

International

Bald eagle officially named America's national bird after 250 years



About News:-

- ❖ It has stood tall and strong with its outstretched wings for nearly 250 years, appearing on official documents, the president's flags, the mace of the House of Representatives, military
- ❖ insignia, and billions of one-dollar bills since 1782. The bald eagle finally got its official status as the national bird of the US after President Joe Biden signed a law on Christmas Eve after Congress passed the bill last week.

Key Points:-

- ❖ The white-headed and yellow-beaked bird has long been recognized as a majestic and soaring symbol, and even before this formal recognition, it was unofficially the national bird of the US. It has long been considered as symbol of strength, courage, freedom, and immortality for generations, according to the US Department of Veteran Affairs.
- ❖ The bald eagle first appeared as an American symbol on a Massachusetts copper cent coined in 1776. Since then it has appeared on the reverse side of many USA coins including the silver dollar, half a dollar, and quarter, as well as the gold coins which were christened the eagle, half eagle, quarter eagle, and double eagle.
- ❖ For six years, Congress engaged in a heated debate over the national emblem before finally selecting the bald eagle in 1789 to represent the new nation. However, one of the most vocal opponents of this choice was Benjamin Franklin, who criticized the bald

eagle in a letter, describing it as a bird of "bad moral character" that survives by "sharping and robbing" and lacks respectability.

- ❖ Franklin argued that the turkey, a true native of America, would have been a more fitting symbol. Despite his objections, many in Congress favored the bald eagle, viewing it as a long-standing symbol of strength, courage, freedom, and immortality. Its status as a species native exclusively to North America further solidified its selection as the emblem of the United States.
- ❖ The bird seeped into the culture with time and found its place in sports teams, American clothing brands, movie lines, and patriotic song lyrics. The Apollo 11 spacecraft that landed on the moon was famously associated with the bird when astronaut Neil Armstrong declared, "The Eagle has landed."
- ❖ The bald eagle will be joining the League of bison the national mammal (recognized in 2016) and the oak national tree since 2004.
- ❖ The bald eagle is also protected under the National Emblem Act of 1940, which makes it illegal to sell or hunt the creature.

National

India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement marks two years of success



About News:-

- ❖ The India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (Ind-Aus ECTA) completes two years of remarkable success, driving mutual growth and showcasing the complementarity of both economies.
- ❖ The Ind-Aus ECTA has significantly advanced trade ties, creating new opportunities for MSMEs, businesses, and employment in both

nations while reinforcing the foundation of their economic partnership. Entering its third year, the Government of India is dedicated to sustaining this momentum through strengthened collaboration and innovative initiatives to drive mutual prosperity to realize the vision 2047 of the Hon'ble Prime Minister to make India a developed country.

Key Points:-

- ❖ Since its signing, bilateral merchandise trade has more than doubled, surging from USD 12.2 billion in 2020-21 to USD 26 billion in 2022-23. Total trade, however, moderated in the year 2023-24 to USD 24 billion in 2023-24, with India's exports to Australia growing by 14%. The current fiscal year continues to reflect strong momentum. Total merchandise bilateral trade from April to November 2024 reached USD 16.3 billion.
- ❖ The exchange of preferential import data has commenced between both countries, highlighting the effective implementation of the agreement in 2023. The data reveals export utilization at 79% and import utilization at 84%.
- ❖ Key sectors like textiles, chemicals, and agriculture have shown substantial growth, while exports on new lines, including gold studded with diamonds and turbojets highlight the diversification enabled by the agreement. Imports of essential raw materials, such as metalliferous ores, cotton, wood, and wood products have fuelled India's industries, contributing to the win-win nature of this partnership. Sectors such as electronics and engineering have room for growth.
- ❖ Building upon this success, the India-Australia Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) is now in progress with 10 formal rounds and inter-sessional discussions held so far. CECA builds on the foundation laid by the ECTA, advancing the bilateral trade agenda with even greater ambition. A stocktake visit on

India-Australia CECA was also recently concluded in New Delhi from 4th to 6th December 2024 to assess the progress made and chart the path forward.

- ❖ Both parties are committed to building on the momentum created by the ECTA, driving deeper economic integration, and achieving the target of trade to reach AUD 100 billion by 2030 between India and Australia. Together, India and Australia are poised to take their economic partnership to new heights, fostering mutual prosperity and contributing to a more resilient and dynamic global economy.

State

Union minister Pralhad Joshi begins 2-day visit to Tripura

About News:-

- ❖ Union Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, and New & Renewable Energy, Shri Pralhad Joshi visited Agartala from 28th to 29th December 2024 to attend multiple programs. His visit to Agartala has been a fruitful one.
- ❖ During his visit to the state, the Minister visited the Food Corporation of India (FCI) office and the state godown on 28th December, where he took stock of the current situation, particularly in terms of food grain storage and distribution.
- ❖ Later, he had a meeting with Chief Minister Shri Dr. Manik Saha and other officials to review the performance and implementation of key central schemes in Tripura.

Key Points:-

- ❖ Union Minister Shri Joshi also carried out a detailed review of the FCI, Central Warehousing Corporation (CWC), and the implementation of MNRE schemes, like Pradhan Mantri Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana and PM KUSUM.
- ❖ In these meetings, the discussions focused on addressing challenges and identifying solutions to enhance the implementation of these crucial programs in the state.

- ❖ Today, on the 29th morning Union Minister Shri Joshi paid a divine Darshan of Maa Tripura Sundari, and thereafter he listened to PM Modi Ji's Mann ki Baat program at Chandrapur Colony higher secondary school at Chandrapur under Matabari in Gomati district.
- ❖ Later in the day, the Minister visited Charilam village to oversee a centrally sponsored renewable energy project taken up by the Tripura Renewable Energy Development Agency (TREDA) for the farmers and also reviewed the implementation of MNRE schemes.

Key Points:-

- ❖ One Nation, One Ration Card plan has been implemented by all 36 States/UTs, across the country to benefit the migrant labourers, Shri Joshi said, adding that the beneficiaries are empowered to lift their entitled foodgrain from any Fair Price Shop of their choice, anywhere in the country.
- ❖ He said in Tripura, total Portability Transactions under ONORC are 18.74 lakh 100% ration cards have been seeded with Aadhar, and all FPSs are ePOS enabled, averting leakage.
- ❖ To protect the interest of the consumers in the country, the Strengthening of Consumer Commissions scheme is being implemented by the Department of Consumer Affairs. The Central Government has been providing financial assistance to the State Governments under the scheme to supplement the efforts of the State Governments In this, total funds released since inception to Tripura state is Rs. 3.65 cr.
- ❖ To control price volatility, the Minister has underlined that the government maintains an onion buffer under the Price Stabilisation Fund. To make the disposal cost-effective and efficient, for the first time, transportation of onions from Nashik to major destinations including Guwahati in the North-Eastern region has been carried out by rail.
- ❖ He said the Union Ministry also provides grants in aid to States/ UTs for awareness generation amongst consumers about rights, under which, Rs. 40 lakh was released to Tripura in 2023-24.
- ❖ Referring to the achievements in the Renewable energy sector, the Minister said India has reached a significant milestone, with the country's total renewable energy capacity reaching 214 GW. India is on-track to achieve 500 GW capacity by 2030 with initiatives like the National Green Hydrogen Mission, PM-KUSUM PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana, and PLI schemes for solar PV modules.
- ❖ Minister Joshi also urged to undertake initiatives to spread public awareness about PM Surya Ghar Yojana. He said the electricity tariff for domestic consumers in Tripura is around Rs. 5 per unit for usage above 200 units. With the MNRE subsidy and a concessional loan at 7%, consumers can start saving money immediately.
- ❖ The cost of power purchase for Tripura DISCOM exceeds Rs. 5 per unit, as most of the power comes from gas-based plants. Installing solar power will reduce reliance on this high-cost energy and also help meet the RPO.
- ❖ Shri Joshi has lauded the initiatives of the state government in the sector, saying that Tripura has made good progress in the renewable energy sector. Before 2018, a total of 2.5 MW of electricity was generated through solar energy. In the last 6.5 years, the BJP-led govt in Tripura has increased the generation 10 times to more than 20.5 MW now.

Economic

Govt plans to borrow Rs 3.9 trillion via treasury bills in Q4FY25



About News:-

- ❖ The government plans to borrow Rs 3.9 trillion through the issuance of treasury bills (T-bills) in the last quarter of the current financial year.
- ❖ The amount will be raised over 13 weeks, with Rs 1.68 trillion allocated to 91-day treasury bills (DTBs), Rs 1.28 trillion to 182-day DTBs, and Rs 98000 crore to 364-day DTBs.

Key Points:-

- ❖ Weekly borrowing through issuance of Treasury Bills in the last quarter is expected to be Rs 28,000 crore for seven weeks, and Rs 33,000 crore for six weeks.
- ❖ Due to the tight liquidity conditions, the central government has increased the supply of T-bills, said dealers.
- ❖ T-bills are short-term debt instruments issued by the government to meet its short-term borrowing needs.
- ❖ These bills are highly liquid and considered a safe investment since they are backed by the government.
- ❖ T-bills are issued with three different maturity periods: 91 days, 182 days, and 364 days.

Appointment

BFI Chief Ajay Singh Appointed Board Member In New Asian Body



About News:-

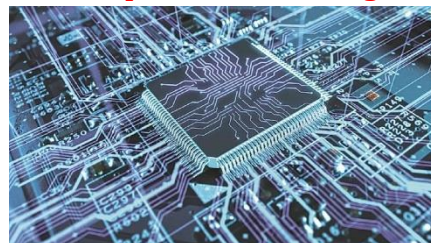
World Boxing has added Asia as its newest member, with India set to play a pivotal role in the growth and development of Asian boxing. As a rising powerhouse in international boxing, the Boxing Federation of India (BFI) has secured seven key positions in the interim organizational structure of the new body, including BFI President Ajay Singh, who has been appointed as a board member.

Key Points:-

- ❖ Indian officials will hold significant roles across all major commissions, ensuring a decisive influence on policy-making and strategic direction. Among them, BFI Secretary General Hemanta Kumar Kalita will contribute to the Olympic Commission, while BFI Treasurer Digvijay Singh will serve on the Finance and Audit Committee.
- ❖ BFI Vice President (North Zone) Narender Kumar Nirwan will serve on the Constitution Commission, while BFI Disciplinary & Disputes Commission Chairman D.P. Bhatt will join the Sports and Competition Commission. Additionally, Dr. Karanjeet Singh will contribute to the Medical Commission within the new Asian body.
- ❖ This collective involvement underscores India's dedication to preserving boxing as a prominent Olympic discipline while reinforcing the country's leadership role in the sport.
- ❖ The announcement builds on India's recent achievements, including securing hosting rights for the prestigious World Boxing Cup Final 2025 and the World Boxing Congress 2025. Scheduled for November 2025, these events highlight India's organizational capabilities and its growing stature as a global powerhouse in boxing development.

Science & Technology

AICTE launches India's first UG minor programme in quantum technologies



About News:-

The All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), in collaboration with the National Quantum Mission (NQM) under the Department of Science and Technology (DST), on Wednesday

launched India's first Undergraduate (UG) Minor programme in Quantum Technologies.

Key Points:-

- ❖ The programme was unveiled at an event attended by prominent dignitaries, including AICTE Chairman Prof. TG Sitharam, DST Secretary Prof. Abhay Karandikar, National Quantum Mission Governing Board Chairman Dr. Ajai Chowdhry, Prof. A.K. Sood from the Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India, and Curriculum Drafting Committee Chairman Prof. Arindam Ghosh.
- ❖ This initiative aims to prepare India's workforce for the quantum revolution, positioning the nation as a global leader in cutting-edge quantum innovation.
- ❖ The UG Minor programme in Quantum Technologies is designed to bridge the gap between academia and industry by addressing the strategic and multidisciplinary needs of the quantum ecosystem. It spans four verticals: Quantum Computation and Simulation, Quantum Communication and Cryptography, Quantum Sensing, and Quantum Materials and Devices.

Defence

Indian Army contingent departs for Nepal to participate in exercise Surya Kiran



About News:-

- ❖ The Indian Army contingent comprising 334 personnel departed for Nepal today to participate in the 18th edition of Battalion Level Joint Military Exercise SURYA KIRAN.
- ❖ The exercise will be conducted in Saljhandi, Nepal from 31st December 2024 to 13th January 2025.
- ❖ It is an annual training event conducted alternatively in the two countries.

Key Points:-

- ❖ The Indian Army contingent is being led by a Battalion from the 11th Gorkha Rifles. The Nepal Army contingent will be represented by the Srijung Battalion.
- ❖ The aim of Exercise SURYA KIRAN is to enhance interoperability in jungle warfare, counter-terrorism operations in the mountains, and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief under the United Nations Charter.
- ❖ The exercise will focus on enhancing operational preparedness, aviation aspects, medical training, and environment conservation.
- ❖ Through these activities, the troops will enhance their operational capabilities, refine their combat skills, and strengthen their coordination to operate together in challenging situations.
- ❖ This edition of Exercise SURYA KIRAN follows successful visits by General Upendra Dwivedi, Chief of the Army Staff to Nepal, and the visit by General Ashok Raj Sigdel, Chief of the Army Staff of Nepali Army to India.
- ❖ The exercise will provide a platform for soldiers from India and Nepal to exchange ideas and experiences; share best practices and foster a deeper understanding of each other's operational procedures.
- ❖ Exercise SURYA KIRAN signifies the strong bonds of friendship, trust, and common cultural linkages that exist between India and Nepal.
- ❖ It sets the stage for a productive and professional engagement, showcasing the unwavering commitment of both nations towards broader defence cooperation.
- ❖ The exercise will also achieve shared security objectives and foster bilateral relations between two friendly neighbours.

Sport

Koneru Humpy wins historic Rapid chess world title



About News:-

- ❖ Koneru Humpy regained the women's World rapid chess championship after a gap of five years on Sunday (December 29, 2024).
- ❖ India's top-ranked female chess player grandmaster Koneru Humpy has achieved a remarkable feat by winning the FIDE Women's World Rapid Chess Championship title for the second time in her career.

Key Points:-

- ❖ This accomplishment has garnered praise from Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who commended Humpy's grit and brilliance, stating that her victory continues to inspire millions.
- ❖ Prime Minister Modi emphasized the historic nature of Humpy's victory, stating that she is the only Indian to achieve the incredible feat of winning the World Rapid Championship title twice.
- ❖ In the recently concluded tournament held in New York, Humpy defeated Irene Sukandar of Indonesia to emerge as the champion. This victory comes after her previous triumph in the same event back in 2019 in Georgia.
- ❖ Notably, Humpy is only the second player after China's Ju Wenjun to clinch the title more than once.
- ❖ Humpy's achievement is particularly significant as it caps off a sensational year for Indian chess.
- ❖ Earlier, D Gukesh made history by defeating China's Ding Liren to become the classical format World Champion in Singapore, further elevating India's stature in the global chess arena.
- ❖ Humpy herself expressed her belief that her victory will inspire and motivate many young Indians to take up chess professionally.

Obituary

Veteran Malayalam writer MT Vasudevan Nair dies at 91



About News:-

MT Vasudevan Nair, a legendary stalwart of Malayalam literature, died on Wednesday at the age of 91.

Key Points:-

- ❖ Popularly known as M T, he authored nine novels, and 19 collections of short stories, directed six films, wrote around 54 screenplays, and published several collections of essays and memoirs over a career spanning seven decades.
- ❖ His novel Naalukettu (The Ancestral House) solidified his place as a literary icon and is considered a classic in Malayalam literature. He also penned several acclaimed works, including Asuravithu, Manju, and Kaalam.
- ❖ MT's literary achievements earned him the Jnanpith Award in 1995, India's highest literary honour, as well as numerous other accolades, including the Kendra Sahitya Akademi Award, Kerala Sahitya Akademi Award, Vayalar Award, Vallathol Award, Ezhuthachan Award, Mathrubhumi Literary Award, and O N V Literary Award.
- ❖ In 2005, M T was awarded the Padma Bhushan, India's third-highest civilian honour.
- ❖ He received the J C Daniel Award for lifetime achievement in Malayalam cinema in 2013, and in 2022, he was honoured with the inaugural Kerala Jyothi Award, the highest civilian honour from the Kerala government.

