's MMR has declined by 6.36%, which is higher than the global decline. This indicates that India's efforts in reducing maternal mortality have been more effective than the global average.
- The data on maternal mortality is maintained by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

Traffic Index Ranking 2023

- The Traffic Index ranking for 2023 published by TomTom (Dutch tech company) provides a comprehensive analysis of traffic congestion in cities around the world, covering 387 cities in 55 countries on 6 continents.
- Notable findings from the 2023 Traffic Index include cities like Dublin, London, and Bengaluru experiencing significant time delays due to traffic congestion.
- The index also highlights the economic costs of congestion, including increased fuel costs and the value of lost time.

Brand Guardianship Index 2024

- Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) chairman and managing director Mukesh Ambani has been ranked first among all the Indians and second globally in the Brand Guardianship Index 2024 compiled by Brand Finance.
- He was ranked higher than many other Indians, including Tata Sons chairman N. Chandrasekaran (ranked No. 5, up from No. 8 in the 2023 ranking) and Anish Shah (ranked No. 6) of Mahindra Group, as well as prominent global business figures like Elon Musk of Tesla, Apple, Google, and Microsoft's Satya Nadella.
- Brand Finance's survey gave Mukesh Ambani a BGI score of 80.3, just below 81.6 of Huateng Ma of China-based Tencent.

NITI Aayog launched Greening India's Wastelands with Agroforestry (GROW) Report and Portal.



- Prof. Ramesh Chand from NITI Aayog launched the Greening and Restoration of Wasteland with Agroforestry (GROW) report and portal.
- This collaborative effort utilized remote sensing and GIS to assess agroforestry suitability across all Indian districts, resulting in the development of an Agroforestry Suitability Index (ASI) for national-level prioritization.
- The report offers state-wise and district-wise analysis, aiding government departments and industries in greening and restoration projects.
- The portal, "GROW-Suitability Mapping" on Bhuvan, provides universal access to state and district-level data.
- Currently, agroforestry covers 8.65% of India's total geographical area, emphasizing the potential benefits of converting underutilized areas, particularly wastelands, for agroforestry.
- The GROW initiative supports national commitments to restore 26 million hectares of degraded land by 2030 and create an additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent.

DARPG released the Annual NeSDA Way Forward Report for 2023

- The Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG) released a report (National e-Governance Service Delivery Assessment (NeSDA) Way Forward Annual Report 2023) showcasing efforts to improve e-Service delivery.
- E-governance is using information and communication technologies (ICTs) at various levels of the government and the public sector for the purpose of enhancing governance.
- Jammu and Kashmir offer the highest number of e-services (1117) among all States/UTs.
- 76% of mandatory e-services are available, a significant increase from 48% under NeSDA 2019.
- Jammu and Kashmir, Kerala, Assam, and Odisha provide 100% of their services through their identified Single Unified Service Delivery Portal.
- The tourism sector has the highest saturation for the provision of all mandatory e-services in 23 out of 36 States/UTs.

Shri Sarbananda Sonowal launched 'Sagar Aankalan' guidelines for Indian Port Performance Index

- The Ministry formulated an action plan for the prompt execution of Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) worth ₹1 Lakh Crore agreed upon at GMIS. A stakeholders' meeting was convened to expedite the translation of GMIS 2023 MoUs into actionable strategies.



- Guidelines under "Sagar Aankalan" were introduced to revamp the performance evaluation of Indian ports.
- Shri Sonowal emphasized that the "Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047," announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, continued the nation's strategic efforts for sustainable growth. He urged stakeholders to collaborate in converting these agreements into reality, elevating the Indian maritime sector.
- The Union Minister, Shri Sarbananda Sonowal, launched the "Sagar Aankalan" guidelines during the stakeholders' gathering to implement previously signed GMIS 2023 MoUs.

Serum Institute of India tops as the most valuable unlisted firm in India

- The Serum Institute of India (SII), under the leadership of Adar Poonawalla, has achieved the esteemed recognition of being India's most valuable unlisted company.
- This recognition comes from the Burgundy Private Hurun India 500 list, which ranks the top private companies in India based on their valuation.
- SII boasts an impressive valuation of Rs 1.92 lakh crore, solidifying its position as a key player in the Indian business landscape.

Henley Passport Index 2024, France tops list of world's most powerful passports

- The Henley Passport Index for 2024 has been published, with France claiming the top position. However, India's passport ranking has slightly dropped from 84th to 85th place compared to the previous year.
- Despite this decline, Indian passport holders now enjoy visa-free travel to 62 countries, up from 60 countries last year.

MoUs and Agreements

Chapter 3

Nokia and IISc team up to drive 6G Research in India

- Nokia announced it is expanding its 6G commitment to India by partnering with the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) to jointly research 6G technologies and 6G use cases.
- Nokia and IISc will also research the application of machine learning technology in the 6G air interface, operating from Nokia's newly established 6G Lab in Bengaluru.
- The collaboration will develop reference architectures, software frameworks and algorithms, with the aim of contributing their joint research to the 6G technology and standards ecosystem.

Bangalore airport joins hands with renewable energy firm CleanMax on long-term project

- Renewable power solutions provider CleanMax and Bangalore International Airport Limited (BIAL) have signed a 25-year long-term power purchase agreement for the generation and supply of renewable energy.
- The energy will be drawn from a 45.9 MW Solar-wind Captive Power Project under a special purpose vehicle named Clean Max BIAL Renewable Energy Private Limited.
- The captive power project set up in a solar-wind farm located in Jagaluru, Karnataka, owned and operated by CleanMax, will have a 36 MW solar power plant and 9.9 MW wind power plant.

Bihar govt, SIDBI join hands to collaborate on enhancing startup ecosystem

- The Bihar government and the Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) have signed an MoU in a bid to boost the startup ecosystem in the eastern state.
- The initiative is aimed at creating a conducive environment for startups and transforming Bihar into a startup hub.
- The Bihar Startup Fund Trust (BSFT) and SIDBI entered into an MoU to administer the Rs 50-crore Bihar Startup Scale-up Financing Fund' (BSSFF).
- Under the policy, the state government has set up the BSFT with an initial corpus of Rs 500 crore. Out of this, BSSFF has been established with an initial corpus of Rs 50 crore for scale-up funding support to startups.

SSB inks MoU for free education of 100 children of force personnel

- Border guarding force SSB inked an agreement with an IB curriculum offering private school in Bengaluru that will provide free education to 100 children of the personnel of the paramilitary.
- The about 80,000 personnel strong Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) functions under the Union home ministry and is primarily tasked to guard unfenced Indian borders with Nepal and Bhutan apart from rendering a variety of duties in the internal security domain of the country.

WTC Utah, IIRF to collaborate on India Trade Mission 2024



- The World Trade Center Utah (WTC Utah) and the Indus International Research Foundation (IIRF) have announced a partnership for a transformative business trade mission to India. This mission is scheduled from February 26th to March 2nd, 2024.

- This strategic alliance aims to fortify economic relations between the U.S. state of Utah and India, unlocking a plethora of lesser-known opportunities for businesses spanning various core industries in the Indian market.
- These industries largely include aerospace, defense, technology, life sciences, education, cybersecurity, and more.

Arunachal Pradesh and NTCA partners to form STPF

- Arunachal Pradesh has collaborated with the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) to establish a Special Tiger Protection Force (STPF).
- This initiative aims to address the pressing need for safeguarding the rich biodiversity, especially the endangered tiger population in the region.
- The formation of the Special Tiger Protection Force is a strategic move to enhance anti-poaching efforts and strengthen the overall protection of tigers in Arunachal Pradesh.
- The force will be equipped with specialized training and resources to combat illegal activities threatening the wildlife.

IEPFA and DBS Bank ink MoU to spread awareness on investment and fraudulent schemes



- A MoU was signed between the Investor Education and Protection Fund Authority (IEPFA) under the aegis of the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA), and DBS Bank, a prominent financial institution with a strong presence in Asia and Southeast Asia in New Delhi.
- According to the MoU, DBS Bank aims to support IEPFA's investor awareness activities by disseminating safety messages via its various digital platforms.
- Leveraging DBS Bank's extensive network of branches and ATMs in 19 Indian states, as well as its digital infrastructure, will significantly increase the reach of IEPFA's investor awareness and protection messages to the end users.

IREDA and PNB join hands to Co-Finance Renewable Energy Projects



- Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency Ltd. (IREDA) and Punjab National Bank (PNB) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) aimed at advancing renewable energy initiatives across the nation.
- The agreement, signed at IREDA's registered office in New Delhi on February 19, 2024, paves the way for joint efforts in co-lending and loan syndication for a diverse spectrum of renewable energy projects.
- These include joint lending, loan syndication and underwriting, management of Trust and Retention Account (TRA) for IREDA borrowers, and working towards competitive terms of sanction, including pricing on IREDA borrowings.

Department of Fisheries signs a MoU with Open Network for Digital Commerce in the presence of Union Minister Shri Parshottam Rupala



- The Department of Fisheries signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) in the presence of Union Minister of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Shri Parshottam Rupala. The signing took place on February 19, 2024, in New Delhi.
- The objective of this collaboration is to provide a digital platform and empower all stakeholders, including traditional fishermen, fish farmer's producer organizations, entrepreneurs from the fisheries sector, to buy and sell their products through an e-marketplace.
- This initiative will play a significant role in the fisheries sector by connecting fishermen, fish farmers, FFPOs, self-help groups, and other fishermen cooperatives in a structured manner.

CIAL, BPCL to establish 1st Green Hydrogen Plant at Cochin Airport

- Cochin International Airport Ltd. (CIAL) has entered into a MoU with Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd. (BPCL) for setting up a green hydrogen plant on the premises of Cochin Airport.
- This collaborative effort will result in the world's first green hydrogen plant and fueling station located within an airport setting.
- Green hydrogen, produced from water using renewable energy sources, is recognised as a future fuel and aligns with zero-carbon energy strategies.
- The agreement exchange ceremony for the green hydrogen plant was held at the Legislative Complex in Thiruvananthapuram in the presence of Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, who is also the chairman of CIAL.

India and Colombia sign MoU on Digital Cooperation



- India and Colombia have signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in the field of Sharing Successful Digital Solutions Implemented at Population Scale for Digital Transformation.
- It was signed between the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology and the Information Technologies and Communications of Colombia.
- They can be built on open standards to deliver and provide equitable access to public and private services.
- India Stack Solutions are DPIs developed and implemented by India at population scale to provide access and delivery of public services.

Tata Steel partners with IIT Bhubaneswar REP to drive innovation and entrepreneurship

- Tata Steel has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the IIT Bhubaneswar Research and Entrepreneurship Park (REP), marking a major step toward promoting innovation and entrepreneurship.
- The accord delineates a cooperative expedition throughout diverse spheres, including materials handling and simulation, energy and surroundings, low-carbon steel manufacturing, and circular economy.
- The two companies will investigate cutting-edge methods, research projects tackling issues with energy usage, and programmes aimed at lowering the steel industry's carbon impact.

Reserve Bank of India, Nepal Rastra Bank sign pact for UPI-NPI linkage

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and Nepal Rastra Bank entered into an agreement integrating the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) of India and the National Payments Interface (NPI) of Nepal for cross-border remittances.
- The integration of Indian and Nepalese fast payment systems is aimed at facilitating cross-border remittances between the two countries by enabling users of the two systems to make instant, low-cost fund transfers.
- As per the Terms of Reference exchanged between the two central banks, the necessary systems will be put in place for interlinking of UPI and NPI, whereas the formal launch of the linkage, i.e., the commencement of operations, will be done at a later date.

NBCC and HUDCO join hands to boost infra & urban development

- NBCC (India) Limited and Housing and Urban Development Corporation Limited (HUDCO) have signed three MoUs to strengthen their strategic partnership.

- The agreements, formalized by NBCC's CMD KP Mahadevaswamy and HUDCO CMD Sanjay Kulshrestha, include collaborative efforts in societal welfare, economic growth, and asset monetization through innovative approaches like Public-Private Partnerships.
- This signifies a joint commitment to inclusive growth, transforming India's urban landscape, and unlocking the latent value of public and private assets for sustainable development.

IIT Roorkee and AFMS collaborate to Enhance Medical Support and Care for Military Personnel

- A significant partnership was formalised between the Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee (IIT Roorkee) and the Armed Forces Medical Services (AFMS) through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).
- This agreement was signed by Lt Gen SK Singh, Director General (Org & Pers), on behalf of the Director General Armed Forces Medical Services, and Prof Kamal Kishore Pant, Director of IIT Roorkee.
- This MoU indicates a new era of cooperation aimed at fostering advanced biomedical research with the objective of enhancing medical support in combat scenarios and elevating the standard of patient care provided to the armed forces personnel.
- Under this MoU, Armed Forces Medical Services will be able to utilise the expertise of IIT Roorkee in various fields like, development of novel medical devices, robotics, nanotechnology, artificial intelligence and machine learning.

Education Ministry partners FIFA to boost Football

- The Ministry of Education has partnered with FIFA to promote football in schools across India.
- Their joint initiative aims to distribute 11 lakh footballs to more than 1.5 lakh schools, making the sport accessible to students nationwide.
- Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan recently distributed 6,848 footballs to schools in Odisha as part of the Footballs for Schools (F4S) program.
- The initiative seeks to integrate football-related activities into the education system, emphasizing inclusivity regardless of gender.

India, Russia sign agreement to strengthen Bilateral Cooperation in Nuclear Energy

- India and Russia have signed a protocol to revise their 2008 agreement to build additional nuclear reactors at the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Project (KKNPP) site and construct Russia-designed nuclear power plants at new Indian sites.
- The KKNPP in Tamil Nadu is a joint initiative of the two countries and the flagship project of bilateral technological and energy cooperation.
- The Russian nuclear energy agency has built two 1,000 MW VVER reactors at the KKNPP site, with plans to construct four more of similar capacitya.

National News

Chapter 4

PM Modi to launch development projects worth over Rs 13,000 crore in Varanasi

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated and laid the foundation for several development projects worth more than Rs 13,000 crore in his parliamentary constituency of Varanasi.
- The projects include multiple roads, a cooking gas bottling plant, a milk processing unit, and a silk fabric printing common facility centre for weavers.
- For the textiles sector of Varanasi, PM Modi laid the foundation stone of a National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT).
- He also laid the foundation of a new medical college and the National Centre of Ageing at Banaras Hindu University.
- PM Modi inaugurated the Sigra Sports Stadium Phase-1 and District Rifle Shooting Range.
- He inaugurated various development works around Sant Ravidas Janmasthali worth about ₹32 crore, and laid the foundation stone of Sant Ravidas Museum.

ECI mandated the installation of CCTV in clubs and bars

- The Election Commission of India (ECI) has recently mandated the installation of CCTV cameras at bars, clubs, recreational clubs, and star hotels.
- This measure aims to monitor the expenditure of political parties and prevent crimes in these establishments.
- The directive is part of measures initiated to keep the expenditure by political parties under watch as well as to check if crimes take place in these places.
- The commissionerate of prohibition and excise has already instructed clubs and hotels to ensure that CCTV cameras are working.
- It is routine for the ECI to issue such instructions ahead of elections, but inclusion of FL2 licence holders (recreational clubs) and FL3 (hotels) for surveillance for the first time assumes significance.

ECI recognized NCP-Sharad Pawar party, allotted symbol



- The Election Commission of India (ECI) has recently recognized the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) faction led by Sharad Pawar and allotted a new party symbol.
- The new party symbol given to them is a 'man blowing turha'.
- This decision came after the ECI recognized Ajit Pawar's faction as the real NCP.
- The ECI had allotted the NCP's symbol 'Wall Clock' to the Ajit Pawar faction of the party on February 6, in a massive setback to its founder Sharad Pawar.

PM Modi inaugurated India's longest Tunnel in Jammu

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated India's longest railway tunnel on the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link.
- The tunnel is 12.77-km long and known as T-50. Trains can now run from Baramulla to Sangaldan via Banihal.
- The prime minister also inaugurated the 48.1-km-long Banihal-Khari-Sumber-Sangaldan section.
- This longest tunnel, which falls between the Khari-Sumber section, is supposed to be the most challenging of the 11 tunnels in the Banihal-Khari-Sumber-Sangaldan section.

Rohit Kumar Singh chaired committee to make guidelines on spam calls

- The Department of Consumer Affairs, Government of India, has constituted a committee under the

chairmanship of Shri Rohit Kumar Singh, Secretary, DoCA, to draft guidelines addressing the issue of pesky/promotional or unsolicited commercial calls.

- The committee convened a meeting on 14th February, 2024, to discuss the issues related to these types of calls.
- It was observed that these calls not only violate the privacy of users but also the rights of the consumers.
- Spam callers are now switching to internet calls, especially using WhatsApp, to lure customers into Ponzi schemes, crypto investments, and offer job opportunities.

Govt to fence entire Indo-Myanmar border to enhance surveillance

- The government has decided to construct a fence along the entire 1643-kilometer-long Indo-Myanmar border to facilitate better surveillance.
- The fencing announcement comes amid months-long ethnic conflict in Manipur, which shares a nearly 400 km long border with Myanmar.
- Out of the total border length, a 10 km stretch in Moreh, Manipur, has already been fenced. Furthermore, two pilot projects of fencing through a Hybrid Surveillance System (HSS) are under execution.

Indian Institute of Mass Communication declared as deemed to be University

- The Indian Institute of Mass Communication (IIMC), a prominent institution for Journalism and Mass Communication, was declared a deemed-to-be University under a distinct category by the Education Ministry, following the advice of the University Grants Commission (UGC).
- This declaration applied to IIMC New Delhi and its five regional campuses situated in Jammu, Amravati (Maharashtra), Aizawl (Mizoram), Kottayam (Kerala), and Dhenkanal (Odisha).

MY Bharat portal surpasses one crore 45 lakh youth registrations in three months

- The Mera Yuva Bharat (MY Bharat) portal has achieved an impressive milestone, surpassing registrations from over one crore 45 lakh youth within just three months of its launch.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the MY Bharat platform on October 31st, 2023 which coincided with National Unity Day.
- This portal is strategically designed to be a technologically advanced facilitator for youth development and youth-driven progress, aiming to provide fair opportunities that empower young individuals to realize their aspirations and contribute to the establishment of a developed Bharat.

Cabinet approved extension of Sugar Subsidy for Antyodya Anna Yojna

- The Union Cabinet has given its approval to extend the sugar subsidy scheme for Antyodya Anna Yojna families distributed through the Public Distribution Scheme (PDS) for an additional two years, extending until March 2026.
- Additionally, the Cabinet has sanctioned the continuation of the Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development Fund, allocating over 29,610 crore rupees for an additional three years, up to 2025-26.
- Furthermore, the Cabinet has granted approval for the signing and ratification of the Bilateral Investment Treaty between India and the United Arab Emirates.
- This treaty is expected to enhance investor confidence, particularly among larger investors, leading to an upsurge in foreign investments.

Dras Winter Carnival-2024 commences

- The Dras Winter Carnival-2024 kicked off in Ladakh with grandeur, under the theme "Celebrating Life in the Second Coldest Inhabited Place in the World."
- Jointly organized by the Indian Army and local communities, this year's carnival is set to blend sports and culture, showcasing the resilient spirit of the region.
- The opening ceremony was a spectacle, featuring an exhilarating ice hockey match between City Blue and Team Goshan Red, injecting thrill into the chilly atmosphere.
- Scheduled to conclude on February 6, 2024, the Dras Winter Carnival aims to nurture local sporting talent, raise cultural awareness, and provide a unique experience for participants and onlookers alike.

Union Ayush Minister Shri Sarbananda Sonowal inaugurated Rashtriya Arogya Mela



- During the inauguration of the National Arogya Fair 2024 in New Delhi, AYUSH Minister Sarbanand Sonowal emphasized the significance of the event in highlighting the rich legacy of Indian Traditional Medicine Systems.
- He stated that the fair, along with its 'Har din Har Ghar AYUSH' campaign, aims to impart the benefits of Indian traditional medicine systems to the people.
- AYUSH Ministry's efforts in promoting India's holistic healthcare tradition, including the establishment of over 900 Ayush start-ups and 9000 Health and Wellness Centres within nine years.
- The four-day National Arogya Fair serves as a showcase of India's cultural and historical legacy in holistic healthcare. The event, held at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in New Delhi, is open to all visitors free of charge until February 4th.

PM Modi laid the foundation stone of Talabira Thermal Power Project.

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Talabira Thermal Power Project by Neyveli Lignite Corporation India Limited in Odisha.
- Valued at over 27,000 crore rupees, the project focused on generating electricity at a rate of 3.65 rupees per unit.
- This state-of-the-art initiative aimed to deliver consistent, affordable power, significantly enhancing the nation's energy security and bolstering economic development.
- The Ministry highlighted the plant's emphasis on higher efficiency, reduced carbon emissions, and a notable 10 percent commitment to eco-friendly biomass co-firing.

Union Minister lays foundation stone for country's first digital National Museum of Epigraphy in Hyderabad



- The Union Culture Minister, G Kishan Reddy, inaugurated the construction of India's inaugural digital National Museum of Epigraphy at the Salar Jung Museum in Hyderabad.
- The Archaeological Survey of India is overseeing the establishment of this museum, which will house approximately one lakh ancient inscriptions in various languages and from different historical periods.
- Last year, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had announced the creation of the Bharat Shared Repository of Inscriptions (BharatSHRI), involving the digitization of these inscriptions.
- The establishment of the National Museum of Epigraphy represents a crucial step toward preserving and showcasing India's rich cultural and historical heritage through the integration of modern technology.

Union Minister Anurag Thakur inaugurated first-ever BIMSTEC Aquatic Championship



- Minister Anurag Thakur inaugurated the inaugural BIMSTEC Aquatic Championship in New Delhi, featuring participation from the seven BIMSTEC member nations across South and Southeast Asia.

- The championship showcases various aquatic events, including swimming, diving, and water polo, chosen to symbolize the endurance, strength, collaboration, cooperation, and cultural diversity within BIMSTEC.
- This six-day sporting event brings together over 400 athletes and officials from member nations in the Bay of Bengal region, including India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand.

Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs hosted inaugural 'The Great Indian Board Reboot: Roadshow 2024' in Mumbai



- The Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs (IICA), the leading think tank under the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Government of India, organized the first-ever 'The Great Indian Board Reboot: Roadshow 2024' at the NSE Headquarters in Mumbai on January 31, 2024.
- This inaugural event, held in collaboration with the National Stock Exchange (NSE) India and the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE), marked a significant milestone in India's corporate governance landscape, bringing together over 200 delegates, including prominent business leaders, regulatory authorities, and experts in corporate governance.
- The event highlighted the changing dynamics and opportunities in corporate governance, with a particular focus on board renewal, diversity, and the incorporation of new technologies and regulatory frameworks.

Shri Dharmendra Pradhan launched EdCIL Vidyanjali Scholarship Programme



- On 6 February 2024, Shri Dharmendra Pradhan, the Union Minister of Education and Skill Development & Entrepreneurship, launched the EdCIL Vidyanjali Scholarship Programme in New Delhi.
- The event was attended by dignitaries including Shri K. Sanjay Murthy, Secretary of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Shri Sanjay Kumar, Secretary of the Department of School Education and Literacy, Dr. Chandrashekhar, Executive Director of EdCIL, and others.
- During the launch, it was announced that 70 students would receive scholarships totaling Rs. 5 crore.

Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh launched the theme for National Science Day 'Indigenous Technologies for Viksit Bharat'.

- Dr. Jitendra Singh, Union Minister of State for Science & Technology, and other portfolios, announced the theme for "National Science Day 2024" as "Indigenous Technologies for Viksit Bharat."
- This year's theme aims to highlight the role of Indian scientists in developing home-grown technologies to address various challenges and promote overall well-being.
- National Science Day is celebrated annually on February 28th to honor the discovery of the 'Raman Effect' by Sir C.V. Raman in 1928.

Shri Pashupati Kumar Paras inaugurates "SUFALAM"

- Union Minister of Food Processing Shri Pashupati Kumar Paras emphasised the pivotal role of startups in the food processing sector.
- Inaugurating "SUFALAM: Start-Up Forum for Aspiring Leaders and Mentors Startup Conclave 2024" he highlighted the significance of events like SUFALAM, emphasizing their potential to enhance networking, facilitate knowledge sharing, and enable startups to leverage various government schemes.
- He said this initiative stands as a testament to the government's steadfast commitment to nurturing entrepreneurship and creating an enabling ecosystem for startups, thereby empowering aspiring entrepreneurs in the food processing domain.

Raksha Mantri unveils the statue of India's first Chief of Defence Staff late General Bipin Rawat in Dehradun

- Defence Minister Rajnath Singh revealed a life-size statue of the late General Bipin Rawat, the nation's first Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), at TonsBridge School in Dehradun on 12 February 2024.
- The ceremony was attended by Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami.
- During the event, Rajnath Singh honored General Rawat, describing him as a brave soldier and a remarkable individual who will continue to inspire future generations.
- The Raksha Mantri added that General Rawat was appointed as the first CDS which is one of the most significant reforms in the military history of the country.

Quality and Sustainability to define India's journey to become developed by 2047



- Union Minister Shri Piyush Goyal emphasized the importance of quality during the convocation ceremony of the first batch of the 'Gunvatta Gurukul Program' by the Quality Council of India (QCI).
- Quality and sustainability are highlighted as crucial issues by Prime Minister Narendra Modi for India's journey to becoming a developed nation by 2047.
- Shri Goyal expresses confidence in the Prime Minister's commitment to improving the quality of living for citizens, following his focus on ease of living in his second term.
- Graduating students are urged to create an ecosystem that values 'Zero Effect and Zero Defect' and respects the environment.
- The Gunvatta Gurukul Program aims to prepare and propel youth to contribute to India's development, aligning with the vision of a Developed India by 2047.

Cabinet approved extension of Fisheries and Aquaculture Infrastructure Development Fund (FIDF)

- The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, approved the extension of the Fisheries Infrastructure Development Fund (FIDF) for another three years, up to 2025-26.
- The extension is within the approved fund size of Rs. 7522.48 crore and budgetary support of Rs. 939.48 crore.
- The Fisheries and Aquaculture Infrastructure Development Fund (FIDF) was created during 2018-19 to address infrastructure requirements for the fisheries sector.
- During the initial phase of FIDF implementation (2018-19 to 2022-23), 121 fisheries infrastructure projects with an investment cost of Rs. 5588.63 crore were approved.

Total installed thermal power capacity is expected to be 283 GW and non-fossil-fuel-based capacity to be 500 GW by 2031-32

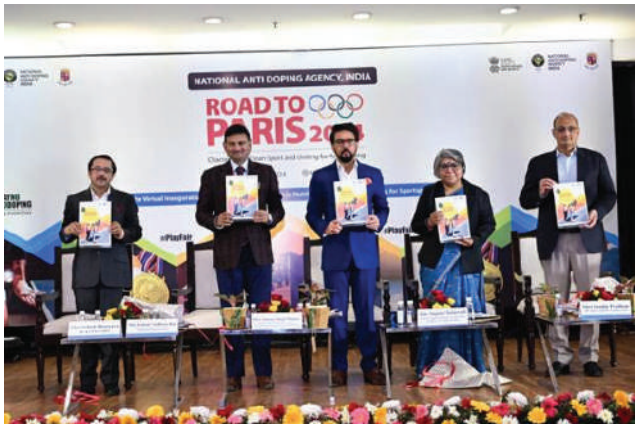
- The Union Minister for Power and New & Renewable Energy has informed that the details of coal imported by Domestic Coal-Based plants and Imported coal-based plants during last five years and the current year is as under:

Period	Import by Domestic Coal based Plants (for blending)	Import by Imported Coal based Plant	Total Import	% Growth
2021-22	8.1	18.9	27.0	-40.6%
2022-23	35.1	20.5	55.6	106.1%
2023-24	17.1	29.5	46.6	3.9

(All Figures in Million Tonnes)

- **During the period:** April – December (2022-23), the total import was 44.8 MT [Import by Domestic Coal-based Plants (for blending): 28.8 MT + Import by Imported Coal-based Plants: 16.0 MT]
- Power plants designed on domestic coal use imported coal for blending purpose whereas power plants designed on imported coal import coal for their fuel requirement.
- As coal is under open general licence (OGL), power plants import coal as per their preference and source based on their commercial prudence.

NADA hosts "Road to Paris 2024: Championing Clean Sports and Uniting for Anti-Doping" Conference.



- The National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) held the "Road to Paris 2024: Championing Clean Sports and Uniting for Anti-Doping" Conference in New Delhi.
- During the event, Shri Anurag Singh Thakur virtually inaugurated the Centre of Excellence for Nutritional Supplements Testing (CoE-NSTS) at the National Forensic Sciences University (NFSU) in Gandhinagar, Gujarat.
- This event, held at the India International Centre, served as a crucial platform for stakeholders to discuss anti-doping initiatives ahead of the Paris Olympics 2024.

PM Modi launched India's UPI and RuPay in Sri Lanka & Mauritius

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi, along with President Ranil Wickremesinghe of Sri Lanka and Prime Minister Pravind Jugnauth of Mauritius, virtually launched Unified Payment Interface (UPI) services in Sri Lanka and Mauritius, as well as RuPay card services in Mauritius.
- This initiative aims to provide UPI settlement services for Indian travelers to Sri Lanka and Mauritius, and for Mauritian travelers to India.
- This launch is expected to strengthen cultural and people-to-people ties between the countries, offering faster and smoother digital transactions and enhancing digital connectivity.

SWATI Portal launched at INSA, New Delhi.



- The "Science for Women-A Technology & Innovation (SWATI)" Portal, launched by Principal Scientific Advisor Prof Ajay Kumar Sood, is a pioneering initiative aimed at showcasing Indian women and girls in STEMM fields.
- Developed and maintained by the National Institute of Plant Genome Research (NIPGR), New Delhi, under the leadership of Dr. Subhra Chakraborty, it is an interactive database intended to address gender disparity in various sectors.
- Its dynamic growth and the goal of including data of all women scientists in India, underscoring its significance as a unique platform for representation and policy-making.

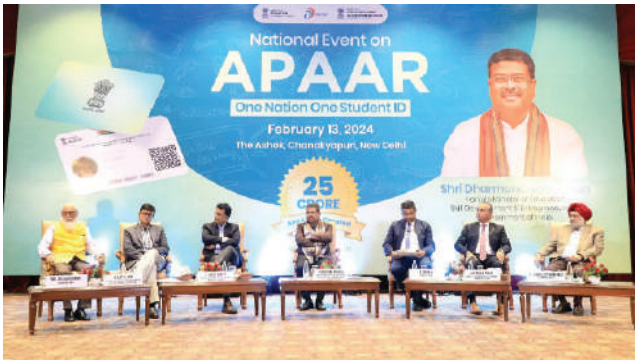
Union Minister of State, Prof. S P Singh Baghel launched Mass Drug Administration (MDA) campaign

- Prof. S P Singh Baghel, Union Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare, initiated the initial stage of the Bi-annual Nationwide Mass Drug Administration (MDA) campaign to eliminate Lymphatic Filariasis.
- This campaign intends to halt disease transmission by distributing complimentary preventive drugs to inhabitants in affected regions.
- Covering 92 districts across 11 states, the campaign will extend for two weeks.

President Droupadi Murmu to share her life journey in episode of 'Nai Soch Nai Kahani- A Radio Journey with Smriti Irani'

- President Droupadi Murmu is set to discuss her life experiences in an exclusive conversation with Union Minister of Women and Child Development, Smriti Irani.
- This discussion will be the concluding episode of 'Nai Soch Nai Kahani - A Radio Journey with Smriti Irani', hosted by the Union Minister for Akashvani.
- Recorded at the Rashtrapati Bhawan, the hour-long interaction air on World Radio Day.
- Additionally, the episode will be accessible on all social media platforms of Akashvani.

Education Minister inaugurated National Conference on APAAR



- Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan announced that the Automated Permanent Academic Account Registry (APAAR) will serve as a prestigious and internationally recognized record for Indian students.
- He emphasized the seamless integration of APAAR IDs, the Academic Bank of Credit, and Digilocker, streamlining operations.
- Additionally, Pradhan underscored the National Education Policy 2020's focus on facilitating migration and integration while upholding educational standards.
- He urged for the promotion of competency in education through skill development and knowledge enhancement.

President Draupadi Murmu urges PVTGs to Embrace New Skills for Economic Development

- President Draupadi Murmu emphasized the crucial role of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in realizing India's vision of becoming a developed nation by 2047.
- During an interaction with over 200 PVTG members from Gujarat in Dharampur, Valsad district, she urged them to acquire new skills to foster economic development and self-sufficiency.
- President Murmu highlighted the government's 'PM Jan Man Yojana' aimed at ensuring 100 percent coverage of all government schemes among tribal communities. She encouraged PVTG members to fully utilize these schemes for the empowerment of their community.

Kilkari, mobile health academy launched for Maharashtra, Gujarat



- Union Ministers of State for Health and Family Welfare, Prof. S P Singh Baghel and Dr. Bharati Pravin Pawar, virtually launched the Kilkari programme and Mobile Academy.
- Kilkari aims to deliver 72 audio messages weekly via IVRS on reproductive, maternal, neonatal, and child health.
- The implementation utilizes the Reproductive Child Health (RCH) portal, targeting pregnant women and mothers with children under one-year-old.
- The content features pre-recorded messages voiced by a fictitious doctor character named Dr. Anita.
- Kilkari is a free service hosted by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, with no additional costs for States/UTs or beneficiaries.
- Mobile Academy offers ASHAs a free audio training course accessible via mobile phones to enhance their knowledge and communication skills.

Cochin International Airport and BPCL collaborate for World's first green hydrogen plant at Airport Premises



- Cochin International Airport Ltd (CIAL) in Kerala has partnered with Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) to establish the world's first green hydrogen plant at an airport, aiming to produce 1000 KW of power.
- CIAL will provide land, water, and green energy resources, while BPCL will oversee the plant's setup and operation. The project, expected to be completed by next year, will initially power airport vehicles.
- The MOU was signed in the presence of Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, who also chairs CIAL. CIAL is known for its commitment to green energy, being the world's first fully solar-powered airport with a capacity of 50 MW.

Ministry of Defence achieves milestone with Rs 1 lakh crore orders on Government e-Marketplace

- The Ministry of Defence reached a significant milestone, surpassing one lakh crore rupees in procurement through Government e-Marketplace (GeM) since its establishment in 2016.
- In the current fiscal, the Ministry placed orders worth approximately 46,000 crore rupees on GeM, showing a substantial increase from previous years. This achievement reflects the Ministry's dedication to utilizing the GeM platform for procurement activities.
- Over 19,800 defence buyers nationwide have placed more than 5.47 lakh orders on GeM, with around 50 percent of these orders going to Micro and Small Enterprises, supporting social inclusion and India's economic growth goals.

PM addresses 'Viksit Bharat Viksit Rajasthan' program

- Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi addressed the 'Viksit Bharat Viksit Rajasthan' program via video conferencing.
- During the event, the Prime Minister inaugurated, dedicated to the nation, and laid the foundation stones for multiple development projects collectively valued at over Rs 17,000 crore.
- These projects span across various critical sectors, including Roads, Railways, Solar Energy, Power Transmission, Drinking Water, and Petroleum & Natural Gas.

PM Narendra Modi is set to unveil a colossal 125-foot statue of Bir Lachit Borphukan



- Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to unveil a monumental 125 feet statue of Bir Lachit Borphukan at Lahdoigarh, Holongapar in Jorhat during the first week of March this year.
- Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has confirmed this information, stating that the State government has extended an invitation to the Prime Minister to dedicate the impressive statue of Bir Lachit and pay homage to him.
- During his proposed visit to Jorhat, Prime Minister Modi is also scheduled to lay the foundation stone of the Sivasagar Medical College and Hospital.

9th Round of Commercial Coal Mine Auctions Attracts 40 Bids, Ministry of Coal Announces Overwhelming Response

- The Ministry of Coal has received a significant response for the coal mines offered in the 9th round of commercial coal mine auctions, with a total of 40 bids received in offline form.
- The auction process for 32 coal mines, launched by the Nominated Authority of the Ministry of Coal on December 20 last year, concluded today, the last date for bid submission.
- Tomorrow, both online and offline bids will be opened in the presence of bidders to proceed with the auction process.

PM Modi to inaugurate Five New AIIMS and Advance Health Facilities

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will dedicate five new AIIMS to the nation on 25th of this month, including AIIMS Rajkot in Gujarat, AIIMS Mangalagiri in Andhra Pradesh, AIIMS Bathinda in Punjab, AIIMS Raebareli in Uttar Pradesh, and AIIMS Kalyani in West Bengal.

- Additionally, he will inaugurate various medical and nursing colleges across the country, as well as advanced health facilities like Critical Care Blocks and Integrated Public Health Labs under the Pradhan Mantri - Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission (PM-ABHIM).
- The Prime Minister will also dedicate advanced research labs and facilities of the Indian Council of Medical Research, various National Health Mission Projects, and advanced food safety infrastructure projects and facilities in multiple states.

Government launched 'Sagar Aankalan' guidelines to boost port efficiency



- Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal launched the 'Sagar Aankalan' guidelines for Indian port performance index, aimed at enhancing the efficiency and competitiveness of Indian ports.
- These guidelines will be enforced across all seaports in India to boost their efficiency and competitiveness.
- The move aligns with the Union shipping ministry's action plan to expedite the implementation of agreements made during the Global Maritime India Summit 2023.

PM Modi to inaugurated the 9th edition of the RAISINA Dialogue in Delhi

- The 9th edition of the RAISINA Dialogue took place in Delhi, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurating the event and the Prime Minister of Greece, Kyriakos Mitsotakis, serving as the Chief Guest and delivering the keynote address.
- Representatives from over 100 countries, including Ministers, former Heads of State and Government, Military Commanders, Industry Leaders, Technology Experts, Academics, Journalists, and Strategic Affairs Scholars, participated in the dialogue.
- Under the theme "Chaturanga: Conflict, Contest, Cooperate, Create," the dialogue explored various facets of international relations and strategic affairs.
- Structured around six thematic pillars, including Tech Frontiers, Peace with the Planet, and War and Peace, the event provided a platform for decision-makers and thought leaders to engage in constructive dialogue, exchange ideas, and explore collaborative solutions.

PM Modi to launch Pradhan Mantri Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan digitally at Mumbai University

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi digitally launched the Pradhan Mantri Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (PM-USHA) via video conferencing at Mumbai University's Sir Kawasji Jahangir Convocation Hall.
- Mumbai University received a grant of 20 crore rupees for infrastructure and educational development.
- Various schemes under PM-USHA will be implemented, including new facilities at the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences, such as a girls' hostel, sports grounds, solar power systems, and modernization of incubation centers.
- Special focus will be on emerging sectors like health services and machine learning with the help of artificial intelligence.

President Droupadi Murmu emphasizes holistic development for Vulnerable Tribal Groups



- President Droupadi Murmu highlighted the government's efforts under the PM Janman Yojana for the holistic development of vulnerable tribal groups during a civic reception in Port Blair.
- She emphasized the strategic importance of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands in India's Act East policy, noting their role in connecting India to South and Southeast Asian countries.
- President Murmu expressed confidence in India becoming a developed country by 2047, the 100th anniversary of its independence. She praised the development of tourism in the islands, which has increased employment opportunities.
- President Murmu visited the Cellular Jail National Memorial and paid tribute to freedom fighters, including Veer Savarkar.

International News

Chapter 5

US House passes Quad bill to intensify cooperation

- The US House of Representatives has passed the Quad bill which instructs the Biden administration to establish a Quad Intra-Parliamentary Working Group to facilitate closer cooperation between the US, Australia, India and Japan.
- It directs the State Department to submit to Congress, within 180 days of the bill's enactment, a strategy to increase engagement and cooperation with the Quad, and within 60 days of its enactment, to enter into negotiations with Japan, Australia and India to establish a Quad Intra-Parliamentary Working Group to facilitate closer cooperation.
- It also would establish a US group, which would have a maximum of 24 members of Congress, to represent the US in the working group.
- It also would establish guidelines for annual meetings and group leadership.

Algeria inaugurates 'Africa's biggest mosque'

- Algeria inaugurated Africa's biggest mosque" and the third-biggest mosque in the world, following over a decade of construction and preparation marred by controversy.
- The Great Mosque of Algiers is situated in the capital, with a minaret towering 265 meters (869 feet) high and a large prayer room.
- Algerian state media says the entire facility could host over 120,000 worshippers.
- President Abdelmadjid Tebboune inaugurated the project.

Dubai introduced a 5 year multiple-entry visa for Indian

- Dubai's Department of Economy and Tourism (DET) has introduced a five-year multiple-entry visa for Indian tourists.
- This visa is issued within two to five working days upon receiving and accepting the service request. It permits the holder to stay in the country for 90 days.
- It can be extended once for a similar period, while the total stay should not exceed 180 days in one year.
- This allows for a total of 900 days in the UAE within five years, though not consecutively.
- This 'significant' initiative allows tourists to leverage multiple entries and exits, providing operational flexibility for both business engagements and leisure travel.
- Dubai received 2.46 million overnight visitors from India between January and December 2023. This shows a significant increase from the 1.84 million tourists in 2022, surpassing the pre-pandemic figure of 1.97 million visitors in 2019.

Greece becomes first Orthodox Christian country to legalise same-sex marriage

- Greece has become the world's first Christian Orthodox nation to legalise same-sex marriage after the Athens parliament passed the landmark reform amid scenes of both jubilation and fury in the country.
- The decision, supported by 176 out of 300 lawmakers in parliament and with 76 against, follows months of polarized political and public discourse, and has been welcomed as a long-awaited vindication by the country's LGBTQ+ couples.

UK Enters Technical Recession Amid Economic Challenges

- The United Kingdom has indeed entered a technical recession, as reported by the Office for National Statistics.
- The UK's gross domestic product (GDP) contracted by 0.3% in the final quarter of 2023. This follows a 0.1% drop in GDP in the July-September period.
- The services sector, which makes up around three-quarters of the economy, declined by 0.2%.
- Production, which includes manufacturing, suffered a 1% drop in output.
- Construction shrank by 1.3%.
- Across 2023, GDP is estimated to have increased by 0.1% compared with 2022.

PM Modi to inaugurate Bharat Mart in Dubai

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi is set to inaugurate Bharat Mart, a warehousing facility for Indian MSMEs to trade in Dubai.
- It will be a unified platform for Indian exporters to showcase a variety of products under one roof.
- The mart will be positioned to function as an all-encompassing destination that addresses diverse commercial requirements and activities.
- Bharat Mart will have retail showrooms, offices, warehouses and supporting amenities to cater to diverse categories of goods, spanning from heavy machinery to perishable items.

UAE dropped from financial crime watch list in win for nation

- The United Arab Emirates, home to the financial hub of Dubai, has been dropped from a global watchdog's list of countries at risk of illicit money flows, a win for the nation that could bolster its international standing.
- The Financial Action Task Force (FATF), a body that groups countries from the United States to China to tackle financial crime, on Friday dropped the UAE from its 'grey list' of around two-dozen nations considered risky.
- The Gulf country, a magnet for millionaires, bankers and hedge funds, was placed under closer scrutiny in 2022, when the FATF highlighted the risk of money laundering and terrorist financing involving banks, precious metals and stones as well as property.

EU launches Red Sea naval mission to protect shipping from Houthi attacks

- The European Union has launched a naval mission to protect cargo ships in the Red Sea from attacks from Yemen's Houthi rebels on 19 February.
- Meanwhile, the militant group claimed to have targeted "two American ships" in the Gulf of Aden, a day after a missile attack severely damaged a Belize-flagged ship.
- The EU aims to have the mission named Aspides, Greek for "shield", up and running in a "few weeks" with at least four vessels.

Philippines becomes first Asian Country to Ratify ILO Convention

- Philippines has indeed become the first Asian country to ratify the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 190 on Violence and Harassment in the World of Work.
- The Philippines deposited the instrument of ratification of the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190), with the Deputy Director-General of the International Labour Organization (ILO) on 20 February 2024.
- By doing so, the Philippines became the 38th country in the world, and the first Asian country, to ratify Convention No. 190.
- Convention No. 190 is the first international labour standard to address violence and harassment in the world of work comprehensively.

Military Regimes of Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso withdraw from ECOWAS



- The decision by the military regimes of Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger to leave the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) marks a significant development in the region.
- The accusations leveled against ECOWAS by the military regimes suggest dissatisfaction with the organization's approach to addressing pressing issues, particularly regarding security concerns such as jihadist violence.
- These countries have been grappling with instability and security threats, and their decision to leave ECOWAS may reflect a perception that the bloc's efforts have been inadequate or misguided.
- The exit of Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger from ECOWAS may have far-reaching implications for the future of regional integration and stability in West Africa.

India formally launches UPI at iconic Eiffel Tower in Paris

- The Unified Payments Interface (UPI) was formally launched by India at the Eiffel Tower in Paris, in alignment with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of globalizing UPI.

- The announcement took place during the Republic Day reception held in France. UPI, a mobile-based payment system created by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPIL) in 2016, enables 24/7 payments using a virtual payment address.
- This system integrates multiple bank accounts into a single mobile application, offering various banking features, smooth fund routing, and seamless merchant payments.
- During his visit to France in July of the previous year, Prime Minister Modi had revealed the agreement between India and France to implement the UPI payment mechanism, starting from the iconic Eiffel Tower. Modi emphasized that Indian tourists in France would now have the convenience of making payments in rupees.

France takes lead as first EU nation to offer Digital Visas.

- From January 1, 2024, France has taken the lead in introducing Digital Schengen visas, making it the inaugural country within the European Union to implement these visas. This initiative is a precursor to the anticipated complete digitization of Schengen visa processes scheduled for 2026.
- In anticipation of the 2024 Olympic and Paralympic games in Paris, slated to occur from July 26 to August 11 and August 28 to September 8, French authorities have embarked on the issuance of approximately 70,000 digital visas.
- However, it is essential to note that due to the limited allocation, not everyone will have the opportunity to apply for these digital visas. This strategic step aligns with the broader goal of embracing digital advancements in visa procedures and facilitates the efficient management of visa applications, especially in the context of major international events like the Olympics.

World's first electric air taxi service in Dubai

- Dubai's Road and Transport Authority has signed an agreement with Joby Aviation to introduce world's first air taxi service in Dubai.
- The agreement was signed on the sidelines of World Governments Summit in Dubai in the presence of UAE Vice President and Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum.
- The agreement gives Joby Aviation the rights to operate the air taxi service in Dubai for a period of six years.
- The agreement is expected to position Dubai as a world leader in proving clean, fast air travel in the megapolis.

New Guinea's PM first Pacific leader to address Australia's Parliament

- Papua New Guinea Prime Minister James Marape became the first Pacific leader to address Australia's parliament.
- The nations announced that Australia will spend AUD 100 million (USD 65.3 million) on Papua New Guinea's internal security, including the development of a police recruiting and investigation training facility and a police barracks.
- Resource-rich Papua New Guinea has rebuffed overtures from China, which struck a security pact with the Solomon Islands in 2022 that caused worry among some in the region.

Minister Shri Ajay Bhatt on a visit to Riyadh for World Defence Show 2024



- Raksha Rajya Mantri Shri Ajay Bhatt leads the Indian delegation at the ongoing World Defence Show (WDS) 2024 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.
- The WDS, spanning five days from February 4 to February 8, serves as a platform for showcasing the latest defence technology and fostering international collaboration.
- Shri Bhatt extends greetings on behalf of the Government of India to the leadership of Saudi Arabia for hosting the event.
- Meeting with the Defence Minister of Saudi Arabia, Prince Khalid bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, to discuss bilateral defence cooperation.
- Shri Bhatt also visited the Saudi Arabian Military Industries (SAMI) pavilion at WDS 2024.

Mexico overtakes China as the leading source of goods imported to US

- Mexico surpassed China as the leading source of goods imported to the United States for the first time in over two decades.

- The shift is attributed to growing tensions between Washington and Beijing, prompting U.S. efforts to import from friendlier and closer countries.
- U.S. Commerce Department figures show a nearly 5% increase in the value of goods imported from Mexico to over $475 billion in 2023.
- In contrast, the value of Chinese imports fell by 20% to $427 billion during the same period.

India-China bilateral trade hit a new record in 2023

- Chinese envoy to India, Charge D'Affaires Ma Jia, announces that India-China trade reached record levels in 2023, surpassing 2022 figures despite a mid-year slowdown.
- Bilateral trade reached US $136.2 billion in 2023.
- Ma Jia attributes the growth in trade to other areas of improvement in bilateral ties, mentioning the informal meeting between PM Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping in August.
- In 2022, bilateral trade had reached $135.98 billion, with a trade deficit in favour of China crossing $100 billion.

Iran announced visa-free travel for Indian tourists

- The Iranian government has approved a visa-free policy for Indian nationals. This policy will be only valid for tourism purposes.
- With this exemption, Indian citizens holding ordinary passports can enter Iran without a visa once every six months for a maximum stay of 15 days.
- If Indian citizens wish to stay for a longer period or make multiple entries within a six-month period or require other types of visas, it is mandatory to get necessary visas through the respective representations of Iran in India.
- Currently, 27 countries provide visa-free entry to Indian citizens. These countries include Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, and others.

Qatar court released all eight former Indian Navy personnel in its custody

- Eight Indian nationals working for Dahra Global detained in Qatar were released, with seven returning to India.
- The Ministry of External Affairs thanked Qatar's Amir for facilitating their release. Additionally, eight Indian Navy veterans, initially sentenced to death in Qatar for alleged espionage while overseeing submarine induction, had their punishment commuted to extended prison terms after diplomatic efforts by India.

PM Modi addressed Indian community at 'Ahlan Modi' event in Abu Dhabi



- Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the Indian diaspora in Abu Dhabi, speaking to a large crowd at the Zayed Sports Stadium.
- He expressed that he had come to meet his family members and conveyed that he had brought with him the essence of the soil where they were born.
- Additionally, he delivered the message from 1.4 billion people that India is proud of its diaspora.

UAE launched Falcon Foundation dedicates to advancing open-source generative AI models



- The United Arab Emirates has initiated the Falcon Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to advancing open-source generative AI models. With a 300-million-dollar investment led by Abu Dhabi's Advanced Technology Research Council, the aim is to democratize AI development and foster collaboration.
- Utilizing TII's Falcon AI models, the Foundation creates an open ecosystem for stakeholders to contribute and benefit, emphasizing transparency and knowledge exchange.
- It supports customizing Falcon models for various sectors and provides open computing resources for ongoing research, promoting adaptability across applications.
- The launch at the World Governments Summit 2024 signifies a pivotal moment in promoting transparent governance models and facilitating knowledge exchange to drive AI advancements collaboratively.

U.S., Japan, Australia conduct trilateral naval exercises in South China Sea

- Warships from the United States, Australia and Japan have held joint drills in the South China Sea in defiance of Beijing, which claims sovereignty over virtually the entire strategic waterway.
- The U.S. 7th Fleet that oversees most U.S. Navy operations in the region said the guided-missile destroyer USS John Finn and combat ship USS Gabrielle Giffords carried out operations with navy ships from Japan and Australia.

Prime Minister's participation in World Governments Summit 2024



- Prime Minister Narendra Modi attended the World Governments Summit in Dubai as Guest of Honour, delivering a keynote speech on "Shaping the Future Governments".
- He emphasized India's transformative reforms and highlighted the importance of digital technology for welfare and sustainability.
- He stressed the need for inclusive, tech-smart, clean, transparent, and green governance, focusing on ease of living, justice, mobility, innovation, and business.
- He also emphasized India's commitment to climate change action and called for multilateral institutions' reform to give greater voice to the Global South.

PM Narendra Modi holds bilateral meeting with Emir of Qatar



- Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, held a bilateral meeting in Doha.
- They discussed various avenues to boost both economies and strengthen India-Qatar ties. Talks covered economic cooperation, investments, energy, space collaboration, infrastructure, cultural bonds, and regional issues.
- The Emir appreciated India's partnership in the Gulf region and the Indian community's contributions. PM Modi also met Father Amir, His Highness Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, discussing bilateral relations and regional developments. The visit aimed to enhance cooperation in trade, investment, technology, and culture.
- This visit held significance, especially after Qatar's release of eight Indian nationals sentenced to death, reaffirming strong ties between the two nations.

India contributes 1 million US Dollars to Poverty and Hunger Alleviation Fund



- India contributed 1 million US Dollars to the Poverty and Hunger Alleviation Fund established by India, Brazil, and South Africa (IBSA). The fund aims to alleviate poverty and hunger, with a focus on supporting projects in developing countries.
- India's Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj, handed over the cheque to the Director of the UN Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC), Dima Al-Khatib.
- Ambassador Kamboj emphasized India's commitment to supporting the IBSA Fund, highlighting its positive impact on millions across the Global South and its promotion of South-South cooperation.
- The IBSA Fund, established in 2004 and operational since 2006, focuses on identifying replicable and scalable projects to address development challenges in partner countries, aligning with national priorities and international development goals.

State News

Chapter 6

PM Modi lays foundation stone for Sikkim's first railway station at Rangpo



- Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone for Sikkim's first railway station at Rangpo.
- It was among the over 2,000 rail infrastructure projects worth about Rs 41,000 crore unveiled by the prime minister.
- The foundation stone laying for the Rangpo railway station is a historic and proud moment for Sikkim, underscoring its significance in the context of 'Viksit Bharat@2047' and its potential to enhance the tourism sector by offering expedited and convenient travel options.
- The station will be a part of the under-construction 45-km rail line from Sevoke near Siliguri in West Bengal to Rangpo in Sikkim. It will have 14 tunnels and 22 bridges.

Anurag Singh Thakur announces setting up of Film Certification Facilitation Office in Chandigarh

- Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Singh Thakur announced the establishment of a Regional Facilitation Office of Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) in Chandigarh with the aim of promoting ease of doing business for film producers in the region.
- Announcing this at the closing ceremony of the Chitra Bharati Film Festival in Chandigarh, Mr. Thakur said that filmmakers from the region will be able to screen their films without the need to travel to Delhi or Mumbai to obtain CBFC certificates for their films.

Haryana launches 'Savera' programme for early screening, detection of breast cancer

- Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar inaugurated the 'Savera' programme, aimed at early detection and prevention of breast cancer, a growing concern among women.
- He emphasised that this groundbreaking initiative is the first of its kind in the country, focusing on detecting breast cancer in its early stages.
- Under the 'Savera' programme, the help of visually impaired women will be taken for screening of breast cancer.
- Furthermore, he expressed his intention to expand this programme to other districts of the state following its successful implementation.
- In the first phase, this programme will be implemented in the Civil Hospital of Sector-10 of Gurugram, the Polyclinic of Sector-31 and the Primary Community Center of Wazirabad village in Gurugram.

SJVN begins commercial power supply from 50 MW Gujrai solar project

- State-run SJVN began commercial supply of electricity from its 50 MW Gujrai solar power station in Kanpur Dehat, Uttar Pradesh.
- With this, the total installed power capacity of SJVN stands at 2,277 MW, with 10 power stations currently operational.
- SJVN, under the administrative control of the Ministry of Power, has begun the successful commercial operation of its 50 MW Gujrai solar power station in Kanpur Dehat, Uttar Pradesh.
- The 50 MW Gujrai solar power station has been executed by SJVN through its renewable arm, SJVN Green Energy Ltd (SGEL) at a cost of Rs 281 crore.

Uttar Pradesh to develop first turtle conservation reserve

- The conservation plan will be implemented by the forest department of Gonda, Uttar Pradesh, in association with the Turtle Survival Alliance Foundation India.

- The conservation reserve will be set up along the Sarju River, a tributary of the Ghaghra River and one of the major waterways in the state.
- The Gonda district has been chosen for the conservation efforts as it is globally known for its turtle diversity.

Madhya Pradesh announces 'bag less school' initiative for Class 1 to 12

- The Madhya Pradesh government has made a significant decision to introduce 'bag less school' once a week for students in classes 1 to 12 starting from the upcoming academic session of 2024-25.
- This initiative aims to alleviate the stress faced by students and will be implemented in both government and private schools across the state.
- The state government has also issued a notice outlining the weight limits for students' school bags based on their respective classes.

Union Minister inaugurated 211 PM SHRI schools in Chhattisgarh

- Union Minister of Education and Skill Development & Entrepreneurship, Shri Dharmendra Pradhan, along with Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh, Shri Vishnu Deo Sai, inaugurated 211 PM SHRI schools in Raipur.
- Shri Pradhan also inaugurated a Digital Library for Kendriya Vidyalaya and Virtual Reality labs for Navodaya Vidyalaya of the State.
- Three short films on the PM SHRI Yojana, Kendriya Vidyalaya and Navodaya Vidyalaya were also shown during the event.

Chandigarh launches North India's first 'Pizza ATM'

- Chandigarh Industrial and Tourism Development Corporation (CITCO) has introduced a new pizza maker that can produce hot pizzas in just three minutes, which is a first in North India.
- It is located near calm waters, providing a tranquil atmosphere for visitors.
- This recently installed pizza vending machine is the only operational ATM of its kind in India.

Odisha CM inaugurates Bagchi Sri Shankara Cancer Center in Bhubaneswar

- Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik inaugurated the Bagchi Sri Shankara Cancer Centre and Research Institute in Bhubaneswar. The inauguration took place on February 15, 2024.
- The center is a 750-bed comprehensive cancer care hospital built over 22 acres of land at Info Valley-II, on the city's outskirts. It will provide world-class oncology treatment to the people of the region.
- The project is a not-for-profit initiative, with Subroto Bagchi, Mind-Tree co-founder and chief adviser (institutional capacity building) of Odisha government, and his wife donating Rs 210 crore.
- The center has facilities to provide radiotherapy to 300 patients and chemotherapy to 150 patients daily.

PM Narendra Modi inaugurated ONGC's sea survival centre in Goa

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated ONGC's sea survival centre in Goa on 6 February.
- It aims to advance the Indian sea survival training ecosystem to global standards as a one-of-a-kind Integrated Sea Survival Training Centre. It is expected to train 10,000-15,000 personnel annually.
- Personnel will be trained in simulated and controlled harsh weather conditions. The centre will help trainees deal with real-life disasters and enhance their sea survival skills.
- In Goa, PM Modi will inaugurate India Energy Week 2024 to be held from February 6-9 in the state. At the energy exhibition and conference, he will also meet Global oil and gas CEOs and experts.

Surat Airport attains International Airport status

- The Centre has formally designated Surat Airport in Gujarat as an 'International Airport', following approval from the Union Cabinet in December 2023.
- This decision comes after Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the new terminal building at Surat Airport on December 17th of the previous year.
- The airport features a runway measuring 2,906 x 45 meters, capable of accommodating Code 'C' type aircraft, along with a terminal building spanning 8,474 square meters.

Uttarakhand takes up Uniform Civil Code

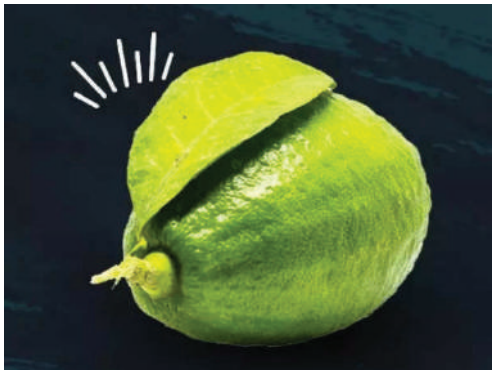
- A government-appointed panel, led by retired Supreme Court judge Ranjana Prakash Desai, has produced a comprehensive report spanning four volumes and 749 pages, offering numerous recommendations.
- The Uttarakhand Uniform Civil Code bill, proposed by the panel, mandates that if either partner in a live-in relationship is under 21 years old, the Registrar must notify their parents or guardian regarding the registration or termination of the relationship.

- The bill, endorsed by the state cabinet, follows the submission of the panel's draft last week, which covers various aspects, including regulations on live-in relationships.

Sikkim becomes first Northeast State to reinstate Old Pension Scheme

- Sikkim Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang declared the reintroduction of the Old Pension Scheme (OPS) for state government employees hired on or after April 1, 2006.
- This decision marks a notable move ahead of the state assembly elections, making Sikkim the first state in the Northeast to enact such a measure.
- According to the Sikkim Services Pension Rules of 1990, employees employed on or before March 31, 1990, will be eligible for the benefits of this reinstatement.

Assam Govt officially declared Kaji Nemu (Citrus Limon) as the 'State Fruit'



- The Assam government has officially declared 'Kaji Nemu' (Citrus Limon), commonly known as citrus lemon, as the state fruit of Assam.
- Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma made the announcement, highlighting the unique aroma and antioxidant properties of Assam lemon that enrich local cuisines.
- This recognition is expected to elevate the status of Assam lemon on the global fruit map, fostering self-dependency and enhancing production in the region.

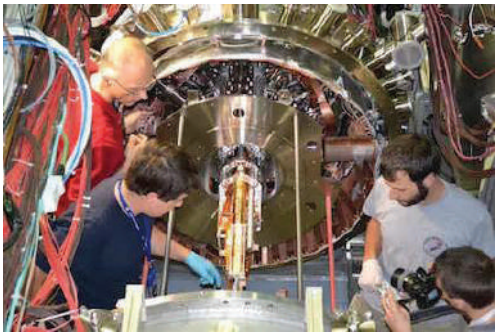
Gupteswar forest in Odisha declared as Bio-Diversity Heritage site

- The pristine Gupteswar Forest, adjacent to Gupteswar Shiva temple in Odisha's Koraput district has been declared as the fourth Biodiversity-Heritage Site (BHS) of the state.
- The site is spread over 350 hectares of demarcated area. Along with its sacred grooves traditionally worshipped by the local community, the site is bestowed with a wide range of flora and fauna.
- The biodiversity inventory and survey conducted by the Odisha Biodiversity Board shows the presence of at least 608 faunal species including 28 species of mammals, 188 species of birds, 18 species of amphibia, 48 species of reptiles, 45 species of pisces, 141 species of butterflies, 43 species of moths, 41 species of odonates, 30 species of spiders, six species of scorpion, and 20 species of lower invertebrates.

Science and Technology

Chapter 7

CERN scientists carry out laser cooling of Positronium



- In a first, an international team of physicists from the Anti-hydrogen Experiment: Gravity, Interferometry, Spectroscopy (AEgIS) collaboration has achieved a breakthrough by demonstrating the laser cooling of Positronium.
- Positronium, comprising a bound electron (e-) and positron (e+), is a fundamental atomic system.
- Physicists representing 19 European and one India research group comprising the Antihydrogen Experiment: Gravity, Interferometry, Spectroscopy (AEgIS) collaboration announced this scientific achievement.

iCreate, Microsoft and MeitY join hands to Transform & Boost Indian Startups in AI

- International Centre for Entrepreneurship and Technology (iCreate), Microsoft signed an Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) facilitated by the Ministry of Electronics & IT to boost AI startups in India.
- This MoU is in line with the vision set forth by Prime Minster Shri Narendra Modi during his meeting with Microsoft Chairman and CEO Satya Nadella last year.
- The MoU signing for the partnership between Microsoft and iCreate to launch the IMPEL AI program will catalyze AI startups in India.
- This partnership is a reflection of our shared vision to build impactful collaborations in AI and emerging technologies, catalyzing startups not only in big cities but also in smaller towns.

IIT Madras, THSTI develop AI-powered model to determine foetus age in pregnant Indian women

- The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras and Translational Health Science and Technology Institute (THSTI), Faridabad have collaborated to develop the first India-specific Artificial Intelligence (AI) model to determine the age of a foetus in a pregnant woman in the second and third trimesters precisely.
- Researchers at IIT Madras and THSTI developed the new technology as part of the Interdisciplinary Group for Advanced Research on Birth Outcomes – DBT India Initiative' (GARBH-Ini) program.
- The AI Model, called the 'Garbhini-GA2' is the first late-trimester GA estimation model to be developed and validated using Indian population data.
- The objective of the AI Model is to help in identifying the accurate Gestational Age (GA) that is necessary for the appropriate care of pregnant women and for determining precise delivery dates.

CASAGRAND launched 360-degree Dome Theatre near Chennai

- Chennai-based residential property developer CASAGRAND has launched its first 360-degree Dome Theatre "Sun Dance" offering an unparalleled visual experience and entertainment to kids and families.
- Sun Dance Dome Theatre, claimed to be the first-of-its-kind in the country, would showcase flicks like Aladdin, Peter Pan, Saving Tinkerbell, and Moby Dick among others at the theatre which is located on the Vandalur-Kelambakkam Road near the city.
- "CASAGRAND believes in bringing the best practices that the world has to offer, be it in construction or amenities in our projects, and in line with that philosophy.

Odysseus completes first US moon landing in 50 years

- The Odysseus lunar lander has made the first United States landing on the moon in more than 50 years, in what has been described as similar to a "cargo mission".

- The moment marks the first successful landing of a commercial spacecraft on the moon, following an unsuccessful US lunar lander mission last month.
- Odysseus is the first craft launched from the US to land on the moon's surface since the Apollo 17 in 1972.
- Odysseus, also known as "Odie", is a type of lunar lander designed by Intuitive Machines, a commercial lunar missions group which has the goal of delivering small "payloads" to the surface of the moon.

Researchers used microrobots in MRI device to treat liver cancer

- Researchers in Canada have indeed developed a novel approach to treat liver cancers using magnet-guided microrobots in an MRI device.
- The microrobots are made of iron oxide nanoparticles and are guided by an external magnetic field. This approach theoretically provides medical treatment in a very targeted manner.
- The force of gravity of these microrobots exceeds that of the magnetic force, which limits their guidance when the tumour is located higher than the injection site.

Japan to launch world's first wooden satellite

- Japan is indeed planning to launch the world's first wooden satellite.
- The satellite, named LignoSat, is made of magnolia wood, which has been found to be particularly stable and resistant to cracking.
- The project is a collaboration between Kyoto University and the logging company Sumitomo Forestry.
- The aim is to test the use of biodegradable materials like wood as environmentally friendly alternatives to the metals currently used in all satellites.
- The wooden satellite is expected to burn up without releasing harmful substances into the atmosphere or raining debris on the ground when it re-enters the Earth's atmosphere.

India's first spy satellite made by TASL set for launch

- India's first military-grade spy satellite, developed by a domestic private sector company, Tata Advanced Systems Ltd (TASL), is set to be launched.
- The satellite has been shipped for launch on a SpaceX rocket in April 2024. It will be used by the armed forces to obtain secret information.
- The satellite was built at the TASL plant in Bengaluru, which can produce 25 satellites annually.
- A ground control center is being set up in Bengaluru to guide and process the imagery sent by the satellite. The center is being built in partnership with Satellogic, a Latin American company.
- The imagery sent by the TASL satellite will also be allowed to be shared with friendly nations.
- This marks the first time ISRO has allowed a private sector company to collaborate in its satellite build program on a large scale.

Woman Robot Astronaut "Vyommitra" will fly into Space ahead of ISRO's ambitious "Gaganyaan" mission



- The uncrewed Robot Flight named "Vyommitra" is set to occur later this year, preceding the launch of "Gaganyaan" in the subsequent year.
- "Vyommitra" will precede India's first human-crewed spaceflight, "Gaganyaan," which aims to carry Indian astronauts into space.
- The uncrewed "Vyommitra" mission is slated for the third quarter of this year, while the manned "Gaganyaan" mission is scheduled for launch in the following year, 2025.

NeGD organises 42nd Deep Dive Training Programme for Chief Information Security Officers under MeitY's Cyber Surakshit Bharat Initiative.



- The 'Cyber Surakshit Bharat' initiative by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology aims to raise awareness about cyber-crime and enhance the capabilities of Chief Information Security Officers (CISOs) and frontline IT officials in government departments.
- The initiative seeks to bolster safety measures against cyber threats and prepare organizations for future cyber-attacks. The 42nd CISO Deep-Dive training program, organized by the National e-Governance Division, took place from February 5-9, 2024, with participants from various states.
- Eminent dignitaries, including Shri Bhuvnesh Kumar from MeitY, emphasized the crucial role of CISOs in mitigating threats and responding to incidents, stressing the importance of adhering to CERT-In guidelines.

IIT Guwahati launches SWASTHA project for nanotech facilities in healthcare

- Secretary of the MeitY, S Krishnan, inaugurated the SWASTHA project and the state-of-the-art ISO 5 and 6 clean room facilities at the Centre for Nanotechnology, IIT Guwahati.
- SWASTHA (Smart Wearable Advanced NanoSensing Technologies in Healthcare ASICs) aims to transform healthcare through cutting-edge nanoelectronic theranostic devices.
- The project is committed to delivering top-notch products and prototypes in micro/nanoelectronics and nanomaterials, with a special focus on healthcare and energy applications.

NASA launches New Climate Mission to Study Ocean, Atmosphere

- NASA's satellite mission to study ocean health, air quality, and the effects of a changing climate for the benefit of humanity launched successfully into orbit.
- Known as PACE, the Plankton, Aerosol, Cloud, ocean Ecosystem satellite, launched aboard a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket from Space Launch Complex 40 at Cape Canaveral Space Force Station in Florida.
- NASA confirmed signal acquisition from the satellite about five minutes after launch, and the spacecraft is performing as expected.
- The satellite will spend at least three years studying the oceans from 420 miles (676 kilometers) up, as well as the atmosphere.

NASA discovers 'super-Earth' with habitable zone

- US space agency NASA has announced the discovery of a 'super-Earth,' a planet that might support life and is located 137 light-years away.
- Dubbed 'TOI-715 b', it is said to be about one and a half times as wide as Earth.
  - The planet orbits within the 'conservative' habitable zone around its parent star, which might give it the right temperature for liquid water to form on its surface.

AIIMS launches AI-based platform for Cancer Diagnosis

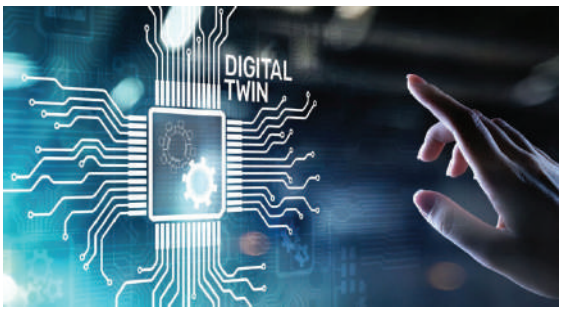
- To exploit the power of AI in healthcare, AIIMS, New Delhi, in collaboration with the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (CDAC), Pune, has recently launched an AI platform, iOncology.ai, for facilitating early detection of Cancer.
- Cancer is globally estimated to be the most fatal disease than those from cardiovascular (Lancet, 2019) in high-income countries (HICs), and middle-income countries (MICs).
- According to the Global Cancer Observatory (GLOBOCAN) estimates, there were 19.3 million incident cancer cases worldwide for the year 2020. India ranked third after China and the United States of America.
- A recent study published in the Lancet predicted that cancer cases in India would increase to 2.08 million, accounting for a rise of 57.5 per cent in 2040 from 2020.
- In India, over 8 lakh deaths were caused due to Cancer in the year 2022. Late detection of cancer remains the main cause of death.

China Opens Qinling Station for Antarctic Scientific Investigation

- China has officially opened the Qinling Station in Antarctica. This significant development marks a new chapter in China's scientific exploration and research in the Antarctic region.
- The establishment of this station underscores China's growing role in polar science, a field that has critical implications for understanding climate change, sea-level rise, and other global environmental issues.
- Since its inception in 1981, the Indian Antarctic programme has performed 40 scientific missions and established three Indian Research Station in

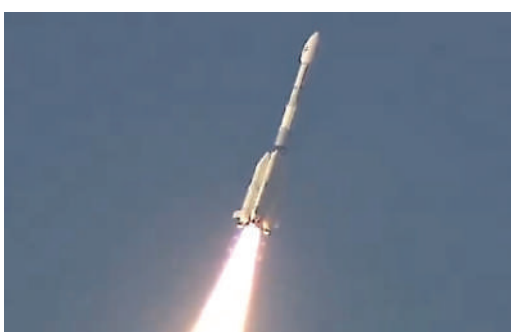
Antarctica, dubbed DakshinGangotri (1983), Maitri (1988), and Bharati (2012).

DoT launched 'Sangam: Digital Twin' Initiative



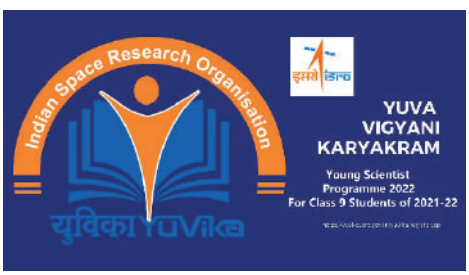
- The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has introduced the 'Sangam: Digital Twin' initiative, inviting Expressions of Interest (EoI) from various stakeholders such as industry leaders, startups, academia, and innovators.
- This initiative aims to leverage Digital Twin technology, which creates virtual replicas of physical assets for real-time monitoring, simulation, and analysis, to achieve optimal outcomes.
- 'Sangam: Digital Twin' will be implemented in two stages in a major Indian city. The first stage, Exploratory, focuses on understanding the landscape and exploring potential opportunities. The second stage involves demonstrating specific use cases to develop a future blueprint for scalability and replication in future infrastructure projects.
- This initiative is driven by advancements in communication, computation, and sensing over the past decade, aligning with the vision for 2047. It combines technologies such as 5G, IoT, AI, AR/VR, AI-native 6G, Digital Twin, and next-gen computational technologies to reshape infrastructure planning and design.

ISRO successfully launched next generation weather satellite INSAT-3DS



- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) successfully launched GSLV F14 from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre Sriharikota.
- The INSAT 3DS weather satellite was injected into its designated path around 20 minutes after lift-off. All stages of the rocket, including the cryogenic stage, performed as expected.
- ISRO Chairman Mr. Somanath declared the mission a success, confirming the deployment of solar panels. Mission Director Tomy Joseph praised the teamwork and highlighted a 50-kilogram payload increase for INSAT 3DS.
- ISRO aims for future developments in building larger spacecraft. INSAT 3DS will provide weather prediction, disaster data collection, and continuity of services, and is being tracked by control centers in Brunei and Port Blair.
- Sathish Dhawan Space Centre Director A. Rajarajan noted this as the heaviest satellite launch, achieving its target flawlessly.

ISRO to organise special programme - YUVIKA



- ISRO will host a special program called 'Young Scientist Programme- YUva VIgyani KAryakram (YUVIKA) starting from May 13th this year, aimed at school children.
- The primary goal is to provide foundational knowledge on Space Science, Technology, and Applications, as well as introduce emerging trends in the field.
- This two-week initiative includes classroom sessions, practical experiments, CANSAT activities, Robotic kits, Model rocketry, interactions with ISRO scientists, and field trips.
- Registration opens on February 20th on the ISRO Antariksha Jigyasa Platform, and students in Class 9 as of January 1st, 2024, are eligible to participate.

Defence and Securities

Chapter 8

India-Japan joint exercise 'Dharma Guardian' commences in Rajasthan



- The fifth edition of the joint military exercise 'Dharma Guardian' between the Indian Army and the Japanese Ground Self-Defense Forces commenced at Mahajan Field Firing Range in Rajasthan on 25 February 2024.
- 'Dharma Guardian' is an annual exercise held alternately in India and Japan.
- The Japanese contingent is being represented by soldiers of the 34th Infantry Regiment, and the Indian Army contingent is being represented by a battalion of the Rajputana Rifles.
- The objective of the exercise is to promote military cooperation and enhance joint capabilities to conduct joint operations in semi-urban environments under Chapter VII of the United Nations mandate.
- The exercise will focus on the basics of high-level physical fitness, joint planning and special weapons skills.

India, Maldives & Sri Lanka's Dosti-16' Kicks off in Maldives

- Indian and Sri Lankan coast guard ships recently arrived in the Maldives to participate in the trilateral coast guard exercise Dosti 16.
- The exercise brings together the coast guards of Maldives, India, and Sri Lanka to address shared maritime security concerns through collaboration and interoperability.
- The exercise aims to enhance cooperation, strengthen friendship, and develop mutual operational capability among the participating countries.
- The exercise will explore ways for the three countries to work together in addressing maritime incidents.

Deputy CM Devendra Fadnavis inaugurated 'Maharashtra MSME Defense Expo'



- The country's largest and Maharashtra's first 'Maharashtra MSME Defense Expo' was inaugurated by Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis at International Exhibition and Convention Center at Moshi near Pune.
- Maharashtra has formulated an aerospace and defence policy in 2017 and a fund of 1000 crores has been created to promote this sector. 600 MSMEs have been created out of it.
- More than 1,200 small companies producing arms as well as other materials related to the defence sector will present their capabilities in the Expo.
- Along with them, weapons like indigenously made tanks and other protective vehicles, missiles, air force helicopters, rocket launchers, ammunition are also going to be displayed in this exhibition.

DRDO to test indigenous Laser Weapon DURGA-2

- Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) of India is preparing to test its indigenous laser weapon system, DURGA-2.
- DURGA-2, which stands for Directionally Unrestricted Ray Gun Array, is a directed energy weapon that operates by focusing energy, whether laser, microwave, or particle beams, to disable or destroy targets.
- The Laser Science and Technology Centre (LSTC) in New Delhi is spearheading India's laser weapon development efforts.

- The LSTC has achieved a significant milestone with the development of a 25KW laser capable of targeting ballistic missiles up to 5 km away during their terminal phase.

Turkish 5th-generation fighter jet KAAN has indeed completed its maiden flight



- The 13-minute maiden test flight of Türkiye's first homegrown fifth-generation fighter jet KAAN has made a splash among worldwide media outlets.
- The jet, known as KAAN, was developed by Turkish Aerospace Industries with help from the UK's BAE Systems.
- KAAN will eventually have stealth capabilities, advanced avionics, and will be able to undertake command roles in battle.
- It's still expected to take several years for KAAN to be operational, with engine procurement emerging as the biggest challenge facing developers.

SARVATRA: Indian Army's Mobile Bridge System.



- SARVATRA, developed by the Armament and Combat Engineering Systems (ACE) of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) under the Ministry of Defence, is a Multispan Mobile Bridging System aimed at aiding the Army in constructing bridges over flowing water.
- This system ensures robust connectivity between two areas during natural disasters. Bharat Earth Movers Limited (BEML) in Bangalore, Karnataka, oversees the production of this easily transportable bridge.
- The Indian Army employs two variants of SARVATRA: the 15m Sarvatra Bridge System and the 20m Sarvatra Bridge System. The latter is specifically designed to span a 100-meter gap effectively.

IAF to conduct mega exercise Vayu Shakti 2024 at Pokhran Range in Jaisalmer



- The Indian Air Force is set to conduct the extensive exercise Vayu Shakti 2024 at the Pokhran Range in Jaisalmer on the 17th February 2024.
- This exercise will showcase the Air Force's combat and operational capabilities, emphasizing interoperability and maneuvering.
- Various indigenous aircraft and helicopters such as Tejas, Prachand, and Dhruv will be participating.
- Additionally, air-to-air and surface-to-air missile systems, including MICA, R-73, SAMAR, and Akash, will demonstrate their firepower.
- The Indian Air Force disclosed that 77 fighter aircraft, including Rafale, Jaguar, Mirage 2000, Sukhoi 30 MKI, 41 helicopters, including MI 17 and Apache, and five transport aircraft, including C130 and C17, will take part in Vayu Shakti 2024.

Raksha Mantri Rajnath Singh scheduled to visit Visakhapatnam to preside over the Commissioning Ceremony of INS Sandhayak



- Defense Minister Rajnath Singh visited Visakhapatnam to oversee the Commissioning Ceremony of INS Sandhayak at Naval Dockyard on 3rd February. Chief of Naval Staff Admiral R Hari Kumar also attended the event.
- The 110-meter ship, weighing around 3800 tons and powered by two diesel engines, had been revamped from its previous incarnation, the erstwhile Sandhayak, which had been decommissioned on June 4th, 2021.
- With an endurance exceeding 25 days and the ability to reach speeds surpassing 18 knots, the vessel proved to be a valuable asset for oceanic mapping and played a crucial role in India's engagements in the Indian Ocean Region through Foreign Cooperation Surveys.

Women officers represent India at World Defence Show



- Three female military officials, Squadron Leader Bhawana Kanth, Colonel Ponung Doming, and Lt Commander Annu Prakash, represented India at the World Defence Show in Riyadh.
- The event, spanning five days and commencing on February 4, showcased the latest advancements in defence technology and served as a platform for international collaboration.
- The trio was scheduled to deliver a talk about their remarkable journey, highlighting the growing role of Indian women in the defence landscape.
- Their participation underscores women's increasing presence and contributions in the military domain, reflecting a broader trend of gender inclusivity in the armed forces.

Surya Kiran Aerobatic Team to Mesmerize Audience at Air Show in Bagdogra



- The esteemed Surya Kiran Aerobatic Team (SKAT) of the Indian Air Force (IAF) is gearing up to captivate the audience at the upcoming Air Show scheduled for February 16th held at Air Force Station Bagdogra in West Bengal.
- Established in 1996, SKAT stands out as one of the few nine-aircraft aerobatics teams globally and holds the distinction of being the sole team of its kind in Asia.
- With an impressive track record, SKAT has performed an astounding 500 displays across India, showcasing the exceptional professionalism of the IAF.
- Additionally, the team has represented India at various international Air Shows in countries like China, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, Singapore, and the UAE, further enhancing its reputation on the global stage.

Defence Ministry signs 2,269 Crore Rupees contract with BEL



- The Ministry of Defence has entered into an agreement with Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) to procure 11 Shakti Electronic Warfare Systems for the Indian Navy. Valued at over ₹2,269 crores, the contract signifies a significant investment in indigenous defense capabilities.

- The Shakti EW System, entirely conceived, developed, and manufactured domestically, boasts advanced capabilities to intercept electronic emissions accurately and implement countermeasures in complex electromagnetic environments.
- Planned for installation on capital warships of the Indian Navy, the system promises to enhance the Navy's operational capabilities.
- Moreover, the project is expected to create employment opportunities, generating approximately two and a half lakh man-days of work over four years.
- Collaboration with more than 155 industry partners, including MSMEs, reflects the government's commitment to promoting self-reliance under the 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' initiative.

12th edition of MILAN naval exercise to begin in Visakhapatnam



- The 12th MILAN exercise in Visakhapatnam, from February 19th to 27th, involves over 50 nations, aiming to strengthen naval cooperation.
- It includes ships and aircraft from various countries, focusing on air defense, anti-submarine, and anti-surface warfare drills.
- The harbor phase features events like parades and seminars.
- MILAN enhances maritime security and promotes collaboration among navies.

Schemes and Projects

Chapter 9

PM Modi to launch Pradhan Mantri Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan at Mumbai University

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi digitally launched the Pradhan Mantri Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (PM-USHA) through video conferencing at a programme in Sir Kawasji Jahangir Convocation Hall of Mumbai University.
- A grant of 20 crore rupees has been approved for the infrastructure and educational development of Mumbai University.
- He informed that funds were sanctioned to various higher educational institutions of the country under PM Usha to strengthen the higher educational institutions of the country, develop infrastructural facilities, and implement new educational activities.
- These include a new girl's hostel in the Kalina complex, a volleyball ground in Thane suburb, a tennis ground, a solar power generation system, a protective wall, entrance and beautification, internal roads, rainwater harvesting, modernization of incubation center in the Kalina complex, special work in artificial intelligence allied health sector.

Shri Dharmendra Pradhan inaugurated the Rashtriya Udyamita Vikas Pariyojana

- The Union Minister of Education and Skill Development & Entrepreneurship, Shri Dharmendra Pradhan, inaugurated the Rashtriya Udyamita Vikas Pariyojana in Sambalpur, Odisha.
- The initiative was also launched virtually across 9 cities including Bhopal, Kanpur, Indore, Varanasi, Bharatpur, Shillong, Silchar, Dibrugarh, and Guwahati.
- It aims to equip individuals with comprehensive entrepreneurship training, aligning with the vision of Hon'ble Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, of creating job providers rather than job seekers[12].
- The Rashtriya Udyamita Vikas Pariyojana will offer comprehensive entrepreneurship training over a period of 22 weeks, combining theoretical knowledge with practical exposure through experiential learning.

Over 3.8 crore beneficiaries enrolled under PM Matru Vandana Yojana



- The government stated that more than 3.8 crore beneficiaries had been enrolled under the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMKVY) by the 29th of January 2024 since the inception of the scheme in 2017-18.
- Minister of Women and Child Development, Smriti Irani, mentioned that maternity benefits totaling around 15,000 crore rupees had been disbursed to over 3.29 crore beneficiaries during this period.

Government to open 25,000 Bhartiya Janaushadhi Kendras



- The Centre announced that in the last nine years, the sale of medicines through Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Kendras (PMBJKs) had resulted in estimated savings of more than 28,000 crore rupees for citizens compared to branded medicines.
- Minister of State for Chemicals and Fertilizers, Bhagwanth Khuba, stated that 10,454 PMBJKs had been opened by the end of January across the country.

- He mentioned that these PMBJKs covered 754 districts out of 785 districts of the country under the Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana.
- The Minister also noted that the Government had set a target to open 25,000 PMBJKs by 31st March 2026 across the country.

NCPCR launched GHAR Portal for Child Restoration and Repatriation.

- The Ministry of Women and Child Development has introduced the "Track Child Portal," a system facilitating the tracking of missing and found children across all States/UTs, including Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, North Eastern States, and Jharkhand.
- The portal's implementation involves collaboration with various stakeholders such as the Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Railways, State Governments/UT Administrations, Child Welfare Committees, Juvenile Justice Boards, National Legal Services Authority, among others.
- The TrackChild portal is integrated with the Crime and Criminal Tracking & Network Systems (CCTNS) of the Ministry of Home Affairs, enabling interoperability for matching missing children's reports with the TrackChild database, aiding State/UT police in tracing and matching missing children.
- One notable feature of the TrackChild Portal is "Khoya-Paya," where citizens can report any missing or sighted children.

Government launches 'Bharat Rice' at subsidised rates for consumers



- Union Minister Piyush Goyal unveiled the 'Bharat Rice' brand at Kartavya Path in New Delhi, aiming to offer rice directly to consumers at subsidized rates.
- This rice will be accessible in 5 kg and 10 kg packs priced at 29 rupees per kg.
- Initially, the Food Corporation of India (FCI) will allocate 5 Lakh Metric Tonnes of rice to two cooperatives - the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd (NAFED) and the National Cooperative Consumers' Federation of India (NCCF), along with the retail chain Kendriya Bhandar.
- These entities will then package the rice into 5 kg and 10 kg packets and sell them through their outlets under the "Bharat Rice" brand, as well as through online marketplaces.

"Ungalai Thedi, Ungal Ooril" scheme launched in Tamil Nadu

- The Tamil Nadu government has issued guidelines for the 'Ungalai Thedi, Ungal Ooril' program, introduced by Chief Minister M.K. Stalin last year to enhance service delivery and hasten the execution of initiatives.
- As per the guidelines, Collectors and senior district-level officials will dedicate 24 hours (from 9 a.m. to 9 a.m.) in a specific taluk on the fourth Wednesday of each month. During this time, they will assess the progress of different projects, inspect infrastructure, and entertain public representations.

Cabinet approved "Pradhan Mantri Matsya Kisan Samridhi Sah-Yojana (PM-MKSSY)"



- The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi approved the "Pradhan Mantri Matsya Kisan Samridhi Sah-Yojana (PM-MKSSY)", a Central Sector Sub-scheme under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada for formalization of the fisheries sector and supporting fisheries micro and small enterprises with an investment of over Rs. 6,000 crores over next four (4) years from FY 2023-24 to FY 2026-27 in all States/Union Territories.
- The Sub-scheme will be implemented as a Central Sector Sub-scheme under the Central Sector Component of the PMMSY at an estimated outlay of Rs 6,000 crore consisting of 50% i.e. Rs. 3,000 crore public finance, including the World Bank and the AFD external financing, and rest 50% i.e. Rs.3,000 crore is the anticipated investment from the beneficiaries/

private sector leverage. It will be implemented for 4 (four) years from FY 2023-24 to FY 2026-27 across all the States and UTs.

- Gradual formalization of the fisheries sector and enhanced access to institutional credit. The initiative will support 6.4 lakh micro-enterprises and 5,500 fisheries cooperatives, providing access to institutional credit.

Need to launch next phase of Smart Cities Mission



- A parliamentary committee underscores the importance of launching the next phase of the Smart Cities Mission, focusing on tier-2 cities within 100 km of state capitals.
- The Standing Committee on Housing and Urban Affairs also highlights concerns about the potential misuse of digital infrastructure created under the Smart Cities Mission. It stresses the need to ensure the right to privacy and cybersecurity.
- The committee's "Smart Cities Mission: An Evaluation" report was presented in the Lok Sabha.
- The Smart Cities Mission, launched in June 2015, aims to promote cities by providing core infrastructure, clean and sustainable environments, and a decent quality of life through smart solutions.
- Initially scheduled for completion by June 2023, an extension was granted until June 2024 to complete pending projects.

Government launches PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the launch of the PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana, aimed at promoting sustainable development and improving people's well-being.
- The project, with an investment exceeding 75 thousand crore rupees, aimed to provide free electricity of up to 300 units per month to one crore households. Subsidies would be directly deposited into people's bank accounts, and concessional bank loans would be provided to ensure no financial burden.
- A National Online Portal would integrate all stakeholders for convenience. Urban Local Bodies and Panchayats would be incentivized to promote rooftop solar systems.
- The scheme was expected to increase income, reduce power bills, and generate employment.
- Prime Minister Modi urged residential consumers, particularly youngsters, to support the initiative by applying for it.

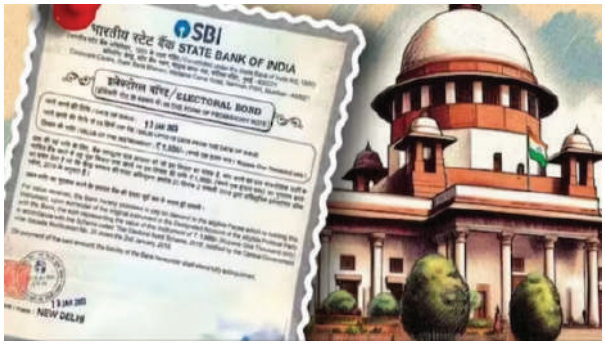
Union Minister launched 'Smart Gram Panchayat: Revolution towards Digitization of Gram Panchayat'

- Union Minister of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Shri Giriraj Singh inaugurated a landmark initiative titled 'Smart Gram Panchayat: Revolution towards Digitization of Gram Panchayat' at Paprour Gram Panchayat under Barauni Block of Begusarai District.
- The pilot project was launched with the aim to extend PM-WANI (Prime Minister's Wi-Fi Access Network Interface) Service in all Gram Panchayats across Begusarai District in Bihar.
- Begusarai has now become the first District in Bihar to equip all Gram Panchayats with Wi-Fi services under the PM-WANI Scheme.

Rajasthan Mukhyamantri Vishwakarma Pension Yojana 2024

- Rajasthan Finance Minister Diya Kumari presented Rajasthan's budget on February 8, 2024, under Chief Minister Bhajan Lal's leadership, after nearly 22 years. The budget includes special provisions for youth, farmers, women, and the elderly.
- One significant announcement is the Mukhyamantri Vishwakarma Pension Yojana, offering a monthly pension of Rs. 2,000 to eligible laborers and street vendors aged 60 and above.
- This scheme aims to support their daily needs and promote independent living.
- The government has allocated around Rs. 350 crores for its implementation, ensuring the welfare of laborers and street vendors in Rajasthan.

Supreme Court declares Electoral Bonds Scheme unconstitutional



- The Supreme Court has declared the electoral bonds scheme unconstitutional, along with related amendments allowing unlimited political donations by corporations.
- In a unanimous judgment, the court stated that these measures violate voters' right to information under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution.
- The State Bank of India has been instructed to halt the issuance of electoral bonds and provide details of bonds purchased since April 12, 2019, to the Election Commission of India (ECI) by March 6, 2024. The ECI must then publish this information on its website by March 13, 2024.

Union Minister Rupala launches Updated AHIDF Scheme



- Union Minister of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying, Shri Parshottam Rupala, launched the realigned AHIDF Scheme and unveiled the Radio Jingle on AHIDF in New Delhi.
- During his address, Shri Rupala mentioned that the scheme was initiated during the challenging COVID period and has now been realigned for another 3 years. He urged the industry, Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), and Dairy Cooperatives to make the most of the scheme's benefits.

Haryana launched 'Van Mitra' scheme to boost green cover

- The 'Van Mitra' scheme is a green initiative designed to engage individuals from economically disadvantaged backgrounds in afforestation efforts. Here's a detailed breakdown of the scheme:
- The scheme targets members of families with an annual income of less than Rs 1.80 lakh. This income threshold ensures that economically vulnerable individuals have the opportunity to participate.
- Individuals aged between 18 and 60 years are eligible to register for the scheme. This age range allows for a diverse group of participants who are physically capable of contributing to afforestation efforts.
- 'Van Mitras' embark on a mission to contribute to the state's afforestation efforts. Afforestation involves the planting of trees in areas that were previously devoid of forest cover or had been deforested. By participating in this mission, 'Van Mitras' play an active role in environmental conservation and ecosystem restoration.

Shri Pashupati Kumar Paras launched "SUFALAM"



- Union Minister of Food Processing, Shri Pashupati Kumar Paras, recently underscored the crucial role of startups in driving innovation and growth within the food processing sector. Speaking at the inauguration of the "SUFALAM: Start-Up Forum for Aspiring Leaders and Mentors Startup Conclave 2024," the Minister emphasized the importance of such events in fostering collaboration, knowledge exchange, and access to government support initiatives for startups.
- SUFALAM play a vital role in connecting aspiring entrepreneurs with mentors and industry leaders, providing them with valuable insights and resources

to navigate the complexities of the startup ecosystem. He reiterated the government's unwavering commitment to nurturing entrepreneurship and fostering an enabling environment for startups, particularly in the food processing domain.

Odisha govt introduced 'Swayam' Scheme for Youth Empowerment.

- The Odisha Cabinet, in its recent meeting, approved several measures, including the establishment of 'SWAYAM,' aimed at providing interest-free loans up to Rs 1 lakh to rural unemployed youth and aspiring entrepreneurs to foster the development of their businesses.
- This initiative, called Swathantra Yuva Udyami (SWAYAM), is introduced ahead of the upcoming elections in the state, with the objective of encouraging young individuals in Odisha to become self-employed by offering them bank loans without interest.

Ayush Minister to launch National Ayurvedic Health Screening Project

- Minister of Ayush, Sarbananda Sonowal, launched a national-level project for health screening and management through Ayurvedic interventions in New Delhi.
- The project aims to benefit over 20 thousand tribal people, focusing on students enrolled in classes 6th to 12th in 55 Ekalavya Model Residential Schools across 14 states. Screening will target conditions like Anaemia, Haemoglobinopathies, Malnutrition, and Tuberculosis, with a focus on promoting healthy lifestyle practices based on Ayurvedic principles.
- The intervention carried out by 16 peripheral units of the Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences (CCRAS), Ministry of Ayush, and ICMR-National Institute of Research in Tribal Health, Jabalpur, in collaboration with the Ministry of Tribal Affairs.

Summit and Conferences

Chapter 10

PM addresses News 9 Global Summit

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the News 9 Global Summit in New Delhi.
- The theme of the Summit was 'India: Poised for the Big Leap'.
- PM Modi emphasized that India of the 21st century does not think small. Whatever India does, it does best and biggest.
- He highlighted the achievements of the last 10 years compared to the ten years before 2014, mentioning the record increase in FDI from 300 billion US dollars to 640 billion US dollars, India's digital revolution, trust in India's Covid vaccine, and the growing number of taxpayers in the country which symbolizes the increasing trust of the people in the government.

13th Ministerial Conference (MC13) of the WTO

- 13th Ministerial Conference (MC13) of the World Trade Organization (WTO) took place from 26 to 29 February 2024 in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.
- The conference was chaired by H.E. Dr Thani bin Ahmed Al Zeyoudi, UAE's Minister of State for Foreign Trade.
- The conference aimed to build on the successes of MC12 in Geneva in June 2022 and ensure the movement of goods and services remains free and fair for every member.

8th Asia Economic Dialogue to be held in Pune

- Asia Economic Dialogue 2024, annual geo-economics conference, organised jointly by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and Pune International Centre (PIC), will be held in the city from February 29 to March 2.
- Focused on the theme, 'Geo-economic Challenges in an Era of Flux', AED 2024 will feature 46 speakers from 11 countries who will participate in 12 sessions over three days.
- The inaugural session on the theme 'Promoting Economic Integration in South Asia' will be chaired by Gautam Bambawale, convenor, AED 2024, former Indian High Commissioner to Pakistan and former Ambassador to China and Bhutan.

7th Session of Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (CCSCH) held in Kochi

- The 7th session of the Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (CCSCH) was held from 29th January 2024 to 2nd February 2024 at Kochi.
- After the Covid-19 pandemic, CCSCH7 was the first session of this committee to be conducted physically. 109 delegates from 31 countries attended the session.
- In this session, quality standards for 5 spices, namely small cardamom, turmeric, juniper berry, allpice and star anise were finalised.
- CCSCH has forwarded these five standards to the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) recommending for adoption at final Step 8 as full-fledged Codex standards.
- The 7th session of CCSCH witnessed participation of a large number of Latin American countries for the first time.

IICA hosts inaugural 'The Great Indian Board Reboot: Roadshow 2024'

- The Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs (IICA), the apex think tank of the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Government of India, hosted the inaugural edition of 'The Great Indian Board Reboot: Roadshow 2024' at the NSE Headquarters in Mumbai on 31 January 2024.
- This landmark inaugural event, conducted in partnership with National Stock Exchange - NSE India and Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE).
- The event underscored the evolving challenges and opportunities in corporate governance, with a special emphasis on board renewal, diversity, and the integration of new technologies and regulatory frameworks.
- 'The Great Indian Board Reboot: Roadshow 2024' is aimed at setting a new benchmark in discussions around corporate governance in India, with its

insights and strategies expected to significantly influence the future direction of board compositions and governance practices in Indian corporations.

PM to inaugurated CLEA -Commonwealth Attorneys and Solicitors General Conference 2024

- Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi will inaugurate the Commonwealth Legal Education Association (CLEA) - Commonwealth Attorneys and Solicitors General Conference (CASGC) 2024 at Vigyan Bhawan on 3rd February, 2024.
- The theme of the conference is "Cross-Border Challenges in Justice Delivery".
- This conference will deliberate on important issues pertaining to law and justice like judicial transition and the ethical dimensions of legal practice; executive accountability; and revisiting modern-day legal education, among others.
- The conference serves as a unique platform by offering a forum for interaction among different stakeholders in the Commonwealth legal fraternity.

Dubai to have world's first air taxi, agreements inked at World Government Summit 2024



- Dubai has made groundbreaking strides in urban transportation by signing agreements at the World Government Summit 2024 to launch the world's inaugural air taxi service.
- This initiative will introduce a city-wide electric aerial taxi service and vertiport network. Central to this project is the Joby Aviation S4, an innovative aircraft designed to accommodate four passengers and a pilot, boasting a range of 161 km and a top speed of 321 km/h.
- With vertical take-off and landing capabilities, it minimizes space requirements and noise pollution, offering benefits like reduced noise levels and zero operating emissions.
- The project, set to commence in 2026, signifies Dubai's commitment to revolutionize urban mobility with efficient, eco-friendly transportation solutions.

7th Indian Ocean Conference held in Perth, Australia

- The Indian Ocean Conference stands as a prominent platform for dialogue among nations in the Indian Ocean Region, convened annually by the Ministry of External Affairs, in collaboration with the India Foundation.
- The 7th iteration of this significant event took place in Perth, Australia from 9th to 10th February 2024, in partnership with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Australian Government.
- The conference is also co-hosted by the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore and the Perth-US Asia Centre in Australia.
- Under the theme "Towards a Stable and Sustainable Indian Ocean," the conference aims to foster discussions and initiatives geared towards promoting stability and sustainability in the Indian Ocean region.

I&B Minister Anurag Thakur inaugurated BSE EXPO-2024

- Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Singh Thakur emphasized India's potential to become a broadcasting hub, urging the industry to embrace advanced technologies and localized content.
- He inaugurated the BSE EXPO-2024 at the 28th International Conference and Exhibition on Broadcast and Media Technology in New Delhi. Thakur highlighted the importance of strengthening public sector broadcasting, particularly Prasar Bharati, in meeting diverse national needs.
- He noted the transformative changes in media consumption patterns and urged the industry to adapt through technological innovations and quality content. Information and Broadcasting Secretary Sanjay Jaju emphasized the need for indigenous broadcasting technologies under the Atmanirbharata Bharat Abhiyan.
- Prasar Bharati CEO Gaurav Dwivedi acknowledged the industry's evolution over the past decades, with increasing popularity of OTT platforms.

16th conference of World Social Forum 2024 commences in Kathmandu

- The 16th World Social Forum (WSF) 2024 began in Kathmandu, focusing on horizontal exchange among civil society groups opposing neoliberal globalization.

- The event, themed "Another World is Possible," kicked off with a Solidarity March advocating justice, peace, equality, and an end to discrimination.
- Over 40,000 participants from 92 countries are expected.
- The Forum addresses pressing global issues through dialogue and action, aiming for a more equitable and just world. It serves as a crucial platform for social movements and activists to collaborate and strategize for change.

Union Minister inaugurated the 2024 annual Government and Institutional Business Meet of the Federal Bank.

- Union Minister Shri Anurag Thakur inaugurated the 2024 Annual Government and Institutional Business Meet of the Federal Bank.
- In his address to the bank's officials and employees, he commended Federal Bank for achieving an all-time high share price.



- Reflecting on the period before the current government, Shri Thakur noted the era of policy paralysis. However, since 2014, the government's focus has shifted to Reform, Perform, Transform. He highlighted the banking sector's remarkable progress, emphasizing its liberation from debt and attainment of unprecedented performance levels.
- The Minister also credited the government for introducing the Economic Offenders Bill to address economic offenders, a measure taken in response to challenges faced by the country prior to 2014.

Environment and Ecology

Chapter 11

SC's Interim Order on the Forest Conservation Act 2023

- Recently, the Supreme Court has instructed the government to maintain the broad interpretation of "forest" as per the 1996 TN Godavarman Thirumulpad case until a final decision is reached on a petition challenging the amended Forest Conservation Act of 2023.
- The apex court was hearing a public interest litigation challenging the constitutionality of the Forest (Conservation) Act. The Act was amended by the Union government in 2023.
- State and UT administrations shall prepare records on forest land within a year from the notification of the 2023 amendment, as per Rule 16 of the Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Rules, 2023.
- The recent Forest (Conservation) Amendment Act, 2023, passed in July-August 2023, aimed to bring clarity and address concerns surrounding deemed forests.

Tamil Nadu govt established the Tamil Nadu Endangered Species Conservation Fund (TNESCF)

- The Tamil Nadu Government has announced the establishment of a first-of-its-kind Tamil Nadu Endangered Species Conservation Fund (TNESCF) of ₹50 crore.
- The fund, announced by Tamil Nadu finance minister Thangam Thennarasu, will aid in the conservation of species, particularly those native to the state.
- The state will also contribute a seed fund of ₹5 crore, with additional funds pooled from CSR contributions.

Goa govt and Power Finance Corporation come together to pioneer subnational Blended Finance Facility for Climate Action

- Power Finance Corporation (PFC) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to support the climate ambitions of the state of Goa.



- The Government of Goa is setting up the sub-national Blended Finance Facility in partnership with the World Bank, aiming to foster low-carbon, climate-resilient development.
- Under the MoU, PFC will utilize innovative blended finance mechanisms to fund key climate projects such as renewable energy, green hydrogen, electric vehicles, waste-to-wealth technology and nature-based solutions, thus contributing to Energy Transition.
- The Government of Goa will facilitate the successful implementation of the facility by identifying and developing a pipeline of climate projects, and promoting policy decisions and facilitating stakeholder collaboration to take those projects forward.

40 spotted deer translocated from Mysuru Zoo to Kali Tiger Reserve

- Sri Chamarajendra Zoo of Mysuru has successfully translocated 40 spotted deer (Axis axis) from its facility in Ittigagud in Mysuru city to Pansoli range in Kali Tiger Reserve in Dandeli in Uttara Kannada district.
- An enclosed area of 2.5 acres has been designed to quarantine the animals at KTR. This allows the deers to acclimatize to new surroundings.
- This translocation initiative aims to improve the status of spotted deer at KTR, thus supporting conservation efforts.

Gupteswar forest designated as fourth biodiversity heritage site in Odisha

- Gupteswar forest, located near the Gupteswar Shiva temple within the Dhondrakhol reserve forest of the Jeypore forest division in Odisha's Koraput district, has been officially recognized as the state's fourth Biodiversity Heritage Site (BHS).
- The site is spread over 350 hectares of demarcated area. Along with its sacred grooves traditionally worshipped by the local community, the site is bestowed with a wide range of flora and fauna.
- As per the comprehensive biodiversity inventory and survey conducted by the Odisha Biodiversity Board, the area is home to an impressive 608 faunal species.

Gigantic new snake species discovered in Amazon rainforest

- Scientists have recently revealed the existence of a previously unknown species of colossal anaconda in the Amazon rainforest. It sets a record as the largest and heaviest snake ever identified.



- The size of these magnificent creatures was incredible – one female anaconda we encountered measured an astounding 6.3 metres (20.7 feet) long.
- Green anacondas are the world's heaviest snakes, which noted that the heaviest individual ever recorded weighed 227 kilograms (500 pounds). It measured 8.43 meters long (27.7 feet) and 1.11 meters (3.6 feet) wide.
- The newly discovered species diverged from the southern green anaconda about 10 million years ago, exhibiting a genetic difference of 5.5%.

Sports News

Chapter 12

Ashwin overtakes Kumble for most wickets in Tests in India

- Indian spinner Ravichandran Ashwin has indeed surpassed Anil Kumble's record for the most wickets taken in Test matches in India.
- Ashwin claimed the wickets of Ben Duckett and Ollie Pope, bringing his total to 351 wickets.
- Kumble had amassed 350 wickets in 63 matches in India at an average of 24.88.
- Ashwin achieved this milestone in 59 Tests at home, boasting an average of 21.40 compared to Kumble's 24.88.
- In the same match, Ashwin also claimed his 35th career five-wicket haul, tying with Kumble.

BWF Para Badminton World Championships 2024

- The 2024 BWF Para-Badminton World Championships, officially known as NSDF Royal Beach Cliff BWF Para Badminton World Championships 2024, was held from February 20 to 25, 2024, in Pattaya, Thailand.
- In the Men's Singles SH6 category, Krishna Nagar won the gold medal.
- In the Women's Singles WH2 category, Liu Yutong won the gold medal.
- In the Mixed Doubles WH1–WH2 category, Qu Zimo and Liu Yutong won the gold medal.
- China topped the medal table with 13 gold, 5 silver, and 5 bronze medals.
- India also performed well, securing 3 gold, 4 silver, and 11 bronze medals.

Jacintha Kalyan became India's first female pitch curator



- Jacintha Kalyan has become India's first female pitch curator. She has been associated with the Karnataka State Cricket Association (KSCA) for more than 30 years.
- She started her career as a receptionist at the KSCA office at the Chinnaswamy Stadium.
- She will be preparing pitches at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium during the Women's Premier League (WPL) 2024.

Badminton Asia Team Championships 2024

- The Indian women's badminton team, led by PV Sindhu and Anmol Kharb, won a historic gold medal at the Badminton Asia Team Championships 2024, which was held in Shah Alam, Malaysia from February 13 to 18.
- This was India's first-ever gold medal at the Badminton Asia Team Championships. The Indian men's team had previously won two bronze - in 2016 and 2020.
- The tournament was organized by Badminton Asia along with the Badminton Association of Malaysia as the host organiser.

8-year-old Indian-origin boy Ashwath Kaushik beats Polish Grandmaster

- Ashwath Kaushik, an 8-year-old Indian-origin boy from Singapore, has indeed made history by becoming the youngest player ever to defeat a Chess grandmaster.
- Ashwath defeated Polish chess grandmaster Jacek Stopa at the Burgdorfer Stadthaus Open in Switzerland.
- With this feat, he became the youngest ever player to beat a grandmaster in the classical version of the game.
- The previous record was held by Serbia's Leonid Ivanovic, who is also 8 years of age but is several months older than Kaushik.

Abhinav Bindra selected as torchbearer for the 2024 Paris Olympics.

- Abhinav Bindra, the inaugural Indian athlete to win an individual gold medal at the Olympic Games, has been chosen as one of the torchbearers for the forthcoming 2024 Paris Olympic Games.
- He is set to participate in the Olympic torch relay scheduled to take place from April 16 to July 26.
- Bindra, who currently serves on the Athletes Commission of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), secured the gold medal in the men's 10m air rifle event at the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games.

Amit Panghal and Sachin Siwach bag Gold medals at Strandja Memorial tournament



- Amit Panghal and Sachin Siwach, both World Championship medallists, secured gold medals, while Nikhat Zareen and three other Indian boxers earned silver medals at the 75th Strandja Memorial tournament held in Bulgaria recently.
- Panghal, who won silver at the 2019 World Championship, triumphed over Sanzhar Tashkenbay of Kazakhstan in the men's flyweight final with a commanding 5-0 victory.
- Sachin, competing in the 57kg category, defeated Shakhzod Muzafarov from Uzbekistan with a unanimous 5-0 decision.
- However, despite their efforts, Zareen, Arundhati Choudhary, Barun Singh Shagolshem, and Rajat settled for silver after losing their respective bouts. Panghal, a two-time world champion, had previously secured bronze in 2017 and back-to-back titles in 2018 and 2019.

United World Wrestling lifts suspension on WFI

- United World Wrestling (UWW), wrestling's global governing body, lifted the suspension from the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) with immediate effect.
- WFI had remained under UWW's suspension since August 23 last year for failing to hold the elections.
- WFI elections were eventually held on December 21 when Sanjay Singh-led panel won 13 of the 15 contested positions.
- The UWW Disciplinary Chamber decided that it had sufficient grounds to impose the provisional suspension on the body as the situation in the federation prevailed for at least six months.

Sumit Nagal lifts Chennai Open ATP Challenger trophy

- In the Tennis Chennai Open ATP Challenger finale, India's top-ranked Sumit Nagal emerged victorious and wins his 5th Challenger Title.
- He defeated Luca Nardi of Italy in the title clash by 6-1 and 6-4. With this, he enters the Top 100 in next week's ATP Rankings.
- The second-seeded Nagal will be the first Indian man since Prajnesh Gunneswaran in 2019 to breach the top-100 barrier.
- The Chennai Open is the first in a series of ATP Challenger 100 events to be held in India.

Naveen Malik won National Wrestling Championship in 74kg category

- Naveen Malik, Commonwealth Games gold medallist, emerged victorious in the men's freestyle 74kg category at the National wrestling championships.
- Malik faced a tough challenge from Yash Tushir, a former World junior bronze medallist, but managed to secure a narrow 5-4 victory.
- Despite injuring his right ankle early in the contest, Tushir put up a strong fight.

Arunachal Pradesh to host final rounds of 77th edition of National Football Championship of Santosh Trophy, 2024



- Arunachal Pradesh will host the final rounds of the 77th edition of the National Football Championship of Santosh Trophy from February 21 to March 9 at

Golden Jubilee Outdoor Stadium, Yupia, Itanagar. Chief Minister Pema Khandu inspected the stadium's preparations and met the Arunachal football team, unveiling their official jersey.

- As President of the Arunachal Pradesh Football Association, he convened a meeting with honorary members and discussed arrangements with local authorities and police for the event's smooth conduct.
- Arunachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly Speaker Pasang Dorjee Sona and others also attended the occasion.

Ravichandran Ashwin joins elite 500 test wicket club



- Indian off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin claimed his 500th Test wicket in the first innings of the third Test match against England at the Niranjan Shah Stadium in Rajkot.
- The 37-year-old achieved this monumental feat in his 98th Test Match.

PM Modi inaugurated 4th edition of Khelo India University Games

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi virtually inaugurates the 4th Khelo India University Games - 2023, Ashtalakshmi in Guwahati.
- Union Minister Anurag Singh Thakur has also arrived for the event. He highlighted the government's focus on Northeastern states' development and emphasized PM Modi's corruption-free tenure.
- The ceremony, attended by Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma.

India won 4 gold in Asian Athletics Indoor Championships

- The eleventh edition of the Asian Indoor Athletics Championships in Tehran, Iran concluded on February 19, 2024.
- A total of 13 Indian athletes -- six women and seven men -- also entered the fray and collected five medals -- four gold and one silver.
- Gold medallists: 1. Harmilan Bains, women's 1500m; 2. Jyothi Yarraji, women's 60m hurdles; 3. Tajinderpal Singh Toor, men's shot put; 4. Gulveer Singh, men's 3000m (stripped)

MS Dhoni named captain of IPL's All-Time Greatest Team

- Ex-India captain and Chennai Super Kings (CSK) legend MS Dhoni has been chosen to captain the all-time greatest IPL team.
- The selection panel, comprising former cricketers Wasim Akram, Matthew Hayden, Tom Moody and Dale Steyn, along with input from 70 journalists, finalised the 15-member squad.
- The team was selected to celebrate the success of the world's most popular T20 league, which was launched in 2008.

Awards and Honours

Chapter 13

Veteran singer Suresh Wadkar receives Lata Mangeshkar Award

- Veteran playback singer Suresh Wadkar has been honoured with the Gansamragini Lata Mangeshkar Award.
- Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis presented him with special mementoes.
- In 2021, he also became a recipient of Padma Shri, The fourth-highest civilian award in the Republic of India.
- Wadkar is known for his playback singing in Hindi and Marathi.
- He has carved a niche for himself in devotional music. 'Sapne Mein Milti Hai', 'Pehli Baar Mohabbat Ki Hai' and 'Lagi Aaj Saawan Ki' are some of his popular tracks.

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



- Swedish photographer Alex Dawson has been named as Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024 for his image 'Whale Bones'. The photo shows a diver beneath the Greenland ice sheet exploring the skeleton of a minke whale.
- The competition for this year's award was fierce, with more than 6,500 entries submitted from photographers around the globe. Participants competed across 13 categories, including Macro, Wide-Angle, Behaviour, and Wreck, with an additional four categories dedicated to photos captured in British waters.

Pyarelal Sharma honoured with Lakshminarayana International Award

- Pyarelal Sharma, one half of the iconic composer duo Laxmikant-Pyarelal, has been felicitated with the Lakshminarayana International Award.
- The award was presented to the My Name Is Lakhan composer by musician's L Subramaniam and Kavita Krishnamurthy Subramaniam as part of the Lakshminarayana Global Music Festival.
- Recently, Pyarelal was announced as a recipient of the Padma Bhushan, India's third highest civilian honour, on the eve of Republic Day.

LK Advani honored with Bharat Ratna for Lifetime Dedication to Public Service



- Long-time BJP leader LK Advani has expressed his gratitude for being awarded the Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian honor.
- In response to the announcement, Advani stated that the recognition is not only for him personally but also for the ideals and principles he has dedicated his life to serving. He recounted his association with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) since the age of fourteen, highlighting his commitment to selfless service for the nation.
- Advani also recalled his close collaboration with key figures such as Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya and former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

Grammy Awards of 2024



- The esteemed Grammy Awards of 2024 witnessed the triumph of the fusion ensemble Shakti, comprising eminent Indian musicians Shankar Mahadevan and Zakir Hussain, in the coveted Best Global Music Album category for their latest opus, "This Moment." Released in June of the preceding year, the album showcased a compilation of eight compositions crafted by the likes of John McLaughlin, Zakir Khan, Shankar Mahadevan, V Selvaganesh, and Ganesh Rajagopalan.
- Furthermore, Zakir Hussain secured an additional Grammy accolade in the Best Global Music Performance category for his noteworthy collaboration on the Pashto piece, alongside Bela Fleck and Edgar Meyer, featuring the acclaimed Rakesh Chaurasia.
- Notably, Rakesh Chaurasia, a venerable exponent of Indian classical flute, achieved the distinction of a dual Grammy triumph for his collaborative endeavor titled "As We Speak," recognized in both the Best Contemporary Instrumental and Best Global Music Performance categories.
- The 66th Annual Grammy Awards transpired at the Crypto.com Arena in Los Angeles, marking a momentous celebration of musical excellence.

Sportstar Aces Awards 2024



- India cricketer Mohammed Shami and chess Grandmaster R. Vaishali won the 'Sportsman of the year (Team Sports)' and 'Sportswoman of the Year (Individual)' awards respectively at the Sportstar ACES Awards 2024 held at the Taj Mahal Palace.
- Shami bagged 24 wickets to emerge as the top wicket-taker of the ODI World Cup 2023. The pacer also recorded an incredible seven for 57 against New Zealand in the semifinal.

Bharat Ratna for Chaudhary Charan Singh, PV Narasimha Rao Garu and M S Swaminathan



- Indian government proclaimed that it would be bestowing the Bharat Ratna, the highest civilian award of the nation, upon three eminent individuals who have made remarkable contributions to various fields in the country.
- The recipients of this prestigious honor include former Prime Minister Chaudhary Charan Singh, former Prime Minister Shri PV Narasimha Rao, and Dr. MS Swaminathan.
- Their distinguished achievements in agriculture, farmers' welfare, nation-building, and economic reforms have been acknowledged through this prestigious recognition.
- This gesture underscores their unparalleled dedication and impact in shaping India's development trajectory.
- The selection of former Prime Ministers P V Narasimha Rao and Charan Singh, along with the pioneer of the green revolution M S Swaminathan, for the Bharat Ratna has brought the total number of recipients of India's highest civilian honor to 53. Notably, within 2024, five individuals have been conferred with this honor, marking the highest number awarded in a single year thus far.

Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar visited Guwahati to present Assam government's highest civilian awards

- Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar visited Guwahati in Assam on a day-long tour to present the Assam government's highest civilian awards - Assam Baibhav, Assam Saurabh, and Assam Gaurav to the winners.
- The state government had decided to confer the awards to 22 individuals selected from diverse sectors for their outstanding contributions in their respective fields. Ranjan Gogoi, Member of Parliament and former Chief Justice of India, was honored with the Assam Baibhav, the state's premier civilian honor.
- The Assam Saurav was awarded to four individuals including Dr. Kishan Chand Nauriyal, Elvis Ali Hazarika, Hima Das, and Nadiram Deuri, while Assam Gaurav was awarded to 17 people including Ranjit Kumar Gogoi, Parvati Barua, Debojit Changmai, and others.

India wins 9th GovTech Prize for AI-Powered Government Services



- India has achieved a significant milestone by winning the esteemed 9th GovTech Prize at the World Government Summit 2024 for its groundbreaking efforts in deploying Artificial Intelligence (AI) in government services.
- Instituted by the government of the UAE, this annual award acknowledges creative and innovative solutions developed by government entities globally.
- India's victory, secured in the 'AI-Powered Government Services' category, underscores its commitment to leveraging technology for enhancing public services and fostering innovation in governance.

Names of 'Indira' and 'Nargis' dropped from National Film Awards

- The 'Indira Gandhi Award for Best Debut Film of a Director' and the 'Nargis Dutt Award for Best Feature Film on National Integration' have been renamed on the recommendation of the Committee for Rationalisation of Film Awards.
- The committee recommended that the 'Indira Gandhi Award for Best Debut Film of a Director' be renamed as 'Best Debut Film of a Director', and the award money be increased to Rs 3 lakh.
- It also recommended that the 'Nargis Dutt Award for Best Feature Film on National Integration' be renamed as 'Best Feature Film Promoting National, Social and Environmental Values'.
- This award carries a Rajat Kamal to the director and the producer with Rs 1.5 lakh each. The committee recommended that it be clubbed with 'Best Film on Social Issues and Best Film on Environment Conservation/Preservation'. The award amount has been increased to Rs 2 lakh each to the director and producer.
- The Dadasaheb Phalke Award has increased from Rs 10 lakh to Rs 15 lakh.

K.P.P. Nambiar award for ISRO chairman S. Somanath

- The field of space exploration and technology in India witnessed a momentous occasion as the IEEE Kerala Section announced the recipient of the prestigious K.P.P. Nambiar Award.
- This year, the accolade was bestowed upon ISRO Chairman S. Somanath, a figure synonymous with innovation and leadership in space technology.
- The conferment of the K.P.P. Nambiar Award to S. Somanath serves as an inspiration to technologists and innovators across the state and beyond.

India wins the 9th GovTech Prize for AI-Powered Road Safety Initiative



- India won the annual award instituted by the UAE government for 'AI-Powered Government Services'. The accolade acknowledges the Ministry for Road Transport & Highways, Government of India, for its innovative project, iRASTE, which integrates AI technology to revolutionize road safety.
- iRASTE, a collaborative effort between government, industry, and academia, utilizes AI algorithms to preemptively address road safety challenges, aiming for a 50% reduction in urban road accidents and minimizing black spots in city road networks.
- The award was presented by Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed Al Maktoum, crown prince of Dubai, and received by Tadu Mamu, Consul at the Consulate General of India.

Urdu poet Gulzar and Sanskrit scholar Jagadguru Rambhadracharya to receive 58th Jnanpith Award



- Renowned Urdu poet Gulzar and Sanskrit scholar Jagadguru Rambhadracharya have been chosen as the recipients of the 58th Jnanpith Award.
- Gulzar, celebrated for his contributions to Hindi cinema and esteemed as one of the finest Urdu poets of the present era, will be honored alongside Jagadguru Rambhadracharya, the founder and chief of Tulsi Peeth in Chitrakoot.
- Jagadguru Rambhadracharya is recognized as a distinguished Hindu spiritual leader, educator, and author of over 240 books and texts.
- The selection committee, chaired by Jnanpith awardee Pratibha Rai, finalized the recipients for this esteemed award.
- Instituted in 1944, the Jnanpith Award is a prestigious accolade bestowed annually to individuals for their exceptional contributions to Indian literature.

Dadasaheb Phalke International Film Festival Awards 2024

- The Dadasaheb Phalke International Film Festival Awards 2024 was held on February 20th at Taj Lands End in Mumbai.

Winners List

Category	Winner	Work
Best Film	Jawan	-
Best Film (Critics)	12th Fail	-
Best Actor	Shah Rukh Khan	Jawan
Best Actress	Rani Mukerji	Mrs Chatterjee vs Norway
Best Actress (Critics)	Kareena Kapoor	Jaane Jaan
Best Director	Sandeep Reddy Vanga	Animal
Best Director (Critics)	Atlee	Jawan
Best Actor (Critics)	Vicky Kaushal	Sam Bahadur
Best Music Director	Anirudh Ravichander	Jawan
Best Playback Singer (Male)	Varun Jain and Sachin Jigar	Tere Vaste from Zara Hatke Zara Bachke
Best Playback Singer (Female)	Shilpa Rao	Besharam Rang from Pathaan
Best Actor in a Negative Role	Bobby Deol	Animal
Best Actor in a Comic Role	Ayushmann Khurranna	Dream Girl 2

Category	Winner	Work
Best Actress in a Comic Role	Sanya Malhotra	Kathal
Best Actor in a Supporting Role	Anil Kapoor	Animal
Best Actress in a Supporting Role	Dimple Kapadia	Pathaan
Most Promising Actor	Vikrant Massey	12th Fail
Most Promising Actress	Adah Sharma	The Kerala Story
Most Versatile Actress	Nayanthara	-
Best Lyricist	Javed Akhtar	Nikle The Kabhi Hum Ghar Se from Dunki
Best Short Film	Good morning	-
Best International Feature Film	Oppenheimer	-
Best Cinematographer	Gnweana Shekar VS	IB71
Best Actress in a Television Series	Rupali Ganguly	Anupamaa
Best Actor in a Television Series	Neil Bhatt	Ghum Hai Kisikey Pyaar Meiin
Television Series of the Year	Ghum Hai Kisikey Pyaar Meiin	-
Best Web Series	Farzi	-
Best Actor in a Web Series	Shahid Kapoor	Farzi
Best Actress in a Web Series	Sushmita Sen	Aarya Season 3
Best Web Series (Critics)	The Railway Men	-
Best Actor in a Web Series (Critics)	Aditya Roy Kapur	Night manager
Best Actress in a Web Series (Critics)	Karishma Tanna	Scoop
Outstanding Contribution to the Film Industry	Moushumi Chatterjee	-
Outstanding Contribution to the Music Industry	KJ Yesudas	-

Appointments & Resignations

Chapter 14

Geeta Batra named as first woman Director of World Bank's GEF



- Geeta Batra, an Indian economist, has been named as the new Director at the Independent Evaluation Office of the World Bank's Global Environment Facility (GEF), making her the first-ever woman from a developing country to hold the coveted post.
- Her name was unanimously recommended for the coveted position at the 66th GEF Council Meeting held in Washington on 9 February and was announced last week.
- She is currently the Chief Evaluator & Deputy Director for Evaluation at the GEF's Independent Evaluation Office.

Shri Anil Kumar Khandelwal takes over as Member Infrastructure, Railway Board



- Shri Anil Kumar Khandelwal, General Manager of East Central Railway has taken over the charge of Member Infrastructure, Railway Board & Ex-Officio Secretary to the Government of India in the Ministry of Railways on 20th February 2024.
- Mr. Khandelwal, a 1987 batch officer of the Indian Railway Service of Engineers, holds a Bachelor's degree in Civil Engineering from MNIT, Jaipur and M.Tech from IIT, Roorkee.

BJP leader Nand Kishore Yadav elected Speaker of Bihar Assembly



- Senior BJP leader Nand Kishore Yadav was unanimously elected as the Speaker of Bihar Legislative Assembly on 15 February 2024.
- In his address to members, Mr. Yadav said he will try to run the House without any partiality and follow the Rules and Procedures of the House.
- A seventh time MLA Mr. Yadav represents the Patna Sahib assembly constituency. He has also held different departments in the state government.

Infosys CEO Salil Parekh joins USISPF Board

- Salil Parekh, the CEO and Managing Director of Infosys, has joined the Board of Directors of the US-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF).
- Parekh, an industry veteran with nearly three decades in the IT services industry, is recognized for his adeptness in executing business transformations and overseeing fruitful acquisitions.
- The USISPF is an independent institution dedicated to strengthening the partnership between the United States and India.

Govt appoints A S Rajeev as Vigilance Commissioner

- A S Rajeev, the former Chief Executive of Bank of Maharashtra, has been appointed as the Vigilance Commissioner in the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) by President Droupadi Murmu.
- Prior to this appointment, A S Rajeev was the Managing Director & CEO of Bank of Maharashtra, a public sector bank.

- The Central Vigilance Commission became a three-member body, with the Central Vigilance Commissioner and two Vigilance Commissioners.
- While Praveen Kumar Srivastava has been Central Vigilance Commissioner since May 2023, Arvinda Kumar has been a Vigilance Commissioner since August 2022.

Anil Kumar Lahoti appointed chairman of TRAI



- The position of TRAI chairman has been vacant for four months following P D Vaghela's retirement on September 30.
- Anil Kumar Lahoti, a retired Indian Railway Service of Engineers (IRSE) officer from the 1984 batch and former Chairman and CEO of the Railway Board under the Ministry of Railways, Government of India, has been appointed as the new Chairman of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI).
- His appointment is effective for a period of three years from the date he assumes office or until he reaches the age of 65, or until further orders, whichever comes earlier.
- Lahoti, a civil engineer who graduated from Madhav Institute of Technology and Science, Gwalior, also holds a master's degree in structural engineering from IIT, Roorkee.
- The Appointment Committee of the Cabinet officially approved Lahoti's appointment, as announced by the Department of Personnel and Training in a letter dated January 29, 2024.

Hemant Soren resigns as Chief Minister of Jharkhand



- On 31 January 2024, Hemant Soren was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate.
- He handed over his resignation letter to the Governor of Jharkhand, C.P. Radhakrishnan. The New CM of Jharkhand is Champai Soren(designated).
- Soren was alleged to be in a land scam case for which he was being investigated by the ED.

Shri Pawan Kumar assumes charge as Chief Adviser (Cost) in Ministry of Finance



- Following the approval of the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC), Mr. Pawan Kumar, an officer of the Indian Cost Accounts Service (ICoAS) from the 1992 batch, has assumed the position of Chief Adviser (Cost) at the Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance.
- Effective from February 1, 2024, he has taken charge in Level-17 (Apex level). Prior to this appointment, Mr. Kumar held the position of Additional Chief Adviser (Cost).
- Notably, Mr. Kumar played a significant role in the development of a web-based Online Dashboard for performance evaluation of Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) at the Department of Public Enterprises, Ministry of Finance.
- This initiative received the prestigious 'Gold Award' in the 'e-Governance' category in 2022, recognized by a leading think tank.

Senior IAS officer Sanjay Jaju takes charge of Secretary, I&B in New Delhi



- Senior IAS officer Sanjay Jaju assumed the responsibilities of the Secretary of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. This key administrative transition involved Mr. Jaju taking over the role from Apurva Chandra, who has been appointed as the Secretary for Health and Family Welfare.
- The handover signifies a significant change in leadership within the Information and Broadcasting Ministry. Sanjay Jaju, an experienced and senior officer of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), has stepped into the role with the aim of overseeing and managing the various functions and activities of the ministry.
- Apurva Chandra, who previously held the position, has now moved to the important role of Secretary for Health and Family Welfare, where he is expected to bring his expertise to bear on matters pertaining to public health and family welfare initiatives.

Punjab Governor Banwarilal Purohit resigns



- Prior to assuming the position at Raj Bhavan in Punjab, Mr. Purohit had previously served as the Governor of Tamil Nadu from 2017 to 2021.
- However, on February 3, a day following a meeting with Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Mr. Purohit submitted his resignation from the role of Governor in Punjab and the concurrent role as the Administrator of the Union Territory of Chandigarh.
- This decision marked a notable development in his gubernatorial tenure, signaling a change in leadership in the state of Punjab and the Union Territory of Chandigarh.

Justice Ritu Bahri becomes Chief Justice of Uttarakhand High Court



- Justice Ritu Bahri took the oath as the new Chief Justice of the Uttarakhand High Court in a ceremony held at Raj Bhawan.
- The oath was administered by Governor Lt Gen (retd) Gurmit Singh. The event was attended by prominent government officials, with Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami among those present at the swearing-in ceremony.
- This marks a significant appointment in the judiciary of Uttarakhand, with Justice Ritu Bahri assuming the role of Chief Justice. The ceremony was a formal and dignified occasion, underscoring the importance of the judiciary in the state.

Sinn Fein's Michelle O'Neill becomes first minister of Northern Ireland



- Michelle O'Neill, a member of Sinn Féin, has officially assumed the role of Northern Ireland's first minister, marking a historic moment as the first time an Irish nationalist is heading the devolved government of this United Kingdom territory.
- The confirmation of O'Neill's appointment occurred, duly acknowledged by the speaker of the regional parliament. This development follows the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), the largest pro-UK party, ending a two-year boycott of the power-sharing government in the region.
- The breakthrough came about through an agreement between the DUP and the UK government aimed at alleviating trade frictions.

Tata Digital announced appointment of Naveen Tahilyani as new CEO



- Tata Digital, the superapp under Tata Sons, appointed Naveen Tahilyani as its new CEO and MD.
- Tahilyani replaces Pratik Pal, who led the company since Tata's entry into digital commerce and the creation of the Tata Neu superapp. Currently serving as the CEO and MD of Tata AIA Life Insurance Company, Tahilyani brings a deep understanding of the Indian consumer market and significant experience in the financial services industry to his new role.
- Tata Digital highlighted Tahilyani's track record of driving innovation, fostering collaboration, and achieving operational excellence.

Biju Prabhakar may step down from KSRTC CMD post



- KSRTC Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) Biju Prabhakar reportedly decides to resign amid simmering discontent with new Transport Minister K.B. Ganesh Kumar.
- Prabhakar also expresses readiness to relinquish the Transport Secretary post.
- Tensions escalated when Minister Kumar announced plans to replace electric buses in Thiruvananthapuram with diesel buses, despite KSRTC accounts showing profitability in e-bus services.

Ajay Kumar Choudhary appointed Non-Executive Chairman of NPCI

- Ajay Kumar Choudhary has been appointed as the new non-executive chairman and independent director of the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), effective from February 8, 2024, as announced by the organization recently.
- Ajay Kumar Choudhary has been appointed as the new non-executive chairman and independent director of the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), with effect from February 8, 2024.
- With a distinguished career spanning over three decades at the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), Mr. Choudhary brings a wealth of experience and expertise as a central banker to this significant role.

Tata AIA Life appointed Venkatachalam H as MD and CEO.



- The board of Tata AIA Life Insurance has granted approval for the appointment of Venkatachalam H, who currently serves as the President and Chief Distribution Officer, as the Managing Director (MD) and Chief Executive Officer (CEO), pending regulatory clearance.
- Venkatachalam, who has been associated with Tata AIA Life since 2016, is slated to succeed the current MD and CEO, Naveen Tahilyani.
- Upon regulatory approval, Venkatachalam will assume the responsibilities of leading the company in its strategic direction and operations.

Mr. Sanjay Kumar Jain assumes the charge of CMD/IRCTC



- Sanjay Kumar Jain, a 1990 batch IRTS officer, has assumed the position of Chairman & Managing Director of Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation Ltd (IRCTC).
- With over three decades of experience in leadership roles across various government sectors, including the Ministry of Railways and Department of Public Enterprises, Jain brings extensive expertise in policy-making and commercial ventures, complemented by his qualifications as a Chartered Accountant.

ICAI elected New President, Vice President


CA. Ranjeet Kumar Agarwal
President, ICAI (2024-25)

CA. Charanjot Singh Nanda
Vice President, ICAI (2024-25)

- Ranjeet Kumar Agarwal has been elected as the new President of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI), succeeding Aniket S. Talati.
- He is the 72nd President of ICAI and has been a practicing Chartered Accountant for 24 years, holding additional qualifications as a Company Secretary and DISA from ICAI.
- Charanjot Singh Nanda has been elected as the Vice President for the Year 2024-25. Nanda, a graduate of M L N College, is a rank holder in CA Inter examination and completed his Chartered Accountancy in 1991.

SBICAPS appointed Virendra Bansal as the new MD and CEO



- Virendra Bansal has been named as the new Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of SBI Capital Markets (SBICAPS), succeeding Rajay Kumar Sinha. Sinha has been appointed as the Whole Time Member (Finance and Investment) of IRDAI.
- Prior to his new role, Bansal served as Country Head for SBI's US Operations and held various positions within the bank, including CEO of SBI's New York office and Vice-Chairman of SBI (California).

Lebanese Judge Nawaf Salam elected as ICJ's New President



- Lebanese Judge Nawaf Salam has been elected as the new President of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for a three-year term.
- Additionally, Ugandan Judge Julia Sebutinde has been elected as the Vice President of the ICJ for the same term. Notably, Judge Sebutinde garnered attention for her voting pattern against all measures sought by South Africa in its genocide case against Israel.
- The International Court of Justice (ICJ) consists of 15 judges who serve nine-year terms, elected by the UN General Assembly and the Security Council.
- Judge Salam, who officially began his tenure at the ICJ on February 6, 2018, previously served as Lebanon's Ambassador and permanent representative to the UN.

Lt. Gen. Dwivedi assumes Command from Lt. Gen. Suchindra Kumar



- Lieutenant General Upendra Dwivedi has assumed the role of Vice Chief of the Indian Army, succeeding Lieutenant General MV Suchindra Kumar. Lieutenant General Dwivedi previously served as the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Northern Command from 2022 to 2024.
- He is an alumnus of Sainik School, Rewa, and was commissioned into the 18 JAMMU & KASHMIR RIFLES in 1984, later commanding the unit. He has extensive experience in both the Northern and Western Theatres.

Pradeep Kumar Sinha appointed as Non-Executive Part-time Chairman of ICICI Bank



- The Board has approved the appointment of Sinha as the Non-Executive Part-time Chairman, effective from July 1, 2024, or the date of approval from RBI, whichever is later.
- This appointment is to fill the vacancy left by the retirement of Mr. Chaturvedi and will be valid until February 16, 2029.

KVS Manian appointed as Kotak Mahindra Bank's New JMD



- Kotak Mahindra Bank has appointed KVS Manian as its new Joint Managing Director (JMD), succeeding former JMD Dipak Gupta.
- Following this announcement, the bank's share price rose by over a percent in early trade.
- This move signifies a reorganization in the bank's top management, with Manian assuming a key leadership role.

Obituaries

Chapter 15

Ghazal legend Pankaj Udhas passes away at 72



- Veteran singer Pankaj Udhas passed away at the age of 72 on 26 February 2024 following prolonged illness.
- Pankaj Udhas is best known for lending his voice to memorable tracks like Chitthi Aayi Hai from Mahesh Bhatt's 1986 crime thriller Naam, Chandi Jaisa Rang Hai from Pravin Bhatt's 1998 film Ek Hi Maqsad, Aaj Phir Tumpe from Feroz Khan's 1988 action thriller Dayavan, Jeeye to Jeeye Kaise from Lawrence D'Souza's 1991 romantic film Saajan, and Chhupana Bhi Nahi Aata from Abbas-Mustan's 1993 revenge thriller Baazigar among others.
- His ghazal career includes reputed albums like Aahat (1980) and tracks like Na Kajre Ki Dhaar, Aur Ahista Kijiye Baatein, Ek Taraf Uska Ghar, and Thodi Thodi Piya Karo.

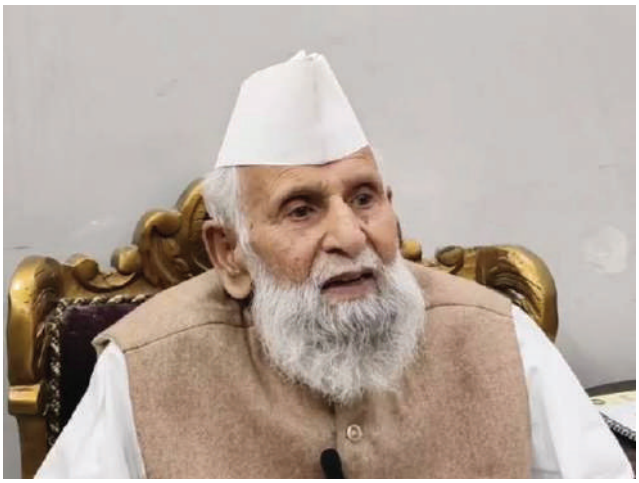
Jain muni Acharya Vidyasagar Maharaj passes away at 77

- Prominent Jain muni Acharya Vidyasagar Maharaj passed away at Chandragiri Teerth in Chhattisgarh's Dongargarh. He was 77.
- According to an official statement by teerth, "Acharya Vidyasagar Maharaj attained Samadhi through 'Sallekhna' at Chandragiri teerth at 2:35 am".
- Sallekhna is a Jain religious practice involving voluntary fasting unto death for spiritual purification.

Renowned filmmaker Kumar Shahani passed away at 83

- Renowned filmmaker and academic Kumar Shahani passed away at a city hospital after battling prolonged old age-related illness. He was 83.
- The director studied at the Film and Television Institute of India in Pune, and began his career with Maya Darpan in 1972. The film is based on a short story by Nirmal Varma. His next film, Tarang in 1984, won a National Film Award.
- Throughout his career, Shahani achieved numerous accolades, including the Filmfare Critics Awards for Best Film in 1972, 1990, and 1991.
- He also received the International Film Festival of Rotterdam - FIPRESCI Award in 1990 and the Prince Claus Award in 1998.

India's oldest MP and Samajwadi Party Shafiqur Rahman Barq passed away at 94



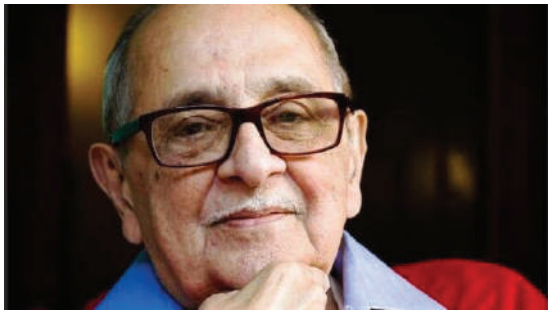
- Samajwadi Party MP Shafiqur Rahman Barq died at a private hospital in Uttar Pradesh's Moradabad at the age of 94 after prolonged illness.
- He started his political career with farmer leader and former Prime Minister of India Bharat Ratna Chaudhary Charan Singh.
- Shafiqur Rahman Barq was also the convenor of the Babri Masjid Action Committee.
- He was the oldest MP in Parliament.
- He represented the Sambhal constituency of Uttar Pradesh in the Lok Sabha. Barq has been elected 4 times as MLA and 5 times as Lok Sabha MP.

Former Chief Minister of Maharashtra, Shri Manohar Joshi passed away



- Former Maharashtra Chief Minister Manohar Joshi passed away on 23 February at the age of 86.
- Joshi was the Chief Minister of Maharashtra from 1995 to 1999 and Speaker of the Lok Sabha from 2002 to 2004.
- He was also a Member of Rajya Sabha from 2006 to 2012, and Minister of Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises from 1999 to 2002.

SC Judge Fali Sam Nariman passed away at 95



- Eminent jurist and Senior Advocate Fali S Nariman passed away on 21 February at the age of 95.
- His career as a lawyer spanned over 75 years with the last half-century being spent as a senior advocate of the Supreme Court of India.
- He started his law practice at the Bombay High Court in 1950. He served as the additional solicitor general between 1972 and 1975 and resigned from the post during emergency.
- Nariman was appointed a Senior Advocate by the Supreme Court of India in 1971. He was also a nominated member of the Rajya Sabha from 1999-2005.
- He was awarded the Padma Bhushan in 1991 and the Padma Vibhushan in 2007.

Ameen Sayani, Renowned Radio Presenter, passed away at 91

- Ameen Sayani, former radio presenter, popular for his show Binaca Geetmala passed away on 20 February.
- Ameen Sayani, whose introduction 'Namaskar bhaiyon aur behno, main aapka dost Ameen Sayani bol raha hoon (Hello sister and brothers, this is your friend Ameen Sayani)' on Radio Ceylon still evokes strong nostalgia.
- Ameen was known for his show Binaca Geetmala which was broadcast since 1952 mainly over Radio Ceylon and later over Vividh Bharati (AIR) for a total of over 42 years.
- Ameen Sayani has produced, compiled (or spoken for) over 54,000 radio programmes and 19,000 spots/jingles since 1951.

Historian R. Champakalakshmi passed away



- The academic world is grieving the passing of esteemed historian R. Champakalakshmi, who served as the former president of the Indian History Congress and was a professor at the Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University.
- Her colleague, K.N. Panikkar, former vice chairperson of the Kerala State Higher Education Council (KSHEC), described her death as an irreplaceable loss to the academic community as a whole, and particularly to the field of Indian history.

Namibian President Hage Geingob, 82, dies at a hospital in capital Windhoek



- Namibian President Hage Geingob, aged 82, passed away at Lady Pohamba Hospital in the capital Windhoek, according to Acting President Nangolo Mbumba.
- The president, diagnosed with cancer in January, breathed his last just after midnight, with his wife Monica Geingos and children at his side.
- Mbumba urged the nation to maintain composure as the government prepares state arrangements, with further details to be disclosed later.
- The Cabinet would convene promptly for necessary state arrangements. Geingob, the country's third President, had been in office since 2015 and was serving his second term.
- He also held the position of Namibia's first Prime Minister from 1990 to 2002 under former President Sam Nujoma, following Namibia's independence from South Africa.

Eminent Hindi and Maithili litterateur Usha Kiran Khan passed away at 82



- Renowned Hindi and Maithili author Usha Kiran Khan passed away at the age of 82 after battling a prolonged illness. She breathed her last in a private hospital in Patna.
- In addition to numerous prestigious accolades, she was awarded the Padma Shree, the fourth highest civilian honor in India.
- Born in Laheriya Sarai, Darbhanga district, Bihar, Usha Kiran Khan received various literary awards, including the esteemed Sahitya Academy and Bharat Bharati awards.
- Her literary contributions span a wide range, encompassing children's literature, novels, and collections of stories. Some of her notable works include "Doobdhaan," "Gili Pank," "Kasavan," "Jaldhar," "Janam Awadhi," "Chidia Chug Gayi Khet," and "Shershah Suri."

Dattajirao Gaekwad, Nation's Oldest Test Cricketer, passes away at 95



- On February 13, India's oldest Test cricketer and former captain Dattajirao Gaekwad passed away due to age-related issues.
- He is the father of former India cricketer and coach Aunshuman Gaekwad. He was 95.

Art and Culture

Chapter 16

50th Khajuraho Dance Festival



- The 50th Khajuraho Dance Festival began on 20 February 2024 at the internationally famous tourist destination Khajuraho in Chhatarpur district of Madhya Pradesh.
- State Chief Minister Mohan Yadav inaugurated the festival in the presence of other dignitaries.
- This festival will continue till February 25th on the huge Muktakashi stage inside the Western Temple Group Complex between the Kandariya Mahadev Temple of Chandel period and Devi Jagdamba Temple.
- The festival, which started in 1975, is organised every year in Khajuraho by the Culture Department through Ustad Alauddin's Music and Art Academy, Bhopal in collaboration with Madhya Pradesh Patan Department and Archaeological Survey of India.

Chief Secretary Dulloo Inaugurates 2nd edition of the SARAS Aajeevika Mela

- Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo inaugurated the 2nd edition of the SARAS Aajeevika Mela, a vibrant 11-day event highlighting the resilience and creativity of rural women entrepreneurs.
- Organised by the Jammu and Kashmir Rural Livelihoods Mission (JKRLM) under the Department of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, the exhibition opened its doors to a diverse array of art, craft, culture, and cuisine, echoing the spirit of 'vocal for local.'
- Featuring over 220 rural women from across 15 states, the SARAS Aajeevika Mela provides a platform for self-help group women artisans to exhibit their exemplary craftsmanship, artistry, and traditional skills.

Divya Kala Mela 2024 inaugurated in Agartala, Tripura



- The Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan), Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment through National Divyangjan Finance and Development Corporation (NDFDC) regularly organizes Divya Kala Mela- a unique event showcasing the products and craftsmanship of Divyang entrepreneurs/artisans from across the country.
- To continue the efforts of empowering Divyang Entrepreneurs, Divya Kala Mela is being organized from 6th to 11th February 2024 at Children Park, Agartala(Tripura).
- The event will present an enthralling experience to the visitors, as vibrant products from various parts of the country as well as NE states will be seen together.
- More than 60 Divyang artisans/artists and entrepreneurs besides prominent organizations from about 18 states/UTs will be showcasing their products, skills and services in Agartala.
- There would be products in the following broad categories: Home Décor and lifestyle, Clothing, Stationery and eco-friendly products, packaged food and organic products, Toys and gifts, Personal Accessories - Jewellery, Clutch Bags Paintings etc.

PM Modi inaugurates world's largest meditation centre 'Swarved Mahamandir' in India's Varanasi

- Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the newly-built Swarved Mahamandir, which is the world's largest meditation centre, in Umaraha, Varanasi.
- Verses of the Swarveda have been carved upon the walls of the Mahamandir, a seven-floor grand structure.

Important Days

Chapter 17

World NGO Day 2024

- World NGO Day 2024 will be observed on 27th February.
- The theme for World NGO Day 2024 is "Building a Sustainable Future: The Role of NGOs in Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)". This theme emphasizes the critical role that NGOs play in addressing global challenges and working towards a more sustainable future.
- The concept of World NGO Day originated from social entrepreneur Marcis Liors Skadmanis in 2009.
- In 2014, World NGO Day was celebrated for the first time.

World Thinking Day

- World Thinking Day is celebrated annually on 22 February.
- It is a special day dedicated to all Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, as well as Scout and Guide organizations around the world.
- The day is intended for members to think about their "sisters" (and "brothers") in all the countries of the world, the meaning of Guiding, and its global impact.

World Pulses Day 2024

- World Pulses Day 2024 was celebrated on Saturday, February 10, 2024.
- The theme for the year 2024 was "Pulses: Nourishing Soils and People".
- The event underscored the contribution pulses make to food security, healthy diets, and the environment.
- The event was a unique opportunity to highlight the role of pulses as a sustainable option for diversification of agricultural production systems contributing to healthy soils, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems in a changing climate and environment.
- The event was hosted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and featured keynote addresses and technical presentations from various experts.

National Management Day

- The 18th National Management Day was celebrated on 21st February 2024.
- The event was marked by the 68th Foundation Day of the All India Management Association (AIMA).
- Union Minister of Education and Skill Development & Entrepreneurship, Shri Dharmendra Pradhan, delivered the inaugural address.
- The theme for the 18th National Management Day in 2024 was 'The Indian Century: Managing Growth with Transformation'.

World Peace and Understanding Day 2024

- World Peace and Understanding Day was observed on 23 February 2024.
- This day is celebrated annually to promote peace and goodwill across the world, reminding people of ways they can contribute positively.
- The day originates from the visionary efforts of Rotary International. The first meeting for the formation of Rotary International was held on this day in 1905.
- The best way to celebrate this special day is by hosting events dedicated to meditation, communication, and conflict resolution skills.

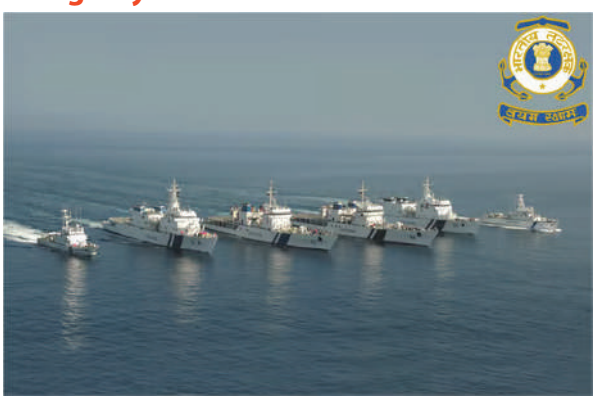
World Interfaith Harmony Week 2024



- The United Nations (UN)'s World Interfaith Harmony Week (WIHW) is annually observed across the globe during the 1st week of February (1-7 February) to promote a culture of peace and nonviolence among people irrespective of their faith.

- World Interfaith Harmony Week is an annual event observed during the first week of February, since the General Assembly designation in 2010.
- The General Assembly pointed out that mutual understanding and interreligious dialogue constitute important dimensions of a culture of peace and established World Interfaith Harmony Week as a way to promote harmony between all people regardless of their faith.
- This year's theme of the World Interreligious Harmony Week organized by UNGA is 'Uniting for peace'.
- Whereas last year the theme was 'Harmony in a Troubled World'.

Indian Coast Guard celebrated its 48th Raising Day



- The Indian Coast Guard marked its 48th Raising Day in New Delhi as stated by the Defence Ministry. With 152 ships and 78 aircraft in its arsenal, the Indian Coast Guard is on course to meet its targeted force levels of 200 surface platforms and 100 aircraft by 2030.
- Operating under the motto "Vayam Rakshamah," the ICG has rescued over 11,554 lives since its establishment, including 200 lives in 2023 alone.
- This unwavering dedication to safety and security has earned the Indian Coast Guard recognition as one of the leading coast guards globally.
- Maintaining round-the-clock vigilance in the Maritime Zones of India, the ICG deploys between 50 to 60 ships and 10 to 12 aircraft daily.
- In response to evolving challenges in maritime security, it has significantly bolstered Maritime Law Enforcement efforts. As a result, the Indian Coast Guard has seized weapons, contraband, and narcotics worth ₹15,343 crore since its inception, with ₹478 crore seized in 2023 alone.

World Wetlands Day 2024



- World Wetlands Day 2024: The theme for this year is "Wetlands and Human Wellbeing."
- World Wetlands Day is observed on 2 February, every year. This year, it falls on Friday.
- It is an international day dedicated to promoting the conservation and sustainable management of wetlands.
- Wetlands are defined as any area of land that is primarily covered by water, either permanently or seasonally.

World Cancer Day



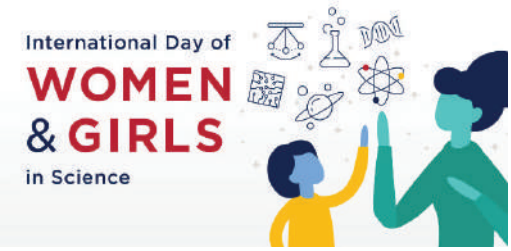
- World Cancer Day is celebrated every year on 4 February.
- The day aims to save millions of preventable deaths every year through education, raising awareness and putting pressure on governments and individuals around the world to take action against the deadly disease.
- Cancer is a major contributor to global mortality, killing 1 in every 6 people and affecting almost every household.

PM Narendra Modi inaugurated India Energy Week 2024 in Goa

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated India Energy Week 2024 in Goa.
- The event witnessed the participation of approximately 17 Energy Ministers from different countries, along with over 35,000 attendees and more than nine hundred exhibitors.

- During the public program in Goa, the Prime Minister inaugurated and laid the foundation stone for projects valued at over 1,330 crore rupees. Among these, he inaugurated the permanent campus of the National Institute of Technology, Goa.
- Additionally, Prime Minister Modi laid the foundation stone for the Passenger Ropeway, along with associated tourism activities, connecting Panaji and Reis Magos.

International Day of Women and Girls in Science 2024



- Resolution 70/212, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 22, 2015, designated February 11th as the annual observance of the International Day of Women and Girls in Science.
- The 9th International Day of Women and Girls in Science Assembly focuses on the main theme of "Women and Girls in Science Leadership, a New Era for Sustainability" with the subtheme "Think Science Think Peace". This day is celebrated annually on February 11th.

World Unani Day observed in Dhaka

- World Unani Day was observed at Hamdard University, Dhaka. World Unani day is celebrated on February 11 in the honour of a famous Indian Unani scholar Hakim Ajmal Khan marking his birth anniversary.
- On the occasion, a discussion and a seminar were held at the auditorium of Hamdard University.
- The university invited the High Commissioner of Indian to Bangladesh Pranay Verma as a special guest for the event.

World Radio Day being celebrated around the world.

- World Radio Day, observed annually on February 13th, was established by UNESCO in 2011 and later adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2012.
- Its purpose is to raise awareness about the importance of radio and promote access to information through this medium. This year's theme was "Radio: A Century informing, entertaining, and educating."
- Despite advancements in technology and communication mediums, radio continues to play a significant role, especially for those who rely on it for news and entertainment. Each year, broadcasters, organizations, and communities worldwide organize various activities to commemorate this day.

International Day for the Prevention of Violent Extremism as and When Conducive to Terrorism 2024

- Annually on February 12th, the global community commemorates the International Day for the Prevention of Violent Extremism as and when Conducive to Terrorism (PVE Day).
- This significant occasion provides an opportunity to shed light on the perils associated with violent extremism and emphasizes the importance of collaborative efforts on a global scale to address this multifaceted challenge.
- PVE Day serves as a platform to enhance understanding and awareness regarding the various dimensions of violent extremism, including its root causes, manifestations, and impacts on societies worldwide.
- It underscores the urgent need for proactive measures and strategies aimed at preventing individuals and communities from being radicalized or recruited by extremist groups.

145th birth anniversary of Sarojini Naidu, National Women's Day

- Every year on February 13th, the nation commemorates the birth anniversary of Sarojini Naidu. This year marks the 145th anniversary since her birth.
- Sarojini Naidu was not only a renowned poet but also a prominent political activist. Her poetic prowess led to her being affectionately called the 'Nightingale of India'. Her contributions to literature and her role in the political sphere remain significant aspects of her legacy, celebrated annually on this occasion.

International Mother Language Day

- International Mother Language Day is a worldwide annual observance held on February 21st to promote

awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity and to promote multilingualism.

- It was first announced by UNESCO on November 17, 1999.
- It was formally recognized by the United Nations General Assembly in 2002.
- The date of February 21st was chosen in tribute to the Bengali Language Movement in Bangladesh, where students were killed while protesting for the recognition of Bengali as an official language in 1952.
- Theme for 2024: Multilingual education is a pillar of intergenerational learning.

World Day of Social Justice

- World Day of Social Justice is observed annually on 20 February.
- It was established by the United Nations General Assembly in 2007 to promote social justice, solidarity, and the elimination of poverty, gender and racial discrimination, and other social injustices around the world.
- It aims to raise awareness about the various social injustices that persist globally and encourage governments, organizations, and individuals to take action to address these issues.
- Theme for 2024: "Bridging Gaps, Building Alliances".

World Human Spirit Day

- World Human Spirit Day is observed annually on February 17th.
- It is a day dedicated to celebrating the power and resilience of the human spirit and encouraging individuals to reflect on their inner strength, positivity, and potential for personal growth and transformation.
- The origins of World Human Spirit Day are not well-documented, but it appears to have emerged as a grassroots movement aimed at promoting positivity, inner peace, and the belief in the inherent goodness and resilience of humanity.
- World Human Spirit Day also serves as a reminder of the interconnectedness of humanity and the importance of compassion, empathy, and understanding in building a more harmonious and compassionate world.

World Anthropology Day

- World Anthropology Day is an annual event celebrated on the third Thursday of February.
- It is a day dedicated to highlighting the contributions of anthropology to understanding human diversity, culture, and society.
- Anthropology is the study of human beings, their cultures, societies, and behaviors throughout time and space.
- The goal of World Anthropology Day is to promote the field of anthropology and showcase its relevance in addressing contemporary global challenges, such as social inequality, environmental sustainability, human rights, and cultural diversity.

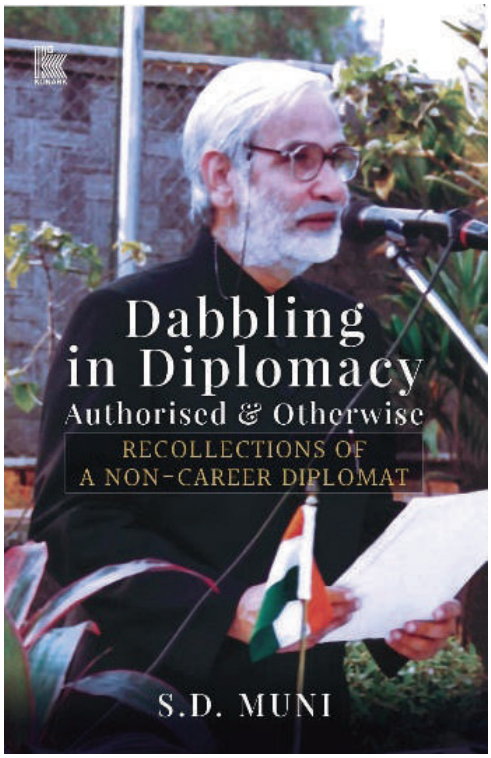
Global Tourism Resilience Day

- The United Nations' Global Tourism Resilience Day, celebrated for the first time on February 17, 2023, marks a significant step towards acknowledging and enhancing the resilience of the tourism industry.
- This initiative aims to foster a tourism sector that can withstand both foreseen and unforeseen challenges, thereby ensuring its contribution to sustainable development and economic stability, especially in developing countries.

Books and Authors

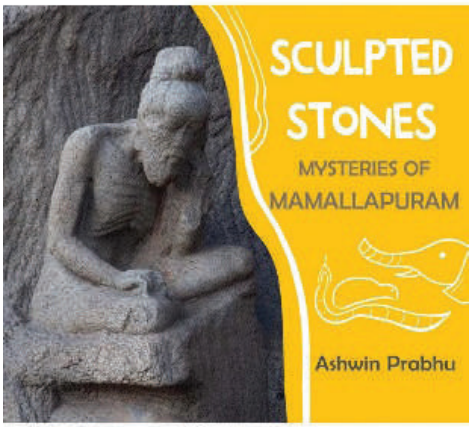
Chapter 18

Book titled "Dabbling in Diplomacy" by Prof. S.D. Muni



- "Dabbling in Diplomacy: Authorised & Otherwise, Recollections of a Non-Career Diplomat" is a fascinating book authored by Prof. S.D. Muni, a well-known South Asian expert.
- Prof. Muni, who taught at Jawaharlal Nehru University for more than three decades, provides many interesting geostrategic details from our neighbourhood, including Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, and even Laos.
- The book offers insights into South Asian geopolitical affairs from an academic and diplomatic standpoint.
- One of the intriguing revelations in the book is about how Nepal's top Maoist leaders reached out to the then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and National Security Adviser Brajesh Mishra through Prof. Muni, initiating a process that ultimately led to the overthrow of the monarchy in Nepal.

A New book titled "Sculpted Stones: Mysteries of Mamallapuram" authored by Ashwin Prabhu



- "Sculpted Stones: Mysteries of Mamallapuram" is a captivating book authored by Ashwin Prabhu.
- The book takes the reader on a journey through the UNESCO World Heritage site of Mamallapuram (also known as Mahabalipuram), a small town on Tamil Nadu's coast that centuries ago must have been filled with the sounds of hammering and chiselling on stone.
- From a mammoth relief panel to cave temples and monoliths, it showcases sculptural art of astounding skill and a variety of styles rare to find in one location.
- The book provides a one-on-one 'looking' experience through its rich archive of 65 vivid photographs.

CDS Anil Chauhan reveals book "AI and National Security".

- Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan unveiled a book titled 'Artificial Intelligence and National Security' at the Defence Literature Festival, "Kalam and Kavach," in Pune.
- In his address at the Lit Fest, CDS Chauhan highlighted the relevance of ancient Indian stratagems like Sun Tzu's 'Art of War' and Kautilya's 'Arthashastra' in modern warfare.

Jagdeep Dhankhar released "9 Incredible Years of Haryana Government".



- Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar praised Haryana, considering it a role model for the entire nation. He emphasized the significance of Chief Minister Khattar's seven principles of good governance, which include education (shiksha), health (swasthya), security (suraksha), self-respect (swabhiman), self-reliance (swavlamban), good governance (sushasan), and service (sewa).
- Referring to these principles as "satvik," the Vice President highlighted their essential role in upholding democratic values.

"Maha Swaapnikudu" book launched by Chandrababu Naidu

- The recent book release event for 'Maha Swaapnikudu' (A Great Visionary) marks a significant moment in the political discourse of India, celebrating the illustrious career of former Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu.
- Authored by journalist P. Vikram and published by NRI Koduri Venkat, this book was unveiled by former Supreme Court judge V. Gopala Gowda.
- Naidu's political saga began in the late 1970s as a leader in the Youth Congress, eventually making a monumental shift to the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), founded by his father-in-law and former Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao.
- This book narrates Naidu's transformation from a budding politician to a pivotal figure in Indian politics, highlighting his significant contributions and visionary leadership.

Banking CA MCQs March 2024

1. The Election Commission of India (ECI) has recently recognized the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) faction led by Sharad Pawar and allotted a new party symbol. The new party symbol given to them is a:

(*a*) Farmer harvesting crops
(*b*) Man blowing turha
(*c*) Drum
(*d*) Horse cart
(*e*) People with spices

2. The Department of Consumer Affairs, Government of India, has constituted a committee under the chairmanship of ..... to draft guidelines addressing the issue of pesky/promotional or unsolicited commercial calls.

(*a*) Shri Rohit Kumar Singh
(*b*) Shri Jatin Sharma
(*c*) Shri Mayank Agrawal
(*d*) Shri Ankit Soni
(*e*) Shri Amar Singh

3. On 6 February, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated ONGC's Marine Survival Center in ..... to advance the Indian Marine Survival Training ecosystem as a unique integrated Marine Survival Training Center at global standards?

(*a*) West Bengal
(*b*) Maharashtra
(*c*) Goa
(*d*) Rajasthan
(*e*) Madhya Pradesh

4. Recently, the Indian government has decided to erect a 1643 km long fence to increase surveillance along the India-Myanmar border amid the months-long ethnic conflict in:

(*a*) Nagaland (*b*) Assam
(*c*) Tripura (*d*) Manipur
(*e*) Sikkim

5. Which of the following institutions has been declared a deemed university under a specific category by the Ministry of Education after the advice of the University Grants Commission (UGC) which applies to IIMC New Delhi and its five regional campuses located at Jammu, Amravati (Maharashtra), Aizawl (Mizoram), Kottayam (Kerala) and Dhenkanal (Odisha)?

(*a*) Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (*T*IFR)
(*b*) Indian Institute of Mass Communication (*I*IMC)
(*c*) Indian Institute of Science (*I*ISc)
(*d*) Indraprastha Institute of Information Technology (*I*IIT)
(*e*) National Institute of Mental Health & Neuro Sciences (*N*IMHANS)

6. The Union Cabinet has given its approval to extend the sugar subsidy scheme for Antyodya Anna Yojna families distributed through the Public Distribution Scheme (PDS) for an additional two years extending until:

(*a*) January 2026 (*b*) February 2026
(*c*) March 2026 (*d*) April 2026
(*e*) May 2026

7. Which airport in Gujarat has been formally designated as 'International Airport' by the Central Government after the approval of the Union Cabinet in December 2023, which came into existence after Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the new terminal building at the airport on December 17 last year?

(*a*) Ahmedabad (*b*) Surat
(*c*) Vadodara (*d*) Rajkot
(*e*) Jamnagar

8. The Union Culture Minister G Kishan Reddy inaugurated the construction of India's inaugural digital National Museum of Epigraphy at the Salar Jung Museum in:

(*a*) Hyderabad (*b*) Mumbai
(*c*) Chennai (*d*) Pune
(*e*) Madurai

9. Who among the following inaugurated the inaugural BIMSTEC Aquatic Championship in New Delhi, featuring participation from the seven BIMSTEC member nations across South and Southeast Asia?

(*a*) Narendra Modi
(*b*) Amit Shah
(*c*) Anurag Thakur
(*d*) Dharmendra Pradhan
(*e*) Rajnath Singh

10. The Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs (IICA), the leading think tank under the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Government of India, organized the first-ever 'The Great Indian Board Reboot: Roadshow 2024' in:

(*a*) Bengaluru (*b*) Indore
(*c*) Pune (*d*) Mumbai
(*e*) New Delhi

11. Which of the following state government has officially declared 'Kaji Nemu' (Citrus Limon), commonly known as citrus lemon as the state fruit?

(*a*) Sikkim (*b*) Tamil Nadu
(*c*) West Bengal (*d*) Assam
(*e*) Odisha

12. Which of the following has become the first state in the North-East India and 10th in the country to achieve 100 percent saturation of Har Ghar Jal under Jal Jeevan Mission?

(*a*) Arunachal Pradesh (*b*) Nagaland
(*c*) Sikkim (*d*) Manipur
(*e*) Assam

13. Who among the following achieved the milestone of being the first woman scientist to receive the G D Birla Award for Scientific Research recognizing her remarkable contributions to the field of Physics?

(*a*) Dipak Kumar Maiti (*b*) R. Mohanty
(*c*) S. Bhattacharya (*d*) Prof Aditi Sen De
(*e*) None of these

14. In which city did the multinational military exercise 'Shanti Prayas IV' commence, involving representatives from 19 countries?

(*a*) Kathmandu (*b*) Bangkok
(*c*) Colombo (*d*) Dhaka
(*e*) Paris

15. Which of the following fintech startup has partnered with five Indian banks to offer its innovative virtual, cardless, and hardware-less cash withdrawal service?

(*a*) FinCo (*b*) Paymart
(*c*) CashTech (*d*) BankEase
(*e*) None of these

16. What is the name of the ChatGPT-style AI service set to be launched by Reliance Industries along with Indian engineering institutions?

(*a*) GPTech (*b*) ReliAI
(*c*) Hanooman (*d*) ChatReliance
(*e*) None of these

17. Which of the following countries is providing a loan of Rs 12,800 crore to fund various infrastructure, healthcare, and innovation projects in India?

(*a*) China (*b*) United States
(*c*) Japan (*d*) Russia
(*e*) Italy

18. Which of the following state government signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) for raising, arming and deploying a Special Tiger Protection Force (STPF) for all three tiger reserves in the state?

(*a*) Madhya Pradesh (*b*) Arunachal Pradesh
(*c*) Sikkim (*d*) Assam
(*e*) Manipur

19. World NGO Day is an occasion to celebrate the contributions made by non-governmental organisation (NGO) across the world. It is celebrated every year on:

(*a*) 27 February (*b*) 28 February
(*c*) 29 February (*d*) 26 February
(*e*) 25 February

20. The oldest member of the current Lok Sabha, Shafiqur Rahman Barq passed away who was related to which political party?

(*a*) Indian National Congress
(*b*) Bahujan Samaj Party
(*c*) Nationalist Congress Party
(*d*) Samajwadi Party
(*e*) Bharatiya Janata Party

21. Which country has replaced Japan as the world's third-largest economy?

(*a*) China (*b*) India
(*c*) Germany (*d*) France
(*e*) United Kingdom

22. What is the value of the contract signed between MoD and AWEIL?

(*a*) Rs 1,500 Cr (*b*) Rs 1,752 Cr
(*c*) Rs 2,000 Cr (*d*) Rs 2,500 Cr
(*e*) Rs 3,000 Cr

23. What was the decline in NCI in December 2023?

(*a*) 1.75% (*b*) 2.75%
(*c*) 3.75% (*d*) 4.75%
(*e*) 5.75%

24. What is the name of the draft regulations issued by IRDAI?

(*a*) Bima Samiti (*b*) Bima Suraksha
(*c*) Bima Suvidha (*d*) Bima Sugam
(*e*) Bima Sampark

25. For how much amount did Wipro acquire insurtech firm Aggne?

(*a*) $40 million (*b*) $50 million
(*c*) $60 million (*d*) $66 million
(*e*) $70 million

26. Which country recently lost its spot as the world's third-largest economy?

(*a*) India (*b*) Japan
(*c*) China (*d*) Germany
(*e*) United States

27. Which bank has India surpassed China in terms of profit in 2023?

(*a*) Barclays
(*b*) Citibank
(*c*) HSBC
(*d*) Standard Chartered
(*e*) Deutsche Bank

28. Which international payment company has recently registered with India's Financial Intelligence Unit?

(*a*) Stripe (*b*) Square
(*c*) PayPal (*d*) Payoneer
(*d*) Skrill

29. Which company has recently received a payment aggregator license from the RBI?

(*a*) Paytm
(*b*) PhonePe
(*c*) Google Pay
(*d*) Mswipe Technologies
(*e*) Amazon Pay

30. What new features is the RBI planning to introduce in the CBDC pilot?

(*a*) Programmability and online functionality
(*b*) Programmability and offline functionality
(*c*) Online functionality and interoperability
(*d*) Offline functionality and interoperability
(*e*) Interoperability and programmability

31. Which bank was barred by RBI from accepting deposits from February 29th, 2024?

(*a*) HDFC Bank
(*b*) SBI Bank
(*c*) ICICI Bank
(*d*) Paytm Payments Bank
(*e*) Axis Bank

32. Which bank recently joined the Rs 1 lakh crore market capitalization club?

(*a*) Bank of Baroda
(*b*) Indian Overseas Bank
(*c*) Canara Bank
(*d*) Punjab National Bank
(*e*) Union Bank of India

33. With which state government did NTPC Green Energy sign an MoU for Green Hydrogen?

(*a*) Gujarat
(*b*) Karnataka
(*c*) Andhra Pradesh
(*d*) Tamil Nadu
(*e*) Maharashtra

34. What type of pension plan did ICICI Prudential Life Insurance launch?

(*a*) Child plan (*b*) Term plan
(*c*) Unit-linked plan (*d*) Retirement plan
(*e*) Health plan

35. Which organization signed a loan agreement with the Indian government for the Brahmaputra River Project?

(*a*) World Bank

(*b*) International Monetary Fund

(*c*) Asian Development Bank

(*d*) International Finance Corporation

(*e*) Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank

36. Which insurance company increased its stake in SBI Cards & Payments Services Limited?

(*a*) HDFC Life

(*b*) ICICI Prudential Life

(*c*) Life Insurance Corporation of India (*L*IC)

(*d*) Kotak Mahindra Life Insurance

(*e*) Bajaj Allianz Life Insurance

37. Which company partnered with NPCI to introduce Credit Lines on UPI?

(*a*) PhonePe (*b*) Google Pay

(*c*) Paytm (*d*) PayU

(*e*) Amazon Pay

38. What is the name of the new insurance product launched by LIC?

(*a*) Jeevan Sarvabhaum

(*b*) Amulya Jeevan

(*c*) Amritbaal

(*d*) Kanyadan Suraksha

(*e*) Swarna Aayushman

39. What are the two schemes for which SBI launched digital enrolment?

(*a*) Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (*P*MJDY) & Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Yojana (PMJJBY)

(*b*) Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (*P*MAY) & Atal Pension Yojana (APY)

(*c*) Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (*P*MMY) & Ujjwala Yojana

(*d*) Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (*P*MSBY) & PMJJBY

(*e*) Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana (*P*MKSY) & Fasal Bima Yojana

40. Which organization released the impact study 'Prabhaav'?

(*a*) National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (*N*ABARD)

(*b*) Small Industries Development Bank of India (*S*IDBI)

(*c*) National Small Industries Corporation (*N*SIC)

(*d*) Export-Import Bank of India (*E*XIM Bank)

(*e*) Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises - Development Institute (*M*SME-DI)

41. According to a recent Cybercrime report, which rank did India secure in terms of cybercrime targeting?

(*a*) 1st (*b*) 50th

(*c*) 80th (*d*) 100th

(*e*) 10th

42. In a global ranking of 300 cooperatives, which position did IFFCO achieve?

(*a*) 5th (*b*) 10th

(*c*) 7th (*d*) 1st

(*e*) 3rd

43. The EIU 2023 democracy report focuses on which aspect of different countries?

(*a*) Economic development

(*b*) Freedom of speech and press

(*c*) Military strength

(*d*) Educational attainment

(*e*) Technological advancement

44. Which organization launched the "Greening India's Wastelands with Agroforestry (GROW)" report and portal?

(*a*) NITI Aayog

(*b*) Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (*M*oEFCC)

(*c*) Indian Council of Agricultural Research (*I*CAR)

(*d*) World Bank

(*e*) Food and Agriculture Organization (*F*AO)

45. What report was released by DARPG for the year 2023?

(*a*) National Strategy for Disaster Management (*N*SDM) report

(*b*) State Disaster Management Plan (*S*DMP) report

(*c*) Annual NeSDA Way Forward Report

(*d*) National Disaster Response Force (*N*DRF) report

(*e*) District Disaster Management Plan (*D*DMP) report

46. Who launched the "Sagar Aankalan" guidelines for the Indian Port Performance Index?

(*a*) Shri Nitin Gadkari
(*b*) Dr. Harsh Vardhan
(*c*) Shri Dharmendra Pradhan
(*d*) Shri Sarbananda Sonowal
(*e*) Shri Piyush Goyal

47. Which company was ranked as the most valuable unlisted firm in India by the Serum Institute of India?

(*a*) Reliance Industries Limited
(*b*) Adani Group
(*c*) Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (*B*PCL)
(*d*) Serum Institute of India
(*e*) Tata Consultancy Services (*T*CS)

48. According to the Henley Passport Index 2024, which country holds the most powerful passport?

(*a*) Japan (*b*) Singapore
(*c*) Germany (*d*) United States
(*e*) France

49. In which Indian state did the Indian Army launch the Women's Skill Development initiative?

(*a*) Uttar Pradesh (*b*) Rajasthan
(*c*) Assam (*d*) Manipur
(*e*) Sikkim

50. What is the theme for the "National Science Day 2024"?

(*a*) To promote scientific research for developed India
(*b*) Indigenous Technologies for Viksit Bharat
(*c*) Promoting global cooperation in science
(*d*) Innovations in Sustainable Development for Viksit Bharat
(*e*) None of the above

51. Which of the following state recently passed a resolution for a comprehensive household caste survey?

(*a*) Kerala (*b*) Tamil Nadu
(*c*) Telangana (*d*) Karnataka
(*e*) Andhra Pradesh

52. Which celestial body is the target destination of the Intuitive Mission's Odysseus spacecraft launched on a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket?

(*a*) Moon (*b*) Mars
(*c*) Venus (*d*) Asteroid
(*e*) Sun

53. Which of the following organization signed a MoU with a Bengaluru institute to provide higher education?

(*a*) SSB (*b*) CISF
(*c*) CRPF (*d*) BSF
(*e*) NIA

54. On which day is World Peace and Understanding Day observed globally?

(*a*) January 15 (*b*) February 23
(*c*) March 5 (*d*) February 25
(*e*) April 11

55. Name the theme which has been highlighted at Mahabiz 2024, business conclave organized by the Gulf Maharashtra Business Forum (GMBF) Global?

(*a*) Exploring new dimensions
(*b*) Building Bridges for Success
(*c*) Connect with Opportunities to Progress
(*d*) Exploring Pathways to Growth
(*d*) Discovering New Horizons

56. Which of the following State's Chief Minister has launched the 'Van Mitra' Scheme to encourage community participation in tree planting activities?

(*a*) Rajasthan (*b*) Punjab
(*c*) Madhya Pradesh (*d*) Gujarat
(*e*) Haryana

57. Which of the following state has launched 'bag less school' scheme, day once a week for students in classes 1 to 12?

(*a*) Uttar Pradesh (*b*) Madhya Pradesh
(*c*) Punjab (*d*) Karnataka
(*e*) Maharashtra

58. Lara Super Thermal Power Station is located in:

(*a*) Chhattisgarh (*b*) Madhya Pradesh
(*c*) Bihar (*d*) Rajasthan
(*d*) Jharkhand

59. The 16th edition of biennial trilateral exercise 'Dosti' was conducted by the coast guard forces of which three countries?

(*a*) India, Bangladesh and Maldives
(*b*) India, Myanmar and Malaysia
(*c*) India, Sri Lanka and Maldives

(*d*) India, Indonesia and Australia

(*e*) India, Singapore and Australia

60. What is the theme of the first Public Health India Conference 2024 held in New Delhi?

(*a*) Health Initiatives towards India's Goal for a developed nation

(*b*) Unite Women of India

(*c*) Women's Role in Building India

(*d*) Rising Women Power

(*e*) Building Resurgent India

61. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has sanctioned a new railway line project to connect the holy city of Puri with:

(*a*) Bhubaneswar (*b*) Cuttack

(*c*) Ayodhya (*d*) Sambalpur

(*d*) Konark

62. Which of the following states of India has the India's longest cable-stayed bridge 'Sudarshan Setu'?

(*a*) Maharashtra (*b*) Gujarat

(*c*) Odisha (*d*) Bihar

(*e*) Uttar Pradesh

63. Which digital payment app partnered with Axis Bank for the settlement of merchant payments?

(*a*) PhonePe (*b*) Google Pay

(*c*) Paytm (*d*) Bank Pay

(*d*) DakPay

64. Which state has launched 'Savera' programme, aimed at early detection and prevention of breast cancer?

(*a*) Haryana (*b*) Punjab

(*c*) Rajasthan (*d*) Gujarat

(*e*) Maharashtra

65. Who is India's first female pitch curator in WPL 2024?

(*a*) Jacintha Kalyan (*b*) Vijay Laxmi

(*c*) Tarkeshwari Sinha (*d*) Raj shree Kriplani

(*d*) None of these

66. Which of the following Indian state aims to establish an AI hub and make the internet a basic right for its citizens?

(*a*) Andhra Pradesh (*b*) Maharashtra

(*c*) Telangana (*d*) Tamil Nadu

(*e*) Karnataka

67. Which of the following Indian state's efforts to revive traditional buffalo and bulbul fights during the Magh Bihu festival faced legal challenges?

(*a*) Sikkim (*b*) Assam

(*c*) Gujarat (*d*) Rajasthan

(*e*) Bihar

68. What of the following Indian state is initiating the Green Hydrogen Initiative targeting 1 million tonne capacity and 1.2 lakh jobs?

(*a*) Madhya Pradesh (*b*) Uttar Pradesh

(*c*) Maharashtra (*d*) Gujarat

(*e*) Tamil Nadu

69. Which company has collaborated with the Brazilian aerospace company Embraer to fulfil the Indian Air Force's acquisition needs for the C-390 multi-mission transport aircraft.

(*a*) Eicher (*b*) Mahindra

(*c*) Tata (*d*) Adani

(*e*) Reliance

70. Which of the following organization launched the PACE mission to study oceans and the atmosphere?

(*a*) JAXA (*b*) ESA

(*c*) CNSA (*d*) ISRO

(*e*) NASA

71. Neeraj Chopra, India's Olympic gold medalist in javelin throw, was honoured with a commemorative plaque at Jungfrau's Ice Palace in:

(*a*) Germany (*b*) Switzerland

(*c*) France (*d*) Italy

(*e*) Austria

72. Which Northeastern state became the first to reinstate the Old Pension Scheme for its government employees appointed after April 1, 2006?

(*a*) Tripura (*b*) Assam

(*c*) Meghalaya (*d*) Sikkim

(*e*) Nagaland

73. Which of the following organization approved payment aggregator business to Juspay, Zoho, and Decentro?

(*a*) IETO (*b*) SEBI

(*c*) RBI (*d*) IRDAI

(*e*) NPCI

74. Which country was selected as the guest of honour at the New Delhi World Book Fair, reflecting the fair's international emphasis on celebrating diverse cultures and literature?

(*a*) UAE (*b*) Saudi Arabia
(*c*) United States (*d*) United Kingdom
(*e*) France

75. Which of the following organization has signed a $200 million loan agreement with the Government of India for the Brahmaputra River Project?

(*a*) World Bank
(*b*) Asian Development Bank
(*c*) International Monetary Fund
(*d*) United Nations Development Programme
(*e*) None of the above

76. Which company has launched the "Pure for Sure" initiative, aiming to enhance transparency and trust in LPG delivery?

(*a*) Oil India (*b*) Indane
(*c*) HP Gas (*d*) Bharat Gas
(*e*) Reliance Petroleum

77. Who has been appointed as the Non-Executive Chairman of NPCI?

(*a*) Dilip Asbe
(*b*) Ajay Kumar Choudhary
(*c*) Rama Subramaniam Gandhi
(*e*) None of the above

78. Which of the following Indian state is set to become the first with 21 airports?

(*a*) Rajasthan (*b*) Maharashtra
(*c*) Karnataka (*d*) Uttar Pradesh
(*e*) Gujarat

79. Which of the following state governments has started 'LAccMI' bus service?

(*a*) Odisha (*b*) Kerala
(*c*) Arunachal Pradesh (*d*) Karnataka
(*e*) Bihar

80. India and Greece set a bilateral trade target of USD 4 billion by the year:

(*a*) 2025 (*b*) 2026
(*c*) 2028 (*d*) 2029
(*e*) 2030

81. Who will launch Indus App store to compete with tech giants Google and Apple?

(*a*) PhonePe (*b*) Paytm
(*c*) Zomato (*d*) Facebook
(*e*) None of the above

82. According to union home ministry, Centre decides to continue Women's safety scheme till:

(*a*) 2022-23 (*b*) 2023-24
(*c*) 2024-25 (*d*) 2025-26
(*e*) 2026-27

83. Ameen Sayani, who passed away at 91 recently, was a legendary:

(*a*) Pop composer (*b*) Radio announcer
(*c*) Scientist (*d*) Rock Dancer
(*e*) Politician

84. Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) of Sugarcane for 2024-25 crushing season is:

(*a*) Rs 250 per quintal (*b*) Rs 340 per quintal
(*c*) Rs 500 per quintal (*d*) Rs 550 per quintal
(*e*) Rs 600 per quintal

85. What is the theme of World Thinking Day 2024?

(*a*) Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
(*b*) Closing the Inequalities Gap to Achieve Equality
(*c*) Closing the Inequalities Gap to Achieve Social Justice
(*d*) Our World, Our Thriving Future
(*e*) Peace & Development, Work

86. Which state government organised Sammakka Saralamma Jathara (also known as Medaram Jathara) in Medaram village, Mulugu district?

(*a*) Telangana (*b*) Karnataka
(*c*) Tamil Nadu (*d*) Andhra Pradesh
(*E*) Kerala

87. Which states are the Rajya Sabha bills modifying the list of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes?

(*a*) Maharashtra and Odisha
(*b*) Odisha and Andhra Pradesh
(*c*) Maharashtra and Karnataka
(*d*) Uttar Pradesh and Bihar
(*e*) Tamil Nadu and Kerala

88. Where did the prelude to the International Water Conclave 2024 conclude?

(*a*) Dispur (*b*) Itanagar
(*c*) Kohima (*d*) Agartala
(*e*) Shillong

89. What type of particle did the GRAPES-3 experiment observe a new feature in its spectrum?

(*a*) Gamma-ray (*b*) Electron
(*c*) Neutrino (*d*) Cosmic-ray proton
(*e*) None of the above

90. Which country developed the Jielong-3 rocket that recently launched nine satellites into orbit?

(*a*) USA (*b*) Japan
(*c*) China (*d*) Russia
(*e*) India

91. In which state were two MoUs signed to enhance voter awareness initiatives?

(*a*) Uttarakhand
(*b*) Punjab
(*c*) Haryana
(*d*) Himachal Pradesh
(*e*) Sikkim

92. Which countries, along with India, have been named Guests of Honor at the 2024 World Government Summit in Dubai?

(*a*) Oman and Saudi Arabia
(*b*) Turkiye and Qatar
(*c*) Japan and Australia
(*d*) Brazil and Russia
(*e*) UAE and Oman

93. When is the International Day of Women and Girls in Science celebrated?

(*a*) 2 February (*b*) 11 February
(*c*) 8 March (*d*) 22 April
(*e*) 5 May

94. Who among the following has been appointed as the Chief Executive Officer & Managing Director of Tata Digital?

(*a*) Naveen Tahilyani (*b*) Rajesh Gopinathan
(*c*) Rohan Sharma (*d*) Radhakrishnan
(*e*) None of the above

95. In which city is the country's first copper-made Bapu Tower, dedicated to Mahatma Gandhi, located?

(*a*) Pune (*b*) Lucknow
(*c*) Patna (*d*) Jaipur
(*e*) Ahmedabad

96. Which of the following country has been cautioned by the IMF about the risk of "debt distress"?

(*a*) Maldives (*b*) Nepal
(*c*) Sri Lanka (*d*) Pakistan
(*e*) Bhutan

97. What is the name of the recently discovered potentially habitable exoplanet by NASA?

(*a*) Kepler-452b (*b*) Proxima Centauri b
(*c*) TOI-715 b (*d*) TRAPPIST-1e
(*e*) None of the above

98. When is National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day observed?

(*a*) 30 January (*b*) 7 January
(*c*) 2 February (*d*) 7 February
(*e*) 16 February

99. Which state's Disaster Management Authority launched the NITISH device?

(*a*) Maharashtra (*b*) Uttar Pradesh
(*c*) Bihar (*d*) Madhya Pradesh
(*e*) Rajasthan

100. When is World Pulses Day celebrated annually?

(*a*) 10 February (*b*) 12 February
(*c*) 13 February (*d*) 14 February
(*e*) 15 February

Answer Key

1. (*b*)	**2.** (*a*)	**3.** (*c*)	**4.** (*d*)	**5.** (*b*)	**6.** (*c*)	**7.** (*b*)	**8.** (*a*)	**9.** (*c*)	**10.** (*d*)
11. (*d*)	**12.** (*a*)	**13.** (*d*)	**14.** (*a*)	**15.** (*a*)	**16.** (*c*)	**17.** (*c*)	**18.** (*b*)	**19.** (*a*)	**20.** (*d*)
21. (*c*)	**22.** (*b*)	**23.** (*d*)	**24.** (*d*)	**25.** (*d*)	**26.** (*b*)	**27.** (*c*)	**28.** (*c*)	**29.** (*d*)	**30.** (*b*)
31. (*d*)	**32.** (*b*)	**33.** (*e*)	**34.** (*d*)	**35.** (*c*)	**36.** (*c*)	**37.** (*d*)	**38.** (c)	**39.** (*d*)	**40.** (*b*)
41. (*c*)	**42.** (*d*)	**43.** (*b*)	**44.** (*a*)	**45.** (*c*)	**46.** (*d*)	**47.** (*d*)	**48.** (*e*)	**49.** (*d*)	**50.** (*b*)
51. (*c*)	**52.** (*a*)	**53.** (*a*)	**54.** (*b*)	**55.** (*c*)	**56.** (*e*)	**57.** (*b*)	**58.** (*a*)	**59.** (*c*)	**60.** (*a*)
61. (*e*)	**62.** (*b*)	**63.** (*c*)	**64.** (*a*)	**65.** (*a*)	**66.** (*c*)	**67.** (*b*)	**68.** (*b*)	**69.** (*b*)	**70.** (*e*)
71. (*b*)	72. (d)	**73.** (*c*)	**74.** (*b*)	**75.** (*b*)	**76.** (*d*)	**77.** (*b*)	**78.** (*d*)	**79.** (*d*)	**80.** (*e*)
81. (*a*)	**82.** (*d*)	**83.** (*b*)	**84.** (*b*)	**85.** (*d*)	**86.** (*a*)	**87.** (*a*)	**88.** (*e*)	**89.** (*d*)	**90.** (*c*)
91. (*d*)	**92.** (*b*)	**93.** (*b*)	**94.** (*a*)	**95.** (*c*)	**96.** (*a*)	**97.** (*c*)	**98.** (*d*)	**99.** (*c*)	**100.** (*a*)

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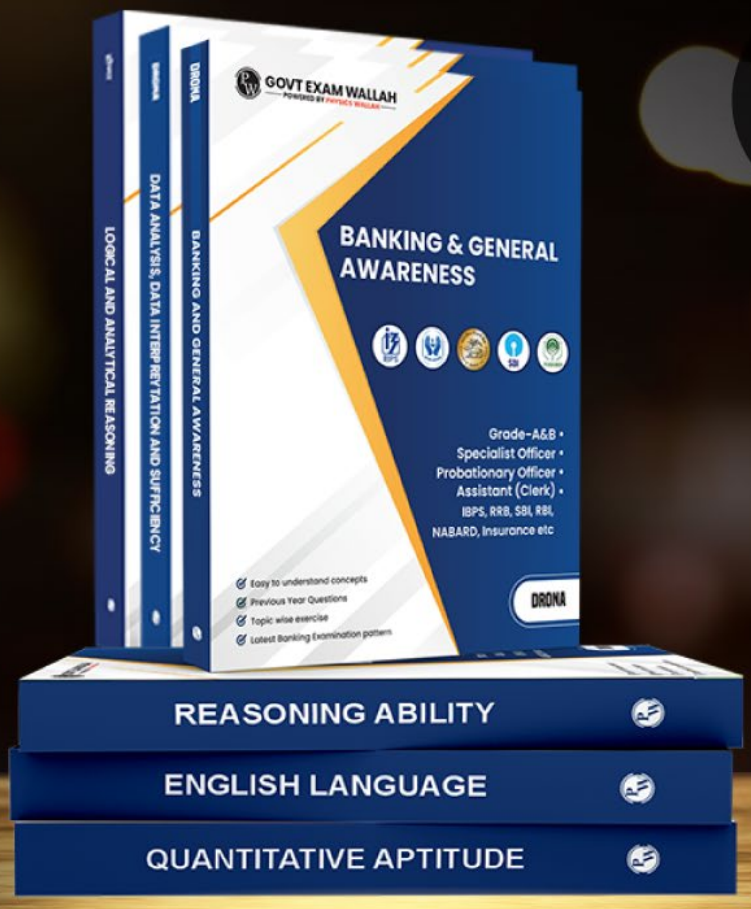
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Banking and Economy

Chapter 1

PB Fintech to set up payment aggregator subsidiary

- Policy Bazaar promoter PB Fintech Limited has decided to set up a wholly-owned subsidiary to carry out the business of a payment aggregator.
- This would be done by facilitating merchants with offline and/or digital payment acceptance infrastructure or both.
- Payment aggregators enable their clients to accept various payment methods such as debit cards, credit cards, cardless EMIs, UPI, bank transfers, e-wallets and e-mandates.
- The paid-up capital of the subsidiary (PB Pay Private Limited) would be ₹27 crore.

YES Bank partners with Indian Olympic Association for Paris Olympics 2024

- YES Bank announced its partnership with the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) as the Official Banking Partner for Team India at the Paris Olympics 2024.
- As part of the collaboration, the bank launched the campaign 'Milkar Jitayengey' and introduced the 'YES Glory Debit Card,' specially designed for India's Olympic athletes.
- The bank also unveiled the 'YES Glory' savings account proposition, extending benefits to athletes and their immediate family members.

DBS Bank India announced USD 250 Million Lending Support for start-ups

- DBS Bank India announced a lending commitment of USD 250 million for new-age start-ups.
- The initiative is part of the bank's focus on fostering innovation and entrepreneurship within the country's thriving start-up ecosystem.
- The Indian start-up sector, a foundational pillar of the country's development goals, has seen significant expansion over the years with over 90,000 start-ups and more than 100 unicorns as of 2024.

RBI issues omnibus framework for recognising SROs for regulated entities

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has come up with a final omnibus framework for self-regulatory organisations mandating them to set up grievance redressal mechanisms for members and a non-discriminatory fee structure, among others.
- The omnibus framework prescribes the broad objectives, functions, eligibility criteria and governance standards, which will be common for all SROs, irrespective of the sector.
- The framework is the minimum requirement and the recognised SROs will be encouraged to develop their best practices.
- The dispute resolution process should consistently use efficient, fair and transparent policies and procedures that are in line with the regulatory and statutory requirements.

RBI imposes Rs 1.31 cr fine on Tamilnad Mercantile Bank for non-compliance

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has imposed penalties on DCB Bank and Tamilnad Mercantile Bank for non-compliance with certain directions related to 'interest rate on advances'.
- A monetary penalty of Rs 63.6 lakh has been imposed on DCB Bank.
- The central bank informed that a penalty of Rs 1.31 crore has been imposed on Tamilnad Mercantile Bank for non-compliance with certain directions issued by it on 'Interest Rate on Advances' and 'Central Repository of Information on Large Credits (CRILC).
- In both cases, the RBI said the penalties were based on deficiencies in regulatory compliance and not intended to pronounce upon the validity of any transactions or agreements entered into by them with their customers.

Net FDI in India down 38.4% in April-January

- The net foreign direct investment (FDI) in India, inflows minus outflows, declined 38.4 per cent year-on-year to $15.41 billion in the first 10 months of this financial year due to an increase in the repatriation of capital.

- According to the Reserve Bank of India's data in the March 2024 bulletin, FDI in India was $25.53 billion and outflows were $10.11 billion in April 2023-January 2024.
- In the same period last year, FDI inflows stood at $36.75 billion, while outflows reached $11.75 billion.

RBI "state of economy" report

- The "state of economy" report in the RBI's monthly bulletin for March 2024 noted that manufacturing, computer services, electricity, and other energy sectors, financial services, and transport accounted for about two-thirds of the FDI equity inflows in the 10 months of the financial year.
- Around 80 per cent of the equity flows were received from Singapore, Mauritius, the US, the Netherlands, Japan, and the United Arab Emirates.
- The report mentioned that despite global FDI flows remaining weak in 2023, with only a modest increase of 3 per cent over 2022, India fared better than its Asian peers.

IndusInd Bank launches India's first All in 1 Payment Wearables

- IndusInd Bank announced the launch of its contactless payments wearables, 'Indus PayWear,' India's first All-in-One tokenizable wearables for both debit and credit cards exclusively on Mastercard.
- Indus PayWear is all set to revolutionize the payment experience by allowing users to effortlessly tokenize their IndusInd Bank credit or debit card onto a chip-enabled wearable device.
- This will facilitate swift and secure tap-and-pay transactions at any contactless Point-of-Sale (PoS) terminal across the globe, eliminating the need for a physical card or even a payment app for purchases.

HSBC India successfully concludes its Business Case programme

- HSBC India has successfully concluded the annual HSBC India Business Case programme (HIBCP) aimed at empowering youth for career preparedness.
- In its 10th edition, the programme, which is designed especially for undergraduate students, witnessed participation from over 3,100 students from 72 undergraduate colleges across the country.
- The HSBC India Business Case programme focuses on empowering youth from across the country to guide and prepare them for future job roles.
- It addresses the pressing need of skill enhancement, critical thinking, and leadership development among youth.
- The objective is to bring together theoretical knowledge and practical application, through real life business case studies.

Razorpay surpasses $150 billion in TPV

- Fintech major Razorpay announced, it has achieved an annualised total payment volume (TPV) of $150 billion, and unveiled several new features including an AI chatbot.
- The company also launched 'Payment Gateway 3.0', making it India's only payment gateway that solves not just the payment journey but the whole buyer journey.
- Powered by its proprietary AI engine called 'AI Nucleus', the checkout option will help businesses expect more than 30 per cent higher conversions, translating to higher revenues.

RBI bans JM Financial from lending against shares, debentures

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) barred JM Financial Products Ltd from providing any form of financing against shares and debentures, including sanction and disbursal of loans against initial public offering, with immediate effect.
- The company can, however, continue to service its existing loan accounts through the usual collection and recovery process.
- JM Financial Products has been directed to cease and desist, with immediate effect, from doing any form of financing against shares and debentures, including sanction and disbursal of loans against Initial Public Offering (IPO) of shares as well as against subscription to debentures.

GoI allocated Rs 6200 crore to boost Regional Rural Banks

- central government has allocated Rs 6212.03 crore to Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) as part of the recapitalization scheme.
- It aimed at supporting RRBs to maintain the minimum prescribed capital-to-risk (Weighted) assets ratio of 9 percent.
- The performance of RRBs has improved significantly, with a consolidated CRAR (Capital to Risk-weighted Assets Ratio) at an all-time high of 13.83 per cent as of December 31, 2023.

- In FY22-23, RRBs recorded the highest-ever consolidated net profit of Rs 4,974 crores, and a net profit of Rs 5,236 crore up to the third quarter of FY 2023-24.

About RRBs

- Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) are commercial banks owned by the Indian government operating at the regional level across various states.
- RRBs were established in 1975 to provide basic banking and financial services to rural areas, particularly to small and marginal farmers, agricultural labourers, artisans, and small entrepreneurs.
- are regulated by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), India's central banking institution, which oversees their operations, governance, and compliance with banking regulations and prudential norms.
- RRBs are jointly owned by the Government of India, the concerned State Government, and a sponsor bank (usually a nationalized bank).
- The ownership structure typically consists of a 50% share held by the sponsoring bank, 35% by the Government of India, and 15% by the concerned State Government.

Noise collaborated with Airtel Payments Bank and Mastercard to launch a new watch to pay

- Payments Bank collaborated with Noise, a smartwatch brand, and Mastercard, a global technology company in the payments space, to unveil A New Way to Pay.
- entities have come together to launch a Smart Watch that aims to make contactless payments.
- the power of Tap and Pay to every wrist, the initiative will empower users to unlock the full potential of smart wearables and democratise convenient financial solutions.
- who have a savings account with Airtel Payments Bank can purchase this smart watch from the Airtel Thanks App.
- A customer would be able to make payments between Rs 1 to Rs 25,000 per day using the Airtel Payments Bank Smart Watch.

Paytm Payments Bank fined Rs 5.49 crore for violating money laundering norms

- The Financial Intelligence Unit-India (FIU-IND) has imposed a penalty of 5.49 crore rupees on Paytm Payments Bank Ltd for violations of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act.
- This penalty follows a review initiated by FIU-IND based on specific information from law enforcement agencies regarding illegal activities, including online gambling, facilitated by entities linked to the bank.
- The money from these activities was routed through accounts maintained with Paytm Payments Bank Ltd. Despite a compliance Show Cause Notice, the violations were found substantiated, leading to the imposition of the penalty by the Director of FIU-IND under Section 13 of PMLA.

RBI revamps BBPS norms for enhanced efficiency

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has announced a revised regulatory framework for the Bharat Bill Payment Systems (BBPS), which will come into effect on April 1, 2024.
- The updated framework aims to streamline bill payments, promote broader participation, and enhance consumer protection measures in response to the changing dynamics of the payment landscape.

RBI to launch Interoperable Payment System for Internet Banking in 2024

- Governor Shaktikanta Das announced the upcoming launch of an interoperable payment system for internet banking transactions, set to boost settlement speed for merchants.
- digital transaction volume is substantial, with retail digital payments surging by over 90% since FY 2012-13.
- dominates, comprising nearly 80% of digital payments, with advanced features like offline payments. Additionally, over 6.65 crore new UPI users have joined since March 2023.
- Efforts are underway to enhance trust through transparency, ease of use, and security in digital payments, with awareness programs empowering individuals in navigating this landscape.

Kotak Mahindra Bank introduced Smart Choice Gold Loan



- Kotak Mahindra Bank has introduced the 'Smart Choice' gold loan, providing borrowers with same-day loan disbursements.

- The loan offers a fixed monthly interest rate beginning at 0.88%, along with no processing fees, foreclosure options, and minimal documentation requirements. Borrowers can avail loans of up to ₹25 lakh under this scheme.

Nirmala Sitharaman chairs national conference on GST Enforcement and Evasion

- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presided over the inaugural session of the National Conference of Enforcement Chiefs of State and Central Goods and Services Tax formations in New Delhi.
- The conference focused on combating GST evasion and fake invoicing, providing a platform for authorities to share best practices and strengthen GST administration.
- Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary also attended.

RBI directs IIFL finance to Cease Gold Loans due to Serious Lapses

- The Reserve Bank of India directed IIFL Finance Limited to halt sanctioning or disbursing gold loans, as well as to cease assigning/securitising/selling any of its gold loans.
- RBI clarified that the company could continue servicing its existing gold loan portfolio through regular collection and recovery processes.
- RBI identified serious issues such as deviations in gold assaying and certification, breaches in Loan-to-Value ratio, excessive disbursal and collection of cash beyond statutory limits, non-adherence to standard auction processes, and lack of transparency in charges levied to customer accounts.
- With the company failing to take meaningful corrective action in recent months, RBI imposed these restrictions immediately, stating that they would be reviewed after completion of a special audit.

Fincare Small Finance Bank merger with AU SFB gets RBI nod

- On 4 March, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced its approval of the Scheme of Amalgamation of Fincare Small Finance Bank with AU Small Finance Bank Ltd.
- The effective date of the amalgamation is set for April 1, 2024, as stated by the RBI. All branches of Fincare Small Finance Bank Ltd will operate as branches of AU Small Finance Bank Ltd from April 1, 2024, according to the RBI.
- Earlier, on January 23, the Competition Commission of India (CCI) had granted approval for the merger between AU Small Finance Bank and Fincare Small Finance Bank.

30 banks join RBI UDGAM to search for recipients of unclaimed deposits

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced that 30 banks are currently participating in the UDGAM portal, which facilitates the search for unclaimed deposits/accounts.
- The remaining banks are in the process of joining. UDGAM, short for Unclaimed Deposits-Gateway to Access inforMation, is an online portal developed by RBI. It allows registered users to search for unclaimed deposits/accounts across multiple banks centrally.
- All unclaimed deposits/accounts within the Depositor Education and Awareness (DEA) Fund of RBI can be searched through UDGAM.
- As of March 4, 2024, the participating banks cover approximately 90% of unclaimed deposits in value terms within the DEA Fund.

RBI directs card issuers to offer choice, Restrains Agreements Limiting Services to specific card networks

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has directed card issuers not to enter into agreements with card networks that restrict them from using other networks' services.
- This move aims to give customers more choice. Card issuers must offer customers the option to choose from multiple networks when issuing cards or during renewal.
- The authorized networks include American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard, RuPay, and Visa.

RBI, Bank Indonesia sign agreement on use of local currencies in bilateral transactions

- RBI signed an agreement with Bank Indonesia to promote the use of local currencies for cross-border transactions.
- Aim of the MoU is to promote the use of Indian Rupee (INR) and Indonesian Rupiah (IDR) bilaterally.
- Covers all current account transactions, permissible capital account transactions, and other economic and financial transactions as agreed upon by both countries.
- Enables exporters and importers to invoice and pay in their respective domestic currencies.

- Facilitates the development of an INR-IDR foreign exchange market.
- Use of local currencies optimizes costs and settlement time for transactions.

Bank employee unions and the Indian Banks' Association have agreed to a 17% annual wage hike

- Bank employee unions and the Indian Banks' Association have agreed to a 17% annual wage hike, benefiting approximately 8 lakh bank employees.
- The wage hike will result in public sector banks spending around Rs 8,284 crore more per year.
- A joint note has been agreed upon to recognize all Saturdays as holidays, subject to government approval.
- Revised working hours will come into effect only after government approval.
- New pay scales have been formulated by merging Dearness Allowance corresponding to 8088 points and additional load.
- The wage settlement also entitled women employees to one day of sick leave per month without needing a medical certificate.
- Accumulated privilege leave can be encashed up to 255 days upon retirement or in the event of an employee's death while in service.

RBI fines Tamilnad Mercantile Bank, DCB Bank for breach of norms

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has levied a penalty of Rs 1.38 crore on Tamilnad Mercantile Bank Limited and a fine of Rs 63.6 lakh on DCB Bank Ltd. for non-compliance with regulatory norms.
- Regarding DCB Bank, the RBI inspection found that the bank neglected to reset interest rates at the prescribed intervals for certain MCLR-linked floating rate advances.
- Additionally, it failed to benchmark the interest rates of certain floating-rate retail loans and loans to MSMEs to an external benchmark lending rate.

Tata Sons announced sale of 0.6% stake in TCS for over ₹9,300 Crore

- Tata Sons, the holding company of Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), intends to sell 23.4 million shares of the software services giant for a minimum of ₹9,300 crore.
- JP Morgan, the banker handling the deal, issued a term sheet revealing this plan.
- The floor price for the shares is set at ₹4,001 each, which represents a discount of 3.6% compared to closing price. This sale amounts to approximately 0.65% of TCS's equity base.

SEBI approved launched of Beta Version of T+0 Settlement on Optional Basis

- SEBI has approved the launch of a beta version of the T+0 settlement on an optional basis starting from March 28.
- T+0 settlement means transactions will be settled on the same day they're made. Initially, it will involve 25 selected stocks and a limited number of brokers.
- SEBI will continue stakeholder consultations and review progress after three and six months.
- Additionally, SEBI approved relaxations for foreign portfolio investors to enhance ease of doing business.

RBI widens scrutiny of credit 'exuberance' amid rising risks to financial system

- India's central bank, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), is intensifying efforts to address "exuberance" in retail lending, targeting areas such as mortgage-linked "top-up" loans.
- Concerns about rising risks to the financial system are driving the RBI to tighten supervision of the industry and urge individual lenders to curb credit in areas deemed risky.
- While no formal enforcement actions have been taken, the RBI is taking steps to rein in retail lending by banks and non-bank financial firms.
- Over the past six months, the RBI has implemented several measures to address retail lending concerns and has publicly cautioned against "all forms of exuberance."

SBI partners with Aurionpro for its transaction banking platform

- Aurionpro Solutions has secured a ₹100 crore contract from the State Bank of India (SBI) to provide its cash management and transaction banking platform, 'iCashpro+'.
- The implementation will occur over the next 12 months, with an additional six years allocated for maintenance and support services.
- This move will help SBI upgrade its current Cash Management Product (CMP) platform and establish 'iCashpro+' as a preferred solution for banks.

- The platform, built on modern cloud technology, ensures interoperability with leading enterprise resource planning (ERP) solutions and empowers SBI to meet evolving customer expectations.

RBI imposes penalty on Bank of India, Bandhan Bank

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) imposed monetary penalties on two banks, Bandhan Bank and Bank of India, and one non-banking finance company, Indostar Capital Finance, for rule violations.
- Bank of India was fined around Rs 1.41 crore for various violations including not paying interest on certain term deposit accounts as per disclosed rates, levying SMS alert charges based on invalid mobile numbers, and failing to reset interest rates in prescribed intervals.
- Bandhan Bank and Indostar Capital Finance were fined Rs 29.55 lakh and Rs 13.60 lakh respectively for rule breaches.

Insurance sector attracts massive Rs 54,000 crore FDI in 9 Years

- Over nine years, the Indian insurance sector attracted around Rs 54,000 crore in foreign direct investment due to increased FDI limits.
- The number of insurance players rose from 53 to 70 during this period. Insurance penetration increased from 3.9% to 4%, and insurance density rose from USD 52 to USD 92.

Index and Reports

Chapter 2

Global Climate Report 2023

- The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) released its State of the Global Climate Report 2023, confirming that 2023 was the warmest year on record.
- The report highlights the alarming trends in various climate indicators, including record-breaking greenhouse gas levels, surface temperatures, ocean heat and acidification, sea level rise, Antarctic sea ice cover, and glacier retreat.
- The global average near-surface temperature in 2023 was 1.45 ± 0.12 °C above the pre-industrial (1850–1900) average, making it the warmest year in the 174-year observational record.
- The 10-year average (2014–2023) global temperature was 1.20 ± 0.12 °C above the 1850–1900 average, making it the warmest 10-year period on record.
- Globally, every month from June to December was record warm for the respective month.
- September 2023 surpassed the previous global record for September by a wide margin (0.46 to 0.54 °C).
- On an average day in 2023, nearly one-third of the global ocean was gripped by a marine heatwave, harming vital ecosystems and food systems.
- By the end of the year, over 90% of the ocean had experienced heatwave conditions at some point.

World Meteorological Organization (WMO)

- The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations responsible for promoting international cooperation in meteorology, climatology, hydrology, and related fields.
- WMO was established on March 23, 1950, and has its headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland.
- The primary purpose of the WMO is to facilitate the exchange of weather and climate data, standardize observation procedures, and enhance the capabilities of meteorological and hydrological services around the world.
- The WMO establishes standards and guidelines for meteorological and hydrological observations, data exchange, and forecasts to ensure consistency and interoperability among its member countries.
- The WMO has 193 member countries and territories, making it one of the largest international organizations in the world.

ILO Report on Forced Labour Profits

- A research conducted by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and published in Geneva claims that illicit profits from forced labor amount to $36 billion annually, a 37% rise since 2014.
- Both the increase in the number of people coerced into labor and the increased profits from victim exploitation are to blame for this surge in illicit revenues.
- Forced labor in the private sector brings about $236 billion in unlawful income for criminals annually.
- Since 2014, there has been a sharp increase in illicit income, totaling $64 billion (or 37%).
- A decade ago, traffickers and crooks made $8,269 each victim; today, they make close to $10,000.
- On any given day in 2021, there were 27.6 million individuals working as forced laborers.
- Forced commercial sexual exploitation accounts for 73% of the total illegal profits.

All-India Consumer Price Index numbers for agricultural and rural labourers

- The All-India Consumer Price Index for Agricultural Laborers and Rural Laborers (Base: 1986-87=100) remained steady in February 2024, with figures of 1258 and 1269, respectively.
- There was a varied pattern observed in the indices of constituent States. In the case of CPI-AL, eight states experienced a decline, while for CPI-RL, this downward trend was observed in seven states. Additionally, two states witnessed no change in their index.
- The month-to-month inflation rates based on CPI-AL and CPI-RL were recorded at 7.43% and 7.36% in February 2024 showing a decrease from 7.52% and 7.37% in January 2024 respectively.

12th edition of the International IP (Intellectual Property) Index

- The US Chamber of Commerce released the 12th edition of its International IP (intellectual property) Index.
- India ranked at 42 out of the 55 countries in the index with an overall score of 38.64 per cent.
- The United States emerged at the top of the list followed by the United Kingdom and France.
- The Index demonstrates the benefits that economies can receive when they adopt robust and enforceable IP standards.
- The index evaluates the IP framework of the world's top 55 economies and found 20 economies significantly improving.

India ranks 62nd on the DHL Connectedness Index

- According to the recently published DHL Global Connectedness Report 2024, India ranked 62nd on the DHL Global Connectedness 2023 Index.
- India was ranked 67th in the 2022 Index. The DHL Global Connectedness Report has been published annually since 2011.
- Singapore was the most globally connected country, followed by the Netherlands and Ireland.
- The report is commissioned by the German logistics company DHL and prepared by the New York University Stern School of Business.
- The 2024 edition ranks the connectedness of 181 countries, accounting for 99.7% of the world's gross domestic product and 98.7% of its population.

Union Home Minister Shri Amit Shah inaugurated the National Cooperative Database & unveils 'National Cooperative Database 2023: A Report'



- Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation, Shri Amit Shah, inaugurated the National Cooperative Database and released the 'National Cooperative Database 2023: A Report' in New Delhi.
- Shri Amit Shah highlighted the significance of the event for the cooperative sector's expansion and strengthening, marking the first inauguration of the cooperative database since India's independence.
- The program aims to provide momentum to the cooperative sector's growth.
- All Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) in the country have been computerized in the last two years, and states have adopted common bylaws to enhance their business operations.

India now stands as the world's second-largest producer of mobile phones

- By the end of the decade spanning 2014-2024, India had emerged as the world's second-largest producer of mobile phones.
- The India Cellular and Electronics Association highlighted the sector's remarkable progress, transitioning from 78 percent import dependence in 2014 to 97 percent self-sufficiency.
- Merely three percent of total mobile phones sold in India were imported. With mobile phone production nearing 20 lakh crore rupees, India achieved unprecedented growth.
- During this period, India manufactured 2.45 billion units of mobile phones, slightly below the targeted goal of 2.5 billion units.

New Delhi ranked World's Most Polluted Capital City for 4th consecutive year since 2018

- New Delhi has maintained its position as the world's most polluted capital city for the fourth consecutive year, according to the Air Quality Report 2023 by Swiss organization IQAir.
- Delhi's PM2.5 levels worsened from 89.1 micrograms per cubic meter in 2022 to 92.7 micrograms per cubic meter in 2023.
- Additionally, Bihar's Begusarai has been identified as the world's most polluted metropolitan area, with an average annual PM2.5 concentrations of 54.4 micrograms per cubic meter.
- India ranked third globally in terms of poor air quality, following Bangladesh and Pakistan.

- The report highlighted that over one billion people in India are exposed to PM2.5 concentrations exceeding the World Health Organization's recommended annual guideline level of 5 micrograms per cubic meter.

MHA ranks amongst 10 top Ministries in Grievance Redressal Assessment Index

- The Home Ministry is dedicated to promptly addressing public grievances through the Centralized Public Grievance Redressal and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS).
- It consistently ranks among the top 10 Ministries in the Grievance Redressal Assessment Index (GRAI), excelling in all 15 indicators.
- In 2023-24, it resolved 48,837 public grievances with an average redressal time of 8 days, well below the standard of 30 days.
- Only 10% of grievances resulted in appeals, one of the lowest rates among Ministries, and citizen satisfaction stands at 40%.

India jumps 14 ranks in Gender Inequality Index 2022

- India has made significant progress in gender equality, jumping 14 ranks in the Gender Inequality Index 2022, according to the UNDP's Human Development Report 2023-24.
- The country now ranks 108 out of 193 countries, with a score of 0.437, compared to its previous rank of 122 in 2021.
- The Ministry of Women and Child Development noted that India's consistent improvement over the past decade reflects progressive strides in gender equality, with the rank improving from 127 in 2014 to 108 in 2022.
- This achievement is attributed to government policies aimed at empowering women socio-economically and politically.

Finland tops 2024 World Happiness Report again

- The 2024 World Happiness Report has been released, with Finland topping the list for the seventh consecutive year.
- India ranks 126th out of 143 countries listed, with factors such as social support, income, health, freedom, generosity, and absence of corruption considered.
- Nordic countries dominate the top spots, with Denmark, Iceland, and Sweden following Finland.
- Afghanistan remains the least happy country, with Lebanon, Lesotho, Sierra Leone, and Congo also at the bottom.
- Among India's neighbors, China ranks 60th, Nepal 93rd, Pakistan 108th, Myanmar 118th, Sri Lanka 128th, and Bangladesh 129th.

MoUs and Agreements

Chapter 3

Tech Mahindra, IBM collaborate to drive digital adoption

- IT services and consultation company Tech Mahindra has collaborated with American technology firm IBM to set up a 'Synergy Lounge' in its Singapore campus.
- It aims to assist enterprises in operationalising and deriving value from next-gen technologies.
- Built on the Hex-I concept, the Lounge will feature different experience zones focusing on various technologies that will help enterprises solve complex business problems, improve customer experiences, reduce operational costs, and enhance workforce efficiency.

Fincare Small Finance Bank merger with AU SFB gets RBI nod

- On 4 March, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced its approval of the Scheme of Amalgamation of Fincare Small Finance Bank with AU Small Finance Bank Ltd.
- The effective date of the amalgamation is set for April 1, 2024, as stated by the RBI. All branches of Fincare Small Finance Bank Ltd will operate as branches of AU Small Finance Bank Ltd from 1 April 2024, according to the RBI.
- Earlier, on January 23, the Competition Commission of India (CCI) had granted approval for the merger between AU Small Finance Bank and Fincare Small Finance Bank.

CCI approved merger of a financial technology company, Garagepreneurs Internet Private Limited with the North East Small Finance Bank

- The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has approved the merger of Garagepreneurs Internet Private Limited, operating under the brand name "slice," with North East Small Finance Bank Limited (NESFB).
- The merger aims to enhance financial inclusion through digital payments and credit products in India.

India, ADB Sign $23 Million loan for Fintech Ecosystem Development

- The Central Government and the Asian Development Bank signed a $23 million loan agreement at Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT City) to strengthen India's fintech ecosystem.
- The project will establish an International Fintech Institute (IFI) to enhance fintech education, startup success rates, and research and innovation.
- This initiative aims to boost employment opportunities and productivity in new and green technologies.

MoD signs contract worth over Rs. 2,890 cr with HAL



- The Ministry of Defence signed a contract with Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) on March 15, 2024, for the Mid Life Upgrade (MLU) of 25 Dornier Aircraft for the Indian Navy, valued at Rs. 2,890 crore.
- The MLU involves incorporating state-of-the-art Avionics Systems and Primary Role sensors into the Dornier Aircraft, enhancing their operational capability.
- The upgraded Dornier Aircraft will be capable of performing Primary Roles including Maritime Surveillance, Coastal Surveillance, Electronic Intelligence, and development of Maritime Domain Awareness.
- The MLU project is expected to generate employment of 1.8 lakh man-days over its execution span of 6.5 years.
- The indigenous upgrade will utilize major systems and equipment from indigenous sources, aligning with the "Atmanirbharta" in Defence initiative and the Make-in-India campaign of the Government of India.

RECPDCL and BHEL to jointly develop utility-scale renewable energy projects



- REC Power Development and Consultancy Limited (RECPDCL), a subsidiary of REC Limited, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Bharat Heavy Electrical Limited (BHEL).
- The MoU aims to jointly develop utility-scale Renewable Energy Projects across India to support the nation's clean energy targets.
- The MoU aims to contribute to the clean energy targets of the nation by establishing a dedicated Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) for renewable energy projects.
- The MoU signing took place in New Delhi on 15th March 2024.

Ministry of Rural Development signs a MoU with J-PAL South Asia to provide technical assistance



- The Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, signed an MoU with Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL), South Asia at IFMR.
- J-PAL, SA@ IFMR, will serve as a knowledge partner on inclusive development to empower rural poor women towards self-sufficiency.
- The MoU signatories were Additional Secretary, Ministry of Rural Development, Shri Charanjit Singh, and Executive Director, J-PAL South Asia, Ms. Shobhini Mukerji.
- Shri Charanjit Singh emphasized the importance of real-time feedback for effective program implementation, highlighting the role of the MoU in facilitating this process.

SmartSoC Solutions joins TSMC Design Center alliance to boost semiconductor innovation

- SmartSoC Solutions, founded in 2016, is a prominent Indian semiconductor design services company.
- The company has announced its membership in the Design Center Alliance (DCA) of TSMC's Open Innovation Platform® (OIP) in March 2024.
- This partnership signifies a significant advancement in SmartSoC's mission to promote indigenous semiconductor solutions tailored to India's evolving technological landscape.
- SmartSoC Solutions is committed to developing cutting-edge semiconductor, embedded, and system designs contributing to India's technological progress.

M&M, Adani Total Energies join hands to set up EV charging infra

- Mahindra & Mahindra has tied up with a unit of Adani Total Gas to establish electric vehicle charging infrastructure across the country.
- The auto major and Adani Total Energies E-Mobility Ltd (ATEL) have inked a memorandum of understanding (MoU) in this regard.
- The MoU sets a roadmap for the creation of an expansive EV charging infrastructure across the country.

PepsiCo expands investment in Vietnam with $400 million for renewable energy-powered plants

- US food and drink maker PepsiCo Inc committed to investing an additional $400 million in Vietnam to build two new plants powered by renewable energy in the country.
- The announcement came as delegations of more than 60 US enterprises, including Suntory PepsiCo Vietnam Beverage, visited Vietnam.

- Reuters reported that one beverage manufacturing factory will be in southern long a province and cost over $300 million.
- Another food processing factory will be in northern Ha Nam province with an investment of $90 million, the Vietnamese government said as per the report.

Partnership between CAG Institution and IIT Delhi for AI in audit and capacity building



- CAG institution and IIT Delhi signed an MoU for a partnership in four key areas for use of AI in audit, audit of AI systems, capacity building and knowledge sharing.
- The MoU between the two institutions was signed by Anand Mohan Bajaj, Chief Technology Officer & Additional Deputy CAG and Prof. Rangan Banerjee, Director, IIT Delhi in the presence of the CAG of India Girish Chandra Murmu.
- By harnessing AI-driven algorithms and predictive analytics, auditors can analyse vast volumes of data with unparalleled speed and precision.

AIIMS-ECHS signs MoA for health services to ex-servicemen

- All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) and Ex-Servicemen Contributory Health Scheme (ECHS), Ministry of Defence has signed a memorandum of agreement (MoA) for health services to ex-servicemen in AIIMS.
- The agreement will ensure free-of-cost health services, including emergency care, for ex-servicemen and their family members.
- It will be beneficial to more than 30,000 ex-servicemen and their family members.

MoU signed between ICAR and Dhanuka Agritech Limited



- A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and Dhanuka Agritech Limited.
- The objective of this agreement is to utilize the efficiency of both the institutions to deliver new technology to the farmers.
- Dhanuka Agritech will provide training related to agricultural production to these small farmers by associating with the central institutes, ATARIs and KVKs.
- The aim of this MoU is to promote natural farming in the changing environment.

IIT-KGP, Navy sign MoU to carry out R&D jointly

- Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur (IIT-KGP) and the Indian Navy signed a MoU to promote technology development, innovative solutions and undertaking joint research and development.
- The studies include propulsion systems, instrumentation and sensors, industrial engineering and operational research, nanotechnology and hydrodynamic study of fluids, computer-aided design, study of mechanical design of systems and equipment, study of acoustics, quantum computing and quantum mechanics and robotics.
- This partnership will promote academic cooperation, enhance scientific understanding of technologies related to defence and undertake research in mutually beneficial areas including research projects by Navy-sponsored students.

Ministry of Heavy Industries signs an MOU with IIT-Roorkee



- Ministry of Heavy Industries (MHI) and the Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee (IIT Roorkee) signed a MoU to work together to encourage innovation and advance the automotive and electric vehicle (EV) sector.
- This MoU represents a joint effort to launch advanced initiatives for creating a Centre of Excellence (CoE) and an Industry Accelerator at IIT Roorkee under the Scheme for Enhancement of Competitiveness in the Indian Capital Goods Sector Phase II of MHI.
- This collaboration seeks to utilize the combined knowledge and resources of both organizations to support groundbreaking projects that will influence the future of transportation.

Arya.ag and Shivalik Bank Partnership Empowers Farmers with Rs 200 Crore

- Arya.ag, an integrated grain commerce platform, has partnered with Shivalik Small Finance Bank to provide financial assistance to farmers, agro-processors, and micro-enterprises.
- Through this strategic partnership, Arya.ag acts as a Business Correspondent for the bank, facilitating over 200 crores in warehouse receipt financing in the current financial year.
- This partnership offers assurance to financial institutions and creates a more inclusive ecosystem for small agri-stakeholders.

India, ADB sign $181 million loan to improve livability and mobility in Ahmedabad

- The Government of India and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) signed a $181 million loan to build quality infrastructure and services toward improving urban livability and mobility in the peri-urban areas of Ahmedabad city in Gujarat.
- The project aims to make peri-urban areas of Ahmedabad livable, environmentally sustainable, and efficient with robust physical and social infrastructure, a vibrant economy, and a distinct identity as a preferred investment destination.
- It will construct 166 km of water distribution network, 126 km of climate-resilient stormwater drainage, 300 km of sewerage systems, and four sewage treatment plants.

India, Bhutan ink several MoUs, including for establishment of rail links between nations

- Both India and Bhutan have signed several Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs), including the establishment of rail links between the two nations.
- The MoU provides for the establishment of two proposed rail links between India and Bhutan, including the Kokrajhar-Gelephu rail link and Banarhat-Samtse rail link and their implementation modalities.
- An Agreement for recognition of official control exercised by the Bhutan Food and Drug Authority (BFDA) by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) was also agreed upon.
- The MoU will make the export inspection certificate issued by BFDA acceptable by FSSAI for compliance with requirements prescribed by FSSAI, while exporting the products to India.

MoRD signs a MoU with IIT Delhi to formalize their partnership in applications of geospatial technology and AI

- The Ministry of Rural Development has signed a MoU with the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi to formalize their partnership in applications of geospatial technology and artificial intelligence.

- The MoU centers around the project "BhuPRAHARI," an ambitious initiative aimed at leveraging ground and space-based geospatial technologies along with Artificial Intelligence to monitor and manage assets under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA).
- This collaboration is a commitment to harnessing the power of technology for the betterment of rural development processes.

India, EFTA ink free trade agreement

- India and the four-nation European (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland) bloc EFTA signed a free trade agreement under which New Delhi has received an investment commitment of $ 100 billion in the next 15 years.
- Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal described the signing as a "watershed moment", as it is India's first modern trade pact with a bloc having developed countries.
- The agreement has 14 chapters, including trade in goods, rules of origin, intellectual property rights (IPRs), trade in services, investment promotion and cooperation, government procurement, technical barriers to trade and trade facilitation.

RBI, Bank of Indonesia sign MoU promoting use of local currencies for trade

- Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the Bank of Indonesia signed a MoU establishing a framework to promote the use of local currencies for cross-border transactions.
- The MoU covers all current account transactions, permissible capital account transactions and any other economic and financial transactions as agreed upon by both countries.
- The framework will enable exporters and importers to invoice and pay in their respective domestic currencies – the Indian rupee and the Indonesian rupiah.
- This will facilitate the development of a rupee-rupiah foreign exchange market, the RBI said, adding that the step would optimise costs and settlement time for transactions.

National News

Chapter 4

EC launched CVIGIL App to supervise election process



- Election Commission launched cVIGIL app to keep a close watch on the election process.
- It is a single app for recording, reporting, and resolving violations of the model code of conduct.
- Through this app, online complaints regarding violations of the model code of conduct can be made by capturing photos, videos etc.
- The citizens can report Model Code of Conduct and expenditure violations through the cVIGIL app.
- By using this app, the citizens can immediately report on incidents of political misconduct within minutes and without having to rush to the office of the returning officer.

DGCA imposes Rs 80 lakh penalty on Air India for violating FDTL rules

- The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) imposed a fine of Rs 80 lakh on Air India for violating rules regarding flight duty time limitation (FDTL).
- It aims to ensure sufficient rest for pilots.
- It had conducted an audit of Air India in January to see if the airline is complying with regulations related to FDTL and fatigue management system (FMS).
- The regulator collected a substantial amount of evidence and analysed random fleet-wise reports.

AFSPA extended for 6 months in several districts of Arunachal, Nagaland

- The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, under which an area is declared as "disturbed" for the convenience of security forces, has been extended in three districts of Arunachal Pradesh, eight districts of Nagaland and some other areas for six more months after a review of the law and order situation in these two northeastern states.
- The AFSPA gives armed forces personnel, operating in disturbed areas, sweeping powers to search, arrest and to open fire if they deem it necessary for "the maintenance of public order".
- An area or district is notified as a disturbed area under the AFSPA to facilitate the operations of the armed forces.

PM Modi inaugurated women and child hospital in Thimphu

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi on inaugurated a ₹140-crore hospital for women and children built in Thimphu with Indian assistance before winding up a two-day visit to Bhutan aimed at bolstering bilateral ties and cooperation in a wide range of areas.
- Modi also announced that India will double its assistance for the neighbouring country's five-year plan from ₹5,000 crore to ₹10,000 crore.
- The move came against the backdrop of concerted efforts by China to settle a border dispute and establish diplomatic ties with Bhutan.

ITU elects India as co-chair of its Digital Innovation Board

- Dr Neeraj Mittal, Secretary, Department of Telecommunications, Government of India, led a high-level delegation to Geneva for a series of crucial meetings at the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Headquarters from 18 to 20 March, 2024.
- The visit focused on fostering collaboration and exploring innovative initiatives in the telecommunications and information and communication technology (ICT) sectors.

- ITU has started Innovation and Entrepreneurship Alliance for Digital Development to respond to significant unmet needs of ITU Membership in the area of innovation, as articulated in the Kigali Action Plan adopted at the World Telecommunication Development Conference 2022 (WTDC-22) and the Outcomes of the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference 2022 (PP-22).

MeitY/NIXI successfully unveiled BhashaNet portal



- Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) and National Internet Exchange of India (NIXI) have announced the launch of the BhashaNet portal at the Universal Acceptance Day event on 21 March 2024.
- The event was held with the active support of Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN).
- The event marked a significant milestone in advancing digital inclusion and promoting Universal Acceptance across India.
- The theme of the event, "BhashaNet: Impetus Towards Universal Acceptance," highlighted MeitY/NIXI's unwavering commitment towards ensuring that, regardless of linguistic or textual barriers, everyone can fully participate in the digital world.
- These sessions aimed to empower participants and the community at large in their efforts to make applications and systems Universal Acceptance compliant.

MoU signed between AIIMS-Raipur and ECHS wing of MoD

- An agreement was signed between the AIIMS-Raipur and the Ex-servicemen Contributory Health Scheme (ECHS) wing of the defence ministry to allow ex-servicemen to avail health benefits at the facility in a "capless and cashless manner".
- The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed during a ceremony held at the AIIMS-Raipur.
- It is only the second AIIMS hospital to be empanelled with ECHS after AIIMS-Bhopal.
- This MoU will allow ex-servicemen to avail health benefits at the facility in a "capless and cashless manner".

Union Minister Gadkari to lay foundation stone of Dharma Path in UP's Jaunpur

- Union Minister Nitin Gadkari laid the foundation stone of the Dharma Path in Jaunpur, Uttar Pradesh, connecting it with Ayodhya, Varanasi, and Mirzapur.
- The project includes a four-lane road from Hauz to Purvanchal University and from Purvanchal University to Shahganj, costing 3,405 crore rupees.
- Additionally, a four-lane road under National Highway No. 135-A will be constructed from Jaunpur to Akbarpur, covering 31 km in the district from Devkali to Shahganj border, costing 1,511 crore rupees.
- Another four-lane road via Sirkoni's Hauz to Purvanchal will be built for 1,894 crore rupees, covering 29 km through 55 villages.

FSSAI gives 'Eat Right Station' certificate to 150 Railway Stations

- The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has granted the 'Eat Right Station' certification to 150 railway stations.
- This certification ensures safe and nutritious food options for rail passengers through rigorous audits of food vendors, training programs for handlers, and adherence to hygiene protocols.
- Stations meeting these criteria are recognized for promoting informed food choices.

Cabinet approves establishment of International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA)



- The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi approved the establishment of the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) with headquarters in India, allocating a one-time budget of Rs. 150 crore for five years from 2023-24 to 2027-28.
- This initiative stems from India's leadership in conserving tigers and other big cats, with the Prime Minister's call for a global alliance to combat poaching.
- The IBCA aims to protect big cats and their habitats by bringing together 96 range countries, non-range countries, conservation partners, and businesses.
- It seeks to replicate successful conservation practices and facilitate collaboration to reverse the decline in big cat populations.

Union Minister Pralhad Joshi launches "Coal Logistics Plan and Policy"



- Union Minister Pralhad Joshi has launched the Coal Logistics Plan and Policy, aiming to modernize coal transportation in India.
- The plan proposes a shift to a railway-based system in FMCs projects, targeting a 14% reduction in rail logistic costs and an annual saving of Rs 21,000 Crore.
- This initiative aims to meet rising energy demand, reduce air pollution, traffic congestion, and carbon emissions. Additionally, it anticipates a 10% saving in average turnaround time of wagons nationwide.

Member (Health) in NITI Aayog Dr V K Paul launches National Birth Defects Awareness Month 2024 in New Delhi



- Dr. V K Paul of NITI Aayog launched the National Birth Defects Awareness Month 2024 in New Delhi. The theme is "Breaking barriers: inclusive support for children with birth defects."
- Activities under the Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram will promote awareness, early identification, and management of birth defects.
- Union Health Secretary Apurva Chandra highlighted the program's role in ensuring access to preventive healthcare for all children and urged states to participate in screening and awareness campaigns throughout the month.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah to inaugurate NUCFDC Limited in New Delhi on 2nd March

- Union Home and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah launched the National Urban Co-operative Finance and Development Corporation Limited in New Delhi.
- This initiative aims to modernize and strengthen the Urban Cooperative Banking Sector under the goal of 'Sahakar se Samriddhi' for 'Aatma Nirbhar' Bharat.
- NUCFDC has received a Certificate of Registration from the RBI to operate as a Non-Banking Finance Company and serve as the umbrella organization for urban cooperative banks.
- It will also function as a Self-Regulatory Organization for the sector, ensuring specialized services, facilitating communication between banks and regulators, and addressing challenges faced by Urban Cooperative Banks.

PM Modi launched India's First Hydrogen Fuel Cell Ferry



- Prime Minister Narendra Modi virtually launched India's first domestically developed hydrogen fuel cell ferry.
- The vessel, built by Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL), is set to operate in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh.

'Development of Semiconductors and Display Manufacturing Ecosystems in India' initiative

- The Indian Cabinet approved the establishment of three semiconductor plants, with Tata and Powerchip-Taiwan collaborating on one in Dholera, Gujarat.
- The total investment is around Rs 1.26 trillion, creating 20,000 direct jobs and 60,000 indirect jobs.
- These plants will supplement the Rs 22,516 crore plant announced by Micron last year in Sanand, following Prime Minister Modi's semiconductor policy announcement in 2022.

Union Steel Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia inaugurates country's 1st Green Hydrogen Plant in Hisar



- Union Steel Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia inaugurated India's 1st Green Hydrogen Plant at Jindal Stainless Limited, Hisar.
- This off-grid plant is a milestone in the stainless steel sector, featuring rooftop and floating solar panels.
- It will slash carbon emissions by 2,700 Metric Tonnes annually and 54,000 tons over two decades. Scindia emphasized India's commitment to sustainability, showcasing the nation's steel sector growth from importer to exporter.
- The National Green Hydrogen Mission, launched with a ₹20,000 crore budget, aims to make India a global hub for green hydrogen production, usage, and export.

PM Modi inaugurated India's first Underwater Metro in Kolkata



- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated India's first underwater metro rail service in Kolkata.
- The Howrah Maidan-Esplanade section, part of the East-West Metro corridor, includes a tunnel beneath the River Hooghly.
- The project is hailed as a marvel, with trains traveling 16 meters below the river's surface. The metro authorities anticipate a daily ridership of seven lakh people.

Minister of Railways and IT Ashwini Vaishnaw launched NITI Aayog's 'NITI for States' platform

- Minister of Railways and IT, Ashwini Vaishnaw, launched NITI Aayog's 'NITI For States' platform on March 7 in New Delhi.
- This platform serves as a cross-sectoral knowledge platform aimed at becoming a Digital Public Infrastructure for Policy and Good Governance.
- Additionally, before the launch, Mr. Vaishnaw inaugurated the Viksit Bharat Strategy Room at NITI Aayog. This room is designed to facilitate enhanced visualization and engagement with insights, information, and knowledge to facilitate effective in-person decision-making processes.

Government raises minimum age for Postal Voting to 85 Years

- The government, in consultation with the Election Commission, has amended the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961, raising the minimum age for senior citizens eligible for voting by postal ballot from 80 to 85 years.
- This decision comes as statistics show that 97-98% of senior citizens aged above 80 years have preferred to vote in person rather than using the postal ballot facility in the past 11 assembly polls since 2020.

Kerala Welcomes 'Iris' its first generative AI teacher



- A Kerala school has introduced a humanoid named Iris as a teacher, making use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to enhance education.
- Iris was unveiled at KTCT Higher Secondary School in Thiruvananthapuram in collaboration with Makerlabs Edutech Private Limited.
- Built as part of the Atal Tinkering Lab (ATL) project by NITI Aayog, Iris can speak three languages, answer difficult questions, and boasts features like a voice assistant, interactive learning, manipulation capabilities, and mobility.
- This initiative highlights AI's role in making learning more engaging and accessible.

Union Minister inaugurated first of its kind 'National Speed Breeding Crop Facility at NABI, Mohali



- Union Minister of Science & Technology, Dr. Jitendra Singh inaugurated the first-of- its-kind "National Speed Breeding Crop Facility" at the premier National Agri-Food Biotechnology Institute (NABI) in Mohali.
- This initiative is in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's priority of doubling the farmer`s Income, ensuring their economic empowerment and promoting Agri-StartUps".
- Biotechnology speedy seeds facility will cater to all the States of India but it will especially be useful for the North Indian States like Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana and the UT of J&K.

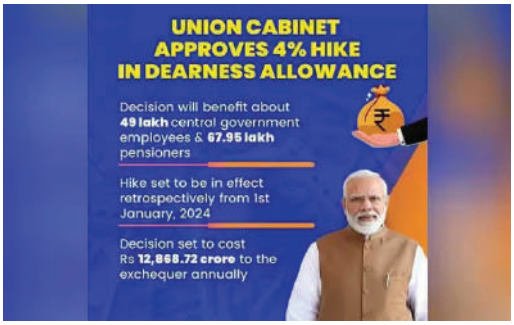
Ashwini Vaishnaw launched India's fastest router with 2.4 tbps capacity

- Union Minister for Communications, Electronics and Information Technology and Railways Ashwini Vaishnaw launched India's fastest and indigenously developed IP/MPLS (Multiprotocol Label Switching) router in Bengaluru.
- The router was developed by the collaboration of the government's Department of Telecom, CDOT and Nivetti.
- The indigenously developed router has a speed of 2.4 tbps. Terabytes per second (TBps) is the rate of data transmission. It is equivalent to 1,000 gigabytes, or one lakh crore bytes per second.

Anurag Thakur announced two National Centres of Excellence for women

- On the occasion of International Women's Day on 8 March 2024, Union Minister of Sports and Youth Affairs Anurag Singh Thakur announced the establishment of two National Centres of Excellence, exclusively for women.
- NCOEs cover 23 focused/priority disciplines where Indian athletes have a chance to win medals in global competitions like the Asian Games and the Olympics.

Cabinet approved additional installment of Dearness Allowance and Dearness Relief



- The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi approved to release an additional installment of Dearness Allowance (DA) to Central Government employees and Dearness Relief (DR) to pensioners w.e.f. 1.1.2024 representing an increase of 4% over the existing rate of 46% of the Basic Pay/ Pension, to compensate against price rise.

- The combined impact on the exchequer on account of both Dearness Allowance and Dearness Relief would be Rs.12,868.72 crore per annum. This will benefit about 49.18 lakh Central Government employees and 67.95 lakh pensioners.
- This increase is in accordance with the accepted formula, which is based on the recommendations of the 7th Central Pay Commission.

Cabinet approved ambitious IndiaAI Mission to strengthen the AI Innovation Ecosystem



- Union Cabinet approved ambitious IndiaAI Mission to Strengthen the AI Innovation Ecosystem with a budgetory outlay of Rs.10,371.92 Crore to be spent on creating AI infrastructure, AI skillsets, AI startups to AI applications during next five years of the mission duration.
- IndiaAI mission rollout is a great stride for developed India which Prime Minister of India plans to achieve by 2047.
- Building a high-end scalable AI computing ecosystem with 10,000 or more GPUs through public-private partnership. Offering AI as a service and pre-trained models through an AI marketplace.

Cabinet approved MSP for Raw Jute for 2024-25 Season

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, has given its approval for the Minimum Support Prices (MSP) for Raw Jute for 2024-25 season.
- MSP set at Rs. 5,335 per quintal, ensuring 64.8% return over all India weighted average cost of production.
- MSP is aligned with the principle of 1.5 times all India weighted average cost of production.
- Increase of Rs. 285 per quintal over previous season.

Union Minister released "Strategy Paper on Coal Import Substitution"



- Shri Pralhad Joshi, Minister of Coal, Mines & Parliamentary Affairs released "Strategy Papers on Coal Import Substitution", at a function in the Ministry of Coal.
- The Ministry of Coal aims to achieve energy security and self-sufficiency in coal by curbing imports.
- The Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) chaired by the Additional Secretary, Ministry of Coal, formed for this purpose.

Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw launched NITI Aayog's – 'NITI for States' Platform

- Shri Ashwini Vaishnaw, Union Minister of Communications, Railways, and Electronics & Information Technology, launched the 'NITI for States' platform, a comprehensive digital initiative designed to empower states and union territories (UTs) in their pursuit of national development goals.
- Vaishnaw is also inaugurated the 'NITI For States - Viksit Bharat Strategy Room' at NITI Aayog.
- NITI for States offers a centralised repository of valuable resources, including best practices, policy documents, datasets, and NITI Aayog publications, spanning various sectors and cross-cutting themes like gender and climate change.

Union Home Minister Shri Amit Shah inaugurated the National Cooperative Database



- Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation, Shri Amit Shah, inaugurated the National Cooperative Database and released the 'National Cooperative Database 2023: A Report' in New Delhi.
- Program is aimed at the expansion of the cooperative sector and providing momentum to it.

Jharkhand government to launch Widow Remarriage Promotion Scheme

- The Jharkhand Widow Remarriage Promotion Scheme is set to be launched by Chief Minister Champai Soren.
- Scheme aims to provide financial support of Rs 2 lakh to widows who choose to remarry.
- This initiative seeks to empower widows, enhance their living standards, and integrate them into mainstream society.

Arjun Munda inaugurated Agriculture Integrated Command and Control Center



- Union Minister of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare and Tribal Affairs, Shri Arjun Munda, inaugurated the Agriculture Integrated Command and Control Center at Krishi Bhawan, Delhi.
- The initiative aims to empower farmers with information, services, and facilities using digital technology.
- Shri Munda highlighted the government's focus on Minimum Government-Maximum Governance to ensure minimal interference in people's lives and empower them to become self-reliant.
- The Agriculture Ministry's innovation under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership aims to make farmers self-reliant across the country.
- Technology has become an integral part of everyone's life, and the government has a responsibility to support people in benefiting from it.
- The government intends to provide better information, services, and facilities to farmers to increase their production capacity and potential.

CIL achieved record coal production of 703.91 MT up to 7th March 2024

- India Limited (CIL) achieved a record production of 703.91 million tonnes (MT) of coal up to 7th March 2024, surpassing last year's production by an impressive margin of 24 days.
- CIL maintains a coal stock of 72.70 MT as of 7th March 2024.
- Initiatives such as the adoption of the Mine Developer and Operator (MDO) model, mechanization, modernization of mines, and undertaking new projects have bolstered coal production.
- Induction of enhanced Mass Production Technologies and digitization of operations, including the introduction of ERP, have enhanced mine efficiency and productivity.
- The Ministry of Coal has facilitated the growth of the coal sector through policy reforms aimed at promoting sustainable mining practices, ensuring environmental compliance, and attracting investments.

Union Minister for Jal Shakti, Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat to launch 'Jal Shakti Abhiyan: Catch The Rain-2024' Campaign



- The Union Minister for Jal Shakti, Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, will launch the nationwide 'Jal Shakti Abhiyan: Catch the Rain-2024' campaign on March 9, 2024, from New Delhi.
- The fifth edition of the campaign will be themed 'Nari Shakti se Jal Shakti' to recognize the crucial role played by women in water management, conservation, and sustainability.
- Two books will be launched during the event: "Jal Shakti Abhiyan: 2019 to 2023" and "101 Water Champions of Jal Jeevan Mission."
- The campaign will run from March 9, 2024, to November 30, 2024, focusing on water conservation and rainwater harvesting in both urban and rural areas across all districts in the nation.
- Key interventions include setting up Jal Shakti Kendras in all districts, afforestation, and awareness generation among the masses.
- This year, the campaign will emphasize de-silting and cleaning of water bodies, revitalizing abandoned borewells for groundwater recharge, geo-tagging of water bodies, intensified afforestation efforts, snow harvesting in hilly areas, and rejuvenation of small rivers nationwide.

Shri Narayan Rane to lay the foundation stone of Multipurpose Exhibition-cum-Convention Centre at Saki Naka, Mumbai



- The Union Minister for MSME, Shri Narayan Rane, and Minister of State for MSME, Shri Bhanu Pratap Singh Verma, will lay the foundation stone of a Multipurpose Exhibition-cum-Convention Centre at Saki Naka, Mumbai.
- They will also inaugurate a Branch MSME Development and Facilitation Office in Pune.
- An exhibition will feature MSMEs showcasing their products across different sectors, with about 100 stalls from PM Vishwakarma, KVIC, and COIR Board.
- Stalls are allocated to Incubators, Women entrepreneurs, and SC/ST entrepreneurs.
- National SC ST Hub (NSSH) beneficiaries will be felicitated during the event.
- The PM Vishwakarma Scheme, launched on 17.09.2023, provides end-to-end support to artisans & craftspeople of 18 trades, with over 6,46,164 successful applications registered as of 07.03.2024.

Union Minister Narayan Rane to lay foundation stone of MSME-Technology Centre in Sindhudurg, Maharashtra

- Union Minister Narayan Rane inaugurated the MSME-Technology Centre in Sindhudurg, Maharashtra, along with the Sindhudurg Audyogik Mahotsav and Self Employment Conclave.
- The government aims to expand technology access for MSMEs nationwide.
- The project cost was 182 Crore rupees, focusing on general engineering and food processing.
- Additionally, an exhibition on PM Vishwakarma was inaugurated, supporting artisans and craftspersons under the scheme launched last year.

WCD Ministry introduces national curriculum for early childhood care and education

- The Ministry of Women and Child Development has introduced a National Curriculum for Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) for children aged three to six years, covering all developmental domains.
- Additionally, a National Framework for Early Childhood Stimulation has been launched for children from birth to three years.
- These initiatives aim to enhance the quality of ECCE and empower caregivers and Anganwadi Workers through competency-based lesson plans and responsive caregiving practices.
- Training will be provided by the National Institute for Public Cooperation and Child Development, and provisions from both initiatives will be included in the Poshan Tracker.

Union Minister inaugurated Digital Exhibition of National Archives of India-Subhash Abhinandan

- Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal inaugurated the Digital Exhibition "Subhash Abhinandan" at the National Archives of India, focusing on Subhash Chandra Bose's life.
- He emphasized the government's mission of "Virasat Bhi, Vikas Bhi" to make India a global leader and assured support for the archive sector.

Sahitya Akademi organises 'Sahityotsav' to commemorate its 70-year journey

- Sahitya Akademi organized "Sahityotsav," the world's largest literature festival, to mark its 70-year journey.
- Inaugurated by Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal, the event hosts over 1100 writers and scholars celebrating India's literary diversity with 190 sessions.
- It emphasizes post-independence India's literary richness and inclusion of underrepresented communities.
- The festival includes panel discussions, poetry readings, and the Sahitya Akademi Awards 2023 presentation, with a notable lecture by Gulzar on March 13th.
- UGC introduced SheRNI, helping female scientists and faculty connect
- The UGC's INFLIBNET Centre launched SheRNI to connect Indian women scientists, promote collaboration, and recognize their contributions.
- UGC Chairman M Jagadesh Kumar stressed the significance of acknowledging women scientists as key contributors to India's development.
- SheRNI aims to foster scientific advancement and innovation through collaboration.

GOI announced implementation of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA)

- The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) is a law enacted by the Indian government in 2019.
- It aims to provide Indian citizenship to persecuted minority communities, including Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis, and Christians, who migrated to India from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan on or before December 31, 2014.

J&K Police launched "Operation Kamdhenu" to Combat Cattle Smuggling

- The Jammu and Kashmir Police have initiated "Operation Kamdhenu" to address the widespread problem of cattle smuggling in the region.
- This comprehensive strategy is designed to identify and apprehend the key orchestrators of these illegal activities, closely monitor the actions of cattle smugglers, and evaluate the assets of individuals involved in such operations.

NHAI issues advisory for Paytm FASTag users

- National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) advises Paytm FASTag users to switch to another bank's FASTag before March 15 to avoid penalties.
- Paytm FASTag recharging will be restricted after this date, but existing balances can still be used for toll payments.

Dr Mansukh Mandaviya launched Credit Assistance Program for Jan Aushadhi Kendras



- Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya, Union Minister for Chemicals & Fertilizers and Health & Family Welfare, inaugurated a credit assistance program for Jan Aushadhi Kendras.
- He presided over the exchange of an MoU between Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) and Pharmaceuticals and Medical Devices Bureau of India (PMBI).
- Additionally, he launched a website for credit assistance to Jan Aushadhi Kendras.

President Droupadi Murmu graced Global Spirituality Mahotsav in Hyderabad

- President Droupadi Murmu attended the Global Spirituality Mahotsav in Hyderabad on March 15.

- The event, spanning four days, at Kanha Shanti Vanam, the world's largest meditation center.
- Organized by the Union Ministry of Culture in collaboration with the Sri Ram Chandra Mission, it aims to foster solidarity among diverse faiths under the theme 'Inner Peace to World Peace.'
- Over 300 spiritual leaders and around one lakh attendees are expected to participate, discussing topics on religion and spirituality's role in benefiting humanity.

Union Minister Amit Shah launched NIA's Digital CCMS

- Union Home Minister Amit Shah inaugurated a digital Criminal Case Management System (CCMS) by the NIA, along with two new branch offices in Jammu and Kochi and a residential complex in Raipur.
- The CCMS will enhance coordination in counterterrorism and organized crime cases, while the Sankalan app by NCRB aids in navigating new criminal laws.
- These initiatives strengthen India's fight against terrorism and organized crime.

ECI releases Electoral Bonds Data on Website

- The Election Commission of India (ECI) has uploaded electoral bond data received from the State Bank of India on its website, in compliance with the Supreme Court's directions.
- The data can be accessed at www.eci.gov.in/candidate-politicalparty.
- The commission emphasizes its commitment to disclosure and transparency, aligning with the Supreme Court's stance.

100 Jails Certified as Eat Right Campus by FSSAI across India

- Around 100 jails across India have been certified as Eat Right Campuses by FSSAI.
- Uttar Pradesh has the highest number of certified jails, followed by Punjab, Bihar, and Madhya Pradesh.
- Notable facilities include Tihar Prison in Delhi, Central Jail Gaya in Bihar, Modern Central Jail in Punjab, and Central Jail Rewa in Madhya Pradesh.
- This initiative ensures access to safe and nutritious food for inmates and staff, extending FSSAI's focus on promoting healthy eating in correctional facilities.

I&B Ministry blocks 18 Over Top, OTT Platforms for Obscene and Vulgar Content

- The Information and Broadcasting Ministry has blocked 18 OTT platforms for hosting obscene and vulgar content, including Dreams Films, Hunters, Hot Shots VIP, Prime Play, and Uncut Adda.
- Additionally, nineteen websites, ten apps, and 57 social media accounts associated with these platforms have been disabled in India.
- This decision was made under the provisions of the Information Technology Act, 2000, in consultation with relevant ministries and domain experts.
- Minister Anurag Singh Thakur stressed the responsibility of platforms to avoid propagating obscenity and vulgarity, particularly content demeaning to women.

20th Convocation of the ICAR-National Dairy Research Institute at Karnal



- The 20th Convocation of the ICAR-National Dairy Research Institute was held today at Karnal, Haryana.
- It was declared open by Dr. Dheer Singh, Director of the institute and Vice Chancellor, Deemed University.
- On this occasion, Padma Bhushan Dr. R.S. Paroda, former Secretary (DARE) and Director General, Indian Council of Agricultural Research and Chairman of TAAS delivered the convocation address.
- A total of 278 students were awarded degrees, out of which 49 students were awarded B. Tech degree, 127 students Master's degree and 102 researchers awarded PhD degree.

Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw unveils financial upgradation scheme for 2.56 lakhs Gramin Dak Sevaks

- Union Minister Shri Ashwini Vaishnaw unveiled a financial upgradation scheme for over 2.56 lakhs Gramin Dak Sevaks (GDSs) in the Department of Posts.

- The scheme aims to improve service conditions and address stagnation issues within the GDS workforce.
- GDSs are essential for delivering postal and financial services in rural areas, serving as the backbone of the Department of Posts.
- Every Gramin Dak Sevak will get three financial upgrades on completion of 12, 24, and 36 years of service amounting to Rs 4,320/-, Rs. 5,520/-, and Rs 7,200/- per annum respectively.
- This is in addition to the remuneration provided to GDS in the form of 'Time-Related Continuity Allowance (TRCA)'.
- In a significant step to improve the service conditions of GDS, this scheme is expected to benefit more than 2.56 lakh GDSs and remove stagnation in their service.

India's first integrated Oil Palm Processing Unit by 3F Oil Palm

- India achieves a significant milestone in its pursuit of self-reliance in edible oils with the inauguration of the nation's first integrated Oil Palm Processing Unit in Roing, Arunachal Pradesh.
- The project, led by 3F Oil Palm, features cutting-edge facilities including a Palm Oil Processing and Refinery, a zero-discharge effluent plant, and a palm waste-based power plant.
- This marks not only the first Oil Palm factory in Arunachal Pradesh but also India's first under the NMEO-OP, supporting the country's journey towards self-sufficiency in edible oils.

Union Minister Kiren Rijiju gives additional charge of Ministry of Food Processing Industries

- Union Minister Kiren Rijiju has been appointed to take on the additional responsibility of the Ministry of Food Processing Industries following the resignation of Union Minister and Rashtriya Lok Janshakti Party Chief Pashupati Kumar Paras from the Union Cabinet.
- President Droupadi Murmu has accepted Mr. Paras's resignation with immediate effect.
- Kiren Rijiju, who was previously holding the charge of the Ministry of Earth Sciences, will now also oversee the Ministry of Food Processing Industries.

ECI launched 'Mission 414' campaign in Himachal Pradesh

- The Election Commission has initiated a special campaign in Himachal Pradesh, titled "Mission 414", aimed at boosting voter turnout in 414 polling stations that recorded less than 60 percent voting in the previous Lok Sabha elections.
- This campaign is particularly significant as it coincides with the bypolls for six assembly seats left vacant due to the disqualification of Congress MLAs, which will be conducted concurrently with the Lok Sabha elections on 1 June.
- The primary objective of "Mission 414" is to enhance voter participation and improve the overall voting percentage in the identified polling stations, as stated by the Chief Electoral Officer of Himachal Pradesh.

India's first Ayurvedic Cafe opens in Delhi



- Soma - The Ayurvedic Kitchen, situated within the premises of Maharishi Ayurveda Hospital in Shalimar Bagh, Delhi, offers a unique dining experience rooted in Ayurvedic principles.
- The restaurant serves a variety of dishes carefully crafted to promote health and well-being according to Ayurvedic principles. Each dish is thoughtfully prepared using ingredients known for their medicinal properties and nutritional value.
- The menu features a range of vegetarian and vegan options, with an emphasis on fresh, seasonal ingredients and traditional cooking methods.
- Guests can indulge in nourishing meals that not only satisfy the palate but also support overall health and vitality.
- Soma - The Ayurvedic Kitchen aims to showcase the benefits of Ayurvedic cuisine and promote a holistic approach to dining and wellness.

PM Modi addressed startup Mahakumbh at Bharat Mandapam

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the Startup Mahakumbh at Bharat Mandapam, highlighting India's remarkable progress in the startup ecosystem.
- The three-day event, which featured sector-focused pavilions covering various domains like AI, agritech, fintech, etc.
- It aimed to facilitate connections between startups, investors, and corporate partners, fostering innovation and growth in the entrepreneurial landscape.

Election Commission launched 'Know Your Candidate' app



- The Election Commission of India, led by Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar, unveiled the Know Your Candidate (KYC) mobile application.
- This app empowers voters to verify if any candidate contesting elections in their constituency has a criminal background.
- Available for both Android and iOS platforms, the app aims to promote transparency and accountability in the electoral process.

ECI allows Postal Ballot for essential service employees in upcoming elections

- The Election Commission of India (ECI) has notified a category of electors, including essential service personnel, for postal ballot voting in the Lok Sabha and Assembly polls in four states and bye-elections in 26 Assembly Constituencies across 13 States.
- This category encompasses employees of various essential services such as Metro, Railways, BSNL, Electricity, Health Department, Fire Services, Postal Services, Aviation, Disaster Management, Doordarshan, All India Radio, and authorized media persons.
- This move enables those on duty on polling day to cast their votes via postal ballot, as per provisions of the Representation of the People Act, 1951.

Shipping Corporation of India Land and Assets Limited lists on BSE and NSE



- Shipping Corporation of India Land and Assets Limited took place at Mumbai's BSE. The shares debuted at an opening price of 46.80 rupees per share at the BSE and 46.70 rupees per share at the NSE.
- This company is categorized as a "C Category" Central Public Sector Enterprise and was established on November 10, 2021, with the objective of unlocking the potential value of Non-Core Assets of Shipping Corporation of India Limited through a demerger scheme.
- Shipping Corporation of India Land and Assets Limited is a debt-free entity with a net worth of 3216 crore rupees and real estate properties valued at approximately 2388 crore rupees as of December 31, 2023.
- Additionally, the company operates a top-tier maritime training institute catering to Indian and international seafarers.

Shipping Ministry approved Rs 645 crore for 10 New Waterways projects on Brahmaputra



- Union Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways and Ayush, Shri Sarbananda Sonowal, announced an investment of over ₹645 crores for 10 waterways projects under the Sagarmala programme in Assam.
- The projects aim to develop terminals and riverine infrastructure along the river Brahmaputra (National Waterways 2) to enhance connectivity and spur economic growth.
- Each project will receive 100% financial assistance from the central government.

Union Minister G. Kishan Reddy unveils plaque for Telangana's first NIELIT

- Union Tourism Minister G. Kishan Reddy inaugurated Telangana's first National Institute of Electronics and Information Technology (NIELIT) in Secunderabad.
- The institute aims to address the shortage of skilled workforce in the local sector by training 5,000 people over the next three years.
- The center, operating from an 11,000 sq.ft. facility, will enhance skills and training in electronics and IT sectors to meet international standards.
- The quick establishment of the center demonstrates the government's commitment to creating better opportunities for youth.

Chandigarh has to pay one million Euros to French bank each quarter to ensure 24×7 water supply



- Chandigarh Municipal Corporation will repay one million Euros every quarter to French bank Agence De Francaise (AFD) for the next 15 years to ensure 24-hour water supply in the city.
- The loan, totaling 48 million Euros, was secured from AFD for the water supply project.
- The special house meeting, chaired by Mayor Kuldeep Kumar, was called amid controversy over a free water scheme announced on March 11.
- The discussion on Chandigarh's water scenario began after the Aam Aadmi Party and Congress alliance announced 20,000 litres of free water for every family in the city.

International News

Chapter 5

NZ will ban disposable e-cigarettes to prevent minors from taking up habit

- New Zealand will ban disposable e-cigarettes, or vapes, and raise financial penalties for those who sell such products to minors.
- The move comes less than a month after the government repealed a unique law enacted by the previous left-leaning government to phase out tobacco smoking by imposing a lifetime ban on young people buying cigarettes.
- Under the new laws, retailers that sell vapes to children under 18 years of age will face fines of up 100,000 New Zealand dollars ($60,000), while individuals will be fined 1,000 New Zealand dollars ($600).

India signs protocol for establishment of its first bilateral institutional mechanism with Dominican Republic

- The protocol for establishment of Joint Economic and Trade Committee (JETCO) between India and Dominican Republic was signed at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MIREX) of Dominican Republic at Santo Domingo on 12 March 2024.
- The protocol was signed by H.E. Mr. Roberto Álvarez, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Dominican Republic and Mr. Ramu Abbagani, Ambassador of India to the Dominican Republic on behalf of the Department of Commerce.
- The Union Cabinet had approved the proposal for signing of the said protocol for establishment of JETCO on January 24, 2024.
- The agreement, signed in the 25 years of establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries, is an important step to elevate the existing economic and commercial relations further.
- The protocol envisages to strengthen and develop cooperation on trade, services, industrial technologies and various other sectors by means of technical assistance, training programmes and capacity building.

Saudi Arabia unveiled world's first-ever 3D printed mosque

- The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is now home to the world's first 3D-printed mosque, spanning an area of 5,600 sqm.
- Located within the Al-Jawhara suburb of Jeddah, the mosque stands as a tribute to the late equestrian Abdulaziz Abdullah Sharbatly.
- The project by Forsan Real Estate utilizes cutting-edge 3D printing technology from Guanli.

China's New Territorial Sea Baseline in Gulf of Tonkin Raises Concerns

- China's recent announcement of a new territorial sea baseline in the northern part of the Gulf of Tonkin, which it shares with Vietnam, has raised concerns about potential impacts on existing agreements and regional stability.
- The Gulf of Tonkin, also known as Beibu Gulf, holds historical significance for maritime demarcation between China and Vietnam in the South China Sea.
- China's disclosure of seven base points forming the baseline for its sovereignty claims in this area has sparked concerns among neighboring countries and the international community.

37th African Union Summit held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia



- The final leg of the 37th African Union Summit concluded on February 18, 2024, with heads of states and governments from member countries convening in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

- Discussions during the summit covered various crucial issues including education, climate, and the economy.
- One prominent issue addressed was the disproportionate impact of the climate crisis on African countries despite their minimal contributions to it. African governments have been utilizing public finance for mitigation efforts, sometimes at the expense of other national priorities such as implementing the United Nations-mandated Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

WTO and ITC have jointly launched a USD 50 million global fund called the WEIDE Fund



- On February 25, the WTO and the International Trade Centre (ITC) launched a USD 50 million global fund to assist women in accessing opportunities in international trade and the digital economy.
- The initiative, known as the Women Exporters in the Digital Economy (WEIDE) Fund, was unveiled on the sidelines of the 13th Ministerial Conference held in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.
- The fund aimed to support women-led businesses and female entrepreneurs in developing economies and least-developed countries by facilitating the adoption of digital technologies and expanding the online presence of their enterprises.

India and Nicaragua Sign Historic MoU on Pharmacopoeia Recognition



- India's Ambassador to Nicaragua, Dr. Sumit Seth, and Nicaragua's Minister of Health, Dr. Martha Reyes, signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Pharmacopoeia cooperation between the two nations.
- This agreement underscores the commitment of both countries to collaborate in regulating medicines and ensuring quality healthcare for their citizens.

WEF's Centre for Fourth Industrial Revolution (C4IR) was inaugurated during BioAsia 2024 in Hyderabad.



- The Telangana state government announced plans for a Life Sciences GCC Consortium, aiming to foster collaboration and innovation among life sciences companies in Hyderabad.
- They also launched the Centre for Fourth Industrial Revolution in Life Sciences (C4IR) in partnership with the World Economic Forum, focusing on healthcare and life sciences.
- The C4IR will prioritize skilling, health profiling, and creating clinical registries. Partnerships were formed with Garmin Health and the National University of Singapore for innovative initiatives and clinical trials.

France poised to become first country in world to enshrine right to abortion in its Constitution

- is set to become the first country to constitutionally guarantee the right to abortion. Parliamentarians convened on March 4, 2024, with President Macron expecting a three-fifths majority in favor of the motion.
- This amendment, the 25th to the Fifth Republic's founding document, reaffirms women's freedom to choose and fulfills Macron's pledge to make abortion rights irreversible.

USIEF Announces Opening of Fulbright-Nehru Fellowship Applications for Indian Citizens

- The United States-India Educational Foundation (USIEF) has announced the opening of its annual competition for Fulbright-Nehru and other Fulbright fellowships for Indian citizens.
- These fellowships, funded by the Ministry of External Affairs and the U.S. Department of State, aim to enhance academic, research, teaching, and professional capacities, fostering closer ties between India and the United States.
- Applications are now being accepted for the academic year 2025-26, welcoming outstanding Indian students, academics, teachers, policymakers, administrators, and professionals to apply.

Sweden joined NATO as 32nd Member



- Sweden formally became the 32nd member of NATO after completing its accession process in Washington.
- The decision came two years after Sweden's application, triggered by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, reflecting concerns about regional security.
- Sweden's shift from neutrality to alliance marks a significant departure after more than 200 years of avoiding military alliances.
- The move signifies Sweden's alignment with NATO's collective security framework.
- The invasion of Ukraine in 2022 prompted Sweden, along with Finland, to seek NATO membership in response to heightened concerns about Russian military aggression.
- Hungary also initially resisted Sweden's membership, citing hostility, but eventually ratified Sweden's bid after negotiations and agreements.

Dubai launched "India by the Creek" festival



- Dubai launched the inaugural "India by the Creek" festival, showcasing Indian culture at Al Seef Park from March 8th to 10th.
- The event celebrates the historical and cultural ties between India and Dubai, offering diverse programs including music, literature, and workshops.
- The festival takes place at Al Seef Park, a historic trade hub on the Dubai Creek, symbolizing the enduring connection between the two regions.
- Indian Ambassador to the UAE, Sunjay Sudhir, emphasized the strong partnership between India and the UAE, with various organizations collaborating to make the festival a success.
- The event features performances by renowned Indian artists and promises to be a vibrant celebration of artistic expression.

President Murmu visited Mauritius to attend National Day celebrations of Mauritius



- President Droupadi Murmu visited Mauritius as the Chief Guest for their National Day celebrations. She held bilateral meetings with President Prithvirajsing Roopun and visited key landmarks, including the Ayurveda Garden and Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Botanic Garden.

- The visit aimed to strengthen the close historical, cultural, and economic ties between India and Mauritius, particularly in maritime security and capacity building.

France becomes world's first country to enshrine abortion in constitution

- French lawmakers have approved a bill that will enshrine the right to an abortion in the Constitution of France in a joint session of Parliament at the Palace of Versailles.
- The bill was approved in an overwhelming 780-72 vote.
- There were celebratory scenes across the country as women's rights activists hailed the measure promised by President Emmanuel Macron following a rollback of abortion rights in court rulings in the United States.
- The move makes France the first country in the world to offer explicit protection for terminating a pregnancy in its basic law.

US Ban TikTok

- The US House of Representatives passed a bill that could ban TikTok unless it separates from its Chinese parent company, ByteDance.
- The bipartisan bill, passed 352-65, awaits Senate approval and presidential signature to become law.
- If enacted, TikTok would have five months to sever ties with ByteDance, or face removal from US app stores.
- Supporters cite national security concerns, fearing Chinese government access to user data. The bill's fate in the Senate remains uncertain.

India to Host WTSA 2024 and IMC 2024: Driving Telecom Innovation



- Minister of Communications Ashwini Vaishnaw launched the Curtain Raiser of the World Telecom Standardization Assembly Delhi 2024 (WTSA 2024) and India Mobile Congress (IMC 2024).
- The WTSA event, organized by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), will take place from October 15 to October 24, 2024, preceded by the Global Standards Symposium (GSS 2024) on October 14, 2024.
- Additionally, the eighth edition of Asia's premier digital technology exhibition, IMC 2024, will be held from October 15 to October 19, 2024, at Pragati Maidan in New Delhi.

Nepal Declares Pokhara as Its Tourism Capital

- On March 17, the government of Nepal formally declared Pokhara as the nation's tourism capital during a ceremony held at Barahi Ghat.
- Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' presided over the event, which featured musical performances by renowned artists, showcasing the cultural vibrancy of the region.

India Criticises Uniting for Consensus Model at United Nations for Opposing Reforms To Security Council

- India's Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj, strongly criticized the Uniting for Consensus (UfC) model for opposing reforms to the Security Council.
- She highlighted its lack of representation for Africa and the Global South and its failure to address the calls for expansion in both permanent and non-permanent categories of an expanded Security Council.
- Kamboj asserted that the UfC model, which comprises only 12 countries and 2 observers including a P5 country, goes against the majority opinion of UN member states.
- She emphasized the importance of fair representation for Africa and the Global South in the permanent category as a "non-negotiable" goal.

Hamas Deputy Military Commander Marwan Issa Killed in an Israeli Air Strike

- US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan has said that Hamas deputy military commander Marwan Issa died in an Israeli air strike.

- Israeli media sources have reported that Issa was killed in a strike on a tunnel complex under the Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza last week, the Palestinian group, which controls Gaza, has not officially commented on reports of his death.
- Issa would be Hamas's most senior leader to die since the war began on 7th October.
- He had been linked directly to the decision to attack Israel in October last year and was considered one of Israel's most-wanted men.

State News

Chapter 6

Gujarat Education Minister Praful Pansheriya launches Shikha Reform

- Gujarat's Minister of State for Education, Praful Pansheriya, launched the online learning platform Shiksha Reform in Surat.
- Shiksha Reform is a collaborative effort with Microsoft and a leading Finnish university.
- It aims to deliver high-quality courses by experienced and highly qualified teachers to revolutionize education, particularly in technology.
- Shiksha Reform offers short-term courses in cutting-edge fields like artificial intelligence and cyber security in association with Microsoft and the Finnish university.

Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik inaugurated India's first indoor Athletics and Aquatic Centres



- Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, inaugurated India's first Indoor Athletics Centre and Indoor Aquatic Centre at the Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar. He also laid the foundation stone for the Indoor Diving Centre.
- The Indoor Athletics Centre stands as India's first capable of hosting indoor continental and regional championships.
- This world-class facility will be a training ground for the Reliance Foundation Athletics High-Performance Centre, which has been producing young athletics champions.

Tamil Nadu tops illegal trade in Shark Body Parts

- Nadu dominates the illegal trade in shark body parts, comprising nearly 65% of seizures between January 2010 and December 2022, as per a recent analysis by TRAFFIC and WWF-India.
- This alarming trend poses a significant threat to marine biodiversity, with Karnataka, Gujarat, Kerala, and Maharashtra also contributing to this illicit trade.
- TRAFFIC and WWF-India conducted a comprehensive study titled 'Netted in illegal wildlife trade: Sharks of India'.
- The confiscated shark products were intended for destinations such as Singapore, Hong Kong, Sri Lanka, and mainland China.

Rajasthan Government to Distribute Free Millet Seeds to Farmers

- The Rajasthan government has decided to distribute free seeds of millets and coarse grains to the state's farmers in a bid to boost millet production.
- Rajasthan Govt decided to provide free mini kits of maize seeds to 1.2 million farmers, pearl millet (bajra) seeds to 800,000 farmers, mustard seeds to 700,000 farmers, moong seeds to 400,000 farmers, and sorghum (jowar) and moth seeds to 100,000 farmers.
- Rajasthan has a share of 26 per cent in total millet production of the country. Pearl millet and sorghum are the main millet crops produced in the state, with Rajasthan accounting for the country's 41 per cent bajra production.

Odisha announces 10 days extra casual leaves for women govt employees

- The Odisha government led by chief minister Naveen Patnaik announced that women employees working in various government departments will now get an additional 10 days of casual leave annually apart from the 15 days they were getting.

- The announcement has been made in view of the domestic responsibilities and other problems faced by women government employees.
- It is pertinent to mention here that Odisha was the first state to announce 33 percent reservation in government jobs during the 90's.

Nayab Singh Saini takes oath as Haryana Chief Minister



- Nayab Singh Saini, an influential leader from the Other Backward Classes (OBC) community, has been appointed as the new Chief Minister of Haryana.
- The decision was announced by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), shortly after Manohar Lal Khattar, the outgoing Chief Minister and his entire cabinet stepped down.
- From the old Haryana Cabinet, BJP leaders Kanwar Pal Gurjar, Jai Parkash Dalal, Banwari Lal and Mool Chand Sharma also took oath as Haryana Cabinet ministers.

Naib Singh Saini's political career

- From 1996 to 2002, he served as the State General Secretary of the Shiromani Akali Dal in Haryana.
- In 2002, he became the District President of the BJP Youth Morcha in Ambala, three years later he was made District President of the BJP Youth Morcha.
- In 2009, Saini assumed the role of State President of the BJP Kisan Morcha in Haryana.
- In 2012, he was appointed as the District President of the BJP in Ambala.
- In 2014, Nayab Singh Saini became an MLA from Narayangarh constituency.
- He was elected as an MLA from the Narayangarh constituency in 2014, and subsequently appointed as a minister in the Haryana government in 2016.
- In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, Saini emerged victorious from the Kurukshetra constituency, defeating his closest rival from the Congress by a handsome margin of over 3.83 lakh votes.

Tamil Nadu govt launched 'Neengal Nalama' scheme

- The Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu announced the launch of a new initiative called "Neengal Nalama" (Are you doing well) on the 6th of March 2024.
- This scheme is also called as 'Are you alright scheme'.
- The 'Neengal Nalama' (Are you fine?) scheme is a beneficiary outreach program aimed at reviewing the implementation of flagship schemes and addressing the grievances of the public.
- The initiative was kickstarted by Minister of Rural Development I. Periyasamy, with Chief Minister MK Stalin, other ministers, senior officials, and district collectors reaching out to beneficiaries across the state.

Assam CM inaugurated 50 MW Solar Project in Sonitpur



- Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma performed Bhumi Pujan ceremony of 50 MW Solar Project being developed in Sonitpur, Assam by SJVN Green Energy Limited (SGEL).
- The 50 MW Solar Project is being developed in Sitalmari village, in Barsola Block under Dhekiajuli Revenue Sector in Sonitpur district.
- It will be built at an estimated cost of Rs 291 crores.
- The project will generate 101 million units of green energy in the first year and the cumulative energy generation over a period of 25 years will be about 2,319 million units.
- The energy generated will be supplied to Assam Power Development Corporation Limited at Rs 3.92 per unit.

Maharashtra's 4th Women's Policy unveiled

- Marking International Women's Day, Maharashtra government unveiled the 4th Women Policy of the state after the delay of more than one and half years.
- The policy focuses on various principles which are: Health, Nutrition and Wellbeing; education and skill; ending sexual and gender-based violence; gender responsive livelihood enhancement; gender inclusive infrastructure; gender responsive governance and political participation; gender sensitive natural resource management etc.
- Announcing the policy, state Women and Child Welfare Minister Aditi Tatkare said free health check-up camps in underserviced, remote and hard-to-reach areas across urban, rural and tribal areas will be undertaken.
- The first women's policy of the state of Maharashtra was announced in 1994, the second in 2001 and the third in 2014.

Bichom becomes 27th district of Arunachal Pradesh



- Bichom, carved out of West and East Kameng, became the 27th district of Arunachal Pradesh.
- Chief Minister Pema Khandu inaugurated the district and laid the foundation of its headquarters at Napangphung, an official communiqué said.
- A total of 27 villages from West Kameng and 28 from East Kameng were made part of Bichom district.
- Govt have fulfilled the longstanding demand for the creation of the district, pending since 1984.
- Infrastructure will be created for the new district headquarters and all assets transferred to Bichom district from East Kameng will be replaced with new ones.

Bengaluru's first driverless metro train, aided by AI

- The Bengaluru Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) received the first set of six train coaches, which are part of the Communication-based Train Control (CBTC) system for its under-construction yellow line last month.
- The 18.8 km-long line, connecting RV Road and Bommasandra, will be the first to have a driverless train.
- The route connects south of Bengaluru to the city's tech hub, which has offices of companies such as Infosys, Wipro and Tata Consultancy Services.
- A fully elevated route with 16 stations, the line connects with the existing Green Line of the Bengaluru metro at the RV Road station and with the Pink Line at Jayadeva Hospital station.

UP govt waives electricity bills of farmers with private tube wells

- Uttar Pradesh government decided to waive electricity bills of farmers with private tube wells with retrospective effect from April 1, 2023.
- The decision taken at the state cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath will benefit around 1.5 crore farmers, an official release said.
- The government has provided Rs 1,800 crore in the 2024-25 budget for implementation of the scheme.

India's first Dolphin Research Centre in Patna

- National Dolphin Research Centre (NDRC) is India's first-ever research facility dedicated to the study and conservation of freshwater dolphins, especially those in the Ganges River.
- The institute, located close to Ganga river in Patna, was inaugurated on March 4, 2024 by Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar.
- The NDRC aims to assist scientists and researchers in studying Gangetic dolphins comprehensively.
- The NDRC is spanning a 4,400 square metre plot on the premises of Patna University near the Ganga.
- It offers a strategic location for researchers to closely observe dolphins in their natural habitat.

CM Yogi rolls out 'MYUVA Scheme' for young entrepreneurs in UP

- Minister Yogi Adityanath is poised to launch the "Mukhyamantri Yuva Udyami Vikas Abhiyan (MYUVA)" scheme in Uttar Pradesh, aimed at nurturing entrepreneurship among the state's youth.
- This ambitious initiative reflects the government's commitment to empowering young entrepreneurs and fostering a culture of innovation and enterprise.
- Through MYUVA, aspiring youth will receive support and resources to kickstart their entrepreneurial ventures, thereby contributing to the economic growth and development of Uttar Pradesh.

Adani group begins operations of its copper unit plant at Mundra, Gujarat

- Gautam Adani-led group announced the start of the first phase of the world's largest single-location copper manufacturing plant at Mundra in Gujarat.
- This will help cut India's dependence on imports and aid energy transition.
- Kutch Copper "commissioned the first phase" of USD 1.2 billion "greenfield copper refinery by dispatching the maiden batch of cathodes to customers.
- The first phase of the facility that will produce 0.5 million tonnes a year of refined copper has started operations and full-scale 1 million tonnes capacity is expected by FY29 (March 2029).

Adani Ports acquired Gopalpur Port in Odisha at ₹ 3,350 Crore

- The Shapoorji Pallonji Group announced the sale of its brownfield Gopalpur Port to Adani Ports and SEZ Ltd for an enterprise value of ₹ 3,350 crore, as part of its deleveraging strategy with planned asset monetisation.
- The under-construction Gopalpur Port in Odisha was acquired in 2017 by the SP Group. Currently, it is capable of handling 20 MTPA.
- The port had recently signed up with Petronet LNG for setting up a greenfield LNG regasification terminal, adding predictable long-term cash flows for the port.

Science and Technology

Chapter 7

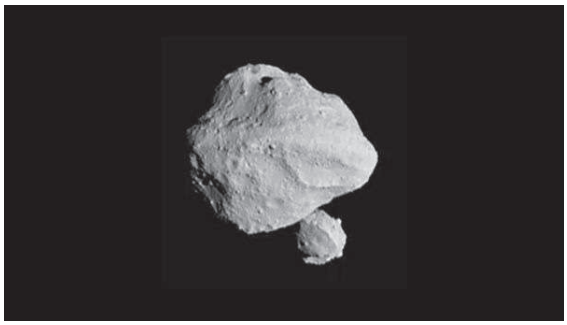
ISRO's START 2024 Program to Inspire youth in space science

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) will conduct the Space Science and Technology Awareness Training (START) 2024 program during April and May.
- ISRO is inviting Expression of Interest (EOI) from educational institutes, universities, and colleges within India offering UG and PG courses in physical sciences and technology to host START-2024.
- The main objective of the training program is to attract youngsters to the fields of space science and technology.
- The training modules will cover introductory-level topics on various verticals of space science and technology, including Indian space exploration programs and research opportunities.

IIT Guwahati completes technology transfer to combat swine fever virus

- Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati (IIT Guwahati) transferred a vaccine technology to BioMed Pvt. Ltd, a vaccine manufacturing company.
- According to a press release by IIT Guwahati, there is a significant gap in India's vaccine technology, specifically that combats the swine fever virus in pigs and wild boars.
- The vaccine technology that was transferred by the institute entails a recombinant vector vaccine designed specifically for combating the classical swine fever virus.
- With the collaborative efforts between researchers from the Department of Biosciences and Bioengineering at IIT Guwahati, and Assam Agricultural University in Guwahati, the vaccine technology was developed.

Indian scientist Prof Jayant Murthy honoured with Asteroid name



- An asteroid has been named after Indian Professor and distinguished scientist Jayant Murthy.
- He is known for his work in space missions, ultraviolet astronomy, and interstellar medium.
- Previously cataloged as 2005 EX296, the asteroid has now been designated as (215884) Jayantmurthy.
- The announcement was made by the International Astronomical Union (IAU)'s Working Group, the authority responsible for naming small objects in the Solar System.

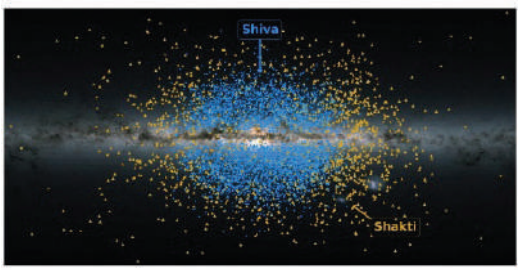
About Asteroids

- Asteroids are small, rocky objects that orbit the Sun, primarily found in the asteroid belt between the orbits of Mars and Jupiter.
- They are remnants from the early formation of the solar system, dating back over 4.6 billion years.
- Asteroids can range in size from a few meters to several hundred kilometers in diameter.
- Some asteroids are solid, while others are rubble piles held together by gravity.
- Asteroids are classified into different types based on their composition.
- The three main types are C-type (carbonaceous), S-type (silicate or stony), and M-type (metallic). There are also other less common types, such as D-type (dark), V-type (basaltic), and P-type (primitive).

Named after ISRO New species of Isopod Discovered in Kollam

- A recent discovery has uncovered a new species of deep-sea isopod off the Kollam coast in Kerala.
- This tiny crustacean, which feeds on fish, belongs to the genus Brucethoa and was found at the base of the Spinyjaw greeneye's gill cavity.
- This is the second documented species within the genus to be found in India, and it has been given the name Brucethoa isro in recognition of the Indian space agency's impressive space missions.
- Females of this species are typically larger than males, growing up to 19mm in length and 6mm in width compared to males, who are only about half that size.

Scientists uncover Milky Way's ancient building blocks, Shakti and Shiva



- Astronomers have identified two ancient streams of stars - named after the Hindu deities Shakti and Shiva - that appear to be among the Milky Way's earliest building blocks, offering new insight into how our galaxy came together long ago.
- These structures, found using observations from the European Space Agency's Gaia space telescope, may be relics of two distinct galaxies that merged roughly 12 billion years ago with the Milky Way's primordial pieces during the galaxy's infancy.
- Shakti and Shiva are comprised of stars with similar chemical compositions that formed 12-13 billion years ago. Each of the structures has a mass about 10 million times greater than our sun.

Milky Way

- The Milky Way is a vast barred spiral galaxy that contains our solar system, along with billions of other stars, planets, and celestial objects.
- It spans approximately 100,000 light-years in diameter and is home to between 100 to 400 billion stars, although estimates vary.
- In addition to stars, the Milky Way contains various types of interstellar matter, such as gas, dust, and dark matter, which contribute to its structure and dynamics.
- The galaxy's spiral arms are regions of active star formation, where massive stars are born from collapsing gas clouds.

MNRE issues guidelines to set up green hydrogen hubs in India

- Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) has released guidelines for establishing green hydrogen hubs as part of the National Green Hydrogen Mission.
- The MNRE and the designated SCHEME implementing agencies (SIAs) will be responsible for these hydrogen hubs.
- The initiative will offer assistance for the establishment of essential infrastructure at hydrogen hubs, including storage and transportation facilities, pipeline infrastructure development, refueling stations, as well as technologies for hydrogen compression and liquefaction, among others.
- The objective of the scheme is to foster the development of regions with significant potential for large-scale hydrogen production at designated hubs.

New black hole map depicts "largest-ever volume of universe"

- Scientists have mapped about 1.3 million of active supermassive black holes in three dimensions, depicting the "largest-ever volume of the universe".
- As the gravitational pull of these black holes living at the centres of galaxies "gobbles up" nearby gas, the process generates extremely bright disks - called quasars - and sometimes jets of light that telescopes can observe.
- The team of scientists, led by New York University in the US, said that the map could help understand dark matter better, as the galaxies hosting these quasars are surrounded by "massive halos" of the invisible matter exerting gravity, but not colliding with particles.

ISRO successfully executes landing mission of RLV 'Pushpak' in Karnataka



- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) successfully executed a landing mission for its Reusable Launch Vehicle (RLV) named "Pushpak" from the Aeronautical Test Range (ATR) in Karnataka's Chalakere.
- Isro had previously conducted successful missions in 2016 and April last year.
- The launch vehicle was airlifted to an altitude of about 4.5 km by an Indian Air Force helicopter and released after meeting predetermined pillbox parameters.
- This mission is part of the agency's efforts to develop essential technologies for a fully reusable launch vehicle to enable low-cost access to space.

India conducted 1st human clinical trial for gene therapy targeting 'haemophilia A'

- Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh announced at the "National Science Day 2024" program in New Delhi that India has conducted its first human clinical trial of gene therapy for haemophilia A (FVIII deficiency) at Christian Medical College (CMC) Vellore.
- The trial, supported by the Department of Biotechnology and the Centre for Stem Cell Research, utilized a lentiviral vector to express a FVIII transgene in the patient's own haematopoietic stem cell.

Three new moons have been confirmed by the International Astronomical Union

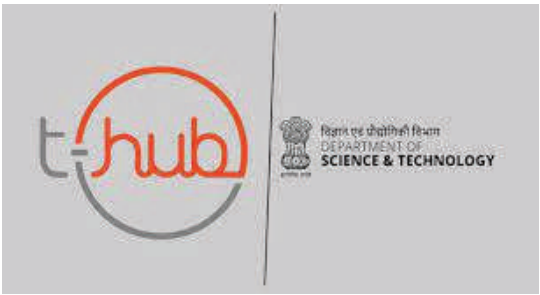
- Astronomers from the International Astronomical Union have identified three previously undiscovered moons orbiting the outer planets of our solar system.
- Two were found around Neptune, and one around Uranus.
- The discovery was made using advanced land-based telescopes located at various observatories worldwide.

Iran launched Pars-I Remote Sensing Satellite



- Iran declared on March 1, 2024, that it had successfully launched its domestically produced 'Pars-I' remote sensing satellite into orbit using a Russian Soyuz-2.1b rocket.
- This achievement signifies increasing strategic space collaboration between the two countries amidst mutual Western sanctions.

T-Hub, DST launch MATH CoE for AI-ML to foster innovation, jobs creation, nurture startups



- The Department of Science and Technology (DST) and T-Hub have collaborated to launch the Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence Technology Hub (MATH) in Hyderabad.
- MATH aims to accelerate AI innovation, create job opportunities, and support AI and ML startups.
- Objectives include generating over 500 AI-related jobs by 2025 and nurturing more than 150 AI and ML startups annually.
- The facility features a mini data center with advanced GPU capabilities, a customized Learning Management System (LMS) for AI education, and robust data infrastructure to accommodate diverse AI applications.

IN-SPACe technical centre focussed on 'satellites & payloads' inaugurated in Ahmedabad

- A first-of-its-kind technical centre built by Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACe) in Ahmedabad was inaugurated by Union minister of state for Science and Technology Jitendra Singh.
- This centre is primarily focussed on satellites and payloads, while the simulation facility that we have is for launch vehicles and mission planning.
- IN-SPACe is an autonomous nodal agency attached to the Department of Space, Government of India.
- This technical centre located at IN-SPACe's headquarters at Bopal is meant to support space non-governmental entities in designing, development, simulation and testing of space technologies.

RECPDCL and BHEL to jointly develop utility-scale renewable energy projects



- REC Power Development and Consultancy Limited (RECPDCL), a subsidiary of REC Limited, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Bharat Heavy Electrical Limited (BHEL).
- The MoU aims to jointly develop utility-scale Renewable Energy Projects across India to support the nation's clean energy targets.
- The MoU aims to contribute to the clean energy targets of the nation by establishing a dedicated Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) for renewable energy projects.
- The MoU signing took place in New Delhi on 15th March 2024.

India's second privately developed rocket developed in Tamil Nadu

- Tamil Nadu is about to witness a historic occasion as one of its space companies, Agnikul Cosmos Private Limited, prepares to launch its first rocket, the Agnibaan Sub Orbital Technology Demonstrator (SOrTeD), from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh.
- launch represents numerous key milestones in India's space exploration efforts.
- Agnibaan SOrTeD will be India's first launch from a private launchpad, representing a watershed moment in the country's space industry.

Multi-purpose app "SAKHI" to help astronauts on Gaganyaan mission

- The Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC) has developed a multi-purpose app 'SAKHI' to assist Gaganyaan Crew.
- The Space-borne Assistant and Knowledge Hub for Crew Interaction (SAKHI) is equipped to monitor astronauts' health, maintain communication with Earth, and manage dietary schedules.
- It serves as an essential tool for the crew, offering real-time assistance and access to necessary data.
- It would assist astronauts during the Gaganyaan space flight mission, facilitating tasks such as accessing vital technical information and communication.

NVIDIA wants to bring AI to the real world with Project GR00T robots

- NVIDIA announced Project GR00T, which is a general-purpose foundation model for humanoid robots.
- The company also unveiled a new computer called Jetson Thor for humanoid robots along with upgrades to its Isaac robotics platform.
- GR00T stands for "Generalist Robot 00 Technology," and robots built on the platform can potentially understand natural language and mimic movements by observing actions.
- NVIDIA claims such robots can quickly learn coordination, dexterity and other skills, allowing them to navigate, adapt and interact with the real world.

Defence and Securities

Chapter 8

LCA Tejas MK-1A completes maiden flight in Bengaluru



- The first Tejas Mk-1A aircraft made its maiden flight from a Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) facility in Bengaluru on 28 March 2024.
- HAL's chief test pilot Group Captain KK Venugopal (retd) flew the light combat aircraft (LCA) Mk-1A for 18 minutes.
- IAF ordered 83 Mk-1A fighters for Rs. 48,000 crore in February 2021 and plans to buy 97 more Mk-1As at a cost of around Rs. 67,000 crore.

About LCA Tejas

- LCA Tejas, which stands for Light Combat Aircraft Tejas (Tejas meaning "Radiance" in Hindi), is a single-engine, indigenously-developed fighter jet for the Indian Air Force and Navy.
- It has been developed by Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA).
- Also, it is manufactured by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL).
- Its development began in the 1980s to replace the aging MiG-21 fighters in the Indian Air Force (IAF).

ICG Ship Samudra Paheredar arrives at Manila Bay, Philippines

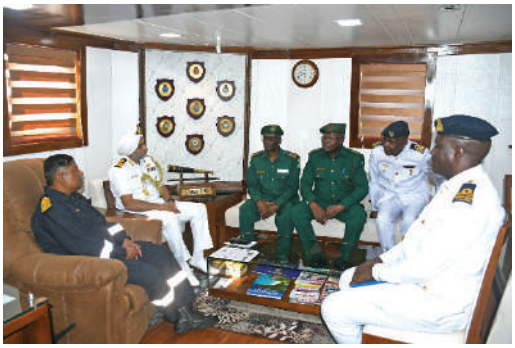
- Indian Coast Guard ship Samudra Paheredar, a specialized Pollution Control Vessel, arrived at Manila Bay, Philippines on 25 March 2024 on a three-day visit.
- The ICG ship is on an overseas deployment to ASEAN countries namely the Philippines, Vietnam, and Brunei from 25 March to 12 April 2024.
- The deployment is the third in a row by the Indian Coast Guard to ASEAN countries. Earlier in the year 2023, ICG Pollution Control Vessels visited Cambodia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and Indonesia as part of the initiative.

India begins "Operation Indravati" to evacuate citizens from violence-hit Haiti



- On 21 March 2024, India launched 'Operation Indravati' to evacuate its citizens from the turmoil-stricken Haiti to the neighboring Dominican Republic.
- Haiti, situated in the Caribbean, has plunged into chaos with armed gangs seizing control of the streets, resulting in the virtual disappearance of the government.
- S. Jaishankar expressed India's commitment to ensuring the security and well-being of its citizens abroad, expressing gratitude to the Dominican Republic government for their assistance.

India, Mozambique and Tanzania trilateral exercise IMT Trilat - 2024



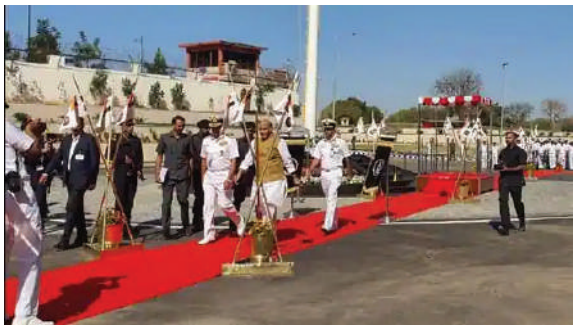
- INS Tir and INS Sujata will participate in the forthcoming second edition of India Mozambique Tanzania (IMT) TriLateral (TRILAT) Exercise, a joint maritime exercise scheduled from 21 to 29 March 2024.
- INS Tir and INS Sujata will engage with the respective Navies at the ports of Zanzibar (Tanzania) and Maputo (Mozambique).
- The first edition of IMT TRILAT exercise conducted on October 22, saw participation of INS Tarkash with the Tanzanian and Mozambique Navies.
- The current edition of the exercise is planned in two phases.

Guyana to acquire two HAL made dornier 228 aircraft from India



- Guyana Defence Force is planning to acquire Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL)-manufactured two Dornier 228 aircraft from India.
- An agreement was signed between the Guyanese Finance Minister and Deputy General Manager of EXIM Bank for a $23.27 million loan from the Export-Import Bank of India.
- These aircraft will be used for maritime patrols and troop movement. India has already given these aircraft to its neighbours like Maldives and Sri Lanka.

Rajnath Singh inaugurated India Navy's first independent headquarters 'Nausena Bhawan'



- Defence Minister Rajnath Singh inaugurated the 'Nausena Bhawan', the new state-of-the-art headquarters of the Indian Navy at the Delhi Cantonment which is equipped with modern facilities and cutting-edge technologies.
- It marks a significant milestone for the Navy as it has established its "first independent headquarters in Delhi".
- Previously, the Navy operated from 13 different locations, necessitating a consolidated and purpose-built facility such as the 'Nausena Bhawan'.

INS Kiltan and Royal Malaysian Ship KD Lekir undertake maritime operations under Exercise Samudra Laksamana



- During the sea phase of Exercise Samudra Laksamana off Visakhapatnam, Indian Naval Ship INS Kiltan and Royal Malaysian Ship KD Lekir engaged in multifaceted maritime operations.

- These activities included gunnery firing, seamanship evolutions, sea boats, helicopters, and maritime patrol aircraft operations. The sea phase concluded with a traditional steam past, symbolizing the strong ties between the two navies.

Indian Navy to commission newly inducted MH 60R Seahawk multi-role helicopter at INS Garuda in Kochi.



- The Indian Navy is set to commission the MH-60R Seahawk multi-role helicopter, marking a pivotal moment in its defense modernization journey.
- Commissioning will take place at INS Garuda in Kochi, where the squadron will be designated as INAS 334.
- These helicopters, part of a 24-aircraft Foreign Military Sales contract signed with the US in February 2020, are equipped for anti-submarine warfare, anti-surface warfare, search and rescue, medical evacuation, and vertical replenishment.
- The Indian Navy expects a significant enhancement in maritime prowess with their induction, given their advanced weapons, sensors, and avionics suite, tailored for maritime security needs.

Indian Navy commissions INS Jatayu at Minicoy



- INS Jatayu was commissioned at Minicoy, the southernmost island in Lakshadweep, strengthening the Indian Navy's foothold and extending operational reach in the region needed, with China increasingly exercising influence over Maldives.
- The establishment of Naval Base at Minicoy will augment connectivity with the mainland focusing towards comprehensive development of the islands.
- INS Jatayu will be functioning under the operational control of Naval Officer in Charge (Lakshadweep), Southern Naval Command.

China, Iran and Russia stage joint naval drills in Gulf of Oman

- The navies of China, Iran, and Russia have initiated their fifth joint military drills in the Gulf of Oman amid escalating regional tensions, including Israel's conflict with Gaza and Houthi rebel attacks on Red Sea shipping.
- These exercises are aimed at protecting maritime economic activities, with a focus on regional maritime security, combating piracy, and maritime terrorism.

PM Modi announces successful maiden flight test of Agni-5 missile with MIRV technology

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that India successfully carried out the maiden flight test of the locally developed Agni-5 missile with multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicle (MIRV) technology.
- With the new capability allowing the weapon system to deliver multiple nuclear warheads against different targets spread across hundreds of kilometres, and further strengthening the country's strategic deterrence capability.
- The PM also revealed the code name for the historic test, Mission Divyastra (divine weapon), which has propelled India into an exclusive league of countries that have the capability to deploy MIRV missile systems, including the US, the UK, France, Russia and China.

Exercise Tiger Triumph – 2024



- India and the US are conducting a bilateral tri-Service Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) Exercise named Tiger Triumph – 24 from 18 to 31 Mar 24.
- The exercise aims to enhance interoperability and refine Standard Operating Procedures for conducting HADR operations.
- It involves the Indian Navy, Army, and Air Force along with the US Navy, Marine Corps, and Army.
- The Harbour Phase includes Training Visits, Subject Matter Expert Exchanges, and Social interactions, while the Sea Phase focuses on Maritime, Amphibious, and HADR operations.

Army raised 1st squadron of Apache attack helicopters near Pak border

- Indian Army raised its first Apache attack helicopter squadron in the desert sector in Jodhpur near the Pakistan front.
- The squadron was raised in Jodhpur in the presence of Director General Indian Army Aviation Lt Gen Ajay Suri and officials from the original manufacturer Boeing along with other senior officials.
- The Indian Army Apache helicopters would camouflage desert colours and the first batch of choppers would arrive and join the fleet by May this year.

The Indian Army has set up a special unit named: STEAG

- The Indian Army has set up a special unit named Signal Technology Evaluation and Adaptation Group (STEAG) focused on developing military applications of critical technologies.
- According to a report by Hindustan Times, the group is intended to nurture the complete spectrum of wired and wireless technologies.
- The elite unit will focus on all critical applications of technology such as electronic exchanges, mobile communications, software defined radios, electronic warfare systems, 5G and 6G networks, quantum technologies, AI, machine learning, etc.
- The unit will also carry out technical scouting, evaluation and development of ICT solutions and provide user interface support.

10th edition of Joint Military Exercise 'LAMITIYE-2024' in Seychelles



- The Tenth Edition of Joint Military Exercise 'LAMITIYE', between Indian Army & Seychelles Defence Forces, commenced at Seychelles Defence Academy.
- biennial Joint Exercise is being conducted at Seychelles from 18 to 27 March.
- The Exercise aims to achieve cohesion, jointness and interoperability between both the Defence Forces during Peacekeeping Operations.
- The 10-day-long Joint Exercise will include Field Training, combat discussions, lectures and demonstrations, concluding with two days of Validation Exercise.
- The exercise 'LAMITIYE', meaning 'Friendship' in the Creole language, has been conducted in Seychelles since 2001.

Schemes and Projects

Chapter 9

Government approved E- Vehicle policy to promote India as a manufacturing destination for EVs

- The Union Government has approved a scheme to promote India as a manufacturing destination so that e-vehicles (EV) with the latest technology can be manufactured in the country.
- The policy is designed to attract investments in the e-vehicle space by reputed global EV manufacturers.
- 3 years' timeline for setting up manufacturing facilities in India, and start commercial production of EVs; 50% domestic value addition to be reached within 5 years at the maximum.
- Companies setting up manufacturing facilities for EVs to be allowed limited imports of cars at lower custom duty.
- This will provide Indian consumers with access to latest technology, boost the Make in India initiative, strengthen the EV ecosystem by promoting healthy competition among EV players leading to high volume of production.

Piyush Goyal Launches 'e-Kisan Upaj Nidhi' for Farmers' Fair Prices and Easy Warehousing



- Consumer Affairs, Food, and Public Distribution Minister Piyush Goyal highlighted the pivotal role of the agriculture sector in India's journey towards 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047.
- At the launch of 'e-Kisan Upaj Nidhi' by the Warehousing Development and Regulatory Authority (WDRA) in New Delhi, he emphasized how this digital gateway will streamline farmers' warehousing logistics, ensuring fair prices for their produce.
- Goyal also announced a reduction in security deposit charges at WDRA warehouses to one percent, aimed at encouraging more farmers, especially small ones, to utilize these facilities and boost their income.

Education Minister launches SWAYAM Plus platform



- Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan launched the SWAYAM Plus platform on February 27 in New Delhi. Attended by education sector leaders, the event saw the exchange of MoUs between SWAYAM and industry leaders like L&T Edutech and Tata Consultancy Services.
- Operated by IIT Madras, SWAYAM Plus will offer industry-ready courses to enhance employability, featuring content from companies like L&T, Microsoft, and CISCO.
- The platform will include multilingual content, AI guidance, credit recognition, and pathways to employment, expanding on the MOOC platform launched by the Ministry of Education in 2017.

Govt approved PM-Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana for installing rooftop solar systems

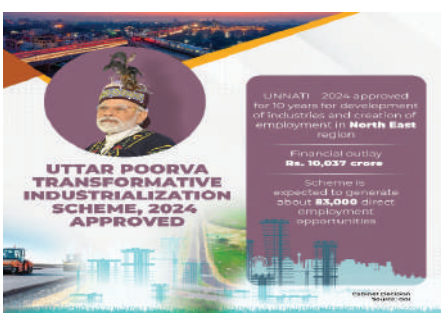


- The Government of India has approved the PM-Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana, a scheme aimed at installing rooftop solar systems in one crore households.
- Each household will receive 300 units of free electricity and have the opportunity to earn 15,000 rupees by selling surplus power.
- This initiative aims to reduce electricity bills, promote solar energy, and create jobs. Additionally, nutrient-based subsidy rates for fertilizers have been approved for the Kharif Season 2024 to ensure affordable access for farmers.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has highlighted the scheme's potential to bring sustainable energy solutions to every home, promising a brighter, greener future.

India introduced Chakshu: Report Fraud Calls & Texts Platform

- Chakshu is the latest government initiative aimed at combating fraudulent activities targeting mobile users in India.
- It has been developed under the Sanchar Sathi portal. This new platform allows Indians to report suspected fraud calls and messages, including lottery offers, job scams, and phone number leaks by businesses.

Cabinet approved Uttar Poorva Transformative Industrialization Scheme, 2024



- The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi approved the proposal of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade for Uttar Poorva Transformative Industrialization Scheme, 2024 (UNNATI – 2024).
- This Schems approved for a period of 10 years from the date of notification along with 8 years for committed liabilities at a total cost of Rs. 10,037 crore.
- The proposed scheme envisages approximately 2180 applications, and it is anticipated that direct employment opportunities of about 83,000 will be generated during the scheme period.

Cabinet approved continuation of Rs.300 targeted subsidy to PM Ujjwala Yojana Consumers



- The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi approved the continuation of targeted subsidy of Rs.300 per 14.2 kg cylinder for up to 12 refills per year to be provided to the beneficiaries of Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) during FY 2024-25.
- The total expenditure will be Rs. 12,000 crore for financial year 2024-25. The subsidy is credited directly to bank accounts of the eligible beneficiaries.
- To make Liquified Petroleum Gas (LPG), a clean cooking fuel, available to the rural and deprived poor households, Government launched Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana in May 2016, to provide deposit free LPG connections to adult women of poor households.

PM Modi launched Mahtari Vandan Yojana of Chhattisgarh government

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi virtually launched Chhattisgarh government's Mahtari Vandan Yojana.
- He disbursed the first installment of 655 crore rupees to around 70 lakh women in the scheme's first phase. During the address, he pledged to uplift 3 crore women to Lakhpati Didis, with over one crore already achieving this status, bringing financial empowerment.
- Additionally, he announced the Drone Didi scheme to provide drones and training for women, modernizing farming and providing additional earning opportunities.
- Under the Mahtari Vandan Yojana, about 70 lakh women would receive 1000 rupees monthly.
- Programs were conducted across 146 block headquarters of Chhattisgarh, with a state-level event in Raipur attended by Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai and other ministers.

Poshan Pakhwada 2024 from 9th to 23rd March

- Poshan Pakhwada 2024, from March 9th to March 23rd, will focus on themes like early childhood care & education, traditional dietary practices, and maternal & child health.
- Additional activities include promoting sustainable food systems, adopting healthy lifestyles, and emphasizing water, sanitation, and hygiene.
- The previous Poshan Pakhwada saw over 4 crore sensitization activities, including promoting millets and celebrating healthy children.

PM launched PM-SURAJ Portal



- Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the PM-SURAJ national portal, providing credit assistance to one lakh entrepreneurs from disadvantaged communities.
- Interacting with beneficiaries, he emphasized prioritizing the underprivileged and empowering marginalized segments.
- Direct Benefit Transfer of 720 crore rupees to beneficiaries was highlighted, along with efforts to ensure equitable access to essential facilities.
- The government's commitment to doubling assistance for SC welfare and empowering disadvantaged communities was reiterated.

Heavy Industries Ministry announced Electric Mobility Promotion Scheme 2024

- The Heavy Industries Ministry has introduced the Electric Mobility Promotion Scheme 2024 to boost the adoption of Electric Vehicles (EVs) in India.
- With a total outlay of 500 crore rupees for four months starting next month until July, the scheme focuses on electric two-wheelers (e-2W) and electric three-wheelers (e-3W), including registered e-rickshaws, e-carts, and L5 automobiles.
- Incentives will be provided only to EVs equipped with advanced batteries to encourage technological advancements.
- The scheme is expected to benefit over 3 lakh 72 thousand EVs, fostering the growth of green mobility and the EV manufacturing ecosystem in the country.

Summits and Conferences

Chapter 10

India at G20 2nd Employment Working Group Meeting at Brasilia

- The two day 2nd Employment Working Group (EWG) meeting under the Brazilian Presidency commenced in Brasilia on 27 March 2024.
- The G20 EWG's mandate is to address labour, employment and social issues for strong, sustainable, balanced and job-rich growth for all.
- As India is a member of the G20 Troika, represented by Ms. Sumita Dawra, Secretary, Labour & Employment, India is co-chairing the 2nd EWG meeting, along with Brazil and South Africa.

Harivansh attended 148 Assembly of Inter-Parliamentary Union in Geneva

- The Indian Parliamentary Delegation, led by Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha, Harivansh Narayan Singh held a bilateral meeting with their Armenian counterparts on the sidelines of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) event in Geneva, Switzerland.
- The Armenian delegation was represented by the Vice President of the National Assembly, Hakob Arshakyan.
- Mr. Harivansh highlighted the rich cultural heritage of both countries and proposed enhancing focus on promoting cultural exchanges, such as art exhibitions, film festivals, and academic collaborations.

1st India and Mauritania Foreign Office Consultations (FOC)

- India and Mauritania held their first Foreign Office Consultations (FOC) in Mauritania's national capital, Nouakchott.
- The discussions encompassed various facets of collaboration, including political cooperation, economic partnership, development assistance, cultural exchanges, and cooperation in multilateral forums.
- Both sides also agreed to hold the next round of the FOC meeting in New Delhi at a mutually convenient date.
- The bilateral trade between India and Mauritania has grown steadily over the last three years, and it reached $378.24 million during 2022-23, from $108.91 million in 2021-22.

Ministry of Earth Sciences hosts Inter-Ministerial Joint Workshop on Blue Economy



- Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) organised a consultative workshop in New Delhi today on the Blue Economy Pathways study report status.
- During the workshop, the collaborative role of each line Ministry towards the preparation of the report was deliberated upon.
- MoES has engaged with the World Bank as a knowledge partner to undertake a technical study and prepare a seminal report titled 'India's Blue Economy: Pathways for resource-efficient, inclusive and resilient growth in India'.
- The report outputs are expected to cover the areas related to global best practices in Blue Economy implementation, ocean accounting framework, institutional strengthening and innovative finance mechanisms towards implementing the Blue Economy Policy framework.

4th Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Startup Forum organized in New Delhi

- The fourth edition of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Startup Forum was organized on 19th March 2024 in New Delhi.

- The initiative focused on broadening startup interactions among the SCO Member States, fostering an environment conducive to innovation, promoting job creation, and inspiring young talent to develop innovative solutions.
- The plenary session of the forum witnessed physical participation from SCO Member States including a delegation of SCO startups, nodal agencies for startups at the Member States, senior government officials and diplomats.

Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs hosted Webinar on 'Viksit Bharat: Corporate Governance for 2047'

- The Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs (IICA), an autonomous institution of the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA), organised a webinar on 'Viksit Bharat: Corporate Governance for 2047' on March 7, 2024.
- The webinar witnessed interactive participation from around 300 participants comprising Independent Directors and corporate professionals, focusing on the future of corporate governance in India and its alignment with the Prime Minister's vision of achieving Developed Nation status by 2047.
- The webinar was inaugurated by Shri Manoj Pandey, Additional Secretary, MCA. Shri Pandey highlighted the progressive steps taken in recent years to strengthen corporate governance in India.

CCI to hold 9th National Conference on Economics of Competition Law

- The Competition Commission of India (CCI) will hold the 9th National Conference on Economics of Competition Law in New Delhi.
- The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has been organising the Conference every year since 2016.
- The plenary at this year's Conference is on the topic "Artificial Intelligence: Challenges And Opportunities".

India, Brazil hold first '2+2' defence ministerial dialogue on tech, energy

- India and Brazil explored ways to expand cooperation in areas of energy, critical minerals, technology and counter-terrorism at their first '2+2' defence and foreign ministerial dialogue.
- Discussions spanned defence, space, energy, critical minerals, tech, counter-terrorism and regional, multilateral & other issues of mutual interest.
- It was co-chaired by additional secretary in the external affairs ministry G V Srinivas and joint secretary in the defence ministry Vishwesh Negi.
- The Brazilian delegation was led by Director at Brazilian foreign ministry Marcelo Camara and Rear Admiral Fernando de Luca Marques de Oliviera.

Third Summit for Democracy

- The third Summit for Democracy, an initiative launched by U.S. President Joe Biden in 2021, commenced on March 18, 2024, in Seoul, South Korea.
- The event, which has been criticized for promoting American exceptionalism and double standards, was met with public protests in the host city.
- The summit, held outside the United States for the first time, aimed to champion and spread the idea of democracy globally.
- The first Summit for Democracy was held in 2021.

Startup Mahakumbh Event 2024

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed Startup Mahakumbh event, where thousands of prospective entrepreneurs, investors, and business visitors were present.
- The focus of his address was on the government's initiatives to enhance emerging sectors like deeptech, agritech, biotech, medtech, and AI.
- The Startup Mahakumbh is being held from March 18-20 at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi.
- The event is organized jointly by apex industry associations, Bootstrap Incubation & Advisory Foundation and Indian Venture and Alternate Capital Association (IVCA).
- It is supported by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT).

India to host WTSA 2024 and IMC 2024

- India is set to host the prestigious World Telecom Standardization Assembly (WTSA) 2024, organized by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), along with the India Mobile Congress (IMC) 2024.

- These events aim to foster global collaboration, drive telecom reforms, and showcase India's technological prowess.

The first Bharat Steam Boiler Expo 2024 in Guwahati



- The first Bharat Steam Boiler Expo 2024 was inaugurated at Veterinary College Field in Guwahati's Khanapara.
- This ground breaking event is a dynamic collaboration with industry giants such as Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL), Oil India Limited (OIL), Numaligarh Refinery Ltd. (NRL), Brahmaputra Cracker and Polymer Ltd. (BCPL), Assam Petro Chemicals Limited and NTPC Limited.
- The Expo will witness active participation from leading manufacturers, esteemed experts, and industry users from across the nation.

World Telecommunication Standardisation Assembly to be held in Delhi



- The World Telecommunication Standardisation Assembly (WTSA 2024) will take place in New Delhi from October 15 to 24, 2024. Organised by the Telecommunication Standardisation Bureau (TSB) of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), WTSA plays a significant role in setting the global agenda for telecom and ICT standardisation.
- It's expected to draw over 2,000 participants from 193 member countries and over 900 ITU associate and sector members.
- Concurrently, the India Mobile Congress (IMC), co-hosted by the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) and Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI), will also be held from October 15 at Pragati Maidan in New Delhi.
- IMC will focus on key themes such as Artificial Intelligence, Quantum technology, Circular Economy, along with showcasing 6G and 5G use cases, cloud and edge computing, semiconductors, cybersecurity, and green tech.

South Korea hosted summit warns of AI risks to democracy

- South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol called fake news and disinformation based on AI and digital technology threats to democracy, as some officials attending a global summit accused Russia and China of conducting malicious propaganda campaigns.
- Fake news and disinformation based on artificial intelligence and digital technology not only violates individual freedom and human rights but also threatens democratic systems.
- South Korea is hosting the third Summit for Democracy conference, an initiative of U.S. President Joe Biden aimed at discussing ways to stop democratic backsliding and erosion of rights and freedoms.

Environment and Ecology

Chapter 11

Plastic Waste Management (Amendment) Rules, 2024

- The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change of India has recently introduced amendments to the Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016, through the Plastic Waste Management (Amendment) Rules, 2024.
- These changes signify a significant effort to address plastic pollution in India, particularly by targeting microplastics and setting stricter criteria for biodegradable plastics.
- Biodegradable plastics are now defined as materials capable of degradation by biological processes in specific environments like soil and landfill, without leaving any microplastics.
- The amended rules make it harder for makers of disposable plastic ware to label such products as 'biodegradable'.

SC stops Assam's move to withdraw notification of Pobitora wildlife sanctuary

- On 13 March 2024, The Supreme Court froze the Assam government's move to withdraw a nearly 26-year-old notification constituting the Pobitora wildlife sanctuary, which hosts one of the largest rhino populations in the country.
- The State government was not right in resolving to withdraw the notification dated March 17, 1998 notifying Pobitora wildlife sanctuary.
- The Assam Cabinet had on March 10 withdrawn the notification issued by the State Forest Department in 1998.
- The Cabinet decision of March 10 said the notification was issued unilaterally by the Forest department without consulting the Revenue department or even the Chief Minister.

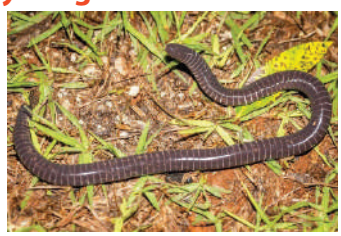
SIDBI secures first green climate fund project worth $120 million

- SIDBI has secured approval from the Green Climate Fund (GCF) for its first anchored project, Avaana Sustainability Fund (ASF), valued at USD 120 million.
- The closure was announced at the 38th board meeting of the GCF, which will invest USD 24.5 million in the fund, in Kigali, Rwanda, on March 5, SIDBI, an accredited entity of GCF.
- The primary aim of the ASF project is to invest in early-stage companies harnessing technology-led innovation to spur climate solutions and sustainability in the country.
- The anticipated outcomes include significant contributions to climate change mitigation, adaptation, and the enhancement of resilience in vulnerable sectors of the economy.

SC bans tiger safari at Jim Corbett, slams illegal constructions

- The Supreme Court (SC) banned Tiger Safari at the Jim Corbett National Park in Uttarakhand.
- In its judgment, the court said it was clear that the national wildlife conservation plan recognises the need for wildlife conservation.
- The SC came down heavily on the Uttarakhand government, issuing directives for the conservation of tigers, which includes the ban on safari tours in core areas of the national park.
- The Supreme Court further directed the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to submit an interim report on the investigation conducted so far within three months.

Egg-laying amphibian discovered that feeds milk to its young



- Researchers have discovered a worm-like amphibian species that nurtures their hatchlings with a unique, lipid-rich, milk-like substance, shedding new light on their parental care strategies and communication methods.

- Researchers have found that ringed caecilians (Siphonops annulatus), a species of legless, burrowing amphibians, provide a milk-like substance to their hatchlings.
- The study, published in the March 8 issue of Science, sheds new light on the diversity of parental care in the animal kingdom and challenges our understanding of the evolution of nurturing behaviors.
- Ringed caecilians are enigmatic creatures that live underground in the coastal rainforests of Brazil.
- These limbless amphibians are nearly blind and have a host of unusual characteristics, including poisonous slime, potential venom, and the practice of feeding their own skin to their young.

India needs more representative national food waste studies: UN report

- India, along with China, South Africa, Indonesia and Mexico, needs representative national food waste studies given variance in data, according to the latest report released by the United Nations on 27 March 2024.
- The country, along with Indonesia and the Republic of Korea (South Korea) have only 'subnational estimates' regarding food waste, the report noted.
- An estimate of household food waste has been identifed from each region, with the exception of Central Asia and Polynesia, according to the report.
- Southern Asia had the greatest number of household food waste datapoints, with 31 estimates over seven countries, equating to an estimate for all countries in the subregion except Iran and Nepal.
- Southern Asia shows a large range of food waste estimates — from 19 kilograms per capita per year for Bhutan to 212 kilograms per capita per year for Pakistan.

California's 1st fatal cougar attack in 20 years



- On 23 March 2024, California witnessed its first fatal attack by a cougar in two decades, when 21-year-old Taylen Robert Claude Brooks died and his 18-year-old brother Wyatt Jay Charles Brooks was injured in an attack by the feline.
- The cougar, known by a bevy of names including puma, mountain lion and panther, is one of the two great cats of the Americas, the other being the jaguar.
- Pumas are found across the length of the American continent from Yukon in Arctic Canada to the Patagonian Andes in South America.

USAID and Red Cross to organise virtual 'Global Summit on Extreme Heat'

- United States Agency for International Development (USAID) organised a virtual 'Global Summit on Extreme Heat' on 28 March, along with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC).
- The summit will bring together leaders and changemakers from across the world to discuss solutions and strategies to protect communities and workers from extreme heat.
- The year 2023 was the hottest on record. It coincided with deadly heat waves on nearly every continent, from Pakistan to Tunisia to Texas.

Union Health Ministry launched National Action Plan for Prevention and Control of Snakebite Envenoming in India

- Shri Apurva Chandra, Union Health Secretary launched a National Action Plan for Prevention and Control of Snakebite Envenoming (NAP-SE) in India.
- With a vision to reduce snakebite deaths by halve by 2030, NAPSE provides a broad framework for states to develop their own action plan for management, prevention and control of snakebites through the 'One Health' approach.
- The activities envisaged under human, wildlife, tribal and Animal health component will be undertaken by concerned stakeholders at all levels.
- Snakebite envenoming is a significant health issue in India, causing around 50,000 deaths annually.
- The NAP-SE aims to reduce mortality and complications due to snakebites through a comprehensive approach involving healthcare, wildlife, tribal, and animal health components.

Global Methane Tracker 2024

- The International Energy Agency's (IEA) Global Methane Tracker 2024 indicates that methane emissions from fuel usage in 2023 were nearly at their highest level on record, representing a slight increase compared to 2022.
- Bioenergy, a form of renewable energy generated by plant and animal waste, caused another 10 million tons of emissions.
- Of the 120 Mt of methane that escaped into the atmosphere, around 80 million tons of methane emissions came from just 10 countries, The United States leads in methane emissions from oil and gas operations. China, on the other hand, leads in emissions from coal operations.
- The world needs to slash methane emissions from fossil fuels by 75 percent by 2030 to achieve the Paris Agreement goal of limiting warming to 1.5°C.

What is Methane?

- Methane is the simplest hydrocarbon, consisting of one carbon atom and four hydrogen atoms (CH4).
- It is the primary component of natural gas, possessing key characteristics: Odourless, colourless, and tasteless gas.
- It is lighter than air.
- Burns with a blue flame in complete combustion, yielding carbon dioxide (CO2) and water (H2O) in the presence of oxygen.

Sports News

Chapter 12

Haryana crowned champions at boxing Sub Junior National Championship

- Haryana clinched the team titles in both the boys and girls categories with an impressive combined haul of 19 medals at the boxing Sub Junior National Championship.
- Haryana, the reigning champions in the girls section, successfully defended their title after finishing on top of the table with 64 points.
- They won 10 medals including seven gold, one silver and two bronze.
- Haryana boxers stamped their authority with a dominating display as six out of seven boxers won comfortably with unanimous 5-0 decisions.

Maharashtra's Naheed Divecha won 2 gold medals in Indian Masters National Badminton Championship 2024

- Maharashtra's Naheed Divecha has won two gold medals in the Indian Masters National Badminton Championship 2024 in Panchkula.
- Divecha, a member of the Bombay Gymkhana and associated with Shuttle Craze Academy clinched the Women's 50 singles title by defeating Haryana's Sunita Singh Panwar in straight sets.
- Later, the duo of Naheed Divecha and Kiran Mokade grabbed the Mixed Doubles 50 title with an impressive win over the top-seeded Karnataka pair of Prabagaran Subbaiyan and Jayashree Raghu in straight sets.

Vinay wins gold at para powerlifting World Cup in Egypt



- Vinay has secured victory at the Para Powerlifting World Cup held in Egypt.
- The 18-year-old athlete showcased his prowess by claiming the gold medal in the 59kg youth category, lifting an impressive 120kg weight on the third day of the competition.
- Hailing from Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh, Vinay has etched his name in history as the first para powerlifter from the state to achieve such a feat on the international stage.

India makes new guinness world record in Kabaddi with participation of 128 players



- India made history by making a Guinness World record with participation of 128 players on the World Kabaddi Day.
- The history was written at Tau Devi Lal Indoor Stadium of Panchkula in Haryana.
- An MOU recently signed between Holistic International Pravasi Sports Association (HIPSA) and the Government of Haryana, for the promotion of Kabaddi, globally, was one of the main reasons to choose India as a venue and Haryana in particular, for the event.

Sreeja Akula wins women's singles title at WTT Feeder Beirut II 2024 table tennis tournament

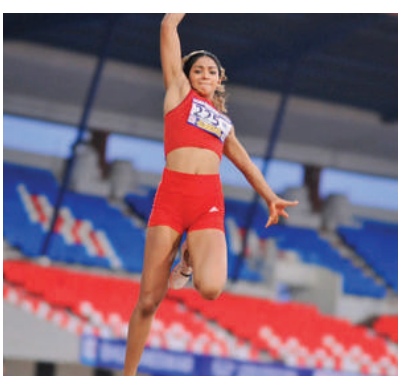


- In Table Tennis, India's Sreeja Akula won the women's singles title at the WTT Feeder Beirut II 2024 table tennis tournament at the Al Kawthar Secondary School in Lebanon.
- Akula, the world No. 47, beat Luxembourg's Sarah De Nutte to win what was her second WTT singles career title.
- The 25-year-old's maiden crown came at the Feeder Corpus Christi 2024 in Texas back in January.

Sathiyan Gnanasekaran wins WTT Feeder title

- Sathiyan Gnanasekaran won the men's singles title at the WTT Feeder Beirut beating higher-ranked compatriot Manav Thakkar 3-1 (6-11, 11-7, 11-7, 11-4) in the final.
- Sathiyan also went past India No.2 Harmeet Desai and Chinese Taipei's 39th-ranked Chuang Chih-Yuan, a former world No.3, along the way.

Nayana James clinches gold with new personal best



- Kerala's Nayana James registered a personal best mark en route to the women's long jump gold medal at the third Indian Open Jumps Competition in Bengaluru.
- The 28-year-old Nayana leaped 6.67m to secure the gold. She improved her personal best by 17cm.
- Nayana sailed to a distance of 6.67m, season's best, in her second attempt to take pole position.
- Favourite Shaili Singh, with a solid season opener of 6.40m, had to be content with the silver.

Mumbai won the Ranji Trophy 2024 after beating Vidarbha



- Mumbai won the Ranji Trophy 2024 after beating Vidarbha by 169 runs at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai.
- It also happened to be their 42nd title for Mumbai.
- Mumbai also ended their 8-year-long wait to win the championship after they last got their hands on the title back in the 2015-16 edition.
- Rahane became the 26th Mumbai captain to win the Ranji Trophy.
- Vidarbha, who had won their previous two Ranji Trophy finals, could not replicate their success this time around.

Max Verstappen Triumphs at Saudi Arabian Grand Prix



- Red Bull's Max Verstappen clinched victory at the Saudi Arabian Grand Prix from pole position, marking a triumphant streak for the team in the Formula One season with their second consecutive one-two finish.
- Mexican Sergio Perez secured the runner-up spot, trailing his triple world champion teammate by 13.643 seconds.
- Verstappen's stellar performance last year saw him notch up a record-breaking 19 wins out of 22 races.
- Ferrari's Charles Leclerc claimed the third spot on the podium.

Sharath Kamal named flagbearer of Paris Olympics 2024



- Ace table tennis player Sharath Kamal will be the Indian team's flagbearer for the upcoming Paris 2024 Olympics, while Olympic bronze medalist MC Mary Kom has been named as the chef de mission for the Summer Games, the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) announced.
- Ranked World No. 88, Kamal has won the national table tennis championship a record 10 times.
- He has also claimed 13 medals at the CWG, including seven golds, and has earned two medals at the Asian Games.

Neil Wagner announced retirement from International Cricket



- New Zealand pacer Neil Wagner has announced his retirement from Test cricket ahead of the two-Test series against Australia.
- With 64 Tests and 260 wickets to his name, Wagner leaves behind a distinguished career as one of New Zealand's most prolific wicket-takers.

Khelo India athletes now eligible for government jobs

- The Department of Personnel and Training and the Sports Ministry have revised eligibility criteria for government jobs to include Khelo India athletes.
- This allows medal winners from Youth, University, Para, and Winters Games of Khelo India to qualify for government positions. Union Sports Minister Anurag Singh Thakur stated that this step aims to support athletes and promote India as a sporting superpower.
- The revisions ensure inclusivity across various sports and highlight the government's commitment to nurturing talent and fostering a robust sports ecosystem, making sports a viable career option in the country.

Indian shuttler B Sai Praneeth announced retirement from international badminton



- Indian shuttler B Sai Praneeth has announced his retirement from international badminton due to nagging injuries since the Tokyo Olympics.
- The 31-year-old confirmed the news on his social media accounts. In his 24-year-long career, he won a World Championships bronze medal and represented India at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics.
- Praneeth, who also won the 2017 Singapore Open, is set to begin a new innings as the head coach of the Triangle Badminton Academy in the US, starting next month.

Indian Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa defeats compatriot Vidit Gujrathi in Prague Masters Chess



- Indian Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa secured a victory against fellow countryman Vidit Gujrathi in the Prague Masters Chess tournament in the Czech Republic.
- Meanwhile, D. Gukesh faced defeat against David Navara from the Czech Republic. Praggnanandhaa now shares the fourth position with Navara, while Gukesh has four rounds remaining.
- In the Challengers section, Grandmaster R. Vaishali lost to Erwin L'Ami from Holland.
- The Prague Chess Festival is ongoing at the Don Giovanni Hotel from February 27 to March 7.

Spain wins first UEFA women's Nations League



- Since winning their first-ever FIFA World Cup title, Spain's women's football team continued their success by defeating France 2-0 to win the inaugural UEFA Women's Nations League.
- Aitana Bonmati and Mariona Caldentey scored a goal each for Spain in front of a record crowd of 32,657 fans at La Cartuja Stadium in southern Spain.
- Bonmati was named the player of the match for her outstanding performance. This victory adds to Spain's achievements, as they also hold the men's Nations League title, having beaten Croatia in the final earlier.

Minister Hardeep S Puri inaugurated 5th ONGC Para Games

- Shri Hardeep Singh Puri, Minister of Petroleum & Natural Gas and Housing & Urban Affairs, inaugurated the 5th ONGC Para Games in Thyagaraj Stadium, New Delhi from March 8-10, 2024.
- He praised the para-athletes for their determination and willpower, highlighting their contribution to defining a more humane society.
- India's performance in Paralympic events, including the Tokyo Paralympics 2020 and the Asian Para Games 2023, was acknowledged by the Minister.
- The Minister Commended Oil and Gas PSUs for their CSR initiatives aimed at uplifting society, particularly focusing on Persons with Disabilities.
- Shri Pankaj Jain, Secretary, MoPNG, expressed admiration for the participating athletes, emphasizing the power of the mind over the body in the Para Games.
- The 5th ONGC Para Games features 371 athletes, including 249 ONGCians, competing across various sporting disciplines, including athletics, badminton, table tennis, and wheelchair racing.

Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty win doubles title at French Open badminton tournament



- Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty secured their second French Open Men's doubles Badminton title with a straight games victory over Yang Po-han and Lee Jhe-huei of Taiwan in the final, winning 21-11, 21-17.
- The Indian pair, who were top seeds, had previously claimed the title in 2022.

Indian sailor Vishnu Saravanan clinches gold medal at Europa Cup in Spain



- Indian sailor Vishnu Saravanan won the gold medal in the ILCA 7 category at the Europa Cup 2024 in Mallorca, Spain.
- He topped the 91-boat race with 17 net points, becoming the first Indian to win gold in this category.

Ravichandran Ashwin becomes 14th player to play 100 Tests for India

- Ravichandran Ashwin became just the 14th player to reach the milestone of 100 Tests for India during the fifth Test against England at the Himachal Pradesh Cricket Association stadium in Dharamsala.
- Ashwin, who made his Test debut against the West Indies in New Delhi in 2011, is also the first player from Tamil Nadu to breach the 100-Test milestone.
- He is also the oldest Indian to reach the landmark at 37 years old.
- The off-spinner became the second Indian, after Anil Kumble, to tally 500 Test wickets, after picking up the wicket of Zak Crawley during the third Test at Rajkot.

BAI announced rewards for Asian Games, BATC success with cash awards

- Badminton Association of India (BAI) announced a cash incentive of over INR 1.12 crore to the players and support staff for their success in major international tournaments including the Asian Games, Badminton Asia Team Championship and the BWF World Junior Championships.
- The women's team that won the historic Badminton Asia Team Championship (BATC) crown last month will get INR 35 lakh, 2022 Asian Games gold medallist men's doubles combination of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty are awarded INR 12 lakh, 2022 Asian Games men's singles bronze medallist HS Prannoy will receive INR 5 lakh while the men's team that bagged the 2022 Asian Games silver for the first time will collectively get a prize sum of INR 40 lakh.
- The BAI has also rewarded 2023 BWF World Championships bronze medallist Ayush Shetty (INR 1 lakh), Badminton Asia Junior U-15 boys singles champion Bornil Aakash Changmai (INR2 lakh), U-17 girls singles silver medallist Tanvi Sharma (INR 1 lakh) and U-15 boys singles bronze medallist Jagsher Singh Khangurra (INR 50,000).

Royal Challengers Bangalore beat Delhi Capitals by 8 wickets to lift Women's Premier League title



- In the Women's Premier League (WPL) Cricket final, Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) defeated Delhi Capitals by 8 wickets at Arun Jaitley Stadium in New Delhi.
- RCB chased down a target of 114 runs, scoring 115/2 in 19.3 overs.
- Ellyse Perry top-scored with 35 runs. Earlier, Delhi Capitals were all out for 113 runs, with Shafali Verma scoring 44.
- RCB's Shreyanka Patil took 4 wickets, Sophie Molineux 3, and Sobana Asha 2. Sophie Molineux was declared Player of the Match.

EC announced Para Archer & Arjuna Awardee Sheetal Devi as National PwD Icon



- The Election Commission has named Para Archer and Arjuna Awardee Sheetal Devi as its National PwD Icon during an exhibition cricket match between the Indian Deaf Cricket Association Team and the Delhi and District Cricket Association team.
- The match aimed to promote voter education and inclusivity, organized by the Election Commission and the Board of Control for Cricket in India.

- Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar and Election Commissioners Gyanesh Kumar and Sukhbir Singh Sandhu attended the event, where a dedicated Voter's Guide for PwDs and Senior Citizen Electors was launched, outlining essential provisions available to them at polling stations.

3rd edition of North East Games 2024 begins in Nagaland



- The 3rd edition of North East Games 2024 began with a grand opening ceremony in Nagaland on March 18.
- Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio inaugurated the event, emphasizing the region's sporting potential and the importance of unity.
- Over 3000 athletes from eight Northeastern states are participating in 15 disciplines across 12 venues in Chumoukedima, Dimapur, and Kohima districts.

Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik inaugurated India's first indoor Athletics and Aquatic Centres

- Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik inaugurated India's inaugural indoor athletics center and a modern indoor aquatic hub at Kalinga Stadium.
- He also initiated the construction of an indoor diving center within the stadium complex.
- Naveen emphasized that these new indoor facilities will enable athletes to train and compete throughout the year, unaffected by external weather conditions.

Lakshya Sen & P.V. Sindhu to begin campaign on opening day of Swiss Open Tournament in Basel





- The 2024 Swiss Open Super 300 Badminton tournament begins, March 19, in Basel, Switzerland.
- In Men's Singles, India's Lakshya Sen faces Leong Jun Hao, while Kidambi Srikanth plays against Wang Tzu-wei. P V Sindhu will compete against Yvonne Li in Women's Singles.
- In Women's Doubles, Ashwini Ponnappa and Tanisha Crasto meet Meilysa Trias Puspitasari and Rachel Allessya Rose, and Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand play against Annie Xu and Kerry Xu of the USA.

Russian and Belarusian athletes will not allowed to Participate in Parade of Nations at the Opening Ceremony of Paris Games

- The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has announced that Russian and Belarusian athletes competing under a neutral flag will not participate in the parade of nations at the opening ceremony of the Paris Games.
- This decision excludes them from the team procession as they are considered individual athletes. A decision regarding their participation in the closing ceremony is pending.
- The move has been criticized by the Kremlin, with a spokesman stating it undermines the Olympic spirit.
- Russian and Belarusian athletes qualifying for the Games will compete without their national flags and anthems, a consequence of previous bans stemming from geopolitical tensions.

Ace Indian Shuttler Lakshya Sen climbs five places to become world number 13



- Indian shuttler Lakshya Sen has risen to world number 13 in the men's singles category after his strong performances at the French Open and All England Open, reaching the semi-finals in both tournaments.
- This boosts his chances for the 2024 Paris Olympics qualification, as the top 16 players in the BWF ranking can qualify. Meanwhile, in men's doubles, Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty maintain their world number one position.
- In women's doubles, Ashwini Ponnappa and Tanisha Crasto climb to world number 20, while Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand drop to world number 26.
- HS Prannoy drops to world number nine due to early exits, and PV Sindhu is ranked world number 11 after a round of 16 finish at the All England Badminton Open.

Awards and Honours

Chapter 13

Michel Talagrand awarded the 2024 Abel Prize



- The Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters has decided to award the Abel Prize for 2024 to Michel Talagrand of the French National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS), Paris, France.
- Michel Talagrand receives the prize for his work in probability theory and stochastic processes.
- The common theme in Michel Talagrand's groundbreaking discoveries is working with and understanding the random processes we see all around us.

ISRO gets Aviation Week Laureates Award for historic Chandrayaan-3 mission



- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has been honoured with the prestigious Aviation Week Laureates Award for its achievements with the historic Chandrayaan-3 mission.
- The award was received on behalf of Isro by Sripriya Ranganathan, Deputy Ambassador at the Indian Embassy in the US.
- The Aviation Week Laureates Award is renowned for recognising extraordinary accomplishments within the aerospace industry, and this year, it celebrated Isro's groundbreaking mission, Chandrayaan-3.
- This mission, which cost a modest $75 million, achieved a historic milestone by making a successful landing at the lunar South Pole.

PM Modi received Bhutan's highest civilian award 'Order of the Druk Gyalpo'



- On 22 March 2024, The King of Bhutan conferred the Order of the Druk Gyalpo on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who became the first foreign head of government to receive Bhutan's highest civilian honour.
- The Order of the Druk Gyalpo holds immense significance within Bhutan's honour system, symbolising a lifetime of outstanding achievements and contributions to society.
- The announcement for the honour was made by the King of Bhutan during the 114th National Day celebrations on December 17, 2021.

COP28 president wins' award for Sustainable Energy Leadership

- Dr. Sultan Al Jaber, the President of COP28 (the 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference), received the "CERAWeek Leadership Award for Building Global Consensus towards a Sustainable Energy Future" from CERAWeek by S&P Global.

- This prestigious award recognized his extraordinary leadership in delivering the UAE Consensus.
- It is a groundbreaking agreement that outlined concrete pathways for countries and industries to transition to sustainable energy systems and keep global warming within 1.5°C.
- The UAE Consensus, achieved during COP28 in Dubai, was a historic achievement in global climate action.

Renowned Indian Dancer Dr. Uma Rele honoured with Maharashtra Gaurav Award



- Dr. Uma Rele, the esteemed Principal of Nalanda Nritya Kala Mahavidyalaya, Mumbai, has been conferred with the prestigious Maharashtra Gaurav Award.
- The honour was bestowed upon her by Maharashtra Industrial Minister Uday Sawant and Minister Deepak Vasant Kesarkar in recognition of her invaluable contributions to the realm of Indian classical dance, particularly Bharata Natyam.
- In 2001, she achieved another milestone by completing her doctoral research on 'Nayikas, heroines of Indian Classical Dance', showcasing her profound understanding and expertise in the field.

Raksha Mantri Trophy for Armed Forces Medical Services' Best & Second Best Command Hospitals for Year 2022



- Raksha Mantri Trophy for the Best and Second Best Command Hospitals of the Armed Forces Medical Services (AFMS) for the year 2022 was presented by Director General Armed Forces Medical Services and Senior Colonel Comdt, Army Medical Corps Lt Gen Daljit Singh on 19 Mar 2024 in New Delhi.
- The Command Hospital (Southern Command), Pune and the Command Hospital (Central Command), Lucknow were judged as the Best and Second Best Command Hospital for the year 2022 respectively.
- From 2023 onwards, Army Institute of Cardio-Thoracic Sciences (AICTS), Pune and Base Hosp Delhi Cantt will also participate in the competition.
- The Raksha Mantri Trophy was instituted in 1989 to recognize excellence in healthcare services provided by Armed Forces Hospitals of the AFMS and to foster a spirit of healthy competition among them.

Noted writer Prabha Varma to be awarded Saraswati Samman 2023



- New Delhi Noted poet and litterateur Prabha Varma will be awarded the prestigious Saraswati Samman, 2023 for his verse novel Roudra Sathwikam.
- Varma has excelled as a bilingual writer, with exemplary literary works in both Malayalam and English.
- He has emerged as one of the most important voices in contemporary Malayalam literature, with his work reflecting a confluence of tradition and modernity.
- Varma has to his credit more than 30 books, including a dozen collections of poems, three novels in verse, eight books on the contemporary sociopolitical milieu and literature, and seven collections of essays in criticism, among others.
- He has bagged more than 70 awards, including the National Sahitya Akademi Award and the National Film Award.

Chameli Devi Jain Award 2024 for Outstanding Woman Media Person



- The Indian Express's Chief of National Bureau (govt) Ritika Chopra and independent journalist Greeshma Kuthar have been jointly awarded the Chameli Devi Jain Award 2024 for Outstanding Woman Media Person of the Year.
- An independent jury comprising senior journalists selected the winners.
- The winners were chosen from more than 65 entries of women journalists.

President Droupadi Murmu confers Sangeet Natak Akademi awards to 94 eminent artists in New Delhi



- President Droupadi Murmu awarded the Sangeet Natak Akademi Awards for 2022 and 2023 to ninety-four artists in New Delhi, recognizing their excellence in various performing arts fields.
- Seven artists were also honored with the prestigious Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowship. Emphasizing the cultural importance of performing arts, President Murmu praised the Akademi's role in promoting diverse art forms.
- Union Minister for Culture G Kishan Reddy and Union Minister of State for Culture Arjun Ram Meghwal lauded the Akademi's contributions.
- Recipients of the Fellowship included Vinayak Khedekar, R Visweswaran, Nitu Kumari Nootan, Shailesh Shrivastava, and Maddali Usha Gayatri.
- The Fellowship carries a purse of three lakh rupees, while the Award carries one lakh rupees, representing excellence in the field.

Dr Pradeep Mahajan received Maharashtra Bhushan Award 2024



- Dr. Pradeep Mahajan, the Founder, Chairman, and Managing Director (CMD) of StemRx Hospital and Research Centre, as well as StemRx Bioscience Solutions, has been honored with the prestigious Maharashtra Bhushan Award 2024.
- This recognition is bestowed upon him in acknowledgment of his remarkable contributions to the field of regenerative medicine.
- Dr. Mahajan's pioneering work has had a significant impact on improving regenerative medicine, offering new hope and innovative therapies to patients globally.

Yatin Bhaskar Duggal wins first prize in National Youth Parliament Festival 2024



- Yatin Bhaskar Duggal from Haryana secured the first prize in the National Youth Parliament Festival 2024, followed by Vaishna Pitchai from Tamil Nadu in second place and Kanishka Sharma from Rajasthan in third place.
- During the concluding session in New Delhi, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla emphasized the importance of youth's thinking capability, innovation, and dedication in realizing India's vision of becoming 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047 while preserving its heritage.

- Union Minister Anurag Thakur praised the determined voice of the youth, highlighting India's progress from fragile economic conditions to being among the top five global economies under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership.

PM presents first-ever National Creators Award



- Prime Minister Narendra Modi presented the first-ever National Creators Award at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi.
- The award aims to recognize excellence and impact across various domains including storytelling, social change advocacy, environmental sustainability, education, and gaming.
- It serves as a launchpad for using creativity to drive positive change.
- PM Modi highlighted the significance of Bharat Mandapam as the venue, linking it to the G20 Summit where world leaders shape the future.
- He emphasized the nation's responsibility to adapt to the changing times and the onset of a new era.
- PM Modi expressed confidence that the awards will have a strong influence in energizing the new era and respecting the creativity of youth.
- He congratulated the winners and appreciated the active participation of over 2 lakh creative minds.

Oscar Awards



- Hollywood's 96th Oscars took place at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles, California.
- Emma Stone won Best Actress for her role in "Poor Things".
- "Oppenheimer" dominated with six awards, including Best Actor for Cillian Murphy and Best Director for Christopher Nolan.
- The film also secured Best Supporting Actor for Robert Downey Jr., as well as Best Film Editing, Cinematography, and Original Score.
- The Oscars paid tribute to the late Indian art director and production designer Nitin Chandrakant Desai during the ceremony.

Here's a table summarizing the winners in some major categories:

Category	Winner
Best Picture	Oppenheimer
Best Director	Christopher Nolan (Oppenheimer)
Best Actor	Cillian Murphy (Oppenheimer)
Best Actress	Jennifer Lame (Oppenheimer)
Best Supporting Actor	Robert Downey Jr. (Oppenheimer)
Best Supporting Actress	Thelma Schoonmaker (Killers of the Flower Moon)
Best Animated Feature	Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse

Krystyna Pyszkova from Czech Republic crowned Miss World 2024



- Krystyna Pyszková from the Czech Republic was crowned the 71st Miss World in Mumbai, competing against contestants from 115 countries.
- Last year's winner, Karolina Bielawska of Poland, crowned her.
- Yasmina Zaytoun of Lebanon was named the First Runner-Up.
- Pyszková, a 24-year-old student and international model, is studying Law and Business Administration while also running the Krystyna Pyszko Foundation, supporting underprivileged children. She has a passion for Music and Art, spending nine years in an Art Academy.

Indian writer Amitav Ghosh awarded prestigious Erasmus Prize 2024



- Kolkata-born author Amitav Ghosh has been awarded the Erasmus Prize 2024 for his contribution to imagining the unthinkable, particularly in addressing climate change.
- Through novels like "The Shadow Lines," Ghosh explores themes of migration, diaspora, and cultural identity, shedding light on pressing global issues.
- The Erasmus Prize is an esteemed annual award bestowed by the board of the Praemium Erasmianum Foundation.
- It honors individuals or institutions that have made remarkable contributions to culture, society, or social science globally. Named after the Dutch Renaissance humanist Desiderius Erasmus, it stands as one of Europe's most prestigious accolades.

Riken Yamamoto wins 2024 Pritzker Architecture Prize



- Riken Yamamoto, a Japanese architect born in Beijing, China in 1945, has been announced as the 2024 Laureate of the Pritzker Architecture Prize.
- This award is widely recognized as the highest honor in the field of architecture internationally.

Goa awarded 'Best Destination of the Year' at ITB Berlin

- Goa was awarded 'The Best Destination of the Year' by the Pacific Area Travel Writers' Association at the ITB Berlin Convention, for promoting the concept of regenerative tourism.
- Hailing the feat, Goa Tourism Secretary Sanjeev Ahuja said such prestigious awards encourage the state to provide better facilities for tourists.
- Goa has given focus on improving tourism facilities and also promoting local festivals, culture and cuisines by involving local communities.
- The ITB Berlin Convention took place between March 5 and 7 at the Berlin Exhibition Grounds with the motto 'Pioneer the Transition in Travel and Tourism Together'.

T M Krishna awarded Prestigious Sangita Kalanidhi



- Renowned Carnatic musician, author, and social activist T M Krishna, a recipient of the Magsaysay Award, is set to receive the prestigious Sangita Kalanidhi award from The Music Academy, Madras.
- This honor recognizes his exceptional contributions to Carnatic music and his dedication to social causes.

Renowned poet Prabha Varma selected for Saraswati Samman for 2023



- Renowned poet Prabha Varma has been honored with the prestigious Saraswati Samman for the year 2023 for his exceptional contributions to Malayalam literature.
- His work "Roudra Sathwikam" has been particularly acknowledged, along with his overall literary contributions from 2013 to 2022.
- "Roudra Sathwikam," published in 2022, is a poetic masterpiece in Malayalam that delves into the intricate dynamics of power and politics, the individual's struggle against the state, and the interplay between art and authority in a distinctive manner.
- The Saraswati Samman not only includes a citation but also a plaque and an award money of fifteen lakh rupees, acknowledging Varma's significant literary achievements and his impactful portrayal of societal complexities through his poetry.

Appointments and Resignations

Chapter 14

Justice Mohammad Yousuf Wani takes oath as judge in J&K



- Justice Mohammad Yousuf Wani was administered oath as Additional Judge of the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh.
- Chief Justice Justice N. Kotiswar Singh administered the oath of office to Justice Wani in Srinagar.
- Justice Wani joined the judicial service in 1997 and has served as a judicial officer in various capacities.

UN names Kamal Kishore as assistant secretary-general



- United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres announced the appointment of Kamal Kishore of India as Assistant Secretary-General and Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR).
- He will succeed Mami Mizutori of Japan, who will continue to serve in the role until Kishore takes over.
- Kishore has nearly three decades of experience in disaster risk reduction, climate action, and sustainable development at various levels.
- He has held important positions in the government, UN, and civil society organizations.

Nidhu Saxena appointed as MD & CEO of Bank of Maharashtra



- Bank of Maharashtra jumped 5.68% to Rs 62.55 after the central government approved the appointment of Nidhu Saxena as the managing director & chief executive officer (MD & CEO) of the bank for a period of three years effective from 27 March 2024.
- The appointment will be in effect for a term of three years with effect from the date of assumption of office from 27 March 2024 or until further orders, whichever is earlier.

Sadanand Date appointed NIA director general, NDRF and BPR&D get new chiefs too

- Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad chief Sadanand Vasant Date has been appointed as the Director General of the National Investigation Agency (NIA).
- Date is a 1990-batch Indian Police Service (IPS) officer of Maharashtra cadre.
- The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has approved the appointment of Date as the Director General (DG) of the NIA for a tenure up to his superannuation on December 31, 2026.
- He will succeed Dinkar Gupta, who is due to superannuate on 31 March.
- The ACC also appointed Rajeev Kumar Sharma, a 1990-batch IPS officer of Rajasthan cadre, as the Director General of the Bureau of Police Research & Development.

Justice Ritu Raj Awasthi sworn in as judicial member, Lokpal of India



- Justice Ritu Raj Awasthi sworn in as judicial member, Lokpal. The oath was administered by Justice A. M. Khanwilkar, Chairperson, Lokpal of India.
- Shri Pankaj Kumar and Shri Ajay Tirkey took oath as member, Lokpal. The oath ceremony was organised today at Lokpal of India office in New Delhi.
- Shri Justice Ritu Raj Awasthi, before joining as Judicial Member, Lokpal of India, was serving as the Chairperson of 22nd Law Commission of India. Before that, he was Chief Justice of Karnataka High Court.
- Shri Pankaj Kumar is a 1986 batch IAS officer from Gujarat cadre. Before joining as Member of Lokpal of India, he was serving as Chief Secretary of Gujarat.

Hansha Mishra appointed as Director in UPSC

- Hansha Mishra, an officer of the Indian Audit and Accounts Service (IA&AS) from the 2010 batch, has been appointed as Director in the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), Delhi.
- Her appointment comes after she was recommended for central deputation by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India.
- According to an order issued by the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) on 21 March 2024, the central government has approved Mishra's appointment to the post under the central staffing scheme.

Luis Montenegro named Portugal's Prime Minister



- After eight years of Socialist rule in Portugal, Luis Montenegro, leader of the centre-right Democratic Alliance (AD), has been appointed as the new prime minister.
- Montenegro's appointment marks the return of a centre-right leader to the prime minister's office after more than eight years.
- Despite his party's victory in the recent election, the AD falls short of a majority in the parliament, with only 80 out of 230 seats.
- Montenegro's rejection of a coalition with the far-right Chega party leaves his government in a fragile position, necessitating negotiations with other parties for legislative support.

Govind Dholakia appointed new chairman of Surat Diamond Bourse

- Diamond Baron Govind Dholakia has been appointed as the new chairman of Surat Diamond Bourse (SDB).
- SDB is India's second diamond trading hub that was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, sometime ago.
- The move to appoint a new head of SDB was necessitated after Vallabh Lakhani stepped down from the post earlier this week.
- Lakhani was the first diamantaire to shut his Mumbai operations and move to SDB in Surat.

Mariam Mammen Mathew appointed DNPA chairperson

- Mariam Mammen Mathew, CEO of Manorama Online, has been appointed chairperson of the Digital News Publishers' Association for two years.
- Mathew, whose tenure begins on April 1, succeeds Tanmay Maheshwari, MD, Amar Ujala.
- Mathew served as vice-chairperson of the DNPA during Maheshwari's chairmanship.
- Puneet Gupt, COO of Times Internet, was made the new vice-chairman of the DNPA while Puneet Jain, CEO of Digital HT Media, continues as the treasurer.

Ireland set for youngest-ever PM after Simon Harris wins leadership of governing party



- Ireland's governing party Fine Gael has named Simon Harris as its new leader, paving the way for him to succeed former Prime Minister Leo Varadkar as the youngest Taoiseach in Irish history at age 37.
- Varadkar announced his surprise resignation, citing "personal and political, but mainly political reasons."
- He had made headlines in 2017 when aged 38 he became the youngest prime minister in Irish history at that time.
- Harris served as Ireland's health minister during a crucial period from 2016 to mid-2020.

Mr Ashwani Kumar unanimously elected as the New President of FIEO

- Mr Ashwani Kumar, Partner, Victor Forgings, Jalandhar has been unanimously elected as the New President of the Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) on March 11, 2024.
- Mr Ashwani Kumar is a well known and popular business entrepreneur and exporter from Jalandhar (Punjab), representing the engineering sector of exports.
- Mr Kumar has held several key positions in different renowned organizations of the country including FIEO as the Chairman (Northern Region) and Member of the Managing Committee of the Federation; Member of the Governing Body of NIT, Jalandhar; Convenor of Hand Tools Panel (Pan India) and Deputy Regional Chairman (Northern Region), EEPC India.

Naveen Jindal takes charge as president of the Indian Steel Association



- Naveen Jindal, chairman, Jindal Steel and Power, took charge as president of Indian Steel Association (ISA), the apex body for steel producers.
- He succeeds Dilip Oommen, CEO of ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel India.
- For India to realise its development goals, steel along with its upstream and downstream manufacturing value chains have to grow in tandem.

M V Rao elected as Indian Banks' Association Chairman



- Indian Banks Association (IBA) has a new Chairman in M V Rao, Managing Director and CEO, Central Bank of India.
- Rao was elected as IBA Chairman for the term 2023-24 at a meeting of the Managing Committee of IBA held.
- Three Deputy Chairmen for IBA would be Dinesh Kumar Khara, Chairman, State Bank of India (SBI); S L Jain, MD and CEO , Indian Bank and N Kamakodi, Managing Director and CEO, City Union Bank.

President accepts Pashupati Paras' resignation, gives Kiren Rijiju additional charge



- President of India, Droupadi Murmu, has accepted the resignation of former Union minister Pashupati Kumar Paras, who resigned from the Union Cabinet, and gave minister of earth sciences Kiren Rijiju the additional charge of the ministry of food processing industries that was held by Paras.
- The President of India, as advised by the Prime Minister, has accepted the resignation of Shri Pashu Pati Kumar Paras from the Union Council of Ministers, with immediate effect, under clause (2) of Article 75 of the Constitution".

- The President has directed that Kiren Rijiju be assigned the charge of the Ministry of Food Processing Industries, in addition to his existing portfolio.

Brajesh Mehrotra appointed as new chief secretary of Bihar



- Brajesh Mehrotra, a 1989-batch IAS officer, has been appointed as the new chief secretary of Bihar.
- He replaces Amir Subhani, a 1987-batch IAS officer, who has applied for voluntary retirement from the government job. This move by Subhani is to enable his appointment as the chairperson of a state-level commission.

RBI clears appointment of S Ravindran as part-time chairman of TMB



- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has given its approval for the appointment of S Ravindran as the part-time chairman of Tamilnad Mercantile Bank (TMB), headquartered in Tuticorin, effective from February 29, 2024.
- However, this approval is contingent upon Ravindran resigning from his directorships in Shriram Finance and Bandhan AMC before assuming his role as the part-time chairman of TMB.
- This decision follows the apex bank's refusal of TMB's proposal to appoint B Vijayadurai as part-time non-executive chairman of the bank last year.

Alexander Stubb was sworn in as the President of Finland



- Alexander Stubb assumed office as Finland's new president on March 1, highlighting that the nation is entering a new phase following its NATO membership.
- As a demonstration of this, Stubb will undertake his inaugural foreign visit to observe a NATO military exercise in Norway's Arctic region.

Shehbaz Sharif to be next Prime Minister of Pakistan



- Shehbaz Sharif, a leader of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), has been elected as the Prime Minister of Pakistan, securing 201 votes in the National Assembly.
- His rival, Omer Ayub Khan, backed by Imran Khan's PTI, received 92 votes amid widespread uproar during the voting session. PTI-backed lawmakers demanded Imran Khan's release and accused Sharif of winning through electoral rigging.
- After his election, Sharif thanked his brother Nawaz and allies for their trust. The general elections were marked by allegations of mass vote rigging, with PTI claiming victory for candidates despite others securing more votes.

IPS Officer Daljit Singh Chaudhary named NSG's new Director General



- Daljit Singh Chaudhary, a 1990 batch IPS officer, has been appointed as the Director General (DG) of the National Security Guard (NSG), marking a significant change in India's security apparatus.
- Chaudhary, who presently serves as the DG of Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB), will now lead the NSG, commonly referred to as the "black cats".

PayU names Renu Sud Karnad as chairperson and independent director



- Renu Sud Karnad, the former Managing Director of Housing Development Finance Corporation Ltd. (HDFC) until June 30, 2023, has been appointed as the Independent Director and Board Chairperson of PayU Payments.
- Karnad, who currently serves as the President of the International Union of Housing Finance (IUHF), brings over four decades of industry experience to her new role. She has also been a Non-Executive Director on the HDFC Bank Board.
- Karnad played a crucial role in HDFC's expansion and now serves as the Chairman of the Board of GlaxoSmithKline Pharmaceuticals.

Ravindra Kumar assumes charge as Director (Operations) of NTPC



- Ravindra Kumar has been appointed to a post by the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet, effective February 26. He holds a B.Sc. in Mechanical Engineering from BIT Sindri and has over 34 years of experience, primarily with NTPC Limited.
- His roles have included diverse responsibilities in Commissioning, O&M, Engineering, and Project Management.
- He has worked at the NTPC Kahalgaon Project and the Corporate Centre, providing technical support to the Director (Technical). His appointment is valid until his superannuation on October 31, 2027, or until further orders, whichever is earlier.

Haryana New Chief Minister appointed



- Nayab Singh Saini, a BJP leader, became the Chief Minister of Haryana following the resignation of Manohar Lal Khattar and his cabinet ministers.
- Five other ministers, including BJP leaders Kanwar Pal, Mool Chand Sharma, Jai Parkash Dalal, Banwari Lal, and independent MLA Ranjit Singh Chautala, were also sworn in as members of the new council of ministers.

Brajesh Kumar Singh is new Executive Director, Indian Bank

- Brajesh Kumar Singh, a Certified Associate of the Indian Institute of Bankers with over 28 years of banking experience, is currently the Executive Director of Indian Bank.

- He previously served as Chief General Manager HR at Bank of Baroda and completed the Executive Leadership Development Programme at IIM Bangalore.
- Singh has held various strategic positions and was a convenor of the state-level bankers' committee. With overseas experience in Durban, South Africa, he has expertise in Retail Assets and Human Resource Management.
- Singh also served as Director on the Board of Baroda UP Gramin Bank. He holds an agriculture degree from Allahabad Agriculture Institute and an MBA in Finance.

Asif Ali Zardari takes oath as Pakistan's 14th President



- Asif Ali Zardari was sworn in as Pakistan's 14th President, following his overwhelming election as the next head of state.
- Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa administered the oath to the 68-year-old Zardari at Aiwan-e-Sadr, the Presidential Palace.
- Zardari succeeded Dr. Arif Alvi, who remained in office for an additional five months despite completing his five-year term in September last year.

President administered the oath of office of Chairperson, Lokpal to Justice Ajay Manikrao Khanwilkar



- President Droupadi Murmu administered the oath of office for Chairperson of Lokpal to Justice Ajay Manikrao Khanwilkar at a ceremony held at Rashtrapati Bhavan.
- Justice Khanwilkar, who served as a judge of the Supreme Court from May 13, 2016, to July 29, 2022, was appointed as the chairperson of Lokpal last month.

Justice Satyendra Kumar Singh sworn in as New Lokayukta of Madhya Pradesh



- Justice Satyendra Kumar Singh has been appointed as the new Lokayukta of Madhya Pradesh, as per an order issued by the state's General Administration Department.
- He was appointed under the Madhya Pradesh Lokayukta and Up-Lokayukta Adhiniyam 1981.

Philanthropist Sudha Murty takes oath as Member of Rajya Sabha



- Philanthropist Sudha Murty was sworn in as a member of the Rajya Sabha.
- Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar administered the oath to Sudha Murty in the Parliament House.
- Infosys founder Narayan Murty and Leader of the Rajya Sabha Piyush Goyal were present at the ceremony. Sudha Murty was nominated to the Rajya Sabha by President Droupadi Murmu.

ISMA appoints Deepak Ballani as New Director General

- The Indian Sugar & Bio-energy Manufacturers Association (ISMA) has appointed Mr. Deepak Ballani as its new Director General.
- With over 25 years of experience in public policy and government affairs, Mr. Ballani brings extensive expertise to the role.
- Previously serving as the Director General at The All India Plastics Manufacturers Association, he has a track record of driving policy advocacy and stakeholder engagement, contributing to notable progress in policy formulation and operational efficiency.

Gyanesh Kumar and Sukhbir Singh Sandhu appointed Election Commissioners



- Retired IAS officers Gyanesh Kumar and Sukhbir Singh Sandhu have been appointed as Election Commissioners, filling vacancies left by the retirement of Anup Chandra Pandey and the resignation of Arun Goel.
- The Ministry of Law and Justice issued a notification confirming their appointments.

Mohammad Mustafa, Palestinian President's longtime adviser, appointed PM



- Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas appointed Mohammad Mustafa as the new Prime Minister of Palestine in March 2024.
- Mustafa is a political independent and economist educated in the United States, serving as an economic advisor to Abbas.
- He will lead a technocratic government in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.
- The government under Mustafa's leadership may potentially administer Gaza before the state achieves independence.

Vladimir Putin wins Russian Presidential Elections for Record 5th Term



- Russian President Vladimir Putin has won a historic fifth term in a landslide victory, securing 87% of the vote.
- His victory solidifies his position as Russia's longest-serving leader, surpassing Josef Stalin.
- Putin pledged to prioritize resolving issues related to Russia's military operation in Ukraine and to strengthen the Russian military.

Navneet Sehgal appointed as Prasar Bharati Board Chairman



- After a four-year vacancy, the Indian government has appointed Navneet Kumar Sehgal, a retired bureaucrat, as the new Chairman of Prasar Bharati, the country's public service broadcaster.
- The appointment was made by the President upon the recommendation of a Selection Committee.

- Sehgal's term is for three years or until he turns seventy, whichever comes earlier.

Poonawalla Fincorp appoints Arvind Kapil as MD & CEO



- Poonawalla Fincorp has appointed retail banking veteran Arvind Kapil as its new Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer for a five-year term starting June 24.
- Poonawalla Fincorp shares have risen over 10% in 2024 so far, while the stock is up more than 67% in one year.

Senior Bureaucrat Rahul Singh appointed New CBSE Chief



- Senior bureaucrat Rahul Singh, a 1996-batch Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer of the Bihar cadre, has been appointed as the new chairperson of the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE).
- He succeeds Nidhi Chhibber in this role.
- The appointment comes as part of a senior-level bureaucratic reshuffle announced by the Centre.
- Currently serving as the Additional Secretary in the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT), Singh brings a wealth of administrative experience to his new position.

Axis Bank's group executive Ravi Narayanan resigns

- Vijay Mulbagal has been appointed as the Group Executive & Head of Strategic Programs and Sustainability at the bank, effective from March 14, 2024.
- Meanwhile, Ravi Narayanana, who previously served as the Group Executive of Retail Liabilities, Branch Banking, and Products at Axis Bank, tendered his resignation on March 13 and is scheduled to be relieved on March 22, according to an exchange filing made by the company on March 14.
- Before his tenure at Axis Bank, Narayanan held positions at HDFC Bank, where he served as the Head of Branch Banking (West) and Retail Trade and Forex.
- During his time at HDFC Bank, he also led various initiatives including Merchant Acquiring, Cash Management Services, and Current Account Product Business.

EC directs West Bengal govt to appoint Sanjay Mukherjee as DGP

- The Election Commission swiftly replaced Vivek Sahay as the West Bengal Director General of Police (DGP), less than 24 hours after announcing his appointment, directing the state government to appoint Sanjay Mukherjee in his place.
- Sahay's appointment was initially made based on his seniority. However, since he is set to retire in the final week of May before the conclusion of the Lok Sabha elections, the Election Commission decided to name Mukherjee as the DGP instead, according to a senior official.

Jharkhand Governor C.P. Radhakrishnan takes charge as Telangana Governor



- C.P. Radhakrishnan has assumed office as the Governor of Telangana, succeeding the previous governor.
- The oath of office was administered by Telangana High Court Chief Justice Alok Aradhe at a ceremony held at Raj Bhavan in Hyderabad.
- The event was attended by Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy, ministers, public representatives, and senior officials.

Obituaries

Chapter 15

Tamil actor-comedian Seshu passed away at 60



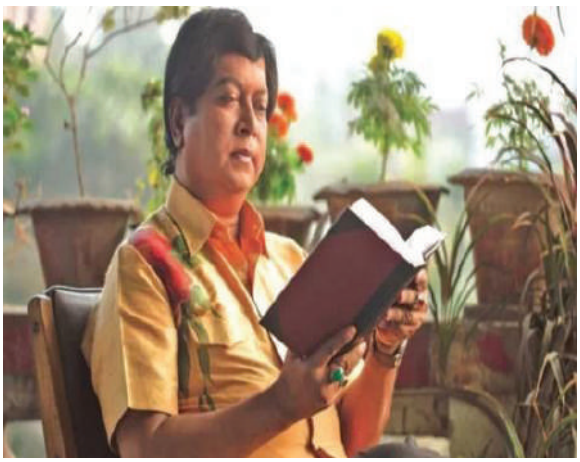
- On 26 March 2024, Lakshmi Narayanan Seshu, a beloved figure in the Tamil entertainment industry, breathed his last, at a private hospital in Chennai.
- The versatile actor, affectionately known as Lollu Sabha Seshu, was 60 years old at the time of his unfortunate demise.
- Born in Chennai, Seshu's journey in the world of entertainment began with his film debut in 2002. He made his acting debut with the Dhanush-starrer "Thulluvadho Ilamai," directed by Kathir.
- Seshu's filmography boasts several memorable performances, including roles in hit movies such as "A1," "Dikkiloona," "Gulu Gulu," "Naai Sekar Returns," "Draupathi," and the recent "Vadakkupatti Ramasamy."

Former Odisha minister Damodar Rout passes away at 81



- Former Odisha Minister and seven-time MLA Damodar Rout passed away at a private hospital in Bhubaneswar at the age of 81.
- In 1997, he was among those who started Biju Janata Dal (BJD) and soon worked as minister under Naveen Patnaik since 2000 working in various departments such as health, panchayatiraj, cooperation, agriculture, culture and excise.
- Rout had joined politics in 1970s and had contested his first election in 1974 on Utkal Congress ticket when he lost to Loknath Choudhury of CPI by less than 15,000 votes from Erasama assembly constituency.
- He was first elected to the Odisha Assembly in 1977 on a Janata Party ticket.

Renowned Rabindra Sangeet Singer Sadi Mohammad passed away at 70



- In Bangladesh, a legendary Rabindra Sangeet singer Sadi Mohammad passed away at the age of 70.
- Sadi Mohammad completed his bachelor's and master's in Rabindra Sangeet from the Visva-Bharati University in India and is the son of Liberation War martyr Salimullah and Jebunnesa Salim Ullah.
- Sadi served as the director of the cultural organisation Rabi Raag.

Tribal leader Lama Lobzang passed away in Delhi at 94



- Former member of the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and Prominent Buddhist Monk of Ladakh popularly known as Lama Lobzang passes away in New Delhi at 94.
- Lama Lobzang has served the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes for 19 years since 1984.
- Lama Lobzang was appointed as a new member of National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes for two terms from 1995 to 1998 and 1998 to 2001.
- Lama Lobzang retired from public office after serving another term as a member of the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes from 2004 to 2007.

Former Navy Chief Admiral Ramdas passed away at 90



- Former navy chief and war hero Admiral Laxminarayan Ramdas passed away at 90 in Secunderabad.
- He was known for promoting gender equality and peace.
- Ramdas was the navy chief during 1990-93.
- He was commissioned into the Indian Navy on September 1, 1953, and retired on September 30, 1993.

Renowned Artisan and Padma Awardee Kapildev Prasad passed away

- Kapildev Prasad, a renowned artisan and Padma awardee for his contributions to the handloom industry and the revival of Bababuti sarees, passed away in Basavanbigha village, Bihar Sharif.
- Bawan Booti, which literally translates to "52 motifs," is a unique weaving technique that involves intricate hand embroidery on cotton or tasar cloth.
- The sarees created through this method are adorned with 52 similar motifs, each representing symbols from Buddhist religion and culture.

Padma Shri Awardee Arun Sharma breathes his last at 91



- Renowned archaeologist Arun Kumar Sharma, a crucial witness in the Ram Janmabhoomi case, has passed away at the age of 91 in Raipur.
- Sharma, who was honored with the Padma Shri, provided significant archaeological evidence supporting the presence of a Hindu temple at the disputed Ayodhya site.

NASA astronaut Tom Stafford, commander of Apollo 10 lunar mission, dies at 93



- Astronaut Thomas P. Stafford, who commanded a dress rehearsal flight for the 1969 moon landing and the first U.S.-Soviet space linkup, died at the age of 93.
- Stafford, a retired Air Force three-star general, took part in four space missions.

- Before Apollo 10, he flew on two Gemini flights, including the first rendezvous of two U.S. capsules in orbit.
- Stafford was one of 24 people who flew to the moon, but he did not land on it. Only seven of them are still alive.

Byron Janis, renowned American classical pianist who overcame debilitating arthritis, dies at 95

- Byron Janis, a renowned American concert pianist and composer who broke barriers as a Cold War era culture ambassador and later overcame severe arthritis that nearly robbed him of his playing abilities, has died. He was 95.
- A childhood prodigy who studied under Vladimir Horowitz, Janis emerged in the late 1940s as one of the most celebrated virtuosos of a new generation of talented American pianists.
- In 1960, he was selected as the first musician to tour the then-Soviet Union as part of a cultural exchange program organized by the U.S. State Department. His recitals of Chopin and Mozart awed Russian audiences and were described by the New York Times as helping to break "the musical iron curtain."

Art and Culture

Chapter 16

Gulaal Gota

- Gulaal Gota, in Jaipur, Rajasthan, the age-old tradition of celebrating Holi. This is a unique tradition dating back around 400 years.
- Gulaal Gota is a small ball made of lac, filled with dry gulaal, and weighs around 20 grams when filled.
- Lac is a resinous substance that is secreted by certain insects. The female scale insect is one of the sources of lac.
- The process of making Gulaal Gotas involves boiling lac in water to make it flexible, shaping it, adding colour, heating it, and then blowing it into a spherical shape with the help of a blower called "phunkni".
- Gulaal Gotas are made by Muslim lac makers, known as Manihaars, in Jaipur, who learned lac-making from Hindu lac makers in Bagru, a town near Jaipur.
- The government of India has provided "artisan cards" to Lac Bangle and Gulaal Gota makers, allowing them to avail benefits from government schemes.

Narasapur crochet lace craft gets Geographical Indication tag

- The famed Narasapur crochet lace craft has got the Geographical Indications (GI) tag, giving a new lease of life to the dying craft in the Godavari region of Andhra Pradesh.
- The Department of Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry registered the craft in the Geographical Indications Registry (GIR) on March 1, 2024.
- Narsapur and Palacole are the major trade points for lace products in West Godavari district.
- In Konaseema region, Razole and Amalapuram are known for the craft.

ASI to remove 18 'untraceable' monuments from its list of protected sites

- The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has put out a list of 18 centrally protected monuments which it wants to delist as, according to the central agency, they no longer hold national importance.
- Incidentally, the list has been drawn up from a list of 24 "untraceable" monuments, which the Union Ministry of Culture submitted to a parliamentary committee last year.
- The monuments facing delisting include Kos Minar No.13 at Mujessar village in Haryana; Bara Khamba Cemetery in Delhi; Gunner Burkill's Tomb at Rangoon in Jhansi; Cemetery at Gaughat in Lucknow; and Telia Nala Buddhist ruins, which form part of a deserted village in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh.
- Currently, the ASI has 3,693 monuments under its purview, which will fall to 3,675 once the delisting exercise is completed in the next few weeks.

Gorsam Kora Festival in Arunachal Pradesh

- The Gorsam Kora Festival, held annually in Arunachal Pradesh's Zemithang valley, celebrating the shared Himalayan Buddhist cultural heritage and the enduring friendship between India and Bhutan.
- The festival, centred around the 93-foot tall stupa – 'Gorsam Chorten' built in the 13th century.
- It attracts thousands of devotees, including Bhutanese nationals, for prayers and traditional rituals.
- It is Located along the Nyanmjang Chu River, Zemithang is historically significant as the refuge where the 14th Dalai Lama sought sanctuary in 1959.

ASI starts court-ordered survey of disputed Bhojshala complex in Madhya Pradesh

- On 22 March 2024, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) surveyed the controversial Bhojshala/ Kamal Maula Mosque complex situated in the tribal-dominated Dhar district of Madhya Pradesh and made preparations for using carbon-dating equipment.
- A 15-member ASI team along with senior local police and district administration officials readied the site for scientific assessments following a Madhya Pradesh High Court directive to conduct a 'scientific survey' within six weeks.
- The high court, on March 11, directed the ASI to carry out a 'scientific survey' within six weeks of the Bhojshala complex, a medieval-era monument that Hindus believe is a temple of Goddess Vagdevi (Saraswati), while the Muslim community calls it Kamal Maula Mosque.
- As per an ASI order issued on April 7, 2003, Hindus are allowed to worship inside the Bhojshala complex every Tuesday, while Muslims are allowed to offer namaz at the site on Fridays.

Simdega district hosts First-Ever Pusa Krishi Vigyan Mela

- The inaugural Pusa Krishi Vigyan Mela in Simdega signifies a groundbreaking step in agricultural innovation and entrepreneurship.
- Hosted by the Indian Agricultural Research Institute, Pusa (New Delhi), this national-level event at Albert Ekka Stadium from March 10th to 12th highlights the district's first-time role as host.
- It underlines the commitment towards empowering farmers with modern agricultural techniques and fostering entrepreneurship for a prosperous farming community.

Important Days

Chapter 17

World Piano Day 2024

- World Piano Day is celebrated every year on 28 March 2024.
- World Piano Day, celebrated annually on the 88th day of the year, pays homage to one of the most beloved and versatile musical instruments – the piano.
- This day serves as a global platform to recognize the beauty, cultural significance, and enduring appeal of the piano, fostering appreciation for its rich legacy across generations and cultures.

World Tuberculosis Day

- World Tuberculosis Day is observed annually on March 24th to raise awareness about the global epidemic of tuberculosis (TB) and efforts to eliminate the disease.
- It commemorates the date in 1882 when Dr. Robert Koch announced his discovery of Mycobacterium tuberculosis, the bacteria that causes TB.
- The day serves as an opportunity to educate the public about the impacts of TB, including its symptoms, transmission, prevention, and treatment.

World Meteorological Day

- World Meteorological Day is observed annually on 23 March.
- It's celebrated annually to commemorate the founding of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) in 1950.
- The theme for World Meteorological Day 2024 was "At the Frontline of Climate Action".
- The day aimed to raise awareness about the urgency of combating climate change and the importance of international cooperation.

World Water Day 2024

- World Water Day is observed annualy on 22 March.
- It's an annual United Nations Observance that raises awareness about the importance of freshwater and the global water crisis.
- Theme for 2024 is "Leveraging Water for Peace".
- The 2024 edition of this flagship report, titled "Water for Prosperity and Peace," explores this theme in detail.

World Down Syndrome Day

- World Down Syndrome Day is celebrated every year on 21 March.
- It's a globally recognized day to raise awareness about Down syndrome and celebrate the lives of people with this condition.
- The theme for World Meteorological Day 2024 was "End The Stereotypes".
- The day provides an opportunity to celebrate the unique abilities and contributions of people with Down syndrome to their families, communities, and societies.

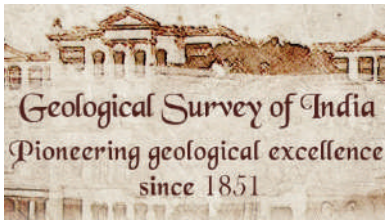
World Poetry Day

- World Poetry Day is celebrated annually on 21 March.
- It was established by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1999.
- The primary objective is to support the reading, writing, publishing, and teaching of poetry throughout the world.
- It aims to highlight the importance of linguistic diversity and encourages the use of poetry in endangered languages.
- The theme for 2024 was "Standing on the Shoulders of Giants."

World Sparrow Day

- World Sparrow Day is observed annually on March 20th to raise awareness about the conservation of sparrows and their declining populations worldwide.
- The day was first celebrated in 2010, initiated by the Nature Forever Society of India in collaboration with the Eco-Sys Action Foundation of France.
- World Sparrow Day aims to highlight the importance of conserving these small birds and to promote actions to protect their habitats and populations.

Geological Survey of India Celebrates 174th Foundation Day



- The Geological Survey of India (GSI) celebrated its 174th Foundation Day on March 4, 2024, with grand festivities held at all its offices across the country.
- The event was marked with great fervor and enthusiasm. In Kolkata, at the Central Headquarters, the celebration was inaugurated by Shri Janardan Prasad, Director General of GSI, who lit the traditional lamp to commence the festivities.
- The event was attended by numerous dignitaries, including Dr. M. K. Mukhopadhyay, former Director General of GSI and Chief Guest of the occasion, Dr. Joydeep Guha, Additional Director General and Head of Department at CHQ, and other prominent working as well as retired officials from GSI.

World Wildlife Day being observed on 3rd March



- World Wildlife Day, celebrated annually on March 3rd, promotes awareness of biodiversity conservation and wildlife protection.
- This year's theme is "Connecting People and Planet: Exploring Digital Innovation in Wildlife Conservation."
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi extended greetings to wildlife enthusiasts, applauding those involved in sustainable practices and conservation efforts.
- Union Cabinet Minister Bhupender Yadav emphasized celebrating Earth's diverse flora and fauna and raising awareness about conservation. He highlighted India's use of digital innovation under Prime Minister Modi's leadership for wildlife protection and human-animal coexistence.

International Women's Day 2024



- International Women's Day (IWD) is celebrated annually on March 8th.
- It commemorates the achievements of women in various spheres and advocates for gender equality.
- The theme for International Women's Day 2024 is 'Invest in Women: Accelerate Progress.'
- Economic empowerment benefits not only individual women but also families, communities, and economies.
- The origins of International Women's Day date back to the early 20th century.
- The first International Women's Day was celebrated in 1911 across Austria, Denmark, Germany, and Switzerland.
- Since then, it has become a global movement for gender equality and women's rights.

No Smoking Day



- No Smoking Day is observed annually on March 13 to raise awareness about the harmful effects of smoking and promote a smoke-free environment.
- It was first celebrated on Ash Wednesday in 1984 in the United Kingdom and is now observed on the second Wednesday of March every year.
- The day aims to help smokers quit and inform people about the dangers of smoking.

- No Smoking Day is crucial in addressing the global tobacco epidemic, which kills over 8 million people annually.
- The theme for No Smoking Day 2024 is 'Protecting children from tobacco industry interference.'

IREDA celebrates 38th Foundation Day

- IREDA celebrated its 38th Foundation Day, acknowledging its journey in renewable energy development.
- CMD Pradip Kumar Das highlighted achievements and future goals, emphasizing IREDA's role in India's energy transition and sustainable development.
- Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency Limited (IREDA) is an Indian public sector enterprise which provides financial assistance and other services to projects related to renewable sources of energy and energy efficiency/conservation.
- Formed in 1987, IREDA is a Mini Ratna (Category – I) organisation owned by the Government of India and administratively controlled by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE).
- IREDA has been notified as a "Public Financial Institution" under section 4 'A' of the Companies Act, 1956 and registered as Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC) with Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

National Commission for Protection of Child Rights celebrates its 19th Foundation Day



- The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) celebrated its 19th Foundation Day today at the Indian Habitat Centre in New Delhi.
- The event included the acknowledgment of children's efforts and participation in the Commission's Pariksha Parv campaign.
- Chairpersons and Members from all the States Commissions for Protection of Child Rights (SCPCRs) were also present, along with NCPCR Chairperson Shri Priyank Kanoongo and other members.

International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination 2024



- The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, observed annually on March 21, calls on people worldwide to speak out against racial discrimination, slavery, and colonialism.
- These injustices have devastated lives and hindered opportunities, denying billions of individuals their fundamental human rights and freedoms.
- The theme for 2024 is "A Decade of Recognition, Justice, and Development: Implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent."
- This theme underscores the importance of recognizing the struggles, promoting justice, and fostering development for individuals of African descent around the world.

World Kidney Day is observed on 14th March

- World Kidney Day is observed on the second Thursday of March each year to raise awareness about kidney health and diseases.
- This year's theme is "Kidney Health For All," focusing on the growing burden of chronic kidney disease and the importance of optimal kidney care.
- Kidneys play a crucial role in removing toxins from the body. Symptoms of kidney disorders include swelling in legs, high blood pressure, low hemoglobin, and weak bones.

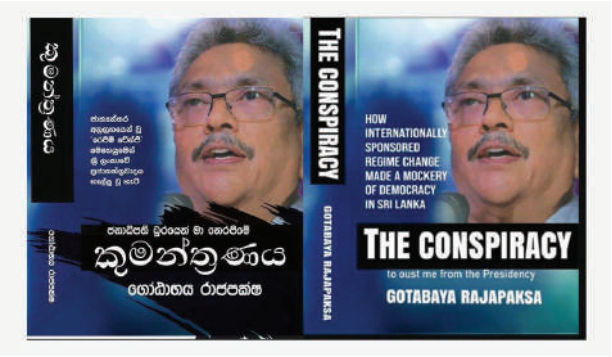
Books and Authors

Chapter 18

Parshottam Rupala release book on Sagar Parikrama at Rajkot

- Union Minister for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry, and Dairying, Shri Parshottam Rupala, release a book and video titled "Sagar Parikrama" at the Engineering Association in Rajkot, Gujarat.
- The book aims to chronicle the Sagar Parikrama Yatra, encompassing diverse elements such as the maritime route, cultural and geographical explorations, and notable impacts from all 12 phases of the journey.
- It contains seven chapters covering the genesis of Sagar Parikrama, an overview of the journey along the West and East coasts, and key takeaways.

Sri Lanka ex-President Gotabaya Rajapaksa launched a book 'The Conspiracy to oust me from the Presidency'



- Recently, former Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa launched a book named 'The Conspiracy to oust me from the Presidency', two years after he was dramatically removed from office by a popular mass movement.
- In this book he attributes the political collapse to a "conspiracy" involving foreign and local parties.
- Announcing his book 'The Conspiracy to oust me from the Presidency' on March 6, Mr. Gotabaya said in a statement: "From the time I was elected President in November 2019, certain foreign and local parties were intent on removing me from power."

A book title "Basic Structure and Republic" Released by Governor P. S. Sreedharan Pillai



- Goa Governor P S Sreedharan Pillai's book, titled "Basic Structure and Republic," was released in Panaji.
- The book launch was conducted by Archbishop H G Mar Joseph Perumthottam of Changanacherry, Kerala.

A book on Indian modern art "The Gems of Indian Art" launched



- A nearly 300-page book documenting the late Harish Khullar's collection of 20th-century Indian modern and contemporary art was released at two events in New Delhi in February 2024.

- The book, titled "Gems of Indian Art, Volume 1," was released by Minister of Road Transport and Highways Shri Nitin Gadkari and Minister of Law and Justice, Parliamentary Affairs, and Culture Shri Arjun Ram Meghwal. Health Minister Shri S.P.S. Baghel also attended the events.
- The book showcases the Khullar family's internationally renowned art collection, known for its exceptional quality and prestigious provenance, with beautiful photographs of the artists' works.
- The collection, largely built by Harish Khullar and augmented by his son Gaurav Khullar and grandson, is celebrated for its extraordinary pieces gathered from around the world.

Practice Questions

1. Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri, Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas (MoP&NG) virtually inaugurated ..... Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) Stations and India's 1st Small Scale Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) Unit of GAIL (India) Limited.
   A. 166
   B. 189
   C. 201
   D. 211
   E. 223
2. The Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MoCA) notified that the provisions of sections 20, 35 & 40 of the Competition (Amendment) Act, 2023 will come into force with effect from 6th March 2024. The CCI can impose a penalty of up to ..... on the global turnover of companies involved in anticompetitive practices.
   A. 10%
   B. 20%
   C. 30%
   D. 40%
   E. 50%
3. Which of the following state government has recently launched the Mukhyamantri Yuva Udyami Vikas Abhiyan (MYUVA) program to empower young entrepreneurs in March 2024?
   A. Maharashtra
   B. Uttar Pradesh
   C. Gujarat
   D. Madhya Pradesh
   E. Jharkhand
4. Union government approved the extension of the targeted subsidy of ..... per 14.2 kg cylinder to the beneficiaries of Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) for Financial year 2024-2025 (FY25).
   A. Rs 100
   B. Rs 150
   C. Rs 200
   D. Rs 250
   E. Rs 300
5. Who among the following has launched India's first government-owned OTT (over-the-top) platform, 'CSpace', at an event held at the Kairali Theatre in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala in March 2024?
   A. Pinarayi Vijayan
   B. M.K. Stalin
   C. Durai Murugan
   D. Revanth Reddy
   E. Siddaramaiah
6. Which of the following Institute has recently (in March '24) signed an Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) with the Central Water Commission (CWC), Ministry of Jal Shakti (MoJS) to establish an International Centre of Excellence for Dams (ICED)?
   A. IIT Madras
   B. IISc Bangalore
   C. IIT Kanpur
   D. IIT Roorkee
   E. Indian Institute of Science Education and Research, Pune
7. Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) headed by Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi, has approved funds worth Rs 15,000 crore for an indigenous fifth-generation Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA) fighter jet project for the Indian Air Force (IAF). The AMCA project aims to develop five prototypes of AMCA over the next five years (before 2030) with the first prototype of AMCA expected to roll out in:
   A. 2024
   B. 2025
   C. 2026
   D. 2027
   E. 2028

8. Who among the following has recently (in March '24) launched NITI Aayog (National Institution for Transforming India)'s 'NITI For States' platform which will serve as a Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) platform for policy and good governance?
   A. Amit Shah
   B. Dharmendra Pradhan
   C. Giriraj Singh
   D. Ashwini Vaishnaw
   E. Virendra Kumar

9. On 1 March 2024, Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, Ministry of Education (MoE), has inaugurated 'I-Hub Foundation' during the 100 Cube Startup Conclave held at:
   A. IIM Indore
   B. IIM Sambalpur
   C. IIM Ahmedabad
   D. IIM Calcutta
   E. IIM Lucknow

10. On 10th March 2024, India and European Free Trade Association (EFTA), signed a Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) commiting an investment of USD 100 billion over:
   A. 2 years
   B. 5 years
   C. 10 years
   D. 15 years
   E. 20 years

11. On 11 March 2024, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) notified the Citizenship (Amendment) Rules, 2024 under the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 (CAA-2019). The rules to fast-track the citizenship process for non-Muslims, immigrants such as Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, Parsis, and Christians from Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, who had entered India before:
   A. 1 January 2010
   B. 31 December 2014
   C. 31 December 2007
   D. 1 January 2002
   E. 1 January 2017

12. On 8th March 2024, Pema Khandu, Chief Minister (CM) of Arunachal Pradesh, inaugurated Bichom, the ..... of Arunachal Pradesh and laid the foundation of its headquarters at Napangphung.
   A. 21th district
   B. 23th district
   C. 25th district
   D. 27th district
   E. 29th district

13. The Department of Pharmaceuticals (DoP) announced the Revamped Pharmaceuticals Technology Upgradation Assistance Scheme (RPTUAS) to enhance the technological capabilities of the Pharma Industry. Eligibility for the PTUAS has been expanded beyond MSMEs to include pharmaceutical manufacturing units with a turnover of less than Rs _____ that requires technology and quality upgradation.
   A. Rs 200 crore
   B. Rs 300 crore
   C. Rs 400 crore
   D. Rs 500 crore
   E. Rs 600 crore

14. On 12th March 2024, Union Minister, Dr Mansukh Mandaviya, Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers (MoC&F), inaugurated a credit assistance program of the Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) for Jan Aushadhi Kendras (JAKs) during the event held in:
   A. Mumbai
   B. New Delhi
   C. Chennai
   D. Pune
   E. Kanpur

15. In March 2024, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) signed a ..... contract for anti-drone systems for the Indian Army and Indian Air Force (IAF) with Chennai (Tamil Nadu)-based Big Bang Boom Solutions Private Limited (BBBS), India's fastest-growing defence sector start-up.
   A. Rs 100 crore
   B. Rs 150 crore
   C. Rs 200 crore
   D. Rs 250 crore
   E. Rs 300 crore

16. Who among the following has been appointed as the Chairman of Prasar Bharati?
   A. Himanshu Kapania
   B. Vittorio Colao
   C. Shashi Shekar Vempati
   D. Navneet Kumar Sehgal
   E. Anupam Shrivastava

17. National Vaccination Day is celebrated every year on 16th March, what is the theme of 2024 this time?
    A. Vaccines bring us closer
    B. Vaccines Work for All
    C. Protected Together: Vaccines Work
    D. Protected To Us : Vaccines Work
    E. None of these

18. In March 2024, Former Test wicketkeeper Matthew Wade announced that he would retire from first-class cricket after playing the Sheffield Shield final. He is associated with which cricket team?
    A. New Zealand
    B. England
    C. South Africa
    D. Australia
    E. Ireland

19. What is the rank of India in the DHL Global Connectedness Report 2024?
    A. 61st
    B. 62nd
    C. 63rd
    D. 64th
    E. 65th

20. In Which city India's first indoor athletics and aquatic centres inaugurated by Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik?
    A. Bhubaneshwar
    B. Cuttack
    C. Rourkela
    D. Balasore
    E. Balangir

21. Which bank will provide USD 23 million loan to the Government of India to set up an International Fintech Institute at the Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT-City) in Gujarat?
    A. Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
    B. World Bank
    C. Asian Development Bank
    D. New Development Bank
    E. Bank of Japan

22. In March 2024, a Majuli masks has been awarded the GI tag, this product received the GI tag for which of the following states?
    A. Assam
    B. Uttar Pradesh
    C. Assam
    D. Madhya Pradesh
    E. Odisha

23. Which of the following states has decided to purchase 2.5 acres of land in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir?
    A. Maharashtra
    B. Punjab
    C. Odisha
    D. Madhya Pradesh
    E. Bihar

24. Indian cricketer Ruturaj Gaikwad has been appointed as the captain of which Indian Premier League (IPL) team in 2024?
    A. Rajasthan Royals
    B. Mumbai Indians
    C. Chennai Super Kings
    D. Kings XI Punjab
    E. Royal Challengers Bangalore

25. Who has assumed additional charge as the Minister of Food Processing Industries on March 20, 2024?
    A. Smriti Irani
    B. Piyush Goyal
    C. Kiren Rijiju
    D. Amit Shah
    E. None of these

26. What was the theme of World Forestry Day 2024?
    A. Safe Blood for All
    B. Be there for someone else. Give blood. Share life
    C. Forests and innovation: new solutions for a better world
    D. Safe Blood Saves Lives
    E. Give Blood. Give Now. Give Often

27. What is the theme of the 'International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (IDERD) 2024?

A. Fight against racism and discrimination
B. Rscism is a tabbo
C. A Decade of Recognition, Justice, and Development: Implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent
D. Youth standing up against racism
E. Coming together to fight racism

28. Former Captain Saeed Ahmed passed away recently was the cricket Test team member of which of the following cricket team?

A. Bangladesh
B. West Indies
C. Netherlands
D. Pakistan
E. None of these

29. Vinay Kumar has been appointed as the next ambassador of India to which country?

A. Japan
B. Indonesia
C. China
D. Russia
E. Madagascar

30. Who was awarded the prestigious 'CERAWeek Leadership Award for Building Global Consensus towards a Sustainable Energy Future' at the CERAWeek by S&P Global conference at Houston?

A. Dr. Sultan Al Jaber
B. Ebrahim Raisi
C. Abdul Latif Rashid
D. Anwar Ibrahim
E. None of these

31. What is the main feature of Trinetra app 2.0 unveiled by Uttar Pradesh Police?

A. Facial recognition for suspects
B. Voice sample analysis for cybercrime cases
C. GPS tracking for stolen goods
D. Fingerprint identification for criminals
E. Real-time crime mapping

32. Where is India's first indigenous Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor located?

A. Kalpakkam
B. Narora
C. Kudankulam
D. Chennai
E. Kollam

33. How many new moons have been discovered orbiting Uranus and Neptune?

A. Two
B. hree
C. Five
D. Seven
E. Eight

34. Which organization celebrated its 174th Foundation Day on March 4th, 2024?

A. Geological Survey of India
B. Archaeological Survey of India
C. National Institute of Oceanography
D. Indian Council of Agricultural Research
E. None of the above

35. Which city's Silver Filigree has recently been awarded the Geographical Indication (GI) tag?

A. Kolkata
B. Jaipur
C. Varanasi
D. Cuttack
E. Pune

36. Under which section of the Banking Regulation Act was the merger of Fincare Small Finance Bank with AU Small Finance Bank approved by the Reserve Bank of India?

A. Section 22
B. Section 33
C. Section 44A
D. Section 55
E. Section 59

37. On which date is Dissociative Identity Disorder Awareness Day observed?

A. March 5
B. March 15
C. April 5
D. April 15
E. April 10

38. In which city was India's first Green Hydrogen Plant in the Stainless Steel Sector inaugurated?

A. Jajpur
B. Nagpur
C. Hisar
D. Raigarh
E. Kanpur

39. Which group does the "MYUVA Scheme" launched by CM Yogi Adityanath in Uttar Pradesh aim to support?

A. Farmers
B. Young Entrepreneurs
C. Women Entrepreneurs
D. Senior Citizens
E. None of the above

40. What platform allows individuals to report suspected fraudulent communication in India?

A. CyberGuard
B. FraudAl
C. hakshu
D. Scamkaram
E. None of the above

41. What is the name of the scheme launched by Rajnath Singh at DefConnect 2024 to foster innovation in defence technology?

A. INNOVATE
B. ADITI
C. DEFEND
D. TECHBOOST
E. SURYA

42. What is Moody's upgraded GDP growth forecast for India in 2024?

A. 6.5%
B. 6.2%
C. 6.6%
D. 6.8%
E. 6.9%

43. When was the inaugural International Day for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Awareness observed?

A. March 5
B. December 7
C. March 7
D. December 5
E. April 15

44. Which financial institution has been banned by the RBI from giving gold loans?

A. Aditya Birla Capital
B. Muthoot Finance
C. Manappuram Finance
D. IIFL Finance
E. Moneyview

45. Which institution is hosting the All India Research Scholars' Summit (AIRSS) 2024?

A. IIT Delhi
B. IIT Bombay
C. IIT Madras
D. IIT Kharagpur
E. IIT Kanpur

46. What is the main objective of the BIMSTEC Faculties Exchange Programme in Dhaka?

A. Foster regional cooperation
B. Boost Mutual Cooperation
C. Enhance individual country's diplomatic skills
D. Facilitate economic development
E. None of the above

47. The Global Spirituality Festival was organized in collaboration with Heart fulness at _____.

A. Patna
B. Ranchi
C. Cuttak
D. Hyderabad
E. Jaipur

48. Who among the following players won 2024 BNP Paribas Open Single title?

A. Rafael Nadal
B. Roger Federer
C. Novak Djokovic
D. Carlos Alcaraz
E. Milos Raonic

49. Which of the following cities hosted the 25th edition of the Flora Expo 2024?

A. Kathmandu
B. Dubai
C. New Delhi
D. Mumbai
E. Jakarta

50. Which country hosted the Summit Warns Of AI Risks To Democracy?

A. South Korean
B. India
C. Japan
D. Nepal
E. China

51. In Which states India's first integrated oil palm processing unit started operation by one of India's largest oil palm development companies, 3F Oil Palm?

A. Arunachal Pradesh
B. Madhya Pradesh
C. Uttar Pradesh
D. Bihar
E. Punjab

52. In March 2024, who was appointed as the National Disability Icon of the Election Commission of India?

A. Deepika Padukone
B. Priyanka Chopra
C. Sheetal Devi
D. Amitabh Bachchan
E. Salman Khan

53. What is 'BioTRIG', recently seen in the news?

A. Waste management technology
B. Method used for environmental conservation
C. Tank cleaning robot
D. Technique to remove pest from crop
E. None of these

54. In March 2024, 3rd edition of North East Games 2024 was held in which North East state?

A. Assam
B. Sikkim
C. Manipur
D. Nagaland
E. Tripura

55. What is the amount that Indian Railways made from canceled tickets on the waiting list from 2021 to 2024 (till January)?

A. ₹1,229.85 crore
B. ₹1,243.20 crore
C. ₹1,220.00 crore
D. ₹1,235.50 crore
E. ₹1,250.75 crore

56. Which state government has recently (in March '24) signed a letter of Intent with the World Economic Forum (WEF) to establish India's sole Centre for Artificial Intelligence (AI)?

A. Karnataka
B. Maharashtra
C. Andhra Pradesh
D. Tamil Nadu
E. Kerala

57. The Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoWCD) launched a National Curriculum for Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) for children from 3 to:

A. 5 years
B. 6 years
C. 7 years
D. 8 years
E. 9 years

58. Which state government has recently (in March '24) renamed the Curry Road railway station as Lalbaug?

A. Odisha
B. Haryana
C. Punjab
D. Uttarakhand
E. Maharashtra

59. Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi launched the 'Pradhan Mantri Samajik Utthan evam Rozgar Adharit Jankalyan' (PM-SURAJ) national portal to disadvantaged communities by the _____

A. Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment
B. Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs
C. Ministry of Home Affairs
D. Ministry of Rural Development
E. Ministry of Panchayati Raj

60. What was the growth rate of earnings from cancelled waiting list tickets from 2021 to 2024(till January)?

A. 35%
B. 30%
C. 20%
D. 25%
E. 40%

61. Who has been appointed as the new CEO of P&G India effective May 1, 2024?

A. Priya Patel
B. Ravi Kapoor
C. Rajesh Menon
D. Kumar Venkatasubramanian
E. Alok Sharma

62. Which country has been named the happiest country in the world for the seventh year in a row according to the latest World Happiness Report released by the UN?

A. Switzerland
B. Sweden
C. Norway
D. Finland
E. Denmark

63. How did India fare in the happiness index ranking in the latest World Happiness Report?

A. 90th
B. 100th
C. 126th
D. 75th
E. 50th

64. Among the 143 countries evaluated in the World Happiness Report, which country remains at the lowest rank?

A. Germany
B. United States
C. Japan
D. Norway
E. Afghanistan

65. In the latest World Happiness Report, which country ranked 126th in the happiness index?

A. China
B. Brazil
C. Japan
D. Australia
E. India

66. Which of the day is celebrated as World Health Day?

A. 16th March
B. 17th March
C. 18th March
D. 19th March
E. 20th March

67. Legendary Rabindra Sangeet singer and composer Sadi Mohammad passed away at the age of 70. He belonged to which country?

A. Bangladesh
B. Pakistan
C. Maldives
D. Turkmenistan
E. Australia

68. Who among the following has been appointed as the principal spokesperson of the government?

Sheyphali B Saran

A. Kuldeep Singh Dhatwalia
B. Sharad Kumar Saraf
C. Mrutyunjay Mohapatra
D. None of these

69. Who is conferred with the 33rd Saraswati Samman for 2023?

A. SL Bhyrappa
B. Prabha Varma
C. Vasdev Mohi
D. Mahabaleshwar Sail
E. Govind Mishra

70. According to the 6th Annual World Air Quality Report, which is the most polluted metropolitan area globally in 2023?

A. Chennai
B. Ghaziabad
C. Indore
D. Begusarai
E. Bhopla

71. What is the percentage growth in gross direct tax collections in FY24 compared to FY23?

A. 24.33%
B. 16.21%
C. 18.74%
D. 20.12%
E. 22.56%

72. What is the growth rate in refunds issued from the preceding year to FY23-24?

A. 10.21%
B. 18.91%
C. 16.82%
D. 12.74%
E. 14.56%

73. When is French Language Day 2024 celebrated?

A. 22nd March
B. 19th March
C. 21st March
D. 20th March
E. 23rd March

74. In which city, Union Minister of State (MoS) for Science and Technology, Jitendra Singh has inaugurated the first-of-its-kind "National Speed Breeding Crop Facility" in March 2024?

A. Mohali, Punjab
B. Dibrugarh, Assam
C. Roorkee, Uttarakhand
D. Rourkela, Odisha
E. Asansol, West Bengal

75. On 12th March 2024, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA), Government of India (GoI), issued a gazette notification, officially designating ..... of every year as Hyderabad Liberation Day.

A. 11 September
B. 13 September
C. 15 September
D. 17 Spetember
E. 19 September

76. Which of the following organisations, along with Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation have pledged nearly USD 600 million towards eliminating cervical cancer in March 2024?

A. World Bank
B. World Trade Organisation
C. World Health Organization
D. Red Cross
E. IMF

77. Who has been selected as the flag bearer for India at Paris Olympics 2024?

A. Manika Batra
B. Sharat Kamal
C. Saurabh Chaudhary
D. Neeraj Chopra
E. Susheel Kumar

78. Which edition of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Startup Forum was organized in New Delhi in March 2024?

A. 1st
B. 2nd
C. 3rd
D. 4th
E. 5th

79. International Telecommunication Union (ITU) elected which country as co-chair of its Digital Innovation Board?

A. Maldives
B. Mauritius
C. USA
D. India
E. Finland

80. In March 2024, which bank has announced a USD 250 million loan commitment for new-age entrepreneurs?

A. City Union Bank
B. Indian Overseas Bank
C. DBS Bank India
D. Karnataka Bank
E. HDFC Bank

81. Who has been elected as the President of the Indian Steel Association (ISA)?

A. Anshika Singh
B. Radhika Goel
C. Naveen Jindal
D. Shivani Tyagi
E. Lokesh M

82. Who has been elected as Chairman of Indian Banks' Association (IBA)for 2023- 24?

A. Madhav Nair
B. N Kamakodi
C. S L Jain
D. Dinesh Kumar Khara
E. M V Rao

83. World Down Syndrome Day is observed every year on which day?

A. 21 March
B. 22 March
C. 23 March
D. 19 March
E. 20 March

84. Who has been appointed as Director General of All India Radio (AIR)?

A. Anshika Singh
B. Maushami Chakraborty
C. Vasudha Gupta
D. Joyeeta Gupta
E. None of these

85. Who has been given the additional charge of Governor of Telangana and Lieutenant Governor of Puducherry?

A. Gurmit Singh
B. Biswabhusan Harichandan
C. C. P. Radhakrishnan
D. S. Abdul Nazeer
E. Anusuiya Uikey

86. Which company has partners with Election Commission of India to identify unlawful content from its platforms?

A. X
B. Tinder
C. Meta
D. Google
E. PIB

87. Who Proposes Introduction of Audio-Visual Disclosures for Public Issue Documents?

A. NABARD
B. RBI
C. EPFO
D. SEBI
E. SIDBI

88. Railways earned how much from cancelled waiting list tickets in span of 3 years?

A. ₹1,236 crore
B. ₹1,234 crore
C. ₹1,130 crore
D. ₹1,430 crore
E. ₹1,230 crore

89. In March 2024, the Reserve Bank of India has imposed how much rupee's penalties on Tamilnad Mercantile Bank?

A. ₹1.31 cr
B. ₹2.31 cr
C. ₹3.31 cr
D. ₹4.31 cr
E. ₹5.31 cr

90. Who among the following has been given the additional charge of the Ministry of Food and Processing Industries?

A. Anurag Thakur
B. Piyush Goyal
C. Jitendra Singh
D. Nitin Gadkari
E. Kiren Rijiju

91. Which payments bank has partnered with Noise and Mastercard to launch "A New Way to Pay" ?

A. Airtel Payments Bank
B. India Post Payments Bank
C. FINO Payments Bank
D. Paytm Payments Bank
E. None of these

92. Which IIT has developed an indigenous electric standing wheelchair called 'NeoStand'?

A. IIT Guwahati
B. IIT Delhi
C. IIT Madras
D. IIT Indore
E. IIT Roorkee

93. Which of the following country officially joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), becoming the alliance's 32nd member in March 2024?

A. Sweden
B. Kosovo
C. Georgia
D. Belarus
E. Bosnia

94. Panama joined the International Solar Alliance (ISA) as its ..... member, showing its commitment to advancing solar energy in the energy sector.

A. 91st
B. 92nd
C. 93rd
D. 95th
E. 97th

95. Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi launched the Mahatari Vandana Yojana in which state, aiming to uplift and economically empower women in the state.

A. Madhya Pradesh
B. Chhattisgarh
C. Rajasthan
D. Maharashtra
E. Gujarat

96. Which of the following state government has launched 'Indiramma Indlu', a housing scheme to provide houses for homeless poor people in March 2024?

A. Odisha
B. Telangana
C. Andhra Pradesh
D. Maharashtra
E. Jharkhand

97. Which country's central bank has recently (in March '24) signed an MoU with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to promote the use of local currencies of both countries?

A. Reserve Bank of Australia
B. Bangladesh Bank
C. Bank Indonesia
D. Bank of Japan
E. Central Bank of Malaysia

98. Which of the following bank has recently launched India's first contactless payment wearable?

A. Axis Bank
B. HDFC Bank
C. ICICI Bank
D. YES Bank
E. IndusInd Bank

99. The Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) has secured approval from the Green Climate Fund (GCF) for its first anchored project, the Avaana Sustainability Fund (ASF), valued at:

A. USD 120 million
B. USD 240 million
C. USD 200 million
D. USD 180 million
E. USD 150 million

100. Name the bank which has launched 'Green Term Deposit Scheme' to raise deposits to finance eligible environment-friendly projects and sectors in March 2024?

A. Canara Bank
B. Federal Bank
C. State Bank of India
D. Union Bank of India
E. Bank of Baroda

101. Name the Insurance Company which has launched a comprehensive women's health insurance plan 'Health PowHER' in March 2024.

A. HDFC Standard Life Insurance
B. Future Generali India Life Insurance
C. SBI Life Insurance
D. IndiaFirst Life Insurance
E. ICICI Prudential Life Insurance

Answer Key

1. (C)	2. (C)	3. (B)	4. (E)	5. (A)	6. (B)	7. (C)	8. (D)	9. (B)	10. (D)
11. (B)	12. (D)	13. (D)	14. (B)	15. (C)	16. (D)	17. (B)	18. (D)	19. (B)	20. (A)
21: (C)	22. (C)	23. (A)	24. (C)	25. (C)	26. (C)	27. (C)	28. (D)	29. (D)	30. (A)
31. (B)	32. (A)	33. (B)	34. (A)	35. (D)	36. (C)	37. (A)	38. (C)	39. (B)	40. (C)
41. (B)	42. (D)	43. (A)	44. (D)	45. (C)	46. (B)	47. (D)	48. (D)	49. (A)	50. (A)
51. (A)	52. (C)	53. (A)	54. (D)	55. (A)	56. (A)	57. (B)	58. (E)	59. (A)	60. (B)
61. (D)	62. (D)	63. (C)	64. (E)	65. (E)	66. (E)	67. (A)	68. (A)	69. (B)	70. (D)
71. (C)	72. (D)	73. (D)	74. (A)	75. (D)	76. (A)	77. (B)	78. (D)	79. (D)	80. (C)
81. (C)	82. (E)	83. (A)	84. (B)	85. (C)	86. (C)	87. (D)	88. (E)	89. (A)	90. (E)
91. (A)	92. (C)	93. (A)	94. (E)	95. (B)	96. (B)	97. (C)	98. (E)	99. (A)	100. (E)
101. (B)									

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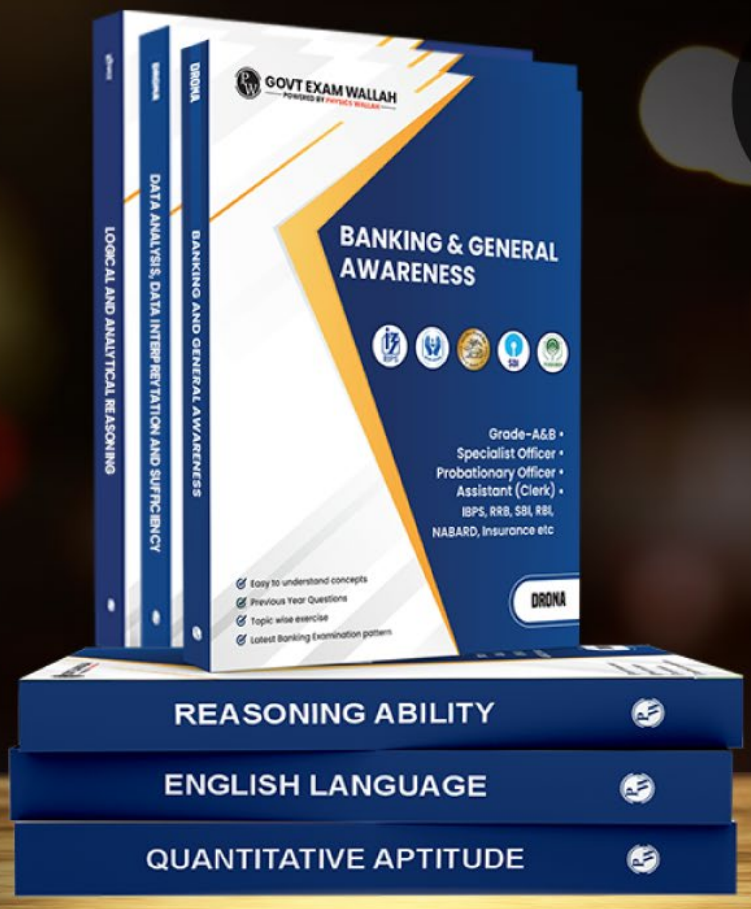
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Banking and Economy

Chapter 1

Airtel Payments Bank's new NCMC-enabled debit, prepaid cards

- Airtel Payments Bank has launched new debit and prepaid cards that are designed to be more convenient and environmentally friendly for their customers in India.
- The Bank has partnered with National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) to launch these interoperable cards that are powered by RuPay.
- National Common Mobility Card (NCMC) allows these cards to be used for various purposes beyond traditional debit/prepaid cards.
- This card is linked to a savings account and allows debit transactions like purchases and ATM withdrawals.

National Common Mobility Card (NCMC)

- The National Common Mobility Card (NCMC) is an initiative by the Government of India to bring about a seamless travel experience across the country.
- It was launched in March 2019, it functions as a single card for various transport-related payments.
- NCMC aims to promote cashless transactions and interoperable fare payments for public transportation systems, including buses, metro trains, suburban railways, and ferries.
- The NCMC project is implemented by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), Government of India, in collaboration with various stakeholders, including transport authorities, banks, and card networks.
- NCMC cards can be used for purposes other than transportation, such as retail purchases, dining, and utility bill payments, wherever RuPay cards are accepted.

Bandhan Life Insurance unveils new identity and growth strategy

- Bandhan Life Insurance, formerly known as Aegon Life Insurance, has rebranded itself with the tagline 'Bharat Ki Udaan, Bandhan Se', reflecting its commitment to empowering the aspirations of India.
- Under the ownership of Bandhan Financial Holdings, the company is embarking on an aggressive growth strategy, aiming to recruit 1,000 new employees and expand its customer base.
- Bandhan Life aims to emerge as a leading multi-channel insurance provider, focusing on digital innovation, robust distribution, and service excellence.

SBI Life launched ideationX

- SBI Life Insurance has inaugurated IdeationX, a groundbreaking initiative aimed at fostering life insurance innovation.
- This initiative encourages future leaders from top B-Schools to devise unconventional solutions that cater to evolving consumer needs in the insurance sector.
- IdeationX targets students from prestigious B-Schools nationwide, urging them to think creatively and present innovative life insurance solutions.

Govt teams up with SBI Cards, telcos to combat OTP frauds

- India's home ministry, SBI Cards and Payment Services Ltd (SBI Card) and telecom operators have partnered to develop an innovative solution for alerting about stolen one-time passwords as part of a broader effort to combat the growing threat of cyber fraud and phishing attacks on the banking ecosystem.
- The Centre is testing a solution that will allow banks to track the registered address as well as geolocation of a customer and where an OTP is getting delivered.
- In case of any discrepancy between the two locations, the customer can be alerted of a possible phishing attack.

NBBL partners with SBI to introduce NCMC recharge as a new biller category

- NPCI Bharat BillPay Limited (NBBL), a wholly-owned subsidiary of the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) announced its partnership with the State Bank of India (SBI) by onboarding SBI NCMC cards on its Bharat BillPay platform.



- The collaboration aims to boost convenience for travelers. Enabling the SBI National Common Mobility Card on Bharat BillPay tries to provide a seamless experience for consumers.
- The category has been already made functional with SBI NCMC cards for Noida Metro, Nagpur Metro, MMRDA Line 2A & 7, Chennai Metro, Kanpur Metro, and Parliament Canteen via SBI Unipay.

About National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)

- National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) was established in 2008 as a not-for-profit company.
- It was established under Section 25 of the Companies Act, 1956, by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the Indian Banks' Association (IBA).
- Some of its prominent shareholders include the State Bank of India, Punjab National Bank, ICICI Bank, HDFC Bank, Citibank, and others.
- NPCI operates under the regulatory supervision of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), which regulates and supervises payment systems in India.

Products and Services:

- Unified Payments Interface (UPI)
- Immediate Payment Service (IMPS)
- RuPay Card
- Aadhaar Enabled Payment System (AePS)

Vedanta firm Hindustan Zinc becomes 3rd largest silver producer globally

- Vedanta group firm Hindustan Zinc has become the third largest producer of silver globally.
- As per a survey, its Sindesar Khurd Mine in Rajasthan now stands as the world's second-largest silver-producing mine, moving up from last year's fourth spot.
- Hindustan Zinc, a Vedanta Group company in zinc, lead and silver businesses, is the world's second-largest integrated zinc producer and now the third-largest silver producer.
- The company has a market share of 75 per cent of the growing zinc market in India.

Audit Panel of board at UCBs must improve oversight, risk management

- The audit panel of the board at urban cooperative banks (UCBs) needs to improve overall oversight and functioning of the regulated entity, according to RBI.
- The financial sector regulator also flagged the importance of the internal audit function in the early detection of irregularities and the need for leveraging technology.
- M Rajeshwar Rao, Deputy Governor of the RBI, highlights the significant role of UCBs in providing banking services, especially to the unbanked.
- The RBI conducts a conference for the Northern Zone UCB Directors in Lucknow, focusing on governance, risk management, compliance, and audit.

RBI to offer CBDC-R accessible to non-bank payments system operators

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) proposed to make CBDC-R (CBDC-Retail) accessible to a broader population by allowing non-bank payment system operators to offer CBDC wallets.
- Non-bank payment system operators include third-party payment applications like Phone Pe, Google Pay, etc.
- According to RBI, this move is expected to enhance access and expand choices available to the users apart from testing the system resilience to handle multi-channel transactions.

About CBDC

- Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) is a digital form of a country's fiat currency issued by the central bank.
- CBDC refers to a digital representation of a nation's fiat currency that is issued, regulated, and guaranteed by the central bank.
- It is a legal tender and holds the same value as physical currency.
- The primary purpose of CBDC is to modernize payment systems, enhance financial inclusion, reduce transaction costs, and mitigate risks associated with cash usage.

- CBDC is issued and regulated by the central bank, ensuring its stability and legal tender status.

Types of CBDC:

- Retail CBDC: Designed for the general public, allowing individuals and businesses to hold and transact in digital currency directly with the central bank.
- Wholesale CBDC: Targeted at financial institutions and used for interbank settlements and other wholesale transactions.

RBI launched the CBDC pilot programme in 2022. The Indian CBDC, also known as Digital Rupee, is a tokenized digital version of the Rupee issued by RBI.

Premium of non-life insurance companies grew 12.78% in FY24

- Non-life insurers posted a 12.78 per cent year-on-year (Y-o-Y) growth in gross direct premium underwritten in 2023-24 (FY24), reaching ₹2.89 trillion, compared to 16.4 per cent in the previous financial year.
- The premium fell short of touching the ₹3 trillion mark amid a slowdown in the growth rate of health and motor insurance, along with weak growth in the crop insurance segment.
- According to data released by the General Insurance Council, premiums of general insurers grew by 14.24 per cent Y-o-Y to ₹2.45 trillion in FY24.
- Public sector general insurers clocked an 8.99 per cent growth in premium to ₹90,344.49 crore, whereas their private sector counterparts witnessed a 17.53 per cent increase to ₹1.55 trillion.

Air India, BIAL sign agreement to develop Bengaluru airport as hub

- On 9 April 2024, Air India and Bangalore International Airport Limited (BIAL) announced a partnership aimed at transforming the Bengaluru airport into an aviation hub.
- The agreement includes plans for the development of a dedicated domestic lounge, expansion of international services, and establishment of a maintenance, repair, and overhaul (MRO) facility.
- According to a joint statement, Air India, along with other Tata Group airlines – AIX Connect and Vistara, will collaborate with BIAL to improve international connectivity, operational efficiency, and passenger experience over the next five years.

Air India

- Air India was founded in 1932 by J.R.D. Tata as Tata Airlines, initially operating mail and passenger services within India.
- In 1946, Tata Airlines was renamed Air India and became a public limited company under the name Air India Ltd.
- Air India commenced its international operations in 1948 with flights between Mumbai and London via Cairo and Geneva.
- In 1953, the Government of India nationalized Air India and merged it with another state-owned airline, Indian National Airways, to form Indian Airlines Corporation (IAC).
- In 2007, Air India and Indian Airlines were merged into a single entity called National Aviation Company of India Limited (NACIL) to streamline operations and improve efficiency.
- Air India is currently owned by the Government of India through the Ministry of Civil Aviation.
- Air India is a member of the Star Alliance, a global airline alliance that enables cooperation and code-sharing with partner airlines.

Chairman of Air India: N Chandrasekaran

Headquarters: Gurgaon, Haryana

Mobile wallet payments in India to surpass ₹531 trillion in 2028

- The adoption of mobile wallets is rapidly increasing in India, becoming the preferred payment method over traditional options such as cash and cards.
- According to GlobalData, a leading data and analytics company based in London, payments made via mobile wallets in India are expected to exceed Rs 531.8 trillion by 2028.
- This growth is projected to have a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 18.3% from 2024 to 2028.
- The value of mobile wallet transactions in India, as reported by GlobalData, experienced a significant increase, reaching ₹202.8 trillion ($2.5 trillion) in 2023, with a CAGR of 72.1% between 2019 and 2023.

HDFC Bank opens branch in Kavaratti island

- HDFC Bank opened its first branch in Lakshadweep on Kavaratti island, becoming the first private sector lender in the region.

- The bank aims to serve the financial needs of individuals, families, and businesses in Lakshadweep.
- The branch inauguration was attended by Indian Navy's Captain Lovekesh Thakur and local resident K P Muthukoya, along with bank officials.

Kavaratti



- Kavaratti is the capital island of the Lakshadweep Islands, a Union Territory of India.
- Kavaratti is a tiny coral islet known for its pristine white-sand beaches, crystal-clear lagoons teeming with marine life, and a laid-back atmosphere.
- Kavatti's beaches are a major draw for tourists seeking relaxation and tranquility.
- The beaches are fringed with coconut palms and offer stunning views of the turquoise waters.
- Kavaratti has a historic lighthouse built-in 1780. The lighthouse offers panoramic views of the island, especially during sunset.

Health insurers leave general insurance industry far behind in growth in FY24

- In FY24, India's standalone health insurers demonstrated remarkable growth, expanding at a rate twice as fast as the general insurance industry, according to data from the General Insurance Council.
- The general insurance sector as a whole recorded an annual premium of nearly ₹2.9 lakh crore for FY24, reflecting a 13% increase from the previous fiscal year's ₹2.6 lakh crore.
- This underscores the significant growth and importance of the standalone health insurance segment within the broader insurance industry landscape.

SBI and Standard Chartered embrace new RBI norms

- State Bank of India (SBI) and Standard Chartered Bank India conducted a Credit Default Swap (CDS) trade worth ₹25 crore, marking the first such transaction following the issuance of fresh guidelines by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
- The trade involved a 1-year rupee CDS featuring REC, according to senior executives at Standard Chartered Bank.

IREDA Celebrates Legacy: Past Leaders Share Vision for Future'



- On 10 April, 2024, Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency Ltd. (IREDA) celebrated "Public Sector Day" by hosting a special event that brought together its predecessors and retired employees.
- The gathering aimed to celebrate the organization's legacy and gather insights for its future success.
- Former CMDs and Directors enthusiastically participated, sharing valuable insights for the company's trajectory moving forward.

RBI rejects Tamilnad Mercantile Bank's proposal for CEO candidate

- S. Krishnan, the MD & CEO of Tamilnad Mercantile Bank (TMB), resigned in September 2023 due to personal reasons but continued until a replacement was found, as he was the only whole-time director on the board.
- The TMB board accepted his resignation and forwarded it to the RBI.
- Similarly, Dhanlaxmi Bank's CEO, JK Shivan, whose tenure ended in January, is also continuing until a successor is appointed, as he is the sole whole-time director.
- TMB appointed Thomas Mathew, RBI's regional director in Thiruvananthapuram, as an Additional Director.

RBI ban on Bank of Baroda World app

- Finance Ministry proposes measures to combat cyber fraud post Bank of Baroda World app scam.

- The Finance Ministry's proactive approach in proposing measures to combat cyber fraud is essential in safeguarding financial systems and restoring public trust.
- The surge in cyber fraud cases, exemplified by the staggering 1.1 million reported incidents in 2023, underscores the urgency of such actions.
- Utilizing National Crime Records Bureau data can provide valuable insights into the nature and extent of cyber fraud, enabling authorities to devise targeted strategies.

India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) introduced AePS service charges

- The decision to offer the first three AePS issuer transactions per month, such as cash withdrawal, cash deposit, and mini statement, free of charge is a commendable step towards promoting financial inclusion and ensuring access to essential banking services for all citizens.

India Post Payments Bank (IPPB)

- The India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) is a payments bank launched by the Government of India in 2018.
- It's a division of India Post, which falls under the Department of Post of the Ministry of Communications.
- IPPB was incorporated as a public limited company under the Companies Act, 2013, on 17 August 2016.
- IPPB was established with the primary objective of providing accessible, affordable, and reliable banking services to all segments of the population, especially those in remote and rural areas.
- IPPB offers zero-balance savings accounts, enabling individuals to open and maintain accounts without the need for a minimum balance requirement.

- This initiative will particularly benefit individuals in rural and underserved areas who rely on AePS for their banking needs.
- However, it's important for users to be aware of the charges that apply to transactions exceeding the free limit.
- With a fee of ₹20 plus GST per transaction for cash withdrawals and deposits, and ₹5 plus GST per transaction for mini statements, users can make informed decisions regarding their banking activities and budget accordingly.

RBI to set up Digital India Trust Agency to check illegal lending apps

- As part of its efforts to curb growing cyber fraud, the Reserve Bank is considering establishing a Digital India Trust Agency (DIGITA) to stop the mushrooming of illegal lending apps.
- The proposed agency will enable the verification of digital lending apps and maintain a public register of verified apps.
- Apps not carrying the 'verified' signature of DIGITA should be considered unauthorized for the purpose of law enforcement, sources said, adding that this will serve as a pivotal checkpoint in the fight against financial crimes in the digital realm.

HDFC Bank proposed to sell 100% stake in its subsidiary HDFC Education

- HDFC Bank has decided to sell its 100 per cent stake in HDFC Education and Development Services Private Ltd.
- The transaction will be undertaken through the Swiss challenge method, HDFC Bank said in a regulatory filing on 30 March 2024.
- "In this regard, HDFC Bank has, on March 30, 2024, entered into a binding term sheet with an interested party, and the offer contained in such term sheet shall serve as the anchor/base bid to seek counter offers from other parties interested in participating in the aforesaid Swiss challenge process".

PM addresses RBI@90 opening ceremony



- The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi addressed the opening ceremony of RBI@90, a program marking 90 years of the Reserve Bank of India, in Mumbai, Maharashtra on April 1, 2024.
- Shri Modi also released a commemorative coin to mark 90 years of RBI.
- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) commenced its operations on the 1st of April in 1935 and enters its 90th year today.

- Addressing the occasion, the Prime Minister said that the Reserve Bank of India has reached a historic landmark today completing 90 years of existence.

2nd highest monthly Gross GST Revenue collection in March at ₹1.78 lakh crore

- Gross Goods and Services Tax (GST) revenue for March 2024 witnessed the second-highest collection ever at ₹1.78 lakh crore, with an 11.5% year-on-year growth.
- This surge was driven by a significant rise in GST collection from domestic transactions at 17.6%. GST revenue net of refunds for March 2024 is ₹1.65 lakh crore which is a growth of 18.4% over the same period last year.
- Strong Consistent Performance in FY 2023-24: FY 2023-24 marks a milestone with a total gross GST collection of ₹20.18 lakh crore exceeding ₹20 lakh crore, an 11.7% increase compared to the previous year.
- The average monthly collection for this fiscal year stands at ₹1.68 lakh crore, surpassing the previous year's average of ₹1.5 lakh crore. GST revenue net of refunds as of March 2024 for the current fiscal year is ₹18.01 lakh crore which is a growth of 13.4% over the same period last year.

AAI to post record ₹5,000-crore profit in FY24

- The Airports Authority of India (AAI) achieved significant milestones and financial success, as highlighted by AAI Chairman Sanjeev Kumar:
  - **Record Profit:** AAI reported a record profit of around ₹5,000 crore in the fiscal year 2023-24, marking the highest profit in its history.
  - **Turnover:** AAI is projected to achieve a turnover of more than ₹15,000 crore in 2023-24, also marking the highest turnover in its history.
  - **Financial Performance in FY23:** In the previous fiscal year (FY23), AAI reported a profit before tax of ₹3,963.75 crore and a profit after tax of ₹2,972 crore. The total revenue for FY23 stood at ₹12,172.35 crore.

SEBI launched new version of complaint redressal system SCORES 2.0

- The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) introduced an upgraded version of its complaint redressal system, called SEBI Complaint Redressal System (SCORES 2.0), effective from April 1.
- SCORES 2.0 aims to bolster the investor complaint redress mechanism in the securities market, enhancing efficiency through various features such as auto-routing, auto-escalation, and designated body monitoring.
- Enhancements in the new SCORES system focus on improving user experience and expediting investor complaint resolution across the securities market.

Yes Bank, IDFC First Bank to levy surcharge on utility payments with credit cards

- Yes Bank and IDFC First Bank have announced the introduction of a surcharge on utility transactions, effective from May 1. The surcharge will apply to various utility expenses, including telecommunications, electricity, gas, water, internet services, and cable services.
- In recent months, several credit card issuers have started excluding categories like utility bills, insurance, and rent payments from their reward-earning category lists.
- Axis Bank's significant devaluation of its credit cards has prompted other banks to reassess their card offerings and evaluate the revenue generated from their card portfolios.

AU Small Finance Bank merger with Fincare SFB to be effective from April 1, 2024

- AU Small Finance Bank merges with Fincare Small Finance Bank, signaling a significant consolidation within the banking sector.
- The merger, completed on April 1, 2024, via an all-stock transaction, bolsters AU SFB's footprint in South India while expanding its customer base and distribution network.
- Merger details include Fincare SFB shareholders receiving 579 equity shares in AU SFB for every 2,000 equity shares held.
- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) granted final approval for the merger on March 4, 2024, facilitating the seamless integration of operations.

- The merger brings forth enhanced access to the lucrative South India market, leveraging the combined strengths of both entities.

Adani Green becomes first Indian firm with 10K MW renewable energy capacity

- Adani Green Energy Ltd (AGEL) has commissioned 2,000 MW of solar capacity at the Khavda solar park in Gujarat, marking a significant milestone for the company.
- This achievement makes AGEL the first company in India to surpass 10,000 MW of renewable energy capacity, solidifying its position as a leader in the renewable energy sector.
- AGEL now boasts an operating portfolio of 10,934 MW, the largest in India, comprising a mix of solar, wind, and wind-solar hybrid projects.

India aims to increase seafood exports to ₹1 trillion in next 2 years

- Indian shrimp exporters adhere to a robust regulatory and safety regime, ensuring the shipment of high-quality marine products to developed regions like the US and Europe.
- The Indian government aims to increase seafood exports to ₹1 lakh crore in the next two years by enhancing processing capacity and focusing on higher value-added products.
- Debunking reports of poor working conditions and safety standards, a senior government official emphasized that India's 548 seafood units undergo regular inspection and monitoring by various government agencies.
- All seafood units are registered with MPEDA (Marine Products Export Development Authority) and FSSAI (Food Safety and Standards Authority of India), and approved by EIC (Export Inspection Council) as per legal requirements.

Indirect tax collection for FY24 exceeds revised estimates by a significant margin

- Indirect tax collection for the financial year 2023-24 has surpassed the revised estimates (RE) of ₹14.84 trillion by a significant margin, primarily driven by record GST collections.
- CBIC chairman Sanjay Kumar Agarwal commended the tax officials for their efforts in achieving this feat, acknowledging their professionalism, teamwork, and perseverance.



- Agarwal emphasized that the achievement reflects the strength of teamwork and dedication within the CBIC community, expressing heartfelt appreciation to all members for their contributions.
- The gross GST collection for 2023-24 reached ₹20.18 trillion, which includes state GST, Central GST, integrated GST, and compensation cess, marking an impressive 11.7% increase from the previous year.
- The revised estimates for central GST, including compensation cess, stood at ₹9.57 trillion, while for excise duty it was ₹3.08 trillion, and customs ₹2.19 trillion.

NHAI executed capex for FY24 increases by 20% to ₹2.07 trillion

- The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) recorded a capital expenditure of ₹2.07 trillion in FY24, marking a 20% increase compared to expenditures in both FY22 and FY23.
- NHAI accomplished the construction of 6,644 km of national highways in FY24, slightly exceeding the target of 6,544 km. This represents a 20% increase over the 5,544 km constructed in FY23 and a significant 53% increase over the 4,331 km constructed in FY22.
- NHAI, functioning under the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, is responsible for executing road projects, contributing to the overall infrastructure development of the country.

Union Bank raised ₹42,000 cr from DIFC to fund overseas business growth

- Union Bank of India has successfully raised $500 million (approximately ₹4,200 crore) from foreign markets to support its international business expansion.
- The fund arrangement was facilitated by Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC), Dubai Branch, as stated in a regulatory filing by Union Bank of India.

- The raised amount comprises a syndicated term loan of $500 million, with $400 million allocated initially and a Green Shoe option of $100 million.
- The syndicated term loan will be drawn in two tranches, with tenures of 3 and 5 years respectively.
- The first tranche of $100 million was drawn on the day of the announcement, signaling the initiation of the loan arrangement.

'Goldilocks' economy to prompt RBI to keep rates on hold: Economists

- Strong economic growth and moderating inflation provide room for India's central bank, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), to maintain interest rates at its upcoming review, economists suggest.
- The RBI is expected to keep rates unchanged for the seventh consecutive meeting, with all 56 economists in a Reuters poll anticipating no change in the repo rate, currently at 6.50 percent, at least until July.
- According to Barclays economists, the RBI has ample room to hold rates steady in the near term, considering the balanced risks between over-tightening and sustaining monetary policy conducive to achieving a stable GDP growth rate of at least 7.0 percent.
- India's economy is growing faster than anticipated, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi emphasizing the importance of prioritizing growth while ensuring trust and stability.

Repo rate kept unchanged at 6.5% for seventh consecutive time

- The RBI's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) has opted to maintain the repo rate at 6.5 percent for the seventh consecutive time.
- Governor Shaktikanta Das announced the decision, which was reached by a majority of 5-1.
- Additionally, the MPC has decided to retain its stance of "withdrawal of accommodation" with a majority of 5-1.
- This decision aims to balance inflation, aligning it with the four percent target, while also considering growth prospects.

Key points: The RBI's Monetary Policy rate.

RBI Policy Rates	Rate	Status
Policy Repo Rate	6.50%	Unchanged
Standing Deposit Facility (SDF)	6.25%	Unchanged
Marginal Standing Facility Rate	6.75%	Unchanged
Bank Rate	6.75%	Unchanged
Fixed Reverse Repo Rate	3.35%	Unchanged
Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR)	4.50%	Unchanged
Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR)	18.00%	Unchanged

Key Decisions from April MPC:

- **CPI Inflation Projection:**
  - Q1: 4.9%
  - Q2: 3.8%
  - Q3: 4.6%
  - Q4: 4.5%
- **Net FPI Inflows:** Net FPI inflows stood at $41.6 billion, compared with outflows in FY22 and FY23, as stated by the RBI Governor.
- **Real GDP Growth Projection for FY25:** FY25: 7%
  - Q1: 7.1%
  - Q2: 6.9%
  - Q3: 7%
  - Q4: 7%

RBI imposes monetary penalty on IDFC First Bank, LIC Housing Finance

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has imposed a monetary penalty of ₹1 crore on IDFC First Bank, a private sector lender, for non-compliance with certain directions related to Loans and Advances.
- IDFC First Bank sanctioned term loans to a public sector undertaking for infrastructure projects without conducting proper due diligence on their viability and bankability.
- RBI found that the bank failed to ensure that revenue streams from the projects were sufficient for repaying the debt, leading to repayment/servicing of term loans from budgetary resources.
- In a separate regulatory action, RBI imposed a monetary penalty of ₹49.70 lakh on LIC Housing Finance Ltd for non-compliance with certain provisions of the Fair Practices Code.

RBI rejigs quarterly GDP growth forecasts for FY25

- The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) adjusted the quarterly gross domestic product (GDP) growth estimates for FY25 while maintaining the full-year projection at 7 percent.

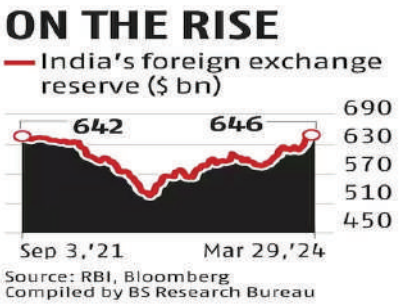
- In its latest bi-monthly monetary policy statement, the MPC revised the growth forecast for the first quarter of FY25 to 7.1 percent from the previous estimate of 7.2 percent.
- Growth projections for the second and fourth quarters were raised to 6.9 percent (from 6.8 percent) and 7 percent (from 6.9 percent), respectively.
- The growth forecast for the third quarter remained unchanged at 7 percent.
- Aditi Nayar, chief economist at ICRA, expressed expectations of transient factors limiting GDP growth to 5.5-5.9 percent in H1 (April-September) of FY25, followed by a sharp improvement to 7.1-7.2 percent in H_2 (October-March).

No change in policy, some 'misusing' currency derivatives norms: RBI

- RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das reiterated the mandatory requirement of underlying exposure for any Exchange Traded Currency Derivatives (ETCD) transaction, ruling out the possibility of reviewing this requirement.
- The RBI deferred the implementation of its new framework for the ETCD market from April 5 to May 3, citing concerns over market participation and increased volatility in the forex market.
- Governor Das emphasized that the need for underlying exposure in ETCD contracts has been a consistent policy of the RBI for many years and is a legal requirement under the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) regulations.

India's forex kitty jumps $2.9 billion to new high of $645.6 billion

- India's foreign exchange reserves surged to a record high for the third consecutive week, reaching $645.58 billion by the week ended March 29, according to data from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).



- This marks an increase of $2.95 billion in the reserves from the previous week.
- RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das highlighted in the monetary policy statement that India's foreign exchange reserves hit an unprecedented level of $645.6 billion as of March 29.

Bandhan Mutual Fund announces launch of the Bandhan Innovation Fund

- Bandhan Mutual Fund (MF) announces the launch of the Bandhan Innovation Fund.
- The scheme will be open for subscription starting April 10.
- It aims to invest in companies demonstrating various characteristics such as substantial R&D investment, high skilled-employee costs, potentially higher margins or growth, unique products or services, non-linear business models, and notable brand presence.
- The fund will allocate its investments across three categories of innovators:
  - 35-45% to leading innovators with significant industry R&D investments.
  - 35-45% to rising innovators utilizing innovation for a competitive edge.
  - 10-15% to emerging innovators.

Index and Reports

Chapter 2

Most global workers facing increasing heat risks: ILO report

- On 22 April 2024, a report titled 'Ensuring safety and health at work in a changing environment' was released by the International Labor Organization (ILO).
- Due to rising temperatures and a growing labor force, more than 70 percent of workers globally are exposed to extreme heat, showing a 34.7 percent increase in risk estimates over the 20 years between 2020 and 2000.
- In hot and rural regions of countries like India, epidemics of chronic kidney disease of unknown aetiology (CKDu) are affecting large numbers of workers conducting heavy manual labour, the UN-agency said in its report citing data from a study.
- Every year, an estimated 22.85 million occupational injuries, 18,970 deaths and 2.09 million disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) are attributable to excessive heat alone, the ILO report said.
- Out of a total global workforce of 3.4 billion workers, at least 2.41 billion workers are exposed to excessive heat every year, the report added.

International Labour Organization (ILO)

- The International Labour Organization (ILO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations that deals with labor issues, particularly international labor standards, social protection, and work-related rights and policies.
- It was founded in 1919, making it the oldest existing UN-specialized agency.
- The primary goal of the ILO is to promote social justice and internationally recognized human and labor rights.
- It also conducts research and analysis on global labor market trends and issues, and it fosters social dialogue between governments, employers, and workers' organizations to address labor-related challenges collaboratively.

Pakistan has highest living cost in Asia with a 25% inflation rate: ADB

- Pakistan has the highest living cost in all of Asia with a 25 per cent inflation rate and its economy may grow at the fourth lowest pace of 1.9 per cent in the region, according to a new Asian Development Bank (ADB) report.
- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) report was released on 11 April 2024 in Manila.
- The Asian Development Outlook also painted a gloomy picture for the next fiscal year as well, projecting a 15% inflation rate for the next fiscal year, again the highest among 46 countries and a 2.8 % growth rate, the fifth lowest for FY 2024-25.
- The Manila-based lending agency stated that the inflation rate in Pakistan is expected to be 25 per cent in the current fiscal year -- the highest in all of Asia.

About ADB

- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is a regional development bank headquartered in Manila, Philippines.
- ADB was established in 1966.
- Its primary mission is to promote economic and social development in Asia and the Pacific region by providing financial assistance, technical assistance, and policy advice to its member countries.
- ADB's operations encompass a wide range of sectors, including infrastructure development, energy, transportation, agriculture, education, health, and environmental sustainability.
- ADB offers technical assistance and knowledge-sharing initiatives to help member countries strengthen their institutional capacity, develop policies and strategies, and adopt best practices in various development areas.
- **Current president and chairperson of the Board of Directors of the ADB** - Masatsugu Asakawa
- **Headquarter -** Manila, Philippines

- This makes Pakistan the most expensive nation in Asia. Earlier, the cost of living in Pakistan used to be the highest in South Asia.

India's population estimated at 144 crore, 24% in 0-14 age bracket: UNFPA report

- The United Nations Population Fund's (UNFPA) State of World Population - 2024 report -- "Interwoven Lives, Threads of Hope: Ending Inequalities in Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights" -- revealed that India's population is estimated to double in 77 years.
- India leads globally with an estimated population of 1.44 billion, followed by China at 1.425 billion, according to the report.
- India's population was recorded at 1.21 billion during the last census, conducted in 2011.
- The report further detailed that an estimated 24 per cent of India's population is aged 0-14 while 17 per cent is within the 10-19 age range.
- The segment aged 10-24 is estimated to constitute 26 per cent, with the 15-64 age group making up 68 per cent.
- Additionally, 7 per cent of India's population is aged 65 years and above, with men having a life expectancy of 71 years and women 74 years.

About UNFPA

- The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) is a UN agency that focuses on issues related to population and reproductive health.
- The UNFPA was established in 1969.
- UNFPA works in over 150 countries and territories worldwide to promote universal access to sexual and reproductive health care, including family planning, maternal health care, and prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted infections.
- UNFPA's mission is to ensure that every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe, and every young person's potential is fulfilled.

World's Best Hospitals 2024

- The Medicity Gurugram operated by Global Health Limited has once again been named as the best private hospital in India by the prestigious 'Newsweek – World's Best Hospitals 2024' rankings.
- This is the fifth consecutive year that Medanta has achieved the status as the best private hospital in India.
- Medanta also remains the only private hospital from India to feature in the top 250 hospitals of the world.
- This remarkable achievement highlights the unwavering excellence in Medanta's healthcare services as well as its commitment to consistently delivering world-class healthcare.
- The prestigious list aims to highlight the best healthcare facilities around the world, employing a diverse set of criteria that assess quality and safety measures.

List of top ten World's Best Hospitals for 2024

Rank	Hospital Name	Location
1	Mayo Clinic	Rochester, United States
2	Cleveland Clinic	United States
3	Toronto General Hospital - University Health Network	Toronto, Canada
4	The Johns Hopkins Hospital	Baltimore, United States
5	Massachusetts General Hospital	Boston, United States
6	Charité - Universitätsmedizin Berlin	Berlin, Germany
7	Karolinska Universitetssjukhuset	Stockholm, Sweden
8	AP-HP - Hôpital Universitaire Pitié Salpêtrière	Paris, France
9	Sheba Medical Center	Ramat Gan, Israel
10	Universitätsspital Zürich	Zurich, Switzerland

- Newsweek, in collaboration with Statista Inc., examined data from 2,400 hospitals across 30 countries.
- The final rankings are based on feedback from over 85,000 medical experts as well as patient survey results and public data from post hospitalization satisfaction.
- Key metrics such as hygiene standards, patient-to-doctor ratios, as well as Patient Reported Outcome Measures (PROMs) have been used to ensure a holistic assessment of healthcare service quality on a global scale.

WMO report: Asia hit hardest by climate change and extreme weather

- Asia was the world's most disaster-hit region by climate-related hazards last year, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) said, with floods and storms causing the highest number of casualties.
- In a report published, WMO said that 79 disasters linked to hydro-meteorological events had been reported in Asia in 2023.
- More than 80% of these were related to floods and storms that caused more than 2,000 deaths.

Key Facts

- Many parts of the region experienced extreme heat in 2023. Asia's annual mean near-surface temperature ranked as the second highest on record with 0.91°C above the 1991–2020 average.
- Particularly high temperatures were observed from western Siberia to central Asia, and from eastern China to Japan. Japan and Kazakhstan experienced a record warm year.
- The report also highlighted that most glaciers in the high-mountain region in Asia had loss significant mass because of record-breaking high temperatures and dry conditions.
- The level of precipitation was below normal in large parts of the Turan Lowland (Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan), the Hindu Kush (Afghanistan, Pakistan) and the Himalayas, as well as around the Ganges and lower course of the Brahmaputra Rivers (India and Bangladesh).
- The Arakan Mountains in Myanmar and the lower course of the Mekong River areas have also seen less rainfall than usual, while Southwest China suffered from a drought, with below-normal precipitation levels nearly every month of 2023.
- Despite overall lower precipitation, several extreme events occurred, such as heavy rainfall in Myanmar in May; floods and storms across India, Pakistan, and Nepal in June and July, and record hourly rainfall in Hong Kong in September, to name a few.
- The report shows that from 1970 to 2021, there were 3,612 disasters attributed to weather, climate and water extremes, with 984,263 deaths and $1.4 trillion in economic losses.
- The region accounted for 47 per cent of all reported deaths caused by natural disasters worldwide, with tropical cyclones as the leading cause of reported deaths.

World Meteorological Organization (WMO)

- The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations responsible for international cooperation in weather, climate, water, and related environmental issues.
- The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) was established in 1950 and currently has 193 member states and territories.
- The primary objectives of the WMO are to facilitate the exchange of meteorological, climatological, hydrological, and related geophysical information and to promote the standardization of meteorological observations, data, and instrumentation.
- The WMO provides technical assistance, training programs, and capacity-building initiatives to strengthen the capabilities of national meteorological and hydrological services, particularly in developing countries.

Karnataka, Gujarat exhibit strong commitment to clean energy transition

- A new joint report by the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA) and Ember shows that Karnataka and Gujarat continue to showcase their leadership in the progress toward the clean energy transition.
- This marks the second year of IEEFA and Ember collaboration on the Indian States' Electricity Transition (SET) report, which evaluates the clean electricity transition preparedness at the subnational level.
- The report in 2024, has added five more states, totaling 21 states and representing about 95 per cent of India's annual power demand in the past seven financial years from 2018 to 2024 (up to November).
- Karnataka and Gujarat showcased strong performance across dimensions, effectively integrating renewable energy sources into their power sectors, making strong strides in decarbonisation.
- But the progress in states like Jharkhand, Bihar, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh needs to improve, similar to last year's findings.

Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA)

- IEEFA is a nonprofit organization that conducts research and analyses on issues related to energy, particularly focusing on the financial and economic aspects of energy markets, policies, and technologies.
- The Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA) was founded in 2012.
- IEEFA aims to provide objective and independent analysis to inform decision-making by policymakers, investors, businesses, and civil society organizations.
- IEEFA analyzes the transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, and hydroelectric power.
- IEEFA conducts financial analysis of energy companies, projects, and markets to assess their performance, profitability, and investment attractiveness.
- IEEFA examines the environmental and climate-related impacts of energy production and consumption, including greenhouse gas emissions, air and water pollution, and ecosystem degradation.

Breast cancer to cause million deaths a year by 2040: Lancet commission

- Breast cancer is now the world's most common carcinogenic disease with the ailment likely to cause a million deaths a year by 2040, according to a new Lancet Commission on breast cancer.
- Around 7.8 million women were diagnosed with breast cancer in the last five years until 2020 and about 685,000 women died from the disease the same year.
- Further, in 2020, women around the world on average had a 1 in 12 risk of being diagnosed with breast cancer before turning 75 years old, and this incidence is rising.
- They estimated that breast cancer cases will increase from 2.3 million in 2020 to more than 3 million by 2040, with low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) being "disproportionately affected".

8 Indians named in Time's 100 Most Influential List 2024

- Eight individuals of Indian descent have been honoured in Time magazine's prestigious list of the 100 most influential people of 2024.
- The list, released on 18 April 2024, features a diverse array of leaders from various sectors, including finance, entertainment, technology, activism, and academia.
- The overall list contains four categories: Leaders, heroes, artists, and thinkers.
- Indians who have made it to Time's 100 Most Influential People list include: Ajay Banga (Former CEO of MasterCard), Alia Bhatt (Bollywood actor), Satya Nadella (Microsoft CEO), Sakshi Malik (female wrestler), Dev Patel (British actor of Indian descent), Priyamvada Natarajan (professor at Yale University), Asma Khan (British restaurateur), Jigar Shah (Director of the US Department of Energy's Loan Programs Office).

Chandigarh University secures top spots in QS World University Rankings by Subjects-2024

- Chandigarh University figures among world's top 100 universities in 2 subjects, 1st in India in 3 subjects among private universities in QS World University Rankings by Subject 2024.
- Chandigarh University (CU), Gharuan, has yet again shined in QS World University Rankings by Subjects-2024 by securing top spots in as many as eight subjects.
- Among the private universities, Chandigarh University secured top rank in India in three subjects - Hospitality Management, Petroleum Engineering, Social Sciences & Management.
- Chandigarh University secured 1st rank in India in Hospitality Management, 10th in India Computer Science & Information Systems, 11th in Engineering & Technology, 14th in Mechanical Engineering, 18th in Business & Management Studies.
- Chandigarh University makes its debut in three new subjects by securing 3rd rank in Petroleum Engineering, 5th in Electrical & Electronics Engineering, and 9th in Social Sciences and Management.

India invokes Peace Clause for Fifth Consecutive Time at WTO

- India has once again invoked the peace clause at the World Trade Organization (WTO) for the fifth consecutive time, this time for the marketing year 2022-23 (October-September).
- This action was taken because India exceeded the prescribed subsidy limit for rice offered to its farmers.

- Despite the value of India's rice production reaching $52.8 billion in 2022-23, the subsidy provided to farmers during the same period amounted to $6.39 billion, as notified by India to the WTO.

India ranks second in Hepatitis B and C Cases Worldwide

- In 2022, India ranked second in terms of the number of hepatitis B and C cases globally, after China, with an estimated 35 million infections, according to a report by the World Health Organization (WHO).
- Hepatitis, characterized by inflammation of the liver, can lead to various health complications and has the potential to be fatal if left untreated.

Consumer confidence for year ahead improves further: RBI survey

- Consumer confidence for the upcoming year shows improvement, driven by higher optimism.
- Future Expectations Index (FEI) rises by 2.1 points to 125.2, reaching the highest level since mid-2019. The Reserve Bank of India conducts a survey in March 2024.
- Household sentiments on general economic situation and employment prospects improve for both current and upcoming periods. Outlook on discretionary spending also improves.
- Respondents report a better income situation compared to a year ago, with expectations of further rise in income in the upcoming year.

According to Fada, the RBI's current repo rate policy will affect retail auto sales

- The Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (Fada) expressed concern that the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) decision to maintain the repo rate at the same level for 14 consecutive months will have a detrimental effect on retail auto sales.
- Fada highlighted the heightened sensitivity of entry-level vehicle buyers to pricing, particularly in light of the ongoing inflationary trend.
- The absence of any relief in finance rates further contributes to buyer hesitation, according to Fada.
- Referring to data from the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), Fada noted a significant decline in consumer sentiment among urban Indians, presenting a nuanced challenge for the automotive sector.
- Fada criticized the decision of the RBI's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) to retain lending rates at 6.5%, stating that it would continue to negatively impact retail sales across all vehicle categories, particularly affecting entry-level vehicles due to the heightened price sensitivity of their buyers.

Climate change poses challenges for policy, risks to growth: RBI report

- According to a report by the Reserve Bank, the occurrence of frequent weather shocks due to climate change presents challenges for monetary policy and poses risks to economic growth.
- The Monetary Policy Report for April 2024 highlights that global temperatures are steadily increasing, leading to a rise in extreme weather events (EWE), and the consequential economic and social impacts of global warming are becoming more apparent.
- The report emphasizes that climate change has heightened the frequency and severity of weather shocks, creating obstacles for monetary policy.
- It identifies various channels through which climate change can affect monetary policy, including its direct impact on inflation through adverse weather events affecting agricultural production and global supply chains.

Indian road logistics industry revenues to grow at 3-6% in FY25: ICRA

- ICRA, a rating agency, stated that the revenue of the Indian road logistics industry is expected to maintain a range-bound growth trajectory, expanding at a slower pace of 3-6% in the current fiscal year.
- The agency also anticipates a decrease in government capital expenditure during elections due to Model Code of Conduct requirements, as well as a decline in consumer demand sentiments amid elevated inflation and interest rates.
- ICRA projected that operating profit margins would remain range-bound at 10.5-12.5% in FY2025, citing ongoing concerns regarding cost inflation.
- Similarly, monthly FASTag volumes have mirrored the trend of e-way bills, ranging from 295 to 350 million in the current fiscal year, with a peak of 348 million in December 2023, highlighting business continuity, according to ICRA.

China renames 30 locations in latest move to assert claim over Arunachal Pradesh

- The Chinese Ministry of Civil Affairs on March 30, 2024, renamed 30 more places in Arunachal Pradesh

to lay claim to what it calls Zangnan, or part of the Tibetan autonomous region, South China Morning Post has reported.

- The Ministry published the country's latest set of "standardised" names which included 11 residential areas, 12 mountains, four rivers, one lake, one mountain pass and a piece of land.
- According to the SCMP report, each of these names was presented in Chinese characters, Tibetan script, and pinyin, which represents the Roman alphabet version of Mandarin Chinese.

Credit quality of Indian companies stayed healthy in H2FY24

- The credit quality of Indian companies remained strong between October 2023 and March 2024 (H2FY24), supported by deleverage balance sheets, sustained domestic demand, and government-led capital expenditure. Rating upgrades continued to surpass rating downgrades in H2FY24.
- In all, there were 409 upgrades and 228 downgrades in H2FY24, according to rating agency CRISIL.
- The credit ratio, rating upgrades to downgrades, moderated to 1.79 times in the second half of the financial year 2024 (H2FY24) compared with 1.91 times for April-September 2023 (H1FY24).

Coal India likely to report production of around 773.7 MT in FY24

- Coal India Ltd is likely to report production of approx 773.7 million tonnes (MT) for the 2023-24 fiscal, which will be close to a 10-per cent growth over last year.
- Coal offtake is expected to stay restricted to 753 million tonnes, nearly 90 per cent of the target of 780 million tonnes.
- The miner will announce its production and offtake numbers later on 1 April, 2024.
- The company's dry fuel supplies to thermal power plants touched the 610.8-million tonne mark on Wednesday, surpassing the target for this sector.

India's trade dependence on EU, China sees spike: UNCTAD report

- India's dependence for trade on the European Union (EU) and China is rising as global trade has seen a restructuring along the geopolitical lines in the past two years, according to a report by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).
- According to the UNCTAD estimates, based on national statistics, India's reliance on the EU and China rose by 1.2 percent annually in 2023, while it declined in the case of Saudi Arabia by 0.6 percent.
- The increase in dependence comes at a time when the country is trying to reduce its imports from China and other countries by emphasizing manufacturing goods locally, backed by schemes, such as production-linked schemes (PLI) and Quality Control Orders (QCOs).
- According to the report, this supply chain shift has happened following the COVID-19 pandemic and the Ukraine-Russia war, which led to a record increase in prices of food and fuels.

Indian economy to grow at 7.5% in 2024: World Bank

- The World Bank has revised its projection for India's economic growth in 2024 to 7.5 percent, marking an increase of 1.2 percent from earlier forecasts.
- This growth is expected to be driven by resilient activity in both the services and industry sectors.
- However, the World Bank forecasts a moderation in growth to 6.6 percent over the medium term, reflecting a deceleration in investment compared to previous years.
- The medium-term outlook also anticipates a decline in India's fiscal deficit and government debt, supported by robust output growth and consolidation efforts by the central government.

India third-most improved business destination in the world

- Greece, Qatar and India have improved the most globally in providing the best environment to businesses in the past one year, according to a report by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU).
- India came third on the list of most improved countries as a result of its youthful demographic, which promises strong demand and availability of good labour, the report said.
- "India is the only single-country market that offers a potential scale comparable to that of China," the report said.
- The EIU said it expects strong economic growth between 2024 and 2028 with more foreign direct investments coming into India as companies look for manufacturing destinations other than China.

Forbes World's Billionaires list 2024



- Forbes has released its 2024 Billionaires list, featuring 2,781 individuals, marking an increase of 141 names from the previous year's list.
- The billionaires on the list have collectively added $2 billion to their net worth, reaching a combined worth of $14.2 trillion.
- The United States leads with a record 813 billionaires, followed by China with 473 billionaires.
- India has seen an addition of 31 billionaires compared to the previous year, with the total number of Indian billionaires reaching 200.
- Among the Indian billionaires, the chairperson of Reliance Industries retains the top position.
- Below is the list of top 5 Indians in the list:
  - Mukesh Ambani- net worth at $116 billion
  - Gautam Adani – net worth at $84 billion
  - Shiv Nadar – net worth at $36.9 billion
  - Savitri Jindal – net worth at $33.5 billion
  - Dilip Shanghvi – net worth at $26.7 billion

India to lose 5.8% of daily working hours amid heat stress in 2030: UNESCAP

- A recent report by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) predicts that India could experience a loss of approximately 5.8 percent of daily working hours by 2030 due to rising temperatures.
- This loss of working hours is expected to result in reduced productivity and a decline in fiscal revenue collection.
- The impact is particularly severe for outdoor workers, including those in agriculture and construction sectors, but also affects indoor factory workers.
- As labor productivity and economic output decline with rising temperatures, the report forecasts a decrease in the collection of fiscal revenues.
- The report, titled 'Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2024', highlights the urgent need for measures to mitigate the effects of climate change on the workforce and economy in India.

MoU and Agreements

Chapter 3

Air India signs codeshare agreement with All Nippon Airways

- Air India has engaged in a codeshare agreement with Japan's All Nippon Airways.
- With the codeshare, beginning 23 May, Air India and All Nippon Airways passengers can fly to their selected location by bundling flights between India and Japan into a single ticket.
- Air India will add the 'AI' designator code to ANA flights between Tokyo Haneda and Delhi, as well as Tokyo Narita and Mumbai.
- ANA will affix its 'NH' designator code to Air India's route between Tokyo Narita and Delhi.
- Tata Group-owned Air India, which is expanding its operations, now has codeshare agreements with 15 airlines, including ANA.

AFMS & IIT Kanpur to collaborate on developing technologies to address health problems

- The Armed Forces Medical Services (AFMS) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for collaborative research and training with the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kanpur on 18 April 2024.
- Under this MoU, AFMS and IIT Kanpur will team up to undertake research and develop new technologies to address health problems faced by soldiers in difficult terrains.
- IIT Kanpur will also provide technical expertise for developing AI diagnostic models, at the Armed Forces Centre for Computational Medicine established in Armed Forces Medical College, which is the first of its kind among medical colleges in India.
- Under the ambit of this MoU, a faculty exchange program, joint academic activities and development of training modules will also be planned.

Armed Forces Medical Services (AFMS)

- The Armed Forces Medical Services (AFMS) is the medical branch of the Indian Armed Forces, providing healthcare to military personnel, veterans, and their families.
- Established in 1948, it's an inter-service organization under the Ministry of Defense.
- Headed by the Director General Armed Forces Medical Services (DGAFMS), a three-star officer.
- DGAFMS is responsible for the overall medical policy for the Armed Forces.
- It consists of medical services from the Army, Navy, and Air Force.
  - Army Medical Corps (AMC) - includes specialists and paramedics.
  - Army Dental Corps (AD Corps) - provides dental care.
  - Military Nursing Service (MNS) - nurses serving the Armed Forces.

Rashtriya Raksha University signs MoU with French Starburst Aerospace



- Gandhinagar-based Rashtriya Raksha University (RRU) and Starburst Aerospace of France entered into an MoU to advance aerospace, defence, and homeland security innovation.
- The MoU includes the creation of a venture capital fund of 100 million euros for aerospace, defence and security technology and provides export promotion support for Indian start-ups to explore international markets.
- The partnership between Starburst and RRU is a reflection of the progress in the India-France Strategic Partnership in defence and space.

- The strategic alliance between RRU, Starburst, and Security and Scientific Technical Research Association (SASTRA), is aimed at fostering innovation and driving advancements in the aerospace, defence and homeland security sectors.

RSSDI, Koita Foundation set up new centre for digital diabetology



- The Research Society for the Study of Diabetes in India (RSSDI) has partnered with the Koita Foundation to establish the RSSDI–Koita Centre for Digital Diabetology (KCDD).
- This partnership is set to advance the use of digital technology in diabetes care and research across India.
- The two entities have formalised their collaboration through a MoU, signed in the presence of RSSDI president Dr Rakesh Sahay, alongside other officials.
- Under this collaborative effort, the organisations, through KCDD, are set to build a healthcare technology team dedicated to defining and implementing national digital programmes in diabetes related management and research.

Research Society for the Study of Diabetes in India (RSSDI)

- The Research Society for the Study of Diabetes in India (RSSDI) was established in 1972.
- RSSDI is Asia's largest organization for diabetes healthcare professionals and researchers.
- Their mission is to promote diabetes research in India and translate those findings into improved clinical practices, prevention, and management of the condition.
- RSSDI boasts over 7,500 members, including physicians, diabetologists, and endocrinologists.
- They actively conduct and support diabetes research initiatives.

The US and the UK sign agreement on AI safety testing

- On 1 April 2024, the United States and the United Kingdom signed an agreement that would see them work together to develop tests for the most advanced artificial intelligence (AI) models.
- Both countries will share vital information about the capabilities and risks associated with AI models and systems, according to the agreement, which has taken effect immediately.
- They will also share fundamental technical research on AI safety and security, and work on aligning their approach towards safely deploying AI systems.

LTIMindtree collaborates with Vodafone to offer connected, smart IoT solutions and Industry X.0 solutions

- LTIMindtree has collaborated with Vodafone, a global leader in managed Internet of Things (IoT), with over 175 million connections worldwide, supporting a wide range of business-critical applications.
- Through this partnership, LTIMindtree will offer connected and smart IoT solutions, powered by its Insight NXT platform (iNXT) and Vodafone's IoT Managed Connectivity.
- LTIMindtree's iNXT Business Unit brings Technical and Functional components, and together with Vodafone's IoT Managed Connectivity solutions it will deliver to solve complex business challenges.

BEL signs MoU with IIT Mandi for co-operation in various fields

- Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) has signed an MoU with the Indian Institute of Technology, Mandi, Himachal Pradesh, for co-operation in Research and Technology/Product Development — in the areas of Semiconductors, Quantum Technologies and Drones.
- The MoU aims at leveraging the complementary strengths and capabilities of BEL and IIT-Mandi.
- It will support the indigenisation of products/ solutions being supplied by BEL to its customers and is in line with the Government of India's 'Make in India' initiative.

Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL)

- Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) was established in 1954.
- BEL is a prominent Indian government-owned company under the Ministry of Defence.

- They specialize in manufacturing advanced electronic products for the Indian military across Army, Navy, and Air Force.
- BEL manufactures a wide range of products including radars, communication systems, electronic warfare systems, naval systems, and electro-optic devices.
- BEL also exports its products to over 30 countries worldwide, contributing to India's defense exports and international partnerships.
- Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) of BEL: Bhanu Prakash Srivastava.

Tata Electronics seals semicon deal with Tesla

- Tesla has reportedly inked a strategic agreement with Tata Electronics Pvt. Ltd. to acquire semiconductor chips for its global operations.
- This move highlights the electric vehicle manufacturer's growing interest in India, which extends beyond generating income locally.
- The largest electric vehicle (EV) company in the US is eager to enter India, the main automotive market with the fastest rate of growth worldwide.

BNCA joins hands with UK University, IIT Bombay for groundbreaking sustainability research

- BNCA has embarked on a two-year research project titled 'Capacity Building in Built Environment Sustainability Research (CAPABLE),' funded by the UK-India Education and Research Initiative (UKIERI) and the Scheme for Promoting Academic and Research Collaborations (SPARC).
- The project, spanning from April 2024 to March 2026, is a collaboration between BNCA, Liverpool John Moores University (UK), IIT Bombay, and the Pune Construction Engineering Research Foundation (PCERF).
- The initiative aims to foster a robust research ecosystem in sustainability, targeting undergraduate and master's students.
- A total of 20 students, evenly distributed between India and the UK, will be selected to participate.

India-Kuwait relations strengthened with inaugural Hindi radio broadcast

- Kuwait began its first-ever Hindi radio broadcast.
- The announcement was made by the Indian Embassy, applauding the country's Ministry of Information for launching a Hindi program on Kuwait Radio, airing on FM 93.3 and AM 96.3 every Sunday.
- The weekly broadcast, scheduled from 8:30 to 9:00 pm starting 21 April 2024, aims to cater to the sizable Indian expatriate community residing in Kuwait.
- With approximately one million members, the Indian community has become the largest expatriate group in Kuwait, including professionals ranging from engineers, doctors, and chartered accountants to scientists, software experts, and management consultants.

PhonePe partners with eSewa, HAN Pokhara to promote UPI in Nepal

- PhonePe has partnered with Nepal's digital wallet service eSewa and the Hotel Association of Nepal (HAN) Pokhara to promote digital payments through UPI on the Himalayan country's payment processor Fonepay Network.
- The partnership is a part of the Fewa New Year Festival which will be held from 11 to 14 April in Nepal.
- Over 3,000 merchants will participate in the festival with more than 1,00,000 visitors expected to visit.
- PhonePe will run on-ground activation aimed at raising awareness about digital payments among local merchants while demonstrating the convenience of digital payments for customers.

ISKCON collaborates with NSDC for skill development

- The National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) will provide vocational training to tribal and underprivileged youth across multiple states.
- The strategic partnership will focus on skilling youth from tribal and marginalised communities in Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Madhya Pradesh.
- Through jointly conducted short-term courses, participants will receive industry-recognized certifications via the Skill India Digital Hub platform, enhancing their employability prospects.

ICICI Lombard and Policybazaar announced partnership

- ICICI Lombard General Insurance Company Ltd. entered into a partnership with Policybazaar, an insurance platform.

- The collaboration aims to provide insurance solutions to Indian consumers through Policybazaar's reach.
- The partnership grants access to nearly 10 million customers, offering insurance products including motor, health, travel, home and business insurance.
- The collaboration covers business lines of the Policybazaar platform, including policybazaar.com for retail audiences, PB for Business for corporates and PB Partners for channel partners.

SINE, IIT Bombay collaborates with Canara Bank for Financing of Startups

- The Society for Innovation & Entrepreneurship (SINE), IIT Bombay and Canara Bank entered into a MoU to provide financial support to startups.
- Under its Canara Start-Up Scheme, Canara Bank is providing financial support for the creation, promotion, diversification, and modernization of industrial units across India.
- SINE, as a technology business incubator, offers comprehensive incubation and acceleration support from start to finish for technology startups.

KABIL and CSIR-IMMT sign MoU for Technical and Knowledge cooperation for Critical Minerals



- Khanij Bidesh India Limited (KABIL) has signed a MoU with the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research - Institute of Minerals and Materials Technology (CSIR-IMMT) for Technical & Knowledge cooperation for Critical Minerals.
- Under the MoU, KABIL will leverage the technical expertise and services of CSIR-IMMT to undertake various projects.
- Furthermore, the agreement will also embark on joint research and facilitate the exchange of scientific information between the two entities.

SJVN partners with IIT Patna to improve Tunneling Project Performance



- SJVN Limited has signed a MoU with the IIT Patna to use advanced geological models in SJVN's tunnelling projects, thus significantly reducing time and cost overruns.
- The collaboration also aims to evaluate the intricate relationship between overburden and deformation, thereby enhancing the evaluation and design of support systems crucial for tunnelling projects.
- By harnessing integrated geotechnical data and 3D geological models, SJVN and IIT Patna aim to identify and analyze potential risks and hazards.

IFFCO inks MoU with ACME to buy 2 lakh tonne ammonia

- Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Limited (IFFCO) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with ACME Cleantech Solutions Private Limited (ACME).
- Under the terms of the agreement, ACME will supply approximately 200,000 metric tons of ammonia to IFFCO, manufactured through a renewable energy route.
- This collaboration is aligned with the National Green Hydrogen Mission, spearheaded by the Hon'ble Prime Minister, aiming to position India as a global hub for the production, utilization, and export of green hydrogen and its derivatives.
- The green ammonia will be produced at ACME's facility in Gopalpur, utilizing a renewable energy route.
- The produced ammonia will be utilized at IFFCO's manufacturing units in Paradeep, Odisha, and Kandla, Gujarat, for the production of complex fertilizers.

National News

Chapter 4

In a first, people of Andaman's vulnerable Shompen tribe vote



- For the first time in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, seven members of the Shompen tribe, a particularly vulnerable tribal group (PVTGs) of Great Nicobar Islands exercised their voting rights for the lone Lok Sabha seat in the union territory.
- Not only Shompen tribe members exercised their voting rights at polling station 411 named as 'Shompen Hut' built inside the forest staff quarters but also they posed for selfies at a designated cut-out made by the Election Commission of India, which reads - "I vote for sure".

Shompen tribe

- The Shompen tribe is one of the indigenous tribes of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, a group of islands in the Indian Ocean, belonging to India.
- The Shompen people primarily inhabit the interior regions of Great Nicobar Island, which is the southernmost island in the archipelago.
- They are considered one of the indigenous Negrito tribes of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, along with other tribes like the Jarawa and Onge.
- The Shompen tribe has historically lived a semi-nomadic lifestyle, practicing hunting, gathering, and simple agriculture.
- The Shompen tribes were assisted in their language by an interpreter known as 'Mathiyas' (a Nicobari tribal youth).

Skill development crucial in setting up efficient logistics: DPIIT

- An official statement emphasized the critical role of capacity building and skill development in establishing efficient and cost-effective logistics and infrastructure systems.
- Addressing a workshop in Vadodara, Rajesh Kumar Singh, Secretary in the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), underscored the importance of integrating logistics and infrastructure development courses into the curriculum of Central Training Institutes (CTIs) and State Administrative Training Institutes (ATIs).
- This initiative aims to better equip officers to address the complexities of infrastructure development, improve logistical efficiencies, and make significant contributions to India's economic growth and development agenda.

Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)

- The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) is a department under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India.
- It was established in 1995 and was formerly known as the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP) until it was renamed DPIIT in 2019.
- DPIIT's primary objective is to formulate and implement policies for the promotion of internal trade, industrial growth, and foreign direct investment (FDI) in India.

FSSAI launched awareness campaign on food safety aspects at prominent markets of Delhi

- The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has launched an extensive awareness and

sensitization program targeting major markets in the national capital, in collaboration with the Food Safety Department, Delhi.



- Kicking off from the popular Khan Market and INA Market of Delhi on 8th April, 2024, the awareness campaign will focus particularly on the detection and mitigation of pesticide residue and contaminants in food products.
- Market associations and traders were actively engaged and educated on the harmful effects of pesticide residue, mainly in fruits and vegetables and the importance of their testing.

Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)

- The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is an autonomous body established under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India.
- It was established under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, which consolidates various food laws and regulations in India.
- FSSAI is responsible for regulating and supervising food safety and hygiene standards across the country.
- It sets standards for various food products, including packaged foods, beverages, dairy products, meat, and seafood, and monitors compliance through inspections, testing, and surveillance activities.

Railways on track to meet target of 100% electrification by December

- Indian Railways maintains an end-of-year target for full electrification of the broad-gauge network. Intensive push required to electrify over 6,000 route kilometers (RKM) in next six months.
- Progress is underway on the entire 6,226 RKM, with contractors instructed to complete tasks by year's end. Fulfillment of this objective would be a landmark achievement for railways.
- Railway industry metric indicating distance between two railway points.
- As of the end of June, over 90% electrification was achieved on broad-gauge routes. Railway Electrification Directorate data: 59,096 of total 65,350 RKM electrified, accounting for 90.43% of total network.

World's largest 'tent city' to host 400 million people for Mahakumbh 2025

- Uttar Pradesh (UP) plans to establish the world's largest 'tent city' spanning 4,000 hectares for Prayagraj Mahakumbh 2025. Anticipated to host around 400 million pilgrims, making it the largest human gathering globally.
- The gathering during the 45-day Mahakumbh period in Jan-Feb 2025 would exceed the combined populations of the United States and the United Kingdom.
- Estimated to be 1.6 times the current population of Uttar Pradesh, which stands at 250 million. The tent city will feature 2,000 tents and 25,000 public accommodations, illuminated with 67,000 streetlights.

Sitars, tanpuras made in Maharashtra's Miraj town get awarded with GI tags



- Miraj, a town in Maharashtra's Sangli district, renowned for its craftsma nship in musical instruments, has been awarded Geographical Indication (GI) tags for its sitars and tanpuras.
- The GI tags signify that these instruments originate from Miraj, enhancing their commercial value and authenticity.
- Sitars and tanpuras made in Miraj are highly sought after by prominent artists, both in classical music and the film industry, according to the craftsmen.
- The tradition of crafting these instruments in Miraj spans over 300 years, with craftsmen passing down their skills through seven generations.

NTPC launched new edition of Girl Empowerment Mission



- NTPC Limited, India's largest integrated power company, is gearing up to launch the latest edition of Girl Empowerment Mission (GEM), its flagship Corporate Social Responsibility initiative.
- The program aligns with the Government of India's Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao initiative and aims to tackle gender inequality by nurturing girls' imaginations and fostering their ability to explore opportunities.
- GEM does this through a 1-month workshop for young girls during summer holidays, by offering them a platform for their all-round upliftment and development.

National Power Training Institute and PTC India to perform joint R&D in Energy Domain



- National Power Training Institute (NPTI) and PTC India Ltd. have entered into a MoU to establish a Centre of Excellence (CoE) for Research & Development in the Energy Domain, with a focus on promoting sustainable development goals.
- The outcomes of the CoE's Research and Development endeavours will be disseminated to the power sector through Training and Capacity building.
- Under the MoU, NPTI and PTC India Limited will collaborate to undertake research, development, and knowledge sharing through the CoE.

INSA and NCGG jointly organizes the 2nd Leadership Development in Science & Technology (LEADS) Programme-2024

- The Indian National Science Academy (INSA) and the National Centre for Good Governance (NCGG) are jointly organizing the 2nd INSA-NCGG Leadership Development Program in Science and Technology (LEADS) at New Delhi from 1 to 7, April 2024.



- This pioneering programme seeks to nurture and empower future leaders in the field of science and technology, fostering visionary leadership and advancing scientific excellence in India.
- The National Centre for Good Governance (NCGG) is an apex institution for governance-related training, research, and consultancy.
- It aims to enhance the capabilities of individuals and organizations involved in governance and public administration in India.

Union Health Ministry launched myCGHS iOS app



- Shri Apurva Chandra, Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, launched the myCGHS app for iOS devices.
- The app is specifically designed to improve access to Electronic Health Records (EHR), information, and resources for Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS) beneficiaries.
- Union Health Secretary expressed enthusiasm for the launch, stating that the myCGHS app represents a significant advancement for CGHS in healthcare services.
- The app empowers CGHS beneficiaries by providing convenient access to essential healthcare features through their mobile devices.

International News

Chapter 5

US President sign bill that could ban TikTok

- US President Joe Biden has signed the bill that could ban TikTok. The US Senate approved the controversial landmark bill.
- China's ByteDance has been given nine months to remove the tik-tok app from the market or sell the app to a US company.
- The law was passed in response to worries that TikTok might provide the Chinese authorities access to user data.
- The bill was passed as part of a package of four bills including military aid for Ukraine, Israel and other US partners in the Indo-Pacific region and got positive vote of 79 Senators.

US President signs 95 billion US dollar package of aid for Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan

- Recently, US President Joe Biden has signed a 95 billion US dollar package of aid for Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan.
- The US Senate approved the aid package following months of negotiations and debate. It was passed in a bipartisan vote of 79-18 in the Senate.
- The aid package worth 95 billion US dollar in total, includes nearly 61 billion dollar in aid to Ukraine, 26 billion dollar for Israel and 8 billion dollar for the Indo-Pacific.

10th round of India-Japan consultations held in Tokyo

- On 24th April 2024, the 10th Round of India-Japan Consultations on Disarmament, Non-Proliferation and Export Control was held in Tokyo.
- The two sides exchanged views on developments in the areas of disarmament and non-proliferation relating to nuclear, chemical and biological domains, outer space security, non-proliferation issues, conventional weapons and export control.
- The Indian delegation was led by the Joint Secretary (Disarmament and International Security Affairs), Ministry of External Affairs, Muanpuii Saiawi.
- The Japanese delegation was led by the Director General for Disarmament, Non-proliferation and Science Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Katsuro Kitagawa.

Defence Secretary Giridhar Aramane to lead Indian delegation to Astana, Kazakhstan



- Defence Secretary Giridhar Aramane will lead the Indian delegation to Astana, Kazakhstan for the Annual Meeting of the Defence Ministers of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Member States.
- The meeting will review the regional security issues within the SCO, including the defence cooperation initiatives.
- During the two-day visit, the Defence Secretary will deliver India's statement at the ministerial meeting.
- He will also hold meetings with Defence Ministers of the friendly countries of the SCO to discuss issues of bilateral defence cooperation.

Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)

- The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is a Eurasian political, economic, and security alliance.
- It was formed in 2001 by China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.
- India and Pakistan joined as full members in 2017.
- The SCO aims to enhance cooperation among member states in areas such as counter-terrorism, economic development, and cultural exchange.
- It serves as a platform for addressing regional security concerns and promoting stability in Central Asia.

EU adopts new visa rules, allows frequent travellers from India to apply for multiple-entry schengen visa with longer validity

- European Union (EU) has adopted new visa rules that will allow frequent travellers from India to apply for multiple-entry Schengen visa with longer validity, easing travel to 29 European countries.
- Announced by the EU delegation to India and Bhutan, the rules will make it easier for regular Indian travellers to get the visa under the new cascade regime.
- Indian nationals can now be issued long-term, multi-entry Schengen visas valid for two years after having obtained and lawfully used two visas within the previous three years.
- The two-year visa will normally be followed by a five-year visa, if the passport has sufficient validity remaining.

European Union (EU)

- The European Union (EU) is a political and economic union of 27 European countries
- EU was created after World War II to foster economic cooperation and prevent further conflict.
- It was founded on principles of free trade and movement of goods, services, and people, the EU has evolved into a single market with a single currency, the Euro, adopted by 19 member states.
- The headquarters of the European Union (EU) are located in Brussels, Belgium.

UK parliament passes Rwanda Asylum Law, allows govt to send Asylum seekers to Rwanda

- UK parliament has passed Rwanda asylum law that will allow the government to send asylum seekers to Rwanda for their claims to be considered by the East African nation.
- British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak promised to start sending asylum seekers to Rwanda within 10 to 12 weeks as the upper house of the parliament finally passed the required legislation.
- The government had booked commercial charter planes and trained staff to take migrants to Rwanda.
- The policy, he hopes will boost his Conservative Party's flagging fortunes before an election later this year.

PNC wins majority in Maldives parliamentary elections

- In Maldives, the People's National Congress (PNC) secured a landslide win in the parliamentary elections held on 21 April 2024.
- The PNC clinched over 66 seats, solidifying its position in the political landscape of the nation.
- Dr. Mohammed Muizzu had won the Presidential election as a PPM-PNC candidate last year.

Maldives

- The Maldives is a stunning tropical paradise located in the Indian Ocean, southwest of Sri Lanka and India.
- It's an archipelago comprising 26 atolls, which are made up of over 1,000 coral islands.
- The Maldives is predominantly a Muslim country, and its culture reflects a blend of South Asian, Arab, and African influences.

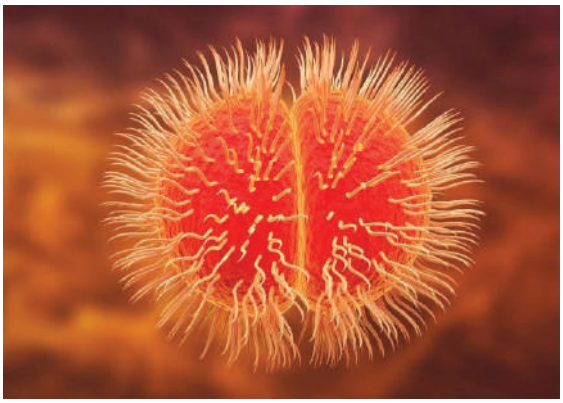
Capital city of Maldives: Male
President of Maldives: Mohamed Muizzu
Currency of the Maldives: Maldivian Rufiyaa

US secretary of state Antony Blinken to visit China

- The US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, will visit China from April 24th to 26th.
- According to the US State Department, he will hold talks on bilateral and global issues with Chinese officials, including the crisis in West Asia, the Russia-Ukraine war, and cross-strait and South China Sea issues.
- Beside these matters, counter-narcotics, bolstering military-to-military communication, establishing talks on artificial intelligence risks and safety, and exploring ways to strengthen people-to-people ties will also be addressed during his visit.
- Meanwhile, China's Foreign Ministry welcomed the US Secretary of State's visit to China as tensions rise between the two countries over global trade, regional conflicts, and the Russia-Ukraine war.

Nigeria is the first country to implement the Men5CV vaccine

- Nigeria has taken a step forward in global health by being the first country to implement a new World Health Organization (WHO)-recommended vaccine, Men5CV, targeting 5 strains of the meningococcus bacteria.



- This initiative is part of a broader effort to combat meningitis, particularly in Africa's "Meningitis Belt," where Nigeria is among the 26 hyper-endemic countries.
- The vaccine campaign targets over a million people aged 1-29 in the affected regions.

UK adds Pakistan to list of countries 'too dangerous to travel'

- The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) of the United Kingdom has named Pakistan in its list of countries that are 'too dangerous' for UK citizens to travel to.
- The total number of destinations banned by FCDO stands at 24.
- The list is based on potential risks, including crime, war, terrorism, disease, weather conditions, natural disasters, and other threats to visitor safety.
- The countries newly added to the list are Russia, Ukraine, Israel, Iran, Sudan, Lebanon, Belarus, and the Palestinian territories. These destinations are currently involved in significant conflicts.

Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO)

- The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) is a government department of the United Kingdom responsible for overseeing the country's foreign affairs, international development, and cooperation policies.
- It was formed in September 2020 through the merger of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and the Department for International Development (DFID).
- It aims to integrate diplomacy, development assistance, and foreign policy to promote UK interests and global stability.

King Charles III received first UK banknotes with his portrait



- Britain's King Charles III was presented with the first set of banknotes bearing his portrait by Bank of England representatives at Buckingham Palace in London.
- The 75-year-old monarch was pictured with Bank of England Governor Andrew Bailey and Chief Cashier and Executive Director of Banking Sarah John.
- It is the first time the Bank of England has changed the image of the British monarch on a banknote, as King Charles' late mother, Queen Elizabeth II, was the first monarch to appear on a Bank of England note in 1960.
- The King was presented with GBP 5, 10, 20 and 50 notes.
- These are the first notes which feature the image of His Majesty. The notes will go into circulation on 5th June 2024.

Zimbabwe launched gold-backed currency to replace battered local dollar

- Zimbabwe is replacing its collapsing local currency with a new one backed by gold and foreign currencies that it hopes will be more stable and help bring down inflation.
- The Southern African country relaunched its own currency in 2019 after a decade of dollarisation, but it struggled to win public trust and more than 80% of domestic transactions are now conducted in foreign currency.
- The new currency - called Zimbabwe Gold (ZiG) - will circulate alongside foreign currencies, central bank governor John Mushayavanhu told a press conference in the capital Harare.

US and UK sign landmark agreement on testing safety of AI

- The US and UK have signed a landmark agreement on artificial intelligence (AI), as the allies become the

first countries to formally co-operate on how to test and assess risks from emerging AI models.

- The agreement will see both countries work together to develop "robust" methods for evaluating the safety of AI tools and its systems.
- The new partnership will take effect immediately and the collaboration will help the government keep pace with emerging risks around AI.

India gifts 35 ambulances, 66 school buses to organisations in Nepal

- India donated 35 ambulances and 66 school buses to various organisations across Nepal, enhancing the local infrastructure in the health and education sectors.
- Indian Ambassador to Nepal Naveen Srivastava handed over the vehicles to the Nepalese officials in the presence of Finance Minister Barshaman Pun at a ceremony.
- Out of 101 vehicles, two ambulances were handed over on location in the earthquake-affected Jajarkot and West Rukum districts by the representative of the Embassy of India in the presence of district officials and local residents.

Japan approved $3.9 billion in aid to Chip Venture Rapidus

- Japan approved up to ¥590 billion ($3.9 billion) in subsidies to chip venture Rapidus Corp., committing more money to its ambition to catch up in semiconductor manufacturing.
- Tokyo greenlighted the bulk of aid the Economy Ministry sought for the 19-month-old startup and its long-shot bid to compete in contact chipmaking with leaders Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co. and Samsung Electronics Co.
- The amount is on top of billions of dollars Rapidus has already received from the government to mass produce chips in Chitose in Japan's northernmost prefecture of Hokkaido in 2027.
- Economy Minister Ken Saito confirmed the subsidy amount during a regular news conference on April 2, 2024. Japan Aims for $10 Billion in Subsidies for TSMC Plant, Rapidus.

'No ground' for India's request for return of Kachchatheevu

- Sri Lankan Minister of Fisheries Douglas Devananda dismisses Indian claims of "reclaiming" Kachchatheevu island, stating they have "no ground".



- Devananda's comments follow accusations by the Narendra Modi government targeting Congress Party and DMK for ceding Katchatheevu island to Sri Lanka in 1974.
- BJP also criticizes Congress and DMK for allegedly neglecting fishermen's rights around Katchatheevu island.
- Devananda suggests India's interest lies in securing the area to prevent Sri Lankan fishermen's access and to negate Sri Lanka's claims in the region.
- He emphasizes that claims of "reclaiming" Kachchatheevu lack validity, citing agreements from 1974 and 1976 allowing fishing rights for both sides in each other's territorial waters.

World Bank allocated $16 mn to support women-led businesses in Afghanistan

- The World Bank allocates USD 16 million to support small businesses in Afghanistan, particularly those owned and operated by women.
- The funding will be managed by the Aga Khan Foundation in the United States and channeled through the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF).
- Melinda Good, the World Bank's country director for Afghanistan, emphasizes the importance of supporting small financial providers to improve access to financial resources, especially for women.
- The project aims to strengthen Afghanistan's small financial sector, enabling small business owners and women-led enterprises to access credit, rebuild their businesses, livelihoods, and contribute to the private sector's revival.

Peru stakes claim to world's oldest person born in 1900

- The oldest living man, according to Guinness World Records, is now a 111-year-old Briton, succeeding a 114-year-old Venezuelan man who recently passed away.



- Peru is now making headlines with state officials claiming that Marcelino Abad, a resident of Huanuco in the Andean mountains, is 124 years old, born in 1900.
- If proven true, this would make him not only the oldest living person but also potentially the oldest ever independently verified human, surpassing current records.

EU-India join forces to promote start-up collaboration on Recycling of E-Vehicles Batteries

- The European Union (EU) and India today launched an Expression of Interest (EoI) for startups working in Battery Recycling Technologies for Electric Vehicles (EVs) for a matchmaking event.
- The matchmaking aims to enhance the cooperation between European and Indian Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) and startups in the clean and green technologies sector.
- The intended exchange of knowledge and expertise will be instrumental in advancing the circularity of rare materials and transitioning towards carbon neutrality in both India and the EU.
- This initiative takes place under the India-EU Trade & Technology Council (TTC), announced by India and the European Commission in New Delhi on 25th April 2022.

Amendment to India-Mauritius double Taxation Avoidance Agreement

- The Income Tax department issued clarifications regarding recent amendments to the India Mauritius Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA).
- The department stated that the Protocol for the amendment is yet to be ratified and notified under Section 90 of the Income-tax Act, 1961. Until this Protocol comes into force, queries or concerns regarding the amendments will be addressed as necessary.

State News

Chapter 6

EC issues no-objection certificate for MCD elections

- The Election Commission (EC) has issued a no-objection certificate for the Delhi Municipal Corporation (MCD) elections of mayor and deputy-mayor posts, to be held in the national capital Delhi on 26 April 2024.
- The MCD had sought permission from the election commission as the model code of conduct is in force due to the ongoing Lok Sabha polls in the country.
- Aam Aadmi Party has nominated Mahesh Khichi for mayor and Ravinder Kumar for deputy mayor post of MCD elections, while BJP has fielded Kishan Lal for mayor and Neeta Bisht for deputy mayor posts.
- The post of mayor is reserved for the Scheduled Caste in this election.

MP leads in tree plantation under 'green credit' plan



- Madhya Pradesh has taken the lead in spearheading the Centre's Green Credit Programme (GCP), securing approval for over 500 land parcels dedicated to tree plantation across 10 states in the recent two-month period.
- These states have collectively identified a sprawling 10,000 hectares of land earmarked for this commendable initiative.
- Madhya Pradesh boasts the highest count of approved degraded forest land for plantation and greening activities, amounting to 954 hectares. Following closely are states like Telangana, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, and Assam.
- Furthermore, Bihar, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, and Odisha have also joined the fray with approved land parcels for the cause.
- The GCP lays emphasis on nurturing ecosystem services, promoting non-carbon environmental endeavours for the betterment of local soil, water, and ecosystems.

Green Credit Programme (GCP)

- The Green Credit Programme (GCP) stands as a market-driven initiative designed to incentivize voluntary environmental actions across diverse stakeholders, including individuals, companies, communities, and private sector industries.
- Rolled out by the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change on 13 October 2023, this program champions eco-friendly activities such as waste management, water conservation, and afforestation, aligning with the government's Lifestyle for Environment (LIFE) movement.
- Governed by the Green Credit Rules, 2023, notified on 12 October 2023, under the Environment Protection Act 1986, the initiative enables individuals and companies to earn and trade green credits for afforestation endeavours on degraded forest land.

Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE)

- The Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE) serves as a pivotal autonomous body under the aegis of the Ministry of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change in India.
- The Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE) was established in 1986.
- Its mandate revolves around advancing the science of forestry research across the nation.
- Overseeing and coordinating research, training, and extension activities in forestry, wildlife, and allied disciplines, ICFRE manages nine research institutes and four advanced centre's.
- Its pivotal role in policy formulation and implementation underscores its commitment to promoting sustainable forest management and conservation in India.

Matabari Pera, Pachra from Tripura get coveted GI tag

- Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha informed that two items from the state have earned the prestigious Geographical Indication (GI) tag.
- The two items that received the tag are Matabari Pera – a dairy-based confectionary item traditionally served as prasad at the Tripurasundari temple in Gomati district – and Pachra – a handwoven cloth used by the state's Indigenous communities.
- The Matabari Mahila Cluster Level Bahumukhi Samabaya Samity Limited had applied for the GI tag for Matabari Pera while the Dewanbari Mahila Cluster Bahumukhi Samabaya Samity Limited had made a similar application for Pachra or Rignai textile in March last year.

Decline in Opium Poppy Cultivation in Manipur Revealed by Satellite Imagery

- Recent data from the Manipur Remote Sensing Applications Centre (MARSAC) indicates a significant decrease in opium poppy cultivation in Manipur, shedding light on the efficacy of anti-drug efforts in the region.
- Utilizing satellite imagery technology from organizations like ISRO and NASA, MARSAC conducted a thorough assessment of opium poppy cultivation across Manipur between September 2021 and January 2024.
- The data revealed a remarkable decline in opium poppy cultivation area, plummeting by 60% over the past three years.
- The report illustrates a consistent reduction in opium poppy cultivation area, with a 40% decrease from 2021-22 to 2022-23 and a further 32% decrease from 2022-23 to 2023-24.

Mumbai to impose double property tax for non-Marathi signboard

- Starting 1 May, shops and establishments in Mumbai will face double property tax if they fail to display signboards in Marathi or Devanagari script. This was announced by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC).
- It will revoke the licenses of illuminated boards lacking Marathi or Devanagari lettering, with license renewal costs ranging from ₹25,000 to ₹1.5 lakh.
- This enforcement aligns with the Supreme Court's directive and the Maharashtra Shops and Establishments Rules.

Noida International Airport conducts its first calibration flight test

- The Noida International Airport conducted its inaugural "Doppler Very High Frequency Omni Range (DVOR) calibration flight" to assess navigation systems.
- A bright and sunny day at NIAirport set the perfect stage for a DVOR calibration flight, the first of many.
- The airport has also released a visual from the pilot's view of flying the Beechcraft King Air B300.

Mahindra Group to invest ₹1,200 crore for Hybrid Project in Maharashtra

- Mahindra Susten will foray into the hybrid renewable energy segment by setting up a ₹1,200 crore 150 megawatt solar wind energy project in Maharashtra.
- The project includes installation of a 101 megawatt (MW) wind and 52 MW solar capacity.
- The facility is expected to generate 460 million kilowatt-hour (kWh) of clean energy, offsetting 420,000 tonne of Co2 emissions.
- This venture marks Mahindra Susten's debut in the hybrid RE segment, aiming to provide clean energy to commercial and industrial customers.

TN continues to be number one State in electronic goods exports in FY24

- Tamil Nadu continued to be the numero uno in the export of electronic goods.
- It achieved a record-breaking $9.56 billion in electronics exports in FY 2023-24 - a whopping 78 per cent growth over the previous year's performance of $5.37 billion.
- Companies like Tata Electronics and Pegatron, starting their production in the last couple of years helped Tamil Nadu to achieve such a performance.
- The State now has over 15 leading electronics manufacturers, including Foxconn, Tata Electronics, Salcomp and Pegatron.
- Out of the total $29.12 billion exports of electronic goods from the country, Tamil Nadu's share was 32.84 per cent, according to Government of India data.

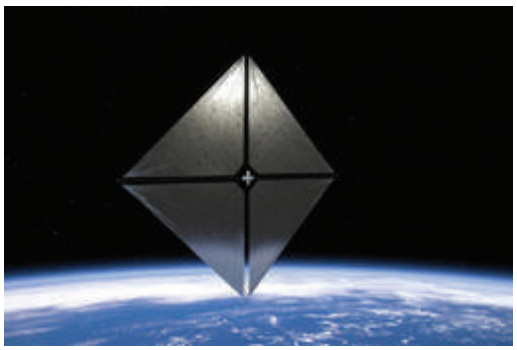
Governor R.N. Ravi inaugurates Param Vir Chakra garden

- Tamil Nadu Governor R.N. Ravi inaugurated Param Vir Chakra garden and Aikyam exhibition in the Kanchi Mahaswami Vidya Mandir in Tambaram.
- He was accompanied by Lt. Gen. Karanbir Singh Brar, Ati Vishisht Seva Medal (AVSM), General Officer Commanding (Dakshin Bharat area) and chairman of Sri Kanchi Mahaswami Trust V.Shankar.
- This garden commemorates the gallantry and sacrifices of India's brave soldiers who have been awarded the Param Vir Chakra, the highest military decoration in the country.

Science and Technology

Chapter 7

NASA launches composite solar sail into space



- NASA's advanced composite solar sail system (ACS3) was launched to space on 23 April aboard a Rocket Lab (Colorado, Colo., U.S.) composites-intensive Electron rocket from the company's Launch Complex 1 on the Mahia Peninsula of New Zealand.
- The ACS3 features booms (which support and connect the sails to spacecraft) that are made from a polymer material that is flexible and reinforced with carbon fiber.
- The sails use the pressure of sunlight for propulsion, angling toward or away from the sun so that photons bounce off the reflective sail to push a spacecraft.
- This eliminates heavy propulsion systems and could enable longer duration and lower cost missions.

About NASA

- NASA is the United States government agency responsible for the nation's civilian space program and for aeronautics and aerospace research.
- The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) was established in 1958.
- NASA's missions have included human spaceflight, robotic exploration of other planets and celestial bodies, Earth observation, and fundamental space research.
- Notable achievements include the Apollo moon landings, the Space Shuttle program, the Hubble Space Telescope, and the Mars rover missions.

SJVN sets milestone with Inauguration of first Multi-purpose Green Hydrogen Pilot Project



- On 24 April 2024, SJVN Limited achieved a significant milestone with the inauguration of India's first Multi-purpose Green Hydrogen Pilot Project at SJVN's 1,500 MW Nathpa Jhakri Hydro Power Station (NJHPS) in Jhakri, Himachal Pradesh.
- The green hydrogen produced from the project will be utilized for High Velocity Oxygen Fuel (HVOF) Coating Facility of NJHPS for meeting its combustion fuel requirements.
- In addition, it will also generate electricity through its fuel cell of 25 kW capacity.
- The state-of-the-art Green Hydrogen Pilot Project is set to produce 14 kilograms of Green Hydrogen daily during 8 hours of operation.

Green hydrogen

- Made from water, it's produced through electrolysis, which splits water molecules using renewable electricity like solar or wind.
- This key part - renewable electricity - makes it "green" because the creation process avoids greenhouse gas emissions.
- It can be used directly in fuel cells to generate clean electricity, power vehicles like cars and ships, or even be converted into synthetic fuels for industries that are hard to electrify.
- Challenges include bringing down production costs and developing efficient transportation and storage methods.

- The project will produce hydrogen using an alkaline electrolyzer of 20 Nm3/hour capacity, which would be powered by renewable energy supplied from the 1.31 MW Solar Power Plant of SJVN in Wadhal, Shimla.

India's biggest Climate Clock activated at CSIR Hq to celebrate Earth Day

- On 23 April 2024, Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR), as a part of the Earth Day Celebrations, installed and activated India's biggest Climate Clock on the CSIR Headquarters Building in Rafi Marg, New Delhi.
- The event signifies CSIR's aim to spread awareness about climate change and its ill effects.
- Climate clocks provided by the Foundation have been installed in most CSIR labs.

Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR)

- The Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR) is India's largest government-funded science and technology powerhouse, established in 1942.
- They work across a vast spectrum of scientific fields, from aerospace and biotechnology to oceanography and chemicals.
- Their mission is to fuel India's scientific and industrial growth through research and development (R&D).
- They develop new technologies, solve critical problems in areas like water and energy, and create innovative products.
- They also play a key role in training future scientists and researchers.

CSIR implements new in-house 'Accounts Manager Software' for financial management



- The Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR) has set an example for all other Central autonomous institutions in the country by successfully implementing its in-house developed 'Accounts Manager Software' for financial management.
- On 01 April 2024, CSIR generated its Annual accounts for the financial year 2023-24, well ahead of the General Financial Rules (GFR) deadline of 30 June.
- The Annual Accounts for the financial year 2023-24 have already been submitted to the Office of the CAG.
- With an intuitive interface designed for ease of use, software users can effortlessly input, track, and manage financial data.

DRDO develops country's lightest bulletproof jacket for protection



- DRDO's Defence Materials and Stores Research and Development Establishment (DMSRDE), Kanpur has successfully developed the lightest bulletproof jacket in the country for protection against 7.62 × 54 R API (level 6 of BIS 17051) ammunition.
- This jacket is based on a new design approach where novel material along with new processes has been used.
- Recently, this bulletproof jacket was successfully tested at TBRL, Chandigarh as per BIS 17051-2018.
- The front hard armour panel (HAP) of this jacket defeats multiple hits (six shots) of 7.62 × 54 R API (sniper rounds) in both ICW (in-conjunction with) and standalone design.

IIT Madras launches India's first mobile Medical Devices Calibration Facility

- Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT Madras) has launched India's First 'medical devices calibration facility on wheels'.



- This has been developed by IIT Madras under its 'Anaivarukkum IITM' (IITM for all) Initiatives.
- This mobile facility will ensure pervasive quality healthcare irrespective of geographical locations across the country.
- This will help to test and maintain medical devices that are used in a wide range of hospitals including those in villages at their doorsteps.

DRDO test-fires 'Indigenous Technology Cruise Missile'

- Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) test-fired its 'Indigenous Technology Cruise Missile (ITCM)' from the Integrated Test Range (ITR) in Chandipur off the northeastern coast of Odisha.
- The flight of the missile was also monitored from the Su-30-MKI aircraft of the Indian Air Force.
- The missile followed the desired path using "waypoint navigation and demonstrated very-low-altitude sea-skimming flight".
- This successful flight test has also established the reliable performance of the indigenous propulsion system developed by the Gas Turbine Research Establishment (GTRE), Bengaluru.
- The missile was developed by Bangalore-based DRDO laboratory Aeronautical Development Establishment (ADE) in collaboration with other laboratories and Indian industries.

SPACE set up by DRDO inaugurated in Kerala

- Submersible Platform for Acoustic Characterisation and Evaluation (SPACE) was inaugurated by Secretary, Department of Defence (R&D) and Chairman DRDO Dr Samir V Kamat at Underwater Acoustic Research Facility, Kulamavu in Idukki, Kerala on April 17, 2024.
- The SPACE is set up by the Naval Physical & Oceanographic Laboratory of DRDO.
- The SPACE will mainly be utilised for evaluation of complete sonar systems, allowing for quick deployment and easy recovery of scientific packages such as sensors and transducers.



- It will be suitable for survey, sampling, and data collection of air, surface, mid-water, and reservoir floor parameters using modern scientific instrumentation.

Nanosensor developed at IIT Jodhpur aims to reduce mortality rate

- A new nanosensor developed by researchers of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Jodhpur aims to reduce the mortality rate occurring due to delayed diagnosis and a lack of early warnings.
- The technology has immense potential to be used as a rapid and point-of-care technique for health monitoring, disease diagnosis, prognosis, and immune response tracking.
- The nanosensor can quickly detect Cytokines, a group of proteins that regulate various cells.
- Cytokines are one of the many biomarkers of inflammation that are used for diagnosing diseases and tracking their progression.

Sub-metre optical satellite assembled in India deployed into space: TASL



- On April 8, 2024, Tata Advanced Systems Limited (TASL) announced the successful deployment of its sub-meter optical satellite into space.
- The satellite, assembled and tested in India, was launched from the Kennedy Space Center in Florida, USA, aboard SpaceX's Falcon 9 rocket on 7 April 2024.

- "TASL's TSAT-1A satellite will provide high-resolution optical satellite images, offering increased collection capacity, dynamic range, and low-latency delivery through its multispectral and hyperspectral capabilities".
- TASL holds a significant position in aerospace and defense solutions in India.
- The company is recognized as a leading private sector player in these sectors.

GUJCOST designated as nodal centre for ISRO's START programme

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has designated the Gujarat Council on Science and Technology (GUJCOST) as the Nodal Centre for the 'Space Science and Technology Awareness Training (START)' program.
- This initiative aims to raise awareness and provide training in space science and technology, with GUJCOST leading efforts in this regard.

Russia's successful Angara-A5 rocket test launch



- Russia conducted the inaugural test of its Angara-A5 space rocket on 11 April 2024, from the Vostochny Cosmodrome in the Far East.
- Prior to this successful launch, two attempts on April 9 and 10 had been canceled at the last minute.

Kodaikanal Solar Observatory celebrates 125 years of studying the Sun

- The Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA) celebrated the 125th anniversary of the Kodaikanal Solar Observatory (KSO) on April 1, 2024.
- The KSO, established in 1899 by the British, boasts one of the longest continuous daily records of the Sun globally, with over 1.2 lakh digitized solar images dating back to the early 20th century.
- A.S. Kiran Kumar, former Chairman of ISRO and Chairperson of the Governing Council of IIA, unveiled the KSO 125 logo and a booklet detailing the observatory's history and research highlights during the anniversary celebrations.
- The KSO has evolved into a crucial research institution under the Indian Institute of Astrophysics, operating as a field station.

NASA to launch 3 rockets in April during total Solar Eclipse 2024



- NASA plans three space missions for April.
- Rockets to launch 260 miles above Earth during total solar eclipse on 8 April 2024.
- Purpose is to study atmospheric disturbances caused by the eclipse.
- Focus on impact on satellite signals and radio frequencies.
- Rockets to carry specialized equipment to the ionosphere for study.
- Objective is to gain insight into eclipse-induced atmospheric disturbances.

New generation ballistic missile Agni Prime successfully test-fired



- The Strategic Forces Command (SFC) and the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) conducted a successful flight test of the new generation ballistic missile Agni-Prime.
- The test, carried out on Wednesday evening, achieved all trial objectives, confirming the missile's reliable performance.
- Data from range sensors deployed at various locations, including two downrange ships, validated the successful test, according to the Ministry of Defence (MoD).
- Agni-Prime, designed for nuclear strikes against targets in Pakistan, boasts a range of 1,000-2,000 km, covering all of Pakistan's territory.
- This missile is set to replace outdated ballistic missiles like Prithvi, Agni-1, and Agni-2, which were developed two decades ago with now obsolete technologies.

DRDO starts to work to set up a test centre in Bengal

- The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has initiated a project in Junput village, West Bengal, to establish a test centre for the country's weapon systems.
- The objective of this project is to alleviate the congestion of testing activities at Odisha's Chandipur Integrated Test Range (ITR) by providing an additional operational area.
- Junput, located near the Bay of Bengal, has been selected for its strategic location, similar to Chandipur.
- The proposed site covers 8.73 acres near Digha and aims to facilitate timely trials of weapon systems, considering their crucial role in defense and security.

Defence and Securities

Chapter 8

Indian Army conducts a seminar cum exhibition on theme "Year of tech absorption, empowering the soldier"



- On 24 April 2024, A seminar cum exhibition was conducted by the Indian Army on the theme "Year of Technology Absorption - Empowering the Soldier".
- The event was conducted by the Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS), on behalf of the Indian Army in Manekshaw Centre.
- The seminar brought together technology experts and industry professionals to deliberate on the adoption of modern technologies like Artificial Intelligence and advanced hardware in the military domain.
- It aimed at fostering a collaborative environment for academia and the defence industry to fast-pace the ongoing initiatives for technological absorption in the military.

About Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS)

- The CLAWS, based in New Delhi, India, is an independent think tank focusing on strategic issues and land warfare.
- The Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS) was established in 2004.
- CLAWS analyzes national security, conventional military operations, and sub-conventional warfare, particularly within the South Asian region.
- CLAWS conducts research with a futuristic and policy-oriented approach.
- Their goal is to contribute to developing a proactive national security strategy for India.

Steel cutting of 3rd cadet training ship at M/S L&T Shipyard, Kattupalli



- Steel Cutting ceremony of the third Cadet Training Ship (Yard-18005) was held at M/s L&T Shipyard, Kattupalli, on 20 April 2024.
- These Cadet Training Ships will be utilised for training officer cadets at sea after their basic training ashore.
- These ships will also extend training facilities to cadets from friendly foreign countries.
- These ships are likely to be delivered to IN commencing Sep 2026.

Indian Coast Guard & Royal Oman Police Coast Guard officials meet in New Delhi



- The 5th Annual High-Level meeting between the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) and the Royal Oman Police Coast Guard (ROPCG) took place in New Delhi on 23 April 2024.
- The meeting focused on bolstering bilateral engagements through a capacity-building programme, cross ships' visit, implementation of Sea Rider programme, establishing professional linkages

between pollution reporting centers and other collaborative arrangements.

- Both sides expressed their commitment to enhancing mutual cooperation in addressing maritime challenges, thereby strengthening the maritime safety and security framework in the region.

Indian Navy conducted Exercise Poorvi Lehar on East Coast



- Indian Navy conducted Exercise Poorvi Lehar on East Coast under the Operational Control of the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Naval Command.
- The exercise aimed at validation of procedures towards assessment of Indian Navy's preparedness to meet Maritime Security challenges in the region.
- The exercise witnessed participation of Ships, Submarines, Aircrafts and Special Forces.
- With operation of aircraft from diverse locations, a near continuous Maritime Domain Awareness was maintained throughout the Area of operations.
- The exercise also witnessed participation of assets from IAF, Andaman & Nicobar Command and Coast Guard indicating a very high degree of interoperability amongst the Services.

Indian Army tests anti-tank guided missile at 'super-high-altitude' in Sikkim

- The Indian Army's Trishakti Corps conducted a training exercise involving the firing of anti-tank guided missiles (ATGMs) at a "super high-altitude area of 17,000 feet" in Sikkim.
- The ATGM system's performance in high-altitude environments reaffirms the "Ek Missile Ek Tank" goal.
- It highlights its accuracy and effectiveness in "super-high-altitude terrain".

India to test 130 km strike range Astra Mark-2 missile this year

- In a major capability boost for the Air Force's fighter fleet, India is planning to carry out the first test of the 120–130 km strike range Astra Mark 2 air-to-air missile in next few months.
- The Astra Mark-1 air-to-air missile with strike range of around 90–100 kms is already in the Indian Air Force and is already integrated with the LCA Tejas and the Su-30 MKI fighter jets.
- The work on developing the 120-130 km strike range Astra Mark-2 air-to-air missile is going on.

DRDO & Indian Army conduct successful trials of indigenous Man Portable Anti-tank Guided Missile Weapon System



- Man Portable Anti-tank Guided Missile (MPATGM) Weapon System has been field evaluated in different flight configurations several times with the objective of proving the technology with high superiority.
- The system consisted of the MPATGM, Launcher, Target Acquisition System, and the Fire Control Unit.
- Adequate number of missile firing trials have been successfully conducted towards achieving compliance of complete operational envelop as stipulated in the General Staff Qualitative Requirements (Infantry, Indian Army).
- The Warhead Flight Trials were successfully conducted at the Pokhran Field Firing Range, Rajasthan on 13 April, 2024.

BEL soars 5%, hits new high on record turnover in FY24

- Shares of Bharat Electronics (BEL) reached a new high of ₹221.40 on the BSE during Tuesday's intra-day trade, accompanied by heavy trading volumes.



- The surge in stock prices followed BEL's announcement of achieving a provisional turnover of approximately ₹19,700 crore in the financial year 2023-24, marking a notable year-on-year growth of 13.65%.
- In FY23, the state-owned aerospace and defense company reported a turnover of ₹17,333 crore, indicating steady growth in revenue.
- The stock price surpassed its previous high of ₹216.70 recorded on March 7, demonstrating positive investor sentiment and confidence in BEL's performance.
- Trading volumes for the counter nearly doubled, with a combined 44.1 million equity shares exchanged on the NSE and BSE.

Indian Coast Guard rescues 27 Bangladeshi fishermen

- In a swift operation, Indian Coast Guard (ICG) rescued 27 Bangladeshi fishermen on 4 April 2024, stranded on their fishing boat at sea.
- Indian Coast Guard Ship Amogh during patrol at Indo-Bangladesh International Maritime Border Line (IMBL), sighted a Bangladeshi fishing boat (BFB) Sagar II, adrift inside Indian waters.
- The ICG ship launched a boarding team to investigate. During investigation it was revealed that the boat had a steering gear breakdown for the last two days and had been adrift since then, which led to the boat drifting inside Indian waters.
- The BFB had 27 crew/fishermen onboard.

Navy chief awards unit citation to INS Sharda for anti-piracy operations

- Admiral R Hari Kumar, Chief of the Naval Staff, during his visit to Southern Naval Command, Kochi, awarded 'On the Spot Unit Citation' to INS Sharda for successful conduct of anti-piracy operations.
- The ship was involved in the safe release of all 19 crew members (11 Iranian & 08 Pakistani) of Iranian fishing vessel Omari which was held hostage by pirates off the East coast of Somalia.



- The ship was tasked to investigate the Iranian fishing vessel Omari that was likely hijacked by pirates. Based on surveillance inputs of naval RPA, the ship intercepted the vessel and maintained a covert trail throughout the night.

Chief of Defence Staff Gen Anil Chauhan to chair maiden 'Parivartan Chintan', a Tri-Service Conference on Jointness & Integration



- The heads of all tri-service military institutions will gather in New Delhi on 8 April, for the first-ever tri-service planning conference called the 'Parivartan Chintan'.
- The conference takes place on the backdrop of the three services combining to set up integrated theatre commands, containing elements of the army, navy, and air force.
- This pioneering tri-service conference is aimed at generating new and fresh ideas, initiatives and reforms to propel jointness and integration efforts.
- The day-long discussions will be chaired by the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), General Anil Chauhan.

India-Uzbekistan joint military exercise DUSTLIK 2024



- The fifth edition of the 'Dustlik' Joint Military Exercise between India and Uzbekistan is scheduled to commence in the Termez District, Uzbekistan, from 15 April.
- Participating contingents from the Indian Armed Forces and Armed Forces of the Republic of Uzbekistan will undergo joint training from April 15 to 28, 2024.
- This exercise aims to strengthen collaboration and pave the way for future military interactions between the two nations.

About Exercise DUSTLIK

- Exercise DUSTLIK is named after Dustlik, a town in the Jizzakh region of Uzbekistan.
- The first-ever joint military exercise between the armies of India and Uzbekistan took place in 2019 near Tashkent.
- The focus of the first edition was on counter-terrorism. Since then, the exercise has been conducted annually, alternating between India and Uzbekistan.
- The previous edition was held in Pithoragarh, India, in February 2023.
- The exercise has significantly contributed to fostering military cooperation, enhancing combined capabilities, developing interoperability, and strengthening bilateral relations between India and Uzbekistan.

Government Schemes and Programs

Chapter 9

Central government launched CDP-SURAKSHA to disburse subsidies to horticulture farmers

- The Central government has launched a new platform called CDP-SURAKSHA to disburse subsidies to horticulture farmers under the Cluster Development Programme (CDP).
- SURAKSHA stands for "System for Unified Resource Allocation, Knowledge, and Secure Horticulture Assistance".
- The move seeks to push the growth of India's horticulture sector, which contributes nearly one-third to the agriculture gross value addition (GVA), making a substantial contribution to the Indian economy.
- The total production of horticulture crops has also spiked in recent years. While in 2010-11, it stood at 240.53 million tonnes, the number rose to 334.60 million tonnes in 2020-21.

NTPC Limited to launch new edition of Girl Child Empowerment Mission (GEM)



- The new edition of the Government E-Marketplace (GEM) was launched in April 2024.
- It aims to connect approximately 3,000 deserving children from underprivileged backgrounds across 42 designated locations within the power sector Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs).
- This initiative will increase the total number of children benefiting from the program to over 10,000, thereby expanding its reach and impact on society.

CCI approved acquisition of shares of MG Motor India Private Limited by IndoEdge India Fund – Large Value Fund (LVF) Scheme



- The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has approved the acquisition of shares of MG Motor India Private Limited by IndoEdge India Fund – Large Value Fund (LVF) Scheme.
- The proposed combination relates to the acquisition of up to approximately 8% of the share capital (8.70% of the voting and economic rights) of the MG Motor India Private Limited (Target) along with certain rights by the IndoEdge India Fund – LVF Scheme (Acquirer) (Proposed Combination).
- The Acquirer is a large value fund for accredited investors, a scheme by IndoEdge India Fund (IndoEdge).
- IndoEdge is a contributory determinate trust registered with the Securities and Exchange Board of India as a Category II Alternative Investment Fund, under the SEBI (AIF) Regulations, 2012.
- Target is a company incorporated in India, engaged in the automobile original equipment manufacturing business and after sale services.

Summit and Conferences

Chapter 10

The Retail Summit 2024



- The Retail Summit (TRS) 2024, a leading global event focused on the future of retail, was held in Dubai with its agenda built around eight key themes.
- These themes aim to address critical challenges and opportunities faced by retailers worldwide.
- This year's TRS will delve into areas including Artificial Intelligence, Brick & Mortar stores, Data, Digital transformation, Macroeconomics, Supply Chain management, Sustainability & Ethics, and Talent acquisition.
- The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) is an Industry partner of The Retail Summit 2024.
- The Retail Summit is the only event in the world that discusses the convergence of retail with technology, experience, and hospitality, with over 900 attendees from 30+ countries.

About FICCI

- The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) was established in 1927.
- It is a non-government, not-for-profit organization.
- FICCI represents the voice of India's business and industry, drawing its membership from the corporate sector, both private and public, including SMEs and MNCs.
- It serves as a platform for networking and consensus building within and across sectors.
- FICCI articulates the views and concerns of industry, influences policy, encourages debate, and engages with policy makers and civil society.
- The summit, known for bringing together the brightest minds in retail, promises to be its most inspiring and thought-provoking edition yet.

Nepal launches first Rainbow Tourism Conference

- Nepal hosts its 1st Rainbow Tourism Conference, with Nepal presenting itself as a safe and respectable destination in South Asia for the sexual minority community.
- The one-day international conference was organized by Mayako Pehchan Nepal, a non-governmental organization.
- This conference represents an important step towards creating a tourism industry that celebrates diversity and embraces inclusivity.,
- The main objective of the conference is to establish Nepal as an LGBT-friendly tourism destination.

International Humanitarian Conference for Sudan & Its Neighbours

- On 15 April, 2024, the French capital, Paris, hosted an International Humanitarian Conference for Sudan and Neighbouring Countries.
- The conference was organized in response to the United Nations' funding appeal on 7 February 2024.
- The devastating conflict in Sudan has plunged the nation into a profound humanitarian crisis, prompting the international community to take swift action.
- The conference was a collaborative effort by France, Germany, and the European Union, bringing together ministers and representatives from over 58 states, including neighboring and regional countries, as well as donors.

World Future Energy Summit 2024

- A panel discussion on "Future Growth Opportunities for Long Duration Energy Storage" took place at the World Future Energy Summit 2024 in Abu Dhabi.
- The World Future Energy Summit is an annual event organised in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, with

the goal of advancing future energy, energy efficiency, and sustainable technology.

- It began in 2008, under the patronage of Abu Dhabi's Crown Prince, Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan.
- It was founded as a platform to address the growing demand for renewable energy solutions and sustainable development in the face of global energy issues.

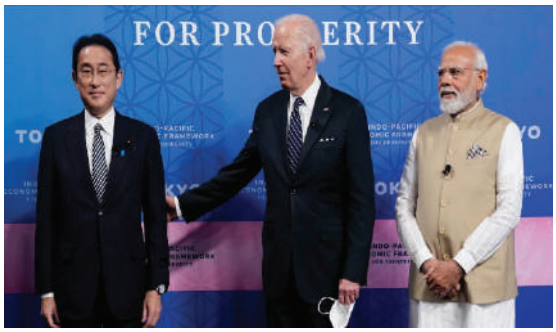
Tri-Service Conference 'Parivartan Chintan' be held in New Delhi



- Parivartan Chintan, a pioneering Tri-Service Conference aimed at generating new and fresh ideas, initiatives and reforms to propel Jointness and Integration efforts will be held in New Delhi on 8 April 2024.
- It will be the first ever conference of the Heads of all Tri- Services Institutions, the Department of Military Affairs, Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff and the three Services.

IPEF to organize Clean Economy Investor Forum in Singapore

- The Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) was launched in May 2022 and currently includes 14 partners – Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, United States and Vietnam.



- It provides a platform for countries in the region to collaborate on advancing resilient, sustainable, and inclusive economic growth, and aims to contribute to cooperation, stability and prosperity in the region.
- The IPEF comprises four pillars of cooperation namely: Trade, Supply Chain, Clean Economy and Fair Economy.

NSA Ajit Doval leads Indian delegation at meeting of SCO countries



- The 19th annual meeting of the secretaries of the security councils of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) member states took place in Astana, Kazakhstan, from April 2 to 3, 2024.
- Indian Delegation: Led by the National Security Advisor (NSA) Ajit Doval, the Indian delegation participated actively in the meeting.
- President Tokayev proposed adopting a Cooperation Programme to counter terrorism, separatism, and extremism for 2025-2027.
- He also advocated for the implementation of the SCO Anti-Drug Strategy for 2024-2029.
- Countering "three evil forces" – terrorism, separatism, and extremism – along with transnational organized crime, drug trafficking, and cybersecurity challenges were emphasized as priorities during Kazakhstan's chairmanship in the SCO.

Environment and Ecology

Chapter 11

New NCPOR study attempts to resolve the Mystery of extremely low sea ice cover in Antarctic

- In collaboration with the British Antarctic Survey, United Kingdom, reported the conditions that led to unprecedented hindrance in Antarctic ice expansion and ice retreat ahead of the annual ice maximum in 2023.
- In light of global warming, the Arctic has witnessed a significant loss of sea ice in the past decade, while the Antarctic experienced a moderate increase until 2015 followed by a sudden decrease since 2016.
- The slow ice expansion in Antarctic occurred ahead of the annual maximum on 7 September 2023 with an ice extent of 16.98 million km2, which was 1.46 million km2 below the long-term average.
- The underlying cause of the observed sea ice changes remained a crucial question both for the scientific community and policymakers.

UN carbon credits document raises concerns

- A key document from a body overseeing the United Nations (UN) carbon markets contains some serious flaws, including the fees that it intends to levy on communities with concerns.
- Article 6.4 of the Paris Agreement aims to establish a centralised market under the United Nations, allowing carbon credits generated by projects that reduce or eliminate greenhouse gas emissions.
- The Supervisory Body (SB), recently put out a document that proposed rules for the submission of appeals or grievances under the Article 6.4 mechanism by participants, including local communities.

ILO flags risk of excessive heat to 2.4 billion workers globally

- More than 70 per cent of all workers worldwide are at risk of exposure to excessive heat, posing significant threats to their safety and health, a new report by International Labour Organization (ILO) has warned.
- Out of a global workforce of 3.4 billion, over 2.4 billion workers are likely to be exposed to excessive heat at some point during their work.
- This is an increase of 34.7 per cent in exposure estimates in the 20-year period between 2000 and 2020, according to the report, titled Ensuring safety and health at work in a changing climate released on April 22, 2024.

Bhutan hosts summit targeting $1 billion USD for the conservation of tiger landscapes

- On Earth Day 2024, the Royal Government of Bhutan is hosting the Sustainable Finance for Tiger Landscapes Conference under the patronage of her majesty the Queen, Jetsun Pema Wangchuck.
- The Conference launches the ambition to mobilise $1 billion USD in new funding over ten years for the preservation of tiger landscapes.
- Co-organised by the Royal Government of Bhutan and the Tiger Conservation Coalition, the conference will include expert panels leading insightful discussions on sustainable finance, linkages with the United Nations Global Biodiversity Framework, and the role of public-private partnerships in safeguarding tiger landscapes.
- The two-day event brings together tiger range countries, visionary private and public sector donors, thought leaders, international development agencies, and conservation NGOs.

Clouded tiger cat found in Brazilian Rainforests



- The clouded tiger cat, or Leopardus pardinoides, is a new species of tiger that has been discovered recently in the lush jungles of Brazil.
- Although it is small in stature, its discovery has enormous ramifications for biodiversity and conservation.
- About the size of a domestic housecat, the clouded tiger cat is a small wildcat.
- Its range includes Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, and Argentina. It is found in the cloud forests of the Andean and southern Central American mountain systems.
- It has been determined by researchers working with the Tiger Cats Conservation Initiative in Brazil that this cat is, in fact, a different species from its previously recognized cousins.

Fourth global mass coral bleaching

- The fourth global mass coral bleaching event has been triggered by extraordinary ocean temperatures.
- This could have serious consequences for ocean life and millions of people who rely on reefs for food, jobs, and coastal defence.
- In March this year, it reached a record monthly high of 21.07 degree Celsius, according to the EU Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S).
- The primary reason behind the soaring temperatures is the rising emissions of heat-trapping greenhouse gases (GHGs) such as carbon dioxide and methane in the atmosphere.

Scientists discover Leaf Litter Frog that emits ultrasonic sounds

- Researchers have discovered that the Leaf Litter Frog makes noises that are too low for people to hear, yet they have the ability to frighten off predators.
- The most prevalent type of frog in the forest community is the leaf litter frog. It uses the frequency of its screams to help it survive.
- It lives on forest edges and main and secondary forests. Usually, one can find it on the leaves of low plants within the forest or in the leaf litter on the forest floor.
- The largest members of the genus are females, and they are little. They only reach a length of 64 millimeters, or 2.5 inches, at most.
- This particular species of frog is exclusive to the Atlantic rainforest in Brazil.

GAIA Asia Pacific called on the ASEAN to take decisive action in response to plastic pollution

- The Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA) Asia Pacific has called on the ASEAN to take decisive action in response to plastic pollution.
- The Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA) is an international coalition including over one thousand non-governmental organizations, individuals, and grassroots groups.
- It seeks to drive the shift away from the extractive, linear economy of today and toward a circular one that upholds everyone's right to a safe and healthy environment.
- It imagines a just, zero-waste society where resources are sustainably conserved rather than burned or disposed of, and people are free from the burden of toxic pollution. This society is based on respect for ecological boundaries and community rights.

Sports News

Chapter 12

India's 17-Year-Old D Gukesh Wins Candidates Chess Tournament



- The 17-year-old Grandmaster D Gukesh Dommaraju from India has made history by winning the 2024 FIDE Candidates Tournament. This victory makes him the youngest player in history to win a Candidates Tournament.
- After 14 rounds and over three weeks of play, Gukesh's draw against Grandmaster Hikaru Nakamura was enough to secure his advancement.
- He is also India's number-one chess player by rating, and after this tournament, he is higher-rated than the current world champion.

Deepika Soreng honoured with Asunta Lakra Award

- Deepika Soreng has been honoured with the prestigious Hockey India Asunta Lakra Award for Upcoming Player of the Year during the Hockey India 6th Annual Awards 2023.
- The award recognizes her outstanding performance and immense potential as a rising star in the sport.
- The Asunta Lakra Award is a testament to Hockey India's commitment to nurturing and recognizing emerging talents within the sport.
- Deepika had a tremendous year in 2023 as she made her debut for the side in the Women's Junior Asia Cup.
- She helped the team win the Gold medal, scoring 7 goals in 6 matches and emerging as the second-highest goal-scorer for the side in the tournament.

Priyanka Goswami and Akshdeep Singh secure Olympic quota in race walk mixed relay event



- India's Priyanka Goswami and Akshdeep Singh secured Paris 2024 Olympic quota after finishing 18th in the mixed marathon race walking relay event at the 2024 World Athletics Race Walking Team Championships in Antalya.
- Akshdeep and Goswami registered a timing of 3:05:03 to finish inside the top 20 while Munita Prajapati and Paramjeet Singh, the other Indian pair competing in the World Championships in Antalya, finished 35th with a timing of 3:09:58.

Barcelona Open 2024

- World number six Casper Ruud defeated Stefanos Tsitsipas 7-5, 6-3 to win the Barcelona Open on 21 April 2024.
- Ruud, a three-time Grand Slam runner-up, had won 10 titles at 250 level with the 500-ranked clay-court event in Barcelona his 11th career triumph.
- Ruud earned revenge after his defeat by the Greek world number seven in the Monte Carlo Masters final last week to claim the biggest trophy of his career.
- Ruud's 91-minute victory ended a 10-match winning streak for Tsitsipas.
- The doubles event at the Barcelona Open witnessed the Argentine pair of Maximo Gonzalez and Andres Molteni emerging victorious.

- The Barcelona Open 2024 was the 71st edition of this prestigious ATP 500 Series clay-court tournament held at the Real Club de Tenis Barcelona in Spain.

India clinches 2 Silver and 2 Bronze medals at the 13th EGMO 2024



- Indian team has shown a commendable performance at the 13th European Girls' Mathematical Olympiad (EGMO) 2024 held in Tskaltubo, Georgia from 11 to 17 April, 2024.
- The 4-member Indian team secured 2 Silver and 2 Bronze medals.
- This achievement marks the second instance of all four contestants securing medals at EGMO since India's debut in 2015.

S. No.	Name	Student from	Award
1.	Gunjan Aggarwal	Gurgaon, Haryana,	Silver Medal
2.	Sanjana Philo Chacko	Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala	Silver Medal
3.	Larissa	Hisar, Haryana	Bronze Medal
4.	Saee Vitthal Patil	Pune, Maharashtra	Bronze Medal

Ethiopia's Sisay Lemma wins first Boston Marathon title

- Ethiopia's Sisay Lemma won his first Boston Marathon title, finishing with a time of 2:06:17 in the men's race, while Hellen Obiri of Kenya retained her 2023 title in the women's race.



- Lemma, who is the fourth-fastest man in history after his 2:01:48 finish in the Valencia Marathon last month.
- The 33-year-old was able to hold on for his second major marathon victory after winning the 2021 London Marathon.
- Obiri, 34, is the first woman to win back-to-back Boston Marathons since Catherine Ndereba accomplished the feat in 2004 and 2005. She also won the New York Marathon in November last year.

Novak Djokovic breaks Roger Federer's record, becomes oldest World No. 1 in ATP rankings history

- Novak Djokovic officially became the oldest World No. 1 in ATP Rankings history, a record previously held by one of his greatest rivals in Roger Federer.
- Serbia's Djokovic, the most decorated male tennis player in the Open era with 24 Majors, is 36 years and 321 days old.
- He already holds the record for most weeks (419) spent as the top-ranked male player with second-placed Federer (310 weeks) way behind.
- Djokovic first became World No. 1 on July 4, 2011 at the age of 24. In contrast, both of Djokovic's great 'Big Three' rivals, Federer and Rafael Nadal, reached No. 1 for the first time aged 22.

Max Verstappen bounces back with dominant F1 win at Japanese Grand Prix



- Max Verstappen, the reigning world champion, reclaimed his winning form by securing his third consecutive pole-to-flag victory at the Japanese Formula One Grand Prix.
- Racing at the Suzuka Circuit, Verstappen led his Red Bull teammate, Sergio Perez, to a dominant one-two finish.
- After experiencing his first retirement since 2022 in Melbourne during the previous race, which ended his nine-race winning streak, Verstappen encountered no mechanical issues on 27 April 2024.

Asian Wrestling Championship



- Indian wrestler Udit secured a silver medal after losing 4-5 to Kento Yumiya of Japan in the men's freestyle 57kg final at the senior Asian Championship.
- Additionally, India won two bronze medals: Abhimanyu won in the men's 70kg freestyle category by defeating Begijon Kuldashev of Uzbekistan 6-5, and Vicky secured a bronze in the men's 97kg category by defeating home favorite Andrey Romanovitch Aronov 10-1.

Harendra Singh appointed as Coach of Indian Women's Hockey team until 2028 Olympics



- Hockey India has revealed a 33-member Indian Women's Hockey Team, with former Indian Hockey player and Dronacharya awardee Harendra Singh appointed as the coach.
- Singh's tenure is set until the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

Awards and Honors

Chapter 13

Dr Malcolm Adiseshiah National Award 2024

- Malcolm and Elizabeth Adiseshiah Trust has announced the annual Dr Malcolm Adiseshiah National Award 2024 for two professors.
- Professor Surinder S Jodhka, School of Social Sciences, JNU, was selected for Malcolm Adiseshiah award (2L & citation) while Vikas Kumar, associate professor, Azim Premji University, will get the Elizabeth Adiseshiah award (1L & citation).

Ratan Tata receives prestigious humanitarian award



- Renowned industrialist and philanthropist Ratan Tata, Chairman Emeritus of the Tata Group, was on Monday honored with the prestigious KISS Humanitarian Award 2021 on Monday.
- The award ceremony was held at his residence in Mumbai, marking a significant recognition of his commitment to social development and exemplary corporate leadership.
- The ceremony was attended by Tata Group chairman N. Chandrasekaran and three-time Grammy Award winner Ricky Kej, among others. The award was presented by the founder of KIIT and KISS Achyuta Samanta.
- Ratan Tata agreed to accept this award following a personal request from Achyuta Samanta, recognizing the importance of the KISS humanitarian honour.
- The award was announced in 2021, but Tata was unable to receive the award then because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

MATTER honored with Clarivate South Asia Innovation Award 2024

- MATTER, a pioneering force in India's Electric mobility and energy landscape, proudly announces winning the Clarivate South Asia Innovation Awards 2024 in the Automotive category.
- This esteemed accolade celebrates MATTER's relentless commitment to innovation and technological excellence in the realm of clean energy & mobility solutions.
- In the fiscal year 2023-2024, MATTER's intellectual property achievements have been remarkable, with 15 granted patents and 62 published patents.
- Till date MATTER has a portfolio of 250+ patent applications including 25 grants and 76 publications.

Indian students bag NASA awards for human exploration rover challenge

- Two Indian students' teams from the New Delhi area and Mumbai have won awards from the NASA for the Human Exploration Rover Challenge.
- The KIET Group of Institutions, Delhi-NCR has won the award in the "Crash and Burn" category of the annual Human Exploration Rover Challenge (HERC) award, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) announced on 22 March 2024.
- The Kanakia International School from Mumbai was given the "Rookie of the Year" award.
- Parish Episcopal School from Dallas in the United States secured the first place in the high school division and the University of Alabama in Huntsville captured the college/university title.
- More than 600 students with 72 teams from around the world participated as the HERC celebrated its 30th anniversary as a NASA competition.

Mohammed Salem wins 2024 World Press Photo of the Year award



- Reuters photographer Mohammed Salem won the prestigious 2024 World Press Photo of the Year award for his image of a Palestinian woman cradling the body of her five-year-old niece in the Gaza Strip.
- The picture was taken on 17 October 2023, at Nasser hospital in Khan Younis in southern Gaza, where families were searching for relatives killed during Israeli bombing of the Palestinian enclave.

Agarwal & Boyce win inaugural Global Award

- The World Inequality Lab (WIL) and Sciences Po's Center for Research on Social Inequalities (CRIS) have joined forces for the first edition of the Global Inequality Research Award (or GiRA).
- It aims to recognize every two years researchers from all disciplines who have made a significant contribution to the understanding of global inequalities.
- The 2024 GiRA Prize is jointly awarded to Bina Argawal and James K. Boyce for their groundbreaking work in the field of social and environmental inequalities.

Pavuluri Subba Rao gets Aryabhatta award for contribution to astronautics

- Ananth Technologies Founder, CEO and Chairman Pavuluri Subba Rao has been conferred with the 'Aryabhatta Award' instituted by the Aeronautical Society of India (ASI).
- He was also presented with ASI's 'Distinguished Fellow' title.
- He received the award recognition of Rao's "tremendous lifetime contribution to the promotion of astronautics in India."
- A former ISRO scientist, Rao incorporated Ananth Technologies Limited in 1992 to indigenously design and develop some of the country's most sophisticated avionics for ISRO and the Defence sector.

Kremlin critic Navalnaya to receive Freedom Prize of the Media



- Kremlin critic Yulia Navalnaya and her husband Alexei Navalny, who died a few weeks ago in a Russian prison, are to receive this year's "Freedom Prize of the Media".
- The award ceremony is to take place on 19 April at the Ludwig Erhard Summit, named after the former German chancellor, at Bavaria's Tegernsee lake. Navalnaya will accept the award in person.
- Navalnaya and her husband are to be honoured for their brave and non-violent battle against a brutal dictatorship in Russia, according to a jury statement.

Israeli scientist Avi Wigderson wins prestigious AM Turing Award



- Israeli computer scientist Avi Wigderson is awarded the prestigious AM Turing award.

- Wigderson has been a leading figure in areas including computational complexity theory, algorithms and optimization, randomness and cryptography, parallel and distributed computation, combinatorics, and graph theory.
- The Turing Award is an annual prize given by the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) to an individual who has made contributions of lasting importance to the field of computing.
- The Turing Award was first presented in 1966, and it has since become one of the most prestigious awards in computer science.

GMR Hyderabad International airport wins' award for 'best airport staff'

- GMR Hyderabad International Airport Ltd (GHIAL) has won the 'Best Airport Staff in India & South Asia 2024' award by Skytrax.
- The award was announced at a ceremony held on April 17 at the Passenger Terminal EXPO 2024 in Frankfurt, Germany.
- Hyderabad Airport emerged as the number one airport among all participating airports in India and South Asia.
- Skytrax is a global air transport rating organisation, having evaluated airports and airlines worldwide since 1989.

Amitabh Bachchan to be honoured with Lata Deenanath Mangeshkar award



- Bollywood Megastar Amitabh Bachchan will be honoured with the prestigious third Lata Dinanath Mangeshkar award for his remarkable dedication to the nation, its people, and society.
- Previous recipients of this esteemed award include Prime Minister Narendra Modi and popular singer Asha Bhosale.
- Lata Dinanath Mangeshkar award was established by the Deenanath Mangeshkar Smriti Pratishthan in memory of the late Bharat Ratna awardee and legendary singer Lata Mangeshkar on February 6, 2022.

Ram Charan awarded honorary doctorate in literature from Vels University, Chennai



- The renowned global star Ram Charan recently received an honorary Doctor of Literature degree from Vels University, Chennai, during its 14th Annual Convocation.
- Notably, Ram Charan becomes the youngest recipient of an Honorary Doctorate from Vels University.
- Previous recipients of this recognition have been Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, director Shankar and others.

Nykaa's co-founder Adwaita Nayar named young Global Leader in World Economic Forum's Class of 2024

- Adwaita Nayar, the co-founder of Nykaa and CEO of Nykaa Fashion, has been inducted into the esteemed World Economic Forum's Young Global Leaders Community as part of the Class of 2024.
- Comprising 90 remarkable individuals, this group of changemakers is at the forefront of shaping the future and fostering positive change through their innovative endeavors.
- Adwaita's inclusion in this prestigious community serves as a testament to her versatility as a leader and strategist.

Kannada poet Mamta G Sagar wins international literature prize



- Kannada poet, playwright and academic, Mamta G Sagar, was awarded the World Literary Prize for her contribution to literature by the World Organization of Writers (WOW) on 6 April 2024.
- The three-day Congress was held at the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA) Writers Village, a community started by celebrated Nigerian author Chinua Achebe in 1981.
- The event was a collaboration between ANA and Pan African Writers Association (PAWA).

Hyderabad-origin actress Avantika Vandanapu named South Asian Person of the Year by Harvard



- Indian-American actress Avantika Vandanapu, who is known for her role in 'Mean Girls', has been honoured with the "South Asian Person of the Year" award by Harvard University.
- The actress was recognised for her outstanding achievements and significant impact in both the international and Indian entertainment industries.
- She was one of the key leads in the new adaptation of 'Mean Girls'. She then made her debut in the Indian OTT series 'Big Girls Don't Cry'.
- The actress made her mark in several Hollywood projects, including 'Mean Girls', 'Spin', and 'Senior Years', among others.

Prestigious John Dirks Gairdner global health award for Dr Gagandeep Kang

- Dr Gagandeep Kang, Director of Global Health at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, has been selected for the prestigious John Dirks Award in global health. It is the most well-recognised global health award.
- The John Dirks Award in global health is awarded by the Gairdner Foundation in Canada.
- She is the first Indian woman to get this award and is a huge honour for all the work that she and her colleagues did while at Christian Medical College, Vellore.



- The Toronto-based Gairdner Foundation was set up in 1958 with a donation from philanthropist James A Gairdner.

GAIL wins prestigious 15th CIDC Vishwakarma Award for Barauni – Guwahati pipeline



- GAIL (India) Limited won the prestigious 15th CIDC Vishwakarma Award in the 'Achievement Award for Best Construction Projects' category for its Barauni – Guwahati Natural Gas Pipeline project (BGPL).
- GAIL Director (Projects) Deepak Gupta and Executive Director (Projects) A K Tripathi received the award on behalf of the company at a function here on 4 April, 2024.
- The BGPL project, an integral part of Jagdishpur (Haldia & Bokaro) Dhamra Pipeline project, has connected North-East India with the National Gas Grid for the first time.
- The 718 km long pipeline will act as the gateway for access of environmental-friendly fuel Natural Gas for entire North-East through Indradhanush Gas Grid Limited (IGGL).

Alexei Navalny's widow Yulia Navalnaya gets German press award

- Yulia Navalnaya, the widow of Russian opposition politician Alexei Navalny, received a prestigious press prize from a German publishing house in Bavaria.

- At the event, on 19 April, Navalnaya reaffirmed her unwavering commitment to promoting media freedom and carrying on her late husband's legacy.
- Navalnaya was adamant in her desire to support press freedom in Russia. She affirmed her dedication to ensure that "Russians who stand against Putin and war have access to uncensored information they can trust and share".

Dr. Karthik Kommuri honoured at National Fame Awards 2024

- Dr. Karthik Kommuri is synonymous with exceptional patient care and stands as a beacon for contemporary practice in orthodontics, and dentistry at large.
- He is known for his unwavering dedication to patient well-being, pursuit of excellence, and commitment to shaping brighter smiles with each passing day.
- As a recognition of his efforts, Dr. Kommuri was felicitated with the Distinguished Overseas Dental Specialist (Orthodontics and Orofacial Pain) title at the National Fame Awards 2024, held at The Club in Mumbai.

Hardik Singh and Salima Tete win Balbir Singh Sr. Award for player of the year 2023



- Hardik Singh was named Player of the Year for 2023 in the men's category.
- Salima Tete named Player of the Year for 2023 in the women's category, announced at the sixth annual Hockey India Awards.
- Hockey India announces the revival of Hockey India League (HIL). HIL to return in January 2025 after hiatus since 2017.
- Will feature eight men's teams and six women's teams. Auctions likely to be held after the Paris Olympics.

REC wins SKOCH ESG Award 2024 in Renewable Energy Financing Category

- REC Limited, a Maharatna Central Public Sector Enterprise under the Ministry of Power and a leading NBFC has been bestowed with the SKOCH ESG Award 2024 in the 'Renewable Energy Financing' category.



- The award underscores REC's dedication to sustainable financing, paving the way for a greener future and accelerating the transition to renewable energy. Executive Director, REC Limited, Shri T.S.C. Bosh received the award in New Delhi.
- REC has emerged as a significant player in India's clean energy transition, actively contributing to the nation's sustainable future. Through various initiatives and achievements, REC has committed to numerous sustainable projects and signed various MOUs for green projects.

15th CIDC Vishwakarma Awards 2024 honour SJVN for its Corporate Social Responsibility Contribution



- SJVN Limited has won two prestigious awards at the 15th CIDC Vishwakarma Awards 2024, organized by the Construction Industry Development Council.
- The awards received by SJVN are the 'Achievement Award for Creating Social Development & Impact' and the 'CIDC Partners in Progress Trophy'.
- Smt. Geeta Kapur, the Chairperson & Managing Director of SJVN and Chairperson of CSR Foundation, emphasized SJVN's commitment to positive change through innovative and sustainable Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives.
- SJVN has secured these awards for the third consecutive year, showcasing its consistent dedication to social impact.

Jain Acharya Lokesh Muni honored with American President's Volunteer Award 2024

- Jain Acharya Lokesh Muni has become the first Indian monk to receive the American President's Gold Volunteer Service Award.

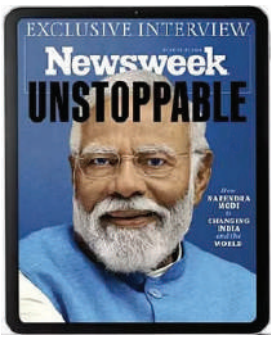


- Instituted in 2003 during George Bush's presidency, this award recognizes outstanding volunteerism.

Dr. Agarwal's Eye hospital wins 'Best Scientific Poster Award' 2024

- Dr. Agarwal's Eye Hospital won the 'Best Scientific Poster Award' at the 2024 ASCRS Annual Meeting for their study on the effectiveness of Revital Vision vision-training software in enhancing best-corrected vision in stable keratoconus patients after Crosslinking surgery.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's historic feature on Newsweek Cover



- Prime Minister Narendra Modi's exclusive interview with Newsweek covers India's economic reforms, governance accountability, and the vitality of Indian democracy.
- His feature on the cover of Newsweek makes him the first Indian Prime Minister since Indira Gandhi to achieve this historic milestone.

Appointment and Resignations

Chapter 14

Axis Bank re-appoints Amitabh Chaudhry as MD and CEO



- The Board of Axis Bank has approved the re-appointment of Amitabh Chaudhry as Managing Director & CEO of the Bank, for another three-year term, effective 1 January 2025.
- He will continue to serve in this role up to 31 December 2027.
- Chaudhry's reappointment is subject to the approval of the Reserve Bank of India and the bank's shareholders.
- Chaudhry, age 59 years, has been serving Axis Bank as MD & CEO since January 1, 2019, after working with HDFC Standard Life Insurance Company Limited (HDFC Life) for nine years.
- Before joining HDFC Life, Chaudhry was the MD & CEO of Infosys BPO and the Head of the testing unit of Infosys Technologies Limited.

Papua New Guinea appoints first defence adviser to India

- Papua New Guinea has appointed Col Edison Napyo as its first Defence Advisor to India, marking a significant diplomatic move.
- Col Napyo will serve as a crucial link between the Papua New Guinean Government and Military in their interactions with India.
- This appointment strengthens the ties between the two nations and enhances cooperation in defense matters.

Nidhi S Jain (IA&AS) appointed as CVO of Cotton Corporation of India

- The Central Government has approved the appointment of Nidhi S Jain (IA&AS) as Chief Vigilance Officer (CVO) of Cotton Corporation of India Limited (CCI).
- According to an order issued from the Department of Personnel & Training on 22 April, she has been appointed to the post for an initial period of three years with effect from the date of assumption of charge of the post or until further orders, whichever is earlier.
- Nidhi is an Indian Audit and Accounts Service (IA&AS) service officer of 2009-batch.
- Presently, she is posted as Director of Audit (Environment & Scientific Departments), Branch office, Mumbai.

Sanjay Mashruwala steps down as MD of Reliance Jio



- Sanjay Mashruwala, one of the two managing directors at Reliance Jio has decided to step down. Mashruwala has been the MD of the company since 2013.
- Mashruwala will leave Reliance Jio effective from June 9, the company said.
- Mashruwala, a Jio veteran, has been a key executive with Reliance since founder Dhirubhai Ambani's times and has been involved with several of its projects and business initiatives.
- The other managing director Pankaj Mohan Pawar will continue to serve in his role.

Sakshi Mittal (IAS) appointed as Director in DoPT

- Sakshi Mittal (IAS) has been selected for the appointment as Director in the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) on 22 April 2024.
- She has been selected for the appointment under the Central Staffing Scheme for a period of five years from the date of taking over charge of the post or until further orders, whichever event takes place earlier.
- Mittal is a 2010-batch Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer of AGMUT cadre.

India's Gita Sabharwal appointed to top UN Post in Indonesia



- United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has appointed Gita Sabharwal of India as the United Nations Resident Coordinator (designate) in Indonesia.
- Ms. Sabharwal, who takes up her post on 22 April, brings close to 30 years of experience in development supporting climate transition, sustainable peace, governance and social policy.
- Previously she served as UN Resident Coordinator in Thailand and as Peacebuilding and Development Advisor at the United Nations in Sri Lanka.

Naima Khatoon, first woman Vice Chancellor of Aligarh Muslim University



- The central government has appointed Naima Khatoon as the Vice Chancellor of the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU), making her the first woman to hold the top post in over 100 years.
- The appointment was approved by President Droupadi Murmu and the Election Commission of India (ECI) because of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) being in place.
- Naima Khatoon, Principal, Women's College, has been appointed as the Vice Chancellor of AMU for a period of five years.

OpenAI hires Pragya Misra as first employee in India

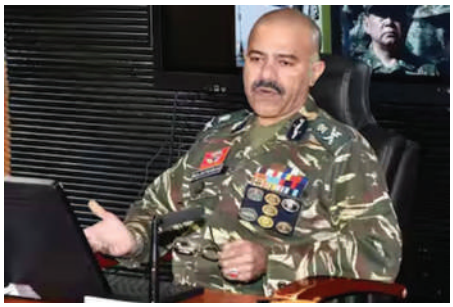
- OpenAI has made its first hire in India, appointing Pragya Misra as the head of government relations.
- This development comes amid the ongoing elections in the country to elect a new government, which will play an important role in shaping regulations concerning artificial intelligence (AI) in the world's most populous nation.
- The company, backed by Microsoft Corp, brought Misra on board to spearhead public policy affairs and partnerships in India.
- Misra, aged 39, brings with her experience from previous roles at Truecaller AB and Meta Platforms Inc.

Narpat Singh (IRTS) appointed as Railway Adviser in High Commission of India, Bangladesh

- Government of India has approved the appointment of Narpat Singh (IRTS) to the post of Railway Adviser in the High Commission of India, Dhaka, Bangladesh.
- According to an order issued from the Department of Personnel & Tranin, the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has approved the proposal of the Ministry of Railways for the appointment of Singh for the above-mentioned post with the diplomatic status as Counsellor.
- Singh is an Indian Railway Traffic Service (IRTS) of 2009-batch. Previously, he was posted as Director (Traffic Transpiration) in the Railway Board.

CRPF ADG Nalin Prabhat appointed chief of NSG

- Senior IPS officer Nalin Prabhat has been appointed as the Director-General of National Security Guard (NSG), the country's counter-terrorism force.



- Prabhat, a 1992 batch IPS officer of Andhra Pradesh cadre, is presently working as Additional Director General in CRPF.
- The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has approved his appointment as the Director General, NSG for a period up to August 31, 2028 i.e. the date of his superannuation.
- Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) chief Daljit Singh Chawdhary was holding the additional charge of the NSG.

Intel announces Santhosh Viswanathan as India region head

- Computer chip maker Intel announced Santhosh Viswanathan will head the India region business as its Managing Director (MD). Viswanathan has been with Intel for about 21 years.
- Santhosh Viswanathan, VP and MD-India region will lead the newly formed region, leveraging his expertise to drive value and customer-centricity.
- Viswanathan took charge as Vice President and Managing Director for the Indian market in July 2022.
- Hans Chuang has been named the General Manager of SMG for the Asia Pacific and Japan (APJ) region, effective immediately.

Vice Admiral Dinesh Kumar Tripathi appointed as the next Chief of the Naval Staff



- The Government has appointed Vice Admiral Dinesh Kumar Tripathi, PVSM, AVSM, NM, presently serving as the Vice Chief of the Naval Staff, as the next Chief of the Naval Staff with effect from the 30 April 2024.
- The present Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral R Hari Kumar, PVSM, AVSM, VSM retires from service on April 30, 2024.
- Born on May 15, 1964, Vice Admiral Dinesh Kumar Tripathi was commissioned into the Executive Branch of the Indian Navy on July 01, 1985.
- A Communication and Electronic Warfare specialist, he has had a long and distinguished service spanning nearly 39 years.

Saurabh Garg assigned additional charge of MoSPI Secretary



- The government has appointed 1991-batch Odisha cadre IAS officer Saurabh Garg as Secretary, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI).
- The Department of Personnel and Training assigned additional charge of MoSPI Secretary to Garg, who currently holds the charge of Secretary, Department of Social Justice & Empowerment.
- The order for the new appointment of MoSPI Secretary came after the completion of the tenure of GP Samanta as MoSPI Secretary on April 15, 2024.

BharatPe announced Nalin Negi as its Chief Executive Officer



- BharatPe, one of India's leading players in the fintech sector, announced the elevation of Nalin Negi as its Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

- Nalin as interim CEO and CFO has been instrumental in showcasing substantial growth and strategic advancements across key business segments.
- Under his leadership, BharatPe recorded 182% increase in revenue from operations in FY23 and clocked October'23 as the first EBITDA positive month.
- Nalin Negi joined BharatPe in 2022, with over 28 years of experience in building and scaling businesses in the fintech and banking domains.

Sr IPS officer Anurag Kumar appointed as Joint Director of CBI

- Senior IPS officer Anurag Kumar was appointed to the post of Joint Director, Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on 12 April 2024.
- Kumar, a 2004 batch Indian Police Service (IPS) officer of Assam-Meghalaya cadre, is currently working in the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D).
- The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has approved his appointment as the Joint Director (JD) in the CBI for a tenure upto February 24, 2027.

Senior Bureaucrat Vandita Kaul appointed as secretary, Department of Posts



- The Union Government appointed senior bureaucrat Vandita Kaul as the new Secretary, Department of Posts on 12 April 2024.
- A 1989 batch Indian Postal Service (IPoS) officer, she is currently serving as Member (Banking & Direct Benefit Transfer), Postal Services Board, in the Department of Posts, Ministry of Communications.
- The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has approved her appointment as Secretary, Department of Posts and she will succeed Vineet Pandey upon his superannuation.
- She was also appointed government nominee on the board of public sector banks likes Bank of India (BoI) and also financial services institutions like the New India Assurance and Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA).

The chief executive officer (CEO) of Wipro to resign



- Thierry Delaporte, the CEO and MD of Wipro, has resigned from his position. Srinivas Pallia was announced as his successor in a regulatory filing to stock exchanges on April 6. Delaporte's tenure, initially set to end in July 2025, ended prematurely due to his resignation declared on a Saturday.
- Delaporte's CEO responsibilities will conclude on May 31, 2024, as per Wipro's statement. The Board of Directors acknowledged his resignation effective April 6, 2024, with his employment officially ending on May 31, 2024.
- Srinivas Pallia, former CEO of Wipro's America region, will step into the roles of CEO and MD from April 7, 2024, for a five-year term.

JSW One Platforms appoints Ranjan Pai as independent director on its board



- JSW One Platforms announced the appointment of Ranjan Pai as independent director on its board.
- The company is the e-commerce venture of the $23 billion JSW Group. It operates B2B tech-enabled marketplace JSW One MSME, to service the building material needs of Industrial & Construction MSMEs in India.

- As part of his role, Pai will provide strategic guidance to shape the company's future and create long-term value for stakeholders.

Centre appoints Manoj Panda as member of 16th Finance Commission



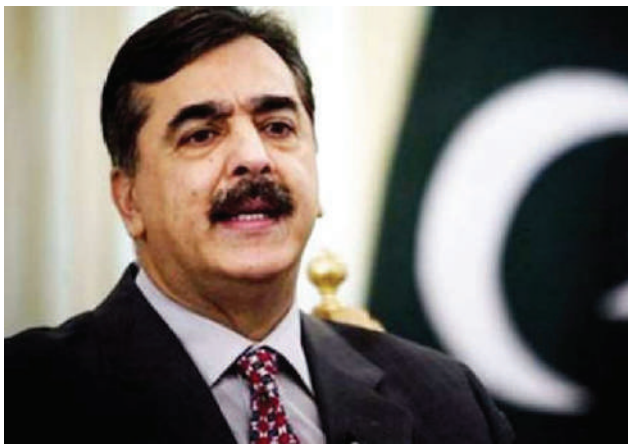
- The government has appointed Manoj Panda, former director at the Institute of Economic Growth as the full time member of the 16th Finance Commission, a notification by the finance ministry said.
- "The above member of the Commission shall hold office from the date of assuming office up to the date of submission of Report or 31st day of October, 2025, whichever is earlier."
- Panda takes over the position previously held by Niranjan Rajadhyaksha, Executive Director at Artha Global, who resigned from the Commission due to unforeseen personal circumstances.

Vinod Francis appointed as Chief Financial Officer of South Indian Bank

- The South Indian Bank has announced the appointment of Vinod Francis as its Chief Financial Officer (CFO), as revealed in a statement on Sunday.
- This decision was made during a meeting of the Board of Directors held on April 5. Francis, characterized as a seasoned professional, has been approved by the board to assume the role of CFO and Key Managerial Personnel within the bank.
- This appointment underscores the bank's commitment to enhancing its financial management and strategic leadership, leveraging Francis's expertise and experience in the field.

Former Pakistan PM Yousuf Raza Gillani elected as Senate Chairman

- Yusuf Raza Gilani, former Prime Minister and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leader, has been elected as the chairman of the senate, Pakistan's upper house of parliament.



- Following a boycott of the elections for the top position by the Imran Khan-led Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI).
- Gilani's election was anticipated after his party, PPP, entered into a power-sharing agreement with Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), involving the exchange of political positions.

Sachidananda Mohanty Appointed as Member, University Grants Commission (UGC)



- Sachidananda Mohanty, an alumnus of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education (SAICE), has been appointed as a member of the University Grants Commission (UGC).
- The appointment, effective from April 10, is for a tenure of three years, as per a notification from the Ministry of Education.

Sushil Sharma Appointed CMD of SJVN Limited

- Sushil Sharma, presently serving as the Director (Project) at SJVN Limited, is set to assume the role of Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) following

his recommendation by the Public Enterprises Selection Board (PESB) panel on 8 April.



- Sharma brings with him a wealth of experience, having previously held positions such as General Manager (Mechanical) at the 1500 MW Nathpa Jhakri Plant within the same organization.

Jagjit Pavadia Re-elected to International Narcotics Control Board



- Ms. Jagjit Pavadia's re-election to the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) for a third term from 2025-2030 is a testament to her dedication and expertise in the field of drug control.
- Securing the highest number of votes among all candidates reflects the international community's recognition of India's commitment to global efforts against narcotics.

Paytm Payments Bank's CEO Surinder Chawla resigns



- Surinder Chawla, the managing director and CEO of Paytm Payments Bank, has resigned from the company, as announced in a regulatory filing by Paytm's parent company, One97 Communications, on April 9.
- His resignation will be effective from June 16, 2024.
- Chawla's decision to resign comes at a time when Paytm Payments Bank is facing regulatory action from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
- In his resignation letter, Chawla cited personal reasons for his decision to step down. He had joined Paytm Payments Bank in January of the previous year.

NDDB chief Meenesh Shah elected as NCDFI chairman



- Dr. Meenesh Shah has been unanimously elected as the Chairman of the National Cooperative Dairy Federation of India Ltd. (NCDFI) in its Board elections held on Friday.
- The election process was overseen by Praveen Chaudhary, IAS, District Collector of Anand, who served as the Returning Officer.
- Earlier, NCDFI held a General Body meeting on April 04, 2024, where eight directors were elected to the Board unopposed.
- NCDFI is a national-level apex dairy cooperative established on December 7, 1970, and is governed under the provisions of the Multi State Cooperative Societies (Amendment) Act, 2023.
- It comprises 20 Regular Members, 14 Associate Members, and the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) as its Institutional Member.

Bandhan Bank CEO Chandra Shekhar Ghosh to step down after tenure



- Chandra Shekhar Ghosh, the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer (MD & CEO) of Bandhan Bank, will retire after the completion of his current tenure on July 9.
- Ghosh has served as the leader of the bank since July 10, 2015.
- Following his retirement from the position of MD & CEO, Ghosh will assume a strategic role at the holding company level, Bandhan Financial Services Ltd (BFSL), which owns 40% of the lender and holds stakes in life insurance and mutual fund ventures.
- The screening and selection committee of the board will commence the process of identifying potential candidates for the MD & CEO position.
- After the selection process, the committee will recommend the chosen candidates to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) for approval.

Former SEBI chief Chandrashekhar Bhave to replace Ramesh Damani as Chairman of Avenue Supermarts



- Ramesh Damani completed his second term on the board of Avenue Supermarts on March 31.
- He has ceased to be Chairman and Independent Director of the company.
- Former SEBI Chairman Chandrashekhar Bhave replaced Damani.
- Avenue Supermarts announced the change in a regulatory filing.
- Damani's term ended, making way for new leadership on the board.

Ms Sheyphali Sharan takes charge as Principal Director General, PIB

- Ms Sheyphali B. Sharan assumed charge as the Principal Director General, Press Information Bureau upon superannuation of Shri Manish Desai on April 1, 2024.



- Ms. Sharan is an officer of the 1990 batch of Indian Information Service.
- During an illustrious career spanning over three decades, she has held cadre portfolios of largely looking after media publicity work as Press Information Bureau officer for Ministries such as Finance, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.
- She has also served as the Spokesperson for Election Commission of India.

Sanjay Nayar takes over as New ASSOCHAM President



- Sanjay Nayar, Chairman of Sorin Investment Fund, has assumed the role of President of Assocham for the term 2024-25, succeeding Ajay Singh, the Chairman and MD of SpiceJet.
- Nayar brings over four decades of experience in global financial and capital markets, including 25 years at Citi and nearly 14 years at KKR, where he established KKR India operations in 2009.
- At KKR, Nayar led investments totaling around USD 14 billion in private equity, real estate, and infrastructure, with private equity alone reaching approximately USD 10 billion in valuation.
- He served in various senior leadership positions at Citigroup for 25 years across India, the UK, and the US.

Bharat Forge re-appoints Amit Kalyani as vice chairman and joint MD



- Bharat Forge Ltd has appointed Amit Kalyani as Vice Chairman and Joint Managing Director (MD) for another five-year term, effective from 11th May 2024.
- The decision was made during a meeting of the board of directors and is contingent upon shareholder approval.
- Amit Kalyani is the son of Babasaheb Kalyani, who serves as the Chairman and MD of Bharat Forge.
- Currently serving as Joint MD, Amit Kalyani's tenure in this role is set to conclude on 10th May 2024.
- He has been associated with Bharat Forge since 1999, initially focusing on operations and manufacturing, and subsequently diversifying his responsibilities into IT and finance domains, as noted by the company.

IIT-Kanpur alumnus Sandeep Jain takes charge as new FISME president

- Sandeep Jain, an auto-component manufacturer and graduate of IIT-Kanpur, has been elected as the President of the Federation of Indian Micro and Small & Medium Enterprises (FISME) for the term 2024-25.
- His election was unanimous and endorsed during a meeting of the Central Executive Committee (CEC) held in New Delhi, adhering to FISME's tradition of annual elections.
- FISME follows a system where one-third of its CEC members are elected each year, and the newly formed body chooses the President for the upcoming year.
- Sandeep Jain succeeds Prashant Patel, a manufacturer of dyes and chemicals based in Ahmedabad and Surat, who previously held the position of Vice President within FISME.

Obituary News

Chapter 15

Yakshagana exponent Subrahmanya Dhareshwar passes away at 67



- Yakshagana thespian Subrahmanya Dhareshwar, who had earned the fame of 'Bhagavata Shrestha' for his scintillating voice, passed away at the age of 67 in Bengaluru.
- Subrahmanya Dhareshwar had served for 46 years in the field of Yakshagana and had served as the main singer for 28 years in Perdoor Mela alone.
- Subramanya Dhareshwara started his journey as an electrician in the Amriteshwari Mela. Later, he learned the art under the Yakshagana artist Narnappa Uppoor and later became a Bhagavatha at the Amriteshwari Mela where he used to work.
- Dhareshwar had sung in Yakshagana episodes enacted by top artistes like Chittani Ramachandra Hegde, Gode Narayan Hegde, Krishna Yaji Ballur, Kondadakuli Ramachandra Hegde and many more.

Sudhir Kakar, 'father of Indian psychoanalysis', dies at 85

- Sudhir Kakar, known as the "Father of Indian Psychology", passed away on April 22, 2024 at the age of 85.
- Kakar's life and work contributed significantly to the field of psychoanalysis in India, exploring the complexities of human behavior and culture.
- He studied Freud and applied him to everything from film criticism to psychotherapy to mythology, considering Hindi cinema a producer of "new myths" and "collective fantasies" that came to India's rescue during great sociopolitical and economic upheaval.
- Kakar called the phenomenon a "humble representative of the Hindu cultural ideal".
- Kakar was also an accomplished table tennis player and a prolific fiction writer, with notable works including "The Seeker" and "A Book of Memory".

Former England cricketer Raman Subba Row dead at 92



- Former England Test batsman Raman Subba Row has died at the age of 92.
- At the time of his death, he was England's oldest living men's Test cricketer.
- Subba Row played first-class cricket for Cambridge University and then joined the powerful Surrey side of the 1950s, which won seven successive County Championships.
- Subba Row also served five years as chairman of the Test and County Cricket Board, the forerunner of the ECB, from 1985-90.
- He later became one of the International Cricket Council's first match referees, overseeing 160 fixtures.

Sarvodaya leader Murari Lal passed away

- Social worker and a leader of the Sarvodaya and Chipko movements, Murari Lal, died at the age of 91 at the AIIMS, Rishikesh.
- He was the president of the Dasholi Gram Swarajya Mandal, the mother organisation of the Chipko movement.
- Lal is known for making the barren land in his village green and creating innovative models for the conservation and utilisation of natural resources.

NFL legend and first Filipino-American Quarterback Roman Gabriel passes away

- Gabriel, the first Filipino-American quarterback in the NFL and the league MVP in 1969, died. He was 83.
- Gabriel, who played at North Carolina State and was a two-time player of the year in the Atlantic Coast Conference, was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame in 1989.
- He was 6-foot-5 and 235 pounds, big for a quarterback in that era. Green Bay coach Vince Lombardi once described him as "a big telephone pole".

Indian Air Force's oldest pilot Dalip Singh Majithia passes away at 103



- The oldest living pilot of the Indian Air Force, Squadron Leader Dalip Singh Majithia, died at the age of 103 at his farm in Uttarakhand.
- Born on July 27, 1920 at Shimla, Squadron Leader Majithia joined the Indian Air Force (IAF) volunteer reserve in 1940 during World War-II, following in the footsteps of his uncle Surjeet Singh Majithia (grandfather of Akali politician Bikramjit Singh Majithia).
- Dalip Singh Majithia initially learnt the basic nuances of flying on a Gypsy Moth aircraft at Karachi Flying Club.

Kannada film industry veteran Dwarakish dies at 81

- Veteran Kannada film actor, producer and director Bungle Shama Rao Dwarakanath, popularly known as Dwarakish, died following a cardiac arrest on Tuesday. He was 81.
- Dwarakish had acted in around 100 films and worked as a director and producer on around 50 of them.



- He had made his Kannada film debut in 1966 with the co-production of 'Mamatheya Bandhana' under the Thunga Pictures banner.

Actor Manoj K Jayan's father KG Jayan passed away



- Renowned Carnatic musician KG Jayan passed away at his residence at Thripunithura in Ernakulam district, Kerala, due to age-related illness at the age of 90.
- The combo of Jayan and his twin brother KG Vijayan, popularly known as Jaya-Vijaya, once dominated the Malayalam music industry with their devotional compositions that are popular even to this day.
- Jayan's contributions to music earned him many prestigious accolades including the Kerala Sangeetha Nataka Akademi Award and the Harivarasanam Award, jointly instituted by the Government of Kerala and the Travancore Devaswom Board.
- In 2019, the Union Government awarded the veteran musician the Padma Shri, the fourth-highest civilian award in the country.

England spin great Derek Underwood dies aged 78

- Derek Underwood, the most successful spin bowler in England's Test cricket history, has died at the age of 78.



- Underwood bagged 297 wickets in 86 Test matches between 1966 and 1982.
- He famously bowled England to a Test victory over arch-rivals Australia at The Oval in 1968 on such a surface, taking 7-50 when a draw had seemed inevitable.
- Underwood made his England debut as a 21-year-old in 1966 and played his last Test in 1982.

Indian origin South African musician Barry Baldeo passed away



- Surabjit Jaybelly Baldeo, a noted South African singer of Indian origin, has died at the age of 66.
- Barry played an instrumental role in setting up the equipment, rehearsing with the band and singers and then playing in the performance. He was a perfectionist whose skill on the range of guitars that he played was unmatched.
- Surabjit Jaybelly Baldeo endeared himself to colleagues and listeners at the East Wave Radio where he worked his way through the ranks to become the station manager.

British physicist Peter Higgs passes away at the age of 94

- Renowned British theoretical physicist Peter Higgs, aged 94, passed away on April 8th.
- Higgs famously predicted the existence of the Higgs boson particle in the 1960s, a prediction that was confirmed with the discovery of the particle in 2012.



- His contribution to physics has left an indelible mark, earning him widespread fame in recent years.

World's Oldest Man, Juan Vicente Perez Mora from Venezuela dies at 114



- Juan Vicente Pérez, a Venezuelan man, lived an exceptionally long life, born on May 27, 1909, in El Cobre, Venezuela.
- Pérez lived for 114 years, making him one of the oldest known individuals in the world.
- With Pérez's passing, the title of "world's oldest man" is anticipated to be inherited by Gisaburo Sonobe, a 112-year-old man from Japan, pending confirmation by Sonobe's family.
- Pérez gained global recognition when, in February 2022, at the age of 112 years and 253 days, Guinness World Records officially recognized him as the oldest man alive.
- Pérez's remarkable longevity has made him renowned worldwide for his extraordinary lifespan and resilience.

Art and Culture

Chapter 16

Indian Historical Records Commission (IHRC) adopts a new logo and motto

- The Indian Historical Records Commission (IHRC) acts as an all-India forum of creators, custodians and users of records to advise the Government of India on the management of records and their use for historical research.
- It was established in 1919, the IHRC is headed by the Union Minister of Culture.
- In order to visually communicate the unique identity of IHRC and the ethos that it represents, an online competition was launched in 2023 on MyGov portal to invite the designs for logo and motto, and in response a total 436 entries were received.

The following entry for logo and motto submitted by Shri Shaurya Pratap Singh (Delhi) was selected for the logo as well as the motto of the IHRC:



- The logo signifies the theme and uniqueness of IHRC entirely.
- The pages in the shape of lotus petals represent IHRC as the resilient nodal institution for maintaining historical records.
- The Sarnath pillar in the middle represents India's glorious past.
- Brown as the colour theme reinforces the organization's mission of preserving, studying and honouring India's historical records.
- The motto translates as "Where history is preserved for the future." The motto holds great significance for the IHRC and its work.

Hoard of Ikshvaku period coins found in Telangana's early historic site



- A hoard of lead coins belonging to the Ikshvaku period was found during the latest round of excavations by archeologists at the early historic site of Phanigiri in Suryapet in Telangana.
- Phanigiri village lies on the left bank of the Bikkeru rivulet, a tributary of the river Musi, located in Nagaram Mandal, Suryapet district.
- This insipid village is located about 35 km from Suryapet the district headquarters, and 110 Km from Hyderabad, the state capital of Telangana.
- The early historic site at Phanigiri was first discovered and protected during the period of Nizam and was excavated from 1941 to 1944 by Sri Khaja Mahamad Ahmad.

Srinagar in spotlight for potential World Craft City nomination

- The World Crafts Council International (WCCI) has turned its focus towards Srinagar as a potential candidate for the esteemed title of World Craft City (WCC).
- The WCCI, headquartered in Kuwait and dedicated to the recognition and preservation of traditional crafts globally, has dispatched a three-member team to Srinagar for a comprehensive assessment of its craft clusters.
- Led by Saad Al-Qaddumi, the WCCI team is conducting a meticulous examination of Srinagar's craft clusters, scrutinizing the intricate processes involved and evaluating the current status of artisans.

- The coveted WCC status, bestowed annually upon cities worldwide, aims to promote, preserve, and advance handicrafts while fostering new market linkages.

Archaeological excavation reveals 5,200-year-old Harappan settlement in Kachchh, Gujarat



- A 5,200-year-old Harappan hamlet at Padta Bet, close to Khatiya village in Gujarat's Kachchh district, has been discovered through a major archaeological excavation conducted as part of a collaborative effort with experts from Kerala University and several other institutions.
- The team, led by associate professors Abhayan G.S. and Rajesh S.V. from the Department of Archaeology at Kerala University, discovered vital information that clarified the cultural development of Early Harappan settlements in the area.
- A Harappan settlement from between 3200 and 1700 BCE was discovered during the excavation. Structures composed of locally available sandstone and shales were found to be both round and rectangular in shape.

'Fort' in Fort Kochi cries for conservation



- The remnants of Fort Emmanuel, built by the Portuguese in 1503, made of laterite bricks, are being conserved as more people show interest in seeing the "fort" on the Fort Kochi beachfront that witnessed the arrival of three colonial powers: the Portuguese, the Dutch, and the English.
- According to legend, the fort, which was a Portuguese bastion, started at Bastion Bungalow, which is now a historical museum, and extended to the southern end of the beach, where the Navy's gunnery school, INS Dronacharya, is located.
- History has it that Fort Emmanuel was built as a symbol of the strategic alliance between the maharaja of Kochi and the monarch of Portugal, after whom it was named.
- By 1806, the Dutch and later the British destroyed most walls and bastions of the fort.

Important Days

Chapter 17

World Veterinary Day 2024

- World Veterinary Day is celebrated every year on the last Saturday of April. In 2024, it will fall on 27 April, 2024.
- The theme for World Veterinary Day 2024 is "Veterinarians are essential health workers".
- World Veterinary Day was first celebrated on April 29, 2000 by the World Veterinary Association (WVA) to recognise and promote the role of veterinarians Significance.
- On this day, veterinary organisations globally organise events and activities to honour the individuals involved in animal welfare.
- This day encourages people to learn about the disease that spreads from the animals and the need to routinely immunize their pets.

World Immunization Week

- World Immunization Week is a global public health campaign that takes place each year during the last week of April, from the 24th to the 30th.
- The campaign aims to raise awareness and increase rates of immunization against vaccine-preventable diseases around the world.
- In 2024, World Immunization Week is celebrated under the theme "Humanly Possible: Immunization for All".
- This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI), recognizing our collective efforts to save and improve countless lives from vaccine-preventable diseases.
- The EPI, which began in 1974, initially focused on protecting all children against six childhood illnesses.

World Malaria Day 2024

- World Malaria Day is celebrated on 25 April 2024.
- The theme for World Malaria Day 2024 is "Accelerating the fight against malaria for a more equitable world".
- World Malaria Day is observed to spread awareness about the disease, its symptoms, and precautions.
- It highlights the need for continued investment and sustained political commitment for malaria prevention and control.

National Panchayati Raj Day

- National Panchayati Raj Day is celebrated every year on 24 April in India.
- This day honors the establishment of the Panchayati Raj System, a devolved form of governance in the country, which was introduced in 1993 by the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act.
- The Panchayati Raj System empowers local bodies, or Gram Panchayats, to govern themselves and make decisions regarding the development of their respective areas.
- The idea of Panchayati rule was advocated vigorously by Mahatma Gandhi, who believed residents should be able to decide the best course of action for the development of their village on their own.
- The significance of National Panchayati Raj Day lies in recognizing the crucial role of Panchayati Raj institutions in rural development and local governance.

World Earth Day 2024

- The annual event of World Earth Day falls on 22 April.
- The theme for World Earth Day 2024 is Planet vs Plastics.
- Earth Day reminds the world about the importance of environment conservation and sustainability, encouraging us to come together and take action for a healthier planet and brighter future.
- The day raises awareness and inspires change, fostering a deep connection with nature.

National Civil Service Day

- 21 April is observed as the National Civil Service Day by the Government of India every year.
- This day is celebrated with the aim of acknowledging the exemplary work done by civil servants across the country.

- The day also acts as a reminder for civil servants to run the administration of the country with dedication.
- The first National Civil Service Day was celebrated on April 21, 2006 at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi.

World Liver Day 2024

- World Liver Day is celebrated every year on 19th April.
- The day is an initiative dedicated to shedding light on the importance of liver health and promoting preventive measures against liver diseases.
- This annual event serves as a crucial platform for raising awareness, encouraging lifestyle changes, and supporting those affected by liver-related conditions.
- Theme for the 2024 is "Keep your liver healthy and disease-free".

World Heritage Day 2024

- World Heritage Day is also known as International Day for Monuments and Sites (IDMS).
- The day is celebrated annually on April 18 to honour and preserve our heritage.
- World Heritage Day brings together individuals, organisations, societies and governments to unite to raise awareness about the importance of historical sites and to promote their protection.
- The theme for World Heritage Day 2024 is 'Discover and Experience Diversity'.

World Hemophilia Day 2024

- World Hemophilia Day is an annual observance held on April 17th to raise awareness about hemophilia, a rare and inherited bleeding disorder.
- This year, the theme for World Hemophilia Day 2024 is "Equitable access for all: recognizing all bleeding disorders".
- The foundation of World Hemophilia Day was laid in 1989 by the World Federation of Hemophilia (WFH).

World Art Day 2024

- Every year on April 15th, people around the globe celebrate World Art Day.
- The day is a tribute to the enduring impact of art across various cultures and societies.
- This date was specifically chosen to honor the birthday of Leonardo da Vinci, who is emblematic of artistic freedom and peace.
- World Art Day not only celebrates the remarkable contributions of artists but also emphasizes the vital role of art in human communication, cultural identity, and personal freedom.
- The theme for World Art Day 2024 is "A Garden of Expression: Cultivating Community Through Art".

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International Conscience Day is observed annually on 5 April



- International Conscience Day: Celebrated annually on April 5th to remind people to introspect, follow their conscience, and do the right thing.
- Theme for 2024: 'Promoting a Culture of Peace with Love and Conscience'. Emphasizes cultivating a global mindset focused on peace, compassion, and moral integrity.
- History: Inaugurated in 2020 by the United Nations General Assembly to encourage global introspection and conscientious action.

Army Medical Corps celebrates 260th Raising Day

- Army Medical Corps celebrated its 260th Raising Day on 03rd April 2024. Raised in the year 1764, the Corps has rendered selfless service to the nation over centuries of progress, development, dedication

& sacrifice, both in combat and in peace, living up to the Corps motto of 'Sarve Santu Niramaya' meaning 'let all be free from disease'.



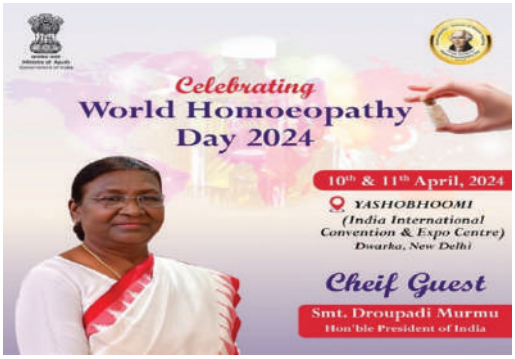
- Chief of Army Staff Gen Manoj Pande, and Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal VR Chaudhari attended an event in New Delhi that was organized to mark the Raising Day, and to honour the achievements and celebrate the Esprit-de-Corps of AMC.
- The AMC Raising Day celebrates the contributions of thousands of Officers, JCOs and other ranks of the Army Medical Corps who have been successful in impacting the lives of the Armed Forces personnel, families and veterans.
- As part of UN Peacekeeping Missions and HADR activities on foreign soil, the Corps has excelled in every sphere of medical care.

International Day of Sport for Development and Peace 2024



- April 6th is celebrated annually as the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace (IDSDP) worldwide.
- IDSDP aims to recognize the positive impact of sports and physical activity on individuals' lives and communities globally.
- The theme for IDSDP 2024 is "Sport for the Promotion of Peaceful and Inclusive Societies," highlighting the role of sports in uniting people, fostering social change, and contributing to sustainable development and lasting peace.
- The United Nations General Assembly officially designated April 6th as the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace in 2013, acknowledging the power and universality of sports.
- National Library Day is celebrated on April 6th annually
- National Library Day is observed annually on April 6th to honor the significance of libraries and librarians in society.
- It serves as a day of celebration and reflection on the importance of reading and ensuring access to books for all individuals.
- Libraries have a rich history dating back thousands of years, with the first organized library established in the 7th century BC by Assyrian ruler Ashurbanipal.
- Ashurbanipal's library contained approximately 30,000 clay tablets categorized by subject matter, marking an early milestone in library organization and accessibility.
- National Library Day encourages communities to recognize and appreciate the valuable resources and services provided by libraries worldwide.

President Smt. Droupadi Murmu to Inaugurate a Homeopathic Symposium on World Homoeopathy Day 2024



- President Droupadi Murmu to inaugurate two-day scientific convention at Yashobhoomi Conventional Centre Dwarka, New Delhi on April 10.
- April 10 coincides with World Homoeopathy Day.
- Theme of the convention: "Empowering Research, Enhancing Proficiency: A Homoeopathic Symposium".
- Aim: Promoting evidence-based scientific treatment, capacitating homeopathic community in

research-based therapeutics, meeting population's healthcare needs, enriching homeopathic medicine with quality diagnostics and therapeutics.

- President to felicitate 8 Padma awardees during the event.
- 17 Central Council for Research in Homoeopathy (CCRH) publications to be released.

61st National Maritime Day celebrated with full Valour



- The Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways (MoPSW), celebrated the Sports Day event commemorating the National Maritime Day. The Sports Day event was held at Commonwealth Sports Stadium, Akshardham, New Delhi on April 05, 2024. The event witnessed a jubilant gathering of maritime enthusiasts, professionals, and dignitaries, marking a vibrant celebration of the maritime industry's legacy and resilience.
- The day is celebrated to commemorate the embarkation of the first Indian-owned vessel "S S Loyalty" on her maiden voyage from Mumbai to London, on this day in 1919. SS Loyalty, a symbol of maritime prowess, not only navigated through the high seas but also exemplified the spirit of unity and fortitude that defines the maritime community.

National Safe Motherhood Day is observed on 11 April



- National Safe Motherhood Day, observed on 11 April, emphasizes maternal health and aims to reduce maternal mortality rates in India.
- Recognized by the Government of India since 2003, it underscores the importance of maternal well-being during pregnancy and childbirth, celebrating and promoting awareness about safe pregnancy practices.

CRPF's 59th Bravery Day 2024



- On 9th April each year, the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) commemorates its Bravery Day, also known as Valour Day, to honor the courageous soldiers who have dedicated themselves to serving the nation.
- In 2024, this occasion marks the 59th anniversary, a poignant reminder of the sacrifices made by these brave individuals in the line of duty.

International Day of Human Space Flight, 12 April



- On 12 April 2011, the General Assembly declared it the International Day of Human Space Flight, commemorating the 50th anniversary of Yuri Gagarin's historic first human spaceflight in 1961.
- This day celebrates the beginning of the space era for humanity, highlighting the importance of space science and technology in achieving sustainable development goals and maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes.

Jallianwala Bagh Massacre: 105 Years On, a Dark Day Remembered



- The Jallianwala Bagh Massacre, also known as the Amritsar Massacre, occurred on April 13, 1919, in Amritsar, Punjab, India.
- British forces, under the command of General Reginald Dyer, opened fire on a crowd of unarmed Indian civilians who had gathered at the Jallianwala Bagh garden for a peaceful protest against British colonial rule.
- Dyer's troops fired without warning, and the gunfire continued until they had exhausted their ammunition, resulting in the deaths of hundreds of people and the injury of thousands more.
- The incident remains a significant and tragic event in Indian history, symbolizing the brutality of British rule and fueling the Indian independence movement.

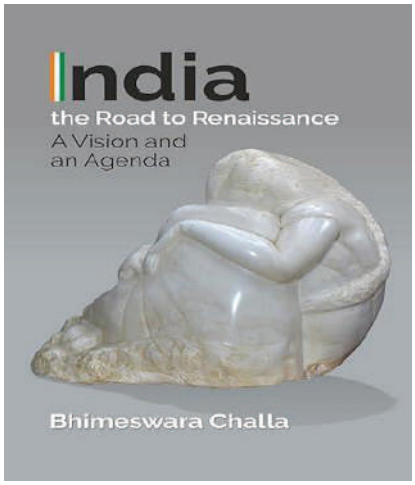
Ambedkar Jayanti Observed on 14th April

- Ambedkar Jayanti, observed on April 14, commemorates the birth anniversary of Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar, often referred to as the "Father of the Indian Constitution."
- This day, also known as "Equality Day," pays tribute to his tireless efforts in fighting against discrimination and advocating for social equality.
- This year marks his 134th birthday, celebrated with various events and tributes across the nation.
- Born in 1891, Ambedkar was not only the chief architect of the Indian Constitution but also served as the first Law Minister of Independent India.
- Beyond his political roles, he was a distinguished jurist, economist, and social reformer, leaving an indelible mark on Indian society and inspiring generations with his ideals of justice, equality, and empowerment.

Books and Authors

Chapter 18

A new book, 'India — the Road to Renaissance: A Vision and an Agenda' by Bhimeswara Chall



- Bhimeshwar Challa's book, "India - The Road to Renaissance: A Vision and an Agenda" was released at the Administrative Staff College of India (ASCI) campus in Hyderabad.
- As a former United Nations official, Challa brings a unique perspective to the table, offering a compelling and ambitious vision for India's path to renaissance.
- This book is a "passionate plea for a new, resurgent India" – a call to action for all those who refuse to accept the status quo and demand a brighter future for the country.
- Challa's work delves deep into the pressing issues that often get overshadowed by the noise of electoral politics, challenging readers to confront the real challenges.

A new book "The Law and Spirituality: Reconnecting the Bond" by Prof. Raman Mittal and Dr. Seema Singh

- The book "Law and Spirituality: Reconnecting the Bond," edited by Professor Raman Mittal and Professor Seema Singh, stands as a remarkable exploration of the intricate relationship between two seemingly disparate realms – the domain of law and the realm of spirituality.



- The book traverses critical aspects in relation to the theme "Law and Spirituality" covering the domain of justice, legal values, feminism and criminology.
- This groundbreaking work delves deep into the complex interplay between these two fundamental pillars of human society, offering a refreshing and enlightening perspective.

Salman Rushdie to release 'Knife' memoir recounting stabbing

- British-American author Salman Rushdie has released his much-awaited memoir "Knife", recounting the harrowing experience of being stabbed at a public event in 2022 and how he overcame the near-fatal ordeal.
- Originally from India and now a naturalized American residing in New York, Rushdie gained global attention as a champion of free speech following death threats spurred by his controversial 1988 novel "The Satanic Verses".
- The author faced a knife-wielding attacker during an arts gathering in New York in 2022, resulting in severe injuries, including blindness in one eye.

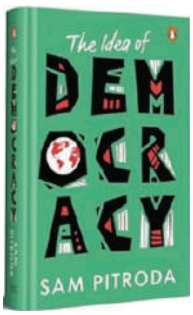
Siddharth Rajsekar unveils 'I Can Coach' Volumes 2 & 3 at Pioneering Freedom Business Retreat 2024

- Bestselling author and digital coaching leader Siddharth Rajsekar announced the release of volumes 2 and 3 of his transformative book series, 'I Can Coach'.

- The books were launched at the Freedom Business Retreat 2024, a two-day event at the Leela Palace, Chennai.
- Building on the success of the first volume, "I Can Coach, Stories of Transformation," volumes 2 and 3 showcase inspiring stories of commitment and aspiration within the digital coaching revolution.
- "Stories of Commitment" highlights the journeys of coaches who achieved millionaire status and those who transformed their lives, starting from scratch.
- "Stories of Aspiration" features digital coaches beginning their paths to success as Freedom Finishers through Hackathons.
- His work through 'I Can Coach' reflects the impact of communal leadership and the unifying power of shared knowledge.

Sam Pitroda's new book 'The Idea of Democracy'

- Renowned author Sam Pitroda has penned a new book titled 'The Idea of Democracy', delving into the present state of democracy and potential challenges faced by countries like India and the United States.
- The book launch saw the presence of Rajya Sabha MP Kapil Sibal and other notable figures from the literary world.



- Pitroda's book tackles the paradox of democratic success alongside its declining liberal values. It offers a comprehensive examination of democracy's essence, its mechanisms, the core values it embodies, and the factors and safeguards crucial for preserving liberal democracy.
- The aim of the book is to initiate discussions, especially among young people, about the significance of democracy and the role they can play in ensuring its sustenance and growth in the future.

Practice Questions

1. The theme of the 26th World Energy Congress held in Rotterdam, Netherlands, in April 2024 was:
   (*a*) Expanding Fossil Fuel Infrastructure for Economic Growth
   (*b*) Nuclear Power: The Key to a Sustainable Future
   (*c*) Redesigning Energy for People and Planet
   (*d*) The Geopolitical Landscape of Energy Resources
   (*e*) Energy Security in a Time of Global Conflict
2. Which of the following countries was NOT a major participant in the discussions at the World Energy Congress 2024?
   (*a*) The United States (*b*) China
   (*c*) Canada (*d*) India
   (*e*) Australia
3. A major tech company announced plans to launch a new generation of self-driving cars in April 2024. Which company was it most likely to be?
   (*a*) Tesla (*b*) Microsoft
   (*c*) Apple (*d*) Amazon
   (*e*) Samsung
4. A new climate change report released by the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) in April 2024 had a particularly alarming finding. What was it?
   (*a*) The rate of global sea level rise is accelerating beyond previous projections.
   (*b*) The Arctic ice cap is melting at a much faster rate than previously predicted.
   (*c*) A new greenhouse gas has been identified with significant warming potential.
   (*d*) The window to limit global warming to 1.5°C is rapidly closing.
   (*e*) The frequency and intensity of extreme weather events are increasing dramatically.
5. Who has been honoured with an International Fellowship by the prestigious Engineering Academy of Japan?
   (*a*) Rajendra Prasad Goyal
   (*b*) Manish Prasad
   (*c*) Pramod Sharma
   (*d*) Kaushik Rajashekara
   (*e*) Vivek Srivastava
6. Who has been appointed as the new Chairman of HDFC Life Insurance.
   (*a*) Sunil Sharma
   (*b*) Neeraj Akhoury
   (*c*) Pramod Sharma
   (*d*) Keki Mistry
   (*e*) Vivek Srivastava
7. To widen the market and foster adequate protection from healthcare expenses, insurance regulator IRDAI has removed the age limit of _____ for individuals buying health insurance policies.
   (*a*) 65 years (*b*) 55 years
   (*c*) 68 years (*d*) 40 years
   (*e*) 50 years
8. Which force has organized the 'Exercise Poorvi Lehar' in April 2024?
   (*a*) Indian Army (*b*) Indian Air Force
   (*c*) Indian Navy (*d*) Indian Coast Guard
   (*e*) All of above
9. Who was honoured with the prestigious KISS (Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences) Humanitarian Award 2021?
   (*a*) Sonam Wangchuck (*b*) Chetan Bhagat
   (*c*) Mukesh Ambani (*d*) MS Dhoni
   (*e*) Ratan Tata
10. In which Gulf country was the first Hindi radio broadcast started, further strengthening relations between that country and India?
    (*a*) Saudi Arabia (*b*) UAE
    (*c*) Bahrain (*d*) Kuwait
    (*e*) Oman

11. Which company showed the highest commitment to Viksit Bharat as per SKOCH's "India Involved Assessment Index 2023"?

(*a*) Reliance Industries (*b*) Tata Motors
(*c*) Infosys (*d*) Wipro
(*e*) TCS

12. World Immunization Week 2024 celebrated from _____ to promote the use of vaccines to protect people of all ages against diseasd.

(*a*) 22-29 April (*b*) 24-30 April
(*c*) 22-30 April (*d*) 25-30 April
(*e*) 24-29 April

13. Which company has become the world's largest mobile operator in terms of data traffic?

(*a*) Reliance Jio (*b*) Airtel
(*c*) VI (*d*) BSNL
(*e*) China Mobile

14. Which day is marked as the 'Civil Services Day' in India every year?

(*a*) 20 April (*b*) 21 April
(*c*) 22 April (*d*) 23 April
(*e*) 24 April

15. Which of the following payment banks launched its eco-friendly NCMC (National Common Mobility Cards) enabled Debit and Prepaid Cards?

(*a*) Airtel Payments Bank
(*b*) India Post Payments Bank
(*c*) FINO Payments Bank
(*d*) Paytm Payments Bank
(*e*) Jio Payments Bank

16. Which one of the following announced its new identity along with a fresh promise of ensuring 'Bharat Ki Udaan, Bandhan Se'?

(*a*) Bandhan Bank (*b*) Yes Bank
(*c*) Indian Bank (*d*) Axis Bank
(*e*) Punjab National Bank

17. Who among the following etched his name in the annals of Indian Premier League (IPL) history by becoming only the second player to feature in 250 IPL matches?

(*a*) Shikhar Dhawan (*b*) Subhman gill
(*c*) Rohit Sharma (*d*) Ajinkya Rahane
(*e*) Dinesh Kartikh

18. The School Education Department in the state has made the use of Permanent Education Number (PEN) mandatory from the academic year:

(*a*) 2024-25 (*b*) 2025-26
(*c*) 2026-27 (*d*) 2027-28
(*e*) 2028-29

19. Which of the following has launched the 'Link It, Forget It' campaign during the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2024 in collaboration with National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)?

(*a*) Amazon (*b*) BharatPe
(*c*) PhonePe (*d*) RuPay
(*e*) Googlepay

20. Who has been honoured with the prestigious Hockey India Asunta Lakra Award for Upcoming Player of the Year during the Hockey India 6th Annual Awards 2023?

(*a*) Deepika Soreng
(*b*) Maushami Chakraborty
(*c*) Vandita Kaul
(*d*) Joyeeta Gupta
(*e*) Anshika Singh

21. Under the Nandini brand, Karnataka Milk Federation (KMF) will sponsor Scotland and _____ teams for the T20 cricket World Cup, scheduled to be co-hosted by the West Indies and the United States from 1 to 29 June 2024.

(*a*) Nepal (*b*) Ireland
(*c*) US (*d*) Oman
(*e*) Namibia

22. The world is set to witness the _____ beauty pageant exclusively for AI-generated models and influencers.

(*a*) 1st (*b*) 2nd
(*c*) 3rd (*d*) 4th
(*e*) 5th

23. Who among the following has inaugurated the 2550th Bhagwan Mahaveer Nirvan Mahotsav on the occasion of Mahavir Jayanti at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi.

(*a*) Narendra Modi
(*b*) Amit Shah
(*c*) Rajnath Singh
(*d*) Droupadi Murmu
(*e*) Jagdeep Dhankhar

24. Euvichol-S vaccine, Used for the treatment of which disease?

(*a*) Typhoid (*b*) Malaria
(*c*) Dengue (*d*) Cholera
(*e*) None of these

25. Who has been appointed as the chief executive officer (CEO) of Pine Labs' Setu?

(*a*) Smita Sarangi (*b*) Arindam Bagchi
(*c*) Anand Raisinghani (*d*) Tanu Singh
(*e*) Rakesh Mohan

26. What is the daily production capacity of HMSI's new engine assembly line at the Global Resource Factory in Manesar for CKD exports?

(*a*) 100 engine (*b*) 300 engine
(*c*) 600 engine (*d*) 800 engine
(*e*) 1000 engine

27. What is the projected annual death toll from breast cancer by the year 2040, according to a new Lancet commission?

(*a*) 2,50,000 (*b*) 5,00,000
(*c*) 10,00,000 (*d*) 20,00,000
(*e*) 25,00,000

28. Who was honoured for their contributions to power conversion and electrification of transportation?

(*a*) Professor Venkatraman Ramakrishnan
(*b*) Professor Satyendra Nath Bose
(*c*) Professor Kaushik Rajashekara
(*d*) Professor C.N.R. Rao
(*e*) None of these

29. Which company won a Bronze Stevie Award for Innovations in Customer Service Technology in the 2024 Asia-Pacific Stevie Awards?

(*a*) Startek (*b*) TCS
(*c*) Infosys (*d*) Wipro
(*e*) KPIT

30. Admiral R Hari Kumar, Chief of the Naval Staff (CNS), presented Gallantry and Distinguished Service awards to Naval personnel on behalf of the Hon'ble President of India at an impressive Naval Investiture Ceremony held at INS Hansa in:

(*a*) Chennai (*b*) Goa
(*c*) Mumbai (*d*) Visakhapatnam
(*e*) Kochi

31. The Central Government has approved the appointment of Nidhi S Jain (IA&AS) as Chief Vigilance Officer (CVO) of:

(*a*) Bharat Heavy Electronics Limited (BHEL)
(*b*) National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC)
(*c*) Indian Oil Corporation (IOC)
(*d*) Cotton Corporation of India Limited (CCI).
(*e*) Rural Electrification Corporation (REC)

32. Which of the following countries tested a "super-large" cruise missile warhead and a new anti-aircraft missile in a western coastal area as it expands military capabilities in the face of deepening tensions with the United States and South Korea?

(*a*) China (*b*) Russia
(*c*) North Korea (*d*) Iran
(*e*) Taiwan

33. The black hole, named Gaia BH3, was discovered "by chance" from data collected by the European Space Agency's Gaia mission, an astronomer from the National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) at the:

(*a*) Royal Greenwich Observatory
(*b*) Berlin Observatory
(*c*) Adolphson Observatory
(*d*) Neuchâtel Observatory
(*e*) Observatoire de Paris

34. Indian Navy conducted _____ off the east coast to validate the processes towards assessing the preparedness of the Indian Navy to deal with maritime security challenges in the region.

(*a*) Exercise Samudri Lahar
(*b*) Exercise Purvi Lahar
(*c*) Exercise Paschimi Lahar
(*d*) Exercise Uttari Lahar
(*e*) Exercise Dakshni Lahar

35. Who among the following secured India's first Paris Olympics quota in rowing by finishing third in the men's single scull event of the 2024 World Asian and Oceanian Olympic and Paralympic Qualification Regatta in Chungju, South Korea?

(*a*) Joginder Singh Bedi
(*b*) Neeraj Yadav
(*c*) Balraj Panwar
(*d*) Dilip Mahadu Gaviot
(*e*) Kishan Gangoli

36. How many bank/s has/have been included in the top 50 banks of the Asia-Pacific region according to a report of S&P Global Market Intelligence?

(*a*) 1 (*b*) 2
(*c*) 3 (*d*) 4
(*e*) 5

37. Indian tennis player Yuki Bhambri and his French partner Albano Olivetti won the 2024 BMW Open tennis tournament title held in:

(*a*) Germany (*b*) Australia
(*c*) Ireland (*d*) Brazil
(*e*) Canada

38. Which of the following states has achieved a record breaking $9.56 billion in electronics exports in FY23-24 that formed nearly 33% of the total national share of electronics exports?

(*a*) Madhya Pradesh (*b*) Uttar Pradesh
(*c*) Karnataka (*d*) Tamil Nadu
(*e*) Odisha

39. The largest bank in the eurozone BNP Paribas has agreed to purchase a _____ stake in Belgian insurer Ageas from China's Fosun Group for approximately 730 million euros ($780 million), becoming the largest shareholder in Ageas.

(*a*) 5% (*b*) 6%
(*c*) 8% (*d*) 9%
(*e*) 10%

40. Lawrence Wong Appointed as Interim Prime Minister of which country?

(*a*) Bhutan (*b*) Kazakhstan
(*c*) Ireland (*d*) Portugal
(*e*) Singapore

41. _____ and BlackRock, Inc. and BlackRock Advisors Singapore Pte signed an agreement to form 50:50 Joint Venture to set up a wealth management and broking business in India.

(*a*) Airtel Payments Bank
(*b*) Jio Financial Services
(*c*) FINO Payments Bank
(*d*) Paytm Payments Bank
(*e*) Jio Payments Bank

42. Which of the following IITs has launched India's first medical devices calibration facility on wheels?

(*a*) IIT Guwahati (*b*) IIT Delhi
(*c*) IIT Madras (*d*) IIT Indore
(*e*) IIT Roorkee

43. Where did Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency Lt(d) (IREDA) has opened an office for Green Hydrogen and Renewable Energy Manufacturing Projects?

(*a*) Bengaluru (*b*) New Delhi
(*c*) Chennai (*d*) Gandhinagar
(*e*) Mumbai

44. Which country has become the first country in the world to roll out the "revolutionary" new Men5CV vaccine against meningitis?

(*a*) Somalia (*b*) Kenya
(*c*) Sudan (*d*) Zimbabwe
(*e*) Nigeria

45. Recently, which Indian company has become the third largest producer of silver globally?

(*a*) Hindalco Industries (*b*) JSW Zinc
(*c*) Jindal Steel (*d*) Adani Zinc
(*e*) Hindustan Zinc

46. Which city is hosting the 16th conference of the World Social Forum in 2024?

(*a*) New Delhi (*b*) Kathmandu
(*c*) Paris (*d*) Lagos
(*e*) London

47. Singles titles in Kazakhstan International Challenge 2024 won by which country?

(*a*) India (*b*) Malaysia
(*c*) France (*d*) Japan
(*e*) None of these

48. Which Indian airport saw a drop in its ranking from last year in the Skytrax World Airport Awards 2024?

(*a*) Delhi Airport
(*b*) Mumbai Airport
(*c*) Bengaluru Airport
(*d*) Hyderabad Airport
(*e*) None of these

49. Who is the author of the book "India - the Road to Renaissance: A Vision and an Agenda"?

(*a*) D Subbarao
(*b*) Bhimeswara Challa
(*c*) Jaya Prakash Narayana
(*d*) Rohan Sharma
(*e*) None of these

50. Who has been appointed as Additional Secretary in the Department of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation?

(*a*) Suman Billa (IAS)
(*b*) Aradhana Patnaik (IAS)
(*c*) Himani Pande (IAS)
(*d*) Rakesh Kumar Verma (IAS)
(*e*) None of these

51. Who has been appointed as Additional Secretary in the Department of Health & Family Welfare?

(*a*) Rakesh Kumar Verma
(*b*) Suman Billa
(*c*) Aradhana Patnaik
(*d*) Himani Pande
(*e*) Roli Singh

52. What is the penalty amount recently imposed on Rajkot Nagarik Sahakari Bank by the RBI?

(*a*) ₹51 lakh (*b*) ₹27 lakh
(*c*) ₹43.30 lakh (*d*) ₹60.3 lakh
(*e*) ₹12.55 lakh

53. In which state is the Bakerwal, a nomadic community of shepherds and goat herders, classified as a Scheduled Tribe?

(*a*) Himachal Pradesh (*b*) Uttarakhand
(*c*) Jammu and Kashmir (*d*) Punjab
(*e*) Gujarat

54. World Heritage Day is observed every year on which day?

(*a*) 15 April (*b*) 16 April
(*c*) 18 April (*d*) 20 April
(*e*) 22 April

55. India is among the top twelve countries in the world responsible for _____ of the planet's mismanaged plastic wastd.

(*a*) 30% (*b*) 40%
(*c*) 50% (*d*) 60%
(*e*) 70%

56. IMF Reappoints Kristalina Georgieva as MD of IMF for _____ Term.

(*a*) 1st (*b*) 2nd
(*c*) 3rd (*d*) 4th
(*e*) 5th

57. Who has been honoured with the "South Asian Person of the Year" award by Harvard University in April 2024?

(*a*) Anshika Singh
(*b*) Maushami Chakraborty
(*c*) Vasudha Gupta
(*d*) Joyeeta Gupta
(*e*) Avantika Vandanapu

58. Who partners with PayPal to enhance cross border payments for Indian merchants?

(*a*) Amazon (*b*) Flipkart
(*c*) PayU (*d*) Paytm
(*e*) Phonepe

59. GMR Hyderabad International Airport Ltd (GHIAL) was awarded the 'Best Airport Staff in India & South Asia 2024' by Skytrax at the Passenger Terminal EXPO 2024 in:

(*a*) Germany (*b*) France
(*c*) England (*d*) Portugal
(*e*) Netherlands

60. Who became the youngest winner of the FIDE Candidates tournament in Toronto?

(*a*) Rameshbabu Praggnanandhaa
(*b*) D Gukesh
(*c*) Arjun Erigaisi
(*d*) Pentala Harikrishna
(*e*) None of these

61. Hamad International Airport (DOH) located in Doha has again secured its position as the "World's Best Airport" by the prestigious 2024 Skytrax World Airport Awards. Doha is located in which country?

(*a*) Oman (*b*) UAE
(*c*) Qatar (*d*) Iran
(*e*) Saudi Arab

62. What is the name of the all-in-one payment device launched by BharatPe?

(*a*) BharatPe Money
(*b*) BharatPe Pay
(*c*) BharatPe Connect
(*d*) BharatPe One
(*e*) BharatPe Fusion

63. Recently. the International Monetary Fund has upgraded India's GDP growth projection to 6.8%

for the financial year 2024-25. Who is currently the Chairman of IMF?

(*a*) Christine Lagarde
(*b*) Kristalina Georgieva
(*c*) Jean Claude Juncker
(*d*) Pierre-Olivier Gourinchas
(*e*) David Malpass

64. When is World Homeopathy Day observed?

(*a*) 8 April (*b*) 9 April
(*c*) 10 April (*d*) 11 April
(*e*) 12 April

65. Which country has collaborated with the European Union (EU) to promote startups in Electric Vehicle (EV) battery recycling under the Trade and Technology Council (TTC) framework.

(*a*) India (*b*) UAE
(*c*) China (*d*) USA
(*e*) Japan

66. With which institution has Canara Bank signed an MoU for providing financial support to startups?

(*a*) IIT Kanpur (*b*) IIM Bangalore
(*c*) IIM Ahmedabad (*d*) IIT Bombay
(*e*) IIM Calcutta

67. Who has been chosen to join Britain's research team on dementia, focusing on p-tau217 as a biomarker for Alzheimer's disease?

(*a*) Dr. Ashwini Keshavan
(*b*) Dr. Rajesh Nair
(*c*) Dr. Harshal Patel
(*d*) Dr. Moorthy
(*e*) None of these

68. The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) celebrates its Bravery Day on _____ April every year, commemorating the valour and sacrifices of its soldiers in defending the nation. This day marks the 59th anniversary of CRPF's Bravery Day in 2024.

(*a*) 6 April (*b*) 7 April
(*c*) 8 April (*d*) 9 April
(*e*) 10 April

69. Who has been appointed as the Head of Global Airport Operations at Air India, aiming to enhance customer experience and operational efficiency?

(*a*) Rajesh Sharma
(*b*) Jayaraj Shanmugam
(*c*) Karthik Reddy
(*d*) Prakash Kumar
(*e*) None of these

70. Who becomes Ireland's youngest Prime Minister?

(*a*) Leo Varadkar (*b*) Fianna Fail
(*c*) Green Party (*d*) Simon Harris
(*e*) None of these

71. National Safe Motherhood Day is observed annually on:

(*a*) 10 April (*b*) 11 April
(*c*) 12 April (*d*) 13 April
(*e*) 14 April

72. Where was the Homoeopathy Symposium organized by the Central Council for Research in Homoeopathy inaugurated?

(*a*) Goa (*b*) New Delhi
(*c*) Mumbai (*d*) Kolkata
(*e*) Chennai

73. In response to the recent terrorist attack in Moscow, India collaborated with _____ to strengthen their efforts against terrorism, focusing on regional threats and strategies to combat cross-border terrorist activities.

(*a*) Qatar (*b*) Japan
(*c*) Kazakhstan (*d*) United Kingdom
(*e*) Afghanistan

74. Which of the following organizations is unveiling a new version of its Girl Child Empowerment Mission (GEM), aligning with the Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao campaign to promote gender equality and provide opportunities for young girls' development?

(*a*) GAIL (*b*) NTPC
(*c*) BHEL (*d*) SAIL
(*e*) ONGC

75. What percentage has the Asian Development Bank (ADB) raised India's GDP growth forecast for the current fiscal year (FY25) to?

(*a*) 6% (*b*) 6.5%
(*c*) 7% (*d*) 7.5%
(*e*) 8%

76. According to the WHO's 2024 Global Hepatitis Report, in which position does India rank globally for Hepatitis B and C cases?

(*a*) First (*b*) Second
(*c*) Third (*d*) Fourth
(*e*) Fifth

77. Which of the following has teamed up with Policybazaar to leverage its digital platform and reach 10 million customers with a range of insurance products, including motor, health, travel, home, and business insurance?

(*a*) HDFC Life (*b*) Fincare Insurance
(*c*) ICICI Lombard (*d*) SBI Life Insurance
(*e*) Bajaj Allianz

78. Which of the following bank to open a branch in Lakshadweep, specifically at Kavaratti Island, marks a milestone as it becomes the first private sector bank to establish a presence in the Union Territory?

(*a*) Canara Bank (*b*) ICICI Bank
(*c*) Axis Bank (*d*) State Bank of India
(*e*) HDFC Bank

79. According to the Hurun Global Unicorn Index 2024, in terms of unicorn creation, which position does India hold globally?

(*a*) 1st (*b*) 2nd
(*c*) 3rd (*d*) 4th
(*e*) 5th

80. Which of the following bank engaged in the first Credit Default Swap (CDS) trade under the new RBI norms, partnering with Standard Chartered Bank India for a ₹25 crore transaction.

(*a*) Canara Bank (*b*) SBI
(*c*) HDFC Bank (*d*) Axis Bank
(*e*) ICICI Bank

81. Which organization has joined forces with CSIR-IMMT to enhance India's mineral security through technical collaboration?

(*a*) NTPC (*b*) NALCO
(*c*) BHEL (*d*) KABIL
(*e*) SAIL

82. Where did the Indian Army conduct an Anti-Tank Guided Missile training exercise, showcasing their capability to neutralize armoured threats at high altitudes?

(*a*) Rajasthan (*b*) Sikkim
(*c*) Arunachal Pradesh (*d*) Uttarakhand
(*e*) Himachal Pradesh

83. Which automaker became the first multinational company to export electric vehicles (EVs) from India?

(*a*) Hyundai (*b*) Morris Garages
(*c*) Tata Motors (*d*) Honda
(*e*) Citroen

84. Which country deployed its C-Dome defence system, a naval adaptation of the Iron Dome, for the first time against an aerial threat near Eilat?

(*a*) Iran (*b*) Israel
(*c*) Yemen (*d*) Qatar
(*e*) Saudi Arabia

85. Who was elected as the Senate Chairman, marking a significant political development in Pakistan's upper house of parliament?

(*a*) Syedal Khan Nasir (*b*) Qasim Samad Khan
(*c*) Yousuf Raza Gillani (*d*) Ali Zafar
(*e*) None of these

86. World Parkinson's Day is observed every year on:

(*a*) 10 March (*b*) 11 April
(*c*) 12 May (*d*) 13 June
(*e*) 14 July

87. When is India aiming to land an astronaut on the moon, as revealed by ISRO Chief S Somanath?

(*a*) 2025 (*b*) 2030
(*c*) 2035 (*d*) 2040
(*e*) 2045

88. Which city's Command Hospital has led with Piezoelectric implants?

(*a*) Bengaluru (*b*) Mumbai
(*c*) Pune (*d*) Delhi
(*e*) Kolkata

89. Which of the following Indian state hosted the inaugural Swami Vivekananda U20 Men's National Football Championship?

(*a*) Madhya Pradesh (*b*) Maharashtra
(*c*) Uttar Pradesh (*d*) Chhattisgarh
(*e*) Rajasthan

90. Where did the Asian Wrestling Championships 2024 take place?

(*a*) Nepal (*b*) India
(*c*) Iran (*d*) Japan
(*e*) Kyrgyzstan

91. Who has been re-elected to the International Narcotics Control Board for the period 2025-2030?

(*a*) Jagjit Pavadia (*b*) John Smith
(*c*) Maria Garcia (*d*) David Johnson
(*e*) None of these

92. Which institution unveiled a nano-sensor for disease tracking?

(*a*) IIT Roorkee (*b*) IIT Delhi
(*c*) IIT Jodhpur (*d*) IIT Bombay
(*e*) IIT Kanpur

93. In which country is PhonePe partnering to promote UPI during a New Year festival?

(*a*) Bhutan (*b*) Srilanka
(*c*) Nepal (*d*) Bangladesh
(*e*) Malasia

94. The International Day of Human Space Flight is celebrated on:

(*a*) 10 April (*b*) 11 April
(*c*) 12 April (*d*) 13 April
(*e*) 14 April

95. Who has been appointed as the UK's first woman high commissioner to India?

(*a*) Lindy Cameron
(*b*) Emma Thompson
(*c*) Sarah Johnson
(*d*) Rachel Evans
(*e*) None of these

96. Who is set to become the first Indian pilot to embark on space tourism with Blue Origin's NS-25 mission?

(*a*) Om Prakash Sanghi (*b*) Satya Pal Shahi
(*c*) Gopi Thotakura (*d*) Rohit Singh
(*e*) None of these

97. India's digital services exports reached _____ in 2023, surpassing China and marking a 17 per cent increase from the previous year, as highlighted in the World Trade Organisation (WTO) report on digital services exports.

(*a*) $100 billion (*b*) $125 billion
(*c*) $257 billion (*d*) $350 billion
(*e*) $420 billion

98. What is Moody's Analytics forecast for India's GDP growth in 2024?

(*a*) 5.0% (*b*) 5.5%
(*c*) 6.9% (*d*) 6.1%
(*e*) 6.5%

99. Who has been appointed as a Member of the University Grants Commission (UGC)?

(*a*) Sachidananda Mohanty
(*b*) Ananya Singh
(*c*) Vikram Patel
(*d*) Neha Sharma
(*e*) None of these

100. Which of the following institute developed a three-layered hydrogel using chitosan, polyvinyl alcohol, and polyaniline, capable of adsorbing and degrading over 90% of microplastics in water?

(*a*) MIT (*b*) Stanford University
(*c*) Caltech (*d*) IISc
(*e*) IIT Delhi

Answer Key

1. (*c*)	**2.** (*b*)	**3.** (*a*)	**4.** (*a*)	**5.** (*d*)	**6.** (*d*)	**7.** (*a*)	**8.** (*c*)	**9.** (*e*)	**10.** (*b*)
11. (*a*)	**12.** (*b*)	**13.** (*a*)	**14.** (*b*)	**15.** (*a*)	**16.** (*a*)	**17.** (*c*)	**18.** (*a*)	**19.** (*d*)	**20.** (*a*)
21. (*b*)	**22.** (*a*)	**23.** (*a*)	**24.** (*d*)	**25.** (*c*)	**26.** (*c*)	**27.** (*c*)	**28.** (*c*)	**29.** (*a*)	**30.** (*b*)
31. (*d*)	**32.** (*c*)	**33.** (*e*)	**34.** (*b*)	**35.** (*c*)	**36.** (*c*)	**37.** (*a*)	**38.** (*d*)	**39.** (*d*)	**40.** (*e*)
41. (*b*)	**42.** (*c*)	**43.** (*d*)	**44.** (*e*)	**45.** (*e*)	**46.** (*b*)	**47.** (*a*)	**48.** (*b*)	**49.** (*b*)	**50.** (*d*)
51. (*e*)	**52.** (*c*)	**53.** (*c*)	**54.** (*c*)	**55.** (*d*)	**56.** (*a*)	**57.** (*e*)	**58.** (*c*)	**59.** (*a*)	**60.** (*b*)
61. (*c*)	**62.** (*d*)	**63.** (*b*)	**64.** (*c*)	**65.** (*a*)	**66.** (*d*)	**67.** (*a*)	**68.** (*d*)	**69.** (*b*)	**70.** (*d*)
71. (*b*)	**72.** (*b*)	**73.** (*c*)	**74.** (*b*)	**75.** (*c*)	**76.** (*b*)	**77.** (*c*)	**78.** (*e*)	**79.** (*c*)	**80.** (*b*)
81. (*e*)	**82.** (*b*)	**83.** (*e*)	**84.** (*b*)	**85.** (*c*)	**86.** (*b*)	**87.** (*d*)	**88.** (*c*)	**89.** (*d*)	**90.** (*e*)
91. (*a*)	**92.** (*c*)	**93.** (*c*)	**94.** (*c*)	**95.** (*a*)	**96.** (*c*)	**97.** (*c*)	**98.** (*d*)	**99.** (*a*)	**100.** (*d*)

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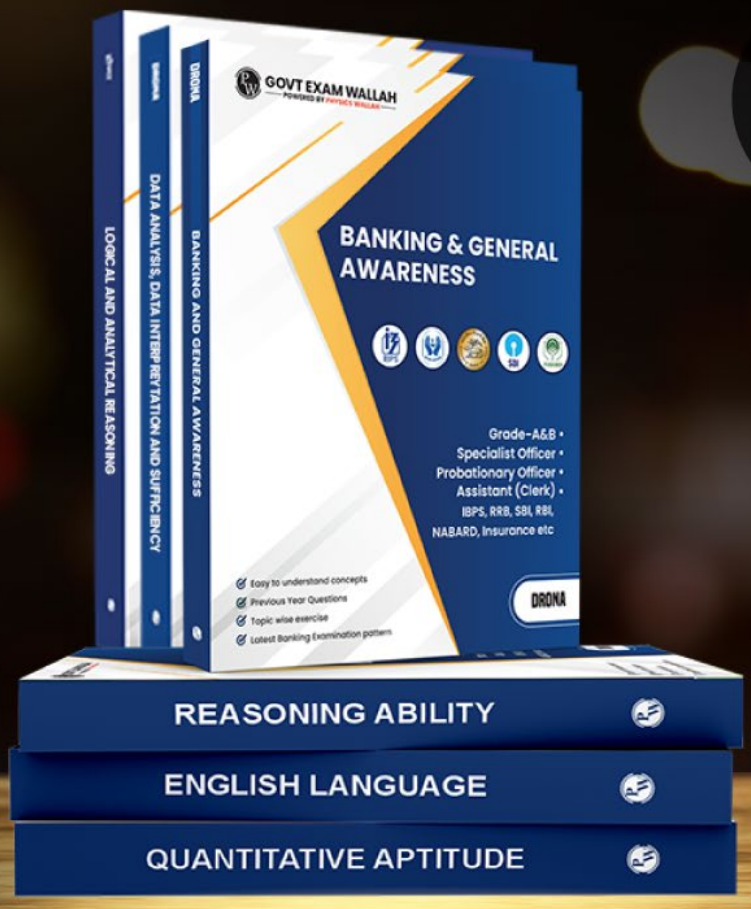
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Banking and Economy

Chapter 1

Government to get Rs 3,662 crore from LIC as dividend.

- State-run Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) will provide a dividend of ₹3,662 crore to the Government of India, which is the largest shareholder in the company.
- LIC declared a final dividend of ₹6 per share for the financial year ended March 31, 2024.
- The government currently holds 96.50% stake in LIC, accounting for 6,10,36,22,781 shares out of 6,32,49,97,701 fully paid-up equity shares.
- This dividend aims to enhance the government's revenue and reflects LIC's robust financial performance.

About LIC

- Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) is the largest state-owned insurance company in India, founded in 1956.
- It was established through the Life Insurance of India Act, which nationalized the insurance industry in India.
- LIC offers a wide range of life insurance products including term plans, endowment plans, pension plans, and unit-linked insurance plans (ULIPs).
- Headquarters of LIC - Mumbai
- Chairman of LIC - Shri. Siddhartha Mohanty

RBI Govt Shaktikanta Das launched" PRAVAAH"

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has introduced a mobile application named the 'G-sec app' under its Retail Direct Scheme.
- This initiative is designed to simplify the process of investing in government securities (G-secs) for retail investors.
- According to RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das, the RBI Retail Direct Scheme, which was launched in November 2021, is set to become more accessible with the introduction of this mobile app.
- The launch of a mobile app for accessing the Retail Direct portal will provide greater convenience to retail investors and deepen the G-sec market.

Poonawalla Fincorp and IndusInd Bank Launch Co-Branded RuPay Credit Card

- Poonawalla Fincorp Limited announced the launch of a co-branded credit card in collaboration with IndusInd Bank on 28 May 2024.
- The IndusInd Bank Poonawalla Fincorp eLITE RuPay Platinum Credit Card is aimed at redefining and elevating the banking experience for customers.
- The introduction of this card marks a milestone for Poonawalla Fincorp, reflecting its focus on providing tailored financial solutions that cater to the evolving needs of its customers.

Bank of Maharashtra tops among PSU Banks in Business Growth in FY24

- Bank of Maharashtra recorded a 15.94% rise in total business (domestic), leading the pack among public sector banks. State Bank of India (SBI) followed with a 13.12% growth.
- Bank of Maharashtra maintained its top spot in terms of growth in deposit mobilization, achieving a 15.66% rise in deposits. SBI, Bank of India, and Canara Bank also achieved double-digit growth in deposits.
- Bank of Maharashtra continued to top the chart with a 52.73% growth in low-cost Current Account and Savings Account (CASA) deposits.
- Bank of Maharashtra reported the lowest gross non-performing assets (NPAs) at 1.88% and net NPAs at 0.2% as of 31 March 2024.
- Bank of Maharashtra led PSBs with a 17.38% capital adequacy ratio at the end of FY24.

SBI General unveiled 'Surety Bond Bima' for infrastructure projects

- SBI General Insurance, the non-life insurance arm of State Bank of India (SBI), has launched the General Surety Bond Bima (Conditional & Unconditional) insurance product.
- This initiative aims to provide financial security for infrastructure projects.
- The Surety Bond Insurance acts as a security arrangement for infrastructure projects, benefiting both contractors and the principal (contract awarding authority).
- The product protects against breach of terms and conditions by contractors during the bidding stage or project performance.
- It includes various bonds such as bid bonds, advance payment bonds, performance bonds, and retention money bonds.

IRDAI introduced new corporate governance regulations for insurers

- The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) has issued new regulations titled "Corporate Governance for Insurers," effective from 20 March 2024.
- These regulations aim to enhance governance structures within insurance companies to safeguard the interests of stakeholders, including policyholders.
- The regulations provide a framework for insurers to adopt sound and prudent principles and practices in their governance structure.
- They define roles and responsibilities for the board and management, ensuring protection for all stakeholders.

About IRDAI

- The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) is the apex statutory body responsible for regulating and promoting the insurance industry in India.
- IRDAI was established in 1999 under the IRDA Act.
- It aims to protect policyholders' interests, ensure the financial stability of the insurance market, and foster its orderly growth.
- Chairman of IRDAI - Mr. Debasish Panda
- Headquarters of IRDAI - Hyderabad, Telangana

RBI approves Rs 2.11 lakh cr surplus transfer to Government

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has approved a record surplus transfer of Rs 2.11 lakh crore to the Central Government for the financial year 2023-24.
- This substantial surplus payment marks a 141% increase compared to the previous year's dividend of Rs 87,416 crore.
- The RBI typically pays dividends from its surplus income earned on investments, valuation changes, and fees related to currency printing.
- This surplus transfer significantly bolsters the government's fiscal position and reflects the central bank's robust financial performance.

India registers record $778 Billion Export in 2023-24.

- In the financial year 2023-24, India achieved a historic milestone by registering record exports totaling $778 billion.
- This impressive figure combines both goods (merchandise) exports and services exports.
- While services exports increased from $325.3 billion to $341.1 billion, merchandise exports experienced a marginal decline from $451.1 billion to $437.1 billion.
- The government's strategic initiatives, including the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme, played a crucial role in enhancing India's global competitiveness, attracting investments, and integrating the country into the global supply chain.

EPFO introduces Auto-Mode for Education, Marriage claims

- The Employees' Provident Fund Organization (EPFO) has introduced an auto-mode settlement for advance claims related to education, marriage, and housing.
- The auto-mode settlement was initially introduced in April 2020 for illness-related advances. Now, it has been expanded to cover other purposes.
- The limit for auto claim settlement has been doubled from the earlier Rs. 50,000/- to Rs. 1,00,000/-.
- The auto claim solution now covers all claims under para 68K (for education and marriage purposes).
- It also includes claims under para 68B (for housing purposes).

About EPFO

- The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) is a statutory body under the Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India.
- The EPFO was established in 1951.
- EPFO administers the Employees' Provident Fund (EPF), a mandatory savings scheme for the workforce aimed at ensuring financial security in retirement.
- It manages the provident fund, pension, and insurance schemes for employees in the organized sector.

PhonePe launched Cross-Border UPI payments in Sri Lanka



- PhonePe, an Indian digital payments and financial services platform, has launched in Sri Lanka.
- High Commissioner Santosh Jha noted that this is part of a larger connectivity agenda and digital transformation, with plans to extend India's digital public infrastructure and introduce a digital identity project in Sri Lanka.

Bajaj Allianz General Insurance promotes Vikramjeet Singh as Sr. President & Chief- HR



- Bajaj Allianz General Insurance has promoted Vikramjeet Singh to Senior President and Chief Human Resources, Investigation & Loss Mitigation, and Administration.
- He previously served as President and Chief Human Resources Officer and has over two decades of experience in HR.
- He joined the company in December 2016 and has been with the team for over seven years, showcasing his long-standing commitment and contributions to the organization's growth.

India's general insurance sector is projected to reach $57.3 billion by 2028

- The general insurance market in India is expected to experience substantial growth, with a projected gross written premium (GWP) of INR 4.89 trillion (US$57.3 billion) by 2028, showing a significant increase from INR 3.35 trillion ($40.36 billion) in 2024.

India's internet economy likely to reach $1 trillion by 2030.

- India's internet economy is projected to reach $1 trillion by 2030, driven largely by the e-commerce sector, which is expected to be valued at $325 billion, making it the third-largest in the world, according to industry experts.

GST portal implemented machine registration for pan masala and tobacco manufacturers

- Manufacturers of specified goods, including pan masala, gutka, and various tobacco products, must now adhere to new regulations effective from 15 May 2024. These regulations require them to:
- Register Machinery: Provide details of all packing machines within 30 days.
- Report Additional Machines: Any additional machines installed must be reported within 24 hours.

M&M gears up for a ₹26,000 Crore investment in Automotive Business

- Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd (M&M) expects mid- to high-teen growth this financial year and plans for up to 30% of its SUV portfolio to be electric by 2027.

- Anticipating a surge in auto demand, M&M will invest ₹26,000 crore in its automotive business over the next three years.
- This includes ₹12,000 crore for Mahindra Electric Automobile Limited (MEAL), ₹8,500 crore for the SUV business, ₹4,000 crore for commercial vehicles, and ₹5,000 crore for the farm equipment business, with investments spanning FY25 to FY27 for new vehicle development and capacity building.

SBI General unveils 'Surety Bond Bima' for Infrastructure Projects

- SBI General Insurance, the non-life insurance arm of State Bank of India (SBI), launched the General Surety Bond Bima (Conditional & Unconditional) insurance product.
- This insurance will serve as a security arrangement for infrastructure projects, providing protection for both contractors and principals (contract awarding authorities).

SEBI's amendments to LODR Regulations

- SEBI has revised LODR regulations, now calculating market capitalization based on average values for listed companies.
- The amendments aim to redefine criteria and establish a defined period for calculation, offering relief for entities with fluctuating market caps through a proposed sunset clause.

Zomato to surrender RBI licence to operate as online payment aggregator

- On 13 May 2024, Zomato Payment Pvt Ltd (ZPPL) decided to voluntarily surrender the certificate of authorisation it obtained from the Reserve Bank to operate as an online payment aggregator.
- Zomato announced its financial results for the quarter and financial year ended in March.
- Additionally, its subsidiary Zomato Payment Pvt Ltd (ZPPL) has chosen to voluntarily surrender the certificate of authorization it received from the Reserve Bank to operate as an online payment aggregator.
- The development comes months after the company received the licence from the central bank to operate as an online payment aggregator, with effect from 24 January 2024.

Mahindra & Mahindra sign MoU with MSDE for 'Drone Didi' Pilot Project



- The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) has taken a significant step towards empowering women in emerging technology sectors by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd.
- This partnership aims to conduct two Pilot Projects under the Drone Didi Yojana, which is a commendable initiative in promoting women's participation in drone technology and related fields.

SAIL-Bhilai to set up Chhattisgarh's first 15-Mw floating Solar Plant

- Bhilai Steel Plant (BSP), a subsidiary of Steel Authority of India (SAIL), is preparing to install Chhattisgarh's first 15 MW floating solar project at its Maroda-1 reservoir.
- This initiative is part of BSP's broader strategy to reduce carbon emissions, conserve energy, and promote renewable energy solutions, which aligns with the user's interest in renewable energy projects and environmental conservation.

HDFC bank reduced notice period from 90 days to 30 days

- HDFC Bank, India's largest private sector bank, has shortened its employee notice period from 90 days to 30 days.
- This decision, following ICICI Bank's similar move in 2020, aims to enhance flexibility for the bank's workforce.

IRDAI brings life, health insurance down to the grassroots level

- IRDAI has mandated life and general insurers to provide insurance coverage to specific Gram Panchayats, aiming to extend insurance services to rural areas.
- The Life Insurance Council, in consultation with the Ministry of Panchayat Raj, will determine the minimum number of Gram Panchayats for each insurer based on parameters like market share.

RBI asks non-banks to stick to loan cash payout limit

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has directed non-bank finance companies (NBFCs) to strictly follow a cash loan limit of Rs 20,000, as reported by Reuters and confirmed by two sources familiar with the matter.
- This move aims to discourage cash transactions within the NBFC sector.

Amazon unveils first electric seaport trucks amid push to slash emissions

- The first of twelve Volvo electric large rigs that Amazon intends to use this year to haul goods from the busiest container harbor in the country—located in southern California—will be unveiled on 7 May 2024.
- Eight of those semi-trucks are currently in service at the port complex in Los Angeles/Long Beach, where all "drayage" trucks are required to have zero emissions by 2035.
- The company's goal of having net-zero carbon emissions by 2040 depends on this endeavor.

CBDC pilot programmes for CPs, CDs likely: RBI governor Shaktikanta Das

- RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das announced plans for a pilot program on Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) focusing on the wholesale segment, specifically commercial papers (CPs) and certificates of deposits (CDs).
- Das noted that the daily retail transaction volume of CBDC, integrated with the United Payments Interface (UPI), has reached one million transactions, yet retail users still prefer UPI.
- He emphasized the need for a more extensive transaction volume to understand CBDC's broader economic impact, especially on monetary policy and the banking sector.
- Das highlighted that permanent deletion of transactions could render CBDC anonymous, similar to paper currency, potentially affecting its usage and regulation.

ICICI Pru Life launched ULIP having fund value-based distributor payouts

- ICICI Prudential Life Insurance on 6 May 2024) launched ICICI Pru Platinum, a Unit Linked Investment Plan (ULIP) that ties the distributor's commission to their customers' Assets Under Management (AUM).
- The plan allows customers unlimited free switches between asset classes, devoid of any costs or tax implications.
- Customers can select from a diverse range of 21 funds, including 13 equity funds, four debt funds, and four balanced funds. Additionally, four portfolio strategies are available.
- The product aims to offer a cost- and tax-efficient means of building long-term wealth.

ICICI Bank enables UPI payments in India for NRIs via int'l mobile numbers

- On 6 May 2024, ICICI Bank announced that it has enabled instant payment facility UPI for its non-resident Indian (NRI) customers in India through their international mobile numbers.
- According to the bank, this will significantly enhance the convenience of making everyday payments.
- With this facility, the NRI customers of the bank can make payments for their utility bills, merchant and e-commerce transactions with their international mobile number registered with their NRE/NRO bank account held with ICICI Bank in India,
- The bank has made this service available through its mobile banking app iMobile Pay.

TI Clean Mobility to raise Rs 580 crore from GEF Capital Partners

- Tube Investments of India (TII) subsidiary, TI Clean Mobility, secured Rs 580 crore from private equity firm GEF Capital Partners LLC.

- The funding includes equity and compulsorily convertible preference shares (CCPS).
- GEF comprises South Asia Growth Invest III LLC and South Asia EBT Trust III.
- The fundraising is part of TICMPL's plan to raise Rs 3,000 crore for its electric vehicle verticals.
- With the GEF investment, the total raised amounts to Rs 2,530 crore, contributing significantly to TICMPL's funding goals.

Govt allows export of 14,000 tn of non-basmati white rice to Mauritius

- The government announced on Monday the approval for exporting 14,000 tonnes of non-basmati white rice to Mauritius.
- The export is facilitated through the National Cooperative Exports Limited (NCEL), as stated by the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT).
- While exports of non-basmati white rice have been restricted since July 20, 2023, to bolster domestic supply, exceptions are made for certain countries upon government permission to fulfill their food security requirements.
- The specific permission granted allows for the export of 14,000 metric tonnes of non-basmati white rice to Mauritius through NCEL.

FPSB India, IFSCA sign pact to promote GIFT IFSC as 'global finance hub'

- Financial Planning Standards Board India (FPSB India) announced a collaboration with the International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA) located in GIFT City, Gandhinagar.
- The partnership aims to position GIFT IFSC as a 'Global Finance Hub' by enhancing the financial market ecosystem and fostering skilled professionals.
- Both entities will work together to organize international and domestic events to raise awareness and establish GIFT IFSC as a prominent global financial center.
- The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) includes provisions for talent pipeline support, ecosystem development, promotional activities, and research collaboration.

KKR acquires Bengaluru-based medical devices company Healthium MedTech

- On 6 May 2024, Global investment firm KKR announced acquiring Bengaluru-based medical devices company Healthium Medtech from an affiliate of funds advised by private equity firm Apax Partners.
- According to sources close to the deal, the value of the acquisition is Rs 6,500-7,000 crore (around $839 million).
- The acquisition marks KKR's latest investment in the Indian healthcare sector, with the firm already holding stakes in Indian drugmaker J B Chemicals and Pharmaceuticals hospital chain operator Max Healthcare and generic injectables maker Gland Pharma.
- Private equity firm Apax bought Healthium, which is involved in the manufacturing of products used in surgical, post-surgical, and chronic care procedures, in 2018.

Former BharatPe COO Dhruv Bahl launched Eternal Capital VC Fund

- Former BharatPe COO Dhruv Dhanraj Bahl has launched Eternal Capital, a venture capital fund aiming to raise Rs 120 crore with a greenshoe option to increase by another Rs 120 crore.
- The fund plans to support 40 early-stage startups across various sectors over the next three years.

Adani Green Energy Secures $400 Million Finance for Solar Projects

- Adani Green Energy Ltd has secured a $400 million green loan for its ongoing solar projects in Gujarat and Rajasthan.
- The lenders involved are DBS Bank, Intesa Sanpaolo, MUFG Bank, Rabobank, and Sumitomo Mitsui Banking.

RBI imposed monetary penalty on three co-operative banks for rule violations

- On 2 May 2024, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) imposed monetary penalties on three co-operative banks for rule violations.
- These banks are Lokmangal Co-operative Bank, The Udgir Urban Co-operative Bank, and The Satara Sahakari Bank.
- The central bank imposed Rs 5 lakh penalty on Lokmangal Co-operative Bank, Rs 2 lakh on The Satara Sahakari Bank, and Rs 1 lakh on The Udgir Urban Co-operative Bank.

Coal India registers 18% growth in annual profit, tepid income rise

- National miner Coal India Limited (CIL) registered a 17.8 percent jump in its year-on-year (Y-o-Y) profit at Rs 37,369 crore for the financial year 2023-24 (FY24).
- The revenue from operations rose minimally by 3 percent to Rs 1.38 trillion during FY24, while the net income was up by a similar quantum to Rs 1.5 trillion.
- The company's board also recommended a final dividend of Rs 5 per share for the financial year ending March 2024 subject to the nod from the shareholders at the ensuing annual general meeting of the company.

NPCI, Bank of Namibia ink an agreement to develop UPI-like system

- NPCI International Payments Limited (NIPL), the international arm of the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), on May 2, 2024, agreed with the Bank of Namibia (BoN) to develop an instant payment system like Unified Payment Interface (UPI) for the African nation.
- This partnership marks NPCI's first-ever collaboration with a central bank to deploy the UPI stack in an international market.
- The collaboration is aimed at developing real-time person-to-person (P2P) and person-to-merchant (P2M) transactions in Namibia.

Adani Energy Solutions arm to acquire 100% stake in Pointleap Projects

- Adani Electricity Mumbai Ltd on Thursday signed an agreement to acquire the 100 percent stake in Pointleap Projects Pvt Ltd (PPPL) for a consideration of Rs 13.15 crore.
- Adani Electricity Mumbai Limited (AEML) is a subsidiary of Adani Energy Solutions Ltd (AESL).
- "AEML executed a Share Purchase Agreement (SPA) with Windson Projects LLP (WPLLP) for acquiring 100 percent equity shares of PPPL," AESL said in a regulatory filing.

Bajaj Allianz Life Insurance declares highest-ever bonus of Rs 1,383 cr for its policyholders

- Bajaj Allianz Life Insurance declared its highest-ever bonus of Rs 1,383 crore for FY2023-24, a 15% increase from the previous year. Over 11.66 lakh policyholders with participating products will benefit.
- Traditional participating policyholders are eligible, with bonuses distributed upon maturity or exit, and cash bonuses paid for specific policy events.
- Tarun Chugh, MD & CEO, emphasized the company's commitment to enabling customers' long-term goals through investment strategies and value-packed products.

RBI Cancels Acemoney (India) NBFC License for Irregular Lending Practices

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) cancelled the license of the Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC) due to its violation of the central bank's guidelines concerning risk management and the code of conduct regarding outsourcing financial services.
- This violation specifically pertained to the NBFC's digital lending operations conducted through third-party apps.

Record High GST Revenue Collection in April 2024

- In April 2024, the Gross Goods and Services Tax (GST) collections soared to a record high of Rs 2.10 lakh crore, marking a substantial 12.4% year-on-year growth.
- This growth was propelled by a robust increase in both domestic transactions, which surged by 13.4%, and imports, which saw an 8.3% rise, according to a statement from the Finance Ministry.

India's Ecommerce Market set to become 3rd largest globally by 2030

- Invest India's projection paints a promising picture for India's e-commerce sector, envisioning a substantial surge to $325 billion by 2030.
- This growth aligns with the anticipated expansion of India's digital economy, which is forecasted to reach a remarkable $800 billion within the same timeframe.

OECD raises India's FY25 GDP growth projection by 40 basis points to 6.6%

- The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) on (2 May 2024) raised its growth forecast for India by 40 basis points to 6.6 percent for 2024-25, holding that buoyant public investment and improved business confidence are expected to propel India's gross domestic product (GDP) growth.
- "Domestic demand will be driven by gross capital formation, particularly in the public sector, with private consumption growth remaining sluggish.
- Exports will continue to grow, especially of services such as information technology and consulting, where India will continue to increase its global market share, supported by foreign investment," the inter-governmental group of 38 high-income economies said in its latest Economic Outlook.

Index and Reports

Chapter 2

WNS released fourth annual Corporate Sustainability Report

- WNS (Holdings) Limited, a leading provider of global digital-led Business Process Management (BPM) solutions, has released its fourth annual corporate sustainability report titled 'Empowering Growth, Inspiring Change' for the fiscal year 2023-24.
- The report highlights WNS' progress in key environmental, social, and governance activities across four cornerstones: people, planet, partnerships, and principles.
- WNS has committed to halving its carbon emissions by 2030 and aims for Net-Zero by 2050.
- The report aligns with Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) Standards, Sustainability Accounting Standards Board (SASB) Standards, UN Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs), and UN Global Compact principles.

India climbs to 39th in Global Tourism Index 2024

- India's rank on the World Economic Forum's Travel & Tourism Development Index 2024 has risen to 39th place, reflecting the resurgence of global tourism after the pandemic.
- While the United States tops the list, India stands as the highest-ranked country in South Asia and among the lower-middle-income economies.
- In the previously published index in 2021, India held the 54th position. However, changes to the index parameters limit direct comparability with earlier years.
- India ranks 18th globally in price competitiveness, making it an attractive destination for budget-conscious travelers.
- India boasts competitive Air Transport (26th) and Ground and Port (25th) infrastructure.
- India's strong Natural (6th), Cultural (9th), and Non-Leisure (9th) resources contribute significantly to travel.

Oxford Economics' Global Cities Index

- Delhi, the national capital of India, has secured the 350th rank in the Oxford Economics' Global Cities Index.
- This index compares the world's 1,000 largest cities across various parameters, including economics, human capital, quality of life, environment, and governance.
- While Delhi is the highest-ranked Indian city, it's interesting to note that no Indian city made it to the top 300.
- Other Indian cities featured in the list include Bengaluru (411th), Mumbai (427th), and Chennai (472nd).

Mukesh Ambani and Gautam Adani secure positions among the World's top 15 Super Rich

- Mukesh Ambani and Gautam Adani have secured positions among the world's top 15 super-rich individuals.
- This news not only highlights their personal success but also underscores the growing influence of Indian entrepreneurs on the global stage.
- Mukesh Ambani, chairman of Reliance Industries, continues to lead his conglomerate to new heights. With a net worth surpassing $80 billion, he stands as one of the wealthiest individuals globally.
- Meanwhile, Gautam Adani, founder and chairman of the Adani Group, has also made significant strides. He now claims the 12th spot on the Bloomberg Billionaires Index, surpassing Mukesh Ambani, who holds the 13th position. Adani's net worth stands at $82.5 billion.

Ronaldo tops forbes' list of Highest-Paid Athletes again

- Cristiano Ronaldo has once again secured the top spot on Forbes' list of highest-paid athletes, marking the fourth time he has achieved this distinction.

- His estimated total earnings reached an impressive $260 million, setting a new all-time high for a football player.
- Ronaldo's on-field performance contributed $200 million to his income. His off-field earnings amounted to $60 million, primarily driven by lucrative sponsorship deals. Brands leverage his massive 629 million Instagram followers to promote their products and services.
- Spanish golfer Jon Rahm follows closely in second place after his sensational switch to Saudi-backed LIV Golf.
- Lionel Messi, the record eight-times Ballon d'Or winner, secured the third position with earnings of $135 million after joining Major League Soccer side Inter Miami.
- The list also features other notable athletes, including NBA star LeBron James, French soccer captain Kylian Mbappe, and former PSG star Neymar.

World Migration Report 2024



- The World Migration Report 2024, published by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), provides a comprehensive overview of global migration trends and challenges.
- The report provides updated migration statistics at the global and regional levels. It includes descriptive analyses of complex migration issues.
- Part I of the report presents key data and information on migration, including global migration trends and patterns, and regional dimensions and developments.
- Part II covers a range of complex and emerging migration issues, including the narrowing of mobility options for people from developing countries, human security in migration, gender dimensions of migration, climate change, food insecurity and migration, global governance of migration, and migration and mobility in a post-COVID world.
- The report aims to inform current and future policy deliberations and discussions by providing a clear identification of the key issues, a critical overview of relevant research and analysis.

India surpassed Japan as 3rd largest Solar Power Generator in 2023

- WNS (Holdings) Limited, a leading provider of global digital-led Business Process Management (BPM) solutions, has released its fourth annual corporate sustainability report titled 'Empowering Growth, Inspiring Change' for the fiscal year 2023-24.
- The report highlights WNS' progress in key environmental, social, and governance activities across four cornerstones: people, planet, partnerships, and principles.
- Notably, WNS has committed to halving its carbon emissions by 2030 and aims for Net-Zero by 2050.
- The report aligns with Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) Standards, Sustainability Accounting Standards Board (SASB) Standards, UN Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs), and UN Global Compact principles.

India's Toy exports slip to $152.34 Million in 2023-24: GTRI Report



- According to the Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) report, India's toy exports saw a slight decline to USD 152.34 million in 2023-24 from USD 153.89 million the previous year.
- Despite the implementation of mandatory quality control orders aimed at boosting the local industry and ensuring safety, they did not significantly enhance India's toy exports.
- From FY'2020 to FY'2022, exports increased modestly from USD 129.6 million to USD 177 million. However, by FY'2024, exports decreased to USD 152.3 million.

- Imports, on the other hand, increased to USD 64.92 million in 2023-24 from USD 62.37 million in 2022-23.

India ratings raises sovereign GDP growth estimate for FY25 to 7.1%

- On 6 May 2024, India Ratings and Research revised upward the country's GDP growth estimate for FY25 to 7.1 percent from 6.5 percent earlier.
- The projection is marginally higher than the Reserve Bank's estimate of 7 percent.
- In a statement, the domestic rating agency said strong support from the sustained government capex, deleverage balance sheets of the corporate and banking sector, and the incipient private corporate capex cycle made it revise its estimate.
- The agency said it expects the growth in private final consumption expenditure to jump to 7 percent in FY25, up from 3 percent in FY24, and added that this will be a three-year high.

Indian airlines to capture half of international passenger traffic by FY28: CRISIL Report

- According to a Crisil Ratings report released on 6 May 2024, Indian airlines are projected to secure almost half of the nation's international passenger traffic by the financial year 2027-28, driven by route expansion and the acquisition of new aircraft.
- The anticipated increase in market share for Indian airlines is significant, expected to rise by 7% from 43% in FY24 to 50% in FY28.
- Alongside the expansion of routes and fleet, the superior domestic connectivity offered by Indian carriers compared to foreign airlines is cited as a contributing factor to their success in capturing the international market.

India's airlines to have 50% mkt share of int'l passengers by FY28: CRISIL

- CRISIL predicts that Indian airlines will handle up to 50% of the country's international air passenger traffic by the financial year 2027-28.
- This projection indicates a significant increase from the 43% share they held in the previous fiscal year.
- The surge in Indian airlines' share is expected due to additional aircraft deployment, expansion of routes, and superior domestic connectivity compared to foreign carriers.
- India's international passenger traffic rebounded strongly, reaching around 70 million in fiscal year 2024, surpassing pre-pandemic levels, following a low of 10 million in the pandemic-hit fiscal year 2021.

MoU and Agreements

Chapter 3

NSDC and ILO partner for "Skill Development and Lifelong Learning"

- The National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) have forged a strategic partnership to advance skill development and lifelong learning in India and globally.
- This collaboration aims to empower individuals by equipping them with essential competencies and qualifications, thereby enhancing employability and sustainable economic growth.
- The partnership aims to facilitate knowledge exchange and enhance Sector Skill Councils (SSCs).
- The collaboration will focus on developing micro-credentials and promoting RPL through a global knowledge-sharing platform.

About NSDC

- The National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) is a unique Public Private Partnership (PPP) enterprise working under the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE), Government of India.
- It was incorporated on 31 July 2008, and aims to promote skill development by catalyzing the creation of large, quality, for-profit vocational institutions.
- NSDC collaborates with industry partners, government agencies, and other stakeholders to enhance employability and bridge the skills gap.
- Chairman of NSDC - Mr. Ved Mani Tiwari
- Headquarters - Kaushal Bhawan, New Moti Bagh, New Delhi

Japan and Nagaland inaugurate Kohima Peace Memorial and Eco Park

- The Kohima Peace Memorial and Eco-Park were officially inaugurated during a soft launch ceremony on 8 May 2024, in Kohima.
- The event, graced by Ambassador Suzuki Hiroshi, the Ambassador of Japan to India, saw the unveiling of this landmark project aimed at promoting peace and environmental conservation in Nagaland.
- Ambassador Suzuki Hiroshi expressed his deepest sympathy and condolences to the people of Nagaland who were caught in the crossfire during the war between Japanese forces and the British Commonwealth Forces eighty years ago.
- The memorial serves as a solemn tribute to the victims of the battle, emphasizing the importance of peace and reconciliation.

MEA, MeitY, and CSC partnered to enhance eMigrate Services

- The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), and CSC e-Governance Services India Limited have signed a MoU to enhance eMigrate services through Common Services Centres (CSCs).
- The eMigrate project aims to assist blue-collar workers going to Emigration Check Required (ECR) countries.
- By integrating the eMigrate Portal of MEA with CSC's portal, the partnership will facilitate registration, document processing, medical bookings, and awareness about eMigrate services.
- CSCs, as part of the Digital India mission, play a crucial role in delivering digital services to citizens especially in rural and remote areas.

TCS signs deal with Kuwait's Burgan Bank

- Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) has signed a deal with Burgan Bank, one of the youngest commercial banks in Kuwait.
- As part of this agreement, Burgan Bank will use TCS BaNCS suite solutions to modernize its core banking technology.
- The suite will enable the bank to manage higher transaction volumes, enhance automation, and improve staff productivity.
- With TCS BaNCS' rich set of APIs, Burgan Bank aims to serve its diversified customer base across corporate, retail, and private banking segments.

- This move aligns with Burgan Bank's broader technology and digital transformation strategy, emphasizing innovation and personalized offerings for sustainable growth.

Additional Facts

Tata Consultancy Services (TCS):

- TCS is an Indian multinational information technology (IT) services and consulting company.
- TCS was founded in 1968.
- TCS is a part of the Tata Group and operates in 150 locations across 46 countries.
- As of March 2024, TCS has more than 601,546 employees worldwide.
- Headquarter of TCS - Mumbai
- Chairman of TCS - Natarajan Chandrasekaran

Kuwait

- Capital of Kuwait: Kuwait City
- Currency of Kuwait: Kuwaiti dinar (KWD) [1 KWD equaling approximately US$ 3.262]
- Emir of Kuwait: Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

Tata Motors and Bajaj Finance launched EV Dealer Financing

- Tata Motors, in collaboration with Bajaj Finance, has introduced a financing program for authorized passenger and electric vehicle (EV) dealers.
- This strategic partnership involves Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles (TMPV) and Tata Passenger Electric Mobility (TPEM), both subsidiaries of Tata Motors.
- Through this memorandum of understanding (MoU), the companies aim to extend supply chain finance solutions to dealers, allowing them to access funding with minimal collateral.
- Bajaj Finance's extensive reach will empower TMPV and TPEM dealers, enhancing their working capital and supporting growth in the passenger vehicles market.

India inks 10-year deal to operate Iran's Chabahar Port

- India and Iran have signed a 10-year contract to develop and operate the Chabahar port in Iran.
- This strategic agreement grants India access to Afghanistan and Central Asia while bypassing Pakistan's denial of land access to the region.
- The Chabahar port, located close to Iran's southeastern border with Pakistan, has the potential to become a significant hub for linking landlocked countries with India's economy.
- This move strengthens trade routes and fosters economic connectivity in the region.

Chabahar Port



- Chabahar Port is located in southeastern Iran on the Gulf of Oman
- It is a strategic deep-water port developed to enhance regional trade and connectivity.
- India has invested significantly in Chabahar as part of a trilateral agreement with Iran and Afghanistan to establish a transit route bypassing Pakistan.
- The port facilitates access to Central Asia and Afghanistan, boosting trade and economic ties.
- Operational since 2017, it includes the Shahid Beheshti and Shahid Kalantari terminals.

Swiggy partners with "SHIELD" for enhanced fraud prevention

- Swiggy, the popular food delivery platform, has collaborated with SHIELD, a leading fraud prevention company, to enhance security and prevent fraudulent activities.
- This partnership aims to safeguard user accounts, transactions, and sensitive data.
- By leveraging SHIELD's expertise in fraud detection and prevention, Swiggy can proactively identify and mitigate risks, ensuring a safer experience for its customers.
- The joint efforts will strengthen Swiggy's commitment to maintaining trust and reliability in its services.

Airbus, SIDBI signed MoU for helicopter financing in India

- Airbus Helicopters and the Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for financing the purchase of Airbus' helicopters in India.
- Under this collaboration, both entities will identify potential civil helicopter operators in India seeking financing solutions for acquiring Airbus helicopters.
- Airbus will provide technical expertise and industry knowledge to SIDBI, who will evaluate these prospects and finance them exclusively for Airbus.
- This strategic move aims to make civil helicopters more accessible to operators in India and foster growth in the rotary wing aircraft market.

About SIDBI

- The Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) is a principal financial institution established in 1990 under an Act of the Indian Parliament.
- Its primary mission is to promote, finance, and develop micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in India.
- SIDBI provides a range of financial services including direct loans, refinancing to banks and financial institutions, and support for venture capital.
- Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) of the SIDBI - Shri Sivasubramanian Ramann
- Headquarters of SIDBI - Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh
- Chairman of NSDC - Mr. Ved Mani Tiwari
- Headquarters - Kaushal Bhawan, New Moti Bagh, New Delhi

Garuda Aerospace and GSFC University forged strategic MoU

- Garuda Aerospace, an innovator in the aerospace sector, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Gujarat State Fertilisers and Chemicals (GSFC) University.
- This landmark agreement aims to propel advancements in aerospace research and foster educational excellence.
- The MoU signifies a strategic alliance poised to enhance research capabilities and innovation in the aerospace field.
- It will leverage the combined expertise of Garuda Aerospace and GSFC University to drive forward new technologies, foster practical learning experiences, and bridge the gap between academia and industry.

FICCI, IESA signed contract to foster innovation in semiconductor

- The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) and the India Electronics and Semiconductor Association (IESA) have signed a MoU to promote innovation, support the semiconductor and electronics industry, and strengthen supply chains.
- This strategic collaboration aims to foster growth in the semiconductor sector by leveraging joint efforts, expertise, and resources.
- By working together, FICCI and IESA intend to drive technological advancements, enhance research capabilities, and contribute to India's self-reliance in critical and emerging technologies.

About FICCI

- The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) is a non-governmental trade association and advocacy group based in India.
- It was established in 1927.
- It was founded on the advice of Mahatma Gandhi by Indian businessmen G.D. Birla and Purshottamdas Thakurdas.
- FICCI is the largest, one of the oldest, and the apex business organization in India.
- It serves its members from the Indian private and public corporate sectors, drawing strength from diverse regional chambers of commerce and industry across states.
- Currently headquartered in New Delhi, it has a presence in 12 states in India and 8 countries worldwide.

MSDE partnered with Mahindra for Drone Didi Yojana

- Mahindra & Mahindra and the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) have joined forces for the Drone Didi Yojana.
- This initiative aims to train 15,000 women to operate drones for agricultural purposes, including tasks

like fertilizing crops, monitoring crop growth, and planting seeds.

- The collaboration involves conducting two pilot projects at the National Skill Training Institutes (NSTIs) in Hyderabad and Noida.
- These pilots will focus on skill development for 500 women in exclusive batches of 20 women each.

Coca-Cola India partnered with Hockey India, for Women's Hockey League

- Anandana, The Coca-Cola India Foundation, has announced its first-ever partnership with Hockey India for the National Women's Hockey League 2024.
- The tournament's initial phase began on April 30th and will conclude on May 9th, 2024, in Ranchi, Jharkhand.
- This domestic league showcases talent and skill, featuring teams that secured top-eight positions in Pune's recently concluded 14th Hockey India Senior Women National Championship 2024.
- The collaboration aims to elevate women's hockey by providing specialized coaching, training equipment, nutritional support, and organizing camps and tournaments.
- It aligns with Coca-Cola India's commitment to sports and gender equality, celebrating and supporting women athletes.

National News

Chapter 4

UAPA tribunal upheld ban on Manipur extremist groups

- The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) tribunal upheld the Centre's decision to declare seven valley-based Meitei extremist organizations in Manipur as "unlawful associations" for the next five years.
- These outfits have been involved in 335 violent incidents over the past five years, resulting in the deaths of nine security personnel and 21 civilians.
- The groups operate camps from Myanmar and Bangladesh, providing arms training to their cadres and a safe sanctuary for procuring arms and ammunition.
- The decision aims to curb their activities and maintain peace in the region.

CCRAS unveiled PRAGATI-2024 to Boost Research and Innovation in Ayurveda



- The Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences (CCRAS) has launched the Pharma Research in AyurGyan and Techno Innovation (PRAGATI-2024) initiative to promote research and innovation in the field of Ayurveda.
- This program aims to foster collaborative research between CCRAS and the Ayurveda drug industry.
- By providing a platform for collaboration, PRAGATI-2024 is expected to drive growth and advancement in the Ayurveda sector.

About CCRAS

- The Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences (CCRAS) is an autonomous body under the Ministry of AYUSH, Government of India.
- CCRAS was established in 1978.
- CCRAS is the apex body for the formulation, coordination, development, and promotion of research in Ayurvedic sciences.

Doordarshan's DD Kisan embraces AI Revolution with 'Krish and Bhoomi'

- On May 26, 2024, DD Kisan will launch two AI anchors: AI Krish and AI Bhoomi.
- These computer-based news anchors function like humans, tirelessly delivering news 24/7.
- They will provide essential information about agricultural research, trends in mandis, weather changes, and government schemes in fifty languages across India, from Kashmir to Tamil Nadu and Gujarat to Arunachal.
- DD Kisan's commitment to serving farmers remains unwavering, and this innovative step underscores its dedication to holistic development in the agricultural sector.

Cabinet approved over Rs 10,300 Crore for IndiaAI Mission

- The IndiaAI Mission, approved by the Union Cabinet, allocates over Rs 10,300 crore for the next five years.
- This substantial financial infusion aims to bolster India's AI ecosystem through various components, including the IndiaAI Compute Capacity, IndiaAI Innovation Centre (IAIC), IndiaAI Datasets Platform, IndiaAI Application Development Initiative, IndiaAI FutureSkills, IndiaAI Startup Financing, and Safe & Trusted AI.
- The Compute Capacity initiative will deploy over 10,000 Graphics Processing Units (GPUs) to create a cutting-edge, scalable AI computing infrastructure.

- Additionally, this funding will support AI startups, industry-led projects, and social impact initiatives, contributing to India's digital economy and innovation ecosystem.

WCD ministry 'officially' dissolved Food and Nutrition Board

- The Women and Child Development (WCD) Ministry has officially dissolved the Food and Nutrition Board (FNB), a technical wing responsible for providing technical and logistical support for community nutrition programs.
- The FNB operated through a network of offices and quality control laboratories in Delhi, Faridabad, Mumbai, Kolkata, and Chennai.
- This decision was made following a Cabinet meeting on 6 April, 2024 as part of the government's plan for rationalizing various bodies.

Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)-Central Mechanical Engineering Research launched Electric Tiller

- Dr. N. Kalaiselvi, Director General, Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)& Secretary, Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR) unveiled the Central Mechanical Engineering Research Institute's Electric Tiller in Durgapur on 25th May 2024.
- The CSIR-CMERI's innovative technology is tailored to meet the requirements of small to marginal farmers, who constitute over 80% of the nation's farming community.
- These farmers, typically with land holdings of less than 2 hectares, can utilize the electric tiller for various agricultural tasks, benefiting from substantially reduced operational costs.

About CSIR

- The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) is India's premier national research and development organization, established in 1942.
- Operating under the Ministry of Science and Technology, CSIR is known for its cutting-edge research in diverse scientific fields including aerospace, biotechnology, chemicals, and environmental science.
- With a vast network of 38 laboratories and 39 outreach centers, CSIR conducts high-quality research aimed at addressing India's socio-economic challenges.

Indian high commissioner inaugurated New Indian Investment in Bangladesh





- India's top pharmaceutical business, Sun Pharma, opened a new factory close to Dhaka on May 26, 2024, with the joint opening of Prime Minister Salman Fazlur Rahman's investment adviser and India's High Commissioner in Bangladesh, Pranay Verma.
- With a yearly production capacity of more than 1 billion pills and capsules, this is the company's second investment in Bangladesh.

Fuji Electric India earns Great Place to Work Certification

- Fuji Electric India, a leading supplier of Energy and Automation solutions, has been certified as a Great Place To Work for the fiscal year 2024.
- This certification is based on feedback from employees about their experience working with Fuji Electric India.
- The company's dedication to creating a supportive and dynamic workplace culture that brings an inclusive work environment, where all employees are respected, valued, and empowered to be their best, has been highlighted.

Air Chief Marshal inaugurated IAF's first-ever emergency medical response system

- On 21 May, 2024, the Emergency Medical Response System (EMRS) at Command Hospital Air Force Bangalore (CHAFB) was officially opened by Air Chief Marshal VR Chaudhari, the Chief of the Air Staff of the Indian Air Force.

- The EMRS is India's first-ever round-the-clock telephone medical helpline for IAF personnel and their families.
- The system's objective is to promptly dispatch a team of paramedical and medical professionals to assist a caller experiencing an emergency wherever in the nation.

Sanjay Murthy launched portal for nominations for National Awards to teachers (Higher Education) 2024

- On 21 May 2024, Higher Education Sanjay Murthy launched the portal for nominations for National Awards to Teachers (Higher Education) 2024.
- The awards will be conferred on teachers of technical and non-technical higher education institutions and Polytechnic Institutions.
- The selected awardees will be felicitated on 5th September, Teachers' Day to commemorate the Birth Anniversary of former President Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan.

GoI sets up Committee to tackle Southeast Asian Cybercrimes

- The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) of India has set up an inter-ministerial committee to tackle the surge in transnational organized cybercrime originating from Southeast Asian countries like Cambodia, Myanmar, Laos, and the Philippines.
- The committee is led by the special secretary (internal security) of the MHA and includes members from the Reserve Bank of India, the Department of Financial Services, banks, the Financial Intelligence Unit, the Department of Telecommunication, and financial technology companies.
- The committee's mandate is to devise long-term strategies to combat these cybercrimes and mitigate their impact.

WCD ministry 'officially' dissolves Food and Nutrition Board

- The Women and Child Development (WCD) Ministry in New Delhi has officially dissolved the Food and Nutrition Board (FNB) as part of a plan to rationalize government bodies.
- The FNB was a technical wing of the ministry, responsible for providing technical and logistical support for community nutrition programs.
- The decision to dissolve the FNB came after a Cabinet meeting in April 2023, following recommendations from the Principal Economic Adviser's report on the rationalization of government bodies.

India Skills 2024

- IndiaSkills 2024, the nation's largest skill competition organized by NSDC, has started in New Delhi, testing 900 students across 61 categories.
- It aims to showcase talent nationally and internationally, with the grand commencement taking place at Yashobhoomi, Dwarka, New Delhi, on 15 May 2024.

Shinku La tunnel work to begin by Mid-September

- The Border Roads Organisation (BRO) is set to begin work on the Shinku La tunnel by mid-September.
- This 4.1-km long tunnel, located at an altitude of 15,800 feet, will reduce the distance between Manali and Leh by 60 km.
- It will provide all-weather connectivity from Manali to Leh via the Nimmu-Padam-Darcha axis.
- The tunnel is expected to be completed in four years and will become the world's highest tunnel, surpassing China's Mila tunnel.

ICMR released upgraded 'Dietary Guidelines' for Indians



- The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has released updated 'Dietary Guidelines for Indians' to suit modern eating habits in 2024.
- These guidelines, framed by researchers from the National Institute of Nutrition (NIN) in Hyderabad, emphasize being physically active, exercising regularly, restricting salt intake, minimizing high fat, sugar, and ultra-processed foods, and preventing abdominal obesity.
- The guidelines include 17 dietary recommendations focusing on health promotion and disease prevention across all age groups, with an emphasis on healthy diets.
- Dr. Rajiv Bahl, DG of ICMR, highlighted the importance of these guidelines in addressing the changing food scenario and promoting food safety, minimally processed foods, and physical activity.

About ICMR

- The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) is India's top body for biomedical research.
- ICMR was founded in 1911.
- ICMR coordinates research across various institutes focusing on diseases like tuberculosis and AIDS.
- Director general of the ICMR - Dr. Balram Bhargava

DoT, MHA and State Police join hands to combat cyber fraudsters

- State Police, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), and the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) have teamed up to stop the abuse of telecom resources in financial fraud and cybercrime.
- The objective of this cooperative endeavor is to disrupt fraudulent networks and safeguard individuals from online hazards.
- According to an analysis done by the State Police and MHA, 28,200 mobile phones were utilized improperly in cybercrimes.

ICG signed MoU with private sector for manufacturing & supply of indigenous marine-grade aluminum for construction of ships



- On 9 May 2024, in New Delhi, the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) and Hindalco Industries signed a MoU for the production and supply of domestic marine-grade aluminium to Indian public and commercial shipyards for shipbuilding.
- In addition, the MoU will include advantages including turnover discount, priority in suppliers, and quarterly pricing.
- There are currently 67 aluminum-hulled ships in the ICG fleet that can navigate in shallow waters.

Mines Secretary inaugurated registered office of Khanij Bidesh India Limited (KABIL) in New Delhi



- In the presence of senior Ministry and KABIL officials, Secretary of Mines Shri V L Kantha Rao opened the Khanij Bidesh India Ltd. (KABIL) Registered Office at Sansad Marg, New Delhi, on May 11, 2024.
- KABIL is a joint venture company that was established by the Ministry of Mines' CPSEs, NALCO, HCL, and MECL.
- The vital task of locating, investigating, obtaining, and developing vital and strategic mineral resources abroad has been given to KABIL.

ECI launched largest-ever voter awareness drive for Lok Sabha Elections

- The Election Commission has launched its largest-ever awareness campaign to boost participation in the Lok Sabha Elections.
- It's collaborating with public and private organizations for outreach. Despite a slight drop in turnout in the first two phases compared to 2019, participation remains high, with 66.14% in Phase 1 and 66.71% in Phase 2.
- The ECI is also addressing potential issues like heatwaves by consulting weather, health, and disaster management experts. The weather is expected to be normal for the 11 States and UTs voting in Phase 3.

Uttarakhand suspends licences of 14 Patanjali Ayurved products

- Following the submission of an affidavit by the Uttarakhand government to the Supreme Court, announcing the suspension of licenses for 14 products sold by Patanjali Ayurved and Divya Pharmacy, the company stated that it intends to pursue legal action against the decision.

Recent archaeological discovery at Phanigiri



- Officials of the Department of Archaeology and Museums in Telangana have made a significant discovery at the Phanigiri Buddhist site in Suryapet district.
- The team found an earthen pot with a diameter of 16.7 cm and a height of 15 cm at a depth of two feet on 29 March.
- Inside the pot, they discovered 3,730 lead coins. Each coin bears an elephant symbol on one side and a Ujjain symbol on the other.

Election Commission issues directions for secure handling of Symbol Loading Units (SLUs)

- In accordance with the Supreme Court Order, the Election Commission of India (ECI) has released guidelines for the management and storage of Symbol Loading Units (SLU).
- All Chief Electoral Officers have received instructions from the Commission to set up the systems and procedures required to put the new procedures for managing and storing SLUs into effect.
- The Election Commission was ordered by the Supreme Court recently to lock and guard the Symbol Loading Unit for forty-five days following the announcement of the election results.
- The Commission mandated that all SLU containers, including those that are reserved and utilized, be sealed with a pink paper seal in a way that makes it impossible to open the container without shattering the paper seal.

Launch of Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) Technology/Product Booklet and ToT of Thermal Camera to Industry



- The Indigenous Technologies of Thermal camera, designed and developed by CDAC Thiruvananthapuram under InTranSE Program of MeitY, was transferred to M/s Aditya Infotech (CP Plus).
- The thermal Smart camera has an inbuilt Data Processing Unit (DPU) to run various AI based analytics.
- The indigenised technology is targeted for applications across multiple domains, including Smart cities, Industries, Defence and Health, etc.

- Under InTRanSE program of R& D group, MeitY, technologies/product/solution developed for Traffic control, Public Transit, Road Safety, Sensors for traffic Applications etc. have been compiled in a booklet form which was launched for awareness creation.

CBSE set to introduce AI and coding from classes 6 to 8

- As part of the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) recently stated that coding and artificial intelligence (AI) will be taught in Classes 6 through 8.
- The policy acknowledges the value of computational thinking and mathematics in educating students for professions in data science, machine learning, and artificial intelligence.
- Additionally, early instruction in subjects like coding and data science will be provided for Class 8 children, while Class 6 students will learn "things you should know about keeping medicines at home."
- Artificial intelligence, financial literacy, coding, data science, augmented reality, Kashmiri embroidery, satellite application, humanity, and Covid-19 are among the 33 courses that the CBSE has mentioned.

Dr. Bina Modi felicitated by Hon'ble Vice President of India for contributions to SILF



- Recipient of the prestigious Jagdeep Dhankar Award for 'Outstanding Contribution to the cause of Corporate Social Responsibility' is Dr. Bina Modi, Chairperson and Managing Director of Modi Enterprises - KK Modi Group.
- In an effort to uplift communities and promote sustainable development, Dr. Modi has been actively involved in a number of CSR projects.
- She has been providing multimodal treatments in support of Andhra Pradesh's impoverished agricultural community since 2015.

International News

Chapter 5

WHO launched new 'Investment Round' aiming to raise USD 7 Bn



- The World Health Organization (WHO) has launched a new 'Investment Round' aiming to raise 7 billion dollars of funds to support countries to tackle challenges like climate change, displacement, poverty and inequality.
- The Investment Round aims to mobilize 7 billion dollars over four years to support countries to respond to these challenges.
- The Investment Round is the result of recommendations by the WHO Working Group on Sustainable Financing and was approved at the 154th Meeting of the WHO Executive Board in January 2024.

Philippines' lower house passes the historic "Divorce Bill"

- On 22 May 2024, the Philippine House of Representatives approved the Absolute Divorce Act (House Bill No. 9349) on third and final reading.
- The bill aims to reintroduce divorce as an alternative legal option for dissolving broken or dysfunctional marriages.
- It stipulates several grounds for absolute divorce, including psychological incapacity, irreconcilable differences, domestic or marital abuse, sex reassignment surgery, and separation of spouses for at least five years.
- This marks the second time such a measure has been approved in the lower chamber, with optimism that the Senate will consider it as well.

Spain to give Ukraine 1 billion euros worth of military aid



- Spain has pledged to provide military support to Ukraine worth 1 billion euros ($1.08 billion) this year under an agreement signed between Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy and Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez in Madrid.
- The pact, which covers the next decade, calls for the supply of modern military equipment for ground, aerial, naval, and other uses, prioritizing Ukraine's key capacity needs.
- It aims to allow Ukraine to boost its capabilities, including essential air defense systems, to protect civilians, cities, and infrastructure.
- Spain will send Patriot missiles, Leopard tanks, and other ammunition to support Ukraine's air security.

China launched AI Model based on Xi Jinping's Philosophy

- China's top internet regulator has introduced a large language model (LLM) grounded in President Xi Jinping's political philosophy, describing it as a "secure and reliable" AI system.
- Developed by the China Cyberspace Research Institute under the Cyberspace Administration of China, this model incorporates Xi Jinping's political thought and other government-endorsed cyberspace themes.

- The effort to embed Xi's philosophy in AI comes as Chinese officials try to balance strict free speech controls with advancing AI development and competing with platforms like OpenAI's ChatGPT.

China proposed 'One Person, One File' surveillance escalation

- The Shanghai government has proposed a program called "One Person, One File" (OPOF), which aims to significantly increase digital surveillance and censorship in China.
- Under this prospective system, Shanghai plans to triple its deployment of facial recognition cameras, compiling exhaustive personal data files on every single resident.
- This escalation of China's efforts to create ruthless digital censorship goes beyond mere surveillance—it represents an attempt to construct an omniscient technology-enabled social control.

European Union gives final nod to the first worldwide rules on AI

- The European Union (EU) has given the final approval to the world's first comprehensive rules on Artificial Intelligence (AI), known as the Artificial Intelligence Act.
- This groundbreaking legislation follows a 'risk-based' approach, meaning the higher the risk an AI system poses to society, the stricter the rules.
- The Act categorizes different types of AI according to risk, with high-risk AI systems subject to stringent requirements and obligations.

Spain becomes 99th Member of International Solar Alliance



- Officially, Spain joined the International Solar Alliance (ISA) as its 99th member.
- During a meeting in New Delhi, José María Ridao Domínguez, the Ambassador of Spain to India, gave the Instrument of Ratification to Abhishek Singh, the Joint Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).
- Launched by France and India during COP21 in Paris, the ISA intends to use a large-scale solar energy deployment to carry out the Paris Climate Agreement.
- It acts as a platform for member nations to work together to advance the global energy transition, improve energy access, guarantee energy security, and use more solar energy technology.

World's highest observatory inaugurated in Chile by University of Tokyo



- The University of Tokyo has inaugurated the world's highest observatory, the Atacama Observatory (TAO), on 30 April, 2024.
- Located at an altitude of 5,640 meters on the summit of Cerro Chajnantor in northern Chile, TAO houses a 6.5-meter optical-infrared telescope.
- The observatory aims to unravel mysteries of the universe, such as dark energy and primordial first stars.
- The project, which took 26 years of planning and construction, was led by Emeritus Professor Yuzuru Yoshii. The inauguration of TAO marks a significant milestone in the field of astronomy.

UAE President confers first-class medal of independence on ambassador of Paraguay

- UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan has conferred the First-Class Medal of Independence on José Agüero Avila, the Ambassador of the Republic of Paraguay to the UAE.

- This prestigious award was given in recognition of Avila's efforts during his tenure, which significantly contributed to the development and advancement of bilateral relations across various fields.
- The medal was presented to Avila by Reem Bint Ebrahim Al Hashimy, Minister of State for International Cooperation, during a meeting held at the headquarters of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- This honor is a testament to the strong diplomatic ties between the UAE and Paraguay and the significant role Avila played in strengthening these relations.

Maldives to launch India's Rupay Service amid bilateral tensions

- The Maldives aims to strengthen its own currency, the Maldivian Rufiyaa (MVR), by accepting India's RuPay payment service.
- Despite recent turbulence in bilateral relations, the Maldives is set to launch RuPay, a product of the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).
- RuPay is India's first global card payment network, widely accepted at ATMs, POS devices, and e-commerce websites across India.
- Minister of Economic Development and Trade Mohamed Saeed emphasized the significance of this move, addressing currency issues and reinforcing the MVR.

New Visa program offers long-term residency for Indians in UAE

- The United Arab Emirates has introduced a new 10-year Blue Residency Visa to attract individuals who contribute significantly to environmental protection and sustainability.
- This visa targets global leaders in environmental research, activism, and technological solutions, extending beyond the UAE's borders.
- It complements the UAE's Year of Sustainability and aligns with commitments made during COP28 in Dubai.
- The Blue Residency Visa joins existing long-term residency programs like the Golden Visa for investors and specialists and the Green Visa for skilled professionals and business owners.

Indo-Bangla Baul music festival commenced in Dhaka



- A nine-day Indo-Bangla Baul music festival commenced in Dhaka, celebrating the 250th birth anniversary of mystic saint and bard Fakir Lalan Shah.
- Organized by Lalon Biswasangha, with support from the Indian High Commission and Bangladesh's Ministry of Cultural Affairs, the festival honors Lalan Shah's humanist teachings.
- Bangladesh Social Welfare Minister Dipu Moni praised Lalan Shah for his emphasis on humanity and unity beyond cultural and regional divides.
- Baul singer Farida Parveen highlighted Lalan's role as a mystic, philosopher, and social reformer, whose songs blended various religious elements.
- The event, featuring Bauls from both countries, underscores the cross-border unity central to Lalan's legacy.

Artara'24 fine arts exhibition & competition makes its mark in Dubai



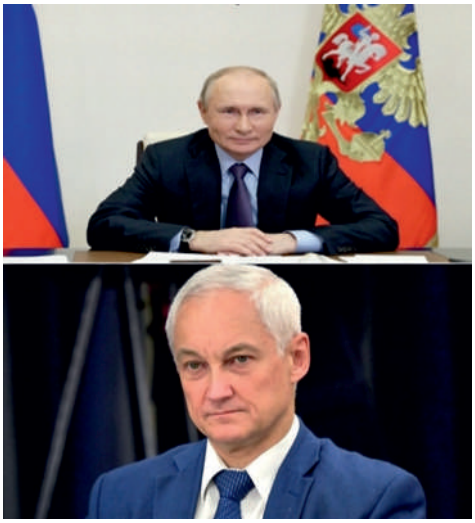
- The Artara'24 Fine Arts Exhibition and Competition in Dubai showcased over 250 artworks from emerging talents, including a special focus on Indian artists residing in Dubai.
- It provided a platform for artists, students, and art enthusiasts to connect and celebrate cultural diversity through art.
- The event also featured a fine arts competition for children called Expressions'24, fostering unity and pride among participants and visitors.

From Dubai's COP28 to Abu Dhabi's EVIS



- The third Electric Vehicle Innovation Summit (EVIS) began at the Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre, highlighting the MENA region's shift towards sustainable transportation.
- Running through May 22, the event includes a 3-day exhibition of the latest EV technologies and a 2-day conference, allowing attendees to test drive advanced EVs.
- The summit reflects growing consumer interest in electric mobility in the Middle East, supported by collaborative efforts despite challenges like charging infrastructure and costs.
- Following the UAE's successful COP28 climate summit in Dubai, EVIS underscores the region's commitment to achieving net-zero emissions by 2050.

Russian President proposed to make former Deputy Prime Minister Andrei Belousov the country's new Defense Minister



- Russian President Vladimir Putin has nominated economist Andrei Belousov to replace Sergei Shoigu as defense minister, with Shoigu moving to head Russia's Security Council and oversee the military-industrial complex.
- Putin aims for better economic alignment in defense spending, comparing the situation to the Soviet Union's military expenditure in the 1980s.
- Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov supports this change, citing the need for civilian oversight in defense ministry roles.

Mahalaxmi Jatra organized in various parts of Kathmandu Valley



- The Mahalaxmi Jatra in Kathmandu Valley, celebrated on Akshaya Tritiya of Baisakh month, honors the goddess Mahalaxmi.
- In places like Banepa and Panauti in Nepal, devotees construct chariots for the goddess and other deities, take them around the village, and engage in festive activities like playing with vermillion.
- The Nala Bhagwati temple in Banepa, built in 1677 B.S., is a significant part of this tradition, blending religious and cultural festivities in the local community.

India contributes $500,000 To UN Counter-Terrorism Trust Fund

- India's contribution of US$500,000 to the UN Counter-Terrorism Trust Fund indeed underscores its commitment to addressing terrorism on a global scale, with a focus on Africa.
- This move aligns with India's longstanding efforts to combat terrorism and promote international security.

Chad's military dictator Idriss Deby wins Presidential Election



- Mahamat Deby Itno, Chad's military leader, has won the presidential election this week, as per provisional results announced.
- His main rival, Prime Minister Succès Masra, contested.
- The election results were released earlier than scheduled by Chad's election management agency.

Sri Lanka inks 20-Year power purchase deal with Adani Green Energy

- The Sri Lankan cabinet approved the agreement on 7 May 2024.
- According to the power purchase agreement, which spans 20 years, Adani Green Energy will receive payment of 8.26 cents per kilowatt-hour (kWh) for the electricity produced by the wind power stations.
- The proposal, which calls for Adani to build two wind power plants, has been approved by Sri Lanka's Cabinet of Ministers, which is a significant step toward the development of renewable energy sources.

Sheikh Hasina urged IOM to secure more funds for Rohingya Assistance



- Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh encouraged the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to raise additional monies for the benefit of the Rohingyas who are being housed in Bangladesh through newer sources.
- Since aid to the Rohingyas has decreased, the IOM must to seek for new collaborators in order to increase funding for them.
- The prime minister also pleaded with the IOM to assist in the Rohingya population's relocation to Bhashanchar, where a home with all the amenities, including jobs, healthcare, and education, has been established for one lakh people.

Japan's ambassador inaugurated Kohima Peace Memorial and Eco Park



- On May 8, 2024, Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio and Japanese Ambassador to India Hiroshi Suzuki jointly dedicated the Kohima Peace Memorial and lay the groundwork for Eco Park Kohima.
- Because it honors the cooperative efforts of the Government of Japan and the Japanese International Corporation Agency with the Government of Nagaland, the Kohima Peace Memorial and Eco Park is very meaningful.

India and Moldova signed Visa Waiver agreement for Diplomatic Passports

- With the signing of a visa waiver agreement, citizens of Moldova and India are able to travel without a visa for diplomatic and official purposes.
- The deal was inked on Friday in New Delhi by Moldovan ambassador Ana Taban and Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) secretary Pavan Kapoor (West).

- After establishing diplomatic relations in 1992, India and Moldova have enjoyed cordial and amicable relations, which will be further strengthened by the pact.

Kathmandu tops the list of cities with 'unhealthy air' in the World

- Kathmandu has been experiencing significant air quality issues. The Air Quality Index (AQI) in Kathmandu has reached unhealthy levels.
- The main pollutant contributing to the poor air quality is PM2.5. PM2.5 refers to atmospheric particulate matter (PM) that has a diameter of less than 2.5 micrometers, which is about 3% the diameter of a human hair.
- The PM2.5 concentration in Kathmandu is currently 18.4 times the World Health Organization's annual air quality guideline value.

Sri Lankan Cabinet approved renovation of Kankesanthurai Port

- The Sri Lankan Cabinet has approved the renovation of the Kankesanthurai Port in the Northern Province of Sri Lanka.
- The entire cost of the project, which is USD 61.5 million, will be granted by India.
- The Kankesanthurai Port, also known as the KKS Port, is located in the northern region of Sri Lanka.
- The direct passenger ship service connecting Nagapattinam in Tamil Nadu to Kankesanthurai port near Jaffna covers a distance of 111 kilometers (60 nautical miles) in approximately three and a half hours.

A study titled 'Future projections for the tropical Indian Ocean' predicts accelerated warming of Indian Ocean

- The study titled 'Future projections for the tropical Indian Ocean' led by Roxy Mathew Koll of the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), Pune, provides a comprehensive analysis of the evolving climate of the Indian Ocean and its future projections.
- The Indian Ocean warmed at a rate of 1.2°C per century during 1950–2020. The maximum warming is expected in the northwestern Indian Ocean, including the Arabian Sea.
- The seasonal cycle of surface temperatures is projected to shift, which may have implications for extreme weather events over the Indo-Pacific region.
- The minimum temperatures by the end of the 21st century will be above 28°C year-round, under a high emission scenario.

Sharjah Chamber of Commerce and Industry leads trade delegation to India

- In celebration of the two-year anniversary of the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement between India and the UAE, the Sharjah Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) will be leading a high-profile commercial delegation to India.
- From May 5 to 10, the delegation will travel to India in an effort to expand commercial connections between Sharjah and India and look into potential new investment opportunities.
- The expedition, which is being led by SCCI Chairman Abdullah Sultan Al Owais, will involve high-ranking chamber representatives and is intended to enable face-to-face interactions between the Indian business communities in Chennai and Mumbai and Sharjah.

Turkiye 'halts' trade while Colombia breaks diplomatic ties with Israel

- According to two Turkish officials familiar with the matter, adding to already high-running tensions between the once-close allies over the war in Gaza.
- Turkiye stopped all trade with Israel as of 2 May, according to two Turkish officials familiar with the matter, adding to already high-running tensions between the once-close allies over the war in Gaza.
- The move expands last month's restriction on some Turkish exports to Israel, as Prez Recep Tayyip Erdogan steps up criticism of the Jewish state.
- Trade between the countries was worth $6.8 billion in 2023, according to Turkish statistical institute.

Govt to train 1,500 civil servants of Bangladesh in next five years

- Over the next five years, India will provide mid-career capacity building programs on good governance initiatives to 1,500 public workers from Bangladesh.
- The decision to extend the current agreement was made during an Indian delegation's visit to Bangladesh from April 28 to 30, which was led by Srinivas.
- The two parties decided to extend their current Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), which calls for 1,500 civil service officials from Bangladesh to participate in capacity-building programs at India's National Centre for Good Governance (NCGG) between 2025 and 2030.

State News

Chapter 6

India's first urban ropeway in Varanasi to be ready by August 2024

- India's first urban ropeway is gaining steam with the section linking Varanasi Cantonment Railway Station to RathYatra expected to complete by August 2024.
- This is part of the Varanasi Ropeway Project which comes under the National Ropeways Development Programme, 'Parvatmala Pariyojana'.
- The centre has identified 200 projects worth Rs 1.25 lakh crore to be executed under the programme.

Uttar Pradesh leads in Transmission line additions by State Utilities

- Uttar Pradesh has emerged as the leading state in terms of the addition of transmission lines by state transmission utilities in FY24, statistics released by the Central Electricity Authority (CEA) suggest.
- In FY24, state utility Uttar Pradesh Power Transmission Corporation Ltd (UPPTCL) added 1,460 ckm of transmission lines of 220kV or above.
- This was much ahead of the achievement by any other state utility. Second-ranking utility Gujarat Energy Transmission Corporation Ltd (GETCO) ended FY24 with the addition of 898 ckm.
- Put together, state power utilities added 6,993 ckm of transmission lines in FY24, which represented about 64 per cent of the targeted 11,002 ckm. Most of the additions took place in the 220kV category.

Centre sanctions Rs 21,253 crore borrowing limit for Kerala amid economic crisis

- Amid Kerala's economic crisis, the Indian Central Government has taken significant steps to assist the state.
- Union Minister of State for Electronics and Information Technology, Rajeev Chandrasekhar, announced that the Centre has sanctioned borrowings of up to Rs 21,253 crores for Kerala until December 2024.
- This substantial financial aid aims to address pressing economic needs, including salary delays for government employees and stalled development projects.

Karnataka mandates 33% reservation for Women in govt contract jobs

- In a significant move aimed at promoting gender equality and empowering women, the Karnataka government has mandated a 33% reservation for women in government contract jobs.
- This decision was announced on May 24, 2024, by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, and is set to be implemented across various government departments and public sector undertakings.
- The reservation applies to outsourced jobs lasting more than 45 days and employing over 20 people.

GAIL's 10 MW green hydrogen plant in Madhya Pradesh inaugurated

- On 24 May 2024, GAIL (India) Limited marked a significant milestone by inaugurating its first Green Hydrogen Plant at GAIL Vijaipur in Madhya Pradesh.
- The plant, powered by a 10 MW PEM (Proton Exchange Membrane) electrolyzer, has a capacity to produce 4.3 tonnes of green hydrogen per day.
- The hydrogen purity from this plant is an impressive 99.999% (by volume), and it is produced through the electrolysis of water using renewable power.

"Cherrapunji Gin" secures top honour at Global Spirits Competition

- "Cherrapunji Gin" has achieved top honors at the Global Spirits Competition.
- This prestigious recognition underscores the gin's exceptional quality and craftsmanship.
- While specific details about the award remain undisclosed, it's evident that "Cherrapunji Gin" has made a significant impact in the spirits industry.
- Whether it's the botanical blend, distillation process, or unique flavor profile, this accolade positions "Cherrapunji Gin" as a standout choice for discerning connoisseurs and enthusiasts alike.

Buddhist festival Saga Dawa celebrated in Sikkim

- Saga Dawa, also known as the Triple Blessed Festival, is a significant and sacred celebration for followers of Mahayana Buddhism in Sikkim.
- This auspicious month commemorates three pivotal events in Lord Buddha's life: his birth, enlightenment, and liberation from the physical realm.
- During Saga Dawa, Buddhists offer prayers in various monasteries throughout the month.
- The main celebration culminates on the full moon of the fourth month of the Tibetan calendar, which corresponds to Buddha Purnima in the rest of India.

Jaisalmer's Desert Park Sanctuary for the Majestic Great Indian Bustard

- Jaisalmer, a city in the state of Rajasthan, India, is closely associated with the conservation and preservation of the critically endangered Great Indian Bustard (Ardeotis nigriceps).
- The Great Indian Bustard is primarily found in arid and semi-arid grasslands, which make up a significant portion of the Thar Desert region surrounding Jaisalmer.
- Listed as critically endangered on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List, the Great Indian Bustard faces threats such as habitat loss, fragmentation, hunting, and disturbance.
- Desert National Park is located near Jaisalmer, the Desert National Park spans over 3,162 square kilometers and encompasses vast stretches of grasslands and sand dunes, providing a suitable habitat for the bird.

Uttarakhand plans authority to regulate Char Dham Yatra

- Amid chaotic scenes during the Char Dham Yatra, the Uttarakhand government is planning to establish a "Dharmik Yatra Authority".
- This authority aims to regulate not only the Char Dham Yatra but also other significant pilgrimages like the Kanwar Yatra.
- The proposed authority will address crucial aspects, including determining the daily pilgrim limits, defining routes, ensuring health and security measures, and coordinating all necessary arrangements.
- Inspired by Uttar Pradesh's model, this proactive approach seeks to manage the surging number of devotees participating in these sacred journeys.

Nagaland Government to form committee to resolve long-standing Naga Conflict

- The Nagaland government has taken a significant step towards resolving the long-standing Naga political issue by announcing the formation of a Political Affairs Committee (PAC).
- This decision, made during a meeting chaired by Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio on 9 May 2024, aims to find a fair and inclusive solution to the pervasive conflict.
- The PAC will include members from all political parties within the 14th Nagaland Legislative Assembly (NLA).
- Its primary role is to facilitate an amicable resolution to the Naga political deadlock.

Manipur Governor Sushri Anusuiya Uikey inaugurated 'School On Wheels'

- Manipur, Governor Sushri Anusuiya Uikey inaugurated 'School on Wheels' on 26 May 2024 at a ceremony held in Imphal.
- The initiative which is being implemented by Vidya Bharati Shiksha Vikash Samiti Manipur aims to reach out to the students in the relief camps in the State.
- The school bus is equipped with a library, computers and sports items with a teacher and visits relief camps in different places in the State.
- The Governor appreciated the initiative and said that children living in the camps should not face any deficiency in education.

Assam unveiled the" DRIMS" platform for Disaster Management

- Assam has taken a significant step in disaster management by launching the Disaster Reporting and Information Management System (DRIMS).
- Developed in collaboration with UNICEF, DRIMS is a pioneering digital platform that facilitates online reporting of disaster-induced damages.
- Its primary objectives are precise damage assessment and swift disbursal of aid to those affected.
- By efficiently capturing critical impact indicators during disasters, DRIMS expedites relief and rehabilitation grants for affected beneficiaries.

CM Patel inaugurated FABEXA fabric sourcing expo in Gandhinagar

- On 21 May 2024, Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel inaugurated the FABEXA Fabric Sourcing Expo 2024 in Gandhinagar, Gujarat.
- Organized by the Maskati Cloth Mahajan of Ahmedabad, this textile and readymade garments exhibition aims to showcase new technical designs and industry trends.
- With 93 stalls representing over 125 leading brands from the country's textile industry, the event provides a platform for B2B and B2C interactions among 800 exporters, buying houses, and garment manufacturers.
- Panel discussions on "Technical Textiles and Innovative Materials for Developed India @ 2047" are also part of the expo.

Amrapali Foods introduced direct delivery of Bihar's Shahi Litchis

- Amrapali Foods, with over 30 years of experience in processing Litchis, has proudly launched India's first-ever Direct-to-Consumer (D2C) delivery service for Shahi Litchis.
- These regal fruits, synonymous with the Muzaffarpur district of Bihar, are now available for discerning consumers nationwide.
- The Shahi Litchis, awarded the Geographical Indication (GI) Tag, offer delightful sweetness and freshness.

Police started "Operation Maryada" for conduction of Kedarnath Yatra

- As thousands of devotee's flock to Kedarnath for the Char Dham Yatra, Rudraprayag Police has launched "Operation Maryada" to ensure decency and purity during the pilgrimage.
- Under this initiative, the police are taking stringent actions against individuals misbehaving or consuming alcohol and intoxicants in the Dham area and along the Yatra halts.

Science and Technology

Chapter 7

India's IIT Madras startup Agnikul Cosmos launched World's 1st Rocket with fully 3D-Printed Engine



- Agnikul Cosmos, a start-up incubated at IIT Madras, achieved a historic milestone by launching the world's first single-piece 3D printed rocket engine.
- The rocket, named Agnibaan, was successfully test-fired from Sriharikota on 30 May 2024.
- Notably, Agnibaan is powered by the only rocket engine in India that uses both gas and liquid fuel (liquid oxygen/kerosene).
- The test flight aimed to demonstrate in-house technologies and gather crucial flight data for Agnikul's orbital launch vehicle.

New Algal species discovered in Kerala's Western Ghats by Phycologists



- A group of phycologists from the Department of Botany at Catholicate College in Pathanamthitta has discovered a new algal species in the Western Ghats.
- The team, including Merin Grace Jiji, Binoy T. Thomas, and Thomas V.P., found the species Oedocladium sahyadricum in the natural forests of the Kumbhavurutty region in Kollam district.
- This discovery is a significant step forward in our understanding of the rich biodiversity of the Western Ghats, an area known for its diverse plant and animal species.
- Oedocladium sahyadricum is unique because it is dioecious, lives on land, and grows as a soft green mat in wet soil, changing color as it matures.

Noise acquired Women's wellness platform SocialBoat

- Noise, a leading smartwatch and connected lifestyle brand, has recently acquired AI-powered women's wellness platform SocialBoat for an undisclosed amount.
- This strategic move is part of Noise's broader strategy to advance innovation in smart rings.
- By integrating SocialBoat's technology, Noise aims to enhance the health tracking features of its flagship smart wearable, the Luna Ring.
- SocialBoat analyzes data from various sources, including wearables, to offer personalized recommendations for nutrition, fitness, menstrual health, and overall well-being.

NASA launched Small Climate Satellite to study Earth's Poles

- NASA has successfully launched the first of a pair of climate satellites designed for the PREFIRE (Polar Radiant Energy in the Far-InfraRed Experiment) mission.
- The satellite, carried by Rocket Lab's Electron rocket from New Zealand, will study heat emissions at Earth's poles.



- These shoebox-size cube satellites will measure the amount of heat Earth radiates into space from the Arctic and Antarctic regions.
- PREFIRE aims to improve predictions related to sea ice loss, ice sheet melt, and sea level rise, providing crucial information for climate research and adaptation.

India's first research testbed to study Nor'westers

- Meteorologists will soon be able to deploy drones, mobile vans, and high-end instruments to track the monstrous nor'westers, or Kalbaisakhi, that affect the east and northeast regions of India every summer.
- The proposed multi-crore rupees research testbed facility will cover a large area adjoining West Bengal, Odisha, and Jharkhand.
- The control center will be at Chandbali in the Bhadrak district of Odisha, about 130 km east of Bhubaneswar.
- This facility aims to study thunderstorms from the formation stage, growth, and propagation over eastern parts of the country, using meteorological instruments, drones, and other equipment.

New plant species discovered from Edamalayar forest range.

- Scientists from SNM College Maliankara, Ernakulam, National Botanical Research Institute, Lucknow, and King Fahd University, UAE, have reported the discovery of a new plant species Emblica chakrabartyi from Adichilthotti within the Edamalayar forest range of Kerala.
- This species belongs to the gooseberry (Phyllanthaceae) family and has been named after Tapas Chakrabarty, a former scientist at the Botanical Survey of India, in recognition of his contributions to the study of Phyllanthaceae.



- The plant attains a height of approximately 2 meters, with large shiny elongated oval leaves.
- Flowering and fruiting occur from December to June, and the fruits turn brown to black when ripe.

World's first 100% biodegradable pen launched in India



- The world's first 100% biodegradable pen was launched in India by entrepreneur Saurabh H Mehta.
- This innovative pen is made entirely without plastic and features a recycled paper refill, non-toxic ink, and options for a metal, paper, or bamboo exterior.
- Saurabh's mission was to prove that the 95% plastic content in pens is avoidable, and it can be replaced with sustainable materials.
- The NOTE pen also allows for easy removal of the metal pen tip after use, contributing to its circularity.
- This eco-friendly pen aims to drastically reduce environmental impact while seamlessly fitting into consumers' daily routines.

JNU Scientist developed promising new Malaria Vaccine Candidate

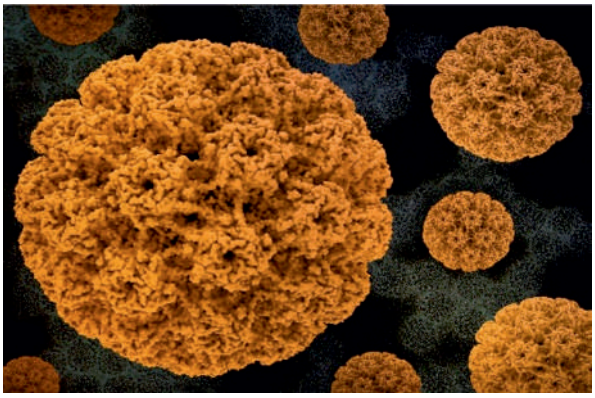
- A team of scientists from Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) has identified a promising vaccine candidate

that could pave the way for more effective prevention and treatment strategies against malaria.



- Their research, published in the iScience journal by Cell Press, proposes the parasite's Prohibitin protein (PfPHB2) as a novel target for vaccine development.
- The researchers discovered that PfPHB2, found on the merozoite surface, interacts with the red blood cell surface heat-shock protein Hsp70A1A.
- The presence of PfPHB2 antibodies in active malaria patients from the Tripura region is a promising turning point towards malaria therapeutic development.

Ancient viral genomes discovered in Neanderthal bones



- Researchers from the Federal University of São Paulo have uncovered the oldest known human viruses in Neanderthal bones dating back over 50,000 years.
- In a study published in a preprint on bioRxiv, the team delved into the DNA of two male Neanderthals whose remains were found in Russia's Chagyrskaya cave, located in the Altai mountains.
- Amongst the Neanderthal genome, they found snippets of DNA resembling three modern viruses: adenovirus (causing common colds), herpesvirus (behind cold sores), and papillomavirus (transmitted during sex and causing genital warts).

CET and IIT Madras secure patent for Novel Voltage Device

- The College of Engineering Thiruvananthapuram (CET) and the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras have secured a patent for designing a contactless voltage measurement device.
- The collaborative project, titled "An instrumentation system with a fully non-intrusive probe for AC voltage measurement," received approval from the Indian Patent Office.
- The device, invented by Boby George (Head of the Department of Medical Sciences and Technology, IIT Madras) and P.S. Shenil (Associate Professor, Department of Electrical and Electronics Engineering, Government Engineering College, Barton Hill), enables accurate voltage measurement without removing insulation.
- It can integrate with IoT devices, smart energy meters, and smart homes, benefiting maintenance in industries.

DoT, Telcos develop mechanism to block spoof overseas calls

- The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) and mobile operators have collaborated to develop a system that can detect and block spoofed international calls masquerading as Indian numbers.
- These fraudulent calls, manipulated to appear as domestic calls, originate from abroad.
- Cyber criminals often use this tactic to deceive recipients, posing as police officials, FedEx staff, or even government and telecom regulatory authorities.
- By identifying and blocking these spoofed calls, the DoT aims to protect millions of mobile users from cybercrime and financial fraud.

Scientists develop cheaper, Safer Lithium-Ion Batteries using iron

- Researchers from Oregon State University have made a significant breakthrough in battery technology by demonstrating that iron can be used as a cathode material in lithium-ion batteries.
- Traditionally, cobalt and nickel are commonly used for cathodes, but they are expensive and scarce.
- By utilizing iron, which costs less than a dollar per kilogram, the team has developed a more cost-effective alternative.
- Iron-based cathodes not only reduce the economic burden but also enhance safety and sustainability.

Indian Ocean temps linked to Global Dengue Intensity

- In recent research published in the journal Science, a noteworthy relationship has been identified between the sea-surface temperatures of the Indian Ocean and the global intensity of dengue outbreaks.
- This work introduces the Indian Ocean basin-wide (IOBW) index as a potential predictor for dengue epidemics, providing countries with vital lead time for preparation and response.
- The IOBW index is a climatological measure used to monitor and predict climate variability in the Indian Ocean region.
- This index plays a crucial role in understanding phenomena like the Indian Ocean Dipole and its impacts on regional climates and monsoon systems.

Sahul has been uncovered by archaeologists

- Archeologists discover ancient supercontinent Sahul linked Asia to Australia
- During the last ice age, approximately 70,000 years ago, a prehistoric supercontinent called Sahul existed.
- It connected present-day Australia with Papua New Guinea to the north and Tasmania to the south.
- Researchers have identified migration routes and archaeological sites on Sahul, shedding light on our ancestors' adaptation to diverse environments and their historical movements.

World's first 6G device launched in Japan

- A Japanese consortium has unveiled the world's first high-speed 6G prototype device.
- This groundbreaking device can transmit data at an impressive rate of 100 gigabits per second (Gbps), covering a distance of over 300 feet.
- This represents a remarkable 20-fold improvement compared to the current 5G technology.

Pasqal to deploy 1st Quantum Computer in Saudi Arabia by 2025

- Pasqal, a French quantum computing company, has signed an agreement with Aramco, one of the world's leading integrated energy and chemicals companies, to install the first quantum computer in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
- The agreement, announced on May 20, 2024, will see Pasqal install, maintain, and operate a 200-qubit quantum computer, scheduled for deployment in the second half of 2025.
- Pasqal and Aramco aim to establish a powerhouse for quantum research within Saudi Arabia, involving leading academic institutions to foster breakthroughs in quantum algorithm development.

IIPE developed eco-friendly Water Treatment Solution

- The Indian Institute of Petroleum & Energy (IIPE) has developed an innovative "Surface Modification Technique of Membrane" to address water pollution and improve efficiency in treating muddy river water.
- This eco-friendly method utilizes non-toxic gasses to treat the membrane surface, enhancing its performance and longevity.
- The IIPE's breakthrough contributes to sustainable water treatment solutions for industries such as pharmaceuticals, food processing, textiles, and biotechnology, while also benefiting environmental monitoring.

First Indian Space Tourist completed Sub-Orbital Flight

- Gopi Thotakura, an India-born aviator and commercial pilot based in the United States, recently became the first space tourist from India.
- He was among six space tourists on a sub-orbital flight conducted by Blue Origin, a private space company.
- During this short recreational trip to space, the spacecraft reached a maximum height of about 105 km from Earth, allowing passengers to experience weightlessness and observe our planet from above.

Mangalyaan-2 unveiled

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has unveiled its ambitious Mangalyaan-2 mission.
- This mission, set to launch in the second half of 2024, aims to land a rover and helicopter on Mars.
- The rover will be deployed using a sky-crane, similar to NASA's Perseverance rover.
- India made history as the first Asian nation to reach Martian orbit on its first attempt.
- ISRO is also developing a helicopter to fly in the thin Martian atmosphere.
- The mission will be launched aboard the heavy-lift Launch Vehicle Mark-III (LVM3).

AstraZeneca says it will withdraw Covid-19 vaccine globally

- AstraZeneca's decision to withdraw its COVID-19 vaccine, Vaxzevria, globally due to a surplus of updated vaccines during the pandemic is notable.

- The company has also encountered legal challenges regarding reported side effects, such as blood clots, which have raised concerns about the safety and efficacy of the vaccine.
- This development reflects the complex landscape surrounding vaccine distribution and public health considerations amid ongoing developments in the fight against COVID-19.

BSNL to launched indigenous 4G Nationwide in August 2024

- Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL), a state-owned telecommunications company in India, is gearing up to launch its 4G services across the country.
- BSNL's 4G services are expected to start rolling out in India from August 2024. This comes after years of anticipation and efforts by the company.
- BSNL is committed to using completely indigenous technology for its 4G rollout. This aligns with the Indian government's "Atmanirbhar" (self-reliant) policy.

China has launched a secret robot to the far side of the moon

- The China Academy of Space Technology (CAST) launched an autonomous Long March 5 rocket into space with success on 3 May.
- This marked the commencement of the nation's Chang'e 6 mission, which seeks to be the first-ever endeavor to gather samples from the secret far side of the moon and transport them to Earth.

ISRO successfully tested new liquid rocket engine in Tamil Nadu

- Using additive manufacturing technology, the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) successfully tested a new liquid rocket engine.
- On 9th May 2024, the test was conducted successfully at the ISRO Propulsion Complex in Mahendragiri, Tamil Nadu.
- With the redesign of the PS4 engine, there are now only one piece instead of fourteen, and there are no longer any weld joints.

First indigenous bomber UAV unveiled in Bengaluru

- Bengaluru's Flying Wedge Defence unveiled India's first indigenous bomber unmanned aircraft, the FWD-200B.
- Prioritizing cost-effectiveness and self-reliance, the firm aims to establish India as a pioneer in cutting-edge defense solutions.
- The FWD-200B has a payload capacity of 100 kgs and is classified as a MALE Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicle (medium-altitude, long-endurance).
- The Unmanned Aerial System (UAS) consists of optical surveillance payloads and is integrated with missile-like weapons for precision air strikes.

IIT Guwahati introduced innovative 3D Printed Dummy Ballot Unit

- The Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation Cell (SVEEP) of Kamrup Election District has collaborated with the Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati to create a novel 3D printed dummy ballot unit.
- This innovative tool aims to familiarize citizens, especially first-time voters and senior citizens, with the voting process, easing any concerns or uncertainties they may have.

Rocket Lab launched a South Korean Earth-observation satellite and NASA solar-sailing tech

- Rocket Lab, a private American aerospace manufacturer and small satellite launch service provider, launched a South Korean Earth-observation satellite and new NASA solar-sailing tech to orbit on 23 April 2024.
- The payloads were launched aboard a Rocket Lab Electron vehicle from New Zealand.

Supersonic Missile assisted release of torpedo system successfully flight-tested by DRDO

- Supersonic Missile-Assisted Release of Torpedo (SMART) system was successfully flight-tested on 1 May, 2024 from Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Island off the coast of Odisha.
- SMART is a next-generation missile-based light-weight torpedo delivery system, designed and developed by the DRDO to enhance the anti-submarine warfare capability of the Indian Navy far beyond the conventional range of lightweight torpedoes.
- This canister-based missile system consists of several advanced sub-systems, namely two-stage solid propulsion system, electromechanical actuator system, precision inertial navigation system etc.

Defence and Securities

Chapter 8

IAF contingent arrived Alaska, USA to participate in Ex. Red Flag 24



- The Indian Air Force (IAF) contingent has touched down at the United States Air Force's Eielson AF Base in Alaska to participate in Red Flag 24, a multinational air combat exercise.
- This advanced training program spans two weeks and focuses on honing skills and tactics required in aerial combat scenarios.
- The IAF's Rafale fighter jets made a transatlantic flight with staging halts in Greece and Portugal.
- The exercise aims to integrate aircrew in a multinational environment, enhancing collaboration and readiness.

Indo-Russian ventures delivered 27,000 AK-203 to Indian Army

- The Indian Army has received 27,000 AK-203 assault rifles through an Indo-Russian joint venture established at Korwa in Uttar Pradesh.
- These rifles are part of a larger contract signed in July 2021, aiming to manufacture over 6.1 lakh AK-203 rifles in India with technology transfer from Russia.
- The joint venture, known as Indo-Russian Rifles Private Limited (IRRPL), was set up between the erstwhile Ordnance Factory Board (now Advanced Weapons and Equipment India Limited and Munitions India Limited) from India and Rosoboronexport (RoE) and Kalashnikov concern of Russia.

Indian Army set to received Russian Igla-S Air Defence Systems

- The Indian Army has received the first batch of 24 Russia-made Igla-S Man Portable Air Defence Systems (MANPADS), along with 100 missiles, as part of a larger deal that includes domestic production in India.
- These systems enhance the Army's Very Short Range Air Defence (VSHORAD) capabilities particularly in high mountainous terrain along the northern border.
- The Igla-S system is designed to bring down low-flying aircraft and can also identify and neutralize air targets such as cruise missiles and drones.
- It comprises the 9M342 missile, the 9P522 launching mechanism, the 9V866-2 mobile test station, and the 9F719-2 test set.

IAF conducted Bambi Bucket Operations to combat forest fires in Uttarakhand

- In response to the raging forest fires in the Pauri Garhwal sector of Uttarakhand, the Indian Air Force (IAF) proactively deployed its Mi17 V5 helicopters for Bambi Bucket operations.
- These helicopters efficiently transported and released over 4,500 liters of water over the affected areas, working in close coordination with the Uttarakhand government.
- The swift and coordinated action by the IAF played a pivotal role in supporting the ground-based firefighting crews, aiding in fire suppression efforts.

Indian Air Force tests BHISHM portable hospital for Airdrop in Agra

- On 14 May 2024, the Indian Air Force conducted field tests of the Arogya Maitri Cube- BHISHM portable hospital by performing an airdrop in Agra, Uttar Pradesh.

- This test marked the first occasion that the Indian Air Force deployed this innovative medical solution, aimed at enhancing rapid medical response capabilities during emergencies.
- The portable hospital, weighing 720 kg, was air-dropped from a transport aircraft using specially designed parachutes.
- The BHISHM portable hospital is part of "Project BHISHM" and can treat up to 200 casualties, focusing on swift response and comprehensive care.

Indian Army installed high-altitude tank repair facility in Ladakh

- The Indian Army has established two of the world's highest tank repair facilities in Ladakh, close to the Line of Actual Control (LAC) along China.
- These facilities, located in Nyoma and the DBO Sector, support over 500 tanks and infantry combat vehicles deployed following the 2020 India-China standoff.
- The region's extreme conditions, including temperatures plummeting to -40 degrees Celsius and rarefied air, pose challenges for tank operations.
- These repair centers play a crucial role in sustaining armored vehicle operations in this strategically important area.

12th joint working group meeting between Defence Ministries of India and Mongolia

- The 12th Joint Working Group meeting between the Defence Ministries of India and Mongolia concluded in Ulaanbaatar.
- Co-chaired by India's Joint Secretary Amitabh Prasad and Mongolia's Brigadier General Gankhuyag Davagdorj, the meeting reviewed bilateral defence cooperation and explored ways to enhance it.
- The Indian delegation highlighted the capabilities of India's defence industry, which was positively received by Mongolia. The Indian officials also met with Mongolia's Deputy Defence Minister, B Bayarmagnai, to discuss further cooperation.
- India and Mongolia share strong historical, cultural, and civilizational ties, considering each other 'Spiritual Neighbours.'

INS Kiltan reached Cam Ranh Bay in Vietnam



- The Indian Navy Ship Kiltan arrived at Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam, as part of the Indian Navy's Eastern Fleet deployment.
- This visit aims to strengthen the friendship and cooperation between India and Vietnam, reflecting shared naval values.
- The visit includes professional interactions, sports, social exchanges, and a Maritime Partnership Exercise at sea to enhance interoperability and best practices exchange.
- INS Kiltan is an indigenous ASW corvette designed and built in India.

Indian Coast Guard signed MoU with Hindalco Industries



- The Indian Coast Guard has entered into an agreement, known as a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), with Hindalco Industries for the production and supply of native marine-grade aluminum used in ship construction.
- Currently, the Indian Coast Guard operates 67 ships with aluminum hulls that can navigate shallow waters.

Summit and Conferences

Chapter 10

44th CISO Training Programme under Cyber Surakshit Bharat Initiative

- The 44th CISO Deep-Dive training programme was organized by the National e-Governance Division (NeGD) under the Cyber Surakshit Bharat initiative of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY).
- The program aimed to spread awareness about cyber-crime and build capacities of Chief Information Security Officers (CISOs) and frontline IT officials across all government departments.
- Participants from Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Gujarat, Haryana, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, West Bengal, and New Delhi attended the training at the Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi.
- The training focused on understanding cyber-attacks, legal provisions, and formulating policies for cyber security.

Kazakhstan Co-Chairs Int'l conference on Nuclear Security in Vienna

- Kazakhstan, in collaboration with Australia, co-chaired the International Conference on Nuclear Security: Shaping the Future (ICONS 2024) in Vienna from 20 to 24 May 2024.
- The conference, organized under the auspices of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), brought together over 2,000 delegates from more than 130 countries.
- Key topics included nuclear policy, regulation, technology, and infrastructure for prevention, detection, and response.
- Kazakh Vice Minister of Energy, Sungat Yessimkhanov, emphasized the need to adapt nuclear security regimes to evolving technologies while reaffirming Kazakhstan's commitment to global efforts in this area.

Cyber Security Conclave is organized in New Delhi

- The CSC Cyber Security Conclave 2024 was jointly organized by the CSC (Common Services Center) and the United Service Institution of India in New Delhi.
- The event focused on the theme of "Navigating Cyber Insecurity: Building Resilience in an Interconnected World."
- It aimed to explore the complexities and opportunities in the ever-evolving landscape of cybersecurity.
- Participants engaged in sessions led by experts, discussing emerging threats, knowledge exchange, actionable insights, and strategies for enhancing cybersecurity defenses.

46th Antarctic Treaty meet begins in Kochi

- The 46th Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM 46) and the 26th Meeting of the Committee for Environmental Protection (CEP 26) are currently underway in Kochi, Kerala.
- Hosted by the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) through the National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR), these meetings bring together experts and representatives from various countries to discuss critical matters related to Antarctica.
- The Antarctic Treaty, signed in 1959 and in force since 1961, designates Antarctica as a peaceful area for scientific research and environmental protection.

Inaugural Africa Clean Cooking Summit held in Paris

- The inaugural Summit on Clean Cooking in Africa, held in Paris on 14 May 2024, brought together over 1,000 delegates from nearly 60 countries.
- The summit aimed to address critical health and environmental challenges associated with traditional cooking methods prevalent across the continent.
- These methods, which rely on biomass fuels like wood and charcoal, pose significant health risks, especially for women and children exposed to indoor smoke.

- The summit resulted in financial commitments exceeding $2.2 billion, supporting the transition to cleaner cooking solutions and promoting sustainable energy alternatives.

Cyber Security Conclave is organized in New Delhi

- The Cyber Security Conclave, jointly organized by the Common Services Centers (CSC) and the United Service Institution (USI) in New Delhi.
- Cyber threats are evolving rapidly worldwide, with data breaches increasing each year.
- The conclave emphasized the importance of maintaining a strong cybersecurity framework to protect businesses and citizens.
- The event aimed to enhance India's cyber protection strategies and foster innovative solutions.

10th World Water Forum opens in Indonesia's Bali, Indonesia

- The 10th World Water Forum has commenced in Bali, Indonesia, bringing together global leaders, experts, and stakeholders to address critical water-related challenges.
- This forum serves as a platform for discussing sustainable water management, conservation, and equitable access.
- Participants will deliberate on innovative solutions, policies, and technologies to ensure water security for present and future generations.
- The forum aims to foster international cooperation and drive actionable initiatives toward a water-secure world.

World Hydrogen Summit 2024

- At the prestigious World Hydrogen Summit in Rotterdam, Netherlands, in 2024, the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy's Indian Pavilion will be among the biggest.
- It provides a stage for showcasing the noteworthy developments in green hydrogen made in the country.
- With a budget of Rs. 19,744 crores, India initiated the National Green Hydrogen Mission (NGHM) in January 2023.

5th Joint Group of Customs (JGC) meeting between India and Bhutan was held in Leh

- The 5th Joint Group of Customs (JGC) meeting between India and Bhutan was held on 6th-7th May, 2024 in Leh, Ladakh.
- The 5th JGC meeting discussed a host of bilateral issues such as opening of new Land Customs Stations and notifying new trade routes, development of infrastructure, automation and digitisation of transit processes, prevention of smuggling, coordinated cross-border management, pre-arrival exchange of Customs data, bilateral agreement on Customs cooperation and movement of transit cargo under electronic cargo system among others.
- There are 10 Land Customs Stations along the India-Bhuan Border in the States of West Bengal (6) and Assam (4).

2nd session of India-Nigeria Joint Trade Committee held in Abuja

- A seven-member delegation from India held a Joint Trade Committee (JTC) meeting with their Nigerian counterparts in Abuja from April 29 to April 30, 2024.
- In a comprehensive dialogue, both sides undertook a detailed review of recent developments in bilateral trade and investment ties and acknowledged the vast untapped potential for further expansion.
- Both sides agreed to early conclusion of Local Currency Settlement System Agreement to further strengthen bilateral economic ties.

EU and India hold 14th Counter-Terrorism Dialogue in New Delhi

- On 7 May 2024, in New Delhi, the European Union and India convened their 14th Counter-Terrorism Dialogue.
- The discussion provided a chance to maintain and strengthen collaboration on this crucial pillar of the EU-India Strategic Partnership.
- The European Union and India have vehemently denounced terrorism in all of its forms and manifestations and have underscored the necessity of bolstering global collaboration to address counterterrorism obstacles.

DRDO organized 8th Technology Council Meeting

- On 9 May 2024, in New Delhi, the Defence Research & Development Organization (DRDO) hosted the 8th Technology Council Meeting.
- The purpose of the meeting was to assess the progress of integrating DRDO technologies into the Ministry of Home Affairs's National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), Police, and Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) (MHA).

4th meeting of ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement Joint Committee

- From 7 to 9 May 2024, Putrajaya, Malaysia hosted the 4th Joint Committee meeting for the assessment of the ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA).
- Participating in the meetings were delegates from all ten ASEAN countries as well as India.
- In order to improve trade facilitation and benefit businesses throughout the region, a study of AITIGA was initiated in May 2023.

4th India-Maldives High-Level Core Group Meeting held in New Delhi

- On 3 May 2024, in New Delhi, the India-Maldives High-Level Core Group convened for the fourth time.
- The two parties carried on their conversation over a wide range of topics pertaining to bilateral cooperation.
- These include capacity-building programs, measures to improve bilateral commerce and investment, defense cooperation, and development cooperation projects.
- MEDEVAC (medical evacuation) and humanitarian services are provided to the Maldivian population by Indian aviation platforms.

7th India-Indonesia Joint Defence Cooperation Committee Meeting held in New Delhi

- The 7th India-Indonesia Joint Defence Cooperation Committee meeting was held in New Delhi on 3 May 2024.
- Defence Secretary Giridhar Aramane and Secretary General of the Indonesian Defence Ministry, Air Marshal Donny Ermawan Taufanto, co-chaired the meeting.
- The progress made on various bilateral defence cooperation initiatives was deliberated in meetings of the Working Group on Defence Cooperation and Defence Industries Cooperation was also reviewed by the co-chairs.
- During the visit, the Secretary-General visited the DRDO headquarters in New Delhi as well as TATA Advanced Systems and L&T Defence facilities in Pune.

India, Netherlands hold 12th Foreign Office Consultations

- The Hague, Netherlands hosted the 12th India-Netherlands Foreign Office Consultations on May 2, 2024.
- Pavan Kapoor, Secretary (West), Ministry of External Affairs, headed the Indian delegation. Paul Huijts, Secretary General of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, led the Dutch delegation.
- December 2022 saw the conclusion of the most recent Foreign Office Consultations in New Delhi.
- The parties discussed the next course of action in the important sectors of water, agriculture and health, science and technology, high-tech and innovation, and both acknowledged the progress made in all areas.

10th Edition of World Art Dubai opened at World Trade Centre in Dubai

- With a significant Indian influence, the 10th edition of World Art Dubai included artwork by Indian artists and art organizations as it opened at the World Trade Center in Dubai on 2 May 2024.
- The distinguished expo, which runs until 5th May, is showcasing 10,000 pieces of art, including paintings, sculptures, digital art installations, and more, alongside more than 400 esteemed galleries and solo artists representing more than 60 countries. Indian art is being showcased on a worldwide scale.
- Twelve national pavilions showcasing artistic expressions from China, Turkey, Iran, America, Russia, the UAE, Europe, the UK, and the Arab world are on display alongside the artworks.

IREDA holds 16th Stakeholders' meet

- Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency Limited (IREDA) organized its 16th Stakeholders' Interaction Meet at the India International Centre in New Delhi on 4 May 2024.
- The Stakeholders' Meet witnessed enthusiastic participation from business partners spanning the renewable energy spectrum, including Solar, Wind, Hydro, Bio Energy, and New & Emerging technologies.
- The event featured a presentation highlighting IREDA's recent achievements, emphasizing its historic annual performance in FY 2023-24.
- The meet highlighted notable financial achievements, with IREDA's Tier-1 Capital reaching Rs. 8,265.20 crores as of 31 March, 2024.

Environment and Ecology

Chapter 11

G7 commits to Net Zero Emissions by 2050

- The Group of Seven (G7), consisting of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States, has taken a significant step toward combating climate change.
- In June 2021, the G7 Leaders made a landmark commitment to achieve net zero emissions by 2050.
- The G7 nations recognize the importance of aligning official international financing with global net zero goals and have called on all countries, especially major emitting economies, to join this effort.
- The International Energy Agency (IEA) has played a crucial role in shaping this commitment by providing a comprehensive roadmap for achieving net zero emissions globally by 2050.

Eucalyptus planting controversy in Kerala

- The controversy over eucalyptus planting in Kerala stems from a recent decision by the Kerala government to allow the Kerala Forest Development Corporation (KFDC) to plant eucalyptus trees for its financial sustenance during the 2024-2025 period.
- However, environmentalists and social activists have raised concerns, arguing that this move could adversely affect forests and exacerbate human-animal conflicts in the future.
- In response to the backlash, the government amended its order, limiting permission to only cut exotic tree species from lands under KFDC's control.

GSAP SKILLS Platform

- The GSAP SKILLS Platform is an initiative aimed at enhancing the employability and skill development of youth in India.
- It focuses on bridging the gap between industry requirements and the skills possessed by job seekers.
- The platform offers a wide range of courses, including technical, vocational, and soft skills.
- By collaborating with industry experts, GSAP SKILLS ensures that learners gain practical knowledge and relevant skills.

Venezuela first country to loose all its glaciers

- Venezuela has become the first Andean country to lose all of its glaciers.
- The Humboldt Glacier, also known as La Corona, located in the Sierra Nevada, has now been reclassified as an ice field due to significant shrinkage.
- This reclassification marks a grim milestone, making Venezuela the first country in the Americas and the first globally to lose all its glaciers.
- Glaciers play a crucial role in maintaining ecosystems and water resources, and their disappearance is a consequence of climate change.

Disappearance of 6 million trees in India

- Between 2019 and 2022, India may have lost approximately 5.8 million mature trees on agricultural lands, according to a satellite imagery analysis conducted by researchers at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark.
- The study, published in the peer-reviewed journal Nature Sustainability, highlights a concerning trajectory where traditional agroforestry systems are being replaced by paddy rice fields.
- Notably, 11% of the trees detected via satellite during 2010-2011 were no longer visible when reviewed from 2018 to 2022.
- However, this specific analysis focuses on large trees above a certain size, and it doesn't necessarily imply a decline in India's overall tree cover.

Global Report on Internal Displacement 2024 (GRID-2024)

- The 2024 Global Report on Internal Displacement (GRID) presents data and analysis on the 75.9 million people living in internal displacement as of the end of 2023.
- This ninth edition of the GRID provides global and regional insights into the risk, scale, and impacts of internal displacement.

- Notably, there were 46.9 million internal displacements recorded during 2023 across 151 countries and territories. These movements occurred due to both conflict and disaster events.
- The report serves as a critical resource for informing policy decisions and improving the lives of internally displaced people worldwide.

GAIL (India) Limited first Green Hydrogen Plant at GAIL Vijaipur in MP

- GAIL (India) Limited has taken a significant step towards sustainable energy by installing its first Green Hydrogen Plant at GAIL Vijaipur in Madhya Pradesh.
- The plant utilizes 10MW PEM (Proton Exchange Membrane) Electrolyzer units to produce 4.3 TPD (tonnes per day) of hydrogen through the electrolysis of water using renewable power.
- The hydrogen purity is an impressive 99.999% (by volume), and it will initially be used alongside natural gas for captive purposes within the existing Vijaipur plant.
- Future plans include retail distribution of this green hydrogen in nearby areas, transported via high-pressure cascades.

First Global Mangrove Assessment

- The First Global Mangrove Assessment is a groundbreaking initiative that evaluates the health and risks faced by mangrove ecosystems worldwide.
- Conducted using the IUCN Red List of Ecosystems, this assessment sheds light on the urgent need for coordinated conservation efforts.
- Mangroves, covering approximately 150,000 km2 along tropical and sub-tropical coasts, play a crucial role in biodiversity conservation, climate change mitigation, and supporting local communities.
- Alarmingly, 50% of mangrove ecosystems are at risk of collapse, with 19.6% facing severe threats.

Tamil Nadu Forest Department has initiated a three-day synchronised elephant census

- The Tamil Nadu Forest Department has initiated a three-day synchronised elephant census in collaboration with other four states: Kerala, Karnataka, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu itself.
- This comprehensive effort spans 26 forest divisions across Tamil Nadu. Approximately 300 forest officials and volunteers are actively participating in this crucial census.
- During the census, teams venture into forest beats covering areas of 500 hectares or five square kilometers.
- They assess the age, sex, and health of elephants directly, record data, differentiate them based on dung analysis, and observe their behavior near water holes and grasslands.

IAEA increased caution against the trafficking of nuclear and radioactive materials

- The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) maintains a database called DIRATA (Discharges of Radionuclides to the Atmosphere and the Aquatic Environment).
- This database contains information about radionuclide discharges from nuclear facilities worldwide.
- Its purpose is to facilitate data exchange and trend tracking among regulatory bodies and nuclear operators.
- By monitoring and assessing these discharges, the IAEA ensures transparency and safety in handling radioactive materials.
- The DIRATA database plays a crucial role in understanding environmental impacts and optimizing protection measures.

Materiovigilance Programme of India (MvPI) Platform

- The Materiovigilance Programme of India (MvPI) was launched in 2015 with the approval of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India.
- Its primary objective is to monitor the safety of medical devices used in the country. Under MvPI, the Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission (IPC) serves as the National Coordination Centre (NCC) since 2018.
- The program systematically collects and analyzes data on medical device-associated adverse events (MDAE) to aid regulatory decisions and recommendations.
- It also raises awareness among healthcare professionals about the importance of reporting MDAEs in India.

Sports News

Chapter 12

ICC Players of the Month for April 2024 announced

- Women's Player of the Month: Matthews played a pivotal role in the West Indies' success during both the ODI and T20I series in Pakistan. Her all-round contributions with the bat and ball were instrumental in the team's achievements.
- Men's Player of the Month: Muhammad Waseem, the UAE captain and opener, made history by becoming the first-ever player from the UAE to win this award. His prolific run-scoring feats in the ACC Premier Cup led UAE to victory. Notably, he scored a T20I century in the final, securing the title for his team.

Praggnanandhaa topples world no. 1 Magnus Carlsen for first time



- Indian Grandmaster R. Praggnanandhaa achieved a remarkable milestone by defeating world number one Magnus Carlsen in a classical game during the Norway Chess tournament.
- This victory marks Praggnanandhaa's maiden classical win against Carlsen, who is renowned for his chess prowess.
- In this format, players have a significant amount of time to make their moves, allowing for deeper strategic thinking.
- Praggnanandhaa's win came while playing with the white pieces, pushing the home favorite Carlsen down to the fifth spot in the points table.
- The 18-year-old Indian now leads the tournament with 5.5 points after three rounds.

Charles Leclerc creates F1 history with win in Monaco

- Charles Leclerc, the talented Monegasque driver, etched his name in Formula One history by securing a breakthrough victory at the Monaco Grand Prix.
- This achievement marked his third pole position at the iconic Circuit de Monaco, overcoming previous heartaches where technical issues and pit stop challenges denied him the top spot.
- Leclerc's calm and collected drive ensured he retained his lead, leaving McLaren's Oscar Piastri and Ferrari teammate Carlos Sainz trailing behind.

Divya Deshmukh wins Sharjah Challengers 2024

- Divya Deshmukh, the talented Indian chess player, emerged as the champion in the Sharjah Challengers 2024.
- With an impressive score of seven out of a possible nine, she secured victory with better tie-breaks.
- Divya's unbeaten performance included five wins and four draws, earning her a total of 7 points.

Dipa Karmakar clinched India's first-ever gold medal in Women's Vault at Asian Championships



- Making history, Dipa Karmakar won the first-ever gold medal for India in the Asian Championships in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. The 30-year-old Olympian finished the women's Vault final with an average score of 13.566.
- This is the first time an Indian gymnast has taken home a gold medal in the Asian Championships in any kind of competition.
- She is the first female gymnast from India to compete in the Olympics. She placed fourth in the women's vault at Rio 2016, putting on the finest performance of any gymnast competing in the Summer Games.

Kolkata Knight Riders won the IPL 2024 T20 Championship



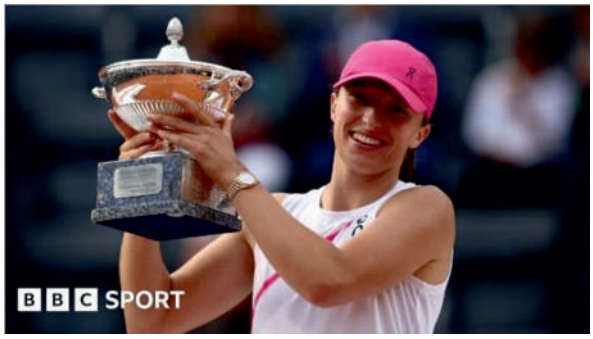
- The Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) emerged as champions in the TATA Indian Premier League (IPL) 2024 after a thrilling final against Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH).
- KKR secured their third IPL championship, adding to their previous titles in 2012 and 2014.
- With an 8-wicket victory over SRH in the tournament final, KKR, led by Shreyas Iyer, claimed their third championship.
- SRH was bowled out for 113 in 18.3 overs, with only captain Pat Cummins (24 in 19 balls, with two fours and a six) and Aiden Markram (20 in 23 balls, with three fours) scoring more than 20 runs.
- With eight wickets remaining, KKR chased down the 114-run target in just 10.3 overs. In the tournament's last game, Rahmanullah Gurbaz (39 in 32 balls, with five fours and two sixes) and Venkatesh Iyer (52* in 26 balls, with four boundaries and three sixes) shone for KKR.

Dinesh Kartik announced retirement from IPL



- Dinesh Karthik, wicket-keeper batter of Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB), concluded his illustrious Indian Premier League (IPL) career during the Eliminator match against Rajasthan Royals (RR).
- Karthik made his IPL debut 16 years ago and featured for six franchises over his career.
- He ends with 4,842 runs in 257 matches, including 22 fifties.

Iga Swiatek wins third Italian Open Title



- Iga Swiatek, the world number one in women's tennis, won her third Italian Open title on 18 May 2024.
- She defeated Aryna Sabalenka, the world number two, in straight sets with a score of 6-2, 6-3.
- Adding to her titles from 2021 and 2022, Swiatek improved her career record in Rome to 20-2.

Brazil set to host FIFA Women's World Cup 2027

- Brazil has been confirmed as the host of the 2027 FIFA Women's World Cup.
- This decision was made at the FIFA Congress in Bangkok, where Brazil received 119 votes, surpassing the joint bid from Belgium, Germany, and the Netherlands.

- The 2027 World Cup will be the tenth edition of the tournament, with 32 nations competing.

Nikhat Zareen and Minakshi win Gold at Elorda Cup

- Indian boxers Nikhat Zareen and Minakshi clinched gold medals at the Elorda Cup 2024 in Astana, Kazakhstan.
- Nikhat Zareen triumphed in the women's 52 kg category, defeating Zhazira Urakbayeva of Kazakhstan with a 5-0 scoreline.
- Minakshi won in the women's 48 kg category, beating Uzbekistan's Rahmonova Saidahon 4-1.

Manchester City wins historic fourth in row title at Premier League



- Manchester City has made history by becoming the first team to win four consecutive Premier League titles.
- This historic achievement was sealed with a 3-1 victory over West Ham United at the Etihad Stadium.
- This is the sixth time in seven seasons that Manchester City, under the leadership of Pep Guardiola, has won the Premier League.

Australia to host AFC Women's Asian Cup 2026

- The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) has officially announced that Australia will host the 2026 Women's Asian Cup.
- The Women's Asian Cup is a quadrennial international football tournament competed by the women's national teams in the Asian Football Confederation.
- The 2026 edition will be the 21st edition of the AFC Women's Asian Cup.

Sunil Chhetri announced retirement from International Football



- Sunil Chhetri, the iconic Indian footballer and national team captain, announced his retirement from international football on 6 June, 2024.
- His illustrious career spanned 19 years, during which he played 145 matches for the national team and scored an impressive 93 goals.
- Chhetri's last game was India's World Cup qualification match against Kuwait.
- He holds the record of being the third-highest scorer of international goals among active footballers, after Argentina's Lionel Messi and Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo.

Next Generation of Squash Players inducted in TOPS



- The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports' Mission Olympics Cell (MOC) has inducted squash players Anahat Singh, Abhay Singh, and Velavan Senthilkumar into the Development Group of the Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS), focusing on the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics where squash will debut.
- This move aims to build on the legacy of Indian squash champions Saurav Ghosal, Dipika Pallikal, and Joshna Chinappa.
- Cyrus Poncha, Secretary General of the Squash Racquets Federation of India (SRFI), highlighted

that this inclusion marks a pivotal moment for squash in India, enhancing participation, training opportunities, and recognizing squash as a significant sport in the country.

French Open 2024 tennis tournament

- The French Open 2024 is set to begin at the Stade Roland Garros in Paris, with main draw matches starting on 26 May 2024.
- Sumit Nagal has qualified for the men's singles main draw, marking a significant achievement for Indian tennis.
- The tournament's key players include Rafael Nadal, Novak Djokovic, Carlos Alcaraz, Daniil Medvedev, Jannik Sinner, and Casper Ruud in the men's singles, while Iga Swiatek is expected to lead the women's singles category.
- In men's doubles, Rohan Bopanna, Matthew Ebden, Yuki Bhambri, Albano Olivetti, Sumit Nagal, and other pairs will compete.

YAI Senior National Championship 2024



- The Yachting Association of India (YAI) Senior National Championship 2024 concluded in Mumbai after a week of intense competition from May 12th to May 18th.
- The event showcased all eight Olympic classes of boats and drew 82 participants from 10 sailing clubs across the country.
- A total of 94 races, including four medal races, determined the champions.
- Vice Admiral Sanjay J. Singh, AVSM, NM, presided over the closing ceremony and awarded medals, emphasizing the importance of pursuing excellence in international events. Teams from the Army and Navy stood out, securing the highest medal count.

Ronaldo tops forbes' list of highest-paid athletes again



- Cristiano Ronaldo has topped Forbes' list of highest-paid athletes for the fourth time, with estimated earnings of around $260 million.
- Spanish golfer Jon Rahm moved up to second place following his switch to Saudi-backed LIV Golf.
- Ronaldo's move to Saudi Arabian side Al-Nassr contributed significantly to his earnings, marking an all-time high for a football player.

2nd stage of Archery World Cup 2024



- The second stage of the 2024 Archery World Cup begins in Yecheon, Korea, with India fielding the same 16-member team that competed in the first stage in Shanghai, China.
- The Indian team emerged as champions in Shanghai, winning a total of eight medals, including five golds.

India's Deepthi Jeevanji smashes world record in women's 400-meter event

- At the World Para Athletics Championships in Kobe, Japan, Deepthi Jeevanji broke the world record in the

women's 400m T20, clocking 55.07 seconds to win gold.



- Aysel Onder of Turkey and Lizanshela Angulo of Ecuador took silver and bronze, respectively.
- Yogesh Kathuniya won silver in the Men's Discus Throw F56, Preethi Pal won bronze in the Women's 200m T35, and Nishad Kumar won silver in the Men's High Jump T47.
- India has secured four medals so far: one gold, two silver, and one bronze.

Japan won the 30th Sultan Azlan Shah Trophy



- Japan won its maiden Sultan Azlan Shah Hockey trophy by defeating Pakistan 4-1 in the penalty shoot-out in the final.
- The final was played at the Azlan Shah Stadium in Ipoh, Malaysia, on 11 May 2024.
- Japan won the trophy, with Pakistan in second place. Malaysia was in third place, followed by New Zealand, South Korea, and Canada in last place.

Abha Khatua sets national record winning gold in women's shot put



- Abha Khatua achieved a national record and secured a gold medal in Women's Shot Put by throwing an impressive distance of 18.41 meters at the National Federation Cup Athletics Competition in Bhubaneswar.
- Representing Maharashtra, she previously shared the record of 18.06 meters with Manpreet Kaur.
- Abha's new record makes her the sole national record holder. However, her throw fell short of the Olympic qualifying mark of 18.80 meters, a milestone no Indian woman has reached.

Jorge Martin wins 2024 French MotoGP



- MotoGP championship leader Jorge Martin won the French Grand Prix, completing a weekend double. Marc Marquez of Gresini Ducati finished second after overtaking Francesco Bagnaia on the final lap.
- Martin's victory, combined with his sprint win, propelled him to 129 points in the standings, with Bagnaia in second place, 38 points behind.
- Marquez's strong performances in the last two races moved him up to third place, just two points behind Bagnaia.

Six Indian Wrestlers qualify for Paris Olympics



- India will have six wrestlers at the Paris Olympics 2024, with five quotas earned by women wrestlers like Vinesh Phogat and Anshu Malik.
- Aman Sehrawat and Nisha Dahiya secured the remaining quotas at the World Olympic Wrestling Qualifiers in Istanbul, Turkey.
- Bajrang Punia didn't qualify, and Deepak Punia missed out on a quota in the men's 86kg category. The Istanbul meet was the last qualifying event for wrestlers for the Paris Games.

R Praggnanandhaa beats world number one Magnus Carlse



- In the Superbet rapid and blitz tournament, India's R Praggnanandhaa defeated Magnus Carlsen, the world number one in chess.
- However, Wei Yi of China leads by a significant margin with 20.5 points after the first day of blitz, leaving Praggnanandhaa behind at 14.5 points. Yi is on track to win the first leg of the Grand Chess Tour, with Carlsen trailing in second place.

Javelin Thrower Neeraj Chopra seals 2nd place finish in Doha Diamond League 2024



- Neeraj Chopra, India's javelin thrower, secured second place at the Doha Diamond League 2024 with a throw of 88.36 meters, just 2 centimeters short of the winner Jakub Vadlejch.
- Chopra's performance was affected by windy conditions, preventing him from winning the event for the second consecutive year.
- Kishore Jena, another Asian Games medallist, was eliminated after a throw of 76.31 meters.

New Zealand's Colin Munro retires from international cricket



- Colin Munro has retired from international cricket after missing out on a spot in the Black Caps' T20 World Cup squad.
- The 37-year-old lefthander's last international was a T20 match against India in 2020 -- but he had long hoped to claw his way back into the squad.
- Making his T20I debut against South Africa in 2012, Munro played 122 white ball matches for New Zealand and a solitary test against the Proteas in 2013.

- His 47-ball century against West Indies in Mount Maunganui in 2018 was the fastest T20 century for New Zealand at the time and saw him become the first player to score three T20I hundreds.

Real Madrid has clinched their 36th La Liga title

- Real Madrid secured the title on 4 May 2024, after a combination of their own victory and a loss by their closest rivals.
- The title was clinched following Real Madrid's win against Cádiz, with the team achieving a 3-0 victory at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium.
- Barcelona's 4-2 defeat at the hands of Girona ensured that Real Madrid's lead at the top became insurmountable.

Amul appointed as 'Official Sponsor' of Sri Lanka Men's team for ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024



- Amul, an Indian dairy producer, has been named the "Official Sponsor" of the Sri Lanka Men's Team for the 2024 ICC Men's T20 World Cup, according to a statement released by Sri Lanka Cricket.
- Amul has been associated with the Sri Lankan team most recently in the 2023 ICC Cricket World Cup.
- On June 3, 2024, Sri Lanka will play their first match in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup in New York against South Africa.

India completes 5-0 series sweep against Bangladesh in Women's T20 Cricket

- In Women's T-20 Cricket, India completed a 5-0 series sweep after a 21-run win in the fifth and final match against Bangladesh in Sylhet on 9 may 2024.
- Chasing a target of 157 runs, Bangladesh made 135 runs for 6 in the stipulated 20 overs.
- Radha Yadav was declared Player of the Match for her splendid bowling. She took 3 crucial wickets. She was also awarded Player of the Series.



ICC announced Women's T20 World Cup schedule



- The International Cricket Council (ICC) announced the fixtures for the ninth ICC The Women's T20 World Cup 2024 is set to take place in Bangladesh from 3 to 20 October 2024, featuring ten teams playing 23 matches across two venues: Shere Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Dhaka and Sylhet International Cricket Stadium.
- The schedule was announced in Dhaka, attended by officials including the President of the Bangladesh Cricket Board and the CEOs of ICC.
- The opening match on 3 October will see South Africa against England, followed by Bangladesh facing Qualifier, India will take on New Zealand on 4 October in Sylhet.

Japan Triumphs at the AFC U-23 Asian Cup

- Japan's men's football team won the Under-23 Asian Cup by defeating Uzbekistan 1-0 in the final, securing their second tournament victory.



- The match remained tight until stoppage time when the game intensified.
- Captain Joel Chima Fujita was named the tournament's Most Valuable Player while Nematov took home the Best Goalkeeper award after conceding just once all tournament long.
- Iraq's Ali Jassim took home the Golden Boot following a four-goal tally.

Paris Saint-Germain Clinches Record 12th Ligue-1 Title



- Paris St Germain (PSG) secured their 12th Ligue 1 title, extending their record, after AS Monaco's 3-2 defeat against Olympique Lyonnais.
- PSG's third consecutive title came after another commanding performance in the domestic league.

Amul will sponsor USA men's cricket team in upcoming T20 World Cup

- Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation (GCMMF), which markets dairy products under the Amul brand, has become a lead sponsor for a USA cricket men's team in the upcoming T20 World Cup.
- In a statement, GCMMF said that Amul has joined as the Lead Arm sponsor of USA Cricket men's national cricket team for the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024.



NADA India organized #PlayTrue Campaign to create awareness about clean sports

- The National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA), India concluded the #PlayTrue Campaign, with a turnout of more than 12,133 participants.
- The campaign commemorated WADA's Play True Day and aimed at fostering awareness about the importance of clean sport and anti-doping practices in India, receiving overwhelming participation and support from athletes, coaches, and sports enthusiasts nationwide.
- The #PlayTrue Campaign highlights NADA India's commitment to equipping athletes, coaches, and the entire sporting community with a thorough understanding of anti-doping regulations, empowering them to champion clean play in India.
- The campaign was held from 15th to 30th April 2024.

National Women's Hockey League 2024

- The inaugural season of the National Women's Hockey League 2024 – 2025 has begun in Ranchi.
- This league marks a significant milestone in the nation's sporting landscape.
- The league is structured into two phases. The inaugural phase is taking place in Ranchi, Jharkhand, from 30th April to 9th May 2024.
- All matches during this phase are being hosted at the Marang Gomke Jaipal Singh Astroturf Hockey Stadium.

Devon Thomas faces a five-year penalty for violating the anti-corruption policy

- The International Cricket Council (ICC) banned West Indies player Devon Thomas from all cricket on 2 May 2024.
- Thomas had admitted to breaking seven anti-corruption codes from the Caribbean Premier League, Sri Lanka Cricket, and the Emirates Cricket Board.



- In accordance with the applicable rules, the ICC declared the term of ineligibility in its function as the Designated Anti-Corruption Official and decided to postpone the final 18 months of the time.

India to host BWF World Junior Badminton Championships 2025

- India will host the BWF World Junior Championships 2025 at the National Centre of Excellence in Guwahati, the Badminton World Federation (BWF) announced on 30 April.
- The 2025 edition in India will mark the return of the BWF Junior World Championships to the country for the first time since 2008 when Pune hosted the event.
- The dates for the 2025 edition will be announced later.

Awards and Honors

Chapter 13

Top PSUs honored at Outlook Planet Sustainability Summit & Awards 2024



- The Outlook Planet Sustainability Summit & Awards 2024 recognized outstanding sustainability initiatives by Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs).
- The event, held in Goa on 27 May, celebrated pioneers across various categories.
- Notably, REC Limited received the prestigious "Sustainability Champion—Editor's Choice Award", while Power Finance Corporation (PFC) Limited was honored with the Corporate Social Responsibility award in the Non-Fossil Fuel sub-category.
- These awards highlight the commitment of CPSEs towards sustainable practices and responsible corporate citizenship.

India's Payal Kapadia wins Grand Prix at 77th Cannes Film Festival

- Payal Kapadia, the talented Indian filmmaker, has scripted history by becoming the first Indian director to win the Grand Prix award at the 77th Cannes Film Festival.
- Her remarkable achievement is attributed to her film "All We Imagine as Light", which bagged this prestigious honor.
- The Grand Prix is the second-most prestigious prize at Cannes, following the iconic Palme d'Or.

Indian Techie Muneeb Amin Bhatt honored in NASA's Hall of Fame



- Muneeb Amin Bhatt, a 22-year-old cybersecurity researcher from Kulgam district, Jammu and Kashmir, has achieved remarkable recognition.
- Not only did he earn a spot in Apple's Hall of Fame in 2023 for reporting vulnerabilities in their system, but he also identified data breach vulnerabilities in NASA's system.
- As part of NASA's Vulnerability Disclosure Program, Muneeb's findings helped enhance the agency's security.
- Although he couldn't disclose specifics due to program guidelines, his work involved sensitive data exposure.

POWERGRID gets global recognition for Learning & Development, receives ATD Best Awards

- The Ministry of Power's Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (POWERGRID) has been recognized with the esteemed ATD BEST Awards 2024 for its business-oriented talent development strategy.
- One of the most prestigious international awards in the subject of learning and development (L&D) is the ATD BEST Awards, which were founded by the Association for Talent Development (ATD), USA.

- It recognizes companies who use talent development as a tactical business tool and show how efficient employee development strategies may lead to enterprise-wide success.

Jenny Erpenbeck's 'Kairos' wins International Booker Prize



- "Kairos" by Jenny Erpenbeck, translated by Michael Hofmann, has won the International Booker Prize 2024.
- This novel, originally written in German, follows a destructive affair between a young woman and an older man in 1980s East Berlin.
- It intertwines the personal and the political as the two lovers seemingly embody East Germany's crushed idealism.

Erpenbeck becomes the first German writer to win the International Booker Prize, and Hofmann is the first male translator to win.

- Scientist Srinivas R. Kulkarni honoured with prestigious Shaw Prize in Astronomy
- Srinivas R. Kulkarni, an Indian-origin American scientist and the George Ellery Hale Professor of Astronomy and Planetary Science at the California Institute of Technology (Caltech), has been awarded the prestigious Shaw Prize in Astronomy for 2024.
- He has been recognized for his groundbreaking discoveries about millisecond pulsars, gamma-ray bursts, supernovae, and other transient astronomical phenomena.
- The Shaw Prize, often referred to as the 'Nobel of the East', carries a monetary prize of $1.2 million and is awarded annually in three categories: astronomy, life science and medicine, and mathematical sciences.

FTII student bags 'La Cinef' Award at 77th Cannes Film Festival

- "SUNFLOWERS WERE THE FIRST ONES TO KNOW", a course end film by Chidanand Naik, a student of FTII, received the Cannes' La Cinef Award for Best Short at 77th Cannes Film Festival in France.
- The winner was officially announced on 23rd May 2024 at the festival where the student Director Shri Chidanand Naik received the award.
- The film has been directed by Chidananda S Naik, shot by Suraj Thakur, edited by Manoj V and sound by Abhishek Kadam.

NHPC conferred with 'The Economic Times HR World Future Ready Organization Award 2024-25'

- NHPC, India's premier hydropower company, has been honored with 'The Economic Times HR World Future Ready Organization Award 2024-25'.
- The award was presented to NHPC at a glittering ceremony held in Mumbai on 23rd May 2024.
- The recognition highlights NHPC's commitment to future preparedness across various domains, including upskilling of employees, ESG interventions, DE&I initiatives, technological upgrades, employee engagement processes, and robust corporate governance strategies.

Anmol Rai, A Transwoman crowned as Miss Pink Nepal 2024



- At a gala event in Kathmandu, Anmol Rai, a transwoman, was crowned Miss Pink Nepal 2024, with Sarosy Neupane and Aarohi Basnet as the first and second runners-up, respectively.
- Rai will represent Nepal at the Miss International Queen 2024 competition in Thailand.
- The event, organized by Diamond Society Nepal, featured cultural performances to celebrate the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Intersexphobia, Transphobia, and Phobia.

- It aimed to raise awareness about the LGBTQ community's struggles.
- Nepal, the first South Asian country to allow same-sex marriage, continues to make strides toward gender equality and LGBTQ rights.

Ruskin Bond awarded prestigious Sahitya Akademi fellowship



- Ruskin Bond Awarded Prestigious Sahitya Akademi Fellowship
- Renowned British-Indian author Ruskin Bond has been awarded the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Fellowship for his exceptional contributions to literature.
- The honor was presented to him at his home in Mussoorie on 11 May 2024.
- Bond, who has written over 300 short stories, essays, novels, and more than 30 books for children, was named a Sahitya Akademi Fellow in 2021.

Hindustan Shipyard Limited's CMD Hemant Khatri honored with 'PSU Samarpan Award'



- Hemant Khatri's recognition as the recipient of the 'PSU Samarpan Award' is indeed a testament to his unwavering commitment and visionary leadership in steering Hindustan Shipyard Limited towards transformative growth.
- It's great to see leaders being acknowledged for their contributions to their organizations' success.
- This esteemed award recognizes the commendable contributions of Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) to the advancement of the nation.

Noida International Airport awards concession for retail, duty free stores



- Noida International Airport (NIA) has awarded a concession for retail and duty-free stores to a consortium comprising Heinemann Asia Pacific and BWC Forwarders Private Limited.
- Heinemann will manage duty-free stores, while BWC Forwarders will handle domestic retail and international duty-paid retail as part of the agreement.

Pawan Sindhi honored with Global Pride of Sindhi Award 2024



- Social worker Mr. Pawan Sindhi received the Global Pride of Sindhi Award 2024 at a ceremony in Mumbai's Mukesh Patel auditorium.
- The event, attended by revered saints and leaders, honored Mr. Sindhi for his outstanding contributions to society.

President to present Padma Awards at Rashtrapati Bhavan

- President Droupadi Murmu will present the Padma Awards at Rashtrapati Bhavan tomorrow during the second Civil Investiture Ceremony.
- The Padma Awards are among the country's highest civilian honors, conferred in three categories: Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan, and Padma Shri, across various fields such as art, social work, science, literature, sports, and civil service.
- The awards are typically announced on Republic Day, and last month, the President presented a set of Padma Awards on 22nd April.

2024 Pulitzer Prize winners announced

- The Pulitzer Prizes, administered by Columbia University, have gained attention this year amidst student demonstrations against the war in Gaza.
- These awards celebrate excellence in journalism and literary works.
- Among the winners are publications like The New York Times and ProPublica, as well as authors such as Jayne Anne Phillips and Jonathan Eig.
- The awards span 15 journalism categories and eight arts categories, recognizing exceptional contributions in various fields like public service, investigative reporting, and feature photography.
- The Public Service award is particularly esteemed, including a gold medal, while other winners receive $15,000 in recognition of their outstanding work.

Shabana Azmi to received Freedom of City of London award



- Veteran Indian actress Shabana Azmi will be honored with the City of London Corporation's Freedom of City of London Award on 10 May in the UK capital's Guildhall.
- This recognition is for her significant contributions to Indian cinema and her advocacy for women's rights.
- The award presentation will coincide with celebrations marking her 50 years in the industry at the 26th UK Asian Film Festival.

UNESCO Guillermo Cano Prize 2024 awarded to Palestine Journalists in Gaza



- The 2024 UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize was awarded to Palestinian journalists covering the crisis in Gaza.
- The laureates were chosen by an International Jury of media professionals.
- The award ceremony took place on May 2, 2024, during the World Press Freedom Conference in Santiago, Chile.
- The prize recognized the unique suffering and fearless reporting of Gaza's journalists.
- The prize is named after Guillermo Cano Isaza, a Colombian journalist assassinated in 1986, and honors an outstanding contribution to the defense and/or promotion of press freedom.

Purnima Devi Barman Gets the 'Green Oscar' Whitley Gold Award 2024



- Dr. Purnima Devi Barman, a wildlife biologist from Assam, has been awarded the prestigious Whitley Gold Award by the Whitley Fund for Nature (WFN) in the UK.
- She received GBP 100,000 for her conservation efforts focused on the endangered Greater Adjutant Stork and its wetland habitat.
- The award ceremony took place at the Royal Geographical Society in London.

Dr. Bina Modi honoured for outstanding contribution to Corporate Social Responsibility



- Dr. Bina Modi was honoured by the esteemed Vice President of India, Jagdeep Dhankar, for her 'Outstanding Contribution to the cause of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)'.
- The felicitation took place during the inauguration of the new building for the Society of Indian Law Firms (SILF).
- Dr. Modi leads the CSR initiatives of the group companies, including uplifting vulnerable farmer communities in Andhra Pradesh and supporting the education of young girls through initiatives like Project Khushi.
- This recognition adds another feather to Dr. Bina Modi's hat of being a responsible business leader.

Alok Shukla wins prestigious Goldman Environmental Prize 2024

- Alok Shukla, the convenor of the Chhattisgarh Bachao Andolan and a founding member of the Hasdeo Aranya Bachao Sangharsh Samiti, has been honored with the 2024 Goldman Prize for Asia.
- His relentless efforts to preserve the forests of Hasdeo Aranya in Chhattisgarh have earned him this prestigious recognition.



Meryl Streep to receive honorary Palme d'Or at Cannes Film Festival



- Meryl Streep, an acclaimed performer, will be presented with an honorary Palme d'Or during the 77th Cannes Film Festival's opening ceremony on 14 May 2024.
- On 14 May, at the event held on the Grand Theatre Lumiere stage, she will also be honored as the guest of honor.
- Meryl has only attended Cannes once, although she did take home the best actress prize in 1989 for the film A Cry in the Dark.
- Meryl has a record 21 Oscar nominations, three wins, and is one of the most beloved actors in Hollywood history.

International Chess Federation Awards Grandmaster title to Indian Chess Prodigy Vaishali Ramesh Babu



- Vaishali Ramesh Babu has been officially awarded the title of Grandmaster by FIDE, making her the third Indian Female Grandmaster after Koneru Humpy and Harika Dronavalli.
- Notably, Vaishali and her brother, Rameshbabu Praggnanandhaa, are the world's first Grandmaster brother-sister duo.
- Vaishali achieved the required 2500 ELO points at the Llobregat Open tournament in Spain last year, and the title was conferred during the FIDE Council meeting in Toronto.

Appointment and Resignations

Chapter 14

Vice Admiral Gurcharan Singh takes command of NDA



- Vice Admiral Gurcharan Singh assumed the appointment of Commandant, National Defence Academy from Vice Admiral Ajay Kocchar in Pune on 25 May 2024.
- An alumnus of the National Defence Academy (Khadakwasla), he was commissioned into the Indian Navy on 1st July 1990.
- Vice Admiral Gurcharan Singh has held several appointments, both afloat and ashore. As a specialist in Gunnery and Missiles, he has served onboard Indian Naval Ships Ranjit and Prahar.

PESB recommended Shri Ajay Kumar Sharma as Director (Personnel) of SJVN



- The Public Enterprises Selection Board (PESB) has recommended Shri Ajay Kumar Sharma for the post of Director (Personnel) of SJVN, a leading Public Sector Undertaking under Ministry of Power.
- He was selected following a rigorous interview process held on May 24, 2024, where he emerged as the top candidate among eleven contenders.
- Shri Sharma is currently serving as General Manager in Corporate Human Resources department, SJVN.
- Shri Ajay Kumar Sharma joined SJVN in October 2009 and has since been serving in the HR department at Corporate Headquarters in Shimla.

Sony appointed Disney Veteran Gaurav Banerjee as New India CEO



- Sony Pictures Networks India (SPNI) has appointed Gaurav Banerjee as its new chief executive officer (CEO).
- Banerjee, a former executive from Walt Disney, will lead Sony's television and media businesses in India.
- Previously, he served as the head of content for Disney's streaming service, Hotstar, and managed the business for the company's TV channels in Hindi-speaking markets.
- Banerjee is expected to assume his role at Sony in approximately two months.
- This appointment follows Sony's recent announcement that its current India CEO, N.P. Singh, has decided to step down.

P Santhosh takes the Helm as MD & CEO of NARCL

- P Santhosh, a former Chief General Manager (CGM) at Canara Bank, has been appointed as the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the National Asset Reconstruction Company (NARCL).
- His appointment comes after Natarajan Sundar's abrupt resignation from the post. Santhosh had been serving as the interim CEO of NARCL since January.
- The board of NARCL has recommended a three-year term for him. Notably, NARCL actively acquired distressed assets under Santhosh's leadership, including accounts with outstanding loans of ₹92,500 crore until 31 March 2024.

NP Singh to step down as MD & CEO of Sony Pictures Networks Ltd.

- NP Singh, the Managing Director (MD) and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Sony Pictures Networks India (SPNI), has decided to step down after an impressive 25-year tenure with the company.
- Singh, who initially joined as the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) in 1999, rose through the ranks to become the CEO in 2019.
- Singh's decision to leave his role is driven by a desire to focus on social change and transition from operational responsibilities to advisory roles.
- He will continue to lead SPNI until a suitable successor is found.

Jetha Ahir appointed as new chairman of NAFED



- Jetha Ahir, a BJP MLA from Gujarat, has been elected unopposed as the chairman of the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (NAFED).
- Ahir, who previously served as the deputy speaker of the Gujarat Assembly, secured this position during the election held in Delhi.
- The board, consisting of 21 directors, including two from Gujarat, unanimously supported his appointment.
- Notably, Ahir also holds the chairmanship of Panchmahal's Pancharmrut Dairy and the Panchmahal District Cooperative (PDC) Bank.

Rushabh Gandhi Appointed as MD and CEO of IndiaFirst Life Insurance



- Rushabh Gandhi, currently the Deputy CEO of IndiaFirst Life Insurance, has been promoted to the position of Managing Director (MD) and Chief Executive Officer (CEO).
- With over 25 years of experience in both national and international markets, Rushabh is a prodigious financial services leader.
- His strategic vision and innovative approach have significantly contributed to IndiaFirst Life's growth. Notably, he has implemented a successful Bancassurance business and a Multichannel Distribution strategy.
- Rushabh Gandhi's term as MD and CEO begins on July 1, succeeding the retiring R.M. Vishakha.

Ramesh Babu V. sworn in as Member of Central Electricity Regulatory Commission

- Ramesh Babu V. has been sworn in as a Member of the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC).
- His appointment to this crucial regulatory body is significant for India's power sector.
- The CERC plays a pivotal role in ensuring fair practices, tariff regulations, and grid management.
- Ramesh Babu's expertise will contribute to shaping policies and decisions that impact the nation's electricity distribution, transmission, and generation.

Allamaye Halina appointed as new Prime Minister of Chad



- Allamaye Halina, a diplomat and former director general of state protocol, has been appointed as the new Prime Minister of Chad by President Mahamat Idriss Deby Itno.
- Following contested elections earlier this month, President Deby was sworn in to succeed his late father.
- Halina's appointment marks a significant transition in the country's leadership.

NASA appointed new chief for Artificial Intelligence



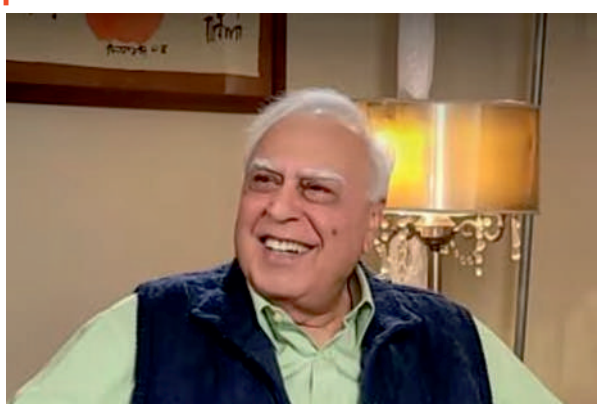
- NASA has appointed David Salvagnini as its first Chief Artificial Intelligence Officer, effective immediately.
- The announcement was made by NASA Administrator Bill Nelson on 13 May, 2024. This role is an expansion of Salvagnini's current role as Chief Data Officer.
- Salvagnini's appointment is in accordance with President Biden's Executive Order on the Safe, Secure, and Trustworthy Development and Use of Artificial Intelligence.

Avendus Wealth Hires Axis Bank's private bank head as CEO



- Avendus Wealth Management, a part of Avendus Group, has appointed Apurva Sahijwani as its new Managing Director and CEO. This announcement comes almost a year after the previous CEO, Nitin Singh, left the firm.
- Sahijwani, a veteran private banker, brings over 25 years of extensive experience in private banking and wealth management. Prior to this, he led Burgundy Private, Axis Bank's private banking arm.
- He has also held key roles at Kotak Wealth, ICICI Bank, HSBC, and Citibank.

Kapil Sibal elected as the President of Supreme Court Bar Association



- Senior Advocate Kapil Sibal has been elected as the President of the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) for the fourth time.
- He secured 1,066 votes, defeating his nearest rival, Senior Advocate Pradeep Rai.
- Sibal, a Rajya Sabha MP and former Union minister, has held the SCBA presidency three times between 1995 and 2002.

- He announced his candidature for the post on 8 May 2024. The election results were declared on 19 May 2024.

RBI approved appointment of Natarajan as whole-time director at IDFC First Bank

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has approved the appointment of Pradeep Natarajan as the Whole Time Director of IDFC FIRST Bank.
- The appointment is for a period of three years. This decision follows an earlier notification from the bank dated December 30, 2023.
- This is a significant development for IDFC FIRST Bank and reflects the bank's commitment to strong governance and leadership.

Sanjiv Puri elected CII President for 2024-25



- Sanjiv Puri, Chairman and Managing Director of ITC Limited, has assumed office as the President of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) for 2024-25.
- He takes over from R Dinesh, Chairman of TVS Supply Chain Solutions.
- Puri heads ITC Ltd, a conglomerate with businesses in FMCG, hotels, paperboards & packaging, agribusiness, and IT.
- Rajiv Memani, Chairman of EY India, becomes President-Designate of CII for 2024-25.
- R Mukundan, MD & CEO of Tata Chemicals Limited, has been appointed Vice President of CII.

Iran's Supreme Leader approved Mohammad Mokhber as Acting President

- Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has appointed Vice President Mohammad Mokhber as acting president after Ebrahim Raisi's death in a helicopter crash.



- Khamenei also declared five days of national mourning for Raisi.
- Mokhber, now interim president, must organize new elections within 50 days.

President-Elect Lai Ching-Te to take oath of office



- President-elect Lai Ching-te of Taiwan took the oath of office on May 20, 2024. The ceremony took place at the presidential office in Taipei.
- Lai, also known as William Lai, served as Vice President for the past four years during incumbent President Tsai Ing-wen's second term.
- In his inaugural address, Lai urged China to stop its military and political threats, and emphasized that peace is the only choice.

IPS Officers A.Y.V. Krishna & N. Venu Gopal appointed as Additional Directors in CBI

- Senior IPS officers A.Y.V. Krishna and N. Venu Gopal have been appointed as Additional Directors in the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).
- Krishna, a 1995-batch Indian Police Service officer of Assam-Meghalaya cadre, is currently working as Inspector General in the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF).

- He has been inducted as the additional director of CBI for a tenure up to 6 August 2028.
- Venu Gopal, Krishna's batchmate from the Himachal Pradesh cadre, is presently working as joint director in the CBI.
- He has been appointed as additional director, CBI for a tenure up to 24 May 2027.

Ujjivan Small Finance Bank names Sanjeev Nautiyal as MD & CEO



- Sanjeev Nautiyal has been appointed as the Managing Director (MD) and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Ujjivan Small Finance Bank.
- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) approved Sanjeev Nautiyal's appointment as MD & CEO from 1 July 2024, for a period of three years.
- Sanjeev Nautiyal is a seasoned banker with over three decades of experience.

Meghalaya gets first woman police chief



- Idashisha Nongrang has made history as the first woman to be appointed as the Director General of Police (DGP) in Meghalaya.
- She is a senior IPS officer who will take over from LR Bishnoi, who is set to retire on 19 May 2024.

Hindustan Petroleum Corporation announced appointment of Govt. Director

- Hindustan Petroleum Corporation (HPCL) has appointed Vinod Seshan as a Government Director on its board, replacing Sujata Sharma.
- Seshan, a Director from the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas, will serve for three years on a co-terminus basis, effective immediately.

N Chandrasekaran to Chair Tata Electronics



- Chandrasekaran is set to replace Banmali Agrawala as the new head, pending regulatory approvals.
- Agrawala, who has been in the position for several years, will transition into an advisory role within the Tata group.
- Chandrasekaran, already serving as chairman for various important Tata group companies, will assume the new role once the necessary regulatory clearances are obtained.

RBI appointed R Lakshmi Kanth Rao as Executive Director

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has appointed R. Lakshmi Kanth Rao as Executive Director (ED) with effect from 10 May 2024.
- Prior to being promoted as ED, Rao was serving as Chief General Manager-in-Charge in the Department of Regulation.
- Rao has experience of over three decades in the Reserve Bank having worked in the areas of Regulation of Banks and NBFCs, Supervision of Banks and Consumer Protection.
- He had served as Banking Ombudsman at RBI Chennai and as Regional Director of Uttar Pradesh at Lucknow.

Tech Mahindra's Europe business head Vikram Nair quits

- Vikram Nair, Tech Mahindra's business head for Europe, the Middle East, and Africa, has resigned after 19 years with the company.
- The regulatory filing refers to him as President for Europe Business, while the company's portal lists his designation as President for EMEA Business.

Prestige Estates CEO Venkata Narayana K resigns



- Venkata has served as CEO of Prestige Estates since August 2017, with a total of 20 years at the company.
- He has resigned from his CEO position and from board committees, effective 10 May 2024.

Vice Admiral Sanjay Bhalla assumed Charge as Chief of Personnel of Indian Navy



- Vice Admiral Sanjay Bhalla has taken over as the Chief of Personnel of the Indian Navy, having joined the Navy in January 1989.
- With 35 years of experience, he has served in various roles at sea and on land, including commanding INS Nishank, INS Taragiri, INS Beas, and the Eastern Fleet.
- He has received accolades such as the Ati Vishisht Seva Medal, Nao Sena Medal, and commendations from senior naval officials for his outstanding service.

L&T Elevates R Shankar Raman as President



- R Shankar Raman, who currently serves as the Whole-time Director and CFO of L&T, has been promoted to the role of President.
- In his new capacity, he will retain his responsibilities as the Whole-time Director and Chief Financial Officer (CFO) at the company.

Appointment of Subodh Kumar (IAS) as Director in Ministry of Ayush



- Subodh Kumar, an IAS officer of the 2010 batch from the Tamil Nadu cadre, has been appointed as the Director of the Ministry of Ayush.
- His appointment is effective from the date of assuming charge and is initially until 8 October, or until further orders, whichever is earlier.

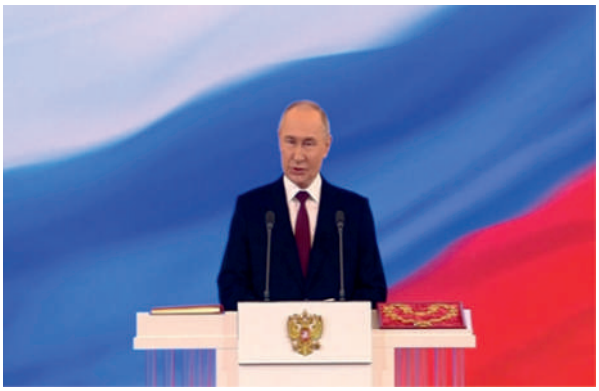
Visa appointed Sujai Raina as India Country Manager

- Visa, the global digital payments platform, has appointed Sujai Raina as the new Country Manager for India.
- In this role, Raina will be responsible for leading and executing Visa's strategic initiatives in the Indian

market, including partnering with clients and the broader payments ecosystem.



Vladimir Putin sworn in for new six-year term as Russia's President



- Vladimir Putin has been inaugurated for a new six-year term as Russia's President, extending his tenure until 2030.
- This marks a significant continuation of his leadership, having already been in power for nearly a quarter-century.
- Putin's presidency has seen Russia's transformation into a major global player, though it has also faced challenges such as heavy sanctions from the West following the 2022 invasion of Ukraine.
- Russia has sought support from other countries like China, Iran, and North Korea amidst these tensions.

José Raúl Mulino wins Panama's Presidential Election

- Jose Raul Mulino, serving as a stand-in for a former president banned from running, has won the presidential elections in his country.
- Mulino, a former security minister who entered the race late following his mentor President Ricardo Martinelli's removal from power due to corruption charges, secured more than a third of the votes in the country, which has a population of 4.4 million people.



John Swinney sworn in as Scotland's first minister



- SNP leader John Swinney has been sworn in as the seventh first minister of Scotland.
- Swinney, 60, succeeds Humza Yousaf, who formally resigned from the role earlier on 7 May after his announcement last week.
- He was confirmed in the role during a brief, formal ceremony at the Court of Session in Edinburgh.
- Mr Swinney takes office 25 years after he was first elected to the Scottish Parliament.

RBI approved appointment of Sanjeev Nautiyal as MD & CEO of Ujjivan Small Finance Bank

- Ujjivan Small Finance Bank appoints Sanjeev Nautiyal as MD and CEO.
- Ujjivan Small Finance Bank said that the Reserve bank of India (RBI) has approved the appointment of Sanjeev Nautiyal as the managing director (MD)

& chief executive officer (CEO) of the bank for the period of 3 years with effect from 1 July 2024.



Atanu Chakraborty re-appointed as HDFC Bank chairman for 3 years



- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has approved the re-appointment of Atanu Chakraborty as the Part Time Chairman of HDFC Bank for a three-year term starting from 5 May 2024.
- The bank's Board of Directors has also approved his re-appointment as Part Time Chairman and Independent Director for the same duration.
- Shareholders' approval for these re-appointments is being sought through a postal ballot notice.

Centre approved appointment of Sanjaya Kumar Mishra as President, GSTAT

- The Appointment Committee of the Cabinet has approved the appointment of Sanjaya Kumar Mishra, former Chief Justice of Jharkhand High Court, as President of the GST Appellate Tribunal (GSTAT) for a four-year term.
- The selection was based on the recommendations of a Search-Cum-Selection Committee, aiming to expedite the tribunal's functionality. The Centre aims to make the tribunal operational by 1 July.

Geetika Sharma made Deputy Secretary Ministry of Mines, Rajan Sharma appointed Deputy Secretary CIC

- Geetika Sharma, an IAS officer of the 2012 AGMUT cadre, has been appointed as Deputy Secretary in the Ministry of Mines, Delhi, for four years, highlighting the government's emphasis on strengthening the mining sector.
- Pratima Singh, from the IRS C&CE batch of 2009, is now Director at the Office of Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Delhi.
- Rajan Sharma is the new Deputy Secretary at the Central Information Commission, Delhi, for a four-year term, reflecting efforts to improve information governance.
- Shashi Bhushan Singh, an IRTS officer from the 2010 batch, has been appointed as Secretary at Director level in the National Jute Board, Kolkata, under the Ministry of Textiles.

Sarvadanand Barnwal appointed as Director in Department of Land Resources

- Sarvadanand Barnwal, a 2010 Indian Statistical Service (ISS) officer, has been appointed as the Director of the Department of Land Resources in Delhi for a five-year tenure.
- His selection under the Central Staffing Scheme (CSS) reflects his expertise and potential to contribute to national-level statistical and programmatic efforts, facilitated by the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation.

Justice Dinesh Kumar appointed as the SAT Presiding officer



- Justice (retired) Dinesh Kumar assumed the role of Presiding Officer of the Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT) on April 29, 2024.
- His appointment by the Government of India spans a four-year term.

KVS Manian steps down as Joint MD of Kotak Mahindra Bank



- KVS Manian, who was re-designated as the Joint MD of Kotak Mahindra Bank on 1 March 2024, has stepped down from his post with immediate effect.
- Reports suggest he is likely to join Federal Bank.
- Manian stated he resigned from Kotak Mahindra Bank to pursue other opportunities in the financial services sector and will also step down from the Bank's Board.

Chegg announced appointment of Nathan Schultz as Chief Executive Officer



- Chegg, Inc. (NYSE: CHGG), the prominent student-focused connected learning platform, has announced the appointment of Nathan Schultz as President and Chief Executive Officer, effective 1 June.
- Schultz will succeed Dan Rosensweig, who will transition to the role of Executive Chairman after serving as CEO for 14 years.

Senior IIS Officer, Maushumi Chakravarty assumed charge of DG of Akashvani News



- On 1 May, 2024, Maushumi Chakravarty, a senior Indian Information Service officer, took over as director general of Akashvani News.
- Ms. Chakravarty, an IIS officer from the 1991 batch, has extensive experience working for the I&B Ministry's Press Information Bureau and Central Bureau of Communication, among other media organizations.
- Throughout her more than thirty-year career, she has also served as P.S. to Cabinet Ministers and worked on deputation for the National Human Rights Commission.

Pratima Singh IRS appointed as Director in DPIIT

- Pratima Singh, an Indian Revenue Service (IRS) officer, has been named Director of the Department of Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) by the Department of Personnel & Training (DoPT).
- Singh will hold the position of Director at DPIIT for a period of five years following the date of charge assumption or until further directives, whichever comes first.
- Pratima Singh's appointment to the DPIIT is a big deal because the department is still working to attract investments and foster a business-friendly atmosphere

Obituary News

Chapter 15

Legendary Disney Songwriter Richard M. Sherman passed away at 95



- Richard M. Sherman, the legendary Disney songwriter, passed away at the age of 95.
- Known for his collaborations with his brother Robert B. Sherman, Richard was a prolific composer-lyricist in the history of family entertainment.
- Together, they penned beloved songs for Disney films such as “Mary Poppins,” “The Jungle Book,” and “Chitty Chitty Bang Bang.”
- Classics like “Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious,” “A Spoonful of Sugar,” and the Oscar-winning “Chim Chim Cher-ee” are part of their enduring legacy.

Bette Nash, world's longest-serving flight attendant passed away at 88



- Bette Nash, the world’s longest-serving flight attendant, passed away on 17 May 2024, at the age of 88.
- She held the Guinness World Record for her remarkable 67-year career as a flight attendant, surpassing any other in history.
- Nash began her journey with Eastern Air Lines and continued working the D.C. to New York City shuttle route, endearing herself to passengers and becoming a legend among flight attendants.

Oscar-winning Composer "Jan A.P. Kaczmarek" dies at 71

- Jan A.P. Kaczmarek, the Polish composer renowned for his work in both European and Hollywood films, passed away at the age of 71.
- His most notable achievement was winning the 2005 Oscar for the musical score of Finding Neverland.



- The biographical fantasy film, inspired by the life of J.M. Barrie, featured Johnny Depp and Kate Winslet.
- Kaczmarek’s compositions also graced other movies, including Total Eclipse (1995) with Leonardo DiCaprio and Unfaithful (2002) with Richard Gere and Diane Lane.

Media veteran Naresh Mohan passed away

- Naresh Mohan, a distinguished media veteran and former president of the Indian Newspaper Society (INS), passed away on 17 May 2024, at the age of 82.
- He was admitted to the intensive care unit of a hospital in Delhi a few days ago. According to The Tribune, his death was due to multi-organ failure.

Mary Poppins song writers, Richard Sherman, died at age 95



- Richard Sherman, 95, a man behind famed Disney songs that delighted generations, such as "It's a Small World (After all)" and Mary Poppins' songs "Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious," "Chim Chim Cher-ee" and "Spoonful of Sugar" died on 25 May 2024.
- They wrote more than 200 songs and garnered nine Academy Award nominations, won two Oscars and three Grammy Awards, and also earned 24 gold and platinum albums over a decades-long career.
- In 2005, the brothers were inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame, three years later, they were awarded the National Medal of the Arts, presented at the White House.

Documentary filmmaker Morgan Spurlock passed away at 53

- Morgan Spurlock, the acclaimed documentary filmmaker behind the hit film "Super Size Me," has passed away at the age of 53.
- Spurlock made a splash in 2004 with his groundbreaking film "Super Size Me," which was nominated for an Academy Award.
- In the film, he famously ate only at McDonald's for a month to illustrate the dangers of a fast-food diet.
- His work skewered America's food industry and shed light on the impact of unhealthy eating habits.

Veteran congress leader and former governor Kamla Beniwal passes away at 97



- Veteran Congress leader and former governor of Gujarat, Kamla Beniwal, passed away at the age of 97 on 15 May, 2024. Her funeral was held on May 16, 2024.
- Beniwal had a distinguished political career, serving as a seven-time MLA, the deputy chief minister of Rajasthan, and the governor of Gujarat, Tripura, and Mizoram.
- Her contributions to Indian politics were significant, and she was remembered for her efficient administration, dynamic speaking, and strong leadership.

Vineet Nayyar, former Vice-Chairman of Tech Mahindra passed away

- Vineet Nayyar, former Vice-Chairman of Tech Mahindra, passed away at the age of 85.
- A former Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer, Nayyar also served with the World Bank for over 10 years in senior roles, including Chief for the Energy, Infrastructure, and Finance Divisions for East Asia and Pacific.



- He was the first Chairman of state-owned GAIL (India) Ltd from 1986 to 1991.

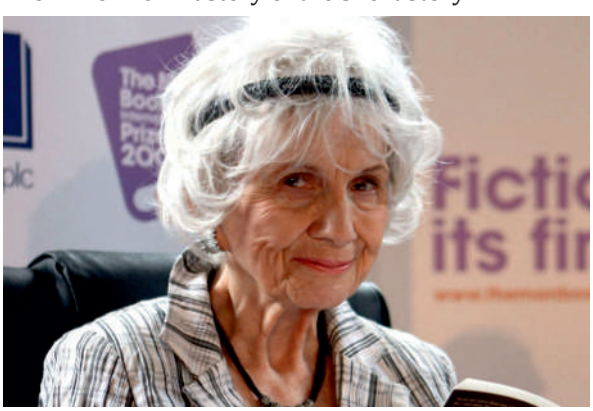
Banking Icon N Vaghul passed away at 88



- Narayanan Vaghul, a renowned banker and former Chairman of ICICI Bank, passed away at the age of 88 in Chennai.
- Known as the architect of modern banking in India, Vaghul was instrumental in transforming ICICI from a development bank to the second largest commercial bank in the country.
- He introduced the concept of credit rating in India and established Crisil (Credit Rating Information Services of India Ltd).

Nobel Prize-winning author Alice Munro dies at 92

- Alice Munro passed away at the age of 92 at her home in Port Hope, Ontario.
- The Nobel Prize-winning Canadian author Munro known for her mastery of the short story.



- Munro published more than a dozen collections of short stories, which she focused on the frailties of the human condition.
- Awarded the International Booker Prize for her body of work in 2009, and the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2013.

Sushil Kumar Modi passed away at New Delhi



- On 13 May 2024, Senior Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader and former Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Sushil Kumar Modi died in New Delhi at 72 years.
- He served as the Deputy Chief Minister of Bihar from 2005 to 2013 and again from 2017 to 2020.
- His political career started in 1973 as a student activist at Patna University, where he was elected as the general-secretary of the students' union.

Filmmaker Sangeeth Sivan passed away at 61

- Renowned filmmaker from Kerala Sangeeth Sivan passed away at the age of 61 on 8 May in Mumbai.
- He had films like 'Vyooham,' 'Daddy,' 'Gandharvam,' and the 'Yodha'. Apart from this, he also made 10 Hindi movies like 'Kya Kool Hai Hum' and 'Apna Sapna Money Money'.



- He made his directorial debut with the film Vyuham in 1990.
- His last movie was a horror comedy starring Shreyas Talpade and Tusshar Kapoor has been titled 'Kapkapiii'.

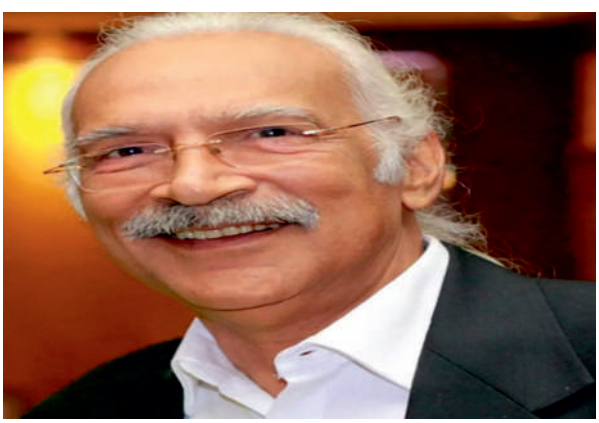
Veteran Politician and Former Union Minister V. Srinivas Prasad passed away at 76



- The Indian political arena mourns the loss of seasoned leader V. Srinivas Prasad, a BJP Member of Parliament and former Union Minister, who passed away at 76 in Bengaluru, Karnataka.
- Prasad's distinguished five-decade career leaves a significant legacy.

Renowned Journalist Vinay Vir passed away at 72

- Vinay Vir, a distinguished journalist, publisher, and editor of the Daily Hindi Milap, breathed his last on Saturday, April 27th, 2024, at the age of 72.
- He was celebrated as a champion for the Hindi language in South India and held in high regard within the journalism community. His contributions will be remembered fondly.



Paul Auster, author of 'New York Trilogy,' dead at 77



- Paul Auster, a prolific writer and director who won numerous awards, is best known for his unique narratives and meta-narratives, including "The New York Trilogy" and "4 3 2 1." Auster passed away at the age of 77.
- Auster wrote over thirty works beginning in the 1970s, several of which have been translated into other languages.
- In 1991, the French government made him a chevalier of the Order of Arts and Letters.

Bernard Hill has passed away at the age of 79

- Bernard Hill, the renowned British actor known for his roles in 'Titanic' and 'The Lord of the Rings,' has passed away at the age of 79.
- Bernard Hill was best known for his roles as Captain Edward Smith in the 1997 Oscar-winning film 'Titanic' and as King Théoden in 'The Lord of the Rings' trilogy.
- His breakout role was as Yosser Hughes in the 1982 BBC TV drama 'Boys from the Blackstuff'.



- His final TV performance was in BBC's 'The Responder', which left viewers in tears. The series began airing on the day of his passing.

Art and Culture

Chapter 16

Virupaksha temple damaged due to heavy rains



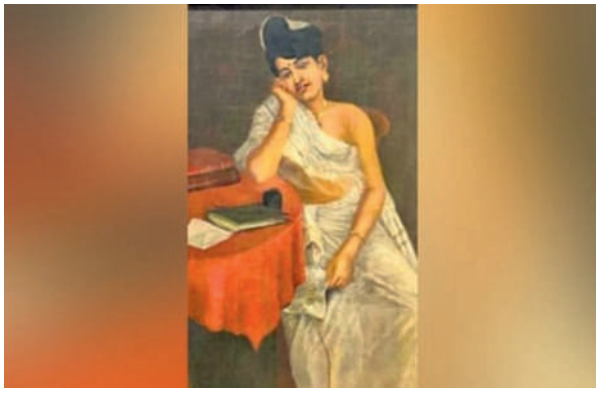
- The Virupaksha Temple in Hampi, Karnataka, recently suffered damage when a portion of its pavilion (saalu mantap) collapsed due to heavy rains.
- The temple, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, has origins dating back to the 7th century.
- During the Vijayanagara Empire (1336 to 1646), it flourished as a vital center for religious and cultural activities.
- The temple showcases Dravidian architecture, characterized by grand gopurams, intricate carvings, and pillared halls.

Three Indian literary works added to UNESCO's Memory of the World Register



- Ramcharitmanas, Panchatantra, and Sahṛdayaloka-Locana have been inscribed in UNESCO's Memory of the World Asia-Pacific Regional Register.
- During the tenth meeting of the Memory of the World Committee for Asia and the Pacific (MOWCAP), held in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, these literary treasures were recognized for their enduring worldwide appeal.
- Ramcharitmanas, authored by Goswami Tulsidas, is revered not only in India but also in Southeast Asian countries like Cambodia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, and Indonesia.
- The Panchatantra fables were chosen for their universal moral values, while the 15th-century Sahṛdayaloka-Locana was celebrated for its aesthetics.

Rebellious Indulekha on Ravi Varma's canvas



- A replica was recently unveiled at the Kilimanoor palace, where it joins another Indulekha painting by Raja Ravi Varma.
- It was unveiled at the Chitrasala of Kilimanoor Palace on April 29, 2024, during the 176th birth anniversary celebrations of the iconic artist.
- Raja Ravi Varma painted Indulekha, the protagonist of the first modern Malayalam novel by O. Chandu Menon, in 1889.
- The painting depicts her as a symbol of beauty and cultural identity in Kerala. Indulekha holds a letter, dated 1892, in her hand.

- This artwork is significant as it showcases Ravi Varma's talent for infusing traditional Indian subjects with European realism.

Annual folk festival Gangamma Jatara celebrated in Tripura



- The Tirupati Gangamma Jatara is a vibrant annual folk festival celebrated in Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh.
- This week-long event takes place between the first and second weeks of May.
- Devotees gather to offer prayers to Goddess Gangamma, the Gramadevata (protector of the region) of Tirupati.
- The Kaikala clans perform the Chatimpu puja, and each day is dedicated to a specific form of the goddess.
- The fair has a rich history spanning 900 years, and it draws thousands of devotees seeking blessings and spiritual fulfillment.

Important Days

Chapter 17

Hindi Journalism Day is celebrated on 30 May 2024



- Hindi Journalism Day (Hindi Patrakarita Diwas) is celebrated on 30 May 2024.
- The journey of Hindi journalism began on 30 May 1826, with the publication of the first Hindi newspaper, 'Udant Martand,' started by Pt. Jugal Kishore Shukla.
- This day is dedicated to the special contribution of Hindi journalists working for public welfare, imbued with truth and courage.
- It represented the beginning of a new era of journalism in India and later influenced the society and culture of the country.

International Everest Day 2024

- International Everest Day is observed on 29 May each year in Nepal and New Zealand.
- This significant day commemorates the historic achievement of two remarkable climbers: Sir Edmund Hillary from New Zealand and Tenzing Norgay Sherpa from Nepal.
- On 29 May 1953, they successfully conquered the world's highest mountain peak, Mount Everest.

World Hunger Day

- World Hunger Day is observed annually on 28 May.
- The day is a global initiative to raise awareness about the critical issue of hunger and malnutrition.
- The day also serves as a platform to promote sustainable food systems and practices that can help to reduce hunger and malnutrition.
- The theme for World Hunger Day 2024 is – Thriving Mothers. Thriving world.

World Turtle Day 2024

- World Turtle Day is celebrated annually on 23 May.
- This day is observed annually to raise awareness about the lifestyle and habitat of turtles and tortoises, and to urge people to understand them better and contribute to their wellbeing.
- The day was first observed in the year 2000 by American Tortoise Rescue.
- The celebration includes a variety of activities such as coloring pages, fact sheets, templates, and more to celebrate turtles and tortoises with fun and education.

International Day for Biological Diversity

- The International Day for Biological Diversity (also known as World Biodiversity Day) is a United Nations-sanctioned international day dedicated to promoting biodiversity awareness. It is observed annually on 22 May.
- This significant date commemorates the adoption of the initial text of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) on 22 May 1992.
- The theme for this year's celebration is "Be part of the Plan", emphasizing the global commitment to halt and reverse the loss of nature by 2050.

Indian Commonwealth Day

- Indian Commonwealth Day is commemorated every year on 24th May.
- This day, also known as Empire Day, celebrates the formation of the British Empire in India and other colonies of Britain.
- It is observed across the 54 Commonwealth Nations to promote shared values of peace, democracy, and equality, and to celebrate the association's rich diversity.

International Day to End Obstetric Fistula

- International Day to End Obstetric Fistula is observed annually on 23 May.

- This international day aims to raise awareness about obstetric fistula, a devastating childbirth-related injury that disproportionately affects women in poor economic regions.
- Obstetric fistula occurs due to prolonged, obstructed labor without timely access to high-quality medical treatment.
- The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) leads the global Campaign to End Fistula, advocating for prevention, surgical repair, and holistic treatment.
- The theme for this year's international day is "20 years on – progress but not enough! Act now to end fistula by 2030!"

International Day of Biodiversity

- The International Day for Biodiversity is observed every year on 22 May.
- The day aims to increase awareness about the crucial role of the natural world.
- It highlights the significance of biodiversity as a primary source of water, food, medicine, clothing, fuel, shelter, and energy for humans.
- The theme for this year's international day is "Be Part of the Plan". The theme emphasizes the need for a collective and coordinated approach to address and reverse biodiversity loss.
- Biodiversity, coined by Walter G. Rosen in 1985, refers to the incredible variety of living organisms on Earth.

World AIDS Vaccine Day

- World AIDS Vaccine Day, also known as HIV Vaccine Awareness Day, is observed annually on 18 May.
- On this day, HIV vaccine advocates emphasize the urgent need for a vaccine to prevent HIV infection and AIDS.
- The concept of World AIDS Vaccine Day originated from a 18 May 1997 commencement speech by then-President Bill Clinton at Morgan State University.

World Hypertension Day

- World Hypertension Day is observed annually on 17 May by the World Hypertension League (WHL) to raise awareness about high blood pressure, which affects over a billion people globally and is a leading cause of death, causing around 7.5 million deaths each year.
- It aims to promote prevention and control of this silent killer epidemic.

National Endangered Species Day (Third Friday in May)

- National Endangered Species Day is observed annually on the third Friday in May to promote awareness about wildlife conservation and restoration efforts for imperiled species.
- It highlights the significance of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, which is dedicated to safeguarding wildlife and threatened species.

World Telecommunication Day

- World Telecommunication and Information Society Day (WTISD) is observed annually on 17 May to commemorate the establishment of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) on 17 May 1969.
- This day highlights the significance of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in enhancing societies and economies, as well as in bridging the digital divide.

Anti-Terrorism Day

- The day aims to educate people about the negative impacts of terrorism and violence on society and the nation.
- Anti-Terrorism Day is being observed nationwide, marking the death anniversary of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, assassinated by an LTTE suicide bomber on 21 May 1991.
- The day pays tribute to the sacrifices made by those who have lost their lives in the fight against terrorism.
- It serves as a reminder of the nation's unwavering resolve to combat terrorism and promote peace, unity, and security within its borders and globally.

World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development

- World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development is celebrated 21 May to emphasize the importance of intercultural dialogue for peace and sustainable development.
- With the majority of conflicts occurring in areas with low intercultural dialogue, prioritizing cooperation and understanding is crucial.
- The cultural and creative sector, employing over 48 million people globally and providing significant opportunities for youth and women, is highlighted as a key driver of development by UNESCO.

World Thalassemia Day

- Every year on 8 May, people around the world observe World Thalassemia Day to increase public awareness of thalassemia prevention and treatment.
- It is a hereditary blood condition that impacts the body's ability to produce hemoglobin.
- The day seeks to help those who are thalassemia patients by highlighting the significance of genetic

testing and promoting universal access to fair and effective treatment.

World Red Cross Day 2024

- World Red Cross Day is an annual celebration of the principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, which is celebrated on 8 May each year.
- This date is the anniversary of the birth of Jean-Henry Dunant, who was born on 8 May 1828.
- This year, the theme for World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day is: "Keeping Humanity Alive".
- The day serves as an opportunity to highlight the vital humanitarian values and activities of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

International Nurses Day, 2024

- International Nurses Day is celebrated every year on 11 May.
- International Nurses Day is celebrated across the world on the birth anniversary of Florence Nightingale to mark the contributions of nurses towards society.
- International Council of Nurses has declared the theme for this year as 'Our Nurses Our Future, The Economic Power of Care'.

National Technology Day, 2024

- National Technology Day is celebrated annually on 11 May to commemorate India's achievements in the science and technology.
- India has been at the forefront of innovation across different spheres, whether it is medicine or space research.
- The theme for National Technology Day 2024 is "School to Startups-Igniting Young Minds to Innovate".

Mother's Day 2024

- In many countries, including India, Mother's Day falls on the second Sunday of May every year and this year the celebration will fall on 12 May 2024.
- Anna Jarvis campaigned for a day to honor mothers and their invaluable role in society. Her advocacy led to President Woodrow Wilson officially proclaiming Mother's Day a national holiday in 1914.

World Athletics Day observed on 7th May

- World Athletics Day is observed on 7 May to raise awareness about sports among youth, in schools and institutions to promote athletics as the primary sport.
- And to introduce new talent and youngsters in the field of athletics.

Government hosts 'Run for Sun' Marathon in New Delhi to celebrate International Sun Day

- The Government of India marked International Sun Day with the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy organizing a 'Run for Sun' Marathon at Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in New Delhi.
- The event aimed to raise awareness about the benefits of solar energy in combating climate change and fostering a cleaner future.

International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action 2024 observed on 4th May

- On 4 April of each year, the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action is officially observed.
- This declaration was made by the General Assembly on 8 December 2005.

World Tuna Day observed on 2 May annually

- World Tuna Day, observed annually on 2 May is dedicated to raising awareness about the critical importance of tuna conservation.
- Tuna is popular for its numerous health benefits, as it provides Omega-3 fatty acids, protein, and vital vitamins.
- World Tuna Day was initially proposed by the Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA) during a meeting of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) in 2011.
- The aim was to raise awareness about the importance of tuna and the challenges facing tuna populations, particularly in the Pacific region where tuna fisheries are significant.
- In 2016, the United Nations General Assembly officially declared May 2 as World Tuna Day.

World Press Freedom Day 2024

- World Press Freedom Day, observed annually on 3 May, honors and upholds the principles of press freedom globally.
- It serves as a platform to assess press freedom worldwide, examine progress in media independence, and recognize journalists who lost their lives in the line of duty.
- The 31st World Press Freedom Day Conference will be hosted by the Government of Chile and UNESCO in Santiago.
- In 2024, World Press Freedom Day falls on a Friday, with the theme "A Press for the Planet: Journalism in the Face of the Environmental Crisis."

International Labour Day observed on 1 May

- The International Labour Day is celebrated every year on 1 May to honour the contribution of workers across the world. It is also known as May Day.
- The day aims at paying tribute to workers' sacrifices in achieving economic and social rights all over the world.
- In 1886, a large demonstration of labourers, demanding eight hours of daily work, was held in America, which went out of hand in Chicago with lots of people getting hurt. The incident came to be known as The Haymarket Affair and marked the start of the International Labour Day.
- In 1889, a lot of socialist parties in Europe came together and decided to celebrate May 1 as International Labour Day. Since then, the special day has been observed every year on the same day.

Books and Authors

Chapter 18

EAM Jaishankar received copy of book 'India's Nuclear Titans'

- External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar received a copy of the book 'India's Nuclear Titans,' edited by Soumya Awasthi and Shrabana Barua.
- 'India's Nuclear Titans' traces the evolution of India into a nuclear state while highlighting the pivotal roles played by renowned figures like Homi Bhabha, Vikram Sarabhai, Abdul Kalam, and K. Subrahmanyam, among others.
- The book aims to give a brief but complete picture of India's nuclear story.

Harinder Sikka released new novel 'Gobind'

- In his new book "Gobind," author Harinder Sikka—whose book "Calling Sehmat" was made into the 2018 film "Raazi," starring Alia Bhatt—delves into the depths of human emotion and resiliency.
- In a story that speaks to themes of love, loyalty, and redemption, Sikka sets the heroic spirit of the Indian Navy against the backdrop of poverty in Bihar.
- Readers are introduced to the title character of "Gobind," a man raised in the harsh reality of a poor Sikh family in Bihar.

Anuradha Mascarenhas unveiled book 'At The Wheel of Research'

- Anuradha Mascarenhas has authored a new book titled "At The Wheel of Research: An Exclusive Biography of Dr. Soumya Swaminathan".
- Anuradha Mascarenhas, Senior Assistant Editor at The Indian Express, delves into the remarkable career of Dr. Soumya Swaminathan, the inaugural chief scientist at the World Health Organization during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The book provides insights into Swaminathan's life, drawing upon interviews with family members, close friends, and eminent scientists.

Practice Questions

1. Which of the following companies, in collaboration with IndusInd Bank, has launched the co-branded eLITE RuPay Platinum Credit Card, a card designed to redefine and elevate the banking experience of customers?
   (*a*) Poonawalla Fincorp
   (*b*) Bajaj Finserv
   (*c*) Reliance Industries
   (*d*) Mahindra & Mahindra
   (*e*) Tata Consultancy Services (TCS)
2. Which of the following Indian cricketers has been named among the 54 representatives of the 'Multicultural Ambassadors Program'?
   (*a*) Rahul Dravid
   (*b*) Ravi Shastri
   (*c*) Ajay Jadeja
   (*d*) Chetan Sharma
   (*e*) Sunil Gavaskar
3. Which of the following Indian peacekeepers deployed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has been awarded the UN Military Gender Advocate Award for 2023 in recognition of his outstanding service and efforts to empower local communities, especially women and girls, during his duty from March 2023 to April 2024?
   (*a*) Mohini Sharma
   (*b*) Anshika Singh
   (*c*) Sheyphali Sharan
   (*d*) Vasudha Gupta
   (*e*) Radhika Sen
4. The Airports Authority of India (AAI) last month invited expressions of interest (EoI) for the preparation of a detailed project report for an Indian Single Sky Harmonized Air Traffic Management at:
   (*a*) New Delhi (*b*) Chennai
   (*c*) Nagpur (*d*) Mumbai
   (*e*) Bhopal
5. Which of the following day is observed to acknowledge the service and sacrifice of over 4000 peacekeepers who have lost their lives while trying to bring peace in strife-torn areas of the world?
   (*a*) International Day of the UN Peacekeepers
   (*b*) World Humanitarian Day
   (*c*) United Nations Day
   (*d*) Human Rights Day
   (*e*) None of these
6. Rising temperatures in urban India are not solely due to climate change but also a result of increased concretization and urban sprawl, contributing to severe heat stress. Which of the following factors exacerbates heat stress in major Indian cities?
   (*a*) High ambient temperatures
   (*b*) Increased relative humidity over the past two decades
   (*c*) Rapid urbanization with increased concretization
   (*d*) All of the above
   (*e*) None of these
7. Which Indian peacekeeper in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) won the prestigious UN Military Gender Advocate of the Year award in 2023?
   (*a*) Major Radhika Sen
   (*b*) Captain Ravi Kumar
   (*c*) Lieutenant Priya Sharma
   (*d*) Colonel Vikram Singh
   (*e*) None of these
8. What is the name of the technology developed by IIT Bombay and TCS, India's biggest IT services company, which aims to completely change how semiconductor chips are inspected?
   (*a*) Quantum Diamond Microchip Imager
   (*b*) Quantum Computing Processor
   (*c*) Diamond Nanotechnology Sensor
   (*d*) Silicon Quantum Chip

(e) None of these

9. The Dubai Gaming Visa, launched as part of the Dubai Program for Gaming 2033 (DPG 2033), aims to make Dubai a major player in which industry by 2033?

(a) Tourism (b) Entertainment
(c) Gaming (d) Technology
(e) None of these

10. According to the World Health Organization, how many extra deaths per year worldwide are likely due to heat stress linked to climate change between 2030 and 2050?

(a) 10,000 (b) 20,000
(c) 38,000 (d) 50,000
(e) None of these

11. Who among the following won the Italian Open 2024 women's singles title?

(a) Aryna Sabalenka (b) Iga Swiatek
(c) Simona Halep (d) Serena Williams
(e) None of these

12. Which of the following countries has been chosen to host the FIFA Women's World Cup 2027?

(a) Brazil (b) Germany
(c) Netherlands (d) Belgium
(e) None of these

13. Who among the following secured a gold medal alongside Minakshi in the Elorda Cup 2024?

(a) Nikhat Zareen
(b) Anamika
(c) Manisha
(d) Yaiphaba Singh Soibam
(e) None of these

14. Which of the following countries unveiled the world's first-ever 6G device, boasting 20x the speed of 5G?

(a) China (b) Japan
(c) South Korea (d) United States
(e) None of these

15. Which of the following companies is partnering with Pasqal to deploy the first quantum computer in Saudi Arabia by 2025?

(a) Google (b) Aramco
(c) Microsoft (d) IBM
(e) None of these

16. What is the name of the joint venture that delivered 27,000 AK-203 assault rifles to the Indian Army?

(a) Indo-Russian Rifles Private Limited
(b) Indo-Arms Corporation
(c) Indo-Defence Systems
(d) Indo-AK Ventures
(e) None of these

17. Who among the following has been appointed as the Vice-Chairman of the International Aluminium Institute (IAI)?

(a) John Slaven (b) Yosuke Ishizaka
(c) Shivaji Waghmare (d) Mathieu Michel
(e) None of these

18. Which of the following Indian companies has been certified as a 'Great Place to Work®' for the second consecutive year?

(a) Vedanta Aluminium (b) Tata Steel
(c) Hindalco Industries (d) NALCO
(e) None of these

19. What is the name of the first worldwide law that harmonizes rules on artificial intelligence?

(a) AI Harmonization Act
(b) Global AI Regulation
(c) Artificial Intelligence Act
(d) World AI Standard
(e) None of these

20. Which of the following AI systems are banned from the EU due to their unacceptable risk?

(a) AI systems for military and defence
(b) AI systems used exclusively for research
(c) AI systems with cognitive behavioural manipulation
(d) AI systems with limited risk
(e) None of these

21. What is the significance of the IAF's first-ever emergency medical response system?

(a) It provides medical assistance during natural disasters
(b) It enhances the Indian Air Force's combat capabilities
(c) It ensures rapid medical aid during air operations
(d) It facilitates emergency evacuation of civilians
(e) None of these

22. Who among the following has been appointed as a Member of the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission?

(*a*) Shri Ramesh Babu V (*b*) Dr. Anjali Sharma
(*c*) Suresh Kumar Jain (*d*) Priya Gupta
(*e*) None of these

23. Why did POWERGRID receive the ATD Best Awards for the third time?

(*a*) For its outstanding financial performance
(*b*) For its commitment to environmental sustainability
(*c*) For excellence in Learning & Development initiatives
(*d*) For achieving record power transmission capacity
(*e*) None of these

24. What was the focus of the 16th India-UK joint working group meeting on Counter Terrorism?

(*a*) Enhancing bilateral trade
(*b*) Strengthening cultural ties
(*c*) Addressing security challenges
(*d*) Promoting educational exchanges
(*e*) None of these

25. How has India improved its position in the World Economic Forum's Travel & Tourism Development Index?

(*a*) By investing in infrastructure development
(*b*) By promoting sustainable tourism practices
(*c*) By enhancing visa facilitation
(*d*) By improving air connectivity
(*e*) None of these

26. Who among the following launched the portal for nominations for National Awards to teachers (Higher Education) in 2024?

(*a*) Sanjay Murthy (*b*) Ramesh Babu V
(*c*) John Slaven (*d*) Rushabh Gandhi
(*e*) None of these

27. Who among the following has been appointed as the MD and CEO of IndiaFirst Life Insurance?

(*a*) Sanjay Murthy (*b*) Ramesh Babu V
(*c*) Rushabh Gandhi (*d*) John Slaven
(*e*) None of these

28. Which company has SIDBI partnered with to finance helicopter purchases in India?

(*a*) Airbus Helicopters
(*b*) Boeing
(*c*) Bell Helicopter
(*d*) Hindustan Aeronautics Limited
(*e*) None of these

29. Which premium fuel has IOCL exported to Sri Lanka?

(*a*) XP100 (*b*) XP95
(*c*) XP98 (*d*) XP105
(*e*) None of these

30. Which of the following countries has become the 99th Member of the International Solar Alliance?

(*a*) India (*b*) France
(*c*) Spain (*d*) Germany
(*e*) None of these

31. What is the focus of the optical nanopatterning process developed by IIT Guwahati and Columbia University?

(*a*) Enhancing solar cell efficiency
(*b*) Improving data storage technology
(*c*) Creating ultra-thin displays
(*d*) Advancing quantum computing
(*e*) None of these

32. Where is the world's highest observatory located, recently inaugurated by the University of Tokyo?

(*a*) Mount Everest (*b*) Mount Kilimanjaro
(*c*) Mount Aconcagua (*d*) Mount Llullaillaco
(*e*) None of these

33. Which of the following country's President conferred the first-class medal of independence on the ambassador of Paraguay?

(*a*) United Arab Emirates (UAE)
(*b*) Chile
(*c*) Japan
(*d*) Australia
(*e*) None of these

34. Which of the following countries will host the AFC Women's Asian Cup in 2026?

(*a*) India (*b*) China
(*c*) Australia (*d*) South Korea
(*e*) None of these

35. Which of the following teams won the TATA Indian Premier League (IPL) title in 2024?

(*a*) Mumbai Indians

(*b*) Chennai Super Kings

(*c*) Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR)

(*d*) Royal Challengers Bangalore

(*e*) None of these

36. Which of the following country's central banks recently introduced a digital currency called "e-krona"?

(*a*) Sweden (*b*) Switzerland

(*c*) Singapore (*d*) South Korea

(*e*) None of these

37. What is the primary cause of rising heat stress in major Indian cities?

(*a*) Climate change

(*b*) Increased concretization

(*c*) Urban Heat Island Effect

(*d*) High relative humidity

(*e*) None of these

38. Which of the following physiological strains occurs when the body cannot effectively release excess heat?

(*a*) Heatstroke (*b*) Heat exhaustion

(*c*) Heat stress (*d*) Hyperthermia

(*e*) None of these

39. What is the Urban Heat Island (UHI) effect?

(*a*) Urban areas experiencing lower temperatures than rural surroundings

(*b*) Urban areas experiencing higher temperatures due to human activities

(*c*) A phenomenon related to volcanic activity

(*d*) A type of heat wave

(*e*) None of these

40. Which of the following sectors are most affected by heat stress in terms of working hours loss?

(*a*) Information technology

(*b*) Agriculture

(*c*) Healthcare

(*d*) Manufacturing

(*e*) None of these

41. Which of the following organization recently developed the RudraM-II air-to-surface missile?

(*a*) DRDO (*b*) ISRO

(*c*) JAXA (*d*) ESA

(*e*) None of these

42. What is the name of the air-to-surface missile successfully flight-tested by the DRDO?

(*a*) RudraM-I (*b*) RudraM-II

(*c*) RudraM-III (*d*) RudraM-IV

(*e*) None of these

43. Recently, which trade association has launched a corporate governance charter for startups?

(*a*) India Trade Promotion Organization (ITPO)

(*b*) Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)

(*c*) ASSOCHAM

(*d*) Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI)

(*e*) None of these

44. According to an Invest India report, India's e-commerce market is expected to grow to $325 billion by which year?

(*a*) 2025 (*b*) 2027

(*c*) 2030 (*d*) 2040

(*e*) None of these

45. Who has been awarded the title of Grandmaster by FIDE, the International Chess Federation?

(*a*) Vaishali Ramesh Babu

(*b*) Surya Sekhar Ganguly

(*c*) Savitha Shri Baskar

(*d*) Tania Sachdev

(*e*) None of these

46. Which city is constructing the world's largest airport, Al Maktoum International Airport?

(*a*) Bombay (*b*) Dubai

(*c*) London (*d*) New York

(*e*) None of these

47. Who took charge as Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief (AOC-in-C) Training Command (TC)?

(*a*) Swaroop Krishna (*b*) Nagesh Kapoor

(*c*) Om Prakash Mehra (*d*) Nirmal Chandra

(*e*) None of these

48. In a significant development for India's space program, which of the following was successfully launched by ISRO in May 2024?

(*a*) Gaganyaan-2 (*b*) Aditya-L1

(*c*) NETRA (*d*) SSLV Mk-III

(*e*) None of these

49. The National Green Tribunal (NGT) made headlines in May 2024 for imposing a heavy fine on a state for environmental degradation caused by which of the following practices?

(*a*) Deforestation in the Western Ghats

(*b*) Illegal sand mining in riverbeds

(*c*) Improper waste disposal in metropolitan cities

(*d*) Uncontrolled use of pesticides in agriculture

(*e*) None of these

50. India and a neighboring South Asian country signed a landmark agreement in May 2024 to facilitate cross-border movement of which of the following?

(*a*) Skilled workers and professionals

(*b*) Tourists and pilgrims

(*c*) Goods and services under a free trade pact

(*d*) Renewable energy resources across the border

(*e*) None of these

51. The Third Backward Classes Commission, headed by Justice (Retd.) O. Abhiram submitted its report in May 2024. One of its key recommendations was to NOT include which of the following communities in the OBC category?

(*a*) Socially and economically disadvantaged sections among Scheduled Castes

(*b*) Nomadic and semi-nomadic communities

(*c*) Religious minorities facing educational and social backwardness

(*d*) Ex-servicemen from disadvantaged backgrounds

(*e*) None of these

52. A new class of drugs called 'immunotherapy' has shown promising results in the treatment of advanced stages of which of the following cancers?

(*a*) Lung cancer (*b*) Breast cancer

(*c*) Leukemia (*d*) All of the above

(*e*) None of these

53. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) took a significant monetary policy decision in May 2024 to combat rising inflation. What was this decision?

(*a*) An increase in the Repo Rate, the rate at which RBI lends to banks

(*b*) A decrease in the Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR), the amount of deposits banks must hold with RBI

(*c*) Introduction of a new open market operation scheme to increase liquidity

(*d*) Printing of additional currency notes to stimulate the economy

(*e*) None of these

54. A major international climate conference was held in May 2024 to discuss strategies for achieving net-zero carbon emissions. Which country hosted this conference?

(*a*) United States of America

(*b*) China

(*c*) European Union

(*d*) India

(*e*) None of these

55. In a historic verdict in May 2024, the Supreme Court of India ruled on the maintainability of a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) concerning the right to privacy. What was the court's most significant observation?

(*a*) The right to privacy is not a fundamental right guaranteed by the Constitution

(*b*) The government has absolute power to collect and utilize personal data

(*c*) A well-defined legal framework is needed to regulate data privacy

(*d*) Social media platforms are not liable for the misuse of user data

(*e*) None of these

56. A bilateral military exercise involving India and a strategic partner nation was conducted in May 2024. Which of the following countries was this partner nation?

(*a*) Russia (*b*) Japan

(*c*) France (*d*) Australia

(*e*) None of these

57. Who among the following recently assumed the appointment of Commandant at the National Defence Academy (NDA)?

(*a*) Vice Admiral Ajay Kocchar

(*b*) Vice Admiral Gurcharan Singh

(*c*) Vice Admiral Santosh Sivan

(*d*) Vice Admiral Maisam Ali

(*e*) None of these

58. Which of the following Indian cities secured the highest rank in the Oxford Economics' Global Cities Index for 2024?

(*a*) Mumbai (*b*) Bengaluru
(*c*) Delhi (*d*) Chennai
(*e*) None of these

59. What does the Henley Passport Index assess?

(*a*) The strength of passports based on visa-free access
(*b*) The economic performance of countries
(*c*) The quality of life in different cities
(*d*) The environmental policies of sovereign states
(*e*) None of these

60. Which of the following Indian filmmakers won the Grand Prix Award at the 77th Cannes Film Festival for the film "All We Imagine As Light"?

(*a*) Santosh Sivan (*b*) Shyam Benegal
(*c*) Payal Kapadia (*d*) Mansi Maheshwari
(*e*) None of these

61. Which of the following FTII students received the Cannes' La Cinef Award for Best Short at the 77th Cannes Film Festival?

(*a*) Chidanand Naik (*b*) Santosh Sivan
(*c*) Payal Kapadia (*d*) Maisam Ali
(*e*) None of these

62. Which of the following Indian hydropower company was conferred with 'The Economic Times HR World Future Ready Organization Award 2024-25'?

(*a*) NHPC (*b*) NTPC
(*c*) BHEL (*d*) Tata Power
(*e*) None of these

63. Where did India host the 46th Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting?

(*a*) New Delhi (*b*) Mumbai
(*c*) Kochi (*d*) Chennai
(*e*) None of these

64. Which of the following companies released its fourth annual Corporate Sustainability Report?

(*a*) Wipro (*b*) Infosys
(*c*) TCS (*d*) WNS
(*e*) None of these

65. What is the largest and most senior global hydrogen event?

(*a*) World Hydrogen Summit 2024
(*b*) World Hydrogen Energy Conference (WHEC-2024)
(*c*) World Hydrogen 2025 Summit & Exhibition
(*d*) World Hydrogen Awards
(*e*) None of these

66. What is the focus of WNS' fourth annual Corporate Sustainability Report?

(*a*) Technological advancements in smart rings
(*b*) Progress in environmental, social, and governance activities
(*c*) Financial performance and shareholder value
(*d*) Employee satisfaction and workplace quality
(*e*) None of these

67. Which global observance commemorates the adoption of the text of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)?

(*a*) International Day for Biodiversity (IDB)
(*b*) World Biodiversity Day
(*c*) International Day for Biological Diversity
(*d*) World Biodiversity Awareness Day
(*e*) None of these

68. What is the significance of Noise's acquisition of SocialBoat?

(*a*) Strengthening the Maldivian Rufiyaa
(*b*) Advancing innovation in smart rings
(*c*) Enhancing Noise's technology offerings
(*d*) Expanding Noise's technological prowess
(*e*) None of these

69. Why is the launch of India's RuPay service in the Maldives significant?

(*a*) To address currency issues and reinforce the Maldivian Rufiyaa
(*b*) To boost bilateral travel and tourism
(*c*) To facilitate payments in rupees within the Maldivian territory
(*d*) To strengthen the position of the Maldivian Rufiyaa
(*e*) None of these

70. Where is the world's highest astronomical observatory located?

(*a*) Atacama Desert, Chile
(*b*) Himalayas, Nepal
(*c*) Mauna Kea, Hawaii
(*d*) Andes Mountains, Chile
(*e*) None of these

71. Who became the youngest Indian to summit Mount Everest at the age of 16?

(*a*) Kaamya Karthikeyan (*b*) Dipa Karmakar
(*c*) Payal Kapadia (*d*) Srinivas R. Kulkarni
(*e*) None of these

72. PRAGATI-2024 is an initiative launched by which of the following organizations to promote research and development in Ayurveda?

(*a*) Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
(*b*) Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences (CCRAS)
(*c*) All India Institute of Ayurveda (AIIA)
(*d*) Department of Biotechnology (DBT)
(*e*) None of these

73. India's first Hydrogen Bus was recently handed over to the Indian Army as part of which mission to promote clean energy solutions?

(*a*) Swachh Bharat Abhiyan
(*b*) National Solar Mission
(*c*) Olive Green – Going Green
(*d*) Ujjwala Yojana
(*e*) None of these

74. SAMEER, a government body involved in electronics research, signed an MoU for technology transfer related to which medical equipment?

(*a*) X-ray Machines
(*b*) MRI and Linear Accelerators
(*c*) Ultrasonography Machines
(*d*) Defibrillators
(*e*) None of these

75. The Public Enterprises Selection Board (PESB) recently recommended the appointment of Shri Ajay Kumar Sharma as Director (Personnel) of which organization?

(*a*) National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC)
(*b*) Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL)
(*c*) Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (POWERGRID)
(*d*) Satluj Jal Vidyut Nigam Limited (SJVN)
(*e*) None of these

76. The Ministry of Ayush recently collaborated with which organization to host a Sensitization Program?

(*a*) World Health Organization (WHO)
(*b*) Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)
(*c*) All India Institute of Ayurveda (AIIA)
(*d*) Indian Medical Association (IMA)
(*e*) None of these

77. What is the focus of the Centre for Carbon Fiber and Prepregs (CCFP) inaugurated by VP Jagdeep Dhankhar?

(*a*) Research in renewable energy
(*b*) Development of advanced textiles
(*c*) Exploration of carbon nanotubes
(*d*) Production of carbon fiber composites
(*e*) None of these

78. Who won India's first-ever gold medal in the women's vault apparatus at the Asian Gymnastics Championships 2024?

(*a*) Ashish Kumar (*b*) Pranati Nayak
(*c*) Dipa Karmakar (*d*) Emma Malabuyo
(*e*) None of these

79. Which country pledged to provide military support to Ukraine worth 1 billion euros in 2024?

(*a*) Germany (*b*) France
(*c*) Spain (*d*) Italy
(*e*) None of these

80. What is the goal of the WHO's new 'Investment Round'?

(*a*) To raise funds for global health challenges
(*b*) To promote sustainable financing
(*c*) To improve healthcare infrastructure
(*d*) To enhance pandemic preparedness
(*e*) None of these

81. Which leaders are meeting for the 9th trilateral summit in Seoul?

(*a*) Leaders of China, Japan, and South Korea
(*b*) Leaders of India, China, and Japan
(*c*) Leaders of South Korea, Russia, and Japan
(*d*) Leaders of North Korea, China, and South Korea
(*e*) None of these

82. Who became India's oldest woman to conquer Mount Everest?

(*a*) Dipa Karmakar (*b*) Jyoti Ratre
(*c*) Ashish Kumar (*d*) Pranati Nayak
(*e*) None of these

83. Which tech giant invested $350 million in Walmart-owned Flipkart?

(*a*) Amazon (*b*) Google

(*c*) Microsoft (*d*) Facebook

(*e*) None of these

84. According to the World Health Organization, how many extra deaths per year worldwide are likely due to heat stress linked to climate change between 2030 and 2050?

(*a*) 10,000 (*b*) 20,000

(*c*) 38,000 (*d*) 50,000

(*e*) None of these

85. Recently, which trade association has launched a corporate governance charter for startups?

(*a*) India Trade Promotion Organization (ITPO)

(*b*) Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)

(*c*) ASSOCHAM

(*d*) Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI)

(*e*) None of these

86. According to Invest India report, India's e-commerce market is expected to grow to $325 billion by which year?

(*a*) 2025 (*b*) 2027

(*c*) 2030 (*d*) 2040

(*e*) None of these

87. Recently, who has been awarded the title of Grandmaster by FIDE, the International Chess Federation?

(*a*) Vaishali Ramesh Babu

(*b*) Surya Sekhar Ganguly

(*c*) Savitha Shri Baskar

(*d*) Tania Sachdev

(*e*) None of these

88. Recently, which city is constructing the world's largest airport, Al Maktoum International Airport?

(*a*) Bombay (*b*) Dubai

(*c*) London (*d*) New York

(*e*) None of these

89. Recently, who took charge as Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief (AOC-in-C) Training Command (TC)?

(*a*) Swaroop Krishna (*b*) Nagesh Kapoor

(*c*) Om Prakash Mehra (*d*) Nirmal Chandra

(*e*) None of these

90. What is the purpose of the strategic partnership between NSDC and ILO?

(*a*) To enhance global skill development

(*b*) To promote lifelong learning

(*c*) To empower individuals through essential competencies

(*d*) All of the above

(*e*) None of these

91. Who has been appointed as Vice Foreign Minister of China?

(*a*) Hua Chunying

(*b*) Mukesh Ambani

(*c*) Noelia Voigt

(*d*) Ursula Owusu-Ekuful

(*e*) None of these

92. What is the significance of World Hunger Day?

(*a*) To raise awareness about food insecurity

(*b*) To highlight sustainable solutions for malnutrition

(*c*) To promote self-love among women

(*d*) All of the above

(*e*) None of these

93. Who was crowned Miss USA 2023 after the previous titleholder resigned?

(*a*) Noelia Voigt

(*b*) Savannah Gankiewicz

(*c*) Ursula Owusu-Ekuful

(*d*) Hua Chunying

(*e*) None of these

94. Which billionaire is part of a venture to provide affordable 5G services in Ghana?

(*a*) Mukesh Ambani (*b*) Bill Gates

(*c*) Elon Musk (*d*) Jeff Bezos

(*e*) None of these

95. What is the focus of GAIL (India) Limited's first Green Hydrogen Plant?

(*a*) Solar energy production

(*b*) Carbon capture technology

(*c*) Hydrogen fuel production

(*d*) Wind energy generation

(*e*) None of these

96. Who among the following created Formula One history by winning the Monaco Grand Prix?

(*a*) Max Verstappen (*b*) Lewis Hamilton

(*c*) Charles Leclerc (*d*) Sebastian Vettel

(*e*) None of these

97. Who among the following emerged victorious at the Sharjah Challengers chess tournament?

(*a*) Divya Deshmukh (*b*) Leya Garifullina

(*c*) Sina Movahed (*d*) Liam Vrolijk

(*e*) None of these

98. What is the purpose of NASA's Small Climate Satellite mission?

(*a*) To study Earth's poles

(*b*) To explore Mars

(*c*) To monitor ocean currents

(*d*) To study lunar craters

(*e*) None of these

99. Why was the State Bank of India's South Africa branch fined by the South African regulator?

(*a*) For non-compliance with financial regulations

(*b*) For excessive lending practices

(*c*) For money laundering

(*d*) For tax evasion

(*e*) None of these

100. What topic was discussed at the side event hosted by India during the 77th World Health Assembly?

(*a*) Climate change and health

(*b*) Digital health

(*c*) Vaccination strategies

(*d*) Mental health awareness

(*e*) None of these

Answer Key

1. (a)	2. (b)	3. (e)	4. (c)	5. (a)	6. (d)	7. (a)	8. (a)	9. (c)	10. (c)
11. (b)	12. (a)	13. (a)	14. (b)	15. (b)	16. (a)	17. (a)	18. (a)	19. (c)	20. (c)
21. (c)	22. (a)	23. (c)	24. (c)	25. (c)	26. (a)	27. (c)	28. (a)	29. (a)	30. (c)
31. (b)	32. (d)	33. (a)	34. (c)	35. (c)	36. (a)	37. (b)	38. (c)	39. (b)	40. (b)
41. (a)	42. (b)	43. (b)	44. (c)	45. (b)	46. (b)	47. (a)	48. (b)	49. (b)	50. (c)
51. (a)	52. (d)	53. (a)	54. (c)	55. (c)	56. (d)	57. (b)	58. (c)	59. (a)	60. (c)
61. (a)	62. (a)	63. (c)	64. (d)	65. (c)	66. (b)	67. (c)	68. (b)	69. (a)	70. (d)
71. (a)	72. (b)	73. (c)	74. (b)	75. (d)	76. (c)	77. (d)	78. (c)	79. (c)	80. (a)
81. (a)	82. (b)	83. (b)	84. (c)	85. (b)	86. (b)	87. (b)	88. (b)	89. (a)	90. (d)
91. (a)	92. (d)	93. (b)	94. (a)	95. (c)	96. (c)	97. (a)	98. (a)	99. (a)	100. (b)

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