

15 October 2024

## SpaceX successfully 'catches' Starship rocket booster in rare engineering feat



### Key Points:

- ❖ Elon Musk-owned SpaceX on Sunday successfully intercepted the returning booster back of its Starship rocket by using the mechanical arms in its launch pad, achieving a tremendous feat.
- ❖ This is the first time the company has recovered the rocket booster right on its launch pad rather than landing it on floating ocean platforms.
- ❖ SpaceX has been recovering the first-stage boosters of its smaller Falcon 9 rockets in this manner for almost nine years.
- ❖ First successful recovery on the launch pad itself has ignited the hopes of enthusiasts for space tourism and a safe landing on Earth during return from space.
- ❖ India's Anand Mahindra shared his excitement in a post on X. "And this Sunday, I'm happy to be a couch potato, if it means that I get to watch history being made.
- ❖ SpaceX achieved this feat during the fifth test flight of Starship rocket. This "catch-landing" method is the company's latest advance in its pursuit to develop fully reusable rocket that can lift more cargo into space orbit.
- ❖ Musk also envisions to ferry humans to moon and eventually the Mars using reusable launch vehicles.

## Japan's anti-N- weapon group Nihon Hidankyo win 2024 Nobel Peace Prize



### Key Points:

- ❖ The Norwegian Nobel Committee Norway has chosen the anti-nuclear weapon Japanese organisation Nihon Hidankyo for the 2024 Nobel Peace Prize.
- ❖ The Norwegian Committee chose the Nihon Hidankyo organisation for its efforts to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons and demonstrate through victims of nuclear weapons testimony that nuclear weapons must never be used again.
- ❖ Representatives of the Nihon Hidankyo organisation will receive their 11 million Kroner prize at a ceremony in Oslo, Norway, on 10 December 2024.
- ❖ The Nobel Prizes in Physics, Chemistry, Physiology or Medicine, Literature, and Economics are awarded at a ceremony in Stockholm, Sweden. At the same time, the Nobel Peace Prize winner is felicitated in Oslo, Norway.

### About the Nobel Prize-winning Organisation Nihon Hidankyo

- ❖ During the Second World War, the United States Air Force dropped two atomic bombs on Japan. A Uranium-enriched atom bomb codenamed "Little Boy" was dropped on Hiroshima on 8 August 1945, and the second plutonium-based bomb codenamed 'Fat Man' was dropped on Nagasaki on 9 August 1945.
- ❖ More than 2 lakh people were killed in the attack, and the survivors suffered the effects of radiation.
- ❖ A powerful local grassroots anti-nuclear weapon movement emerged in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, popularly called Hibakusha (a combination of Hiroshima and Nagasaki).
- ❖ In 1956, the local Hibakusha association, along with victims of nuclear weapons tests in the Pacific, formed the Japan Confederation of A- and H-Bomb Sufferers Organisations.

- ❖ Nihon Hidankyo is the shortened Japanese name of the Japan Confederation of A- and H-Bomb Sufferers Organisations. They are the largest and most influential Hibakusha organisation in Japan.
- ❖ Nihon is the Japanese name of Japan.
- ❖ The victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were at the forefront of the movement, where they shared their own experiences and the horrors of the aftereffects of nuclear weapons. They tirelessly worked to stigmatise the use of nuclear weapons as morally unacceptable. This norm later became known as “the nuclear taboo”.

**Nobel Peace Prize**

- ❖ The Nobel Foundation instituted the Nobel Peace Prize in 1900, as per Alfred Nobel's will, and the first prize was given in 1901.
- ❖ The first Prize was jointly shared by Jean Henry Dunnat of Switzerland and Frédéric Passy of France.
- ❖ Between 1901 and 2024, the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded 105 times to 142 laureates – 111 individuals and 31 organisations.
- ❖ It was not awarded on 19 occasions: in 1914-1916, 1918, 1923, 1924, 1928, 1932, 1939-1943, 1948, 1955-1956, 1966-1967, and 1972, as no person or institution was found suitable.
- ❖ The only institution to win the prize thrice was the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in 1917, 1944 and 1963.
- ❖ The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize twice, in 1954 and 1981.
- ❖ Baroness Bertha Sophie Felicita von Suttner of Austria was the first female to be honoured with the Nobel Peace Prize in 1905.

- ❖ In 2023, the prize was awarded to the Iranian peace activist Narges Mohammadi.

**Indian Nobel Peace Prize Winners**

- ❖ Albanian-born Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu, also known as Mother Teresa, was the first Indian citizen to win the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979. She started her organisation, "The Missionaries of Charity," to look after the poor and destitute in Kolkata (then Calcutta).
- ❖ In 2014, Kailash Satyaarathi shared the prize with Pakistan’s Mala Yousafzai. Kailash is the founder of the Save the Childhood Movement, which works for the abolition of child labour in India and rescues children from child labour

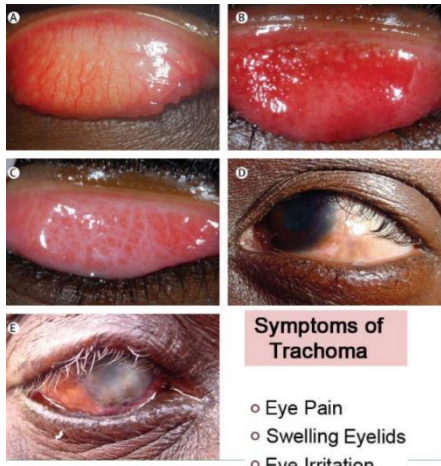
**Trachoma no longer a public health problem in India: WHO**



**Key Points:**

- ❖ The World Health Organisation (WHO) has certified India, Nepal, and Myanmar as having eliminated trachoma as a public health problem.
- ❖ India joins 19 other countries in the world that have successfully eliminated trachoma as a public health problem.
- ❖ According to the WHO, trachoma is still a major public health problem in 39 countries in the world and causes blindness in around 19 lakh people worldwide.
- ❖ WHO has attributed the success to the government's National Trachoma Control Program. Jal Jeevan Mission and Swachh Bharat Mission.

## What is Trachoma?



- ❖ Trachoma is an eye disease caused by *Chlamydia trachomatis* bacteria.
- ❖ It is a highly infectious disease that spreads from one infected person to another through;
  - contaminated fingers,
  - fomites (objects or materials likely to carry infection, such as clothes, utensils, and furniture),
  - Coming into contact with flies that have come into contact with discharge from the eyes or nose of an infected person.
  - Poor hygienic conditions, overcrowded households, and inadequate access to water and sanitation facilities.
  - Repeated infection with trachoma leads to scarring of the inner side of the upper eyelids.
- ❖ This scarring causes the eyelid margin to turn inward, and the person's eyelashes touch the eyeball.
- ❖ This painful condition is known as trachomatous trichiasis, and if left untreated, it can result in visual impairment and blindness.

### Government's effort to deal with Trachoma

- ❖ To address the problem of trachoma, the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare launched a National Trachoma Control Program in 1963 with the help of WHO and UNICEF.

- ❖ In 1976, the central government launched the National Programme for Control of Blindness and Visual Impairment (NPCBVI), and the National Trachoma Control Program was merged with it.
- ❖ The NPCBVI programme incorporated the WHO's SAFE strategy.
- ❖ The WHO's recommended SAFE strategy consists of:
  - Surgery;
  - Antibiotics to clear the infection
  - Facial cleanliness, and
  - Environmental improvement emphasises cleanliness, improving access to clean water and sanitation.

### Success against Trachoma

- ❖ According to the government of India, during the 50s and 60s, trachoma was widespread in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, and the Nicobar Islands, with over 50 per cent of their population infected by the eye disease.
- ❖ In 1971, trachoma was responsible for 5% of all blindness cases in the country. However, due to the successful implementation of the National Trachoma Control Program, the incidence of trachoma-induced blindness was brought down to 4% of all cases of blindness in India. By 2018, it was down to 0.008%.

### Trachoma Free Countries

- ❖ According to the World Health Organisation, 19 countries have successfully eliminated trachoma as a public health problem.
- ❖ These are Benin, Cambodia, China, Nepal, Oman, Pakistan, Gambia, Ghana, Iran, Iraq, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mexico, Morocco, Malawi, Mali, Myanmar, Saudi Arabia, Togo, and Vanuatu.

### World Health Organisation

- ❖ The World Health Organisation is an agency of the United Nations which was formed on 7 April 1948.
  - Headquarters: Geneva, Switzerland
  - Members: 194 countries
  - Director General : Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus

### Jannik Sinner wins the ATP Shanghai Masters 1000 singles title



#### Key Points:

- ❖ World Number One male tennis player Jannik Sinner of Italy defeated 24 Grand Slam winner Novak Djokovic of Serbia in the final to win the ATP Shanghai Masters 1000 singles title.
- ❖ The ATP Shanghai Master 1000 was held in the Chinese city of Shanghai from 2 to 13 October 2024.
- ❖ The Shanghai Master is played on a hard court. Jannik Sinner denies 100th career singles title win for Novak Djokovic
- ❖ Only Jimmy Connors (109 titles) of the United States and Switzerland's Roger Federer (103 titles) have won over 100 ATP titles.
- ❖ Both Jimmy Connors and Rafael Nadal have retired from tennis, but Djokovic still has a chance to win his 100th ATP singles title. So far, Djokovic has won 99 ATP singles titles

### Aryna Sabalenka wins the WTA Wuhan 1000 singles title



- ❖ World No.2 Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus defeated World No.7 Zheng Qinwen of China to win her third consecutive WTA Wuhan 1000 singles title.
- ❖ The WTA Wuhan 1000 Tennis tournament was held in the Chinese city of Wuhan from 7-13 October 2024. Wuhan Open is played at the Hard Court

### Third Wuhan 1000 Title for Aryna Sabalenka

- ❖ Aryna Sabalenka defeated the local favourite Zheng Qinwen 6-3, 5-7, 6-3 in the final played on 13 October 2024 at Wuhan. This was Aryna Sabalenka's third title at Wuhan, having won it in 2018 and 2019.
- ❖ This is the 17th WTA Tour title for Aryna Sabalenka and her fifth on Chinese soil.

### Defence Minister virtually dedicates to the nation 75 BRO infrastructure projects, worth Rs 2,236 crore



#### Key Points:

- ❖ Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has virtually dedicated to the nation 75 infrastructure projects of Border Roads Organisation (BRO) at Rs 2,236 crore.
- ❖ Singh also inaugurated the projects from the Headquarters, of Trishakti Corps in Sukna, West Bengal.
- ❖ One of the main highlights was the inauguration of the Kupup-Sherathang Road in Sikkim, which serves as a crucial link between Jawahar Lal Nehru Marg and Zuluk axis.
- ❖ Last year, 125 infrastructure projects of BRO were dedicated to the nation at a cost of Rs 3,611 crore.

- ❖ Singh also inaugurated the projects from the Headquarters, of Trishakti Corps in Sukna, West Bengal.
- ❖ One of the main highlights was the inauguration of the Kupup-Sherathang Road in Sikkim, which serves as a crucial link between Jawahar Lal Nehru Marg and Zuluk axis. With the inauguration of these 75 projects, BRO has completed a total of 111 infrastructure projects in 2024 at an overall cost of Rs 3,751 crore which includes 36 projects worth Rs 1,508 crore, such as the state-of-the-art Sela Tunnel in Arunachal Pradesh, inaugurated by Prime Minister earlier.

**Union Government releases 15th Finance Commission Grants for Rural Local Bodies in Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan**



**Key Points:**

- ❖ The Union Government has released the first instalment of the 15th Finance Commission grants for the FY 2024–25 to the Rural Local Bodies (RLBs) in Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan. Andhra Pradesh has received untied grants amounting to ₹395.5091 crores and tied grants totalling ₹593.2639 crores.
- ❖ These funds are for duly elected 9 eligible District Panchayats, 615 eligible Block Panchayats, and 12,853 eligible Gram Panchayats in Andhra Pradesh.
- ❖ While in Rajasthan, untied grants of ₹507.1177 crores and tied grants of ₹760.6769 crores have been released for the duly elected 22 eligible District Panchayats, 287 eligible Block Panchayats and 9,068 eligible Gram Panchayat in the state.

- ❖ The tied grants will focus on core services such as sanitation, maintenance of open-defecation free (ODF) status and water management, including rainwater harvesting, water recycling, and treatment of household waste.
- ❖ The untied grants will enable Panchayats to address specific local needs across 29 subjects under the 11th Schedule of the Constitution of India, ranging from agriculture and rural housing to education and sanitation.
- ❖ These funds, however, cannot be used for salaries or establishment costs.
- ❖ The tied grants will focus on core services such as sanitation, maintenance of open-defecation free (ODF) status and water management, including rainwater harvesting, water recycling, and treatment of household waste.
- ❖ In line with Article 243G of the Indian Constitution, these funds empower Panchayats to manage essential services and infrastructure.
- ❖ Government of India through Ministry of Panchayati Raj and Ministry of Jal Shakti (Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation) recommends release of 15th-FC Grants to States for Rural Local Bodies which are then released by Ministry of Finance.
- ❖ The allocated Grants are recommended and released in 2 instalments in a financial year

**Net direct tax collection grows 18.3% to ₹11.25 lakh crore**



**Key Points:**

- ❖ Net direct tax collection grew 18.3% to about ₹11.25 lakh crore as of October 10 this fiscal, government data showed.
- ❖ The mop-up includes personal income tax collection of ₹5.98 lakh crore and corporate tax collection of ₹4.94 lakh crore.
- ❖ Securities Transaction Tax (STT) stood at ₹30,630 crore, while other taxes (including equalisation levy and gift tax) earned ₹2,150 crore.
- ❖ The income tax department had collected ₹9.51 lakh crore during the same period a year ago.
- ❖ Refunds worth Rs 2.31 trillion were issued between April 1 and October 10, a growth of 46 percent. On a gross basis, direct tax collection grew 22.3 percent to Rs 13.57 lakh crore.
- ❖ The collection includes personal income tax of Rs 7.13 trillion and corporate tax of Rs 6.11 lakh crore.
- ❖ The government has budgeted to collect Rs 22.07 trillion in the current fiscal from direct taxes.

**WTO cuts 2025 world merchandise trade growth forecast to 3% from 3.3%**



**Key Points:**

- ❖ The World Trade Organisation (WTO) has reduced its growth forecast for the volume of global merchandise trade in 2025 to 3 per cent from 3.3 per cent, amid escalating conflict in the West Asia region, which has blocked the crucial Red Sea shipping route for nearly a year.

- ❖ For 2024, the WTO revised upwards its forecast for merchandise trade growth to 2.7 per cent, up from the previous estimate of 2.6 per cent.

**Noel Tata succeeds Ratan Tata, appointed chairman of Tata Trusts**



**Key Points:**

- ❖ Noel Tata has been named the chairman of Tata Trusts, the charitable division of the Tata Group. He is the son of Naval H. Tata and Simone N. Tata.
- ❖ Noel takes over from his half-brother, Ratan Tata, who passed away earlier this week at the age of 86.
- ❖ Noel Tata is currently a trustee of the Sir Dorabji Tata Trust and the Sir Ratan Tata Trust, which collectively own a substantial 66% stake in Tata Sons, the holding company of the diversified Tata Group.
- ❖ Noel N. Tata is the Chairman and NonExecutive Director of Tata International Limited and has been associated with the Tata group for 40 years.
- ❖ He holds various board positions within the group, including Chairman of Trent, Voltas, and Tata Investment Corporation, as well as Vice Chairman of Tata Steel and Titan Company Limited.
- ❖ In his most recent executive role as Managing Director of Tata International Limited, he led the company through a period of significant growth, with revenue rising from \$500 million to over \$3 billion between August 2010 and November 2021.

**12 October – World Migratory Bird Day**



**Key Points:**

- ❖ World Migratory Bird Day Celebrated in the second Saturdays of May and October. This year the dates are May 11 and October 12, 2024.
- ❖ The two days of World Migratory Bird Day serve as a means to reflect the cyclical nature of bird migration, as well as the varying peak migration periods in the northern and southern hemispheres.
- ❖ World Migratory Bird Day is a global awareness raising campaign that aims to highlight the need for international cooperation to conserve migratory birds and concerns related to decreasing populations of insects.
- ❖ Theme – Protect Insects, Protect Birds

**Indian Naval Ship Shardul arrives in UAE**

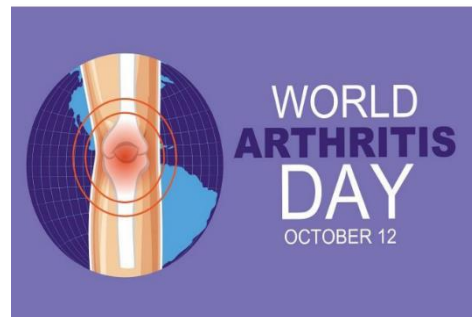


**Key Points:**

- ❖ The Indian Naval Ship Shardul, part of the First Training Squadron of the Indian Navy, arrived at Port Mina Rashid, Dubai, UAE, as part of its Long Range Training Deployment.

- ❖ This visit marks a significant milestone in strengthening maritime cooperation and fostering mutual understanding between India and UAE.
- ❖ Shardul is scheduled to engage in various activities designed to enhance maritime security and interoperability.
- ❖ These include harbour interactions and joint exercises including visit to the Naval Officers Training Academy and UAE Naval Ship.

**12 October – World Arthritis Day**



**Key Points:**

- ❖ World Arthritis Day is observed annually on October 12th to raise awareness about arthritis, a condition affecting millions worldwide. Arthritis primarily affects the joints, causing pain, stiffness, and swelling.
- ❖ Joint pain is a common symptom of arthritis due to the inflammation or degradation of the cartilage that cushions joints.
- ❖ While there is no cure for arthritis, exercise plays a significant role in reducing joint pain by strengthening the muscles around the joints, improving flexibility, and maintaining overall mobility.

**10 October 2024 – World Sight Day**



**Key Points:**

- ❖ World Sight Day is observed every year on the second Thursday of October.
  - ❖ This year it falls on 10 October.
  - ❖ Objective – To raise awareness about the preventive measures to avoid blindness, promote eye health and ensure equitable access to quality vision care.
- ❖ Theme 2024 – Children, Love Your Eyes  
World Sight Day was started as part of the “Sight First” campaign which was organised by the Lions Club International Foundation in 1988.

